

IBSTOCK SEVERN TRENT A Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief

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SUMMARY

- Trent & Peak Archaeology was contracted by Severn Trent Water to conduct an archaeological watching brief on ground works associated with the construction of a pipe line at Ibstock, Leicestershire, between SK404094 and SK407096.
- The new pipe was to replace an existing one that ran on the same alignment some 4m to the south.
- The study area covered three fields immediately to the south of St Denys' Church.
- In Area 01 the remains of a brick and slate field drain were recorded. There was no dating evidence associated with this feature and it remains undated.
- In Area 02 a line of stones interpreted as the remains of a wall base were recorded. Although there was no direct dating evidence a scatter of medieval pottery within 200mm of the stones make it likely that they date to the medieval period.
- Area 03 had surviving ridge and furrow. Two of the furrows suffered truncation at their southern end due to the ground works. Apart from this the ridge and furrow remained unaffected by the ground works.

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1 INTRODUCTION.

1.1 Trent & Peak Archaeological Unit was contracted by Seven Trent water to monitor ground works associated with the modernising of a sewer immediately to the south of the small town of Ibstock, Leicestershire.

1.2 The ground works to be monitored lay in fields skirting the south side of St Denys' Church which had been identified as an area of potential archaeological interest as part of the planning process (Figure 1). Initially a pre-drainage pipe was constructed and this was followed by the stripping of a twenty metre wide easement along the length of the pipeline.

2 SITE TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY.

2.1 The land subject to the watching brief was down to rough pasture. The field closest to St Denys Church had been ploughed in the very recent past but had since reverted to pasture presumably in anticipation of the ground works associated with the modernisation of the sewer.

2.2 Two fields to the east of this showed no signs of recent cultivation although Area 03 had clear ridge and furrow running north-east to south-west. All the fields sloped down to the south and are bounded by a substantial fast flowing brook. The field by St Denys' Church was waterlogged. The extent of the ground works lay between, from west to east, SK404094 and SK407096. The town of Ibstock stands on rising ground to the north of the site whilst to the south Hinckley is some 10 miles distant.

2.3 The geology of the area consists of:

Bedrock Gunthorpe member mudstone, red/brown with subordinate doleritic siltstone and fine grained sandstone.

Superficial Oadby member Diamicton, grey/brown clay characterised by Cretaceous and Jurassic rock fragments and subordinate lenses of sand and gravel. (BGS Geology of Britain Viewer)

3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.

3.1 Ibstock is first mentioned in the Domesday Book (1086) and is made up of an Old English personal name, Ibba, and stoc meaning dairy farm (Ekwall, 1960). The town and its environs are featured in a number of reports in Archaeology in Leicestershire and Rutland. A.J.K. Hirst (1984) reported the foundations of a building some 7.50 x 6.00m at Ravenstone, about a mile to the north of Ibstock. His report gives no date for this structure but it was noted that there were no signs of mortaring in the remains of the walls.

3.2 A coin hoard comprising 468 Roman copper alloy coins was found by a metal detector. The hoard, dating to the 4th century, was buried in a grey ware pottery strainer which was possibly a product of the nearby kilns at Ravenstone (ALR, p.174 1998).

3.3 Field walking prior to an extension of a brick quarry at Ibstock, (ALR, p.100 1998) recorded 8 sherds of post medieval pottery, 1 possible medieval sherd, 3 Romano-British sherds and 3 worked flints.

3.4 Area 02 is the site of the former seventeenth century rectory. A geophysical survey detected buried walls a robber trench and a hearth. Part of the chimney is still visible in the field.

4 METHODOLOGY.

4.1 The ground work in preparation for the new sewer was carried out in two distinct phases. Firstly a 'pre drain' was constructed in order to ensure that surface water did not flood the main pipe trench when it was excavated. This consisted of excavating a narrow V shaped trench some 500mm wide at the surface and then the insertion of a plastic pipe. Plate 1.

4.2 This was constructed along the entire length of two of the three fields, Area 02 and Area 03. This trench, which was backfilled immediately, lay within the twenty metre easement which constituted the second phase of the monitored ground works.

4.3 The easement was stripped by a tracked machine using a toothless ditching bucket, Plate 2, with the topsoil being stored within the twenty metre easement. The actual surface area that was seen was therefore on average fifteen metres wide in each area (Figure 2). The topsoil stripping was monitored along the entire length of the easement and a collection was made of pot and any other artefacts that were unearthed as a result of this.

