

**Archaeological evaluation  
of land between 2 Park Lane and 35 Load Street,  
Bewdley,  
Worcestershire**

WSM 40828

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# **Archaeological evaluation of land between 2 Park Lane and 35 Load Street, Bewdley, Worcestershire**

## **Introduction**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken of land between 2 Park Lane and 35 Load Street, Bewdley, Worcestershire (SO 7849 7525; Fig 1) at the request of Mr Terry Preece, on behalf of his client Mr R Round according to a brief provided by Worcestershire County Archaeology Service (planning ref WF/09/0025; WSM 17584). The archaeological evaluation comprised two trenches excavated within the plot of land described above. This was undertaken in order to provide sufficient information to the planning authority to enable them to determine an application for planning permission for the above site.

## **Brief background to the site**

Documentary research took place on 20th May 2009 at Worcestershire County Record Office and the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record. Additional research was subsequently undertaken on the 3rd June 2009 at Bewdley Museum.

## **The map evidence**

The tithe map of Bewdley does not include the town centre. The earliest available mapping is therefore the Ordnance Survey mapping. There are two complicating factors to understanding the historic mapping. The first is that the modern plot was, historically, two tenement plots with the sub-division running approximately north-east to south-west. The second is that Park Lane was widened in the 1960s and the tenement plot that formerly ran adjacent to Park Lane on its north-western side now lies beneath the road. Thus, on Figure 2, the site is located one tenement plot further to the north-west than would be expected.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1884 shows the north-west tenement plot containing three rectangular buildings fronting an access alley. The south-eastern tenement plot also contains three buildings of considerably different shapes and sizes, fronting what appears to be a yard. The 1903 Ordnance Survey map shows no change to this arrangement. However, by the time of the 1927 Ordnance Survey map all the buildings shown on the earlier mapping have gone. In their place are two rectangular buildings in the north-west tenement plot. The south-east tenement plot is empty. The 1938 Ordnance Survey map shown no change to the north-west tenement plot. By contrast, the south-east tenement plot now has five buildings of varying shapes and sizes arranged, like those on the 1884 and 1903 maps, around what appears to be a yard.

## **Information from Worcestershire Historic Environment Record**

Park Lane is first recorded in 1595 although it may have existed earlier (WSM 17642). To the west of the site lies WSM 19355, being part of medieval town of Bewdley. It includes 17th and 18th century buildings as do tenement plots to the east of the site (WSM 19356; Buteux 1996).

## **Other documentary evidence**

In the immediate vicinity of the site the 1655 Manor Court Roll mentions a messuage with malthouse, backside and garden situated in Load Street extending from Load Street on the east to the Park of Bewdley on the west. A John Hill, shoemaker is mentioned. In April 1680 the same messuage was called The Malthouse with garden and curtilage. A Jabez Reynolds who was also a shoemaker is mentioned.

The Manor Court Roll for the property now known as 35 Load Street record that in May 1679 it comprised a messuage with outbuildings, stables, garden and curtilage. By April 1762 it had been divided into two tenements with outbuildings, stables and gardens. Other entries in the Manor Court Rolls up to 1779 only record changes of occupier. The 1835 edition of Pigot's Trade Directory lists the occupier as a Thomas Pettipher (under Grocers and Tea Dealers). He continued in occupancy at least until January 1844. The 1850 edition of the Post Office Trade Directory lists an Amos Farrington (Grocer and agent to Norwich Union Fire and Life Insurance Office). The property continued as a grocer's shop under different occupiers until the census of 1901 when the property is

listed as unoccupied. Kelly's Trade Directory of 1908 lists the occupier of 35 Load Street as Ross and Son (boot makers). In 1912 the same directory lists Birt Plevey (a saddler) in occupation; in 1924 Alfred Oakes (a corn merchant) and between 1928 and 1932 John James (a butcher) was there. The Telephone Directory of 1954 shows the property occupied by Barbara Crampton (a hairdresser).

## **Analysis**

### **The fieldwork**

Fieldwork took place on the 24th, 25th, 26th and 27th June 2009. The site was first cleared of a considerable quantity of debris which had accumulated over the last 20 or 30 years and the usual scrubby, and sometimes thicker, self-seeded vegetation. Two trenches were excavated (Figs 1, 6 and 7). The location of a substantial tree bole was instrumental in the positioning of trench 1, which was forced to skirt around it in order to achieve a reasonable length.

### **Description - see Figures 3, 4 and 5**

#### *Phase 1*

These are natural deposits comprising a light orange brown sandy clay (contexts 018 and 028).

#### *Phase 2 - 17th century*

This comprises a layer of dark grey brown sandy clay with occasional small rounded pebbles and common charcoal (contexts 015 and 016). It, and the feature which cuts it (context 021), are dated by pottery of the 17th century. It is believed that context 021 and a similar feature to the south, context 010, are the remains of agricultural activity.

#### *Phase 3 - 18th century*

A rectangular brick (context 002) and clay lined (context 003) pit or tank (Fig 8) was constructed. A contemporary feature appears to be an oval pit (context 012; Fig 11).

#### *Phase 4 - 18th to 19th century*

The rectangular clay lined pit/tank went out of use (context 001). A number of brick structures (contexts 006, 013, 014) and 022; Fig 9) were built and two of them were subsequently linked by a brick wall (context 014; Fig 10). Contemporary features are a rectangular pit (context 005) and a post hole (context 020; Fig 12).

