



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological evaluation on land at
Former Cox Hire Ltd, Birmingham Street,
Stourbridge, West Midlands, August 2013



Northamptonshire Archaeology

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Report 13/148

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		Oasis No. 157172	
Project title	Archaeological evaluation on land at the former Cox Hire Ltd, Birmingham Street, Stourbridge		
Short description	Three trenches were excavated within the southern half of the development area in order to locate the remains of a medieval mill leat known to have crossed the site. All three trenches contained redeposited building rubble, crushed brick layers mixed with disturbed soil to a depth of approximately 2m. No natural geological horizons were encountered. The site appears to have been reduced in level and used as a temporary tip by the Corporation in the early part of the 20th century removing all traces of previous activity to a significant depth.		
Project type	Trial trench evaluation		
Site Status			
Previous work	None		
Current land use	Light Industrial complex		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type and period	Modern landfill		
Significant finds	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	West Midlands		
Site address	Birmingham Street, Stourbridge, West Midlands		
Post code	DY8 1JR		
OS co-ordinates	NGR SO 90540 84420		
Area (sq m/ha)	0.79 hectares		
Height aOD	72m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)		
Project brief originator	Jayne Pilkington, Senior Conservation Officer, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council		
Project Design originator	Prospect Archaeology		
Director/Supervisor	Liz Muldowney (NA)		
Project Managers	Ian Meadows (NA),		
Sponsor or funding body	Whitbread plc		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	08/08/2013		
End date	08/08/2013		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Contents	
Physical	NA store	None	
Paper	STO BMR 13	Site records	
Digital		Survey data, report, photographs	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	Archaeological Evaluation on land at the former Cox Hire Ltd, Birmingham Street, Stourbridge August 2013		
Serial title & volume	13/148		
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Contents

1	INTRODUCTION
2	TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY
3	AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
4	ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND
5	EVALUATION METHODOLOGY
6	THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE
6.1	TRENCH 1
6.2	TRENCH 2
6.3	TRENCH 3
7	CONCLUSION
	BIBLIOGRAPHY
	APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Figures

Front cover: Trench 3 looking north-north-west

Back cover: Trench 2

Fig 1: Site location

Fig 2: Revised trench plan

Fig 3: Trench 1 section showing rubble layers, looking west

Fig 4: Trench 2 section showing rubble layers, looking west

Fig 5: Trench 3 section showing dumps of demolition material, looking north-west

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION ON LAND AT
THE FORMER COX HIRE LTD, BIRMINGHAM STREET, STOURBRIDGE,
WEST MIDLANDS
AUGUST 2013**

Abstract

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on land at the former Cox Hire Ltd, Stourbridge, West Midlands. Three trenches were excavated within the southern half of the development area in order to locate the remains of a medieval mill leat known to have crossed the site. All three trenches contained redeposited building rubble and crushed brick layers mixed with disturbed soil to a depth of approximately 2m. No natural geological horizons were encountered during the evaluation. The site appears to have been reduced in level and used as a temporary tip by the Corporation in the early part of the 20th century, removing all traces of previous activity to a significant depth.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by Prospect Archaeology, on behalf of Whitbread plc, to carry out archaeological trial trenching on land at the former Cox Hire Ltd, Birmingham Street, Stourbridge (NGR SO 90540 84420; Fig 1).

