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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SALVAGE RECORDING ON THE ROUTE OF THE WORCESTER WESTERN BYPASS

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(Revised) December 1996

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Project P1208
Report 430

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Salvage recording on the route of the Worcester Western Bypass

M Napthan and S Ratkai

Part 1 Project summary

1 Reasons for the project

The project was undertaken in response to the construction of a new road around the south-western edge of St Johns in Bedwardine, forming a link in the proposed Worcester orbital route.

At the planning stage an archaeological evaluation was undertaken (Napthan and Cooper 1993) and the nature of the salvage recording is based on the recommendations in that report. The road passes close to a number of sites identified as of archaeological interest and registered on the County Sites and Monuments Record as such. The route crosses part of the documented site of the Battle of Worcester (1651), and the earlier Civil War skirmish at Powick Bridge (1642). A number of other sites of archaeological interest lie in the vicinity of the roadline, several of which are known only from documentary sources and cannot be positively located.

2 Outline of results and significance

A metal detector survey of the battlefield was undertaken prior to the start of construction work. This proved to be inconclusive as periodic flooding appears to have buried the contemporary ground surface under a deep layer of silt. The depth of silt sealing the battlefield may be sufficient to protect the Civil War deposits from the effects of road construction.

The remainder of the route was inspected during and after soil stripping. The ground conditions were generally poor for archaeological purposes, and no significant features were identified. One late post-medieval field boundary was identified crossing the roadline where it showed as a "softspot" rutted by heavy machinery. A very sparse scatter of late post-medieval and modern finds was recovered during a walk over survey of the stripped areas. Direct monitoring of the soil stripping by 360° excavator was not usually possible due to the hazardous conditions created by manoevring dumper trucks. Areas stripped by bulldozer provided the best finished surfaces, but these often retained a thin skim of topsoil potentially obscuring underlying features.

The flood relief channels cut across the Teme flood plain proved to be the most archaeologicaly usefull elements of the scheme in providing clean sections across Powick Hams. These sections confirmed that only alluvial deposits, devoid of archaeological material were present within 1.2m of the current ground surface in this area. The former lane leading to Powick Bridge was also visible in section where it was cut by a flood relief channel. A complex sequence of graveled road surfaces, some sealed by alluvial deposits appears to represent the later medieval and post-medieval causeway leading

A watching brief on the line of the new Worcester Western Bypass produced evidence of the development of the former lane leading to Powick bridge, along which two significant actions were fought during the Civil War. No direct evidence for the battles was recovered despite an intensive metal detector survey of those parts of the road-scheme which formed part of the battlefield. The depth of alluvium over the battlefield may have contributed to the absence of positve results.

The whole bypass route was watched for archaeological remains, however nothing else of significance was observed. The monitoring conditions were not condusive to the identification of discrete features and the apparent lack of archaeological deposits may not present the complete picture of the area.

10 The archive

The archive consists of:

10	Fieldwork progress records AS2
3	Colour transparency films
3	Black and white photographic films
3	Context finds sheets AS8
3	Scale drawings
1	Boxes of finds

The project archive will be placed at:

Hereford and Worcester County Museum
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ

Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

11 Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank Mr Henderson of Croome Estate Trustees, Idris Lewis, Barry Stephenson and Birse Construction Ltd for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project.

12 Personnel

Volunteers Sue Brueton, Bob Embleton and Steve Southwick assisted with the metal detector survey. Archaeology service staff Nigel Topping and David Wichbold assisted with the fieldwork. Simon Woodiwiss edited the report and co-ordinated the project.

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14 Abbreviations and glossary

ADCWC - Archives of the Dean and Chapter of Worcester Cathedral

HWCM - Numbers prefixed with "HWCM" are the primary reference numbers used by the Hereford and Worcester County Sites and Monuments Record.

HWCC - Hereford and Worcester County Council.

HWCRO - Hereford and Worcester County Records Office.

CMHTS - Central Marches Historic Towns Survey

across the floodplain. Two sherds of pottery recovered from the former road surfaces indicate that they were in use in the 12th-13th century and 16th-17th centuries, which confirms the documented history of the bridge.

3 Conclusions

The construction of the bypass has provided an oppportunity to examine a substantial area around Claphill and along the Laugherne valley. However, the earthmoving methods used on this project were not condusive to archaeological investigation. Some forms and periods of site could not have been identified if they were present within the roadline unless they had unusually large features or substantial artefactual scatters. Prehistoric sites generally would not have been visible under these conditions.

