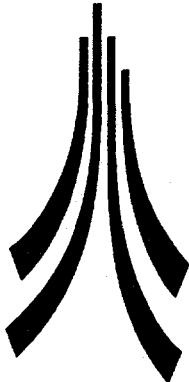


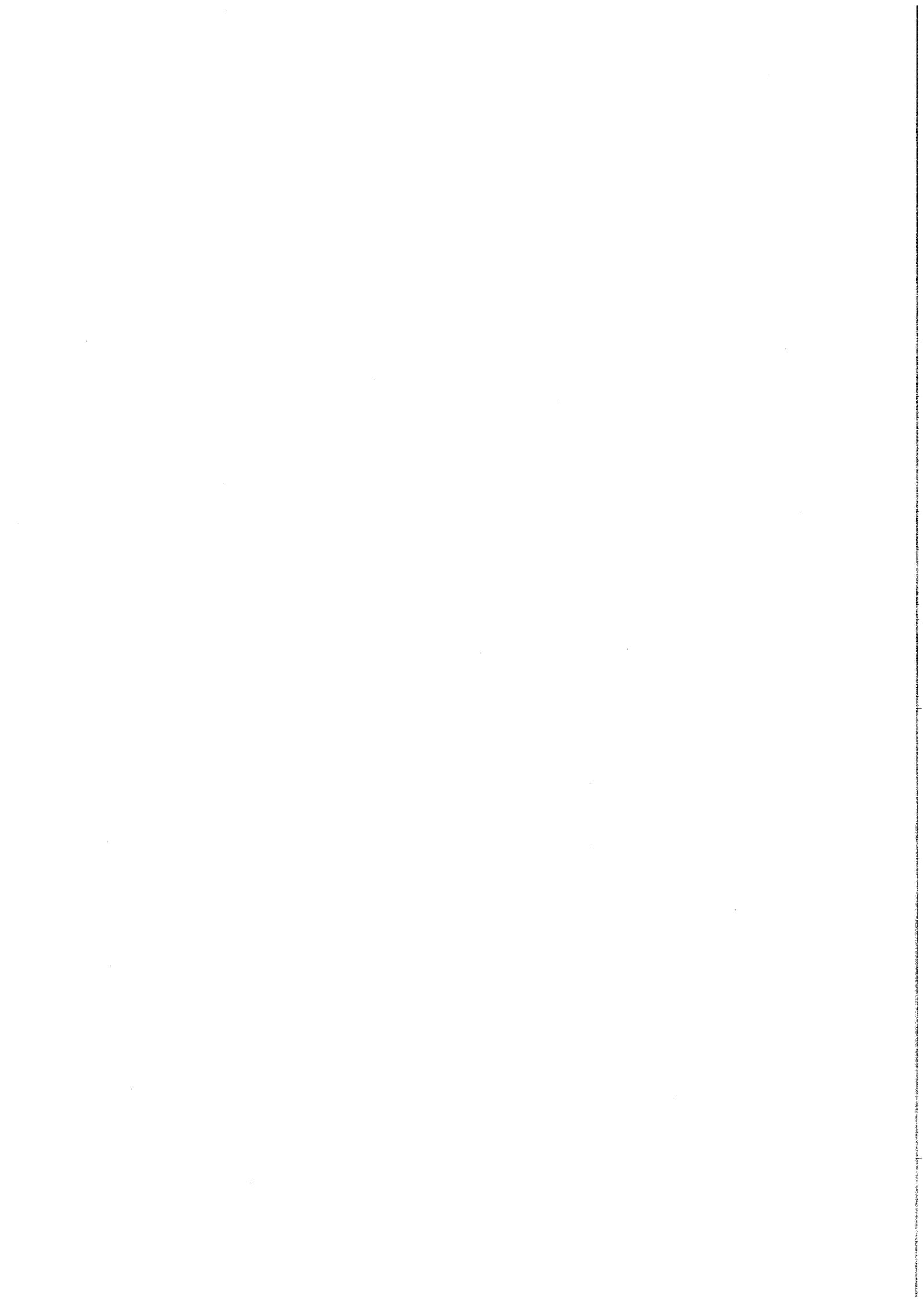
**WINERY LANE  
WALTON-LE-DALE  
LANCASHIRE**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**LANCASTER  
UNIVERSITY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
UNIT**



**June–September 1990**



**WALTON-LE-DALE 1990**  
**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE AREA NORTH OF WINERY LANE**  
**LANCASTER UNIVERSITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Introduction	2
Previous Research	2
Archaeological Background	4
Geology and Topography	5
The Excavations	6
The Evaluation (Trenches 1-7)	6
Discussion	13
Recommendations	14
Acknowledgements	15
Bibliography	16

**LIST OF LINE ILLUSTRATIONS**

Fig 1 Plan of Roman Settlement and Industrial complex	3
Fig 2 Plan of the 1990 Trial Trenches	7
Fig 3 Trench 5 Section, facing north-east	9

