

ZOOC/01



CHESTER ZOO ISLANDS PROJECT

Archaeological Mitigation Works

commissioned by Laing O'Rourke

09/10257/FUL

February 2014

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HA Job no.: Z00C/01

HAS no.: 1004

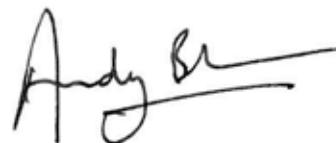
NGR: SJ 4095 6989

Local authority: Cheshire West & Chester County Council

OASIS ref.: headland3-160550

Accession no.: CHEGM-2013-013

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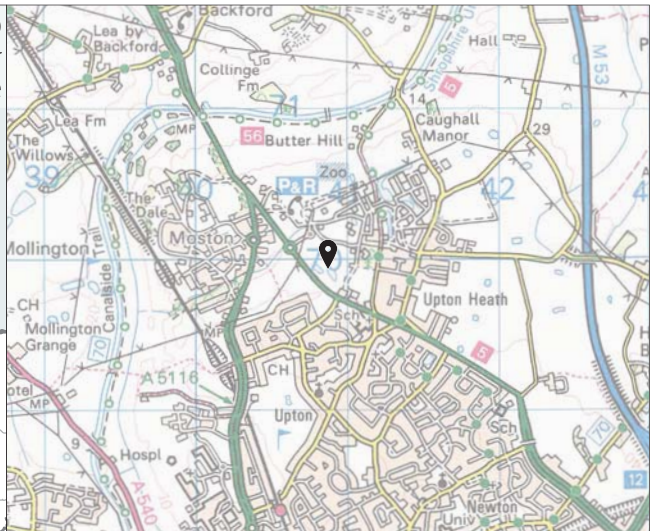
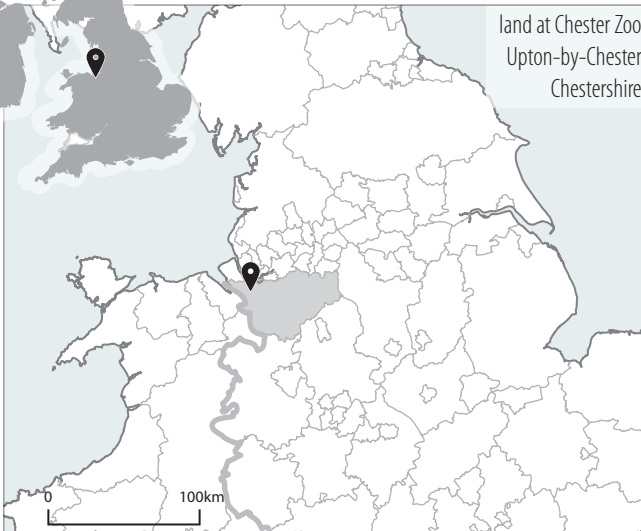


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scale 1:3,500 @ A4



0 150m

Illus 1

Site location

CHESTER ZOO ISLANDS PROJECT

Archaeological Mitigation Works

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd carried out a sample stripping exercise, on a site which lies outside the southern boundary of the current Chester Zoo site, as part of the Chester Zoo Islands Project. A total of 42 investigative strips were excavated across the site in order to establish the presence or absence of archaeology, and more specifically Roman practice camps. Three linear features were discovered each with a U-shaped profile and a single fill. Feature [106] contained pottery of possible Roman date within it. These features may indicate evidence for a Roman field system that extended into the western part of the development area.

1 INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd carried out an archaeological field project on a site which lies outside the southern boundary of the current Chester Zoo site. Planning permission was granted for a large-scale extension to the amenities provided by Chester Zoo in the form of a themed island development with associated waterways, seven new display areas and associated infrastructure, a water ride and pumping station.

A mitigation design proposed in a Written Scheme of Investigation, produced by AECOM (2013), covered the entire scheme and developed a general scope for the methods of mitigating impacts on buried archaeology. The initial intention was that areas of the site would be stripped and subsequently inspected on a weekly basis by the project archaeologist (in this case from Headland Archaeology). Should archaeology be discovered then a meeting would take place to establish further mitigation measures.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is centred on grid reference SJ 4095 6989 and lies to the south of the main Chester Zoo complex. The area contains a number of pond features, roads buildings and varying levels of vegetation – some of which is to be retained.

