

Archaeological Watching Brief at The Olive Branch, Church Street, Worcester

for JBD Architects

January 2019



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THE OLIVE BRANCH, CHURCH STREET, WORCESTER

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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SITE INFORMATION

Site name: The Olive Branch, Church Street,
Worcester

Site code: WCM 102328

Local planning authority: Worcester City Council

Planning reference:

Central NGR: SO 85027 54947

Commissioning client: JBD Architects

Client project reference:

WA project number: P5499

WA report number: 2654

HER reference: WCM102328

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Archaeological Watching Brief at the Olive Branch, Church Street, Worcester

By Beth Williams

With contributions by Rob Hedge and Liz Pearson

Illustrations by Laura Templeton

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at The Olive Branch, Church Street, Worcester (NGR SO 85027 54947). It was commissioned by JBD Architects as part of a gas supply improvement. The site is located in central Worcester. The observed trench follows the former gas pipe which runs through the private courtyard shared by The Olive Branch Mediterranean Bistro and St Swithun's Church to the east, and extends into the adjacent Church Street. Due to the central city location and proximity to St Swithun's Church the potential for structural remains was identified.

The excavations recovered a small quantity of early to mid-18th century artefacts, representing domestic debris that was most likely incorporated into the soils during 18th century reconstruction of the adjacent St Swithun's Church. A single piece of possible human bone was identified; most likely accidentally disturbed and deposited during the aforementioned renovations.

A short stretch of cobbled surface was recorded at a depth of 0.45m below the present surface, at c24.00mAOD, which most likely represents the previous ground level, prior to being raised during the aforementioned renovation of the church. The cobbles had been truncated by a possible pit of mid-18th century date. A previous phase boundary wall was identified beneath the current wall enclosing the courtyard, comprised of handmade bricks which may be of 18th century date.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) on 12th November 2018 at The Olive Branch, Church Street, Worcester (NGR SO 85027 54947). This comprised the monitoring of one service trench, up to 0.6m deep and 14m long. The project was commissioned by JBD Architects, in advance of a proposed gas supply improvement.

The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the proposed development had the potential to impact upon possible heritage assets.

No brief was provided but the conditions of work were discussed in correspondence between WA, the Curator and the client. The watching brief also conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in or *Standard and guidance: for an archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014a) and *Guidelines for archaeological work in Worcester* (Worcester City Council 2016).

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site is located on the north side of Church Street, bounded on the east by retail units, the north by the Olive Branch restaurant and to the east by St Swithun's Church. It is a small courtyard measuring c40m², which currently serves as access to the Olive Branch restaurant and the western entrance of St Swithun's Church, and is laid with paving slabs.

The site is flat, and sits at c23m above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The underlying geology is mapped as Sidmouth Mudstone Formation (BGS 2018).

2 Archaeological and historical background

2.1 Introduction

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) of the adjacent St Swithun's Church was previously undertaken by WA (Walsh 2016). The findings presented in the DBA are summarised below.

2.2 Prehistoric

The HER holds no archaeological records for the site or the immediate surrounding area for this period.

2.3 Roman

The HER holds records of Roman activity in the surrounding area.

To the north, on St Swithun's Street, excavation in 1889 reported Roman Walls (WCM100847), in 1961 works identified a limestone well (WCM100366), and a 1998 watching brief recorded intercutting features that were believed to be of Roman date (WCM100365). During works in Church Street in 1952 over 50 sherds of Roman pottery were found, these included decorated samian ware (WCM100015).

Based on archaeological, documentary and topographical evidence Holt and Baker (2004, 170) suggest that church street is an eastwards continuation of a Roman road identified c100m south-west of site.

2.4 Early medieval

Church Street is recorded as an Anglo-Saxon later street (WCM96272), although Baker and Holt (2004) believe this to be the line of a Roman Road.

Baker and Holt also suggest that late Anglo-Saxon burh defences passed under the Church (2004, 169-70). They have predicted that the defences turn southwards towards City Arcade, so that the curve in St Swithun's street reflects the course of these defences. Watching briefs in the former school room, to the north of site opposite the church tower, recorded 'thick strata of grey loam and organic fill with bands of decayed organic matter, consistent with an infilled ditch' (WCM 100662 and 100663).

