

**An Archaeological Evaluation at  
Shires West, Site 5, Free School Lane,  
Leicester, (NGR SK 583046)**

**A Gnanaratnam**

**For  
Shires GP Ltd**

Checked by Project Manager
Signed:.....Date
Name:.....

**University of Leicester  
Archaeological Services**

University Road, Leicester, LE1 7RH  
Tel: (0116) 252 2848 Fax: (0116) 252 2614

## Table of Contents

Summary .....	1
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Aims and Methods.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Archaeological and Historical Background .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>The Prehistoric and Roman Period .....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>The Post-Roman Period .....</i>	<i>3</i>
<b>Results .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Trench 1.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Trench 2.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Trench 3.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Trench 4.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Trench 5.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Trench 6.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Trench 7.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<b>Auger Survey .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Archaeological Topography.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Discussion .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Appendix 1 - Selection of the Relevant Deed Evidence .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Appendix 2 – The Auger Results.....</b>	<b>20</b>

## List of Illustrations

<b>Figure 1 - Site Location at scale 1:1000 .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Figure 2 - The Projected Roman Roads and the Macellum.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Figure 3 - The 1881 OS Map with Main Property Boundaries Emphasised.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Figure 4 - Location of Sondages within Trenches 1 and 2 .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Figure 5 - Trench 3, North to top of page.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Figure 6 - Trench 4 with north to top of page.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Figure 7 – Schematic Sections Trenches 1 and 2 .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Figure 8 - The 1881 showing Trench Location at scale 1:750.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Figure 9 – Projected Depths and Nature of Archaeology Based on Auger Hole Data, ....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Figure 10 - The Auger Results for Trench 3 .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Figure 11 - The Auger results for Trench 4 .....</b>	<b>27</b>

## An Archaeological Evaluation at Shires West, Site 5, Free School Lane, Leicester, (NGR SK 583046)

### Summary

Between the 15/03/04 and the 22/06/2004, a staged archaeological evaluation was carried out by ULAS for Shires GP Ltd on the site of the Freeschool Lane carpark. The work was carried out as part of an archaeological impact assessment for the proposed Shires West development. The work established the presence of significant archaeological deposits, comprising early post-medieval or medieval building remains stretching back from the Highcross Street and Freeschool Lane frontages. These seem to include clay-built walls as well as clay or earth-bonded rubble walls.

Below these layers, were probably Roman deposits of varying thickness, seen mainly in an auger survey. Away from the Highcross frontage, the Roman appears to be sealed by a thick soil deposit.

At the rear of the carpark, sondages cut down to around 4m from the ground surface indicated that the area had probably been subject to truncation, perhaps from quarrying and the ground made up with poorly-differentiated soils. The truncation had removed any clearly stratified Roman deposits. The extent of the disturbance was not clear.

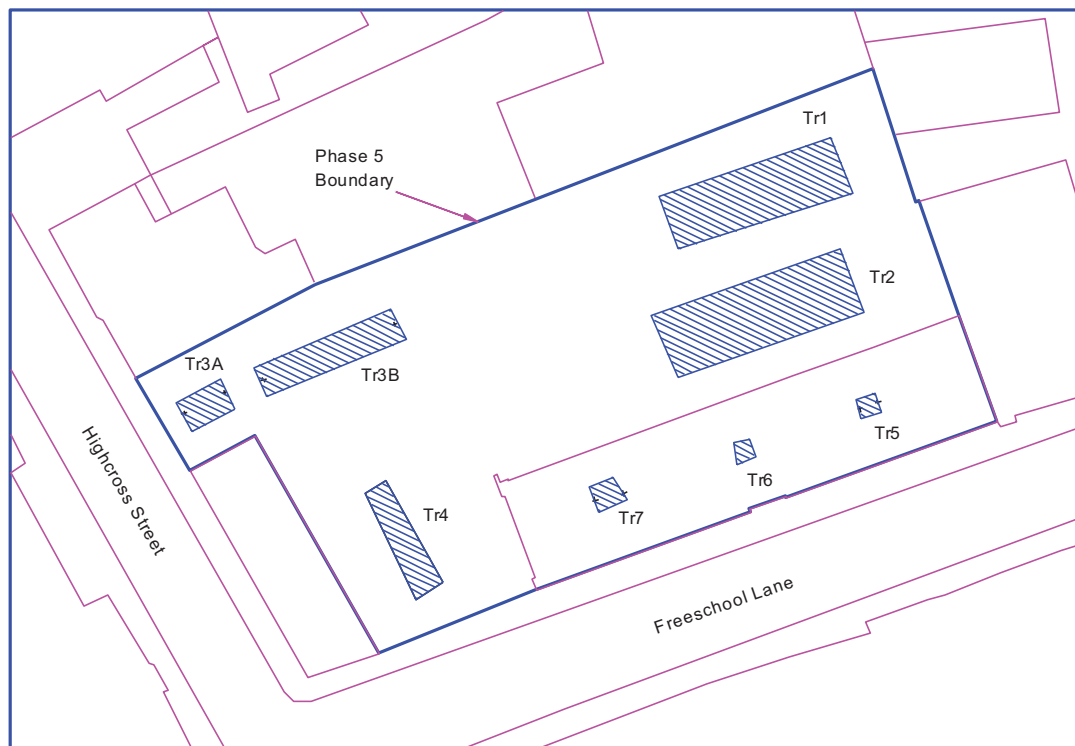


Figure 1 - Site Location at scale 1:1000

## **Introduction**

Between the 15/03/2004 and the 22/06/2004, a staged archaeological evaluation was carried out by ULAS for Shires GP Ltd, on the site of the car park at the junction of Highcross Street and Freeschool Lane (Fig. 1). The work was carried out as part of an archaeological impact assessment for the proposed Shires West development. The archive is to be deposited with Leicester City Museums Service with accession number A1. 2004.

## **Aims and Methods**

The aim of the evaluation was to establish the presence or absence of archaeological deposits, and if present their extent, character date, quality and state of preservation. This information would allow the Planning Archaeologist to assess the potential impact of the proposed development upon any archaeological remains. The work followed the design specification issued by ULAS.

All work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists' (IFA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*. The evaluation adhered to the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers' (SCAUM) *Health and Safety Manual* and ULAS's *Health and Safety Guidelines (2001)* and *Health and Safety Policy (2001)*. The recording followed the *ULAS Field Recording Manual*.

The trenches were excavated to the top of archaeological deposits, where present, or to the top of the natural substratum using a JCB 180° mechanical excavator using a 1.5m toothless ditching bucket and where necessary 0.60m toothed digging bucket. Due to the depths of overburden, it was necessary to step the sides of the trenches. In cases of exceptionally deep truncations, test pits were dug and observed from the top of the trench only. The trenches were of various lengths and were generally 3m wide at the base (fig.1).

The trial trenching provided data concerning depths of overburden and thickness of archaeological deposits, together with locations of modern disturbance and truncation, which are a first step in modelling the archaeological resource.

A hand auger was used to indicate the general nature of the underlying, and thus obscured, deposits. This proved successful although the resolution was poorer compared to that obtained by viewing the deposits in section.

## **Archaeological and Historical Background**

The following is largely summarised from Meek 2000.

### ***The Prehistoric and Roman Period***

Although Iron Age activity is known from the Westbridge area of the town and is regarded as a precursor to the Roman town, Iron Age activity is not known this far east.

The first Roman activity is represented by a fortlet built to dominate the crossing of the Soar (Clay and Pollard 1994, 46). An early settlement developed perhaps associated with the fort, and based around the river crossing. This phase is characterised by timber rather than stone buildings.

In the early second century, the street grid was laid out, on a different alignment to the early settlement (Fig. 2). This is likely to coincide with the establishment of Ratae as a tribal capital. In the middle and later second century a programme of construction of major public buildings was undertaken, including the building of the Forum and Basilica, the Jewry wall baths and at least one temple, and around this time masonry private houses begin to appear (Clay 1985, Clay and Pollard 1994).

Directly opposite the site lay the Roman Macellum, a market-hall of substantial size complementing the Forum to the south (Fig. 2). This was built in the early 3rd century and appears to have replaced at least one substantial townhouse of c. 125-175. Recent archaeological investigations have confirmed the good survival of the remains of these two structures (Derrick forthcoming).

The later Roman period in Leicester is poorly understood, being partly biased by poor survival and perhaps also through the use of less durable materials. Other than the cemeteries, located outside the city walls, there seems to be very little evidence of late settlement in Leicester.

