

Interim report on the Archaeological Evaluation at the

Former Clay Pipe Works
Whitburn Street
Bridgnorth
Shropshire

NGR: SO 71356 93124

BORDER ARCHAEOLOGY

PO Box 36
Leominster
Herefordshire
HR6 0YQ
Email: enquires@borderarchaeology.com

Technical Services
Chapel Walk
Burgess Street
Leominster
Herefordshire
HR6 8DE
Tel: 01568 610101
Fax: 01568 616900
Email: borderarch@btconnect.com

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. METHODOLOGY	3
3. RESULTS	3
4. INTERIM CONCLUSION	6
5. RECOMMENDATIONS	6

Report Specification

Site manager: James Archer BA

Report compilation: George Children MA AIFA

Artwork: Michelle Bithell BA

Approved: Neil Shurety

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This interim report provides a technical summary of the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Border Archaeology on behalf of United Developments upon the instruction of David Dickinson Architects at the site of the former clay pipe factory located at the junction of Whitburn Street and Pound Street Bridgnorth Shropshire (NGR: SO 71356 93124) (**Fig. 3**).
- 1.2 The factory was established by Thomas Parsons Southorn Jr, a member of the influential pipe-making family of Broseley, and continued to operate until c. 1885. The purpose of the evaluation was to ascertain the survival or otherwise of the suspected medieval occupation of the site and anticipated 19th century clay pipe factory thereon and to devise a suitable strategy for its preservation or recording.
- 1.3 Copies of this report will be submitted to David Dickinson Architects and to Mr Mike Watson, Historic Environment Officer, Shropshire County Council.

2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 Four trenches were opened by machine at the side and rear of the site in locations previously agreed with Mike Watson.
- 2.2 Trench 1 measured 10m x 1.8m, Trench 2 measured 4.5m x 1.8m, Trench 3 measured 10m x 1.5m and Trench 4 measured 4m x 1.8m. These were excavated down to the first archaeological horizon or natural deposits, whichever was encountered first.
- 2.3 A temporary benchmark of 63.17m OD was established on the site.
- 2.4 Full written and graphic records were compiled using *pro forma* record forms and sheets. A photographic record was made using a 10.3MPX digital camera.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

- 3.1.1 The upper part of the trench, to a depth of 0.36m, consisted of loose blackish-brown silty sand topsoil containing frequent post-medieval CBM fragments and ceramic sherds, occasional animal bone and medium subangular stones (101).
- 3.1.2 Underlying this was a post-medieval subsoil deposit (106), consisting of dark reddish-brown silty sand with moderate CBM fragments, ceramic sherds, charcoal flecking and small to medium subangular stones, together with occasional animal bone. This soil was cut by a series of pits - [102], [104], [108] & [110] – three of which contained very similar fills - (103), (105) & (109) - consisting of loose dark blackish-brown silty sand with frequent post-medieval CBM fragments and ceramic sherds, moderate Fe objects and occasional glass fragments. Pit [110] was 1.6m deep and revealed two fills: a primary fill (112) measuring 0.4m thick and consisting of moderately compacted, dark reddish-brown silty sand with occasional small rounded pebbles, and a secondary fill

(111) of moderately compacted, dark blackish-brown sandy silt with occasional small pebbles, post-medieval ceramic sherds and charcoal flecking.

3.1.3 The natural (107) was encountered at a depth of c. 1.5m and consisted of mid orangey-brown silty sand with frequent gravel patches. This extended trench-wide to a maximum visible thickness of 0.5m.

3.2 Trench 2 (Fig. 3)

3.2.1 Trench 2 contained four contexts, the first of which was a 0.8m-thick topsoil deposit (201), consisting of moderately compact blackish-brown silty sand with frequent post-medieval CBM fragments and ceramic sherds, moderate small subangular stones and occasional glass fragments.

3.2.2 Underlying this was 0.6m-thick layer of demolition material (202), composed of moderately compact yellowish-brown silty sand with frequent mortar, sandstone masonry blocks and ceramic tile & occasional fragmentary glass and charcoal flecking.

3.2.3 Beneath this demolition layer to a maximum thickness of 0.24m was a post-medieval soil (203), consisting of moderately compact mid brown silty sand with occasional CBM fragments and ceramic sherds and moderate clay pipe fragments and charcoal flecking. This overlay a basal deposit of moderately compact orangey-red sand (204).

3.3 Trench 3 (Figs. 1 & 3)

3.3.1 The upper part of the trench was composed of a 0.4m-thick layer of demolition material (301), consisting of moderately compact dark greyish-brown silty sand with frequent post-medieval CBM and glass fragments and moderate post-medieval ceramic sherds.

3.3.2 Underlying this material were post-medieval soils (302) and (313). The first of these (302) was a moderate to firm dark greyish-brown silty sand with occasional post-medieval CBM fragments and charcoal flecking, extending throughout the trench to a maximum thickness of 0.52m. The second soil deposit (313) was a 0.4m-thick moderately compact greyish silty sand containing moderate clay pipe fragments and very occasional charcoal flecking. These soils overlay natural sandy gravels (310) and (311).

