

**Summary of Results for an
Archaeological Watching Brief at
St. Mark's Primary School
Shelton
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire NGR SJ 8791 4678**

Planning Application No: SOT/48928
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Site Code: SMS 09

Produced for
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Non-technical summary

Stoke-on-Trent Archaeology was appointed by the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education to undertake an archaeological watching brief at St. Mark's Church of England Primary School, Shelton, Stoke-on-Trent (NGR SJ 8791 4678). The scheme aimed to monitor all ground works associated with the extension of the existing school building and creation of new parking facilities.

The development lay close to the site of Shelton Old Hall, a half-timbered farmhouse of probable medieval origin. By 1834, the hall had become the homestead of Shelton farm, but was gutted by fire in 1853. Shelton farm also included the site of a potworks, active from c.1730 until c.1780 and owned at one time by John Astbury and Joshua Twyford. The works were archaeologically excavated in 1992, revealing a number of pottery kiln bases along with substantial quantities of pottery waste.

Monitoring of the ground works was carried out between the 22nd April and 8th May 2009. Little of archaeological significance was recorded during the course of the watching brief. The natural subsoil was encountered at a shallow depth and lay beneath modern surfacing or landscaping deposits. This suggested that construction and levelling work associated with the present school had impacted severely upon any surviving below-ground deposits. One context (101) offered some evidence of past pottery production on, or near to the site, but this was extremely fragmentary. The small number of wares recovered date to the period c.1750-c.1820 and represent products that could have been found in most north-Staffordshire pottery manufactories during this time

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Stoke-on-Trent Archaeology (SOTARCH) was appointed by the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education to undertake an archaeological watching brief at St. Mark's Church of England Primary School, Shelton, Stoke-on-Trent (NGR SJ 8791 4678) (Fig. 1). Proposals to extend the existing school building and create a new car park were approved by Stoke-on-Trent City Council on the 17th November 2008 (application number SOT/48928). The City's Planning Archaeologist, however, recommended that a condition be attached to the scheme requiring an archaeological watching brief to monitor all ground works necessitated by the development.

2.0 Aims & objectives of the project

2.1 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologist's *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (revised October 2008). This defines a watching brief as a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during an operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. Its purpose is to define the nature, depth and preservation of any archaeological materials encountered.

3.0 Site location

3.1 St. Mark's Primary School is located in the township of Shelton, *c.*1.0km to the south west of the commercial heart of Hanley, one of the six towns that comprise the modern City of Stoke-on-Trent. The development area occupies an area of *c.*622m² on the western side of the school and is accessed from Cutts Street and Wood Terrace (Fig. 2). Prior to development the area was largely surfaced with tarmac, although a turf bank was present along the western edge of the site.

4.0 Archaeological & historical background

4.1 The development lay close to the site of Shelton Old Hall, a half-timbered farmhouse of probable medieval origin. By 1680, the hall was held by the Fenton family and was the residence of John Fenton, coroner for Staffordshire. The house and surrounding lands remained with the Fenton family until at least 1932. By 1834, the hall had become the homestead of Shelton farm and was in the tenure of the Woodward family, who continued to work the farm until at least 1876. The original hall was gutted by fire in 1853, but remained on the farm as a ruin for many years afterwards. A new farmhouse

was constructed during the 19th century and stood until the late 20th century, although, latterly, it formed part of an abattoir, owned in the 1960s by J. Mayer & Sons (Hanley) Ltd. (Greenslade 1963, 153).

4.2 Shelton farm also included the site of a potworks, active from c.1730 until c.1780 (Klemperer 1993, 515) and owned at one time by John Astbury and Joshua Twyford (Greenslade 1963, 164). The works were archaeologically excavated in 1992, revealing a number of pottery kiln bases along with substantial quantities of pottery waste.

5.0 The watching brief

5.1 Monitoring of the ground works was carried out between the 22nd April and 8th May 2009 and was conducted in accordance with a project brief (Boothroyd 2008) produced by the Planning Archaeologist for Stoke-on-Trent and a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by SOTARCH (Goodwin 2009).

5.2 The project involved the monitoring of level reduction work and trenching on site, all of which was undertaken using a 360° mechanical excavator. Throughout the project written records were made (site notes and *pro-forma* context sheets), annotated sketch plans and sections produced, and digital and 35mm monochrome photographs taken. The archive is stored at The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Bethesda Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent (site code **SMS09**, museum accession no. **2009.LH.4**).