4.4 Features revealed by the soil stripping were plotted onto a plan and recorded by photograph and drawing. All contexts including features were given a unique four figure code and finds were recorded by feature or context rather than individually. For the purposes of reporting the easement was divided into three areas and the results are described below.

5 RESULTS.

Area 01. Contexts 0001, 0002, 0009.

5.1 To the south of St Denys Church, this area revealed only one feature, the remains of a field drain, 0009, Plate 3, made up of bricks in places two courses deep topped off with slates. Figure 3. The bricks probably date to the late 18th / early 19th century. Their dimensions vary from 100x235x60cms to 110x245x50cms. Some incomplete bricks measure 35cms in depth and 100cms in width. All appear to be hand made and none have frogs. The slates when cleaned in post excavation have holes in them that suggest they were once part of the roof of a building. Very little of this drain survived but it is probable that the materials used in its construction have come from a building or buildings that had been demolished and subsequently re used. There were no artefacts recovered from the drain and it therefore remains undated.

5.1.2 Elsewhere in Area 01 the removal of the topsoil, 0001, average depth 100mm, uncovered a sandy subsoil interspersed with large areas of yellow clay, 0002. There was no indication that the church yard had at one time extended into the field.

Area 02. Contexts 0001, 0002, 0005, 0006, 0007, 0008.

5.2 Area 02 lies to the east of Area 01 and extends to Overton Road. At its southern end it dips down sharply to the brook and at the time of the ground works seems to have been given over to rough pasture. There being no sign of ridge and furrow or modern ploughing. As with Area 01 once the topsoil, 0001 (average depth 100mm) was removed, a sandy subsoil, 0002, interspersed with areas of yellow clay was revealed.

5.2.1 Thirty metres to the east of the boundary with Area 01 a line of large stones, 0005, was uncovered running north west to south east, Plate 4. This has been interpreted as the base of a wall. The stones were set deeply into the subsoil. (Plate 5). A quantity of medieval pottery was recovered from between and around the stones. All of these were

within 200mm of the stones and it is reasonable to assume that they are associated with it.

5.2.2 An area of 10 metres either side of the stones was further cleaned by machine and then by hand to try and ascertain whether or not there was any indication of a feature parallel to 0005. There was no indication of any other structural remains. The observed extent of 0005 ends at the northern edge of the existing pipe trench and there exists the possibility that originally it extended further to the south east. Similarly at its north west extent 0005 runs up to the edge of the stripped area and again there is the possibility that it extends further in that direction.

5.2.3 Four cuts were excavated across the line of 0005, to establish how much of it remained and whether or not it was possible to detect any evidence of a foundation cut (Figure 4). No foundation cut was visible. Excavation of 0005 was carried out in a manner that caused a minimum of intrusion and where sections were excavated across it this was done without removing any of the individual stones. It was agreed with the contractors that the area around 0005 would not be tracked over by plant or machinery when the new pipe is laid so that the feature can be preserved in situ.

5.2.4 There were no further archaeological deposits or artefacts revealed as a result of the soil stripping in Area 02.

Area 03. Contexts 0001, 0002

5.3.1 Machine stripping removed an average of 100mm of topsoil, 0001, revealing sandy subsoil with patches of clay, 0002.

5.3.2 In this area there is clear evidence of ridge and furrow to the north of the easement. At the eastern end of the area two of the furrows were truncated by topsoil stripping. The bases of the furrows did not extend below the base of the topsoil. Over the rest of the area the ridge and furrow has remained intact.

5.3.3 Along the southerly edge of the easement the line of the original pipe trench was observed. This formed a dark band of mixed material that constituted its backfill.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 The remains of the field drain in Area 01, 0009, were recorded. Only a small portion of this had survived. It was constructed of bricks and topped with slates. There was no dating evidence recovered from the excavation and recording of 0009. Whilst the bricks used in its construction appear to be hand made and date to the late 18th / early 19th century this does not securely date the feature since the materials it is constructed with could easily have been reused from another structure.

6.2 The base of a wall, 0005, was uncovered in Area 02. This was in the form of a line of stones, which run from north/west to south/east from the edge of the easement to the edge of the old pipe trench. There were no signs of a parallel wall and its interpretation is difficult. It could be the remains of a building or it could be a boundary wall. Its alignment does not correspond to any of the modern field boundaries. The stones show no signs of having been worked, rather they are rough blocks of varying sizes and there were no signs of any mortar. One course was all that remained. Individually the stones were set deeply in the subsoil, 0002, and covered by it. There was no evidence of a foundation trench.

