



THE ARCHAEOLOGY CO.

Ribchester Playing Fields
Watching Brief

May 2021

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was a requirement of condition 4 of planning permission 3/2019/0823, to be carried out during the groundworks for the erection of a new football pavilion. Foundation trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 300mm. A rough cobbled surface was found to the south of the trench, likely an earlier footpath associated with the cemetery wall. The trench for services was excavated to a similar depth, with the northern end excavated to a depth of 600mm, where modern services were found. The excavation revealed no significant archaeology or artefacts.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Steven Price of The Archaeology Co. has been commissioned to perform a watching brief on the extension foundations. The condition 4 of Planning Application 3/2019/0823 states that:

No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agent or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological recording and analysis. This must be carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which shall first have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure and safeguard the recording and inspection of matters of archaeological/historical importance associated with the site.

2. SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The site lies on the southern side of Pope Croft which runs west from Church Street giving access to the tennis courts. The site lies between the tennis courts to the west and football pitch to the east. The site lies within the Ribchester Conservation Area and within the Scheduled Monument 'Ribchester Roman fort (Bremetennacum)' (list entry number 1005110). The site lies to the north of the fort itself, within the later military annex.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The purpose of a watching brief, as stated by the ClfA is:

- “to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, their presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works.
- To provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.” (ClfA 2014)

3.2 The results of a watching brief are used to produce a record of the location, nature and date of any archaeological remains encountered on the site. It also adds to the knowledge about the previous history of activity on the current site and its surroundings as well as providing information to influence future planning decisions in the area.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The project was carried out in accordance with the recommendations of The Management of Archaeological Projects 2nd ed. 1991 and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct.
- 4.2 Photographs were taken using a NIKON D70s. Where possible and safe, a 1 or 2m scale was used in the photographs.
- 4.3 The groundworks associated with the development commenced on the 10th of May 2021 when the archaeologist Paul Hickman attended to carry out the watching brief. Ground excavation was carried out with a toothless ditching bucket in level spits, with opportunities for archaeological observation. The attending archaeologist was able to direct the machine to stop to allow inspection, excavation and recording of potential archaeological features. The ground was stripped by 100mm with the trenches themselves being a further 200mm deep.
- 4.5 The assessment was carried out in accordance with the guidelines laid out by the Institute for Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Watching Briefs.

5. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The first known Roman activity was the building of a timber fort, believed to have been constructed around AD 72/3 by the 20th legion. At this time, it was a frontier post in a hostile territory and would have been surrounded by a clay rampart topped with a timber palisade. Around the rampart were defensive ditches. In the late 70s and early 80s AD Ribchester acted as a supply centre for armies to the north, as well as guarding the roads, and by the end of the first century, it was garrisoned by the Second Asturian Cavalry unit from northern Spain, about 500 men strong. In the first part of the second century, they were redeployed to Chesters Fort at Hadrian's Wall (Lancashire Past 2021).
- 5.2 The military annex area at this time extended to where the present day playing fields are now, including the subject site. A large number of timber buildings were built, associated with metal-working. Here metal goods were manufactured and sent to Hadrian's Wall (Lancashire Past 2021).
- 5.3 The fort was rebuilt in stone around 120-130 AD, under the supervision of the Sixth Legion from York. It remained a similar size to the previous one of just under six acres. By the mid-second century, an unusually large vicus had built up next to the fort, with metal- and leather-working workshops being abundant. There were also at least two temples. At the end of the second century, the military annex was abandoned and levelled. A dump of gravel and cobbles, some five feet thick, was then laid on top of the area, likely as a parade ground (Lancashire Past 2021).
- 5.4 The third century saw the defensive ditches reorganized, with the old ones filled in and a new wider one placed at a greater distance from the fort. The fort and bath house continued to be used into the late fourth century. During these latter days metal and glass production took place within the fort, which was unusual, as such work was usually restricted to the vicus or military annex rather than within a fort itself (Lancashire Past 2021).
- 5.5 After the withdrawal of the Roman Army the land was left and the fort fell to ruins. An official of King Henry VIII's, John Leland, described it in the 16th century, noting

“Great squarid stones, vaultes, and antiques coyness be found ther” (Lancashire Past 2021).

