

Archaeological evaluation of land to the rear of the Shamrock public house, Grove Street, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire



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Richard Bradley

With contributions by C Jane Evans

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land to the rear of the Shamrock public house, off Grove Street in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 394421 222836). It was commissioned by Andrew Marsh of Dawson and Marsh Building Contractors, who intends residential redevelopment, for which a planning application has been submitted to Cheltenham Borough Council.

A single trench, 10m in length, was excavated within the parking and storage area to the rear of the property. The archaeological deposits identified were all of post-medieval and later date, and of limited significance. Post-medieval garden soil was overlain by modern made-ground and cut by a service pipe. Despite the proximity of the site to the historic core of Cheltenham, there was no indication of earlier settlement extending into this area.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the 8th May 2017 on land to the rear of the Shamrock public house, at the northern end of Grove Street in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 394421 222836; Figure 1). It was commissioned by Andrew Marsh of Dawson and Marsh Building Contractors (the Client). The Client has proposed the erection of a terrace of four residential units, with on-site parking to the front and gardens to the rear (see A L Associates 2017), for which a planning application has been submitted to Cheltenham Borough Council (reference 17/00310/FUL; alternative reference PP-05684417).

The proposed development site was considered to have the potential to include heritage assets, the significance of which may be affected by the application, since the site is located in the area of medieval settlement at Cheltenham. It was recommended, therefore, that the site be archaeologically evaluated prior to determination of the planning application.

As a result, an indicative trench plan was presented by Worcestershire Archaeology in a project proposal (including detailed specification; see WA 2017) and agreed in principle with Charles Parry (Senior Archaeological Officer, Gloucestershire County Council). The evaluation was carried out following this document and the guidelines outlined in a generic brief for archaeological field evaluation, issued by the planning authority (Gloucestershire County Council 2016).

The project also conformed to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (ClfA 2014a).

2 Aims

The evaluation aimed, in general terms, to:

- Gather information and prepare a report which, beyond reasonable doubt, will inform decision making.

More specifically, the purpose was to:

- Determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits;
- Identify their location, nature, date and preservation;
- Assess their significance;
- Assess the likely impact of the proposed development.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The fieldwork project was led by Richard Bradley (BA (hons.), MA, ACIfA), assisted by Morgan Murphy (BA (hons.), MA). The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers (BA (hons.), MSc).

C Jane Evans (BA, MA, MCIIfA) contributed the finds report. Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.), PG Cert; MCIIfA).

3.2 Documentary research

There was no preceding desk-based assessment of the built or buried archaeological heritage assets and, therefore, prior to fieldwork commencing, a search was made of the Gloucestershire

Historic Environment Record (HER). This provided access to records of archaeological sites, monuments and find-spots in the surrounding area. Ordnance Survey historic and modern mapping was also examined and these are detailed below.

3.2.1 List of sources consulted

Cartographic sources

- *Ordnance Survey Town Plan 1885, 1:500, Cheltenham*
- *Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1887, 1:2,500 (25")*
- *Ordnance Survey 1903, 1:2,500 (25")*
- *Ordnance Survey 1923, 1:2,500 (25")*
- *Cheltenham Borough Council online mapping of conservation areas (accessed 10th May 2017)*

Documentary sources

Published and grey literature sources used are listed in the bibliography.

3.3 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2017). Fieldwork was undertaken on the 8th May 2017. The Worcestershire Archaeology project reference number is P5062.

A single trench, 10m in length and amounting to just over 17m², was excavated on the site area of 411m², representing a sample of just over 4%. The location of the trench is indicated in Figure 1. It was positioned with consideration for numerous practical constraints, including live service routes, spoil storage, parking and access to the site (Plate 1).

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a JCB 3CX wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under constant archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand, where clean surfaces were inspected and artefactual material retrieved. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

3.4 Structural analysis

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

3.5 Artefact methodology, by C Jane Evans

The finds work reported here conforms with the following guidance: for finds work by ClfA (2014b), for archive creation by AAF (2011) and for museum deposition by SMA (1993).

3.5.1 Artefact recovery policy

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012; appendix 2).