5.3 The results.

5.3.1 The removal across much of the site of the existing 0.15m thick tarmac surface and its underlying bedding layer of stone chippings, also 0.15m thick, revealed the natural orange/yellow clay and sandstone subsoil (102) (Plate 1). Occasional small patches of a compacted black silty ash (101), up to 0.25m thick, were recorded towards the northern end of the site beneath the stone bedding layer, surviving within hollows in the natural subsoil. Silty ash (101) contained a handful of very small fragments of mid-late 18th- and early 19th-century pottery waste (see below **6.0**). No other archaeological deposits or features were observed within the stripped area.

5.3.2 Along the western edge of the site, the natural subsoil (102) lay beneath a dark brown silty loam topsoil (100), a maximum of 0.28m thick, which contained much brick

and concrete rubble, and had been disturbed by several modern services (Plate 2). In the south-western corner of the site, the removal of 0.19m of topsoil (100) partially exposed the top of a large cylindrical iron fuel tank (112), which measured at least 2.66m NE-SW by 0.52m NW-SE (Fig. 2, Plate 3). The tank sat within a rectangular cut [111] in the natural clay, the full extent of which was not revealed, but was at least 2.93m NE-SW by 1.25m NW-SE. A light orange sand (113) had been used to backfill the cut around the tank. No other finds were made along the site’s western edge.

6.0 Ceramic finds

6.1 A small number of ceramic finds were recovered from context (101) and are listed below:

Context	Description	Form	No. sherds/ fragments	Date
101	Creamware	Plate	1	late C18
	Creamware	Tea bowl	2	late C18
	Creamware	Moulded hollow ware	1	late C18
	Pearlware – TP (blue)	Tea bowl	2	early C19
	Pearlware – TP (blue)	Hollow ware	4	early C19
	Pearlware – TP (blue)	Moulded hollow ware	1	early C19
	Pearlware	Tea bowl	1	early C19
	Biscuit-fired e’ware – TP	Tea bowl	1	early C19
	Biscuit-fired e’ware	Hollow ware	7	C19
	Stoneware?	Crucible?	1	C19?
	Refractory SG clay fabric	Saggars	5	mid C18
	Buff SG clay fabric	Brick	2	C18
Total			28	

TP – transfer printed; e’ware – earthenware; SG – salt glazed.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 Little of archaeological significance was recorded during the course of the watching brief at St. Mark’s School. The natural subsoil was encountered at a shallow depth and

lay beneath modern surfacing or landscaping deposits. This suggested that construction and levelling work associated with the present school had impacted severely upon any surviving below-ground deposits. Context (101) offered some evidence of past pottery-production on or near to the site, but this was extremely fragmentary. The small number of wares recovered date to the period *c.*1750-*c.*1820 and represent products that could have been found in most north-Staffordshire pottery manufactories during this time. The salt-glazed bricks probably once formed part of a kiln and were disposed of along with other factory waste.

8.0 Acknowledgements

8.1 This report was written and illustrated by Jonathan Goodwin of SOTARCH. Fieldwork was undertaken by Zoë Sutherland and Jonathan Goodwin. Thanks are due to Noel Boothroyd, Planning Archaeologist for Stoke-on-Trent and to Graham Lees, site manager.

