Bolsover Junior School, Bolsover, Derbyshire

Report on a Watching Brief

ARS Ltd Report 2007/35
May 2007

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Executive Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Archaeological Research Services Ltd for Derbyshire County Council upon the excavation of a trench planned for the building of a boundary wall to the rear of Bolsover Junior School, Derbyshire(National Grid Reference SK 47129 70532), on May 29th[b] 2007. This comprised observation of all groundworks and recording and excavation of any archaeological features encountered. No archaeological features were identified.

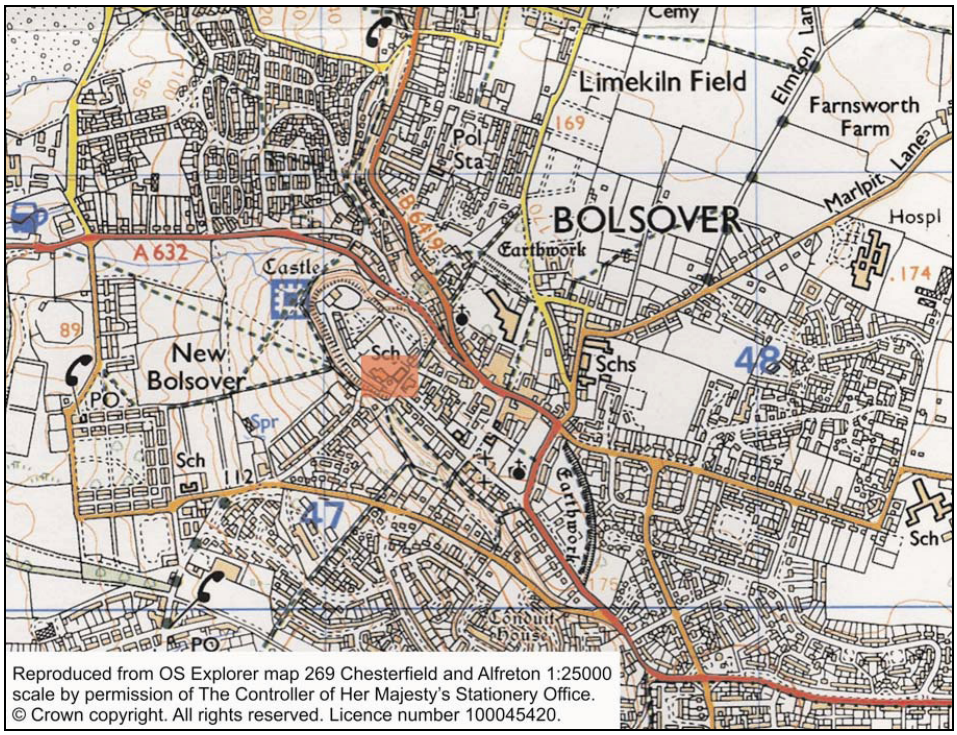


Fig. 1 Location of site.

1. Introduction

1.1 The watching brief at Bolsover Junior School (Fig.1) was undertaken by Brian Marshall of Archaeological Research Services Ltd for Derbyshire County Council. The intention was to monitor the excavation of a trench to a depth of 0.5m, the preliminary to the building of a boundary wall. The watching brief was considered essential due to the location of the site adjacent to the scheduled area of Bolsover Castle and within the former castle precinct (Fig.2). As such it lies within an archaeologically sensitive area, where significant remains could well be preserved.

2. Location

2.1 The site of Bolsover Junior School is found on the eastern fringe of the grounds of Bolsover castle (SK 471705), 22.5km SE of Sheffield at a height of 175m OD.

2.2 Bolsover Castle and its surrounding area lie upon an outcrop of Triassic Sherwood Sandstone which overlies the Derbyshire Middle Coal Measures (Linford 1994, Donnelly et al 2006).

3. Background

3.1 Prior to the Norman Conquest Bolsover lay in the Earldom of Mercia and was the property of Leofric. Leofric lost possession of his estate, as did the majority of Saxon landowners, sometime after the Conquest. Bolsover did not suffer in the harrying of the north, but did pass to a Norman lord. In 1086 it was granted

to William De Peveril. The rocky ledge was an obviously defensible position and on this site he built the first castle.

