



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation at Gulson
Road/ Vecqueray Street, Coventry**

NGR: SP 34389 78775

Nathan Flavell



ULAS Report No. 2019-005

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**An Archaeological Evaluation at Gulson Road/ Vecqueray Street
(SP 34389 78775)**

Nathan Flavell

For: Robertson Ltd

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Archaeological Evaluation at Gulson Road/ Vecqueray Street, Coventry (SP 34389 78775)

Nathan Flavell

Summary

Archaeological trial trenching was carried out intermittently on the vacant Buildbase site on the corner of Gulson Road and Vecqueray Street, Coventry, Warwickshire (SP 34389 78775) by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) between 13 August and 26 September 2018. The work was undertaken on behalf of Robertson Ltd in advance of new student accommodation. The site archive will be held by Coventry City Museums Service under the accession number GTRVS 18

Introduction

This document constitutes the report for an archaeological evaluation carried out on land on the corner of Gulson Road and Vecqueray Street, Coventry (SP 34389 78775 – Fig. 1). The work was undertaken on behalf of Robertson Ltd by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on 13 August, 20 & 26 September 2018. Planning permission has been granted for the construction of a new student accommodation on the site of the former Buildbase buildings and yard. The Planning Authority required a programme of archaeological work to determine the impact of the proposed scheme on any buried archaeology and produce a mitigation strategy for the site.

The site lies outside the historic core of Coventry, east of the City walls near Gosford Gate, just south of the Far Gosford Street conservation area. The work followed the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation (Hanes 2018).

Geology and Topography

The site consists of a sub-rectangular section of land to the NNW of Vecqueray Street in the east of the city of Coventry. The development site is in the eastern medieval suburb, adjacent to the Far Gosford Street Conservation Area and south of A4600, Sky Blue Way (Fig. 2). The site covers approximately 0.56 hectares and lies at a height of around 75m aOD. This site will be used to build student accommodation once work is complete.

The British Geological Survey of Great Britain website indicates that the underlying geology consists of alluvial deposits and overly Corley sandstone.

