Archaeological Excavation Report for

ROMAN GARDENS GATE

For Cheshire West and Chester Council

Author Matthew Jones & Kate Pack

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Archaeological Excavation Report for

ROMAN GARDENS GATE

Client:	Cheshire West and Chester Council
Local Authority:	Cheshire West and Chester Council
NGR:	340550 365870
Site code:	CHE/PASI I
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Abstract

A programme of improvement works were carried out by Grosvenor Construction Ltd to the pedestrian entrance in the City Walls between Park Street and the Roman Gardens as well as repair work to the upper wall surface above the gateway on behalf of Cheshire West and Chester Council. .These works were carried out under archaeological watching brief conditions.

The works revealed considerable modern disturbance associated with the placement of drainage and and services, with additional Victorian and Georgian disturbance resulting from the need to repair, underpin and stabilise the City Walls following the building of cellared structures against the walls. All deposits identified contained a range of artefacts dating from the Roman through to Post Medieval periods, typical of deposits which had either been disturbed and redeposited over time or brought in from different areas to make up the ground.

The repair work to the city walls elevated walkway revealed the top of the western side of the sandstone City Wall.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report details the results of archaeological monitoring of a programme of improvement works carried out by Grosvenor Construction Ltd to the pedestrian entrance in the City Walls between Park Street and the Roman Gardens as well as repair work to the upper wall surface above the gateway.
- 1.2. The site is located on the south east section of the City Walls between Park Street and the Roman Gardens (FIGURE 1), Chester CH12DW (NGR 340550 365870).
- 1.3. The work was carried out by Matthew Jones and Kate Pack of L-P: Archaeology on behalf of Cheshire West and Chester Council.
- **1.4.** This document has been prepared by Matthew Jones and Kate Pack for L-P: Archaeology.
- **1.5.**The local authority is Cheshire West and Chester Council whose representative monitored works and offered advice throughout the excavation.

2. Site Background

2.1.PLANNING BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1. In March 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government issued the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Department for Communities and Local Government 2012). This document sets out planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment. Section 12 of this document sets out planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment.
- 2.1.2. Paragraph 128 of the NPPF indicates planning decisions should be made based on the significance of Heritage Assets. These are defined as buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions.
- **2.1.3.** In considering any planning application for development the Local Planning Authority is the Cheshire West and Chester Council. At present Cheshire West and Chester refer to the Chester Local Plan. The relevant polices are:
 - **ENV31** Development proposals which would adversely affect the site or setting of an existing or proposed Scheduled Ancient Monument or other nationally important sites and monuments will be refused.
 - **ENV37** Development in conservation areas or affecting the setting of such an area will only be permitted where it will preserve or enhance its character or appearance.
- 2.1.4. Additional guidance to help implement these policies is given in the accompanying Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide (DCLG, ENGLISH HERITAGE, DCMS 2010). The gate is a designated asset as it forms part of the 'The walls, towers, gates and posterns of the City of Chester' which are listed under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (amended) and considered of national importance (SM no.7; List Entry Number 1006785). The following policies should be considered when designing options for the steps:

HE6 – INFORMATION REQUIREMENT FOR APPLICATIONS FOR CONSENT AFFECTING HERITAGE ASSETS

HE7 – PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE DETERMINATION OF APPLICATIONS FOR CONSENT RELATING TO ALL HERITAGE ASSETS

HE9 – ADDITIONAL POLICY PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATIONS

FOR CONSENT RELATING TO DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

- **2.1.5.** The gate is within the Chester City Conservation Area as designated by Cheshire West and Chester Council.
- **2.1.6.** On matters concerning archaeology and the historic environment Cheshire West and Chester Council take impartial advice from Mike Morris, City Archaeologist.

2.2.GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- **2.2.1.** Chester is located on red sandstone bedrock. This can be viewed on the eastern side of the wall in the Roman gardens as the underlying bedrock below the City Walls.
- **2.2.2.** The site is located in the south east section of the City Walls (FIGURE 2). Its height at street level is c.20.00OD. The land on the eastern side of the wall drops down into the Roman gardens to a depth of 11m OD.

