

BRANNAMS MEDICAL CENTRE, BRANNAMS SQUARE, BARNSTAPLE, DEVON

NGR SS 5607 3290

Results of Archaeological Monitoring and Recording

North Devon District Council Planning Reference: 59981
(Condition 4)

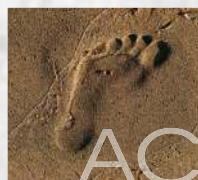
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On behalf of:
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archaeology

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Summary

Archaeological monitoring and recording associated with a proposed extension to the Brannams Medical Centre, Brannams Square, Barnstaple, Devon (SS 5607 3290) was undertaken by AC archaeology during November 2015. The work comprised the excavation of a trial trench measuring 10.5m long and 1.1m wide, which was positioned across the proposed extension footprint.

The site was located within an area associated with post-medieval pottery production, with the area investigated overlying the position of a former garden plot with outbuildings that was then occupied by the Brannams Pottery factory from the late 19th/early 20th century.

The trench exposed a brick footing that probably formed part of the former factory building. Evidence for demolition and levelling dating to the late 19th to early 20th century was also present, which was likely to represent the clearance and preparation of the site for the construction of the factory. This included the use of pottery wasters and kiln furniture as levelling material. A retained sample of this material has provided an assemblage that contains examples of the broad range of objects used for production as well as the final product.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of archaeological monitoring and recording in advance of a proposed extension to the Brannams Medical Centre, Brannams Square, Barnstaple, Devon (SS 5603 32901). The work was required as condition 4 of planning consent granted by North Devon District Council (ref. 59981), following consultation with the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (hereafter DCCHET).
- 1.2 The archaeological works commissioned by Clive Jones Architects on behalf of the Brannams Medical Centre and were carried out by AC archaeology on 18 November 2015.
- 1.3 Brannams Medical Centre lies on the southeast side of central Barnstaple in Brannams Square, which is bounded to the southwest by Litchdon Street and is accessed via Kiln Lane from the northwest (Fig. 1). The proposed area for the extension was positioned on the southeast side of the medical centre on what was existing lawn and shrub-covered grounds (Plate 1). It lay on flat ground at 10m aOD (above Ordnance Datum), with the underlying solid geology comprising mudstone of the Pilton Mudstone Formation beneath a superficial deposit of clay, silt, sand and gravel alluvium (British Geological Survey Online Viewer).

2. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site is located within an area associated with historic pottery production dating from the 17th century onwards, with potteries formally in production on Litchdon Street and the land to the rear (Devon Historic Environment Record ref. MDV813). Thomas Brannam operated the pottery fronting Litchdon Street, which backs onto the site, from 1840, with this expanding towards Trinity Street under successive generations of the family into the area now covered by the Brannams Medical Centre by 1904. A brick-built kiln, retained in the grounds of the medical centre would have formed part of the later expansion to the pottery (MDV104805). The Ordnance Survey town plan of 1889 depicts the site as within a garden plot to the rear of the properties fronting Litchdon Street, with the position of the proposed extension as partially covered by probable outbuildings. The subsequent map of 1904 shows the garden area as infilled by the expansion to Brannams Pottery.

- 2.2** Immediately to the east of the site is Penrose Almshouses which date to 1627 and comprise of four ranges arranged around a courtyard (MDV4515). The garden to the rear is bounded by a cob wall (MDV95937), which forms the property boundary adjacent to the proposed extension.

3. AIMS

- 3.1** The aim of the archaeological monitoring and recording was to preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits exposed during groundworks associated with the scheme. This was with particular reference for the potential for industrial remains and deposits relating to the former pottery industry.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** It was agreed with the DCCHET that the work would consist of an initial trial trench, excavated across the footprint of the proposed extension (Fig. 2). The trench measured 10.5m long and 1.1m wide and was excavated to a depth of 0.5m, which was the proposed formation depth of the development. The work was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by AC archaeology (Hughes 2015).
- 4.2** The trench was excavated using a tracked 360° machine fitted with a toothless bucket and was directly supervised by the attending archaeologist.
- 4.3** All features and deposits exposed were recorded using the standard AC archaeology pro-forma recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2* (revised August 2012). Detailed sections and plans were produced at a scale of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50 as appropriate.

