



Archaeological investigations at Pikk Street 2a in Viljandi

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INTRODUCTION

Archaeological investigation on the plot of Pikk Street 2a in Viljandi (see Fig. 1) took place in August 2021. The work was commissioned by OÜ Priosteem and carried out by Silja Möllits (MTÜ AEG). The investigated area was rather large (600 m²), and was made up of several trenches in different parts of the plot (see Fig. 2) – pipelines of water and sewage (Area 1), a filter drain (Area 2), electricity cables (Area 3) and surface water sewer (Area 4). Thus, the investigations enabled a relatively concise overview of the archaeological strata in the present-day courtyard area.

EARLIER RESEARCH AND GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE AREA

The investigated area at Pikk St. 2a is located in the western edge of medieval Viljandi, between Pikk street and the town wall, with a pipeline crossing the latter in the north-western corner of the studied area. Earlier investigations at Pikk street have already revealed interesting information about the development of the town. Just south from the current plot, a 13th century pottery kiln was discovered and investigated at Pikk St. 4 (Tvauri 1998). Abundance of archaeological finds from the 13th–14th century in the vicinity of the kiln is also documented by earlier research (e.g. Haak & Russow 2013, 73–77), while later deposits have been revealed infrequently. Several

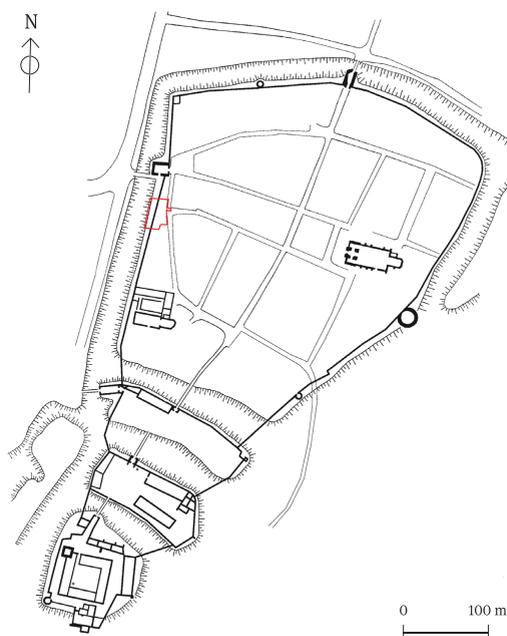


Fig. 1. Location of Pikk 2a plot on the map of Viljandi.

Jn 1. Pikk 2a kinnistu asukoht Viljandi linnaplaanil.

Map / Kaart: Andres Tvauri, Marge Konsa, additions / täiendused: Silja Möllits

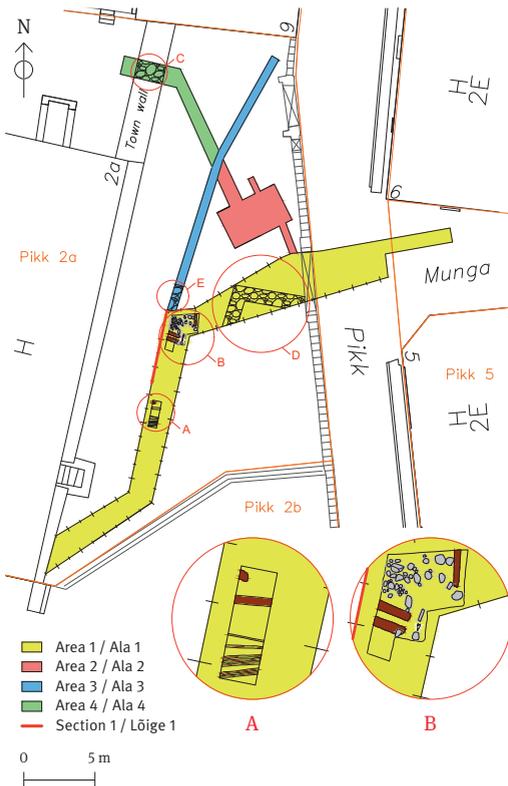


Fig. 2. Investigated area in and next to the Pikk St. 2a plot.
Jn 2. Uuringuala Pikk 2a kinnistul ja selle naabruses.
 Drawing / Joonis: Valeri Šabanov

Archaeological investigations carried out from 2019 to 2020 by Piirits (2020) conclude that soil, taken from the moat during the erection of the building, was at least partly used to fill the courtyard area. Under that untouched layers should be in place. On the eastern side of the plot, bordering Pikk street, a second house existed at least from 1865 till 1980 (Piirits 2020, 6 and references). The foundation stones of that house became partly visible during the leveling of the courtyard in 2020. During those works, the location of the town wall was also ascertained: it was situated approximately under the eastern wall of the current Pikk St. 2a building (Piirits 2020, 7–8).

