

10 Church Street, Ribchester in Lancashire



Archaeological Watching Brief

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Client:
Mr Simon Noblet

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REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT 10 CHURCH STREET, RIBCHESTER IN LANCASHIRE.

For: Mr Simon Noblet

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NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Stephen John Baldwin (Archaeological Consultant) carried out an archaeological watching brief at No.10 Church Street, Ribchester on Saturday, 2nd December 2006. The archaeological investigation was commissioned and funded by Mr Simon Noblet in order to satisfy a planning requirement, attached to the granting of planning permission by Ribble Valley Borough Council to build a small conservatory to the rear of the property..

Previous archaeological work in the area had shown that archaeological remains survive in the village and the Lancashire County Archaeology Service recommended that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken to record the presence of all archaeological deposits encountered during the investigation.

The development site lies in the village of Ribchester 8 miles (12km) north-east of Preston and 5 miles (8km) north of Blackburn in Lancashire. The Ribchester placename is derived from the latin for camp (*castrum*) on the Ribble which refers to the establishment in c 71AD of a Roman fort occupied by the twentieth legion. The fort was subsequently garrisoned by an auxiliary unit of Asturian cavalry from Northern Spain and these were replaced by a contingent of Sarmatian cavalry from modern-day Hungary in 175AD. By this time a civilian settlement (or *vicus*) was firmly established outside the north gate of the fort.

The watching brief provided an opportunity to examine a small part of the Romano-British settlement (*vicus*) known to be located outside the north gate of the fort; the investigation however, yielded no new archaeological evidence to enhance our understanding of the locality.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Stephen John Baldwin, Land Use and Heritage Consultant (6 Hollowford Lane, Lathom, Nr Ormskirk, Lancashire L40 4BH) carried out an archaeological watching brief at No.10 Church Street, Ribchester on Saturday, 2nd December 2006. The fieldwork was conducted by Ron Gurney of Archaeological Excavation Services.
- 1.2 The archaeological investigation was commissioned and funded by Mr Simon Noblet in order to satisfy a planning requirement, attached to the granting of planning permission by Ribble Valley Borough Council to build a small conservatory at the rear property (planning reference number: 3/2006/0460P).
- 1.3 Previous archaeological work to the north of the fort at Ribchester had shown that archaeological remains survive in the village and the Lancashire County Archaeology Service recommended that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken to record the presence of all archaeological deposits encountered during the investigation.
- 1.4 This report summarises the topographical, geological, archaeological and historical background of the site, and presents the results of the archaeological watching brief.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Objectives of a Watching Brief

An archaeological watching brief is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) as:

“...a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.” (IFA rev.1999)

2.2 The purpose of a watching brief is similarly defined by the IFA and is:

- *“to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, their presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works.*
- *To provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.” (IFA rev.1999)*

2.3 The results of a Watching Brief are used to:

- produce a record of the location, nature and date of any archaeological remains encountered on the site and
- add to the knowledge about the previous history of activity on the current site and its surroundings and
- provide information to influence future planning decisions in the area.

3. LOCATION

- 3.1 The development site is located at NGR SD 6503 3162 on the north side of Church Street in the village of Ribchester, 8 miles (12km) north-east of Preston and 5 miles (8km) north of Blackburn in Lancashire. Its position is shown on the location plan at **fig 1**. The watching brief area covers trenches to the rear of the property where footings are to be put in place to facilitate the construction of a new conservatory.

4. TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 4.1 Ribchester is located in the Ribble Valley flood plain, and stands on the north bank of the river near a crossing point. The rural Ribble Valley is mainly pastoral in character, with small to medium sized fields bounded by hedgerows and mature trees (LEUS 2004, 10).
- 4.2 The solid geology consists of the 'Sabden Shales' formation, previously part of the Millstone Grit Group but now belonging to the Arnsbergian and Cholkerian episodes of the Namurian phase of the Upper Carboniferous (Bridge 1989, quoted in Lancashire Extensive Urban Survey: Ribchester Archaeological Assessment 2004, 10). The village stands on a second terrace of the River Ribble, which rises to c.3-4m above the floodplain. Soils of the second terrace comprise 0.6 to 0.8m of unmottled sandy loams, overlying slightly mottled sandy clay loams. These soils are classified as Flint Association, while the alluvian soils closer to the river are Alun Association, and the soils over glacial till lying further from the river, over most of the presumed extent of the *vicus*, are Salop Association (*op cit*).

