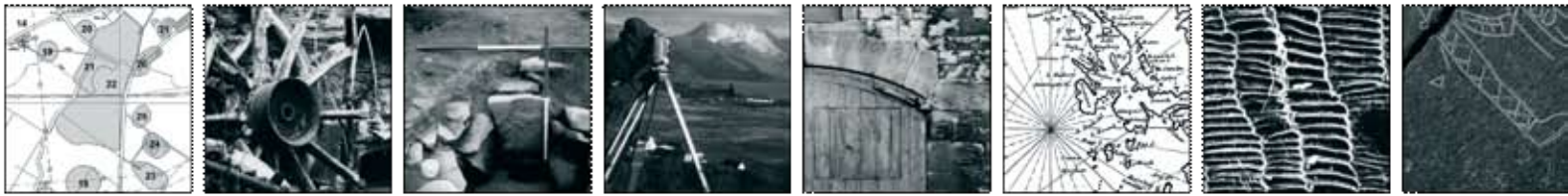


HSPN13/01



# FORMER HEXHAM SWIMMING POOL, GILESGATE, HEXHAM, NORTHUMBERLAND

*Archaeological Evaluation*

*commissioned by CgMs on behalf of McCarthy and Stone*

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Parish: Hexham

Local authority: Northumberland County Council

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Archive will be deposited with Museum of Antiquities at Newcastle University

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## CONTENTS

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<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND</b>	<b>1</b>
	3.1 Prehistory, Roman & Saxon	2
	3.2 Medieval	2
	3.3 Post-medieval & modern	2
<b>4</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>2</b>
	5.1 Trenching	2
	5.2 Recording	2
	5.3 Reporting and archives	2
<b>6</b>	<b>RESULTS</b>	<b>3</b>
	6.1 Trench 1	3
	6.2 Trench 2	3
	6.3 Trench 3	3
<b>7</b>	<b>FINDS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<b>4</b>
	8.1 Description of the significance of the Heritage Assets	4
<b>9</b>	<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>4</b>
	9.1 Bibliographic sources	4
	9.2 Online sources	4
	<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>5</b>
	Appendix 1 Site registers	5
	<i>Appendix 1.1 Trench register</i>	5
	<i>Appendix 1.2 Context register</i>	5
	<i>Appendix 1.3 Photographic register</i>	5
	<i>Appendix 1.4 Drawing register</i>	6
	Appendix 2 Finds register	7



