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**Extension and Upgrading of properties 38-40
Church Street, Bungalow and Granary
Ribchester**

**Report on Archaeological Evaluation and Watching
Brief**



Commissioned and Funded by: Len Fox

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Archive Repositories

The full archive, including site records, slides and digital and hard copies of the report will be deposited with:

Ribchester Roman Museum
Riverside
Ribchester
Preston
PR3 3XS

01254 878261

Finds from the project will also be deposited at the Museum.

Further copies of the report will be deposited with:

Lancashire County Record Office
Bow Lane,
Preston
PR1 2RE

Tel. 01772 261550

And the client, Len Fox:
39 Church Street
Ribchester
Preston
PR3 3XS

Tel. 01254 878026

Introduction

Patrick Tostevin, archaeological consultant, was commissioned to undertake a series of watching briefs at 38-40 Church Street, Ribchester (centred NGR SD6489 3536) by Mr Len Fox (the Client).

The Client commissioned the project in observance of standard planning procedures followed by Ribble Valley Borough Council, acting on the advice of Lancashire County Archaeological Service (Appendix 1).

The archaeological survey was undertaken between 1997 and 2000 prior to the development and extension of the properties 38-40 Church Street and the conversion of an existing granary building and construction of a new-build dormer bungalow at the back of the premises.

Archaeological Background

Since the nineteenth century Ribchester has been the subject of innumerable archaeological excavations, evaluations and surveys. The Roman archaeology in parts of the village is therefore reasonably well understood but other areas require further detailed examination.

The earliest excavations were concentrated on the fort. The location of the fort, on the south side of the village and its extent, were established first and major early twentieth century excavations by Thomas May characterized the remains. The headquarters building, commander's house and granaries are beneath the area of modern Ribchester centred round the church.

Roman roads leaving Ribchester follow the course of the main village streets, Church Street and Water Street. The civilian settlement outside the fort walls expanded along these streets and covered approximately the same area as present day Ribchester.

Much of the vicus therefore lies beneath the village and has remained largely unexcavated as a result. However, excavations and watching briefs over the last 40 years have increased our knowledge of the settlement, and, in particular, those which took place in 1989 and 1990 at St Wilfrid's Graveyard and at the site of the demolished Bee Mill on the north side of the village, added considerably to our knowledge of this part of Ribchester.

It is clear from previous work that Roman activity, certainly military activity, at Ribchester was at its peak from the late first century until the end of the second. From AD200 the settlement appears to have declined and its focus possibly shifted from the fort to the civil settlement, centred on civic buildings, the character of which, are yet to be discovered (Buxton, Howard-Davies, 2000).

What is known is that most of the buildings outside the fort were of timber construction. Examples of wattle fences and buildings are known from several sites at Ribchester, most notably from the 1989 excavation of St Wilfrid's graveyard. Excavations of parts of the playing field have also revealed similar structures. Indeed one of the reasons Ribchester is such a notable Roman site is because of the soil conditions which favour preservation of organic materials.

It also became evident during the course of the excavations at Ribblesdale Mill that Roman occupation developed along the Roman road out of Ribchester, following present day Church Street. Evidence of this ribbon type of development was likely to surface at the site at 38-40 Church Street.

Methodology

Standard practices were adhered to during the course of the project.

Excavation of the foundation trenches was carried out by machine using a mini excavator (Kubota).

The depth of excavation of trenches was limited to that required for foundation construction.

All archaeological deposits were recorded on site and sections drawn where appropriate. Photography was used to record deposits and features

All artefacts recovered were cleaned during post-excavation.

Recording of Trench 3, 1999, was rendered extremely difficult because of a flood of raw sewage into the trench during its excavation.

Archaeology

Trench Descriptions

Trench 1 (July 1997) was excavated at the west end of 38 Church Street within the limits of the proposed extension. It measured 1.50m x 1.00m and was orientated northeast-southwest.

A concrete yard surface [2] covered this part of the site. Beneath the concrete was a hardcore fill comprising brick within a dark grey sandy loam [2]. Underlying the hardcore was a layer of topsoil [7]. Two modern ceramic drainpipes crossed the trench, cut into the topsoil [4] and [6]. Beneath the topsoil was a layer of subsoil [8]. A mottled orange/ light grey, sticky sandy clay [9] underlay [8]. This horizon contained occasional fragments of Roman pottery. The layer beneath [9] was a dark grey gritty clay containing charcoal [10]. The horizon below [10] was a medium grey sticky clay containing occasional pebbles [11] underneath which was an orange/ light grey sticky clay with some charcoal and small infrequent pieces of Roman pottery.

Trench 2 (July 1997) was excavated on the west side of the site, located within the limits of the new build dormer bungalow. It also measured 1.50m x 1.00m and was aligned northeast - southwest.

