

## Aston Street, Wem, Shropshire

### Archaeological Watching Brief Report





**ASTON STREET,  
WEM, SHROPSHIRE**

## **Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

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## QUALITY ASSURANCE

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**Archaeological Watching Brief**

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## **ASTON STREET, WEM, SHROPSHIRE**

### **Archaeological Watching Brief**

#### **Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Severn Trent Water to undertake an archaeological watching brief on groundworks associated with the construction of a sewer on land off Aston Street, Wem, Shropshire. The sewer runs from NGR 351547, 328769 to NGR 351502, 328722 and consists of two parallel pipes with three manholes located along each pipe. The development is located close to Civil War defences identified by previous archaeological work undertaken in the area (Charles 2007).

The scope of the watching brief comprised the monitoring of all groundworks that potentially impacted on archaeological deposits and features. The works were requested by Shropshire County Council in line with planning policy guidance set out in PPS5. The aim of the works was to investigate and record any archaeological features and deposits revealed during test pitting and groundworks. This report outlines in detail the methodology employed during the watching brief and the results.

Six manholes and a length of open cut trenching were monitored. An archaeological feature containing post-medieval material was observed in one of the manholes, though its full extent could not be determined. No other features were observed in the other manholes or in the open cut trench where the ground appeared disturbed.

Datable material (pottery, ceramic building material, clay pipe) recovered from the site is all post-medieval; the pottery (coarse redwares, Midlands stoneware, creamware and refined whitewares) suggests a date range from 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The archive will be deposited with Shrewsbury Museum under accession number SHRMS:2010.0011.

## **ASTON STREET, WEM, SHROPSHIRE**

### **Archaeological Watching Brief**

#### **Acknowledgements**

This project was commissioned by Severn Trent Water, through Wayne Musiwa of Grontmij, and Wessex Archaeology is grateful in this regard. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank the principle contractor Forkers Ltd for providing a positive working environment. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank Mike Watson of Shropshire County Council and Peter Boyd of Shrewsbury Museum.

Fieldwork was undertaken by Zac Nellist, Neil Dransfield, Rob Barnett, Iain McIntyre and Richard O'Neill. The report was researched and compiled by Zac Nellist. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Richard O'Neill. Illustrations were prepared by Chris Swales and the finds were assessed by Lorraine Mephram.

## **ASTON STREET, WEM, SHROPSHIRE**

### **Archaeological Watching Brief**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Project Background**

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Severn Trent Water to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a sewer at Aston Street, Wem (hereafter 'the Site'). The Site is centred on National Grid Reference 516289 (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 The development comprised the provision of a new foul water pipe and a surface water sewer pipe, both 60m in length, to run parallel from NGR 351547, 328769 to NGR 351502, 328722.
- 1.1.3 Mike Watson, Historic Environment Record officer for Shropshire County Council (SCC) requested that an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during all groundworks (**Figure 2**) due to the presence of Civil War defences in the vicinity of the Site. This was in line with current government planning guidance (DCLG 2010). The watching brief followed methodologies set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), prepared by Wessex Archaeology (WA 2010).
- 1.1.4 This report presents a brief description of the methodology followed, the results of the monitoring, and the archaeological interpretation of the findings.
- 1.1.5 The watching brief comprised several site visits between 2<sup>nd</sup> June and 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2010.

### **1.2 The Site, location and geology**

- 1.2.1 The Site is centred on National Grid Reference SJ 516289. It is located 150m south of Aston Road and 200m east of Leek Street. Wem lies 16km north of Shrewsbury and 17km south of Whitchurch, Shropshire.
- 1.2.2 The Site lies adjacent to a veterinarian surgery, a footpath and a large concrete slab. The underlying geology is river terrace sand and gravels.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Aims and scope**

- 2.1.1 The principal aim of the watching brief was to provide further information concerning the presence/absence, date, nature and extent of any buried archaeological remains that may survive and to investigate and record all archaeological features revealed during test pitting and groundworks.
- 2.1.2 The specific aims of the project were:
- to accurately record the location and stratigraphy of areas excavated during the main groundworks programme;
  - to assess the state of survival of archaeological features and finds within the Site;

