

A WATCHING BRIEF AT BATTLEFIELD, SHREWSBURY 2016

by

H R HANNAFORD MCIFA

A report for

Highways & Transport, Shropshire Council
and
Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Archaeology Service Report Number 379
© Shropshire Council
February 2016

Archaeology Service,
Shropshire Council, Historic Environment Team,
Business Support & Regulatory Services,
Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury SY2 6ND

Tel: 01743 254622 email: archaeology@shropshire.gov.uk

CONTENTS

	Page No
SUMMARY	1
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 THE HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	1
3 THE WATCHING BRIEF	2
4 SOURCES	3

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: The location of the study area

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo 1: The location of the new ponds, looking NE

Photo 2: The new ponds, looking SW

Photo 3: The re-profiled ditch, looking N

SUMMARY

In January 2016 work was undertaken on a “Slow the Flow” drainage scheme at Battlefield, Shrewsbury. The scheme lay within the area of the Battle of Shrewsbury, 1403, an Historic England Registered Battlefield. The groundworks for the scheme were accompanied by a programme of archaeological work in the form of a watching brief. The watching brief encountered no significant archaeological features or deposits.

1 INTRODUCTION

In late January and early February 2016 a “Slow the Flow” water management scheme was created at Battlefield, Shrewsbury. This scheme included the creation of three small ponds and the re-profiling of a short section of ditch within the area of the site of the Battle of Shrewsbury (1403). The battlefield is included on Historic England’s Register of Historic Battlefields (Battle of Shrewsbury 1403, National List Entry [NLE] No. 1000033). The site of the new works also lay c. 150m west of a Scheduled Ancient Monument, the site of the College of St Mary Magdalene at Battlefield (NLE 1003717). The new ponds and ditch were located on the northwestern corner and edge of a field that until the mid-1990s had contained the earthwork remains of medieval ridge and furrow ploughing (Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER) No. 04471).

2 THE HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

In the medieval period the study area formed part of the fields of the manor of Albright Hussey (which included Harlescott and Battlefield). At the time of the Domesday Survey

of 1086, the manor was held by Rainald the Sheriff from Roger of Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury. Rainald's lands passed to his descendants, the FitzAlans, as part of the Lordship of Oswestry, and the manor of Albright Hussey was held from the FitzAlans by the Hussey family until the 17th century. Until recently, much of the Battlefield area was covered by the ridge and furrow earthworks of the manor's medieval strip fields. By the late 20th century, however, most of this had been ploughed away.

The Battle of Shrewsbury was fought on 21st July 1403 across Albright Hussey's strip fields. Royalist forces under Henry IV and the Prince of Wales, the future Henry V, met here with a rebel army under the command of Henry Percy the younger (Hotspur). The fighting was on foot, and appears to have been a fluid and wide ranging encounter. Both sides had large bodies of archers, and many of the casualties of the battle resulted from the arrow storms they generated. The king's army was ultimately victorious, and Hotspur was among the dead, which may have numbered several thousand. The precise site of the battle is uncertain, although it is probable that Hotspur's army was initially drawn up on the ridge of high ground to the north of the church. The position of the royalist forces is thought to have been in a field later known as King's Croft, just to the southeast of the church, although in the 18th century this field name was applied to a field further to the south and now bisected by the railway line. The field immediately to the west of this was named Trooper's Piece and Roushill. The traditional site of Hotspur's death was a mile to the west of the church.

Following the battle, a chapel was erected to commemorate the dead. In 1410 the chapel was re-founded as a college of chaplains, and its church of St Mary Magdalene (HER 00981), which had replaced a smaller chapel at Albright Hussey as the parish church, survived the Reformation to serve as the church of the re-named Battlefield Parish.

In 1638 the manor was bought by the Corbet family, and it was probably during the 17th century that the medieval strip fields were divided up into smaller fields, many of whose boundaries survive to the present day. The roads to Ellesmere and Whitchurch at either end of the study area were turnpiked in the 18th century, and the Shrewsbury to Crewe railway line was built across the eastern end of the area in 1853. The A5124 Battlefield Link Road was built across the southern part of the battlefield in the late 1990s.

3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

The excavation of the three ponds and the re-profiling of the ditch were carried out with a 360° tracked excavator. The ponds were excavated to a depth of c. 0.7m below the existing ground surface, the spoil being used to create a bund along the southeastern and northwestern sides of the excavations. The eastern bank of the ditch along the northwestern edge of the field was cut back from an existing vertical angle to a slope of about 30°; the spoil was laid in a narrow spread along the eastern side of the ditch. The spoil from the re-profiled ditch was searched with a metal detector; finds comprised three small fragments of barbed wire, a nut and bolt, and the top of an aluminium tube.

In the area of the southern of the two ponds and the ditch, the topsoil comprised a dark brown humic loam about 0.3m in depth. It lay over a light brown sandy silt natural subsoil. The ground surface in the area of the northernmost pond had been disturbed during previous drainage works. This new pond partially overlay the site of a former pond shown on the 2nd edition OS 25" map of c. 1902. This pond was excavated to a shallower depth (c. 0.5m), and the topsoil here increased in depth over the site of the former pond.

No archaeological features, deposits, or finds were encountered during the work.