RESULTS OF THE FIELDWORK

Earliest settlement

The earliest human activity concentrated in the central and southern part of the plot (see Fig. 2, Area 1; Fig. 3). The natural ground was slightly descending on the northern side of the plot, where virgin sand was not reached. In the rest of the investigated area, a thick, dark yellow or red level of virgin sandy loam appeared (Fig. 3: 1a, 1b), covered with a slightly mixed soil between sand and the first inhabitation level (Fig. 3: 2). No signs of tillage were spotted. A distinct layer with slightly different composition depending on the location, can be related to the 13th–14th century. First, on the virgin red and yellow sandy loam there was a dark brown

investigations have taken place in the street area east of the studied plot. Pikk street is considered one of the earliest connections between the castle and the Riga Gate located north of the investigated area (Kauba St. 9 and 12). Cobblestone pavements, and in a few locations, also earlier deposits were documented in 2001 and 2013 (Haak 2001b; Tvauri & Metsoja 2013, 4–7), thus indicating the 14th century streetline; information on the existence of an earlier street remained ambiguous. It also appeared that during the second half of the 16th century, a heated house (probably dwelling) had been constructed above earlier street pavement (Haak 2001a, 79; Haak 2001b, 114–115). On both sides of the Franciscan monastery, erected in the third quarter of the 15th century and located north of the current St John's Church, there were gardens of the monastery, with an orchard presumably located on the northern side (Altoa 1979, 26); however, it is unclear how far from the monastery the garden and orchard extended.

The existing building at Pikk St. 2a property – a former barn – appears on the earliest map from 1790 (RA, EAA 308-6-364), i.e. after the town wall had lost its function.

layer of soil, thicker on the southern side (15 to 40 cm), thinning down in the central part of the plot (5 to 12 cm). In the southern area, within the dark brown layer, a subdivision into soil with additional fragments of charcoal (see Fig. 3: 3) and soil with chips of wood (see Fig. 3: 4) could be observed. Another deposit, greyish brown in colour, containing sandy loam, wood chips, particles of charcoal and brick fragments was the dominant layer with the thickness up to 25 cm in the central part (see Fig. 3: 5); it narrowed on the southern side of the plot and could only be followed discontinuously.

