

No 5 CHAPEL STREET, POULTON-LE- FYLDE, LANCASHIRE



Archaeological Watching Brief



Oxford Archaeology North

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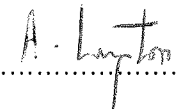
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SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was commissioned by Arc Media to undertake an archaeological watching brief to the rear of No 5 Chapel Street, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire (NGR SD 34925 39444), an area which, potentially, might contain medieval and post-medieval remains.

Although a small brick-built structure of twentieth-century date was identified, no significant archaeological remains were observed during the watching brief, which was undertaken on 1st July 2008. Indeed, it was found that previous terracing of the site had led to a degree of truncation within the present development area, rendering it improbable that the present development will impact on any archaeologically significant remains.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) would like to thank Ben Bancroft of Arc Media for commissioning the work and Doug Moir of Lancashire County Archaeology Service for his advice and liaison.

The watching brief was undertaken by Andrew Frudd, who also compiled the report, which was illustrated by Alix Sperr. The report was edited by Dr Richard Gregory and Stephen Rowland, the latter of whom managed the project.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Arc Media submitted a planning application (07/01/201/FUL) to construct two town houses to the rear of No 5 Chapel Street, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire (NGR SD 34925 39444; Fig 1). The site lies within an area where potential medieval and post-medieval remains might survive and, accordingly, Lancashire County Archaeological Service (LCAS) requested that an archaeological watching brief should be undertaken during the course of the ground works. Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was commissioned by Arc Media to undertake the work, which took place in July 2008.

1.2 SITE LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 1.2.1 The landscape around Poulton-le-Fylde consists of a flat to gently rolling coastal landscape, with improved pasture and arable fields, interspersed with patches of mixed woodland (Countryside Commission 1998). The underlying geology consists of Permo-Triassic red mudstones, siltstone and sandstones, which are overlain by thick deposits of glacial and post-glacial till and boulder clays, with pockets of post-glacial peat throughout (*ibid*; Middleton *et al* 1995). These are superseded by typical brown earths (Ordnance Survey 1983). The site is located at the centre of the historic town, behind a row of terraced houses on the eastern side of Chapel Street; these had been cleared from the site prior to the watching brief.

1.3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 1.3.1 **Prehistory:** the earliest evidence for a human presence in the Poulton-le-Fylde area was the discovery of a Palaeolithic elk skeleton containing barbed arrow points, at High Furlong, to the south of the town (Middleton *et al* 1995). This skeleton appears to date to between 13,500 and 11,500 BC. Although no Mesolithic finds have been made in the immediate area of Poulton, there is evidence to the west of Lytham Moss of an anthropogenic burnt layer, dating to 8390 ± 150 uncal BC (*ibid*). In the vicinity of Poulton, five other sites, in the form of dense lithic scatters, have been identified as dating from the late Mesolithic to early Neolithic (*ibid*).
- 1.3.2 Stray finds dating from the late Neolithic to early Bronze Age are more numerous, particularly around Lytham Moss and Peel, to the south of Poulton (*ibid*). During the nineteenth century, an extensive Bronze Age site was uncovered near Marton Mere, to the south-west of Poulton, which produced hide-covered coracles, a skin cap or bag, and an axe. Within Poulton-le-Fylde itself, two prehistoric findspots have been identified. Sherds of Bronze Age pottery were recovered from Skippool Bridge, whilst a chert arrowhead was discovered in a back garden in the south-west area of the town (Lancashire County Council (LCC) 2005). In 1998 a human skull was recovered from peat deposits to the south-west of the town and was dated to the Bronze Age (*ibid*).

By the later Bronze Age the marshland seems to have been abandoned (Middleton *et al* 1995).

