



RIBCHESTER PLAYING FIELDS, RIBCHESTER, LANCASHIRE

Archaeological Watching Brief



Oxford Archaeology North

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Prepared by: Chris Healey
Position: Project Officer
Date: December 2006

Checked by: Emily Mercer
Position: Project Manager
Date: December 2006
Signed.....

Approved by: Alan Lupton
Position: Operations Manager
Date: December 2006
Signed.....

Oxford Archaeology North

Storey Institute
Meeting House Lane
Lancaster
LA1 1TF
t: (0044) 01524 848666
f: (0044) 01524 848606

w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk

© Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd (2006)

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford
OX2 0EA
t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496

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SUMMARY

In February 2006, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) undertook an archaeological watching brief at the Ribchester Playing Fields site, Ribchester, Lancashire (NGR centred SD 6485 3511), on behalf of the Ribchester Playing Field Trust. The archaeological work was required as a condition to the planning consent (planning ref: 03/04/0291) due to the high archaeological potential of the development site. It is situated approximately 100m to the north of the Ribchester Roman fort, and lies within the area designated as a Scheduled Monument (Lancs SM55) and, hence, scheduled monument consent was also necessary for the development. Previous excavations in the immediate vicinity have revealed the presence of timber buildings and hearths which seemed to date to the second century AD and are believed to be connected with craft-working. The work was carried out in advance of the proposed construction of a multi-games and skateboard park, and involved the archaeological monitoring of the groundworks involved in the preliminary stages of this process.

The groundworks subject to a permanent archaeological presence consisted of topsoil stripping of the outlined development area, followed by the excavation of 14 trial pits for the purpose of the installation of floodlights and goal posts. During the groundworks, *in situ* Roman deposits were identified at a depth of approximately 0.6m below the modern ground surface. These comprised the remains of a cobbled road surface on a probable east/west alignment, which led to the repositioning of the whole development 4m to the north-west of its original positioning. Pottery recovered from immediately above these deposits and from the topsoil strip has suggested activity in this area from the first century AD through to the fourth century AD, reflecting the known longevity of the use of the fort.

During the course of the groundworks, disturbance of archaeological deposits was minimised and subsequently avoided on discovery. As such, it is not likely that the development will incur a negative impact on the sub-surface archaeological resource. However, any further groundworks in this area may impact on the remains and further archaeological intervention is recommended.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North would like to thank Peter Forbes of the Ribchester Playing Fields Trust for commissioning the work and to the principal contractor on site, John Wade Groundworks. Thanks are also extended to Dr Jennie Stopford of English Heritage and Doug Moir of the Lancashire County Archaeology Service for their advice.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Chris Healey, who also compiled the report. Christine Howard-Davis examined the finds, and the drawings were produced by Christina Robinson. The project was managed by Emily Mercer, who also edited the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was commissioned by the Ribchester Playing Field Trust to undertake a watching brief during the preliminary groundworks in advance of the proposed construction of a multi-games and skateboard park at the Ribchester Playing Fields site, Ribchester, Lancashire (NGR centred SD 6485 3511; Fig 1). The site lies within an area of high archaeological significance immediately to the north of the Roman fort, and is within the area designated as a Scheduled Monument (Lancs SM55).
- 1.1.2 Consequently, Lancashire County Archaeology Service (LCAS) advised the local planning authority that any groundworks be carried out under archaeological supervision due to the potential for disturbance or damaging impact on any sub-surface archaeological remains or deposits. The work was carried out as a condition to the planning consent (planning application ref: 03/04/0291), and under scheduled monument consent, and involved topsoil stripping of the outlined development area (Fig 2), followed by the excavation of 14 trial pits for the purpose of the installation of floodlights and goal posts. The work took place over two days on the 3rd and 7th February 2006. This report sets out the results of the watching brief in the form of a short document.

1.2 SITE LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 1.2.1 The small town of Ribchester in central Lancashire, lies on the northern bank of the River Ribble, approximately midway between the central Pennine uplands and the Irish Sea (Fig 1). The playing fields are located to the north of St Wilfrid's Church, and 100m to the north of the northern defences of the Roman fort (Fig 2), on the south-western edge of the present town. The site occupies an area to west of the line of the road assumed to have extended from the north gate of the fort, and thus within part of the associated civilian settlement (*vicus*).
- 1.2.2 The topsoil strip took place immediately to the north-east of the tennis pavilion (Plate 1), with further hand excavation of trial pits for floodlights in a line parallel to the north wall of St Wilfrid's churchyard (Figs 2 and 3).
- 1.2.3 The solid geology around Ribchester is dominated by the 'Sabden Shales' formation, previously part of the Millstone Grit Group, but now belonging to the Arnbergian and Chokierian episodes of the Namurian phase of the Upper Carboniferous (Aitkenhead *et al* 1992). This formation is predominantly argillaceous, although north-east of Ribchester it contains a high proportion of siltstone and sandstone (Bridge 1989, 11-15).
- 1.2.4 The solid geology is masked by boulder clay deposits up to 0.5m thick. The till exposed at the surface is typically a reddish-brown sandy-clay with grey mottling, with beds of clay, sands and gravels, and Triassic and Ordovician rock fragments (*ibid*).

- 1.2.5 Ribchester town and the Roman fort are thought to stand on deposits of a Second Terrace of the Ribble, which rises to *c* 3m-4m above the floodplain (*op cit*, 17). This terrace formation is being actively eroded with about one third of the area of the fort lost to fluvial processes to date (Fig 2). Soils of the Second Terrace comprise 0.6m-0.8m of unmottled sandy-loams overlying slightly mottled sandy-clay loams.