**LIST OF PLATES**

Plate 1 Possible Roman road, Trench 3, facing north-west	10
Plate 2 Possible Roman road, Trench 3, facing north-west	10
Plate 3 The erosion slope, Trench 5, facing south-east	11

## INTRODUCTION

The Lancaster University Archaeological Unit was commissioned by Henry Barrett Projects Limited and the John M Harris Design Partnership to undertake an archaeological site evaluation prior to redevelopment of land at Walton-Le-Dale. The proposed development comprised of a storage warehouse and vehicle park, to be located partially on land designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The site is situated on enclosed, overgrown wasteland to the north of Winery Lane, and east of the track leading to Flats House (NGR SD 55202840, figs 1 and 2). The objectives of the evaluation were to determine the character and extent of all archaeological deposits within the threatened area. Phase 1 of the evaluation involved the excavation of six machine cut trial trenches, and fieldwork started in June 1990. As Scheduled Monument Consent had not been granted at this time work was restricted to the area outside the Scheduled Area. Phase 2 commenced in September 1990 and involved the southern continuation of three of the original phase 1 trenches into the Scheduled Area, as well as the excavation of a new trial trench.

## PREVIOUS RESEARCH (fig 1)

Roman activity was first identified at Walton-Le-Dale in the mid nineteenth century. Between 1947 and 1960 a number of trenches were excavated to the west of the current site, north and south of Winery Lane. This work was carried out first by the Preston Historical Society under the direction of Mr Richard Livesey, and then by the Walton-Le-Dale Archaeological Society under the direction of Ernest Pickering. Pickering's work established both the extent and chronology of the Roman site. The area was outlined for industrial development in 1980 by the then Central Lancashire Development Corporation. The Department of the Environment funded a four season programme of controlled open area excavation to the north of Winery Lane, undertaken by Adrian Olivier on behalf of the Cumbria and Lancashire Archaeological Unit. This work greatly enhanced the interpretation of the site which had previously proven difficult due to the keyhole nature of the trench excavations. In 1987 plans were submitted to the South Ribble District Authority to develop an out of town shopping and leisure complex on land to the south of Winery Lane, potentially damaging archaeological deposits identified by Pickering. Pentith Developments Limited commissioned the Cumbria and Lancashire Archaeological Unit to undertake an evaluation characterising archaeological deposits in this area, which took place in the following year.