#### *Phase 5 - mid 19th century*

Successively overlaying an outline plot of the features described in phases 3 and 4 onto the 1884, 1903, 1927 and 1938 Ordnance Survey mapping produced no obvious conformity. It is therefore suggested that the various structures excavated in the two trenches were disused and demolished by the mid to 3rd quarter of the 19th century. Contexts 027, 026, 025, 030 (Section 1), all successive layers comprising light orange brown sandy clays and very dark brown (almost black) granular material with abundant charcoal, although currently undated, probably date to the latter part of the 19th or earlier 20th century. Context 023 is, or was, a topsoil which developed before the site was used for dumping (see below).

#### *Phase 6 - late 20th century*

A very mixed layer of building rubble, plastic bags and other modern debris was spread over the site (contexts 023 and 029).

## **The specialist reports**

### **Pottery**

The dating discussed below relies upon spot dating of material from various contexts. The full pottery report is included as Appendix 2.

All contexts contained material of post-medieval date, but three (contexts 009, 017 and 019) had a post-medieval *terminus post quem* of late 17th-18th century.

The pottery of post-medieval date consisted primarily of red and buff wares (fabrics 78 and 91). These wares are commonly identified on sites of 17th-18th century date in Worcestershire and are found in a range of domestic forms, often decorated with a brown or black glaze. Identifiable forms from this site included pancheon (011), tyg (009) and a press-moulded dish form with slip decoration (context 011). In addition to the aforementioned wares, a single sherd of tin-glazed ware could also be dated to this period (fabric 82, context 011). This sherd was a full profile of a small, shallow bowl with an out-turned rim and the glaze had a distinctive blue colouration to it.

Other material of post-medieval date included the fragments of clay pipe stem, and three shards of undiagnostic vessel glass.

Although the window glass from context 011 is from a context containing material of post-medieval date, the possibility of it being medieval in origin cannot be ruled out. This glass was fine and dark green in colour and almost certainly from a single window. Marks on some of the fragments with a definite edge, indicate that it was held in place by lead cames.

Two contexts (001 and 011) could be dated to the modern period. Two sherds of modern stone china were retrieved from context 001 giving a *terminus post quem* of 19th century to this context and two sherds of creamware and two of Nottingham stoneware were identified within context 011 and dated to the late 18th century.

In addition, a fragment of roof tile from context 011 is also likely to be of this date.

### **Significance of the ceramic finds**

The material from this site formed an assemblage of commonly identified domestic pottery and other objects of the post-medieval and modern periods. None of the material can be linked directly with the tanning processes thought have been carried out on this site but the material found within the contexts associated with this industry indicate a late 18th century end date.

### **Animal bone**

A very small quantity of animal bone was recovered from the site. The full animal bone report is included as Appendix 3. A cattle metacarpal, which had been chopped through the shaft and had knife marks on the surface, was found which may derive from tanning waste; feet and horns were commonly left attached to the skins brought into tanning yards and hence foot bones (including metacarpals) are commonly found on tanning sites. This bone, along with a scapula from a different individual may represent debris from the tanning yard disposed of in a disused pit.

## **Discussion**

Only significant phases are discussed below.

### *Phase 2 - 17th century*

The features pre-dating the brick and clay lined pit/tank (contexts 010 and 021) are believed to be agricultural or horticultural in origin, resulting from ploughing or digging across the contour of the land. The material through which they were cut (contexts 015 and 016) may be a buried soil from this period.

### *Phase 3 - 18th century*

The brick and clay lined pit/tank (contexts 002 and 003) is thought to be related to tanning, although other interpretations are possible (see below). The process of tanning has been recorded in Bewdley before, although not under propitious circumstances. Building work in Corporation Yard, Lax Lane (SO 7883 7511) revealed a set of timber-lined tanning pits (Babb and Davies 1975; Fig 13). They formed a continuous row of at least seven pits, each measuring 7 feet six inches by 40 to 45 inches. The depth was not possible to ascertain. Each pit had been lined with clay on the outside of the wooden lining. The species of oak of which the pits were lined (*Quercus ilex* L. or Turkey Oak, *Q. cerris* L.) were not introduced into Britain until the 17th century, providing a *terminus post quem* for this structure.

In his description of the preparation of sole-leather Procter (1885) described and illustrated the process of tanning employing a series of rectangular pits. Schlutz, writing in 1876, noted that in



Great Britain the tanners made use very largely of brick and cement to form their tanks (Fig 14). He was in no doubt these materials made a very substantial structure, and as they were generally erected in cities and towns, and being intended to last for all time, this construction may have been the best. However, some attempts to use this material in [the USA] have resulted in staining of the leather. The British tanners claimed that this difficulty had been overcome. Salaman (1986) also published a drawing of a tan yard (Fig 15). The structure at Park Lane was of brick construction, lined with clay and there was some, slight, evidence for sub-division of the pit (context 003). In his *Cyclopaedia*, Rees (1819-20) describes the shoe making process. He states that the leather for the soles was first softened by soaking it in water.

It is felt that the combination of a clay lined, rectangular pit of brick construction, the disuse of which dates to the 18th century, in a town known for its early tanning industry, combined with the presence of shoe makers in the immediate vicinity listed in the Manor Court Rolls and a cattle metacarpal, which had been chopped through the shaft and had knife marks on the surface, strongly indicates the activity of tanning and/or shoemaking on this site. However, other interpretations of this structure are currently possible. It may, for instance, have been associated with another Bewdley trade: that of dyeing. It is not impossible, though it is thought unlikely, that it could be a soil or cess pit. This latter interpretation would, however, require that it was carefully cleaned out immediately prior to being abandoned. This seems improbable.

#### *Phase 4 – 18th to 19th century*

Most of the lining of the tanning pit was robbed out, leaving the northern side intact. A number of brick structures were erected around and over its site. One of them, represented by context 006, apparently made use of the remaining brick lining (context 002) as a foundation. Only short lengths of wall relating to these structures appeared in the trench and it is not possible to interpret them further.

