

**ST GEORGE CAR SALES SITE,
BLACKSWARTH ROAD,
BRISTOL.**

NGR: ST 6183 7349

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

November 2016
Report No. 1169



ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANCY, MANAGEMENT & FIELD SERVICES

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Quality Assurance

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GLOSSARY OF 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 through 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.

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

Refers to the period from *c.* AD 1500 to AD 1900.

Prehistoric

In Britain this term is generally used for any of the traditionally defined periods such as Palaeolithic (*c.* 480,000-12,000 BC), Mesolithic (*c.* 12,000-4000 BC), Neolithic (*c.* 4,000-2,500), Bronze Age (*c.* 2500-600 BC) and Iron Age (*c.* 800 BC – AD 43).

Romano-British

Term used to describe the fusion of indigenous late Iron Age traditions with the invasive Roman culture. Traditionally dated between AD 43 and AD 410.

Saxon

Term used to describe the period between the end of Roman Britain *c.* AD 410 and the Norman Conquest (AD 1066).

SUMMARY

In June and July 2016, Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring at Blackswarth Road, Bristol (ST 6183 7349) prior to the construction of a new development of 20 flats. The work was commissioned by Clayewater Homes.

The watching brief consisted of the monitoring of three phases of groundwork;

- *The removal of two subsurface petrol storage tanks (dating to 1966) in the centre of the development area.*
- *The excavation of two inspection trenches (Inspection Trench 1 5m long, Inspection Trench 2 6m long) to locate a 1974 subsurface petrol tank.*
- *The excavation of the footings (in two blocks) for the main structure.*

Observations during the watching brief showed that the development area has been subject to a high degree of truncation, particularly in the area of the two underground petrol storage tanks, which dated to the 1960s (still in situ at the time of development) and 1970s in the centre and northern areas of the site. Natural yellow clays were encountered in this area at 37.17m aOD. In the southern part of the development area natural yellow clays were found immediately upon removal of tarmac and overburden at 38.18m aOD, while along the eastern part of the footings excavation area, a layer of redeposited natural covered natural clays which occurred at between 37.90m and 37.60m aOD, most probably as a result of landscaping to create a flat area for the petrol station.

No structural or depositional evidence was found for either the 19th century houses shown on Maule's 1803 survey or for the Medieval chapel.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 29th June and the 5th and 13th of July 2016 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring at Blackswarth Road, Bristol (NGR ST 6183 7349). The work was commissioned by Clayewater Homes.
- 1.2 The project was undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2016). The WSI was produced in accordance with the archaeological heritage conditions attached to Planning Permission (0020/14) as well as *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2008).
- 1.3 This document presents the findings of the archaeological monitoring.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Planning consent had been granted for the erection of a new block development which contained a total of 20 flats on the former St George Car Sales site (Planning Refs 05/04006/F and 15/03304/CE). The permission included conditions for a programme of archaeological monitoring during these works.
- 2.2 The site was considered to have archaeological potential, therefore conditions requiring a programme of archaeological monitoring were attached to the 2005 planning consent (Condition 12). This is in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Chapter 12: 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' (DCLG 2012), and local planning policies.
- 2.3 The site was the subject of an archaeological desktop study by Darren Lankstead of BaRAS in 2005 (BHER 22213), which should be consulted for details about the historical and archaeological background. A summary is provided below. Since 2005 there has been a watching brief on the Fire Engine Garage site to the north of this site (2014; BHER 25317) and a desk-based assessment of the St Leonard's Church site immediately to the south (2012; BHER 25151).
- 2.4 Activity from the Roman period is known from local sites to the south-west. The manor of Blackswarth itself would seem to be at least Medieval in origin, and it was handed to St Augustine's Abbey in 1153. A Medieval chapel dedicated to St Anthony is believed to have stood on or close to the present development site. Cartographic evidence suggests that Blackswarth Road existed by 1769. Maule's 1803 survey showed seven cottages erected on the site, these only being removed at some point between 1949 and 1958. Since then the site has been used as the location of a petrol station prior to becoming a car sales site.
- 2.5 To satisfy the planning condition, Foundations Archaeology issued a Written Scheme of Investigation (2016) outlining a monitoring programme during the building works. This was submitted to the Senior Archaeological Officer of Bristol City Council for comment and approval. It was accepted and forms the basis of the current works.

3 SITE LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 3.1 The site is located in the eastern part of Bristol, in Redfield and lies on the eastern side of Blackswarth Road, close to its northern end at its junction with Wicket Lane (Figure 1). It comprises a rectangular area of 990m² and most recently has been an open area under tarmac, with structures along its eastern side. At the time of the works Modern ground level (tarmac) was at approximately 38.20m aOD.
- 3.2 The underlying solid geology of the site comprised mudstone, siltstone and sandstone of the *Downend Member*. No superficial deposits are recorded (British Geological Survey 2016).

