

33 WHITECROSS STREET MONMOUTH

An Archaeological Watching Brief for Mrs. S. Egan

Carried out by

MONMOUTH ARCHAEOLOGY

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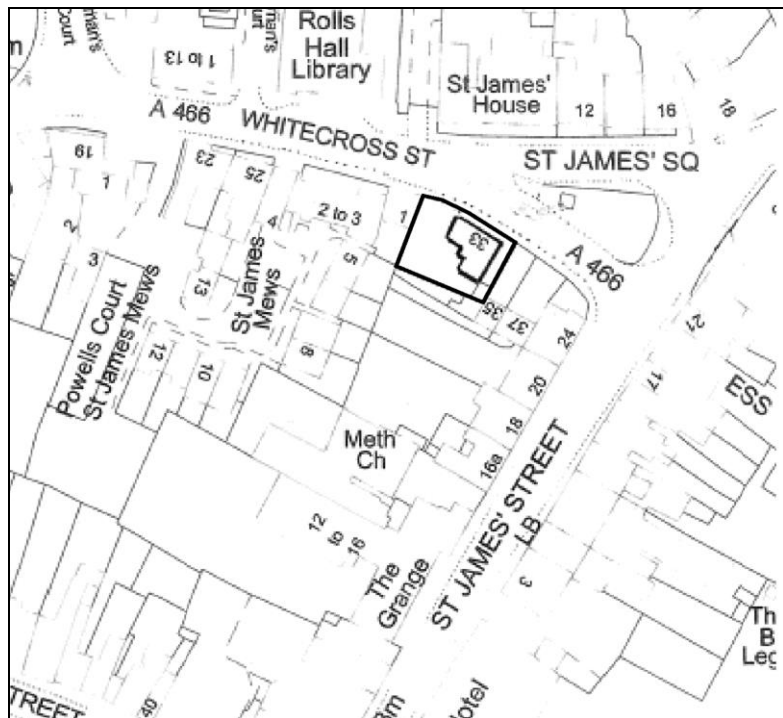
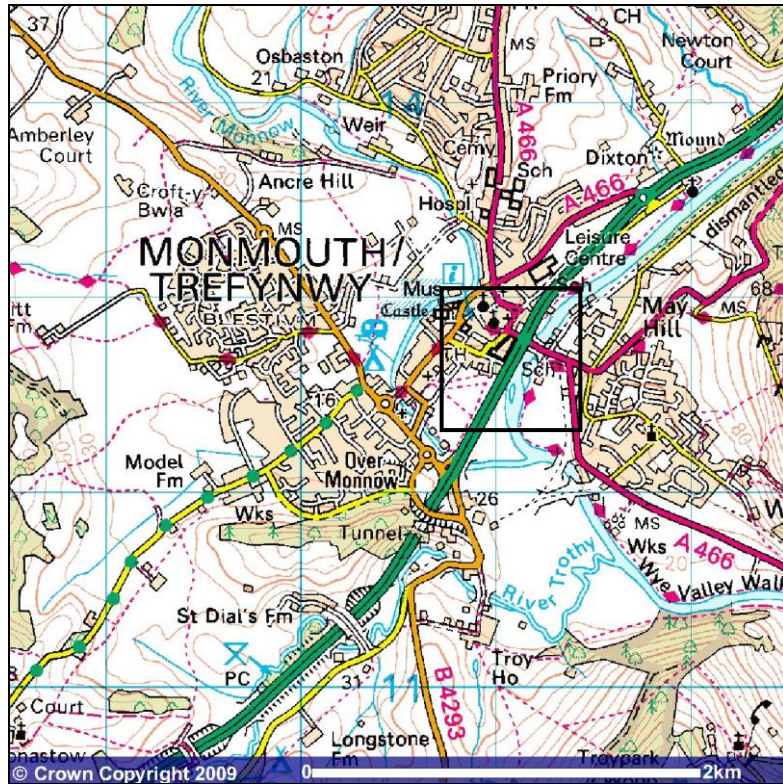
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Summary

Monmouth Archaeology was commissioned by Mrs. Sarah Egan, through her architects, Buckle Chamberlain Partnership Ltd., to carry out an Archaeological Watching Brief during the groundworks connected to an extension at 33 Whitecross Street, Monmouth (centred at NGR SO 51040 12957).