- 5.6 The land became agricultural in the post-medieval period, as suggested by the field boundaries. These boundaries are fairly regular and rectangular suggesting that they were formed by the post medieval enclosures act (Adkins et al. 2008; Baker & Butlin 1973). Historic mapping shows these boundaries, and the site as an open field throughout this period to present day.

6. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The foundation trenches revealed a dark brown loam subsoil (02) at the base of the trench, c. 200mm in depth, below the 100mm deep topsoil (01). At the southern end, close to the cemetery wall, a small patch of rounded cobbles (03), were found within (02), c. 100mm in size. No other archaeology or artefacts were found.
- 6.2 The service trench ran northwest from the existing pavilion at a depth of 300mm, with the same contexts as above. At the northwestern end the trench was widened and went to a depth of 600mm for a new manhole chamber, directly adjacent to an older one. This showed a similar context to (02) to the base of the trench, although containing more medium sized stones (c. 200mm) with modern services at the base. No archaeology or artefacts were found.
- 6.3 No evidence of Roman archaeology was found. The cobbles (03) likely represent the remains of a former footpath running along the outside of the cemetery wall, below the modern flagged footpath.

7. ARCHIVE

- 7.1 The results of the archaeological investigation form the basis of a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current Historic England guidelines (“The Management of Archaeological Projects”, 2nd edition, 1991), the “Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage” (UKIC 1990), and current ClfA “standards and guidance for the creation, compilation, transportation and deposition of archaeological archive” (published October 2009). The project archive represents the collation and indexing of all the data and material gathered during the course of the project. The deposition of a properly ordered and indexed project archive in an appropriate repository is considered an essential and integral element of all archaeological projects by the ClfA in that organisation’s code of conduct.
- 7.2 The archive will be deposited with ADS, including a digital copy of the report as well as associated photographs. A copy of the final report will also be deposited with the Lancashire Historic Environment Record in PDF/a format as well as Mr A P Davison at Historic England within 3 months of the completion of the works.

8. COPYRIGHT

- 8.1 Full copyright of this commissioned report and other project documents shall be retained by the author of the report under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbreviations

CIfA	Chartered Institute for archaeologists
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
OS	Ordnance Survey

Literature

Adkins, R, Adkins, L and Leitch, V. 2008 "The Handbook of British Archaeology"

Baker, A.R.H and Butlin, R.A. 1973 "Studies of Field Systems in the British Isles"

CIfA (2009) "Standards and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transportation and Deposition of Archaeological Archive"

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FAME 2016 "Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employees Health and Safety Manual"

Historic England (1991) "Management of Archaeological Projects"

Lancashire Past 2021 <https://lancashirepast.com/2020/08/08/ribchester-roman-fort-ribchester/>

NPPF (2012) "National Planning Policy Framework"

UKIC 1990 "Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage"

Maps

1847 OS map 1:10,000 scale Lancs. Sheet LIV

1893 OS map 1:2500 scale Lancs. Sheet LIV.14

1910 OS map 1:2500 scale Lancs. Sheet LIV.14

Appendix 1: Figures



Figure 1: Location plan (OS Licence Number: 100057911)

