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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

CATTERICK RACECOURSE

ALISON CLARKE

APRIL 1998

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT CATTERICK RACECOURSE, CATTERICK, NORTH YORKSHIRE

INTRODUCTION

In April 1998 a course of improvements to the facilities at Catterick racecourse was undertaken which involved some ground disturbance work. In view of the proximity of the works to known archaeological remains, and especially to the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Cataractonium, a Roman fort and town, all ground disturbance work was required to be monitored and recorded by an archaeologist. The field work for this was begun on 2 April 1998 and concluded on 9 April 1998.

All the works were close to existing building, and were of limited extent. Most were carried out using a JCB digger, with supplementary hand digging by the contractor's workmen.

THE WATCHING BRIEF

The area involved in ground disturbance works lay between the main grandstand and the perimeter wall around the eastern and northern side of the racecourse. There was a slight slope in ground level down towards the north-west. The whole area was covered in concrete and/or tarmac. At the entrance gate through the perimeter wall, the ground level was similar to that of the tarmac footpath outside, though this was slightly lower at the entrance point than it was to either side.

The first trench (A - B) was excavated to the east of the main stand, between existing steel pillars supporting a raised extension at the back of the stand. It was 70cm wide and between 93 and 100cm deep. The surface was concrete, some of it covered by a thin layer of tarmac. Beneath the concrete, from a depth of c.12cm., was a fine-grained orangey-brown clayey loam with few stones extending to the base of the trench. This was cut in several places by modern drains and services, and was disturbed to below the base of the trench around the existing pillars in their concrete setting, which remained in situ. Towards the northern end of the trench the clayey loam gave way to a coarse cobbly natural gravel rising towards the surface. By C, the clayey loam had disappeared, and a top surface of tarmac and concrete overlaid angular dark grey stones in a medium grey silty matrix extending to 58cm below the surface. Beneath this was the natural gravel.

The return trench, A - D, and a third trench parallel to the first (D - E), contained similar soils, except that D-E had no concrete but a top layer of hardcore over brown clayey loam to a depth of 40cm above the natural gravel. To the south, the fourth trench in this area (B - F) contained disturbed soils with brick and concrete rubble to the base near to F, and similar soils to the southern half of A - B near to B.

The second area of work was alongside the existing perimeter wall on the eastern side of the racecourse (G - H), with a short cross-trench to the back of the stand (G - J). G-J was hand excavated to a depth of 80cm., and contained brick rubble beneath concrete, to a depth of 25cm., below which was mid greyish brown silty sandy loam with some pebbles and occasional large cobbles near the base. Near to J a pipe and an electric cable crossed the trench.

A foundation trench roughly 70cm. wide and varying in depth from 72cm to 94cm was machine excavated adjacent to the perimeter wall. At intervals wider pads were excavated for pillars and these were between 93cm. and 175cm deep and over 100cm. wide. A pipe ran parallel with the trench for the first 6.5 metres from G at a depth of 43cm., then turned northwards away from the trench. Beneath the concrete surface was brick rubble as in G-J,

beneath which was a dark brown compacted silty stony loam. This was either the fill from the pipe trench or from the foundation trench of the wall. Below 45cm. this fill became less compacted and sandier with few stones and a lighter colour.

The perimeter wall foundations reached down to c. 100cm. below the surface. At a depth of around 75cm. a line of large cobbles sticking out 7-8cm. further than the main line of the wall was visible, and these marked the base of the wall. Near to K, the cobbles were replaced by blocks of flaky pale red sandstone. They were roughly shaped and were 20-25cm deep. Between K and L, where a vehicular access has been cut through the original wall, the sandstone and cobble foundations continued below the surface. The soil beneath the foundations, where exposed, was orangey brown clayey loam, similar to that in A-B. At K a large concrete tank was revealed, apparently a septic tank. It was approximately 187cm square externally, and 175cm deep, filled with a wet dark grey to black sludgy sand and silt. Large concrete blocks over 1 metre deep formed the foundations for the gateposts at K and L.

The third area of work was a foundation trench (M - N), in the tunnel between the two parts of the main stand. This trench was 70cm. wide and 90cm. deep. The western end of the trench (near M) had been previously excavated to lay new drains to an existing main drain running parallel to and south of M-N. The first 2.25 metres therefore contained hardcore to the base, with a brick built manhole filling the southern side for 1.15 metres. Beyond this, below the concrete, was a mid brown rubbly sandy loam to a depth of roughly 80cm., below which the soil became orangey brown clayey loam, similar to that in A-B. Several old drains crossed the trench, and the entire fill to 80cm was heavily disturbed.

