



**Archaeological trial trench evaluation
at 72 Radford Road
Coventry, West Midlands
November 2015**

Report No. 15/199

Author: Susan Porter

Illustrator: James Ladocha



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Author: S Porter

Illustrator: J Ladocha

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MOLA
Bolton House
Wootton Hall Park
Northampton
NN4 8BN
01604 809 800
www.mola.org.uk
sparry@mola.org.uk

STAFF

Project Manager: Mo Muldowney BA ACIfA

Text: Susan Porter BA MA

Fieldwork: Ian Fisher BSc

Susan Porter

Harry Young

Illustrations: James Ladocha BA

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: molarnort1 - 230515	
Project name	Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at 72 Radford Road, Coventry, West Midlands November 2015		
Short description (250 words maximum)	MOLA Northampton was commissioned by CCC to carry out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at 72 Radford Road, Coventry, West Midlands prior to the proposed development of the site. Three trenches were excavated. Two undated irregular features, likely to be of natural origin were observed. No deposits of archaeological interest were perceived and no finds were recovered.		
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Evaluation		
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)	None		
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	-		
Current Land use	Derelict building with areas of turf and hardstanding		
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Unknown		
Monument type/ period	Natural features: undated		
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	-		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	West Midlands		
Site address (including postcode)	Land east of Radford Road, Coventry, West Midlands		
Study area (sq.m or ha)	c 0.46ha		
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. letter code)	SP 33050 79941		
Height OD	102.28 – 100.28m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Chris Patrick, Conservation and Archaeology Officer, Coventry City Council		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	Susan Porter		
Project Manager	Mo Muldowney		
Sponsor or funding body	RSSB UK Ltd		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date/End date	03/11/15 – 04/11/15		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)	
Physical	Herbert Museum and Art Gallery Coventry	-	
Paper		Site records, maps, permatrace drawings	
Digital	MOLA Northampton Offices:	Mapinfo plans, Word report	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)			
Title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at 72 Radford Road, Coventry, West Midlands, November 2015		
Serial title & volume	15/199		
Author(s)	Susan Porter		
Page numbers	16		
Date	16 November 2015		

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Front cover: The Coachmakers Club (© geograph.org.uk)

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Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at 72 Radford Road Coventry, West Midlands November 2015

Abstract

MOLA Northampton was commissioned by RSSB to carry out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at 72 Radford Road, Coventry prior to the proposed development of the site. Three trenches were excavated. Two undated irregular features, likely to be of natural origin were observed. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed and no finds were recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA Northampton was commissioned by RSSB to carry out a trial trench evaluation of c 0.46ha of land at 72 Radford Road, Coventry (NGR SP 33050 79941).