1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 1.3.1 The following information aims to be only a brief summary of the archaeological and historical background for Ribchester in order to provide a context for the results of the fieldwork.
- 1.3.2 **Prehistoric period:** little is known of prehistoric Ribchester, although Bronze Age activity was recorded by Olivier and Turner (1987) who excavated a circular ditch enclosing an arc of five cremation burials in collared urns to the north of the site. Soil analysis has indicated some agricultural disturbance on the banks of the river Ribble during the Bronze Age, but also implied that the site had been abandoned some hundreds of years before the arrival of the Romans in the early AD 70s (Buxton and Howard Davis 2000). The nearby hillfort of Portfield Camp, near Blackburn, appears to have been established during the Late Bronze Age, continuing in use throughout the Iron Age, and possibly re-fortified at the time of the Roman invasion (Beswick and Cooks 1986). Although there is increasing evidence for Iron Age activity in the south of the county (Nevell 1999), only very occasional finds of Iron Age date have been made in central or northern Lancashire and the county is noted for this as yet little discussed, or fully explained, anomaly (Haselgrove 1996).
- 1.3.3 **Roman period:** the presence of extensive Roman remains at Ribchester is well known and its identification as *Bremetenacum* is secure, based on a third century dedication to Apollo Maponus (*RIB* 583) from the town (Rivet and Smith 1981, 277). The site was strategically well-placed at the western end of one of the few major trans-Pennine routes and at its intersection with a major north/south road. In addition, it was also at, or close to, a crossing point of the River Ribble at the approximate point where it becomes navigable. The road south (Margary 1973, 370) led to Manchester and on to Chester, while that to the north passed along the Lune/Eden corridor, and on northwards to Carlisle and Hadrian's Wall. The Roman road eastwards ran over the Pennines to the fort at Elslack and then on to Aldborough and York. To the west it ran along the northern side of the Ribble Valley, connecting Ribchester with the industrial site at Walton-le-Dale and the fort at Dowbridge, Kirkham (*ibid*).
- 1.3.4 As the frontier moved north during the first and second centuries AD, the fort would have dominated the hinterland between the settled and 'Romanised' region around Chester and the frontier of Hadrian's Wall (*ibid*). The fort and settlement at Ribchester lay within the western territory of the Brigantes and, therefore, the garrison must have fulfilled something of a policing function. Evidence from excavations in 1989-1990 suggests a timber fort was established in the early AD 70s, during the governorship of Petilius Cerialis (AD 71-73/74), and modified *c* AD 82-86. Subsequent demolition of this fort,

and its rebuilding in stone, probably occurred around AD 125-135, possibly as a result of activity in the area of Hadrian's Wall (*ibid*).

- 1.3.5 Roman occupation of Ribchester is known to have continued into the third century AD. The identity of the Ribchester garrisons is uncertain for the first two centuries AD, although Legion VI and Legion XX are attested epigraphically (*ibid*). Later, the fort was garrisoned by a *numerus equitatum Samatorum* (soldiers from what is now modern Hungary). These are thought to have been settled at or around the fort after discharge as veteran; hence the name of the settlement, *Bremetennacum Veteranorum* (*ibid*).
- 1.3.6 Both the fort and the settlement, which have been well-known from the sixteenth century onwards (Edwards 2000), lie largely beneath the church and glebe lands of St Wilfrid. Extra-mural settlement has been proven as far as 500m to the north of the fort. Evidence from other parts of the town indicate that it is unwise to assume any area in the vicinity of the fort, even if partially damaged, has little or no archaeological value (Buxton and Howard Davis 2000).
- 1.3.7 **Medieval period:** the circumstances of Ribchester in the early post-Roman period are uncertain. Whitaker suggested the town was abandoned, and then later inhabited by '*... a few Saxon settlers of uncertain period*' (1823), and certainly a number of items recorded by antiquarians as coming from Ribchester, and a small collection of objects in the Museum, suggest that there was post-Roman occupation. Complete abandonment of the site on the withdrawal of Roman administration from Britain would appear increasingly unlikely in face of the growing body of evidence from sites such as Birdoswald on Hadrian's Wall (Wilmott 1997), which would suggest continuity of occupation from the Roman to the early medieval period.
- 1.3.8 Such continuity may be inferred from the building of the church of St Wilfrid situated within the walls of the fort, reputedly built in *c* AD 596 (Baines 1870, 2), and a church certainly stood on the site before the Domesday Survey (Farrer and Brownbill 1912). Ribchester is listed in the Domesday Survey as *Ribelcastre* (Hinde 1985, 154), although it was possibly uninhabited wasteland at that time. It may well have undergone 'sweeping desolation' as a result of the rebellions of 1069-70 (*ibid*), a fate which appears to have befallen the community again around 1320 'by the great incursion of the Scots' (Whitaker 1823). From *c*1150, there may have been a manor house situated to the north-west of the church, although this was seemingly abandoned in *c*1450, when the lord moved to Dutton (Farrer And Brownbill 1912, 45-51). Ribchester was never designated as a borough, and never had the right to have a market.
- 1.3.9 During the seventeenth century, flax spinning and linen weaving were the main occupations in Ribchester, although a lawsuit of 1634 referred to the poverty of the town citing the remoteness from the road system and the lack of a market as the main causes (Neil 2003).
- 1.3.10 **Post-medieval period:** it seems unlikely that there was much significant change in the layout or status of Ribchester until the Industrial Revolution of the mid eighteenth century. During this period, technical improvements

allowed hand-loom cotton weaving from home to become commonplace along with related industries such as bobbin making. Two cotton mills were built on the outskirts of the settlement which affected both the layout and economic focus of the town. Several textile mills were built on the outskirts of the settlement, which affected both the layout and economic focus of the town. Corry (1825) notes that in 1821 Ribchester had 300 houses, 303 families, and was inhabited by 1760 persons, suggesting a thriving community capable of sustaining a textile industry.

