NPA DURHAM

Client Report No. 343/06

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION AT EBCHESTER PRIMARY SCHOOL, EBCHESTER, CO. DURHAM

Pupils from the school visit the NPA Trenches

FOR
DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

NGR NZ 1041 5534

OASIS ID: NORTHPEN3-1693

Matthew Town BA, MA
NPA Durham
PO Box 203
Bishop Auckland
Co. Durham
DL14 4AL
Tel: (01434) 382045
Fax: (01434) 382294
Mobile: 07920 105819
Email: m.town@nparchaeology.co.uk

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

In July 2006, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd undertook an archaeological evaluation at Ebchester Primary School, Ebchester, Co. Durham. The work was requested in response to a proposal to extend the present playing field at the school to the south-west into an adjoining field. The extension would involve the levelling of the ground surface by 1.0m in depth, and as such an evaluation was requested by Durham County Council to assess whether any archaeological remains were present, and to inform the planning process. The work conformed to the standards set out in a brief provided by Durham County Council Archaeology Section, and accepted best practice.

Ebchester Primary School lies within an area of archaeological sensitivity, as it is located 70m south of the Roman fort of *Vindomora*, parts of which are a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM DU32, SMR 1911). The location of the *vicus* settlement for the fort is at present unknown, but may extend into the development area. The fort went out of use in the 4th century, and the site was reused in the medieval period; in the 7th century a monastery was established by St. Ebba, thought to be on the site of the present church (SMR 1909) to the north-west of the school (though this structure dates predominantly to the 11th century, built using reused Roman stone). A geophysical survey undertaken in 1989 at Church Close, and an archaeological investigation undertaken in 2001 on the site of the extension to the school, failed to uncover any archaeological evidence, though this appeared due to modern disturbance having truncated any putative deposits.

Two trenches were excavated in the proposed development area as part of the present scheme of works. The results of the evaluation succeeded in uncovering several archaeological features, sealed beneath the topsoil. In Trench 1, two gullies and a post-hole were identified at the north-east end of the trench. The fills of the features contained abraded Roman pottery, and it seems probable that these features are of Roman date. The trench also contained three very shallow linear features, running across the centre; these are presumed to be remnants of cultivation furrows, possibly of medieval date. A single sherd of medieval green-glazed pottery was recovered from above the furrows, within the topsoil. In Trench 2, the central cultivation furrow was seen to continue on into the trench at the north-western end, and at the south-eastern end, one of the two Roman gullies was identified again, cutting across the eastern corner of the trench. In the centre of the trench, a large sub-rectangular cut was identified, possibly a truncated pit. The pit was not fully visible, as it extended beyond the limits of excavation; two slots were excavated into the feature. The primary deposit consisted of a water-borne clay deposit, which lay beneath a layer of dumped charcoal in the eastern slot. The deposits were sealed by a layer of dirty clay, containing large quantities of Roman tile, and sherds of Roman pottery. This in turn was sealed by a deposit of redeposited natural clay. The pit may have served as a rubbish pit, and suggests probable settlement nearby, perhaps to the north in the area occupied by the playing field.

The results of the evaluation indicate that Roman archaeology is present within the development area, and the proposed scheme to level the field will directly impact on the archaeological remains. As such, the present programme of work is not sufficient to allow the development to continue, and it is recommended that further investigation of the area be undertaken, ideally as a small open area excavation, prior to future development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd (NPAL) would like to thank: Charles Mercer of Durham County Council for commissioning the project and for his assistance in facilitating the groundworks; and Richard Combes, Headteacher, and all the staff and pupils of Ebchester Primary School, for their assistance and enthusiasm during the works. NPAL would also like to thank Lee White, Assistant Archaeology Officer, of Durham County Council Archaeology Section, for her assistance on the project. The machining was ably undertaken by Darren of DD Plant Hire, who is also thanked.

