

# CFA Archaeology Ltd

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## **Whitefield Road, Warrington** **Archaeological Watching Brief**

**Report No. Y090/13**

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## **Summary**

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd on gas pipeline improvement works on Whitefield Road, Warrington during April 2013. The excavation of a series of test pits and access trenches were monitored by a qualified archaeologist. No archaeological features were encountered during the watching brief.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 General**

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) on behalf of North West Gas Alliance, during April 2013. The CFA code and number for the project is Y2104/WHRW.

All work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation by CFA Archaeology (2013).

#### **1.2 Site Location and Description**

The development area is located in the suburb of Stockton Heath within the town of Warrington, with the work monitored taking place on Whitefield Road (Fig. 1, NGR: SJ 611 858). The site was bound to the east and west by existing residential properties, to the north by the A56 Walton road, and to the south by the Bridgewater Canal. The church of St. Thomas is in close vicinity to the north, while further to the southeast is the church of St Monica's.

The site at the time of groundworks consisted of tarmac pavements and road surfaces, with a height of 20.4m above the Ordnance Datum.

The underlying solid geology is Wilmslow Sandstone Formation consisting of sedimentary bedrock. The superficial geology consists of Shirdley Hill Sand Formation-Sand (BGS 2013).

#### **1.3 Previous Archaeological work and Historical Background**

Excavations 600m to the north of the area of archaeological interest during 1974-6 at Lousher's Lane revealed a small pit which was apparently of pre-Roman date and contained a sherd of coarse, gritty pottery, which was possibly Iron Age. These excavations also revealed residual flintwork in a number of Romano-British features (Hinchliffe and Williams 1992, 100).

There is general agreement that Roman settlement began at Wilderspool, located approximately 1200 metres north of the area under investigation, on the south bank of the river Mersey towards the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Here it is suggested that Roman interest in the site was originally strategic, since it was the lowest crossing point of the Mersey on the road north (Shaw and Clark 2003). Later, the industrial importance of the area, servicing the needs of the Roman army in north Britain, superseded the military priorities.

It was previously considered that major settlement at Wilderspool ceased around 160 AD, but recent work suggests that occupation continued at least into the early to mid 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, while that at Loushers Lane, 600m to the north of the site, may have continued later still.

Activity in this region continued in the early medieval period and during the construction of Walton Locks, the remains of a log boat were found (L-P Archaeology 2005, 10-7).

No previous work is believed to have taken place in the area marked as of archaeological interest in this case, although previous work to the east of the site includes a geophysical survey undertaken by Channel 4's Time Team as part of a wider investigation into possible surviving Roman features, although no detectable archaeological anomalies were discovered (Wood 2006).

## **1.4 Aims**

The aims of the evaluation were:

- to determine the form and function of any archaeological features encountered
- to determine the spatial arrangement of any archaeological features encountered
- to, as far as practicable, recover dating evidence from the archaeological features
- to establish the sequence of any archaeological remains present on the site

## **2. WORKING METHODS**

### **2.1 General**

All work was undertaken according to the Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct, and relevant Standards and Guidance documents (IfA 1996), and the terms of the specification.

All excavation and on-site recording was carried out according to standard CFA procedures, principally by drawing, photography and by completing standard CFA record forms.

The excavation of the access pits and trenches was carried out using a mechanical excavator equipped with a smooth-bladed bucket under constant archaeological supervision, and in some cases by hand digging. Spoil resulting from the excavation of the access pits and trenches were regularly scanned for finds.

## **2.2 Standards and Guidance**

CFA Archaeology is a registered organisation (RO) with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA). All work was conducted in accordance with relevant IfA Standards and Guidance documents (IfA 1996), English Heritage guidance (EH, 2005, 2006, 2008, and 2011), and CFA's standard methodology.

## **2.3 Archiving**

The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, plans and reports, will be deposited at the appropriate museum within an agreed timescale. The archive will be ordered, indexed and conform to the requirements of the depositing museum and to all relevant professional guidance (Brown 2011, UKIC 2001). A summary of the results of archaeological works will be submitted for inclusion in OASIS.

## **3. RESULTS**

A full overview of each test pit/access trench is provided in Appendix 1 at the back of the report.

A total of 14 test pits and access trenches were excavated in the area designated as having potential archaeological interest during the watching brief (Fig. 1).

The natural subsoil was not encountered in any of the pits or access trenches excavated, the deepest of which was excavated to 1.4m below the modern ground surface (see Appendix 1). The deposits encountered in the pits and access trenches largely consisted of brown silty sand, with modern 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century pottery noted within this soil. After excavation a series of modern pipes and cables were exposed in the majority of the test pits/access trenches, at which point excavation ceased.

