

Tesco Service Yard, West Street, Ware, Hertfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief For Sovereign Construction

by Stephen Hammond and Jo Pine
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code WSW06/06

March 2006

Summary

Site name: Tesco Service Yard, West Street, Ware, Hertfordshire

Grid reference: TL 3578 1442

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 31st January –8th February 2006

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Steve Hammond

Site code: WSW 06/06

Area of site: 123 sq m.

Summary of results: Late post-medieval made ground layers sealing a buried soil, were recorded together with a possible late Post medieval wall foundation. A few sherds of Roman and medieval pottery were also recorded.

Monuments identified: Wall foundation and late post-medieval dumps

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Ware Museum in due course.

Summary of contents of archive: Provisionally, 1 file of correspondence including SMR data and 1 site file including context index, context sheets, maps and database sheets. Nine pottery sherds, two fragments of animal bone , 29 fragments of tile and 5 brick fragments.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 10/03/06 Jen Lowe✓ 10/03/06
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Tesco Service Yard, West Street, Ware, Hertfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

By Stephen Hammond and Jo Pine

Report 06/06

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on land on the south side of Church Street, Ware, Hertfordshire (TL 3578 1442) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Steve Ward of Sovereign Construction, Sovereign House, Avenue Lane, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN21 3UL.

Planning consent (app no 3/03/2492/FP) has been granted by East Herts District Council to increase the service yard area for Tesco Stores. This planning permission is subject to two conditions (2 and 6) relating to archaeology, which require a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Alison Tinniswood, Historic Environment Record Officer for Hertfordshire County Council, advisers to the District. The fieldwork was undertaken by Stephen Hammond between 31st January and 8th February 2006 and the site code is WSW 06/06.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Ware Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the northern side of the High Street, on the south side of Church Street and to the north of the existing Tesco service yard and store (Fig. 2). At the time of the work, the site consisted of a plot of grassland. The site lies on the border of glacial gravel and flood plain gravel (BGS 1978). A gravel and sand was observed in some of the foundations during the course of the work. The site was relatively level at c. 36m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within the historic (medieval) core of Ware. The settlement is mentioned in Domesday Book of 1086, where it is assessed at 24 hides, with five mills, meadow for 20 ploughs, woodland for 400 pigs, a park for wild beasts and a vineyard (Williams and Martin 2002). A search

of the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) was made for a 100m radius around the site. This revealed a wide range of finds and sites from prehistory to the present day. Ditches of late Iron Age date have been found to the rear of West Street and No 2 West Street. A middle Saxon *sceat* (coin) of 7th century date was also recovered (from a much later pit) during building works at No.2 West Street.

The HER also indicates that numerous medieval features have been recorded during building works in this part of the town. During the construction of the Tesco store immediately to the south, in 1979 rescue excavations revealed a small rectangular building together with sherds of late medieval pottery. Foundations of an outhouse associated with a post-medieval inn butted the above structure. Elements of a 19th-century malthouse, which once stood on this plot, were also recorded in the northern parts of the excavation. During excavations associated with construction of an extension to Tesco, to the east of the original store, medieval pits and artefacts of 13th/14th century date in association with a thick garden soil of similar date were revealed. In the 15th/16th century this site was intensely used with pits, including possible deep quarry pits and a flint wall was recorded on the Church Street frontage. Residual Neolithic, Iron Age and Roman pottery was also recovered.

Medieval pits of 13th/14th century date containing pottery and artefacts have been recorded at St Mary's Church. This church is mainly 14th/15th century with later additions and during construction of a church hall 40 medieval coffin burials were recorded. Medieval features, badly truncated, were also recorded at Chase Side. Numerous 15th-century and early post-medieval buildings still occupy the frontages of High Street, Church Street and West Street.

