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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**THE SHIP INN**

**LOW LANE**

**ALDBOROUGH S.A.M. NO.436**

**NORTH YORKSHIRE**

**N.G.R. 440638 466514**

**COUNTY / PARISH NO. 6064**

**REFERENCE NO. 6.64.54.F.FUL**

**FOR**

**MR. AND MRS.D.FINCH**

**JULY 1996**

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**THE SHIP INN  
ALDBOROUGH**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION  
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**INTRODUCTION**

An Archaeological Evaluation was undertaken in advance of the commencement of ground disturbance associated with the construction of a property to the rear of the Ship Inn, Low Lane, Aldborough. The nature of the proposed ground disturbance relates to the reduction of ground levels in advance of the construction of a concrete raft foundation and access road, together with the installation of services and new drains.

**LOCATION AND STATUS**

The Ship Inn is situated within the northern extent of the village of Aldborough, North Yorkshire. The site is located on the northern side of Low Lane. The study area is located at N.G.R. 440638 466514 to the immediate north of the existing car parking facilities and is presently a domestic grassed lawn area.

The Ship Inn Public House and attached grounds are owned by Mr. and Mrs. D. Finch, the appointed Architect is Mr. P. Knowles.

Below ground this site is Scheduled as an Ancient Monument (Isurium, North Yorkshire, S.A.M.No.436) located within the civil parish of Boroughbridge.

