

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION AND MONITORING AT  
NORTH GATE RETAIL PARK, NEWARK,  
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE:  
INTERIM SUMMARY OF RESULTS



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Fig. 1 Evaluation, excavation and monitoring areas in relation to pre-construction site layout	

## Summary

- **Background.** This fieldwork was carried out by Trent & Peak Archaeological Unit from August 2000 to September 2001, on behalf of Limes Estates Ltd. in fulfilment of a planning condition.
- **Site location and description.** The site lies on the north-east edge of Newark, Nottinghamshire, bounded by the R. Trent to the north-west and North Gate, the Roman Fosse Way, to the south-east.
- **Details of the development.** Following demolition of the existing buildings, the site was constructed with parking to the frontage and retail units to the rear. A large volume of fill was imported to build up the ground, thus minimising damage to known extensive archaeological remains.
- **Previously-known archaeological context.** A Desk-top Assessment and Evaluation previously carried out by TPAU showed that the site lies over a former Roman settlement occupied from the first to fourth centuries AD, with burials, buildings and a kiln distributed throughout and beyond the site boundaries. It was also occupied by the medieval settlement of Osmundthorpe, largely concentrated at the North Gate frontage. A Civil War earthwork, the King's Sconce, and the medieval and post-medieval buildings and cemetery of the Hospital of St. Leonard were possibly located within the development site.
- **Results of this work.** Evaluation trenches in the Peaches Maltings area (excluded from the original area evaluated) showed that remains of the Roman settlement continued to the northern boundary of the site (Trent Lane), at a depth of about 11.2m OD. These were little affected by the development due the considerable depth of made ground associated with the maltings. Stripping of the soft surfaces revealed relatively few finds, with the exception of the North Gate frontage, where allotment-digging has brought pottery and other finds close to the surface. Stripping and excavation has revealed in all six stone buildings or structures, probably of Roman date. In the excavated trenches (required largely for drainage runs), where excavation depth was sufficient, and excepting some areas of recent disturbance, numerous Roman features, ditches, pits and gulleys were found. The sole exception was the North Gate frontage in the south corner of the site, where an extensive area was well-preserved, but contained only a Roman boundary ditch, and a lime kiln of probable post-medieval date.

Significant post-excavation analysis and reporting remains to be completed.

Through carefully-considered design and with care in construction, the great majority of the extensive and important archaeological remains on the site were preserved, and remain preserved, beneath the buildings and surfaces of the new development.

## 1 Project design and site location

The fieldwork summarised in this report was carried out by Trent & Peak Archaeological Unit from August 2000 to September 2001, on behalf of Limes Estates Ltd, in fulfilment of a planing condition. It was directed in the field by Gerwyn Richards. Following a detailed desk-top assessment (referred to as "DTA" below, see bibliography) and evaluation ("Evaluation" below, see bibliography), a Scheme of Treatment was drawn up by TPAU with the agreement of the client, the Local Planning Authority and the County Archaeologist. In its implementation, considerable effort was made by the client to avoid ground disturbance through modified design, but where damage to potential archaeological remains proved unavoidable, prior excavation, and recording of archaeological remains was carried out by TPAU.

The active co-operation of Clugston Construction staff during the fieldwork, particularly Heath Williamson, Site Manager, was greatly appreciated, and contributed greatly to the success of the project.

The site is located on North Gate, Newark (the former Roman Fosse Way road) on the north-east outskirts of the town, at National Grid reference SK 802 546 and about 12m OD. It is bounded to the east by the road and to the west by the River Trent.

The site prior to redevelopment comprised two main areas, of different character. The north and south-west parts were mainly built-up with former brewery buildings and the Peaches Maltings in the north corner; the external surfaces, mainly tarmac and concrete, stood at around 11.9-12.7m OD. The remainder of the site (area of soft strip, Fig. 1), containing the former bowling green and allotments, but with no buildings, and covered with grass and other vegetation, had surface levels at around 11.3-12.2m.

In this report, excavation and strip-monitoring areas are numbered with two digits, contexts (pits, ditches and their fills) with four digits, and individual artefacts with three letters (e.g. 33, 1001, and DIN respectively).

## 2 Outline of site development known from DTA and evaluation

Five main types of deposits were identified in the evaluations.