Roman, medieval and post-medieval remains were found during the watching brief and were preserved either *in situ* or preserved by record.

An area of red-burnt soil on the west of the site was associated with a layer of brown humus which produced only Roman pottery of 2nd and 3rd century date. The main medieval remains consisted of a domestic building in the central part of the site with pottery dated from the 12th to the 14th centuries. Most of the pottery from the east of the site was 'Group 1' post-medieval kiln waste, which was probably produced during the later 15th or the 16th century.



33 Whitecross Street, Monmouth : Site Location

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Introduction

Monmouth Archaeology was commissioned by Mrs. S. Egan, through her architects Buckle Chamberlain Partnership Ltd., to carry out an Archaeological Watching Brief during the groundworks connected with an extension at 33 Whitecross Street, Monmouth, (centred at NGR SO 51040 12957).

The Archaeological Watching Brief was required in order to comply with a condition imposed by Monmouthshire County Council (Planning Application No. DC/2008/0000786) on the planning consent for the development.

Monmouth Archaeology wishes to acknowledge the help given by Mrs. Egan and the building contractors on the site. The unit is also grateful for the help received from Mr. Neil Maylan and the staff of Monmouthshire County Council's archaeological advisors, the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust.

The archaeological watching brief was carried out during July 2009.

Objectives

The objectives of the Archaeological Watching Brief were to understand the nature, date and extent of any archaeological features and deposits which existed on the proposed development site and to ensure their preservation in situ or by record. All remains of potential interest were recorded and finds retained.

Methodology

Following the demolition of the old extension, the foundation trenches were excavated to an average depth of 0.90m. Mitigation excavations were carried out by hand by the archaeological contractors.

Stephen Clarke, Jane Bray, Dave Hancocks and Colin Harris, of Monmouth Archaeology, were the archaeologists who carried out the mitigation excavation work and were present on the site during the development. The mitigation work was carried out to the Institute of Field Archaeologists' standards and the watching brief was carried out to the IfA's '*Standards for Archaeological Watching Briefs*'. A metal detecting survey of the site was carried out by Mr. John Bray, who also identified the metal finds. Mr. A. L. Sockett reported on the Roman pottery.

A photographic record was maintained during the groundworks while plans and sections were drawn and context records were kept in accordance with normal practice.

The finds were related to the contexts in which they originated and were examined and reported on by recognised specialists and are included in this report.

Historical Background

33 Whitecross Street, which is situated to the west of St. James' Square, is just inside the medieval Western Gate and town wall which was built in around AD1300. The stone defences were pre-dated by an earlier ditch and rampart, running from the River Monnow to the River Wye. The siting of the existing house may represent medieval or post-medieval encroachment from outside the original medieval square or street frontage. Whitecross Street is assumed to be named after a white cross; this was usually a plague cross and may be the one shown in the churchyard of St. Mary's Priory Church on John Speed's Map of 1610. The medieval priory precinct, which was marked by a ditch, appears to have run down Monk Street and along Whitecross Street to the south-west of the church.

The site is inside the Roman industrial town named as *Blestium* in the 3rd century Roman road book, the *Antonine Itinerary*. Roman iron working has been shown to have been practised in this area of the town and especially on the nearby banks of the River Wye. The area may also be inside the defended area of the early (Pre-Flavian) Roman Fort - if the fort was a very large one, as suggested by some specialists. Other Roman features include ditches to the north of the West Gate and First century pottery in St. James' Street. Medieval and later bell foundries have been found on the west of the square and beside the Rolls Hall on the north-west, while there is evidence of a 13th century pottery kiln at Pitman's Court and an early post-medieval one off the square behind St. James' House. Post-medieval boat building which associated with the thriving river trade took place on the nearby riverside.

The Archaeology

Roman

The main Roman deposit was dark loam (014) which had survived on the western side of the site; it was lying directly over the presumed horizon of the natural ancient alluvial sands (022). In the western end of the southern foundation trench the Roman level was sealed by a layer of fawn-coloured clay which also produced Roman pottery (011); this was covered by the dark loam Context 010.

