

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

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**An Archaeological Excavation and  
Watching Brief at  
Hampton Lucy, Warwickshire, 1993**

by  
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# An Archaeological Excavation and Watching Brief

At Hampton Lucy, Warwickshire, 1993

by

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## 1.0 Introduction

This report outlines the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out during the laying of a new water pipeline by Haiste Automation Limited, on behalf of Severn Trent Water Limited, from the Thelsford Pumping Station to the Stratford Road, Hampton Lucy, Warwickshire (Fig. 1). The recommendation for a programme of archaeological work was made by Warwickshire Museum and a detailed proposal was prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit according to a brief drawn up by the museum.

The pipeline route runs between NGR SP271580 and SP242574 in the parishes of Charlecote, Wasperton and Hampton Lucy, and is approximately 3.4km long. The groundworks began on 28th April. Observations and salvage recording were undertaken by staff of Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit between April 28th and June 14th.

## 2.0 Objective

The principal objective stated in the brief was to obtain an adequate record of any archaeological deposits or finds disturbed or exposed by work associated with the development.

## 3.0 Methodology

For the purposes of the archaeological fieldwork the pipeline route was divided into 10 sections. Figure 1 illustrates this route in relation to the 1926 edition of the 6" Ordnance Survey map (which includes former field boundaries). All ground disturbance associated with the laying of the pipeline was closely observed by archaeological staff in order to identify any deposits of archaeological importance.

The groundworks were undertaken by the contractors in two stages. Stage 1 involved the removal by earthmoving machinery of the topsoil or ploughsoil horizon for eventual reinstatement. For the majority of the length of the pipeline this topsoil was removed from a corridor up to 10m wide, narrowing to 3m wide in Sections 5 and 6 on either bank of the river. An opportunity was provided at this stage for the careful examination of the exposed underlying subsoil, gravels and alluvial clays for any intrusive archaeological features. Stage 2 involved the cutting of the pipe trench itself, which was generally 0.5m wide and up to 1.5m deep. The sections of the pipe trench were examined for any archaeological features which may have been obscured in plan following the removal of the topsoil. Even where no archaeological features were identified a record was made of the basic stratigraphy in each section.

Particular attention was paid to a 350m length of the pipeline (Section 9) which passed through part of a cropmark complex (WA 956) recorded on aerial photographs (Webster and Hobley 1965). This may have formed part of a settlement of unknown date. In this area a geophysical survey was initially undertaken by Stratascan prior to the groundworks (Stratascan 1993). The topsoil (1000) was subsequently removed by machine under careful archaeological supervision. Seven selected areas of the underlying subsoil (1001) were cleaned manually in order to define any features of archaeological interest (five of these areas are indicated on the figure 2 which shows the eastern portion Section 9). Six of these areas measured 10m x 5m and one measured 20 x 5m. Their location was designed to coincide with potential archaeological features suggested by the

survey. A trial trench, 40m long and 0.5m wide and coinciding with the line of the subsequent pipe trench, was then excavated through the subsoil (1001) at the eastern end of Section 9 in the area of the cropmark (Fig. 2). Finally, after the pipe trench was excavated, its sections were carefully examined and any potential archaeological features were recorded.

#### 4.0 Results

##### **Section 1 - Alongside the B4088**

**Stratigraphy** - Natural orange brown sands and gravels overlain by up to 0.5m of topsoil

**Comments** - The pipeline was located along the verge of the road and passed within 120m of several former archaeological sites (now destroyed by quarrying) in the field immediately to the west (WA 1146, WA 1148 and WA 5174). These included the site of a Neolithic mortuary enclosure excavated in the late 1960s (Ford 1969 and 1971). However, despite a careful examination of the sections of the pipe trench no archaeological features could be identified.

