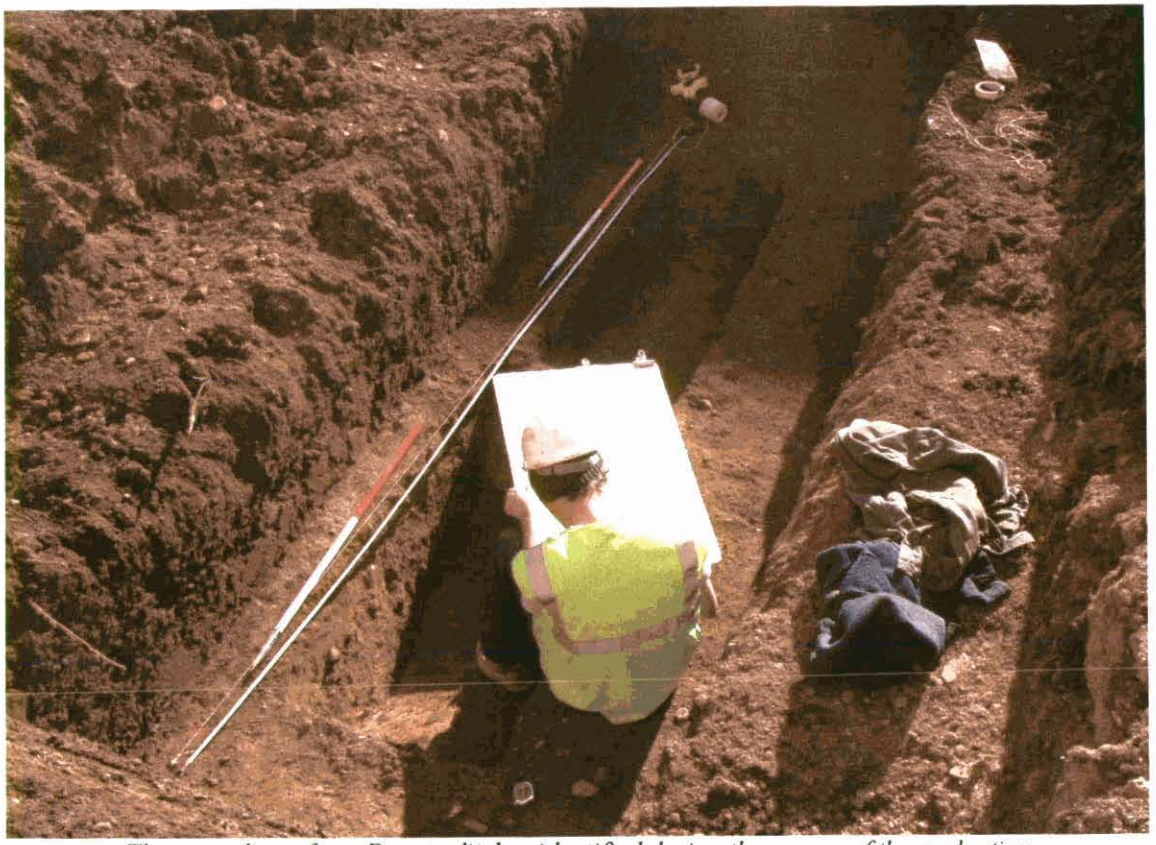
Bridgewater Street, Castlefield, Manchester

An Archaeological Evaluation within the Roman *vicus*



The recording of two Roman ditches identified during the course of the evaluation

The University of Manchester

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UMAU March 2006 (23)

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1. Introduction

1.1. The University of Manchester Archaeological Unit (UMAU) was commissioned by Hutchinson Project Management Ltd to complete an archaeological evaluation on a development site close to Bridgewater Street, Castlefield, Manchester[1]. This site is known to fall within Manchester's Roman settlement and the aim of the evaluation was to assess the levels of survival of Roman archaeology, and establish its depth below modern ground levels. This, in turn, would enable an assessment of the impacts of the proposed development on any underlying Roman archaeology.

[1] The fieldwork was directed by Dr Richard Gregory who was assisted by Peter Noble. Thanks to Norman Redhead, Assistant County Archaeologist for Greater Manchester.

2. Physical Setting

2.1. Location

The development site lies within Castlefield, Manchester (centred on NGR: SJ 8335 9765) and comprises an L-shaped parcel of land bounded on the east by Southern Street, on the west by Barton Street, on the north by a modern building fronting Southern Street and on the south by Bridgewater Street (**Illus 1**).