The fieldwork was directed by Matthew Town, assisted by Nicola Gaskell, Martin Sowerby, James de la Rue and Joanne Wilkinson. The finds were processed and analysed by Jo Beaty and Frank Giecco, and the environmental samples were assessed by Patricia Crompton. The report was written by Matthew Town, and the drawings were produced by Nicola Gaskell. The report was edited by Juliet Reeves. The project was managed by Frank Giecco, Technical Director for NPAL.

1 INTRODUCTION AND LOCATION

1.1 Circumstances of the Project

1.1.1 Planning permission is being sought by Ebchester Primary School for the extension of the playing fields onto land adjacent to the school at Ebchester, Co. Durham (centred on NZ 1041 5534). Ebchester Primary School lies within an area of archaeological sensitivity, as it is located 70m south of the Roman fort of *Vindomora*, parts of which are a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM DU32, SMR 1911). The location of the *vicus* settlement for the fort is at present unknown, but may extend into the development area. In the 7th century AD, a monastery was established by St. Ebba, thought to be on the site of the present church (SMR 1909) to the north-west of the school. A geophysical survey undertaken in 1989 at Church Close, and an archaeological investigation undertaken in 2001 on the site of the extension to the school, failed to uncover any archaeological evidence, though this appeared due to modern disturbance having truncated any putative deposits.

1.1.2 Following initial consultation, Durham County Council Archaeology Section advised that the presence of considerable archaeological potential within the area would require an archaeological evaluation be undertaken in the first instance, to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains in the development footprint. The results of the evaluation would then inform decisions to be taken regarding any application for planning permission for the development, and would suggest mitigation measures designed to preserve any archaeological remains *in situ* or by record. This process is in line with current government advice contained within *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16; DoE 1990).

1.1.3 Durham County Council requested that North Pennines Archaeology Ltd (NPAL) submit proposals for an evaluation of the development area. NPAL provided a Project Design in accordance with a Project Brief produced by Lee White (DCCAS 2006). The Assistant Archaeology Officer for DCCAS approved the Project Design and NPAL were subsequently commissioned to undertake the work in July 2006.

1.1.4 This document sets out the results of the archaeological evaluation in the form of a short report.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and Topography

2.1.1 Ebchester is a small parish in Co. Durham, separated from Northumberland by the river Derwent, and situated 25km to the north-west of the historic centre of the city of Durham, and 6km north of the town of Consett (NGR NZ 1041 5534). The village occupies broadly low-lying ground, with the development area located on a small promontory overlooking the village to the north, and defined by a burn or stream along its southern side. The development area is currently rough pasture, defined by mature woodland along its south and east sides; a hedge and fence separate the field from the school to the north. The development area lies at approximately 100m AOD (Figure 1).

2.1.2 The underlying solid geology consists of Westphalian Coal Measures. The drift geology consists of a deep accumulation of glacial till, predominantly boulder clay interleaved with alluvial sand and gravels (British Geological Society website).

2.2 Historical Background

2.2.1 The prehistoric archaeology of the area is confined to a single discovery of a greenstone polished axe of probable Neolithic date at Mains Farm in Ebchester (Keys to the Past website). The village is best known for the Roman fort on which it now stands. The fort is mentioned in the Antonine Itinerary as *Vindomora* (Roman Britain website), and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM DU32, SMR 1911). The square fort has now been almost destroyed by modern buildings, though sections of the ramparts survive on all four sides; the south corner lies in the churchyard of St Ebba's church, north-east of the development area.

2.2.2 The fort was built to guard the crossing of Dere Street over the river Derwent, probably in AD80, and the first fort would have been built of earth and timber. Investigations by archaeologists have shown that there were at least seven phases of building in the fort itself - four in timber and three in stone (Keys to the Past website). Archaeological watching briefs on water pipeline replacements have identified that timber buildings were constructed along the line of the A694. The fort appears to have been abandoned until AD163 when it was reconstructed in stone, and the early timber buildings were flattened to make way for the main road through the fort.