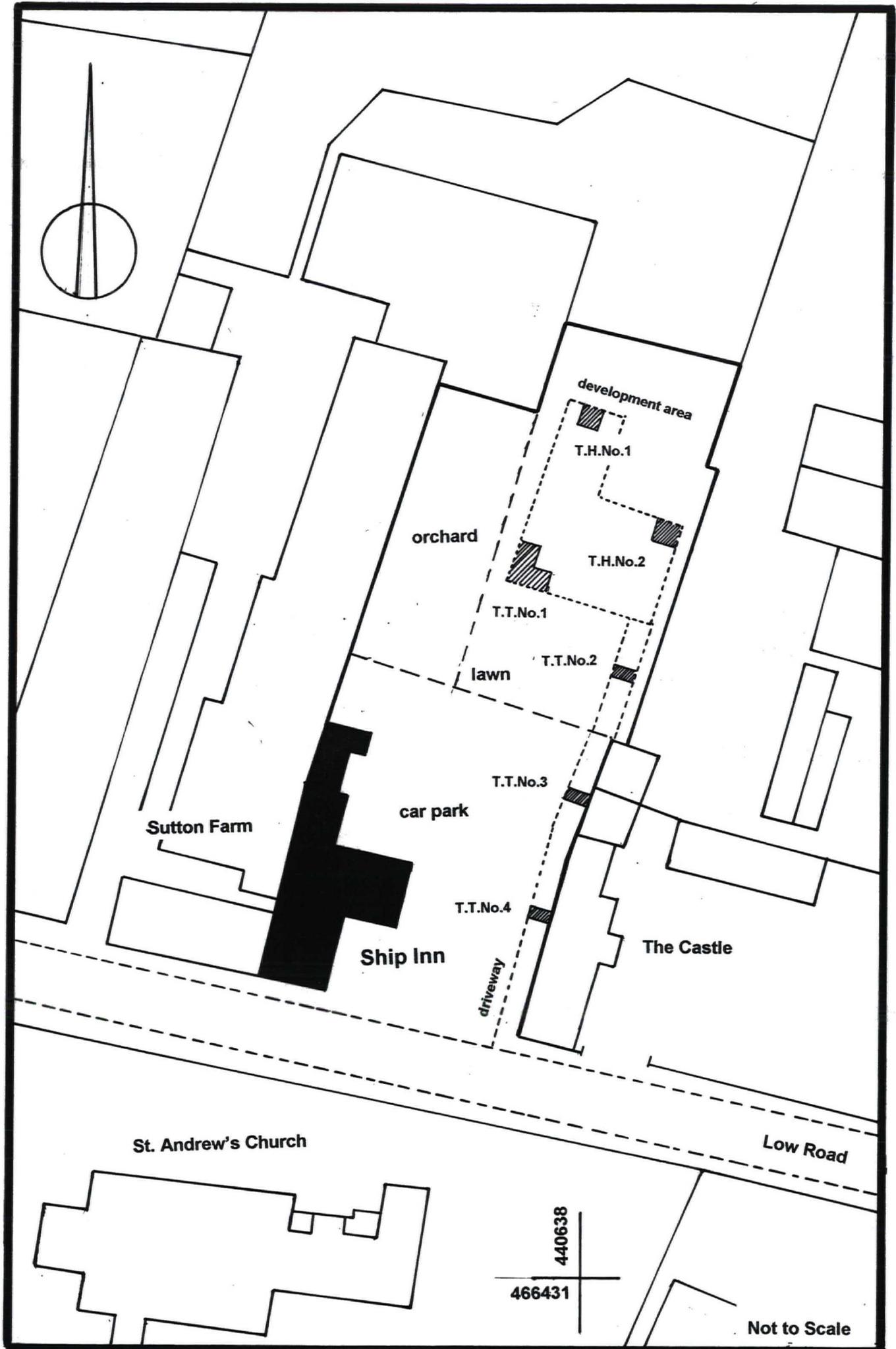
**PLANNING HISTORY**

Outline Planning Permission for the erection of a two storey dwelling house and garage was granted by Harrogate Borough Council on Tuesday 26th March 1996 (Planning Application No.6.64.54.F.FUL).

A formal application for Scheduled Monument Consent was submitted by Peter Knowles and Associates to the Department of National Heritage on 13th June 1996, prior to consent being approved Mr. and Mrs. Finch were instructed to engage the services of an approved Archaeologist in order to undertake an Archaeological Evaluation of the site.

FIGURE 1

SITE LOCATION PLAN





Study Area - facing south west



Study Area - facing north east



Study Area - facing north

The Archaeologist prepared and submitted a detailed Specification of Works (09/05/96) pertaining to the proposed Archaeological works to English Heritage and the Department of National Heritage for their consideration and approval. During July 1996 the client received instruction from English Heritage that the Archaeological Evaluation could proceed.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Prior to the commencement of groundwork's a desk top study was undertaken of the site and it's immediate environs.

### **The Village**

The present village of Aldborough overlies the Roman town of Isurium and remains relatively well contained within the ancient town's perimeter defence's that date to the late 2nd century.

The Roman settlement was a civilian administrative centre or a civitas capital for the territory of the Brigantes, a tribal area that covered much of the north of England.

### **The Study Area**

The study area was almost certainly developed at some time during the Roman occupation.

The site is located within the central area of the Roman Town, situated within the north eastern quadrant of the cross-roads and within close proximity to the Forum which occupied the site of St. Andrew's Church, it is likely that the study area was also supported main administrative and public buildings.

The eastern boundary of the site runs on the conjectural line of the main northern thoroughfare leading out of town.

The size and form of the property parcels situated to the rear of those properties fronting Low Road have the appearance of Medieval tenement plots. These units would have been utilised during the Medieval period for a variety of different uses that would have included animal husbandry, small scale manufacturing industry, gardens, orchards and open yard areas. It is highly probable that the study area was utilised for a number of such purposes during the medieval and post medieval period.

It is understood that parts of the Ship Inn dates as far back as the 14th Century and it is believed that there has been continuity in the use of this property, as an Ale House since this time.

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his deeds  
to property

The available map sources would indicate that the street frontage that is presently a car park situated between the "The Ship" and "The Castle" was previously occupied by terrace housing and to their immediate north associated outbuildings and yard areas. These buildings are depicted on the earliest consulted cartographic source the 1809 Enclosure Award Map. The terrace was demolished sometime prior to 1951 (OS 6" to the mile map), however, was upstanding in 1910 (OS 6" to the mile map). The associated outbuildings were converted during the 1930's into toilet facilities to serve the Ship Inn and were later incorporated into the main footprint of the Inn complex.

The proposed development site was previously occupied by a yard, garden and an area of orchard, the boundaries of which appear to have been somewhat flexible. The desk top study would suggest that the study area has not been developed in the 19th or 20th century.

#### The Transport Network

The size and alignment of the existing road network within the northern extent of the village is depicted as early as the Ordnance Survey 6", 1898 edition.

A similar road network is depicted on the Ordnance Survey 6", 1855 edition, however, from this source it would appear that the junction of Back Lane with Low Lane differed from the 1898 Edition. The existing triangular area of lawn and gardens that denotes the configuration of the present junction is a late 19th century feature. These gardens were created following the re-routing of the eastern extent of Low Lane and formed part of a major programme of landscaping works within the grounds of Aldborough Hall.

Prior to the creation of this triangular green Low Lane proceeded out of the village on a more direct east south east alignment following the line of the main Roman eastern thoroughfare.

On a 1809 Enclosure Award map of the village and the surrounding area the basic road network is depicted as on the Ordnance Survey 1855 map.

