

**A WATCHING BRIEF ON
EMERGENCY WATER MAIN REPAIRS AT
WROXETER, SHROPSHIRE 2015**

by
H R HANNAFORD MCIfA

A Report for
SEVERN TRENT WATER Ltd.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In September 2015 the Archaeology Service carried out a watching brief on emergency repairs to a burst water main at Wroxeter, Shropshire (NGR SJ 5651 0876).

1.2 Wroxeter is situated in central Shropshire, about 7.5km southeast of the centre of Shrewsbury. The modern village lies on the northeast bank of the River Severn, just to the south of the B4380 road, formerly the A5 London to Holyhead Trunk Road (now bypassed). The modern village lies within the site of the Roman city of Viroconium Cornoviorum, the fourth largest walled city in the Roman province. The site of the Roman city is a scheduled Ancient Monument (Shropshire County No. 32, "The site of the Roman Town of Wroxeter [Viroconium Cornoviorum] Shropshire).

1.3 In 1999 a programme of archaeological work was carried out at Wroxeter in advance of water main relining by Severn Trent Water Ltd. A total of 24 holes were excavated at specified locations and in most cases to set dimensions of 2m by 1.7m in size and c 1.5m deep. The degree and nature of activity varied in the lining holes with some showing only road surfaces or limited evidence for human settlement. In two holes, evidence of buildings was found. One of these holes, Lining Hole 8, was excavated in the immediate vicinity of the current emergency works. The deposits in this pit had been severely disturbed by earlier excavations for the existing water main and a sewer pipe. Two road surfaces were seen in section (White, 2000, p17)

1.4 On 16th September 2015 Severn Trent Water Ltd carried out emergency repairs to a burst water main at Wroxeter. The burst main was located in the grass verge on the west side of the road opposite the Wroxeter Roman City office and museum. The groundworks involved the excavation of a small trench to access and repair the burst water main.

1.5 Because of the potential archaeological significance of the site it was made a condition of the Scheduled Monument class consent that the emergency repairs to the water main should be accompanied by an archaeological watching brief on the groundworks. The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council was commissioned by Severn Trent Water Ltd. to carry out this archaeological work.

2 THE WATCHING BRIEF

2.1 The excavations to locate and repair the burst main were carried out using mechanical mini excavator and by hand. The excavations were made in the grass verge on the west side of the road. A trench 1m long by 0.8m wide was excavated by machine to a depth of 0.45m, then by hand to a depth of 0.8m. The 6" main was located at a depth of 0.6m below the ground surface. The feeder main to the Wroxeter Roman Site office and museum ran east from the top of this main dropping to a depth of 0.85m. The trench was extended 0.5m to the east to follow this feeder main to the principal leak.

2.2 A layer of dark grey humic topsoil 0.3m deep contained a mix of materials including stones, cobbles, pebbles, a fragment of Roman roof tile and crushed drink cans and sweet wrappers. This lay over a mixed fill of very dark greyish brown sandy loam with similar inclusions.

2.3 All the excavations were carried out entirely within ground that had previously been disturbed, comprising the backfill of trenches previously excavated for the laying or relining of the water mains. No significant archaeological features or deposits were recorded during the watching brief.

3 REFERENCES:

White, R, 2000: *Final report on excavations in advance of water main relining at Wroxeter Roman City, Shropshire*, BUFAU Project 462.2.

Gaffney, V, et al., 2001: *Wroxeter, the Cornovii and the Urban Process: Final Report on the Work of the Wroxeter Hinterland Project, Vol 1*, BUFAU Project 500.6, p146-164

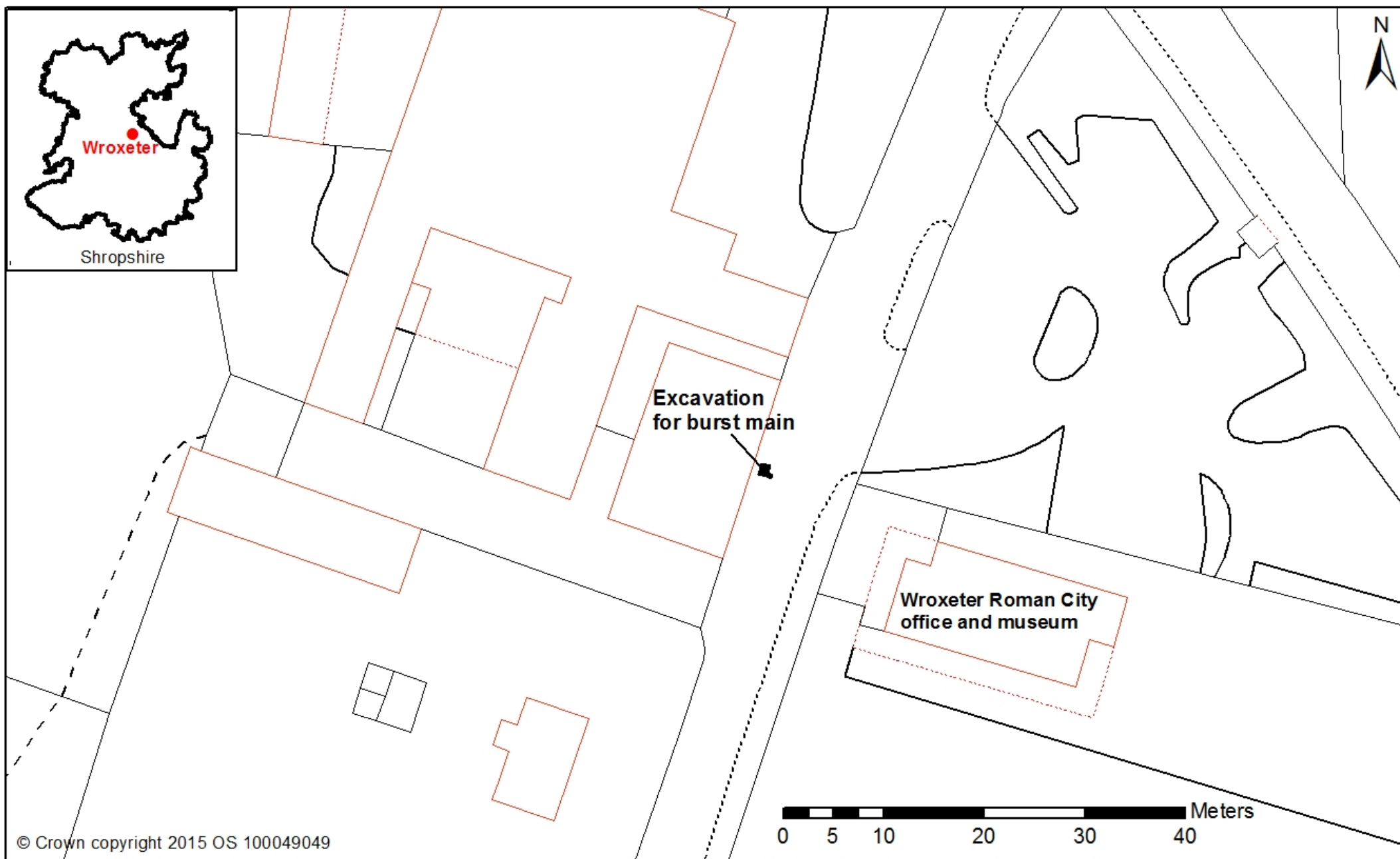




Photo 1: The location of the burst main (arrowed), looking NW



Photo 2: The excavation, looking W; (scale bar 1m)



Photo 3: The excavation, looking SE; (scale bar 1m)