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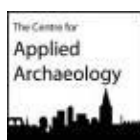
Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Manchester Medieval
Quarter Phase 1a

Client:
Galliford Try

Author:
Graham Mottershead

Report No:
SA/2021/73



Location: The site is located within Manchester City Centre, between the River

NGR: 383854 398803 (centred)

Project: Manchester Medieval Quarter Phase 1a

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Manchester Medieval Quarter Phase 1a

Archaeological Watching Brief

Introduction

As part of the ongoing landscaping and improvement works being carried out by Manchester City Council at Manchester Medieval Quarter, Civic Engineers and Galliford Try have been commissioned to carry out landscaping and service works within the phase 1a area (Figure 1). As part of the archaeological condition for these works it was required that an archaeological watching brief be carried out during any intrusive groundworks. Salford Archaeology were commissioned by Civic Engineers to carry out this work. The watching brief was carried out between May and August 2021.

Background

The area now known as Manchester Medieval Quarter was the core of the medieval town and contains three extant standing late medieval buildings of national importance, the collegiate church, now the Cathedral, the buildings constructed to house the college of priests serving the collegiate the church, which later became Chetham's Hospital and Library, and Hanging Bridge, which is visible within the Cathedral Visitor's Centre, and which provided access to the church across the natural obstacle of Hanging Ditch.

The Medieval Quarter still retains elements of the medieval street pattern in the form of Long Millgate, Fennel Street, Cateaton Street and the Hanging Ditch thoroughfare, now a part of Exchange Square. Important below-ground remains are known to survive in the form of the Hanging Ditch channel, running below the Cathedral Visitor's Centre to the river and spanned by Hanging Bridge, and a rock-cut ditch at Chetham's School which is likely to represent the moat of the former Manchester Castle. Chetham's school is an area of very significant archaeological potential with possible below-ground remains of the medieval castle and manor house, the lost college buildings, and the post-medieval House of Correction. The Medieval Quarter area has also produced prehistoric and Roman finds in the past, and is likely crossed by the line of the Roman road from the fort of Mamucium at Castlefield. Industrial period remains are also contained within the Medieval Quarter area including the Victoria (or Cathedral) Arches and a 19th-century corn mill. Around the Cathedral was a graveyard extending from Cathedral Yard to Fennel Street and From Victoria Street to Cathedral Street. It is known from an evaluation carried out in 1999 that human remains survive *in situ* below the flagstones of Cathedral Yard.

Watching Brief Results

All excavations were monitored during the groundworks carried out as part of phase 1a. This included surface stripping across the eastern part of the area between Victoria

Street and Fennel Street, and service trench, service connection and manhole excavations across the western part of the area along Victoria from Salford Bridge to the front of the cathedral (Figure 1).

The surface stripping did not reach deeper than modern levelling layers at any point.

The entire phase 1a area exhibited abundant modern truncation from services, drainage and other previous excavations of unknown function. At the north end of the site sandstone bedrock was observed within the deeper manhole and connection excavations. The intact areas of rock were very fragmentary tending to small 'islands' within the abundant truncation. The bedrock was at a depth of 1.2m at the north end and appeared to slope downwards to the south, being no longer visible at the point level with Fennel Street. From this point all excavations were within a modern levelling layer of mixed gravel, stone fragments and rubble. A single drainage manhole excavation also reached intact bedrock within the eastern area, close to the Glade of Light. This was at a depth of 0.8m, was also a fragmentary 'island' of rock and contained a fissure (see below).

Within a manhole excavation towards the north end of Victoria Street (marked on Figure 2) the remains of one of the cast iron tram tracks from the Victorian tramway were encountered (Plate 1). These had been laid onto a bedding of broken slate and brick below each track, which in turn lay on very compact yellow sand.



Plate 1: Tram track visible within a service trench, looking west

Within a manhole excavation at the north end of Victoria Street (marked on Figure 2) a fissure was observed within an intact section of bedrock (Plate 2). The roof of the fissure appeared to slope down towards the river. There was no structure associated with the fissure and the rock faces did not exhibit any kind of toolmarks. It was therefore felt that this was a natural fault in the geology.



Plate 2: Natural fissure within the bedrock, looking north

A second fissure was observed within the eastern part of the watching brief area, within an excavation for a drain connection (Plate 3; marked on Figure 2). This did not appear to slope. It had no associated structures and exhibited no toolmarks and so was also interpreted as a natural geological fault.



Plate 3: Natural fissure within the sandstone bedrock, looking northeast

Discussion

The majority of groundworks within the phase 1a area did not reach archaeological levels. Those that did demonstrated that the entire area has been subject to abundant truncation within the last century.

Although most of the area has been heavily truncated 'islands' of intact bedrock exist in places. Two of these 'islands' contained natural fissures, a feature common within sandstone bedrock.

No features of archaeological significance were encountered, however, across much of the area groundworks were not deep enough to encounter potential archaeological levels and so the possibility of earlier remains surviving remains a possibility, particularly within the eastern area between Victoria Street and Fennel Street. This should be taken into account should any works be carried out further east of the phase 1a area.

