



Parade Ring Canopies, Chester Racecourse, Roodee, Chester, CH1 2LY.

March 2021 V 1.0





æon archaeology

Parade Ring Canopies, Chester Racecourse, Roodee, Chester, CH1 2LY.

March 2021 v1.0

Report no. 0286

Archaeological Watching Brief

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NEXUS
HERITAGE

Project Code: A0139.2

Date: 23/03/2021

Client: Chester Racecourse Company Ltd.

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Parade Ring Canopies, Chester Racecourse, Roodee, Chester, CH1 2LY.

March 2021 v1.0

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1.0 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Aeon Archaeology, in association with Nexus Heritage, was commissioned by the Chester Racecourse Company Ltd to carry out an archaeological watching brief on groundworks associated with the Parade Ring Canopies development at Chester Racecourse, Roodee, Chester, CH1 2LY.

The watching brief involved the monitoring of groundworks associated with the development of new racecourse amenities including a single storey kitchen and serveries building and a series of fourteen square pits which were to receive concrete bases of octagonal parasols. During the excavation works a linear ditch was found to be running southwest to northeast towards to the eastern edge of the development area; passing through the foundation trenches and continuing through into the easternmost parasol base. The ditch fill produced a number of ceramic finds dating from the 2nd century AD to the late 20th century, although it is believed to be of post-medieval origin. The ditch is not depicted on the Chester Tithe map or on the ensuing Ordnance Survey maps, although it is likely that it was too ephemeral a feature to depict.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Chester Racecourse Company Ltd, hereafter the Client, has secured planning permission for Construction of a new circular bar under an open-sided canopy with access to a rooftop terrace. Construction of replacement hospitality outlets and adjacent area covered by a series of octagonal canopies (Cheshire West and Chester Council Planning Application ref. **20/04591/FUL**) at Chester Racecourse, Roodee, Chester, CH1 2LY (**NGR SJ 39968 66009**).

The proposed development at the Site comprises two main elements:

- i) A new circular bar under an open-sided canopy. A central, enclosed stair giving access to a Rooftop terrace which overlooks the Parade Ring.
- ii) The replacement of existing food & drink outlets with a row of single storey kitchen / serveries with an adjacent seating area covered by a series of octagonal canopies.

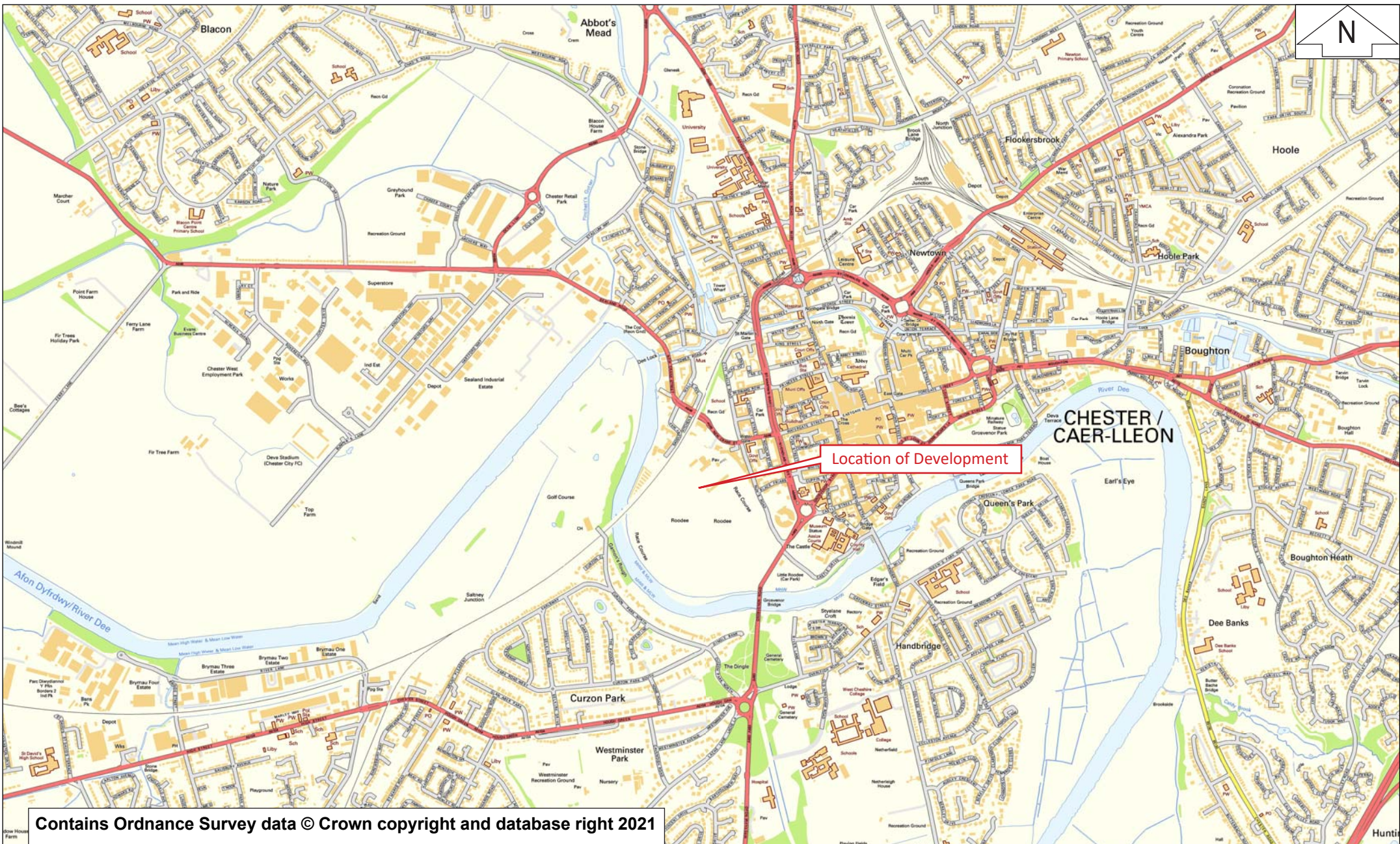
A condition (no. 6) was appended to the permission stating:

The development shall be strictly carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief, Document No: 3519.R01 Dated Feb. 2021 produced by Nexus Heritage. Reason: To ensure that the nature, extent and significance of this site of potential archaeological interest is adequately assessed.

Aeon Archaeology, in association with Nexus Heritage was commissioned by the Client to carry out the archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the Parade Ring Canopies.

As a responsible landowner and developer in Chester, the Client acknowledges the historic and archaeological interest at the Racecourse and its duty of care to that interest. With this in mind it was its intention to arrange for suitable archaeological attendances to ensure that an adequate record of any archaeological features revealed by the development were to be made in compliance with the relevant policy and that, in the event of any discovery of significant archaeological remains, appropriate attention might have been brought to the discovery and suitable solutions devised and implemented to cater for the significance.

Nexus Heritage prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation for these works which set out how the archaeological watching brief was to be undertaken in order to identify and record items of archaeological and historic interest. That document was prepared with reference to the relevant provisions in the National Planning Policy Framework and in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) document Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief (2020). The results of the investigative works were to be reported and submitted to the Cheshire Historic Environment Record (CHER). If merited the results of the archaeological works would be published in a local or national journal, as appropriate. The records generated during the fieldwork (paper, photographic and digital) are to be offered to a local museum or other public depository willing to receive them.