The more artefactually rich site types such as Roman and medieval settlements or farmsteads would have been visible as artefactual scatters and charcoal rich patches in all but the worst ground conditions observed. It may therefore be assumed that no similar site lay directly within the roadline.

The identification of earlier and wider road surfaces on the lane leading to Powick Bridge has added detail to our knowledge of this element of the topography of the Civil War battlefields by firmly locating the Civil War roadline and demonstrating that it stood on a low causeway.

Part 2 Detailed report

4 Aims

The aims of the project were to locate archaeological deposits and record, if possible, their nature, extent, state of preservation, date and their significance; any salvage recording being undertaken without disruption to the road-building programme.

5 Archaeological background

The course of the new Worcester Western Bypass runs across the Teme Valley from the current roundabout south of Powick Bridge, along the western bank of Laugherne Brook across the railway north of Upper Wick Lane junction to terminate at the Bromyard Road. A further link road runs from the Bromyard Road junction in a south-westerly direction, passing through Aymestry Wood, to join the Bransford Road at Tudor Mount.

The road scheme includes both the flood plain of the Teme with its deep deposits of reddish-brown silty clay loam alluvial soils and the Teme terrace deposits with their large proportion of soft sandstones giving typical argillic brown earths (Palmer 1982). In the Laugherne Brook area the soil consists of a reddish brown stony sandy clay loam of the Newnham Association on weathered non-calcareous gravel (Ragg *et al* 1983). On the line of the link road near Crown East the soils are of the Norton series and consist of a dark brown slightly stony sandy silt loam, with medium to large rounded quartzitic pebbles and occasional sub angular flints (Palmer 1982).

5.1 Archaeological sites affected by the road construction

Skirmish at Powick Bridge 1642 (HWCM 17319)
The lane leading to Powick Bridge was the scene of one of the earliest engagements of the Civil War.

The Parliamentarian force of 800 troops commanded by Colonel Brown, having crossed the Severn at Upton, and taken control of the bridge at Powick on the evening of the 22nd September, spent the night on horseback in Powick Hams. The Parliamentary force approached across Powick Bridge towards St Johns in the afternoon of the 23rd and encountered Ruperts' army of 1,800 men resting in the vicinity of the Chequers Inn (Bowen 1642). Royalist dragoons dispersed along the road line gave harassing fire as the Parliamentary forces came up the lane, the latter turned off the lane across a small field and a skirmish ensued. The Parliamentarian forces were heavily out-numbered and were rapidly pushed back to Powick Bridge. Here the disorganised column became congested in the narrow bridge approaches. Fighting became intense, according to a contemporary Parliamentarian pamphlet (Bowen, 1642) their own losses were in excess of 36 dead, 21 wounded and one captured. In addition a Parliamentarian commander Colonel Edwin Sandys was mortally wounded and captured. The Parliamentary forces were routed and made their escape across the bridge, back to Upton and stopped only at Pershore.

Site of the Battle of Worcester 3rd September 1651 (HWCM 249)
The site of the battle lies mainly to the east of Powick Bridge along the banks

of the Severn, but fighting occurred all along the banks of the Teme and around the bridge itself. The battle was on a large scale, with about 16,000 on the Royalist side alone (Cromwell 1651). Much of the site remains as agricultural land, although part has been affected by development and construction of the Worcester Southern Bypass, particularly by the construction of the junction with the A449 just to the south of Powick Bridge. Limited physical evidence of the battle has been reported from these previous developments, "the only relics of the battle found are two clay pipes and a cannon-ball, which were picked up in the excavations for the generating station" (Electrical Engineer 1894). The surviving portion remains in character as it was during the Civil war, under cultivation and as watermeadows This is the site of the last battle of the Civil War and is included in the English Heritage Battlefield Register.

Powick Bridge saw heavy fighting during the battle. It was stubbornly defended by a detachment of Highland Scots commanded by Keith against repeated attacks by the Parliamentary forces under Fleetwood who approached from the south.

Powick Weir (HWCM 8604)
This lies at the junction of the River Teme and the leat to Powick Mill. The weir is of several phases, three being still visible. The earlier of these consisting of a stone construction incorporating reused building materials and possible hearth bases. A date stone of 1826 is still visible on the west side of the sluice. The latest phases are of concrete and steel construction (Cook 1996). Map evidence suggests that the weir was in its present position at the end of the 18th century, and it is probable that an earlier wooden structure diverted the flow of the Teme into the leat, which is itself first documented in 1475 (VCH I, 288).

