ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT THE FIRE BRIGADE TRAINING STATION, 51 FRIAR STREET, DROITWICH, WORCESTERSHIRE

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With a contribution by Angus Crawford

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Project 2954
Report 1466
WSM 35611

Archaeological evaluation at The Fire Brigade Training Centre, 51 Friar Street, Droitwich, Worcestershire

Simon Sworn

Background information

Client	Worcestershire County Council Property Services
Site address	The Fire Brigade Training Centre, 51 Friar Street, Droitwich, Worcestershire
National Grid reference	SO 8982 6350
Sites and Monuments Record reference	WSM 35611
Planning authority reference	Wychavon District Council W/06/1207
Brief	HEAS 2006a
Project design	HEAS 2006b
Project parameters	IFA 1999

Previous archaeological work on the site

There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken on site.

Previous archaeological work on associated sites

Droitwich has been the subject of a recent survey undertaken as part of the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey. The research report contains a summary of previous archaeological work in the town and its immediate surroundings (Buteux and Hurst 1996).

The urban area of Droitwich is primarily a large area of 20th century industrial and residential development around what remains of the historic core (Buteux and Hurst 1996). The soils of Droitwich are unmapped, but the surrounding natural geology consists of peloalluvial gley soils along the river (Mackney *et al* 1983), surrounded by stagnogleys argillic brown earths overlying Keuper Marl and third river terrace deposits (Beard *et al* 1986).

The site lies at the northern end of Chorely Road, off Friar Street, in the car park of the present fire station. The historic core of the town has been the subject of considerable change and development over the recent centuries, including subsidence caused by 19th and 20th century brine extraction (Buteux and Hurst 1996). Information contained within the SMR suggests the potential for extensive deposits here of an Iron Age, Roman and medieval date.

Recent finds from Friar Street and the immediate vicinity have included evidence for settlement and salt working from the Roman and medieval periods (WSM 00605, 07072, 09553, 29803, 29908, 30600, 33531).

Aims

The aim of the evaluation recording was to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

Methods

General specification for fieldwork		CAS 1995
Sources consulted		Sources cited by the SMR/HER 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1885
Date of fieldwork		14th August 2006
Area of site		*c* 322m²
Sampling	area sampled	*c* 8m². Indicated on Fig 2
	sample size	*c* 2.5%
Dimensions of excavated areas observed		length 5.00m width 1.60m depth 2.13m (max)

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. Access to the deeper section of the trench was not made for safety reasons.

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	Type Colour Texture	Description	Date	Interpretation	Depth (below ground level)
100	Tarmac	Tarmac	Modern	Present car park surface	0 - 0.10m
101	Loose orange/ brown sand and sub-angular gravels		Modern	Hardcore make-up for 100	0.10 – 0.20m
102	Loose gravels and angular stones	Grey sand matrix	Modern	Made ground	0.20 – 0.51m
103	Friable dark brown sandy silt	Frequent charcoal, bricks, tiles and other modern material	Modern	Made ground	0.5- - 0.61m
104	Loose gravels and angular stones	Grey sand matrix	Modern	Made ground	0.61 – 0.74m
105	Loose brick rubble	Orange sand matrix and frequent modern material: concrete, metal, plastics etc	Modern	Made ground	0.70 – 1.27m
106	Friable dark brown/black sandy silt	Frequent charcoal, occasional small sub-rounded pebbles, brick fragments and other modern material	Modern	Made ground	1.27 – 2.13m+

Artefact analysis by Angus Crawford

Artefact recovery policy

All artefacts from the area of evaluation recording were retrieved by hand and retained in accordance with the service manual (CAS 1995 as amended).

Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined and a primary record was made on a Microsoft Access 2000 database. Artefacts were identified, quantified and dated and a *terminus post quem* date produced for each stratified context.

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and recorded by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by the service (Hurst and Rees 1992; Hurst 1994).

Artefactual analysis

The pottery assemblage retrieved from the evaluated area consisted of 12 sherds of pottery weighing 109g, In addition two bricks, fragments of roof and wall tile and studio glass were recovered. The group came from two stratified contexts and could be dated from the post-medieval to modern period (see Table 1). Level of preservation was generally good with only the roof tile displaying a medium level of abrasion.

