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Kenilworth Castle Gallery Tower evaluation 2004  
Archive Summary Report

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with contributions by Sarah Jennings and Tracey Clark

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**Summary**

An evaluation trench was excavated at the Gallery Tower to assess the nature of deposits in advance of proposals to place a new building on the site. This report outlines the results.

**Keywords**

Excavation  
Post-Medieval

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## Introduction

This report describes the results of a limited excavation within the Gallery Tower of Kenilworth Castle in February 2004.

Kenilworth Castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (RSM 21576) located at NGR SP278723 in the county of Warwickshire. Proposals for new visitor facilities show a new building on the flat space within the ruins of the Gallery Tower, a probable 16<sup>th</sup> century tower built at the outer end of the causeway/dam known as the Tiltyard that would have retained the Mere around the castle prior to deliberate slighting after the Civil Wars. A geophysical survey was arranged for October 2003 (Eiks 2003) that indicated potentially complex archaeology on the site, and prior to that in 1990 two test pits were excavated as part of a bridge construction scheme (Anon, 1990). These two investigations, coupled with a sparse record of 1960s clearance activities (Thompson 1965, Thompson 1969) were not considered sufficient to inform the decision-making process, and CfA was called upon to undertake an evaluation of the site.

To test the validity of the 1990 test pit report and to inform decisions regarding proposals for new facilities the CfA undertook a limited excavation programme at the Gallery Tower from 23 February to 5 March 2004. A single trench was hand-excavated, running roughly north-south along the main axis of the tower (fig 1) in order to test the range of geophysical anomalies seen across the site (fig 2). Further, the trench was designed to provide a comparison with the 1990 test-pits (fig 1) at either end of the wooden bridge installed in 1991, and to determine the relationship of any revealed deposits to the standing fragment of wall on the east side of the tower. The trench was 10 metres long by 2 metres wide, with a 2 metre x 2 metre side extension to bring it in contact with the standing remains of the wall.

The aims of the project (from Cromwell 2004) were:

- 1.1. To examine the nature of the allegedly modern “overburden” layers and assess their date. Particular effort was made to identify and determine the extent (if any) of backfill from 20<sup>th</sup> century excavations and landscaping, and to separate them from post-1649 archaeological deposits.
- 1.2. To determine the depth of the allegedly modern “overburden” layers across as much of the Gallery Tower as is practical.
- 1.3. To expose and assess the nature of any underlying *in situ* archaeological deposits, and their relation to the remnants of upstanding masonry.

Further, the trench was located to:

- 1.4. Examine the various different geophysical anomaly types.
- 1.5. Examine areas that would be most affected by the new building, such as proposed wall footings.
- 1.6. Avoid obstructing the existing pathway used by visitors to the monument.

A condition of Scheduled Monument Class Consent (SMCC) was intended to preserve the 16<sup>th</sup> century and earlier deposits (assuming these could be recognised) by stipulating that excavation should cease if these could be identified.

## Methods

The trench was marked out and de-turfed with a turf-cutter to ensure that the reinstated surface would be tidy given the prominent position of the site at the entrance to the monument. The excavation consisted of a 2m wide main trench along the axis of the Gallery Tower, with a side extension to the upstanding east wall of the tower. All excavation was by hand using trowels, mattocks, and shovels as appropriate. The 10 days of fieldwork included everything from de-turfing through to backfilling and reinstatement of turf.

## Results

Excavation began with the removal of layer [0002], a dark brown topsoil containing a mix of tile fragments, pottery fragments, and modern artefacts such as lipstick and ice-cream wrappers. The sole fragment of clay pipe-stem came from this layer. The topsoil was approximately 0.25m thick over the whole trench, and was extensively disturbed by burrowing animals. Below this at the southern end of the trench was layer [0003], a spread of frogged bricks and mortar-covered sandstone fragments corresponding to the area of “stones” indicated in the geophysical survey (see fig 3).

Against the wall the turf was peeled off to reveal that the wall footings stepped out a distance of 0.10m at a depth of less than 0.05m below ground surface (see fig. 4). This stepped-out course can be seen at either end of the wall where the 1960s clearance has exposed the wall to a further 0.50m. Below the topsoil [0002] was a shallow linear cut feature [0005] filled by a brown soil [0006] (see fig. 5). This cut was 0.60m wide and 0.08m deep, running parallel to the wall, and was interpreted as the base of a narrow trench dug to expose the wall for consolidation. Its edges were sharp and the base of the cut was flat, suggesting careful excavation. Below [0005] was another brown silty deposit [0008] in cut [0009] that again represented some form of linear feature against the wall. It was 0.25m wide, and again was shallow at only 0.08m deep, but was probably truncated when [0005] was dug. Its edges were irregular and not as well defined as [0005], and considerable tree-root disturbance within the feature probably accounts for this.

All of these features and topsoil overlaid context [0004], a flat layer of reddish sandy loam that covered the whole trench right up to the wall footings. This deposit was excavated in two places (Area A and Area B on fig. 6) with the aims of gathering dating evidence and identifying its thickness. Area A was defined by the “side extension” which was then projected across the main trench to form a roughly 4m by 2m area that would test the deposit’s relationship with the wall fabric. Area B was a 1.5m stretch at the southern end of the trench. In both cases the reddish sandy loam was approximately 0.30m thick, and contained numerous pebbles and sandstone fragments. Tile fragments and some pot fragments were recovered which provided a probable late 17<sup>th</sup> century date for the context. Clay pipes were conspicuously absent from the deposit. Lenses of material with slightly different amounts of pebbles or sandstone fragments were recognised within the deposit, but as these generally could not be resolved to discreet features with defined edges they were interpreted as separate loads within the deposit.

