ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

THE CHEYLESMORE/NEW UNION STREET, COVENTRY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT & TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION

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Approved: Claire Halpin MIFA	Project No. 2016
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THE CHEYLESMORE/NEW UNION STREET, COVENTRY

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT AND TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION

SUMMARY

AS carried out an archaeological desk-based assessment and trial trench evaluation at the Cheylesmore/New Union Street, Coventry in May/June 2004, in advance of proposed redevelopment of the site.

The development site lies just to the north of the medieval town wall and also an entrance known as the Cheylesmore or Park Gate. The site appears to have been garden plots at the rear of large houses facing Little Park Street through much of the medieval and early post-medieval periods. It is likely the plots originated from an episode of 'town planning' carried out in the earlier 14th century, and could possibly be earlier. The cartographic evidence suggests two boundary ditches or fences crossed the site, one to the north and one to the south. The northern boundary was built over by an engineering works by 1886, but the southern boundary appears to have retained its line up to the 1960s when major redevelopment took place. In addition, a house or building is shown on the western edge of the site, fronting Cheylesmore Lane with a garden and path to the rear, running across the development site. It was built between 1610 and 1748 and demolished or subsumed by the factory by 1886. The likelihood of preservation of medieval garden soils and associated pits and structures, together with possible property boundaries, was thought to be potentially good.

The dating evidence from the evaluation is consistent. The features (pits and gullies) cutting the natural drift are associated with Late $15^{th}-17^{th}$ century activity in the backplots of the features fronting Cheylesmore Lane. They are likely to have been refuse pits and property boundaries, emphasised by the high quantity of domestic waste retrieved from the features. A stone surface or path post-dates the pits and gullies. It may have been part of a yard surface within the backplots, but equally may have formed the post-medieval boundary shown on the 18^{th} century maps. The depth of post-medieval garden soils (1.5m) is considerable, and comparable to the results of the excavation on the western side of the Cheylesmore. Test-pits observed to the west and north of the trench showed similar, if not deeper deposits overlying the natural clay. The large east-west aligned wall located during the trial trenching may have been associated with the southern wall of the Cheylesmore Cycle and Auto factory depicted on the 1886 OS map. It is too substantial to have been an earlier property boundary, but may have re-used the boundary shown on the 18^{th} century maps. The north-west/south-east aligned brick wall is likely to have been a later addition to this factory.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In May and June 2004, Archaeological Solutions carried out a archaeological desk-based assessment and subsequent trial trench evaluation of a car park site at The Cheylesmore/New Union Street, Coventry (NGR SP 3349 7858 Figs. 1 & 2). The work was commissioned by Cox Turner Morse on behalf of the Stoford Group, in advance of proposed redevelopment of the site. The local planning authority (Coventry City Council) required a programme of archaeological work to be undertaken as a condition of the planning consent.
- 1.2 The programme of archaeological research and was undertaken according to a brief for the project issued by Coventry City Council Planning Archaeologist (CCC PA) (dated July 2002; *Brief*

for Archaeological Watching Brief Part B (Site-specific, city centre environs and Brief for Set-Piece Archaeological Excavation, Part A (Generic)), and a specification prepared by AS (dated April 2004). It also complied with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' (IFA) Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations (1994, revised 1999).

- 1.3 The principal research objectives for the trial trench evaluation included:
 - To determine the location, date, extent, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development. In particular, it will be important to establish the presence or absence of any remains relating to the post-medieval, medieval, or earlier settlement of the area. It will also be important to understand the level of truncation on the site and also to ascertain whether it will be possible to mitigate the development proposals to accommodate any surviving archaeological remains within the area of proposed redevelopment.
 - To establish the extent of surviving post-medieval, medieval or earlier deposits on the site
 - To establish the nature of land use in the area in the post-medieval, medieval and potentially earlier periods.
 - To establish the economic base of the settlement, if remains are present
 - To establish the environmental character of the site during the post-medieval, medieval and earlier periods

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE (Figs. 1 & 2)

- 2.1 The site lies at a height of approximately 87m AOD. The natural geology in the immediate area of the development site is red sandstone and keuper marl.
- 2.2 The site is sub-triangular in shape and bounded by the roads of Cheylesmore to the south-west and New Union Street to the east with a traffic control centre and multi-storey car park to the north-west. The site is currently in use as a car park. It was closed for the duration of the archaeological field evaluation.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 There is little evidence of a significant prehistoric presence within the area of modern Coventry and only sparse evidence of Roman activity from the periphery of the City. Early and middle Saxon remains are also notable by their absence, although most of the suburbs have names indicating a Saxon origin for the various villages. The known origins of the City of Coventry are associated with the founding of a priory in the 9th century, indicated by the radiocarbon dating of bones from beneath the Romanesque Cathedral arcade.
- 3.2 By the 12th century, the town had grown to become of considerable commercial importance through industry based primarily on woollen cloth and also ceramics, the former being later exported abroad in large quantities. This successful commerce soon attracted patronage, and a castle was founded by the Earls of Chester whilst the priory was elevated to a Benedictine Cathedral. In the 13th and 14th centuries, other monastic orders including the Franciscans, Carmelites and Cistercians founded religious houses on lands within the city and between c. 1355

and 1534, the town was elaborately walled with the inclusion of 12 gates and 20 towers (Figure 5) (circumstantial evidence of an earlier wall has yet to be proved by excavation). This great wall was as much a display of civic power and wealth as for defence at a time when arts and crafts continued to flourish including the introduction of schools of glaziers and non-ferrous metal workers. The nearest gate to the development site, the Cheylesmore or Park Gate and its associated section of wall is first mentioned in 1385. It was built with stone from the King's quarry to ease the taxation burden and popularity with the local inhabitants.

