

YARLET SCHOOL, YARLET, STAFFORDSHIRE

Archive report for:
Archaeological Watching Brief

Prepared By

NETWORK ARCHAEOLOGY

For

Yarlet School

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Non-Technical Summary

Between July and October 2023, Network Archaeology undertook a watching brief during the construction of a new car park (Area 1a) and improvements to another (Area 2) at Yarlet School, Staffordshire (Centre: NGR 391320 329372).

The watching brief comprised archaeological monitoring during all groundworks within the two areas, followed by archaeological excavation and recording of all identified features.

The watching brief successfully identified a brick wall, cobbled surface, and a further brick surface in Area 1a, all thought to date to the post-medieval or early modern period (Figure 3). These features appeared to align with structures visible on the 1846 tithe map and it is likely that they represented surviving elements of 19th century or earlier structures. Both the structures are absent from the 1901 Ordnance Survey map, indicating that they were demolished in the mid to late 19th century.

Finds recovered from Area 1a, including pottery, and building materials, further point towards a late 18th to late 19th century date.

The only features identified in Area 2 were two areas of probable bioturbation, likely former hedges, or bushes.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Report

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during the groundworks associated with a development at Yarlet School, Yarlet, Staffordshire (Figure 1).

1.2 Project Background

1.2.1 Proposed Development

The Development comprised the creation of a new carpark and the expansion and improvement of an existing car park, and improvements to the access. These included the installation of a new gas main, an extension to an existing car park and the construction of a new playground (Planning Application number: 22/36781/FUL).

1.2.2 Planning history

A planning application (20/00193/FUL was approved in July 2023 by Staffordshire Borough Council Historic Environment Team (SBCHE) with the following condition in accordance with paragraph 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework:

“Should permission be granted, an archaeological watching brief be carried out during any substantial groundworks associated with the development, particularly in relation to the creation of both new proposed car parks and the proposed attenuation pond. This would include:

- *topsoil stripping*
- *engineering works*
- *foundation trenches*
- *drainage and service runs.*

The watching brief should be scalable to a strip, map and sample excavation should potentially significant archaeological remains be observed during the archaeological monitoring works”.

The following conditions were suggested by SBCHE:

“The above works could be most satisfactorily secured via a condition attached to any planning permission for the scheme. This condition should read:

- a) *Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, a written scheme of archaeological investigation ('the Scheme') shall be submitted for the written approval of the Local Planning Authority. The Scheme shall provide details of the programme of archaeological works to be carried out within the site, including post-fieldwork reporting and appropriate publication.*
- b) *The archaeological site work shall thereafter be implemented in full in accordance with the written scheme of archaeological investigation approved under condition (A).*
- c) *The development shall not be occupied until the site investigation and post-fieldwork assessment has been completed in accordance with the written scheme of archaeological investigation approved under condition (A) and the provision made for analysis, publication and dissemination of the results and archive deposition has been secured".*

The Archaeological Officer for SBCHET requested an archaeological watching brief be undertaken in order to clarify the impact of the proposed development on any unknown heritage assets or archaeological remains in line with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

1.2.3 Location, description, and natural environment

- **Location:** The Development Area (DA) was located within the grounds of Yarlet School, which is located on the eastern side of the A34, approximately midway between Stafford and Walton (NGR 391320 329372, Figure 1).
- **Description:** The DA was divided into six separate elements, these being:
 - Area 1a – Installation of a new carpark – 990m²
 - Area 1b – Playing field extension – 670m².
 - Area 1c – Installation of a new playground – 220m²
 - Area 2 – Improvement and expansion of an existing carpark – 2170m²
 - Area 3 – Installation of a new gas main along the line of the existing access road followed by resurfacing works.
 - Installation of an attenuation pond – 37m²
- **Topography:** The site was located entirely within the school grounds and lay within a semi-rural landscape with the school facilities and buildings separated by areas of trees and greenery. It lay on moderately sloping ground which rises from 110m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the north to 130m aOD in the south.
- **Solid and superficial geology:** The underlying bedrock is mudstone and siltstone of the Mercia Mudstone Group. No superficial deposits are recorded within the DA although Devensian Till is recorded to the east and northeast. (British Geological Survey 2023).

- **Soils:** The soils within the DA are recorded as slightly acid loamy and clayey with impeded drainage whilst to the east they are recorded as slowly permeable, seasonally wet, slightly acid, and base rich loamy clays.

1.3 Archaeological and Historic Background

This section provides a brief overview of the history and known heritage assets in the vicinity of the DA. This information is taken from the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), a 500m-radius search of Staffordshire Historic Environment Record (made via Heritage Gateway), the Portable Antiquities Scheme, and supplementary information taken from publicly available sources and Network Archaeology's own library.

2.3.5 Prehistoric

No heritage assets dating to the prehistoric period are recorded within the DA, however a mid-to-late Bronze Age leaf-shaped socketed bronze spearhead (MST762) was recorded by Robert Plot in his book, *The Natural History of Staffordshire*, published in 1686 (Plot 1686). The Historic Environment Record (HER) locates the spearhead north-east of New Plantation, approximately 150m south of the northern part of the DA, but its findspot was originally recorded somewhere between Yarlet and the foot of Pyre Hill.

2.3.6 Roman

There are no known Roman heritage assets recorded within the DA. Archaeological works in advance of HS2 identified evidence of a potential Roman settlement dating broadly from the 2nd to 3rd centuries AD approximately 330m southwest of the DA.

2.3.7 Early Medieval to Medieval

The place name Yarlet likely translates as (*earhild*) meaning "Gravel Slope" in Old English (Nottingham University). No evidence of early medieval activity has been recorded within the DA or its immediate environs, the earliest reference to Yarlet being in Domesday Book compiled in 1086 which records a population of 10 households, making it in the smallest 40% of the settlements recorded in Domesday (Open Domesday). Despite the lack of evidence for early medieval activity, the mention of the settlement in Domesday, compiled some 20 years after the Norman conquest of Anglo-Saxon England, suggests the settlement may have earlier origins (MST1752).

