

ST JOHN'S PRECINCT, WORKINGTON TOWN CENTRE, WORKINGTON

Archaeological Evaluation Phase 1 Interim Report



Oxford Archaeology North

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Monaghans

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SUMMARY

In October 2003 the first phase of archaeological evaluation was carried out by Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) of an area of proposed redevelopment at St John's Precinct, Workington Town Centre, Cumbria (NY 0039 2862). The first phase consisted of a trench within the footings of the Presbyterian Church during its demolition. The evaluation follows a previous archaeological desk-based assessment undertaken by Oxford Archaeology North in December 2002. This identified the north-east corner of the proposed development area containing the church to be an area of high archaeological potential.

This interim report details the results of the first phase evaluation. The trench contained a rubbish pit and foundations pertaining to the church. No other features of archaeological significance were located. However, the restrictive size and nature of the trench does not allow for a full understanding of the archaeology. Therefore, the remaining evaluation trenches require completion before an assessment of the archaeological potential and subsequent recommendations can be made.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North would like to express its thanks to David Harriman of Monaghans for commissioning the work on behalf of Harrison Developments Ltd and for his logistical help.

The evaluation was undertaken by Andrew Bates with assistance from David Tonks. The interim report was compiled by Andrew Bates and Emily Mercer. The drawings were undertaken by Mark Tidmarsh. The report was edited by Emily Mercer who also managed the project.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Cumbria County Council Archaeological Services (CCCAS) issued a brief for an archaeological investigation in response to consultation with Allerdale District Council regarding a planning application to redevelop an area in Workington town centre, Cumbria. Harrison Developments Ltd propose to redevelop St John's Precinct, Workington, and due to the archaeological potential of the site, as defined by an earlier desk-based assessment undertaken in December 2002 (OA North 2002), an archaeological evaluation is required prior to development. Monaghans (hereafter the client), working on behalf of Harrison Developments Ltd, requested that Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) submit proposals to undertake an evaluation. Following the submission and approval of a project design (*Appendix 2*), OA North were commissioned by Monaghans to undertake the evaluation work in October 2003. Areas of the site are still in use and therefore it was agreed that the evaluation will be undertaken in phases according to access. This interim report details the results from the first phase of work on the site of the demolished Presbyterian Church.

1.2 SITE LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

- 1.2.1 **Location:** St John's Precinct is situated in the north-east corner of Workington (NGR NY 0039 2862; Fig 1), close to the site of Workington Hall (within 300m to the north-east), and the River Derwent to the north. Pow Street lies to the north of the site, with Washington Street to the east, Jane Street and Oxford Street to the south, and the former railway embankment to the west. It is an entirely urban area, at a height of around 15m OD. The town of Workington is situated on the broad floodplain of the River Derwent, and the surrounding landscape is dominated by the former iron works and collieries (Countryside Commission 1998, 27).
- 1.2.2 **Physical Background:** the solid geology of the area comprises of Westphalian grey mudstones, with numerous coal seams, of the upper Carboniferous period (345-280 million years age) (British Geological Survey 1982). The quaternary sediments underlying the archaeological deposits comprised of alluvial gravels (Countryside Commission 1998, 27).

1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

- 1.3.1 The desk-based assessment undertaken in December 2002 (OA North 2002) identified the majority of the known occupation and the use of land within the study area dated to the post-medieval period and, in particular, the nineteenth century. Therefore, the potential for identifying remains relating to this period is very high, although they are likely to relate primarily to domestic and commercial buildings. The areas along Washington Street and Pow Street consisted of a complex mix of buildings, principally comprising shops and houses. Jane Street, Thompson Street and Edkin Street are more likely to have

been dominated by terraced housing. In the centre there were the Drill Hall and school, and the Presbyterian Church, which was demolished immediately prior to the evaluation, in the north-east. Few of the buildings were considered to have any high historical value in their present condition, although they could possibly provide information regarding the daily life in nineteenth century Workington, and the post-medieval development of the town.

