
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT MIDLAND ROAD,
PETERBOROUGH
(PMR 07)**

Work Undertaken For
GB Oils Limited

August 2007

Report Compiled by
Paul Cope-Faulkner BA (Hons) AIFA

National Grid Reference: TL 1838 9912
OASIS Record No: archaeo11-30782

APS Report No. **115/07**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
PROJECT
SERVICES**



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1. SUMMARY

A watching brief was undertaken during groundworks at Midland Road, Peterborough. The watching brief monitored the excavation of a service trench and works associated with concrete surface removal.

The site is located close to an extensive Romano-British (AD 42-410) settlement including a sizeable cemetery. During the medieval period (AD 1066-1540) the site lay in the general vicinity of St Leonard's Hospital, founded for lepers and first mentioned in the early 12th century. Previous work in 1928 at the site identified 16 burials.

The watching brief revealed an undated subsoil which contained a sizeable assemblage of human bone, representing at least three individuals. Though undated, these may relate to either the Romano-British or medieval cemeteries known in the vicinity. Other than the human bone, a sherd of 10th -12th century pottery was retrieved along with an iron nail.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Definition of a Watching Brief

An archaeological watching brief is defined as “*a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed.*” (IFA 1999).

2.2 Planning Background

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by GB Oils Limited to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with a new

pipe trench and re-surfacing at Midland Road, Peterborough. The watching brief was carried out on the 3rd and 6th July 2007.

2.3 Topography and Geology

The site is located 1km northwest of the centre of Peterborough as defined by the cathedral church at National Grid Reference TL1838 9912 (Fig. 2). Located on the east side of Midland Road, the site lies at a height of c. 12.8m OD on land that slopes gently down to the south and east.

As an urban area, local soils have not been mapped, although may comprise brown rendzinas of the Sherborne Association (Hodge *et al.* 1984). These soils are developed upon a solid geology of Jurassic Cornbrash with 3rd River Terrace deposits immediately to the east of the site (BGS 1984).

2.4 Archaeological Setting

The site is located south of an extensive Romano-British settlement situated between Westwood Bridge and Spital Bridge where during development in the late 19th century, structures, a cemetery containing about forty inhumations as well as numerous finds were noted. Further burials were found in Midland Road, including a number of inhumations arranged in a circle with their heads inwards (RCHM 1969, 3).

To the northeast, lies the site of the Hospital of St Leonard which had been founded by 1125 when thirteen lepers are recorded as living at the site (Serjeantson and Adkins 1906, 162). The hospital is commemorated in the names of Spital Bridge and St Leonard's Street.

Further burials were found at the site in 1928. Over 16 were found aligned east-west and one was recorded as lying in a stone coffin. The remains were undated but it was considered that they were

medieval and were associated with St Leonard's Hospital. The site lay also to a 'pest house' and a possibility that they were 17th century plague victims was also considered at the time.

3. AIMS

The aim of the archaeological investigation was to ensure that any archaeological features exposed during the groundworks should be recorded and, if present, to determine their date, function and origin.

4. METHODS

Excavation of a service trench and removal of the concrete surface was undertaken by machine to a depth of 0.4m below the current ground level. The exposed area was cleaned and the sides rendered vertical. Selected deposits were excavated further to retrieve artefactual material and to determine their function. Each deposit was allocated a unique reference number (context number) with an individual written description. A list of all contexts and their descriptions appears as Appendix 1. A photographic record was compiled and sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10. Recording was undertaken according to standard Archaeological Project Services practice.

Following excavation the records were checked and a stratigraphic matrix produced. Phasing was assigned based on the nature of the deposits and recognisable relationships between them.

5. RESULTS

Following post-excavation analysis three phases were identified;

Phase 1 Natural deposits
Phase 2 Undated deposits

Phase 3 Recent deposits

Archaeological contexts are listed below and described. The numbers in brackets are the context numbers assigned in the field.

Phase 1 Natural deposits

The earliest deposit encountered during the investigation was a layer of yellow limestone with clayey silt (006). This measured in excess of 40mm thick.

Phase 2 Undated deposits

Developed upon the natural geology was a subsoil comprising brown silty clay with frequent limestone (004). This measured 0.24m thick (Fig. 4, Sections 1 and 2). A number of human bones were retrieved from this layer and where particularly frequent were assigned a separate number (005 and 007).

Recent activity at the site had partly contaminated the subsoil (009).