Context	Material	Type	Total	Weight (g)
105	Brick	Modern	2	7600
105	Wall	Tile	1	147
105	Pottery	Modern	3	31
106	Glass	Studio/art	1	376
106	Pottery	Modern	7	67
106	Pottery	Post-medieval	2	11
106	Roof	Tile	2	57

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

Discussion of the pottery

All sherds have been grouped and quantified according to fabric type (see Table 2). The discussion below is a summary of the finds and associated location or contexts by period. Where possible, *terminus post quem* dates have been allocated and the importance of individual finds commented upon as necessary.

Post-medieval

Two sherds from context 106 were identified as post-medieval in date. Both where of post-medieval red sandy ware (fabric 78) and dated to the 18th century.

Modern

The remaining pottery assemblage consisted of ten sherds of porcelain (fabric 83) with three from context 105 and the remaining seven from context 106. The modern pottery as a whole originated from domestic table wares which included an undecorated soup plate, a blue willow ware plate sherd and a blue on white gilded edge tea cup. All of the moden sherds were dated to the late 19th to mid 20th century.

Context	Fabric	Common fabric name	Total	Weight (g)
105	83	Porcelain	3	31
106	78	Post-medieval red wares	2	11
106	83	Porcelain	7	67

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric

Other finds

The remaining finds from the assemblage consisted of a modern wall tile (context 105), two fragments of abraded roof tile that could only be broadly dated from the 13th to 18th century (context 106) and two bricks of 1850-1900 date (context 105). Context 106 also contained a large section of decorative table glass, most likely a condiment or sweets bowl, with only a partial section of its silver stand still attached.

Significance

The assemblage as a whole indicates that there are no significant archaeological deposits within the evaluated area. Both context 105 and 106 are of modern date with context 106 also containing residual post-medieval material. Both contexts are indicative of general household discard during the modern period and more specifically during the early to mid 20th century

Discussion

A single east to west aligned trench was excavated towards the eastern side of the Fire Services Training Centre, Droitwich (Fig 2). The existing surface was tarmac (100), overlying a loose orange sand and gravel hardcore layer (101). Below these two deposits a number of other layers of dumped material was observed (Fig 3: Plate 3). These consisted of two deposits of sand and angular stones (102 and 104), a thin layer of dark sandy silt containing frequent charcoal (103). Below these deposits was a substantial deposit of mainly brick rubble, which included other modern materials, such as metal, wiring, lead, glass, plastics and ceramic tiles were also noted within this context. The trench was excavated to a depth of 1.20m to allow for safe access for recording purposes. Once this had been completed a small sondage was excavated towards the centre of the trench to establish the depth of deeper deposits (Plate 4). Below the brick deposit a thick layer of dark brown/black sandy silt was noted. Finds recovered during the machining of this deposit again indicated a 20th century date. Machining was halted at 2.10m below the present surface entirely on the grounds of safety.

Conclusions

No deposits of any archaeological interest were observed during the evaluation. The sequence of deposits appeared to have derived from either the importation and dumping of material, or from the construction and levelling of the present car park surface during the 20th century. The majority of the material appears to have been imported and deposited across this area in large quantities. This dumping of waste material has either been carried out in order to raise the ground level, or more likely, to infill after subsidence.

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 evaluation was undertaken on behalf of Worcestershire County Council Property Services at The Fire Brigade Training Centre, 51 Friar Street, Droitwich, Worcestershire (NGR ref SO 8982 6350; SMR ref WSM 35611). A single trench to the eastern edge of the present fire station car park was excavated to a depth of 2.10m below the present ground surface. No deposits of any archaeological interest were observed during the evaluation. The sequence of deposits appeared to have derived from the importation and dumping of material, and/or the construction and levelling of the present car park surface during the 20th century. The majority of the material appears to have been imported and deposited across this area in large quantities. This dumping of waste material has either been carried out in order to raise the ground level, or more likely, to infill after subsidence.

Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	1
Photographic records AS3	1
Digital photographs	44
Trench records AS41	1
Drawings	2
Boxes of finds	1

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Hartlebury Castle, Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
telephone 01299 250416

Acknowledgements

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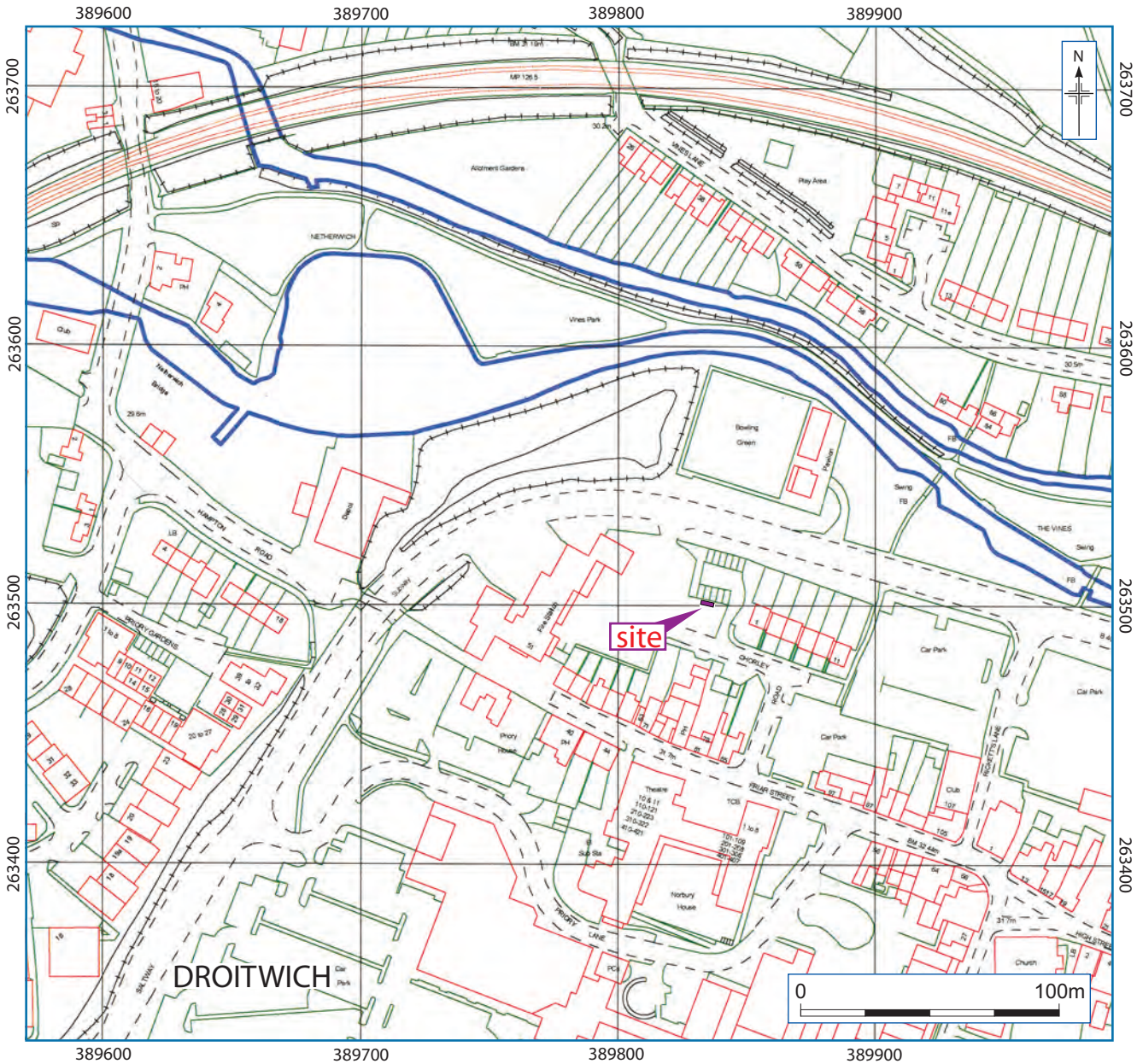
Plate 1: Location of trench. (Facing north-west)

