

CENTRAL WAY, ALTRINCHAM CHESHIRE



SOUTH TRAFFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP

© South Trafford Archaeological Group 2014



CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	2
1.1	Circumstances of the Investigation	2
1.2	Location	2
2	METHODOLOGY	2
3	FINDS	3
3.1	Finds Analysis	3
3.2	Finds Detail	4
3.3	Finds Photographs	6
4	HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	13
5	MAPS	14
6	PLATES	18
7	CONCLUSION	21
8	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	21

Figure 3.1	Central Way - Number of Finds by Use	3
------------	--	---

Figure 3.2	Central Way - Number of Finds by Type	3
------------	---	---

Map 5.1	Current map with development area shown in red.	14
Map 5.2	1936-37 OS map showing development area	14
Map 5.3	1910 OS with development area	15
Map 5.4	1892 map with development area	15
Map 5.5	1875 OS map with development area	16
Map 5.6	1852 Board of Health Map with development area	16
Map 5.7	1835 Tithe map with development area	17
Map 5.8	1790 Stamford estate map showing development area	17

Plate 3.1	Clay pipe fragments	6
Plate 3.2	Oyster shell	6
Plate 3.3	Metal Items	7
Plate 3.4	Animal bone	7
Plate 3.5	Stoneware	8
Plate 3.6	Stoneware jar	8
Plate 3.7	Eathenware	9
Plate 3.8	Buckley type pottery	9
Plate 3.9	Slip decorated pottery fragments	10
Plate 3.10	Early 20th century pottery	10
Plate 3.11	Plain white earthenware	11
Plate 3.12	English Delft	11
Plate 3.13	Transfer printed blue and white	12
Plate 3.14	Ointment jars	12
Plate 6.2	Road surface as excavated	18
Plate 6.3	Dimensioning for excavated road surface	18
Plate 6.4	View of exposed roadway looking towards the alleyway to Greenwood St.	19
Plate 6.5	View NE towards Shaw's Road showing levels removed above the roadway.	19
Plate 6.6	General view of drain conduits across the site to Central Way	20
Plate 6.7	Excavated sondage for tree planting	20

Front Cover photograph: View of site excavation looking southwest, showing kerbing to be installed running parallel to the demolished theatre block on the right of the picture.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Circumstances of the Investigation

A phone call from a member of the public advised STAG that “something archaeological” had been uncovered in Shaw’s Road, Altrincham.

A visit to the area revealed that Central Way was being revamped for additional market stall spaces, as part of a larger general improvement scheme for the Altrincham Market Site.

1.2 Location

The area undergoing redevelopment is centred on Grid Ref. SJ 7678 8782

2 METHODOLOGY

A discussion with the site foreman established that the west side of Central Way was to be levelled and provided with surface drainage channels to accommodate space for a line of market stalls. The work at the north end of the site (Shaw’s Road) did not involve disturbance of previous foundation layers but an uncovering of an earlier stone track way running north/south for an approximate distance of forty metres was generally parallel one metre to the west side of Central Way and just below the intended finish level of the development from the south end. The track way turned to the west to coincide with an existing alley giving access to Greenwood Street at its mid point. This involved a total ground surface rise of approximately three metres. The exposed area of the road surface was photographed and measured and details of construction were added to an overlay.

Where a contemporary broken drain cover was removed, it was reported that an even earlier cobbled surface existed 0.30m below the present track way.

A visual inspection of the cleared area and spoil heap resulted in recovery of a number of artefacts for potential dating of the stratigraphy. This collection was further enhanced with recoveries obtained by the construction team retained for our inspection and analysis.

At the south end of the site, installation of one of the surface drains involved cutting a slot across the track way surface. This appeared to be the only intrusion during the work undertaken by the redevelopment scheme.

The entire site was finally covered by a layer of tarmac to ensure that all archaeological features would be thoroughly protected for the foreseeable future.