#### *Phase 5 - mid 19th century*

By the mid 19th century the phase 4 structures had been demolished and the buildings shown on the 1884 and later Ordnance Survey mapping (Fig 2) were probably beginning to be erected. These would have been erected and modified according to the needs of the various trades being carried out from 35 Load Street including a grocer's shop, a boot maker, a saddler, a corn merchant, a butcher and a hairdresser.

## **Significance**

### **General**

Worcestershire started the late post-medieval period (c 1750 onwards) as an agricultural county without significant urban growth or industrialisation outside Worcester (Dinn 2003). By the end of the 19th century Worcester itself had expanded considerably and a number of towns and smaller settlements in the north of the county had grown and taken on an industrial character.

Manufacturing industry was typically specialised by location, especially in north Worcestershire. Many of these industries had origins in earlier periods, but unfortunately there is no comprehensive modern resource assessment of any of them. As an agricultural county, it is unsurprising that many of its industries were based on agricultural products: in the case of Bewdley - tanneries and leatherworking.

Assessing the significance of the deposits at 35 Load Street/2 Park Lane Bewdley is difficult as little attention has been given to assessing the value of later post medieval remains, very little fieldwork has been directed specifically at the later post-medieval period and what has been done is very limited, and biased in particular towards [larger] industrial sites. An important factor is that the post-medieval resource is under greater threat than that for any other period – there is much more of it and not all can be preserved. Selections must be made, both for research and for preservation, but these must be made on the basis of knowledge and understanding, neither of which are currently forthcoming and we are not yet in a position to undertake a valid resource assessment for most features of much of this period.

### Site specific

Evidence for 17th century agricultural activity this close to the built-up centre of Bewdley has the potential to inform knowledge relating to the extent of the town and the diet of the contemporary population. Evidence for industrial activity in the 18th century can assist in better understanding the processes concerned, in particular their scale. The industrial process revealed by the evaluation (whatever it turns out to be) was in operation at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. The latter has been, and continues to be, extensively studied but its immediate forebears, often amounting to 'cottage' industries, are little known by comparison. As recent work in High Street, Bewdley has shown (Cook 2008) much can be learned about these early examples of industry by suitably targeted projects.

### Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken of land between 2 Park Lane and 35 Load Street, Bewdley, Worcestershire (SO 7849 7525). It identified what was probably a buried soil dating to the 17th century with signs of former agricultural activity. An 18th century brick and clay lined tank, believed to be for tanning or shoemaking and other brick buildings, which succeeded the tanning operation, of the 18th and earlier 19th centuries.

