

**WESSEX HOUSE  
11-13 BILLET STREET,  
TAUNTON,  
SOMERSET**

**NGR: ST 229 243**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION  
AND EXCAVATION**

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**Report No. 538**

**Quality Assurance**

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## GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

### *Archaeology*

For the purposes of this project archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

### *Medieval*

The period between the Norman Conquest (AD 1066) and c AD 1500.

### *Natural*

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site, in this case being sand and gravel.

### *NGR*

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

### *OD*

Ordnance Datum; used to express a given height above sea-level.

### *OS*

Ordnance Survey

### *Post-medieval*

The period from *circa* AD 1500 to *circa* AD 1900

## SUMMARY

A planning application (No. 38/04/424) was made for the redevelopment of 11-13 Billet Street, Taunton, Somerset at NGR: ST 229 243. The study area is situated near the south side of Taunton town centre. The planning application was submitted to Taunton Deane Borough Council for the erection of a building comprising 13 flats. At the time of the application it did not contain sufficient information concerning any buried remains present so an archaeological evaluation and subsequent excavation was ordered as a condition of the planning consent to determine the character, date and extent of any remains.

Foundations Archaeology was asked to undertake archaeological work on behalf of B& D Homes Limited. The work included an archaeological evaluation of the site carried out by Foundations Archaeology in November 2006. The evaluation revealed a number of features of medieval date. The excavation revealed more features of a similar type and period.

The results of the archaeological work indicate that the earliest identified activity consisted of field boundary hedges of 13<sup>th</sup> century date. A number of 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century features in the form of ditches related to field or property boundaries were also present, along with a number of tree root scars and throws which were used as *ad hoc* rubbish pits, while the presence of ceramic building material indicates the presence of a structure in the near vicinity, possibly associated with pin making. A single large tree throw in the far west of the site contained finds of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century date and suggests remodelling of the area during the later post-medieval period. A small number of stakeholes were also identified, although it did not prove possible to attribute these to any structures or specific function.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A planning application (No. 38/04/424) was made for the redevelopment of 11-13 Billet Street, Taunton, Somerset at NGR: ST 229 243. The study area is situated near the south side of Taunton town centre. The planning application was submitted to Taunton Deane Borough Council for the erection of a building comprising 13 flats. At the time of the application it did not contain sufficient information concerning any buried remains present so an archaeological evaluation and subsequent excavation was ordered as a condition of the planning consent to determine the character, date and extent of any remains.
- 1.2 Foundations Archaeology was asked to undertake archaeological work on behalf of B& D Homes Limited. The work included an archaeological evaluation of the site carried out by Foundations Archaeology in November 2006. The evaluation revealed a number of pits, postholes and linear features of medieval date. The excavation revealed more features of a similar type and period.
- 1.3 The archaeological works were undertaken in accordance with the *Brief for an Archaeological Evaluation* prepared by Steven Membery (Development Control Archaeologist) of Somerset County Council and the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2006).
- 1.4 This report details the evidence recovered during the evaluation and excavation. The final format for publication was not specified in the Project Design, although a range of possible options was suggested (Foundations Archaeology 2006). This assessment now details the proposed publication format and content of the excavation report. This document conforms to the specification set out in Appendices 4 and 5 of The Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage 1991).
- 1.5 In the following sections a summary of the results of the evaluation/excavation is followed by an assessment of its stated aims and an overall assessment of the importance of the site is given. Finally each major category of finds is then similarly assessed in turn.

## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND PROJECT BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Archaeological Background

- 2.1.1 The archaeological background to the site was compiled by Steven Membery of Somerset County Council in his brief for the archaeological works (2006).
- 2.1.2 Taunton and the settlements of its immediate hinterland lie within the broad, sheltered vale of the River Tone, which contains rich agricultural land on which the economic importance of the area has been based. Converging in the

vale are important communications lines from the uplands and the Levels, including the River Tone itself (though the river's navigable limit has varied over the centuries). Taunton lies at a crossing point of the river, but other historically important settlements in the hinterland (including Norton and Bishop's Hull) instead overlook the vale. The hillfort of Norton Fitzwarren represents the first known 'central place' in the vale, and was in many respects the predecessor of modern Taunton. The site was in use in various forms from the Neolithic period onwards, and is believed to have been during the later prehistoric period an important interchange point on the boundary between two tribes. The surrounding settlement and landscape pattern is still not fully understood, but it seems clear that Norton dominated a densely settled and farmed area. A number of settlement sites have already been revealed by excavation (including one in the town centre) and aerial photographic survey, and it is probable that many more existed. The partial abandonment of Norton in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD is the clearest indication in the Taunton area of the impact of the Romans. However, it appears that eventually (in the 3rd and 4th centuries) the site was reoccupied, perhaps representing a resurgence of native British traditions. Elsewhere, continuity of settlement seems likely and, indeed, has been shown on some excavated sites. Ample evidence of Roman activity in the vale has been recovered in the form of coin and pottery finds, though this can not always be linked to specific sites. Whether there was settlement on the site of Taunton itself is not yet known: no structural evidence has yet been recovered, except for the remains of a small number of agricultural drainage ditches.

- 2.1.3 The first historical reference to Taunton is in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 722. The entry records the destruction (or demolition) of Taunton, built by Ine, by his wife, Queen Aethelburh. This probably refers to a fortified centre associated with the expansion of Wessex under Ine, which was in 722 slighted by Aethelburh to prevent its use by rebels against her husband. The omission of Taunton from the later Burghal Hidage (c900 AD) appears to indicate that the first site was not refortified. Indeed, it is possible that it was not reoccupied, and that it was not the same site as later Saxon or medieval Taunton occupied. The Tone Vale estates were extensive and it has been suggested that Ine may have had his fort at Norton Fitzwarren, in the hillfort, or at Bishop's Hull. Local traditions also associate the Dragon of Wessex with Norton, though archaeological evidence is lacking. The foundation of a minster at Taunton, probably by the wife of Ine's successor in the mid 8th century, may mark the beginning of the town of Taunton.
- 2.1.4 The minster, with a limited estate, was granted to the See of Winchester at a very early stage in its history, and lands were subsequently added to the minster estates in the 8th and 9th centuries. However, most of the manor was retained by the kings of Wessex, and it was they who first developed it as an important administrative, judicial and commercial centre for the extensive Tone Vale estate which stretched from the Quantocks to the Blackdowns. It was not until the early 10th century that the Bishops of Winchester acquired rights to the profits of the developing commercial centre. The earliest of the

10th century charters (of 904 AD) refers not only to market tolls and tax exemptions, but also to burgage rents, showing that Taunton was by this date already a town, and from the mid 10th century onwards, it had its own mint. Though the minster site has almost certainly now been located under part of the medieval castle, the location of the town founded by the kings of Wessex and taken over by the Bishops of Winchester remains an enigma. The "obvious" site - that later occupied by the medieval borough - has produced worryingly little archaeological evidence despite relatively frequent interventions. The peculiar relationship of the ancient parish of Bishop's Hull (which included the Saxon minster/medieval castle site) to the medieval borough has been much discussed, though its significance remains unclear. Indeed, an alternative site for the Saxon settlement west of the minster in the St Paul's area is a possibility (one supported by archaeological evidence of at least some Saxon activity there).

- 2.1.5 By Domesday there were 64 burgesses in Taunton, making it the third largest in the county after Bath and Ilchester. It was the centre of a vast estate held by the Bishops of Winchester, either directly (the Infaring) or indirectly (the Liberty or Outfaring). Of the parishes covered (or partly covered) by this report, some were Infaring (Taunton St James, Ruishton, Stoke St Mary, Wilton, Trull, Bishop's Hull, Pitminster, and Staplegrove), others Outfaring (Cheddon Fitzpaine, Norton Fitzwarren). much of the Outfaring was granted away during the course of the medieval period and became lay property. Cheddon Fitzpaine was one of the separate medieval manors; another was West Monkton, which was part of the Glastonbury Abbey estates.
- 2.1.6 The histories of the individual settlements eventually absorbed by Taunton could not be studied in detail for this report. The essential settlement pattern of networks of farmsteads, hamlets and small villages served by dependent chapels or parish churches can still be described on the late 18th century and early 19th century maps. But the results of a number of excavations show a complex picture of shifting occupation sites within a general framework of continuity. As the estate's town, the jewel in the crown, Taunton was tightly controlled the Bishops of Winchester. Their influence on the development of Taunton was important throughout the medieval period, but this was perhaps especially the case in the first half of the 12th century. It was almost certainly at this time, under Bishops William Gyffard and then Henry of Blois, that the medieval town plan was established. Gyffard (who was also King William II's Chancellor) was responsible for the upgrading of the existing Bishops' Hall, and for the conversion of the Saxon minster into an Augustinian Priory. His successor, Henry of Blois (who was also Abbot of Glastonbury), built the Great Keep and the town defences, thus ensuring the town's military importance. He also moved the Priory beyond the town defences, primarily in order to relieve pressure of space on the castle, which was gradually enlarged under his successors. Henry of Blois was also the brother of King Stephen, who granted Taunton's first borough charter in 1136. This represents not the creation of a new town - since Taunton was already a borough before the Conquest - but a formalisation of the existing situation. The changes to the

Castle and Priory represent aspects of this process of formalisation. However, the implications for the town itself are unclear. Only a little archaeological evidence of occupation on the site before the 12th century has been recovered, and it is possible that the focus of the town was deliberately shifted at this time, perhaps because of a fire recorded in the Annals of Winchester for 1111. However, Taunton does not have the regular appearance of the archetypal early medieval planned town, and no entirely satisfactory interpretation of the transition from pre-Conquest borough to medieval town can yet be given.

