CHURCH HILL, BRISLINGTON
BRISTOL

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

C.A.T. JOB: 1162
C.A.T. REPORT: 01033

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SUMMARY

In March 2001 Cotswold Archaeological Trust (CAT) carried out an evaluation, consisting of 3 trenches, on land at Church Hill, Brislington, Bristol. The trenches were situated around a former egg-packing warehouse and garages which currently occupy the site.

Although the site lies close to the centre of the medieval settlement of Brislington, no features of this date were identified. However, in Trench 1 a layer of stone rubble at least 1.2m thick was found and this may well form the fill of a feature, such as a soakaway, of uncertain date. A further pit of uncertain date was found in Trench 2 although the upper fill of the pit was clearly modern in origin. A post-medieval pit was found in Trench 3.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 In March 2001 Cotswold Archaeological Trust (CAT) was commissioned by Mr. Andrew Thomas to carry out an archaeological evaluation of approximately 0.2ha of land at Church Hill, Brislington, Bristol (NGR ST 62167077). This land is bounded by the house and garden of no. 2 Church Hill Cottages to the north, and a tarmac road to the west and south leading to a bungalow (Sunny View) immediately to the east of the study area (Figs. 1 and 2).

1.1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a brief for archaeological evaluation issued by the City Archaeologist, Bristol City Council, the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists, and the Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP2) issued by English Heritage.

1.1.3 The objectives of the evaluation were to record any archaeological features that came to light and to provide data on the date, character, quality, survival and extent of those deposits in order that an informed decision on their importance in a local, regional or national context could be made.

1.1.4 The fieldwork was monitored by Mr. R. H Jones, City Archaeologist, Bristol City Council.

1.2 Landuse, topography and geology

1.2.1 The application area encompasses approximately 0.2ha of land, most of which is occupied by the site of a former egg-packing warehouse and a garage. These are bounded to the west, south and east by concrete surfaces.
1.2.2 The underlying geology of the area consists of the Farrington and Barren Red Group of the Supra-Pennant Measures (Upper Coal Measures) (Green 1992).

1.2.3 The study area slopes very gently from east to west from approximately 42.29m OD to 41.39m OD.

1.3 Archaeological background

1.3.1 Prior to the evaluation a desk-based assessment of the study area was carried out (BARAS 2000). It is not intended to repeat this background information in detail as the report is available in its entirety. However, the principal conclusion was that the study area lies close to the heart of the medieval settlement of Brislington which was centred around St. Luke’s Church just to the west of the study area, although no known archaeological remains are recorded from the site itself.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Three trenches were excavated using a JCB equipped with a toothless grading bucket under archaeological supervision. Trench 1 measured 4m x 1.5m, although only the southernmost 2m could be properly investigated due to the presence of a drain in the northern part of the trench. Trench 2 measured 3.2m x 2.5m and Trench 3 measured 4.8m x 2.6m.

2.2 Trenches 2 and 3 were excavated by the JCB onto the top of the natural bedrock and in Trench 1 onto a layer of stone rubble. Excavation and recording then continued by hand in accordance with CAT Technical Manual 1, Field Recording Manual (1996). All artefacts were recovered and retained for processing in accordance with CAT Technical Manual 3, Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation (1995).
2.3 In the following report features cut into the natural bedrock are designated by square brackets thus; [0000]. All other deposits/layers are in round brackets; (0000). Detailed context descriptions per trench are provided in Appendix 1.

2.4 Subject to the landowner’s consent the artefacts from the excavation will be deposited, along with the site archive, at Bristol City Museum under the accession code BRSMG 2001.14.

3. EVALUATION RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Archaeological features were found in all three trenches. These took the form of an undated feature, possibly a pit, in Trench 1; a pit of uncertain date in Trench 2 (although its uppermost fill was modern), and a post-medieval pit in Trench 3.