# WALTON-LE-DALE

Roman Settlement and Industrial Area

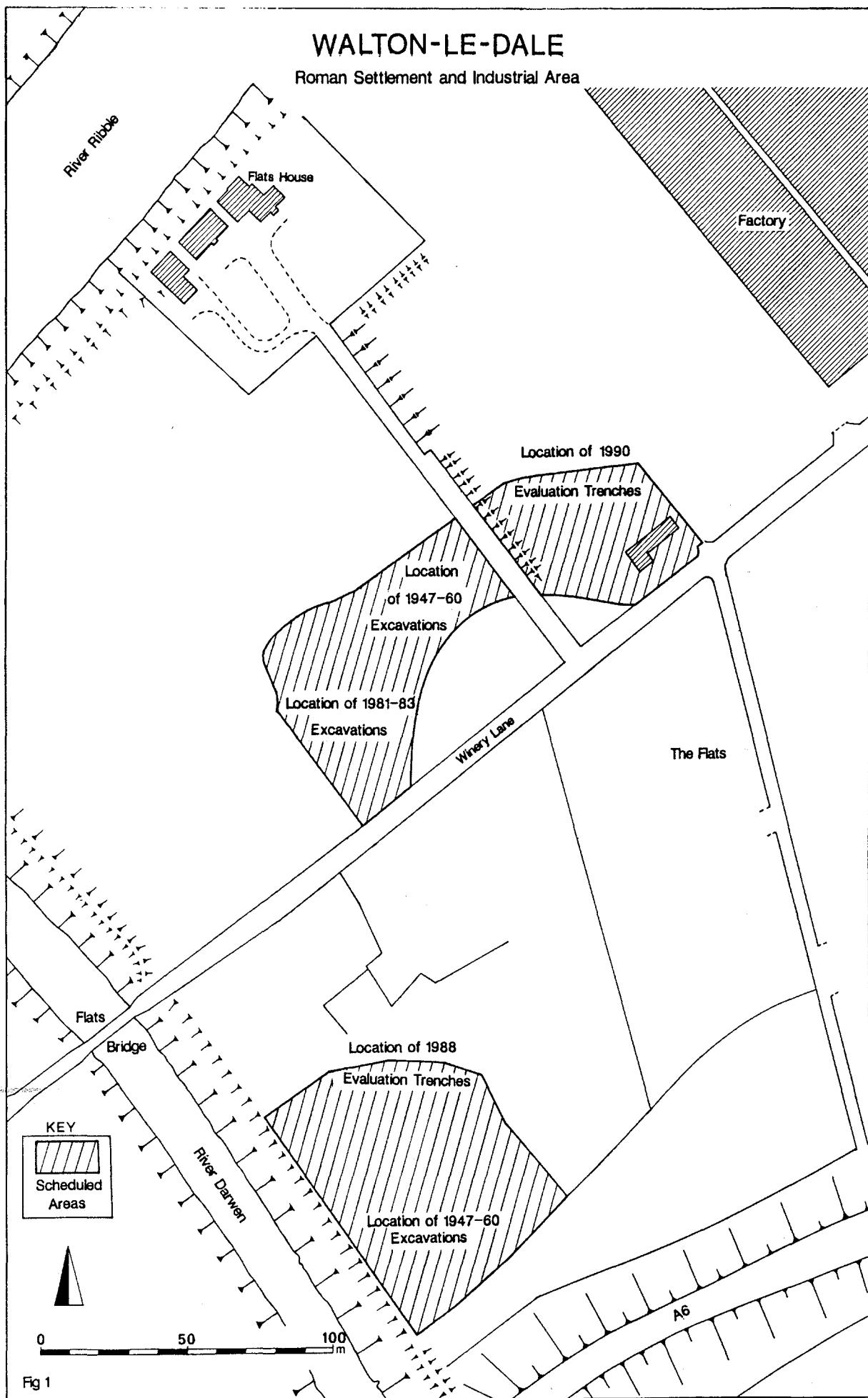


Fig 1

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A large assemblage of prehistoric flint flakes and implements were retrieved from the surface of the subsoil in the 1981-1983 excavations. These date from the mesolithic and neolithic periods, and indicate the presence of early prehistoric activity in close proximity to the later Roman site. Parallel ridge and furrow features were also identified within the subsoil sealed by Roman activity which may relate to a prehistoric field system, or alternatively may represent early Roman agricultural activity on the site.

The earliest recorded Roman occupation at Walton-Le-Dale is assigned to the Hadrianic period (AD 117-138). This activity was represented by a series of rectangular timber buildings, whose long axes were orientated at right angles to a substantial metalled road aligned approximately north-south. All the buildings were similar in size but they exhibited variations in external ground plan and internal arrangements. Associated with these structures were industrial features comprising hearths, pits and water storage ditches. These features suggest that the site was used for an unidentified industrial process, involving the combination of heat and water. The large number of buildings combined with the regular layout of the site suggest that the industrial activity was under the control of the Roman military authorities.

In the late Hadrianic period the timber buildings were totally destroyed by fire, and immediately replaced using the same basic layout as before, although individual buildings were enlarged slightly. Industrial features were again associated with all the buildings, however water was now supplied from wells. The mid Antonine period (cAD 165) witnessed another extensive rebuilding programme, with the addition of a number of insubstantial post-hole timber buildings. This did not effect the basic layout and functioning of the site which appears to have remained unchanged up until the late second century AD.

A short hiatus occurred towards the end of the century although the road continued to be used. At the end of the second century a series of rectangular post-hole buildings were constructed on the same alignment as the previous industrial structures. The early third century witnessed another brief phase of abandonment, after which the post-hole buildings were reconstructed. None of these structures displayed any evidence of the industrial activity, which had proven so common in the second century AD. The prolonged use of the road and consistent alignment of all the buildings on the site suggests continuity, possibly as a result of the site being controlled by the army. The lack of industrial features in the later third century post-hole buildings, suggests that the site may have changed its function from a military works depot to a storage facility. Evidence for the continued use of the site up until the early fourth century was identified in the 1988 evaluation south of Winery Lane, although these levels appear to have been badly degraded by post-Roman activity to the north of the Lane.

## GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The Roman site of Walton-Le-Dale is located on a low lying area of the West Lancashire Plain, known locally as The Flats, at the confluence of the rivers Ribble and Darwen. The West Lancashire Plain was formed out of Permotriassic rock which in the Pleistocene period was covered by vast icesheets. During the last glaciation drift deposits consisting of sands, gravels, silts and laminated clays were laid down over the surface of the plain. The deposits have since been eroded by the rivers Ribble and Darwen. These in turn have deposited their own alluvial sediments, which make up much of the present fertile soil in the area.

Roman activity on The Flats is concentrated within two areas to the north and south of Winery Lane (fig 1). Pickering identified these areas and noted that they occupied the highest ground in the region. He suggested that two independent Roman sites were deliberately founded on the higher ground within the floodplain. Work undertaken between 1981-1983 to the north of Winery Lane demonstrated that the edge of the ground on which the Roman site was located had been eroded by post-Roman river action. Archaeomagnetic dates taken from the river silts in this locality confirmed that they date to the period 550-900 AD, and were therefore post-Roman in date. Pickering identified a large metalled road surface orientated approximately north-south which was subsequently identified on an identical alignment in the 1981-83 excavation north of Winery Lane. It is now known that the two Roman sites at Walton-Le-Dale were originally part of a single large scale complex which has undergone widespread fluvial erosion in the post-Roman period. The 7.50m contour has been used as a guide to scheduling predicted areas of archaeological survival.

