

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

# CHEYNEY ROAD

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For Dwr Cymru

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Blair Poole BA MSc

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L~P:ARCHÆOLOGY

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

# CHEYNEY ROAD

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Client: Dwr Cymru

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Local Authority: Cheshire West and Chester Council

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NGR: 339750,367380

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Planning App: 11/05517/FUL

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Author(s): B. Poole

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Doc Ref: LPI229C - AWB - V2.1

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Date: February 12

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Site Code: CHE/CYR 11

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## L-P:ARCHÆOLOGY

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# Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during excavations for a new pumping station at Cheyney Road, Chester. The Watching Brief was implemented because of deposits of archaeological interest on the site relating to the changing course of the River Dee. The work was carried out by Blair Poole 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 relating to Medieval Portpool facilities and activities, and to record and sample any silting deposits of the river and portpool for palaeoenvironmental information.

The excavation revealed that the upper 2.2m to 2.8m of material on the site relates to 20<sup>th</sup> century land reclamation. Sealed by these deposits was an inorganic silt which is typical of flood plains associated with riverine activity.

No in situ archaeological features or deposits 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. A single area measuring 3.8m by 3.8m in plan by 5.2m deep was excavated by Welsh Water in a playground to the west of Cheyney Road in February 2012. The excavation was monitored by Blair Poole of L – P : Archaeology. Paleoenvironmental specialist advice was supplied by Kristina Krawiec of Birmingham Paleoenvironmental.
- 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.

## 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. Proposals for the upgrade works include a new pumping station and associated pipework. Only the excavation for the pumping station was monitored.
- 2.1.2. 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 as defined by Chester Archaeology.
- 2.1.3. 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.
- 2.1.4. 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).
- 2.1.5. Cheshire West and Chester Council is also bound by the saved policies within the 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 satisfy the planning condition by 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. Previous archaeological 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 children's playground.

### **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. This area only became dry enough to be inhabitable during the post-medieval period.

2.4.2. The study site is on the edge of the Medieval portpool, which was an area for moving cargo on and off vessels.. 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 13<sup>th</sup> century and research suggests that it was linked to the portpool. The 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 identify and take paleoenvironmental samples of any silting deposits of the river and Portpool.

## 4. Methodology

- 4.1. The trench was excavated by Dwr Cymru's groundwork contractor, Cummins on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2012. The excavation was monitored by Blair Poole of L – P : Archaeology.
- 4.2. Excavation was carried out using appropriate sized plant. All machine excavation within was undertaken in spits. The trench was shored using sheet piles. 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. No environmental samples were collected on advice from the on site paleoenvironmental specialist.
- 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. The results comprise an account of the stratigraphic sequence and archaeology present. Deposits are shown in (parenthesis).

5.2. The trench was located 14m to the west of Cheyney Road and 25m south of the Stone Bridge (FIGURE 2). The trench measured 3.8m by 3.8m in plan and was excavated to 1.15mOD, 5.2m below ground level (BGL) (PLATE 1). The trench was excavated at the location of a new pumping station within the grassed area of a small playground.



Plate 1 - Depth of excavation, looking west

5.2.1. The uppermost deposit (100) was a 0.06m 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 high quantities of modern debris including metal, glass, plastic and brick. No finds were retained from this deposit.

5.2.2. Underlying deposit (101) was a loose to friable orange brown clay silt mix (104). This extended to a depth of 2.2m BGL at the eastern end of the trench, however it sloped to a depth of 2.8m BGL at the western end of the trench. This was clearly a modern make up deposit associated with land reclamation during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Finds from (104) included plastic and rubber items, mesh fencing and a shopping trolley. No finds were retained from this deposit.

5.2.3. Sealed by (104) was a friable deposit of dark grey silt (107), which extended beyond the base of the trench at 5.2m BGL. The deposit contained no finds or features and was an inorganic alluvium associated with the River Dee. Its wide spread and depth are indicative of flood plain rather than a slow moving brook or gutter.

5.2.4. It is interesting to note that deposits identified during an earlier evaluation, 2m to the northeast of this area, were not present in this larger area. This suggests that those deposits were discrete dumps of material with in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century make up.

5.2.5. It is clear that the upper deposits, extending between 2.2 and 2.8m BGL, are all 20<sup>th</sup> century in date and have been deposited as part of a land reclamation strategy on what would have been a flood plain.