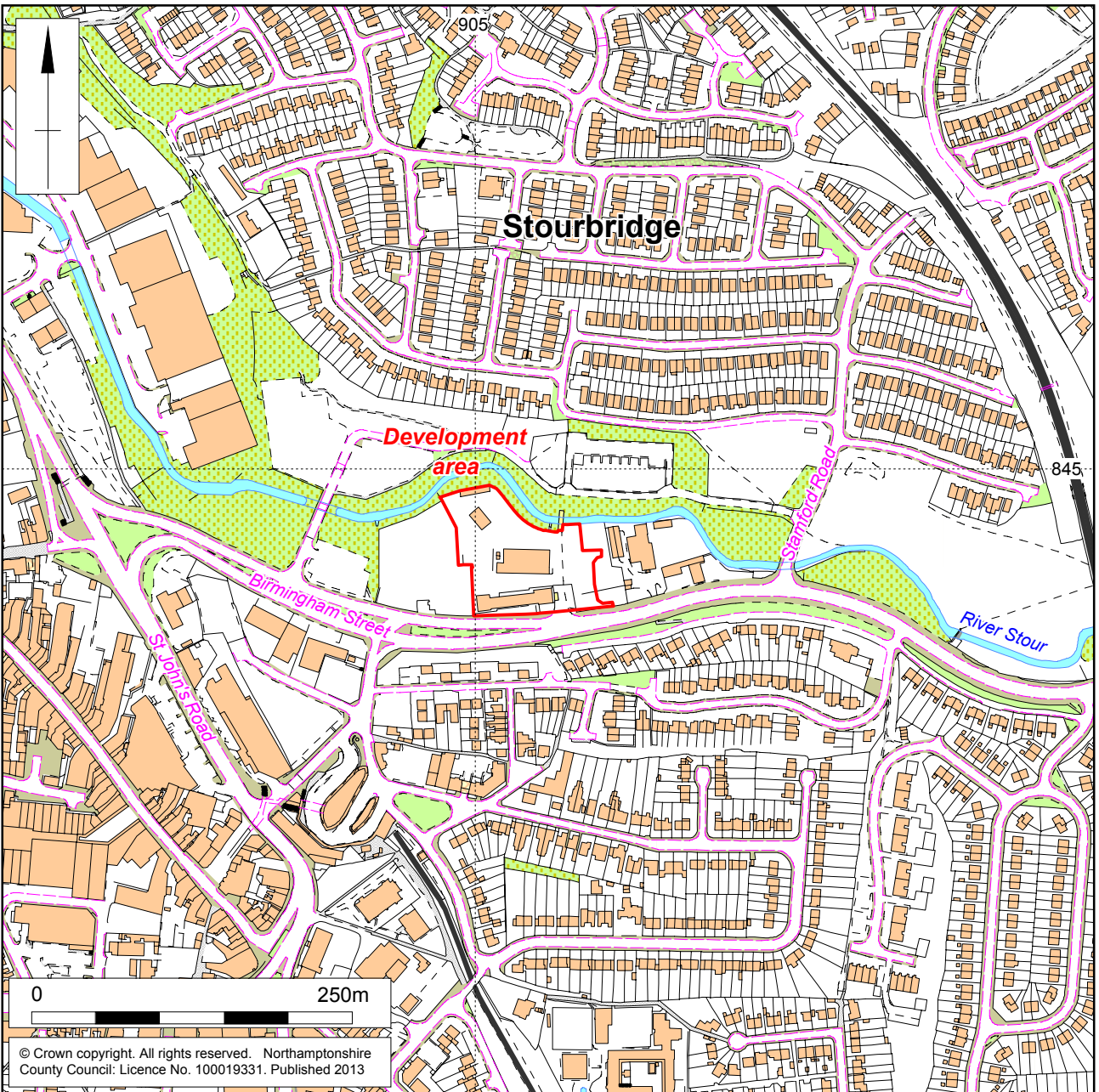
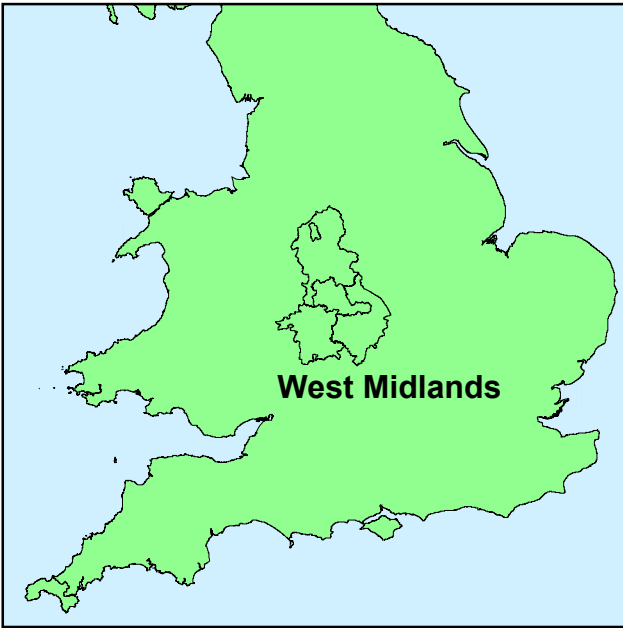
The work was commissioned as a condition to the planning application submitted for the construction of a hotel, pub/restaurant and associated car parking (P12/1521). The development area comprises c0.8 ha of land. The trenching was designed to determine whether any archaeological remains were present within the development area with particular scope to determine whether a medieval mill leat, known to have crossed the site, survived.