3.5.2 Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date was produced for each stratified context. The date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on a *pro forma* Microsoft Access database.

The pottery was examined by eye and referenced to the fabric reference series maintained by Gloucester Museum (Vince 1983a and 1983b, Appendix B3).

3.6 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

4 The application site

4.1 Current land use, topography and geology

The site is located to the rear of the Shamrock public house at the northern end of Grove Street, just off Cheltenham High Street. This is in the historic centre of the town and within the Central Conservation Area, designated by Gloucestershire County Council in May 1973. The site is currently a mix of tarmac and concrete rough ground used for parking and storage, incorporating a redundant and derelict bowling alley and the remnants of a demolished garage. It is bounded to the north by the Shamrock public house and to the east by Grove Street itself, to the south by a new residential terrace development, and to the west by houses fronting onto Burton Street.

Topographically, the site is level, at around 55.80m AOD, with the underlying geology of the site mapped as Charmouth Mudstone Foundation, overlain by superficial deposits of Cheltenham Sand and Gravel (BGS 2017).

4.2 Archaeological background

There have been no previous archaeological investigations of the site or of properties immediately adjacent, although there has been a limited amount of work in the wider surrounds. Around 50m south-east of the site, east of Grove Street, evaluation trenching in 2007 identified 19th century brick walls and a well associated with former terraced properties (HER 30549/30550). Also to the south-east, approximately 110m from the site and just off Station Street, evaluation trenching and follow up watching-brief work recorded the presence of a Roman ditch, undated pits and ditches, post-medieval features and the remains of a probable air-raid shelter, as well as recovering a sherd of Saxon pottery (HER 22102 and HER 41362).

South of the site, 60m further along Grove Street, two archaeological evaluations were undertaken in close proximity in 2007 and 2008, where a brick well was identified, but neither located any significant archaeological remains (HER 29048 and HER 32670). To the north-west, a watching-brief on the High Street found a stone-lined well (HER 27697) but nothing else of significance, while to the north-east, also on the High Street, evaluation trenching did not reveal any archaeological features or deposits (HER 21642).

Historic mapping suggests that the site has been part of the built-up area of Cheltenham since at least the 19th century, with outbuildings surrounding an open space to the rear of the public house fronting the High Street. Most of the buildings in the area reflect the expansion of Cheltenham in the late 18th to early 19th century (see Cheltenham Borough Council 2008). During the latter half of the 20th century the site became semi-industrial/commercial in use, with a small garage and workshop space.

5 Results

5.1 Structural analysis

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

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

Natural deposits were encountered 1.45m-1.65m below the car park surface, at around 54.29m AOD. This comprised soft light yellowish-orange sand with occasional small gravels (106; Plates 2 and 3), consistent with natural deposits previously identified locally (see, for example, Walsh and Mann 2017).

5.1.2 Phase 2: Post-medieval deposits

A substantial humic silty sand soil deposit directly overlay the natural sand for the majority of the trench (continuing at least 7m in length); this was up to 1.05m in depth and included frequent charcoal flecks, as well as a few fragments of clay tobacco pipe and pottery dispersed throughout the deposit (Plate 2). The artefacts dated it to the 18th century and it is probable that this represents a reworked garden soil (105).

5.1.3 Phase 3: Modern deposits

At the south-west end of the trench, the post-medieval soil was cut through by a large feature of modern date [104], possibly a construction cut, that included numerous pieces of glass, brick and tile in the loose sandy fill (finds not retained). Both the humic garden soil and the modern feature were cut by a service trench [108] that included a lead water pipe (capped off but still live). This effectively stopped excavation in the first 3m of the trench, other than locating the route of the pipe (Plate 3).

Sealing the modern features was a layer of loose rubble in a silty sand matrix (102), 0.22m in depth (Plate 2). This included pottery of 19th-20th century date and was probably a demolition or levelling layer of made-ground, deposited prior to construction of the car park surface, which consisted of tarmac (100) bedded onto soft light yellow gravel-rich sand (101).

