



Mather & Platt Foundry Site: Land at Grimshaw Lane, Newton Heath, Manchester

Archaeological Evaluation Report

March 2022

Client: Canmoor Projects

Issue No: 3

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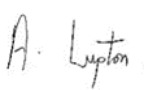
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Mather & Platt Foundry Site

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Aidan Parker

With illustrations by Mark Tidmarsh.

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Summary

During February 2022 OA North undertook an evaluation involving the excavation of three trenches on the site of the former Mather & Platt foundry at Newton Heath, Manchester. The evaluation was undertaken in order to inform mitigation, if appropriate, given forthcoming redevelopment of the site. In discussion with the curatorial archaeologist for GMAAS and BSA Heritage, acting as consultant for the client, the trenches were targeted on elements of the former foundry, as well as a putative brickwork, identified on historic mapping to the west of the site. Excavation of the trenches revealed no significant archaeological remains within the investigation area.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology North would like to thank Ian Miller and Ben Dyson who monitored the work on behalf of Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS). Thanks are also extended to Ben Stephenson of BSA Heritage for monitoring the project on behalf of Canmoor Projects.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Dr Adam Tinsley. The fieldwork was directed by Aidan Parker, who was supported by Andrew McGuire. Survey and digitizing were carried out by Andrew McGuire, Aidan Parker and Mark Tidmarsh. Thanks, are also extended to the teams of OA staff that prepared the archive under the supervision of Karen Barker.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) North was commissioned by Canmoor Projects (hereafter referred to as the client) to undertake a trial trench evaluation of a permitted commercial development to provide warehousing on part of the site of the former Mather and Platt Foundry, Newton Heath, Manchester. In this regard, OA North acted as the archaeological contractor, operating under the guidance of Ben Stephenson, archaeological consultant for BSA Heritage (hereafter referred to as the consultant).
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref: 129444/FO/2021, Condition 3). Although the Local Planning Authority (LPA) did not set a brief for the work, discussions undertaken by the consultant with Ian Miller (Heritage Management Director for Greater Manchester Archaeology Advisory Service: GMAAS: hereafter referred to as the curator), acting in his capacity as archaeological advisor to the LPA, established an initial scope of work, which involved excavation of four trenches (1-4), from which trench labels were largely retained. Following subsequent discussion between the curator and consultant the current phase of trenching was reduced, omitting trenches 1 and 3, due to issues of access and consideration of proposed design features. However, after conducting archival research a further potential target for trenching in the form of a possible brickyard was identified, and a trench requested to sample its indicative location. This was subsequently labeled Trench 3 as featured in accompanying figures. OA North subsequently drafted a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI: OA North 2021), which set out the methods by which the evaluation would be conducted and address the requirements of the conditions of development. This was formally agreed with the consultant and curator for GMAAS.
- 1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with the WSI and therefore the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Code of Conduct and relevant Standards and Guidance, and local and national planning policies (CfA 2019; 2020a; 2020b: English Heritage 1991: Historic England 2015a: 2015b: 2016: UKIC 1990: MCC 2012a: DCLG 2021).

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The proposed development area (PDA) is located approximately 3 miles to the north-east of the centre of Manchester, in the area of Newton Heath (Figs 1-3). It occupies part of the site of the former Mather and Platt Foundry, now demolished, a total area of approximately 6.5 hectares, comprising hard standing and rough ground to south, east and west, as well as an access track from Grimshaw Lane. The area was divided into two unequal parts by a fence line and acoustic suppression spoil bund extending north/south roughly through the centre of the site. The fence and spoil bund had to be retained, effectively dividing the site into two separate areas and truncating one of the intended trenches. The site is defined by the Rochdale canal to the north and north-west, the premises of the modern Fine Lady Bakery, off Briscoe Lane and Grimshaw Lane to the south and south-east, and Ten Acres Lane to the north-east and east.

