

# Former Car Clinic, Back of the Walls, Southampton

Report on Archaeological Evaluation  
SOU 1247

Ref: 53335

*June 2003*

**FORMER CAR CLINIC  
BACK OF THE WALLS  
SOUTHAMPTON**

**SOU 1247**

**REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

prepared on behalf of:

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**Figure 1: Site and Trench Location plan**

**Figure 2: Plan and section of Trench 1 and plan of Trench 2**

**Appendix 1: Trench summaries**

## Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Chatmohr Estates to undertake an archaeological evaluation at the former Car Clinic premises, Back of the Walls, Southampton, centred on NGR 442315 111195 (hereafter the 'Site'). The Site is the subject of a planning application to Southampton City Council (Application ref. 02/01165/FUL) for residential development.

In response to the planning application, Southampton City Council requires an archaeological evaluation of the Site to be carried out to determine what threat the proposals may pose to archaeological remains. The requirement is based on advice provided by the Heritage Conservation Unit of the Council and is in keeping with City of Southampton Local Plan (1995) Policy ENV4.

Remains of Saxo-Norman date have been recorded to the south of the Site, along with remains of Southampton's medieval defences. The line of the town wall extends along the western frontage of the Site, while to the east, the Site straddles the line of the two town ditches. Additionally, there was a possibility that the position of an artillery redoubt added to the wall and shown on a plan dated 1791 lay within the Site. The eastern end of the Site lies over the line of the former 18<sup>th</sup> century canal.

The evaluation consisted of the excavation of two trenches extending from the Site's western frontage eastward to determine the presence, absence, and condition of archaeological remains. The fieldwork was undertaken over five days from 28<sup>th</sup> April to 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2003.

The evaluation partially revealed two ditches, conceivably corresponding to the inner and outer town ditches east of the line of the town wall. These were cut through brickearth. One rim sherd of medieval pottery and ceramic building material were recovered, along with a fragment of bone, from redeposited brickearth in Trench 1 lying between the line of the town wall and the inner ditch. No evidence of the town wall was found along the western frontage. Modern foundations were also revealed cut down into the natural brickearth. These have severely impacted archaeological remains, which appeared to survive between them.

Mr Allan Morton, Southampton City Council's Heritage Conservation Officer, monitored the evaluation in his capacity as advisor the Council's Chief Planning Officer. Depending on the impact of the proposed development, a further, limited investigation of the Site may be required in mitigation of the proposed development.

## **Acknowledgements**

Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Chatmohr Estates, for commissioning the evaluation and for the advice of Allan Morton, Heritage Conservation Officer at Southampton City Council.

The fieldwork was carried out by Hannah Marriott, who prepared this report, and Simon Skittrell. The finds were assessed by Lorraine Mephram, and the report illustrations were prepared by Katherine Brandon. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Paul McCulloch.

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**REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Project Background**

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Chatmohr Estates to undertake an archaeological evaluation at the former Car Clinic premises, Back of the Walls, Southampton, NGR 442315 111195, hereafter the 'Site' (**Figure 1**). The fieldwork was undertaken from the 28<sup>th</sup> April to 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2003.

1.1.2 The Site is the subject of a planning application (ref. 02/01165/FUL) to Southampton City Council for residential development. In view of the potential of the Site to contain buried archaeological remains, the Heritage Officer of Southampton City Council advised that an archaeological evaluation should be undertaken prior to any development.

1.1.3 The evaluation was undertaken in line with a Programme of Archaeological Work prepared by Wessex Archaeology (document ref. T7756) and approved by the Heritage Officer of Southampton City Council. All works were carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (1994 as amended).

**1.2 Site Location and Description**

1.2.1 The Site is located on the east side of Back Of the Walls, below Canal Walk, and is bounded to the rear by Canal Walk. The Site is presently occupied by the former premises of Car Clinic, a car workshop. The eastern end of the workshop lies over a basement area.