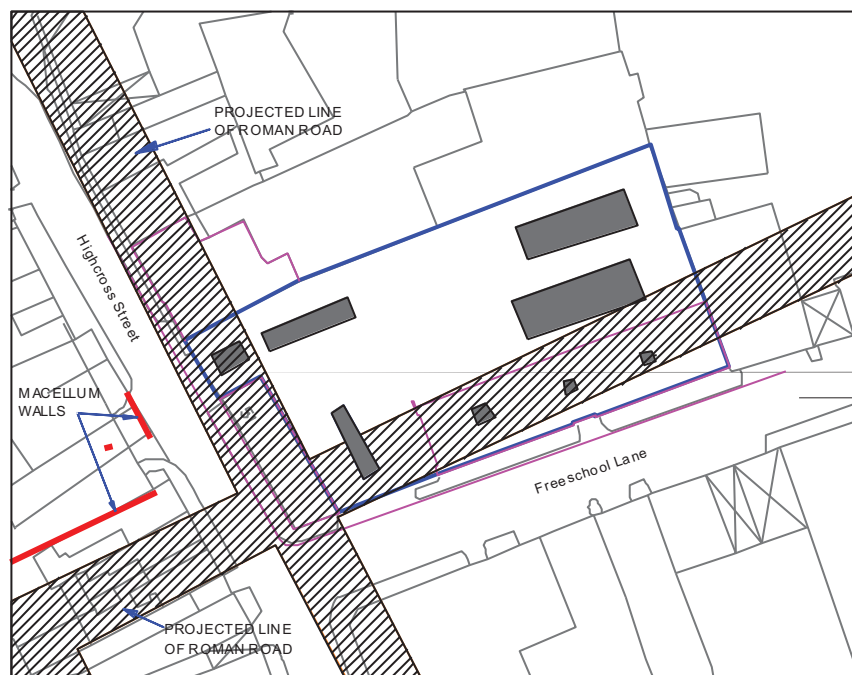


Figure 2 - The Projected Roman Roads and the Macellum

### *The Post-Roman Period*

The nature of occupation after the Romans is also poorly understood. Again, there is a lack of evidence, which may be the result of poor preservation but also of truncation, resulting from later periods of agricultural/horticultural activity. Some

250m south of the town, remains of Saxon structures have been found (Finn 1994, 167; Gossip 1998, 159-160) although no structures have been identified within the town. However, finds of early Saxon date on sites in the north-east quarter of the town may also point to settlement within the walls during this period (Conner & Buckley 1999, 83). The importance of the High Street in the Saxon and medieval town has been emphasised by Courtney (2000) who also noted that Saxon remains are most likely to occur on the street frontages.

Leicester became a Mercian bishopric after 670, and was one of the Five Boroughs of the Danelaw in the late 800s. The Domesday survey suggests that Leicester was a flourishing town with three hundred houses and six churches. Courtney suggests that the main focus for settlement was Highcross Street, which ran between the north and south gates of the town, beyond which were later suburbs.

In the medieval period, Highcross Street seems to have continued as a major focus for economic activity. Historical evidence for the period in Leicester is fairly sparse, one of the indicators of activity are medieval deeds which survive in two main collections, the Borough Records and the Wyggeston Hospital deeds (Hamilton Thompson 1963). These are few in number, but while there are only a few deeds surviving for the Highcross Street, a much greater number survive for Freeschool Lane (the former Dead Lane). Whatever the reason for this, it does indicate the existence of a number of individual buildings and properties along what seems to be a minor lane. Among these were the *capital messuage* of William Okham (Hamilton Thompson 1963, 523) which might include a substantial building.



Figure 3 - The 1881 OS Map with Main Property Boundaries Emphasised

The pattern of settlement along the Highcross Street is poorly understood, due to a lack of historical records and until recently a lack of archaeological investigation. Recent work at 9 St. Nicholas Place, has shown quite dense settlement, some way back from the frontages (Kipling forthcoming). It seems that the Highcross Street was more densely settled than many other parts of town such as the 'crofts of St Michael's' so-called in a deed of 1460 (Hamilton Thompson 1963, 633).



Map evidence suggests that the line of the eastern boundary of the site, continues northwards up to St. Peter's Lane. This forms a large block that could indicate an early single property which was since sub-divided (Fig. 3). To the east of this block, is a row of properties stretching north/south between the two lanes, a pattern indicated in the medieval deed evidence (Hamilton Thompson 1963, 523, 524).

The later map evidence shows buildings along the Highcross Street frontage but Freeschool Lane as almost empty. The Stukeley plan of 1722 shows no buildings at all on the Freeschool Lane frontage at all, whilst the Roberts plan of 1741 shows a built-up block at the east end of the lane but nothing in the vicinity of the site. The 1828 map shows occasional buildings on both sides of Freeschool Lane, and an L-shaped building within the development area, probably beneath the present garage. This also clearly shows the whole of the Highcross Street frontage as being built up. Overall, the plans might indicate that the Highcross Lane had decreased in importance by the post-medieval period.

## **Results**

Trenches 1 and 2 were excavated in the eastern part of the carpark, however due to problems with depth and contaminants, it was necessary to excavate a series of deep sondages rather than the continuous trenches which were intended (Fig. 4).

Trench 3 could not be excavated as a single continuous trench due to a service running across the line of the trench, and so was excavated as trenches 3A and B.

Trench 4 was excavated without problem.

Further problems were encountered in the excavation of trench 5 in the former garage. Here, due to problems in ensuring adequate ventilation it was decided to only excavate three test pits, trenches 5, 6 and 7, rather than a single continuous trench.

### ***Trench 1***

Here, three deep sondages were excavated due to the depth of homogenous soils encountered (Fig. 4, 7). Demolition rubble was encountered down to a depth of around 0.5m from ground level. This sealed darker soils which in turn lay over a cobbled yard surface, of probable Victorian date (41). Below this lay reddish sands containing modern brick (42)/(48).

These deposits lay over (43)/(49)/(39) which were mid to dark, grey-brown silty clays. These were loosely compacted, loamy, soil deposits containing few inclusions other than pebbles. These deposits were too deep to view *in situ*, and could only be inspected as they were being removed by machine. However, the main context divisions were fairly clear.

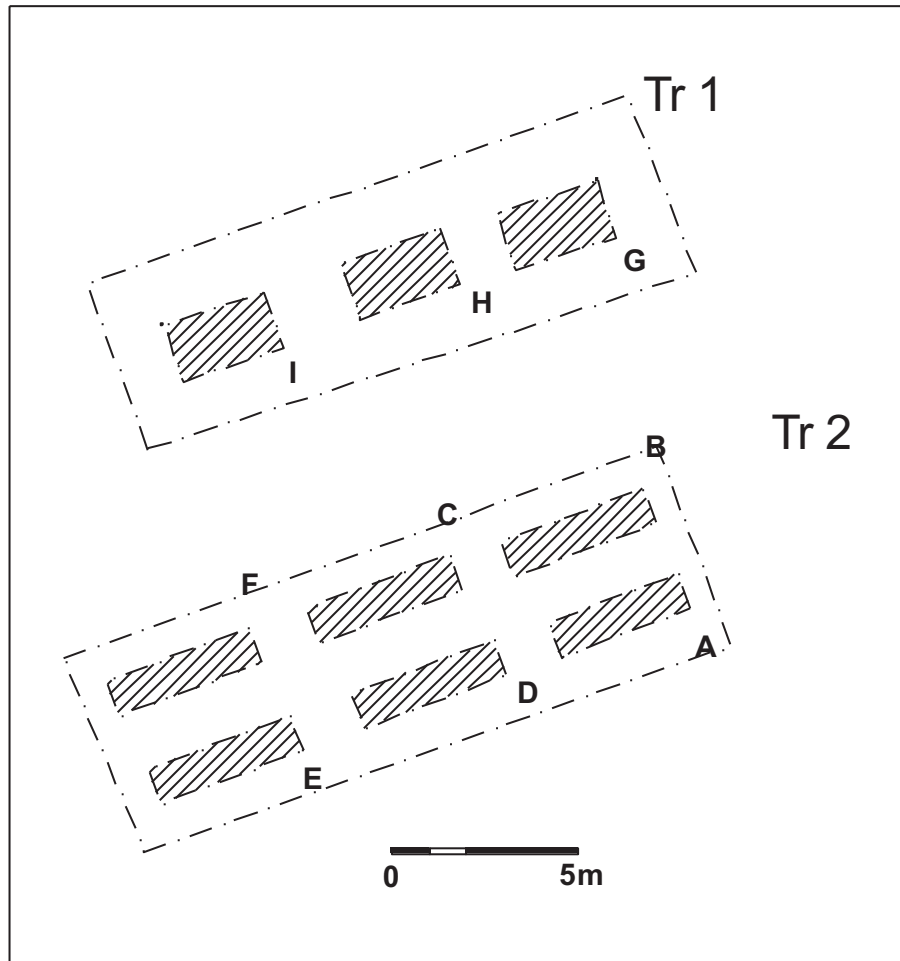


Figure 4 - Location of Sondages within Trenches 1 and 2

These deposits sealed (35), (44) and (51) the natural gravels at between 59.96 – 59.30mOD. Context (44) consisted not only of the natural orange iron rich gravels, but also had remnants of a lighter grey silty layer over the gravels. This is very likely to have been the original subsoil layer. Similar deposits were seen at the former St Margaret's Baths (Gnanaratnam 2003, 27), the 1989 Shires Excavations (Buckley and Lucas forthcoming) and elsewhere in Leicester such as near Vaughan College (Gnanaratnam 1999).