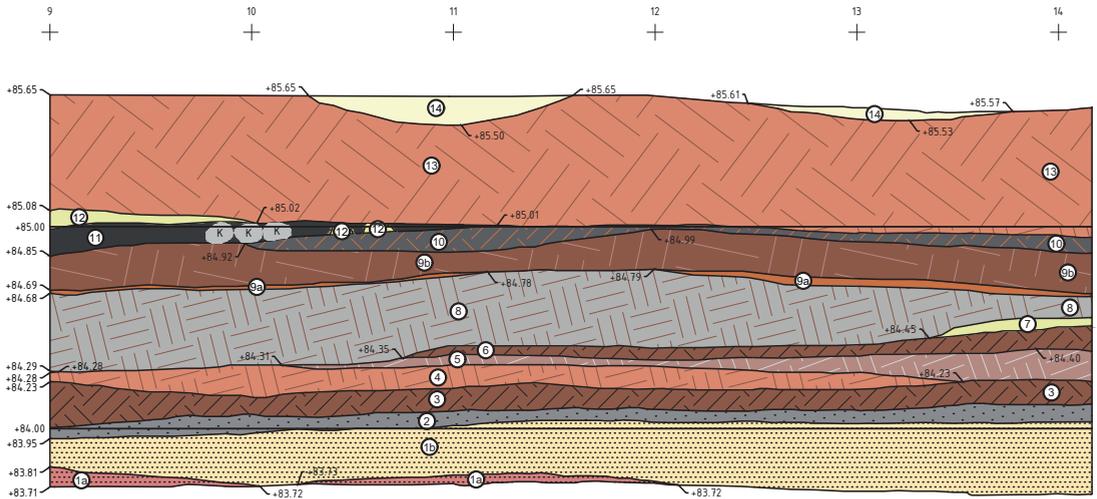


Fig. 3. Section 1 (western profile of Area 1) in the central area of the plot. 1a – virgin red sandy loam, 1b – virgin yellow sandy loam, 2 – mixed sandy soil and decomposed wood, 3 – dark brown dense soil with fragments of charcoal, 4 – dark brown dense soil with chips of wood, 5 – greyish brown soil with sandy loam, wood chips, particles of charcoal and brick fragments, 6 – dark brown thick soil, 7 – mortar, 8 – dark brown soil with wooden chips, fragments of charcoal and red bricks, 9a – layer of decomposed wood, 9b – dark brown soil with decomposed wood, fragments of charcoal, mortar and red bricks, 10 – dark brown debris with charcoal and mortar particles, 11 – layer of charcoal covering pavement stones, 12 – mortar, 13 – brown debris containing town wall stones, 14 – mortar and fragments of red bricks.

Jn 3. Lõige 1 (Ala 1 lääneprofil) kinnistu keskosas. 1a – looduslik punane saviliiv, 1b – looduslik kollane saviliiv, 2 – segatud liivane pinnas, mis sisaldab kõdupuitu, 3 – tumepruun tihke pinnas söeosakestega, 4 – tumepruun tihke pinnas laastudega, 5 – hallikaspruun pinnas, sisaldab saviliiva, laaste, söeosakesi ja tellisetükke, 6 – tumepruun tihke pinnas, 7 – lubimört, 8 – tumepruun pinnas laastude, söeosakeste ja tellisetükkidega, 9a – kõdupuidukiht, 9b – tumepruun pinnas kõdupuidu, söeosakeste, mördi ja tellisetükkidega, 10 – tumepruun, söene rusu mörditäppidega, 11 – söekiht, mis katab sillutisekive, 12 – lubimört, 13 – pruun rusu, mis sisaldab kive linnamüürist, 14 – lubimört ja tellisetükid.

Drawing / Joonis: Valeri Šabanov

There are indications of different types of structures from that horizon. In the southern part of the plot there was a 1 m long horizontal layer of wooden sticks (approx. 5 cm in diameter), laid in the east-west direction in one layer (see Fig. 2: A). Two more poorly preserved small sized logs were discovered, laid in the east-west direction ca. 1 m to the north. There were no signs of ditches below or around the structures.

The southern side of the excavated area and especially these early layers contained the most archaeological finds. As the dense dark brown organic-rich layer covering the area was ideal for preserving organic material: there were approximately 50 fragments of leather and

birch bark, some with needle holes along the edges, probably from bark boxes. In addition, some animal bones and hazelnut shells were collected. The material is very similar to the finds from the close by Munga street (Tvauri & Metsoja 2013). The soil also contained numerous pottery sherds from vessels produced at the 13th-century kiln discovered less than 100 m south from the present excavation area (Tvauri 2000). The discovered sherds were mainly light brown in colour and many had an ornament of wavy and straight lines on the shoulder area. A knife and two crossbow arrowheads dating from the second half of the 13th century and 14th century (type CIV according to Mäesalu 1991, 175) were also discovered.

On the spot where the piping line turned east, another construction came to light. Remains of three logs bordering an area of irregularly laid stones were unearthed (see Fig. 2: B). The construction seemed to be extending to the north and north-west, but the cable ditch (see Fig. 2, Area 3) that ran north from the spot, did not give any additional information as its depth did not reach the remains. The construction could be interpreted as a wooden house, the southeastern corner of which was unearthed. Greyish brown soil with sand particles covered the stones and three small fragments of Paffrath-type ware could be collected from it.

The dark brown habitation layer was thinner in the central part of the investigated area. It was visible in the filter drain area (see Fig. 2, Area 2) and stretched at least 2.5 m further to the north. Finds were scarce. In addition to some fragments of local pottery, one small fragment of proto-stoneware (SIEG1 according to Russow 2006, VM 11641: 215) dating from the second half of the 13th century stood out. Two ditches, visible in profiles, were dug through the early layers and into the untouched sands underneath. One was directed east–west or slightly northwest–southeast; the other north–south or slightly northeast–southwest. The width and the depth of the ditches could not be determined, as they were partly destroyed by later constructions and surpassed the depth of the current excavations. There were no signs of water running through or any kind of additional construction inside. The ditches were filled with greyish brown soil that covered the whole area. Only one object was recovered from that layer – a fragment of a connecting plate of a bone comb (VM 11641: 210), copper alloy rivet remains were visible in the holes of this item. The comb can be dated to the 13th and 14th century (Luik 1998, 83–84, 100).