1.2.2 The underlying geology of the Site comprises brickearth, overlying valley gravels. The Site lies between 6m and 7m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

**1.3 Archaeological Background**

1.3.1 The Site lies in the historic core of medieval Southampton. The line of the town wall extends along the western frontage of the Site, while further east the Site overlies the town ditches. There is a possibility that the position of an artillery redoubt added to the wall and shown on a plan dated 1791 falls within the Site. The eastern end of the Site lies over the line of the former 18<sup>th</sup> century canal.

- 1.3.2 Archaeological investigations immediately to the south of the Site (now Saxon Gate), revealed evidence of late Saxon/early Norman structures, and later Medieval defensive features. The medieval town wall and its berm to the east were also uncovered.
- 1.3.3 Archaeological investigations carried out by Platt and Coleman-Smith close to the Site (Leicester University Press 1975), provided evidence of an inner and outer town ditch, an arrangement possibly confined to the eastern side of the town defences.

## **2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **2.1 Fieldwork and assessment**

- 2.1.1 The aim of the evaluation fieldwork was to determine whether archaeological remains, in particular of the town wall and ditch, survive on the Site and to determine the extent, nature, state of preservation, and date of those remains.
- 2.1.2 The aim of this report is to provide an assessment of the results of the evaluation fieldwork sufficient to inform the Heritage Officer of Southampton City Council of the archaeological potential of the Site.

## **3 METHOD**

### **3.1 Evaluation trenches**

- 3.1.1 Two evaluation trenches were excavated. Trench 1, measuring 10m by 2.3m, was positioned centrally within the Site and ran eastward from the western Site frontage. Trench 2, 5.5m by 1.8m, was positioned east of Trench 1. The trenches were positioned so as to provide an east to west profile through the Site and across the line of the postulated elements of the town defences.
- 3.1.2 The concrete floor of the Site was removed using a mechanical breaker. Subsequent trench excavation was carried out using a toothless bucket, under archaeological supervision. Up-cast from the trenches were scanned for artefacts. The trenches were backfilled on completion.
- 3.1.3 All archaeological deposits and features were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system. A drawn and digital record was compiled, including both plans and sections, and tied to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. A full photographic record was also maintained using both colour transparencies and black and white negatives (on 35mm film), and digital pictures.
- 3.1.4 A Southampton City project code, SOU 1247, was used for the recording of the Site.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 A summary of the results of the evaluation is provided below. This is based on the archive of the evaluation as compiled on Site under Southampton City Museums Code **SOU 1247** and held at Wessex Archaeology under project code 53335. A summary of context information is provided in **Appendix 1**.

4.1.2 The evaluation trenches were limited in extent and contained substantial modern foundations. This severely limited the areas available for investigation and consequently the archaeological information was gained from very small areas within the trenches.

### 4.2 Trench 1

4.2.1 Trench 1 measured 10m by 2.3m and was excavated to a general depth of 1.3m to 1.6m (**Figure 2**). Clean natural brickearth **111** was revealed in the base of the trench in two small areas toward the eastern end of the trench. Overlying **111**, at the western and eastern ends of the trench, were small areas of redeposited brickearth **105**, at least 0.3m thick, which contained one medieval (12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century) jar rim sherd, two pieces of post-medieval brick, and a small fragment of bone. At a depth of 1.39m below ground level, **105** appeared to be cut by feature **104**, a 3.4m wide ditch running north-south across the trench. The fill **103** of the ditch was not investigated and was overlain by a wall of probably post-medieval date comprising a single course of mortared stone blocks running north-south. All other deposits within the trench were modern.

### 4.3 Trench 2

4.3.1 Trench 2 (**Figure 2**), measured 5.5m by 1.8m. Between modern foundations, a small strip of natural brickearth **206** was revealed at the base of the trench at a depth of 1.65m. This was cut by a linear feature **205**, which appeared to be a ditch running north-south. Its fill **204** was not investigated.