- 1.3.11 **Archaeological Interventions:** since the mid sixteenth century, antiquarian writers have commented on the richness of the site and there have been numerous chance finds from the town, including the well known Ribchester Helmet, a second century cavalry parade helmet now in the British Museum. In the last two centuries numerous excavators have opened trenches in both the fort and the extramural settlement, establishing the existence of a long, detailed, and well-preserved archaeological sequence which spans the entire period of the Roman occupation. Unfortunately, as is common, a great deal of information from the earlier work has been lost. These smaller excavations have been most coherently summarised by Edwards and Webster (1985; 1987a; 1987b; 1988), in their consideration of the township during the Roman occupation. The majority of the excavations undertaken in Ribchester in recent years have, however, been in response to threats to archaeology or actual development, and have therefore been concentrated to the north and east of the fort. These excavations have been summarised recently in Buxton and Howard-Davis (2000).
- 1.3.12 Of these excavations, those completed under the auspices of the Ribble Archaeological Society in 1968-9 are of particular interest as they were centred across the present study area (Fig 2). This programme of archaeological investigation revealed a complex sequence of Roman timber buildings, many of which were replete with 'industrial hearths' (Edwards *et al* 1987a, 13-28). The excavated remains were interpreted to represent four distinct phases of activity, all dated to the first two centuries AD (*op cit*, 13). The main occupation of the area, however, seems to occur during the late first and early second centuries AD, and was represented by a succession of timber buildings with intervening alleyways, aligned north/south across the southern part of the excavated area (*op cit*, 15).
- 1.3.13 The excavations revealed the layout of this part of the settlement to have been revamped during the mid second century AD, and a series of wooden buildings and road surfaces were constructed. Several of these buildings contained hearths, which appear to have been used for iron smithing. Interestingly, the excavations did not produce any pottery that was later than *c* AD 200, even from unstratified material.
- 1.3.14 The results of the 1968-9 work were augmented by a series of emergency excavations and watching briefs that were conducted during the construction of a new sewerage scheme in 1976 (Olivier 1987; Fig 2). Land immediately adjacent to the present study area was examined, and the remains of timber buildings and hearths were again exposed, which appeared to be of second century date.

- 1.3.15 In 1979, planning approval was granted for the construction of a Sheltered Housing Scheme at the western end of Parsonage Avenue (Fig 2). This provided an opportunity to examine archaeologically the edge of the known extramural settlement associated with the fort (Olivier and Turner 1987). The subsequent excavation again revealed the remains of timber buildings and evidence of industrial activity, although provided insufficient evidence to firmly characterise the nature of Roman occupation in this part of the civil settlement (*op cit*, 76).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

- 2.1.1 In response to a request by the client, OA North submitted a project design for the required archaeological work (*Appendix 1*). The project design was adhered to in full and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, and generally accepted best practice.

2.2 WATCHING BRIEF

- 2.2.1 A permanent archaeological presence was maintained during the groundworks, which mainly comprised topsoil stripping and other earth moving activities carried out by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.6m toothless ditching bucket. Hand excavation of trial pits for the stanchion foundations of the floodlights was also undertaken. A programme of field observation accurately recorded the location, extent, and character of any surviving archaeological features and deposits. This involved the systematic examination of any subsoil horizons exposed during the course of the groundworks and the accurate recording of all archaeological features and horizons, and any artefacts.
- 2.2.2 Recording was by means of OA North's standard context recording system, with trench records and supporting registers and indices. A full photographic record in colour transparency and monochrome formats was undertaken.
- 2.2.3 Putative archaeological features and deposits identified by the machining process, together with the immediate vicinity of any such features, were cleaned by hand, using shovel scraping and trowels depending on the subsoil conditions.
- 2.2.4 All artefactual material was processed in accordance with OA North standard practice, which follows current IFA guidelines. This has been fully catalogued and prepared for deposition with the final archive.

2.3 ARCHIVE

- 2.3.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the project design (*Appendix 1*), and in accordance with current IFA and English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991). The paper and digital archive will be deposited in the Lancashire Record Office, and the material archive with Ribchester Museum on completion of the project.

3. RESULTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 The objective of the watching brief was to identify any potential archaeological features or deposits revealed during the groundworks for the development, and record their presence or absence, character and extent, integrity, state of preservation and relative quality. The position of the groundworks is plotted on Figure 2 and discussed in turn below for the topsoil strip and the fourteen trial pit excavations, of which a more detailed plan is shown in Figure 3. A list detailing all of the contexts identified during the watching brief has been provided in *Appendix 2*, with a summary of the finds in *Appendix 3*.

3.2 TOPSOIL STRIP

3.2.1 The development area was stripped of topsoil, **100**, to a depth of 0.5m below the existing ground surface at the south-eastern end, and 0.3m below the existing ground surface at the north-western end. Stripping at the south-western end of the site revealed an extensive cobbled surface, **101** (Plate 2), immediately beneath the topsoil, **100**, at a depth of approximately 0.6m. Similar deposits were also observed along the edge of excavation area to the south-east. Due to the potential of damaging scheduled deposits, the topsoil strip was temporarily halted.

3.2.2 The excavation of topsoil resumed following examination by English Heritage who, in consultation with the client and the principal contractor, John Wade Groundworks, agreed that the entire development should be moved 4m to the north-west to avoid the archaeological deposits. The remainder of the topsoil stripping activity revealed no further archaeological deposits, although numerous finds were recovered from within the topsoil (see 3.4, below).

3.3 TRIAL PITS

3.3.1 **Trial Pit 1:** Trial Pit 1 measured approximately 0.3m square, and was excavated to a depth of 0.3m below the final designated height of the playing field surface (i.e. 0.1m below that already removed during topsoil stripping). No archaeological deposits or features were noted.

3.3.2 **Trial pit 2:** Trial Pit 2 was approximately 0.3m square and was excavated to a depth of 0.3m below the final designated height of the playing field surface, which was 0.15m below that already removed during topsoil stripping. No archaeological deposits were encountered.

3.3.3 **Trial Pit 3:** Trial Pit 3 was approximately 0.45m square and was excavated to a depth of 0.3m below the final designated height of the playing field surface, and 0.2m below the level of that already removed during topsoil stripping. Although the hand excavation revealed no archaeological deposits, there were

deposits that appeared to be redeposited natural which would be suggestive of recent backfilling.

