

# HERITAGE NETWORK



## **43 QUEEN STREET Hitchin, Herts.**

HN392

*Archaeological Evaluation Report*



THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD  
*Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation*  
Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

43 QUEEN STREET  
Hitchin, Herts.

HN392

*Archaeological Evaluation Report*

*Prepared on behalf of Pegasus Retirement Homes Ltd*

*by*

Geoff Saunders, BA

Report No.251

*September 2004*

© The Heritage Network Ltd

11 FURMSTON COURT, ICKNIELD WAY, LETCHWORTH SG6 1UJ  
TELEPHONE: (01462) 685991 FAX: (01462) 685998

## Contents

	Summary .....	Page i
Section 1	Introduction .....	Page 1
Section 2	Fieldwork .....	Page 2
Section 3	Discussion .....	Page 14
Section 4	Bibliography.....	Page 16
Section 5	Illustrations.....	following Page 16

*The cover illustration shows a view of the site taken from the south-east corner*

## Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Chris Turner, Geoff Saunders, and David Kaye, and the finds assessment was undertaken by Helen Ashworth. Illustrations were prepared by David Kaye and Geoff Saunders, and the report was edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to the Directors of Pegasus Retirement Homes Ltd; Peter Tanner, Tanner and Tilley Planning Ltd; Peter Wilson, Plant Hire; and Stewart Bryant and Jonathan Smith, County Archaeology Office, Hertfordshire County Council, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

## Summary

<b>Site name and address:</b>	Land at 43 Queen Street, Hitchin		
<b>County:</b>	Hertfordshire	<b>District:</b>	North Herts
<b>Village/town:</b>	Hitchin	<b>Parish:</b>	Hitchin
<b>Planning reference:</b>	01/01092/1	<b>NGR:</b>	TL 18125 28837
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Pegasus Retirement Homes Ltd, Cheltenham, GL53 7LE		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	Housing	<b>Present land use:</b>	Offices & Car Park
<b>Size of affected area:</b>	c.2360m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	c.85m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site Code:</b>	HN392	<b>Other reference:</b>	N/a
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Type of work:</b>	Evaluation	<b>Archive location:</b>	North Hertfordshire Museums
<b>Start of work</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> August 2004	<b>Finish of work</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> August 2004
<b>Related SMR Nos.:</b>	N/a	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Post-medieval
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	N/a		

**Synopsis:** In order to determine the archaeological risk posed by a proposal to construct sheltered apartments at 43 Queen Street, Hitchin, the Heritage Network was commissioned by Pegasus Retirement Homes Ltd to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation.

Four trenches were opened across the proposed development area. Trenches 1, 2, and 3, all measured c1.5 x 15m whilst trench 4 measured c1.5 x 10m. Trenches 1, 2, and 3, were excavated within the disused burial ground associated with the former Independent Meeting House chapel. Trench four was excavated to the front of the former chapel, outside of the disused burial ground.

The results of the fieldwork indicate that the site has been significantly disturbed between the post-medieval period and the present not only by the post-medieval cemetery but also by service pipes at the front of the site. The evaluation has also demonstrated the presence of intact post-medieval burials on the site, confirming that the clearance of the burials in the 1960s was not complete. The only evidence of activity predating the post-medieval period on the site was in the form of residual abraded pottery sherds ranging from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries in date.

# 1. Introduction

**1.1** This report has been prepared on behalf of *Pegasus Retirement Homes Ltd*, as part of the archaeological evaluation of a development site on land at 43 Queen Street, Hitchin, Herts. The planning permission for the development by the North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC), has been subject to a standard archaeological condition. The scope of the required investigation was set out in a *Design Brief for Archaeological Evaluation* dated 29 October 2002 prepared by the County Archaeological Office (CAO) of Hertfordshire County Council, acting as adviser to the planning authority. A full specification was contained in the Heritage Network's approved Project Design dated October 2002.

**1.2** The study area is located on the south-eastern edge of the historic core of the town, centred on NGR TL 18125 28837 (see Figure 1). It is bounded by Queen Street on the west, the Hitchin British Schools Museum complex (41-42 Queen Street) on the north, Storehouse Lane on the east, and Cannon House and Hazeldene on the south. The redevelopment proposes the construction of sheltered apartments.

**1.3** A desk-based archaeological assessment of the site, undertaken by the Heritage Network, demonstrated that the site held a low potential for the preservation of archaeological remains from the prehistoric and Roman periods, and a more significant potential for preservation from the Anglo-Saxon period onwards. The site may lie within the cemetery zone of the recently identified Anglo-Saxon settlement area, and also lies within a post-medieval burial ground which is believed to have been partially cleared in the 1960s (Ashworth, 2002).

**1.4** The aim of the evaluation has been to consider the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any remains that are liable to be threatened by the development, and to provide a local and regional, archaeological and historical context for any such remains, in accordance with the current published regional research agenda (Glazebrook 1997, Brown and Glazebrook 2000), if they were discovered.

**1.5** The present report has been prepared in order to provide the planning authority with sufficient data to allow it to consider the archaeological implications of the proposed development, and to determine what further mitigation measures, if any, may be required to allow the development to proceed.

## 2. Fieldwork

### **TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

**2.1** Hitchin lies in the bottom of the valley of the River Hiz, with the land rising on both eastern and western sides of the river. Both Windmill Hill, on the eastern side of the town, and West Hill, opposite it, rise to heights of approximately 90m AOD.

**2.2** The town lies in the centre of the Hitchin Gap, a glacially derived deep cutting. The solid geology is Lower Chalk, with a deep drift covering of fluvio-glacial sands and gravels of the Anglian phase of the Quaternary period. The chalk bedrock is present at considerable depths below the fluvio-glacial deposits. Locally the soils are derived from the St Albans Association and comprise a brown earth derived from the underlying sands and gravels.

### **SITE BACKGROUND**

**2.3** A desk-based archaeological assessment of the site was undertaken by the Heritage Network in 2002 (Ashworth, 2002). This demonstrated that the site had a moderate potential for the preservation of archaeological remains from the Anglo-Saxon period onwards. The assessment also demonstrated that the site was previously occupied by an Independent Meeting House and associated burial ground. The use of the southern part of the site as graveyard and its subsequent clearance in the 1960s may have removed earlier archaeological evidence from substantial parts of the site. The discovery of undisturbed human remains during the construction of Sodexo House suggests that the clearance of the post-medieval cemetery was not thorough and as such it was considered that further intact burials were likely to survive on the site.

### **METHODOLOGY**

**2.4** The presence of wooden outbuildings in the north-east corner of the site made it necessary to move trench 1 to the south of the location proposed in the Project Design. Trench 2 was rotated to run approximately east to west so as to avoid a tree and its associated roots. Trench 4 was rotated to run approximately east to west in an attempt to minimise the impact on modern services crossing it. All other work was carried out in accordance with the approved *Project Design*, current health and safety legislation, and IFA standards.

