

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF
AT
MANSFIELD ROAD,
YARDLEY,
BIRMINGHAM



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Worcestershire Archaeology
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Revision 1

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Watching Brief at Mansfield Road, Yardley, Birmingham.

Authors Tim Cornah and Tom Rogers

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Mansfield Road, Yardley, Birmingham (NGR SP 12310 84335). It was undertaken on behalf of Galliford Try Ltd, who have obtained planning permission from Birmingham City Council for the construction of 16 dwellings on the site as well as conversion of Pinfold House Barn.

An historic building assessment of Pinfold House and barn suggested that small scale settlement at Pinfold would have been present since at least the 17th Century and the project aimed to determine, if possible, the extent and date of this settlement as well as to examine evidence for economic activity, environmental conditions and industrial or craft activity in the area.

Two features were recorded, both of post-medieval date. Close to the southern boundary of the site the robbed-out foundation of a probable 18th century wall was recorded, constructed from dressed sandstone blocks and bricks. It is possible that the dressed limestone blocks came from an earlier phase of Pinfold House which was altered in the 17th and 18th Centuries.

On the northern side of the site adjacent to Mansfield Road a bedding trench was recorded which may have been a garden feature or may represent commercial horticultural activity.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Mansfield Road, Yardley, Birmingham (NGR SP 12310 84335). It was undertaken on behalf of Galliford Try Ltd, who intend to construct 16 dwellings on the plot for which a planning permission has been granted by Birmingham City Council (reference 2010/04980/PA) subject to conditions including a programme of archaeological works.

The project conforms to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by CgMs Consulting (CgMs Ref: CP/14921) and approved by the Planning Archaeologist for Birmingham City Council. The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2012).

2 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to monitor ground works in order to determine the extent and nature of archaeological features within the site and to mitigate the impact of the development on these remains as well preserving them by record.

The more specific aim was to determine the extent and date of the settlement activity at Pinfold House and to examine any available evidence for economic, industrial and craft activity as well as environmental conditions as provided by plant, insect and industrial remains.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was undertaken by Tim Cornah (BA) who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2007 and has been practising archaeology since 2004. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers M.Sc. Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc Hons). Finds Analysis was undertaken by Dennis Williams BSc MA PhD.

3.2 Documentary research

Prior to works, the Written Scheme of Investigation (Patrick and Bedford 2013) which includes an historic building assessment of Pinfold House and Barn (Cherrington 2007) were consulted.

3.3 Fieldwork strategy

Fieldwork was undertaken between the 4th of March 2013 and the 15th of March 2013.

Four trenches, amounting to just over 1318m² were excavated over the site of roughly 4349m². The location of these trenches is indicated in Figure 1. These areas were located and excavated to provide a piling mat for the construction of the 16 dwellings.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012a).

3.4 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The site is located to south of the centre of Yardley, 6.5km east of the centre of Birmingham and its topography is basically flat at a height of 125m AOD. The solid geology of the site is Mercian Mudstone with the superficial drift geology being Mid Pleistocene Till (Patrick and Bedford 2013). Based on cartographic evidence from 1847, the site can be seen to be within the plot of Pinfold House referred to as Pinfold Farm on the 1888 OS map. The road to the north and east of the site can also be clearly seen on a map of 1822 as well as the canal to its south. The 1888 Ordnance Survey depicts the part of the site to the rear of Pinfold House and Barn as an orchard and outbuildings and the part to the west as a section of an adjacent field. The earliest map of 1822 shows the area around the site as being an area of scattered farmsteads which becomes steadily more populated with a distinct settlement being shown by 1916 (Cherrington 2007). Though the village of Yardley to the north-east is thought to have had medieval origins (British History Online 2013), there is no known activity from this period in the vicinity of the site.

4.2 Current land-use

The features mentioned above are still clearly visible on the site though most of the actual site was until recently under hard standing with various ancillary small industrial buildings having been present. Part of the plot was also used as a garden for Pinfold House.

5 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Fig 2. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

The geological deposits observed were consistent across trenches 1 to 4 and were made up of a yellow orange silty sand with pockets of more concentrated rounded gravels. This is consistent with a mid Pleistocene till.

