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**A49 WOOFFERTON BY-PASS
(PREFERRED ROUTE):
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

Part One: the Documentary Research,
the Field Walking and Walk-over Survey,
and the Geophysical Survey

by
H R HANNAFORD

**A REPORT FOR
THE COUNTY SURVEYOR'S DEPARTMENT,
SHROPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

The
Archaeology Unit
SHROPSHIRE 
COUNTY COUNCIL
Leisure Services Department

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Winston Churchill Building, Radbrook Centre, Radbrook Road, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY3 9BJ Tel. (0743) 254018

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1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1.1 The Preferred Route

1.1.1 The preferred route of the proposed A49 Woofferton Bypass runs for 3.75km from the southern end of the present Ludlow Bypass. For most of its length the proposed new road will be an improvement of, or will follow closely the course of, the present A49, although just to the north of Woofferton it diverges from the existing road, running around the east side of the village to link up with the northern end of the Brimfield Bypass (Fig. 1).

1.1.2 The initial phases in the planning of the general route of the proposed new road were undertaken before the introduction of the guidelines published in June 1993 in the Department of Transport's Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DoT, 1993). As a result, formal detailed archaeological desk top studies were not undertaken before the selection of the preferred route. Nevertheless, both English Heritage and the Historic Environment Section of the Property and Planning Services Department of Shropshire County Council were consulted on the archaeological constraints applying to the broad route corridor before the selection of the preferred route. This consultation process produced the general level of information required for Stages 1 and 2 of the current guidelines, and resulted in the production by the Senior Archaeologist of the Leisure Services Department, Shropshire County Council, of a brief for the archaeological assessment and evaluation of the preferred route (Watson, 1993).

1.1.3 The Archaeology Unit of the Leisure Services Department, Shropshire County Council, was commissioned by the County Surveyor's Department, Shropshire County Council, to conduct this evaluation in accordance with the brief prepared by the Senior Archaeologist (above, 1.1.2).

1.2 The Archaeological Background

1.2.1 The solid geology of the study area consists of "Downton" Series Old Red Sandstone of the Silurian Period (Toghill, 1990), overlain by glacial and periglacial clays, sands, and gravels. To the east of the study area are the Clee Hills, and to the west the uplands around Richard's Castle. The River Teme flows in a generally southwards direction through the lower ground between these hills, before curving to the east as it reaches Woofferton.

1.2.2 In the vicinity of the study area, the most obvious surviving monuments of the prehistoric period are the Iron Age hillforts of Caynham Camp, 4km northeast of Ashford Bowdler, and Croft Ambrey, 7km southwest of Woofferton, but the lowlands in between also appear to have attracted settlement, and the preferred route runs through an area which has a concentration of archaeological cropmark sites, many of which are presumed to be of prehistoric to Roman date. The preferred route directly affects one such cropmark site (SMR No SA3431) at SO51607150. This site comprises a series of linear features of unknown date or function, though Romano-British pottery was found in the immediate vicinity of the site during construction of the Ludlow By-pass in 1978.

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- 1.2.3** The presumed course of a Roman road (SA2613), running from north to south through the study area, is crossed by the preferred route in three places.
- 1.2.4** Medieval settlements, some of which survive as modern villages, also flourished on the lower ground, many of them at crossing points along the River Teme, such as the villages of Ashford Bowdler and Ashford Carbonell, or, like Brimfield, at road junctions. The preferred route runs through the medieval estates of Ashford Bowdler and Woofferton.
- 1.2.5** In the late 18th century the Leominster to Stourport canal was constructed, running from west to east across the study area at Woofferton. In the mid 19th century the Shrewsbury to Hereford Railway bisected the area from north to south, with a branch line (now disused) from Woofferton to Tenbury being built on the bed of the by then abandoned canal. The preferred route cuts the line of the former canal and railway branch line at SO52326859.

2 THE AIMS AND METHODOLOGY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

2.1 Aims and Objectives of the Evaluation

2.1.1 The aim of this evaluation is to provide information enabling an informed and reasonable planning decision to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the areas affected by the proposed by-pass.

2.1.2 The objectives were:

- a) To locate any archaeological features and deposits likely to be affected by the preferred route.
- b) To assess their survival, quality, condition, and significance.
- c) To identify and assess the significant archaeological impacts likely to arise from the construction of the preferred route and to recommend appropriate mitigation strategies.

2.2 Methodology of the Evaluation

2.2.1 To achieve these objectives, the evaluation of the preferred route was required to comprise a number of different elements:

STAGE 1: Desk Top Study

Documentary and cartographic research would be undertaken to locate and assess previously unrecorded features within the route corridor. This research would include a survey of the aerial photographs and primary and secondary sources held at the County Sites and Monuments Record and the County Records and Research Unit.

STAGE 2: Walk-over Survey and Field Walking

A walk over survey would be undertaken along the entire route in order to locate and assess any previously unrecorded earthwork features of significance within the route corridor. This element of the evaluation would include rapid field reconnaissance and the sketch plotting of any surviving earthworks encountered. Areas of arable land use within the road corridor would be field walked after ploughing.

STAGE 3: Field Evaluation

(i) A geophysical survey would be undertaken of the cropmark site and find spot SA3431 at Ashford Bowdler. The site would also be field walked after ploughing in order to identify any concentrations of artefact remains within the ploughsoil.

(ii) On the basis of the results of the geophysical survey and the field walking, trial excavations would be carried out on the cropmark site SA3431. The excavations would be limited to the top of significant archaeological deposits, which would then be sampled only where essential for achieving the objectives of the evaluation. A full written, graphic, and photographic record would be made of the findings.

(iii) Further sample excavation might be required following the results of Stages 1 and 2 of the evaluation.

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2.2.2 As the cropmark site SA3431 was not available for trial excavation until autumn of 1994, and because of the need for initial evaluation results by early 1994, the project sponsors required that the documentary research, the walk over survey, and the geophysical survey and field walking of site SA3431 be carried out and reported on prior to any trial excavation being agreed. The documentary research, walk over survey, and geophysical survey and field walking were carried out between October and December, 1993, and this document is the report on this phase of the evaluation.

3 ASSESSMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES IN THE PREFERRED ROUTE CORRIDOR

3.1 STAGE 1: The Documentary Research

A search was made of all the documents relevant to the study area held by the Shropshire County Council Records and Research Unit at the Local Studies Library, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, and the Records Office, Shirehall, Shrewsbury. The records held by the County Sites and Monuments Record were also consulted. This included the aerial photographic coverage of the route corridor.

- 3.1.1 Settlement and land use.** In 1086 Ashford Bowdler and Woofferton belonged to Osbern, son of Richard Scrope, Lord of Richard's Castle (Thorn, 1986). Richard Scrope was a Norman settler during the reign of Edward the Confessor who has been credited with building a castle at Auvertune (Richard's Castle) 2 miles west of Asses Ford (Thorn, 1983). Soon after 1086, part of Richard's Castle (including Woofferton and Ashford Bowdler) was transferred to Shropshire; in 1255, Asford Budlers (Ashford Bowdler) , held by Henry de Budlers, and Wllerton (Woofferton), belonged to the castlery of Richard's Castle and lay within Munslow Hundred (Thorn, 1983). In the early 14th century Joan Talbot had a park at Woofferton, apparently located about one mile northwest of the present village (Stamper, 1993). In 1407 a papal bull granted the church at Ashford Bowdler the right to its own cemetery (SRO 2327/1).

The Shropshire Hearth Tax Roll of 1672 reveals that for that year twelve inhabitants of Ashford Bowdler paid a total of £20 2s 0d, and eleven in Woofferton paid £14 1s 8d. (SAPRS, 1949). The Roll for 1675 shows that on the Ashford Bowdler estate, four householders were paying tax on more than one hearth, with fifteen other names being on the roll (Beesly, 1965).

The Ashford Bowdler estate was acquired in the late 17th century by the Hall family, passing by marriage to the Reverend Jonathon Green in the mid 18th century. The present Ashford Hall (SA10687), a Grade II* listed building, is thought to date from this period (Pevsner, 1958, p61). The estate was held by a succession of different owners in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and was finally broken up in 1965 (Beesley, 1965).