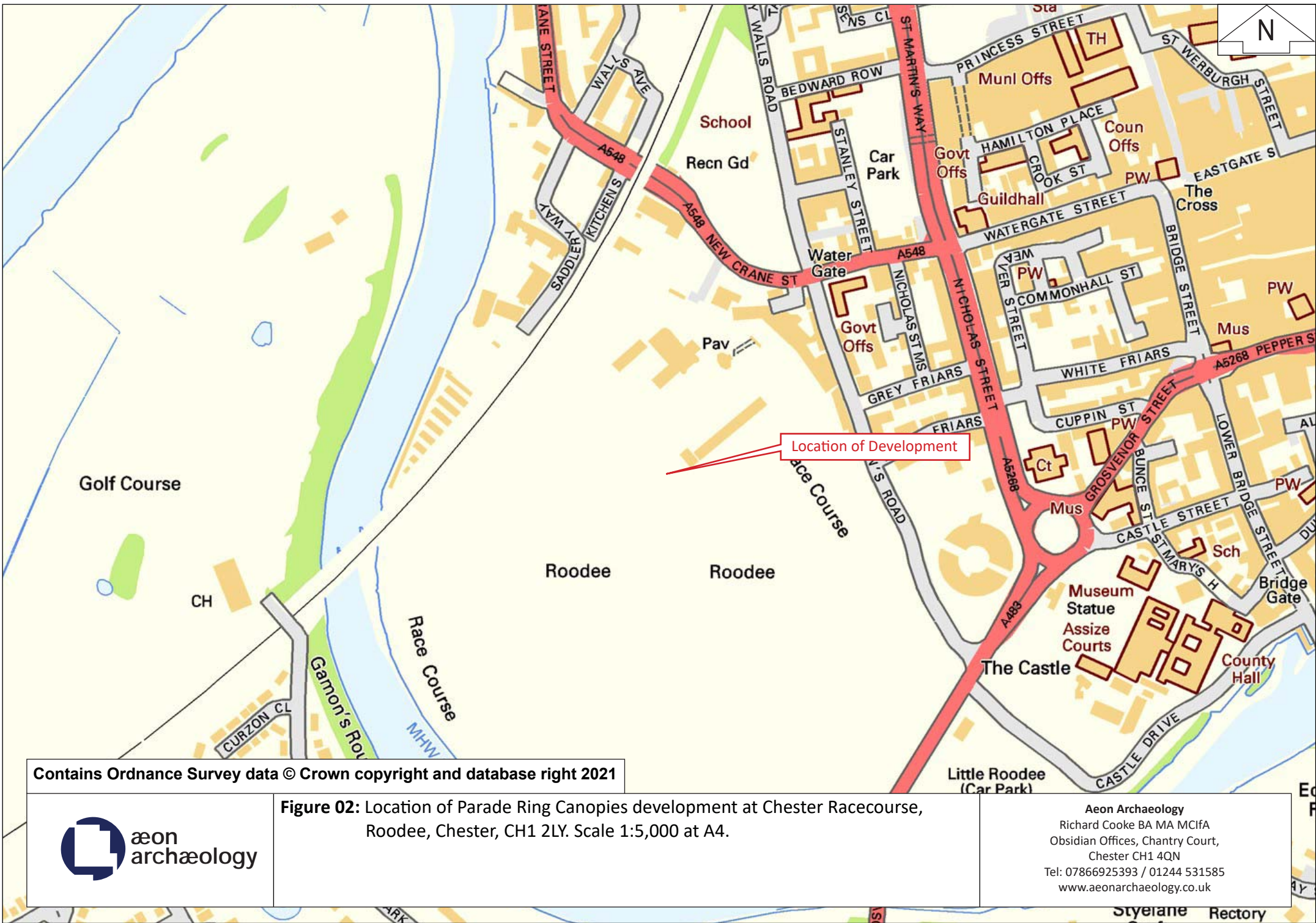


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Figure 01: Location of Parade Ring Canopies development at Chester Racecourse, Roodee, Chester, CH1 2LY. Scale 1:20,000 at A4.

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Figure 02: Location of Parade Ring Canopies development at Chester Racecourse, Roodee, Chester, CH1 2LY. Scale 1:5,000 at A4.

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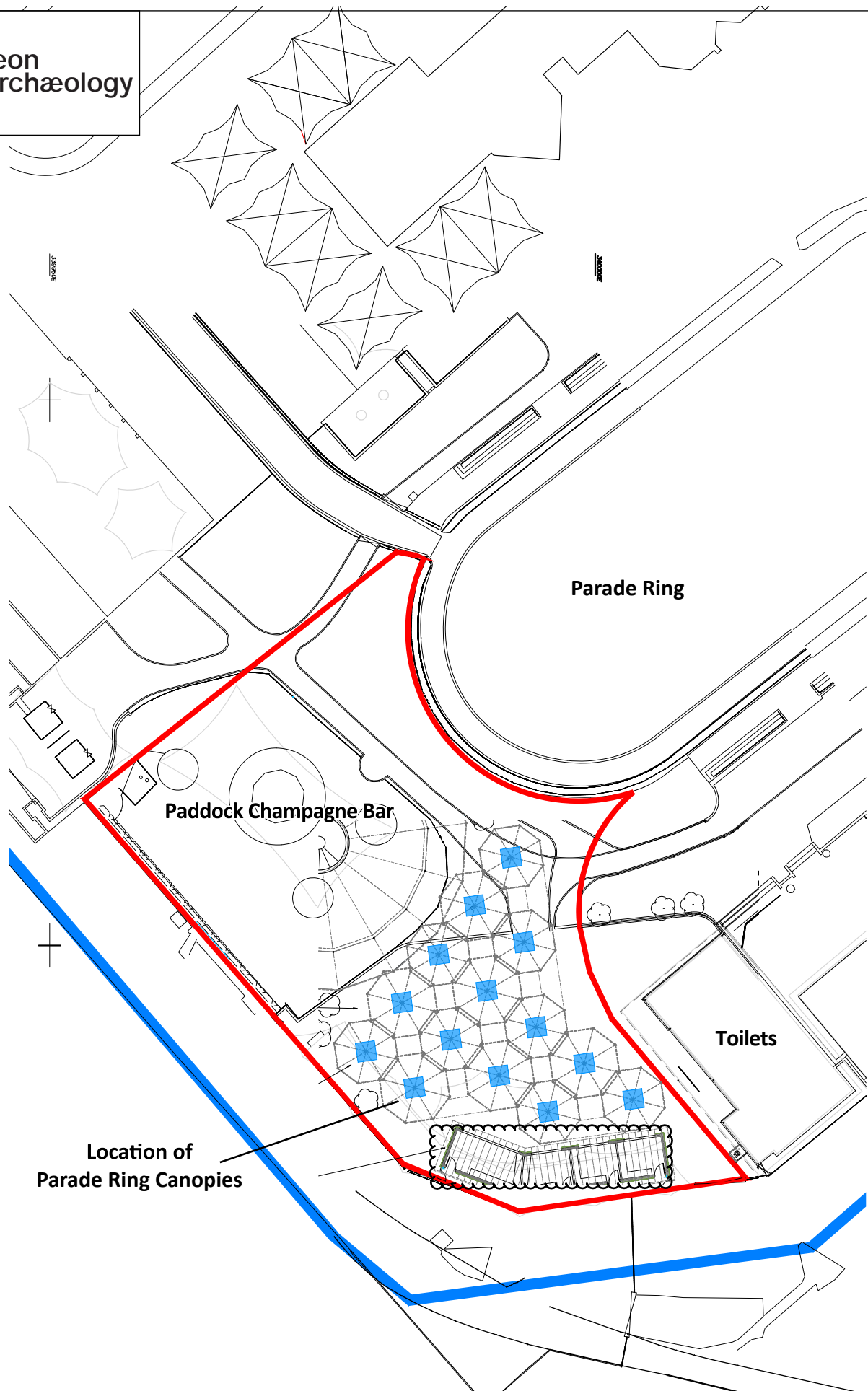


Figure 03: Location of Parade Ring Canopies, Chester Racecourse, Chester.
Scale 1:500 at A4.

3.0 SITE LOCATION & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following is reproduced from Nexus Heritage Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) Document No: 3519.R01:

The Site is situated in on the Roodee in Chester and is centred approximately at National Grid Reference SJ 39968 66009 and comprises of an irregular shaped parcel of land, within the racing circuit. The Site is currently laid to hardstanding and is used as the Paddock Champagne Bar, with some associated beverage and comestible outlets (aka ‘kitchen pods’). The Champagne Bar sits underneath a parabolic canopy supported on columns. The forecourt of the beverage and comestible outlets, which sit underneath parabolic canopies, benefits from a shelter canopy supported on a single column.

The archaeological and historical background of the Site has been researched in detail in recent times and a fulsome Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (Heritage Statement) was prepared to inform the planning application (Nexus Heritage 2020).

There is no reason to rehearse the detail of the assessment here, but a basic excursion through the current understanding of the archaeological and historical background is worthwhile.

In the first instance it is appropriate to note that there are no registered World Heritage Sites, Archaeological Areas, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens or Registered Battlefields wholly or partly within in the Site. There are no specific archaeological assets recorded in the area of the proposed development recorded within the Cheshire Historic Environment Record (CHER). However, the CHER does identify the Site within an Area of Archaeological Potential.

The archaeology of Chester has been subject to a programme of review culminating in the production of an Urban Archaeological Database (UAD) covering the administrative area of the city and Archaeological Plan (Cheshire Archaeology, 2014). The Archaeological Plan outlines the strategy under which the local authority will manage the interests of the archaeological in the context of development.

The Site lies outside the Chester Area of Archaeological Importance but is entirely within Chester’s Primary Archaeological Character Zone which in turn is further characterised into more refined Character Zones, over one of which the Site extends.

The Site lies in Character Zone 53 Roodee Racecourse. The name “Roodee” is a corruption of the Saxon word “rood” (cross) and the Norse element “ey” (island). This name appears to be derived from a cross, known to have existed in this area since the medieval period. A 13th century cross now stands at the racecourse, c. 206 m to the south-east of the Site, and is a Grade II* Listed Building. Prior to the medieval period, the waters of the River Dee covered the majority of this character zone with the exception of a small island, the Little Roodee, which lies c. 400m southeast of the Site beyond the A483. Archaeological interventions at the Roodee have documented significant depths of silts deposited by riverine and alluvial processes, some of which appear to be as late as 18th century in date.

This Character Zone has significant archaeological potential due to the presence of a wharf of Roman date adjacent to city walls and also to the medieval port which is believed to be located adjacent to the city walls between the Water Gate and the Water Tower. The Site appears to lie outside the area in which remains of the Roman wharf and medieval port are expected. However, it is possible that

features related to the medieval port, and possibly the Roman wharf, may extend into the footprint of the proposed development or that related artefactual and/or palaeoenvironmental material may be present. Deposits related to these facilities are likely to be of national archaeological interest due to their evidential value for understanding both the development of Chester and also changing environmental conditions in these periods.

A significant portion of the Roodee Racecourse Character Zone is thought to have been inundated completely or periodically by the River Dee before the post-medieval period. Some artefacts of Roman date are reported as having been recovered from the racecourse during the 19th century, including a tomb. In addition, archaeological observations in 1991, encountered Roman artefacts at a depth of c. 3.5 m below ground level. These observations also indicated deliberate deposition of material, interpreted as land reclamation dating to the post-Roman period. More recent archaeological investigations at the Racecourse have not produced any in situ material of this date. The absence of Roman material from these investigations was attributed the shallow depth of ground disturbance and it was considered possible that early deposits may yet lie at depth at these locations, being sealed by naturally deposited silts.