All works were undertaken in accordance with *the National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012) and followed the Brief issued by Jayne Pilkington (Senior Conservation Officer, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, and a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Prospect Archaeology (Field 2013).

2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The development area is located to the east of Stourbridge town centre and is bounded to the north by the River Stour, to the east by commercial property, to the south by Birmingham Street and to the west by derelict land on the site of a former foundry.

The site is generally flat, dropping steeply to the north where it forms the bank of the River Stour. The eastern part of the site had been steeply terraced to a depth of approximately 2m below the main site level. The main area is at c72m above Ordnance Datum.



Scale 1:5000

Site Location Fig 1

The land had contained a tool hire company working out of buildings that had been associated with the previous council depot, at the time of the evaluation all buildings had been demolished and contractors were on site crushing the rubble. The geology of the site is recorded as being Wildmoor Sandstone Formation, no superficial deposits are listed (BGS 2013). No bedrock or superficial geology was encountered in the evaluation.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the investigation was to determine if archaeological remains were present within the development area.

The specific objectives of the project were to provide further information on the:

- Location, extent, nature and date of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present at the proposed development site;
- Integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present at the proposed development site.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

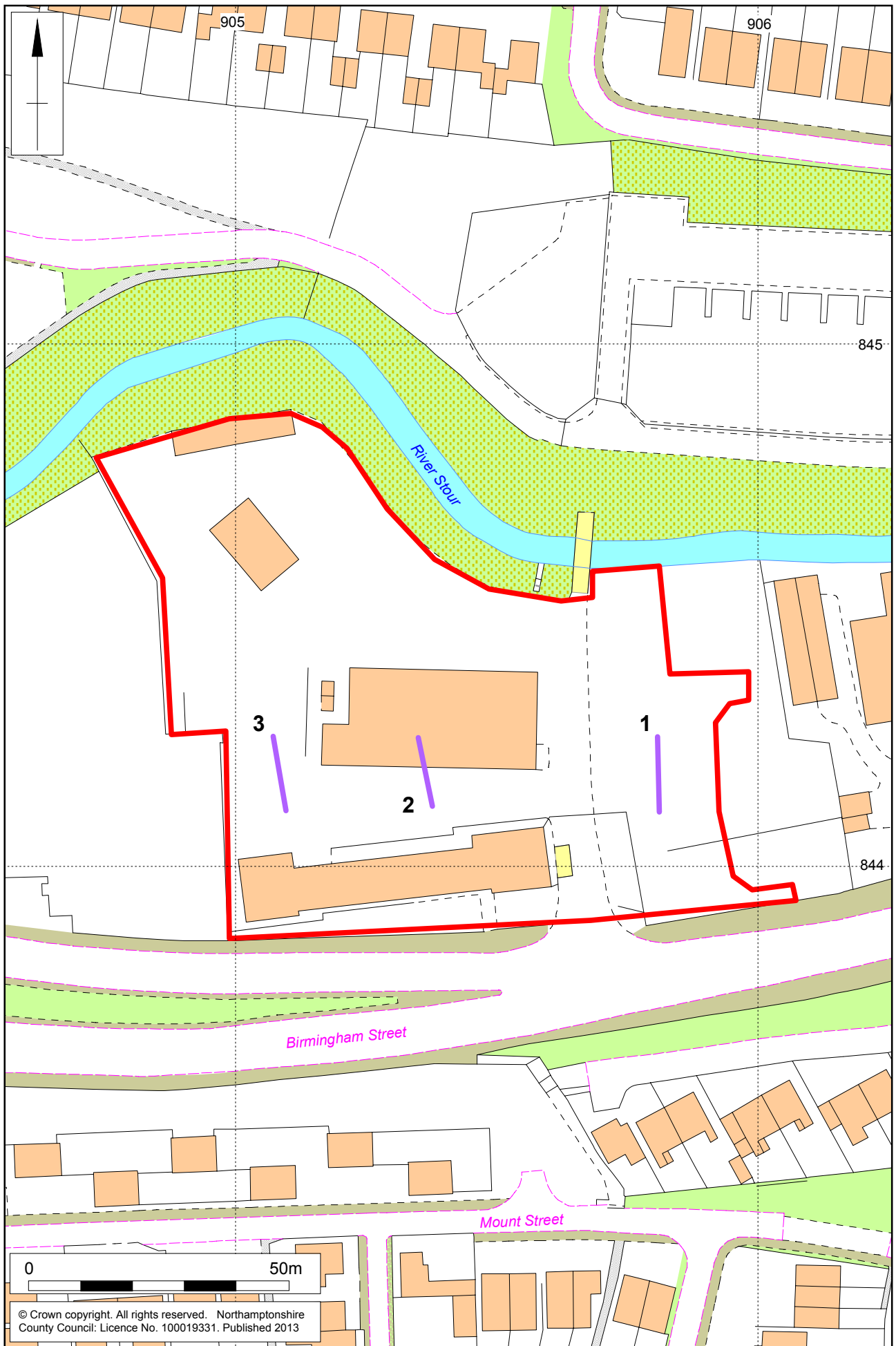
A desk-based assessment was carried out for the site by Prospect Archaeology in 2012 which established that there was a limited potential for the recovery of archaeological remains from any period within the development area with the exception of the medieval period. A medieval water mill was situated to the east of the development area that was in use until the early