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3. Archaeological and Historical Background

TIMESCALES USED IN THIS REPORT:

PERIOD	FROM	TO	
PREHISTORIC	450,00 BC	AD 43	
ROMAN	43	410	
MEDIEVAL	410	1485	
POST MEDIEVAL	1485	PRESENT	

Table 1 - Timescales used in this report

3.1. This section is taken from a previous desk based assessment carried out on the site by L - P: Archaeology on behalf of Cheshire West and Chester Council (WILLIAMS 2012).

3.2.PREHISTORIC

3.2.1. There is no relevant information regarding the site from this period. However, recent excavation at Chester Amphitheatre, 50m to the east of the site has revealed evidence of Iron Age settlement.

3.3.**ROMAN**

- **3.3.1.** The site is situated 85m south of the south east corner of the Roman fort which forms the centre of modern Chester. During this period the area to the south of the fort on the west side of Lower Bridge Street was built up, but there is no evidence that the same occurred to the east and the area was probably open cultivated land (WARD 1994, 14).
- **3.3.2.** The area of the Roman gardens was quarried during the Roman and later periods, and the edge of the quarrying is visible immediately below the south east section of the wall. The sandstone quarry edge below the site is not visible.

3.4.MEDIEVAL

3.4.1. The section of the City Wall that forms the site is not part of the original Roman fort defences and it is unclear when the walls were extended south and west to the present lines. On the basis of the length of defences given in the Burgal Hidage, Mason (1985) suggests it occurred when Chester was refortified as a burgh by Queen Aetheflaed in AD907, however Lewis and Thacker (2005)

suggest that the extensions, if they existed at all, may just have been earth banks and it is only with the construction of the castle in the late 11th century that the south and west walls can be considered finally abandoned. LeQuesne (1999, 146) argues for an even later date of late 12th century for the stone wall extensions based on early Parish boundary documents and the fact that late 12th century churches were founded in three of the gate towers in the south and west walls, indicating they were still standing at this time.

3.5.POST MEDIEVAL

- **3.5.1.** Speed's Map of Chester dated 1610 shows a single building at the bottom of Park Street, where it bends into Duke Street. The remainder of Park Street remains largely undeveloped at this time and only two buildings are shown opposite the city walls.
- **3.5.2.** The entire city wall circuit was rebuilt with the addition of the walkway in the 18th century (LEWIS & THACKER 2005) and the majority of the exterior and elements of the interior fabric associated which the entranceway are believed to date from this period.
- 3.5.3. Hunter's Map of 1789 names Park Street as Nine Houses. This is a reference to the nine alms houses which were built on the eastern side of the street during the mid 17th century. This map shows that by this date numerous buildings have been constructed against the city wall. These structures are arranged in blocks with three breaks separating them. Interestingly one of these breaks corresponds with the position of the entranceway under examination. This same break in the buildings is also shown on the Stockdale 1796 map. Both Cole's Map of 1805 and the Neele Map of 1809 (although shaded in) also show the same break noted in the 1789 map.
- **3.5.4.** The first reference in a cartographic source to the name Park Street name is found on Bateman's Map of 1821. This source shows the maintenance of the gaps between the buildings against the city walls. A series of maps produced by Cole dated 1836, 1843 and 1851 all show that the Park Street layout remains unaltered from that shown on Bateman's map and although this may simply reflect copying rather than a lack of development the similarity with later

- sources is indicative that the area has undergone little change during the early nineteenth century.
- **3.5.5.** All the maps detailed above show the east side of the wall (currently the Roman Gardens) as a sparsely wooded area with open spaces which lead down to the river Dee.
- **3.5.6.** The stasis of development on Park Street continues through the mid nineteenth century and this is shown on Thomas' Map of 1853 and Gresty's Map of 1870 as again both show no change to the buildings at the west side of the wall.
- **3.5.7.** The eastern side of the wall is hatchered which would indicate that the area was likely to have been raised at this time. The 1871 Chester Town Plan was produced at a much larger scale and shows buildings/plots lining the western side of the wall and the same wooded park area on the eastern side of the wall.
- 3.5.8. A single photographic image dating from 1890's was sourced which shows a two story terrace house (PLATE 1) had been constructed against the west side of the wall facing Park street. This could possibly be the building indicated on the 1871 Chester Town Plan. In this image the roof line scar for a smaller building against this house is clearly visible. This structure is also shown on the Chester City Plan and is believed to have been a work shop or garage.



