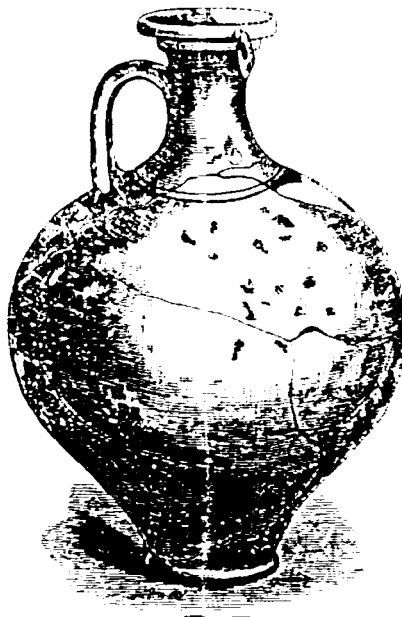


REPORT NO. R2042  
SITE NO. 80039  
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# An Archaeological Evaluation at Loushers Lane Special School Warrington



**Loushers Lane Special School  
Wilderspool, Warrington**

**An**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

Research and Report:	W S Walker
Director of Excavations:	B Turner-Flynn
Excavation and Finds Analysis:	D J Garner
Excavation:	I R Smith

Report commissioned by  
Cheshire County Council Architectural Services

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Earthworks Archaeological Services  
The Corner House  
High Street  
Northop  
Clwyd CH7 6BQ  
Tel: (0352) 840335 or (0244) 534958

## ABSTRACT

This report contains the results of an evaluation exercise designed to assess the quality and determine the location of surviving archaeological remains prior to the construction of an extension to the east wing of Loushers Lane Special School, Warrington.

The area is known to have been occupied during the Roman period and previous archaeological discoveries have revealed parts of a substantial masonry structure, including a hypocaust, very close to the development site.

The fieldwork element of the evaluation comprised the excavation of three trial trenches and although - as is commonplace during evaluation work - the results in some respects were inconclusive, important Roman remains were positively identified and these will require full consideration prior to the commencement of building work.

*A note on the cover illustration:* The cover shows a drawing (after Watkin, 1886, 267) of a ring-neck Roman flagon from Wilderspool, probably a local ware and dating from the early to mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We should also like to thank Mr Ian Smith and Mr Dan Garner for their hard work and informed input at every stage of the project. Dan also analysed the finds and contributed a separate note.

## ABBREVIATIONS

c.	circa
CAB	Cheshire Archaeological Bulletin
CRO	County Record Office, Chester
JCAS	Journal of Chester Archaeological Society
JRS	Journal of Roman Studies
NGR	National Grid Reference
OD	Ordnance Datum
OS	Ordnance Survey
pers comm	Personal Communication
THSLC	Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire
VCH	The Victoria History of the County of Chester

## KEY TO PLANS

②	Context number
-----	Limit of excavation
---▲---▲---	Vertical edge
-----	Indistinct merging horizon/base of section
┌   └	Location of string line
S	Sandstone
T	Tile
▨	Clay

## **1: INTRODUCTION**

**1.1** As a result of proposals by Cheshire County Council to provide an extension to the east wing of Loushers Lane Special School, Wilderspool (NGR SJ 61618683) (Figures 2 and 3), Earthworks Archaeological Services was commissioned to undertake an evaluation exercise designed primarily to determine the location, nature, survival and potential significance of archaeological deposits on the site, and to assess the impact of the development on any remains located. This information will enable the archaeological implications of the scheme to be given due consideration prior to the commencement of building works.

**1.2** The site is in an archaeologically sensitive location. Since the late eighteenth century chance discoveries and controlled archaeological investigations (Figure 2) have demonstrated that a Roman settlement once extended over a large area of Wilderspool, possibly centred about the Greenall Whitley Brewery site (Petch, 1987, 195) some 500 m west of the proposed redevelopment. The precise status, character and extent of the settlement have still not been established with any degree of certainty, but discoveries during pipe-laying in the 1930s and extensive excavations during the 1970s (Spencer, 1975, 58; Pierce, 1974, 33-4; Hinchliffe *et al.*, 1992) have confirmed that Roman occupation did extend into this area.

**1.3** Today the area is one of mixed residential and industrial development on the east side of the main A49 trunk road which essentially perpetuates the line of the main Roman road which ran north from Middlewich through to Wigan.

**1.4** Negotiations took place through Mr Geoff Barnes of Cheshire County Architectural Services and agreement was reached to carry out the on-site work between 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> June 1993.

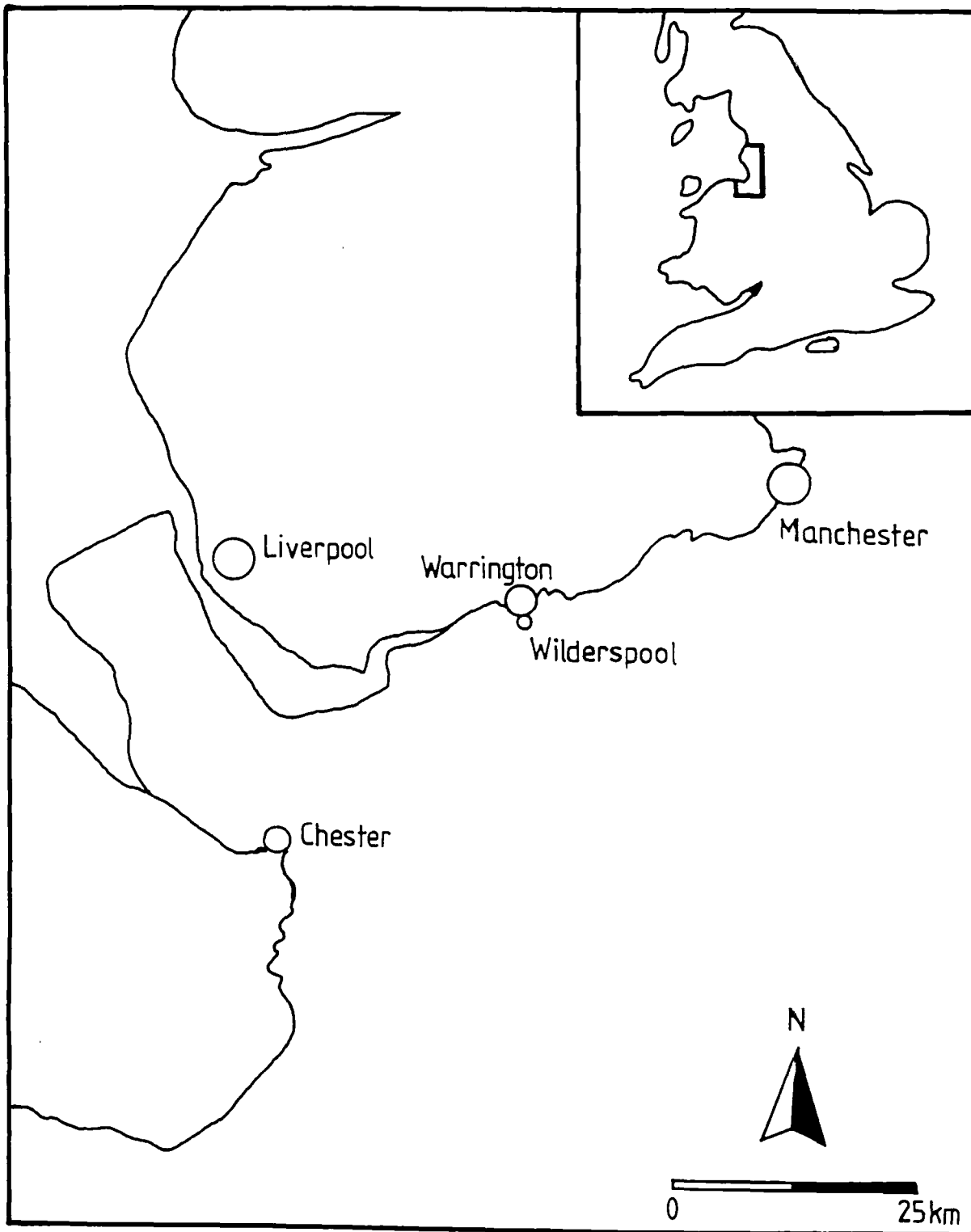


FIGURE 1 Location of Wilderspool



## **2: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **2.1 Location, Geology, Topography**

Loushers Lane Special School was constructed during the 1960s with the east wing - shortly to be extended - being added subsequently. The building is located on the south side of Loushers Lane and immediately east of the course of the Mersey and Irwell canal (Figures 2, 3), now disused and filled in. It forms part of a buffer zone separating industrial development to the west and residential development to the east. The line of the Manchester Ship Canal, completed in 1894, lies a little over 200 m to the south.

The expansion of Warrington since the eighteenth century has led to a swallowing up and readjustment of ancient parish and township boundaries. Most of the Loushers Lane area is now included in the parish of Christ Church within the postal address of Latchford - previously a separate township within the ancient parish of Grappenhall (Rev Tom Kenny, pers comm).

Adaptation of the landscape over the last two centuries to accommodate the industrial growth of Warrington has obscured the natural topography of the area. However, it is clear that a fordable location in the valley of the river Mersey has been, from early times, a stimulus to settlement.

