

STATION ROAD, WHITTINGTON, SHROPSHIRE

Archaeological Evaluation
Prepared for: Shingler Group

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Planning background

1.1.1 SLR Consulting were commissioned by Shingler Group (the Client) to undertake a programme of site investigation in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation¹ to mitigate the potential impacts of a new residential housing scheme on land south of Station Road, Whittington, Shropshire (planning ref: 18/01990/FUL) (Figure 1).

The extent of permitted new development is shown on Figure 2.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

The site is located west of the B5009 road from Queens Head and Babbinswood to Whittington (central point at approximately NGR SJ328308 (332810 330805) (Figure 1), in agricultural fields to the rear and south of properties that face on to Station Road, Whittington. The nearest post code is SY4 1JY. The land consists of several fields of agricultural land, currently under pasture; it is about 1.7ha in extent. The highest point is at c.89m AOD in the northern corner, and slopes south-eastwards. It is 87.5m AOD at the entranceway on the eastern side. The nearest watercourse is Common Brook, c.50m to the south.

The soil is Grade 3 agricultural land, which is of moderate fertility but with impeded drainage. The soils are classified as 'slowly permeable, seasonally wet, slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils.'²

The solid geology is Kinnerton Sandstone, and the drift geology is fluvioglacial, consisting of sands and gravels over glacial till.

The initial ground investigation, carried out by Georisk, identified grey and brown slightly clayey cobby gravel or gravelly cobble, as well as sandy gravelly clay with cobbles at 0.4 m below ground level; on the north end of the site, firm to stiff grey and brown gravelly clay was encountered at a depth of 0.45.

¹ SLR Consulting June 2019 *Station Road, Whittington, Shropshire Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation*