Objectives and methodology

The aims of the project were to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks for the construction of a service yard, which would involve ground reduction and excavations of a foundation for a new wall. It was expected that superficial deposits of up to c. 0.45m depth would be removed to enable the new yard surface to be set at the same height as surrounding ground. It was anticipated that even if the archaeologically relevant levels were exposed, these would not otherwise be affected and the watching brief would largely be one of recording any deposits present in plan with recovery of finds from exposed uppermost fills only. It was proposed that should archaeological deposits be exposed but not excavated, their reburial would take place following the laying of terram matting beneath the stone foundations. However, should significant deposits be present at a height above the formation level, more extensive archaeological excavation and

recording would be required. The extent of excavation and/or methods for preservation *in situ* would be determined in consultation with the Hertfordshire County Archaeology Office.

Results

Ground reduction

An irregular parcel of land of 123 sq m was stripped of overburden by a JCB-type machine fitted with toothless ditching bucket. The ground level was reduced by between 0.75m and 0.90m which was slightly deeper than expected. The stratigraphy in the area typically showed topsoil between 0.15m and 0.40m deep onto made ground between 0.50m and 0.75m deep which contained mass produced white earthenware pottery (including transfer decorated wares) and brick and tile fragments (not retained). Excavation ceased within this deposit and the natural geology was not exposed.

A flint wall foundation (51) was observed for *c.* 13m aligned NNE–SSW. It may have continued northwards but the ground reduction level in this area of site rose slightly and thus it was not exposed. It appeared to be constructed of roughly hewn flint nodules of maximum length 0.15m within a sandy lime mortar with tile within this matrix, and appeared to be only 0.33m wide and 0.12m in height. No construction cut was observed for this structure but beneath it made ground which contained tile fragments was still present.

Boundary wall foundation trench

A foundation trench for a wall and four pillar foundations (A-D) were also excavated (Fig. 3). The foundation trench was 0.65m wide and 1.53m deep. The northern 10.40m of the foundation showed topsoil between 0.20m and 0.73m deep onto made ground, between 0.70m and 1.00m deep, which contained white earthenware and brick and tile. No natural geology was exposed within this section of the trench (Fig. 4).

The southern *c.* 15m of the foundation trench showed topsoil, 0.23m deep, onto a brown/grey clayey silt *c.* 0.70m deep, which contained mass produced white earthenware and occasional brick and tile. This overlay an orange/brown clayey silt (possibly a buried topsoil, 52) which was 0.10m deep onto natural gravel which was revealed at 1.03m below the present ground surface.

Pillar A was 1.10m by 1.55m and 2.00m deep. It showed topsoil 0.45m deep onto made ground 0.70m deep which overlay an orange/brown clayey silt. This possible buried topsoil (52) was *c.* 0.20m deep and sealed the natural gravel which was excavated to a depth of 2.00m below the present ground surface.

Pillar B was 1.30m by 1.50m and 2.00m deep. The stratigraphy revealed in the section comprised topsoil 0.73m deep onto made ground 0.45m deep which overlay a light brown clayey silt (possibly buried topsoil, 52) which was 0.65m deep onto natural gravel. Pillar C was 1.30m by 1.40m and 1.95m deep. The sections showed topsoil 0.73m deep onto made ground 0.70m deep which overlay an orange/brown clayey silt (52) which was excavated to 1.95m below the present ground surface. No natural geology was exposed. Pillar D was 0.80m by 1.80m and 1.74m deep. The stratigraphy showed topsoil 0.20m deep onto made ground 0.50m deep which overlay a brown/grey silt 0.65m deep onto an orange/brown clayey silt which was at least 0.25m deep. No natural gravel was exposed in this trench.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised nine sherds with a total weight of 108g, all retrieved from the spoilheaps. It comprised a mixture of Roman, medieval and post-medieval wares, as follows:

Roman grey ware: 1 sherd, 17g.

Medieval Greyware I: Hertfordshire. Moderate to dense sub-rounded quartz up < 1mm. One sherd with glaze splashes. 13th–14th century? 2 sherds, 16g.

Medieval Greyware II: Hertfordshire. Moderate to dense sub-angular quartz up to 1mm, sparse to moderate angular grey flint up to 2mm. 13th–14th century? 1 sherd, 7g.