4 SOURCES

Hannaford, H R, and Phillpotts, C J, 1994: *A49-A528 Battlefield Link, Shrewsbury (Preferred Route): An Archaeological Evaluation*, SCCAS Report No. 43

Hannaford, H R, and Phillpotts, C J, 1996: *A49-A528 Battlefield Link, Shrewsbury (Option D): An Archaeological Evaluation*, SCCAS Report No. 84

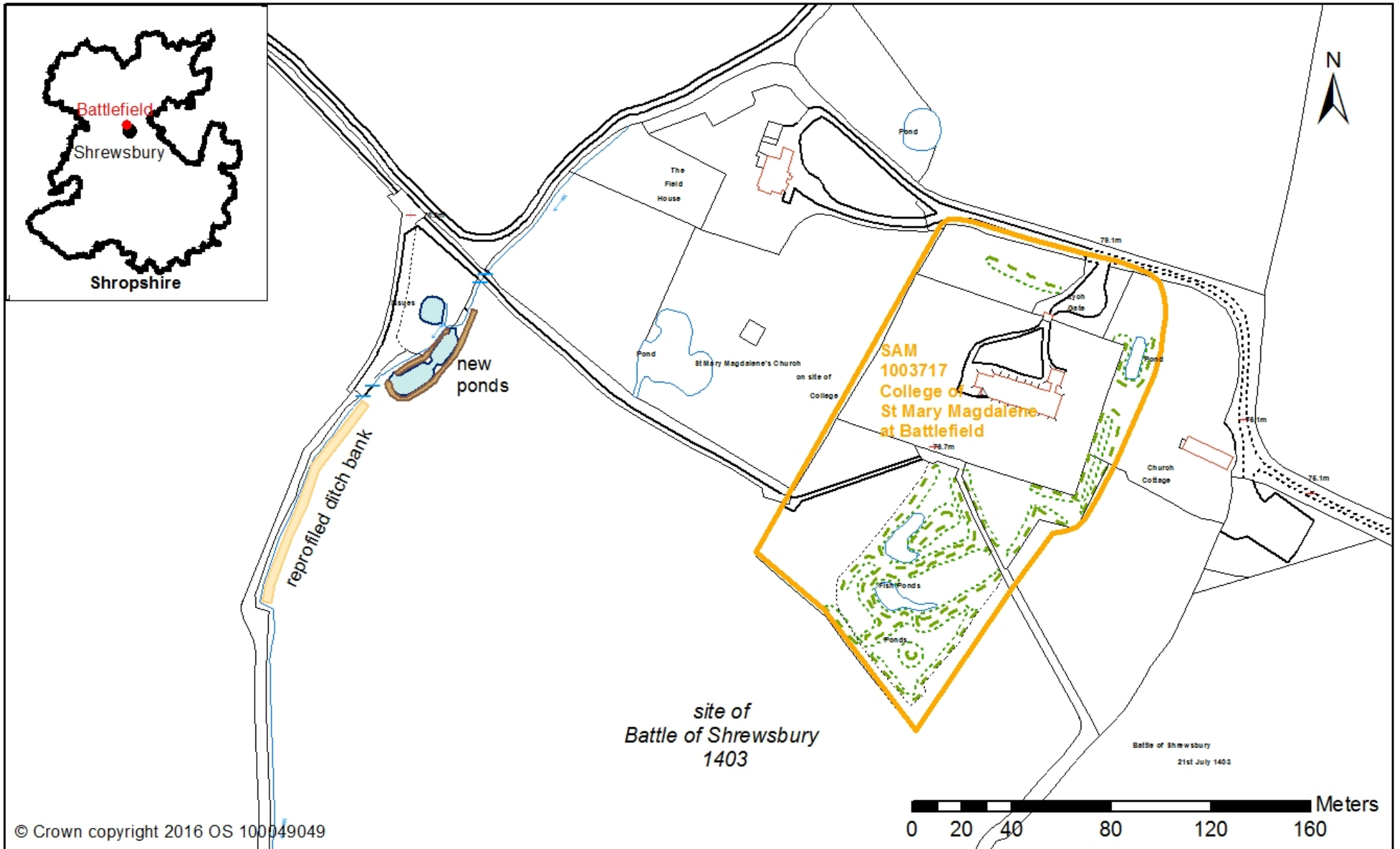
Hannaford, H R, 1998: *A Watching Brief on the A5124 Battlefield Link Road, Shrewsbury*, SCCAS Report No. 149

Priestley, E J, 1979: *The Battle of Shrewsbury 1403*

Thorn, F and C (eds), 1986: *Domesday Book: Shropshire*, Phillimore, Chichester

ABBREVIATIONS

AOD	Above Ordnance Datum
OS	Ordnance Survey
HER	County Historic Environment Record, Shirehall, Shrewsbury
NGR	National Grid Reference
SA	Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury
SCCAS	Shropshire County Council Archaeology Service
SCAS	Shropshire Council Archaeology Service
TSAHS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society
TSAS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society



© Crown copyright 2016 OS 100049049



"SLOW THE FLOW" SCHEME, BATTLEFIELD, SHREWSBURY 2016

Figure 1: The location of the study area

Scale: 1:2,000

Archaeology Service,
Historic Environment Team, Shropshire Council,
Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

A Watching Brief at Battlefield, Shrewsbury 2016



Photo 1: The location of the new ponds, looking NE



Photo 2: The new ponds, looking SW



Photo 3: The re-profiled ditch, looking N

'SLOW THE FLOW' SCHEME, BATTLEFIELD, SHREWSBURY 2016