² <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/>

Figure 3
Site location

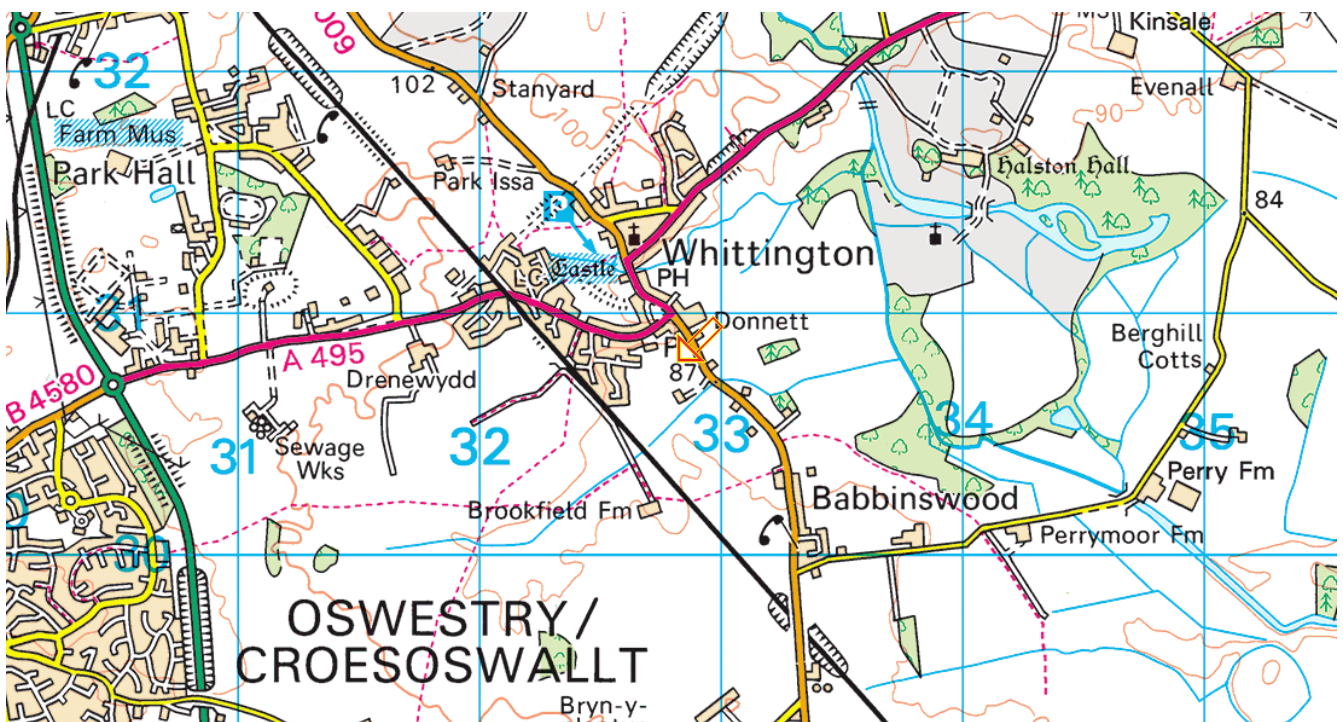
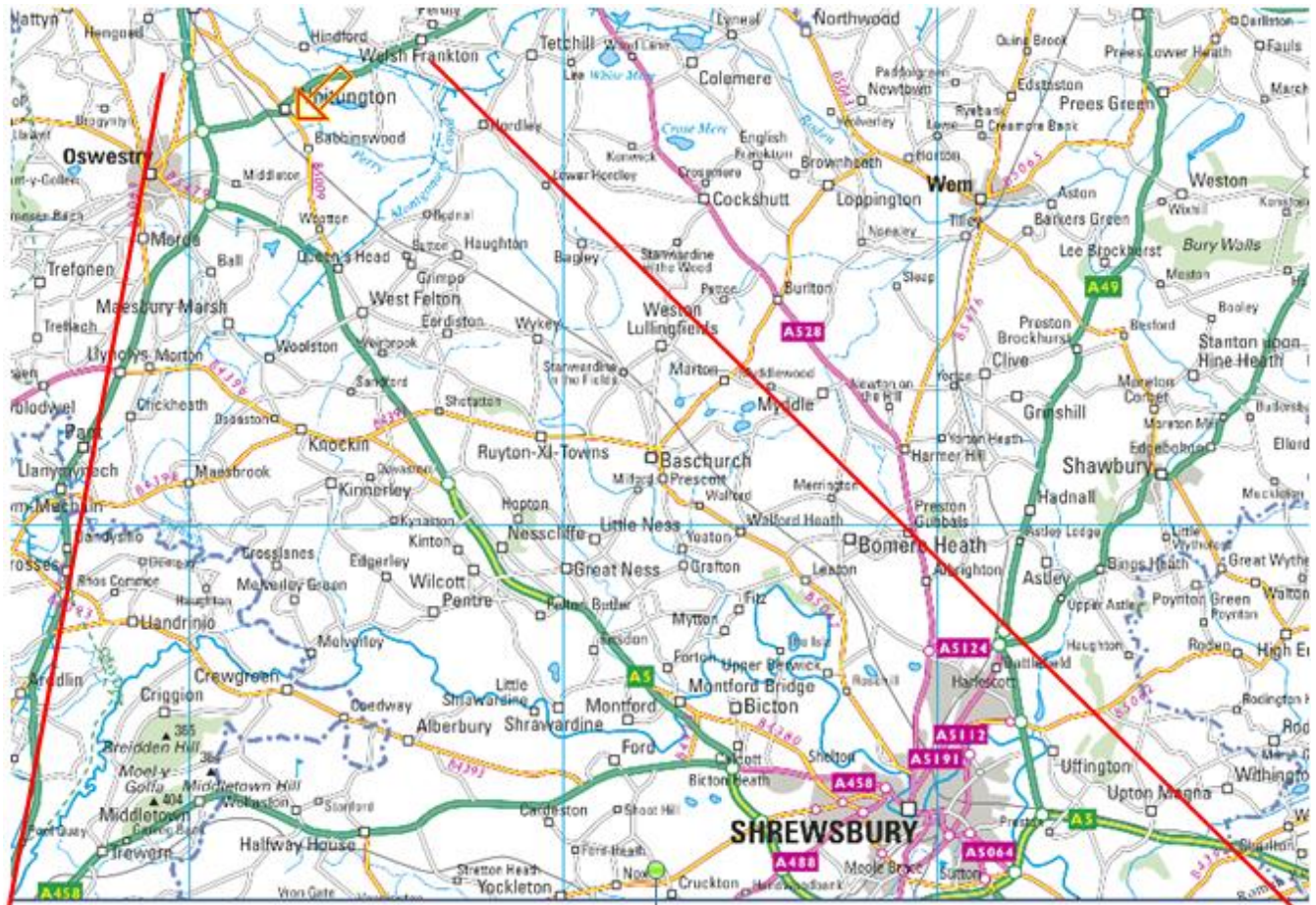