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### Archive

The archive consists of

3 Scale site drawings  
1 CD-ROM

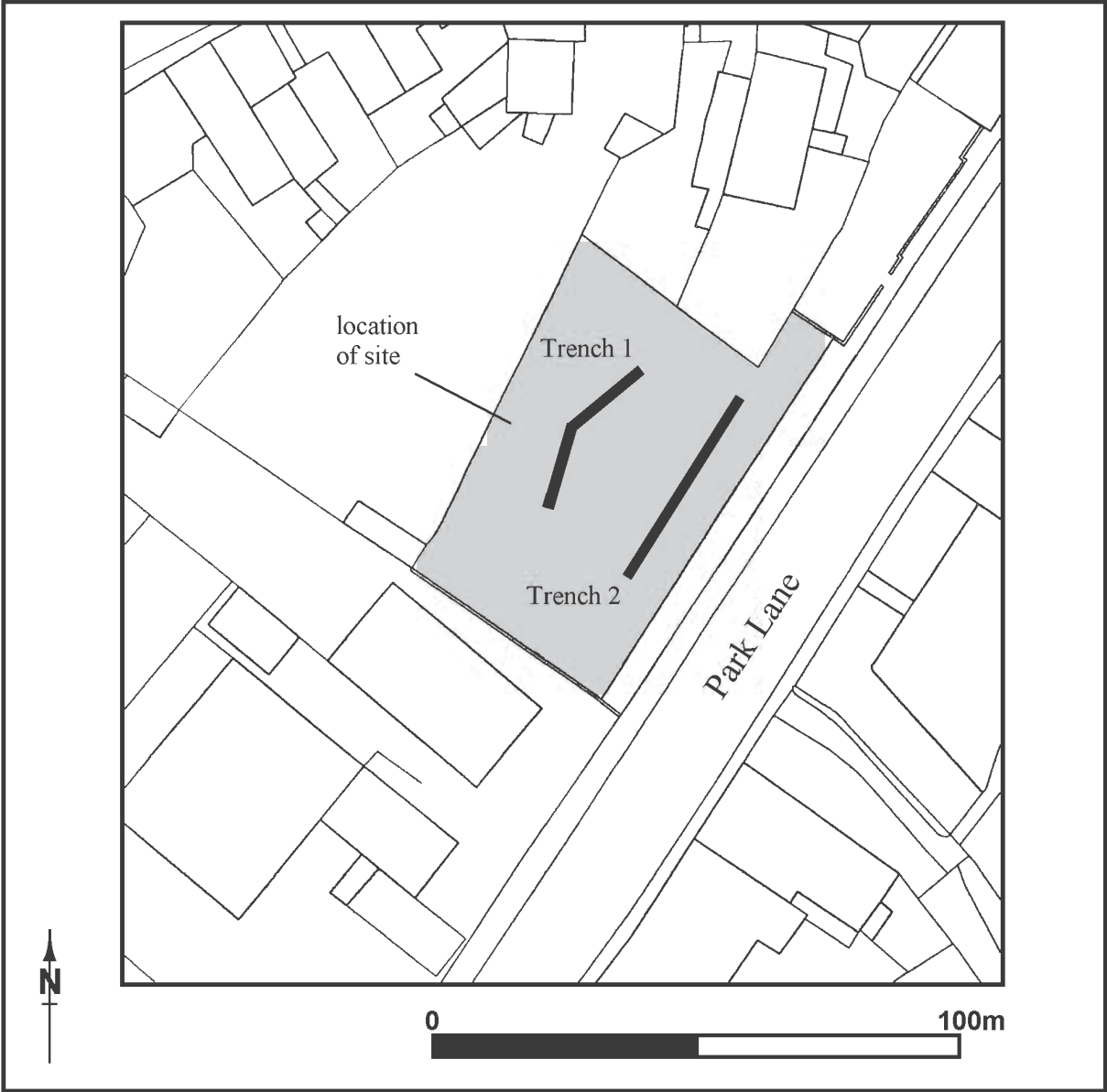
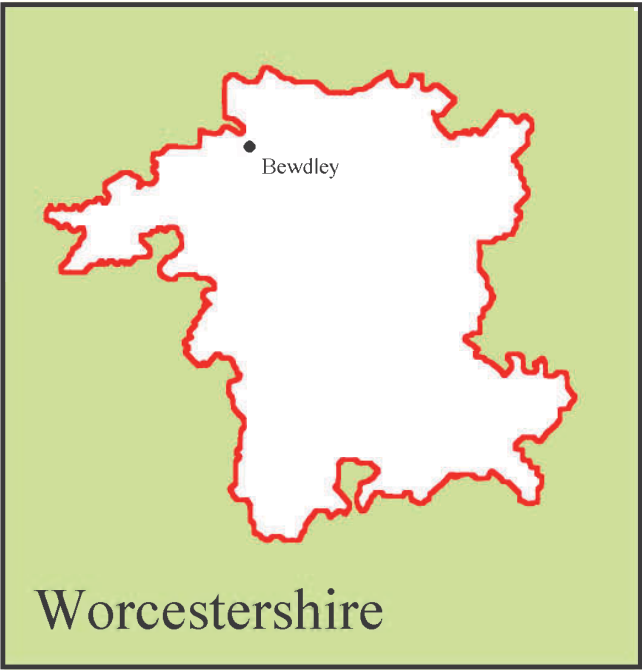
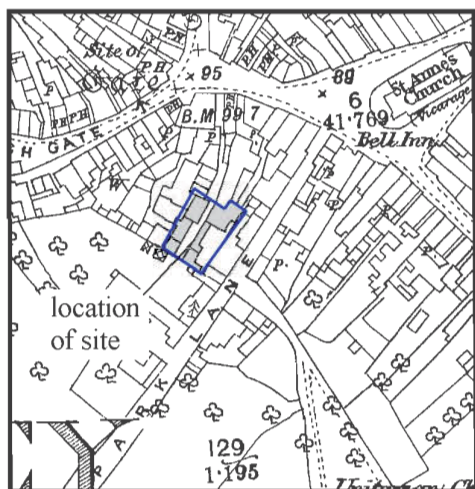
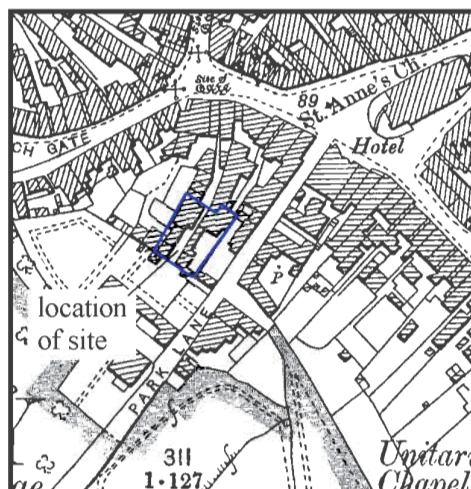