On visiting the site it was noted that the surface topography of the area to be evaluated had changed dramatically since 1985. A new perimeter fence had been constructed along the north-west side of the field, and around the bungalow within the Scheduled Area. The whole field east of the track leading to Flats House, including the Scheduled Area had been cleared and the resulting debris mounded up along its north and west sides (fig 2, banks A and B respectively).

## THE EXCAVATIONS

Fieldwork commenced in the northern part of the site on 18/6/91, and continued until 26/6/90. Scheduled Monument Consent was granted on 7/8/90, and the evaluation of the Scheduled Area took place between 16/9/90 and 19/9/90. In total seven trenches were cut, ranging from c30m to c60m in length. Trenches 1 and 2 were sited in the north of the field and were aligned approximately east-west. Trenches 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 were all positioned on the 7.50m contour and were aligned north-south. All the trenches were excavated mechanically, using a Komatsu PC20 mini-excavator fitted with a 0.91m rehandling bucket, and a JCB 3CX fitted with a toothless 0.60m bucket. On site recording techniques involved the filling in of context record sheets, the compilation of a photographic record and the construction of accurate scale sections using an optical level.

## THE EVALUATION

### TRENCH 1

Trench 1 was 58m long, aligned north-east south-west, and located in the extreme north of the site (fig 2). The topsoil comprised a dark brown/black loam, 0.25m deep which became slightly thinner towards the east. It was sealed in the east by a substantial layer of mixed relatively modern landfill material containing bricks, wood, iron and modern pottery sherds. This was on average 0.85m thick but thinned towards the south-west, terminating 27m from the west end of the trench. The topsoil sealed an intermediate layer of topsoil and silt 0.20m deep, which originated 17m from the west end of the trench and extended eastwards along its entire length. Underlying this and the topsoil in the west was a substantial deposit of grey/brown river silt at least 1.20m deep. This was devoid of any coarse components although occasional thin horizontal lenses of lighter colour were identified within it.

### TRENCH 2

Trench 2 was 60m long located south of and parallel to Trench 1 (fig 2). The topsoil was 0.45m thick in the east of the trench but thinned to 0.25m in the west. Overlying it in the extreme west of the trench was a crushed brick horizon, 4.50m in length and 0.15m deep. A pit, 0.50m deep, containing modern demolition material cut the topsoil between 34m and 42.5m from the west end of the trench. Modern landfill material identical to that found in Trench 1 extended a distance of 11m from the east end of the trench. It was 0.50m deep and cut the topsoil. The topsoil sealed an intermediate layer of topsoil and silt, 0.25m deep, which extended for a distance of 33m from the east end of the trench. The base of the trench comprised a substantial deposit of clean grey/brown river silt identical to that in trench 1 and tested to a depth of 0.80m.

