

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING  
BRIEF AT  
ALREWAS SURGERY,  
EXCHANGE ROAD,  
ALREWAS,  
STAFFORDSHIRE

Simon Sworn and Tom Vaughan

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

16 February 2012  
Revised 27 February 2012

© Worcestershire County Council



Worcestershire Archaeology,  
Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology Service,  
Woodbury,  
University of Worcester,  
Henwick Grove,  
Worcester WR2 6AJ

Project 3828  
Report 1907  
ASER12



---

## Archaeological watching brief at Alrewas Surgery, Exchange Road, Alrewas, Staffordshire

Simon Sworn and Tom Vaughan

---

### Background information

<i>Client</i>	CgMs Consulting
<i>Site address</i>	Alrewas Surgery, Exchange Road, Alrewas, Staffordshire
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SK 17325 15063
<i>Historic Environment Record reference</i>	ASER12
<i>Planning authority</i>	Lichfield District Council
<i>reference</i>	11/01124/FUL
<i>Brief</i>	SCC 2012
<i>Project design</i>	CgMs 2012
<i>Project parameters</i>	IfA 2008

#### *Previous archaeological work on the site*

There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken on site.

#### *Previous archaeological work on associated sites*

No recorded archaeological investigations have been undertaken in the immediate vicinity of the site.

The archaeological background to Alrewas itself is presented in the brief (SCC 2012, section 2).

The site lies to the east of and on the outskirts of the historic core of the Anglo-Saxon and medieval village. It is immediately adjacent to Alrewas Conservation Area, which extends eastwards beyond Exchange Road to the north and south (DST5655, ref 011, centred on SK 1695 1524).

Cropmarks have been identified north of Dark Lane to the north of the site, interpreted to be enclosures, field systems and trackways, of possible prehistoric date. These cropmarks are overlain by medieval ridge and furrow and possible post-medieval field boundaries (PRN 04201 – MST3925 and PRN 20191 – MST5461). *Ryknild Street* Roman road runs north-east to south-west approximately 0.25km to the east of the site (PRN 05155 – MST4699). A large number of cropmarks of possible enclosures, trackways and field boundaries have been identified to the south-east of the Roman road, indicative of extensive land use from the prehistoric through to the medieval period (including PRN 01350 – MST 1342, PRN 01351 – MST 1343 and PRN 01353 – MST1345).

---

### Aims

The aims of the watching brief are outlined within the proposal (CgMs 2012), as follows:

- To determine, as far as reasonably practicable, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains, including artefactual evidence, in areas impacted on by development.
- Where it is not possible to preserve deposits, to excavate and record all below-ground deposits and stratigraphic sequences exposed by groundworks (foundation and service trenches, landscaping), even where no archaeology is identified, are to be recorded.
- To clarify the presence and character of any archaeological activity on the site.
- To carry out an appropriate programme of environmental sampling for analysis, with especial attention being paid to any waterlogged deposits.

The Brief presents specific objectives (SSC 2012, section 3), as follows:

- To identify and record evidence for prehistoric and Anglo-Saxon activity in the area.
- Where possible to identify and record evidence for medieval activity away from the core of the settlement and to determine a date for expansion into this area of Alrewas.
- To recover evidence for the development of the site throughout the late medieval and early post-medieval periods.

---

## Methods

General specification for fieldwork	HEAS 2012
Sources consulted	HER
Date of fieldwork	10 February 2012
Area of site observed	c 14.82m <sup>2</sup> . Indicated on Figs 2 and 3
Dimensions of excavated areas observed	
Foundations	length 28m width 0.57m depth 1.20m

### *Access to or visibility of deposits*

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken during and after machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits. Selected areas were cleaned by hand.

### *Statement of confidence*

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

---

## Deposit description

Context	Description	Date	Interpretation	Depth (below ground level)
100	Modern black tarmac hard-standing	C20 <sup>th</sup>	Existing tarmac	0 – 0.20m
101	Loose reddish brown fine 'building sand'	C20 <sup>th</sup>	Levelling sand for 100	0.15 – 0.22m
102	Poured concrete	C20 <sup>th</sup>	Concrete sealing 103, for the levelling for 100 and 101	0.22 – 0.28m
103	Brick, tile, concrete, mortar rubble. Bricks 'frogged' and 'un-frogged' c.233mm x 105mm x 80mm	C20 <sup>th</sup>	Brick rubble, butting against existing surgery wall	0.22 – 0.44m
104	Loose yellow fine 'building sand'	C20 <sup>th</sup>	Levelling sand	0.44 – 0.46m
105	Firm dark brown sandy silt, occasional small pebbles and pottery fragments	C19 <sup>th</sup>	Mixed imported 'garden soil'	0.46 – 0.92m
106	Loose mid brown sandy silt, occasional small pebbles	C20 <sup>th</sup>	Topsoil/flower bed soil; in south end of trench only	0 – 0.15m
107	Sands and gravels	N/A	Natural	0.87m+