- 3.3 By the early 16th century a decline had set in largely associated with the Dissolution of the monasteries in 1539, and the city's fortunes waned. This is indicated in the 1523 census and the 1610 John Speed map of the city (Figure 3). The city was of strategic importance during the Civil War and was unsuccessfully besieged by Charles I in 1642 and later used as a Prisoner of War camp in 1648. With the Restoration, the walls were slighted in 1662 as the city was deemed to have supported the wrong side.
- However, by the mid 18th century skilled industry was re-emerging, aided by Coventry's geographic location and the arrival of the canal in 1769 and the railway in 1838. This resurgence in trade led to the destruction of many of the medieval gates, as the roads were widened to feed the coal and brick-making industries, while silk-ribbon weaving was another burgeoning industry. Civil unrest at this time led to the building of a city-centre cavalry barracks, which survived up to the 1950s. Bicycle and watch making factories soon followed the other industries and by the turn of the 20th century, motorcycle, car and arms manufacture were also underway. The city was heavily bomb damaged during air raids in 1940 and 1941 having become a target particularly through its aircraft and munitions manufacture. Consequently, massive post-war redevelopment saw great change with realignments of new roads and buildings away from the old medieval topography. However, it is known from excavation that large areas of the medieval layout still survive beneath the modern city.
- 3.5 There are several possible derivatives of the name Cheylsmore, one is *cagel more* meaning marsh with tree stumps and another that Caegal is a personal name hence Caegels more, whilst 'moor of the church' or 'moor of the churls' are other possibilities. A fifth alternative is 'Childs Moor' named after the old nursery of the children of the Earl of Chester over which the manor was built. In the early 12th century control of Coventry was divided between the Priors Half and the Earls Half and circa 1237, Hugh d'Albany, 5th Earl of Arundel, laid out a small park in the district of Cheylsmore. In 1243, his successor Roger de Montalt finding the castle of the old earls in a ruinous state built a manor in the north of the established park to reaffirm control over the area of former baronial strength. In 1249, Cheylsmore manor was rented to the Prior of Coventry for £108 a year whilst Roger went on Crusade and 436 acres of parkland was stocked with deer under a park keeper. Before the middle of the 14th century Queen Isobel rented up to 88 building plots in Cheylsemore Park to citizens of standing in the city. Some of these plots lay in Much or Great Park Street and Little Park Street. In spite of later infilling, the outlines to these building plots could still be recognised in the 20th century and this layout has been referred to as 'Coventry's first piece of town planning' (VCH 1069, 8). The development site lies within the historic core of the city between the former line of Little Park Street and the town wall, close to the site of Park Gate or Cheylesmore Gate. In 1477 the manor passed to the crown and in 1501 was part of Catherine of Aragon's dowry from Henry VII for her marriage to Prince Arthur
- 3.6 In the 16th century the manor was leased by various titled people including the Duke of Northumberland who leased part of the park to the Coventry Corporation for 99 years so the poor could pasture their cattle. The Little Park was also used in the 16th century for other functions including the staging of outdoor plays and the burning of heretics. In 1642, the dividing wall between the Much and Little Parks was knocked down and quarries infilled to prevent cover being

provided for the besieging Royalist army, but the two parks were separated again in 1657. Between 1755 and 1783 a racecourse was constructed. Five years later, Lord Hertford renting the estate enclosed large parts of the park and the Coventry Corporation followed suit with its own area in 1795. In 1801, the Marquis of Hertford purchased the tithes of the park from the Corporation for £1,802.9d and in 1820, he began cutting down trees on the estate and converting it into separate fields and gardens.

4 CARTOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The earliest map of Coventry is the John Speed version of 1610 (Figure 3). It is not drawn 4.1 to scale, but it shows the area of the proposed development site bounded by Cheylesmore to the west, which is the part of Grey Friars Lane that leads up to the Cheylesmore Gate. To the east are substantial buildings fronting Little Park Street. It is likely that some of these properties relate to the town planning of Queen Isobel. The site is located in the rear of the gardens of these building plots and the map suggests the area was largely orchard. There is a boundary to one plot shown crossing the development site in the south and another in the north. The Samuel Bradford map of 1748 (Figure 4), although also not to scale, appears more accurately proportioned than the Speed map. It shows more clearly the two garden boundary lines, presumably marked by ditches and/or fences, evident in Fig.3. The map suggests there are now orchards or trees in the northern and southern plots while the central plot contains a building on the west side of the site fronting Cheylesmore. This building is approached from the east by a path or track running across the site with lawns or gardens on either side. To the east the plots behind the large buildings have been divided into smaller plots with associated houses, and the north-south running rear boundary to these plots lies very close to the development site. The Lobel map (Figure 5) is a reconstruction of the City circa 1750, based largely on the Bradford map, but shows the location of the most important medieval buildings. The 1851 National Health Board map (not illustrated), although in colour and clearly drawn is not of great use on this occasion as it does not encompass the site. However, the general picture gives the appearance that the area was by then still predominantly garden plots with a few buildings dotted around. The First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886 (Figures 6) shows a marked change from the Bradford illustration. The majority of the site is now built over by the extensive Cheylesmore Cycle and Auto Works. Only towards the southern end are some of the trees/orchards shown in Figure 5 still to be seen. These trees are now at the rear of new properties fronting St Patrick Street to the south. A new boundary line just in the southern tip of the development site demarcates the rear of these new properties. The earlier boundary ditch slightly north of this, shown in Figures 4 & 5 and almost certainly of medieval origin, is still present but now forms part of a lane or through way linking Cheylesmore with Little Park Street. The Second Edition OS of 1905 (Figure 7) is similar to Figure 6 except the trees are not depicted and instead buildings run along the lane which now appears to be blocked from exiting to the east by more buildings. The 1914 OS map (not illustrated) shows no change from 1905 relevant to the site. The 1937 OS map (Figure 8) also shows little change at the site other than a further subdivision of land plots south of the lane. It also shows the line of the medieval city wall and the location of Park (or Cheylesmore) Gate to be at least 25 metres south of the development site. The 1951 post-war OS map (Figure 9) shows the Cheylesmore Cycle & Auto works to be gone following the Blitz and Baedekker raids, with only a small engineering works remaining. The southern end of the site was still intact including the lane running along the line of the original medieval plot. After the war, particularly from the early 1960s, the area was radically rebuilt and changed, with the construction of the ring-road resulting in the site as it appears today (Figure 2).

