

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION

## WATER MAINS RENEWAL SCHEME ST PAUL'S BRISTOL

NGR: ST 59300 74000  
JOB N<sup>o</sup>: BA1249BWSPB



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BA1249BWSPB

OCTOBER 2013

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*Frontispiece: View NE of City Road Baptist Church built in 1861*

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## 1. Non-Technical Summary

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*In July and August 2013, Border Archaeology undertook a programme of Archaeological Observation on a water mains renewal scheme in two specific areas along City Road, within the St Paul’s district of central Bristol, identified as having potential to reveal evidence of the survival of the Civil War defences of Bristol, built in the early to mid-1640s.*

*Within the trenching excavated at the junction of Stokes Croft and City Road, a deep soil deposit (102) was identified which could represent either a landscaping deposit relating to formal gardens associated with a detached property of late 18<sup>th</sup> century date which occupied a large corner plot to the E of the Stokes Croft street frontage, or a levelling layer associated with the demolition of the house and the subsequent construction of City Road in the early 1860s.*

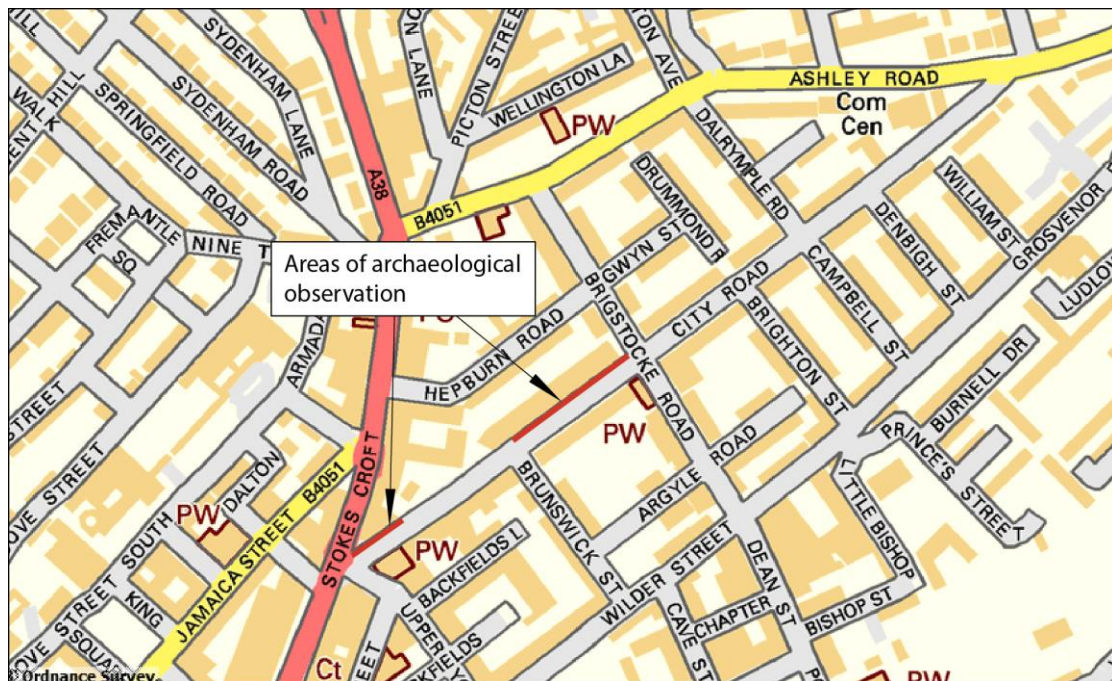
*During the course of the ground works between Brunswick Street and Brigstocke Road, a compact lime mortar surface (205) was revealed, at a depth of 0.75m below the current ground level (18.08m AOD), which was interpreted as a track-way or yard surface of possible post-medieval date. No artefactual evidence was recovered from the mortar surface or the overlying and underlying deposits which might have indicated a more precise date. Underlying mortar surface (205) was a sequence of soil deposits predating the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century development of City Road.*

*No features, deposits or finds were revealed that could be positively associated with the Civil War defensive fortifications.*

## 2. Introduction

Border Archaeology was instructed by Bristol Water plc to carry out a programme of Archaeological Observation during the ground works phase of a mains renewal scheme at St Paul’s Bristol (*fig. 1*). The majority of the scheme (carried out in July and August 2013) comprised open-cut trenching, the excavation of which was archaeologically observed by Border Archaeology in compliance with Bristol Water’s *Code of Conduct*. This programme of Archaeological Observation was informed by the results of a Desk-Based Assessment carried out by Border Archaeology in January 2013, which concluded that the route had Low to Moderate potential for revealing significant archaeological remains (BA, 2013).