2.2.3 Several legionary building stones have been recovered from the interior of Ebchester fort, five of them naming a Fifth Cohort, but none bearing the name of the parent legion (Roman Britain website). Although it is possible that this cohort were the first occupants of *Vindomora*, they are only identified on building inscriptions and centurial stones, which cannot be taken as evidence of occupation. All Roman auxiliary forts were built by the highly-trained legionaries, and not entrusted to the auxiliary soldiers who were to garrison the completed camp (Roman Britain website). Two stones carry the name of the same centurion, *Martialis*, under whose supervision some of the work at the fort was conducted (Roman Britain website). The first attested garrison unit at Ebchester is *Cohors IV Breucorum*, identified from the early third century altar to Minerva, the Roman war goddess, and also on an undated but probably contemporary building inscriptions. They were a five-hundred strong infantry regiment originally levied from

amongst the *Breuci* tribe of Pannonia Inferior, natives of the Bosna valley in north-eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina (Roman Britain website).

2.2.4 The location of the *vicus* settlement for the fort is at present unknown, but may extend into the development area. There has been relatively little research on this fort, though it is known that a simple mosaic was found here in the 1950s (Keys to the Past website). Over the years, Ebchester has revealed a small number of altars which are dedicated to a mixture of classical Roman and Germanic/Celtic gods typical of an Auxiliary fort. There are two altars naming the ancient Germanic ancestor-god *Vitiris*, and single altars dedicated to the *Genius* or 'local' god, to the Roman war deities Mars and Minerva - on separate stones - and to *Vernostonus Cocidius*, an apparent conflation of two Germanic war gods (Roman Britain website).

2.2.5 Although the fort went out of use by the end of the 4th century, being definitely abandoned by AD 410, it is probable that the site was reused again in the 7th century. The name Ebchester means '*Ebba's camp*' (Mills 2003), and it is thought that the church of St Ebba was originally a convent founded in 660AD by Ebba, the daughter of Aethelfrith, the first king of Northumbria (SMR 1909). However, Downie (2002) suggests that the 16th century source for this may in fact be incorrect. Ebba had already established a monastic house at Coldingham between 651AD and 660AD, where she was Abbess, and it is possible that there may be confusion between the two locations; he suggests the name may derive from '*Ybcestre*' meaning '*high fort*' (Downie 2002). Indeed, there are no remains of this date within the church fabric, and the present church was mainly built in the early 11th century, using stone re-used from the Roman fort. During the medieval period the area remained rural. The isolated, yet attractive, landscape encouraged many hermits to come here and the area was once known as the '*place of the anchorites*' (SMR 6784).

2.2.6 No previous works have taken place directly in the development area, though an archaeological investigation during the construction of an extension to the school in 2001 found no archaeological deposits, the construction of the school having truncated the horizons. A geophysical survey undertaken at 1-8 Church Close (SMR 6987) also failed to uncover any conclusive evidence.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Project Design

3.1.1 A project design was prepared in response to a brief prepared by Durham County Council Archaeology Section for an archaeological field evaluation. This included a detailed specification of works to be carried out, which consisted of a visual site inspection, and the excavation of a series of trial trenches and a programme of post excavation and reporting.

3.2 Site Investigation

3.2.1 A site visit was made on June 27th 2006 by Frank Giecco, Technical Director for NPA Ltd. This was in order to note any surface features of potential archaeological interest and to identify any potential hazards to health and safety, such as the presence of live services or constraints to undertaking archaeological fieldwork, such as Tree Preservation orders and public footpaths.

3.2.2 Access to the development area was only possible via the school grounds, and therefore a section of fencing required removal in order to gain access to the field. The machine was able to access the site via a gap in the hedge, without damaging any vegetation. The field contained three horses at the time of excavation; these were kept clear of the trenches by means of barrier fencing held up by road pins. All machine movement through the grounds was monitored by a member of staff as a safety precaution, when the pupils were indoors.

