



Archaeological Observation

Land to the rear of
No 6 Whitburn Street
Bridgnorth
Shropshire

NGR: SO 71510 93260

BORDER ARCHAEOLOGY

PO Box 36
Leominster
Herefordshire
HR6 0YQ

E-mail: neil@borderarchaeology.com

Technical Services

Chapel Walk
Burgess Street
Leominster
Herefordshire
HR6 8DE

Tel: 01568 610101

Fax: 01568 616900

E-mail: borderarch@btconnect.com



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Report specification:

Archaeological Observation: James Archer BSc, Ross Shurety BA

Report compilation: James Archer BSc & Stephen Priestley MA

Artwork: Michelle Bithell BA

Report editing: George Children MA

Approved: Neil Shurety



1. Non Technical Summary

A programme of archaeological observation of groundworks regarding a proposed development to the rear of No. 6 Whitburn Street, Bridgnorth, took place between 28th and 30th April 2008. It was anticipated that the site could contain significant archaeological remains relating to medieval burgage plots fronting onto Whitburn Street.

The programme of observation revealed a cobbled yard surface and several wall foundations relating to late post-medieval (18th-19th century) occupation on the site. Modern drainage and utility trenching relating to extant buildings abutting the site was also identified.

During the site excavations a moderate quantity of ceramic building materials, pottery, glass, animal bone and clay pipe fragments, uniformly of late post-medieval (18th-19th century) date, was encountered in association with the wall foundations, drainage and utility trenching.

This programme of archaeological observation confirms that no archaeology predating the post-medieval period was damaged or disturbed during the works.

2. Introduction

Border Archaeology was instructed by Mr. E. Kirk to undertake a programme of archaeological observation (commonly known as a watching brief) of groundwork's in regard of the construction of an extension to the rear of No. 6 Whitburn Street, Bridgnorth (NGR SO 7151 9326) (planning ref: APP/FUL/08/0104). In a letter dated 22nd April 2008, Mr M. Watson, Shropshire County Council Historic Environment Officer, advised that a programme of archaeological work was required as stipulated in the accompanying Brief.

Copies of this report will be submitted to Mr. E. Kirk, Mr Mike Watson (Historic Environment Officer, Shropshire County Council) and the Shropshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).