2.5 Medieval

St Swithun's Church is first recorded around 1125±49; it was substantially rebuilt during the 1730s but still retains elements of the medieval church including its 15th century tower – which forms the eastern boundary of the present site.

There has been limited archaeological investigation in proximity to site, with reported 'secret' alterations taking place without archaeological supervision to the north of site, supposedly disturbing human remains.

It is recorded that during this period St Swithun's Street was called 'Crockere Strete', suggesting the presence of potters or a potter market (Baker and Holt 2004).

2.6 Post-medieval

Comparison of current maps to John Speeds 1610 map of Worcester indicates that there has been little change in the general street layout since at least the early 17th century. Study of historic maps and drawings depicting Worcester show that the site and its immediate surroundings have not been significantly altered. The west church tower was originally octagonal but was rebuilt as square during the 1730s (Walsh 2016). The 1st edition OS map of 1886 records a Sunday School in the building now occupied by The Olive Branch, and a urinal to the immediate south of the church tower. The boundary enclosing the courtyard can be seen.

3 Project aims

The principal aims of the archaeological investigation were to:

- Determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains;
- Determine the character, extent, date, complexity, integrity, state of preservation and quality of any archaeological remains present, therefore ensuring their preservation by record; and

The general objectives were to ensure:

- The protection and recording of archaeological assets discovered during the archaeological works;
- That any below-ground archaeological deposits exposed were promptly identified; and
- The recording of archaeological remains, to place this record in its local context and to make this record available.

4 Project methodology

No written scheme of investigation was prepared, but the conditions of work were discussed in correspondence between WA, the Curator and the client. The watching brief of works was undertaken on 12 November 2018. This comprised the monitoring of one service trench, up to 0.6m deep and 14m long (Figure 1).

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision by hand and using a 360° tracked excavator. Deposits of archaeological interest were excavated by hand by archaeologists. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to

standard WA practice (2012) and trench and feature locations were surveyed on a scale plan. On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

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

The project archive is currently held at the offices of WA. Subject to the agreement of the landowner it is anticipated that it will be deposited at Worcester City Museum.

5 Archaeological results

5.1 Introduction

The features recorded in the trench are shown in Figure 2 and Plates 1-7. The trench and context inventory is presented in Appendix 1.

5.2 Phasing/Trench descriptions

5.2.1 General deposits

The trench followed the line of a pre-existing gas pipe line and stopped at a depth no greater than 0.6m. As such the deposits seen consisted primarily of previously disturbed, redeposited and mixed strata. The present ground surface comprised flagstones (within the courtyard) and a modern brick surface (within Church Street). The 'made ground' beneath this was grey-brown silty sand, with extensive charcoal. A few further layers of 'made ground' could be seen beneath this. They varied between mid-greyish-brown silty-sand and mid-yellowish-brown sandy-silt.

5.2.2 Structural Deposits

Towards the north end of the trench, a c2.40m stretch of cobbled surface was recorded [105]. This was truncated at the south end and along the west and north-west sides. The cobbles were c0.45m deep, at c24.00mAOD, and bedded in orange sand that was c0.1m thick. Clay tobacco pipe and some pottery was found with the cobbles.

South of this a possible pit [109] was seen. It appears to have truncated surface [105], and contained two fills: the upper fill was mid-brownish-grey silty-sand and rubble. The lower fill was a dark-red sand/sandstone that contained tile.

Beneath the current boundary wall and railings (structure [114]) a previous boundary wall was seen: [113]. Three courses of wall remained, of handmade bricks measuring 220mm x 100mm x 60mm bonded in a soft mid-pinkie-white lime mortar with occasional charcoal inclusions. This had been repaired using cement on the southern face, presumably when a previous gas pipe was inserted.

6 Artefactual evidence

6.1 Summary

A small quantity of early to mid-18th century artefacts were recovered, representing domestic debris probably incorporated into soils during the 18th century renovation of the church.

6.2 Artefact methodology, by Rob Hedge

The finds work reported here conforms with the following guidance: for findswork by ClfA (2014b), for pottery analysis by PCRG/SGRP/MPRG (2016), for archive creation by AAF (2011), and for museum deposition by SMA (1993).

6.3 Recovery policy

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

6.4 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 Microsoft Access database.

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and referenced as appropriate by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology (Hurst and Rees 1992 and www.worcestershireceramics.org).