- 2.1.7 The influence of the Bishops, and subsequently of the Priory, remained strong throughout the medieval period. The Priory controlled all the churches and chapels, but the Bishops continued to shape and foster the economy of the town. The Castle, occupied mainly by the Constable and occasionally by the Bishops or the King, was expanded in the 13th century, and the scheme also involved the construction of a fulling mill. This, the earliest documented fulling mill in the west country, was the first of several as the cloth trade was deliberately fostered by the town's masters. The town defences were also improved in the 13th century, though the town was already expanding beyond them. The value of the borough rose steeply between the 11th and 13th centuries, and maintained a high average despite occasional slumps. By the 14th century Taunton was one of the largest and wealthiest towns in the county after Bath and Bristol. A merchant guild, the Common Guild of St Martin, had been established, and two fairs, one in the Borough and one in North Town, had been established. Taunton returned members of Parliament from the late 13th century onwards, and in 1360 a regional Parliament was held there. Both Castle and town were of strategic regional importance and, though the town defences were never seriously tested, the medieval period was not without incident. The first Keep of Henry of Blois is believed to have been destroyed during the wars of succession waged between Stephen and Matilda, for example.
- 2.1.8 The later medieval period saw further unrest: in 1451 the Castle was besieged during the Wars of the Roses, and in 1497 Perkin Warbeck's rebellion against Henry VII came to an end in Taunton. Severe disruption of the medieval status quo occurred in the 16th century, under Henry VIII. However, it can be argued that the Dissolution (and rapid demolition) of Taunton Priory had, in the end, a positive impact on Taunton. It freed for residential and commercial development a large amount of land adjacent to the town (subsequently included in the Parish of St James). However, the Priory had already begun this development, both north and south of the river, and subsequent expansion was not over-rapid. Much of the land was not built over until the 19th century, but in the meantime Taunton continued to thrive.
- 2.1.9 The accounts of 16th and early 17th century travellers, such as Leland (1542) and Gerard (1633) describe a fair, extremely prosperous market and cloth town: indeed, Gerard describes it as the chief town in the county (barring Bath and Bristol). The town remained under the influence of the Bishops of Winchester. But by the early 17th century, the Borough was trying for



incorporation, and its first grant of incorporation was received in 1627 - whilst the Bishopric was vacant. This can be seen as an early manifestation of the anti-establishment currents which repeatedly swept the town into trouble in the mid to late 17th century, when it was described as "that insolent town, the sink of all rebellion in the west". During the Civil War it was a Parliamentary centre in a predominantly Royalist area, and was several times besieged between 1643 and 1645. Much of the east side of the medieval town was destroyed by siege and fire and the trauma of these events, together with the subsequent demolition of the Castle keep after the Restoration, led to festering resentment. This can only have been exacerbated by the quashing of the Grant of Incorporation when the Bishop's estates (temporarily seized by Parliament) were restored. Though a new, more extensive Charter of Incorporation was granted in 1677, the new Corporation was under the control of a loyalist, establishment minority. There followed a period of extreme persecution of the many dissenting congregations which had been established in Taunton, culminating in serious assaults on meetings in 1682-3. In response, the town welcomed the rebellious Monmouth in 1685, and was deeply scarred by the brutal reprisals which followed his defeat at Sedgemoor. More than 500 rebels were tried in Taunton Castle by Judge Jeffreys, and a total of 38 were executed in the market place, many more being sent for execution in surrounding towns and villages. Despite the inevitable disruption caused by war, Taunton's economy remained fairly buoyant throughout the 17th and early 18th centuries. Textiles were still its main product and trading commodity, however, and by the second half of the 18th century the town was suffering the effects of the widespread failure of the Somerset cloth industry in the face of competition from the mechanised northern mills. The effects were mitigated in Taunton by the growth of the silk mills, but also by great improvements in communications. Between the turn of the 18th century and the end of the 19th the turnpikes, the Tone Navigation scheme, the two canals, and finally the railways, improved access to the town and allowed considerable industrial and trade development to take place. Meanwhile the administration of the town was revamped, with the establishment of market Trustees in 1768 and the dissolution of the Corporation in 1792; and the Bishop's manor was sold off in 1822 and fragmented. Though the Corporation was revived in the later 19th century, the borough was absorbed in 1974 into the borough of Taunton Deane. This change reflects the huge expansion of Taunton in the 20th century, which has led to the absorption or virtual absorption of a number of surrounding settlements. The development of the town has been heavily influenced since the early 1970s by the M5 motorway, and subsequent road developments and estate infill have obscured much of the historic settlement pattern.

## **2.2 Project Background**

2.2.1 The archaeological field works were undertaken in accordance with current planning guidance (Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, DoE 1990) and in consultation with Steven Membery (Development Control Archaeologist) Somerset County Council. The evaluation and excavation were undertaken

between November and December 2006 by Foundations Archaeology and revealed a number of archaeological features of various dates. The excavation was undertaken to standards set out in the Foundations Archaeology Excavation Manual and in concordance with standards set by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations, 1999).

2.2.2 In the Foundations Archaeology Written Scheme of Investigation the following academic objectives, based on the assessment of quality and importance of deposits encountered during the evaluation work (2006), were stated:

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

ii) to attempt to characterize the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site;

iii) where possible to recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples.

2.2.3 The extent to which the excavation has successfully answered these questions, and thrown up new avenues of research, will be addressed in this document.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

3.1 The evaluation comprised the excavation of four trenches, Trench 1 was 7.40m long (N/S) x 1.60m wide (E/W) x 1.30m deep, Trench 2 was c. 7.50m long (E/W) x 1.60m wide (N/S) x 1.20m deep, Trench 3 was 5.50m long (N/S) x 1.60m wide (E/W) x 1.20m deep, Trench 4 was 8.00m long (E/W) x 1.60m wide (N/S) x 1.35m deep; all are located on Figure 2. Archaeological features were present within all four trenches, although excavation of features could not be safely carried out in the western half of Trench 4. The presence of archaeological features within the evaluation area resulted in the requirement for an archaeological excavation on the site.

3.2 The excavation took place in the area detailed on Figure 2. Non-significant overburden was removed to a maximum depth of 0.70m without archaeological supervision thereafter all overburden removal to the top of archaeological deposits or natural, whichever was encountered first, were under constant archaeological supervision. This was achieved through use of a mechanical excavator with a toothless grading bucket. All cleaning and excavation was thereafter conducted by hand in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (Foundations Archaeology, 2006).

- 3.3 All archaeological deposits and features were subjected to appropriate levels of investigation. A minimum 20% sample of all linear features was excavated at appropriate intervals and all intersections, overlaps and terminals were investigated. A minimum 50% sample of all non-linear features was also excavated.

#### 4 STRATIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

- 4.1 Examination of the stratigraphy across the site revealed disturbance of the area during the modern period, this was noticeable throughout the site where all identified features were sealed by either topsoil (1003) or subsoil (1004). These soils contained modern artefacts including plastic and corrugated iron. No structures, other than a brick foundation for a greenhouse within the topsoil, were present on the site and, if there ever were any earlier structures, then post-medieval and modern activity had destroyed all evidence. The levels from which ditches, stake-holes and pits were cut would also have been truncated and some ephemeral features may have been destroyed altogether. Modern features (car park surfaces, etc.) were identified and planned, and are detailed in this document.
- 4.2 In some cases the frequent absence of stratigraphic relationships and the problems with providing other than general dates (13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century etc.) for the majority of the artefactual evidence has prevented accurate phasing of every feature. As a result the features have been assigned a 'general' phase; this is not intended to suggest that every feature within a phase was contemporary. For the purposes of this document the evaluation trenches and the excavation area are illustrated as an open area excavation. Context numbers assigned during the evaluation phase of the project have been re-numbered concordant with the sequence used during the excavation. This re-numbering provided an integrated and coherent evaluation/excavation archive.
- 4.3 Natural consisted of a light orange-pink clay-sand with occasional small stones. In the north of the site in evaluation Trench 4 natural was observed at 22.93m OD (1.22m below modern ground level). In the east of the site in evaluation Trench 1 it lay at 23.09m OD, in the south of the site in evaluation Trench 2 natural was observed at 23.12m O.D and in the centre of the site in evaluation Trench 3 it lay at 23.04m OD The natural in Trenches 1-3 lay 1.18m below modern ground level. The natural also sloped gently downwards from south to north with a 0.19m fall and with a fall of 0.05m from the east to the centre of the site.
- 4.4 The natural was overlain by subsoil (1004). The subsoil was a mid-brown fine friable clay sand with a thickness varying from 0.10m – 0.17m and had a maximum height of 23.09m OD in the east of the site, in the south and centre of the site it was 23.24m OD and in the north of the site had a maximum height of 23.10m OD. The subsoil was overlain by topsoil (1003). The topsoil was a dark brown fine friable clay sand with occasional flecks of charcoal, occasional

medium sized slate/shale fragments, clay pipe, china, glass, CBM fragments, animal bone and oyster shell. In the east of the site the layer was 0.90m thick with a maximum height of 23.99m OD, in the south and centre of the site the layer was 0.62m thick and had a maximum height of 23.86m OD and in the north of the site the layer was 0.63m thick with a maximum height of 23.73m OD. The topsoil was overlain by (1002) a levelling layer for the modern tarmac car park surface. The layer was a 0.20-0.30m thick, comprising dark brown loose sandy clay containing plastic, modern china and corrugated iron. This in turn was sealed by a 0.08-0.17m thick deposit of hardcore (1001) laid as a bedding layer for the tarmac car park surface. The car park surface's height was 24.19m OD in the east of the site, 24.15m OD in the north of the site, 24.19m OD in the south of the site and 24.22m OD in the centre of the site. These layers have been dated to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