##### **Section 2 - Alongside trackway to east of disused farm building**

**Stratigraphy** - Natural sands and gravels overlain by 0.3m of light brown sandy subsoil and up to 0.5m of topsoil

**Comment** - The trench was located on the south side of the trackway and passed within 20m of the southeast corner of a cropmark enclosure (WA 1147) dated by excavation to the Romano-British period (Grey 1967). However, despite careful observations, no features of archaeological interest were identified. The only artefacts recovered were several fragments of post-medieval glazed pottery and fragments of oyster shell.

##### **Section 3 - Alongside trackway to west of disused farm building**

**Stratigraphy** - As Section 2

**Comment** - The level of vegetation in a nearby bank suggests that this area has suffered from severe truncation perhaps associated with the former quarrying activity. This would make the survival of any archaeological features highly

unlikely and none were identified.

##### **Section 4 - East bank of the Thelsford Brook**

**Stratigraphy** - Not fully recorded

A detailed record was made difficult by the waterlogged ground conditions although no archaeological features could be identified.

##### **Section 5 - East bank of River Avon**

**Stratigraphy** - Light grey to brown alluvial clay overlain by up to 0.4m of topsoil.

**Comment** - Area of surviving medieval ridge and furrow orientated at right angles to line of pipe trench.

##### **Section 6 - West bank of River Avon**

**Stratigraphy** - As Section 5

**Comment** - No archaeological features identified. A sample of the lower alluvial clay deposit was collected. A brief description is given in the Appendix.

##### **Section 7 - Steep embankment between gravel terrace and floodplain**

**Stratigraphy** - Terrace gravels and sands merge into alluvial clay at bottom of slope. Overlain by up to 0.3m of topsoil.

**Comment** - No archaeological features identified

##### **Section 8 - Field to the east of Snitterfield Street, Hampton Lucy**

**Stratigraphy** - Natural sands and gravels overlain by up to 0.4m of topsoil.

**Comment** - No archaeological features identified.

##### **Section 9 - Field between Snitterfield Street and Stratford Road, Hampton Lucy**

**Stratigraphy** - The natural subsoil comprised coarse sands and gravels (1002) at the eastern and western ends of the corridor. Within the central area the gravels were overlain by a red brown silty clay. These natural horizons were encountered at a depth of 0.5m within the cut of the pipe trench.

**Description** - Within the trial trench, excavated at the eastern end of the corridor, the gravel was cut by two linear ditches (Fig. 3, F4 and F7) and a circular pit (F3). The two ditches appeared to be

converging to a point approximately 4m to the southeast of the trial trench. The westernmost of the two ditches (F4) had a U-shaped profile and was 1.5m wide and 0.5m deep. The easternmost ditch (F7) had a more V-shaped profile and was 1.4m wide and 0.6m deep. Both were filled by a sandy silt. Neither contained any finds. The pit (F3) was located between the two ditches and had vertical sides and a flat base. It was 1m in diameter and 0.9m deep. Its primary fill (1010) comprised rounded burnt cobbles set into a compact silt forming a lining to the base of the pit. This was overlain by a silty sand (1009) which contained several fragments of coarse pottery, probably of Iron Age date (Ann Woodward pers. comm.). A 20 litre sample of this fill, collected for environmental assessment, contained several charred seeds. The upper fills of the pit comprised a thin layer of burnt red clay and charcoal (1008) and a layer of silty sand (1007).

These archaeological features were sealed by 0.25m of reddish brown silty sand with occasional small pebbles (1001). This subsoil was cut by several linear features including a modern pipe trench and three shallow gullies up to 2m wide and 0.1m deep towards the eastern end of the corridor (Figs. 2 and 3, F1-2 and F5). The gullies were filled with reddish brown silty sand with flecks of charcoal. One contained several fragments of post-medieval tile. The only other feature of note was a large area of disturbance, up to 5m across, and filled with dark brown clayey silt with smears of charcoal (Fig. 2, F17). This feature was located in the central area of the pipe corridor just to the southeast of where it changes direction. Several other possible features with U-shaped profiles were recorded in the section of the pipe trench although it seems likely that they had a natural rather than an archaeological origin.