The Site lies in that part of the character zone thought to have been largely submerged under the waters of the adjacent River Dee prior to the medieval period. The land including the Site, is thought to have developed into common land and salt marsh by the medieval period but to have remained prone to river flooding. Due to the hydrated nature of the Site during this period extensive deposits of medieval or earlier date are not thought likely to exist in this area. However, any such deposits are likely to be of archaeological interest due to their evidential value for understanding both the development of Chester and also changing environmental conditions in these periods. There is, it should be noted, also some evidence for shipbuilding at the Roodee during the earlier post-medieval period.

4.0 PROJECT AIMS

The archaeological watching brief was maintained during the groundworks associated with:

- i) A new circular bar under an open-sided canopy. A central, enclosed stair giving access to a roof-top terrace which overlooks the Parade Ring.
- ii) The replacement of existing food & drink outlets with a row of single storey kitchen / serveries with an adjacent seating area covered by a series of octagonal canopies.

The CifA maintains a standard for archaeological watching brief which states that:

An archaeological watching brief will record the archaeological resource during development within a specified area using appropriate methods and practices. These will satisfy the stated aims of the project, and comply with the Code of conduct and other relevant by-laws of CifA.

An archaeological watching brief is defined by the CifA as a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons (CifA 2020). The watching brief will take place within a specified area within the Site where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed.

The CifA further identifies the purpose of a watching brief as allowing, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works.

It is also important to note that a watching brief provides an opportunity, if needed, for a signal to be made to all interested parties, before the destruction of the archaeological materials, 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.

A watching brief is, therefore, not intended to reduce the requirement for excavation or preservation of known or inferred deposits, and it is intended to guide, not replace, any requirement for contingent excavation or preservation of possible deposits.

The aims of the watching brief are:

- To allow, within the resources available, the opportunity to gain information about and record the presence/absence, nature and date of archaeological remains on the Site affected by excavations and groundworks, the presence and nature of which could not be established with sufficient confidence in advance of works which may disturb them.
- To provide the facility to signal to the relevant authorities, before irreversible impact to remains that an archaeological and/or historic find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are inadequate to support their treatment to an adequate and satisfactory standard.

The specific objectives of the watching brief are:

- To observe and recover any artefacts of archaeological significance.

- To record the location, dimensions and nature of any deposits, features, structures or artefacts of archaeological significance.
- To recover samples of any deposits considered to have potential for analysis for palaeoenvironmental data should the opportunity arise.

5.0 METHODOLOGY – ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

5.1 Archaeological Watching Brief

The methodology for the watching brief was prepared with reference to the CIfA's document Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief (2020) and was kept under constant review during the project, in order to see how far it met the terms of the aims and objectives, and in order to adopt any new questions which should they have arisen.

Curatorial monitoring of the archaeological work was carried out by the Development Management Archaeologist (DMA) at the Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service (CAPAS).

A suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist from Aeon Archaeology was commissioned for the maintenance of the watching brief in association with Nexus Heritage. On arrival on site, the archaeologist reported to the site manager and conformed to the arrangements for notification of entering and leaving site. The archaeologist kept a record of the date, time and duration of all attendances at site, the names and numbers of archaeologists deployed and any actions taken. The archaeologist was provided with a Health & Safety Induction by the construction contractor and wore a safety helmet, safety footwear and high visibility jacket/vest at all times.

Any of the archaeological deposits, features and structures identified were to be investigated and recorded under the terms of the watching brief and to be excavated manually in a controlled and stratigraphic manner sufficient to address the aims and objectives of the project.

The method of recording followed the normal principles of stratigraphic excavation and the stratigraphy was recorded by written descriptions even where no archaeological deposits were identified. The archaeologist recorded archaeological deposits using proformae recording forms and located them on a large-scale site plan related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid and Datum references.

The groundworks excavations were undertaken using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket.

The drawn record comprised of plans at scale 1:20 and sections drawn at scale 1:10; proprietary electronic hardware and software to prepare site drawings was used as appropriate.

A photographic record was maintained throughout, using a digital SLR camera (Canon 600D) set to maximum resolution and any subsurface remains were also recorded photographically, with detailed notations and measured drawings being undertaken where required.

5.2.1 Post-excavation Assessment

This report on the results of the watching brief, in accordance with the recommendations in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment Project Manager's Guide* (English Heritage 2006; 2015), and in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (2020) has now been produced upon conclusion of the archaeological fieldwork.

5.2.2 Post-excavation Report

This report includes the following:

- A non-technical summary.
- A table of contents.
- An introduction with acknowledgements, including a list of all those involved in the project and the location and description of the site.
- A statement of the project aims.
- An account of the project methodology undertaken, with an assessment of the same to include a statement on preservation bias and the means of data collection and sampling strategies.
- A factual summary of the history, development and use of the site.
- A statement setting out the nature, quantity and condition of the material archive (artefacts and ecofacts) including commentary on any bias observed due to collection and sampling strategies and commentary on long-term storage requirements.
- A statement setting out the nature and quantity of the documentary archive (notes, photographs, drawings, digital data).
- A general site plan indicating the position and size of the areas subject to watching brief and the locations of archaeological deposits identified and recorded during the works.
- Plans and sections at appropriate scales, augmented with appropriate photographs. All plans and sections will be related to the OrdnanceSurvey datum levels and to the National Grid.
- Other maps, plans, drawings, stratigraphic matrices and photographs as appropriate.
- Summary assessment reports on the artefact, bio-archaeological, dating and other assessments/analyses.
- A discussion of the location, extent, date, nature, condition, quality and significance of any archaeological deposits and finds identified during the project.
- A discussion of any research implications arising from the archaeological work.
- Notes on consultations with conservators and the nominated archive repository related to the immediate and long-term conservation and storage requirements for the data held in the site archive and recommendations of retention/discard of artefacts and ecofacts.
- A bibliography of sources consulted.
- Appendices to the report will include artefact catalogues, reports on assessments/analyses and an index to the project archive and a statement on its location/proposed repository.
- In addition the post-excavation report will summarise and draw together the findings of all of the phases of work.

5.3 Archive

A full archive including plans, photographs, written material and any other material resulting from the project has been prepared. All plans, photographs and descriptions have been labelled, and cross-referenced, and upon approval from the Client copies of the report will be sent to the Cheshire Historic Environment Record, the DMA at CAPAS, and the OASIS online database. Digital copies of all proformas will be retained at Aeon Archaeology, Chester under project code **A0139.2**. The original paper archive will be deposited with the Grosvenor Museum, Chester.

6.0 DIGITAL DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

6.1 Location of Study

Archaeological Watching Brief on groundworks associated with the proposed Parade Ring Canopies development at Chester Racecourse, Roodee, Chester, CH1 2LY (NGR SJ 39968 66009).

6.2 Type of study

Photographs, digital text, annotated plans.

6.3 Format and scale of the data

Photographs taken in *RAW* format and later converted to *TIF* format for long term archiving and *JPEG* format for use in the digital report, converted using *Adobe Photoshop*. All photographs renamed using *AF5* freeware with the prefix (*project code_frame number*) and a photographic metadata created using Microsoft Excel (*.xlsx*) or Access (*.accdb*).

Written descriptions taken in digital *.txt* format and sent via email to ensure a digital backup copy at time of record.

Annotated plans scanned as *.PDF* files.

6.4 Methodologies for data collection / generation

Digital data will be collected / generated in line with recommendations made in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives* (2014. Rev 2020). Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.3 are relevant:

3.3.1 Project specifications, research designs or similar documents should include a project specific Selection Strategy and a Data Management Plan.

3.3.3 Project designs or schedules of works etc should outline the methodology used in recording all information, in order to demonstrate that all aspects of archive creation will ensure consistency; for instance in terminologies and the application of codes in digital data sets, highlighting relevant data standards where appropriate

6.5 Data quality and standards

Consistency and quality of data collection / generation shall be controlled and documented through the use of standardised procedure as outlined in the WSI. This will include the use of standardised data capture file formats, digital proformas, data entry validation, peer review, and use of controlled vocabularies.

6.6 Managing, storing and curating data.

All digital data will be organised into Aeon Archaeology proformae project file systems and backed up to the cloud using *Digital River's Crashplan* with additional copies made to external physical hard drive.

6.7 Metadata standards and data documentation

Digital metadata created using Microsoft Excel (.*xlsx*) or Access (.*accdb*) of all photographic plates. Paper metadata created from Aeon Archaeology proformas for contexts, artefacts, environmental samples, watching brief day sheets, trench sheets, and basic record sheets and then scanned to create digital .PDF copies.

6.8 Data preservation strategy and standards

Long term data storage will be through the submission of digital (.PDF) reports to the regional Historic Environment Record (HER); submission of digital (.PDF) reports and a project completion form to the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales RCAHMW database; submission of the scanned (.PDF) archive, photographic plates (.TIF), and metadata (.*xlsx*) (.*accdb*) to the Archaeology Data Service (ADS); and retention of copies of all digital files at Aeon Archaeology on physical external hard drive and uploaded to the cloud.