3 FINDS

3.1 Finds Analysis

The finds were cleaned, sorted and, where possible, identified. They are best illustrated by the following charts:

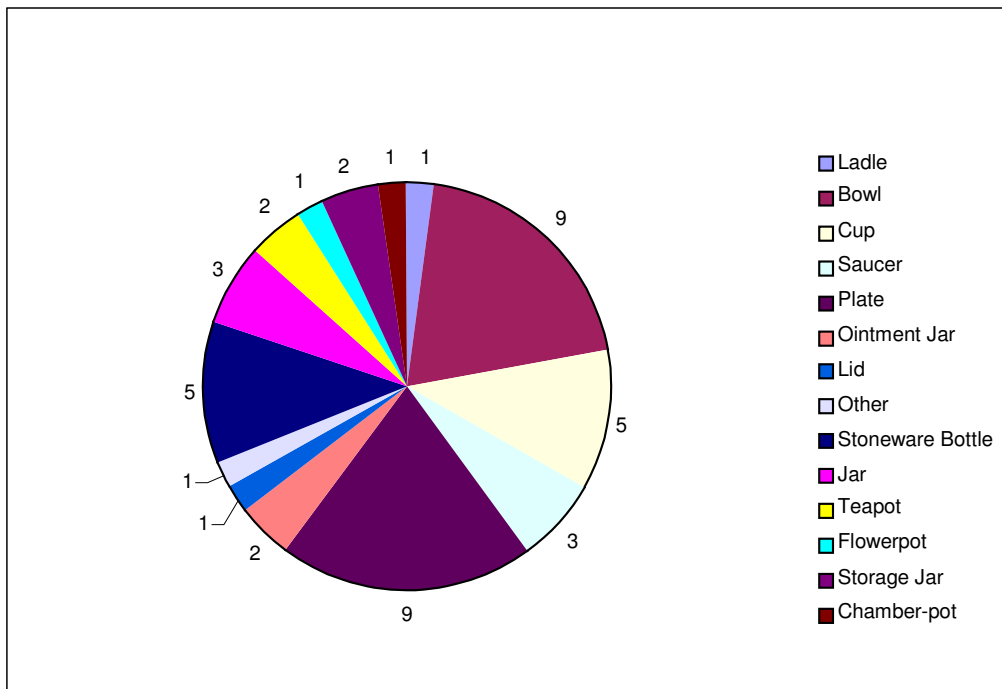


Figure 3.1 Central Way - Number of Finds by Use

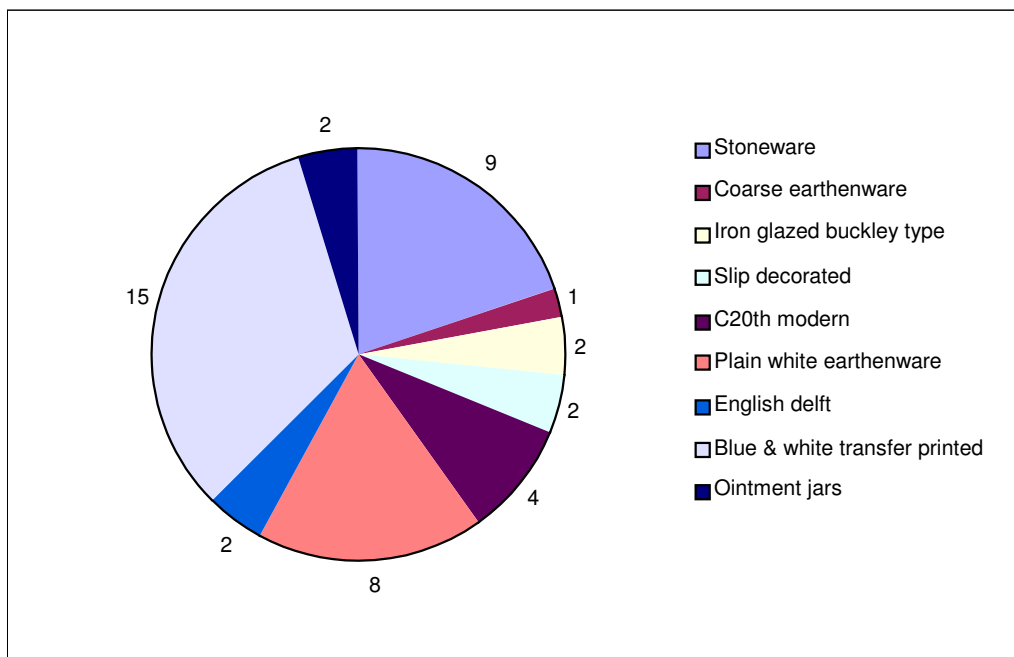


Figure 3.2 Central Way - Number of Finds by Type



3.2 Finds Detail

Bag Ref.	Type	Qty	Representing	Comment
A	Clay pipe stem fragments	9	8 x 4/64ths: 1850 or later, plain stems 1 x 5/64ths: 1800 or later, plain stem	All fit within the date range 1800 – 1900.
B	Oyster Shell	1	One oyster	Some patches of nacre were evident on the inner side of the shell which could be used as a “pearl” covering on bone buttons
C	Metal	4	1 x 2” cast iron support 1 nail, French oval, 6” machine made 1 x iron nail 1/4” sq x 3” long hand forged 1x 1/8” dia x 1” long brass sheet bent to form tube possibly an electrical connector	All items fit within the date range 1800 – 1900.
D	Animal Bone	5	3 x knuckle bones (one is a possible vertebra). Indications of butchery. 1 x animal leg bone, broken (cooked?) 1 x fragment of bird bone, chicken or pigeon	All items could have been disposed of in the late Victorian period 1850 - 1900
E	Stoneware	9	1 x bottle, cork plugged 3 1/2” dia x 7” high. Uniform grey finish overall. No manufacturer’s mark. 1 x bottle fragment similar to the above. 1 x marmalade jar. Broken. External decoration of vertical lines 1/8 “ wide at 7/8” intervals. Base inscribed “W.P. Hartley, Liverpool and London. Trade Mark Regd.”. Picture of lighthouse, entrance steps and waves with six seagulls. 2x marmalade jar fragments. Vertical decoration with panel of fine lines. 