6.3 Twelve metres of 0005 were revealed as a result of the ground works and there exists the possibility that continues both to the north west and south east. At its north/west end it has been truncated by a modern field drain and at its south east by the original pipe

trench. A quantity of medieval pottery was recovered from within 200mm of the south west edge of 0005. There were no further finds of medieval pottery in Area 02 and this suggests that the pottery recovered is associated with 0005 rather than part of a more dispersed assemblage which may have arisen as a result of night soiling.

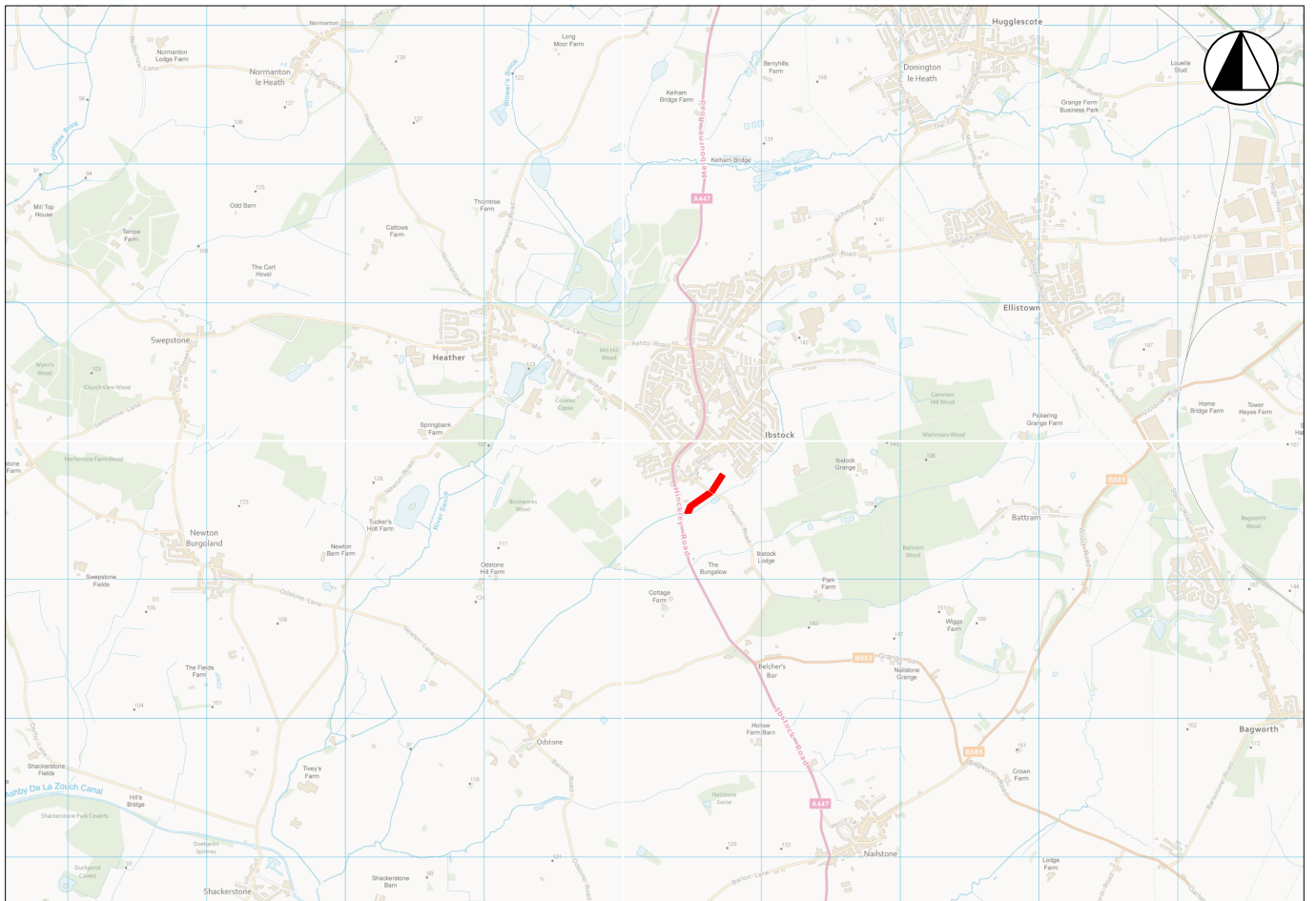
6.4 There were no archaeological features or artefacts revealed as a result of the soil stripping in Area 03. The ridge and furrow that exists in the field remained in tact with the exception of two ridges which ran into the easement and were truncated at their south east end.