- 1.2.2 The site is generally level, although the natural ground rising up from c 70m AOD to the south-west of the main site area, to c 75m in its north-east. The PDA is centred at NGR SJ 8710 9999.
- 1.2.3 The underlying solid geology of the PDA is characterised as sandstone of the Chester Formation to the east, with a thin band of Newton Heath Sandstone to its west, as well as Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation mudstone, siltstone, and sandstone west of that (BGS 2022). Superficial deposits are recorded as comprising till, Devensian - Diamicton across the whole of the site and beyond (Cranfield 2022).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site is presented in full in the WSI and will not be repeated here, what follows is a summary of the main potential presented by the PDA.
- 1.3.2 Development during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the purchase of land in the Newton Heath area by the Mather & Platt Co which was subsequently developed into the Park Works site. The works were used initially for the construction of textile machinery, but later expanded production to include other products including fire sprinkler systems and pumps. The plant constructed here was later immortalized by L. S. Lowry in the painting 'Going to Work' (1943).
- 1.3.3 During the First World War, part of the site was given over to A.V. Roe for aircraft manufacture and in 1915 the site was taken over by the government for munitions production, something that happened again during the Second World War. Post-war, the Park Works fell into decline, ultimately being demolished in 2017. There remains potential for below ground remains relating to the development of the site during this period to be preserved.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The general aim of the trench evaluation was to determine the archaeological potential of the PDA ahead of permitted development of the site and assess the potential impact development will have on any remaining assets and inform suitable mitigation, if appropriate.
- 2.1.2 The specific project aims, and objectives were as follows:
- i. To provide information about any archaeological resource identified within the PDA (including its presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality);
 - ii. To record, where feasible, the depth, extent, character and date of any archaeological features or deposits encountered;
 - iii. To create an appropriate record of the archaeological resource which will be impacted upon as a result of the proposed development;
 - iv. To interpret the archaeology of the site within its local, regional and national archaeological context;
 - v. To carry out the above in accordance with the ClfA Code of Conduct, Standard and guidance for an archaeological evaluation;
 - vi. To compile a professional archive in line with industry standards and guidelines;
 - vii. To satisfy and discharge (in part or whole) the conditions of planning consent associated with development of the site.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 Following consultation with GMAAS and the consultant, a programme of work was devised, comprising the excavation of two 100m x 2m trenches targeting the original location of the foundry works, as identified on historic mapping (Fig 4). A single 20m x 2m trench was subsequently requested following archival research, to the west of the site, targeting the putative remains of a brick works, also identified on historic mapping (Fig 5). They were to be excavated to a maximum depth of no more than 1.2m, taking account of health and safety protocols, although limited and temporary machine sondages were excavated to greater depth, where appropriate.
- 2.2.2 Following deployment to site, OA North set out each trench location using a dGPS accurate to +/- 0.01m, based upon the trenching plan agreed in the WSI. This also featured a number of excavation exclusion zones over and around mapped services found to impact upon the trench locations (see Figs 2-3). All working areas were then subject to scans for services using a CAT 4 and Genny prior to excavation, with remaining excavation areas modified as required.
- 2.2.3 Once the intended excavation areas were considered safe to break ground, all trenches were carefully excavated using a tracked mechanical excavator, equipped with a toothless ditching bucket, under direct archaeological supervision at all times and in a stratigraphical manner. Within each trench, the upper horizons of overburden, topsoil, subsoil and any recent made ground were mechanically removed, in controlled, level spits, of no more than 0.20m, to the surface of the first significant archaeological

deposit, or to the level of the natural subsoil, whichever was encountered first. Where appropriate, this deposit was cleaned by hand, using appropriate hand tools and inspected for archaeological features. Overburden arisings were stored either side of the trench and separated into bunds and sealed awaiting backfill. Limited mechanical sondages were used as appropriate, to test underlying deposits, where no archaeology was identified in the upper horizons. These sondages confirmed the absence of archaeological remains and the continuation of overburden deposits to depth. The sondages were recorded, as appropriate, and backfilled after inspection by GMAAS.

- 2.2.4 Excavations commenced in the eastern half of the area in relation to the available parts of trenches 2 and 4. These trenches were left open for inspection by Ben Dyson, who attended site on Tuesday 16th February, after which the excavation areas were recorded on *pro-forma* sheets, as appropriate, re-surveyed using the dGPS and backfilled. Once complete, the plant was then transported by low loader to the western half of the site where the remaining available trenching areas were excavated as per the method defined above. No archaeological remains were identified in this area and Ben Dyson was informed by phone, but declined attendance, providing clearance to backfill on completion of operations. Therefore, once all manual excavation and recording was achieved to the satisfaction of GMAAS, trenches were backfilled with the arisings in reverse order and compacted with plant provided only. No reinstatement of surfaces was undertaken.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches as excavated. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in *Appendix A*.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The soil sequence in the trenches was uniform. Within the longer trenches to the east, the bulk of the deposits encountered were made ground comprising clay soil containing various elements of demolition rubble and other detritus (modern plastic, rebar, modern timber etc.). This was overlain by a thin layer of shale, which in turn was overlain by topsoil/turf. Within the shorter trench to the west, similar redeposited clay deposits were overlain by clinker, capped with topsoil or tarmac, this variation due to the trench location straddling a sports field and associated access path.
- 3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, however, a severe storm active at the time of the evaluation meant that large sections of the trenches subsequently flooded, and trench sections suffered from collapse. Despite this, archaeological features, where present, would have been easy to identify at the time of excavation as water ingress was not so severe as to immediately limit visibility.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