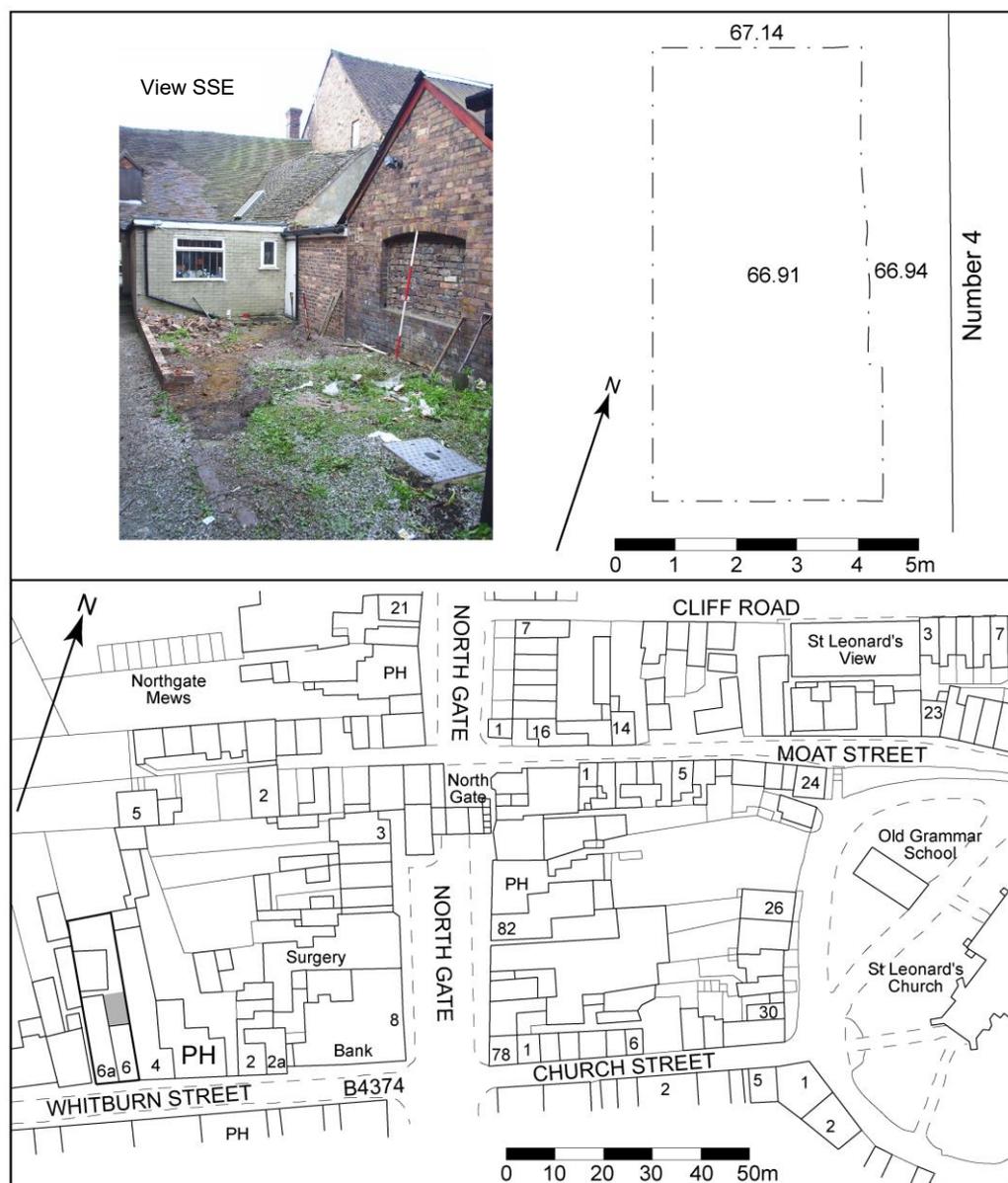


Fig. 1: Map showing location of site

2.1 Soils & Geology

The site lies within the urban area of Bridgnorth and is thus unsurveyed by the 1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW, 1983). Three soil types have been identified in the area immediately surrounding Bridgnorth: typical brown sands of the BRIDGNORTH series (551a), stagnogleyic argillic brown earths of the HODNET series (572c) and cambic stagnogley soils of the BARDSEY series (713a). The first of these consists of well-drained sandy and coarse loamy soils over soft sandstone, the second of reddish fine and coarse loamy soil with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging and the third of slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged loam overlying clayey and finer silty soils.

3. Historical and Archaeological Background

The site at No. 6 Whitburn Street consists of a narrow rectangular plot situated at the E end of Whitburn Street, approximately 100m W of the North Gate of the historic medieval town of Bridgnorth, the origins of which appear to date back to the early 12th century, when it was founded by Robert de Belleme, earl of Shrewsbury (Eyton, 1854). The site appears to form one of a series of medieval burgage plots fronting onto Whitburn Street (PRN 05642), representing a planned development established to the W of the High Street prior to the construction of the town defences in the early 13th century (Buteux, 1996, 9).

The original town defences (PRN 05629) appear to have been constructed of turf and timber with an external ditch, at some time between 1216 and 1220 (Mason, 1957, 10). Documentary evidence, in the form of murage grants, indicates that the town defences were rebuilt in stone from c.1220 onwards and continued to be repaired well into the 15th century; however, by the late 1530s they are described by the Tudor antiquary, John Leland, as being 'all in ruin' (Buteux, 1996, 9).

Bridgnorth was provided with a set of five town gates (including the North Gate), which were erected during the period 1258-64 (Buteux, 1996, 9). The line of the medieval defensive circuit is preserved by later property boundaries established to the N of the site and details of the defences in this area were revealed during an evaluation carried out by Shropshire County Council Archaeology Service in 1998 (Hannaford & Philpotts, 1998).

The earliest cartographic evidence for the site at Whitburn Street is derived from John Wood's 1835 map of Bridgnorth, which shows a small rectangular building fronting onto Whitburn Street with a long, narrow yard to the rear, sandwiched between present-day Nos. 4 & 6a. Later Ordnance Survey maps dated 1883, 1903 and 1926 respectively show little evidence of alteration to the layout of the site, the only major change being the addition of a small brick extension to the rear of the property in the 1970s.

4. Methodology

The programme of archaeological observation at No. 6 Whitburn Street took place between 28th and 30th April 2008.

The groundworks involved the reduction of up to 0.4m of deposits over the entire development area. This area, situated to the rear of No. 6, covered approximately 26m². All deposits were manually removed using hand tools and all stripping through layers of archaeological potential was undertaken under strict archaeological supervision.

