



**RIVERSIDE HOUSE,  
1 CHURCH STREET,  
RIBCHESTER,  
LANCASHIRE**

**Archaeological Watching  
Brief**



**Oxford Archaeology North**

May 2006

**Mr Christopher Ratcliff**

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**CONTENTS**

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<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Circumstances of the Project.....	4
1.2 Location, Topography and Geology .....	4
1.3 Historical Background .....	4
<b>2. METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 Watching Brief.....	7
2.3 Archive.....	7
<b>3. FIELDWORK RESULTS .....</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1 Watching Brief Results .....	8
3.2 The Finds.....	11
<b>4. DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1 Conclusions .....	14
4.2 Impact and Recommendations .....	15
<b>5. BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>6. ILLUSTRATIONS .....</b>	<b>18</b>
6.1 List of Figures .....	18
6.2 List of Plates.....	18
<b>APPENDIX 1: PROJECT DESIGN.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT LIST.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>APPENDIX 3: FINDS SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>23</b>

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## SUMMARY

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Following a request by Mr Christopher Ratcliff, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) undertook an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of wall footings for an extension to the dwelling at Riverside House, 1 Church Street, Ribchester, Lancashire (NGR SD 6500 3510). The watching brief was required as a condition to the planning consent (planning application reference 3/2005/0063), and took place between the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September 2005. Trench 1 consisted of the foundation trenches for the extension and Trench 2 consisted of service trenches. Both were excavated using a three tonne mini-excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. All machining work was carried out under constant archaeological supervision.

Trench 1 was aligned north-west/south-east, 2.7m away, but parallel to, the existing building wall; it measured 15m north/south and 0.6m wide, except in the central area, which measured 2.7m x 1.6m. Much of the north-eastern side had been apparently disturbed by the construction of Riverside House. However, a sequence of deposits was uncovered that demonstrated at least two phases of construction during the Roman period. A continuous 'raft' of timbers, **109**, known as corduroy, was uncovered at the base of Trench 1, approximately 1.75-1.9m below the present ground surface. They were shown to extend 15m in a north-west/south-east alignment within the confines of the foundation trench and would appear to extend beyond the excavation. The overlying clay also appeared to show evidence of turf. From the limited evidence it would appear to be the eastern side of the early turf-and-timber fort, dating to the AD 70s. Four of the timbers revealed were removed for further analysis.

A later phase of activity was visible as a linear clay and cobble feature, **102**, running outside and parallel to the timber corduroy. The foundation may represent an independent wall or perhaps the re-facing of the rampart with a stone wall, which was a general practice during the Trajanic period (AD 98-117), up to the instigation of stone-built forts during the Hadrianic period (AD 117-138). Forts with stone re-faced clay ramparts include that at Lancaster, dated to after AD 100, Carlisle, Kirkham, and Manchester.

Trench 2 lay to the front of Riverside House, in the small courtyard adjacent to the road. The trench measured approximately 3m x 3m and had a maximum depth of 1.1m. The majority of the upper part of the trench had been disturbed by the insertion of drainage pipes but at the very base, along the south-eastern side, a clay deposit was just visible. It is suggested that this may be the same as a deposit that overlay a cobble deposit seen in the nearby Ribchester Flood Works trench, evaluated in 2000 and may represent a make-up layer or possible surface or bedding layer.

The deposits associated with the eastern rampart of the early phases of the fort were at depth and are unlikely to be disturbed by general garden activity. However, any further substantial groundworks will require a mitigative archaeological investigation, preferably in the form of a detailed archaeological excavation.

It is also recommended that the timbers recovered during the fieldwork be subject to further analysis. At the very minimum they require specialist cleaning and analysis of the surface for toolmarks.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Oxford Archaeology North would like to offer thanks to Mr Christopher Ratcliff for commissioning the project, and to Lancashire County Archaeology Service for issuing the project brief. Thanks are also extended to Patrick Tostevin of Ribchester Roman Museum, and John Zant of OA North for their advice and interest.

The watching brief was undertaken by Christina Clarke and Vix Hughes, who also compiled this report. The drawings were produced by Mark Tidmarsh. The Roman ceramics were examined by Sean McPhillips, the medieval pottery by Ian Miller, the post-medieval pottery by Jo Dawson, and the timber by Denise Druce and Chris Howard-Davies. The project was managed by Emily Mercer, who also edited the report, together with Alan Lupton.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Christopher Ratcliff requested that Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) undertake an archaeological investigation at the domestic dwelling of 1 Church Street, Ribchester, Lancashire (SD 6500 3510). The work was required as a condition to planning consent for a rear two-storey extension (Planning Application No 3/2005/0063). Lancashire County Archaeology Service (LCAS) advised the local planning authority that an archaeological watching brief of the groundworks on the site be undertaken due to the high archaeological potential of the area.
- 1.1.2 The current house lies close to the Scheduled Monument of the Roman fort (LSM55), and is known to stand within extreme close proximity to the fort dating from the first through to the third century AD. The fort lies on the south-west edge of the town; hence much of the town, including the site in question, lies within the SM setting. Previous archaeological investigations in the area have revealed extensive Roman remains. The fort and surrounding civilian settlement (*vicus*) have been recognised as of national importance. This report sets out the results of the work in the form of a short document, which outlines the findings.

### 1.2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 1.2.1 The site lies at the southern end of Church Street, and is located on the northern bank of the river Ribble (Fig 2). It is at the southern edge of the village of Ribchester in central Lancashire, roughly mid-way between the central Pennine uplands and the Irish Sea.
- 1.2.2 The solid geology around Ribchester is dominated by Sabden shales of the Millstone Grit Group masked by thick (up to 50m to rock head) boulder clay deposits (Aitkenhead *et al* 1992). Ribchester town and Roman fort are thought to stand on deposits of a second terrace of the Ribble (*ibid*), which rises to *c* 3-4m above the floodplain. This terrace formation is being actively eroded with about one third of the area of the fort lost to fluvial processes. Soils of the second terrace comprise 0.6-0.8m of unmottled sandy loams overlying slightly mottled sandy clay loams (*ibid*).

### 1.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 1.3.1 **Prehistoric period:** little is known of prehistoric activity in the Ribchester area, 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 Ribble during the Bronze Age, but also implied that the site had been abandoned some hundreds of years before the arrival of the Romans (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 was possibly re-fortified at the time of the Roman invasion (Beswick and Cooks 1986).

