PN 1531

# birmingham archaeology

THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

**Red Hill Marina, Ratcliffe on Soar.**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief 2006**

| | |
|---|---|
| Checked by | |
| Supervisor..... | date..... |
| Project Manager..... | date..... |

Project No. 1531

By

Kristina Krawiec

For
Red Hill Marine Ltd

*For further information please contact:*
Alex Jones (Director)
Birmingham Archaeology
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 5513
Fax: 0121 414 5516
E-Mail: bham-arch@bham.ac.uk
Web Address: http://www barch.bham.ac.uk/bufau

# Red Hill Marina
# An Archaeological Watching Brief 2006

## CONTENTS

**1 INTRODUCTION ..... 1**

**2 LOCATION AND GEOLOGY ..... 1**

**3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES ..... 1**

**4 METHODOLOGY ..... 1**

**5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT ..... 2**

**6 RESULTS ..... 4**

**7 FINDS ..... 4**

7.1 THE POTTERY BY SHAUN CARTER ..... 4
7.2 THE BONE BY MARTIN SMITH ..... 5

**8 CONCLUSIONS ..... 5**

**9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... 5**

**10 SOURCES ..... 6**

### Figures

Fig.1 Location map
Fig.2 Trench location

### Plates

Plate 1 Service trench looking north-east
Plate 2 North facing section of north end of trench

**SUMMARY**

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the excavation of a service trench across a field to the south of Red Hill farm in October 2006. The nature if the groundworks were such that close inspection from within the service trench was not possible and so the exact stratigraphy could not be recorded. A search of the spoil heaps recovered concentrations of Roman pottery and fragments of human bone. It was also possible to identify the flood plain deposits in the south-western half of the site. The concentration of finds is unsurprising given the proximity of the Redhill SAM to the north and the evidence recovered during the 2001 evaluation carried out by Birmingham Archaeology.*

*The watching brief suggests that the Romano-British occupation of Red Hill may extend a further 30m to the west of the known settlement.*

# RED HILL MARINA
# AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF, 2006.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In October 2006 Birmingham Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief of the groundworks in the field south of Redhill Farm (hereafter referred to as the site). The work was commissioned by Richard Morley of Red Hill Marine Ltd, during the excavation of a service cable for the present marina.

This report was prepared in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (IFA 1999).

## 2 LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

The site is located 1km to the north of Ratcliffe on Soar (centred on NGR SK 4492 3299) and 200m to the east of the River Soar (Fig.1). It comprises four fields within Red Hill Farm owned by Richard Morley Esq. The site lies to the north of the A453. To the east is the River Soar, which has its confluence with the River Trent approximately 500m to the north. The western side of the site is divided by a farm track which leads from the A543 to Red Hill Farm and Red Hill Marina. Further to the west is the Nottingham to London Railway line, with the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Red Hill approximately 20m to the north-east. (SAM Notts 141, SMR 500). The site is currently under pasture.

The geology of the site comprises mainly river terrace gravel deposits within the alluvial flood plain. On the higher ground the geology changes to Keuper marl particularly on a raised knoll on the eastern side of the site, and to the north on Red Hill itself.

## 3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The principle aim of the project was to assess the survival and potential significance of any archaeology within the study area.

More specific aims were to:

- Observe the depth of modern overburden.
- Identify and briefly characterise any alluvial deposits, and any paleochannels that might contain waterlogged deposits.
- Identify the changes in the underlying geology that might reflect the presence of past settlement.
- Identify any finds or settlement features revealed in section, either within archaeological features/deposits or as scatters within the overburden.
- Identify any made or disturbed ground.

This information will be used to develop strategies for future archaeological work on the site.

## 4 METHODOLOGY

Groundworks comprised the excavation of a service trench with a chain trencher, making the width of the trench 0.30m. This was monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist and complemented by the salvage recording of any archaeological deposits and features revealed during works.

All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present. A comprehensive written record was maintained using a continuous numbered context system on *pro-forma* context and feature cards. Photographs supplemented written records and scale plans and sections.

The full site archive includes all artefactual remains recovered from the site. The site archive will be prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage, 1991), the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage (UKIC, 1990) and Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological collections (Museum and Art Galleries Commission, 1992). The paper archive will be deposited with the appropriate repository subject to permission from the landowner.

## 5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

A desk-based assessment (Stephenson 1999) of the archaeological potential has already been carried out, prior to this evaluation. This section forms only a summary of the archaeological background.

A Mesolithic microlith recovered from the surface at Red Hill, and worked Neolithic and Bronze Age flints recovered nearby indicate early prehistoric activity. Neolithic stone axes have also been recorded locally, one close to the Soar and two from the Trent. A Bronze Age ditch has also been identified during the 2001 evaluation carried out by Birmingham Archaeology with a few scattered flint flakes being recovered from the topsoil (Cuttler 2001).

