Archaeological Watching Brief Report

CHEYNEY ROAD

For Dwr Cymru

Kate Pack BA MA

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Archaeological Watching Brief Report

CHEYNEY ROAD

Client:	Dwr Cymru
Local Authority:	Cheshire West and Chester Council
NGR:	339750,367380
Planning App:	11/05517/FUL
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Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during trial trenching at Cheyney Road, Chester. The Watching Brief was implemented because of the potential for archaeological remains on the site. The work was carried out by Blair Poole of L – P : Archaeology. This report has been prepared by Kate Pack of L – P : Archaeology on behalf of Dwr Cymru.

The site is located 750m to the north west of Chester city centre. This area was the old route of the River Dee prior to its silting and canalisation during the post-medieval period.

The objectives of the Watching Brief were to record any surviving archaeological remains of the Medieval Portpool facilities and activities and to record and sample any silting deposits of the river and Portpool that would provide palaeoenvironmental information.

Within Trench 1, where the pumping station is to be located, the top of the archaeological horizon was identified at a depth of 0.96m BGL, where undisturbed silts were recorded.

Trench 2 revealed varying levels of disturbance.Within the playground area and the public footpath to the north of Cheyney Road only 20th century service fills were encountered up to 1m BGL.Within the boundary of Cheyney Road, undisturbed silts were identified at a depth of 0.35m BGL.

No in situ archaeological features of significance were identified.

1. Introduction

- 1.1.This report details the results of an archaeological Watching Brief carried out at Cheyney Road for Dwr Cymru. The local authority is Cheshire West and Chester Council.
- **1.2.** Two trial trenches were excavated by Welsh Water at agreed locations at Cheyney Road in September 2011. The excavation was monitored by Blair Poole of L P: Archaeology. This report was written by Kate Pack of L P: Archaeology.
- 1.3.The site is located at the site of the Stone Bridge, Cheyney Road, Chester. (FIGURE 1). The NGR is 339750,367380.
- 1.4. The site code allocated by Cheshire West and Chester Council is CHE/CYR 11.
- 1.5. The work was carried out in accordance with the archaeological monitoring method statement prepared by Blair Poole of L P : Archaeology.
- **1.6.**The standards laid out by English Heritage and the Institute for Archaeologists were adhered to at all times.

2. Site Background

2.1.PLANNING

- **2.1.1.** Planning consent is being sought for a Dwr Cymru water pumping station. The application reference is 11/05517/FUL.
- **2.1.2.** Proposals for the upgrade works include a new pumping station and associated pipework. The pumping station will measure 2.5m in diameter and extend to a depth of 3m BGL. The associated pipework will extend a maximum of 0.9m BGL.
- 2.1.3. The site is not scheduled nor are there any listed buildings on site.
- 2.1.4. The Local Planning Authority is Cheshire West and Chester, with Mike Morris being the City Archaeologist. The site is not within an Archaeological Priority Zone. The site is however in an area of archaeological interest on the edge of Medieval Portpool.
- **2.1.5.** In March 2010 the Department for Communities and Local Government issued Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT 2010). This document sets out planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment and replaces all previous Planning Policy Guidance, specifically PPG15 and PPG16.
- **2.1.6.** In considering any planning application for development the Local Planning Authority, Cheshire West and Chester Council, is bound by the policies provided by PPS5. Additional guidance to help implement these policies is given in the accompanying Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide (DCLG, ENGLISH HERITAGE, DCMS 2010).
- 2.1.7. Cheshire West and Chester Council is also bound by the saved policies within the borough's local planning framework. However, as Cheshire West and Chester Council is a relatively new authority they defer to the current adopted local plans. The relevant Local Plan in this case is the Chester plan adopted in May 2006. The relevant policies contained within the Local Plan is as follows:

POLICY ENV 32

Where development proposals affect sites of known or potential archaeological interest, the City Council will require an archaeological assessment/evaluation to be submitted as part of the planning application. Planning permission will not be granted without the adequate assessment of the nature, extent and significance of the remains and the degree to which the proposed development is likely to affect them.

POLICY ENV 33

Development proposals affecting the site or setting of a site of regional or county importance will only be permitted if the integrity of the archaeological remains has been secured. **POLICY ENV 45**

Planning permission will be refused for proposals that fail to have regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest

2.1.1. This document seeks to inform the Cheshire West and Chester Council, describing the results of the watching brief and clarifying the status and location of the project archive.