- to place any archaeology encountered within its local, regional and national significance.
- 2.1.3 The scope of the project comprised the observation of all groundworks associated with the construction of the sewer that could impact on archaeological deposits and features.
- 2.1.4 All work was carried out in accordance with current industry best practice, current Institute for Archaeologists guidelines (IfA 2008) and the Wessex Archaeology Written Scheme of Investigation (WA 2010).
- 2.1.5 Groundworks were carried out by a tracked 360° excavator using a toothless ditching bucket. The spoil was scanned for finds before being removed from site.
- 2.1.6 The observed works included excavation of six manholes (Trenches 1-6) each measuring between 3-4m in width and up to 4-5m in depth, and a length of open trench measuring 6m in length, 1m in width and up to 3m depth (Trench 7). Works were monitored until natural deposits were observed.

## **2.2 Copyright**

- 2.2.1 This report may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (e.g. Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown Copyright), or the intellectual property of third parties, which we are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferrable by Wessex Archaeology. You are reminded that you remain bound by the conditions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of the report.

## **3 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS**

### **3.1 Results**

- 3.1.1 Observed features, stratigraphy and contexts for each trench are detailed in the **Appendix**.
- 3.1.2 The general stratigraphy across the area impacted on by groundworks was very consistent. A mid orange-brown silty sand topsoil overlay a light orange-brown silty sand subsoil. The underlying natural consisted of orange and pink sand and gravels.
- 3.1.3 A rubbish pit was identified in Trench 1 (Figure 3). The feature was located in the corner of the trench so its full extent could not be determined. Several finds, of domestic character, recovered from the feature are of 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century date.
- 3.1.4 The other five manholes (Trenches 2-6) contained no archaeological features. A length of open cut trenching (Trench 7) appeared to traverse primarily previously disturbed ground, probably a result of the recent construction of the car park for the adjacent veterinarian's surgery.



### 3.2 Finds

- 3.3.1 A small quantity of finds was recovered from the Site during the watching brief, deriving from two contexts (106, 501); quantities by context are presented in **Table 1**.
- 3.3.2 Datable material (pottery, ceramic building material, clay pipe) is all post-medieval; the pottery (coarse redwares, Midlands stoneware, creamware and refined whitewares) suggests a date range from 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century. One fragment of mortar, and one animal bone, are both undatable.
- 3.3.3 Given the small quantity of finds recovered, their provenance and date range, their archaeological potential is very low. Retention for long-term curation is not therefore recommended, and the finds will be discarded prior to archive deposition.

**Table 1: All finds by context (number / weight in grammes)**

Context	Animal Bone	CBM	Clay Pipe	Mortar	Pottery
106	1/18	3/151	2/1	1/34	8/310
501		1/36			2/150
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1/18</b>	<b>4/187</b>	<b>2/1</b>	<b>1/34</b>	<b>10/460</b>

CBM = ceramic building material

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

### 4.1 Summary

- 4.1.1 Archaeological monitoring of the groundworks at Wem identified a single pit feature in Trench 1. This consisted of a shallow rubbish pit of probable early 20<sup>th</sup> century date.
- 4.1.2 No evidence for the civil war defensive ditch previously identified in the adjacent area (Charles 1998) was observed. However, the area of highest potential to observe this feature, Trench 7, was located in an area where the ground had been recently disturbed.

## 5 ARCHIVE

### 5.1 Preparation

- 5.1.1 The project archive, consisting of all primary written documents, plans, sections, photographs, and electronic data, will be prepared by Wessex Archaeology staff in accordance with the requirements of the repository museum and in line with guidelines published by the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (1990) and, Museums and Galleries Commission (1992).

### 5.2 Deposition

- 5.2.1 It is anticipated that the physical Site archive will be deposited with Shrewsbury Museum under the accession number SHRMS:2010.0011.

- 5.2.2 A digital copy of the report will be prepared for the client and physical copies will be submitted to Shropshire County Council, and, along with the Site archive, to the repository museum.
- 5.2.3 An OASIS form will be completed at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/> for inclusion in the ADS database. This will include an electronic copy of the report in PDF format.

