

*Archaeological Recording at
**Sunderton Pool, Sundorne,
Shrewsbury***

by
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Archaeology Service



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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING AT
SUNDERTON POOL, SUNDORNE, SHREWSBURY**

by
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A report for



The Environment Agency

Archaeology Service

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SUMMARY

In February 2012 the Archaeology Service carried out a Level 1 photographic record of and watching brief at Sunderton Pool, Sundorne, Shrewsbury, in advance of modifications to a failing weir. Sunderton Pool is an artificial lake created, probably around 1766, as part of a landscaped garden for Sundorne Castle. The watching brief suggested that the weir was likely to have been an original component of this landscaping work, dating to the middle to late 18th century.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Sunderton lies on the northeastern outskirts of Shrewsbury, Shropshire, about 5.5km northeast of the town centre (Figure 1). Sunderton Pool (Historic Environment Record [HER] No. 08283) is one of a number of artificial pools or lakes on a stream that rises at Holbrook, Yorton (SJ 5005 2407) and flows into the River Severn at Uffington (SJ 5248 1408). Sunderton Pool was created as part of the Sundorne Castle estate gardens (HER 07706) in the 18th century and was formed by damming the stream between Albrightlee and Dell Farms (SJ 5260 1607). The pool has a narrow sinuous shape 930m long by up to 94m wide, lying in the former stream valley between the north side of Sunderton Farm and the northwest of Dell Farm.

1.2 In February 2012 the Environment Agency undertook work to modify a failing weir structure at Sunderton Pool (NGR SJ 5265 1606). The works involved the lowering of the crest of the existing weir.

1.3 Because of the potential significance of the archaeological resource it was decided that the repairs should be accompanied by a programme of archaeological work, agreed with the Historic Environment Team, Shropshire Council. The archaeological work was to include a Level 1 photographic survey of the weir structure in its current condition and a watching brief on destructive groundworks.

1.4 The aim of the programme of archaeological work was to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains that were encountered during the works. The prior recording would aim to capture evidence for the form of the weir, details of its construction history and any fitting which might assist in understanding how the weir functioned and the date of construction phases. The watching brief on the removal of the weir crest would aim to identify any evidence of earlier weir structures, the re-use of any historic building materials and the recovery of any dating evidence.

1.5 The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council, was commissioned by the Environment Agency to carry out this programme of archaeological work.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Sundorne Castle was the centre of a large estate built up by the Corbet family in the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1741 the Corbets inherited the Haughmond Abbey estate, and John Corbet had a new house, Sundorne Castle, built at Sundorne by Robert Mylne, an Edinburgh architect and landscape designer. A landscaped park, incorporating the ruins of Haughmond Abbey, was created and developed around the new house between 1766 and the beginning of the 19th century.

2.2 A stream running through the estate was dammed to create two pools, Sunderton Pool and Sundorne Pool as part of the landscaped gardens. Sunderton Pool is shown on a survey of the Sundorne Estate of 1777 where it is described as “New made Water” (www.uptonmagna.com/index.cfm/history/sundorne-estate-1777-survey). The estate plan also appears to show the course of the original stream.

2.3 The 1st and 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey 25” plans provide a more detailed view and show three streams running south from the pool dam at the southern end of the pool (Figure 2). One lay at the southwestern corner, one at the centre, and one at the southeastern corner of the pool; the southwestern and the central outfalls show no direct connection from the pool, but were presumably connected via a sluice and pipe

arrangement, and a small structure is shown at the top of the dam adjacent to the central outfall. Both OS maps show a weir (marked "Waterfall") at the southeastern end of the pool dam; this is the weir that was the subject of the current work. The three outfall streams are shown coming together again 35m and 80m below the dam back into the stream which goes on to form Sundorne Pool.

2.4 The Sundorne estate was broken up in the early 20th century, Sundorne Castle was demolished in the 1950s, and the park reverted to farmland. The southern lake, Sundorne Pool, had been drained by 1994 (Stamper, 1996).

3 THE RECORDING

3.1 A photographic record was made of the existing weir structure prior to the commencement of the modification work. The removal of the crest of the weir was monitored and recorded.

3.2 The weir (Figure 3) was seen to be constructed of brick of mid- to late 18th-century date, with a core of compact puddled clay (possibly the same material as used in the pool dam). The upper edge of the weir was formed by a row of large sandstone blocks on a brick wall 0.6m thick. The spillway was of concrete about 7cms thick (although this surface is likely to have been 19th century in date and was probably a replacement for an earlier surface – perhaps of brick). The lower edge of the spillway was marked by a timber beam which ran across the width of the weir. The timber had split through and the beam was displaced. The lower part of the concrete of the spillway had also broken away to reveal a mass of loose brick rubble – some of it still mortared together – beneath the spillway. This also seemed to suggest that the spillway had originally comprised a brick (and possibly timber) structure, but which had largely disintegrated and further deteriorated following the failure of the spillway surface and the beam at its lower end.

