

Land Adjacent to Browse Antiques Lichfield Road Stafford



Archaeological Evaluation



Oxford Archaeology

9th October 2002

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McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Ltd

**Browse Antiques, Lichfield Road, Stafford
Staffordshire**

NGR SJ 9249 2275

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McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Ltd

**Browse Antiques, Lichfield Road, Stafford
Staffordshire**

NGR SJ 9249 2275

Planning Reference: 40956

Archaeological Evaluation

SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation on land adjacent to Browse Antiques on Lichfield Road Stafford for CgMs, on behalf of McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Ltd. No clear significant archaeological deposits or remains were revealed by the evaluation. Three pits were revealed, two of which were securely dated to the C18th or later by the presence of porcelain. The undated feature was not securely stratigraphically placed but may represent earlier activity on the site. In addition a modern brick foundation and possible boundary ditch/construction cut, were recorded within the trench.

1 INTRODUCTION**1.1 Location and scope of work**

1.1.1 In September 2002 OA carried out a field evaluation on land adjacent to Browse Antiques on Lichfield Road Stafford. The work was carried out for CgMs on behalf of McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Ltd in respect of a planning application (No.40956) for development of the site into a ground floor health centre and upper floor sheltered housing. The work was carried out to the specifications detailed in a brief (Walters 2001) set by and a WSI agreed with Stafford Borough Development Department.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site is centred on SJ 9249 2275, situated at the junction of the Main Wolverhampton and Lichfield Roads (A449 and A34 respectively). The site covers an area measuring approximately 0.367 hectares. It is located immediately to the south-east of the town of Stafford within the area of Forebridge. The site is bounded on its north side by the Lichfield Road, on its west side by the Wolverhampton Road, on its south-west side by a doctor's surgery and properties which front Garden Street and on its east side by the adjacent property fronting Lichfield Road. The site is currently occupied by the premises of Browse Antiques (fronting the southern side of Lichfield Road) with associated car parking, workshops and a builder's yard to the rear.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

(Extract from Walters 2001)

General

- 1.3.1 Stafford lies in the valley of the River Sow, just above its confluence with the Penk and Trent. The historic core of the town is situated on the north and east banks of the River Sow on a terrace of sand and gravel which rises to c. 76m OD. Evidence of the earliest settlement on the terrace dates back to the prehistoric periods and has continued, with varying degrees of intensity through the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods to the present day. Prehistoric and Roman activity has been recognised within the centre of Stafford, indeed it is likely that Gaolgate Street was constructed along the line of a Roman Road. Mesolithic flints were recovered from an excavation at Salter Street in 1995, whilst Roman pottery and three possible 'granaries' were recorded (during excavations in the 1980s in the area of St Mary's Church (PRNs 1600, 1613). Further Roman pottery was recovered from the Market Square area. The level of prehistoric or Roman occupation on the sand and gravel peninsular is clearly not well defined, although likely to be low-key.
- 1.3.2 Definably urban settlement at Stafford (PRN 765) did not commence until the construction of a burh (a settlement fortified against attack from the Danes) in AD913. The circuit of the burh defenses at Stafford is unknown and may either lie along the same lines as their later medieval replacement or enclose a smaller area. The manufacture of pottery was one of the major activities associated with the burh (and earlier). Four rare kilns have been recorded in the town centre, one during excavations at Salter Street. Anglo-Saxon Stafford pottery known as *Stafford Ware* has been discovered at other Royal Saxon towns such as Chester, Worcester and Hereford. The Stafford pottery industry was therefore exporting its wares over a considerable distance. It is rare to find Anglo-Saxon pottery and very few pottery manufacturing sites have been found.
- 1.3.3 The Domesday survey of 1086 records Stafford as being the main town in the county: it was walled in timber and inside were 128 occupied houses. The suburb of Foregate to the north of the North Gate may have developed by the 13th century and the suburb of Forebridge by the 14th century. A picture map of c.1593 shows the course of the medieval town walls. Speed's plan dating from c.1610 demonstrates that although parts of the medieval town walls had been constructed in stone by the 17th century, stretches remained built in timber. These coincided with those areas protected by the natural defences of the King's Pool to the east and the River Sow to the south. Between the East and South Gates was at least one and possibly two gates affording access to the 'common dunghill' by the river and the 'thieves ditch'. The walls were in ruin by the 1670s.