1 x possible tea-pot body fragment. Internal glaze. External brown & white horizontal stripe with one band of brown 1/8” wide with rouletted white, fine dot decoration. Possibly late Victorian. 1 x bottle neck fragment. Smooth iron brown glazed. Poss. Hollands gin 1 x bottle base fragment 3 1/2" dia. brown glazed. Poss. Ink or mineral water. 1 x bottle base fragment 4 1/2" dia., salt glazed poss. Mineral water. A suggested manufacturer from Nottingham or Derbyshire.	Early 20 th Century could be a terminal date for later white stonewares.
F	Earthenware	1	1 x unglazed base fragment with central hole suggesting garden flowerpot, possibly 3" pot.	The somewhat crude hole suggests Victorian rather than modern.
G	Buckley Type	2	1 x storage jar, upper body fragment with remains of "grip" type handle. Fabric red/grey with inclusions. Refining of clay suggests early C19th date. Iron glazed inside & out 1 x storage jar body fragment. Iron glazed inside & out. Pink fabric with "rare" inclusions indicates better refining of raw material i.e. late C19th	Variations in qualities of refining clay are an indication of before and after 1800 by comparison with Timperley Old Hall finds.
H	Slip decorated 1680 - 1740	2	1 x press moulded plate fragment, brown stripe slip trailed decoration on yellow background. Buff fabric, lead glazed. 1 x press moulded plate fragment with circular trailed decoration. Brown stripe on yellow background. Additional slip decoration in black glaze embellished with yellow dots. The space in-between filled with a brown glaze suggesting a Commemorative plate. The nearest interpretation of the letter is that of a small "e".	Both are of early date but, if we apply a use date of 40 years before breakage, it brings the date somewhat nearer that of the 1800 clay pipe stem, i.e. an early Victorian disposal.



