



**Archaeological observation, investigation
recording, analysis and publication of works at
Site 31, Allesley Old Road
Coventry
June 2020**

Report No. 20/044

Author: Paul Thompson

Illustrators: Sofia Turk



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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: molanort1-397051	
Project title	Archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication of works at Site 31, Allesley Old Road, Coventry		
Short summary	MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) carried out an archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication of works at Site 31, Allesley Old Road, Coventry, for one of fifty monitoring sites as part of Transport for West Midlands Connected and Autonomous Vehicle test sectors. The works comprised the observation of the excavation of a service trench. No archaeological features, remains or deposits were uncovered.		
Type of work	Archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication of works		
Site status	None		
Previous work	None		
Current land use	Pedestrian public access		
Development type	Infrastructure		
Future work	None		
Monument type/period	None		
Significant finds	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	West Midlands		
Site address	Site 31, Allesley Old Road, Coventry		
Postcode	CV5 8BU		
OS coordinates	SP 32035 79035		
Area (sq m/ha)	c0.01ha		
Height aOD	90.0m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project Brief originator			
Project Design originator	WSP		
Project Director/ Manager	Paul Thompson, MOLA		
Project Supervisor	James West, MOLA		
Sponsor or funding body	Private		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date (dd-mm-yyyy)	12-06-2020		
End date (dd-mm-yyyy)	12-06-2020		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content	
Physical	None	None	
Digital	OASIS	Report, photographs	
Paper	The History Centre, Coventry Archives, The Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry – AOR'20	Site records	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
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Front cover: Service Trench looking south-east

Fig 1: Site location

Fig 2: Service Trench looking east

Archaeological observation, investigation recording, analysis and publication of works at Site 31, Allesley Old Road, Coventry June 2020

Abstract

MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) carried out an archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication of works at Site 31, Allesley Old Road, Coventry, for one of fifty monitoring sites as part of Transport for West Midlands Connected and Autonomous Vehicle test sectors. The works comprised the observation of the excavation of a single service trench. No archaeological features, remains or deposits were present.

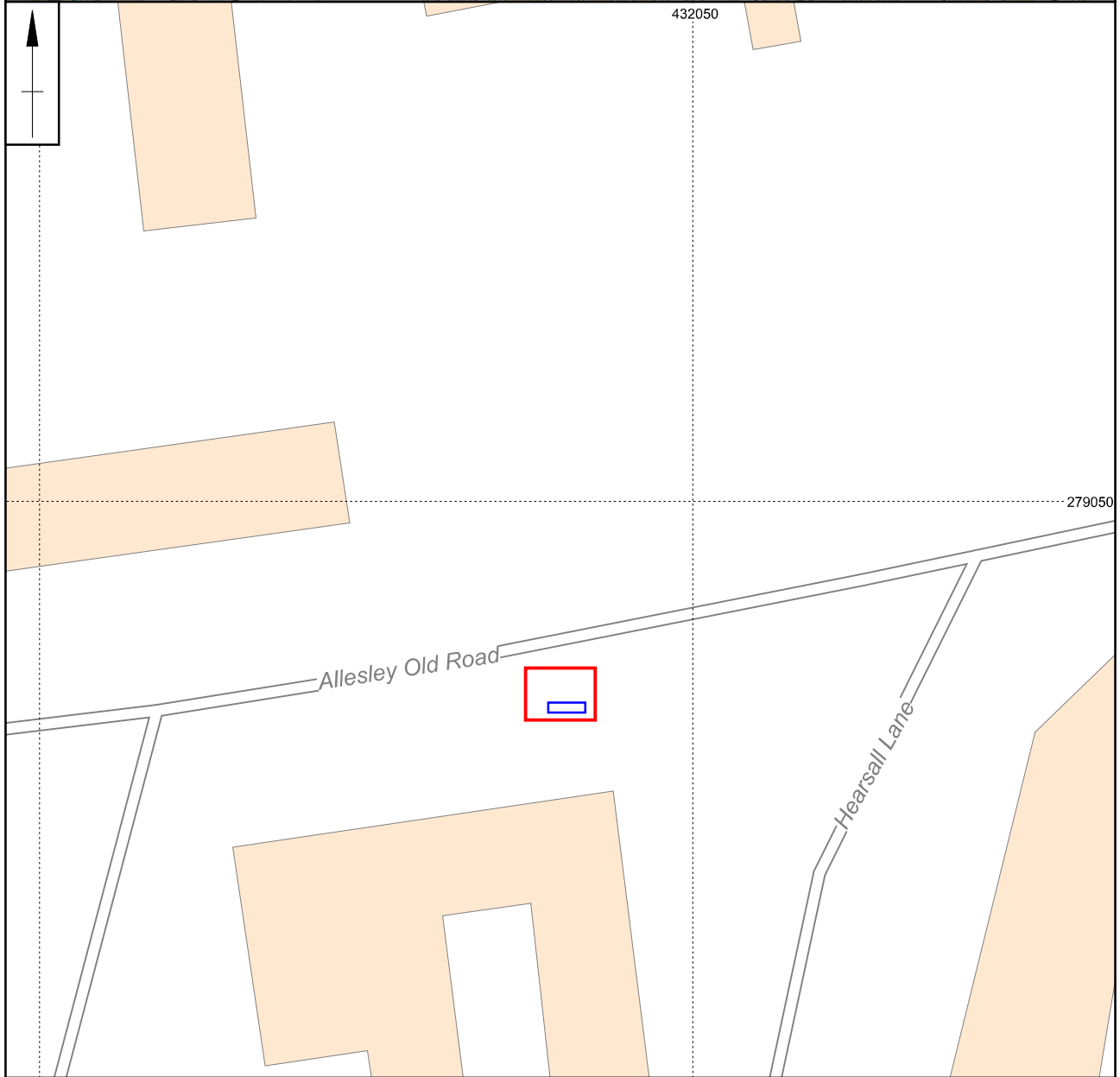
1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) was commissioned by WSP to undertake a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication on Site 31, Allesley Old Road, Coventry (NGR SP 32035 79035, Fig 1).