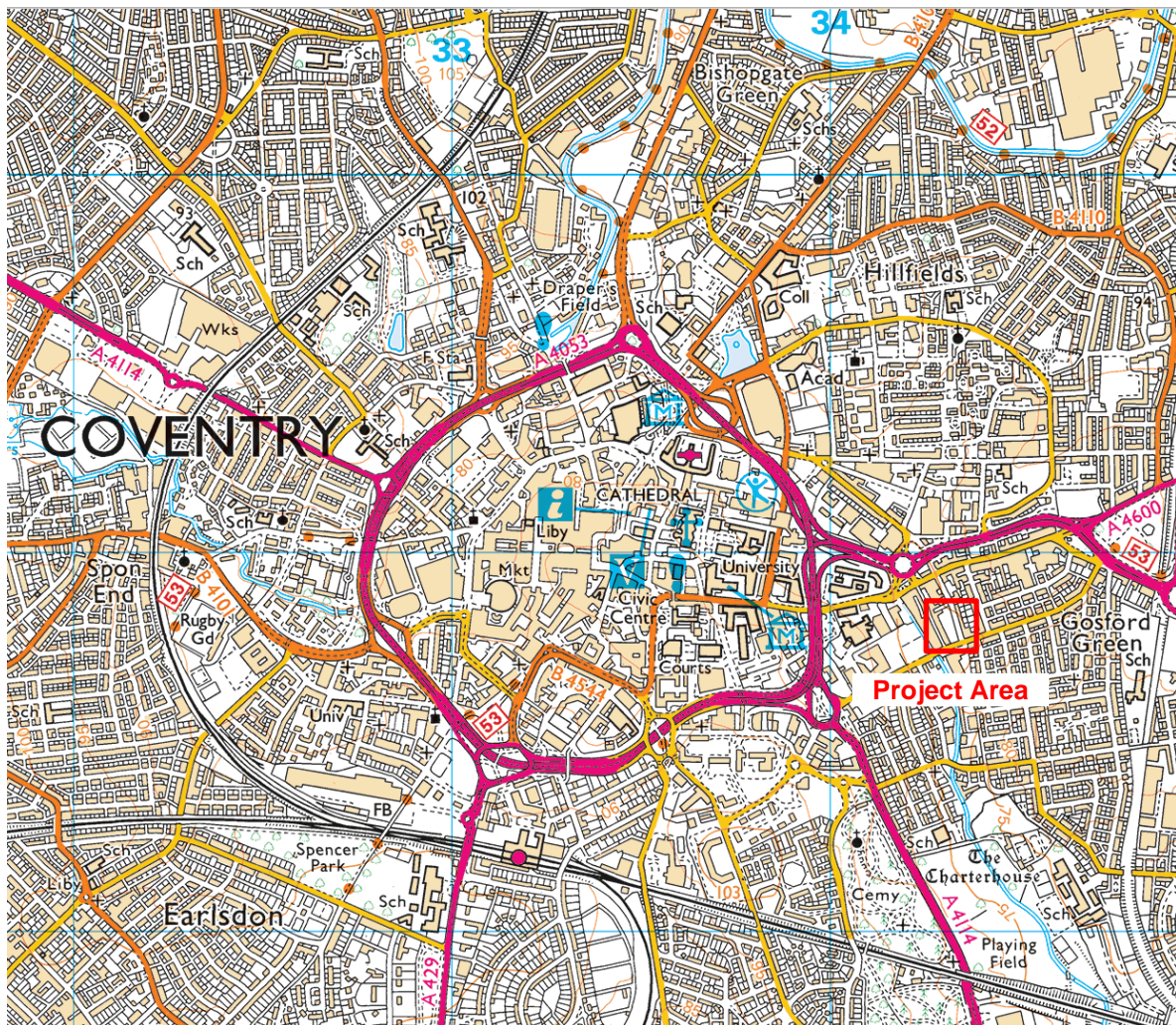


Figure 1: Site Location (Scale 1:50 000)

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Historical and Archaeological Background

An archaeological desk-based assessment was undertaken by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) for land at Gulson Road/Vecqueray Street, Coventry (NGR: SK 34389 78775) (Gonzales-Rodriguez 2017). The assessment area is accessed via Gulson Road, and is currently in use partly as a tarmacked car park and working yard situated on mostly flat ground. The rest of the site is covered by buildings of the Buildbase chain, and is surrounded by offices, warehouses and a hedge running along Vecqueray Street.

Far Gosford Street, to the north of the site, was fronted with houses as early as the 13th century, forming an extra-mural suburb outside of the city walls. A defensive ditch from Gosford Gate to what was then Mill Lane (now Gulson Road) was dug in 1403. During the Civil War period, 'Half-Moons' (entrenchments formed in a semi-circle) were dug. It is possible that these entrenchments may appear in the development site as their locations and sizes are unrecorded. Vecqueray Street was laid out to the south around 1910 to cope with a growing workforce.

The Far Gosford Street frontage was excavated in 2006, and revealed the archaeological potential of this nearby site (Mason et al 2017). The earliest archaeological evidence was alluvial deposits relating to a previous course of the River Sherbourne, however there is low

archaeological potential for both prehistoric and Roman deposits due to lack of evidence both historically and from the 2006 excavation.

There is moderate potential for medieval and post-medieval remains due to the proximity of the site to the Far Gosford Street Conservation area and the results of the 2006 Far Gosford Street excavation, which revealed evidence from the 13th to the 17th centuries, and also the Civil War period.

According to cartographic evidence the site was largely undeveloped until the late 19th century when terraced houses were erected. The preservation of archaeological material will be variable across the site due to modern and Victorian disturbance, and may be less frequent due to the positioning of the site outside the medieval city bounds and the protection of the conservation area. Whilst there are no known archaeological remains in the conservation area itself there is the nearby 'Emma's Well', a medieval holy well recorded on the earliest ordnance survey maps (SP 3432 7878, MCT143) (Fig. 4).

Archaeological Objectives

The main objectives of the archaeological work were:

- To identify any evidence for the survival of buried archaeological remains on the site which may be threatened by development of a site and area
- To determine the depth of burial, character, date, extent and state of preservation of any such remains
- To produce an archive and report of the results

Methodology

The original trench plan, as indicated in the WSI, consisted of a series of interventions located to cover the area of a new building (Fig. 3). Further trenches were added to this plan by request of the City Archaeologist (Fig. 4). Due to site constraints however, a number of trenches were moved or shortened to avoid active services resulting in 1 15m and 2 1.5m long trenches being excavated (Fig. 5). The trenches were excavated with a toothless bucketed machine down to natural substratum. The eastern trench was discounted because of filled in cellars from a row of terraced houses. Deep concrete machinery foundations were discovered under demolished buildings on the west side of the site, thus disturbing the ground to well below natural substratum. Foundations of a previous building in the southeast corner were also encountered at significant depth. The southernmost trench was also abandoned due to modern disturbance and building foundations on the east side, and an active sewer on the west side. Although it is hard to accurately pinpoint the location of Emma's well (marked as a red cross), it is believed that it has been truncated by 20th Century building works.

