

A1 CHESTERTON KSI SAFETY SCHEME

SIGNAGE HOLES

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF REPORT**

Site code	CSNC 06
NGR:	511650 296850 – 512520 296400
PCA Job No	06-282
CHER Ref:	ECB2361

prepared for

Scott Wilson Ltd

by

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Summary

- *An archaeological watching brief took place during the excavations for new road signage along the A1 at Chesterton, Cambridgeshire.*
- *The brief identified no features of archaeological significance.*
- *The deposit sequence included a recently buried cultivation horizon tentatively interpreted as ridge and furrow.*
- *A small assemblage of Romano-British pottery was also recovered from secondary contexts and as such is not considered to be significant other than to reinforce the general distribution of known Roman finds in the area.*

1.0 Introduction

An archaeological watching brief took place during excavations for the erection of new road signage along the A1 at Chesterton, Cambridgeshire. The works were located between NGR 511650 296850 and NGR 512520 296400 (Figure 1). The watching brief was commissioned by Scott Wilson Ltd in response to a recommendation by Cambridgeshire County Council.

This report documents the results of the archaeological watching brief that was undertaken between the 6th and 9th September 2006. It has been prepared to meet the requirements of a project specification prepared by Scott Wilson Ltd and approved by Cambridgeshire County Council (Cambs.CC). This approach complies with the recommendations of *Archaeology & Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16*, (Department of the Environment, 1991), *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991), and *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, (IFA, 1999).

Copies of this report will be sent to Scott Wilson. Scott Wilson will forward a copy to Cambs. CC Archaeology Section for inclusion into the Historic Environment Record and Cambridgeshire County Store.

2.0 Location and Description (Fig. 1)

The development comprised the provision of new road signs at ten locations along the A1 at Chesterton, Cambridgeshire (Figure 1).

The solid geology of the area is characterised by Oolitic Limestone underlain by Northamptonshire Sands (BGS sheet 172).

3.0 Planning Background

Permission was granted for the development, with recommendation for an archaeological watching brief to be implemented in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, approved by the local planning authority.

The written scheme of works was produced by Scott Wilson Ltd and included detailed procedures for the on-site implementation and post-fieldwork reporting.

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The site of the development lies within a diverse archaeological landscape, with remains dating from the Neolithic period onwards having been recorded.

The A1 at Chesterton follows the route of the Roman road *Ermine Street* as it approaches the Roman settlement of *Durobrivae* and thus the potential for remains dating to the early historic period was the primary impetus for the watching brief requirement.

Durobrivae dates from at least the second century AD, when it is mentioned in the *Antonine Itinerary*, and became one of the most prosperous small towns of Roman Britain owing to the flourishing Castor pottery industry centred on Water Newton and specialising in ceramic boxes.

Other Roman and Romano-British remains within the locality include a Claudian campaign fort c. 4km to the east of Durobrivae, marble quarries, and antiquarian references to Roman burials being found in the Chesterton area.

5.0 Methodology

The excavation work was undertaken overnight between 6th – 9th September 2006, as this would produce the minimum disruption to normal traffic flow.

The excavations were undertaken with a JCB excavator and overspill removed from site. This work was monitored continuously to ensure that any archaeological features exposed were identified and recorded. The up-cast from the excavations was also scanned with a metal detector and raked through for finds recovery.

On completion of the excavation of each signage pit, all exposed surfaces were hand cleaned and inspected to determine the deposit sequence. Deposits identified by this method were subjected to limited excavation to assess their nature/dimensions and to attempt to recover datable materials.

These investigations resulted in the production of written descriptions of each deposit on standard watching brief context recording sheets. Colour photographs and scale drawings complement these accounts.

6.0 Results (Figs. 2,3)

In total, ten pits were excavated to provide foundations for the new signage. No archaeological features were observed in any of these excavations.

For the most part, the pits were characterised by the sterile natural being overlain by a deep undifferentiated dark-earth sealed by the current topsoil. The current topsoil was not developed, and was considered to be redeposited as a consequence of recent road construction works.

Additional modern horizons were identified at some locations by their inclusion of modern finds such as brick and litter. Representative sections of these pits are presented in Figure 2, and context descriptions given in Appendix 2.

Two un-stratified Nene Valley sherds were recovered from the up-cast from Pit 5, with a possible over-fired Nene Valley sherd from the topsoil of Pit 3 (context 300).

Two further Romano-British sherds (grey wares) were recovered from Pit 7. Unlike the other pottery, these were recovered from the buried dark-earth (702) and are therefore considered to be of greater interest given their sealed context.