J	Modern – early 20 th Cent.	4	1 x bowl rim fragment with alternating blue, black & white horizontal stripes. White internal glaze 1 x cup body fragment with alternating green, black, orange & white horizontal stripes, white internal glaze 1 x bowl rim fragment with 3 each thin blue & white horizontal stripes on a yellow/buff background, similar internal glaze 1 x bowl body fragment, glazed inside & out, with a small hand decorated black stem, green leaf & red flower design. The thickness of 5/32" suggests a sugar bowl or similar.	All these fragments are common on excavation sites e.g. Timperley Old Hall, and give a 1920-1930 date
K	Plain white Earthenware	8	1 x cup base fragment. No marks 1 x ointment jar lid fragment. No marks 1 x misc. body fragment. No marks 1 x misc. carinated body fragment, thickness suggests a teapot type. No marks 1 x dinner plate rim fragment. No marks 1 x cup handle fragment of robust design. Tin glazed 1 x strap handle for water jug or chamber pot. Tin glazed. Decoration on extreme bottom suggests a "pearlware" type. 1 x rim fragment of cup or small bowl in white porcelain.	This group suggests late C19th.
L	English Delft	2	1 x dinner plate rim fragment with blue, hand painted rim band 1/4" wide. No marks 1 x bowl body fragment, hand painted with a fruit/flower pendant motif. No marks.	The assumed date range 1680-1740 is too early in association with the greater body of finds. It is now suggested as late C18th to early Victorian date.
M	Transfer printed Blue and white Pattern	16	1 x half bowl (2 3/4" dia.) of a punch ladle with a ceramic handle, 1/4" dia. projecting up from the outer lip. The bridge on the inside does not show any figures. Externally a band of decoration, dark blue 5/8" wide is similar to that of a platter by Leeds Pottery from 1790, producing a coarse gritty body 1837-1840 which describes this fragment. The company was known to be operating 1916. 2 x plate rim fragments with a dark blue edge decoration similar to LEEDS as above. 1 x plate rim fragment, dark blue, unidentified. 1 x plate fragment similar to above 1 x bowl or teapot body fragment with external pale blue portion of a Willow Pattern scene (not identified). 1 x cup base fragment with dark blue "Oriental" floral decoration in the centre. Marked "OU" or an incomplete 8. Not identified. 1 x bowl body fragment with part of a Willow pattern design in dark blue. Not identified. 1 x plate base fragment showing a figure riding a buffalo, possibly a Spode variation. Underneath, a floral stamp but no maker's name. 2 x misc. rim fragments (poss. saucer type). Pale blue Willow pattern. Not identified. 1 x misc. saucer fragment with outer decoration of dot/dash design. 1 3/4" wide in pale blue. There is a hint of a pastoral central motif. Not identified. 3x misc body fragments, pale blue willow pattern. Not identified. 1 x body fragment, dark blue oriental floral decoration, similar to item 6 above but better quality. Not identified.	Of late, no other ladles have been recovered in the North West. Except where "possibly identified", the fragments were too small to attribute to a specific manufacturer. All would be covered by a date 1850-1900
N	Ointment Jars	2	1 x oval ointment jar, 3 1/4" x 2" x 1 1/2" high. Lead glazed inside & out. Hard grey buff fabric to "stoneware" quality 1 x circular ointment jar, 2 1/2" dia. X 1 1/4" high. White glazed inside & out on a hard white fabric. Transfer print external decoration with random black wavy lines & circles and partial grey dot areas on a white background. Lead glazed.	Both come within a mid/late Victorian date range



3.3 Finds Photographs



Plate 3.1 Clay pipe fragments



Plate 3.2 Oyster shell



Plate 3.3 Metal Items



Plate 3.4 Animal bone



Plate 3.5 Stoneware



Plate 3.6 Stoneware jar



Plate 3.7 Earthenware



Plate 3.8 Buckley type pottery



Plate 3.9 Slip decorated pottery fragments



Plate 3.10 Early 20th century pottery



Plate 3.11 Plain white earthenware



Plate 3.12 English Delft



Plate 3.13 Transfer printed blue and white



Plate 3.14 Ointment jars



4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The road from the Old Market Place, certainly established when Altrincham was granted its Charter in 1290, via Market Street itself, leading to Norman Place, the Narrows and the Firs, is considered to be the original route connecting with Chester Road before the construction of the Dunham Road access.

