



Evaluation/monitoring Report No. 220

**Carrickfergus Castle
Co. Antrim**

AE/10/202

Contents	page
List of Figures	3
List of Plates	3
Site specific information	4
Account of the excavation	5
Discussion	8
Recommendations for further work	10
Acknowledgements	10
Archive	10
Bibliography	11
Appendix 1: Context lists	17
Appendix 2: Harris matrices	19
Appendix 3: Concordance table	20
Appendix 4: Field drawing register	23
Appendix 5: Samples record	23
Appendix 6: Small finds register	23
Appendix 7: Photographic record	24

List of Figures

Figure 01: Ground floor plan of Carrickfergus Castle	5
Figure 02: Recommended post-excavation analysis table	10
Figure 03: Plan of Inner Ward, showing excavation trenches	12
Figure 04: Trench 1 plan	13
Figure 05: Trench 1 west-facing section	13
Figure 06: Trench 2 plan	14
Figure 07: Trench 2 west facing section	14
Figure 08: Trench 3 plan	15
Figure 09: Trench 3 north-west facing section	15
Figure 10: Stone architectural feature (top, side and base views)	16

List of Plates

Plate 01: Trench1, mid-excavation view of brick path C106, looking east	25
Plate 02: Trench 1, mid-excavation view of dump of cobbles	25
Plate 03: Trench 1, view of cobbled surface C112, with cut C129 to the right	26
Plate 04: Trench 2, post-excavation view, looking west	26
Plate 05: Trench 3, post- excavation view of brick wall C305	27
Plate 06: Trench 3, post-excavation view of trench looking south-west	27
Plate 07: View of interior of access tunnel, looking north-west	28
Plate 08: View of external entrance to access tunnel, looking south-east	28
Plate 09: Base of stone architectural feature	29
Plate 10: Side view of stone architectural feature	29

Site Specific Information

Site Address: Carrickfergus Castle, Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim

Town: Carrickfergus

SMR No. ANT 052:059

State Care √ *Scheduled* *Other*

Grid Ref: J 4143 8725

Excavation Licence No: AE/10/202

Planning Ref: N/A

Date of excavation: 5 January 2011 to 10 January 2010

Archaeologist present: Dr Henry Welsh

Brief Summary:

Type of evaluation:

Archaeological monitoring of the excavation and recording of one trench, excavated by hand (Trench 1), along an area known as the Inner Ward, located between the Keep and the south curtain wall and two extensions (Trenches 2 and 3) to connect Trench 1 with the Toilet Block adjacent to the Keep, with the Flash Room Corridor, respectively. The excavation of trenches 2 and 3 required the lifting of a layer of concrete paving blocks and their concrete foundation, by mechanical cutters and chisels, in advance of their subsequent excavation by hand.

Size of area opened:

Trench 1: 15.1m (north/south) by 0.3m (east/west)

Trench 2: 2.2m (north/south) by 0.3m (east/west)

Trench 3: 1.85m (north-east/south-west) by 0.3m (south-east/north-west)

The excavation

A trench (Trench 1) was excavated north/south across the Inner Ward, to connect the Toilet Block at the south of the Keep to the entrance of the Flash Room Corridor. The trench was 0.3m in width, 15.1m in length and varied from 0.3m to 0.4m in depth, determined by the archaeological remains that were uncovered during the excavation. Extensions to this trench to the north and south (Trenches 2 and 3 respectively) were subsequently requested by NIEA staff to facilitate connection of the electricity supply. The excavations were undertaken by concrete cutter and hand and a context record for the site was created using the standard context recording method. Individual features and deposits were photographed. An overall plan of the immediate area (scale 1:100) was completed and plan and section drawings (scales 1:20 and 1:10 respectively) were prepared throughout the course of the investigation.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was excavated across the grassed area of the Inner Ward, 15.1m in length and aligned north/south. The stratigraphically latest deposit encountered consisted of a turf layer (Context No. 101) which was 0.05m in depth and extended across the entire area of the trench. Immediately beneath this was a gravel-rich loamy layer (Context No. 102), which also extended across the entire area of the trench. This was interpreted as a modern levelling deposit, to create a level substrate for the turf layer. The presence of a wide range of artefacts in this context from many time periods suggested this material was obtained from a variety of sources around the castle and perhaps further afield. At the northern end of Trench 1, a modern perforated plastic drainage pipe was found (Context No. 114), extending across the trench in an east/west alignment. A similar pipe was observed to discharge into the tunnel that is located underneath the western part of the Inner Ward and represents a modern effort to improve drainage in this part of the castle.

A variety of features were found immediately below Context No. 102. The first of these (Context No. 108) was located between 2.1m and 2.8m from the northern end of the trench. This was a deposit of compacted mortar-rich sandy loam, around a dump of cobble stones, many of which had mortar attached to them. To the south of this, was a layer of orange sand (Context No. 109), averaging 0.05m in depth. This was found to terminate at another deposit of compacted mortar-rich sandy loam (Context No. 110), within which was a deposit of larger rounded stones (approximately 0.02m in diameter). When context No. 109 was removed, it was found to be 0.05m in depth. No finds were recovered from this context. Immediately below Context No. 109, a layer of mortar-rich gravelly loam was present (Context No. 113). This was excavated to a depth of 0.4m at which point the limit of excavation was reached. One piece of bone and a metal object, possibly an iron nail, were recovered. All the deposits and finds in this area were consistent with the excavation, construction and filling in around the brick-built tramway tunnel in the Inner Ward constructed in 1889 (McNeill 1981, 51).

To the south of this, at 6.1m from the northern end of the trench, a concrete slab (Context No. 116) was encountered at the eastern side of the trench. This was associated with the tunnel described above and formed the support for the manhole cover which leads from the ground surface in the Inner Ward, to the tunnel itself. The concrete slab extended for 1.2m towards the southern end of Trench 1 and was aligned north-east/south-west. To the west of the trench and on a similar alignment to the concrete slab, a mortared brick surface was uncovered (Context No. 121). This was probably associated with the brick-built tunnel, located immediately below. To the south of the concrete slab, a deposit of gravel and clinker-rich sandy clay was uncovered (Context No. 107), which extended for 1.7m, where it abutted a cobbled surface (Context No. 112). The only finds in this area were three pieces of shell, found in Context No. 107.