7.0 Discussion and Conclusions

Whilst the works exposed no archaeological features, the deposit sequence is not without interest.

Discounting the current topsoil and other recent deposits, the sequence comprised the natural geology overlain by the deep undifferentiated dark-earth; and with a very distinct interface between the two deposits.

The dark-earth (contexts 303, 501, 602, 701/2) consisted of dark brown clayey sand up to 0.7m in depth, with rare but well sorted inclusions. These characteristics and the sharp interface with the underlying natural are consistent with the interpretation of a former cultivation horizon: a view supported by the very abraded pottery recovered from Pit 7 and the fact that it was sealed by a recent topsoil dump. At 0.7m deep, however, it is unusually deep for a modern plough soil and may, tentatively, signify ridge and furrow.

The significance of the Roman pottery is low, given that it was not recovered from its primary depositional context. However, it does signify that some form of Roman deposition has occurred within the development area, which future development may be better placed to resolve and characterise.

8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

The watching brief has resulted in the collection of a small Roman pottery assemblage and the recording of a deposit sequence. This information may be indicative of both Roman and medieval activity within the area.

Whilst this is not particularly significant, it does make a small contribution to the known archaeology of the area and thus it is considered that the watching brief was an appropriate and successful level of work.

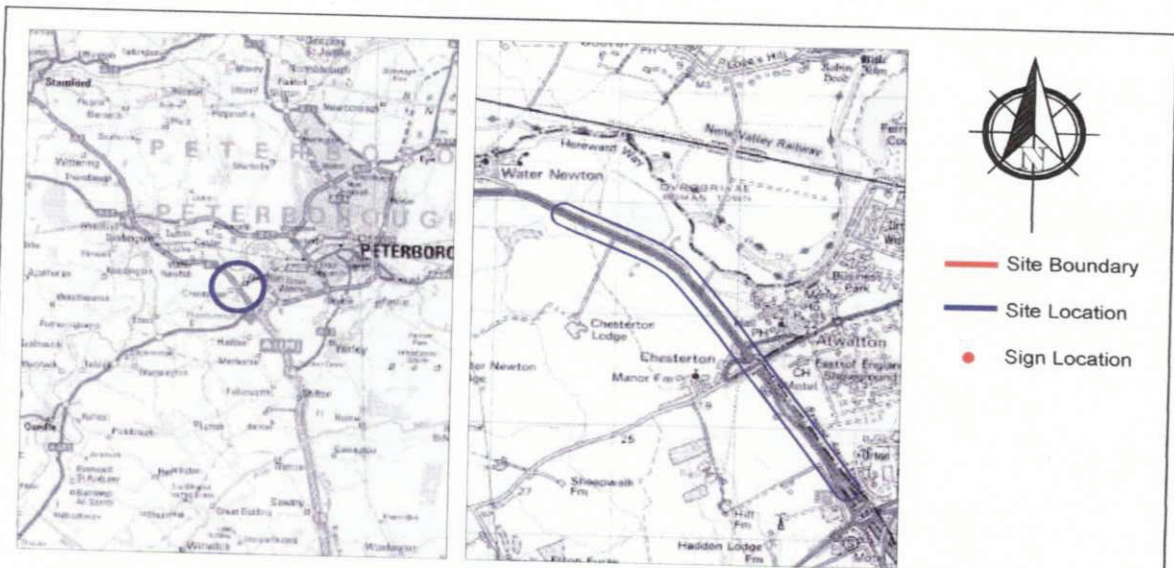
9.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank Scott Wilson Ltd for this commission, and for the assistance provided by AMScott.

10.0 Bibliography

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Scott Wilson Ltd, 2006, *A1 Chesterton KSI Safety Sceme. Specification of Archaeological Watching Brief*. Unpublished



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Drawing Title
Figure 1 - Site Location Plan

Drawing Number
D101103/AR/001

Project Title
A1 Chesterton KSI Safety Scheme
Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief

SCALE AT A4 Not to Scale			
Drm	GB	Appd	Revised
Chk		Date	Date
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Figure 1. Location