For a brief period in the late 18th/early 19th centuries, the wharfage and warehousing associated with the Leominster to Stourport Canal may have brought in some extra income to the village of Woofferton, but the predominantly agricultural nature of the settlement here is likely to have been little affected by this short-lived venture.

The field name maps based on the Tithe Apportionments and maps for Ashford Bowdler and Richards Castle (Shropshire), the 19th century estate plans for Ashford Bowdler, and railway plans for the Shrewsbury and Hereford Railway show that the present field systems were already established in the 19th century; agricultural usage would appear to have been broadly similar to that of the present day - this is confirmed by a mortgage deed of 1882 for the Ashford Bowdler estate (SRO 4887/2/8) - with the exception of the disappearance of

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hopyards shown on the Tithes Apportionment maps (Foxall, 1979a). The many orchards are a significant feature of the landscape; most of the orchards shown on the early maps of the study area survive today.

A sale plan for Mansion House (now The Grove), Ashford Bowdler, of 1837 shows a cottage in the northeast angle of the crossing of the A49 Ludlow to Leominster road and Wheatcommon Lane (SO51567106). This timber framed cottage was sold to and demolished by Ludlow Corporation in 1951 (Beesley, 1965). The site of this cottage (Fig. 1, Site b) was probably destroyed by improvements to the crossroads carried out either at this time or during the construction of the Ludlow Bypass in the late 1970s. It is possible, however, that some below ground remains survive; if so, they would be directly affected by the construction of the new road (see para 4.2.4 below).

3.1.2 Roads. A possible Roman road (SA2613) runs through the study area from north to south along the west side of the River Teme (Houghton, 1966). This road would be cut in three places by the new road (Fig. 1, Site g). The road is thought to be a northerly continuation of Margary's road no. 613 (ARICONIVM to Ashton), joining his road no. 610 (Watling Street West) south of Little Stretton, Shropshire. No detailed fieldwork on the line of this road appears to have been undertaken on the section of the road south of Ludlow (this includes the section that runs through the study area). However, an annotated copy of an engineering plan for the Ludlow Bypass held in the Sites and Monuments Record site file for SA3431 shows a straight linear feature labelled "apparent break of slope" on the suggested line of the Roman road. This linear feature was not apparent on the ground at the time of the present evaluation (see below, para 3.2.2). To the north of the study area, it is suggested that the Roman road SA2613 followed the line of the pre-19th century Ludlow to Leominster road (SMR annotated copy of OS1:10,560 Sheet SO57SW) which before 1815 followed a more easterly course, closer to the River Teme (SRO 1141 / Box 181). However, the sinuous course of the post medieval road through relatively easy country would seem to indicate that a Roman origin is unlikely.

It has been suggested that a bridletrack, running from the Welsh coast to the Midlands, crossed the River Teme at Esseford - or Asses Ford - in the Norman conquest period, and that this trackway might be associated with Wheatcommon Lane and a ford of the river in the vicinity of Ashford Mill. The same source further suggests that the track may have been a salt track (from the occurrence of the Whit/ Wich/Wheat/ along its route) (Beesley, 1965). A 250m length of Wheatcommon lane, including its junction with the A49, would be directly affected by the construction of the new road (Fig 1, Site h₁-h₂).

3.1.3 The Leominster to Stourport Canal (SA 3413). Poor communications in south Shropshire led in the late 18th century to proposals to construct a canal between Leominster and Stourport. An Act of Parliament of 1791 authorised the raising of funds, and Thomas Dadford was appointed as the engineer to supervise the construction of the canal. The intended traffic was to be mainly agricultural, but it was also hoped to transport coal from the colliery at Mamble (Hereford and Worcs). In 1794, the canal was opened between Sounsant and Woofferton,

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where there was a basin and warehouse, and by 1796 it was open between Leominster Wharf and Marlbrook. Continuing engineering problems, however, particularly with its long tunnels, resulted in the canal never being completed, and work was stopped in 1803. A plan to link the unfinished sections of the canal by means of plateways was abandoned. In 1858, the section of the canal between Leominster and Woofferton was closed, and a branch line railway was constructed on the bed of the canal between Woofferton and Tenbury. (Morriss, 1991a). The line of the proposed new road will cross that of the canal and railway branch line just to the east of Woofferton (Fig. 1, Site f)

3.1.4 Railways. The Shrewsbury and Hereford Railway is a major feature affecting the landscape of the study area, bisecting as it does the Ashford Bowdler and Woofferton estates from north to south. The Shrewsbury and Hereford Railway was authorised by Act of Parliament in 1846, and work was started in 1850. By 1852 the line had reached Ludlow from Shrewsbury, and by 1853 it had reached Hereford (Morriss, 1991b). A set of railway plans dating from the period of the construction of this line is held by the Shropshire County Records and research Unit at the Local Studies Library, Shrewsbury. The only part of this railway line to be affected by construction of the new road is the Skew Bridge (Fig. 1, Site d) at SO51806914, about 650m north of Woofferton crossroads. The bridge is a single span structure of brick construction, and presumably dates to the building of the railway in the early 1850s. In 1859, a branch from the main line was authorised to run from Woofferton to Tenbury. This line was opened in 1861 (Morriss, 1991b), being laid for much of its length on the bed of the former Leominster to Stourport Canal. This branch line closed in the 1960s.

3.2 STAGE 2: The Field Walking and Walk-over Survey

3.2.1 The only field given over to arable cultivation and available for field walking during the period of the evaluation was the field 6427 containing the cropmark site SA3431 (Fig. 1, Site a). The site was systematically field walked at the same time as the geophysical survey was being carried out. Light scatters of Romano-British and medieval pottery were recorded over the study area, but the small quantity of pottery recovered was not indicative of past occupation of the site and might best be interpreted as simply reflecting arable cultivation of the site during these periods.

3.2.2 During the field walking of SA3431 (see below), a series of very low parallel ridges were observed running across the survey area, particularly noticeable along its western edge, and also at the southern end of the field. These ridges may possibly represent the slight earthwork remains of medieval ridge and furrow ploughing of the field. An annotated map in the SMR file, indicating the findspots of Roman pottery during the construction of the A49 Ludlow By-pass in 1978, also suggests the presence of a break of slope running north to south across the field corresponding to one of the linear cropmark features visible on the aerial photograph. This apparent break of slope was not visible on the ground at the time of the present survey. This may possibly be the result of recent agricultural activity, although the low earthworks mentioned above run diagonally across the supposed line of this feature and do not appear to have been affected.

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3.2.3 The triangular field between the present A49 and the Shrewsbury to Hereford railway line immediately to the north of the Skew Bridge is currently under permanent pasture, and contained a series of earthwork remains (Fig. 1, Site c). The present A49 here runs along the top of a steep scarp, probably a terrace of the River Teme, which lies some 500 metres to the east of the road. The visible earthworks lie on the level part of the field below and to the east of this terrace (Fig. 3). Cutting across the eastern corner of the field was a low bank c100m in length aligned north-northwest/south-southeast. This feature corresponds in position and alignment to the proposed line of the Roman road SA2613, and may possibly represent a short stretch of surviving agger. Another possibility is that it represents a headland or former hedgebank of a medieval or post medieval field system. And indeed in the southern half of the field was a small area of well preserved ridge and furrow, probably the remains of medieval cultivation, centred on SO518693. The ridges ran approximately north to south, and at their northern end were cut across by a pair of shallow dry ditches spaced about 10m apart and running west to east. These ditches marked the southern limit of a network of similar ditches, probably representing former field boundaries around small closes of medieval or post medieval date. Indeed, several of these features correspond in form and position to a dog-legged section of parish boundary and northern boundary of a field (named Ox Pasture) delineated on the 1840 Tithe Apportionment map (Foxall, 1979a). The proposed new road would destroy the western half of these earthwork remains.

3.2.4 Woofferton Court Farm occupies the edge of a plateau above the scarp marking the terrace of the River Teme. The farmhouse itself (SA11344) is a Grade II brick building of late 18th century date. The farmhouse is surrounded by farm buildings, ranging from dilapidated timber framed barns to modern steel framed structures. Three of these structures are also Grade II listed buildings - a barn to the north of the farmhouse (SA17368), the cowshed and stable (SA17369), and the cart shed and stable (SA17370). Orchards lie beyond the farm buildings to the south and east, and there are the remains of former orchards to the northeast. Beyond the orchards the land is mainly permanent or improved pasture, though some is given over to arable cultivation. The farmhouse, outbuildings, and adjacent orchards are not directly affected by the road construction.