The aim of the Archaeological Observation was to locate and record any archaeological finds, features or deposits within the ground works area and to confirm that no impact on the archaeological resource occurred during the course of works without the implementation of a programme of archaeological recording.



*Fig. 1 Site location plan*

The Desk-Based Assessment concluded that archaeological observation should most usefully be restricted to two locations associated with the Civil War defences (see *fig 1*). These consisted of a 35m section of the ground works at the junction between City Road and Stokes Croft and a 50m section of the ground works on City Road between the junctions with Brunswick Street and Brigstocke Road (see *fig: 1*)

Copies of this report will be supplied to Bristol Water, Bob Jones, Senior Archaeological Officer, Bristol City Council and the Bristol City Council Historic Environment Record.

### 3. Brief Historical & Archaeological Background

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The Desk-Based Assessment of the proposed mains renewal scheme previously undertaken by Border Archaeology identified the area that the pipeline route impacts upon as being of **Low to Moderate** potential for revealing significant archaeological remains (BA, 2013).

Recorded evidence of medieval archaeology in the vicinity of the pipeline route was very limited in scope. An archaeological evaluation undertaken in St Paul’s Park in 2007 (PRN 4415; Etheridge, 2007) revealed a small quantity of residual medieval pottery; however, no stratified deposits or features of medieval date were identified. A small quantity of residual medieval pottery was recovered during an evaluation at Westmoreland House, No. 104 Stokes Croft (PRN 24827; CA, 2009).

Documentary and cartographic evidence indicates that the area to the E of Stokes Croft essentially remained a thinly settled, predominantly agricultural landscape, characterised by woodland and enclosed pasture fields, from the medieval period through to the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although Stokes Croft road appears to have been an important thoroughfare since the medieval period, leading from St James’s Priory towards Horfield, there is little evidence for settlement activity along its route until the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The archaeological record for medieval activity in this area and the historical evidence indicate that it largely remained a sparsely occupied, agricultural landscape prior to suburban development from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

Post-medieval archaeology dominates the archaeological record for this specific area. Of particular importance is evidence for the location of the Civil War defences in the vicinity of the N end of Stokes Croft.

The defensive circuit ran from Priors Hill Fort across to a gateway situated at the N end of Stokes Croft (PRN 1539M), from where it continued SE towards the River Frome. Situated in close proximity to the Stokes Croft gate was a ‘spurwork’ or V-shaped earthwork fortification (PRN 1536M), described by the contemporary Royalist engineer Bernard de Gomme as ‘a great Spurreworck in the line, and a strong high Traverse or Foreworck, watching and shutting up the highway, with a strong port of timber barres on the East side of it’ (Leech, 2006).

The precise location of the gateway and the adjacent ‘spurwork’ at Stokes Croft remains unclear. It has been usually assumed that the defensive line extended due E from Priors Hill Fort along Nine Tree Hill to the gateway on Stokes Croft, located just S of the junction with Ashley Road, and that the ‘spurwork’ was situated immediately to the E of the gateway. Rocque’s map of 1742 indeed shows a gate blocking the highway across Stokes Croft at the junction with Ashley Road, which has been assumed to relate to the Civil War gateway, although this remains unconfirmed (Leech, 2006; Ducker 2007, 9).

The site of the associated ‘spurwork’ has been placed immediately to the E of the gateway, primarily based on de Gomme’s account and the evidence of later historic maps (in particular Ashmead’s map of 1828 and the OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition map of 1885) showing a triangular enclosure preserved in later property boundaries which has been interpreted as the

probable location of the 'spurwork' (Leech, 2006; Ducker, 2007, 9). However, it has also been suggested that the defences could actually have extended SE from Priors Hill to the junction of City Road and Stokes Croft (Russell, 1995, 24; CA, 2009). Possible evidence for a defensive ditch associated with the Civil War defences was identified during the construction of Jamaica Road in 1867, which exposed a section of a broad ditch, roughly 3m in width and containing a burial (Russell, 1995, 26).