- *modern overburden containing brick, concrete, tarmac and other modern debris, and of varying thickness*

- *a buried soil, evidently the original ground surface, appearing as a homogenous dark brown pebbly silty sand about 300mm thick where complete*
- *archaeological features*
- *natural gravel overlying red clay, the natural Mercia Mudstone bedrock*
- *a fourth deposit occurred in the area of the allotments, consisting of the dark brown pebbly silty sand mixed with gravel and or mudstone, and representing disturbed topsoil, archaeological deposits, and the natural subsoil / bedrock.*

### 2.1 Romano-British period

Chance finds and small-scale excavations by S. Gorin in the 1970s (Fig. 1, G1-G6) showed that the site is occupied by a substantial Romano-British settlement, occupied from the first to the fourth centuries AD. Evidence for buildings, burials and a kiln was recovered, but no significant detail regarding the nature of the occupation or its extent was recovered. The DTA showed that remains were likely to extend throughout the site, and evaluation showed that although damaged by allotment digging, and in some areas by the buildings of the Warwick's and Richardson's Brewery and its successors which occupied the site until recently, remains of the Romano-British settlement were extensive and substantial, buried at depths of between 450 and 950mm below surface.

### 2.2 Medieval period

The site was occupied by the settlement of Osmundthorpe, separately administered from the town but effectively a suburb of Newark spread out along the Fosse Way. Medieval features were found concentrated near the North Gate frontage, including ditches possibly representing property boundaries.

### 2.3 Post-medieval period

During the Civil War Osmundthorpe was burned down. It was recognised that the cemetery and buildings relating to the medieval hospital of St. Leonard (later fortified), and the King's Sconce, a Civil War earthwork, might also be found during the excavations but in the event this did not happen.

## 3 Description of excavation areas

Excavation areas, including Gorin's excavations (G1-G6) and the evaluations of 1997 (01-19) are shown in Fig. 1. The areas excavated during the construction scheme (20-45, numbered in the order of opening) are described below.

#### 21, 27, 31, and 41

These lengths of trench were located along the line of a drainage run and outfall to the river in the north-west corner of the site.

#### 21, 27 and 31

These trenches were excavated to depths of 10.88m OD at the south-western end, to 10.6m OD at the north-eastern end, about 1m below ground. Only modern material was found in them. Tree-preservation issues prevented the joining of this run and its completion to an outfall at the river: instead, a new run and outfall were formed (area 41) at the east end of existing sheet piling which retains the river bank to the west from this point.

#### 41

This trench was excavated to a depth of 10.87 to 10.81. In order to minimise the ground disturbance, a back drop to river level was formed at the outfall itself.

Only modern material was found in the drain run. Even in the outfall itself the excavation (to 6.4m OD) exposed large slaggy boulders, with no sign of either archaeological deposits or of natural bedrock, even at the base of the excavation. The boulders may well be infilling connected with the existing river-bank revetment to the west.

This general area of made ground coincides with the river bank area beyond a boundary mapped on the Tithe Award map of 1842 (Fig. 1, DTA Fig. 7); although the map gives no indication of levels, this area was shown to be on low-lying ground by excavation in 1977 (trench 05, *Evaluations* fig. 6).

#### 22, 23 and 37

Densely-packed archaeological features were found between areas of disturbance in these trenches. The highest surviving archaeological levels were recorded at 11.4-11.5m at the south-eastern end (23), and 11.0m at the north-western end (22). Eighty-eight sherds of Romano-British pottery came from these features, and no features were certainly dated to the medieval period. It is thus likely that most, if not all belong to the Roman settlement. Of particular importance was a fragment of stone wall, 1704 (23). Although six stone-footed buildings were found on the site, this fragment contained a stone with mortar adhering (DIN), suggesting that mortar had been used in its construction, whilst resting on its top was a fragment of fired clay (DIO) with wattle impressions indicating that the building was built of timber with wattle panels, resting on stone foundations. It is possible that it was re-used

from a mortared stone building located elsewhere on the site, but no direct evidence of this was found.

#### 40

The foundations for a docking area had a proposed formation level of 12.0m OD. This was expected to be considerably above the general top level of archaeological deposits (for example these were identified at 11.6m in nearby 07 and in 11.5m OD in 05 on the far side of the docking area. However, the area was investigated prior to construction to verify this. Three test-pits were dug manually to the formation level of 12.0m OD, exposing only topsoil and rubble; no archaeological levels were found.