The presence of the subsoil-like deposits provides further confirmation of the depth of the natural gravel.

### ***Trench 2***

The upper part of the stratigraphic sequence in this trench was more complex than in trench 1, and could only be viewed in a series of small but deep sondages (Fig.4, 7).

The natural sands and gravels (5), (15), (10), (25) and (34) were seen from around 59.31 down to 58.27mOD. In the case of (34), there was around 0.5m of greyish silty sand sitting over the gravels. This was probably a remnant of the pre-Roman subsoil



seen elsewhere in the town. Again, although the deposit was too deep to be inspected *in situ*, the remnant subsoil does provide a lower level for any Roman deposits that may have been present.

In the eastern four sondages, sitting above the natural were dark, greenish or greyish loamy deposits, (4), (14) (23) and (24). These appear to have been similar garden soils possibly of similar date. Above these were (8) and (22) lighter brown clean loamy deposits.

In the sondage E, in the west of the trench was (29) which may have been a similar garden soil. This sat over (30), a mid-brown sandy silt, which contained noticeable quantities of Roman pottery. This appeared very different to the overlying deposits and may have been a remnant fragment of Roman stratigraphy. For this reason, the deposit was left *in situ*.

In sondage F, in the west of the trench, the natural was sealed by (33), which was a light grey fine mottled, fine-grained deposit. This appeared to be a mixture of ash or lime mixed with human waste. This is likely to have been of medieval or post-medieval waste. Typically, such deposits are found in cesspits, which would suggest that the overlying deposit (32) is likely to have been a fill, rather than a continuation of the nearby garden soil layers. The top of this deposit was partly defined by (45), a layer of mortar fragments of around 200-400mm thick. This did not seem to be part of an *in situ* structure, and was more likely part of a dump. The top of this deposit was at around 60.25mOD.

Another pit was seen in sondage B, filled with a dark grey-brown loam, (11). The top of this was seen at around 60.82mOD.

Apart from sondages E and F, the only other evidence for horizontal stratified deposits came from sondage A. Here two deposits were revealed on roughly the same level. These were (6) a layer of reddish clay or silty clay and (3) a yellowish layer of sandy, coarse gravels. It is possible that these represent a gravel surface and some type of structural remains. However, these were too deep to inspect *in situ*, so they remain ambiguous, although still strongly reminiscent of other building remains seen in Leicester at St Margaret's Baths and elsewhere (Gnanaratnam 2003, 22; 2001, 17).

Deposits (3) and (6) were overlain by a dark grey loam (2) and context (45) was overlain by a similar dark loam (31).

### ***Trench 3***

#### *Trench 3A*

The upper part of the trench (Fig. 5) consisted of make-up layers for the tarmac surface, sitting on top of modern demolition deposits. These sealed two east-west aligned walls, which survived to a depth of 62.78mOD. These were of brick, sat upon a single course of mainly Dane Hills sandstone blocks, together an area of possibly gypsum cement and brick. The stone did not seem to represent a re-used earlier

foundation, but rather a simple levelling course for the brickwork. These were part of the gateway shown on the 1881 plan.

Below the northern of the two walls was a seemingly unrelated area of stonework (106). It was not possible to resolve whether this was a dump or a disturbed wall during this phase of fieldwork.

The two brick walls seemed to abut a third wall (101). This consisted of substantial stone footings built with an outer skin of stone with a rubble clay-bonded core with a surviving brick wall set on top of it. The size and build of the wall suggest that this was the base of a well-built stone wall that was later replaced in brick. Wall (101) was on the same line as the rear wall of the Free Grammar School and is potentially of similar antiquity.

The two brick walls were machined off to better assess the underlying deposits. A mortar floor (106) was partly revealed which appeared to be associated with wall (101).

The fact that this was physically below the probably nineteenth-century brick walls strongly suggests that both (106) and (101) were of some antiquity. Only a couple of sherds of pottery were retrieved, that could be associated with the floor. These were both of late medieval/early post-medieval date, and a large fragment of glazed medieval ridge tile was also recovered, which sat directly on the floor itself.

Of the two modern intrusions in the trench, one was too narrow to allow access, and the other only allowed limited inspection of the underlying deposits. These appeared to be soil-like deposits to a depth of around 0.60m from the floor.

### *Trench 3B*

The upper part of the trench consisted of modern make-ups over Victorian brickwork including brick floors. These appeared to be from an industrial building rather than from a domestic dwelling. A series of medieval architectural fragments were recovered from an area of Victorian brick rubble. These consisted in the main of tracery fragments of probably later medieval date. These are likely to derive from the medieval church of St Peter's, demolished in the mid-16th century and known to be the source of much of the building material for the Freeschool.

Below this were two soily deposits, contexts (155) and (156), which are likely to have been remnant garden soils. The lower of the two (156) was more compact but this is likely to be the result of its depth and consequent lack of recent bioturbation.

At the west end of the trench was what appeared to be a large cut feature with a probable clay lining (123) surrounding fill (152). This cut layer (121) which was of uncertain function.

To the south of these deposits was a series of clayey deposits, (123), (128), (131) (141) and (147), which ran eastwards along the southern edge of the trench. These included patches of stone and slate.



Figure 5 - Trench 3, North to top of page

Although unprepossessing, these were likely to be the remains of a clay-built building, strikingly similar to that seen on the St Margaret's Baths site (Gnanaratnam forthcoming). It is likely that the remains would include deposits derived from the collapse or demolition of structures as well as *in situ* structural remains.

To the north of these deposits was an area of a darker soily deposit, context (140). This appeared to be little more than a remnant of the overlying soils, and so a shallow sondage was excavated through this. This exposed further clayey deposits, (138) (144), associated with a line of rubble and slate. Again, this was identical to deposits seen on the St Margaret's Baths site, and is very likely to represent the remains of a clay-walled building. The lines of stone at St Margaret's Baths were not intended to act structurally as footings, instead where seen they appear to do little more than mark out the centre lines of the mud walls, a consideration in the days before ground paint.

To the east of these, the ground sloped away and due to health and safety considerations it was not possible machine below the base of the garden soils. However, the lower garden soils (146) and (150) only yielded post-medieval pottery and are unlikely to have been modern. They also had an ambiguous relationship with a earth-bonded, stone-built wall (149), which was aligned north/south.

In the southeast corner of the trench, a small sondage was excavated through these soil deposits. This came down to the top of reddish clayey deposits (151). Although only a small area was examined, this appeared to be very similar to the clayey, probable building remains seen to the west.

#### ***Trench 4***

At the south end of the trench (Fig. 6) was an area of mid brown silty clays (167) and (177) with slate fragments and stone rubble. A slot showed that this was a deposit formed up against standing wall (188). This appeared to be a clay bonded rubble wall, of a type common in Leicester. The wall was at least 0.30m wide although the rear of the wall had been removed by a probable pit with fill (163).

The eastern edge of (167) was defined by a shallow flat-bottomed slot with fill (164). The function of this slot is unclear, it may have been structural feature, such as a beam slot. The fill (164) did not show any silts, that might be expected were it for drainage.

Over most of the middle of the trench were dark-grey silty deposits. If these were pit fills they appeared to be fairly shallow. A sondage excavated in the middle of the trench showed a flat deposit of red clay (184) with dark staining over the top. Below this was a thick deposit of demolition rubble consisting of mortar fragments with burnt clay fragments of probably burnt daub (187). It is likely that these were layers rather than fills, and could represent building remains especially given the adjacent remains.

At the north end of the trench was an area of yellow-brown silts formed up against a clay-bonded rubble wall (173). A thin layer of crushed sandy lime mortar lay next to this. It is not clear if this was a fragment of floor, damaged during machining and subsequent cleaning or just a thin dump.

A curious short linear feature occurred just south of wall (173) of unknown function. In the floor of the cut [186], a red brown clay was observed, similar to (184). To the west of these was a disturbance, probably a pit and a single posthole (154). No related features were visible.

