

Archaeological Watching Brief  
Blackfriars Street  
PERTH  
PEX176



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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
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<i>1</i>	<i>Background.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>Details of Work.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>Interpretation.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>4</i>	<i>Conclusions.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>5</i>	<i>Bibliography.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Appendix 1</i>	<i>Context Register.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Appendix 2</i>	<i>Photographic Register.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Appendix 3</i>	<i>Drawing Register.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Appendix 4</i>	<i>Finds Register.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Appendix 5</i>	<i>Discovery &amp; Excavation in Scotland Entry.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Appendix 6</i>	<i>Standard Terms of Reference for all Fieldwork.....</i>	<i>14</i>

*Illustration 1: Site location plan*

*Illustration 2: Plan of Trenches and Features*

*Illustration 3: East-facing section of Trench A*

*Illustration 4: North-facing section of Trenches L and N*

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**ABSTRACT**

*W J Beatson Architect commissioned Alder Archaeology to undertake an archaeological watching brief on the site of an office development in Blackfriars Street, Perth. The site forms the rear of 3 Atholl Crescent. The proposed development area is the site of a former garage and stores, previously a stable block, at NGR NO 1176 2390. The work (Alder site code PEX176) was undertaken during the periods 9-12 April 2013, 21-30 June 2013 and 17-25 March 2014 in mixed weather conditions.*

*The remains of six human burials from the Blackfriars cemetery were recorded. Two wells, one probably dating to the early 19th century, the other possibly to the 18th century, and a stone culvert, also possibly of 18th-century date, were also recorded. The wall of a 19th-century outhouse was also recorded. The human bones were reburied on site.*

## **1 Background**

### **1.1 Introduction**

W J Beatson Architect commissioned Alder Archaeology to undertake an archaeological watching brief on the site of an office development in Blackfriars Street, Perth. The site forms the rear of 3 Atholl Crescent. The proposed development area is the site of a former garage and store, previously a stable block, at NGR NO 1176 2390. The work (Alder site code PEX176) was undertaken during the periods 9-12 April 2013, 21-30 June 2013 and 17-25 March 2014 in mixed weather conditions.

The work was designed to satisfy the archaeological condition on development application reference 12/00195/FLL.

### **1.2 Aims and Objectives**

The main aim of this investigation was to establish the presence/absence, date, character and quality of any archaeological remains surviving within the development area.

### **1.3 Reporting**

The present document has been prepared as the final report on this watching brief. Copies will be sent to the client, The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and Perth and Kinross Historic Environment Record.

### **1.4 Planning and Curatorial Issues**

This watching brief is the final part of a programme of archaeological work designed to satisfy the outstanding archaeological condition on the planning consent for this development.

### **1.5 Acknowledgements**

We wish to thank Mr W Beatson, Architect for his assistance and guidance throughout this project. Pat Brogan funded this watching brief.

## **2 Details of Work**

### **2.1 The Site (Illus 1)**

The site lies to the rear of 3 Atholl Crescent and was formerly occupied by a garage and store, demolished in 2013. The new building will occupy more or less the same site as the previous building.

### **2.2 Archaeological Potential**

The proposed development lies within the Blackfriars lands, near the Blackfriars or Dominican monastery, which lay under Carpenter Court and some of whose remains, including ditches and a road, were excavated in 1983-4 in advance of the construction of Carpenter Court. Part of the monastic cemetery was also uncovered within the excavation and further burials were observed in Union Street (Bowler and Hall 1995, 943-4). Further burials were recorded in the NW side of Blackfriars Street in 1987

(Reid 1987) and in 1993 four burials and one disturbed burial were located in trial trenching to the rear of 4 Atholl Crescent (Cachart 1993); further disturbed human bones were recovered during construction work on that site in 1995 (Hall 1995).

### 2.3 Archaeological Method

The excavation by a JCB mid-sized tracked excavator of the foundation trenches for the new building was monitored by one archaeologist with the assistance of another archaeologist to excavate by hand human remains and other features that were uncovered. The foundation trenches, designated A to O, were up to some 1.2m deep below the existing kerb level, with the exception of Trench M which was some 0.4m deep below kerb level.