#### 28 and 29

Two machine-dug test-pits were excavated on the site of the maltings in order to confirm the extent and thickness of the made ground associated with the maltings, to a depth due to be affected by proposed drainage trenches, and an access road from Trent Lane. 28 was excavated to 11.6m OD and 29 to 12.1m OD, about 1m below existing ground level, and well in excess of the proposed formation levels, but produced modern overburden overlying red clay, which contained 19/20th cent. brick.

#### 24, 25 and 36

24 and 25 were excavated on the line of proposed drainage runs, and 36 in an area of cut for an access road at the North Gate frontage, with a formation level down to 11.2m OD. The road was embanked over the site as far as possible in order to avoid ground disturbance, but an area of cut at the frontage was inevitable in order to link to the existing road levels. The northern edge of the excavated road-area was determined by the point where the rising formation level away from the frontage exceeded the known surface of archaeological levels by 300mm.

Although largely undisturbed by previous buildings, allotment-digging or other intrusions, the area contained clean sand and gravel with few features, a result consistent with the results of the evaluation (trench 03, *Evaluation* Fig. 4, pp. 6-7). Two archaeological features were recorded: 1200, a linear feature orientated parallel with North Gate, and 1207, a probable lime kiln (suggested by its scorched sides and apparent flue-channel cut into the south-east side). 1200 produced two sherds of Romano-British pottery. The lime kiln was undated, but its size and construction resembles those found at several locations elsewhere in Newark, and

dated to the post-medieval period. The scarcity of finds from 1200, despite the complete excavation of an 18m length of this feature, is consistent with the general absence of features, and thus of occupation, in the vicinity, in the Roman period. Its location and orientation suggest that it may well have been a boundary for the Roman road.

34

Area 34 was excavated to the formation level a constant depth of 11.80m, but was of insufficient depth to expose any archaeological features, while at its west end, there was considerable damage to levels from the foundations of the existing building.

26, 32 and 33

These areas formed a drainage run with formation levels sloping down from 11.42m at the north-east end of 26, to 11.26m OD. at the south-west end of 33. 32 ran into it from the north with a formation level of 11.86 at the north-east end. The east end of 26, and all of 32 were too shallow to expose archaeological deposits, and some destruction was encountered under the east wall of the cask store.

Two areas contained archaeological features: deposits, the west end of 26 and the west end of 33. The features were cut into gravel beneath the buried topsoil. In 33, 1001-1005, and in 26, 2001-2009 were all pits or gullies extending beyond the limits of excavation. 1001 was a small pit or gully-terminal which produced four sherds of Romano-British pottery. 2006 was a substantial ditch, 1.5m wide and orientated perpendicular to the Roman road, which produced abundant medieval and Roman pottery, (the latter presumably residual). 2000, 2002-2005 were smaller features which produced medieval and Roman pottery.

20

This area was excavated in order to assess the presence, extent and nature of potential archaeological remains in the area of the former Peaches Maltings, which had been excluded from the site evaluated in 1997.

One 10x3m trench was excavated, situated at the east corner of the proposed units in order to establish the depth of made ground and the level of the highest archaeologically-significant layers. This area was due potentially to be affected by piling for the new units and the drain F7. Consideration of general site levels suggested that the pre-maltings ground level was likely to occur at about 11.4m OD.

The original pre-maltings ground level, consisting of buried topsoil was located at about 11.2-11.4m

OD. Above this was made ground containing 19th /20th century brick apparently relating to the former Peaches Maltings and of no archaeological value. The topsoil was removed mechanically, and at about 11.1m OD the disturbed top of a Roman stone-footed building and much Roman pottery appeared.

Mechanical excavation ceased at this level, and the surface was hand cleaned, and a written drawn and photographic record was formed. Two 5cm thick spits were removed from the surface and the associated finds (recorded in plan), confirmed the Roman date of the layers / features.

#### Topsoil strip areas

Stripping of the soft surfaces was carried out to a sufficient depth remove the living organic component of the soils. During the stripping of 35 excavation came close to intact archaeological levels, and the excavation level was therefore raised as it progressed to the bowling Green area, (44). A detailed plan of 35 was drawn up. Elsewhere recording was limited to plotting finds and concentrations of other material. The overall density of finds therefore provides little information about the extent of occupation or other activity, as may be seen by comparing surface collected pottery, and the results of excavations (Fig. 1).