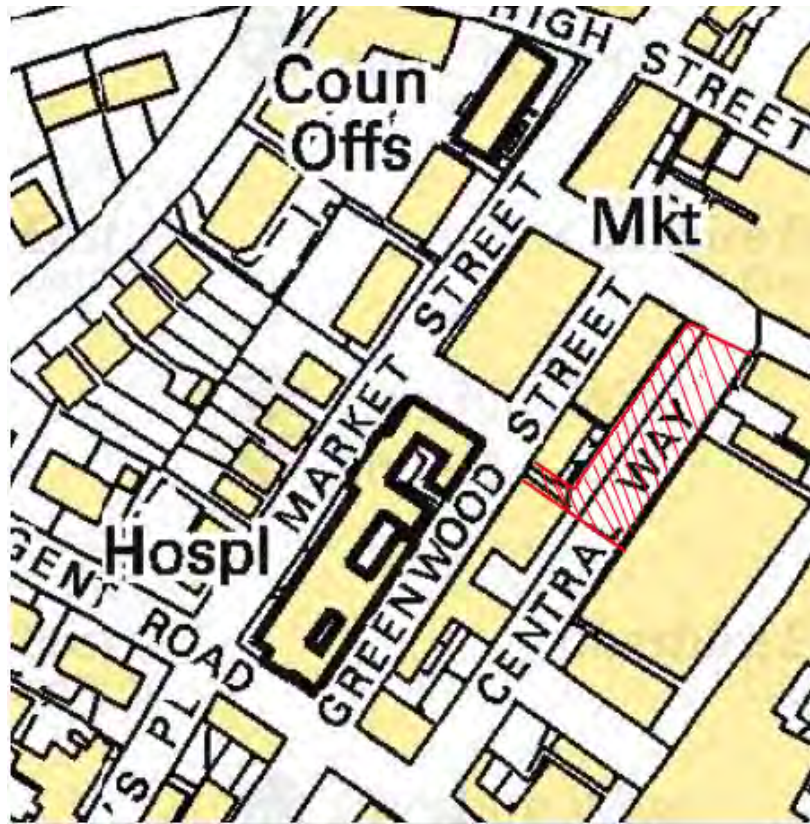
The historic part of Altrincham associated with Windy Harbour is at the junction of the route from the Old Market Place in Shaw's Lane connecting to George Street. The Unitarian Chapel was one of the main burial grounds in Shaw's Lane from 1816 to 1872 when it moved into new premises south of the Brick Layers Arms, between Central Way and George Street. Next door, no.17, was on the corner of the junction with Central Way. Initially the Chapel Hall, it became the Clarion Club in 1905, the Shakespeare Theatre in 1906 seating 200 persons, the Central Theatre from 1907 to 1909 and was then refurbished as the New Central Hall Cinema, 1909 – 1938, under Weiskers Picture Palace. Even by 1914, it was known as the 'Bug Hut' or 'Flea Pit'.¹

The sequence of Maps in Section 5 show the development of the area in reverse chronological order from the present to the earliest available map, the 1790 Stamford Estate map. The area that is the subject of this report is outlined and crosshatched in red. The maps show that up to 1875 the southwest half of the area was open land. The only buildings were in the northwest part being the Unitarian Chapel and an adjacent building on Shaw's Lane. By the 1892 map houses had been built on Greenwood Street and the alley from Greenwood Street to an open yard behind the houses is shown. By the 1910 map the yard area has been developed into a building possibly a tenement surrounding a much smaller yard. a curved route into the yard is shown. This may be the cobbled track way revealed by the development work as seen in Plate 6.1. This development shows more clearly on the 1936-37 map (Map 5.2).