- 1.3.2 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. Indeed, 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 the routes 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 Roman road south (Margary 1973, 370) led to Manchester and on to Chester, and to the north passed along the Lune/Eden corridor and on 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, while to the west it ran along the northern side of the Ribble Valley. This connected Ribchester with the industrial site at Walton-le-Dale and the fort at Dowbridge, Kirkham (Buxton and Howard-Davis 2000).
- 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 recent excavations (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 stones, 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). The north-east corner of the stone fort which was uncovered in the garden of 2 Church Street by Mr. J. Ridge and the Time Team (Channel 4 1994), lies adjacent to the current site.
- 1.3.7 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 investigated 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, 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 from actual development, and have therefore been concentrated to the north and east of the fort. A significant amount of work has taken place around St Wilfred's School, just opposite Riverside, 1 Church Street, including in 1974, when a number of trial trenches were investigated (Edwards and Webster 1987b), and 1977, when archaeological observations were made during the earlier phase of the school extension (Turner and Witherington 1977), and further work was carried out at the school by LUAU (1999). In 2000 work was carried out on the Ribchester Flood Works, less than 15m to the south-east of the current site (OA North 2000). Other excavations in the *vicus* area have been summarised recently in Buxton and Howard-Davis (2000).

- 1.3.8 **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. A growing body of evidence from sites such as Birdoswald on Hadrian's Wall (Wilmott 1997) would suggest continuity of occupation from the Roman to the early medieval period.
- 1.3.9 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).
- 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. 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.



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## 2. METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1.1 In response to a verbal brief issued by LCAS (*Appendix 1*), Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) produced a project design (*Appendix 2*). This was adhered to in full throughout the fieldwork.

### 2.2 WATCHING BRIEF

- 2.2.1 A programme of field observation recorded accurately the location, extent, and character of all surviving archaeological features and deposits within the proposed ground disturbance. The work comprised observations during the excavation for the works, and included both building foundations (Trench 1) and service trenches (Trench 2). A systematic examination of any subsoil horizons exposed during the course of the groundworks took place, and all archaeological features and horizons were fully recorded.

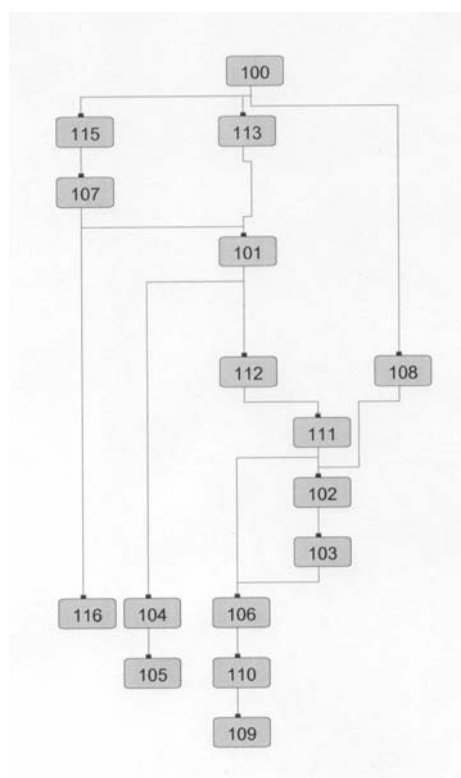
### 2.3 ARCHIVE

- 2.3.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with current UKIC (1990) and English Heritage guidelines (1991). The paper and digital archive will be deposited in the Lancashire Record Office, Preston, and the material archive will be deposited with the Ribchester Museum.

### 3. FIELDWORK RESULTS

#### 3.1 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

- 3.1.1 **Introduction:** two trenches were excavated during the groundworks (Fig 2). Trench 1 consisted of the foundation trench for the purpose of the extension to the rear of the property. Trench 2 comprised the service trenches excavated at the front of the property. Excavation was carried out with a three tonne mini-excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. All machining was under constant archaeological supervision.
- 3.1.2 **Trench 1:** the main foundation trench, to comprise the external back wall of the extension, was aligned north-west/south-east, 2.7m away from and parallel to the existing rear building wall. There were three additional small trenches at the northern, central and southern parts of the main foundation trench, effectively joining it to the building (Fig 2). The main trench measured 15m north/south and was 0.6m wide, except in the central area which measured 2.7m x 1.6m. Much of the north-eastern side of the extension area had been disturbed by the construction of Riverside House, and thus the deposits varied quite dramatically across the trench. The sequence of deposits, as revealed, is shown below. It is possible that some of the relationships may not be clear due to the restricted nature of the area exposed and the manner in which the trench was seen to cut obliquely across the deposits.



*Matrix showing the sequence of deposits in Trench 1*

- 3.1.3 At the top of the sequence was a 0.82m thick deposit of mixed topsoil and make-up material, **100**, of recent date (Fig 3). The deposit extended across the entire area of the trench and was a dark brownish-black, firm sandy-clay, with

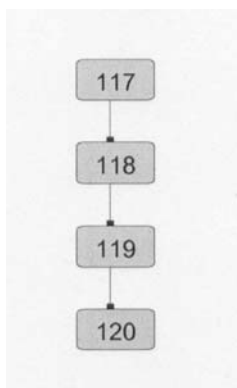
a small proportion of small stones and two isolated sandstone blocks. It overlay a soil layer **108** that contained medieval and Roman material. Within the topsoil, **100**, were two drains, which were grouped as **115**. One drain was plastic and the other ceramic, and appeared not to be contemporary with each other (Fig 3). They had obviously truncated earlier deposits and sat within a linear cut, **107**, that ran along the side of Riverside House. Probably contemporary with these drains was the manhole, and a make-up deposit of sand **113** that was visible in the long north-eastern facing trench section. The drains cut through a lower Roman make-up deposit, **101**, which was a mottled grey and mid brown clay, with a small proportion of small stones throughout.

- 3.1.4 Beneath the Roman (possibly second century AD) make-up deposit **101** was a thin layer, **104**. This was seen on the north-western side of the trench and only revealed in a small area. It was 0.1m thick and consisted of a dark grey clay containing occasional small pebbles. The sediment was similar to a further deposit, **116**, seen on the south-eastern part of the trench, and both were suggested to be possible ground surfaces, either resulting from trampled material or from a turf layer that has been subsequently covered. Deposit **116** was truncated by the cut for the drains, **107**, and general disturbance associated with the house. The two deposits, **104** and **116** were not linked stratigraphically.
- 3.1.5 Layer **101** also overlay a 0.18m thick layer of dark grey clay that was stiff and slightly brittle, **112**. The deposit contained about 10% small to medium rounded cobbles and was only visible along the north-western side of the trench. This layer, in turn, overlay a 0.12m thick, mid brownish-orange, brittle clay, **111**, again only visible on the north-western side (Fig 3). There was no clear indication as to what these deposits may represent or exactly how they formed but it is possible that they were of Roman date, and were perhaps related to a later use of the fort.
- 3.1.6 Below layer **111** was a very thick deposit of pale orangey-brown firm clay **102** that contained a very high proportion of medium to large cobbles (Plate 3). The deposit ran obliquely along the length of the trench, showing that it was over 15m in length, and measured over 1.4m in width and 0.92m in depth. The deposit appeared to be a deliberate construction of clay and cobbles and was probably part of the fort rampart, although insufficient evidence was revealed to determine its purpose or date further. At the north-western end of the trench, it appeared that the deposit may be contained within a cut, **103** (Fig 3). The feature was not fully visible but would presumably also have been linear and aligned north-west/south-east.
- 3.1.7 Stratigraphically below the probable rampart **102**, and possibly cut by **103**, was a pale orange plastic clay, **106**, with no stone inclusions, and very rare charcoal flecks, which distinguished it from the similarly coloured **102**. Deposit **106** was about 0.4m in depth and visible only in the north-eastern-facing trench section (Fig 3). It occurred only in the northern 7.5m stretch of the trench, due to it being crossing obliquely by the groundworks.
- 3.1.8 Beneath this was a 0.4m thick deposit of pale to mid grey plastic clay, **105=110**, which ran along the north-western side of the trench only (Plate 2). It was not clear if this deposit was a continuation of clay **114**, seen on the

