

LOWGILL WASTEWATER TREATMENT WORKS, LOWGILL, LANCASHIRE



Archaeological Watching Brief



Oxford Archaeology North

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SUMMARY

Following a proposal to create a new Waste Water Treatment Works (WwTW) and water pipeline between Lowgill sinks and the River Hindburn, Lowgill, Lancashire (SD 65270 64850 to SD 64810 65050) a programme of archaeological work was undertaken on behalf of United Utilities. The work comprised a watching brief during the topsoil strip in advance of the excavation of the pipe trench and the laying of the proposed pipeline. The work was undertaken in July, August and September 2006 and followed a brief from Lancashire County Council Archaeological Services (LCCAS). The watching brief was carried out in order to ascertain the presence or absence of any archaeological remains, particularly those relating to the Ribchester to Tebay Roman road thought to run below the present Lowgill Lane.

In total, five fields were inspected and finds dating to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were recovered from unstratified deposits. However, no features or horizons of archaeological significance were encountered during the works and no remnant of the Roman road was observed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North would like to thank to United Utilities for commissioning the project and Lancashire County Archaeology Service for issuing the project brief. Thanks are also extended to Richard Greenep, Colin Sutton and their colleagues at Volker Stevin for their assistance on site.

The watching brief was undertaken by David Tonks, who also wrote the report. The drawings were produced by Mark Tidmarsh. The finds were examined by Sean McPhillips. The project was managed by Alison Plummer, who also edited the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Following a proposal by United Utilities to create a new water pipeline at Lowgill, Lancashire (centred on SD 65178 64813), Lancashire County Archaeological Service (LCAS) requested that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken during the topsoil strip in advance of the excavation of the pipe trench. The proposed pipeline runs through an area of archaeological potential and this report sets out the results of the watching brief in the form of a short document.

1.2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 1.2.1 The pipeline is located in pasture to the west of Lowgill (centred on SD 65178 64813). The route inclines moderately down from Lowgill Lane to the river Hindburn in the base of a small valley. The general landscape of the area largely comprises similar undulating pasture, with several variations caused by the numerous river valleys (Countryside Commission 1998). The fields tend to be small and well maintained with a relatively large amount of woodland and parkland (*ibid*).
- 1.2.2 The majority of the underlying geology comprises Carboniferous rocks, in particular of the lower Millstone Grit groups (Brandon *et al* 1998). The gritstones of the Quernmore fault in particular, which runs north/south to the east of Lancaster, passes through Caton (*ibid*). The overlying soil, comprising Cambic stagnoley soils of the Brickfield 3 association (Soil Survey 1983), is almost entirely glacially derived and part of a Drumlin field with scattered bedrock outcrops (Brandon *et al* 1998). To a lesser extent it is also produced by fluvial deposits collected in the Lune valley, which are derived from various rock types (*ibid*).

1.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 1.3.1 **Prehistoric:** there is currently no evidence for human activity within the immediate environs of Lowgill prior to the Roman period. The closest known evidence comes from a scatter of flint tools (Penney 1978) found in Halton Park which have been roughly dated to the Mesolithic (OA North 2004). Further Mesolithic sites are known in Lancashire but these tend to concentrate on the Pennines, such as at Anglezarke (Cowell 1996, 23), or along the coast (Middleton *et al* 1995) at places where erosion has exposed the artefacts. Evidence for Neolithic activity is also recorded from across Lancashire as a whole, but not currently from Lowgill. Neolithic sites turn up particularly in the form of flint artefact scatters and axe finds (Middleton 1996), with axes being particularly common in north Lancashire (*op cit*, 44).
- 1.3.2 Activity during the Bronze Age in Lancashire is also largely represented by artefact finds, with axe hammers occurring quite frequently in north Lancashire (Middleton 1996, 43). However, actual settlement evidence in north Lancashire during the Bronze Age is extremely scarce and is apparently represented only by flint scatters (*op cit*, 54). Although there have been several burials excavated within Lancashire as a whole (*op cit*, 49-53) these can only give

limited information about the extent of Bronze Age activity. One site in particular, Manor Farm near Borwick, revealed a complex funerary monument reused several times throughout the Bronze Age, which incorporated several metal items (Olivier 1988). There is a paucity of excavated Iron Age sites within Lancashire as a whole (Hazelgrove 1996, 61). There are, however, potential settlement sites known within the wider area and these tend to take the form of irregular enclosures, including several examples from the Lune valley (*op cit*, 65), including one at Claughton and one at Quernmore (English Heritage 1996).