6.9 Suitability for sharing

All digital data will be placed within the public realm (through the channels in 6.8) except for where project confidentiality restricts the sharing of data. All data sets will be selected / discriminated by the Senior Archaeologist at Aeon Archaeology and written permission will be sought from all project specific Clients prior to the sharing of data.

6.10 Discovery by potential users of the research data

Potential users of the generated digital data (outside of the organisation) will be able to source the data and identify whether it could be suitable for their research purposes through access granted via the ADS and RCAHMW websites. Requests can also be made for data through the regional HER's and directly to Aeon Archaeology (info@aeonarchaeology.co.uk).

6.11 Governance of access

The decision to supply research data to potential new users will be via the associated website request (ADS, RCAHMW, HER) or via the Senior Archaeologist when made directly to Aeon Archaeology.

6.12 The study team's exclusive use of the data

Aeon Archaeology's requirement is for timely data sharing, with the understanding that a limited, defined period of exclusive use of data for primary research is reasonable according to the nature and value of the data, and that this restriction on sharing should be based on simple, clear principles. This time period is expected to be six months from completion of the project however Aeon Archaeology reserves the right to extend this period without notice if primary data research dictates.

6.13 Restrictions or delays to sharing, with planned actions to limit such restrictions

Restriction to data sharing may be due to participant confidentiality or consent agreements. Strategies to limit restrictions will include data being anonymised or aggregated; gaining participant consent for data sharing; and gaining copyright permissions. For prospective studies, consent procedures will

include provision for data sharing to maximise the value of the data for wider research use, while providing adequate safeguards for participants.

6.14 Regulation of responsibilities of users

External users of the data will be bound by data sharing agreements provided by the relevant organisation or directly through Aeon Archaeology.

6.15 Responsibilities

Responsibility for study-wide data management, metadata creation, data security and quality assurance of data will be through the Senior Archaeologist (Richard Cooke BA MA MCIfA) at Aeon Archaeology when concerning data generation and early/mid-term storage. Upon deposition with digital depositories the study-wide data management, metadata creation, data security and quality assurance of data will be the responsibility of the specific organisations' themselves.

6.16 Organisational policies on data sharing and data security

The following Aeon Archaeology policies are relevant:

- Aeon Archaeology Archive Deposition Policy 2019
- Aeon Archaeology Quality Assurance Policy 2019
- Aeon Archaeology Conflict of Interest Policy 2019
- Aeon Archaeology Outreach Policy 2019
- Aeon Archaeology Digital Management Plan 2020

7.0 QUANTIFICATION OF RESULTS

7.1 The Documentary Archive

The following documentary records were created during the archaeological watching brief:

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Watching Brief day Sheets | 8 |
| Digital photographs | 127 |
| Drawings | 3 |

7.2 Environmental Samples

No environmental samples were recovered during the archaeological watching brief.

7.3 Artefacts

The Finds Assemblage – *By Leigh Dodd, BSc PGDip MCIfA*

Introduction

A small finds assemblage totalling 22 sherds and fragments of pottery and ceramic building materials (CBM) spanning a broad time period – Roman to 19th century – was recovered from a single context (102) identified as the fill to a ditch feature. Recovery of the assemblage was through hand collection and all finds were collected and retained.

The assemblage is in very fragmentary condition and with much rounding and wear evident to the surfaces and edges of the objects recovered, in particular the ceramic building materials. The lack of large, freshly broken sherds indicates a high level of residual material across the ceramic assemblage.

The broad dating and types of objects forming the assemblage is summarised and quantified in the table below. The following sections of this report summarise in detail the objects recovered according to period and type (e.g. Roman CBM, medieval CBM etc.).

| <i>Object category and period</i> | <i>No. of sherds/fragments</i> | <i>Weight (g)</i> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Roman pottery | 1 | 1 |
| Roman CBM | 3 | 493 |
| Medieval/post-medieval pottery | 3 | 124 |
| Medieval/post-medieval CBM | 13 | 2351 |
| Late post-medieval pottery | 2 | 41 |
| <i>Total</i> | 22 | 3010 |

Table 1: Quantification of finds assemblage by number of objects and weight according to broad object categories

Roman Pottery

A single sherd of *Moselkeramik* black-slipped ware (National Roman Fabric Reference Collection fabric code: MOS BS; Tomber & Dore 1998: 60) was recovered. This sherd, with characteristic sandwiched red and grey fabric coated with a black slip, was from the wall of a beaker or jar decorated with both a rouletted band and a *barbotine* white pipe-clay slip design. Unfortunately, owing to the small size of the sherd, it is not possible to determine if the barbotine decoration forms part of a scroll, abstract motif or part of a short text, or motto, which often allude to some aspect of drinking behaviour. The vessel can be dated to between the late 2nd century and the mid-3rd century (Tyres 1996: 138).

Roman Ceramic Building Materials

The assemblage of Roman-period CBM consisted of a single fragment of curved ridge tile/*imbrex*, and two fragments of *tegulae* (flanged roof tiles) in fabrics typical of those of the legionary kilns at Holt, situated 12 km south of Chester. The kilns were established by the Twentieth Legion, which was based at Chester from the early AD 90s, and are known to have been producing ceramic building material and pottery for the legionary fortress from c. AD 90/100, with the production of CBM continuing into the 3rd century.

Of the three fragments of Roman CBM, one is worthy of further note. This fragment, consisting part of the central area from a *tegula*, carries a *signum*, or signature mark, consisting of five loops or arcs closely set (a multiple of Warry's type B: Warry 2006:149) formed through the running of the tilemaker's fingers into the surface of the soft clay prior to firing. Whilst *signum* are not uncommon – some 80% of the complete *tegulae* studied by Peter Warry had such marks – this particular design is a little unusual in comparison to the more frequently observed simple arcs and loops often present on tiles of Holt manufacture recovered from excavations at Chester. However, the data for *tegulae* produced by the Twentieth Legion (*Legio XX*) that bear such signature marks is sparse (Warry 2006: 91).

Medieval/Post-medieval Pottery

Three sherds of transitional medieval/early post-medieval pottery were recovered. All three sherds were in pink/white or buff fabrics and coated internally and externally in patchy green glazes or speckled orange-brown glazes. The three sherds all derived from the body of jars or cisterns, probably manufactured in the Ewloe area of Flintshire, and are characteristic of forms present in transitional medieval/post-medieval assemblages dating to the 14th/15th and 16th centuries at Chester (see Edwards 2008a: 207).

Medieval/Post-medieval Ceramic Building Materials

This category of ceramics consisted of two floor tiles, two ridge tiles and nine fragments from flat roof tiles.

The floor tile consisted of an example manufacture in a red, sandy fabric with patches of green glaze and scored or cut diagonal across the centre. There are indications that this tile had been coated, or else decorated, with white clay slip but the surface exhibits much wear. This tile may have derived from one of Chester's many ecclesiastical establishments or, equally, a secular setting. The second floor tile, perhaps part of a thin brick, also in a red sandy fabric, shows evidence of burning and may

have served as flooring to a hearth or oven. The floor tiles cannot be assigned a close date, but the lack of decoration does, however, suggest a broad late medieval to early post-medieval date range.

The two fragments of ridge tiles were both in red, sandy fabrics, and coated with orange-green glaze. One was of crested type (crests missing). Of the nine fragments of flat roofing tiles, all but two were in red sandy fabrics and un-glazed. The further two fragments were made from pink/white fabrics with patchy green glazes. Closely datable assemblage containing roof tiles are generally absent in Chester. However, at 25 Bridge Street such ceramic building materials were sparse in deposits dated prior to the late medieval period (14th to late 15th century), providing some indication as to when this type of building material started to be deposited within the city (Edwards 2008b: 158).

Late Post-medieval Pottery

These sherds consisted of a sherd from the base of a tin-glazed jar of drum shape, decorated with blue banding, dating to the 17th or early 18th century, and a sherd from a plate decorated with an underglaze blue transfer print in *Willow pattern*; a popular and long-lived pattern that followed a standard design by the first decade of the 19th century (Coysh and Henrywood 1982: 402).

Discussion

Although of little archaeological significance, some 1800 years of human occupation and, in particular, use and consumption of ceramics in Chester are nonetheless reflected in the assemblage recorded here.

The earliest datable finds, dating from the 2nd century, consist of a sherd of imported fine ware pottery from the Rhineland and ceramic building materials manufactured locally under the control of the Twentieth Legion. Finds of late medieval/early post-medieval transitional ceramic building materials otherwise dominate the assemblage, accompanied by a handful of sherds from pottery vessels of broadly contemporary date. The later post-medieval period is represented by a sherd from a tin-glazed jar of a type associated with pharmaceutical use (the storage of dry drugs or ointments) during the 17th century, whilst the terminal date of the assemblage is provided by the sherd of transfer printed pottery of 19th century, or perhaps later, date.

The finds are broad in both character and date and cannot, therefore, be regarded as a secure or intrinsically valuable archaeological group. Indeed, the assemblage appears to represent residual material displaced, no doubt, from a variety of archaeological contexts disturbed across two millennia before finally being brought together, through whatever means and circumstances, as a single group.

8.0 RESULTS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

8.1 Overview

The archaeological watching brief was maintained by Josh Dean BA & Richard Cooke BA MA MCIfA operating as field archaeologists with Aeon Archaeology / Nexus Heritage. The dates of these visits to Chester Racecourse extended from 17th, 18th, 19th, 22nd and 23rd February and 4th, 15th and 16th March 2021. The watching brief involved the observation of groundworks associated with the development of new racecourse amenities within the *Parade Ring Canopies* - of Chester Racecourse within the Racing Circuit Track (*see figures 01-03*) These groundworks involved the excavation of foundation trenches for a single storey kitchen and serveries building and also a series of fourteen square pits which were to receive concrete bases of octagonal parasols. Given the alluvial origin of the deposits within the development area the water table was encountered at quite a high level and excavations over 1.00m in depth were quickly inundated with standing water.