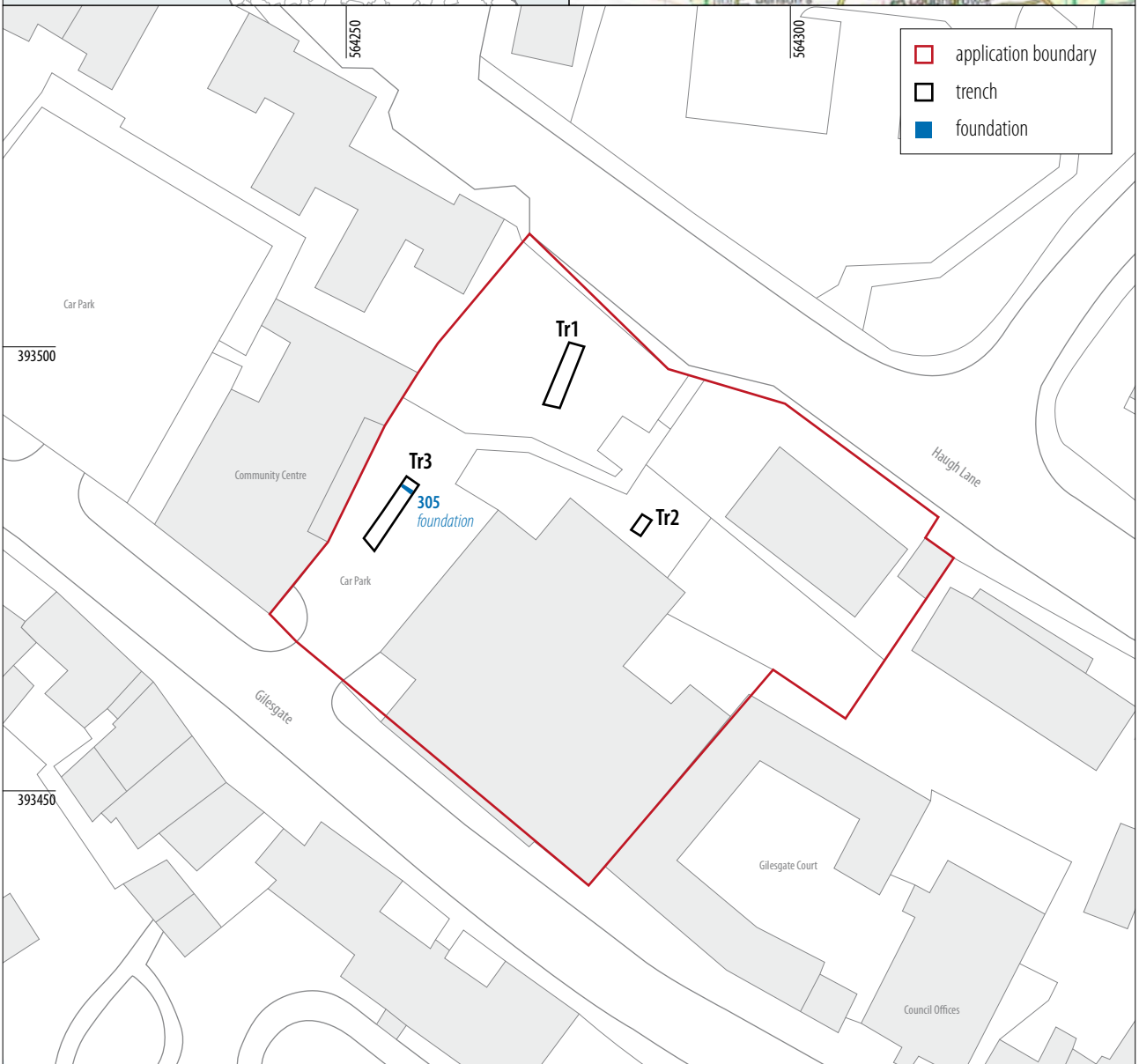
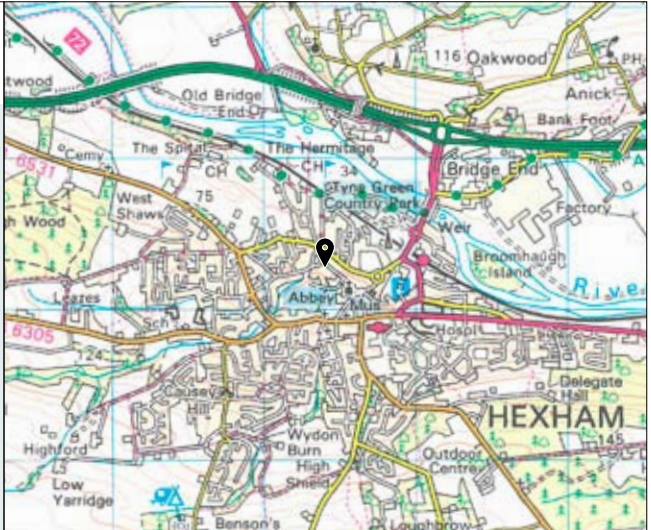
## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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<b>Illus 1</b>		viii
	<i>Site location</i>	
<b>Illus 2</b>		2
	<i>SE-facing section of Trench 1</i>	
<b>Illus 3</b>		3
	<i>SW-facing section of Trench 2 at limit of excavation</i>	
<b>Illus 4</b>		3
	<i>NW-facing section of Trench 3 and wall foundation [305]</i>	