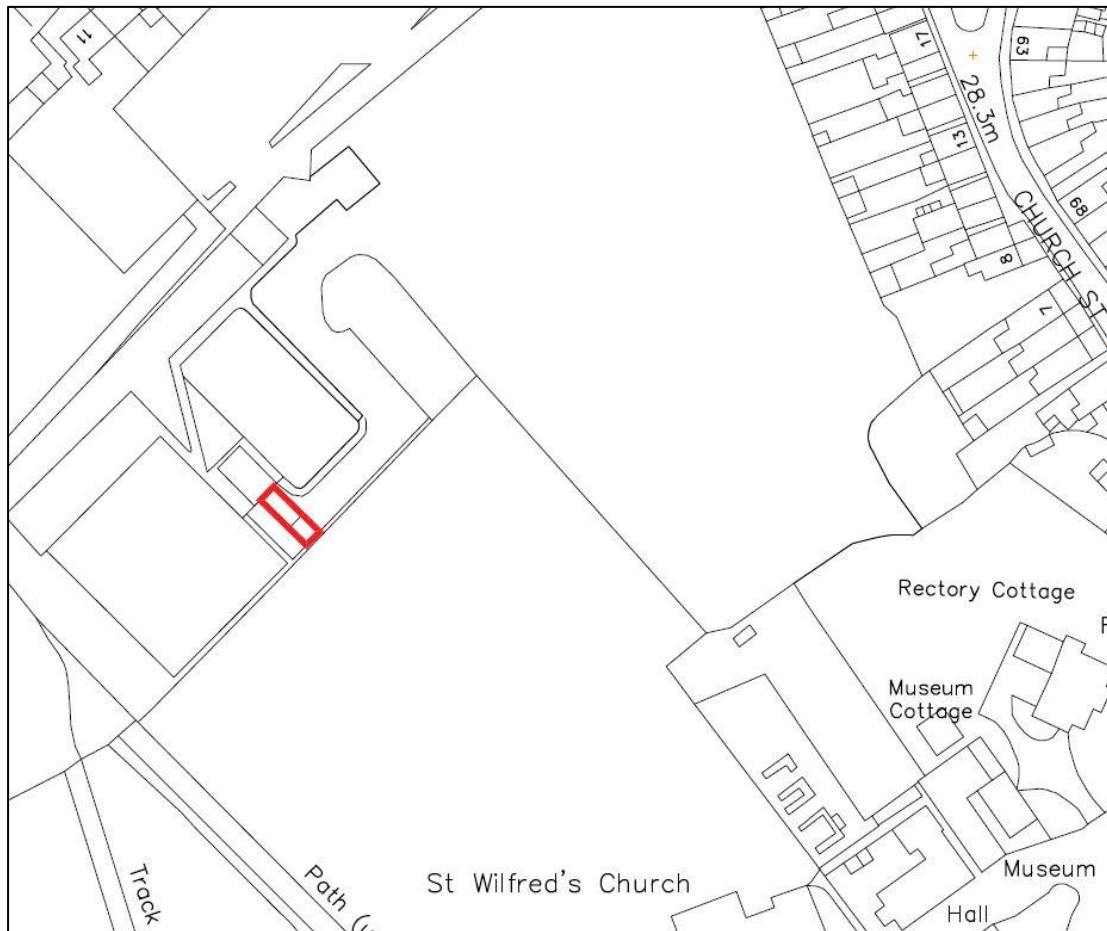


Figure 2: Site plan



Figure 3: 1847 OS map 1:10,000 scale Lancs. Sheet LIV (Courtesy of Lancashire Archives)