8.2 The Kitchen Pod / Serveries Building Foundation (*figures 04-05; plates 1-19*)

The foundations of the Kitchen Pod/ Serveries building measured 23.13m in length and 5.10m in width. The foundations were formed from seven 0.70m wide trenches (*trenches A-G, see figure 04*) and these formed a rectangular shaped building in plan which was generally aligned east to west. The works began with the removal of a red and grey tarmac which was cut with a mechanical saw prior to lifting with a tracked excavator with toothless ditching bucket. The tarmac measured 0.18m in depth and covered the entire area of the intended building foundation footprint. Immediately, beneath this covering of tarmac was 0.15m of a stony substrate which also covered the entire area. This substrate was intermittently interrupted by modern concrete intrusions that had previously been cast prior to being covered over with tarmac – these persisted to depth of 0.70m.

Underling this stony substrate was 0.08m of dark brown-grey, silt-clay with frequent flecks of charcoal and very rare fragments of post-medieval/modern pottery. This narrow band of material appeared to be partially mixed with the stone above suggesting the stone was laid onto this surface. Beneath the dark silt-clay was a >1.30m deep deposit of mid-blue-grey, gley/clay alluvial material.

During the excavation of trenches A and B a linear ditch [101] was revealed in plan (which continued within parasol base 10, see below) and which aligned southwest to northeast, part of the ditch was also visible within trench D (*see figure 05*). The ditch was 2.90m wide and >6.25m in length and extended to a maximum depth of 1.42m. The upper sides of the ditch appeared gradual and concave before they stepped in sharply; the base of the cut became quite narrow with its sides quite steep before finishing with a sharply concave base.

Within the southern trench (trench B) there was a discernible undercut at the base of the ditch on the eastern side suggesting this ditch could have been a drainage channel within the flats of the floodplain. This ditch had two distinct fills; the primary fill (106) was a sedimentary deposit 0.12m in depth consisting of a very soft, mid grey-brown, clay-silt, which appeared to have been evidence of natural silting during the period in which the ditch was open, whereas the secondary deposit was significant 1.30m deep, soft, dark grey-brown, silt-clay with frequent charcoal inclusions, occasional fragments of slate, red tile (Roman, Medieval, Post Medieval), rare fragments of ceramic (*see section 8.3*) and occasional fragments of butchered animal bone.

This ditch [101] produced ceramic finds covering a period dating to the early 2nd century AD to the late 20th century. The character and date range of the finds suggest that they represent residual material displaced from a variety of archaeological contexts that have been brought together as a single group via a variety of processes that equate to both natural and anthropogenic systems *i.e.* backfilling events, natural inundation by rain water or flooding etc.



Plate 01: Pre excavation shot of foundations for Kitchen Pod, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the south - no scale



Plate 02: Pre excavation shot of foundations for Kitchen Pod, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the north - no scale



Plate 03: Working Shot cutting Tarmac, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the south - no scale



Plate 04: Post Tarmac removal Kitchen Pod foundations, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the east - 1.00m scale



Plate 05: Post Tarmac removal Kitchen Pod foundations, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the northwest - 1.00m scale



Plate 06: South facing section of Ditch [101] within Trench A, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the southeast - 1.00m scale



Plate 07: Pre excavation shot Ditch [101] within Trench B, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the west - 0.50m scale



Plate 08: Post excavation shot Ditch [101] within Trench B, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the west - 0.50m scale



Plate 09: North facing section of Ditch [101] within Trench B, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the northeast - 1.00m scale

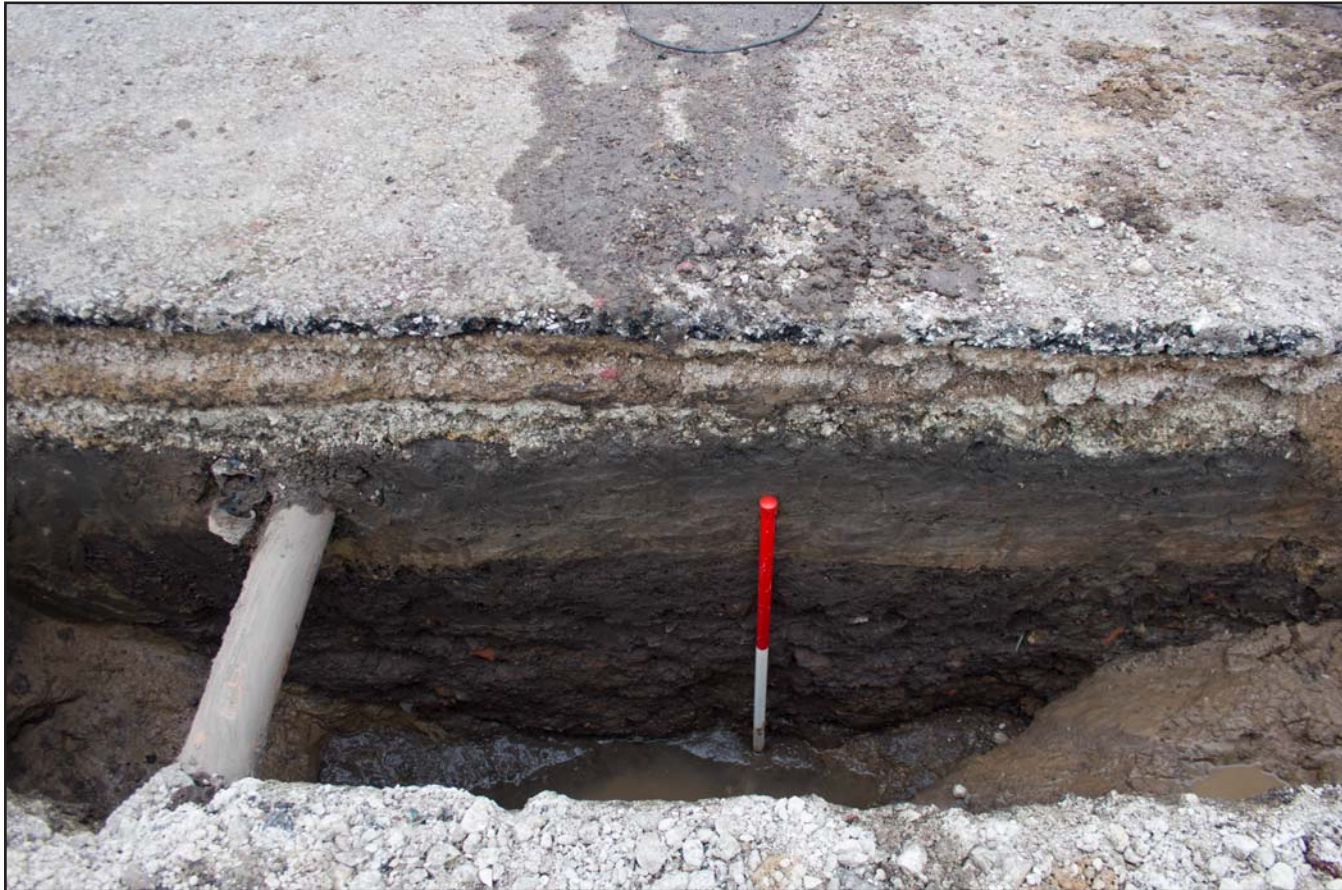


Plate 10: North facing section of Ditch [101] within Trench B, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the north - 1.00m scale



Plate 11: Ditch [101] within Trench E, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the south - 1.00m scale



Plate 12: Trench A within foundations for Kitchen Pod, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the south - 1.00m scale



Plate 13: Trench B within foundations for Kitchen Pod, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the south - 1.00m scale



Plate 14: Trench C within foundations for Kitchen Pod, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the south - 1.00m scale



Plate 15: Trench D within foundations for Kitchen Pod, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the south - 1.00m scale



Plate 16: Trench E within foundations for Kitchen Pod, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the south - 1.00m scale



Plate 17: Trench F within foundations for Kitchen Pod, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the south - 1.00m scale



Plate 18: Trench G within foundations for Kitchen Pod, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the south - 1.00m scale