Finally, five small trenches (P1 - P5) were hand excavated at the back of the grand stand at the southern end. These were c. 1 metre square, 90cm. deep, and contained disturbed soils and the footings of a brick wall running parallel to and 50cm. to the east of the existing brick wall of the building.

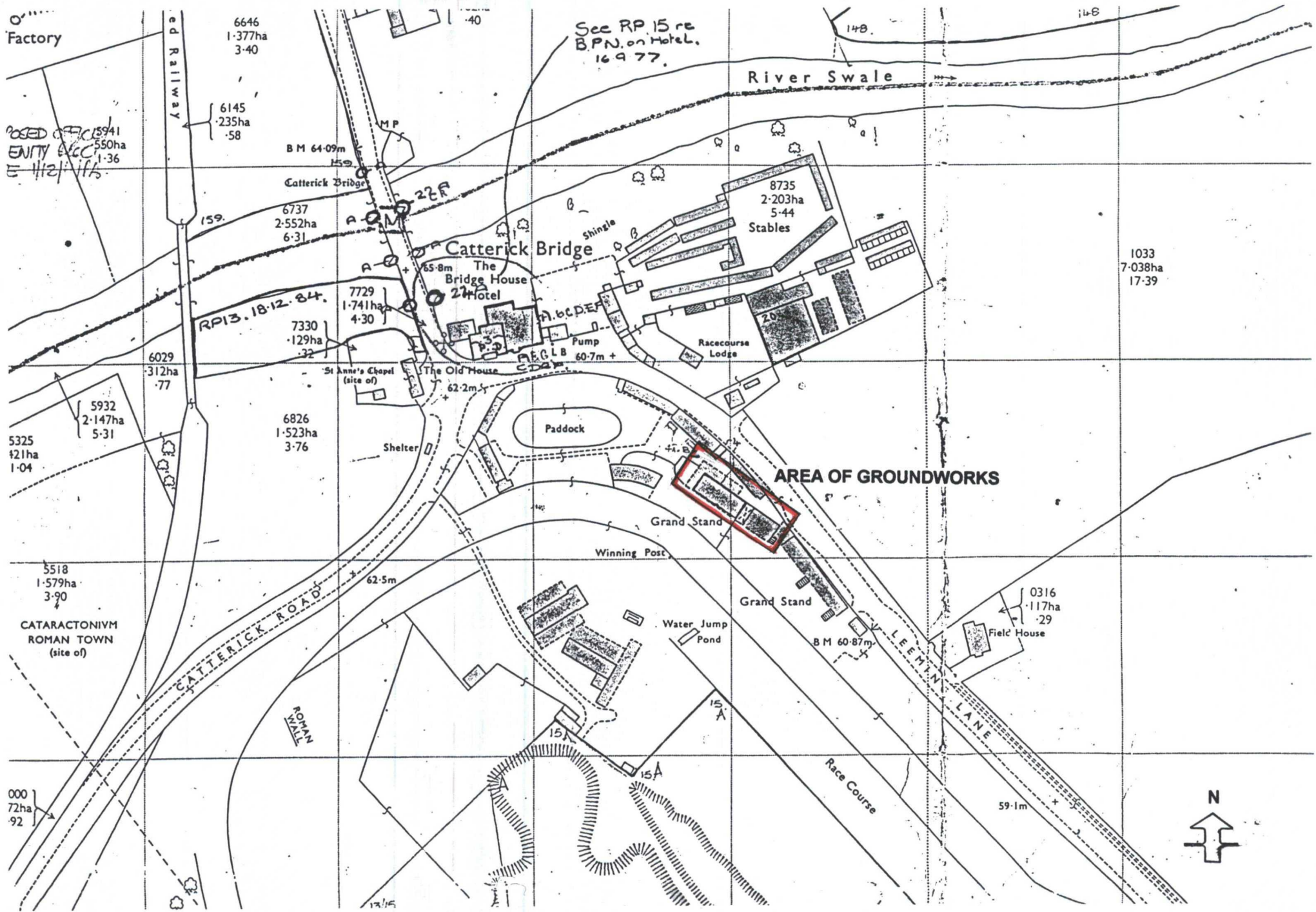
CONCLUSIONS

The watching brief did not reveal any significant archaeological deposits or finds. All the ground affected by the current works had been previously disturbed. The gravels encountered represent the natural subsoil. These were nearer to the surface to the north-west of the site than elsewhere. The existence of clayey loam over part of the site is of some interest as it had the appearance of a ploughsoil, indicating agricultural use, but the dating of any such usage was impossible to determine.