3.2.3 No known services or other hazards lay within the proposed position of the trenches.

3.3 Archaeological Evaluation

3.3.1 The archaeological evaluation consisted of the excavation of two linear trial trenches measuring 19m x 1.6m, which provided a 5% sample of an area of 1200m² (Figure 3). This was in order to produce a predictive model of surviving archaeological remains detailing zones of relevant importance against known development proposals.

3.3.2 In summary, the main objectives of the excavation were:

- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record these were they are observed;
- to establish the character of those features in terms of cuts, soil matrices and interfaces;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
- to recover palaeoenvironmental material where it survives in order to understand site and landscape formation processes.

3.3.3 Each trench was mechanically excavated by a 1.5 tonne mini-digger equipped with a toothless ditching bucket, under archaeological supervision, to the natural substrate. Each trench was then manually cleaned where possible and any putative archaeological features investigated.

3.3.4 Photography was undertaken using Canon EOS 100 and EOS 300V Single Lens Reflex (SLR) cameras. A photographic record was made using digital photography, Black and White Print and Colour Slide film.

3.3.5 All work was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (IFA 1994).

3.4 Project Archive

3.4.1 The full archive has been produced to a professional standard in accordance with the current English Heritage guidelines set out in the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 2nd Ed. 1991). The archive will be deposited within an appropriate repository and a copy of the report given to the County Sites and Monuments Record, where viewing will be available on request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier NPA 06 EBC-A.

4 EVALUATION RESULTS

4.1 Trench 1

4.1.1 Trench 1 was 19m long by 1.6m wide, and was orientated approximately north-east south-west (Figure 4). It was positioned in the western half of the development area. The maximum depth of the trench was 0.60m.

4.1.2 The machining removed approximately 0.60m of firm mid greyish brown silty sand to clay **(100)**, which comprised the relic plough soil within the field. Beneath the plough soil, the natural drift geology **(127)**, comprising a very firm mottled mid to light pinkish grey boulder clay, was observed. A number of features were observed cutting the natural, and sealed by the topsoil.

4.1.3 At the north-eastern end of the trench, a shallow gully **[102]** was noted, running NW-SE, and extending beyond the limits of excavation. The gully measured 0.52m in width and 1.6m in length, and was excavated to 0.20m in depth. The gully had sharp top and base breaks of slope, moderately steep sloping sides and a flat base. The gully was filled with **(101)** a compacted reddish brown clayey silt, containing occasional small stones. The fill contained a number of pieces of Roman tile, and a sherd of abraded Roman Samian pottery, which suggests a Roman date for this feature. Approximately 2.3m to the south-west, a similar gully was also noted, on an identical alignment to the first, and also extending beyond the limits of the excavation. This gully **[106]** measured 1.6m in length, by 0.6m in width, and was excavated to a depth of 0.17m. The profile of this feature was similar to **[106]**, having moderately steep sloping sides and a flat base. The fill of the feature **(105)** was also similar to **(101)**, being a mid to light brownish grey clayey silt, with occasional small stones. Fragments of CBM were recovered from this feature, and it is likely that this feature is also Roman in date, as both features appeared to have served a similar function, perhaps as drainage ditches to a track. Between the two gullies, and immediately north-east of **[106]**, a small sub-circular pit or posthole **[104]** was noted, measuring 0.38m in diameter and excavated to a depth of 0.10m. The feature had sloping sides, and a rounded base, and was filled with **(103)**, a compacted mid to light grey clayey silt. A single fragment of CBM was recovered from this feature, and the fill appeared contemporary with the two gullies, implying a probable Roman date.