5.2 Artefactual analysis, by C Jane Evans

The artefactual assemblage recovered is summarised in Tables 1 to 3.

period	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight(g)
post-medieval	ceramic	earthenware	pot	2	17
post-medieval	ceramic	fired clay	clay pipe	4	13
modern	ceramic	earthenware	pot	4	235

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

broad period	fabric code	fabric common name	count	weight(g)
post-medieval	TF61	post-medieval red ware, black glaze	2	17
post-medieval	TF96	miscellaneous late stoneware	1	49
modern	TF71?	modern transfer-printed china	3	186

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric

5.2.1 Summary artefactual evidence by period

For the finds from individual features, including specific types of pottery, consult Tables 3 and 2 in that order and in combination.

Post-medieval and modern finds

The garden soil (105) produced three fragments of clay pipe stem, not closely datable, and two sherds from the rim of a small bowl in a black-glazed, post-medieval red ware (fabric TF61), all suggesting an 18th century *tpq* date. The made-ground above this (102) produced a complete bowl from a clay pipe, dating to the mid-17th century (Oswald 1975, fig 3.5), along with fragments of transfer-printed modern china and stoneware, suggesting a 19th century *tpq* date.

context	material subtype	object specific type	fabric code	count	weight(g)	period	start date	end date
102	fired clay	clay pipe		1	8	post-medieval	1640	1660
102	earthenware	pot	TF71?	3	186	modern	1800	2000
102	earthenware	pot	TF96	1	49	modern	1800	1950
105	fired clay	clay pipe		3	5	post-medieval		
105	earthenware	pot	TF61	2	17	post-medieval	1700	1800

Table 3: Summary of context dating based on artefacts

5.2.2 Recommendations

No further work is required on the finds. The modern finds should be considered for discard, in consultation with the receiving museum.

6 Synthesis

Archaeological deposits identified during the evaluation trenching were all of post-medieval and later date, and are of limited significance. Despite the proximity of the site to the historic core of Cheltenham and the High Street, there was no indication of earlier settlement extending into this area.

The artefactual material recovered indicates activity in the vicinity of the site from the mid-17th century onwards, but reveals little beyond this. It is probable that the clay pipe fragments were part of waste material incorporated into the deep deposit of garden soil through horticulture and manuring in the garden space to the rear of properties fronting the High Street. The depth of the soil may suggest that it has formed over a considerable period of time, away from direct occupation. The rubble and made-ground are reflective of the later commercial use of the site.

7 Significance and potential impacts

The archaeological deposits recorded across the site were all dated to the post-medieval and modern period. Given the depth of the post-medieval soil identified in the trench it is possible that earlier features will have been protected by this and survive elsewhere on the site, outside of the trench. Overall, it is concluded, on present results, that the site is of very limited archaeological significance.

8 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology 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:

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9 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the conclusion of this project: Andrew Marsh (Dawson and Marsh Building Contractors); Charles Parry (Senior Archaeological Officer, Gloucestershire County Council); and the staff at the Shamrock public house.