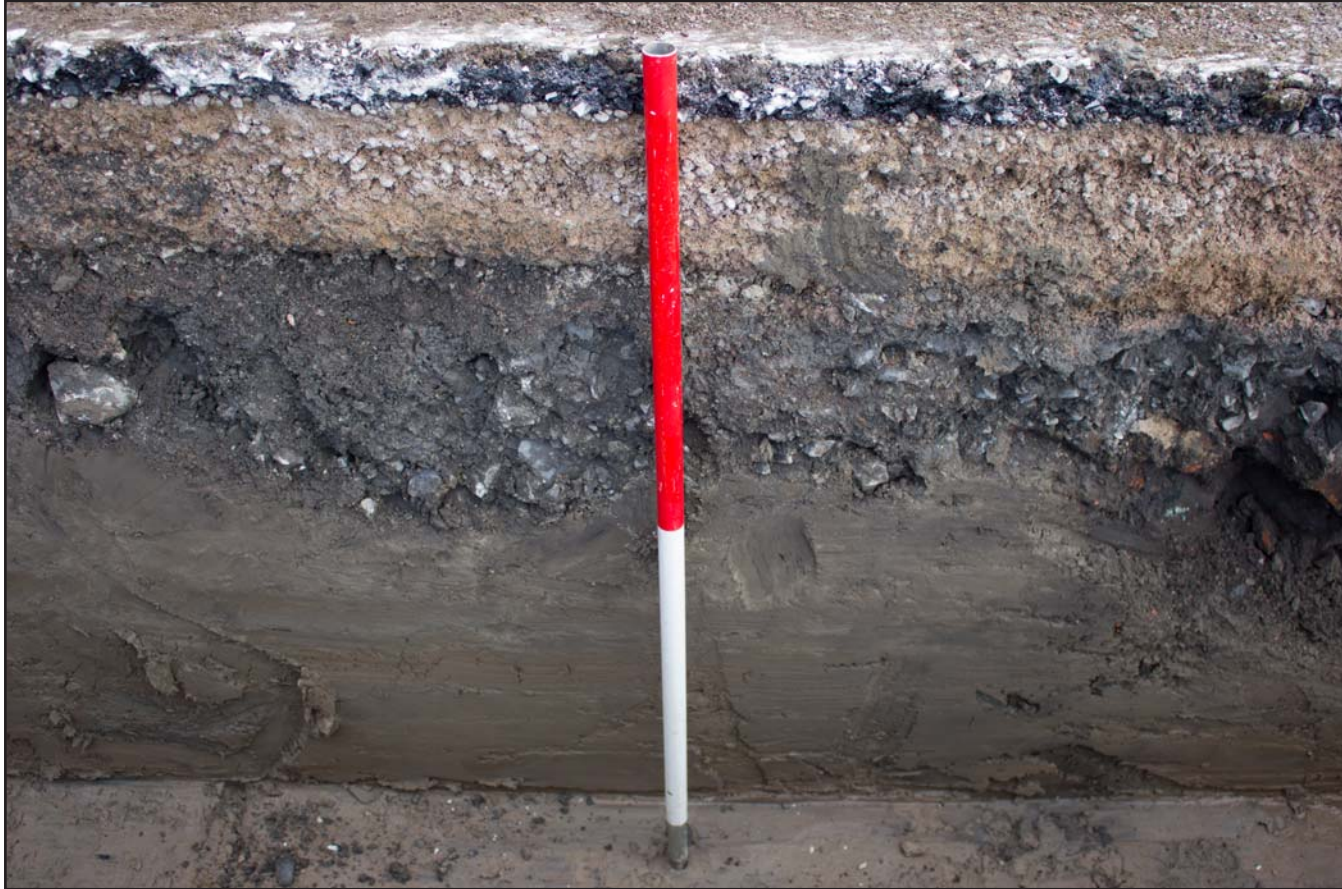


Plate 19: Generic Section of foundation trenches for Kitchen Pod, Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the south - 1.00m scale



Key
➡ Direction of Photograph



Figure 04: Location of Parasol Bases (1-14) and Kitchen Pod Foundation Trenches (A-G), and location of archaeological plates (1-5; 12-48), at Chester Racecourse, Roodee, Chester, CH1 2LY. Scale 1:250 at A4.

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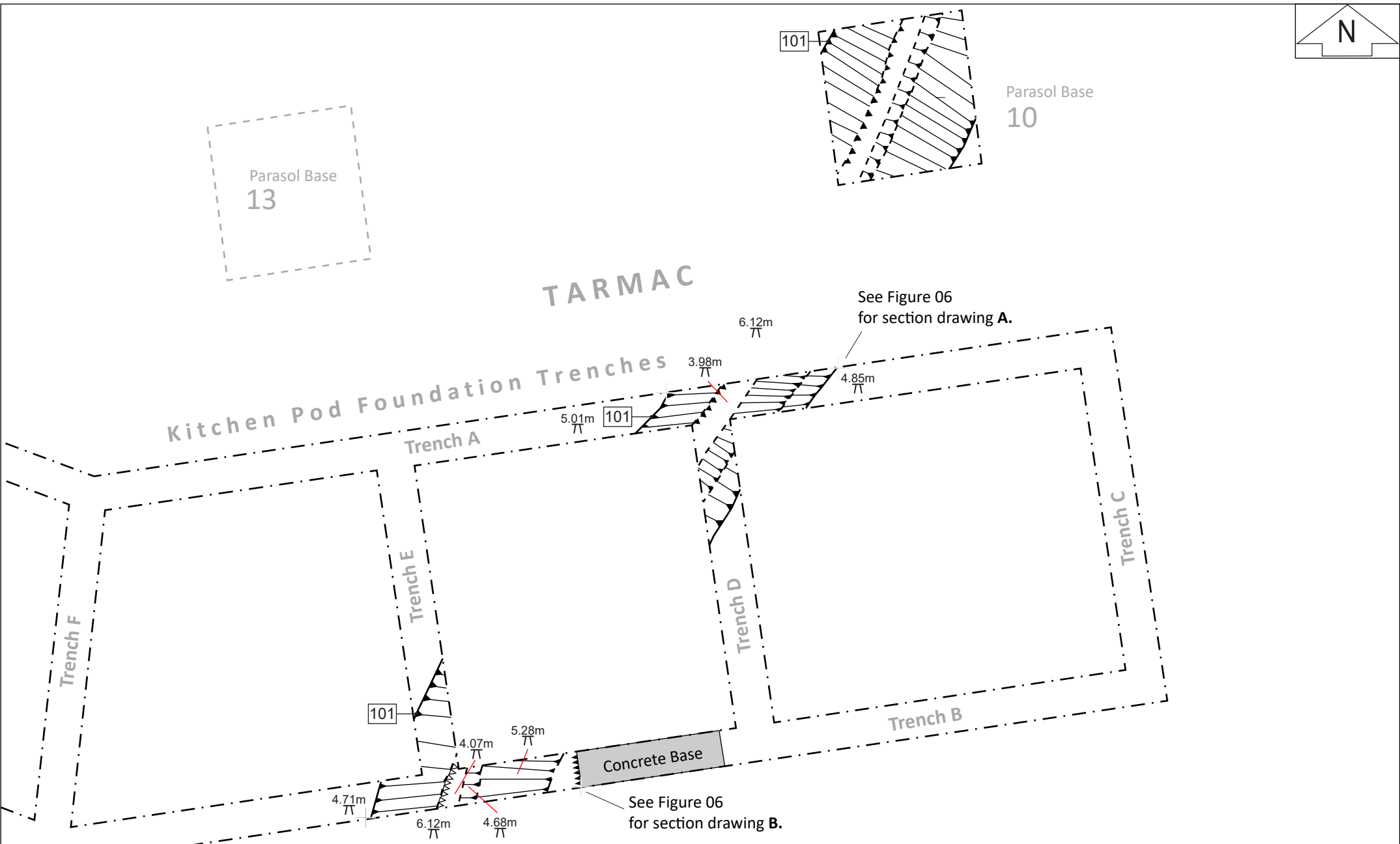
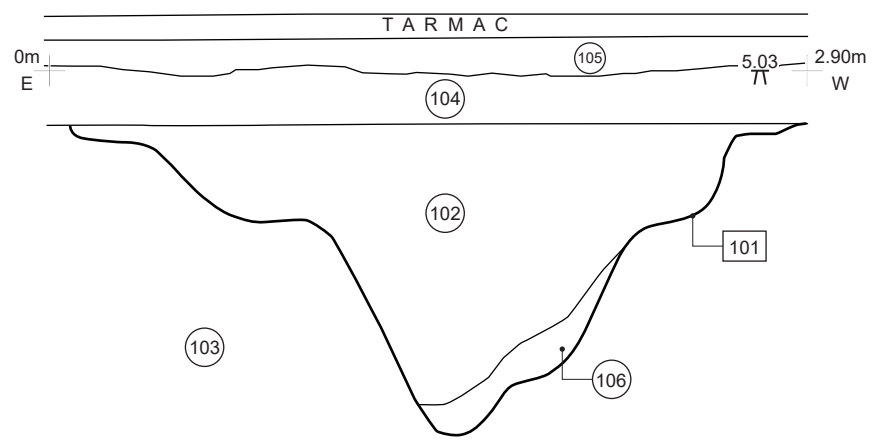


Figure 05: Northeast - southwest aligned ditch [101] within Kitchen Pod foundation and Parasol Base 10 at Chester Racecourse, Roodee, Chester, CH1 2LY. Scale 1.75 at A4.