- 3.3.4 **Trial Pit 4:** Trial Pit 4 was approximately 0.45m square and was excavated to a depth of 0.5m below final designated height of the playing field surface. This equated to an additional 0.3m below the level of topsoil stripping. Along the south-western edge, at 0.1m below the machined level, the top of a large piece of sandstone, **102**, was observed on a north-west/south-east alignment (Plate 3). This measured at least 0.45m north-west/south-east, extending beyond the edges of excavation, and it was at least 0.2m high. It was left *in situ* and the soil around it was excavated to the required depth without observing any other features or deposits.
- 3.3.5 **Trial Pit 5:** Trial Pit 5 was approximately 0.45m square and was excavated to a depth of 0.5m below the final designated height of the playing field surface. This equated to additional 0.3m below that previously removed by machine. In the base of the pit was a large flattish piece of stone, **103**, which potentially demonstrated a floor surface at this level (Plate 4). Ten pieces of Roman pottery were recovered from the removed topsoil **100** (see 3.4, below).
- 3.3.6 **Trial Pit 6:** Trial Pit 6 was approximately 0.5m square and was excavated to a depth of 0.6m below the final designated height of the playing field surface, which equated to 0.4m below that previously removed during stripping. At the base of the pit the top of a cobbled surface, **104**, similar to that previously revealed in the topsoil strip, **101**, was observed (Plate 5). Nine pieces of Roman pottery were recovered from the removed topsoil, **100** (see Appendix 3).
- 3.3.7 **Trial Pit 7:** Trial Pit 6 was approximately 0.5m square and was excavated to a depth of 0.6m below the final designated height of the playing field surface, which amounted to 0.4m below the stripping. At the base of the pit the top of a cobbled surface, **105**, similar to that previously revealed in the topsoil strip, **101**, and in Trial Pit 6, **104**, was observed (Plate 6). However, it appeared that the cobbled surface as a whole was at a higher level than in Trial Pit 6. Two pieces of ceramic building material (CBM) were also recovered from the removed topsoil, **100** (see Appendix 3).
- 3.3.8 **Trial Pit 8:** Trial Pit 8 was approximately 0.5m square and was excavated to a depth of 0.6m below the final designated height of the playing field surface, and 0.4m below the level of the previous strip. At the base of this pit, in the very centre, was a concentration of small pebbles, **106**, potentially representing the top of a subsoil horizon or possibly a floor surface. One piece of Samian ware, five pieces of Black Burnished ware and one small fragment of cremated bone were recovered from the removed topsoil **100** (see Appendix 3).
- 3.3.9 **Trial Pit 9:** Trial Pit 9 was approximately 0.5m square and was excavated to a depth of 0.6m below the final designated height of the playing field surface, and 0.4m below the level of the previous strip. Although no features or deposits were encountered in this trench, a piece of Black Burnished ware, one piece of Samian ware, one piece of orange ware and one piece of post-

medieval pottery were recovered from the removed topsoil **100** (see *Appendix 3*).

- 3.3.10 **Trial Pit 10:** Trial Pit 10 was approximately 0.45m square and was excavated to a depth of 0.5m below the final designated height of the playing field surface, and 0.1m below that previously removed by machine. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered during excavation of this pit.
- 3.3.11 **Trial Pit 11:** Trial Pit 11 was approximately 0.45m square and was excavated to a depth of 0.5m below the final designated height of the playing field surface, which was 0.1m below that previously removed during stripping. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered during excavation, although a piece of Roman glass and a single piece of orange ware were recovered from the removed topsoil **100** (see *Appendix 3*).
- 3.3.12 **Trial Pit 12:** Trial Pit 12 was approximately 0.45m square and was excavated to a depth of 0.3m below the final designated height of the playing field surface, which amounted to 0.12m below that previously removed by machine. At the base of the pit cobbles, **107**, of unknown function were observed, and one piece of mortaria was recovered from the removed topsoil **100**.
- 3.3.13 **Trial Pit 13:** Trial Pit 13 was approximately 0.45m square and was excavated to a depth of 0.3m below the final designated height of the playing field surface, which was 0.1m below the level previously stripped. Although no archaeological features or deposits were encountered during excavation of this trench, a clayey subsoil, **108**, was encountered at the base (Plate 7).
- 3.3.14 **Trial Pit 14:** Trial Pit 14 was approximately 0.45m square and was excavated to a depth of 0.3m below the final designated height of the playing field surface, which equated to 0.08m below the level previously removed during topsoil stripping. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

3.4 FINDS

- 3.4.1 In all, 44 fragments of artefacts were recovered during the investigation, the majority being pottery of Roman date. Finds were recovered during topsoil stripping, from Trial Pits 5, 6, 8, 11 and 12, and from within the topsoil, **100**, as shown below in Table 1. In addition, two joining fragments of a large cast lead fitting were recovered by a metal detectorist over the playing fields.

	Samian ware	Mortarium	Amphora	Coarse-ware	Post-Roman	Other finds	Totals
Trial pit 5	1		1	8			10
Trial pit 6			1	8			9
Trial pit 8	1			5		1	7
Trial pit 11				1		1	2

Trial pit 12		1					1
Topsoil strip		1		4	1		6
Topsoil strip	1			3	1	2	7
<i>Totals</i>	3	2	2	29	2	4	42

Table 1: Distribution and type of finds recovered during the watching brief

- 3.4.2 The fragments are all relatively small, but unabraded and there are several joining fragments, suggesting that the material has not moved far from its original place of deposition. The marked lack of medieval or post-medieval pottery (only two small fragments of the latter) also implies that the area has not been significantly disturbed by previous developments.
- 3.4.3 The majority of the finds recovered are of Romano-British date, probably focusing on the later second and third centuries AD. A single fragment of glass, from a mould-blown storage bottle, can be dated to the same period. The composition of the pottery assemblage is what might be considered 'normal' for Ribchester, with imported samian (in this case all probably from the Central Gaulish kilns at les Martres de Veyre) and amphora reflecting the settlement's access to military sources of supply. The coarsewares include Black Burnished ware 1, Wilderspool products, and Nene Valley products. Mortaria derive from Wilderspool, which was a significant producer in the area, and from the Mancetter-Hartshill kilns.
- 3.4.4 The lead object from the Playing Fields is difficult to date but seems unlikely to be Roman. Its purpose is not clear but, although obviously decorative, it appears to be a poorly made object cast in an open mould, with the back surface unfinished, and thus not intended to be seen. The proximity of the cemetery might suggest that it is a discarded coffin fitting, perhaps of later eighteenth or nineteenth century date.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 DISCUSSION

