

*BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT*

**An Archaeological Watching Brief of the
Hagley to Roundhill
Severn Trent Water Pipeline Abandonment**

Staffordshire and Worcestershire

1999

B.U.F.A.U.



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by

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Figure 1 Pipeline Abandonment Location.

Figure 2 Location of Zones A and B.

(Encircled numbers refer to the gazetteer of historical and archaeological sites in Mould 1998).

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1.0 Summary

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit carried out an archaeological watching brief on behalf of Severn Trent Water Ltd., in July 1999, during topsoil-stripping of a pipeline abandonment between the Hagley and Roundhill Sewage works (NGR SO 870 839 to SO 897 799). Two zones requiring archaeological monitoring had been identified in a previous desk-based assessment. Zone A comprised the line of a Roman road and Zone B covered the remainder of the pipeline route. No evidence of the Roman road was identified in Zone A and no archaeological deposits were identified in Zone B.

2.0 Introduction

This report describes the results of a watching brief carried out in July 1999, during the excavation of a pumping main and its abandonment between the Hagley and Roundhill Sewage Works, in Worcestershire and Staffordshire respectively. Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned to carry out the watching brief on behalf of Severn Trent Water Ltd. This project followed-on from an earlier archaeological desk-based assessment (Mould 1998) which identified two zones of investigation:

Zone A - where the pipeline crossed the route of a Roman Road.

Zone B - the remainder of the pipeline route.

The assessment recommended that the topsoil-stripping in Zone A be archaeologically supervised and that a contingency be allowed for the excavation of any archaeological features identified (Mould 1998). A later brief also recommended that a 2m-wide section be excavated across the Roman road (Atkin 1998). In Zone B, it was recommended that a walkover survey of the topsoil-stripped abandonment be undertaken to identify any surviving archaeological features. A contingency was to be allowed for excavation (Mould 1998). These recommendations were endorsed by the County Archaeologists for Staffordshire and Worcestershire County Councils.

3.0 The Site (Figures 1 and 2: NGR SO 870 839 - SO 897 799)

The pipeline followed a southeasterly route from Roundhill Sewage Works in the north, to Hagley Sewage Works in the southeast. The total length was in excess of 5km. The pipeline originated from Roundhill (NGR SO 870 839) and proceeded southwards, transecting Whittington Sewage Farm, then continuing southwest to Whittington Hall Sewage Farm. From there, it continued south across two open fields, before assuming a southeasterly alignment past Bunker's Hill Wood, across six open fields towards Iverley. From here it ran south, parallel to Iverley Lane. The pipeline crossed the county border from Staffordshire into Worcestershire at a road junction immediately to the north of Common Farm.

Within Worcestershire, the pipeline ran parallel with a track leading to Brake Lane and transected three open fields. It skirted to the west of Palmers Hill, before continuing southeast, across five open fields and under a railway line. The pipeline terminated at a sewage works (NGR SO 897 799) located on the southwestern outskirts of West Hagley.

The geology of the area is Lower Keuper sandstone overlaid by Bridgnorth Association brown sand.

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background (Figure 2)

A full gazetteer of historical and archaeological sites in the vicinity of the pipeline route can be found in the earlier desk-based assessment (Mould 1998). Only the main sites are summarised here (numbers in brackets represent the gazetteer entry and are shown on Figure 2).

The earliest evidence of Prehistoric activity was the discovery of a Neolithic stone axe at Racecourse Farm (6), which may have been associated with a series of enclosures that are visible on aerial photographs. Bronze Age burial mounds were excavated in 1766 by Bishop Lyttleton in a field south of Stakenbridge Lane (13). Three cremations and one urn were recorded from these excavations, although they have subsequently been lost. A site visit in 1970 recorded the survival of two ploughed-down tumuli, which are visible on the aerial photographs. No other prehistoric sites are recorded in the vicinity of the pipeline.