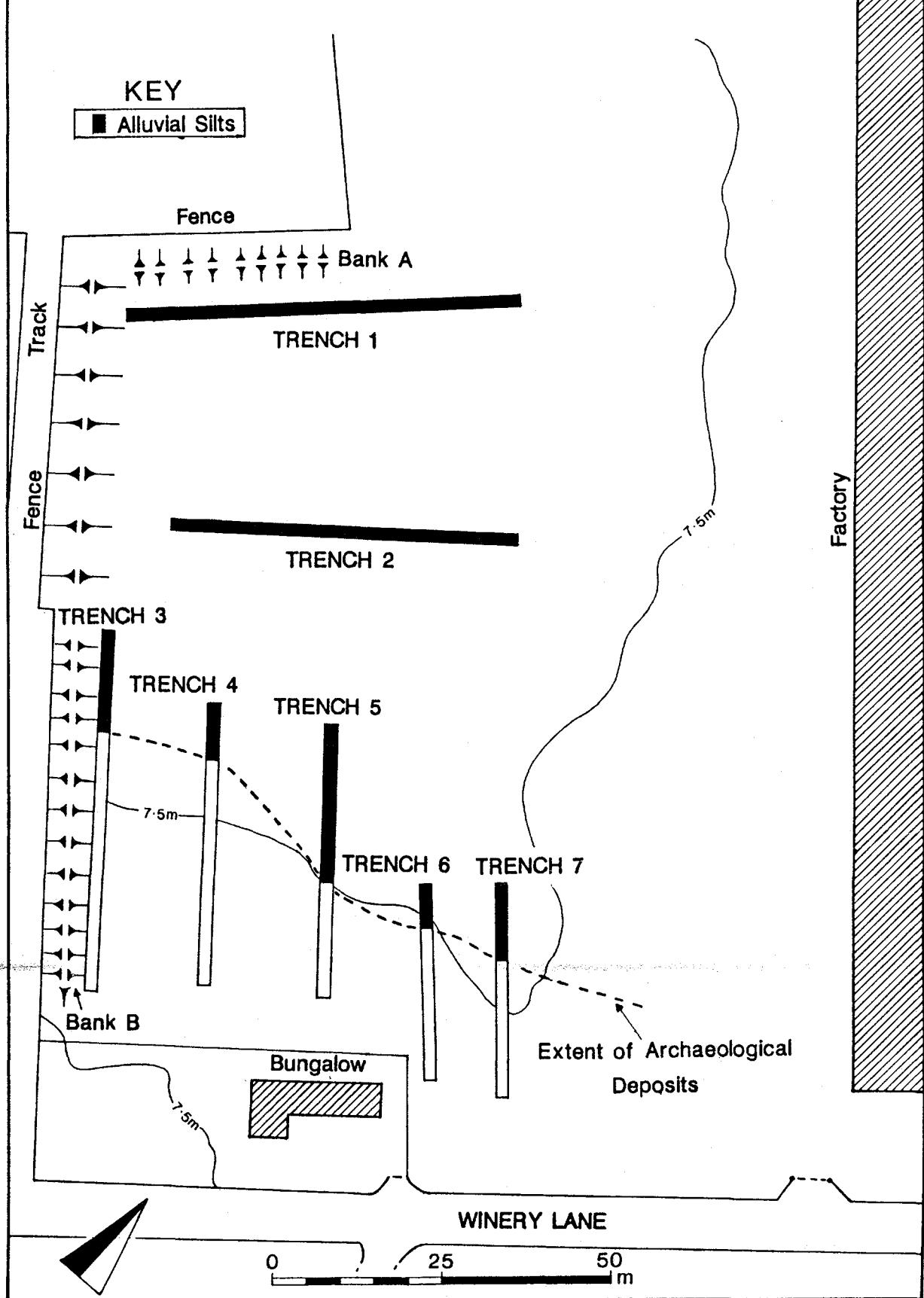
### TRENCH 3

Trench 3 was located in the extreme west of the site aligned north-west south-east, it was 53m long (fig 2). Like Trenches 4, 5, 6 and 7 it was deliberately positioned over the 7.50m contour in order to locate the exact position of the erosion slope. The dark brown loamy topsoil was 0.25m deep. Underlying it to the north was a substantial sterile deposit of dark brown river silt, identical to that found in Trenches 1 and 2. This was tested to a depth of 1.70m in the north, but began to thin 15m from the north end of the trench prior to terminating at the 20m point. The thinning of this horizon defined the erosion slope, its base was characterised by a substantial surface of river washed pebbles ranging between 0.07m and 0.25m in diameter. This surface was truncated to the south making its precise function unclear. It may be the eroded remnants of the Roman road aligned north-south, identified by Pickering and also during the 1981-1983 excavation, although the projected course of this lies slightly to the north and west. Alternatively it may represent the natural

Fig 2

# WALTON-LE-DALE 1990

## LOCATION OF TRIAL TRENCHES



fluvial deposition of large cobbles along the edge of the erosion slope.

The south of the trench was characterised by a thin horizon 0.15m deep of dull brown clay silt located below the topsoil and cut by the river silt to the north. This layer probably represents an intact Roman horizon and contained charcoal flecks and Roman pottery sherds. Below this was the clean dull plastic clay subsoil, 0.45m deep. The upper surface of this contained occasional fragments of charcoal and Roman pottery sherds indicating that Roman features may have been cut into it, although none were positively identified within the trench. Below the subsoil was a substantial layer of gravel within a brown gritty clay matrix considered (together with the subsoil) to be glacial in origin.

#### TRENCH 4

Trench 4 was located east of and parallel to Trench 3, it was 41.50m long (fig 2). The topsoil consisted of a dark brown/black loam 0.35m deep. In the north it sealed a substantial deposit of alluvial silt at least 1.50m deep. The erosion slope was identified beginning 33.50m from the south end of the trench where the silt was seen to thin prior to terminating 23m from the south end of trench. To the south below the topsoil, and cut by the silt, was a thin layer, 0.15m thick, of dull brown clay identical to that found within Trench 3. This contained charcoal flecks and Roman pottery sherds and probably represents an intact Roman horizon. Underlying this was the dull plastic clay subsoil, 0.35m deep. Again the upper surface of this contained charcoal flecks and fragments of Roman pottery indicating that Roman features may have been cut into it. Below the subsoil was a natural gravel horizon 0.70m deep, identical to that found within Trench 3.