The site is underlain by Chester Pebble Beds formation and Sandstones. The superficial geology is boulder clay or glacially deposited clays (AECOM).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The town of Chester was originally founded as a Roman legionary fort, completed around AD79 and occupied until around AD410 (Crosby 1996), and developed into a thriving Roman urban centre. The development site is located c 5 miles north-east of Chester town centre.

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken for the Heart of Africa development as part of the wider development of the zoo which incorporated this site in the baseline conditions. This encompassed information from a radius of 1km around the perimeter of the zoo. The EIA identified Roman activity in the area including five Roman practice camps to the east of the site, all of which are Scheduled Monuments (SAM 25726). The marching camps consist of a square shaped enclosure demarcated by a c 1.5m deep ditch. The camps generally enclose an area of c 1.5 ha. Two Roman find spots of coins were also discovered within the study area.

Early medieval as well as post-medieval and modern activity (relating to World War II) is present within vicinity of the site.

A geophysical survey was undertaken using fluxgate Gradiometry in 2013 (Harrison). The results of the survey were inconclusive due to background noise caused by heavy disturbance from rutting and ferrous material.

4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The specific aims of the project were:

- to establish a working method and train the main contractor and their staff to operate in a manner that would enable archaeological remains to be identified and recorded.
- to undertake occasional monitoring of the site to establish the presence or absence of archaeological features/deposits.
- to sample, record and report on any archaeological features or finds exposed.

5 METHOD

Prior to commencement of the site work the scope of the field methodology was further refined through discussions between the archaeological advisor for the planning authority, the client (Laing O'Rourke) and the archaeological contractor (Headland Archaeology). A variation to the proposed methodology was agreed whereby top soil could be removed without the need for subsequent monitoring using bulldozers. Following this a 360° tracked excavator was used to strip the upper part of the sub-soil under archaeological supervision across areas affected by the proposals. Where archaeological features were uncovered areas around them were extended or further strips undertaken, and features sampled and recorded.

Prior to the main contractor commencing groundworks on site a toolbox talk was given to the plant operators regarding the potential presence of archaeology on site as well as the specific roles and responsibilities of archaeologists and construction workers on this project.

The removal of the overburden across the site was undertaken by the contractors own plant. The initial overburden strip was removed using tracked bulldozers, as referred to above. A non-tracking policy was adopted, whereby the plant could not track over stripped areas until they were subsequently cleared by an archaeologist.

Final stripping of the upper part of subsoil or lower part of top soil was undertaken using a tracked back acting mechanical excavator, fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless grading bucket, under the supervision of an archaeologist, until the first archaeological horizon was encountered. Targeted investigative strips were excavated, c1.8m wide, across areas that would be significantly impacted upon by the construction work and therefore put underlying archaeology at risk. These mainly included areas of cutting, and not those targeted for fill or making up as part of the landscaping for the project.

All recording followed IfA Standards and Guidance for conducting archaeological evaluations and watching briefs. All contexts, small finds and environmental samples were given unique numbers. All recording was undertaken on pro forma record cards. 35mm colour transparencies and black-and-white prints were taken with a graduated metric scale clearly visible. Digital images were taken for illustrative purposes.

A site plan including all identified features, areas of excavation and other pertinent information was recorded digitally. The site plan was accurately linked to the National Grid and heights to OD. Digital

recording was undertaken using a differential GPS. Where necessary, plans and sections of features were hand-drawn on permatrace at an appropriate scale (1:20 or 1:50 for plans and 1:10 for sections) and tied into the national grid using the dGPS.

The results of the site work form the basis of this site report. The resulting archive (finds and records) will be organised and deposited with Grosvenor Museum in consultation with the client and the current land owner to facilitate access for future research and interpretation for public benefit.

6 RESULTS

A total of 42 investigative strips (loosely termed trenches) were excavated across the site (**Illus 2**). The strips vary in length from 162m to 17m (See Appendix 1 for trench details). As an aid to the explanation and the location of trenches and features, the site was divided into Areas 1–3 (See **Illus 1**).

The stratigraphy across site was generally consistent, with similar deposits observed in most of the strips. The earliest geological deposit encountered was a mid yellow brown clay [102] with natural patches of variation, in the form of light pink brown clay, within it. Above this a silty clay subsoil [101] was encountered with post-medieval/modern material in it. This was sealed by silty loam topsoil [100].