The manor of Yarlet was granted to the Cistercian monastery of Combermere (Cheshire) in the reign of Henry II (1154 - 1189), whereupon it was depopulated and converted into a monastic grange (an outlying farm worked by lay brethren).

It is unclear where this depopulated medieval settlement was located. However, a hollow way, earthwork banks, and upstanding ridge and furrow have been identified in the area to

the north of Yarlet School, whilst a possible house platform was previously observed in the area to the north of Yarlet Hall Farm (MST3709). The exact locations of these features are not recorded by the HER; however, the HER indicates that the deserted medieval settlement was within the school grounds.

A surviving land boundary forming an oval around Yarlet Hill, is labelled the 'Liberty of Yarlet' and 'Yarlet Liberty' on the 19th-century tithe maps for Marston, Whitgreave and Stone. The 'liberty' they refer to is freedom from the requirement to pay tithes on the produce from the land within the oval boundary. This almost certainly means that this oval boundary formerly defined the extents of the Cistercian grange, as the Cistercian order received a block exemption from the need to pay tithe on their landholdings from the papacy in the 12th century.

2.3.8 Post-medieval and Modern

After the dissolution of Combermere Priory in 1538, and the subsequent sale or grant of its assets, Yarlet Hall was established in the 17th century to the east of the A34 upon Yarlet Hill. The Hall is depicted on the 1816 Ordnance Survey surveyor's drawing (no. 210) at a location marked today by earthwork platforms and a possible banked defensive enclosure. The survival of the oval boundary in the post-medieval and modern landscapes suggests that the post-medieval estate centred upon the 17th-century Yarlet Hall was coextensive with the medieval monastic grange.

The 17th century hall was replaced in 1870 by a building approximately 250m to the north of the original with an adjacent area of parkland (MST6423) presumably serving the 19th-century Yarlet Hall. The 19th-century Yarlet Hall was converted to Yarlet School in 1873.

The A34 follows the line of the Stone, Stafford, and Penkridge Turnpike Road (MST22384), enabled by an Act of Parliament passed in 1761.

1.3.1 Historic mapping

Yates' map of the County of Stafford, dated 1775, shows the turnpike road that became the A34 bowing out and running to the east of the DA, not to the west as the current road does.

The 1846 tithe map (Staffordshire County Council) and award for Yarlet Hundred (Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service) show that the DA lay within land called "Great Meadow", which was owned by Sarah Tunnicliffe, with elements occupied by James Freakley, George Sidney and William Swift-Woolf. The tithe map also shows the area occupied by the current hall, which was constructed in 1870, as a building recorded as a homestead owned by Sarah Tunnicliffe and occupied by William Swift Wolf. Several other land parcels are also recorded, including gardens and pleasure grounds, a homestead, pleasure grounds occupied by George Sidney (possibly located within Area 1a), a school

cottage, and several plantations. The access to the DA is also shown to have been further north, with a road or track passing between the present Yarlet Hall Farm and Yarlet School.

By the time of the 1901 Ordnance Survey (OS) map, Yarlet Hall (Yarlet School) appears, as does a Chapel to the south-west. The access points and roads / tracks within the DA align with the current layout, whilst a lodge is recorded on the southern side of the current main entrance. A boundary had been installed across the southern part of the Great Meadow, and a reservoir had been constructed in its north-eastern corner. The buildings seen on the tithe map in Area 1a are no longer visible on the late 19th / early 20th century maps, these showing the current hall, constructed in 1870 and converted into a school in 1873.

The later historic mapping shows little change within the DA.

1.4 Archaeological Investigation

1.4.1 Aims and objectives.

The primary purpose of the watching brief was to gather sufficient information to:

- generate a reliable predictive model of the location, extent, date, character, date, condition, and quality of any archaeology within the DA;
- ascertain significance, and
- determine potential impacts.

The general aims of the watching brief are to:

- determine, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeology;
- assess preservation levels;
- determine truncation levels;
- elucidate site formation processes;
- determine the presence or absence of a paleo-soil or 'B' horizon;
- define the extent of previous ground disturbance and made-ground;
- undertake research, synthesis, publication and dissemination of results, and
- deposit the project archive.

1.4.2 Resources

The watching brief within Area 1a was undertaken between July 31st and August 8th 2023, and within Area 2 between October 9th and October 10th 2023. Both areas were monitored and investigated by a single archaeologist.

2 Watching Brief Results

2.1 Introduction

Throughout this section, cut features and deposits are referred to by unique context numbers. Cut features are referenced in **bold** type.

To simplify the narrative and aid interpretation, all features mentioned in the results section are referenced by the primary survey context number (e.g., 'cut 2031') which acts as the master feature number. Subsequent interventions into the same feature are referenced appropriately in the text (e.g., 'section 2032').

2.2 Methods

Initially, it was proposed that a watching brief should be undertaken in all six areas (see Section 1.2.3) however, Yarlet School descoped areas 2 to 6 as works there were being undertaken in land disturbed by previous development and renovation (Figure 2).

Within the two areas of investigation, the existing overburden was excavated under archaeological supervision down to construction formation level, utilising a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket.

Any remains of potential archaeological significance identified during the stripping were cleaned, excavated, and recorded in accordance with the methods laid out in the written scheme (Network Archaeology, 2023).

2.3 Area 1a

Area 1a was located in the southern part of the DA, occupying approximately 990m² of relatively flat ground at approximately 13m aOD to the west of the Yarlet Hall (Figure 2, Plate 1).

2.3.1 Stratification

The topsoil (1001) comprised 0.16m of mid-brown silty clay and the subsoil (1002), 0.4m of soft red silty clay. The natural substrate was a red plastic clay (1003) from which fragments of post-medieval and modern glass were recovered. Fragments of shale, copper alloy, glass and 19th or 20th century pottery were recovered from the subsoil.