#### Trench 5 (Fig 3)

Trench 5 was located directly north of the bungalow, to the west of, and parallel to Trench 4 (fig 2). It was 40m long. The topsoil comprised a loose dark brown/black loam 0.30m deep which contained organic debris and modern bricks. In the north of the trench it overlay a similar more compact layer which was devoid of any coarse components, 0.20m deep. Below this was an intermediate layer of topsoil and silt 0.15m thick which extended a distance of 15m from the north end of the trench. The topsoil and silt horizon sealed a substantial deposit, tested to a depth of 1.40m, of river silt. The erosion slope was identified 17.50m from the south end of the trench where the silt horizon began to thin prior to terminating 12m from the south end of the trench. Sealed by the topsoil to the south, and cut by the river silt to the north, was a thin horizon of grey/brown silty clay 0.10m thick. This contained charcoal flecks and may represent a shallow *in-situ* Roman horizon. Below it was a shallow intermediate layer of orange/brown gritty sandy clay, 0.10m deep, which probably represents a basal Roman horizon. This sealed a substantial natural gravel deposit, 0.60m deep, identical to that found within trenches 3 and 4, and thought to be of glacial origin. A sondage located at the south end of the trench identified clean natural sand below the gravel.

Fig 3

WALTON-LE-DALE 1990

Trench 5 North East Facing Section

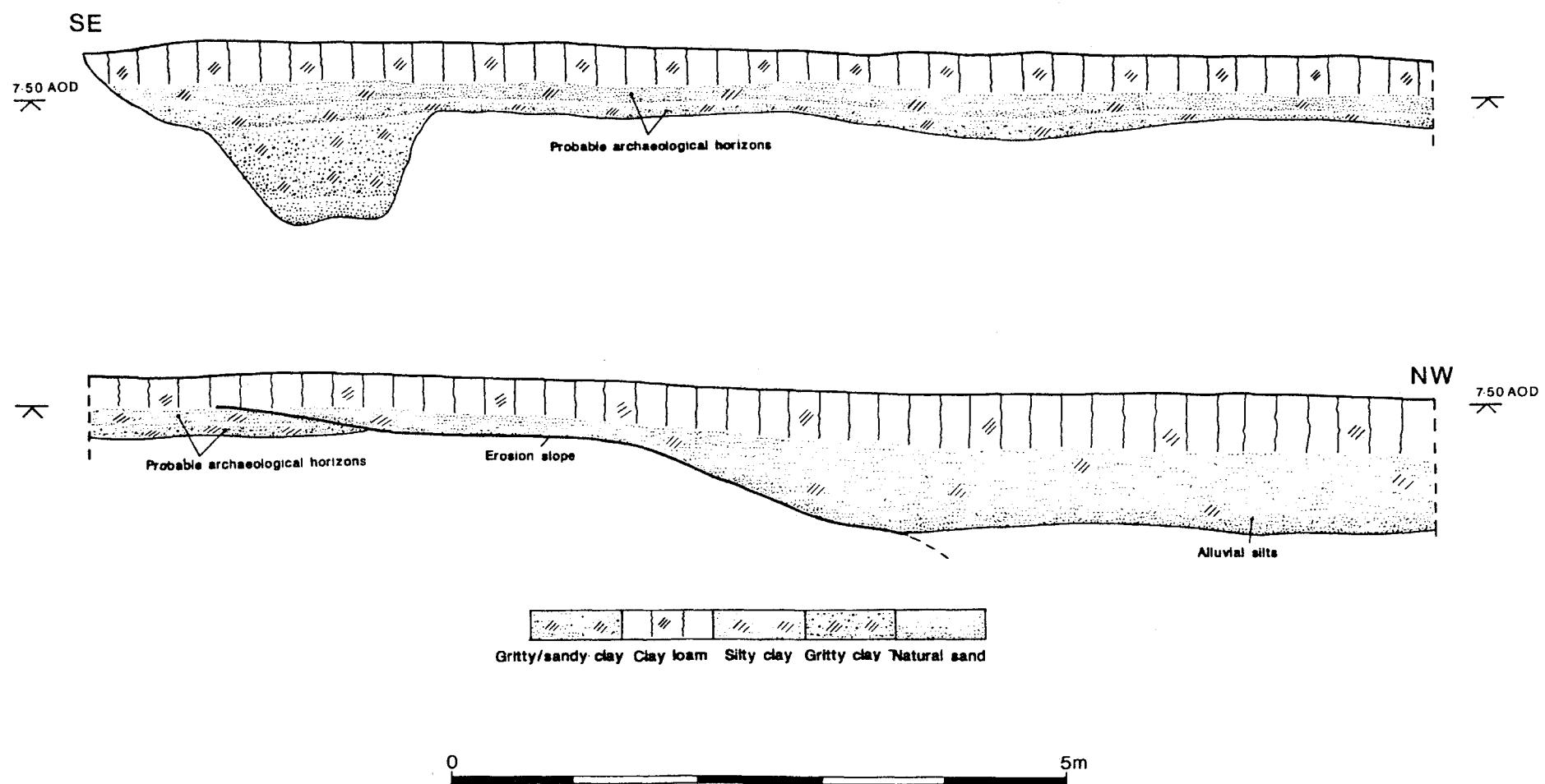




Plate 1 Possible Roman road, Trench 3, facing north-west

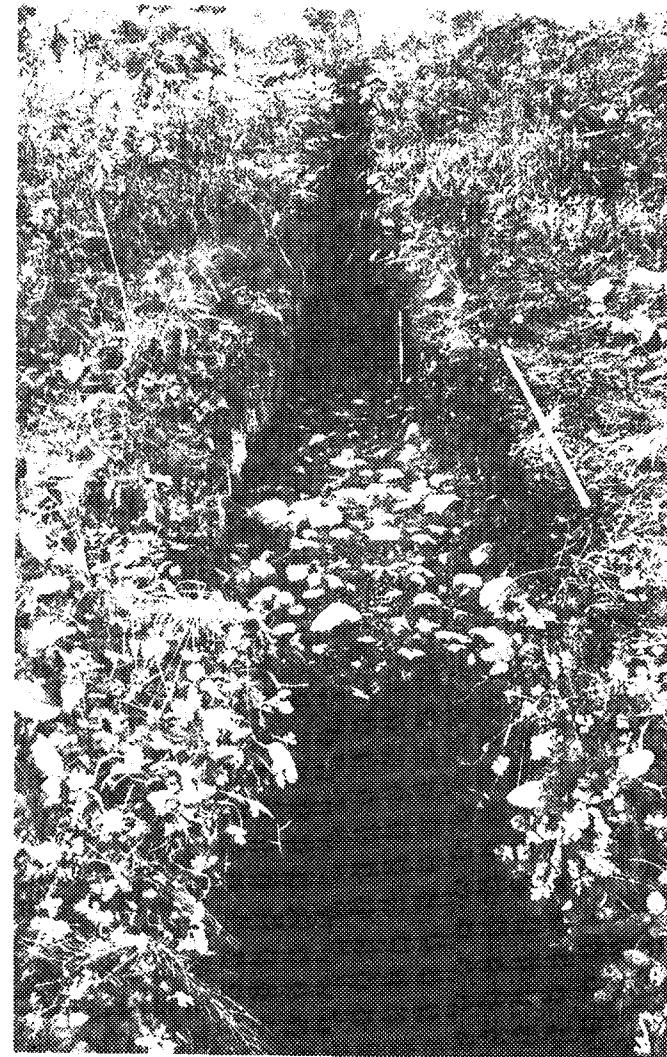


Plate 2 Possible Roman road, Trench 3, facing north-west



Plate 3 The erosion slope, Trench 5, facing south-east