3.2.5 In the field to the east of Woofferton Court Farm and immediately to the north of the former Leominster to Tenbury Railway and Leominster to Stourport Canal, another series of well preserved earthworks, centred on SO522686 were observed in another area of permanent pasture (Fig.4). Woofferton Court Farm lies on the top of a steep scarp which curves round to the east where the former canal and railway run along its upper edge. This scarp is probably the continuation of the river terrace noted above. The earthwork remains are present in the level pastureland at the bottom of this terrace, and have the appearance of the remains of deserted medieval settlement. The earthworks consist mainly of a grid of shallow dry ditches, but at least one linear bank, possibly a former field boundary, was visible within the line of the road corridor at the southern end of the field. A wider linear hollow, possibly a holloway, corresponding in position to the boundary between the Upper and Middle Bogs fields as delineated on the

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1840 Tithe Apportionment map (Foxall, 1979a) formed the western boundary of this grid of dry ditches. To the west of this feature, and to the north of the area of dry ditches, are what appear to be a number of low, irregularly shaped platforms, possibly representing the sites of former houses or other structures. Further evaluation of these earthworks will be required (see below, para. 5.2)

3.3 STAGE 3: The Geophysical Survey of the Cropmark Site and Findspot SA3431

3.3.1 A geophysical survey of the cropmark site SA3431 was carried out on behalf of the Archaeology Unit by Geophysical Surveys of Bradford. A full report on the geophysical survey appears as a separate document (Geophysical Surveys, Report No. 93/124), but the results of the survey will be drawn on below to supplement the evidence from the documentary research, and to provide an integrated summary of the overall significance of this first phase of the evaluation.

3.3.2 The geophysical survey revealed an area of magnetic noise (Geophysical Surveys, Report No. 93/124, Fig.5, A) which was considered likely to be of modern origin. A second area of magnetic noise (ibid, Fig. 5, B) was thought to represent either the site of a recent large bonfire or perhaps a possible area of industrial activity. A series of poorly defined magnetic anomalies along the western edge of the survey area (ibid, Fig. 5, C) were thought to be of archaeological origin, and could be interpreted as indicating the presence of a small enclosure. A further weak linear anomaly (ibid, Fig. 5, D) may mark the line of a former field boundary or represent some other agricultural activity.

3.3.3 A plot at 1:2500 scale was made of the cropmarks appearing on the aerial photograph of the site (SMR: SO5171-A; NMR: SO5171-1; UCCAP: TR71) using the "four point" method (Riley, 1987, p68). The cropmarks (Fig. 2) comprise a number of intercutting curved and straight linear features, classifiable as belonging to Whimster's Category 6: linear ditches (Whimster, 1989, p31). The northwestern extremity of the cropmark complex is now covered by the present Ludlow Bypass, constructed in 1978-9, and it was during the course of these roadworks that Roman pottery was found on this site. There was no correlation between any of the features suggested by the geophysical survey and the plotted cropmarks (Fig. 2). However, one of the cropmark features, a straight linear cropmark ditch c170m long on a north-northwest/south-southeast alignment, does correspond in alignment and approximate position (ie within 50m of) to the proposed line of the Roman Road SA2613. This feature could possibly represent a side-ditch belonging to the Roman road.

3.3.4 Trial Excavation of Site a (SA3431): On the basis of the results of Stages 1 and 2 of this evaluation, and of the results of the field walking, the geophysical survey, and plotting of the cropmarks of Site a, a strategy for sample excavation was devised for Site a to examine features represented by the cropmarks and the anomalies detected by the geophysical survey (see below, para. 5.2). This further evaluation work is to be held in abeyance until Site a becomes available for excavation in the autumn of 1994.

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3.4 Gazetteer of Affected Sites.

Site a: The cropmark site and findspot SA3431 (SO51597134).

Description: The site consists of a series of linear cropmarks representing features of unknown date or function, although one of the cropmarks corresponds in alignment and approximate position to the proposed line of the Roman road SA2613. Finds of Roman pottery have been made on the site. A number of earthwork features have also been noted, mainly representing ploughed out ridge and furrow. A geophysical survey undertaken as part of this evaluation has indicated the presence of a possible small sub-circular enclosure and possible industrial activity.

Survival/condition: Medium - the site survives as a cropmark, findspot, and earthwork site. In addition, further buried features have been revealed by geophysical survey.

Period: ?Roman/medieval.

Rarity: Rare. Sites where finds of Roman pottery coincide with cropmarks are rare in Shropshire. The presence of possible industrial activity on the site increases its rarity.

Documentation: Good - SMR Primary Record No.: SA3431; Aerial Photograph nos.: SMR: SO5171-A; NMR: SO5171-1; UCCAP: TR71; Geophysical Surveys report No.:93/124.

Group value: Low - isolated feature within landscape

Diversity: Medium - whilst the cropmarks are of uniform type, the geophysical survey has revealed the presence of a possible small sub-circular enclosure and possible industrial activity.

Potential: Provisionally medium, but further evaluation necessary.

Site b: Site of cottage (SO51567106).

Description: Location of former timber framed cottage demolished in 1951.

Survival/condition: Poor - most of the site is likely to have been lost during the improvements to the Wheatcommon Lane crossroads in 1978-9.

Period: Post medieval; pre-18th century - 1951.

Rarity: Abundant

Documentation: Poor. Cottage appears on Ordnance Survey maps and Tithe Apportionment map (Foxall 1979b), Beesley, 1965.

Group value: Low - Isolated feature.

Diversity: Low

Potential: Low.

Site c: Earthworks (SO518693).

Description: Well preserved remains of former ridge and furrow ploughing and late medieval or post medieval field boundaries, and possible short stretch of agger of Roman road SA2613.

Survival/condition: Medium - the earthworks have been cut by the Shrewsbury to Hereford railway to the east and south.

Period: Medieval - post medieval.

Rarity: Rare

Documentation: Poor

Group value: Medium (possibly associated with Site e).

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Diversity: Medium

Potential: Low

Site d: The Skew Bridge (SO51806914).

Description: Mid-19th century railway bridge.

Survival/condition: Good; the bridge has reached the end of its structural life.

Period: 1852-3 - present.

Rarity: Abundant

Documentation: Medium

Group value: Medium

Diversity: Medium

Potential: Low

Site e: Earthworks to the east of Woofferton Court Farm (SO522686).

Description: Earthwork remains of possible medieval settlement, consisting of platforms, holloway, ditches and bank.

Survival/condition: Good

Period: Medieval

Rarity: Rare

Documentation: Poor

Group value: Medium (possibly associated with Site c).

Diversity: Medium

Potential: Medium

Site f: The line of the Leominster to Stourport Canal SA3413 and the Woofferton to Tenbury Branch Railway (SO52326860).

Description: Line of late 18th century canal and 19th century railway.

Survival/condition: Medium.

Period: late 18th/19th century - c1960

Rarity: Rare

Documentation (historical): Medium - SMR Primary Record No. SA3413; Morriss 1991a&b

Group value: Medium - associated with canal buildings and features at Woofferton, and extant and other railway features.

Diversity: Medium

Potential: Low

Site g: Roman road SA2613 (SO51906910, SO51637113, and SO51617127).

Description: Line of Roman road

Survival/condition: Medium. Possible cropmark of side ditch within Site a (SA3431) cropmark complex (SO51617127-SO51637113), and possible agger within earthworks of Site c (SO51836945).

Period: Roman

Rarity: Rare

Documentation: Low - SMR Primary Record No. SA2613.

Group value: Low - possibility of association with findspot at Site a (SA3431).

Diversity: Low

Potential: Low

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Site h: Wheatcommon Lane.

Description: Possible medieval bridle track.

Survival/condition: Good

Period: Medieval - present.