### 2.4 Results of Investigations

After the demolition of the standing buildings, a circular stone well (01) was uncovered. The well contained water and its circular opening had been closed by a rectangular opening with iron bars and capped by a rectangular stone slab.

#### *Trench A*

At the base of the trench was natural orange silty sand (5) under garden/cemetery soil (10), above which was a 19th-century construction deposit (2). Cut into the 'cemetery' soil were four graves (4, fill 3; 8, fill 9; 12, fill 11; and 26, fill 27) containing incomplete human skeletons extending into the trench from the west (SK1-3, SK6). Grave 26 was cut into grave 12. Visible in the W section of the trench were three other cuts (31, fill 32; 33, fill 34; and 35, fill 36), of unknown purpose, likewise cut into the 'cemetery' soil.

#### *Trench B*

This trench had similar sequence of deposits to Trench A. At the base of the trench, in the natural sand subsoil (5) was a grave cut (16, fill 15) with a full-length human skeleton, SK04.

#### *Trench C*

This trench had similar sequence of deposits to Trench A. At the base of the trench was a grave cut (19, fill 18) containing the partial remains of a skeleton, (SK05). The skeleton was cut by the edge of the construction cut (20, fill 21) of the well (01). The lower legs of SK01 extended into this trench from Trench A.

#### *Trench D*

This trench contained only the fill, 21, of the construction cut, 20, for the well (01).

#### *Trench E*

The southern side of this trench was cut by the construction cut (20) for the well (01). The other deposits were as in Trench A: natural sand (05), under the 'cemetery' soil (10) under the construction/demolition deposit (2). The cut (20) for the well (01) may have been cut through the construction/demolition deposit (2).

### *Trench F*

Natural orange sand (05) was under a 'garden' soil (30). Cut into the 'garden' soil was the edge of a cut (28) filled with rubble (29), which may have been part of the construction cut (20) for the well (01).

### *Trench G*

This trench had a similar sequence of deposits as Trench A. Cut into the construction/demolition deposit (02) was the edge of the cut (20) for the well (01).

### *Trench H*

This trench had a similar sequence of deposits as Trench A.

### *Trench I*

This trench contained the rubble and sand fill (21) of the construction cut (20) for the well (01), with natural sand (05) at the base.

### *Trench J*

This trench had a similar sequence of deposits as Trench F: natural sand (05) under 'garden' soil (30). Cut into the 'garden' soil was a cut (23) for a lead water pipe (24).

### *Trench K*

This trench had a similar sequence of deposits as Trench F: natural sand (05) under 'garden' soil (30).

### *Trenches L and N*

Above the natural orange sand (05) was a flagstone (45) under a 'garden' soil (46). Cut into the natural sand was the edge of a construction cut (44) for a well (50) in Trench O. Above the fill of the construction cut were two layers of mixed sand and mortar (38, 47). Cut into the 'garden' soil (45) and sand (47) was a mortar-bonded stone culvert (41), comprising the base and sides, but no capstones. Above that was a construction/demolition layer (37), into which was cut a modern ceramic drain pipe (48).

### *Trench M*

This trench contained a mortar-bonded stone wall (52), which appears to have been extended over the well (01).

### *Trench O*

This trench had been heavily disturbed by modern drains and was widened for a repair to a drain. At the base of it was a stone well (50) set in a construction cut (44). The well had been filled in with sand (51).

## **3 Interpretation**

### **3.1 Blackfriars Cemetery**

The western part of the site contained one full length burial (SK04) and the partial remains of another five extended burials (SK01, SK02, SK03, SK05, SK06). The skeletons were arranged in a N/S row, some 2m apart, with five of the skeletons forming groups of three (SK03, SK04, SK06) and two (SK01, SK02). They can be

seen as a continuation of the burials recorded in 1993 to the rear of the adjacent property, 4 Atholl Crescent. The skeletons would have been part of the cemetery attached to the Blackfriars' monastery, which lay to the W of the development area, under Carpenter Court. The absence of skeletons from the eastern part of the site suggests either that the limit of the cemetery crossed the site, although no evidence for a boundary was observed in the watching brief, or that the cemetery was not fully used before the dissolution of the monastery in 1559.