3.4 The timber beam at the base of the spillway was supported on a brick wall at the foot of the pool dam. The base of this wall was built onto natural sandstone bedrock, and there were signs of deformation and displacement of the lower courses of the wall. Wing walls on either side of the weir extended south along either side of the outfall, built up from the sandstone bedrock. The southern extensions of the wing walls were in poor condition, and had collapsed where the supporting sandstone bedrock had eroded and been undercut. A large section of brick masonry from one of the wing walls was visible in the stream bed below the weir.

3.5 Although it seems probable that the surface of the spillway had been rebuilt or recovered in concrete, probably in the mid to late 19th century, the evidence from the watching brief otherwise indicated that the weir and spillway were of a single phase of construction. The brickwork visible in the prior recording work and further revealed by the work to reduce the weir all appeared to be of mid-to late 18th-century date, which conforms with the presumed date for the formation of Sunderton Pool as part of the overall landscaping of the grounds around Sundorne Castle around 1766.

4 REFERENCES

Ordnance Survey 1881: 25" (1:2,500) 1st Edition Shropshire Sheets XXVIII.16 & XXXIV.4

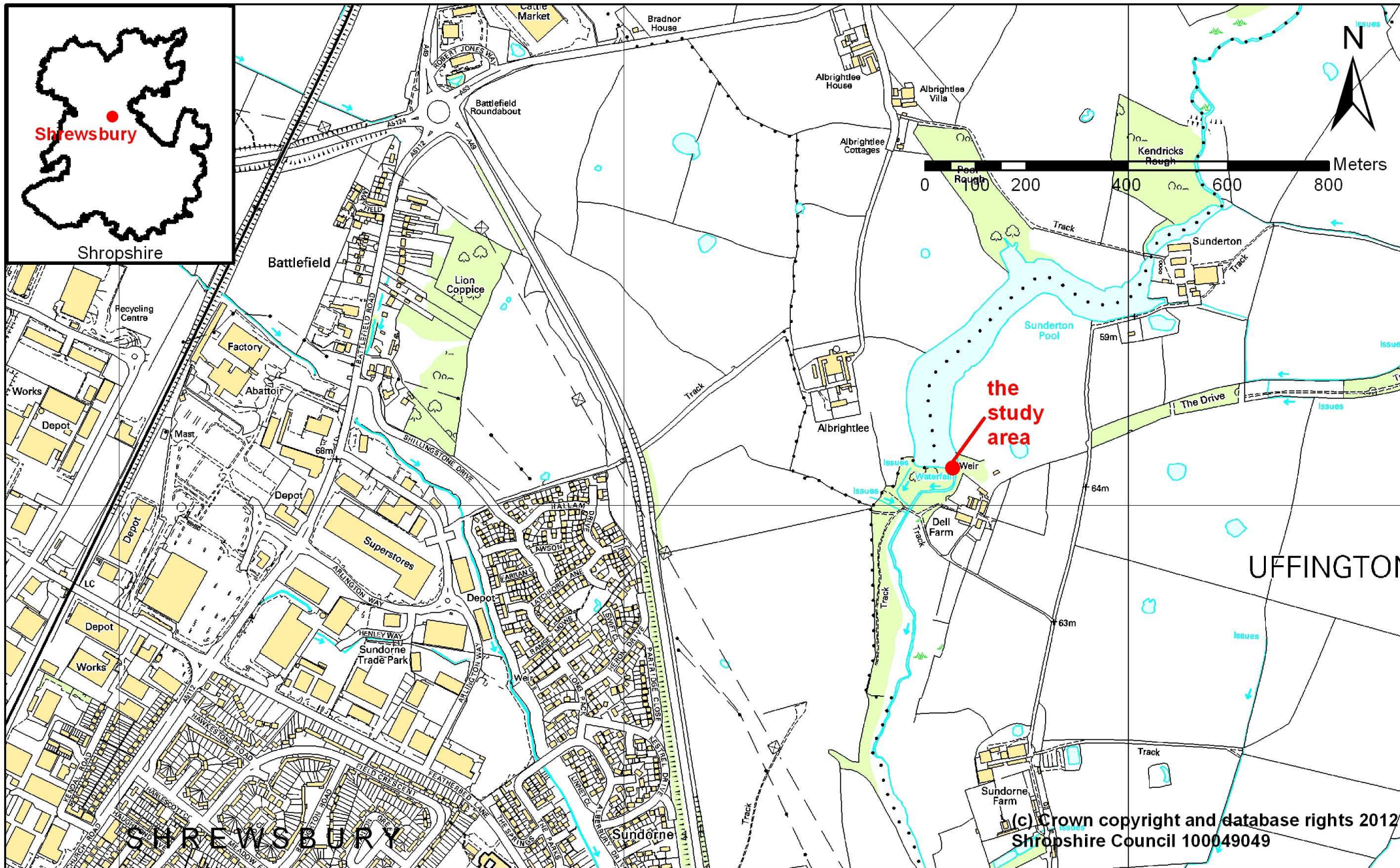
Ordnance Survey 1902: 25" (1:2,500) 2nd Edition Shropshire Sheets XXVIII.16 & XXXIV.4