2.3.2 Archaeological Findings

A modest amount of archaeology was identified in this area, comprising a cobble surface (1004), a line of possible kerbstones (1005), an upstanding brick wall (1006), and a brick surface (1007) (Figure 3).

The cobble spread (1004), located in the southern part of Area 1, was approximately 49m² in diameter and comprised a single course of unbonded rounded stone cobbles between 0.06m and 0.14m in size (Plate 2). Along the eastern edge of the cobbles was a line of compact stone (1005). Fragments of modern glass, copper alloy, iron and fragments of late 19th or 20th century pottery were recovered from this surface, along with fragments of undated stone. A smaller patch of potentially the same cobbled surface was identified approximately 5.5m to the north-east of the main spread.

The brick wall (1006), located close to the centre of Area 1, was rectilinear in plan oriented broadly east to west and north to south with a north-south step at its western end (Figure 3). The wall comprised up to nine courses (0.71m) of orange brick in stretcher-bond (Plate 3), bonded with an off-white friable mortar and was two bricks thick (0.25m). A single brick recovered from this wall provided a potential early 19th century date (Ratkai, Appendix C).

The remaining surface (1007) comprised 3.5m x 2.5m of un-mortared bricks of in two sizes (0.2m – 0.23m long by 0.1 – 0.12m wide, and 0.2 to 0.22m long by 0.06m wide) with part being laid in English Garden style (Plates 4 and 5). Two bricks were assessed, one dating from the late 18th to mid-19th century and the other being a 20th century engineering brick (Ratkai, Appendix C). This surface was located close to the north-west corner of wall 1006.

2.4 Area 2

Area 2 was located in the northwestern part of the DA, occupying approximately 2170m² of relatively flat ground at approximately 13m aOD to the north-west of the Yarlet Hall (Figure 3, Plate 6). Area 2 comprised approximately 1149m² of existing carpark.

2.4.1 Stratification

The topsoil (2000) comprised 0.2m of dark-brown silty clay and the subsoil (2001), 0.13m of grey silty clay. Below the subsoil was 0.11m of disturbed natural greyish-orange clay (2002), which overlay the natural substrate (2003).

2.4.2 Archaeological Findings

The only features identified in this area were two patches of bioturbation (**2004** and **2006**), both located in the south-west part of Area 2 and neither producing any finds.

2.5 Finds

A small assemblage of finds was recovered, all dating from the post-medieval (mid-17th century) to early modern period (Early 20th century). These are summarised in Table 1 with specialist finds reports provided in Appendix D.

Table 1: Quantification table of finds

Material	Date	Count	Weight
CBM	L18th / M19th c	1	1951
	E19th c	1	3312
	20th c	1	2715
Cu alloy	Modern	1	142
Fe (Iron)	Modern	5	246
Glass	Post-Medieval	4	304
	Modern	2	396
Pottery	19th c	18	365
	Mid 19th c	1	17
	Late 19th c	1	15
	L19th / 20th c	2	30
Stone	Uncertain	2	118
	Grand Total	39	9611

3 Interpretation and Discussion

The Watching Brief was successful in identifying a small amount of archaeology within Area 1a whilst showing that such remains were not present within Area 2.

The wall and surfaces identified in Area 1a appeared to align with a building visible on the 1846 tithe map labelled as a “homestead and pleasure grounds” owned by Sarah Tunnicliffe and occupied by George Sydney. The same arrangement also exists for Near Little Croft, another plot within the Yarlet School complex. Further plots owned by Sarah Tunnicliffe include three plantations a cottage and garden, Near Little Croft and Near Little Brough Leasow (Staffordshire Past Track and Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent Archive Services).

The absence of any plaster on either side of wall 1006 suggests that it was unlikely to have been part of a building, more likely it represented the remnant of a garden or boundary wall, perhaps linking the two buildings visible on the tithe map (Figure 4). In contrast, the brick surface (1007), although un-mortared, formed a quite ornate surface. If this surface was associated with the structure visible on the tithe map, its apparent location, close to what appears to have been an entrance, suggests that it may have been part of an ornate path or porchway.

The bricks from surface 1007 suggest a late 18th to mid-19th century date and the wall an early 19th century date (Ratkai, Appendix C) which would correlate with the date of the tithe map. However, a fragment of 20th century engineering brick was also recovered from surface 1007, although it is unclear if this was intrusive or part of a possible later repair.

In contrast to surface 1007, the cobbled surface (1004) was much rougher and likely an external surface or yard with the line of stones (1005) acting as kerbing. This is perhaps further borne out by the fact that the only feature to produce any finds was the cobbled surface, the implication being that one would discard rubbish outside of a building, not inside.

None of these features, or the structures shown on the tithe map, appear on the 1899 Ordnance Survey map, meaning they had been demolished prior to the latter half of the 19th century. Finds recovered from cobbled surface (1004) provided a possible 19th to 20th century date, although it is difficult to ascertain if these finds were disposed whilst the surface was in use or if they were indicative of post-abandonment activity.

It is therefore possible that combined, the archaeology identified in Area 1a represented the remnants of landscape features associated with a 19th or earlier garden, perhaps related to the structures visible on the early-19th century tithe map. It is possible that these earlier structures were demolished to facilitate the construction of the new hall, which was constructed in 1870, becoming a school three years later.

The patches of bioturbation (**2004** and **2006**) identified in Area 2 likely represented the remnants of bushes or hedges, the dates of which are unknown.

4 Conclusions

Overall, the archaeological works were successful in identifying structures and surfaces thought to be associated with structures visible on the 1846 tithe map within Area 1a whilst in Area 2, no archaeological remains or deposits were identified.

No evidence of any Roman, early-medieval, or medieval remains were identified, and no finds of such dates were recovered. No earthworks were visible during the works.

There is a high level of confidence in both the factual results of the archaeological observation and in their interpretation, due to the clarity of the stratigraphic relationships, and the prevailing conditions at the time of the investigations.

The archaeological works have assured the long-term survival of the data collected through the compilation of a site archive and this report.

