

PEIRSON HOUSE, MULGRAVE STREET, PLYMOUTH, DEVON

(NGR SX 47565 54209)

Report on Archaeological Trial Pits

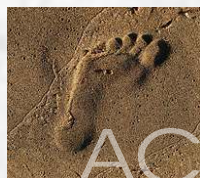
Plymouth City Council Planning Reference: 17/01826/S73
(Condition 8)

Prepared by:
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On behalf of:
Burke Richards

Report No: ACD1792/2/0

Date: May 2018



AC archaeology

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Client	Burke Richards
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The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of AC archaeology and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

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Summary

A trial pit evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology during April 2018 at Peirson House, Mulgrave Street, Plymouth, Devon (SX 47565 54209). The site lies close to the assumed extent of Stray Park burial ground, a Royal Naval hospital cemetery dating to the late 18th to early 19th centuries.

The work comprised the excavation of seven trial pits positioned to provide a sample coverage of the site.

The trial pits exposed structural remains that were related to former 19th century tenements and the recently-demolished Pierson House flats. A probable stone drain was also exposed. This was also of likely 19th century date.

No evidence for cemetery remains were exposed. Furthermore, terracing of much of the site into the hillside to the south had almost certainly removed the potential for pre-modern archaeological features and deposits.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The excavation of trial pits as part of a programme of archaeological work associated with a proposed residential development at Peirson House, Mulgrave Street, Plymouth, Devon (SX 47565 54209) was undertaken during April 2018. The programme of archaeological work was required by Plymouth City Council following consultation with the Plymouth City Council Historic Environment Officer as condition 8 of planning reference 17/01826/S73, a variation of condition 2 of existing consent reference 16/00154/FUL.
- 1.2 The site covers an area of 0.14ha, and is located to the south of Notte Street, and is bounded on its other three sides by Mulgrave Street (Fig. 1). It lies at around 18m aOD (above Ordnance Datum). Peirson House itself is terraced into a hillside that slopes up to the south. The underlying geology comprises Devonian Limestone of the Faraday Road Member (www.bgs.ac.uk).
- 1.3 The archaeological work was carried out following the demolition of Pierson House; a block of post-war flats.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The principal archaeological interest in the site is its proximity to the Stray Park Burial Ground – a cemetery associated with the Royal Naval Stonehouse Hospital between c. 1764 and 1824, which is located 90m to the west of the western boundary of the site. The central eastern part of this cemetery was excavated between 2007 and 2015, during which 467 articulated skeletons were exposed. Cartographic research undertaken during the excavations has defined the extent of the cemetery, based on a plan of 1778. This suggests that the cemetery does not extend eastwards of the excavations, and no further south than The Crescent (see Fig. 1).
- 2.2 The site is located on land developed during the early 19th century, and by 1856 was occupied by a terrace of 8 houses fronting onto (the historic) Mulgrave Street as well as part of the highway itself, and was surrounded to the south, east and west by further terrace houses, some of which survive. Ordnance Survey maps record no significant change to the site until after the Second World War, when the site had been cleared leaving only the eastern two houses standing. This was almost certainly as a result of

bomb damage during the war. Peirson House was constructed in the late 1960s following the demolition of the two surviving terrace houses.

3. AIMS

- 3.1** The aim of the programme of archaeological work is to preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits exposed during the groundworks associated with the scheme. This is with particular reference for potential evidence of the former Stray Park burial ground to be on the site.
- 3.2** The aim of the trial pitting was to get an initial assessment for the archaeological potential across the site.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** The archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a project design prepared by AC archaeology (Passmore 2018) and with reference to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Evaluation* (2014). The work comprised the machine-excavation of seven test pits, with each test pit approximately 2m². These were positioned to provide a sample coverage of the site (Fig. 1).
- 4.2** All features and deposits revealed 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 plans were produced at a scale of 1:20.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Introduction (Plan Fig. 1; Plate 1)

The site is positioned on flat ground within the terrace previously occupied by the recently-demolished Peirson House. A variable depth of deposits was encountered across the site. Natural subsoil, which consisted of weathered limestone in a mid red clay, was exposed in Trial pits 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 at a depth that ranged between 0.55m and 2m below existing levels. The natural subsoil was not exposed in Trial pit 2 due to thick concrete or in Trial pit 7 because of unstable ground. With the exception of Trial pit 6, probable 19th and 20th century levelling layers were exposed. These were overlain by modern levelling layers and demolition deposits related to the former Peirson House. No finds were recovered. The results from each trial pit are summarised below and described by context in Appendix 1.