Figure 4
Proposed development at south side of Station Road, Whittington



Figure 3
Proposed development at Whittington, showing landscaping detail



1.3 Archaeological and historical background

The proposed development site is located partially within, and immediately south of the historic core of Whittington and the associated Conservation Area. A Heritage Assessment, together with a geophysical survey report, were submitted in support of the planning application (Frost 2014); the Heritage Assessment supplied local maps going back to 1746 (Figure 4), all of which showed the land on the proposed development site as open or agricultural. The tithe map of 1839 provides further detail, indicating that the fields in the development area were used for pasture and meadow.

Figure 4
Rocque's County map of 1746. From Frost 2014



2.0 Archaeological trial trenching

2.1 Aims and objectives

2.1.1 Aims

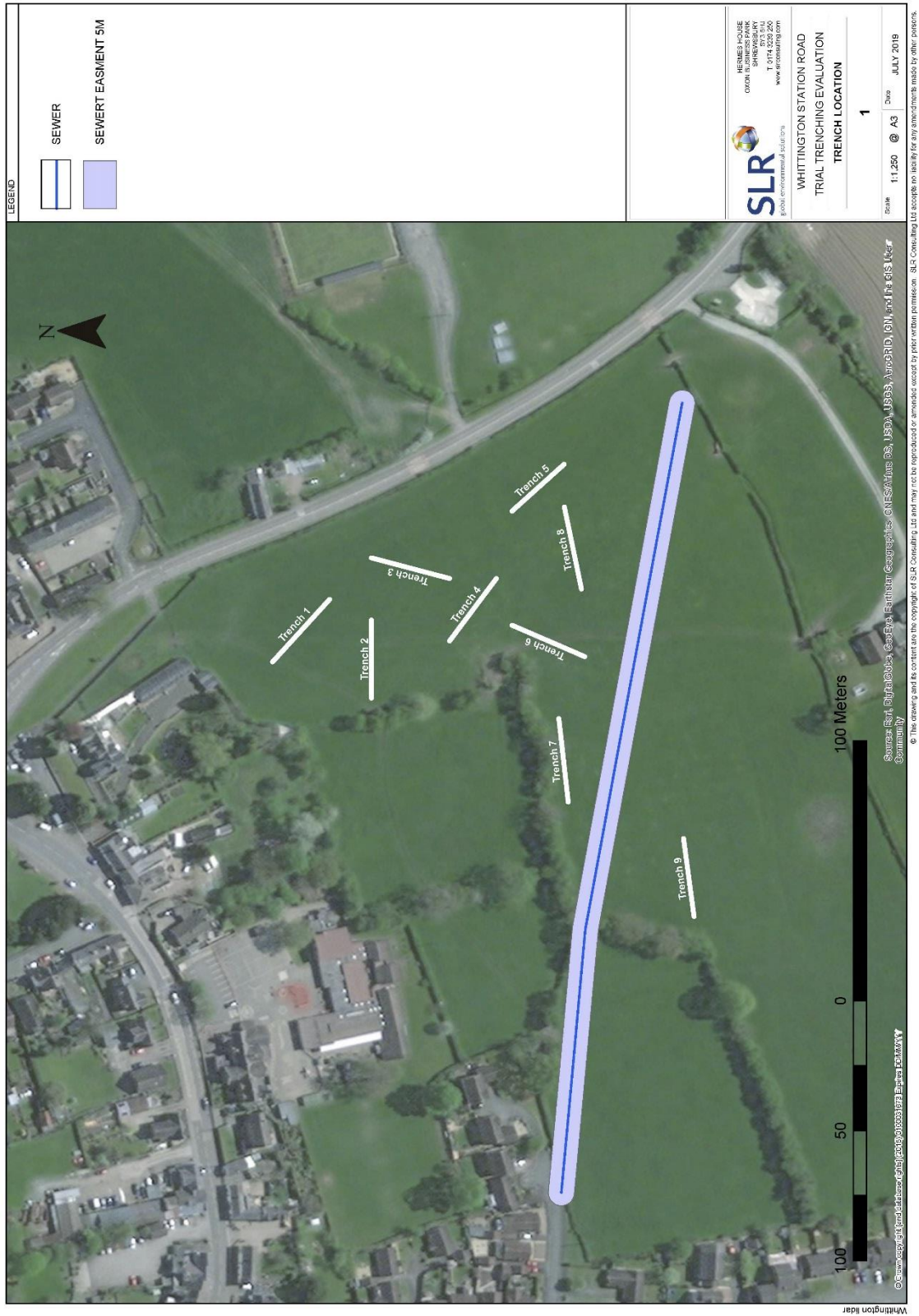
- to investigate and record the extent of archaeological remains within the development envelope
- to assess the evidence and design a mitigation strategy proportional to the heritage significance of the remains