The sections and existing spoil heaps were visually inspected for features and finds. All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (2014) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological field evaluations* (2014).



Figure 2: Site location copyright Imagery ©2018 Google, Map data ©2018 Google

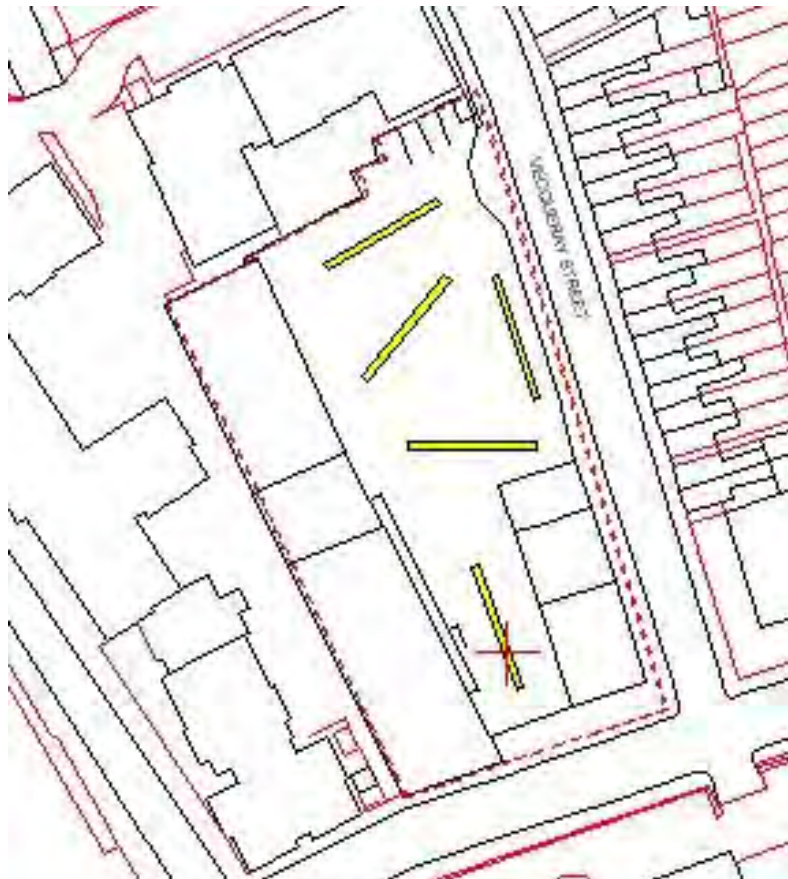


Figure 3: Proposed trench locations



Figure 4: Re-proposed trench locations

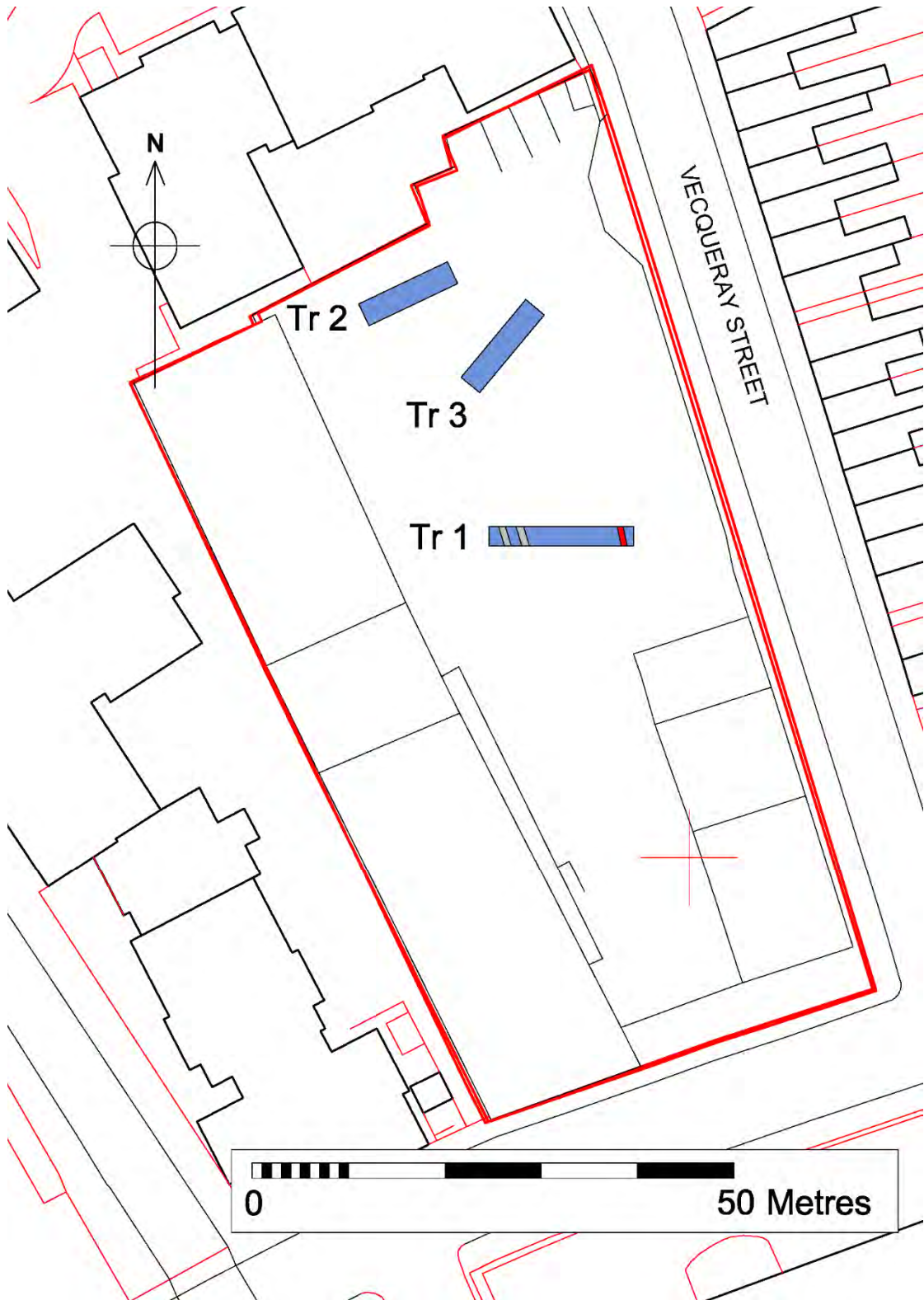


Figure 5: Overall site plan showing eventual trench locations

Results

The excavated trenches revealed no archaeological features, only alluvial layers and post-medieval land build-up.

Trench 1

Trench 1 measured 15m x 2m, and was aligned east-west (Figs. 6 & 7). The natural substratum was encountered between 2.3m and 2.43m. The natural was overlain two alluvial deposits, (104) and (105). The lower one, (105) was pale blue-grey silky clay, 0.1-0.26m thick. It was overlain by (104), mid grey-brown silky clay, 0.17-0.32m thick. A sherd of 11-12th Century pottery was found in this layer. Overlying this was a probable buried soil (103), dark brown sandy loam with occasional CBM fragments 0.34-0.45m thick. A total of three sherds of post-medieval pottery and 17th Century clay pipe came