The initial site strip undertaken by the bulldozers completely removed the topsoil [100] and the majority of the subsoil [101]. When the investigative strips were inserted across the site using the mechanical excavator, the remaining subsoil was removed up to a remaining depth of between c. 0.2m–0.3m. In Area 3, in the vicinity of strips 40–41, the soil was stripped by the bulldozers down to the natural geological deposit [102]. The area gradually sloped south-eastwards and the subsoil depths appear to have varied which may account for the cutting to the level of lower geological deposits in this part of the site.

In general the method employed by removing the upper topsoil and the majority of the subsoil deposits using a bulldozer was effective. The removal of the overburden significantly reduced the depth of deposits, therefore allowed many more investigative strips to be excavated within the available time frames than might otherwise have been the case. This allowed the development to proceed without undue delay whilst still affording protection to the value of any unknown heritage assets.

6.1 Area 1

In total 12 investigative strips were inserted within Area 1. No archaeological deposits were encountered.

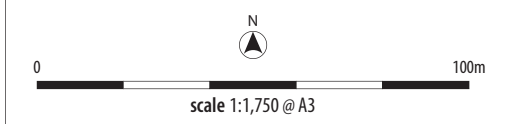
6.2 Area 2

A total of 20 investigative strips were dug within Area 2 and two potential archaeological features were encountered.

A linear feature [103] measuring 28m x 2.2m x 0.4m, was observed transecting strips 2–5, in an east-west direction. An attempt was made



- KEY**
- site boundary
 - trench
 - ▬ Roman field boundary
 - slot



Illus 2
Trench and slot locations

Illus 3

General site shot showing trenches at NW corner of site



Illus 4

Roman field boundary [105] Trench 37, Slot 1

Illus 5

NE facing section of [105] Trench 37, Slot 1



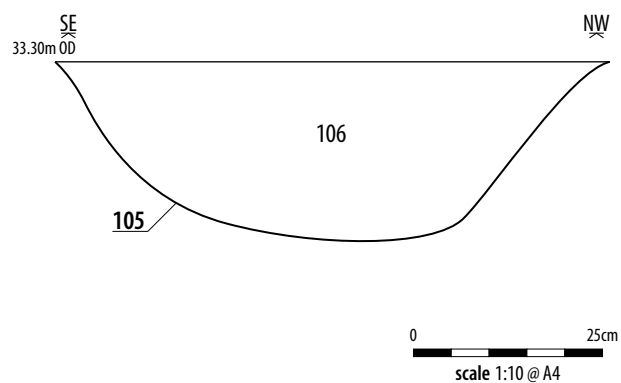
to follow this feature at both ends; however it did not seem to continue further across the site. An investigative slot Slot 5 was excavated across the ditch/gulley revealing a flat base with steep sides (Illus 9). The shallow nature of this linear feature suggests that it may represent a former field boundary or holloway. No datable evidence was recovered from its fills.

Another narrower feature [107] was also discovered within Area 2. This feature was observed crossing strips 30–31 in a north-west to south-east direction. The feature was 4.5m x 0.75m x 0.16m and seemed to disappear towards the south-east, beyond strip 30. A large tree prevented this feature being followed any further towards the north-east. An investigative slot Slot 4 was dug across the ditch/gulley. A dark/mid brown/grey clay fill [108] was observed within the bowl shaped, uneven, flat base of the feature (Illus 8). No datable evidence was recovered.

6.3 Area 3

In total 10 investigative strips were dug within Area 3. Two linear features [105 & 109] were observed in the north-west corner of Area 3.

The first, [105], was a linear feature which ran in a north-east to south-west direction across strips 22–25, measuring 49m x 0.54m x 0.29m (Illus 4 and 5). An investigative slot Slot 1 was inserted within [105] revealing a single dark brown grey fill [106] and a U-shaped profile with a flat base (See Illus 4). Pottery and Ceramic Building Material was recovered from within [106] and was given a probable Roman date, but the condition of the surviving material hindered any definitive conclusions (see Appendix 2). A strip was excavated along the length of the feature to determine its extent, and the presence of other linear features branching from it. An off-shoot was encountered [109] which ran south-westerly from [105], and terminated in the region of the lake.