The historic parts of the weir are in poor condition as a result of both water erosion and unsympathetic modern engineering works. A breach was recently cut through the weir, exposing the stone core to erosion. Due to repeated rebuilding little of the earlier structures are visible as upstanding remains, but these have recently been the subject of an archaeological survey (Cook 1996).

Powick Old Bridge (HWCM 239)
Powick Bridge is principally medieval structure of 15th century date. On the site of an earlier bridge "the bridge of Wyke by Worcester" which was in a dangerous state in 1336, when the Prior of Great Malvern, liable to repair it, was refusing to do so. It was again in need of repair in 1447 when indulgences were offered by John Carpenter, Bishop of Worcester, for all those who assisted with its repair (VCH IV, 184-5). There are three principal arches across the Teme, of sandstone with massive cutwaters. The mill stream is crossed by a further two arches extensively repaired in brick. This may be the result of damage during the Civil War. The structure is a scheduled ancient monument (Here and Worc County monument no 323) and as such is of national importance.

6 Methods

6.1 Fieldwork

Metal detecting survey was undertaken with three metal detectors, the principal instruments used were a Coinmaster 1000 and a Silver Sabre Plus. A

Tandy machine was tried, but proved to be too insensitive. The instruments were operated by both Service personnel and local volunteers belonging to the South Worcestershire Archaeological Group. A 20m interval grid was laid out and aligned to the Ordnance Survey national grid. The grid squares were individually numbered and each further subdivided into four $100m^2$ areas lettered A-D.

The areas selected for the metal detector survey were those parts of the new road corridor which lay within a theoretical musket-shot of the known and suspected centres of action. Due to the high level of recent contamination, particularly within the Little Sling, a rigorous discard policy was maintained, foil, aluminium and fragments of agricultural machinery were all discarded. Six horse-shoes were retained for study, but proved to be recent and were later discarded. A small number of iron slag fragments were also detected, which is unsuprising in view of the proximity of the 18th-19th century ironworks, these were also discarded.

The remainder of the route was visited regularly during the course of earthmoving operations. All available stripped surfaces were examined for artefact scatters and cut features. Ground conditions varied considerably, being dependant on the method of stripping, degree of rutting by dumper trucks, rainfall and geology. None of the areas had a good surface finish suitable for archaeological observation. The best areas for observation proved to be those based on gravels stripped by billdozer in dry weather. Several areas, stripped in wet conditions, or geologically soft, were rutted to an extent that made meaningfull observation was impossible. As these areas corresponded with dumper runs it was too hazardous to inspect them whilst they were being stripped, in these cases they were inspected during the drivers' breaks and during wet-weather stoppages.

The narrow slots cut for fencing purposes provided clear sections through to the underlying natural in the Wick Episcopi area, however no significant features were identified in them.

Flood relief channels 1.2m deep were cut across the Teme flood plain, parallel with the new road line, these provided a good clear section of the more recent alluvial deposits, and across the former lane (Fig 2).

6.2 Artefacts

6.2.1 Artefact recovery policy

Post-medieval and earlier material observed during stripping operations was retained. Modern material was not retrieved.

6.3 Environment

No deposits suitable for environmental analysis were encountered during the salvage recording.

7 Analysis

A very sparse scatter of late post-medieval and modern pottery was noted over the entire route. Only adjacent to the railway line was the concentration at anything higher than normal background levels for the county. The proximity of houses and the construction of the railway almost certainly account for the

slight concentration of building material, clinker and 19th-20th century pottery (not retained). Another scatter of 18th-19th century English stoneware flagon fragments close to the former garage on the old Malvern road may represent occupation of this date, possibly an agricultural bothy.

The length of roadline between Claphill Lane and the Hereford road produced a small but interesting assemblage of isolated sherds. The earliest was late 15th to mid 16th century Cistercian ware, and the remaing three sherds were 17th century - blackware and a trailed slipware plate (light on dark), not of Stoke-on-Trent production, of mid-late 17th century date.

The only substantial feature, not previously observed, noted on the roadline between Claphill and the Grove Ponds was a former field boundary, containing 19th century brick and bottle glass. This feature was noticed only as an area of deeper ruts on a dumper run and was not excavatable.