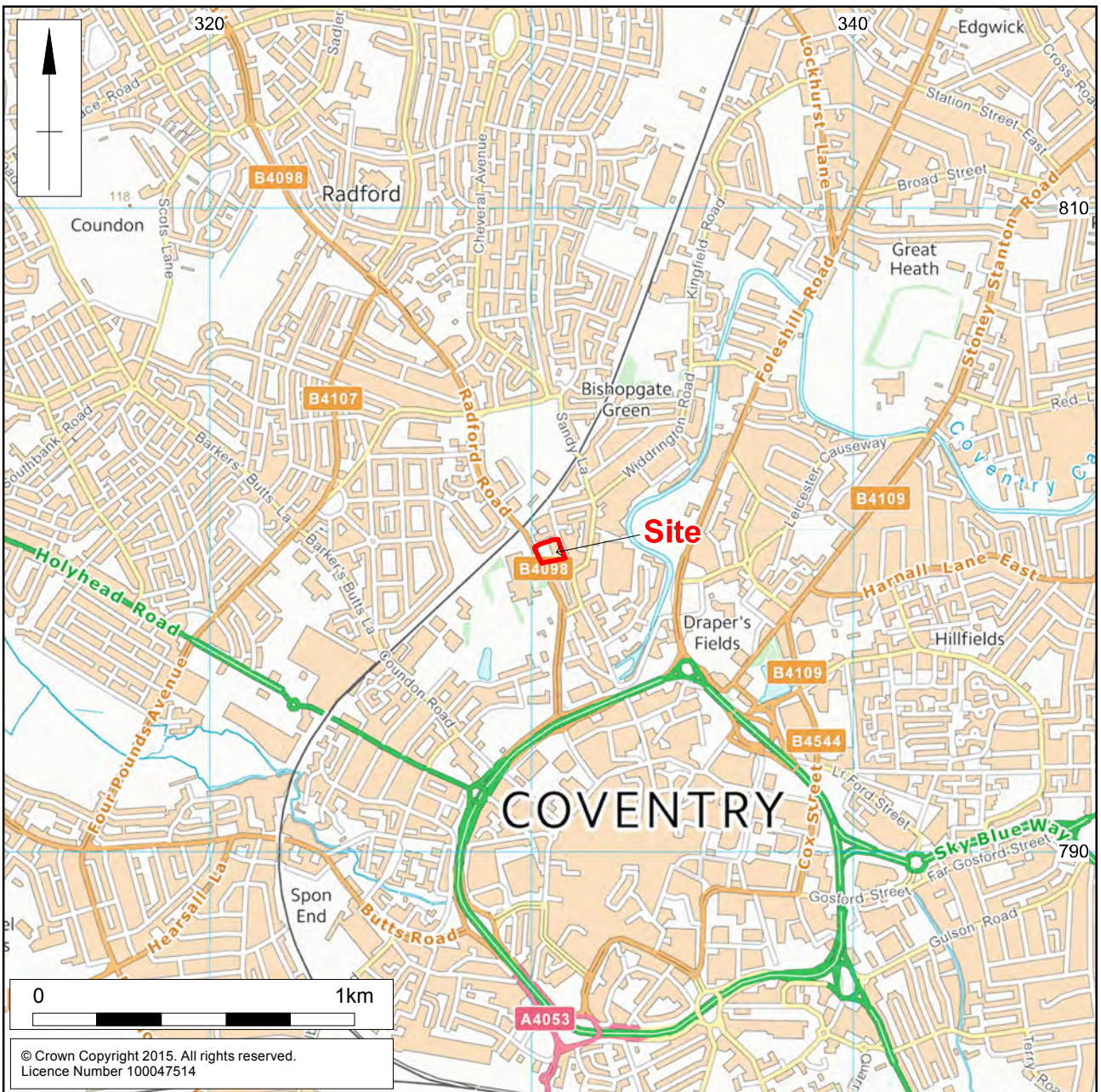
The Planning Archaeologist for Coventry City Council (CCCPA) had advised that a programme of archaeological evaluation should be undertaken to determine the nature and extent of any archaeological remains within the development area. The requirements were outlined in a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by MOLA (MOLA 2015).

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The principal aim of the archaeological evaluation was to quantify the quality and extent of the archaeological resource and inform further decisions regarding the suitability of the site for development. This was achieved through trial trench evaluation.

The evaluation was designed to gather sufficient information to generate a reliable predictive model of the extent, character, date, state of preservation and depth of archaeological remains within the application area. This was achieved via the following aims and objectives:

- To establish the date, nature, significance and extent of activity or occupation in the development site;
- To determine the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- To determine the potential for the recovery of artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;
- To assess the potential for palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions;
- To assess the impact of the proposed works upon any surviving archaeological remains;



Scale 1:20,000

Site Location Fig 1

- To inform any future excavation or mitigation strategy.

The evaluation was carried out with reference to the IfA's *Standards and guidance: Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 2008), the MOLA Fieldwork Manual (2014) and the West Midlands regional framework (Watt 2011).

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Topography and geology

The proposed area of development comprises a c0.46ha parcel of land in central Coventry (Fig 1). The land is bounded to the west by Radford Road, to the north by Dark Lane, and to the east by St Nicholas Street, which allows current access to the site. The northern boundary was previously the boundary of a 16th-century enclosure (MCT2629), and the extant hedgerow may date to this period (MCT16874). The southern boundary is formed of an iron palisade fence which divides the area from the land of Highfield House (Historic Environment Record MCT390). The land is currently occupied by the Coachmakers' Club house, with areas of garden turf to the west, and hardstanding around the building to the east.

The topography of the site is sloping, from c101m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) to the east, down to c99m aOD to the west. The underlying geology of the site is recorded as Keresley Member Carboniferous sandstone (BGS 2015), which was confirmed in all of the excavated trenches. There is no record of superficial deposits within the BGS.

3.2 Historical and archaeological background

A search of the Historic Environment Record was made for a 250m radius around the site. The results, combined with an examination of historic Ordnance Survey maps, are summarised below.