5.1.2 Phase 2: Post-Medieval

Two Post-Medieval features [210] and [305] were cut through a mid light grey sandy silt deposit (101), (201) and (302) which appears to have been a cultivation horizon or plough soil. A single sherd of 19th-20th century glazed china was found in context (101) as well as fragments of roof tile which are probably 17th to early 19th century in date (Williams *pers comm.*) though the fragment of china is likely to be intrusive. This deposit was observed throughout in trenches 1 to 3 though was not visible in trench 4 due to modern truncation.

5.1.3 Phase 3: Later Post-Medieval Deposits

The observed archaeological remains all related to the Post-Medieval period. The most significant feature was a heavily truncated east to west aligned wall (208) close to the southern boundary of the site within trench 2, constructed from, dressed sandstone blocks and bricks. The bricks are hand-made and measured 4½ inches wide x 2 inches thick, these dimensions being typical of stock bricks from the early 18th century date. Sherds of brown-glazed red ware pottery, late 17th to 18th century in date, were recovered from contexts (205) and (207) which immediately post date this wall, including a rim sherd from a large bowl or pancheon found in (205). Fragments of roof tile recovered from context (207) were probably 17th to early 19th century in date (Williams *pers comm.*). It is likely that the wall dates to the 18th century. This wall was heavily truncated by a robber cut [204] and was not visible in plan, though the construction cut for the wall [210] was partially visible running across the site towards the east.

This wall is on the edge of a sand and gravel pit which appears on a map for the first time in the late 19th century (Cherrington 2007). It is possible that the wall was demolished during expansion

of this pit. The presence of dressed sandstone in the wall is likely to have come from the farmhouse which is thought to have been built in the 17th century though major alteration took place in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries (Cherrington 2007).

One further feature [305] was recorded on the northern side of the site, close to the road within trench 3. Sherds of brown-glazed red ware pottery, late 17th to 18th century in date, were recovered from context (304) (Williams *pers comm.*), the fill of a shallow rectangular cut [305]. Though its exact function remains unclear, it may have been a bedding trench for planting implying that this part of the site, adjacent to Mansfield Road, was a garden in the 18th Century or later.

5.1.4 Phase 4: Modern deposits

A modern deposit (100), (200), (301) was observed throughout that is consistent with a modern topsoil or makeup layer. This was cut by two modern features [104] and [402]. These are likely to be the footings of modern buildings removed prior to archaeological monitoring on the site.

6 Synthesis

No features or artefacts of medieval or earlier date were recorded on the site. Some potentially late medieval timbers were reused within the later barn (Cherrington 2007) implying that there was settlement here in that period.

The 18th Century wall is likely to have formed the southern boundary of the property before it was demolished and the stones were taken, perhaps at a time when a sand and gravel pit was expanding to the south in the late 19th or early 20th centuries as shown on Ordnance Survey maps. No evidence was recorded for buildings to the rear of Pinfold House and Barn depicted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map and later editions.

The presence of a bedding trench is evidence of the use of this part of the site for growing vegetables as a garden or part of a field. .

6.1 Research frameworks

The findings of the watching brief have provided some evidence for the form of the settlement at Pinfold. The lack of substantial remains suggests that use of the site was primarily a garden and orchard until the 20th century as depicted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map.

Information relating to the settlement of Pinfold contributes to a growing body of archaeological evidence for the form of post-medieval agriculture and settlement in the hinterland of Birmingham.

7 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project. The client, Galliford Try Ltd and Cathy Patrick of CgMs Consulting.