The linear off-shoot [109], 28m x 0.52m x 0.17m, is similar to [105], although slightly shallower.



Illus 6

Slot 2 at intersection of [105 & 109], looking NE



Illus 7

Slot 3 [109], NW facing section



Illus 8

Slot 4 [107], SE facing section

The shallowness may be related to agricultural activity of a later period within the area having eroded the upper part of the soil profile here. An investigative slot Slot 3 (**Illus 7**) was inserted across [109] revealing a fill [110] and a similar U-shaped profile with a flat base to that seen in [105].

An L-shaped investigative slot Slot 2 was inserted at the intersection of [105 & 109] in order to determine their relationship (**Illus 6**). However, the relationship between the features could not be determined as the both fills [106 & 110] were very similar. This suggests that both [105 & 109] may filled contemporaneously i.e. they were both dug and filled in roughly around the same period.

Pottery found within [106] is likely to be Roman in origin. The linear features [105 & 109] within Area 3, and [107] in Area 2 may represent a Roman field system.

Soil samples were floated and sieved from the excavated sections of the features however they did not contain any carbonised remains or any other environmental material.

7 DISCUSSION

A number of linear features were observed on site. Features [105, 107 & 109] all have a similar appearance being linear in nature, with similar single fills, flat bases and U-shaped profiles. Feature [105], within Area 3, continued up to the edge of the site boundary and seemed to extend beyond this. It is not know how much further north-east this extended as the area beyond strip 37 was not under threat of disturbance as a result of the proposed construction work, and therefore investigation ceased at this point. Feature [107], on the other hand, became shallower and faded out as it continued to the south-east. The area may have been disturbed by post-medieval/modern agricultural activity therefore removing any further presence of the field system within Area 2.

Illus 9
Slot 5 [103]



Consideration of the dating of these features relies on a number of disparate pieces of information. Tithe maps of the area from 1836–51 do not show any field systems that correlate with the linear features found on site indicating they are earlier than 1836. Similar linear features were discovered during an Archaeological Evaluation at Saighton Camp, Chester (ECH5452: Northern Archaeological Associates 2006). The features observed on this site were described as flat-bottomed or shallow U-shaped gullies, measuring 64m x 0.19m x 0.32m, all with a single fill, and were sealed by early medieval deposits. Although no dating evidence was recovered from within these gullies, it was assumed that they were part of an Iron Age or Romano-British field system.

Pottery retrieved from [105] suggests a Roman date and given the similarity of the features it is a strong possibility that they form part of a contemporaneous set of land divisions dating to this period. The nature of these features suggests a Roman field system extended into the western part of the development area. There was no evidence observed indicating that the field system extended beyond the north-west corner of Area 3 and the mid-western side of Area 2.

Feature [103] was observed on the eastern side of Area 2 and is likely to represent a post-medieval field boundary or holloway. Whilst it was considered it is not likely that [103] represents evidence for a Roman marching camp within the area as the ditches associated with these camps are c.1.5m deep and [103] was only 0.4m deep.

A small lake feature was indicated as being present in Area 3 in 1836; however the present lake features located in Area 1 and the larger lake in Area 3 are not indicated on the Tithe Maps which suggests they are a later addition to the landscape. Any archaeology present within the area of the lakes would therefore have been destroyed as a result of their construction.

8 CONCLUSION

The programme of archaeological work indicates that there was very little archaeological activity in the area of the proposals. The method used to strip the site did not seem to damage the underlying archaeological features where they occurred and was an efficient and effective means of undertaking the mitigation for buried cultural heritage. No evidence for Roman marching camps was identified, however, evidence for a possible Roman field system was uncovered on the western side of the site which adds to our knowledge of Roman activity and land use in the Chester area.

9 REFERENCES

9.1 Bibliography

Northern Archaeological Associates 2006 *Saighton Camp, Chester. Phase 1 Development; Archaeological Evaluation Report* Northern Archaeological Associates (ECH5452) unpublished report.

Crosby, A 1996 *A History of Cheshire* Phillimore & Co Ltd: London

Harrison, D 2013 *Land South of Chester Zoo, Upton-by-Chester, Cheshire; Geophysical Survey* Leeds Archaeological Services WYAS unpublished report.