### 3.2 Blackfriars Street

After the Blackfriars lands were granted to the King James VI Hospital in 1569, the Kirk Session of Perth as Hospital managers forbade the grazing of animals in the Blackfriars kirkyard, only permitting the tenant to cut the grass (Fittis 1885, 193). The site was undeveloped, open ground until the late 18th century. Rutherford's (1774) and Stobie's (1783) plans of Perth both show the site as undeveloped, the S side of what became Blackfriars Street forming the N boundary of Lord John Murray's house and garden. Macfarlane's (1792) and Morrison's (1805) plans show two different intended developments of the Blackfriars lands. The latter plan was under development in 1806 when Atholl Crescent was described as forming 'an elegant sweep' (Morrison 1806). Reid's (1809) plan shows Atholl Crescent with a short row of buildings along the N side of Blackfriars Street to the rear of 2 and 3 Atholl Crescent. Wood (1823) shows the same, as does the OS 'First Edition'.

The well (01) presumably dates from the early 19th century and provided a water supply to the newly built house at 3 Atholl Crescent. It is not shown on the OS 'First Edition', which shows a Pump against the adjoining boundary wall with No 4 Atholl Crescent; it had been built over by a dog-leg stair, presumably leading to a hayloft above stables. The wall (52) formed the rear wall of the outhouse shown on the OS 'First Edition'. The construction deposit (02) dates from the development of the site in the early 19th century.

The other well (50) is presumably an earlier feature, predating the development of the site in the early 19th century. It was constructed earlier than the stone culvert (41), but both may have served Lord John Murray's house and garden in the 18th century.

## 4 Conclusions

The watching brief has shown that the Blackfriars cemetery extended into the western part of the development site, but not apparently into the eastern part of the site where no burials were recorded. An approximate eastern boundary for the cemetery has thus been established. Apart from the early well (50) and culvert (41), possibly 18th-century features of Lord John Murray's house and garden, the site of the cemetery was undeveloped until the early 19th century.

## 5 Bibliography

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*Cartographic*

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Rutherford, A 1774 'A plan of the town of Perth taken from an actual survey'.

Stobie, J 1783 'Perth', inset on 'The counties of Perth and Clackmannan'.

Wood, J 1823 'Plan of the City of Perth from actual survey'.

## Appendix 1 Context Register

<i>No:</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Trench</i>
01	Circular stone well, 0.85m diameter and about 4m deep to the water level; upper courses mortared; two openings on S and E sides at depths of 0.7m and 0.6m respectively; one re-used worked stone (not retained), 0.30m long, 0.23m wide and 0.10m thick, had drafted margins and a furrowed surface with mortar adhering to surface and sides; set in construction cut 20	M
02	Brown and light yellow brown silty sand, moderate compaction, with occasional stone rubble and moderate charcoal flecks. Construction deposit for 19th-century building development with demolition disturbance	A-I, M
03	Dark brown silty sand with occasional charcoal flecks and occasional small rounded stones; fill of grave cut 4; under 02, over 06	A, C
04	Cut for grave of SK01, 0.6m wide, 0.44m deep; cuts 10	A, C
05	Natural orange silty sand	A-C, E-O
06	Skeleton SK01, comprising lower vertebrae, pelvis, lower arms and hands, and legs of a human skeleton, in grave cut 04	A, C
07	Skeleton SK02, comprising patellas and lower legs of a human skeleton, in grave cut 08	A
08	Cut for grave of SK02, 0.52m wide, 0.64m deep; cuts 10	A
09	As 03, fill of grave cut 08	A
10	Greyish brown clayey sandy silt; graveyard and/or garden soil	A
11	As 03, fill of grave cut 13	A
12	Skeleton SK03, comprising lower legs of human skeleton in grave cut 13	A
13	Cut for grave of SK03, 0.6m, 0.8m deep; cut by 26, cuts 10	A
14	As 03, fill of grave cut 16	B
15	Skeleton SK04, comprising skull, vertebrae, arms, hands, pelvis, legs and feet of human skeleton; only one rib fragment; in grave cut 16	B
16	Cut for grave of SK04	B
17	As 03, fill of grave cut 19 for SK05	C
18	Skeleton SK05, comprising skull, left arm and vertebrae of human skeleton, in grave cut 19; cut by well trench 20; under SK01	C
19	Cut for grave of SK05	C
20	Cut for well 01, not fully excavated; visible in sides of Trenches E, G and I as a	D-G, I