- 1.3.3 **Roman:** the Roman period was, perhaps, the first to leave identifiable monuments in the Lowgill area. Although there are no known Roman settlement sites within close proximity to Lowgill, a presumed section of the Roman road between Ribchester and Tebay is thought to exist beneath Lowgill Lane which borders the proposed development to the east (OA North 2004). It is understood from contemporaneous records that a local farmer drained a local field near the road and exposed a good proportion of it.
- 1.3.4 **Early Medieval:** evidence for activity during the early medieval period is not widespread or extensive in Lancashire as whole, and none currently exists within Lowgill. However, two finds, one from nearby Hornby and one from Halton Church (OA North 2004), suggest that the area was far from abandoned. Both are fragments of crosses, rebuilt into later walls which, although limited in the information they can supply, suggest that early Christian buildings and related settlements must have existed in the centuries following the Roman occupation. Society at this time was undoubtedly a complex and mixed affair with many influences. Several churches within the north Lancashire area have early Anglian dedications (Tupling 1948) but there is also a strong Hiberno-Norse influence (Wainright 1946). It would appear that the Anglian inhabitants were mingling with Norse settlers by the tenth century (*ibid*). The cross at Halton churchyard also shows Anglian and Norse influences with unusual figurative descriptions, which are also seen at Hornby (Newman 1996, 98). The concentration of such sculpture along the Lune valley suggests it is an area of some significance, possibly even the site of an early monastery (*ibid*). Baines also suggests that there was an early medieval fortification in Hornby (1824, 664) although this is likely to refer to a later medieval site.
- 1.3.4 **Medieval:** evidence for medieval activity in Lowgill is restricted to an area of ridge and furrow identified during a walkover survey (OA North 2004) in a field just to the north of the village. However, the implementation of Norman control led to increased development of the wider area, and a number of sites representing the newly defined infrastructure occur relatively nearby. These include the churches of Gressingham and Tatham, and the motte and bailey at Hornby. As the new ruling class became established, more fortified sites began to appear such as nearby Melling-with-Wrayton, and Priest Hutton (English Heritage 1996).
- 1.3.5 **Post-Medieval:** the majority of sites within Lowgill village relate to the seventeenth century and later, in particular a large number of farmhouses built in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The well-established and increasingly wealthy inhabitants of the county could obviously afford such an

expansion in property at this time. In addition, a variety of earthwork features have been identified just north of the proposed development site during a walkover survey (OA North 2004). These include a localised quarry (OA North 2004, Gazetteer Site No. 182), a linear earthen mound (*ibid*, GS No 184) and a linear lynchet or earthwork (*ibid* GS No. 185). Place name evidence, namely Tenter Hill Wood (Fig 2), also suggests the presence of tenter grounds towards the north and to the west of the proposed development. A further development in the evolution of Lowgill village is the disappearance of the Rose and Crown Inn towards the south of the village. This is marked on the 1848 OS First edition mapping of the area but is not in evidence today. It is interesting to speculate that its disappearance coincided with the construction of the present nineteenth century Methodist church which is presently an architectural and, it is understood from local sources, spiritual feature of the village.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

- 2.1.1 In response to a verbal brief issued by LCAS, OA North produced a project design (*Appendix 1*). 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 topsoil strip in advance of the creation of hardstanding for the site compound, the construction of the treatment works and the excavation of the pipe trench. A photographic record in monochrome print and colour slide formats was made. All finds recovered were appropriately bagged, labelled and processed for later specialist analysis.

2.3 ARCHIVE

- 2.3.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with current 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 Museum of Lancashire.