6.5 Discard policy

Artefacts from topsoil and subsoil and unstratified contexts will normally be noted but not retained, unless they are of intrinsic interest (eg worked flint or flint debitage, featured pottery sherds, and other potential 'registered artefacts'). All artefacts will be collected from stratified excavated contexts, except for large assemblages of post-medieval or modern material, unless there is some special reason to retain, such as local production. Such material may be noted and not retained, or, if appropriate, a representative sample may be collected and retained. Discard of finds from post-medieval and earlier deposits will only be instituted with reference to museum collection policy and/or with agreement of the local museum.

See the environmental section for other discard where appropriate.

6.6 Artefactual analysis, by Rob Hedge

The artefactual assemblage recovered is summarised in Tables 1 and 2. It comprised a small quantity of building material, pottery, and clay tobacco pipe. It came from three stratified contexts and could be dated from the medieval period onwards, though most was post-medieval in date. Using pottery as an index of artefact condition, this was generally fair. Pottery sherds displayed low levels of abrasion, and the average sherd size, at 14.9g, was slightly above average, suggesting little disturbance since original deposition.

Period	Material class	Object specific type	Count	Weight(g)
medieval	ceramic	roof tile	1	139
late med/early post-med	ceramic	pot	1	15
post-medieval	ceramic	clay pipe	10	25
		pot	7	104
undated	animal bone	horn core	3	26
		mammal	10	232
Totals			32	541

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

6.6.1 Pottery

All sherds have been grouped and quantified according to fabric type (Table 2). Sherds were datable by fabric type to their general period or production span.

Broad period	Fabric code	Fabric common name	Count	weight(g)
Medieval/post-medieval	69	Oxidized glazed Malvernian ware	1	15

Broad period	Fabric code	Fabric common name	Count	weight(g)
Early post-medieval	81.10	German stoneware: Frechen?	1	42
Post-medieval	82	Tin-glazed ware	2	15
Post-medieval	75	North Devon gravel-tempered ware	1	36
Post-medieval	78.3	Fine red sandy ware	1	1
Post-medieval	91	Manganese mottled ware	2	10
Totals			8	119

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by period and fabric-type

There was a single sherd of medieval pottery (15th to early 17th century oxidised Malvernian ware; f69, see Bryant 2004).

A range of regional post-medieval wares were present within fill (106) of cut [107], including North Devon gravel-tempered ware (f75), manganese mottled ware, red sandy ware, and a pink-tinged tin-glazed earthenware with hand-painted red-brown decoration. Also present was a fragment from the base of a stoneware jug, the fabric and style being consistent with a German origin, and traces of wire-marks on the base suggesting that it is likely to be a Frechen product. Although declining from their dominance of the market in the 16th–17th centuries, Frechen pots were still entering the country in some quantity in the early 18th century, and Gaimster (1997, 211) notes that they were not superseded by Westerwald products, for instance at the port of Exeter, until 1720.

Overall, the pottery from (106) is likely to derive from domestic activity in the early 18th century.

6.6.2 Other artefacts

Roof tile

A single fragment of medieval pegged roof tile in sandy fabric 2A (Fagan 1992) was present within fill (110) of possible pit [109]; produced in the city between the 13th–15th centuries.

Clay pipe

A small assemblage of pipe stems and one bowl were recovered from fill (110) of possible pit [109]. The bowl is from a large, thin-walled, spurred pipe, similar to type 22 in Oswald's general typology (1975, 40-41); this form is generally dated to the mid-18th century (viz 1730–1780).

6.6.3 Site dating

The range of wares present suggest that the fill (106) of cut [107] was deposited sometime in the early 18th century: and probably pre-1750. Possible pit [109] may well be contemporary: although containing residual medieval material, as the clay pipes point to a date no earlier than 1730. It seems likely, therefore, that the features cutting surface [105] are associated with the rebuilding of the church in the 1730s.