Appendix 1. Summary context list.

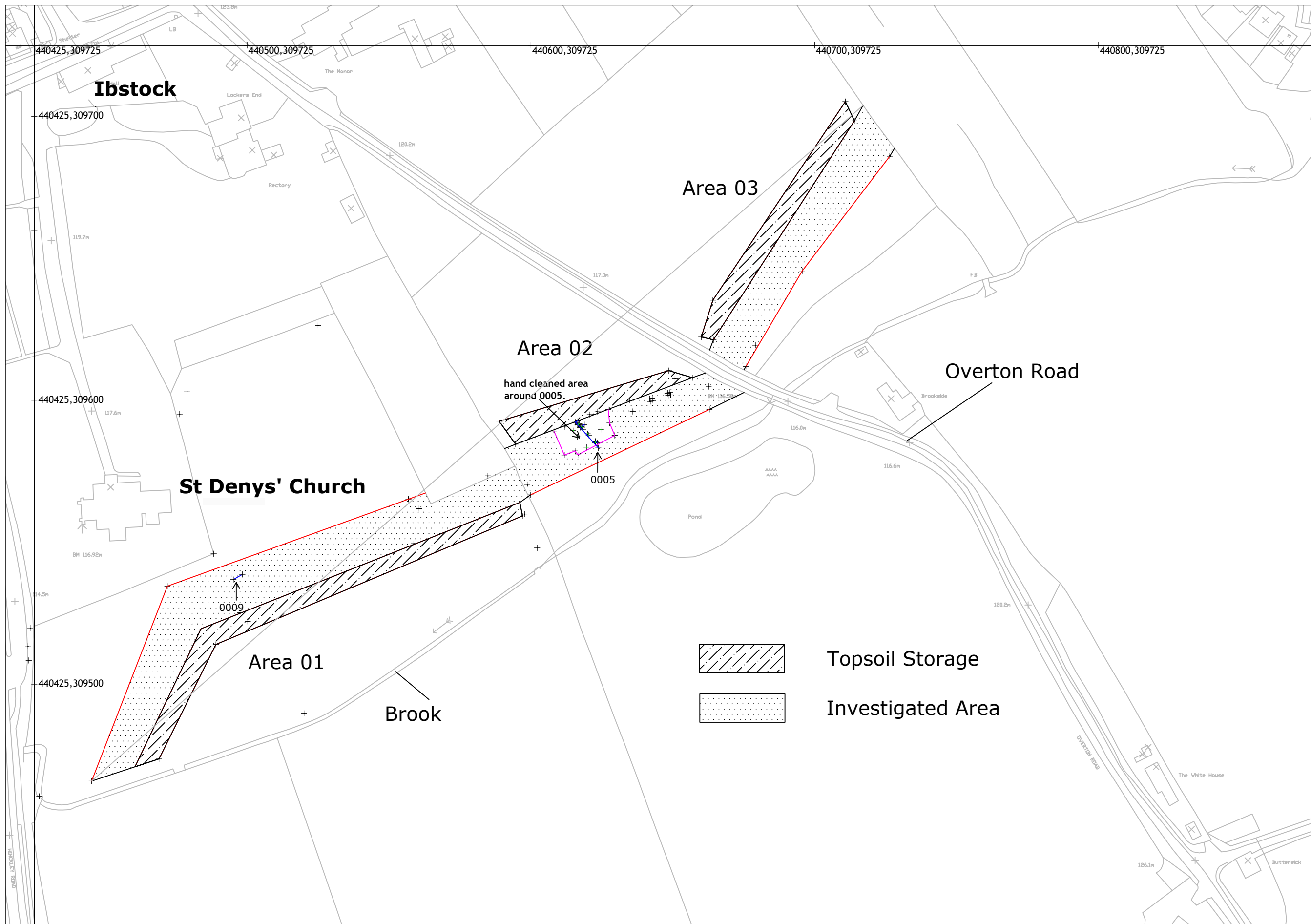
Context	Area	Thickness	Description
0001	01,02,03	200mm, average	Mid/dark brown firm clay loam with patches of stones and gravel.
0002	01,02,03	100mm average	Orange/brown silty loam with patches of small stones and gravel.
0003	01,03,04		Fill of existing pipe trench, mixed top and sub soil with blocks of red clay. Only surface observed.
0004	01,02,03		Cut of existing pipe trench
0005	02		Stone line, possible remains of wall foundation
0006	02	120mm maximum	Similar to 0002 but with <10% small rounded pebbles, average 50mm in diameter distributed throughout
0007	02	210mm maximum	Brownish orange sandy clay with 30% rounded pebbles < 15mm in diameter
0008	02	80mm observed	Firm pink clay with lenses of rounded pebbles < 15mm in diameter
0009	01		Field drain constructed of bricks with slates forming the cover