The eastern boundary of the study area is unchanged since at least 1809, in 1855 a trackway is depicted as running adjacent and to the immediate east of this boundary. There are a number of reasons to suggest that this boundary marks the line of the main road leading from the administrative centre of the Roman settlement to the north. The alignment of the boundary would correspond with the north north eastern axis of the Roman defences.

The boundary is also centrally situated within the Roman settlement, bisecting that area enclosed by the perimeter defences, the line of this same road survives today as the main road exiting the village to the south.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Archaeological records suggest that during 1966 groundwork's were undertaken to the rear of the Ship Inn, the exact location of these works has not been established but it is understood that the remains of a number of buildings were exposed one of which may have included a butchers shop, it is possible that these may be associated with the Medieval / Post Medieval tenements. Unfortunately no further details relating to these works are available and therefore no information can be provided regarding the state of Archaeological preservation or the depth at which Archaeological remains were likely to be encountered.

Rev. G.E. Stephen  
J.R.S. 57, 179.  
in advance of  
building work?  
See  
Dobinson  
1988 in  
pansh file

Archaeological features have been discovered close to the study area these include Roman road surface that was identified approximately 100 metres to the west of the site by Northern Archaeological Services. This road surface was exposed during recent ground disturbance at Manor Cottage, N.G.R. 440527 466512 the surface was encountered within 0.40 metres of the present ground levels.

Further evidence of Roman road surfaces were noted during Barber's excavations of the 1920's, it is understood he trenched 13 sections across the north road and it was revealed to be cambered and cobbled.

In 1964 M.U. Jones conducted an extensive programme of works within the village and on it's periphery, this included a watching Brief being maintained on trenching associated with sewage improvement works. These works were situated to the east and north of the village and intermittent lengths of Roman road were noted within the exposed sections of the trench. At the Dunsforth Road section (N.G.R. 44100 46631) the surface of the Roman road was identified at 0.30 below the existing ground levels and consisted of up to 0.53 metres of gravel laminations bedded on a layer of old topsoil, a ditch, contemporary with the road, was noted on the east side of the road. At the Sewage Plant (N.G.R. 44074 46690) the road surface was identified at 1.5 metres below the existing ground levels and was made up of gravel laminations up to 0.60 metres in depth, these were bedded on a old topsoil. At a site to the south west of the Sewage Plant (N.G.R. 44079 46680) the road surface was identified at 1.0 metre below existing ground levels and consisted of gravel laminations measuring up to 0.70 metres deep and was bedded on a dark grey clay interpreted as an old topsoil, it was noted that the camber of the road tails off to the east into a "pseudo - ditch".

During 1990 York Archaeological Trust undertook an archaeological investigation at Sutton Farm for Mr. Craggs in advance of drainage works and the construction of a silage clamp and slurry lagoon. The site is situated to the immediate north of the Ship Inn property parcel at N.G.R. 440640 466550. Structural remains were encountered during these works and these included the remains of a building constructed out of red sandstone, these features were encountered within 0.60 metres of the present ground levels, unfortunately no exact date for this building could be established.

## **THE AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

In my opinion, due to the above findings there was a high probability that archaeology survived in situ within the northern extent of the development area, it was anticipated that this would comprise of Post Medieval and Medieval deposits and structural remains associated with the tenement strips and these would almost certainly overly a stratified sequence of deposits associated with the Roman occupation.

It was suspected that the central and southern area of the site would have been heavily disturbed during the construction of the terrace buildings that had until recently occupied the street frontage, and given that the Ship Inn and the neighbouring property The Castle is cellared it is likely that the terrace was also cellared.

It was therefore recommended that prior to any groundwork's commencing for the proposed development an archaeological evaluation should be undertaken so as to determine at what depth any archaeology is encountered and whether this will conflict with the excavation depths required for the concrete foundation raft, service road and service trench's.

### **The Evaluation**

It was agreed that the evaluation would consist of the excavation of two trial holes and four trial trench's, together this would provide a suitably sized sample and overall cross section of the buried ground levels within the study area. The size, location and alignment of each had been determined so as to best investigate the nature of any archaeology within the footprint of the proposed building and on the line of the proposed service road and trench's.

It was agreed that a machine could be engaged to remove the turf and topsoil from each excavation, these works would be conducted under direct archaeological supervision, thereafter the trial hole / trench would be excavated by hand by the Archaeologist.

The trial hole's / trench's should be excavated down to the upper level of any surviving archaeology or to the required depth of the proposed development whichever is the lesser.

The right was reserved for the Archaeologist, if necessary, to sample archaeological deposits to a depth that will not exceed the proposed development in order to establish their character.