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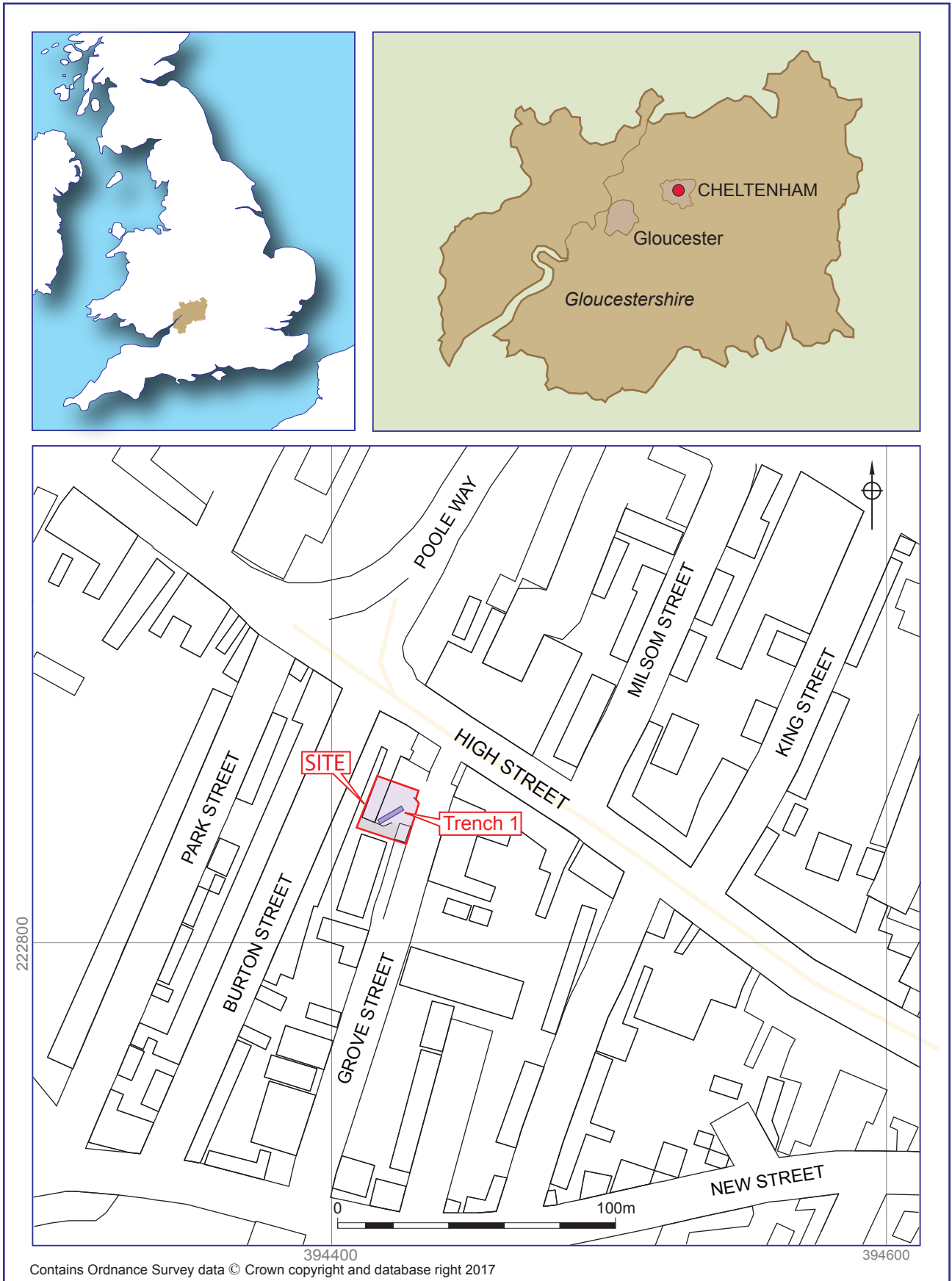
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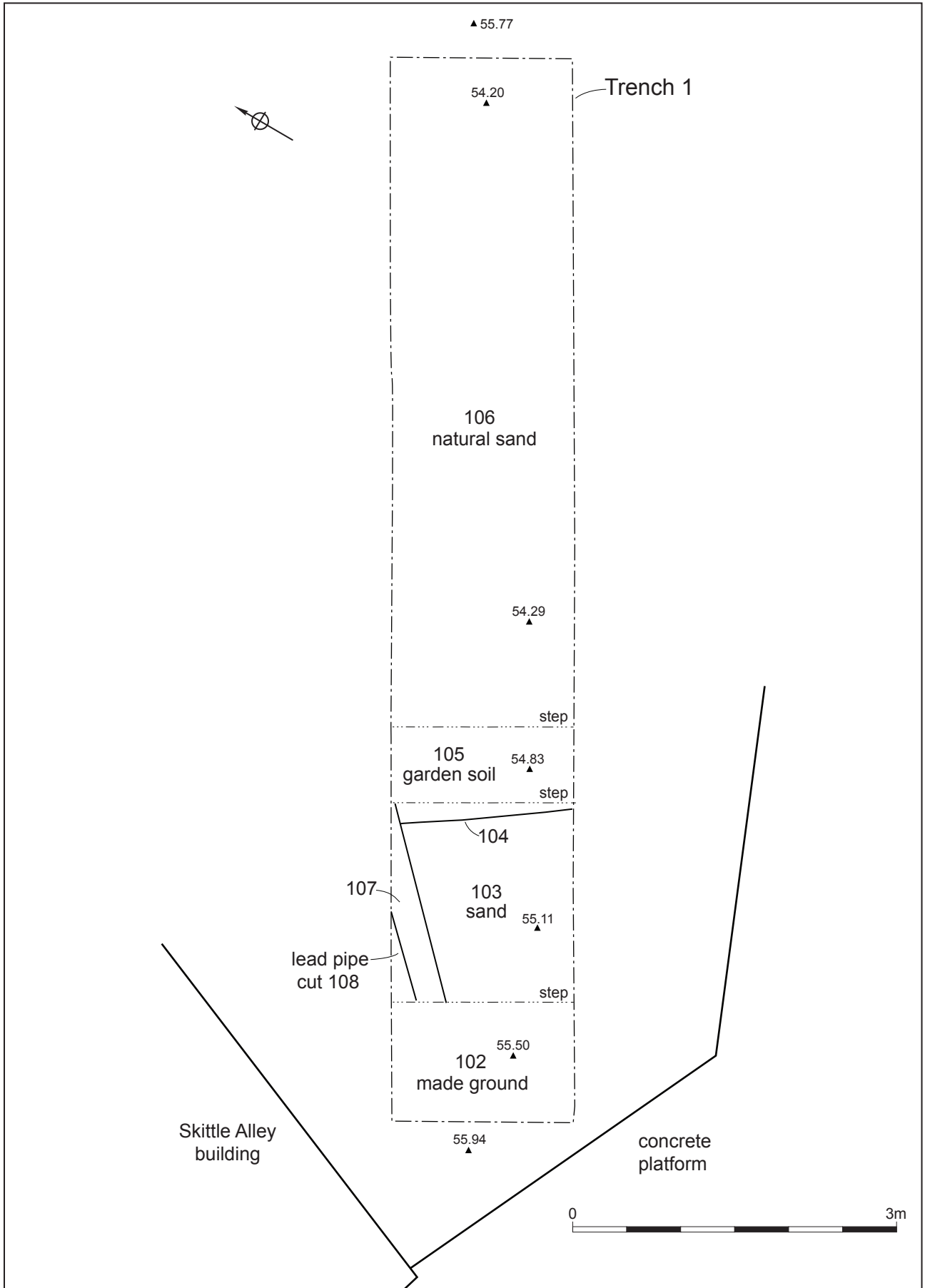
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Figures