- 4.1.1 The archaeological watching brief has, unsurprisingly, confirmed the presence of Roman remains within the study area. The results concur to some extent with those obtained from the excavations of 1968/9 (1.3, above), with evidence for cobbled and stone surfaces perhaps representing a road or intervening alleyways. The different levels or depths of the cobbled surfaces in Trial pits 6 and 7 (**104** and **105** respectively) could relate to a camber of a road surface aligned north-east/south-west.
- 4.1.2 Other features and deposits encountered at the base of some of the excavated trial pits were difficult to interpret as these were not investigated below their uppermost surface as they clearly represented *in situ* archaeological deposits. The limited extent of the trial pits also precluded interpretation. The large sandstone block, **102**, in Trial Pit 4 may be associated with the postulated road surface, or possibly a structure.
- 4.1.3 The topsoil, **100**, above the probable *in situ* Roman deposits showed disturbance at least below 0.2m-0.25m in the vicinity of the trial pits, although to a far lesser extent at the south-west of the site where cobbles **101** were initially observed. This disturbance may have been associated with activity for the Second World War 'Dig for Victory' allotments in the area now given over to the playing fields. However, it is also probable that the excavation and subsequent backfilling of the 1968-9 excavations adjacent to the area of the trial pits led to the disturbance of topsoil and subsoil. This was evident in the redeposited clay deposits observed in Trial Pit 3.
- 4.1.4 During the course of the groundworks, disturbance of archaeological deposits was minimised and subsequently avoided on discovery. As such it is not likely that the development will incur a negative impact on the sub-surface archaeological resource. However, any further groundworks in this area may impact on the remains and further archaeological monitoring is recommended.

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6. ILLUSTRATIONS

6.1 FIGURES

Figure 1: Site Location

Figure 2: Position of the site and previous excavations relative to the Roman fort

Figure 3: Detail of the trial pits

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Plate 5: Cobbled surface *104*, facing north-east

Plate 6: Cobbled surface *105*, facing north-east

Plate 7: Subsoil *108*, facing north-east



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Figure 1: Location Map

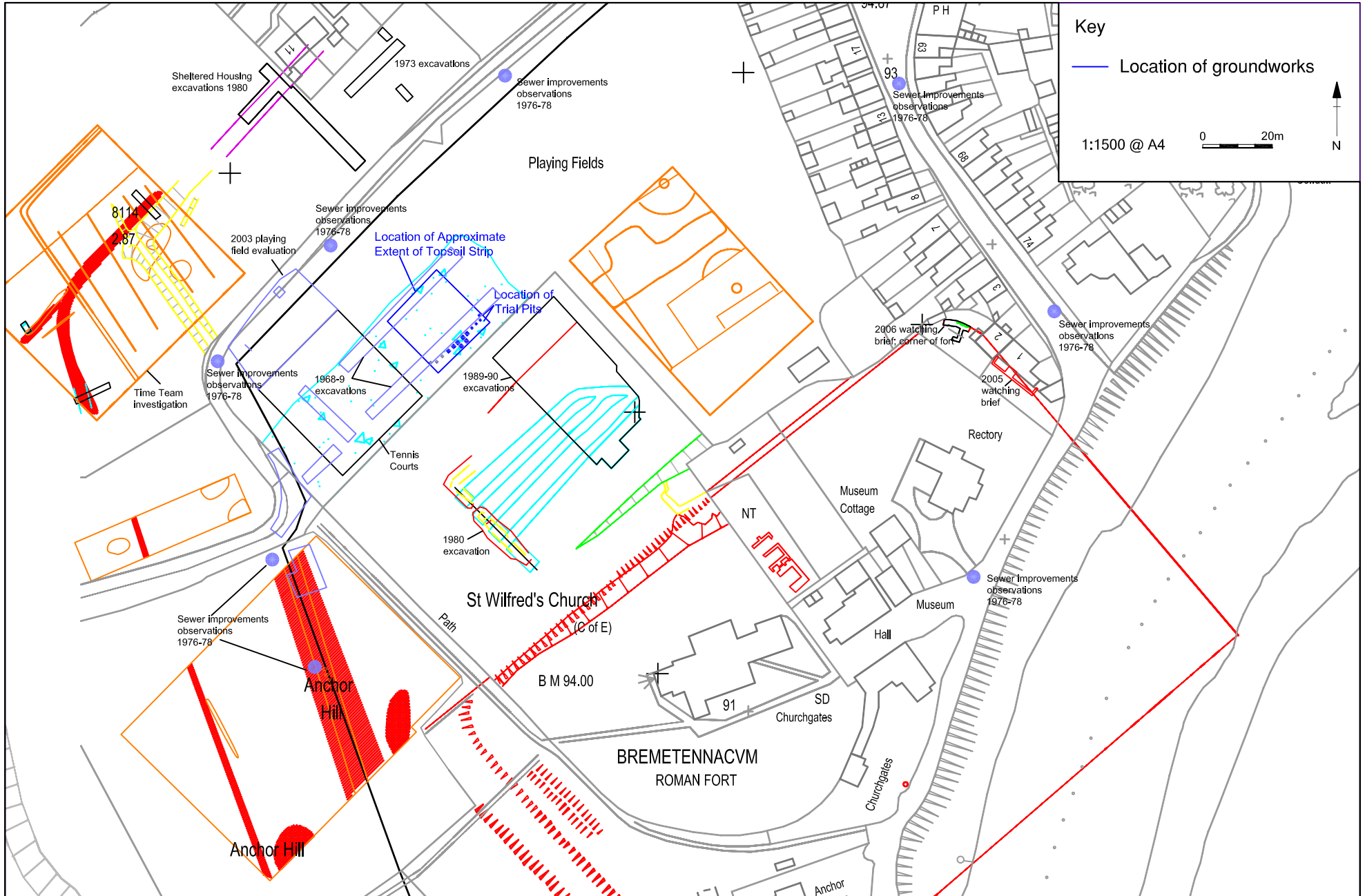


Figure 2: Position of the site and previous excavations relative to the Roman fort

