Iftonrhyn Colliery

Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief

Ridgway Rentals

April 2009
SLR Ref: 406.2326.00001

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during the groundworks for a commercial development at the former Iftonrhyn Colliery near St Martin's, Oswestry. The watching brief has been carried out to address Condition 13 of planning permission for the site (Planning Application reference number 06/14374/FUL) which states:

> *The development shall not be commenced until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation prepared by the applicant in response to a brief prepared by the County Council's Historic Environment Officer. This written scheme shall be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works.*

The scope for the watching brief was set out in a brief issued on 8th January 2007 by the Historic Environment Officer for Shropshire County Council (Appendix A). This stated that groundworks associated with the proposed development should be carried out under archaeological supervision (watching brief), with provision for the investigation and full recording of any archaeological features encountered during the course of the works.

A written scheme of investigation was prepared for the site (SLR report 406.2326.00001 July 2008) which was submitted to and approved by the Historic Environment Officer for Shropshire County Council.

2.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The SLR staff involved in the preparation of this report were:

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Andy Towle MIFA	Associate	QA
Tim Malim MIFA	Principal	Project Management

SLR is a Registered Organisation (RO) with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) which means that it undertakes work to the highest professional standards. This report has been produced with reference to the IfA's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (2008). SLR operates a Quality Assurance system conforming to ISO 9001.

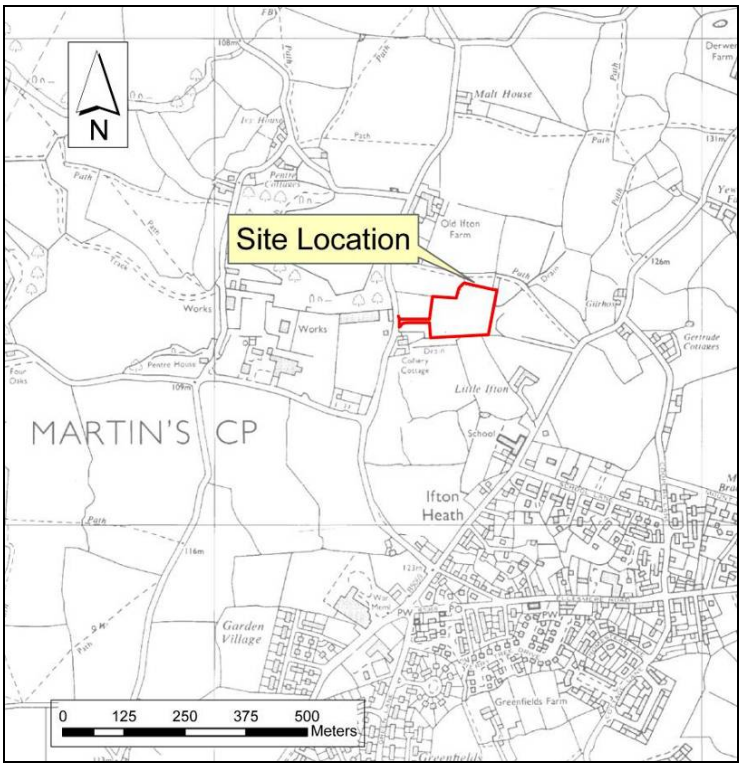
3.0 SITE DESCRIPTION AND HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The development site is located on open agricultural land at NGR SJ 325 374 (Figure 1). The site comprises a small 'L'-shaped compound c. 1.2 ha in size surrounded to the north, south and east by agricultural land with tree-lined field boundaries. The site is accessed from Colliery Road to the west; a lane which runs south towards St Martin's to join the B5069. Ifton Industrial Estate lies to the west of Colliery Road.

The site is situated on an undulating plateau between 120m and 130m AOD, which slopes down to the west towards the valley of the River Ceiriog, a tributary of the River Dee.

The solid geology beneath the site is split between undifferentiated Carboniferous mudstone/siltstone of the Halesowen Formation to the east, and mudstone of the Etruria Formation to the west. The superficial geology comprises Devensian glacial till (BGS Geoindex accessed 26.03.09).