References:

Ekwall E.	Dictionary of English Place Names	OUP 1960
Hurst AJK	Archaeology in Leicestershire and Rutland	1984
ALR	Archaeology in Leicestershire and Rutland	1998

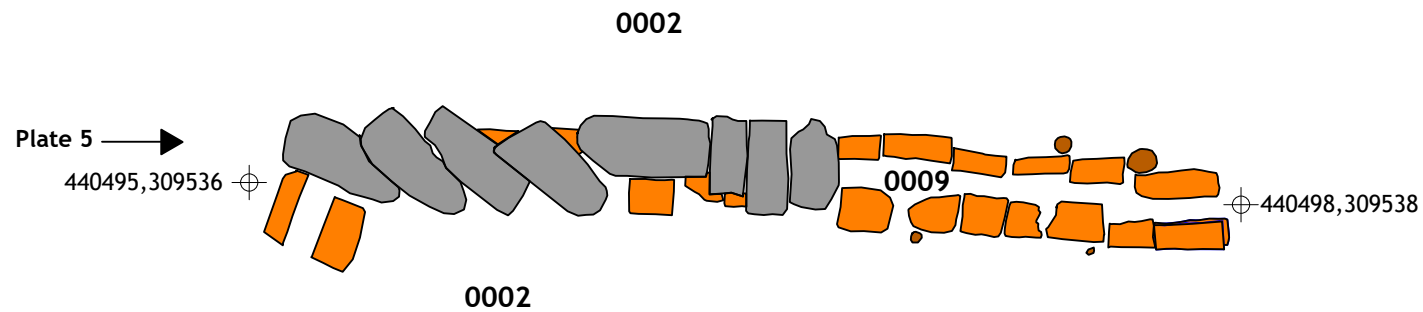


tp Figure 1. Location of study area
 Scale at A4 1:50000 / 1:10000
 Ordnance Survey map reproduced with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright Licence No. AL 100020618





tp Figure 2. Site plan showing extent of topsoil strip and areas of archaeological interest
 Trent & Peak Scale at A3 1:1250





