

Synopsis

This report contains the results of a programme of archaeological watching brief undertaken during below-ground disturbance on Land off Shadsworth Road, Blackburn as part of planning application reference 10/07/0207.

In May 2006, an archaeological desk-based study of the site was undertaken in order to formally identify any possible sites of archaeological significance. The report identified cartographic evidence in respect of a number of Post-medieval features. The report also commented on the possibility of earlier archaeological evidence which may survive on the site, due to the proximity of the Roman road located west of the site.

In view of the results of the 2006 assessment, the developers were advised by Doug Moir, Lancashire Planning Archaeologist, that an archaeological watching brief should be undertaken during ground disturbance within the area of development an application.

The watching brief was undertaken intermittently between September and November 2006 but no new archaeological features were revealed other than the scant trace of a former field boundary. In view of the extensive area of the topsoil strip, the lack of archaeological evidence is disappointing. The watching brief, however, has enabled a record to be made of the current works.

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ABBREVIATIONS:

<i>c</i>	<i>circa</i>
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists
LCAS	Lancashire County Archaeology Service
LRO	Lancashire Record Office
NGR	National Grid Reference
OS	Ordnance Survey
PRN	Primary Record Number

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning application reference 10/07/0207 for development on land off Shadsworth Road, Blackburn was submitted to Blackburn and Darwen Borough Council by Stephen George & Partners, Architects and Planners on behalf of St. Modwen Developments (Blackburn) Ltd. The Planning Application was made in respect of Phase 1 works which include construction of two buildings - a three storey Innovation Centre and a two storey Office Building - complete with associated vehicular and pedestrian access, car parking and landscaping. The site comprises 1.842 hectares (4.55 acres), being Phase 1 allocation of the full site which comprises 6.129 hectares (15.15 acres). Phase 1 will be part of a five phase development on the south side of the town of Blackburn located at c.190m OD.

1.2 In May 2006, an archaeological desk-based study of the site was undertaken by Gifford & Partners in order to formally identify any possible sites of archaeological significance (Report No.13384 RO1). The report covered land to the north and south of Old Bank Lane and identified cartographic evidence in respect of Whinney Edge Farm, the Sett End Inn, post-medieval coal workings and a number of post-medieval boundary stones. The report commented that the known archaeological remains were restricted to the post-medieval period and were related to mineral extraction, boundary definition, residential dwelling and recreational drinking. The report concluded that the post-medieval features may be considered to be of local significance but there was a slight chance that earlier archaeological remains may survive on the site, due to the proximity of the Roman road located west of the site.

1.3 In view of the results of the 2006 assessment, the developers were advised by Doug Moir, Lancashire Planning Archaeologist, that an archaeological watching brief should be undertaken during ground disturbance within the area of development (Planning Application Approval Condition 17, 26th June 2007). The 2006 assessment and the watching brief condition applies to the entire development area north and south of Old Bank Lane.

1.4 In September 2007, Pat Frost, Castlering Archaeology, was contracted to undertake the archaeological work at the request of Lee Oliver, Commercial Manager for Globe Management Services Ltd., main contractors on site for Phase 1 works. The watching brief was undertaken intermittently between September and November 2006 and the results form the basis of this report.

1.5 The current development forms Phase 1 of the staged programme of development. Ground disturbance in respect of Phase 1 works is restricted to a portion of the land bounded on the north side by Old Bank Lane, on the east side by Shadsworth Road (B6130) and on the south side by Haslingden Road (A6117). The western boundary is formed by Queen's Park Hospital, as indicated on Figs 1 & 2.

2. AIMS

2.1 The watching brief is designed to record the archaeological resource (being the nature, condition, significance and, where possible, the chronology of any archaeological deposits and/or features revealed) during the proposed development within the specified area, in so far as these aims are possible, and to secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual /ecofactual material uncovered during works on site.

2.1 The photographic record is designed to record the structures on site, prior to the proposed development.

3. METHODOLOGY

The fieldwork comprised the monitoring of ground excavation work associated with the proposed development within the specified area (Figs 1 & 2). The watching brief was undertaken using proven archaeological techniques, which comply with the Guidelines and Codes of Conduct set out by the Institute of Field Archaeologists; in particular the IFA Standard & Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs.

4. RESULTS OF THE WATCHING BRIEF

Pre-works site visit

4.1 Prior to construction works, a site-walkover was undertaken in order to locate any above ground archaeological features or the potential for archaeological remains in particular areas. The site comprised generally level ground extending from Old Bank Lane in the north, which dipped gently towards Haslingden Road in the south. In September 2006, the land comprised rough pasture, which was extremely overgrown in parts (Plate 1-2).

4.2 On the east side of the site, fronting Shadsworth Road, the boundary walls that once defined the curtilage of the Sett End Inn survive to a maximum height of c.1.1m. The walls are covered by vegetation and were fenced off during Phase 1 works (Plates 3, 5 & 13). No other above ground structural evidence survives in respect of the field boundaries or boundary stones recorded from 19th and 20th century cartography as part of the desk-based study.

4.3 The area south of Old Bank Lane was walked prior to works on site, but no evidence of the boundary stones identified in Gifford's desk-based assessment was recovered.

