

**An archaeological
watching brief at
the site of
St. George's Parade,
Wolverhampton,
West Midlands
2002**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
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An archaeological watching brief during groundworks at St. George's Parade, Wolverhampton, West Midlands. 2002

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in March 2002. The work was undertaken on behalf of Adonis Construction during residential development at St. George's Parade in Wolverhampton, West Midlands (NGR SO 917 984), ahead of a proposed housing development. A watching brief was required as part of the planning condition to identify any evidence of the moat associated with Old Hall, that had been previously identified to the north of the site, during an archaeological evaluation in 2000. No evidence of this moat or associated structures had been identified during trial trenching on this site, although it appeared that any early deposits had been severely truncated by 19th and 20th century cellarage. Monitored work during the current development identified a deposit that may have been associated with the moat, but the extent of the deposit was not identifiable and therefore the evidence remains inconclusive. The evaluation and watching brief suggest that if there was any evidence of the Old Hall, its moat and associated structures then it has probably been severely truncated by the later cellarage prevalent across the St. George's Parade site.

1.0 Introduction

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken on the site of former St. George's Parade car park, Wolverhampton. The work was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of Adonis Construction, during residential development by Heantun Housing Association, in March 2002. This work was carried out following two desk-based assessments (White 1996, Watt 2000) and a programme of archaeological evaluation (Williams 2000). The desk-based assessments had identified the potential for the moat and remains of Old Hall to have survived on the site. However, two trial trenches failed to identify such features, although the line of the moat was identified to the north of the site. As the development was affecting areas previously inaccessible during the evaluation stage, a watching brief condition was included in the planning permission.

The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' 1999 *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* and a Design Brief prepared by Mike Shaw (Shaw 2002: Appendix 1), Black Country Archaeologist, on behalf of Wolverhampton City Council.

2.0 Site Location (Fig. 1)



Plate 1. General site photograph, viewed eastwards

The site is centred on NGR SO 917 984 (Fig. 1), within the southern part of Wolverhampton town centre. It is bounded by Old Hall Street, to the north, St. George's Parade, to the south and east and the College of Adult Education, to the west. The site was formerly used as a car park, although standing buildings bordered the northern extent.

3.0 Archaeological Background

Two previous desk-based assessments (White 1996, Watt 2000) and an archaeological evaluation report (Williams 2000) have described the archaeological background of the site in detail, so only a brief summary is given here.

The Old Hall Street site lies within a Conservation Area and immediately south of Bilston Street, which is an ancient routeway. This area lay outside the probable location of the defensive earthworks of the main settlement of Wolverhampton, but due to its location at a meeting of important routes, it has been suggested that the area may have had significance prior to the building of the Old Hall (SMR 2557) on the site.

Taylor, on his 1751 map, depicts the great hall and its associated gardens surrounded by a substantial moat. White (1996) points to the fact that the buildings shown within the moat are not centrally positioned and that this could indicate that earlier buildings may have existed in this area. It is thought, from the study of illustrative and photographic material, that the Old Hall may have originated in the 16th century. However the substantial buildings, shown to the south-west of it, which were probably barns for keeping sheep and storing wool (Jones 1990), have not been securely dated. The house was also known as Levesons and Turtons Hall. In 1575, the Leveson family, who made their fortune in the wool trade, owned it.

By 1842, as depicted on the tithe map, the moat had been infilled and the Old Hall building had been substantially extended. Towards the end of the 19th century, it was largely used as a japanning factory and for the production of tin goods. In 1883, it was demolished.

In 1982, during groundwork excavations between Old Hall Street and Bilston Street, Malam and Thom (SMR 8631) excavated a 'peaty' deposit about two metres below the surface. No plan is available of the exact location of the groundworks, but it is known to have been adjacent to the site of the college. The upper fills produced post-medieval material.

Archaeological trial trenching (Trenches 1 & 2; Williams 2000) on this site failed to identify the line of the moat or any buildings associated with the Old Hall. They did demonstrate that any early deposits had been severely truncated by 19th and 20th century cellarage. A trench (Trench 3; *ibid.*) located to the north of the site identified the moat deposit, which had survived to a depth of 1.5m and width of 7m. This trench and another to the west failed to clearly identify the alignment of the moat. There was also a lack of dating evidence.

4.0 Aims

The general objective of the watching brief was to attempt to establish the presence/absence, character, state of preservation and date of any archaeological features or deposits.