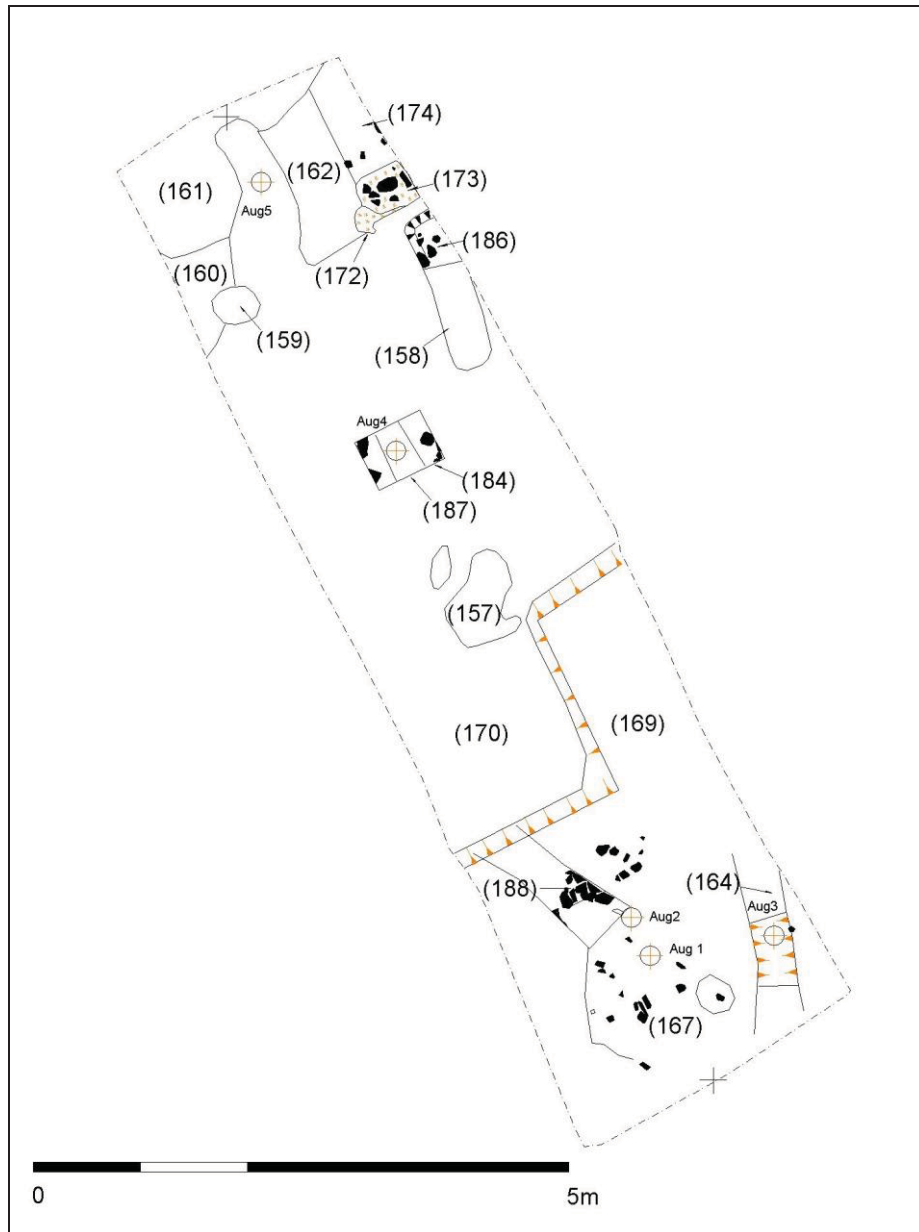


Figure 6 - Trench 4 with north to top of page

In summary, the trench indicated reasonable survival of medieval or post-medieval building remains. These consist of clay-bonded rubble walls and deposits of red clay, a common building material which may well represent demolition or *in situ* building remains.

### ***Trench 5***

This was located within the former garage and consisted of a test pit. This revealed a series of deposits of Victorian date containing brick. These were remains of the domestic dwellings shown on the First Series OS plan. These continued down to a depth of around 1.5m from ground level. An attempt to auger below this level proved unsuccessful, due to the quantities of brick rubble in the underlying deposits.

### ***Trench 6***

This was truncated down to a depth of around 1.40 from ground level by cellaring. Below the floors was a dark grey-brown soil, which continued down for roughly 0.50m. No evidence was encountered for significant archaeology.

### ***Trench 7***

This was truncated down to a depth of around 1.70m by a cellar. The southernmost wall of the cellar was located and partly removed to give a section of the surviving stratigraphy. The floor of the cellar was not removed. The section showed soil deposits from below the floor of the garage. No evidence was seen for building remains, although there was no indication of truncation.

### **Auger Survey**

Due to the difficulties of examining lower deposits, an auger survey was conducted to try to characterise the underlying stratigraphy (Fig. 9, 10, 11). Whilst the auger is perfectly good at locating major changes in the underlying stratigraphy, it is less able to characterise the rapid small changes, which are most likely to be of archaeological significance.

However, the survey was able to locate a series of deposits which are likely to be building materials. Whilst these could be redeposited and derive from simple ground raising, there is a strong likelihood that these represent *in situ* buildings and are best treated as such.

Near the frontage below the building partly exposed in trench 3A, were a series of reddish clayey deposits which are likely to be building remains, at a depth of around 62.20mOD down to around 61.61mOD.

In the same location from around 60.80mOD were a further series of reddish and orange clayey and sandy deposits which were also likely to represent building remains. These are almost identical to deposits seen on the opposite side of Highcross Street at a similar level, at the Highcross Travelodge and Casino site (Derrick forthcoming). These were of Roman date, relating to the Macellum, these are thought to start at a height of around 60.60mOD (Clark 2001).



Further away from the frontage, in trench 3B there again appeared to be building remains from a depth of around 61.70mOD down to around 60.30mOD, these consisted mainly of reddish-brown clayey deposits. Below this level in the middle to end of the trench was a seemingly homogeneous dark grey-green, clayey silt with greenish iron mottling. The extent of this deposit and the similarity in four separate auger holes suggests that this was a single deposit, rather than an area of medieval pitting. This was seen to start between 60.60 to 60.10mOD. This deposit reached a depth of 59.30mOD although it may run out at around 60.60mOD at the very east of the trench.

Further deposits of probable building remains were seen at a depth of around 59.30mOD. A solid gravel was encountered at a depth around 58.60mOD, although it is not clear whether this was the natural gravel, however further augering was impossible.

Augering was only possible in the middle and rear of trench 4, due to the presence of a layer of stone fragments in the south of the trench. However, this indicated that there were likely to be building remains from around 61.00m down to around 60.00m which may reflect a slope. A thick soil deposit lay below this, similar to that seen in trench 3. Below this was a further deposit of material very similar to the Roman layers seen on the Highcross Travelodge and Casino site (Derrick forthcoming).

Gravel was encountered at a depth of roughly 59.25mOD, although it is not clear whether this was the natural substratum or not.

### **Archaeological Topography**

(see Figs. 7, 9, 10, 11)

#### **Trench 1**

Probable garden soils were seen from around 61.00mOD down to a depth of around 59.60mOD. Below this appeared to be the natural substratum, consisting of a sandy gravel.

#### **Trench 2**

Garden soils were seen from a depth of around 61.80mOD generally down to a depth of 59.00mOD, below which was the natural gravel sub-stratum. In the southeast corner, possible Roman deposits were seen at around 59.90mOD going down to natural gravel at around 59.03mOD.

A probable medieval cess-pit was seen to cut the natural down to a depth of at least 57.60mOD.

#### **Trench 3**

Near the frontage in Trench 3A, significant archaeological deposits start at around 62.59mOD (wall stub) with floors starting at 62.53mOD. Building remains are likely below this from around 62.30mOD down to around 61.60mOD.



There seem to be soily deposits below to a depth of around 60.80mOD when probable building remains start again going down to an unknown depth.

Further east in trench 3B, significant archaeological deposits, comprising building remains start at a depth of around 61.94mOD and appear to continue to a depth of around 60.40mOD. Below this, is a homogenous soil-like deposit with greenish iron speckling or mottling which was seen over much of the trench. This seems to go down to a depth of around 59.40mOD and perhaps 59.60mOD in the east end of the trench.

Below this are further probable building remains down to a depth of around 58.90mOD.

Possible natural was seen at a depth of around 58.66mOD.

#### Trench 4

Near the Freeschool Lane frontage, the top of significant archaeological deposits starts at around 61.90mOD. In the rest of the trench, the significant deposits start at around 61.60mOD.

Near the middle of the trench soil-like deposits were seen from around 60.80mOD down to around 60.00mOD, with probable building remains from 60.00mOD down to around 59.40mOD.

#### Trench 5

This contained Victorian building remains from a 61.90mOD down to around 60.70mOD. It was not possible to hand-auger through these deposits.

#### Trench 6

This was cellared down to a depth of around 60.50mOD; below this appeared to be a series of soils down to a depth of around 59.10mOD, which may be the top of the natural substratum.

#### Trench 7

This was partly cellared but showed soil-like deposits from a depth of around 61.90mOD down to at least 61.10mOD. Below this was a series of similar soil-like deposits down to a depth of around 59.00mOD. Below this level were a series of probably natural deposits consisting of brown sands on top of sandy gravel, the gravel being at around 58.40mOD.