The cobbled surface (Context No. 112) had been cut (Cut No. 129), probably during the construction of the tramway tunnel described above and this point marks the southernmost extent of the disturbance of the Inner Ward associated with these works. The presence immediately above the cobbled surface of cinder-rich (Context No. 126) and mortar-rich (Context No. 127) deposits, similar to Context No. 113 to the south, suggests the cobbled surface was exposed while construction and restoration works connected with the tramway tunnel were taking place. Other features in the remainder of Trench 1 were found to be undisturbed. The original requirement was that the trench be excavated to a depth of 0.5m in order to accommodate a plastic duct for the provision of the electricity supply to the Flash Room Corridor. Due to the presence of these undisturbed archaeological features and in consultation with staff at the castle and Mr Andrew Gault, Inspector at the Northern Ireland Environment Agency: Built Heritage, it was agreed to limit the depth of the excavation at the point where there would be still sufficient depth to accommodate the duct, at around 0.2m to 0.3m.

The cobbled surface (Context No. 112) was found to extend at least 4m to the south, with a variety of features placed on it at intervals. The first of these was an un-mortared brick surface (Context No. 106), consisting of eight visible bricks, which extended into the eastern side of the trench. The southern-most of these bricks was found to rest on a deposit of mortar (Context No. 120), which extended across the trench and for 0.4m to the south. This was interpreted as being either a path aligned east/west, or a platform to support the crane associated with raising ammunition and supplies from the tramway tunnel nearby. The restricted size of Trench 1 prevented a more positive identification.

To the south of this brick feature three small areas of mortared stonework (Context No. 118) were uncovered, along with a small mortar-rich surface (Context No. 117). Due to the restricted size of the trench, it was not possible to determine if these were separate features or all part of a larger structure, but their proximity and similar constructional components suggest these were all part of one feature, perhaps wall foundations. This may be the partial remains of the south wall of the building marked *Engine House* on the 1811 map of the Castle (PRO wo 78/1158, cited in McNeill 1981). The only other feature uncovered in this area was a small mortared brick wall (Context No. 103), which consisted of a single row of broken bricks, aligned east/west and which continued across the trench. This was located at the southern end of the trench and probably represented the remains of a small landscaping feature. It was in this area that a moulded stone architectural feature (Small Find No. 1; see Figure 10 and Plates 09 and 10) was uncovered within Context No. 104 and close to Context No. 103. An initial examination of this object was carried out by Dr Tom McNeill,

who concluded (pers. comm.) that it seemed to be similar to four similar stone objects, previously found during work in this area to lay paths around the Inner Ward. He suggested that these might be surviving parts of a post-medieval fireplace that was removed from the Keep.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was 2.1m in length, aligned north/south and located to the north of Trench 1. It was effectively an extension of Trench 1, being required to connect the existing electricity supply from a source in the keep to the northern end of Trench 1. The stratigraphically latest deposit encountered was a layer of concrete paving blocks (Context No. 201). Immediately below this was a concrete substrate (Context No. 202), along which a trench 0.3m wide had to be cut using an angle grinder. Under this was a concrete foundation layer (Context No. 203), which also had to be cut with an angle grinder before removal by hand. Under this was a clinker and mortar-rich deposit, which was excavated to a depth of 0.4m. Also uncovered were concrete edging (Context No. 206) and an associated concrete foundation (Context No. 205). Nothing of archaeological significance was found in this trench and deposits were consistent with modern disturbance associated with the construction of paving around the Inner Ward.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was 1.85m in length, aligned north-east/south-west and located to the south of Trench 1, being required to connect the new electricity supply from the southern end of Trench 1 to the Flash Room Corridor. The stratigraphically latest deposit encountered was a concrete door sill (Context No. 301) at the entrance of the Flash Room Corridor. This abutted a layer of concrete paving blocks (Context No. 302). Immediately below this was a concrete substrate (Context No. 303), along which a trench 0.3m wide had to be cut using an angle grinder. Immediately under Context No. 302 was a deposit of mortar-rich gravelly clay (Context No. 307), which had been cut (Cut No. 309) to permit the construction of a mortared brick wall (Context No. 305), 0.3m in width, aligned east/west across the trench. A dark grey gravel-rich clay had later been deposited around the brick wall, probably as part of preparatory levelling in connection with construction of the modern paving. Context No 307 had also been cut (Cut No. 310) to permit the construction of the concrete edging (Context No. 306). A levelling deposit (Context No. 308) had then been added in order to provide a foundation for the concrete substrate (Context No. 303) referred to above. No finds were recovered from this trench. The limited area of Trench 3 militated against a positive interpretation of the brick wall Context No. 305, but its mortared construction and regular shape suggests it was more substantial than a garden feature and may represent the remains of a small building, perhaps associated with the nearby Flash Room to the east.

Discussion

The excavation of a trench across the Inner Ward of Carrickfergus Castle provided a rare opportunity to see if undisturbed archaeological remains survived in this area, one of the oldest parts of the Anglo-Norman castle. Following small-scale excavations by Professor Jope in the 1950s and Nick Brannon in 1993 (Ó'Néill 2002, 3), it was thought that nothing of any antiquity survived in the Inner Ward due to the disturbance caused by regular building works at the castle, particularly during the nineteenth century when the tramway tunnel was constructed in the western part of the Inner Ward.

However, the 2011 excavation has revealed that while the north-western part of the Inner Ward has indeed suffered major disturbance, many archaeological features still remain to be investigated in the southern part. The limited size of the trenches and time constraints during the 2011 excavation prevented meaningful interpretation of the features uncovered, but initial examination of the finds suggests that the material above the cobbled surface is reasonably modern and the possibility remains that medieval remains still lie undisturbed beneath it.

Following the conventions used by McNeill to denote periods of time at Carrickfergus Castle (1981, 19), there are possibly three periods relevant to the archaeological remains uncovered during this excavation. These are Periods VIII, IX and X.

Period VIII [1754-1792]

According to McSkimin (1823, 164), part of the south curtain wall of the castle collapsed in 1754, facilitating the French occupation in 1760 and repairs probably took place in 1761. There is a possibility that the cobbled surface (Context No. 112) may be associated with this repair work, providing a solid surface to the repaired Inner Ward.

Period IX [1793-1854]

Construction work in the Inner Ward of the castle during this period is discussed by McNeill (1981, 49). A number of buildings 'were recorded by McSkimin as being built or rebuilt in the castle between 1793 and the winding-down of the castle as an active base between 1816, when it ceased to be an infantry barrack, to the 1830s when almost all the garrison was withdrawn'. With regard to buildings within the southern part of the inner ward, 'other buildings which McSkimin says were built in this period were...a small magazine in the inner ward'. This magazine must have served the guns of the grand battery on the eastern side of the castle, as 'the guns now lining the grand battery bear dates around 1800 and the present embrasures and height of the curtain probably date from this period...the new artillery demanded the building of the magazine which now fills the southern end of the inner ward'. This small brick-built magazine was probably the room now known as the Flash Room and the brick walls found at the southern end of Trench 1 (Context No. 103) and in Trench 2 (Context No. 305) may have been associated with work at this magazine.