4 AIMS

- 4.1 The aims of the archaeological watching brief recording were to make a complete record of all features of archaeological interest that were exposed during groundworks associated with the development, including during the installation of services. The fieldwork will therefore establish, as far as possible, a full record of the archaeologically significant activities that have taken place within the site.
- 4.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:
- i) to define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible;
 - ii) to attempt to characterise the nature and preservation of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning and extent of features present on the site;
 - iii) to recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence which will attempt to determine the complexity of the horizontal and vertical stratigraphy present, and to recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples;
 - iv) to recover palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence.
 - v) to record any remains of the chapel (if present) and record any remains of the former cottages along with any associated features.

5 METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 The watching brief consisted of the monitoring of three phases of groundwork;
- The removal of two subsurface petrol storage tanks (dating to 1966) in the centre of the development area.
 - The excavation of two inspection trenches (Inspection Trench 1 5m long, Inspection Trench 2 6m long) to locate a 1974 subsurface petrol tank.

- The excavation of the footings (in two blocks) for the main structure.

Figure 2 shows the location of all these elements.

- 5.2 All excavations were undertaken using a mechanical excavator using either a toothed or toothless bucket (as appropriate to the ground conditions) and under constant direction of an archaeologist. All excavation and recording work was undertaken in accordance with the WSI and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.

6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- 6.1 After the removal of tarmac and Modern overburden across most of the area, the two 1966 subsurface petrol storage tanks were removed. They were situated in a c.11m by 6.5m pit, which had been excavated into natural yellow clays to a depth of 2m below ground level (Figure 2). Here the natural clays were sealed by 0.50m of made-ground. To the south of this area, removal of the overburden had immediately exposed natural yellow clays (at 38.18m aOD), which indicated that there had been a high degree of truncation within the development area.
- 6.2 To identify if a known subsurface petrol storage tank dating from 1974 was still *in situ* to the north, two inspection trenches were excavated. Inspection Trench 1 (Figure 2 & Figure 3, Section 01) showed that the tank had already been removed and backfilled, with the natural yellow clays **(103)** present at 37.15m aOD. This was overlain by a 0.70m thick deposit **(102)** of a very dark greyish brown friable to sticky silty clay which contained brick rubble, chalk fragments, slate, animal bone, Modern pottery and glass. This was overlain by a 0.20m thick layer of stone chippings **(101)** which in turn was covered by a 0.10m thick layer of tarmac **(100)**.
- 6.3 Inspection Trench 2 (Figure 2 & Figure 3, Section 02), however, was slightly different. Natural yellow clays **(204)** were encountered at a similar depth (37.17m aOD), and these were overlain by a 0.45m thick black sticky silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks **(203)** which was heavily petrol contaminated. Above this was a 0.25m thick pale greyish white mortar deposit **(202)** which contained brick fragments. As with Examination Trench 1, this was overlain by a 0.20m thick layer of stone chippings **(201)** which was covered by a 0.10m thick layer of tarmac **(200)**. It is possible that layer **(203)** represented remnant garden soil (nightsoil) from the 19th century houses shown on Maule's 1803 survey (see above) – albeit now heavily petrol contaminated. However, the fact that natural yellow clays were found at the same depth as in Inspection Trench 1, where clear truncation had occurred, would suggest that perhaps deposit **(203)** had a later origin.

- 6.4 Excavation of the footings was undertaken using a 0.6m wide bucket and went to a maximum of 1m below ground level. Except in the areas of truncation by the subsurface petrol storage tanks and remnant surviving nightsoil between them, there had been a similar degree of truncation, however here there was some evidence for landscaping using redeposited natural, probably to create a level area for the 1960s petrol station.
- 6.5 In the southeastern area of footings excavation (Figure 2 & Figure 3 Section 03) natural yellow clays (**302**) were encountered at 37.60m aOD and overlain by a thin (0.05m thick) charcoal layer (**301**). This was covered by a 0.45m thick deposit of redeposited blue clays, which contained brick and concrete rubble (**300**). In the northeastern area of footings excavation (Figure 2 & Figure 3, Section 04) natural yellow clays (**401**) were encountered at 37.90m aOD and this was overlain by a single deposit of blue/grey clay (**400**), 0.35m thick, which contained fragments of concrete and patches of gravel.
- 6.6 The only finds observed were from layer (**102**) in Inspection Trench 1, which consisted of animal bone and Modern pottery and glass.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Observations during the watching brief showed that the development area has been subject to a high degree of truncation, particularly in the area of the two underground petrol storage tanks, which dated to the 1960s (still *in situ* at the time of development) and 1970s in the centre and northern areas of the site. Natural yellow clays were encountered in this area at 37.17m aOD. In the southern part of the development area natural yellow clays were found immediately upon removal of tarmac and overburden at 38.18m aOD, while along the eastern part of the footings excavation area a layer of redeposited natural covered natural clays, which occurred at between 37.90m and 37.60m aOD, most probably a result of landscaping to create a flat area for the petrol station.
- 7.2 No structural or depositional evidence was found for either the 19th century houses shown on Maule's 1803 survey or for the Medieval chapel.