Several programmes of archaeological work have been undertaken recently on the Westmoreland House site (No. 104 Stokes Croft), at the junction of Stokes Croft and Ashley Road, which has been assumed to occupy part of the site of the Civil War fortification adjacent to Stokes Croft gate. An archaeological evaluation undertaken on the site in March 2007 (PRN 4388; Ducker, 2007) revealed a series of soil cut ditch features; the primary fill of one of the ditches in Trench 2 was dated to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century while the primary fills of two of other ditches in Trench 1 were identified as being of early 18<sup>th</sup> century date. Possible evidence of a flattened or slighted bank was also recorded to the S of one of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century ditches in Trench 1. A series of wall footings relating to later 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century residential and commercial buildings occupying the site were also recorded, one of which appeared to utilise the line of the earlier ditch and was interpreted as a structure adjoining the apex of the fossilised outline of the Civil War spurwork (Ducker, 2007, 5).

A more recent archaeological evaluation of the Westmoreland House site in December 2009 (PRN 24827) differed markedly in its conclusions from the earlier investigation, concluding that 'no evidence for the presence of features associated with Bristol's Civil War defences, postulated as extending through the site, was encountered' (CA, 2009, 2). The 'ditch' feature previously interpreted as being possibly associated with the Civil War defences was interpreted as a foundation trench for the construction of an 18<sup>th</sup> century Pennant sandstone wall.

Of the relatively few programmes of fieldwork undertaken in the immediate vicinity of the study area, several have yielded evidence of archaeological remains of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century date. The 2007 evaluation at Westmoreland House (No. 104 Stokes Croft) revealed extensive evidence of 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century commercial and residential buildings, including a cistern, four walls and a sequence of floor surfaces and the W wall of the E range of Perry's Carriageworks (PRN 1466M), built in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as a modern backfilled cellar probably associated with the carriage works (Ducker, 2007, 5). The 2009 evaluation also identified further evidence of walls and drainage features associated with the 19<sup>th</sup> century carriage works and a rubber factory which occupied the site during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (CA, 2009).

An evaluation undertaken in 2006 on an industrial estate at Nos. 1 & 2 Backfields, Upper York Street, revealed evidence of the footings of a circular stable (marked as an 'Old Circus on the OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition map of 1885) erected as part of a riding school on the site in 1761 (PRN 4299). A subsequent watching brief on geotechnical test pits excavated on the same site in 2007 (PRN 4431) revealed a NE-SW aligned wall constructed of sandstone blocks located at a depth of 1m below the existing ground surface. Overlying this wall was a brown clay deposit containing pottery dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which, in turn, had been truncated by the foundation trenches for a series of sandstone wall footings probably associated with the circular stable block (Saunders, 2007).

A watching brief undertaken in March 2008 on ground works at 117-33 Wilder Street (PRN 4446) identified, underlying a modern make-up layer of chippings and rubble, a deposit of mid-brown sandy clay which was cut by the wall foundations of a former terrace of houses, the walls being built of roughly-coursed sandstone (Pennant and Brandon Hill Grit) and occasional brick structures bonded with light grey ash and lime mortar. The only other feature recorded was an arched culvert of stone and red brick construction which extended beneath the rear boundary of the site, to the rear of the houses fronting onto Argyle Street (Potter, 2008).

There appear to be very few records relating to the monitoring of excavations for the installation of utilities within the immediate study area. A watching brief undertaken in August 2006 on the excavation of a gas-main trench in the centre of Ashley Road adjacent to the junction with Stokes Croft (trench dimensions 40m long × 1m wide) revealed a sub-base deposit 0.2m thick overlying a deep deposit of undisturbed red sandy silt (extending to 2m in depth) with no archaeological features observed (PRN 4326).

## 4. Geology

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The entire study area is classed as unsurveyed in the Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW, 1983); however, the underlying solid geology is recorded as consisting of Redcliffe Sandstone of the Triassic period.

## 5. Methodology

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The programme of archaeological work detailed herein consisted of the monitoring of ground works forming part of a mains renewal scheme in the St Paul’s district of central Bristol.

The programme of Archaeological Observation within the specified area was carried out in accordance with *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008a). Border Archaeology adheres to the *IfA Code of Conduct* (IfA 2013) and *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology* (IfA 2008b). Ground works were carried out either by machine and toothless bucket, or by hand, under archaeological supervision.