5. RESULTS (Fig. 3, Plates 2-3)

5.1 Introduction

The trench was excavated to a depth of 0.5m below existing levels into the lowest exposed layers (contexts 102 and 104). These comprised dark grey to mid grey silty-clay loams representing probable buried soils. Three fragments of clay tobacco pipe were recovered from layer 104. Layer 104 was overlain by a mixed 0.06m thick light brownish-yellow silty-clay loam dumped layer (109) with patches of yellow clay and degraded mortar. The trench contained some brick footings (S106) and two large cut features (F112 and F114) that cut through layer 109 and were, in turn, overlain by a dark brownish-grey clayey-loam subsoil (100) and dark brown humic loam topsoil (108).

5.2 Brick footings 106

Layer 109 was cut toward the northeast end of the trench by a construction cut (F110), which contained ENE to WSW aligned mortar-bonded brick-built wall footing S106. The brick footing was constructed on roughly hewn local stone (115 not illustrated) and was comprised of late 19th to 20th century bricks and were laid in a single stretcher course width for the majority of the exposed section, but stepped wider at the WSW extent. The construction cut was backfilled with a sandy-silt loam (111). To the NNW of wall S106, a dumped mid yellow clay (113 not illustrated) that was beneath a mid grey clayey-loam dumped soil (107) infilled this area, while to the SSE, the brick footing was abutted by a mid brownish-yellow compacted clay levelling layer (105) that also sealed layer 109.

5.3 Features F112 and F114

Features F112 and F114 also cut through layer 109. Linear feature F112 measured more than 5m wide with a gradually-sloping side that extended beyond the limit of excavation to the southwest and a vertical northeast site. It contained a light brownish-yellow sandy matrix with crushed mortar and abundant pottery sherds and fragments of kiln furniture from which a sample was retained.

Feature F114 represented a squared cut that extended beyond the extent of the trench. It contained a dumped mixed light yellow sand to silty-clay (103) with abundant structural demolition material comprising slate and brick fragments, as well as finds of 19th to 20th century glass bottle fragments, 19th century pottery and kiln furniture.

6. THE FINDS *by Naomi Payne*

6.1 Introduction

A representative sample of finds recovered during the watching brief was 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. The finds included an assemblage of Brannam pottery sherds, pieces of kiln furniture and small quantities of industrially-made pottery, glass, ceramic building material and slag. The finds are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of finds by context (weights in grams)

Context	Context Description	Slag		Glass		Clay tobacco-pipe		CBM		Kiln furniture		Post-medieval pottery	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
100	Topsoil											9	584
101	Fill of F112	2	200					3	37	28	6215	80	5184
103	Fill of F114			11	608			3	266	1	158	16	1043
104	Buried soil					3	10						
107	Dumped soil layer											1	23
Total		2	200	11	608	3	10	6	303	29	6373	106	6834

6.2 Slag

Two pieces (200g) of fuel ash slag were recovered from context 101.

6.3 Glass

11 fragments (608g) of post-medieval bottle glass were recovered from context 103. This material includes two sherds of English green bottle glass. The remaining sherds are fragments of industrially produced bottles of later 19th or 20th century date.

6.4 Clay tobacco-pipe

Three fragments (10g) of post-medieval clay tobacco-pipe were recovered from context 104. All three are stem fragments and cannot be closely dated.

6.5 CBM

Six pieces (303g) of ceramic building material which do not appear to be kiln furniture were recovered from context 101 and context 103. They include four pieces of curved tile or pipe and two flat fragments, at least one of which is probably brick.

6.6 Kiln furniture (Plates 4-6)

28 pieces (6215g) of kiln furniture were retained. The majority of this material consists of props and bricks. There is also a possible saggar fragment, a probable setter fragment and a stilt or spur.

Bricks

Of the ten bricks, two are small fragments and the remainder are all incomplete or fragmentary bricks of the same form. They have a squat pentagonal cross-section with three faces set at right-angles, one wide curving face and one narrower curving or flat face. The original widths range between 65mm and 80mm for width and depths between 47mm and 54mm. No original length has been preserved but the largest surviving piece was more than 112mm in length. Their function is uncertain but as no other brick forms were recovered it seems likely that they were used as kiln furniture.