Specific aims of the watching brief were to:

- establish the date of the moated site,
- establish the dimensions and characteristics of the moat,
- establish the date of the hall and associated buildings within the moat,
- establish whether there were earlier buildings within the moated area,
- establish whether there was earlier occupation outside the moated area, and
- recover environmental information, particularly from any moat deposits.

It was acknowledged that it may have been difficult to fulfil all or any of the specific aims listed above, within the scope of work for this watching brief (Shaw 2002: *Sec. 5.2*).

5.0 Method

Foundation and service trenches had been excavated and concreted prior to BUFAU being commissioned to carry out the watching brief and had therefore not been monitored. It did appear, however that these trenches were across the main car park, which had previously been proved to be considerably disturbed by 19th and 20th century cellarage.

Archaeological monitoring took place during test excavations prior to the excavation of cellars to the north of the site. These were excavated with a 360° tracked excavator. Where appropriate, possible archaeological features were hand excavated to provide information concerning the survival and complexity of feature fills, and to recover artefactual evidence. A detailed context record on individual pro-forma record cards was maintained and all features were photographed using both colour and monochrome film.

Sections and plans were drawn at a scale of 1:50 or 1:20 as appropriate. Where no archaeological deposits were identified, a record of the stratigraphy was made.

6.0 Results (Fig. 2)

A trial pit of approximately 3m by 5m size was excavated adjacent to standing buildings in the north of the site (see Fig 2). This trial pit was excavated to a depth of 2.6m. These excavations were too unstable to facilitate safe access. The pit contained the walls and floors of a 19th and 20th Century cellar structure associated with the surviving building. The southern end of this cellar had been cut into a dark grey sand-silt deposit. The base of the cellar had been cut into the natural weathered sandstone horizon.

It was difficult to assess the extent of the dark grey sand-silt deposit, and the only dateable artefacts were of a 19th and 20th century date, mostly associated with building debris.

This area of the cellars was further removed by machine, prior to being backfilled with concrete. The grey sand-silt deposit did not appear to continue far beyond the area observed in the trial pit. The remainder of the cellars appeared to have been cut into the natural weathered sandstone.

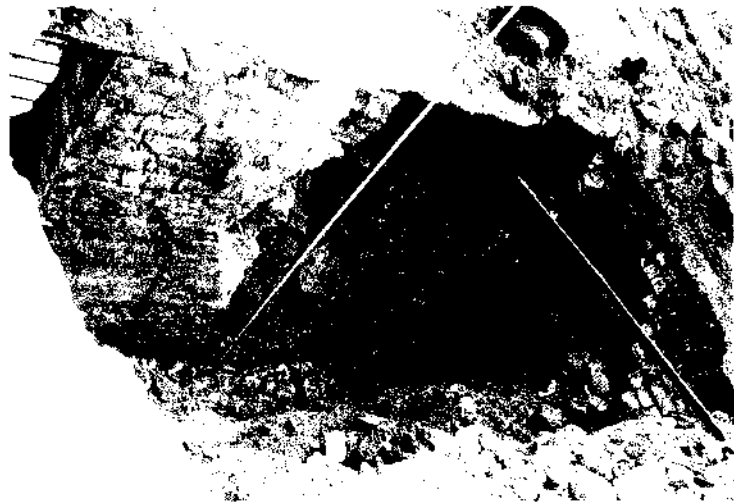


Plate 2. Excavated trial pit, viewed southwards

7.0 Discussion

The limited nature of this watching brief meant that it was difficult to assess whether the dark grey silt-sand encountered in the test pit, prior to the removal of the cellarage was a deposit within the moat or the remains of some form of backfill deposit. It also remains possible that this may have been moat deposit removed and redeposited during the construction of the cellars.

Recent archaeological trial trenching on an adjacent site, to the north of Old Hall Street, suggests that the line of the moat is different from that proposed in the evaluation report (Williams 2000; Fig. 7) and that the deposit identified here is not in the projected line of the southern arm of the moat (R.Cuttler, pers. comm.). However, at this point there is no conclusive evidence to confirm or refute the presence of the moat here.

The evaluation and watching brief exercise suggest that if there was any evidence of the Old Hall, its moat and associated structures surviving, then it has probably been severely truncated by the later cellaring prevalent across the site.