2.1.2 Objectives

A trial trench approach (Figure 5) was adopted, with the following objectives:

- to investigate sub-surface deposits;
- to establish the general deposit sequence on the site;
- to establish the extent, nature and date of any man-made archaeological features or remains which may be present on the site;
- to undertake post-excavation analysis of the records, artefacts and samples recovered during the work to produce a report for submission to the local planning authority; and
- to deposit an archive of site records, reports and artefacts with an appropriate body

Figure 5
 Site plan showing location of trenches against proposed development



3.0 Detailed methodology

3.1 Trial Trenching and archaeological investigation

Nine c.30m long trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket to carefully remove the topsoil to the top of archaeological remains or undisturbed natural deposits. This work was carried out under the direction of experienced archaeologists.

Where man-made features were identified the trench was manually cleaned at that level to expose them. These were then recorded and excavated in order to achieve the project aims.

The site code was WHIBR19 (Whittington, Babbinswood Road, 2019) and an OASIS record will be compiled in due course.

3.1.1 Fieldwork recording

After removal of the topsoil and subsoil with a mechanical excavator, the trench surface was inspected and manually cleaned to identify potential archaeological remains cut into the natural geology. Cut features were recorded in plan and a section cut across each one. Archaeological deposits were recorded using a pro-forma recording system, and fully cross-referenced.

The photographic record comprised high-resolution digital images with a supporting index. The drawn record comprised plans of the site at a suitable scale, with 1:20 for detail of features, and profiles and sections as appropriate. The location of remains were recorded using hand-measured offsets or a hand-held GPS to enable an overall site plan of remains at the site to be produced.

On completion of the evaluation Shropshire Council's Archaeological Advisor confirmed that this fieldwork stage has been satisfactorily accomplished.

4.0 Results

4.1 General site description

Trial trenching was undertaken on 24 and 25 July 2019 in clear, sunny conditions. A general view of the site is provided in Figure 6, facing north towards the village.

Nine trenches were excavated with lengths of approximately 30m. All trenches were 1.80m wide. They were placed at random, in order to provide coverage of the pasture field. The random alignment was decided upon because there were no crop marks to investigate, and the lidar data proved inconclusive.

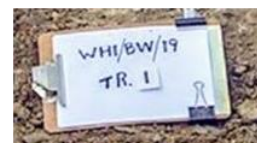
Figure 6
General view of Northern part of the site, showing Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 4.



4.2 Trench 1

Trench 1 was 31m long and was oriented north-west – south-east (Figure 7). A sondage was excavated by machine to a depth of 0.90m, in order to ascertain the appropriate depth, after which the trench was excavated to a depth of 0.70m. The topsoil was 380mm deep above a subsoil made up of rounded, poorly sorted gravel and stones in a brown sandy silt matrix. This overlay a gleyed orange and blue-grey clay with frequent rounded, very poorly sorted stones; this was interpreted as glacial till.