2.2.GEOLOGY

- **2.2.1.** The British Geological Survey GeoIndex shows the site to be located on bedrock of undifferentiated Triassic sandstone and conglomerate.
- **2.2.2.** This geotechnical investigation carried out on the site in 2011 shows that the natural superficial deposit on the site is made up of alluvial silts and sand from the River Dee.

2.3.TOPOGRAPHY

- **2.3.1.** The site is located 750m to the north west of Chester city centre in a predominately residential area (FIGURE 2).
- **2.3.2.** The site is bound to the east by Cheyney Road and the stone bridge. To the west of the site are allotments.
- **2.3.3.** The site is low lying level ground at c6.35m OD. This area was the old route of the River Dee prior to its silting and canalisation during the post-medieval period.
- **2.3.4.** The site is currently a playground with footpath.

2.4.ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

- **2.4.1.** During the Roman and Medieval period, the River Dee flowed through the area of the site, coming right up to the Water Tower and Watergate. It is seen that this area only became solid enough to be inhabitable during the post-medieval period.
- **2.4.2.** The study site is on the edge of Medieval Portpool. This was an anchorage established by the thirteenth century (LAUGHTON, 2008 P.57).
- 2.4.3. This area played an important role in the early riverine trade that formed Chester's main economy from the Medieval period. The Stone Bridge, to the north of the site, has been a landmark since at least the 13th century and research suggests that it was linked to the Portpool. This is an area where sea going vessels cargo could be loaded. Portpool was described by Leland in the late 1530s as a dock within two bowshots of the northern suburb where a ship could lie at spring tide (LAUGHTON, 2008 P.171). The Portpool Way, which led from the northern suburb to the anchorages became increasingly important in the later medieval period (LAUGHTON, 2008 P.171).
- **2.4.4.** The development of the Roodee and the area of the River Dee are well-documented in the sequence of maps of the city dating from 1580 into the 20th century. It is apparent that by the publication of Speed's map in 1610 the loop of the river had begun to move west from its former location adjacent to the Watergate and away from its original course around the Water Tower.
- 2.4.5. The wide shallow estuary had become silted up and a cut made the river navigable during the 18th century. The cutting scheme was proposed by Nathaniel Kinderley in 1731, to make the Dee navigable from the sea to Chester for ships of 200 tons, this was done by digging a new channel to achieve a depth of sixteen feet of water at a moderate spring tide. The channel was dug in 1735 (KENNETT, 1982). Unfortunately following the canalisation the Dee silted up more rapidly and became unsuitable for heavy sea going vessels.
- 2.4.6. As the river silted up again the port and its associated activities moved away from this area. The Stone Bridge continued to act as a route over Finchett's Gutter after the decline of the port until the late 20th century when the new

road was constructed to divert traffic away from this narrow structure. The standing structure of the bridge may contain elements of earlier structures, however the majority of the stonework appears to be late Post Medieval repair work and reconstruction.

3. Aims and Objectives

- **3.1.**The general aims of the archaeological watching brief were to record the character, date, type, state of preservation, and extent of any archaeological remains on site exposed or disturbed during groundworks.
- **3.2.**The specific aims of the archaeological watching brief, as defined by the City Archaeologist were:
 - To record any surviving archaeological remains of the medieval Portpool facilities and activities.
 - To record and sample any silting deposits of the river and Portpool that would provide palaeoenvironmental information.

4. Methodology

- 4.1.Two trial trenches were excavated by Welsh Water at agreed locations at Cheyney Road in September 2011. The excavation was monitored by Blair Poole of L – P : Archaeology.
- **4.2.**Excavation was carried out by Welsh Water's groundwork contractor using appropriate sized plant. All machine excavation within was undertaken in spits. The groundworks were closely monitored and all deposits observed for archaeological significance.
- **4.3.**All features were recorded stratigraphically. Features were recorded archaeologically, both in plan and section.
- **4.4.** A site code was allocated to the site by the Cheshire Historic Environment Team. This code was used to label all elements of the documentary archive. The written recording system used followed the Museum of London Archaeological Site Manual. Context sheets included all relevant stratigraphic relationships. Detailed plans were drawn at an appropriate scale, 1:10 or 1:20.
- **4.5.**An adequate photographic record was made of all significant archaeological remains in both plan and section. This included black and white prints and digital images. A register of all photographs taken was kept on standardised forms.
- 4.6. Environmental samples were collected from two deposits.
- **4.7.**The standards laid out by English Heritage and the Institute for Archaeologists was adhered to at all times as well as all relevant local standards.