Full written and photographic records were made in accordance with Border Archaeology’s *Field Recording Manual* (BA, 2012). The written record comprised detailed stratigraphic recording using a context numbering system.

The photographic record was made using a high-resolution (12 MPX) digital camera, comprising photographs of all excavated contexts and archaeological features and structures. Included in each photograph are appropriate scales and all photographic records have been indexed and cross-referenced to written site records. Details concerning subject and direction of view were maintained in a photographic register, indexed by frame number.

No artefacts were identified in the course of these groundworks.

## 6. Results

### 6.1 Trenching at junction of City Road and Stokes Croft (NGR ST 59110 73855 – ST 59137 73873)

The ground works observed at the junction of City Road and Stokes Croft comprised approximately 35m of open-cut trenching, 0.5m in width, to a depth of approximately 1m (fig. 2). A single wide-ranging context was identified; this was moderately disturbed by modern services.

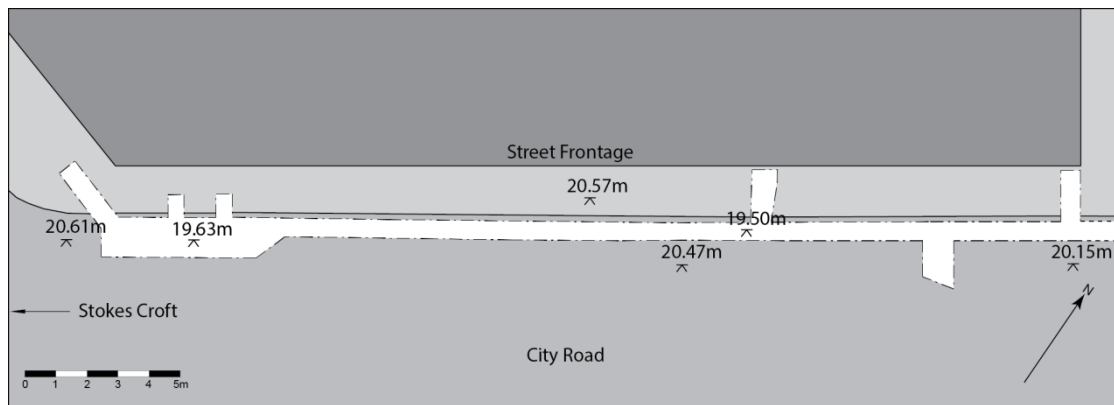


Fig 2: Plan of ground works at the junction between City Road and Stokes Croft

Underlying the modern tarmac road surface (0.1m thick) and a thick concrete sub-base (101) measuring 0.35m in thickness was (102), comprising a soft cohesive dark reddish-brown slightly sandy clay, containing occasional stones and occasional fragments of CBM, probably 19<sup>th</sup> century in date. This deposit extended trench-wide to a typical thickness of >0.52m. No significant archaeological deposits or features were observed (Plate 1).



Plate 1: SE-facing section of trenching within the observed area at the junction between Stokes Croft and City Road



6.2 Trenching along City Road between Brunswick Street and Brigstocke Road (NGR ST 59279 73974 - ST 59241 73946) (fig. 3)

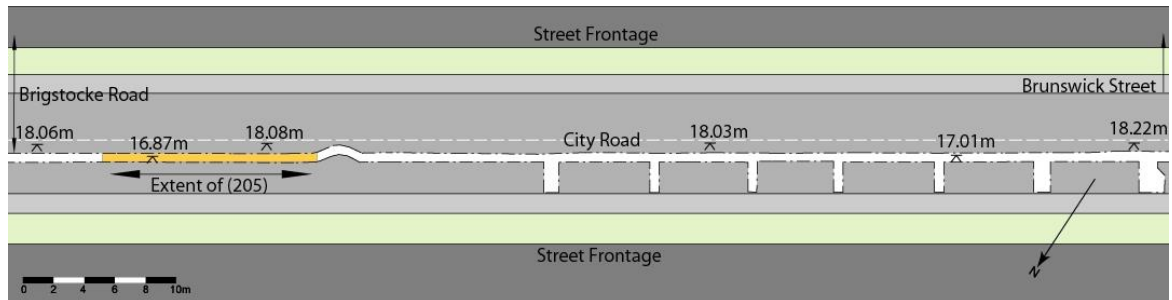


Fig 3: Plan of ground works on City Road between the junctions with Brunswick Street and Brigstocke Road

The ground works observed on City Road comprised a 50m long section of open-cut trenching extending from a point approximately 30m SW of Brigstocke Road (NGR ST 59279 73974) to NGR ST 59241 73946, about 25m NE of the junction of City Road and Brunswick Street. A total of seven contexts were identified.