Figure 1: Site Location

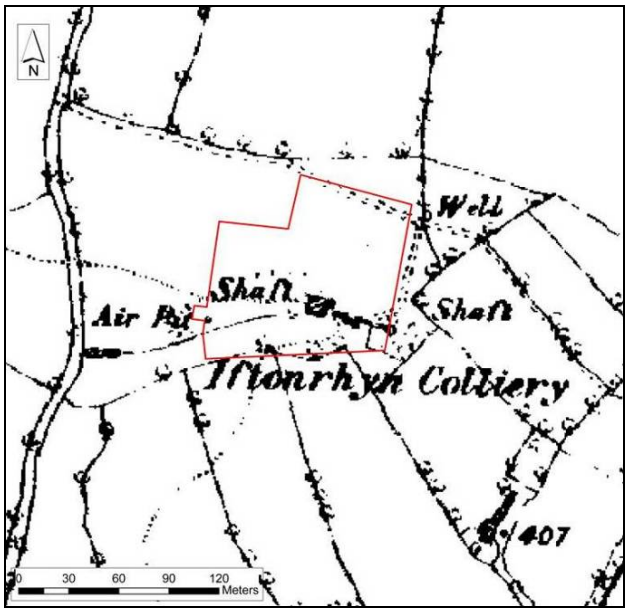


The Ordnance Survey map of the area produced in 1879 (1:10,560- Figure 2) indicates that the site was occupied by Iftonrhyn Colliery[1], with buildings and shafts located in the central and eastern parts of the site. Field boundaries are shown extending into the site from the south. The record for the colliery held by the Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER) states that this had been operating since around 1800 AD (HER ref 06539). Records available at www.shropshiremines.org.uk demonstrate that Iftonrhyn Colliery was known as Lord Trevor's "St Martin's Pit" when recorded in 1860. The

[1] Note: Iftonrhyn Colliery is the name of the 19th century working on the current site, and is distinct from Ifton Colliery, established to the west of Colliery Road in the 20th century.

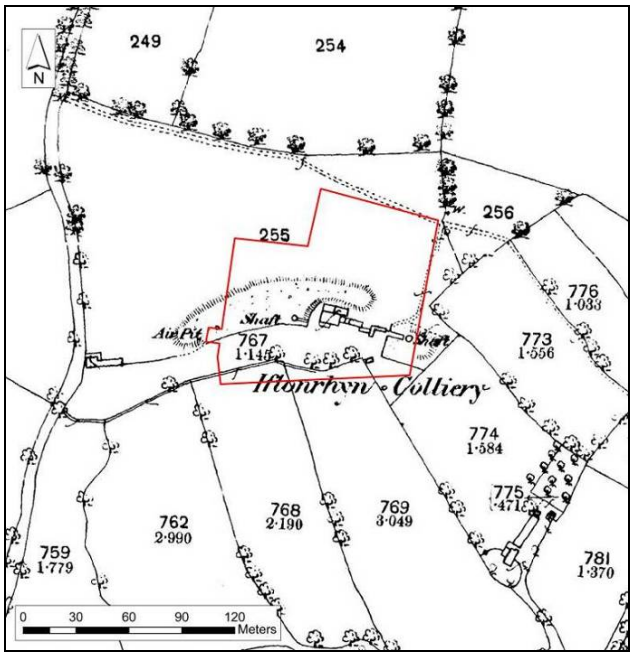
surrounding sites recorded by the HER are predominantly industrial in nature; within 1km of the development site the only non-industrial known feature is that of ridge-and-furrow earthworks associated with medieval farming to the north of Street Dinas (www.discovershropshire.org.uk; accessed 08.07.08).

Figure 2: 1879 Ordnance Survey Map (1:10,560)



More detail of the colliery is visible on the Ordnance Survey map produced in 1891 (1:2500-Figure 3). This shows a linear complex of buildings running across the eastern half of the development site, with shafts at the eastern and western ends, and an air pit (ventilation shaft) to the west. A spoil heap is indicated across the western half of the site, extending across the site boundary towards some small cottages.

Figure 3: 1891 Ordnance Survey Map (1:2500)



By 1901 the colliery was disused, and the Ordnance Survey map produced at that time shows that much of the site and some of the land to the east had been covered with spoil tips from the workings (Figure 4). All of the buildings on the site had been removed, with the exception of a chimney towards the north-eastern corner. Immediately to the northeast of the site a reservoir is indicated (though not labelled) within a former triangular field. This situation remained largely unchanged in 1938 (Figure 5).