KEY

-  brick
-  slate

0009 Field drain constructed with brick uprights and slate tops.
0002 surrounding stripped surface.

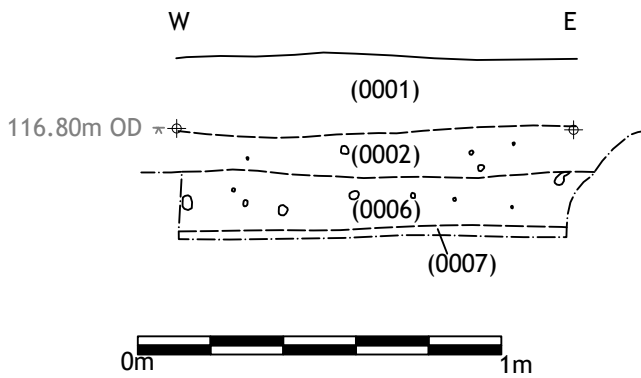


Figure 5 South east facing section Cut 01
Scale at A4 1:20

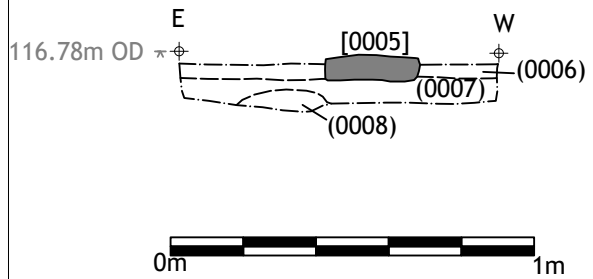


Figure 6 North west facing section 0005 Cut 01
Scale at A4 1:20

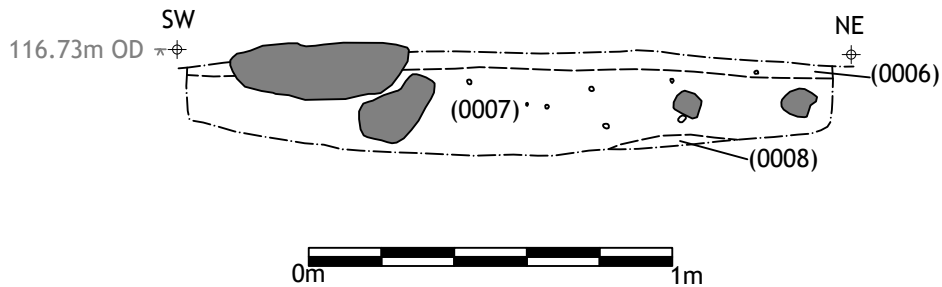


Figure 7 South east facing section 0005 Cut 02
Scale at A4 1:20

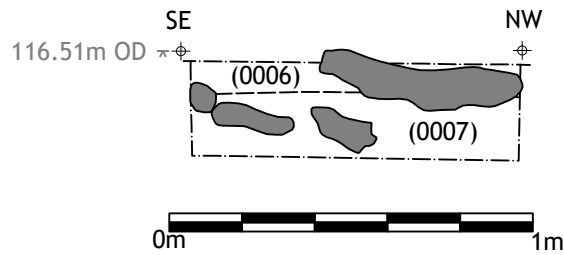


Figure 8 North west facing section 0005 Cut 03
Scale at A4 1:20

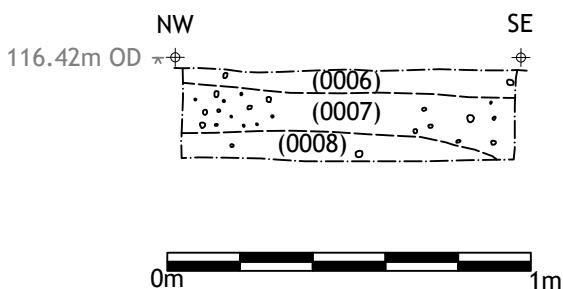


Figure 9 South west facing section Cut 04
Scale at A4 1:20

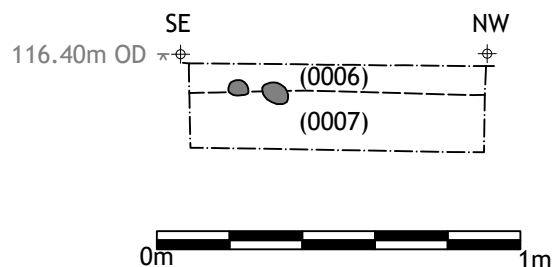


Figure 10 North west facing section 0005 Cut 04
Scale at A4 1:20

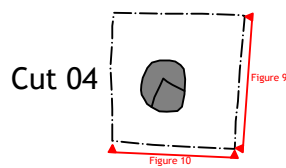
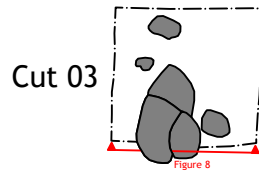
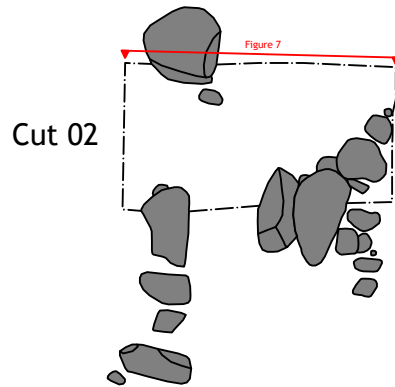
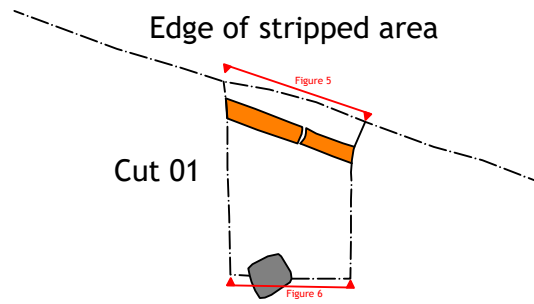




PLATE 1. The pre-drainage pipe in Area 02. Looking north east.



PLATE 2. Machine stripping in Area 02. The fill of the original pipe trench is on the left Looking south west.



PLATE 3. 0009, brick and slate field drain in Area 01. Looking north west.



PLATE 4. 0005, stone line, possible wall foundation in Area 02. Looking south east.



PLATE 5. 0005, cut 4, showing stone set into subsoil, 0002, but no indication of a foundation trench. Looking east.