from this layer. This was covered by various layers making up a thick levelling deposit (102), consisting of pink, and mixed red-brown clays and sandy clays with CBM and charcoal inclusions, 1.05-1.15m thick. This was covered by a mixed topsoil/levelling layer (101), dark brown sandy loam and ashy/mortar mix, 0.4-0.5m thick. No archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench No.	Length (m)		Width (m)		Area (sq. m)		Min. depth (m)		Max. depth (m)		Archaeology?
1	15		2		30		0.7		2.43		No
Interval (m) from west end	0	5	10	14							
Topsoil depth	0.5	0.5	0.4	-							
Levelling layers	0.2	1.05	1.15	-							
Buried soil	-	0.35	0.45	0.34							
Upper alluvium	-	0.32	0.17	0.26							
Lower alluvium	-	0.15	0.26	0.1							
Top of natural substratum	-	2.37	2.43	2.3							
Base of trench	0.7	2.37	2.43	2.3							



Figure 6: Trench 1 looking west



Figure 7: Trench 1 section looking northeast

Trench 2

Trench 2 measured 10.2m x 25m, and was aligned northeast-southwest (Figs. 8 & 9). The natural substratum which was a red-pink clay sand with patches of gravel was encountered between 2.2m and 2.4m. The deposits were the same as in trench 1. The natural was overlain two alluvial deposits, (204) and (205). The lower one, (205) was pale blue-grey silky clay,