9.2 Online sources

Cheshire Archives & Local Studies *Tithe Maps 1836–51* <http://maps.cheshire.gov.uk/tithemaps/TwinMaps.aspx?township=EDT_96-2> Accessed: 08.2013

English Heritage *SAM 25726* <<http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1014376>> Accessed: 08.2013

10 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Site registers

Appendix 1.1 Trench register

Trench	Length (m)	Width (m)	Av. Depth (m)
01	17	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
02	55	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
03	54	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
04	55.5	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
05	56	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
06	73.5	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
07	34.6	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
08	44.5	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
09	36	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
10	50	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
11	44	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
12	86	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
13	108	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
14	52.6	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
15	43.5	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
16	46.9	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
17	39.5	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
18	32.5	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
19	101	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
20	27.7	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
21	17.7	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
22	105.4	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
23	103.9	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
24	46.4	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
25	22.7	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
26	162	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
27	25.8	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
28	61.5	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
29	72.5	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
30	64.4	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
31	40	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
32	39	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
33	45.8	1.8	c.0.2–0.3

Trench	Length (m)	Width (m)	Av. Depth (m)
34	54.1	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
35	21	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
36	27.5	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
37	49.9	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
38	40.8	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
39	21	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
40	51.7	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
41	27	1.8	c.0.2–0.3
42	70	1.8	c.0.2–0.3

Appendix 1.2 Context register

Context	Description	Dimensions(m)
100	Topsoil – a mid grey brown silty loam	D: 0.27
101	Subsoil – Mid Grey Brown silty clay	D: c.0.18
102	Natural – Mid yellow brown compact clay	–
103	Cut of modern field boundary or Holloway – fill [104]	W: 2.2; D: 0.4
104	Fill of [103] – field boundary or holloway	W: 2.2; D: 0.4
105	Cut of field boundary – filled by [106]	L: 49; W: 0.54; D: 0.29
106	Fill of [105] field boundary	–
107	Cut of field boundary – filled by [108]	L: 4.5; W: 0.75; D: 0.16
108	Fill of [107] field boundary	–
109	Cut of field boundary – filled by [110]	–
110	Fill of [109] field boundary	–

Appendix 1.3 Photographic register

Site visits 13/08/2013 – 23/08/2013

Photo	C/S #798	B/W #810	Digital	Direction facing	Description
01	36	01	01	–	ID Shot
02	35	02	02	E	W facing section(strip at E end of feature)
03	34	03	03	E	W facing section(strip at E end of feature)
04	33	04	04	N	N part of Tr 01
05	32	05	05	N	N part of Tr 03
06	31	06	06	N	N part of Tr 04
07	–	–	07	N	Tr 04
08	–	–	08	NW	Tr 04 – extension following [103] to the W
09	–	–	09	N	Tr 03

Photo	C/S #798	B/W #810	Digital	Direction facing	Description
10	–	–	10	N	Tr 02
11	–	–	11	S	Land drain within Tr 02
12	–	–	12	N	Tr 02 – S facing section
13	–	–	13	SW	Tr 04 – [103]
14	–	–	14	N	Tr 05
15	–	–	15	W	E facing section – Tr 05
16	–	–	16	W	E facing section – Tr 05
17	–	–	17	W	Tr 03 – E facing section
18	–	–	18	W	Tr 03 – E facing section
19	30	7	19	W	[103] within Tr 03
20	29	8	20	W	[103] within Tr 03
21	–	–	21	SW	Land drain in Tr 03
22	–	–	22	S	Land drain in Tr 03
23	–	–	23	SE	Land drain in Tr 03
24	28	9	24	W	Tr 02 – [103] in section
25	27		25	E	Tr 02 – [103] with slot in background
26	–		26	SE	S of pond area Tr 08
27	–	–	27	SE	S of pond area Tr 07
28	–	–	28	W	Tr 01–05 with trenches by pond in foreground
29	–	–	29	W	Tr 01–05 with trenches by pond in foreground
30	–	–	30	NW	Tr 01–05 with trenches by pond in foreground
31	–	–	31	E	Trenches to N of pond in NE corner of site
32	–	–	32	SE	Trenches to S of pond in NE corner of site
33	–	–	33	E	Trenches to N of pond in NE corner of site
34	–	–	34	E	Trenches to N of pond in NE corner of site
35	–	–	35	–	On site – general shot
36	–	–	36	NE	Natural features – clay/gravel deposits
37	26	10	37	W	Section through pond feature Tr 013
38	25	11	38	S	Section through pond feature Tr 013
39	24	12	39	S	Tr 19
40	23	13	40	S	Tr 20
41	22	14	41	W	Tr 21
42	21	15	42	N	Tr 09
43	20	16	43	S	Tr 13
44	19	17	44	S	Tr 12
45	18	18	45	S	Tr 12 – channel feeding pond