The solid geology of the area consists of upper mottled sandstone overlain by a blanket of glacial drift deposits composed of sands and gravels.

### **2.2 History and Archaeology**

#### **2.2.1 Prehistory**

The density of stray finds and remains within the Warrington district suggests that the area was the focus of considerable settlement during the period, particularly during the Bronze Age *c.* 2500 to *c.* 700 BC (Longley, 1987; Grealey, 1976). Indeed several objects of flint have been recovered during recent archaeological investigations of the Roman settlement (Hinchliffe, 1992, 163; Brewery

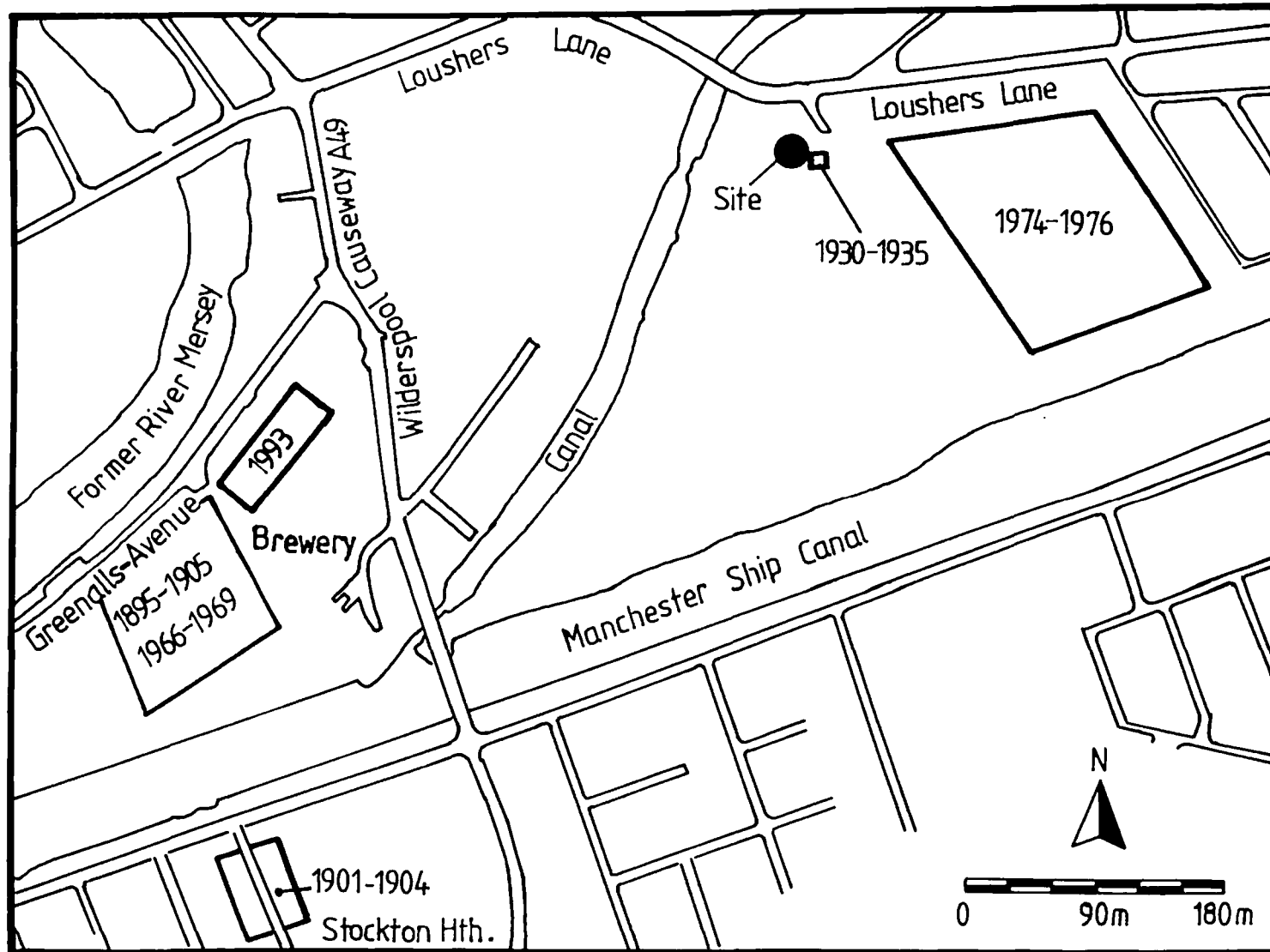


FIGURE 2 Location of site and previous excavations (after Hinchliffe *et al.* 1992, 15), with additions

Excavations 1993; Gifford, forthcoming). Although all flintwork recovered during excavations has been residual in context one small pit, identified during the Loushers Lane excavation in 1976, appeared to belong to the later prehistoric period, or Iron Age, c. 700 BC to c. AD 50 (Hinchliffe, 1992, 100). Further, the remains of circular timber structures, observed by Hinchliffe, suggest a continuation into the Roman period of a native building tradition. A background of prehistoric activity can thus be reasonably inferred.

During the last hundred years, eleven dug-out canoes have been discovered in the river Mersey (Grealey, 1976, 16) close to Warrington. Until recently, on stylistic grounds, these were assumed to be prehistoric, but radio-carbon dating now suggests a tenth century AD date (Alan Leigh, pers comm).

### 2.2.2 Roman

It is clear from the body of evidence that has accumulated since the late eighteenth century that the remains of an extensive and important Roman settlement underlie modern Wilderspool. The earliest discoveries came to light in 1770 during the cutting of the Bridgewater Canal through Stockton Heath, to the south of Wilderspool; subsequent observations during expansion and development in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries revealed further widespread evidence of Roman occupation astride the main Roman road from Middlewich to Wigan.

Controlled archaeological work began in 1895 (May, 1897, 1900, 1902, 1904, 1905, 1907) with further large-scale excavations (see Figure 2) pursued periodically between 1966 and 1976 (Hinchliffe *et al.*, 1992) and more recently in 1993 (Gifford Archaeology, forthcoming). Work in the Loushers Lane area began in 1930 after a local enthusiast, Colonel B Fairclough, recognised Roman material during Council pipe-laying operations; excavation of the site took place intermittently between 1930 and 1935 (Fairclough, unpublished archive).

The three main areas of excavation, the Greenall Whitley Brewery, Stockton Heath and Loushers Lane, probably represent parts of a single settlement, perhaps ribbon development both to the south (Stockton Heath) and to the east (Loushers Lane)

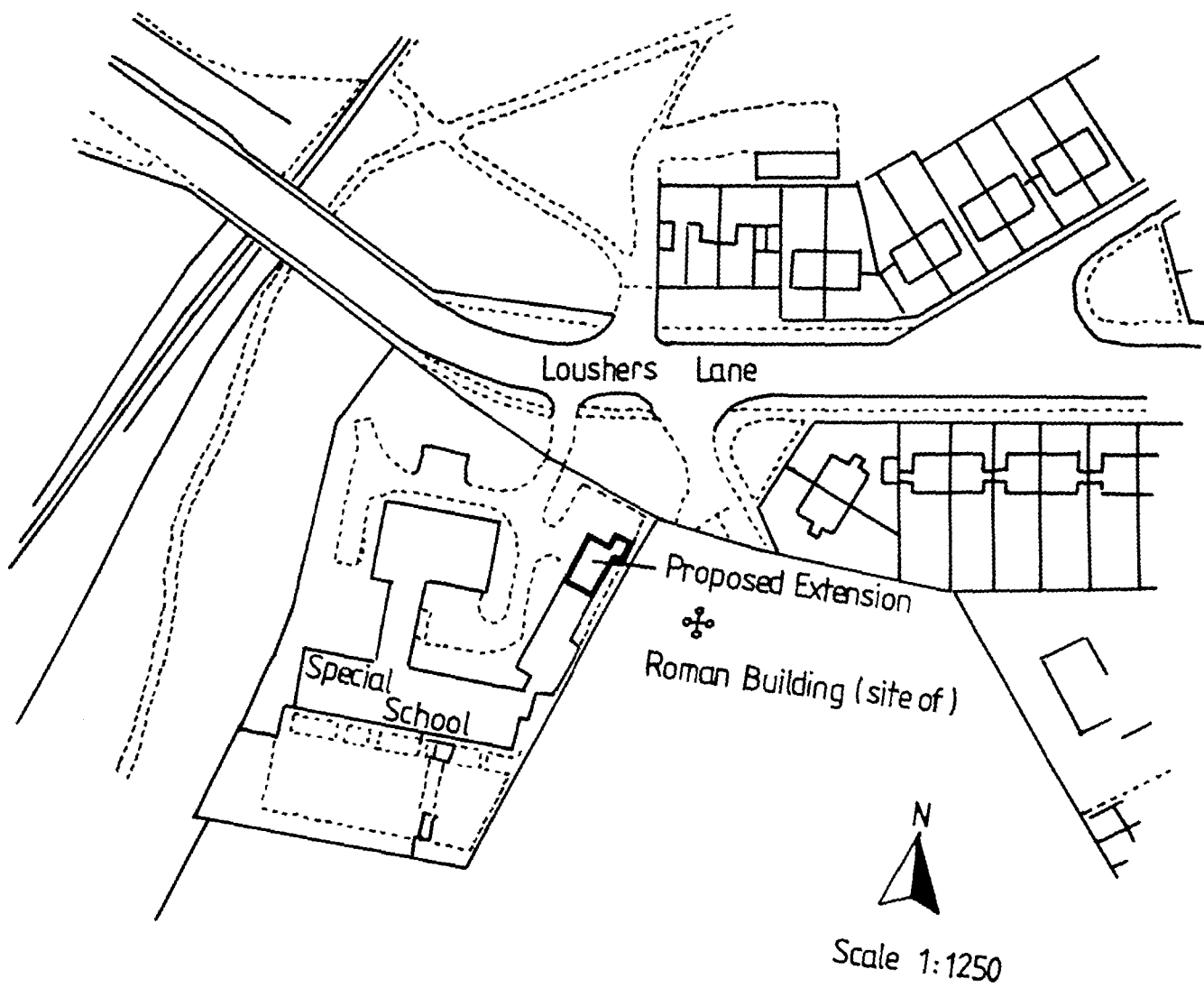


FIGURE3 Location of proposed extension

of a possible settlement nucleus centred about the Brewery site. However, it has been suggested that the character of the occupation at the Brewery site may be peripheral (T J Strickland, pers comm) rather than nuclear.