Medieval Oxidized Sandy ware. Essex redware? Oxidized red with grey core. Moderate to dense subrounded quartz up to 1mm, rare sub-angular calcareous material < 0.5mm. Sparse silver mica. Occasional sub-rounded iron ore up to 2mm. 13th–14th century? 4 sherds, 37g.

Staffordshire Slipware. AD1680–1750. Fine cream fabric with white slip and pale yellow lead glaze, commonest decoration is feathered dark brown trailed slip. Chiefly press-moulded flat wares, although small bowls and mugs etc are known. 1 sherd, 31g

The range of fabrics is fairly typical of East Hertfordshire, and can be paralleled at previous excavations in the town (Turner-Rugg 1993).

Animal bone by Ceri Falys

Two almost complete long bone fragments were recovered from the buried soil layer (52). The preservation of the long bones was excellent, however the distal articulation of each bone was absent. Both elements are identified as cattle metatarsals from the right side. The larger of the two has a very prominent cut/slicing mark from the proximal end around the dorsal aspect of the bone, down to the bottom of the middle third of the shaft.

Tile

A moderate assemblage of tile was found during the project. From the buried soil (52), five fragments of peg tile weighing 554g and two fragments of brick weighing 170g. From the flint foundation matrix (51) nine fragments

of peg tile weighing 1.3kg were recovered with mortar patches still attached and three red bricks weighing 74g. From the made ground deposits fifteen fragments of peg tile were recovered weighing 764g.

Conclusion

As anticipated, within the area of the reduced excavation the relevant archaeological horizons were not reached. A probable late post-medieval wall foundation and late post-medieval made ground appear to be the only deposits identified in the large stripped area.

Within the wall foundation trench and pillar trenches topsoil was observed to seal late post-medieval made ground. Within the southern part of this trench and pillars A and B this was seen to seal a possible buried topsoil above the gravel natural geology. At approximately the same level in the northern foundation trench and Pillars C and D, the post-medieval made ground was the only deposit observed and the buried soil and gravel was not exposed. This stratigraphy suggests that the area has been landscaped in the recent past with made ground deposits to raise the area. It also suggests either that the original land surface was sloping down to the north or that there has been deep truncation in this area of the site. The results of this fieldwork appear to confirm the conclusions of the previous work in the area. Firstly, that there was a buried soil in this part of the town, given a medieval date by previous excavators. Secondly, that there has also been truncation in the area, with gravel extraction being suggested.