Figure 4: 1901 Ordnance Survey Map (1:2,500)

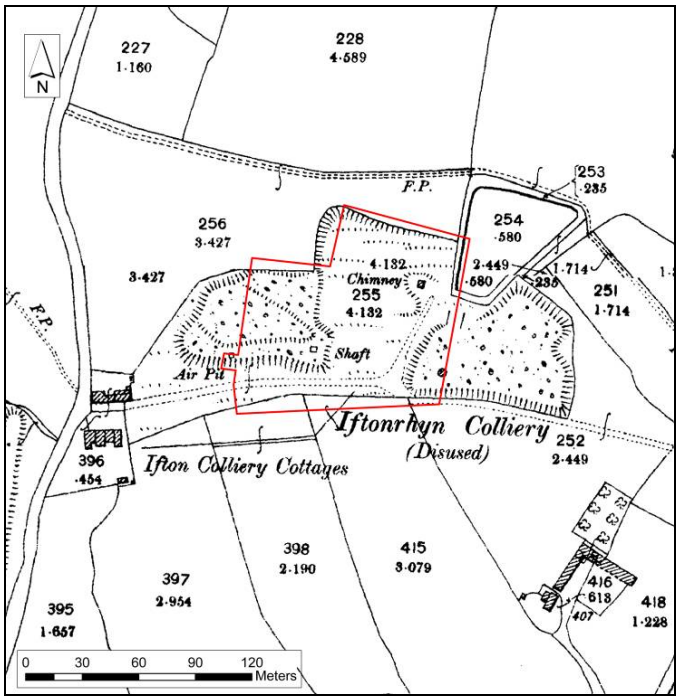
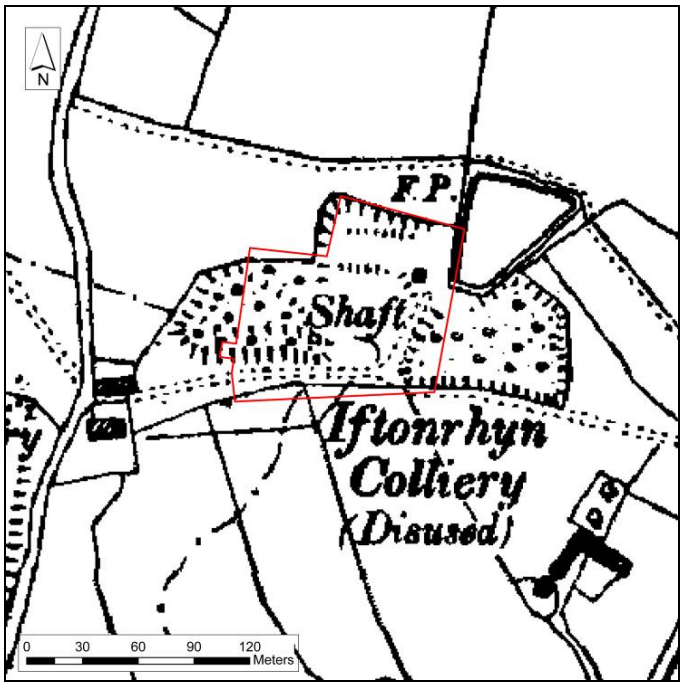
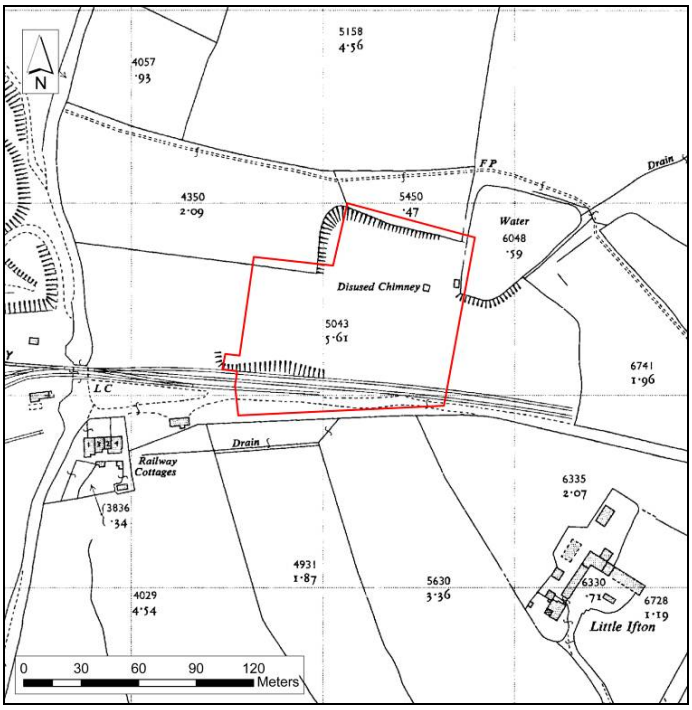


