Land to the rear of 47 - 95 Kings Weston Avenue, Lawrence Weston, Bristol

Archaeological Evaluation

NGR ST 5302 7760
BHER 25402

By Kevin Potter BA, MIFA

On behalf of Keith Webb

Avon Archaeology Limited
September 2014

Summary

Avon Archaeology Limited were commissioned by Mr Keith Webb to undertake an Archaeological Evaluation of a plot of land to the rear of Numbers 47 to 95 Kings Weston Avenue, Lawrence Weston, Bristol (centred on NGR ST 5302 7760). The evaluation comprised the excavation of four approximately 10 x 2m trenches. It was designed to inform the planning process for a proposed application to construct 14 new residential dwellings on the site (application ref: 14/03037/F).

The project sought to identify and record any archaeological features, finds or deposits present within the evaluation trenches, in order to characterise the archaeological potential of the site.

Despite the fact that the site lies within an area that has established archaeological potential the project recorded no significant archaeological features or deposits within any of the trenches. It did, however, provide a useful opportunity to examine the natural morphology of the area and has identified a sequence of colluvial deposits overlying the Mercia Mudstone substrate.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank the following:

Mr Keith Webb for commissioning and funding the project, and for his assistance throughout the fieldwork; Mr Pete Insole and Mr Bob Jones of Bristol City Council for their advice, assistance and cooperation. Mr Adrian Sarkar for his careful machine excavation.

Thanks also to Nick Corcos, Susana Dias and Sarah Newns for their hard work excavating the site under poor conditions.

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PROJECT HEALTH & SAFETY STATEMENT

In all matters pertaining to this fieldwork project Health and Safety has taken priority *over all archaeological matters.*

All archaeological fieldwork has been undertaken in accordance with the guidelines set out by the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers (SCAUM 2002, *Health & Safety in Field Archaeology*) and also the relevant requirements set out in Construction (Design & Management) Regulations 1994 (Health & Safety Commission 1994).

NOTE

Whereas Avon Archaeology Limited has taken all care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused

Location of the Study Area

Figure 1

The Study area

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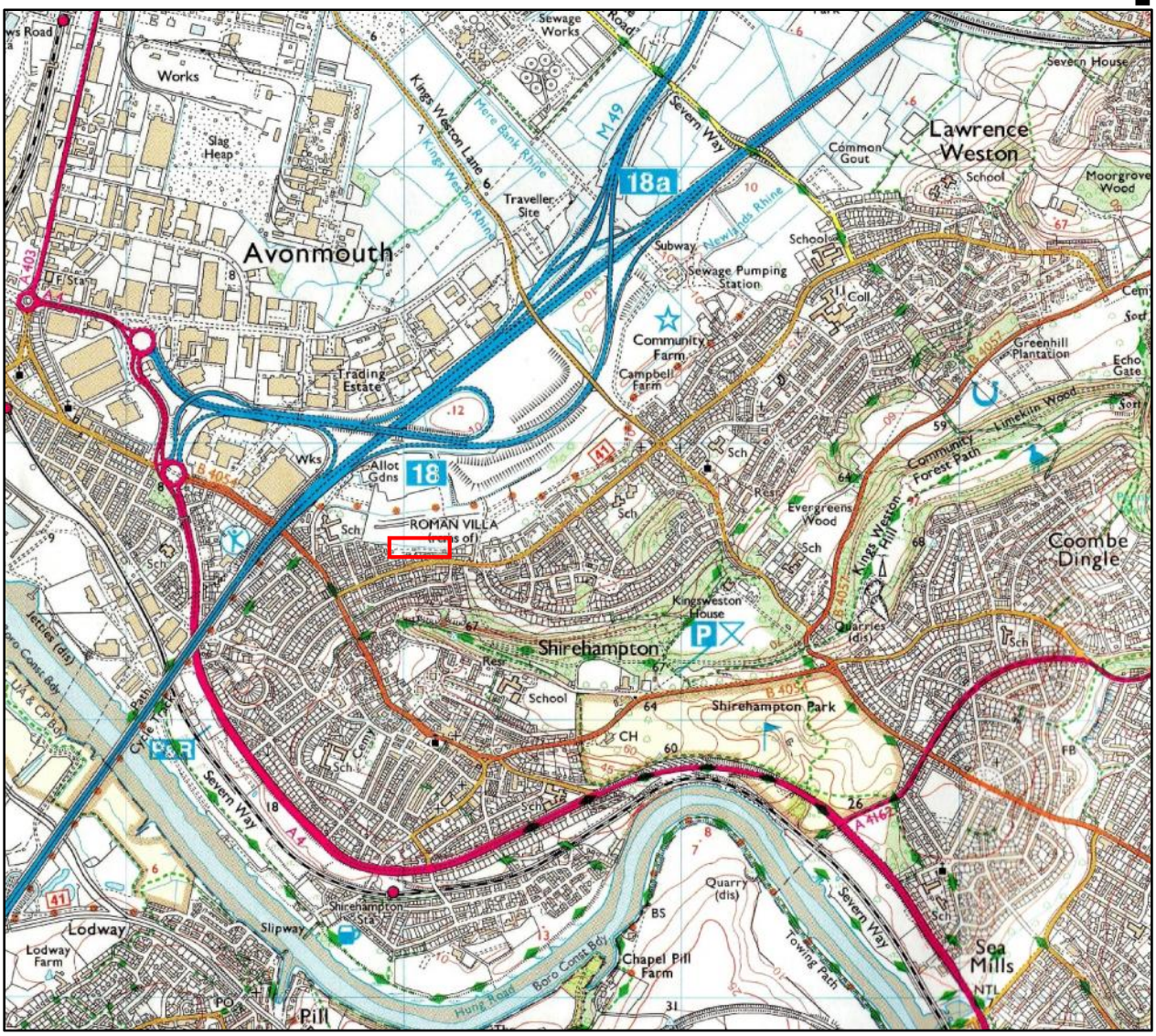
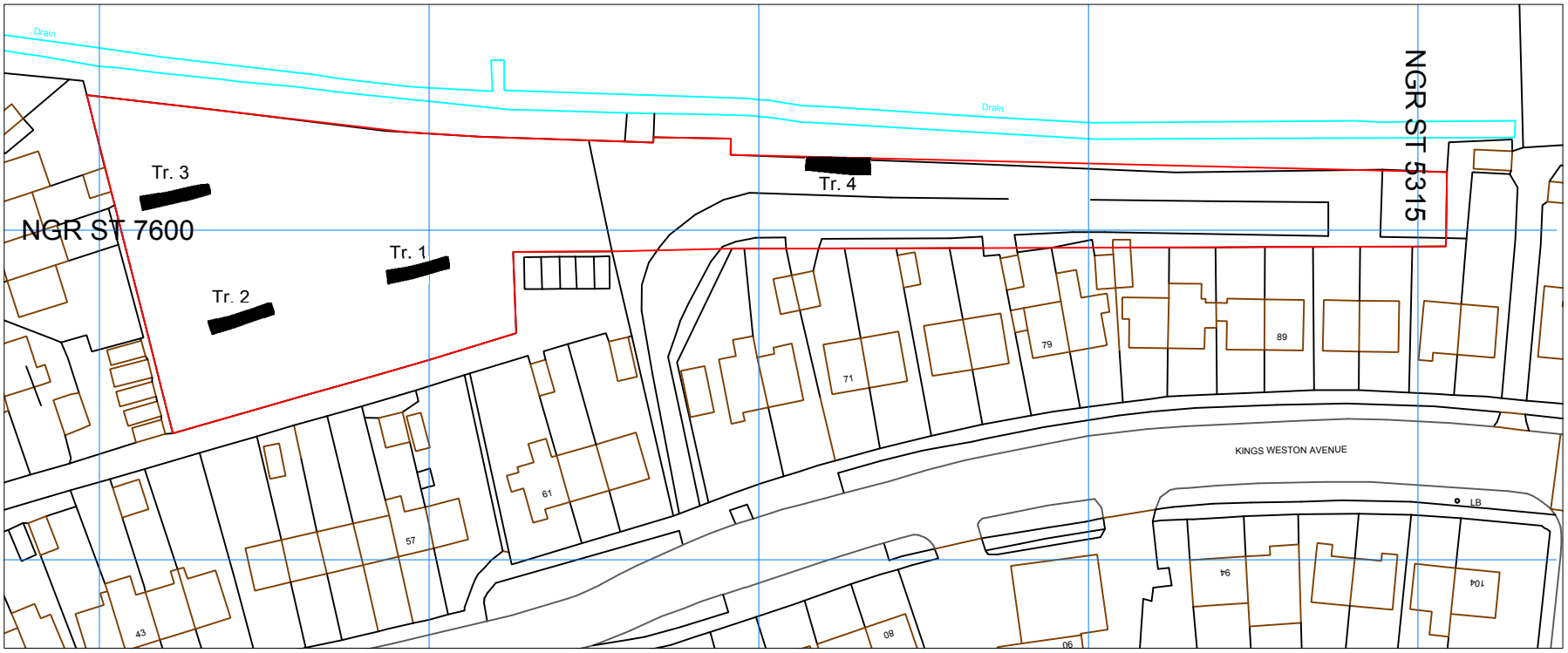


Scale 1:25000

Figure 2

The Site Boundary with trench Locations



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1 Introduction

Avon Archaeology Limited (AAL) were commissioned by Mr Keith Webb to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land to the rear of numbers 47-95 Kings Weston Avenue, Bristol (centred on NGR ST 5302 7760).

The project was commissioned in compliance with a request from the archaeological planning officer for Bristol City Council that the site be evaluated in order to inform the planning process for an application (ref 14/03037/F) to construct 14 new dwellings on the site.

The fieldwork was undertaken during August 2014 under the direction of the author.

The project archive will be given to the care of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, and an entry detailing the project will be placed in the Bristol Historic Environments Record (BHER 25402).

2 Methodology

The evaluation fieldwork was conducted in accordance with methodologies outlined in a Written Scheme of Investigation (Potter 2014), produced in response to a brief issued by Bristol City Council. The standards and guidelines set out in MoRPHE (Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment) and the relevant guidelines issued by the Institute for Archaeology were followed.