Fig 1: Location of site

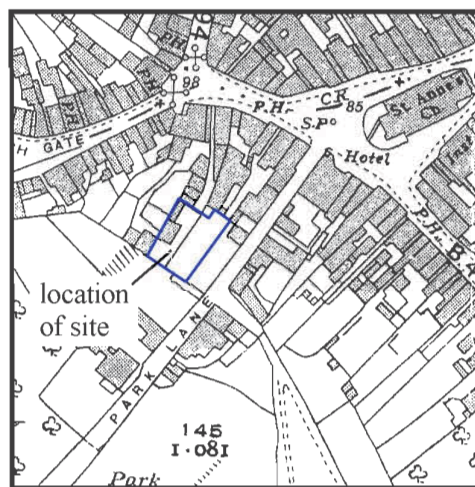
1884



1903



1927



1938

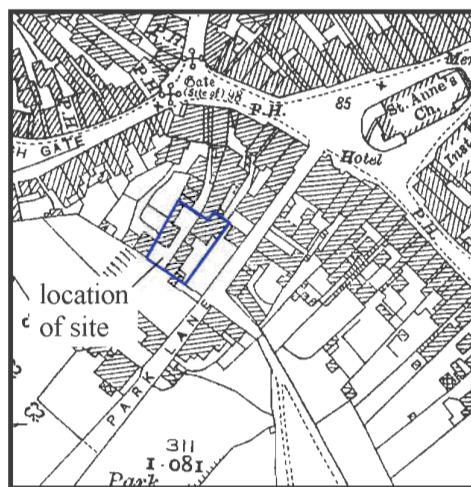


Fig 2: Historic mapping

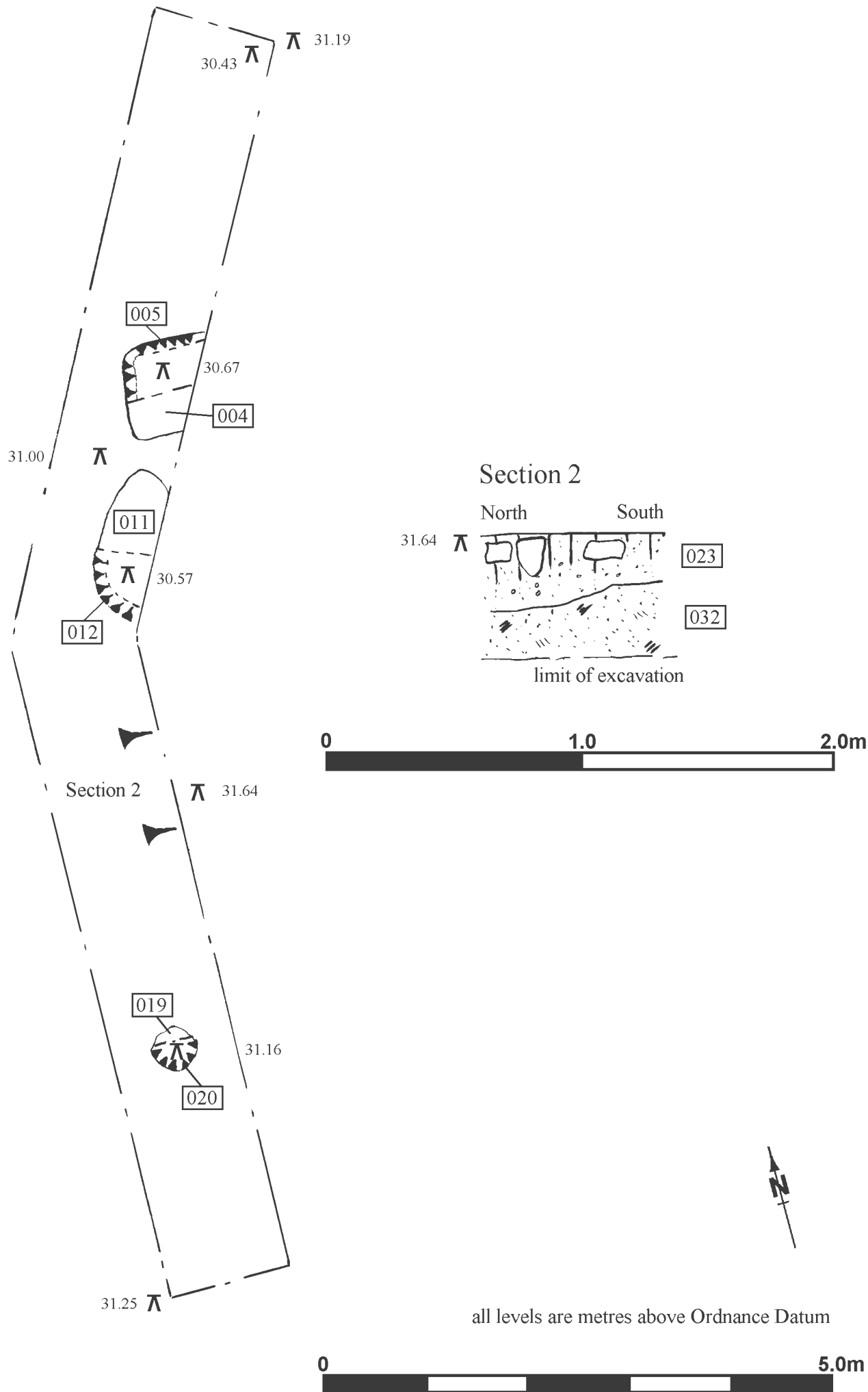


Fig 3: Trench 1

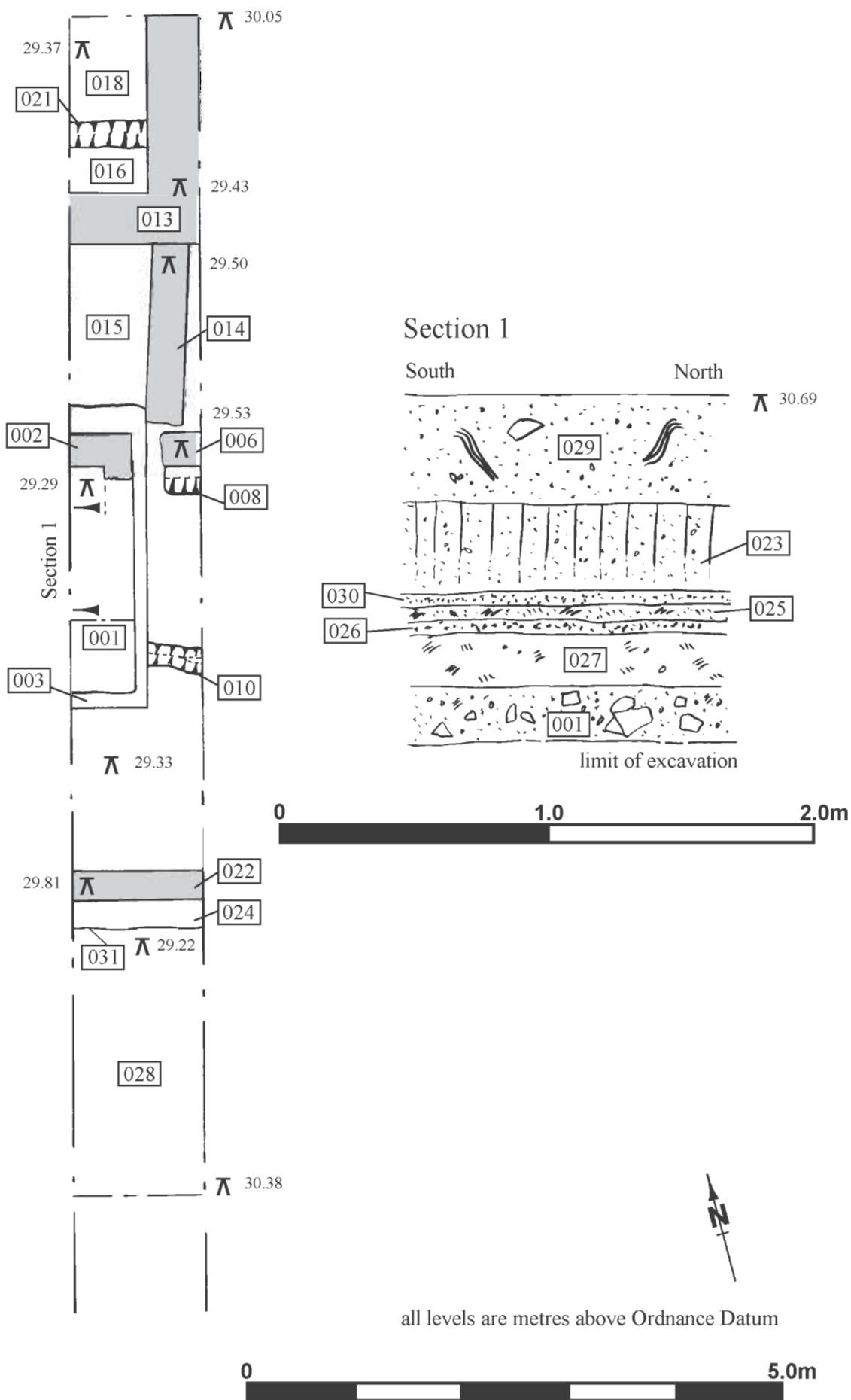


Fig 4: Trench 2

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Fig 5: Harris matrix of trenches 1 and 2