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2019), a programme of archaeological works was undertaken to mitigate the effects of the development on the archaeological resource. The WSI has been informed by an Archaeological Constraints Appraisal (ACA) (WSP 2020) and was submitted to Coventry City Council in support of a planning application. Coventry City Council granted planning permission for the application (FUL/2019/2987) on 24th February 2020 with Condition 4:

“4. The installation of the cabinet and associated chamber at Site 031 shall not take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, have secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation (WSP, January 2020), dated 19/02/20. The details shall be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, prior to the installation of the cabinet and associated chamber at this site. For the avoidance of doubt, development not associated with excavation may proceed on site.”

All archaeological works were carried out in accordance with the WSI, and with the ClfA Code of Conduct (ClfA 2019) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (ClfA 2014a) and in accordance to the requirements of Historic England (HE 2015).



Scale 1:500 Site location and excavated trench Fig 1

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2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location, topography and geology

The site comprises a small area immediately west of the road junction between Hearsall Lane and Allesley Old Road, Coventry. Monitoring Site 31 is located within Coventry's western suburbs within the hardstanding of the public footway adjacent to Allesley Old Road. It is located on the southern side of the road adjacent to properties 13–19 Allesley Old Road.

The site is generally flat at approximately 85-90m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The pavement surface comprises tarmac.

The geology of the site has been mapped as argillaceous rocks and sandstone of the Allesley Member group, interbedded with conglomerate. This comprises a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 302 to 310 million years ago during the Carboniferous Period in a local environment previously dominated by rivers (BGS 2020). No superficial deposits are recorded.

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The following information has been extracted from the Written Scheme of Investigation produced by WSP (WSP 2020).

Previous archaeological investigations

No previous archaeological investigations are recorded as having been carried out at the location of Site 31, Allesley Old Road, Coventry.

An archaeological investigation was undertaken 30m south of monitoring Site 31 (Warwickshire Museum Archaeology Field Services 2007). Otherwise there has been no archaeological work undertaken in the immediate area of the site. As a direct result there is almost no understanding of the extent of past human activity at the site in particular with relation to the prehistoric, Roman and the early Saxon period, for which there is no documentary record.

Previously identified archaeological assets

Prehistoric, Iron Age, Roman and Anglo Saxon

There were no finds or monuments of these periods recorded within 50m of the monitoring site in the Coventry Historic Environment Record (HER) database. Two finds are recorded within 1 km of the site. A late Neolithic to Bronze Age flint barbed and tanged arrowhead (HER ref No. MCT53) was found 535m west of Monitoring Site 31 along Allesley Old Road, and a Roman coin (HER No. MCT796) was found in a garden 585m to the north-east. The lack of pre-medieval evidence is likely to be due partly to Coventry's suburban expansion along Allesley Old Road between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries and partly pre-PPG16, lack of any archaeological interest or capacity to investigate this area of Coventry.