The trenches were opened using a mechanical excavator to the first significant archaeological or geological deposit, after which excavation was undertaken by hand. The Avon Archaeology single context recording system (AAL 2013) was used to create written records of all features and stratigraphic units. Plans and sections were drawn at 1:20 and 1:10 respectively. Levels were reduced from a benchmark , located on a drain cover on the corner of Humberstan Walk and Kings Weston Avenue, which has a recorded value of 10.31m aOD.

Column samples were taken from sections in Trenches 1 and 2, for possible specialist assessment of natural site formation processes and micromorphology. However, it was determined, in discussion with the archaeological planning officers for Bristol City Council, that such work was not necessary and the columns have not been retained. Detailed photographs of the columns will be placed in the project archive and their locations have been marked on the section drawings in this report.

The only artefacts recovered were from a modern deposit and have been assessed in-house by Sarah Newns.

3 Geology, Topography and Land Use

The development site (**Figure 2**) encompasses a rectilinear plot of land covering a total area of 4300 square metres, located to the rear of Numbers 47 - 95 Kings Weston Avenue. It occupies a relatively level area with only a mild westward incline from 7.78m to 8.89m aOD over a 200m distance. The site is bounded to the north by open fields, to the west by properties fronting onto Merrimans Road, and to the south and east by properties fronting onto Kings Weston Avenue. At the time of the evaluation the site was unoccupied and comprised overgrown scrub to the west and a rough yard surface to the east.

The British Geological Survey's Online Viewer records the solid geology of the site as being "Mercia Mudstone Group - Mudstone and Halite-stone. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 200 to 251 million years ago in the Triassic Period. Local environment previously dominated by hot deserts". No superficial deposits are recorded. The evaluation has further characterised the geological setting of the site to include colluvial activity as described below.

4 Archaeological and Historical Background (Dr Nick Corcos)

Historical Background
Historically, the site lay at the north-eastern corner of the tithing of Shirehampton in the parish of Westbury on Trym. Shirehampton was actually detached from its mother parish by an extensive outlier of Henbury parish, further to the north-east, and it seems as though there was a chapelry there from at least the medieval period to serve the cure of souls in the tithing, since the settlement of Shirehampton lay over 4km from the mother church at Westbury. Westbury itself was a massive and important parish, had been the site of a pre-Conquest monastic house, and for at least a part of its history an estate of the Mercian royal house. Shirehampton is not separately identified by name in the Domesday Book of 1086, although its existence is attested in pre-Conquest charters, and its resources will certainly have been subsumed within the very large 50 hide assessment for Westbury (Moore 1982). Several Anglo-Saxon charters for Westbury, and surrounding estates, survive, showing that the church and estate there had been gifted to the church of Worcester (Orme and Cannon 2010; Higgins 2004).

During the 12th century, the manorial lands of Westbury were settled on the collegiate church there, incorporated as a daughter house of the church of Worcester, until they were surrendered to the crown at the time of the monastic Dissolution in the mid-16th century (Rudder 1779, 800). The College, and all its associated manors and lands, thereafter passed through the hands of a succession of lay owners. Shirehampton itself was regarded as a manor in its own right at least from the early 17th century, but neither Atkyns (1712) nor Rudder (1779) record the name of the manorial lord in Shirehampton. The village was elevated to full parochial status in 1844, although the chapel of ease has been rebuilt on at least two occasions, the last time being in the 1920s, which is the present building. The proposed development site itself lay among undeveloped farmland right up to the end of the second world war. The area was

transformed by the construction in the late 1940s and 1950s, of the Lawrence Weston housing estate, which absorbed the original, historic hamlet of the same name. Lawrence Weston was originally built as local authority housing, but the dwellings are now for the most part in private hands.

Archaeological Background

The Bristol City Historic Environments Record (BHER) records numerous archaeological finds, sites and projects within the wider area of the site. This is not surprising as the archaeological potential of the Lawrence Weston/Shirehampton area, particularly in terms of Romano British archaeology, is well known.

Whilst the dominant archaeological backdrop to the site is Romano British, the area has potential for prehistoric deposits and features. Pleistocene river gravels, within Shirehampton, have produced Palaeolithic artefacts and faunal remains. An archaeological evaluation of a site approximately 1km south of the current study area (BHER 21999, Young 2005) assessed the Pleistocene gravels and, although no archaeological finds were present, important geoarchaeological information was retrieved. A Palaeolithic hand axe (BHER 21486) was found by an unidentified person at West Town Road, only 580m south-west of the current site.

The dominant archaeological feature within the locality is the Kings Weston Roman Villa (BHER 20179); a multi phase villa originally constructed in the later 3rd century and remodelled in the 4th century. The site was first excavated in 1948 by George Boon and J S Clevedon Brown and has subsequently been the subject of a number of archaeological studies and investigations. A detailed description of the Villa is not necessary here, suffice to say that it reflects an important and high status Roman site, with implications for the wider locality.