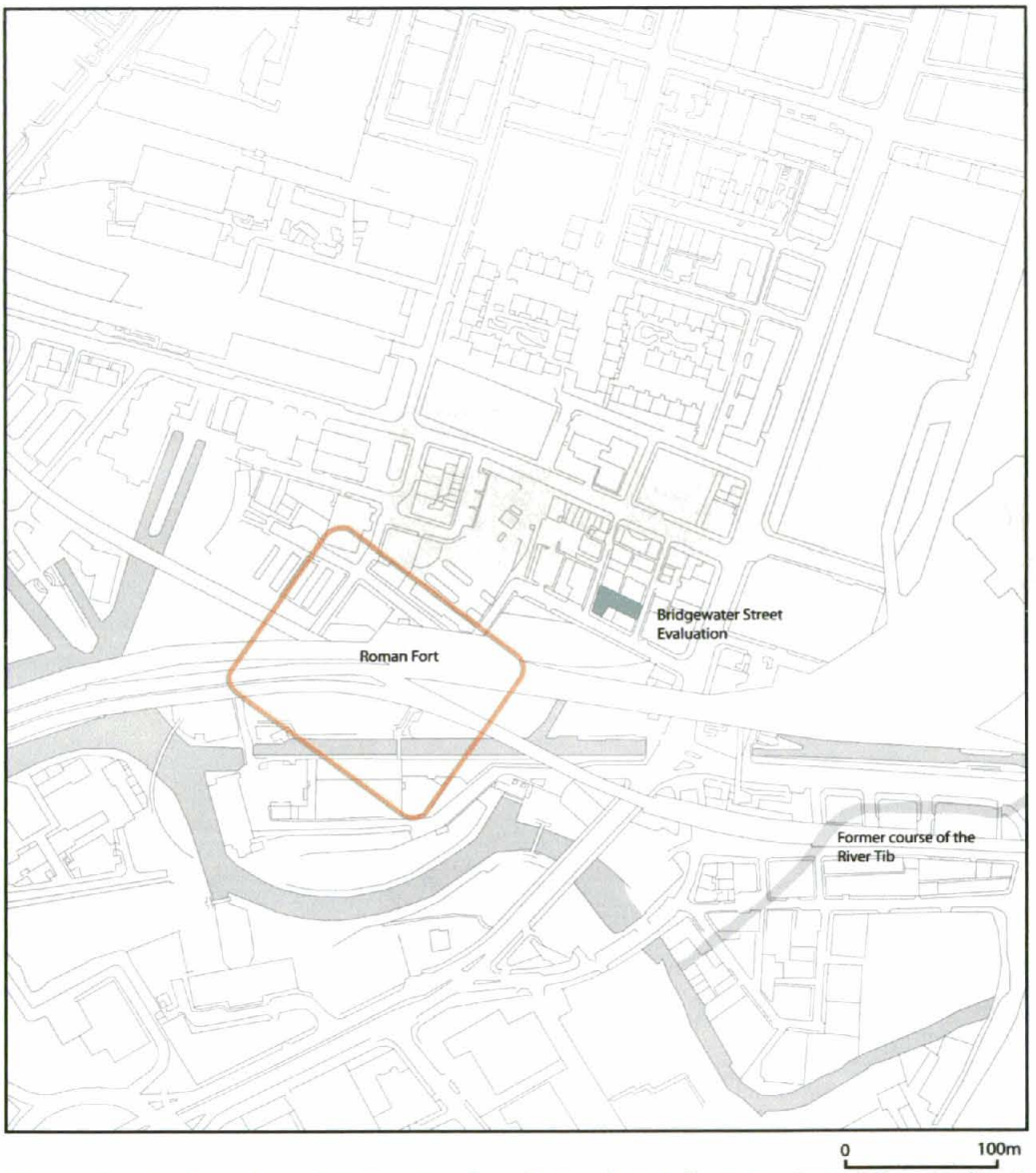

Illustration 1. Location of the evaluation (Reproduced from modern OS mapping by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved: Licence No. WL8021).

2.2. Geology

The overlying drift geology, as mapped by the OS Geological Survey (Sheet 85), comprises late glacial flood-gravels. The underlying solid geology, as mapped by the OS Geological Survey (Sheet 85), comprises Bunter Sandstone of the Permo-Triassic

(now reclassified as the Sherwood Sandstone Group). During the evaluation the natural geology was noted as comprising mottled yellow sandy clay, presumably deposited through alluvial mechanisms in the late glacial period, which overlay orange glacial gravels.

2.2. Land-use and Topography

Prior to the evaluation the development site had been used as a car park, which lay at approximately 34.6m AOD.

3. Archaeological Background

3.1. The development site is known to lie within the confines of the Roman civil settlement, or *vicus*, which developed around the Roman fort of *Mamucium*, during the early second century. Furthermore, the development site is found directly east of a number of Roman timber buildings excavated between the Roman Gardens and Barton Street, which fronted a probable Roman street running along Bridgewater Street (Gregory 2005; in prep). It also lies immediately to the south of Roman pits and a timber building identified during a watching brief on the eastern side of Barton Street (Gregory & Higgins 2004) and to the north of Roman buildings, which were identified during an archaeological evaluation beneath the Greater Northern Railway viaduct (Gregory 2004). To the north-east of the site Roman domestic/commercial buildings have also been recently excavated and these probably fronted a Roman street running in the vicinity of Southern Street (Gregory & Higgins 2006).