A section across the former lane to Powick Bridge (Fig 2) revealed a series of former gravelled road surfaces, seperated partly by deposits of alluvium. Only 12th-13th century Worcester type cooking pot (Fabric 55; Hurst and Rees 1992) was recovered from the earliest road surface, however it was present in such a small quantity (one sherd) that it cannot be considered to firmly date the surface. A later layer of metalling had a single sherd of 16th-17th century Malvernian pottery (Fabric 69) sealed underneath it, this might tentatively indicate that this surface is broadly contemporary with the Civil War conflicts.

The section was drawn at an oblique angle to the former roadline, and the drawn surface was approximately 45° from vertical. The depth of the section is correct in the drawing but the shape of the deposits, notably the pipe trenches is distorted by the unusual perspective.

The earliest features identified were a ditch with a dark brown silty clay fill containing very rare charcoal but no finds, this lay under the southern edge of the earliest phase of metalling. The width of the earliest road surface, corrected for distortion is 3.75m. A second ditch, north of the road is detectable only where the second phase metalling has sunk into it. The ditch fill is a reddish brown alluvium, softer than that under first phase metalling. The second phase is represented by the addition of further metalling to the north of the first roadway, widening it to approximately 6m wide The third phase is the widest at 8.6m and noticeably less well made on the widened side. The original roadway was still functional at this time and the addition width may represent a droveway. The 17th century Coventry Estate map (Fig 2) appears to show a wide trackway leading to the river immediately north of the bridge.

A fourth phase of metalling is represented by a gritty sandy clay lense, cut by the pipe trenches, a modern ditch and the modern roadstone. It is seperated from the previous metalling by a layer of reddish brown alluvium averaging 0.18m deep. This alluvium does not appear to have been trampled or rutted, and may indicate a period of disuse A single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from the alluvium over the phase one metalling. A lense of gravel to the south of the road occupies a similar stratigraphic position but seals a tan-white alluvium. If these two similar deposits represent a single phase, the roadway was 8.5m wide. Above the fourth phase metalling to the north of the modern roadline a 0.4m deep layer of alluvial deposits has built up, apparently over a long period. A single sherd of 16th-17th century pottery was sealed by

the fourth phase of metalling. A fifth phase gravel surface above the alluvium may represent a footpath or truncated road surface, or possibly a footpath. Three substantial modern ditches and the pipe trench have removed the majority of earlier deposits from this level. The modern road is distinctly different from the earlier metalling. It is made of an imported crushed rock rather than local gravel, and capped with a skim of tarmac and chippings. It seems probable that a number of recent road surfaces have been truncated when the present surface was laid.

Apart from the former lane no features were observed in the entire length of flood relief ditches, the deposits being entirely a homogenous reddish brown alluvium.

The metal detecting finds retained for analysis were all horse shoes except one horse shoe nail. Six shoes were recovered, although there was a reasonable amount of corrosion products adhering to the surfaces a good solid core of iron remained beneath it, suggesting that the artefacts were not particularly old. Two of the horse shoes had a "lip" at the front of the shoe and in view of this and their size appeared to be for shire horses. The remaining shoes were regular, without calkins and without the wavy outside edge, characteristic of pre-industrial horse shoes. No countersunk nail holes were present. In short it is not possible to associate these finds with the Battle of Worcester.

A number of modern fence-post holes, test-pits and land drains on the bypass route were also observed but not recorded.

8 Discussion

The absence of significant features from the majority of the route has confirmed the findings of the evaluation. Areas, such as the Teme floodplain, which were not tested during the evaluation also proved to be devoid of significant deposits at levels affected by groundworks.

The recorded section of the old lane leading to the medieval Powick bridge has added detail to the development of the causeway across the floodplain. Whilst the metalled surfaces could not be dated closely, the earlier phases may be of medieval date. The period of apparent disuse represented by the alluvium across the roadway may reflect one of the documented periods when the bridge was in disrepair and wheeled traffic diverted to an alternative crossing point. The interest and significance of the road deposits primarily lies in thier association with the scheduled medieval bridge and the Civil War battles. It has been demonstrated that early road surfaces do survive under the modern lane, however more extensive excavation would be required to demonstrate that any of the surfaces could be considered contemporary with the battles.