The stone wall around the racecourse was proved to be of substantial construction with deep foundations. It is possible that part of the foundations of this wall were re-used stones from the Roman occupation in the area, as the red sandstone is not local but does seem to exist in the remaining Roman wall which is part of the scheduled area.

Alan Clarke

23 April 1998



See RP 15 re
B.P.N. on Hotel.
16 9 77.

POSED OFFICE
ENITY ACC
E 112/115

River Swale

Catterick Bridge

The Bridge House

Hotel

Stables

Racecourse Lodge

The Old House

Paddock

AREA OF GROUNDWORKS

Grand Stand

Winning Post

Grand Stand

Water Jump Pond

Field House

CATTERICK ROAD

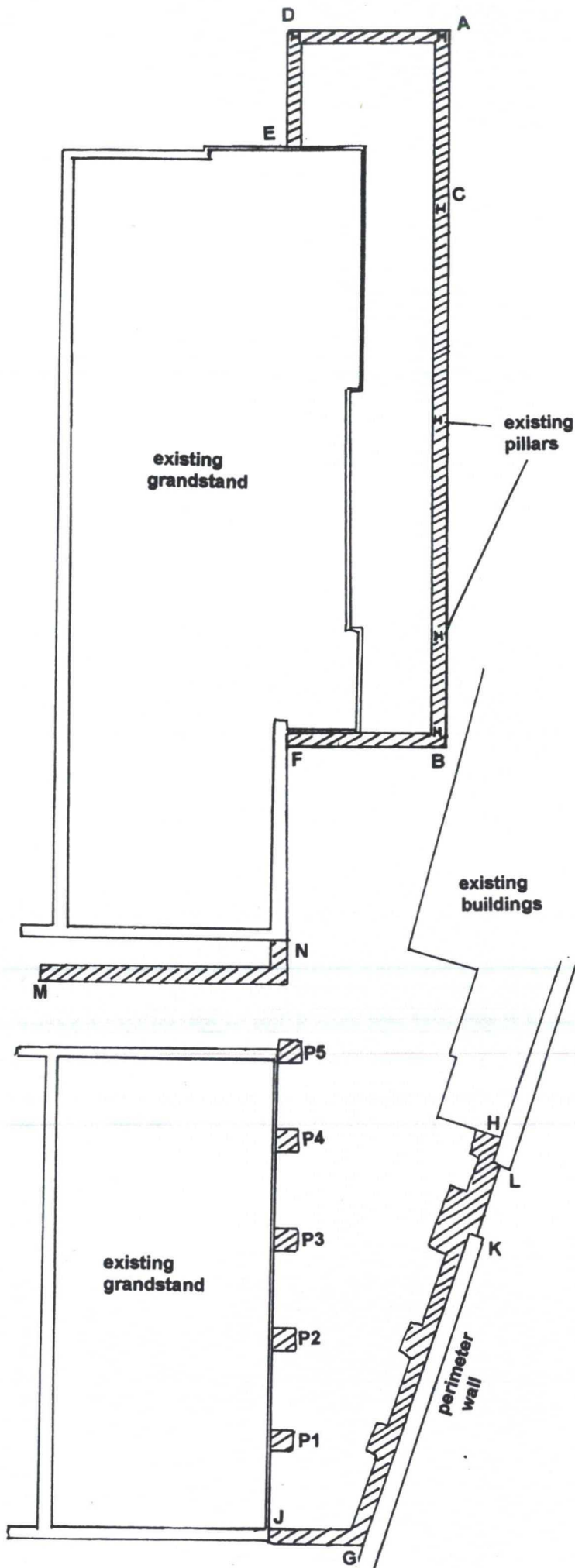
LEEMIN LANE

Race Course



CATTERICK RACECOURSE 1998 PLAN 1 - LOCATION

SCALE 1:2500



CATTERICK RACECOURSE 1998 PLAN 2 - SITE