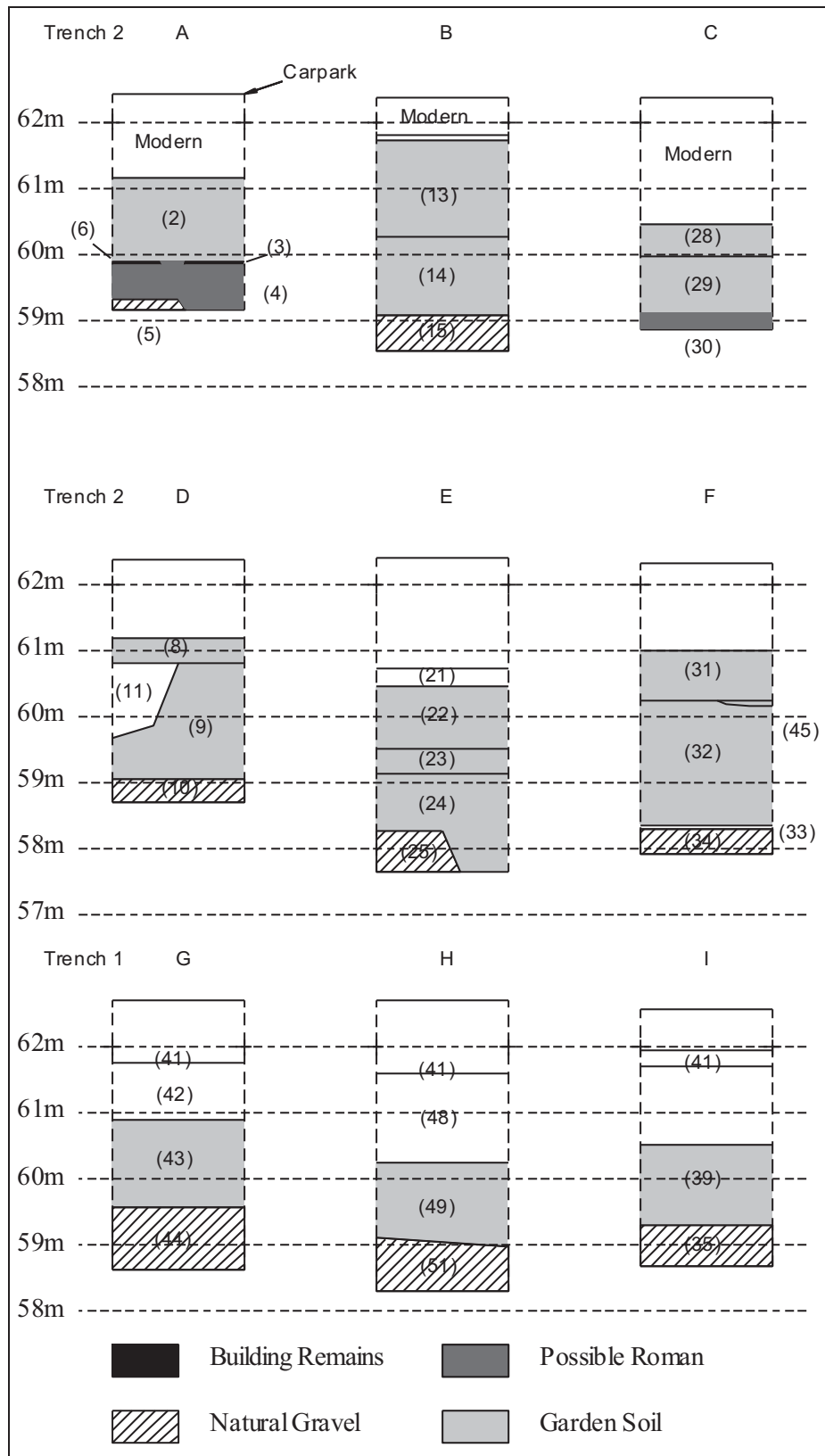


Figure 7 – Schematic Sections Trenches 1 and 2

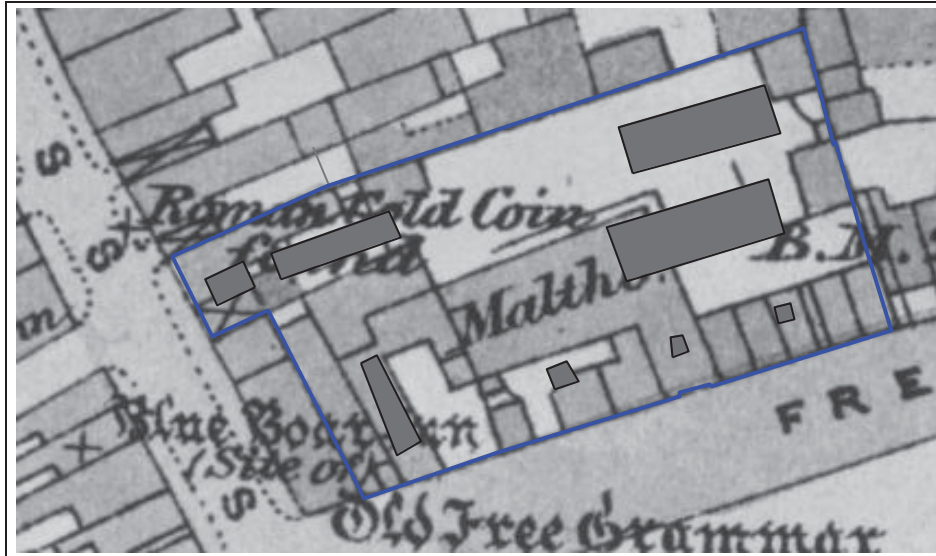


Figure 8 - The 1881 showing Trench Location at scale 1:750

## Discussion

This phase of work was evaluative and due to the complex nature of the stratigraphy, the limited areas examined, difficult site conditions and the paucity of dating evidence means that the work resists all but the most basic interpretation.

Building remains of likely post-medieval or medieval date were seen in trenches 3 and 4. These appeared to stretch back from both the Highcross Street and Freeschool Lane frontages. In this part of the town it is quite possible to reconstruct the later medieval and post-medieval landscape, with the Freeschool directly opposite the Blue Boar Inn, and Trench 3A almost directly opposite the Admiral Rodney public house (Derrick forthcoming). Both of these were timber-framed buildings of medieval date, which were standing into the 19th century. This also indicates that the present street level at this point has hardly altered over the last few centuries.

The full extent of these remains is not clear, in particular, how far eastwards building remains may extend. It is quite feasible for them to extend some distance back from the frontages, especially along the main medieval road through the town. This was seen at the recent excavations at 9 St Nicholas Place (Kipling forthcoming).

Although the post-medieval maps may indicate a lack of activity, there is no guarantee that this reflects the state of affairs over the whole medieval period, indeed the building remains found in this phase of work do not appear on these plans. The subject of late medieval urban decline has been much debated whether as a widespread phenomenon (Dyer 1996) or even down to the level of single streets (Foulds 1997) but may be relevant in considering the density of settlement in such apparently empty lanes.