- 1.3.2 The area identified to have the highest archaeological potential is that along Pow Street and part of Washington Street, but it is most likely to have already been badly disturbed by later development. Consequently, the most promising area combining a high level of archaeological potential and relatively moderate level of likely later disturbance, is immediately to the south of the Presbyterian Church. This area is particularly interesting because it is the approximate position of the 'High Meeting House' recorded in 1793, and is within the general area of the medieval town, as far as this is known.
- 1.3.3 The Presbyterian Church was built in 1858-9 and replaced an earlier church built in 1750, known as Scotch Church.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

- 2.1.1 The fieldwork was conducted in accordance with a project design by OA North (*Appendix 2*), which was based on the project brief issued by Cumbria County Council Archaeological Services (*Appendix 1*). The project design was adhered to in part for the first phase of evaluation to undertake one trench within the footings of the demolished Presbyterian Church (Fig 2), in agreement with the client and CCCAS. The work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, and generally accepted best practice.

2.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

- 2.2.1 A programme of trial trenching was implemented to establish the presence or absence of any previously unsuspected archaeological deposits. The project brief required a minimum sample of 5% of the proposed undeveloped study area. However, due to phasing of the investigation as a result of restricted access, the first investigation comprised one evaluation trench measuring 2m by 10m to be carried out immediately following the demolition of the Presbyterian Church in the north-west corner of the site.
- 2.2.2 The evaluation trench was excavated by a 360° mechanical excavator, fitted with a 2.0m wide toothless ditching bucket, under the supervision of an OA North archaeologist. The trenches were excavated in a stratigraphical manner, with minimal disturbance to archaeological features, and the spoil heaps were scanned for artefacts.
- 2.2.3 The recording comprised a full description and preliminary classification of the features and materials revealed on OA North *pro-forma* sheets, as recommended by English Heritage's Centre for Archaeology. A plan was produced showing the location of all the trenches and features, with representative sections being drawn at a scale of 1:10. A photographic record, using black and white and colour slide formats, was maintained.
- 2.2.4 The position of the trenches was located using a Zeiss total station. This was incorporated with digital map data in a CAD system to create the location map.
- 2.2.5 All finds recovered were bagged and recorded by context number; all significant finds were retained and have been processed and temporarily stored according to standard practise (following the Institute of Field Archaeologists guidelines).

2.3 ARCHIVE

- 2.3.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the project design (*Appendix 2*) and in accordance with current IFA and English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991). The archive will be deposited in the Cumbria Record Office with a copy to the Cumbria SMR.

3. EVALUATION RESULTS

3.1 RESULTS

- 3.1.1 The evaluation trench was excavated and recorded using OA North *pro-forma* sheets. It was aligned approximately north/south across the width of the demolished church building (Fig 2), measuring 10m x 2m, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.1m.
- 3.1.2 Overburden consisting of rubble was removed to a depth of 1.0m at the southern end of the trench down to natural subsoil (Fig 2). A sondage was excavated through to natural, which comprised layers of alluvium deposited by the river Derwent, seen as mid-reddish brown, loose, coarse sandy gravel with 40% to 50% rounded stone inclusions of a maximum size of 0.16m by 0.14m by 0.14m. It was evident that the upper layers of natural had been disturbed during the construction of the church, with some mortar and other materials intermixed.
- 3.1.3 In the northern half of the trench a circular pit was located, **02** (Fig 3), measuring 1.3m in diameter and 0.3m deep. It had been backfilled with deposit **I**, which comprised loose, very dark grey, coarse sandy clay with 13% to 20% rounded stone in of a maximum size of 0.11m by 0.08m by 0.05m. This fill contained frequent fragments of bone and eighteenth or nineteenth century pottery, and appears to have functioned solely as a rubbish pit.
- 3.1.4 In the northern end of the trench the sandstone foundation of the recently demolished church was found, **03** (Fig 3). It was orientated in an east/west direction across the 2.0m width of the trench, measuring at least 0.83m wide as it continued under the northern baulk. It comprised a single course of roughly-squared sandstone blocks, measuring a maximum of 0.68m by 0.5m by 0.05m, with a dark grey medium sand-clay sediment used as a bonding material.