Fig 6: General view of trench 1 from the north



Fig 7: General view of trench 2 from the south



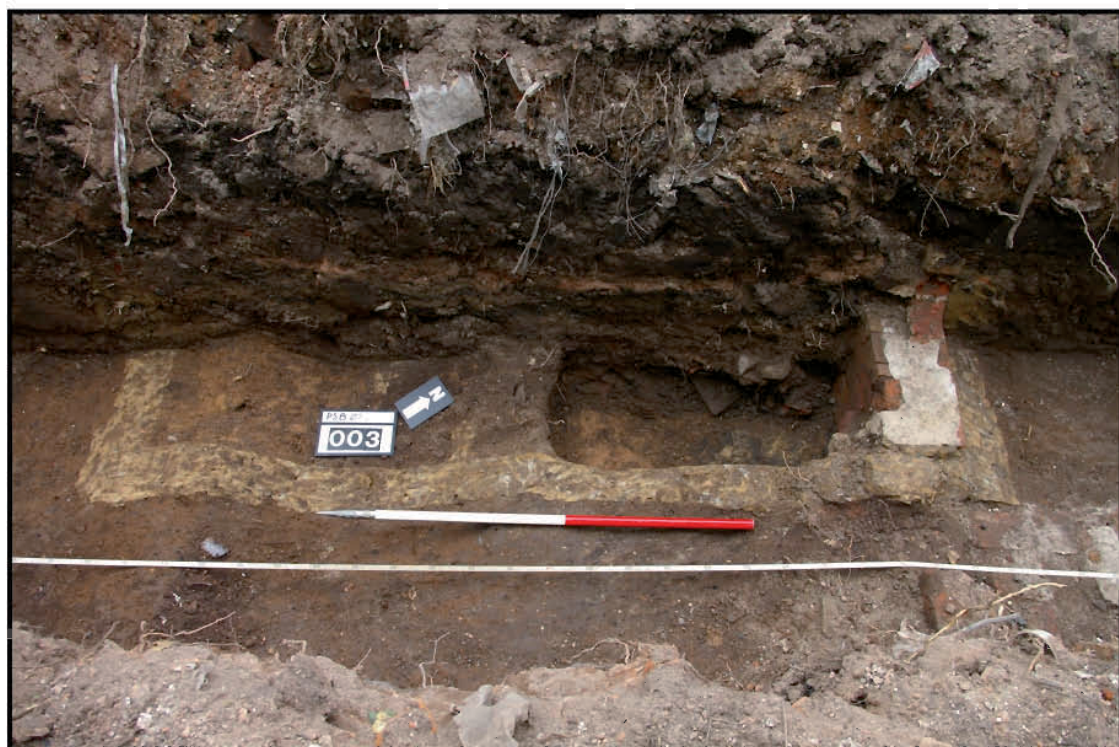


Fig 8: Clay and brick lined pit or tank and fill 003



Fig 9: Foundation trench 008 and wall 006





Fig 10: Wall 014



Fig 11: Pit 012





Fig 12: Post hole 020



Fig 13: Timber lined tanning pits, Lax Lane, Bewdley

Reproduced courtesy of Bewdley Museum

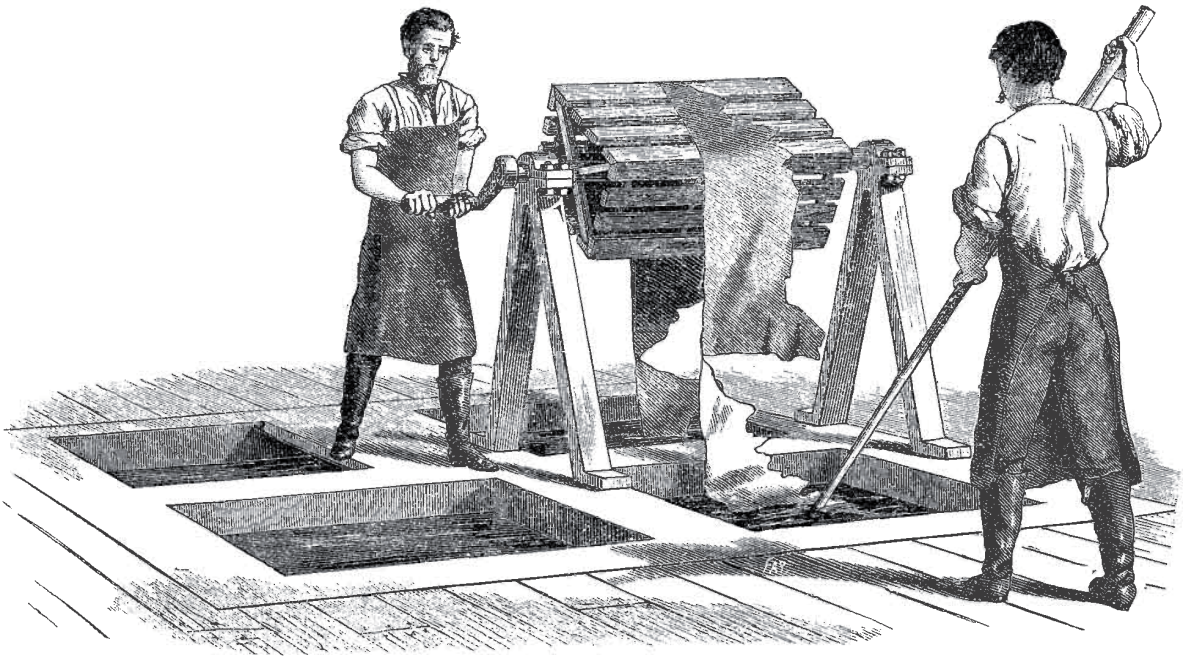


Fig 14: Tanning pits after Schlutz 1876

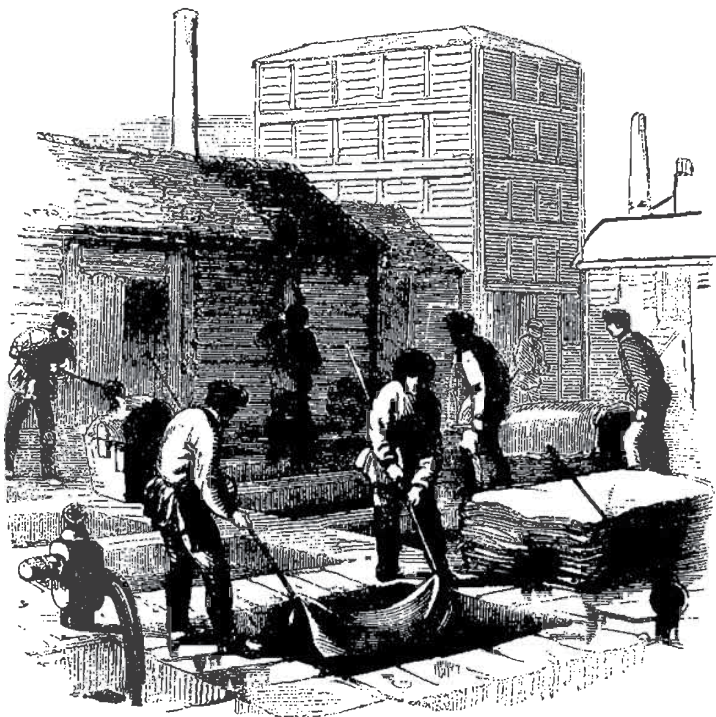


Fig 15: A tan yard after Salaman 1986

## Appendix 1: List of the contexts

Context number	Description	Interpretation
001	Dark brown sandy clay with abundant brick and tile rubble	Fill of 002
002	Brick wall	Wall of tanning pit
003	Light yellow buff tenacious clay	Puddled clay seal for tanning pit
004	Mid grey brown sandy clay	Fill of 005
005	Shallow, rectangular cut with near vertical sides	Pit
006	Brick wall	?same building as 022
007	Dark grey brown sandy clay	Fill of 008
008	Linear cut	Foundation trench for 006
009	Very dark brown (almost black) sandy clay with abundant charcoal flecks	Fill of 010
010	Linear cut	Unknown
011	Mid grey brown sandy clay	Fill of 012
012	Deep (c 0.45m) oval cut with near vertical sides	Pit
013	Brick wall	Corner of building
014	Brick wall	Infill wall between 013 and 002 or 006