3.2. These excavations indicate that the survival of Roman archaeology is largely influenced by the extent and depth of eighteenth and nineteenth century activity. In this area of Castlefield activity that has proved most detrimental to the Roman levels has been the construction of late eighteenth/nineteenth basements, which in most cases severely truncate any underlying Roman remains. Within the development area although the early cartographic evidence indicates that the buildings originally fronting Barton, Southern and Bridgewater Street were provisioned with cellars, it was suspected that relatively undisturbed Roman archaeology night survive within a yard area found to the rear of these buildings (Arrowsmith 2002).

4. Archaeological Evaluation

4.1. Methodology

The evaluation was undertaken in late February/early March 2006 and targeted the former yard area, which was originally sandwiched between the late eighteenth century buildings found within and adjacent to the development area (**Illus 2**). Here two trenches (A & B) were positioned either side of a former passageway, which is denoted on the early maps as 'Back Southern Court' (Arrowsmith 2002). Trench A measured *c.* 1.6m by 4.5m, whilst Trench B measured *c.* 1.6m by 6.5m and both were initially excavated with a mechanical excavator, equipped with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket, in order to expose any surviving areas of Roman archaeology.

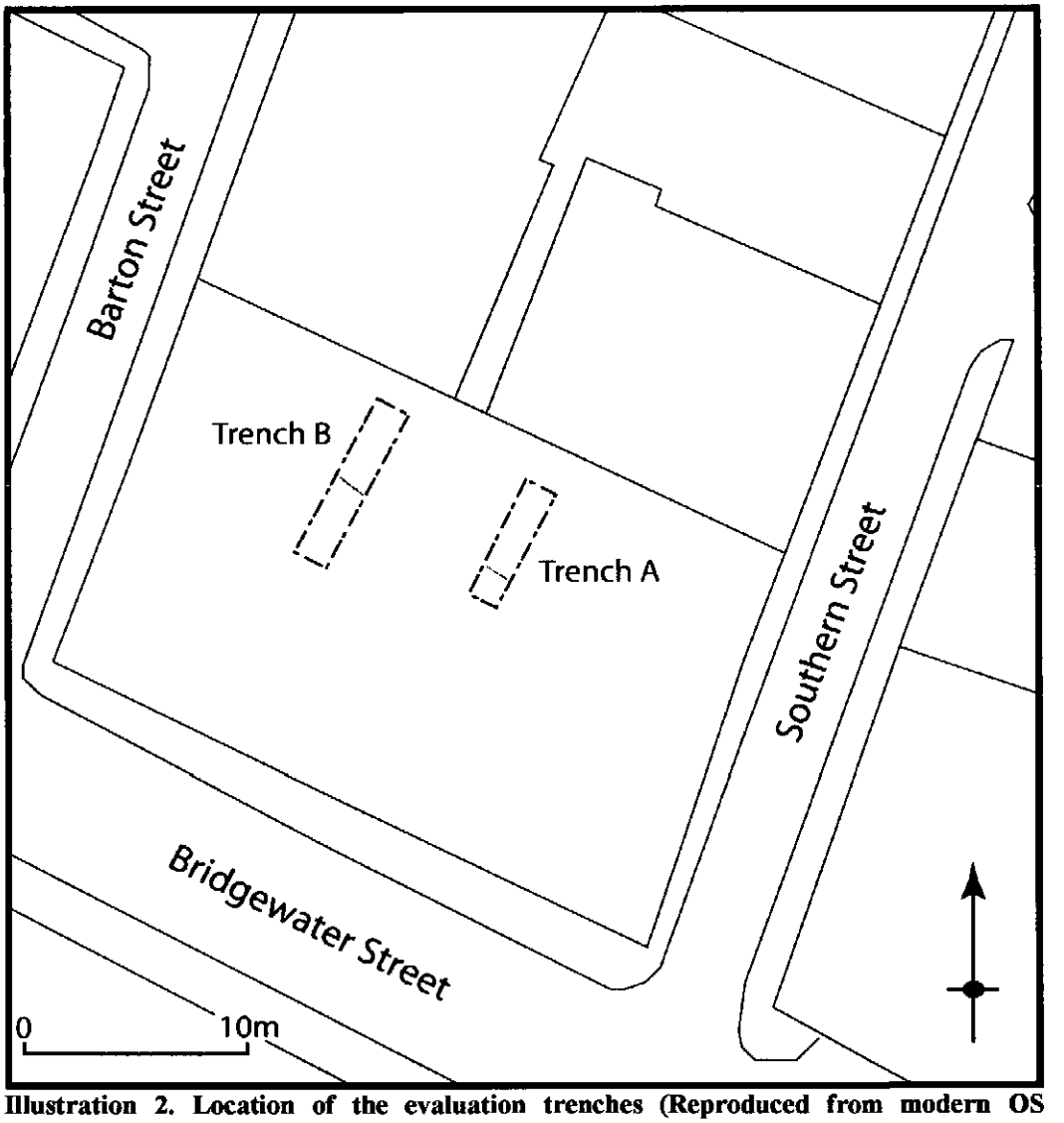

Illustration 2. Location of the evaluation trenches (Reproduced from modern OS mapping by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved: Licence No. WL8021).