years of the 20th century. A leat was associated with the mill and was believed to run through the site from a loop in the river to the west. In the later post-medieval period this leat formed the rear (northern) boundary to a series of properties facing on to Birmingham Street. These properties were demolished in the 20th century and the area converted to a Corporation depot.

5 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

A programme of evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) provided by Prospect Archaeology (Field 2013) in response to a planning condition set by the Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Senior Conservation Officer. This required the excavation of three 15m trenches designed to target the presumed line of the mill leat as indicated by cartographic evidence (Fig 2).

Three trenches were excavated in the Development Area in accordance with a trench plan produced by Prospect Archaeology, and approved by Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Senior Conservation Officer (Fig 2). The trench layout had to be varied on site from the agreed plan to accommodate the presence of a large pile of demolition material (Fig 2). The trenches were set out using differential GPS (Leica System 1200); any trenches that were altered from the original plan were subsequently resurveyed.

All trenches were excavated using a 25 tonne 360 degree tracked excavator, fitted with a 1.8m wide toothed ditching bucket, operated under constant archaeological supervision.



Scale 1:1000 (A4)

Revised trench plan Fig 2

The excavation and recording were carried out in accordance with NA guidelines and all records were created using NA pro-forma (NA 2011). Photographs were taken of all relevant deposits on 35mm monochrome print film, high resolution digital images were also taken. Work was carried out in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008).

The trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 2.2m, no natural geological horizon was observed in any of the trenches. Excavation stopped at this depth due to the loose nature of the material removed. Trenches 1 and 3 were partially backfilled following recording to prevent the sides collapsing. All trenches were recorded from ground level because of their depth and instability.