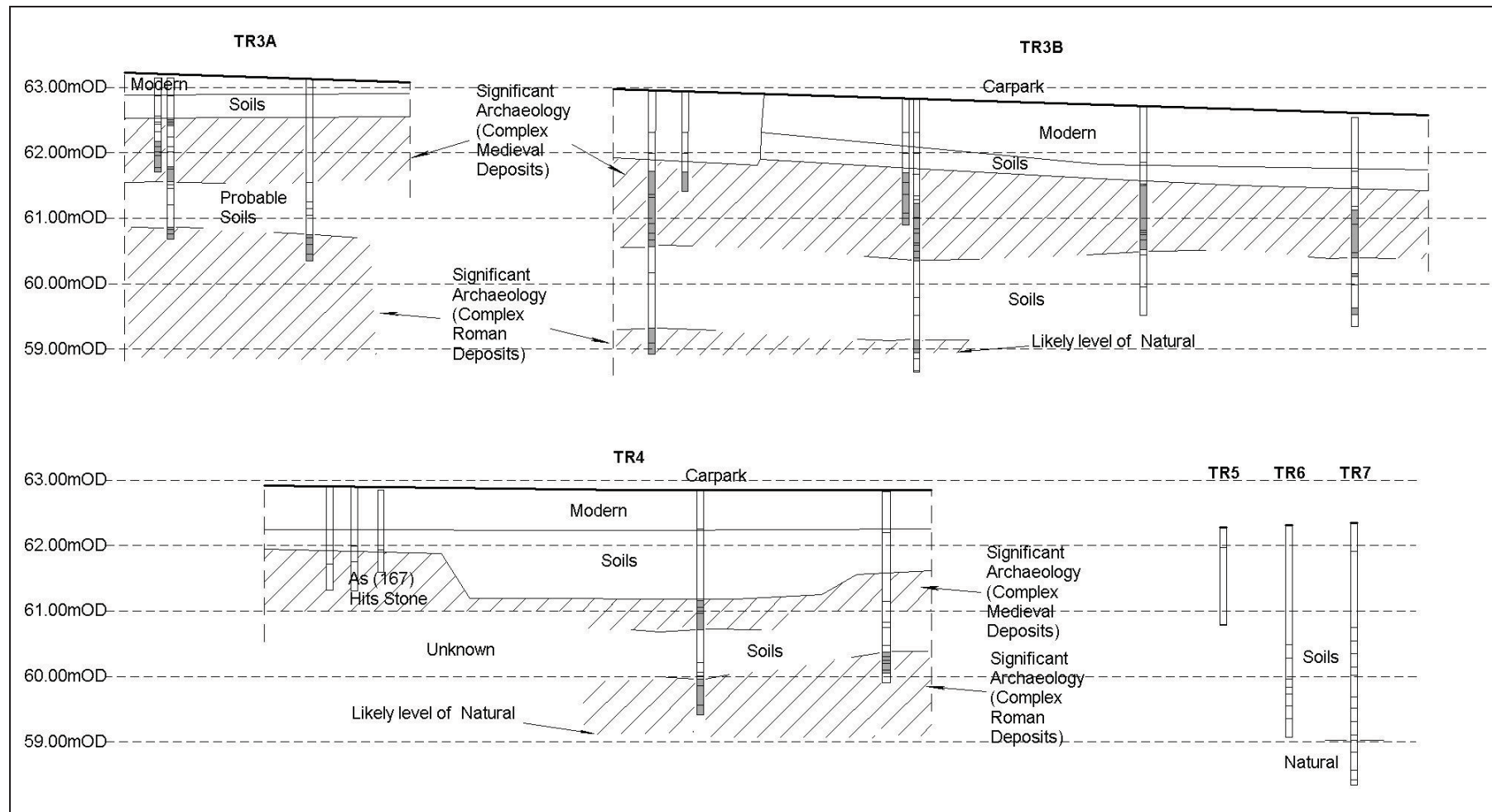


Figure 9 – Projected Depths and Nature of Archaeology Based on Auger Hole Data,

Later truncation resulted in the top of the post-medieval/medieval levels at 62.50mOD near to Highcross Street and at only 61.70mOD further back. Along Freeschool Lane, the top of building remains were at roughly 61.70mOD near the frontage and at around 61.00mOD further back. The deposits all appear to slope downwards away from the frontages and it is likely that the deposits may generally not be much thicker than 1m.

Below these deposits away from the Highcross Street, a roughly 1m thick deposit of dark grey brown soils was observed. The similarity of the deposits make it unlikely that they are simply a series of pit fills and they are more likely to be a single layer or perhaps a fill of a larger feature such as a quarry. The apparent absence of these deposits near to the Highcross Street frontage make the latter more likely.

The expected depth of Roman building remains was not clearly visible on site except perhaps, on the Highcross Street frontage. Here reddish and orange silts were seen in the auger hole identical to dated Roman deposits seen on the opposite side of Highcross Street (Derrick forthcoming), which appeared to be at a similar depth. These were encountered at 60.70mOD, elsewhere on site the probable Roman was at a depth varying between 59.40 to 59.70mOD. This difference may indicate truncation of the Roman deposits.

The depths of these deposits is not clear, but stone (possibly gravel) was encountered at varying depths around 59.00 mOD and it is tempting to suggest that this is the top of the natural gravel substratum. This ties in with Lucas's deposit model which suggests approximately 4m depth to the natural substratum at around 59.00mOD (Lucas 1980, 2). The later earth deposits might act as a buffer protecting the Roman deposits. No clear evidence was found for the projected Roman road which ought to pass below the Highcross Street frontage, however the height at which the auger hit stone in that area might reflect the presence of a large stony feature such as a road.

## Conclusions

- The evaluation has revealed significant medieval/early post-medieval building remains stretching back from the Highcross Street and Freeschool Lane frontages. It is not clear how far back they extend.
- At the rear of the site is a large probably cut feature, which seems to have removed all significant archaeological deposits down to the natural substratum. Its full extent is not clear.
- The medieval building remains seem to slope down away from Highcross Street.
- The medieval/post-medieval deposits may be less than 1m thick, and may seal a soil-like deposit.
- Little clear indication of Roman archaeology was seen except near to the Highcross Street frontage. It is possible that it has been truncated in the medieval period.

## Bibliography

- Buckley, R.J. & Lucas, J., forthcoming *The Shires Excavations 1989*
- Clark, R., 2001 *Design Brief for Archaeological Evaluation 38 Vaughan Way and 78-90 Highcross Street*
- Connor, A. & Buckley, R., 1999 *The Roman and Medieval Occupation at Causeway Lane*
- Derrick, M., forthcoming *Archaeological Excavations on the site of the Highcross Travelodge and Casino* ULAS Report
- Dyer, A., 1996 *Decline in the Late Medieval Town*
- Foulds, T., 1997 'A garden called Paradise' variant street names and the changing townscape in later medieval Nottingham' in *TST CI* p99-109
- Kipling, R., forthcoming '9 St. Nicholas Place, Leicester' notes in *TLHAS Archaeology in Leicestershire and Rutland*
- Gnanaratnam, A., 1999 *An Archaeological Watching Brief at Vaughan College, Leicester* ULAS Rept 1999-061
- 2001 *An Archaeological Watching Brief on the site of the proposed Leicester Cathedral Visitors Centre, St. Martins West and the East Wing of the Guildhall, Leicester* ULAS Rept 2001-162
- 2003 *An Archaeological Evaluation on the Site of the former St Margaret's Baths, Leicester* ULAS Rept 2003-069
- forthcoming 'St Margaret's Baths' note in *TLHAS Archaeology in Leicestershire and Rutland*
- Lucas, J., 1980 'The Debris of History: an archaeological survey of Leicester' in *TLHAS* 56 p1-9
- Meek, J., 2000 *An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of Proposed Redevelopment of Highcross Street/St Peter's Lane, Leicester* ULAS Rept 2000-145

## Appendix 1 - Selection of the Relevant Deed Evidence

### Wyggeston Hospital Records

- 1306 - G & C, Christian relict of Henry le Mustarder to Agnes do. John Claybrook of moiety in message in St Peter's Deadlane. Moiety between land of Simon and Roger Abraham
- 1322 - G & C Roger de Claybrook to Willl Okham of message in Deadlane between that of Will Oham and Christian le Mustarder
- 1324 - as above land between Will Okham and Will Alleyn
- 1336 G & C Rob Pyk to Nich. Le Cok of message and garden and croft in Deadlane, lying between Henry Danels and Will Okham, stretching from Deadlane to St Peter's Lane
- 1348 - G & C Will Okham to Isabel do. Of his capital message, between his tenement and a gate there
- 1348-9 - G & C Will Okham to Maude two cottages in Deadlane between message of Nic le Cok and tenement of Will Okham extending from lane to a hedge
- 1351 - G & Con, Eilen w Nich. Le Cu/Cok to W Groby of plot in Deadlane, tenement of of John Elmeshale and that sometimes of Ocham from Deadlane to St Peter's Lane.
- 1367 - G & C Eilen w. Nich. le Cu/Cok to Rob Hornynglowe of tenement, between tenement of John Russel and that of Will Okham, from Deadlane to St Peter's Lane.

Similar follows for what are probably the same properties. However:

1428 Release and quitclaim of Rose Peksyll wid. Ralph Flecher in a cottgae and garden, between the Abbot of Leicester's tenement on the south and the lane leading from Torchmere toward the church of St Peter on the north, next the land of Will Newby. (Abbot of Leicester's tenement on north side of Deadlane, perhaps near the east of the street. Perhaps originally a single long plot?)

1535-6 - G & C Lease by Walter Browne master of the Hospital to Rog Gillot of a close in Deadlane sometime belonging to Tho Innocent, bellfounder, betwixt the house of the king and that of Nicholas Reynold called his bakehouses.



**RBL II**

1433 - Grant of Will Baybrooke to John Gyllowe if a message at corner of Dead Lane between tenement of John Hewett and land of John Glover. Later John Gyllowe allows Baybrookes house, message and hall chamber and easement of a well. In 1435, this is granted to Tho Charity and John Nutte and in 1452 reverts to the Mayor and Community.

1403 - grant has two cottages in Deadlane between tenements of John Cowper and in front of the land of Roger Belgrave, perhaps opposite the lands of Rob Ulf and Poutrell

**Appendix 2 – The Auger Results****Trench 3**

## Auger 1

Depth (cm)	mOD top	Description
0-30	61.55	Light brown clayey sand occ charcoal
30-40	61.24	Light orange sandy clay occ chalky frags
40-50	61.15	Dark grey sandy silt
60-80	61.05	Mixed grey silt/brownish greenish sandy silt
80-85	<b>60.74</b>	Mixed: Red clay in lumps 20m in size with dark grey charcoal or burning, shell frags, and light grey silty sand
85-95	60.70	Light grey silty sand
95-110	60.59	Slightly orange silty sand, with oyster frags fine pebbles
110-120	60.44	Reddish silty sand
120	60.34	Hits stone - abandoned

## Auger 2

Depth (cm)	mOD top	Description
0-9	62.56	Light brown /greyey brown sandy silt 30/70, (context 107) DH sandstone at base of layer
9-12	62.46	Dark grey brown silt
12-24	62.44	mid-dark grey brown sandy clayey silt occ charcoal
39-46	62.16	Light orange sand with fine gravel and coarse gravel at base
46-55	<b>62.09</b>	Bright orange, sandy medium gravel, quite compact, could be surface (20 silt 80 gravel)
55-60	62.01	mid red brown/light red brown silty clay, small rounded pebbles.
60-78	61.96	Slightly mixed mixed sandy silty clay(10/30/60) moderate angular pebbles
78-85	61.78	Lump of mortar overlain by band of dark silt
85+	61.71	Mortary layer with stones – stops auger

