

Archaeological Watching Brief Report for

BLUECOAT SQUARE ACCESS RAMP

For Chester Municipal Charities

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L~P:ARCHÆOLOGY

Archaeological Watching Brief Report for

BLUECOAT SQUARE ACCESS RAMP

Client: Chester Municipal Charities

Local Authority: Cheshire West and Chester Council

NGR: 340365,366711

Planning App: 10/11332/LBC

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Abstract

This report contains the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out to the rear of the Bluecoat School, Chester (NGR 340365,366711), between the 30th August and 7th September 2011 on behalf of Chester Municipal Charities.

Historic research indicates that the site has been used since at least the Roman period and housed the hospital of St Johns since 1190. The hospital had its own graveyard and chapel from the 13th century. The hospital was demolished during the Civil War, however it was rebuilt as a school over an extended period in the 18th century. Almshouses were constructed to the rear of the school as a replacement to the hospital.

Below the modern paved surface and its associated sub base was a deposit dating to the Post Medieval period thought to represent 18th century lowering and levelling of the courtyard surface. This deposit contained a great deal of disturbed disarticulated human skeletal material. It is thought that these relate to disturbed burials associated with the hospital that occupied the site from the 12th to the 17th century.

Three partial burials survived at the base of the excavation and skeletal assessment indicates that these showed signs of osteo-arthritis and as such could relate to the hospital activity on the site.

At the base of the excavated area a silty deposit was identified. This is thought to represent the upper horizon of Roman activity on the site and produced a single sherd of black burnished ware, dating to the 2nd to 4th century.

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1. Introduction and Scope of Study

- 1.1. An archaeological watching brief was carried out on groundworks for a new access ramp for the Bluecoat Almshouses, Chester. The archaeological work was carried out in order to fulfil a planning condition relating to application 10/11332/LBC.
- 1.2. The site is located 400m to the north of the city centre, to the west of Upper Northgate Street, Chester, CH1 4EH. The site is located at NGR 340365,366711 (FIGURE 1).
- 1.3. Fieldwork was carried out by Blair Poole of L – P : Archaeology between 30th August and 7th September 2011. The fieldwork was commissioned by Chester Municipal Charities.
- 1.4. The local authority is Cheshire West and Chester Council.
- 1.5. The site lies to the immediate north of Chester City Walls, within the Area of Archaeological Importance and within the Chester City Conservation Area.
- 1.6. Archaeological works comprised the archaeological monitoring of hand excavation of deposits beneath the courtyard's paved surface to previously agreed depths.
- 1.7. The objectives of the archaeological works on the site were
 - ◆ To identify and record the archaeological deposits on this site.
 - ◆ To record all archaeological features present within the area of disturbance.
 - ◆ To preserve by record the archaeological deposits on the site and to produce a formal written report on the findings of the archaeological works.

2. Planning Background

2.1. In March 2010 the Department for Communities and Local Government issued Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT 2010). This document sets out planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment and replaces all previous Planning Policy Guidance, specifically PPG15 and PPG16.

2.2. In considering any planning application for development the Local Planning Authority, Cheshire West and Chester Council, is bound by the policies provided by PPS5. Additional guidance to help implement these policies is given in the accompanying Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide (DCLG, ENGLISH HERITAGE, DCMS 2010).

2.3. Cheshire West and Chester Council is also bound by the saved policies within the borough's local planning framework. However, as Cheshire West and Chester Council is a relatively new authority they defer to the current adopted local plans. The relevant Local Plan in this case is the Chester plan adopted in May 2006. The relevant policies contained within the Local Plan is as follows:

POLICY ENV 32

Where development proposals affect sites of known or potential archaeological interest, the City Council will require an archaeological assessment/evaluation to be submitted as part of the planning application. Planning permission will not be granted without the adequate assessment of the nature, extent and significance of the remains and the degree to which the proposed development is likely to affect them.

POLICY ENV 33

Development proposals affecting the site or setting of a site of regional or county importance will only be permitted if the integrity of the archaeological remains has been secured.

POLICY ENV 45

Planning permission will be refused for proposals that fail to have regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest

2.4. Planning consent has been granted for the installation of a new access ramp leading to Bluecoat Almshouses, via a covered entrance from the Bluecoat School (10/11332/LBC).

- 2.5.A planning condition was imposed requiring archaeological monitoring of all groundworks associated with the project.
- 2.6.The site is not scheduled, however both the almshouses in the courtyard and the Bluecoat School are listed buildings, Grades II and II* respectively (469944 & 469945).
- 2.1.The Local Planning Authority is Cheshire West and Chester, with Mike Morris being the City Archaeologist. The site lies within Chester's Area of Archaeological Importance.

3. Geology and Topography

3.1.GEOLOGY

- 3.1.1. Previous archaeological work on the site identified the natural drift deposit as pink-brown silty sand at a depth of approximately 28.9mOD, 1.7m below the courtyard surface (POOLE & STATTER 2009).
- 3.1.2. The solid geology of the area is known from previous excavation work on the site to be sandstone bedrock and pebble beds of the Sherwood Sandstone Group (POOLE & STATTER 2009).

3.2.TOPOGRAPHY

- 3.2.1. The site is located 400m to the north of Chester city centre at an elevation of approximately 30mOD (FIGURE 2). Chester City Walls lie 43m to the south of the site.
- 3.2.2. Canal Street bounds the site to the north, with an existing almshouses to the west. To the south of the site is a steep sandstone rock face leading down to the Canal. The Blue Coat School bounds the site to the east leading to Northgate Street.
- 3.2.3. The site is located in an area of courtyard which is used to access the existing almshouses surrounding the courtyard. The courtyard stands 1.7m higher than Canal Street and 0.5m lower than Northgate Street.

4. Archaeological and Historical Background

4.1. The following section is an updated historic background to the site based on Poole & Statter (2009).

TIMESCALES USED IN THIS REPORT:

PERIOD	FROM	TO
PREHISTORIC		
PALAEOLITHIC	450,000	12,000 BC
MESOLITHIC	12,000	4,000 BC
NEOLITHIC	4,000	1,800 BC
BRONZE AGE	1,800	600 BC
IRON AGE	600	43 AD
HISTORIC		
ROMAN	43	410 AD
EARLY MEDIEVAL	410	1066 AD
MEDIEVAL	1066	1485 AD
POST MEDIEVAL	1485	PRESENT

PREHISTORIC

4.1.1. There is very little evidence for early Prehistoric activity in Chester. Evidence for Mesolithic activity in Chester comes from the recovery of a Horsham point type flint tool at the amphitheatre (MATTHEWS 2001) 500m to the south east of the site.

4.1.2. There is little evidence for Neolithic activity in the area, however a Neolithic axe has been recovered from Chester. It is thought that this axe head was discovered during excavations on Hunter Street, 500m to the south of the site (POOLE & STATTER 2009).

4.1.3. Discoveries made at Chester Amphitheatre in 2007 have provided evidence of Iron Age activity within Chester (GARNER & WILMOTT 2007). It has been suggested that the landscape was dotted with farmsteads during this period (WARD 2009). The exact quantities or locations of these farmsteads is not

known, however plough marks dating to the Iron Age were identified during excavations at Abbey Green 150m to the south east of the site. Iron Age ceramics and flint tools were also recorded along with the plough marks (MCPEAKE ET AL 1980).

ROMAN

- 4.1.4. The legionary fortress of Deva, associated with the XX legion, was founded at Chester to serve as a military centre for north-west England and is thought to have been completed around AD79 (CROSBY 1996).
- 4.1.5. The site lies directly to the north of the city walls and the Northgate originally built by the Romans. One of the main routes out of Chester during the Roman period was north through the Northgate along current Parkgate Road. This route is the Cheshire-Wirral road as described by Margary (1957). This route would have been used extensively during the Roman period by both the army and civilians with the movement of troops and supplies into and out of the city.
- 4.1.6. Excavations on the site in 2005 revealed the potential for a subsidiary Roman road running along a northwest southeast axis across the site (WALKER PERS COMM 2009). This may be a smaller domestic route used as access to the Dee from the fort.
- 4.1.7. Approximately 150m to the south of the site, on the southern side of the city wall, lie the barrack buildings for the fortress. Each barrack block housed one century of men and had a separate house for the centurion in command (CARRINGTON 1994).
- 4.1.8. The Roman cook houses are thought to be located to the immediate southeast of the site, butting the southern face of the City Walls.
- 4.1.9. This evidence therefore shows a huge amount of activity within the city walls throughout the Roman period. However, it is unclear as to what was happening outside the walls in this area during the Roman period (WARD & STRICKLAND 1987). As a route way ran adjacent to the site it can be assumed that this area was utilised during this period although it was not directly occupied by buildings (CROSBY 1996).

EARLY MEDIEVAL

- 4.1.10. This period saw a movement of settlement and activity towards the River Dee, to the south of the city, mainly along Lower Bridge Street. However a small area of intense Saxon occupation is recorded to the east of the Northgate, at the site of the Roman cook houses (CARRINGTON 1994).
- 4.1.11. In the late 7th Century St Werberg founded a religious house on the site of the current St. John's Church, located 500m to the southeast of the site. This religious house was later to become the first Cathedral in Chester. It was later replaced by the building of a new cathedral, on the site of the present one, in AD907 (SMALLEY 1996).
- 4.1.12. It is unclear as to what was taking place on the site area during this period as the documentary evidence indicates the Saxon settlement concentrated along Lower Bridge Street (CARRINGTON 1994).

MEDIEVAL

- 4.1.13. The town plan of this time followed that inherited from the Roman fortress via the Saxon burgh (CARRINGTON 1994). There is evidence for some settlement within the city walls close to the Northgate during this period (CARRINGTON 1994).
- 4.1.14. The Earl of Chester, Ranulph III, founded a hospital for the poor in Chester in the early 1190s. The earl's grant made for the Virgin and All Saints, however the hospital changed its dedication to St John the Baptist (LEWIS & THACKER 2003). This hospital was located at the current Blue Coat School on the eastern boundary of the site (LAUGHTON 2008).
- 4.1.15. It is thought that by c.1200 St John's hospital had its own burial ground and a chapel was added in 1241 (LAUGHTON 2008). The hospital was required to house as many sick and poor patients as possible, however 13 of its beds had to be reserved for the poor townspeople (IBID).

POST MEDIEVAL

- 4.1.16. The earliest cartographic evidence for the site comes from Braun & Hogenberg's plan of the city dated 1581 (FIGURE 3). The site is clearly depicted

as having timber framed buildings fronting Upper Northgate Street and what is now Canal Street. These buildings may well represent the hospital, which survived into the 17th century. It is thought that its role of housing the poor saved it from being closed during the dissolution in the mid 16th century (LEWIS & THACKER 2003).

4.1.17. Speed's map of Chester, 1610, also shows structures on the site, however these do not extend as far down Canal Street as on the earlier map (FIGURE 4).

4.1.18. During the Civil War in the 17th century King Charles was aware of the importance of Chester and the need to protect it.