St Nicholas Street was one of Coventry's medieval suburbs, extending north from the Bishop Street gate. The suburb may have originated as a separate settlement that became absorbed by the expanding medieval city. A church for the suburb is recorded from 1368, although the known parish church of St Nicholas was dedicated in 1539 (HER MCT138). This is thought to have been located immediately opposite the proposed development site, where it is marked as a historic site on early Ordnance Survey maps. The church itself seems to have been demolished in the early 17th century, although a Vicarage continued to stand on the site until the Second World War (HER MCT9321).

Industrial activity in the area is represented by the 19th-century Coventry-Nuneaton railway line and associated bridges, which lie approximately 120m to the north of the site (HER MCT16534, MCT19, MCT2), and the 18th-century Coventry Canal which passes 250m to the east (HER MCT6958). A Victorian waterworks were formerly to be found to the south of the site (MCT9313), and Coventry's first powerstation lay to the east (MCT758). Quarry pits for gravel and clay are known to have been excavated to the south and west of the site (MCT7032, MCT2630, MCT2633).

The application site was occupied by a substantial Victorian villa in the 19th century called Rose Hill (HER MCT9314). The villa is marked on the first Ordnance Survey map of 1887, occupying the north-east area of the plot. The area was edged by trees at this time. The north-eastern corner, from the centre of Dark Lane, was enclosed by a fence, and contained a smaller building facing onto St Nicholas Street. To the south was Highfield House, constructed in 1853-54 (HER MCT390). On the 1906 map, this

smaller property is named as Ivy Cottage. These houses were probably destroyed by wartime bombing, Highfield House to the south was also partially damaged. Coventry bomb census mapping indicates that at least one bomb fell on the site close to the western boundary, however aerial photographs of WWII era appear to show a crater in the centre of the site (1st Line Defence 2015) and as such more than one bomb may have landed close to or within the site.

The plot was devoid of buildings in 1949-50 with the Ordnance survey map for the year recording no structures on the site. However, it was surrounded to the north and east by ruins, particularly that of the former Daimler factory to the east (HER MCT14317, MCT14317, MCT16876). The plot, edged with trees, remained empty until some point between 1962 and 1969 when the Coachmakers Club building was constructed.

Previous archaeological monitoring during extensions at Highfield House in 2008 (HER ECT528/MCT16656), and on land to the rear of 116-120 St. Nicholas Street in 1997 (ECT635) produced no archaeological features or finds.

4 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

All three of the proposed trenches were excavated using a JCB type mechanical excavator equipped with a 1.8m-wide toothless ditching bucket. No changes were made to the initial layout and the trenches were all 30m in length (Fig 2).

Removal of topsoil and subsoil took place under constant archaeological direction to reveal the archaeological horizon and were stacked, where possible, separately at the side of the trench. All procedures complied with MOLA Health and Safety provisions and MOLA Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.

All archaeological deposits encountered during the course of the excavation were fully recorded, following standard MOLA procedures (MOLA 2014). All deposits were given a separate context number in a sequence assigned to each trench. They were described on *pro-forma* context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships and interpretation.