4.2. Evaluation Results

Trench A

During the mechanical excavation of Trench A it became clear that two late eighteenth handmade brick structures were present at the northern and southern ends of the trench. The northerly structure was exposed in plan and was found, in the excavated area, to be composed of three stretches of walling, exposed on the southern side for two courses, defining a 1m wide area that was filled with a mid-dark brown silty clay (**Illus 3**). The form and location of the structure suggests that it was probably a privy attached to the rear of the buildings, which originally fronted Southern Street.

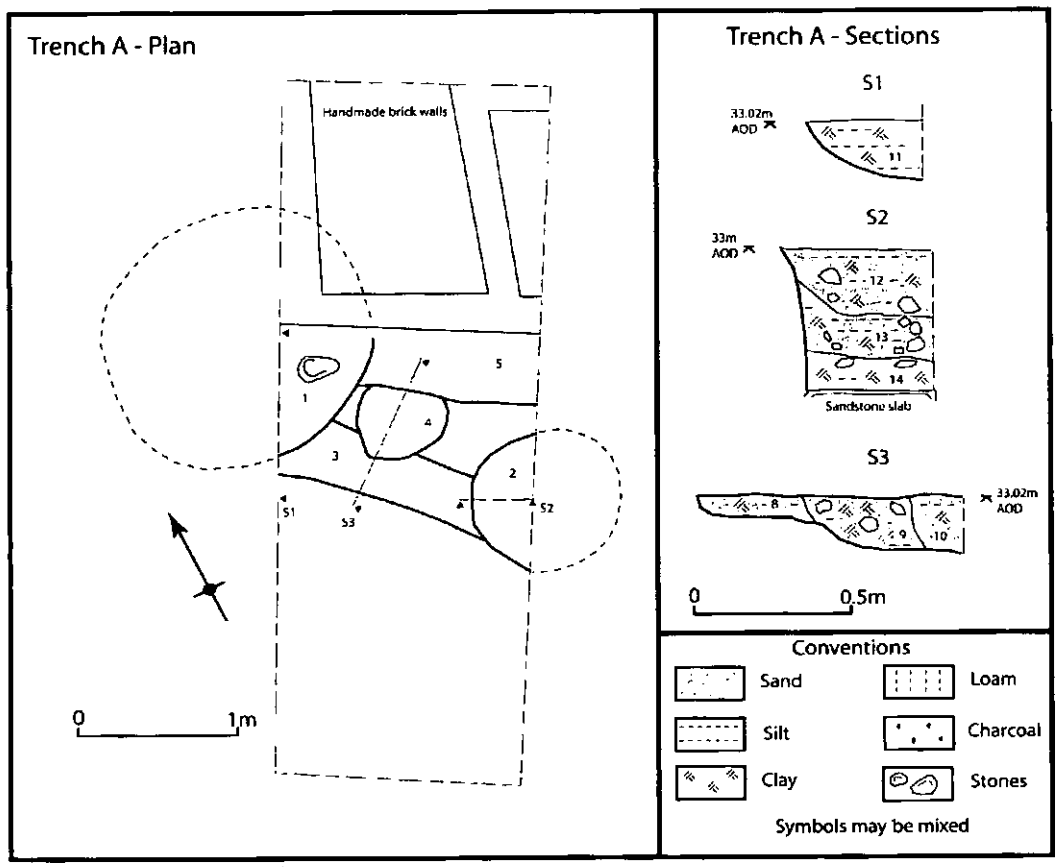

Illustration 3. Trench A.

Positioned between this structure and the other comparable brick structure to the south was an area which had remained undisturbed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The area contained a *c.* 0.8m thick layer of mid-brown loamy ploughsoil that was formed in the pre-industrial period when this part of Castlefield was used as agricultural land. Within the ploughsoil were a number of sherds of Roman pottery, which suggested the presence of underlying Roman features.