3. FIELDWORK RESULTS

3.1 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

- 3.1.1 **Introduction:** in total, five fields were subject to the topsoil strip, which was effected by a tracked mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket. All works were conducted under constant archaeological supervision.
- 3.1.2 **Field 1:** the affected area measured approximately 40m x 20m and lay directly adjacent to the projected line of the Ribchester to Tebay Roman road (Fig 2). The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m mid grey-brown sandy-clay topsoil directly overlying loose, mid-to-dark orangey-brown fine sand-silt subsoil (Plate 1) flecked with manganese and containing c2% small-to-large sized sub-angular stones and the occasional boulder up to 0.3m in diameter.
- 3.1.3 A stretch of drystone wall forming the south-eastern and part of the southern boundary of the field was to be demolished to establish a wide entrance to allow for large vehicle access to the site. The east/west aligned southern boundary in part comprised worked stone, namely a gate stoop broken into three pieces (Plate 2) and a faced block of masonry, assumed to have been a relic from the building of the adjacent nineteenth century church. The north/south aligned eastern boundary wall was built upon a shallow but noticeable earthfast embankment (Plate 3), which dipped westward and resembled the possible side camber of a Roman road. The demolition by mechanical excavator of this wall was closely monitored and the resulting section through both the wall and the embankment (Plate 4) was scrutinised; however, nothing resembling the remnants of a road was observed.
- 3.1.4 The demolition of the walls also occasioned the removal of a further earthfast embankment in the corner angle of the two walls. During this excavation natural ground was encountered beneath the subsoil previously described (*Section 3.1.2*) which comprised soft, light yellow-brown slightly sandy-clay. An assemblage of finds was recovered from unstratified deposits but there were no significant archaeological horizons encountered during the works.
- 3.1.5 **Field 2:** an area of c30m x 20m (Fig 2) was stripped in advance of the installation of the treatment works. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m mid grey-brown sandy-clay topsoil directly overlying mid-to-light brown/buff slightly sandy-clay natural with occasional boulders. Some patches were more orangy in colour but this reflected only a slight change in natural. Several field drains ran obliquely across the area but no archaeological features were encountered.
- 3.1.6 Topsoil was also stripped from the demarked easement, which measured 8.0m in width and approximately 75m in length. The stratigraphy was similar to that described above comprising 0.15-0.2m topsoil over mid-to-light orange brown fine sand clay natural with around 5% inclusions of rocks and boulders. One amorphous, roughly sub-circular patch of disturbed ground was observed towards the northern perimeter of the field. It contained fragments of very modern glass and pot and is interpreted as modern disturbance. An assemblage

of unstratified finds was recovered for assessment but no features of archaeological significance were encountered.

- 3.1.7 **Field 3:** this measured approximately 140m in length and the strip was 8.0m wide. The stratigraphy comprised 0.15m mid grey-brown sandy-clay topsoil overlying mid-to-light grey/brown clay-silt natural (Plate 5) with many large stones and several boulders measuring up to 0.4m x 0.2m x 0.2m. In some areas the natural changed to light orangey-brown fine-sand-clay but there were no archaeological features encountered. A relatively small assemblage of finds was recovered from unstratified deposits.
- 3.1.8 **Field 4:** the topsoil strip measured approximately 25m in length and was up to 10m wide. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m dark brown-grey sandy-clay topsoil over mid brown, very stony sandy-clay subsoil. Some patches of orangey-grey clay natural were observed with boulder inclusions up to 1.3m x 1.0m x 0.5m. A very small quantity of pot was recovered from unstratified deposits but there were no archaeological horizons encountered.
- 3.1.9 **Field 5:** the north-east section of this strip was down a very steep embankment onto the valley floor. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m dark grey-brown sandy-clay topsoil with inclusions of medium-to-large sized stones over light brown clay-silt subsoil. The underlying natural geology was not exposed. There were no finds and no archaeological horizons were encountered.

3.2 THE FINDS

- 3.2.1 In total, the finds comprised 21 fragments of artefacts recovered from unstratified deposits in three fields (2, 3 and 4). The assemblage is made up of pottery (19 sherds) and two fragments of glass, that collectively have a broad date range between the late eighteenth to mid twentieth centuries. The finds are summarised in *Appendix 2*.
- 3.2.2 The pottery forms a fairly coherent group of late kitchen and tablewares, the three largest components being dark glazed red earthenwares, underglaze transfer-printed earthenwares, and jars. All of the finds were from unstratified deposits. As a small post-medieval assemblage from rural Lancashire it thus has limited significance.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The absence of archaeological deposits from Field 1 which may have confirmed the presence of the Roman road may be a result of the rebuilding of the drystone wall in times past. The putative roadside camber (*Section 3.1.3*) upon which the present wall stands, could equally be the earthfast remains of an earlier wall which had collapsed. As the groundworks did not impact below this horizon, no observation of the road would be made even were it present. Additionally, the topsoil strip in the field itself clearly impacted natural ground adjacent to this small embankment and no sign of a Roman roadside ditch was observed within the deposit, which would be expected were the road present. It must, therefore, be concluded that, if the road is present, it is wholly buried beneath Lowgill Lane and the flanking drystone walls.
- 4.1.2 The finds demonstrate activity mostly during the fairly late post-medieval period, which coincides with the expansion and construction of the village (*Section 1.3.6*) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries through to the modern era.
- 4.1.3 No further work relating to the pipeline is recommended as a result of this watching brief. However, if future utility or development works impinge upon Lowgill Lane and the flanking drystone wall, then a programme of archaeological investigation should be considered.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Plate 4: Section through drystone wall Field 1, facing north

