

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

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**ASTON BOTTERELL, SHROPSHIRE**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief, 1991-2**

by A.E. Jones

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## ASTON BOTTERELL, SHROPSHIRE

### An Archaeological Watching Brief, 1991-2

#### 1.0: INTRODUCTION

In December 1991 Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned by Severn-Trent Water PLC to undertake an watching brief during the excavation of a length of 120m of service trench at Aston Botterell, Shropshire (Figure 1A). The work was carried out in two stages during December 1991 and February 1992. The purpose of the watching brief was to record any archaeological features, associated with the adjoining medieval moated site (Shropshire SMR No. 1200), exposed during excavation of the water-main trench.

The moated site is located on pasture land which slopes gently southwards towards a stream (Figure 1B). The moat, or ditch, encloses a platform measuring 48m by 38m, terraced into the natural slope. The moat is ovoid in plan, forming a hollow measuring between 5-10m in width and up to 1m in depth. The platform area was further defined by an incomplete inner bank measuring up to 3m in height from the base of the moat. External earthwork banks and ditches are also visible outside the moat, and the course of a channel leading between the moat and the Cressel Brook is also apparent. No traces of buildings are visible within the moat platform. Some such sites were small defended farmsteads, while others have been interpreted as stock enclosures, where no buildings were found by excavation.

The water-main trench was routed along the centre of the Aston Botterell-Loughton road in the vicinity of the moat, to minimise the possible disturbance to any buried archaeological deposits along the southern edge of the road and possibly associated with the moated site. However, it was necessary to excavate a short stretch of the service-trench into the southern verge of the road to connect with an existing water-main.

The trench was excavated using a mechanical excavator with a 0.5m wide bucket. One side of the trench was cleaned by hand in an attempt to define

any archaeological features or deposits intercepted by the trench. Recording was by means of written pro-forma record cards, photographs, and sample section drawings.

## 2.0: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

The trench was dug to a depth of c. 1m below the surface of the modern road, exposing the upper 0.3m of the undisturbed subsoil throughout. The subsoil (1003) was a coarse gravelly clay sand, which became less stony to the north. The subsoil was capped by a compact layer of orange-brown clay-silt (1002) which measured up to 0.1m in depth. The latter was overlain by a layer of crushed stone fragments set in clay-sand (1001) forming a track or foundation make-up for the tarmac road above (1000).

The natural subsoil was also exposed by excavation within the southern road verge. Here the subsoil (1007) was located at c. 0.7m below the modern surface. A shallow layer of red-brown clay-silt (1006) was recorded above the subsoil. Layer 1006 was sealed by grey-brown topsoil (1005) under the modern hedge bank.

No archaeological features were observed during monitoring, and no artifacts were recovered.

## 3.0: DISCUSSION

The stony gravel seen to the south of the moated site may have been deposited by a glacial stream channel, extending to the north of the Cressel Brook. The layer of clay-silt (1002,1006) overlying the subsoil may represent a buried ground surface, preserved beneath the road, but no dating evidence was forthcoming from this layer. Equally, no dating evidence was recovered from the stone foundation or rough track (1001), which may represent the earliest definition of the modern Aston Lane, leading to Loughton.

The modern road surface was laid roughly level with the pasture to the northwest of the road; to the southeast, ground level had been raised by up to 0.5m as a result of the build-up of soils associated with the moated site. The negative evidence from this monitoring exercise suggests that the northwestern limit of the moated site and its associated features lay to the southwest of the modern road. This new information has assisted in defining the limits of the archaeologically sensitive area surrounding the moated site, and will prove useful in the future management of the monument.

#### **4.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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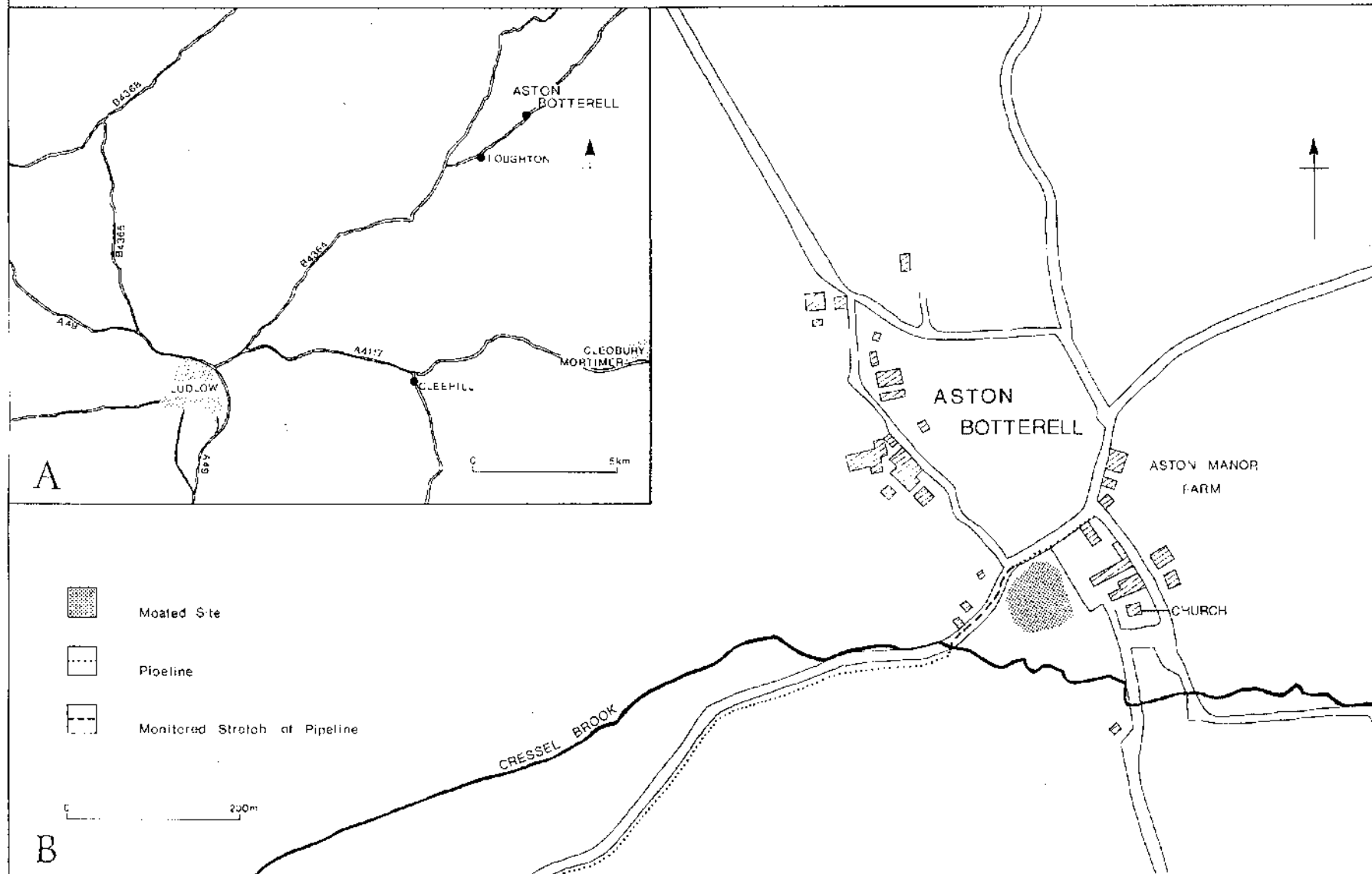


Figure 1