Below layer [0004] a number of other layers were identified but not excavated (see fig. 7) after consultation with Tony Fleming the Inspector of Ancient Monuments (Historic

Properties) in order to meet the condition of SMCC. Limited examination of the edges of each layer established the stratigraphic sequence seen in Fig 11. Cut and fill [0017] and [0018] occurred against wall footings [0019], and were cut into reddish brown sandy layer [0016] which itself butted the footings. [0016] overlaid a yellowish brown sand deposit [0015] which in turn overlaid a narrow band of red sand [0014]. [0014] lapped over the edge of [0012], an orangy brown sand deposit that overlaid [0010], a gravelly deposit from which a single sherd of late medieval pottery was retrieved. The layers near the wall were sloping downwards towards the wall, suggesting that they were meant to fill the space between a higher pre-existing central ridge and the newly-built wall. It might be that they represent a mix of construction deposits and deposits pre-dating the tower, although the limited exposure combined with the condition of consent preventing their excavation meant that their true nature could not be determined.

The inner face of the wall consists of a coursed roughly-squared red sandstone rubble core exposed across most of the wall with fine ashlar facing blocks surviving above the foundation “step” at 82.09mOD (see fig. 4) to the wall’s full height at the north end and on the lower two courses across the rest of the elevation. Below the foundation “step” the wall consists of roughly coursed roughly-squared red sandstone blocks. The ashlar and corework are pointed in a hard whitish mortar with some patches of pinkish mortar representing several episodes of consolidation. The top two foundation courses below the step are also pointed in whitish mortar, but below them the stones sit in a silty soil matrix reminiscent of clay bonding. The outer face of the wall (see fig. 8) similarly retains only part of its ashlar facing and has three horizontal “steps” near the base set one course apart projecting out by approximately 0.10m each. The middle step corresponds in height to the internal step exposed by the excavation, with heights ranging from 81.92 to 82.00mOD along its length. The wall contains little in the way of diagnostic features, and is of a general “late medieval” construction, but the surviving outside corner incorporates at its base a fine fluted block that appears to be reused from a richly moulded column or vault rib. This may be salvaged from the nearby abbey after its dissolution giving the tower wall a mid-16<sup>th</sup> century date or later. However, it could also come from improvements within the castle, potentially allowing an earlier date for its incorporation here.

### **Interpretation**

The step in the wall, and the change in construction below it, suggest that the intended occupation surface of the tower was most likely at present turf level (around 82.20mOD) or higher. The rough stonework below the step was not intended to be seen, so either it was buried during construction or was hidden by a floor structure for which there is no evidence. No evidence was found for internal cross-walls, suggesting that the Gallery Tower was either floored and roofed with single large spans or that it might have actually been an open courtyard space with an earthen or paved floor. However it is also possible that any such evidence lies below the unexcavated portions of layer [0004].

The layer [0004] appears to be a levelling-up layer designed to fill the interior of the Gallery Tower, and may date from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century or earlier. The earlier layers exposed beneath it were probably intended to fill and level the uneven construction site, but would need to be exposed in a larger area and excavated to fully understand them.

Layer [0004] did not have a trampled surface, and showed no evidence of having been paved or covered in any way. Its top was also considerably lower than the wall-footing step, suggesting either that it was a later levelling layer unrelated to the construction of the tower and possibly deposited as late as the topsoil (although considered unlikely), or that its upper surface had been truncated by later events such as the 1960s clearance.

Pottery from [0004] supports a late 17<sup>th</sup> century date, although the range of dates for the sherds stretched from the 14<sup>th</sup> to late 17<sup>th</sup> century, and contamination through root or animal activity cannot be completely ruled out despite the evidence that much of the current mole activity is focussed on topsoil layer [0002]. The absence of clay pipes – that hallmark of post-medieval labouring – argues for an early date with later material being intrusive, but the small number of recovered finds caused by the small size of Areas A and B precludes any meaningful speculation.

The evaluation did not examine the strata below the construction horizon for the tower.

### **Archive summary**

The archive consists of:

19 context records

11 plans and sections on drafting film

17 photographic records, representing 74 colour slides, 60 monochrome prints, and 109 digital images in JPEG format.

1 Levels Book

1 Project Design

167 artefacts from 6 contexts

1 file of correspondence

### **Statements of potential**

The stratigraphic record is very short, and has no potential for further analysis in its current form.

There were no environmental samples taken, so there is no potential for analysis.

The finds include two iron objects and a piece of glass that could be further investigated to provide dates. This would help secure the dating and thus the interpretation of layer [0004].

### **Recommendations for further work**

Aside from completing analysis of the three items from [0004] that may provide extra dating evidence, there is no further analysis work to recommend.

The existence of the evaluation should be made known in an appropriate journal, although publication of the results should remain in this publicly-available CfA Report. A poster summarising the work should be produced for display at the site.

This report should be considered as the final report for this evaluation.

### **Recommendations for future investigations of the site**

The evaluation achieved its aims, but has left significant questions about the tower and the deposits within it. The two deposits that make up the top 0.70m of the site have been examined, characterised, and dated, but the deposits below 0.70m depth are still unexplored. It is these lower deposits that are likely to relate to pre-Civil War activity on the site, and thus it is these deposits that hold the key to understanding the development, date, and form of the Gallery Tower and any predecessors on the site. Should development plans include disturbance beyond c0.70m depth these untouched deposits under [0004] will have to be investigated archaeologically in a sufficiently large trench to make sense of them. Also, given that [0004] is itself an archaeological deposit any disturbance below the topsoil (eg below about 0.25m depth) would require archaeological work. In this sense the evaluation clarifies the inaccurate assumptions from the 1990 test pit that suggested everything less than 0.80m below surface was post-Civil War and thus less important. The discrepancy almost certainly lies in the position of the 1990 test pit at the margin of the Gallery Tower “plateau”, on the edge of the slope into the Mere to the west.