The medieval town wall

As mentioned earlier, the town wall was discovered under the eastern wall of the former barn (Piirits 2020). The axis of the wall, running from northeast to southwest, did not coincide perfectly with that of the building. During current excavations a breach, to build a stairway and rainwater piping, was made through the wall about 6 m to the north of the building (see Fig. 2: C). It confirmed the previous knowledge that the wall consisted of irregularly sized stones, some up to 1 m in diameter, combined with natural sandy loam and mixed earth between the stones. The remaining wall part was about 2 m wide but, as it was damaged by Soviet era construction, it might actually have been slightly wider. The excavations did not reach the foundation depth of the wall.

Medieval building

After the first intensive occupation period, a house was erected on the eastern side of the plot. The northwestern corner and the stone foundations of northern and western walls (see Fig. 2: D) were unearthed. The house was aligned by the medieval city wall and placed about 8 m to the east from it. The wall foundations were 0.8 to 1 m wide consisting of two

rows of stones connected with lime mortar, thus not excluding a wooden house. Red bricks (29 × 12 × 10 cm), as well as brick and roof tile fragments were placed randomly in between the stones. The visible east–west directed wall was 5 m long. Whether it reached the present-day street line is unclear. There is no information about the length of the wall in the north–south direction, as the area inside the house south and east of the trench remained uninvestigated.

Traces of mortar connected to the construction of the foundation are visible on top of the early medieval layers. As the foundation trench reached the virgin loam, there were sherds of locally produced pottery from earlier strata in the soil surrounding the foundation. Datable finds, connected to the erection of the house, its use and destruction were not abundant. From between the foundation stones, two fragments of Waldenburg stoneware (VM 11641: 197, 235) dating from the 15th century, were collected.

The exact time of abandoning the house remained uncertain, as the inside was destroyed by a 19th-century building. It most likely went out of use before the Russian-Livonian War (1558–1583). No traces of a fire could be seen, but stones from the collapsed wall and fragments of red bricks were present on its western side. There was a deposit of red brick fragments in the northern end of Area 2. A Visby örtug (see Fig. 4), dating from ca. 1390–1395¹ (Haljak 2014, no. 141b), was found from the destruction rubble of the house in Area 1.



Fig. 4. Visby örtug (1390–1395).

Jn 4. Visby öörtug (1390–1395).
(VM 11641: 236.)

Photo / Foto: Arvi Haak

Pavements next to the building

A layer of wooden board remains could be seen in most of the Area 1 (with the exception of the house remains and the southernmost ditch), the whole Area 2 and southern part of Area 3. The boards were located in the east–west direction. In the northern part of the excavated area (see Fig. 5), they also covered a ditch, 25–30 cm deep and about 1 m wide on the bottom. The boards had sunk into the ditch, most likely because of decomposition of organic matter below. The level of decomposition of the planks did not allow measuring their width and thickness.

On top of the boards in Area 1, a fragment of a Siegburg jug (SIEG3B, VM 11641: 19) was found. The boards most probably formed a pavement west and north of the stone house (see Fig. 2: D) and were thus contemporary with it.

The pavement in Area 2 was covered with a clayey layer containing wood chips, brick fragments and charcoal on the northern side and red Devonian sand on the southern side.

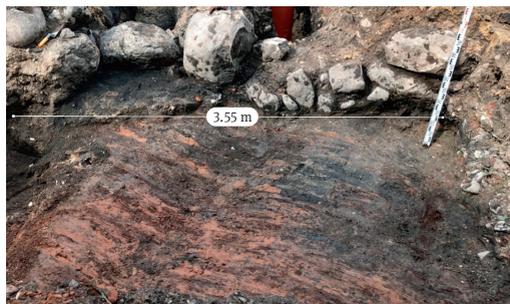


Fig. 5. Boards covering Area 2. A ditch running through the area is visible.

Jn 5. Plankudest sillutis Alal 2. Fotol on näha ala läbiv kraavilohk.

Photo / Foto: Silja Möllits

¹ Dating confirmed by Ivar Leimus (AM).