5. Results

5.1.This section will discuss the results of the archaeological monitoring of the two trial trenches were excavated by Welsh Water. The results will be discussed by trench to give a detailed account of the stratigraphic sequence and archaeology present in each. Deposits are shown in (parenthesis), cuts are shown in [square brackets], structures are <u>underlined</u>.

5.2.TRENCH 1

5.2.1. Trench 1 was located 14m to the west of Cheyney Road and 22m south of the Stone Bridge (FIGURE 2). The trench measured 3m by 0.6m in plan and was excavated to 4.65mOD, 1.7m below ground level (BGL). The trench was excavated in a northwest southeast alignment at the proposed location of a new pumping station within the grassed area of a small playground. Due to the deep and narrow nature of the trench photography was problematic, therefore only acute images of the strata could be taken (PLATE 1).



Plate 1 - Trench 1, looking southeast, 1m scale

5.2.2. The uppermost deposit (100) was a 0.1m thick layer of dark brown silty loam topsoil which formed the turf layer for the playground (FIGURE 3). Below the topsoil was a 0.25m thick deposit of mottled brown silty sand (101) which contained modern brick rubble and plastic fragments. This deposit was cut by a late 20th century pit [103] at the southern corner of the trench. Only a small

area of the pit was uncovered, however it could be seen to have steep sides extending 0.75m below the topsoil and a single homogenous fill (102) of loose, mid brown loam. The pit contained plastic sheet, bottles and metal cans. It is clear that this is a late 20th century waste pit sealed by the topsoil and likely dates to the formation of the playground.

- 5.2.3. Sealed by (101) was a loose to friable orange brown clay silt mix (104). This measured 0.28m thick and contained plastic and rubber finds dating it to the late 20th century. Underlying (104) was a 0.33m thick friable dark brown silt (105). This deposit also contained 20th century plastic and metal finds. At the base of (105) at 5.39mOD, 0.96m BGL, a buried surface was identified (106). This surface formed the transition between (105) and a friable dark brown silt (106) which could be seen to contain grass root activity. Deposit (106) measured 0.2m thick and contained no finds. As the upper deposits all date to the 20th century it is evident that this earlier surface was sealed in the 20th century.
- **5.2.4.** Sealed by (106) was a friable deposit of dark brown to grey silt. This extended beyond the base of the trench at 4.65mOD and contained no finds or features. This has been interpreted as natural silting. Its form and make up are suggestive of slow moving silts from a small river or stream and its location could suggest that this represents part of the stream or brook that the Stone Bridge crossed from the Medieval period onwards. This deposit has been sampled and sent for palaeoenvironmental analysis.
- 5.2.5. It is clear that the upper deposits within Trench 1, extending 0.96m BGL, are all 20th century in date. Therefore the archaeological horizon can be placed at this level within Trench 1.

5.3.TRENCH 2

5.3.1. Trench 2 was located 10m south of the Stone Bridge and extended from within the grassed area in the playground across Cheyney Road. The trench was excavated in four parts along a northwest southeast alignment (FIGURE 4). The total trench length was 13m at 0.6m wide and was excavated to varying depths. The northwestern section (Trench 2a) measured 5m and was excavated within

the grassed playground area to 5.21mOD, 1.1m BGL (PLATE 2).



Plate 2 - Trench 2a, looking south, 1m scale

- 5.3.2. The upper deposit of the trench could be divided into two sections (FIGURE 5). The northwestern 2.6m (200) was the same deposit as (100), a grassy loam topsoil. The southeastern 2.4m was made up of a loose black humic loam (201), which could be seen to be the upper section of a flower bed. Both (200) and (201) measured 0.08m thick.
- **5.3.3.** Sealed by (201) was a 0.2m thick deposit of dark brown silty loam (202). This was the turned soil used for the flower bed and corresponded in plan with the extent of (201). Underlying (202) was a 0.9m thick deposit of yellow brown clay silt (203). This contained fragments of brick and concrete and could be seen to be a 20th century make up layer. Below (203) at the northwestern end of the Trench 2a was a 0.45m thick deposit of loose brown silt (205). This contained stone and rubble fragments dating to the 20th century.
- **5.3.4.** Also sealed by (202) was a mid brown silt fill (204). This extended to the base of the trench at 1.1m BGL. Fill (204) also contained brick and concrete fragments and its sloping nature indicates that it is a discrete fill which relates to the same make up activity as (203).
- **5.3.5.** At the base of the trench was a large concrete cap <u>208</u> covering services. This concrete layer was sealed by (203), (204) and (205) indicating that all three deposits represent 20th century backfill of a large service trench.