The uppermost context comprised a concrete sub-base for the modern road surface (201), extending to a thickness of 0.2m. Underlying (201) was (202), a compact stone and cement deposit 0.2m thick. Underlying (202) was (203), a trench-wide moderately compact mid-brown gritty sandy silt deposit, approximately 0.22m thick. Underlying this was (204), a cohesive reddish-brown sandy silt deposit measuring 0.23m thick and approximately 16m x 0.8m in extent. Both (203) and (204) appeared to represent made ground or levelling deposits associated with the construction of City Road in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

Underlying (204) was (205), a compact greyish white lime mortar surface, the visible extent of which measured 16m in length and 0.05m in thickness and was identified in section approximately 5m in from the NE end of the trench (NGR ST 59275 73969). This surface was directly underneath (204) suggesting that the later deposit had been deliberately dumped on top of it (*Plate 2*).



*Plate 2: NW facing section of observed area between Brunswick Street and Brigstocke Road showing lime mortar surface (205) overlying buried soil horizon (206)*

(205) was laid directly onto (206), a cohesive mid-to-dark brown sandy clay containing frequent stones, which measured 0.21 in thickness and extended trench wide. This was interpreted as a buried soil horizon probably representing the ground level prior to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century development of City Road. Underlying (206) was (207), a cohesive reddish sandy clay >0.24m thick and extending throughout the entire observed area, which was interpreted as a naturally derived soil.

## 7. Discussion of Results

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The results for both sections of this programme of archaeological observation appear to confirm that these areas of St Paul's were sparsely occupied prior to the development of the suburb during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. City Road itself was constructed between 1855 and 1874, occupying an extensive area of meadow referred to on the Rocque map of c.1743 as 'Meer Furlong'. Meer Furlong appears to have been a long-established feature, as it is mentioned as forming part of the jurisdictional boundary of the City of Bristol, as defined in the great charter of 1373 (Harding, 1930).

Results for the area of archaeological observation at the junction between the W end of City Road and Stokes Croft revealed a single wide-ranging poorly stratified soil deposit (102). This contained occasional fragments of late post-medieval CBM and appeared to be cultural in origin, although it is likely it was, in part, disturbed during the development of this area. The deposit was lacking in common 'garden soil' signifiers, such as animal bone and other domestic waste, which suggested that it could represent a landscaping deposit rather than a typical domestic garden soil or cultivation soil.

This section of trenching was located within the former boundaries of a large detached house depicted on the 1828 and 1855 Ashmead maps as occupying a large corner plot at the

junction of Stokes Croft and Upper York Street, which appears to have been demolished following the construction of City Road in c.1860. This house appears to have been of late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century date, replacing an earlier property shown in the same location on Rocque’s map of 1743; the later building appears to have been set back further from the Stokes Croft street frontage. The 1828 map also shows a formal garden layout with lawns, paths and a turning circle immediately N of the house (*fig. 4*). It is possible that (102) could represent a deposit formed as a result of the formal landscaping immediately to the N of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century house, or that it represents a landscaping/levelling deposit associated with the demolition of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century house and the construction of City Road in c.1860 (which might explain the occurrence of post-medieval CBM in this deposit).



*Fig. 4: Extract from Plumley and Ashmead’s plan of 1828 showing the approximate location of the trenching location (circled in red)  
 (Reproduced by courtesy of Bristol Record Office)*

Observation of the ground works carried out on City Road between Brunswick Street and Brigstocke Road revealed a series of modern or late 19<sup>th</sup> century landscaping or levelling deposits, represented by contexts (202), (203) and (204), underlying the modern road surface and extending to a depth of 0.75m. These may have constituted part of the landscaping works required in order to create the level road-bed for City Road.

Underlying these deposits at a depth of 0.75m was a lime mortar surface (205). This surface was of uncertain date and purpose; moreover, its full extent and alignment could not be ascertained within the narrow limits of the pipeline trench. The greyish-white colour of the mortar suggests a post-medieval date; however, the depth at which it was encountered suggests that it was too deep to be associated with the construction of City Road in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. No artefactual evidence was recovered from (205) which might have established a more precise date.