5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SETTING

- 5.1 The development site lies in the village of Ribchester which had seen human activity in the late-prehistoric period. Several Bronze Age cremation urns were found to the west of 10 Church Street during the course of excavations in 1977 (Hodge and Ridge 1997, 1).
- 5.2 Continuation of human activity and possible Iron Age settlement may be indicated by the existence of Celtic stone heads found in the area and now on display at Ribchester Roman Museum.
- 5.3 The Ribchester placename derives from the latin for a fort or camp (*castrum*) on the Ribble (Harrington 1984, 102). Ribblecastre is found in the Domesday Book, but by 1202 became Ribbecestre (Eckwall 1922, 144-5).
- 5.4 The Roman fort (*Bremetennacum veteranorum*) is thought to have been built by Gnaeus Julius Agricola in about AD79; although some authorities place the foundation of the earliest timber fort in the governorship of Quintus Petillius Cerialis in AD71-74 (LEUS 2004, 11; Rachael Newman, Lancaster University Archaeological Unit, now Oxford Archaeology North, personal communication). The fort was garrisoned in 100AD by a unit (*ala quingenaria*) of 500 Asturian cavalry from Northern Spain who were replaced by a contingent of Sarmatian cavalry from modern day Hungary in c 175AD (Ribchester Museum Trust 1981). During this time a civilian settlement (or *vicus*) was firmly established outside the north gate of the fort.
- 5.5 Excavation in the playing field adjacent to No.10 Church Street in 1969 demonstrated that the early settlement consisted of low status single storey timber framed buildings and that these were probably pulled down to make way for a cobbled parade ground soon after the arrival of the Sarmatian Cavalry (Edwards 1981, 12 -14). There appears to be no evidence to show how the settlement developed into the third and fourth centuries.
- 5.6 The site of the Roman fort is now occupied by St Wilfred's Church which was built in c 1220. The church contains masonry from an earlier building, possibly 11th or 12th century as shown by a blocked archway of reputed Norman construction (Hodge and Ridge 1997, 5).
- 5.7 Before the Norman Conquest, the whole of the parish of Ribchester lay within Amounderness hundred, but during the twelfth century the townships of Ribchester, Dutton (to the east), and Dilworth (to the north-west) were transferred to Blackburn hundred. These formed part of earl Tostig's fee of Preston, and were assessed as two ploughlands in the Domesday Survey, by which time they had been granted to Roger de Poitou. They were later granted to the de Lacy family as part of the Honor of Clitheroe, descending to the Earls and Dukes of Lancaster, and then to the Crown (LEUS, Ribchester 2004, 13).
- 5.8 In the post medieval period a succession of famous travellers and diarists visited Ribchester. William Camden the author of *Britannia* visited in the 16th century as

did Henry VIII's antiquary John Leland who noted: '*the inhabitants regularly used to find coins and squared stones*'. Academic interest was maintained throughout the 18th century with visits by William Stukely and Thomas Pennant (Edwards 1992, 3).

- 5.9 In 1997-2000 archaeological consultants carried out developer funded evaluations and watching briefs in the fort and vicus at Ribchester Museum and 38-40 Church Street. These revealed areas of walls, linear cut features and cobbled surfaces thought to be typical of the archaeology noted from other parts of Ribchester (Tostevin 2004, 11). A watching brief during development at 38-39 Church Street (carried out by S J Baldwin, Report No 03/06, March 2006) underscored these results.