---

## Discussion

At the south end of the eastern frontage of the existing surgery building, a single continuous foundation trench was archaeologically monitored. The trench, excavated with a mini-digger using a toothless bucket, was 28m in length and up to 1.20m below the existing car park surface. This was into the underlying natural geology, so any buried archaeological remains would have been visible. However no significant archaeological deposits were observed.

---

Below the car park tarmac surface (100) was a thin layer of red 'building sand' (101) which had been used to level the surface before the laying of the tarmac. Below this was a thin layer of concrete (102) which was sealing a more extensive deposit of mixed rubble (103). This mixed deposit consisted mainly of broken bricks, but also included floor and roof tiles, mortar, concrete, glass and tarmac fragments. This deposit contained both Victorian and 20<sup>th</sup> century bricks and other material, but clearly dated to the construction phase of the surgery, as it clearly butted the surgery wall and overlay the backfill of the construction cut for the building. This deposit was very loose, and was removed during the works across the exposed area to allow for the laying of a hard-core consolidating material.

The brick rubble overlay a thin band yellow 'building sand' (104) and a more extensive deposit consisting of mixed 'garden' type soils (105). This lower deposit (105) contained brick and mortar rubble and pottery fragments dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This soil directly overlay the natural natural sand and gravel (107). There was no defined subsoil horizon.

To the south the foundation trench also truncated the flower bed, with heavily rooted topsoil material (106).

---

### **The Artefactual Assemblage**

The finds assemblage from this site consisted of 16 sherds of pottery which were all recovered from soil 105, all of which could be products of the Staffordshire industry. The only notable find was a fine blackware vessel, possibly lathe-turned, with slip-moulded decoration, probably of late 18<sup>th</sup> century date.

There were thick-walled sherds of black-glazed red wares (fabric 78), from functional jars or bowls, late 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century in date, and a large sherd from a brown-glazed stoneware jar (fabric 81.4), probably of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century date, together with smaller earthenware sherds ('mocha ware' – fabric 100), most likely produced during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Blue willow-pattern china (fabric 85), including small sherds from a bowl and a dish, could have been manufactured at any time from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards (pers comm Dennis Williams).

---

### **Conclusions**

None of the exposed deposits are considered to be of archaeological significance. The foundation trench reached the depth of the underlying natural geology and this showed no signs of any archaeological disturbance. The thick 'garden soil' type deposit (105) appeared to have been deliberately deposited here in a single episode sometime prior to the construction of the surgery.

The lack of any subsoil or buried soil horizons between soil (105) and the natural deposits suggests that at some time after the early 19<sup>th</sup> century this area of the site had been subjected to wholesale stripping and the importation of this mixed material. This would have removed any shallow archaeological remains. Deeper features, cut into the natural material, would probably have survived, although none were seen within this investigation. Archaeologically significant remains may survive within the vicinity; however the limited scope of this project has not increased our knowledge of medieval or earlier occupation of the village.

---

### **Publication summary**

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting at Alrewas Surgery, Exchange Road, Alrewas, Staffordshire (NGR ref SK 17325 15063; HER ref ASER12). Excavations for the footing for the surgery extension were observed, but only modern deposits directly overlying the natural geology were noted. These deposits consisted of modern made ground associated with the construction the existing surgery in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Below this*

*was a thick deposit of 'garden soil' which contained 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery. The absence of any buried soil horizon below these deposits suggests that the area had been landscaped some time in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Deeper archaeological deposits may remain in the vicinity, although none were observed within the limited scope of this project.*

---

### **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Cathy Patrick (CgMs Consulting) and Stephen Dean (Principal Archaeologist, Staffordshire County Council).