The nearest entry to the site, recorded on the Bristol HER, describes the discovery of 'Roman finds' during construction, in 1947, of the housing estate situated to the south of the current study area (BHER 23745). The archaeological potential of the area is therefore clear; however, it should be noted that nearby archaeological investigations at Long Cross (BHER 22201) and at Waylands (BHER 10495) identified no significant archaeological features or deposits pre-dating the 19th century.

5 The Archaeological Trenches

Four trenches were opened at agreed locations within the site boundary (**Figure 2**). All were opened by machine using a toothless bucket and subsequently cleaned, recorded and excavated by hand. Levels can be taken from the scaled plans at the back of the report and have not been included within the text below unless directly relevant.

It should be noted that all of the trenches were excavated to below the water table, and as a result only sample areas of each trench were cleaned and recorded in detail.

Trench 1 (Plates 1 - 3)

Trench 1 measured 9.6m x 1.70m, and was located towards the centre of the site and was orientated approximately north-east to south-west. It was reduced in length due to the presence of a bees' nest. Machine excavation was initially undertaken to a level at *c*8.30m aOD, within a naturally accumulated colluvial deposit ((102), see below). It was later extended, by machine, to a depth at *c*7.50m aOD.

The sequence of deposits recorded began with a layer (100) of dark brown loamy topsoil, up to 200mm thick, sealing the trench. Below the topsoil was a deposit of red-brown sandy clay sub soil (101) containing occasional small stones and infrequent mineral (manganese) flecking. It seems likely that Subsoil (101) reflects the weathered surface of underlying colluvial Deposit (102). Deposit (102) was also a red-brown sandy clay characterised by occasional small stone and mineral inclusions, which measured c550mm in thickness. Below Deposit (102) was a thick (over 350mm, full depth not established) layer of mid-grey, gritty, clay which contained frequent manganese flecks. This deposit extended below the water table and further excavation was not possible. However, the same deposit was identified within Trench 2 (Deposit (202))where it was found to overlie the Mercia Mudstone substrate.

No archaeologically significant features or deposits were identified within Trench 1.

Trench 2 (Plates 3 - 6)

Trench 2 measured 1.7m x 9.8m and was located towards the south-east corner of the site and was orientated approximately north-east to south-west. Machine excavation was initially undertaken to a level at *c*8.00m aOD to within a naturally accumulated colluvial deposit ((202), see below). It was later extended to a depth at c7.35m aOD onto the surface of the Mercia Mudstone substrate.

The sequence of deposits recorded reflected closely those identified within Trench 1. The upper most deposit, sealing the trench, comprised dark brown loamy topsoil up to 200mm thick. Below the topsoil was a c600mm thick colluvial deposit (201), identical to Deposit (102) from Trench 1, comprising occasional small stones and manganese flecking in a matrix of red-brown sandy clay. Below Deposit (201) was a layer (202) of grey-brown gritty clay with frequent manganese flecks equivalent to Deposit (103) from Trench 1. The significant difference within Trench 2 was that the

base of the deposit was found and the surface of the underlying deposit, which was the natural Mercia Mudstone (context 204), was revealed.

No archaeologically significant features or deposits were identified within Trench 2.

Trench 3 (Plates 7 - 9)

Trench 3 was located towards the north-west corner of the site and was orientated approximately north-east to south-west. It measured approximately 11 x 1.7m. It was machined into a layer ((306)) of blue-grey, probably alluvial, clay at *c*7.15m aOD.

The sequence of deposits recorded differed from those found elsewhere on site. It was evident that the area of the trench had been disturbed in the modern period. Most recently a north-south orientated service trench ([303]) filled by an iron pipe ((302)) and mixed backfill deposits ((300) and (301)) had been cut through the underlying deposits at the west end of the trench. Beyond Cut [303] the uppermost deposit ((304)), which forms the current ground surface around the trench, was also a modern re-deposition. It comprised a *c*400mm thick layer of pink-brown clay with bands of red-brown sandy silt. An unusual assemblage of finds was retrieved from the deposit comprising three fragments of worked stone, a probable cannon ball, two glazed Somerset redware rim sherds and a large fragment of modern industrial glass. The bizarre diversity of this assemblage and the broad date range it reflects is of limited interpretative value. However, the fact that no finds were present within any of the deposits excavated during the evaluation, suggests the possibility that Deposit (304) was brought to the site from elsewhere.

Below the modern disturbance was a *c*340mm thick layer of red-brown sandy clay ((305)) with manganese flecking, that correlates with the upper colluvial deposits identified in Trenches 1 and 2. The sequence differed again, from that recorded within the other trenches, below Deposit (305). Whereas in Trenches 1 and 2 there had been an earlier colluvial layer below the red-brown clay colluvial, in Trench 3 there was not. Red clay Deposit (305) overlay Deposit (306), which was a dense blue grey clay that displayed alluvial characteristics.

Trench 4 (Plates 10-11)

Trench 4 was located approximately mid way along the northern site boundary. It was orientated roughly east to west and measured 9.5 x 1.7m. The trench was machined to a depth at *c*6.70m aOD.