south-eastern side, which appeared to contain several very fine lenses of a darker, possibly organic material but only in a confined area (Plate 5). It is hypothesised that these could be the preserved remains of individual turfs, although the fact that they are not evident throughout may contradict such a suggestion, or reflect variable preservation (Fig 3). On the south-eastern side of the trench the lowest visible deposit in the sequence was mid grey plastic clay, **114**, which was over 0.25m thick. The relationship with **102** above was unclear and due to the constraints of the watching brief it could not be determined if deposit **114** was stratigraphically linked to deposit **105=110**.

3.1.9 Underlying this clay layer **105=110** a small stretch of continuous horizontal timbers was exposed, **109** (Plate 4). Six timbers were revealed by the excavations, which were at most 0.1m thick and evidently cut to shape. They had been laid adjacent to each other, with their long axis aligned north-east/south-west. The timbers were revealed in a part of the foundation trench that was relatively soft. Due to this, the visiting buildings inspector had requested that this area, taking in approximately 5m from the northern end, was excavated deeper, which then revealed the timbers. A maximum of 0.5m in length of the timbers was exposed, at the northern end, which decreased southwards, suggesting that they were encountered obliquely by the trench, and they clearly extended westwards beyond the limits of excavation. A small exploration sondage further south determined that the timbers must form a continuous 'raft', aligned north-west/south-east (Plate 6). Four of the timbers were carefully cut through and retained for examination, with all the other timbers re-covered and left *in situ*.

3.1.10 **Trench 2:** was located at the front of Riverside House, in the small courtyard adjacent to the road (Plate 7). The trench measured approximately 3m x 3m and had a maximum depth of 1.1m (Fig 4). The majority of the upper part of the trench had been disturbed by the insertion of drainage pipes but at the very base, along the south-eastern side, a clay deposit was just visible. The uppermost, and therefore latest, deposit in the trench was a dark brownish-grey, silty-clay that contained a small proportion of roots and small to medium-sized stones throughout, **117**. Below this was the backfilled material for the drainage pipes, **118**, which was a very similar deposit but slightly darker in hue and contained no roots. The drainage pipes were a standard glazed orangey-brown ceramic type, which were laid in segments. The drains were within a regular linear cut, **119**, that was aligned north-east/south-west and was 0.6m wide, and at a depth of 1.1m from the present ground surface. The drains truncated an earlier deposit of mid orangey-brown clay, **120**, which was over 0.1m deep and extended below the depth of excavation. It is suggested that this may be the same as a deposit identified in the nearby Ribchester Flood Works trench (LUAU 2000), excavated by the attending archaeologist and might represent a make-up layer or possible surface or bedding layer.



Matrix showing the sequence of deposits in Trench 2

## 3.2 THE FINDS

3.2.1 **Introduction:** in total, 31 artefacts and ecofacts were recovered from the site, comprising ceramics and waterlogged timber. The type and date of finds recovered from different contexts is summarised in Table 1 below. The artefacts are mainly Roman in date, with a single medieval pottery fragment, and only six post-medieval fragments.

	Topsoil <b>100</b>	Make-up Layer <b>101</b>	Later rampart/ wall foundation <b>102</b>	Clay layer - earlier rampart <b>105</b>	Soil layer <b>108</b>	Timbers - corduroy <b>109</b>
Pottery (Roman)	0	5	4	0	1	0
Pottery (Medieval)	0	0	0	0	1	0
Pottery (Post- medieval)	6	0	0	0	0	0
Ceramic building material (Roman)	0	0	1	0	1	0
Daub (Roman?)	0	0	0	0	6	0
Timber (Roman?)	0	0	0	1	0	5

Table 1: Type of finds from different contexts

3.2.2 **Roman pottery:** ten fragments of pottery deriving from seven vessels were collected during the investigation. Many of the fragments were abraded showing evidence of concreted and worn surfaces, suggesting a degree of movement and contamination since their deposition. These comprised fragments of Samian, amphora, white ware and locally produced oxidised and fully reduced grey wares.

- 3.2.3 The Samian fragments represented a plain Central Gaul bowl (Form 18/31, Webster 1996) dated between AD 100-120, recovered from the base of the rampart, **102**, and a worn decorated Central Gaul produced bowl from make-up layer **101**. Other material collected from **102** included three large jar or flagon sherds of granular white ware with traces of applied white stripes across the body. The source of the pottery was unprovenanced, although its smooth surface and texture bears similarity to the type of white ware produced in the Mancetter-Hartshill area during the second half of the second century AD (Peacock and Williams 1986).
- 3.2.4 Other material from subsoil **101**, included pinkish-buff micaceous amphora that probably derived from Cadiz in Spain (Class 17; *ibid*). The amphora was of a type that was commonly used to transport fish sauce up to the early second century AD. In addition, two reddish-orange oxidised wares with worn white slip were recovered that resembled Wilderspool and Walton-le-Dale type products of the second century AD, and a light bluish-grey ware was also recovered that was possibly locally produced and comparable in date with the oxidised wares. The other grey ware identified was collected from soil layer **108** and was almost identical to that recovered from **101**, and again was of probable local source.
- 3.2.5 **Roman ceramic building material and daub:** two broken ceramic tiles were recovered from the investigation. A single piece of smoothed *tegula* roof tile from **102** had incised grooves across a slightly curved upper surface for the intention of ‘keying’ into a structure. The other tile fragment recovered from **108** was too small for precise identification, although it probably derived from a *tegula*. In addition to the tile from **108**, six small pieces of fired clay were recovered. Most appeared to be amorphous fragments of accidentally fired daub, although only one piece showed evidence of wattle marks. None of the other fragments retained architectural detail or organic elements. The presence of the fired clay and tile indicates the likelihood of a building in close proximity.
- 3.2.6 **Roman timber:** a small group of wood samples from the site was assessed for further analytical potential. The wood, extremely well preserved, was recovered from the base of a deep layer of anaerobic clay, **105=110**. A fragment of Samian vessel from the clay has been provisionally assigned an early-mid second century date AD (form Dr 18/31), which would coincide with the proposed Hadrianic demolition of the turf and timber fortifications. An obvious conclusion is that the wood forms part of a corduroy base for the fort rampart.
- 3.2.7 The timbers examined were subdivided radial splits from very large trees, with all four surfaces apparently tool-dressed, although this remains to be confirmed by closer examination once the timbers have been thoroughly cleaned. Until such time, it is not possible to assess the quality of surface preservation and thus the potential for analysis of toolmarks. It must, however, be stressed that any such analysis would be limited by the small size of the samples retained. It is recommended that the timbers be cleaned in order to confirm or otherwise the survival of toolmarks and that they be repacked in airtight conditions to ensure their continued survival.