Context Number	Description
01	Fill of 02
02	Eighteenth/nineteenth century rubbish pit
03	Church sandstone foundation

Table 1: List of contexts

4. IMPACT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT

- 4.1.1 The results showed that this particular area contained what appears to be a rubbish pit dating to the period prior to the construction of the church. The desk-based assessment undertaken in December 2002 showed the church dated from 1858-9 and replaced an earlier church known as 'Scotch Church' (OA North 2002). Therefore, it is likely that the artefacts probably relate to this 'demolition and construction' phase in the middle of the nineteenth century. No evidence was located of any activity earlier than the post-medieval period.

4.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.2.1 Due to the limited investigation, it is difficult to assess the potential for the survival of archaeological deposits on the west of the site. The remaining proposed evaluation work requires completion before an assessment can be made.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Countryside Commission, 1998 *Countryside Character Volume 2: North West*, Cheltenham

English Heritage, 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd Edn, London

OA North, 2002 *St John's Precinct, Workington: Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment* unpubl rep

UKIC, 1990 *Guidelines for the Preparation of Archives for Long-Term Storage* London

APPENDIX 1: PROJECT BRIEF

APPENDIX 2: PROJECT DESIGN

**Oxford
Archaeology
North**

September 2003
Revised

ST JOHNS PRECINCT, WORKINGTON TOWN CENTRE, CUMBRIA

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED STUDY ENHANCEMENT AND EVALUATION PROJECT DESIGN

Proposals

The following design is offered in response to a request from Monaghans for an enhancement of a desk-based study and an evaluation in advance of the redevelopment of Workington town centre, Cumbria.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1 Monaghan (hereafter the client) has requested that Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) submit proposals for the enhancement of the desk-based study and evaluation at St John's Precinct, Workington, Cumbria (NY 0039 2862), in advance of the proposed re-development of the site. This project design is a revised version of the original dated March 2003. This takes into account the reduction in the area to be evaluated in the first instance, which is situated in the north-east corner of the proposed re-development and comprises an area of extant car parking and a demolished nineteenth century church.

1.2 BACKGROUND

- 1.2.1 The site has been subject to a documentary study which has examined the archaeological potential of the area. Early medieval remains have been discovered in Workington, but these relate to a single site, and there is no evidence of any activity from this period within the immediate environs of the study area. Documentary sources suggest that the town of Workington was established within this period.
- 1.2.2 It has been demonstrated that Pow Street probably formed part of the medieval town. It appears to fit with what is shown on the plan of 1569, and was certainly in place by 1793. The detailed medieval layout of Workington is not well understood, however, and there are few certainties about its exact form. The area fronting directly onto Pow Street could potentially have extensive surviving medieval remains surviving below post medieval and modern remains, although without carrying out a physical inspection of the standing buildings it is difficult to assess the extent of damage caused by later cellars.
- 1.2.3 The majority of the occupation and the use of land within the study area dates to the post-medieval period, in particular the nineteenth century. The potential for identifying remains throughout the study area relating to this period is very high, although they are likely to relate primarily to domestic and commercial buildings. The areas along Washington Street and Pow Street consisted of a complex mix of buildings, principally comprised of shops and houses. Jane Street, Thompson Street and Edkin Street are more likely to have been dominated by terraced housing. In the centre there were the Drill Hall and school, with a Presbyterian Church to the north-east. Few of these buildings have any high historical value in their present condition, although they could potentially provide a great deal of information about daily life in nineteenth century Workington, and the post medieval development of the town.