Figure 7
Trench 1, showing sondages



A strip of sand in the base of the trench was investigated as a possible archaeological ditch, but the sand was interbedded with the surrounding gravel, and a test pit demonstrated that the feature was not archaeological. The investigation sondage was recorded as the representative section of the trench. At this point there were four distinct fluvioglacial deposits: 101 (the subsoil) was a dark grey silty clay with 50% compact pea gravel with occasional larger stones. Below this, 102 was a compact mid-brownish yellow sandy gravel. 103 was below 102; this was a lens of very loose, well-sorted dark brown, stone-free sand. The sand overlay 104, a compact stony greysand. There were no archaeological features and no finds.

4.3 Trench 2

Trench 2 was 29m long and 0.35m to 0.50m in depth, and was oriented approximately east – west. The natural drift geology in the western end of the trench was a compact, very stony gleyed clay with large rounded stones; in the eastern end the geology changed to a yellowish brown silt (10YR 5/4). The topsoil was 0.25m

deep and was a very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2), very light textured and friable clayey silt. The subsoil was about 0.20m thick, and was a brownish grey stony clay. There were no archaeological features and no finds.

Figure 8
Trench 2 section



4.4 Trench 3

Trench 3 was 30m long and was oriented approximately NNE – SSW. The topsoil was c. 0.25m deep and overlay a brownish grey stony clay subsoil about 0.22m in depth. The base of the trench at the NNE end was a yellowish brown silt (10YR 5/6) with iron precipitation and slight gleying. In the SSW end of the trench the natural drift was a dense, compact boulder clay with large stones and cobbles. One isolated post hole was identified within the trench; the cut [1000] was c.0.3m diameter, 0.10m in depth with shallow sloping sides and an irregular concave base. The fill [1001] was a dark greyish brown clayey silt (10YR 4/2) with occasional pea grits, charcoal flecks and stones up to 90mm. Two artefacts were found in the Trench 3 topsoil: the rim of a large storage vessel and a sherd of table or serving ware. These finds probably date to between the 17th and 19th century.

Figure 9
Post hole in Trench 3



4.5 Trench 4

Trench 4 was 31m long and was oriented north-west -- south-east. The topsoil was 0.20 to 0.32m thick, and overlay a 0.30m deep subsoil consisting of compact greyish yellow gravel in a clay-silt matrix. Below this was the natural drift, which was composed of very stony grey mottled sandy clay-silt; a 0.90m exploratory sondage was excavated by machine into this very dark coloured drift. The remainder of the trench was excavated down onto very stony till at depths of 0.40-0.60m.

Clusters of manganese nodules indicate decayed tree roots, but there were no archaeological features and no finds.

4.6 Trench 5

Trench 5 was 26.50m long and was oriented north-west--south-east. It was 0.50-0.70m deep, with natural layers comprising c. 0.25m of topsoil over gritty yellow silt subsoil with 20-50% small stones (20-50mm). The subsoil overlay a very stony brown till comprising a stiff silty sandy clay, which weathered to a more yellowish colour over the course of a few days. There were no archaeological features and no finds.

4.7 Trench 6

Trench 6 was oriented north-south, and was 30m long and 0.45-0.60m deep. A 0.65m sondage was excavated in the northern end. The topsoil was about 0.20m deep, and overlay a blueish-gray clay with occasional stones; the drift geology below was a compact blue-grey and orange till with occasional stones on the southern end; the drift on the northern end was a very stony, compact clay till. There were areas of decayed tree roots along the trench, made up of friable brown silt with frequent iron nodules and precipitation of iron into casts of the decayed roots. There was also an area of grey clay (10YR 4/1) along the centre of the trench. This clay is interpreted as water-lain, and constitutes a natural feature relating to slow-moving or standing water. One artefact was recovered from the topsoil: the rim of a large, black-glazed storage vessel, dating to the 18th to 19th century.

4.8 Trench 7

Trench 7 was oriented east-west, and was 32m long. It was machine excavated to a depth of 0.30-0.60m onto silt and stony silty sand. The topsoil was 0.28m and overlay a subsoil which was 0.10 to 0.20m in depth. There was one ditch in the trench, oriented roughly north-south. The ditch was 0.26m in depth and 1.65m wide, with a gradual break of slope to the west and a steeper break of slope on the eastern edge (Figure 10). The base was flat. The fill [703] was a compact yellow-brown clayey silt with moderate poorly sorted stones.

