

OLD MATFORD, WONFORD STREET, EXETER

(SX 93295 91839)

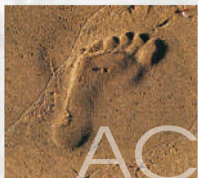
Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

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On behalf of:
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archaeology

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation was carried out by AC archaeology in December 2013 on the site of a proposed annex to Old Matford, Wonford Street, Exeter (SX 93295 91839).

Old Matford is a late 16th-century merchant's house. The evaluation targeted the postulated location of a demolished range of the house. Although the buildings had been thoroughly demolished, very fragmentary remains of the rear wall and an internal floor were located. It contained a semi-basement and was probably constructed of cob. No high-quality finds were recovered, which probably indicates that the range was a service wing.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology in December 2013 at Old Matford, Wonford Street, Exeter (SX 93295 91839; Fig. 1). The evaluation was commissioned by the owner, Mr Anthony Orchard, to provide information on potential archaeological deposits and features within the footprint of a proposed new annex. This report will form part of the supporting information for applications for planning permission and listed building consent for the new annex and conversion of the existing garage as required by the local planning authority (Exeter City Council) in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (paragraph 218), Exeter City Council's *Local Plan* policy C5 and their *Archaeology and Development Supplementary Planning Guidance*. The garage is located at the eastern corner of the property, with the proposed annex located to the south, between the house and the modern brick southeast boundary wall.
- 1.2 Old Matford is a Grade II* listed building (National Heritage List no. 1224370), situated on the edge of St Leonards and within the St Leonard's Conservation Area. It lies on the south side of Wonford Street surrounded by a small area of gardens, at a height of around 35m aOD. The underlying solid geology comprises Permian breccia of the Aliphington Breccia Formation.
- 1.3 There are documentary references to the site from the 14th century, although the present house was constructed by the Exeter merchant George Smyth in the late 16th century. The present house comprises the central hall and screens passage with a chamber over, flanked by two gabled wings, as well as an off-centre porch. The forecourt walls against Wonford Road are also of 16th-century date. The wall was analysed by Richard Parker in 2012 who has concluded that whilst the opening may have comprised a simple arched gate, it could also have taken the form of a larger gatehouse, either freestanding or forming part of a long front range (Parker 2013, 3).
- 1.4 Architectural investigation of the house by Richard Parker in 2008-9 revealed that the present building is a fragment of a much larger structure. Openings in the northwest and southeast walls were associated with demolished ranges flanking the sides of the house, whilst further service buildings were postulated at the rear of the house. The level of the openings in the side walls indicated that both side ranges had a lower first-floor level than that in the core of the surviving house, and therefore they may have been partially or wholly cellared (*ibid.*, 3, 14)

2. AIMS

- 2.1** The aims of the investigation were twofold. Firstly, to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of any archaeological features, deposits or finds within the site, specifically those associated with the demolished southeast range, including walls, surfaces and infilling deposits including decorative or painted plasterwork. Secondly, to identify, and where possible recover, the plan and extent of the range.
- 2.2** The results of the work will be reviewed and used to inform any planning decision made by the Local Planning Authority, as well as the requirement for any subsequent archaeological work should planning permission be granted.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1** The investigation was undertaken in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation* (revised 2008), and a trench plan agreed with the Exeter City Council Archaeology Officer. The position of the excavated trench was however moved to avoid previously unknown services and tree roots. During a site visit by the Archaeology Officer it was agreed that a contingency trench located to the southwest of the house would not be excavated.
- 3.2** The trench was excavated using a mini-digger fitted with a toothless bucket down to the top of archaeological deposits. Following the machine-excavation of a sondage through these deposits, they were then excavated by hand. A written, drawn and photographic record was prepared in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2*. Levels were tied into the existing site survey.