39 Gilesgate  
Hexham  
Northumberland



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### Illus 1

Site location



# FORMER HEXHAM SWIMMING POOL, GILESGATE, HEXHAM, NORTHUMBERLAND

## *Archaeological Evaluation*

*Headland Archaeology conducted an archaeological evaluation ahead of proposed development of sheltered apartments for the elderly at a former swimming pool and associated land at Gilesgate, Hexham, Northumberland. The evaluation was undertaken in order to provide further information on the archaeological potential of the Development Area (DA). The work was commissioned by CgMs consulting, on behalf of McCarthy & Stone Retirement Lifestyles Ltd. A total of three trenches were excavated within the DA. A trench in the car park on the Gilesgate frontage established that the area had been subject to terracing in the 20th century, and had been cleared down to the surface of geological deposits. A post-medieval wall foundation and possible cellar to the north survived below the level of geological deposits. A hand-excavated test pit to the rear of the swimming pool did not extend below deposits of loam containing modern artefacts. A trench excavated adjacent to Haugh Lane encountered modern topsoil, over a possible colluvial deposit and reached underlying geological deposits. No medieval deposits or features were encountered and the investigation resulted in a better understanding of the stratigraphy of the site.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

McCarthy & Stone Retirement Lifestyles Ltd (the company) has applied for planning permission for a development of sheltered apartments for the elderly at Gilesgate, Hexham in Northumberland; henceforth referred to as the Development Area (DA). As part of the application process, the company have commissioned non-intrusive archaeological evaluation of the DA comprising an archaeological desk-based and historic buildings assessment report (CgMs 2013). The archaeological desk-based assessment concluded that the site had high archaeological potential and Northumberland County Council Conservation Team (NCCCT) requested intrusive archaeological evaluation (trial trenching) of the site, and the results supplied, prior to determination of the planning application. The evaluation was carried out to assess the extent, nature and survival of archaeological features within accessible parts of the site.

A written scheme of investigation for the evaluation was prepared by CgMs Ltd (2013) (the consultant). As part of the preparation of the WSI, consultation was undertaken with NCCCT by CgMs regarding the requirements for the trial trench evaluation.

Headland Archaeology was commissioned to prepare a method statement for the evaluation, undertake the site works (which took place between 14th and 16th October 2013) and produce a report (this document) on the results.

## **2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION**

The DA is located on grid reference NY 93459 64287 and covers a total of 2633m<sup>2</sup>. The site contains the former Hexham Swimming Pool and an operating car park which fronts the street of Gilesgate in the centre of Hexham. To the rear is an occupied, modern single-storey building fronting Haugh Lane and an open space which is steeply sloping with retaining walls, vestiges of structures, mature trees and other vegetation.

The site lies on a north-east facing slope at c. 52m OD. There is a significant drop in levels to the rear of the swimming pool building with the northern portion of the site lying at c. 40m OD.

The underlying geology of the DA comprises Yoredale Group (Limestone, Sandstone, Siltstone And Mudstone) overlain by alluvium – clay, silt and sand (British Geological Survey website).

## **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

A desk based assessment was carried out by CgMs Ltd in 2013. This identified a high potential for medieval and post-medieval remains. The results of the desk based assessment are summarised briefly below.



**Illus 2**

*SE-facing section of Trench 1*

### 3.1 Prehistory, Roman & Saxon

No prehistoric remains have been recorded in Hexham and very few remains have been recorded from the Roman and Saxon periods. Whilst the presence of remains of these periods cannot be entirely ruled out, there is low potential for discovery.

### 3.2 Medieval

During the 13th and 14th centuries, the town of Hexham operated as a monastic and administrative centre for the region. The town appears to have been planned around the Priory and the Archbishop's precincts with Gilesgate being a key road connecting an approach road from the north-west with the market place. It is possible that an enclosing medieval town wall did once pass through or near to the site although its existence remains unproven.

### 3.3 Post-medieval & modern

Maps of the site depict properties present on the north side of Gilesgate from the 18th century onwards and suggest potential for sub-surface remains relating to industrial as well as domestic activity.

## 4 OBJECTIVES

The aims of the investigation were:

- to retrieve information on the archaeological potential of the site; and
- to aid in the determination of the planning application and the design of an appropriate post-consent mitigation strategy to accompany development works.

The local and regional research contexts are provided by *'Shared Visions: The North-East Regional Research Framework for the Historic*

*Environment'* (Petts & Gerrard 2006) and English Heritage (1997). Any evidence retrieved during the works should be analysed in light of the objectives contained in these frameworks.

