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LOWER FORD STREET,  
COVENTRY

Post Excavation Assessment

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**LOWER FORD STREET COVENTRY**  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS, 2005.**

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## SUMMARY

*Due to a proposed residential development by Kingsoak South Midlands, Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned to carry out a series of archaeological investigations in 2005-2006 including a desk-top survey, trial trenching, a full environmental archaeological assessment and open area excavation. This was at a site located on Lower Ford Street closed to the centre of Coventry. Although the desktop assessment indicated that Coventry is an historic city with a long and complex history it was thought that the area on which the site was located had not been occupied until the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to its topography and location. The site is located in the flood plain of the River Sherbourne, the main river running through Coventry and is just beyond the limits of the medieval city walls. Trial trenching however revealed archaeological deposits within the development area dating to the medieval period. Two areas thought to be at risk from the development were targeted for open area excavation. These excavations revealed activity dating from the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century and more intensive activity, characterised by a series of dug pits, in the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century. The deposits suggest localised but intensive areas of pit digging with some boundary ditches towards the periphery of this. Alongside this there is evidence for what appears to be a continuous battle against the floodwaters of the Sherbourne River, with evidence of deposits of soil in order to raise the level of the land and a possible bank constructed between some areas of activity and the river. The environmental analysis to site revealed a restricted window on the past environment, which suggests disturbed damp grassland. The waterlogged beetle remains suggest derelict damp and dry rotting conditions, manure carrion as well as pests of grain. Further analysis of these and all of the other finds is hoped will reveal more about the nature of the site.*

**LOWER FORD STREET COVENTRY**  
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**1 INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Background to the project**

Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by KingsOak South Midlands to undertake a programme of archaeological work that included documentary research, trial trenching and area excavation ahead of a residential development at Lower Ford Street, Coventry (hereinafter referred to as the site). An assessment of standing buildings on the site, which were associated with the famous Lea Francis car manufactory, was also undertaken prior to their demolition. This is reported upon elsewhere.

The work conformed to a brief produced by Coventry City Council, and a Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2005 and 2006 Appendix 1), which was approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to implementation, in accordance with guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoE 1990).

This report outlines the results of these archaeological investigations, which were carried out between November 2005 and February 2006. This report has been prepared in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations (IFA 1999).

The layout of this report has been prepared to the guidelines set out by English Heritage in the Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP 2).

**1.2 Site Location**

The site was located on Lower Ford Street, in Coventry to the north of the city centre (centred on NGR SP 340 791, Fig. 1). The course of the River Sherbourne originally ran along the southern boundary of the site, and the Spitalmoor Brook, a tributary of the River Sherbourne ran along the approximate course of Lower Ford Street, which bounds the site to the North. These water courses are now culverted and diverted away from the site. However, interestingly, in the later medieval period the site was located on an island of land between these two rivers. Cartographic evidence from 1750 onwards suggests that the site was open ground, pasture or water meadows in the early period, and orchards throughout the post-medieval period until the late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the site was developed by the Lea-Francis Company a bicycle and motor car manufacturer.

**1.3 Aims**

The principle aim of the excavation was to determine the character, state of preservation and the potential significance of any buried remains.

More specific aims as stated in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2005 and 2006) were to:

- Define the nature and chronology of the development of the site from the earliest period to the present, with special reference to the medieval and Post-Dissolution periods.
- Examine the impact of human activity on the natural environment of the river terrace with special attention to environmental archaeological deposits.
- Identify industrial processes being undertaken on the site, and assess their impact on the natural environment.
- Provide comparative material, which will contribute to our understanding of the site in relation to other sites in Coventry.
- Contribute to an overall understanding of the historical development of the City of Coventry from the 12th century onwards.

## **2 METHOD**

### **2.1 Desk-based Assessment**

Documentary research involved the consultation of primary and secondary records and maps held at the Coventry Records Office, Coventry Library Local Studies, and Birmingham University Library. Coventry Historic Environment Record (HER) was also consulted (records from the HER are denoted by a 'COVE' number). All sources consulted are listed below. A number of original documents listed in the Coventry Archives could not be viewed, within the time-scale of the assessment, as a large number of them are currently in storage in Warwick.

### **2.2 Fieldwork**

Initially two trial trenches (Trenches 1 and 2) were excavated across the site (Fig 2). They were located to establish the profile of the river valley, and targeted areas that would be affected by the proposed development. Trench 1 was placed to recover environmental evidence from the alluvial silts associated with the River Sherbourne, which originally bounded the site to the south. Evidence of occupation was not anticipated within this trench, however, several layers of alluvium were identified in the course of the evaluation, through which archaeological features had been cut. This led to a third evaluation trench (Trench 3) being excavated, and an area being opened within the footprints of the proposed building (Area 2, Fig 2).

All modern overburden was removed using a JCB mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket, under direct archaeological supervision, down to the top of the uppermost archaeological horizon or the subsoil. Subsequent cleaning and excavation was by hand. Where there was a deep build-up of alluvium areas were re-machined to reveal earlier significant horizons of archaeology, cleaning and excavation was once again by hand.

All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present. Features were planned at a scale of 1:20, and sections were drawn through all cut features and significant vertical stratigraphy at a scale of 1:20. A comprehensive written record was maintained using a continuous numbered context system on *pro-forma* context and feature cards. Written records and scale plans were supplemented by photographs using monochrome, colour slide and digital photography.

Twenty or forty litre soil samples were taken from datable archaeological features for the recovery of charred plant and waterlogged remains. The environmental sampling policy followed the guidelines contained in the Birmingham Archaeology Guide to On-Site Environmental Sampling. Recovered finds were cleaned, marked and remedial conservation

work was undertaken as necessary. Treatment of all finds conformed to guidance contained within 'A strategy for the care and investigation of finds' published by English Heritage.

The full site archive includes all artefactual and/or ecofactual remains recovered from the site. The site archive will be prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage, 1991), the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage (UKIC, 1990) and Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological collections (Museum and Art Galleries Commission, 1992). Finds and the paper archive will be deposited with the appropriate repository subject to permission from the landowner. Location and geology

### **3 DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH BY ELEANOR RAMSEY**

The origins of Coventry lie in the Saxon period, the name Coventry is itself almost certainly of Old English origin, meaning Cofa's Tree. Further testimony to its Saxon origins is the prevalence of the ending 'ley' (leah – a wood or clearing) in the names of its hamlets and nearby parishes such as Pinley, Shortley and Canley (VCH VII 1-23). Although it is no longer believed that Coventry district was once impenetrable forest, only gradually cleared by Anglo-Saxon invaders, the population density recorded by Domesday was low even by Warwickshire standards. The underlying geology of heavy clays that were difficult to plough must have been a contributing factor in this. Coventry's entry in Domesday records an agricultural population of over sixty households, though these were not necessarily concentrated in one place. Indeed, early Coventry may only have been a large scatter of hamlets and farmsteads across an extensive manor (Demidowicz 2003, 9).

The earliest documentary records for the city record a Benedictine house being founded there in 1043 by Leofric, Earl of Mercia, and the Countess Godgifu (Godiva), his wife (VCH VII 1-23). There is no doubt that the priory stimulated the growth of Coventry, and a great market place was laid out in front of the west end of the church. The earls of Chester must also have played a part in the town's expansion, for, by the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, they had established a castle to the south of the priory and developed their own market area (Demidowicz 2003, 10).

The site on Lower Ford Street was originally located in Harnall, the former name of the district in Holy Trinity parish, part of which was later known as Hillfields. It was located immediately to the northeast and east of the city wall. The district was bounded on the north-west by Leicester Row and Foleshill Road, on the north by Great Heath in Foleshill parish and Broad Oak Waste, on the east by Swan Lane, and the southeast by Far Gosford Street.

The River Sherbourne, Coventry's main water way, ran through Harnall from west to east, with the land rising from the river valley towards Stoke Heath and Great Heath to the north. Two streams, the courses of which are now partly lost, also crossed Harnall. The Springfield Brook, which the course of Lower Ford Street follows, and the medieval Endemere, later known as the Harnall or Swanswell Brook which originally ran south from the Swanswell Pool across Foleshill Road.

These rivers were vital to the prosperity and growth of the town, as water-mills played an important role in the economic life of the Coventry district until the 19<sup>th</sup> century (ref). There were as many as fourteen mills exploiting a four mile stretch of the Sherbourne, between Spon End and Stivichall, though not all of them were in existence at the same time. A further five mills, located on tributaries of the Sherbourne, are also recorded in the Coventry area. The



mills were in use for a very long period of time, many of them from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (VCH VIII, 190-98).

Most of the area of Harnall was claimed by Coventry Priory in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century as part of its original endowment. Harnall was one of the estates of Roger de Montalt in 1279, when the property consisted of six cottages, and a number of crofts and other pieces of land. It is possible that the site lies on land which was originally part of the Benedictine hospital of St John the Baptist, a dependant of St. Mary's Priory which was founded in 1165 (Soden 2005 118). These holdings steadily accumulated in size throughout the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries until by 1425 the hospital precinct included the Grange and Manor Farm, and encompassed lands between Swanshill pool to the north, the town wall to the south, which covers the area of Lower Ford Street. There are documentary references for Harnall Fields, like others around the city, being used to feed stock for the Coventry market. A butcher had beasts on pasture in Harnall in 1365, and there were 60 sheep and cattle in a field there in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century (VCH VIII, 71-7).

Although in 1329 a licence was granted to the priory and men of Coventry to levy murage for building a wall round the city, work does not seem to have started for some time. It was not until 1363 that licence to crenellate was granted, and this was followed 22 years later by a licence to complete the work. Parts of this wall, though badly preserved and largely rebuilt survive to the south of the study area (HER 10214, VCH VIII 1-23). The wall was eventually completed in the 1530s, this last section was located on the southern bank of the River Sherbourne to the immediate south of the site (Demidowicz 2003, 13). The Bastille Gate (or Dergate, SMR 6220) lay to the west of the site, and the city wall followed the line of the Sherbourne to the south (SMR 10212).

Following the dissolution of the monasteries Coventry experienced a period of general decline. A complex series of economic disasters hit the city, resulting in contraction of population, shrinkage of the suburbs back to within the historic core and general dereliction of structures within the town, although recent archaeological work has revealed that this was not the case in Far Gosford Street where there was renewed building programme (Soden 2005, 36). This suggests that not all fortunes were in decline in the late medieval period.

Following the Civil war much of Coventry declined further. However, there was a revival of fortunes in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries with the introduction of new types of cloth and the beginnings of the ribbon industry. There was a concentration of ribbon weavers in Hillfields, in particular, close to the site, where many houses were built with top-shops to accommodate the looms of this prospering cottage industry (VCH VIII, 1-23; Demidowicz 2003, 17).

Ford Street was one of the streets laid out by the corporation on land purchased from Sir Thomas White's trustees. Lower Ford Street appears to have existed by 1748-9 as a continuation of a road later called All Saints' Lane. All Saints' Lane runs west and southwest from Payne's Lane to Lower Ford Street, more or less parallel to Far Gosford Street (VCH VIII, 24-33). Samuel Bradford's map of 1750 depicts the area of the site as open fields, with a stream or path to the north, where Lower Ford Street now runs. A map of 1807 depicts the same features, whilst a map of 1837 clearly depicts the foot road and stream along which the modern Lower Ford Street is aligned. The Board of Health Map, dated to 1851, shows the area closest to the Sherbourne River as still being undeveloped. It was not until the late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century that the site was developed for industrial use, which has been described in detail in another report (Litherland 2005).

No archaeological work has been undertaken in the immediate vicinity of the study area. However, archaeological work including evaluations and watching briefs have identified archaeological remains to the west (COVE 23, COVE 63, COVE 186-8 and COVE 217).

## **4 RESULTS**

### **4.1 Geology**

The underlying bedrock (1024) sloped down considerably towards the river valley floor, it was visible in a machine-dug sondage at the northeastern end of Trench 1 at a depth of 3.8m below the modern ground surface (71.64m Above Ordnance Datum). It consisted of pink Mercia Mudstone, the top of which had been substantially eroded to a compact pink clay. This horizon became shallower towards the northeast as this distinctive pink clay (1037) was once again visible at a depth of c.73.5m AOD within Trench 2, Area 2 and the northern part of Trench 3.

### **4.2 Phasing**

The results of these excavations can be placed into six broad phases of activity

- Phase 1 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century
- Phase 2 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century
- Phase 3 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century
- Phase 4 Late 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century
- Phase 5 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century
- Phase 6 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century

#### ***Phase 0 Pre-12<sup>th</sup> century***

Where riverine deposits were excavated, the primary deposit was water sorted gravel (1023) which was overlain by c.1.1m of alluvial silt and clay with a high sand content (1013/1210). It is probable that this represents a relatively rapid silting up of the channel of the River Sherbourne, probably due to destabilisation of topsoil, possibly due to an intensification of farming/clearance of land upstream (Dr Emma Tetlow pers. comm.). Although no datable material was recovered from any of these deposits, the upper layer of silt had features dating to the 12<sup>th</sup> century cut through it.

#### ***Phase 1 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century***

The earliest archaeological activity identified on the site was found in Area 2 and Trench 3 (Figs. 3 and 4). Several gullies and small ditches (1031, 1038, and 1211), that appeared to respect each other spatially, were excavated, although later activity had obscured some of the relationships. At least two phases of activity can be dated to this period, with discrete features being cut into the top of the group of the linear features. These have been nominally labelled Phases 1a and 1b.

##### *Phase 1a*

A small ditch (1031, Fig. 3) orientated roughly north-south, with a terminus at the northern end, could be securely dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It was 0.9m wide, 0.22m deep, and had a bowl-shaped profile. It was filled with dark grey silt with lenses of redeposited clay throughout (1029). A similar ditch (1211, Fig. 4) of the same dimensions and containing a similar fill

(1212) was located further south in Trench 3. Here the ditch did not contain any datable material, however it was sealed by a layer which contained 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century pottery (1216). It is possible that this ditch represents the continuation of ditch 1031.

At the southern limits of trench 2 ditch 1031 was cut by a further ditch (1119). No dating evidence was recovered from single fill 1120. This may place this feature into a later phase.