The pipeline crosses the line of a Roman road (5), which led from Greensforge to Droitwich and which was later used as a medieval saltway. The line of the road is still used, in parts, as a bridleway, footpath and road. The Roman road is also visible on the aerial photographs as a metalled agger surface, with a pair of parallel ditches either side. An archaeological evaluation as part of the Kidderminster, Blakedown and Hagley Bypass and A449 link, in 1992, found no evidence of the road itself or associated archaeological features. This suggested that later use of the Roman road

had eroded away earlier deposits, creating the holloway that exists today. Further evidence of possible transient Roman activity in the area was a Roman coin hoard found to the north of Stakenbridge Lane.

In the Medieval period, the area was largely characterised by common land used for grazing. Brake Mill and its associated mill pond, referred to as Sweet Pool (10), ground corn from the 16th to the 20th century, with historical sources documenting the granting of permission to create the mill ponds to 1543 (Mould 1998). During the post-medieval period the common land became enclosed and used for arable and pastoral agriculture. This is the predominant land use along the pipeline route at present.

5.0 Objectives

The objectives of the archaeological watching brief were twofold:

1. To excavate and record any remains of the Roman road and any archaeological features associated with it in Zone A.
2. To identify any potential archaeological deposits in Zone B and to excavate and record such deposits.

6.0 Method

A 12-15m wide abandonment was stripped of topsoil along the majority of the pipeline route. This was carried out by contractors using a hymax excavator fitted with a toothless bucket. In places, particularly between Hagley Sewage works and the railway track, the pipeline was tunneled. The stripping of the topsoil in Zone A was monitored by qualified archaeologists from Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit. A walkover survey was carried out in Zone B, after the topsoil had been stripped, to identify surviving archaeological deposits. Any significant archaeological deposits were to be excavated by hand and recorded on pro-forma record cards supplemented by scale plans, section drawings and photographs, where appropriate. Where no archaeological deposits were identified the stratigraphy was recorded and photographed. These records comprise the site archive which, at the time of writing, is stored at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

7.0 The Results

7.1 Zone A

No archaeological deposits were identified in this zone. An area of pale-brown sand was recorded in the vicinity of the possible route of the Roman road and a section was

machined across this deposit. The sand was a maximum of 0.2m deep and appeared to represent a variation in the natural sand subsoil. Similar patches of light-brown sand were observed along the abandonment, beyond the projected line of the Roman road. There was no evidence of parallel double ditches and no artifacts were recovered.

Immediately adjacent to the bridleway and field boundary, the topsoil varied in depth between 0.4m and 1.5m. It sealed the Bridgnorth Association brown sand.

7.2 Zone B

No archaeological deposits were identified in this zone. A small assemblage of pottery sherds was recovered during the walkover survey. All of the sherds were post-medieval in date.

The 0.3-0.4m deep topsoil lay directly above the Bridgnorth Association brown sand.

8.0 Discussion

No prehistoric features were identified and no prehistoric artifacts were recovered.

No evidence of the Roman road or associated features was identified in Zone A. This suggests that either the pipeline did not cross the Roman road or, that no remains of the road survive in this particular zone. It is possible that the Roman road was later followed by a present-day bridleway and that its surface has been eroded away in Zone A. However, the depth of topsoil (0.4m-1.5m) should have protected the associated ditches from being erased.

The absence of other archaeological deposits in Zone B is a reflection of land use from the medieval period onwards. As common land, and later farmed fields, it was unlikely that archaeological deposits relating to a medieval, or earlier, settlement would be uncovered in the width of the pipeline abandonment. The tunneling of the pipeline in the area of Sweet Pool unfortunately meant that there was no possibility of identifying the dam associated with the medieval Brake Mill. The depth of tunneling will, however, have prevented any damage to this feature.

9.0 Acknowledgements

The watching brief and walkover survey was sponsored by Severn Trent Water Ltd. Thanks to Lloyd Christian, Resident Engineer, for his assistance, and to all the site contractors for their co-operation, in particular to Roger Wiggins from Droicon Engineering. Thanks also to Tom Paget for his invaluable information concerning the mills and Roman road. The project was monitored by Chris Welch, Staffordshire County Archaeological Officer and by Malcolm Atkin, Worcestershire County Archaeological Officer. The watching brief and walkover survey was undertaken by

Gary Coates and Rodney Cottrill, Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit. The project was managed by Lucie Dingwall and Catharine Mould for BUFAU. Illustrations were prepared by Nigel Dodds and the report was edited by Catharine Mould.