5 DISCUSSION (DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT)

In its basic topography the city hardly changed for 600 years from the 14th century when 5.1 the walls were constructed, up until the 19th and 20th centuries when industrial expansion took place (VCH 1969, 7). In particular, the development area appears to have undergone little change in this period probably because it was in the line of access from the royal Cheylesmore manor to the park, via the Cheylesmore Gate. The cartographic evidence shows that the city wall and Cheylesmore Gate lay between 30 and 50 metres beyond the southern tip of the site. However, the Speed and Bradford maps, and the Lobel reconstruction show that the site lay over parts of at least three boundary plots containing gardens or orchards situated at the rear of large houses lining Little Park Street (Figures 3, 4 & 5). Two boundary lines traverse the site from east to west, one to the south and one to the north. By 1748, a house had also been constructed on the west-central edge of the site, fronting Cheylesmore Lane, with a path crossing the site (Figure 4 & 5). By 1886, the Cheylesmore Cycle and Auto factory had been built over most of the site including the line of the northernmost of the two medieval boundary plots. However, the southern boundary remained as part of a lane linking Cheylesmore Lane with Little Park Gate. Much of this lane remained into the 1960s before major redevelopment changed the topography of the area. Modern excavation since the 1960s has shown that very little of the City's archaeology has been lost to either the Blitz or modern redevelopment. In particular, foundations of the 14th century town wall have been recorded on the western side of the Cheylesmore robbed out in 1662, and sealed by 1.5m of post-medieval garden soils (information courtesy of Coventry Planning Department). Although the City wall does not cross the development site and the presence of medieval buildings is unlikely, the potential for the preservation of medieval garden soils and associated pits or structures together with their plot boundary markers may be judged to be good (Fig.10).

6 METHODOLOGY (Trial Trench Evaluation)

- 6.1 The trial trench evaluation was conducted in accordance with the brief and specification, and also complied with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* (revised 1999).
- 6.2 A trial trench, measuring 15m x 1.6m, was excavated on the site, in a location approved by CCC (Fig.12). It was excavated by a 180° wheeled mechanical excavator (JCB), under close archaeological supervision. Hard surfaces, topsoil and undifferentiated overburden was removed mechanically; thereafter all further excavation was undertaken by hand. Only the south-eastern half of the trench was excavated to the natural drift due to the presence of a large brick wall and reenforced concrete in the north-western half of the trench. The top of the trench was stepped to facilitate safe working at depth.
- 6.3 Exposed surfaces were inspected for archaeological finds and features, cleaned by hand as necessary, drawn to scale, photographed and recorded on *pro forma* sheets as appropriate. Excavated spoil was searched for residual finds, and a metal detector was used as necessary to enhance finds recovery.

7 RESULTS

7.1 **Trench 1** (15m x 1.6m at base) (Figs 11 & 12, Plates 1 - 6)

North-East End

Sample Section (0.00 = 87.24 m AOD): 0.00 - 0.10 m L1011. Tarmac surfacing.

0.10 - 0.25m L1012. Made ground. Brick and rubble. 0.25m+ F1009. Brick and stone wall foundation.

South-West End

Sample Section (0.00 = 86.79 m AOD):

0.00 - 0.10m L1011. Tarmac.

0.10 - 0.70m L1012. Made ground. Brick and rubble.

0.70 - 1.05m L1013. Dark brown/black clayey silt with modern CBMs and 19th - 20th century

1.05 - 1.90m L1014. Mid brown clayey silt with occasional small pebbles, stones, tile and Late $15^{th} - 16^{th}$ C pottery (160g) and animal bone (33g)

1.90 - 2.15m L1015. Mid to light brown clayey silt with occasional small stones, 16th – 17th C pottery (44g), building material (410g) and animal bone (31g).

2.15m+ L1019. Natural Drift. Brownish yellow silty clay (overlying reddish brown clay)

Description Four archaeological features were located cutting the natural drift (L1019) in the south-west half of the trench.

On the northern side of the trench was a small square pit (F1006, dimensions: 0.68m long, 0.17m wide, 0.22m deep) with moderately sloping, concave sides breaking to a flattish base. The fill (L1007) was a mid - dark brown clayey silt with a high charcoal content. Finds from the deposit comprise $16^{th} - 17^{th}$ century pottery (11g), building material (50g) and animal bone (15g).

To the north-east of this was a small linear gully (F1004, dimensions: 0.35m wide, 0.34m deep), orientated approximately north/south, which terminated before the southern edge of the trench. The gully had steep sides breaking to a flat base and was filled with a mid brown clayey silt (L1005) with occasional small flint pebbles, containing $17^{th} - 18^{th}$ century pottery (109g), building material (1203g) and animal bone (113g).

Another gully (F1002, dimensions: 0.44m wide, 0.19m deep) was located 1.5m to the north-east, parallel to F1004. This had a similar profile to F1004, and contained a similar deposit (L1003). Finds from the deposit comprise Late $15^{th} - 17^{th}$ century pottery (172g), building material (3709g) and animal bone (352g).