An area of burnt soil with a layer of wood ash along the western side trench are also believed to be Roman although there were few finds (037/038). Any surviving Roman levels from the area of the medieval building to the eastern end

of then trench were undisturbed during the groundworks and mitigation excavations.

The upper parts of the Roman dark loam (036) were associated with a heavily burnt area of soil (038) in the western trench

Medieval

The primary medieval feature was a hard surface (021, interpreted as the earth floor of a house) with charcoal which was heavily concentrated in the central area of the surface (interpreted as a hearth). Part of a ceramic cooking pot (006) was found sitting upright on the charcoal concentration; when a cut was made in the trench edge to examine and recover the pot it was found that most of it had been destroyed/removed by a late medieval disturbance (029/030). The cut exposed a charcoal covered ridge (031) sloping from the north (by 8cm).

The floor of the building (which was probably built of wood, wattle and daub) extended as far as a hollow in the clay on the west (019) which is probably the shallow slot for a sleeper beam (a wooden soleplate). A small sondage into clay (019) revealed a layer of sand (020) lying over a hard surface of compacted sand and pebbles (027) which was sloping towards the east. This surface had been cut (026) on the eastern side of the sondage, exposing a dark, charcoal rich, loam (028).

A trace of a possible sleeper beam cut, matching 019 on the east, had been cut by 004 (which is discussed below) and further disturbed by mortared stones on the northern side of the trench. The charcoal concentration (005) seems to be a domestic hearth on the presumed house floor (021), this was covered by a layer of dark loam which was itself covered by a layer of loam (018) containing a great deal of orange-coloured lightly burnt clay (017).

A sondage dug beneath the stone filled trench (015/012) entered a brown loam (024) which produced a small sherd of late 11th/early 12th century Cotswold Ware from the Vale of Gloucester.

Post-Medieval

Dark soil (003 and 010) covers the earlier contexts along the western half of the main foundation trench. These layers are post-medieval and are cut by a stone filled trench running somewhat diagonally across the trench (015/012, west to east).

Context 004, on the east, was composed of heavy deposits of black soil and broken stone. This context contained definite kiln waste and saggars while most other pottery was probably also kiln waste from an early post medieval pottery. This deposit was found all along the eastern trench and was spreading some five metres towards the west along the main foundation trench.

The kiln waste is of the same group as that found in the garden of St. James House, also in St. James' Square.

Modern

Twentieth century disturbances, with dark soil and rubble (002) covered the upper parts of the site; this was capped by concrete patio slabs (001) which were pre-dated by a 1974 New Penny.

Finds Summary and Discussion

Prehistoric. Evidence of prehistoric activity from the Middle Stone Age onwards is common in Monmouth, so the retouched dark coloured flint flake from the current site is not unexpected and could date from the New Stone Age (the Neolithic).

Roman. The Roman level (014) in the western side of the trench was covered by a layer of fawn clay (011) which appears to be the same as the 'plough soil' separating many of the Roman deposits in the town from the medieval.

Mr. Sockett examined the Roman pottery and considered it to be dominantly of 2nd and 3rd century date; it is listed in the Finds Catalogue.

Medieval. Norman activity on or close to the site is suggested by the unabraded sherd of D2 Cotswold Ware found in the brown loam, (024), which was exposed in a sondage below 015. This pottery, which is made in the Vale of Gloucester, is found in Monmouth's Norman levels, especially on the burgage sites in Monnow Street. Further sherds of this ware have been found in St. Mary Street and during the construction of Pitman's Court on the corner of Whitecross Street and Monk Street, in the 1970's.

Two worn rim sherds of 12th century Malvernian tripod pitchers, from Contexts 007 and 010, confirm occupation of that period on or close to the development site. These vessels are the earlier of two types of tripod pitchers from Malvern and are dated in Hereford and Monnow Street from around the middle 12th century; they are not found in 13th century deposits.

The floor of the presumed medieval house was covered by a dark loam (018) which was not closely datable but the pottery recovered included Bristol Redcliffe Ware which is not found until after the middle of the 13th century and jug sherds with a heavy streaky glaze reminiscent of some early 14th century pots. However, a sherd of (probably) Hereford A2 cooking pot should have gone out of circulation before the end of the 13th century while the other pots could be of any 13th or early 14th century date.