The evaluation did not establish the origins of the standing remnant of wall, which is only dated based on associations with known historical events and by a single block of fluted stone of allegedly Dissolution origin in its base. Better understanding of the Gallery Tower would require further investigation of this wall and its relation to the dam structure.

Greater understanding of the Gallery Tower would require considerably more excavation than was planned or indeed allowed by SMCC. To truly interpret the development of this site a large-scale excavation would be required.

The limited amount of artefactual material recovered from [0004] was not large enough to securely characterise the deposits from which it may have come before being deposited across the tower, and if possible future work on site should include taking a much larger sample of this deposit for finds retrieval. This should be done archaeologically, and should certainly be done if the deposit is to be disturbed by construction.

While the archive from the evaluation has no further analysis potential on its own it does provide a useful basis on which to plan future work. The archive should be considered again if new information is added such as through further excavation work.

### **Acknowledgements**

The authors wish to thank Tony Fleming (EH IAM for site) for his kind permission to conduct the evaluation. Fond thanks are given to Vicky Crosby, Dave Fellows, and Liz Muldowney who agreed to leave the comfort of the CfA offices and excavate in winter, and for their intellectual contributions to the understanding presented here. Thanks are also due to Steve Spacey, Mark Malin, Carol Rogan, and Annette Stocken for their assistance and indulgence during the occasionally messy work on their monument. Thanks are due to Brian Kerr (EH CfA) for his advice on the nature of the archaeology, his understanding of the buildings, and his enthusiastic digging. The authors wish to acknowledge Kirsty Stonell-Walker (EH CfA) who bound this report and Christine

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Figures

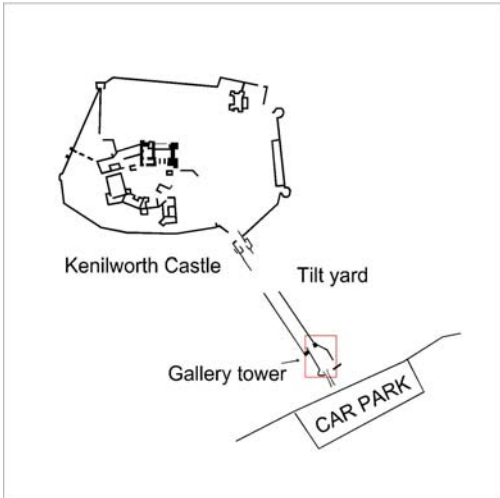


Fig 1a. Location of Gallery Tower.

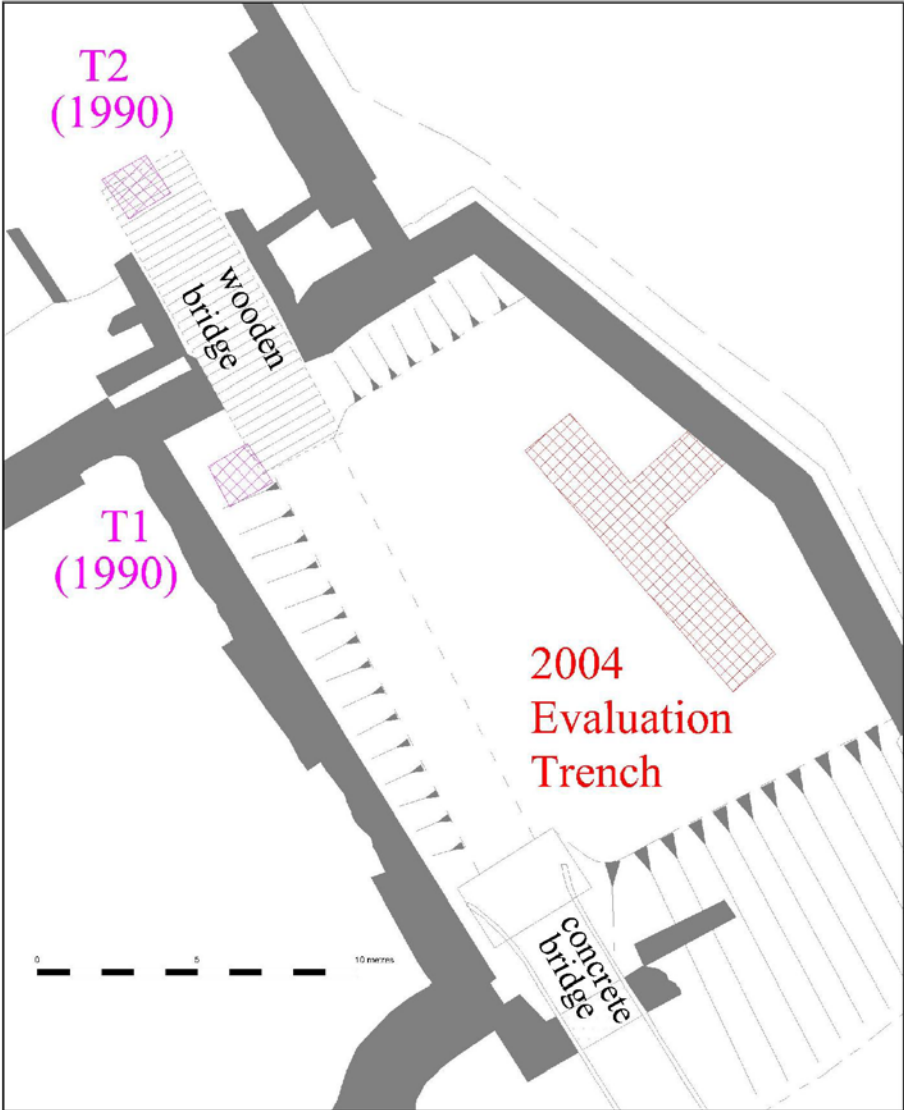


Fig 1b. Location plan showing evaluation trench and 1990 test pits within Gallery Tower.