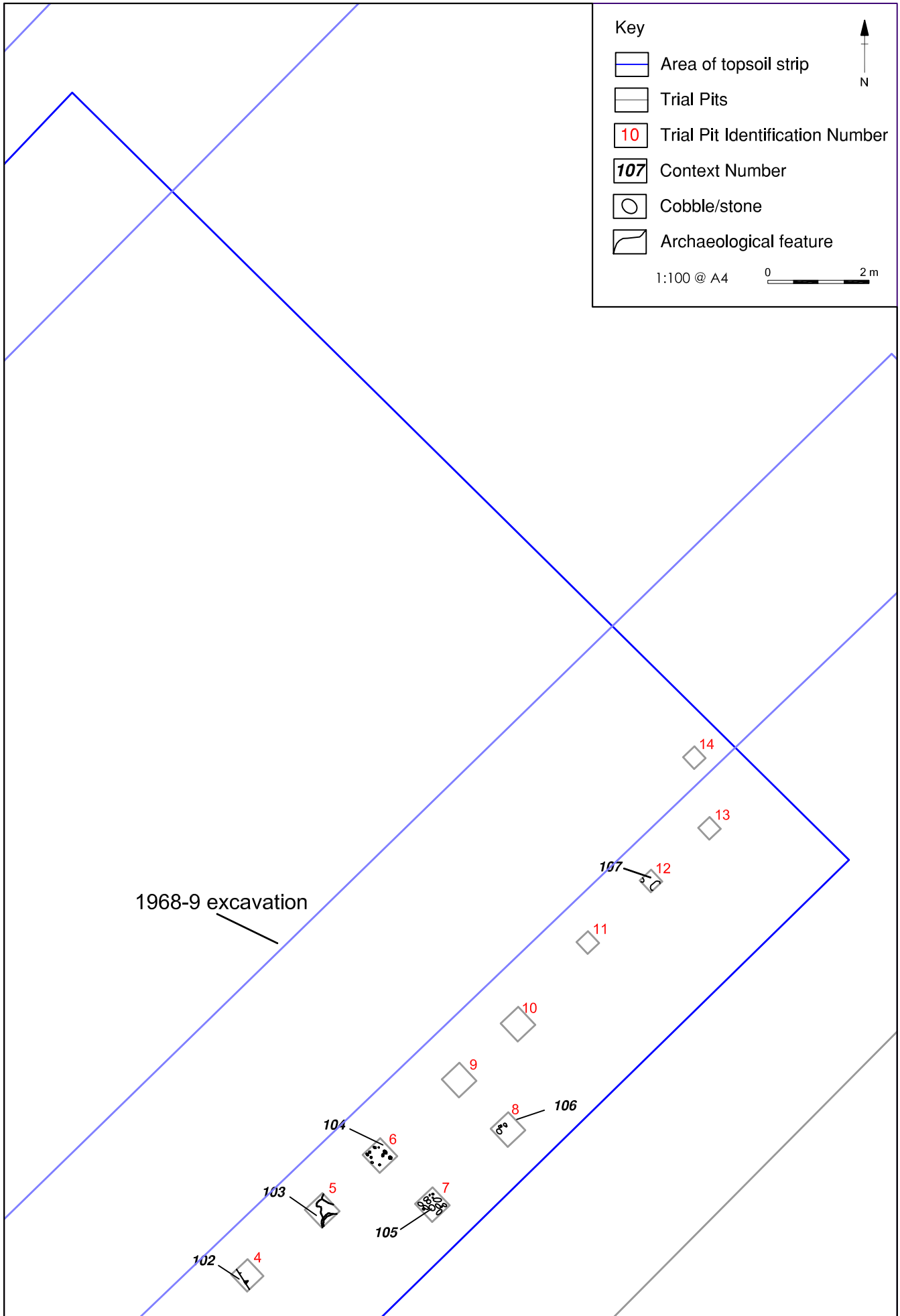


Figure 3: Detail of Trial Pits



Plate 1: General view of the site, looking south-west



Plate 2: Cobbled Surface *101*, facing south-east



Plate 3: Sandstone block, *102*, facing south-west



Plate 4: Stone surface *103*, facing north-east



Plate 5: Cobbled surface *104*, facing north-east



Plate 6: Cobbled surface *105*, facing north-east

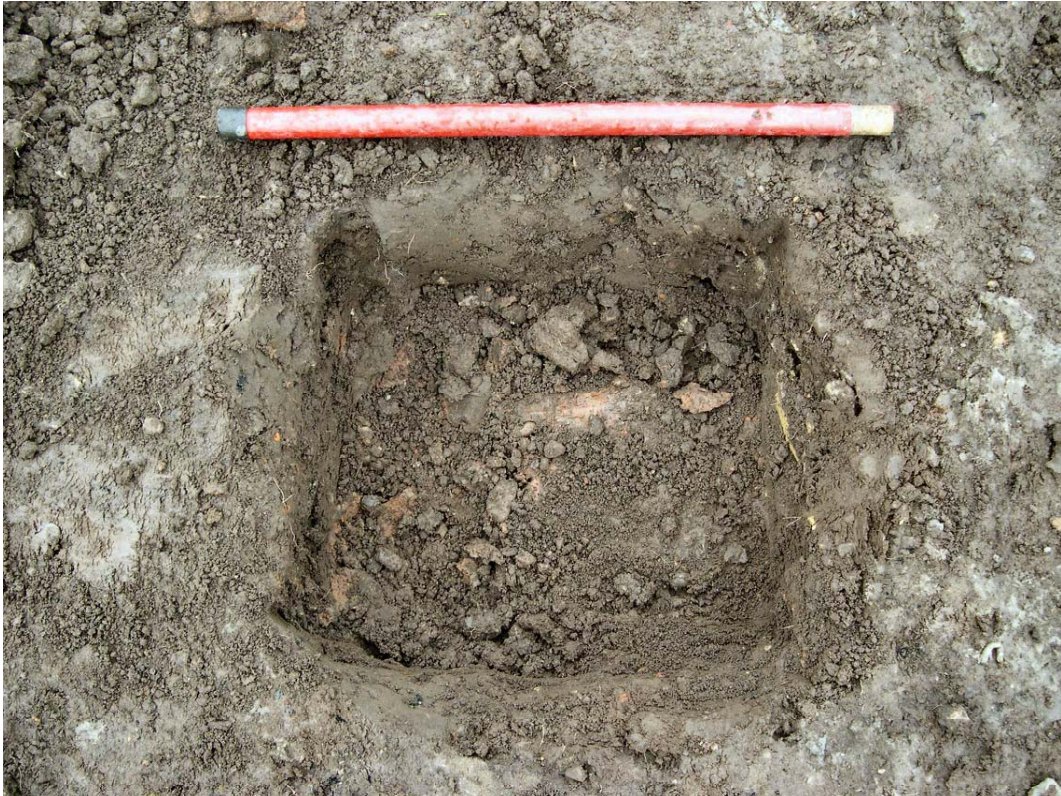


Plate 7: Subsoil *108*, facing north-east

APPENDIX 1: PROJECT DESIGN

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Ribchester Playing Field Trust (hereafter the client) has requested Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) submit proposals to undertake an archaeological watching brief of the groundworks for a proposed multi games and skateboard park at Ribchester Playing Field, Ribchester. The Trust is currently in the process of applying for Scheduled Monument Consent from English Heritage to undertake the work. The village of Ribchester is an area of very high archaeological potential and is regarded as being of national importance, much of which has been protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