Context	Material class	Object type	Count	Weight(g)	Start date	End date	TPQ date range
106	ceramic	pot	1	1	1700	1800	AD 1700 - 1800
			2	10	1680	1740	
			1	36	1575	1800	
			2	15	1590	1730	
			1	42	1550	1720	
108	ceramic	pot	1	15	1400	1630	AD 1400 - 1630
	animal bone	horn core	3	26	<i>undated</i>		
110	ceramic	clay pipe	10	25	1730	1800	AD 1730 - 1800
		roof tile	1	139	1200	1500	
	animal bone	mammal	10	232	<i>undated</i>		

Table 3: Summary of context dating based on artefacts grouped in phase order

6.7 Recommendations

6.7.1 Further analysis and reporting

The following recommendations are made with regard to further work on the artefacts considered as part of this report.

No further work on the artefacts is required.

6.7.2 Discard and retention

The assemblage is not considered likely to warrant retention by Museums Worcestershire, although the final decision rests with the museum curator. Given that the assemblage contains an attractive range of wares from an interesting transitional period in pottery production and use, one prospect may be to return them to the restaurant for the purposes of display.

7 Environmental Evidence, by Liz Pearson

7.1 Project parameters

The environmental project conforms to guidance by ClfA (2014a) on archaeological watching brief and guidance by English Heritage (2011) and Association for Environmental Archaeology (1995).

7.2 Methods

7.2.1 Sampling policy

No features were suitable for environmental sampling, although animal bone was hand-collected from two post-medieval features (Env Table 1).

7.2.2 Processing and analysis

Animal bone was quantified according to fragment count and weight. Comments were made on overall condition and key species. Identifications were made with the aid of modern bone reference

collections housed at the Historic Environment and Archaeology Service and identification guides (Schmid 1972 and Hillson 1992).

7.3 Discard policy

Remaining sample material and scanned residues will be discarded after a period of three months following submission of this report unless there is a specific request to retain them.

7.4 Report

A small quantity of hand-collected animal and possibly human bone was hand-collected during fieldwork (Env Table 1) from post-medieval features. The bone was well-preserved, consisting of cattle, sheep and a single human calcaneus in fill (110) of possible pit [109], of 18th century date. Only cattle horn core fragments were identified in fill (108) of late medieval/early post-medieval date.

The single human bone is likely to have been disturbed during re-modelling of the adjacent St Swithun's church, and therefore represents charnel material.

Context	Count	Weight (g)	Feature Type	Period	Comments
108	3	26	Unknown	Late medieval/early post-medieval	Fragments cattle horn core
110	10	232	Pit?	18 th century	Includes cattle pelvis inornate, cattle/horse size rib and vertebrae fragments, sheep/goat metapodials and rib fragments, Human calcaneus

Env Table 1: Hand-collected animal bone

8 Discussion and Conclusions

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) on 12 November 2018 at The Olive Branch, Church Street, Worcester (NGR SO 85027 54947). This comprised the monitoring of one service trench, up to 0.6m deep and 14m long. The project was commissioned by JBD Architects, in advance of a proposed gas supply improvement.

The excavations recovered a small quantity of early to mid-18th century artefacts, representing domestic debris that was most likely incorporated into the soils during 18th century renovation of the adjacent St Swithun's Church. A single piece of possible human bone was identified; most likely accidentally disturbed and deposited during the aforementioned renovations.

A short stretch of cobbled surface was recorded at a depth of c0.45m below the present surface, at c24.00mAOD, which most likely represents the previous ground level, prior to being raised during the aforementioned renovation of the church. The cobbles had been truncated by a possible pit of mid-18th century date. A previous phase boundary wall was identified beneath the current wall enclosing the courtyard, comprised of handmade bricks which may be of 18th century date.

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in the trench to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features. It is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features provides an accurate characterisation of the site as a whole.

9 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Peter Lovett, assisted by Beth Williams.

The project was managed by Tom Vaughan. The report was produced and collated by Beth Williams. Specialist contributions and individual sections of the report are attributed to the relevant authors throughout the text.

10 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following: Peter Johnson (JBD Architects), and James Dinn (Archaeological Officer, Worcester City Council).