8.0 Acknowledgements

The watching brief was carried out by Charlotte Neilson and Gary Coates. This report was compiled by Gary Coates, who also managed the project. The illustrations were prepared by Ed Newton.

Thanks are due to Chris Bannister and staff from Adonis Construction for their help and assistance.

Mike Shaw, Black Country Archaeologist, monitored the project on behalf of Wolverhampton City Council.

9.0 References

Jones, W. H. 1990 *'Story of the Japan tin plate working and iron braziers trade etc in Wolverhampton and district.'*

Shaw, M. 2002 *'Foyer, St. George's Parade, Wolverhampton. Brief for Archaeological Evaluation'*

Watt, S. 2000 *'Old Hall Street, Wolverhampton. An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment. Phase II.'* BUFAU report 734.1

White, H. 1996 *'The Old Hall Site, Wolverhampton. A Desk Based Assessment'* West Midlands Joint Data Team

Williams, J. 2000 *'Old Hall Street, Wolverhampton. An archaeological evaluation.'* BUFAU report 734.2

Appendix I

Foyer, St George's Parade, Wolverhampton

Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief

1. Summary

- 1.1 Heantun Housing Association has been granted planning permission to develop residential apartments and a learning foundation on the site of the former St George's Parade Car Park
- 1.2 The proposed development area includes an area which lay in the south-east corner of one of Wolverhampton's major monuments, the Old Hall, a mansion house dating back to at least Tudor times. The hall was surrounded by a moat and there were a number of associated buildings outside the moat to the south west, which may have been barns.
- 1.3 Subsequently the moat was filled in (by 1842) and the hall, much altered and extended, was used for a time as a japanning factory. These buildings, including the hall, were demolished in 1883.
- 1.3 The south-east corner of the moat is believed to pass through the northern portion of the former car park area (White 1996; Watt 2000).
- 1.4 Accordingly the site was trial trenched in 2000. The results of the trial trenching demonstrated that large parts of the moat had been removed by later cellars (Williams 2000).
- 1.5 Nevertheless there is still the possibility of survival of small pockets of archaeological deposits in uncellared areas. Accordingly a condition requiring an archaeological watching brief with access for recording of any archaeological deposits uncovered was placed upon the planning consent.

2. Site location and description

- 2.1 The development area lies within the southern part of Wolverhampton town centre at around SO917964. Old Hall Street lies to the north, Wolverhampton Adult Education College to the west and St George's Parade to the east and south. The area was until recently used as car parking.

3. Planning background

- 3.1 The Old Hall Street area is a Conservation Area and Wolverhampton City Council is actively promoting the regeneration of this area as part of the St John's Urban Village.

4. Archaeological Background

- 4.1 Settlement in Wolverhampton dates back to at least the Saxon period when an ecclesiastical and probably royal centre appears to have been founded around the site of the present St Peter's church. Subsequently a medieval town arose on the site centred around a market place on the present Queen's Square.
- 4.2 The proposed development site probably lies outside the settlement area of the original medieval town. It does, however, lie beside an early routeway out of the town, now marked by the line of Bilston Street, and is likely to have come into occupation as the settlement expanded in the medieval or early post-medieval period.
- 4.3 The Old Hall (also known as Leveson's, Turton's or the Great Hall) was surrounded by a large, square moat with a causeway entrance on the west side. The building itself appears to have been a three-storey brick structure, dated on stylistic grounds to c 1575. There may, however, have been an earlier hall on the site for there are early 16th century references to the Levesons holding a large house and grounds on the edge of the town. The moat was infilled by 1842 and the hall itself was demolished in 1883. There were in addition ancillary buildings outside the moated area to the west, described as barns for receiving sheep and storing bales of wool (Jones 1900). The Leveson family is known to have had business interests in wool.
- 4.3 The excavation of a trench for the construction of a boundary wall at the north end of the development area in 1982 revealed over 1m of late post-medieval build up. Below this 'peaty' material was recovered at the bottom of the trench at a depth of around 2m. This may have been fill from the moat of the Old Hall.
- 4.4 Trial excavations were financed by Wolverhampton Council in 2000 in order to attempt to establish the location of the moat ditch and assess the survival and potential of the archaeological remains associated with the hall (Williams 2000). Two trenches to the south of Old Hall Street and west of St George's Parade, designed to locate the south east corner of the moat, demonstrated that all archaeological levels of this period had been removed by later cellaring in this area. However, a trench immediately to the east of the present site did manage to locate the infilled moat ditch and demonstrated that it was around 7m wide with a surviving depth of 1.5m. The moat was largely infilled with dark organic fills which contained 19th century material. There was, however, a primary infill of brownish-grey silt, around 0.1m thick. Unfortunately no dating material was recovered from this layer. Subsequently a further trench was

excavated directly within the proposed development area in order to confirm the line of the ditch but failed to locate it.