The natural ground levels, as expected, appear to slope downwards from east to west, towards the river, and from north to south.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Galliford Try for commissioning the work, and in particular to Adam Liu and Rob Stokey for their support during the project. Thanks also go to Ian Miller of Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service for his advice and support.

The watching brief was carried out by Graham, who also wrote and illustrated the report and managed the project.



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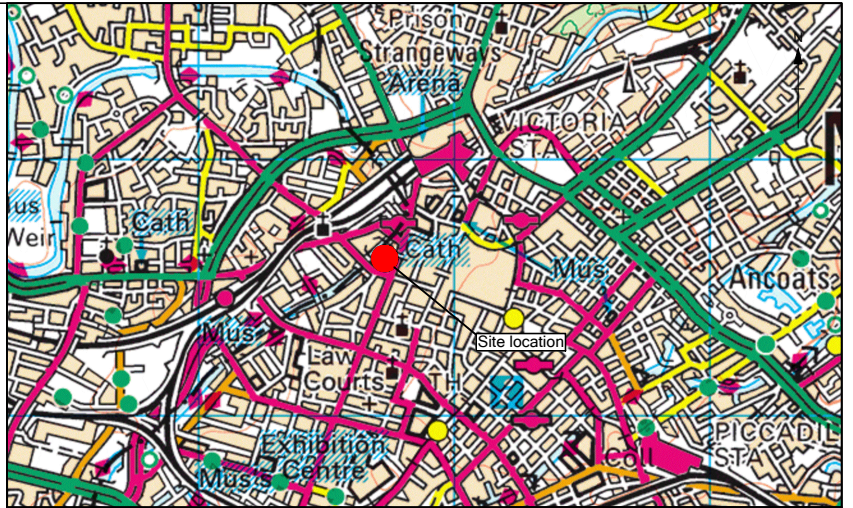


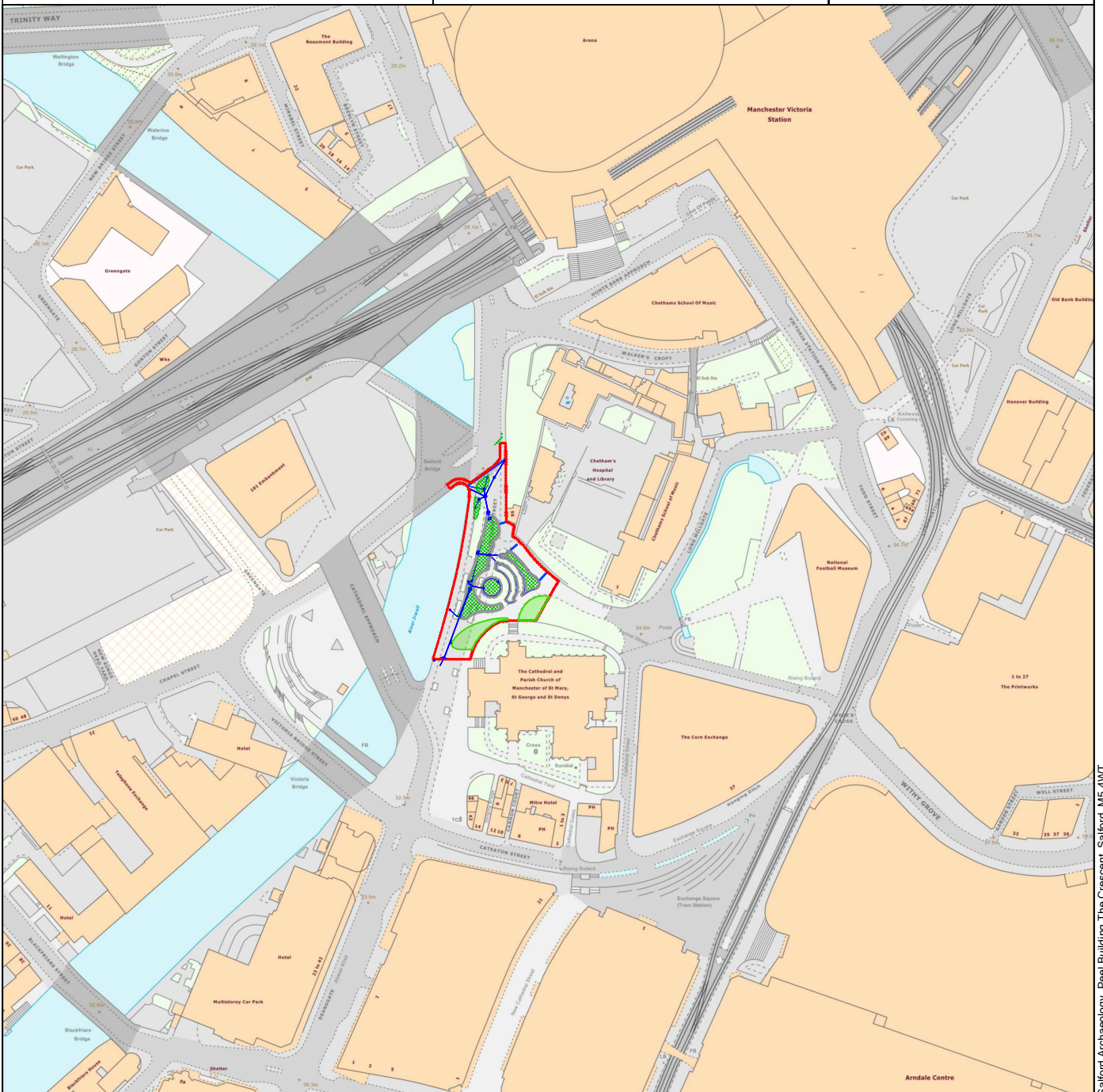
Figure 1:

Site location

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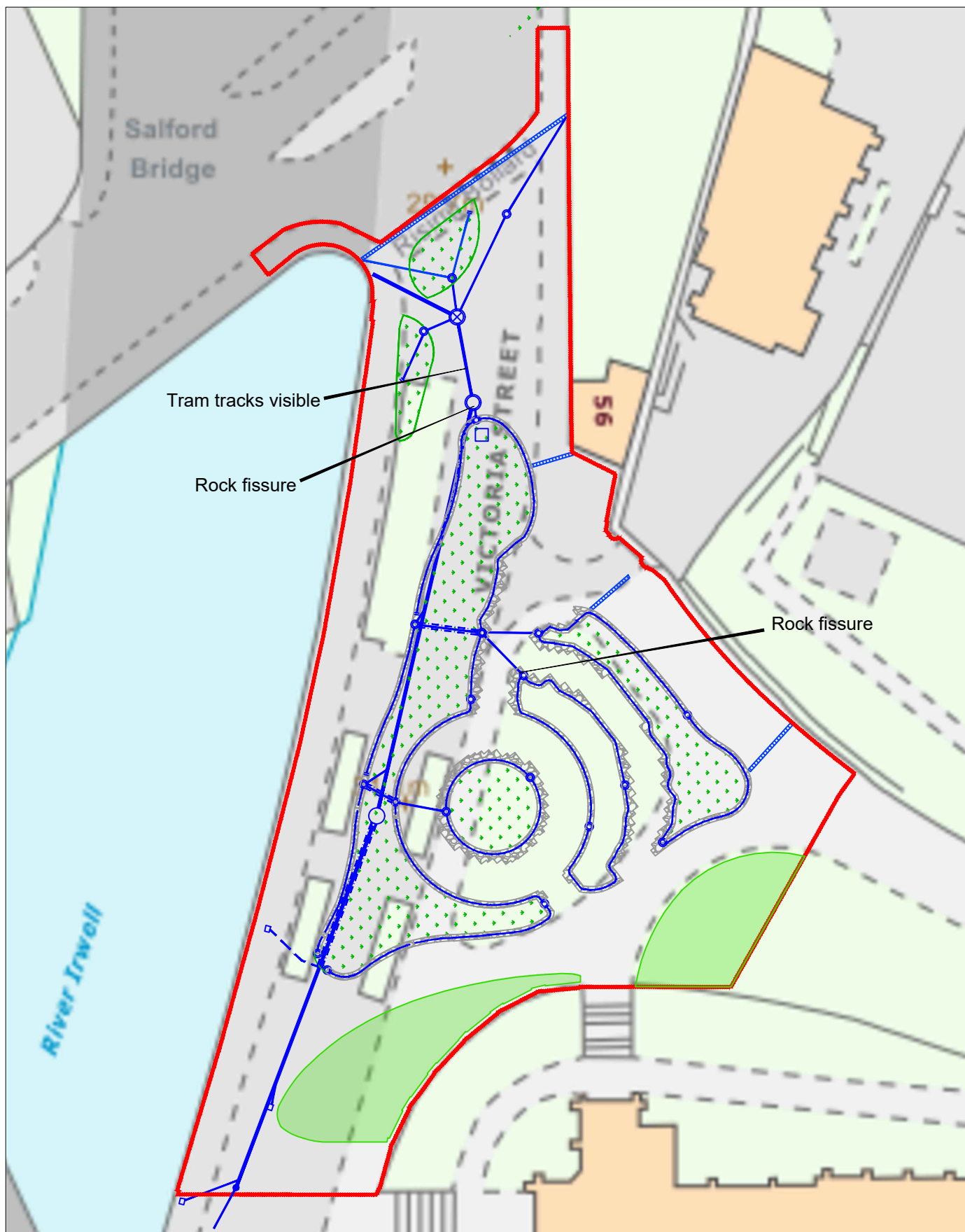


Figure 2:

Phase 1a watching brief area layout

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Key:

- Phase 1a boundary
- Service/drainage excavations
- Landscaping (lawn)
- Landscaping (stone blanket)
- Landscaping (stone wall)



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