- 3.3.1 No significant archaeological remains were observed in any of the trenches during the evaluation. It should be noted that, due to the presence of numerous live services crossing trenches 2 and 4, excavation exclusion zones were necessarily implemented over their mapped locations which significantly impacted available areas, breaking the trenches into many smaller sections. In addition, the position of a fence and spoil bund dividing the site was retained on instruction of the client. This further prevented access to sections of the intended trench. The deposits and depths observed within the various sections of each trench in this area remained uniform throughout. Given this, it is therefore unlikely that significant variation would occur in the unexcavated areas or that archaeological remains survived intact within these areas when they were not observed elsewhere.
- 3.3.2 The trenches described below are presented out of conventional order, this is due to the removal of one proposed trench prior to the evaluation starting and logistical constraints that influenced the sequence of works. The trench numbering was not altered to reflect these changes and the following descriptions are presented in the order in which trenches were excavated.

3.4 Trench 2

- 3.4.1 Trench 2 was the easternmost trench excavated and targeted the remains of 'Block A' of the Mather & Platt works (as seen on architects plans c 1901, Fig 5). Measuring 100m x 2m it was aligned north-west/south-east. Due to the presence of services this trench was excavated in five separate sections. The average depth reached throughout

the trench was 1.2m below ground level (bgl), with sondages excavated periodically to a maximum depth of 2m (Plate 1).



Plate 1: Trench 2, general shot looking West

- 3.4.2 Within each excavated section of the trench, a thin grass/topsoil layer was removed to reveal deposit **200**, a mid-brown/grey shale levelling deposit up to 0.30m thick. This deposit overlay a mid-yellow/brown clay (**201**), that contained frequent demolition material and other modern rubbish. This material formed the bulk of the observed deposits within the trench and measured approximately 1.5m thick. Where sondages were excavated, another deposit (**202**) was recorded, this material was largely the same composition as deposit **201**, but darker in hue due to hydrocarbon contaminates. Due to issues of contamination, depth, and edge stability, no excavation was able to progress beyond this made ground deposit, and an average depth of 2m bgl in the machine sondages. Within this excavated horizon no archaeology was observed (Plate 2).



Plate 2: Trench 2, section of machine sondage

3.5 Trench 4

3.5.1 Trench 4 was located to the west of Trench 2 and followed the same north-west/south-east alignment and the same intended measurements (100m x 2m). This trench was targeted on 'Block C' of the Mather & Platt works, thought to be the location of the engine and boiler house (architects plans, c 1901). Again, service exclusion zones were implemented, dividing the eastern part of the trench into three separate sections. The large steel fence and associated acoustic spoil bund that divided the PDA also bisected the trench on a north/south alignment, west of its centre. This further reduced the available area of the trench for excavation, with a smaller section, further impacted by other service lines and exclusion zones, located in the western half of the site (Fig 2).



Plate 3: Trench 4, general shot looking West

- 3.5.2 Similar stratigraphy to Trench 2 was observed within Trench 4 (Plate 3), with the same shale levelling deposit (**400**) observed overlying redeposited clay/demolition rubble (**401**). Again, machine sondages excavated within various parts of the excavated trench sections, revealed the same underlying darker made ground deposit (**401**) extending to depth. The sondages achieved a maximum depth of 2m bgl, with an average trench depth of 1.2m elsewhere, in which no archaeology was observed (Plate 4).



Plate 4: Trench 4, section of machine sondage

- 3.5.3 The westernmost end of Trench 4 differed slightly to the above as it lay within the area of lower lying ground in the western half of the PDA (west of the steel fence). While the same made ground deposit (**401**) was observed, this part of the site did not have the shale levelling deposit observed in trench sections in the eastern half of the PDA. This end of the trench was again restricted by the presence of service exclusion zones resulting in a length of 2m being the only available area in which ground could safely be broken. Excavation of this section was halted at 0.40m due to the presence of a large cast-iron pipe crossing the area. Due to the possibility this was also a live service (use of the Cable Avoidance Tool determined it carried a signal) excavation was ended on safety grounds (Plate 5).