0.2m thick. It was overlain by (204), mid grey-brown silky clay, 0.1-0.3m thick. Overlying this was a probable buried soil (203), dark brown sandy loam with occasional CBM fragments 0.4-0.6m thick. This was covered by various layers making up a thick levelling deposit (202), consisting of pink, and mixed ref-brown clays and sandy clays with CBM and charcoal inclusions, 1.0-1.2m thick. This was covered by a mixed topsoil/levelling layer (201), dark brown sandy lam as ashy/mortar mix, 0.3m thick. No archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench No.	Length (m)		Width (m)	Area (sq. m)	Min. depth (m)	Max. depth (m)	Archaeology?	
2	10.2		2.5	25.5	2.2	2.43	No	
Interval (m) from southeast end	0	5	10					
Topsoil depth	0.3	0.3	0.3					
Levelling layers	1.2	1.0	1.2					
Buried soil	0.4	0.6	0.4					
Upper alluvium	0.1	0.3	0.3					
Lower alluvium	0.2	0.2	0.2					
Top of natural substratum	2.2	2.4	2.4					
Base of trench	2.2	2.4	2.4					



Figure 8: Trench 2 looking northeast



Figure 9: Trench 2 looking east

Trench 3

Trench 3 measured 10.5m x 25m, and was aligned northeast-southwest (Figs. 10 & 11). The natural substratum which was a red-pink clay sand with patches of gravel was encountered between 2.6m and 2.8m. The deposits were the same as in trench 1. The natural was overlain two alluvial deposits, (304) and (305). The lower one, (305) was pale blue-grey silky clay, 0.4-0.7m thick. It was overlain by (304), mid grey-brown silky clay, 0.2-0.4m thick. Overlying this was a probable buried soil (303), dark brown sandy loam with occasional CBM fragments 0.1-0.4m thick. This was covered by various layers making up a thick levelling deposit (302), consisting of pink, and mixed ref-brown clays and sandy clays with CBM and charcoal inclusions, 1.2-1.3m thick. This was covered by a mixed topsoil/levelling layer (301), of dark brown sandy loam and ashy/mortar mix, 0.3m thick. No archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench No.	Length (m)		Width (m)	Area (sq. m)	Min. depth (m)		Max. depth (m)		Archaeology?
3	10.5		2.5	26.25	2.6		2.8		No
Interval (m) from southeast end	0	5	10						
Topsoil depth	0.3	0.3	0.3						
Levelling layers	1.2	1.3	1.2						
Buried soil	0.1	0.3	0.4						
Upper alluvium	0.4	0.2	0.3						
Lower alluvium	0.7	0.7	0.4						
Top of natural substratum	2.7	2.8	2.6						
Base of trench	2.7	2.8	2.6						



Figure 10: Trench 3 looking southwest



Figure 11: Trench 3 looking west

The Post Roman Pottery - *Deborah Sawday*

The pottery assemblage was made up of four body sherds, weighing 9 grams and representing a maximum count of two vessels. Three fragments of china clay were also recorded.

Condition

The medieval pottery sherd showed evidence of abrasion and weighed only 2 grams. Three joining modern glazed sherds were also present.

Methodology

The pottery was examined under an x20 binocular microscope and catalogued with reference to current guidelines (MPRG 1998, MPRG 2016) and Warwickshire Medieval and Post-Medieval Ceramic Type Series (Soden and Ratkai, 1998).

The results are shown below (table 1). The table catalogues the pottery and miscellaneous finds by context, fabric, number and weight. Co-joining sherds are noted, whilst single sherds are counted as one vessel.

Discussion

The one medieval pottery sherd is of some significance, as there is little evidence of pottery of this date in the vicinity. However SMR, No. MCT465, records the presence of 11th or 12th century pottery to the rear of Gulson Hospital inside the town wall to the north of this extra mural site (Rodriquez 2017).

The clay tobacco pipe bowl, with a relief mark, IB on back of bowl is also of note. The pipe is dated c.1670-1710 with parallels from Atherstone and Packington, Warwickshire, and was presumably manufactured by a local maker, (Muldoon 1979, fig.3.143e).

Conclusion

Whilst the finds are limited in number, both the pottery and clay pipe are of some interest. They are indicative of activity in the area both in the early medieval and post medieval periods.

Table 1: The pottery and miscellaneous finds by context, fabric/ware, number and weight (grams).

Context	Fabric/ware	No	Gr	Comments
POTTERY				
103	MGW - Modern Glazed ware	3	7	Joining sherds – Modern yellow glazed.
104	WW20 - Stamford ware	1	2	Thin lead glaze on exterior, reduced grey. Abraded internally, later 11 th -12 th C. Thin lead glaze generally dated from the end of the 11 th C. at Stamford (Kilmurry 1980, 130).
MISCELLANEOUS				
103	China clay	1		Clay tobacco pipe bowl, spur type, relief mark IB on back of bowl. No rouletting. (Muldoon 1979, fig.3.14E). Muldoon comments: dated c.1670-1710 (Oswold

				pers. comm.) with parallels from Atherstone and Packington, Warwickshire. Presumably a local maker.
103	China clay	2		Clay tobacco pipe stem fragments.