- 3.2.8 Examination of the samples indicated that they are not suitable for any dendrochronological analysis. All those examined were provisionally identified as oak, and had a number of clearly visible rings. However, as they lack both heartwood and sapwood there is no potential for a felling date, and as they clearly derive from very large, slow-growing trees, even cross-matching with extant tree ring curves could give a spuriously early date. Radiocarbon dating is a possibility, and would be amongst the first radiocarbon dates for wood from the Ribchester fort. It is, however, likely that as the samples examined come from relatively close to the heart of the tree there is again potential for a too-early date to be produced, although this could be to some extent resolved by dating all five available timbers.
- 3.2.9 The dating of the timbers may be important, as in comparison to the timbers seen from earlier excavations in 1989-90 (Plate 8), the current timbers, **109**, are of better quality and are dressed, which indicates they have been reused. Corduroy normally consists of poor quality or unworked wood as it was inefficient to use the best timber reserved for buildings. The timber, in this case, found in the corduroy foundation of the Agricolan rampart must have come from elsewhere. The fact that it appears to be reused and there is known to be a pre-Agricolan fort suggests this was its possible origin. However, the lengths of timber revealed during the watching brief was insufficient to make any further assessment, such as revealing any mortice holes etc. Indeed, the well-dressed nature of the timbers, and their level position might alternatively, point to the wood examined being part of a building rather than the rampart corduroy, and again, dating would be of interest.
- 3.2.10 **Medieval pottery:** a single fragment of Northern gritty ware from an unglazed hollow-ware vessel dated to the thirteenth century was recovered from soil layer **108**. This layer also contained a single fragment of Roman grey ware pottery and a single fragment of probable Roman building material. Stratigraphically, **108** was earlier than subsoil **101**, and later than rampart/wall foundation **102**, both of which only produced Roman artefacts.
- 3.2.11 **Post-medieval pottery:** six fragments of post-medieval pottery from five individual vessels were recovered from topsoil **100**. They date from the late seventeenth to twentieth century, but this large date range is mainly as a result of the presence of coarsewares, which are not very diagnostic and cannot be closely dated at present. The relative lack of tableware means that only a nineteenth century date can be confirmed. The vessels comprise a 'Willow' transfer-printed soup plate, a black-glazed brown earthenware tea pot, a black-glazed orange earthenware crock, a brown-glazed red earthenware dish, and a brown-glazed buff-coloured stoneware hollow-ware vessel.
- 3.2.12 **Conclusion:** although the finds assemblage is small, it provided significant dating evidence for the conversion of the fort from the late first century AD of timber and turf to stone revetted rampart in the early second century AD. The pottery bore similar comparison to the material produced across the rampart horizons during the large excavations in the 1980s, and attests to this period of redevelopment (Buxton and Howard Davis 2000). Furthermore, the presence of medieval and post-medieval ceramics reflects the continued activity of the site until the present day.

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## 4. DISCUSSION

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### 4.1 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The watching brief, carried out during the excavation for the foundations of a building extension at Riverside House, 1 Church Street, Ribchester, revealed significant archaeological features. Considering the large amounts of archaeological features identified at nearby sites, such as numbers 2, 20 and 50 Church Street (OA North 2004), the well-preserved survival of archaeological remains beneath made-ground deposits was to be expected.
- 4.1.2 The findings at Riverside House are consistent with those of the larger excavations carried out in 1989-90 (Plate 8). The timbers, **109**, uncovered at the base of Trench 1, were shown to extend over 15m in a north-west/south-east alignment. They were laid adjacent to each other and formed a continuous 'raft', and were reminiscent of corduroy timbers (Buxton and Howard-Davis 2000) with some evidence of the overlying turfs **114**. These are thought to be part of the foundation of the rampart of the early turf-and-timber fort, dated to the late first to early second century AD, and were used to provide a firm footing across the soft wet ground. Indeed, it was such prevailing conditions that preserved the timbers in such good condition within the clay **110**.
- 4.1.3 The ramparts were originally *c* 7m wide at the base and over 1.15m high (*op cit*, 27). Instances of full rampart preservation show that the ramparts could be about 3.6m high (*op cit*, 27). The outer face would have been vertical and the inner face at an angle of 45° and built of turf sods and clay. The 1989 and 1990 works demonstrated that there were several layers and at least two phases of corduroy. The earliest corduroy had two rows, an outer and an inner row, with the inner one slightly overlapping the outer. The outer row was generally 0.7m –1.4m in length and had sawn edges. The inner row were 1.3m-3m in length and all the timbers were from large oak trees (Buxton and Howard-Davis 2000, 43). Dendrochronology provided dates between 197 BC and AD 53, and although they could not be more accurately sequenced, it does corroborate with a pre-Agricolan foundation date. A third row of timbers belonged to a slightly later phase of construction associated with the renewal of the fort and rampart. At this time the fort is known to have been enlarged to the north. The third row of corduroy timbers was laid abutting the outer row with sawn edges either end, and most were over 0.8m in length. There were no apparent differences in the quality of the timbers or the date range between the two phases of corduroy and rampart enlargement. Timber structures would have required maintenance and replacement and although it is not known exactly how long they would last, suggestions have been made for about 25-30 years (Shotter 1993, 38; Hanson 1978, 296)
- 4.1.4 It would seem, therefore, that the timbers revealed relate either to the earliest phase of the corduroy or to the second phase. It is not clear which since only a small area was examined, and it could not be determined whether the eastern rampart was renewed and enlarged. The timbers appeared to be of an appreciably higher quality than those seen elsewhere in the perimeter of the early fort (Buxton and Howard-Davis 2000). Wood from elsewhere in the



circuit (1989-90 excavations, *ibid*) was, on the whole, from considerably smaller trees, and of considerably poorer quality, often undressed. This raises the possibility that the timbers were re-used from earlier buildings, although the short samples available did not bear evidence of redundant joints or other carpentry which might confirm their origin. The use of oak, and of large trees in particular, has been interpreted to mean that wood resources at the time of construction were probably plentiful and close by (*op cit*, 28).