1.3 OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY NORTH

- 1.3.1 Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) has considerable experience of the archaeological survey and evaluation of sites and monuments of all periods, having undertaken a great number of small and large projects during the past 20 years. Projects have been undertaken to fulfil the different requirements of various clients and planning authorities, and to very rigorous timetables. OA North has considerable experience of the recording of historic buildings together with the evaluation and excavation of sites of all periods, having undertaken a great number of small and large scale projects during the past 20 years. Fieldwork has taken place within the planning process and construction programmes, to fulfil the requirements of clients and planning authorities, to very rigorous timetables.
- 1.3.2 OA North has the professional expertise and resources to undertake the project detailed below to a high level of quality and efficiency. OA North is an Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) registered organisation, registration number 17, and all its members of staff operate subject to the IFA Code of Conduct.

2. OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The following programme has been designed, in accordance with a brief by Cumbria County Council Archaeology Service (CCCAS) to provide an enhancement of the existing desk-based study and an evaluation. The required stages to achieve these ends are as follows:

2.2 DESK-BASED STUDY ENHANCEMENT

- 2.2.1 To provide an enhancement of the existing desk-based study for the site.

2.3 EVALUATION TRENCHING

- 2.3.1 To implement a programme of trial trenching.

2.4 REPORT

- 2.4.1 A written report will assess the significance of the data generated by this programme within a local and regional context. It will present the desk-based work and evaluation and would make an assessment of the archaeological potential of the area, and would make recommendations for further work.

3. METHOD STATEMENT

3.1 DESK-BASED STUDY ENHANCEMENT

- 3.1.1 It is proposed that the existing desk-based study be enhanced by means of the investigation of additional sources. This would provide for the re-examination of trade directories, a search for historical photographs to provide evidence of the recent history of the site, and any other sources pertinent to the study. The search for additional sources will involve a visit to the Cumbria Record Office and Local Studies Library in Whitehaven (tel 01946 852920).

3.2 EVALUATION TRENCHING

- 3.2.1 The programme of trenching will establish the presence or absence of any previously unsuspected archaeological deposits and, if established, will then test their date, nature, depth and quality of preservation. The work will be carried out in three phases as the areas become available, with the demolished church and its car park as one phase and the car park to the south split into east and west phases.
- 3.2.2 **Methods:** the evaluation is required to evaluate 5% of the undeveloped study area. With this in mind the area to be considered in the first instance lies in the north-east corner of the re-development area and contains 11 trenches measuring 10m x 1.6m. The position of these trenches has been arranged to accommodate the phased access of the car parking and the use of the road, Thompson Street. Provisionally the trenches will be scattered uniformly over the extent of the undeveloped area, but in practice the precise locations will be determined by the site investigation, the enhanced assessment, and in consultation with CCCAS. Subject to the assessment there may also be additional areas of disturbed land, which are inappropriate for evaluation, and consequently may reduce the overall area needing to be evaluated.
- 3.2.3 The trenches will be excavated by a combination of mechanised and manual techniques; the topsoil will be removed by mechanical excavator, fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless bucket, and archaeological deposits beneath will be first manually cleaned and then any features identified will be manually excavated. The machine excavation will not intrude into any potential archaeological stratigraphy and all machine excavation will be undertaken under careful archaeological supervision. Following mechanical excavation the floor of the trench will be cleaned by hoe and Manual excavation techniques will be used to evaluate any sensitive deposits, and will enable an assessment of the nature, date, survival and depth of deposits and features. The trenches will not be excavated deeper than 1.25m to accommodate health and safety constraints; any requirements to excavate below this depth will involve recosting.
- 3.2.4 All trenches will be excavated in a stratigraphical manner, whether by machine or by hand. Trenches will be located by use of GPS equipment which is accurate to +/- 0.25m, altitude information will be established with respect to Ordnance Survey Datum. Archaeological features within the trenches will be planned by manual techniques.
- 3.2.5 Samples will also be collected for technological, pedological and chronological analysis as appropriate. If necessary, access to conservation advice and facilities can be made available. OA North maintains close relationships with Ancient Monuments Laboratory staff at the Universities of Durham and York and, in addition, employs artefact and palaeozoological

specialists with considerable expertise in the investigation, excavation and finds management of sites of all periods and types, who are readily available for consultation.