4.1.4 In the centre of the trench, three broad linear cut features were noted, running NW-SE and extending beyond the limit of the trench (linears **[108]**, **[110]**, and **[112]**). All three linears were very shallow, being only between 0.05m and 0.08m in depth, and were of similar width at around 1m. The features were filled with a grey to mid brown compacted clayey silt, containing small stones (fills **(107)**, **(109)**, and **(111)**). The features were arranged approximately 1.2m apart, and appear to be possible cultivation furrows, probably of medieval date (a sherd of medieval green-glazed pottery was recovered from within the plough soil directly above these features). The south-westernmost feature also corresponds with an earthwork still visible in the field. The sinuous layout of the field appears to have originated from enclosure of medieval ridge-and-furrow, creating a strip field, so the presence of medieval agricultural features is not surprising.

4.1.5 No further archaeological features were found in the base of Trench 1, and the natural geology begins to drop away down to the burn 4m from the south-east end of the trench, providing a physical limit to the human activity in this area.

4.2 Trench 2

4.2.1 Trench 2 was 19m long by 1.6m wide, and was orientated approximately north-west south-east (Figure 5). It was positioned immediately east of Trench 1, to assess the eastern half of the development plot. The maximum depth of the trench was 0.45m.

4.2.2 The machining removed approximately 0.45m of firm mid greyish brown silty sand to clay **(119)**, which comprised the relic plough soil within the field. Beneath the plough soil, the natural drift geology **(118)**, comprising a very firm mottled mid to light pinkish grey boulder clay, was observed. A number of features were observed cutting the natural, and sealed by the topsoil.

4.2.3 At the north-western end of the trench, the central of the three possible medieval cultivation furrows observed in Trench 1 was seen to continue through into this trench. The furrow, **[120]**, measured 1.04m in width by 7.10m in length, and was excavated to 0.09m in depth. Only the northern side of the feature was visible, and the feature extended to the west and east beyond the limits of excavation. The furrow had a sharp edge break and gradual sloping sides, and a broadly flat base. The fill of furrow **(128)** consisted of a mid brown clayey silt, with occasional sub-rounded stone inclusions. No dating material was recovered from this feature.

4.2.4 In the centre of the trench, a large sub-rectangular feature, probably a rubbish pit and/or a pond, was noted, measuring approximately 4m in diameter, and extending north-east and south-west beyond the limits of excavation. Two slots were excavated through this feature, on the north-west and south-east sides, both measuring 0.4m in width. The cut of the feature **[113]/[126]** was fairly well-pronounced on the south-east side, with a sharp top edge break and sloping sides, with a broadly flat base; in contrast, the north-west side of the feature was almost imperceptible, and appears to have been truncated away by ploughing. The feature was excavated to 0.38m in depth. The primary fill of the cut **(114)/(125)**, consisted of a bluish grey mixed sandy clay and silt, with iron pan and small stone inclusions, and was excavated to 0.15m in depth. This appears to have been derived from silting, suggesting the feature held water originally. In the south-eastern slot, a deposit of charcoal-rich blackish grey clayey silt **(115)** was noted, extending from the north-eastern side of the slot and petering out to the south-west. The deposit measured 0.06m in depth, and appears to represent a deliberate dump of burnt material into the feature. The deposit was sealed with a dark brownish grey clayey silt **(116)/(124)**, containing occasional sub-rounded medium to large cobbles and stones, and frequent large pieces of CBM (including box tile). The deposit was excavated to 0.2m in depth, and was found to also contain a number of sherds of Roman pottery, including mortaria and Crambeck Ware; it appears to represent deliberate back-filling. The feature was sealed by a layer of very firm redeposited orange clay natural **(117)/(123)** excavated to a depth of 0.08m, and also representing deliberate backfilling. The presence of large quantities of building debris within the pit suggests a probable settlement close by.

4.2.5 At the eastern end of the trench, a gully **[121]** was noted; only the southern edge of the feature was visible as the north, west and east sides extended beyond the limits of

excavation. The gully measured 0.50m in width, and was excavated to 0.18m in depth. The top edge break of the cut was fairly gradual, with shallow sloping sides and a rounded base. The sole fill of the gully consisted of a firm mid-orangey brown clayey silt **(122)**, with rare sub-angular stone inclusions. No finds were recovered from this feature, but it may correlate with gully **[104]** seen in Trench 1.