Levels in metres above Ordnance Datum were established for all trenches and across the development area using GPS.

Artefacts removed during machining were examined, identified and discarded as they were all recent in origin. No environmental samples were taken.

All records and materials will be compiled in a structured archive in accordance with the guidelines of Appendix 3 in the English Heritage procedural document, *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (EH 1991).

6 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

The three trenches were aligned north to south and no undisturbed strata was recorded during the evaluation (Fig 2).

6.1 Trench 1

This trench was located towards the east side of the development area, within a compound set up by the team demolishing the buildings on the site (Fig 2). It measured 15m in length and was 2.15m at its deepest point.

The latest layer (101) was Type 1 crush, 0.05m thick, extending across the full length of the trench (Fig 3). This layer has been recently deposited to form hard standing for a temporary compound. It sealed a mixed deposit, in excess of 2m deep and again extending across the full length of the trench, comprising layers of crushed brick, and clay silt soils in a variety of dark hues all containing concrete rubble, brick rubble, building debris, tile, slate, metalwork, glass and plastics (102). Red and white banded plastic hazard tape was observed at a depth of approximately 2m.

6.2 Trench 2

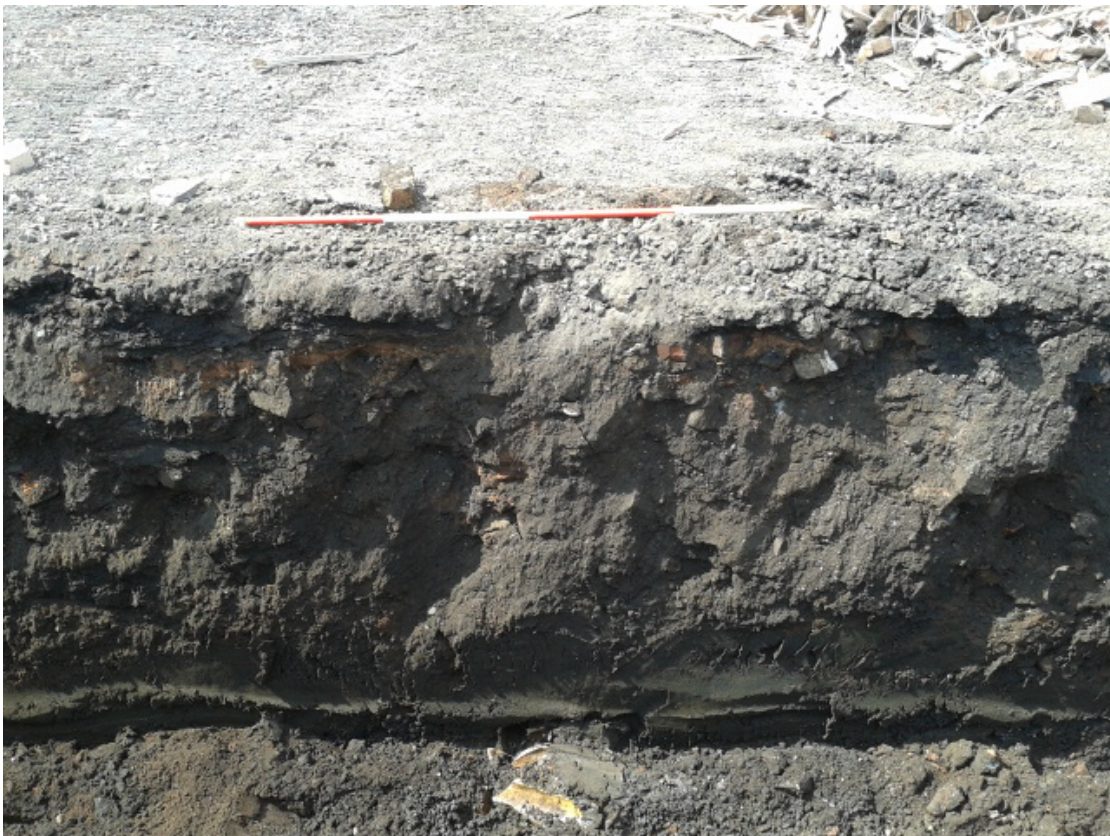
This trench was located towards the centre of the development area, shifted from its planned position because of the presence of a large pile of demolition debris (Fig 2). It measured 13.4m in length and was 2.10m at its deepest point.