4. RESULTS (Figs 1-2; Plates 1-4; Appendix 1)

- 4.1** A single T-shaped trench was excavated within a raised garden southeast of the house, the only area available for evaluation within the footprint of the proposed development. Its arms measured 7.5m and 3.55m long by 1m wide. The results of the evaluation are summarised below and fuller context descriptions are presented in Appendix 1.
- 4.2** The natural subsoil (119) comprising very compact purple-red clay with occasional bands of degraded breccia and gravel was exposed consistently at a depth of 1.10m below the surface.
- 4.3** At the southwest end of the trench a northwest-southeast aligned trench (F118) had been cut very slightly (20mm) into the natural subsoil. It contained the remains of a very fragmentary foundation of a breccia wall bonded with very coarse white/grey sandy lime mortar (117). To the northeast of the wall a thin (60mm) layer of clay (121) was present overlying the natural, which might represent the remains of a trampled earth floor.
- 4.4** Wall 117 and possible surface 121 were sealed by up 0.55m of demolition deposits (120, 116, 124, 123 and 105). The lower layers comprised degraded breccia (120), and compacted clay (116), possibly representing remains of collapsed or demolished stone and cob walls, whilst 105 contained building debris including plasterwork.
- 4.5** The levelling deposits were sealed by a thin layer of a buried garden soil (104). At the northern end of the trench, 104 had been truncated by a large feature (F122) that extended down into the natural subsoil. It was only partially exposed, and its function

is unclear, but may be associated with 19th-century landscaping. It contained fills (111, 115, 125, and 114) of fairly sterile gravels and clays with rare demolition debris. A small linear feature (F108), filled with compact clays (107 and 106), had been cut into 111. It was only partially exposed within the trench, and its function is unknown. Layer 115 was truncated by a northeast-southwest aligned drain (F113) comprising layers of cobbles bedded in clay (112).

4.6 Feature F122 was sealed by surface (F103) that was present throughout the trench. It comprised laid bricks as well as tiles, roughly dressed breccia, and moulded concrete blocks, and was exposed at the same level as the courtyard surface and garage to the north (and the landscaped grounds of the adjacent church to the southeast). The surface was sealed by up to 0.60m of soils containing building debris (102 and 101) and the present garden soil (100). In the northern arm of the trench two modern drains were partially exposed; one ran alongside the northern edge of the raised garden, aligned northeast-southwest, but was exposed at a level below the present courtyard surface. The other was aligned roughly north-south and was exposed at the same level.

5. THE FINDS by Dr Naomi Payne

5.1 Introduction

All finds recovered on site were retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. They were then quantified according to material type within each context and the assemblage was scanned to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented. This is discussed below. The finds included post-medieval pottery and building materials, as well as small quantities of iron, shell, clay tobacco pipe, animal bone and an incomplete marble pestle. The finds are summarised below in Tables 1 and 2.

5.2 Iron

Three iron nails were recovered from two contexts (101 and 116). They are all post-medieval or modern in date.

5.3 Worked stone

An incomplete white marble pestle was recovered from demolition spread 105. This has a circular cross-section and one expanded, rounded end. The other end is broken. The pestle is 19th or early 20th century in date.

Context	Context description	Iron		Worked stone		Clay tobacco pipe		CBM	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
101	Topsoil	2	12			1	2	2	106
103	Brick courtyard							1	2574
105	Demolition spread			1	240			1	135
112	Drain							4	1030
116	Collapsed cob layer	1	32						
Total		3	44	1	240	1	2	8	3845

Table 1: Summary of finds by context (weights in grams; CBM – ceramic building material)

Context	Context description	Architectural concrete		Plaster		Post-medieval pottery		Animal bone		Shell	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
101	Topsoil					4	57	1	78		
103	Brick courtyard	3	8000								
104	Possible buried soil					4	66				
105	Demolition spread			1	101	6	37	2	202		
112	Drain					1	17				
115	Layer of backfill material					4	57	1	2	1	12
116	Collapsed cob layer									1	9
Total		3	8000	1	101	19	234	4	282	2	21

Table 2: Summary of finds by context (weights in grams)

5.4 Clay tobacco pipe

A single fragment (2g) of post-medieval clay tobacco pipe was recovered from 101. As this is only a stem fragment it cannot be closely dated.

5.5 Ceramic Building Material

Eight pieces (3845g) of ceramic building material were recovered from four contexts. They include two hand-made brick fragments, three roof tiles, an incomplete flat brick from courtyard surface 103, and an unidentified fragment of CBM and a piece of glazed ridge tile. The latter is the earliest component of the assemblage and could date from the 16th to early 18th century. It is probably a South Somerset product.

5.6 Architectural concrete

Three pieces (8000g) of moulded concrete were recovered from courtyard surface 103. Two of the fragments are from flat blocks, 110mm thick. Both have three flat faces and chamfering along the original surfaces, front and back. The other edges are broken. The third fragment is a smaller, narrower section with a central rib projecting from one side. The blocks are presumably pre-cast concrete for building purposes. They are made from a coarse fabric with large brick and stone inclusions and smaller coal and coke fragments. They probably date from the later 19th or early 20th century.