Medieval (AD 1066–1500)

The site has high potential to contain medieval and post-medieval remains. St Leonard's leper hospital, with its chapel dedicated to St Mary Magdalen, was founded to the west of the medieval suburb of Spon Street in the 12th century. This was located on the southern side of Allesley Old Road immediately adjacent to Monitoring Site 31 (VCH 1969). The precise location of the hospital and the extent of its burial ground are unknown and it was considered possible that the proposed Monitoring Site 31 may lie within the former extent of the hospital precinct. In addition

to the leper hospital, by the mid-13th century a moated manor house had been established to the north of Allesley Old Road, 85m north east of Monitoring Site 31, (HER No. MCT2045).

By the early 13th century, the leper hospital possessed its own common, fields, wood, mill and waste (*ibid*). It passed into the possession of St Mary's Priory, Coventry in 1280, and in the late 14th century it was transferred to the Crown (*ibid*). Between the late 14th century and the late 15th century, the chapel of St Mary Magdalen was granted the status of a Royal Free Chapel (VCH 1969).

Post-medieval to modern (AD1500–present)

When the leper hospital ceased operating as such is unknown. 'Magdalen's Chapell' is recorded in a document of 1554 (HER MCT2900) but was later converted to a barn and was demolished in around 1800 (VCH 1969). The remainder of the site of the hospital was left as open land during the later post-medieval period; any ancillary buildings which may have existed had presumably been demolished at or before the Reformation in the mid-16th century. In documents dated 1820 and 1847 the site was referred to as 'Former Chapel Yard' (HER MCT13076).

Human remains were recorded during two episodes of building works, to the rear of 17 Allesley Old Road in 1988 or 1989, 30m south-east of Monitoring Site 31 (HER ECT403), and during redevelopment works at 19 Allesley Old Road, 30m south-west (Warwickshire Museum Archaeology Field Services 2007). It is likely that these remains are from the burial ground associated with the leper hospital and/or St Mary Magdalene Chapel.

The site of St Leonard's hospital and St Mary Magdalene chapel was redeveloped as part of an expansion of Coventry's western suburbs during the mid-19th century. Nos 13 to 19 Allesley Old Road are standing buildings dating to the mid-19th century and are located immediately to the south of Monitoring Site 31.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the watching brief was to record, as far as reasonably possible, the location, extent, condition, significance and quality of any survival archaeological remains discovered and observed; carry out a programme of post-excavation assessment; and disseminate the results. In order to examine the archaeological resource within the proposed development area the objectives of the investigation were to:

- Establish and record the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of all archaeological deposits at the development site;
- Establish the date, nature and extent of archaeological activity or occupation at the development site;
- Establish the relationship of any archaeological deposits within the wider contemporary landscape;
- Recover any artefacts that may assist in the development of type series within the region;
- Recover palaeo-environmental remains that may assist in determining the local environmental conditions, and;
- Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information

collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

Specific research objectives for this site, as laid out by the WSI, were as follows:

- Are burials associated with the medieval and post-medieval burial ground associated with St Leonard's Hospital and St Mary Magdalene's chapel present beneath the modern highway and with the footprint of the monitoring site works? What is the nature, date, extent, survival and significance of the remains and what potential do they have for further analysis and in enhancing understanding of the population of the hospital or context of any remains?
- What evidence is there for further archaeological remains, associated with St Leonard's Hospital and St Mary Magdalene's chapel, e.g. structural remains, property boundaries to be present which may indicate the original extent of the burial ground and hospital site.

Specific research objectives would, if any archaeological remains had been uncovered, have been addressed as detailed with reference to the national and regional research frameworks documents. Unfortunately, as only pavement surface laying above modern deposits was encountered, therefore no research objectives could be examined or discussed.

4 METHODOLOGY

All works were carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2019), and *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014a). All works will conform to the Historic England procedural document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (HE 2015).

The archaeological investigation and recording was undertaken during the groundworks for the digging of a service trench for new infrastructure monitoring equipment west of the road junction of Hearsall Lane and Allesley Old Road, Coventry. The investigation continuously observed the removal of overburden by hand following tarmac being cut with a circular saw.