4.5 All archaeological features were cut from below either the topsoil or the subsoil. In some cases it is probable that features apparently cut from below the topsoil may have actually been cut into the topsoil with the disturbed nature of the topsoil masking the relationship. Equally, although features apparently cut from below the subsoil might normally be interpreted as a relict landscape not disturbed by accretionary formation, it is clear from the nature of the deposits and the artefactual evidence, that many of the features apparently either below or cut through the subsoil, are broadly contemporary. It is likely in this case that bioturbatory process, predominantly associated with the nature of the archaeological deposits (predominantly hedge/bush/tree-type features) have acted to confuse the actual stratigraphic relationship of a number of the features to the subsoil. This process has undoubtedly been exacerbated by the removal of some of the plants and the retention and/or re-growth of others. The phasing of the site has, as a result, been split into three phases: Phase 1, features and deposits of probable medieval date; Phase 2, features of early post-medieval date and Phase 3, of post-medieval date. A further section has been included for those features and deposits whose place in the sequence is unclear.

#### **4.6 Phase 1: Features and deposits of probable 13<sup>th</sup> century date (Figures 3 & 4)**

4.6.1 Pit/root ball scar [1005] was located towards the southeast corner of the site between features [1035] to the west and [1019] in the east. The pit was shallow and rounded with sloping sides (0.90m long x 0.90m wide x 0.12m deep). The pit was filled with (1006) a brown friable clay silt with occasional stone inclusions. The height of the pit and fill at the top was 24.44m OD and 24.32m OD at its base. It was not conclusively proved but pit [1005] may have been truncated by pit [1007] which lies immediately to the south. Artefactual evidence from this feature comprised a sherd of 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century pottery.

4.6.2 Pit/root ball scar [1007] was located towards the southeast corner of the site between [1035] to the west and [1019] in the east. The pit was deep and sub-rounded with steep sides (1.04m long x 0.93m wide x 0.25m deep). It was filled with (1008) a dark brown friable silt clay with occasional stones, oyster

shell and animal bone. The height of the pit and fill at the top was 24.44m OD and 24.19m OD at its base. It was not conclusively proved but pit [1007] may have truncated pit [1005] which lies immediately to the north.

- 4.6.3 Pit/root ball scar [1009] was located towards the southeast corner of the site between [1019] to the west and [1013, 1027] in the east. The pit was sub-oval with shallow sloping sides and a rounded base (0.85m long x 0.60m wide x 0.18m deep). The pit was filled with (1010) a dark brown friable silt clay with occasional stones, a sherd of medieval pottery and animal bone. The height of the pit and fill at the top was 24.32m OD and 24.14m OD at its base.
- 4.6.4 Pit/root ball scar [1019] was located towards the southeast corner of the site between [1005] to the west and [1009] in the east. The pit was irregular in plan with uneven sides and an irregular base (0.65m long x 0.60m wide x 0.08m deep). The pit was filled with (1020) a dark brown friable clay silt with occasional large stones. The height of the pit and fill at the top was 24.43m OD and 24.35m OD at its base.
- 4.6.5 Pit/root ball scar [1025] was located towards the southeast corner of the site between [1009] to the south and [1037] in the north. The pit was small and sub-oval with steep sides and a rounded base. It was filled with (1026) a dark brown friable clay sand.
- 4.6.6 Pit/root ball scar [1035] (Figure 3) was located in the south and centre of the site west of [1048] and east of [1005]. The pit was sub-oval/irregular in plan with steep sides and an irregular pitted base (0.87m long x 0.54m wide x 0.09m deep). It was filled with (1036) a dark brown friable clay sand with occasional stones and pottery and slate fragments of early post-medieval date, which may be intrusive. The height of the pit and fill at the top was 24.50m OD and 24.41m OD at its base.
- 4.6.7 Pit/root ball scar [1037] (Figure 3) was located in the east of the site south of [1029] and north of [1025]. The pit was sub-oval/irregular in plan with sloping sides and an irregular base (1.87m long x 0.88m wide x 0.17m deep). The pit was filled with (1038) a dark brown friable clay sand with occasional stones and rare charcoal fragments. The height of the pit and fill at the top was 24.39m OD and 24.22m OD at its base.
- 4.6.8 Pit/root ball scar [1041] was located in the south and centre of the site between [1043] to the west and [1048] to the east. The posthole was sub-oval with sloping sides and a gently curved rounded base (0.45m long x 0.40m wide x 0.15m deep). The posthole was filled with (1042) a mid-grey brown friable sandy silt with occasional flint fragments. The height of the posthole and fill at the top was 24.57m OD and 24.42m OD at its base. The northwest corner of the posthole was truncated by linear [1045] and the southeast corner was truncated by pit [1050].

- 4.6.9 Pit/root ball scar [1043] was located in the south and centre of the site between [1041] to the east and [1045] to the north. The posthole was oval with shallow sloping sides and a flat base (0.61m long x 0.45m wide x 0.11m deep). The posthole was filled with (1044) a mid-grey brown friable sandy silt with occasional flint nodules. The height of the posthole and fill at the top was 24.59m OD and 24.48m OD at its base. The northern part of the posthole was truncated by linear [1045].
- 4.6.10 Pit/root ball scar [1048] was located in the south and centre of the site between [1041] to the west and [1035] to the west. The posthole was oval with sloping sides and a gently rounded base (0.74m long x 0.36m wide x 0.16m deep). The posthole was filled with (1049) a mid-to dark grey brown friable sandy silt with occasional flint nodules. The height of the posthole and fill at the top was 24.55m OD and 24.39m OD at its base.
- 4.6.11 Stakehole/root hole [1021] was located towards the southeast corner of the site between [1005] to the west, [1009] in the east and [1019] to the south. The posthole was circular with sloping sides and a rounded base (0.23m in diameter x 0.07m deep). The stakehole was filled with (1022) a dark brown friable clay silt with occasional stones. The height of the stakehole and fill at the top was 24.40m OD and 24.33m OD at its base.
- 4.6.12 Posthole [1011] (Figure 3) was located in the southeast corner of the site between [1013] to the west and [1015] in the east. The posthole was sub-circular with uncertain edges, steep sides and a base that sloped downwards towards the southwest (0.45m in diameter x 0.21m deep). The posthole was filled with (1012) a dark brown friable clay sand with occasional sub-rounded stones, occasional slate fragments, charcoal flecks, medieval pottery and animal bone. The height of the posthole and fill at the top was 24.44m OD and 24.23m OD at its base. Artefactual evidence from this feature comprised six sherds of 13<sup>th</sup> century pottery. It was not conclusively proved but posthole [1011] may have been truncated by posthole [1013] which lies immediately to the west.
- 4.6.13 Posthole [1013] (Figure 3) was located in the southeast corner of the site between [1009] to the west and [1011] in the east. The posthole was sub-circular with steep sides and a wide rounded base (0.34m in diameter x 0.10m deep). The posthole was filled with (1014) a dark brown friable clay sand with occasional sub-rounded stones, occasional slate fragments, charcoal flecks and two sherds of 13<sup>th</sup> century pottery. The height of the posthole and fill at the top was 24.49m OD and 24.39m OD at its base. It was not conclusively proved but posthole [1013] may have truncated posthole [1011] which lies immediately to the east.
- 4.6.14 Posthole [1015] (Figure 3) was located in the southeast corner of the site between [1011] to the west and ran into the eastern site boundary. The posthole was possibly sub-circular with near vertical sides and a narrow base (c. 0.27m in diameter x 0.44m deep). The posthole was filled with (1016) a dark brown

friable clay sand with occasional sub-angular stones, occasional slate fragments, charcoal flecks, animal bone and two sherds 13<sup>th</sup> century pottery. The height of the posthole and fill at the top was 24.48m OD and 24.04m OD at its base.

4.6.15 Posthole [1027] (Figure 3) was located in the southeast corner of the site between [1009] to the west and [1023] to the southeast. The posthole was sub-circular with steep sides (c. 0.28m in diameter x 0.19m deep). The posthole was filled with (1028) a dark brown friable clay sand with some slate fragments. The height of the posthole and fill at the top was 24.49m OD and 24.30m OD at its base.

#### **4.7 Phase 2: Features and deposits of 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century date (Figures 3 & 5)**

4.7.1 Pit [1017] was located in the southwest corner of the site between [1053] to the west and [1057] to the south, the pit also ran northwards into the site boundary. It was sub-rectangular (c. 1.18m long x 0.20m deep) and was filled with (1018) a brown friable clay sand with frequent animal bone, six sherds of early post-medieval pottery, charcoal, and a copper dress-making pin. The height of the pit and fill at the top was 24.61m OD and 24.41m OD at its base.