4.1.19. There is no trace of the Medieval hospital in the modern period due to the extra defensive measures taken, as in February 1644 the buildings and surrounding wall were demolished to prevent them giving cover to the Parliamentarians during the siege of Chester (LEWIS & THACKER 2003).

4.1.20. Following the war Oliver Cromwell granted the site of St John's Hospital to the corporation of Chester and the revenues collected were to be used to rebuild the hospital. It took many years for the rebuilding to take place, however Bishop Nicholas Stratford established the first charitable school in Chester at the site of the Blue Coat Hospital. The buildings are thought to have been erected during 1714 and 1717.

4.1.21. The school was erected in order to provide education for boys between the ages of nine and 14 (WRIGHT 1920). The alms houses to the rear were constructed as successors to the Medieval hospital (LANGTREE & COMYNS 2001). It is thought that the original building was L-shaped with the main section facing Northgate Street housing the school room and accommodation and the southern wing housing the chapel. In 1733 the north wing was added (IBID).

4.1.22. Lavaux's map of 1745 clearly depicts the Bluecoat building in its recognisable plan, as seen into the 21st century (FIGURE 5). The area to the rear of the school building is shown as an orchard at this time.

4.1.23. This development can be seen on Stockdale's plan of the city dated 1796 (FIGURE 6), which also depicts a row of terraced buildings to the west of the courtyard area. The site development area is shown as gardens. This layout is

repeated on Neele's map of 1809 as well as Batenham's map of 1821 and Thomas map of 1853.

- 4.1.24. The central section of the school was enlarged in 1854 and a new façade was erected. It was during this remodelling that the 'Blue Coat' statue was added above the door to the central passage leading to the alms houses. The clock above this statue was added in 1855 (LANGTREE & COMYNS 2001).
- 4.1.25. It is also in 1854 that the Almshouses were rebuilt in their current format by Morris and Hobson for Trustees of Hospital of St John Baptist.
- 4.1.26. By the first edition Ordnance Survey map dated 1872 the almshouses can be clearly seen in their C-shaped format (FIGURE 7). The site development area ceases to be depicted as a garden by the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map and the courtyard area is shown as a homogeneous unit.
- 4.1.27. By the second edition Ordnance Survey map of 1899 a further building has been constructed along the southern wing of the alms houses. This small building was a changing rooms for the boys of the school and the layout of the courtyard continues in this format on the 1911, 1958 and 1977 Ordnance Survey maps.
- 4.1.28. During the late 20th century the cloakroom to the southeast corner of the courtyard was demolished. This building was replaced in 2005 by another almshouse.
- 4.1.29. Excavation was undertaken by L – P : Archaeology in 2009 in advance of construction work on a new almshouse in the northeast corner of the courtyard (POOLE & STATTER 2009). This work revealed a total sequence of seven phases of activity on the site dating from the Roman period to recent 21st century activity.
- 4.1.30. The Roman activity was limited to the 1st to 2nd centuries and was made up of two cultivation layers and a small pit. Later features included a 16th century post hole and 17th to 18th century domestic waste pits.
- 4.1.31. The later phases of activity, from the 18th century onwards, are characterised by thick make up deposits and remodelling of the walls fronting onto Canal

Street and forming the narrow alley between the courtyard and the Bluecoat building.

5. Methodology

- 5.1. The existing block paved surface and overburden of recent origin was removed by the ground works contractor by hand under archaeological monitoring.
- 5.2. Following the surface removal all excavation was undertaken by hand to agreed depths across the site.
- 5.3. All features were recorded stratigraphically and levels recorded as metres Ordnance Datum (mOD) from a known benchmark on the Northgate (31.96mOD).
- 5.4. Examination, excavation and cleaning of all archaeological deposits was carried out by hand using appropriate tools. All archaeological deposits were recorded both in plan and section.
- 5.5. All finds, artefacts, industrial and faunal remains were collected.
- 5.6. A site code, CHE/UNG 11, was allocated by Chester Archaeology.
- 5.7. All features were recorded stratigraphically. Features were recorded archaeologically, both in plan and section. Detailed plans were drawn at an appropriate scale, 1:10 or 1:20.
- 5.8. The written recording system used followed the Museum of London Archaeological Site Manual. Context sheets included all relevant stratigraphic relationships.
- 5.9. An adequate photographic record was made of all significant archaeological remains in both plan and section. This included black and white prints and digital images. A register of all photographs taken was kept on standardised forms.
- 5.10. The standards laid out by English Heritage and the Institute for Archaeologists were adhered to at all times as well as all relevant local standards.

6. Results

6.1. An archaeological watching brief was carried out within the courtyard to the rear of the Bluecoat School during groundworks for a new access ramp. This section will outline the results of the archaeological watching brief. The results will give a detailed account of the stratigraphic sequence and discuss the archaeology present. Deposits are shown in (parenthesis), cuts are shown in [square brackets], structures are underlined.

6.2. RESULTS OF WATCHING BRIEF

6.2.1. The watching brief was carried out in two distinct areas (FIGURE 8). The main area was located to the west of the steps leading into the courtyard (PLATE 1). A small subsidiary excavation was carried out to the north of the steps. The main area was excavated to a depth of 0.3m below ground level. The subsidiary area was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.35m below ground level.



Plate 1 - Excavation area, looking north. 1m scale

6.2.2. The courtyard surface was of engineer block paving 100 (FIGURE 9). The blocks measured 0.24 x 0.07 by 0.11m and were laid in ashlar form on top of a 0.1m thick layer of grey angular stone and gravel in a sand matrix (101) (PLATE 2).



Plate 2 - West facing section of main excavation area, 1m scale

- 6.2.3. To the western end of the main trench (101) overlay a 0.1m thick make up deposit of red brown sand silt (103) (FIGURE 10). This contained late Post Medieval ceramic dating to the 18th and 19th century, including printed blue and white ware. Also within (103) were two lengths, 0.23m long of steel road pins. It is clear from the finds recovered from (103) that this deposit is a late 20th century layer, likely associated with levelling for the laying of the block paving.
- 6.2.4. Deposit (103) directly overlay a dark brown mixed silt-sand deposit (102), which was a 0.2m thick layer of friable dark brown mixed silt sand. This deposit could be seen to spread across the site and contained the majority of the finds recovered during the groundworks. This deposit will be discussed in more detail in section 6.6 below.
- 6.2.5. In the subsidiary excavation to the north the paving 100 overlay a fine sand sub base (123) that measured 0.2m thick. This in turn overlay a thin layer of angular gravel (101). These deposits could be seen to form the base of the courtyard. Sealed by (101) was the backfill (120) against the western wall. The Fill (120) extended beyond the base of the trench at a depth of 0.35m below ground level and was present throughout the extents of the trench (PLATE 3).



Plate 3 - North facing section of subsidiary trench, 1m scale

6.2.6. Previous excavation and historic research suggests that the current wall is a 19th century modification of an earlier wall. The footprint of the wall changed somewhat between the 1853 and 1872 maps of the area. The larger spread of (120) seen in this area, compared to the area 5m to the south, supports the theory that the wall footprint altered. In this area more make up material was required as prior to the construction of the new wall, seen at the left hand side of PLATE 3, this area was outside of the courtyard and as such lay at a significantly lower elevation.

6.3.20TH CENTURY SERVICES

6.3.1. The trench contained a series of four services occupying the southern and northern areas of the trench (FIGURE 8). These all dated to the 20th century and were sealed by (101). Service [113] measured 0.2m wide and ran in an east west orientation and contained a metal 0.05m diameter pipe and a loose dark brown silt fill (112). The base of the service was at a depth of 0.32m below ground level and cut deposit (102).

6.3.2. Service [108] ran in a northwest southeast alignment and measured 0.4m wide. This contained a 0.03m diameter plastic pipe and had two distinct fills. To the southern end a loose grey pea gravel (105) was identified. This changed to a loose yellow sand (122) to the northern end of the cut (FIGURE 11). [108] cut a spread of rough sandstone fragments (104) at the southern end of the trench. It is service trench [108] that truncates burial [109] at its western

extent (FIGURE 10). This spread was a 0.3m thick make up layer which contained no finds. The sandstone was very fragmented and it appeared to be a late post Medieval make up layer which overlay deposit (102).

6.3.3. Service [119] was located in the northern end of the footings and contained a 0.03m diameter metal pipe within a loose dark brown silt sand fill (118) (PLATE 4). The cut measured 0.3m wide and extended to a depth of 0.4m below ground level. This service trench truncates burials SK2 and SK3 within deposit (116/117) and cut a previous service [115]. The fill of service [115] was a loose brown sandy loam (114). Service [115] runs in an east west orientation and contains a narrow lead water supply pipe. This cut is irregular in plan and measures approximately 0.5m wide and cuts (102).



Plate 4 - North facing section of northern area, 1m scale

6.4.19TH CENTURY STRUCTURE

6.4.1. The retaining wall for the almshouses courtyard formed the eastern boundary of the trench. This wall is known to date to the 19th century. The construction cut for the wall [121] extends between 0.3 and 0.7m from the wall within the footing trench and cuts (102). To the north of the footings, where a narrow investigation trench was excavated, the cut extends over 1.7m from the standing wall. It is thought that previously the wall followed a different footprint, extending further south onto the site before returning east. It is

likely that this large construction trench represents the demolition and removal of the earlier wall as well as the construction of the standing wall. The fill of [121] was a loose mixture of red stone, brick rubble and sand (120) which extended beyond the base of the trench at a depth of 0.7m below ground level.

6.5.SANDSTONE FEATURE

6.5.1. Located centrally in the trench was a 1.2m wide spread of large sandstone blocks, 110, running in an east west orientation (FIGURE 8). The blocks measured approximately 0.6 x 0.4x 0.2m in size and appear to relate to a demolished structure (PLATE 5). There was a clear cut fore the sandstone, [111] measuring 1.2m wide and having steep sloping sides (FIGURE 10). The southern end of the sandstone spread appeared to form a definite face, whereas the northern edge was much rougher in appearance. It is thought that this may have formed the foundation for a garden wall. The maximum depth of the cut was 0.34m below ground level. This feature cut (102) and as such it is thought to date to the 18th or 19th century.



Plate 5 - Sandstone 110, 1m scale

6.6.18TH TO 19TH CENTURY TRUNCATION

6.6.1. Deposit (102) was a 0.2m thick layer of friable dark brown mixed silt sand (FIGURE 10). This deposit could be seen to spread across the whole of the excavated area and contained the majority of the finds recovered during the

groundworks.

- 6.6.2. The deposit produced a large quantity of fragmented disarticulated bone. This is discussed in more detail in Appendix 3. The human remains from (102) were not recovered from distinct graves and were all disturbed fragments of bone, representing a minimum number of individuals of seven, with three of these being juvenile.
- 6.6.3. The deposit also contained fragments of animal bone, local black and brown glazed ceramic, blue and white wares and slat glazed drain fragments. Details of the assemblage can be found section 7 Below.
- 6.6.4. The finds assemblage recovered from this deposit give a clear 17th to 19th century date range. This deposit could be seen to have truncated a burial, SK1 to the southern end of the trench and two further burials, SK2 and SK3, at the northern end of the trench. These burials had also been disturbed by 20th century services.
- 6.6.5. It is thought that (102) represents construction activity on the site relating to the 18th century school and almshouses and later modification to the courtyard in the 19th century. The human remains show signs of osteoarthritis and it is likely these fragments represent disturbed burials of patients from the hospital that occupied the site from the 12th century until the 17th century. The mix of finds from (102) suggest that these disturbed burials may date from the latter end of the hospital's existence.