Sealing the trench was a 300-600mm thick layer ((400)) of compacted modern rubble (including concrete) forming the surface of a trackway that currently runs behind the houses fronting Kings Weston Avenue. Below Rubble Deposit (400) was a 250mm thick layer of highly mixed and disturbed dark-brown silt (Deposit (401)) , which contained patches of modern scalpings. Deposit (401) overlay a layer ((402)) of pink-brown clay, which despite frequent intrusion and disturbance from the overlying modern deposits probably reflected the surface of the Mercia Mudstone substrate. Cutting Deposit (402) was a linear trench ([403]) which ran south-east to north-west across the evaluation trench. It ((404)) was filled with a highly mixed deposit of predominantly red-brown clay, with patches of dark-brown silt and occasional small

stones. No excavations into Cut [403] were undertaken as it was below the water table. However the composition of the fill, as observed, strongly suggests that it is composed of material re-deposited from some of the modern deposits sealing the trench and that the cut is therefore itself a modern feature.

No significant archaeological features or deposits were recorded within Trench 4. Cut [403] remains of undetermined origin, but is likely to be modern.

6 Summary of the Finds by Sarah Newns

A very small and eclectic assemblage of finds was recovered during the evaluation, comprising three fragments of worked stone, a probable cannon ball, two glazed Somerset redware rim sherds and a large fragment of modern industrial glass. All were retrieved from the same context in Trench 3, Context 304, a mixed redeposited red clay layer containing within it bands of redeposited topsoil.

Details of all the above finds are given in the catalogue at the end of this report. The more unusual of the finds are discussed briefly below:

The worked stone:
The three worked stone fragments are particularly intriguing and appear to constitute fragments of columns or pillars of near-identical diameter. The largest fragment measures 147mm diameter and is 153mm high. The fragment is of a very hard, grey crystalline possibly igneous rock, and has a slightly domed, smoothed top and a fractured base. The sides are roughly tooled and have been worn smooth by wear in places.

The second fragment is of a cream-coloured sandstone, possibly oolitic, and of a type which is used for decorative masonry. It measures 148mm diameter and stands to a height of 76mm. Again, the general form is cylindrical, and the fragment has up to three incised slightly irregular grooves running horizontally around the circumference.

The third fragment is smaller and is of a local red sandstone, possibly Brandon Hill Grit, and measures just over 140mm diameter, with a height of 45mm. Again, the object is cylindrical, and is fractured vertically roughly across the diameter.

It is possible that the worked stone objects are fragments of masonry, probably re-used, deriving ultimately from the nearby Roman villa at Kings Weston, possibly fragments of hypocaust *pilae* (Boon 1950, 14 and Plates VIa and b).

The cannon ball:
The iron cannon ball is very similar to one retrieved during recent excavations at the Royal Fort, Bristol (King 2014, 18). It measures 4” (104mm) in diameter and weighs 3.95kg, and is of a type used in a demi-culverin cannon, which was valued as a siege weapon due to its long range and accuracy (ibid.). Its presence here is a matter of some conjecture, but it is likely to be related to activity in the wider area at the time of the Civil War.

References:

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Finds Catalogue

Context	Material	Count	Weight (g)	Description
304	Pottery	2	84	2 internally glazed rim sherds of probable Somerset redware bowls (BPT 285, 16th-19th centuries).
304	Glass	1	126	Rectilinear modern glass fragment, comprising three sides of a thick-walled fractured glass "box", probably used as a translucent element in building construction. Dimensions: 85mm by 47m by 35mm.
304	Worked stone	3	9,641	1 fragment of hard, grey crystalline probable igneous rock, cylindrical, fractured at base. Top is domed and smoothed. The sides are roughly tooled and have been worn smooth by wear in places. Dimensions: 153mm high by 147mm diameter; 1 fragment of cream-coloured sandstone, possibly oolitic, of a type commonly used for decorative masonry. Form is cylindrical, with incised irregular grooves running horizontally around circumference. Dimensions: 76mm high by 148mm diameter; 1 fragment of local red sandstone, possibly Brandon Hill Grit, cylindrical, fractured vertically roughly across diameter. Dimensions: 45mm high by over 140mm diameter.
304	Iron	1	3,950	Probable iron cannon ball, corroded. Dimensions: 4" (104mm) diameter.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

The evaluation site is located within an area that offers a reasonably rich archaeological backdrop, most notably for the Romano-British period. Prior to the evaluation it therefore had to be concluded that the site offered at least moderate potential for the presence of significant buried archaeological remains.

The evaluation found no evidence for stratified archaeological features or deposits buried on the site. This is not in itself enough to claim that the site is free from archaeology, although it undoubtedly diminishes the likelihood. Further, most of the deposits encountered contained no finds or anthropogenic material at all, even residual, which may indicate that the wider site does not contain any substantial settlement activity. That many of the deposits would seem to be colluvial further diminishes the prospects for significant archaeology in the immediate locality as colluvium could reasonably be expected to collect and carry with it finds from the surrounding area as it washed onto the site, and none were present.

It should however be highlighted that the presence of colluvial deposits presents the possibility that archaeological remains, particularly prehistoric, could be buried below the colluvium.

On the basis of the evaluation it is concluded that the site has low potential for the presence of buried archaeology.