Plate 5: Field 3 facing north-west

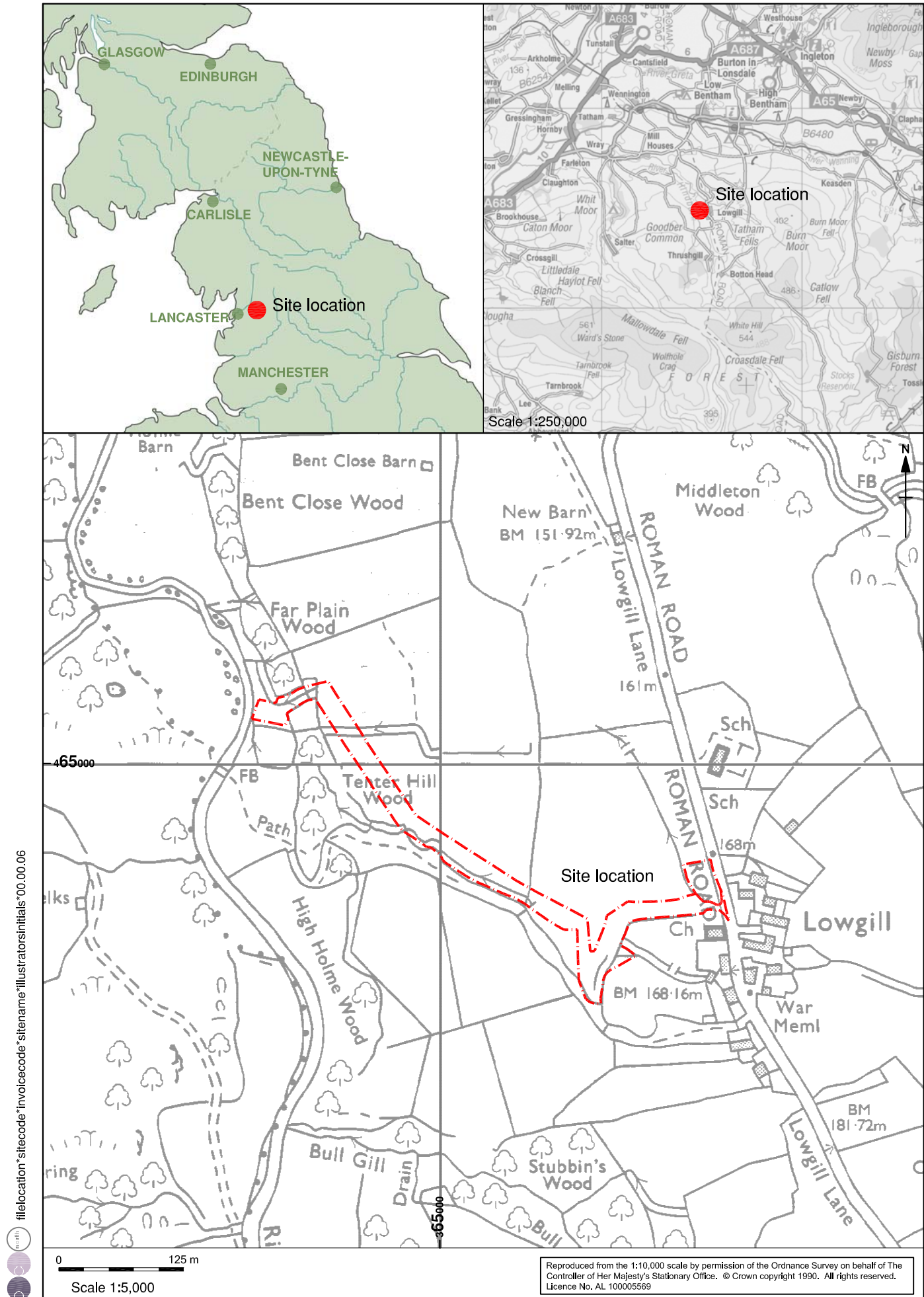


Figure 1: Site Location

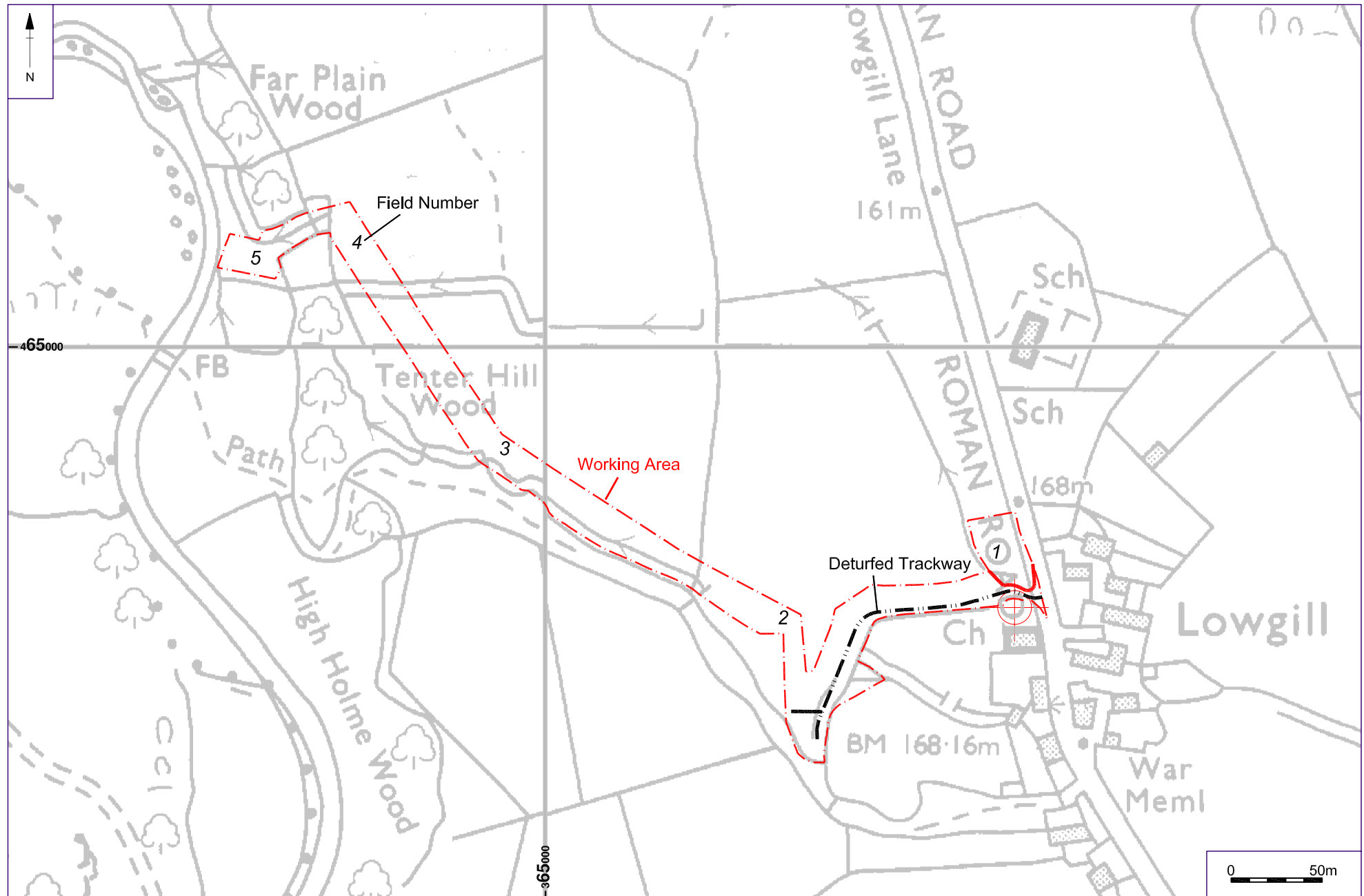


Figure 2: Field location plan



Plate 1: West-facing section Field 1



Plate 2: Detail of broken stone stoop in wall



Plate 3: Drystone wall on earthfast embankment in Field 1, facing south



Plate 4: Section through drystone wall Field 1, facing north



Plate 5: Field 3 facing north-west

APPENDIX 1: PROJECT DESIGN

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 United Utilities (hereafter the client) have proposed the construction of a new wastewater treatment works and outfall pipe, at Lowgill, Tatham, Lancashire (SD 65178 64813). As the scheme affects areas of archaeological potential Lancashire County Council's Archaeology Service issued a brief for a programme of archaeological works to be undertaken.
- 1.2 The adjacent Lowgill Lane is partly aligned on the Roman route from Ribchester to Tebay (Margary 7c, PRN 15560) and not far from a spot where a Roman inscribed stone and horseshoes were recovered (PRN 167). A variety of earthwork features have been identified just north of the proposed development site during an earlier walkover survey (OA North 2001, PRN 27175) and placename evidence suggests the former presence of a tetter ground at the northern end of the proposed discharge pipeline. The village itself contains a number of listed buildings, generally dating to the 17th and 18th centuries (PRNs 16272-16278).
- 1.3 OA North has considerable experience of the assessment, evaluation and excavation of sites of all periods, having undertaken a great number of small and large-scale projects during the past 20 years. Watching briefs, evaluations and excavations have taken place within the planning process, to fulfil the requirements of clients and planning authorities, to very rigorous timetables.
