

**Land off Marksbury Road, Knowle,
Bristol**

**Archaeological Watching Brief
(NGR ST 59055 70716)
HER 25265
BRSMG 2015.27**



General view of the site looking north.

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Avon Archaeology Limited
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SUMMARY

Avon Archaeology Limited was commissioned by Keith Kippax of Alun Griffiths (Contractors) Limited via Rebecca Collins of GVA Planning, to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording (Archaeological Watching Brief) during groundworks related to a proposed development (BCC application ref: 12/05581/P) on land off Marksbury Road, Knowle, Bristol (centred on NGR ST 59055 70716). The project focused on the construction of a short stretch of road and the instillation of services to the site. This project represents a single element of re-development of the site to provide a new General Practice Doctors Surgery and housing (to be confirmed).

During the groundworks associated with this project, no significant archaeological deposits and only a single feature, a drainage pipe (Cut 104) was recorded. The drain was of modern date and almost certainly associated with the former City of Bristol College building which was demolished prior to the commencement of this project, but was located on the site.

There was, however, evidence of how the site had been altered by the construction and the demolition of the above college building. A sudden rise in ground level at the southern edge of the project site suggested that the ground had been terraced, to provide a level platform on which to build. This terracing was associated with the original building of the former City of Bristol College and not with the current development.



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NOTES

Avon Archaeology Limited have 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.

PROJECT HEALTH AND 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 and Safety in Field Archaeology) and also the relevant requirements set out in Construction (Design & Management) Regulations 1994 (Health and Safety Commission 1994).

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1. INTRODUCTION

Avon Archaeology Limited was commissioned by Keith Kippax of Alun Griffiths Limited via Rebecca Collins Of GVA Planning, to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording (Archaeological Watching Brief) during groundworks related to a proposed development (BCC application ref: 12/05581/P) on land off Marksbury Road, Knowle, Bristol (centred on NGR ST 59055 70716).

The project was commissioned to satisfy a condition of planning consent, imposed by the City Archaeologist for Bristol City Council, which requires that the groundworks on the site are recorded in accordance with guidelines for Watching Brief projects issued by The Institute for Archaeology (IfA).

A Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by Avon Archaeology in 2013 as a method statement for the archaeological works, which was approved by the City Archaeologist of Bristol City Council.

Archaeological monitoring was required during the construction of a short distance of road, linking Marksbury Road and Timsbury Walk in an L shape and also to provide services to the site prior to redevelopment of the surrounding land. This project is a single element of a much larger development plan for this area of Knowle. The developments include a new primary school adjacent to the new road (nearing completion, planning ref: 13/04991/F), a proposed medical centre and residential housing (though plans for the latter are yet to be confirmed).

A unique site code for the project (**BRSMG 2015.27**) was supplied by Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery prior to the start of the works and was used as the site identifier for all records produced. A copy of this Report will appear within the Bristol Historic Environment Record under the reference number **HER 25265**.



2. THE SITE

The site is located in Knowle, a Parish of Bedminster, Bristol, within the edge of the inner city on the southern limits of the metropolitan region (**Figure 1**).

More specifically, the site is located at north west corner of a much larger development site, fronted to the north by Marksbury Road, to the east by Timsbury Walk, and to the south by open waste land, with Glyn Vale Road beyond. On the west side, the construction of a new primary school is, at the time of writing, nearing completion (**Figure 2**).

Topographically, the has a gentle slope rising from 16m aOD, a spot height on Marksbury Road, to approximately 17.5m aOD. At the southern boundary of the current project area, the ground steps up by approximately 2m and the ground level continues to rise more steeply up towards Glyn Vale Road where a spot height close to its junction with Kingswear Road measures 35m aOD.

The underlying solid geology of the site consists of Triassic Mercian Mudstone Group, a sedimentary bedrock comprised of mudstone and halite-stone, formed in hot dry environments. It is overlain by Quaternary Alluvium in the Malago Valley to the northwest (BGS, 2014).

There are no known designated or previously identified heritage assets within the proposed development site. There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Conservation areas, registered Parks and Gardens or World Heritage sites in close proximity of the site.