### 4.4 Discussion

4.4.1 Despite the very limited areas available within the trenches, each contained evidence for a north-south ditch clearly cut into redeposited or natural brickearth. It appears reasonable to suggest that these represent the inner and outer ditches that lay outside of Southampton's eastern town wall. These features, at a depth of between 1.39m (in Trench 1) and 1.65m (in Trench 2), appear to survive as discrete 'islands' between deeply cut modern foundations.

4.4.2 Along the western frontage of the site was a substantial concrete footing. No evidence of the town wall was found, and it may be concluded that this is because the town wall either lies further to the west beneath the modern pavement and carriageway, or has been completely removed by modern foundations.

## **5 CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Results and Recommendation**

- 5.1.1 Evidence of the inner and outer ditches of Southampton's defences and of potentially earlier deposits west of the inner ditch survives beneath the Site, albeit severely truncated by modern foundations and to a very limited extent.
- 5.1.2 Depending on the nature and impact of detailed proposals to develop the Site, the Heritage Conservation Officer of Southampton City Council may recommend mitigation of the proposed impact in the form of further limited archaeological investigation confined to the western end of the Site.

## **6 REFERENCES**

Wessex Archaeology 2003, Former Car Clinic, Back of the Walls, Southampton – Programme of Archaeological Work, Client Report

Platt and Coleman-Smith, 1975, *Excavations in Medieval Southampton 1953-1969*, Leicester University Press