Plate 1: Park Street, 1890s (Chester Image Bank)

- 3.5.9. Trade directories dating from the late eighteenth century show that a number of trades were conducted on the street. The area near the walls is described as Park street /City walls and in 1789 Samuel Mercer was listed in Cowdroy's Directory of Cheshire as being a cabinet maker with workshop. Later John Wiggens appears have taken over the the business and is listed in the 1857 Post Office Directory. This same directory also lists a John Bailey as a Blacksmith although in this instance it is unclear as to the exact location of his business and it is possible that it was not located on this street.
- 3.5.10. Three public houses are listed on Park Street. The first is named the 'The Council Beer House' and was run by an Eliza Hodkinson in 1840. The second was 'The Albion' which stands on the corner of Park Street and Albion Street which first appears in the 1857 Post office directory. This public house is still trading under the same name. The third public house is the 'George and Dragon' located at 21 Park street. Brewer Henry Knight is recorded as living next door at number 20 (1883 POST OFFICE DIRECTORY). It is however unclear as to the exact location along the wall line of these public houses and it is indeed possible that 'The Council Beer House' and 'George and Dragon' are the same building which has undergone a name change.
- 3.5.11. The First Edition Ordnance Survey Map dated 1882 shows no significant change to the site area from that described above. The Second Edition (dated 1899) shows that the buildings against the east side of the wall have been removed. The west side of wall (Roman gardens) has been developed into a bowling green and two small sheds have been built. hachures on the plan appear to show a sunken area along the wall near the development area which could indicate a path leading from the entrance in the wall into the bowling green.

4. Results

4.1.For ease of discussion the excavation results have been divided into four sections: the eastern side of the City Walls (Roman Gardens), the passageway inside the City Wall, the western side of the City Wall on Park Street and the elevated City Wall walkway.

4.2.ROMAN GARDENS – EASTERN SIDE OF THE CITY WALL (PLATE 2)



Plate 2: Entranceway looking West, 2x1m Scale

- **4.2.1.** The Roman Gardens have recently been redeveloped and the majority of the deposits encountered during this phase of excavation were of modern origin.
- **4.2.2.** This area of the Roman Gardens had been covered with tarmac and associated bedding layers which were present to a depth of between 0.28m 0.46m. Below these layers was deposit (04), a loose dark brown grey deposit with very rare irregular shaped sandstone inclusions. Artefactual material recovered from within this context was predominantly of post Medieval date, although a small number of abraded Roman ceramic fragments were found.
- 4.2.3. Two small evaluation trenches were excavated against the City Walls and associated buttress in an attempt to recorded the depth and foundations of the walls on this side of the site (PLATE 3). The maximum depth reached during this excavation was 0.52m. The base of the wall was reached but the depth of the buttress continued below the depth of the excavation, as did the depth of

context (04).



Plate 3: Evaluation Trench looking North, 1m Scale

- **4.2.1.** Deposit (04) was seen to continue beneath the City Walls and is believed to provide evidence of a Victorian remodelling of this section of wall. This is likely to have included the rebuilding of a damaged area of the wall and the addition of a series of buttresses on its eastern side. This may have been necessary due to subsidence caused by the building of housing and businesses on the Park Street side of the wall, many of which had cellars which undermined the walls.
- **4.2.2.** A number of services had been cut into context (04) and cast iron and lead pipes were recorded during an earlier phase of works at the site (WILLIAMS 2012). There was also a modern service trench cut into this deposit.