The latest layer (201) was an asphalt surface 0.08m thick extending 7.5m from the southern end of the trench (Fig 4). This layer was the remains of a yard surface associated with the recently demolished depot buildings. To the north the trench cut through the footprint of one of the removed buildings and the upper surface here was mixed rubble derived from the recent demolition works. Below this was a mixed deposit of building rubble, crushed brick and soil layers (202), in excess of 2m deep, similar to the deposit (102) observed in Trench 1. Pottery of 19th and 20th century date, plastic, rubber and glass were observed in the lowest recovered material.



Trench 1 section showing rubble layers, looking west

Fig 3



Trench 2 section showing rubble layers, looking west

Fig 4

6.3 Trench 3

This trench was located at the western end of the development area; it was slightly rotated from its planned position because of the presence of more demolition debris (Fig 2). It measured 14.5m in length and was 2.20m at its deepest point.

The latest layer (301) was an asphalt surface 0.08m thick that was the remains of a yard surface associated with the recently demolished depot buildings (Fig 5). Below this was a mixed deposit of building rubble, crushed brick and soil layers (302), in excess of 2m deep, similar to the deposit (102) and (202). A similar assemblage of building debris was observed including iron manhole surrounds and Belfast sinks.



Trench 3 section showing dumps of demolition material, looking north-west Fig 5

7 CONCLUSION

The three trenches excavated at the former Cox Hire Ltd site found evidence for significant ground disturbance dating from the early years of the 20th century and with localised deposition continuing into the later years of the century.

No natural undisturbed geological horizons were encountered during the evaluation; the area where the presumed medieval mill leat crossed the site contained a minimum depth of 2.2m of redeposited soil and demolition debris dating from the late 19th to 20th centuries. A geotechnical borehole excavated in 2012, in the area between trenches 1 and 2, encountered a similar sequence to a depth of at least 5m. The extreme eastern part of the development area had been reduced in level, at the time of the evaluation, by approximately 2m and this reduced area also comprised made ground.

A benchmark recorded on the 1885 Ordnance Survey map taken on the corner of one of the buildings within the plot measured 75.74m. The asphalt surface within the development area was at 72.2m at the time of the evaluation; this suggests that the area had been reduced in height and then subsequently backfilled with debris to approximately the original height. It is possible that some of the debris derived from demolition of the properties fronting on to Birmingham Street, these properties were still present on the 1920 Ordnance Survey map. The Corporation owned the land from the period following the First World War and it was used by the refuse department as a dustbin lorry depot in the mid to late 20th century. Local information suggests that the area was used as a temporary tip site during this period.

Therefore the extensive 20th-century earthmoving activities on the site are likely to have removed all traces of previous land use within at least the area subject to evaluation.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
1	15m x 1.8m, N-S	390580 284420	72.2m	
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
101	Type 1 crush	Grey crushed limestone fragments	0.10m thick	
102	Made ground	Mixed demolition debris and dark greyish-brown soil	2.10m + thick	

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
2	30m x 2m, NNW-SSE	390536 284418		72.28m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
201	Asphalt	Yard surface	0.08m thick	
202	Made ground	Mixed demolition debris and dark greyish-brown soil	2.12m + thick	

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
3	30m x 2m, NNW-SSE	390507 284417	72.39m	
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
301	Asphalt	Yard surface	0.08m thick	
302	Made ground	Mixed demolition debris and dark greyish-brown soil	2.12m + thick	



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