## Auger 3

Depth (cm)	mOD top	Description
0-4	62.51	Context 107 – mortar floor
4-7	62.46	Dark grey brown silt with charcoal flecks
7-10	62.43	Light greeny brown silty clay
10-24	62.40	mid greeny brown silty clay (50/50)



24-42	<b>62.24</b>	mid brown silty clay, occ charcoal, small pebbles, firmly compacted
42-50	62.09	As above 5-10% charcoal
50-72	62.00	As above less charcoal, occasional pebbles
72-76	61.79	Fragment of DH sandstone
76-95	61.75	Finely mixed, slightly mixed red clay, with mid brown silt, with fragments of red burnt clay/daub, and light grey silty clay
95-100	61.56	Mottled light grey/mid grey silt with mortar frags
100-105	61.50	mid grey silty clay, with fine orange sandy looking mottles. Fine oyster and charcoal flecks
105-130	61.45	Light greenish silty sand 40/60, contains fine pebbles occ mortar/stone frags
130-165	61.20	As above but with around 20% fine stone frags, mortar frags also daub frags. Likely to be redepo demolition
165-168	60.85	Danehills sandstone frags in dark grey brown silty clay. Large fragments around 40x40mm
168-175	60.83	Pale pinkish brown silty sand (50/50) with fine charcoal and stone frags
175-183	60.75	As above but more clayey towards base, becomes reddish silty clay with fine charcoal and fine silt lumps
183	61.51	Hits stone – abandoned

## Auger 4

Depth (cm)	mOD top	Description
0-30	61.71	mid brown sandy clay (30/70) moderate small pebbles and stone frags (context 121)
30	61.41	Hits stone – abandoned

## Auger 5

Depth (cm)	mOD top	Description
0-35	61.72	mid reddish brown sandy clay (50/50) small stone frags (context 121)
35-40	61.36	Mixed light orange brown sandy clay with DH sandstone frags, poss quite large
40-70	61.31	Reddish brown clay with DH sandstone frags
70-80	61.02	Red clay with DH sandstone frags
80-95	<b>60.92</b>	Light yellowish brown silty sand
98-105	60.77	Mixed light orange-brown/grey brown mottling, sandy clay, some large pebbles, fine oyster frags and charcoal
105-155	60.56	Dark grey brown soft silty clay
155-180	60.17	Very soft dark grey silty clay, damp and plastic, occ charcoal, reminiscent of waterlogged deposits
180-200	59.97	As above, with fine organic 'fluffy' inclusions, slightly gritty,
200-240	59.57	As above with orangey/greeny slightly gritty mottling – Fe mottles
240-262	59.31	Pinky red clay with orange gritty sand, mixed with the above
262-280	59.10	As above but with chunks of DH sandstone
280	58.92	Hits stone – abandoned

## Auger 6

Depth	mOD	Description
-------	-----	-------------

(cm)	top	
0-15	61.70	mid brown silty clay, with red clay mottles, and DH sandstone frags (context126)
15-33	61.54	Ditto but slightly paler
33-62	61.36	Red brown silty clay, with small red clay patches
62-70	61.07	Orangey red clay with charcoal flecks, and fine silt mottling clay/silt 80/20
70-80	<b>61.00</b>	DH sandstone
80	60.90	DH sandstone – abandoned

## Auger 7

Depth (cm)	mOD top	Description
0-33	61.67	Modern pipe trench (context 126)
34-39	61.34	Creamy lime mortar fragments
40-44	61.27	Greyish silty clay
44-66	61.22	Red brown silty clay, with mortar frags and sandstone frags
66-83	<b>61.00</b>	Orangey red clay 80% clay with charcoal frags and occ greenish clay lumps
83-94	60.85	Dark grey brown silt – soily , has occasional mortar frags
94-105	60.76	Dark greenish black, with greenish flecking, likely to be Fe mottling
105-108	60.61	Pale orangey brown, sandy silt (20/80) slightly mixed, with flints and pebbles
108-117	60.59	Dark greyish brown, clayey silt with greenish orange mottles, common charcoal, occ mortar, very soft
117-126	60.50	Interface
128-132	60.39	Pale orange brown gritty silt
132-188	60.34	Mid greyish brown, clayey silt (20/80) common charcoal
188-215	59.79	Ditto but paler
215-253	59.51	Ditto but lacks inclusions
253-255	59.13	Pale orangey brown silt
255-272	58.95	Ditto with pebbles – could be remnant surface
272-300	58.84	Ditto but more silty sandy
300-302	58.66	Fine orange sand - natural
	58.64	

## Auger 8

Depth (cm)	mOD top	Description
0-70	61.52	Context (135)
70-74	60.82	Light orange sandy fine gravel, compact
74-77	60.78	Contaminated
77-85	60.75	Light reddish clayey sand with 20% small pebbles
85-100	<b>60.67</b>	Contaminated
100-108	60.52	Brown grey clayey silt
108-200	60.44	Dark greyish brown, silty clay, few inclusions, greenish mottling
200+	59.91	Hits compacted gravel – abandoned

## Auger 9

Depth (cm)	mOD top	Description
0-30	61.48	Context 150

30-35	61.18	Dark brown, silty clay
35-57	61.12	Mid red brown, silty clay, sand 10% mod charcoal frags, shell frags
57-100	60.90	Red silty clay, clay is in fine lumps, sandstone and mortar flecks
100-108	<b>60.48</b>	Ditto becomes lighter
108-133	60.39	Contamination
133-137	60.15	Light red brown, sandy silt (30/70) with DH sandstone frags and charcoal very stony
137-150	60.11	Contamination
150-185	59.97	Greyish brown sandy silty clay (20/40/40) charcoal, organic flecks, soft and plastic, greeny mottling
185-195	59.63	Mixed pink clay (50%) in small lumps mixed with grey silt, mortar frags, stone frags
195-213	59.53	Contamination
231	59.34	Hits stone – abandoned

## Trench 4

### Auger 1

Depth (cm)	MOD top	Description
0-20	61.72	As (167)
20-32	61.52	Ditto
32-40	61.40	Ditto
40	61.32	Hits stone

### Auger 2

Depth (cm)	MOD top	Description
0-20	61.76	As (167)
20-40	61.56	Ditto
40-46	61.36	Ditto
46	61.30	Hits stone

### Auger 3

Depth (cm)	MOD top	Description
0-20	61.65	Mixed light grey Daneshills sandstone fragments, yellow sand, mid greenish sandy silt

### Auger 4

Depth (cm)	MOD top	Description
0-10	60.96	Reddish mixed clay
10-20	60.86	Mixed light grey green Daneshill Sandstone frags, with soft lumps of mid orangey red clay – daub?
20-45	60.76	Mixed reddish clay in small lumps, Daneshill sandstone frags, occ with clay on the outside, in section CBM lumps visible.
45-75	60.51	Dark grey clayey silt 40/60, 1% fine stone frags, fine pink mottling

75-110	<b>60.01</b>	Ditto becoming a sandy silt 40/60
110-115	59.86	mid brown, silty sand, very clean, stiff, occ. small pebbles, finely mottled mid grey
115-120	59.81	Disturbance
120-130	59.76	Mid sandy silt
130-160	59.66	mid orange silty 40 sand 60, firmly compacted, finely mottled
160-175	59.36	mid to Light brown/ orangey sandy silt 40/60 firm compacted
175-80	59.21	Hits stone/stones in silty clay 50/50 inc. small rounded pebbles could be gravels

## Auger 5

Depth (cm)	MOD top	Description
0-32	61.15	Mid grey brown sandy silt
32-40	60.83	Odd, light grey, silty clay with 30–40% small rounded pebbles, boundary very sharp
40-67	60.75	Slightly mixed mid to dark brown sandy silt 40% pebbles 60%
67-78	60.48	Dark yellowy greyish brown, sandy silt 30/70 1% charcoal 5% small pebbles
78-85	<b>60.37</b>	Light brown, clayey silt 10/90 5%charcoal
85-90	60.30	Daneshill sandstone fragments
90-95	60.25	Light brown silty clay 40/60
95-105	60.20	Dark grey silty clay 40/60
105-110	60.10	Light brown silt, occ charcoal, reddish clayey frags, occ daub frags.
110-125	60.05	Disturbance
125	59.90	Hits stone/stones

## Trench 5

Depth (cm)	MOD top	Description
0-35	60.78	Dark grey brown sandy silt
c.50		Hits stone/brick etc abandoned

## Trench 6

Depth (cm)	mOD top	Description
0-20	60.47	Dark brown silt, with traces of mortar and flecks of charcoal, 1% sm rounded pebbles
20-53	60.27	Dark brown silt with 1% small stones and occasional pebbles, 1% charcoal and mortar
53-65	59.94	Ditto with 20% mortar and larger charcoal fragments
65-75	59.82	Ditto but more yellowish brown
75-93	<b>59.72</b>	Dark brown clayey silt 10/90, with mortar/charcoal <1% small angular sub-angular stones
93-113	59.54	Dark brown clayey silt 10/90, with flecks of mortar and charcoal occ small stones
113-142	59.34	Ditto but 15% clay
142-145	59.05	Hits stones – abandoned