3.2 The next major family to hold the castle were the De Furnival lords of Sheffiield and by the time of John's war with the Barons the castle was a major fortress. This is demonstrated by a letter from King John to Gerald De Furnival suggesting that he should leave Sheffield for the 'stronger' castle in Bolsover. Gerald followed John's advice; the castle was besieged and was damaged in the process. The later medieval period saw the castle suffer from a process of decay prior to its seventeenth century rebirth.

4. Aims of the Project

4.1 The project consisted of an archaeological watching brief as requested by the local authority. Its intention was to observe all ground works for the presence of any surviving archaeological features, record them and preserve the remains *in situ*.

5. Methodology

5.1 A trench running west from the corner of an outbuilding was excavated by a toothless ditching bucket (Fig. 2). The trench then turned at right angles towards the north where the concrete surface required the trench line to be cut by a circular cutter before removal of a tarmac surface. The trench was then excavated by the removal of level shallow spits and a check was made at all stages for archaeological features. A small trench south of the outbuilding and connecting to the school building was manually dug by spade. The entire process was monitored by an archaeologist from Archaeological Research Services Ltd.

5.2 A site plan at a scale of 1:50 was produced. No archaeological features were encountered and no archaeological small finds identified.

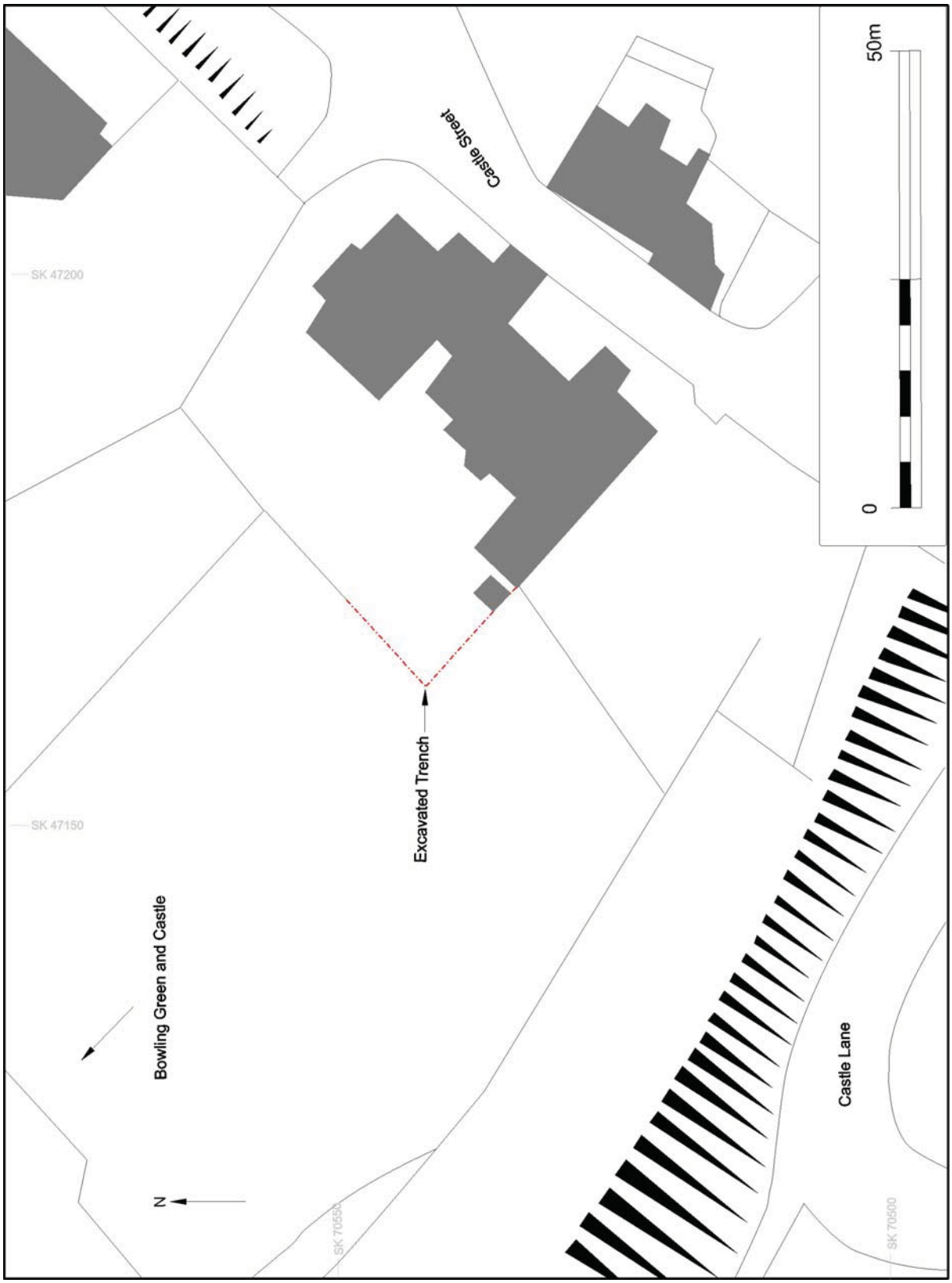
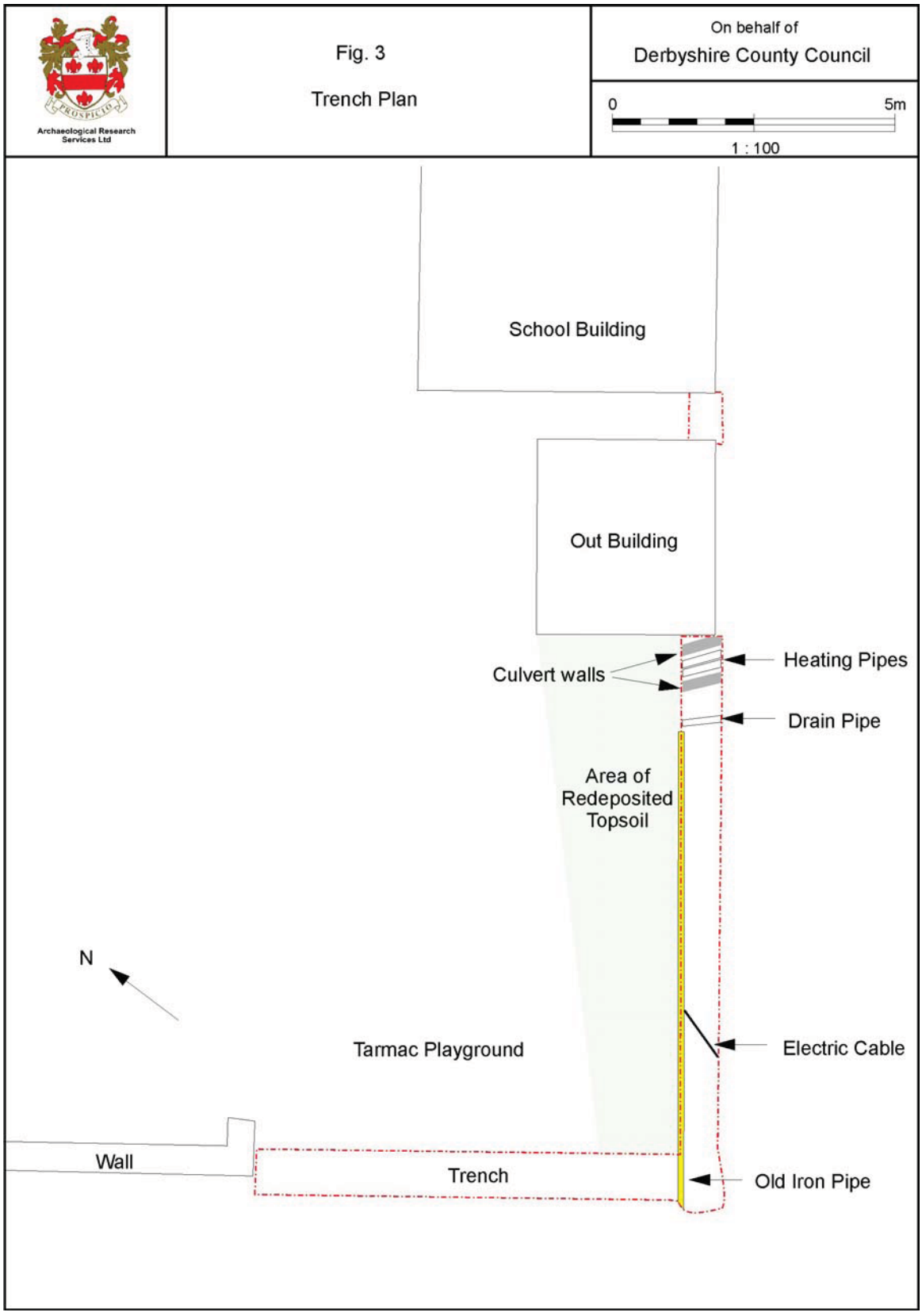