Artefacts recovered from the excavated slot include a sherd of 17th to 18th century glass, a sherd of 19th-20th century glass, a small, glazed white sherd of fine pottery and several pieces of ceramic building material.

Figure 10
Excavated section of Ditch [702]



4.9 Trench 8

Trench 8 was oriented east-west and was 30m long; it ranged in depth from 0.35m at the west end to 0.75m in the central area and 0.45m on the eastern end. The trench is on higher ground to the east. No archaeological features were uncovered, however an area of clay and peat occur in the lower ground towards the centre of the trench (Figure 11). This was made up of contexts [802, 803 and 805]. [802] was a bluish grey clay with occasional large stones. [803] was a dark grey-brown silty clay, and [805] was a dark grey stony clay.

A fragment of animal bone was recovered from the bluish grey clay layer [802], and a sherd of 18th-19th century pottery was found in the topsoil. The pottery was a glazed sherd from a serving bowl or large plate.

Figure 11: Remains of a palaeochannel or pond in Trench 8.



4.10 Trench9

Trench 9 was oriented east-west and was 28m long. It was 0.45m-0.55m deep and was excavated down to a very compact, stony till, more silty on the eastern end of the trench. The till had blue-grey and orange mottling, indicating gleying. The topsoil was 0.28m deep, with a gradual transition onto the light yellowish brown stony clay subsoil. There were no archaeological features or finds.

5.0 Discussion and Conclusions

The cut features that were identified during trial trenching consisted of an isolated post hole in Trench 3 (which produced no finds) and a ditch in Trench 7, which contained 17th to 20th century finds. This ditch probably relates to the possible early routeway marked on the map in Figure 12. This lane is the projected course of Castle Street, which may at one stage have continued to the south of its present extent, forming a southern approach to the village.

Trench 8 is located about 120m to the NNE of a watercourse (the Common Brook), and flood risk maps show what appears to be a former watercourse which is still subject to periodic flooding (Figure 12). Trenches 6 and 8 had features indicating a former watercourse or ponds; these alluvial features could represent either a palaeochannel or a pond formed in an old oxbow.

Figure 12: Trenches in relation to flood risk map and 'early routeway'