6. Requirements for work

5.1 The archaeology of the area has been relatively well assessed. A general desk-based assessment was carried out in 1996 (White 1996). A detailed desk-based assessment in 2000 concentrated on mapping the earlier buildings and the location of services and areas of likely disturbance (Watt 2000). The subsequent trial trenching was aimed at establishing the precise location of the moat ditch and assessing its state of survival (Williams 2000). Accordingly there is no requirement for further desk-based work but the archaeological contractor should familiarise himself/herself with the results of the previous work. Copies can be loaned from the Black Country Sites and Monuments Record.

5.2 Research aims for the Old Hall are defined below. It is, however, accepted that opportunities to advance these aims in the present scheme may be limited. However, it would be particularly important to reconstruct a profile of the moat and obtain dating and environmental evidence from the bottom fill of the moat if any deposits were encountered.

- (1) Establish plan of moat and its width, depth, date of excavation and phases of infill and re-cutting
- (2) Recover environmental information as to the economy, diet etc of the inhabitants of the area.
- (3) Establish plan of the hall, its date and any phases of rebuilding
- (4) Establish plan and phases of additions, alterations and extensions to the hall during its subsequent use as a japanning factory; establish whether evidence for this phase survives
- (5) Establish whether there are earlier buildings (e.g. remains of an earlier hall) within moated area
- (6) Establish the plan, nature and date of the ancillary buildings (?barns) to the south west of the moated area
- (7) Establish whether there is earlier occupation outside the moated area

6. Stages of work

6.1 Watching Brief

A watching brief should be maintained during all groundworks for the development, including excavation for services.

Any archaeological deposits encountered should be recorded and sampled before removal.

6.2 Analysis and Reporting

On completion of the work the data and finds recovered should be assessed in line with the recommendations of the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage - 1991), *Model briefs and Specifications for Archaeological Assessments and Field Evaluations* (Association of County Archaeological Officers 1993), *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (Institute of Field Archaeologists - 1999) and the form and level of publication necessary should be agreed with the Black Country Archaeologist.

7. General conditions

- 7.1 The work should be undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced archaeological staff, preferably under the supervision of a Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- 7.2 An appropriate recording strategy should be used and the method and justification for this stated in the reports.
- 7.3 The code of conduct, standards and guidance of the Institute of Field Archaeologists should be adhered to. Excavation work should be in accordance with the recommendations in *Model Briefs and Specifications*.
- 7.4 A specification for the work required should be prepared by the contractor and agreed with the sponsor and the local planning authority before the work commences. It is advisable to submit a draft of the specification to the Black Country Archaeologist before the submission of a tender in order to ensure that the work proposed meets the requirement of the brief.
- 7.5 Archive deposition

On completion of the work the site archive should be deposited with an appropriate museum/public archive. The site owner should be encouraged to deposit any finds with the archive.
- 7.6 Copies of all reports should be provided to the LPA, together with two copies for the Black Country Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). The report will normally become a publicly accessible part of the SMR within 6 months of completion. **It is intended that a small number of slides should be stored with the SMR. The contractor should therefore take an extra copy of the most vital photos and submit these together with the reports to the SMR.**
- 7.7 Reports should contain at least the following information.
 - Location, aims and methodology

- A written summary of the findings together with appropriate illustrations, which should be related to the national grid. Levels should be related to the Ordnance Datum. Sufficient data and references to the project archive should be included to permit interpretations to be challenged
- An analytical summary of features and deposits
- Specialist reports related to the site sequence
- List of sources consulted and their full titles/reference numbers
- A copy of the brief

7.8 On completion of the work a summary report should be sent for publication in *West Midlands Archaeology* and any other appropriate local or national archaeological journal

7.9 Health and Safety

It is the responsibility of the contractor to ensure that all work is carried out in accordance with relevant Health and Safety regulations

Site procedures should be in accordance with the guidance set out in the Health and Safety Manual of the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers

The archaeological contractor should liaise with the developer in determining contamination levels

Known service information is included in Watt (2000) but the archaeological contractor should ensure that all areas are scanned for services prior to any excavation works

7.10 Monitoring

The work will be monitored by the Black Country Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority and provisions for monitoring should be agreed with him. At least five working days notice of commencement of any fieldwork should be given to the Black Country Archaeologist.