Fig. 2. Site Plan


Archaeological Research Services Ltd
Fig. 3
Trench Plan
On behalf of
Derbyshire County Council
0
5m
1 : 100
School Building
Out Building
Culvert walls
Heating Pipes
Drain Pipe
Area of Redeposited Topsoil
N
Tarmac Playground
Electric Cable
Wall
Trench
Old Iron Pipe

6. Summary of Results

6.1 An initial inspection of the development site revealed the area to be excavated was to the rear of the school in the South West corner of the playground and consisted of a tarmac surfaced area adjacent to an area of redeposited topsoil (context 001). The topsoil had been laid and reseeded following the demolition of classrooms in 2006. The trench was excavated by a toothless ditching bucket to a width of approximately 0.7m wide and 0.5m deep.

Fig.4. Trench running west from the out building (facing East)

6.2 Excavation commenced at the west wall of the outbuilding and after removal of a thin layer of topsoil a concrete base was encountered. The base continued for 1m after which the topsoil (001) was excavated to a depth of 0.10m to 0.15m, revealing a layer of subsoil (003) of which 0.35m was excavated. The subsoil (003) consisted of a loose matrix containing shattered sandstone typical of the Bolsover area.

6.3 Underneath the concrete base a wall of modern brick was revealed and when the concrete base was removed a further wall revealed the structure to be a culvert carrying heating pipes to the old classrooms (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5. Culvert carrying heating pipes

At a point 1.5m west of the outbuilding wall an infill of modern rubble was encountered, which when removed exposed a drain most likely part of the services to the old classrooms. Just past the drain underlying the topsoil in the north face of the trench an old iron pipe was encountered (Fig. 4). The trench was excavated along the line of this pipe which ran west.

6.3 At 9.2m the trench turned at a right angle running North East leaving the iron pipe fully exposed across the trench (Fig. 6). At a point 1.4m north from this point the tarmac playground surface (002) was encountered and 0.15m below the topsoil (001) another layer of tarmac (005) was discovered. The lower layer of tarmac overlay the subsoil which was excavated by 0.30m to 0.35m to complete the trench.

Fig. 6. Trench looking North East (scale 2m)

7. Conclusion

7.1 No small finds or structures of medieval date were discovered during the watching brief. The archaeological sensitivity of the site has already been referred to and the need for the watching brief self evident from the proximity of the scheduled ancient monument. However, no archaeological features were identified.

8 Publicity, Confidentiality and Copyright

8.1 Any publicity will be handled by the client.

8.2 Archaeological Research Services Ltd will retain the copyright of all documentary and photographic material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).

9. Statement of Indemnity

9.1 All statements and opinions contained within this report arising from the works undertaken are offered in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author/s of the report for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report(s), howsoever such facts and opinions may have been derived.

10. Acknowledgements

10.1 Archaeological Research Services Ltd would like to thank all those involved with the smooth running of the project, especially Darren Blenkinsop of Faithful and Gould, John Eade of Derbyshire County Council, Andy Myers the Development Control Archaeologist of Derbyshire County Council and the staff on site from Wildgoose Construction.

References

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