## 6 REFERENCES

- Charles, M. 2007.** Land of Aston Street, Wem, Shropshire Archaeological Evaluation, Birmingham Archaeology; Report Number 1578.
- Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). 2010.** *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning and the Historic Environment*, London; Department for Communities and Local Government.
- Institute for Archaeologists (IfA). 2008.** Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief.
- Museum and Galleries Commission (MGC). 1992.** Standards in the museum care of archaeological collections.
- United Kingdom Institute of Conservation (UKIC). 1990.** Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage.
- Wessex Archaeology. 2010.** *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching brief at Aston Street, Wem, Shropshire.* Unpublished Report no. 74710.02

## APPENDIX

**Table 1: Contexts in Trench 1**

<b>Trench 1 (Manhole: 4m x 4m, observed to 4.6m depth)</b>			
<b>Depth bgl (m)</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Context description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
0.00 - 0.30	101	Mid orange-brown silty sand	Topsoil
0.30 - 0.48	102	Orange silty sand	Subsoil
0.36 - 0.46	103	Pink and orange sand with frequent gravel	Natural
0.18 - 0.72	104	Concave sided and bottomed cut	Cut of rubbish pit
0.18 - 0.72	105	Mid brown sandy silt	Secondary fill of pit
0.18 - 0.41	106	Black brown sandy silt	Secondary fill of pit

**Table 2: Contexts in Trench 2**

<b>Trench 2 (Manhole: 3.7m x 3.1m, observed to 1.3m depth)</b>			
<b>Depth bgl (m)</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Context description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
0.00 - 0.40	201	Dark brown organic rich silty sand, occasional modern CBM	Topsoil
0.40 - 0.80	202	Mid brown silty sand	Subsoil
0.80 - 1.30	203	Orange sand with occasional gravel	Natural
1.30	204	Beige sand with frequent quartz and sandstone pebbles	Natural

**Table 3: Contexts in Trench 3**

<b>Trench 3 (Manhole: 3m x 3m, observed to 1.38m depth)</b>			
<b>Depth bgl (m)</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Context description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
0.00 - 0.56	301	Dark brown silty sand	Topsoil
0.56 - 0.68	302	Mid brown silty sand	Subsoil
0.68 - 1.38	303	Beige to pink sand with frequent gravel	Natural

**Table 4: Contexts in Trench 4**

<b>Trench 4 (Manhole: 3m x 3m, observed to 1m depth)</b>			
<b>Depth bgl (m)</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Context description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
0.00 - 0.30	401	Mid orange-brown silty sand	Topsoil
0.30 - 0.75	402	Orange silty sand	Subsoil
0.75 - 1.00	403	Orange pink sand with common gravel	Natural

1.00	404	Light orange yellow loose sand	Natural
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**Table 5: Contexts in Trench 5**

