

**University Hospital
Birmingham NHS Trust**

Test-Pitting 2002

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
Project No. 929
July 2002

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by
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1.0: SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken to monitor the excavation of test-pits by geotechnical contractors. The watching brief was undertaken in advance of the construction of the new University Hospital, within and adjoining the Metchley Roman forts (centred on NGR SP 044838). The work was commissioned by the University Hospital Birmingham NHS Trust. No features, or possible features of archaeological interest were identified during the watching brief, with the possible exception of an undated pebble surface.

2.0: INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken to monitor the excavation of test-pits by geotechnical contractors, intended to provide details of the underlying geology and modern disturbances within the area of the new University Hospital. The geotechnical investigations were managed by Mott MacDonald for the University Hospital Trust. The watching brief was located within and adjoining Metchley Roman forts (Jones 2002; centred on NGR SP 044838). The work was commissioned by the University Hospital Birmingham NHS Trust. Within the extensive programme of geotechnical investigation a total of five locations were selected for the archaeological watching brief, following consultation with the Planning Archaeologist, Birmingham City Council. Test-pits excavated in advance of the cutting of boreholes BH 306G and BH 260 were located within part of the fort interior which had been extensively affected by existing buildings and services. Test-pit TP 424 was located outside the fort, on the western fringe of the associated *vicus* (Jones in preparation). The test-pit excavated in advance of borehole BH 227 lay to the west of the northwestern angle of the northern fort annexe, a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The test-pit excavated in advance of borehole BH 232 was dug to the west of the fort and associated *vicus*, close to the line of a buried former stream course. It was near the location of a prehistoric burnt mound, located during an archaeological watching brief maintained in advance of the construction of the Queen Elizabeth Psychiatric Hospital (Jones 1989). Boreholes dug without a preparatory test-pit were not, of course, recorded. The archaeological watching brief was undertaken in May 2002.

Recording was by means of pre-printed pro-formas for contexts and features, supplemented by section drawings and photographs. The stratigraphy was recorded even where no features or deposits of archaeological interest were noted. It is intended that the archive will be deposited with Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, subject to approval from the landowners.

3.0: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of monitoring are tabulated.

<i>No</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Depth from mod. surface</i>
BH 227 (Hand-dug)	Topsoil layer (2270). Dark brown-grey sandy-silt, containing fragments of modern building rubble.	-
	Dark grey/brown silty layer (2271), containing fragments of modern building debris. Abuts a modern, red brick structure (2272; underlying layer 2270).	0.35m
	Reddish-brown layer (2273) comprising a mix of pebbles, sand, clay and silt. Fragments of modern building debris are apparent throughout the layer.	0.58m
BH 232 (Hand-dug)	Topsoil layer (2320) A reddish-brown silty layer, containing a few stones.	-
	Grey, gritty powder (2321), similar to powdered fuel ash.	0.22m
	Ceramic tile (capping for a service (electricity?)). No further investigation possible.	0.8m
BH 260 (Hand-dug)	Surface layer (2600). Heterogeneous mix of modern building rubble and brown, silty soil.	-
	Layer of modern building rubble (red bricks) with brown, silty soil (2601).	0.54m
	Dark-grey/black sandy-silt (2602), containing some stones.	0.75m
	Brown, sandy-clayey-silt (2603) containing few stones.	0.85m
BH 306G (Hand-dug)	Surface layer (3060). A brownish-black, ashy/sooty silt, mixed with fragments of modern building debris and household rubbish.	-
	Heterogeneous layer (3061), comprising a mix of mortar fragments/powder, broken bricks (red/modern) and large pebbles. Contained ferrous fragments.	0.48m
BH 424 (Machine-dug)	Root-disturbed topsoil (4240). A dark brown-grey silty layer, containing modern building and other debris.	-
	Redeposited subsoil layer (4241), with some pebbles and charcoal flecks within the matrix.	0.1m
	Yellow-brown, clayey-silt (4242), with a few pebbles distributed throughout.	0.8m
	Mixture of fine sand and gravel (4243) of various hues (orange-pink-red-grey).	1.58m
	A dark, pinkish-red layer of damp sand (4244)	2.3m

No archaeological deposits or features of Roman date were identified within the areas investigated, and no finds of Roman, or possibly Roman date, were recovered. However, the results have served to identify the depth of overburden, and the possible degree of archaeological survival in the locations tested.