4.2.6 No further archaeological features were found in the base of Trench 2.

5 THE FINDS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The pottery and other artefactual material has been cleaned, marked and packaged according to standard guidelines, and recorded under the supervision of Frank Giecco. The pottery and finds are quantified in Table 1.

5.2 The Roman Pottery

5.2.1 A total of twenty-four fragments of Roman pottery were recovered during the excavation of both trenches, all from secure contexts.

5.2.2 Twenty-three sherds were recovered from Trench 2. The assemblage from context (**116**) consisted of 1 sherd of abraded samian, 1 sherd of mortaria, 1 sherd of abraded colour coated ware and 8 sherds of Roman coarse ware. Context (**124**) produced a further 11 sherds, and consisted of 2 sherds of mortaria, 2 sherds of drinking beaker (from the same vessel), 6 sherds of Parchment Crambeck Ware with a hard, yellowish-white fabric and 2 sherds of Roman coarse greyware. One additional sherd of undiagnostic abraded samian was recovered from context **(101)** in Trench 1.

5.2.3 The broad dating for this material is likely to date from the mid third century into the fourth.

5.3 The Tile

5.3.1 A total of forty-four fragments of Roman brick and tile were recovered during the evaluation, with the bulk of these located in contexts **(116)** and **(124)** within Trench 2, and few small fragments retrieved from the gully fills in Trench 1. The majority of the assemblage (twenty-five fragments) was made up of small undiagnostic brick/tile fragments in a hard fired bright orange sandy fabric, which are likely to have been locally produced in an as yet unidentified production site.

5.3.2 In addition to the undiagnostic brick fragments, 7 fragments of *imbrices,* (3 fragments from context (**116)** and 4 fragments from context (**124)**), and 10 fragments of *tegulae* (4 fragments from context **(116)** and 6 from context (**124)**). Contexts **(116**) and **(124)** also produced a fragment each of box tile, one still exhibiting traces of sooting.

5.3.3 This small assemblage of tile hints at a substantial Romano British building with a tiled roof and internal heating system in the vicinity of Trench 2.

5.4 The Medieval Pottery

5.4.1 A single body sherd of partially reduced green glazed pottery was recovered from the topsoil **(100)** of Trench 1. This fragment is likely to have come from a jar or jug and date from the 13th/14th century.

Context	Trench	Material	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Period
100	1	Pottery	1	0.019	Medieval
101	1	C.B.M. (Tile)	8	0.038	Roman
101	1	Samian	1	0.001	Roman
101	1	Charcoal	1	0.001	Roman
105	1	C.B.M. (Tile)	3	0.006	Roman
103	1	C.B.M. (Tile)	1	0.001	Roman
116	2	Pottery	10	0.059	Roman
116	2	Samian	1	0.001	Roman
116	2	C.B.M. (Tile)	20	1.553	Roman
124	2	C.B.M. (Tile)	12	0.745	Roman
124	2	Pottery	12	0.036	Roman

Table 1: The finds assemblage by context

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND BONE REPORT

6.1 Introduction – Environmental Remains

6.1.1 In the trenches excavated, some six contexts were considered worth sampling. Three of the samples came from ditch or gully fills, one was a lens of charcoal between two contexts and two were pit or post-hole fills. All six whole earth samples were selected for processing in order to assess their environmental potential. This will help provide further information as to the depositional processes involved in their formation. The methodology employed required that the whole earth samples be broken down and split into their various different components. This was achieved by a combination of water washing and flotation. The recovered remains can then be assessed for content.

