

**A WATCHING BRIEF AT OSPREY LTD., STOKWOOD ROAD,
CRAVEN ARMS BUSINESS PARK, CRAVEN ARMS, SHROPSHIRE 2012**

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A report for
DBS Steel Build

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Archaeology Service

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SUMMARY

In May and July 2012 the Archaeology Service carried out a watching brief on the excavations for drainage works associated with a new industrial unit at Stokewood Road, Craven Arms Business Park, Craven Arms, Shropshire. The development site lay immediately adjacent to a cropmark enclosure (HER 02046), archaeologically evaluated in 1992 and thought to be the remains of a Romano-British farmstead or small villa. The current watching brief recorded two field drains of probable 19th-century date. No significant archaeological deposits or features were observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In May 2012 work began on the erection of an industrial building with associated office accommodation and the formation of an access road for Osprey Ltd at Stokewood Road, Craven Arms Business Park, Craven Arms, Shropshire.

1.2 The development site lies within an area known to have displayed cropmarks suggestive of the precinct of a small Roman villa (Shropshire Historic Environment Record [HER] No. 02046). It also lies a short distance to the east of the route of a Roman road, Watling Street, (HER 00108) and in proximity to several Roman occupation sites (HER 02041 and HER 00620). Archaeological field evaluations undertaken in 1992 by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit revealed the presence of Roman occupation to the south and east of the development site. It was considered that archaeological remains associated with these sites might therefore be impacted on by the development.

1.3 Because of the potential significance of the archaeological resource it was made a condition of the planning consent for the works that they be accompanied by a programme of archaeological work which should include a watching brief during any ground disturbance.

1.4 The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council, was commissioned by DBS Steel Build to carry out this programme of archaeological work to a scheme of investigation agreed by the Historic Environment Team, Shropshire Council.

1.5 The aim of the watching brief was to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains that were encountered during the groundworks.

2 PREVIOUS WORK

2.1 The cropmark enclosure site (HER 02046) at Stokewood Road was discovered by aerial photography in c.1977. The site was classified by Whimster as a rectilinear double ditched enclosure and described as resembling the formal precinct of a small Roman villa (Whimster, 1989, p45).

2.2 In March 1991 an evaluation exercise was carried out on this site in advance of a proposed development. Geophysical survey was carried out, but two linear disturbances caused by ferrous sewage pipes meant that the geophysical plot was less precise than the AP plot. Nevertheless some internal features were located. Trial trenching was hampered by vandalism, which led to surveying discrepancies, but again some internal features were identified. These were shown to have been truncated by agricultural activity, but some Romano-British pottery was recovered to confirm the dating of the enclosure. It was recommended that the southwest and southeast corners of the enclosure should be preserved in situ but that if this were not possible then these areas should be archaeologically excavated and recorded (Ferris & Trafford, 1991)

2.3 An archaeological watching brief in 2004 on a development immediately to north of the cropmark enclosure recorded no archaeological features or deposits (Krawiec, 2004)