Figure 5: 1938 Ordnance Survey Map (1:10,560)



By the mid-20th century a mineral railway had been constructed running west-east along the southern edge of the site (Figure 6). This rail siding was used to transport spoil from Ifton Colliery to the west for deposition on the current site, the line terminating a little to the east of the development site boundary. This map also indicates that the site had been levelled, with embankments adjacent to the rail line and in the north-western corner of the site. By the late 20th century the rail siding and chimney were removed.

Figure 6: 1961 Ordnance Survey Map (1:2500)



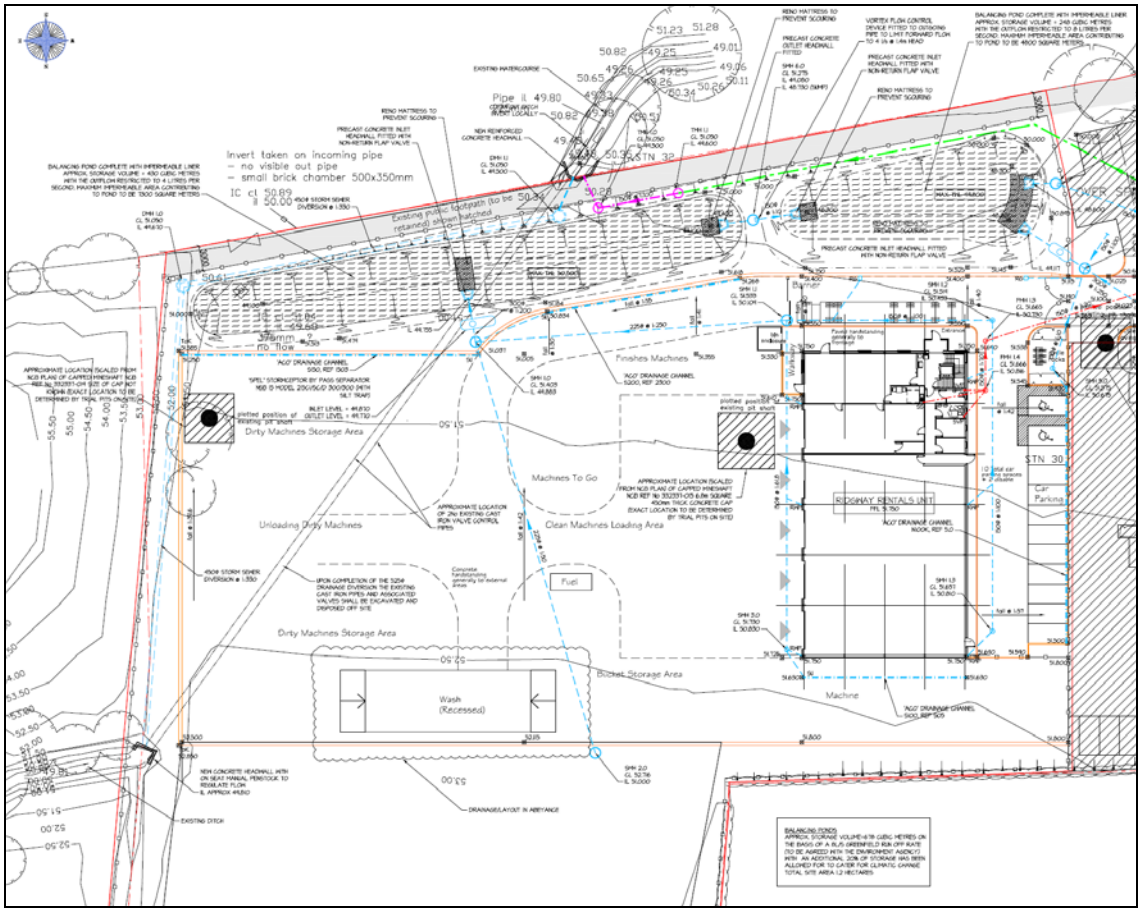
4.0 DEVELOPMENT PRPOPOSALS AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS

The development of the site broadly entails:

- The creation of a vehicle maintenance depot which covers the eastern half of the site
- A private access road leading from Colliery Road to the depot, with overspill parking and an attenuation lagoon to the south
- In the western half of the site an industrial unit, with parking facilities and soft landscaping
- The insertion of surface water drainage and foul water drainage.