5 Archive

The investigation produced the following document archive, under the site code YAS16.

Table 2: Archive quantification

Item	Count
Context Indices	2
Context Records	15
Photographic Indices	3
Digital Images	69
Drawing Indices	1
Permatrace sheets	1

Copies of this report will be submitted to the client, and to SBCHET. The following recipient museum has been identified: The Potteries Museum and Art gallery, Bethesda St, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 3DW. The accession number for the archive is 2023.PMAG.16. The report will also be uploaded to the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) and OASIS websites.

A copy of the OASIS data collection form can be found in Appendix A.

6 Acknowledgements

Network Archaeology would like to thank the following people and organisations for their assistance during the investigation and the production of this report.

Table 3: Acknowledgements

Organisation	Name	Position	Contribution
Yarlet School	Kirsty Nixon	Bursar	Client
Ian Ankers Architecture	Ross Ankers	Architect	Architect
Roy Beech Contractors	Ian Jennings	Managing Director	Groundworks management
Network Archaeology	Derek Cater	Snr Project Manager	Project management
	Jacqui Hutton	Project Officer	Author
	Steve Thorpe	Snr. Project Officer	Author
	Hayden Dunn	Project Supervisor Surveyor	Fieldwork
	Diana Fernandes	Finds Officer	Finds processing and specialist reports
	Agnieszka Trambowicz	GIS Supervisor	Report Figures

7 Bibliography

7.1 Secondary sources

Author	Date	Title	Publisher
AAF	2007	Archaeological Archives: A Guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation	
Brown, D H	2007, 2011	Archaeological Archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer, and curation	Archaeological Archives Forum
Chartered Institute for Archaeologists	2014a	Code of Approved Practice for The Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology	CIfA, Reading
Chartered Institute for Archaeologists	2014b	Standards and Guidance for The Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials	CIfA, Reading
Chartered Institute for Archaeologists	2019	Code of Conduct	CIfA, Reading
Chartered Institute for Archaeologists	2020a	Standard and guidance for archaeological Watching Briefs	CIfA, Reading
Chartered Institute for Archaeologists	2020b	Standard and Guidance for The Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives	CIfA, Reading
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	1996	The Treasure Act 1996 Code of Practice (2nd Revision)	
Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government	2021	National Planning Policy Framework	London
Ferguson L.M. & Murray D.M.	1997	Archaeological Documentary Archives: Preparation, Curation and Storage, Paper 1,	Institute of Field Archaeologists' Manchester
Historic England	1997	Historic England Archaeology Division Research Agenda (Unpublished Draft)	London
Historic England	2008	Investigative Conservation: Guidance on How the Detailed Examination of Artefacts from Archaeological Sites Can Shed Light on Their Manufacture and Use	London
Historic England	2009	Management of Research Projects in The Historic Environment and Morphology Project Planning Note 3: Excavation	London
Historic England	2012	Waterlogged Organic Artefacts: Guidelines on Their Recovery, Analysis and Conservation	London

HS2	2017	High Speed Rail (West Midlands – Crewe), Environmental Statement, Volume 5, Technical appendices, CA3: Stone and Swynnerton, Cultural heritage baseline report	
Museums & Galleries Commission	1992	Standards in The Museum Care of Archaeological Collections	London
Network Archaeology a	2023	Yarlet School, Yarlet, Staffordshire. Written Scheme of Investigation for: Archaeological Watching Brief	Unpublished client report
Network Archaeology b	2023	Health, Safety and Welfare Policy	Network Archaeology
Plot, R	1686	The Natural History of Staffordshire	
Society of Museum Archaeologists	1995	Towards an Accessible Archaeological Archive - The Transfer of Archaeological Archives to Museums: Guidelines for use in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales	Society for Museum Archaeologists, London
UKIC	2001	Excavated Artefacts and Conservation	United Kingdom Institute for Conservation, Conservation Guidelines No. 1, revised
Walker, K.	1990	Guidelines for The Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-Term Storage.	United Kingdom Institute for Conservation, Archaeology Section (London)
Watkinson, D & Neal A. V	1998	First Aid for Finds	Rescue Publications, Hertford

7.2 Online sources

Author/Date	Title	Publisher/Sponsor	URL	Date Accessed
ADS (Archaeological Data Service), 2011	Archaeology Data Service / Digital Antiquity - Guides to Good Practice	unknown	https://guides.archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/g2gpwiki/	01/02/2023
BGS (British Geological Survey) 2021	Geology of Britain viewer	UKRI	https://www.bgs.ac.uk/map-viewers/geology-of-britain-viewer/	18/04/2023
Historic England	National Heritage List for England	Historic England	https://historicengland.org.uk	18/04/2023
LandIS, 2021	Soilscapes Viewer	Cranfield University	https://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/	18/04/2023
National Archives	Planning Act 2008	HM Government	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/contents	18/04/2023
Open Domesday	Yarlet		https://opendomesday.org/place/SJ9128/yarlet/	18/04/2023
Research Frameworks Network	The West Midlands Regional Research Framework		https://researchframeworks.org/wmrf/	18/04/2023

Author/Date	Title	Publisher/ Sponsor	URL	Date Accessed
Stafford Borough Council (a)	The Plan for Stafford Borough		https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/lp	19/04/2023
Stafford Borough Council (b)	Stafford Borough Local Plan 2020-2040		https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/local-plan	19/04/2023
Staffordshire past Track	Stafford, St. Mary, Staffordshire: Yarlet township tithe award and tithe map		https://www.search.staffspasttrack.org.uk/details.aspx?IO=1&ResourceID=42592&PageIndex=12&SearchType=2&ThemeID=774	23/10/2023
Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent Archive Service	Staffordshire Name Indexes		https://www.staffsnameindexes.org.uk/default.aspx?Index=P&OwnerLN=&PartOW=1&OwnerFN=&OccupierLN=&PartOC=1&OccupierFN=&Town=&Parish=yarlet&Plot=&PIno=	23/10/2023
The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery	Conditions and Guidelines: Preparation and Deposition of Archaeological Archives		https://www.stokemuseums.org.uk/pmag/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/01/Revised-conditions-and-guidelines-2023.pdf	19/04/2023
University of Nottingham	Key to English Place Names		http://kep.n.nottingham.ac.uk/map/place/Staffordshire/Yarlet	18/04/2023