- 1.4 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 evaluate the archaeological resource of the proposed development area. The required stages to achieve this are as follows:
- 2.2 **Rapid Desk-Based Assessment:** a brief appraisal of the data held by the Sites and Monuments Record Office (SMR) will be undertaken;
- 2.3 **Permanent Presence Watching Brief:** this will be undertaken during all ground disturbance associated with the proposed development;
- 2.4 **Report and Archive:** production of a report following the collation of data during Sections 2.2 and 2.3 above.

3 METHOD STATEMENT

3.1 WATCHING BRIEF

- 3.1.1 **Rapid Desk-Based Assessment:** an examination will be undertaken of SMR data made available to the project in order to place the findings of the watching brief into a local and regional context;

- 3.1.2 A programme of field observation will record accurately the location, extent, and character of any surviving archaeological features and/or deposits within all topsoil stripping activities associated with the development works. This work will comprise observation during the excavation for these works, 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.
- 3.1.3 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 It is assumed that OA North will have the authority to stop the works for a sufficient time period to enable the recording of important deposits. It may also be necessary to call in additional archaeological support if a find of particular importance is identified or a high density of archaeology is discovered. This would only be called into effect in agreement with the Client and the County Archaeology Service and will require a variation to costing.
- 3.1.5 **Written Record:** during this phase of work, recording will comprise a full description and preliminary classification of features or materials revealed. All information identified in the course of the site works will be recorded stratigraphically utilising OA North pro-forma. Areas of excavation will be assigned trench numbers and context numbers will be applied to archaeological features.
- 3.1.6 **Site Drawings:** a large-scale plan (provided by the client) will be produced of the area of the groundworks showing the location and extent of the ground disturbance, appropriately labelled to correspond with the written record. Archaeological features will be recorded accurately (either on plan (1:20) and/or section (1:10), and as grid co-ordinates where appropriate).
- 3.1.7 The site drawings will be manipulated in an industry standard CAD package (AutoCAD release 2000) for the production of final drawings.
- 3.1.8 A photographic record will be undertaken simultaneously. This will utilise a 35mm camera for the production of both colour slides and monochrome contact prints. A photographic scale will appear in all images captured. The photographic index will describe and locate each area/feature photographed.
- 3.1.9 **Human Remains:** any human remains uncovered will be left *in situ*, covered and protected. No further investigation will continue beyond that required to establish the date and character of the burial. The LCAS and the local Coroner will be informed immediately. If removal is essential the exhumation of any funerary remains will require the provision of a Department of Constitutional Affairs license, under section 25 of the Burial Act of 1857. An application will

be made by OA North for the study area on discovery of any such remains and the removal will be carried out with due care and sensitivity under the environmental health regulations, and if appropriate, in compliance with the 'Disused Burial Grounds (Amendment) Act, 1981.