Plate 5: Trench 4, cast-iron pipe

3.6 Trench 3

3.6.1 Trench 3 was situated to the west of the trenches 2 and 4 and targeted the location of a putative brickyard identified on historic mapping (Fig 5). Measuring 20m x 2m and aligned north/south, the trench had to be moved 3m east of its original location due to the presence of mature trees, fencing, and a manhole, indicating the presence of a drain. This trench lay across a sports field and the path accessing it and therefore was capped by different deposits to those observed elsewhere on site (Plate 6). This comprised a sequence of topsoil (**300**) with a tarmac surface (**303**) and bedding gravel (**304**) to the north and beyond the limit of the sports field, correlating with an access track in this location. These deposits overlay a clinker leveling layer (**301**) up to 0.10m thick. Beneath the clinker was a similar redeposited clay layer (**302**) to that observed elsewhere across the site. Deposit **302** comprised a mixed deposit of yellow/brown clay containing occasional demolition debris and clinker and formed the bulk of the deposit within the trench. Excavation of a machine sondage identified that this deposit continued to a depth of 2m bgl and beyond. The average trench depth was 1.2m and no archaeology was observed (Plate 7).



Plate 6: Trench 3, general shot looking North



Plate 7: Trench 3, section of machine sondage

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 Although the area available for excavation in the main trenches (Trench 2 and 4) was limited by ground conditions, including the presence of live services and associated exclusion zones, as well as a dividing fence and acoustic spoil bund, it was possible to sample the target areas and effectively establish that no archaeological remains were preserved in the observed horizons, to a maximum depth of 2m bgl. In this regard, the deposits encountered in each excavated trench area were observed to be uniform throughout trenches 2 and 4, with no change detected within the maximum allowed depth of excavation.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

- 4.2.1 The primary objective of the evaluation was to assess the possibility of surviving significant archaeological remains existing within the PDA. Where remains were encountered their character and extent were to be recorded. This information would then be used to inform mitigation of the effects of impending development. The process of evaluation also includes documenting the absence of any such features within the impact zone. The results of the trenching exercise therefore fulfilled this objective by ascertaining that no surviving significant archaeological remains exist within the site at any depth up to 2m bgl.

4.3 Interpretation

- 4.3.1 Observed deposits indicate areas of the PDA subject to trenching has been built up with imported material, particularly in the east of the site. No archaeological remains were observed that could relate to the former works and therefore no interpretation is possible. Based upon the results, any remains have either been entirely removed during demolition or are preserved at a depth beyond what could be achieved during the evaluation, c 2m bgl. If any remains are present outside of the trenched areas or depths, they are therefore likely to be heavily denuded and of reduced significance and value.

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APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 2							
General description					Orientation		Nw-Se
Shale levelling deposits overlying overburden of clay and demolition material. At 1.50m deposits darken due to hydrocarbon contamination					Length (m)		100
					Width (m)		2
					Avg. depth (m)		1.2
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
200	Layer		2	0.3	Other Layer. Mid Brown Grey shale used as levelling deposit across site	n/a	Modern
201	Layer		2	1.5	Other Layer. Mid Yellow Brown clay with frequent demolition material	n/a	Modern
202	Layer		2	0.5	Other Layer. As 201 but darker due to hydrocarbon contamination	n/a	Modern
Trench 3							
General description					Orientation		N-S
Tarmac/topsoil overlying Clinker levelling deposit with redeposited clays beneath. Mixed demolition debris and clinker throughout clay					Length (m)		20
					Width (m)		2
					Avg. depth (m)		1.2
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
300	Layer		2	0.2	Topsoil	n/a	Modern
301	Layer		2	0.1	Other Layer. Clinker/cinder layer sealing redeposited clay below	n/a	Modern
302	Layer		2		Other Layer. Very mixed deposit of yellow brown clay with occasional demolition debris and clinker mixed in. Observed to continue beyond depth of 2.00m	n/a	Modern
303	Layer		2	0.05	Other Layer. Tarmac, replaces topsoil in NE half of trench	n/a	Modern
304	Layer		2	0.1	Other Layer. Hard-core and fine gravel used for bedding the tarmac	n/a	Modern
Trench 4							
General description					Orientation		Nw-Se
Shale levelling deposits overlying overburden of clay and demolition material. At 1.50m deposits darken due to hydrocarbon contamination					Length (m)		100
					Width (m)		2
					Avg. depth (m)		1.2
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
400	Layer		2	0.3	Other Layer. Shale deposit as per 200	n/a	Modern