The top layer comprised topsoil, a black sandy clay loam containing small stones, mortar and post-medieval pottery [1]. Beneath [1] was a layer of crumbly, sticky medium to dark grey subsoil containing charcoal [8]. Underlying [8] was a horizon of mottled orange/ light grey sticky sandy clay. Several features were cut through [8] and [9]. These were a drainpipe [2] and [3], an animal burial [4] and [5] and an unidentified feature [6], the fill of which comprised friable dark grey black silty clay loam containing mortar flecks [7].

The horizon beneath [9] was a sticky mottled mid grey clay containing charcoal and sand [10] and infrequent sherds of Roman pottery. A very dark grey sticky clay [11] containing Roman pottery, charcoal and occasional small pebbles up to approximately 10cm in diameter underlay [10]. Visible in the north-east facing section was a feature [12] that cut through [10] and [11]. It contained two identifiable fills. The uppermost was a friable orange/ grey sand [13] containing some clay and some very orange coarse sand lenses. A very sticky smooth silt containing charcoal and roots of vegetation lay beneath [13]. It was dark grey/ green in colour.

Trench 3 (August 1997) was located at the north of the site and was aligned northeast-southwest, and northwest-southeast, following the course of the foundations to the extension to No.40.

The northeast-southwest section measured 3m in length. The uppermost horizon consisted of friable black clay sandy loam topsoil [1] containing occasional post medieval pottery and large stones up to 20cm across the largest dimension. A mottled sticky orange/ grey clay [2] containing few inclusions, except a small amount of charcoal, lay beneath the topsoil at the southwest end of this section of the trench. This layer tapered until it faded out and a distinctly different horizon of mottled

medium grey/ orange/ brown clay [3] continued from this point towards the end of the trench. This layer was cut by the cottage foundation trench [4] and [5].

A brown clay containing occasional charcoal flecks [6] underlay [2] and [3]. Beneath [6] was a sticky brown grey clay [7] with cobbles set into the top of the layer. The cobbles were up to 25cm across the largest dimension. Some were flat and angular. The layer also contained infrequent sherds of Roman pottery, fragments of burnt bone and patches of charcoal. In parts the layer was also gritty. Underlying this layer was a horizon of grey sticky mottled clay [8] and at the base of the trench was a sticky, mottled orange clay [9].

The northwest-southeast section of Trench 3 was 4.50 metres in length. The layers followed those observed in the previous section. Cutting across the trench on an approximately north-south alignment was a linear feature [15]. The feature cut through layers [7] and [8]. The fill [16] was a dark grey sticky clay fill containing much charcoal, burnt bone, pebbles up to 15cm in diameter, gravel and Roman pottery.

Trench 4 (July 1998) was aligned northwest-southeast, following the course of the foundations to the extensions to No 38 and No.39.

The surface layer [1] was a continuation of the concrete slab at Trench 1. Beneath the concrete was a layer of friable dark grey silty sandy clay containing small fragments of charcoal and infrequent small stones less than 2cm in size. Beneath this layer was a horizon of sticky medium to light grey sandy silty clay [3] with orange/ brown mottling. Within this deposit were occasional small pieces of charcoal and brick. Two modern drains [7], [8] and [9], [10] cut layers [2] and [3].

The layer underlying [3] was a dark grey, sticky, gritty, silty, clay [4] that contained an ephemeral layer of cobbles up to 10cm in diameter. It also contained infrequent charcoal and Roman brick. The horizon below [4] was a layer of sticky medium grey clay with orange mottling [5] that contained brick, charcoal and daub. Horizons [4] and [5] were cut by a linear feature [11] that contained a light grey/ orange mottled sandy fill. At the south end of the trench beneath [3] was a layer of medium to dark grey gritty, sticky, sandy, silty, clay with infrequent very small stones and occasional fragments of charcoal, Roman tile and pottery.

A leak of raw sewage into the trench from a live drain damaged by the machine precluded investigation at the south end of the trench. Over time, leakage of sewage had stained the horizons in this part of the site dark grey, making observation difficult. Several modern drains also crossed this part of the trench.

Trench 5 (July 1999) was aligned northwest-southeast, and measured 9.7m in length. It was located parallel to the building at the rear of the property and on the site of the new bungalow.

The upper most layer was a dark grey friable, silty, clay, loam [1] containing very occasional stones up to 30cm across the largest dimension and fragments of mortar. This layer also contained very occasional sherds of post medieval pottery and glass.

Beneath [1] was a light grey/ orange or brown mottled sticky, sandy clay [2] containing very infrequent fragments of Roman pottery. Underlying this horizon was a layer similar in character that consisted of lighter grey clay and darker brown mottling. This layer also contained less sand. A very friable light grey/ grey/orange sand [4] underlay [3]. Observed at the south end of the trench was a modern posthole containing fragments of wood.

Trench 2 (July 1999) was excavated at the southwest end of trench 1 on a northwest southeast alignment. It was similar to trench 1 in character, although the topsoil was shallower and more Roman levels were revealed. However there were no discernable features.