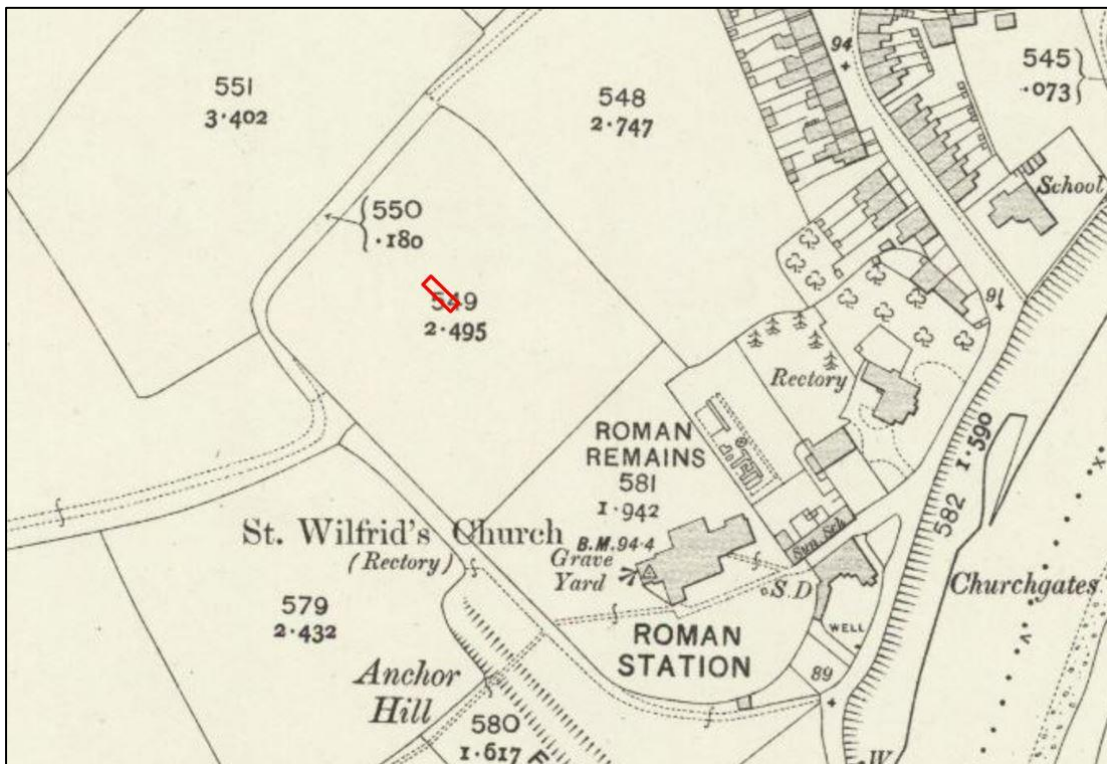


Figure 4: 1893 OS map 1:2,500 scale Lancs. Sheet LIV.14 (Courtesy of Lancashire Archives)