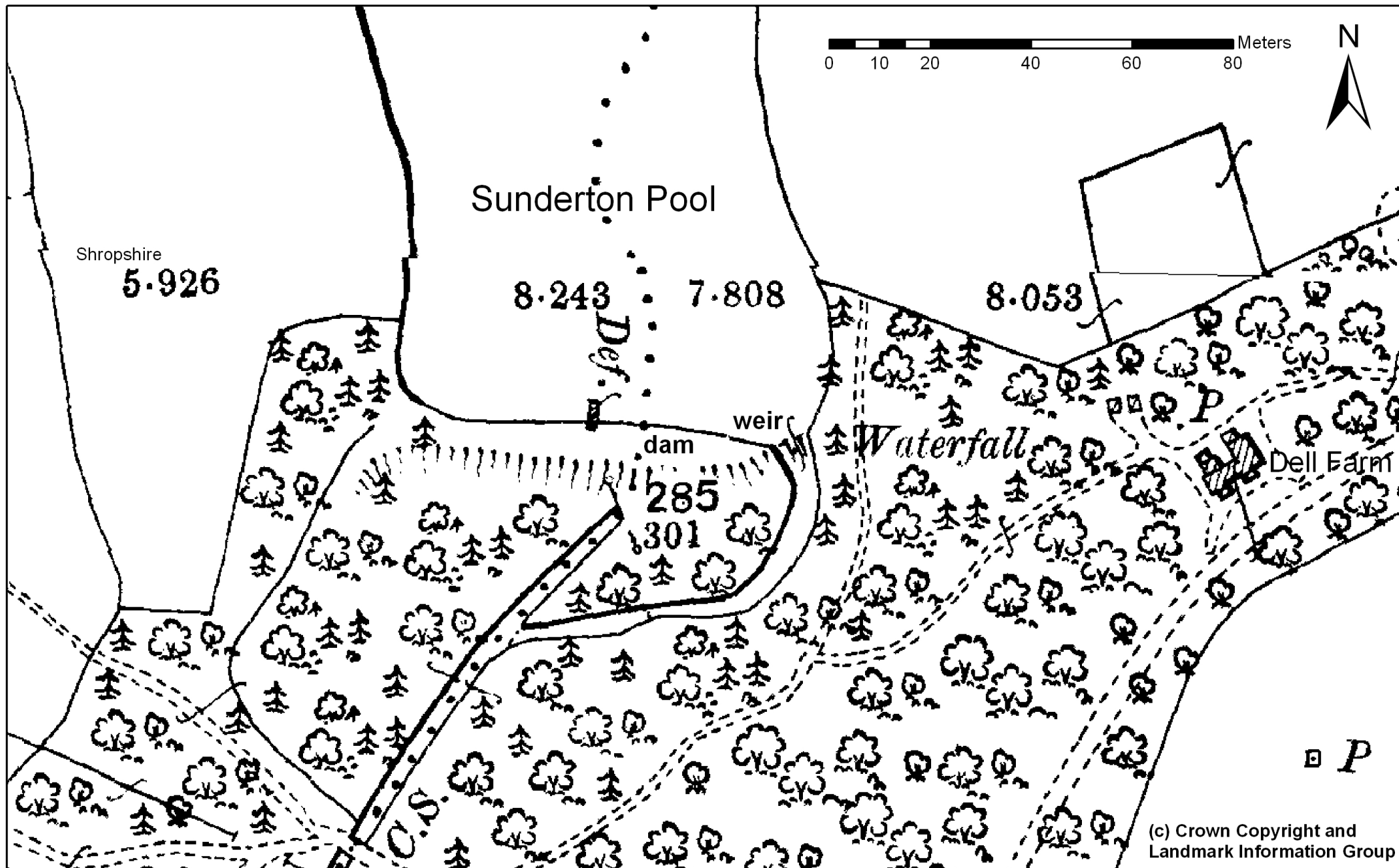
Stamper, P, 1996: *Historic Parks and Gardens in Shropshire: A Compendium of Site Reports Compiled 1994-6*, Shropshire County Council Archaeology Service Report No. 55