A small circular pit (F1000, dimensions: 0.60m long, 0.35m wide, 0.09m deep) was located a further 1.5m to the north-west, exhibiting moderately sloping sides and a rounded base. It contained a single deposit (L1001), consisting of a dark greyish/brown sandy clay with occasional charcoal flecks. Finds from the deposit comprise Late 15th – 17th century pottery (23g), building material (117g) and animal bone (52g).

The natural drift was directly overlain by a mid to light brown clayey silt (L1015) containing 16^{th} – 17^{th} pottery (44g). It was sealed towards the south-west end of the trench by a sandstone surface (F1008, dimensions: 1.45m x 1.10m, 0.25m deep). This surface was only one stone thick and consisted of rough sandstone blocks up to 0.25m³. The surface was overlain by a mid brown clayey

silt (L1014), containing Late 15th – 16th century pottery (160g) which in turn was sealed by a dark brown/black clayey silt (L1013), containing modern pottery and CBMs.

Cutting L1013 was a substantial wall, aligned east/west (F1009, dimensions: length 6.00m+, width, 1.00m, depth 0.85m) constructed with up to three courses of rough sandstone blocks which formed the foundations for five courses of red brick. The bricks (measuring 10" x 4½" x 3") were handmade and bonded with a lime-based mortar. The wall extended across the north-eastern end of the trench and was observed in a geotechnical test-pit on the eastern boundary of the site. F1009 and L1014 were sealed by a layer of relatively modern made ground (L1012) consisting of brick and rubble.

Cutting all of these layers was a north-west/south-east aligned brick wall (F1010, dimensions: length 1.60m+, width 0.50m, depth 1.90m+) constructed from machine-cut bricks bonded with a concrete mortar. The construction trench (F1017) for the F1010 could be seen on the north-eastern side of wall. This was filled with brick and rubble (L1018). The trench was capped with a layer of tarmac (L1011).

8 CONFIDENCE RATING

8.1 It is not felt that any factors hindered the identification of archaeological features or finds during the evaluation.

9 DEPOSIT MODEL

9.1 The natural alluvial clay (L1019) was located at a maximum depth of 2.15m (c. 84.65m AOD) below the present car park level. This was directly overlain by a series of buried garden soils up to 1.5m thick (L1013 – L1015). These were overlain by a relatively modern demolition layer (L1012) and a layer of tarmacadam forming the car park surface (L1011).

10 DISCUSSION

- 10.1 The dating evidence is consistent (pottery report below). The features cutting the natural drift are associated with Late $15^{th}-17^{th}$ century activity in the backplots of the features fronting Cheylesmore Lane. They are likely to have been refuse pits and property boundaries, emphasised by the high quantity of domestic waste retrieved from the features.
- 10.2 The stone surface or path post-dates the pits and gullies. It may have been part of a yard surface within the backplots, but equally may have formed the post-medieval boundary shown on the 18^{th} century maps (Figs. 4-5).
- 10.3 The depth of post-medieval garden soils (1.5m) is considerable, and comparable to the results of the excavation on the western side of the Cheylesmore. Test-pits observed to the west and north of the trench showed similar, if not deeper deposits overlying the natural clay.
- 10.4 The large east-west aligned wall located in the trench may have been associated with the southern wall of the Cheylesmore Cycle and Auto factory depicted on the 1886 OS map (Fig. 6). It is too substantial to have been an earlier property boundary, but may have re-used the boundary shown on the 18th century maps (Figs. 4-5). The north-west/south-east aligned brick wall is likely to have been a later addition to this factory.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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AS would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Geotechnical Developments UK Ltd (in particular Mr Graham Dowlen).

APPENDIX 1 – LIST OF FIGURES AND CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES

Figure	Date	Description and Source	Scale
Figure 1	Modern	Ordnance Survey Explorer 221	1:25000
Figure 2	2002	The Site	1:1250
Figure 3	1610	John Speed map	Not to scale
Figure 4	1748	Samuel Bradford map	Not to scale
Figure 5	1750	M. Lobel map showing reconstruction of the	1:2500
		City circa 1750 and the location of important	
		medieval sites	
Figure 6	1886	1st Edition Ordnance Survey map	1:2500
Figure 7	1905	2nd Edition Ordnance Survey map	1:2500
Figure 8	1937	Ordnance Survey map	1:2500
Figure 9	1951	Ordnance Survey map	1:2500
Figure 10	2002	The Site showing where potential	1:1250
		archaeological remains might be	