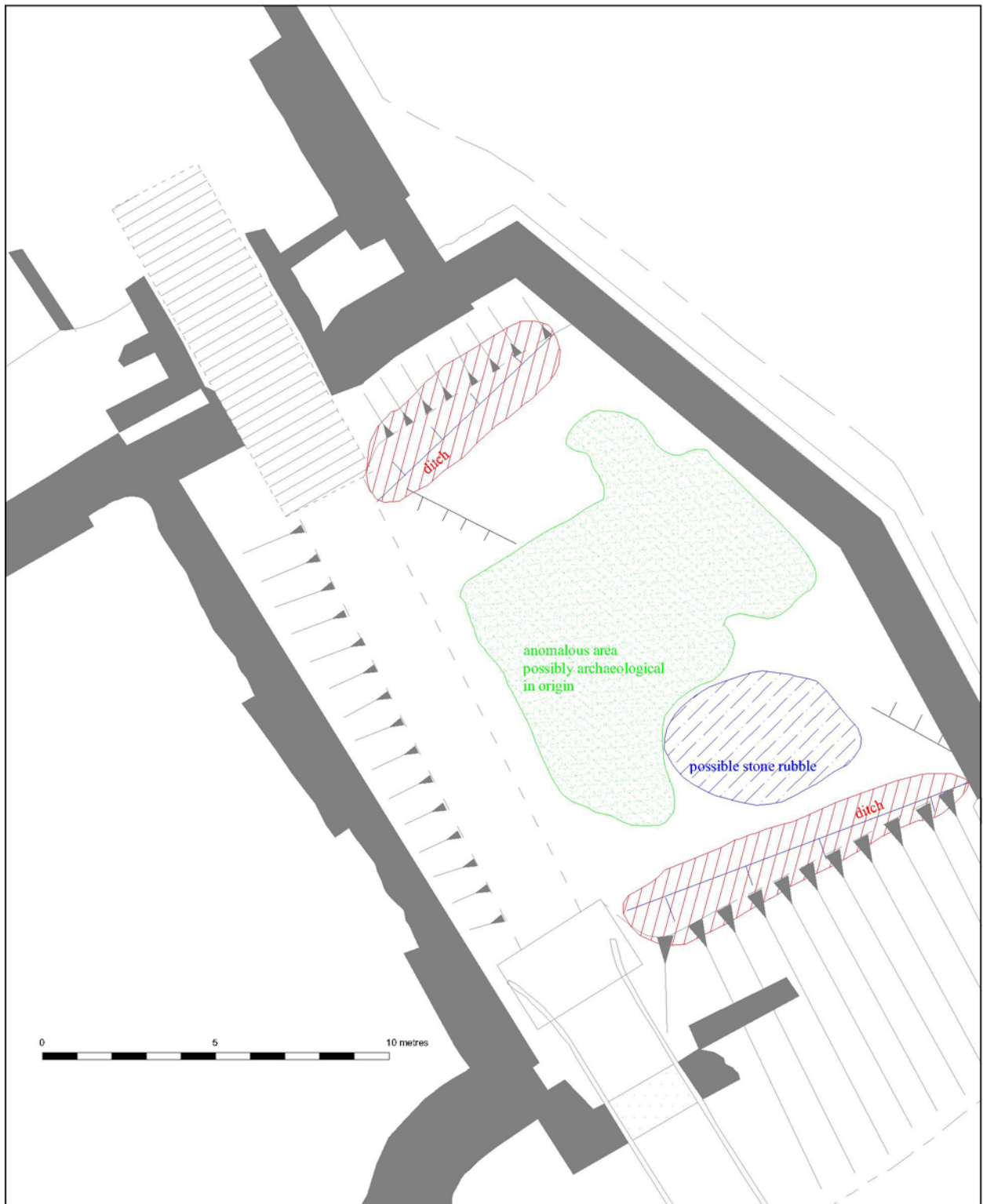


Fig 2. Geophysics interpretation plot (from Elks 2003 Stratascan report). Large green area in centre is “anomalous area, possibly archaeological in origin” while smaller oval blue area is “strong complex area – possibly stone rubble”.



Fig 3a. Photo of brick rubble [0003]. 2-metre scale.