4.7.2 Root ball scar [1023] was located in the southeast corner of the site between [1027] to the northwest and ran into the eastern site perimeter. It was irregular in plan with irregular sloping sides and an irregular base (0.80m long x 0.61m wide x 0.12m deep). It was filled with (1024) a dark brown friable clay silt with occasional stones from which a fragment of a 17<sup>th</sup> century wine glass was recovered. The height of the fill at the top was 24.48m OD and 24.36m OD at its base. It is possible that this feature represents re-growth associated with the possible medieval boundary, rather than a Phase 2 feature.

4.7.3 Ditch/linear feature [1029] (Figure 3) was located in the north east corner of the site between [1037] to the south and [1059] to the northwest. The ditch was a wide and shallow linear curving to the northwest at its northern end, had sloping sides and an uneven base (1.09m wide x 0.11m deep). The ditch was filled with (1030) a mid-grey brown friable sandy silt with occasional flint fragments from which a sherd of a 16<sup>th</sup> century jug, was recovered. The height of the ditch and fill at the top was 24.48m OD and 24.37m OD at its base.

4.7.4 Pit/root ball scar [1031] was located in the centre of the site south of [1033]. The pit was sub-circular/irregular in plan with an irregular pitted base (0.61m in diameter x 0.12m deep). It was filled with (1032) a dark brown friable clay sand with occasional small stones, charcoal flecks and small slate fragments. The height of the pit and fill at the top was 24.55m OD and 24.43m OD at its base. It is likely that this feature was associated with linear [1033].

4.7.5 Ditch/linear feature [1033] (Figure 3) was located in the south and centre of the site between [1031] to the north and [1041, 1048] to the south. The ditch was a shallow linear on a north south alignment with sloping sides and a flat base

(2.54m long x 0.68m wide x 0.19m deep). The linear was filled with (1034) a mid-to dark grey brown friable sandy silt with occasional flint fragments from which a sherd of post-medieval pottery dating from 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries was recovered. The height of the posthole and fill at the top was 24.58m OD and 24.39m OD at its base. The southwest corner of the linear was truncated by feature [1045].

4.7.6 Root ball scar [1039] was located in the east of the site west of the south terminal of [1029]. The feature was sub-rectangular with a shallow northwest end becoming deeper in the centre where it may have been disturbed by burrowing activity (1.73m long x 0.92m wide x 0.28m deep). It was filled with (1040) a dark grey brown friable sandy silt with occasional flint and early post-medieval pottery. The height of the fill at the top was 24.41m OD and 24.13m OD at its base.

4.7.7 Feature [1045] was located in the south and towards the west of the site between [1057] to the west and [1041, 1043] to the south and [1033] to the east. The feature was generally linear in plan on an east-west alignment with uneven steep sides and an uneven base (2.37m long x 1.77m wide x 0.81m deep). The feature was filled with (1046) a 0.50m thick mid-grey brown hard, compact sandy silt with occasional flint fragments from which early post-medieval pottery was recovered. The height of the linear and fill at the top was 24.56m OD. A second fill lay at the base of the linear (1047) a 0.31m thick mid-grey brown firm sandy silt with occasional flint fragments from which early post-medieval pottery was recovered. The height of the fill was 24.06m OD and at the base was 23.75m OD. The linear [1045] truncated [1033] to the east and [1041, 1043] to the south. To the west it was itself truncated by [1057].

4.7.8 Pit [1057] was located in the southwest corner of the site between the excavation edge to the south and [1045] to the east and south of [1017]. The pit was sub-rectangular with steep sides and a flat base (1.60m long x 0.98m wide x 0.44m deep). It was filled with (1058) a dark brown friable sandy silt. The fill contained some slate fragments, occasional stones, abundant animal bone and 10 sherds of early post-medieval pottery. The height of the pit and fill at the top was 24.56m OD and 24.12m OD at its base.

#### **4.8 Phase 3: Features and deposits of later post-medieval date (Figures 3 & 6)**

4.8.1 Feature [1053] was located in the southwest corner of the site between the excavation edge to the west and [1057, 1017] to the east. To the west it extended beyond the site boundary. It was sub-rectangular in plan with a very uneven base (2.07m long x 0.93m wide x 0.34m deep). It was filled with (1054) a mid-brown friable clay sand with evidence of disturbance by root action. The fill contained frequent slate fragments, abundant animal bone, 23 sherds of post-medieval pottery, occasional oyster and mussel shells. The height of the feature and fill at the top was 24.78m OD and 24.44m OD at its base.



#### 4.9 Features of uncertain date (Figures 3 & 6)

- 4.9.1 Pit/root ball scar [1050] was located in the south and centre of the site west of [1055] and south of [1041, 1048]. The pit was oval with regular sloping sides and a flat base (1.32m long x 1.24m wide x 0.45m deep). It was filled with (1052) a 0.06m thick orange red friable sand, this overlay (1051) a 0.39m thick mid-to dark grey brown friable sandy silt with occasional flint nodules. The height of the pit and fill at the top was 24.54m OD and 24.09m OD at its base. Pit [1050] truncated the southeast corner of [1041] and in turn was truncated along its western side by [1055].
- 4.9.2 Pit/root ball scar [1055] was located in the south and centre of the site south of [1043] and west of [1050]. The pit was shallow, sub-rectangular with sloping sides and a rounded base (1.30m long x 0.60m wide x 0.20m deep). It was filled with (1056) amid-grey brown friable sandy silt, this overlay (1051) a 0.39m thick mid-to dark grey brown friable sandy silt with occasional flint. The height of the pit and fill at the top was 24.54m OD and 24.34m OD at its base. Pit [1055] truncated the western side of [1050].
- 4.9.3 Stakeholes [1059] were a group of six stakeholes or rootholes in the north of the site to the west of the northern end of [1029]. The five southernmost stakes formed a line on an east west alignment, they were all circular with vertical sides and flat bases (0.09m in diameter x 0.22m deep). The stakeholes were filled by (1060) a dark brown friable clay sand with very occasional slag. The height of the stakeholes and fills at the top was 24.29m OD and 24.07m OD at its base. The stakeholes have not been dated and their function within the site is unclear.

## 5 DISCUSSION

- 5.1 Archaeological features of the Medieval (11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century), early Post-medieval (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century) and later Post-Medieval (18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century) periods were present within the excavation areas, although modern features were also present
- 5.2 A series of pits/root ball scars and possible postholes located along the southern boundary of the site may have formed part of a field or property boundary. Wood's plan of 1840 shows properties to the south of the site, although it is not known whether there were properties in the area during the medieval period. The fills of several of these features contain artefactual evidence dated to the medieval period, although one [1035], contained a sherd of pottery and a fragment of tile dating to the early post-medieval period. While it is probable that this material is intrusive in context, it also remains possible that all of the medieval pottery is residual in context. In general, however, the localised nature of the features from which medieval pottery was recovered suggests that the features are more likely to represent a medieval boundary.

- 5.3 Features [1005], [1007], [1009], [1019], [1035], [1041], [1043] and [1048] appear to represent the line of a hedged boundary on a roughly east-west alignment dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The boundary may have turned northwards towards the eastern edge of the excavation area represented by [1025] and the complex of root ball scars [1037]. Any continuation of this hedged boundary had been removed by a large linear feature [1029] of early post-medieval date. To the east, the boundary appears to have continued on the same line with a series of posthole-type features [1011], [1013] and [1015], which were markedly different in form to the root ball scars to the west and may, therefore represent a different property/field boundary. Feature [1027] may also form a component of this boundary. Some of the root ball scars along the southern boundary may also represent re-growth of the original hedge line.
- 5.4 Posthole/root ball scar [1031] and linear feature [1033] may also represent elements of these early land divisions, although artefactual evidence recovered from them suggested an early post-medieval date. This material may have become incorporated into the fills during the removal of a long-lived medieval hedged boundary during the early post-medieval period.
- 5.5 The substantial curving early post-medieval ditch feature [1029] along the eastern boundary of the site appeared to obliterate the postulated northwards continuation of the medieval hedged boundary represented by [1025] and [1037]. It is possible that this feature represents either a later boundary on the same line, or that the feature is contemporary with the hedge and contains intrusive early post-medieval artefactual evidence associated with its later infill and possible remodelling of land boundaries during the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 5.6 A number of features were also present to the west of [1033] in the form of an irregular linear feature [1045], which also cut [1033] and two possible pits [1017] and [1057]. All three of these features contained early post-medieval pottery and animal bone, along with a copper pin from [1017] and a possible pinner's bone from [1045], which indicate pin production in the near vicinity. It is likely that all three of these features represent root ball scars and throws from trees which were previously located in the area and which have been used for *ad hoc* rubbish disposal, rather than deliberately excavated features. A substantial tree throw [1053] in the western end of the site had been used for *ad hoc* rubbish disposal in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 5.7 The distribution of medieval and Post-medieval features is consistent with field and property boundaries. The artefactual evidence is generally what might be expected from Taunton during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but also includes a possible northern French import. No evidence was recovered for domestic occupation of medieval date and there appears to have been little activity from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century through to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The presence of ceramic building material suggests there may have been a structure of 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century date in the near vicinity, which may have been associated with pin making. The ceramic finds associated with this phase of occupation are relatively low status, although

there are three imports, which suggests the occupants were not at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Activity on the site appears to have ceased by the later 17<sup>th</sup> century, with occupation probably resuming after the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century.

- 5.8 The identifiable archaeological features predominantly consisted of medieval and Post-medieval features, mostly in the form of root ball scars and tree throws, along with at least one certain ditch and a number of possible stakeholes and postholes.
- 5.9 The artefactual and ecofactual evidence is detailed in see Appendix 1.