Sherds of locally produced wares, while only one fragment of Siegburg stoneware with ash glaze, dating from the 15th century (VM 11641: 189), were found.

On the northern part of the investigated area, just west of the crossing of Pikk and Munga streets, a cobbled pavement was visible in the eastern profile of Area 2 approximately at the height of 84.60–84.80 m. The cobbles rested on a layer of red Devonian sand. During the excavations, two similar, fragmentary remains of pavement layers were documented on the western and northern profile of Area 1 (Fig. 3: 11). In addition, a cobblestone pavement was unearthed in the southern end of Area 3 (see Fig. 2: E). Unfortunately, the trench was the narrowest there and did not give a good overview of the situation. Thus it remained unclear whether the yard area was cobbled, or the Munga street extended west of Pikk street towards the town wall.

16th–17th-century deposits

In Areas 1–3, a burnt dark blackish layer could be distinguished above the cobbled pavement (Area 2) or brick debris (Fig. 3: 11). It contained items typical to the period of the Russian-Livonian War: fragments of greyware field flasks with green glaze (VM 11641: 251, cf Tvauri 2004, 403–404), iron heel supports, as well as fragments of redware tripod pots and stove tiles. A black layer with burning traces and similar dating has been documented at several earlier excavations (e.g. Haak 2001b, 70–71).

In Area 2, a fragment of a redware plate, and that of a stove tile with black glaze could be collected – both from the 17th century. At Pikk street, a pavement has been attributed to the same period (Haak 2001b, 77–78), confirming continuous occupation during the period of general decline in Viljandi.

The chronologically following layers include a significant amount of debris in the western part of the investigated area, while the eastern edge of Area 1 showed several strata that had probably deposited in the yard area. The origin of the debris is uncertain, but it may coincide with the destruction of the town wall and construction of the barn on the western part of the plot, probably in the late 18th century.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The investigations at Pikk St. 2a property revealed several constructions relevant to the development of medieval Viljandi.

Earlier research has pointed out the existence of ditches, visible on the level of 13th – early 14th-century deposits. These have been recorded at Munga street (Valk 1990, 17–20), and at Lossi street (Valk 1994, 93, pl. XLIII; Heinloo 2015, 135, 140, fig. 2), whereby in the latter case, ditches in the east-west direction were interpreted as property boundaries. At Pikk St. 2a, one of the ditches was almost parallel to the town wall, while the other was directed almost east-west and could, at least theoretically, mark a property boundary.

It should also be noted that recent excavations have unearthed several wooden pavements in Viljandi, mostly connected to 13th–14th-century deposits. At Munga street, wooden logs have been placed lengthwise in the street area up to the 16th century (Valk 1990, 15–17). At Pikk St. 2a, we could not connect the pavements with known street areas, indicating that wooden pavement of planks could also have existed in the courtyard – the first indication of such practice from Viljandi. In the central and northern part of the plot, a cobblestone pavement could also be distinguished, but mostly in the profiles and its extent and borders remained somewhat uncertain. Besides the usual interpretation that it indeed was a yard

pavement, an alternative idea that Munga street may have continued westward from Pikk street, to the hypothetical street just beside the town wall, also deserves attention in the future.

In the investigated area, remains of two medieval houses could be distinguished. Only fragments of the construction of the earlier house, interpreted as the south-eastern corner, were located within the investigated area. The deposits inside the construction, most notably fragments of Paffrath-type globular pot(s), reveal its dating from the period of ca. 1225–1300 (Russow 2006, 39), placing it into a period prior to the construction on the town wall in late 13th or early 14th century (Tvauri 2001, 97–99; Bernotas 2013, 286). The later one with a stone foundation was located between the above-mentioned hypothetical street and Pikk street. Although its exact dating could not be established, the stratigraphic situation together with the coin find allow suggesting the 14th or 15th century.

The investigations by Piirits in 2020 firmly established the exact location of the town's western wall in the area – it was situated along the eastern wall of the current Pikk St. 2a building, but running at a slightly different angle. Its location and width just north of the mentioned building could be seen during current fieldwork.

Habitation during the 16th and 17th century was not very well documented. However, the existence of a slipware, and a few other items indicate that the area was not abandoned after the destruction of the town in the early 17th century. The developments of the late 18th and 19th century, best known from town plans, could also be distinguished in the construction remains in the area.