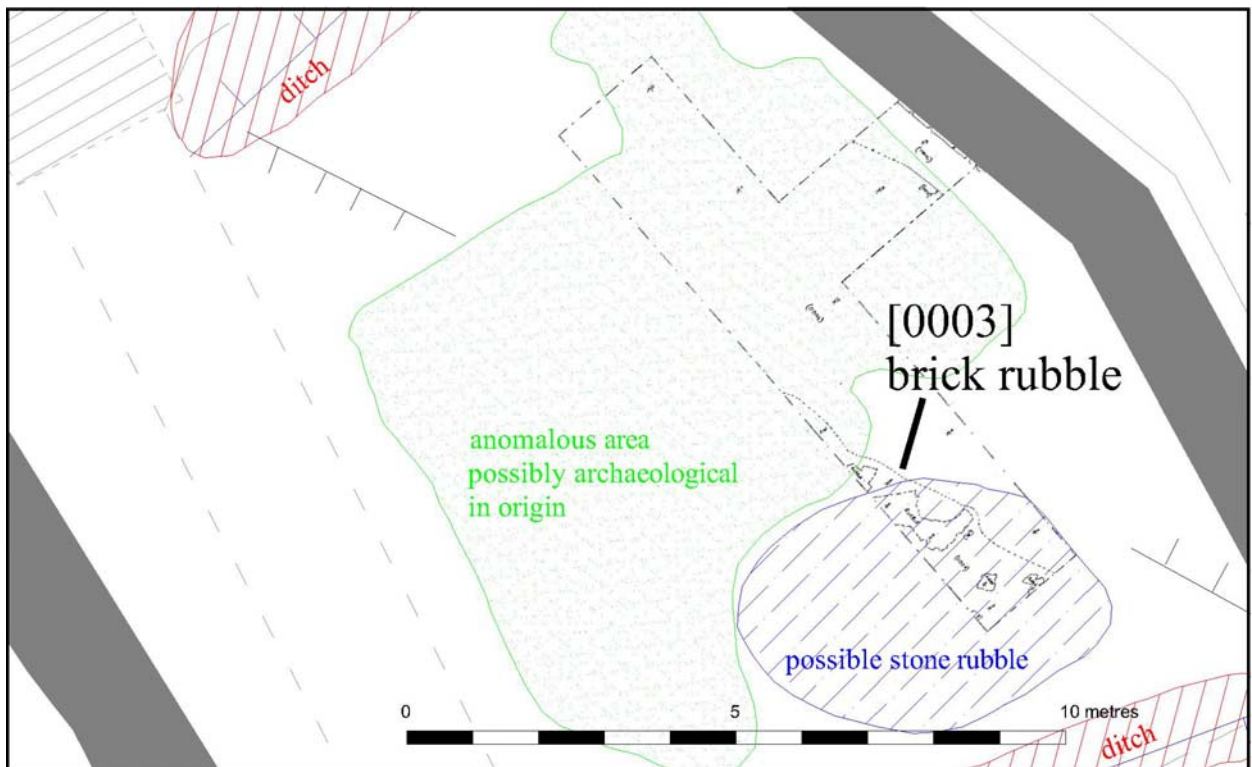


Fig 3b. Plan of brick rubble layer [0003] imposed on geophysics plot.



Fig 4. Stepped-out wall footings. 1-metre horizontal scale and 0.5-metre vertical scale.



Fig 5. Context 0005. 0.5-metre scale.

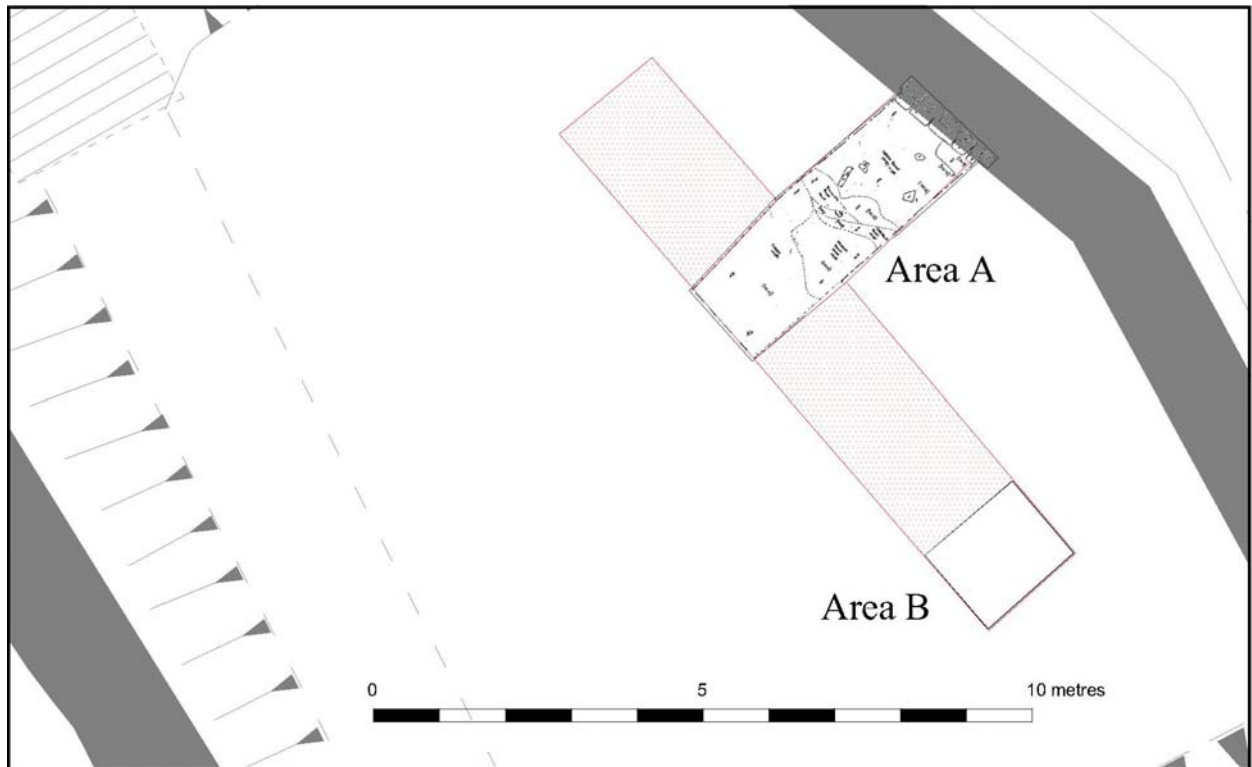


Fig 6. Location of Areas A & B within trench. Note that context 0011 extended beyond the trench in all directions at the base of Area B, unlike Area A (see fig 7).