- 3.1.10 **Treatment of finds:** no sampling of finds will take place during fieldwork. All finds will be exposed, lifted, cleaned, conserved, marked, bagged and boxed in accordance with the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC) *First Aid For Finds*, 1998 (new edition) and the recipient museum's guidelines.
- 3.1.11 All identified finds and artefacts will be retained, although certain classes of building material can sometimes be discarded after recording if an appropriate sample is retained on advice from the recipient museum's archive curator.
- 3.1.12 **Treasure:** any gold and silver artefacts recovered during the course of the excavations will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local Coroner according to the procedures relating to the Treasure Act, 1996. Where removal cannot take place on the same working day as discovery, suitable security will be employed to protect the finds from theft.
- 3.1.13 **Environmental Samples:** samples will also be collected for technological, pedological and chronological analysis as appropriate. If necessary, access to conservation advice and facilities can be made available. OA North maintains close relationships with Ancient Monuments Laboratory staff at the Universities of Durham and York and, in addition, employs artefact and palaeozoological specialists with considerable expertise in the investigation, excavation and finds management of sites of all periods and types, who are readily available for consultation.

3.2 REPORT AND ARCHIVE

- 3.2.1 **Interim Statement:** in the event that further work is recommended an interim statement will be issued. In this instance or in the event that the client specifically requests an interim statement it should be noted that all illustrations will be copies of field drawings and not finished CAD drawings.
- 3.2.2 **Final Report:** two copies of the final report will be submitted to the client and a further copy to the LCAS. Both paper and digital copies will be provided on CD-ROM in pdf format. The report will present the following information:
 - (i) **Summary:** a summary statement of the findings;
 - (ii) **Introduction:** the background to the project including location details;
 - (iii) **Methodology:** an outline of the methodology of all elements of the programme of work;
 - (iv) **Historical Background:** a brief historical background to the site;
 - (v) **Results:** an account of the past and present land use of the study area;
An account of archaeological features identified during the course of the watching brief;

- (vi) **Discussion:** a description of the significance of the study area in its local and regional context;
 - (vii) **Recommendations:** the identification of areas where further development will impact upon the archaeological resource in addition to the impacts of the current development;
 - (viii) **Illustrations:** maps, plans, sections and copies of the site photographic archive;
 - (ix) **Appendices:** a copy of the brief and this project design;
- 3.2.3 Provision will be made for a summary report to be submitted to a suitable regional or national archaeological journal within one year of completion of fieldwork, if relevant results are obtained.
- 3.2.4 **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.
- 3.2.5 **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, including a copy of the report, will be provided in the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology format. In this instance the archive will be submitted to the County Record Office (Preston).
- 3.2.6 The Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) online database *Online Access to index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) will be completed as part of the archiving phase of the project.

4 PROJECT MONITORING

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

5 WORK TIMETABLE

- 5.1 The rapid desk-based assessment is expected to take in the region of one day to complete.
- 5.2 The duration of the watching brief will be dependent upon the progress of the contractor.
- 5.3 The client report will be completed within three weeks following completion of the fieldwork.

6 STAFFING

- 6.1 The project will be under the direct management of **Alison Plummer BSc (Hons)** (OA North Senior Project Manager) to whom all correspondence should be addressed.
- 6.2 Present timetabling constraints preclude detailing at this stage exactly who will be undertaking the rapid walkover survey and evaluation trenching, but both of these elements of the project are likely to be supervised by an OA North project supervisor experienced in these types of project. 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.

APPENDIX 2: FINDS SUMMARY

Context	Field	Quantity	Material	Description	Date range
Topsoil	2	6	Pottery	Black transfer-printed plate, brown grooved and striped factory-made slipware mug	Nineteenth/twentieth century
Topsoil	2	2	Glass	Green bottle glass	Twentieth century
Topsoil	3	8	Pottery	Blue transfer-printed ware plate, glazed white earthenwares	Nineteenth/twentieth century
Topsoil	4	5	Pottery	Black-glazed red earthenware storage jar, glazed white earthenware; some with grey and blue transfer print and machine applied stripes,	Late eighteenth to twentieth century