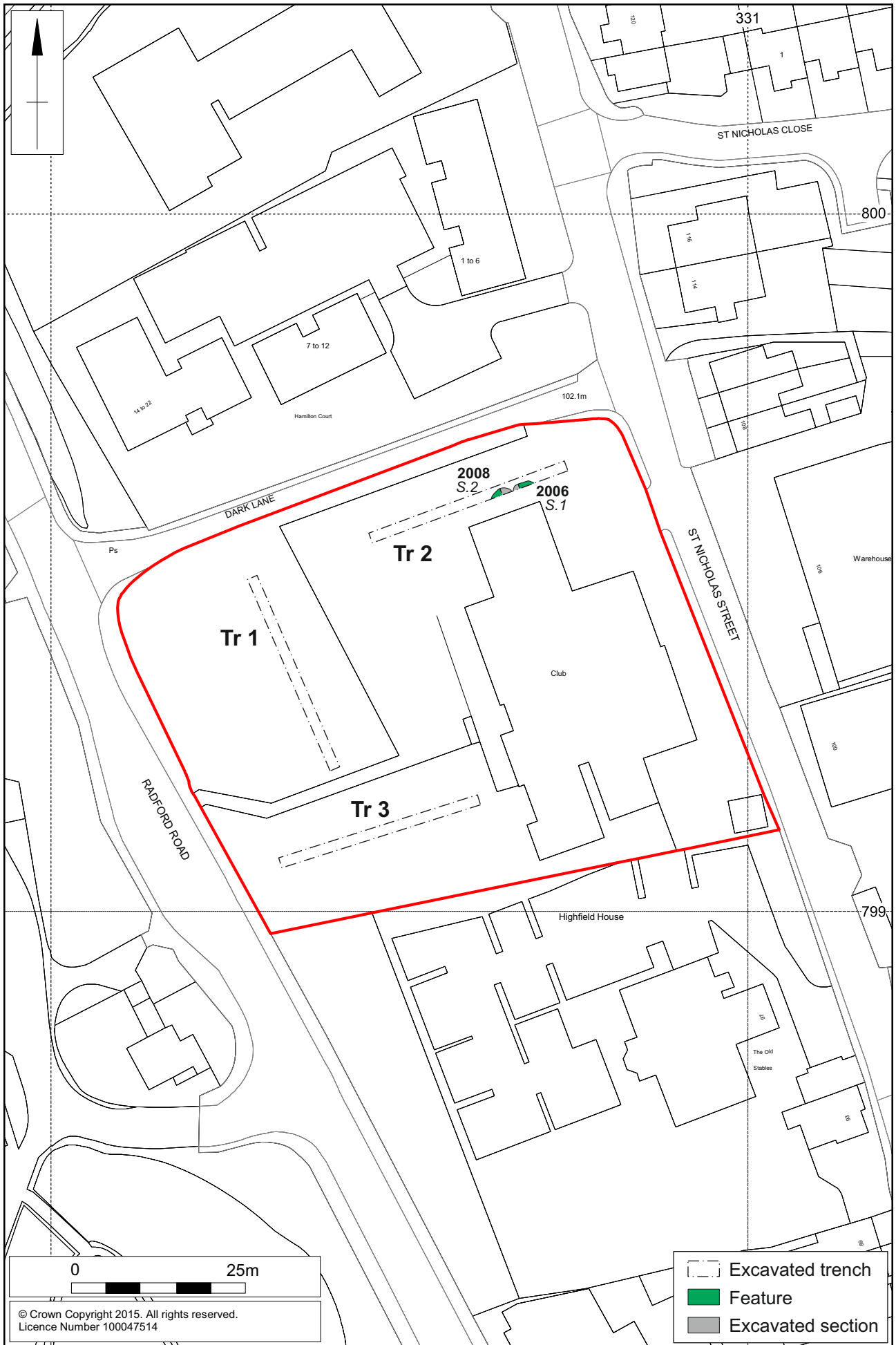
All trench locations were recorded using Leica Viva Global Positioning System (GPS) survey equipment using SMARTNET real-time corrections, operating to a 3D tolerance of $\pm 0.05\text{m}$. A full digital photographic record was maintained. The field data from the evaluation has been compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

The evaluation conformed to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance: archaeological field evaluation* (2014b). All stages of the project were undertaken in accordance with Historic England's, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (HE 2015). The evaluation was carried out in accordance with Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by MOLA (2015).

All trenches were backfilled with their up-cast material and compacted by the mechanical excavator.

5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

The stratigraphic sequence varied across the three trenches with made ground observed to the east, and natural subsoil layers down the slope to the west. The natural, mid-brownish-red sandy loam, was between 0.80m and 1.35m below the upper ground surface. It was overlain by mid orange-brown sandy loam subsoil, which varied between 0.15m and 0.55m in depth.



Scale 1: 750

Excavated trenches Fig 2

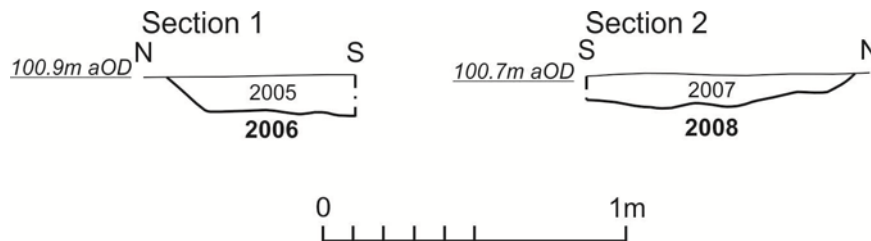
An additional deposit in Trench 1 lay between the topsoil and subsoil and comprised a very dark brown sandy loam with decayed organic inclusions, between 0.30 and 0.40m thick. The topsoil of this trench was similar to that of Trenches 2 and 3, but also contained degraded organic matter and charcoal flecks. Given the location of this trench close to the centre of the site and its proximity to the bomb crater observed in the WWII aerial photographs (1st Line Defence 2015) this additional layer within the trench may have been a buried topsoil associated with the explosion. Alternatively, this could be another aspect of landscape management associated with construction of the former Coachmakers Club.