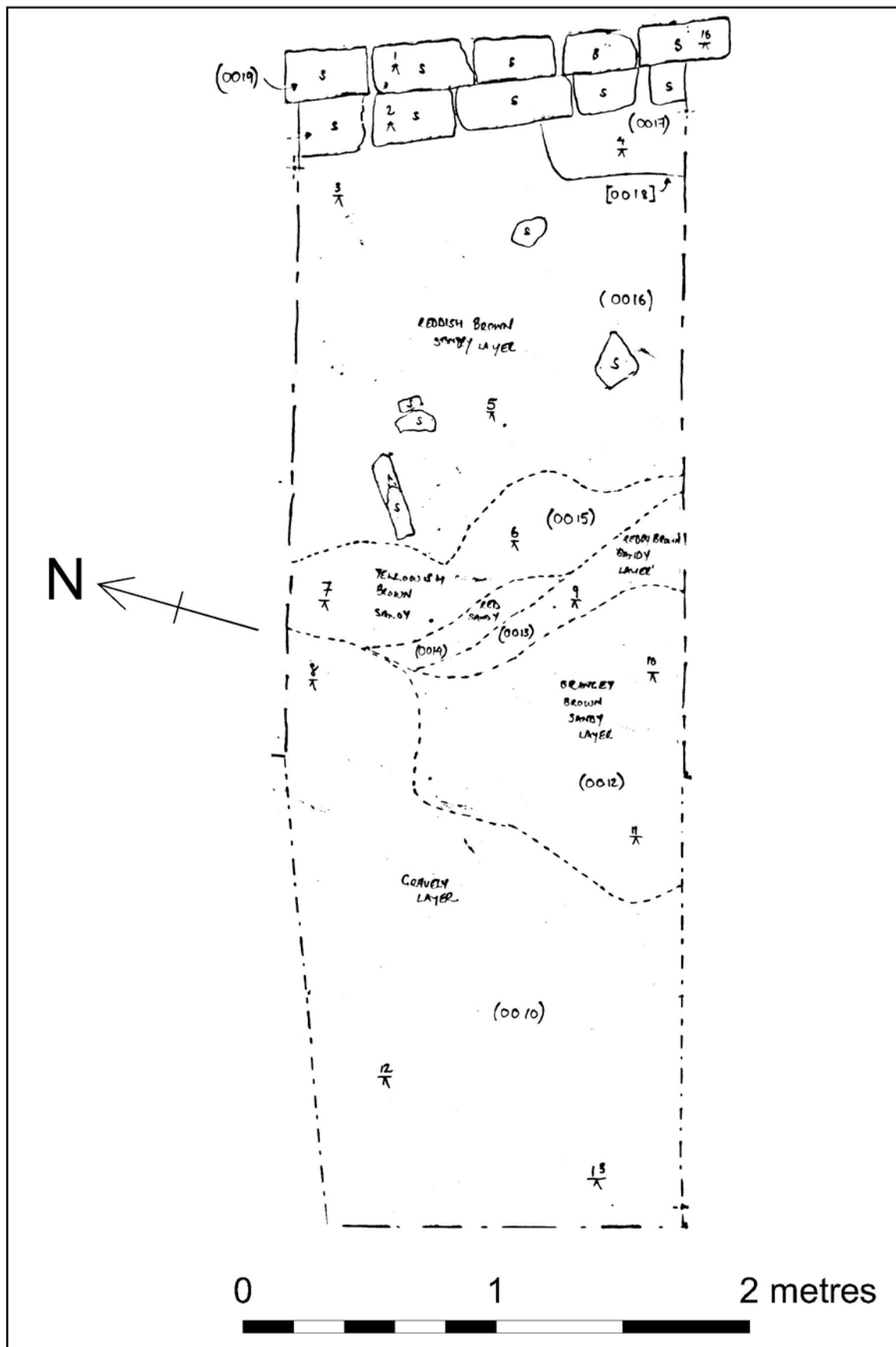


Fig 7. Plan at base of Area A, showing (from bottom to top) contexts 0010, 0012, 0013, 0014, 0015, 0016, 0017, 0018, 0019.



Fig 8. Exterior of Gallery Tower wall showing steps in foundation, as well as fluted block.

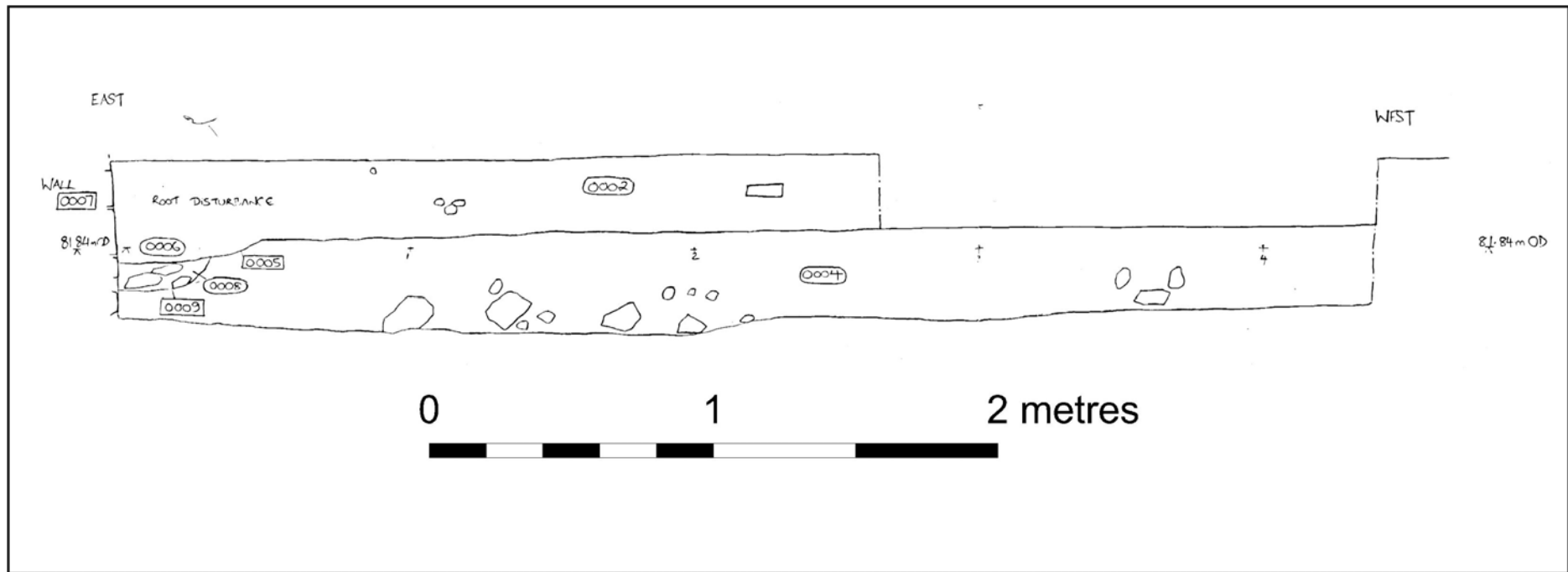


Fig 9. North-facing section of Area A.