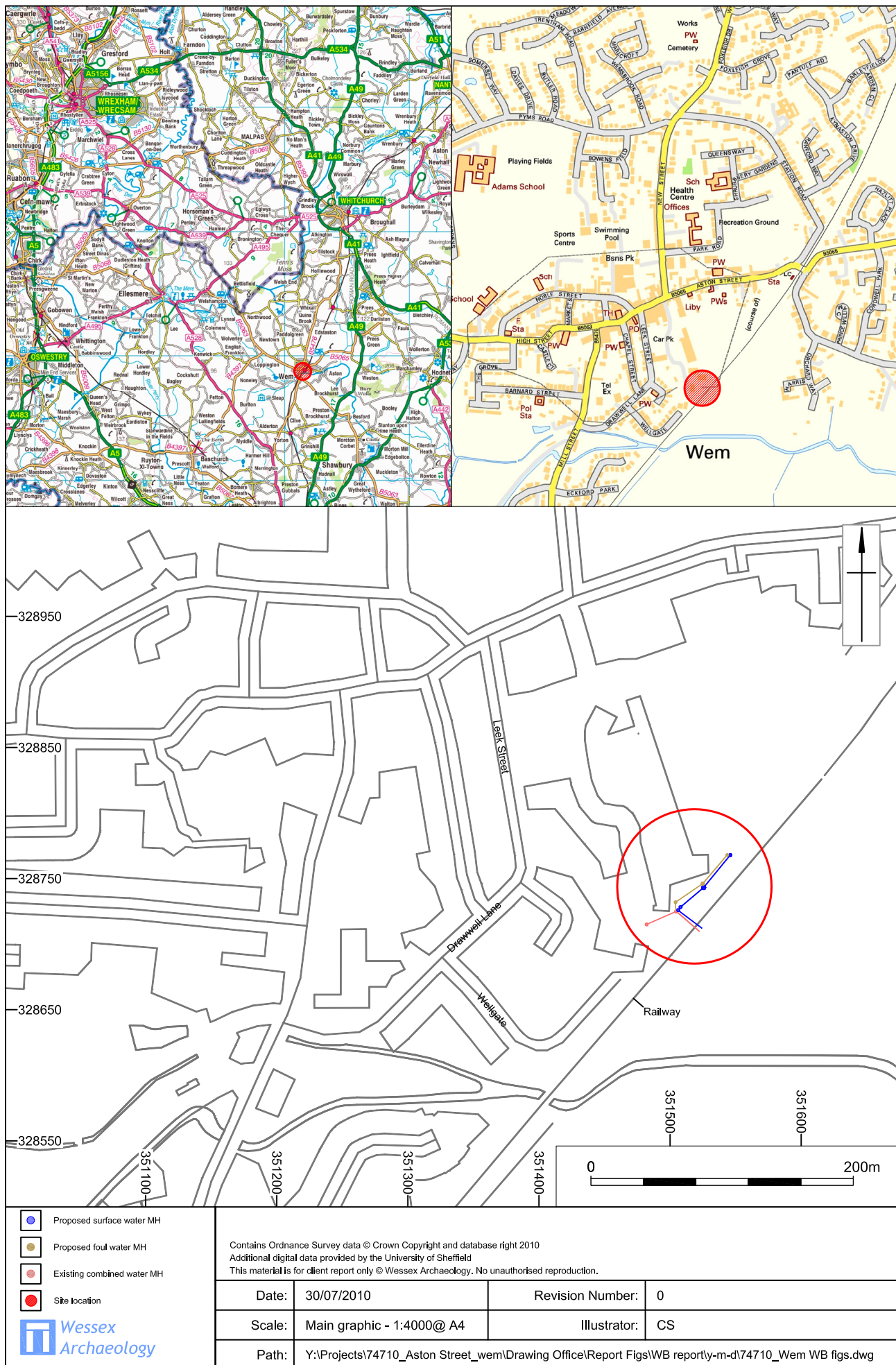
<b>Trench 5 (Manhole: 3.3m x 3.3m, observed to 1.4m depth)</b>			
<b>Depth bgl (m)</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Context description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
0.00 – 1.40	501	Mid brown silty sand with occasional modern CBM.	Backfill
0.00 – 1.40	502	Vertically sided flat bottomed cut	Cut of modern manhole
0.00 – 1.10	503	Mid brown silty sand with occasional modern CBM.	Modern deposits
2.50	504	Light yellow sand with frequent pebbles	Natural

**Table 6: Contexts in Trench 6**

<b>Trench 6 (Manhole: 3m x 3m, observed to 3m depth)</b>			
<b>Depth bgl (m)</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Context description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
0.00 – 0.10	601	Modern tarmac	Car park surface
0.10 – 0.30	602	Modern hardcore bedding	Bedding for car park surface
0.30 – 3.00	603	Orange sand	Natural