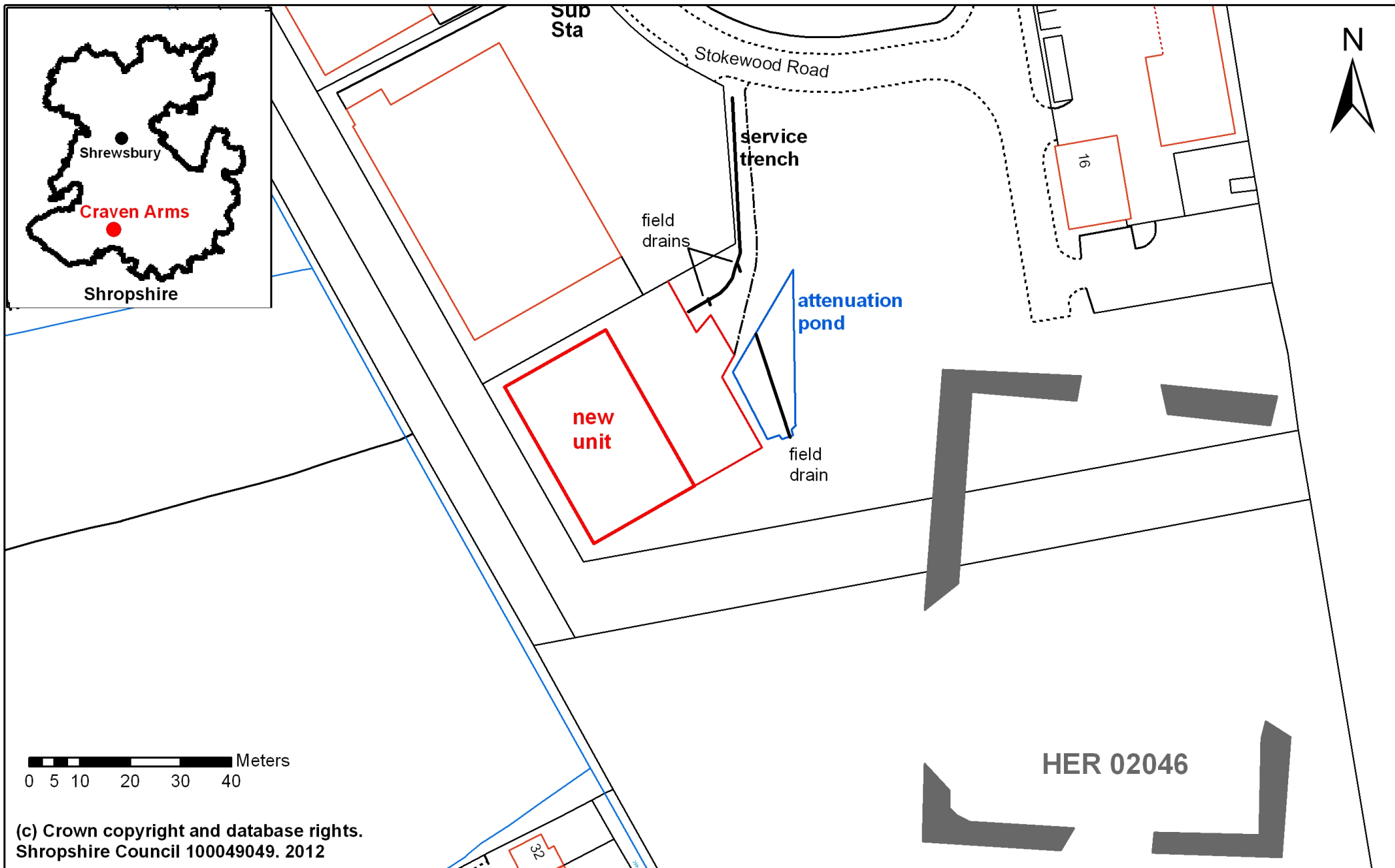
3 THE WATCHING BRIEF.

3.1 In May 2012 a trench for services was excavated running northeast from the northeast side of the new unit then north along the new access track to its junction with Stokewood road. Topsoil was removed in a band c. 3m wide to a depth of 0.1m over the length of the working area. The service trench was then excavated to a width of 0.45m and a depth of 1m. The topsoil was seen to comprise a homogenous layer of dark grey brown sandy silty loam up to 0.5m deep, over the natural subsoil which comprised rounded gravel in a dark brown sandy silt matrix. The service trench cut across the line of two field drains, running north-northwest / south-southeast. The field drains both comprised narrow trenches 0.25m wide by 0.4m deep cut into the lower part of the topsoil and the top of the gravel subsoil, filled with greenish grey stone fragments and loose topsoil. The top of the field drains lay 0.25m below the ground surface, indicating the depth of recent ploughing. The field drains are likely to have dated to the 19th century. No significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered in the excavation of the service trench.

3.2 In July 2012 a watching brief was carried out on the excavations for an attenuation pond to the east of the new industrial unit. The pond formed a roughly triangular area 240m² in extent by 1.4m deep on the eastern side of the development area. The top of the natural gravel was seen about 0.5m below the ground surface. The gravel lay beneath 0.35m depth of dark brown sandy clay silt loam and a temporary contractors' working surface of grey stone chippings 0.15m thick. A field drain of grey-green sandstone fragments was cut into the loam. No significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered in this area either.

4 REFERENCES

- Ferris, I & Trafford, N**, 1991: *An Archaeological Evaluation at Craven Arms, Shropshire, 1991*, BUFAU Report No. 157
- Krawiec, K**, 2004: *Land off Long Lane, Craven Arms, Shropshire: An Archaeological Watching Brief 2004*, Birmingham Archaeology Project No. 1137
- Whimster, R**, 1989: *The Emerging Past: Air Photography and the Buried Landscape*, RCHME



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Photo 1: The service trench, looking NE (scale bar 1m)



Photo 2: One of the field drains in the service trench, looking NW (scale bar 1m)



Photo 3: The attenuation pond, looking SE