The preparatory ground works entailed a general site strip of c 300mm. Foundations are to be cut to depths of between 900 and 1200mm, with drainage cut to depths of up to 2m.

Figure 7: Plan of the development (north to bottom of page)



5.0 WATCHING BRIEF METHODOLOGY

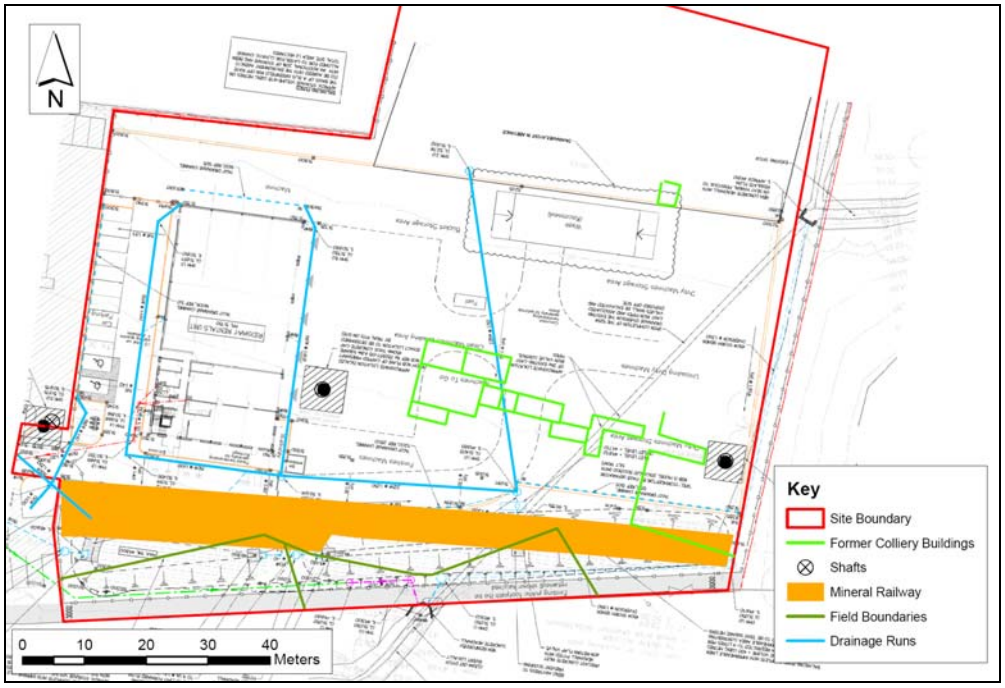
The aim of the watching brief was to preserve by record any archaeological remains associated with the colliery encountered during groundworks for the development.

Specific objectives were defined as follows:

- To undertake a targeted archaeological watching brief and recording of the archaeological stratigraphy and any structures exposed during site works
- To allow for the full investigation and recording of any significant remains prior to removal
- To recover all artefacts and where necessary palaeoenvironmental samples from deposits of archaeological significance (requested by local authority)
- To analyse the site records and produce an integrated report (this document) on the archaeology of the site
- To identify the research implications of the site with reference to the regional research agenda and recent work in the area.

A site visit was made on 25th March 2009 to examine the groundworks at the site following communication with the project manager. All open excavations were inspected and surfaces investigated for features and deposits of archaeological significance. A photographic record was maintained, along with textual descriptions of all observed deposits and measured sketch sections where sequences of archaeological interest were observed. As a guide on site, all features associated with the colliery on the historic OS maps were geo-referenced onto the development plan in GIS, allowing specific features to be identified on the ground if present (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Plan of anticipated colliery features within development footprint



6.0 RESULTS

Prior to the site visit, the development area had been subjected to a topsoil strip. Within the area of the proposed development the ground was levelled (a reduction of between 0.3m and 1m) and drainage inserted (1-2m depth below the strip level).

In levelling the site, the land had been terraced slightly into the rising ground to the north and east, exposing sections through the surrounding deposits. The drainage runs had also exposed sections through the basal deposits of the development area.

6.1 Natural Deposits

The only exposed natural geology within the development area was observed along the northern edge of the site, where a higher ridge of ground entered the site from the northwest. This was visible in section as a cambered deposit of light brown silty clay, overlain to the east with spoil (slag) from the colliery workings.