6.7. BURIALS

- 6.7.1. At the northern extent of the trench two *in situ* truncated burials were identified, SK2 and SK3 (FIGURE 12). Both burials lay in an east west orientation, however no grave cut was visible for them (PLATE 6). This may be due to the amount of disturbance in the area. It appears that SK3 may have cut the burial of SK2. Both sets of remains lay within a friable dark brown silty loam (116/117). To distinguish the areas that the remains came from and ensure that finds from each were kept distinct, this deposit has been given two number (116) and (117) for burials SK2 and SK3 respectively. Only two finds were recovered from these deposits, both from (116). These were sherds of

ceramic dating to the Roman period, between the 1st and 3rd century.



Plate 6 - Burials SK2 and SK3, 1m scale

6.7.2. The burials had been truncated by (102) and by service trench [119] and were identified at a depth of 30.19mOD, 0.4m below ground level (PLATE 7). No material, wood or metal was recovered from around the remains. The shallow depth and lack of evidence for coffin material could be due to disturbance or that the ground level has been significantly lowered in this area. However, as the remains may relate to poor burials of patients from the hospital it is likely there was no coffin and a shroud burial would have taken place. Due to the site conditions no trace of a shroud would survive.



Plate 7 - North facing section, 1m scale

6.7.3. At the southern end of the main trench another burial, SK1, was recovered

(FIGURE 13). Due to truncation by services and the narrow extent of the trench only a portion of the remains were recovered (PLATE 8). It was clear, however, that a cut for a grave [109] existed running in an east west orientation. The grave measured a maximum of 0.4m wide at the western section of the trench and 0.3m at the eastern section. The lower long bones of an individual were recovered. No finds were recovered from the grave cut and there was no evidence of material, wood or any metal fixings, such as nails, within the loose dark brown loam fill (106). The full extent of the grave cut had been obscured by the later truncation, meaning only the very base of the grave survived *in situ*.



Plate 8 - SK1, 0.1m scale

6.7.4. The grave base was recorded at a depth of 30.25mOD, a depth of 0.32m below ground level (FIGURE 10) and had clearly been truncated by (102) (PLATE 9). This could indicate that the burial was either very shallow or the ground level here has been significantly reduced since the burial. The grave cut a friable dark brown silt loam (107) which extended beyond the base of the trench.



Plate 9 - West facing section of SK1, 1m scale

6.7.5. It is likely that all three individuals, SK1 to 3, represent Post Medieval burials of patients from the hospital that occupied the site until the 17th century. Due to later truncation and levelling of the courtyard the full extent of the burials have not been identified and only the base of these burials survived. The plethora of disarticulated human remains on the site suggest a series of at least nine other burials disturbed by 18th and 19th century activity. That the grave cut for SK1 cuts (107) a potential Roman deposit does not necessarily suggest a Roman date for the burial as this is only partial information. The loss of the upper stratigraphy of the site due to truncation means that the information as to where the graves were cut from has been lost.

6.8.ROMAN DEPOSIT

6.8.1. A single find was recovered from (107) a small fragment of black burnished ware dating from the 2nd to 4th century. The deposit was exposed but not excavated as it marked the base of formation levels for the new ramp at 0.3m below ground level.

6.8.2. Deposit (107) matched a deposit seen during excavations to the south of the trench by Earthworks Archaeology in 2005. It is possible that this deposit represents the uppermost Roman horizon on the site. The Earthworks excavation identified this at a depth of 0.35m below ground level.

7. Finds

7.1. The following section will discuss the finds recovered from the site by material. Each material will be discussed by context. A full, detailed, osteoarchaeological assessment can be found in Appendix 3 of this document.

7.2. FAUNAL REMAINS

Context (102)

- 7.2.1. Context (102) was a 0.2m thick mixed silt deposit that was present across the site. This deposit contained 30 fragments of animal bone with a total weight of 491g.
- 7.2.2. Within (102) were six fragments of cattle (*bovine*) rib, two fragments of cattle vertebrae, one fragment of cattle scapula, three fragments of cattle femur and four fragments of cattle tibia.
- 7.2.3. A single fragment of pig (*suidae*) pelvis and three fragments of pig fibula were identified.
- 7.2.4. Two fragments of sheep/goat (*ovis*) scapula, three fragments of sheep/goat tibia were recovered along with a single fragment of sheep/goat femur.
- 7.2.5. A single fowl femur fragment was recovered.
- 7.2.6. The remaining fragments were small undiagnostic fragments of long bones.
- 7.2.7. A total of five heels were recovered from (102), with a total weight of 71g. These included two European flat oyster (*ostrea edulis*) shells, one upper and one lower valve. Three cockle shells (*cerastoderma edule*) were also recovered from (102).
- 7.2.8. The assemblage from (102) clearly represents kitchen waste, likely associated with the kitchens for Bluecoat school. The presence of these types of bone indicate low quality cuts of meat, with limb cuts such as shin and shoulder, rather than and high meat content cuts.

Context (106)

- 7.2.9. This was the fill associated with SK1, an *in situ* burial. A single non human

bone fragment was recovered from (106), which was a cattle (*bovine*) vertebrae. It is possible that this is an intrusive find from the truncation deposit (102).

Context (107)

7.2.10. Context (107) is thought to represent the upper horizon of Roman activity on the site. This deposit produced a single pig tooth.

7.3. CLAY TOBACCO PIPE

Context (102)

7.3.1. A total of three pieces of clay tobacco pipe were recovered from the site, all from (102). The total weight of the clay pipe was 10g. All three stems are thought to be 18th and 19th century domestic type which had been broken from use.

7.4. CERAMIC

Context (102)

7.4.1. The mixed silt deposit (102) produced a total of 26 sherds of ceramic, weighing a total of 885g. The ceramic assemblage was mixed in date and form.

7.4.2. 17th to 19th century ceramics included two sherds of salt glazed drain, six sherds of Buckley ware, all from domestic vessels, a single sherd of brown glazed vessel and seven sherds of printed blue and white ware.

7.4.3. The blue and white ware contained two decorated rim sherds and two undiagnostic body sherds. The three other sherds could be seen to be associated with a single decorated vessel. Only two of these were conjoining pieces, forming a base of a small cylindrical vessel. The other piece was a rim sherd.

7.4.4. A single body sherd of a salt glazed vessel, dating to the 17th to 18th century and a half section of a ceramic marble with a diameter of 17mm was also recovered from (102).

7.4.5. Three body sherds of Staffordshire ware, dating to the 17th to 19th century, were recovered from (102).

7.4.6. A single fragment of green glazed ceramic was identified, which is thought to be Medieval in date.

7.4.7. Three sherds of Cheshire plain ware were also recovered from (102), which have been dated to the Roman period, between the 2nd and 3rd Century.

7.4.8. Two fragments of Roman course building material (CBM) were also recovered from (102).

Context (107)

7.4.9. Context (107) is thought to represent the upper horizon of Roman activity on the site. A single sherd of black burnished ware, BB1, dating to between the 2nd and 4th centuries, was identified within (107).

Context (116)

7.4.10. Context (116) was the fill around burial SK2 to the north of the site. This was a disturbed burial which is thought to be associated with the later activity of the Hospital in the 17th century.

7.4.11. Two sherds were recovered from (116). A base sherd of what could be a small beaker of Cheshire plain ware dating to the 1st to 3rd century was recovered. A body sherd of white ware dating to the 1st to 3rd century.