The topsoil, dark brown sandy loam, was present in Trenches 1 and 3 and was between 0.40m and 0.85m deep.

In Trench 2 there were additional deposits of made ground overlying the subsoil, comprising made ground of tarmac and brick and rubble up to 0.47m thick. This appears to have been used to build up the slope to a flat level to provide the hardstanding area associated with the existing 20th century building on site.

Two features, likely to be of natural origin were identified in Trench 2.

Features [2006] and [2008] (Fig 2) formed irregular ovals in plan and lay 5.50m and 9m from the eastern end of the trench. Both features lay along the southern edge of the trench and extended beyond to the south. Feature [2006] was the smaller of the two, at least 0.70m wide and 0.12m deep with steep-sides and a flat base (Fig 3, section 1). Feature [2008] was more irregular in plan and at least 0.90m wide by 0.12m deep with steep sides and an undulating base (Fig 3, section 2). The deposits encountered within the features were broadly similar comprising friable mid reddish-grey sandy loam with red streaks and mottling. No dating material was recovered from either feature and they are considered to be of natural origin, likely tree hollows.



Natural features [2006] and [2008] Fig 3

6 DISCUSSION

The evaluation has demonstrated that the development area contained two undated features considered to be of natural origin, and that no archaeological remains were observed.

The lack of archaeological features is perhaps surprising, given the site's proximity to the medieval core of Coventry, and the largely undisturbed nature of the deposits, with little later intrusive activity that could have destroyed any remains. The background research indicated that although the site was located within or near a suburb of Coventry, expansion into the area did not take place until the 19th and 20th centuries and when it did occur, did not impact upon the site. It would appear therefore that the site has remained untouched until recently.

The presence of a normal sequence of natural, subsoil, topsoil also shows that little intrusive activity has taken place, although the additional layers in Trenches 1 and 2 do indicate some level of landscaping, perhaps in preparation for the construction of the Coachmakers Club or possibly tidying of the site after the bomb had exploded.

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MOLA
17 November 2015

APPENDIX: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height, NW end (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
1	NW-SE 1.8m x 30m		100.287m	1.05 – 1.35m 98.937m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
1001	Topsoil	Friable red mottled dark brown sandy loam with 3% organic matter and stones	0.40 – 0.70m thick	-
1002	Buried topsoil	Very dark brown sandy loam with 10% degraded organic matter and stones	0.30 – 0.40m thick	-
1003	Subsoil	Mid brown sandy loam	0.25 – 0.45m thick	-
1004	Natural	Mid reddish-brown, with patches of brown and stones	-	-



Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height, NNE end (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
2	NNE-SSW 1.8m x 30m		102.283m	1.04-1.14m 101.098m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
2001	Tarmac	Tarmac	0.07m thick	-
2002	Made ground	Mid grey-brown sandy loam with brick	0.20 – 0.40m thick	-
2003	Subsoil	Mid brown sandy loam with stones,	0.37 – 0.55m	-
2004	Natural	Mid brownish-red sandy loam with stones more clayey consistency to west	-	-
2005	Fill	Friable mid reddish-grey sandy loam with red streaks and mottling	0.12m deep	-
2006	Cut	Natural feature. Steep-sided, slightly uneven base	0.70m wide 0.12m deep	-
2007	Fill	Friable mid reddish-grey sandy loam with red streaks and mottling	0.12m deep	-
2008	Cut	Natural feature. Moderately sloping sides to an uneven base	0.90m wide 0.12m deep	-
2009	Redeposited natural layer	Mid red-brown sandy clay, extent limited to western end of trench	0.20m thick	-



Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height, NE end (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
3	NE-SW 1.8m x 30m		101.693m	0.80- 1.00m 100.893m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
3001	Topsoil	Friable very dark brown sandy loam with rooting	0.60 – 0.85m thick	-
3002	Subsoil	Mid brown sandy loam	0.16 - 0.19m thick	-
3003	Natural	Mid brownish-red sandy loam, becoming light brown sandy loam with streaks of red with stones	-	-





MOLA
Bolton House
Wootton Hall Park
Northampton
NN4 8BN
01604 809 800
www.mola.org.uk
sparry@mola.org.uk