Following the removal of the ploughsoil five intercutting Roman features were identified immediately to the south of the privy, which represent four separate phases of Roman activity dating to the Hadrianic-early Antonine period, based on pottery recovered from the overlying ploughsoil (**Illus 4 & 5**). The earliest feature was a *c.* 0.35m wide, *c.* 0.1m deep linear gully [3], orientated north-west – south-east, which was filled with mid-brown silty sandy clay [8]. Based on its linear form, flat-bottomed profile and shallow depth it is probable that this feature housed a timber sleeper beam that secured the wall of a Roman timber building. At some point this

wall line was demolished and a post-hole [4] dug, which partially truncated the earlier feature. This post-hole probably formed an element of a second timber building and contained a mid-brown silty sand intermixed with yellow clay [9]. Like its predecessor this second timber was subsequently demolished and was truncated by a *c.* 0.18m deep linear feature that contained a mid-brown sandy silty clay [10]. Although within the evaluation trench it was not possible to establish the width of the feature, as it ran beneath the late eighteenth century privy, it seems likely that it was a construction trench securing the timber wall of a third Roman building. This building was also demolished to make way for a fourth timber building. In the evaluation trench this was evidenced through the discovery of two large post-holes [1 & 2], spaced *c.* 1m apart, which truncated the wall lines of the earlier timber buildings. Although the full extent of the post-holes was not exposed in the evaluation trench, the available evidence suggests that one post-hole [1] had a *c.* 1.5m diameter, contained a large river cobble which was utilised as a packing stone and was filled with mid-grey silty clay [11]. The other post-hole [2] probably had a *c.* 0.9m diameter, was *c.* 0.45m deep, contained sandy silty clays [12 & 13] and silty clay [14] and had a sandstone slab at is base, which presumably acted as a post-pad.

Illustration 4. Roman features in Trench A prior to excavation.

Illustration 5. Roman features in Trench A following excavation.

Trench B

Within Trench B there was no evidence for any industrial period remains. Instead the post-Roman ploughsoil was initially encountered, which was *c.* 0.8m deep. This horizon also contained a small assemblage of Roman pottery, a heavily corroded Type 1b Roman iron nail (Manning 1985) and a moderate sized assemblage of fragmented Roman roof tile and other pieces of ceramic building material, which may have been derived from the demolished buildings identified in Trench A.

Beneath the ploughsoil two large Roman ditches [6 & 7] were evident (**Illus 6 & 7**). These ditches were orientated north-west – south-east and ran parallel with each other suggesting that they were contemporary features. The full extent of both ditches could not be established during the evaluation as both features ran beyond the limits of the trench. The ditches were, however, partially sectioned (**Illus 8**). The southern ditch appeared to have a shelf on its northern side and had been intentionally backfilled with a mottled mid-grey clay [16] and a mottled mid-grey silty sandy clay [15], both containing numerous charcoal flecks and sherds of Roman pottery suggesting that the ditch had been backfilled during the Hadrianic period (early second century). In contrast, the northern ditch had a U-shaped profile and contained on its southern side deposits [19 & 20] indicative of natural slumping. Sealing these fills were two sandy silty clay deposits [17 & 18], containing numerous flecks of charcoal and a number of sherds of Roman pottery, which indicated that this ditch, in a similar manner to the ditch immediately to the south had been intentionally backfilled during the Hadrianic period (early second century). Based on the orientation of this ditch, it is also clear that it must have terminated between the two evaluation trenches, as it was not present in Trench A.

4.3. Watching Brief

In late March 2006 an archaeological watching brief was undertaken in order to observe the excavation of a lift shaft during ground works associated with the new development. This lift shaft was positioned 2m west of the south-western corner of evaluation trench B and measured *c.* 3m square. The shaft was dug through a deposit of building rubble contained within a late eighteenth century basement, originally associated with housing fronting Barton Street. At 1.9m below the present street level the flagged floor of the basement was encountered. This was removed and at a depth of 2m below the present street level the natural glacial sand and gravels were observed. No Roman archaeology was present.

