

Roman Site Letocetum Wall Staffordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Issue	Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by	Signature
1	Matthew Morgan Acting Supervisor	Katrina Anker Project manager	Edward Biddulph Senior Project Manager	

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Janus House

Osney Mead

Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263800

e: oasouth@thehumanjourney.net

f: +44 (0) 1865 793496

w: oasouth.thehumanjourney.net

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Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by Matthew Morgan

illustrated by Markus Dylewski

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Summary

On 28th August 2012 Oxford Archaeology conducted an archaeological watching brief during the cleaning out of a sewerage ditch, the removal of a low soil bund and the excavation of a pipe trench on farmland at Manor Farm, Wall, Staffordshire. No archaeological features or deposits were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 An existing sewerage ditch, aligned roughly north-south, c. 50 m long by 1.2 – 1.4 m wide and c. 0.9 m deep was cleaned out to a depth of 1.4 m below current ground level.
- 1.1.2 In line with and to the south of the existing sewerage ditch a low earth bank c. 40 m long by 1.2 – 1.4 m wide and 0.3 - 0.4 m high was removed to the level of the surrounding field.
- 1.1.3 A pipe trench was excavated from the south end of the sewerage ditch to the south field boundary, adjacent to the A5. The pipe trench was c. 110 m long by 0.6 m wide by 1.4 m below current ground level.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located approximately 80m to the south of the historically significant settlement of Wall near Lichfield, Staffordshire, and lies immediately south of the line of the Roman Road of Watling Street.
- 1.2.2 The works lay within an open area of agricultural land situated to the south-west of Manor Farm itself, at an approximate level of 112m OD (Figures 1 and 2). The area is bounded to the north, west and east by local roads and to the south by the A5.
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is Keuper sandstone overlying Bunter soft sandstone with pebble beds (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet number 154).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been described in a Staffordshire County Council brief for previous works on the Manor Farm site (Staffordshire County Council 2010) and is reproduced here.
- 1.3.2 The site lies to the south of the historically significant settlement of Wall. Known as *Letocetum* during the Romano-British period, Wall was a significant settlement containing a postal station, bath house and other municipal buildings. There was also a series of small forts at Wall in the area of the current parish church while at the convergence of several roads extensive cemeteries have been excavated in the recent past. To the south and south-east lie a series of crop-mark enclosures thought to represent the site of a Romano-British farmstead and other possible prehistoric enclosures.
- 1.3.3 The recent discovery of the Staffordshire hoard approximately 3km to the west of the current scheme has highlighted the potential for Anglo-Saxon activity in the area. It is currently not known what the hoard may represent and so its connection with contemporary activity in the wider landscape around Hammerwich and Wall is uncertain. To date excavations within the heart of the modern settlement of Wall have



recovered extensive evidence of Roman activity but little evidence for a Saxon presence. It may be that settlement in the area avoided the Roman sites or that it has not been identified or is too ephemeral in nature. However, there remains the potential for evidence of Anglo-Saxon activity to be present within the area of the scheme (Staffordshire County Council, 2010. 3).

- 1.3.4 In 2011 OA conducted an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a new composting facility at Manor Farm approximately 400m north-east of the proposed works. This observed evidence for 18th and 19th century agricultural practises, but no evidence for any earlier activity was recorded (OA 2011).

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The general aims of the watching brief were to:

- establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area;
- record the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains affected by the proposed works;
- establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features within the site and to take samples where appropriate; and
- make available the results of the investigation.

- 2.1.2 Site specific aims were to:

- identify and record Roman archaeology connected with the settlement of Letocetum; and
- establish the potential for Anglo-Saxon activity within the area.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The OA archaeologist worked in conjunction with the ground works contractor to monitor the ground works. A 360 mini digger, equipped with a toothless ditching bucket, was used for all excavations. If any items of archaeological interest had been uncovered during the project then the contractor would have immediately ceased work to allow the archaeologist to excavate deposits and record the information. The contractor would not have re-commenced works until the archaeological contractor had confirmed that this was acceptable.

- 2.2.2 A written record of the progress of the watching brief was maintained and supported by the production of a plan (at appropriate scales). As the site lacked archaeological features and deposits it was considered sufficient to maintain a digital photographic record only.

- 2.2.3 The project was conducted in accordance with the by-laws of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) and IfA standards and guidance (2008).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 No archaeological features or deposits were present in the excavated areas.



- 3.1.2 A modern ploughsoil 1000 was seen overlying a sub-soil 1001 which in-turn overlay the natural geology 1002.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Modern CBM and glass were noted in context 1000 but not retained.

3.3 Environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits of environmental potential were uncovered.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 No archaeological features or deposits were found during the watching brief. This may be because of the restricted area of excavation and the possibility that some archaeology may have been removed by ploughing.



APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Length	Comments	Finds	Date
1001	Layer	0.3-0.5m	c. 1.2m+	350m+	Modern ploughsoil. Moderately firm, mid-brown silty loam.	Modern CBM and glass (none retained)	C20th
1002	Layer	0.3-0.5m	c. 1.2m+	350m+	Sub-soil. Soft brown/orange silty sand.	-	-
1003	Layer		c. 1.2m+	350m+	Natural. Soft orange/brown sand.	-	-



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- IFA, 2008. *Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*
- OA, 2011 *New Compost Site, Manor Farm, Wall, Lichfield, Staffordshire; Archaeological Watching Brief Report*
- OA, 2012 *Roman Site, Letocetum, Wall, Staffordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation*
- Staffordshire County Council, 2010. *Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief: Manor Farm, Wall, Lichfield*



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Roman Site, Letocetum, Wall, Staffordshire
Site code:	WALLET12
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR SKS 101 065
Type of watching brief:	Watching brief during cleaning out of a sewerage ditch, removal of low earth bank and excavation of pipe trench.
Date and duration of project:	28/08/12. 1 day.
Area of site:	c. 420 m ²
Summary of results:	No archaeological features or deposits were present in the areas of excavation.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at Janus House and will be deposited with the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent



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Figure 1: Site location

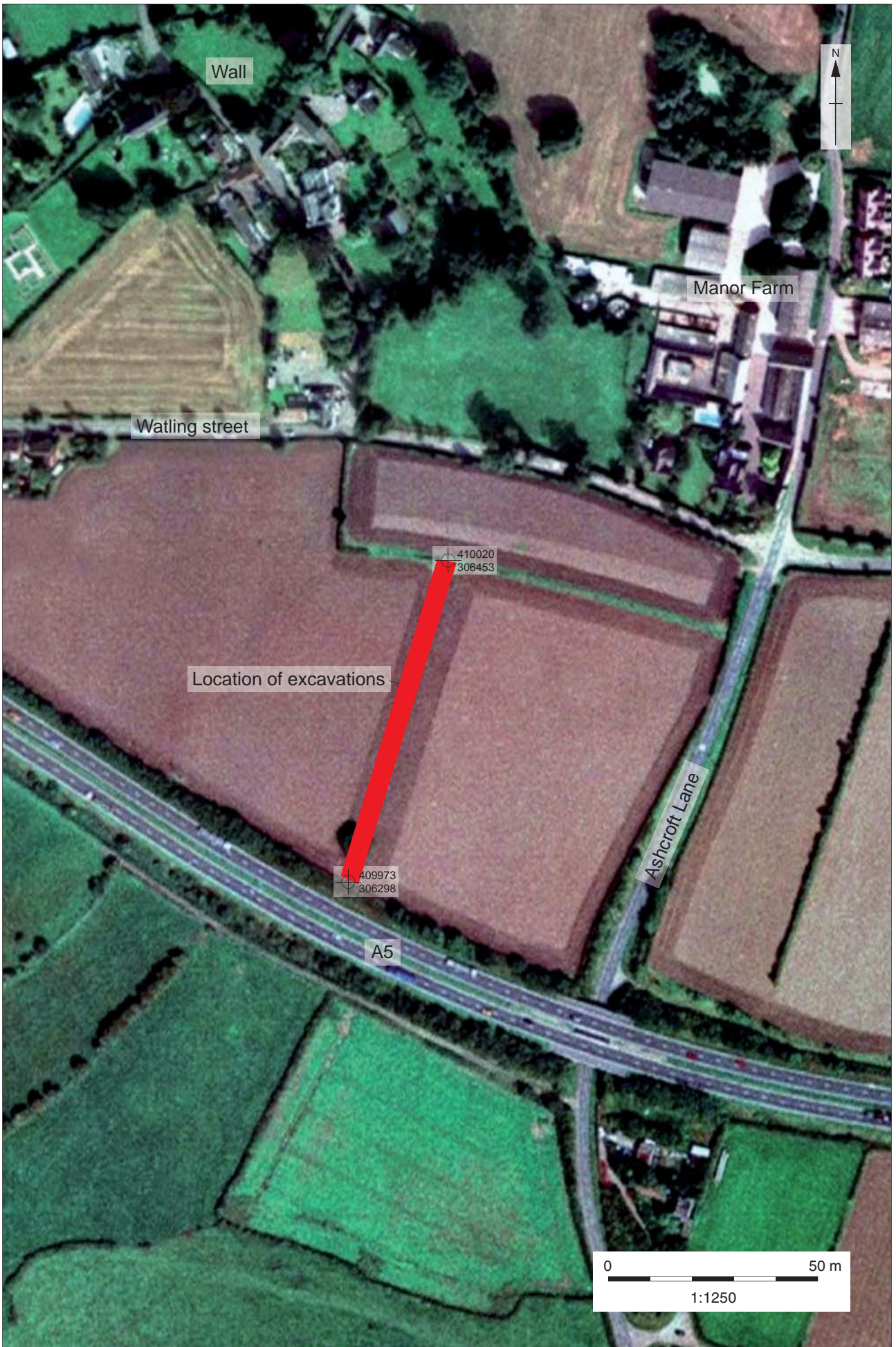


Figure 2: Site plan



**Head Office/Registered Office/
OA South**

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1GF

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: [oanorth@thehumanjourney.net](mailto: oanorth@thehumanjourney.net)
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500
f: +44 (0) 1223 850599
e: [oaeast@thehumanjourney.net](mailto: oaeast@thehumanjourney.net)
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>



Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

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