Immediately west of ditch 1031 was a spread of pebbles which appeared to be linear in plan, aligned northeast-southwest 1127 (Fig. 3). This had either been completely truncated by later features at its northern end, or it terminated at this point. The surface consisted of pebbles and cobbles compacted into the natural clay subsoil, a thin layer (only 0.05m deep) consisting of brown silt and clay (1030) sealed this, and it is likely that this built up whilst the surface was in use. No finds were recovered from this feature.

Towards the northern extent of Area 2 was a linear ditch (1038/1115/1139 Fig. 3: 1104 not illustrated aligned east-west. This had a rounded terminus at the eastern end, but had been heavily truncated to the west. This feature had a maximum width of 2.8m with a bowl shaped profile with a maximum depth of 0.22m. The fill of this consisted of distinctive green silt (1028/1103/1115/1138 sample number 14, Phosphate Sample). Pottery was recovered from context 1138 (1139).

#### *Phase 1b*

Cutting this ditch, but also dating to the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century were two pits. Pit 1095 was cut through the eastern terminal of the phase 1a furrow, this was oval in plan with a diameter of 0.65m and a U-shaped profile, it was 0.24m deep. The fill consisted of a dark brown clay rich silt (1096). Pit 1041 was located to the west of, and was sub-circular in plan with a maximum diameter of 3m and a maximum depth of 0.18m. It was filled with grey silty clay that was rich in animal bone (1027/1130 sample number 16, Phosphate Sample).

To the east an irregular linear feature (1110/1124) appeared to be orientated roughly north-south, although the irregular nature of the feature made this difficult to determine. It had a maximum width of 4m and an irregular although generally bowl-shaped profile with a maximum depth of 0.2m. The fill consisted of green-yellow sandy clay (1111/1123). The only dating evidence was recovered from the cleaning of the top of this feature (1067), comprising two fragments of post-medieval pottery. However it is probable that this feature is 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century and has been included in this phase.

Across the whole area a buried soil containing 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century pottery survived in localised pockets. In the northern part of Trench 3 a layer of soil with 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century pottery was excavated (1216).

#### ***Phase 2 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century***

A single pit (1118) could be dated to this period (Fig. 3). Pottery dating to the 14<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century was recovered from the fill (1081/1112). Stratigraphically it was one of the earlier pits in a cluster located towards the centre of Area 2. The full extent of this pit partially obscured by later cuts, however, it appeared to be sub-circular in plan with a maximum diameter of 1.7m and had a U-shaped profile 0.54m deep. The fill consisted of a brown silt sand and clay (1081/1112).

#### ***Phase 3 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century***

Generally this phase of activity was characterised by a series of pits in the northwestern half of Area 2 and the southwestern half of Trench 1, however, two probable ditches or gullies were

also identified within Trench 1. Activity on site during this period appears to have been relatively intense, with the majority of the surviving archaeological deposits being inter-cut. Three distinct phases of activity (Phases 3a, 3b and 3c) could be identified, however the ceramic evidence suggests that they are all early post-Dissolution, further analysis will be required to clarify this.

#### *Phase 3a*

A ditch and a gully on a northwest-southeast orientation in Trench 1 have been dated to this period. Ditch 1019 was 2.62m wide and 0.7m deep and had an asymmetric profile with a shallow sloping edge to the northeast and a steeper southwestern edge. The fill of this (1006) consisted of a grey silt and clay rich in waterlogged organic material. To the south of this was a gully (1012) which had a regular U-shaped profile, and was 0.9m wide and 0.4m deep. It was filled by homogenous grey silt and sand (1004) that had evidence of waterlogged material.

To the northeast of Trench 1 a wooden stake (1025 Fig. 4) was discovered during the excavation of the machine-dug sondage. The stake was 1m long and measured 0.15m square, with a pointed end. It appeared to have been driven through layer 1018 (Fig. 5).

In the northern corner of Area 2 was a pit 1075 (Fig. 3) which had been obscured by later disturbance, and ran under the edge of excavation which meant that its shape in plan could not be determined. The diameter of the pit was at least 2.44m and it had a bowl-shaped profile with a maximum depth of 0.6m. The primary fill consisted of a black silty clay that was rich in waterlogged organic material and mollusc shell (1077, sample number 37). This was overlain by a narrow band of pink clay (1076), and the upper fill of the pit (1088) consisted of brown silty clay.

A second pit (1093/1109) was also partially obscured by later cuts and a layer of redeposited natural clay (1105; Fig. 3). It had a maximum diameter of 2m, a U-shaped profile, and was 0.5m deep. The primary fill of this (1108, sample number 36) consisted of a charcoal rich silty clay, the upper fill (1049/1094, sample numbers 20 and 23) was a dark grey silt.

Further east, a third pit (1068/1141), was again truncated by later activity (Fig. 3). It was sub-circular in plan, at least 2m in diameter with a bowl shaped profile, and was 0.46m deep. The fill of this (1069/1133, sample number 32) consisted of light yellow-brown silt, rich in redeposited natural clay.

A fourth pit (1140), although partially truncated by a later cut, was evidently sub-circular in plan with a maximum diameter of 1.7m (Fig. 3). It had a shallow bowl-shaped profile with a maximum depth of 0.24m. The fill consisted of a brown silty clay rich in cobbles (1132/1082, sample number 31).

Pit 1072/1117 was much better preserved, again it was sub-circular in plan with a maximum diameter of 2.2m it had a bowl-shaped profile with a maximum depth of 0.4m (Fig. 3). The fill consisted of a brown silty clay (1073/1080, sample numbers 21 and 22).

#### *Phase 3b*

Sealing features 1012 and 1019, and present over the whole area of Trench 1 was a layer of brown-grey silt and clay (1021, Fig. 5). This had a maximum depth of 0.35m.

At the southern end of Trench 1 Pit 1000 was cut into the top of alluvial layer 1021 (Fig 4). The pit was rectangular, at least 2.25m long (although the full extent was not revealed within the area of the trench) and 1.5m wide with a steep-sided U-shaped profile 0.4m deep. The primary deposit filling it was dark grey silt (1002, sample number 2) which was rich in

carbonised and waterlogged organic material, including wood and leather. The upper fill consisted of a narrow band of brown silty clay (1001, sample number 1).

In Area 2, there was once again a cluster of pits which cut through earlier Phase 3a pits. Pit 1107 was again obscured by the edge of excavation (Fig. 3). However, it was sub-circular in plan with a maximum diameter of 2.25m, it had an irregular profile with a maximum depth of 0.68m. The primary fill consisted of dark grey silty clay rich in charcoal (1106, sample number 26). The upper fill (1066) consisted of a brown silty clay.

To the east, pit 1142/1121 was rectangular in plan, 2.88m long and 1.1m wide, with a bowl-shaped profile and a maximum depth of 0.52m (Fig. 3). The primary fill consisted of a mid-brown silty clay (1137, sample number 35). The upper fill was a brown silty clay rich in stone (1134/1121, sample number 33).

#### *Phase 3c*

There appears to be a short hiatus in occupation during which there is an accumulation of soil (1022, sample number 11, Fig. 5) at the southwestern end of Trench 1, a maximum depth of 0.4m. This may be derived from inundation by the river. This layer was then cut by Pit 1020 (Fig. 5), which was once again rectangular in plan. It was 3.7m long and at least 1.75m wide (the full extent of this feature was not revealed in this trench). The profile was asymmetric with a steep northeastern edge and a shallow sloping edge and base to the southwest, this had a maximum depth of 0.5m. The primary fill was rich in charcoal (1005) and the upper fill (1026) consisted of mid-brown silt.

A rather enigmatic cut (1227 Fig. 4) was located in the eastern corner of Trench 3. A single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from one of the fills (1224), although it is possible that this is residual. Only a part of this feature was exposed within the area of this excavation, the full extent of this was never discovered. However it was at least 3.2m wide, 5m long and 1.7m deep. The lower part of this feature was filled with narrow laminations of silt, sand and gravel (1222, 1224, 1226) alternating with narrow laminations of clean pink clay (1221, 1223, and 1225). The upper fill of this consisted of mixed silt clay and pebbles (1219 and 1220).

It is possible that this large feature was related to a bank of pink clay located in the northern corner of Trench 3 and the western quarter of Area 2. This bank comprised a deposit of pink-brown clay that seemed to be made of three layers. A lower layer of mixed brown orange sand and clay (1215/1053) was sealed by a layer of solid pink clay with pebbles (1054/1214) which in turn was sealed by a layer of pink-brown clay and silt (1055/1232). The mound appeared to be the upcast of the cut 1227, which had eroded back into the cut. It seems possible that the bank was placed between the occupation of the site and the Sherbourne River possibly as a flood barrier, further emphasising the efforts to stabilise the working surface of the land in the vicinity.

#### ***Phase 4 Late 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> century***

Further silting-up or dumping episodes were evident in Trench 1. Sealing pit 1020 and extending over the area of Trench 1 was a mid-brown silt and loam rich layer (1011), which had a maximum depth of 0.48m. Above this was a narrow layer (1014) that extended 3.5m over the northeastern end of the trench and had a maximum depth of 0.16m. This layer probably represents a stabilised surface.

Two features could be dated to the late 16<sup>th</sup> century on the basis of the pottery that they contained. A pit (1078, Fig. 3) in Area 2 was once again largely obscured by later disturbance and the edge of the excavation. However, it had a maximum diameter of 2.4m, a bowl-shaped

profile and was 0.63m deep. The primary fill (1092) consisted of a shallow deposit of pink clay confined to the northeast edge of the cut, probably representing slumping of the natural. This was overlain by a narrow band of grey silt and clay (1089), again only present at the northeast edge of the pit. A dark grey silt rich in charcoal and mollusc shell (1091, sample number 38) overlay that deposit, and the upper fill (1079) was a dark brown silty clay.

To the east of this pit was a second sub-circular pit (1074, Fig. 3), with a maximum diameter of 2.4m. The pit had a moderately sloping bowl-shaped profile with a maximum depth of 0.2m. The primary fill of this feature (1061) consisted of compact red clay similar to the natural subsoil. Above this the upper fill of the pit (1060) consisted of dark grey, charcoal rich silty clay.

A third pit of this date (1070/1143, Fig. 3), again immediately southeast, was oval in plan with a maximum diameter of 2.2m. This shallow scoop had a maximum depth of 0.21m filled with brown silty clay (1071/1144). Although a single sherd of 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century pottery was recovered from the fill (1071) hand cleaning over the top of this produced several sherds of 17<sup>th</sup> century pottery (1046 and 1047) and it is more probable that this feature dates to this period.

Two pits in Trench 3 (Fig. 4) were also dated to this phase on the basis of the stratigraphic evidence. Pit 1201 was approximately 2m in diameter and was cut through the edge of the palaeochannel. Pit 1228 was located to the south of this pit, and was approximately 2.7m in diameter, although only half of the feature was exposed in plan.

#### ***Phase 5 17<sup>th</sup>-20th century***

Occupation on the site appears to have ceased around the 1600s. It appears from the cartographic evidence that the area reverted to agricultural usage, with pasture and orchards both being shown on early maps. This is reflected in the archaeological record by an accumulation of topsoil building up over the site. Narrow boundary gullies were evident cutting this last soil deposition, echoing the 1807 and 1888 (Fig. 6) maps of the site.

The Midland Metal Company, first listed in a Coventry trade directory of 1874/5, was constructed to the north of the excavation area, fronting onto Lower Ford Street. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, these premises were taken over by LEA-FRANCIS Works in 1896 (Litherland 2005).

Around the turn of the century the area of the site was raised by around 1m over its entirety by the dumping of imported rubble and redeposited natural clay. This prepared the ground for the cutting of the foundations for cycle works (Fig. 6).

## **5 DISCUSSION**

It is apparent from the archaeological evidence encountered that this site is far from being barren of human occupation and has witnessed several periods of activity. The 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century use of this site is evident by relatively ephemeral deposits. However the relative intensity of use of a small area would suggest that this particular area was well used, if for a short space of time. Particularly the mass of animal bone retrieved from one of the pits (1041) would also suggest a deliberate activity rather than a casual deposition.

The clay bank and cobble surface although roughly made also suggests a concentration of activity and presumably an early attempt to create a usable ground surface in the medieval period. This can be further emphasised by the putative medieval bank present in Area 2 and

Trench 3 that presumably was constructed to help control the waters of the River Sherbourne. The historical evidence for this part of Coventry is incomplete. Evidently the Sherbourne River and the Spittle Brook were bordering the site at some time. The Sherbourne limited the access to the centre of Coventry.

There is an apparent hiatus of activity by around 1250 and no sign of further activity until the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century. It is apparent that by the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century the activity was relatively intense, but only in certain parts of the site, to the north of Area 2 and the south of Trench 1. The late medieval activity on this site although more intense than first expected is not all that dense especially if the overall length of time the activity spans is taken into account. In relation to cut features, all of which presumably relate to intense periods of occupation, it is evident that this area was used throughout the medieval period.

It had been thought that this area located just outside and to the north of the city walls, close to Bastille Gate or Mill Lane Gate had always been uninhabited well into the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This was assumed due to the site being located in the flood plain of the River Sherbourne. However it is apparent that not only was there some sort of activity on this site, but efforts were made to stabilise the area, presumably against flooding. This would indicate that rather this area had a relatively important function or possibly that the proximity of a water source was essential to the activity on this site.

The dumping of soil evident in Trench 1 and the southern part of Trench 3 is most probably due to the proximity of the River Sherbourne. Presumably this was part of an effort to escape the floodwaters of the river. There is good historical evidence for repeated flooding of the Sherbourne, as a result of the many mills along the course of the river. It is probable that this build-up material was transported and dumped on the site (Tetlow pers. comm.) The question is from where has this travelled?

It is probable that the archaeological deposits present within this trench predate any cartographic evidence for the site. Further historical evidence is not exact enough to accurately locate the site to any specific activity. The earliest map of the area (Speed 1610) depicts a mill on the northern bank of the Sherbourne, close to the town wall. This map does not however depict the Spitalmoor Brook, or a millrace, both of which are depicted on later maps. There is also evidence that from as early as 1358 the mills of Coventry were causing a problem with flooding. It is possible that the archaeological deposits on the site relate to the mill, or more probably to flooding caused by the mill. The large quantities of horse bones present on the site could be linked to the fact that the mill is a water and horse mill, however this may need to be explored in more detail to assess the significance of this statement.