## 6 NATURE OF THE RECORD

- 6.1 The stratigraphic archive for the site consists of the following elements:

- Context Sheets
- Record Sheets
- Plans
- Sections
- Black & White photographs
- Colour slides

- 6.2 The following contexts types were represented:

- Stakeholes/rootholes
- Postholes/rootholes
- Pits/root ball scars
- Ditches
- Fills

- 6.3 The on-site methodologies used to recover this evidence were set out in the Foundations Archaeology Written Scheme of Investigation (2006). In summary the following excavation methods were utilised. A mechanical excavator was used to remove overburden onto the surface of archaeological deposits, thereafter the appropriate sample of all deposits was removed by hand onto natural. All contexts were recorded on a pro-forma context sheet and principal deposits were drawn in plan and section. These are available in the archive. Photographs were taken of all features and sections.

- 6.4 Following the completion of the excavation an ordered, indexed, and internally consistent site archive was compiled in accordance with Appendix 3 of The Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage 1991).

## 7 STATEMENT OF POTENTIAL

- 7.1 Of the three objectives set out in the project design (see Section 2) the following have been achieved:
- 7.2 Objective i: this has been satisfactorily achieved. The nature of the archaeological deposits on site has been characterised and these are adequately dated.
- 7.3 Objective ii: the archaeological sequence has been adequately characterized within the general constraints of the artefactual evidence and the Post-medieval disturbance. A general picture can be assembled from the preliminary results, which indicates that the earliest identified activity consisted of field boundary hedges of 13<sup>th</sup> century date. A number of 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century features in the form of ditches related to field or property boundaries were also present, along with a number of tree root scars and throws which were used as *ad hoc* rubbish pits, while the presence of ceramic building material indicates the presence of a structure in the near vicinity, possibly associated with pin making. A single large tree throw in the far west of the site contained finds of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century date and suggests remodelling of the area during the later post-medieval period. A small number of stakeholes were also identified, although it did not prove possible to attribute these to any structures or specific function.
- 7.4 Objective iii: A coherent artefactual assemblage has been recovered providing some useful information on disposal patterns. The main phases of archaeological activity have been identified as medieval (13<sup>th</sup> century), early post-medieval (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century) and later post-medieval (18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century). The artefactual and ecofactual evidence is discussed in Appendix 1.
- 7.5 The results of the evaluation justified the implementation of the excavation programme, and the site warrants publication in note form. It is unlikely that comparison of data with other sites in the vicinity will allow any useful conclusions to be drawn with regard to the spatial patterning of medieval and early post-medieval occupation within this part of Taunton. The following section presents a considered policy for dissemination of the results, achieving:
- a) the presentation of the results in a coherently synthesised format.
  - b) the deposition of an ordered and internally consistent archive with Taunton Museum.

## 8 PUBLICATION, PRESENTATION AND ARCHIVING

- 8.1 The report should be published as a note setting out the main conclusions of the excavation. In addition two finds of particular interest were recovered; the

pinner's bone and a sherd of probable North French Monochrome Ware. These should be illustrated and described in the publication note.

- 8.2 The site archive for the project will be security copied upon completion of the report, and the copy deposited with the National Monuments Record. An OASIS form will be completed and submitted.
- 8.3 The site archive and artefactual collection will be deposited with Taunton Museum.

## 9 REFERENCES

English Heritage 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects: Appendices 4 and 5*

Foundations Archaeology 2006 *11-13 Billet Street, Taunton: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation*

Foundations Archaeology 2006 *11-13 Billet Street, Taunton: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Excavation*

Foundations Archaeology *Technical Manual 3 (Excavation Manual)*

IFA 1994 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations*. Institute of Field Archaeologists

IFA 1994 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations*. Institute of Field Archaeologists

Membery, S. 2006 *Brief for an Archaeological Evaluation at 11-13 Billet Street, Taunton, Somerset*.

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**APPENDIX 1**  
**SPECIALIST REPORTS**

## **1) Assessment of the pottery from Billet Street, Taunton, Somerset (BST06)** **Dr Alan Vince**

A moderate collection of pottery from excavations carried out by Foundations Archaeology at Billet Street, Taunton, was submitted for identification and assessment.

### **Description**

#### **Ceramic Building Material**

Fragments of glazed ridge tiles and handmade red earthenware bricks were recovered. The ridge tiles were all examined at x20 magnification and have a variety of different fabrics. There are ten fragments in total. Two are probably of Bristol manufacture and have a quartz sandstone moulding sand and contain rounded fragments of white mudstone. Tiles of this type were traded over a wide area around the Bristol Channel from the late 13<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Two are probably Exeter Fabric 40 (EX40), a ware produced first in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century but continuing into the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Allan 1984). One is probably a Nether Stowey product, since it contains fragments of slate which may originate in the Quantock Hills (Nether Stowey is documented as a source of bricks in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, VCH 1992. Finally, two fragments of ridge tile of South Somerset ware were present. Since this industry was in operation from the 13<sup>th</sup> century until the 19<sup>th</sup> century these tiles cannot be closely dated (Coleman-Smith & Pearson 1988, 319-23).

The bricks, also examined at x20 magnification, all have the same fabric, containing moderate fragments of rounded quartz and chert. This fabric suggests that they were locally-made since chert and quartz gravels occur to the south of Taunton. Bricks were probably not used in this part of Somerset until the later 16<sup>th</sup> century, owing to the wide availability of building stone, and may owe their introduction here to the adoption of chimneys in later 16<sup>th</sup> century domestic buildings. By the late 17<sup>th</sup> century the brick industry of Bridgewater, utilising marine muds, was underway and this may provide a terminus ante quem for these bricks.

#### **Clay Tobacco Pipes**

Three fragments of clay pipe stem were recovered. Two have bore diameters which suggest a mid 17<sup>th</sup> century or earlier date and one has a narrower bore diameter, typical of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century pipes.

#### **Glass**

Four fragments of glass were recovered.

That from context 1024 is the bowl of a stemmed wine glass in a clear glass. The weight of the fragment suggests that it is a lead glass and therefore of late 17<sup>th</sup> century or later date whilst the crudeness of the manufacture suggests an earlier date.

Those from context 1054 are fragments of tall dark green wine bottles of mid 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

That from context 1018 is the rim of a small jar in a weathered light blue glass. The rim is similar to that found on urinals but the body appears to be too bulbous for these vessels, which have a long narrow neck. Vessels with a light blue, as opposed to a light green tinge first appear in the west country in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century.

## Pottery

### Medieval

Twenty-two sherds of medieval pottery were recovered. Most are small sherds and include some abraded examples. It is likely, therefore, that some at least of these sherds have had a long post-depositional history.

The earliest type is chert-tempered ware (SWCHT). A spouted bowl of this type containing a hoard of mid 11<sup>th</sup>-century pennies was found at Wedmore (Rahtz 1974) and vessels of very similar fabric were still in use in Exeter and Launceston Castle into the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century (Allan 1984; Brown et al. 2006). All of the sherds from Billet Street come from handmade jars with no sign of decoration (which is more common on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>-century examples).

A sherd of South East Wiltshire ware (SEW) comes from a jar. Such jars were produced from the late 11<sup>th</sup> to the mid 13<sup>th</sup> centuries and wasters have been found at Laverstock in the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century (Musty and Ewence 1969).

The remaining wares could all be of 13<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century date: six sherds of Exeter 40 jugs and one jar in the same fabric; two sherds of probable Nether Stowey jugs, with thumbled bases, both containing large rounded fragments of slate; two sherds of South Somerset ware of medieval character (SSOM MED); and a unusual green-glazed whiteware vessel. The latter appears to be the cordoned base of a cylindrical vessel decorated with plastic decoration. The fabric is reminiscent of North French Monochrome ware, and may be a product of the Lower Seine valley (i.e. Rouen or its hinterland). The identification could be confirmed by further analysis.

### Post-Medieval

Forty-one sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered. Most of these (36 sherds) are of South Somerset ware. Of these, the majority are internally-glazed bowl fragments, an undiagnostic form produced from the later 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, wherever decoration or typological features occur they mostly appear to be of early to mid 17<sup>th</sup> century date. These include jugs with bands of white slip on the shoulder which was then decorated with crude sgraffito wavy lines, a mid 17<sup>th</sup>-century type, and a pancheon with a distinctive lid-seated rim form (Coleman-Smith & Pearson 1988, Fig 121 Nos. 12-36-38).

The earliest example is a sherd from context 1030 which is from a 16<sup>th</sup>-century jug with an applied strip around the rim (1988, Fig.61).

The five remaining sherds are of imported or non-local wares. The earliest of these is the handle of a Raeren stoneware mug of later 15<sup>th</sup> to mid 16<sup>th</sup> century date (Hurst, Neal, and van Beuningen 1986, 194-8, Fig 94). Two sherds from a Frechen stoneware mug with a tall neck were recorded. They either come from a vessel Hurst's Plain Narrow Globular Jugs (late 16<sup>th</sup> century) or Plain Ovoid Jug (early 17<sup>th</sup> century), Hurst, Neal, and van Beuningen 1986, 216-7).

A bodysherd of a Martincamp flask of Hurst's type III (Hurst, Neal, and van Beuningen 1986, 103-4, Fig 47 No.143) probably dates to the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The remaining sherds are either of Bristol or Staffordshire origin. They consist of one small sherd of a yellow-glazed hollow ware, probably a slipware posset pot (STSL) and a bodysherd of a white salt-glazed stoneware tankard with a fine white slip over a coarser buff body. This type was produced for a short period in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (Edwards & Hampson 2005, 20-25).