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9.0 References

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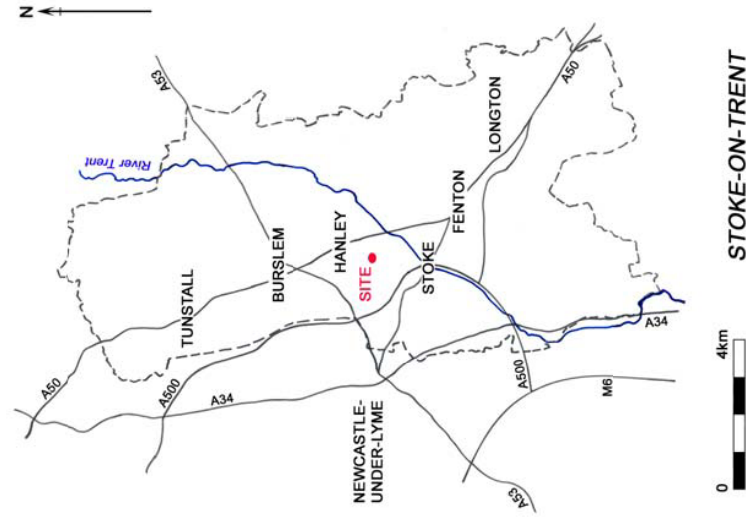
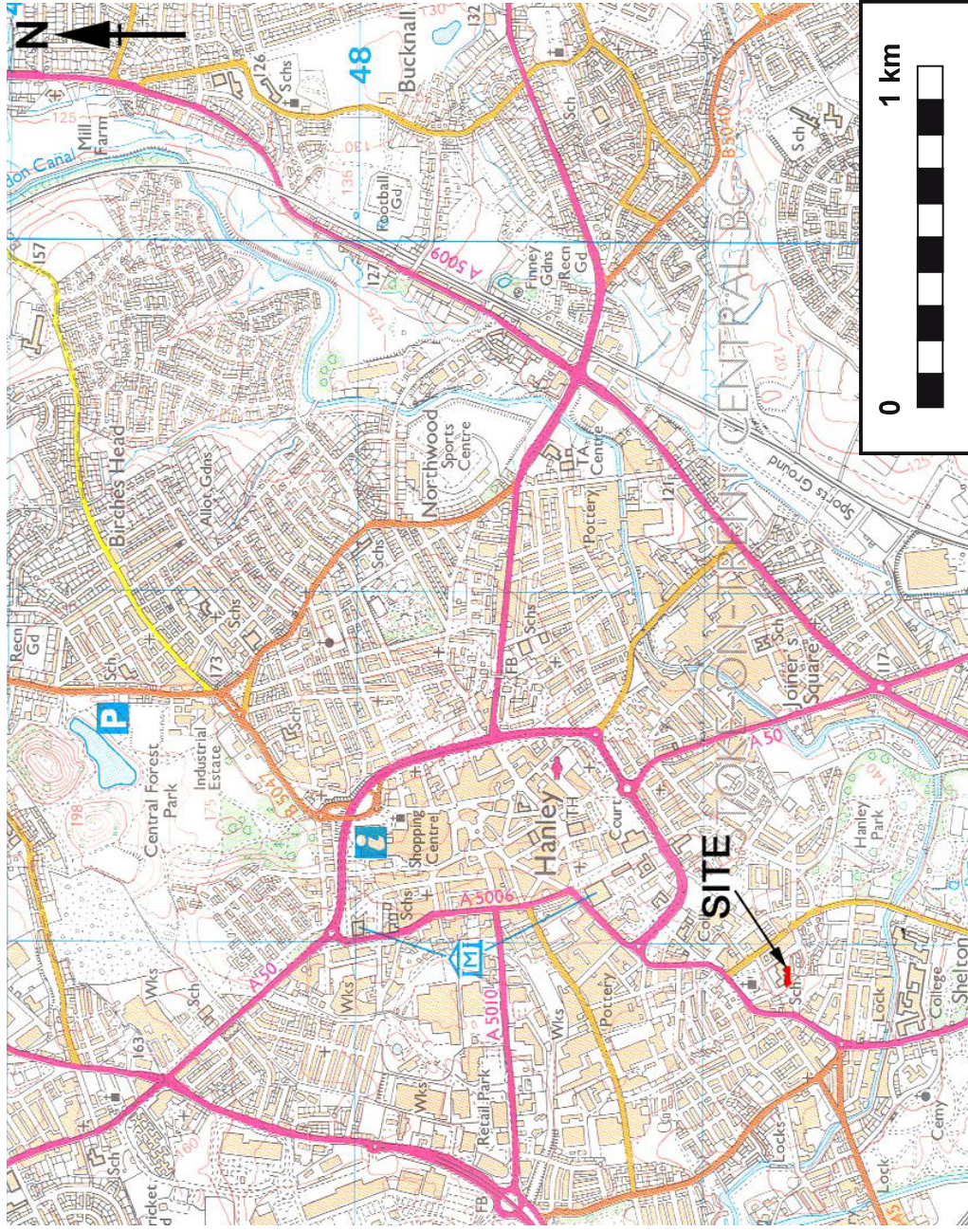