However, according to the pottery spot dating (15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century) these features have a very similar date to the building of the town wall at the section which is closest to the site, which was constructed between 1500 and 1534. At a similar time was also the construction of the nearby Mill Lane Gate, built 1512-1514. It is again possible that there is some connection. Further analysis of this site, and comparison to other similar sites could indicate whether this can be promoted as a viable hypothesis for the use of this site.

It is quite possible that the abandonment of this site in some way echo the fortunes of the City of Coventry around this time. Although to a certain extent windows into the history and archaeology of Coventry at the turn of the medieval into the post-medieval period may offer some insight into the fortunes of the town. It may be possible to fully assess the connections between these sites, especially a contrast of the outlying and inner city character.

## 6 ASSESSMENT

### 6.1 The Paper Archive

Material	Quantity
Context Record Sheets	224
Plans and Section Drawings	22
Colour Slides	
Colour Prints	11
Black and White Prints	
Digital Images	211
Survey Information	2
Index Sheets	9
Database	5
Assemblage Summaries	

Table1 Excavation Archive

Material	Quantity
Misc. Documentary Research	10
Misc. Developer's Plans	5
Service Locations Plans	10
Geotechnical Report	1

Table 2 Documentary Archive

### 6.2 Stratigraphic Data

As described above, the features and deposits on site have largely been dated through ceramic spot dating. Presently undated features may be phased through further analysis and definition of the stratigraphic sequence and their morphology. This will contribute to the research aims laid out in Section 1.3 above, and revised in Section 7 below.

### 6.3 Artefactual Data

Material	Quantity
Tile	326
Brick	2
Building Stone	25
Mortar	6
Pottery	505
Clay Pipe	1
Iron Nails	9
Other Iron	6
Copper/Alloy	3
Lead	1
Other Metal	1
Slag	1
Bottle Glass	4
Window Glass	4



Flint	1
Animal Bone	66kg
Shell	38
Leather	1
Wood	14
Charcoal	57

Table 3 Finds Quantification

#### 6.4 The Pottery by *Stephanie Rátkai*

##### **Method**

A total of 505 sherds of pottery was recovered from the site, all sherds were examined macroscopically. Each context was spot dated (see table 4 below), and brief notes made on the range of medieval and post-medieval fabrics and wares present.

##### **Results**

The pottery assemblage was in good condition with many large and unabraded sherds. The medieval pottery is, by and large, Coventry ware. There is no Chilvers Coton A or other whiteware sherds although there may be a couple of Stamford ware sherds. The limited range of fabrics suggests that the medieval activity is mainly pre 1250.

There appears to be a hiatus in occupation following the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, denoted by the lack of material recovered for the period 1250-1400, however, a single sherd from a Chilvers Coton C ware bowl from (1005) could belong to the 14th century.

The majority of the pottery recovered from the site consisted of late 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century fabrics such as Midlands Purple ware, Cistercian ware, late red wares and Tudor Green ware. Cistercian ware was recovered from most contexts of this date, and there were a number of sherds decorated with white slip. Only a very small number of contexts contained blackware, yellow ware or coarseware sherds which reinforces the fact that most of the contexts are pre-17<sup>th</sup> century. There were several good form sherds from the assemblage, and there appears to be little residual material.

Later material comprised two 'proto-coarseware' sherds from (1010) and part of the rim of a yellow ware chafing dish from (1005). Both these wares could be as early as the final quarter of the 16th century or early 17th century. The absence of any other pottery which definitely dated to the 17th century might favour an earlier date were it not for a small piece of clay pipe stem in (1010) which is unlikely to be earlier than the early 17th century.

The presence of building materials in (1006), (1010), (1011) and (1014) comprising ceramic and stone roof tile, glazed floor tile and window glass may suggest a period of rebuilding or remodelling on the site in the 16th-early 17th centuries.

Context	Date	Comment
1001	15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1002	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1003	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> -mid 16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1005	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> -mid 16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1006	15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> c	Roof tile only
1010	(16 <sup>th</sup> ) 17 <sup>th</sup> c	One coarseware sherds other pot 16 <sup>th</sup> c
1011	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> -mid 16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1014	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> -mid 16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1027	12 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup> c	
1028	12 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup> c	
1029	12 <sup>th</sup> c?	Two possible Stamford ware sherds
1030	12 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup> c	One ? intrusive sherd
1035	?early 19 <sup>th</sup> c	
1046	17 <sup>th</sup> c	
1047	?17 <sup>th</sup> c	Possibly two wasters
1048	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> -mid 16 <sup>th</sup> c	A couple of sherds look like wasters
1049	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> -mid 16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1054	?early 19 <sup>th</sup> c	
1058	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> -mid 16 <sup>th</sup> c	One intrusive 19 <sup>th</sup> c sherd
1059	15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1060	Late 16 <sup>th</sup> c?	
1066	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> -(?mid) 16 <sup>th</sup> c	One glazed floor tile fragment
1069	15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1071	15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1073	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> -mid 16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1075	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> -mid 16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1077	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> -mid 16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1079	Late 16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1080	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> -mid 16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1081	14 <sup>th</sup> -15 <sup>th</sup> c	
1094	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> -mid 16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1096	12 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup> c	
1106	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> -mid 16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1108	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> -mid 16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1132	15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1133	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> -mid 16 <sup>th</sup> c	Roof tile fragments
1134	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> -mid 16 <sup>th</sup> c	
1138	12 <sup>th</sup> -(13 <sup>th</sup> ) c	
1205	12 <sup>th</sup> c	
1218	Later 17 <sup>th</sup> -mid 18 <sup>th</sup> c	
1224	12 <sup>th</sup> c	

Table 4 Pottery Spot Dates

### **Discussion**

The pottery was generally not abraded, although abrasion was more apparent on the earlier medieval sherds. The majority of the later medieval vessel forms include cups, jars, cisterns

and chafing dishes. An unusual late red ware, flange-rim vessel from (1010) may have had an industrial function, and there may be some late medieval or early post-medieval wasters. There were also some interesting sooting patterns and deposits on several of the sherds which demands further analysis.

The range of vessel forms, which contained a relatively high proportion of drinking vessels in Cistercian ware, blackware, late red ware and Tudor Green and two chafing dishes in yellow ware and cistercian ware, is consistent with reasonably high status urban occupation. This assemblage is also very interesting because the pottery fits into a very tight time span, possibly less than 25 years. It would be interesting to see if there is any documentary information surviving to suggest what was going on. The pottery, is also rather odd in that it suggests moderately affluent urban living (eg chafing dishes) which one would not normally expect on a site on the periphery of development in a rather marshy environment. It may, of course, be possible that rubbish was being dumped from the city, which may shed light on Coventry's rubbish disposal in this period.

## **6.5 The Tile** by *Erica Macey-Bracken*

### **Method**

A total of 326 fragments of ceramic tile were recovered from the site. Only one complete tile was recovered (1049), but, on the whole, the individual fragments were largely unabraded. The assemblage was quantified by count and weight, and examined macroscopically.

### **Results**

The majority of the fragments recovered were undiagnostic. However, several fragments had complete or partial lugs (1006, 1030, 1047, 1049, 1060, 1066, 1070, 1079, 1081, 1132, 1133, 1134, Area 2 cleaning, U/S). Eight fragments were glazed, or had traces of glaze (1001, 1006, 1046, 1049, 1094, 1108, 1132, 1137). Nail holes were noted in two fragments (1006, 1049), and one fragment (1080) had a deep D-shaped impression on one surface.

The fragments were divided into basic fabric groupings by eye, the dominant fabric being a smooth orange-red fabric, not dissimilar to the smooth red sandy fabric (Fabric SMRS) noted at Whitefriars, Coventry (Rátkai and Woodfield, 2005, 289). Besides the dominant red – orange fabric, two otherwise undiagnostic fragments appeared to be similar to Chilvers-Coton Fabric A (1010, 1049), a cream fabric with fine sand inclusions (ibid, 290).

### **Discussion**

The tile from the Whitefriars was first noted in contexts dating to the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, and its use continued into the late 15<sup>th</sup>–early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries (ibid, 291). Similar tile from Lower Ford Street was recovered from contexts dating to Phase 3 (15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> century) suggesting that the same clay source/kiln was producing tile used on both sites. This may also suggest an ecclesiastical link with the owner/occupier of the site on Lower Ford Street.

The presence of the Chilvers Coton fabric at the Whitefriars extended its known production dates into the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, and if this fabric is confirmed as being the same, the date may be further extended into the early 15<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Recommendations**

The similarity of the fabrics from the tiles at Lower Ford Street with those excavated from Whitefriars requires further comparison to determine whether they are indeed the same fabric. This may also aid in understanding possible links with the land here and the church during this period, and help to establish the function of the site, and the type of occupancy.

## 6.6 The Metal Objects

### **Method**

The majority of the material was inspected macroscopically, items of a more unusual nature/interest were x-rayed in order to determine their manufacture and aid in their identification.

### **Results**

A total of nine nails were recovered from late medieval contexts, a Hans Krauwinkel Jeton from Nuremberg (Roger White pers. comm.) was also recovered from a late 15<sup>th</sup> to mid-16<sup>th</sup> century context. Several metal objects that have, as yet, not been identified form the remainder of the assemblage, all of which come from late medieval deposits. These include four Iron objects, two copper alloy pieces, one lead object, possibly a weight and one possible tin object.

Two other items were identified by Geoff Egan, these are shown below.

Context Number	Object Description
1005	Cu alloy object
1006	Fe Object
1010	Cu alloy object
1047	Fe Nail
1049	Lead Object (Weight?) Tin? Object
1060	Fe Nail
1066	Cu alloy Jeton
1073	Fe Object
1075	Fe Nail
1080	Fe Nail x2
1081	Fe Nail
1090	Fe Nail
1106	Fe Nail
1132	Fe Nail, Fe Object x2, Hammer
1137	Horse Bit?

Table 5 Metal Objects by context

### Composite Iron Item from context 1137



Part of a horse curb bit which represents a very unusual survival from the late Middle Ages or early-modern period. The curb bit, as opposed to the gentler and much more common snaffle

bit, was a heavy-duty, forceful means of controlling a strong horse in battle or tournament conditions, intended through delivery of a sharp physical message via soft parts inside the steed's mouth and through leverage between both jaws to make it draw up short or to redirect its course.

What appears to survive are provisionally interpreted as two or three outer components (at least one incomplete) from the cheek piece on one side of the bit (probably that on the rider's left) and a (?)cylindrical component with a twisted-cord profile at the inner end to fit inside the arc of the teeth (this may comprise one or more components).

#### Iron Hammer from context 1132



Iron hammerhead of routine claw form, with an (?)iron spike set through as the handle. Hammerheads of this common form were current through most of the medieval period, into the early-modern period, and they continue in wide use today. The relative evenness of the original surface should confirm this as a blacksmith-made tool (as opposed to a recent, machine-made one). The spike would seem to be a makeshift replacement of an original purpose-made version routinely in wood. The context is likely to be the best guide to dating and possibly usage.

#### **Discussion**

Research to date on the curb bit has identified only three other medieval examples from excavated contexts. One from London (Clark 1995, 51-3 no. 6), one from Ludgershall Castle (Goodall 2000, 153 & 155 fig. 6.33 no. 242) and one from Pergamum (Hyland 1999, 64-6), and Clark refers another in France. These are generally more heavy duty than later examples.

Similarly, Post-medieval parallels are equally hard to find. One dating to c.1400-1600 from Sandal Castle (Goodall 1983, 250-1 fig. 10 nos. 237-9) is only complete enough to provide a fullish form. A second from an early-17<sup>th</sup> century context at Basing House (Goodall with Moorhouse 1971, 47-8 fig. 21 no. 89) appears to be the best example of later date. However, the find from Lower Ford Street differs, notably in the cord-decorated component, from both the medieval examples and (though less different overall) from post-medieval comparanda.

This item therefore represents a significant addition to the small number of known finds of this highly specialised item of horse equipment.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that prior to any further analysis of the object, the curb bit be cleaned and stabilised by a competent conservator, as it is possible that there is a coating on this object. A fuller consideration of this artefact, its context and background, with reference to any further examples are needed. It would also be worth consulting John Clark at the Museum of London and others more familiar with the few archaeological examples on points of detail. The bit merits a reconstruction drawing as well as the usual illustration, and the hammer, too should be drawn. Further work will also be necessary to produce a full comprehensive catalogue of the other metal finds, including the lead weight and jeton.

### **6.7 Other Finds** by *Erica Macey-Bracken*

Other finds from the site included clay pipe, slag, shell, flint, glass, mortar, stone and charcoal.

#### **Method**

The majority of the assemblage was fragmentary, although individual pieces showed little signs of abrasion. The assemblage was quantified by count and weight, and examined macroscopically for the purposes of this assessment. The assemblage is stable, and presents no long-term storage problems.

#### **Results**

##### Charcoal

Charcoal was recovered from contexts 1001, 1002, 1006, 1011, 1049, 1058, 1060, 1066, 1071, 1077, 1079, 1080, 1094, 1108, and 1132.

##### Shell

Shell was recovered from contexts 1001, 1002, 1006, 1011, 1048, 1060, 1073, 1075, 1079, 1080, 1094, 1106, 1112. Most of the assemblage was oyster shell, although four snail shells (1006) were also recovered.

##### Stone

Stone was recovered from contexts 1011, 1014, 1047, 1061, 1066, 1073, 1077, 1079, 1080, 1081, 1090, 1132, 1133, U/S. None of the pieces appeared to have been worked, but examination by a geologist may help to determine whether or not the material is local.

##### Wood

Wood was recovered from contexts 1002 and 1006. Most of the pieces appeared to have been broken off larger pieces of unworked tree trunk. Two pieces from context 1006 were part of flat sawn-off planks, but were otherwise undiagnostic. Also recovered was a wooden stake (1025) made from a piece of oak (Scott Timpany pers. comm.).