Evidence to date suggests a purely civilian settlement, a largely industrial community which came into existence c. 90 AD and produced goods for a military market, but whether the army was actively involved in the foundation and/or regulation of the settlement is not clear. It has been suggested that Wilderspool formed the site of a Roman fort during the early Flavian period c. 80 AD, but there is no evidence to support this. The possibility remains, however, that an early fort was sited in the Warrington area (Grealey, 1976, 27) to guard the Mersey crossing.

Current thought favours a sharp decline in occupation on the Brewery site from c. 160 AD (Hinchliffe, 1992, 170), but continuing on a much reduced scale until the early fourth century (Webster, 1975, 91-2). But new evidence, from the 1993 excavations, based upon stratified building sequences rather than inferences from residual pottery assemblages, may offer a reassessment and revision of the chronology here.

In Loushers Lane the 1930s excavations indicated that the remains of a substantial and quite sophisticated Roman building lay in the area, with at least one room possessing a hypocaust. A smaller structure c. 6 m by 3.6 m, constructed of sandstone with a clay floor, lay some 12 m to the west. North of the building complex lay a sandstone tank and the remains of a circular sandstone base, both of uncertain function (see Figure 4). Painted wall plaster was recovered together with a quantity of industrial waste, suggesting that the building was utilised for both residential and industrial purposes (Petch, 1987, 196). The hypocaust may also imply use as a bath house (Thompson, 1965, 80). A brief reassessment of the pottery from the 1930s work, for the purposes of the evaluation, confirmed a date range from the second to the fourth century, with several overfired tile fragments possibly indicative of a nearby kiln (see 5.5 - A Note on the Finds by D J Garner).

Further extensive excavations during the 1970s, east of the site explored during the 1930s, revealed a complex of buildings associated with both industrial and

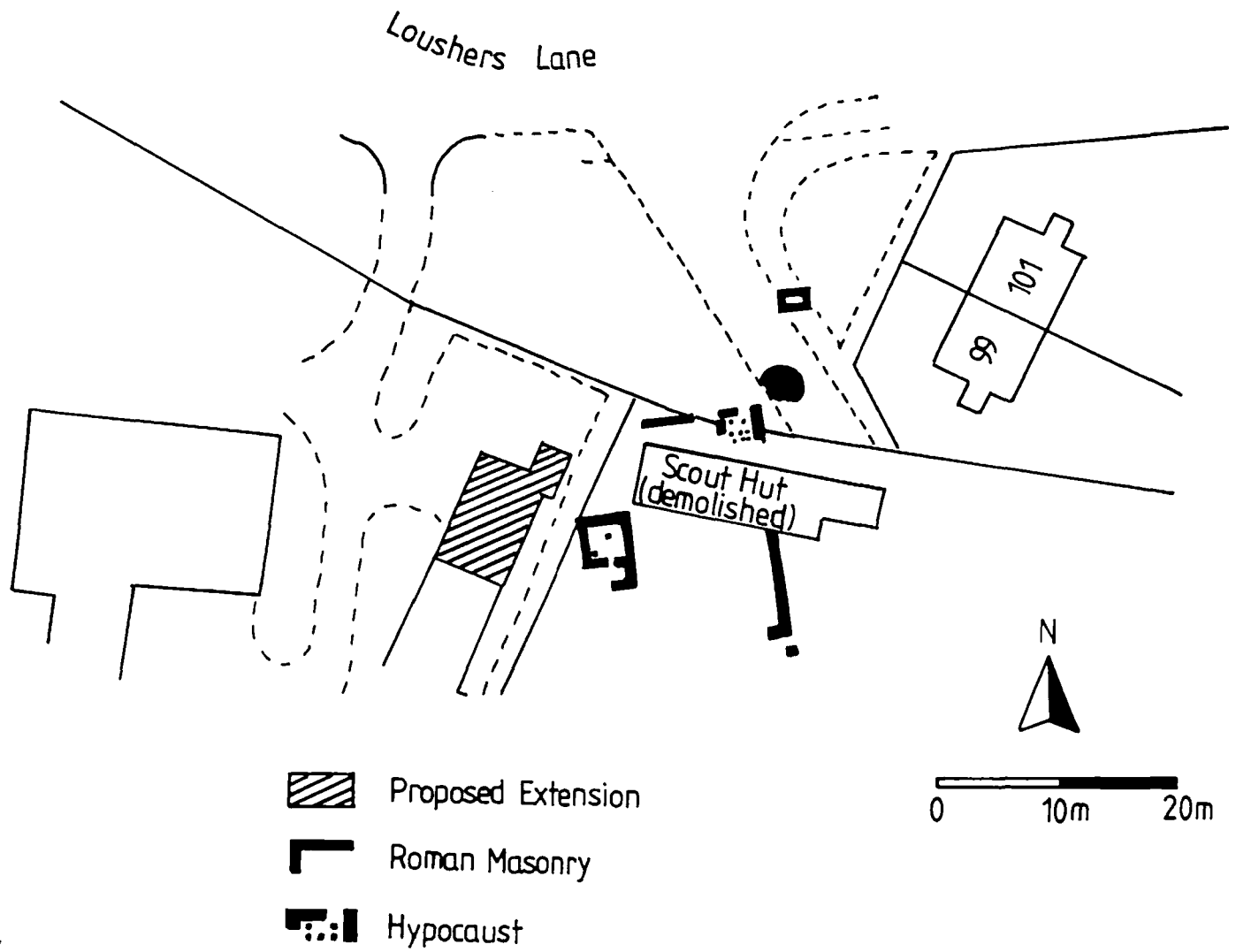


FIGURE 4 Proposed extension in relation to approximate location of Roman building(s) observed during 1930s

possibly agricultural activities (Hinchliffe *et al.*, 1992; Spencer, 1975, 58; Pierce, 1974, 33-4). The layout has very much the appearance of ribbon development and a major road running eastward, from a main settlement area, approximating to the present line of Loushers Lane, has been suggested (Hinchliffe, 1992, 118). The fording point across the Mersey would thus appear to be in the vicinity of the ancient ford marked on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map (Figure 5), however illogical this circuitous route may appear to be.

### 2.2.3 Post-Roman

After the Romans' departure there is nothing in the archaeological record to indicate continuing occupation of the area. During a long, obscure Anglo-Saxon period the river Mersey appears to have served as a boundary between Northumbria to the north and Mercia to the south. The Old English name 'Maeres-*ea*' means boundary water (Grealey, 1976,36).

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 919 AD tells us that Edward the Elder built a burh, a defensive stronghold, at nearby Thelwall to consolidate Mercian power in the region, but the exact site has not been identified (Thacker, 1987, 250-3). Nearby St Elphin's Church, a little to the north across the river, is almost certainly a pre-Norman foundation, and after the Norman Conquest the earliest lords of Warrington constructed a motte and bailey timber castle at Mote Hill, close to the church and clearly intended to control the river crossing. During the nineteenth century early occupation levels were identified beneath the twelfth century castle and two jet gaming pieces, recovered during the levelling of Mote Hill, may have been Scandinavian in origin (Grealey, 1976, 18).

The Domesday Book of 1086 AD makes no mention of either Wilderspool or Latchford in its entries, but this does not mean to say that the settlements did not exist at that time; they may have been included within another entry, perhaps Grappenhall, which was held as two manors in the eleventh century (Morris, 1978).

The settlements of Wilderspool and Latchford are first documented over one hundred years after the compilation of the Domesday Book. 'Lache-ford' is first

recorded in 1250-55 (Dodgson, 1970, 143) and the origin of the place-name has been seen as 'a ford over the "laecc" or stream' (Carter, 1971, 31), or alternatively 'ford at a boggy place' (Dodgson, 1970, 143). Wilderspool first appears as 'Wildrespul' in 1190-99 (Dodgson, 1970, 145) and the first part of the name is 'wild deor', meaning 'wild beast' or 'deer'; the second element refers to a 'pool' or 'creek' (Carter, 1971, 27-8).