- 3.2.6 **Human remains:** working within the environs of the churchyard suggests that human remains may be present on the site. The recovery and exhumation of any funerary remains will require the provision of a Home Office license, under section 25 of the Burial Act of 1857. An application will be made by OA North for the study area on discovery of any such remains and the removal will be carried out with due care and sensitivity. The costs for exhumation of the human remains has been defined as a contingency. Consequently, should analysis of the remains be necessary a strategy will be agreed with CCCAS and the client and will be costed as a variation.
- 3.2.7 **Environmental Assessment:** environmental samples (bulk samples of 30 litres volume, to be sub-sampled at a later stage) will be collected from stratified undisturbed deposits and will particularly target negative features (gullies, pits and ditches). Subject to the results of the excavation an assessment of any environmental samples will be undertaken by the in-house palaeoecological specialist, who will examine the potential for further analysis. The assessment would examine the potential for macrofossil, arthropod, palynological and general biological analysis. The costs for the palaeoecological assessment are defined as a contingency and will only be called into effect if good waterlogged deposits are identified and will be subject to the agreement of CCCAS and the client.
- 3.2.8 **Faunal Assessment:** OA north's specialist in faunal remains (Andrew Bates) will assess the potential of the site for producing bones of fish and small mammals, and subject to the results there may be a requirement for more detailed analysis. The present costs provide only for the assessment.
- 3.2.9 **Recording:** all information identified in the course of the site works will be recorded stratigraphically, with sufficient pictorial record (plans, sections and both black and white and colour photographs) to identify and illustrate individual features. Primary records will be available for inspection at all times.
- 3.2.10 Results of the field investigation will be recorded using a paper system, adapted from that used by Centre for Archaeology of English Heritage. The archive will include both a photographic record and accurate large scale plans and sections at an appropriate scale (1:50, 1:20, and 1:10). All artefacts and ecofacts will be recorded using the same system, and will be handled and stored according to standard practice (following current Institute of Field Archaeologists guidelines) in order to minimise deterioration.

3.4 REPORT

- 3.4.1 **Archive:** the results of the fieldwork will form the basis of a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (*The Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition, 1991). The project archive represents the collation and indexing of all the data and material gathered during the course of the project. It will include summary processing and analysis of all features, finds, or palaeoenvironmental data recovered during fieldwork, which will be catalogued by context. This archive can be provided in the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology format and a synthesis will be included in the Cumbria Sites and Monuments Record. A copy of the archive can also be made available for deposition with the National Archaeological Record. OA North practice is to deposit the original record archive of projects (paper, magnetic and plastic media) with the appropriate County Record Office, and a full copy of the record archive (microform or microfiche) together with the material archive (artefacts, ecofacts, and samples) with an appropriate museum.
- 3.4.2 **Report:** one bound and one unbound copy of a written synthetic report will be submitted to the Client, and a further three copies will be submitted to the Cumbria County Council SMR. The report will include a copy of this project design, and indications of any agreed departure from that design. It will present, summarise, and interpret the results of the programme detailed above and present an assessment of the sites history; the report will include photographs of any significant features. The report will also include a complete bibliography of sources from which data has been derived, and a list of further sources identified during the programme of work, but not examined in detail. The report will include a description of

the methodology and the results. A list of the finds, and a description of the collective assemblage. Details of any environmental work undertaken.