Full written, drawn and photographic records were made in accordance with archaeological practices set out in *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994; rev. 2001) and Border Archaeology adhered to the IFA *Code of conduct* and *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology*.

A detailed stratigraphic record was made using *pro forma* record sheets and a context numbering system. Any identified archaeological deposits, features and structures were drawn in plan and section/elevation at scales of 1:20 or 1:50. Any significant features or structures were recorded at 1:10 in plan and section. All features and structures were photographed using a 10.3 MPX digital camera.

Spoil and removed material were visually scanned for artefacts, which were recorded and, where appropriate, retained.

A temporary benchmark was established on site with a value of 67.12m AOD.

5. Archaeological Observation

Eighteen contexts were identified during this programme of archaeological observation (**Fig. 2**). Extending across the majority of the observation area was (101), a gravel surface layer containing occasional modern plastic waste and CBM fragments, which extended 7.5m NW-SE x 3.5m NE-SW x 0.05m and formed the existing ground surface over the development area. This material abutted (107), a small, irregular area of concrete hardstanding in the extreme SW corner of the site measuring 2.45 NE-SW x 1.5m NW-SE x 0.08m.

Abutting the SW boundary of the site were the disturbed remains of a narrow cobbled yard (103) consisting of a weakly cemented surface extending 3.5m NW-SE x 1m NE-SW x 0.08m (**Plate 1**). This deposit appeared to have formed a hardstanding yard surface, which was later covered by gravel deposit (101). Cutting (103) was [108], a linear drainage channel orientated NNW-SSE, its visible extent measuring >7.5m x 0.29m x 0.3m. This modern drain ran along the length of the site into an inspection chamber (106). Filling [108] was (109), a moderately compacted mid brown silty sand with frequent post-medieval CBM and mortar fragments.