#### TRENCH 6

Trench 6 was located east of and parallel to Trench 5. It was 29m long (fig 2). The topsoil comprised a dark brown/black loam, 0.35m thick. It was cut in the extreme north of the trench by a large pit, 4.40m wide and 0.80m deep, which contained modern demolition debris and topsoil. A cobbled surface was identified directly below the topsoil, which extended for a distance of 9m from the south end of the trench. This consisted of small angular and rounded stones set into a slightly silty loam matrix. Fragments of post-medieval pottery were associated with this surface, indicating that it was not of great antiquity. Below the metalled surface and topsoil was a layer of dark brown/black silty sand which contained post-medieval pottery sherds. This horizon was 0.30m deep in the south but it quickly dwindled to an average thickness of 0.10m. Below this in the north of the trench was a layer of sterile grey/brown river silt tested to a depth of 0.60m. The erosion slope was identified 7.50m from the north end of the trench, here the silt thinned in depth prior to terminating 10m from the north end of the trench. As in trenches 3, 4 and 5 the erosion slope was represented by a layer of gravel and cobbles gently rising upwards in a southerly direction from the floor of the trench. The natural gravel horizon was at least 0.60m deep and identical to that found within the other trenches. Approximately 10m from the south end of the trench the natural gravel was cut by a feature, 1.80m wide. Its profile was unusual having an almost vertical northern edge 0.80m deep and a gently sloping southern side. It was filled with clean dull plastic clay identical to the subsoil, which formed a layer to the south below the dark brown/black silty sand. No finds were associated with this feature and it remains unclear as to whether it represents an intrusive Roman feature filled with redeposited subsoil, or is an unidentified geological feature.