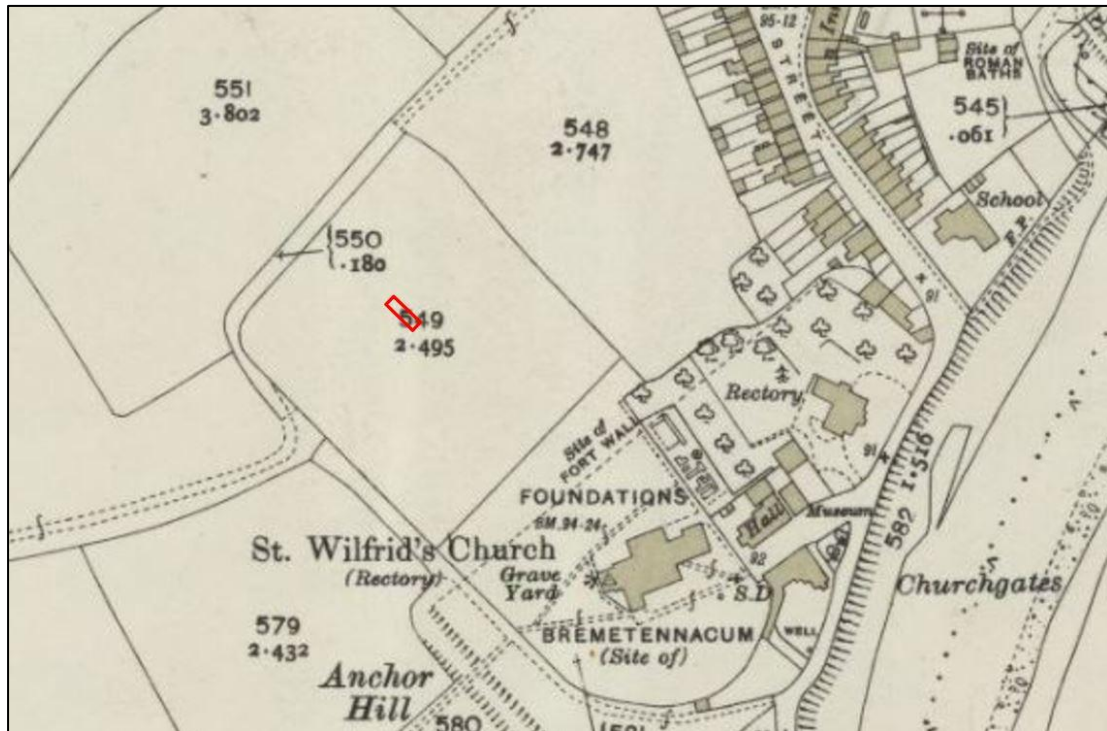
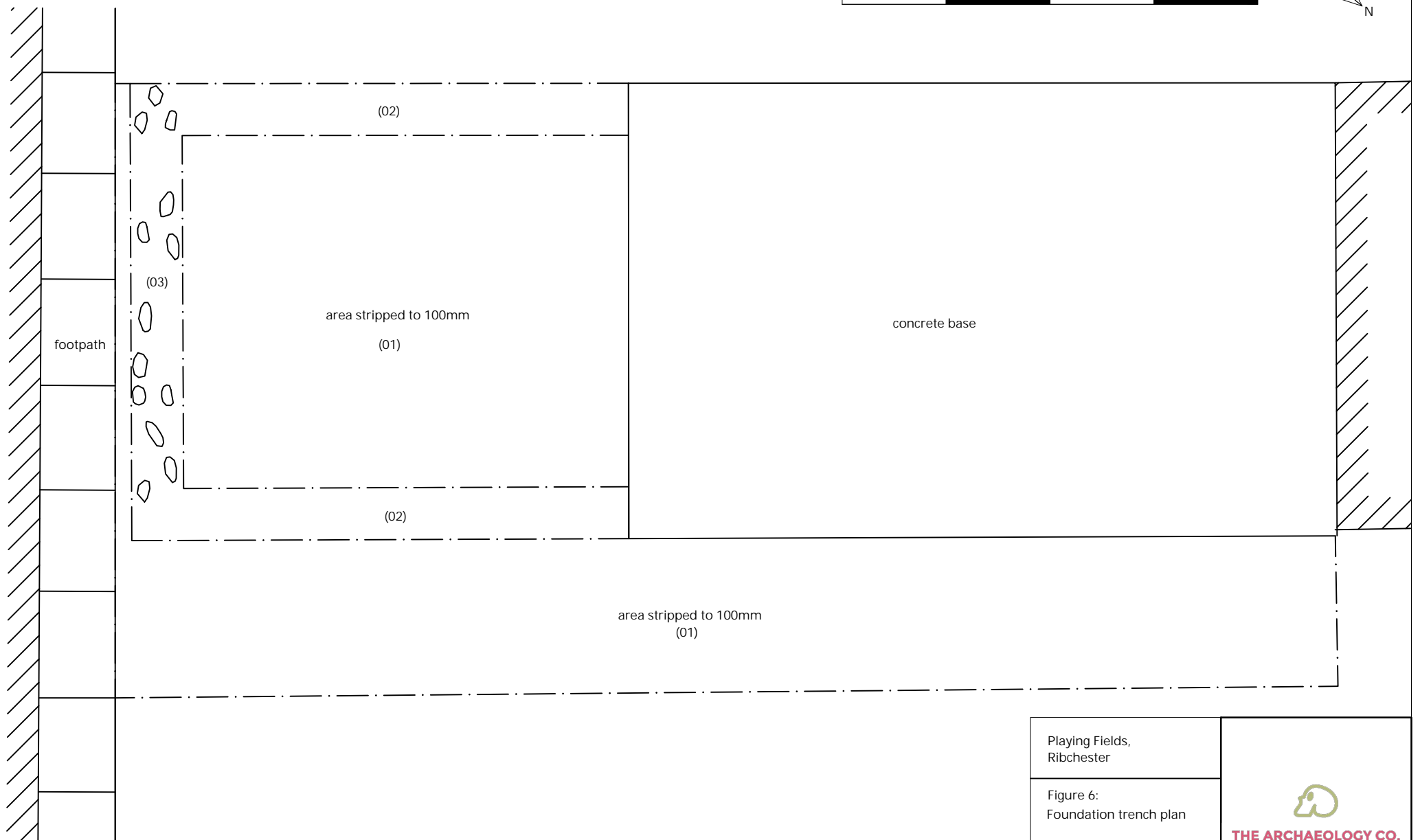
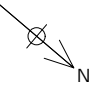
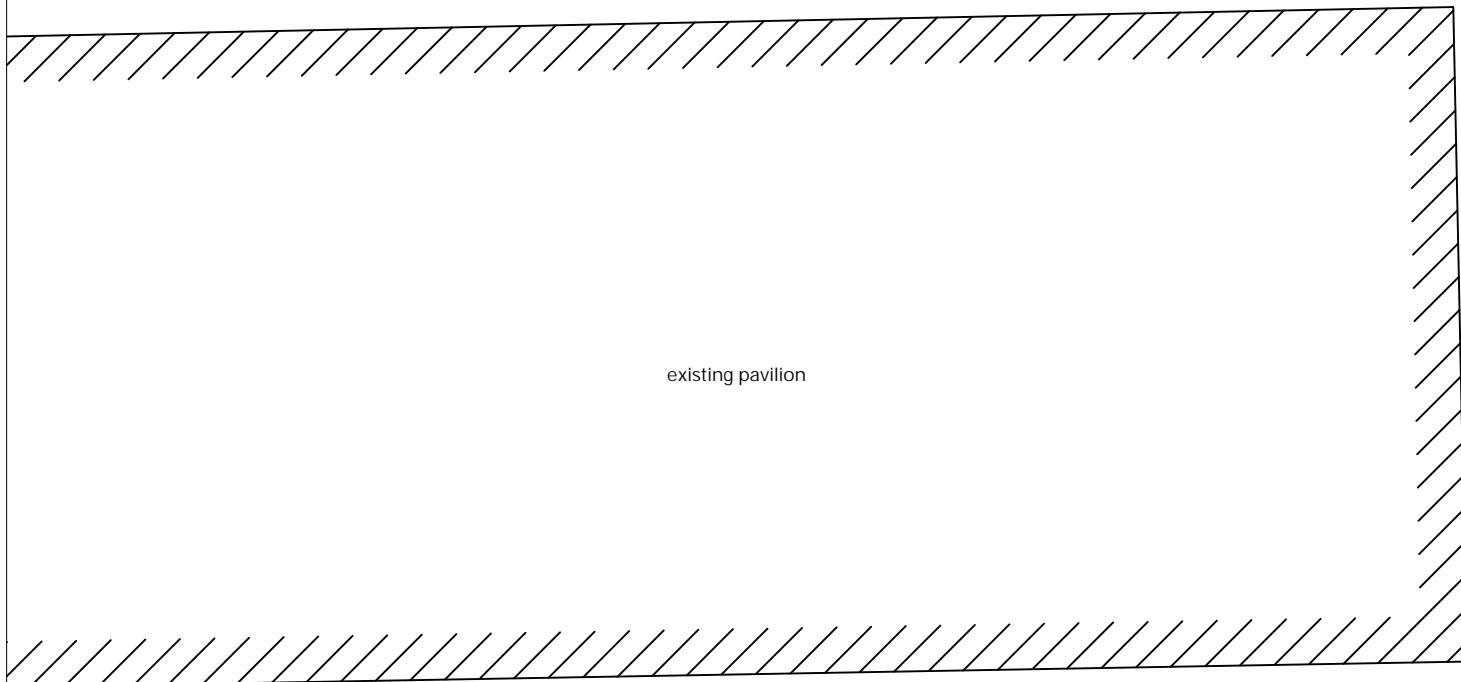
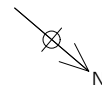