Props

There are 16 fragments from hollow cylinders which are presumably circular kiln props used to hold up kiln shelves. All of these are from context 101 with the exception of one fragment from context 103. None of the fragments survives to its full length; the largest fragment was originally more than 148mm in length. Seven fragments have part of one flat edge, which is plain without a flange. Extrapolated external diameters range from 95mm to 150mm. The depths of the curving walls range between 13 and 17mm. The prop fragment from context 103 has a dribble of dark brown glaze which has run down the internal face.

Saggar

The possible saggar fragment is part of a corner, indicating a broadly square profile. No original dimensions have been preserved other than the thickness, which is between 14mm and 21mm (at the corner). It has a mid-brown salt glaze inside and out and a band of faint diagonal lines which runs along the corner edge on one face only.

Setter

The section of probable setter is made from reasonably fine red clay. It is flat with an original width of 25mm and thickness of 9mm. It is broken at both ends. The surviving piece is less than 4cm long and has a slight curve. Both edges are flanged, but on one side this splays out both ways and on the other, only one way. Presuming that this is a fragment of setter, a spacer bar used to separate pots in the kiln, the side with one flange must have supported a base and the underside would have sat on top of a rim.

Stilt or spur

The stilt or three-legged spur is made from fine white clay and has three arms, one of which is broken. Each arm terminates in an upward and downward point. There is some moulded lettering on each of three facets on one side including a '4' in the centre of one facet and 'C F 4' (unclear, possibly G P or similar) on the other two facets of the same side. These were commercially produced products and the lettering presumably refers to the particular type or size.

6.7 Post-medieval pottery (Plates 7-11)

106 sherds (6834g) of post-medieval/modern pottery were recovered from four contexts. The largest group, 80 sherds (5184g), was from context 101, fill of F112. This group consists of utilitarian household glazed earthenware vessels made at the Brannam pottery. There are two distinct fabrics, one of which is coarser and has been used to make the larger vessels, and the other finer and used to make the smaller vessels. There are five different coloured glazes in use and some unglazed vessels, the relative proportions of which are shown in Table 2. There are no misshapen

wasters but the glazes are imperfect on some sherds and others may be from vessels which shattered in the kiln.

Table 2. Relative proportions of glazed and unglazed sherds in context 101

Glaze description	No. of sherds	Weight (g)
Dark brown glaze	12	764
Mid-dark brown glaze	9	504
Mid brown glaze	10	763
Mid-light brown glaze	12	647
Dark yellow/greenish glaze	7	493
Creamy yellow	20	1152
Unglazed	10	861
Total	80	5184

The vessels represented are mainly bowls, jars and pans of varying sizes. There are also two fragments from unglazed shallow vessels with base diameters of c 120mm and heights between 35-40mm which were probably seed pans. In addition there is a base from a small upright vessel with a base diameter of 70mm which was probably a mug.

Context 103, fill of F114, produced a smaller quantity of similar material, including two conjoining sherds from a large internally glazed jar with dark brown wavy line decoration on a pale yellow background, just below the rim.

The remaining pottery from contexts 100 and 103 consists entirely of non-local industrially-produced ceramics including stoneware jars and transfer-printed wares. Context 100 also contained an early 20th century ceramic and metal light fitting made by Vickers.

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 The trial trench exposed features and deposits dating from the late post-medieval/modern periods that are almost certainly associated with the former Brannams Pottery factory, which previously operated on the site. Historic mapping, as described above, depicts the site as having been developed for industrial buildings in the period between 1889 and 1904, following the site having been occupied by gardens and outbuildings to the rear of the original pottery fronting Litchdon Street.
- 7.2 The features and deposits post-dated a buried soil exposed in two sections as layers 102 and 104, which has been dated to the post-medieval period based on the recovery of clay tobacco pipe fragments. These layers probably represent the overall soil layer existing prior to the industrial development directly on the site.
- 7.3 Brick footing S106 is likely to relate to the industrial structures that previously occupied the site. It cut through mixed clay layer 109, which may be related to its construction phase, with associated infilling deposits 113 and 107 and probable levelling layer 105 are also likely to be related to its construction.
- 7.4 Features F112 and F114 also cut through layer 109 and are therefore likely to be broadly contemporary to wall S106. The structural demolition material within feature F114 with finds dating from the late 19th to early 20th century corresponds with the date for the industrial development of the immediate site. This feature may therefore also relate to the construction period. However, based on its location, as close to the