No archaeological features or finds were recovered from any of the test pits or access trenches monitored during the extent of the watching brief.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

The watching brief successfully monitored the excavation of test pits and access trenches for the gas pipeline improvements on Whitefield Road, Warrington. No archaeological features were exposed during these excavations, with the depth of the test pits and access trenches themselves not being sufficiently deep to disturb any potential early archaeology that may have survived in the area.

At the depth of excavation monitored during this watching brief, it appears likely that the excavations for the installation of the original gas and other services pipe work had previously truncated any earlier possible archaeology in the area, with the deposits removed during this watching brief representing the backfill of these earlier excavations.

## 5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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### Online Resources

BGS, 2013. <http://www.bgs.ac.uk> (Accessed 15/4/13)

## APPENDICES



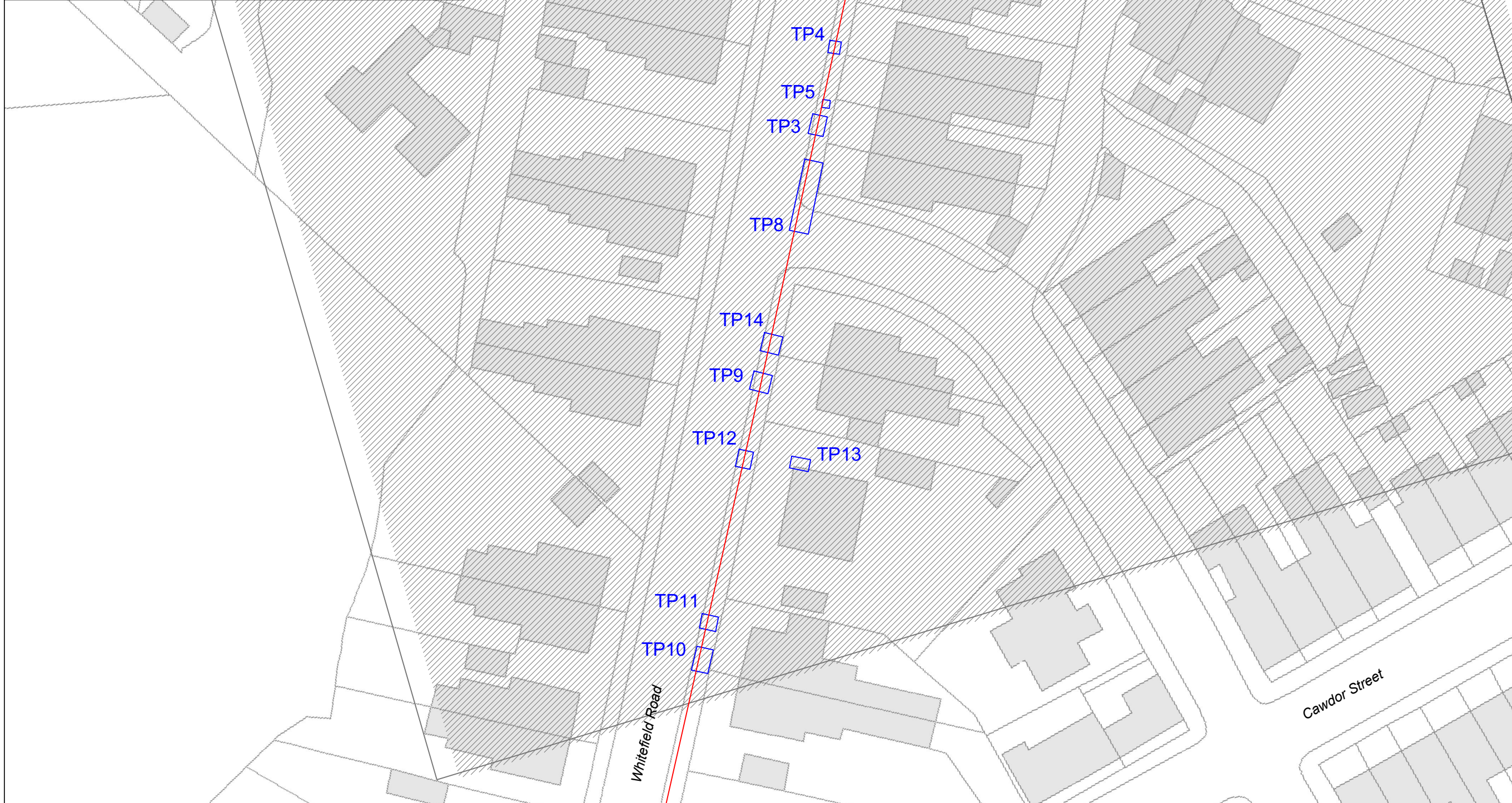
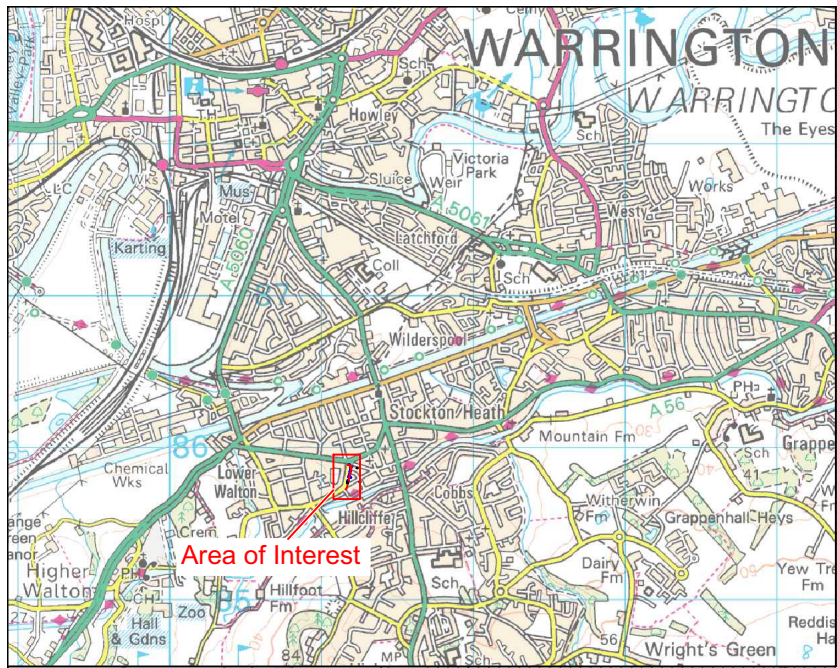
## Appendix 1: Test Pit and Access Trench Details