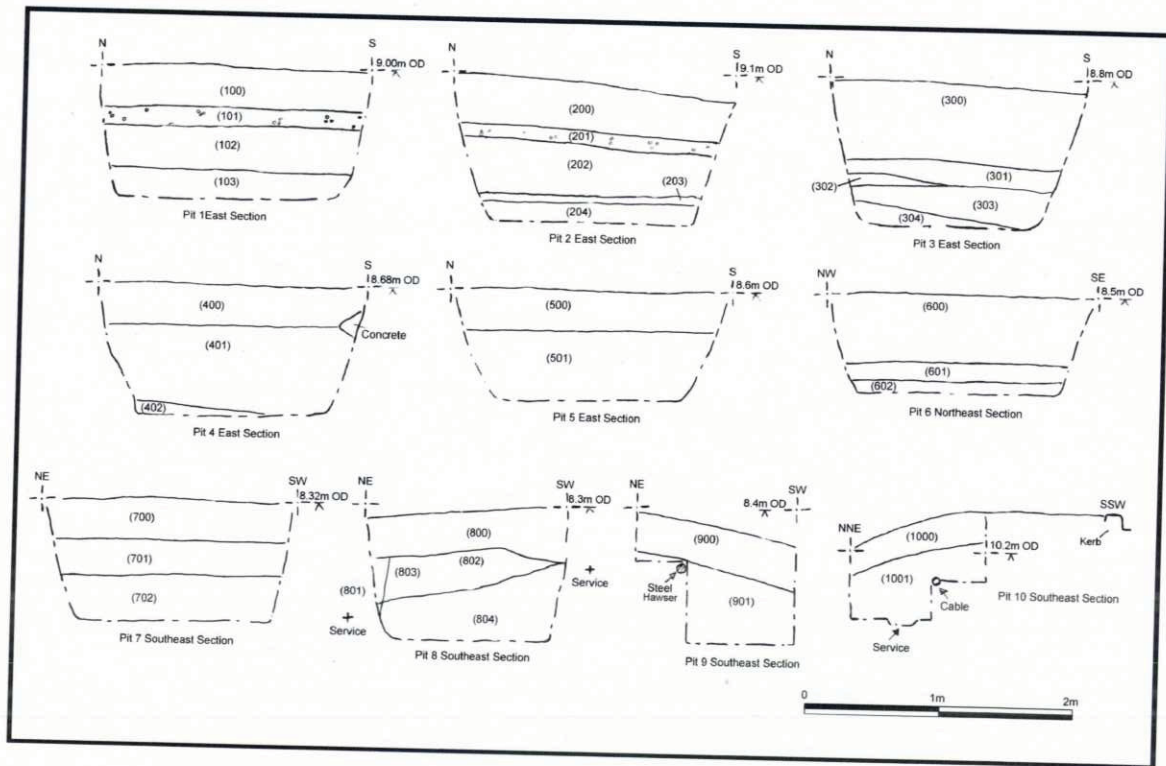


Figure 2. Pit Sections

Appendix 1: THE ROMANO-BRITISH POTTERY

R.S.Leary

Factual Data

The pottery was examined in context groups and catalogued according to the Guidelines of the Study Group for Romano-British Pottery for basic archiving (Darling 2004). The fabrics were recorded in broad groups and source suggested where appropriate. Reference was made to the National Fabric Collection where appropriate (Tomber and Dore 1998). Details of fabric variations were recorded where appropriate. Forms were described.

Quantity and provenance

There were five sherds of Romano-British pottery (51g.). The quantities and type of pottery sherds recovered from the excavation are shown in Table. 1.

Context	Ware	Vessel	Sherds	Weight	Date range
300	Hard orange with grey core and partially reduced external surface. This may be an overfired Nene Valley colour-coated ware or a later sherd dating to after the Roman period.		1	6	Mid 2 nd century or later if colour-coated ware
702	Grey ware	Closed vessel	1	6	Roman
702	Grey ware	Lid with triangular rim, very abraded	1	27	Roman
Pit 5 N/S	Nene Valley grey ware	Bodysherd from closed vessel with burnished surfaces	1	9	2 nd quarter of the 2 nd century or later
Pit 5 N/S	Nene Valley colour coated ware, white with black surfaces. National Fabric Collection LNV CC	Bodysherd	1	3	Mid 2 nd -4 th century. The thickness of the sherd suggests this may be from a bowl or dish likely to date to the late 3 rd -4 th century AD

Table 1 quantity and type of pottery

Range and variety of material

Wares

The fabric of the pottery was first examined by eye and sorted into ware groups on the basis of colour, hardness, feel, fracture, inclusions and manufacturing technique. If the sherds could not be adequately grouped by eye then they were examined under an x30 binocular microscope and compared with sherds from known sources. National fabric collection codes are given wherever possible (Tomber and Dore 1998).

The sherds from pit 5 are both of types made at the Nene Valley kilns. The two grey ware sherds from 702 are not in the characteristic Nene Valley grey ware fabric but are in a common Roman grey ware made at many centres in Roman Britain.

Forms

Only one sherd was diagnostic in terms of form – the grey ware lid from 702. Unfortunately lid forms are not closely datable.