Rarity: Common

Documentation: Low

Group value: Medium

Diversity: Low

Potential: Low

4 THE IMPACT OF THE PREFERRED ROUTE ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE

4.1 The Impact of Road Construction Methods

The methods employed in road construction will inevitably involve the destruction of all earthwork remains and all but the deepest archaeological features within the road corridor. Most of the damage is done during the early stages of construction with the removal of topsoil from the road corridor, and the subsequent disturbance of the subsoil by heavy plant. The cutting of roadside drains, service trenches, and other ancillary works will further damage any surviving archaeological deposits. Even where the finished road is to be embanked, the initial site preparation is likely to involve the removal of topsoil and other unsuitable material from the road corridor. Any deposits surviving road construction will be sealed beneath a permanent structure and will be unavailable for future study and research.

4.2 The Impact on Specific Sites

4.2.1 Site a: The cropmark site, findspot, and earthwork remains SA3431

(SO51597134), Fig. 2: The effect of the construction of the proposed new road on the cropmark site SA3431 is unquantifiable at this stage. The cropmarks may well represent buried archaeological features. If so, road construction would almost certainly destroy or severely damage approximately 85% of the cropmark features comprising this site. The integrity of the cropmark complex would thus be entirely destroyed. Both the anomalies suggested by the geophysical survey as representing part of a small enclosure and an area of possible industrial activity would be lost to the roadworks. Although the new roads here (the bypass and the diverted road to Caynham) are to be embanked, the damage to these possible archaeological features would be caused during the initial topsoil stripping of the road corridors, by the movement of contractors' heavy plant over the exposed subsoil, and by the cutting of service trenches. However, until trial excavations have been undertaken, the significance and quality of the features producing the cropmarks and the geophysical anomalies is unknown and the full impact of the road on these features cannot be properly assessed.

Those parts of the earthwork remains that lie within the road corridor will be obliterated with the initial topsoil removal phase of road construction.

4.2.2 Site b: Site of cottage (SO51567106), Fig.2: Any below-ground remains of the former timber framed cottage in the northeast angle of the A49/Wheatcommon Lane road junction which have survived recent road widening and ancillary works are likely to be further damaged during road construction, and would in any case be sealed beneath the new road.

4.2.3 Site c: Earthwork remains (SO518693), Fig. 3: The road will cut a swathe 55m wide by 260m long through the western side of these earthwork remains of medieval and post-medieval field systems.

4.2.4 Site d: The Skew Bridge (SO51806914), Fig. 3: The Skew Bridge over the Shrewsbury to Hereford railway is to be demolished.

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- 4.2.5 Site e: Earthworks to the east of Woofferton Court Farm (SO522686), Fig. 4:** The proposed new road will cut a swathe 30m wide by 180m long through the middle of the earthwork remains on this site. The western carriageway of the new road follows almost exactly the line of the possible holloway, and the eastern edge of the platforms on the west side of this hollow also lies just within the road corridor. At least one of the shallow dry ditches and part of the low bank on the east side of the holloway will also be destroyed by road construction.
- 4.2.6 Site f: The line of the Leominster to Stourport Canal and the Woofferton to Tenbury Branch Railway (SO52326860), Fig. 4:** The line of the Leominster to Stourport Canal and the Woofferton to Tenbury Branch Railway will be crossed by the proposed new road at SO52326860. The road will be placed in a cutting here, resulting in the loss of a 100m long section of the former canal and railway.
- 4.2.7 Site g: Roman road SA2613, Figs 2 and 3:** There is no firm evidence for the existence of the line of this road within the study area. The line of the road as shown on the Sites and Monuments 1:10,560 annotated map sheets (Sheet nos. SO56NW and SO57SW) is a general line and is not based on previous fieldwork undertaken within the study area. Nevertheless, it is possible that the general line of this Roman road may mark its actual position. One of the cropmark features of Site a (SA3431) corresponds in position and alignment to the line of the road; this feature will be cut across by the diverted road to Caynham at SO51637113 and SO51617127 (Fig. 1, Sites g₂ and g₃). Moreover, one of the earthwork features at Site c may represent a short stretch of surviving agger; this feature lies just outside the Bypass road corridor, but c300m to the southeast, the line of the Roman road is crossed by the proposed new road at SO51906910 (Fig. 1, Site g₁).
- 4.2.8 Site h: Wheatcommon Lane, Fig. 2:** Although a 250m stretch of the existing lane will be lost to the proposed roadworks, the lane will be diverted only some 10m south of its present course in order to bridge the new road. The approximate line of Wheatcommon Lane will thus be preserved as a feature within the landscape.
- 4.2.9 Ashford Hall (SO51337114), Fig. 1:** Ashford Hall, a Grade II* 18th century seven bay brick house (Pevsner, 1958) and its gardens lie on the west side of the A49. The new road at this point is to be constructed on the east side of the present road, crossing its line at Wheatcommon Crossroads. The house and gardens will not be directly affected by road construction, and as the new road will be adjacent to and at the same level as the present road at this point, the impact on their setting should be negligible.
- 4.2.10 Woofferton Court Farm (SO52076862), Fig. 1:** Woofferton Court is a Grade II listed brick building of probable late 18th century date, surrounded by an assortment of barns and outbuildings, three of which are also Grade II listed (see above, para 3.2.4). The farm and its outbuildings are set some 160m to the west of the route corridor, and so will not be directly affected by the construction of

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the new road. The orchards to the south and east of the farm also lie to the west of the road corridor, which here avoids the river terrace and runs across the pasture land below and to the east.

4.3 Associated Ancillary Works

4.3.1 Contractors' compounds, spoil dumps, and borrow pits: The siting of contractors' compounds, spoil dumps, and borrow pits can also adversely affect archaeological features and deposits lying outside the road corridor.

4.3.2 Landscaping and tree planting: Landscaping and tree planting may also have a detrimental effect on archaeological features and deposits outside the road corridor.

5 MITIGATING EFFECTS: RECOMMENDED ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROVISION FOR THE AFFECTED SITES

5.1 Grading of Affected Sites.

5.1.1 The archaeological provision recommended for the various sites affected by the proposed new road will depend upon their status, and may range from preservation *in situ* to the maintenance of a watching brief during the destructive phases of road construction.

5.1.2 Criteria employed for grading:

(i) In grading the sites affected by the preferred route, the same criteria have been used as those employed by English Heritage to evaluate a monument's status in terms of national importance for the purposes of scheduling (English Heritage Conservation Bulletin No. 14, June 1991).

(ii) In the light of the data accumulated by this evaluation, consideration has been given to the following criteria for each of the sites to be affected by the construction of the proposed new road: **survival/condition; period; rarity; fragility/vulnerability; documentation; group value; diversity; potential.**

5.1.3 The known sites which will be affected by the construction of the proposed new road have thus been categorised into the following five grades :

GRADE A: These sites are considered to be of sufficient significance as to merit preservation *in situ*.

GRADE B: These sites are of such importance as to require preservation by record. This can involve the excavation of below ground remains and the recording of above ground features. Sufficient funding for this should be allocated within the construction budget, and time for the completion of such recording should be built into the pre-construction timetable.

GRADE C: Sites on which an archaeological watching brief should be maintained. Provision of time and resources should be made for the recording of any archaeological features revealed during the course of road construction and associated ancillary works.

GRADE D: Further field evaluation is required on these sites before recommendations for the level of archaeological provision can be made.

GRADE E: Sites requiring no further archaeological provision.

5.2 Recommended Archaeological Provision

GRADE A: None at present, though it is possible that Site a (SA3431) could be placed in this grade after further field evaluation.

GRADE B: Site c: Earthworks at SO518693. A full measured topographical survey should be made to an appropriate scale of these earthwork remains of ridge and furrow ploughing and former field boundaries. This survey should include those portions of the earthworks in this field which lie outside the road corridor.

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Site d: The Skew Bridge: A photographic record should be made of this bridge prior to and during demolition.

GRADE C: Site b: Site of cottage at SO51567106.

Site f: SA3413 - The line of the Leominster to Stourport Canal and the Woofferton to Tenbury Branch Railway at SO52326860.

Site g: SA2613 - Roman road between SO51617127 and SO51906910.

GRADE D: Site a: SA 3431 - cropmark site, findspot, and earthworks.

(i) A full measured, topographical survey should be made to an appropriate scale of the earthworks on this site. This should include those portions of the earthworks which lie outside the road corridor.