**2.5** The trenches were triangulated from known points using fibreglass tape measures.

**2.6** Four trenches were opened using a JCB excavator fitted with a 1.5m wide toothless bucket, under close archaeological supervision (see Figure 2). Spoil from the machining was inspected for archaeological artefacts. Trenches were machined to the first significant archaeological horizon.

**2.7** The trenches were cleaned by hand, and all potential archaeological features and deposits were sampled to ascertain their nature, depth, date, and quality of preservation.

**2.8** It was deemed unnecessary to disturb human remains during the course of the pre-determination groundworks, a number of grave cuts were however investigated so as to determine how thorough the earlier cemetery clearance had been. All intact human burials

identified in the evaluation trenches were left undisturbed in situ and back filled by hand with a suitable depth of topsoil. The location and depth of the grave cuts were also recorded.

**2.9** All identified contexts were photographed and recorded using the appropriate proforma. Scaled plans and sections were drawn on drafting film at scales of 1:50 and 1:10.

**2.10** In addition to the evaluation trenches, five geotechnical test pits were machined under archaeological supervision. The test pits measured approximately 0.4 x 1.5m and the depth at which the natural geology was encountered varied between 1.3 to 1.8m.

## **RESULTS**

### ***Stratigraphy***

**2.11** The upper stratigraphy was uniform across the site. This consisted of a layer of modern black tarmac laid down for the existing car park. Beneath the tarmac various levelling layers of aggregate, crushed CBM, and CBM rubble were encountered. These levelling layers varied in depth between 0.3 – 0.55m. In trench 1, trench 2, and trench 3, the stratigraphy below the levelling layers had been heavily disturbed by grave cuts and brick vaults. The natural geology of yellowish sand and gravels was encountered at depths between 0.9 – 1.3m. In trench 4 the stratigraphy below the levelling layers had been disturbed by various service pipes. The trench was machined to a maximum depth of 1.2m without encountering the natural geology.

**2.12** Although the stratigraphy across the site has been heavily disturbed, the evaluation trenches demonstrated that the site had not been subject to terracing and that the original slope of the ground was still intact.

### ***Trench 1*** (see Figures 2 & 3)

**2.13** Trench 1 was located in the centre of the plot close to the eastern boundary and was aligned north-east to south-west. The trench measured 1.5 x 15.9m and was a maximum of 1.35m in depth.

**2.14** The trench contained at least eight individual grave cuts, and the remains of at least three brick built vaults. Two of the grave cuts were investigated to ascertain whether they had been cleared in the 1960s. No archaeological features other than graves were observed in this trench.

**2.15** Grave cut [101] was observed cutting into the natural sands and gravel, and was sub-rectangular in shape. This feature was greater than 2.0m long by 0.57m wide and articulated human remains were encountered at a depth of 0.72m. The feature was aligned east – west and pottery sherds recovered from the fill (103) suggest that it dates to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**2.16** Grave cut [104] was observed cutting into the natural sands and gravel, and was sub-rectangular in shape. This feature was greater than 1.5m long by 0.65m wide and approximately 0.63m deep. A single sherd of 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery was recovered from the fill. No human remains were encountered in the grave, although a substantial amount of coffin furniture including handles and tacks were recovered near the base of the cut. This



suggests that the grave may have been cleared during the 1960s or alternatively the remains are still in situ further to the west beyond the baulk.

**2.17** The brick built vaults appear to have been heavily disturbed, presumably as a result of the 1960s clearance. Fragments of plain headstones observed in grave cuts [115] and [116], indicate that these are also likely to have been cleared.

#### *Recorded contexts*

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
101	Cut	Sub-rectangular cut feature with vertical straight sides on an east – west alignment. Grave cut.	Length: 0.62m+ Width: 0.57m Depth: 0.88m+
102	Fill	Friable, dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/6), sand and very fine gravel with occasional flints and chalk. Primary fill of [101].	Length: 0.62m+ Width: 0.37m Depth: 0.16m+
103	Fill	Friable, very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2), silty clay with frequent flints and chalk. Secondary fill of [101].	Length: 0.62m+ Width: 0.57m Depth: 0.72m
104	Cut	Sub-rectangular cut feature with vertical straight sides on an east – west alignment. Grave cut.	Length: 0.63m+ Width: 0.65m Depth: 0.80m
105	Fill	Very friable, dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/6), very sandy silt with occasional small flints and chalk. Fill of [104].	Length: 0.63m+ Width: 0.65m Depth: 0.80m
106	Layer	Black modern tarmac. Surface layer.	0.12m thick
107	Layer	Compacted, yellowish brown (10YR 5/8), levelling aggregate for tarmac [106].	0.08m thick
108	Layer	Compacted, brownish yellow (10YR 6/8), levelling gravel for tarmac [106].	0.17m thick
109	Layer	Small angular stones in a matrix of firm, dark brown (10YR 3/3), sandy silt. Surface layer associated with sheds in NE corner of site.	0.45m thick
110	Layer	Firm, brown (10YR 4/3), slightly clayey sand.	0.40m thick
111	Fill	Soft, very dark brown (10YR 2/2), sandy silt. Fill of [104].	Depth: 0.35m
112	Fill	Compacted, dark yellowish brown (10YR 3/6), sandy silt with frequent small stones. Fill of [104]. Recorded in trench section.	Depth: 0.25m
113	Fill	Soft, dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/6), slightly clayey sand. Fill of [104]. Recorded in trench section.	Depth: 0.45m
114	Fill	Firm, brown (10YR 4/3), slightly clayey sand. Fill of [104]. Recorded in trench section.	Depth: 0.06m
115	Feature	Grave cut, with a loose, very dark brown (10YR 2/2), sandy silt fill. Contained fragments of headstone.	Length: 1.00m+ Width: 0.55m
116	Feature	Grave cut, with a loose, very dark brown (10YR 2/2), sandy silt fill. Contained fragments of headstone.	Length: 1.35m+ Width: 0.55m

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
117	Feature	Brick built tomb and associated cut with a firm, dark brown (10YR 3/3), sandy clay fill.	Length: 3.1m+ Width: 1.55m
118	Feature	Grave cut, with a soft, greyish brown (10YR 5/2), sand fill.	Length: 1.15m+ Width: 0.58m
119	Layer/ deposit	Compact, greyish brown (10YR 5/2), sandy clay.	0.15m thick
120	Layer/ deposit	Compact, black (10YR 2/1), sandy silt.	0.30m thick
121	Layer/ deposit	Compact, greyish brown (10YR 5/2), sandy clay.	0.45m thick
122	Layer	Compact, greyish brown (10YR 5/2), sandy silt.	0.20m thick
123	Feature	Grave cut, with a soft, greyish brown (10YR 5/2), sand fill.	Length: 0.35m+ Width: 0.20m+
124	Feature	Probable grave cut, with a soft, greyish brown (10YR 5/2), sand fill.	Length: 0.15m+ Width: 0.10m+
125	Layer	Friable, brownish yellow (10YR 6/8), sandy gravel.	0.25m thick
126	Layer	Soft, yellow (10YR 7/8), sand with gravel.	0.60m thick
127	Layer	Soft, reddish brown (5YR 4/3), clayey sand with gravel.	0.50m thick
128	Layer/ deposit	Firm, dark yellowish brown (10YR 3/6), sandy gravel.	0.40m thick
129	Layer/ deposit	Firm, brownish yellow (10YR 6/6), sandy gravel.	0.30m thick
130	Layer	Layer of CBM rubble, lies over a brick built tomb.	0.33m thick
131	Layer	Soft, greyish brown (10YR 5/2), sand.	0.85m thick
132	Layer	Soft, yellow (10YR 7/8), sand.	0.15m thick
133	Feature	Red brick built tomb.	Length: 2.40m+ Width: 1.15m
134	Feature	Red brick built tomb.	Length: 1.60m+ Width: 0.52m+