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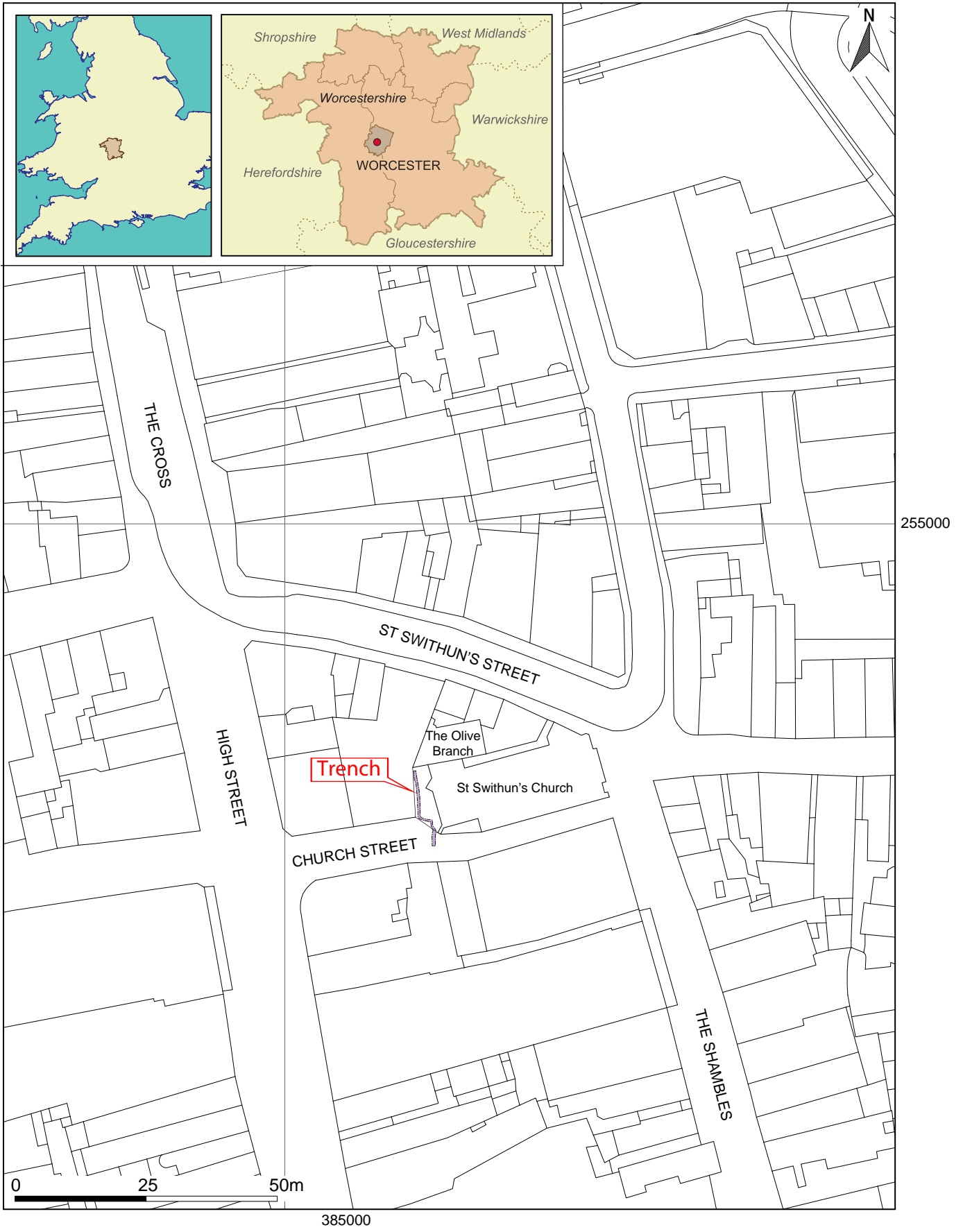