APPENDIX A

OASIS Summary

OASIS Summary for networka2-521234

OASIS ID (UID)	networka2-521234
Project Name	Archaeological Watching Brief at Yarlet School
Sitename	Yarlet School
Sitecode	YAS16
Project Identifier(s)	Yarlet School, Yarlet, Staffordshire
Activity type	Watching Brief
Planning Id	22/36781/FUL
Reason For Investigation	Planning requirement
Organisation Responsible for work	Network Archaeology Ltd
Project Dates	31-Jul-2023 - 10-Oct-2023
Location	Yarlet School NGR : SJ 91320 29372 LL : 52.86176242686669, -2.130367378270596 12 Fig : 391320,329372
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Staffordshire Local Authority District : Stafford Parish : Marston
Project Methodology	Between July and October 2023 Network Archaeology undertook a watching brief during the construction of a new car park (Area 1a) and improvements to another (Area 2) at Yarlet School, Staffordshire (Centre: NGR 391320 329372). The watching brief comprised archaeological monitoring during all groundworks within the two areas followed by archaeological excavation and recording of any identified features.
Project Results	The Watching Brief was successful in identifying a small amount of archaeology within Area 1a, comprising a cobble spread with possible kerbing, an upstanding brick wall and a brick surface whilst identifying only two patches of bioturbation within Area 2. The wall and surfaces identified in Area 1a appeared to align with a building visible on the 1846 tithe map labelled as a "homestead and pleasure grounds" owned by Sarah Tunnicliffe and occupied by George Sydney. The absence of any plaster on either side of wall 1006 suggests that it was unlikely to have been part of a building, more likely it represented the remnant of a garden or boundary wall. In contrast, the brick surface, although un-mortared, formed a quite ornate surface. If this surface was associated with the structure visible on the tithe map, its apparent location, close to what appears to have been an entrance, suggests that it may have been part of an ornate path or porchway. Dating from these features suggest an 18th to 19th century date, although a 20th century engineering brick recovered from the vicinity of the brick surface was considered to be intrusive or indicative of a later repair. The cobbled surface was much rougher than the ornate brick surface and was likely an external surface or yard with a line of larger stones acting as kerbing. It is therefore possible that combined, the archaeology identified in Area 1a represented the remnants of landscape features associated with a 19th or earlier garden, perhaps related to the structures visible on the early-19th century tithe map. It is possible that these earlier structures were demolished to facilitate the construction of the new hall, which was constructed in 1870, becoming a school three years later.

Keywords	
Funder	Educational institution Yarlet School
HER	Staffordshire Historic Environment Record - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Derek Cater
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - 2023.PMAG.16
Archives	Documentary Archive - to be deposited with The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery; Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;

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Summary Context Data

Appendix C
Summary Context Data

Area	Context	Context type	Filled by	Fill of	Same as	Cut by	Cuts	Length (m)	Width (m)	Diameter	Depth (m)	Description	Interpretation	Finds
1a	1001	Layer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.16	Mid-brown silty clay	Topsoil	None
1a	1002	Layer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.4	Soft red silty clay	Subsoil	Stone CU Alloy Glass Pottery
1a	1003	Layer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Plastic red clay	Natural substrate	None
1a	1004	Deposit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	48m	0.13	Rounded cobbles 0.06m to 0.14m in size	Cobbled surface	Slate Glass Pottery
1a	1005	Deposit	-	-	-	-	-	9	0.95	-	0.15	Line of stone oriented N-S	Possible kerbing for cobbled surface	None
1a	1006	Masonry	-	-	-	-	-	18	0.25	-	0.71	Up to 9 courses of red bricks in a running bond with a friable white mortar	Wall	None
1a	1007	Masonry	-	-	-	-	-	3	2.5	-	-	Brick surface comprising both imperial and non-imperial bricks	Brick surface	None
2	2000	Layer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.2	Dark brown silty clay	Topsoil	None
2	2001	Layer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.13	Grey silty clay	Subsoil	None
2	2002	Layer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.11	Grey-orange silty clay	Disturbed natural	None
2	2003	Layer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Red to orange clay	Natural substrate	None
2	2004	Cut	2005	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.4	0.18	Circular cut with near vertical sides and flat base	Bioturbation	None
2	2005	Fill	-	2004	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.18	Friable mid-brown-orange silty clay	Sole fill	None
2	2006	Cut	2007	-	-	-	-	-	0.55	0.3	0.04	Ovoid cut with moderate concave sides and irregular base	Bioturbation	None
2	2007	Fill	-	2006	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.04	Friable grey-brown silty clay	Sole fill	None

Specialist Finds Reports

Pottery and Ceramic Building Material Assessment

Stephanie Ratkai

Introduction and Methodology

A very small collection of 19th- to early 20th-century pottery and CBM was catalogued.

All the data were entered onto an Excel spreadsheet and the results are shown in Table 1.

Comment

There is very little to be said about the finds, which appear to be fairly random accumulations of discarded domestic pottery and bricks.

Most of the pottery was blue transfer-printed with willow pattern the most common.

Two bricks were complete, the third largely complete but broken into fragments in recent times. The bricks were not frogged and one of them appeared to be a blue engineering brick.

Recommendations

The data entered onto an Excel spreadsheet forms part of the archive.

It is not recommended that any further work is conducted and the finds are kept.