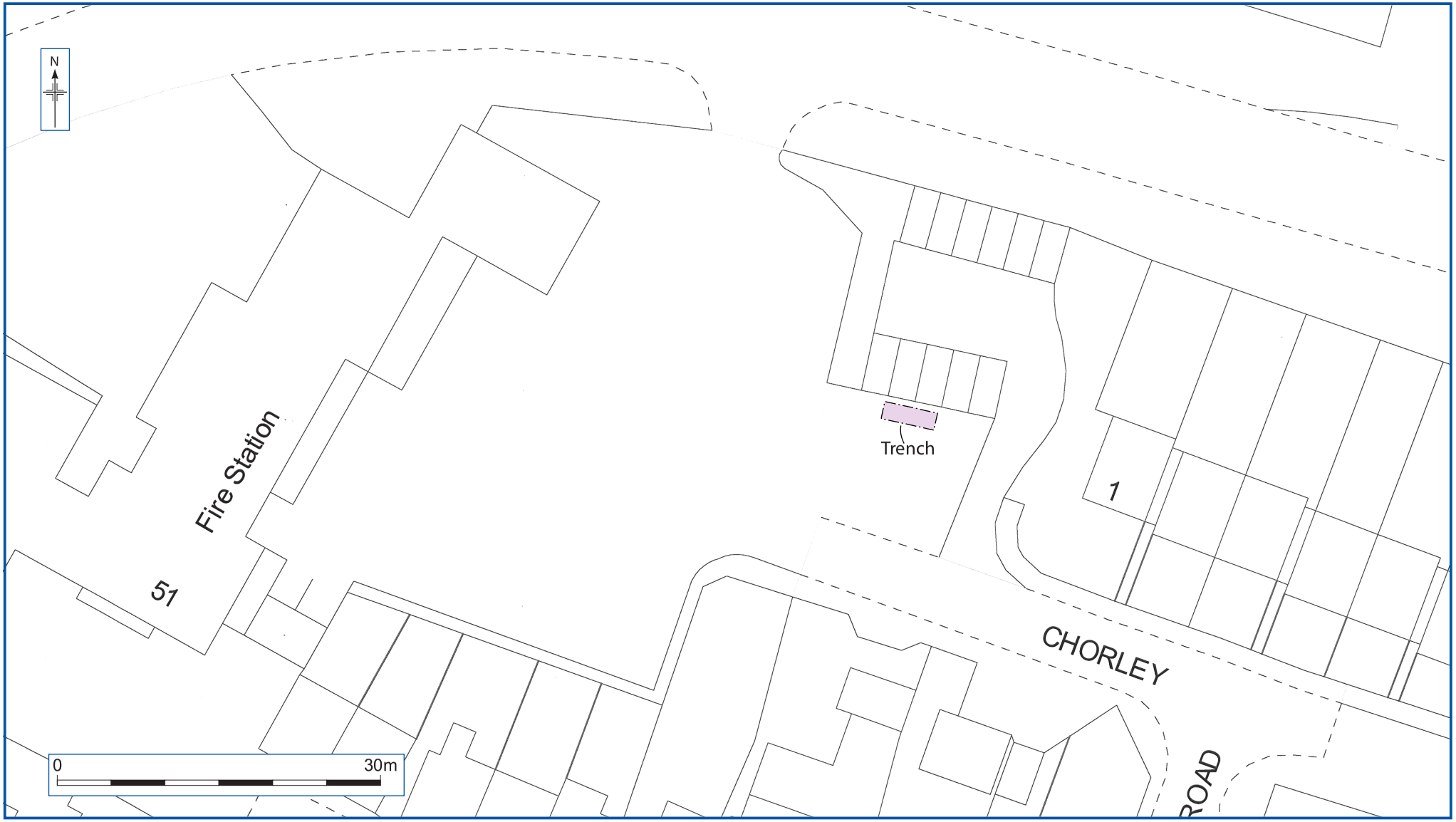
Plate 2: General view of trench and deposit 105. (Facing east)

Plate 3: Section through deposits. (Facing north)

Plate 4: Northern section, after excavation of sondage to access depth of deposits. (Facing north)