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following information has been extracted from the desk based assessment prepared by Avon Archaeological Unit Ltd (2009).

Prehistoric Periods (c.500,000 BC to AD 43).



There is no evidence of prehistoric activity within a radius of 1km of the site.

Roman Period (AD 43 - AD 410).

There is no direct evidence of Roman activity on or close to the site. However, archaeological investigations to the south, at Inns Court and also at Filwood Park, revealed Romano-British activity, which has been dated to between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD. Significant Roman-British activity has also been recorded during archaeological excavations on West Street, Bedminster, approximately 1.5km north west of the site.

Early Medieval and Medieval Periods (AD 410 - AD 1536)

Knowle was recorded in the Domesday book of 1086 as *Canole*, a manor in Somerset owned by Osbern Giffard, who also owned estates in Gloucestershire and Buckinghamshire. Prior to the 1086 survey, the manor had been a parish within Bedminster, as one of six 10th century tythings within the parish. The name 'Bedminster' suggests the presence of a pre-conquest monastery or 'minster' and therefore of established monastic/settlement activity in the area. The exact location of such a religious building is not known, but it is thought to have been close to the now demolished church of St John the Baptist, now a small park on the north side of Malago Road.

Excavations by Avon Archaeological Unit Ltd at Sheene Road (1997) and West Street (2005) both recorded evidence of early medieval activity, including structures, ditches and pits, all of which dated to the 13th Century.

Documentary records (BHER 2789M) identify Lower Knowle Court, a former range of buildings dating to the 16th century or possibly earlier, which was located c.200m north west of the site. The remains of these structures were demolished in the 19th century. The origins of a now in-filled pond, recorded on an 18th century plan of Lower Knowle Farm, are thought to be associated with the former Court buildings.

Post Medieval (AD 1536 - AD 1900)



There is evidence of small scale development in Knowle and Bedminster from the 17th century onwards. Buildings of this date remain in the area today; for example, Windmill Hill, a property located on Berrow Walk just over 200m east of the site. Industrial activity, in the form of milling, was evident from the 18th century onwards.

Following the Reform Act of 1832, the boundaries of the city of Bristol were extended to incorporate Bedminster, but Knowle remained on the outskirts. Knowle continued its existence as a rural village, comprising dispersed settlements, during the 19th century despite the industrial growth occurring in neighbouring Bedminster.

Cartographic evidence suggests that the development site itself was used for pasture farming. Field systems remained in place well into the 20th century.

Modern (AD 1900 - Present)

At the turn of the 20th century, Knowle began to develop more rapidly, with residential properties and allotments dominating the area by the 1930's. By 1936, Marksbury Road school had been constructed on the site. The site was heavily bombed during the 'Good Friday Raid' in 1941 which resulted in the school being badly damaged.

The school was rebuilt after World War II, and a larger educational building, the City of Bristol College, was constructed on the site. This has now been demolished to make way for a new primary school with plans for a medical centre and residential buildings (forthcoming).

4. AIMS

The aims of the archaeological watching brief at Marksbury Road were:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological features encountered.



To determine the extent of previous truncations of any archaeological deposits.

To enable the archaeological officer at Bristol City Council to make an informed decision on the basis of the extent and condition of any archaeology revealed, and to add any further possible requirements for further work in order to satisfy the planning conditions.

To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation.

5. METHODOLOGY

The work was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Avon Archaeology Limited, 2013), previously approved by the Bristol City Council Archaeological Officer.

Excavation was carried out by the contractor, using a 360 tracked mechanical excavator with a toothless grading bucket, under supervision of the Archaeologist.

All the information regarding the ground works was recorded in field documents, produced and compiled by Avon Archaeology Limited, in addition to a detailed photographic survey and technical drawings. The contexts were characterised individually and numbered in sequential order.

6. THE WATCHING BRIEF

Archaeological monitoring was required during excavations prior to the construction of a short L shaped stretch of road to join Marksbury Road with Timsbury walk. In conjunction with this, a main drainage channel and primary service cables and pipes were to be put in place prior to larger scale development.