Finds

There was a small assemblage of material from the site. It comprised pottery and tile/ brick with very occasional pieces of burnt bone. These finds are awaiting specialist referral but indications are that they are mainly 2nd century AD in date.

Discussion

Identifiable Roman stratigraphy was recorded across the whole of the site. The most notable features were discovered on the northeast side of the premises closest to where the original Roman street frontage would have been.

The nature of this evidence, areas of cobbling and linear cut features, is typical of some of the archaeology noted from other parts of the Roman civilian settlement at Ribchester. The remains at Ribblesdale Mill (Buxton, Howard-Davies, 2000) closely resembled those found on the site at 38-40 Church Street.

On the southwest side of the site features were less evident but much, undisturbed Roman stratigraphy was present.

The archaeology has clearly been damaged by the activities undertaken during the construction of the foundations of the extensions but the stratigraphy beneath the floors should be offered some protection by the concrete rafts.

Recommendations

The archaeology at the site is significant. If any further work is planned at the site the writer recommends a permanent presence watching brief be maintained during excavations for any building work or service installations.

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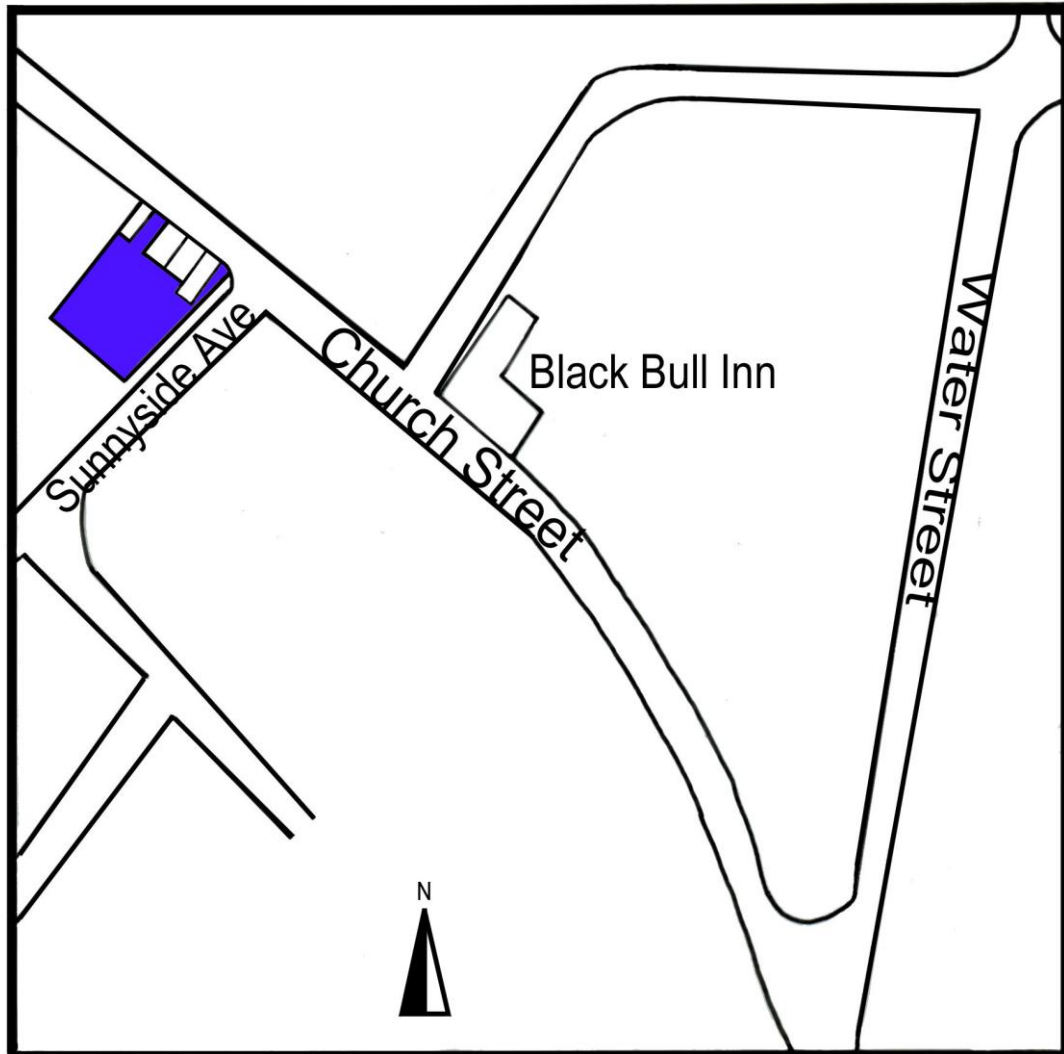
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Appendices

Illustrations

Site Location Plan





Trench 3, Roman cobbles



Trench 3, Linear feature