---

### **Bibliography**

CgMs 2012 *Specification for archaeological observation and recording of below-ground works, Alrewas Surgery, Exchange Road, Alrewas*, CgMs Consulting, unpublished document, **CP/13635**, dated 26 January 2012

IfA 2008 *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute for Archaeologists

SCC 2011 *Specification for an archaeological watching brief, Alrewas Surgery, Exchange Road, Alrewas*, Staffordshire County Council, unpublished document dated January 2012

---

## **Figures**



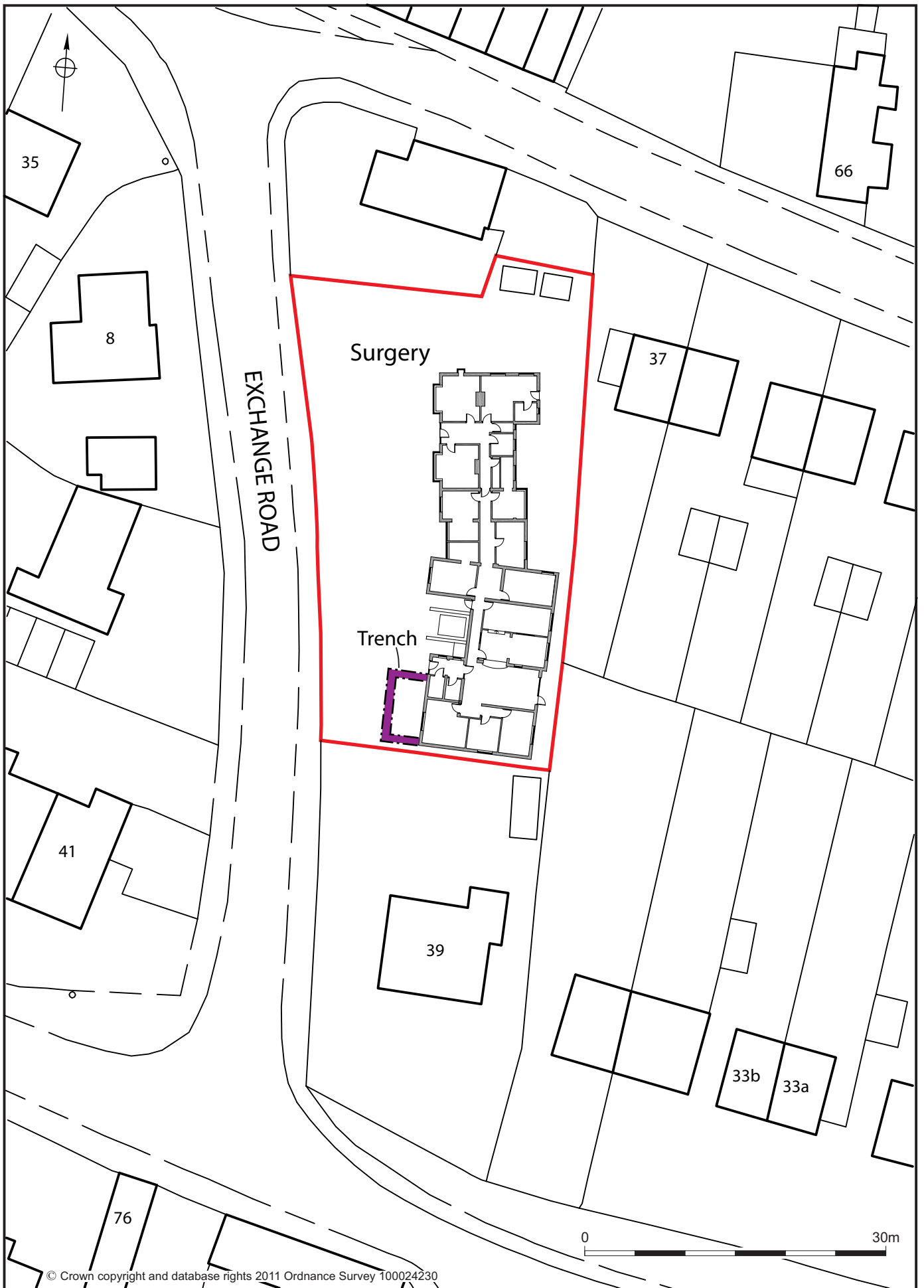




© Crown copyright and database rights 2011 Ordnance Survey 100024230

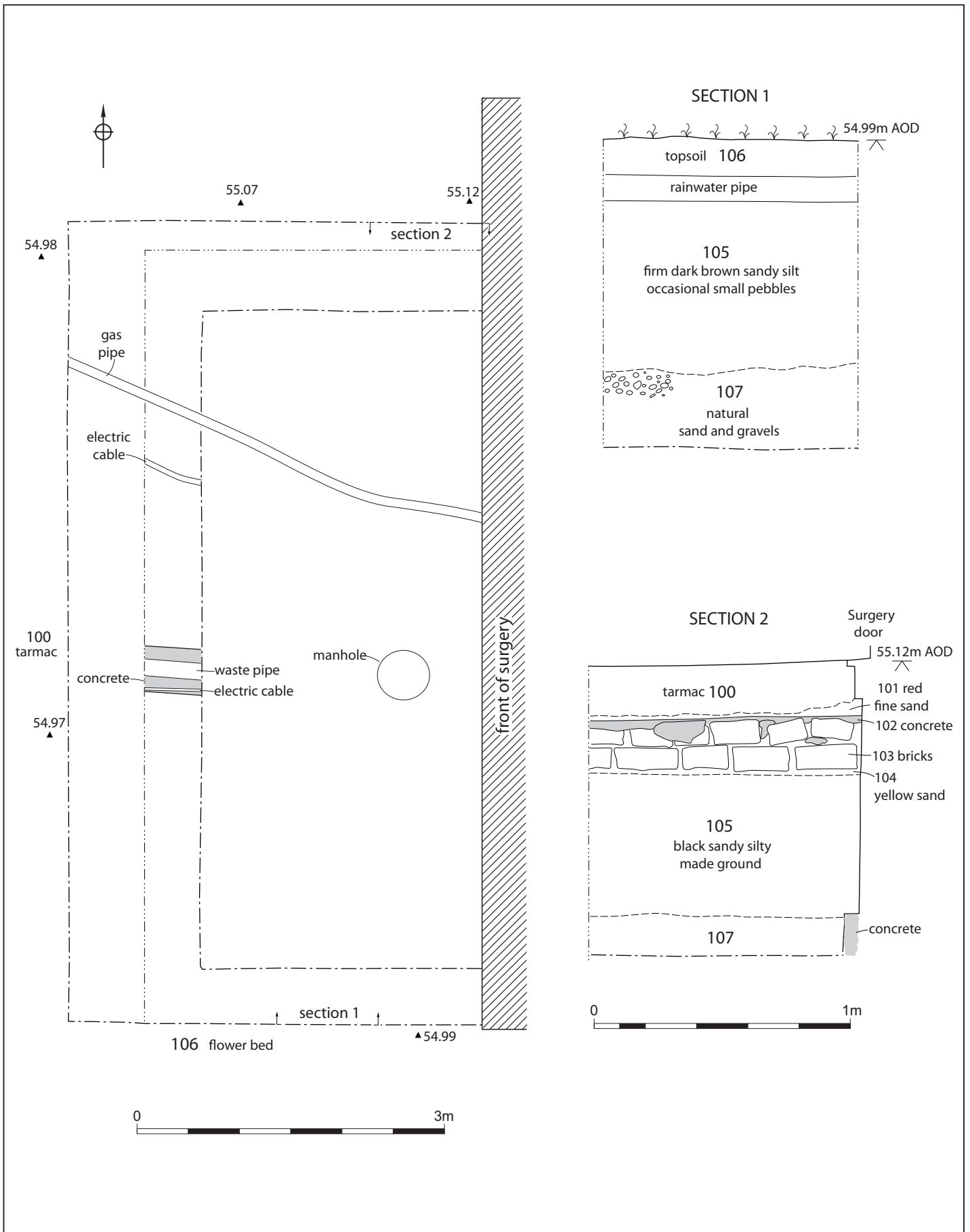
Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench location plan (based upon West Hart Partnership Drg No 748-211)

Figure 2



Trench plan and sections

Figure 3



---

## Plates



Plate 1; General view of the footings from the east, scale at 1m



Plate 2; Sample section showing dark 'garden soil' deposit (105) and the natural sands below (106), scale at 1m, facing south

## **Appendix 1 Technical information**

### **The archive (site code: ASER12)**

The archive consists of:

- |    |                                       |
|----|---------------------------------------|
| 1  | Field progress reports AS2            |
| 65 | Digital photographs                   |
| 1  | Drawing number catalogues AS4         |
| 3  | Scale drawings                        |
| 1  | Trench record sheets AS41             |
| 1  | Copy of this report (bound hard copy) |

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Potteries Museum and Art Gallery  
Bethesda Street,  
Cultural Quarter,  
Hanley,  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST1 3DW