Early nineteenth century field names and patterns in both Wilderspool (Watkin, 1886, 260) and Latchford (Figure 5) suggest open-field agriculture during the mediaeval period, with gradual piecemeal enclosure of common land, completed by Act of Parliament in 1773. This process may have begun particularly early here with the Domesday entry for Grappenhall referring to two enclosures (Morris, 1978).

Warrington itself flourished during the mediaeval period as a town and borough. By the seventeenth century attested trades included: tanning, sail making, copper smelting and pin-heading. Away from the main centres of industry, agricultural pursuits doubtless predominated, although fish yards are known to have existed at Latchford at this time (Grealey, 1976, 19).

In the mid-seventeenth century Warrington suffered badly during the Civil War but the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw considerable industrial and commercial expansion, due to improvements in Mersey navigation and a favourable geographic location astride the easiest route across the river into the growing industrial areas of Lancashire.



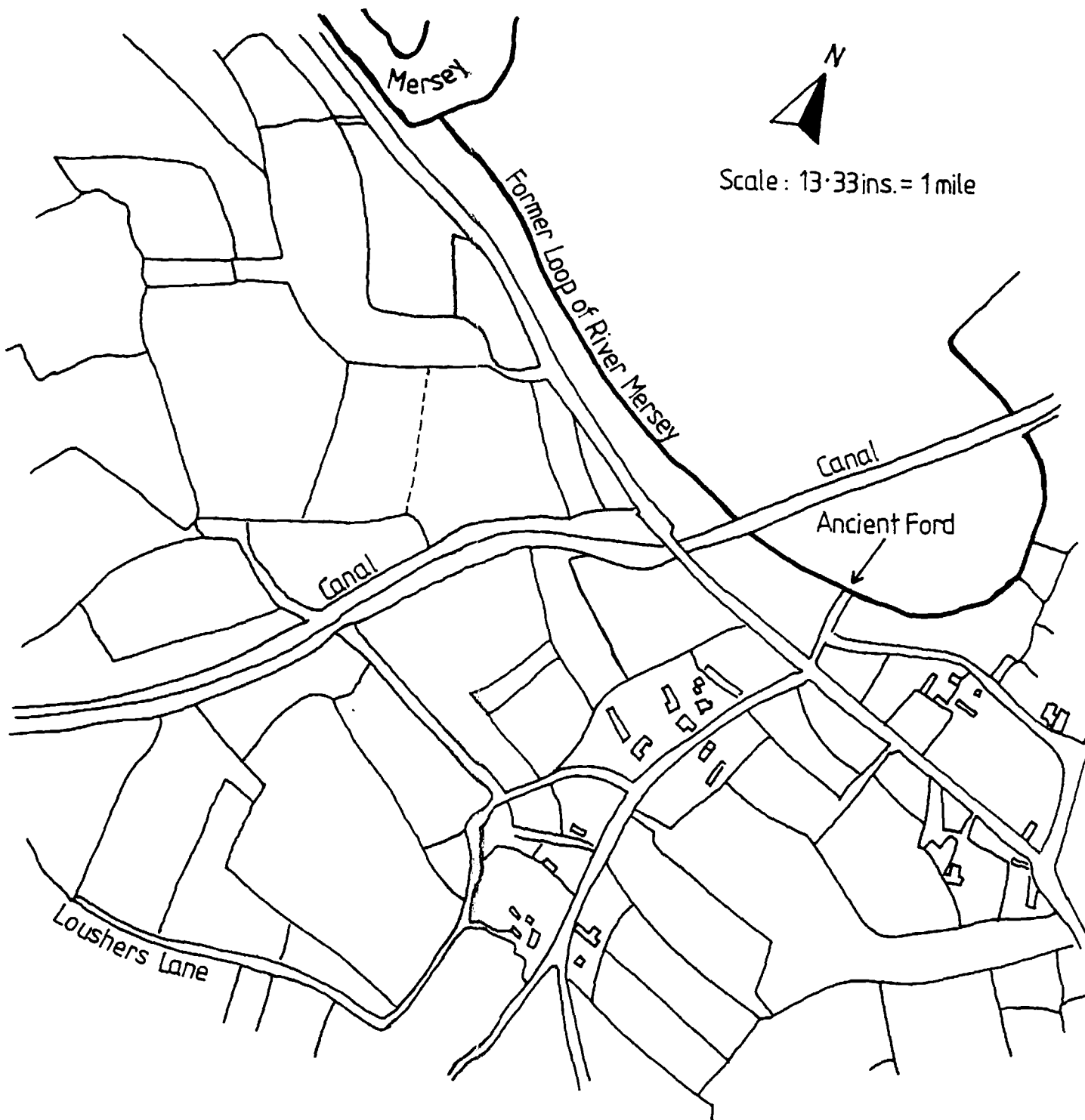


FIGURE 5 Tithe Map of Latchford and Grappenhall 1827 ( location of ford taken from 1st Edition OS Map 1872 )

### **3: FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY**

**3.1** In accordance with a brief drawn up by the Principal Archaeologist, Cheshire County Council, the fieldwork element of the evaluation comprised the manual excavation of three trial trenches, each measuring c. 1 m x 2 m.

**3.2** The trenches were located (Figure 6) to coincide with the building foundation line of the proposed extension, on its north, west and east sides.

**3.3** The proposed depth of ground disturbance during building foundation work is 900 mm; the trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 1 m to allow for possible overcutting during building operations.

**3.4** During the excavation deposits and features were recorded using context sheets and upon completion the trenches were planned, levelled and photographed. The important remains in Trench 3 were covered with plastic sheeting, both to give protection during backfilling operations and to aid identification of the trench during any future archaeological work.

**3.5** Potentially important deposits were selectively sieved during excavation to provide datable material.

**3.6** The finds recovered during the evaluation were cleaned, marked, sorted and packed for storage. A summary assessment of the finds forms an appendix to this report.

**3.7** The site archive is stored with Warrington Museum and comprises:

- i) Context sheets recording the excavated trial trenches
- ii) Plans and section drawings of the trenches, plus location maps
- iii) Full photographic record, consisting of slides and prints
- iv) Artefacts recovered during the evaluation
- v) Levelling survey
- vi) Site matrix.