3.3.3 Cutting (302) was a sub-circular post-medieval pit [303] measuring 0.8m N-S and 0.6m deep. This was filled by moderately compact greyish-brown silty sand with occasional post-medieval CBM fragments and frequent charcoal flecking and fragments (304).

3.3.4 Also running through (302) was the cut [305] for a kiln structure (307), the full extent of which was undefined. The kiln consisted of a circular base measuring 1.5m NW-SE x >0.65m SW-NE constructed of unfrosted brick bonded with a reddish-brown sandy mortar, which was vitrified internally. The structural remains were overlain by loose reddish-brown silty sand with frequent brick rubble, clay pipe fragments and occasional charcoal flecking (306).

3.3.5 Associated with the kiln was a brick floor surface (308) measuring 1.93m N-S x >1m E-W x >0.14m and three courses of an abutting brick wall (309) orientated N-S and measuring >1.3m N-S x 0.25m E-W x > 0.3m.

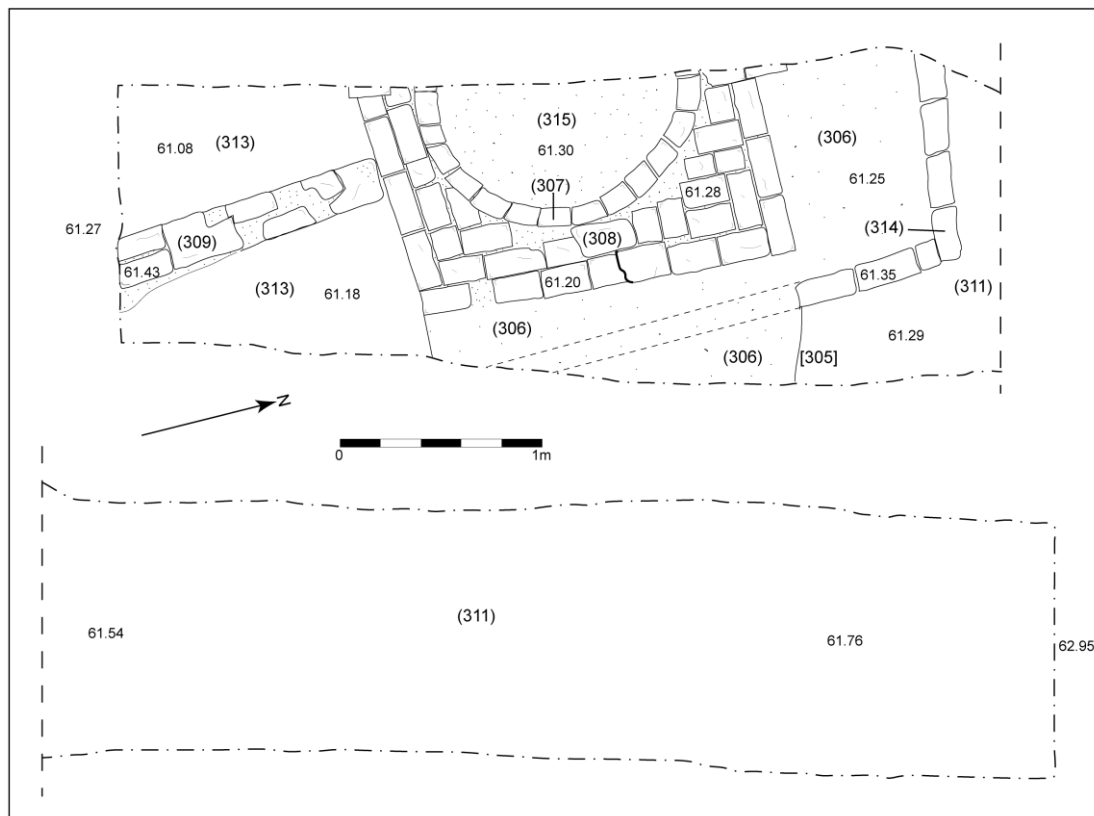


Fig. 1: Plan of Trench 3 showing detail of kiln base and associated features

3.4 Trench 4 (Figs. 2 & 3)

3.4.1 The upper contexts comprised a 0.18m-thick spread of modern rubble overburden (401) overlying lenses of dumped material - (402) and (403) - forming part of a modern make-up layer.

3.4.2 Underlying (403) was a 0.4m-thick post-medieval soil deposit (404) consisting of moderately compact dark greyish-brown silty sand with frequent charcoal flecking and very occasional small rounded pebbles.

3.4.3 Beneath this was a post-medieval soil (405) consisting of moderately compact mid brown silty sand with occasional post-medieval ceramic sherds, small subangular stones and charcoal flecking. This soil extended to a depth of more than 1.02m and overlay natural (406) consisting of moderate to loosely compacted orangey-red sand, the thickness and extent of which was undefined.