In the early 18$^{th}$ century human remains were unearthed during gypsum mining, and during the construction of the rail route along the eastern edge of the site further skeletal remains were revealed. The construction of a rail bridge over the Trent in 1895 produced the boss and spine from a rare Iron Age shield. From the 1950s onwards excavation work and systematic investigation by amateur archaeologists has generated further information about prehistoric and Romano-British activity at the site. A large amount of investigation has also been carried out by metal detectorists which has identified a spread of Romano-British material at the west side of the site.

Approximately 20m to the north of the site is the well documented Iron Age and Romano-British site of Red Hill, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM Notts 141, SMR 500). Red Hill is situated on high ground to the southeast of the confluence of the River Soar and the River Trent. It seems likely that this confluence was considered sacred during the Iron Age and was chosen for the site of a shrine, which was later adopted by the Romans for a temple. Work in the past few years has begun to suggest that the shrine may have encouraged the growth of a small Roman town to the south and west of the scheduled area.

The importance of the site is further illustrated by the proximity of two Roman roads. The first of these runs directly from the Trent near Sawley in a northwest direction to the fort and later settlement at Strutt's Park and Little Chester (Derby). It seems likely that it crossed the Trent and continued to Red Hill, although the exact location has not been identified. The Road

probably continued on from Red Hill to Vernemetum on the Fosse Way (Elsdon 1986). A second road (SMR 10) runs southwards along the west bank of the Soar to crossing at Kegworth and continues to Shepshed. The exact line of this road at Red Hill is not clear, but it seems likely that the road crossed to the east bank of the Soar somewhere north of the present A453, close to the site.

While artefacts thought to relate to the Roman military have previously been found at Red Hill, no clear defensive features relating to a camp or fortress have yet been discovered. The steep topography of the northern and western sides of Red Hill would have afforded a natural defence, the occupation of which would have controlled traffic on both the Soar and the Trent.

Excavations by Houldsworth on the site at Red Hill in the 1950s uncovered a Roman building which had been identified from aerial photographs (Houldsworth 1963). Fluted stone columns of red Mansfield sandstone were thought to be associated with the building he had excavated since he believed this was the only building on the site. Pottery from the 2nd to 4th centuries AD, a lead tablet and a 1st century AD burial were associated with the building. Further field walking found traces of tessera, hypocaust tiles, stone flooring, limestone rubble and diamond shaped Roman floor tiles (Elsdon 1982). Red Hill was further excavated by E. Greenfield in the summer of 1963 in advance of building works connected with the powerstation (Greenfield 1964).

Recent work at Red Hill has concentrated on the cliff side area over looking the River Soar (Reeves 1992), which confirmed the concentration of Roman activity. Within the site observations were made during excavations for electrical cable laying, along the line of the Red Hill Farm access track. Here deposits of possible Romano-British date were observed (JSAC 1998). Evaluation carried out in 2001 by Birmingham Archaeology revealed extensive remains of Romano-British occupation, including buildings, more akin to semi-urban deposits than rural settlement.

The probable remains of ridge and furrow relating to medieval or early post-medieval open field cultivation are visible on 1940s aerial photographs, aligned east-west (Stephenson 1999). An investigation into the proposed dualling of the A453 between Barton and the M1 also suggested the potential for a ring ditch between the area of the site and the A453 (Walker 1992).

## 6 RESULTS

**Plate 1**

**Plate 2**

A service trench 64m long by 0.30m wide was excavated to a depth of 0.68m across a field to the south-west of Redhill Farm on a south-west north-east orientation (Fig.2, Plate 1). The trench was too narrow to allow full recording or for the stratigraphy to be properly identified. The service was excavated using a chain trencher, which meant that deposits could only be observed once they had been excavated. The spoil heaps generated by the chain trencher produced sherds of Romano-British pottery with some fragments of human bone to the north-east end of the trench. As the trench progressed to the south-west this concentration diminished and the presence of a clay-rich alluvial deposit was observed.

To the north-east of the site, across the farm track, the trench continued and disturbed a dark brown silt-clay deposit 0.50m thick which contained abundant animal bone and Roman pottery (Plate 2). A lens of gravel was also observed which may be interpreted as a surface although it was only seen in one section.

These archaeological deposits were heavily truncated around the area of the farm track due to the presence of other service trenches. This truncation extended 2m to the south of the farm track and represents the only modern disturbance within the site.