6.1.2 Flotation separates the organic, floating fraction of the sample from the heavier mineral and finds content of sands, silts, clays, stones, artefacts and waterlogged material. Heavy soil and sediment content measuring less than 1mm falls through the retentive mesh to settle on the bottom of the tank. Flotation produces a 'flot' and a 'residue' for examination, whilst the heavier sediment retained in the tank is discarded. The method relies purely on the variation in density of the recovered material to separate it from the soil matrix, allowing for the recovery of ecofacts and artefacts from the whole earth sample.

6.1.3 The retent, like the residue from wet sieving, will contain any larger items of bone, or artefacts. The flot or floating fraction will generally contain organic material such as plant matter, fine bones, cloth, leather and insect remains. A rapid scan at this stage will allow further recommendations to be made as to the potential for further study by entomologists or palaeobotanists, with a view to retrieving vital economic information from the samples. Favourable preservation conditions can lead to the retrieval of organic remains that may produce a valuable suite of information in respect of the depositional environment of the material, which may include anthropogenic activity, seasonality and climate and elements of the economy.

6.1.4 The contents of the samples are listed below in Tables 2 and 3.

SAMPLE NUMBER	CONTEXT NUMBER	SAMPLE SIZE (litres)	FLOT SIZE (cm^3)	RETENT SIZE (cm^3)
1	101	10	50	4000
2	103	10	20	2000
3	105	10	50	2500
4	115	10	100	3000
5	116	20	100	1500
6	122	10	250	1000

Table 2 Details of samples and contexts

DETAILS			RETENT FRACTION							LIGHT FRACTION													
Context	Context type	Sample number	Root material	Charred wood	Waterlogged wood	Burnt bone	Pottery	Gravel	Stones	Insects	Charred wood	Root material	Charred wheat	Charred oats	Charred barley	Grass	Chenopodium	Raspberry	Scirpus	Ranunculus	Other seeds	Twigs	Woody plant parts
101	Fill	1	0	1	0	0	1	3	2	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
103	Fill	2	0	1	0	0	0	3	2	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
105	Fill	3	0	1	0	0	0	3	2	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
115	Dep	4	0	3	0	0	3	2	2	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
116	Fill	5	0	2	0	0	1	3	2	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
122	Fill	6	0	2	0	0	0	2	3	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0

Table 3 Contents of flot and retent residues from samples.

Key to tables: Fill = ditch, posthole or pit fill, Dep = deposit. Contents assessed by scale of richness 0 to 3. 0 = not present, 1 = present, 2 = common, 3 = abundant.

6.1.5 **Sample 1 (Context 101)** : this sample was from the fill of a linear feature. The matrix was a reddish brown clay silt with inclusions of occasional small stones. The retent was made up of stones and gritty gravel with a small amount of charred wood and Roman pottery. The flot contained mainly root material. A seed of raspberry and one of *Scirpus* species were also present with a small amount of charred wood.

6.1.6 **Sample 2 (Context 103)**: this sample also came from the fill of a posthole or pit and was a hard compacted mid to light grey clay silt. The retent of this sample was made up of gravel and stones with a small amount of charred wood present. The flot contained mainly root material with a small amount of charred wood also present.

6.1.7 **Sample 3 (Context 105):** this fill comes from a shallow linear feature and was a hard compacted brown grey clay silt with inclusions of occasional stones. The retent produced only stones and gravel with a small amount of charred wood. The flot yielded only root material and a small amount of charred wood.

6.1.8 **Sample 4 (Context 115):** this sample came from a lens of charcoal between 2 fills and appeared to be a deliberate dump. The soil was a dark blackish grey clayey silt with frequent charcoal inclusions throughout. The retent of this sample was made up of gravel and stones with a large amount of charred wood and small amount of pottery. The flot contained a large amount of charred wood and a seed of *Ranunculus* species.

6.1.9 **Sample 5 (Context 116):** from this friable dark brownish grey clayey silt, the probable deliberate backfill of a pit, there were inclusions of CBM and Roman pottery. The retent was mainly stones and gravel with an amount of charred wood and a small amount of Roman pottery. The flot was mainly root material with some charred wood and a modern seed of *Ranunculus* sp. and a metal droplet, probably from some type of metalworking.