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COLOUR PLATES



Plate 1 View of the site, looking to the south-east



Plate 2 View of the site, looking to the south



Plate 3 Trench 1 looking NE



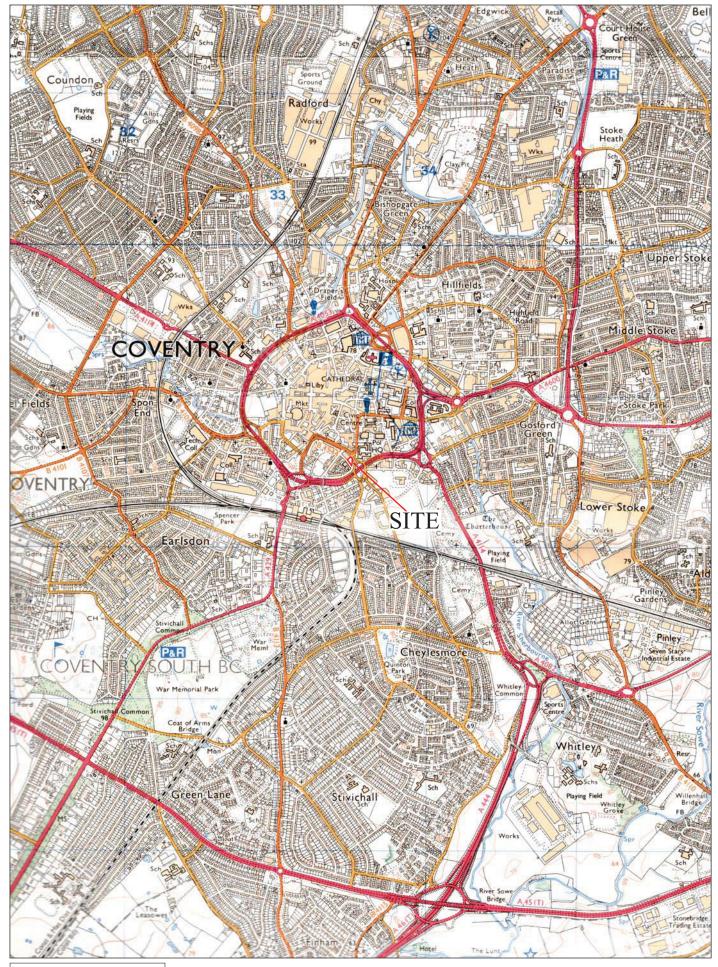
Plate 4 Feature 1004



Plate 5 Trench 1 looking NE



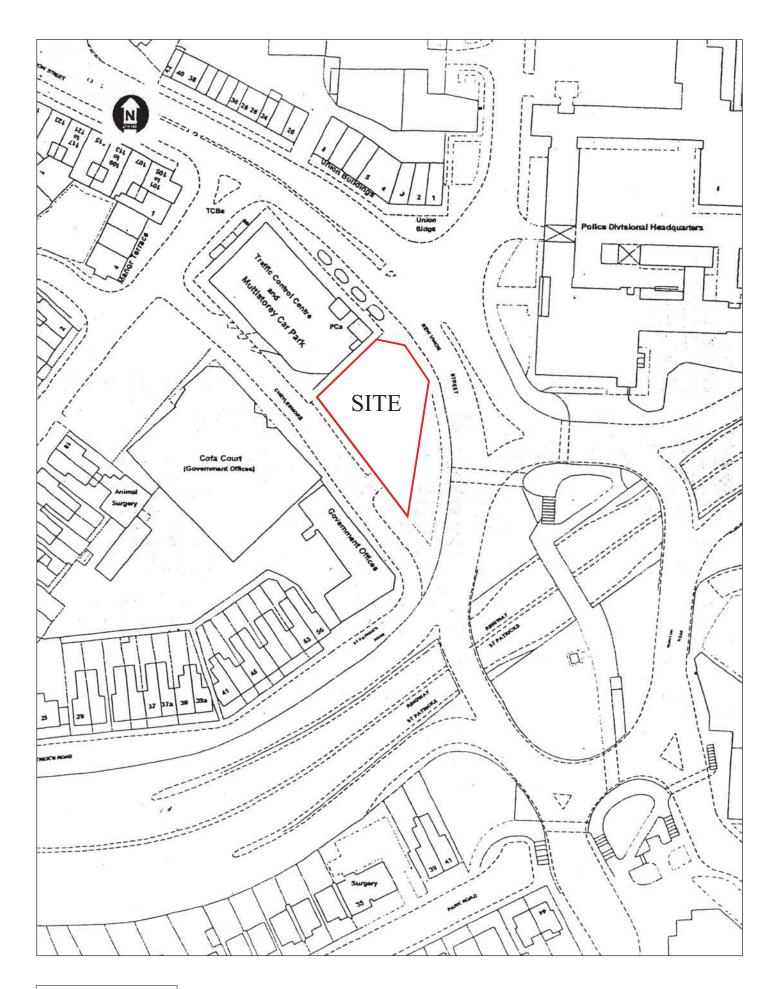
Plate 6 Features 1006, 1008, 1010



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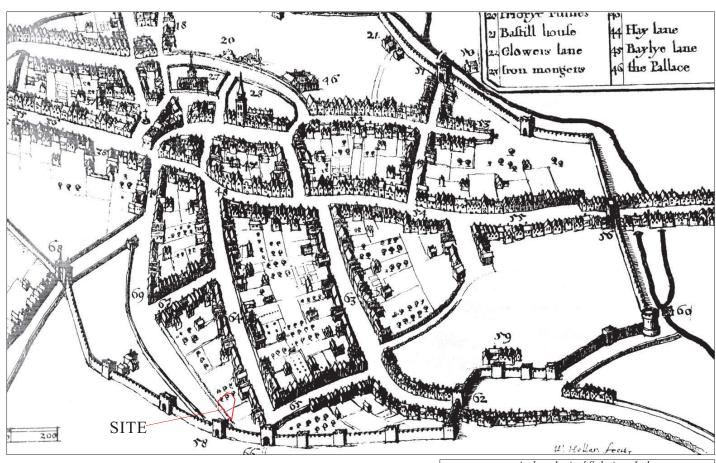
Fig. 1 Site Location