Specific

- 1.3.4 The proposed development site lies to the south east of the medieval defended town of Stafford, within the area of the medieval suburb of Forebridge, which continued to be developed during the post-medieval period. Speed's map of c.1610 shows roads along the lines of the modern Wolverhampton and Lichfield Roads. The map also

appears to show a street providing the junction between these two roads with buildings along its south east side. It is possible that the street is marked by the line of White Lion Street, now truncated by the Queensway island, and if so, burgage plots running back from the buildings on it may extend into the area of the proposed development. Archaeological evidence for backyard activities such as rubbish disposal, gardening and industrial practices taking place in the medieval and post-medieval periods is likely within the proposed development site.

- 1.3.5 The proposed development is close to the site of the medieval hospital of St. John the Baptist, which had its own chapel and burial ground. The hospital is believed to have been founded by one of the Stafford family, to which the patronage belonged until the 1611 century. The first mention of the hospital is in 1208 when Hugh, son of Ralph, granted 40 acres of land in Castle Church to Eudes, Prior of the hospital, in return, Hugh asked for the prayers of the prior and brethren, suggesting that the hospital was run by a religious brotherhood. Other benefactions were evidently few and the hospital seems to have suffered from poverty for most of its existence. Documentary references mention the chapel and in the 1530s many burials were recorded at the hospital. By 1548 it appears that no poor had been maintained in the hospital for a long time. In 1552 the burgesses admitted that only three or four people had been lodged in certain little cottages adjoining the chapel. The hospital seems to have finally come to the end of its life in 1560. In 1638 the master's house and the chapel were both still standing. The only pictorial record of the chapel exists on the seal of the hospital, which appears to depict a cruciform building of the 13th century. Above the door of the west front is a window of three lancets beneath a trefoil. What appears to be a low wall surrounds the church.
- 1.3.6 The White Lion Inn was said to be built on the site of the medieval hospital. This theory was based on the fact that stonework, thought to be from the hospital and chapel, was apparently visible within the rear structure of the inn and in the grounds. The inn was demolished to make way for the Queensway ring road in the 1970s. Various descriptions of the hospital site, including documents dating to the 15th century, render the location of the medieval hospital, chapel and associated burial ground uncertain. Though unlikely, there is the potential for the discovery of archaeological evidence relating to the medieval hospital site within the proposed development area.
- 1.3.7 The only house of Austin Friars in the county was in the manor of Forebridge (PRN 777). It was founded in 1344 by Ralph Lord Stafford. The Pope granted permission provided that twelve friars could be accommodated. In June 1344 the King granted a license for the foundation and its endowment with five acres as the site of the church and other friary buildings. There were further grants of land in 1349 and 1352. The house however remained obscure and received no striking benefactions. The house survived until the Dissolution. When the Augustinian house of canons at Stone was dissolved in 1537, Henry Lord Stafford moved the family monuments to the Austin friary at Stafford, believing that they would be safe. However in August 1538 the friary itself was dissolved. The stile of property that followed suggests that the friary was a poor house, although it was patronised by Lord Stafford. Friaries were Very dependent on charity.