- 1.3.3 **Roman:** during the nineteenth century it was postulated that a Roman road ran from the fort at Kirkham, approximately 6km to the south of Poulton, to Fleetwood at the mouth of the River Wyre, where it was suggested the site of *Portus Setantiorum* was located (*ibid*; LCC 2005). Recent surveys have found no evidence for the road, although if it did exist, it was located just to the west of Poulton. Recent excavations at Kirkham fort (Middleton *et al* 1995) suggest that it was probably only a staging post for troops, and was abandoned early in the second century, and that, consequently, there was not a large population in the surrounding area that needed quelling (*ibid*). Five findspots in Poulton-le-Fylde can be attributed to the Roman period and include three coins, a medal of Germanicus, and a horseshoe (LCC 2005). Recently, elements of a Romano-British rural settlement, including roundhouses and rectilinear enclosures, have been excavated on the outskirts of the village (OA North forthcoming).
- 1.3.4 **Early Medieval:** the name Poulton derives from the Old English *pull* and *ton*, meaning a settlement beside a pool or stream, while the le-Fylde suffix was added in the nineteenth century to define it from Poulton-le-Sands, which later became Morecambe (LCC 2005). In later medieval documents it is referred to as *Poulton Magna* or *Kirk Poulton*, implying that it was an ecclesiastical centre. Though there is little pre-Conquest evidence, and no mention in Domesday, the church's dedication to the seventh-century Saint Chad, may argue for early origins (*ibid*).
- 1.3.5 **Later Medieval:** from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries Poulton-le-Fylde and its surroundings were owned by the church. After Dissolution the lands passed to the Crown, before being given to the Savoy Hospital of London and, subsequently, to the Hesketh family (LCC 2005). By the seventeenth century Little Poulton Hall was the main family seat; the current building dates to the 1750s (*ibid*).
- 1.3.6 It is not certain when Poulton became a settlement, but the regularity of the roads and plot sizes suggest that it was probably deliberately planned and constructed when the estate was granted to St Mary's Priory (LCC 2005). A vicarage was established shortly after 1247, which was revamped in the seventeenth century, and tithes were stored in a barn to the western end of the village. During the medieval period a large market was established in the village, measuring over 0.5ha. It was not, however, granted a market charter, but it continued to flourish as it was easily accessible to the local farming population (*ibid*). Towards the end of the medieval period permanent structures were replacing the less substantial stalls.
- 1.3.7 During the majority of the medieval period the wetlands surrounding the village, and across the Fylde area, were generally left untouched (Middleton *et al* 1995); very little marshland was reclaimed, although peasants and yeomen were noted as using the reeds for thatch. The marsh must have held some value, however, as during the sixteenth century there were a number of minor land disputes, such as that between the Abbot of Whalley and the Lord of Preece in 1523 (*ibid*).

- 1.3.8 **Post-Medieval:** by the seventeenth century, the mosses of the Fylde were being quickly reclaimed and used for a mixture of rough pasture grazing and peat extraction. An extensive network of ditches was also dug during this period (Middleton *et al* 1995). Peat digging reduced the land so much that by the middle of the century areas were beginning to flood; the Main Dyke was constructed in 1731 to channel the outflow to the River Wyre (*ibid*). This canalised the Skippool flue, which was recorded on both Saxton's and Speed's maps as one of the main drainage channels in the area (1577 and 1610 respectively).
- 1.3.9 During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Poulton-le-Fylde developed a couple of small-scale domestic industries, including linen and salt, processes aided by the development of Skippool as a small port (LCC 2005). The port not only dealt in exports, but imports of timber from the Baltic, and tobacco, sugar, and rum from the West Indies are also documented (*ibid*).
- 1.3.10 Even with the incoming wealth, Poulton-le-Fylde was still relatively poor, with records of disease and famine during the seventeenth century. The town largely consisted of *fylde longhouses*, which were cruck-framed and constructed from wattle and daub; there were few stone-built houses (LCC 2005). In 1751 the church was subject to alterations, and it was suggested in the nineteenth century that the original church was razed and a new one constructed. However, recent survey work has identified a medieval roofline and the eighteenth-century work seems to have been solely aesthetic (*ibid*). In 1732 a fire destroyed many of the buildings along the western edge of the market place, and the houses built to replace them were constructed out of more durable materials (*ibid*).
- 1.3.11 During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the town developed into quite a successful market centre, with several flour and corn merchants listed. During this period it was the main food supplier to the newly established resort at Blackpool (LCC 2005), and much of Poulton was rebuilt in brick. The opening of the railway line to Fleetwood in 1840 helped boost the economy, though this was short lived, as the Blackpool line, constructed in 1846, by-passed the town. Following this, Poulton reverted to being a small, but successful, local market town (*ibid*).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 RECORDING