3.4.4 Cutting (404) was [407], the foundation cut for a concrete and brick footing (409) orientated SE-NW and measuring >0.6m NE-SW x 0.4m. The footing comprised a concrete pad and four courses of unfrogged brick (240mm x 120mm x 80mm). This footing was visible only in the NW-facing trench section and appeared to form part of a structure extending NE.

3.4.5 A backfill deposit (408) within [407] consisted of moderately compact mid greyish-brown sandy clay with frequent post-medieval CBM fragments and occasional ceramic sherds, glass fragments and charcoal flecking.

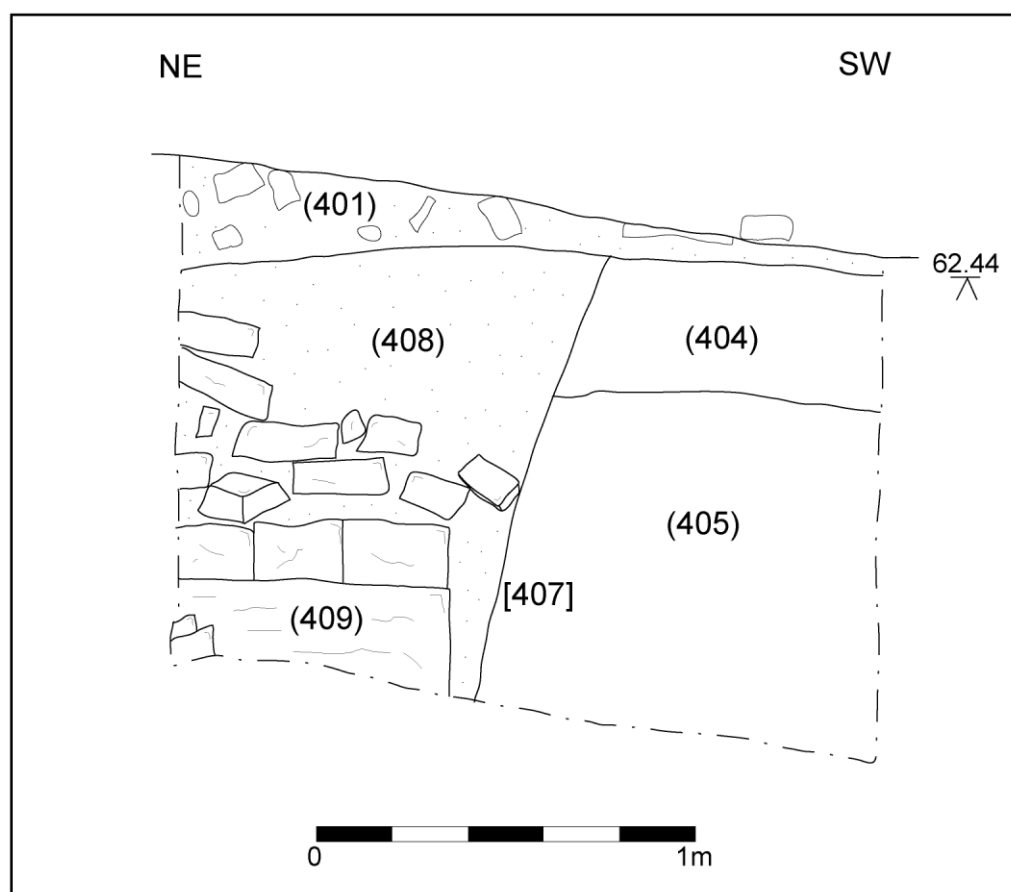


Fig. 2: NW-facing section of Trench 4 showing remains of wall (409)

4. INTERIM CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The evaluation has revealed no record of medieval occupation but significant evidence of clay pipe manufacture, including the remains of a kiln base and indications of workshop / storage buildings, together with a considerable amount of waste pipe material.
- 4.2 The kiln base (307) and an associated brick floor surface (308) were exposed in Trench 3 together with the remains of a brick wall (309) abutting this structure, which was orientated N-S and measured >1.3m N-S x 0.25m E-W x > 0.3m.
- 4.3 This section of wall and the kiln appear to align precisely with the position of the factory buildings as indicated on Wood's map of 1835. A further section of wall (409) was identified in Trench 4 and this may represent the rebuilding of a boundary wall shown on the 1835 map, which appears to have been realigned at some point during the late 19th or early 20th century.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Following discussions with Mike Watson as to appropriate options for the preservation either in situ or by record of the kiln remains, Neil Shurety of Border Archaeology and David Dickinson met on site to assess the possible

inclusion of the remains within the site as part of an engineering solution but as was soon apparent such an option is not feasible.

- 5.2 Having identified positive evidence of the remains of the clay pipe factory both in terms of this evaluation and by further research using cartographic data and computer alignment, it is therefore recommended that an excavation be undertaken within the likely footprint of the factory at the corner of Whitburn Street and Pound Street.
- 5.3 It is fully appreciated that such a decision rests with Mike Watson, Historic Environment Officer, but this recommendation is proposed as a reasonable resolution of archaeological and construction constraints.