¹ www.communigate.co.uk/chesh/altrincham/ p14



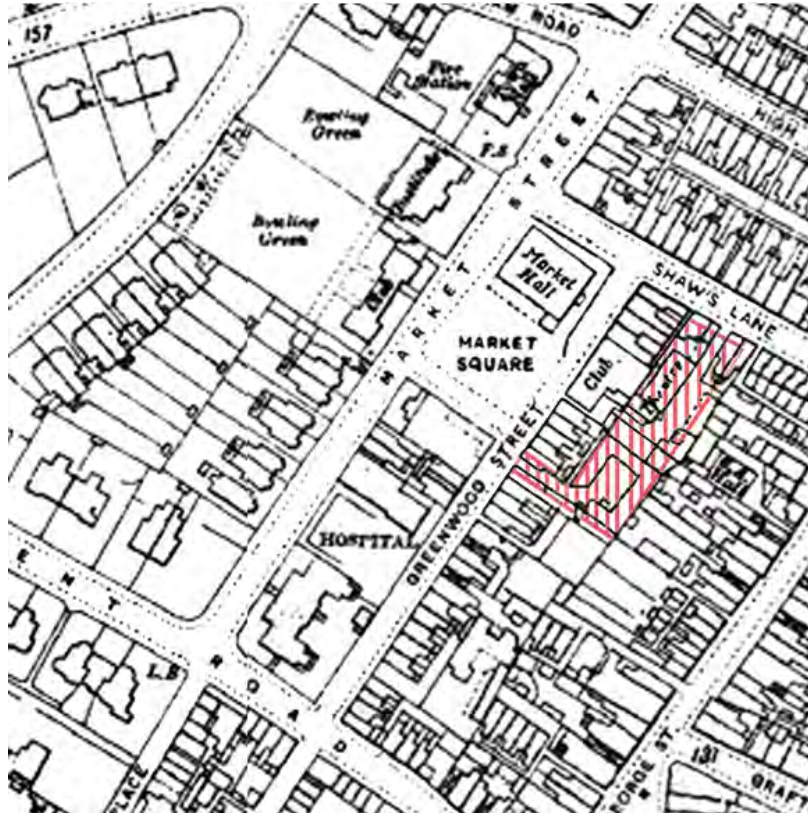
5 MAPS



Map 5.1 Current map with development area shown in red.