Period X [1855-1889]

The castle 'was put back into commission as the headquarters of the Antrim Artillery in 1855, which caused a programme of rebuilding to take place, normally using hammer-dressed granite and modern three-inch pressed bricks' (McNeill 1981, 50). These are the materials used extensively in the construction of the Flash Room Corridor and external wall facings. These works also included 'a new magazine, or armourer's shop, built against the south side of the keep' and 'the two embrasures reached by the long stair at the west side of the ward, all in hammer-dressed granite, were built over the magazine at the south at this time. This new magazine is still present, although now used as public toilets and was the location for an archaeological excavation in 2002 (see Ó Néill, J. and Logue, R. 2002. *Data Structure Report No 8, Investigations at Carrickfergus Castle, Co. Antrim*).

The northern side of the Flash Room Corridor, facing the Keep, is faced with hammer-dressed granite blocks and is brought level with the top of the south curtain wall to provide a solid platform for two gun embrasures that are still evident today. In front of this structure was a single storey

building 'now removed except for its north wall whose foundations survive; in 1923 this was the armourer's shop' (McNeill 1981, 51). Wall scars on the northern face also confirm the location of this building. The mortared stone features found at the southern end of Trench 1 (Context Nos 117 and 118) may be associated with the construction of this building, but there is a problem in that the length of mortared stone wall that is visible in the Inner Ward is not parallel with the hammer-dressed Granite wall of the Flash Room building. The wall is 4.2m distant at the eastern end and 3.4m distant at the western end, a significant discrepancy (0.8m) and one which calls into question its function as the north wall of the armourer's shop.

Recommendations for further work

This archaeological monitoring has shown that there are significant archaeological remains in the Inner Ward, despite the significant disturbance of nineteenth and twentieth-century works. These remains were uncovered at a depth of 0.3m below ground surface at the southern part of the trench. The discovery of in-situ archaeological features contrasts with previous archaeological investigations in the Inner Ward by Professor Martyn Jope in 1950 and Nick Brannon in 1980, when nothing archaeological was found, suggesting these excavations were located in the northern part of the Inner Ward. The presence of undisturbed archaeological remains in the Inner Ward presents an opportunity to learn more about the early life of the castle from any future excavation in this area.

It is recommended that post-excavation analysis should be carried out on the finds recovered during the excavation. This could be carried out internally at the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, without additional cost implications, as follows:

Material	Number of items	CAF Specialist	Time implication
Bone/Shell	23	Dr Emily Murray	1 day
Flint	47	Brian Sloan	2 days
Pottery/Glass/Stone	37/28/2	Ruairí Ó Baoill	2 days
Metal	5	Dr Philip MacDonald	1 day

Figure 02: Recommended post-excavation analysis table

Acknowledgements

Assistance during the course of the excavation was kindly provided by June Welsh and Ian Gillespie of the Ulster Archaeological Society and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency staff at Carrickfergus Castle. The field drawings were scanned and prepared by Sapphire Mussen at the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University, Belfast.

Archive

Finds: All finds are currently archived at the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast, but it is anticipated these will be returned to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency following any post-excavation analysis.

Photographs: digital images, held by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast.

Plans/Drawings: digital plans and section drawings, held by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast and included with this report.

Bibliography

McNeill, T.E. 1981. *Carrickfergus Castle, County Antrim, Northern Ireland Archaeological Monographs: No. 1*, Belfast: HMSO.

McSkimin, S. 1811. *The history and antiquities of the county of the town of Carrickfergus*, Belfast.

Ó Baoill, R. 2008. *Carrickfergus, the Story of the Castle and Walled Town*. Belfast: Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

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Welsh, H. 2010. *Evaluation/Monitoring Report No. 169, Carrickfergus Castle, County Antrim*. Belfast: Queen's University, Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork.