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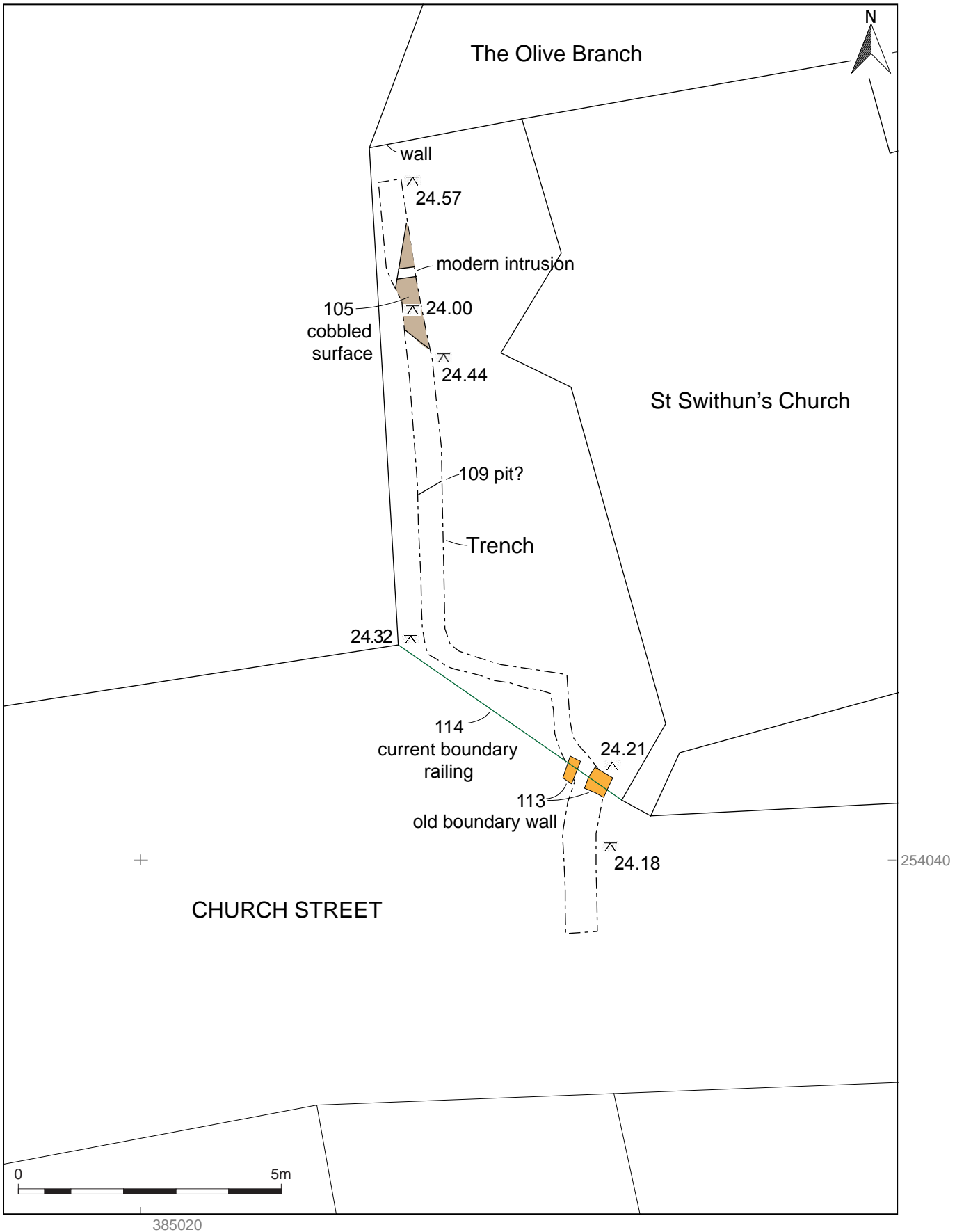
Figures