## 5 METHODOLOGY

### 5.1 Trenching

Three trenches were excavated within the DA. One machine excavated trench was located adjacent to Haugh Lane and measured 5m by 1.5m. A hand excavated pit measuring 2m by 1m was situated on a terraced area immediately north of the rear of the swimming pool building, and a machine excavated trench (10m by 1.5m) was opened within the car park adjacent to Gilesgate. All trenches were orientated NE-SW. Full trench descriptions, including orientation, length and soil profile, can be found in Appendix 1.

A 360 degree tracked mechanical excavator equipped with a flat-bladed bucket was used to remove made ground deposits and topsoil in the machine excavated trenches. All machine excavation was undertaken under direct archaeological supervision. Excavation continued until clean geological sediments or significant archaeological deposits were encountered.

Further excavation required to satisfy the objectives of the evaluation was continued by hand. The stratigraphy of each trench was recorded in full.

### 5.2 Recording

All recording was in accordance with the code of practice of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA). All trenches were given unique numbers and all recording was undertaken on pro forma record cards that conform to accepted archaeological standards. All stratigraphic relationships were recorded.

An overall site plan at an appropriate scale and relative to the National Grid was recorded. A full photographic record was taken. A metric scale was clearly visible in record photographs.

### 5.3 Reporting and archives

The results of the works are presented below. A summary report has been prepared for submission to the OASIS database (headland1-161822).

The complete project archive will be deposited with Museum of Antiquities at Newcastle University within 12 months of the completion of the project. The records (paper and digital) will be archived according to best practice guidelines set out by the Archaeological Archiving Forum (July 2007).

## 6 RESULTS

### 6.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 (Illus 2) contained a 0.2m thick deposit of topsoil (101), overlying a 0.8m thick, loose loam (102) containing ash and gravel. Inclusions of modern pot, glass, plastic, indicate that it has been disturbed relatively recently and it is interpreted as a garden soil.

A 0.3m thick deposit of silty clay (103) interpreted as colluvium underlay the loam (102) and contained a small amount of animal bone (not retained). Geological sands and gravels were encountered at a depth of 39.7m OD.

### 6.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 (Illus 3) contained a 0.9m thick deposit of dark grey brown sandy silt (201) containing inclusions of pottery, glass and animal bone, which was interpreted as garden soil. This overlay a 0.2m thick deposit of sandy silt (202) containing fragments of mortar, pottery and brick. Underlying these deposits was light brown silt clay (203). The full thickness of this deposit was not established as excavation was terminated at 43.3m OD when the trench reached a maximum safe working depth of 1.2m.

### 6.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 (Illus 4) had upper deposits of tarmac (300) and concrete (301) which were 0.05m and 0.07m thick respectively. These overlay a 0.4m thick deposit of sand and gravel (302) with frequent inclusions of red and yellow brick; this was interpreted as a deliberate dump or 'made ground'. This overlay a mixed deposit containing ash, brown sand, white/grey chalk sand clay (303) 0.4m thick, also interpreted as a deliberate dump of made ground.

A sandstone foundation [305], aligned north-west to south-east and 0.45m in width, was revealed in the north-east end of Trench 3.

It was cut into geological sand and gravel (304) (at 48.5m OD) to the south-west (Illus 4). To the north-east of the foundation, mixed mid brown orange gravels (307) containing modern pottery sherds was present. This deposit is interpreted as relating to either the backfilling or levelling of a potential cellar.



**Illus 3**

*SW-facing section of Trench 2 at limit of excavation*



**Illus 4**

*NW-facing section of Trench 3 and wall foundation [305]*

## 7 FINDS

By Julie Lochrie

The finds comprised 26 fragments of clay pipe, three sherds of bottle glass, 11 sherds of modern pottery, a ceramic object and an iron object (see Appendix 2). They were retrieved from Trenches 2 and 3 and all indicate a modern date of 18th to 20th century.