5.2 Trial pit 1 (Detailed plan Fig. 2a; Plate 2)

Natural subsoil (context 102) was exposed at 0.9m below existing levels. It was cut by a north to south aligned foundation trench (F104) for a brick wall (103) in stretcher bond with lime mortar bonding. The wall was constructed on a concrete footing (105) and was sealed by two demolition/levelling layers (101 and 100).

5.3 Trial pit 2

This was excavated to a depth of 1.2m below existing levels onto concrete, which was overlain by demolition and leveling layers, with these sealed by a garden soil. The upper deposit consisted of recent demolition rubble.

5.4 Trial pit 3 (Detailed plan Fig. 2b; Plate 3)

Weathered bedrock (307) was exposed at a depth of 1.07m below existing levels. Cutting through the bedrock was the construction cut (F302) for a north to south aligned

partially-exposed possible drain lined with mudstone blocks (303). Inserted within the possible drain was a broken ceramic pipe. The east and south sides of the test pit exposed the corner of a 20th century brick wall (305) constructed on a concrete footing (306) and within a construction cut (F304) that cut through drain F302. These were sealed by demolition and levelling layers (301 and 300).

5.5 Trial pit 4

Natural subsoil was exposed at a depth of 0.66m below existing levels and this was overlain by levelling and demolition layers.

5.6 Trial pit 5 (Detailed plan Fig. 2c; Plate 4)

Natural subsoil (503) was present at a depth of 2m below existing levels. The trench contained the corner of a brick wall (505) within a construction cut (F504).

5.7 Trial pit 6

This was excavated onto natural subsoil, which was exposed at a depth of 0.55m below existing levels and was overlain by modern leveling and recent demolition layers.

5.8 Trial pit 7

This was excavated to a depth of 2.3m below existing levels into modern levelling and demolition deposits and a modern garden soil.

6. COMMENTS

6.1 The trial pits have exposed largely demolished structural remains that were related to the former 19th century tenements and the former Peirson House. Perhaps the earliest feature was the probable stone drain F302 exposed in Trial pit 3, which was later replaced with a ceramic drain. Although undated, this was of probable 19th century date.

6.2 No evidence of cemetery remains were exposed and it appears that the site lies outside of the presumed extent of the Stray Park burial ground. Furthermore, terracing of much of the site into the hillslope to the south had almost certainly removed the potential for pre-modern archaeological features and deposits.

7. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

7.1 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 under the unique project code of **ACD1792**. It will be held until the need for any further archaeological work is established and ultimately will be offered to the Plymouth City Museum, Plymouth.