8. Bibliography

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British Geological Survey Online Viewer

Figure 3

Trench plans

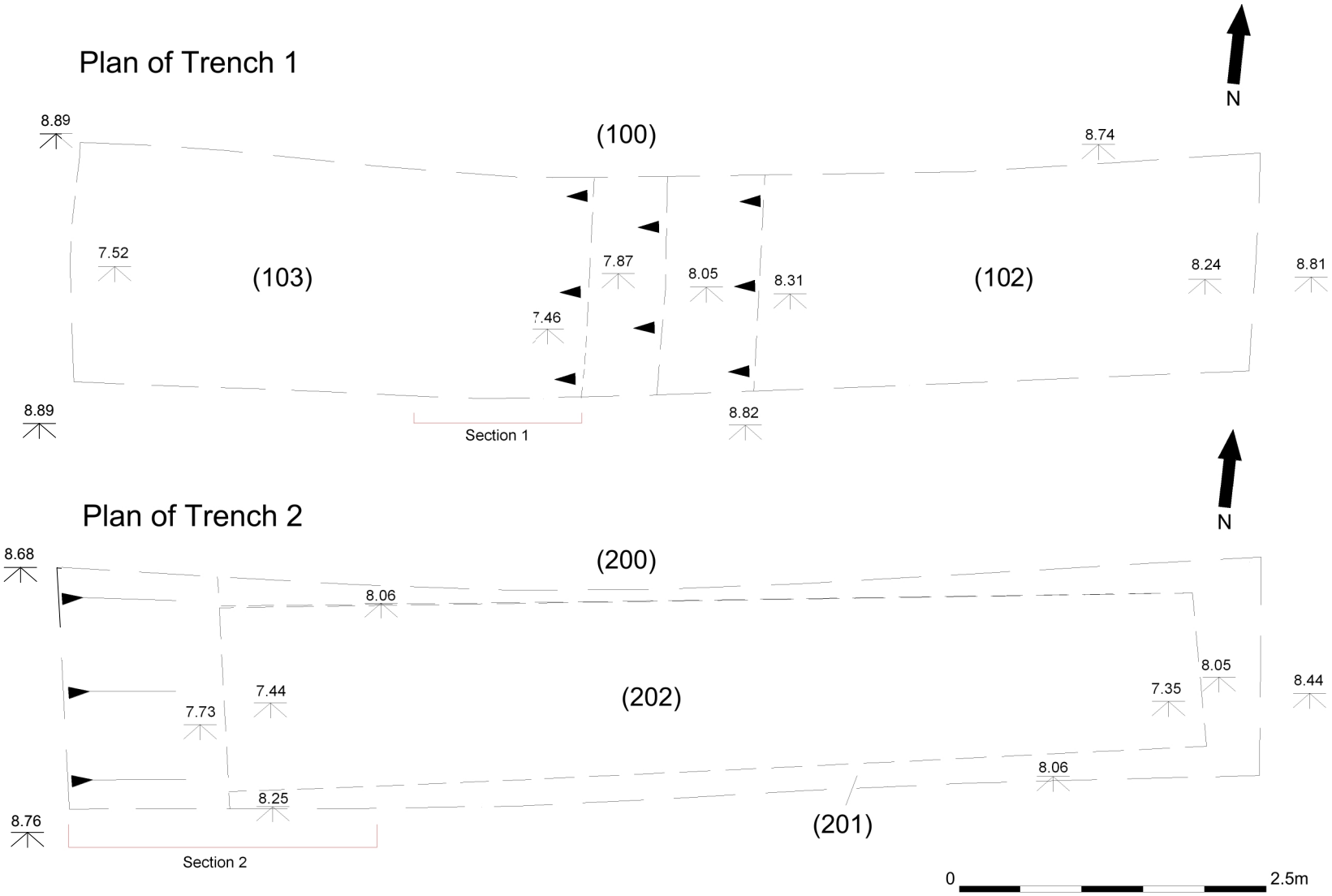
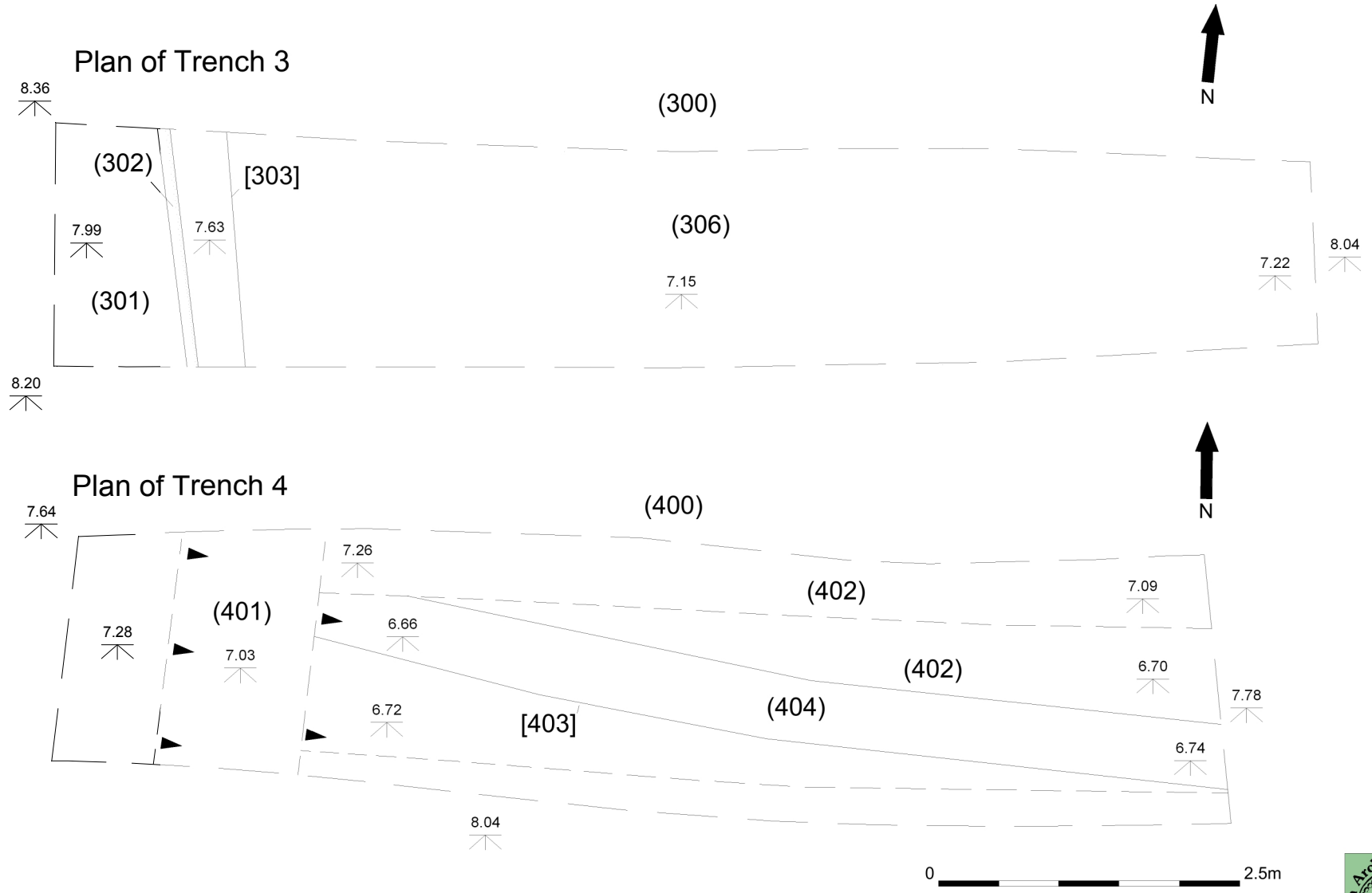