4.3. THE CITY WALL PASSAGEWAY (PLATE 4)



Plate 4: Passageway looking West, 1m Scale

- **4.3.1.** Excavation in the passageway leading between the Roman Gardens and Park Street revealed a series of similar modern deposits to those found in the Roman Gardens. The only exception to this was the pathway surface. Whilst the surface in the Roman Gardens was of tarmac construction with associated bedding levels, squared granite setts were used on the path.
- **4.3.2.** The maximum excavated depth in the passageway was 0.58m below the current ground level and at this depth the top of deposit (04) was reached.
- **4.3.3.** The passageway elevations visible above ground have been described in detail elsewhere and this information will not be duplicated here. There were a number of interesting below ground architectural features noted during the course of the excavation and these are detailed below.
- **4.3.4.** Two protruding ledges were recorded within the passageway. Ledge [01] protruded from the north facing eastern end of the passageway wall and was constructed using sand stone blocks and fragments of brick bonded with a lime mortar. The ledge was1.06m in length, 0.22m 034m in thickness and 0.08m in width.
- 4.3.5. Ledge [02] protruded from the south facing western end of the passageway

and was of the same construction. The ledge was 0.92m in length, 0.19m and 0.34m in thickness and 0.08m in width. It is believed that these ledges represent the surviving remnants of the original passage flooring (PLATE 5).



Plate 5: Ledge [01] looking South -West, 1m Scale

4.4.PARK STREET - WESTERN SIDE OF THE CITY WALL (PLATE 6)



Plate 6: Western Side looking West, 1m Scale

4.4.1. Excavation on Park Street revealed the same general stratigraphy as was found in the Roman Gardens and the small square granite setts used as a surface in the passageway continued into this area (FIGURE 4). This surface was cut by a

- modern linear trench running parallel with the road [08]. This trench had been back-filled with deposit (09), a mixed sandy-clay around a modern service pipe. The pipe had been covered with stone beach cobbles (FIGURE 5).
- 4.4.2. Beneath the modern deposits context (04) was found to continue through the passageway. This deposit overlies and surrounds two roughly brick built walls. Wall [12] (PLATE 7) was aligned on a north-south axis and ran from the northern edge of the trench. Within the excavated area the wall survived for approximately 1m. It was 0.50m in width with a excavated of height of 0.45m. The wall ends approximately 1.5m from the city walls. A rubble deposit (13) which was formed from the disturbance/demolition of this wall was identified to the east of this wall.



Plate 7: Western Side looking North, 1m Scale

4.4.1. The second wall, [15] (PLATE 8), was aligned on an east-west axis and ran from the south of the entrance to the City Walls passageway and ran for approximately 1.05m. The width of the wall was 0.40m and the height was 0.28m. A possible continuation of this wall was observed in the western (road side) trench section, although this area had been heavily damaged by tree roots and pipe trench [08]. The eastern end of wall [15] was formed into an arched feature (assigned context number [16]) 0.80m in length. This arched towards the southern edge of the trench and the corresponding end of the arch was not

within the trench limits.



Plate 8: Wall [15], looking North, 1m Scale

- **4.4.2.** Directly below the arch was a mixed clinker and charcoal deposit (17). It was unclear whether this deposit was just the fill of the area beneath the arch or if it it ran beneath wall [15] itself as the deposit was only partially excavated.
- **4.4.3.** Brick underpinning was evident on both the north and south sides of the passageway. In the western area the brick underpinning (assigned context [14]) was associated with the rebuilding of the city walls in the 18th century. This feature was recorded as context [05] in the previous phase of works (WILLIAMS 2012).
- **4.4.4.** A modern service pipe was aligned on a north south axis along the curb of park street on the west side of the development.

4.5.THE ELEVATED WALL WALKWAY

4.5.1. Works were being undertaken on the elevated wall walk to stabilise the material above the new entranceway.



Plate 9: Wall Excavations looking North, 1m scale

- **4.5.2.** The stone flags (PLATE 9) of the present wall walk were lifted and internal portion of the wall excavated under archaeological supervision until stable building material was encountered, to be reinforced with lime plaster, poured in to reinforce any voids.
- **4.5.3.** The archaeological sequence monitored was as follows:
- **4.5.4.** (103) present stone flag walkway, with flags up to 1.1m in width laid in a regular squared coursing (FIGURE 6).
- **4.5.5.** (104) bedding for (103), dark brown sandy silt 0.04m thick (PLATE 10).