Location of the site and Trench 1

Figure 1



Plan of Trench 1

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1: Trench 1 location to rear of public house during initial surface removal



Plate 2: Post-medieval soil deposit (105) below made ground (102)



*Plate 3: Overview of Trench 1, with live service in foreground
and natural sand below post-medieval soil*

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench Number	Length	Width	Orientation
1	10m	1.70m	North-east to south-west

Main deposit description:

Context	Type	Short description	Description	Interpretation	Dimensions
100	Layer	Tarmac car park	Indurated dark grey tarmac	Tarmacadam car park for pub	0.03m in depth
101	Layer	Bedding layer	Loose light yellow brown sand with gravel	Sandy gravel bedding layer for car park	0.15m in depth
102	Layer	Made ground	Loose dark reddish brown rubble in silty sand matrix	Rubble made ground build-up layer	0.22m in depth
103	Fill	Fill of modern cut 104	Loose mid yellow brown sand	Loose sandy fill of modern cut. Cut by lead water pipe intrusion.	0.54m+
104	Cut	Modern cut		Modern cut for foundations or services. Cuts post-med garden soil 105.	0.54m+
105	Layer	Garden soil	Soft mid brown silty sand	Soil deposit, large build-up related to bioturbation. Probably med to post-med in date. Cut by modern services.	1.05m in depth
106	Layer	Natural sand	Soft/loose light yellow/orange sand	Natural sand	
107	Fill	Fill of service trench 108		Fill of service trench, contains lead water pipe (live)	
108	Cut	Service trench		Cut for service	

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 35 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 1 Scale drawings
- 1 Levels records AS19
- 1 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 Box of finds
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

The Wilson
Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum
Clarence Street
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL50 3JT