### **5.3. ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLING**

5.3.1. A site visit by Kristina Krawiec of Birmingham University on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

5.3.2. No deposits suitable for sampling were identified. The natural silt (107) at the base of the trench was inorganic and devoid of dating evidence. The structure of the deposit was identifiable as typical of flood plains and riverine activity. It is not thought that sampling would provide any additional information as it could not be dated and the safe retrieval strategy would not give an accurate sequence.

## 6. Discussion and Conclusions

- 6.1. An archaeological watching brief was carried out on excavation for a new pumping station at Cheyney Road, Chester.
- 6.2. The archaeological monitoring was carried out by Blair Poole of L – P : Archaeology on behalf of Dwr Cymru on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2012.
- 6.3. The results of the archaeological monitoring shows that the area has undergone a significant 20<sup>th</sup> century build up of material on the site.
- 6.4. The excavation revealed that the upper 2.2 to 2.8m of material were 20<sup>th</sup> century in date and appear to relate to top land reclamation of a flood plain associated with the River Dee.
- 6.5. No archaeological features were identified on the site.

# SOURCES CONSULTED

## **BIBLIOGRAPHIC**

- CARRINGTON P 1994 *English Heritage Book of Chester* London: English Heritage/ Batsford.
- HEMMINGWAY J 1831 *History of the City of Chester from its Foundation to Present Time* Chester: J Fletcher.
- KENNETT A 1982 *Chester and the River Dee An Illustrated History of Chester and its Port*
- LAUGHTON J 2008 *Life in a Late Medieval City Chester 1275 – 1520* Oxbow Books
- PACK, K. 2012. *Archaeological Watching Brief Report for land at Cheyney Road, Chester*, Unpublished archive report for L – P : Archaeology

## **CARTOGRAPHIC AND PICTORIAL**

- Braun & Hogenberg, 1581
- Speede, 1610
- Hollar, 1653
- De Lavaeux, 1745
- Burdett, 1777
- Hunter, 1789
- Stockdale, 1796
- Ormerod, 1808
- Neele, 1809
- Woods, 1833