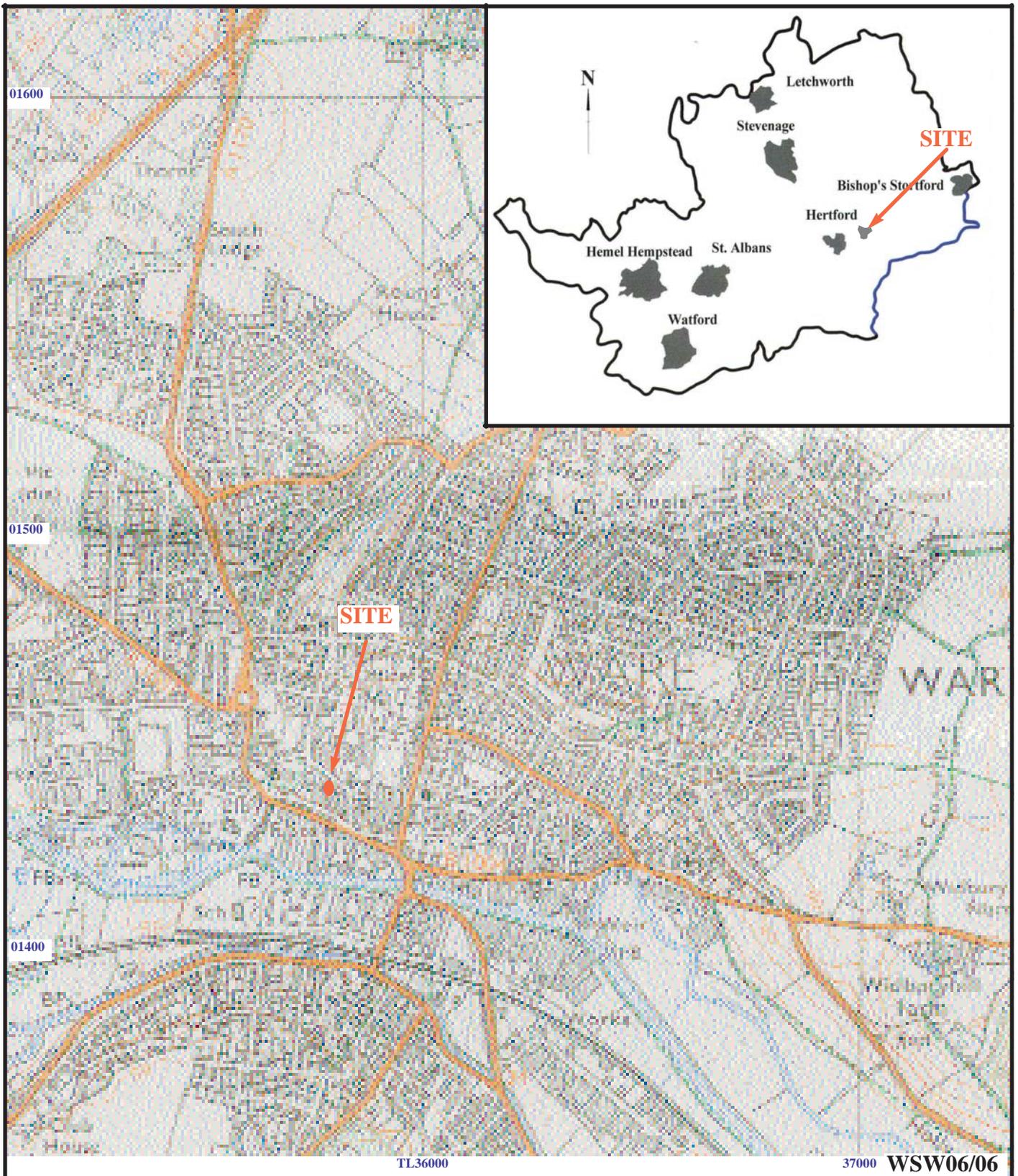
The few sherds of Roman and medieval pottery point to some activity of these periods within the area, though this may represent be no more than the manuring of farmland.

References

- BGS, 1981, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 269, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO
Turner-Rugg, A, 1993, 'Medieval Pottery in Hertfordshire: a gazetteer of the principle collections',
Hertfordshire Archaeol **11**, 30–53
Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book, a complete translation*, London

SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD SUMMARY SHEET

Site name and address: Tesco Service Yard, West Street, Ware		
County: Hertfordshire	District: East Herts	
Village/ Town:	Parish:	
Planning application reference: 3/03/2492/FP		
Client name, address, and tel. no.: Sovereign Construction, Sovereign House, Avenue Lane, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN21 3UL 01323638348		
Nature of application: enlargement of service yard		
Present land use: undeveloped		
Size of application area:	Size of area investigated: 123sq m	
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 3578 1442		
Site Code: WSW06/06		
Site Director/ Organisation: Stephen Hamond, Thames Valley Archaeological Services		
Type of work: Watching brief		
Date of work:	Start: 31/01/2006	Finish: 08/02/2006
Location of finds/ Curating museum: (to go to) Ware Museum		
Related SMR nos:	Periods represented: Roman, medieval, post-medieval	
Relevant previous summaries/ reports:		
Summary of fieldwork results: Late post-medieval made ground layers sealing a buried soil, were recorded together with a possible late post-medieval wall foundation. A few sherds of Roman and medieval pottery were also recorded.		
Author of summary: Stephen Hammond		Date of Summary: 10/03/2006



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Figure 1. Location of site within Ware and Hertfordshire.