Any archaeological deposits and artefacts encountered during the course of the works would have been fully recorded using standard MOLA procedures (MOLA 2014), including being assigned separate context numbers and described on pro-forma context sheets. All records compiled during fieldwork have been compiled into a cross-referenced site archive that will be prepared for deposition in accordance relevant county guidelines as well as with more general archiving guidelines given by Brown (2011), Walker (1990), MGC (1992), SMA (1993), CIfA (2014b) and Watkinson and Neal (2001).

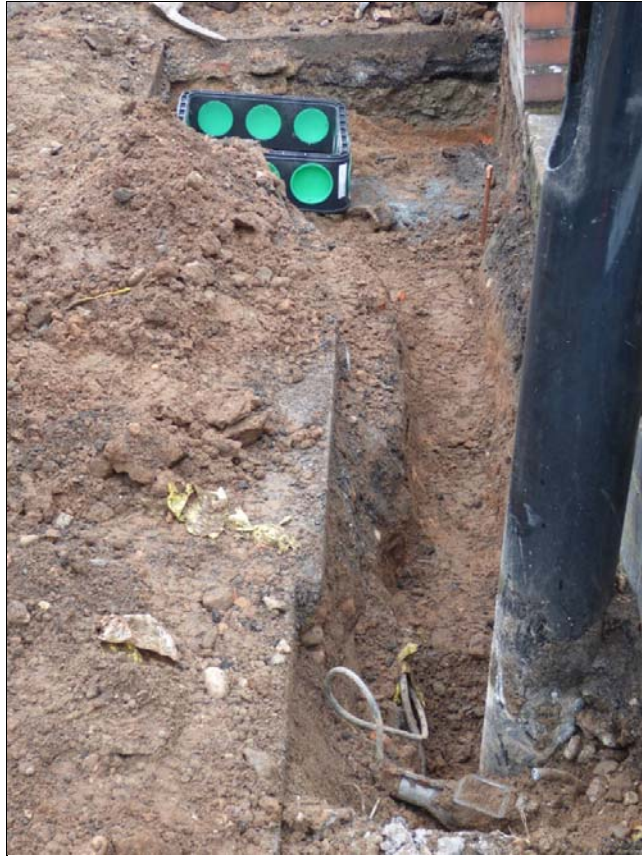
5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

A rectilinear service trench was excavated by hand, orientated east-west, measuring 0.78m wide and 2.85m long (Fig 2).

The service trench was excavated to an artificial depth of 0.40m below present ground level, and the natural geology was not encountered anywhere along the length of the excavation. The lowest layer encountered comprised a mid brown soil with sand and cement dry mix inclusions (03). Overlying this layer was a deposit of mid brown loam and broken brick fragments with brick dust (02), which was 0.11m in

depth. Above this, and forming the pavement surface, was a smooth tarmac layer 0.05m in depth.

No finds or human remains were encountered during the service trench excavation. However, as the natural substrate was not reached at any point during the excavations, the presence of human remains, graves cutting into natural geology or other surviving archaeological features cannot be entirely ruled out at this site.



Service trench, Monitoring Site 31, looking east Fig 2

6 CONCLUSION

The observation works identified no archaeological features, deposits, layers or artefacts within the monitoring site. The investigation revealed the current tarmac pavement surface lies above a make-up layer of soil and broken brick. This lay above disturbed ground, either modern or 19th century in date. Natural geology was not encountered anywhere along the excavated trench.

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MOLA Northampton

18 June 2020

APPENDIX 1: Photograph register

Photograph Number	Subject	Direction of shot
1	Service Trench	East
2	Service Trench	South-East
3	Service Trench	East
4	Service Trench	East
5	Service Trench	East
6	Service Trench	East
7	Service Trench	East
8	Service Trench	East
9	Service Trench	East
10	Service Trench	East
11	Service Trench	South-East
12	Service Trench	East
13	Service Trench	East
14	Service Trench	East
15	Service Trench	East

APPENDIX 2: Site photographs



1 Service Trench looking east



4 Service Trench looking east



2 Service Trench looking east



5 Service Trench looking east



3 Service Trench looking south-east



6 Service Trench looking east



8 Service Trench looking east



9 Service Trench looking east



7 Service Trench looking east



10 Service Trench looking east



13 Service Trench looking east



11 Service Trench looking south-east



14 Service Trench looking east



12 Service Trench looking east



15 Service Trench looking east