(ii) Further field evaluation in the form of a trial excavation should be conducted on this site. These excavations should comprise two trenches, located so as to examine features represented by the cropmarks and the anomalies detected by the geophysical survey. The first trench, 40m long by 2m wide, will examine the small curvilinear geophysical anomaly, and intersect a number of the cropmark features, including the possible side-ditch of the Roman road SA2613. The second trench, 10m long x 2m wide, would examine the area of possible industrial activity detected by the geophysical survey. A total of 100m² would thus be examined.

(iii) The excavations will be limited to the top of significant archaeological deposits, which will then be sampled only where essential for achieving the objectives of the evaluation. A full written, graphic, and photographic record will be made of the findings.

(iv) On the basis of the results of these trial excavations, recommendations will be made for the necessary archaeological provision for this site.

Site e: Earthworks to the east of Woofferton Court Farm (SO522686).

(i) A full measured, topographical survey should be made to an appropriate scale of these earthworks. This should include those portions of the earthworks which lie outside the road corridor.

(ii) In addition, the platforms to the west of the linear hollow should be examined by means of a trial excavation to ascertain their function. A single trench, 10m long x 1m wide should be excavated to examine the platforms west of the linear hollow where they lie within the road corridor.

(iii) The excavations will be limited to the top of significant archaeological deposits, which will then be sampled only where essential for achieving the objectives of the evaluation. A full written, graphic, and photographic record will be made of the findings.

(iv) On the basis of the results of this survey and trial trenching, recommendations will be made for the necessary archaeological provision for this site.

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GRADE E: Site h: Wheatcommon Lane. No further provision need be made for the affected part of this road.

5.3 Further Recommendations

The proposed by-pass route crosses a landscape predominated by permanent or improved pasture. Such land use is not conducive to the production of cropmarks visible from the air. There must remain a distinct possibility that there will be other, as yet unrecorded, sites that will only be revealed once construction work on the road has been started. It is therefore further recommended that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during the destructive phases of road construction in order to record any such sites. Provision of time and resources should be made for the recording of any such archaeological features revealed during the course of road construction. The watching brief should be extended to cover groundworks associated with the siting of contractors' compounds, spoil dumps, and borrow pits, and areas affected by landscaping and tree planting associated with road construction. It is also recommended that construction companies and sub-contractors inform their employees of the need to report as soon as possible any archaeological finds and features discovered during works.

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7 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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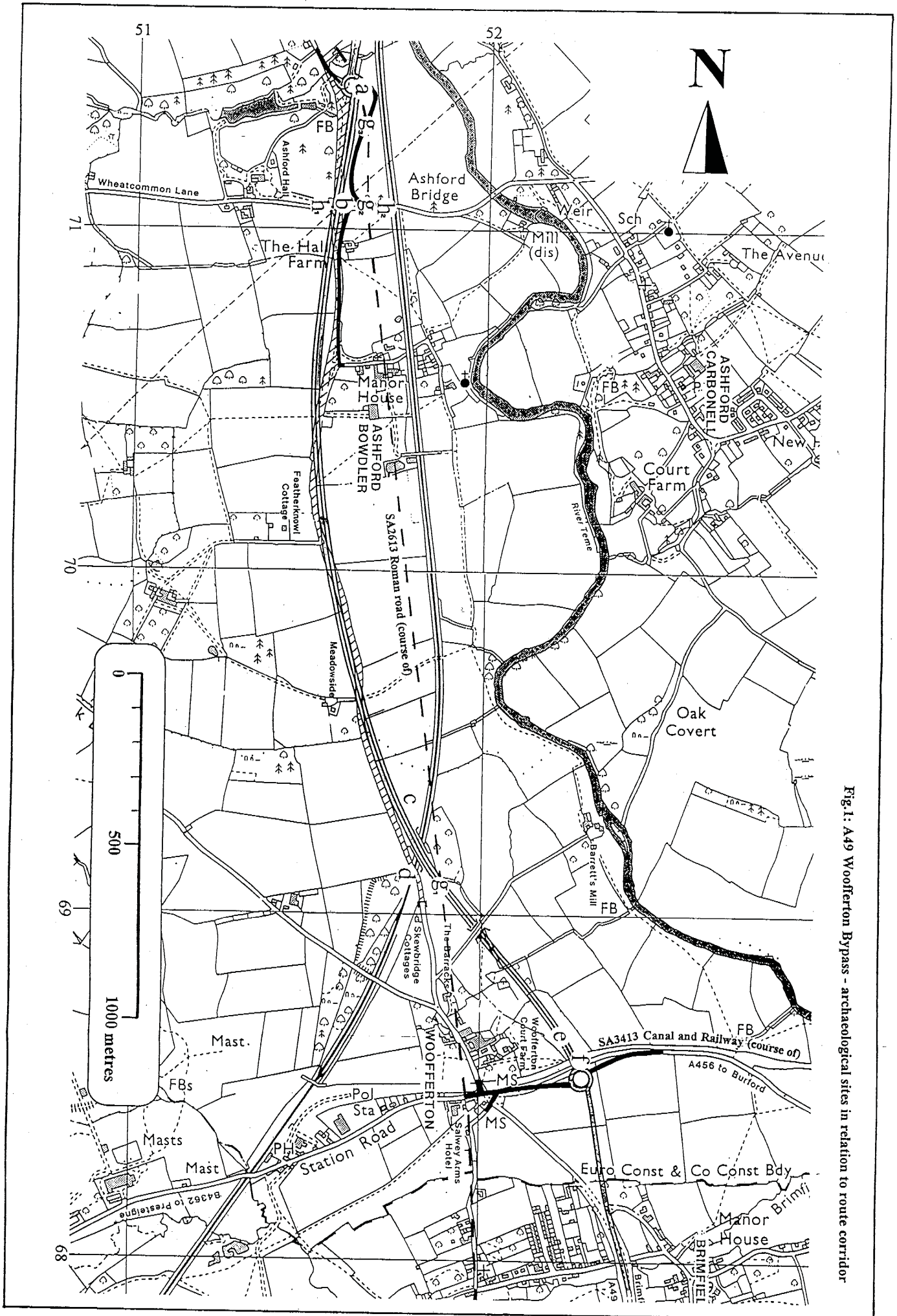
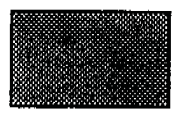
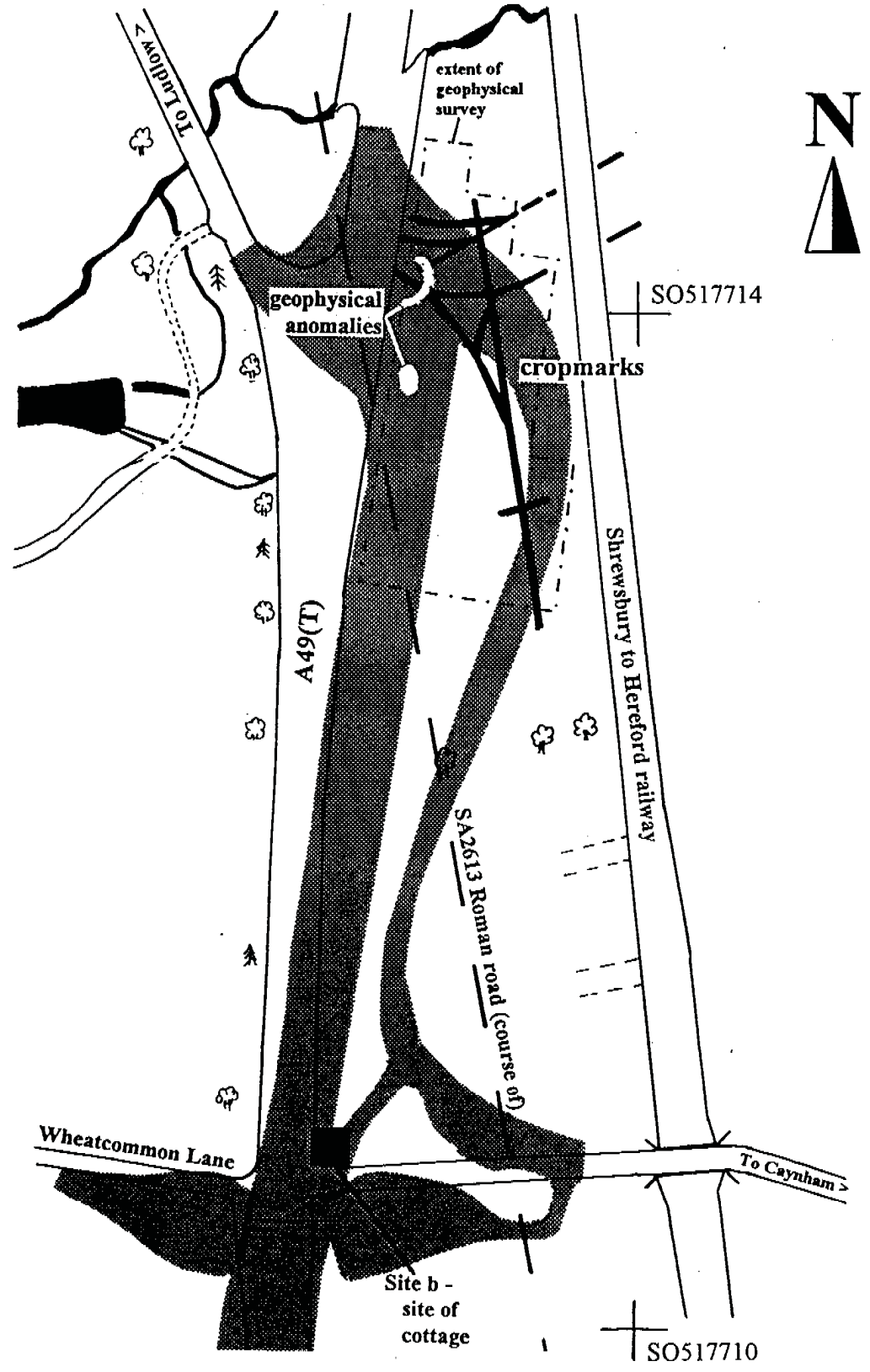
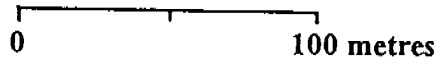