- 4.1.5 The early rampart of the fort was mostly constructed of clay, and excavations in 1980 and 1989-90 showed that it was subsequently demolished and cut into by the outer defensive ditch of the stone fort (*op cit*, 29), referred to as the Punic ditch. However, demolition of the early rampart may not have occurred throughout the whole of the fort perimeter, as it would appear that at some locations the rampart may have been re-fronted (Edwards and Webster 1985). This later phase of demolition, and construction of the stone fort, may reflect the need to renew the turf and timber structures, or perhaps there was an underlying defensive reason. Unfortunately, the excavations of 1989-90 only examined the Punic ditch and did not provide any information regarding the construction of the stone walls themselves. Therefore, a later clay and cobble linear feature, **102**, running outside and parallel to the timber corduroy is suggested as a foundation for the stone fort, although it is not precisely clear. Nevertheless, it is compatible with similar features seen at forts elsewhere, including Carlisle (OA North 2002). The foundation may represent a main defensive wall, or perhaps the re-facing of the rampart with a stone wall, which was general practice during the Trajanic period (AD 98-117), up to the instigation of stone built forts during the Hadrianic period (AD 117-138). Examples of forts with stone re-faced clay ramparts include that at Lancaster, dated to after AD 100 (Jones and Shotter 1988), Kirkham (Jones 1975, 159), and Manchester (Shotter 1993).

## 4.2 IMPACT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.2.1 The groundworks carried out for the purpose of the foundation trenches showed the area closest to the house to have been disturbed by the construction of the property. However, within the garden area there are extensive and significant archaeological deposits which, although the investigation was limited, appear to relate to the construction of the ramparts for both the early turf-and-timber phase and probably the later stone construction phase. Although the deposits were at depth and are unlikely to be disturbed by general garden activity, any further substantial groundworks will require a mitigative archaeological investigation, preferably in the form of a detailed archaeological excavation as opposed to a watching brief.
- 4.2.2 It is also recommended that the timbers recovered during the fieldwork are subject to further analysis. At the very minimum they require specialist cleaning and analysis of the surface for toolmarks is also advised.

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## 6. ILLUSTRATIONS

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### 7.1 LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Location map

Figure 2: Plan of the trenches

Figure 3: Plan and section of Trench 1

Figure 4: Plan of Trench 2

### 7.2 LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1: General view of Trench 1, looking north-west

Plate 2: Trench 1, section showing the timbers **109** and overlying deposits, looking south-west

Plate 3: Trench 1 clay and cobble deposit **102**, looking south-east

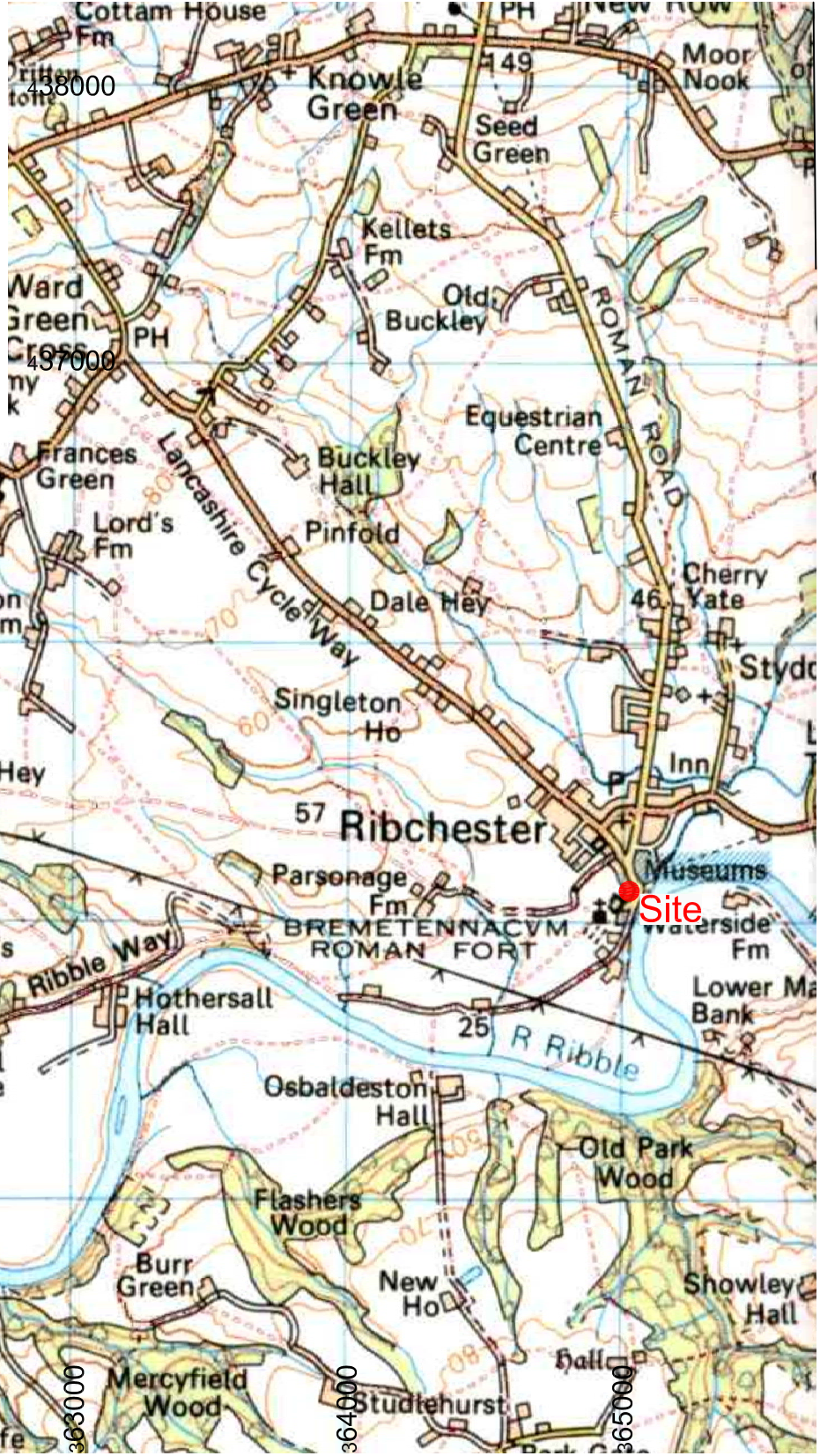
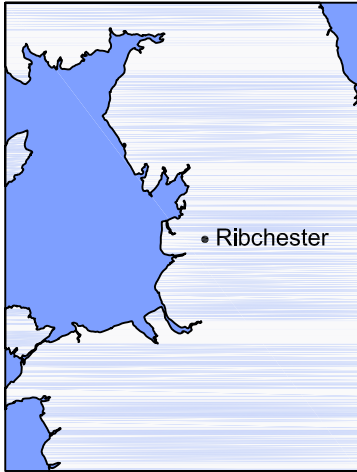
Plate 4: Trench 1 close up view of the timbers **109** at the base of the section, looking south-west