9 Academic summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intend to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The Client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

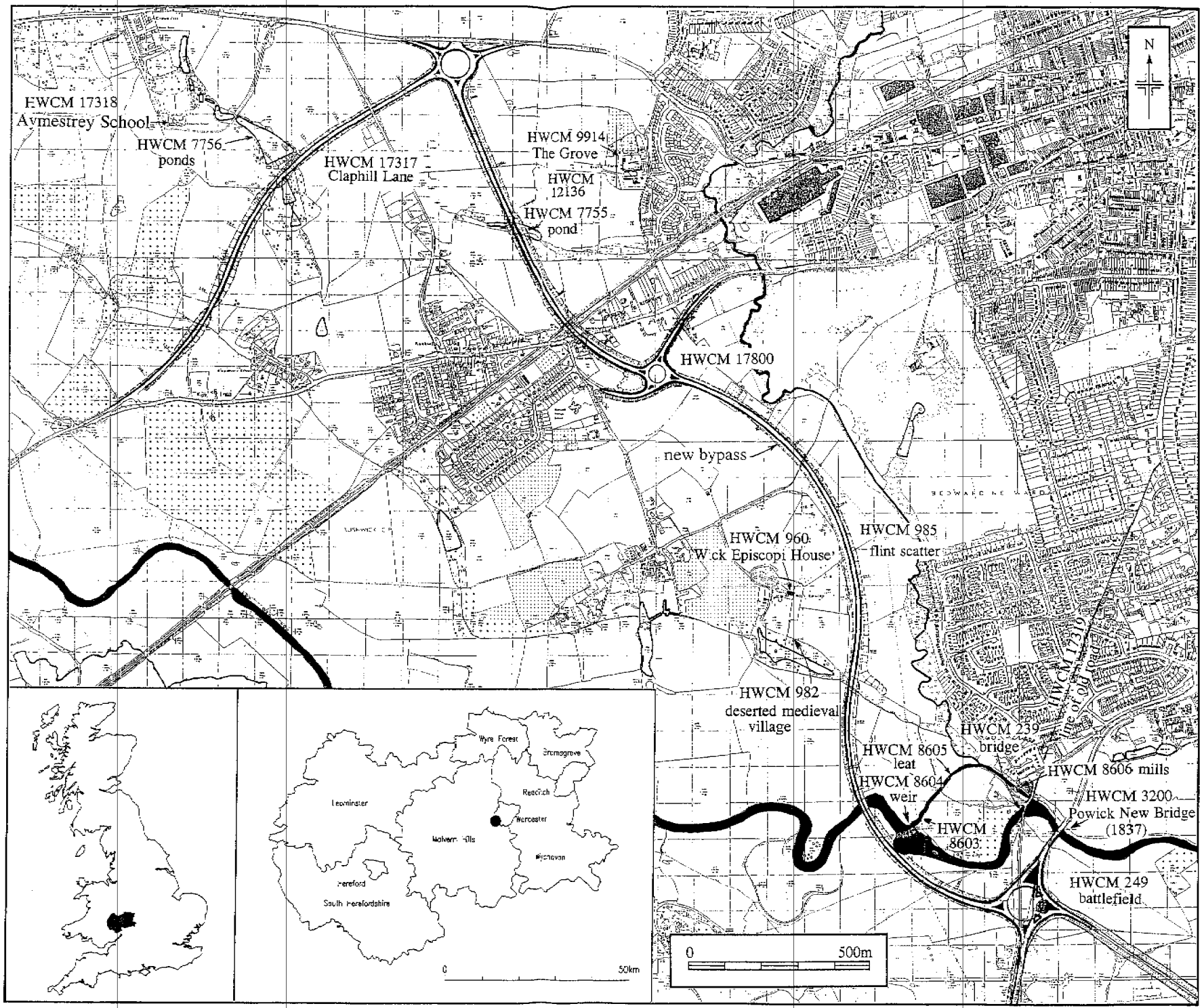
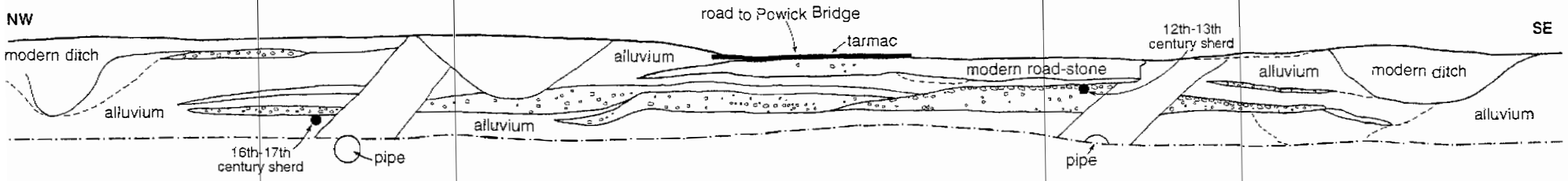
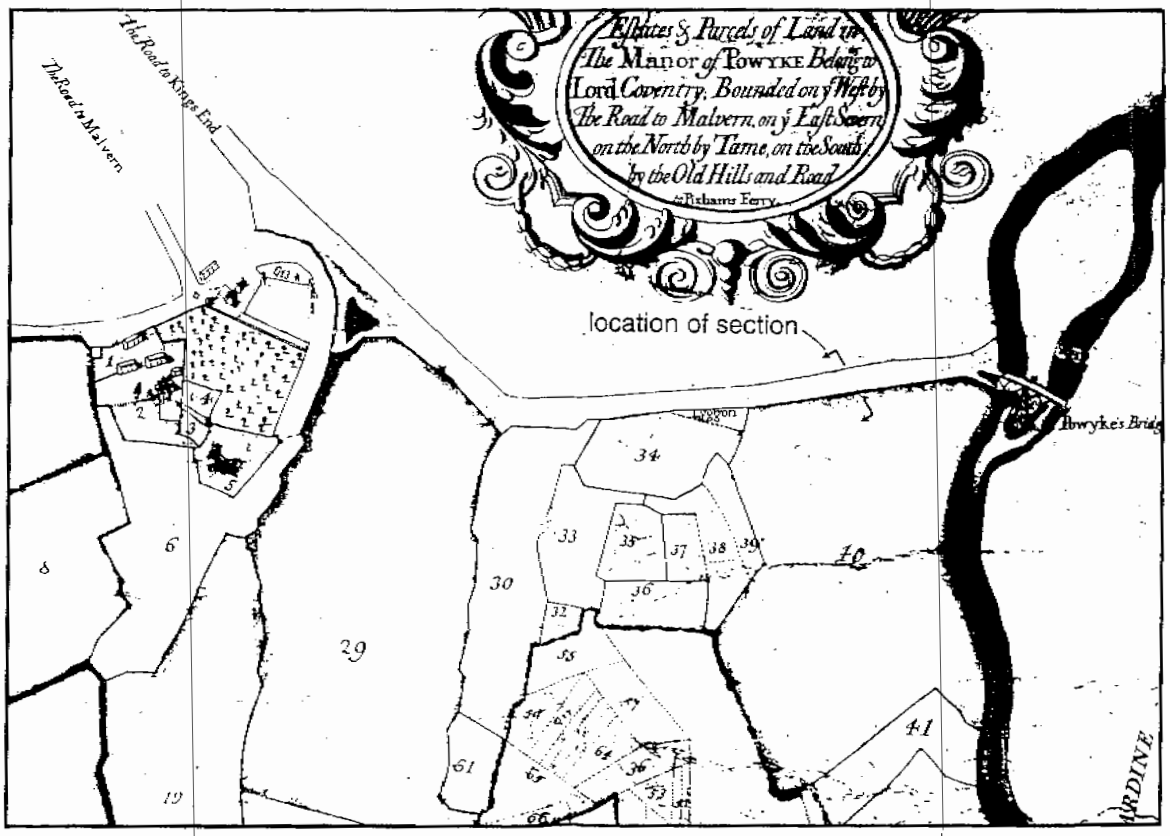

HWCM 17318
Aymestrey School
HWCM 7756
ponds
HWCM 17317
Claphill Lane
HWCM 9914
The Grove
HWCM
12136
HWCM 7755
pond
HWCM 17800
new bypass
HWCM 960
Wick Episcopi House
HWCM 985
flint scatter
HWCM 982
deserted medieval
village
HWCM 239
bridge
HWCM 8605
leat
HWCM 8604
weir
HWCM 8606 mills
HWCM 3200
Powick New Bridge
(1837)
HWCM
8603
HWCM 249
battlefield
HWCM 17310
line of old road
N
0
500m
Wyre Forest
Bromsgrove
Leominster
Redditch
Worcester
Malvern Hills
Evesham
Hereford
South Herefordshire
0
50km

Figure 1



Section through the former Powick Lane showing medieval and later road metalling (please note that this section runs obliquely to the line of the road and slopes down at an angle of approximately 45°)



Map of Powick c 1779

Figure 2