

Cedarwood, Coughton, Warwickshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION AND RECORDING



understanding heritage matters

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1699

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*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: Cedarwood, Coughton,
high voltage cable trench

Commissioned by: Kevin Morel

Project Report No. 1699

Site Code: CS16

Planning Reference: N/A

National Grid Reference: SP 0783 6052 to SP 0790 6056

Team:

Project Manager: Caroline Rann MCI/A

Fieldwork: Dr Cathy Coutts

Author: Dr Cathy Coutts

Illustrations: Candy Stevens

Report checked by: Pete Thompson BA

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Archaeology Warwickshire

Unit 9

Montague Road

Warwick

CV34 5LW

01926 412278

fieldarchaeology@warwickshire.gov.uk

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/archaeology

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the excavation of a new high voltage electricity cable trench for Cedarwood, Coughton. The trench was excavated through land owned by the National Trust, to the west of Coughton Court, and the National Trust archaeologist requested that a watching brief be undertaken during the excavation work. No significant archaeology was disturbed by the work.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Permission has been granted by the National Trust for the excavation of a new below-ground cable through their land to the west of Coughton Court, Warwickshire. The site lies on the edge of the supposed extent of the medieval settlement of Coughton and it was therefore possible that archaeological remains might be disturbed during the development. A condition of permission to excavate the cable trench therefore required the applicant to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work to be carried out in conjunction with the development.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork, consisting of the archaeological observation of the proposed electricity service trench, was commissioned from Archaeology Warwickshire and carried out in October 2016. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under Site Code CS16.

2 SITE LOCATION

2.1 The area of excavation was located on the north side of the property boundary of Cedarwood, towards the farm outbuildings to the rear of Coughton House (a Grade II timber-framed Listed Building), and extends from National Grid reference SP 0783 6052 to SP 0790 6056 (Fig 1).

2.2 The superficial geology of the area is Mercia Mudstone overlaid by New Inn Sand and Gravel (British Geological Survey 2016).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 An undated cropmark, possibly representing a trackway and other linear features lies to the north of Coughton Court (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record MWA 4665). Cropmarks form when the remains of buried features such as ditches, walls or pits show as differential growth or ripening in overlying crops, and these may represent a pre-medieval

field system. Neolithic features were recorded during archaeological works at Coughton Court in 1991 (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record MWA 9004).

3.2 The site lies close to the Birmingham road which follows the line of a major Roman road, Ryknild Street (MWA 445). A Roman coin of Carausius, a ring, brooch and bracteate have all been found in the field to the east of the River Arrow (MWA 1893). Roman features were recorded during excavation in 1991 (MWA 9007).

3.3 Coughton Court medieval settlement is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 30030; MWA 3776). The earliest mention of a settlement at Coughton comes in the Domesday Book of 1086 which records 13 households (equivalent to a population of about 65) and a mill (VCH 1904, 325). The medieval settlement seems to have stretched along Coughton Lane from west of Ryknild Street, eastwards to the River Arrow, where there was a ford (MWA 563), and beyond. Other properties lay along Ryknild Street. The parish church of St Peter lay west of the river, in the north-east part of the settlement, with the manor house, Coughton Court to its north. There are a series of north-south strip properties with buildings fronting Coughton Lane, which are shown on early estate maps of 1695 (WRO CR 1998 M7) and 1746 (WRO CR1998 M29), and which survive today as earthworks (Hooke 1985, fig 10.16). Archaeological work in 1991 recorded medieval features (MWA 9008). Coughton deer park lies on the south-west side of Sambourne Lane (MWA 557).

3.4 St Peter's Church (MWA 552) is first mentioned in the 12th century. The existing building dates to the 15th century with additions and alterations in the 18th and 19th centuries and is a Grade I Listed Building. The Domesday and later medieval mills (two are recorded in 1370) were probably on the site of Coughton Mill (MWA 555), north of the ford, which was in use during the 19th century but was demolished in the early 20th century.

3.5 Coughton Court is partly timber-framed and partly of stone and brick and is a Grade I Listed Building (MWA 559). The majority of the standing building dates to the early 16th century. It was originally quadrangular and moated, but the moat was infilled and the east range demolished in 1780. Archaeological salvage recording in 1990-91 recorded evidence for primary occupation dating to the 12th-13th century (EWA 7044).