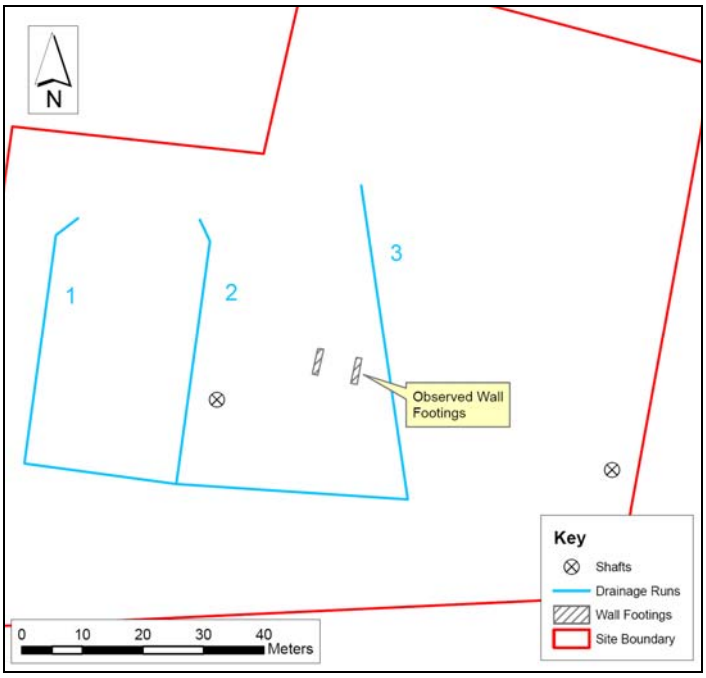
Figure 9: View to northern edge of site showing natural orange clay in section

Figure 10: Detail of natural geology in section (facing north) overlain by spoil to east

6.2 Colliery Structures

Brickwork associated with the footings of colliery buildings were observed in the area between Drainage Runs 2 and 3 at NGR 332516 337429 (see Figure 11). The brickwork, comprising two footings possibly for a single structure, was substantial, with two parallel wall bases oriented southwest-northeast each approximately 1m thick.

Figure 11: Location plan of observed wall footings



The wall footings were constructed from red brick in a header bond, bonded with buff sand mortar. The two footings were 5m apart, and almost certainly relate to the westernmost building shown within the colliery complex on the 1891 Ordnance Survey map. Because the footings were not associated with any artefacts or other structural components it is not possible to infer the building's function, however the considerable thickness of the walls may suggest that the overlying structure was large, perhaps a chimney or explosives store.

Figure 12: Cleaned wall footings (facing north)

A number of railway sleepers were recovered from the overburden removed during the topsoil strip within the southern half of the site. It is likely that these are the remnants of the mineral railway which connected the site with the adjacent Ifton Pit in the 20th century. No *in-situ* remains of the railway were observed.

Figure 13: Railway sleepers recovered from site overburden

6.3 Colliery spoil and made ground

Across the majority of the site the exposed deposits comprised tips of redeposited natural and slag from the colliery workings, across the southern half of the site this material exceeding 2m in depth. At the northern end of Drainage Run 1 (Figure 14) it was apparent that excavated shale had been deposited within a large pit cut into the natural clay. Elsewhere the depth of the spoil obscured the interface with the natural geology, so it is not possible to state whether further pitting had occurred, or if the spoil had been deposited directly onto the original land surface.

The spoil included redeposited natural clay and shale, pulverised demolition rubble (presumably derived from later 20th century site levelling), and coal waste and ash. From the observed sections around the edges of the site and within the drainage runs it is clear that much of this spoil is *in situ*, with clearly defined tip lines, massive discrete deposits and, as elsewhere, no artefactual material. It seems likely that much of the observed spoil was derived from the later Ifton Colliery to the west of Colliery Road, imported onto the site by rail. The levelling of the site after the colliery was closed in 1968 appears to have obliterated almost all evidence for the earlier workings.

Figure 14: Pit containing redeposited shale, Drainage Run 3 (facing north)

Figure 15: Extensive deposits of coal waste and building rubble, northeast corner of site (facing north)

Figure 16: Rubble and spoil visible in section, extending into site from heap to east (facing south)

Figure 17: Bedded layers of spoil, Drainage Run 2 facing east

Figure 18: Sequence of spoil tips to 2m depth, Drainage Run 1 (southern end)

7.0 DISCUSSION

The watching brief provided a valuable opportunity to investigate the extent of remains associated with a 19th century coal mine in the Oswestry Coal Field. The study of coal mines in the county, and in particular their association with the lead smelting Industry, is raised as a research priority for the post medieval period in the West Midlands archaeological research framework (www.arch-ant.bham.ac.uk accessed 02.04.09).