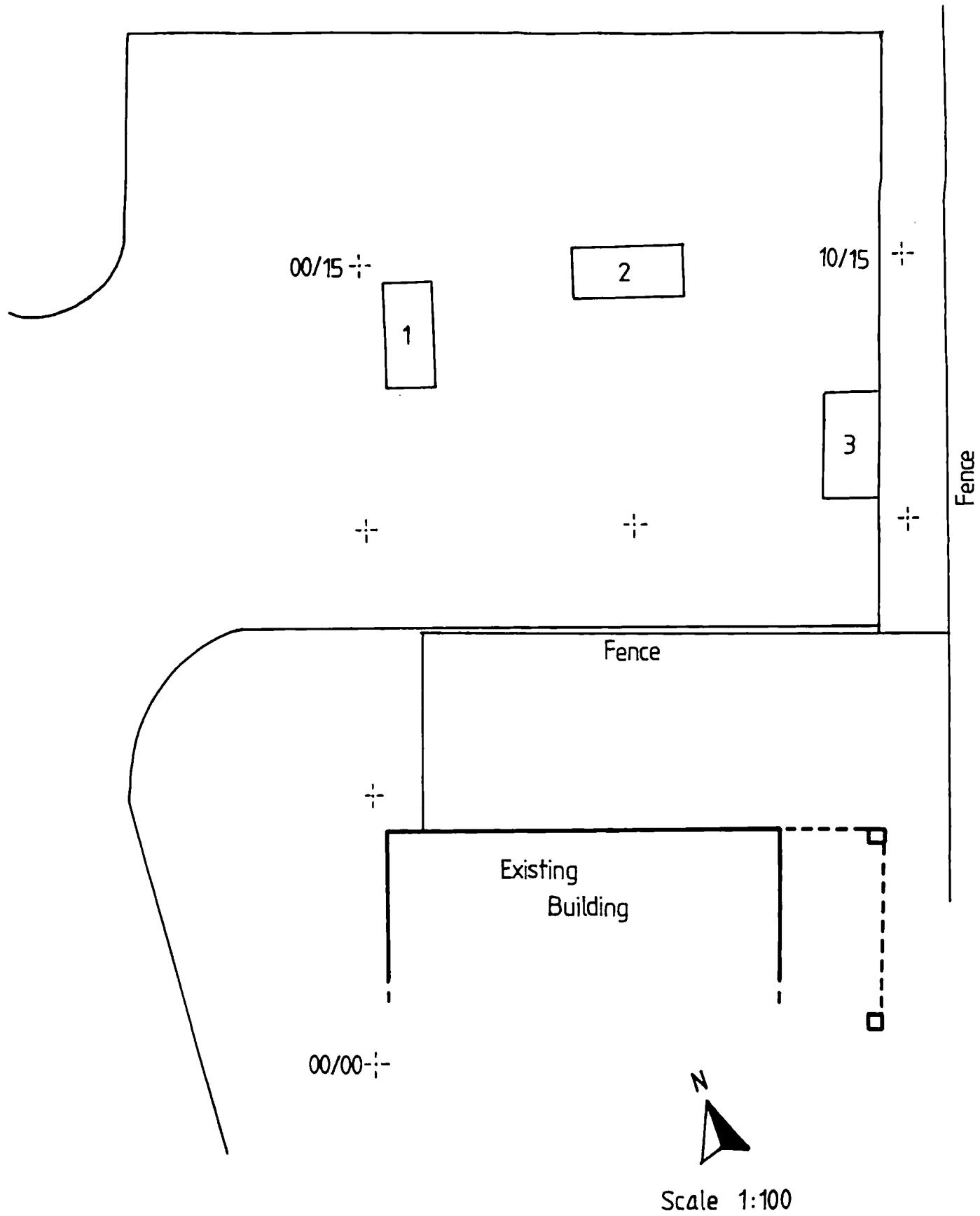


FIGURE 6 Location of Grid and Trial Trenches

## 4: RESULTS

### 4.1 Trial Trench 1 (Figures 7 and 8)

#### 4.1.1 Location

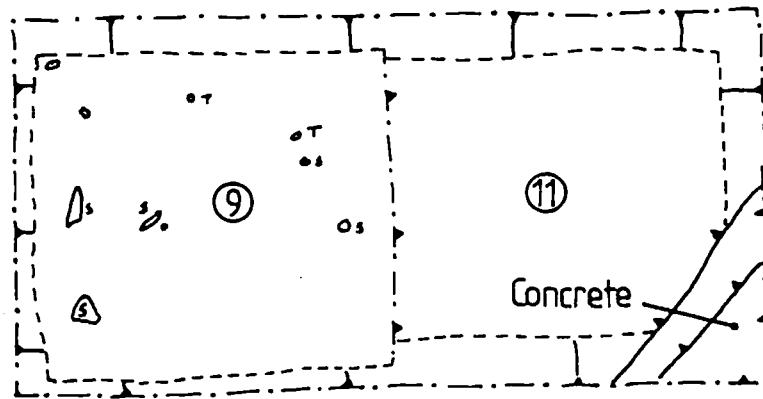
This trench, measuring c. 1 m x 2 m and aligned north-south, was located on the west side of the proposed structure with the western edge of the trench coinciding with the exterior building line.

#### 4.1.2 Description

After the removal of modern tarmac surfacing (1) and its hardcore make-up (2), with a combined thickness of 400-450 mm, a mixed level deposit of dark grey silty loam (4) with inclusions of charcoal, coal fragments and pebbles, was encountered. This deposit was c. 20 mm thick at the north end of the trench, increasing to c. 200 mm at the south end. Several sherds of eighteenth or nineteenth century date were recovered from context (4).

Beneath context (4) lay a c. 200-250 mm thick deposit comprising friable, dark yellowish-brown sandy loam (9) with inclusions of pebbles, sandstone fragments, coal, slate and tile fragments. Initially this context was only excavated in the southern half of the trench and several Roman tile fragments and three sherds of Roman pottery were recovered. However, the generally mixed character of this context together with a distinct lack of pottery from a potentially Roman deposit was archaeologically inconclusive. Consequently, the remainder of context (9) was removed and sieved: one small sherd of nineteenth century pottery was recovered.

Underlying context (9) a deposit of firm brown clay (17) contained a low percentage of stone and micaceous sandstone. This clay, although possibly a Roman clay floor in origin, appeared to be disturbed and mixed within a soil matrix identical to (9). Only half of the clay was excavated, on the south side of the trench. It sealed a level, mixed deposit of friable, generally yellowish-brown mottled sand and sandy loam (10), c. 120 mm thick and containing a low




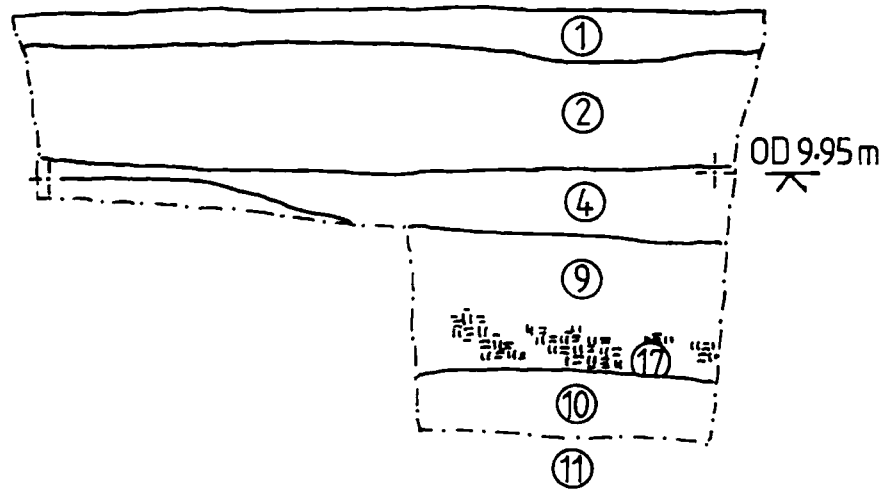
  
 Scale 1:20

FIGURE 7 Plan of Trench 1



Scale 1:20

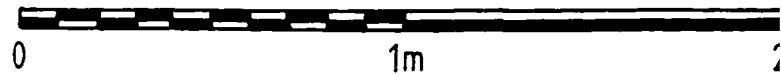


FIGURE 8 Trench 1, East Section

percentage of small sandstone fragments and pebbles, together with several fragments of Roman tile.

Below context (10), at a depth of just over 1 m below ground level, a level, friable, dark brownish-orange coarse sand (11) was observed. This context may have represented the start of the natural sandy substratum here, but its mixed appearance was perhaps suggestive of redeposition. In consideration of the depth of building foundation work no further investigation was required and the excavation was discontinued at this level.

#### **4.1.3 Provisional Interpretation**

Although the results were not wholly conclusive below the level of context (9), the probability is that all deposits excavated in this trench, below context (4), represent disturbed Roman contexts with little archaeological potential.

### **4.2 Trial Trench 2 (figures 9, 10 and 11)**

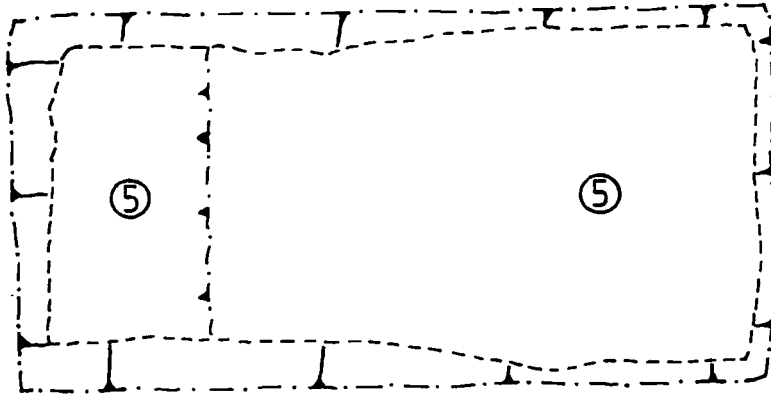
#### **4.2.1 Location**

This trench, measuring c. 1 m x 2 m and aligned east-west, was located on the north side of the proposed building with the northern edge of the trench coinciding with the exterior building line.

#### **4.2.2 Description**

Beneath the modern tarmac surface (1) and its hardcore make-up layer (2), with a combined thickness of c. 400 mm, lay a generally level deposit c. 80 mm thick and consisting of friable yellowish-brown sandy loam (3) containing a low percentage of small sandstone fragments and stone. No pottery was recovered from this context but it did yield three fragments of tile - not conclusively of Roman origin.

Removal of context (3) revealed, at a depth of just over 500 mm below ground level, friable light brownish-yellow sand (5), lightly mottled probably through root



Scale 1: 20

FIGURE 9 Plan of Trench 2

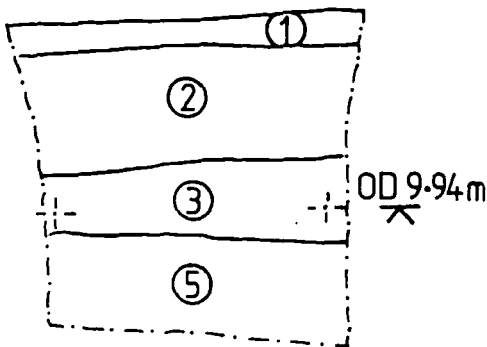


FIGURE 10 Trench 2 , East Section , Scale 1: 20

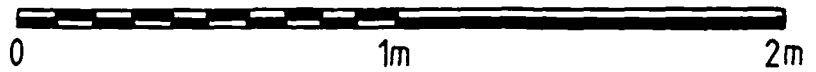
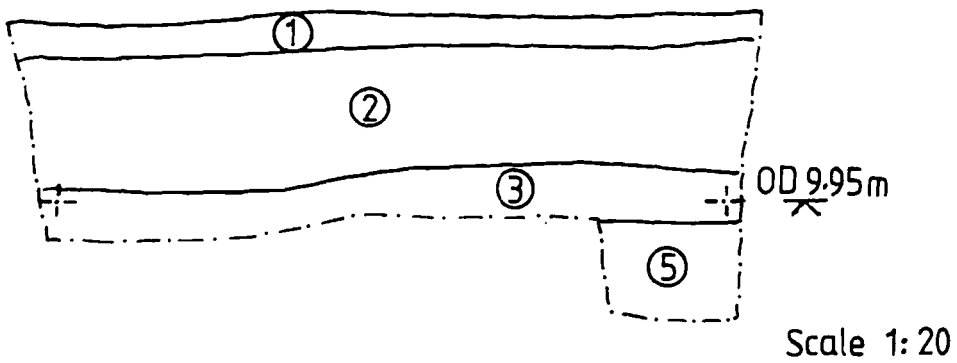


FIGURE 11 Trench 2 , North Section

action and possibly animal burrowing. In a small slot, up against the east section, this deposit was excavated to a depth of c. 800 mm below ground level; this slot confirmed that the deposit was the natural sandy substratum.