Table 1: Pottery and CBM Catalogue

Code	Ctxt	Fabric /Ware	Qty	Wght	Form	Comment	Date
YAS16	1002	Painted ware	1	17	bowl		1830s-50s
YAS16	1002	Ironstone?	1	15	?		later 19th century?
YAS16	1002	Flowerpot	1	16	flower pot		Later 19th-20th century
YAS16	1002	Blue transfer-printed	1	11	plate	Rim sherd, willow pattern	19th century
YAS16	1002	Blue transfer-printed	1	4	plate	Rim sherd	19th century
YAS16	1002	Blue transfer-printed	1	134	jug?	Rim sherd, Chinoiserie	19th century
YAS16	1002	Utilitarian whiteware	3	37	bowl	undecorated	19th century
YAS16	1004	Blue transfer-printed	11	136	plates	two dinner plates, one side plate, willow pattern, blue back stamp on one plate - lion	19th century
YAS16	1004	Brown salt-glazed stw	1	14	ink bottle		Later 19th-early 20th century
YAS16	1004	Coarseware	1	43	?	int black glaze	19th century
YAS16	1006	CBM	1	3312	Hand-formed brick	several fragments, broken in transit probably, mortared surfaces 110mm x 70mm complete length unknown; Imperial $4\frac{1}{4} \times 2\frac{3}{4}$ inches	19th century? Pre 1850
YAS16	1007	CBM	1	1951	Hand-formed brick	orange brown, sandy 210mm x 85mm x 55mm; Imperial c. $8\frac{1}{4} \times 3\frac{1}{4} \times 2$ inches	late 18th-mid 19th century
YAS16	1007	CBM	1	2715	Engineering brick	blue brick ¹ over-fired, purplish grey /blue 225mm x 110mm x 60mm; Imperial c. $8\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{4} \times 2\frac{1}{4}$ inches	20th century

An Assessment of the Glass, Metalwork, and Stone

Diana Fernandes, BA MA

Introduction and Methodology

A small group of various artefacts derived from archaeological monitoring undertaken at Yarlet School, Staffordshire. The assemblages here reported comprise Glass, Metalwork and Stone, and were all recovered from the subsoil and from a cobbled surface. The material was visually examined and recorded by context, including description, quantification, and weight. Provisional dating was attempted whenever possible.

The Assemblages

Each category was recorded and discussed individually below.

The Glass

The glass group from Yarlet was composed of six objects, weighing 700 grams, and despite fragmentation of most items, it displayed good preservation and condition (Table 2).

The material collected from subsoil (1002) comprised five items including the fragment of one clear drinking glass, one broken light-green bottle neck, the fragments of two aquamarine bottles and one complete ink well with round pan made of clear glass.

The only fragmented recovered from a cobbled surface (1004) was the base of a rectangular bottle made of dark green glass.

Table 2: Glass from Yarlet School

CONTEXT	MATERIAL	OBJECT	DESCRIPTION	PROVISIONAL DATE	COUNT	WEIGHT (g)
1002	Glass	Ink Well	Clear glass ink well with round pan	Modern	1	378
1002	Glass	Various	1 clear drinking glass; 1 light-green Bottle neck; 2 aquamarine fragments of bottle	Post-Medieval	4	304
1004	Glass	Bottle	Dark green glass - base of bottle	Modern	1	18

The Metalwork

The metal objects were represented by 6 objects weighing 388 grams (Table 3).

Subsoil (1002) yielded a modern window stay characterised by a long bar with peg and seven surviving perforations.

The material collected from cobbled surface (1004) comprised three iron nails and two door or window hinges. The nails presented square section, two were fragmented and only the complete item presented a flat squarish head. The hinges were of rectangular shape and their dimension varied from 77 to 138 mm length.

Table 3: Metalwork from Yarlet School

CONTEXT	MATERIAL	OBJECT	DESCRIPTION	PROVISIONAL DATE	COUNT	WEIGHT (g)
1002	Cu alloy	Window Stay	21cm long bar with peg and seven surviving perforations	Modern	1	142
1004	Fe (Iron)	Various	3 nails of square section. One complete, presents flat head. Length: 56mm / 78mm / 94mm 2 corroded rectangular hinges. Length: 138mm / 77mm	Modern	5	246

The Stone

Two stone fragments weighing 118 grams were presented for assessment (Table 4).

A single fragment of burnt shale was collected from subsoil (1002) and a broken slate tile was collected from context (1004).

Table 4: Stone from Yarlet School

CONTEXT	MATERIAL	OBJECT	DESCRIPTION	PROVISIONAL DATE	COUNT	WEIGHT (g)
1002	Stone	Shale	Burnt shale	Uncertain	1	18
1004	Stone	Slate	Fragment of slate tile, max length 79mm	Uncertain	1	100

Discussion and Recommendations

The finds here assessed presented a variety of objects with clear connection to households and urban dwellings. All items were fully recorded, and specific recommendations can be seen below.

- The glass from Yarlet School was of modern date and has the capacity to characterise the use of this land in the most recent centuries of our past. The objects here assessed are common among assemblages of the late 19th and 20th centuries, used in daily activities. The group of material was fully recorded and due to its common traits, do not merit any further work nor retention.
- Similarly, the metalwork proved to be of equivalent chronological character with house elements of structural nature. The group of material was fully recorded and do not merit any further work nor retention with the final archive.
- Finally, the stone items were common elements of urbanisation, with the burnt shale being a by-product with no archaeological value, and with the slate roof proving the habitational nature of this area in the most recent centuries of our past.

This assessment is enough to aid the site interpretation and no further work nor retention of any of the finds is recommended.

APPENDIX D

Plates



Plate 1: Area 1a prior to stripping



Plate 2: Area 1a, Cobbled surface 1004. Camera facing south



Plate 3: Area 1a, Wall 1006. Camera facing north-north-east.



Plate 4: Area 1a, brick surface 1007. Camera facing east.