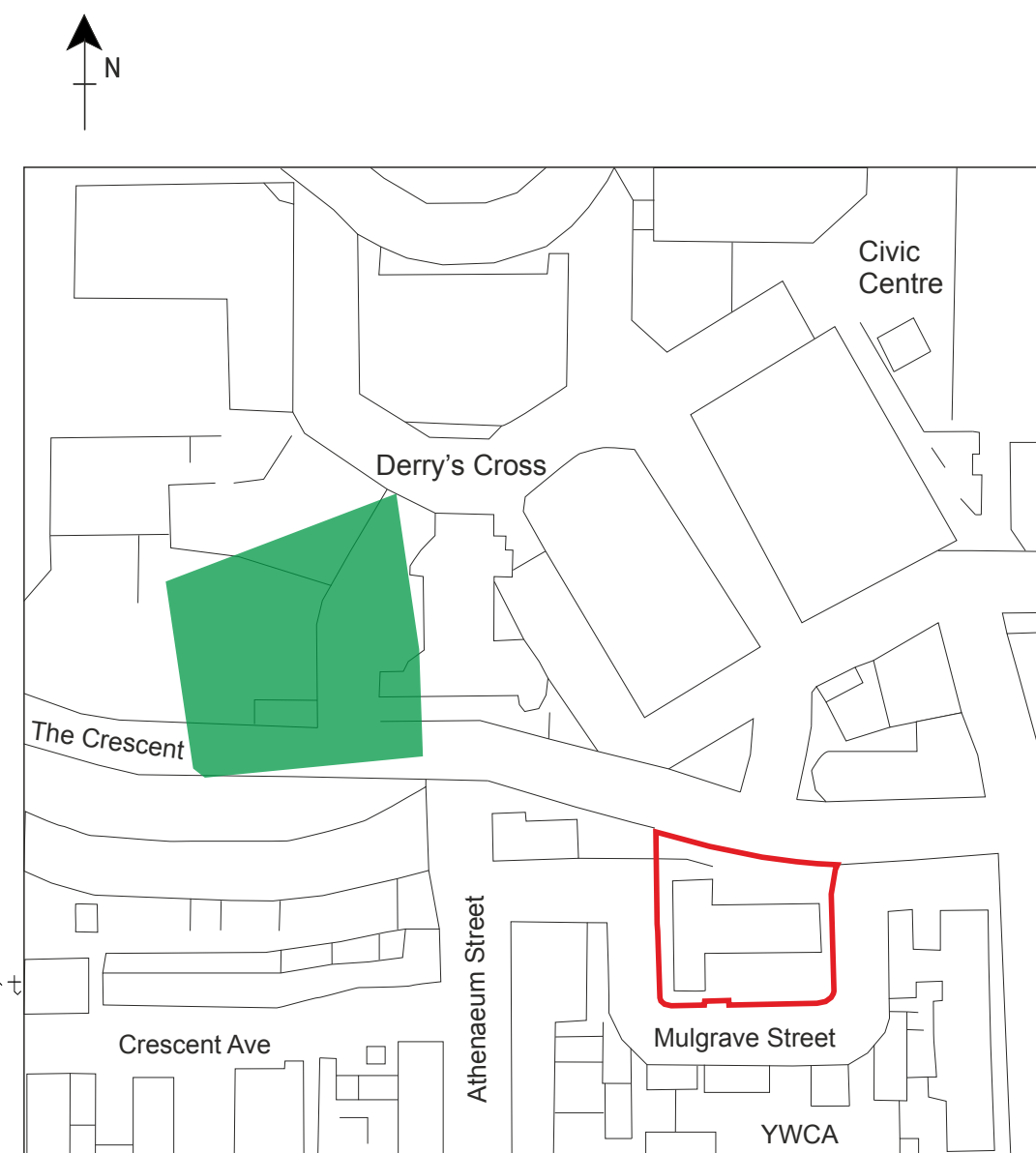
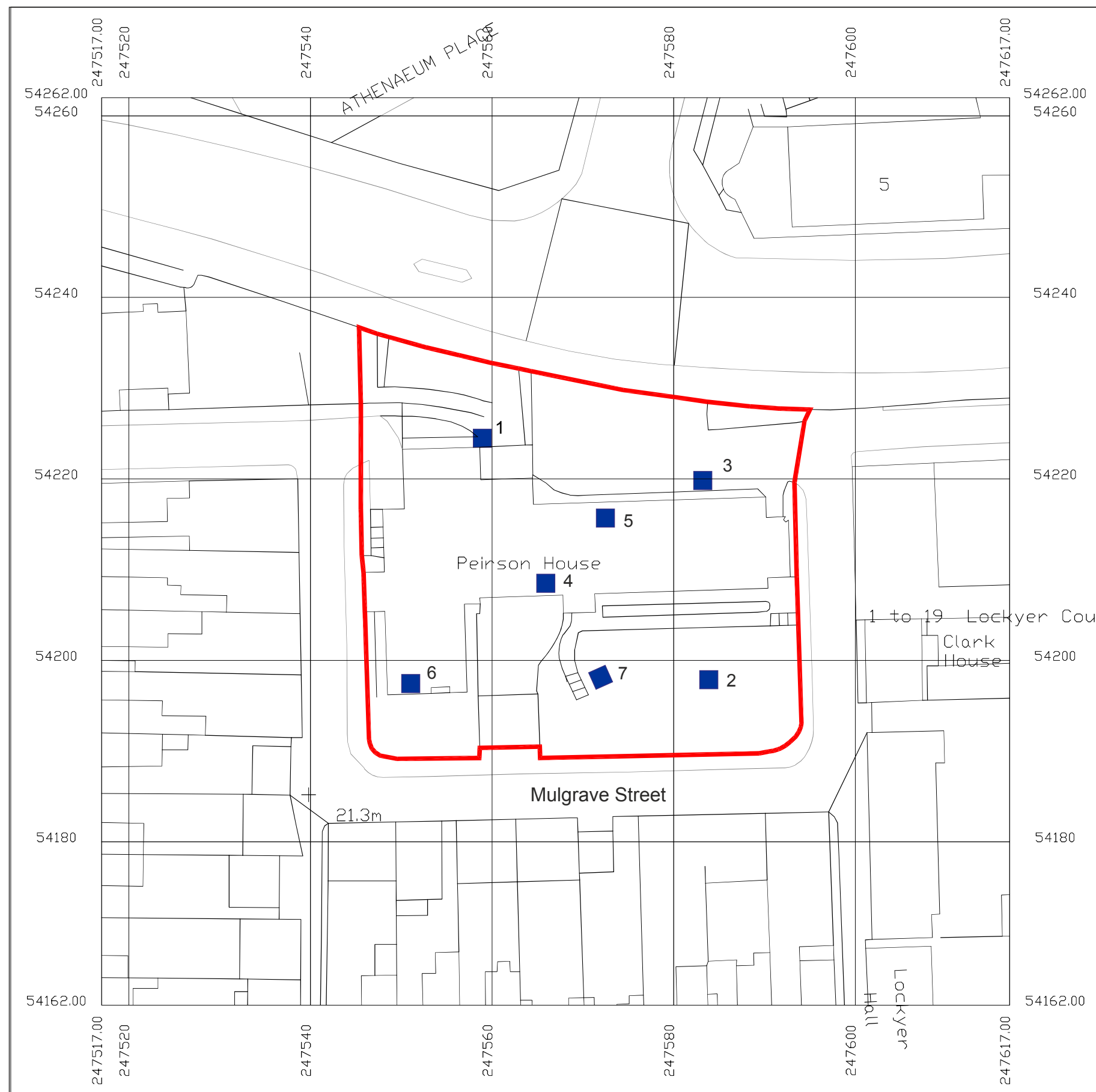
7.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier **317851** which includes a digital copy of this report.