- 1.3.8 In addition to the friary church, there are references to a tower, an underground aqueduct, a hall, brewhouse and kitchen. A substantial friary would have had a chapter house, a dormer, a frater, store rooms and lodgings for guests and president. In 1544 the site and such buildings and lands as remained were granted by the Crown to Edward Stanford of Rowley. There are no surviving buildings from the friary. Below the brick wall which links Friars Walk with Bailey Street there are some sandstone foundations. Along Friars Walk there are two courses of large sandstone blocks, which are likely to be nineteenth century, but there is some smaller sandstone rubble below. There is also some sandstone rubble below the brick wall along Bailey Street. The initial grant of land to the friary was five acres. There was a mention in the Stafford Newsletter dated 1st November 1974 of the discovery of a human burial along Friars Road (PRN 03193). It seems reasonable to suppose that this came from the friary burial ground. It is believed to be very unlikely that the grounds of the friary extended into the site of the proposed development.
- 1.3.9 The 1881, 1901 and 1923 Ordnance Survey maps show a number of structures occupying the footprint of the modern Browse Antiques building. The exact construction date of the current building is unknown, although the frontage appears to date to the late Victorian period. It seems likely that a late 19th century building fronting onto the Lichfield Road was extended sometime during the mid 20th century to form the building occupied by Browse Antiques. Other small buildings are shown on the 1881, 1901 and 1923 Ordnance Survey maps, located in the area immediately adjacent to Browse Antiques. The area at the rear of the premises, currently used as a car park, is shown as a garden on the 1881 map and otherwise vacant. Some damage to archaeological deposits will have occurred from the construction of 19th and 20th century buildings.
- 1.3.10 An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by BUFAU in February 2002 (see Fig.2) during which a single trial-trench was excavated to the west of the site. A shallow linear feature, possibly a beam slot, and two shallow pits and a posthole were revealed (BUFAU 2002). These features produced no finds but were sealed by a layer from which sherds of medieval pottery, dating from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, were recovered, suggesting that they were of a similar date or perhaps earlier. Medieval pottery dating from the twelfth to the thirteenth century were also recovered from the upper surface of the natural sand subsoil. Late post-medieval pits and a modern demolition levelling layer were also recorded.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were;

- To determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present.
- To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
- To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any remains.
- To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- To determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present.
- To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of any artefactual evidence present.

- To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeo-environmental and/or economic evidence and the forms in which such evidence may be present.
- To make available the results of the investigation.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

3.1.1 The trial trenching comprised one trench, located to the north west of the site as indicated on Fig.2. The trench was excavated by a mechanical excavator (JCB) under archaeological supervision, supplemented by hand excavation. The trench measured 30 m x 1.9 m.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

3.2.1 The trenches were excavated to the top of the 'natural' or to the top of any significant structural/archaeological level. The exposed horizons were cleaned to clarify the remains and potential archaeological features were sampled to sufficiently characterise and date them.

3.2.2 The stratigraphy of the trenches was recorded even where no archaeological deposits were identified. Spoil heaps were monitored to allow analysis of the spatial distribution of artefacts.

3.2.3 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with established OA practice (OA Field Manual, 1992). All contexts were allocated unique numbers. Bulk finds were collected by context.

3.2.4 Colour transparency and black-and-white negative photographs were taken during the ground-works and of any archaeological features and deposits. Site plans were drawn at an appropriate scale (1:50) with larger scale plans of features. Section drawings of features and sample sections of stratigraphy were drawn at a scale of 1:20

3.2.5 The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3.3 Finds

3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

3.4.1 No deposits appropriate for environmental sampling or analysis were revealed by this evaluation.

4 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

4.1 Finds

- 4.1.1 Due to the paucity of archaeological deposits and the modern nature of artefacts retrieved from the site, finds have been commented on by the author (see below) rather than sent to individual external specialists.

Context	Item	Comments
2002	Two sherds of porcelain pottery	C18th or later
2006	Three sherds of porcelain One clay pipe stem Five hard fired industrial brick fragments One sherd of brown glazed earthenware. Possibly portion of a handle	Context is C18th or later, clay pipe stem and earthenware sherd could be earlier and residual within this context.
2009	Four sherds of porcelain pottery	C18th or later