8 ARCHIVING, STORAGE & PUBLICATION

- 8.1 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology, but will be deposited in due course with the Bristol Museums Service. Copies of the report in paper and digital format will be supplied to the County Archaeological Service and an additional copy will be deposited with the site archive.

- 8.2 The report will be published in an appropriate form in a relevant journal within 12 months from completion of fieldwork. An OASIS record will also be completed and submitted on completion of the project.

9 REFERENCES

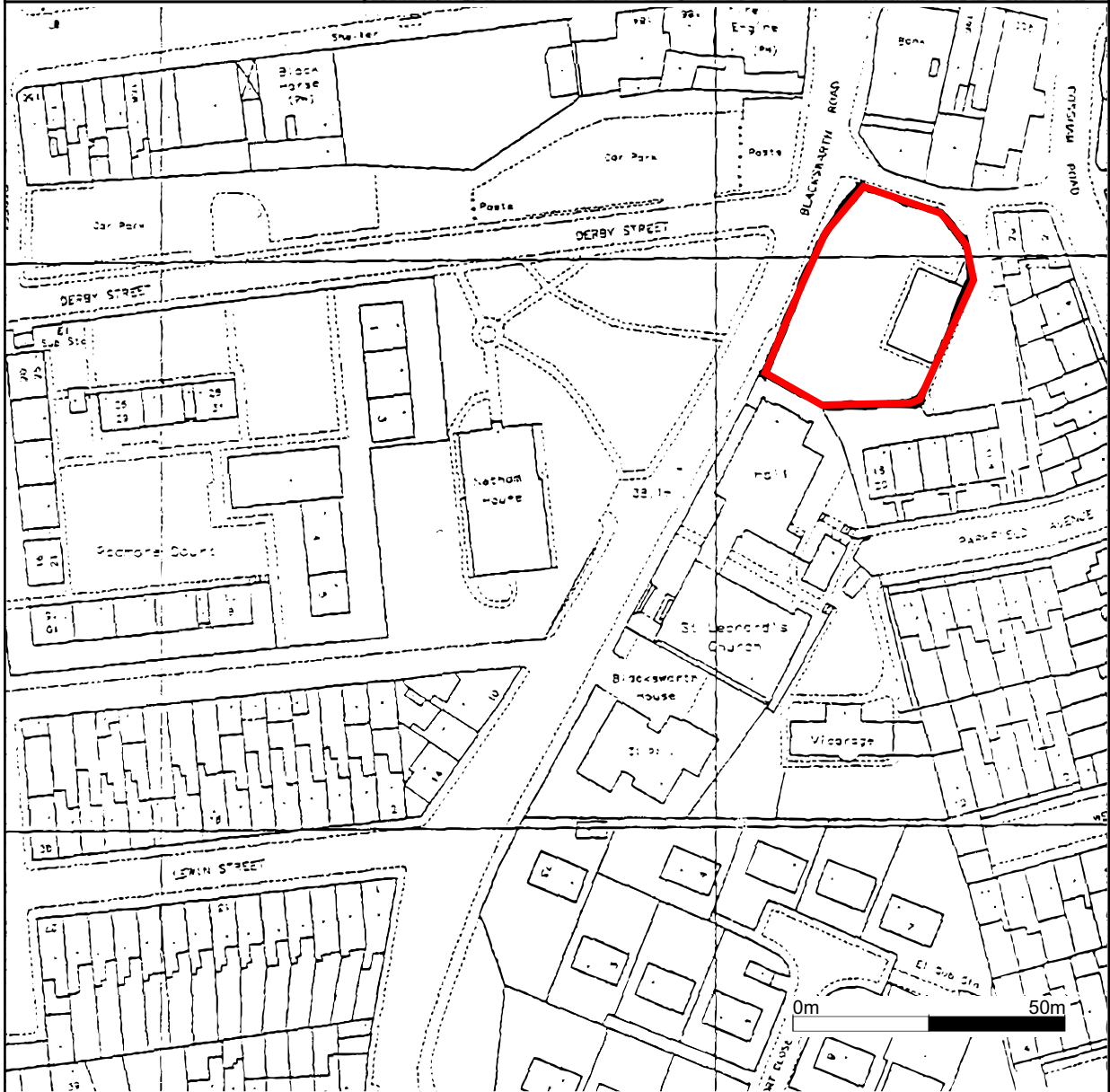
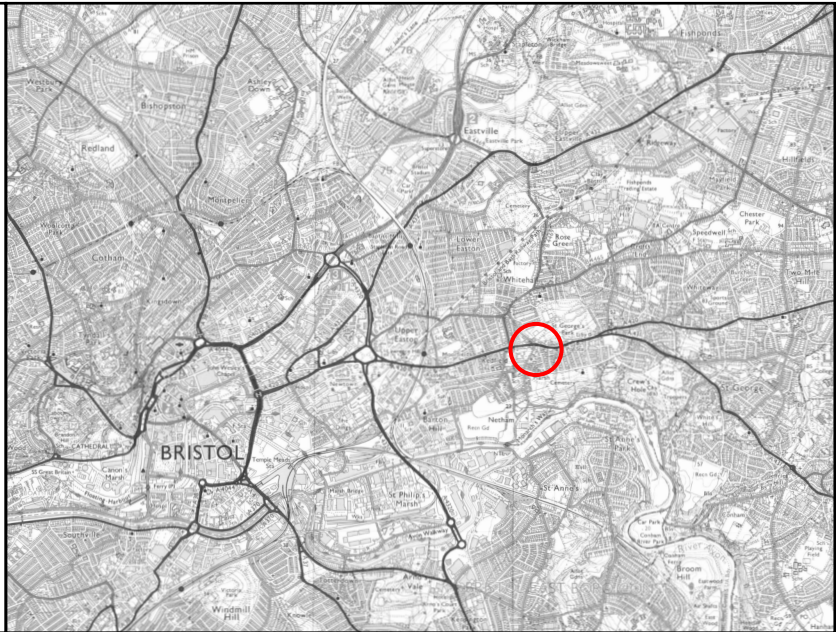
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10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