- 3.4.3 The report will include a frontispiece showing the planning number and the grid reference. It will have a summary and a methodological statement, and it will define any variations to the defined programme. It will include recommendations for further work.
- 3.4.4 The report will provide a predictive model for the surviving archaeological remains on the basis of the evaluation, site inspection and enhanced desk-top study, and assessment of the impact upon the archaeological resource by the development will be made.
- 3.4.5 Illustrative material will include a location map, site map, historic maps, a trench location map, trench plans, survey plans and also pertinent photographs. It can be tailored to the specific requests of the client (eg particular scales etc), subject to discussion.
- 3.4.6 **Publication:** a summary report of the results will be submitted to a regional journal, and information from the project will be fed into the OASIS project (On-line Access to Index of Archaeological Investigation).

3.5 OTHER MATTERS

- 3.5.1 **Health and Safety:** OA North provides a Health and Safety Statement for all projects and maintains a Unit Safety policy. All site procedures are in accordance with the guidance set out in the Health and Safety Manual compiled by the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers (1991). OA North will liaise with the client to ensure all health and safety regulations are met. A risk assessment will be completed in advance of any on-site works.
- 3.5.2 Full regard will, of course, be given to all constraints (services etc) during the survey, as well as to all Health and Safety considerations. If there is a requirement to excavate trenches deeper than 1.25m the trenches will be stepped out to minimise section collapse.
- 3.5.3 As a matter of course the Unit uses a U-Scan device prior to any excavation to test for services. It is assumed that the client will provide any available information regarding services within the study area, if available. Any knowledge of contamination of the site must also be made available to OA North prior to commencement of the work in order that this can be taken into account in the risk assessment.
- 3.5.4 **Insurance:** the insurance in respect of claims for personal injury to or the death of any person under a contract of service with the unit and arising out of an in the course of such person's employment shall comply with the employers' liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969 and any statutory orders made there under. For all other claims to cover the liability of OA North, in respect of personal injury or damage to property by negligence of OA North or any of its employees, there applies the insurance cover of £2m for any one occurrence or series of occurrences arising out of one event.
- 3.5.5 **Confidentiality:** the report is designed as a document for the specific use of the Client, for the particular purpose as defined in the project design, and should be treated as such; it is not suitable for publication as an academic report, or otherwise, without amendment or revision. Any requirement to revise or reorder the material for submission or presentation to third parties beyond the project brief and project design, or for any other explicit purpose can be fulfilled, but will require separate discussion and funding.
- 3.5.6 **Project Monitoring:** OA North will consult with the client regarding access to the site. Whilst the work is undertaken for the client, the County Archaeologist will be kept fully informed of the work and its results. Any proposed changes to the project design will be agreed with CCCAS in consultation with the Client.

4. WORK PROGRAMME

- 4.1 The following programme is proposed;

Desk-Based Enhancement : approximately a three day period would be required for this element.

Site Inspection: one day will be required to complete this element

Evaluation Trenching: approximately 6 days will be required to complete this element in three separate phases.

Report: a ten day period would be to complete this element.

- 4.2 OA North can execute projects at short notice once an agreement has been signed with the client.
- 4.3 The project will be managed by **Emily Mercer BA MSc AIFA** (Unit Project Manager) to whom all correspondence should be addressed. OA North adheres by the IFA's Code of Conduct and the Code of Approved Practice for the regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology.
- 4.4 Present timetabling constraints preclude detailing exactly who will be carrying out the excavation and watching brief, but it is likely to be supervised by an OA North project officer or supervisor experienced in this type of project. All OA North supervisors are experienced field archaeologists capable of carrying out projects of all sizes.
- 4.5 The processing and analysis of any palaeoenvironmental samples will be carried out by **Elizabeth Huckerby BA, MSc** (OA North project officer), who has extensive experience of the palaeoecology of the North West, having been one of the principal palaeoenvironmentalists in the English Heritage-funded North West Wetlands Survey.
- 4.6 Assessment of any finds from the excavation will be undertaken by **Sean McPhillips BA**. Sean has worked as a finds supervisor for English Heritage and MOLAS on a number of occasions and has extensive knowledge concerning finds. Assessment of any faunal remains will be undertaken by **Andy Bates** (OA North supervisor).