4.2 Trench 2

- 4.2.1 Trench 2 (see Figs 2 and 3) was 30 x 1.9 m and orientated north west-south east. Natural sand (2004) was revealed in this trench at 76.59m OD to the north and 76.73m OD to the south. This was overlaid throughout the trench by a disturbed mid brown slightly silty sand (2003). No dating material was retrieved from this layer.
- 4.2.2 Layer 2003 was cut by pit 2014 to the north of the trench and linear cut 2007 to the centre of the trench. Pit cut 2014 was sub-circular in plan and measured 0.70 m in diameter and was 0.90m deep. It was filled with a mid grey brown sand (2013). No finds were retrieved from this feature. Linear cut 2007 was north-west south-east aligned but its width was obscured by a brick foundation (see below). The ditch was 1 m deep and filled with a dark brown friable sand (2006) from which porcelain, earthenware pottery and a clay pipe stem were retrieved. This feature has been interpreted as a possible boundary ditch but may also be the construction cut for brick foundation 2008.
- 4.2.3 The fills of pit 2014 and linear cut 2007 have been recorded as sealed by layer 2002, which was seen throughout the trench. This was a dark brown grey silty sand, upto 0.50 m thick, which may represent a buried garden or plough soil. However, it was noted that the fills of the pit and linear cut were very similar to 2002 and that these features may not have been visible in plan until this layer was removed.
- 4.2.4 Layer 2002 was cut in the centre of the trench by pits 2010 and 2016 as well as brick man hole 2011 and modern brick filled intrusions 2018 and 2012. In addition brick foundation 2005/2008 has been recorded as cutting this layer. If linear feature 2007 is the construction cut for foundation 2005/2008 this would mean that layer 2002 has

accumulated or been dumped up against the structure. Distinguishing between a flush cut foundation or an accumulated soil has not been possible.

- 4.2.5 Pit 2010 was sub-square in plan with vertical sides and a flat base. The feature measured 0.56 m x 0.53 m x 0.46 m deep and was filled by a dark grey brown silty sand (2009) four sherds of porcelain were retrieved from this deposit.
- 4.2.6 Pit 2016 was rectangular in plan with vertical sides and a rounded base. This feature measured 0.90 m x 0.65 m x 0.57 m deep. It was filled a loose dark grey silty-sand (2015) from which modern brick fragments were retrieved; these were noted but not retained.
- 4.2.7 Brick structure 2008 was an east, north, east - west, south, west structure with a north-south aligned concrete return at its eastern end. The structure was two courses high. Local visitors to the site suggested that it was part of an annexe to a college that was demolished for the realignment of the road to the north.
- 4.2.8 All contexts were overlain by modern tarmac and associated construction deposits (2000).

5 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

- 5.1.1 The results of the evaluation have differed only slightly to those of the trench to the south-west carried out by BUFAU in February 2002. In the previous evaluation a possibly medieval soil horizon was identified sealing undated features. In this investigation a layer immediately overlying the natural sand (2003) was found but no dating material was present. As in the previous investigation this layer was overlain by a soil (probably a garden soil) worked in the C18th. A single undated pit maybe evidence of early activity within the trench, and given the evidence of the south-west trench, truncated negative features of possible archaeological significance do survive within the proposal area. However, no clear evidence of significant archaeological remains was found during this investigation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>No / wt</i>	<i>Date</i>
002								
	2000	Layer		0.18m	Tarmac surface			
	2001	Layer		0.25	Brick rubble			
	2002	Layer		0.50m	Buried garden/plough soil	porcelain	2	C18th
	2003	Layer		0.12m	Subsoil			
	2004	Layer		-	Natural sand			
	2005	Fill		0.22m	Ceramic drain packing			
	2006	Fill		0.80m	Fill of linear 2007 PM	porcelain clay pipe earthen ware pottery	3 1 1	C18th
	2007	Cut			Boundary ditch?			
	2008	Structure			Brick wall foundation			
	2009	Fill		0.46m	Fill of pit 2010	porcelain	4	C18th
	2010	Cut			Pit PM			
	2011	Structure			Brick manhole			
	2012	Layer		0.90m	Made ground			
	2013	Fill		0.90m	Fill of pit 2014			
	2014	Cut			Undated pit			
	2015	Fill		0.57m	Fill of pit 2016	brick frags		
	2016	Cut			Rectangular pit PM			
	2017	Layer			Fill of 2018			
	2018	Cut			Modern intrusion	brick		

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Walters, L 2001 Brief for an archaeological evaluation at the site of Browse Antiques, Lichfield Road, Stafford

BUFAU 2002 Land at Browse Antiques, 127 Lichfield Road Stafford, An archaeological evaluation

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**Site name:** Browse Antiques, Stafford**Site code:** STLR02**Grid reference:** SJ 9249 2275**Type of evaluation:** Trial Trench**Date and duration of project:** 23rd-24th /09/02**Area of site:** 0.367ha

Summary of results: No clear significant archaeological deposits or remains were revealed by the evaluation. Three pits were revealed, two of which were securely dated to the C18th or later by the presence of porcelain. The undated feature was not securely stratigraphically placed but may represent earlier activity on the site. In addition a modern brick foundation and possible boundary ditch/construction cut, were recorded within the trench

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with for the deposition of archive and artefacts in the Potteries Museum , Bethesada Street, Hanly, Stoke on Trent.