The Environmental Remains - *Adam Santer*

Introduction

During an archaeological evaluation at Gulson Road/Vecqueray Street, Coventry two samples (numbered 1 and 2) were taken for the analysis of waterlogged plant remains. The samples were taken from alluvial deposits (104) and (105). The analysis of the environmental remains are presented here, together with a discussion of what potential there is for further analysis of the alluvial deposits in the vicinity.

Methodology

The samples consisted of a mostly pale blue-grey silky clay. 100ml (10%) of each sample was bucket floated and floatation fractions (flots) were collected a 300 micron mesh, then sorted for plant remains and other artefacts under an x10-40 stereo microscope. The residues were only scanned for remains. Plant remains were identified by comparison to modern reference material available at ULAS and their names follow Stace (1991).

Results

Sample 1 (104)

Sample 1 contained a medium density of plant remains (more than five items per litre). Uncharred bramble seeds (*Rubus* sp.), a buttercup seed (*Ranunculus* sp.) and two indeterminate seed casings were found. The sample contained some flecks of charcoal but no pieces measuring over 2mm in diameter were found (and therefore would not be deemed suitable for radiocarbon analysis). Rootlets were abundant in the sample.

Sample 2 (105)

Sample 2 contained a low density of plant remains (less than five items per litre). Just one uncharred indeterminate seed casing was found as was one small mollusc. Sample 2 also contained some small flecks of charcoal and an abundance of rootlets.

Table 2: The waterlogged remains found in samples 1 and 2

Sample	1	2	
Context	104	105	
Feature type	Alluvial deposit	Alluvial deposit	
Date	Undated	Undated	
Wild seeds			
<i>Ranunculus</i> sp.	1		Buttercups
<i>Rubus</i> sp.	4		Brambles
Indeterminate seed casing	2	1	Indeterminate seed casing
Other			
Mollusc		1	Mollusc
Total	7	2	
Soil volume (L)	10	10	
% Analysed	10%	10%	
Items per litre	7	2	

Discussion

Due to the presence of identifiable (to genus) plant remains Sample 1 contained the most potential for further environmental analysis. Buttercups grow in a variety of different environments whereas the bramble seeds are indicative of an environment with deciduous forests or shrubs.

Due to the small sample size it is not possible to tell whether or not the mollusc found in sample 2 is indicative of the potential for molluscan analysis at a later stage.

Conclusion and statement of potential

Two samples were taken from undated alluvial deposits. 100ml of each was sieved for the analysis of waterlogged remains; neither of which produced anything in high quantities. If further sampling is to be carried out on the alluvial deposits at Gulson Road then a suitable sampling strategy should be implemented.

Discussion

The evidence recovered from the trial trenching appears to show that the site remained undeveloped until the beginning of the 20th Century. The Samuel Bradford Map of 1748-9 shows the rear plots undeveloped, and even very little development on the street frontage. The first actual development within the site boundary is the row of terraced houses on the eastern side in the Edwardian period. While the frontages on the south side of Far Gosford Street were developed from an early stage, there appears to have been limited activity in the rear of those plots, particularly further south, as seems to be the case with the present site. Archaeological evidence from evaluation and excavation in 2006 has shown similar areas directly to the west contained early medieval alluvial deposits suggesting it was a generally wet area (Richards 2006, Mason et al 2017). Alluvial deposits from the River Sherbourne, located closer to the street frontage, dated to the 12th or 13th centuries and the river once flowed in a channel further to the east of the site (Mason et al 2017, pp. 119). The evidence from trenches 1-3 excavated within the north area of the old Buildbase yard present a similar picture of an unused, periodically waterlogged area for much of the sites history. The first edition OS 1889 (Fig. 12) clearly shows the River and Brook which have started to be culverted at this time and this coincides with the onset of development in the area. Trench 1 also found 20th Century occupation as evidenced on the 1961 OS map (Fig. 13), the rear of no. 24, and some sort of ancillary building outside the property boundary. Unfortunately the general disturbance across much of the site did not enable the location of ‘Emma’s Well’ to be tested, however it appears from the cartographic evidence that this medieval feature may have been compromised by earlier development.