8. Bibliography

Watt, Sarah 2000 *Old Hall Street, Wolverhampton. An archaeological desk-based assessment: Phase II*. Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

White, H. 1996 *The Old Hall site, Wolverhampton: a desk based assessment*

Williams, Josh 2000 *Old Hall Street, Wolverhampton. An archaeological evaluation 2000*. Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

Prepared on 7 February 2002 by Mike Shaw, Black Country Archaeologist

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Figures

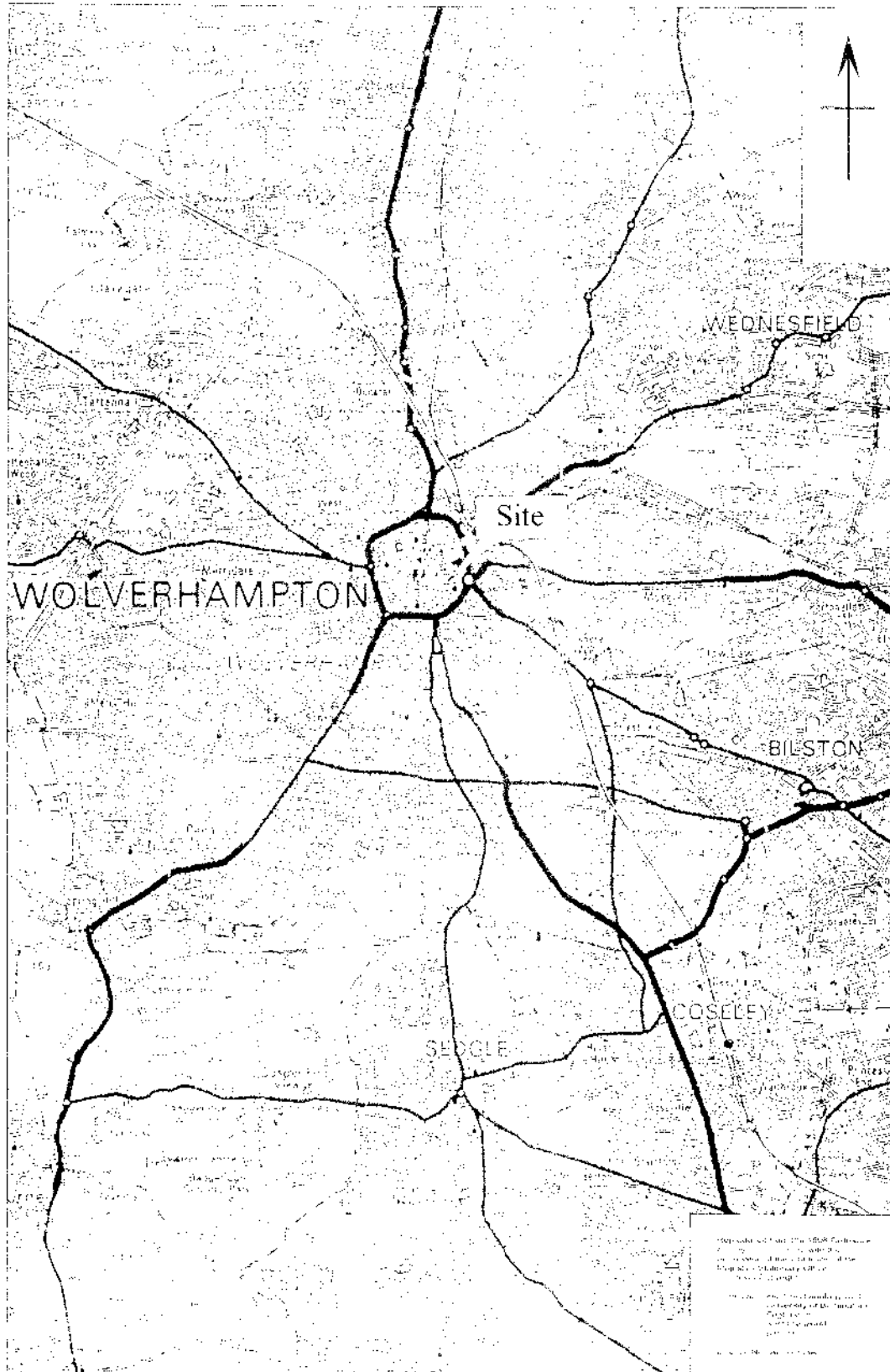


Fig. 1

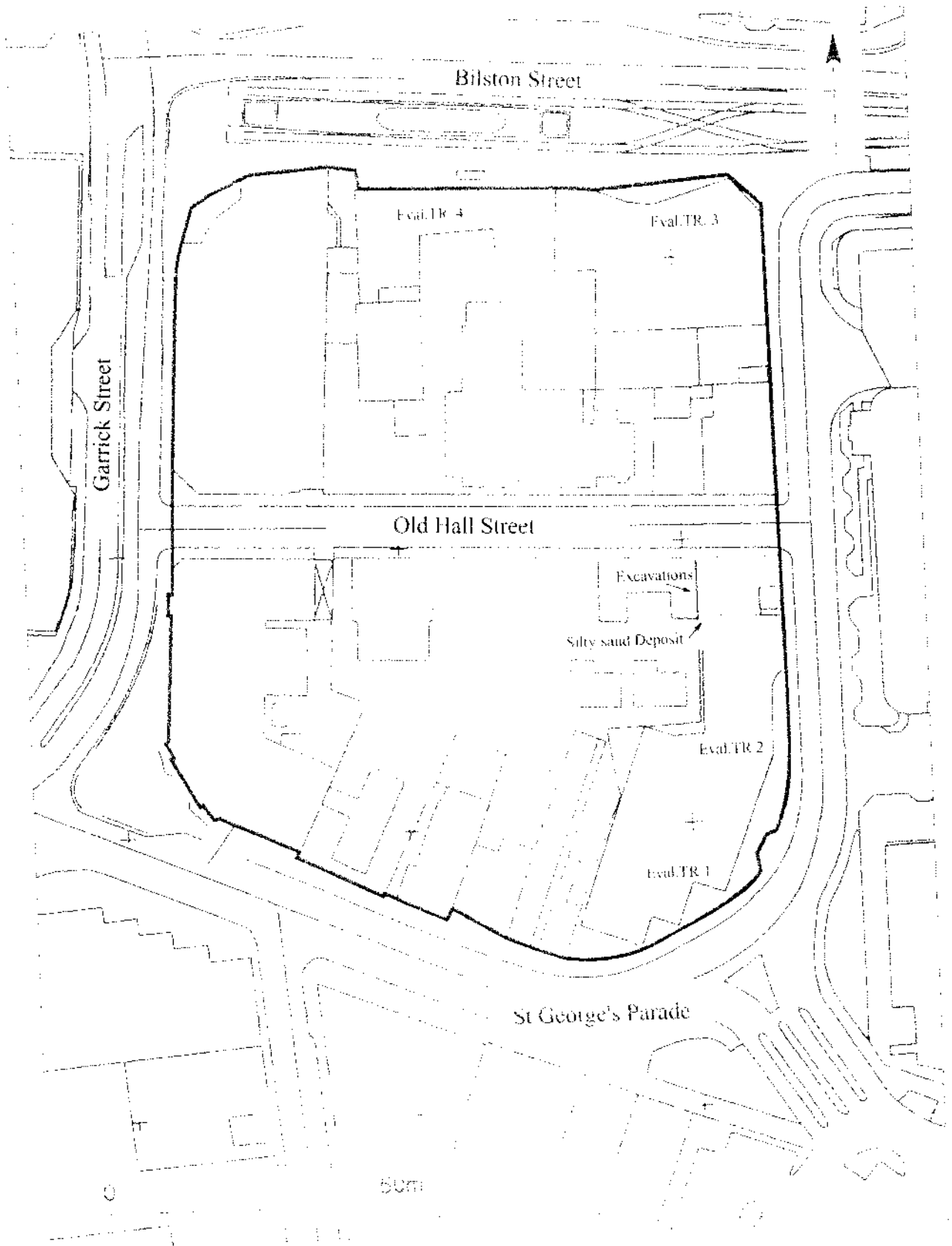


Fig. 3