## **SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION**

(See Appendix A)

The Archaeological Evaluation concluded on Tuesday 29th October 1996 and it was confirmed that the proposed construction of the dwelling and driveway will have no impact on archaeological features or deposits, however the proposed service trench is likely to impact on a deposit that is rich in Late Roman pottery.

Archaeological features and deposits were identified during these recent works these were dominated by the discovery of a Roman road surface, this cobble structure with a well pronounced camber and kerb was identified within the eastern extent of the development area. The road was identified within three trial trench's at an average of 19.880 metres AOD and from which it can be determined the Roman Road was aligned north north east and situated within the grounds of the Ship Inn and not, as had been anticipated, in those of the neighbouring property to the east.

It was confirmed that the northern extent of the study area had been subject to a high level of landscaping. It would appear that the ground levels within the area, that is presently grassed lawn, had been substantially made up with a single deposit of sandy loam, this had been imported onto site and levelled during the late 19th / early 20th century.

### **Archaeological Finds**

A small assemblage of finds were recovered from these works. The finds were predominantly found within those heavily disturbed layers and fill deposits associated with the installation of services. The finds included pottery sherds of modern and late 19th century date together with Roman pottery including non decorated Samian Ware and coarse pottery.

## CONCLUSION

The recent archaeological investigation conducted by Mr. K.J. Cale on behalf of Mr. & Mrs.D. Finch at a site adjacent to the Ship Inn, Aldborough has provided further details concerning the nature, layout and development of this settlement and it's transport network.

The naturally deposited sub-soil was **not** identified during these works, the maximum depth of excavation was reached at 19.455 metres AOD (Trial Trench No.2) that is 1.04 metres below the existing ground level, this would suggest that any sub soils lie buried beneath this depth or alternatively have been truncated and removed from the site by previous ground disturbance.

Substantial evidence of a Roman road surface was identified within the eastern extent of the study area and it was confirmed that this surface, the *agger*, consisted of a series of cobble and pebble laminations that were extremely well compacted and bedded on a sandy sub base. The upper surface of the *agger* appeared to be relatively level and was identified at 19.880 metres AOD with a well pronounced camber of 31 degrees towards it's eastern extent, the camber was supported and retained by a clay verge/kerb. The eastern extent of the road surface was encountered within trial trench's 2, 3 and 4 and from which it is possible to confirm that the road was aligned north north east, and runs parallel and to the west of the eastern boundary wall of the study area. The road surface measured up to 0.38 metres deep, Unfortunately the width of the surface was not established from these excavations but it is anticipated that this will also lie within the study area.

The surface would appear to survive relatively well intact and in a good state of preservation, however, towards the centre and north of the study area the road had been cut by an electricity service trench, this damage would appear to be resulted in the displacement of a narrow track, 0.37 metres wide, of the road surface.

A small quantity of Late Roman pottery was found imbedded within the upper surface of the road, this evidence together with the stratigraphic evidence would strongly support a 4th century date for the most recent resurfacing of the road, this of course does not preclude that the earlier laminations date as far back as the 1st century.

The location and alignment of this road conforms with the north north eastern axis of the settlement defences and with the line of the existing High Street that bisects and exits the village to the south.

The ground levels adjacent to the eastern extent of the Roman road surface consisted of a sandy loam, this deposit was found to be rich in Late Roman

Pottery and exceeded 0.30 metres deep. It would appear that this deposit post dates the working life of the Roman road surface and may well be medieval in origin, this would suggest that the ground levels adjacent to the road, if not developed, were considerably reduced during the Roman period.

No indication of an Anglo-Scandinavian occupation of the site was found, the paucity of this evidence is not untypical for little evidence for this period has been found within the village and at this moment in time it's absence can not be satisfactorily explained.

It is of interest to note that following the construction / repairs to the most recent of the Roman road surfaces there appears to have been little accumulation of deposits prior to the 12/13th century.

The Late Roman Road was sealed by a less well constructed cobble and pebble surface that was imbedded with 12/13th century pottery, the upper surface of which was identified at 20.118 metres AOD. This feature was noted within Trial Trench's 2, 3 and 4 and within which it was noted that the surface was restricted to the footprint of it's Roman predecessor and as such it is suspected that it also functioned as road but serviced the medieval settlement. It is possible that the absence of any intermediary deposits between the two road surfaces is the result of medieval site clearance. A small quantity of medieval pottery sherds were recovered from heavily disturbed deposits, these were predominantly 13th and 14th century in origin, but no further evidence of medieval activity on the site was identified.

The medieval road surface had fallen into disuse by the mid 17th century by this time a sandy clay deposit had accumulated on the cobbles, the upper surface of which was identified at 20.375 metres AOD. No further indication of Post Medieval activity was identified across the site.