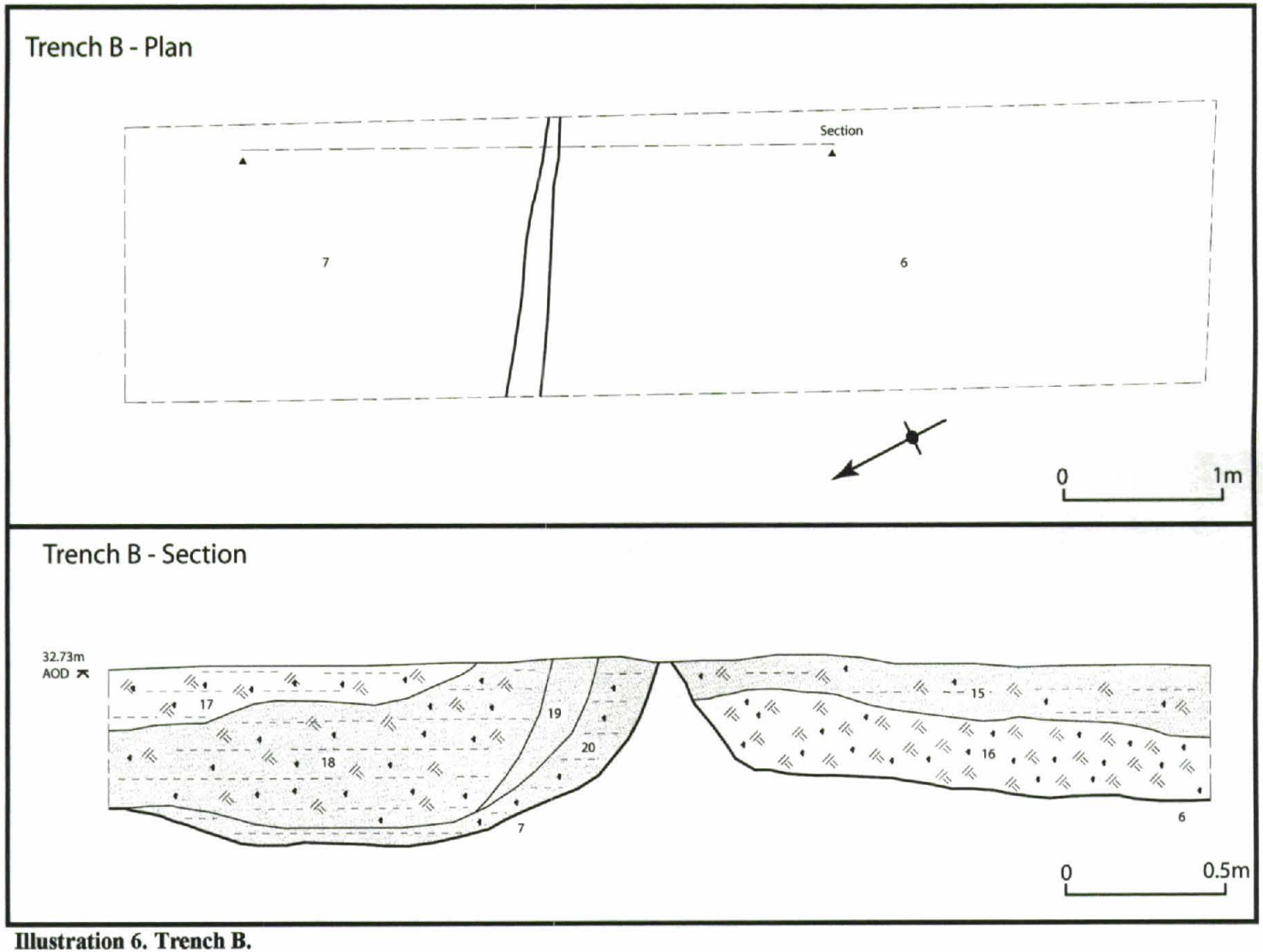

Illustration 6. Trench B.

Illustration 7. Ditches 6 (foreground) & 7 (background) prior to sectioning.

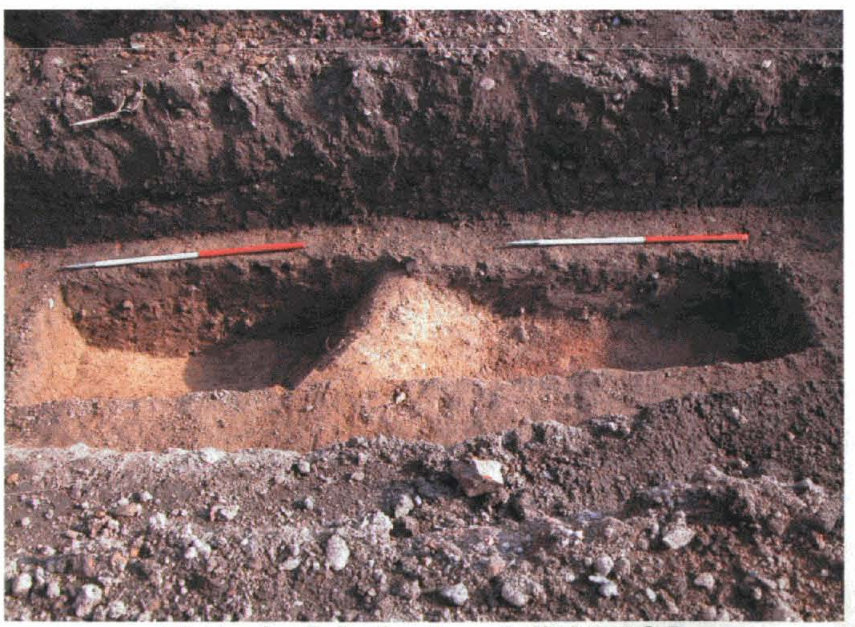

Illustration 7. Section through ditches 6 & 7.