3.6 The grounds of Coughton Court show several phases of garden and landscape activity (MWA 8550). In the late 18th century the land between the house and Ryknild Street, including the development site was taken into the grounds. The buildings along the north side of Coughton Lane were demolished along with a stabling west of the Court, and the area was landscaped, largely according to a plan by John Davenport of 1793. Holes dug

in 1994 for the replanting of an avenue of trees to the front of the main house revealed some large sandstone blocks which may have been associated with the former stable yard (Hicks and Palmer 1994).

3.7 At the corner of Coughton Lane and Birmingham Road is the stump of a medieval cross (MWA 554) which is Listed Grade II. It consists of a square socket stone with chamfered corners. The shaft is round and very short and may have been octagonal where it connected with the socket stone. The cross is surrounded by iron railings with classical urns (also in iron) at each corner. These probably date from the late 18th century. The 1746 map shows the cross in the middle of the cross roads and it was probably re-sited during the late 18th century landscaping. The remains of a further medieval cross are in the churchyard of Coughton church (MWA 553).

3.8 A medieval pendant has been found in a field to the east of Coughton Court (MWA 5513).

3.9 The site of two disused pits is shown on early Ordnance Survey maps, to the north and south of the site (MWA 7776 and 7777).

3.10 Archaeological observation took place during the construction of a new cycleway with associated fencing at Coughton, within the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Coughton medieval village, in 2001 (Palmer and Gethin 2001). No evidence for the buildings, which are known to have existed on the site until the end of the 18th century, was revealed. However, a large amount of 19th-century and some 18th-century pottery was found, which probably derived from landscaping work. An 'ashy' layer observed within a fence posthole may represent the fill of a post-medieval feature associated with the settlement.

3.11 Other archaeological interventions at Coughton Court include a geophysical survey to the west of the house in 2008 (EWA 9458) which showed some potential structural features and a possible moat, resistivity and magnetometer survey was also carried out that year (EWA 9457), and an archaeological watching brief (EWA 9660) and evaluation trenching in 2009 (EWA 9310).

4 AIMS AND METHODS

4.1 The main aim of the work was to record any archaeological remains disturbed by the development, to collate the records in an archaeological archive and present the significant aspects of the archive in a report for dissemination.

4.2 The secondary aim was to form an understanding of the remains recorded in terms of their character and date, and to place the evidence in its local and regional context.

4.3 The objective of the work was a programme of controlled excavation to development formation levels, or the geological natural, whichever the higher.

4.4 The work undertaken involved the examination of early map evidence as well as records of archaeological remains in the area and local historical journals and other publications.

4.5 An experienced archaeologist was made available for each day of ground disturbance when notified by the client in accordance with the requirements of the National Trust.

5 RESULTS

5.1 The trench was excavated using a mini excavator with a toothed bucket to a depth of between 0.60m and 1.00m and was 0.35m wide. The underlying geology was an intractable red brown clay with areas of grey pebbles overlying it and it was reached at a depth of between 0.35m and 0.50m below ground level (3).

5.2 The geological natural was overlain by 0.15m to 0.30m of reddish brown silty clay with pebbles (2), more gravelly in some areas and becoming less apparent as the trench progressed north-east. The topsoil in the main field was a very dry brown silty clay with pebbles (1). A fragment of brick was noted in the first part of the trenching adjacent to the hedge. A single ceramic land drain was recorded in the field at a depth of 0.40m (4). A layer of rudimentary pebbly concrete (c.0.20m thick) was recorded below the topsoil in the north-east part of the trench in the main field. There are no maps showing a building in this part of the field and it may be that this was the base of a temporary structure erected and demolished between map records.

5.2 Following the excavation of the long stretch of trench in the main field a further length of trench was excavated from the telegraph pole back to the fence, in the farmyard area. Here the geological natural was directly overlain by a 0.40m thick layer of gravelly topsoil which contained fragments of roof tile near the farm buildings (6). A single land drain was recorded just west of the westernmost outbuilding at a depth of 0.50m (7). The area between the two field gates was more noticeably stony from metalling of the track (8).