1.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

1.2.1 The Ribchester area has been settled since prehistoric times and is the site of *Bremetennacum*, a Roman fort and associated external settlement dating from the first century AD. The fort lies on the south-west edge of the town, and is protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument; hence much of the town, including the site in question, lies within the setting of that monument. Both the fort and the settlement, which have been well known from the sixteenth century onwards, lie largely beneath the church and glebe lands of the church of St Wilfrid, with extra mural settlement proven as far as 500m to the north of the fort. There have been both numerous chance finds (including the well-known Ribchester Helmet, now in the British Museum), and excavations within the fort and extra mural settlement.

1.2.2 Remains of the fort and settlement are exposed to view within the town and more extensive archaeological deposits are present below the surface. The fort and settlement have been recognised as of national importance.

1.2.3 The fort and settlement at Ribchester lie within the western territory of the Brigantes. The site is strategically well placed at the crossing of a major trans-Pennine route with an important north-south road. The location of Ribchester, at a crossing of the Ribble, may also have allowed it to oversee river traffic to and from the West Coast.

1.2.4 As the frontier moved north during the first and second centuries AD, the fort would have dominated the hinterland between the settled and “Romanised” region around Chester, and “the Wall” frontier zone. Evidence from the recent excavations (1989-90) suggests a timber fort was established in the early AD 70’s, and modified cAD 82-86. Subsequent demolition of this fort, and its rebuilding in stone, probably occurred around AD 125-135, possibly as a result of activity in the area of Hadrian’s Wall, with the Roman occupation of Ribchester known to have continued into the third century AD.

1.2.5 The north-east corner tower of the stone fort, which was uncovered in the garden of 2 Church Street by Mr J Ridge and the Time Team. Similarly, the bathhouse was discovered by labourers in 1837, and is now open to the public. Excavations in 1927 and 1966-68 revealed a hypercausted room, stone walls, furnaces, and a tiled floor, while excavations in 1977-78 uncovered further features associated with the bath house and a proceeding structure on the same site. A broad second century AD date has been given to these structures and their associated activity, although it is likely that both the bath complex and the general area may have remained in use during the third century.

1.3 OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY NORTH

1.3.1 Oxford Archaeology North has considerable experience of excavation of sites of all periods, having undertaken a great number of small and large scale projects throughout Northern England during the past 24 years. Evaluations, assessments, watching briefs and excavations have taken place within the planning process, to fulfil the requirements of clients and planning authorities, to very rigorous timetables. OA North has undertaken numerous excavations and watching briefs in Ribchester (particularly in its former guise as Lancaster

University Archaeological Unit). The excavations from 1980, 1989-1990 have been published (Buxton and Howard-Davis 2000).

- 1.3.2 OA North has the professional expertise and resources to undertake the project detailed below to a high level of quality and efficiency. OA North is an **Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) registered organisation, registration number 17**, and all its members of staff operate subject to the IFA Code of Conduct.

2. OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The following programme has been designed to provide for accurate recording of any archaeological deposits that are disturbed by ground works for the proposed development.
- 2.2 **Watching brief:** a watching brief, during associated ground disturbance, will determine the quality, extent and importance of any archaeological remains on the site across the whole of the proposed development area.
- 2.2 **Report and Archive:** a report will be produced for the client within eight weeks of completion of the fieldwork. A site archive will be produced to English Heritage guidelines (MAP 2) and in accordance with the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage* (UKIC 1990).

3 METHOD STATEMENT

3.1 WATCHING BRIEF

- 3.1.1 **Methodology:** a programme of field observation will accurately record the location, extent, and character of any surviving archaeological features and/or deposits within the proposed ground disturbance. This work will comprise observation during the excavation for these works, including building foundations and service trenches and any other earth moving activities, the systematic examination of any subsoil horizons exposed during the course of the groundworks, and the accurate recording of all archaeological features and horizons, and any artefacts, identified during observation.
- 3.1.2 Putative archaeological features and/or deposits identified by the machining process, together with the immediate vicinity of any such features, will be cleaned by hand, using either hoes, shovel scraping, and/or trowels depending on the subsoil conditions, and where appropriate sections will be studied and drawn. Any such features will be sample excavated (ie selected pits and postholes will normally only be half-sectioned, linear features will be subject to no more than a 10% sample, and extensive layers will, where possible, be sampled by partial rather than complete removal).
- 3.1.3 During this phase of work, recording will comprise a full description and preliminary classification of features or materials revealed, and their accurate location (either on plan and/or section, and as grid co-ordinates where appropriate). Features will be planned accurately at appropriate scales and annotated on to a large-scale plan provided by the client. A photographic record will be undertaken simultaneously.
- 3.1.4 A plan will be produced of the areas of groundworks showing the location and extent of the ground disturbance and one or more dimensioned sections will be produced.

3.2 CONTINGENCY PLAN

- 3.2.1 In the event of significant archaeological features being encountered during the watching brief, discussions will take place with English Heritage as to the extent of further works to be carried out. All further works would be subject to a variation to this project design. In the event of environmental/organic deposits being present on site, it would be necessary to discuss and agree a programme of palaeoenvironmental sampling and or dating with the English Heritage.

3.3 HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 3.3.1 OA North provides a Health and Safety Statement for all projects and maintains a Unit Safety policy. All site procedures are in accordance with the guidance set out in the Health and Safety Manual compiled by the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers

(1997). OA North will liaise with the client to ensure all health and safety regulations are met. A risk assessment will be completed in advance of any on-site works.