	sloping concave edge and in base of Trench E as a subrectangular cut	
21	Mixed dark brown silty sand with occasional charcoal flecks and frequent small to large stones; contains occasional disarticulated human bones; fill of cut 20	D-G, I
22	Skeleton SK06, comprising lower vertebrae, pelvis and legs of a human skeleton in grave cut 26	A, B
23	Cut for lead water pipe 24, 0.65m wide	J
24	Lead water pipe in cut 23; water supply to No 3 Atholl Crescent	J
25	Brown silty clay, fill of cut 23	J
26	Cut for grave of SK06, 0.8m wide and 0.8m deep; cuts fill 11 of grave cut 12	A, B
27	As 03, fill of grave cut 26	A, B
28	Vertical cut in sides of Trench F, 0.54m deep	F
29	Moderate light brown silty sand with sandstone fragments, fill of cut 28	F
30	Moderate dark brown/black silty sand, 0.4m thick; garden soil	F
31	Cut in W side of Trench A, 0.3m deep, 0.54m wide	A
32	Moderate brown silty sand, fill of cut 31	A
33	Cut in W side of Trench A, 0.34m deep, 0.48m wide	A
34	Moderate brown silty sand, fill of cut 33	A
35	Cut in W side of Trench A, 0.4m deep, 0.7m wide	A
36	Moderate dark brown silty sand, fill of cut 35	A
37	Loose dark brown silty sand with occasional sandstone fragments, 0.22m thick; construction deposit for 19th-century buildings; cut by 48	L, N, O
38	Moderate brown silty sand with mortar, 0.04m thick; under 47, over 43	N, O
39	Loose reddish brown friable sand and small fragments of mortar, with occasional stones, 0.12m thick; under 37, over 40	N
40	Loose dark brown friable sand, 0.2m thick; fill of culvert 41	N
41	Stone culvert, bonded with mortar, composed of a flat sandstone slab, 0.44m wide and 0.06m thick, forming the base, on which rest two parallel sandstone blocks, 0.3m high and 0.2m apart, forming the sides	N
42	Mortar bonding E side of culvert 41	N
43	Loose reddish brown silty sand with lenses of lighter sand, fill of construction cut 44 for well 50	N, O
44	Cut for well 50; only W side of cut located	N, O

45	Large flat slab, 1.1m long, 0.3m thick, at least 0.18m wide (broken by machine) in S side of Trench N; a similar flat slab was visible in N side of Trench N; under 46, over 5	L
46	Moderate dark brown silty sand with moderate stones, abundant charcoal flecks and occasional brick fragments, up to 0.54m thick; cut by 49, over 45	L, N
47	Loose brown friable sand with mortar fragments, 0.2m thick; cut by 49, over 38	N, O
48	Cut for modern ceramic sewer pipe, 0.2m deep; cuts 37	N
49	Cut for stone culvert 41, 0.5m deep; under 37, cuts 46 and 47	N
50	Stone well at base of Trench O, approx 0.8m diameter (E side not excavated); contained within construction cut 43	O
51	Loose greyish brown wet clayey silt with brown sand, occasional fragments of creamy mortar, occasional charcoal flecks and occasional stones, fill of well 50; not excavated	O
52	Stone wall bonded with mortar on approximately SW/NE alignment, generally 0.6m wide but 1.2m wide to E of well 01; two courses (0.2m) high	A, M