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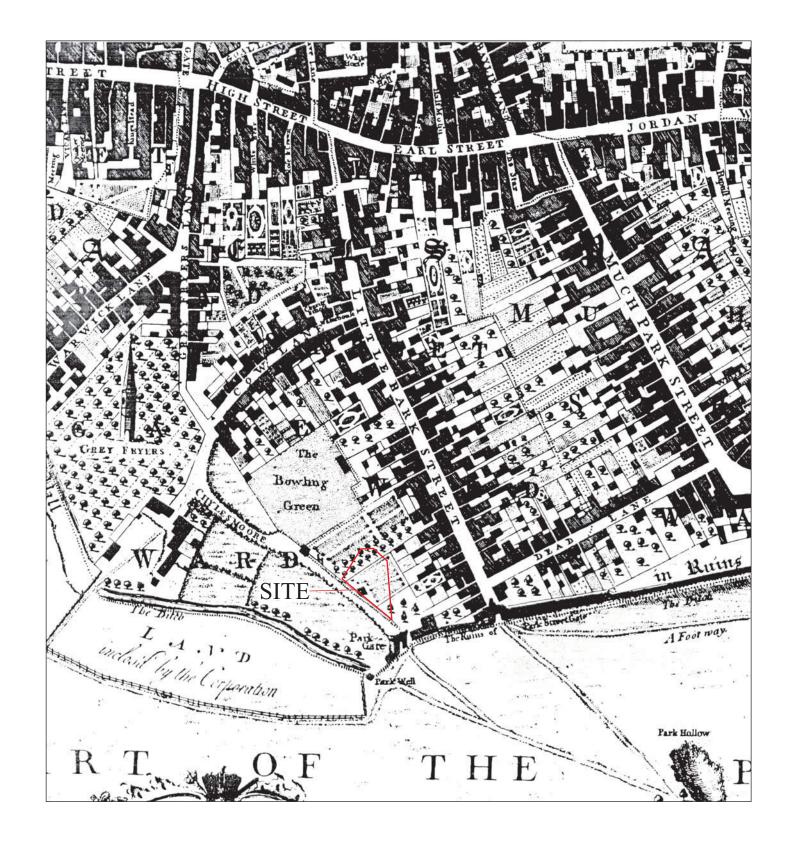
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Fig. 2 Detailed Site Location Plan

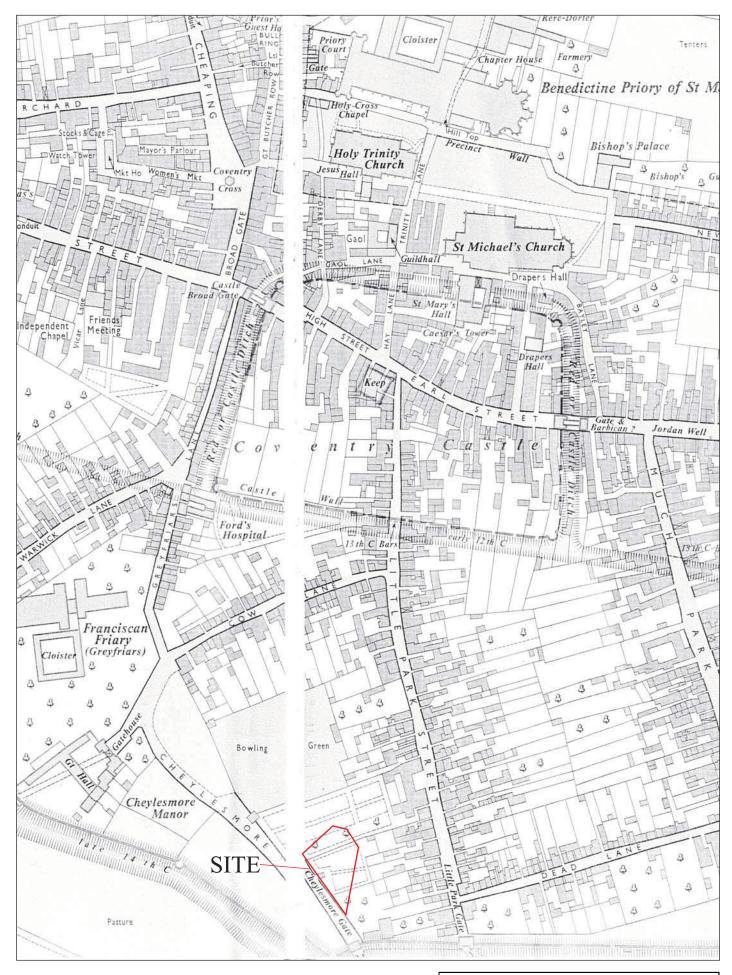


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Fig. 3 Speed's Map of Coventry 1610

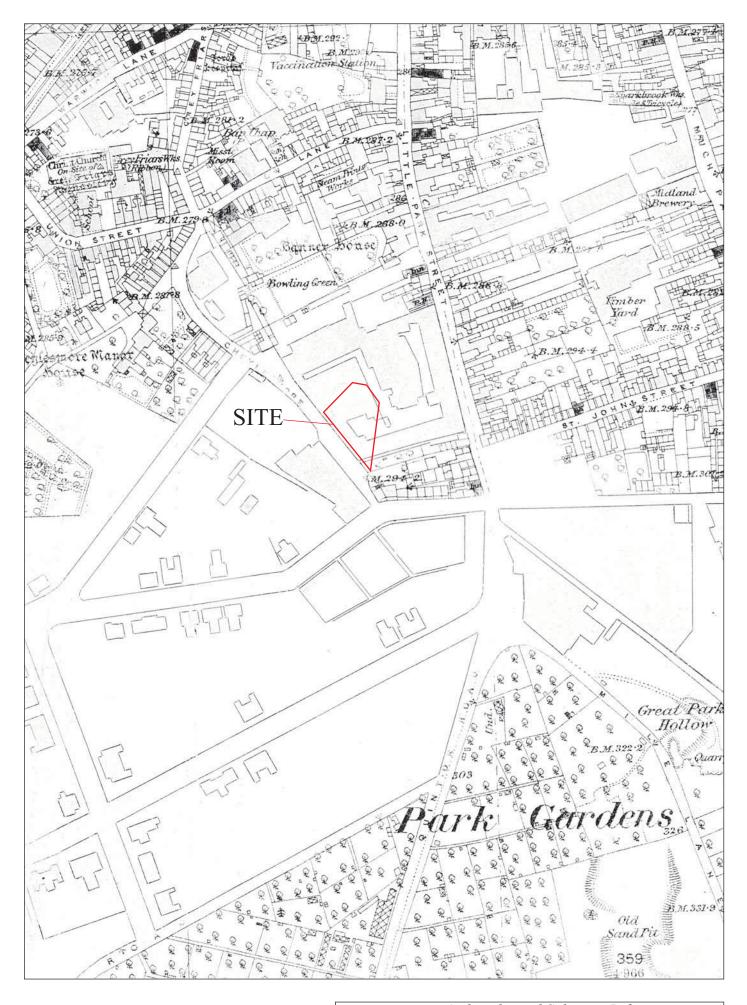


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Fig. 4 Sam Bradford's Map 1748