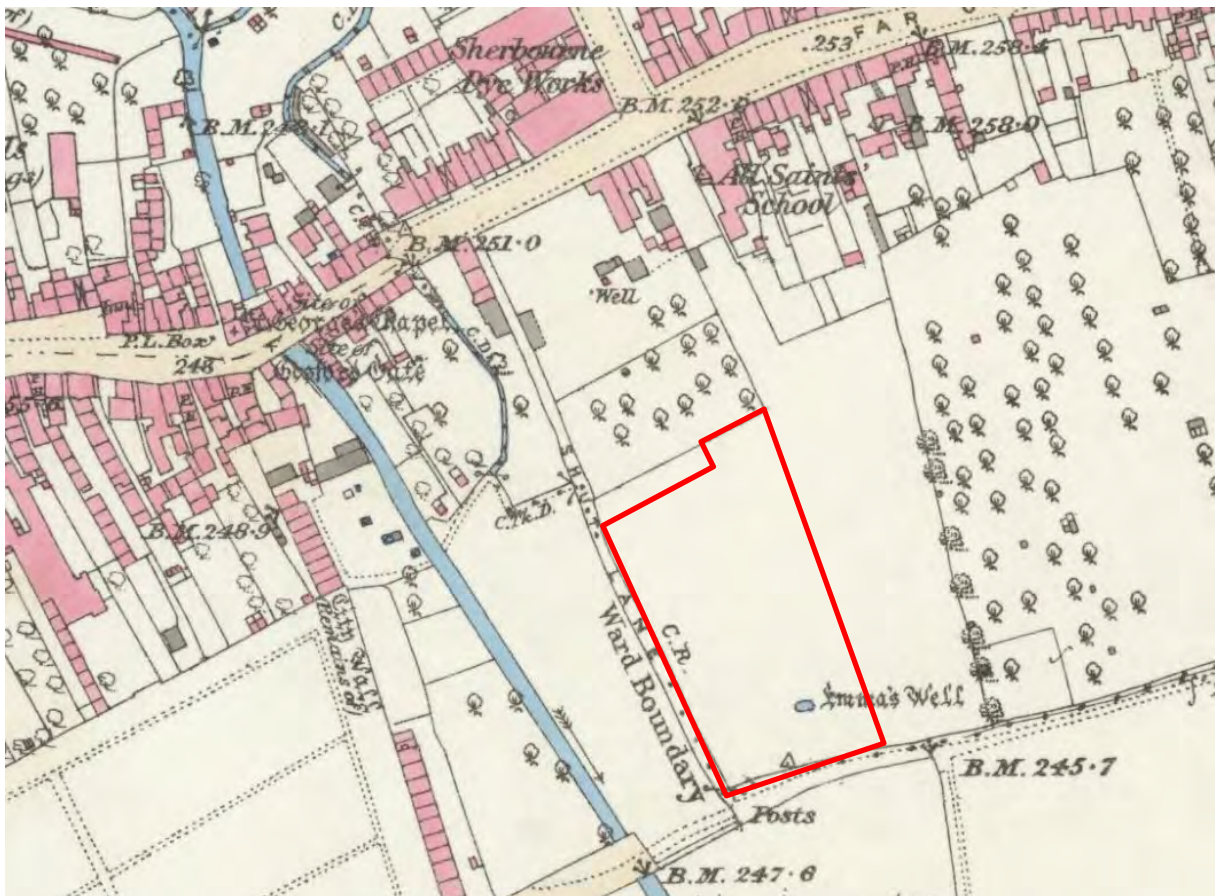


Figure 12: 1889 OS map showing Sherbourne River and Springfield Brook (in blue)