## Trench 7

Trench 7 was located in the east of the site parallel to, and east of, Trench 6, it was 32m long (fig 2). The dark brown/black topsoil was 0.30m deep, it sealed a thin 0.10m thick horizon of topsoil and silt which extended along the length of the trench. The grey/brown river silt was identified underlying this in the north of the trench where it was tested to a depth of 1.90m. The erosion slope was defined by the silt thinning 11m from the south end of the trench, prior to terminating at the 13m point. The erosion slope consisted of a layer of small and medium sized cobbles set into a brown silty clay loam matrix 0.10m deep. Below this was natural gravel identical to that identified within the previous trenches.

## DISCUSSION

Landfill was identified in the north of the site, both sealing, and cutting into the uppermost horizons in the east of trenches 1 and 2. Its deposition must post-date the use of this area as a market garden as it sealed the fertile topsoil. The Central Lancashire Development Corporations contour survey conducted in c1980 appears to have been carried out after the closure of the market garden and subsequent infilling of this area. Hence the contour survey cannot be taken as representing the underlying pattern of river erosion in this region, as its topography has been influenced by more recent events. Deep alluvial silt deposits were identified extending along the entire length of trenches 1 and 2, indicating that any intact Roman stratigraphy which existed in this area, has been completely eroded by post-Roman river action.

As anticipated the erosion slope was identified in trenches 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, close to the 7.50m contour. From this it was possible to deduce the extent of archaeological survival on the site which closely echoed the existing Scheduled Area (fig 2). The stratigraphy to the north of the erosion slope consisted of topsoil sealing alluvial silt of no archaeological value. Below the topsoil south of this slope Roman horizons were encountered. These consisted of shallow horizontal layers which extended southwards from the erosion slope along the length of the trenches.

The Roman stratigraphy can be characterised in the following general terms. The uppermost surviving horizon comprised a dull brown clay, 0.15m thick, which contained Roman pottery sherds and charcoal flecks. This horizon was probably derived from redeposited subsoil and was only recorded in trenches 3 and 4. Below it was a layer of dull plastic clay subsoil, 0.40m deep, its upper surface contained occasional charcoal flecks and abraded fragments of Roman pottery. This layer was identified in trenches 3 and 4, and in a more disturbed form in trench 5 (the grey brown silty clay). Under this was a substantial gravel horizon set into a brown gritty clay matrix, present in trenches 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. The dull plastic clay subsoil and gravel horizon were probably deposited as a result of glacial activity however they contain cut features of probable Roman date. The evaluation demonstrated that only the basal levels of Roman stratigraphy survive undisturbed, immediately below the topsoil, in this area of The Flats but because of their proximity to the surface these horizons are extremely fragile. Archaeological preservation appears to be at its greatest in the west of the site, where the dull brown clay survives intact. The Roman levels become successively more truncated towards the east. The 1981-1983 excavation demonstrated that the Roman stratigraphy was more extensive west of the current site, indicating that its survival across The Flats, north of Winery Lane appears to generally decrease towards the east. The recent landscaping of the site has probably truncated the uppermost Roman stratigraphy, although further survey work would be necessary in order to confirm this.

Few actual cut features were identified within the Scheduled Area, although this is not all together surprising given the narrow dimensions of the trenches. Two enigmatic features were encountered; the possible Roman road in Trench 3, and the steep sided pit/ditch in trench 6. Their presence suggests that further Roman features do survive intact on the site. The pit/ditch feature identified in trench 6 indicates that deep cut archaeological features may survive north-east of the present Scheduled Area below the existing concrete and hardstanding.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

No significant archaeological features were identified by the assessment in the area of the proposed storage warehouse. Consequently the construction of the warehouse as illustrated on the 1:500 scale plan, dated May 1990, provided by the John M Harris Design Partnership, should be allowed to proceed without any further archaeological constraints.

Should any alterations be made to the area to the immediate west of the factory, ie the tarmac and concreted hardstanding, further archaeological assessment work will be necessary, particularly in the southern part of this area where deep cut Roman features may still survive intact even outside the existing Scheduled Area.

The proposed vehicle park south-east of the warehouse is positioned directly over the Scheduled Ancient Monument. In this area the evaluation identified basal Roman deposits, c0.25m below the ground surface. These comprise very fragile shallow horizons, although relatively simple, they form part of the complex surviving Roman stratigraphy at Walton-Le-Dale and must therefore be accorded a high archaeological value. The Roman Military/Industrial complex at Walton-Le Dale is unique within the British archaeological record and is recognised as having international importance. Under no circumstances should these fragile and vulnerable deposits be damaged by construction. It may be possible to devise a sympathetic scheme which protects the *in-situ* stratigraphy and also allows construction by raising the ground surface although this could prove expensive. Should this not be possible the site should either be preserved *in-situ*; the preferred option, or undergo controlled archaeological excavation, prior to development, ensuring preservation by record , the second best option. The latter course of action would require Scheduled Monument Consent from the Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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**NICK HAIR  
LANCASTER UNIVERSITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT,  
PHYSICS BUILDING,  
LANCASTER UNIVERSITY,  
LANCASTER.  
LA1 4YW**

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