Sundorne Estate Survey, 1777: *Plan of Sunderton Farm in Uffington, Haughmond, and St Alkmonds*, Upton Magna, Shropshire website:
<http://www.uptonmagna.com/index.cfm/history/sundorne-estate-1777-survey>, 0056 Sunderton Farm (map)

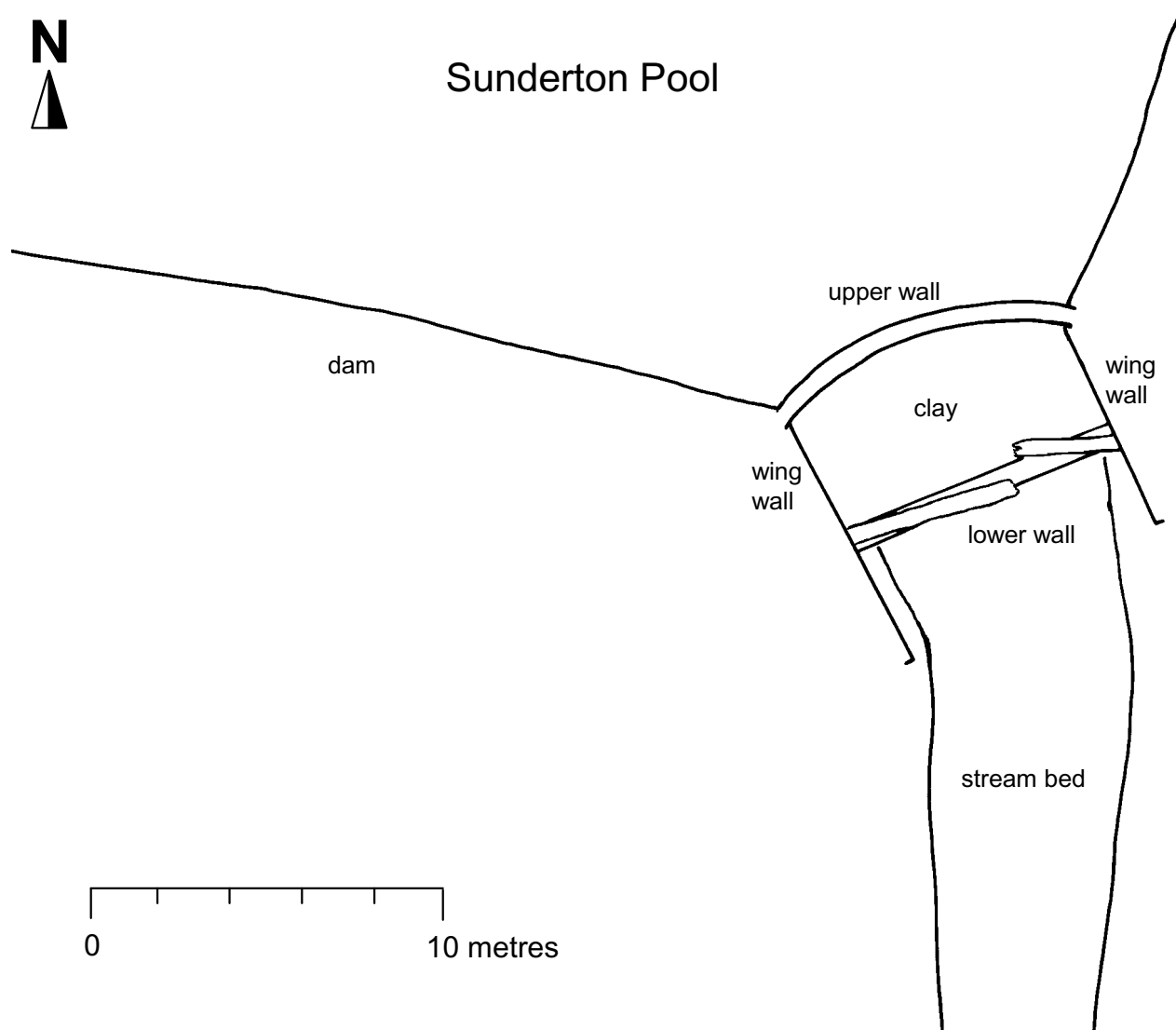
ABBREVIATIONS

HER	Historic Environment Record, Shropshire Council
NGR	National Grid Reference
OS	Ordnance Survey





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SUNDERTON POOL, SHREWSBURY 2012
Figure 3: Plan view of the weir after reduction; 1:200 scale



Photo 1: Sunderton Pool from the pool dam, looking N



Photo 2: The weir and spillway from below, looking NW



Photo 3: The top of the weir and spillway, looking E



Photo 4: The top of the weir and spillway, looking NE



Photo 5: The weir and spillway during work to reduce the crest of the weir, looking NE



Photo 6: The weir and spillway, looking W, (scale 0.5m)