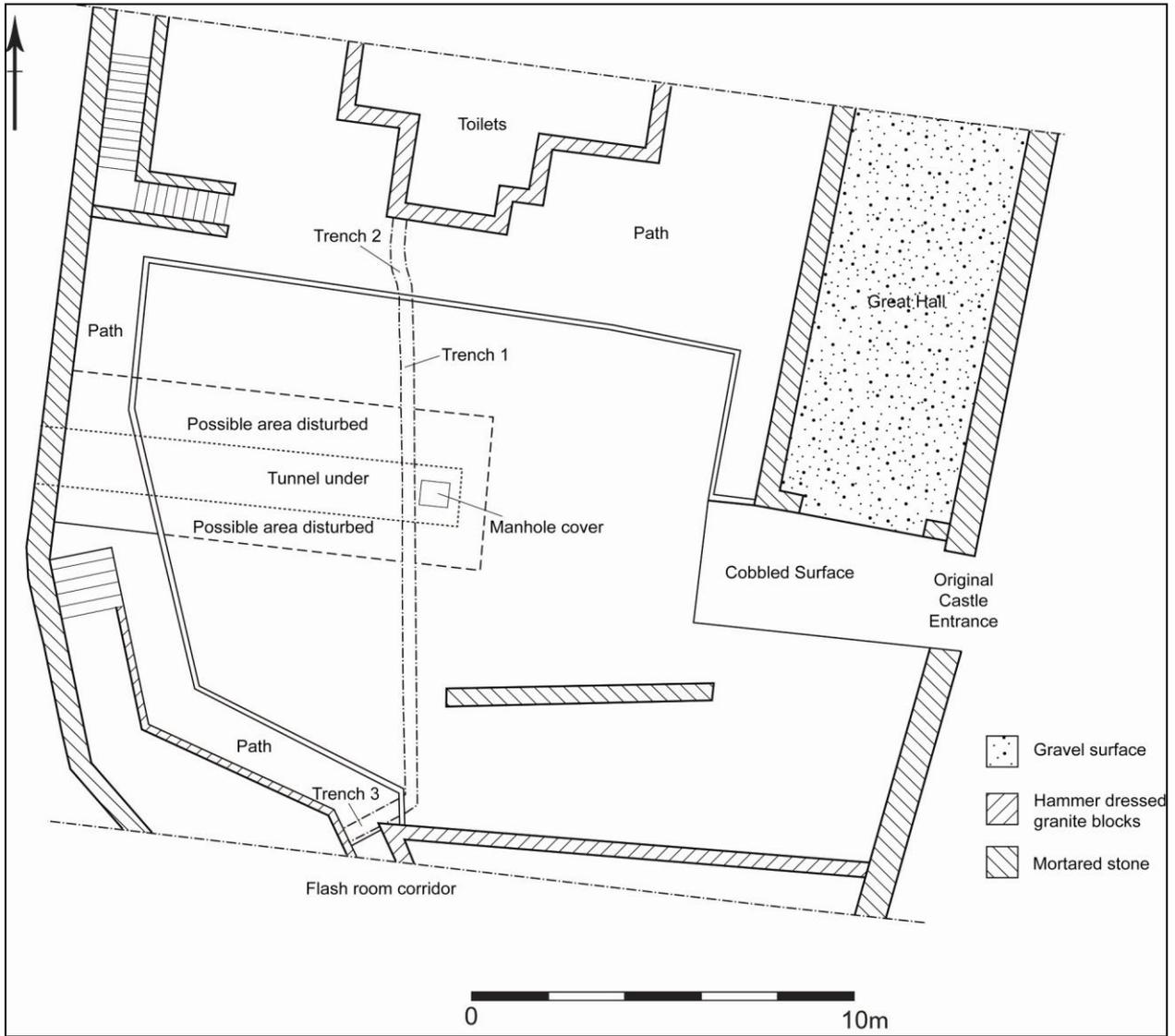


Figure 03: Plan of Inner Ward, showing excavation trenches

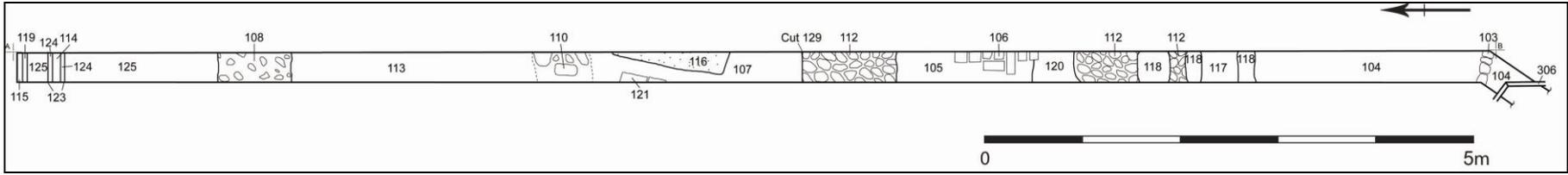


Figure 04: Trench 1 plan

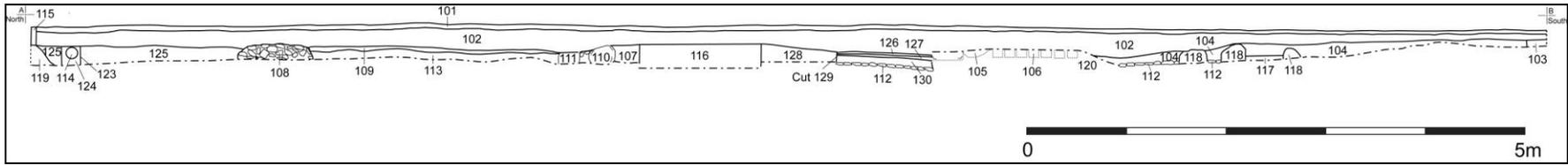


Figure 05: Trench 1 west-facing section

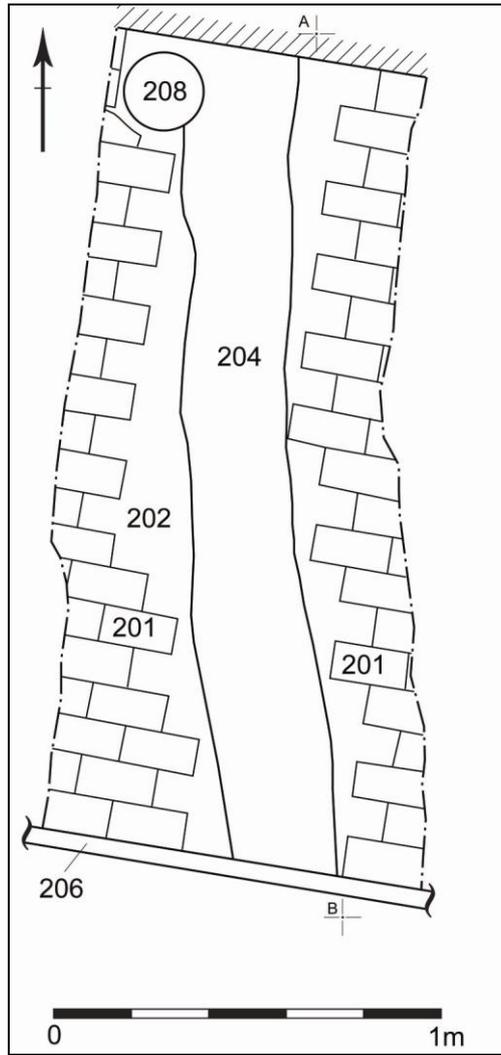


Figure 06: Trench 2 plan