REFERENCES

Association of County Archaeological Officers (ACAO) 1993 *Model briefs and specifications for Archaeological Assessments and Field Evaluations*, Bedford

OA North 2002 *St John's Precinct, Workington, Cumbria: Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment*, unpubl rep

Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA), 1992 *Guidelines for data collection and compilation*

ILLUSTRATIONS

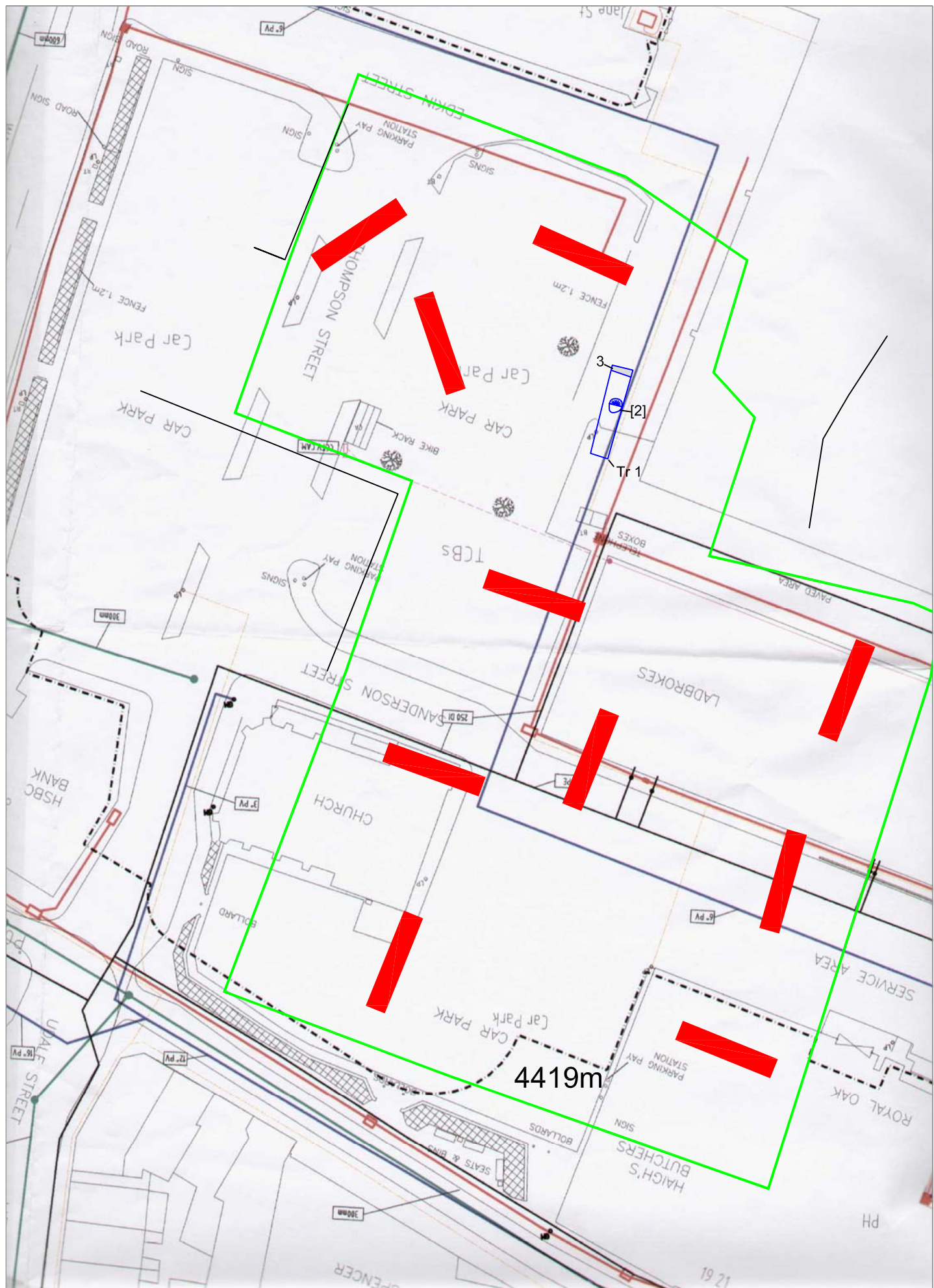
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Location map