3.2 Trench 1

3.2.1 There was no sign of the natural bedrock in Trench 1 and, at the southern end of the trench, it is likely that it had been cut away by a deep pit. The full dimensions of this pit [105] were not established. However, it was partially excavated to a depth of 1.3m (39.93m OD) without being bottomed. The fill (107) of this feature consisted of thin angular stone fragments with a large quantity of slag. This was partly covered by a fill of a reddish-brown clay (106). No dating evidence was recovered from these fills.

3.2.2 In the northern part of the trench a ceramic drain was identified at which point excavation ceased and this part of the trench was backfilled. The foundation trench [103] for the adjacent garage wall was also identified in the eastern section of the trench.
3.2.3 Both pit [105], the ceramic drain and foundation trench [103] were covered by a 0.14m thick make-up layer (102) for a 0.13m thick concrete slab (101) (41.52m OD).

3.3 Trench 2

3.3.1 The natural bedrock (203) was identified at a depth of 0.27m (41.44m OD). It was cut by a pit [208] which was 2m deep and which contained a primary fill (206/7) of a mid brown silty clay. This was partially covered by a dark grey/black grit (205), in turn covered by a dark brown silty clay (204). This had then been covered by a dark grey silty clay packed with stone and modern brick fragments (202) which directly underlay a 0.1m thick concrete slab (201).

3.4 Trench 3

3.4.1 The natural bedrock (307) was identified at a depth of 0.33m (41.96m OD). It was cut by a pit [303] which, within the trench, measured 3.2m x 1.5m across and 0.37m deep. The fill (304) of this pit contained pieces of slag, the base of a glass bottle, and 5 sherds of 16th-18th century pottery (together with a residual medieval sherd). This pit together with a modern drain and small soakaway [306] underlay a 0.45m thick make-up deposit (302) for a 0.1m thick concrete surface (301).

4. THE FINDS

4.1 The pottery

4.1.1 A single residual sherd of medieval sandy ware was found in the fill (304) of pit [303], together with 3 sherds of glazed red earthenware and 2 sherds of unglazed earthenware of 16th-18th century date.
4.2 **Other finds**

4.2.1 Eight fragments of slag were retained from the fill (107) of pit [105] and a further piece was found in the fill (304) of pit [303]. An animal bone and the base of a glass wine bottle were also recovered from the latter.

5. **DISCUSSION**

5.1 **Introduction**

5.1.1 The evaluation has proved the existence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area. This section will discuss the importance of the remains in general.

5.2 **Survival, Quality and Extent**

5.2.1 Archaeological features were found in all three trenches. In Trenches 2 and 3 they survived as negative features cut into the natural bedrock. This bedrock was not identified in Trench 1 but it is likely that it had been cut away in the southern part of the trench by pit [105].

5.2.2 As no archaeological investigation was carried out within the two standing buildings on the site it is impossible to judge the impact they have had on any archaeological remains. Although the foundation trench for the western garage wall was identified in Trench 3, it is possible that the internal floor may not have been deep enough to severely impact on any surviving archaeological remains. Within the warehouse the internal concrete floor is thought to be approximately 1m thick (BARAS 2000). However, this floor appears to be raised to a level of between 0.4m and 0.8m above the surrounding area and again archaeological deposits could be preserved beneath, except where cut by wall foundation trenches.
5.3 Date and character

5.3.1 No evidence of activity associated with the medieval village of Brislington was identified. In Trench 3 pit [303] is clearly of post-medieval date, and the date and character of the pits in Trenches 1 and 2 is uncertain.

5.3.2 The stone fragments within fill (107) of pit [105] in Trench 1 are perhaps too thin to be the demolition debris of a major structure and it may be that the pit is a stone and slag filled soakaway.

5.3.3 The character of pit [208] in Trench 2 is also uncertain. However, after its excavation, it is possible that it was left open for some time allowing a natural silting layer (206/7) to accumulate. This may suggest that the pit was originally dug as a stone quarry. The other fills could well be much later in date. Indeed fill (202) was clearly modern in origin and had presumably been deposited to fill the depression left by the initial digging of the pit.