015	Dark grey brown sandy clay with occasional small rounded pebbles and common charcoal	Layer
016	Dark grey brown sandy clay with occasional small rounded pebbles and common charcoal	Layer
017	Dark grey brown sandy clay with occasional small rounded pebbles and common charcoal	Fill of 021
018	Light orange brown sandy clay	Natural subsoil
019	Light to mid grey slightly clayey sand	Fill of 020
020	Shallow, circular cut with near vertical sides	Posthole
021	Linear cut	Unknown
022	Brick wall	?same building as 006
023	Dark grey brown loamy clay with occasional small rounded pebbles	Topsoil
024	Light grey brown sandy clay	Fill of 031
025	Dark grey brown sandy clay	Layer
026	Very dark brown (almost black) granular material with abundant charcoal	Layer
027	Light orange brown sandy clay	Layer
028	Light orange brown sandy clay	Natural subsoil
029	Very mixed layer including plastic bags and other modern debris	Dumped material/topsoil
030	Light grey very sandy clay	Layer
031	Cut	Foundation trench for 022

032

Mid reddy brown slightly clayey sand with very occasional charcoal fragments,  
small angular stones and occasional fragments of lime mortar

Layer

## **Appendix 2: The finds by L C Griffin**

### **Artefactual analysis**

#### ***Aims***

The brief required an assessment of the quantity, range and potential of artefacts from the excavation.