#### **Comment/discussion**

It seems highly probable that the two linear ditches (F4 and F7) cutting the gravel (1002) and sealed by the subsoil (1001), correspond with the easternmost of the plotted cropmarks. The slight difference in position (see Fig. 2) is probably the result of a slight error in the original plot of the cropmark. The most likely interpretation is a small settlement enclosure; the few pottery

fragments suggesting an Iron Age date. The presence of at least one well-preserved internal feature (F3) which contained evidence of charred grain suggests a high archaeological potential.

The overlying sub-soil (1001) may be the result of the accumulation of hill wash (colluvium) following the abandonment of the settlement. It is noticeable that the area of the field upslope of the former settlement has very little soil cover. The linear gullies (F1, F2 and F5) cutting this subsoil may be the truncated remains of medieval furrows.

The variation in the natural deposits may partially explain the results of the resistivity survey (Stratascan 1993, Fig. 6). The mixed sands and gravels (1002) correspond with those areas where there is a greater range of resistance readings (the eastern and western sections of the pipe corridor). The homogenous red clays in the central area of the corridor appear to correspond with the area where the resistance readings fall within a narrower range. It seems likely that many of the anomalies recorded by the resistivity survey at the western and eastern ends of the area (Stratascan 1993, Fig 7, R2 R4 and R8) are the result of variations in the make up of the natural gravel and sand rather than being caused by archaeological features. However, it is also possible that the two linear anomalies (R6 and R7) may have been caused by two of the suggested furrows (F1 and F2). The magnetic anomaly (M4) in the central area appears to correspond with the area of disturbance (F17) recorded in the section of the pipe trench. The early edition of the O.S. map (see Fig. 1) indicates that this was the location of a former field boundary.

#### **Section 10 - Alongside Stratford Road**

Stratigraphy - Not recorded in detail

Comment - Pipeline runs along verge of road and through garden allotments.

#### **5.0 Acknowledgements**

The fieldwork was carried out by Gwilym Hughes, Steve Litherland, Jon Sterenberg, Hal Roberts and Susan Buckam. The illustrations are the work of Nigel Dodds and Mark Breedon. The report was edited by Simon Buteux and produced by Ann Humphries.

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Helen McClagan (County Archaeologist, Warwickshire Museum) and to Rebecca Roseff for her comments on the alluvium deposit.

## 6.0 References

- |                               |      |  |
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## Appendix

### Soil report on lower alluvial clay deposit in Section 6

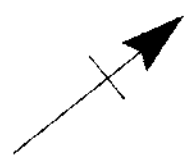
by R. Roseff

**Objective** - To examine character of alluvial clay deposits within the floodplain of the river in order to determine possible nature of deposition.