##### Glass

Glass was recovered from contexts 1010, 1054, 1080, 1090, U/S. Four complete or near complete bottles were found, including a complete clear glass bottle, two near-complete Codd bottles (U/S) and a near-complete Hamilton bottle (U/S). The Hamilton bottle was embossed with the name W.LANT & Co COVENTRY TRADE MARK, and the company's trademark of a shield with an intertwined L & Co. The two Codd bottles were also embossed. The more complete bottle had THE LICENSED TRADE SUPPLY SOCIETY LTD COVENTRY embossed on one side, along with a trade mark of a rearing lion on a crescent moon, with the letters LTSS Ltd on the moon, and TRADE MARK above and below the emblem. The other bottle was embossed

with THE COVENTRY COFFEE TAVERN CO LTD COX STREET COVENTRY. This bottle also had the company's trade mark, which was an embossed picture of Coventry Cathedral with the words TRADE MARK embossed around the spire.

Four small pieces of window glass (1010, 1054, 1080, 1090) were also recovered, but these fragments were too small to be of any diagnostic use.

#### Mortar

Fragments of mortar were recovered from contexts 1060, 1066 and 1079.

#### Slag

Two pieces of slag, one possibly hearth slag, were recovered from 1029 and 1075.

#### Flint

A single flint flake was recovered from context 1138.

#### Clay Pipe

One clay pipe stem was recovered from context 1010. The stem had no markings, and was undiagnostic.

#### Leather

Two scraps of leather were recovered from context 1001. One of the scraps has stitching along one edge, and both scraps appear to have been torn away from a larger piece of leather, possibly a shoe.

### **Recommendations**

Most of the material will require no further work, although as stated above, the stone will benefit from identification by a geologist to determine whether it is local or whether it has been imported onto the site. The piece of slag from 1029 may also benefit from further research as it may help identify the function of the site.

## **6.8 The Animal Bone by Ian L. Baxter**

All the bones forming the basis of this assessment were collected by hand. The animal bones mostly deriving from pits. Preservation of the bone surface was, on average, good with relatively few badly damaged specimens. There were also relatively few gnawed fragments. The total weight of the hand-collected bone is 66Kg. This assessment is based on the dated contexts comprising 63.5Kg in weight. Animal bones were recovered from all phases

### **Method**

A large proportion (7 boxes = 43Kg) of the assemblage derived from the fills of two pits: Pit 1027 (dating from the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries), and Pit 1080 (dating from the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries). These largely comprised complete horse bones and vertebrae and are considered separately (see below). One third (33%) of the remaining 23Kg of animal bones was assessed using the counting system based on a modified version of the system suggested by Davis (1992) and used by Albarella and Davis (1994). Numbers of "countable" bones, ageable mandibles and measurable bones are recorded in Table 6. Excluding the horse bones, only material from the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries was present in sufficient quantities to be assessed.

### **Results**

The assemblages from Pits 1027 and 1080 primarily comprise the complete bones of horses and vertebrae. The largest assemblage from the other contexts consists of sheep metapodials

from 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century 1006. Other species represented include cattle, pig and wild birds. A small hoof bone from 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century 1134 may derive from a donkey or mule.

The deposits of horse bones and sheep metapodials may represent industrial waste from knacker and tanning activities. Similar deposits have been previously described by the author from Leicester, Market Harborough and Aylesbury (Baxter 1996, 1998, 2004a, 2004b). The other material appears to be primary and secondary butchery waste.

***Recommendations***

Further recording and analysis should primarily concentrate on the industrial waste from the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century contexts. This should provide useful information regarding the industrial processes carried out on the site and also the size and conformation of the animals concerned.



Table 6. Hand-collected assemblage. Number of "countable" bones (Davis 1992; Albarella and Davis 1994) used for assessment and estimates of their total. The estimated total is calculated on the percentage of bone weight used for assessment (approximately 33%).

PERIOD	COUNTABLE BONES						Comments
	Cattle	Sheep/Goat	Pig	Others	Bird	Total	
15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> century AD Assessment	13	33	1	1	+	<b>48</b>	Includes equid and wild bird
15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> century AD Estimated	39	99	3	3	+	<b>144</b>	
16 <sup>th</sup> century AD Assessment	6	1	2	2	-	<b>11</b>	Includes horse
16 <sup>th</sup> century AD Estimated	18	3	6	6	0	<b>33</b>	
<b>Total Assessment</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>59</b>	
<b>Total Estimated</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>177</b>	

PERIOD	AGEABLE MANDIBLES				MEASUREMENTS					
	Cattle	Sheep/Goat	Pig	Total	Cattle	Sheep/Goat	Pig	Others	Bird	Total
15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> century AD Assessment	1	-	-	<b>1</b>	2	30	-	-	-	<b>32</b>
15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> century AD Estimated	3	0	0	<b>3</b>	6	90	0	0	0	<b>96</b>
16 <sup>th</sup> century AD Assessment	-	-	1	<b>1</b>	1	1	-	2	-	<b>4</b>
16 <sup>th</sup> century AD Estimated	0	0	3	<b>3</b>	3	3	0	6	0	<b>12</b>
<b>Total Assessment</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Total Estimated</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>108</b>

"+" means a taxon is present but could not be counted.

## 6.9 Waterlogged Plant Remains *by Wendy Smith*

Four samples were collected from waterlogged deposits, they were assessed in order to determine:

- If plant remains were present and of interpretable value.
- If the plant remains provide information about deposition of settlement waste.
- If the plant remains provide information about the surrounding environment.

### **Method**

500 ml sub-samples were each washed over a 0.3 mm geological sieve and all of the material retained by the sieve. Because these samples contained fine quartzite crystals, this flot was re-floated over a 300 micron mesh sieve and the residue, primarily containing quartzite crystals, was also sieved over a 300 micron mesh sieve. The flot was sorted at x12 magnification for plant macrofossils. Identifications were made rapidly and subjectively, without direct comparison to reference material and, therefore, all identifications discussed here should be seen as preliminary. Nomenclature follows Stace (1997) for indigenous taxa and Zohary and Hopf (2000) for economic plants. The traditional binomial system for the cereals has been used here, following Zohary and Hopf (2000, Table 3, 28 and Table 5, 65).

### **Results**

The taxa identified during the assessment are presented in Table 7 below. Three of the samples (1002, 1004 and 1006) produced limited waterlogged plant macrofossils. These assemblages were fairly small (ca. 50 identifiable items), and dominated by common nettle (*Urtica dioica* L.). Notably, no waterlogged plant remains were recovered from context 1005, although charcoal was observed.

### **Discussion**

The plant remains from three of the Lower Ford Street samples are not particularly rich, but do provide some indication of the nature of the surrounding environment at the time of deposition. In the main the assemblages are dominated by taxa typical of waste places (i.e. common nettle (*Urtica dioica* L.) and bramble (*Rubus* spp.)). Some tree taxa was also present (e.g. beech (*Fagus sylvestris* L.) and elder (*Sambucus nigra* L.)), suggesting limited scrub or woodland in the vicinity. There was also several taxa specifically associated with water or waterside habitats (e.g. sedge (*Carex* spp.), possible water-plantain (*Alisma* cf. *plantago-aquatica* L.), duckweed (*Lemna* sp.) and common spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris* (L.) Roem. & Schult. - type).

### **Recommendations**

On their own, these samples are unlikely to form a reliable reconstruction of the past environment at the site; however, if the Coleoptera from these deposits are interpretable, then full analysis of these samples would provide additional, independent evidence to support any interpretations from the archaeoentomological assemblages. An additional 500 ml sub-sample was retained from all three samples and it is recommended that this material should be processed to increase the quantity and, possibly, range of plant macrofossils.

Context No. Sample No. Sample Vol.	1002 2 500 ml	1004 5 500 ml	1005 9 500 ml	1006 - 500 ml	ENGLISH COMMON NAME
<b>LATIN BINOMIAL</b>					
Cereal Grain					
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i> L. (charred)	1	-	-	-	Barley
Wild Plants					
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i> L.	+	-	-	-	Beech
<i>Ranunculus acris</i> L./ <i>repens</i> L./ <i>bulbosus</i> L.	+	+	-	+	Meadow/ creeping/ bulbous buttercup
<i>Ranunculus ficaria</i> s.l.	-	++	-	-	Lesser Celandine
<i>Ranunculus</i> subgenus BATRACHIUM (DC.) A. Gray	++	+	-	+	Crowfoot
<i>Urtica dioica</i> L.	+	++++	-	++++	Common nettle
<i>Chenopodium</i> spp.	-	-	-	-	Goosefoot
<i>Atriplex</i> sp.	+	-	-	+	Orache
<i>Stellaria media</i> s.l.	-	+	-	-	Common chickweed
<i>Persicaria</i> spp.	-	+	-	+	Knotweed
<i>Polygonum</i> cf. <i>aviculare</i> agg.	-	-	-	+	Knotgrass
<i>Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum</i> (L.) Hayek	-	+	-	-	Water-cress
<i>Reseda</i> spp.	-	+	-	+	Mignonette
<i>Rubus</i> spp.	+++	+	-	-	Bramble (blackberry)
<i>Prunus spinosa</i> L. (? charred)	+	-	-	-	Blackthorn
<i>Chaerophyllum temulum</i> L.	-	-	-	+	Rough chervil
<i>Conium maculatum</i> L.	-	+	-	-	Hemlock
<i>Solanum</i> sp.	-	+	-	-	Nightshade
<i>Stachys</i> sp.	-	-	-	+	Woundwort
<i>Sambucus nigra</i> L.	-	-	-	++	Elder
<i>Lapsana communis</i> L.	-	+	-	-	Nipplewort
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i> L.				-	Smooth sow-thistle
<i>Anthemis cotula</i> L.	-	+	-	-	Stinking chamomile
<i>Alisma</i> cf. <i>plantago-aquatica</i> L.	-	-	-	+	Possible water-plantain
<i>Lemna</i> sp.	-	-	-	+	Duckweed
<i>Eleocharis palustris</i> (L.) Roem. & Schult. – type	+	-	-	-	Common spike-rush type
<i>Carex</i> spp. – 2-sided	+	-	-	-	Sedge
<i>Carex</i> spp. – 3-sided	+	+	-	+	Sedge
Berry – (will need to dissect to identify)	-	+	-	-	Berry
Bud	++	-	-	-	Bud
Leaf abscission pad/ Bud scar	++	-	-	+	Leaf abscission pad/ Bud scar
Waterlogged wood	✓	✓	-	-	Waterlogged wood
Charcoal	✓	✓	✓	-	Charcoal
Roots/ root filaments	✓	✓	-	-	Roots/ root filaments
Unidentified	-	-	-	+	Unidentified

✓ = observed, + = 1-2 items, ++ = 3-6 items, +++ = 7 - 10 items, +++++ > 10 items

Table 7: Waterlogged plant macrofossils observed in assessment of samples

### 6.10 The Insect Remains By Dr Emma Tetlow

The earliest dated samples from the sequence were from two pits and two ditches, Pit 1020 (fill/sample 1005), Pit 1000 (fill/sample 1002), Ditch 1019 (fill/sample 1006) and Ditch 1012 (fill/sample 1004).

It was hoped that analysis of the insects would help establish whether:

- Insects were present, and if so, were the faunas of interpretative value.
- Any of the insects present indicate the nature of nearby human land use.
- The insect remains could be used to provide information on the nature of the environment and land use in the area at the time of the deposits formation.

- The insects present would provide information on how these deposits formed.

### **Method**

Four samples of primarily minerogenic material with some organic remains were processed, weight and volume of the material processed may be found in Table 8 below.

Samples were processed using the standard method of paraffin flotation as outlined in Kenward *et al.* (1980). The insect remains were then extracted from the paraffin flot and identified where possible under a binocular microscope (x10 magnification).

Where possible, the insect remains were identified by comparison with specimens in the Gorham and Girling collections housed at the University of Birmingham. The taxonomy used for the Coleoptera (beetles) follows that of Lucht (1987).

### **Results**

Samples 1004 and 1006 produced small but well-preserved interpretable assemblages. Sample 1002 produced a well preserved but restricted assemblage. Sample 1005 produced no interpretable sclerites. The environments suggested by samples 1002, 1004 and 1006 were similar and will be discussed collectively below.

None of the insect remains from Lower Ford Street were directly indicative of specific human activity. Many of the species recovered were associated with damp, foul, rotting material, manure and carrion. Grain pests and other species associated with drier rotting material were also recovered.

Many of the Staphylinidae such as *Trogophloeus bilineatus*, *Oxytelus rugosus*, *Oxytelus sculpturatus* and *Oxytelus tetricarinatus* are found amongst rotting organic material such as wet compost and stable manure (Tottenham 1954). Two further species of Staphylinidae *Megarathrus* spp. and *Omalius rivulare* are more commonly found with similar foul material, but also with carrion (Koch 1989a, Tottenham 1954).

Several examples of the grain pests *Sitophilus granarius* and *Oryzaephilus surinamensis* were recovered. Further species associated with drier decaying organic material such as straw, stored products and carrion is the ptinid *Ptinus fur*, the lathridiid *Enicmus minutus* and the Cryptophagidae *Atomaria* spp (Koch 1989b, 1992). A number of species are associated with diseased and rotten wood, the common woodworm, the anobid *Anobium punctatum* is found in worked and dry wood and is a well known pest of building timber (Koch 1989). The previous four species are all part of Kenwards' 'House Fauna' (Kenward and Hall 1995, 1997). The scolytid *Pteleobius vittatus* is found beneath the dead of damaged elm trees (*Ulmus* spp.).

Scarabaeidae or 'dung beetles' were also recovered from sample 1006, which suggests large animals at the site during formation of this particular fill.

### **Discussion**

Few species were recovered which provide information on the surrounding environment. Those species, which do provide ecological data, suggest damp, tussocky grassland with sedges and moss, disturbed ground is indicated by species associated with nettle (*Urtica* spp.).