Figure 4

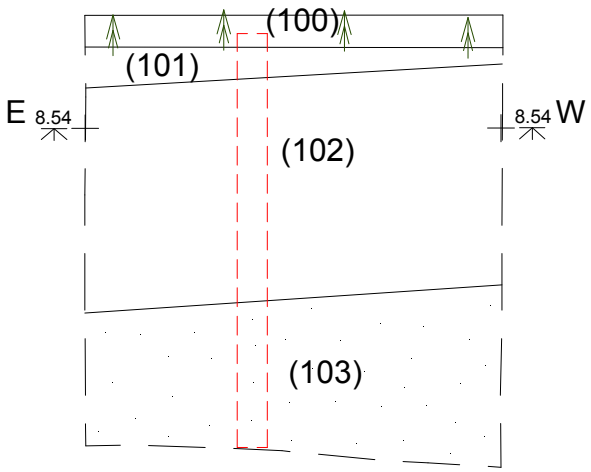
Trench plans



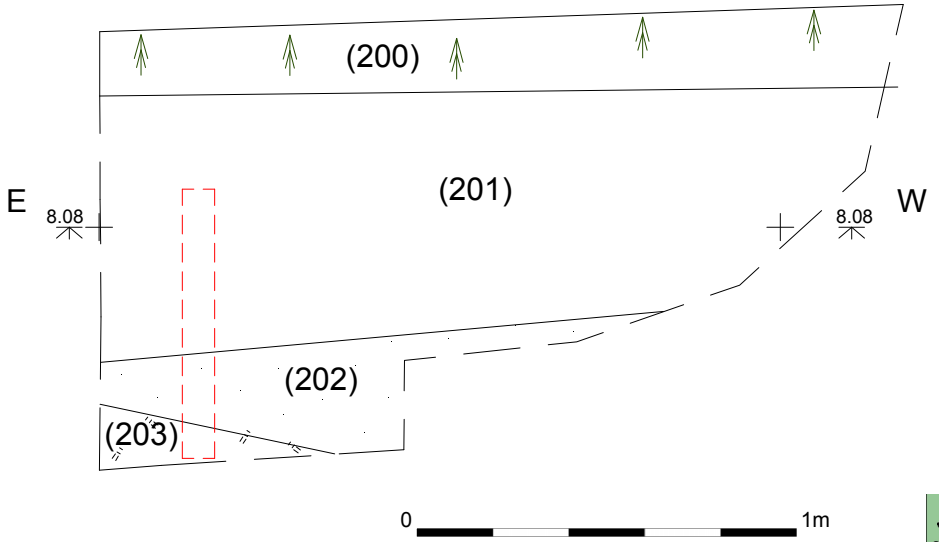
Section Drawings and Photographs

Figure 5

Section 1. North Facing Section. Trench 1



Section 2. North Facing Section. Trench 2



Plates

Plate 1. Looking west along Trench 1 showing colluvial Deposit (102). 2 x 1m scale