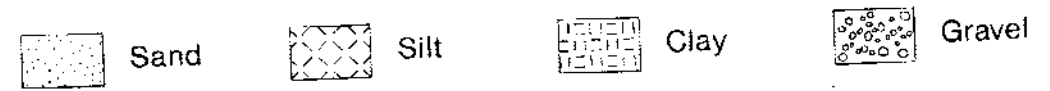
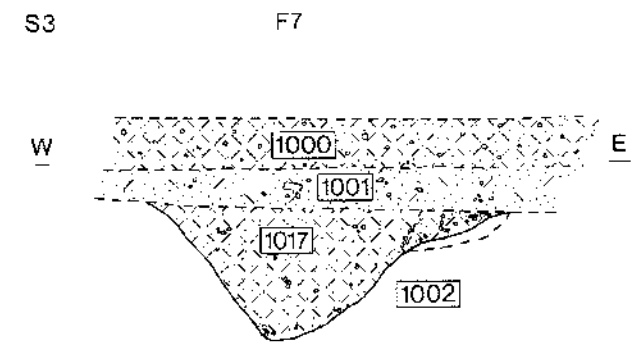
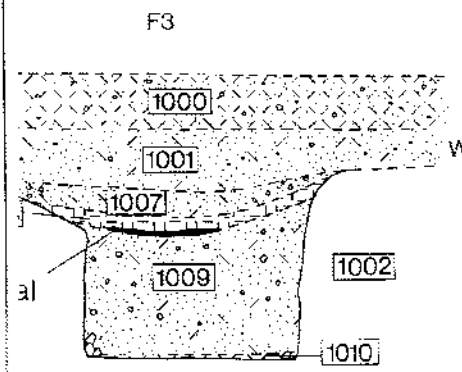
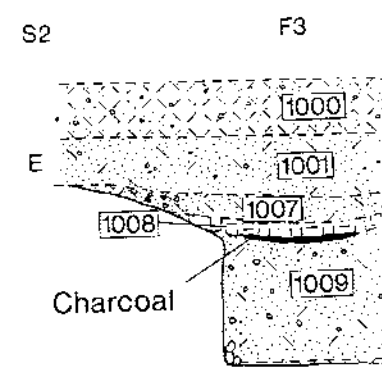
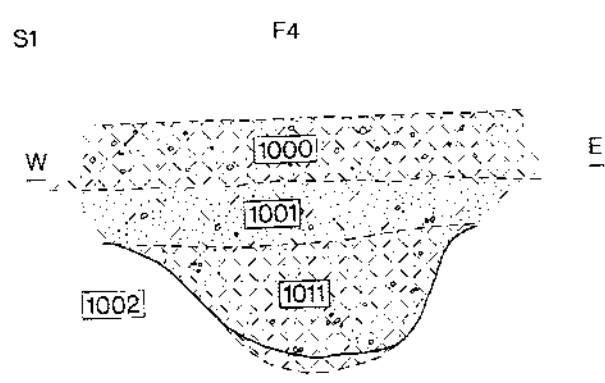
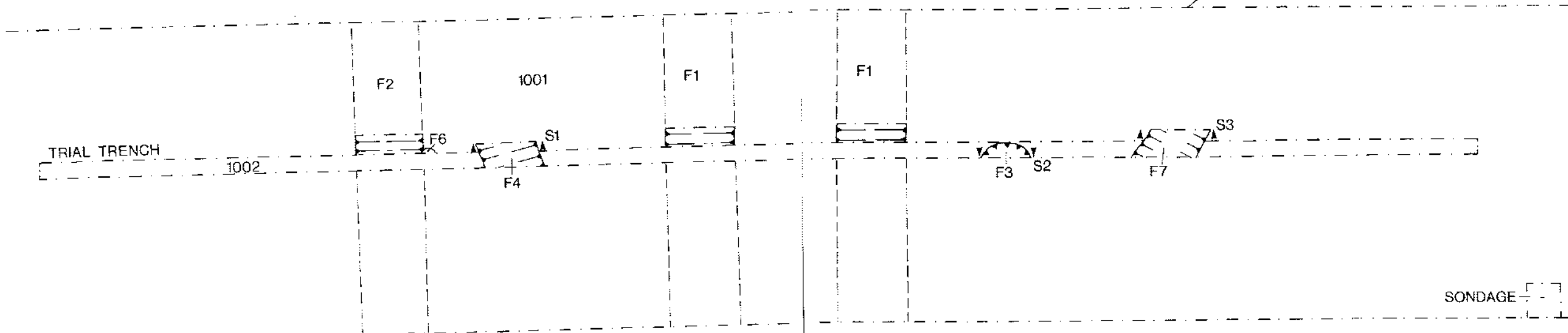
**Method** - A 20 litre sample of lower alluvial clay deposit was collected from the exposed section of the pipe trench in Section 6 on the west bank of the river at a depth of 1.5m.

**Description** - Grey brown (10YR 5/2), clay (at least 40%), no sand or stone. Manganese flecking 1%. Fe mottling 30%. A few flecks of organic matter. Strongly gleyed.

**Conclusion** - This alluvium would have been deposited by water of low energy, probably by overbank sedimentation. It has been, and is, very waterlogged with only partial aeration (non waterlogged conditions) in the intervening period between deposition and excavation.



Edge of Topsoil Strip



Gravel