The carabid *Pterostichus melanarius* and the curculionid *Bruchus* spp. are both found in open countryside and pasture (Koch 1992, Lindroth 1974). The staphylinid *Lesteva longoelytrata* and the curculionid *Notaris acridulus* are both found in damp tussocky grassland with sedges (Cyperaceae), the latter is also commonly associated with reed sweet grass (*Glyceria maxima*) (Koch 1992, Tottenham 1954). The nitidulid *Brachypterus urticae* and curculionid *Phyllobius*

*urticae* are phytophagous species which both feed exclusively on nettle (Koch 1989b,1992).

The similarities between the three interpretable assemblages suggest that these samples represent either a series of contemporaneous deposit fills or that the deposits formed over a more prolonged period but under similar conditions. Many of the species identified in samples 1004 and 1006 are indicative of both damp and drier rotting material and are part of Kenward's 'Decomposer' Group (Kenward and Hall 1995).

The composition of the assemblages from Lower Ford Street is similar to assemblages from Medieval deposits in the Bullring, Birmingham; particularly the 'Pit Fills' from Area A, which Smith (2001) suggests are likely to be from straw or stabling matter in the early stages of decay. The strong similarity between the assemblages from Lower Ford Street and the Bullring suggest similar conditions during the formation of the Coventry deposit. However, when considering the paucity of dung beetles from sample 1004 and the limited number in sample 1006, it is possible that the Coventry deposit consists of material that may once have been used as a rudimentary, organic, floor covering in a dwelling or workshop rather than stabling. This would also explain the presence of granary pests, perhaps in the detritus from baking, and also the limited 'House Fauna' species (Kenward and Hall 1995, 1997).

On present evidence the palaeoentomological record suggests that the ditches and pits at Lower Ford Street were surrounded by sparse, low growing, scrubby vegetation with stands of nettles. There is also data to suggest some form of habitation was either on, or close to, the site as at least two of these features had waste material dumped in them.

### Recommendations

Survival of the palaeoentomological record has been found to be good from the samples assessed so far. Whilst it is not recommended that any further work be undertaken on these assemblages specifically, there remains the potential for analysis of further similar fills from the site to provide good information on regarding the surrounding habitat and human occupancy/usage of the site for key periods of Coventry's history. It is therefore recommended that close liaison with the project manager and site supervisor will identify further key samples from the excavation that should be processed and analysed.

	Eco*	S*			
Sample no			1002	1004	1006
Volume (l)			10	10	10
Weight (kg)			10	10	10
<b>COLEOPTERA</b>					
<b>Carabidae</b>					
<i>Bembidion harpaloides</i> Serv.			-	1	-
<i>Pterostichus melanarius</i> (Ill.)	oa		-	1	-
<i>Pterostichus</i> spp.			-	-	1
<b>Dytiscidae</b>					
<i>Hydroporus</i> spp.	oa-w		-	-	1
<b>Hydraenidae</b>					
<i>Hydraena</i> spp.	oa-w		-	2	1
<i>Octhebius</i> spp.	oa-w		-	-	1
<i>Limnebius</i> spp.	oa-w		-	-	-
<i>Helophorus</i> spp.	oa-w		-	1	1
<b>Hydrophilidae</b>					
<i>Cercyon</i> spp.			-	1	-
<i>Hydrobius fuscipes</i> Leach	oa-w		-	1	1
<b>Histeridae</b>					
<i>Acritus nigricornis</i> (Hoffm.)	rt	sf	-	-	1
	Eco*	S*			

Sample no			1002	1004	1006
Volume (l)			10	10	10
Weight (kg)			10	10	10
<b>Staphylinidae</b>					
<i>Megarthus</i> spp.			-	1	1
<i>Phyllodrepa</i> spp.			-	-	1
<i>Omalius rivulare</i> (Payk.)	rt		-	3	-
<i>Omalius</i> spp.	rt		1	1	-
<i>Lesteva longelytrata</i> (Goeze)	oa-d		-	1	-
<i>Lesteva</i> spp.			-	1	-
<i>Trogophloeus bilineatus</i> (Steph.)	rt	sf	-	1	-
<i>Oxytelus sculpturatus</i> Grav.	rt		-	1	1
<i>Oxytelus rugosus</i> (F.)	rt		-	1	2
<i>Oxytelus tetracarinus</i> (Block.)	rt		-	-	1
<i>Oxytelus</i> spp.	rt		-	1	1
<i>Platystethus</i> spp.	u		-	1	-
<i>Stenus</i> spp.			-	2	-
<i>Philonthus</i> spp.	u		-	-	1
<i>Lathrobium</i> spp.			-	1	2
<i>Xantholinus</i> spp.			-	1	-
<i>Tachinus</i> spp.			-	2	-
<i>Aleocharinae</i> gen. & spp. Indet.			-	4	3
<b>Pselaphidae</b>					
<i>Brachygluta</i> spp.			-	-	1
<b>Nitidulidae</b>					
<i>Brachypterus urticae</i> (F.)			-	2	-
<b>Cucujidae</b>					
<i>Oryzaephilus surinamensis</i> (L.)	g	ss	-	1	1
<b>Cryptophagidae</b>					
<i>Atomaria</i> spp.	rd-h	st	-	1	-
<b>Lathridiidae</b>					
<i>Encimus minutus</i> (L.)	rd-h	st	1	2	1
<i>Encimus</i> spp.	rd-h	st	-	1	-
<b>Anobiidae</b>					
<i>Anobium punctatum</i> (Geer.)	l	sf	1	1	-
<b>Ptinidae</b>					
<i>Ptinus fur</i> (L.)	rd-h	st	2	1	1
<b>Scarabaeidae</b>					
<i>Aphodius</i> spp.	d		-	-	2
<b>Chrysomelidae</b>					
<i>Phyllodecta</i> spp.	oa		-	1	-
<i>Phyllotraeta</i> spp.	oa		-	1	-
<b>Bruchidae</b>					
<i>Bruchus</i> ssp.			-	1	-
<b>Scolytidae</b>					
<i>Ptelobius vittatus</i> (F.)	l		-	1	-
<b>Curculionidae</b>					
<i>Apion</i> spp.	oa-p		-	-	1
<i>Phyllobius urticae</i> (Geer.)	oa-p		-	1	-
<i>Notaris acridulus</i> (L.)	oa-w		-	1	-
<i>Sitophilus granarius</i> (L.)	g	ss	-	1	-
<i>Gymnetron</i> spp.	oa-p		-	2	-

Table 8 list of species in the assessed samples.

\**Ecological Codings* (Kenward and Hall 1995)

- oa (& b) – species which will not breed in human housing
- w – aquatic species
- d – species associated with damp watersides and river banks
- rd – species primarily associated with drier organic matter
- rf – species primarily associated with foul organic matter, often dung
- g – species associated with grain
- l – species associated with timber
- p – phytophagous species often associated with waste areas, grassland or pasture.

h – members of the 'house fauna'. This is a very arbitrary group based on archaeological associations (Hall and Kenward 1990).

\**Synanthropic codings* (Kenward 1997, pers.comm.)

- sf – facultative synanthropes – common in natural habitats but clearly favour artificial conditions
- st – typical synanthropes – particularly favour artificial habitats but believed to be able to survive in nature in the long term.
- ss – strong synanthropes – essentially dependant on human activity for survival.

### 6.11 Pollen Analysis by Scott Timpany

#### **Method**

A pollen column, comprising a series of samples were collected every 4cm down a recently exposed and cleaned section through the riverside deposits. A total of 16 samples were prepared for pollen analysis, microscopic charcoal and non-pollen palynomorph analysis (NPPs) using the method described by Barber (1976). Samples were chosen that would give a good representation through the sequence through the completion of a skeleton pollen diagram for the site. Sample numbers and depths are given below.

Sample Number	Depth (cm)
1	04
2	08
3	12
4	24
5	36
6	48
7	56
8	60
9	64
10	72
11	76
12	84
13	92
14	96
15	100
16	108

Table 9

#### **Results**

Unfortunately, following preparation none of the samples proved to have any pollen preserved, therefore providing no opportunity for further analysis

## 7 UPDATED PROJECT DESIGN

It is possible to redefine and enhance the research aims as to

- comprehensively explore the historical record relating to the area within the periods in which the site was occupied in order to better understand the context of Medieval Coventry.
- contribute to understanding the of the outlying areas of Coventry city centre throughout the medieval period.
- define the stratigraphic sequence of all deposits encountered in order to determine the development of the site focusing on the use and disuse of the site throughout the medieval and post-medieval period
- pottery: as assessment recommends.
- examine the bone assemblage further especially in relation to possible industrial deposits
- to further examine some of the waterlogged remains in order to determine whether different area and phases can inform on the changing environment and/or use of the land.
- study the small finds in the assemblage in order to assess their intrinsic intellectual value, and how they can contribute to an understanding of the nature of the deposits.
- fully integrate the results of this project with other archaeological projects in the local area to create a better understanding of the site and its chronology on a local and regional scale.

## 8 PUBLICATION SYNOPSIS AND TASK LIST

### Archaeological and Historical Investigations on Lower Ford Street , Coventry, West Midlands 2005

By Kevin Colls and Mary Duncan

With contributions by Stephanie Ratkai, Wendy Smith, Ellie Ramsey, Dr Emma Tetlow, Ian Baxter, Erica Macey-Bracken, and N. W. Alcock.

Illustrations by Nigel Dodds

Introduction by Mary Duncan and Kevin Colls  
300 words 2 Illustration

Aims and Method by Mary Duncan  
200 words

The Historical Context by Ellie Ramsey and N. W. Alcock  
500 words 1 illustration

Description of Results By Kevin Colls and Mary Duncan  
1000 words 4 Illustrations

The Pottery by Stephanie Ratkai  
1000 words 3 table 1 illustration

Metal Small Finds By Geoff Egan  
500 words 2 Illustrations

Animal Bones By Ian L. Baxter



750 words 2 Tables

Waterlogged Beetle Remains By Dr Emma Tetlow

750 words 3 Table

Discussion and Conclusions by Kevin Colls and Mary Duncan

1500 words 3 illustrations

Bibliography

**TOTAL 7000 words 13 figures 8 tables**

It is proposed that this report will be published in an appropriate local journal or as a B.A.R. publication. The tasks below give the initials of the individuals responsible for the completion of the task and number of days allocated.

<b>Task List</b>	<b>Person</b>	<b>Days</b>
Overall project management	KSC	6
Integrate archives/check phasing	MD	2
Phasing database	MD	1
Figure roughs for site narrative	MD	1
Draught figures for site narrative-plans	ND	2
Preparation of first draft of introduction and results	MD	5
<b>Pottery</b>		
Record pottery	SR	2
Data entry	SR	0.5
Manipulation of data	SR	0.5
Research-comparanda/parallels	SR	1.5
Report writing	SR	2
Sorting vessels for illustration	SR	1
Checking pottery drawings and final edit/emendations	SR	1
Illustration of pottery	ND	5
<b>Other Finds</b>		
Identification of metal objects	GE	1
Writing of report	GE	1
Illustration and reconstruction	BR	5
<b>Animal Bone</b>		
Quantification of bone assemblage	ILB	5
Species identification	ILB	3
Writing of report	ILB	2
<b>Paleontamological Remains</b>		
Processing and full analysis of phase 1 and 2 samples (to a maximum of 5 samples)	ET	3
Species identification	ET	2
Writing of report	ET	2
<b>Shorter Specialist Reports</b>		
Editing/correction to specialist reports	AF/KSC	3
Further documentary research	NWA	2
Preparation of first draft of discussion	MD/KSC	2
Editing of first draft (BA)	KSC	2
Further illustrations	ND	3
Final proof reading	KSC/AF	3
Final corrections to text/illustrations	MD	1
Submission of text	KSC/AF	2

Preparation of excavation and research archives	EJR	3
Deposition of archive	EMB	2
Archive Management	AF	2
Preparation of report for Oasis	AF	2

Table 10

## 9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## **Appendix 1: Written Scheme of Investigation**

### **Introduction**

This Written Scheme of Investigation is concerned with requirements for a programme of archaeological investigation on land to the rear of Lower Ford Street. It outlines the proposed programme of work required to the final open area excavations within the footprints of buildings during redevelopment of the site. This is the third stage of a programme of work required under PPG 16. Previous work has included building recording, trial trenching and the Phase 1 open area excavation. Any variation in the scope of the work would be agreed with Chris Patrick, Planning Archaeologist, prior to implementation.

The overall scheme is in response to the proposed redevelopment of the site with a residential development consisting of apartment blocks and associated parking, and is necessary due to significant and unexpected archaeological deposits surviving across the site. The original scheme was undertaken in order to take environmental samples to assess the riverine and alluvial deposits laid down by the River Sherbourne, and evaluation trenches were located to maximise the potential for getting good environment results. Open area excavation has been targetted at areas where significant archaeological deposits are known to survive within the footprints of the proposed development plan, where the greatest amount of disturbance is likely to occur.

This Written Scheme includes a framework for post-excavation analysis upto and including a post-excavation assessment of the site. It does not include details of the final publication, as these will be put forth following a MAP II style assessment of the findings of all phases of evaluation and excavation.

### **Site location**

The development area (NGR SP 3345 7925) is an irregularly shaped block of land between Lower Ford Street, and the Coventry Ring Road (Ringway Whitefriars). The underlying geology of Coventry is Mercia Mudstone of the Triassic Enville Beds. This overlies coarse-grained red sandstone, which seals Carboniferous coal seams. The site is located between two former watercourses depicted on the Board of Health Map (dated to 1851). The River Sherbourne originally ran along the southern edge of the proposed development area, the course of which may still be detected in modern property boundaries. Lower Ford Street itself may have followed the line of the Spitalmoor Brook to the north.

### **Archaeological background**

A trial trench in the centre of the site revealed cut features that have been securely dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Stepanie Rátkai, pers. comm.). Deposits of this date included a large pit containing quantities of cattle bone, and a probable cobbled surface. Evidence of occupation and activity of this date lying outside the city walls is of great importance in the overall history of Coventry, as much recent work has been concentrated on the intramural settlement. Thus, there is the potential for the evidence from Lower Ford Steet to be compared to other urban assemblages from the city proper in order to build up a more complete overview of how the city functioned in the medieval period.