#### **4.2.3 Provisional Interpretation**

No archaeological deposits of significance survive and no truncated features were observed to cut the natural sand substratum. The area must have been graded down, probably during the construction of the school.

Interestingly, the level of the natural sand in this trench was significantly higher than in both trenches 1 and 3, and this certainly suggested a cut into the natural sand to accommodate the features observed in Trench 3.

### **4.3 Trial Trench 3 (Figures 12, 13, 14 and 15)**

#### **4.3.1 Location**

This trench, measuring c. 1 m x 2 m and aligned north-south, was located to coincide with the building line of the proposed structure on its east side. Of the three, this trench was located closest to the Roman buildings observed in the 1930s (Figure 4).

#### **4.3.2 Description**

This trench contained the most interesting archaeological results.

Beneath the modern tarmac (1) and its hardcore make-up layer (2), with a combined thickness of c. 450 mm, lay a level mixed deposit comprising dark yellowish-brown sandy loam (6) c. 200-300 mm thick and mottled with lighter brownish-yellow sand; it contained a high (c. 30%) content of sandstone fragments together with many fragments of Roman tile and mortar/plaster. Two sherds of Roman pottery, together with one modern sherd datable to the eighteenth or nineteenth century, and a modern glazed tile fragment, were recovered.



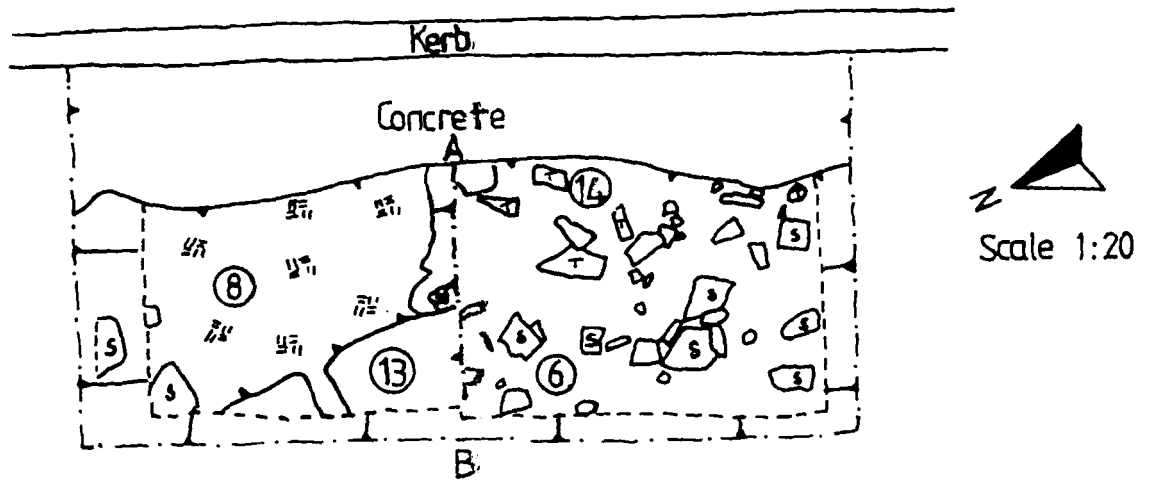


FIGURE 12 Plan of Trench 3

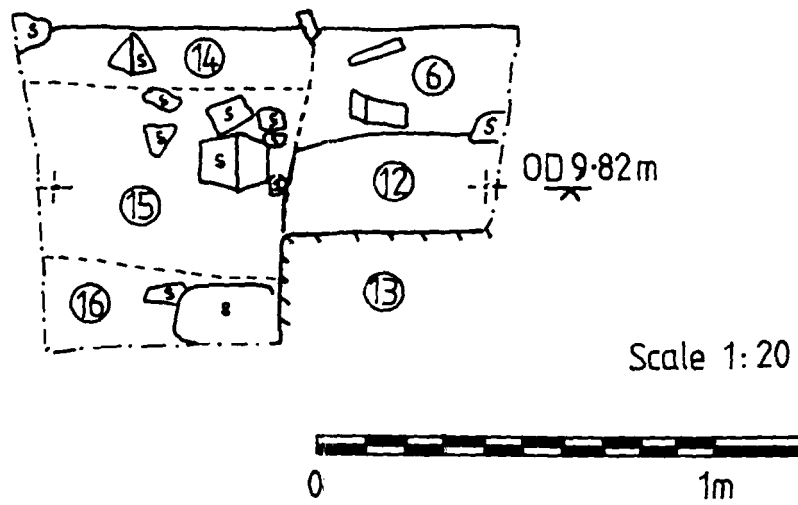


FIGURE 13 Section along line A-B on Fig.12

After excavating a small test slot in the north-east corner of the trench down to a possible clay floor level (8), further investigation was considered necessary and the northern half of the trench was excavated down to the level of the clay. The sandy loam contexts removed - (6), (7), (14), (15), (16) - were very similar in texture, and detection of marginal differences in colour and consistence was only possible through close examination in section after excavation. The removal of these contexts revealed a single course of masonry, aligned north-south and composed of well-dressed rectangular sandstone blocks (13) (Figures 12 and 14). On its east side this wall was associated with a mid reddish-brown clay floor (8) containing patches of brownish-yellow, coarse-grained, perhaps mortary, sand - evidently the interior of a Roman structure. Only the east side, the interior face, of the wall (13) was exposed during the evaluation and its full width could not be established with certainty. Immediately above the wall lay a deposit of light reddish-brown, coarse-grained sand (12) c. 150 mm thick and containing a rather high percentage (c. 15%) of sandstone fragments and stone; no finds were recovered from this context. The sand also appeared to fill the interstices of the sandstone wall but its use as a bonding material - unless decayed mortar similar to that noted within the clay floor - seems improbable.

The excavation was discontinued at the level of the clay floor.

#### **4.3.3 Provisional Interpretation**

The precise details of the stratigraphic relationships in this trench were not conclusive and the mixed nature of the sandy loam sequence, sealing the intact Roman remains, together with the conspicuous absence of Roman pottery and (previously discarded?) tile fragments, lead to a suspicion of redeposited Roman contexts, perhaps associated with the 1930s excavation. Further, the position of the structures previously observed (Figure 4), on the information available, cannot be located with precision and, assuming a reasonable margin of error, there is the possibility that the evaluation has revealed the western edge of the rectangular sandstone building with puddled clay floor excavated during the 1930s.