Phase 3 Recent deposits

Overlying the subsoil was a layer of mixed brown, yellow and grey rubble, ash and concrete (003) forming a make-up deposit for the concrete yard surface (002).

6. DISCUSSION

Natural deposits (Phase 1) comprise limestone and clayey silt of the underlying solid geology of Cornbrash.

A subsoil layer remains undated (Phase 2) due to a lack of artefactual material. Within the subsoil were a number of human remains representing at least three individuals. One concentration of human bone (005) appears to be largely from a male aged *c.* 34 years of age, though female and juvenile bones are also present. Sixteen individuals were found at the site

previously and perhaps indicate a sizeable cemetery in the locale.

The dating of the remains is problematical, although may relate to either the Romano-British or medieval and later burial grounds in the vicinity. One of the burials recorded in 1928 was observed as being within a stone coffin. Although this practise is known during the Roman period, such a high status burial may be more expected nearer to *Durobrivae* (Chesterton), the principal town of the period in the vicinity. It is more probable that the remains may be associated with the medieval hospital and a single sherd of Saxo-Norman pottery, though unstratified, may support this notion. Furthermore, the adult male includes the skull and part of the right shoulder which, given the location of the section, would imply an east-west inhumation.

7. CONCLUSION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Midland Road, Peterborough, as the site lay in close proximity to Romano-British settlement and a medieval hospital and where burials have previously been found.

The watching brief recorded an undated subsoil deposit within which were the remains of at least three individuals. No dating evidence was found associated with the burials, although it is considered that they could be outlying burials of the medieval hospital cemetery.

Finds from the investigation, apart from the human bone, include a nail and a single sherd of Saxo-Norman pottery.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wish to acknowledge the assistance of Mr M Slorach of GB Oils Limited for

commissioning the fieldwork and post-excavation analysis. The work was coordinated by Steve Malone who edited this report along with Steve Malone. Ben Robinson, the Peterborough City Archaeologist, kindly provided background information on the site. Dave Start permitted access to the library maintained by Heritage Lincolnshire.

9. PERSONNEL

Project Coordinator: Steve Malone
 Site Supervisors: Mark Peachey, Fiona Walker
 Finds processing: Denise Buckley
 Photographic reproduction: Sue Unsworth
 Illustration: Paul Cope-Faulkner
 Post-excavation analysis: Paul Cope-Faulkner

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11. ABBREVIATIONS

APS Archaeological Project Services
 BGS British Geological Survey
 IFA Institute of Field Archaeologists