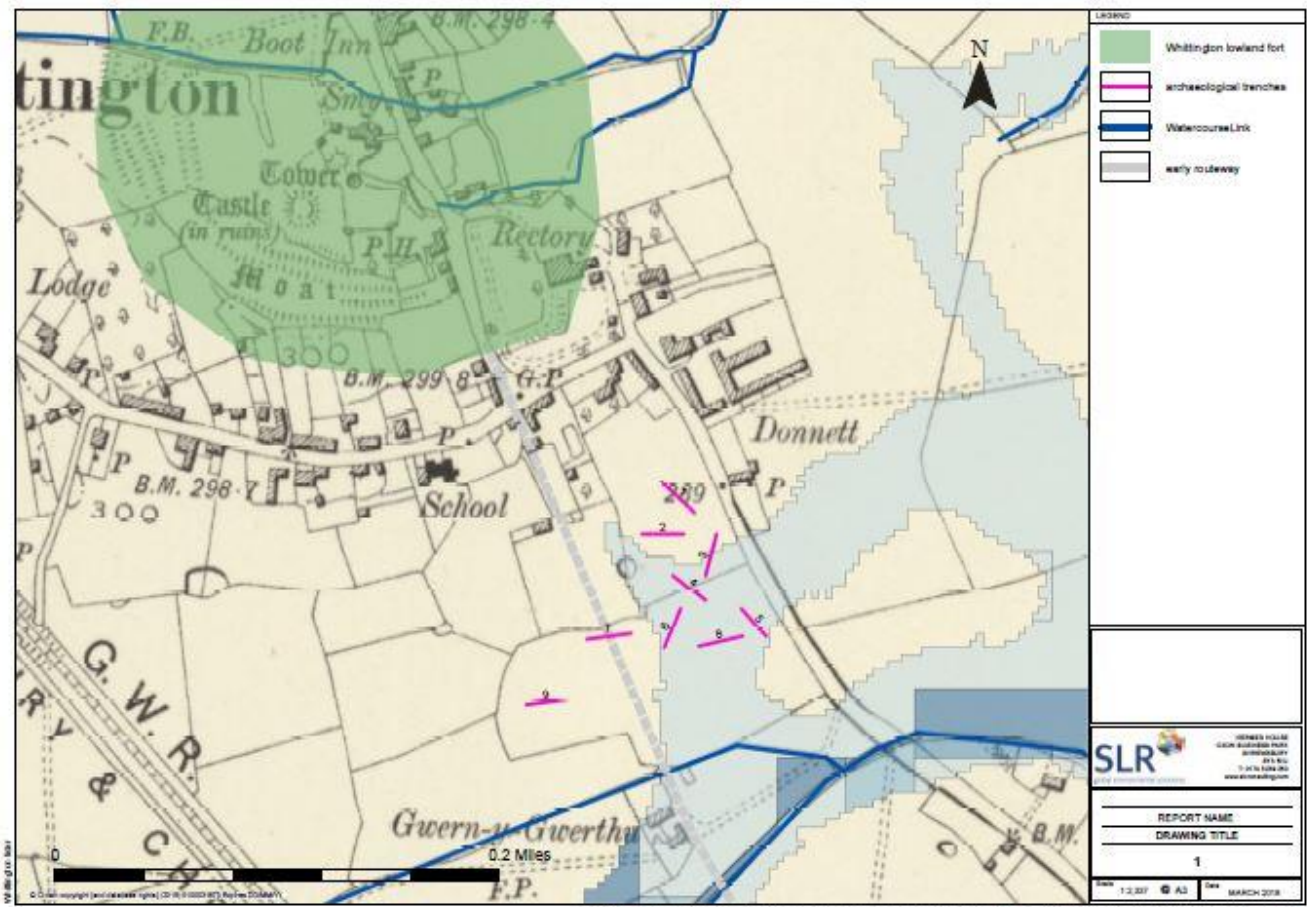
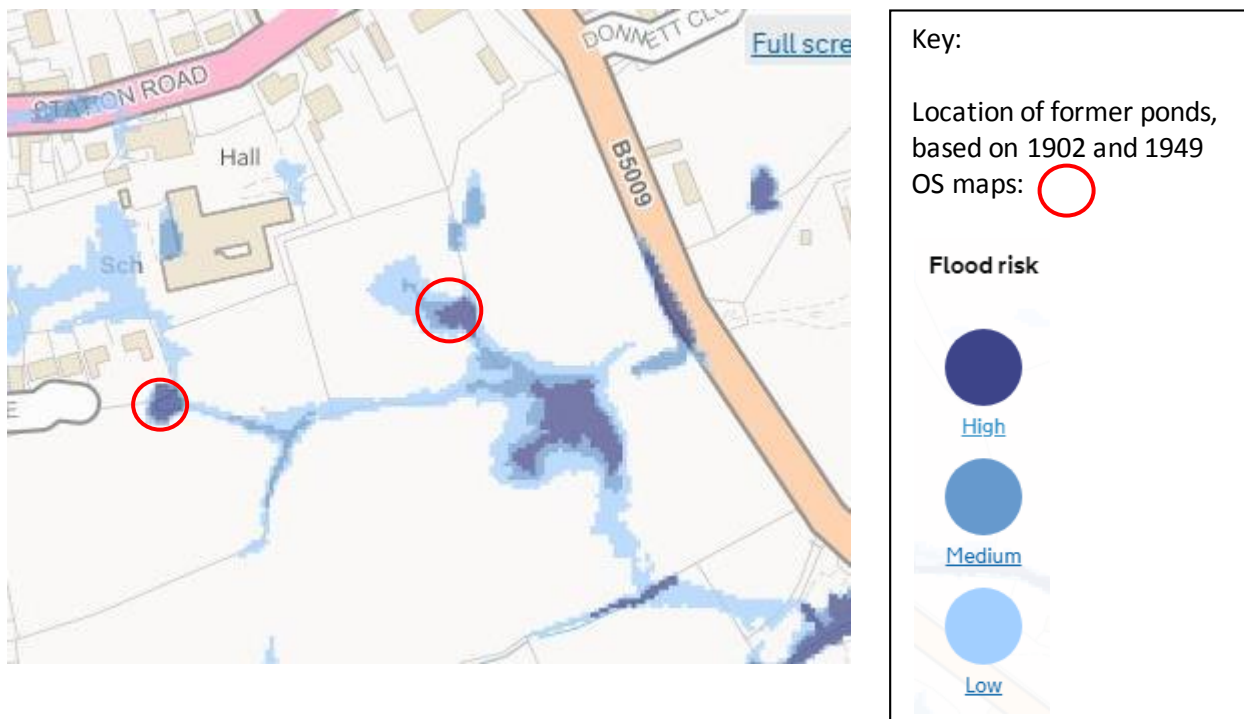