---

## 8 DISCUSSION

The silty clay deposits (103) and (203) observed in Trenches 1 and 2 are interpreted as deposits of hill wash from upslope (representative of colluviation). The small amount of animal bone present in one of these deposits could be representative of midden material washing down in the colluvium from the town to the south. The interpretation of deposits above this hill wash as garden soils (102) and (201) is supported by cartographic evidence which shows this area as part of open land or within gardens from 1826 onwards (Wood 1826 in CgMs 2013). The presence of these deposits in the northern part of the DA indicates that the land has not been terraced or cleared in the modern period in the same way as the southern part of the DA. In theory, this lack of disturbance implies that the preservation of archaeological remains, if any are present, could be good. The absence of any such remains in the evaluation trenches cannot be taken as a reliable indicator of archaeological potential, because of the restrictions in trenching size and depth.

The made ground present directly above geological deposits in Trench 3 (302) and (303), and the absence of any earlier surfaces, suggests that this part of the site has been cleared and terraced. Material within these deposits suggested that this happened in the relatively recent past and this clearance will have removed archaeological deposits and features above the level of geological deposits in this part of the DA. Although archaeological potential was high, it appears modern clearance of this area has greatly reduced this. The only features that seem likely to survive are those cut deeply into the surface of geological deposits.

Cartographic evidence shows the DA was occupied by buildings from at least the mid 19th century onwards (Wood 1862 in CgMs 2013). The foundation found in Trench 3 [305] is presumed to relate to one of the buildings on the site at this time as its position and orientation is consistent with those shown on Wood's map. These buildings (still on the same alignment) are apparent on the Ordnance Survey Map of 1896 but by the Ordnance Survey Map of 1963 had been cleared. This indicates that the levelling of the area now occupied by the car park took place between these dates.

### 8.1 Description of the significance of the Heritage Assets

The local and regional research contexts are provided by Petts & Gerrard 2006, the aims of which are to survey and evaluate our current understanding of the region's historic environment.

A foundation, dating to at least the early 19th century, was the only feature recorded during the evaluation that is regarded as having archaeological significance. The wall is assessed as having local importance and low sensitivity.

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## 9 REFERENCES

### 9.1 Bibliographic sources

Archaeological Archives Forum 2007 *Archaeological Archives: A Guide to Best Practice in Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Curation*, Institute for Archaeologists.

Petts, D & Gerrard, C 2006 *Shared Visions: The North-East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment*, Durham County Council.

English Heritage 1997 *English Heritage Archaeology Division Research Agenda*, English Heritage.

CgMs Ltd 2013 *Written Scheme of Investigation: Former Hexham Swimming Pool, Gilesgate, Hexham, Northumberland*.

CgMs Ltd 2013 *Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment & Building Assessment: Hexham Swimming Pool, Gilesgate, Hexham, Northumberland*.

### 9.2 Online sources

Open Geoscience, British Geological Survey website <[www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk)>, accessed 21st October 2013

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 Site registers

#### Appendix 1.1 Trench register

Trench	Direction	Length (m)	Description	Max depth (m)	OD level at top of trench
001	NE-SW	5	Topsoil (0.2m) overlying a mixed made ground of loose garden soil, dark black ash material, and yellow pebble gravel with large inclusion of modern pot, glass, plastic and general domestic waste (0.8m). Underlying this deposit is dark grey brown silt clay with inclusions of round pebbles (colluvium) (0.3m) overlying natural geology of mid brown orange sand gravel with large round boulders and smaller round pebbles.	1.8	41m
002	NE-SW	2	Dark grey brown sandy silt garden soil with inclusions of stone, pottery, glass and animal bone throughout (0.9m) overlying mid brown grey sand silt with mortar fragments, pottery and brick fragment inclusions (0.2m). Underlying these deposits was a light brown silt clay with rare stone inclusion.  *Trench terminated at 1.2m due to depth – natural geology not reached.	1.2	44.5m
003	NE-SW	10	Tarmac (0.05m) and concrete (0.07m) overlying make up/levelling layers of mixed yellow sand and gravel with frequent inclusions red and yellow brick fragments (0.4m) over mixed ash, brown sand, white/grey chalk sand clay (0.4m). Underlying these deposits is a natural geology of mid brown orange sand gravel with round pebble inclusions.	1.1	49.5m