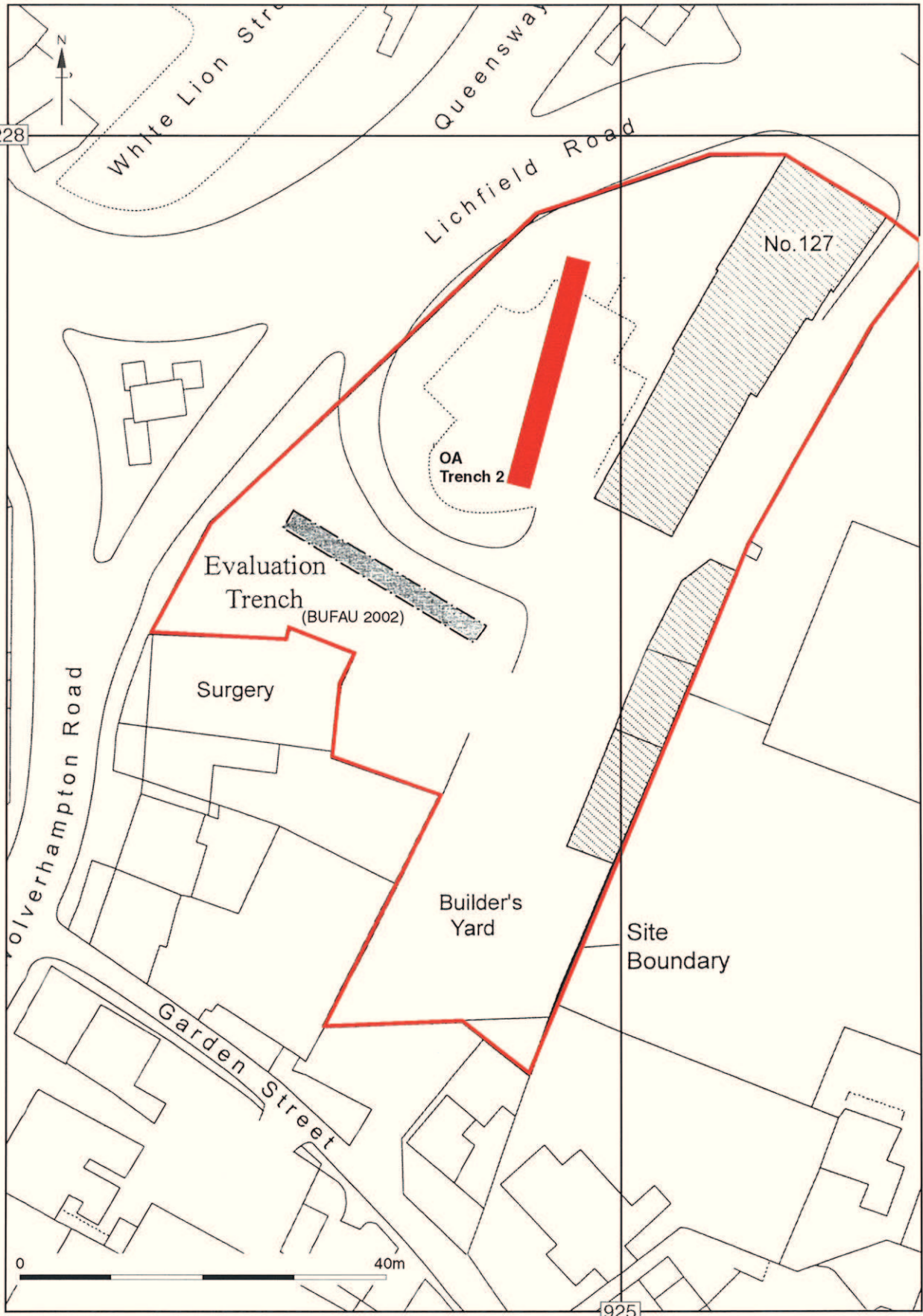
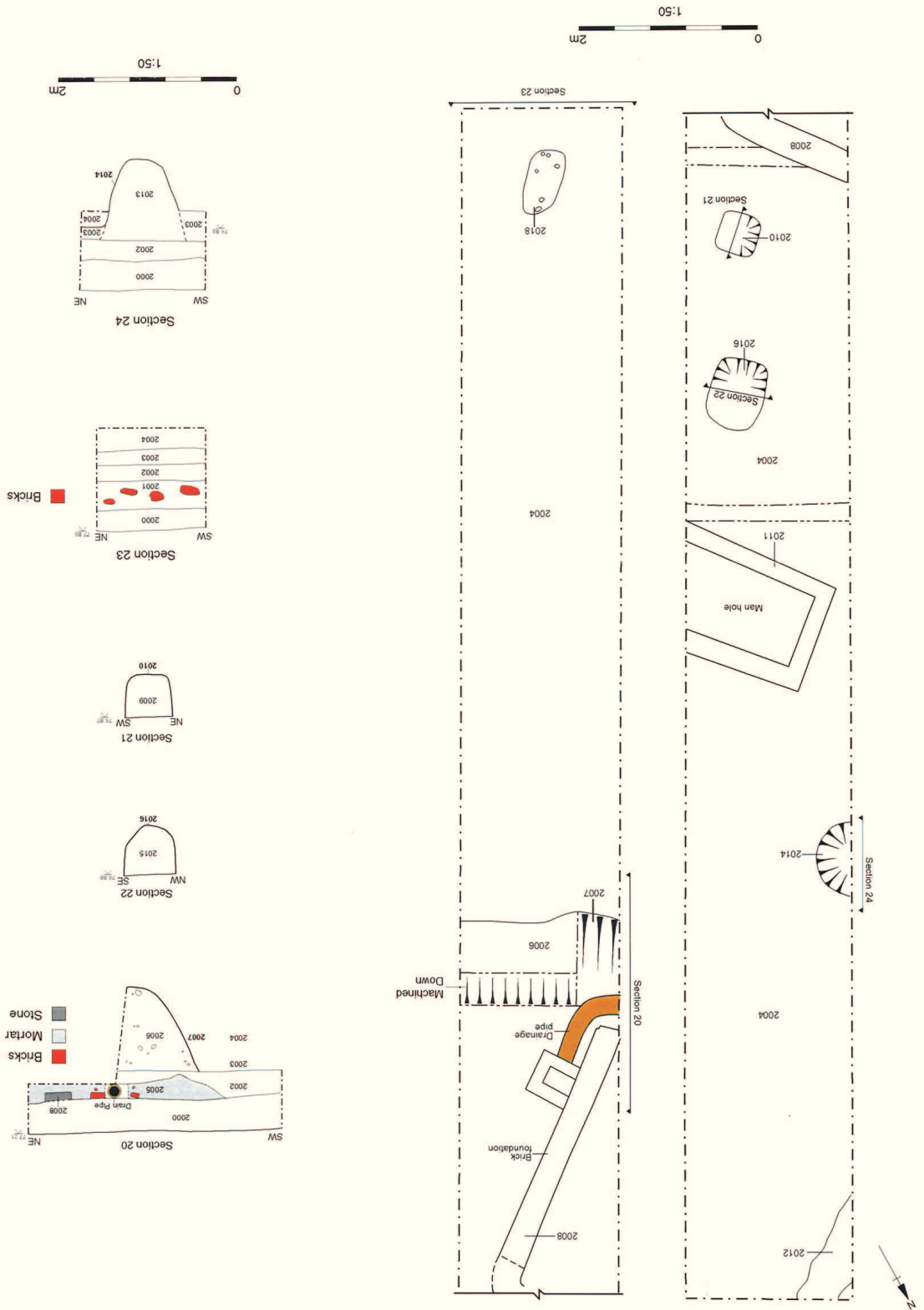


Figure 2: Trench location

Figure 3: Trench 2, plans and sections





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