## 7 FINDS

### 7.1 The Pottery by Shaun Carter

A total of 12 sherds were examined, all of which were dated to the Romano-British period. Six of the sherds were locally or regionally produced reduced wares, and six sherds had been produced at various locations nationally. The sherds spanned the majority of the Roman period, with the Little Chester wares dated to the early era up to 150 AD, whilst the Dales-Shelly wares were in production from 200 up until 380 AD. Those sherds that displayed diagnostic forms, were form bowl or jar vessels with the exception of the single mortarium sherd. Both coarse and fine fabrics were present together which would indicate that a demarcation between cooking and dining areas is unlikely to exist. The majority of the sherds displayed sharp edges indicating little disturbance post-depositionally.

In comparison with earlier studiesCarter 2004) on larger quantities of sherds from this site, the pattern of the fabric and form types can be seen to be identical. The earlier study showed that the local grey wares were the most common fabric type present, and this is repeated within the sherds here. Again, as has been noted in the previous study, both fine dining vessels and

coarse cooking wares appear to exist within the same areas. There would appear to be a lack of storage vessels within the sherds studied here, a pattern seen in the earlier pottery recording.

### 7.2 The Bone by Martin Smith

Fourteen fragments of bone were submitted for preliminary analysis. Of these, four fragments were identifiable as human whilst six fragments were clearly animal bone. The remaining four 'unidentified' fragments appear very likely to also be animal bone, although the possibility cannot be ruled out that one or more might be human. The definite human specimens consist of three, apparently adult cranial fragments, the largest of which measures 53.8 mm x 50mm, and the proximal end of a right humerus. The latter is large and robust and again clearly from an adult. The cortical surfaces of the human specimens are well preserved with no peeling or erosion (Grade 0-1 –Brickley and McKinley 2004, 16) and were this material part of a larger assemblage there is clear potential for analysis with recovery of good quality data.

A Home Office licence was obtained for the removal of human remains (licence no 07-0007).

## 8 CONCLUSIONS

The watching brief has confirmed that the Romano-British occupation continues to the west of the Scheduled Ancient Monument. The pottery recovered spans the early 1st-4th centuries AD in a range of fabrics and styles. This indicates substantial deposits that are rare for rural sites. Human bone was also recovered and although fragmentary was in good condition and indicates the presence of inhumations within the proposed development area. There were fewer finds towards the south-west end of the trench possibly indicating a maximum extent of the dryland settlement. The deposits became more clay-rich in the most south-westerly half of the site, as the trench disturbed the flood plain deposits. Although no more finds were recovered beyond this point, there is the possibility that evidence will be recovered for the exploitation of wetland resources along the flood plain, as seen in the Trent Valley (Krawiec 2006).

The service trench also continued to the east of the farm track. The dark brown deposit observed here contained large amounts of animal bone and pottery indicating the presence of features outside the development area with a possible gravel surface, possibly a road, observed in the section.

It seems clear that the settlement evidence recorded during the 2001 evaluation continues to the west and onto the edges of the flood plain of the River Soar. As the service trench was too narrow to inspect, the nature of the deposits could not be fully understood but shows the hich potential for archaeological deposits.

## 9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was commissioned by Richard Morley. Thanks are due to Richard Morley, Alan Palfreyman and Robert Williams of the Redhill Research Group for their co-operation and assistance throughout the project. Thanks go to the specialists Martin Smith and Shaun Carter. The watching brief was undertaken by Kristina Krawiec produced the written report. The report was edited by Richard Cuttler who also monitored the project for Birmingham Archaeology.

## 10 SOURCES

Brickley, M.B. and McKinley, J.I.(eds.) (2004) *Guidance to the Standards for Recording Human Remains* IFA Paper No.7.

Carter, S 2004 *Roman Pottery from the Excavations at Ratcliff- on-Soar, Nottinghamshire 2001. Dissertation for Practical Archaeology MA, Birmingham Archaeology*

Cuttler,R. 2001 *Land east of Redhill Far, Ratcliffe on Soar, Nottinghamshire: an archaeological evaluation 2001(BA report 829)*

Department of the Environment (DoE) 1990 *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning*

Elsdon, S. M. 1982 *Iron Age and Roman Sites at Red Hill, Ratcliffe-on-Soar, Nottinghamshire: Excavations of E. Greenfield, 1963 and Previous Finds. Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire no. 86.*

Greenfield, E. 1964 *Ratcliffe-on-Soar. East Midlands Archaeology Bulletin no. 7.*

Houldsworth, H. O. 1963 *The Roman Site at Red Hill, Ratcliffe-on-Soar, Nottinghamshire. Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire no 67.*

Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001 *Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

Krawiec, K. 2006. *An Archaeological Watching Brief at Shardlow Quarry, Derbyshire: phases 2-5 (BA report 1332)*

Reeves, P. 1992 *Report on the Evaluation at the Roman Site of Red Hill at Ratcliffe on Soar, Nottinghamshire. English Heritage Central Archaeology Service.*

