

RECENT WORK IN NORTH LANCASHIRE UNDERTAKEN BY LUAU

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Since arriving at the Archaeological Unit in May 1994 I have witnessed a considerable increase in the amount of work undertaken by the Unit. We have always worked throughout Cumbria and Lancashire but increasingly we are working farther afield, the West Midlands, in Essex and even in Nepal! This has happened in part because there is insufficient work locally to maintain an organisation of the Unit's size and diverse skills base, so we have sought work elsewhere. More importantly, however, it has occurred because of a growth in demand of skill areas where the unit is particularly strong, for example in industrial or buildings archaeology. Nevertheless, we have continued to provide a local archaeological service, supplying advice and practical assistance to a wide range of clients needing archaeological input into projects in order to meet the requirements of the planning process. The Unit has also continued to undertake grant-aided research into aspects of the past of North Lancashire and as a result has published The Wetlands of North Lancashire, a substantial contribution to the understanding of the formation and past exploitation of the lowlands of Lancashire.¹ Other local projects carried out between May 1994 and August 1995 are briefly detailed in the following résumé.

Projects in Lancaster

In March a watching brief was carried out within Lancaster Castle during alterations to the former hospital of H M Prison Lancaster. Little of significance was noted.² In July 1995, however, a watching brief and excavation was undertaken during alterations to the yard area behind the gatehouse, here important well-stratified deposits of Roman, medieval and post-medieval date were encountered.³ In most cases they were not investigated as the development proposals were such that their immediate survival was not in jeopardy. Amongst the finds was a column capital believed at present to be of likely Anglo-Saxon date and therefore possibly to belong to the Anglo-Saxon church known to have been sited on Castle Hill.

Elsewhere in Lancaster, the Unit carried out evaluations at Pye Motors site, at 3 Dalton Square and at the former MFI site in Aldcliffe Road, as well as a watching brief in George Street. Only the work undertaken at 3 Dalton Square produced archaeologically significant results.⁴ There in May 1995 two 2 x 3m trial trenches were excavated in the open garden area to the rear of the site. They revealed a substantial masonry wall, 0.9m wide, bonded with lime mortar, and orientated north-south. The wall was not aligned in accordance with existing buildings and appeared to continue beyond the northern limit of the site. The demolition material overlying the wall contained pottery and glass of later medieval date. Remains of the Dominican (Blackfriars) Friary church have been found previously immediately to the north of 3 Dalton Square. Any contemporary remains to the south of such a church are likely to belong to the cloister. The wall found at 3 Dalton Square seems to be medieval in date and it is likely that it formed part of the claustral range of the Friary.

The Roman Road from Kirkham to Ribchester.

During the past year the Unit has had two opportunities to examine sections of the Roman road between Kirkham and Ribchester. A watching brief was carried out in October 1994 on the site of a new planetarium in Longridge.⁵ Previous work in the area indicated that the site lay on the route of the Roman road. The work involved the observation of top soil stripping, levelling and the digging of building foundation trenches. A band of pebbles, 0.15m deep, was noted that might be the surface of the road, though a natural origin for this feature could not be discounted. If the pebbles did form the road surface it would appear that the road in the vicinity was not well made. There were no signs of *agger* ditches to the sides of the supposed road course.

In January 1995 four trenches were placed across the road route to the south-east of Longridge Road at Red Scar, Preston, as part of an evaluation undertaken in advance of development.⁶ The road was found to be approximately in the position indicated on the Ordnance Survey map. It had an average width of 9m, and a cambered surface composed of sub-

rounded stones and cobbles, with finer gravels acting as a capping. Again there was no evidence of *agger* ditches. Following the evaluation one trench was fully excavated by hand to record a section through the road. The road as revealed was shown to be of a single construction phase, lacking any evidence for resurfacing. The stones forming the surface lay on top of a 0.10m deep bedding deposit of sand. Below the sand was a deposit containing much burnt material which appears to represent a phase of vegetation clearance preceding the road building. The two areas of the road investigated, albeit producing only limited evidence, indicate that the road was not a major route way, nor does it seem to have been intensively used.