Map 5.2 1936-37 OS map showing development area



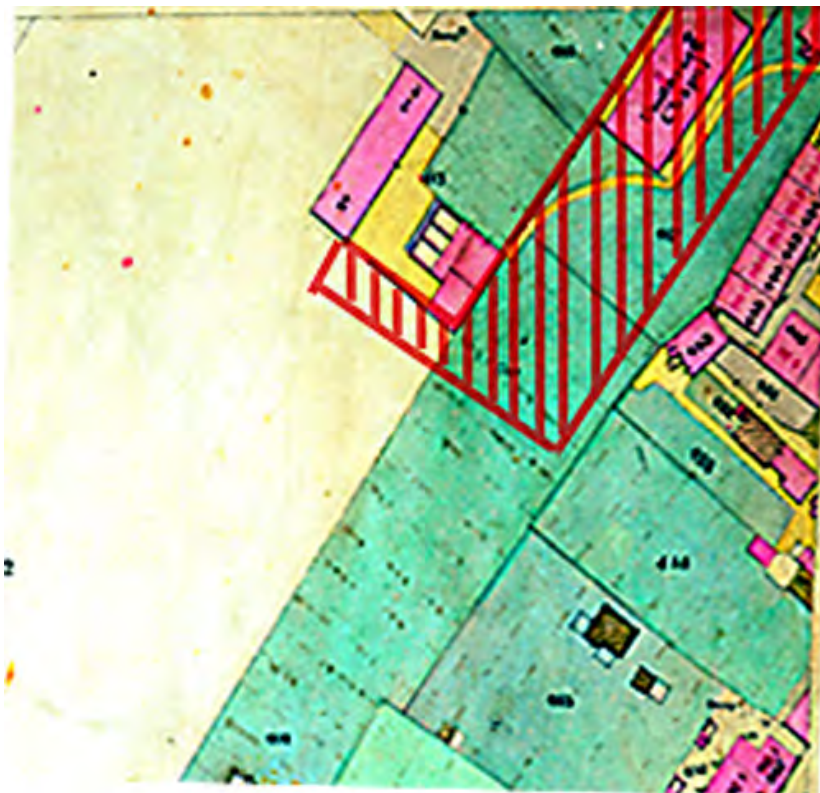
Map 5.3 1910 OS with development area



Map 5.4 1892 map with development area



Map 5.5 1875 OS map with development area



Map 5.6 1852 Board of Health Map with development area



6 PLATES



Plate 6.1 Road surface as excavated

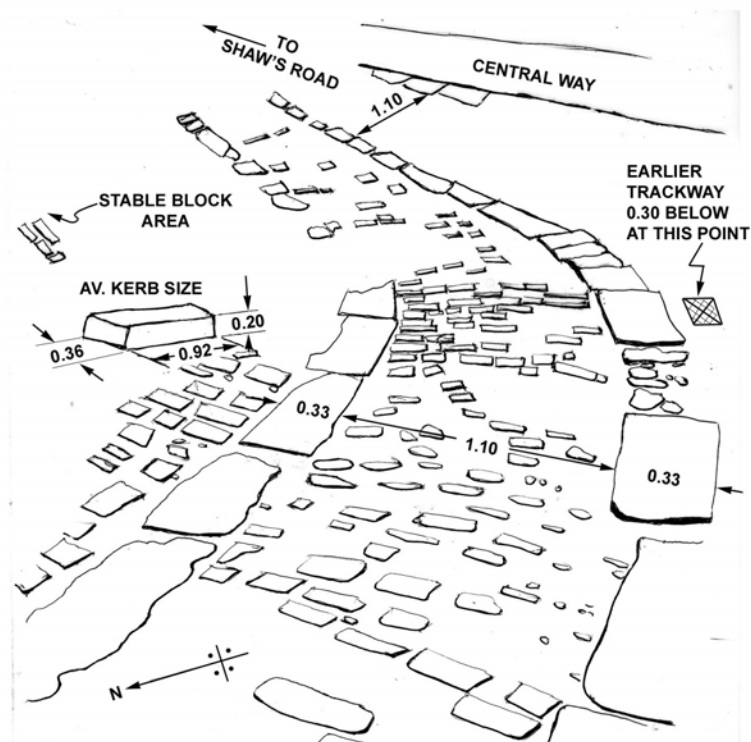


Plate 6.2 Dimensioning for excavated road surface



Plates cont.



Plate 6.3 View of exposed roadway looking towards the alleyway to Greenwood St.



Plate 6.4 View NE towards Shaw's Road showing levels removed above the roadway.

Plates cont.



Plate 6.5 General view of drain conduits across the site to Central Way

In the foreground, part of the roadway has been cut through where it rises to Greenwood Street



Plate 6.6 Excavated sondage for tree planting

The elevation facing SW of the excavation revealed a sharp vertical cut into the natural sand bank. Various layers of black soil with pottery fragments suggest removal of a cellar wall when the original cottages were demolished to allow for the construction of Central Way. This sondage was the first excavation for a row of trees along the eastern side of Central Way.



7 CONCLUSION

The curved track way exposed by the development probably dates from the fourth quarter of the 19th century between 1892 and 1910. The cobbled surface revealed in the test pit 0.3m below the curved track way could be the surface of the yard shown on the 1892 map, which would have been established at some time between 1852 and 1892. The finds, which are all unstratified, are consistent with this.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to the Contracting Team who carried out the redevelopment work. Their enthusiasm in collecting the pottery samples on which this report is based has given us a greater knowledge for the dating of the stratigraphic level involved.

As a direct request for assistance was not received from any official source, the phone call from a member to the public to advise STAG of the discovery of the roadway is to be highly commended. STAG members who undertook the pot washing and part assembly and dating of the finds also deserve our thanks, Jenny Cracknell and Marion Gregory. Jane Darwin and Bryan Burton produced the typing and page layouts.

Report Compiled by: D. C. Pierce
South Trafford Archaeological Group
behind Timperley Old Hall
Stockport Road
Altrincham
WA15 7LP

Tel: 0161 929 0929
email: stag.pierce@btinternet.com
website: <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/bryanbj/>
Reg. charity no. 51397

—