Number	Type	Size (m)	Depth (m)	Description
TP1	Test Pit	0.5 x 0.3	1.2	Contained one service pipe junction
TP2	Access Trench	7 x 0.3	0.6	Contained one yellow gas pipe, one green water pipe
TP3	Test Pit	0.8 x 0.3	1.0	Contained three services
TP4	Test Pit	0.5 x 0.3	1.35	Contained one service
TP 5	Test Pit	0.5 x 0.3	0.7	Contained two services
TP 6	Access Trench	5 x 0.3	0.6	Contained one yellow gas pipe
TP 7	Access Trench	5 x 0.3	0.35	Contained one green service pipe
TP 8	Access Trench	4 x 0.3	0.7	Contained one yellow gas pipe, one green service pipe and one possible land drain
TP 9	Test Pit	1.2 x 0.5	0.8	Contained two services
TP 10	Test Pit	1.2 x 1.2	1.2	Contained three services
TP 11	Test Pit	1 x 1.2	1.4	Contained two services
TP 12	Test Pit	1 x 1.2	1.0	Contained one service pipe junction
TP 13	Test Pit	2 x 0.3	0.35	Contained one service
TP 14	Test Pit	1 x 1.2	1.1	Contained two services

## Appendix 2: Photographic Register

No	Contexts/description	Facing	Conditions
1	Test Pit 1, fully excavated	West	Cloudy
2	Test Pit 3, fully excavated	West	Cloudy
3	Test Pit 2, access trench, fully excavated	North	Cloudy
4	Test Pit 2, access trench, fully excavated	West	Cloudy
5	Test Pit 1, fully excavated	West	Cloudy
6	Test Pit 4, fully excavated	West	Cloudy
7	Test Pit 5, fully excavated	West	Cloudy
8	Test Pit 6, access trench, fully excavated	South	Cloudy
9	Test Pit 7, access trench fully excavated	East	Cloudy
10	Test Pit 7, access trench, fully excavated	Northwest	Cloudy
11	Test Pit 8, access trench, fully excavated	South	Cloudy
12	Test Pit 8, access trench, west facing section	West	Cloudy
13	General site shot of Whitefield Road	South	Cloudy
14	Test Pit 9, fully excavated	West	Cloudy
15	Test Pit 10, fully excavated	West	Cloudy
16	Test Pit 11, fully excavated	West	Cloudy
17	Test Pit 12, fully excavated	West	Cloudy
18	Test Pit 13, fully excavated	West	Cloudy
19	Test Pit 14, fully excavated	West	Cloudy

**Figure 1**



- Key:
- Test pits / access Trenches
  - Gas pipelines within watching brief area
  - Area of Archaeological Interest

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Fig. No: 1      Revision: A

Title:  
**Test pit and access trench locations**

Project:  
**Whitefield Road, Warrington**

Client:  
**North West Gas Alliance**

Scale at A3:  
**1:500**

Drawn by: TB      Checked: KH      Report No: Y090/13

**Plates 1-3**



Plate 1: Test Pit 2 access trench fully excavated, shot facing east



Plate 2: Test Pit 3 fully excavated, shot facing east



Plate 3: Test Pit 11 fully excavated, shot facing east