7.4.12. Both sherds are thought to be intrusive finds and not contemporary with the burial.

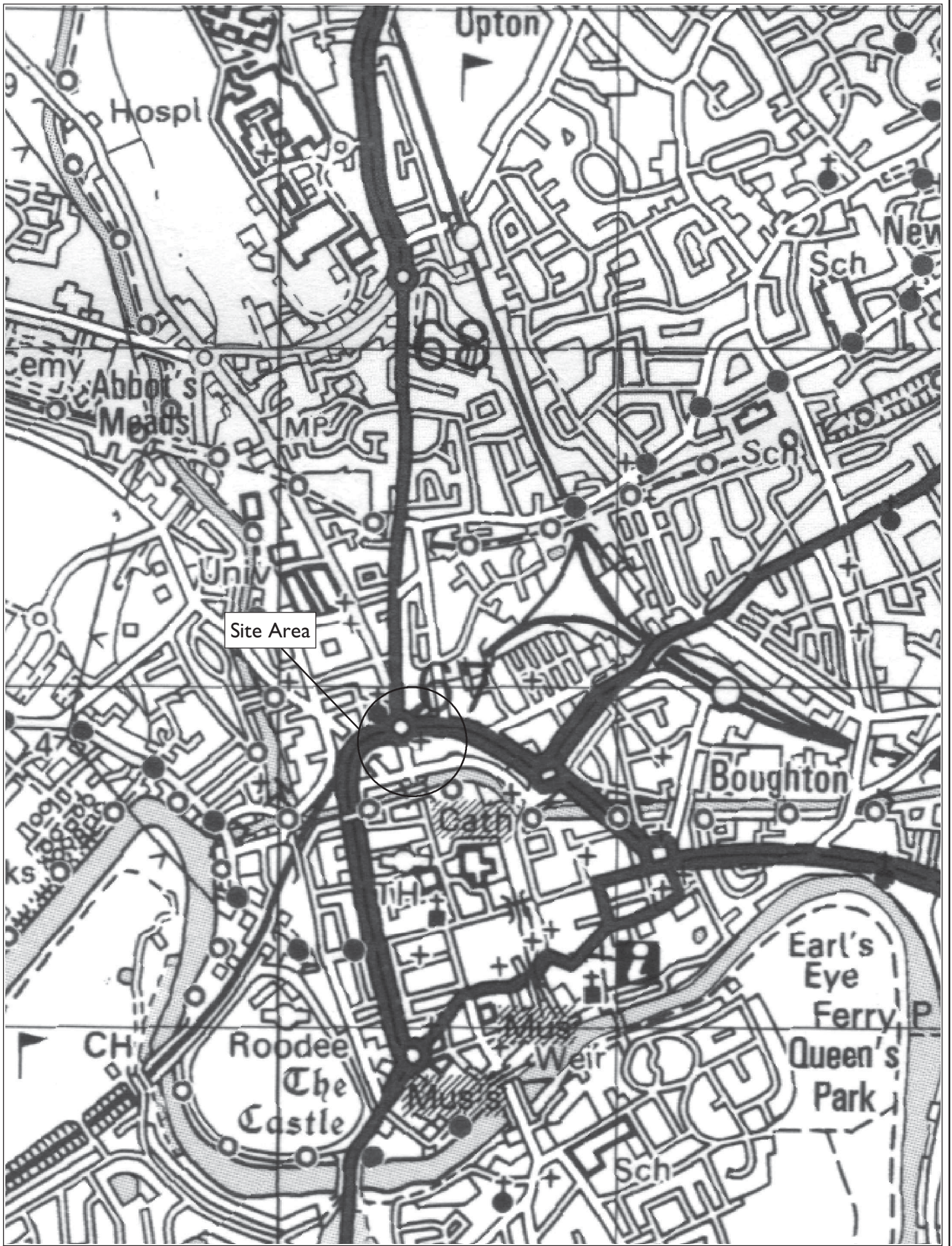
8. Summary and Conclusions

- 8.1. The archaeological fieldwork was carried out between 30th August and 7th September 2011 within the courtyard to the west of Bluecoat School, Chester. The fieldwork was carried out on behalf of Chester Municipal Charities.
- 8.2. The site is located at NGR 340365,366711 off Upper Northgate Street, to the north of Chester city centre.
- 8.3. The fieldwork was carried out in respect to a planning condition imposed by the local authority, Cheshire West and Chester Council.
- 8.4. The site lies close to Chester City Walls and falls within the Area of Archaeological Importance and Chester City Conservation Area. Both the almshouses in the courtyard and the Bluecoat School are listed buildings.
- 8.5. Archaeological works comprised the monitoring of hand excavation of the courtyard to agreed depths for a new access ramp.
- 8.6. A clear stratigraphic sequence was identified on the site. Below the modern paved surface and its associated sub base was a 0.2m thick deposit dating to the Post Medieval period. This deposit relates to modification of the courtyard in the 18th century and represents a lowering and levelling of the courtyard surface.
- 8.7. Within this deposit was a series of service trenches crossing the site. A high quantity of disarticulated human skeletal remains were recovered from this deposit and it is thought that these relate to disturbed burials associated with the hospital that occupied the site from the 12th to the 17th century. When the courtyard was lowered and levelled the burials were disturbed.
- 8.8. Three partial burials survived at the base of the excavation at a depth of 0.35m below ground level. All three burials had been truncated, meaning that only the lower sections of each remained in tact. Skeletal assessment indicates that these showed signs of osteo arthritis and as such could relate to the hospital activity on the site. It is known that the hospital had a burial ground associated with it and chapel from the 13th century. The lack of any coffin material could indicate that these were poor burials.
- 8.9. At the base of the excavated area a silty deposit was identified. This contained a

single sherd of Roman ceramic. It is similar in nature and depth to a Roman deposit recorded on the site during excavations in 2005 and as such it is thought that this represents the upper horizon of Roman activity on the site.

FIGURES

FIGURE 1 // Site Location General



Scale 1:15,000 @ A4

0 500m



PROJECT // LPI035C - Bluecoat Access Ramp

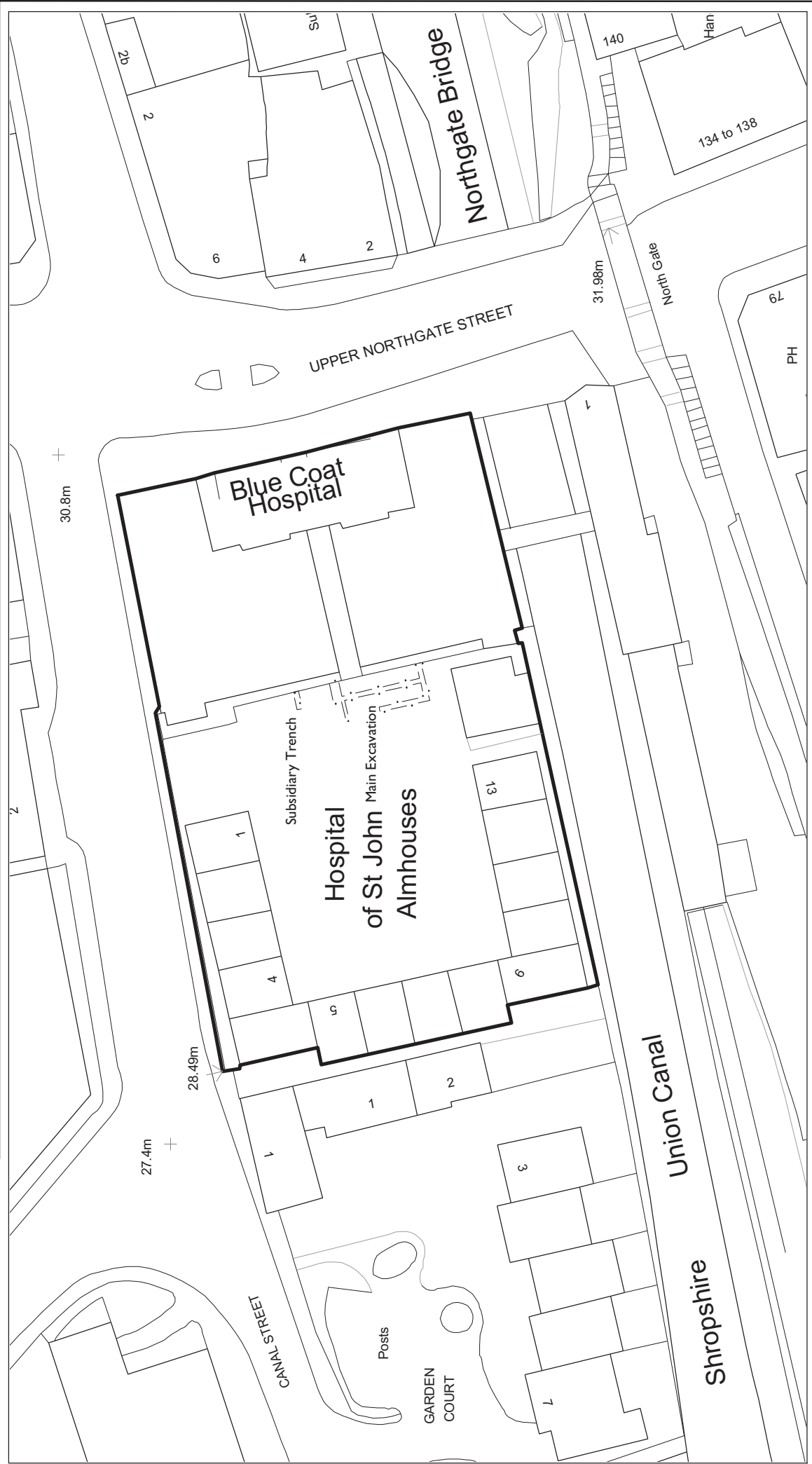
DESCRIPTION // Site Location General

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DOC REF: LPI035C-WBRv1

L-P:ARCHÆOLOGY

FIGURE 2 // Site Location Detailed



Scale 1:500 @ A4

0 25m

PROJECT // LP1035C - Bluecoat Access Ramp

DESCRIPTION // Site Location Detailed

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L-P:ARCHAEOLOGY



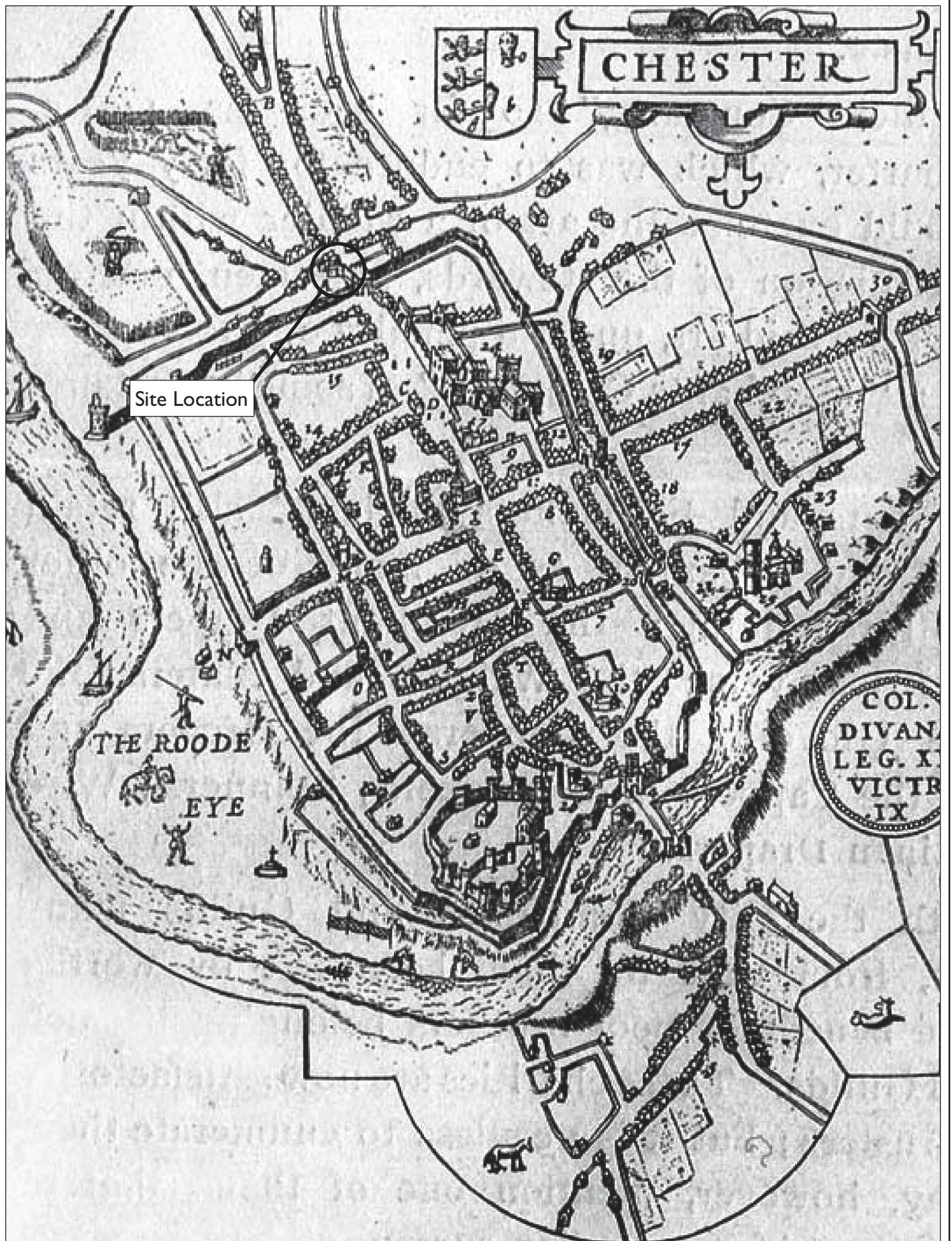
Not to scale. For illustration only.



PROJECT // 01035C - Bluecoat Access Ramp

DESCRIPTION // Braun & Hogenbergs plan of Chester 1581

FIGURE 4 // Speed 1610



Not to scale. For illustration only.