Fig.1: A49 Woofferton Bypass - archaeological sites in relation to route corridor

Fig. 2: Site a (SA3431) and Site b



Bypass road corridor



0

100 metres

Fig. 3: Sites c and d

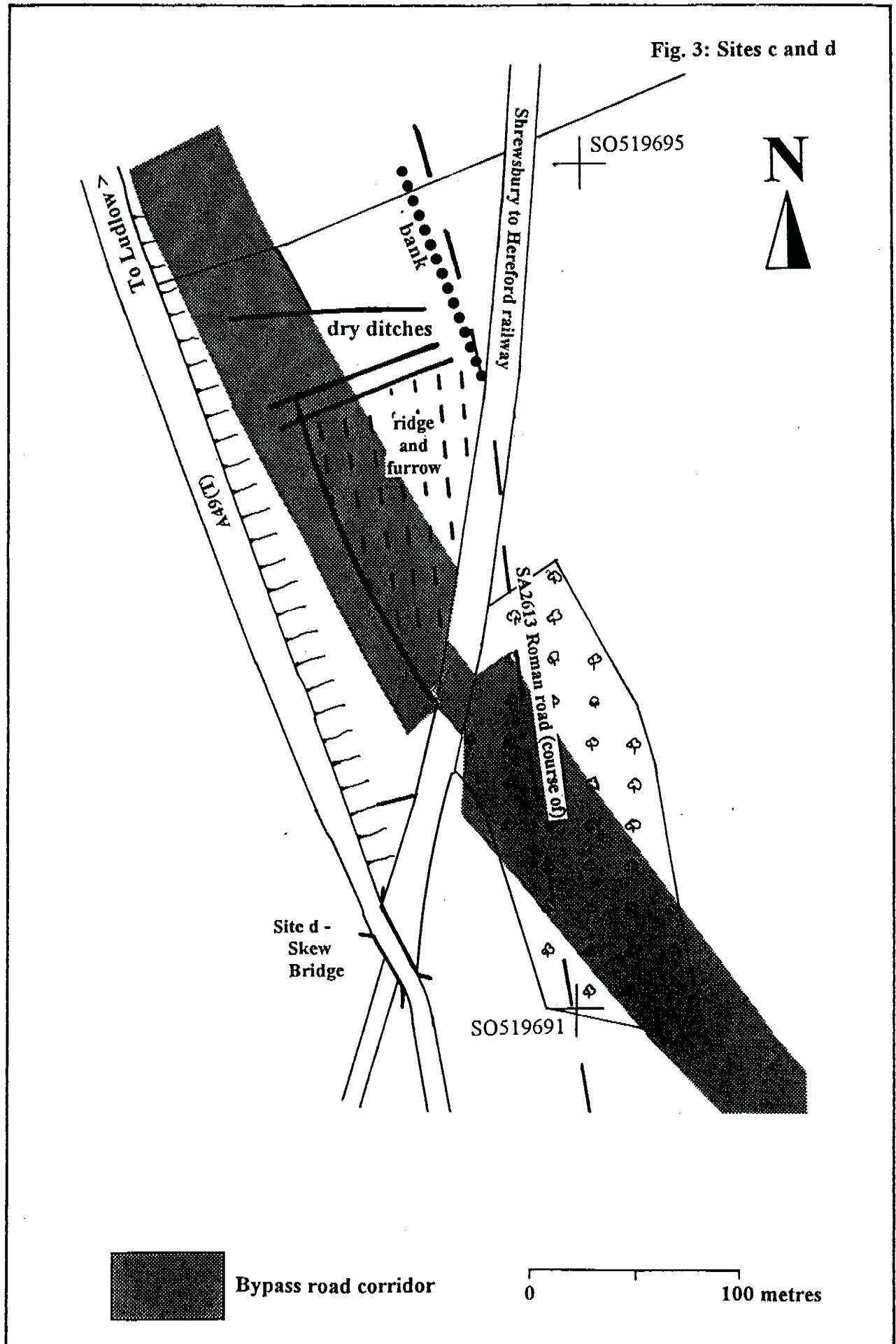
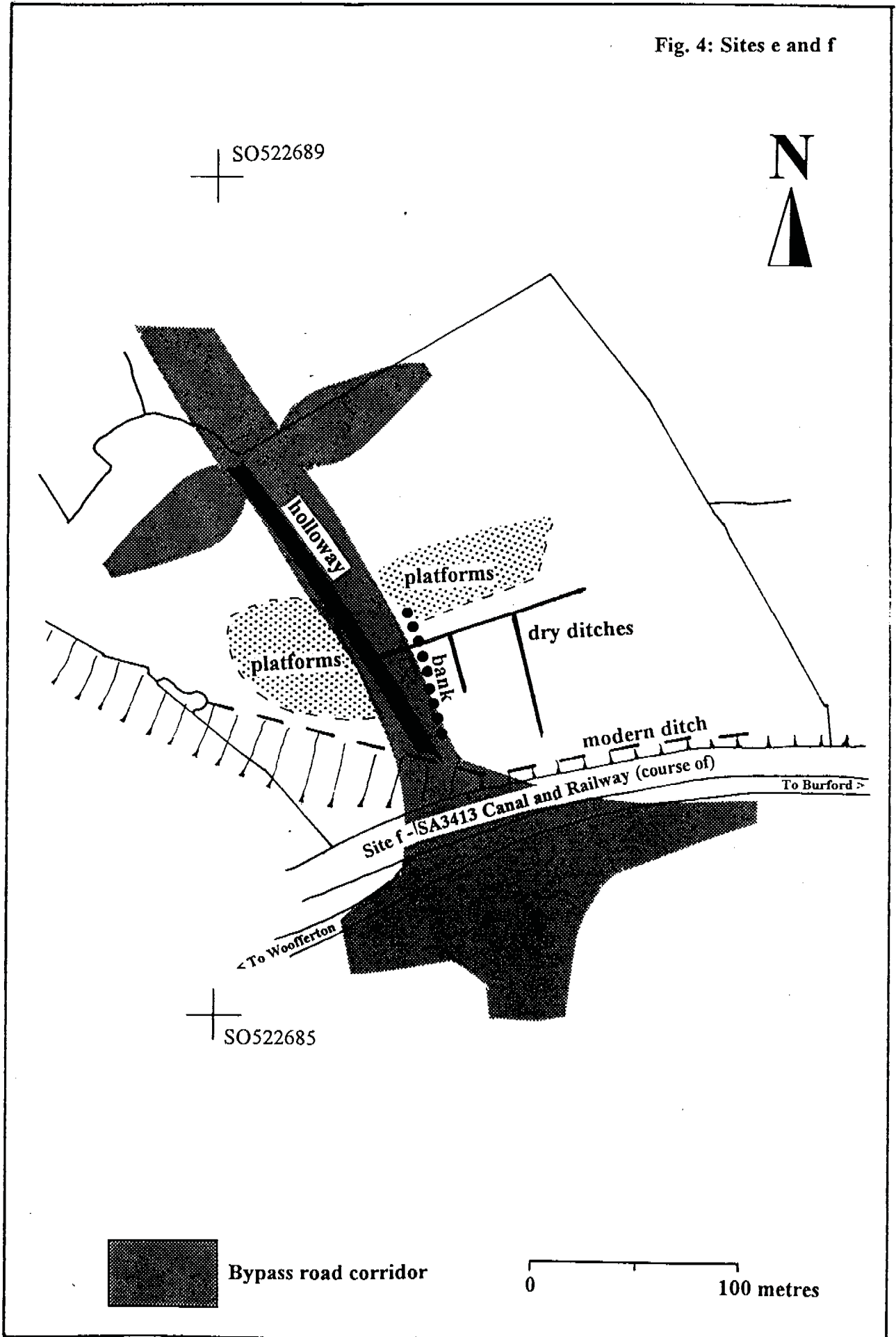