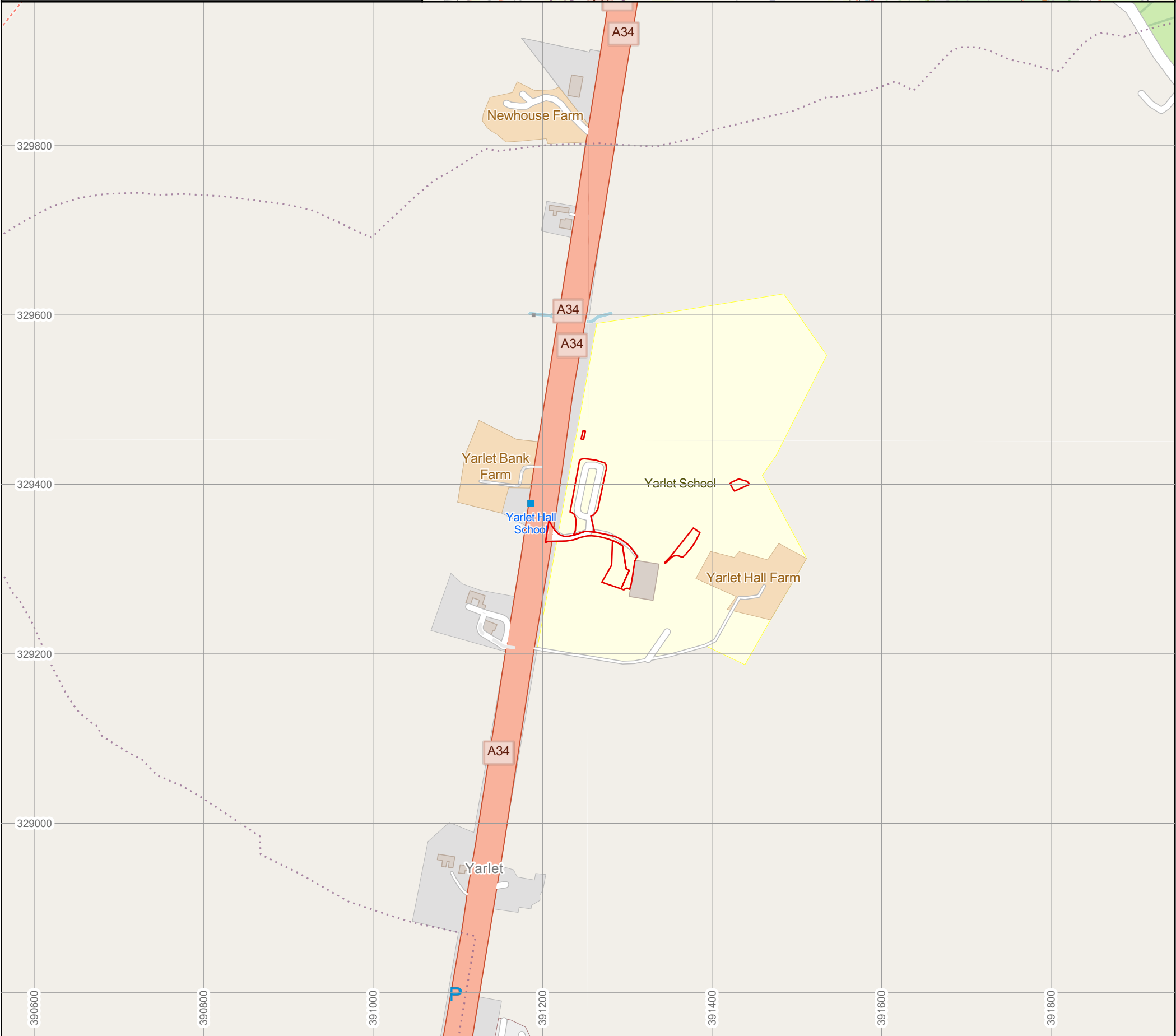
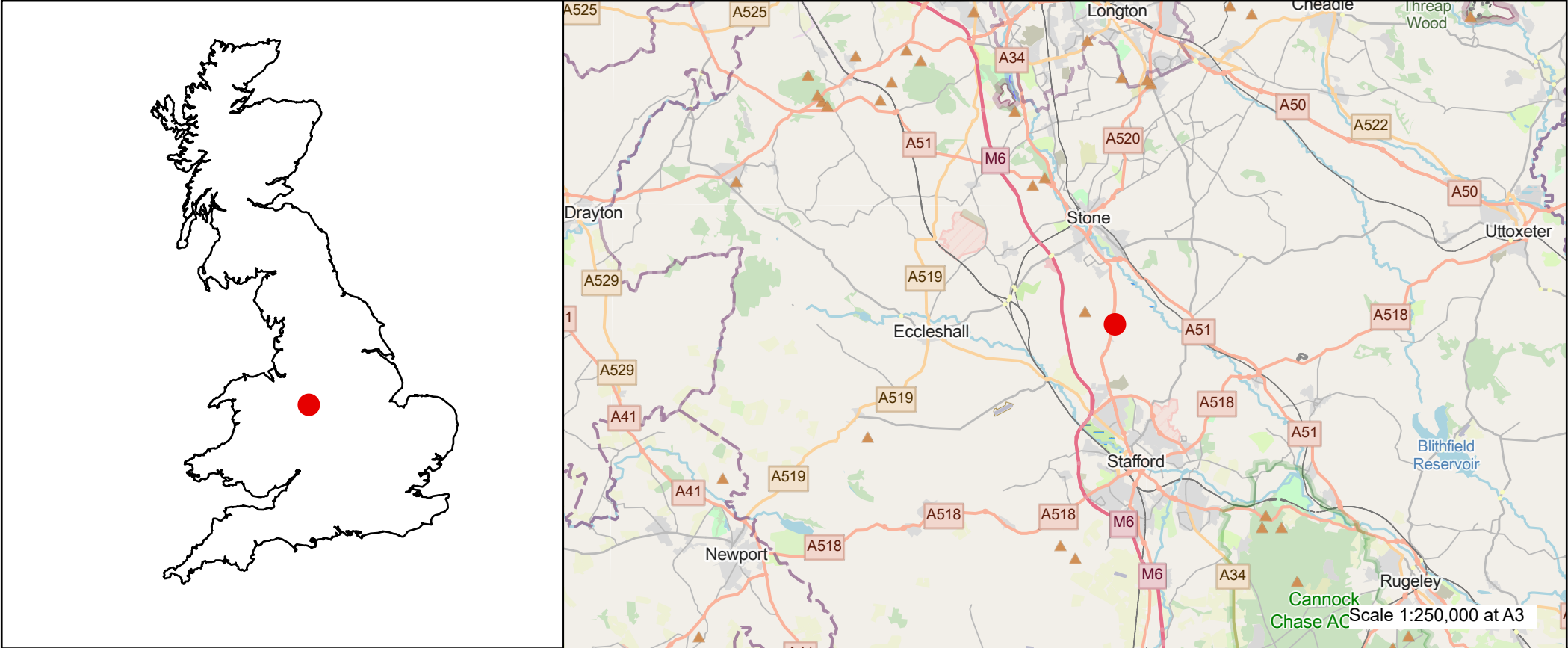
Plate 5: Area 1a, Brick surface 1007. Camera facing east.