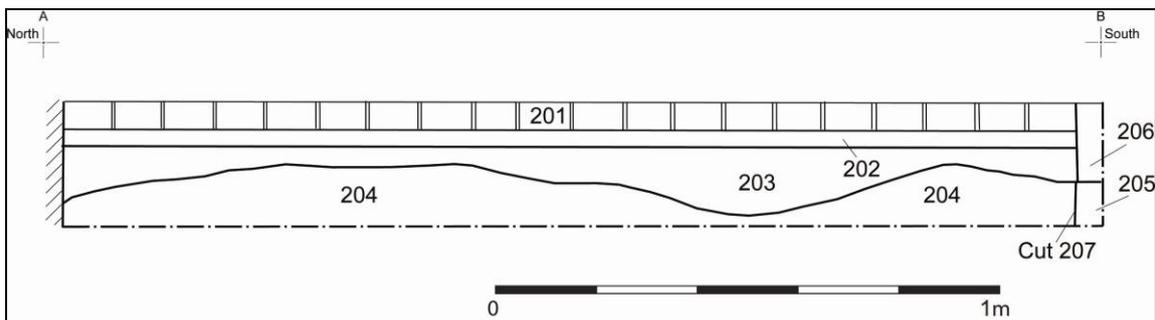


Figure 07: Trench 2 west-facing section

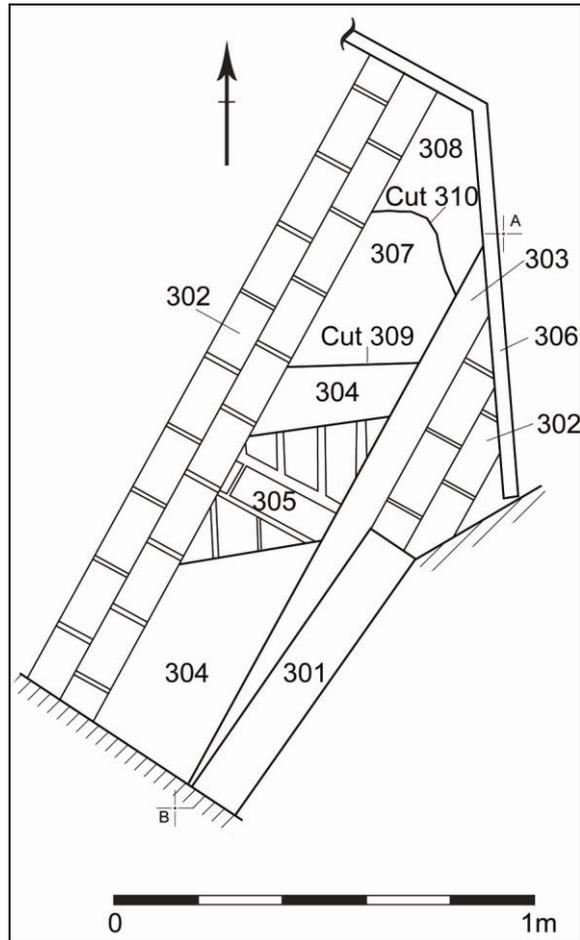


Figure 08: Trench 3 plan

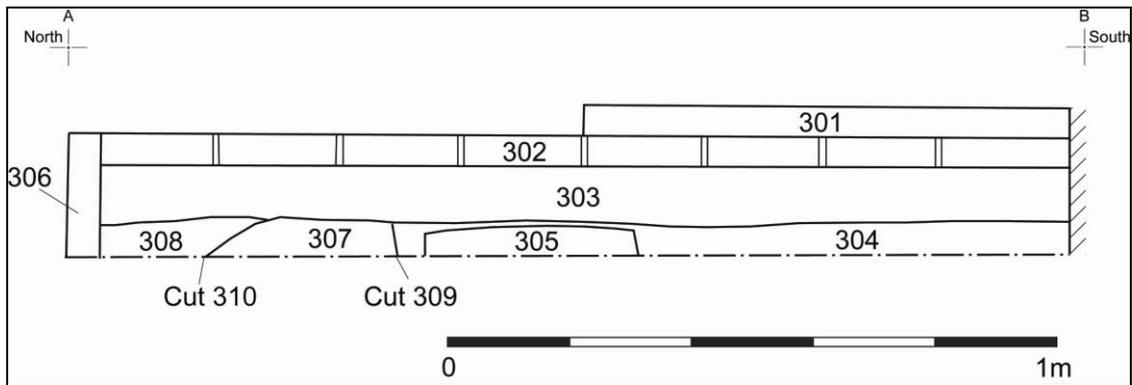


Figure 09: Trench 3 north-west facing section

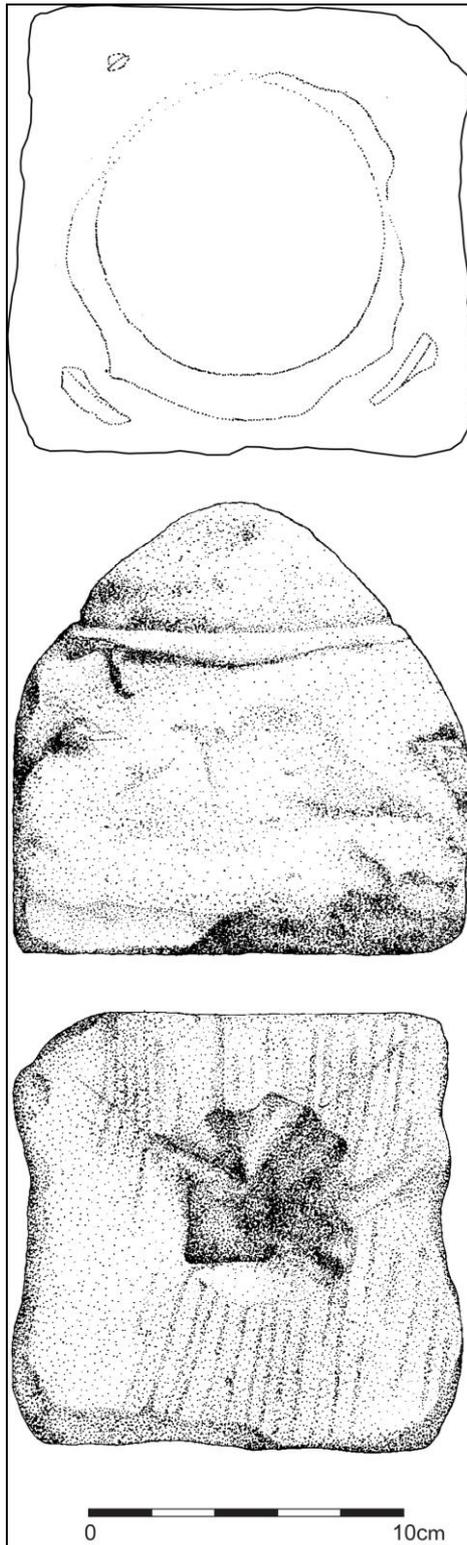


Figure 10: Stone architectural feature (top, side and base views)