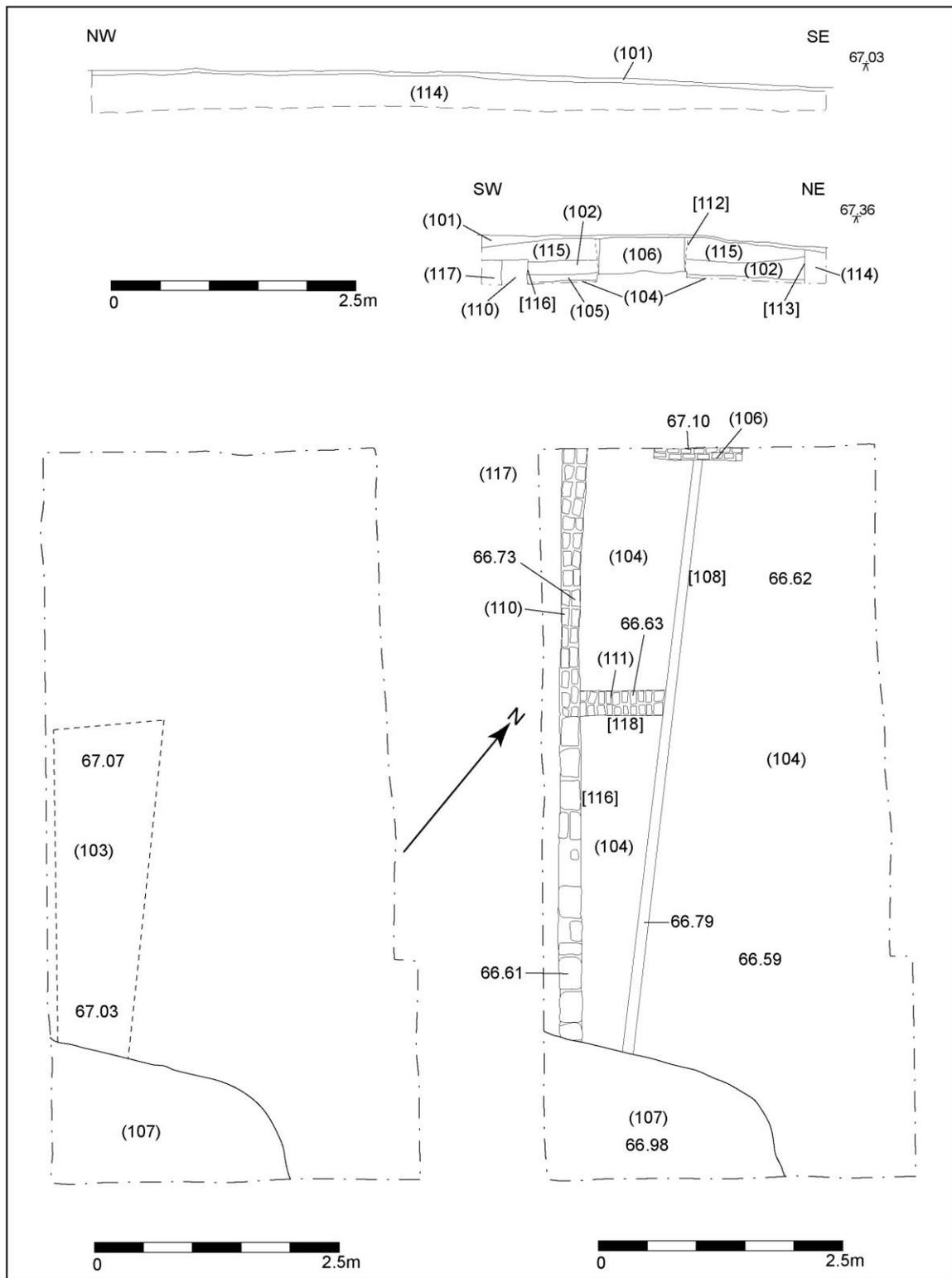


Fig. 2: Mid-excavation & post-excavation plans and SE- and SW-facing sections showing features and deposits revealed during archaeological observation of groundworks at No. 6 Whitburn Street

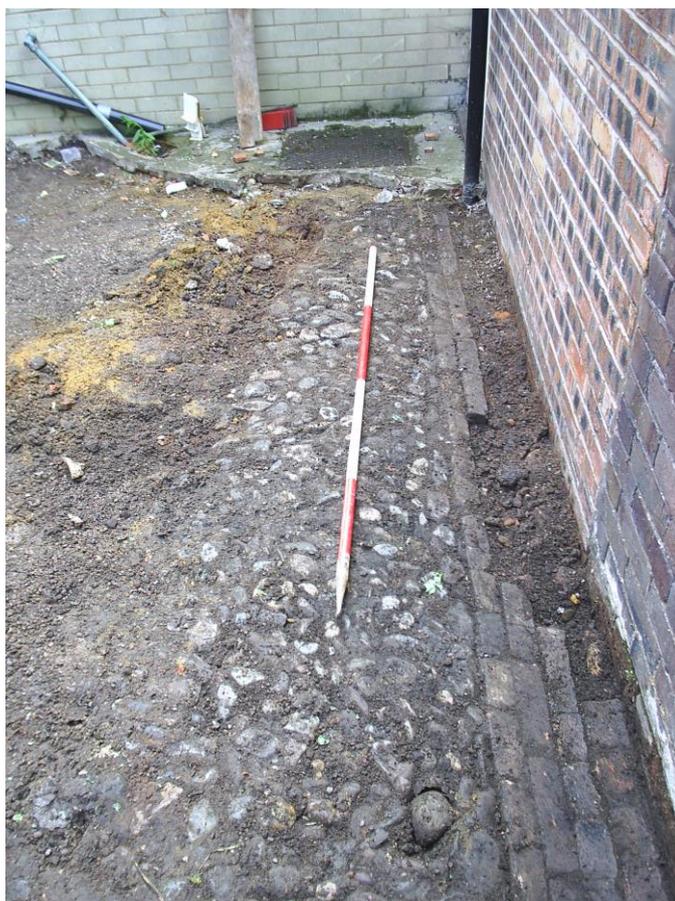


Plate 1: View SSE showing cobbled yard surface (103) and adjacent wall foundation oriented NW-SE (110), both of post-medieval date, situated to rear of site

Also cut by [108] was post-medieval demolition deposit (115) consisting of moderately compacted light reddish-brown silty sand with frequent post-medieval CBM fragments and charcoal flecking. The stratigraphic relationship between this deposit and (103) was unclear owing to truncation by [108]; however, (103) and (115) appeared to be broadly contemporary.

Deposit (115) was cut by two further features, [112] and [113], which were visible only in the SE-facing section. Cut [112] formed an inspection chamber measuring 0.9m NE-SW x >0.2m NW-SE x >0.38m, which was lined with five (visible) courses of frogged cement bonded brick (106). Running into the base of (106) was drainage cut [108].