The observed deposits on site however indicate that the 19th century Iftonrhyn Colliery was comprehensively cleared during the operating life of its larger successor to the west of Colliery Road. The tips and deposits of waste from extraction at the later site have obscured the original land surface, and only one fragmentary section of wall from the earlier colliery survives. The observed deposits are therefore of little interpretive value.

It is worth noting that the depth of the industrial waste on the site may seal buried remains associated with the colliery or other activities that were not exposed by the groundworks for the current development, and so there may be potential for further investigation at some point in the future.

8.0 CONCLUSION

The watching brief was successful in meeting the aims specified at the outset. The presence of an archaeologist on site was scheduled at the correct point during the groundworks, allowing the deposit sequence to be characterised and recorded. No significant remains associated with the 19th century colliery workings were observed.

The implementation of the programme of archaeological work was in accordance with an agreed Written Scheme of Investigation (SLR 2008), to facilitate the discharge of Condition 13 of Planning Permission ref 06/14374/FUL.

9.0 CLOSURE

This report has been prepared by SLR Consulting Limited with all reasonable skill, care and diligence, and taking account of the manpower and resources devoted to it by agreement with the client. Information reported herein is based on the interpretation of data collected and has been accepted in good faith as being accurate and valid.

This report is for the exclusive use of Ridgway Properties Limited; no warranties or guarantees are expressed or should be inferred by any third parties. This report may not be relied upon by other parties without written consent from SLR.

SLR disclaims any responsibility to the client and others in respect of any matters outside the agreed scope of the work.

APPENDIX A

Brief for Archaeological Programme

BRIEF FOR A PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK AT IFTONRHYN COLLIERY SITE, IFTON HEATH, SHROPSHIRE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 There is currently a proposal to erect a commercial/industrial development on land at Ifton Heath near St Martins, Shropshire (NGR SJ 32513744). The site was formerly in use as a brickworks and is at present largely an area of open rough ground.

1.2 The proposed development site occupies the site of the former Iftonrhyn Colliery. This colliery dates in origin the 19th century, and so the site may contain archaeological remains relating to the historic mining activity.

1.3 In view of the archaeological significance of the proposed development site it has been made a condition of planning permission that:

'The development shall not be commenced until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation prepared by the applicant in response to a brief prepared by the County Council's Historic Environment Officer. This written scheme shall be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works.

The planning application reference is 06/14374/FUL.

1.4 The brief is intended to form the basis for a written scheme of investigation required for the archaeological work. The study area is shown on the accompanying site plan.

2. AIMS

2.1 The aim of the programme of archaeological work is to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains that are encountered during the development.

3. REQUIREMENTS

3.1 All ground disturbance works associated with the proposed development within the study area shall be carried out under archaeological supervision.

3.2 In the event of significant archaeological features structures or deposits being encountered provision shall be made for their investigation and full recording prior to removal or disturbance.

3.3 . A full graphic, photographic and written record of the findings even if negative will be made. Individual contexts will be recorded on separate contexts sheets within a context register. Plans shall be drawn to a 1:50 or 1:20 scale and section drawings to a scale of 1:20 or 1:10 as appropriate. Elevation drawings of all structures remains shall be at a scale of 1:20. Drawn records will be related to Ordnance Survey datum and published boundaries where appropriate. Photographic records will be at a minimum 35mm format and include both black and white and colour.

3.4 All archaeological objects, artefacts, industrial waste and faunal remains will be recovered and related to the contexts from which they derive wherever possible. They will be exposed, lifted, cleaned, conserved, marked, bagged and boxed in accordance with the guideline set out in the United Kingdom institute for Conservation's Conservation Guidelines No.2.

3.5 Provision shall also be made for the sampling of deposits for environmental and technological evidence where appropriate. Any environmental samples taken shall be bulk samples of a minimum of 10 litres. They shall be taken only from contexts considered to be of a high potential and used as a basis for assessing potential further analysis.

3.6 In the event of human remains being encountered all relevant statutory and Home Office requirements shall be fully complied with.

3.7 Documentary research shall be undertaken where appropriate to assist with the assessment and interpretation of the on-site investigation.