Trial trenching closer to the River Sherbourne revealed that there had been several episodes of flooding along the river terrace, with each inundation being followed by re-occupation which was characterised by the digging of ditches and other cut features through the alluvial layers. This trench revealed a continuous sequence of occupation dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup>

century (Stephanie Rátkai, pers. comm.). The presence of building material in some of the later deposits, comprising ceramic and stone roof tile, glazed floor tile and window glass, may suggest a period of rebuilding or remodelling in this area in the 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The pottery assemblage was in good condition overall, with many large and unabraded sherds. The range of vessel forms included a relatively high proportion of drinking vessels in Cistercian ware, blackware, late red ware and Tudor Green. There were also two chafing dishes in yellow ware and cistercian ware, and an unusual late red ware, flange-rim vessel which may have had an industrial function (*ibid*). Further analysis of the pottery assemblage, combined with analysis of the environmental evidence may shed light on industrial processes taking place on the flood plain at this time. The overall assemblage from this trench is consistent with reasonably high status urban occupation (*ibid*), and is highly significant given the location of the site outside the city walls. This is particularly interesting when considering the Dissolution of the Monasteries, following which there is believed to have been a period of contraction and decline in Coventry's population which only ended in the late 1700s. This is reflected in Samuel Bradford's Map (dated 1748-9) which shows the town shrunken into its historic core.

Following the Industrial Revolution, Coventry swiftly developed into a seat of manufacturing, specialising in bicycles, engines, and car manufacturing, which lead inevitably to a period of expansion in the town. Circa 1828 Coventry began to extend north-eastwards, and a so-called 'New Town' was established at Hillfields. There were several water mills in the vicinity of the proposed development site until the 1840s, and much of the surrounding area was marshy and prone to flooding, which has been borne out by the current excavation. Following the demolition of the watermills along the river valley this land was reclaimed allowing the 'New Town' to be linked with the historic core of Coventry. It was during this period that a series of roads between the town wall and the Swanswell Pool, were laid out, this included Ford Street. The development of the district of Spitalmoors was also part of this programme of expansion, which took place some time after 1855 (VCH 1969, 24-33).

The Midland Metal Company occupied buildings on the site between 1874 and 1894, these premises were taken over in 1896 by the Lea-Francis motor manufactory. Although the majority of buildings on the site had been demolished down to ground level, prior to any archaeological investigations taking place, several buildings of interest remain along the frontage. The rear shopping is of particular interest as it is possible that evidence for its original construction still survives, having been obscured behind later fire proofing. This is scheduled to be removed as part of the demolition process, and, given the importance of the car manufacturing industry in Coventry, combined with Coventry's national and international importance in the history of car production, it has been recommended that further building recording is undertaken prior to the demolition of the buildings on the Lower Ford Street frontage.

### **Aims**

Specific objectives of the project are to:

- Determine the depth of burial, character, and date of archaeological deposits.
- Define the nature and chronology of the development of the site from the earliest period to the present, with special reference to the medieval and Post-Dissolution periods.
- Examine the impact of human activity on the natural environment of the river terrace with special attention to environmental archaeological deposits.
- Identify industrial processes being undertaken on the site, and assess their impact on the

natural environment.

- Provide comparative material which will contribute to our understanding of the site in relation to other sites in Coventry.
- Contribute to an overall understanding of the historical development of the City of Coventry from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

### **Method**

The earlier evaluation targeted areas that had the potential to provide good environmental results. However, alluvial layers along the river terrace were found to have several phases of occupation, denoted by cut features, and therefore the strategy for this programme of works had to be revised. Subsequent to the excavation of the evaluation trench near to the line of the River Sherbourne, the City Planning Archaeologist has requested that a third trench be excavated through the centre of the footprint of the building scheduled to be constructed in this area (see attached plan). This trench will be 4m wide with a stepped profile for health and safety reasons. If significant archaeological remains are located within the bounds of the trench, and in consultation with the City's Planning Archaeologist, it may be necessary to undertake further excavation in this area (pink on the attached plan).

Modern overburden will be removed by machine under direct archaeological supervision onto the uppermost significant archaeological horizon, using a toothless ditching bucket. The sides of the trench will be stepped in order to provide a safe working environment. Subsequent cleaning and excavation will be by hand. Spoil will be stored on site for the duration of the excavation. Adequate shoring of the trench will be implemented as necessary, within health and safety guidelines. Any human remains disturbed by the works will be recorded *in-situ* and excavated in accordance with Home Office guidelines.

All stratigraphic sequences will be recorded, even where no archaeology is present. Features will be planned at a relevant scale, and sections will be drawn through all cut features and significant vertical stratigraphy at a scale of 1:10, 1:20 and 1:50 and 1:100. A comprehensive written record will be maintained using a continuous numbered context system on *pro-forma* context cards. Written records and scale plans will be supplemented by photographs, using digital, monochrome and colour print and colour slide photography. These records will comprise part of the site archive.

All archaeological deposits and features will be sampled and, where appropriate, their potential for environmental and industrial analysis will be assessed. The full site archive will include all artefactual and/or ecofactual remains recovered from the site. The overall co-ordination of the finds strategy will be the responsibility of Dr Amanda Forster (Assistant Post-Excavation Manager) all ceramics and small finds will be retained. All finds will be processed during and immediately after the fieldwork. An immediate assessment will be made of any special conservation requirements, if any finds require stabilisation, advice will be sought from specialists in artefact conservation and will be conserved. Otherwise, finds will be stored in the appropriate conditions to minimise deterioration (for example, dry storage in Stewart boxes with silica gel where necessary). All metal objects will be x-rayed to aid further identification.

A series of monitors meeting will be arranged to discuss progress with Chris Patrick, Planning Archaeologist, the client, and relevant specialists. This will be in accordance with the conditions of planning consent. Advice will be sought from the English Heritage Regional Scientific Advisor as well as environmental specialists from the University of Birmingham.

*Environmental Sampling Strategy*

Following consultation with the regional English Heritage Environmental Officer, pollen samples will only be taken from any wet riverine deposits that may be encountered. Conspicuous pockets of shell rich sediment will be sampled as single bulk samples upto 20 litres, as these often produce large numbers of shells or insects and raise the diversity of the fauna being examined. Bulk samples will be wet sieved and the residues sorted for the recovery of animal and fish bones, and other artefacts. Where a deposit (wells etc) continues below the dig-depth auguring may be used to assess the potential for waterlogged material.

A 20 litre soil sample will be taken of any datable dry deposit or 100% of the contents of features which do not hold that amount will be collected from datable and well-defined features for floatation. Features will be sampled in order to ensure that representative material is collected for charred plant remains, industrial residues, molluscs and bone. 20 litre samples will be collected from datable waterlogged deposits. Deposits where there is clear evidence of disturbance or mixing will not be sampled.

In the absence of dating evidence samples suitable for radiocarbon dating will be collected. However, radiocarbon dating of fluvial sequences can be problematic as plant debris is typically re-worked by floods, resulting in large errors in dating. Therefore, it may be preferable to obtain more than one single date from the section of a palaeoenvironmental sequence. It is therefore proposed that dates be taken from the base, middle and top of major channel fills to allow for the identification of errors (the oldest date should be at the base, the youngest at the top; inversions are clearly wrong).

The environmental programme will be undertaken in accordance with IFA and English Heritage guidelines, 'Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation' (English Heritage 2002). Samples will be taken, and subsequently disposed of, at the discretion of the environmental specialist. Residues, and any retained samples will form part of the finds assemblage. A geomorphologist will be consulted as necessary.

## **Reporting**

### Post-Excavation Assessment

On completion of the different phases of excavation it will be necessary to undertake a formal MAP II style assessment. This will examine the potential of the environmental and artefactual remains for further analysis, and will be prepared in the format required by English Heritage in the Management of Archaeology Projects (MAP II) guidelines. This will include:

- (a) A site narrative (Appendix 6.2.1, 1 MAP II)
- (b) A fully indexed archive (Appendix 6.1.1 MAP II)
- (c) All finds washed, marked and boxed and catalogued.
- (d) Specialist assessments (finds, environmental etc)
- (e) Interpretative stratigraphic plans and sections (not simply the primary archive plans) accompanied by a plan catalogue (Appendix 6.2.1, 1 MAP II).
- (f) updated research design
- (g) publication outline.
- (h) The results from the evaluation phase of works as part of a fully-integrated research archive.

Should it be appropriate (depending on the results of the excavation work) to proceed directly into full analysis of the results, a programme for full post-excavation will be defined along with agreed monitoring points in consultation with the Coventry City Archaeologist.



### Full Post-Excavation Report and Publication

Following the post-excavation assessment review specialist reports will be commissioned as necessary, and the full post-excavation programme will be implemented. Appropriate resources will be allocated to complete and collate the specialist reports, site plans, sections and the site narrative from the evaluation work with the results of the excavation to publication standard. The post-excavation analysis will address local and national research issues with reference to themes laid out in the West Midlands Research Framework "Resource Assessment" document (Birmingham University website [www.arch-ant.bham.ac.uk/wmrrfa/sem5](http://www.arch-ant.bham.ac.uk/wmrrfa/sem5) and sem6).

The results will be made available in a form ready for publication within 2 years of completion of the fieldwork. They will be prepared for inclusion in a Birmingham Archaeology British Archaeological Reports (BAR) Monograph or other appropriate Journal. A digital copy will be submitted to the County Sites and Monuments Record in Word format.

### **Staffing**

The project will be managed for Birmingham Archaeology by Kirsty Nichol (BA Hons, PG Dip, AIFA) and supervised on site by an appropriately qualified member of staff. Specialist staff will be consulted as appropriate. CVs for all members of staff involved in the project can be provided upon instruction.

Specialist staff will be, where appropriate:

- Prof. David Keen – geoarchaeologist.
- Dr Lawrence Barfield - flint artefacts and small finds.
- Dr Wendy Smith-charred and waterlogged plant remains
- Ian Baxter - animal bone.
- Dr James Greig - pollen and plant macro-fossils.
- Dr David Smith - micro-fauna.
- Prof. Susan Limbrey - soils.
- Dr Ann Woodward - prehistoric ceramics.
- Stephanie Rátkai - medieval and post-medieval pottery.
- Dr Megan Brickley - human bone
- 

### **Archive**

The site archive will conform to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeological Projects. All finds will have been appropriately conserved prior to deposition. The archive will be made available to the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum in a form commensurate with the museum's accession requirements. An accession number for the archive will be sought from the museum prior to the commencement of groundworks.

### **Timetable**

The current timetable provides for the commencement of works on Area 2 to follow on immediately from the trial trenching. This will take place in September 2005. The Area 1 excavation will take place ahead of the next phase of development, and the City Planning Archaeologist will be informed of the timetable as information becomes available and timetables are finalised.

### **General**

All project staff will adhere to the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The project will follow the requirements set down in the appropriate Standard and Guidance notes prepared by the Institute of Field Archaeologists. A detailed Risk Assessment will be prepared prior to the commencement of excavation works.

***Appendix 2: Context Summary***

Strat unit	Assoc number	Keyword	Cut shape in plan	Cut profile	Area	Description of strat unit
1000		CUT	Square	Irregular	1	pit
1001	1000	FILL			1	brown silt upper fill
1002	1000	PRIMARY FILL			1	silty clay waterlogged fill
1003		LAYER			1	hand cleaning layer
1004	1012	FILL			1	grey silty sand fill
1005		MODERN			1	modern disturbance
1006	1019	FILL			1	dark grey silty clay
1007		MODERN			1	concrete
1008		LAYER			1	rubble layer beneath 1007
1009		LAYER			1	rubble dump
1010		LAYER			1	buried soil
1011		LAYER			1	alluvial silt
1012		CUT	Linear	U-shaped	1	gully
1013		LAYER			1	alluvial deposit
1014		LAYER			1	stabilised surface
1015		LAYER			1	clay dump
1016		CUT			1	concrete pile
1017		CUT			1	concrete pile
1018		LAYER			1	alluvial deposit
1019		CUT	Linear	Asymmetric	1	ditch
1020		CUT	Sub-Rectangular	U-shaped	1	pit
1021		LAYER			1	alluvial deposit
1022		LAYER			1	alluvial silting
1023		LAYER			1	alluvial gravel, sorted
1024		LAYER			1	natural clay
1025		STAKE	Sub-Square	V-shaped	1	waterlogged wooden stake
1026	1020	FILL			1	upper fill of pit
1027	1041	FILL			2	fill of pit
1028	1038	FILL			2	fill of ditch
1029	1031	FILL			2	fill of gully
1030	1127	SURFACE			2	top of cobbled surface
1031		CUT	Linear	Bowl	2	terminating ditch
1032		LAYER			2	concrete floor
1033		LAYER			2	rubble dump
1034		LAYER			2	rubble dump
1035		LAYER			2	buried soil
1036		LAYER			2	buried soil
1037		NATURAL CLAY			2	natural horizon
1038		CUT	Linear	Bowl	2	shallow ditch
1039	1040	FILL			2	fill of posthole
1040		CUT	Sub-Circular	U-shaped	2	posthole
1041		CUT	Sub-Circular	Bowl	2	wide shallow pit
1042		CUT	Sub-Square	U-shaped	2	concrete pile
1043		CUT	Sub-Square	U-shaped	2	concrete pile