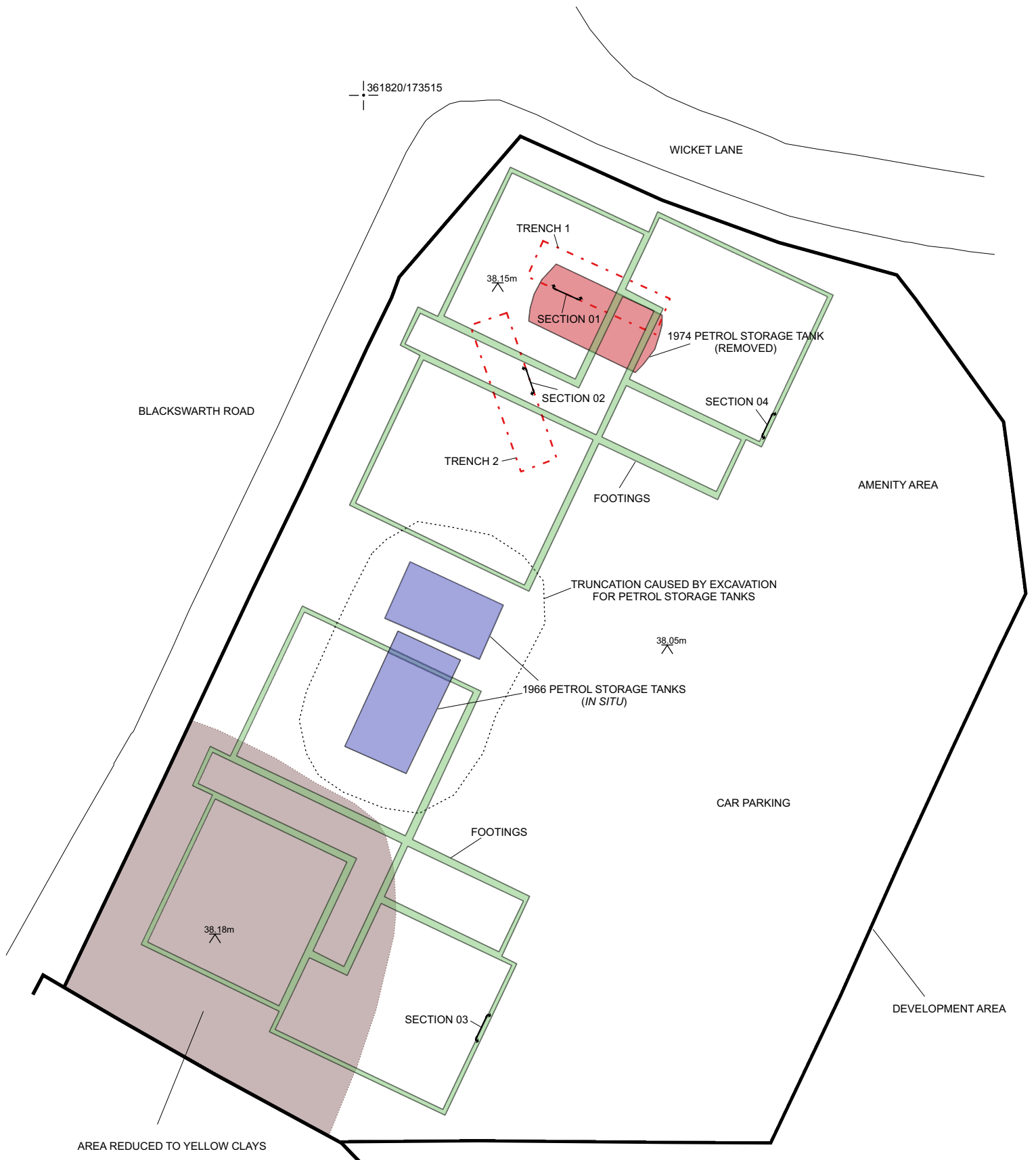
Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Brian Webber of Clayewater Homes and Bob Jones, Senior Archaeological Officer for Bristol County Council for their help during the course of this project.