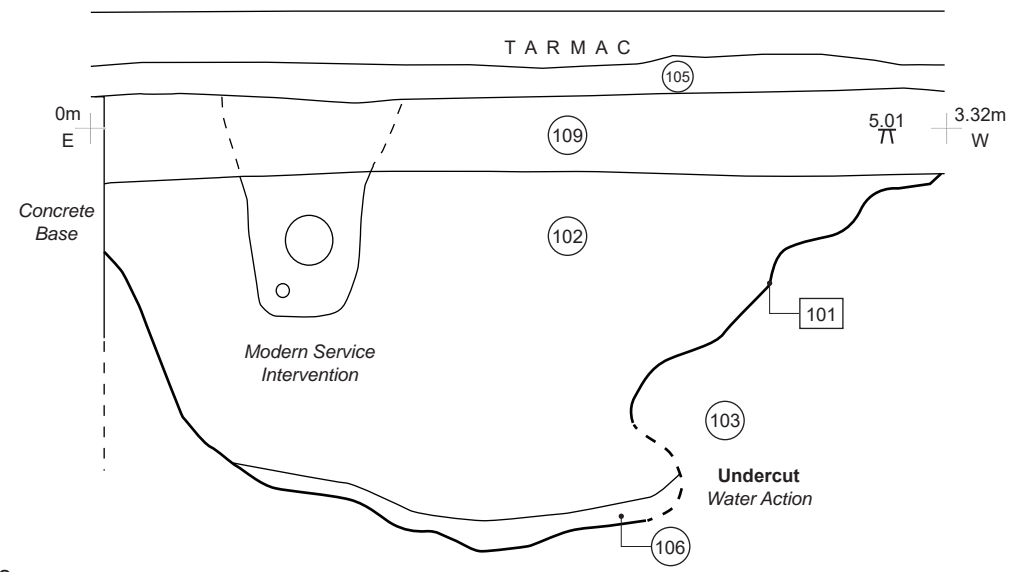


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A. South Facing Section of Ditch [101]
see figure 05 for location

B. North Facing Section of Ditch [101]
see figure 05 for location



1:20



Figure 06: Archaeological sections (A.-B.) of northeast-southwest aligned ditch [101], found at Chester Racecourse, Roodee, Chester, CH1 2LY. Scale 1:20 at A4.

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8.3 Parasol Bases (figures 04-05, plates 20-48)

In addition to the excavation of the foundations for the building there were a further fourteen pits which were prepared in order to receive substantial concrete anchors for the octagonal parasol/canopies that would ultimately provide cover for the seating/dining area which would be located adjacent (north) to the new kitchen/serveries building. All the pits measured 2.00m square and 1.45m in depth (*aside from parasol base 10*) which extended to 1.53m depth.

Parasol Base 01

This pit cut through 0.25m of dark black-grey, silt, clay topsoil which overlay 0.25m of mid-brown-grey, silt-clay subsoil. Below this was >0.95m of mid/light red-brown slightly silty clay alluvium. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered.

Parasol Base 02

This pit cut through 0.18m of tarmac which overlay 0.15m of stony substrate. Below this was >0.95m of mid/light red-brown slightly silty clay alluvium. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered.

Parasol Base 03

This pit cut through 0.18m of tarmac which overlay 0.15m of stony substrate. Beneath this lay 0.25m of dark brown-grey, silt clay. Below this was >0.95m of mid/light red-brown slightly silty clay alluvium. Two modern post holes visible in north and west sections of pit. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered.

Parasol Base 04

This pit cut through 0.18m of tarmac which overlay 0.15m of stony substrate. Beneath this lay 0.25m of dark brown-grey, silt clay. Below this was >0.95m of mid/light red-brown slightly silty clay alluvium. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered.

Parasol Base 05

This pit cut through 0.18m of tarmac which overlay 0.15m of stony substrate. Beneath this lay 0.25m of dark brown-grey, silt clay. Below this was >0.95m of mid/light red-brown slightly silty clay alluvium. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered.

Parasol Base 06

This pit cut through 0.18m of tarmac which overlay 0.15m of stony substrate. Beneath this lay 0.25m of dark brown-grey, silt clay. Below this was >0.95m of mid/light red-brown slightly silty clay alluvium. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered.

Parasol Base 07

This pit cut through 0.18m of tarmac which overlay 0.15m of stony substrate. Beneath this lay 0.25m of dark brown-grey, silt clay. Below this was >0.95m of mid/light red-brown slightly silty clay alluvium. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered.

Parasol Base 08

This pit cut through 0.18m of tarmac which overlay 0.15m of stony substrate. Beneath this lay 0.25m of dark brown-grey, silt clay. Below this was >0.95m of mid/light grey/brown slightly silty clay alluvium. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered.

Parasol Base 09

This pit cut through 0.18m of tarmac which overlay 0.15m of stony substrate. Beneath this lay 0.25m of dark brown-grey, silt clay. Below this was >0.95m of mid/light grey/brown slightly silty clay alluvium. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered.

*Parasol Base 10**

This pit cut through 0.18m of tarmac which overlay 0.15m of stony substrate. Beneath this lay 0.25m of dark brown-grey, silt clay. Below this was >0.95m of mid/light grey/brown slightly silty clay alluvium. However, cut into the grey/brown alluvium was the linear ditch [101] which had been observed to the southwest within the foundation trenches for the building.

The ditch was >2.00m wide and >2.00m in length at this location and extended to a maximum depth of 1.34m. The sides of the ditch were gradual before they appeared to step in sharply, almost horizontally; the base of the cut once again became narrow and steep before finishing with the same sharply concave base observed to the southwest.

This ditch had two fills, a shallow primary, sedimentary fill (106) which was 0.10/12m in depth, consisting of a very soft, mid grey-brown, clay-silt and a secondary *backfill* deposit which was more significant 1.22m deep, soft, dark grey-brown, silt-clay with frequent charcoal inclusions, occasional fragments of slate, red tile (Roman, Medieval, Post Medieval), rare fragments of ceramic (*see section 8.3*) and occasional fragments of butchered animal bone.

The persistence of this feature suggested that it would have extended underneath the toilet block to the northeast and away to the southwest underneath the southern service road and further into the centre of the Roodee (within the racecourse circuit).

Parasol Base 11

This pit cut through 0.18m of tarmac which overlay 0.15m of stony substrate. Beneath this lay 0.25m of dark brown-grey, silt clay. Below this was >0.95m of mid/light grey/brown slightly silty clay alluvium. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered.

Parasol Base 12

This pit cut through 0.18m of tarmac which overlay 0.15m of stony substrate. Beneath this lay 0.25m of dark brown-grey, silt clay. Below this was >0.95m of mid/light grey/brown slightly silty clay alluvium. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered.

Parasol Base 13

This pit cut through 0.18m of tarmac which overlay 0.15m of stony substrate. Beneath this lay 0.25m of dark brown-grey, silt clay. Below this was >0.95m of mid/light grey/brown slightly silty clay alluvium. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered.

Parasol Base 14

This pit cut through 0.18m of tarmac which overlay 0.15m of stony substrate. Beneath this lay 0.25m of dark brown-grey, silt clay. Below this was >0.95m of mid/light grey/brown slightly silty clay alluvium. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered.



Plate 20: Parasol Base 1 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the east - 1.00m scale



Plate 21: Parasol Base 1 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the east - 1.00m scale



Plate 22: Parasol Base 2 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the north - 1.00m scale

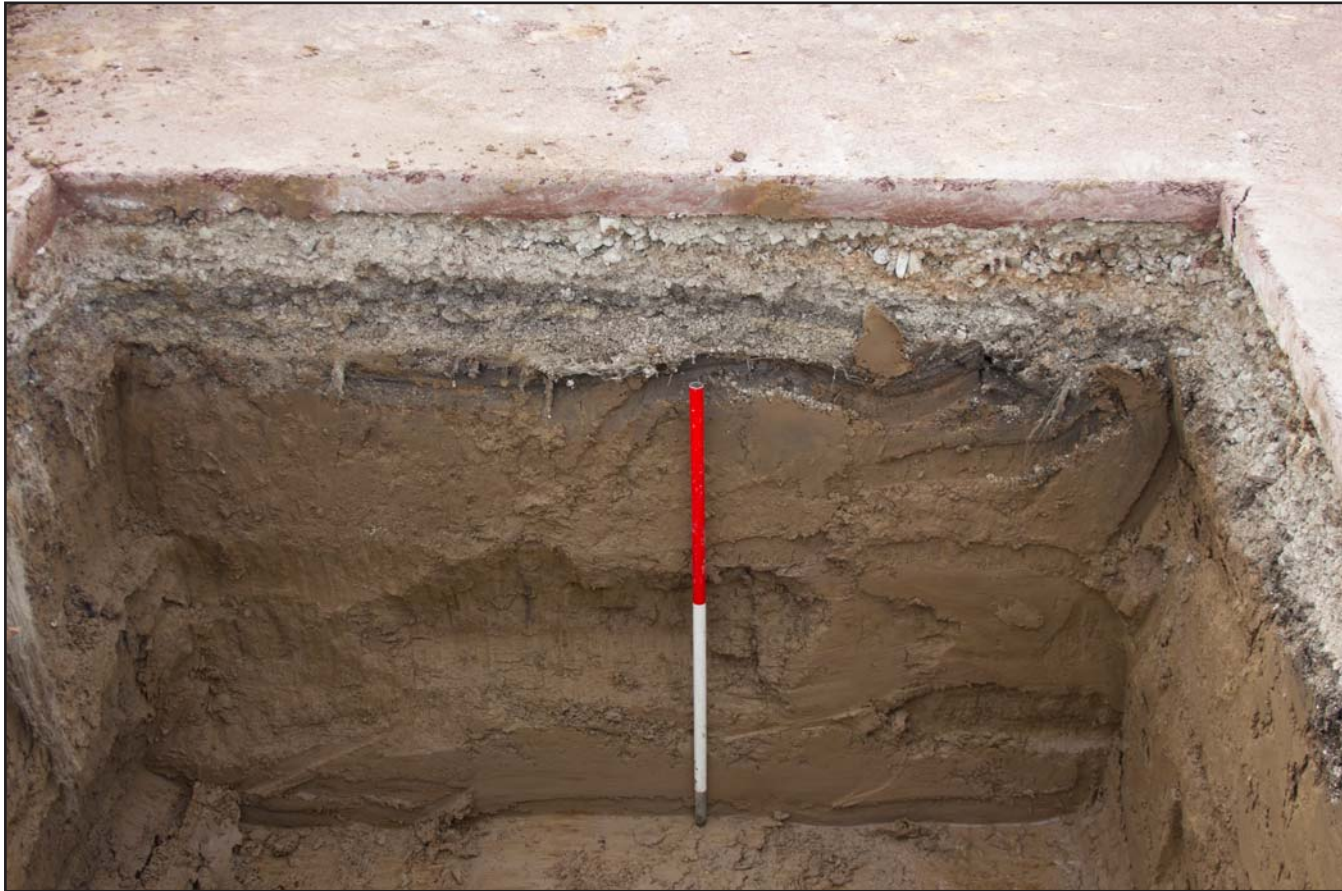


Plate 23: Parasol Base 2 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the north - 1.00m scale