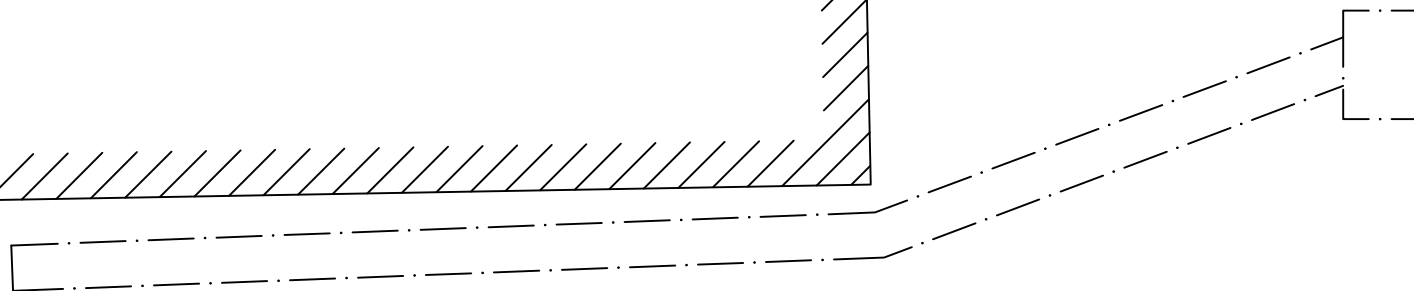
Figure 5: 1910 OS map 1:2500 scale Lancs. Sheet LIV.14 (Courtesy of Lancashire Archives)