- 5.3.6. At the southeastern end of Trench 2a was a dark brown silt deposit (207). This contained plastic fragments and is also dated to the 20th century.
- 5.3.7. Trench 2b (PLATE 3), the second section of Trench 2, measured 1.1m by 0.6m in plan and was located in the public footpath to the north of Cheyney Road (FIGURE 4). Below the stone paving surface <u>209</u>, was a 0.15m thick make up layer of grey angular gravel (212). This formed the base of the footpath and sealed in deposit (207), which extended from Trench 2a into Trench 2b. At the base of the trench at 5.31mOD, 1m BGL, a series of services were identified. Sealed by (207) was an electrical service running southwest northeast. The electrical service [211] could be seen to cut a loose dark brown silt fill (210). This was a backfill sealing two salt glazed drains.



Plate 3 - Trench 2b, looking south, 1m scale

- 5.3.8. Trench 2 continued to the southeast of Trench 2b and extended in two sections across Cheyney Road (FIGURE 4). These two section will be discussed as a single entity, Trench 2c/d, below.
- 5.3.9. Trench 2c/d measured 7m by 0.6m in plan and was excavated to a maximum depth of 4.71mOD, 1.52m BGL (FIGURE 5). The upper deposit was a 0.1m thick layer of tarmac <u>213</u>, which sealed a 0.25m thick layer grey angular gravel (212). Below (212) was a 0.1m thick deposit of gravel and brick (214) which extended across the entire trench. This is though to be a sub base for the road surface (PLATE 4).



Plate 4 – Trench 2c, looking south, 1m scale

- 5.3.10.In the northwestern section of the trench (214) sealed a hard layer of rubble and brick (215). This measured 0.1m thick and is thought to form a levelling layer for the construction of Cheney Road. Below (215) was a friable black ash deposit (216). This measured 0.1m thick and is thought to form a depositional material above an earlier road, lying along the line of Cheyney Road (217). Deposit (217) was a 2.2m long area of crushed sandstone that measured 0.1m thick. It is possible that this sandstone formed an earlier mettled surface along the line of Cheyney Road.
- 5.3.11.At the southeastern end of the trench, below (214), there was a 1.1m thick deposit of friable orange red silt (230). This is thought to be alluvial silt natural to this area and could represent long term flooding activity. At the southern end of the trench at 4.73mOD, 1.5m BGL, natural sandstone was encountered (231). Cutting (230) was a large service trench [220]. This measured 1.6m wide and held a 1.6m diameter brick culvert <u>221</u> and associated backfill (219). The backfill (219) contained rubble and concrete fragments. The nature and form of the culvert indicate a 19th century date for the service.
- 5.3.12.To the north of service trench [220] the natural silt was identified again, however this silt was lighter in colour in this area, forming a friable grey silt (218). This deposit underlay (217) and contained no finds and extended beyond the base of the trench (PLATE 5).



Plate 5 - Trench 2d, looking south, 1m scale

- **5.3.13.** At the northwestern end of Trench 2c/d two service trenches were identified, [223] and [227]. Service trench [223] cut (214) and contained a 0.3m diameter metal pipe and was filled by a loose cream mixed clay. Fill (222) had been cut by [227], which contained a 0.1m diameter metal pipe and was filled by a friable black clay ash mix (226). Above (226), at the northern edge of Cheyney Road, was a small area of loose grey gravel (224) 0.2m thick. This is thought to function as drainage for the road. Both service trenches [223] and [227], their associated fills as well as deposit (224) are thought to date to the 20th century.
- 5.3.14.Below (224) at the northern extent of Cheyney Road was a 0.4m area of friable black clay (225), which measured 0.2m thick. No finds were recovered from this deposit. Underlying (225) at the northern end of the trench the natural silt (218) was identified. In this area it could be seen that the grey clay (218) overlay the orange clay (230). Both of these deposits have been sampled and sent for palaeoenvironmental analysis.
- 5.3.15.Trenches 2a and 2b both revealed modern disturbance to a depth of 1m BGL. No archaeological features or deposits were identified within these trenches.
- 5.3.16.The modern upper deposits within Trench 2c/d, extend 0.35m BGL, and are all 20th century in date. Below 0.35m BGL natural alluvial silts were identified, therefore the archaeological horizon can be placed at this level within Trench

2c/d. No *in situ* archaeological features were identified within Trench 2.

5.3.17.Only 19th and 20th century finds were recovered form the modern deposits. These have been discarded as they can be seen to come from 20th century contexts. No finds were recovered from the natural silts.