Plate 10: Section of Works looking South-East, 1m Scale

4.5.6. Below (103) was (101), an interior wall infill of mid pink brown silty sand

with frequent mortar and sandstone rubble up to 0.1m in diameter with finds of 18th 19th Century china and Buckley Ware. This deposit revealed further large irregular blocks of sandstone with mortar at the limit of excavations at a depth of 0.3m. A more compact rubble infill (105), comprised of irregular sandstone pieces up to 0.4m in length, was deemed solid enough for works to cease and this rubble was left undisturbed.

4.5.7. The excavations revealed the top of the western side of the sandstone City Wall construction (102), comprised sub-rectangular and irregular sandstone blocks up to 0.5m in diameter (PLATE 11).



Plate 11: Full extent of works looking North, 1m scale

5. Discussion

- **5.1.**The excavation revealed considerable modern disturbance associated with the placement of drainage and and services. There was additional Victorian and Georgian disturbance which had resulted from the need to repair, underpin and stabilise the City Walls following the building of cellared structures against the walls.
- **5.2.**All deposits identified had a mixed composition and contained a range of artefacts dating from the Roman through to Post Medieval periods. This is indicative of deposits which had either been disturbed and redeposited over time or brought in from different areas to make up the ground.
- 5.3. Cartographic and documentary sources show that Park Street was once heavily populated with a mixture of houses and businesses. A photograph was sourced which was dated to the late 1800's. This picture shows a single terraced house which was all that remained of the previous properties against the walls. This house is located within the excavation area and it is clear that walls [12] and [15] were part of this building. It is possible that wall 15 is part of a house which appears on the 1871 Town Plan.
- 5.4. As detailed in the history section many of the earlier maps show a break between buildings in the area of the passageway. This would indicate that the passageway was in use from at least the 1780's although it is a strong possibility that the passageway could have been added as part of the Post-Civil War rebuilding of the wall. The Town Plan of 1871 shows that the gap had been blocked by this date by the building of a lean-to structure against the terrace house shown in photograph.
- **5.5.**The repair work to the city walls walkway revealed the top of the western side of the sandstone City Wall, which was of irregular sandstone blocks.