## Wood

A possible fragment of a burnt wooden cup was recovered. It is an unstratified find and is now completely carbonised.

## Assessment

### Stratigraphy

Most of the finds come from the fills of features which cut through the natural strata. Some of these were only visible on removal of subsoil (Phase 1) and others were seen on removal of the topsoil (Phase 2).

Only two features in Phase 1 produced any of the finds reported on here. They are interpreted as tree holes (1005 and 1009) and produced a sherd of chert-tempered jar and a sherd of Exeter 40 jug. Both are small sherds and could easily be residual. They date the filling of these features to the 13<sup>th</sup> century or later.

Phase 2 features include three postholes, 1011, 1013 and 1015, which produced sherds of medieval pottery. However, 1015 also produced a fragment of brick. This suggests either that the brick is of medieval date, which is unlikely in Taunton, or that the pottery is residual and the post-holes are of post-medieval date. The other definite Phase 2 features are of post-medieval date. Pit 1057 contains a group of late 16<sup>th</sup> to mid 17<sup>th</sup> century pottery and a fragment of brick. Pit 1053 produced a mixed assemblage in which the latest finds are two fragments of tall dark green glass bottle. This dates the backfill of the pit to the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century or later. Other finds from the same feature date to the medieval period, the late 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century and the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Other features on the site, with an indeterminate relationship to the subsoil, all contain late 16<sup>th</sup> to mid 17<sup>th</sup>-century finds, sometimes together with medieval pottery. They consist of two ditches (1029 and 1033); two pits (1017 and 1045); two possible tree holes (1023 and 1035) and a possible pit, 1039.

### Interpretation

The first signs of human activity on the site consist of the medieval pottery. As a group, this pottery dates to the early to mid 13<sup>th</sup> century, although it is possible that earlier sherds are present. The low quantity of medieval South Somerset ware suggests that there is little late 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>-century activity. The size and condition of the sherds suggests that the sherds may have been present in a horticultural horizon. The next signs of activity come in the later 16<sup>th</sup> century and the majority of finds date between the mid 16<sup>th</sup> and the mid 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, with a few later types. The finds of brick associated with mid 16<sup>th</sup> to mid 17<sup>th</sup> century finds suggest that a structure nearby had brick elements, perhaps just a chimney stack rather than brick walls. The variety of ridge tiles, some of which are of medieval date and others early post-medieval date, might indicate the reuse of various ridge tiles in the early post-medieval period, which might in turn suggest a fairly low status. However, the collection includes three sherds from imported vessels of mid 16<sup>th</sup> to mid 17<sup>th</sup> century date and this probably indicates that the occupants were not at the bottom of the social hierarchy. This activity seems to have ceased by the later 17<sup>th</sup> century (otherwise the collection should contain South Somerset ware slipwares) and the latest feature, the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century or later Pit 1053, appears not to contain much contemporary refuse, suggesting that the site was not occupied at that time.

### Further Work

The sherd of possible North French Monochrome ware is an unusual find and of a form which is not precisely paralleled, in the author's experience. It therefore deserves to be illustrated and its source tested by thin section and chemical analysis. At 2007-8 rates, this work would cost £100 plus VAT, including the production of a report.

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## **2) Assessment of the animal bone from 11–13 Billet Street, Taunton, Somerset. Sylvia Warman (Oxford Archaeology)**

### **Introduction**

Animal bone was recovered from 15 contexts during the excavation. The assemblage comprised 269 fragments from 258 bones of which 81 bones could be identified to species. The assemblage weighed 2.8kg and includes six mandibles and 37 epiphyses (of use for estimation of age at death).

### **Methods**

The assessment conforms to the guidance on best practice as described by English Heritage (2002). The animal bone was rapidly scanned and recorded at context level using a Microsoft Access database. Information recorded included; number of bones, number of fragments, weight of bones in grams, number of bones identifiable to species, fragmentation and preservation, numbers of mandibles, epiphyses and whole bones, species and body parts identified, age and state (including modifications such as butchery, burning, gnawing etc). This information is presented by phase and context in Table 1.

### **Results**

#### *Phase 1*

Seven fills produced animal bone (1006, 1008, 1010, 1012, 1016, 1036 and 1049). The only identifiable fragment was a sheep/goat humerus and two cow bones, the remaining fragments were all sheep-sized.

#### *Phase 2*

Most of the animal bone in the assemblage came from deposits assigned to Phase 2. Feature types included postholes, pit fills and ditch/linear feature fills. The species identified were: cattle, sheep/goat, pig and chicken. Unidentified fish bone was also present. Of these cattle and sheep/goat were the most numerous, both taxa exhibited a range of parts of the skeleton. Chicken bones included a complete femur, a humerus and a tarso-metatarsus with a spur indicating it came from a male. A number of bones, particularly cattle long bones, have been chopped through the shaft. A cattle metapodial (cannon bone) from ditch fill 1047 has been worked, the nature of the alterations to the bone are consistent with it having been used as a pinner's bone (MacGregor 1985, 171). Some fragments of burnt bone were noted. These were generally black in colour. The bones show little sign of weathering (except in fill 1018) and gnawing by dogs or rodents is not seen.

#### *Phase 3*

A single deposit, fill 1054, assigned to this phase produced the single largest assemblage of animal bone from the site. Cattle, sheep/goat, chicken and pig were identified. Pig was represented by the lower jaw and lower limb bones only.

#### *Unstratified*

A cow upper molar and a cow-sized rib fragment comprised the unstratified material.

## Discussion

This small assemblage is well-preserved showing little signs of weathering and no evidence of gnawing; suggesting rapid deposition at the time of discard. The range of species present is quite restricted; just the three main domestic mammals and chicken. The range of body parts seen for cattle and sheep/goat is quite broad including meat-bearing and non-meat-bearing parts. Thus the cattle and sheep/goat material could include both butchery and domestic waste. The pig bones are largely from the head and lower limb which are not significant meat bearing areas and may be butchery waste. The chicken bones are likely to represent domestic waste. The cattle limb bones, the shafts of which had been chopped could result from the extraction of marrow. The pinner's bone is an interesting find as it indicates the presence of pin manufacture.

### *A note on the oyster shell.*

Oyster shell was recovered from three deposits as well as some unstratified material. Pit fill 1008 contained one fragment of oyster shell weighing 14g. Ditch fill 1047 contained four fragments, weighing 8g. Pit fill 1054 contained five fragments of oyster shell weighing 56g. Finally one unstratified fragment of oyster shell weighed 2g.

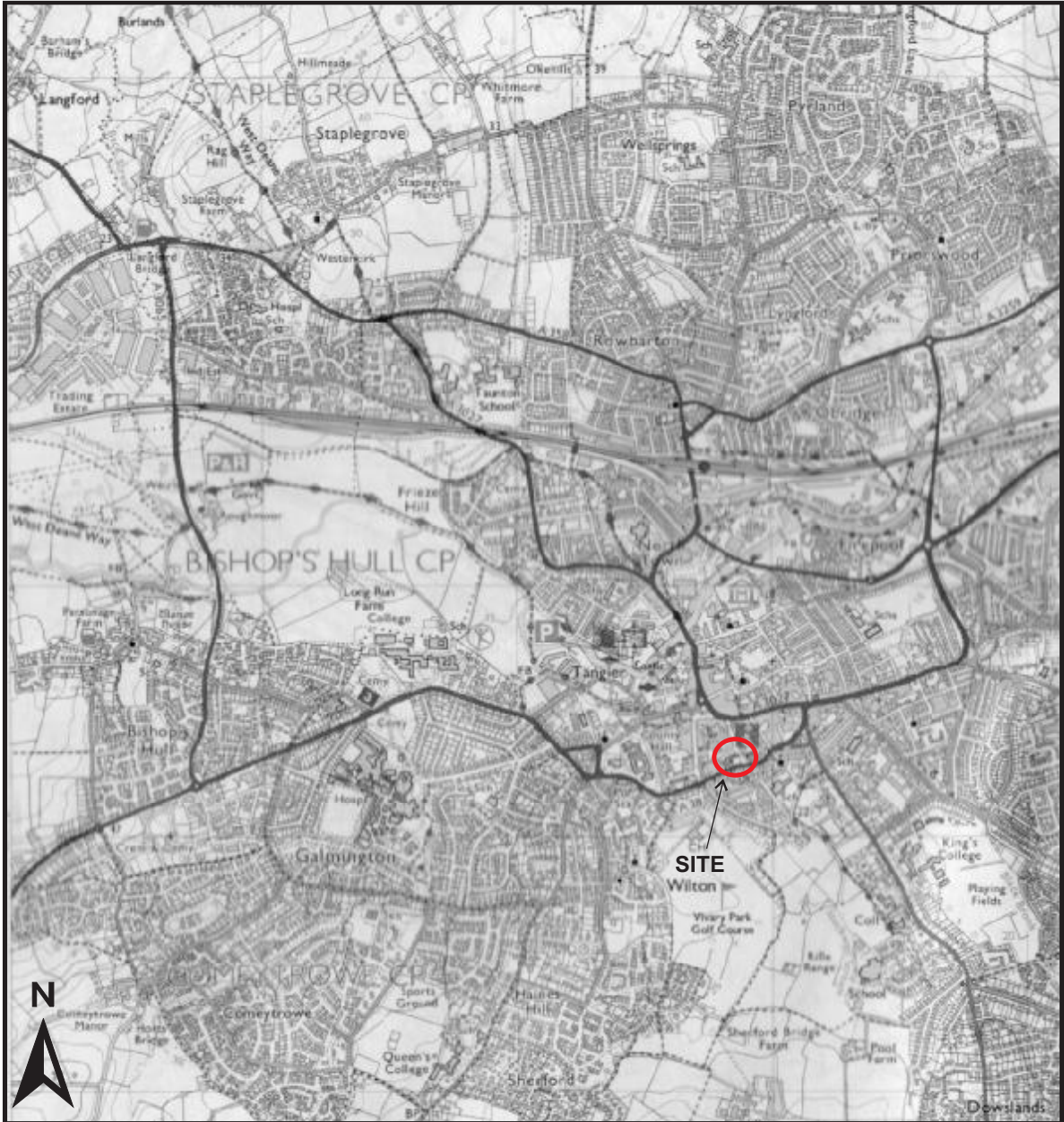
## Recommendations

This small assemblage is well preserved, but due to its small size it has limited potential for further work. The material from all dated deposits should be retained and if further excavations in the vicinity produce more animal bone then this assemblage should be revisited. Any future publication should include a summary of the results of this assessment. The pinner's bone is a significant find and should be fully described and illustrated in the publication.