Plate 5: Trench 1 close up view of the possible organic lenses within the clay **110**, looking south-west

Plate 6: Trench 1 close up view of the southern sondage, and revealed timbers, looking south-west

Plate 7: Trench 2 general view, looking south

Plate 8: Fort ditch and corduroy, (from Buxton et al 2000)



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Figure 1: Location Map

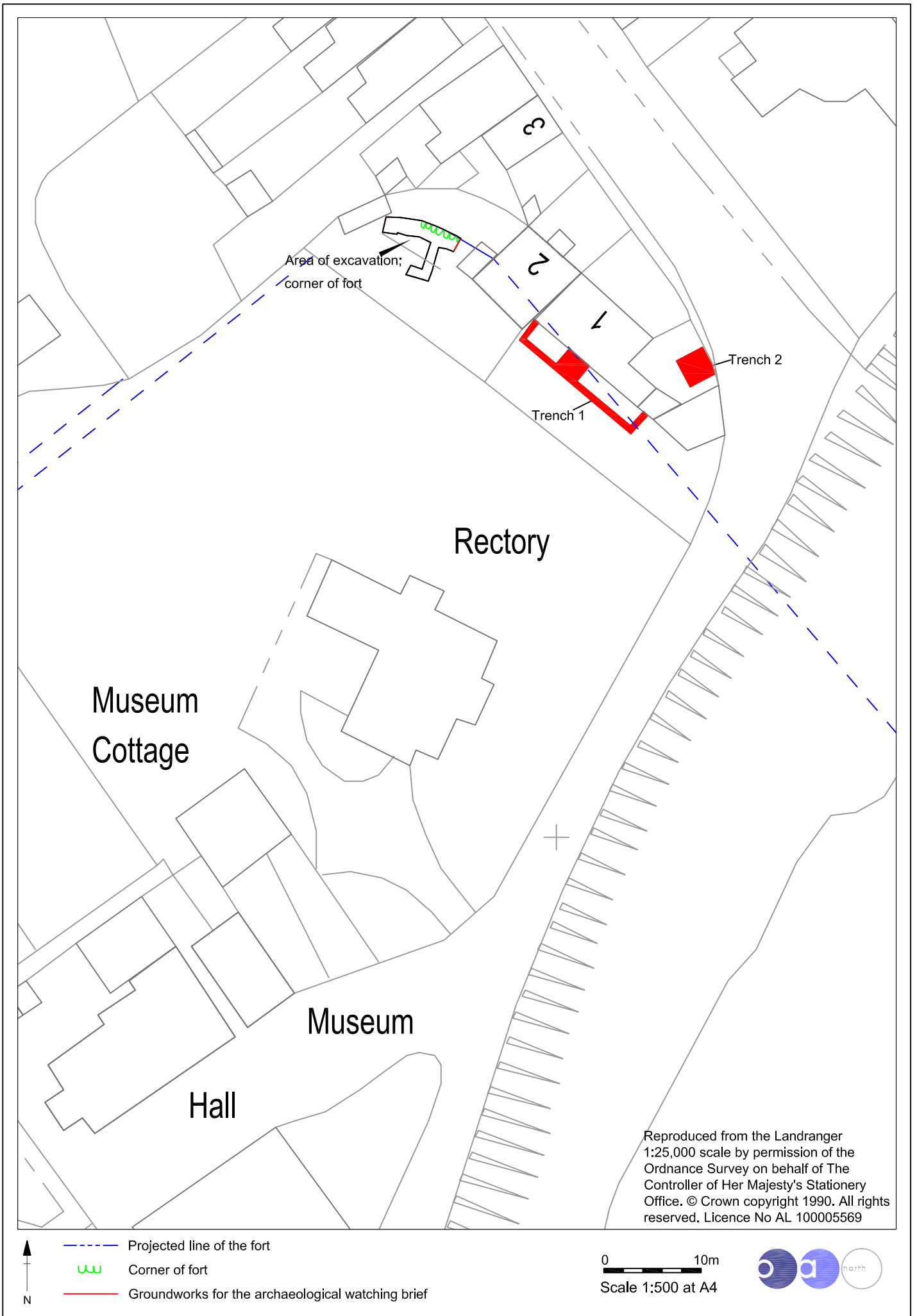


Figure 2: Plan of the Trenches

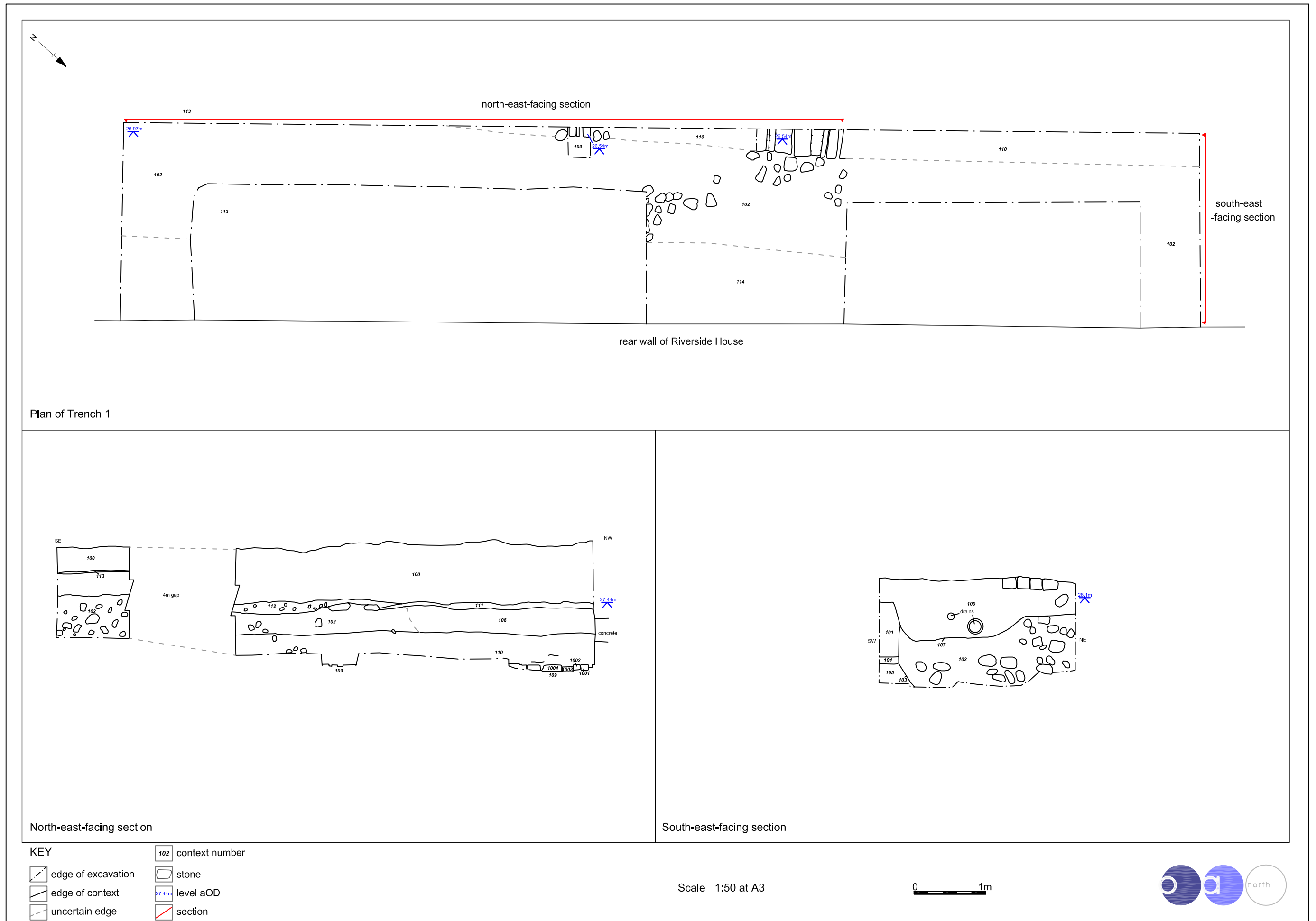
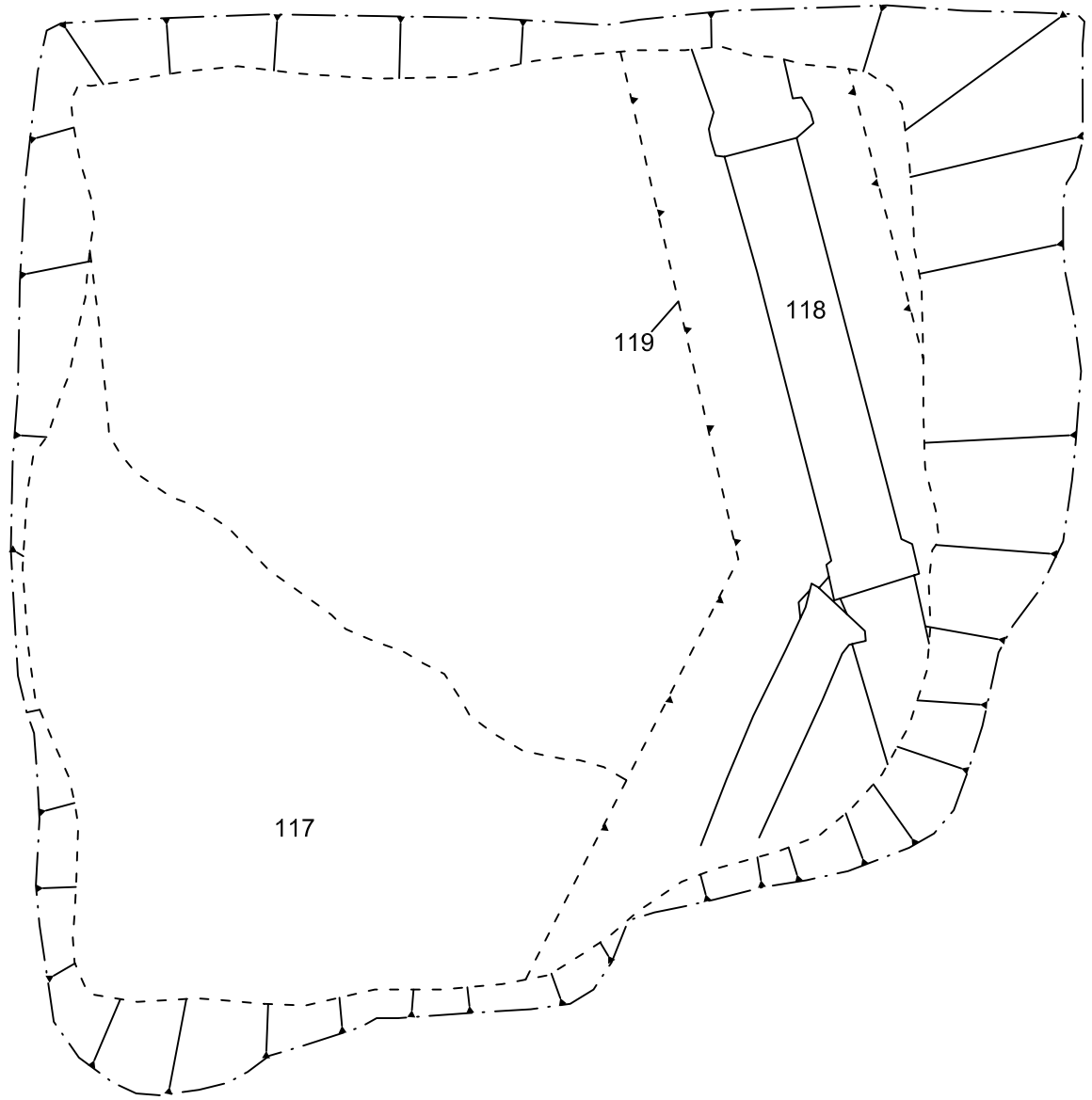


Figure 3: Plan and Sections of Trench 1



0 0.5m  
Scale 1:20 at A4



Figure 4: Plan of Trench 2





Plate 1: General view of Trench 1, looking north-west



Plate 2: Trench 1, section showing the timbers **109** and overlying deposits, looking south-west



Plate 3: Trench 1 clay and cobble deposit *102*, looking south-east



Plate 4: Trench 1 close up view of the timbers *109* at the base of the section, looking south-west



Plate 5: Trench 1 close up view of the possible organic lenses within the clay *110*, looking south-west



Plate 6: Trench 1 close up view of the southern sondage, and revealed timbers, looking south-west



Plate 7: Trench 2 general view, looking south



Plate 8: Fort ditch and corduroy (from Buxton *et al* 2000)

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## APPENDIX 1: PROJECT DESIGN

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### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Christopher Ratcliff (hereafter the client) has requested Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) submit proposals to undertake an archaeological investigation at the domestic dwelling of 1 Church Street, Ribchester, Lancashire (SD 6500 3510), during the construction of a rear two storey extension (Planning Application No 3/2005/0063). Lancashire County Archaeology Service (LCAS) have requested that an archaeological watching brief of the groundworks on the site be undertaken due to the high archaeological potential of the area.

#### 1.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

1.2.1 The Ribchester area has been settled since prehistoric times and is the site of *Bremetennacum*, the 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 Monument (SM55); hence much of the town, including the site in question, lies within the SM setting. Both the fort and the settlement, which have been well known from the sixteenth century onwards, lie largely beneath St Wilfrid's Church and glebe lands, with extra mural settlement proven as far as 500m to the north of the fort.