Fig. 4: Sites e and f



A49 WOOFFERTON BY-PASS (PREFERRED ROUTE): AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (Summary of Report)

1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- 1.1** The preferred route of the proposed A49 Woofferton Bypass runs for 3.75km from the southern end of the present Ludlow Bypass, closely following the course of the present A49; the preferred route diverges from the present road to run around the east side of Woofferton, linking up with the northern end of the Brimfield Bypass.
- 1.2** The preferred route runs through an area which has a concentration of cropmark sites, many of which are of presumed prehistoric or Roman date. The preferred route directly affects one such cropmark site (SMR No SA3431) at SO51607150. This site comprises a series of linear features of unknown date or function, though Romano-British pottery was found in the immediate vicinity of the site during construction of the Ludlow By-pass in 1978.
- 1.3** The presumed course of a Roman road (SA2613), running from north to south through the study area, is crossed by the preferred route in three places.
- 1.4** Medieval settlements, some of which survive as modern villages, also flourished on the lower ground, many of them at crossing points along the River Teme, such as the villages of Ashford Bowdler and Ashford Carbonell, or, like Brimfield, at road junctions. The preferred route runs through the medieval estates of Ashford Bowdler and Woofferton.
- 1.5** In the late 18th century the Leominster to Stourport canal was constructed, running from west to east across the study area at Woofferton. In the mid 19th century the Shrewsbury to Hereford Railway bisected the area from north to south, with a branch line (now disused) from Woofferton to Tenbury being built on the bed of the by then abandoned canal. The preferred route cuts the line of the former canal and railway branch line at SO52326859.
- 1.6** In view of the archaeological importance of the landscape through which the route of the proposed bypass runs, it was deemed necessary to conduct an archaeological evaluation of the preferred route.

2 THE AIMS AND METHODOLOGY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

- 2.1** The aim of this evaluation was to provide information enabling an informed and reasonable planning decision to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the areas affected by the proposed by-pass.
- 2.2** The objectives were:
 - a)** To locate any archaeological features and deposits likely to be affected by the preferred route.
 - b)** To assess their survival, quality, condition, and significance.

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(Summary of Report)*

c) To identify and assess the significant archaeological impacts likely to arise from the construction of the preferred route and to recommend appropriate mitigation strategies.

2.3 To achieve these objectives, the evaluation of the preferred route was required to comprise a number of different elements:

STAGE 1: Desk Top Study: To comprise documentary and cartographic research of the route corridor.

STAGE 2: Walk-over Survey and Field Walking: A walk over survey would be carried out of the entire route. Areas of arable land use within the road corridor would be field walked after ploughing.

STAGE 3: Field Evaluation:

(i) A geophysical survey would be undertaken of the cropmark site and find spot SA3431 at Ashford Bowdler.

(ii) Trial excavations based on the results of the geophysical survey would be carried out on the site SA3431.

(iii) Further sample excavation might be required following the results of Stages 1 and 2 of the evaluation.

2.4 As the cropmark site SA3431 was not available for trial excavation until autumn of 1994, and because of the need for initial evaluation results by early 1994, the project sponsors required that the documentary research, the walk over survey, and the geophysical survey and field walking of site SA3431 be carried out and reported on prior to any trial excavation being agreed.

2.5 The Archaeology Unit of the Leisure Services Department, Shropshire County Council, was commissioned by the County Surveyor's Department, Shropshire County Council, to conduct this evaluation in accordance with the brief prepared by the Senior Archaeologist.

3 ASSESSMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES IN THE PREFERRED ROUTE CORRIDOR

3.1 Stages 1 and 2 of the evaluation revealed the presence of a number of new, previously unrecorded sites along the line of the preferred route. Together with the known sites, it was demonstrated that at least eight archaeological sites would be directly affected by the preferred route.

3.2 The majority of these sites are not considered to be of great archaeological significance. Nevertheless, many of these will require further recording before their destruction by the new road.

3.3 The geophysical survey of the cropmark site and find spot SA3431 revealed the presence of a possible small, circular enclosure and a possible area of industrial activity. These features, as well as the features represented by the cropmarks, will require further evaluation by means of trial excavation before their significance or quality can be assessed.

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- 3.4 The walk-over survey revealed the presence of a possible medieval settlement to the east of Woofferton Court Farm. Further evaluation of this site will also be required before its significance can be assessed.

4 THE IMPACT OF THE PREFERRED ROUTE ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE

- 4.1 The methods employed in road construction will inevitably involve the destruction of all earthwork remains and all but the deepest archaeological features within the road corridor. Most of the damage is likely to be done during the early stages of construction with the removal of topsoil from the road corridor, and the subsequent disturbance of the subsoil by heavy plant. The cutting of roadside drains, service trenches, and other ancillary works will further damage any surviving archaeological deposits. Any deposits surviving road construction will be sealed beneath a permanent structure and will be unavailable for future study and research.
- 4.2 The siting of contractors' compounds, spoil dumps, and borrow pits can also adversely affect archaeological features and deposits lying outside the road corridor.
- 4.3 Landscaping and tree planting may also have a detrimental effect on archaeological features and deposits outside the road corridor.

5 MITIGATING EFFECTS: RECOMMENDED ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROVISION FOR THE AFFECTED SITES

- 5.1 The archaeological provision recommended for the various sites affected by the proposed new road will depend upon their status, and may range from preservation *in situ* to the maintenance of a watching brief during the destructive phases of road construction.
- 5.2 It is further recommended that a watching brief be maintained in order to record any previously unknown sites that come to light during road construction.
- 5.3 Strict adherence to planning procedures by contractors and subcontractors should allow for the siting of compounds, spoil dumps, and borrow pits away from known archaeological sites and features. The archaeological watching brief should be extended to cover all such ancillary works.
- 5.4 The known sites can be categorised into five grades, depending on the level of archaeological provision considered necessary:
- GRADE A:** Sites requiring preservation *in situ*.
 - GRADE B:** Sites requiring preservation by record, ie the excavation of below ground remains and the recording of above ground features.
 - GRADE C:** Sites on which a watching brief should be maintained.
 - GRADE D:** Sites requiring further field evaluation.
 - GRADE E:** Sites requiring no further archaeological provision.