RCHM Royal Commission on Historical
Monuments



Figure 1 General location map

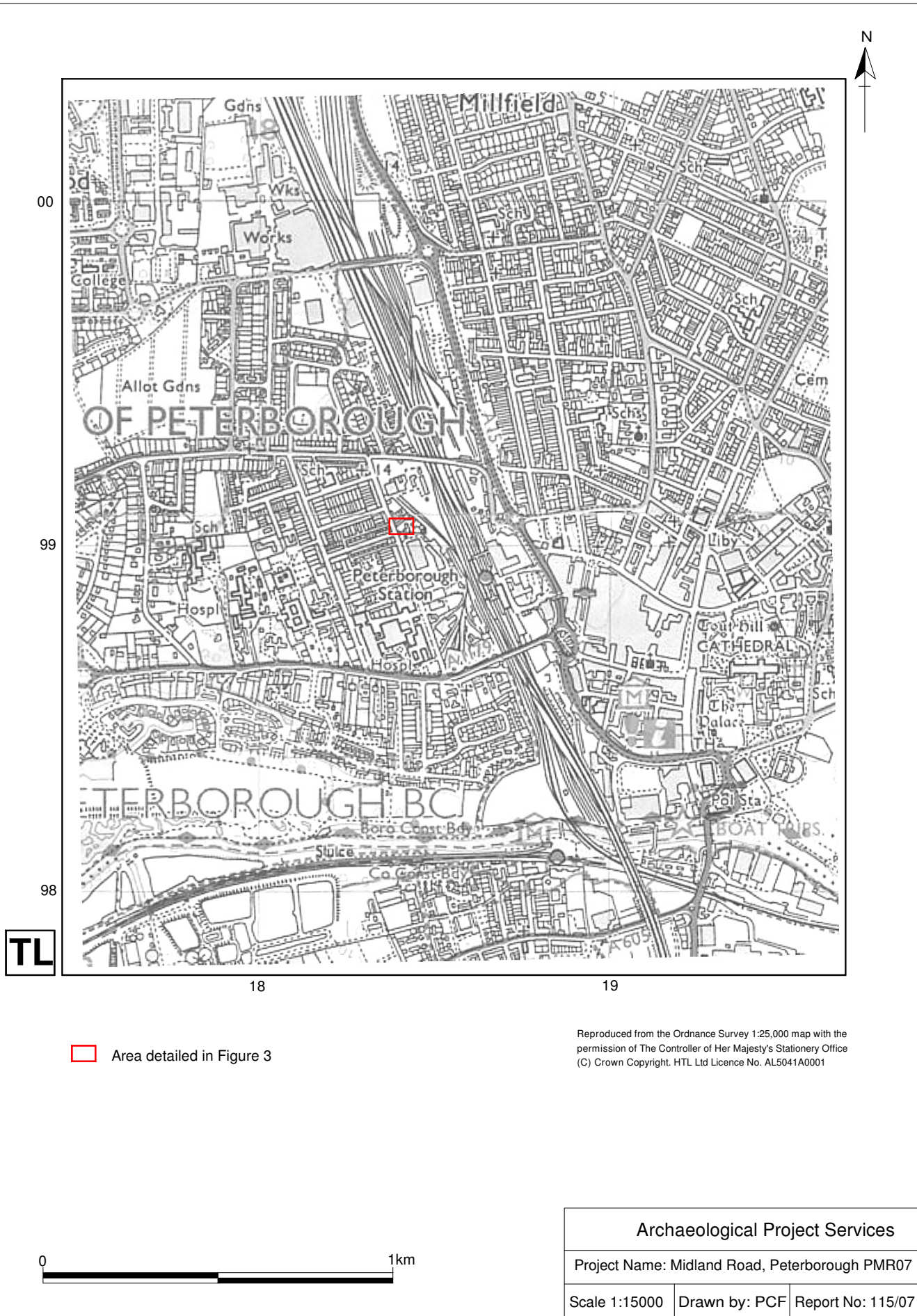


Figure 2 - Site location plan