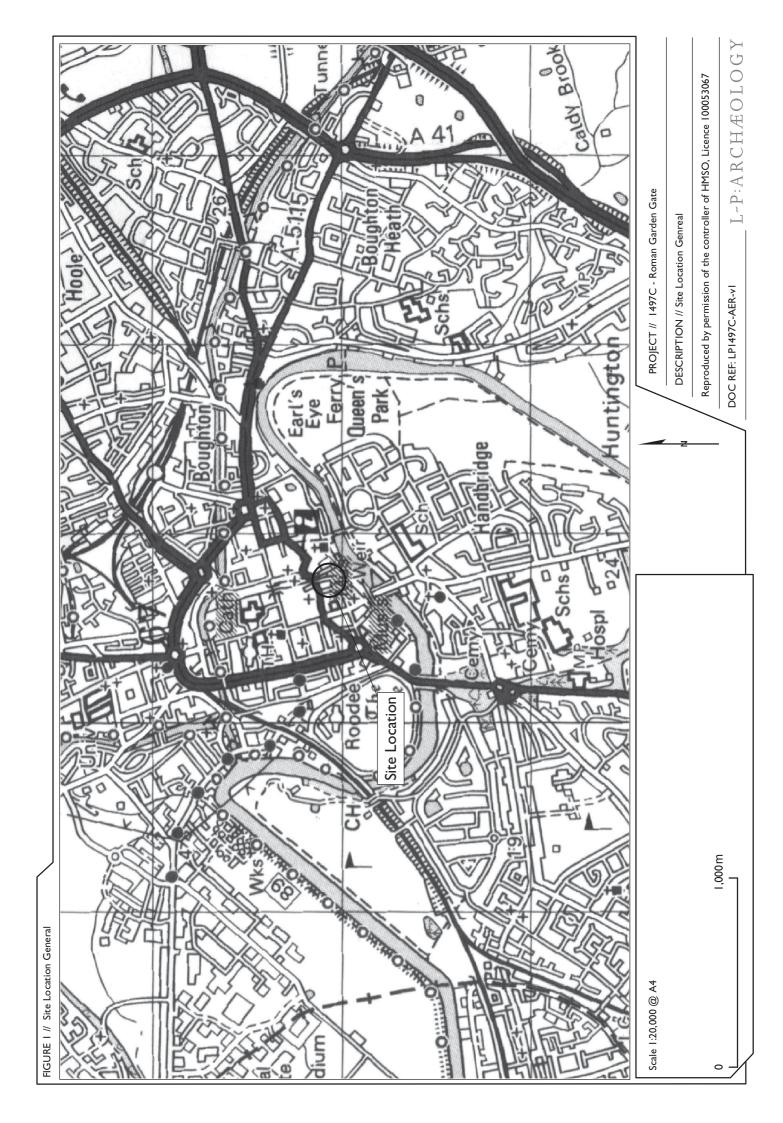
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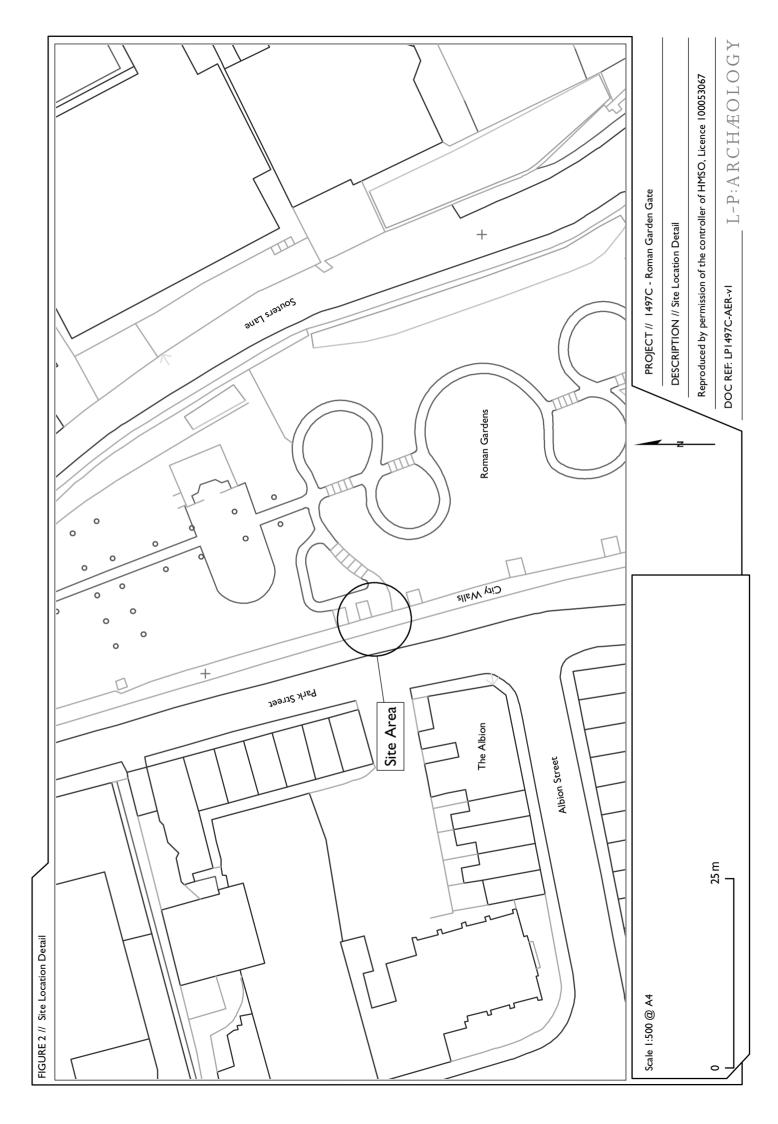
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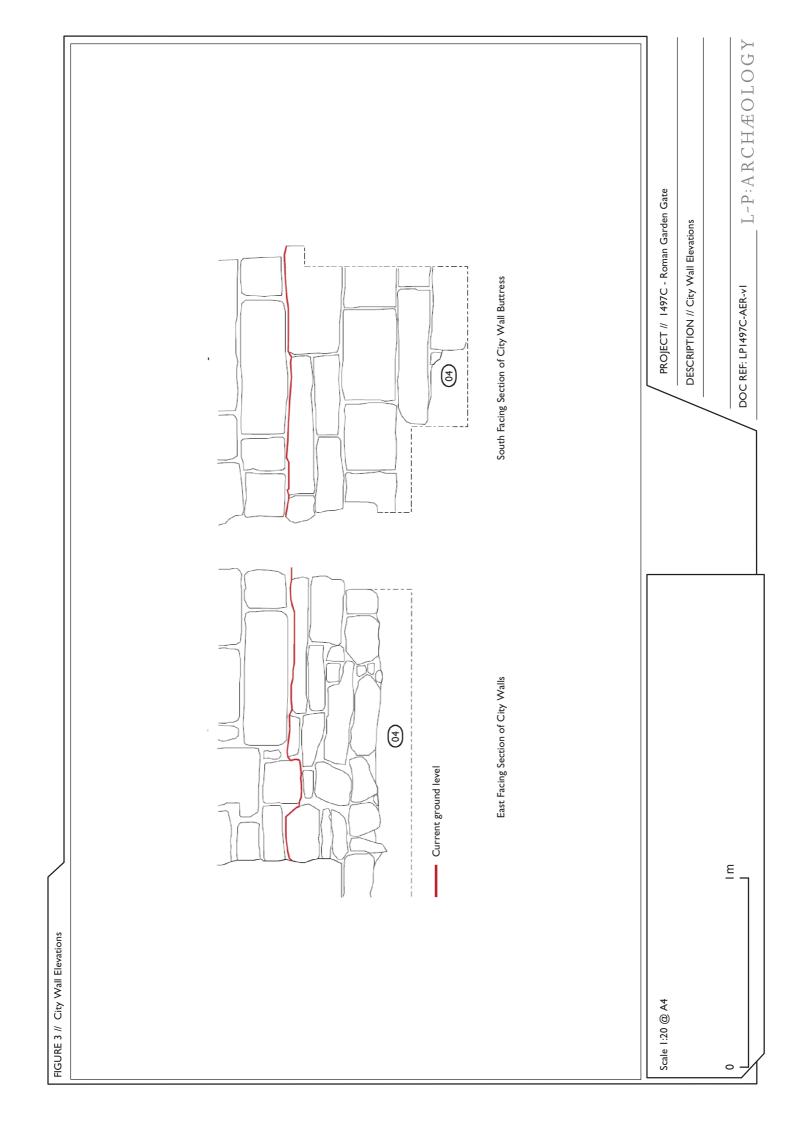
BIBLIOGRAPHIC