4.4. Roman small finds

Roman coarseware

Ruth Leary

An archive catalogue was compiled for all the pottery according to the standard laid down by the Study Group for Romano-British Pottery (Darling 2004). Pottery was recorded detailing specific fabrics and forms, decorative treatment, condition, cross-joins/same vessel and was quantified by sherd count, weight and rim percentage values, giving estimated vessel equivalents. All the pottery from the site was catalogued in the archive and the stratified pottery was examined in order to date the features. The fabric series was cross-referenced with the fabric series from the excavations at Barton Street and the National fabric collection codes (Tomber & Dore 1998) are included where possible.

Fabric descriptions

The fabric of the pottery was first examined by eye and sorted into fabric groups on the basis of colour, hardness, feel, fracture, inclusions and manufacturing technique. A sample of the sherds was further examined under an x30 binocular microscope to verify these divisions. The size of the sample was as large as was felt necessary for each fabric group.

Colour: narrative description only

Hardness: after Peacock 1977
soft - can be scratched by finger nail
hard - can be scratched with penknife blade
very hard - cannot be scratched

Feel: tactile qualities
smooth - no irregularities
rough - irregularities can be felt
sandy - grains can be felt across the surface
leathery - smoothed surface like polished leather
soapy - smooth feel like soap

Fracture: visual texture of fresh break, after Orton 1980.
smooth - flat or slightly curved with no visible irregularities
irregular - medium, fairly widely spaced irregularities
finely irregular - small, fairly closely spaced irregularities
laminar - stepped effect
hackly - large and generally angular irregularities

Inclusions:

Type: after Peacock 1977
Frequency: indicated on a 4-point scale - abundant, moderate, sparse and rare where abundant is a break packed with an inclusion and rare is a break with only one or two of an inclusion.

Sorting: after Orton 1980

Shape: angular - convex shape, sharp corners
subangular - convex shape, rounded corners
rounded - convex shape no corners
platey - flat

Size: subvisible - only just visible at x30 and too small to measure
fine - 0.1-0.25mm
medium - 0.25-0.5
coarse - 0.5-1mm
very coarse - over 1mm

The Fabrics

BB1 As Tomber & Dore 1998 South-East Dorset BB1 (DOR BB1).

CC1 As OBA1 with brown slip rough cast ware. Rough cast ware beakers with simple everted rims, cornice rims and grooved cornice rims. The fabrics compare to locally made Cheshire Plains oxidised wares. The Wilderspool kilns produced similar beaker types (Hartley & Webster 1974 nos 23-34).

DR20 Dressel 20. Baetican olive-oil amphora Dressel 20 [Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 25] from the valley of the River Guadalquivir and its tributaries between Seville and Cordoba in the southern Spanish Roman province of *Baetica* made in at least 150 different centres [Ponsich 1974, 1979, 1991; Remesal, 1986]. Production began in the reign of Augustus and lasting until shortly after the middle of the third century A.D.

FLA2 White hard, smooth with irregular fracture. Common, well-sorted fine, subrounded quartz and sparse, ill-sorted medium to fine red/brown inclusions

FLB1 Orange, quite pale with white slip. Soft with smooth or sandy/powdery feel and slightly irregular fracture. Sparse well-sorted subangular quartz and rare rounded grey inclusions

FLB2 Red-orange. Hard with sandy feel and irregular fracture. White slip. Moderate well-sorted medium subangular quartz, sparse, coarse. rounded grey inclusions

GRB1 As Martin 2004 GW1 Hard with fairly smooth feel if surface unabraded. Sandy if surface abraded. Sparse-moderate, well-sorted medium subangular quartz as OAB1, sparse ill-sorted medium-fine rounded grey inclusions. Darker grey slip. Cheshire Plains reduced ware

M 5 Mancetter-Hartshill, Warks

Fine-textured, cream fabric, varying from softish to very hard, sometimes with pink core; self-coloured or with a self-coloured slip. Inclusions usually moderate, smallish, transparent and translucent white and pinkish quartz with sparse opaque orange-brown and rarely blackish fragments; rarely white clay pellets (or re-fired pottery). The range in fabric is, in fact, quite wide, from that with virtually no inclusions to fabrics with a fair quantity and fabrics with hard, ill-sorted black inclusions. The trituration grit after AD130-140 consisted of hard red-brown and/or hard blackish material (probably re-fired pottery fragments), with only very rare quartz fragments. Earlier mortaria usually have a mixed trituration grit in which quartz and sandstone are normal components and some early second-century mortaria probably have entirely quartz trituration grit.

Mancetter-Hartshill mortaria of AD130/140 onwards are usually easy to recognize, but Mancetter-Hartshill fabrics of AD100-130 are more variable. It is at this period when there can be difficulty in distinguishing Mancetter-

Hartshill, Little Chester and Wroxeter fabrics. A further difficulty is that a few potters were active at both Mancetter-Hartshill and Little Chester.