#### Appendix 1.2 Context register

Context	Area	Description
101	T1	Topsoil
102	T1	Mixed deposit of garden soil, ash, gravel, etc
103	T1	Dark grey brown sandy clay (colluvial)
104	T1	Mid brown orange sand gravel with large bolder inclusion
201	T2	Dark grey sand silt (garden soil)
202	T2	Light brown grey sandy silt
203	T2	Light brown silt sand
300	T3	Tarmac
301	T3	Concrete
302	T3	Yellow & Red brick demo mixed with sand (made ground)
303	T3	Mixed deposit of ash, brown sand, white/grey chalk sand clay (made ground)
304	T3	Mid brown orange sand gravel with round pebbles
305	T3	White sandstone foundation
306	T3	Mixed deposit of ash, brown sand and gravel (backfill north of [305])

#### Appendix 1.3 Photographic register

Frame	Direction	Description
001	N	Cutting tarmac
002	N	Cutting tarmac
003	NE	Cutting tarmac
004	NE	Pre-condition: fence prior to cutting
005	NE	Pre-condition: fence prior to cutting
006	NE	Pre-condition: fence prior to cutting
007	E	Pre-condition: fence prior to cutting
008	SE	Pre-condition: hand-dug trench
009	SE	Pre-condition: hand-dug trench
010	–	ID shot
011	SW	Pre-ex Trench 1
012	SW	Pre-ex Trench 1
013	SW	Pre-ex Trench 1
014	–	Council sign
015	E	Working shot going through fence
016	N	Excavating Trench 1
017	N	Excavating Trench 1
018	W	Breaking concrete
019	NE	Possible foundation Trench 3
020	SW	Post-ex Trench 3
021	NE	Post-ex Trench 3

<b>Frame</b>	<b>Direction</b>	<b>Description</b>
022	NE	Post-ex Trench 3
023	NE	Post-ex Trench 1
024	SW	Post-ex Trench 1
025	NW	SE facing section Trench 1
026	NW	NW facing section Trench 1
027	E	General shot of access to Trench 2
028	NE	Post-ex shot of Trench 2 (SE section)
029	NE	Post-ex shot of Trench 2 (SE section)
030	E	Post-ex shot of Trench 2 (WFS)
031	NE	Post-ex shot of foundation wall (Trench 3)
032	SE	Post-ex shot of foundation wall (Trench 3)
033	E	WFS Trench 3
034	NE	WFS Trench 3
035	—	Boulders in geology of Trench 1
036	N	Excavating Trench 1
037	W	EFS of Trench 1 extended
038	NW	EFS of Trench 1 extended
039	S	NFS of Trench 1
040	N	EFS of Trench 1
041	NW	EFS of Trench 1
042	NE	WFS of Trench 1
043	NE	WFS of Trench 1
044	N	Post-ex Trench 1
045	E	Backfilled Trench 2
046	E	Backfilled Trench 2
047	N	Backfilled Trench 1
048	NE	Backfilled Trench 3
049	SW	Backfilled Trench 3
050	SE	Backfilled Trench 3 and surrounding area
051	S	Backfilled Trench 1
052	SE	Backfilled Trench 1
053	SW	Backfilled Trench 1
054	—	Digger on his way!

#### Appendix 1.4 Drawing register

<b>Dwg</b>	<b>Description</b>
001	Sketch plan of Trenches 1 and 3
002	Sketch plan of Trench 2

## Appendix 2 Finds register

Trench	Context	Qty	Material	Object	Description	Period
2	201	25	Clay pipe	Bowl & stem	Twenty narrow bore stems, 5 with glaze; and 5 mould decorated bowls	Mod
2	201	8	Pottery (mod)	Various	Modern hand painted (spongeware?) whitewares and redwares	Mod
2	201	3	Glass	Bottle	Two body sherds and a base sherd, in poor condition	?
2	201	1	Ceramic	Object	Small, broken sphere with remains of glaze, and brake to its base. Possible handle off pottery	Mod
2	202	1	Pottery (mod)	Redware	Glazed Redware	Mod
3	U/S	1	Clay pipe	Stem	Stem, narrow bore	Mod
3	U/S	2	Pottery (mod)	Greyware	Large conjoining base sections	Mod
3	U/S	1	Iron	Object	Possible nail, gently curving shaft, heavily corroded	Mod









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