Projects in Ribchester

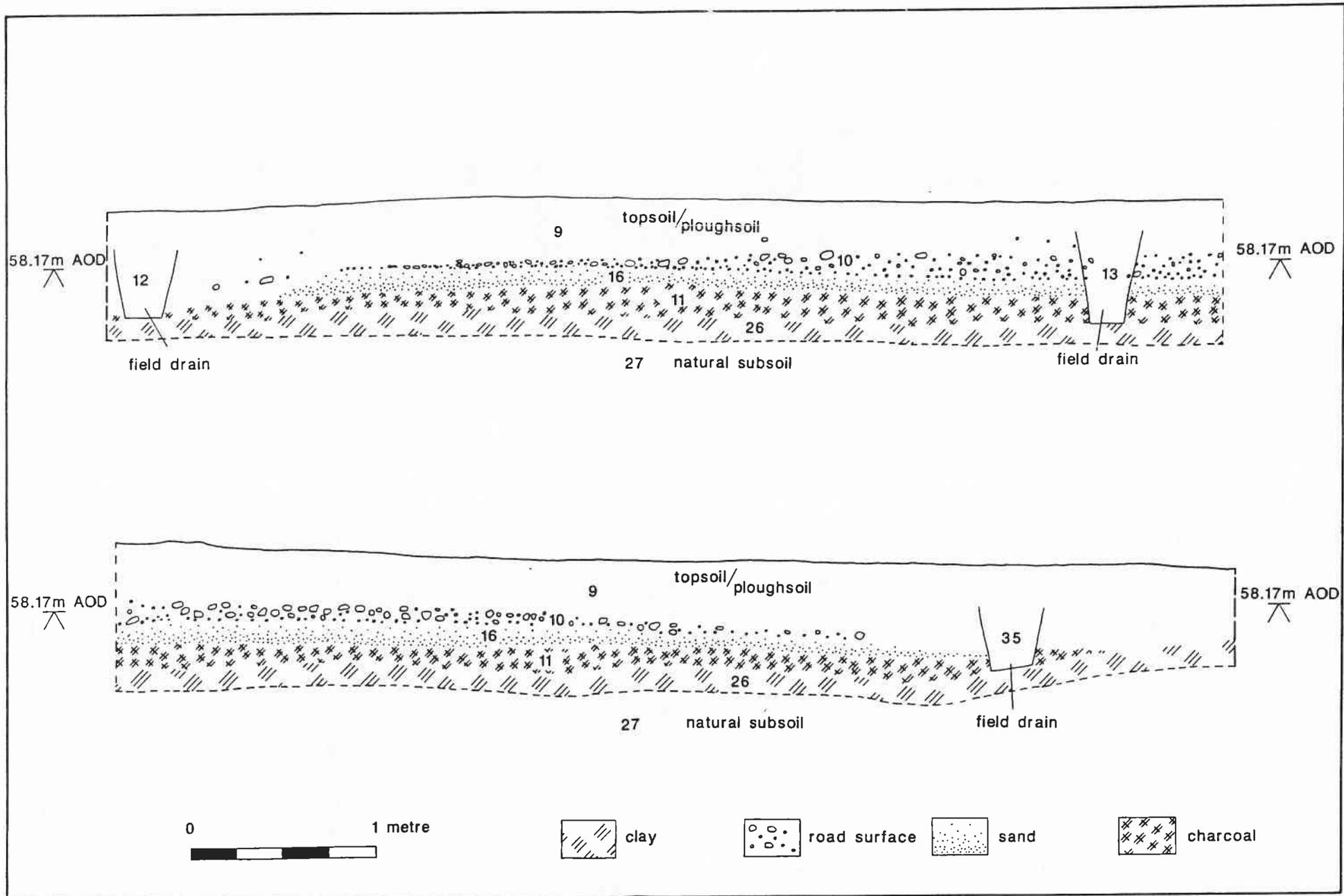
A building survey and watching brief were undertaken in October 1994 during the replacement of the roof and rear gable-end wall of the stable block of the White Bull Hotel.⁷ A roof of early eighteenth century construction was recorded for the main building of the hotel, which is consistent with the date of 1707 on a carved lintel on the west face of the building. The rebuilding of the gable-end wall provided an opportunity to examine the underlying stratigraphy in an area close to Ribchester's Roman bath house. Both *in situ* and redeposited Roman layers were recorded. A copper alloy object in the shape of an acorn cup and three sherds of mid-second century samian pottery from central Gaul were recovered.

In November 1994 a further watching brief was carried out adjacent to 11 Fort Avenue, during the initial site works for the construction of a detached house and garage.⁸ Traces of a linear feature were revealed, thought to be the Punic ditch discovered during excavations in the 1980s at Parsonage Avenue. This feature was unfortunately disturbed by a later robber trench which had removed a boundary wall. Unstratified finds recovered were largely of Roman date. These small projects demonstrate how useful such observations can be for adding information about such well known archaeological sites like Ribchester. Even minor interventions can yield new discoveries.

Kendal Castle.

As part of a project being undertaken by South Lakeland District Council to conserve, interpret and present Kendal Castle, LUAU carried out an archaeological and documentary survey of the standing fabric of the castle in August 1995.⁹ The castle was shown to have probably originated in the thirteenth century as an earth and timber fortification, which was built in stone shortly afterwards. By 1572 the castle was ruinous. Repairs to the ruin were carried out in 1813 and 1897 and at various times during the twentieth century. The Unit's examination of the standing structure indicated that much of what is visible today dates from the nineteenth century restorations. In particular, the exterior face of the curtain wall can be seen to deviate in places from its lower courses which are arguably the sole survivors of the original facing.¹⁰

1. Middleton R, Wells C E & Huckerby E, The Wetlands of North Lancashire, Lancaster Imprints 4, 1995. (Ed, also see Middleton Bob, North West Wetlands Survey: Work in Cumbria and Lancashire 1990. in Contrebis Vol. XVI, (1991) 37-40. & Middleton Robert, Wetland Research in Lancashire : Latest Results from the North West Wetlands Survey. in Contrebis Vol. XVIII (1993), 57-61.)
2. LUAU 1995, Lancaster Castle Hospital Block, Lancashire, Watching Brief; unpub. client report.
3. LUAU 1995, Lancaster Castle Gatehouse, Lancashire, Archaeological Watching Brief and Excavation: unpub. client report.
4. LUAU 1995, 3 Dalton Square, Lancaster, Lancashire, Archaeological Evaluation; unpub. client report.
5. LUAU 1994, Alston Planetarium, Longridge, Lancashire, Watching brief; unpub. client report.
6. LUAU 1995, Red Scar, Preston, Lancashire, Archaeological Evaluation; unpub. client report.
7. LUAU 1994, The White Bull Hotel, Ribchester, Roof Survey and Watching Brief; unpub. client report.
8. LUAU 1994, Fort Avenue, Ribchester, Lancashire, Archaeological Watching Brief; unpub. client report.
9. LUAU 1995, Kendal Castle, Cumbria, Fabric History Documentary Survey; unpub. client report.
10. Further information on these and other projects can be found in LUAU's Annual Review or within the detailed client reports deposited with the Lancashire or Cumbria Sites and Monuments Records.



ROMAN ROAD SECTION NEAR RED SCAR, PRESTON