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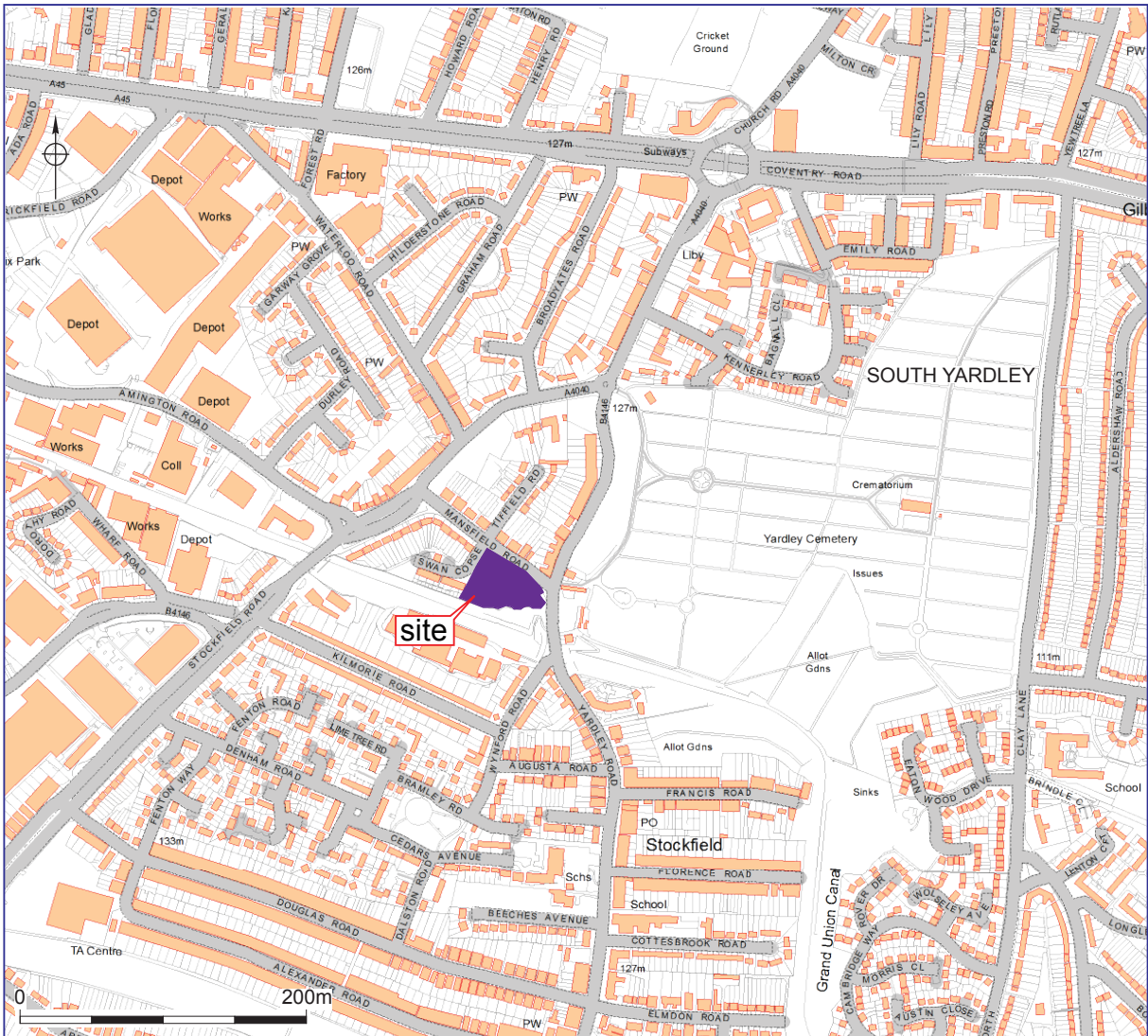
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West Midlands Regional Research Framework for Archaeology 2012 Website

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/iaa/departments/archaeology/research/wmrrfa/index.aspx>