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Location of the trench

Figure 1



Plan of Trench 1

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1: View east of structure/surface 105 and west facing section of the Trench; 1m scale



Plate 2: View north of northern segment of the Trench, including surface 105; 1m scale



Plate 3: View north-east of boundary wall 113, seen from Church Street; 0.5m scale



Plate 4: View north of trench, including boundary wall 113, seen from Church Street; 1m scale



Plate 5: View north of trench, in courtyard; 1m scale

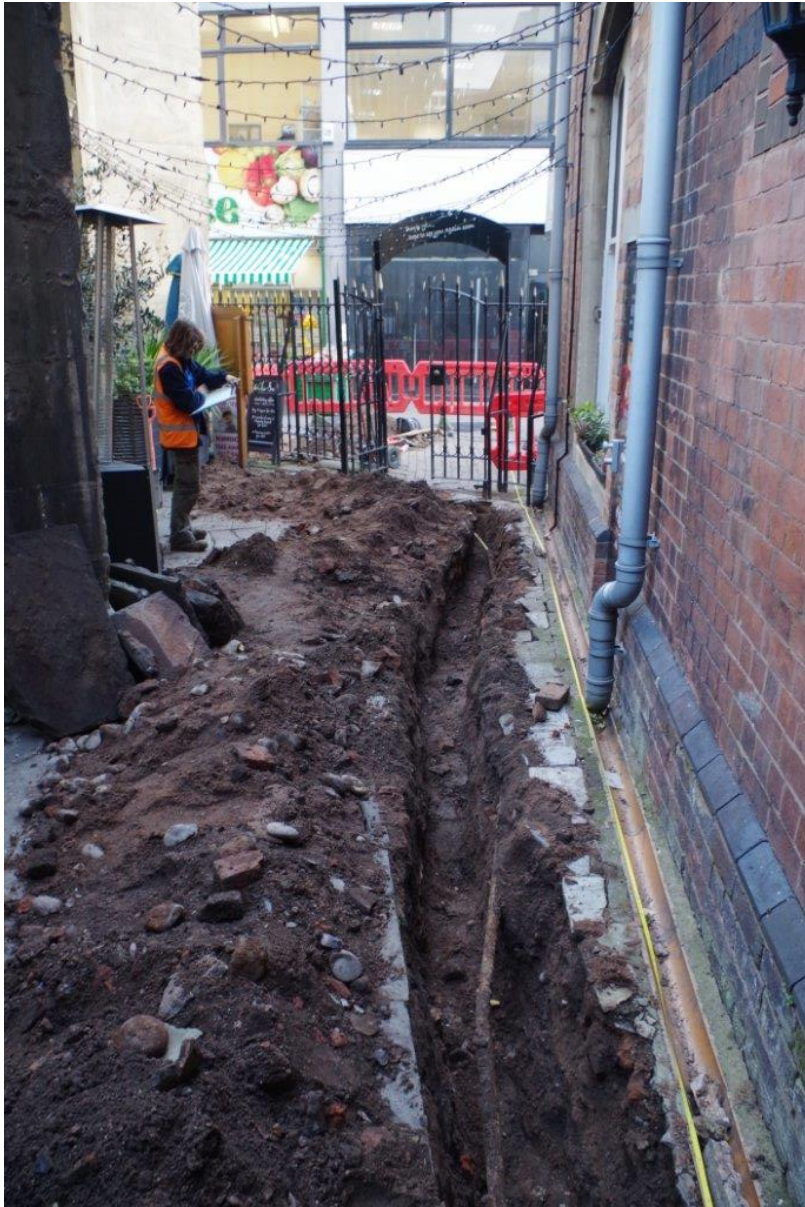


Plate 6: View south of trench, in courtyard; no scales



Plate 7: View south of trench, including boundary wall 113, seen from Courtyard; 1m scale

Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Length: 14m

Width: 14m

Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
100	Layer	Layer	York paving slabs. Current floor level	0.12m	
101	Layer	Layer	Made ground under paving slabs	0.11m	Soft greyish brown silty sand
102	Layer	Layer	Made ground under paving slabs	0.18m	Soft yellowish brown sandy silt
103	Layer	Layer	Made ground, with lots of brick rubble	0.12m	Soft greyish brown silty sand
104	Layer	Layer	Mortar rich made ground directl above cobbled	0.04m	Soft brownish yellow silty sand
105	Surface	Structure	Cobbled surface, heavily truncated. Bedded in an orange sand layer. 0.45m below ground surface	0.1m	
106	Unknown	Fill	Material within a cut of unknown form or function that truncates northern end of surface 105. Contains brick rubble, and seems like dumped material/made ground. Within 107	0.28m	Soft brownish grey silty sand
107	Unknown	Cut	Cut of feature that truncates north end of surface 105. Unknown form. Contains 106	0.28m	
108	Unknown	Fill	Fill of feature that truncates south end of surface 105. Lots of brick rubble. Seems like backfill/made ground. Within 109	0.24m	Soft brownish grey silty sand
109	Possible pit	Cut	Cut of feature that truncates south end of surface 105. Possible pit, as it is seen to have a slightly circular shape in plan. Contains 108 and 110	0.3m	
110	Unknown	Fill	Fill of possible pit 109.		Soft greyish brown silty sand
111	Layer	Layer	Made ground in south run of trench. Heavily truncated by services, difficult to see the cuts for these. Mixed	0.3m	Soft greyish brown silty sand
112	Layer	Layer	Degraded red sandstone layer. Only seen in edge of trench and below surface 105 in southern end. Cut by pit 109.		Firm brownish red sand
113	Wall	Structure	Red brick wall running nw-se under existing gate, presumably as an earlier	0.5m	

property boundary.
 Truncated by services.
 Exists to 4 courses high/
 0.5m high. Brick dimension
 220mm x 100mm x 60mm.
 Handmade bricks, bonded
 with a soft pinky white lime
 mortar with occasional
 charcoal inclusions. Cement
 repair/repointing to southern
 face of wall.