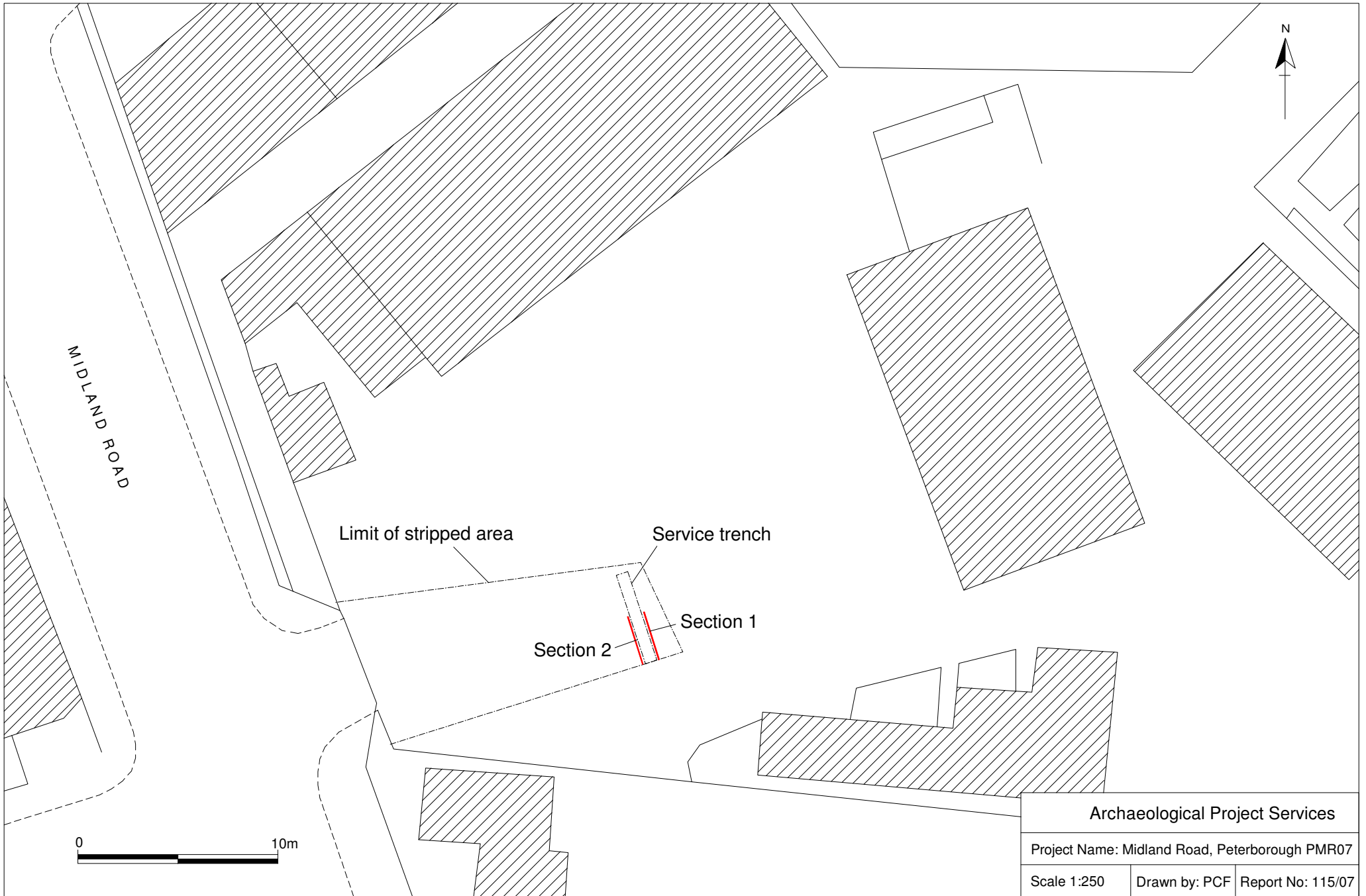
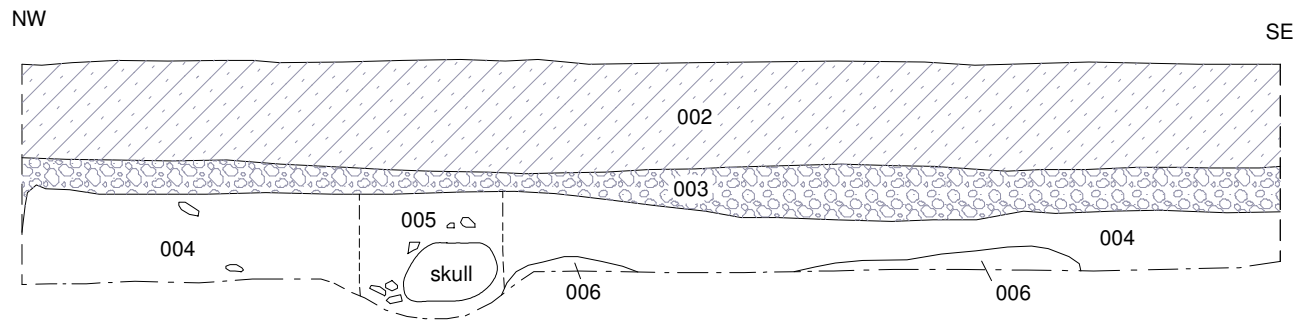
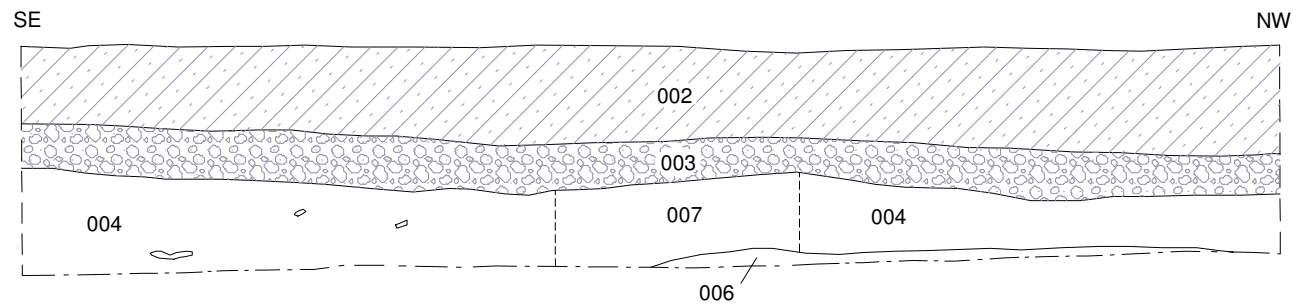