## Appendix 2 Photographic Register

<i>Image No</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>View</i>
001-002	General of site before excavation	SE, S,
003-004	Capstone of well 01	S
005-006	General of site before excavation	NE, E
007-008	General of site before excavation	SW, NW
009-010	General of site before excavation	W, SW
011-012	Leaking water main	SE
013-015	Trench A, SK01	N
016-017	Well 01	S
018	Well 01	E
019-030	Trench A, SK01 after removal of machine-disturbed bones	N
031-034	Trench A, SK02	W
035-037	Trench A, SK03	W
038-040	Trench A, general showing locations of SK01, SK02, SK03	N
041-044	Trench B, SK04	W

045-046	Trench B, SK04	S
047	Trench B, SK04	SE
048-049	Trench C, lower legs and feet of SK01	E
050-054	Trench C, SK05, partially excavated	S
055-057	Trench C, SK05, detail, partially excavated	E, SE
058-059	Trench E, W section	W
060-061	Trench E, N section	N
062-067	Trench A, W section, progressively S to N	W
068-074	Trench A, W section, progressively N to S	W
075-079	Trench C, SK05 after S section cut back	S
080-085	Trench A, SK06	W
086-087	Trench E (and D), S section	S, SW
088-089	Trench E, cut 20 for well 01 in natural 05	W
090-091	Trench F, W section	W
092-095	Trench F, S section	S
096-097	Trench G, W section	SW, NW
098-101	Trench I, N section with fill 21 of cut 20 for well 01	NW, N, NE
102-103	Trench M, wall 52 and well 01	NE
104-105	Trench M, detail of wall 52	NE
106-110	Trench M, wall 52 and well 01	SW
111-114	Trench M, wall 52 and well 01	NE
115-116	Trenches L and N, S section	S
117-118	Trench L, culvert 41 in S section of Trench N	S
119-120	Slab 45 in S section of Trench L	S
121-122	Trench O, well 50	S
123-125	Trench O, well 50	S
126-130	Trench O, well 50 with edge of cut 43 in N section of Trench N	N
131-136	Reused stone from well 01	

137-144	General and details of site from scaffolding on Carpenter House	N
145-146	Trench B, S section at corner with Trench O	S
147-148	Trench B, E section at corner with Trench O	E
149-156	Reburial of human bones within Well 01	

### Appendix 3 Drawing Register

<i>Sheet No.</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Scale</i>
D1	Site plan; details of skeletons SK01-SK06, and well 50	1:50; 1:20
D2	W section of Trench A, W section of Trench E, S section of Trench F, W section of Trench G and N section of Trench I; plan of wall 52 and well 01	1:20
D3	S section of Trenches L, N	1:20

### Appendix 4 Finds Register

<i>Context</i>	<i>Trench</i>	<i>Material Type</i>	<i>Details</i>
5	E	Mammal bone	1 pig lower canine tooth; in wear
10	E	Mollusc shell	2 oyster valves
10	E	Mammal bone	2 indeterminate fragments 1 large ungulate rib shaft 1 sheep/goat metatarsal; entire, distal end fused
10	H	Mammal bone	1 sheep/goat tibia shaft
10	J	Mammal bone	1 large ungulate long bone shaft with chop marks 1 large ungulate vertebra fragment; sawn, knife mark present
10	E	Pottery	1 TGE sherd; red fabric, glazed yellow and brown 1 medieval redware sherd; spotty glaze
21	D	CBM?	1 small fragment; buff fabric eg brick
21	D	Mammal bone	2 indeterminate mammal bones 1 cattle calcaneum fragment 1 large ungulate shaft fragment, gnawed by carnivore

21	D	Pottery	1 medieval redware rim sherd; glazed green 1 TGE sherd; white fabric, glazed white
21	D	Clay pipe	1 stem
2	M	Mammal bone	1 cattle left radius shaft; chopped
43	O	Pottery	1 TGE sherd; white fabric, cream glaze
43	O	MWD	1 lump 'heated residue with coal/charcoal inclusions
43	O	Glass	1 green bottle body sherd
43	O	Mammal bone	1 sheep/goat metatarsal; entire, distal end fused 1 rabbit humerus, distal 1 small ungulate long bone shaft fragment
43	O	Bird bone	1 humerus shaft; Galliform (eg large chicken/small turkey)
u/s	G	Mammal bone	1 cattle calcaneum; proximal end unfused 1 sheep/goat femur shaft 1 small ungulate rib shaft 7 indeterminate fragments
u/s		Pottery	1 medieval redware handle sherd; glazed green