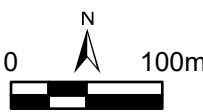


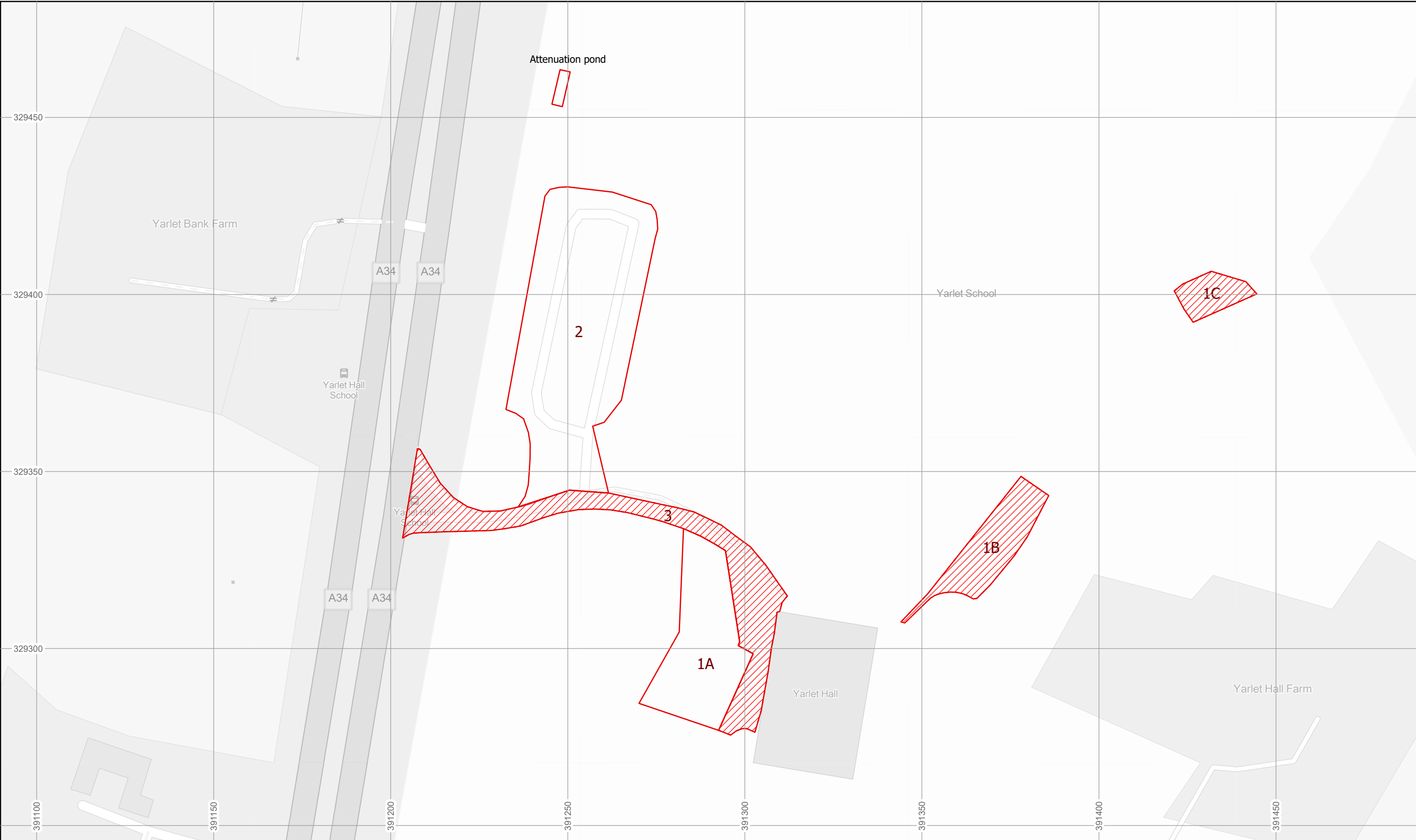
Plate 6: Area 2 under excavation

APPENDIX E

Figures



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Scheme boundary



Descoped



Yarlet School, Yarlet,
Staffordshire

Figure 2 Site layout



050m



N

Site Code: YAS16
Drawn By: A. Trambowicz
Approved By: D. Cater
Date: 14/11/2023
Ver: 1.00
Scale at A3: 1:1,000





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 Scheme boundary

 Descoped

 Masonry

 Cobbled surface and kerbing

 Brick surface

 Bioturbation



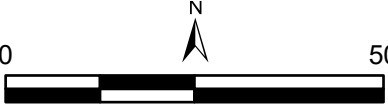
Yarlet School, Yarlet,
Staffordshire

Figure 3 Archaeological
findings



Site Code: YAS16
Drawn By: A. Trambowicz
Approved By: D. Cater
Date: 14/11/2023
Ver: 1.00
Scale at A3: 1:1,000



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