former outbuildings that occupied this part of the site, it perhaps relates to their demolition immediately prior to construction. Feature F112 may also represent a pre-existing feature that was levelled with the dumped waste from pottery production also prior to construction. This dump contains examples of the range of objects used for the production of the pottery, while the sherds themselves demonstrate part of the range of wares produced.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The archaeological investigations have exposed a small part of activities related to the former use of the site for Brannams Pottery production. Demolition material dated to the late 19th to early 20th century, and possibly relating to the clearance of outbuildings that formally occupied the site corresponds with the industrial development of the immediate site. The presence of a brick footing, almost certainly related to the former factory building that occupied the site represented the expansion of the Brannams Pottery in this period, as expanding from the, as then, established industry occupying the buildings fronting Litchdon Street.

A dump of pottery wasters and kiln furniture, probably used as readily-available levelling material for the preparation of the site prior to construction of the former factory building has provided an assemblage that contains examples of the broad range of objects used for production as well as the final product.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

9.1 The paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. This will be offered for deposition under museum accession number **NDDMS2015.48** at the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon, Barnstaple.

9.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier **229434**, which includes a digital copy of this report.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

10.1 The archaeological investigations were commissioned by Clive Jones Architects on behalf of the Brannams Medical Centre. The site works were carried out by Paul Cooke, with the illustrations for this report prepared by Stella de-Villiers. The collaboration of Stephen Reed, Devon County Council Archaeology Officer, is duly acknowledged.