FIG. 1
Site location



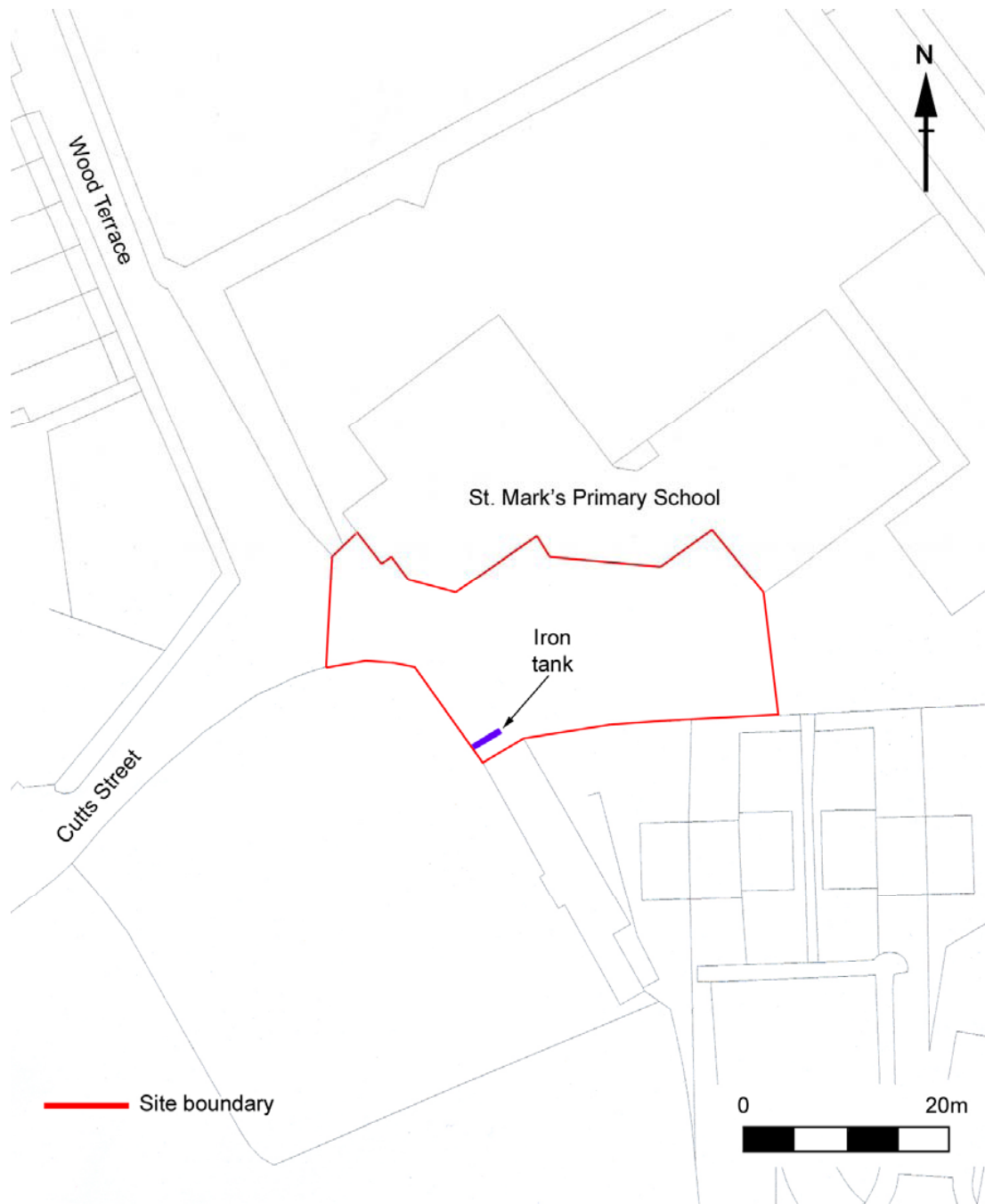


FIG. 2

The development area, showing the location of iron tank (112).



PLATE 1

The northern end of the site during tarmac/topsoil stripping (looking north west). The natural yellow clay and sandstone subsoil (102) has been revealed.



PLATE 2

Topsoil stripping in the south-western corner of the site (looking south). The deposit profile of topsoil (100) overlying the natural subsoil (102) can be seen (scale: 1.0m).