### **Trench 2** (see Figures 2 & 3)

**2.18** Trench 2 was located to the south of Trench 1 in the south-eastern corner of the site and was aligned approximately east to west. The trench measured 1.5 x 15.5m and was a maximum of 1.40m in depth.

**2.19** The trench contained at least ten individual grave cuts. Two of the grave cuts were investigated to ascertain whether they had been cleared in the 1960s. No archaeological features other than graves were observed in the trench.

**2.20** Grave cut [201] was observed cutting into the natural sands and gravel, and was sub-rectangular in shape. This feature measured 2.25m long by 0.73m wide and was excavated to a depth of 0.38m. No human remains were observed within the grave cut. Pottery sherds



recovered from the fill suggest an 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date for the feature. A single residual sherd of medieval pottery of 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century date was also recovered from this fill.

**2.21** Grave cut [203] was observed cutting into the natural sands and gravel, and was sub-rectangular in shape. This feature measured greater than 0.8m long by greater than 1.1m in width and was excavated to a depth of 0.75m. The base of the feature was not reached and no human remains were observed. The feature had been truncated by a later grave cut [205]. The feature was aligned east – west and pottery sherds recovered from the fill (204) suggest that it dates to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Several sherds of residual medieval pottery ranging in date from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries were also recovered from this fill.

**2.22** Grave cut [205] was observed cutting into fill (204) of cut [203], and was sub-rectangular in shape. The feature measured greater than 1.6m in length by greater than 0.2m wide and articulated human remains were encountered at a depth of 0.7m. The feature was aligned east – west.

#### Recorded contexts

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
201	Cut	Sub-rectangular cut feature with very steep straight sides on an east – west alignment. Grave cut. No evidence of inhumation recovered.	Length: 2.25m Width: 0.73m Depth: 0.38m
202	Fill	Friable, dark yellowish brown (10YR 3/4), sandy silt with occasional flints. Fill of [201].	Length: 2.25m Width: 0.73m Depth: 0.38m
203	Cut	Sub-rectangular cut feature with very steep straight sides on an east – west alignment. Grave cut. No evidence of inhumation recovered, however base not reached. Cut by [205].	Length: 0.80m+ Width: 1.15m+ Depth: 0.75m+
204	Fill	Soft, dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2), silty sand, with patches of redeposited natural sand. Fill of [203].	Length: 0.80m+ Width: 1.15m+ Depth: 0.75m+
205	Cut	Sub-rectangular cut feature with vertical straight sides on an east – west alignment. Grave cut.	Length: 1.60m+ Width: 0.30m+ Depth: 0.70m+
206	Fill	Soft, brown (10YR 5/3), silty sand with frequent roots. Fill of [205].	Length: 1.60m+ Width: 0.30m+ Depth: 0.70m+
207	Layer	Black modern tarmac. Surface layer.	0.14m thick
208	Layer	Compacted, brownish yellow (10YR 6/8), levelling gravel for tarmac [106].	0.07m thick
209	Layer	Modern brick CBM rubble and sand.	0.19m thick
210	Layer	Crushed CBM levelling material.	0.23m thick
211	Layer	Soft, dark brown (10YR 3/3), silty sand.	1.05m thick
212	Deposit	Firm, reddish brown (2.5YR 4/4), sandy gravel.	0.40m+ thick
213	Layer	Soft, yellow (10YR 7/8), sand with patches of gravel.	0.25m+ thick
214	Layer	Compacted, brown (10YR 5/3), sand.	0.20m thick

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
215	Layer/ deposit	Soft, yellowish brown (10YR 5/8), sand.	0.25m thick
216	Layer/ deposit	Soft, very dark brown (10YR 2/2), slightly clayey sand.	0.40m thick
217	Deposit	Soft, yellow (10YR 7/8), redeposited sand.	0.20m thick
218	Deposit	Firm, reddish brown (2.5YR 4/4), sandy gravel.	0.19m+ thick
219	Fill	Firm, yellowish brown (10YR 5/4), clayey sand. Fill of [228]. Recorded in trench section.	Depth: 0.52m
220	Fill	Soft, very dark brown (10YR 2/2), silty sand. Fill of [228]. Recorded in trench section.	Depth: 0.52m
221	Fill	Firm, brown (10YR 5/3), clayey sand. Fill of [228]. Recorded in trench section.	Depth: 0.28m
222	Feature	Grave cut, with a soft, yellowish (10YR 7/8), redeposited sand fill with brown mottling.	Length: 1.85m+ Width: 0.52m+
223	Feature	Grave cut, with a soft, greyish brown (10YR 5/2), sand fill.	Length: 2.45m Width: 1.40m
224	Feature	Grave cut, with a soft, greyish brown (10YR 5/2), sand fill.	Length: 1.50m Width: 0.47m+
225	Feature	Grave cut, with a soft, dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2), silty sand fill.	Length: 2.00m+ Width: 0.55m+
226	Feature	Grave cut, with a soft, greyish brown (10YR 5/2), sand fill.	Length: 2.00m+ Width: 0.58m+
227	Feature	Grave cut, with a soft, dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2), sand fill.	Length: 1.75m+ Width: 0.65m
228	Feature	Grave cut, with a soft, dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2), sand fill. Also contains upper fills (219), (220), and (221).	Length: 1.63m+ Width: 0.62m+

### **Trench 3** (see Figures 2 & 4)

**2.23** Trench 3 was located in the western half of the present car park on the southern half of the site and was aligned approximately east to west. The trench measured 1.5 x 15.0m and was a maximum of 1.1m in depth.

**2.24** The trench contained at least nine individual grave cuts. Two of the grave cuts were investigated to ascertain whether they had been cleared in the 1960s. No archaeological features other than graves were observed in the trench.

**2.25** Grave cut [305] was observed cutting into the natural sands and gravel, it was sub-rectangular in shape. This feature was greater than 2.0m long by 0.95m wide and partial human remains were encountered at a depth of 1.03m. The base of the feature was not reached. The feature was aligned east – west and pottery sherds recovered from the fill (306) suggest that it dates to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Several sherds of residual medieval pottery ranging in date from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries as well as a single residual sherd of Anglo-Saxon pottery of 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century date.