The cooking pot remains on the charcoal concentration (005) on the floor (021) of the medieval building is again dated to the 13th or early 14th century while fragments of a ridge tile and a local tyg which were found in the disturbed area behind the cooking pot are probably of 15th century date and intrusive. Inside the cooking pot itself, a sherd possibly from the Worcester area, may also be of the later 13th or early 14th century while one of the abraded sherds of Malvernian tripod pitcher (Monmouth Fabric B2) is at least a century older. A small fragment of Roman glass was also recovered from the fill of the pot. The other sherd of B2 tripod pitcher, again very worn and abraded, came from Context 010 which is probably attributable to the 13th century.

The Post-Medieval Kiln Waste. The post-medieval kiln waste formed the main pottery assemblage from layer 004 which dominated the eastern side of the excavations. This consisted of black soil (often very sticky) and broken stone which was found spreading from the east side of the excavations, some 5.00m towards the west. The pottery, which included kiln saggars and glazed wares, was of the same group (Group 1 : Clarke, et al, 1985) as was found in an excavation in the orchard garden of St. James' House in 1956/57. An assemblage of similar waste to this was also found at The Malthouse, St. Mary's Street, while small groups or individual sherds have been recovered from several other sites, including Monnow Street. This was a very heavy deposit and its relationship to the kiln waste is unclear.

Bones

The bones were domestic waste and consisted of bovine, sheep, pig and chicken.

The Contexts

Eastern and southern foundation trenches

- 001 Concrete slabs and base to 0.20m.
- 002 Dark soil with rubble – brick, stone and lenses of lime. Recent.
- 003 Dark soil with post medieval pottery, general spread.
- 004 Black soil, broken stone, kiln waste and early post medieval pottery spreading from east side of excavations c. 5.00m towards the west.
- 005 Charcoal concentration, probably a hearth.
- 006 Medieval cooking pot in situ on Context 005 on floor (021).
- 007 Fill of cooking pot 006.

- 008 Northern wall of house.
- 009 Foundations of house wall (008).
- 010 General spread of dark loam across majority of excavations with some medieval pottery.
- 011 Fawn clay on the west side of southern trench, possibly Roman but definitely sealing Roman levels.
- 012 Cut on west side of stones (015).
- 013 Red ?boulder clay, lens in Context 014, below Context 011, sloping towards the east.
- 014 Dark loam, only containing Roman pottery, over Context 022.
- 015 Broken sandstone, beneath Context 003, running north-east to south-west across the southern foundation trench, fill of cuts 012/016.
- 016 Cut on the east of Context 015.
- 017 Dark loam with burnt clay (daub) much charcoal, especially at the base.
- 018 Dark loam, charcoal, clay and medieval pottery, below Context 017 and over Context 019, also over floor (021),
- 019 Clay approx. 0.10m in depth, over sand 020.
- 020 Sand, below Context 019, and over hard surface (027), also over Context 028.
- 021 Hard, compacted, gritty surface of sand and pebbles (medieval floor) with iron slag and charcoal.
- 022 Alluvial sand on the west, presumed to be natural.
- 023 Fill of developer's trial hole to c. 1.20m - slag, red clay and loam with one sherd of Roman pot, natural not reached.
- 024 Brown loam below stones (015), and inside cut 016 with D2 Cotswold ware sherd; exposed in sondage.
- 025 Developer's trial hole cut through floor (021), filled by Context 023.

- 026 Cut through Context 027.
- 027 Compacted sand and pebbles surface sloping towards the east. Cut through by cuts 016 on the west and 026 on the east.
- 028 Dark with charcoal below Context 020.
- 029 Medieval disturbance behind section, north east, of cooking pot (006).
- 030 Cut for Context 029 through cooking pot (006).
- 031 Bank or mound below Context 029 sloping towards cooking pot (006) composed of compacted clay and slag with charcoal covered surface.
- 032 Fawn clay below west side of stones (015).
- 033 Lime-mortared stones, on the east, against Context 021.
- 034 Lime mortar, stone and clay in sticky black loam
- 035 Brown clay beneath Context 034, in sondage 4.00m from eastern end of southern foundation trench, at a depth of approx. 1.05m.