6. Environmental Sampling

- 6.1. Two deposits were sampled and sent to Birmingham Archaeoenvironmental for assessment. All samples were floated for evidence of macrofossil and palaeoecological elements.
- **6.2.**Sample <1> was A 40ltr bulk sample retrieved form context (107) within Trench 1. Upon inspection the sample was found to be devoid of macrofossil and was extremely minerogenic. This has been interpreted as river silt, likely relating to the early course of the River Dee.
- 6.3.Sample <2> was a 20ltr bulk sample retrieved form context (230) within Trench 2c. As with sample <1> the deposit was found to be minerogenic and devoid of macrofossils. This has also been interpreted as river silt relating to the early course of the River Dee.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

- 7.1.An archaeological watching brief was carried out on trial trenches at Cheyney Road, Chester. The works were carried out in advance of upgrade works by Dwr Cymru to the services in the area.
- **7.2.**The archaeological monitoring was carried out by Blair Poole of L P: Archaeology on behalf of Dwr Cymru between 8th and 14th September 2011.
- **7.3.**The results of the archaeological monitoring of the trial pits shows that the area has not undergone historic development, however there is a significant 20th century build up of material on the site.
- **7.4.**Within Trench 1, where the pumping station is to be located, the top of the archaeological horizon was identified at a depth of 0.96m BGL, where undisturbed silts were recorded.
- **7.5.**Trench 2 revealed varying levels of disturbance. Within the playground area and the public footpath to the north of Cheyney Road only 20th century service fills were encountered above 1m BGL. Within the boundary of Cheyney Road, undisturbed silts were identified at a depth of 0.35m BGL.
- **7.6.**Proposals for the upgrade works include a new pumping station and associated pipework. The pumping station will measure 2.5m in diameter and extend to a depth of 3m BGL. The associated pipework will extend a maximum of 0.9m BGL
- 7.7.It is suggested that during future groundworks adequate mitigation would comprise archaeological monitoring targeted on the undisturbed silts to ensure that any buried archaeological features are recorded. This work would also allow for assessment of the silts to build up a picture of the changing riverine deposits of the area.

8. Archive

8.1.The paper archive consists of:

- ◆ 1 Drawing Register
- 5 Drawing Film
- 2 Photographic Register
- 62 Black and white photographs and negatives
- ◆ 1 Context Register
- ♦ 40 Context sheets

8.2.The finds archive consists of:

- ♦ No finds
- 8.3. The archive is to be deposited at the Grosvenor Museum, Chester.