Figure 3 - Plan showing the location of groundworks and section locations



Section 1



Section 2



Archaeological Project Services		
Project Name: Midland Road, Peterborough PMR07		
Scale 1:15	Drawn by: PCF	Report No: 115/07

Figure 4 - Sections 1 and 2



Plate 1 – View of the development area, looking east



Plate 2 – Section 1 with *in-situ* skull, looking southeast



Plate 3 – Section 2, looking southwest

Appendix 1

CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

No.	Description	Interpretation
001	Unstratified finds retrieval	
002	Indurated light grey concrete, 0.2m thick	Yard surface
003	Firm mixed mid brown and light yellow to grey rubble, ash and concrete fragments, 100mm thick	Make-up for (002)
004	Firm to friable mid brown silty clay with frequent limestone fragments, 0,24m thick	Subsoil
005	Human bone retrieval	
006	Firm light yellow limestone with clayey silt, >40mm thick	Natural deposit
007	Human bone retrieval	
008	Loose light yellow and yellowish grey rubble and limestone fragments, 100mm thick	Interface between (003) and (006)
009	Firm dark grey silty clay, >0.2m thick	Contaminated subsoil

Appendix 2 - THE POTTERY

by Anne Boyle

context	cname	full name	sub fabric	form type	sherds	vessels	weight	decoration	part	description	date
001	SNLOC	Local Saxo-Norman fabrics	oxidised; medium sandy	jar ?	1	1	6	horizontal rows of square roller stamping	BS	? ID or later; odd - roller stamping typical of Saxo-Norman wares and no traces of glaze apparent; fine background quartz + abundant round to sub round quartz 0.3 to 0.5mm and occasional larger round to sub round quartz up to 1mm + sparse fe up to 0.3mm	10th to 12th?

Appendix 3

THE OTHER FINDS

by Gary Taylor

A single piece of iron weighing 8g was recovered. Other artefacts were retrieved and are reported separately.

Provenance

The material was recovered as an unstratified artefact (001).

Range

The range of material is detailed in the table.

Table 1: Other Artefacts

Context	Material	Description	No.	Wt (g)	Context Date
001	Iron	Nail, rectangular sectioned shaft, bent	1	8	

Condition

The material is in good condition and presents no long-term storage problems. Archive storage of the collection is by material class.

Documentation

There have been previous archaeological investigations at Peterborough that are the subjects of reports. Details of archaeological sites and discoveries in the area are maintained in the Peterborough Council Sites and Monuments Record.

Potential

As a single, unstratified artefact the piece of iron is of negligible local potential and significance.

Appendix 4

THE HUMAN REMAINS

By Jennifer Wood

Introduction

A total of 173 fragments of disarticulated human bone were recovered during an archaeological watching brief at land off Midland Road, Peterborough.

Results

The remains were of good to moderate condition, with little post depositional modification to the cortical bone surface. The majority of the remains were in a fragmentary condition and highly commingled suggesting that the remains were disturbed from their original burial location.

Due to the disarticulated nature of the remains each of the bone fragments have been individually recorded by context, as summarised within Table 1. Where remains with fresh breaks could be refitted, the bone was counted as one.

Table 1, Summary of Disarticulated Remains

Context	Bone	Side	Segment	Count	Notes
001	Mandible	L	Alveolare and 2 nd Molar	1	No evidence of M3 having been present.
	Tibia	L	Distal shaft	1	
	Tibia	L	Proximal shaft	1	Smaller bone than above, not associated
	Humerus	R	Proximal shaft	1	
	Femur	L	Distal epiphysis	1	Fully fused
	Clavicle	L	Acromial portion	1	Gracile
	Radius	L	Distal shaft	1	Rootlet etching
	Fibula	X	Shaft fragment	1	
	Phalange	R	Middle and distal phalanx	1	Fusion between distal middle phalanx articulation and proximal distal phalanx articulation. Ankylosing spondylitis /trauma?
	Metatarsal I	L	Distal shaft and articulation	1	
	Metatarsal II	L	Proximal shaft and articulation	1	
	Long Bone	X	Shaft fragment	3	
	Rib	L	Neck	1	
	Pelvis	R	Pubis	1	Fragment
	Thoracic Vertebra	M	Centrum	2	Fragments
	Vertebra	X	Centrum	2	Small fragments
	Skull	M	Occipital	1	
	Skull	X	Parietal	6	
	Skull	L	Parietal	1	
	Skull	L	Orbital ridge	1	
Skull	X	Vault	4		
Unidentified	X	Unidentified	15	Fragments	
	Femur	L	Distal shaft and	1	