114	Modern Layer	Layer	Brick surface, current road surface	0.07m
115	Modern Layer	Layer	Bedding layer of sand for surface 114	0.04m
116	Modern Layer	Layer	Concrete base layer for surface 114	0.3m
117	Layer	Layer	Made ground beneath concrete 116. Seen in southern end of trench only.	

Appendix 2: Summary of project archive (WCM 102328)

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	Animal bones, Ceramics, Human bones,
Paper	Context sheet, Drawing, Plan, Report
Digital	Database, GIS, Images raster/digital photography , Spreadsheets, Text

*OASIS terminology

Summary of data for Worcester HER/OASIS

WCM102328 (event HER number)

P5499

Artefacts

period	material class	object specific type	start date	end date	count	weight(g)	specialist report? (note 2)	Key assemblage? (note 3)
medieval	ceramic	roof tile	1200	1500	1	139	Y	N
late med/early post-med	ceramic	pot	1400	1630	1	15	Y	N
early post-medieval	ceramic	pot	1550	1720	1	42	Y	N
post-medieval	ceramic	clay pipe	1730	1800	10	25	Y	N
post-medieval	ceramic	pot	1590	1730	2	15	Y	N
post-medieval	ceramic	pot	1575	1800	1	36	Y	N
post-medieval	ceramic	pot	1680	1740	2	10	Y	N
post-medieval	ceramic	pot	1700	1800	1	1	Y	N
undated	animal bone	horn core			3	26	N	N
undated	animal bone	mammal			10	232	N	N

Notes

- 1) In some cases the date will be "Undated". In most cases, especially if there is not a specialist report, the information entered in the Date field will be a general period such as Neolithic, Roman, medieval etc (see below for a list of periods used in the Worcestershire HER). Very broad date ranges such as late Medieval to Post-medieval are acceptable for artefacts which can be hard to date for example roof tiles. If you have more specific dates, such as 13th to 14th century, please use these instead. Specific date ranges which cross general period boundaries can also be used, for example 15th to 17th century.

period	from	to
Palaeolithic	500000 BC	10001 BC
Mesolithic	10000 BC	4001 BC
Neolithic	4000 BC	2351 BC
Bronze Age	2350 BC	801 BC

Iron Age	800 BC	42 AD
Roman	43	409
Post-Roman	410	1065
Medieval	1066	1539
Post-medieval	1540	1900
Modern	1901	2050

period specific	from	to
Lower Paleolithic	500000 BC	150001
Middle Palaeolithic	150000	40001
Upper Palaeolithic	40000	10001
Early Mesolithic	10000	7001
Late Mesolithic	7000	4001
Early Neolithic	4000	3501
Middle Neolithic	3500	2701
Late Neolithic	2700	2351
Early Bronze Age	2350	1601
Middle Bronze Age	1600	1001
Late Bronze Age	1000	801
Early Iron Age	800	401
Middle Iron Age	400	101
Late Iron Age	100 BC	42 AD
Roman 1st century AD	43	100
2nd century	101	200
3rd century	201	300
4th century	301	400
Roman 5th century	401	410

Post roman	411	849
Pre conquest	850	1065
Late 11th century	1066	1100
12th century	1101	1200
13th century	1201	1300
14th century	1301	1400
15th century	1401	1500
16th century	1501	1600
17th century	1601	1700
18th century	1701	1800
19th century	1801	1900
20th century	1901	2000
21st century	2001	

2. Not all evaluations of small excavation assemblages have specialist reports on all classes of objects. An identification (eg clay pipe) and a quantification is not a specialist report. A short discussion or a more detailed record identifying types and dates is a specialist report. This field is designed to point researchers to reports where they will find out more than merely the presence or absence of material of a particular type and date.
3. This field should be used with care. It is designed to point researchers to reports where they will be able to locate the most important assemblages for any given material for any given date.