Both features related to the existing modern drainage system running from the rear of the property directly to the SE of the site. Running along the E edge of the trench was a linear cut [113] for modern utility cabling, its extent measuring >7.5m NW-SE x >0.21m NE-SW x 0.32m. Filling [113] was (114), a moderately compact greyish-brown silty sand with frequent post-medieval CBM fragments and charcoal flecking.

Underlying (115) was (117), a moderately compacted mid brown silty sand with frequent post-medieval CBM fragments. This deposit extended only to the SW of wall foundation (110) and measured >0.2m SW-NE x 1.8m NW-SE x >0.26m. It is possible that this deposit related to the demolition of the structure defined by (110).

Truncated by foundation cuts [116] and [118] was deposit (102), a loose to moderately compacted, blackish-brown silty sand with occasional post-medieval CBM fragments and ceramic sherds and occasional charcoal flecking, measuring >7.5m NW-SE x 3.5m NE-SW x 0.15m (maximum thickness).

Cut [116] was linear in form measuring >6m NW-SE x 0.25m NE-SW x >0.16m, extending NW-SE parallel with the SW edge of the site. Within [116] was wall foundation (110) (**Plate 2**), which consisted of a single (visible) course of sandstone blocks overlaid at the NW end by two courses of brick, which might imply two phases of construction, with an earlier stone wall subsequently repaired in brick. It appeared that this foundation had been extensively robbed, with the brick being removed along most of its visible length.

Abutting (110) was the foundation course for a brick wall (111), oriented NE-SW (**Plate 2**). This foundation was within cut [118] and extended NE from (110) measuring 0.3m NW-SE x 0.85m NE-SW and consisted of a single (visible) course of cement-bonded brick. This foundation had been heavily truncated by drainage cut [108]. Cobbled yard surface (103) appeared to respect the NE edge of wall foundation (110) and the SE edge of brick wall (111).



Plate 2: View NW showing wall foundation (110) oriented NW-SE and abutting wall (111) aligned NE-SW

Underlying (102) was (105), a loose orange sand with occasional post-medieval CBM fragments, measuring >7.5m NW-SE x 2.4m NE-SW x 0.13m, which appeared to represent a post-medieval levelling deposit. This in turn overlay (104), a moderately compacted mid to dark brown silty sand with orange sand lenses, frequent post-medieval CBM fragments, moderate post-medieval ceramic sherds, clay pipe fragments

& charcoal flecking and occasional domestic animal bone. This material extended >7.5m NW-SE x >3.5m NE-SW and appears to have been a post-medieval occupation deposit.

6. Conclusion

This programme of archaeological observation revealed a cobbled yard surface and several brick and stone wall foundations relating to late post-medieval (18th-19th century) occupation on the site. Modern drainage and utility trenching relating to extant buildings abutting the site were also identified.

A moderate quantity of ceramic building materials, pottery, glass, animal bone and clay pipe fragments, uniformly of late post-medieval (18th-19th century) date, was encountered in association with the wall foundations, drainage and utility trenching. No deposits, features or finds relating to medieval occupation on the site were identified.

7. Copyright

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8. Bibliography

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9. Cartography

(All maps were obtained from the Shropshire Archives, Shrewsbury unless otherwise stated)

Plan of Bridgnorth by John Wood (1835)

Bridgnorth Parish Tithe Map and Apportionment (1840)

Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25 inch map Shropshire 57. 12 (1884)

Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25 inch map Shropshire 57. 12 (1903)

Ordnance Survey map 3rd edition 25 inch map Shropshire 57. 12 (1927)