8. REFERENCES

Boston, C., and Farnell, A., 2017. *Land at the Crescent, Plymouth, Devon: Results of an archaeological excavation*. AC archaeology document no. **ACD1036/2/0**

British Geological Survey Online Viewer, www.bgs.ac.uk.

Passmore, A., 2018, *Peirson House, Plymouth: Written Scheme of Investigation for a programme of archaeological works*. Un-published AC archaeology document, ref. **ACD1792/1/0**



Legend

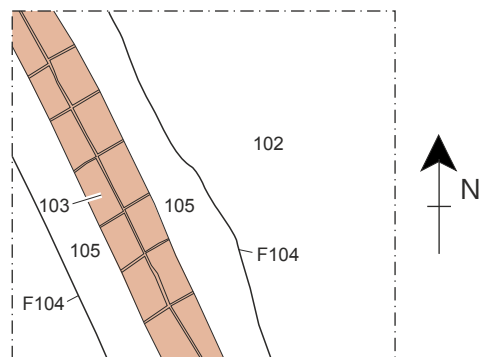
- Site boundary
- Trial pits 1-7 (2x2m)
- Presumed extent of Stray Park Royal Naval cemetery



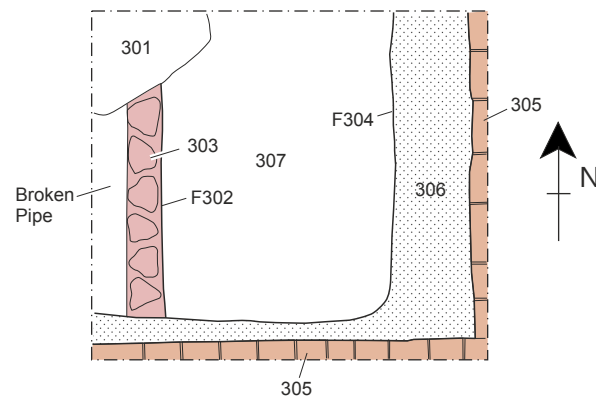
PROJECT
Peirson House, Mulgrave Street, Plymouth, Devon

TITLE
Fig. 1: Location of site and test pits

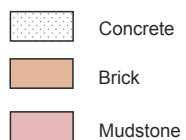
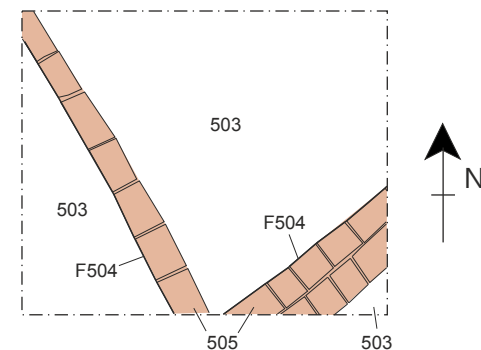
a) Trial pit 1, plan



b) Trial pit 3, plan



c) Trial pit 5, plan



PROJECT

Peirson House, Mulgrave Street,
Plymouth, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 2: Trial pits 1, 3 and 5, plans



Plate 1: General view of site looking towards Mulgrave Street



Plate 2: Trial pit 1, view to west (scale 1m)



Plate 3: Trial pit 3, view to north (scale 1m)



Plate 4: Trial pit 5, view to south (scale 1m)