Chronology

The types of fabrics and forms identified in the assemblage indicate a date in the Roman period. The sherds from pit 5 indicate a date after the mid 2nd century and probably in the 3rd-4th century. The sherds from pit 7 are unfortunately not chronologically sensitive and only give a date within the Roman period.

Function and site status

Too few sherds were recovered to assess aspects of function and site status.

Statement of potential

This small group of sherds needs no further work and a record should be deposited with the archive.

Storage and curation

The pottery is stable.

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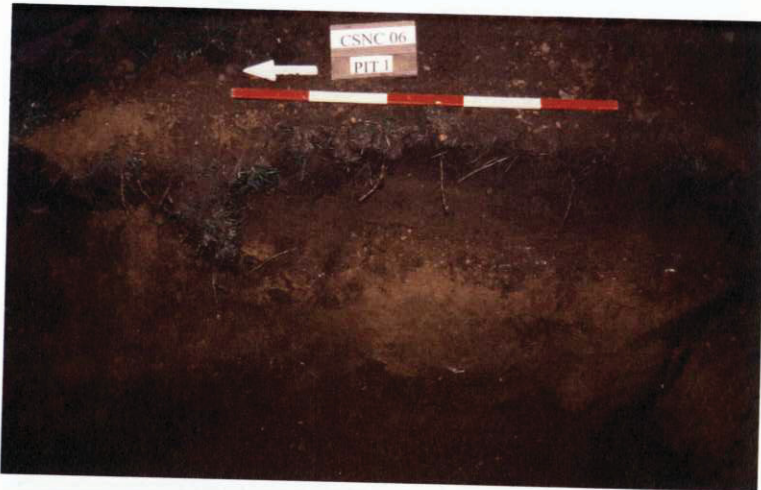
Willis, S 1997 *Research Frameworks for the Study of Roman Pottery*. Study Group for Roman Pottery. London

Appendix 2: CONTEXT SUMMARY

Context	Depth	Above	Below	Description	Finds
100	0.30m	101		Layer: dark greyish brown clayey sand with small, rare, rounded stone and charcoal inclusions. Recent Topsoil dump	
101	0.13m	102	100	Layer: mid orangey brown silt with frequent small angular and rounded gravel inclusions. Modern road make-up material	
102	0.30m	103	101	Layer: mid brown clayey sand. Disturbed Natural	
103	>0.20m		102	Layer: dark orange-brown with frequent platy and angular limestone fragments. Weathered natural	
200	0.37m	201		Layer: dark greyish brown clayey sand with small, rare, rounded stone and charcoal inclusions. Recent Topsoil dump	
201	0.10m	202	201	Layer: mid orangey brown silt with frequent small angular and rare rounded gravel inclusions. Modern road make-up material	
202	0.40m	203	201	Layer: light whitish yellow coarse sand. Natural; same as 204	
203	0.06m	204	202	Lens: mid brown silty sand lens with occasional limestone within natural 203/204	
204	>0.10m		203	Layer: light whitish yellow coarse sand. Natural; same as 202	
300	0.50m	302		Layer: dark brown clayey sand with small, rare, rounded stone inclusions and occasional limestone flecks. Recent Topsoil dump	1 no R-B pot
301	0.30m	302	300	Layer: dark brown clayey sand with small rare rounded stone inclusions. Essentially same as 303, but redeposited.	
302	0.10m	303	301	Layer: redeposited natural sand/blinding from carriageway construction.	
303	0.30m	304	302	Layer: dark brown clayey sand with occasional angular limestones and rare small rounded pebbles. Recently buried cultivation horizon	
304	>0.20m		303	Layer: light whitish yellow coarse sand. Natural	
400	0.30m	401		Layer: dark brown clayey sand with small, rare, rounded stone inclusions and occasional limestone flecks. Recent Topsoil dump	
401	0.55m	402	400	Layer: dark brown clayey sand matrix with common platy limestone fragments and rare rounded limestones. Modern deposit associated with road construction works	
402	>0.10m		401	Layer: light whitish yellow coarse sand. Natural	
500	0.30m	501		Layer: dark brown clayey sand with small, rare, rounded stone inclusions and occasional limestone flecks. Recent Topsoil dump	1 no u/s R-B pot
501	0.70m	502	500	Layer: dark brown clayey sand with occasional angular limestones and rare small rounded pebbles. Recently buried cultivation horizon	