**2.26** Grave cut [301] was observed cutting into the natural sand, and was sub-rectangular in shape. This feature was approximately 2.5m long by 0.85m wide, an apparently intact red brick tomb was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.4m. The single soft, yellowish brown (10YR 5/4), sand fill yielded no datable artefacts.

#### Recorded Contexts

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
301	Cut	Sub-rectangular cut feature with vertical straight sides on an east – west alignment. Grave cut.	Length: 2.45m Width: 0.85m Depth: 0.40m+
302	Fill	Soft, yellowish brown (10YR 5/4), sand. Fill of [301]	Length: 2.45m Width: 0.85m Depth: 0.40m
303	Structure	Red brick built tomb inside grave cut [301].	Length: 2.45m Width: 0.85m
304	Feature	Grave cut, with a firm, dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2), slightly clayey sand fill.	Length: 1.95m+ Width: 1.45m+
305	Cut	Sub-rectangular cut feature with vertical straight sides on an east – west alignment. Grave cut.	Length: 2.00m+ Width: 0.71m Depth: 1.03m+
306	Fill	Friable, brown (10YR 4/3), sand with occasional flints. Fill of [305].	Length: 2.00m+ Width: 0.71m Depth: 1.03m+
307	Layer	Black modern tarmac. Surface layer.	0.13m thick
308	Layer	Crushed CBM levelling material.	0.30m thick
309	Layer	Mixed, grey (10YR 5/1), sandy silt.	0.51m thick
310	Layer	Mixed, greyish brown (10YR 5/2), sandy silt.	0.55m thick
311	Layer	Soft, reddish brown (2.5YR 4/4), sand.	0.40m thick
312	Feature	Grave cut, with a firm, dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2), silty sand fill.	Length: 1.15m+ Width: 0.65m
313	Feature	Grave cut, with a firm, dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2), silty sand fill.	Length: 0.85m+ Width: 0.13m+
314	Feature	Grave cut, with a friable, brown (10YR 4/3), sand fill.	Length: 1.20m+ Width: 0.50m+
315	Feature	Grave cut, with a friable, brown (10YR 4/3), sand fill.	Length: 0.70m+ Width: 0.85m+
316	Feature	Grave cut, with a friable, brown (10YR 4/3), sand fill.	Length: 0.75m+ Width: 0.15m+
317	Feature	Grave cut, with a firm, dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2), silty sand fill.	Length: 0.30m+ Width: 0.97m
318	Feature	Grave cut, with a friable, greyish brown (10YR 5/2), slightly clayey sand fill.	Length: 1.75m+ Width: 1.50m+

**Trench 4** (see Figures 2 & 4)

**2.27** Trench 4 was located in the present car park on the street frontage and was aligned approximately east to west. The trench measured 1.5 x 10.5m and was a maximum of 1.20m in depth.

**2.28** The stratigraphy in the trench had been heavily disturbed by modern services. No grave cuts were observed in this trench confirming that it lies outside of the former cemetery.

**2.29** A sub-ovoid pit [408] was partially revealed in the eastern end of the trench, the feature was greater than 1.05m long and greater than 0.75m wide. The feature was also observed in geological test pit 6, where it was shown to have a maximum depth of 0.6m. The feature had steep concave sides and a rounded base. The single mixed, dark brown (10YR 3/3), silty clay fill yielded late post-medieval pottery and tile fragments, clay pipe, and oyster shell.

**2.30** No further archaeological features or deposits were identified within the trench. Geological test pit 6 excavated adjacent to the trench demonstrated that the natural geology lay at a depth of 1.3m below the current surface.

*Recorded Contexts*

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
401	Layer	Black modern tarmac. Surface layer.	0.14m thick
402	Layer	Modern CBM rubble cemented together to provide levelling material for tarmac [401].	0.40m thick
403	Layer	Compact, olive brown (2.5Y 4/3), clayey sand with frequent CBM fragments.	0.25m+ thick
404	Feature	Concrete covering for modern service pipe on a northwest – southeast alignment.	Length: 2.00m+ Width: 0.69m
405	Layer	Mixed, greyish brown (2.5Y 5/2), clayey silty sand with moderate small CBM fragments.	0.60m+ thick
406	Feature	Metallic service pipe on a northwest – southeast alignment.	Length: 0.80m+ Width: 0.06m
407	Feature	Pipe trench for a ceramic service pipe on a northwest – southeast alignment.	Length: 4.00m+ Width: 0.45m
408	Feature	Sub-ovoid cut feature running beneath southern baulk of the trench. Late post-medieval rubbish pit.	Length: 1.8m Width: 1.05m+

*Geological Test Pits*

**2.31** A total of 5 test pits were opened across the site for geo-technical purposes. The test pits were monitored until they reached a depth below the archaeological horizon.

**2.32** Human remains were encountered in four of the test pits. Only a small amount of bone was recovered from test pits one and five, and this was unarticulated and fragmentary. Test

pits two and four produced a larger amount of bone and coffin furniture suggesting that these test pits may have disturbed burials.

**2.33** Test pit one encountered a red brick built vault, which had evidently been cleared during the 1960s and had been backfilled with carved and engraved masonry presumably from the tomb's monument. The test pit demonstrated that the tomb had a depth in excess of 2.3m.

**2.34** It is intended that the human remains recovered from the geological test pits will be re-interred.

### ***FINDS CONCORDANCE***

Ctxt	Pottery		CBM		An.bone		Shell		Glass		Clay pipe		Fe.objs		Slate	
	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.
102													305	31		
103	85	6	140	6	25	6	20	1	125	7	5	3	310	6	95	2
105	10	1	5	1	3	1							330	45		
202	5	3	3	1	20	2							5	2		
204	90	17	580	32	10	4	35	5					800	27	185	1
302	25	1	60	1	25	1										
306	105	10	1925	19	56	6			3	1			15	1		
402	15	2	205	8	40	2			4	1	5	2				
Tr 1 U/S	55	2	30	1	25	1					10	1	70	12		
Total	390	42	2948	69	204	23	55	6	132	9	20	6	1835	124	280	3

### ***ARTEFACTS***

#### ***Pottery***

**2.35** A total of 42 pottery sherds, weighing 390g, was recovered from one unstratified and 7 stratified contexts during the present investigation. The pottery ranged in date from the Anglo-Saxon period to the Victorian period.

**2.36** A single small undiagnostic body sherd of handmade pottery, of probable 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century date, was recovered from context (306). This sherd was residual within a grave cut which also contained 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery and tile fragments.

**2.37** A total of 14 sherds of early medieval sandy ware weighing 63g were recovered from 3 stratified contexts. This material makes up 16% of the assemblage by weight and 33% by number. All of this material was residual within the fills of later grave cuts, and consists largely of small, abraded, and undiagnostic body sherds.

