

**SARAH HAYTER'S ALMSHOUSES,
FISHERTON STREET,
SALISBURY, WILTSHIRE**

NGR: SU 1392 3015

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
SHA99**

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SUMMARY

On 20th September 1999 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land at Sarah Hayters Almshouses, Fisherton Street, Salisbury (NGR SU139303) on behalf of Barry Taylor associates.

The evaluation consisted of a single 2m x 2m hand-dug trench in order to test the presence of archaeologically sensitive deposits relating to the medieval frontage of Fisherton Street.

Archaeological features dating to the post-medieval period were located and identified within the trench, consisting of a brick surface and associated relating to the construction/demolition of the original almshouses endowed in 1797.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology on 20th September 1999, on land at Sarah Hayters Almshouses, Fisherton Street, Salisbury at NGR : SU 139303 on behalf of Barry Taylor Associates.

1.2 The evaluation was undertaken in response to the proposal to redevelop the site into a new building comprising two and three storey apartments.

1.3 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a project design prepared by Foundations Archaeology (SHA99/FA.doc1.tp) which was prepared in accordance with the IFA *Standards and Guidance on Archaeological Evaluation* (1994) and the *Standards for Archaeological Assessment and Field Evaluation in Wiltshire* (County Archaeological Service 1995). The programme of archaeological works was undertaken in accordance with the principals of Panning Policy Guidance note 16, Archaeology and Planning (DoE 1990). The site lies within an area defined by Wiltshire County Council as archaeologically significant.

1.4 The study area is located approximately 0.5km west of the Salisbury City Centre (Fig.1) and lies within the probable area of the Medieval village of Fisherton known as Fiscarton in AD 1086. It is bounded to the North by the existing Almshouse building and terraced rear garden, beyond which lies a railway embankment. A carpark and Fisherton Mill lie to the east and to the west independently standing two storey shops and flats. The southern boundary of the area is formed by Fisherton Street itself, which is separated from the front garden area of the site by a brick built revetment wall. The front garden area consists of a lawn, paved paths and hardstanding and several medium sized deciduous trees.

1.5 The objective of the evaluation was to test whether archaeologically sensitive deposits were present within the study area, particularly considering the location of the medieval frontage to Fisherton Street and two medieval pots found on the site in 1935 and 1963.

1.6 The underlying solid geology comprises of Valley gravels underlain by Upper Chalk of the Cretaceous period.

2 AIMS

2.1 The aim of the archaeological evaluation was to gather a high quality information from the direct observation of the archaeological deposits in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains; as well as make recommendations for management of the resource.

2.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:

- i) To define and identify the nature of the archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible;

- ii) To attempt to characterise the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site;
- iii) To recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 The archaeological works comprised the excavation of a hand-dug test pit 2m x 2m positioned within 2m of Fisherton Street. The test-pit was excavated and recorded to standards defined in the Project Design.

4 RESULTS

4.1 The trench was excavated to the top of the archaeological deposits except against the western section, where the post medieval deposits were removed to natural substrates to give a representative cross section.

4.2 A dark brown/black sandy loam topsoil approximately 0.30m thick sealed a layer of pale grey/off white mortar and building debris with a depth of 0.10-1.20m probably formed during the demolition of the original almshouses in 1976. This directly sealed a post-medieval period patterned brick surface, formed of several distinct brick types and colours (103), (104) present at 47.52m OD.

4.3 In order of investigate the presence or absence of archaeologically significant deposits sealed by the brick surface, a section measuring 2m x 0.6m was excavated against the western face of the trench. Directly underlying the brick surface was a layer of mid grey brown silty loam (106) which contained frequent inclusions of charcoal, building debris and post medieval potsherds. This sealed a layer of light grey brown silty loam (107) again containing moderate amounts of post medieval building debris to a depth of 0.30m. Underlying (107) was a thin (0.02m) layer of fine grey/beige silt (108) with frequent charcoal flecks, this layer sealed a grey brown silty loam (109) which was identical in consistency and make up to (106). This layer contained a broken clay pipe bowl with spur and a piece of stem. This layer directly overlaid an orange brown clay forming the natural substrate at 45.08m OD.

4.4 The patterned brick surface can be separated into two distinct sections. The main area (104) forms a regular pattern made up of broken brick pieces. Three different colours of brick make up the pattern. A central square of four dark purple bricks was surrounded by a large area of red brick, bordered by a double width of salmon pink bricks. The second area of the brick surface (103) consists of larger, more regular bricks, possible of later date. The formed a more regular alignment along the western side of the trench.

It is likely that the patterned surface (104) was associated with the original almshouses, and that the second area represents later patching.

4.5 The two upper layers of the trench, the topsoil and layer of demolition rubble sealing the brick surface, are modern and related to the rebuilding of the almshouses in 1976. The stratigraphic deposits sealed below the brick surface are all of a similar post-medieval date and probably relate to the raising of the ground level prior to or during the construction of the original almshouses, endowed in 1797.