5.7 Plaster

A single piece (101g) of wall plaster was recovered from (105), a demolition spread. One side is roughly flat.

5.8 Post-medieval pottery

A total of 19 sherds (234g) of post-medieval pottery was recovered from five contexts, and is predominantly made up of glazed coarse earthenwares of South Somerset type, including a rim sherd from a late 17th or 18th century slipware bowl from context 105 and two cup handle sherds from context 115. Two of the body sherds from context 105 are a little earlier in date than the rest of the material (16th or early 17th century). There are also six sherds of 19th-20th century transfer-printed wares, two of which were recovered from context 105.

5.9 Animal bone

Four fragments (282g) of animal bone were recovered from three contexts. No species could be identified, although at least two of the pieces have butcher's cuts present.

5.10 Shell

Two pieces (21g) of oyster shell were recovered, one from context 115, the other from context 116.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 The evaluation has uncovered evidence for an early structure southeast of the present house. Although it had been almost entirely removed when demolished, a foundation trench was identified (F118) along with what may be an associated interior earth floor (121). The level of the surface was around 1m below the present courtyard level and threshold of the door into the southeast wing of the house. The position of the foundation trench ties in with Richard Parker's inferred location for the rear wall of a southeast range. The depth of the exposed floor level below the present house, along with the consistent level of the floor and the underlying natural subsoil indicates that the structure contained a semi-basement as put forward by Richard Parker. The possible earth floor may indicate that the basement was used for storage or other service activities, and that high-quality domestic accommodation would have been present on the north side of the building. This interpretation is backed up by the lack of high quality finds from overlying demolition deposits that clearly included debris and building material from the former range.

6.2 No dating material was recovered from the surviving elements of the range nor from the immediate overlying layers. The latest of the group of demolition layers (105) can be dated to the 19th century; the residual earlier post-medieval pottery from this context is consistent with the documented occupation of the site. No direct dating for the demolition of the range can be put forward but the limited archaeological evidence does not contradict Richard Parker's interpretation for 18th century 'demolition or reduction of redundant or decayed parts of the house' (Parker 2013, 12).

6.3 The overlying deposits and features were all dated to the 19th and 20th centuries. No obvious function can be put forward for the large feature (F122) at the north end of the trench. However, a plausible context is landscaping associated with the construction of the garage to the northeast in the late 19th century, perhaps in 1888 (*ibid.*, 11-12). The overlying brick surface (103) may be of the same date. The later deposits (100-102) are of 20-century date and the raised garden in which they are found was probably created when the southeast part of the site was redeveloped as a church and the present brick boundary wall constructed.

7. COMMENTS

7.1 The evaluation has established the following:

- A range of the 16th-century house was located to the southeast of the present building, partially within the footprint of the proposed annex,
- The range has been thoroughly demolished, and only very little of its walls and the internal floor of the semi-basement survive;
- The remains of the range are in too poor a condition to merit preservation *in situ*, and are therefore not a constraint on the proposed development; and
- The range was probably used for service activities, with the infilling deposits comprising demolition layers that do not contain high quality architectural features or artefacts.

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7.2 In the event of consent being granted by the local planning authority, the vestigial remains would however need to be fully excavated and recorded across the footprint of the new development, and this would be a condition of consent.

8. ARCHIVE AND OASIS ENTRY

8.1 The paper and digital archive and finds are currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ, where they will be stored pending the outcome of the planning application. At this time, or if necessary following the completion of any further archaeological investigations required by the grant of planning permission, the finds will be offered to the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, to be stored under an allocated accession number. If they are unable to accept this, then it will be dealt with under their current accession policy.

8.2 A digital archive will be compiled in accordance with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) standards and guidelines. It will consist of:

- All relevant born-digital data (images, survey data, site data collected digitally etc.); and
- Digital copies made of all other relevant written and drawn data produced and/or collected during fieldwork and as part of the subsequent post-excavation analysis phase.