**2.38** A single sherd of medieval green glaze pottery, of probable 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century date, was recovered from context (204). This sherd was residual within a grave cut which also contained 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery and CBM fragments.

**2.39** The remainder of the assemblage is of 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date and is contemporary with the site's use as a cemetery.

**2.40** Although residual within later features the presence of Anglo-Saxon and medieval pottery on the site gives evidence that activity was taking place in the vicinity of the site during these periods.

#### *Recommendations*

**2.41** As the pottery is largely abraded and undiagnostic, and is largely residual within later features, no further work is proposed on this assemblage.

#### ***Ceramic Building Material***

**2.42** A total of 69 ceramic building material fragments, weighing 2948g, was collected from 1 unstratified and 7 stratified contexts during the present investigations. The bulk of the assemblage consisted of fragments of post-medieval to modern peg tile and brick fragments, ranging in date from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

#### *Recommendations*

**2.43** Post-medieval peg-tile and brick are a common finds on urban sites of post-medieval date. On this basis, no further work is proposed on this material.

#### ***Glass***

**2.44** A total of 9 pieces of glass, weighing 132g, was recovered from 3 stratified contexts during the present evaluation. The pieces consist of sherds of glass bowls, bottles, and probable window panes. All of this material is post-medieval and was recovered from the fills of grave cuts.

#### *Recommendations*

**2.45** Given the small size of the assemblage, no further work is proposed on this material.

#### ***Clay pipe***

**2.46** A total of 6 fragments of clay pipe, weighing 20g, was recovered from one unstratified and 2 stratified contexts. The assemblage consists of undiagnostic stem fragments.

#### *Recommendations*

**2.47** Given the small size and undiagnostic nature of this assemblage, no further work is proposed.

#### ***Iron Objects***

**2.48** A total of 124 iron objects, weighing 1835g, was recovered from one unstratified and 6 stratified contexts during the course of the evaluation. The assemblage is entirely made up of coffin furniture and is contemporary with the site's use as a cemetery.



**2.49** A total of 6 coffin handles were recovered representing 67% of the assemblage by weight. The remainder of the material is largely made up of tacks and nails used for the decoration and manufacture of coffins.

*Recommendations*

**2.50** No further work is proposed on this material and it is intended that the coffin furniture will be re-interred with the human bone recovered from the geological test-pits.

**Slate**

**2.51** A total of 3 pieces of slate, weighing 280g, was recovered were recovered from 2 stratified contexts. The assemblage consists of large thin fragments which were probably originally used for roofing on the Independent Meeting House.

*Recommendations*

**2.52** Given the small size of the slate assemblage, no further work is proposed.

**ECOFACTS**

**Animal bone**

**2.53** A total of 23 animal bone fragments, weighing 204g, was collected from one unstratified and 7 stratified contexts. The assemblage consists of small, mostly undiagnostic, fragments.

*Recommendations*

**2.54** Given the small size and fragmentary nature of this material, no further work is proposed on this assemblage.

**Shell**

**2.55** A total of 6 shells, weighing 55g, were collected from 2 stratified contexts. The material consisted only of oyster shell.

**2.56** Oyster was a common foodstuff in the medieval and post-medieval periods.

*Recommendations*

**2.57** Given the small size of the assemblage, no further work is proposed on this material.

**Human Bone**

**2.58** Two fragments of human bone, weighing 104g, were recovered from one unstratified and one stratified context. The lower half of a left humerus was collected unstratified from trench 1, and a small and abraded fragment of probable spine was collected from the fill of grave [306].

**2.59** Further human bone was recovered unstratified from the geotechnical test pits.

*Recommendations*

**2.60** No further work is proposed on the human bone and it is intended that the all the recovered fragments will be re-interred.

### 3. Discussion

**3.1** Despite the proximity of the site to known areas of Anglo-Saxon activity, the present fieldwork did not reveal any archaeological features or deposits predating the post-medieval period.

**3.2** The fieldwork has demonstrated that the stratigraphy across the site has been heavily disturbed by post-medieval activity including burials and service pipes. However the natural slope of the hill appears to be intact and has not been terraced away this is demonstrated by the natural sand and gravel geology being encountered at a height of 71.94mOD towards the rear of the site and at 66.05mOD at the front of the site, beneath 1.1 – 1.4m of overburden.

**3.3** The presence of undisturbed graves across the site has also been demonstrated, indicating that the clearance of the cemetery in the 1960s was not thorough.

**3.4** The residual pottery recovered from later grave cuts and ranging in date between the 8<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries indicates activity on or in the vicinity of the site at these periods. However the residual nature of this material within later grave cuts suggests that the sites use as a cemetery has had a severe impact on any potential earlier archaeology.

#### *Conclusions*

**3.5** The archaeological evaluation has demonstrated that:

- post-medieval burials survive on the site, whose location and density cannot be predicted;
- residual sherds of pottery ranging in date from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries are indicative of late Saxon and medieval activity in the vicinity;
- the stratigraphy on the site has been heavily disturbed by the post-medieval burials, and by modern service pipes on the front of the site, and stratified evidence from earlier periods is unlikely to survive.

**3.6** On the basis of these findings, it is considered that the risk that significant archaeological features, deposits or artefacts predating the post-medieval period, would be disturbed by the proposed development is Low.

**3.7** It is also considered that the risk that significant features, deposits and artefacts, associated with the Independent Meeting House, and subsequent Congregational Chapel, would be disturbed by the proposed development is Low.

**3.8** It is considered that the risk that substantial evidence for the former graveyard, including the remains of vaults, grave cuts, monumental masonry, extant graves including mass deposits of human remains, unarticulated human bone, and coffin furniture, would be disturbed by the proposed development is Very High. It is, however, considered that, following the partial clearance of the site in 1969, such remains would not constitute a useful or informative statistical sample for archaeological purposes, and controlled archaeological

removal may be limited to that required under directions from the Home Office pursuant to the Disused Burial Grounds (Amendment) Act 1981.

***CONFIDENCE RATING***

**3.9** In the course of the fieldwork, weather and ground conditions were generally acceptable for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation.

**3.10** There are no other circumstances which would lead to a confidence rating for the present evaluation which is less than High.

## 4. Bibliography

Ashworth, H. 2002. *43 Queen Street, Hitchin, Herts. Desk-based Archaeological Assessment*. Heritage Network, September 2002.

Hillelson, D. 2002. *43 Queen Street, Hitchin, Herts. Project Design: Archaeological Evaluation*. Heritage Network, October 2002.

Bryant, S. 2002, *Design Brief for Archaeological Evaluation*. Hertfordshire County Council.