Context	Bone	Side	Segment	Count	Notes
			epiphysis		
	Femur	R	Lateral condyle and shaft fragment	1	
	Radius	L	Proximal shaft	1	
	Radius	X	Proximal articulation	1	
	Rib	X	Blade	4	
	Mandible	R	Condyle	1	
	Mandible	L	Condyle	1	Small
	Femur	L	Head	1	46mm, in male range
	Tibia	L	Proximal midshaft	1	
	Tibia	L	Shaft	1	
	Long Bone	X	Shaft fragment	7	
	Femur	L	Lesser trochanter	1	
	Pelvis	R	Pubic Symphysis	1	Approx 22- 25 years (Todd 1921a/b)
	Scapula	R	Glenoid	1	Unfused, below 10 years
	Radius	R	Distal shaft	1	Unfused, below 17 years
	Ulna	R	Olecranon, coronoid process	1	Fragment, Juvenile
	Thoracic Vertebra	M	Arch	1	
	Vertebra		Arch	1	Fragment, cervical?
	Skull	L	Mastoid and petrous part of temporal	1	Possible male, from mastoid
	Skull	L	Parietal and occipital	1	Fragment
	Skull	M	Frontal- above glabella	1	
	Skull	L	Zygomatic	1	
	Skull	X	Vault	1	
	Skull	R	Temporal	1	
	Skull	X	Fragments	5	
	Mandible	L	Body	1	
	Unidentified	X	Unidentified	17	Small fragments
004	Ulna	L	Distal shaft and articulation	1	
	Fibula	X	Midshaft	1	
005	Skull	M	Cranial Vault	1	Fragmentary, Possible male/indeterminate, healed indentation in the left parietal. Suture closure suggests young adult, approx 34 years.
	Humerus	R	Proximal epiphysis and shaft	1	Humoral head diameter, 48mm within the male range
	Clavicle	R	Complete, but fragmentary	1	Broad, length measurement, 149mm within range for male.
	Rib	R	Neck and blade	5	
	Rib	L	Neck and blade	2	
	Rib	X	Blade	9	
	Scapula	R	Glenoid cavity and	1	Glenoid cavity width, 36mm

Context	Bone	Side	Segment	Count	Notes
			acromion		within male range.
	Mandible	R	Mandibular condyle	1	
	Axis	M	Dens and centrum	1	
	Pelvis	L	Fragment of illium with little auricular surface	1	
	Pelvis	L	Fragment of illium, pelvic brim	1	
	Thoracic vertebra	M	T1/2, centrum and arch	1	Juvenile, unfused centrum rings
	Thoracic vertebra	M	T11/12 complete	1	Juvenile, unfused centrum rings
	Sacral vertebra	M	First sacral vertebra	1	Unfused S1, aged approximately below 30 years.
	Pelvis	R	Acetabulum and auricular surface	1	Unfused acetabulum, below 15 years
	Rib	R	Head and neck	2	Juvenile
	Rib	X	Blade	2	
	Skull	R	Petrous part of temporal and mastoid process	1	Female?
	Long Bone	X	Midshaft	1	
	Skull	X	Vault fragments	15	
	Unidentified	X	Unidentified	8	
007	Skull	R	Parietal	1	
	Skull	X	Vault fragment	2	
	Rib	B	Blade	2	
	Tibia	R	Proximal shaft	1	
	Skull	L	Parietal	1	Broken into two fragments
	Metatarsal	L	Shaft and distal articulation	1	
008	Skull	M	Parietal fragment	1	Obliterated saggital suture
	Radius	L	Proximal epiphysis	1	

The remains represent a minimum of 3 individuals; both adult and juvenile remains are present. The remains recovered from (001) were unprovenanced and probably represent fragments of charnel recovered during the works. The remains recovered from (005) represent a concentration of bone possibly within a grave/feature cut, several fragments of which appear to represent the skull and upper right side of the appendicular skeleton of a single male young adult individual (approximately 34 years of age). A number of disarticulated fragments of unassociated bone were also included, with several fragments from juvenile individual/s were also present which may suggest earlier burials were present prior to the burial of the individual or that the burials within the vicinity were subject to heavy disturbance

Pathology

Two fragments of bone recovered from the assemblage displayed evidence of pathological change.

A middle and distal right phalanx recovered from context (001) had fused at the joint between the proximal articulation of the distal phalanx and the distal articulation of the middle phalanx (Plate 1). The fusion appears well remodelled and probably to have occurred through the growth of vertical osteophytes across the joint. The fusion of the joint had probably occurred as a result of a trauma or an arthropathy such as

arthritis or an auto-immune disease like Ankylosing Spondylitis, which commonly occurs within the spine, with peripheral joints such as the hands, feet and hips also often affected (Roberts and Manchester 1995).

The cranial vault of the young adult male, recovered from context (002) displayed a well healed circular indent within the left parietal bone (Plate 2). There was no evidence that the skull vault was pierced or depressed from the endocranial surface of the bone. The indent may have possibly be resultant of a cranial trauma some time in the early life of the individual which had subsequently remodelled and healed prior to death. Alternatively the indentation may have formed due to the presence of a cartilaginous granuloma which had misshapen the vault of the skull during the ossification of the plate.

Discussion

The remains recovered from the scheme of works were highly fragmentary and commingled, many of which were unlikely to have been recovered from their original burial location, with possible exception of the young adult male remains from context (005). However, the amount of disarticulated remains recovered from the small area of works indicates that a burial ground was present within the immediate locality.

Two burial grounds have been located within the vicinity of the scheme of works, one from the Roman period and one associated with a 11th century leper hospital. None of the remains displayed evidence of leprous pathological changes, however, the remains were highly fragmentary and incomplete, therefore providing little available evidence demography and present pathologies. Additionally, cemeteries associated with leper hospitals do not only contain individuals suffering from the infliction. Non-hospitalised local residence, paupers etc. were probably also inhumed as illustrated at the leper hospital cemetery at London Road, Grantham. The inclusion of locals and paupers may have increased especially as the decline of leprosy within England often caused the hospitals to change in function (Boulter 1992).

Due to the disarticulated nature of the remains little further information can be gained, save the association of a burial ground within the local vicinity.

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Plate 1, Middle and Distal fused phalanx, context (001).



Plate 2, Skull with healed circular intent/ trauma, context (005).

Appendix 5

GLOSSARY

Context	An archaeological context represents a distinct archaeological event or process. For example, the action of digging a pit creates a context (the cut) as does the process of its subsequent backfill (the fill). Each context encountered during an archaeological investigation is allocated a unique number by the archaeologist and a record sheet detailing the description and interpretations of the context (the context sheet) is created and placed in the site archive. Context numbers are identified within the report text by brackets, <i>e.g.</i> (004).
Cut	A cut refers to the physical action of digging a posthole, pit, ditch, foundation trench, <i>etc.</i> Once the fills of these features are removed during an archaeological investigation the original 'cut' is therefore exposed and subsequently recorded.
Fill	Once a feature has been dug it begins to silt up (either slowly or rapidly) or it can be back-filled manually. The soil(s) which become contained by the 'cut' are referred to as its fill(s).
Layer	A layer is a term to describe an accumulation of soil or other material that is not contained within a cut.
Medieval	The Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1066-1500.
Natural	Undisturbed deposit(s) of soil or rock which have accumulated without the influence of human activity.
Post-medieval	The period following the Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1500-1800.
Romano-British	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 43-410 when the Romans occupied Britain.
Saxon	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 410-1066 when England was largely settled by tribes from northern Germany.

Appendix 6

THE ARCHIVE

The archive consists of:

9	Context records
1	Sheet of scale drawings
1	Photographic record sheet
2	Daily record sheets
1	Stratigraphic matrix
1	Box of finds

All primary records are currently kept at:

Archaeological Project Services
The Old School
Cameron Street
Heckington
Sleaford
Lincolnshire
NG34 9RW

The ultimate destination of the project archive is:

Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery
Priestgate,
Peterborough,
PE1 1LF

The archive will be deposited in accordance with the document titled *Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery Standards for Archaeological Archive Preparation*.

Archaeological Project Services Site Code:

PMR 07

The discussion and comments provided in this report are based on the archaeology revealed during the site investigations. Other archaeological finds and features may exist on the development site but away from the areas exposed during the course of this fieldwork. *Archaeological Project Services* cannot confirm that those areas unexposed are free from archaeology nor that any archaeology present there is of a similar character to that revealed during the current investigation.

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