Figure 2: Trench location plan

Figure 3: Trench 1





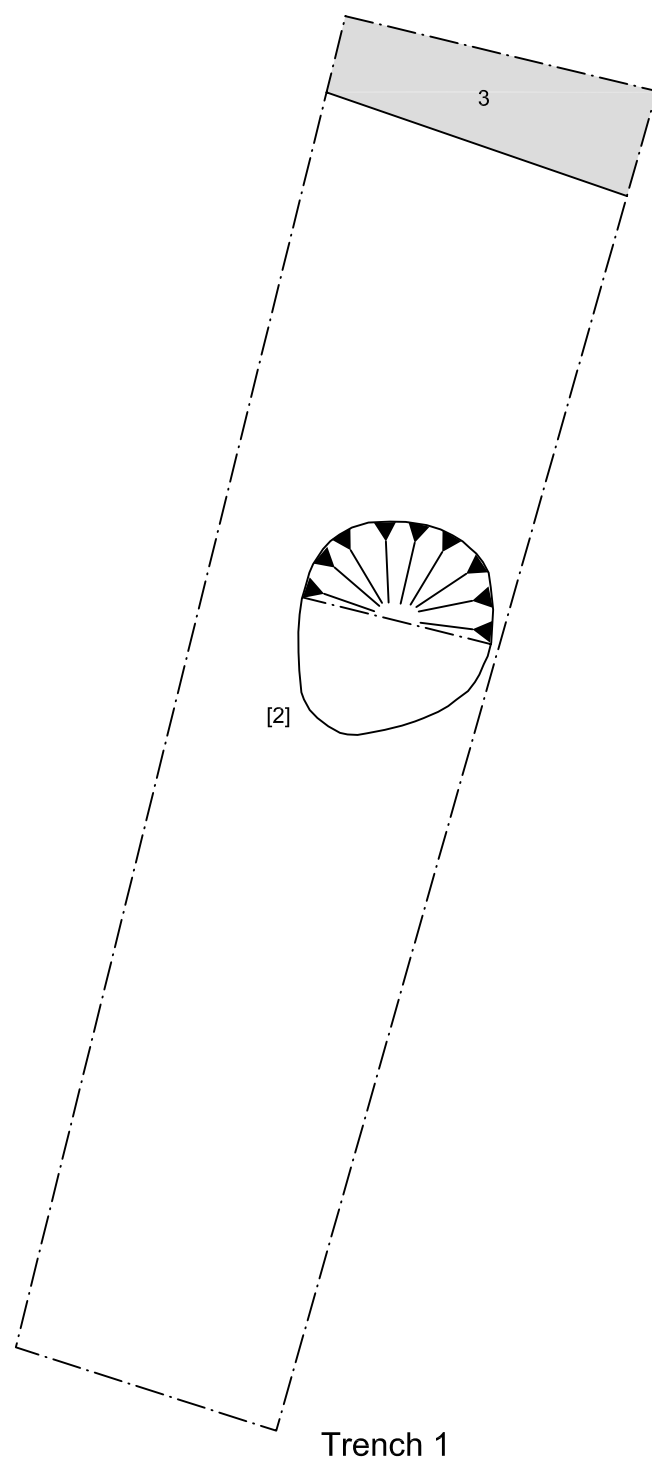
Trenches proposed for further evaluation

Excavated trench 1

0 10m



Figure 2: Trench Location Plan



0 1m



Figure 3 : Trench 1