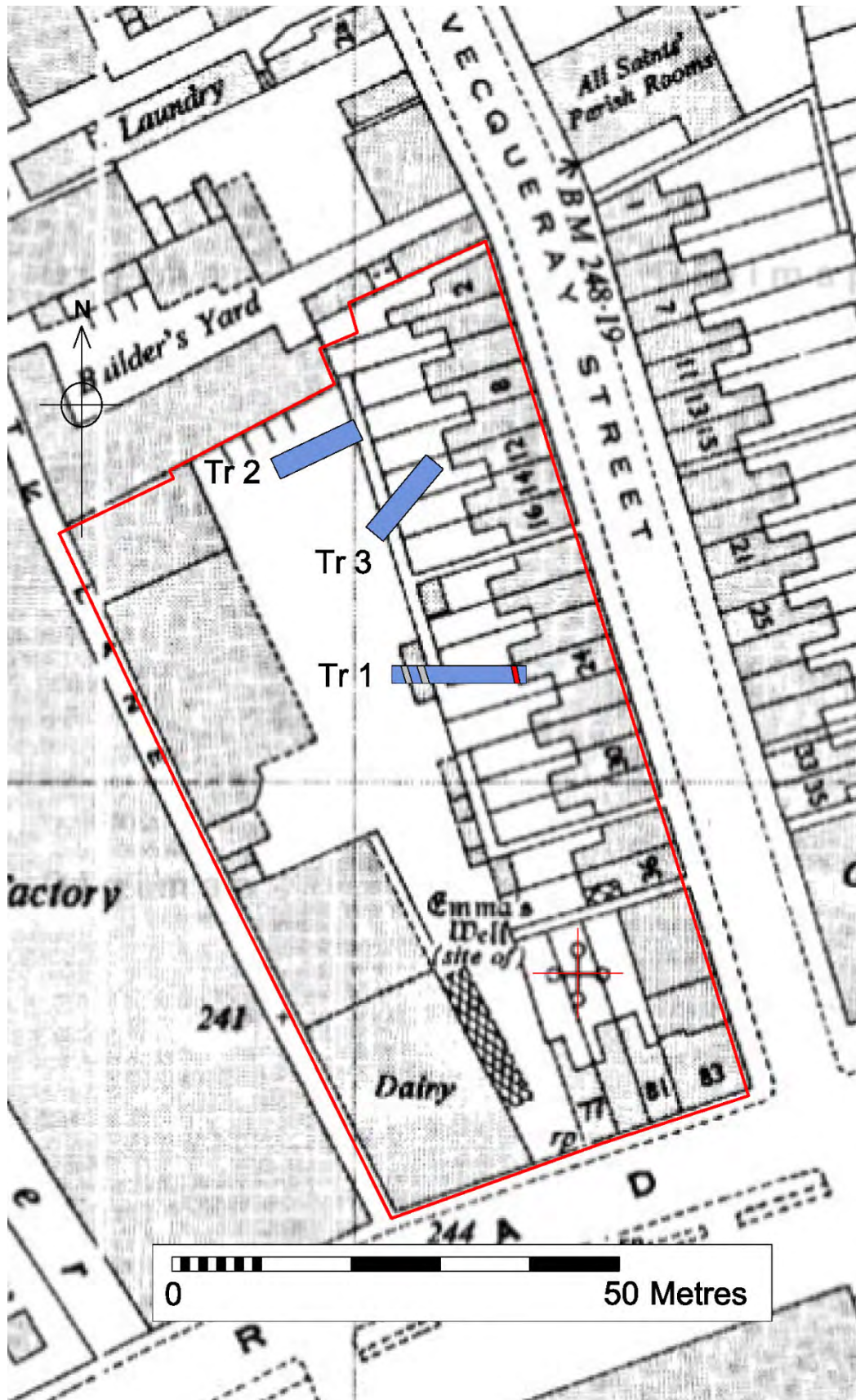


Figure 13: OS 1961 with overlain trenches

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Archive

The site archive for this phase consists of: 3 A\$ trial trench sheets, 1 A4 context index sheet, 18 A5 context sheets, 1 A4 sample index, 1 A4 photo index sheet and 21 digital photographs. It will be held by Coventry City Museum Services under the accession number GTRVS 18.

Publication

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work through the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York. A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in a suitable regional archaeological journal in due course.

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	universi1
	Project Name	Gulson Road, Coventry

	Start/end dates of field work	13-08-18, 20-09-18, 26-09-18		
	Previous/Future Work	DBA ULAS Report 2017-082		
	Project Type	Evaluation		
	Site Status			
	Current Land Use	Builders merchant		
	Monument Type/Period	Medieval, post-medieval		
	Significant Finds/Period	Pottery, clay pipe		
	Development Type	Residential		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Planning condition		
	Planning Ref.	FUL/2017/3097 – Condition 25		
PROJECT LOCATION	Site Address/Postcode	Gulson Road, Coventry CV1 2HQ		
	Study Area	0.56 ha		
	Site Coordinates	SP 34389 78775		
	Height OD	75m		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	ULAS		
	Project Originator Brief	Local Planning Authority (CCC)		
	Project Originator Design	ULAS		
	Project Manager	John Thomas		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Nathan Flavell		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Gilltown Ltd		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		Physical	Digital	Paper
	Recipient	Coventry City MusService	Coventry City MusService	Coventry City MusService
	ID (Acc. No.)	GTRVS 18	GTRVS 18	GTRVS 18
	Contents	Pottery, clay pipe	Photos	Context index, context sheets, photo records, sample record, contact sheet
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