502	>0.05m		501	Layer: light whitish yellow coarse sand. Natural	
600	0.50m	601		Layer: dark brown clayey sand with small, rare, rounded stone inclusions and occasional limestone flecks. Recent Topsoil dump	
601	0.13m	602	600	Layer: Limestone hardcore. Modern road construction deposit	
602	>0.08m		601	Layer: dark brown clayey sand with occasional angular limestones and rare small rounded pebbles. Recently buried cultivation horizon	
700	0.30m	701		Layer: dark brown clayey sand with small, rare, rounded stone inclusions and occasional limestone flecks. Recent Topsoil dump	
701	0.26m	702	700	Layer: dark brown clayey sand with occasional angular limestones and rare small rounded pebbles. Recently buried cultivation horizon	
702	0.34m			Layer: same as 701; split owing to finds recovery	2no R-B pot
800	0.30m	800 803		Layer: dark brown clayey sand with small, rare, rounded stone inclusions and occasional limestone flecks. Recent Topsoil dump	
801	0.55m			Fill: mixed deposit; modern service trench Fill. Contained by 803	
802	>0.6m	800		Layer: light whitish yellow coarse sand. Natural	
803	0.55m		800	Cut: modern service trench; contains 801, sealed by 800, cuts 802	
804	>0.55m		800	Layer: light whitish yellow coarse sand. Natural	
900	0.32m	901		Layer: dark brown clayey sand with small, rare, rounded stone inclusions and occasional limestone flecks. Recent Topsoil dump	
901	>0.64m		900	Layer: mid brown coarse sandy clay matrix with frequent inclusions including modern brick. Modern made ground	
1000				Layer: dark brown clayey sand with small, rare, rounded stone inclusions and occasional limestone flecks. Recent Topsoil dump	
1001	>0.5m		1000	Layer: mid brown coarse sandy clay matrix with frequent inclusions including modern brick. Modern made ground	

Appendix 3 COLOUR PLATES



Foundation Pit No1



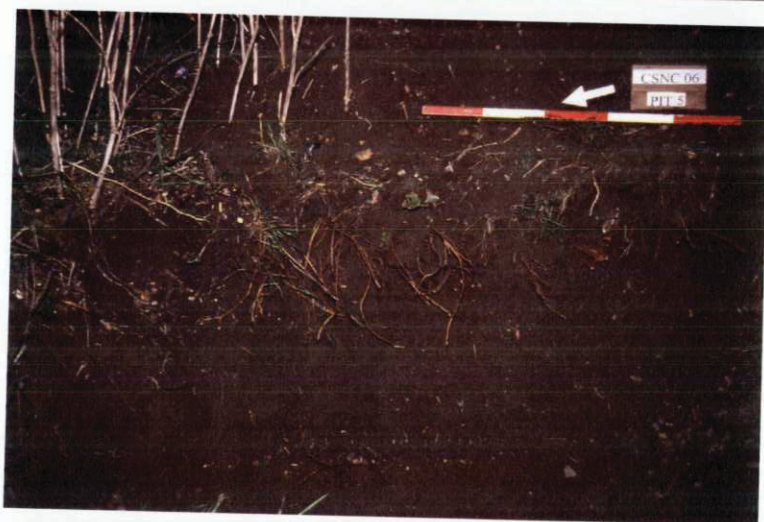
Foundation Pit No2



Foundation Pit No3



Foundation Pit No4



Foundation Pit No5



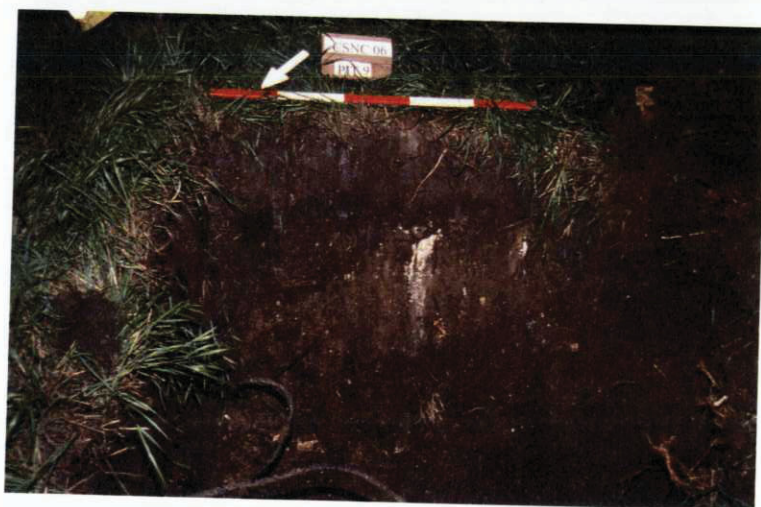
Foundation Pit No6



Foundation Pit No7



Foundation Pit No8



Foundation Pit No9



Foundation Pit No10