The areas towards the rear of the site revealed remarkably few finds of medieval or earlier date, whilst concentrations towards the frontage are uneven, reflecting varying depths of preservation. Three stone clusters suggest the sites of stone structures, possibly buildings. Most of the pottery collected was Roman. The few medieval sherds collected were found largely towards the North Gate frontage, despite the general concentration of finds of any period at least about 20m or more back from the frontage. This supports the general conclusion from excavation that the medieval occupation of the site is concentrated at the frontage.

## 4 The Finds

The finds have been cleaned, marked and listed. An appraisal of the Romano-British pottery is included below, but work on the other finds by specialists has yet to commence.

#### Romano-British pottery

*R. Leary*

712 sherds (7.224kg) of material provisionally



identified as pottery was examined and catalogued. This included 22 sherds which were likely to be medieval in date, 9 sherds of brick or tile and two crucible sherds. Also identified were a fragment of possible sagger (kiln) material, a reduced, quartz-tempered sherd, possibly handmade and of Anglo-Saxon date and a wheel-thrown, grey ware sherd possibly of late Saxon type. Around 60% of the assemblage was of grey ware type with fairly high proportions of non-local wares such as Mancetter-Hartshill mortaria (4%), samian (8%) and other fine wares (c.11%). Much of the material, however, could not be closely dated and most did not come from the contexts identified in excavation, making the potential of this assemblage in terms of dating rather less than had been anticipated in view of the mass of material and wide range of types recovered from the evaluation trenches. Nevertheless types dating from the second to fourth centuries were identified with two major grey ware fabric groups and additional fine wares, including Parisian ware, mica-dusted ware and non-Nene Valley colour-coated wares. The presence of a severely distorted waster sherd from a bifid-flange rim jar of the type made at the Little London kilns in the late second to early third century sheds some light on the nature of pottery production in Newark at that time. The presence of undiagnostic shell-tempered ware bodysherds raises the possibility of a Mediaeval attribution for some of those sherds but further identification, probably thin-sectioning, would be necessary.

## 5 Conclusion

### Results of this work.

Evaluation trenches in the Peaches Maltings area (excluded from the original area evaluated) showed that remains of the Roman settlement continued to the northern boundary of the site (Trent Lane), at a depth of about 11.2m OD. These were little affected by the development due to the considerable depth of made ground associated with the maltings. Stripping of the soft surfaces revealed relatively few finds, with the exception of the North Gate frontage, where allotment-digging had brought pottery and other finds close to the surface. Stripping and excavation revealed in all six stone buildings or structures, almost certainly of Roman date. In the excavated trenches (required largely for drainage runs), where excavation depth was sufficient, numerous Roman features, ditches, pits and gulleys were found. The sole exception was the North Gate frontage in the south corner of the site, where an extensive area was well-preserved, but contained only a Roman boundary ditch, and a lime

kiln of probable post-medieval date.

Through carefully-considered design and with care in construction, the great majority of the extensive and important archaeological remains on the site were preserved, and remain preserved, beneath the new buildings and surfaces.

## 6 Work remaining

- Completion of specialists' analysis of all finds
- Non-specialist summary of all stages of the project
- Report on all stages of the project for academic publication.
- Archive completion and deposition

## 7 Published and unpublished works consulted

DTA 1994. Appleton, E.M. and Kinsley, G., *An Archaeological Assessment of the Proposed Development Site at Warwick's and Richardson's Brewery, North Gate, Newark*. Unpublished report for Limes Developments.

Evaluation 1997. Kinsley, G., et al., *Interim Report on Archaeological Evaluation of Part of the Warwick's and Richardson's Brewery Site and adjacent land, Newark, Notts*. Unpublished report for Limes Developments.

Scheme of Treatment 2000. Kinsley, G., *Archaeological Scheme of Treatment for the Proposed Development at Warwick's & Richardson's Brewery Site and Adjacent Land, Northgate, Newark, Notts., 31st July 2000*. Unpublished submission supporting Planning Application on behalf of Limes Developments Ltd.



Fig. 1: evaluation (01-19), excavation (20-39) and monitoring (40-45 and light tone) areas in relation to existing site layout (scale 1:800)