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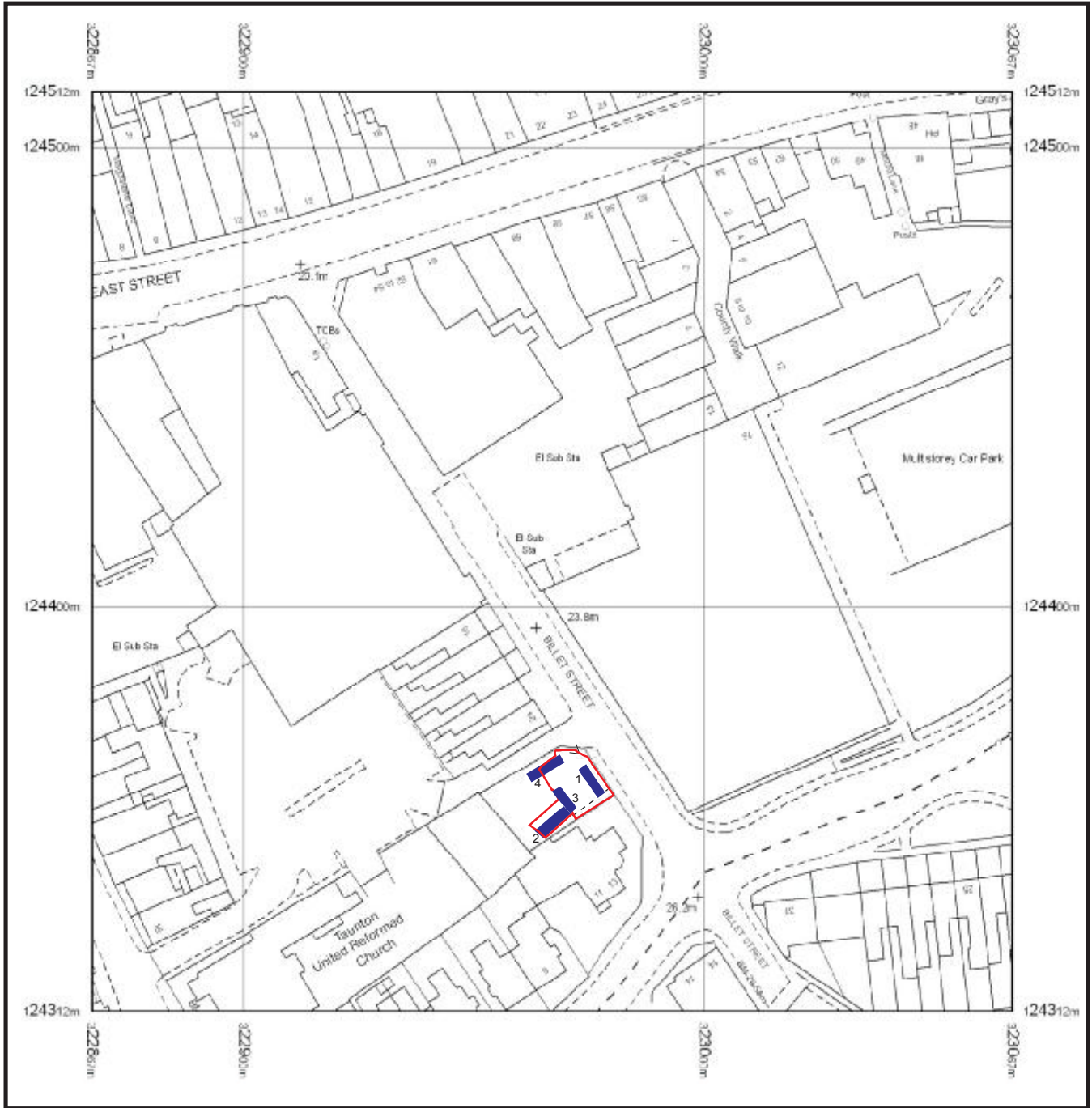
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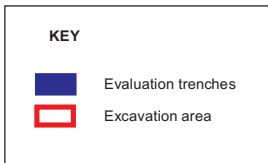
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0m 1000m