Western foundation trench

- 036 Dark loam over 035
- 037 Grey (wood ash) over and mingled with 036
- 038 Red-fired soil
- 039 Brown loam below 035
- 040 Cut into brown loam with darker brown loam and charcoal fill, sloping from 035/036
- 041 Brown loam, slag and red clay, below floor (021), exposed by the developer's trial hole.

Catalogue of pottery

(See Appendix B – The Medieval and Later Pottery Fabric Notes)

The finds are catalogued in the contexts from which they were recovered.

Context 003

Bag 3

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
003	Cooking pot, very micaceous	A5	13/14 th C	1
003	Cooking pot	A3	13/14 th C	2
003	Malvern ridge tile	B4	14/15 th C	1
003	Non-local ridge tile	G	14 th C	1

Context 003

Bag 5

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
003	Bristol Redcliffe	C2	Post c.1250	1
003	?Cup fragment	A5	15/16 th C	1
003	Small jug, non-local	G	15/16 th C	1
003	?Jug	A5	13/14 th C	1
003	Glazed jugs, one with applied decoration	A3/ A5	13/14 th C	5
003	Cooking pot	A3	13/14 th C	1
003	Non-local ridge tile	G	14 th C	1

Context 004

Bag 13 Main Kiln Waste deposit : All probably the same kiln

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
004	Probable waste but showing no kiln damage. Some plain glaze, others copper-speckled. Rims and bases	A5	Late 15 th /17 th C	48
004	Saggars, two bases with cut holes, one rim	A5	Late 15 th /17 th C	3
004	Saggars, wall with rim melted and buckled in kiln	A5	Late 15 th /17 th C	1
004	Tygs; one handle, two bases	A5	Late 15 th /17 th C	3
004	Possibly same kiln, ridge tile fragments	A5	Late 15 th /17 th C	3

Context 004

Bag 4

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
004	Ridge tile (old breaks and abraded)	A5	13 th C	3
004	MVW jug	A5	13 th /14 th C	2

Context 004

Bag 4

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
004	Split rod handle fragment, abraded	A5	Early 14 th C	1
004	Local kiln sherds	A5	16/17 th C	6

Context 006

Bag 8

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
006	Cooking pot base	A3	12/13 th C	6

Context 007

Bag 7

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
007	Tripod pitcher, abraded	B2	12 th C	1
007	Non-local jug, Worcester area	G	14 th C	1

Context 010

Bag 12

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
010	Malvern tripod pitcher rim, abraded	B2	12 th C	1
010	Small sherd of fine walled, fine sand tempered poss. cup	-	Roman	1
010	Cooking pot, including two rims	A3	12/13 th C	7
010	Oxford colour coated rim	-	Roman (3 rd 4 th C)	1
010	Severn Valley ware	-	Roman	2
010	Cooking pot	A3	12/13 th C	1

Context 011

Bag 14

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
011	Severn Valley ware rim of heavy bowl	-	Roman 2 nd C	2
011	Oxford ware rim	-	Roman	1

Context 014

Bag 15

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
014	Grey-ware rim	-	Roman	1
014	Black Burnished including one rim	-	Roman	3
014	Severn Valley ware including one rim	-	Roman	7
014	Samian poss. DR.18/31		Roman (2 nd C)	1

Context 018

Bag 6

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
018	Bristol Redcliffe	C2	Post c.1250	1
018	Hereford cooking pot	HA2	13 th C	1
018	Jug sherd with heavy, streaky glaze	A3	Late 13/14 th C	4
018	Non-local glazed jug sherd	G	13/14 th C	1
018	Glazed thumbed jug base	A3	13/14 th C	1

Context 024

Bag 11

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
024	Cotswold ware	D2	Late 11/12 th C	1

Context 027

Bag 1

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
027	Severn Valley ware	-	Roman	1

Context 029

Bag 2

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
029	Cooking pot	A3	12/13 th C	8
029	Ridge tile fragment	A5b type	13/14 th C	1
029	Severn Valley ware	-	Roman	1

Context 029

Bag 9

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
029	?Cup/tyg fragment, local kiln	A5	15/17 th C	1