10.0 References

Atkin, M. 1998 *Brief for an archaeological watching brief along the route of the proposed sewage water pumping mains between Hagley STW and Roundhill STW, Hagley, near Stourbridge, Worcestershire.*

Mould, C.A. 1998 *Hagley Severn Trent Engineering Abandonment, Staffordshire and Worcestershire. An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment 1998.*
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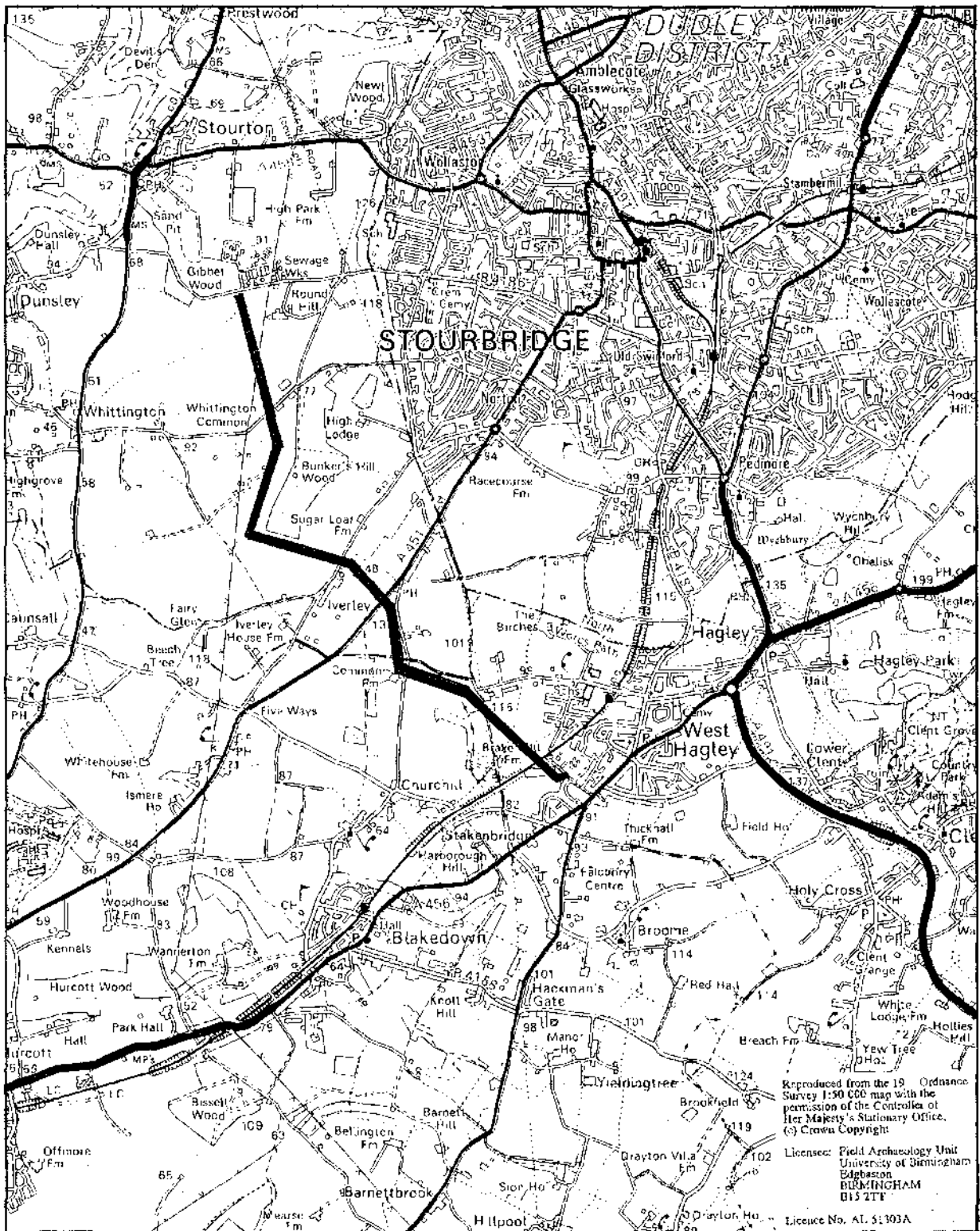