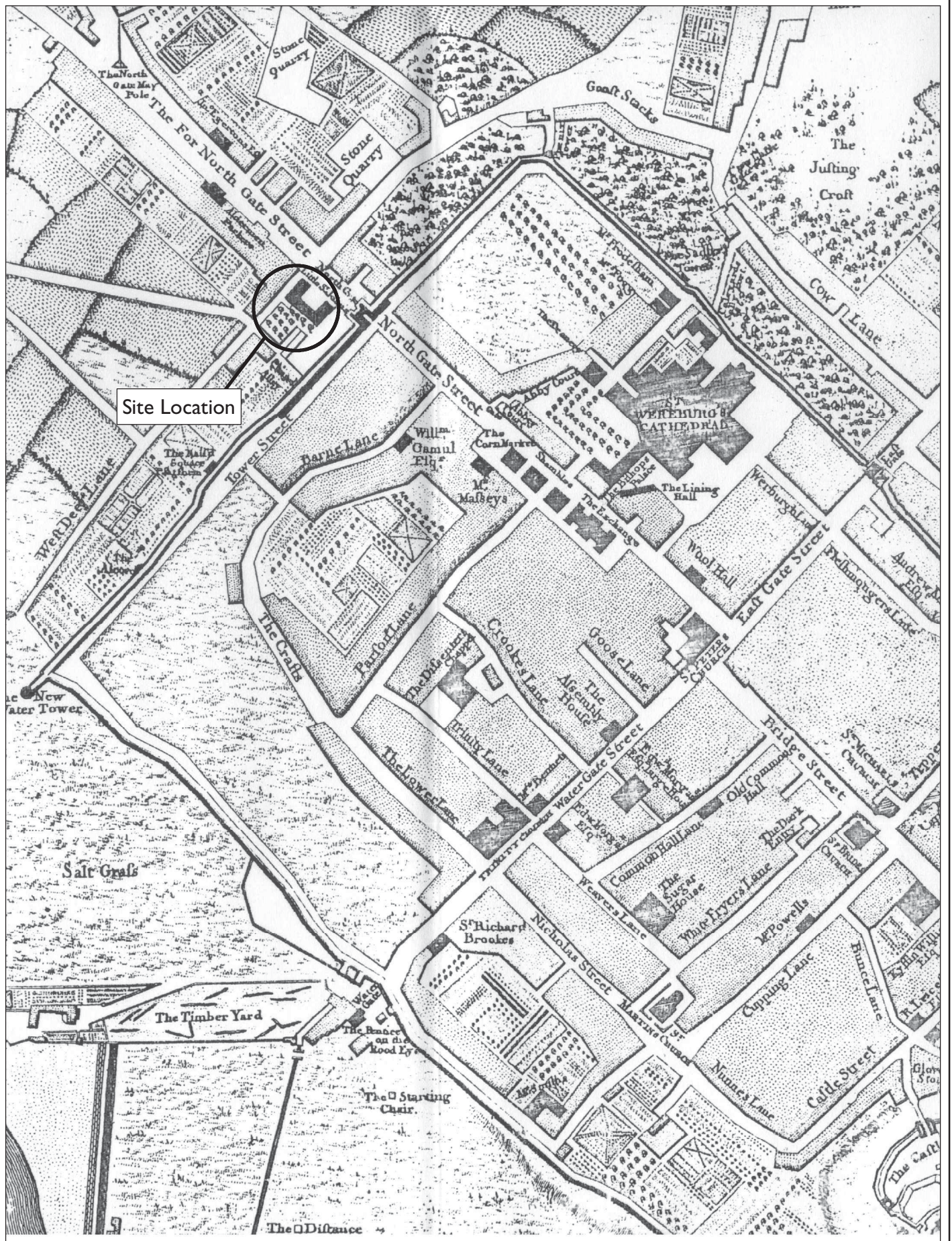
PROJECT // 1035C - Bluecoat Access Ramp

DESCRIPTION // Speed's plan of Chester 1610

DOC REF: LPI035C-WBR-v1

L-P:ARCHÆOLOGY

FIGURE 5 // Lavaux 1745



Not to scale. For illustration only.



PROJECT // 1035C - Bluecoat Access Ramp

DESCRIPTION // Lavaux plan of Chester 1745

FIGURE 6 // Stockdale 1796



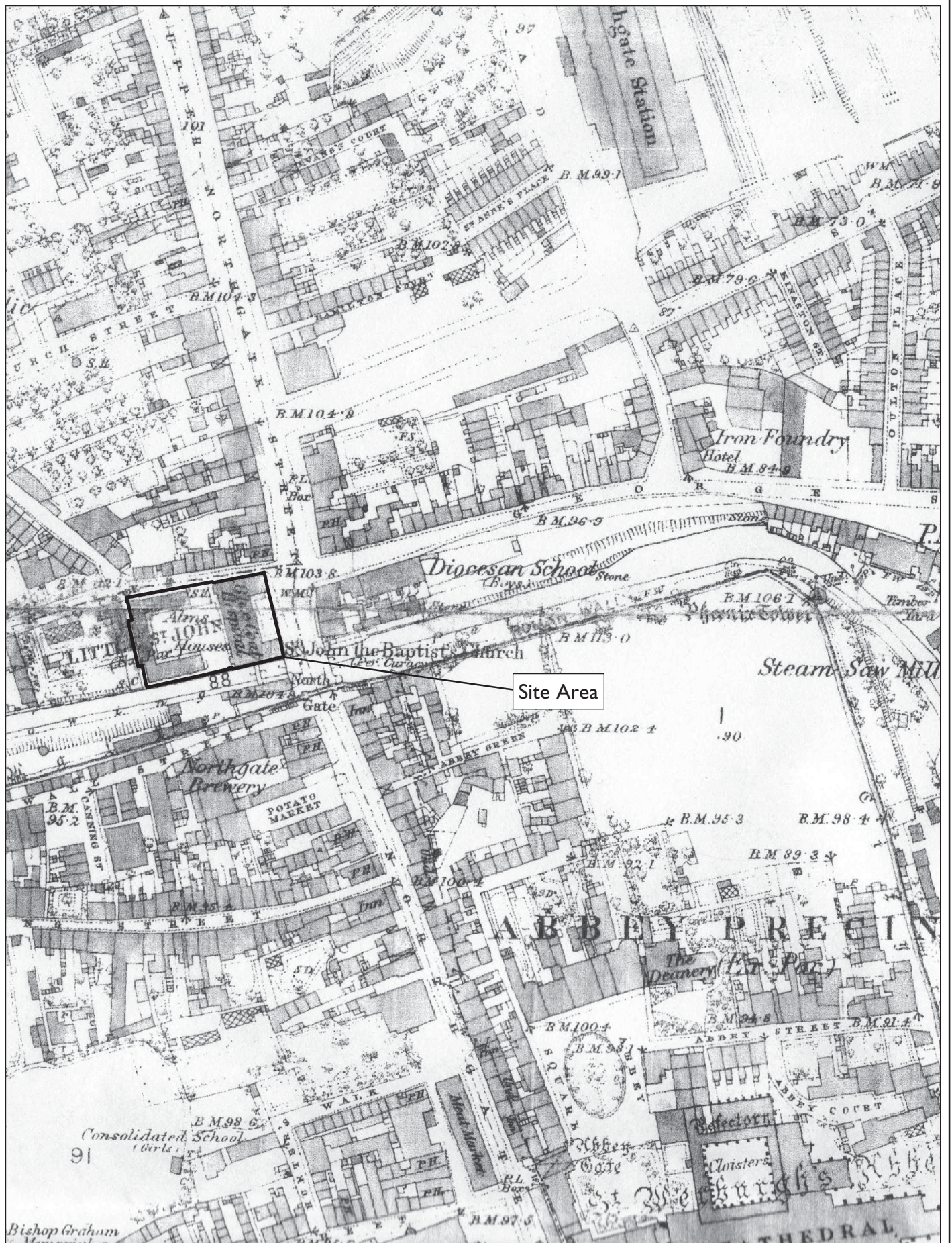
Not to scale. For illustration only.