Accessed April 2013

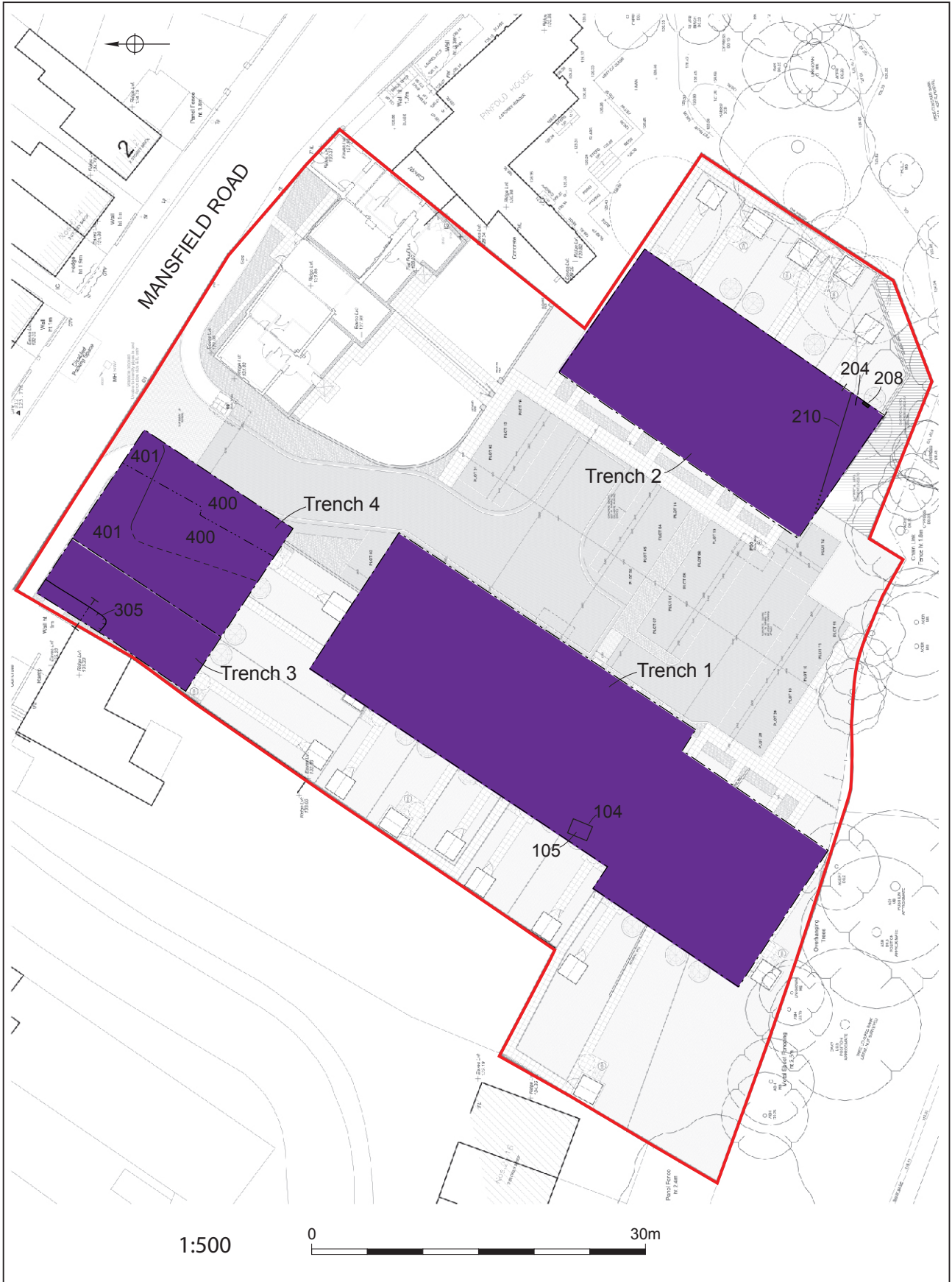
Figures



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Location of the site

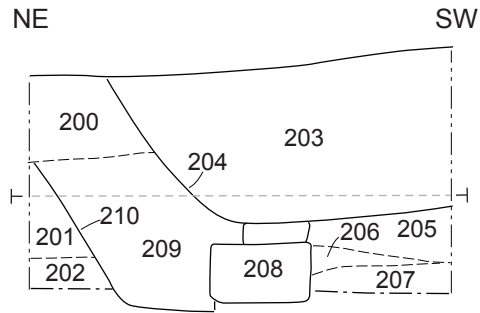
Figure 1



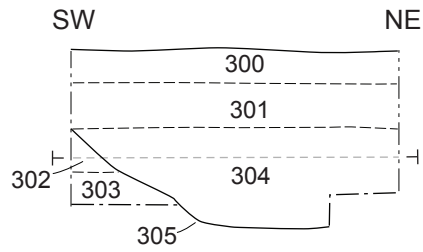
Trench location plan (based upon BM Architecture Drg No L(90)01)