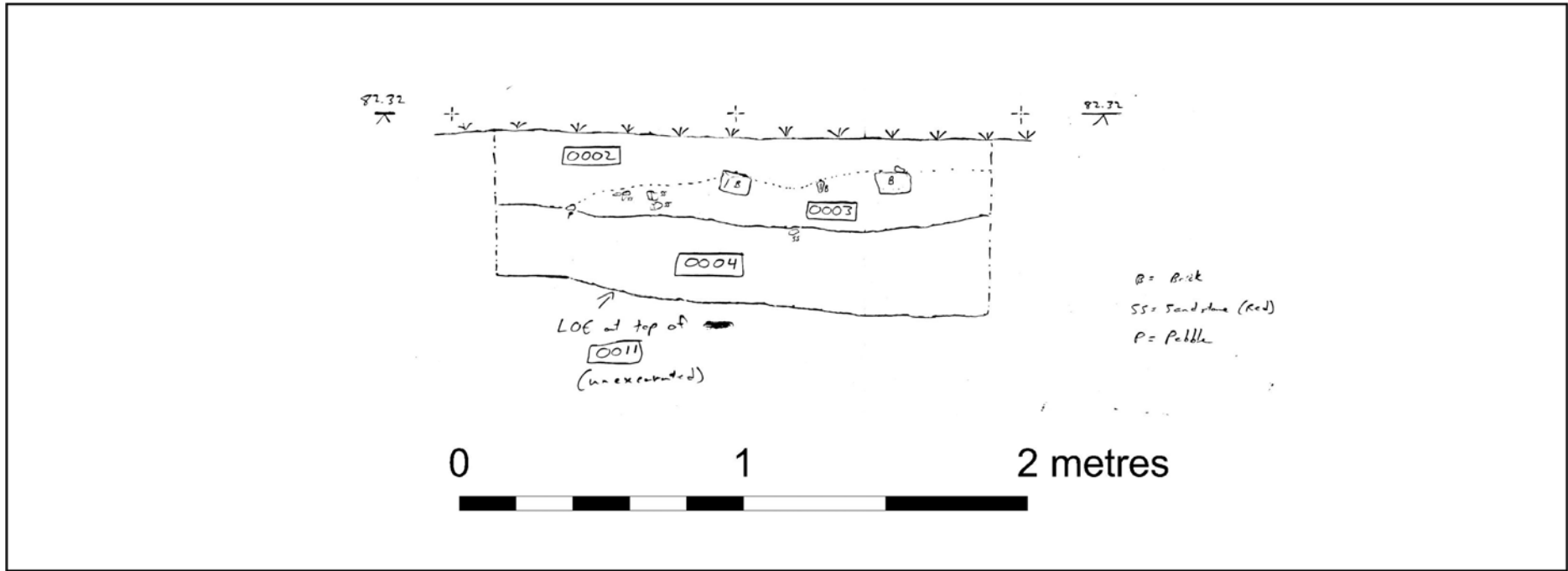


Fig 10. North-facing section of Area B.

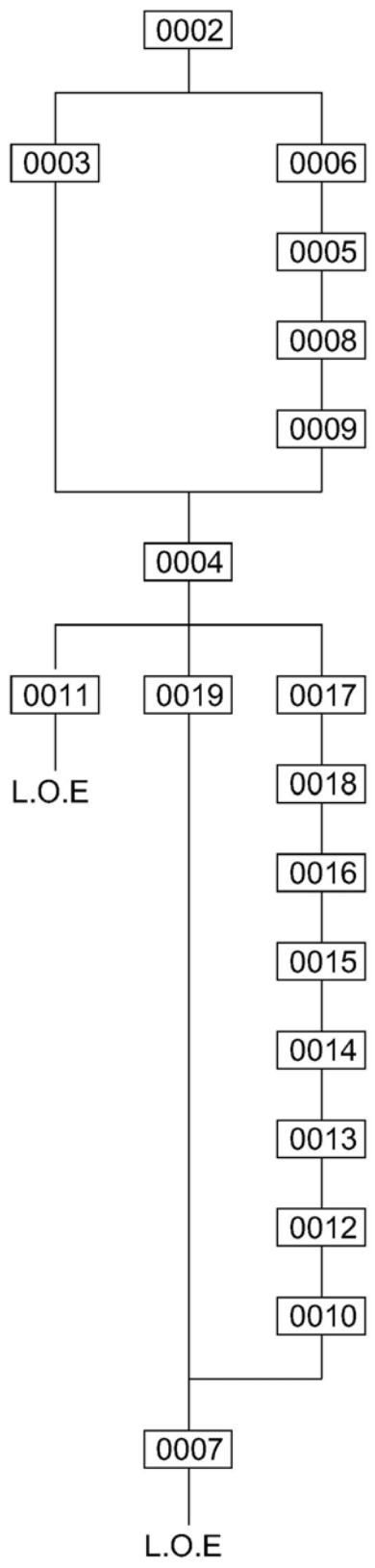


Fig 11. Matrix of contexts.

## **Appendix: The finds**

Tracey Clark and Sarah Jennings, March 2004

From the excavation at Kenilworth finds were recovered from only 6 contexts, yielding a total of 167 fragments of all types of material. The majority of these came from topsoil, which is believed to be imported. The amount of modern material within many of these contexts was high and much of the ceramic building material (CBM) recovered had been re-used. Indeed, the only cohesive context with no modern material but some important pottery spot dates was 0004.