All significant excavation centred on the footprint of the road, as all the proposed services were to be placed within its confines. The road is located across the footprint of the former college building.



A single trench approximately 7m wide was excavated using a 360 tracked mechanical digger, using a toothless grading bucket, following the L shaped line of the proposed road. It was excavated to an approximate depth of approximately 1.8m at the north end (Marksbury Road, **Plate 1**), becoming increasingly shallow with distance south and east, where excavation was limited to a depth of 0.5m below the working ground surface (**Plate 9**). At the south edge of the project site, the ground level steps up by 2m, forming a bank above the majority of the site (**Plates 5 & 6**). The road length is approximately 80m north to south and measures 40m east to west.

The drainage pipe trench was excavated to a deeper level within the confines of the road trench. The pipe trench measured approximately 1.5m wide, with a maximum depth of approximately 3m below current ground level (**Plate 8**).

Stratigraphic Sequence

The following stratigraphic sequence was recorded during the excavation, beginning with the earliest deposits first.

Natural substratum (102), a light reddish brown sandy clay, often containing mottled patches of pale blue-coloured clay, was reached at an approximate depth of 0.7m at the north end (Marksbury Rd) of the road trench, but was reached at an increasingly shallower depth to the south, generally at depths of between 0.2m and 0.3m below the current ground level.

The southernmost 2-3 metres of the north-south section of the road trench was cut into the bank (**Figure 2**) where there was a sudden rise in ground level of approximately 2.5m. The bank almost entirely consisted of Context 102. Cutting context 102 at the south end of the site was a modern drainage trench, Cut [104], filled by Context (103), which contained a ceramic pipe (**Plate 5**). The cut was aligned in an approximate east-west direction.

The natural was sealed at the north end by a re-deposited natural deposit (Context 101). Deposit 101 was a reddish-brown sandy clay, which contained occasional pieces of red brick, stone, mortar fragments and charcoal (**Plates 2 & 4**). The deposit had a maximum



thickness of 0.2m and was only visible in the northern half of the road trench, where, after approximately 45m /50m from the north end, it disappeared.

The uppermost deposit recorded, (Context 100) was made ground, a dark grey-brown friable silty gravel, containing frequent small pieces of brick, mortar and other general rubbish. The deposit varied in thickness from 0.10m at the south end of the site to 0.50m at the north end, and could be seen across the majority of the site. It formed the working surface of the project.

Table of Contexts

Context Number	Description
(100)	Made ground, dark grey brown friable silty gravel, containing frequent small pieces of brick, mortar and other general rubbish. The result of demolition of the college building and levelling prior to the start of this project. The deposit varies in thickness from 0.10m to 0.50m and it can be seen across the majority of the site.
(101)	Re-deposited natural. Reddish brown sandy clay containing occasional pieces of red brick, stone, mortar fragments and charcoal. Maximum thickness 0.2m. Visible in road trench for approximately 45m from the north end before disappearing.
(102)	Natural. Light reddish brown sandy clay, often containing mottled patches of pale blue coloured clay.
(103)	Fill for a drainage pipe trench, consists of grey silty gravel, containing large ceramic pipe. Fills cut [104]
[104]	Linear cut, with vertical sides and flat base for a drainage pipe, clearly 20th century date. Filled by 103, it cuts the natural. Visible in the bank at the south end of the site.

7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main aim of the project was to record any evidence of archaeological features and structures which predated the 20th century school and college buildings that until recently



occupied the site. During the project, excavations were limited to the footprint of a road which formed a relatively small percentage of the site.

There were no significant archaeological deposits, and only a single feature, a drainage pipe (Cut 104) was recorded during the project, which was of modern date and almost certainly associated with the former City of Bristol College building.

There was, however, evidence of how the site had been altered by the construction and the demolition of the college building. The sudden rise in ground level at the south edge of the project site suggested that the ground had been terraced, probably to provide a more level platform on which to build, probably associated with the original building of the former City of Bristol College.

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