401	Layer		2	1.3	Other Layer. Mid Yellow Brown clay contains frequent demolition material as per 201	n/a	Modern
402	Layer		2		Other Layer. Same as 202 see for description	n/a	Modern

APPENDIX B

SITE SUMMARY DETAILS / OASIS REPORT FORM

Site name: Mather & Platt Foundry: Land at Grimshaw Lane, Newton Heath, Manchester

Site code: MPF21

Grid Reference SJ 8720599781

Type: Evaluation

Date and duration: 15th-17th February 2022 (3 days)

Area of Site 240m²

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Mill 3, Moor Lane Mills, Moor Lane, Lancaster LA1 1QD, and will be deposited with Manchester Museum of Science and Industry in due course.

Summary of Results: Between 15th-17th February 2022 OA North undertook an evaluation, excavating three trenches on the site of the former Mather & Platt foundry at Newton Heath, Manchester. The trench evaluation hoped to inform a planning application submitted for a proposed development of the site. In discussion with GMAAS and other consultation, the trenches were targeted on elements of the former foundry, as well as a putative brickyard, that lay to the west of the site. Excavation of the trenches revealed no archaeological remains within the area and concludes that if any such remains do survive, they remain at a significant depth that may lie beyond the impact of any subsequent works.

Project Details

OASIS Number			
Project Name			
Start of Fieldwork	15//02/22	End of Fieldwork	17/02/22
Previous Work		Future Work	

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	MPF21	Planning App. No.	
HER Number		Related Numbers	
Prompt			
Development Type	Commercial		
Place in Planning Process	Choose an item.		

Techniques used (tick all that apply)

☐ Aerial Photography – interpretation	☐ Grab-sampling	☐ Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
☐ Aerial Photography - new	☐ Gravity-core	☐ Sample Trenches
☐ Annotated Sketch	☐ Laser Scanning	☐ Survey/Recording of Fabric/Structure

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Augering | ☐ Measured Survey | ☒ Targeted Trenches |
| ☐ Dendrochronological Survey | ☐ Metal Detectors | ☐ Test Pits |
| ☐ Documentary Search | ☐ Phosphate Survey | ☐ Topographic Survey |
| ☐ Environmental Sampling | ☐ Photogrammetric Survey | ☐ Vibro-core |
| ☐ Fieldwalking | ☐ Photographic Survey | ☐ Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit) |
| ☐ Geophysical Survey | ☐ Rectified Photography | |

Monument	Period	Object	Period
	Choose an item.		Choose an item.
	Choose an item.		Choose an item.
	Choose an item.		Choose an item.

Insert more lines as appropriate.

Project Location

County	Lancashire	Address (including Postcode) Mather and Platt Foundry, Grimshaw Lane, Manchester, M40 2BA
District	Greater Manchester	
Parish	Newton Heath	
HER office		
Size of Study Area		
National Grid Ref	SJ 8720599781	

Project Originators

Organisation	BSA Heritage
Project Brief Originator	BSA Heritage/GMAAS
Project Design Originator	Oxford Archaeology North
Project Manager	Adam Tinsley
Project Supervisor	Aidan Parker

Project Archives

	Location	ID
Physical Archive (Finds)		
Digital Archive		
Paper Archive		

Physical Contents	Present?	Digital files associated with Finds	Paperwork associated with Finds
Animal Bones	☐	☐	☐
Ceramics	☐	☐	☐
Environmental	☐	☐	☐
Glass	☐	☐	☐
Human Remains	☐	☐	☐
Industrial	☐	☐	☐
Leather	☐	☐	☐
Metal	☐	☐	☐
Stratigraphic Survey		☒	☐

Textiles	☐	☐	☐
Wood	☐	☐	☐
Worked Bone	☐	☐	☐
Worked Stone/Lithic	☐	☐	☐
None	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐

Digital Media

Database	☐
GIS	☒
Geophysics	☐
Images (Digital photos)	☒
Illustrations (Figures/Plates)	☐
Moving Image	☐
Spreadsheets	☐
Survey	☒
Text	☐
Virtual Reality	☐

Paper Media

Aerial Photos	☐
Context Sheets	☐
Correspondence	☐
Diary	☐
Drawing	☐
Manuscript	☐
Map	☐
Matrices	☐
Microfiche	☐
Miscellaneous	☐
Research/Notes	☐
Photos (negatives/prints/slides)	☐
Plans	☐
Report	☒
Sections	☐
Survey	☐

Further Comments

FIGURES



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