M7 **Wroxeter** (location of kilns unknown, but serving Wroxeter as their primary market). The floruit of these potteries was within the period AD100-150/160. One or two potters perhaps had started marginally earlier c. AD80.
Cream fabric, varying in texture from softish to very hard and often with a buff-cream slip. Inclusions: again varying, moderate to frequent, ill-sorted quartz, red-brown and opaque black material. Trituration grit: mainly quartz, quartz sandstone, red-brown sandstone, black rock.
For a fuller description of the range produced in these potteries see James 2003, 245, Fabrics 8-12; see also Tomber and Dore 1998, 179.

OBA1 As OAA1 but buff

OAB1 Cheshire Plains medium orange, hard to soft with rather sandy feel and quite smooth fracture. Sparse-moderate, ill-sorted medium to coarse subangular quartz, sparse, ill-sorted, rounded red/brown and grey inclusions

OBB1 Cheshire plains fine ware, buff. Soft with powdery/sandy feel and smooth fracture. Sparse, well-sorted, fine quartz and sparse ill-sorted fine to medium, rounded red brown inclusions. Micaceous.

Chronology

Thirty-seven sherds (927.4g) of Romano-British pottery were recovered from the excavations. Most of these came from the ploughsoil layer: two sherds (26g) from Trench A and 48 sherds (1232g) from Trench B). Two posthole fills in Trench A contained Romano-British pottery. S Dressel 20 amphora bodysherd (33g.) came from posthole 1 dating from the first-third century AD and a scrap of grey ware (GRB1, 2g) came from posthole 2, which is not closely datable.

In Trench B pottery was found in the two ditches. Fill 15 of ditch 6 was dated to the Hadrianic or early Antonine period by sherds from a BB1 jar, including a burnt base, and a Wroxeter white ware mortarium. White ware mortarium are known to have been made from the Wroxeter kilns from AD80-150, but this example is likely to be of early second century date. A date in the Hadrianic period would fit all these sherds although extension into the early Antonine period is possible.

Ditch 7 fill 17 contained a Dressel 20 amphora bodysherd (61g.), bodysherds of fabrics FLB1 (17.9g.) and a BB1 jar (4.8g.) and a sherd giving the profile of a BB1 dish with acute lattice burnished decoration. This last vessel is a type common in the Hadrianic-early Antonine period and a Hadrianic date would be acceptable.

The material from the plough soil in Trench A comprised a fragment of brick or tile and an undiagnostic OBB1 sherd. In area B 13 fragments of brick and tile were found. The pottery included the rim of a BB1 necked jar of early-mid-second century date (Gillam 1976 no. 2), part of the base of an FLB1 vessel, probably a flagon, the shoulder of an OAB1 narrow-necked jar with shoulder cordon, a type common throughout the Roman period but, in this fabric, likely to belong to the second century or later, the base of a Mancetter-Hartshill mortarium dating after AD 130/40, an incomplete rim sherd from a white, Wroxeter M7 mortarium dating to AD80-150 with an optimum date in the early second century, an undercut, bead rim in fabric OAB1 perhaps from a wide-mouthed jar of a type found in the Antonine period or later and undiagnostic bodysherds of fabrics OBA2, OAB1, GRB1 and Dressel 20 amphora. One oxidised bodysherd from this layer compared better with medieval or later pottery.

The ceramics recovered suggests activity in the Hadrianic period, perhaps extending into the early Antonine period. There is very little material of Flavian-Trajanic type, although the fine OBA1 sherds may belong to that period. The oxidised fabrics are, for the most part, typical of the Cheshire Plains industries developing in the Hadrianic-Antonine period. No later Romano-British ceramics were identified.

Ceramic Building Material

Catalogued by Ruth Garrett

Context	Description	Weight (g)
Tr. B. ploughsoil	Oxidized scraps (CBM 91g)	2541
Tr. A. ploughsoil	Highly oxidized	19
Tr. A. PH (2)	CBM scrap	3
Tr. B. Ditch [7] (17)	Oxidized CBM	44
Tr. B. Ditch [6] (15)	Oxidized CBM	93
	Total	**2700**

Metal Artefacts

Catalogued by Ruth Garrett

Context	Description	Weight (g)
Tr. B. Ditch [6] (15)	Lead	10
Tr. B. Ploughsoil	Type 1b iron nail	66
	Total	**10**

5. Discussion

5.1. The evaluation indicated that Roman archaeology had survived within the yard area to the rear of the properties, which originally fronted Barton Street and Southern Street.

These remains included a series of timber buildings, probably dating to the Hadrianic-early Antonine period, and two Roman ditches, which had been backfilled during the early second century. The position and form of these ditches indicate that they probably linked with a comparable ditch system found at Barton Street (Gregory in prep) and formed part of an early military annexe, which surrounded the earliest Roman fort at Manchester. The depth of the remains lay at *c.* 1.5m below the present street level and would not, therefore, be affected by the ground works associated with the residential development of the site.

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