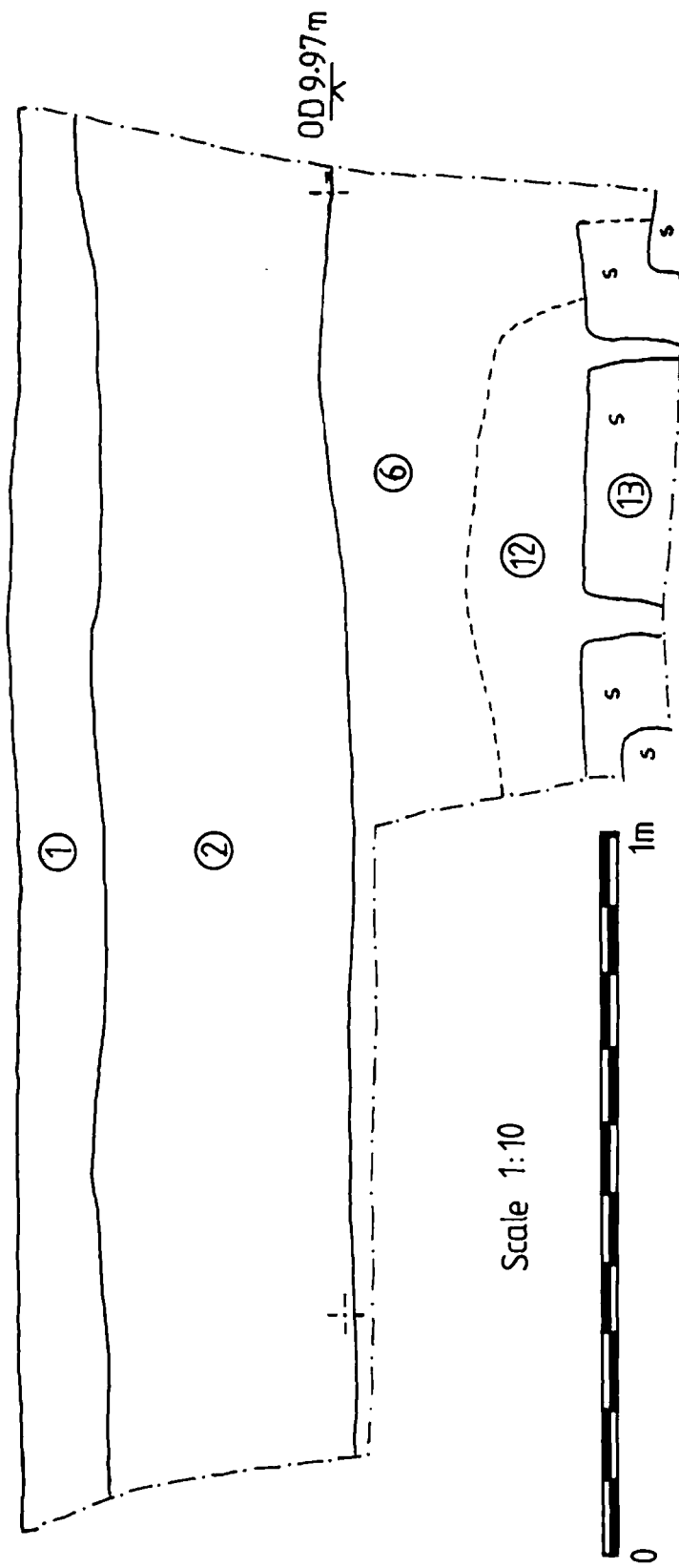


FIGURE 14 Trench 3, West Section

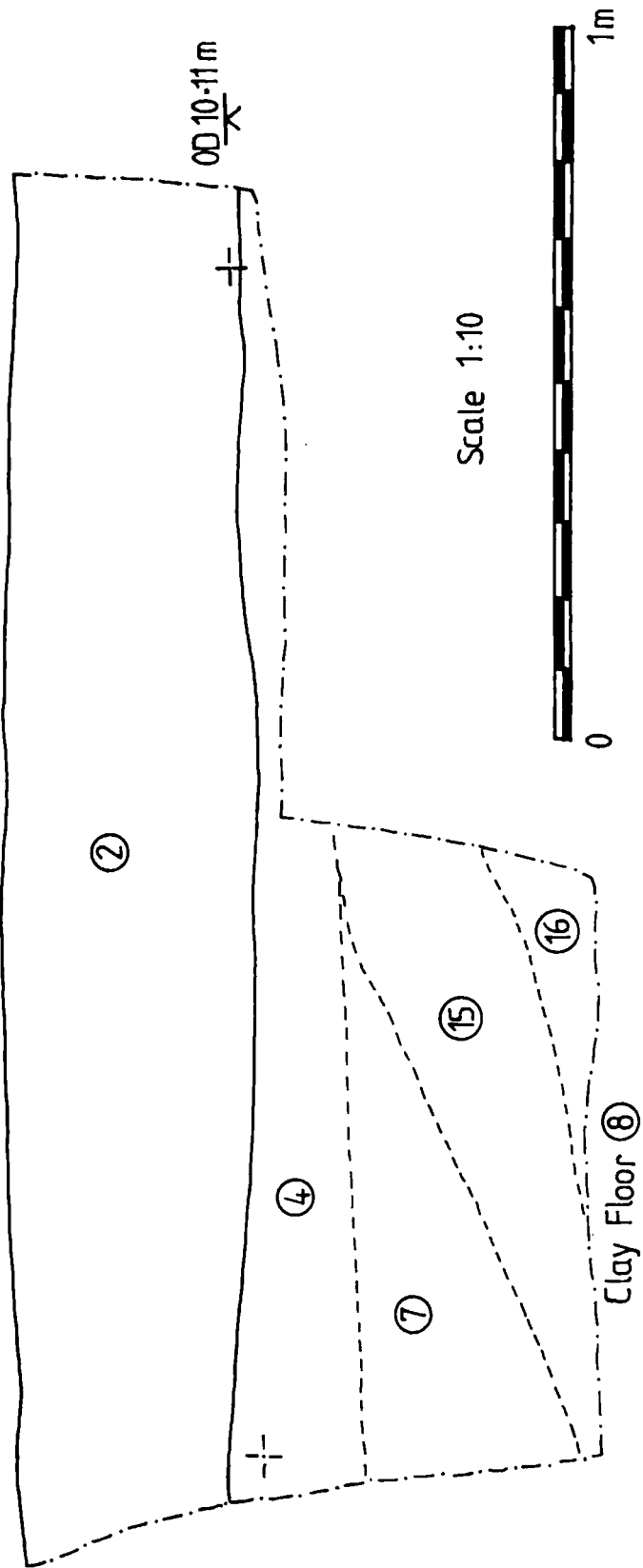


FIGURE 15 Trench 3, East Section

Although unclear and not recorded as such, it is noteworthy that the loam deposits - (7), (14), (15), (16) - may have been in a cut (see Figure 13); this notion is strengthened by the concentration of micaceous sandstone fragments which formed an indistinct edge within (6) essentially following the projected southward line of the sandstone masonry; similarly there was a clear edge to context (12) (Figure 13) which followed the same line. If not redeposited in modern times - and there was no evidence to resolve this - the thick deposit of stony sand over the walling may indicate demolition within the Roman period, and a later phase of activity. This must, of course, remain conjectural.



Plate 1: Excavating Roman sandstone wall, Trench 3

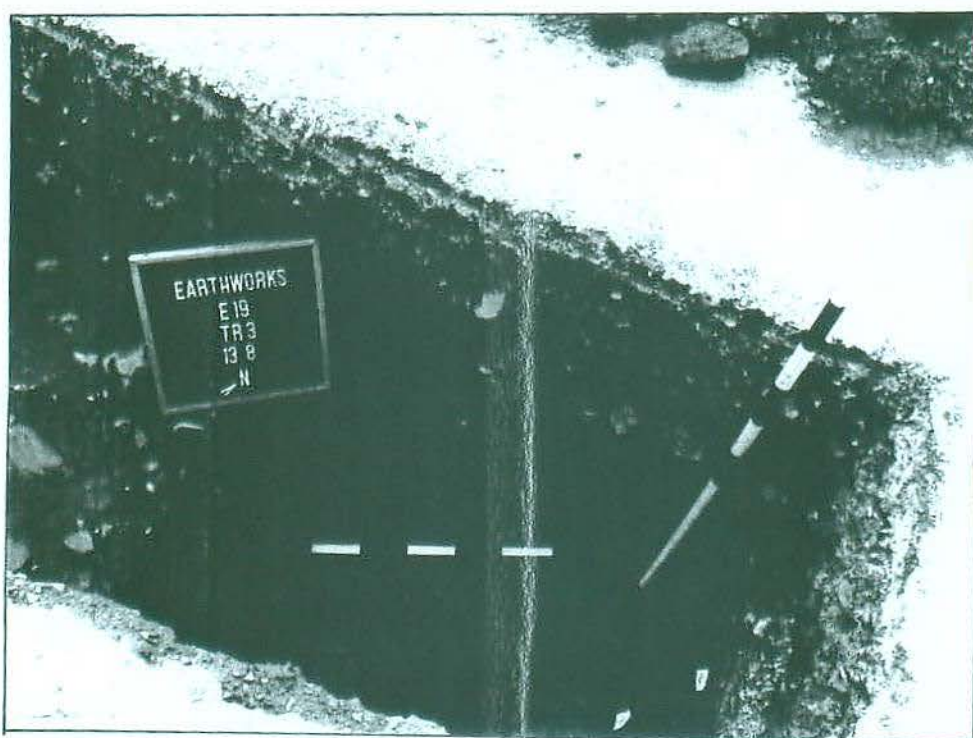


Plate 2: Roman wall and clay floor, Trench 3

## **5: DISCUSSION**

**5.1** From the above it is apparent that important and sensitive archaeological remains, datable to the Roman period, survive. This accords with the evidence from previous investigations.

**5.2** However, considerable damage to the archaeological levels appears to have occurred, through the grading down of the area during modern construction work and also, debatably, as a result of previous archaeological investigation during the 1930s. Presumably the post-Roman plough soil, on average perhaps c. 450 mm thick (Hinchliffe, 1992, 100) and evident on the 1930s photographs (Fairclough, unpublished archive) was also removed.

**5.3** Opinions differed during the site work but, on balance, the evidence does seem to support the view that the structural remains revealed during the evaluation form part of the remains exposed (but not removed) during the 1930s, and belong to the west side of the small rectangular structure located closest to the redevelopment site (Figure 4). The mixed deposits, lack of finds and quantity of small, perhaps discarded, tile fragments, may be the result of post-excavation backfilling. Moreover, despite the imprecision involved in actually locating the previously excavated structures, and remaining mindful of the fact that a building's west wall was revealed during evaluation, there appears to be insufficient space to squeeze in another structure here.

**5.4** Further, larger-scale, excavation would be required to resolve these matters.

**5.5 A Note on the Finds, by D J Garner**

### **5.5.1 Reassessment of 1930s Finds**

For the purposes of the evaluation a brief assessment was made of the finds recovered during the 1930s excavations, stored in Warrington Museum; the Museum references and box numbers form part of the bibliography for the summary finds catalogue.