Stephenson, B. 1999 *East Midlands Parkway, Ratcliffe-on-Soar, Nottinghamshire. Desk-Based Assessment. C. P. M. Environmental Planning and Design.*

Walker, J. 1992 *Archaeology of the A453. Implications of the Proposed Dualling of the A453 Between Barton and the M1. Trent and Peak Archaeological Trust.*

Williams, J. 2001. *Redhill Marina, Radcliffe on Soar, Nottingham. Proposal for rapid archaeological monitoring of geotechnical test pits.*

Fig.1

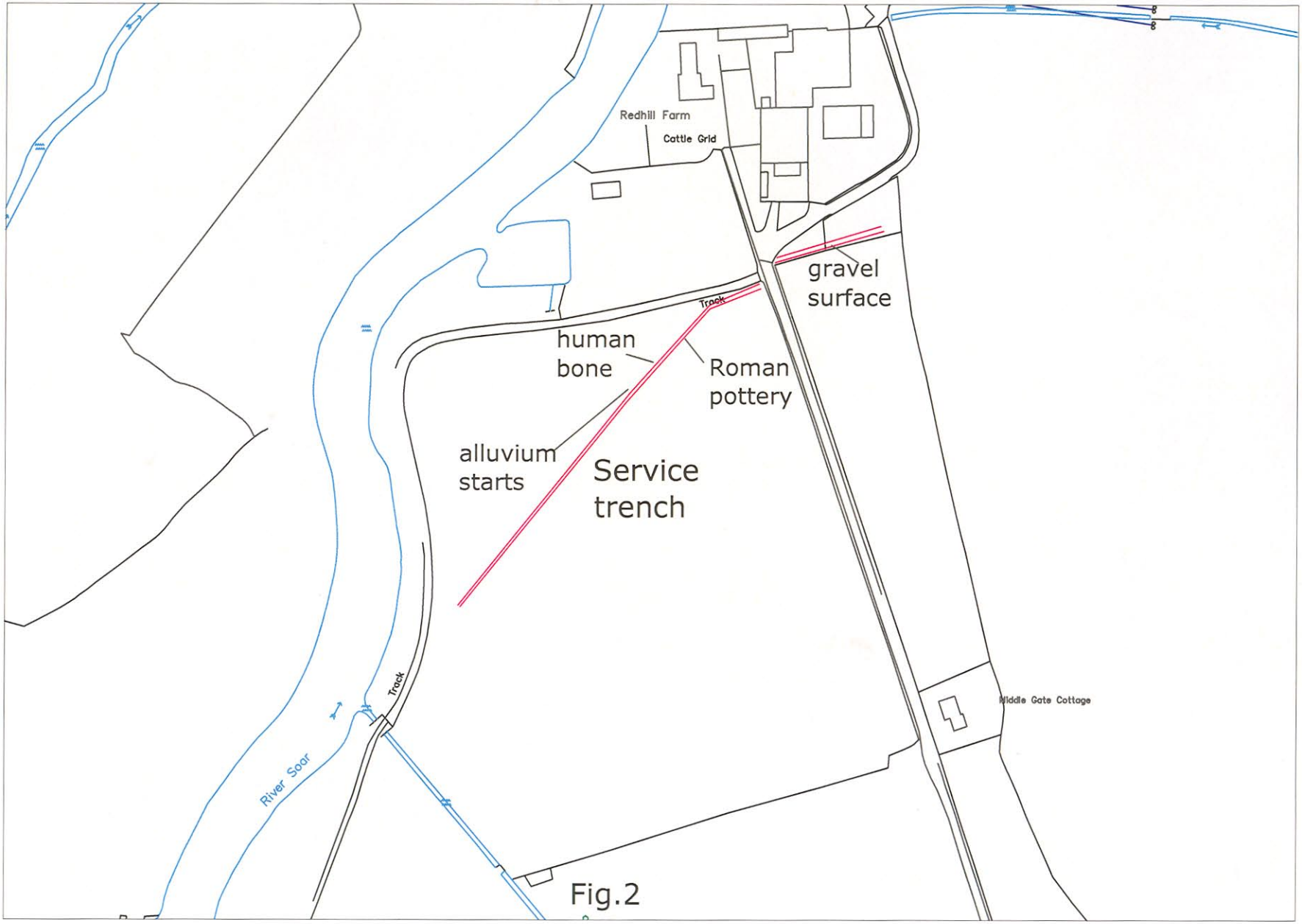
Redhill Farm
Cattle Grid
gravel surface
Track
human bone
Roman pottery
alluvium starts
Service trench
Track
River Soar
Middle Gate Cottage

Fig.2