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**5.5 SCHEDULE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES DIRECTLY AFFECTED
BY THE PREFERRED ROUTE**

	SMR No	Grid Ref	Description	Grade
Site a	SA3431	SO51597134	Cropmark site of possible prehistoric or Roman date; Roman pottery find spot. Geophysical survey revealed possible small circular enclosure and industrial activity.	D
Site b	New site	SO51567106	Site of post-medieval timber framed cottage	C
Site c	New site	SO51806930	Earthwork remains of medieval and post-medieval field systems.	B
Site d		SO51806914	The Skew Bridge - 19th century railway bridge.	B
Site e	New site	SO52226865	Earthwork remains of possible medieval settlement.	D
Site f	SA3413	SO52326860	Line of Leominster to Stourport Canal and Woofferton to Tenbury branch railway	C
Site g	SA2613	SO51637140- SO52006800	Roman road	C
Site h		SO51507106- SO51707106	Wheatcommon Lane - possible medieval bridle track	E

H R Hannaford
Field Archaeologist

January 1994

The Archaeology Unit,
Leisure Services Department,
Shropshire County Council

Winston Churchill Building, Radbrook Centre, Radbrook Road, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY3 9BJ Tel. (0743) 254018

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The cropmark site and findspot SA3431 lies just to the north of Ashford Bowdler in the northeast angle of the junction between the A49 Trunk Road and Wheatcommon Lane. The site lies at the northern end of the Preferred Route of the A49 Woofferton Bypass, and was investigated as part of the archaeological evaluation of the route corridor conducted in the last quarter of 1993.
- 1.2 The site consists of a series of linear cropmarks representing features of unknown date or function, although one of the cropmarks corresponds in alignment and approximate position to the proposed line of the Roman road SA2613. Finds of Roman pottery were made on the site during the course of construction work on the A49 Ludlow Bypass and during fieldwalking carried out as part of the current evaluation. A number of earthwork features have also been noted, possibly representing ploughed out ridge and furrow. A geophysical survey undertaken as part of this evaluation indicated the presence of a possible small sub-circular enclosure and possible industrial activity.
- 1.3 On the basis of the results of Stages 1 and 2 of this evaluation, and of the results of the field walking and the geophysical survey of SA3431 (reported on in January 1994 in Part One of the evaluation report), a strategy for sample excavation was devised for the site to examine features represented by the cropmarks and anomalies detected by the geophysical survey. The trial trenching was deemed necessary in order to assess the full implications of the proposed new road on the site, and to determine the level of archaeological provision required.

2 Results of the 1993 Evaluation Work

- 2.1 The geophysical survey revealed an area of magnetic noise (Geophysical Surveys, Report No. 93/124, Fig. 5, B) which was thought to represent either the site of a recent large bonfire or perhaps a possible area of industrial activity. A series of poorly defined magnetic anomalies along the western edge of the survey area (ibid, Fig. 5, C) were thought to be of archaeological origin, and could be interpreted as indicating the presence of a small enclosure. It was suggested that a further weak linear anomaly (ibid, Fig. 5, D) might mark the line of a former field boundary or represent some other agricultural activity.
- 2.2 A plot at 1:2500 scale was made of the cropmarks appearing on the aerial photograph of the site; the cropmarks appeared to comprise a number of intercutting curved and straight linear ditches. There was no correlation between any of the features suggested by the geophysical survey and the plotted cropmarks. However, one of the cropmark features, a straight linear cropmark ditch c170m long on a north-northwest/south-southeast alignment, did correspond in alignment and approximate position (ie within 50m of) to the proposed line of the Roman Road SA2613. This feature could possibly represent a side-ditch belonging to the Roman road.
- 2.3 The site was systematically field walked at the same time as the geophysical survey was being carried out. Light scatters of Romano-British and medieval

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pottery were recorded over the study area; the small quantity of pottery recovered was considered more indicative of arable cultivation rather than settlement of the site during these periods.

- 2.4 During the field walking of the site, a series of very low parallel ridges were observed running across the survey area, particularly noticeable along its western edge, and also at the southern end of the field. These ridges may possibly represent the slight earthwork remains of medieval ridge and furrow ploughing of the field.

3 The Trial Excavations

- 3.1 Trial excavations were carried out by the Archaeology Service of the Leisure Services Department, Shropshire County Council, in September 1994. Two trenches were excavated, located so as to examine features represented by the cropmarks and the anomalies detected by the geophysical survey. The first trench (Trench A), 40m long by 2m wide, examined the small curvilinear geophysical anomaly, and intersected a number of the cropmark features, including the possible side-ditch of the Roman road SA2613. The second trench (Trench B), 15m long x 2m wide, examined the area of possible industrial activity detected by the geophysical survey. A total of 110m² was examined.

- 3.2 **Trench A:** A JCB mechanical excavator was used to remove a depth of about 0.3m of topsoil, overlying the natural subsoil, consisting of gravel at the western end of the trench, and a pebbly silty clay over the rest. Three very shallow linear features were revealed cut into this clay subsoil. All were aligned north-northwest/south-southeast; definition of these features was poor, each showing as a slightly darker, stone-free band against the natural subsoil. Each of these three features was sectioned; none proved to be more than 0.2m deep. Only the westernmost contained any significant dating material - this consisted of several sherds of 18th-19th century pottery, although all produced a few very small and very abraded sherds of Romano-British coarseware pottery.

No features were identified to correspond with the possible small enclosure suggested by the geophysical survey. The middle of the three shallow ditches did correspond in position and alignment to the weak linear anomaly suggested by the geophysical survey. The easternmost ditch corresponded in position and alignment to the long straight linear feature identified on the aerial photograph. However, no sign of a road, Roman or otherwise, was revealed by the excavations, and none of the three ditches had the attributes of a roadside drainage ditch. No sign was revealed of the curvilinear cropmark features also identified on the aerial photograph.

- 3.3 **Trench B:** Again, a JCB mechanical excavator was used to remove about 0.3m of topsoil. This revealed natural gravel subsoil in the western half of the trench giving way to a silty clay in the eastern half. In the central part of the trench, a large straight sided cut 3.3m wide by up to 1m deep was revealed. The eastern part of this cut was filled at the bottom with a layer of cobbles and large stone fragments in a brown loamy soil matrix; the whole cut was then filled with a

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deposit of compacted stone chippings with occasional fragments of tarmac. Pottery finds dated these fills to the late 19th or early 20th century. This feature no doubt was the area of possible industrial activity identified by the geophysical survey. Its purpose, however, remains obscure.

- 3.4 The western ends of both trenches also cut across some of the low earthworks observed during the walk-over survey. These "earthworks" were seen to reflect undulations of natural rather than archaeological origin in the underlying ridge of gravel that ran along the western edge of the site at this point.

3.5 Conclusions

The trial trenching has demonstrated that whilst some of the cropmarks do represent buried archaeological features, these features are shallow and have been severely truncated. Their remaining fills produced little diagnostic material, and such as there was suggested a relatively recent origin for these features. There was no trace either of the postulated Roman road SA 2613 or the small enclosure suggested by the geophysical survey. The industrial feature also indicated by this survey was shown to be a pit filled with road debris of recent date. The earthwork remains along the western edge of the site were shown to be of probable natural origin.

4 Impact of Road Construction on the Site

- 4.1 Road construction would almost certainly destroy or severely damage approximately 85% of the cropmark features comprising this site. The integrity of the cropmark complex would thus be entirely destroyed. Although the new roads here (the bypass and the diverted road to Ashford Carbonnel) are to be embanked, the damage to these archaeological features would be caused during the initial topsoil stripping of the road corridors, by the movement of contractors' heavy plant over the exposed subsoil, and by the cutting of service trenches.

5 Recommended Archaeological Provision for the Site

5.1 Grading of the Site.

As a result of the trial excavation of the cropmark site and findspot Site a (SA3431), the site can be placed in the category of **Grade C** (sites which will require salvage recording during construction) of the schedule outlined in Part One of the evaluation report. [*Nb. the term "watching brief" employed in Part One of the report has been replaced by "salvage recording exercise" to describe more accurately the level of archaeological provision required.*]

5.2 Recommended Archaeological Provision

A salvage recording exercise should be conducted on Site a (SA3431) during road construction to record any buried remains or other archaeological features revealed. To facilitate this, all initial topsoil stripping should be carried out under direct archaeological supervision, followed by a sub-surface examination and assessment. Provision of time and resources should be made for the adequate recording of any archaeological features revealed during the course of road construction and associated ancillary works.

6 Acknowledgments

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