4. ARCHIVE AND REPORT

4.1 This site archive will be prepared to at least the minimum acceptable standard defined in English Heritage's Management of Archaeological Projects (Map 2). This will include all written, drawn and photographic records relating directly to the investigation undertaken. It will be quantified, ordered, indexed and internally consistent before transfer to the recipient body. It will also contain where relevant a site matrix, a site summary and brief written observations on the artefactual and environmental date (where appropriate).

4.2 To ensure compatibility with other archaeological archives produce in the County all archaeological strata and features excavated or exposed will be entered onto prepared pro-forma recording sheets and recorded with a context register.

4.3 The site archive, including finds and environmental material, will be ordered, catalogued, labelled and conserved and stored according to the UKIC Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage.

4 The project archive will be presented to an appropriate Museum or recipient body within 12 months of completion of the field work, subject to the agreement of the site owner with regards to any finds.

4.5 Prior to the commencement of the project the Contractor shall contact the Curator of Archaeology, Museum Services, Shropshire County Council, who will advise on an appropriate repository for the project archive and the provision for any finds. Responsibility for obtaining the owner(s) permission for deposition of finds shall lie with the contractor.

4.6 Contractors are responsible for arranging the deposition of finds, including obtaining the owner(s) permission, and ascertaining the costs of storage and deposition with an approved body before the project commences and informing the Historic Environment Officer, SCC of the arrangements which have been made.

4.7 If the finds are not to be donated to the appropriate recipient body, arrangements shall be made for a comprehensive record of all materials (including detailed drawings, photographs and descriptions of individual finds), which can instead constitute the archaeological archive.

4.8 A written report detailing the results of the archaeological investigation will be prepared within six months of completion of fieldwork. The report will include:

a. A full written description and interpretation of the result of all elements of the fieldwork.
b. A full written description and interpretive account of any excavated or recorded stratigraphic and structural evidence.
c. It will be fully illustrated with drawings to an appropriate scale showing location, trench layout, record structures, features and deposits, section drawings and selected photographs.
d. Any documentary research/historical analysis shall be supported by copies of relevant historic maps, documents and aerial photographs. All sources consulted shall be cited.
e. The report shall also include a succinct summary of the results suitable for printed publication

4.11 In addition to copies submitted to the client, a copy of the report shall be provided to the Historic Environment Officer, Shropshire County Council, and one copy to the Shropshire Sites and Monuments Records.

4.10 Shropshire County Council Sites and Monuments record is currently participating in the OASIS (Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigation scheme). As part of the scheme the contractor is required to fill in an OASIS data capture form on completion of each report stage of an archaeological project, and on deposition of the final archive. Details of the progress, copies of the form and guidelines for its completion can be found on the internet at http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis. Failing this, contact either the Shropshire SMR or Archaeology Data Service directly for further advice.

5. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 Curatorial responsibility for this project lies with the Historic Environment Officer, Shropshire County Council.

5.2 In response to the project brief contractors are expected to submit for prior written approval a written scheme of investigation to the Historic Environment Officer, Shropshire County Council, detailing their intended scheme of work, proposed working methods, report format and content, time scales and staffing levels (including any specialist sub-contractors). Levels of professional competence in appropriate areas shall be demonstrated. No archaeological work should commence until the written scheme of investigation has been approved in writing by the Historic Environment Officer, Shropshire County Council.

5.3 Information provided in this brief cannot fully anticipate the conditions that will be encountered as work progresses. If requirements of the brief cannot be fully met they should only be excluded or altered after attainment of the written approval of the Historic Environment Officer, Shropshire County Council.

5.4 The project will be monitored throughout by the Historic Environment Officer, Shropshire County Council. To facilitate this, the archaeological contractor shall advise the Historic Environment Officer in writing at least one week in advance of commencement of the on-site work.

5.5 A programme of curatorial monitoring site visits to be undertaken by the Historic Environment Officer will be agreed in advance with the archaeological contractor.

6. CONDITIONS

6.1 All archaeological work is to be carried out under the direct supervision of an appropriately qualified and experienced archaeologist. Preferably they shall be a Member or Associate of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

6.2 The code of conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists will be adhered to.

6.3 The Archaeological Contractor is to ensure requirements relating to all relevant health and safety legislations and codes of practice will be adhered to.

M D WATSON
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT OFFICER

SUSTAINABILITY GROUP
SHROPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
JANUARY 2007