2.1.1 No specific LCAS brief or OA North project design was prepared for the project, but, due to its simple nature, it was agreed with LCAS that the working methodology for the archaeologists would adhere to standard OA North practices for watching briefs. These in turn conform to the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA), English Heritage (EH) and generally accepted best practice. All information identified in the course of the watching brief was recorded stratigraphically using a system adapted from that used by the EH Centre for Archaeology, with a sufficient pictorial record (plans, sections, and photographs) to identify and illustrate individual features. Written notes were made on *pro-forma* recording sheets and accurate plans and sections were produced at an appropriate scale. A full, detailed, and indexed photographic record was maintained of individual contexts, features, and general views and working shots from standard view points using 35mm cameras on archivable monochrome print film and colour transparency; all frames included a visible, graduated metric scale. Artefacts were handled and stored according to standard practice (following current IFA guidelines) in order to minimise deterioration.

2.2 ARCHIVE

2.2.1 A full archive of raw data generated during the watching brief has been produced in accordance with current EH guidelines (1991; *Appendix 1*). The archive will be deposited in the County Record Office and a copy of this report submitted to the Lancashire Historic Environment Record, both of which are in Preston.

3. RESULTS

3.1 RESULTS OF THE WATCHING BRIEF

- 3.1.1 All modern structural remains, including foundations, were removed before there was an archaeological presence on site. The area had also been stripped down to the natural geology and levelled. This revealed the extent to which the previous terracing of the natural slope, that rose to the east of the site, had impacted through any archaeological deposits, and into the natural geology (Plate 1).
- 3.1.2 A small brick structure (**100**) was observed at the centre of the development area (Plate 2). It was constructed of frogged, machine-made, bricks, bonded with light grey cement mortar, measured 2.3m x 1.8m and survived to a maximum height of two courses. The outer wall surrounded an irregularly laid brick floor measuring 1.4m x 1m. The floor was overlain by brick rubble (**101**).

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 DISCUSSION

- 4.1.1 No significant archaeological remains were observed during the watching brief. The machine-made frogged bricks and cement-based mortar of the one extant feature indicated that it was of twentieth-century date, and was probably an element of the early twentieth-century buildings that were demolished prior to the watching brief. The terracing of the site was likely to have accompanied the early twentieth-century development of the site. Had medieval or post-medieval remains ever lain within the site, only the deepest-cut features would have survived the high level of truncation associated with the process of terracing. As such, it seems that the development has had little impact on any archaeologically significant remains.

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APPENDIX 1: ARCHIVE INDEX

Record group	Contents	Comments	Box/File Number
	Introduction	N/A	N/A
A	Report Final Report		1
B	Primary Fieldwork Records Watching Brief Record		1
C	Primary Drawings Annotated Plans Original Drawing (plan)		1
D	Finds Box and Bag Lists	N/A	N/A
E	Environmental Records	N/A	N/A
F	Photographic Record Photographic Indices Monochrome Colour Slides Digital		1
G	Electronic Media		1

ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURES

Figure 1: Site Location Map

PLATES

Plate 1: The levels of truncation visible along the western edge of the site

Plate 2: Structure *100*, viewed from the east

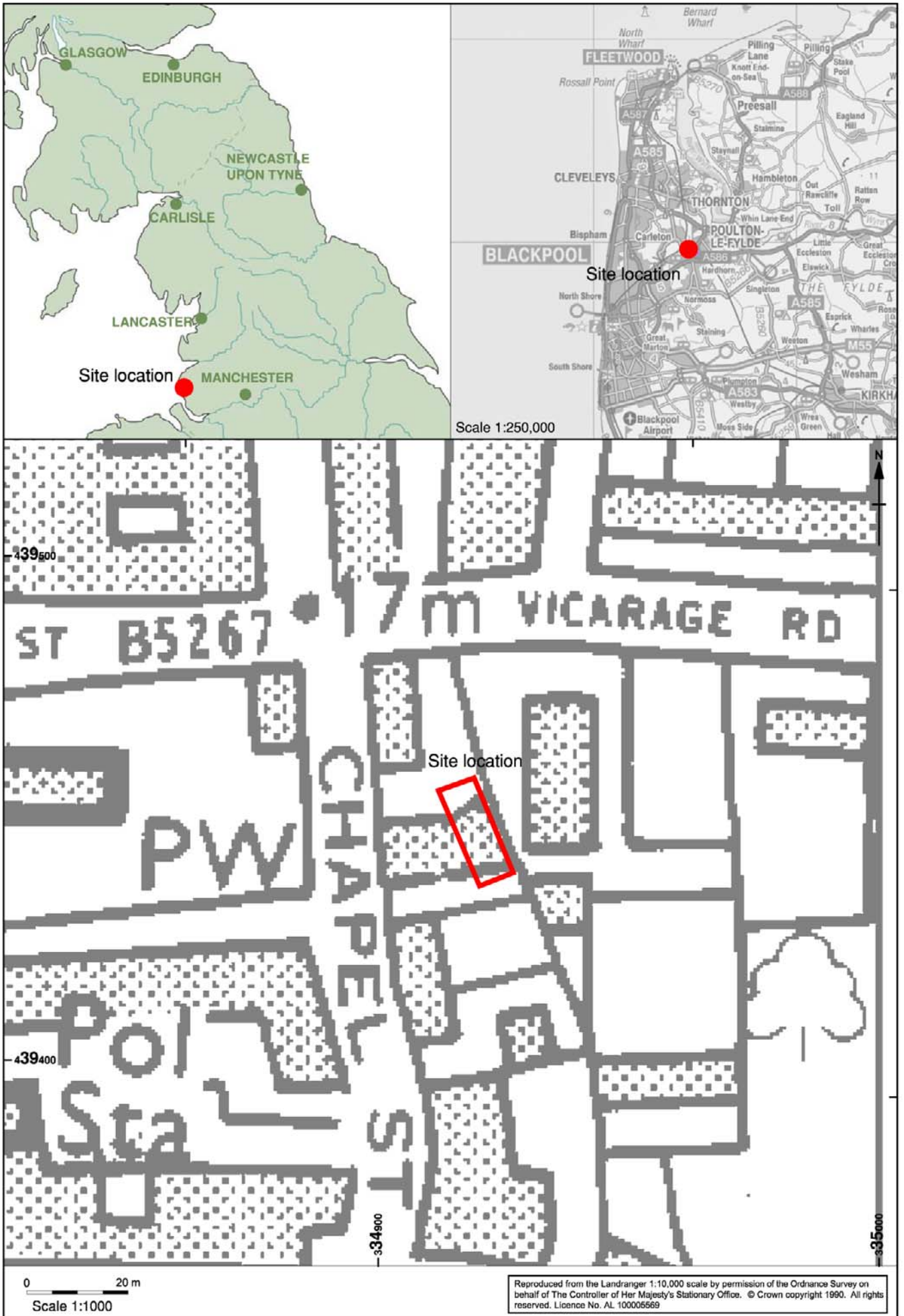


Figure 1: Site location



Plate 1: The levels of truncation visible along the western edge of the site



Plate 2: Structure *100*, viewed from the east