Photo	C/S #798	B/W #810	Digital	Direction facing	Description
46	17	19	46	S	Tr 10
47	16	20	47	NW	Tr 011
48	15	21	48	NW	Tr 014
49	14	22	49	NE	pond feature
50	13	23	50	S	Tr 015
51	12	24	51		Tr 016
52	11	25	52		Tr 017
53	10	26	53		Tr 018

Site visits 02/09/2013 – 06/09/2013

Photo	C/S #802	B/W #811	Digital	Direction facing	Description
1	36	1	1	–	ID Shot
2	35	2	2	N	Tr 22
3	–	–	3	N	General shot
4	34	3	4	W	[105] E facing section
5	33	4	5	S	[105] – machine dug slot
6	32	5	6	S	Tr 23
7	31	6	7	S	Tr 23 [105]
8	30	7	8	S	Tr 24
9	29	8	9	S	Tr 24 [105]
10	28	9	10	S	Tr 25
11	27	10	11	S	Tr 25 [105]
12	26	11	12	N	Tr 26
13	25	12	13	NE	Tr 27
14	–	–	14	N	Tr 28
15	–	–	15	N	Tr 29 (end of day, half of trench dug)
16	24	13	16	NW	Tr 30 [107] SE facing section
17	23	14	17	NW	Tr 30 [107] SE facing section
18	22	15	18	N	Tr 30
19	21	16	19	N	Tr 29
20	20	17	20	NW	Tr 33
21	19	18	21	N	Tr 32
22	18		22	N	Tr 30 [107]
23	17	19	23	E	Tr 34
24	16	20	24	SE	Tr 35
25	15	21	25	N	Tr 36
26	–	–	26		Tr 37 Slot 1 [105]
27	14	22	27	W	Tr 37 Slot 1 [105]

Photo	C/S #802	B/W #811	Digital	Direction facing	Description
28	13	23	28	W	Tr 37 L-shaped slot in [105 & 109] intersection. Slot 2
29	12	24	29	N	Tr 37 L-shaped slot in [105 & 109] intersection. Slot 2
30	11	25	30	E	Tr 37 L-shaped slot in [105 & 109] intersection. Slot 2
31	10	26	31	W	Tr 39 [109], slot 3
32	09	27	32	S	Tr 39 [109], slot 3-N facing section
33	–	–	33	NW	Tr 41
34	–	–	34	NW	Tr 40
35	–	–	35	W	Tr 42
36	–	–	36	W	Tr 38 [109]
37	–	–	37	W	Tr 39 [105]
38	–	–	38	E	Tr 39 [105]
39	–	–	39	W	Tr 39 [105]

Appendix 1.4 Sample register

Drawing	Context	Description
1	106	Fill of [105] possible Roman field boundary
2	110	Fill of [109] possible Roman field boundary

Appendix 2 The pottery and other ceramic material

by Jane Timby

Summary

The archaeological work recovered eight sherds of probable pottery and ten fragments, some joining, of ceramic building material from context (106), the fill of boundary ditch [105]. The material is catalogued below. Other than suggesting it could potentially be Roman, the material is in too poor a condition to be absolutely sure. No further work is recommended.

Catalogue

Context	Weight (g)	Description
106	53	Seven fragments of ceramic building material (CBM). The pieces all join to form one side of what appears to be a deliberately-shaped, rectangular? piece with rounded corners. One side can be reconstructed and this measures 98mm. The thickness is 15–16mm. A fine, sandy, powdery orange fabric with a grey interior. Probably re-used Roman tile although quite thin. Alternatively may be another ceramic object in a roof-tile type fabric.
106	14	Three fragments of probably CBM with no surviving surfaces.
106	13	Eight small fragments of an oxidised, very soft, slightly sandy ware. There are a few surviving surfaces but these could suggest pot rather than CBM. However none of the pieces showed two opposing surfaces so identification is unclear.



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