### **Context 0001**

Context 0001, spoilheap, contained 2 sherds of pottery of limited dating potential and a small fragment of ceramic building material.

### **Context 0002**

Due to the nature of context 0002, imported topsoil, it provided the greatest number of finds, a total of 79. These included 15 thick roof tiles, 5 green glazed floor tiles, 6 brick fragments, 8 stones and 10 pottery sherds, which provided a 18<sup>th</sup> century spot date. The upper surfaces of the floor tiles were smooth and much of the glaze had been worn away due to long term use.

Two of the brick fragments were from modern machine cut bricks, and mortar was found on 8 of the roof tiles, bricks and stones suggesting re-use. Of the stones only 1 could be determined as a pavior, the remainder were amorphous and unworked.

Of the remaining objects 3 were natural materials, coal, clinker and slate. There were 21 sherds of glass, both clear and green beer bottle glass and a lipstick and cork, all modern. The 2 corroded iron objects were given small find numbers, 200401003 and 200401004, and further assessment is necessary following x-raying.

In addition there was an unmarked clay tobacco pipe stem with a large central hole, 2 animal bones, 1 animal tooth and 3 fragments of ceramic building material, all amorphous.

This context had a mixture of modern and older material and is likely to have been deposited in the 1960s.

### **Context 0003**

Context 0003 contained much the same material as context 0002 above. There were 6 sherds of pottery of late 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century date and 2 glazed floor tiles, 1 green and 1 yellow. The white slipped yellow glazed floor tile was triangular in shape and had a score mark along one side where it had been cut, suggesting that it was positioned along the edge of a room up against the wall.

The remainder of the material, excluding 2 roof tiles and 3 fragments of CBM, is most likely modern. The 6 brick fragments were machine cut, with one being patterned over one surface. There were 9 pieces of clinker/coal, a modern cup hook, a piece of mortar and a large piece of tarmac/concrete. One stone was covered in tar and the other 2 were amorphous. Again in this context, 3 of the bricks and stones had mortar over them, indicating re-use.

#### **Context 0004**

Context 0004 was the most cohesive and contained no modern material. Unlike contexts 0002 and 0003, there was no evidence for re-use of any of the material found in 0004.

The 14 sherds of pottery, including black glazed ware and Nottingham stoneware, provided spot dates between late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century. There was 1 piece of yellow glazed floor tile. Of the remaining 8 fragments of roof tile, 2 were nib tiles. These were the only tiles providing evidence of the type of roofers used, as no peg tiles were found.

There were 3 small finds from this context which consisted of 2 iron objects, one of which was possibly a knife, 200401001, and a fragment of translucent window glass, 200401000. These artefacts have potential for further investigation to provide dates. However, the 1 animal bone, 1 animal tooth, 1 unworked stone and 9 fragments of CBM have little potential.

#### **Context 0006**

The 9 finds from this context indicate a late date. There were 2 fragments of modern bottle glass, 1 tile, 3 unworked amorphous stones, 1 lump of mortar, 1 piece of slate and a sherd of pottery. Evidence for reuse was apparent on 1 stone and the tile with mortar being present on all surfaces of the tile, including those that were broken.

#### **Context 0008**

This context only contained 1 small animal bone and 1 amorphous unworked stone.

#### **Context 0010**

Context 0010 contained 1 featureless pottery sherd, potentially of late medieval date, and a large bone.

#### **Summary**

It is clear from three contexts that the presence of modern material in the upper layers is very high on this site. Bottle glass and machine cut brick provide the main evidence for

dates in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This date is supported by such objects as the lipstick (0002), cork (0002) and mug hook (0003).

There is strong evidence for later reuse of many of the building materials (stone, tile and brick) which is made apparent by mortar present on 13 of these artefacts. Often mortar was present on more than 1 surface of the fragments and covered previously broken edges. This indicates that they were reused, possibly as rubble deposit for the inside of a later wall.

The roof tile fragments were, in the main, very thick, up to 1.7cm. This would create a heavy tiled roof requiring a strong structure to support it, possibly indicating the existence of a substantial structure on or near this site.

The wear on the upper surfaces of the green glazed floor tiles indicates they were in use for a long period. Indeed, on many of these tiles the glaze had almost totally worn away from the upper surface and it was extremely smooth. Unlike the roof tiles and other ceramic building materials, no mortar was observed on the floor tiles, therefore they were unlikely to have been reused. A difference of thickness is noticeable between the green (2cm) and yellow (2.4cm) glazed tiles meaning we have 2 types of floor tiles from 2 different periods. Both types were found in context 0003 but the material in this context is extremely mixed.

The pottery from the archaeological deposits provides a date range of late medieval to early 18<sup>th</sup> century. With the exception of the Nottingham stoneware from 0004 and white glazed pierced fragment from 0002, all the remaining pottery is likely to be of local manufacture.

All the material was clearly redeposited and the impression for the significant context 0004 is that it was very mixed and does include one sherd that cannot date before the very late 17<sup>th</sup> century and at least one other sherd that is also 17<sup>th</sup> century in date. The material from context 0010 is so limited that inferring a date of deposition from the single featureless body would be unwise, but the sherd is not likely to date after the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Table 1. Pottery spot-dates.

<b>Context</b>	<b>Date Range</b>	<b>Spot Date</b>
<b>0002</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> – 18 <sup>th</sup> century	2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter of 18 <sup>th</sup> century
<b>0003</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> - 17 <sup>th</sup> century	Late 16 <sup>th</sup> /17 <sup>th</sup> century
<b>0004</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> – late 18 <sup>th</sup> century	Late 17 <sup>th</sup> /18 <sup>th</sup> century
<b>0006</b>	? Early post medieval	15 <sup>th</sup> /16 <sup>th</sup> century
<b>0010</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> – 16 <sup>th</sup> century	15 <sup>th</sup> century