It is possible that it could represent a roughly-metalled avenue or track-way of post-medieval date predating the construction of City Road in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Rocque’s map of 1743 shows a broad avenue on a NNW-SSE alignment terminating at the N boundary of Meer Furlong (*fig. 5*), while Plumley and Ashmead’s map of 1828 shows a footpath or track-way on a similar alignment intersecting with another track-way running NE-SW along the N edge of Meer Furlong, now represented by the existing course of City Road. In both

instances, these features appear to be located roughly 30-40m SW of the junction of City Road and Brigstocke Road (in the approximate location of the second section of open-cut trenching). However, it appeared likely that (205) was not a long-established feature, as there was no obvious evidence of successive phases of renewal or replacement; it appeared to represent a single phase of deposition.



*Fig. 5: Extract from Rocque's map of 1743 showing the approximate location of the mortar surface revealed during trenching between Brunswick Street and Brigstocke Road (indicated by a red circle)  
 (Reproduced by courtesy of Bristol Record Office)*

An alternative explanation, in view of its somewhat insubstantial construction, is that (205) could perhaps represent a yard surface associated with a post-medieval outbuilding on the N edge of Meer Furlong; however, no evidence of buildings in this location is given on any of the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century maps of the area. No features, deposits or finds were revealed that could be positively associated with the Civil War defensive circuit.

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33513 – Abstract of title to part of The Full Moon and Stokes Croft Estates, Bristol, with plan of such estates annexed – 1788-1830

35472 - Abstract of title of W.H.T. Brigstocke to part of the ‘Full Moon’ public house and Stokes Croft estates – 1788-1846

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## 10. Context Register

### 10.1 Trenching at junction of City Road and Stokes Croft

Context	Description
(101)	Concrete sub-base; extends >34m × >0.8m × 0.1m. Underlies modern tarmac road surface. Overlies (102)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Modern road sub-base</i>
(102)	Soft dark reddish-brown sandy clay, occasional stones, CBM flecking; extends >34m × >0.8m × >0.45m. Underlies (101)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Post-medieval soils, possibly predating mid-19<sup>th</sup> century urbanisation of the area close to the junction between Stokes Croft and City Road</i>

### 10.2 Trenching along City Road between Brunswick Street and Brigstocke Road

Context	Description
(201)	Concrete sub-base; extends >50m × >0.8m × 0.2m. Underlies modern tarmac road surface. Overlies (202)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Modern road sub-base</i>
(202)	Compact stone and cement layer; extends 15m × >0.8m × 0.2m. Underlies (201), overlies (203)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Stony sub-base localised over (203)</i>
(203)	Moderately compact mid brown gritty sandy silt; extends 20m × >0.8m × 0.3m. Underlies (202), overlies (204)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century imported levelling deposit</i>
(204)	Cohesive reddish-brown sandy silt; measures 0.23m thick & approximately 16m x 0.8m in extent. Underlies (204), overlies (205)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>19<sup>th</sup>- or 20<sup>th</sup>-century made ground deposit</i>
(205)	Hard greyish-white lime mortar surface; extends 16m × >0.8m × 0.06m. Underlies (204), overlies (206)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Mortar surface of uncertain function and date, possibly a post-medieval track-way or yard surface</i>
(206)	Cohesive mid-dark brown sandy clay, frequent stones; extends >50m × >0.8m by 0.21m. Underlies (205), overlies (207)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Buried soil horizon pre-dating construction of City Road</i>
(207)	Cohesive reddish sandy clay; extends >50m × >0.8m × >0.24m. Underlies (206)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Sterile probably naturally derived soils</i>



*Document Control*

<b>JOB TITLE</b>	ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION: WATER MAINS RENEWAL SCHEME, ST PAUL’S, BRISTOL	<b>REF</b>	BA1249BWSPB
<b>REPORT WRITTEN BY</b>	<i>WILL LOGAN BA DIP &amp; STEPHEN PRIESTLEY MA</i>		
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<b>ISSUE NO</b>	<b>STATUS</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>APPROVED FOR ISSUE</b>
1	FINAL	OCTOBER 2013	<i>NEIL SHURETY DIP. M. GM. INST.M</i>