PROJECT // 1035C - Bluecoat Access Ramp

DESCRIPTION // Stockdale's plan of Chester 1796

FIGURE 7 // Ordnance Survey 1872



Scale 1:2000 @ A4

0 100m

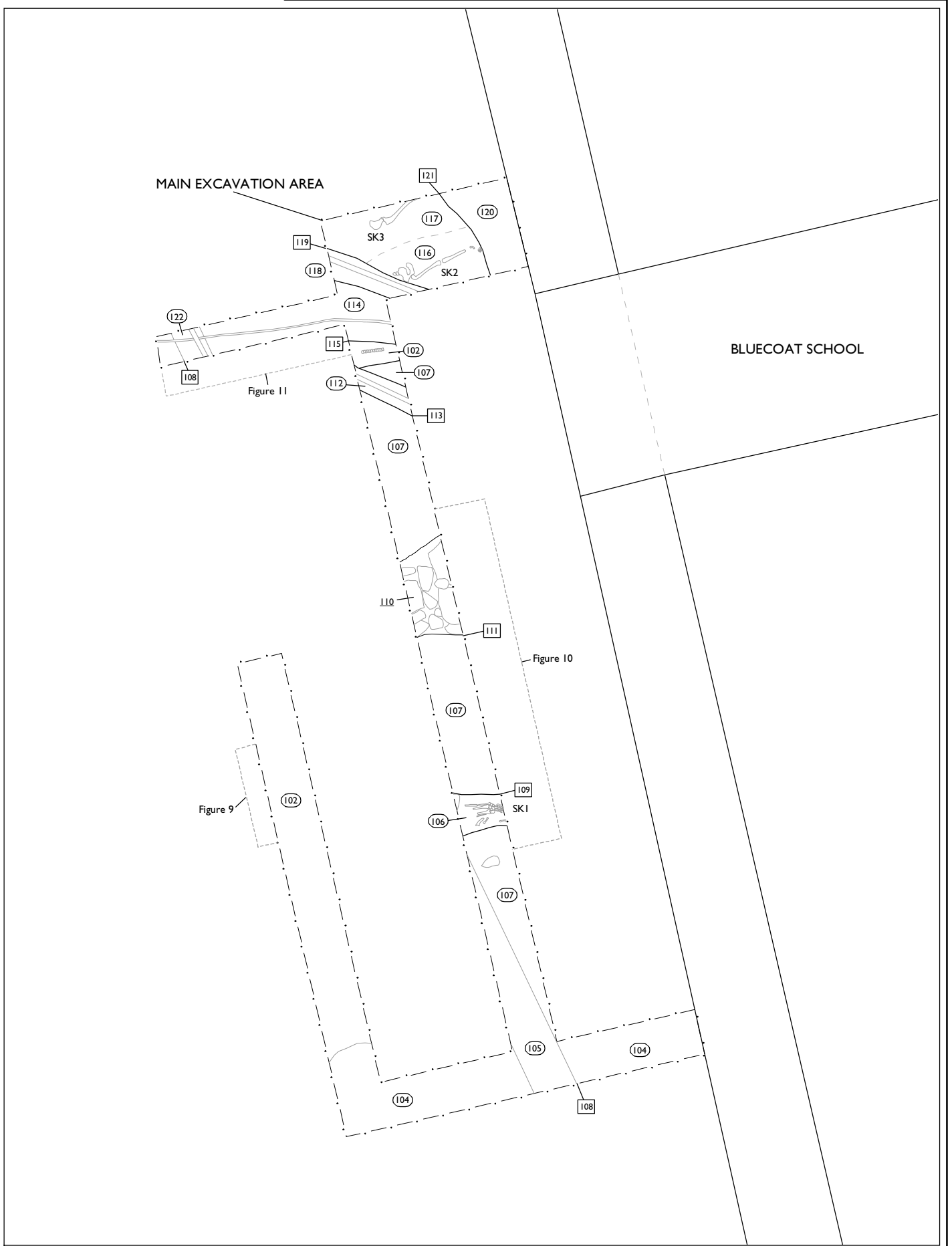


PROJECT // 1035C - Bluecoat Access Ramp

DESCRIPTION // Ordnance Survey map of Chester 1872

DOC REF: LPI0035C-WBR-v1 L-P:ARCHAEOLOGY

FIGURE 8 // Excavation Plan



Scale 1:50 @ A4

0 1m



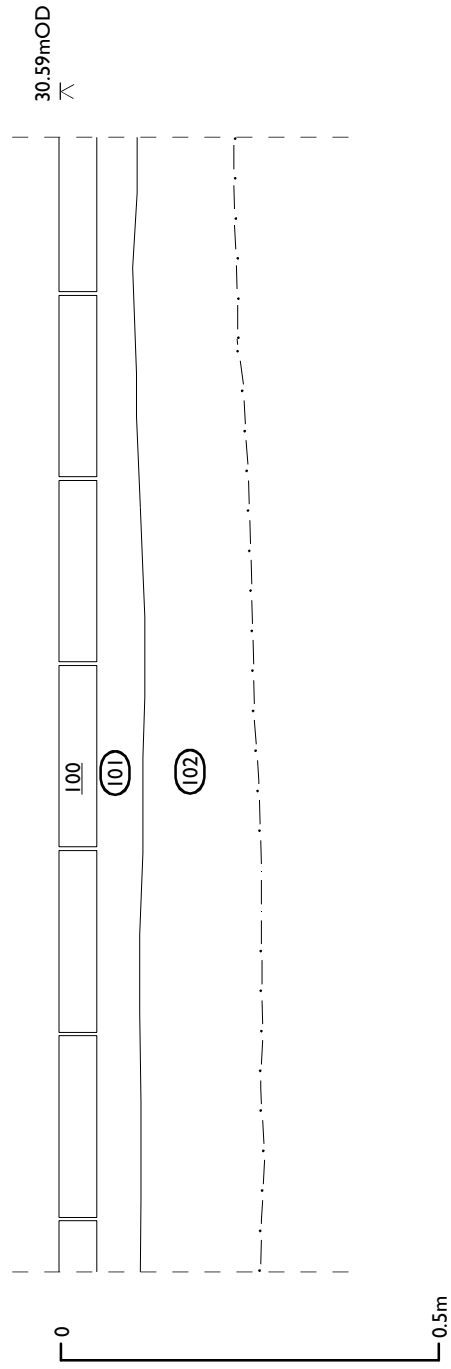
PROJECT // LPI035C - Bluecoat Access Ramp

DESCRIPTION // Excavation Plan

DOC REF: LPI035C-WBRv1

L-P:ARCHÆOLOGY

FIGURE 9 // East Facing Section



Scale 1:10 @ A4

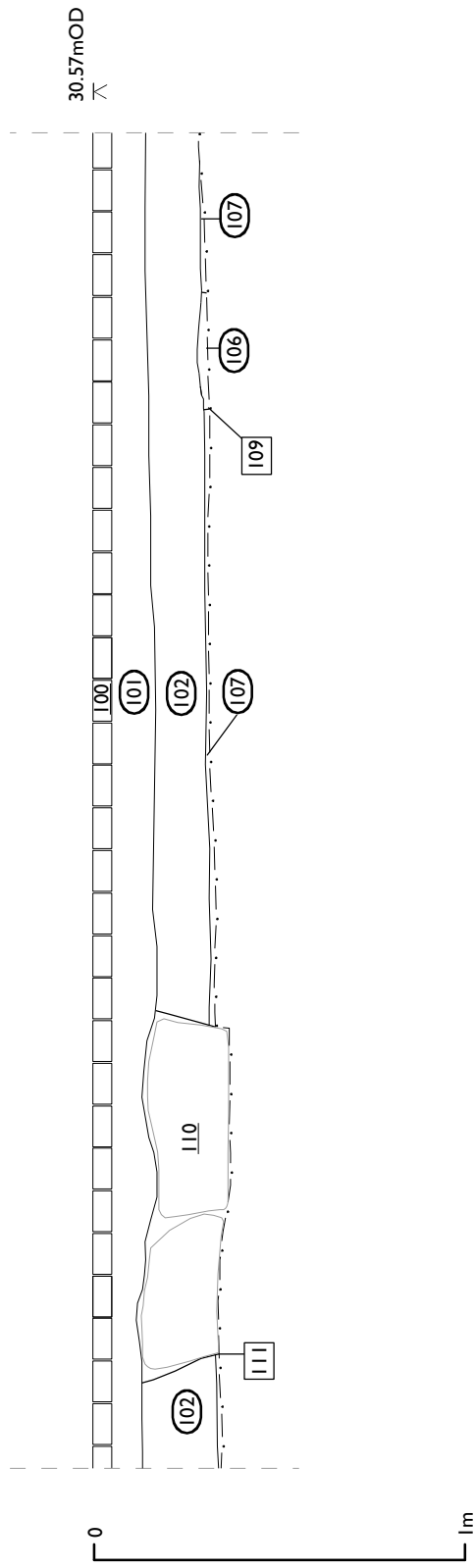
PROJECT // LP1035C - Bluecoat Access Ramp

DESCRIPTION // East Facing Section of West Footing

DOC REF: LP1035C-WBRv1

L-P:ARCHAEOLOGY

FIGURE 10 // West Facing Section



Scale 1:20 @ A4

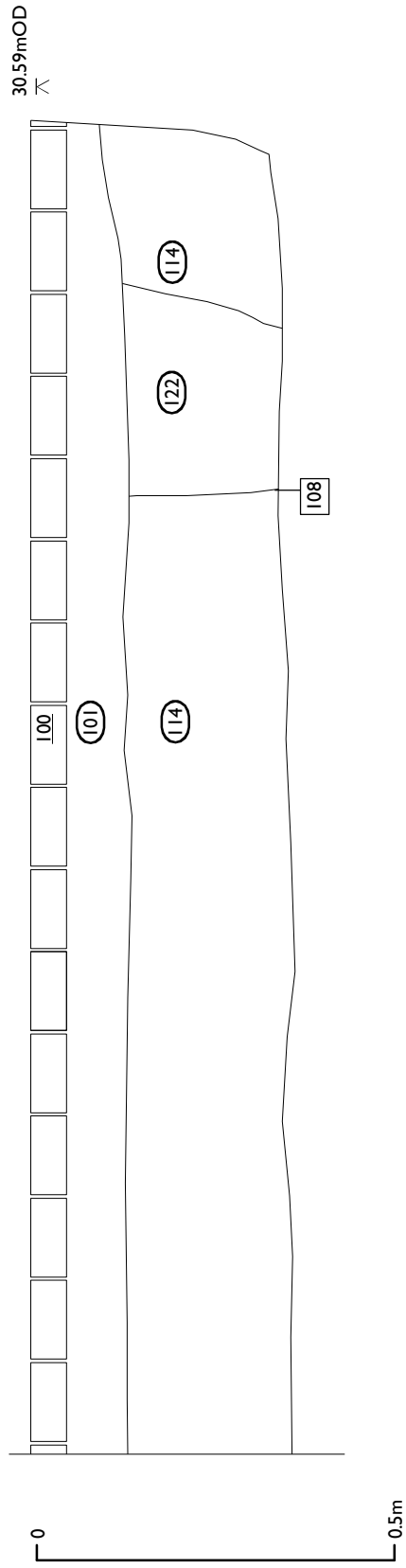
PROJECT // LP1035C - Bluecoat Access Ramp

DESCRIPTION // West Facing Section of East Footing

DOC REF: LP1035C-WBRv1

L-P:ARCHAEOLOGY

FIGURE 11 // North Facing Section



Scale 1:10 @ A4

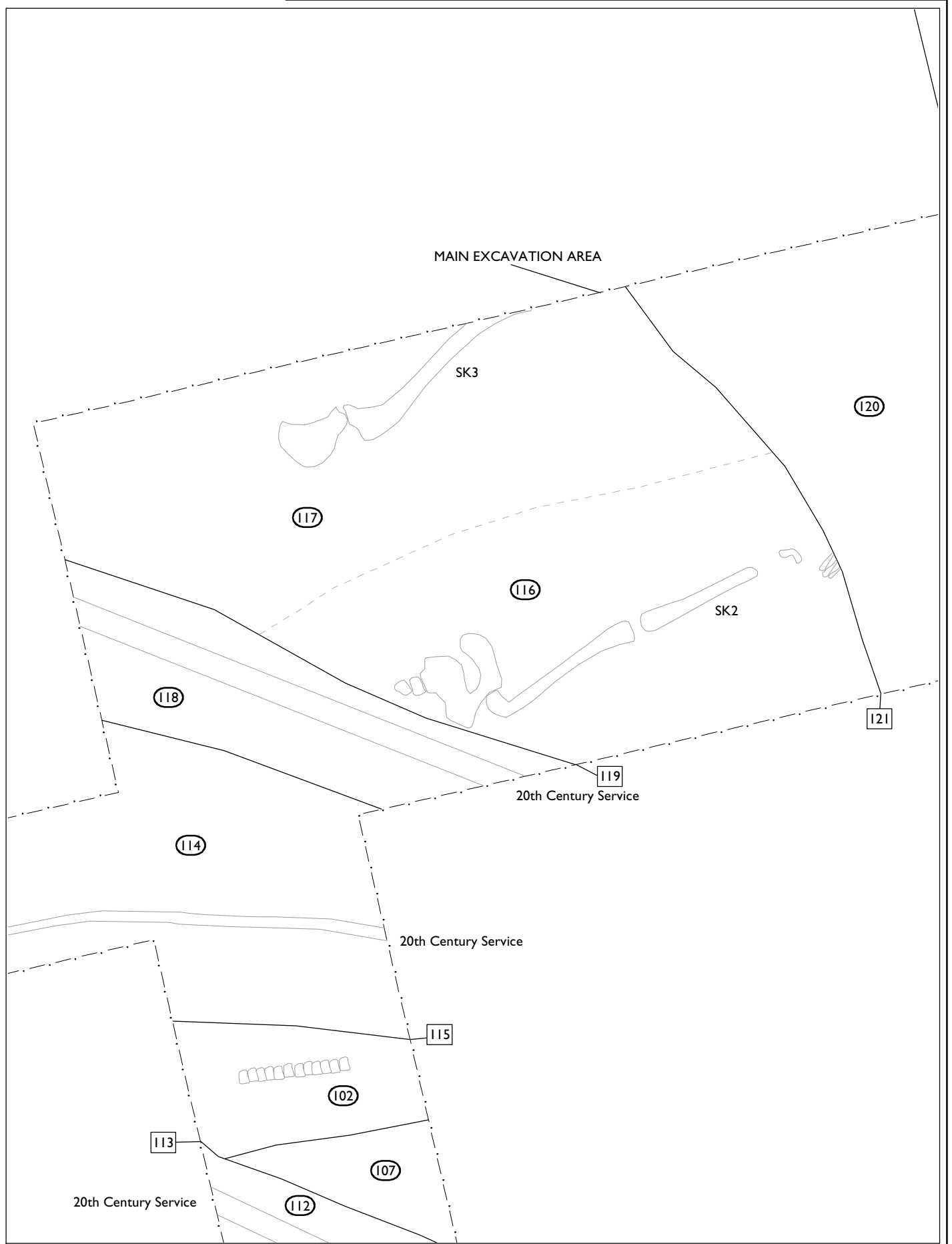
PROJECT // LP1035C - Bluecoat Access Ramp