5.3.4 No structural remains associated with the house shown within the study area on the 1846 tithe map were found during the evaluation. This house is still marked on the Ordnance Survey map of 1938 and was probably demolished around the 1940’s (BARAS 2000). The relationship of the features in Trenches 1-3 with this building is uncertain although pit [303] lies close to, if not within, the building footprint.

5.4 Conclusions

5.4.1 No clear evidence of medieval activity within the study area was identified. Indeed it is likely that the remains of any medieval houses are to be found to the north of the study area on the Church Hill frontage. Any medieval activity within the study area is likely to have been related to backland activity in ancillary structures, or rubbish pit digging and cultivation, for which there was no clear evidence in the evaluation trenches.
5.4.2 There was no archaeological evidence for the survival of features related to the building marked on the tithe and later Ordnance Survey maps, although remains, such as wall foundations, may well exist outside of the evaluation trenches.

5.4.3 Although there was a complete absence of features associated with the medieval settlement of Brislington in the evaluation trenches it is considered that an archaeological watching brief should be maintained during initial groundworks associated with future building work on the site. This is because of the proximity of the site to the medieval street frontage on Church Hill.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cotswold Archaeological Trust would like to thank Mr. Andrew Thomas and Mr. Bob Jones, City Archaeologist, Bristol City Council, for their co-operation and assistance throughout the project. The project was managed for CAT by Simon Cox and directed in the field by Alan Thomas with the assistance of Neil Lambert. The finds analyses were co-ordinated by Emma Harrison. This report was written by Alan Thomas and the illustrations prepared by Peter Moore.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY


Green, GW 1992  *British Regional Geology: Bristol and Gloucester Region*
## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

### Trench 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context no.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(101)</td>
<td>Concrete slab; 0.13m thick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(102)</td>
<td>Make-up layer for (101); brick fragments and gravel; 0.14m thick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(103)</td>
<td>Wall foundation cut for adjacent garage; depth not established; filled with (104)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(104)</td>
<td>Fill of [103]; loose black silty clay packed with stone fragments and gravel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(105)</td>
<td>Cut for pit; dimensions not ascertained but excavated to a depth of 1.3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(106)</td>
<td>Secondary fill of pit [105]; reddish-brown clay with small angular stone fragments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(107)</td>
<td>Primary fill of pit [105]; thin angular stone fragments up to 0.25m long with a large quantity of slag</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Trench 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context no.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(201)</td>
<td>Concrete slab; 0.1m thick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(202)</td>
<td>Fourth fill of pit [208]; dark grey/black silty clay packed with stone and modern brick fragments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(203)</td>
<td>Natural bedrock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(204)</td>
<td>Third fill of pit [208]; dark brown silty clay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(205)</td>
<td>Secondary fill of pit [208]; dark grey/black grit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(206/207)</td>
<td>Primary fill of pit [208]; mid brown silty clay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[208]</td>
<td>Pit cut containing fills (202), (204), (205) and (206/7). Full dimensions not established but 2m deep</td>
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### Trench 3

<table>
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<th>Description</th>
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<td>(301)</td>
<td>Concrete surface; 0.1m thick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(302)</td>
<td>Make-up layer for (301); dark brown silty clay with stone and modern brick fragments; 0.45m thick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(303)</td>
<td>Pit cut; within the trench it measured 3.2m x 1.5m across and 0.37m deep; filled with (304)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(304)</td>
<td>Fill of pit [303]; dark brown silty clay with occasional; stone fragments and charcoal flecking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[305]</td>
<td>Cut for modern drain and soakaway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(306)</td>
<td>Fill of [305]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(307)</td>
<td>Natural bedrock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trench 1; section

Trench 2; section

Fig. 3  Trenches 1 & 2; sections
Fig. 4  Trench 3; plan and section
Plate 1: Trench 1 looking north-east showing surface of layer (107)

Plate 2: Trench 2 looking south-east showing pit [208]
Plate 3: Trench 3 looking south-west