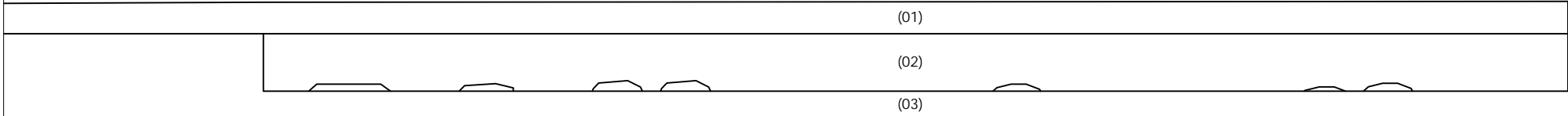
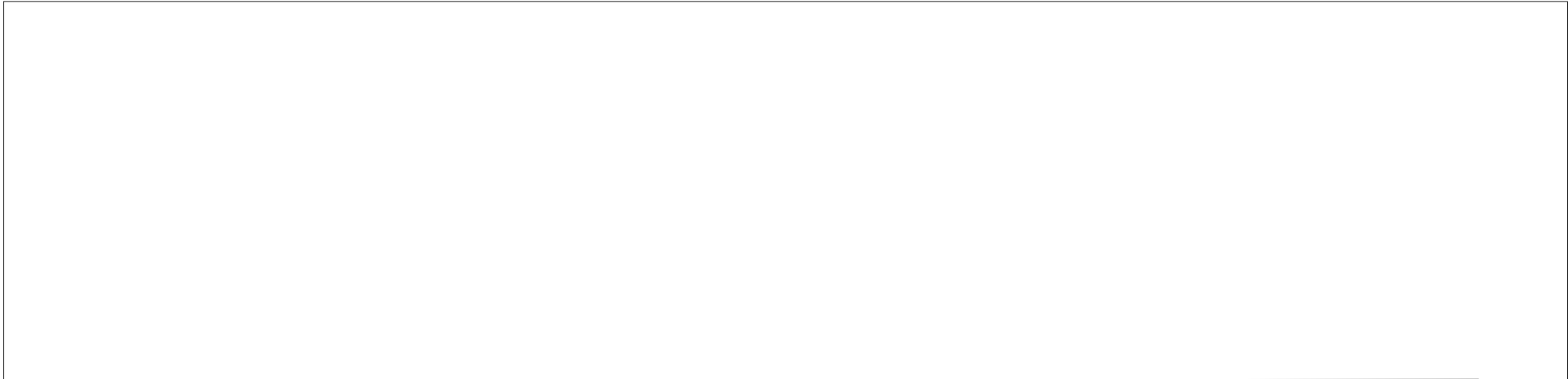
Playing Fields, Ribchester	 THE ARCHAEOLOGY CO. steven@thearchaeologyco.uk 07803202689
Figure 6: Foundation trench plan	
Scale: 1:50	
Date: May 2021	



existing pavilion



Playing Fields, Ribchester	 THE ARCHAEOLOGY CO. steven@thearchaeologyco.uk 07803202689
Figure 7: Services trench plan	
Scale: 1:50	
Date: May 2021	



Playing Fields, Ribchester	 THE ARCHAEOLOGY CO. steven@thearchaeologyco.uk 07803202689
Figure 8: Northwest facing section	
Scale: 1:20	
Date: May 2021	

Appendix 2: Plates



Plate 1: General shot of foundation trenches and stripped area



Plate 2: East trench facing north



Plate 3: East trench facing south



Plate 4: West trench facing north



Plate 5: South trench facing east



Plate 6: Detail of cobbles (03) in south trench



Plate 7: Service trench facing north



Plate 8: Manhole chamber facing north



Plate 9: Manhole chamber facing south