

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

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Oldbury Camp, Near Nuneaton,
Warwickshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief
1993

by A.E. Jones

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1.0: INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of archaeological monitoring during the construction of a water-feed pipeline to Oldbury reservoir, located within Oldbury hillfort (Warwickshire S.A.M. No. 37; Warwickshire SMR No. 255). This watching-brief follows an archaeological evaluation commissioned by Severn Trent Water Ltd, which involved the excavation of a total of eight trenches positioned approximately along, or across the proposed line of the pipeline. The evaluation report (Ferris and Sterenberg 1992) described the archaeological background, which need not be repeated here. The report recommended that the pipeline construction groundworks be archaeologically monitored. Sections of the pipeline trench, excavated by a Hymac excavator to a maximum depth of 6m and a width of 3m were monitored archaeologically, in an attempt to define any out features visible in the trench sides and associated with the hillfort. Recording was by means of printed pro-forma sheets, scale drawings and photographs, which form part of the overall project archive.

2.0: RESULTS

2.1: The hillfort interior

Within the hillfort interior, the pipeline trench was cut to a depth of 3m into bedrock, which was sealed by a layer of shattered bedrock, 1m deep.

Above, between 1-2m of modern make-up deposits were observed. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered, nor were any artifacts collected.

2.2: The hillfort defences

A length of the pipeline trench, aligned west-east, was cut perpendicular to the hillfort defences in the southeastern angle of the fort. The encircling earthwork bank on the northwestern side appeared to terminate immediately to the north of the pipeline. The southeast side of the defences has been completely quarried away.

Examination of the pipeline trench sides revealed a ditch (F1), cut into bedrock, aligned approximately northwest-southeast, and measuring a maximum of 4m in width; its base was obscured by trench-shuttering. The upper ditch fills comprised a buff-brown clay-silt (1006). A second possible ditch (F2), located to the northwest of F1 was filled with similar material. The infilled ditches were sealed by a layer of loose stone fragments (1003), recorded immediately below the modern topsoil (1000). A modern disturbance (F3) was cut into the topsoil. No artifacts were recovered.

3.0: DISCUSSION

No archaeological discoveries were made in the hillfort interior, where debris and soil deposited after construction of the reservoir had caused a

deep build-up above the natural ground surface. No archaeological features could be defined here. The broader ditch located during the watching brief is on-line with the defensive circuit of the hillfort in this sector. Other segments of the external ditch were recorded in advance of reservoir construction (Dauncey 1949). The inner ?ditch may be paralleled by internal linear scoops found during the 1949 investigations, and interpreted by the excavator as quarries. The rubble bank recorded around the northwestern, and the majority of the northeastern, side, may have eroded down the steep natural slope in the vicinity of the pipeline. The collapse from this bank may have created the layer of stone rubble which sealed the infilled ditches.

While no archaeological data were recovered during either the evaluation or the watching brief, nevertheless the observation and recording of overburden and other deposit depths should allow any future development plans in the same areas to be quickly assessed.

4.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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5.0: REFERENCES

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