SOURCES CONSULTED

BIBLIOGRAPHIC

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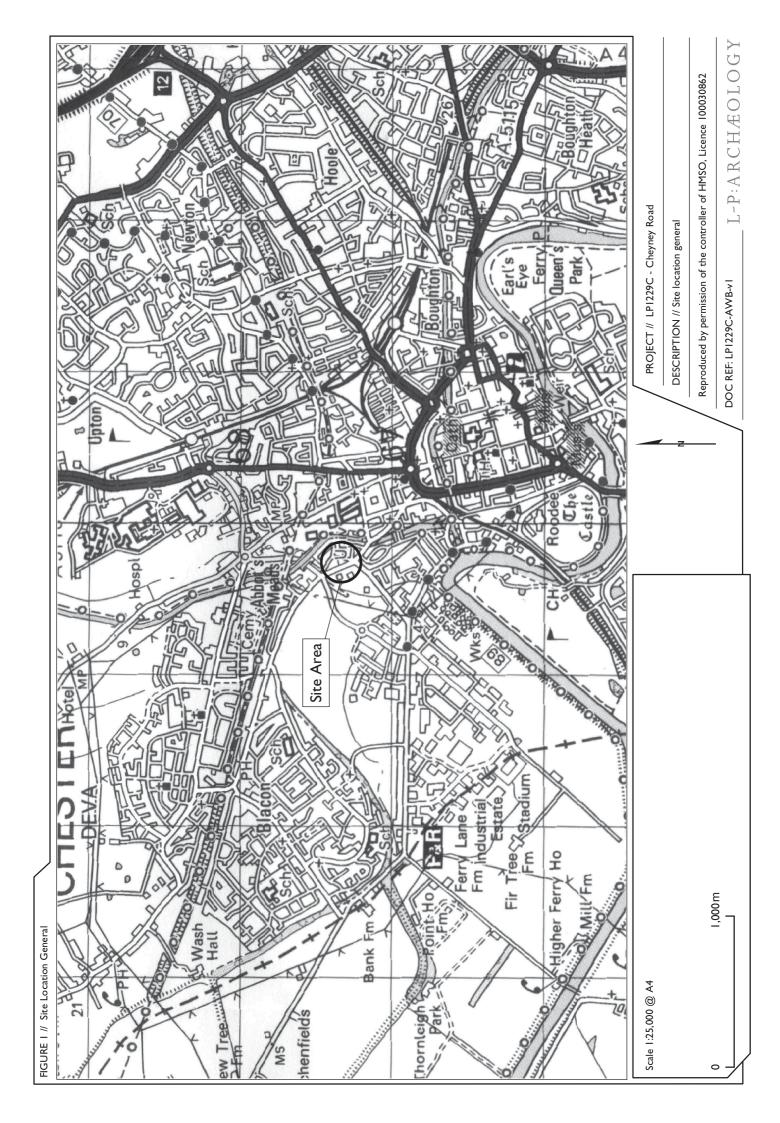
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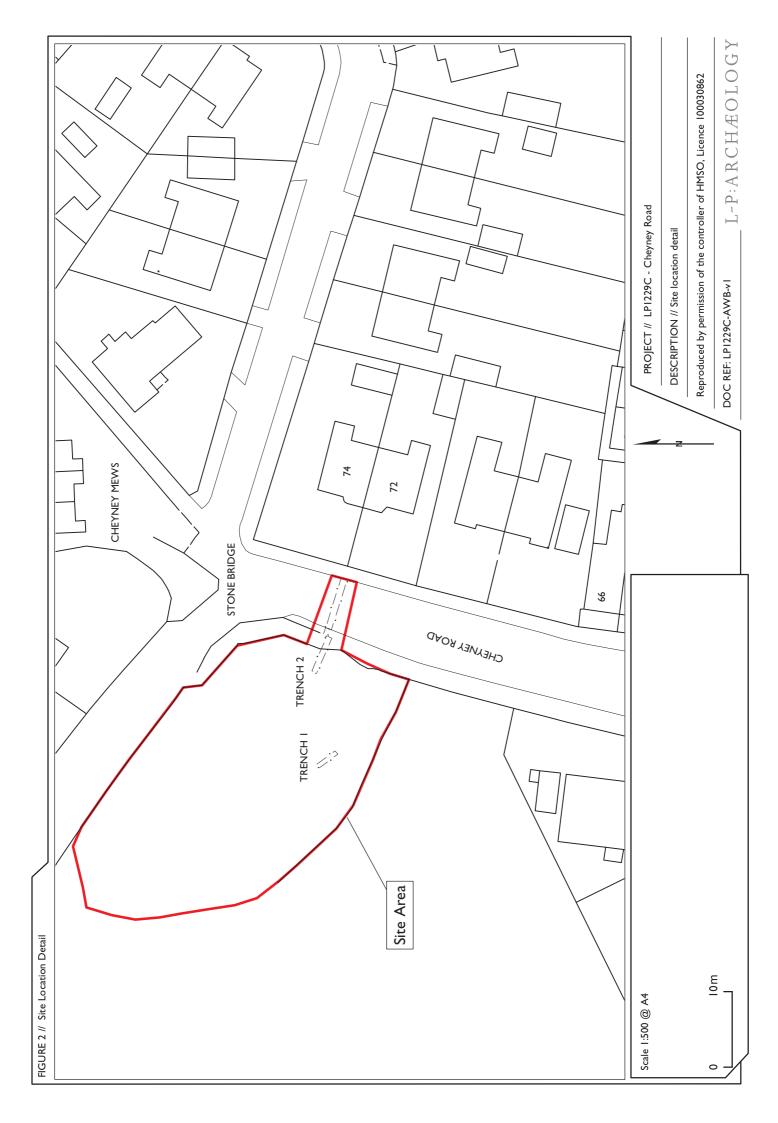
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