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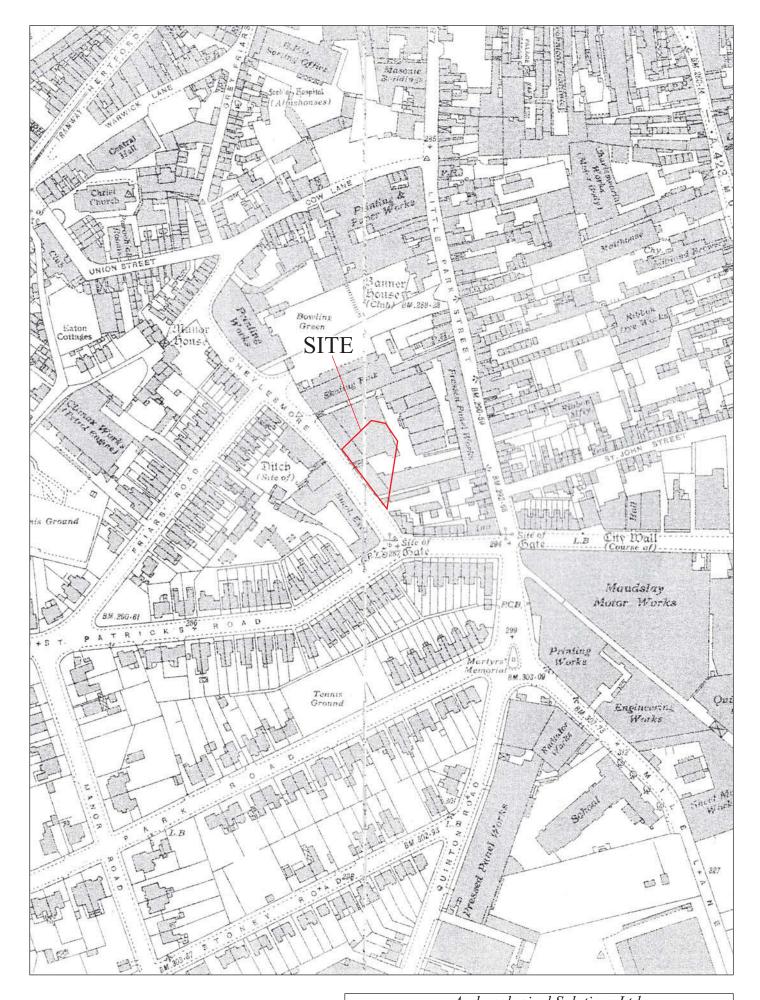
Fig. 5 Lobel's Map, 1750



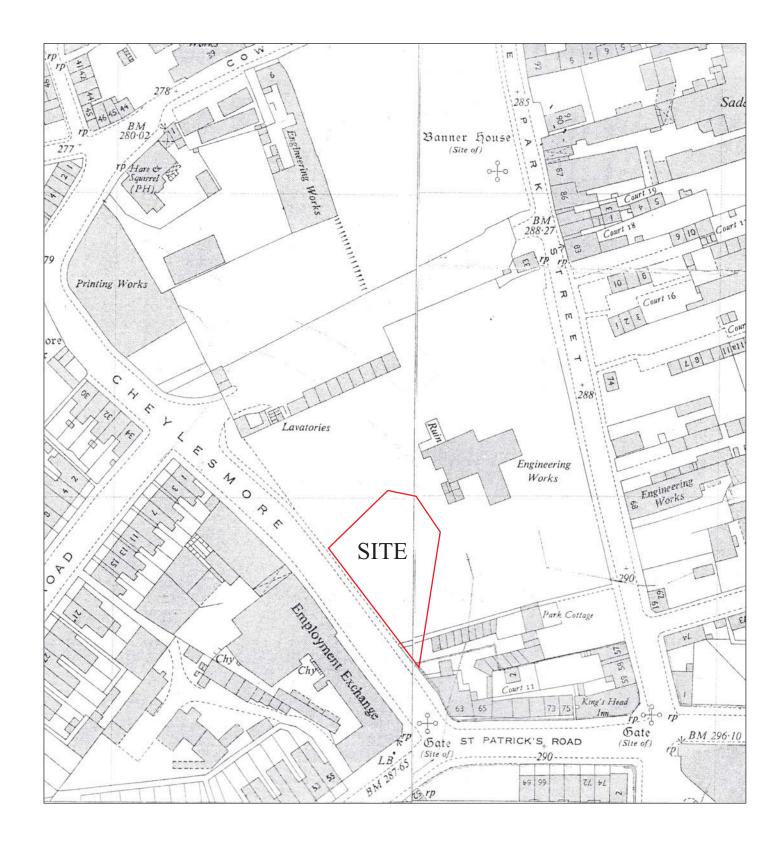
Archaeological Solutions Ltd
Fig. 6 OS map, 1886