Appendix 1

Tabulated Context Descriptions by Trial Pit

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRIAL PIT

Trial pit 1		Length 2m	Width 2m
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation
100	Light greyish brown, friable with abundant sub rounded and sub- angular cement / hardcore	0m-0.5m	Demolition layer
101	Mid reddish brown sandy-clay with common sub angular mudstone, brick fragments, charred wood and mortar inclusions	0.5m-0.9m	Levelling layer
102	Dark pinkish red clay, indurated with abundant sub angular mudstone pebbles and limestone boulders	0.9m+	Natural subsoil
103	North to south aligned. 0.30m wide Stretcher construction mortar-bonded brick wall construction, 0.3m wide	0.9m+	Brick wall
104	The cut for the foundation is orientated north south and extends the two meres cross the trench. Seen in plan	0.9m+	Construction cut

Trial pit 2		Length 2m	Width 2m
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation
200	Light greyish brown, friable with abundant sub rounded and sub angular cement/hardcore	0-0.8m	Modern demolition
201	Light brown clay silt, soft containing sparse sub angular stones and gravels	0.8m-1.1m	Possible garden soil.
202	Mid brown silt, friable containing abundant gravels and a cement horizon	1.1m-1.2m	Levelling layer
203	Concrete	1.2+	Concrete

Trial pit 3		Length 2m	Width 2m
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation
300	Mid reddish brown clay with common hardcore fragment to boulder inclusions	0.1m-0.61m	Levelling layer
301	Mid reddish brown sand clay with common sub angular mudstone, coke, coal, brick fragments and charred wood inclusions	0.61m-1.07m	Demolition layer
302	Linear cut	1.07m+-	Construction cut
303	Roughly faced mudstone blocks (0.2m) in a lime-mortar bond	1.07m+	Drain lining
304	Cut for foundation wall	1.07m+	Cut for foundation wall
305	Stretcher lain mortar-bonded brick wall construction	0.6m +	Brick wall
306	Concrete	1.07m+	Concrete footing
307	Weathered limestone in a red clay matrix	1.07m+	Natural subsoil

Trial pit 4		Length 2m	Width 2m
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation
400	Light greyish-brown silty-clay with abundant sub-rounded and sub-angular cement/hardcore inclusions	0-0.35m	Modern demolition
401	Dark greyish-brown silty-clay with occasional sub angular pebbles and modern plastics inclusions	0.35m-0.45m	Levelling layer
403	Mid brownish yellow sand, friable with no inclusions.	0.45m-0.66m	Levelling layer
404	Dark red clay with abundant sub angular mudstone pebbles and limestone boulder inclusions.	0.66m +	Natural subsoil

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRIAL PIT

Trial pit 5		Length 2m	Width 2m	
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
500	Light greyish brown silty clay with abundant sub-rounded and sub-angular cement/hardcore inclusions	0-0.51m	Modern demolition	
501	Mid pinkish brown silty sandy clay, friable with common sub angular stones and occasional charcoal	0.51m – 1.10m	Levelling layer	
502	Mid pinkish brown silty sandy clay, friable with common sub angular stones, a horizon of concrete flooring and occasional charcoal	1.1m-2m	Levelling layer	
503	Dark pinkish red clay, indurated with abundant sub angular mudstone pebbles and limestone boulders.	2m+	Natural subsoil	
504	Right angled linear cut	2m+	Construction cut	
505	Stretcher construction mortar-bonded brick wall	0.51m-2m	Foundation wall.	

Trial pit 6		Length 2m	Width 2m	
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
600	Light greyish-brown, friable silty clay with abundant sub rounded and sub-angular cement/hardcore inclusions	0m-0.41m	Modern demolition	
601	Mid reddish-brown silt with occasion sub angular gravel inclusions.	0.41m-0.55m	Modern levelling	
602	Dark red clay with abundant sub-angular mudstone pebble and limestone boulder inclusions	0.55m+	Natural subsoil	

Trial pit 7		Length 2m	Width 2m	
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
700	Light greyish-brown, friable silty clay with abundant sub rounded and sub-angular cement/hardcore inclusions	0-0.45m	Modern demolition	
701	Mid greyish-brown clay silt loam with angular boulders and building debris including plastics	0.45-0.65m	Modern demolition	
702	Light brown clayey silt	0.65-0.90m	Possible garden soil	
703	Mid reddish brown sandy clay, indurated with common sub angular mudstone, brick fragments, charred wood and mortar. Abundant charcoal fragments	0.90m-1.4m	Demolition layer	
704	Mid brownish red clay with occasional sub-angular stones to cobble inclusions	1.4m-2.3m+	Levelling layer	

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