Due to the archaeological techniques employed at the time, the finds are of little stratigraphic value, in terms of the 'phasing' or sequence of deposits and structures on the site. The reassessment, however, did confirm a wide date range for the pottery assemblage indicating occupation from the second to the fourth century AD. Many large fragments (c. 200-300 mm) of tile (box tile, *imbrices* and *tegulae*), brick and pottery had evidently come from undisturbed and probably closely datable contexts, which augurs well for any future, controlled archaeological work in the vicinity. There were also sizeable fragments of tile which defied immediate classification, and may repay further analysis. As has been noted previously (Thompson, 1965, 80) some overfired and distorted examples of tile suggest the nearby presence of a tile kiln; one large fused mass of probable tile kiln waste was also noted.

Both ceramic tiles and micaceous sandstone 'slates' appear to have been used as roofing material, suggested also by the current evaluation. One fragment of probable window glass was also noted, and several pieces of possibly worked greenish sandstone, perhaps not local, may have been used as decorative masonry.

#### 5.5.2 Finds Recovered from 1993 Evaluation

The small quantity of Roman pottery retrieved from the evaluation was either badly abraded or of no stylistic use, and therefore the dating has been based upon the periods of time that the respective pottery kilns were producing the identified fabrics. In the case of the local Wilderspool orange wares the Loushers Lane excavations carried out by Hinchliffe suggest that Hartley and Webster's (1973, 77-103) provisional dating of c. 100-165 AD should be extended into the third century AD.

The Roman tile appears to include three main fabrics:

- i) a hard, smooth reddish fabric which probably originated at Holt,
- ii) a hard/soft coarse sandy, orange fabric very similar to the coarse orange ware pottery fabric from Wilderspool and thus probably of local origin,
- iii) a yellow fabric of uncertain origin.



The relatively high occurrence of scoring marks upon the Roman tiles seems to suggest the presence of a hypocaust; but some of the thicker bricks bearing scoring marks may have been designed as vertically-mounted wall tiles, as the technique was primarily used as an aid to the attachment of mortar/plaster.

## 6: CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The archaeological remains that survive within the area of the proposed extension will need to be given due consideration prior to the commencement of building work.

6.2 In accordance with the current national archaeological policy of preservation of remains *in situ* wherever possible, the careful design of foundation form and layout should be pursued to avoid disturbance to the remains on the east side of the development. If damage to and/or destruction of the archaeology proves to be unavoidable then redevelopment will need to be preceded by a properly resourced programme of archaeological investigation.

6.3 The western half of the site appears to be less promising archaeologically but, in consideration of previous discoveries, the proximity of Roman structures/deposits and the evidence for disturbed/redeposited Roman remains, archaeological monitoring, in the form of a watching brief, plus a contingency time allowance for any recording that may be necessary, would be a prudent response.

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### **Map Sources** (excluding OS)

Enclosure map and award of Grappenhall and Latchford	1773	CRO DGR/D/39
Copy of above (reduced)	1774	CRO DGR/D/40
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Altered Tithe Map and Apportionment Grappenhall and Latchford	1897	CRO DGR/D/42

**Project Design  
Loushers Lane Special School Extension  
Archaeological Evaluation June 1993  
Earthworks Job No.E19**

The following framework has been designed in accordance with a brief drawn up by Cheshire County Council's Principal Archaeologist.

1. Background
2. Aims and Objectives
3. Methods
4. Standards, Conditions, Arrangements, Timescale
5. Staffing

June 1993

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### **1. BACKGROUND**

**1.1** The proposed development site lies potentially on the east side of an extensive Roman settlement at Wilderspool on the south bank of the river Mersey immediately south of Warrington.

**1.2** Past chance discoveries during expansion and development dating from the eighteenth century, together with extensive archaeological investigation, have gone some way towards developing an understanding of the site's history; but its precise character, history and extent are still uncertain.

**1.3** During the 1970s archaeological work in the Loushers Lane area indicated that both circular buildings, with a native flavour, and rectangular enclosures were associated with domestic, industrial and agricultural activities. The discovery of a hypocaust - unique on the site - and painted wall plaster also point to more sophisticated structures.

**1.4** A Roman cemetery may also lie towards the east side of the settlement.

**1.5** The 1993 excavations on the Greenall Whitley brewery site, west of the main A49 trunk road and c. 500 m to the west of the Loushers Lane site, have indicated - notwithstanding the action of the plough - the localised survival of substantial areas of stratigraphy.

## **2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

**2.1** The primary objective of the evaluation would be to identify the nature, depth, survival and likely extent of archaeological features and deposits, and to assess their potential importance.

**2.2** To assess the vulnerability of any surviving archaeology and suggest a mitigation strategy.

**2.3** To compile a full and illustrated report setting out the results of the excavation.

**2.4** The final response to the results of the evaluation will be determined by Cheshire County's Principal Archaeologist.

## **3. METHODS**

**3.1** The background research element of the project will comprise an assessment of all relevant documentary (secondary and some primary) sources, artifactual and linguistic evidence.

**3.2** The fieldwork element will consist of the hand excavation of 3 trial trenches, each measuring c. 2 m x 1 m and located along the west, north and east sides of the proposed foundation trenches.

**3.3** If necessary a machine will be employed to break through the existing tarmac surface.

**3.4** If neither archaeological deposits nor the natural sandy substratum are encountered at a depth of c. 900 mm - the proposed depth of foundation work - the trenches will be further excavated to a depth of c. 1 m to allow for machine overcutting during building work.

**3.5** The excavation will be undertaken with a view to minimising the damage to sensitive archaeological deposits. However, in order to achieve an understanding of the deposits and to assist informed judgement, deposits and negative features, if apparent at a depth higher than 900 mm, may require partial excavation.

**3.6** All deposits and features will be fully recorded using:

3.6.1 Context sheets

3.6.2 Plans at scale 1:20; sections at 1:10

3.6.3 Comprehensive photographic record: colour prints 120 mm format;  
mounted colour slides 35 mm format

3.6.4 Levelling survey

3.6.5 A plan at a suitable scale (1:50, 1:100) showing location of site and position of trenches in relation to published boundaries.

**3.7** Selective on-site sieving (10 mm mesh) will be employed to aid recovery of artefacts.

**3.8** The artefacts recovered during the evaluation will be analysed and catalogued; a summary catalogue will form an appendix to the final report.

**3.9** Deposits likely to yield palaeoenvironmental data will be assessed for their suitability for further analysis; this assessment will take the form of sieving small (c. 100 cu.mm) samples through 1 mm and 300 micron sieves followed by quick microscopic scan. The results, as appropriate, will form an appendix to the final report.

## **4. STANDARDS, CONDITIONS, ARRANGEMENTS, TIMESCALE**

**4.1** All excavation and post-excavation work will be carried out in accordance with Cheshire County Council's General Conditions for Approved Archaeological Contractors.

**4.2** On-site works to be carried out between 10 and 16 June 1993.

**4.3** Final draft of report to be completed within two weeks of the end of the excavation.

**4.4** The site archive will comprise:

4.4.1 Evaluation report

4.4.2 Context sheets



- 4.4.3 Site drawings
- 4.4.4 Photographic records
- 4.4.5 Artefacts (processed: washed, marked, bagged)
- 4.4.6 Catalogue of finds
- 4.4.7 Levelling survey
- 4.4.8 Site matrix

4.5 Deposition of site archive to be determined.

## 5. STAFFING

<b>Staff:</b>	B Turner-Flynn	: Director of on-site works
	W Walker	: Background research, report preparation
	D J Garner	: Excavation, finds analysis
	I R Smith	: Excavation, Environmentalist, flint analysis (if required)

## THE FINDS FROM LOUSHERS LANE 1993: SUMMARY CATALOGUE

## THE POTTERY

Context 2	1-3	Modern sherds datable to late eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century.
	4-5	Roman: orange coarseware. Probably local.
Context 4	6-13	Modern sherds: eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century.
Context 6	14	Modern: eighteenth or nineteenth century.
	15-16	Roman: orange coarseware.
Context 9	17	Modern: nineteenth century.
	18-19	Roman: orange coarseware.
	20	Roman: white coarseware. Probably Oxfordshire product.

## THE TILE

Context 2	1	Modern.
	2-3	Roman: orange fabric.
Context 3	4-6	Uncertain: orange fabric.
Context 4	7-8	Uncertain: orange fabric.
Context 6	9-28	Roman: orange, red, yellow fabrics.
	29	Uncertain: light red fabric.
	30	Post-mediaeval: orange fabric.
Context 7	31-43	Roman: orange, red, yellow fabrics.
Context 9	44-48	Roman: orange and yellow fabrics.
Context 10	49-52	Roman: orange and red fabrics.

## THE IRON

Context 4	1	Uncertain: cylinder shape.
Context 9	2	Roman: Square sectioned nail.

## THE GLASS

Context 2	1	Modern: window glass.
Context 4	2-4	Modern: fragments of vessel and window glass.

## MORTAR/PLASTER

Context 6		Probably Roman: seven fragments.
Context 7		Uncertain: five fragments.

## THE STONE

Context 2		Two fragments of micaceous sandstone 'slate'.
Context 6		One fragment of micaceous sandstone 'slate'.
Context 7		One fragment of micaceous sandstone 'slate'.
Context 9		Two fragments of micaceous sandstone 'slate'.

Dan Garner  
Earthworks Archaeological Services  
June 1993

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PE 9.5	1, 2, 14
PE 9.7	8
PE 9.8	3, 7
PE 9.9	10

Also one separate box reference: PW 16 History 1, Romano-British 3.