1.2.2 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. 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 Evidence from 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.

1.2.4 The bathhouse belonging to the stone fort was discovered by labourers in 1837, which 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 bathhouse and a proceeding structure on the same site.

1.2.5 The base of the north-eastern angle tower of the stone fort was uncovered in the garden of 2 Church Street by Mr J Ridge and the Time Team (Channel 4 1994), immediately to the north of the site at 1 Church Street. As a result, the projected line of the ramparts for the fort lies directly beneath the dwelling of 1 Church Street. Therefore, there is a strong possibility that the proposed groundworks will impact on archaeological remains associated with the rampart.

#### 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 (and under its former guise as LUAU) has undertaken numerous excavations and watching briefs in Ribchester.

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 identify any surviving archaeological deposits and provide for accurate recording of any archaeological remains that are disturbed by ground works for the proposed development.

- 2.2 **Watching brief:** to carry out a watching brief during associated ground disturbance, to determine the quality, extent and importance of any archaeological remains on the site.
- 2.3 **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, 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 The watching brief will cover the whole of the area to be disturbed by the development including building foundations, service trenches and other earthmoving activities.
- 3.1.3 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).
- 3.1.4 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.
- 3.1.5 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.
- 3.1.6 **Contingency plan:** in the event of significant archaeological features being encountered during the watching brief, discussions will take place with the Planning Archaeologist or his representative, 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 Planning Archaeologist.
- 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). This archive will be provided in the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology format and a synthesis will be submitted to the HER (the index to the archive and a copy of the report). OA North practice is to deposit the original record archive of projects (paper, magnetic and plastic media) with the County Record Office, and a full copy of the record archive (microform or microfiche) together with the material archive (artefacts, ecofacts, and samples) with an appropriate museum.
- 3.2.2 **Report:** one bound and one unbound copy of a written synthetic report will be submitted to the client, and a further bound copy and digital copy supplied as pdf files will be submitted to the Lancashire HER within eight weeks of completion of fieldwork. Any finds recovered will be assessed with reference to other local material and any particular or unusual features of the assemblage will be highlighted. The report will also include a complete bibliography of sources from which data has been derived.
- 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 HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 4.1 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. It is assumed that any information regarding health and safety issues on site will be made available by the client to OA North prior to the work commencing on site.

#### 5 PROJECT MONITORING

- 5.1 Monitoring of this project will be undertaken through the auspices of the Lancashire County Council Archaeologist, who will be informed of the start and end dates of the work.

#### 6 WORK TIMETABLE

- 6.1 The duration of the archaeological presence for the watching brief is as yet unknown, being dictated by the schedule of works.
- 6.2 The client report will be completed within approximately eight weeks following completion of the fieldwork.

#### 7 STAFFING

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 The watching brief and any subsequent excavation will be supervised in the field by an OA North project supervisor.
- 7.3 Assessment of the finds from the evaluation will be undertaken under the auspices of OA North's in-house finds specialist **Chris Howard-Davis** (OA North project officer). Chris acts as OA North's in-house finds specialist and has extensive knowledge of all finds of all periods from archaeological sites in northern England, together with published works on the excavations at Ribchester.

#### 8. INSURANCE

- 8.1 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 LIST

<b>Context</b>	<b>Trench</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>100</b>	1	Topsoil - modern
<b>101</b>	1	Subsoil - modern
<b>102</b>	1	Later rampart / wall foundation
<b>103</b>	1	Cut for later rampart, <b>102</b>
<b>104</b>	1	Buried soil ?
<b>105</b>	1	Clay layer – earlier rampart
<b>106</b>	1	Clay layer - Roman
<b>107</b>	1	Cut for drains - modern
<b>108</b>	1	Layer of soil
<b>109</b>	1	Timbers – corduroy
<b>110</b>	1	Clay grey - earlier rampart
<b>111</b>	1	Clay brownish-orange - Roman
<b>112</b>	1	Clay grey - Roman
<b>113</b>	1	Sand layer - modern
<b>114</b>	1	Clay grey -Roman
<b>115</b>	1	Drains and backfill - modern
<b>116</b>	1	Buried soil ?
<b>117</b>	2	Topsoil and make-up – modern
<b>118</b>	2	Drains and backfill - modern
<b>119</b>	2	Drains and backfill - modern
<b>120</b>	2	Clay layer – date uncertain

## APPENDIX 3: FINDS SUMMARY

<b>Ctxt</b>	<b>Object record</b>	<b>Qty</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date range</b>
<b>100</b>	1000	2	Ceramic	Refitting white earthenware soup plate rim fragments with 'Willow' transfer-printed pattern	Nineteenth century
<b>100</b>	1000	1	Ceramic	Brown-glazed buff-coloured stoneware hollow-ware base fragment	Eighteenth - twentieth century
<b>100</b>	1000	1	Ceramic	Mottled brown-glazed light red earthenware dish fragment, glazed on upper surface only, iron wash showing on unglazed lower surface	Late seventeenth - early twentieth century
<b>100</b>	1000	1	Ceramic	Fine black-glazed brown earthenware tea pot (?) fragment with ridge for lid to rest on	Late eighteenth - twentieth century
<b>100</b>	1000	1	Ceramic	Black-glazed orange earthenware crock (?) base fragment, with iron wash beneath glaze and showing on unglazed areas	Late seventeenth - nineteenth century
<b>101</b>	1010	1	Ceramic	Samian; worn decorated bowl probably produced in Central Gaul	Second century
<b>101</b>	1010	1	Ceramic	Greyware; locally produced	Second century
<b>101</b>	1010	2	Ceramic	Oxidised wares, probably of local source	Second century
<b>101</b>	1010	1	Ceramic	Amphora; Cadiz fish sauce carrying vessel	Late first to early second century AD
<b>102</b>	1011	1	Ceramic	Samian; Central Gaul bowl (Form 18/31)	AD100 -120
<b>102</b>	1012	3	Ceramic	White ware; probably deriving from a flagon or large jar	Second century?
<b>102</b>	1013	1	Ceramic	Roof tile	Roman
<b>105</b>	1009	1	Wood	Waterlogged oak fragment	Roman?
<b>108</b>	1005	1	Ceramic	Grey ware; locally produced	Second century
<b>108</b>	1006	6	Ceramic	Daub	Roman?
<b>108</b>	1007	1	Ceramic	Roof tile fragment	Roman
<b>108</b>	1008	1	Ceramic	Northern gritty ware	Thirteenth century
<b>109</b>	1001	1	Wood	Waterlogged oak (?) rampart	Roman?

				fragment	
<b>109</b>	1002	1	Wood	Waterlogged oak (?) rampart fragment	Roman?
<b>109</b>	1003	1	Wood	Waterlogged oak (?) rampart fragment	Roman?
<b>109</b>	1004	2	Wood	Waterlogged oak (?) rampart fragment	Roman?