TGE = Tin Glazed Earthenware  
u/s = unstratified

## Appendix 5 Discovery & Excavation in Scotland Entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Perth and Kinross
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Blackfriars Street
PROJECT CODE:	PEX176
PARISH:	Perth
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR(S):	David Perry
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Alder Archaeology Ltd
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching brief
RCAHMS NO(S):	None
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	Human skeletons, stone wells, wall and culvert
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NO 1176 2390
START DATE	9/4/2013
END DATE	25/3/2014
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	<p>W J Beatson Architect commissioned Alder Archaeology to undertake an archaeological watching brief on the site of an office development in Blackfriars Street, Perth. The site forms the rear of 3 Atholl Crescent. The proposed development area is the site of a former garage and stores, previously a stable block, at NGR NO 1176 2390. The work (Alder site code PEX176) was undertaken during the periods 9-12 April 2013, 21-30 June 2013 and 17 March to 25 March 2014 in mixed weather conditions.</p> <p>The remains of six human burials from the Blackfriars cemetery were recorded. Two wells, one probably dating to the early 19th century, the other possibly to the 18th century, a stone culvert, also possibly of 18th-century date, and a wall of a 19th-century outhouse was also recorded. The human bones were reburied on site.</p>
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Pat Brogan
CAPTIONS FOR ILLUSTRS	
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	Alder Archaeology Ltd, 55 South Methven Street, Perth PH1 5NX
ARCHIVE LOCATION	RCAHMS (intended)

(intended)	
EMAIL ADDRESS:	<a href="mailto:director@alderarchaeology.co.uk">director@alderarchaeology.co.uk</a>

## Appendix 6 Standard Terms of Reference for all Fieldwork

### 6.1 Recording Methodology

Alder Archaeology employs a Single Context Recording System that allows full cross-referencing of stratigraphy, finds and environmental samples, as well as site-wide phasing. All features will be planned at scale 1:20, and sections drawn at scale 1:10. Sections and profiles will be drawn and all features will be photographed with metric scale included. Environmental samples will be taken from archaeologically significant contexts, if the analysis of these samples would aid significantly in the interpretation of any features identified.

### 6.2 Human Remains

If human remains are encountered they will be left in situ and the local police will be informed. If removal is required this will take place in compliance with Historic Scotland's Policy Paper *The Treatment of Human Remains in Archaeology*.

### 6.3 Products and Reporting

A Data Structure Report will normally be prepared within a period agreed within the Written Scheme of Investigation/ Project Design, after the completion of the fieldwork. This forms the basic level of reporting. Further reporting may be required on the basis of discoveries made during excavations.

A copy of the report and the project archive will be deposited in the NMRS. Further copies will be sent to the client, LAAO and others, as appropriate.

### 6.4 Artefacts

Finds of objects will be subject to the Scots Laws of Treasure Trove and *Bona Vacantia*. We will report such finds, if recovered, with supporting documentation to the Secretariat of the Treasure Trove Panel for disposal to the appropriate museum.

### 6.5 Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

A brief summary of the results will be submitted to *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*.

### 6.6 General Conditions and Health and Safety

We adhere to the Code of Conduct of the Institute for Archaeologists.

Alder Archaeology Ltd has public liability insurance of £2,000,000. Details of this can be provided on request.

We operate a strict health and safety policy that conforms to the Health and Safety at Work Act. We undertake Risk Assessments on all fieldwork carried out.

Alder Archaeology representatives will at all times wear protective footwear, high visibility clothing and other appropriate clothing. Hard hats will be worn if there is active plant on site or at all times if the site is deemed a hard hat area.

If lightly contaminated deposits are uncovered disposable boiler suits and gloves will be worn. A source of clean water will be made available for staff to clean hands with. If the health risk posed by site contamination is felt to be too high all further archaeological work will stop in that area.