6. METHODOLOGY

- 6.1 All archaeological work at 10 Church Street, Ribchester was carried out in accordance with Lancashire County Archaeology Service's (LCAS) standard brief for this type of work. A copy of the standard brief is appended to this report (see appendix 1). The contractor adhered to the Code of Conduct and Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology issued by the IFA, at all times during the course of the investigations.
- 6.2 The work was also carried out in accordance with the recommendations of *The Management of Archaeological Projects* 2nd edition 1991.
- 6.3 The watching brief monitored a development footprint of c 10 square metres. Trenches were dug by hand under the supervision of the archaeological contractor. Excavation continued until the top of any suspected archaeology was encountered, rapid manual excavation then followed. The following procedures were then adopted:
 - All suspected archaeological contexts and features were excavated by hand.
 - All excavation was undertaken with a view to avoiding damage to any archaeological features or deposits which appeared to be worthy of preservation *in situ*.
 - A representative number of archaeological contexts were drawn in sketch section and elevation on dimensionally stable media at scales of 1:10 and 1:20 where appropriate.
 - All archaeological features (if present) were sketch planned.
 - All archaeological deposits are to be levelled to Ordnance Datum by means of a temporary bench mark transferred from an Ordnance Survey bench mark at a height of 28.92m AOD incised on the wall of No.62 Church Street.
 - A photographic record of the watching brief was prepared and involved the use of digital images using a Fuji 5 mega-pixel camera. Monochrome photographs were taken using a Canon EOS 500, 35mm SLR camera. Colour slides were taken using a Canon EOS 500, 35mm SLR camera. The photographic record includes images illustrating in both detail and general context, the principal features and finds discovered. The record also includes working shots to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.
 - All archaeological features and finds were recorded on pro-forma sheets based on the standard National Museums Liverpool context recording sheets. All masonry features were recorded on pro-forma masonry sheets based on MOLAS 'recording masonry structures'.

7. STRATIGRAPHY

7. Description of layers and archaeological features

7.1 The archaeological stratigraphy for the area cut by the footings is described below. Context layer/fill numbers appear within standard brackets. 'Cut' numbers if relevant appear within square brackets. Where contexts are discussed in the text the relevant number is displayed.

Trench 1 (see appendix 4, fig 2)

A rectilinear area of trenching was excavated, consisting in total of 11.8m length x 0.4m width running north-east/south-west for 4.3m, north-west/south-east for 3.2m and with a south-west/north-east return of 4.3m. At the north-eastern end of this return the trench was excavated around a brick buttress for a length of 0.94m. The trench was excavated to a depth of 0.4m to provide concrete footings for four courses of brick which will provide the base for a wooden conservatory structure.

An initial layer of decorative grey gravel (01) consisting of washed loose stones ranging in size between 5mm-15mm covered two thirds of the area enclosed by the trenching. This was removed and at a depth of 70mm-80mm a disturbed and contaminated layer of dark brown 10yr3/2 topsoil (02) was exposed, containing fragments of 19th and 20th century ceramics and along with other modern material. At both north-eastern ends of the trench this layer had been further disturbed by the shallow burial of two ceramic 130mm diameter sewer pipes. This layer was removed to a depth of 0.18m and found to lying above a layer of grey/medium brown 2.5yr3/3 subsoil (03). The interface between (01) and (02) was difficult to define and the soils were homogenised at the higher level. Soil colour was stronger at lower depth but levels of contamination were high and this layer was excavated a further 0.15m, the required depth of the trench. A representative 2m length of the stratigraphy was recorded and an unstratified assemblage of various finds were collected including C19th ceramic fragments, clay pipe fragments, potential Roman pottery and two small animal bones. C19th ceramics were found at the base of the trench in layer (03) indicating the trench had not penetrated into undisturbed strata. The raised level of the garden in relation to the nearby playing field would tend to reinforce this conclusion.

It was interesting to note No.10 Church St. is built on no foundations at all; this became apparent when the trench was excavated against the property. The stone house is supported by three large brick and stone buttresses at the rear of the property.

8. THE FINDS

- 8.1 A total of 25 ceramic finds were collected during the watching brief. Unsurprisingly, several pieces of the assemblage were potentially Roman and /or Romano British. There was one orange coloured medieval body sherd, probably 13-14th century
- 8.2 The remainder of the assemblage comprised examples of post medieval and modern pottery which included: 2 Victorian period clay pipe stems, and 2 pieces of ceramic tile. There were 3 items of probable animal bone.
- 8.3 The pottery and tile will be sent for examination by Jeff Speakman, finds specialist at National Museums Liverpool.

9. CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 Although the excavation was being carried out in an archaeologically sensitive area, the footings trench did not appear to penetrate any sealed archaeological contexts. There are other factors to consider in understanding the reasons for this:
- At 0.4 m the maximum depth of the trenching, it is unlikely in view of normal topsoil levels that the excavation would break into undisturbed sealed strata. This was confirmed by the presence of relatively modern material at the base of the trench.
 - The garden of No.10 Church St is reputed to belong to an 18th century weaver's cottage and this in itself suggests that the garden had been enclosed and separated from the nearby playing field for some time. The regular and constant cultivation of vegetables and other foodstuffs especially before the mid 20th century would have required much enhancement of the garden soil i.e. manure/compost and resulted in the regular mixing of soils. This appears also appears to have resulted in a 0.2m rise in the level of topsoil in the garden compared to the level of the playing field, from which it is separated by a stone garden wall. This would tend to indicate that the normal current topsoil level in this area may only have penetrated to a depth of 0.2m by the excavation.
- 9.2 Although the watching brief provided an opportunity to examine a small part of the Romano-British settlement (Vicus) known to be located outside the north gate of the fort (Tostevin 2004, 6), the investigation yielded no new archaeological evidence to enhance our understanding of the locality.

10. THE ARCHIVE

10.1 This report has been produced in accordance with the archaeological brief and project design (see appendix 1).

10.2 An archive has been prepared in accordance with the recommendations set out in English Heritage's *The Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd ed. 1991. In addition to working notes and scale drawings this includes a full photographic record comprising 35mm black and white contact prints and digital photographs. The archive will be deposited with the Curator of Ribchester Roman Museum (Riverside, Ribchester, Nr Preston PR3 3XS). A copy of the watching brief report will be deposited with the Client, the Lancashire Sites and Monument Record at Preston, and the National Monuments Record at Swindon. A copy of the non-technical summary will be sent to the editor of CBA Archaeology North West.

10.3 **Contents of Site Archive**

Sketch plans and sections

- 1) Photographs
Colour slide, monochrome and digital (see catalogue at appendix 3)
- 2) Pottery assemblage
- 3) Context and Masonry Sheets
- 4) Client Report

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 11.1 Thanks are due to Simon Noblet who commissioned and funded the watching brief and who supplied a copy of the architect's plan used in this report. I would also like to thank Ron Gurney for the fieldwork and for undertaking the metal detector survey and for producing the stratigraphy report. My thanks also to the Lancashire County Archaeology Service for providing information from the Lancashire Sites and Monuments Record; and to the LCAS planning adviser, Doug Moir for his guidance in advance of the project.

12. BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABBREVIATIONS

LR	Lancashire Record Office, Preston
IGS	Institute of Geological Sciences
LCC SMR	Lancashire County Council Sites and Monuments Record, Preston
LEUS	Lancashire Extensive Urban Survey

MAPS

PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Rachael Newman (1998). Lancaster University Archaeological Unit

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. LCAS BRIEF

APPENDIX 2. SITE LEVELS

10 Church Street, Ribchester, Lancashire (December 2006)

LEVEL NO.	CONTEXT NO.	COMMENTS	REDUCED LEVEL
		Ordnance Survey Bench Mark – No. 62 Church St	28.92m AOD
		BS to Temporary Bench Mark	1.62m
1	(03)	Trench1	2.10
2	(03)	T1	2.04
3	(03)	T1	2.25
4	(03)	T1	1.97

APPENDIX 3. PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX

SITE: 10 Church Street, Ribchester (Watching brief December 2006)

Date	Monochrome Film No/Frame No: Film 1	Digital (5 Mega- pixels) File Name:	Description	Scale	View - From	Photographer
2/12/ 2006	Frame: 36	File 1	Working shot view to rear of garden		N	R Gurney
“	FR 35	File 2	Rear of property		W	R Gurney
“	FR 34	File 3	View from rear of garden		W	R Gurney
“	FR 33	File 4	Rear of property		N	R Gurney
“	FR 32	File 5	Working shot – start of manual excavation		W	R Gurney
“	FR 31	File 6	Working shot – start of manual excavation		W	R Gurney
“	FR 30	File 7	South facing section showing contexts (01 and 03)	2M	SE	R Gurney
“	FR 29	File 8	NW facing section (01, 02 and 03)	2M	NW	R Gurney
“	FR 28	File 9	“	2M	“	R Gurney
“	FR 27	File 10	Base of trench (03)	2M	NE	R Gurney
“	FR 26	File 11	2 shots as above	2M		R Gurney
“	FR 25	File 12	West facing section	2M	W	R Gurney
“	FR 24	File 13	As above	2M	W	R Gurney
“	FR 23	File 14	South facing section	2M	S	R Gurney