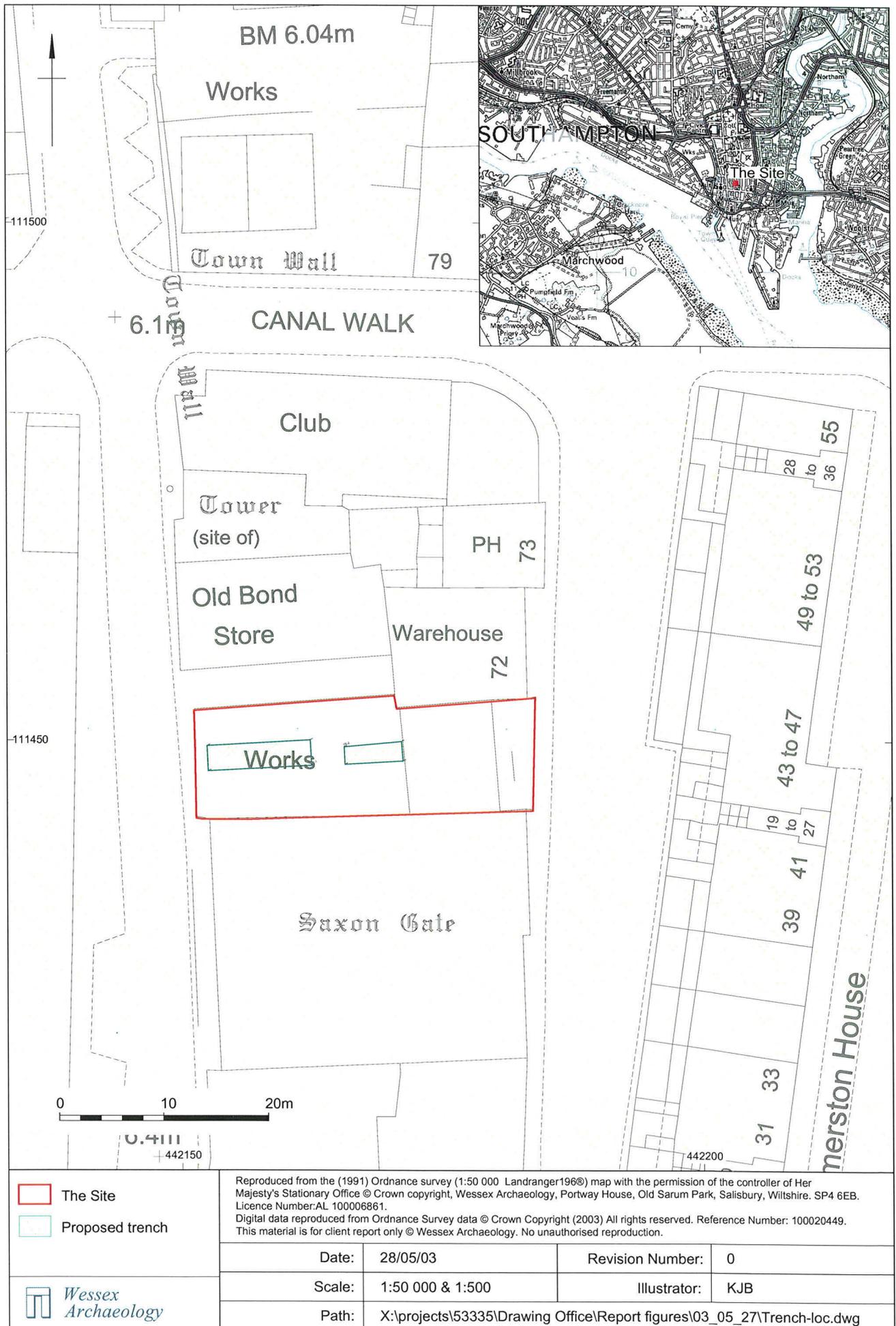
## APPENDIX 1

### Trench 1 - 10m x 2.3m x 1.6m

Context Number	Description	Depth
101	Concrete floor	0 – 0.20m
102	Modern Rubble	0.20 – 1.30m
103	Mid greyish brown silty clay, with frequent subangular gravel, and modern CBM. Fill of 104 – probable tertiary fill.	unexcavated
104	Cut of probable N-S linear feature – possible inner town boundary ditch	unexcavated
105	Mid orangey brown slightly clayey brickearth, with charcoal flecks, subrounded flint gravels <0.02m-medieval pottery, cbm, and bone frag.	1.30m -
106	Concrete wall	
107	Concrete wall ( identical to 207)	
108	Concrete wall	
109	Limestone wall with degraded sandy mortar remaining, one course. Appears to be sunk into ditch backfill	
110	Concrete layer covering line of town ditch	
111	Light orangey brown sandy brickearth natural	1.60m -

### Trench 2 - 5.5m x 1.8m x 1.8m

Context Number	Description	Depth
201	Concrete floor	0 – 0.20m
202	Demolition rubble from cellar	0.20 – 1.05m
203	Brick foundations of cellar	1.05 – 1.65m
204	Mid greyish brown silty clay, with frequent subangular gravel, and modern CBM. Fill of 205 – probable tertiary fill.	Unexcavated
205	Cut of probable N-S linear feature – possible outer town boundary ditch	Unexcavated
206	Light orangey brown sandy brickearth natural	1.65m -
207	Concrete wall ( identical to 107)	
208	Stone block set within cellar floor	
209	Black brick cellar floor	