8.3 The digital archive will be deposited with the ADS within three months of acceptance of the final report.

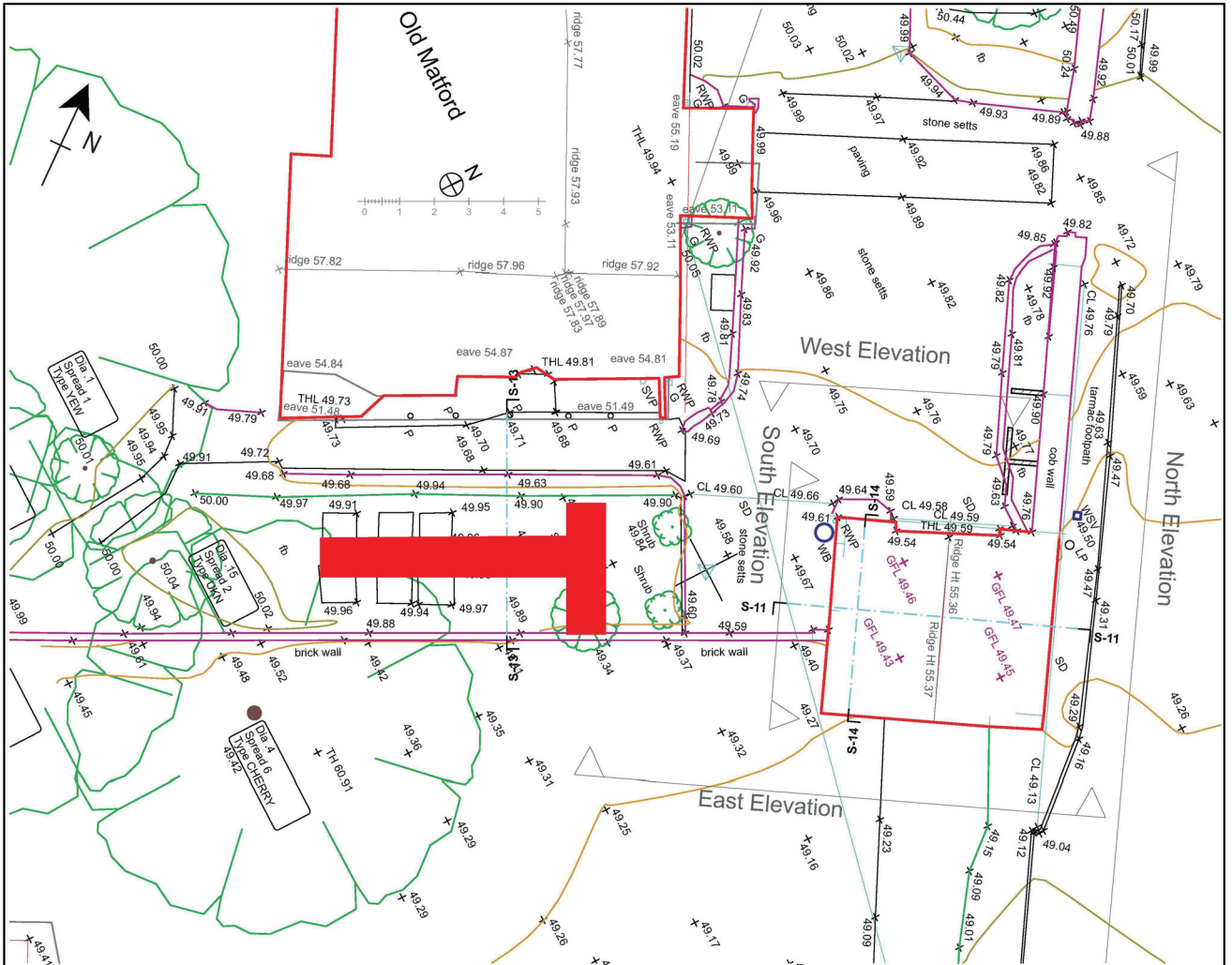
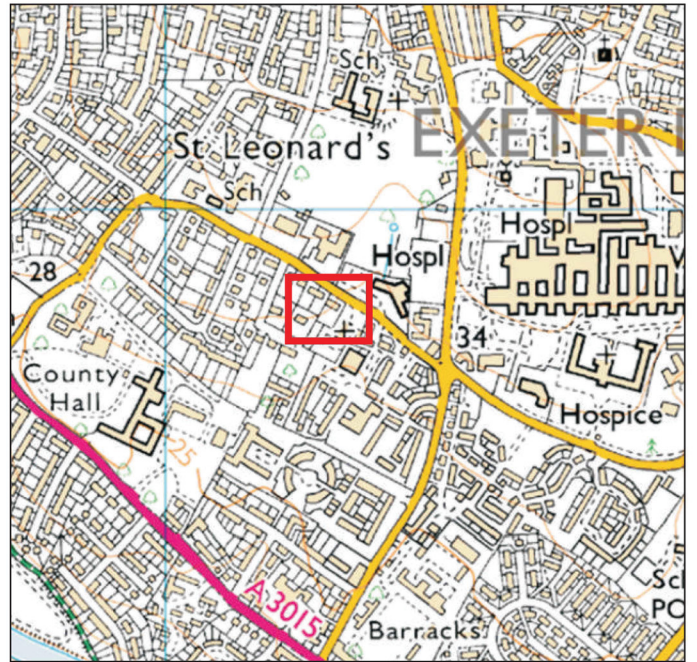
8.4 An OASIS entry has been completed under the unique identifier 168135.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