Appendix 1: Context Lists

Trench 1

Context No.	Description
101	Turf Layer
102	Gravel-rich levelling deposit
103	Small mortared brick feature at south (Flash Room end) of trench
104	Rubble-rich fill to north of brick feature C103
105	Clinker-rich fill north of C106
106	Large un-mortared brick setting
107	Clinker-rich fill north of C105
108	Compacted dump of brick and cobbles
109	Orange sandy layer between C108 and C112
110	Un-mortared stone wall?
111	Rubble fill north of C110
112	Cobbled surface under C111
113	Mortar-rich deposit under C109
114	Plastic drainage pipe
115	Concrete edging
116	Concrete base for manhole cover C122
117	Mortar-rich surface
118	Mortared stonework
119	Concrete foundation for C115
120	Un-mortared stone feature
121	Brick feature adjacent to C116
122	Steel manhole cover
123	Cut for plastic pipe C114
124	Dark brown fill around plastic pipe C114
125	Rubble-rich fill under C102 at north of trench
126	Cinder-rich deposit immediately above C127 and cobbled surface C112
127	Mortar-rich deposit immediately above C128 cobbled surface C112
128	Gravelly-sand layer between C116 and C129
129	Cut for tunnel
130	Gravel-rich sandy deposit over cobbled surface C112

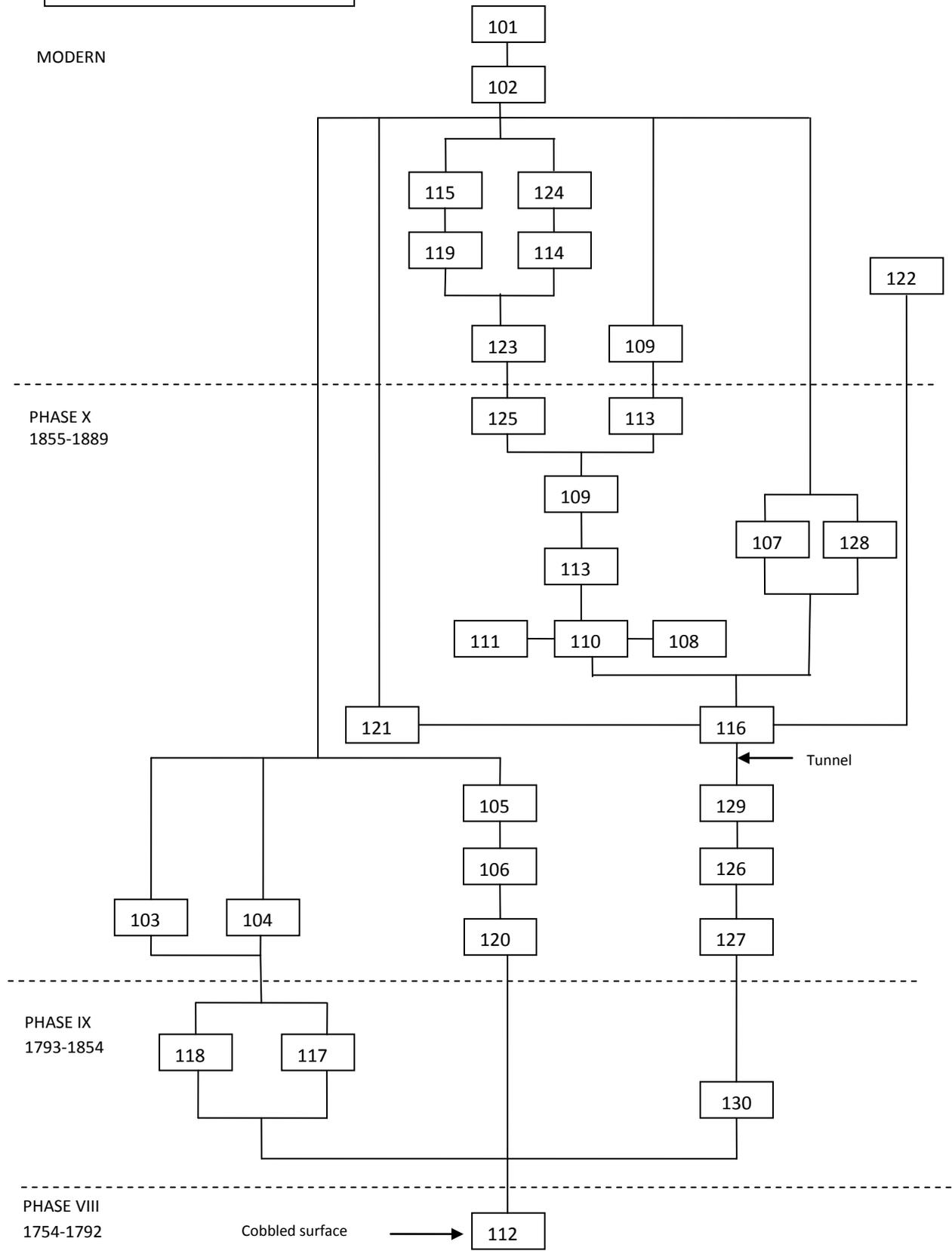
Trench 2

Context No.	Description
201	Concrete paving blocks
202	Concrete substrate for C201
203	Concrete foundation for C202 AND C201
204	Clinker and mortar rich layer
205	Concrete foundation for concrete edging
206	Concrete edging
207	Cut for concrete foundation C205
208	Plastic drain water pipe

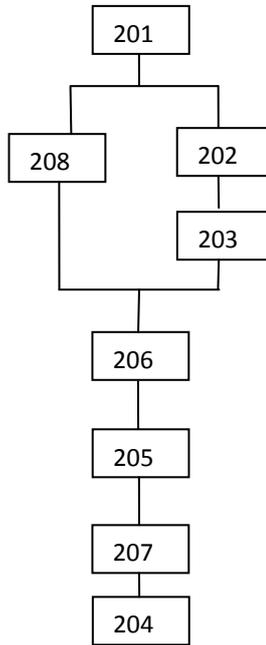
Trench 3

Context No.	Description
301	Concrete sill at entrance to Flash Room Corridor
302	Concrete paving blocks
303	Concrete foundation for C302
304	Mortar-rich gravelly clay layer
305	Mortared brick wall
306	Concrete edging
307	Earliest deposit of light grey gravelly sand
308	Fill of trench for concrete edging
309	Cut for brick wall C305
310	Cut for trench for concrete edging C306