It would appear that it was during the 18th century that the terrace cottages were constructed on the street frontage within the southern extent of the study area, only slight evidence of the yard areas to the rear of these properties was revealed. This consisted of sand sub base for a former paved floor area, the upper surface of which was identified at 20.380 metres AOD.

During the Late 19th century / Early 20th century a large scale programme of landscaping was undertaken within the northern extent of the study area this resulted in the importing and levelling of large quantities of topsoil, burying an existing topsoil and raising the ground levels by up to 0.38 metres, the surface of the pre landscaped garden was identified at 20.155 metres AOD. This imported material contained the occasional fragment of construction/demolition rubble

including Welsh roof slate, this material is not commonly used throughout the village but has been used on the neighbouring property The Castle, it is therefore possible that the earth was transported only a short distance from it's original source.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORKS**

As a result of this Archaeological Evaluation it is recommended that the following points are addressed when any future ground works are undertaken within the study area.

i. It is anticipated that the excavations in advance the laying of the concrete raft for the proposed dwelling will have no detrimental effect on the Archaeology. It is recommended that an Archaeological Watching Brief should be maintained during these machine excavations.

ii. The depth of excavation in advance of the construction of the proposed driveway will not in anyway conflict with the Archaeology identified within the eastern extent of the study area. It is recommended that an Archaeological Watching Brief should be maintained during these machine excavations.

iii. Careful consideration should be given to the depth and the line of the required service trench and drainage runs. It is recommended that the depth of these excavations should be kept to an absolute minimum and if possible this should be achieved by raising ground levels.

It is recommended that the service trench should be excavated to the east of the existing electricity ducts so as to minimise the impact on the cobble road features. However, it is understood from Northern Electric Utilities that the northern section of the existing electric service will have to be exposed in order to encase the cable in a duct. It is therefore recommended that the two trenching operations are combined in a single excavation. Should it be decided that the service and drainage trench's are excavated to the east of the electricity service then these works will have a direct impact on a deposit rich in Late Roman material.

It is recommended that the turf/topsoil and tarmac and overburden are removed by machine under the direct supervision of an Archaeologist, however, below 20.375 metres AOD the service trench should be hand excavated by the Archaeologist.

**Kevin John Cale**

**March 1997**

## APPENDIX A

### Trial Hole & Trench Excavations

#### Trial Trench No.1

Type: Exploratory Excavation: machine and hand  
N.G.R: 440630 466509

Length: 4 metres  
Width: 4 metres  
Depth: 0.55 metres

Planform: L shaped  
Aligned: north north east  
Area: 12 square metres

Context No's: 3000 - 3002  
Plate No: 2  
Fig. No: 1

The trial trench was excavated so as to ascertain the nature of the buried ground levels within the south western extent of the footprint of the proposed building. The trial trench was excavated into an area of grassed lawn.

The existing ground levels were generally level at 20.685 metres AOD.

The turf (context 3000) and topsoil (context 3001) was machine excavated, beneath which a buried top soil (context 3002) was exposed across the entire trial trench. The layer contained a small quantity of 19th century, 12/13th century and Roman pottery. The layer was devoid of Archaeological features, up to 0.34 metres of this layer was excavated before the required depth of excavation was reached.

#### Trial Trench No.2

Type: Exploratory Excavation: hand and machine  
N.G.R: 440639 466497

Length: 3 metres  
Width: 1.30 metres  
Depth: 1 metre

Planform: Rectangular  
Aligned: east south east  
Area: 3 square metres

Context No's: 4000 - 4007  
Plate No: 3  
Fig. No: 1, 2

The trial trench was excavated so as to ascertain the nature of the buried ground levels beneath the proposed driveway that runs parallel and adjacent to the eastern boundary of the study area. The trial trench was excavated into an area of grassed lawn at the northern extent of the proposed driveway.

The existing ground levels slope very gently downwards to the west and south at 20.493 metres AOD.

The turf (context 4000) and topsoil (context 4001) was machine excavated exposing a cobble surface (context 4004) within the western third of the trench and an adjacent area of loamy sand (context 4002).

The surface of the cobble feature was identified at 19.937 metres AOD, the surface of which sloped downwards on a very gentle gradient to the east to 19.887 metres AOD. The cobbles and pebbles measured less than 0.10 metres in size and were extremely well compacted and tightly grouped with no apparent arrangement or pattern noted within its upper surface, the narrow fissures between the cobbles were filled with a fine grained pea grit. The western extent of the surface would appear to be relatively level on a north / south axis. The feature appeared to continue beyond the edge of the excavation to the west, the eastern extent of the surface was identified within the trial trench.