9.1 The evaluation was commissioned by Mr Anthony Orchard, and managed for AC archaeology by Andrew Passmore. The fieldwork was carried out by Will Smith and Jon Hall, the report written by Andrew Passmore and Naomi Payne with the illustrations prepared by Elisabeth Patkai. Thanks are due to Richard Parker for his advice and comments on the layout of Old Matford and for discussing the results of the evaluation.

10. SOURCE CONSULTED

Parker, R.W., 2013, *Historic Building Survey of Outbuildings at Old Matford, Wonford Road, Exeter*, report no. **2013.05**.



Evaluation trench

PROJECT

Old Matford, Wonford Street, Exeter

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location and trench plan



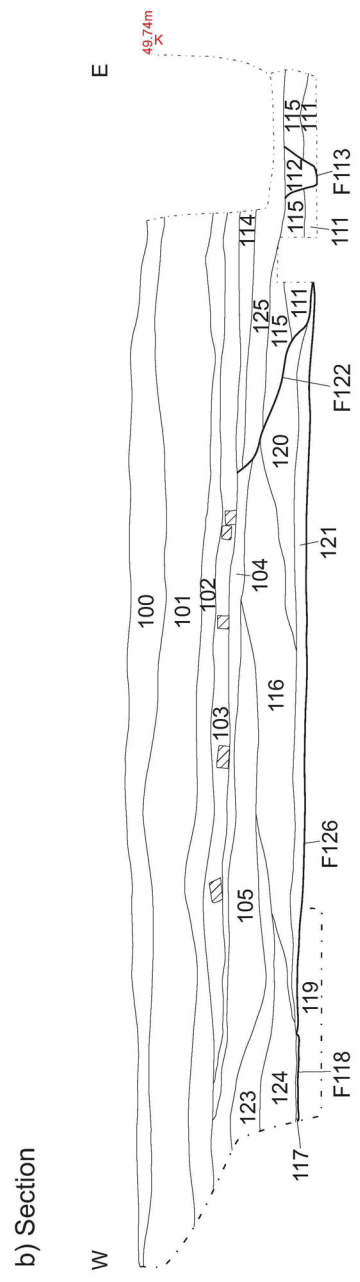
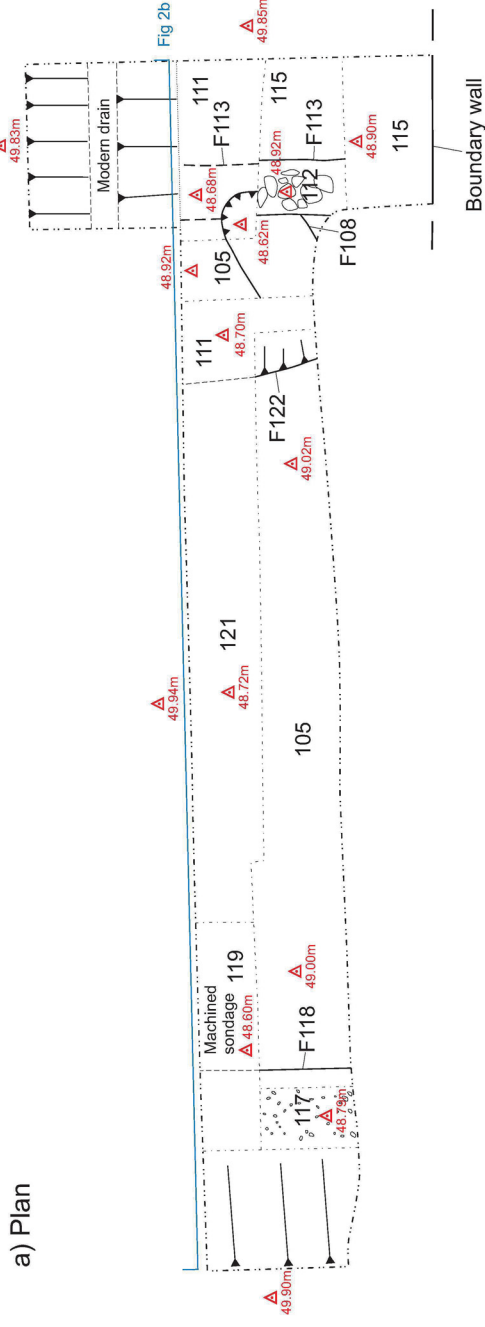