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Site Code: BRB16 WB
Accession Code:

FIGURE 1: Site Location



ALL HEIGHTS METRES aOD

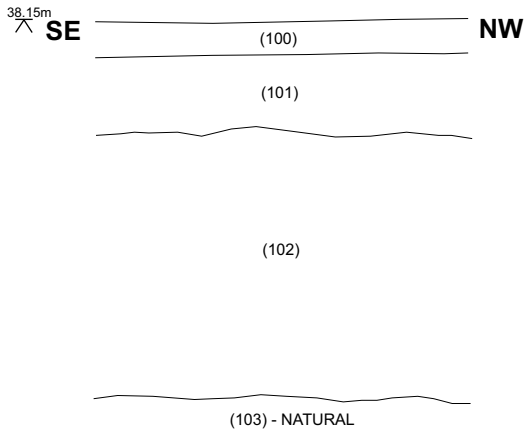
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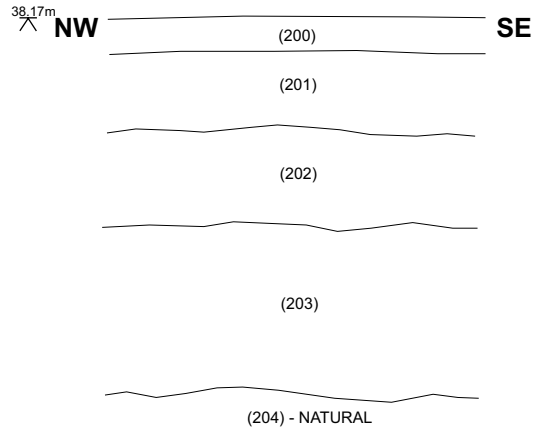
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FIGURE 2: Plan of Groundwork Areas

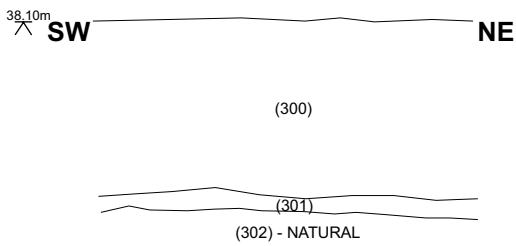
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IN INSPECTION TRENCH 1**



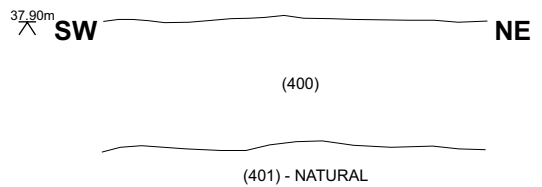
**SEC 02: SOUTHWEST FACING SECTION
IN INSPECTION TRENCH 2**



**SEC 03: SOUTHEAST FACING SECTION
SOUTHEAST FOOTINGS**



**SEC 04: SOUTHEAST FACING SECTION
NORTHEAST FOOTINGS**



Site Code: BRB16 WB
Accession Code:



FIGURE 3: Sections 01 to 04