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 No significant archaeology was recorded during the excavation of the trench and it appears unlikely that this field was part of the medieval settlement. The absence of finds from the field suggests it has been under pasture for a significant amount of time and not subject to ploughing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDICES

A List of contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comment/details</i>
1	Topsoil	grey brown silty clay
2	Layer	reddish brown silty clay with pebbles
3	Natural	red brown clay with grey pebbles over
4	Land drain	ceramic land drain with flat base
5	Concrete	rough layer of pebbly concrete
6	Topsoil	gravelly topsoil in farmyard
7	Land drain	
8	Track metalling	compact gravel



1. Excavation of trench in main field



2. Trench excavated adjacent to farm buildings

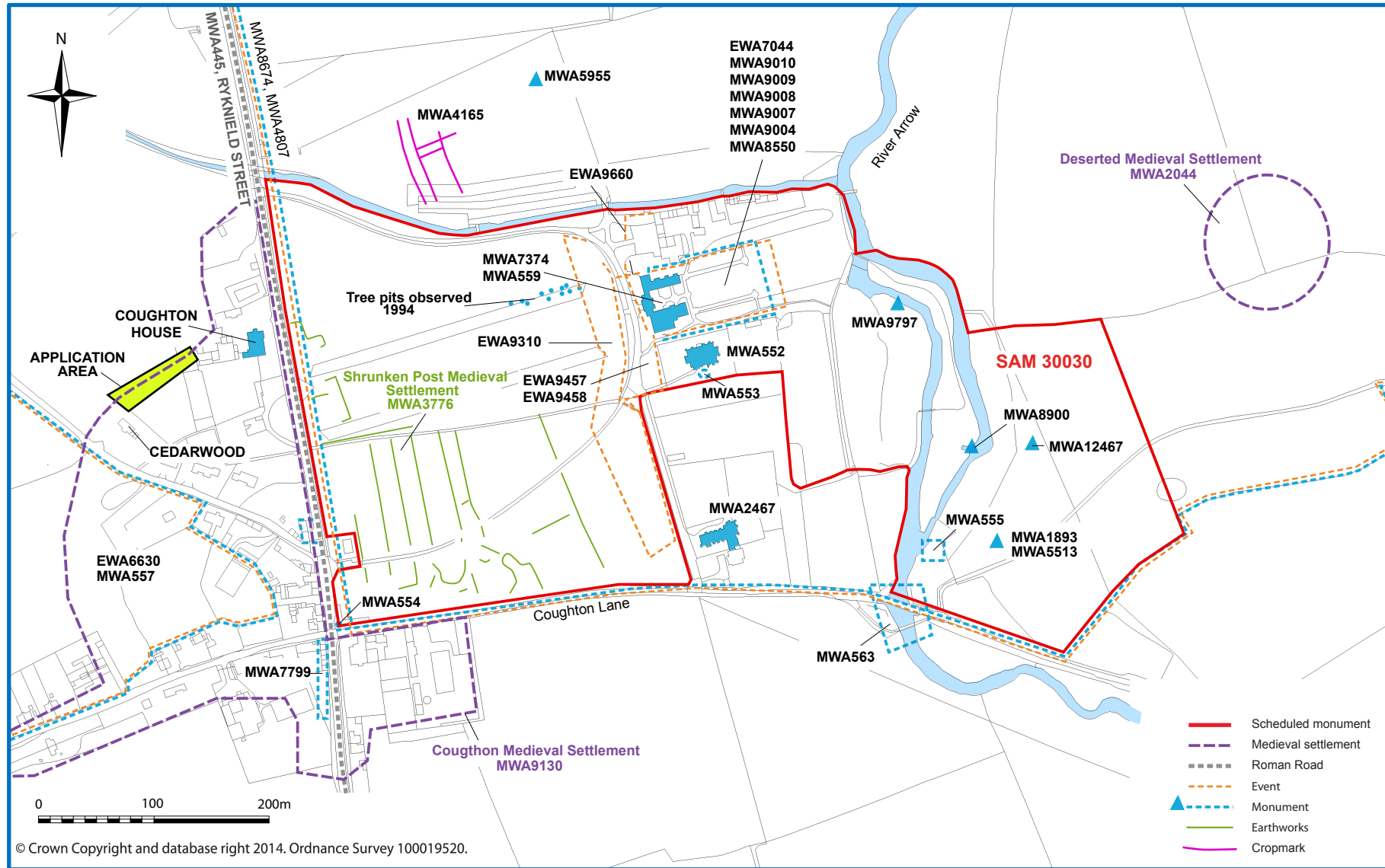


Fig 1: Location of application area and Historic Environment information

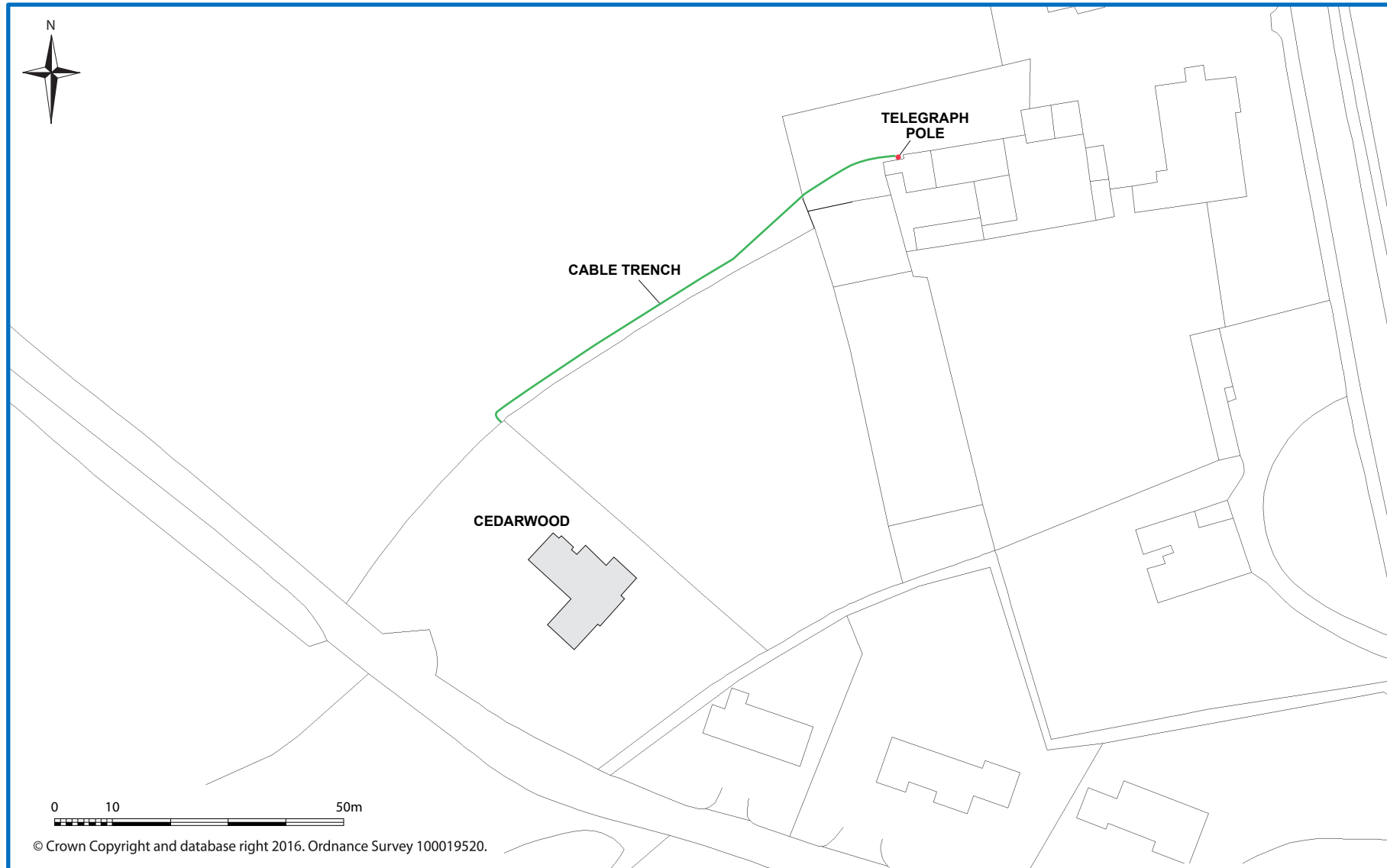


Fig 2: Route of cable trench