10. Context Register

CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION
(101)	Loose grey small angular gravels, occasional modern plastic waste & CBM fragments. Extends trench-wide. Abuts (107)
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Modern gravel surface.</i>
(102)	Loose to moderately compacted blackish-brown silty sand, occasional post-medieval ceramic sherds, CBM fragments & charcoal flecking. Extends trench-wide. Overlies (105). Cut by [116].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Post-medieval soil deposit with some demolition material.</i>
(103)	Weakly cemented surface comprising small to medium rounded cobbles. Extends 3.5m NW-SE x 1m NE-SW x 0.08m (average thickness). Overlies (117). Cut by [108].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Modern cobbled yard surface.</i>
(104)	Moderately compacted mid to dark brown (with some orange mottling) silty sand, orange sandy lenses, frequent post-medieval CBM fragments, moderate post-medieval (18 th -19 th century) ceramic sherds, charcoal flecking and clay pipe fragments, occasional domestic animal bones. Underlies (105).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Post-medieval occupation deposit</i>
(105)	Loose orange fine sand, occasional post-medieval CBM fragments. Extends >7.5m NW-SE x 2.4m NE-SW x 0.13m (maximum thickness). Underlies (102). Overlies (104).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Post-medieval levelling/make-up deposit.</i>
(106)	Five courses of cement-bonded brick measuring (visible) 0.9m NE-SW x >0.2m NW-SE x >0.4m. Partially visible extending from NE end of trench. Underlies (107). Fills [112].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Upper portion of brick inspection chamber for 20th century drain. Drainage channel [108] ran into the base of this structure.</i>
(107)	Indurated concrete surface extending 2.45m NE-SW x 1.5m NW-SE x 0.08m (average thickness). Abutted by (101). Overlies (106), (114), (109).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Remains of concrete surface.</i>
[108]	Linear cut measuring >7.5m NNW-SSE x 0.29m x 0.3m, break of slope at top sharp, sides vertical, break of slope at base sharp, base slightly concave. Cuts (103), (115). Filled by (109).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Cut of 20th century drain.</i>
(109)	Moderately compacted mid brown silty sand, frequent 20 th century CBM & mortar fragments. Extends >7.5m NW-SE x 0.29m NE-SW x 0.3m. Underlies (107). Fills [108].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Fill of modern drainage channel.</i>
(110)	Linear structure of roughly hewn sandstone blocks (300mm x 250mm x 150mm avg.) overlaid at NW end by brick wall foundation orientated NW-SE measuring >6m x 0.25m x >0.16m. Bed joints approximately 70mm. Single course of sandstone blocks overlaid by two brick courses. Overlies [116]. Abutted by (111).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Post-medieval wall foundation, partially robbed/demolished.</i>
(111)	Linear brick wall foundation orientated NE-SW measuring 0.3m NW-SE x 0.85m NE-SW x >80mm. Materials consist of standard sized frogged brick with 70mm bed joints, cement bonded with only the top of a single course visible. Overlies [118]. Abuts (110).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Post-medieval wall foundation forming part of the same structure as wall (110). Foundation has been heavily truncated by drain [108].</i>
[112]	Rectilinear cut visible only in SE-facing section measuring 0.9m NE-SW x >0.38m deep, break of slope at top sharp, sides vertical, break

	of slope base unknown, base unknown. Cuts (115). Underlies (106).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Construction cut for drainage inspection chamber (106).</i>
[113]	Linear cut visible only in SE-facing section measuring >7.5m NW-SE x >0.21m NE-SW x 0.32m (maximum visible depth), break of slope at top sharp, sides vertical, break of slope at base unknown, base unknown. Cuts (115). Filled by (114).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Cut of 20th century utility trench.</i>
(114)	Moderately compacted, mid greyish-brown silty sand, frequent post-medieval CBM fragments, moderate charcoal flecking. Deposit measures >7.5m NW-SE x >0.21m NE-SW x >0.32m. Underlies (107). Fills [113].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Fill of utility trench [113].</i>
(115)	Moderately compacted, light reddish-brown silty sand, frequent post-medieval CBM fragments, moderate charcoal flecking. Deposit extends >7.5m NW-SE x 3.28m NE-SW x 0.2m (average thickness). Overlies (117). Cut by [108], [112], [113].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Post-medieval demolition deposit.</i>
[116]	Linear cut orientated NW-SE measuring >6m NW-SE x 0.25m NE-SW x unknown, break of slope top sharp, sides vertical, break of slope base unknown, base unknown. Underlies (110). Cuts (102)
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Construction cut of post-medieval wall (110).</i>
(117)	Moderately compacted, mid brown silty sand, frequent post-medieval CBM fragments. Extends >0.2m NE-SW x 1.8m NW-SE x >0.28m. Underlies (115), (103). Overlies (110), (111).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Post-medieval deposit seemingly related to the demolition of a building defined by wall (110).</i>
[118]	Linear cut orientated NE-SW measuring 0.3m NW-SE x 0.85m NE-SW, depth unknown, break of slope top sharp, sides vertical, break of slope base unknown, base unknown. Cuts (102). Underlies (111).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Construction cut of post-medieval wall (111).</i>



Document Control

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