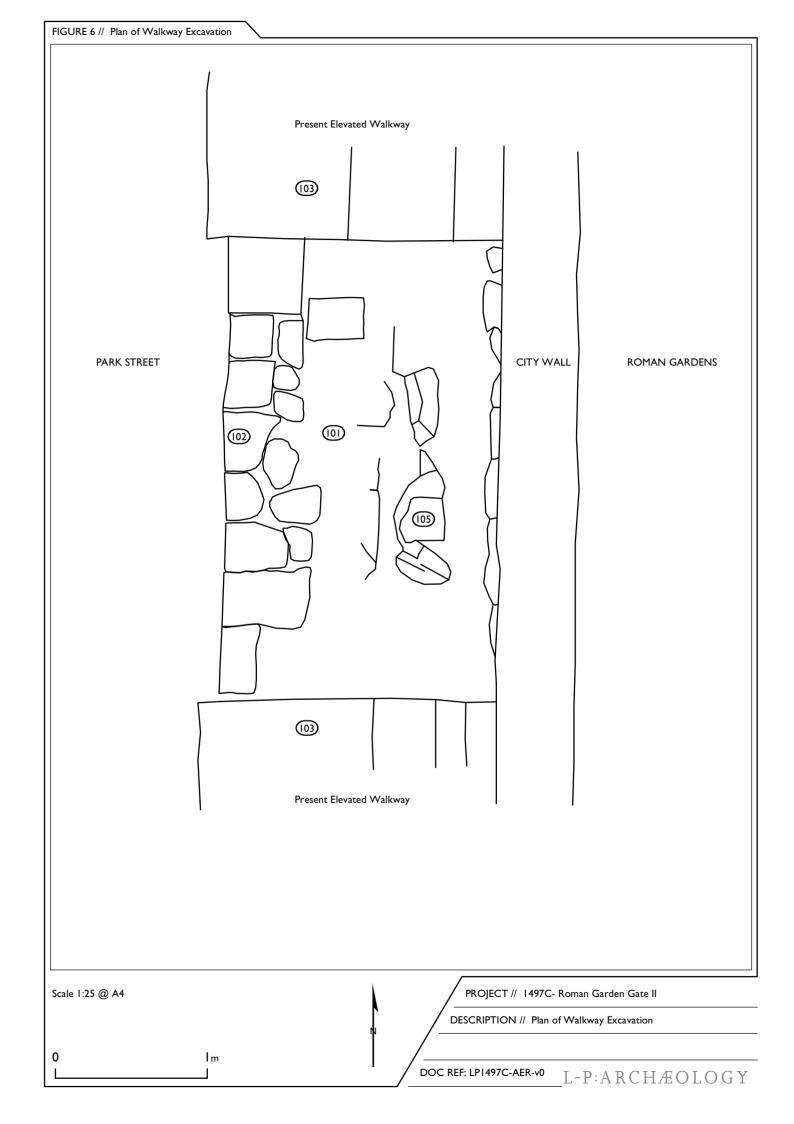
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FIGURES