Figure 13 provides another insight into the hydrology of the site. This map shows the flood risk from surface water, and it is interesting that the ponds shown on the 1902 and 1949 maps are still acting as catchments during heavy rainfall. This map also shows that water periodically accumulates in the area of Trenches 6 and 8.

The fluctuating water table is also evident in the gleying of the glacial drift and subsoil noted in the site trenches.

All of the artefacts were post-medieval in date.

Figure 13
The Environment Agency's 'Surface water flood risk' map



6.0 References

- Cranfield University Soilscales maps: <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscales> (accessed 30/08/2019)
- Frost, P. 2014. Land Southeast of Whittington Primary School, Station Road, Whittington, Shropshire SJ 32829 30777. Castlering Archaeology Report no. 472.
- Georisk 2019. GROUND INVESTIGATION LAND TO WEST OF B5009 WHITTINGTON, SHROPSHIRE Report No: 18246/1 Date: January 2019.
- Environment Agency flood maps available at <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/> (accessed 01/08/2019)
- SLR Consulting 2019. *Station Road, Whittington, Shropshire Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation*. SLR Ref: 406.03317.00008.

Appendix 1

Recorded Features and Fills

Context No	Type	Fill of	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Interpretation
Topsoil descriptions							
100	Layer	N/A	Trench	Trench	0.20-0.32m	Mid-brown silt with frequent gravel	Topsoil Trench 1
200	Layer	N/A	Trench	Trench	0.35m	10YR 3/2 v. dark greyish brown. Very light and friable clayey silt, occ. gravel	Topsoil Trench 2
300	Layer	N/A	Trench	Trench	0.25m	As above	Topsoil Trench 3
400	Layer	N/A	Trench	Trench	0.25-0.32	As above	Topsoil Trench 4
500	Layer	N/A	Trench	Trench	0.30	Mid-brown compact topsoil, occ. gravel	Topsoil Trench 5
600	Layer	N/A	Trench	Trench	0.20	Compact clayey topsoil, occ. manganese nodules, freq. roots	Topsoil Trench 6
700	Layer	N/A	Trench	Trench	0.28 to 0.42	Light brown-grey clayey silt, occ pebbles, freq. roots	Topsoil Trench 7
800	Layer	N/A	Trench	Trench	0.10	Grey-brown friable clay silt	Topsoil Trench 8
900	Layer	N/A	Trench	Trench	0.28	Mid-brown friable silt loam	Topsoil Trench 9
Feature descriptions							
702	Cut	N/A	1.80+	1.65	0.26	Linear, gradually sloping sides, flat base	Ditch cut
703	Deposit	702	1.80+	1.65	0.26	Compact yellow-brown clayey silt with moderate poorly sorted stones	Ditch fill
802	Deposit	N/A	unclear	1.80+	Not fully exc.	bluish grey clay with occasional large stones	Deposit in palaeochannel or pond
803	Deposit	N/A	Unclear	1.80+	Not fully exc.	dark grey-brown silty clay	Water lain deposit in palaeochannel or pond
805	Deposit	N/A	unclear	1.80+	Not fully exc.	dark grey stony clay	Deposit in palaeochannel or pond
1000	Cut	N/A	0.38	0.37	0.10	Shallow cut, concave base	Cut of isolated post hole in Trench 3
1001	Fill	1001	0.38	0.37	0.10	dark greyish brown clayey silt (10YR 4/2) with occasional pea grits, charcoal flecks and stones up to 90mm	Fill of isolated post hole, Trench 3

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