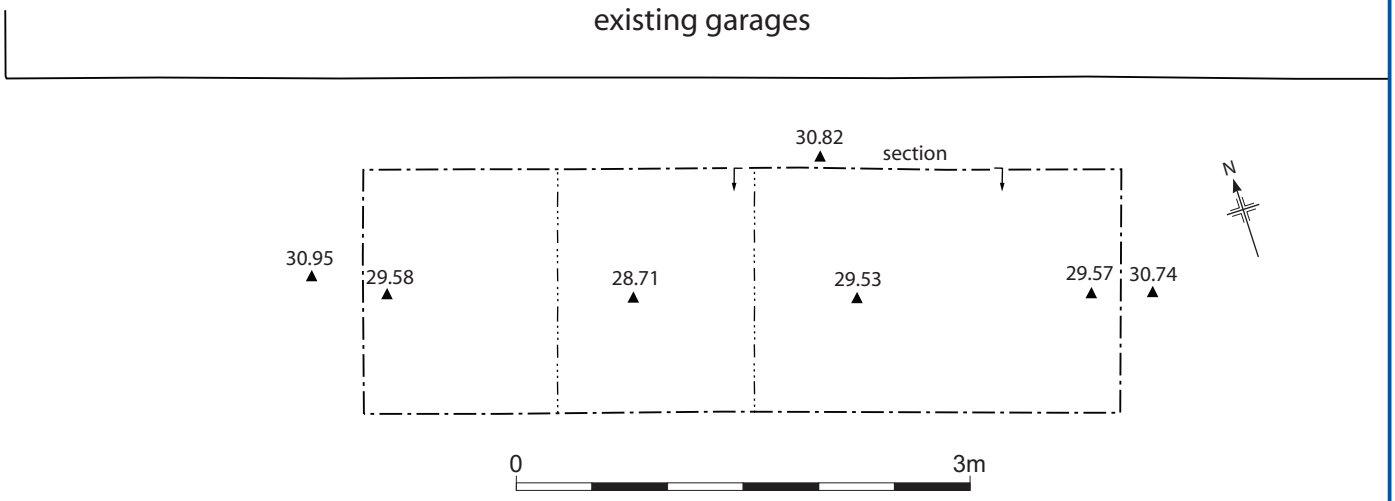
Location of the site. *Figure 1*



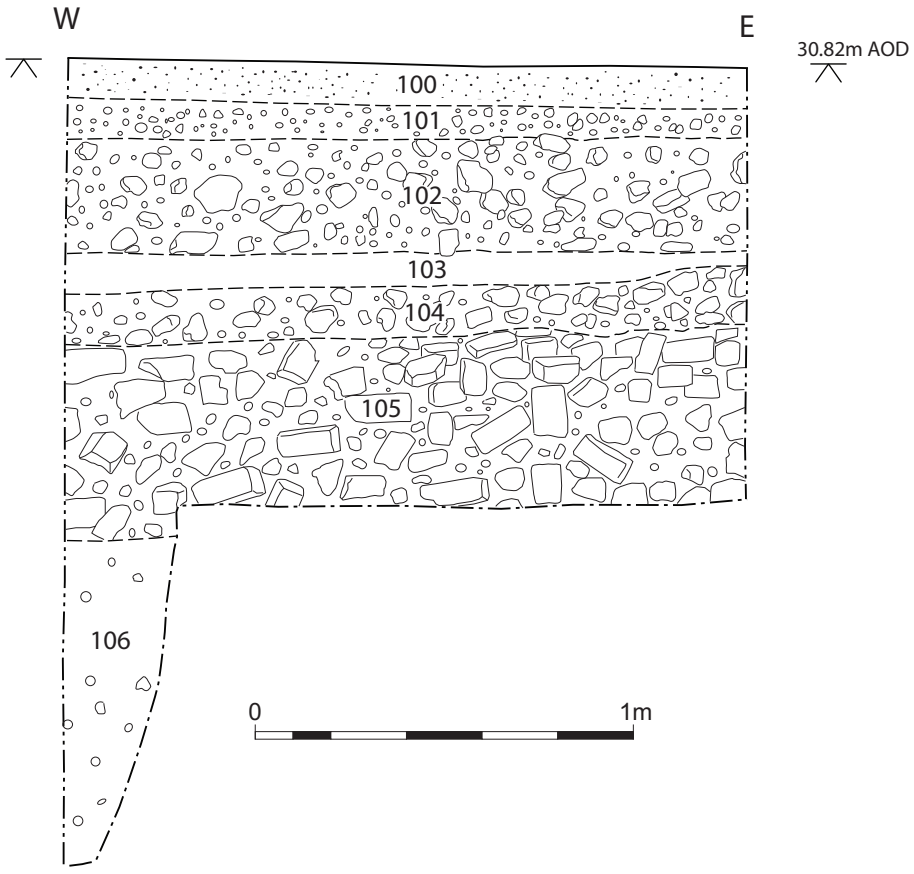
Trench location plan

Figure 2

PLAN