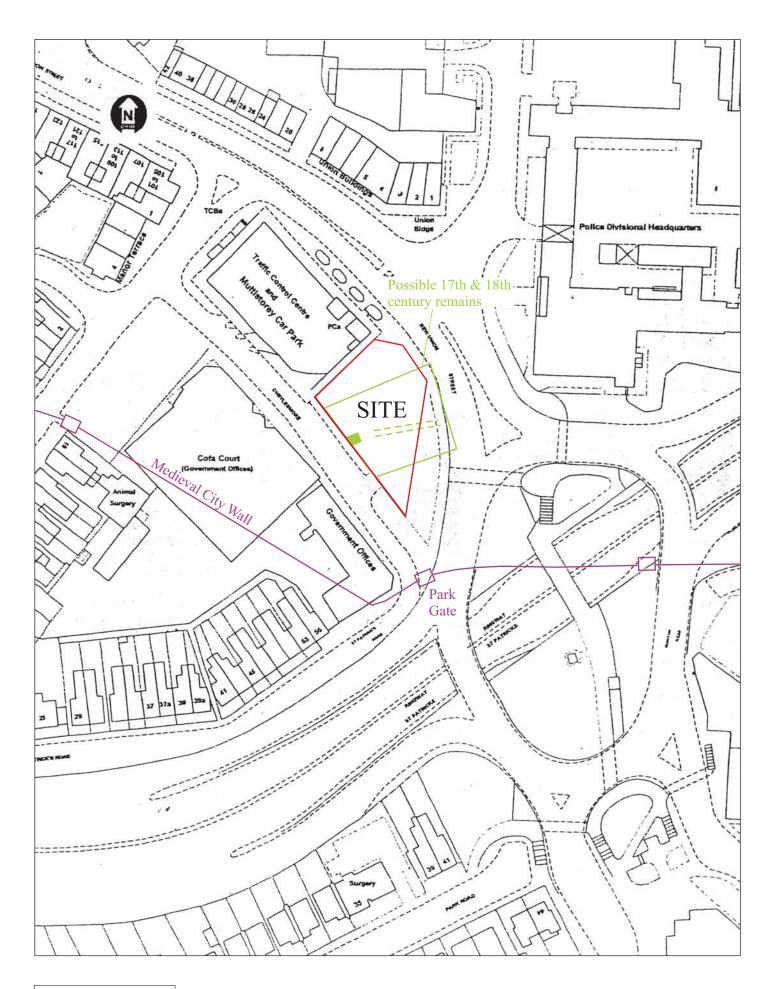
Archaeological Solutions Ltd Fig. 7 OS map, 1905



Archaeological Solutions Ltd Fig. 8 OS map, 1937



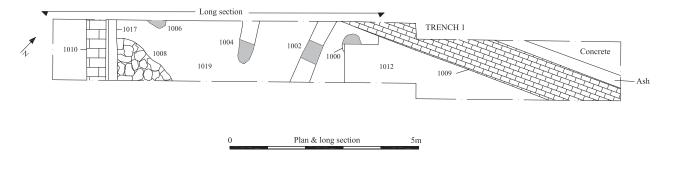
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Fig. 9 OS map, 1951

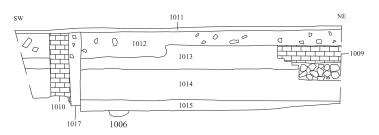


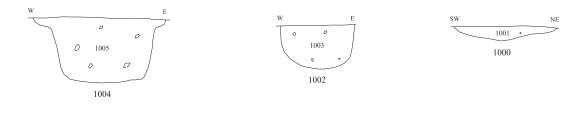
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Fig. 10 Areas of Possible Archaeological Survival







Feature sections 1m

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Fig. 11 Trench plans and sections

Scale Plan and long section 1:50, feature sections 1:10

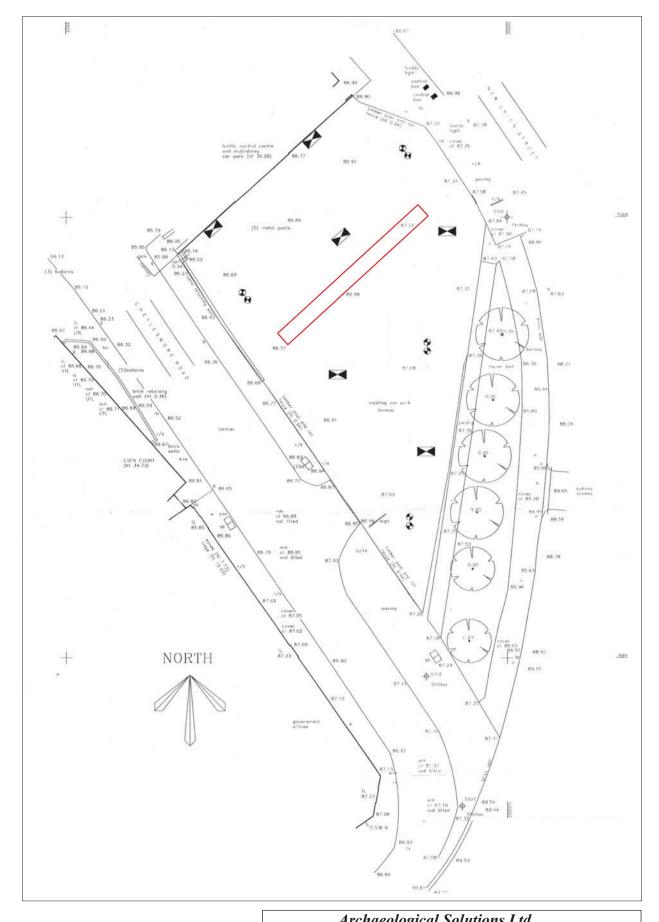


Fig. 12 Site plan and trench location
Scale 1:300