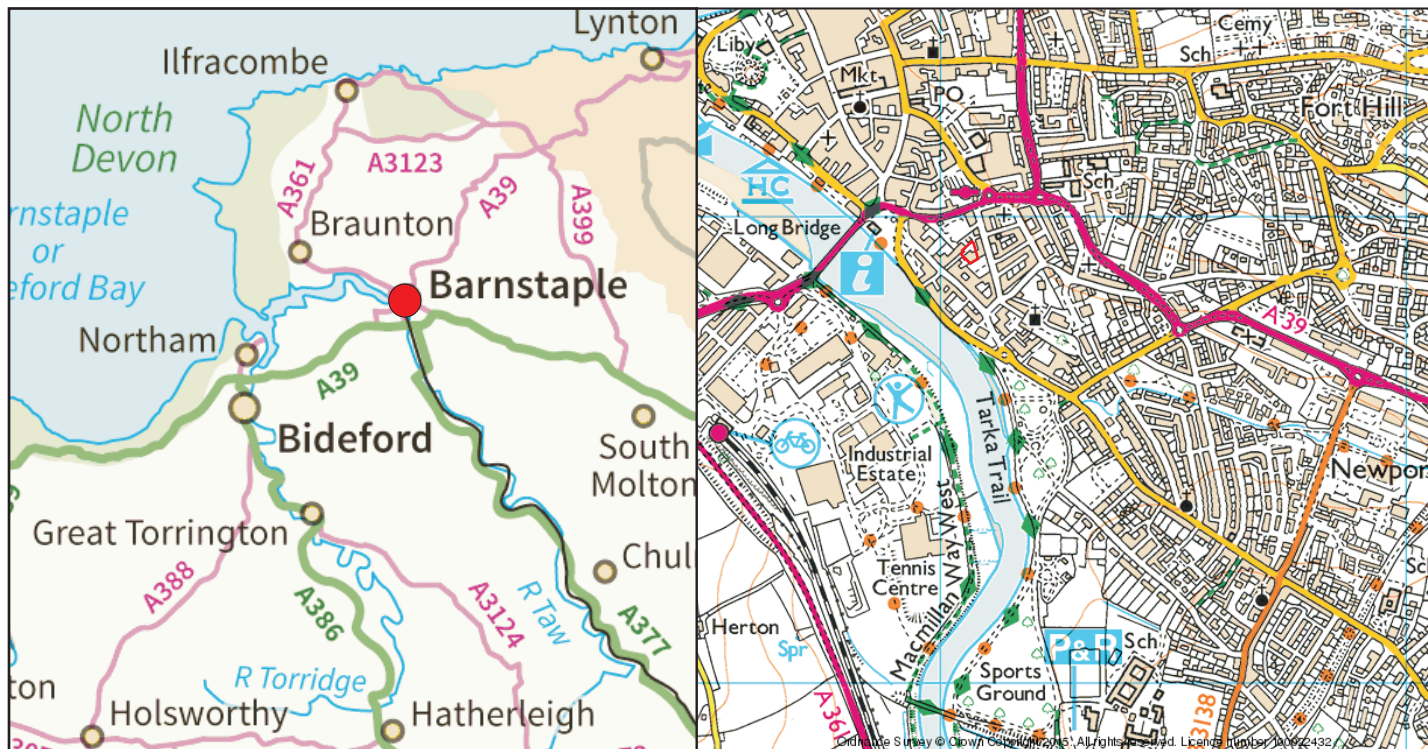
11. SOURCES CONSULTED

British Geological Survey online viewer www.bgs.ac.uk

Hughes, S., 2015, *Brannams Medical Centre, Brannams Square, Barnstaple, Devon: Project Design for archaeological monitoring and recording*. Unpublished AC archaeology document, ref. ACD1259/1/0

Ordnance Survey 1889 1:500 Barnstaple Town Plan

Ordnance Survey 6-inch Devonshire sheet 13 NE, surveyed 1885, published 1889, revised 1904