APPENDIX 4

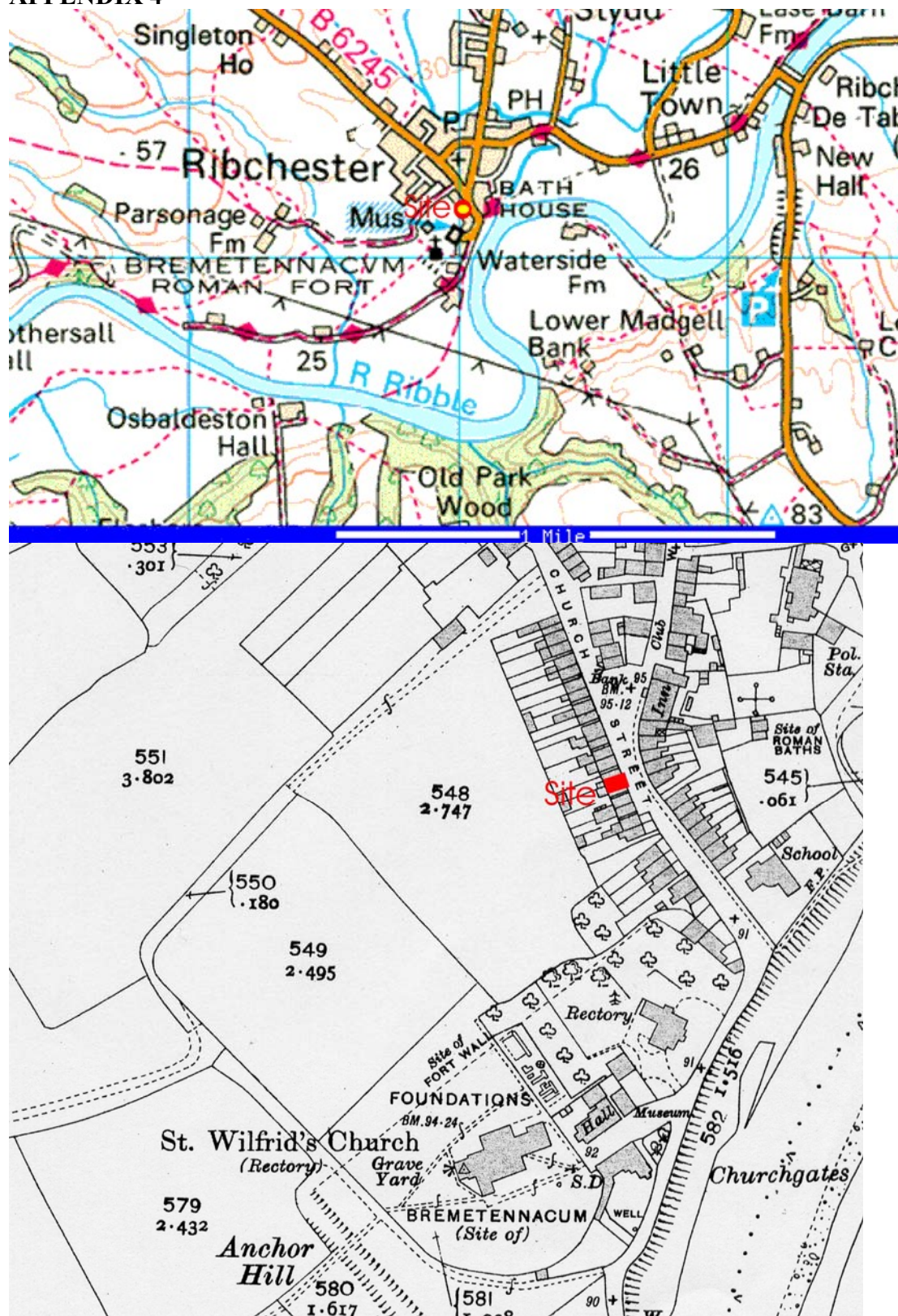


Fig 1. Site Location Map

Bottom map: 1932, 25 inch OS

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APPENDIX 4