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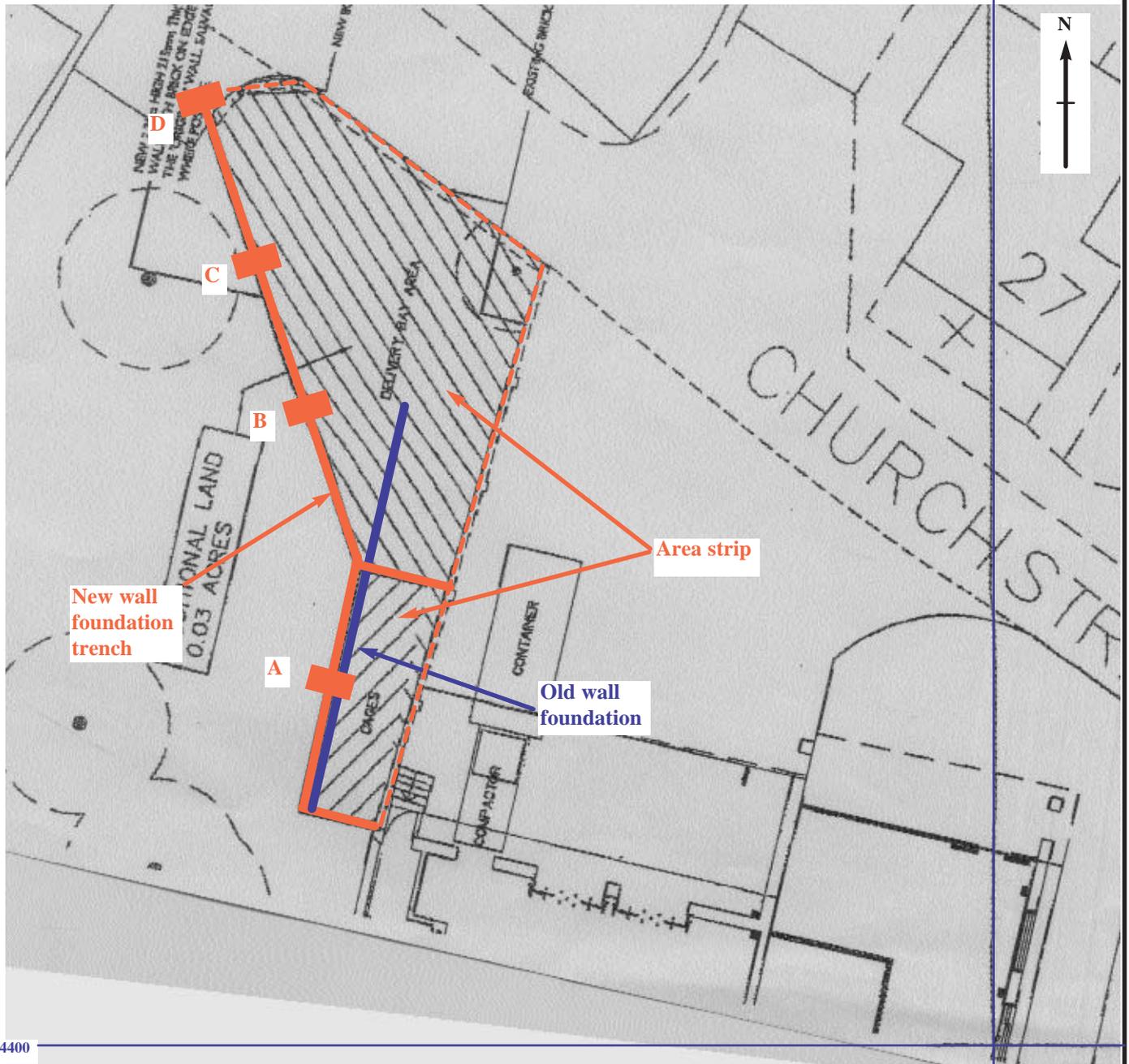
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on West Street.

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Scale: 1:1250

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Figure 3. Detailed location of watching brief.