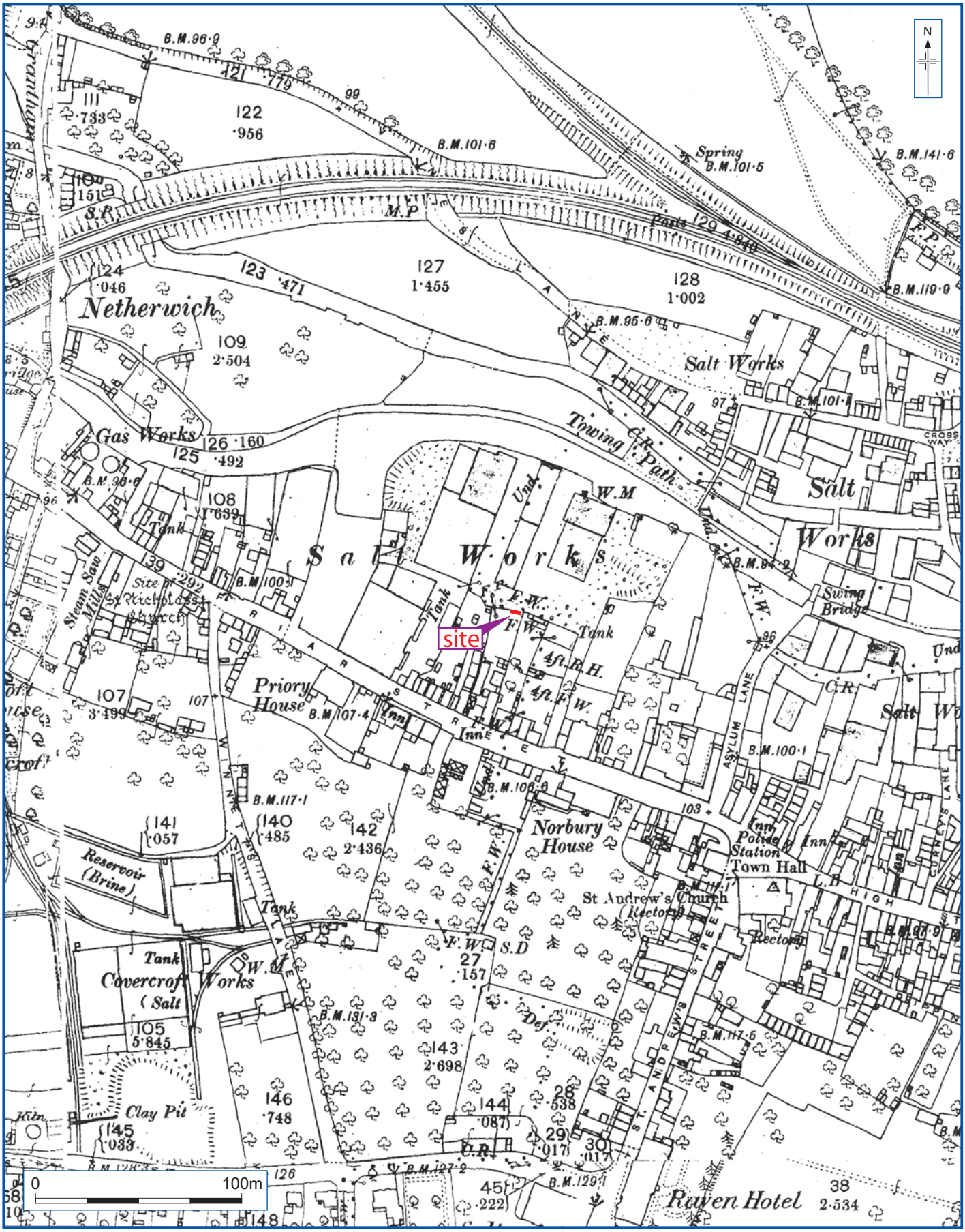


SECTION



Trench plan and section

Figure 3



Extract from 1st Editon Ordnance Survey map, showing location of the site *Figure 4*