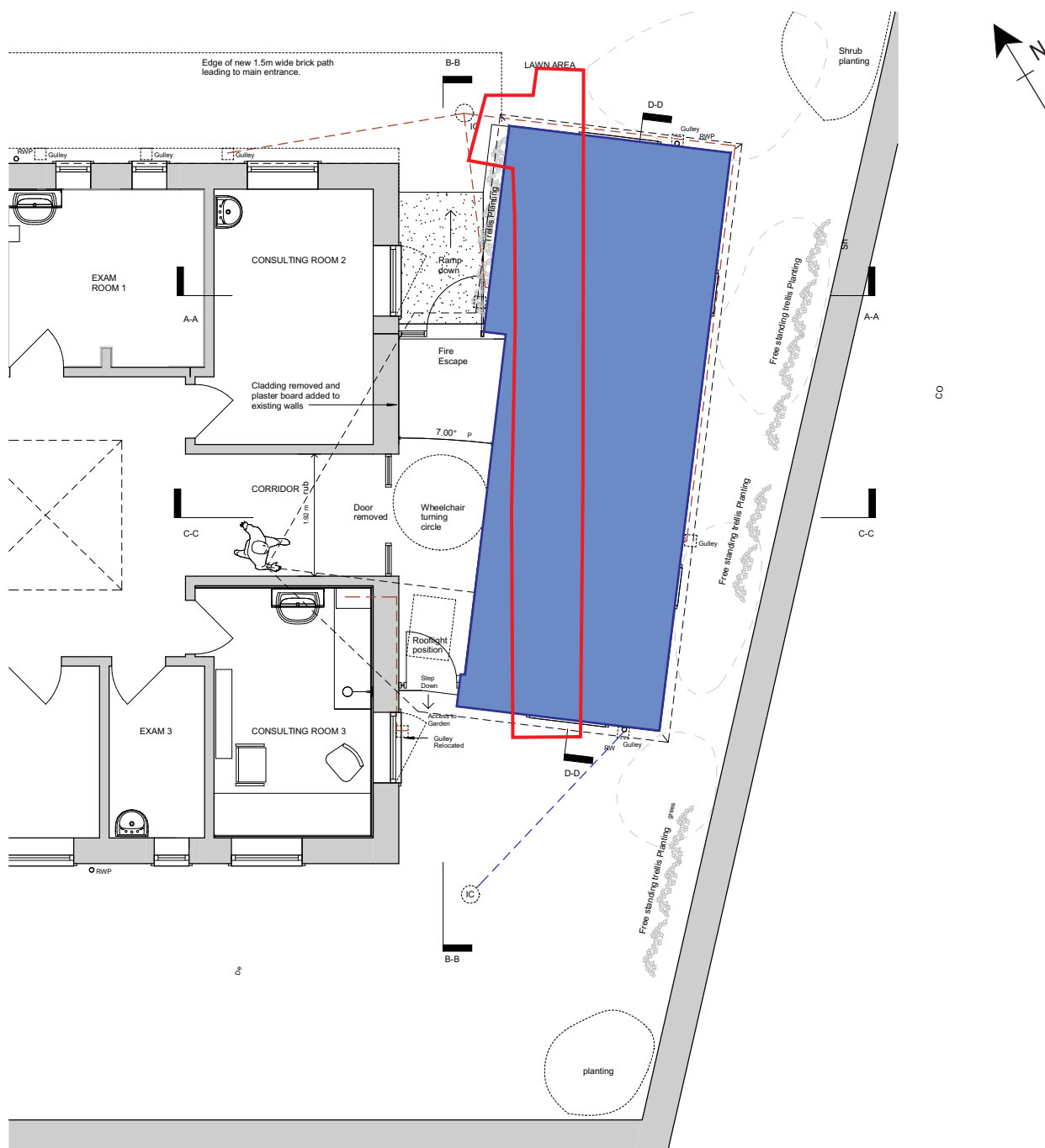
0 50m
Scale 1:1000@A4

PROJECT

Brannams Medical Centre, Barnstaple, Devon

TITLE

Fig.1: Site location



trench location

0 50m
Scale 1:1000@A4

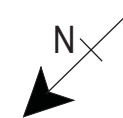
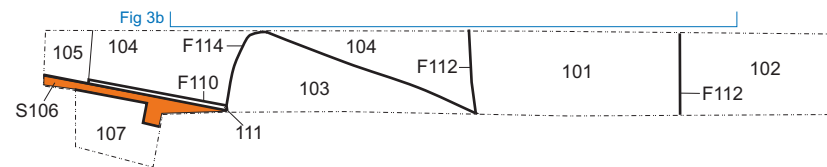
PROJECT

Brannams Medical Centre, Barnstaple, Devon

TITLE

Fig.2: Trench location

a) Plan of Trench 1

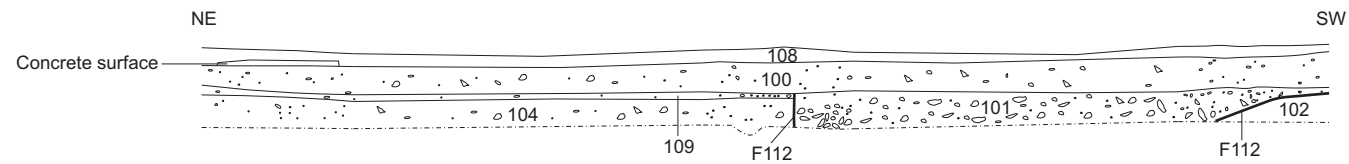


Key

Brick wall

0 5m
Plan
Scale 1:100@A4

b) Section of Trench 1



0 3m
Scale 1:50@A4

PROJECT

Brannams Medical Centre, Barnstaple, Devon

TITLE

Fig.3: Trench 1, plan and section





Plate 1: General pre-excavation view of site, looking southwest



Plate 2: General view of Trench 1, looking southwest (scale 1m)



Plate 3: Showing layer sequence at northeast end of trench. View to southeast

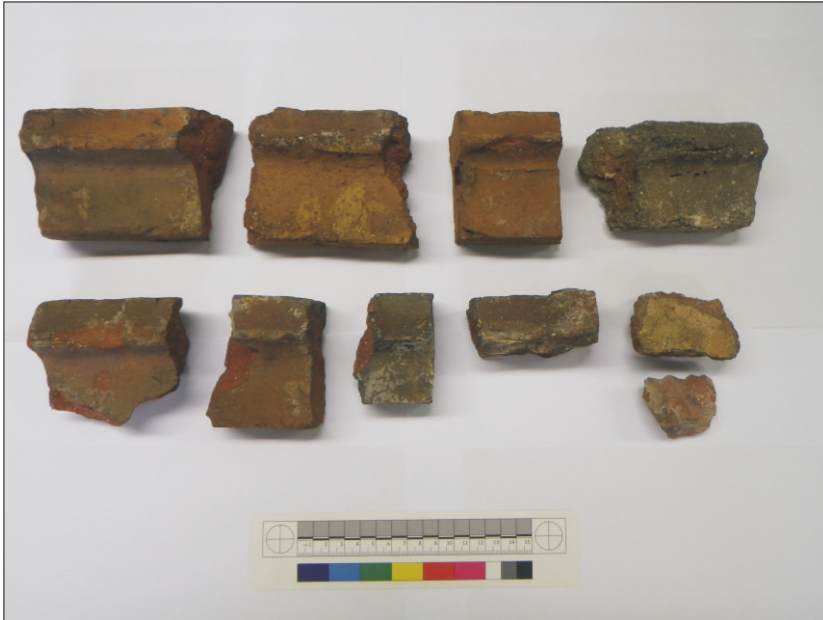


Plate 4: Kiln bricks (scale 15cm)