Figure 1

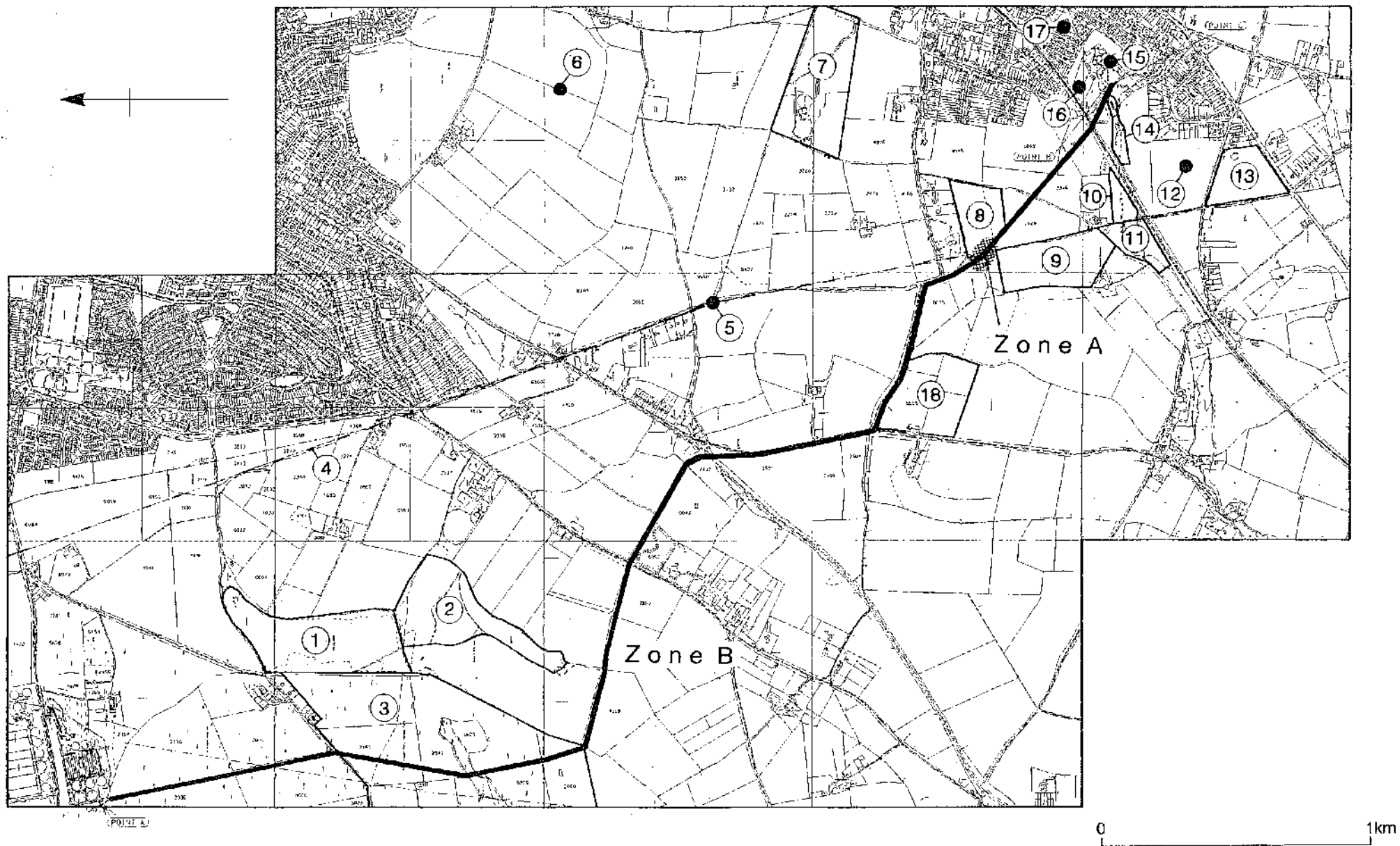


Figure 2