Plate 24: Parabol Base 3 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the west - 1.00m scale



Plate 25: Parasol Base 3 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the west - 1.00m scale



Plate 26: Parasol Base 4 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the west - 1.00m scale



Plate 27: Parasol Base 4 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the west - 1.00m scale



Plate 28: Parasol Base 5 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the west - 1.00m scale



Plate 29: Parasol Base 5 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the west - 1.00m scale



Plate 30: Parasol Base 6 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the west - 1.00m scale



Plate 31: Parasol Base 6 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the west - 1.00m scale



Plate 32: Parabol Base 7 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the west - 1.00m scale



Plate 33: Parasol Base 7 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the west - 1.00m scale



Plate 34: Parasol Base 8 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the southwest - 1.00m scale



Plate 35: Parasol Base 8 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the northwest - 1.00m scale



Plate 36: Parasol Base 9 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the southwest - 1.00m scale



Plate 37: Parol Base 9 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the northwest - 1.00m scale



Plate 38: Parasol Base 10 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the southwest - 1.00m scale



Plate 39: Parasol Base 10 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the southeast - 1.00m scale



Plate 40: Parasol Base 11 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the southwest - 1.00m scale

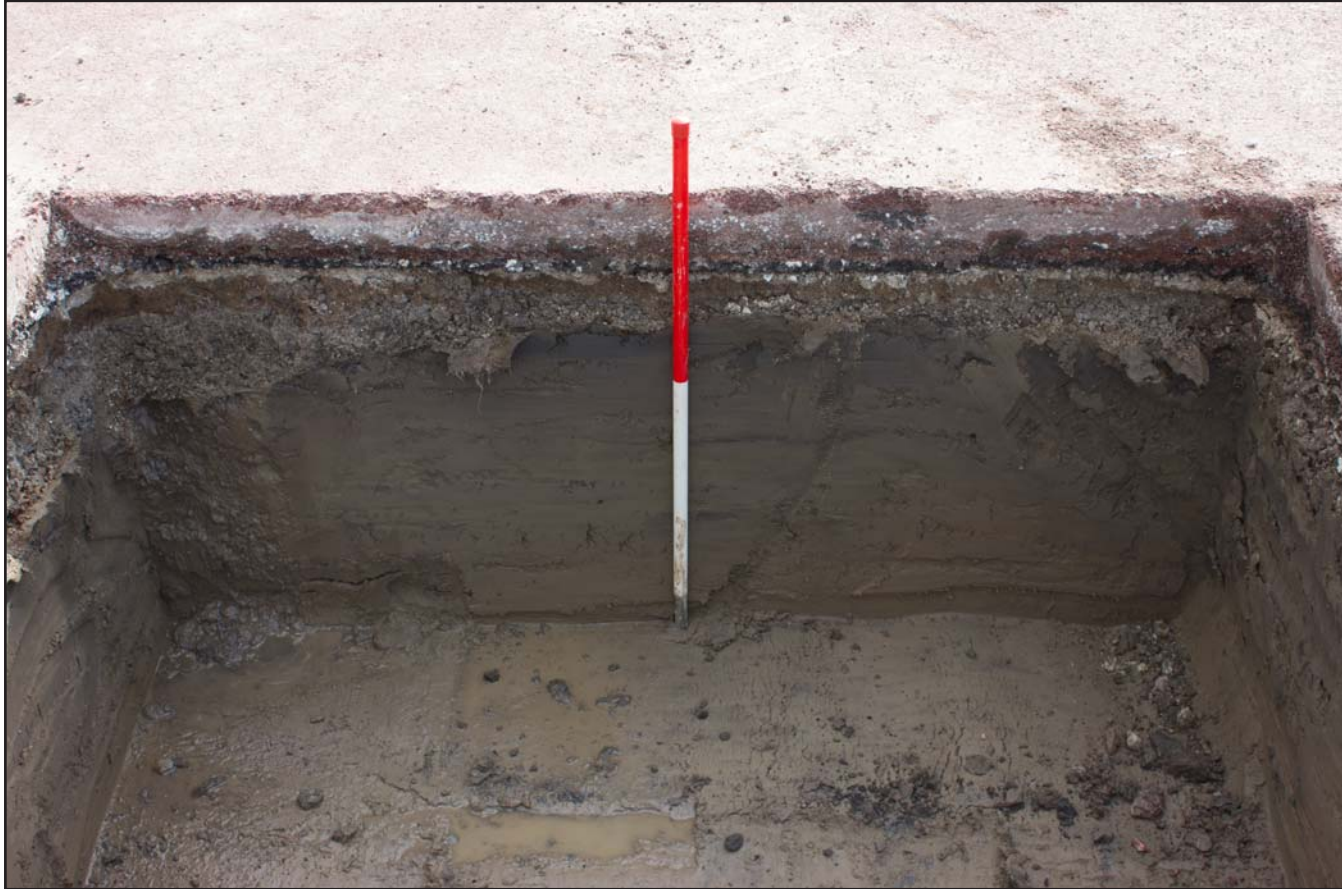


Plate 41: Parasol Base 11 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the northwest - 1.00m scale



Plate 42: Parasol Base 12 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the southwest - 1.00m scale



Plate 43: Parasol Base 12 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the northwest - 1.00m scale



Plate 44: Parasol Base 13 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the southwest - 1.00m scale



Plate 45: Parasol Base 13 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the northwest - 1.00m scale



Plate 46: Parasol Base 14 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the southwest - 1.00m scale



Plate 47: Parasol Base 14 for Parade Ring Canopies at Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the southwest - 1.00m scale



Plate 48: Parasol Base 10 showing profile of Ditch [101] for Chester Racecourse, Chester - from the southeast - 1.00m scale

9.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the archaeological watching brief covering the groundworks associated with the *Parade Ring Canopies development* at Chester Racecourse, Roodee, Chester, a linear ditch [101] was found to persist beneath the tarmac/hardstanding towards the southern edge of the Parade Ring development within the Racecourse Circuit. The archaeological feature was aligned southwest to northeast and was shown in plan to pass through the foundation trenches of the new building before continuing through into the eastern most parasol base (Parasol Base 10). The most significant ditch fill produced a number of ceramic finds dating from the 2nd century AD to the late 20th century.

These finds are broad in both character and date and cannot, therefore, be regarded as a secure or intrinsically valuable archaeological group. The assemblage appears to represent residual material displaced from a variety of archaeological contexts which have been disturbed across the course of two millennia before finally being brought together, through alluvial and anthropogenic processes, as a single group.

The presence of Roman and medieval finds within this assemblage is not a surprise and probably represents a residual collection of redeposited wares. A significant portion of the Roodee Racecourse Character Zone is thought to have been inundated completely or periodically by the River Dee before the post-medieval period. In addition, archaeological observations in 1991, encountered Roman artefacts at a depth of c. 3.50 m below ground level. The ditch [101] therefore most likely represents a post-medieval intervention into the alluvial silt/clay for the purposes of drainage, perhaps as part of land reclamation within the floodplain – this ditch appears to have carried water for a sufficient length of time and with such velocity as to have caused under-cutting in areas of the channel (*observed trench A, see figure 06*) and then left a shallow sedimentary fill (106) during the period it was open. The ditch is not depicted on the Chester Tithe map or on the ensuing Ordnance Survey maps, although it is likely that it was too ephemeral a feature to depict.

The secondary fill (102) appears to represent an event, or rather a series of events, across the length of the channel. The presence and height of the water table (*observed during the works*) had made it very difficult (and unsafe) to discern specific episodes when scrutinising the archaeological section, however, the ceramic material that was produced by the ditch fill (102) is representative of multiple timeframes; Roman, medieval & post-medieval transitional wares were all present. These materials could have been removed from their original context via anthropogenic processes and deposited within the channel in order to close it down or similarly they may have washed into the channel from deposits which were exposed by the running waters closer to the town walls, assuming that the channel ran from northeast to southwest - regardless this process likely continued over a significant period of time and did not happen in unison.

As a responsible landowner and developer in Chester, the Client has and continues to acknowledge the historic and archaeological interest at the Racecourse and realise its duty of care to that interest. In conclusion this watching brief can be said to have met the broad aims and objectives set out within the written scheme of investigation produced by Nexus Heritage. This report can be said to contribute to and inform upon a better understanding of *Chester's Primary Archaeological Character Zone - Character Zone 53 Roodee Racecourse* both with regards to its changing morphology over time and partially inform on its utilisation by the post medieval populations of historic Chester.

10.0 SOURCES

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