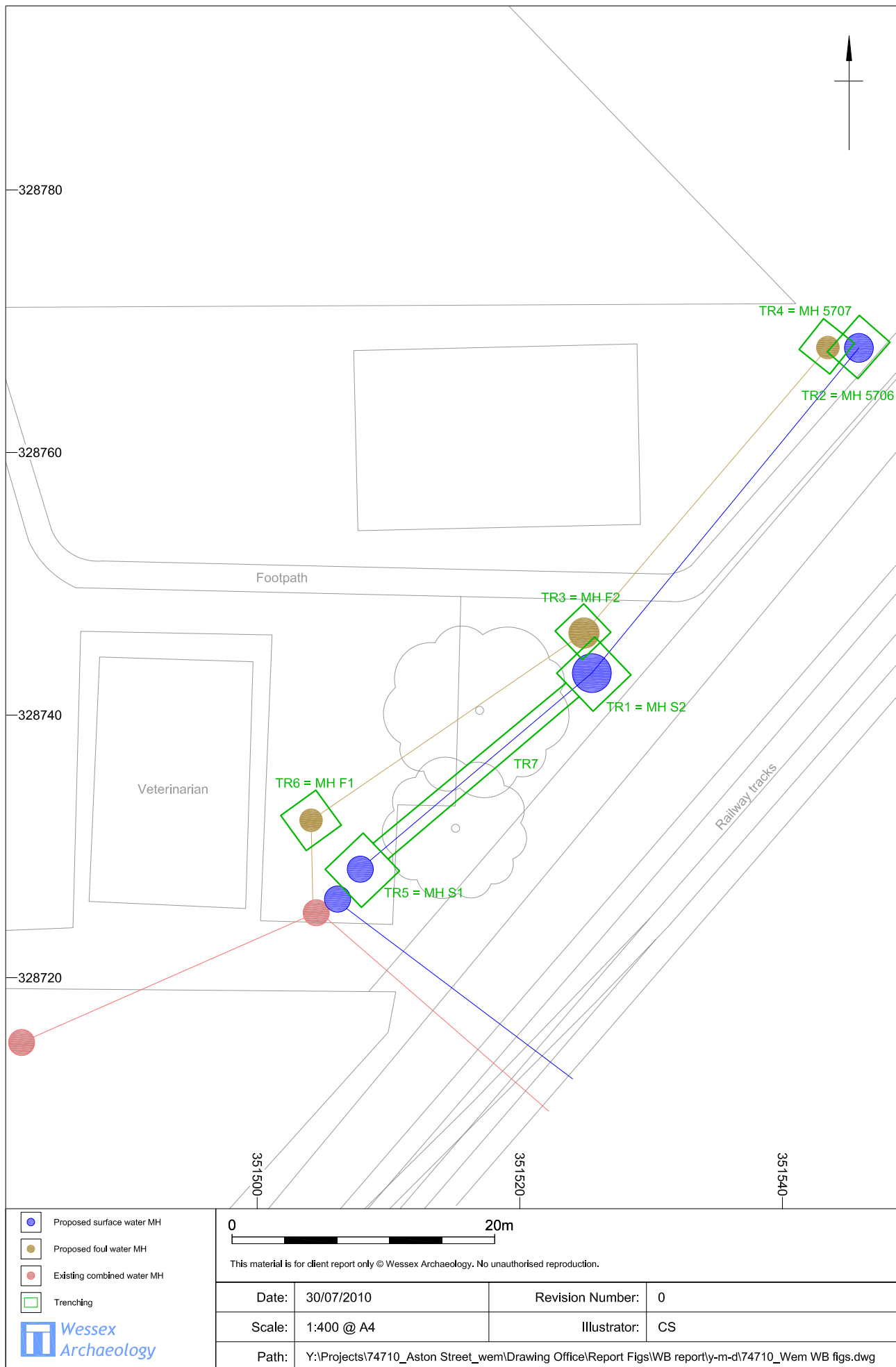
**Table 7: Contexts in Trench 7**

<b>Trench 7 (Opencut trench: 19m x 1m, observed to 3m depth)</b>			
<b>Depth bgl (m)</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Context description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
0.00 – 0.10	701	Modern tarmac	Car park surface
0.10 – 0.30	702	Modern hardcore bedding	Bedding for car park surface
0.30 – 2.5m	703	Mid brown silty sand with occasional modern CBM (southwestern and central areas of trench).	Modern deposits
0.30 – 0.70	704	Mid brown silty sand (seen towards northern extent of trench)	Subsoil
0.70 – 3.00	705	Pink and orange sand with frequent gravel (higher towards northeastern extent of trench)	Natural



Site location

Figure 1



Trench locations

Figure 2







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