1044		CUT	Sub-Square	U-shaped	2	concrete pile
1045		CUT	Linear	U-shaped	2	foundation wall
1046	1070	FILL			2	cleaning layer over pit
1047	1117	FILL			2	cleaning layer over pit
1048	1074	FILL			2	cleaning layer over pit
1049	1109	FILL			2	upper fill of pit
1050		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1051		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1052		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1053		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1054		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1055		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1056		CUT			2	wall
1057		CONSTRUCT			2	build of wall
1058		FILL			2	
1059		LAYER			2	
1060	1074	FILL			2	upper fill of pit
1061	1074	FILL			2	primary fill of pit
1062	0	CUT			2	
1063	0	FILL			2	
1064	0	CUT			2	
1065	0	CONSTRUCT			2	
1066	1107	FILL			2	upper fill of pit
1067	1110	FILL			2	cleaning layer over 1110
1068		CUT	Linear	Bowl	2	pit
1069	1068	FILL			2	fill of pit
1070		CUT	Sub-Circular	Bowl	2	pit
1071	1070	FILL			2	fill of pit
1072		CUT	Sub-Circular	Bowl	2	pit
1073	1072	FILL			2	fill of pit
1074		CUT	Sub-Circular	U-shaped	2	pit
1075		CUT	Sub-Circular	Bowl	2	pit
1076	1075	FILL			2	middle fill of pit
1077	1075	FILL			2	primary fill of pit
1078		CUT	Sub-Circular	Bowl	2	pit
1079	1078	FILL			2	upper fill of pit
1080	1117	FILL			2	fill of pit south section
1081	1118	FILL			2	fill of pit north section
1082	1140	FILL			2	fill of pit south side
1083		LAYER			2	alluvial deposit
1084		LAYER			2	alluvial deposit
1085		LAYER			2	alluvial deposit
1086		LAYER			2	alluvial deposit
1087		LAYER			2	alluvial deposit
1088	1075	FILL			2	upper fill of pit
1089	1078	FILL			2	secondary fill of pit
1090		LAYER			2	cleaning layer over 1082 and

1091	1078	FILL			2	middle fill of pit
1092	1078	FILL			2	primary fill of pit
1093		CUT	Sub-Rectangular	Bowl	2	pit
1094	1093	FILL			2	fill of pit
1095		CUT	Sub-Circular	U-shaped	2	pit
1096	1095	FILL			2	fill of pit
1097		LAYER			2	rubble dump
1098		LAYER			2	buried soil
1099		LAYER			2	charcoal lens
1100	1102	FILL			2	Top fill of pit
1101	1102	FILL			2	Primary fill of pit
1102		CUT	Sub-Circular	Bowl	2	Pit
1103	1104	FILL			2	fill of ditch
1104		CUT	Linear	Bowl	2	ditch
1105		LAYER			2	area of re-deposited natural
1106	1107	FILL			2	primary fill of pit
1107		CUT	Sub-Circular	U-shaped	2	pit
1108	1109	FILL			2	primary fill of pit
1109		CUT	Sub-Circular	U-shaped	2	pit
1110		CUT	Linear	Irregular	2	irregular linear
1111	1110	FILL			2	fill of irregular linear
1112	1118	FILL			2	fill of pit
1113		CUT	Linear	U-shaped	2	end of ditch
1114	1113	FILL			2	fill of ditch NW end
1115		CUT	Linear	Bowl	2	eastern terminal of gully
1116	1115	FILL			2	distinctive green fill of gully
1117		CUT	Sub-Circular	U-shaped	2	pit
1118		CUT	Sub-Circular	U-shaped	2	pit
1119		CUT	Linear	U-shaped	2	linear gully
1120	1119	FILL			2	fill of gully
1121	1122	FILL			2	fill of pit
1122		CUT	Sub-Rectangular	U-shaped	2	pit
1123	1124	FILL			2	fill of linear
1124		CUT	Sub-Rectangular	Irregular	2	possible linear feature
1125		CUT	Linear	Bowl	2	linear feature
1126	1125	FILL			2	fill of linear feature
1127		LAYER	Linear		2	cobbled surface
1128	1129	FILL			2	probably natural gravel
1129		FEATURE	Linear	U-shaped	2	probably natural feature
1130	1041	FILL			2	fill of sw corner of pit
1131	1038	FILL			2	fill of linear south edge
1132	1140	FILL			2	fill of pit north side
1133	1141	FILL			2	fill of pit east side
1134	1142	FILL			2	fill of pit NE side
1135	1136	FILL			2	probably natural gravel
1136		FEATURE	Sub-Circular	U-shaped	2	probably natural feature
1137	1142	FILL			2	primary fill of pit

1138	1139	FILL			2	green fill of linear
1139		CUT	Linear	U-shaped	2	Ditch
1140		CUT	Sub-Circular	V-shaped	2	pit
1141		CUT	Sub-Circular	Bowl	2	pit
1142		CUT	Sub-Rectangular	U-shaped	2	pit
1143		CUT	Sub-Circular	Bowl	2	pit
1144	1143	FILL			2	fill of pit
1145		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1146		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1147		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1148		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1149		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1150		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1151		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1152		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1153		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1154		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1155		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1156		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1157		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1158		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1159		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1160		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1161		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1162		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1163		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1164		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1165		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1166		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1167		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1168		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1169		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1170		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1171		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1172		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1173		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1174		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1175		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1176		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1177		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1178		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1179		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1180		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1181		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1182		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1183		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1184		LAYER			2	19th/20thc

1185		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1186		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1187		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1188		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1189		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1190		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1191		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1192		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1193		LAYER			2	19th/20thc dumping
1200	1201	CUT			3	pit
1201	1200	FILL			3	fill of pit
1202		LAYER			3	19th/20thc dumping
1203		LAYER			3	19th/20thc dumping
1204		LAYER			3	soil dump
1205		LAYER			3	soil dump
1206		LAYER			3	dump
1207		LAYER			3	soil dump
1208		LAYER			3	alluvial silt
1209		LAYER			3	alluvial silt
1210		LAYER			3	alluvial silt
1211	1212	CUT			3	gully
1212	1211	FILL			3	fill of gully
1213		LAYER			3	soil dump
1214		LAYER			3	clay mound
1215		LAYER			3	buried soil
1216		LAYER			3	med buried soil
1217		LAYER			3	soil
1218		LAYER			3	soil dump
1219	1227	FILL			3	Fill of large feature
1220	1227	FILL			3	Fill of large feature
1221	1227	FILL			3	Fill of large feature
1222	1227	FILL			3	Fill of large feature
1223	1227	FILL			3	Fill of large feature
1224	1227	FILL			3	Fill of large feature
1225	1227	FILL			3	Fill of large feature
1226	1227	FILL			3	Fill of large feature
1227		CUT	unknown	unknownn	3	large negative feature
1228	1229	CUT	Sub-circular	bowl	3	Pit at south edge of Tr 3
1229	1228	FILL	1228		3	Fill of pit 1228
1230	0	NATURAL FEATURE			3	Natural subsoil
1231	0	PALAEOCHANNEL			3	silted palaeo-channel
1232	0	LAYER			3	soil layer charcoal to top
1233	0	LAYER			3	lens of dark silt