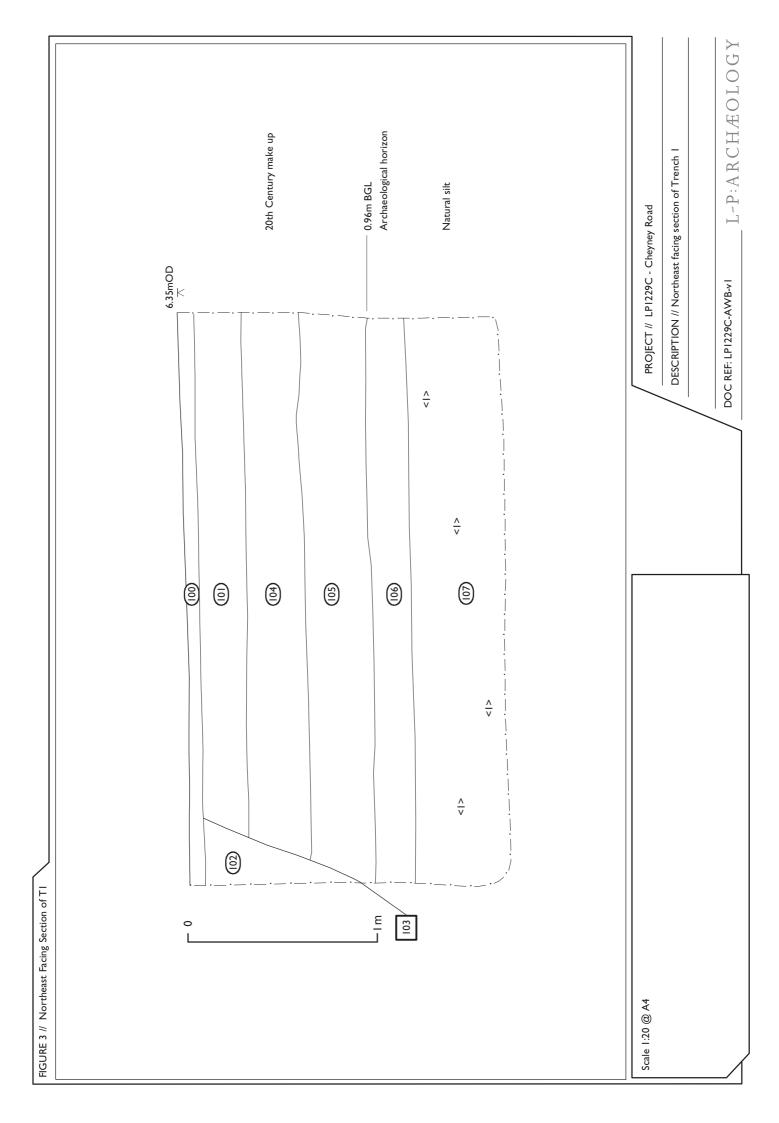
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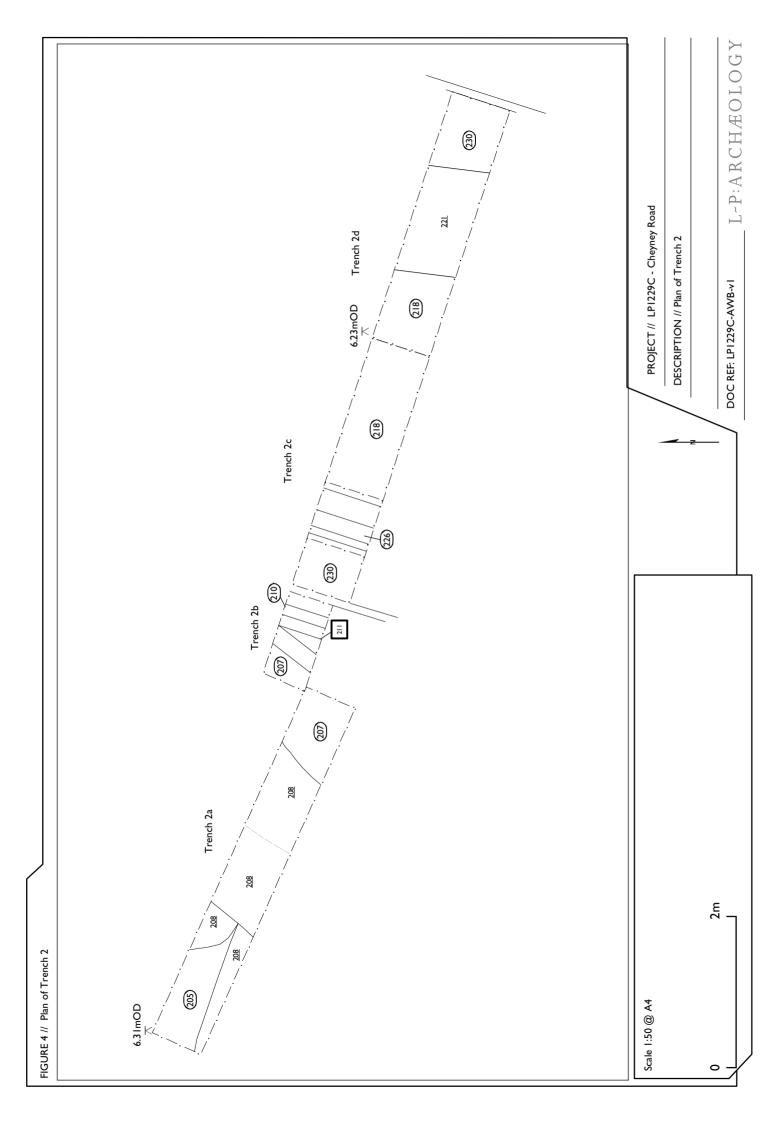
STANDARD AND GUIDANCE FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF Institute for Archaeologists 2008