Appendix 2: Harris matrices
Trench 1

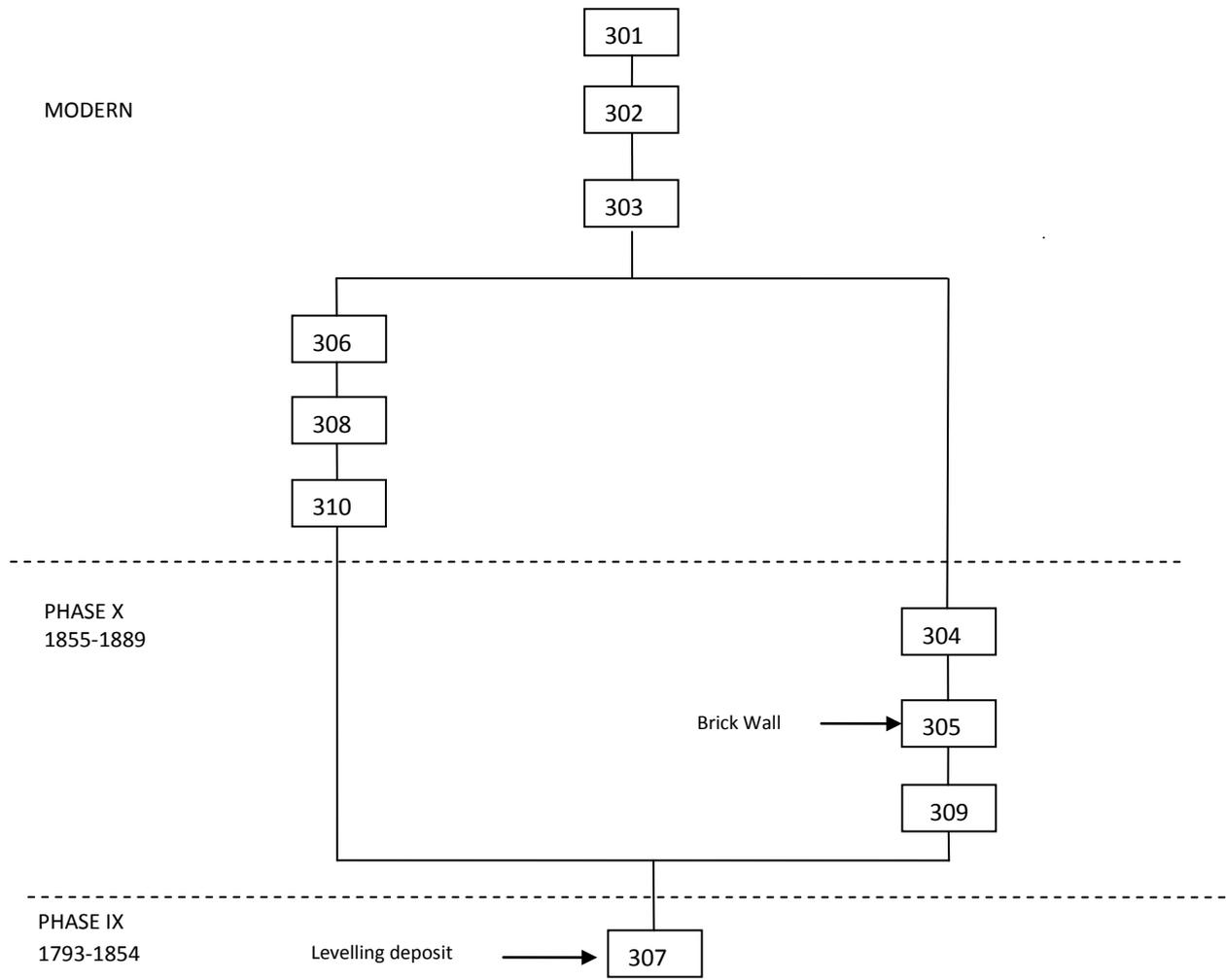


Harris matrix
Trench 2



MODERN

Harris matrix
Trench 3



Appendix 3: Harris Matrix – Concordance Table

Phase	Context	Trench 1	Trench 2	Trench 3
Modern	Concrete sill			301
	Lawn and preparation deposits	101/102		
	Drainage features	114/123/124	208	
	Paving and edge	115/119	201/206	302/306/308
	Paving foundations		202/203/205/207 204	303/310
Phase X 1855-1889	Phase X - Levelling deposits			304
	Tunnel – associated features	121		
	Constructional elements of Tunnel	116/122		
	Spoil from Tunnel excavation	126		
	Cut for Tunnel	129		
	Deposits above cobbled surface and brick walls	127/128		
	Brick walls/features	103		309/305
Phase IX 1793-1854	Post-demolition levelling deposits	130		307
	Mortar-rich surface	117		
	Mortared stonework	118		
Phase VIII 1754-1792	Cobbled surface	112		

Appendix 4: Field Drawing Register

Drawing No.	Scale	Type	Date	Description
1	1:100	Plan	7/1/11	Inner Ward including Trench 1
2	1:20	Plan	12/1/11	Trench 1 and extension
3	1:10	Section	10/1/11	West-facing section of Trench 1
4	1:10	Section	11/1/11	West-facing section of Trench 2
5	1:10	Section	12/1/11	North-east facing section of Trench 3
6	1:20	Plan	12/1/11	Plan of Trench 2
7	1:20	Plan	12/1/11	Plan of Trench 3

Appendix 5: Samples Record

Sample Number	Sample Material	Context	Number of bags
1	Soil	102	1
2	Cobbles	112	1
3	Brick	106	1
4	Soil	109	1
5	Soil	107	1

Appendix 6: Small Finds Register

Find Number	Material	Description	Context Number	Material Category
1	Sandstone	Architectural feature	102	Stone
2-4	Flint	Bag of 3 pieces	102	Stone
5-6	Shell	Bag of 2 pieces	102	Shell
7-10	Coal	Bag of 4 pieces	102	Stone
11-26	Bone	Bag of 16 pieces	102	Bone
27	Bone	1 piece	113	Bone
28	Shell	1 piece	106	Shell
29-30	Flint	Bag of 2 pieces	106	Stone
31-33	Shell	Bag of 3 pieces	107	Shell
34-40	Flint	Bag of 7 pieces	106	Stone
41	Metal	Nail?	113	Metal
42	Pottery	1 sherd	110	Ceramic
43-46	Pottery	Bag of 4 sherds	106	Ceramic
47-50	Metal	Bag of 4 items	102	Metal
51	Red mineral?	1 piece	102	Unknown
52	Asbestos tile?	1 fragment	102	Ceramic
53	Limestone	1 fragment	102	Stone
54	Concrete	1 Piece of floor surface	102	Stone
55-82	Glass	Bag of 28 fragments	102	Ceramic
83-114	Pottery	Bag of 32 sherds	102	Ceramic
115-149	Flint	Bag of 35 pieces	102	Ceramic