Fig.1



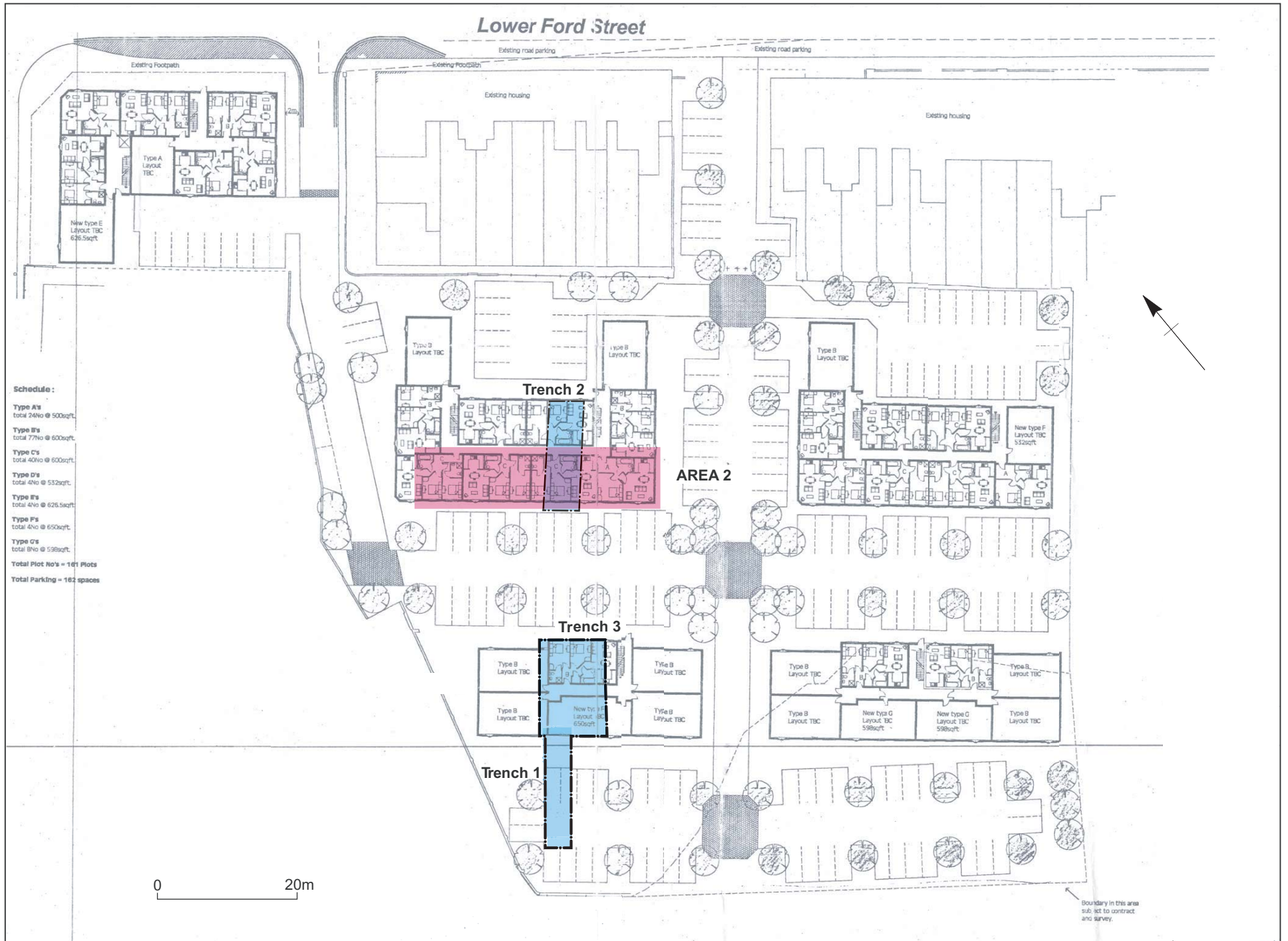


Fig.2

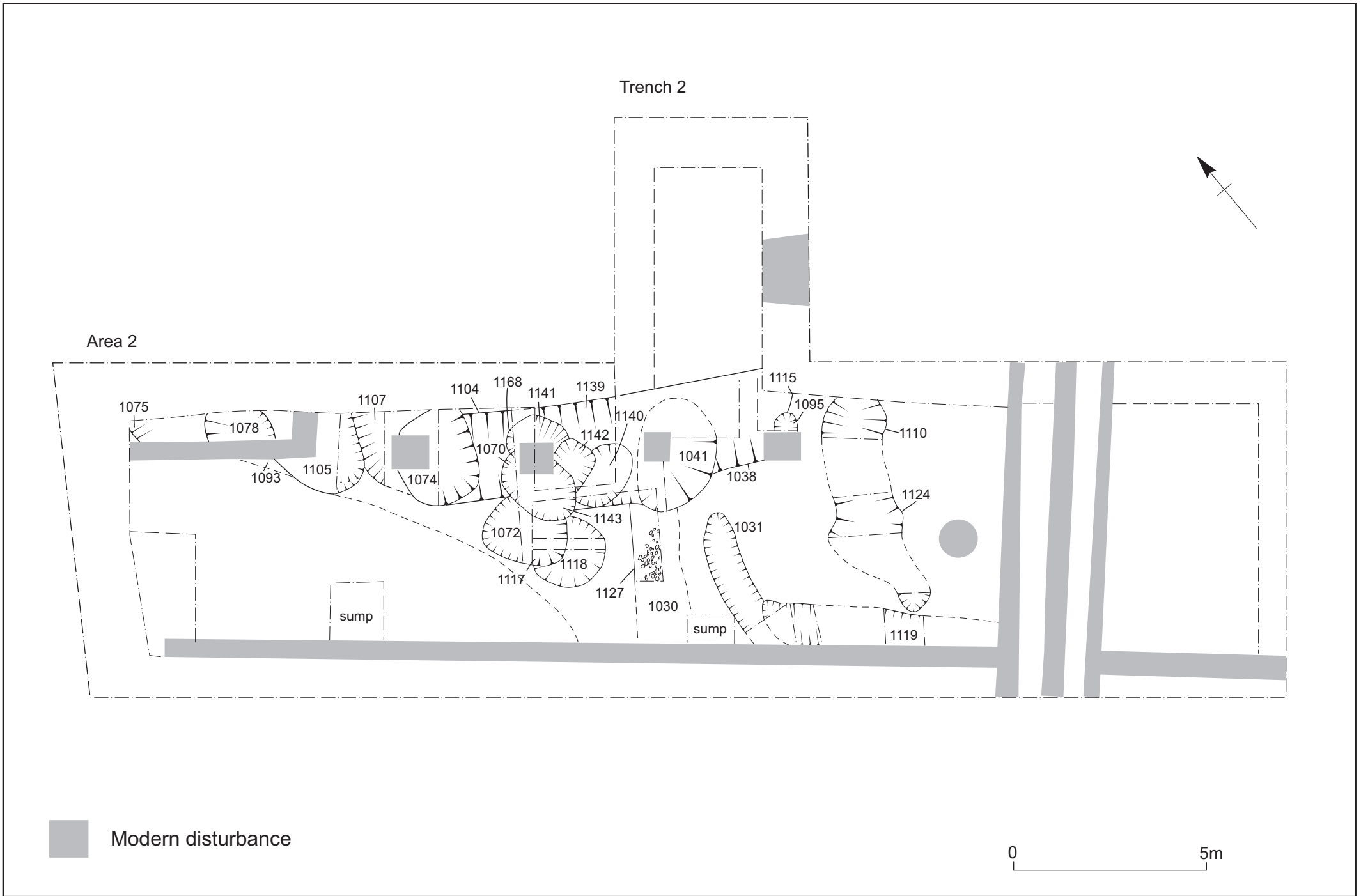


Fig.3

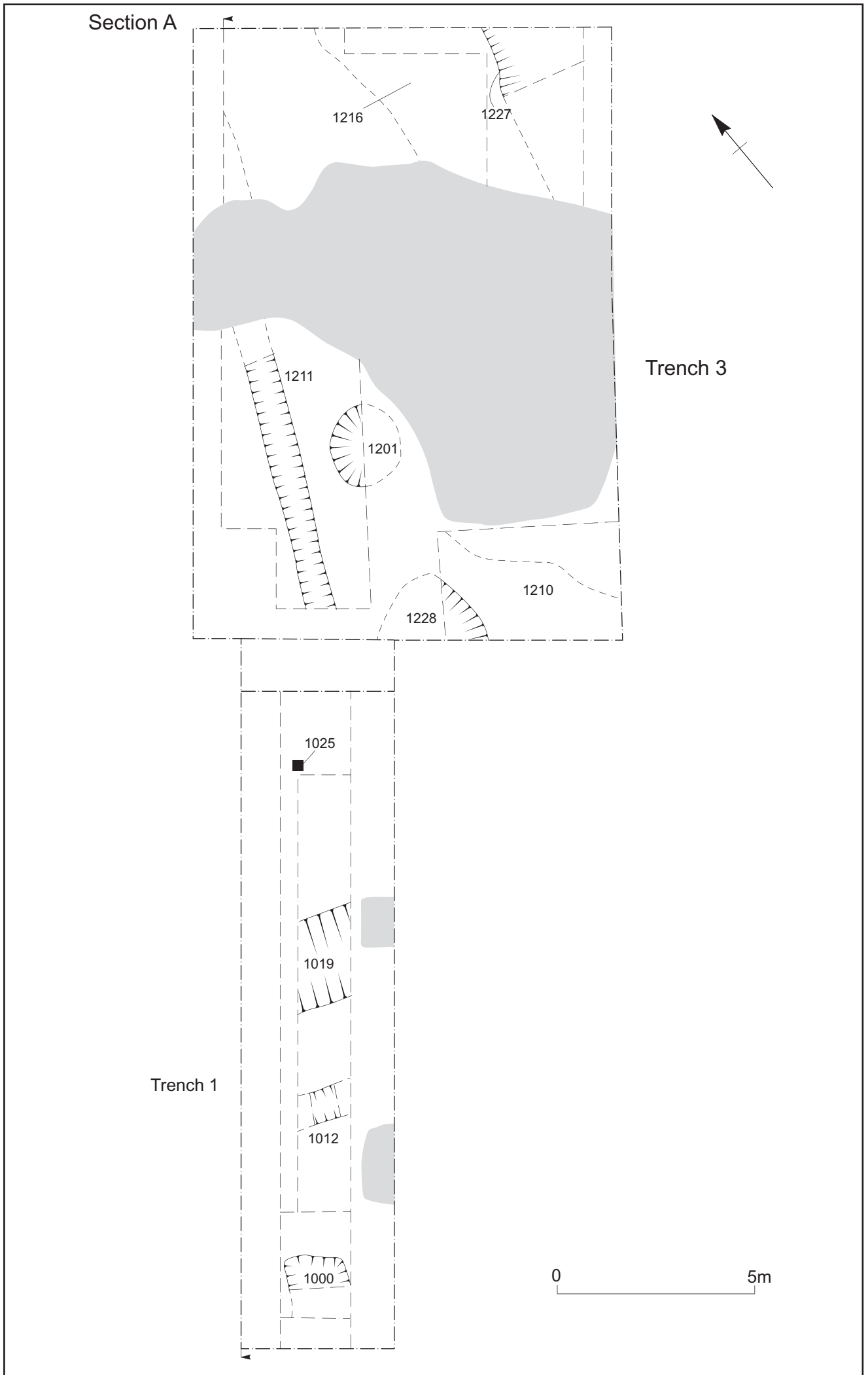


Fig.4

Section A (Reversed)

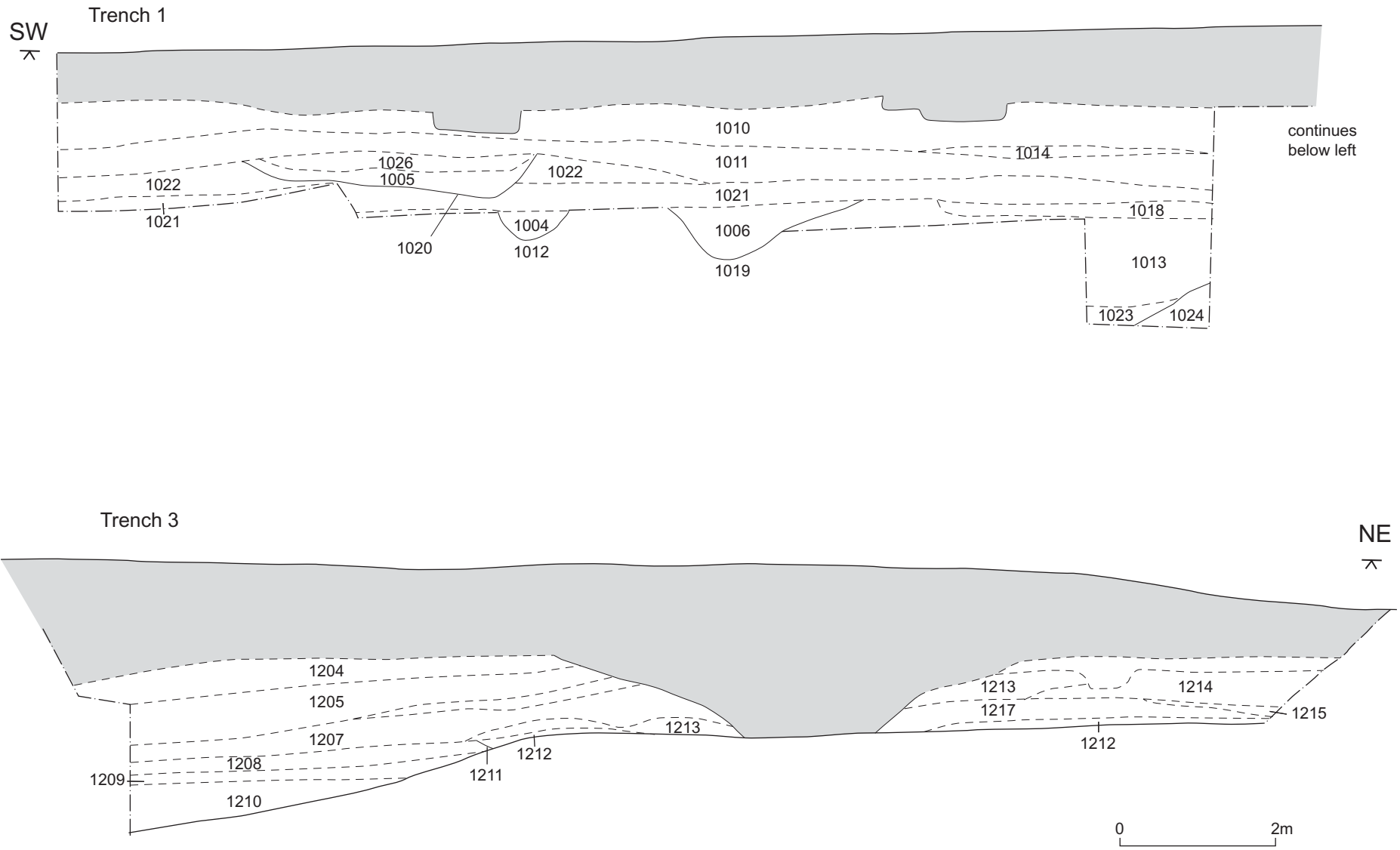


Fig.5

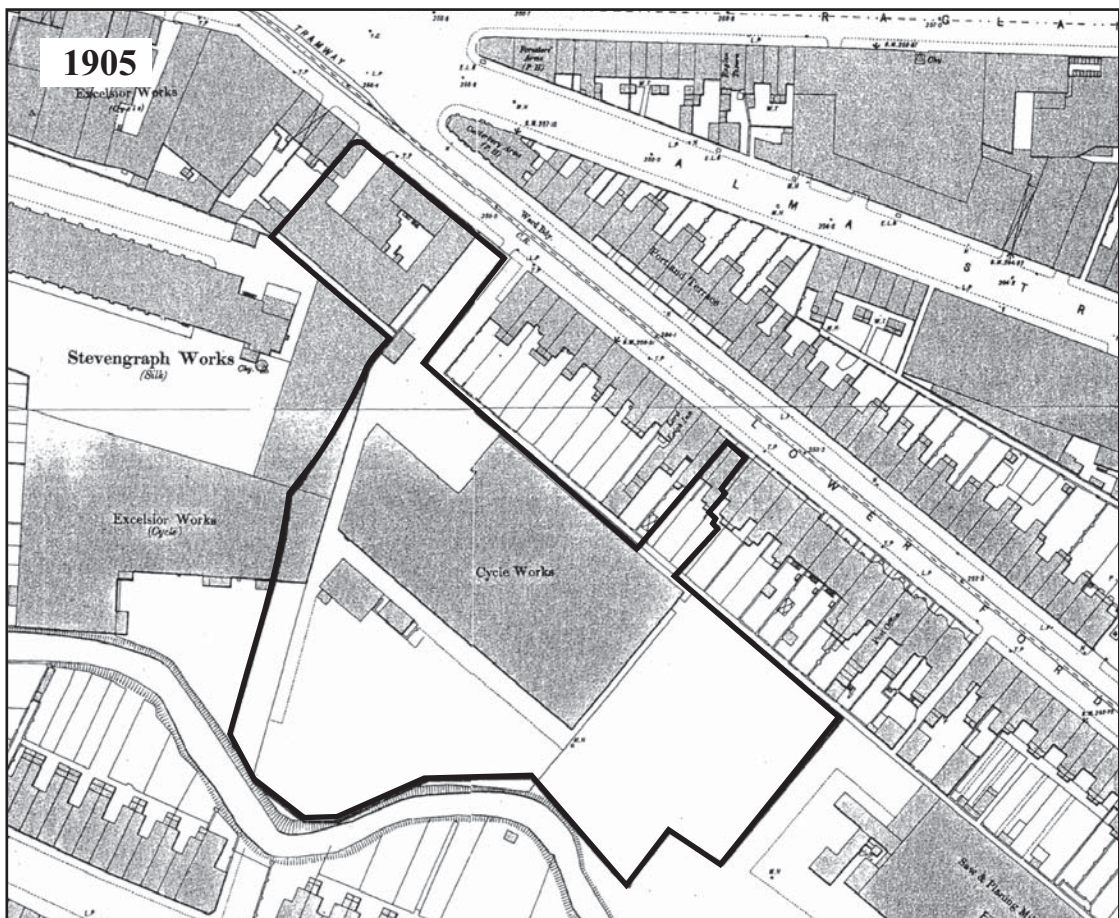
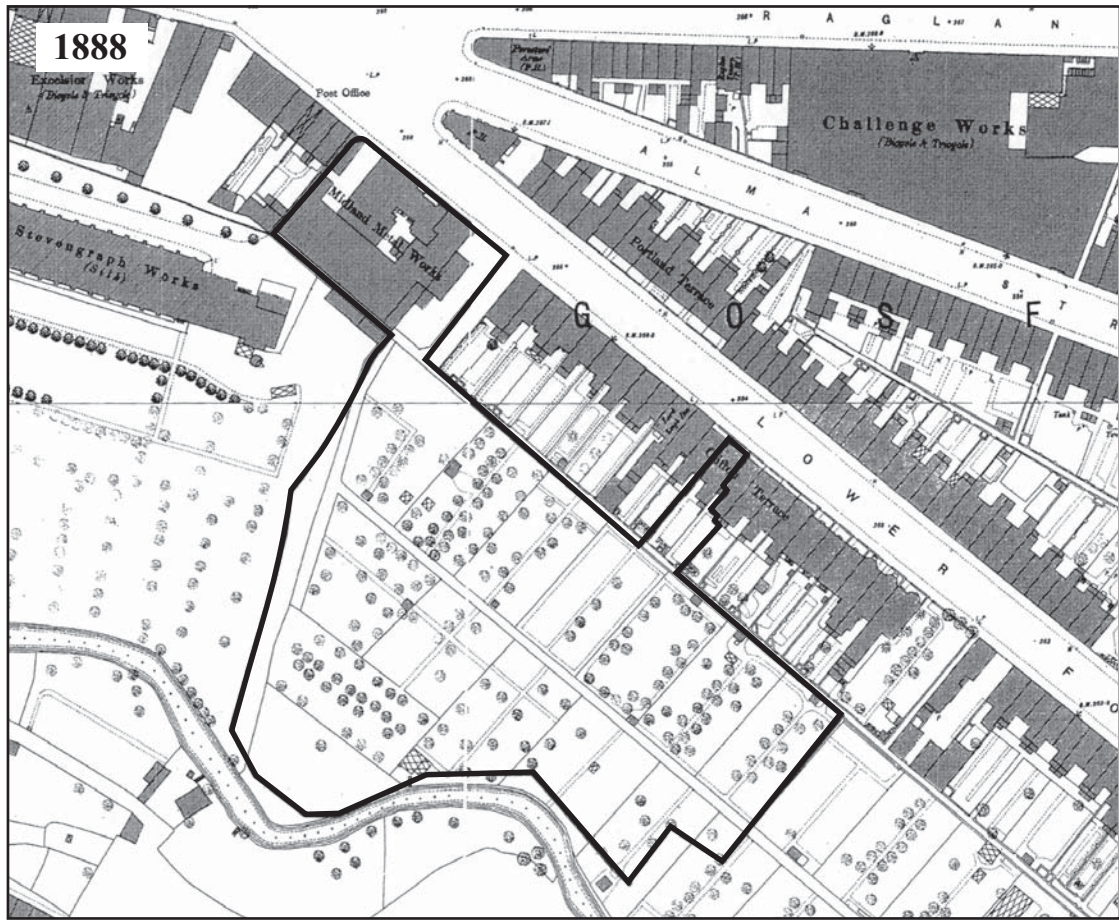


Fig.6