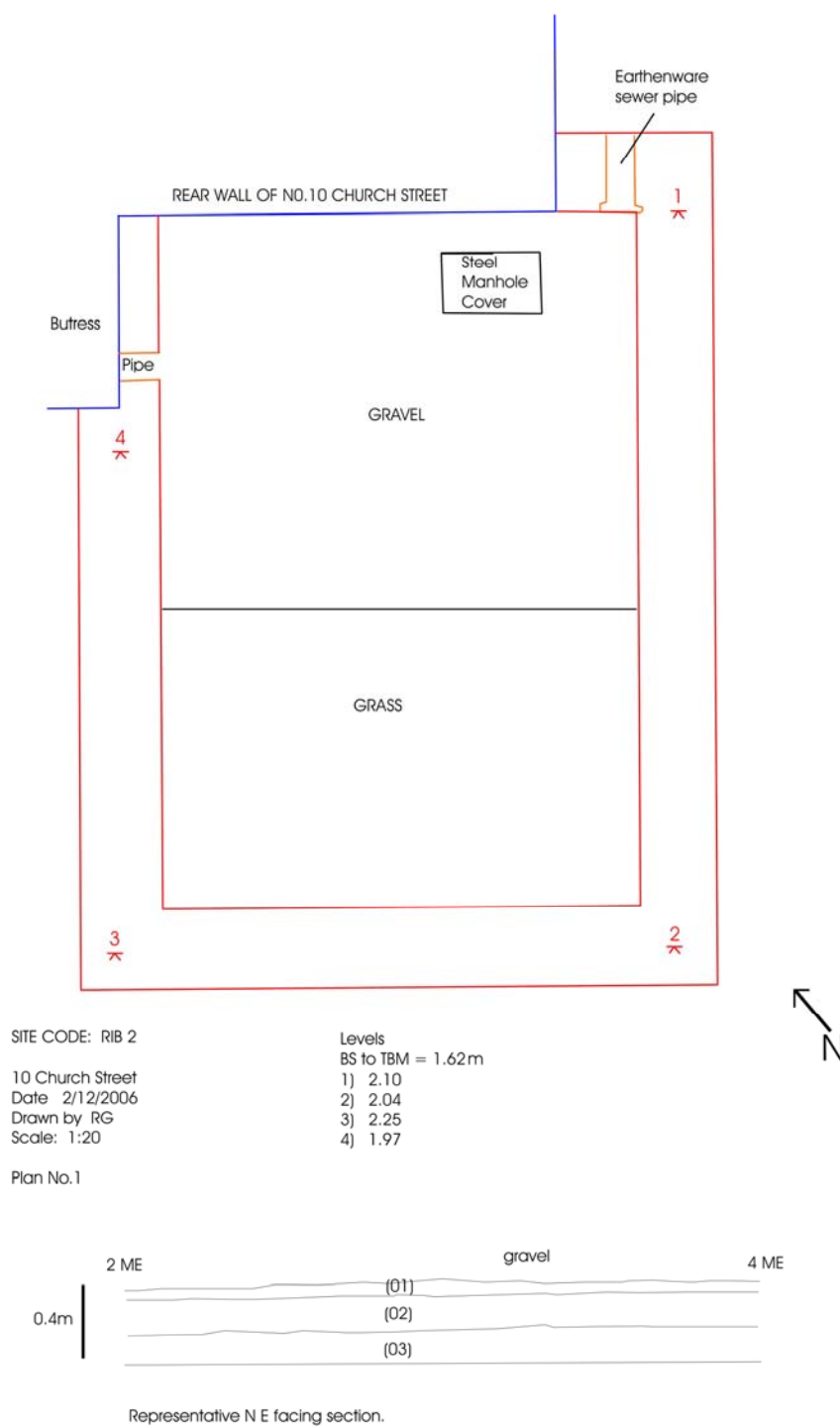


Fig 2. Development trench – plan and section (1:20 and 1:10 scale)



Plate 1. Development area before topsoil removal



Plate 2. Development area after topsoil removal