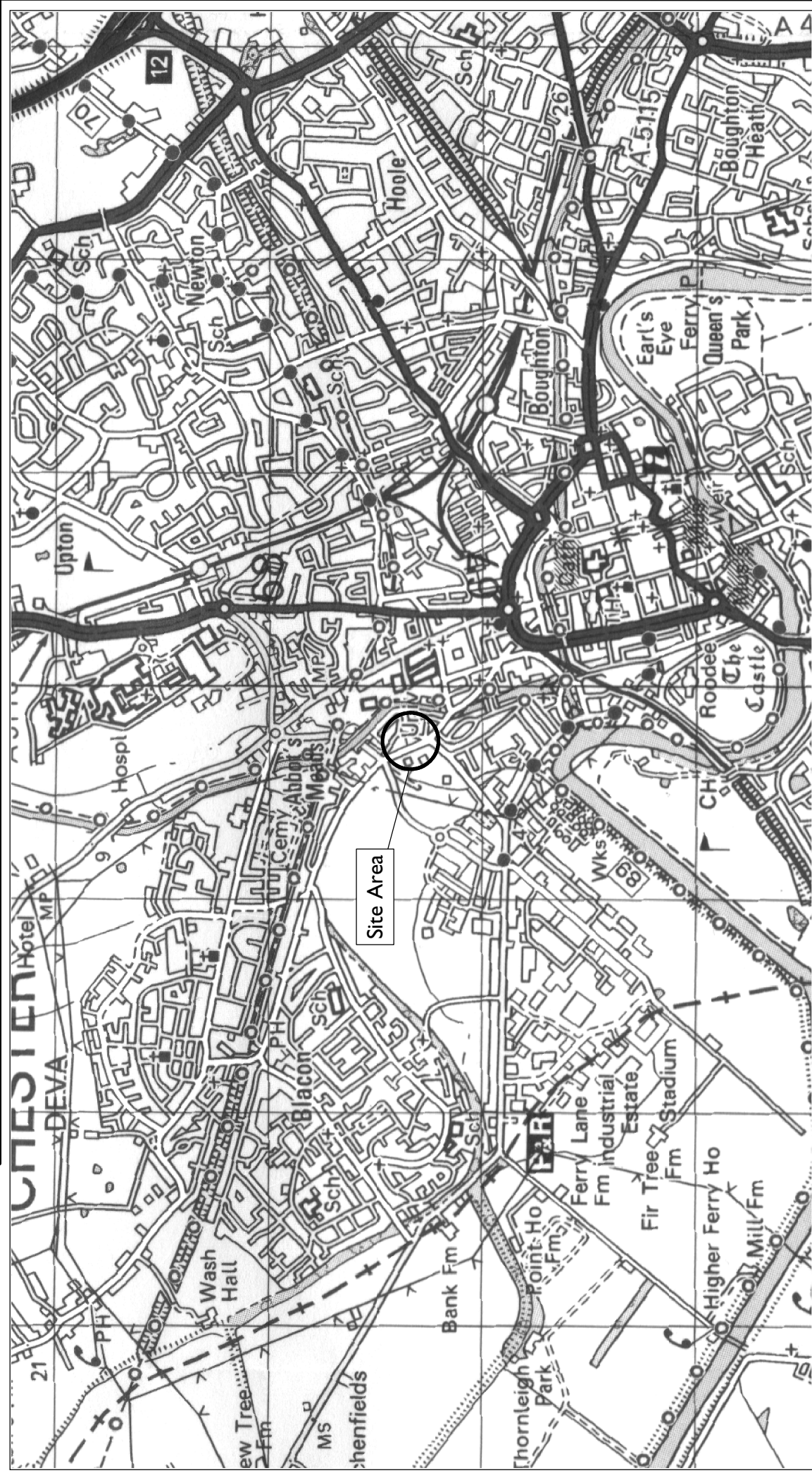
## **STATUTORY AND GUIDANCE**

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

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# FIGURES

FIGURE I // Site Location General



Scale 1:25,000 @ A4

0 1,000m

PROJECT // LP1229C - Cheyney Road

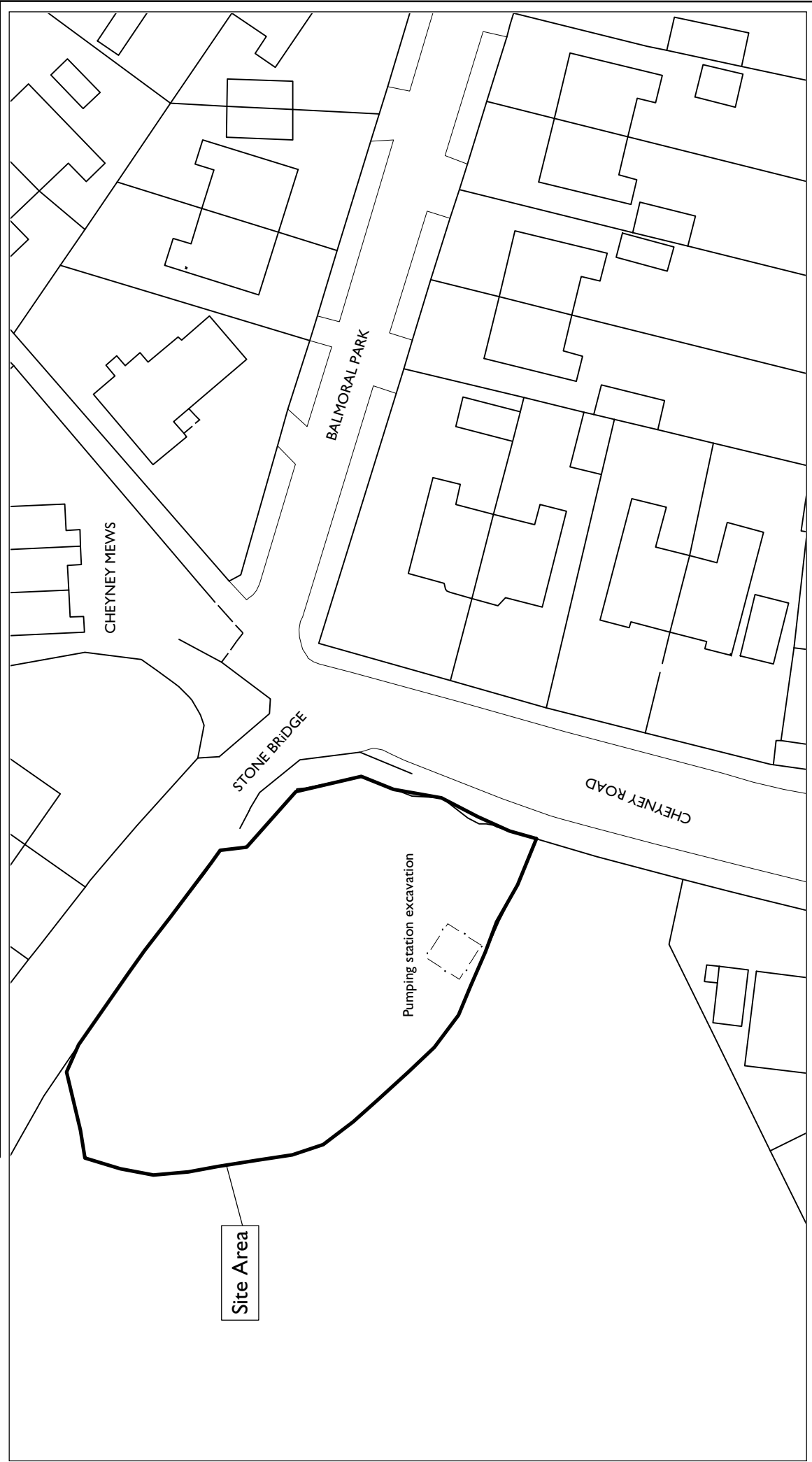
DESCRIPTION // Site Location General

Reproduced by permission of the controller of HMSO, Licence 100030862

DOC REF: LP1229C-AWB-v2

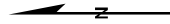
L-P: ARCHAEOLOGY

FIGURE 2 // Site Location Detail



Scale 1:500 @ A4

0 10m



PROJECT // LP1229C - Cheyney Road

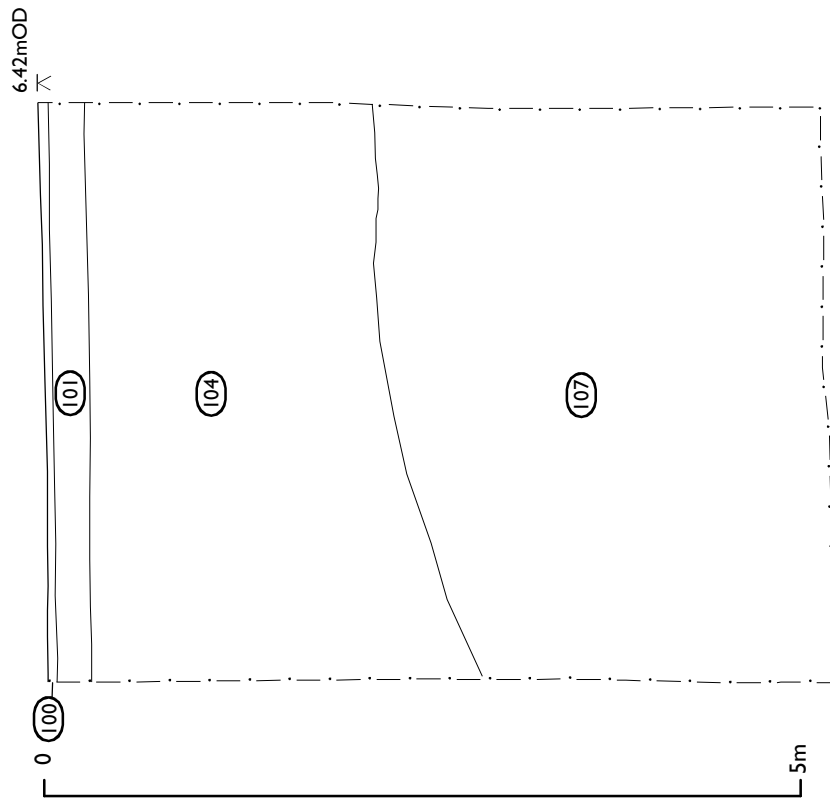
DESCRIPTION // Site Location Detail

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DOC REF: LP1229C-AWB-v2

L-P: ARCHAEOLOGY

FIGURE 3 // North Facing Section



Scale 1:50 @ A4

PROJECT // LP1229C - Cheyney Road

DESCRIPTION // North Facing Section

DOC REF: LP1229C-AWB-v2

L-P: ARCHAEOLOGY



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# OASIS FORM

## APPENDIX I

# OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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## Printable version

**OASIS ID: Iparchae1-119188**

### Project details

Project name	Cheyney Road Pumping Station
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring on excavations for a new pumping station at Cheyney Road, Chester
Project dates	Start: 01-02-2012 End: 13-02-2012
Previous/future work	Yes / No
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 'Report','Section'

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)  
Title Archaeological Watching Brief Report for land off Cheyney Road, Chester Access Ramp  
Author(s)/Editor(s) Poole, B.  
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Entered on 13 February 2012

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