4.6 Artefactual evidence for all stratigraphic layers comprised of post medieval ceramics, iron objects, building debris and clay pipe fragments. Limited amounts of faunal remains comprised the only ecofactual remains from the trench.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 The most significant individual feature revealed in the evaluation was the post-medieval brick surface (104), which appears to have been preserved *in situ* in the area of the trench. It probably represents an open yard or path area within the front garden plots of the original almshouses.

5.2 The clear stratigraphy of the layers below this surface, and the fact that these layers appear to be contemporary, lead to the conclusion that there had been a deliberate raising of the ground level in the post medieval period, probably also associated with the building of the almshouses.

5.3 The level at which natural substrate was encountered (45.08m OD) was significantly higher than that of the present day road surface, implying that the present road is at a level lower than that in the medieval period and revealing the possibility that medieval features and deposits could be preserved beneath the post medieval build up.

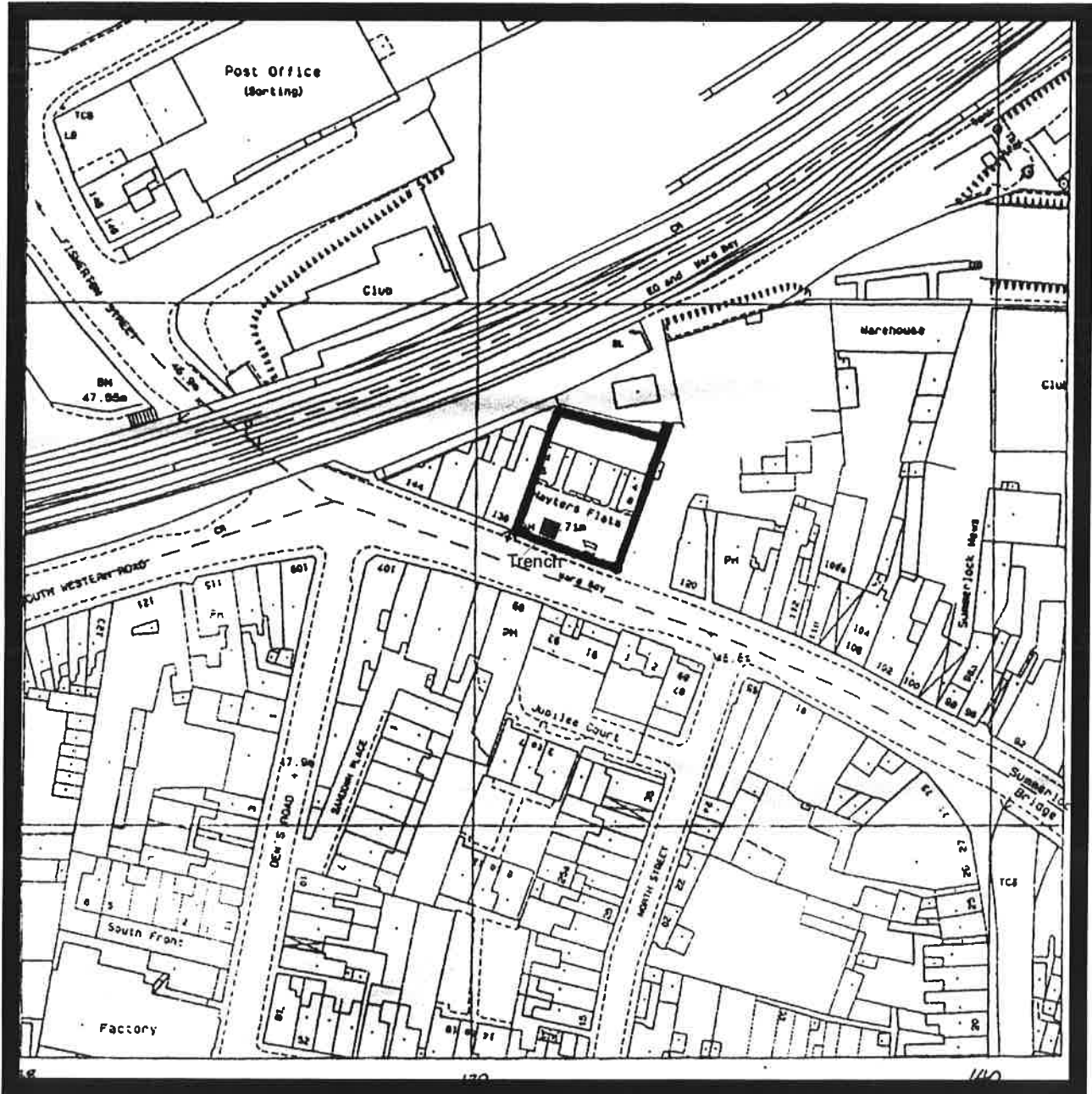


Figure 1 : Site and Trench Position

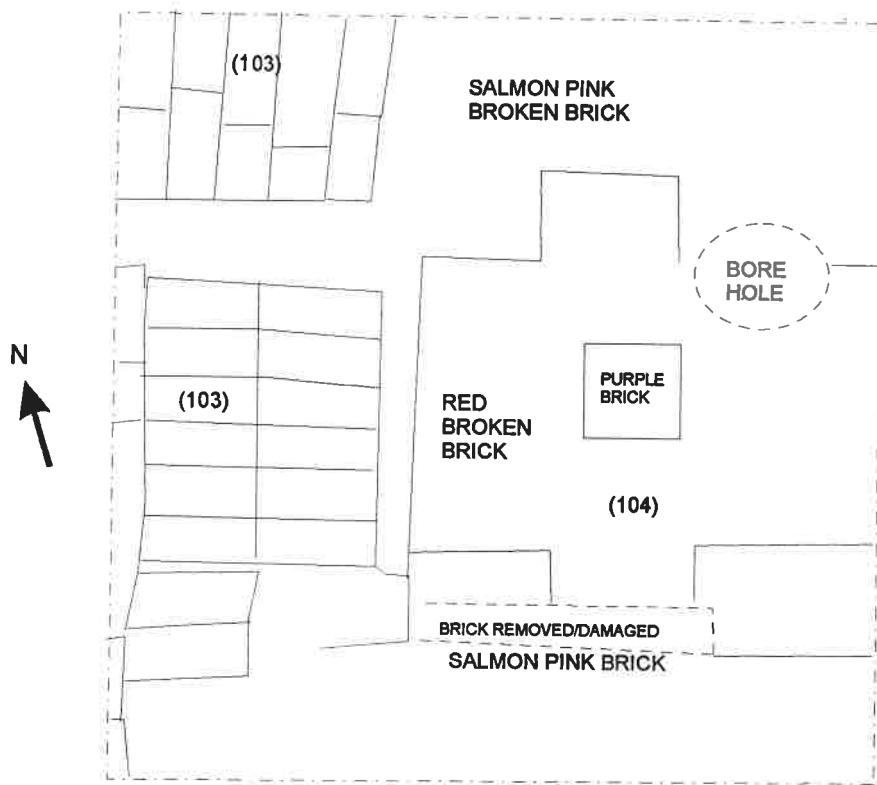


Figure 2 : Trench Plan

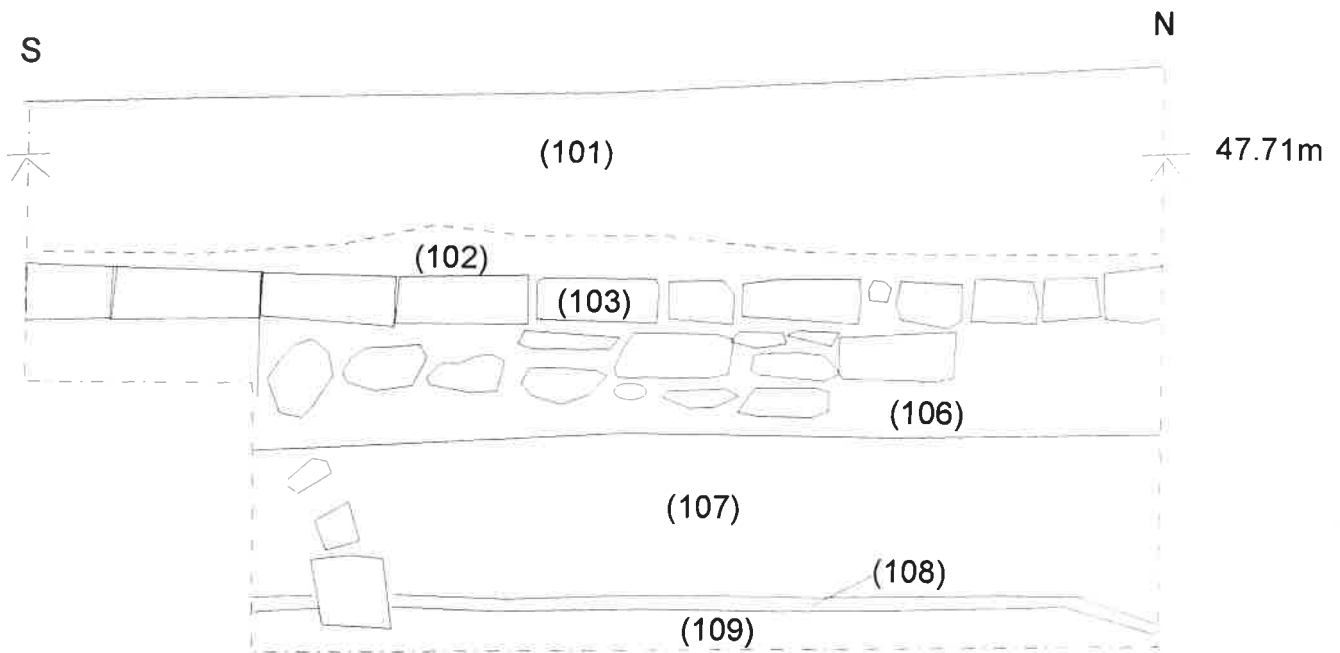


Figure 3 : Section