Plate 5: Kiln props (scale 15cm)



Plate 6: Kiln furniture, stilt left, possible sagger centre and setter right (scale 15cm)



Plate 7: Pottery, dark brown glaze
(scale 15cm)



Plate 8: Pottery, brown glaze (scale 15cm)

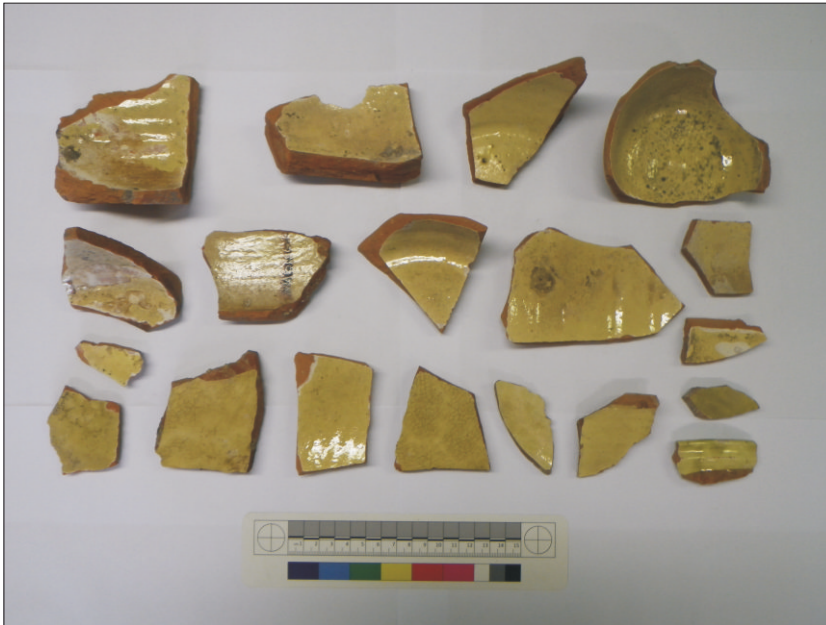


Plate 9: pottery, cream glaze (scale 15cm)



Plate 10: Pottery unglazed (scale 15cm)

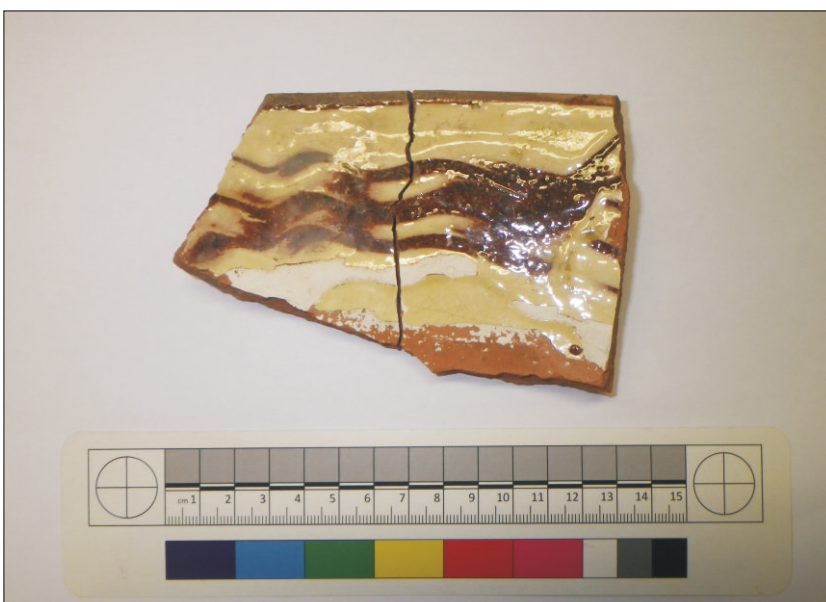


Plate 11: Pottery, glazed with internal decoration (scale 15cm)

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