Figure 2

SECTION OF 204 AND 210



SECTION OF 305



Sections

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1 Trench 2 looking east



Plate 2 Trench 4 looking south east



Plate 3 Post-Medieval wall (208)



Plate 4 Post-Medieval bedding trench [305]

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 47m Width: 15m Depth: 0.90-1.15m

Orientation: North East to South West

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Modern Topsoil	Dark brown black moderately compact silty loam with frequent brick and tile fragments as well as moderate amounts of plastic, wood and concrete and occasional rounded stones.	0.00-0.48m
101	Buried soil	Mid brown moderately compact silty loam with frequent small to medium rounded stones and occasional charcoal flecks.	0.48-1.10m
102	Re-deposited natural	Compact red clay marl with some black clinker and occasional brick fragments.	0.53m
103	Natural	Yellow silty sand and gravels with pockets of orange/ red sand. Occasional small to medium rounded stones.	
104	Cut of modern waste dump	A square cut for a modern waste dump.	
105	Fill of 104	Brick rubble with some mid brown silty loam matrix	

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 26.70m Width: 13.40m Depth: 0.75-1.77m

Orientation: North East to South West

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Modern Topsoil	Dark brown black moderately compact sandy silt with occasional small to medium rounded stones and CBM.	0.00-0.58

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
201	Buried soil	Mid to light grey brown sandy silt with occasional small rounded stones.	0.58-1.22m
202	Natural	Yellow silty sand and gravels with pockets of orange/ red sand. Occasional small to medium rounded stones.	1.22-1.42m
203	Fill of 204	Mid orange brown silty sand with very frequent rounded stones.	0.00-1.18m
204	Modern robber cut	.Robber cut running East to West, truncating wall 208.	0.00-1.18m
205	Layer	Compact mid brown sandy silt with occasional small rounded stones. Above 206, butting 208.	1.06-1.43m
206	Layer	Compact re-deposited red clay marl layer. Above 207, butting 208.	1.33-1.52m
207	Layer	Compact mid to light brown sandy silt with occasional small rounded stones. Above 210, butting 208.	1.44-1.65m
208	Wall	Dressed sandstone and brick wall running roughly east to west though heavily truncated by 204.	1.18-1.71m
209	Backfill of 210	Moderately compact mid to light brown sandy silt with frequent rounded stones. Backfill behind northern side of wall 208.	0.58-1.77m
210	Construction cut for 208	Construction cut for wall 208 running roughly east to west. Heavily truncated by 204.	0.58-1.77m

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 16m Width: 11.60m Depth: 0.93m

Orientation: North East to South West

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Modern concrete	Concrete surface	0.00-0.22m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
	footing		
301	Modern Topsoil	Dark brown black moderately compact sandy silt with occasional small to medium rounded stones and CBM.	0.22-0.52m
302	Buried soil	Mid to light grey brown sandy silt with occasional small rounded stones.	0.52-0.82m
303	Natural	Yellow silty sand and gravels with pockets of orange/ red sand. Occasional small to medium rounded stones.	0.82-1.04m
304	Fill of 305	Moderately compact light brown silty sand with frequent rounded stones.	0.52-1.17m
305	Bedding Trench	Sub-rectangular cut running North East to South West.	0.52-1.17m

Trench 4

Maximum dimensions: Length: 16m Width: 5.90m Depth: 0.75m

Orientation: North East to South West

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
400	Fill of 402	Modern deposit containing plastic, CBM and concrete.	0.00-0.75m
401	Natural	Yellow silty sand and gravels with pockets of orange/ red sand. Occasional small to medium rounded stones.	0.82-1.04m
402	Modern truncation	Modern truncation.	0.00-0.75m

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code:)

The archive consists of:

- 11 Context records AS1
- 2 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 27 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 2 Scale drawings
- 4 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

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Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery
Chamberlain Square
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