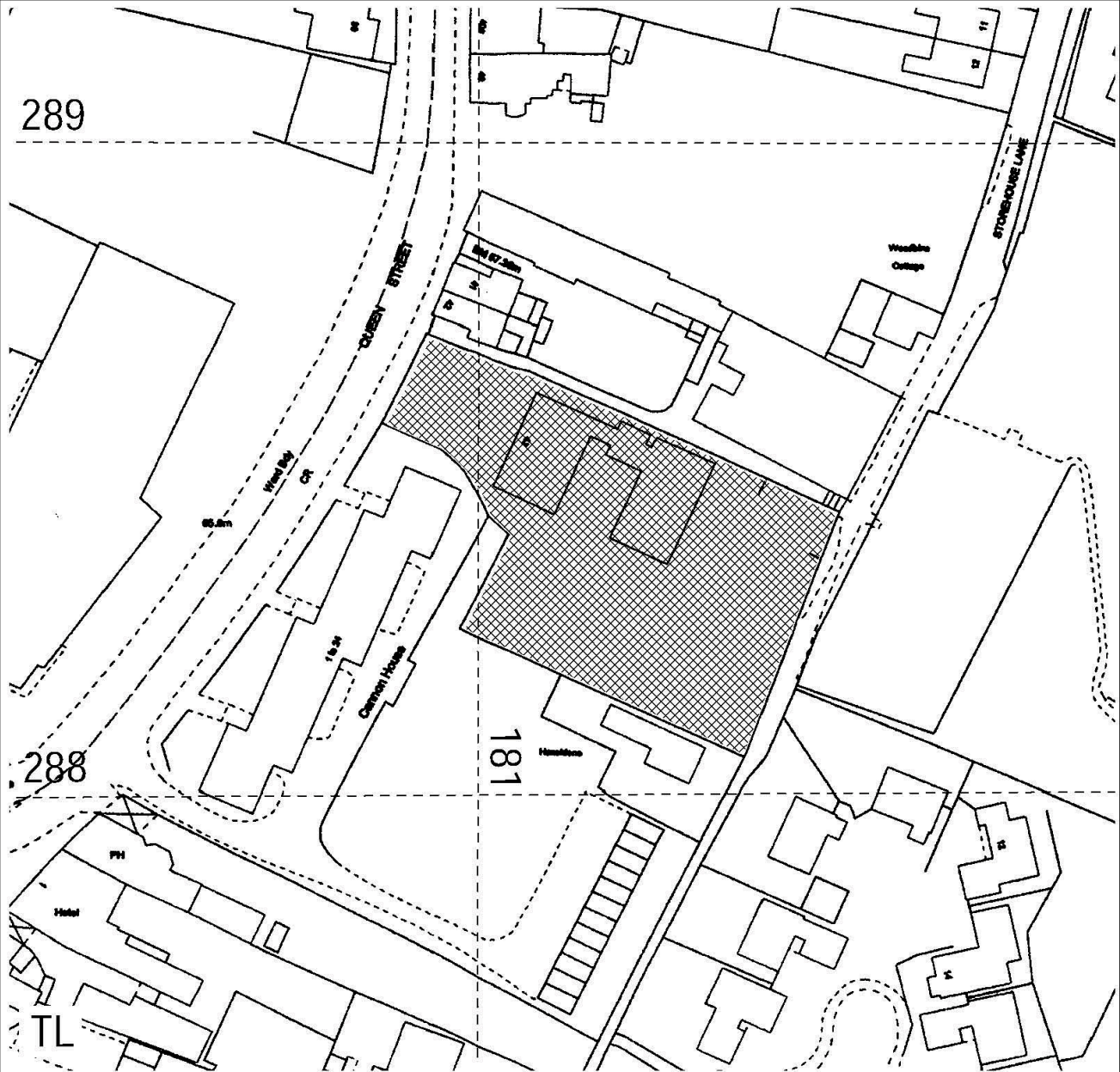
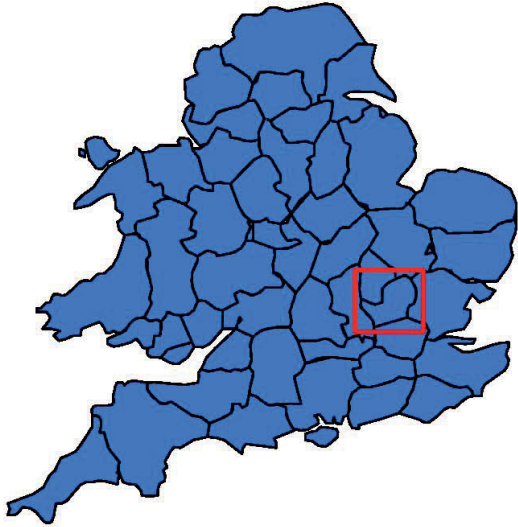
## 5. Illustrations

Figure 1 .....	Site location
Figure 2 .....	Trench location
Figure 3 .....	Trenches 1 and 2 plan and section
Figure 4 .....	Trenches 3 and 4 plan and section
Figure 5 .....	Feature sections

THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

43 Queen Street, Hitchin

HN392



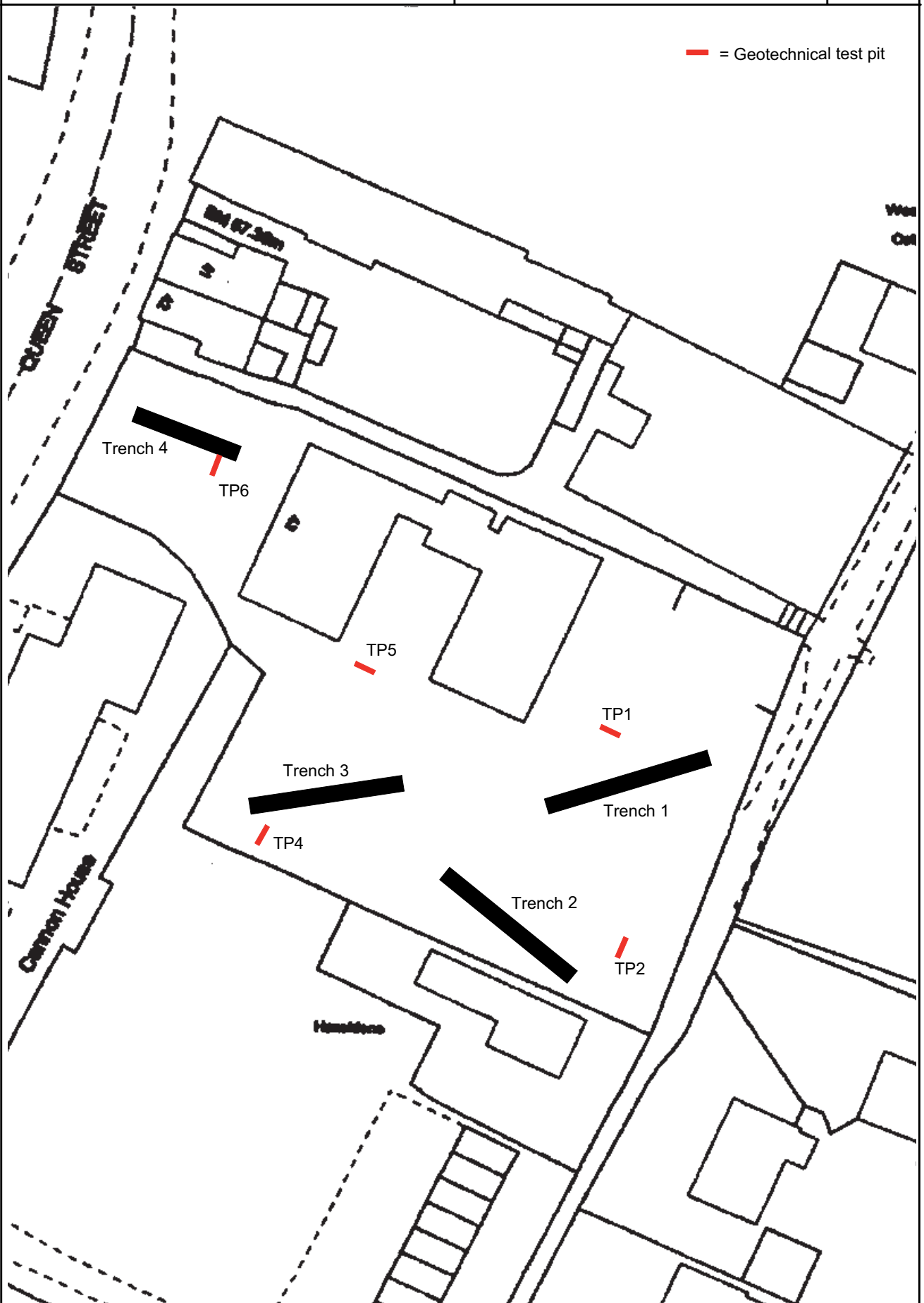
Site Location

Scale 1:1250

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office, Licence no.AL100014861

Figure 1





— = Geotechnical test pit

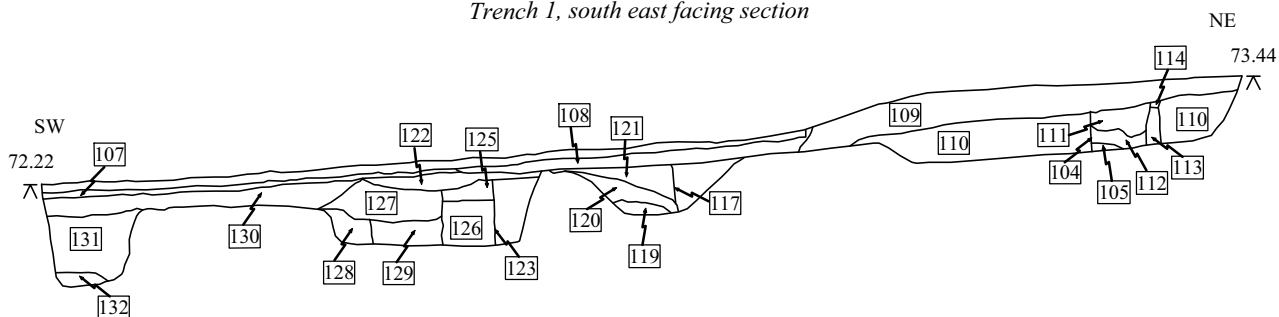
Trench location

Scale 1:500

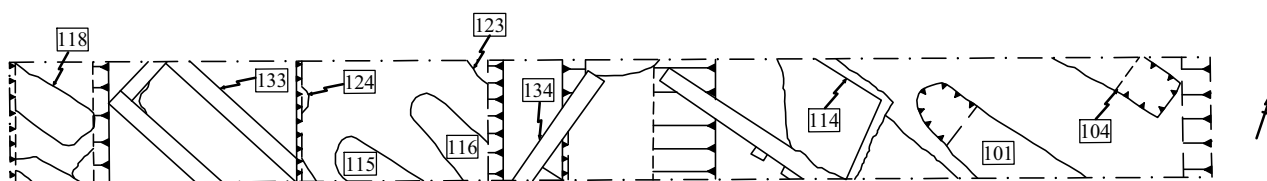
Reproduced from Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Licence no. AL100014861.