Borehole BH232 was excavated through the backfill of an earlier service trench, and no further investigation was possible. With the exception of machine-dug hole BH 424, the boreholes appeared to comprise made-up ground to a considerable depth. The basal layer in borehole BH 260 may have formed a surface of either Roman or post-medieval date, sealed under a considerable depth of modern build-up material.

4.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The test-pitting was commissioned by the University Hospital Birmingham NHS Trust, and was undertaken by Roy Krakowicz. The figure was prepared by Nigel Dodds

5.0: REFERENCES

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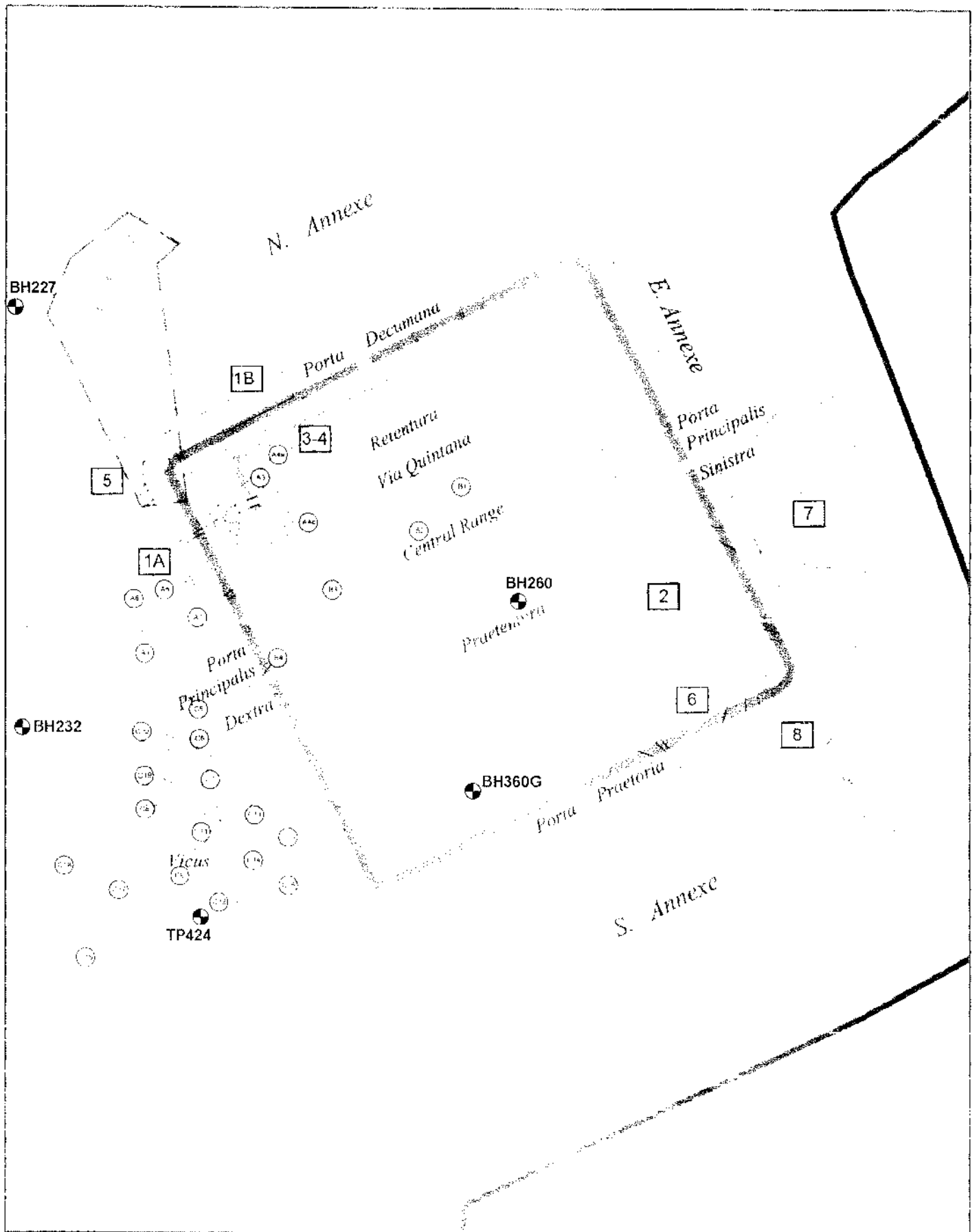


Figure : Location of test-pits Monitored