## Trench 7

Depth (cm)	mOD top	Description
0-20	60.73	Slightly yellowish brown silt with occ small pebbles and sub angular stones
20-40	60.53	Ditto but slightly sandy and firmer 1% mortar and charcoal
40-60	60.33	Ditto but with slate fragments
60-73	60.13	Yellowish sandy silt10/90, with flecks of charcoal and mortar, stone frags and mortar
73-106	<b>60.00</b>	Ditto more mortar at base
106-123	59.67	Yellowish brown sandy silt, occ pebbles, stone frags etc
123-143	59.50	Dark brown silt, occ small stones/pebbles
143-162	59.30	Dark brown mottled with yellowish brown slightly sandy silt, with occ pebbles
164-172	59.09	Yellowish brown sandy silt and stones,
172-190	59.01	Yellowish brown sand, no stones
190-218	58.83	Orangeish brown silty sand, <1% small pebbles
218-232	58.55	Orangey brown, silty sand and gravel
232-240	58.41	Orangey brown sandy clay and stones (gravel)
240	58.33	Gravel is too compacted – abandoned

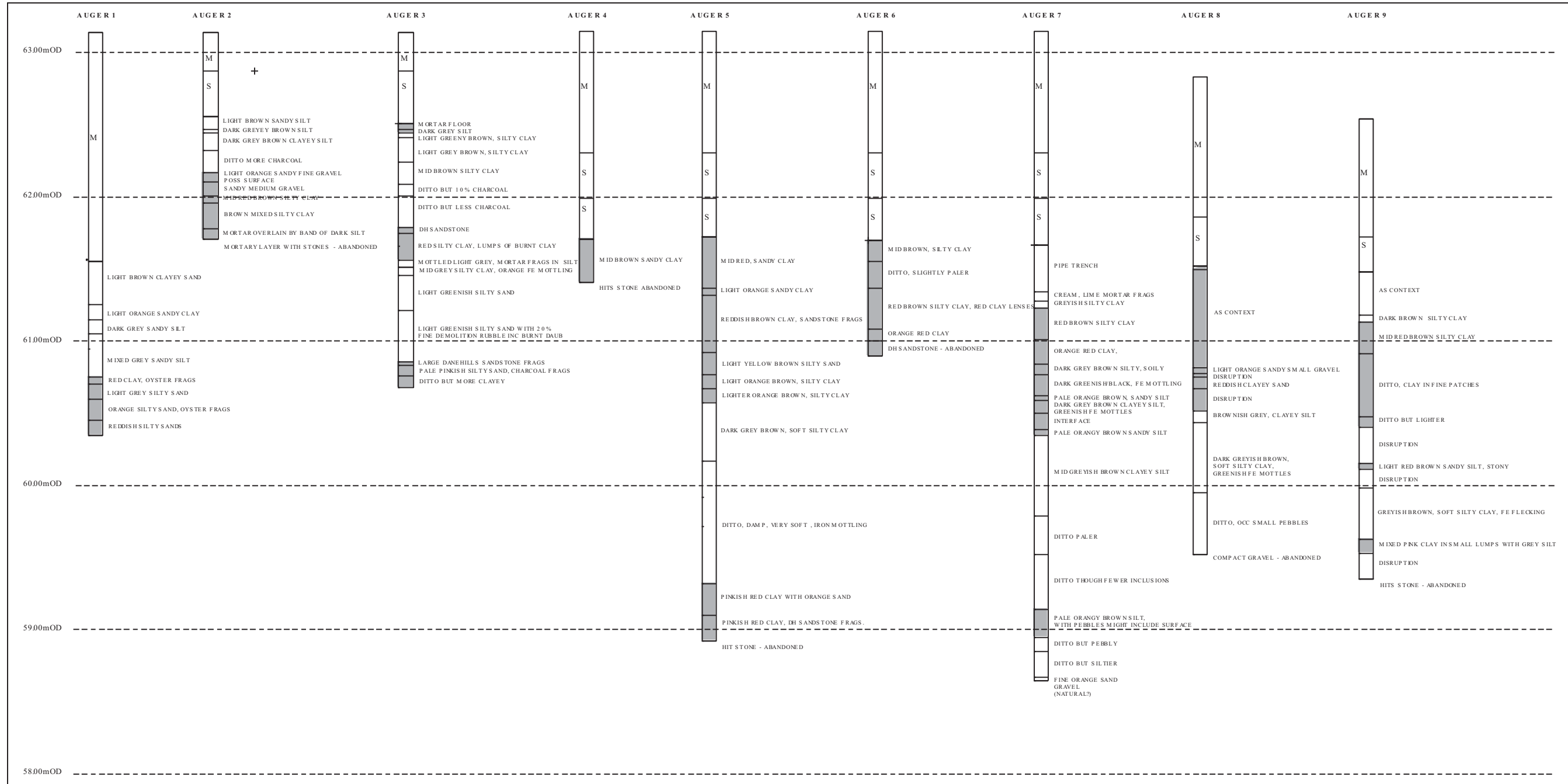


Figure 10 - The Auger Results for Trench 3

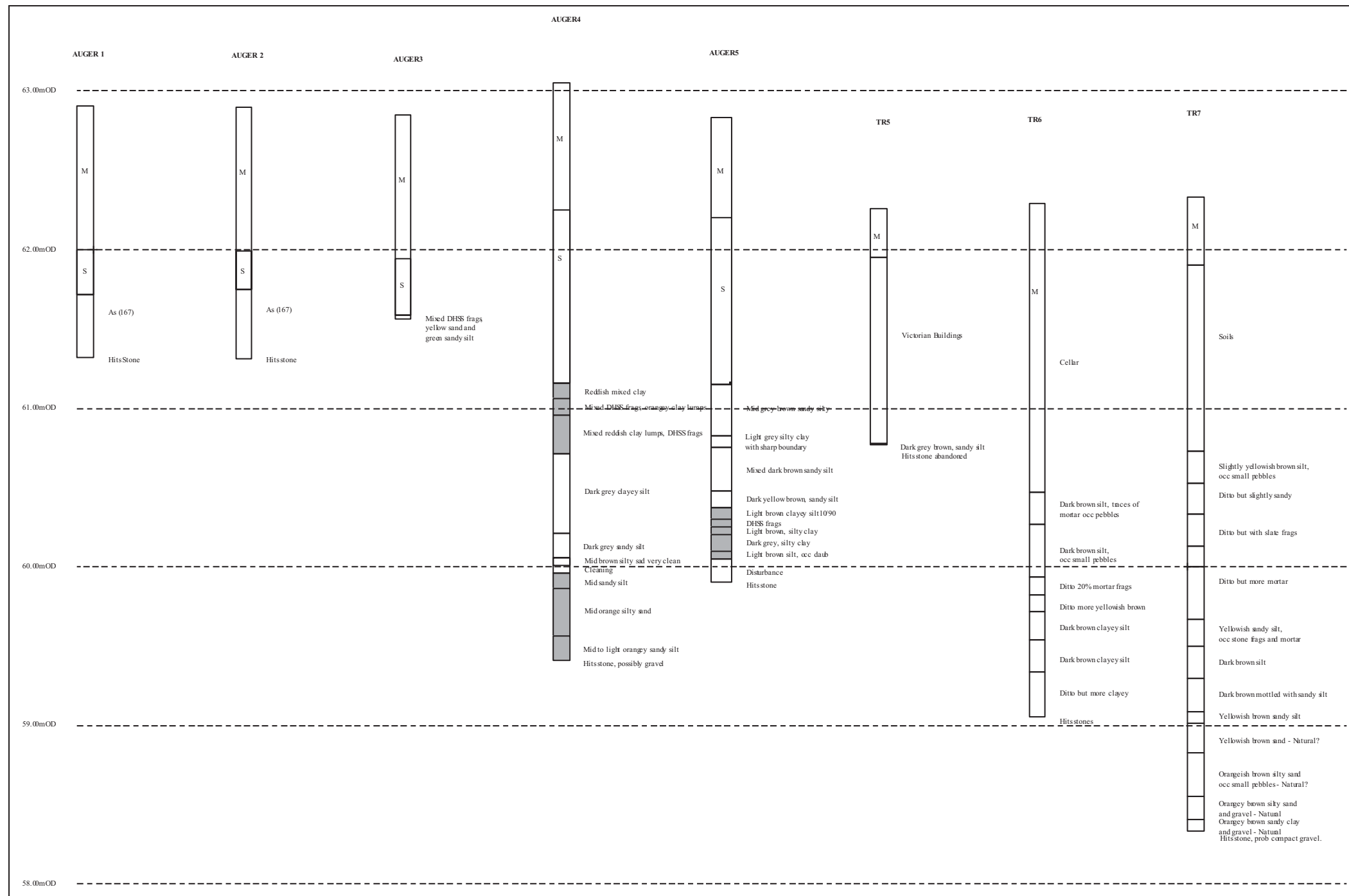


Figure 11 - The Auger results for Trench 4