Plate 2. Looking west along Trench 1 after deeper excavation through colluvial Deposits (102) & (103). 1 x 2m scale

Plate 3. Detail of the deep excavation at the western end of Trench 1 after removal of column from the north facing section. 1 x 2m scale

Plate 4. Looking west along Trench 2 showing colluvial Deposit (201). 2 x 1m scale

Plate 5. Looking west along Trench 2 after deeper excavation through colluvial Deposits (201 & 202). 1 x 2m scale

Plate 6. Working shot looking south during cleaning of Trench 2.

Plate 7. Looking east along Trench 3 showing colluvial Deposit (305). 2 x 1m scale

Plate 8. Looking north-east at Trench 3 after deeper excavation through colluvial deposit (305). 1 x 1m scale

Plate 9. View of the south facing section of Trench 3. 2 x 1m scale

Plate 10. Looking west along Trench 4 during machine excavation. Featuring Cut [403].

Plate 11. Looking west along Trench 4 after deeper excavation into Mercia Mudstone Deposit (402). 1 x 2m & 1 x 1m scales

Appendix 1

Table of Contexts by Trench

Trench 1

Context No.	Context Description
(100)	Topsoil overlying the entire trench. Soft, silty, dark brown loam with frequent root disturbance. 150 - 200mm thick.
(101)	Subsoil below (100). Red brown sandy clay with occasional small stones. Very similar to underlying colluvial Deposit (102). May be the weathered surface of the natural colluvium. 150 to 200mm thick.
(102)	Red-brown sandy clay with occasional small stones and mineral (manganese) inclusions. Probably derived from colluvial activity. *c*550mm thick.
(103)	Mid grey, gritty, sandy clay with frequent manganese flecking. Sealed below (102). Probably an earlier colluvial deposit. Although the underlying deposit was not encountered within this trench, elsewhere the deposit was proven to overly natural Mercia Mudstone. *c*350mm thick as exposed.

Trench 2

Context No.	Context Description
(200)	Topsoil overlying the trench. Soft, silty, dark brown loam with frequent root disturbance. 100 to 200mm thick.
(201)	Red-brown sandy clay with frequent mineral (manganese) flecking and rare small stones. Probably colluvium. 590-620mm thick.
(202)	Mid grey, gritty, sandy clay with frequent manganese flecking. Sealed below (201). Probably an earlier colluvial deposit. Seals the natural mudstone. *c*100 to 280mm thick.
(203)	Stiff pink-brown clay with blue grey streaks. Mercia Mudstone natural substrate below (202) at base of trench.

Trench 3

Context No.	Context Description
(300)	Upper fill of Cut [303] sealing Pipe (302). Dark-brown soft sandy loam. Highly mixed with frequent root disturbance and small stones. Some red clay lenses. Modern deposit.
(301)	Lower fill of Cut [303] surrounding Pipe (302). Predominantly re-deposited grey clay with red clay lenses.
(302)	Iron pipe running roughly SSE to NNW across the western end of the trench within Cut [303].
[303]	Cut containing Iron Pipe (302) located at the western end of the trench. Filled by (300), (301) and (302). Truncates deposits (304), (305) and (306).
(304)	A sequence of tipped deposits in interleaved layers, dominantly re-deposited red-brown clay but with bands of red-brown sandy silt. This deposits forms the upper most deposit sealing the trench where topsoil would be expected. Some root disturbance. 360 - 400mm thick. Contained an assemblage of worked stone items and a cannon ball.

(305)	Red-brown sandy clay with frequent mineral (manganese) flecking and rare small stones. Probably colluvium. Sealed below (304). *c*340mm thick.
(306)	Blue-grey clay at base of trench. Dense natural clay that was heavily waterlogged.

Trench 4

(400)	Deposit of scalpings and heavy demolition rubble, including broken concrete, sealing the trench and forming the surface of the trackway to the rear of the houses fronting Kings Weston Avenue. 300 to 600mm thick.
(401)	Dark-brown silt below (400). Contains small stones and patches of sclapings. 100 to 250mm thick.
(402)	Stiff pink-brown clay with blue grey streaks and occasional intrusive patches of scalpings impressed from overlying deposit (401). Mercia Mudstone natural substrate below (202) at base of trench. Waterlogged.
[403]	Approximately N-S orientated straight linear cut in base of trench sealed below (401). Filled by (404). Not excavated as below the water table but both the fill and uniform nature of the cut suggest modern origins. Possibly a service trench.
(404)	Predominantly red-brown clay mixed with dark-brown silt and occasional small stones filling Cut [403].