Appendix 7 Photographic Record

Ricoh Caplio 500 G wide, 8 Megapixel

Reference	Details
RIMG0008	Trench 1: mid-excavation view of brick path C106, looking east
RIMG0014	Trench 1: mid-excavation view of small brick wall C103, looking east
RIMG0021	Trench 1: mid-excavation view of stone feature C110, looking east
RIMG0042	Trench 1: mid-excavation view of dump of cobbles C108
RIMG0107	Trench 1: modern plastic drainage pipe C114, looking west
RIMG0116	Trench 1: post-excavation view of rubble-rich fill C104, looking north-east
RIMG0080	Trench 1: view of cobbled surface C112, with cut C129 to the right
RIMG0051	Trench 1: mid-excavation view, with manhole cover to access tunnel and part of associated concrete base C116
RIMG0100	Trench 2: post-excavation view, looking west
RIMG0101	Trench 2: post-excavation view, looking east
RIMG0106	Trench 2: connection between Trenches 1&2, with concrete edging left in place, looking south
RIMG0076	Trench 3: post-excavation view of brick wall C305
RIMG0114	Trench 3: mid-excavation view of duct into Flash Room Corridor, looking east
RIMG0115	Trench 3: Mid-excavation view of connection with Trench 1, looking north-east
RIMG0077	Trench 3: post-excavation view of trench, looking south-west
RIMG0059	Post-excavation view of Inner Ward and excavation, looking east
RIMG0058	Post-excavation view of excavation, with connection to Toilet Block, looking south-east
RIMG0093	View of external entrance to access tunnel, looking south-east
RIMG0034	View of interior of access tunnel, looking north-west



Plate 01: Trench 1: mid-excavation view of brick path C106, looking east



Plate 02: Trench 1: mid-excavation view of dump of cobbles C108



Plate 03: Trench 1: view of cobbled surface C112, with cut C129 to the right

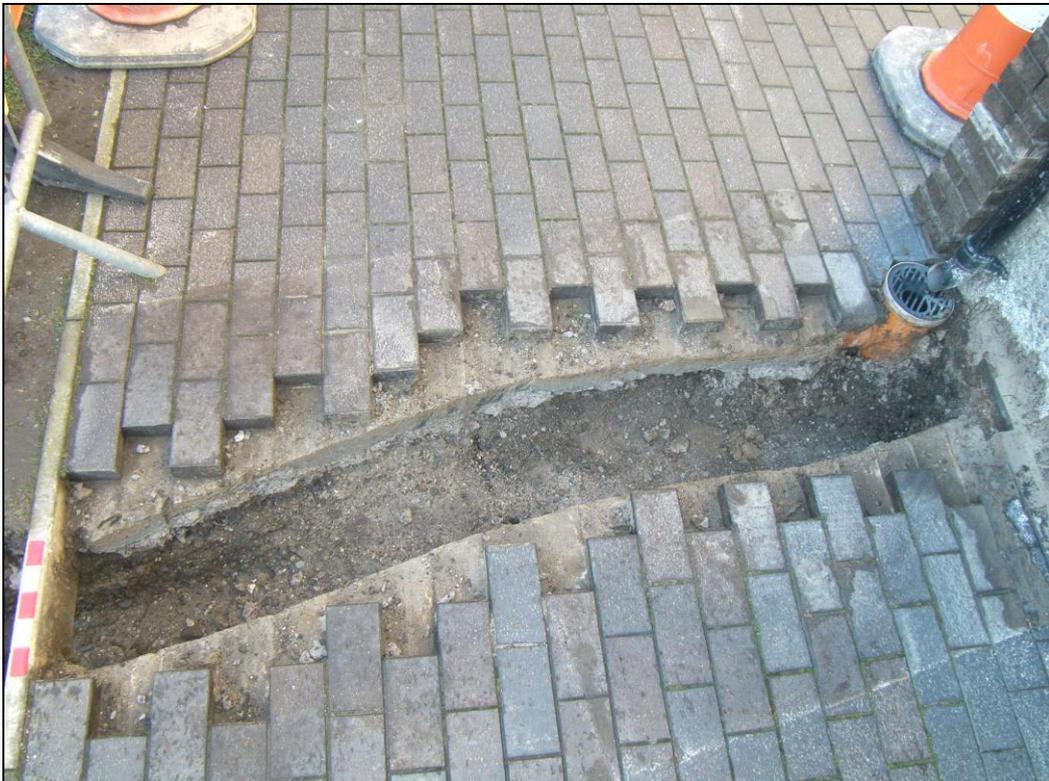


Plate 04: Trench 2: post-excavation view, looking west



Plate 05: Trench 3: post-excitation view of brick wall C305



Plate 06: Trench 3: post-excitation view of trench, looking south-west



Plate 07: View of interior of access tunnel, looking north-west



Plate 08: View of external entrance to access tunnel, looking south-east



Plate 09: Base of stone architectural feature

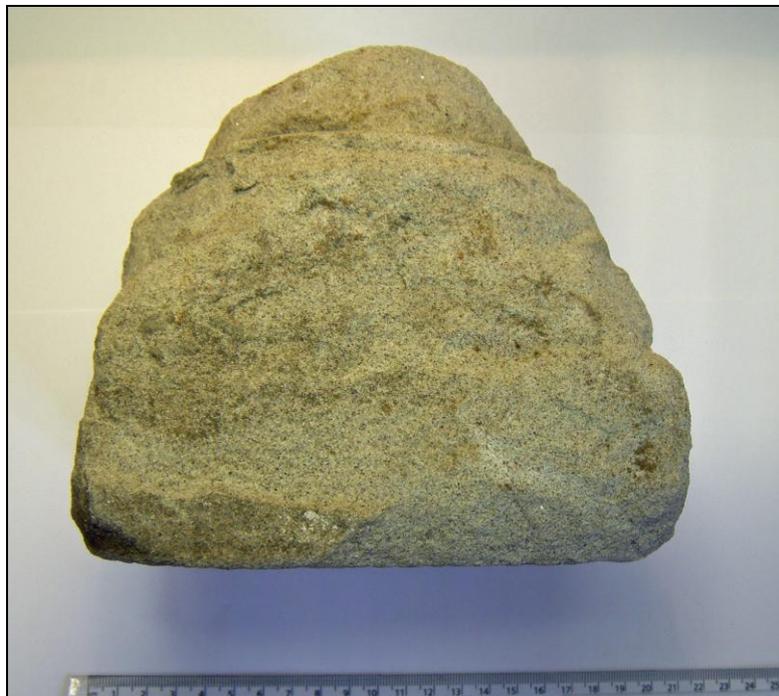


Plate 10: Side view of stone architectural feature



Plate 11; View of possible limewash residue on stone feature