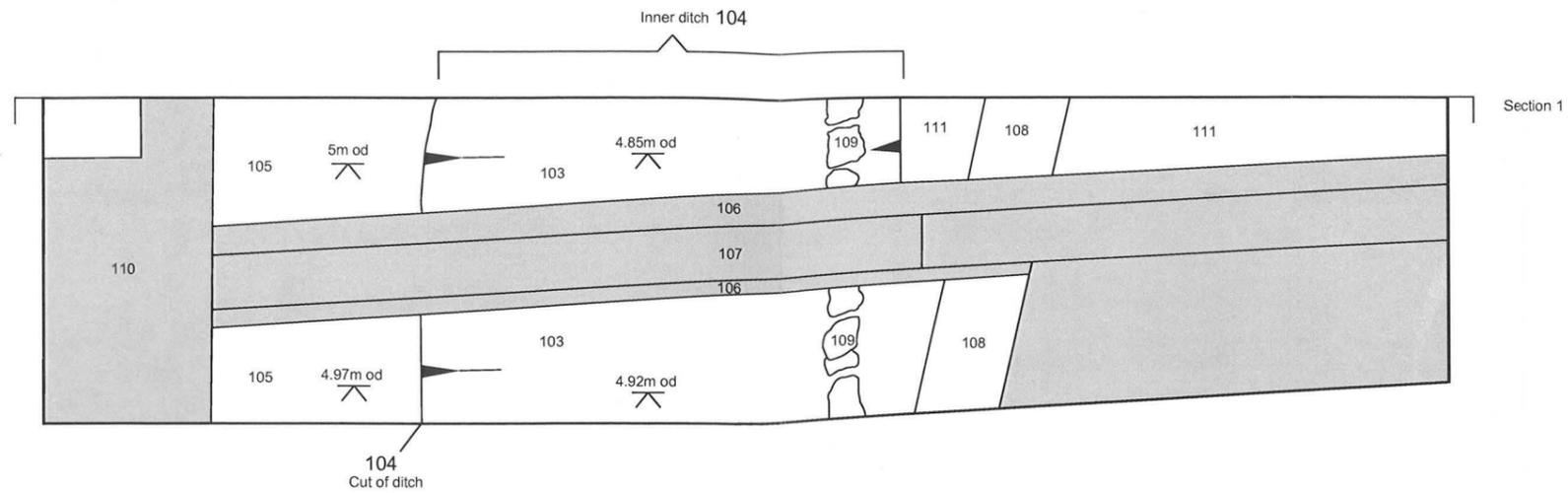


Location of the Site and proposed trench

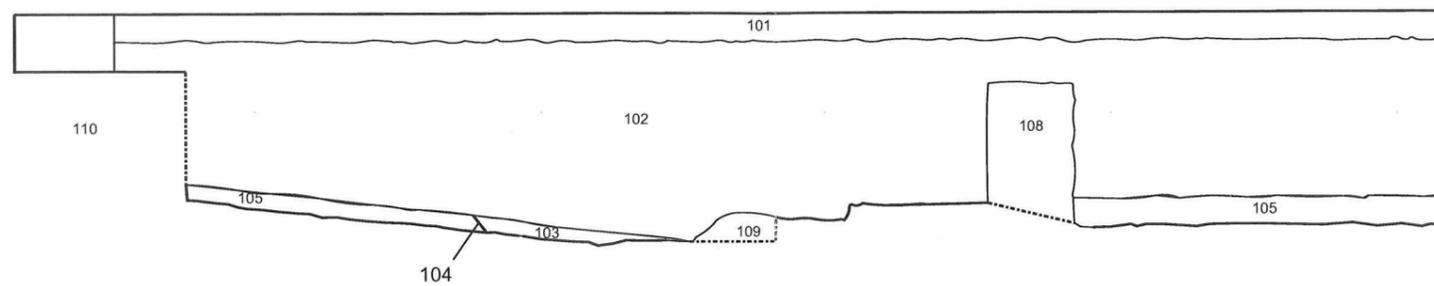
Figure 1

Trench 1

6.39m od

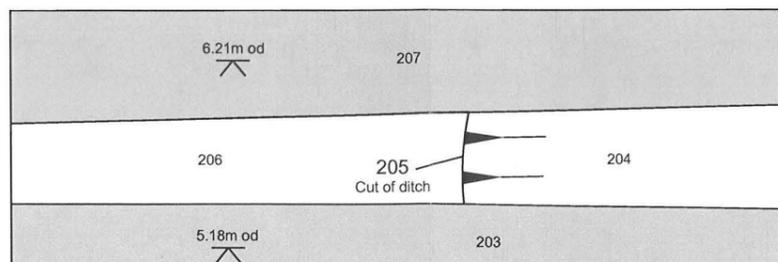


Trench 1, section 1



Trench 2

6.43m od



Modern foundations

Wessex Archaeology



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Trench plans and section

Figure 2