FIGURE 1: Site Location



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**FIGURE 2: Site Plan**

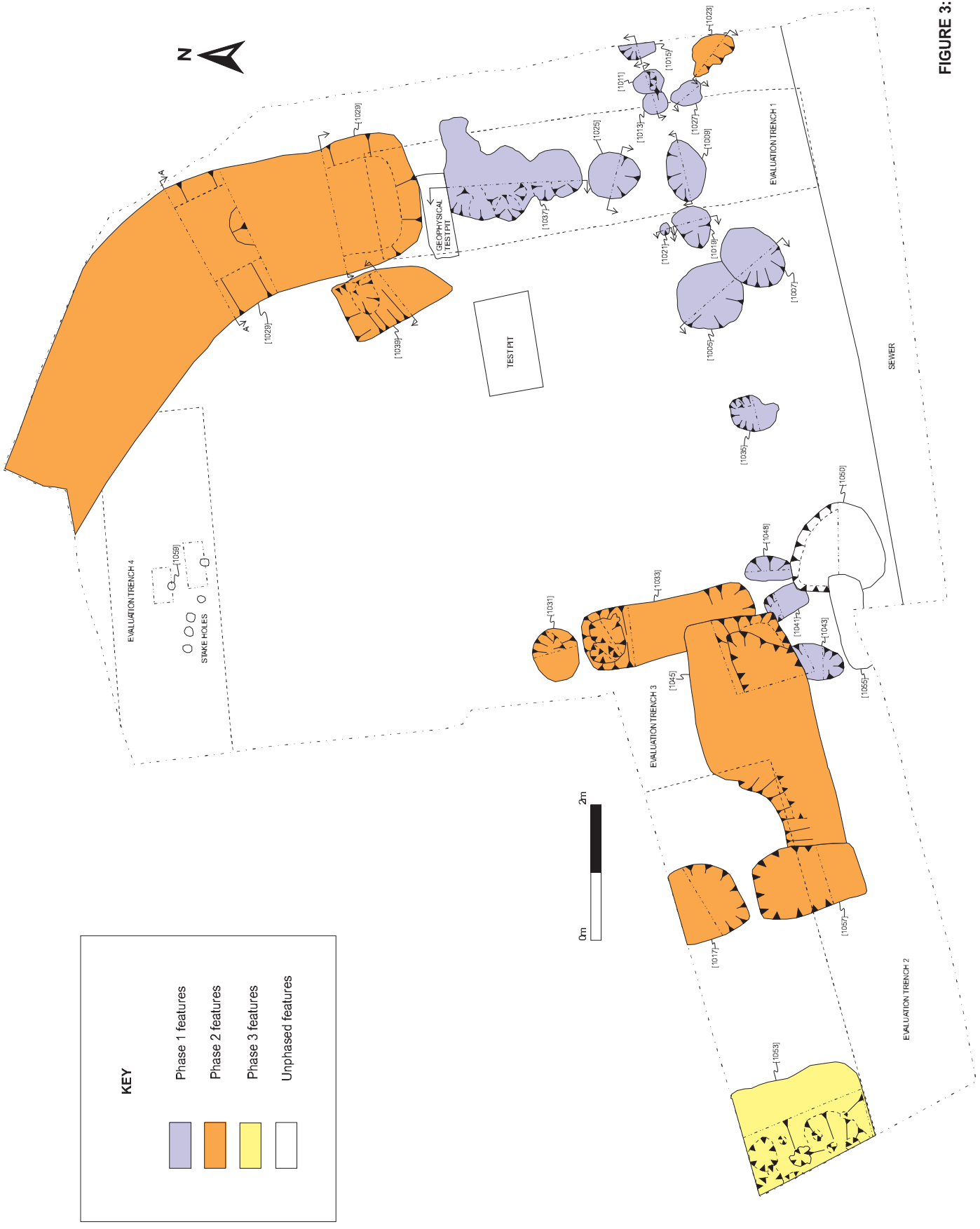
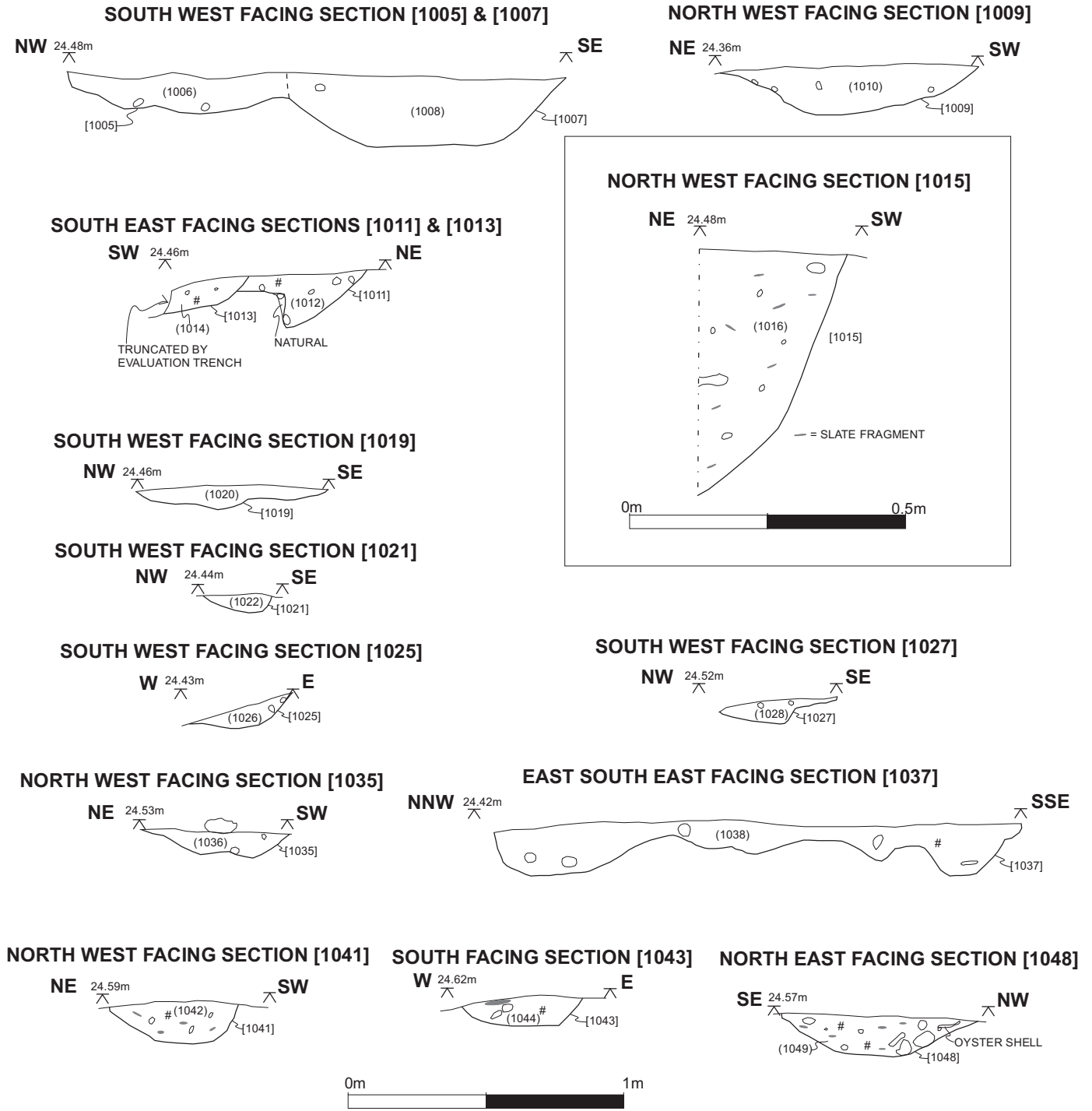
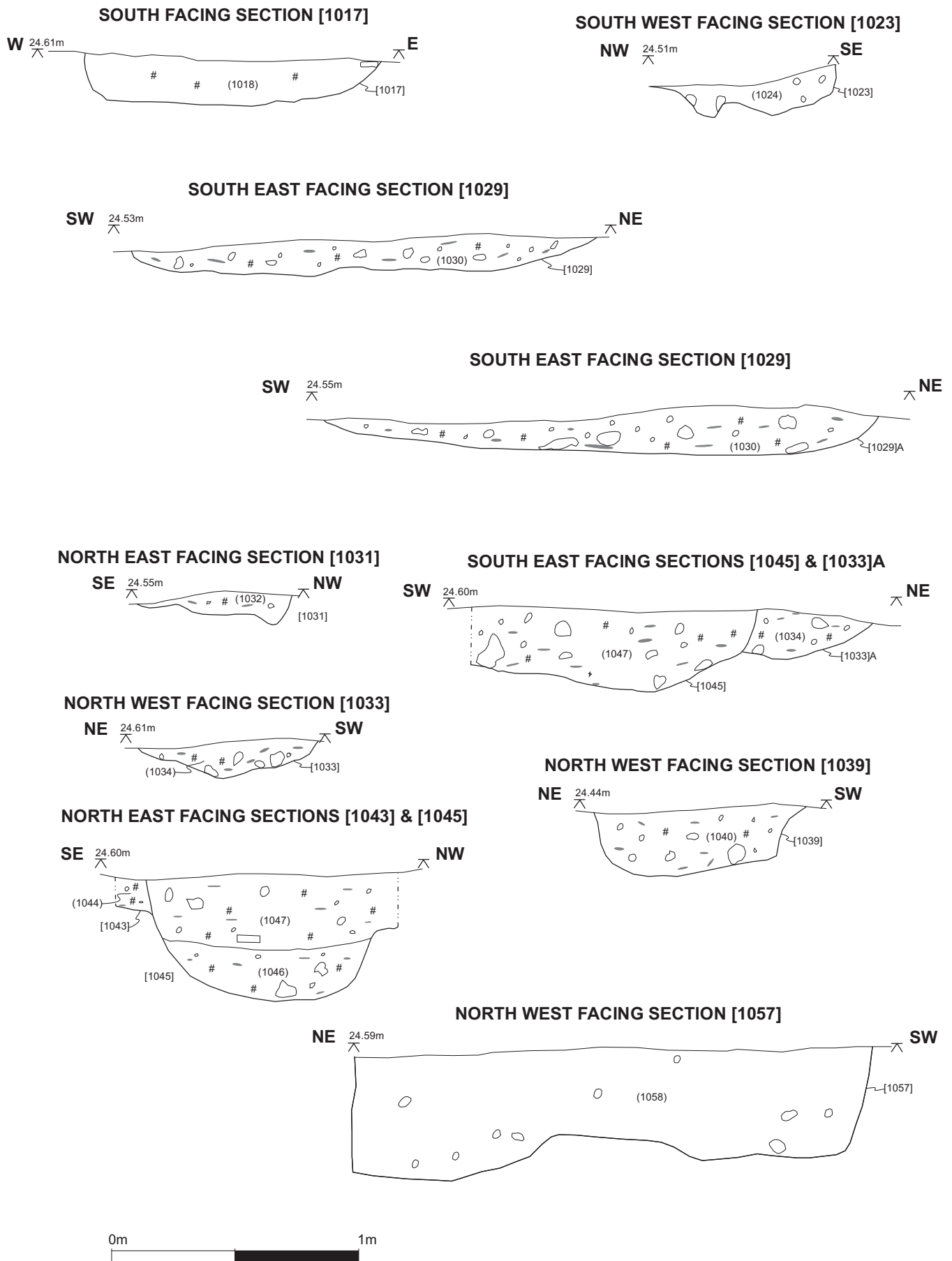


FIGURE 3: Feature Plan



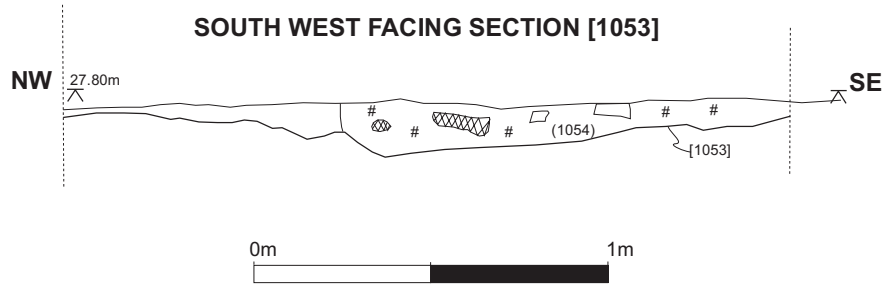
**FIGURE 4: Phase 1 Sections**



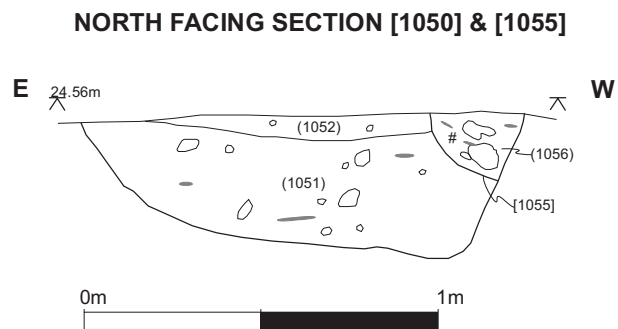


**FIGURE 5: Phase 2 Sections**

# PHASE 3



# UNDATED



**FIGURE 6: Phase 3 and Undated Sections**