OASIS FORM

APPENDIX I

OASIS FORM - Print view 23/08/2013 11:48

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

List of Projects | Manage Projects | Search Projects | New project | Change your details | HER coverage | Change country | Log out

Printable version

OASIS ID: Iparchae1-157612

Project details

Project name Roman Gardens Gateway

Short description of the

project

Archaeological watching brief on repair work to the passage through the city

walls between Park Street and the Roman Gardens

Start: 18-01-2013 End: 22-08-2013 Project dates

Previous/future work Yes / No

Any associated project

reference codes

CHE/PAS 13 - Sitecode

Type of project Recording project

Site status Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)

Site status **Conservation Area**

Scheduled Monument (SM) Site status

Current Land use Other 15 - Other WALL Medieval Monument type Significant Finds **NONE None** Investigation type "Watching Brief"

Prompt Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS

Project location

Country England

Site location CHESHIRE CHESTER CHESTER Roman Gardens gate

Postcode CH1 2DW

Study area 10.00 Square metres

Site coordinates SJ 340550 365870 52 -2 52 55 20 N 002 58 51 W Point

Min: 8.00m Max: 20.00m Height OD / Depth

Project creators

Name of Organisation L - P : Archaeology OASIS FORM - Print view 23/08/2013 11:48

Project brief originator Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District

Archaeologist)

Project design

originator

Ramboll UK Ltd

Project

Project

Blair Poole

director/manager

Project supervisor Kate Pack

Type of

sponsor/funding body

Cheshire West and Chester Council

Name of

sponsor/funding body

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Project archives

Physical Archive

No

Exists?

Digital Archive Exists? No

Paper Archive recipient Grosvenor Museum

Paper Archive ID CHE/PAS 13

Paper Contents "none"

Paper Media available "Context sheet", "Drawing", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Section"

Project bibliography 1

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OASIS:

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