Figure 1

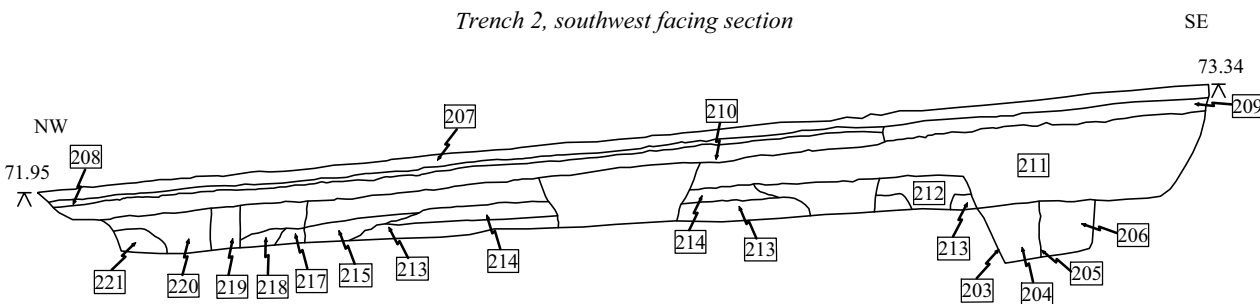
Trench 1, south east facing section



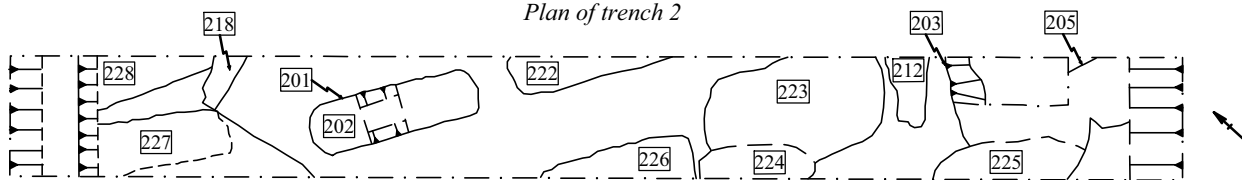
Plan of trench 1



Trench 2, southwest facing section



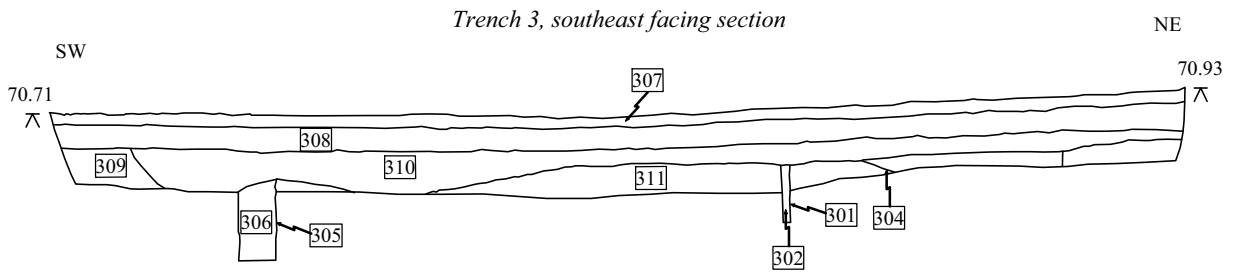
Plan of trench 2



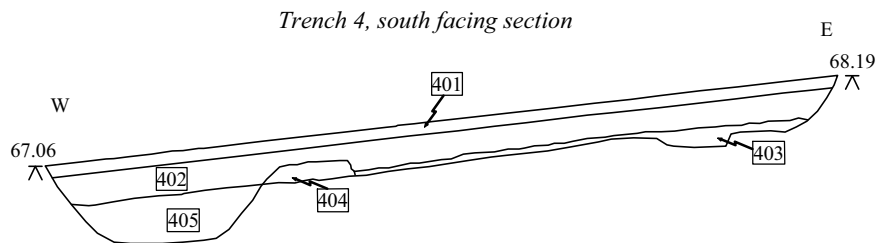
Trenches 1 and 2: plan and section

Scale 1:100

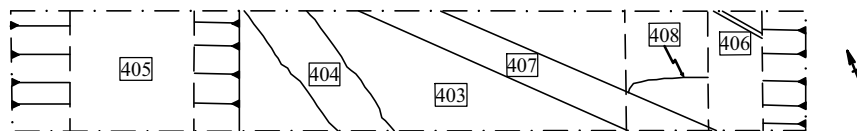
Figure 3



Plan of trench 3



Plan of trench 4

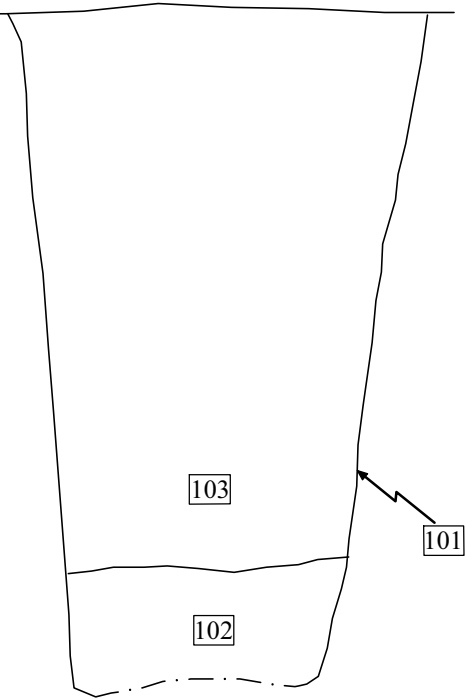


Trenches 3 and 4: plan and section

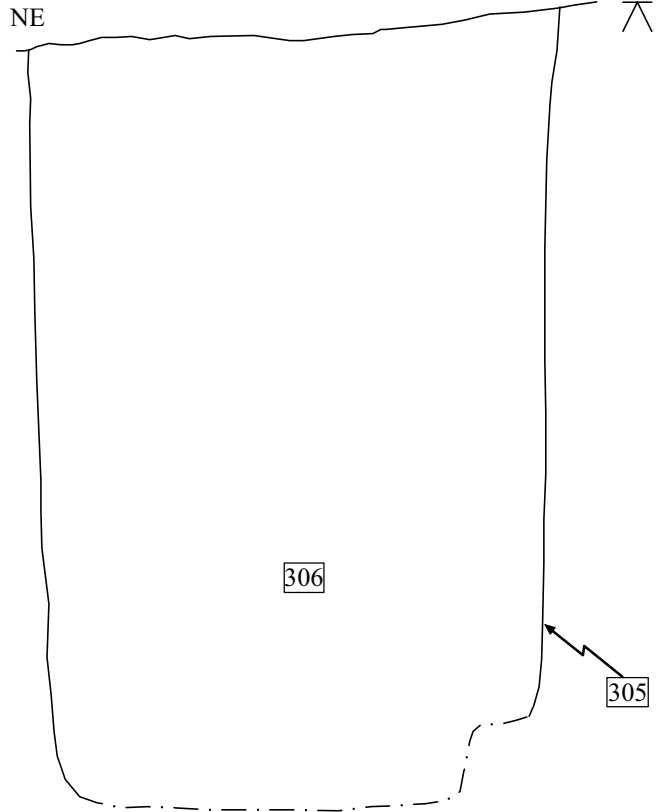
Scale 1:100

Figure 4

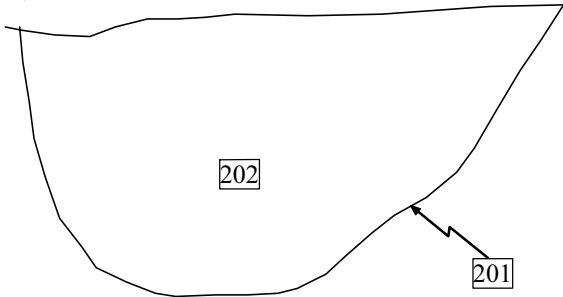
NE North west facing section of cut [101] SW  
72.42



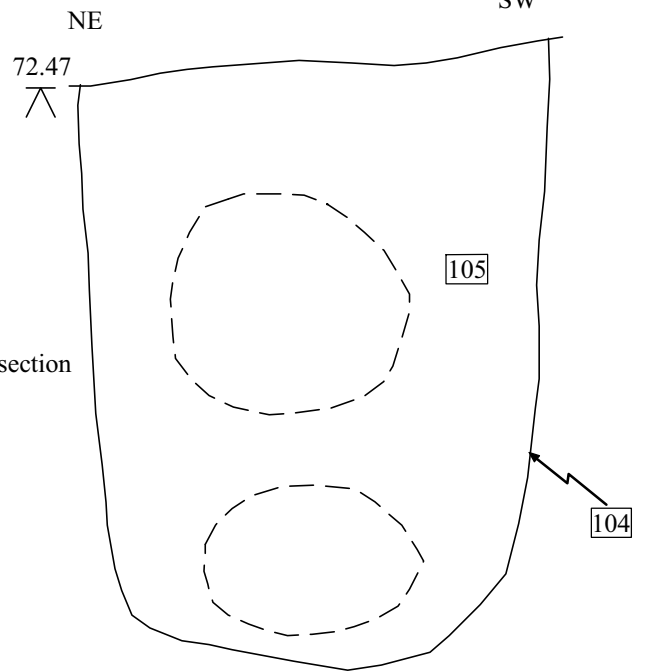
North west facing section of grave cut [305] SW 69.65



N West facing section of cut [201] S 71.30



North west facing section of cut [104] SW



Hollows in section



Feature sections

Scale 1:10

Figure 5