6.1.10 **Sample 6 (Context 122):** from this firm mid orangey brown clayey silt, the fill of a gully, the retent produced only stones and gravel with an amount of charred wood. The flot yielded mostly root material and an amount of small twigs and charred wood.

6.2 Discussion

6.2.1 The flot samples recovered yielded very few seeds and these as only weeds. Charred wood occurred in all the samples to a degree and was especially prolific in **<4>**, context (**115)**. Artefacts recovered included Roman pottery and, as seen above, very few ecofacts. The dating of these features can be said to be Roman from the artefactual evidence but very little can be learned from these samples as to the conditions at the time of deposition. Most of the charcoal is probably due to soil management practices.

6.3 Dating

6.3.1 There is enough charred organic material for a radiocarbon date to be done but considering the secure dating given from the artefacts this is not deemed necessary.

6.4 Conclusion and recommendations

6.4.1 The potential for further information being gained from the examination of this material is limited and so it is recommended that no further work be done. If further excavation were to be undertaken, however, a firm sampling strategy must be implemented as, from the artefactual evidence there is obviously some evidence of archaeological activity in the vicinity.

6.5 Vertebrate Remains

6.5.1 No vertebrate remains were recovered from the site.

6.6 Mollusc Remains

6.6.1 No mollusc remains were recovered from the site.

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The results of the archaeological evaluation clearly indicate the presence of Roman archaeological remains within the development area, in the form of a series of gullies, a posthole and a possible pond or rubbish pit. The presence of these features is perhaps unremarkable given the close proximity of the development area to the fort; the presence of these features has served to confirm the presence of *vicus* activity in the area which was hitherto unknown, and the gullies hint at the possibility of a trackway or drainage gullies, perhaps for agricultural purposes. However, of most interest is the pit, which appears to indicate domestic activity in close proximity. Of particular interest are the quantities of tiles, particularly box flue remnants, which can only have derived from a Roman house equipped with heating systems. The location of this building must be speculative; however, it must be close to the location of the pit, as the land to the south and east is defined by the burn, which presumably must have been a physical barrier in Roman times as well. The conclusion can only be that the building lay either close to or within the development area, or to the north in the school grounds.

7.2 The results of the evaluation indicate that Roman archaeology is present within the development area, that further remains are almost certainly likely to be present, and the proposed scheme to level the field will directly impact on these archaeological remains. As such, the present programme of archaeological work cannot be deemed sufficient to allow the development to continue, and it is recommended that further investigation of the area be undertaken, ideally as a small open area excavation, prior to future development.

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Roman Britain website (http://www.roman-britain.org/places/vindomora.htm)

9 APPENDIX 1 – CONTEXT INDEX

Context Number	*Trench*	*Type*	*Description*
100	1	Layer	Topsoil
101	1	Fill	Gully
102	1	Cut	Gully
103	1	Fill	Posthole
104	1	Cut	Posthole
105	1	Fill	Gully
106	1	Cut	Gully
107	1	Fill	Furrow
108	1	Cut	Furrow
109	1	Fill	Furrow
110	1	Cut	Furrow
111	1	Fill	Furrow
112	1	Cut	Furrow
113	2	Cut	Pit
114	2	Fill	Pit
115	2	Fill	Pit
116	2	Fill	Pit
117	2	Fill	Pit
118	2	Layer	Natural
119	2	Layer	Topsoil
120	2	Cut	Furrow
121	2	Cut	Gully
122	2	Fill	Gully
123	2	Fill	Pit
124	2	Fill	Pit
125	2	Fill	Pit
126	2	Cut	Pit
127	1	Layer	Natural
128	2	Fill	Furrow

Table 1: Context Index

10 APPENDIX 2 – ILLUSTRATIONS