Context 039

Bag 16

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
039	Amphora	-	Roman	1
039	Red-ware ?Caerleon	-	Roman	1
039	Oxford white ware	-	Roman	1
039	Possibly local wares	-	Roman	5

Context US

Bag 10

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric and Form</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Sherds</i>
US	Jug	A5b	13/14 th C	1
US	Cooking pot	A3	12/13 th C	2
US	Severn Valley ware	-	Roman	1

Other Finds

Context 001

Bag 14

<i>Context</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>
001	New Penny	1974	1

Context 003

Bag 3

<i>Context</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>
003	Drossy slag	-	1
003	Re-touched dark flint flake	?Neolithic	1

Context 003

Bag 5

<i>Context</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>
003	Polished rib fragment	-	1
003	Slag on furnace lining, greenish colour	-	1

Context 007

Bag 8

<i>Context</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>
007	Roman glass fragment	-	1

Context 004

Bag 4

<i>Context</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>
004	Oyster shell	-	1

Context 010

Bag 12

<i>Context</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>
010	Iron nail with traces of wood	-	1

Context 014

Bag 15

<i>Context</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>
014	Iron nail	Roman	1

Context 024

Bag 11

<i>Context</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>
024	Furnace lining	-	1

Context 027

Bag 1

<i>Context</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>
027	Drossy iron slag	-	1

Context 029

Bag 2

<i>Context</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>
029	Iron ?Nails	-	2

Bones

(Not identifiable : Nid)

Context 003

Bag 3

<i>Context</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Bone / Teeth</i>	<i>Number</i>
003	Pig	Partial jaw with teeth	1
003	Nid	-	1

Context 003

Bag 5

<i>Context</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Bone / Teeth</i>	<i>Number</i>
003	Nid	-	1

Context 004

Bag 3

<i>Context</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Bone / Teeth</i>	<i>Number</i>
004	Bovine	Metacarpal	1
004	Nid	-	1
004	Sheep	Tibia	1

Context 10

Bag 12

<i>Context</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Bone / Teeth</i>	<i>Number</i>
010	Bovine	Phalange	1

Context 018

Bag 6

<i>Context</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Bone / Teeth</i>	<i>Number</i>
018	Bovine	Metacarpal, distal end	1
018	Bovine	Phalange	1
018	Nids	-	4
018	Sheep	Humerus, Distal end	1
018	Sheep	Vertebra fragment	1
018	Chicken	Humerus	1
018	Chicken	Tibiotarsus	1

Context 039

Bag 16

<i>Context</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Bone / Teeth</i>	<i>Number</i>
029	Nid	-	1

Context US

Bag 10

<i>Context</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Bone / Teeth</i>	<i>Number</i>
US	Nid	-	1

Samples

Context 003

Bag 3

<i>Context</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Number</i>
003	Burnt clay	1

Context 018

Bag 6

<i>Context</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Number</i>
016	Slag	3

Context US

Bag 10

<i>Context</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>
US	Slag	-	1

Conclusion

The archaeological watching brief produced evidence of Prehistoric, Roman, Post-Medieval and Recent occupation on the site. The single dark coloured flint flake is probably of Neolithic date. The Roman material is mainly dated to the 2nd and 3rd centuries and was sealed by a layer reminiscent of the 'plough soil' separating the Roman from the medieval periods in other areas of the town. There was evidence that a house constructed of wattle and daub was the main medieval feature surviving from the High Middle Ages while the dominance of early Post-Medieval pottery kiln waste on the eastern side of the site was of considerable interest, although its significance is unknown.

The Archive

The archive will be held in the depository of Monmouth Archaeology at The Town Wall, Monmouth, until such time as it can be accessioned by the Monmouth Museums Service. The Archive consists of CD with digital photographs, report and drawings, photographic contact sheet, contexts records, finds records and other paperwork.

The finds are being retained by the client.

Bibliography

Stephen Clarke, Reg and Philomena, David and Jan Jemmett, 'Post-Medieval Potteries in North Gwent', *Medieval & Later Pottery in Wales*, **8**, 1985.

*This report was compiled by
Stephen Clarke, M.B.E., F.S.A., M.I.F.A. and Jane Bray, A.I.F.A.,
of Monmouth Archaeology.*

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