DESCRIPTION // North Facing Section of North Footing

DOC REF: LP1035C-WBRv1

L-P:ARCHAEOLOGY

FIGURE 12 // Plan of SK2 & SK3



Scale 1:10 @ A4

0 0.5m



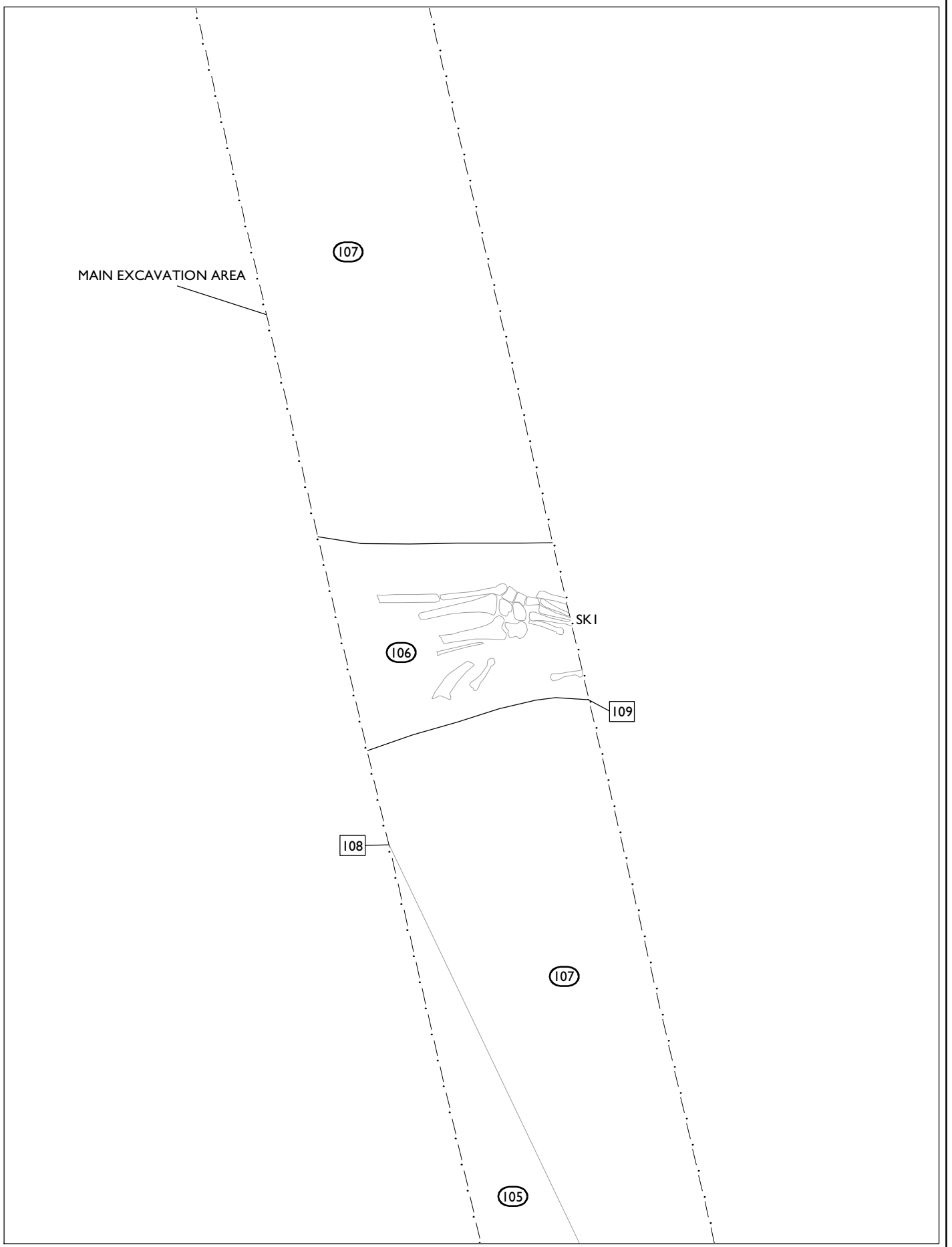
PROJECT // LPI035C - Bluecoat Access Ramp

DESCRIPTION // Plan of SK2 & SK3

DOC REF: LPI035C-WBRv1

L-P:ARCHAEOLOGY

FIGURE 13 // Plan of SK I



Scale 1:10 @ A4

0 0.5m



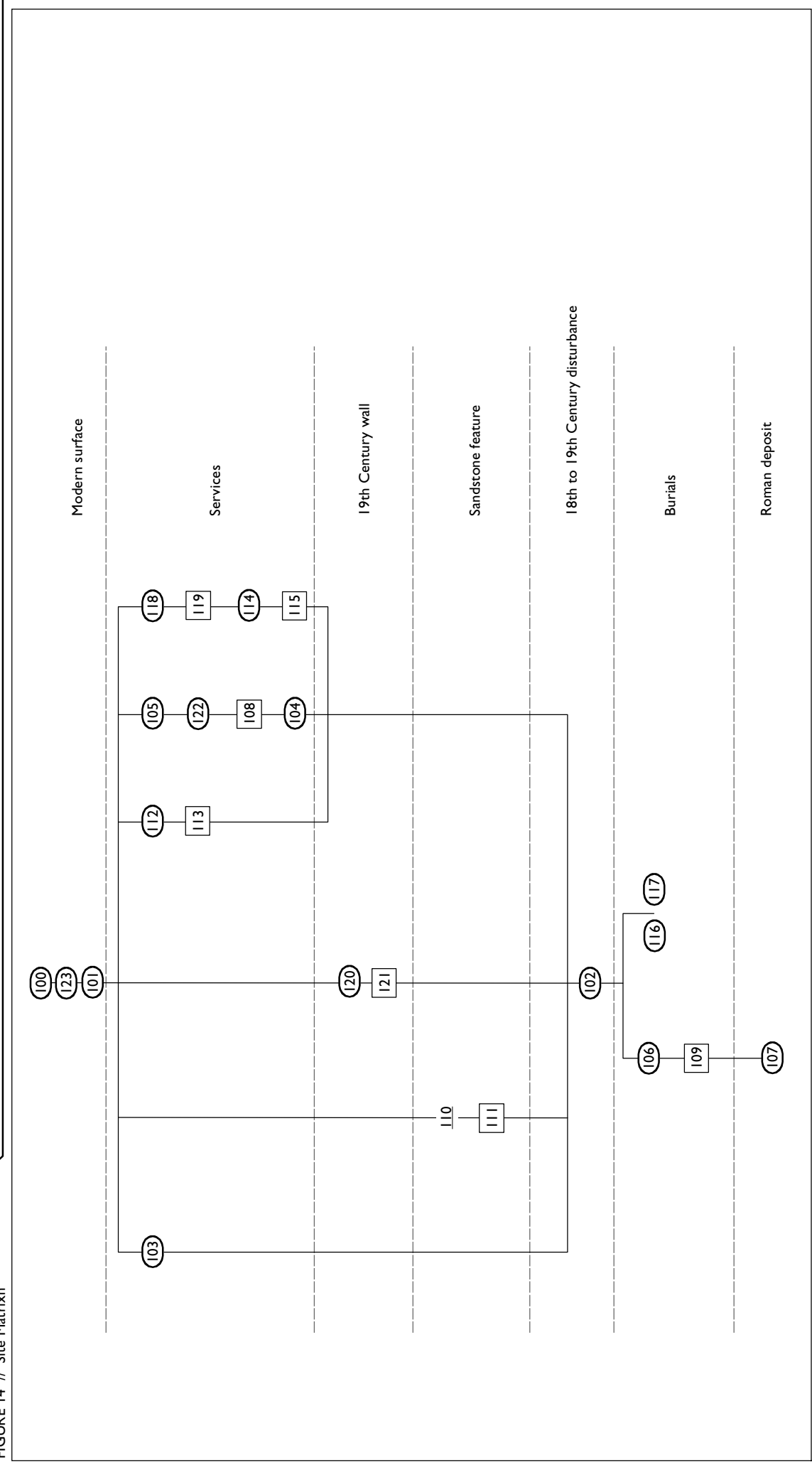
PROJECT // LPI035C - Bluecoat Access Ramp

DESCRIPTION // Plan of SK I

DOC REF: LPI035C-WBRv1

L-P:ARCHÆOLOGY

FIGURE 14 // Site Matrix



- 100 Context
- 105 Structure
- 110 Cut

PROJECT // 1035C - Bluecoat Access Ramp

DESCRIPTION // Site matrix

DOC REF: LP1035C-WBR-v1

L-P:ARCHAEOLOGY

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ORDNANCE SURVEY, 1958. *Cheshire Sheet xxxviii.ii*, Scale 1:1,250. Surveyed 1956-7

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LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

APPENDIX 2

ST JOHN'S ALMSHOUSES

Number: 469944

Location: ALMSHOUSES OF HOSPITAL OF ST JOHN BAPTIST, UPPER NORTHGATE STREET
Grade II

Almshouses of Hospital of St John Baptist, Formerly Listed as Almshouses.

Fourteen almshouses rebuilt 1854 by Morris and Hobson for Trustees of Hospital of St John Baptist in place of 13 almshouses reputedly founded by Earl Ranulph III of Chester 1181-1232.

Stone-dressed orange brick; hipped grey slate roof. U-shaped court accessed through Bluecoat School. Two storeys with six almshouses in central block and four almshouses each in south and north wing which project toward Bluecoat School.

Stone plinth. Paired 4-panel doors in Tuscan cases, each with side and central pilasters, friezes and cornices. A stone-cased segmental-arched sash to ground floor of each almshouse. The first storey has a stone-cased rectangular sash above each ground floor sash and a pair above each pair of doors. Stone cornice; 8-course brick parapet with simple stone coping. Symmetrically-placed ridge chimneys have original pots. Courtyard of blue paviments between almshouses and Bluecoat School.

BLUECOAT SCHOOL

Number: 469945

Location: BLUECOAT SCHOOL AND FORMER CHAPEL OF ST JOHN BAPTIST,

Grade II*

Bluecoat School and former Chapel of St John Baptist, Formerly Listed as The Bluecoat School and Church of Little St John.