3.2 ARCHIVE/REPORT

3.2.1 **Archive:** the results of all archaeological work carried out will form the basis for a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (*Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition, 1991) and the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage* (UKIC 1990). The project archive represents the collation and indexing of all the data and material gathered during the course of the project. The deposition of a properly ordered and indexed project archive in an appropriate repository is considered an essential and integral element of all archaeological projects by the IFA in that organisation's code of conduct.

3.2.2 **Report:** one bound and one unbound copy of a written synthetic report will be submitted to the client, and a copy submitted to English Heritage and to the Lancashire SMR as a paper copy and digital copy on CD within eight weeks of completion of fieldwork. The report will include a copy of this project design, and indications of any agreed departure from that design. It will present, summarise, and interpret the results of the programme detailed above.

3.2.3 **Confidentiality:** all internal reports to the client are designed as documents for the specific use of the Client, for the particular purpose as defined in the project brief and project design, and should be treated as such. They are not suitable for publication as academic documents or otherwise without amendment or revision.

4 PROJECT MONITORING

4.1 Monitoring of this project will be undertaken through the auspices of the English Heritage, who will be informed of the start and end dates of the work.

5 WORK TIMETABLE

5.1 The duration of the archaeological presence for the watching brief is as yet unknown, being dictated by the schedule of works.

5.2 The client report will be completed within eight weeks following completion of the fieldwork.

6 STAFFING

6.1 The project will be under the direct management of **Emily Mercer BA (Hons) MSc AIFA** (OA North Senior Project Manager) to whom all correspondence should be addressed.

6.2 The watching brief will be supervised by either an OA North project officer or supervisor experienced in this type of project. Due to scheduling requirements it is not possible to provide these details at the present time. All OA North project officers and supervisors are experienced field archaeologists capable of carrying out projects of all sizes.

7 INSURANCE

7.1 OA North has a professional indemnity cover to a value of £2,000,000; proof of which can be supplied as required.

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APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT INDEX

Context	Description	Location	Depth
<i>100</i>	Topsoil.	Topsoil Strip and all trenches	0.0m-0.6m
<i>101</i>	Cobbled surface	SW corner of topsoil strip	0.6m
<i>102</i>	Large piece of sandstone	Trench 4	0.2m
<i>103</i>	Large pieces of flattish stone	Trench 5	0.4m
<i>104</i>	Cobbled surface?	Trench 6	0.45m
<i>105</i>	Cobbled surface?	Trench 7	0.5m
<i>106</i>	Stony subsoil or surface	Trench 8	0.5m
<i>107</i>	Cobbled surface?	Trench 12	0.3m
<i>108</i>	Clayey subsoil	Trench 13	0.3m

APPENDIX 3: FINDS SUMMARY

OR = object record number; Qty = quantity of finds; Unstrat = unstratified finds

Context or Site ref	OR	Material	Category	Qty	Description	Date
Trial pit 5	1008	Ceramic	vessel	1	Body fragment. Plain vessel. Central Gaulish samian, probably Les Martres de Veyre.	Second century AD
Trial pit 5	1008	Ceramic	vessel	4	Body fragments. Orange oxidised ware.	-
Trial pit 5	1008	Ceramic	vessel	2	Body fragments. Greyware.	-
Trial pit 5	1008	Ceramic	vessel	1	Unidentified. Undiagnostic.	-
Trial pit 5	1008	Ceramic	vessel	1	Body fragment. White fabric, colour-coated.	Late second - third century AD
Trial pit 5	1008	Ceramic	vessel	1	Small body fragment. Amphora.	-
Trial pit 6	1006	Ceramic	vessel	1	Very abraded body fragment. Amphora	First - third century AD
Trial pit 6	1006	Ceramic	vessel	8	Joining rim and body fragments. Greyware jar.	Second - early third century AD
Trial pit 7	1007	Ceramic	building material	2	Small fragments	-
Trial pit 8	1009	Bone	animal	1	Small fragment calcified bone.	-
Trial pit 8	1010	Ceramic	vessel	1	Central Gaulish samian, probably Les Martres de Veyre. Form Dr33.	Second century AD
Trial pit 8	1010	Ceramic	vessel	5	Small joining body fragments, Black Burnished ware 1.	Second - fourth century AD
Trial pit 9	1007	Ceramic	vessel	1	Body fragment, pinkish fabric, self glaze	Eighteenth century or later
Trial pit 9	1007	Ceramic	vessel	1	Body fragments. Orange oxidised ware. Undiagnostic.	-
Trial pit 9	1007	Ceramic	vessel	1	Rim fragment. Black Burnished ware 1. Sooted.	Late second - mid third century AD

Trial pit 9	1007	Ceramic	vessel	1	Small fragment. Central Gaulish samian, probably Les Martres de Veyre. Form not known.	Second century AD
Trial pit 11	1004	Ceramic	vessel	1	Body fragment. Orange oxidised ware.	Second - third century AD
Trial pit 11	1001	Glass	vessel	1	Body fragment natural blue-green glass. Prismatic bottle.	Late first - early third century AD
Trial pit 12	1006	Ceramic	vessel	1	Rim fragment wall-sided mortarium, white fabric and red angular grits. Mancetter-Hartshill?	Late second - fourth century AD
Topsoil Strip	1002	Ceramic	vessel	1	Body fragment. Black-glazed redware.	Eighteenth to twentieth century
Topsoil Strip	1002	Ceramic	vessel	1	Profile. Black Burnished ware 2 (?) dish	Late second - fourth century AD
Topsoil Strip	1002	Ceramic	vessel	1	Mortarium rim. Orange sandy fabric with mixed grits. Wilderspool.	Second century AD
Topsoil Strip	1002	Ceramic	vessel	2	Joining rim fragments Black Burnished ware 1 rim. Jar.	Second century AD
Topsoil Strip	1002	Ceramic	vessel	1	Body fragment, white fabric brownish-purple colour coat. Nene valley ware	Late second - third century AD
100	1002	Ceramic	vessel	1	Body fragment. Orange fabric with white slip. Wilderspool	Second - third century AD
Playing field	1003	Lead	fitting	2	Round cast fitting. Decorated with concentric beaded rows. Back unfinished. Coffin fitting?	Eighteenth-nineteenth century?