Investigations at Pikk St. 2a plot on the one hand confirmed what is already known of the area and in addition revealed important new facts on its development. It also emphasized the need to integrate the collected pieces into more plausible reconstructions of medieval and post-medieval Viljandi in general.

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ARHEOLOOGILISED UURINGUD VILJANDIS, PIKK TÄNAV 2A KINNISTUL

Silja Möllits ja Arvi Haak

Arheoloogilised uuringud Pikk 2a kinnistul (uuringu-ala u 600 m²) leidsid aset torustike ja elektriikaabli paigaldamise tõttu. Kinnistust lõuna ja ida poole jäävatel aladel on uuringud aset leidnud alates 1990. aastate algusest. Piirkonnast on arvukalt leitud 13.–14. sajandi ladestusi, sh keraamikatöökoja jälgi. Pikk 2a kinnistul selgitati aasta varem välja linnamüüri täpne asukoht.

Uuringutel selgus, et looduslik maapind langeb põhja poole, mistõttu õnnestus aluspinnani jõuda ning sellele kujunenud ladestusi uurida vaid kinnistu lõunaosas. Künnijälgi ega märke muinaeaegsest asutusest ei leitud, varasemad tumepruunid või hallid, kohati puidulaastused ladestused sisaldavad 13.–14. sajandi laine- ja joonornamendiga keraamikat, lisaks pähklikoori, nahka ja kasetohust karpide(?) katkeid, nuga ja kaks ammunooleotsa. Leiti ka kuni 1 m laiune roigastest sillutis (jn 2: A), samuti puithoone nurgakonstruktsioon (jn 2: B), mille sisemusse kogunenud ladestus sisaldas Paffrathi tüüpi keraamika katkeid. 13. sajandisse dateeritud ladestusi lõikas kaks kraavi, mis võisid märkida kinnistupiire, kraavi sisemusest leiti luukammi katke.

Keskaegse linnamüüri osas selgus 2021. aastal, et aidahoonest põhja pool (jn 2: C) on müüri säilinud laius 2 m, rajamissügavuseni elektriikaabli kaevises ei jõutud.

II asustusjärku, ilmselt linnamüüri rajamise järgesse aega kuulub kivist vundamendijäänus (jn 2: D). Hoone paiknes linnamüüri samasihiliselt sellest 8 m idas. Vundamendi paksus oli 0,8–1 m, maakividest vundamendikivide vahel leidus 29 × 12 × 10 cm

suurusega telliste ja katusekivide katkeid. Ida-läänesuunaline vundamendiosa oli säilinud 5 m pikkuselt, ei selgunud, kas see ulatus tänavajooneni, nagu oletati; hoone põhja-lõunasuunalist ulatust ei lubanud selgitada torustikukraavide paiknemine. Varaste ladestuste peal leidus ilmselt hoone rajamisega seonduv mõrdijälgedega kiht, müürikivide vahelt koguti kaks 15. sajandi Waldenburi kivi-keramika katket. Ehitise sisemus oli 19. sajandi hoone rajamisega lõhutatud. Arvatavasti hävis maja enne Liivimaa sõda, hoonerusude seest leiti Visby öörtug (1390–1395).

Enamikul ülalkirjeldatud hoonejäänustest välja poole jäävast alast oli jälgitav puitplankudest sillutis (jn 5), ida-läänesuunaliselt asetatud plangud katsid ka kaevandi põhjaosas avastatud 25–30 cm sügavust ning põhjaosas kuni 1 m laiust kraavi, mis nähtavasti oli täidetud orgaanilise materjaliga – selle kõdunemisel olid laudad kraavi vajunud (jn 5). Plankude pealt leiti Siegburgi kivi-keramika katke. Lisaks avastati ligikaudu Munga tänava pikenduse joonel punasele Devoni liivale sängitatud maakividest sillutis – seega on hoovisillutise kõrval võimalik ka Munga tänava jätkumine linnamüürini. Kaevandi põhjaosas esines tume põlengukiht, milles leidus Liivimaa sõja ajale (1558–1583) iseloomulikke leide, ning selle kohal ka paar 17. sajandi leidu, sh maalinguga punase taldriku katke. Hiliseimad ladestused seostuvad ilmselt linna uue arengufaasiga 18. sajandi lõpukümnenditel ja 19. sajandil.

Kaevamistel sillutiste ja hoonestuse kohta kogutud andmed täiendavad märkimisväärselt meie varasemaid teadmisi Viljandi linna kujunemisest.