The aims of the finds assessment were:

- a) to identify, sort, spot date, and quantify all artefacts
- b) to describe the range of artefacts present
- c) to preliminarily assess the significance of the artefacts

This report covers artefacts of modern date.

### **Method of analysis**

All hand-retrieved artefacts were examined and identified, quantified and dated to period. All information was recorded on a Microsoft Access 2000 database.

### **Results of analysis**

The assemblage retrieved from the site consisted of 55 artefacts weighing 735g (see Table 1), which came from five stratified contexts (contexts 001, 009, 011, 017 and 019). Material displayed moderate levels of abrasion and dated to the late post-medieval and modern periods.

Material included 20 sherds of pottery which has been quantified and dated according to fabric type (see Table 2). Diagnostic sherds were identified as of a particular form type and dated accordingly. Remaining undiagnostic pottery sherds were datable by fabric type to the general period or production span. Other finds consisted of a single piece of roofing tile (context 011), nine fragments of clay pipe stem (contexts 001, 017 and 009), 21 shards of green window glass (context 011) and four fragments of vessel glass (contexts 011 and 019).

### **Discussion**

The discussion below is a summary of the artefacts and associated location or contexts by period. Where possible, dates have been allocated and the importance of individual finds commented upon as necessary.

#### ***Post-medieval***

All contexts contained material of post-medieval date, but three (contexts 009, 017 and 019) had a post-medieval *terminus post quem* of late 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century.

Pottery of post-medieval date consisted primarily of red and buff wares (fabrics 78 and 91). These wares are commonly identified on sites of 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century date in Worcestershire and are found in a range of domestic forms, often decorated with a brown or black glaze. Identifiable forms from this site included pantheon (011), tyg (009) and a press-moulded dish form with slip decoration (context 011). In addition to the aforementioned wares, a single sherd of tin-glazed ware could also be dated to this period (fabric 82, context 011). This sherd was a full profile of a small, shallow bowl with an out-turned rim and the glaze had a distinctive blue colouration to it.

Other material of post-medieval date included the fragments of clay pipe stem, and three shards of undiagnostic vessel glass.

Although the window glass from context 011 is from a context containing material of post-medieval date, the possibility of it being medieval in origin cannot be ruled out. This glass was fine and dark green in colour and



almost certainly from a single window. Marks on some of the fragments with a definite edge, indicate that it was held in place by lead cames.

### **Modern**

Two contexts (001 and 011) could be dated to the modern period. Two sherds of modern stone china were retrieved from context 001 giving a *terminus post quem* of 19<sup>th</sup> century to this context and two sherds of creamware and two of Nottingham stoneware were identified within context 011 and dated to late 18<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, a fragment of roof tile from context 011 is also likely to be of this date.

### **Significance**

The material from this site formed an assemblage of commonly identified domestic pottery and other objects of the post-medieval and modern periods. None of the material can be linked directly with the tanning processes thought have been carried out on this site but the material found within the contexts associated with this industry indicate a late 18<sup>th</sup> century end date.

### **Appendix 1: Tables**

Material	Total	Weight (g)
Post-medieval pottery	14	472
Modern pottery	6	36
Tile	1	56
Clay pipe	9	27
Window glass	21	112
Vessel glass	4	32

*Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage*

Fabric no.	Fabric name	Total sherds	Weight (g)
78	Post-medieval red ware	12	416
81.3	Nottingham stoneware	2	8
82	Tin-glazed ware	1	30
84	Creamware	2	10
85	Modern stone china	2	18
91	Post-medieval buff ware	1	26

*Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric type*

## **Appendix 3: the animal bone**

### **Elizabeth Pearson**

#### **Introduction**

Animal bone from was analysed on behalf of Martin Cook. This consisted of a small assemblage of bone from an 18<sup>th</sup> century tanning pit.

#### **Methods**

The animal bone was identified and recorded to species where possible, but otherwise to large ungulate (horse/cattle/red deer size) using modern reference material and identification guides (Hillson 1992 and Schmid 1972). The condition of the bone, and any butchery marks, juvenile bones (for example, unfused epiphyses), pathology and non-metrical traits were noted.

#### **Results**

Only two bones were recovered which consisted of a juvenile cattle (*Bos*) scapula and adult cattle metacarpal. The latter has been chopped through the shaft, and there are knife marks on the surface. No signs of pathology or non-metrical traits on either were noted.

The cattle metacarpal may derive from tanning waste; feet and horns were commonly left attached to the skins brought into tanning yards and hence foot bones (including metacarpals) are commonly found on tanning sites. This bone, along with the scapula from a different individual may represent debris from the tanning yard disposed of in a disused pit.

#### **Bibliography**

Hillson, S, 1992 *Mammal bones and teeth: an introductory guide to methods of identification*, University College London, Institute of Archaeology publications

Schmid, E, 1972 *Atlas of Animal Bones: For Prehistorians, Archeologists and Quaternary Geologists. Knochenatlas: Für Prähistoriker, Archäologen und Quatärgeologen*, Elsevier Publishing Company (Amsterdam, New York)