Development work

4.4 Groundworks commenced in September 2007 in extremely heavy rain, which made observations very difficult. In general an extensive area south of Old Bank Lane was de-turfed and topsoil was removed to expose the underlying glacial boulder clay. The topsoil comprised dark blackish-brown silty clay which was variable up to 0.4m thick. The earth moving data is included as Fig. 2 of this report. As works progressed the chances of the site being productive in archaeological terms seemed less and less likely. Although Phase 1 building works is restricted to the southeast corner of the site, a considerable amount of topsoil stripping has been undertaken over the entire site south of Old Bank Lane (Plates 6-12).

4.5 The subsoil mainly comprised mid yellow-brown to orange-brown clay with occasional areas of shattered orange sandstone visible (Plates 10-11). No archaeological features were revealed other than the scant trace of a former hedged boundary, which is recorded by 19th century cartography until the 1960s period in Gifford 2002 (Figs 8-18). The boundary extended west from the Sett End Inn and was visible as a linear feature c.0.50-1.00m wide indicated by the eroded sandstone subsoil as recorded in Plate 11. The feature could be traced for c. 6m before it disappeared into greyish-brown silty-clay.

4.6 Throughout the topsoil strip, much of the lower-lying area which forms the Phase I development site was under water. Ground works on site included the removal of topsoil and subsoil over several areas on the upper (north) part of the site in order to raise the level on the south side (Plate 14).

Excavation of footings

4.7 In view of the absence of archaeological evidence revealed during the site strip, a sample of the excavation for footings was monitored in November 2007. The low-lying area of Phase 1 buildings had been subjected to the deposition of material excavated during the site strip. Little virgin ground was exposed. Plates 15 and 16 show a section of shale and sandstone which had not previously been disturbed below the clayey subsoil on the southeast corner of the site.

4.8 The excavation for the main drainage channel exposed sections > 3.5m deep (Plates 17 & 18) but only the bottom c.0.8 to 1m of the trench cut into undisturbed shale and sandstone. The upper layers were redeposited as part of the current work. A 19th ceramic field drain was noted in the undisturbed ground at the base of a 3.5m trench. This is unsurprising given the extremely wet conditions of the site.

Finds

4.9 Minimal amounts of post-medieval ceramic material were recovered from the topsoil strip, mainly in the area of the former Sett End Inn. No finds were recovered from the subsoil. A total of sixty-two sherds (1465g) of distinct post-medieval pottery ware types were present amongst the assemblage. The ceramic material was unremarkable in nature comprising sherds of household white earthenware, pearlware, willow pattern ware, coal measures ware, stoneware and industrial slipware. The material has the characteristics of mid-to late eighteenth century through to the early twentieth century wares, including late stoneware preserve jars. The sherds are likely to have been scattered following demolition of the Inn. The sherds were all in very fragmentary and abraded condition, ranging in size from c.20mm up to c.40mm. A minimal amount of utilitarian post-medieval material was recovered from other surface areas. The assemblage contains material that one might typically expect to find during any fieldwalking or topsoil stripping exercise on rural agricultural land.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 The absence of archaeology is attributed to the former agricultural nature of the landscape and its more recent abandonment and the geology of the site which renders it liable to flood. It is likely that early archaeological evidence if it existed would not have survived post-medieval agricultural regimes. There was, however, no evidence of ploughmarks during the topsoil strip and the land may have been used primarily only for pasture.

5.2 The boundaries recorded from 19th – 20th century cartography as part of the desk-based study appear to have been hedged boundaries, of which only the slight trace of one had survived below ground. The parish boundary stones (PRNs 14400 – 14405) have not been recorded by the OS since 1913 and there was no surviving sub-surface evidence of their position. It is assumed that the former well site (PRN 7424) has been lost to road widening.

5.3 The geology exposed is typical of the Carboniferous Coal Measures recorded in the northern part of the Lancashire Coalfield (Ordnance Survey 1979).

5.4 In view of the extensive area of the topsoil strip, the lack of archaeological evidence is disappointing. The watching brief, however, has enabled a record to be made of the current works.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Castlering Archaeology would like to thank Lee Oliver, Commercial Manager and Greg Brinkworth of Globe Management Services Ltd. for contracting the work on behalf of St. Modwen Developments (Blackburn) Ltd; Lee Page of Stephen George and Partners, Architects and Planners, Leeds; Will Hargreaves, DBK Group; Dr Fiona Grant, AIFA, for undertaking some of the site monitoring and Doug Moir, Lancashire Planning Archaeologist.

7. SOURCES

Gifford & Partners, 2006, *Archaeological Desk-based Assessment, Old Bank Lane, Blackburn, Lancashire*. Chester: Gifford & Partners, 20 Nicholas Street

Lancashire County Council, 2005, *Lancashire Historic Town Survey: Blackburn*. Unpublished project report. Lancaster University Archaeological Unit

Ordnance Survey Sheet 76 (Drift) Rochdale 1:50,000 1974

Ordnance Survey Geological Survey Ten Mile Map, South Sheet (Solid) 1979

**8. LIST OF SITES RECORDED BY LANCASHIRE SITES & MONUMENTS RECORD
IN THE AREA OF CURRENT PHASE 1 WORKS**

PRN	NAME	LOCATION
14400	Boundary Stone recorded since 1894	SD 69938 26736
14401	Boundary Stone recorded since 1894	SD 69934 26716
14402	Boundary Stone recorded since 1894	SD 69926 26673
14403	Boundary Stone recorded since 1894	SD 69912 26616
14404	Boundary Stone recorded since 1894	SD 69901 26559
14405	Boundary Stone recorded since 1894	SD 70080 26578
7424	Well recorded since 1894	SD 69970 26420