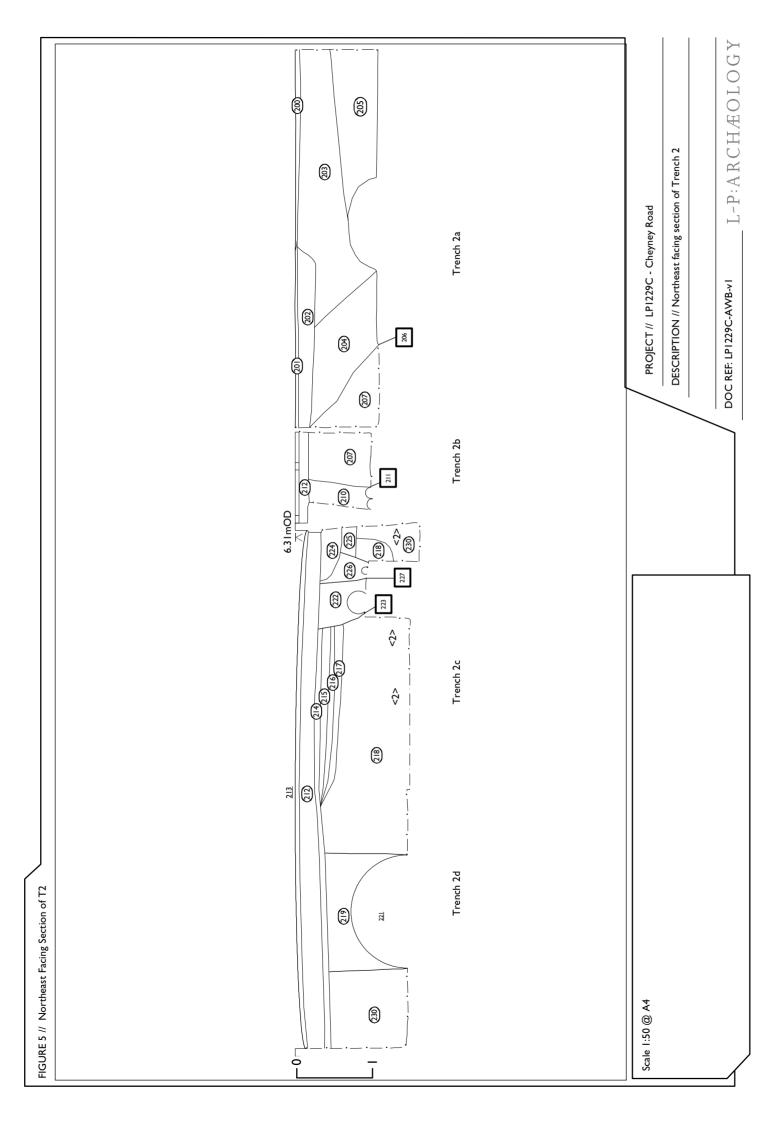
FIGURES











OASIS FORM

DOC REF: LP1229C - AWB - V1.2

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Project details

-	
Project name	Cheyney Road, Chester
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief of trial trenches at Cheyney Road, Chester
Project dates	Start: 02-09-2011 End: 26-01-2012
Previous/future work	No / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	CHE/ CYR 11 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	CHESHIRE CHESTER CHESTER Cheyney Road
Postcode	CH1 4BS
Study area	0.10 Hectares
Site coordinates	SJ 339750 367380 52.9236725826 -2.982203744930 52 55 25 N 002 58 55 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 6.00m Max: 7.00m
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	L - P : Archaeology
Project brief originator	City/Nat. Park/District/Borough archaeologist
Project design originator	L - P : Archaeology
Project director/manager	Blair Poole

Project supervisor	Blair Poole
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Dwr Cymru
Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive Exists?	No
Paper Archive recipient	Grosvenor Museum
Paper Contents	'none'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Drawing','Map','Matrices','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section'
Project bibliography 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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