Chapel, orphanage and school. Founded 1700 by Bishop Stratford and built 1717. Stone-dressed orange brick; hipped grey slate roof. U-shaped.

Two storeys; symmetrical; plinth. Central block has pedimented entrance bay with two bays to each side; second and fourth bays recessed. Central bay has through passage in basket-arched painted-stone Tuscan case carrying shouldered round arched niche with statue of Bluecoat boy 1854 by Edward Richardson.

A basket-arched 19-pane sash in pilastered case to each side of entrance; a narrower bay to each side has door of 6 fielded panels in plastered case with blank panel above. Second-storey floor band; blank panel to entrance bay; two square 6-pane sashes to each side have simple stone cases with keys. Cornice; clock in central pediment; parapet with simple stone cap. Central octagonal belfry cupola has round-arched bell-openings and copper roof. Projecting south and north wing, each with two basket-arched 16-pane sashes to court in ground floor and two square 6-pane sashes to first floor, all in cases as in central block.

Front of south wing has basket-arched window to former Chapel of St John, arch breaking floor band, with two mullions, central glazing bar, two horizontal bars and impost transom; case with panelled pilasters. North wing has basement window projecting above plinth and window of 46 panes, including fanlight, in case matching that to chapel. The south face has six fixed lights of 16 panes with 1-pane hopper inserts; 6-pane first floor sashes above, all in cases as to the front; plinth, floor band, cornice and parapet. The north face, similar to south face, has a door and windows also to basement, facing Canal Street.

The rear is simply expressed. Long, narrow area to basement has quarter-landing and 10 steps, now concrete, down to basement; access to central passage bridges area. Wrought-iron railing to area has round knob-topped balusters on painted stone plinth. Brick reveals to passage arch with panelled imposts; keystone. The ground floor has two segmental-arched 12-pane flush sashes and an altered, deeper, 15-pane sash north of passage; a square bay window of 4;4;8;4;4-panes with pilaster mullions of stone; two segmental-arched 15-pane sashes and bay window, as to north, south of passage. Brick floor band; 11 recessed 9-pane fixed lights to second storey in segmental-arched openings; cornice parapet and plain stone coping; two lateral chimneys.

OSTEOARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX 3

HEPBURN, S. 2011. *Assessment of the Human Remains Excavated from Bluecoat School Chester, 2011*

Introduction

During ground works for the construction of an access ramp at Bluecoat School, Upper Northgate Street, Chester, three partial burials and a number of disarticulated human remains were recovered. The three burials were roughly orientated East-West (feet in the East), and all three had been severely truncated, so that only parts of the lower limbs remain, only SK1 had a visible grave cut. The majority of the remains were recovered from two disturbed contexts (102) and (107) which appear to indicate periods of construction on the site.

The remains recovered from site represent a minimum of thirteen individuals, of which nine were adults and four juveniles. This number was achieved using guidelines set out in McKinley (2004) with the aid of skeletal recording sheets.

Preservation

The remains from this site were poorly preserved, the burials in particular. Sk1 (106) was the only burial to have a recordable grave cut [109], measuring 0.40m wide by 0.30m deep. Due to its orientation within the trench only the feet and the distal ends of both the left and right tibiae and fibulae were present, the rest of the lower limbs appear to have been removed/damaged in antiquity. A number of disarticulated remains were also recovered with this burial; they could have come, either from deposit (102) which was directly above it, or from deposit (107) which was cut by the burial.

SK2 (116) and SK3 (117) were positioned roughly side by side, and were both truncated to the west by [119] a modern service trench and to the east by [121] a foundation trench for a retaining wall of the 19th century almshouse. Due to the fact that only the lower right side of each burial survived, it is possible that SK3 originally cut SK2, although no evidence of a cut remains.

A total of 353 pieces of human bone were recovered from contexts (102) and (107), the table below shows the breakdown of bone represented among the fragments. Using the system of bone surface preservation recommended by McKinley (2004) majority of the bone was recorded as Grade 2-3, with the exception of SK3 whose preservation was recorded as Grade 4-5. The edges and ends of many of the long bones were damaged; and the fragmentary nature of the bone has greatly reduced the amount of metrical information that could be derived from these remains. It has been possible to fit many of the fragments together, and as a result reduce the minimum number of individuals present.

	Number of Fragments					
	(102)			(107)		
	Left	Right	–	Left	Right	
Skull	–	–	55	–	–	
Vertebrae	–	–	32(A),1(J)	–	–	
Ribs	–	–	3	–	–	
Scapula	–	2	5	–	3	
Clavicle	2	–	–	1(A),1(J)	–	
Humerus	3	1	–	–	1	
Radius	–	1	–	–	2	
Ulna	1(A),2(J)	2	1	–	1	
Carpals	–	–	–	–	1	
Pelvis	–	–	4	–	–	
Femur	4(A),1(J)	2(A),3(J)	4	–	–	
Tibia	1(A),1(J)	2	–	–	–	
Fibula	–	–	–	–	–	
Tarsals	11	10	14	4	1	
Metatarsals	13	7	–	5	2	
Phalanges	–	–	19	–	–	
Unidentifiable long bone	–	–	35	–	–	
Total No. of Fragments	242			111		
Minimum No. of Individuals	7 4 Adults, 3 Juveniles			2 1 Adult, 1 Juvenile		

Age and Sex Determination

Due to the nature of the bones it is not possible to offer any estimation as to the age the individuals present. The majority of the bone is robust; and where the ends are present epiphyseal fusion is evident, marking them as adult. The exceptions to this are the 12 fragments of juvenile bone (1-12 years old) aged using Buikstra and Ubelaker (1994). They represent 2 left radius, 2 left ulnas, 4 femurs (3 right, 1 left), 1 left tibia epiphysis, and part of S1 vertebrae from context (102), and a left clavicle from (107).

The remains were sexed using the dimorphic aspects stated in Bass (1995). SK2 (116) was the only burial that could be sexed due to the partial survival of the right pelvic innominate, which displayed masculine characteristics (narrow sciatic notch, and narrow subpubic angle). Of the skull fragments, two of the mandible fragments from (102) displayed masculine characteristics (both had square shaped chins), and the 29 skull fragments that could be pieced together from (107) showed feminine characteristics (absence of supraorbital ridges, and a small mastoid process).

Pathology/Trauma

Almost all of the vertebrae recovered from (102) and SK2 showed to some degree signs of new bone growth and porosity of the vertebral body, both of which are classic signs of osteo-arthritic degeneration (Waldron and Rogers, 1991). Osteo-arthritic changes were also visible on a calcaneus and talus from a right foot, where the two bones sat together eburnation was evident and the bone was slightly porous. SK2 also had new growth on the cortical bone of the femur, in particular along the linea aspera. Not enough of the skeleton survives to be able to draw any firm conclusions as to the cause of the osteo-arthritis and new bone growth; it could be a result of trauma, physical action or age.

Two rib fragments from (102) showed possible signs of unhealed fractures with new bone growth on the ends. The distal end of the fibula found in SK2 had a possible healed fracture, where the bone was broken is noticeably thicker to the rest of the fibula shaft, suggesting the fracture had healed slightly displaced, although not enough of the bone survives to be able to say with any certainty.

Several of the long bones recovered from (102) display tool marks on the joint surfaces and shafts, which is consistent with damage caused during the excavation process. None of the marks appear to be fresh and were most likely made in antiquity when then burials were

removed from their original resting places, prior to their re-deposition within the layer.

Dental Health

The dental health of the individuals represented was relatively poor. Where present all the teeth were worn to a certain degree. Caries were present on the left second incisor and the right second premolar of the maxilla fragment from (107) and on the left first incisor on the large maxilla fragment from (102). The teeth on this fragment of maxilla were also quite chipped and had an uneven wear pattern compared to the others, cause unknown.

Calculus was present on many of the teeth (recorded according to Brothwell 1981), but this did not appear to have led to any infection or inflammation of the gums, no periodontal disease was recorded. Tooth loss was noted on two jaw fragments (left mandible and left maxilla) from (102). On both fragments, the premolars to the molars were missing and the bone had remodelled itself to fill in the empty sockets, indicating that the individual had lived with the tooth loss for quite some time before death, there was no evidence as to what caused the loss.

Summary

The three truncated adult burials may have been associated with the St John's Hospital built in the 1190s, which was located on the site before the Bluecoat School, and was thought to have had its own burial ground (Laughton 2008:74). The disarticulated bones from (102) had several instances of trauma and many showed signs of osteo-arthritis, which would be consistent with the sick and poor patients that St John's Hospital was required to take in. The tool marks present on some of the bones from this deposit represent one of the periods of construction that took place on the site from 1714 onwards. As burial Sk1 was cut into context (107) the remains in this deposit could represent an earlier phase of occupation on the site.

Recommendations

The date of the bones affects the importance of the information that they can produce, if they are Romano British in date even though they are not complete burials and mainly disarticulated remains, then they would be worth further study due to the absence of remains from this era in the archaeological record. If the bone is medieval or post-medieval in date, then further study would have been beneficial, due to the possible link to St John's Hospital. Although as it stands, the fragmentary nature of the bones and the highly disturbed condition

of the burials, means that there would be little, or no value in undertaking any further work in addition to the assessment report. C14 dating would be able to confirm the date of the remains, and would answer the question as to whether further study is necessary.

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OASIS FORM

APPENDIX 4

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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OASIS ID: Iparchae1-119020

Project details

Project name	Bluecoat Access Ramp
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring of a new disabled access ramp to St John's Almshouses to the rear of the Bluecoat School, Chester.
Project dates	Start: 30-08-2011 End: 08-02-2012
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	CHE/UNG 11 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)
Site status	Conservation Area
Current Land use	Residential 1 - General Residential
Monument type	BURIAL Post Medieval
Significant Finds	VESSEL Roman
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CHESHIRE CHESTER CHESTER Bluecoat School
Postcode	CH1 4EH
Study area	50.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	SJ 340365 366711 52.9230787801 -2.9812754047 52 55 23 N 002 58 52 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 35.00m Max: 36.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	L - P : Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body

Project design originator	L - P : Archaeology
Project director/manager	Blair Poole
Project supervisor	Blair Poole
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Chester Municipal Charities

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Grosvenor Museum
Physical Archive ID	CHE/UNG 11
Physical Contents	'Animal Bones','Ceramics','Glass','Human Bones'
Digital Archive Exists?	No
Paper Archive recipient	Grosvenor Museum
Paper Contents	'Animal Bones','Ceramics','Human Bones','Survey'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Drawing','Map','Matrices','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Survey'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological Watching Brief Report for Bluecoat Access Ramp
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Poole, B.
Other bibliographic details	LP1035C-WBR-V1.2
Date	2012
Issuer or publisher	L - P : Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	Chester
Description	Grey literature report on the results of the archaeological watching brief carried out at the Bluecoat School, Chester.
Entered by	B Poole (b.poole@lparchaeology.com)
Entered on	8 February 2012

OASIS: