

Archaeological Watching Brief report of

UNION STREET CHESTER

For CgMs Consulting Ltd

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Archaeological Watching Brief report of

UNION STREET CHESTER

Client: CgMs Consulting Ltd

Local Authority: Chester City Council

NGR: 341213, 366445

Planning App: 06/01964/FUL

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Abstract

This report contains the results of an Archaeological Watching Brief carried out at Union Street, Chester (341213, 366445).

The Watching Brief was undertaken on the 24th April 2007. Fieldwork was carried out by Claire Statter of L – P : Archaeology.

The investigation comprised monitoring of the excavation of two investigation pits, dug to examine the foundations of the adjoining building.

The Watching Brief revealed both 18th and 19th century deposits. The 18th century deposit being an archaeological build up of material, with the 19th century deposit being a waste deposit from the construction of the adjoining building.

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1. Introduction and Scope of Study

- 1.1. On the 24th April 2007 an archaeological watching brief was carried out at Union Street. The fieldwork was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd.
- 1.2. The site is located at 341213, 366445. (FIGURE 1)
- 1.3. The site is located between Murlain House and the Swimming Baths on Union Street.
- 1.4. The local authority is Chester City Council.
- 1.5. Chester Archaeology issued the site code CHE/UNS 07.
- 1.6. The developer is building sheltered accommodation on the site.
- 1.7. The archaeological site recording was carried out by Claire Statter of L – P : Archaeology.
- 1.8. The investigation comprised the monitoring of the excavation of 2 investigation trenches.
- 1.9. The aims of the archaeological watching brief were;
 - ◆ To make a record of any archaeological deposits or features and to establish their date, character and importance.

2. Planning Background

- 2.1. In November 1990 the Department of the Environment issued PPG 16, “Archaeology and Planning”. This document provides guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the preservation and investigation of archaeological remains.
- 2.2. In considering any planning application for development the local planning authority, Chester City Council, is bound by the policy frameworks provided by Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG 16), and the policies within the Local Plan which was adopted in May 2006.

CHESTER LOCAL PLAN

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 34

Development proposals affecting the site or setting of a site of district or local importance will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the particular site or monument can be preserved in situ or, where this is not feasible, by record.

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 which it possesses.

- 2.3. Full planning permission, reference number 06/01964/FUL, has been granted by Chester City Council with the following condition:

No development shall take place within the application site area until full details of a programme of archaeological work have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority. The archaeological works shall be undertaken/allowed to be undertaken wholly in accordance with the agreed watching brief.

2.4. Mike Morris, Chester City Archaeologist, requested that a Watching Brief was implemented during the excavation of foundation investigation trenches. This report details the results of the Archaeological Watching Brief carried out.

3. Geology and Topography

3.1. Geology

- 3.1.1. The British Geological Survey indicates that the solid geology of the area is Boulder Clay overlaying pebble beds of the Sherwood Sandstone Group. However this information is presented in a low resolution and therefore only gives a general indication of the geology of the area.
- 3.1.2. Previous work carried out in Chester shows the natural bedrock is a red sandstone overlayed by a degraded red sandstone, which in turn is overlayed by red boulder clay.
- 3.1.3. The sandstone bedrock was not seen on this site as the trenches did not extend this far. Boulder clay was however seen in trench 1.

3.2. Topography

- 3.2.1. The River Dee lays approximately 220m to the south of the site.
- 3.2.2. The site is relatively flat, laying at c. 20m OD on a south facing slope (BOURN 2005).

4. Archaeological and Historical Background

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

4.1. It is not the aim of this assessment to present a complete history of Chester from earliest times, nor is it the intention of this report to examine every artefact found in the local area.

4.2. We know from archaeological excavations and cartographic references that Chester is an area of high Roman activity, with a legionary fortress present.

PREHISTORIC

4.3. There has been very little evidence to suggest significant prehistoric settlement activity in the vicinity, although recent finds from Chester Amphitheatre in 2006 may indicate that Iron Age settlement came closer to Chester City than previously thought.

4.4. As the information regarding the known prehistoric landscape around Chester's hinterland develops this picture is changing slightly.

ROMAN

- 4.5. Chester by 84AD had been established as a Roman legionary fortress occupied by the Twentieth legion. The study site lies c. 350m to the east of this fortress.
- 4.6. However the site does lie within the *canabae* of the Roman settlement. This was an area which was occupied outside the fortress and the port. It is thought that this area outlived the fortress itself.
- 4.7. The Cheshire HER records the large amount of Roman activity which we know happened in the area. The records which appear close to the study site include a substantial ditch running north-south through the City Baths to the east of the site (HER 3001/0/107). Finds recovered from this ditch included a statuette of Venus, bronze buckles and coins along with a figure of cupid. Also recovered were a whetstone and leather shoes. A second century amphora was also discovered to the north of the site on Forest Street.
- 4.8. Several archaeological investigations have been carried out within the vicinity of the site area, all revealing evidence of Roman occupation. For example an evaluation was carried out to the south of the study site at the former St. Augustine Convent. The evaluation revealed Roman deposits which were excavated at a depth of c.1.2m below ground level, an adult skeleton was recorded within a grave which had previously been a large north-south orientated ditch of Roman date. This ditch if it extended from the Convent, would cross the study site (GIFFORD & PARTNERS 1994).
- 4.9. Another evaluation which took place to the north of Forest Street identified Roman deposits at between 19.04 – 19.77m OD (BOURN 2005). This is c. 0.5 – 1m below the present ground level of the study site.

EARLY MEDIEVAL

- 4.10. During the 19th century Roberts thought that, following the departure of the bulk of the Roman legionary, Chester may have been part of Wales before 616 AD. When Æthelfrith of Northumbria defeated a Welsh army at the Battle of Chester and probably established the Anglo-Saxon position in the area from then on (ROBERTS 1851). However it is now unclear as to whether or not Wales was a separate nation during the early medieval period.

4.11. In the late 7th century, Saint Werburgh founded a religious institution on the present site of St John's Church, which later became the first cathedral. Her body was removed from Hanbury in Staffordshire in the 9th century and, in order to save it's desecration by Danish marauders, she was reburied in the Abbey of St. Peter & St. Paul in Chester, the present Cathedral (CARRINGTON 1994).

4.12. During this period the walls of Chester were extended and strengthened to protect the city against the Danes, who occupied it for a short time until Alfred seized all the cattle and laid waste to the surrounding land to drive them out (HARDING 2002).

4.13. At the end of the 10th century the new king, Edgar, after having been crowned at Bath, came to Chester where he was rowed up the River Dee by eight minor kings, who then swore fealty and allegiance to him at St John's Church (ROBERTS 1851).

4.14. The Domesday book refers to Chester as:

Paid tax on 50 hides before 1066. 31 1/2 hides which are outside the City, that is 1 1/2 hides beyond the bridge and 2 hides in Newton and Redcliff and the Bishop's Borough, these paid tax with the City.

Before 1066 there were 431 Houses in the City paying tax, and besides these the Bishop had 56 houses paying tax. This City then paid 10 1/2 silver marks; two parts were the Kings, the third the Earl's.

4.15. Archaeological evidence for this period is limited but seems to show the occupation was restricted to within the Roman walls of the city (BOURN 2005).

MEDIEVAL

4.16. During the medieval period Chester was a thriving ecclesiastical and trading area with a prosperous port.

4.17. Historic maps show that medieval Chester was mainly confined within the Roman walls, the site area lies outside of this and therefore no substantial medieval remains have been recorded within the vicinity of our site (BOURN 2005).

POST MEDIEVAL

4.18. Following the invasion of 1066, the Normans took Chester, destroying 200 houses in the city. Hugo d'Avranches, the first Norman earl, William's nephew built a motte and bailey near the river, probably as a defence against the Welsh. This was rebuilt

in stone by Henry II in 1245 and now stands as Chester Castle (LANGTREE & COMYNS 2001).

- 4.19. The first earl had a Benedictine monastery dedicated to Saint Werburgh in 1092 on the site of a church of c660AD dedicated to St Peter and St Paul. The monastery was dissolved under Henry VIII in 1540 and was rededicated to Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary to become Chester Cathedral (CARRINGTON 1994).
- 4.20. During this period the walls around Chester were renovated and extended to include other parts of the growing city. The site area however remained outside of the city walls.
- 4.21. It is unclear from historic maps as to when the site itself became occupied. It is not until Hunter & May's plan of Chester dated 1789 that a building is clearly depicted on the site. However by Wood's Plan of Chester dated 1833 the site is again shown as vacant (BOURN 2005).
- 4.22. The 1st edition OS map shows the site being occupied by Tanyard Court with a small building in the northwest corner. By 1911 the OS map shows 2 isolated buildings in its place it can be assumed that the small building as noted above had been previously demolished. The next map depicting the site area was published in 1959 and depicts the current buildings which occupy the site (BOURN 2005). It is unclear as to what buildings if any occupied the site between these dates.

5. Methodology

5.1.The watching brief consisted of archaeological monitoring of 2 foundation investigation trenches adjacent to the eastern wall of the site, butting the City Baths.

5.2.Standard L – P : Archaeology field practice for an Archaeological Watching Brief was employed.

6. Results

6.1. The location of the investigation trenches can be seen on FIGURE 3.

TRENCH 1

6.2. Trench 1 was located 11.5m from Forest Street and measured 1.5m along the eastern boundary of the site and 1.8m wide. The trench was excavated to a depth of 2.6m below ground level (BGL) (FIGURE 4).



Plate 1: South facing section of Trench 1

6.3. The first context encountered was the layer of concrete, (101), which made up the floor this measured a depth of 0.15m. Underlying the concrete was a cream in colour silty gravel, (102), which will have been a make up deposit brought on to site for this purpose. Deposit (102) measured 0.25m in thickness.

6.4. Sealed in by (102) was (103), a black clay silt deposit. This deposit was present across the whole trench and measured a depth of 1.1m. Within this deposit were small pieces of red brick and large amounts of 19th century pottery, for example large storage jars. It is unclear as to what this deposit represents however, it is possible that it is part of a rubbish dump made up of material removed from the adjacent City Baths building when a cellar was excavated there to house the pump house.

6.5. Below (103) lay (104) a thin lens of an orange coloured deposit. This measured maximum thickness of 0.12m however, due to the depth of the trench at this point

and the loose sections, it was not safe to enter the trench to establish the form of this deposit.

6.6. Underlying (104) was (105) a firm dark brown black blue clay. It could be seen from the top of the trench that this deposit was waterlogged. This deposit measured a thickness of 0.7m, recovered from it were 2 timbers with the nails still present. It was unclear as to whether or not these timbers were horizontal or vertical. However, similar looking timbers could be seen in the east facing section suggesting that the planks recovered had been horizontal. It is thought that these timbers were joists of a 19th century date.



Plate 2: Timber recovered from (105)

6.7. Sealed in by (105) lay (106) the natural mid brown clay. The trench was bottomed into this deposit at a depth of 2.6m below ground level.

TRENCH 2

6.8. Trench 2 was located 7m from Forest Street and measured 1.2m along the eastern site boundary wall and 2m wide. This trench reached a maximum depth of 0.75m BGL (FIGURE 5).



Plate 3: South facing section of Trench 2

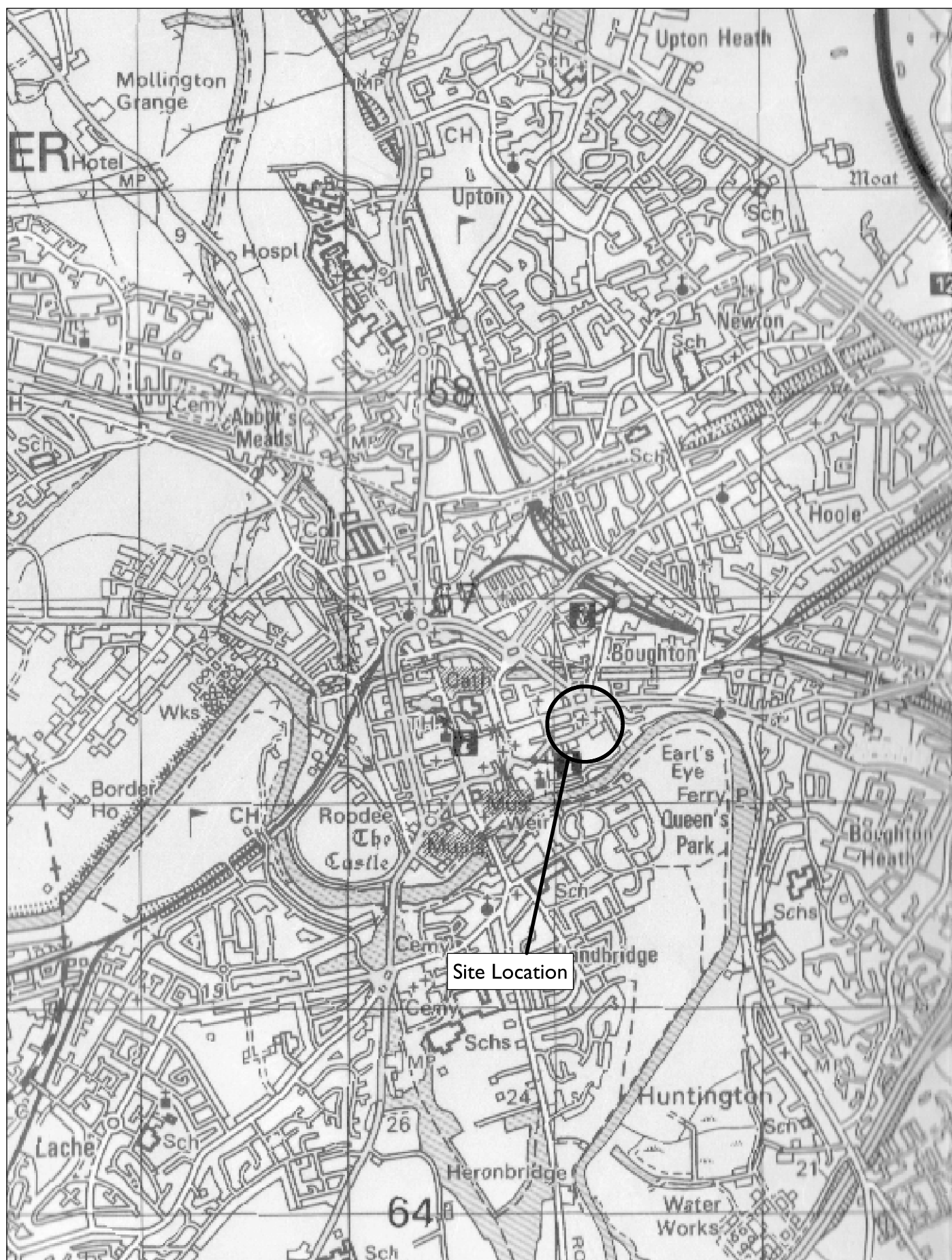
- 6.9. The first context encountered was, as in trench 1, the concrete surface. This was given context number (201) and reached a depth of 0.15m. Underlying the (201) lay (202) a similar deposit to that of (102), however it also contained small fragments of floor red floor tile. None of these floor tiles were intact which would suggest that they had once comprised a floor but had been reused as a makeup layer.
- 6.10. Sealed in by (202) lay (203) a firm mid to dark brown silty clay. This deposit covered the entire trench and reached a depth of 0.4m, however, its full extent is unknown as the trench was not excavated any deeper. This deposit had charcoal inclusions along with 18th century ceramic, bone and clay pipe.
- 6.11. The finds from context (203) were studied by Julie Edwards of Chester Archaeology for further dating. The finds included a piece of stone glazed whiteware and some black glazed ware. These pieces, along with several others, indicated that this deposit dates to the middle 50 years of the 18th century.

7. Summary and Conclusions

- 7.1. This report contains the results of an archaeological watching brief on the site of Union Street, Chester.
- 7.2. The watching brief revealed 18th and 19th century deposits underlying modern concrete.
- 7.3. Due to the nature of the deposits it can be seen that the 19th century deposit, within trench 1, relates to a material brought on to site possibly from the construction of the adjoining City Baths building.
- 7.4. The 18th century deposit appears to be a built up of material over a period of time rather than a discrete event.
- 7.5. From the results and locations of the trenches it can be said that the southern end of the site area, containing trench 1, has been disturbed within its recent past. Whereas the extreme north of the site appears to have little disturbance, as in trench 2.

FIGURES

FIGURE I // Site Location General



Scale 1:25,000 @ A4

0 1,500m



PROJECT // 0578C - Union Street, Chester

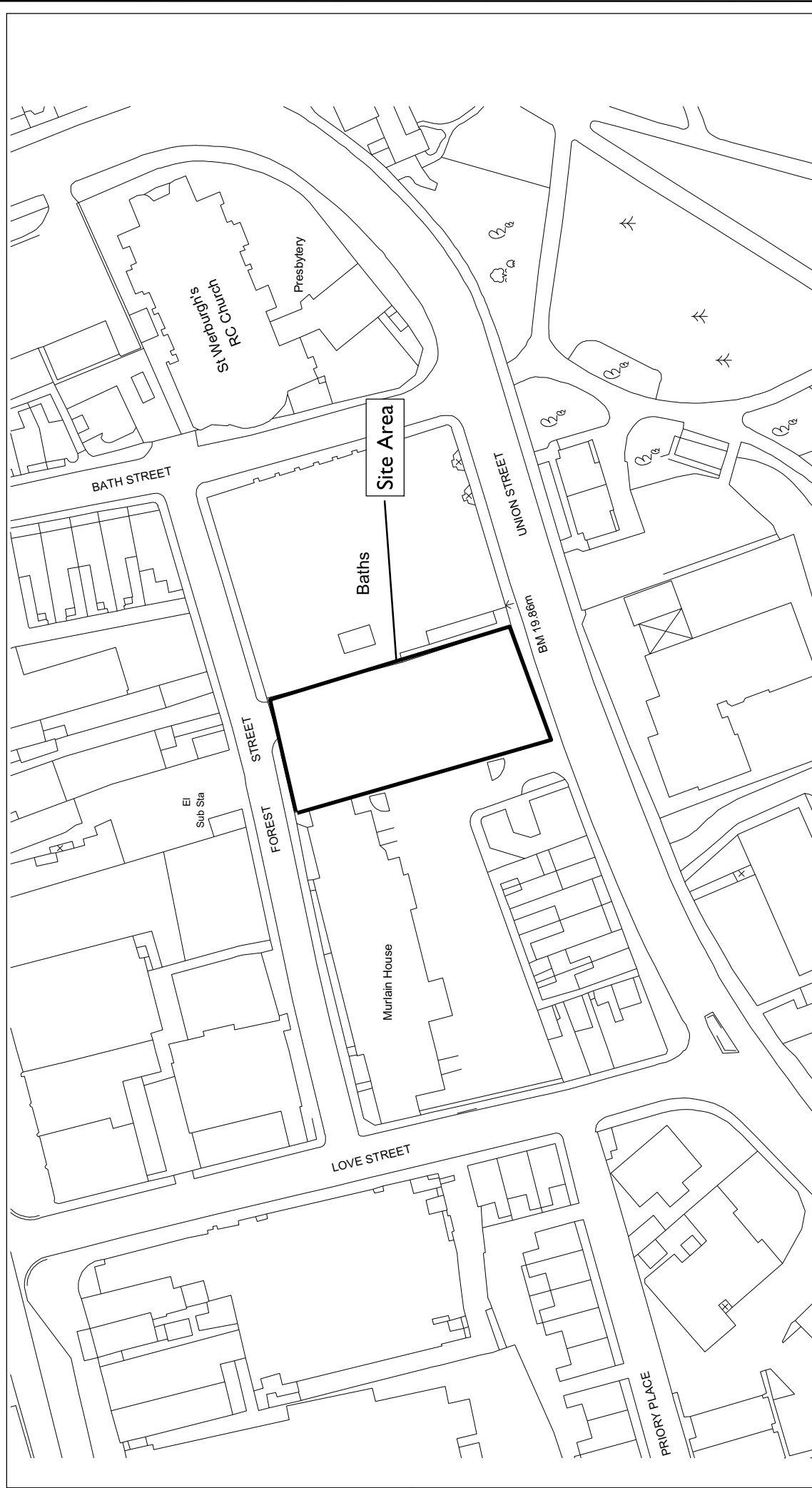
DESCRIPTION // Site Location General

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FIGURE 2 // Site location detailed



Scale 1:1,000 @ A4

PROJECT // 0578C- Union Street, Chester

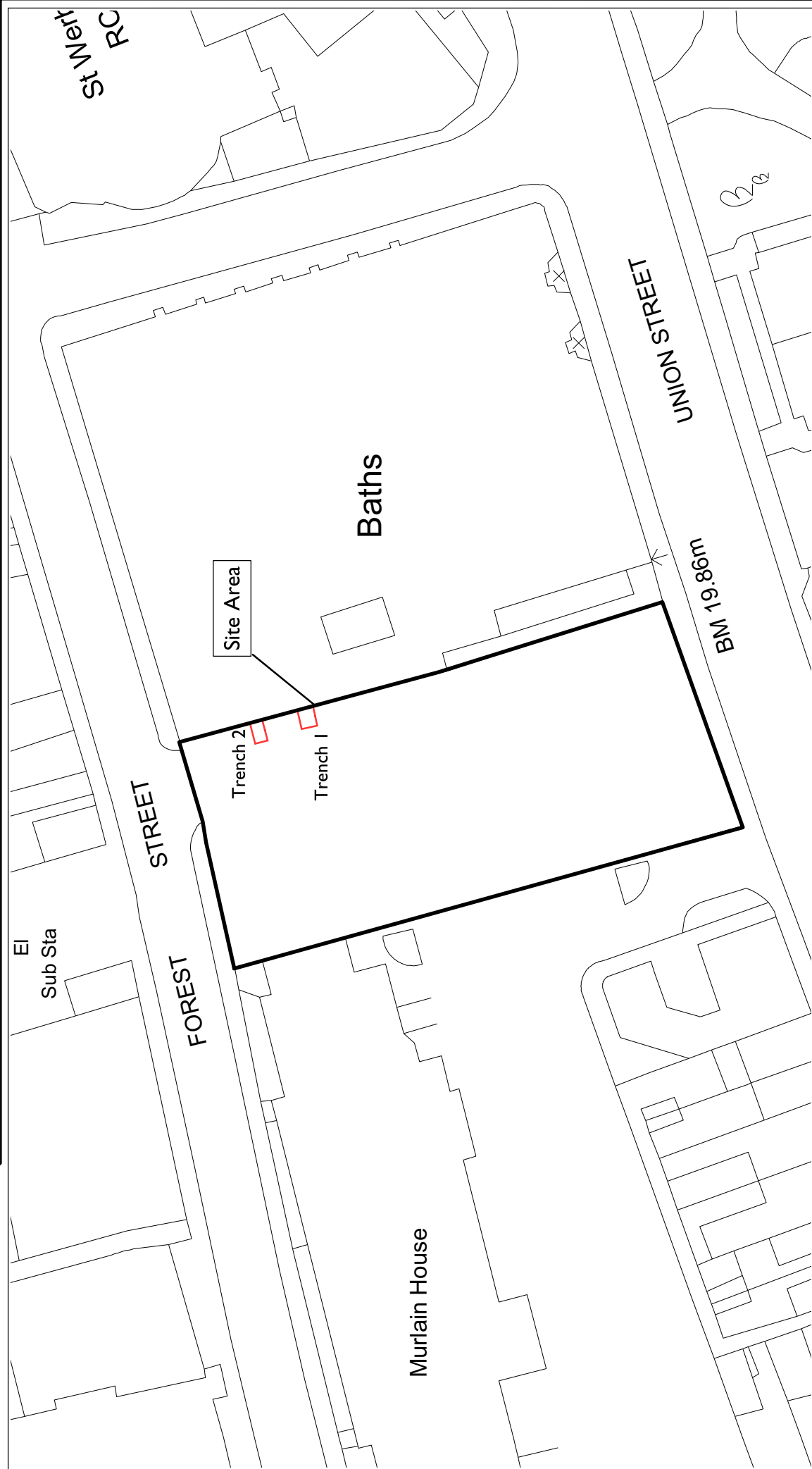
DESCRIPTION // Site location detailed

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FIGURE 3 // Trench locations



Scale 1:500 @ A4

PROJECT // 0578C - Union Street, Chester

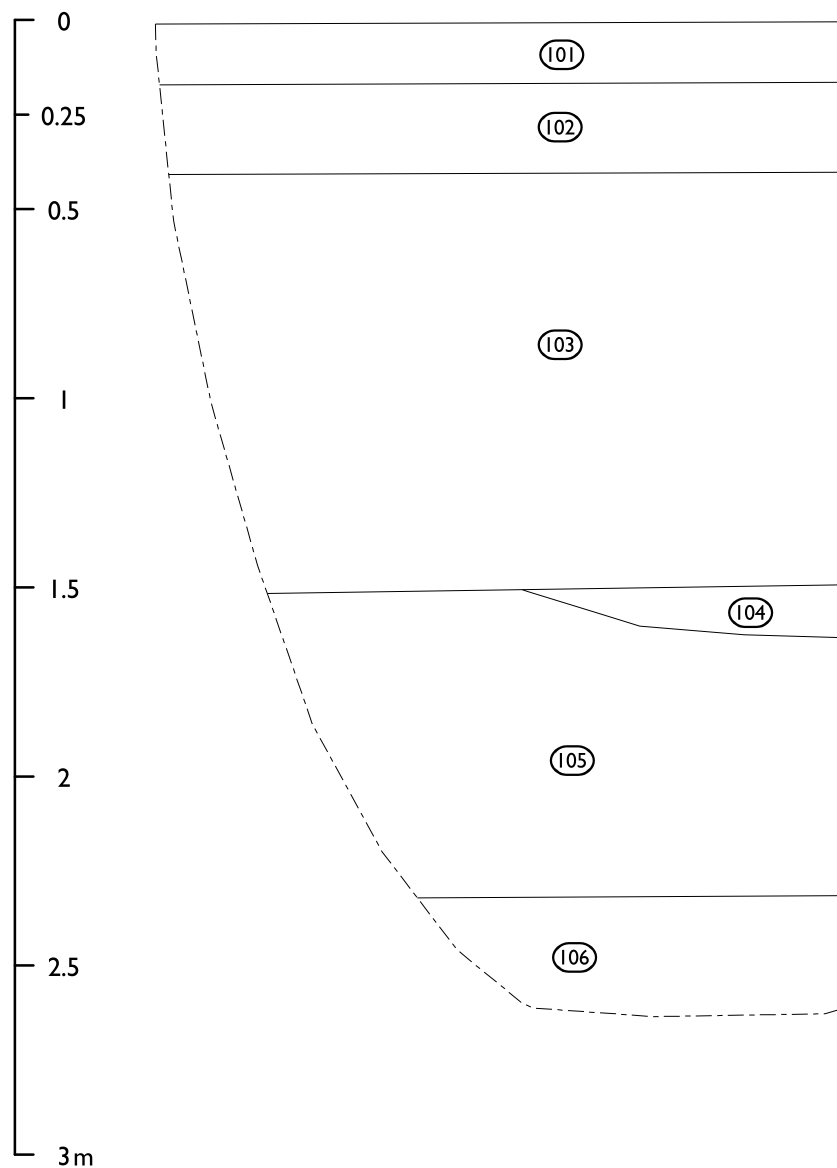
DESCRIPTION // Trench locations

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FIGURE 4 // South Facing Section of Trench I



PROJECT // 0578C- Union Street, Chester

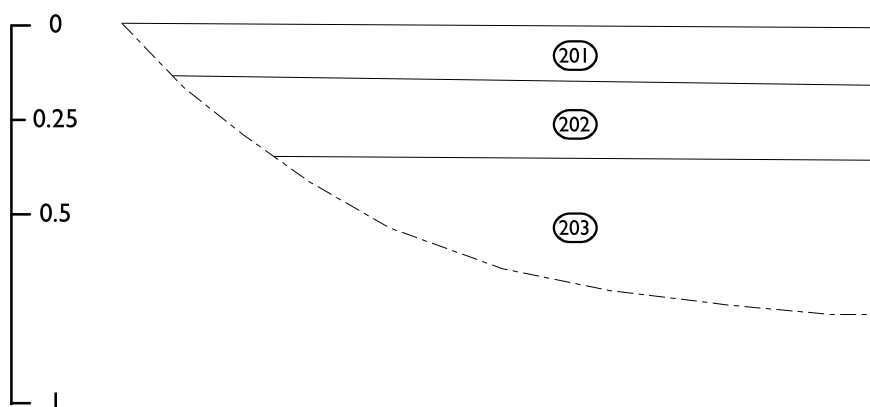
DESCRIPTION // South Facing Section of Trench I

Scale 1:20 @ A4

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FIGURE 5 // South Facing Section of Trench 2



PROJECT // 0578C- Union Street, Chester

DESCRIPTION // South Facing Section of Trench 2

Scale 1:20 @ A4

DOC REF: LP0578C-AWB-v1

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SOURCES CONSULTED

APPENDIX I

BIBLIOGRAPHIC

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OASIS FORM

APPENDIX 2

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OASIS ID: lparchae1-26607

Project details

Project name	Union Street, Chester
Short description of the project	Watching Brief comprising the monitoring of the digging of 2 foundation investigation trenches.
Project dates	Start: 24-04-2007 End: 24-04-2007
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 1 - Industrial
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CHESHIRE CHESTER CHESTER Union Street
Postcode	CH1 1QP
Study area	966.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	SJ 41213 66445 53.1915526163 -2.879968562590 53 11 29 N 002 52 47 W Point
Height OD	Min: 17.20m Max: 19.80m

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	Claire Statter
Project supervisor	Claire Statter

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Grosvenor Museum
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Physical Contents	'Animal Bones','Ceramics','Wood'
Digital Archive Exists?	No
Paper Archive recipient	Grosvenor Museum
Paper Archive ID	LP 0578C
Paper Contents	'other'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Drawing','Map','Photograph','Report','Section','Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography**1**

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