Scale: 1:200

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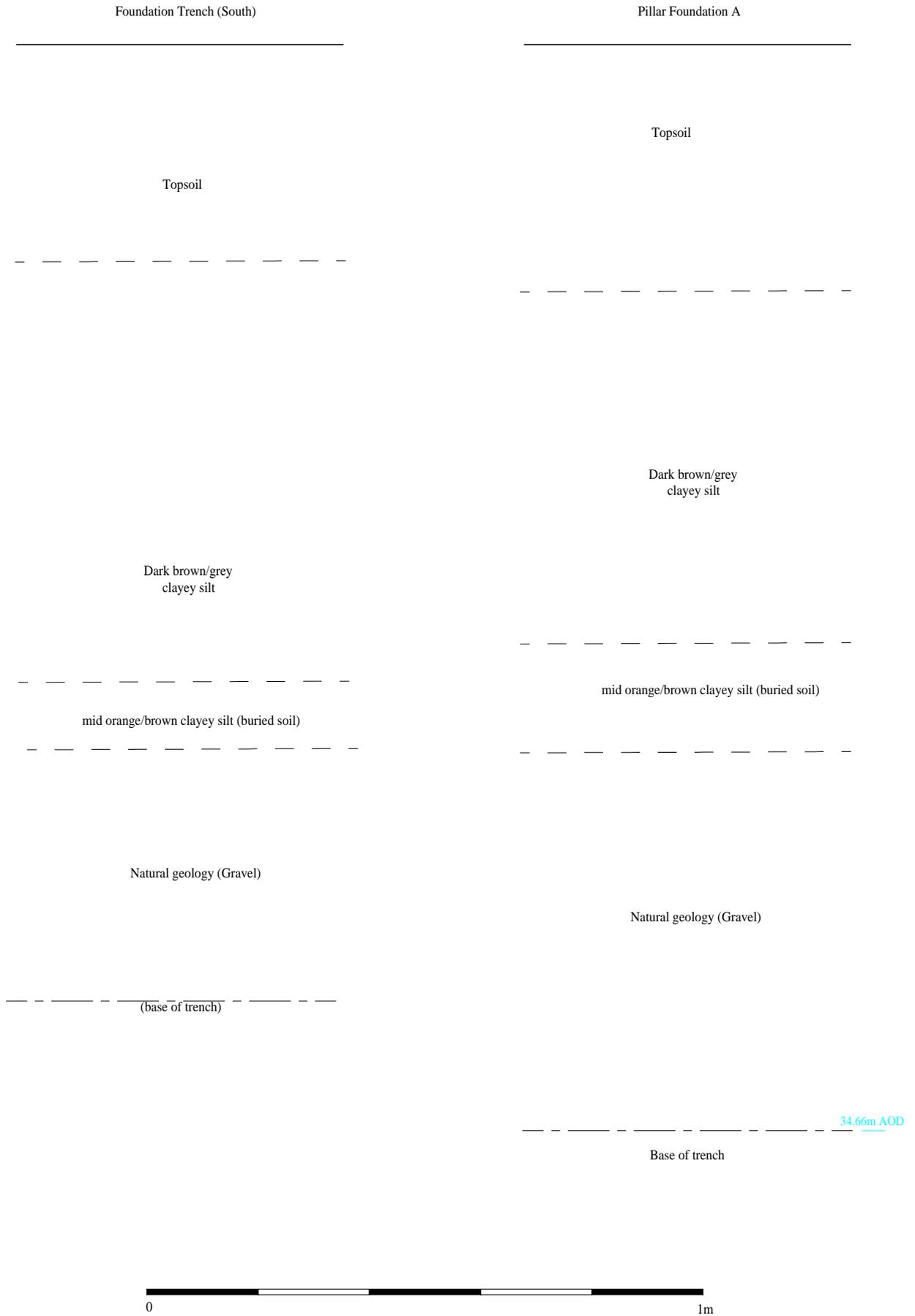


Figure 4. Representative sections