Plate 1: Trench 1, post-excavation photograph, viewed from the northeast (scale 1m)



Plate 2: Construction trench F118 showing mortar bedding 117, viewed from the northeast (scale 0.50m)



Plate 3: Edge of feature F122 in the foreground within drain F108 behind the scale, viewed from the southwest (scale 0.50m)



Plate 4: Surface 103 partially exposed, viewed from the southwest (scale 1m)

Appendix 1

Context descriptions

Appendix 1: Context descriptions

Context	Depth	Description	Interpretation
100	0.12m	Dark blackish brown loose silty clayey loam with frequent flecks of slate, CMD, mortar and mixed gravels	Modern garden topsoil
101	0.30m	Mid brown soft fine sandy clay with frequent flecks of pinkish white sandy mortar, slate, CBM and poorly sorted gravels	20th-century landscaping layer
102	0.10m	Very dark grey soft silty clayey loam with gravels and moderate large charcoal flecks	20th-century landscaping deposit
103	0.10m	Surface of frogged brick, ceramic tiles and roughly-cut Heavitree breccia laid in a single course bonded in reddish fine sandy mortar.	19th-century courtyard surface
104	0.06m	Dark brown soft silty sandy clay loam with frequent well-sorted gravels	Layer of 19th-century buried topsoil
105	0.20m	Purple red firm sandy clay with frequent flecks of off-white grey sandy mortar, charcoal, gravels, flecks of CBM, slate and plaster	19th-century demolition/levelling layer
106	0.05m	Mottled red/yellow compact clay	Upper fill of F108
107	0.15m	Yellow-brown compacted clay	Lower fill of F108
F108	0.20m	2m long, 0.40m wide linear cut with steep sides and a rounded base	Cut feature, possibly a drain
109	0.23m	Yellow brown compact clay with demolition debris, grit and mortar flecks.	19th-century demolition/levelling layer
110	0.20m	Yellow brown compact clay silt with demolition waste, shell, slate and mortar fragments	19th-century demolition/levelling layer
111	Min 0.40m	Pink red compact gleyed decayed breccia with grit and charcoal flecking	19th-century demolition deposit within F122
112	0.35m	Riverworn cobbles measuring 0.20m-0.40m long set into compacted yellow brown clayey silt	Drain fill within cut F113
113	0.35m	0.35m wide linear cut with vertical sides and a flat base	Drain
114	0.25m	Yellow grey friable sandy clay with sand and grit	Fill of F122
115	0.12m	Yellow brown compact clayey silt	Fill of F122
116	0.30m	Light purple red compact clay with poorly-sorted gravels	Demolition deposit deriving from a cob wall
117	0.02m	White to light grey loose very coarse sandy lime mortar bonding a breccia block	Foundation of demolished southeast range within cut F118
118	0.02m	c. 0.60m wide NW-SE aligned linear cut with a straight side and a flat base	Construction trench for foundation of southeast range 117.
119		Purple red with yellowish mottling and occasional bands of gravel	Natural subsoil
120	0.24m	Purple red compact clay with frequent poorly-sorted gravels	Post-medieval demolition/levelling layer
121	0.06m	Purple red firm clay with moderate poorly-sorted gravels	Post-medieval demolition/levelling layer
122	Min. 0.50m	NW-SE aligned linear cut with gently sloping south edge	Cur feature possible associated with late 19th-century landscaping and garage construction
123	0.19	Red brown compact fine sandy silty clay with common flecks of mortar, CBM, charcoal and poorly-sorted gravels.	Post-medieval demolition/levelling layer
124	0.25m	Purple brown compact sandy silty clay with common mortar flecks	Post-medieval demolition/levelling layer
125	0.18m	Reddish brown compact sandy clay with occasional poorly sorted gravels and breccia fragments	Fill of F122
126		Linear cut	Number allocation to a possible cut into the natural subsoil for the basement of range F118/117

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