# Walsall Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire:

An Archaeological Watching Brief

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#### Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out between July and September 2001, during groundworks for the laying of a 150mm diameter sewage rising main in Lichfield, Staffordshire. The groundworks involved the excavation of a pipe trench along the intended course of the sewage rising main. Staffordshire County Council advised that three sites of potential archaeological survival recorded on the Staffordshire County Sites and Monuments Record would require archaeological monitoring in the form of a watching brief. Charles Haswell and Partners Limited commissioned Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) to carry out this work between NGR SK 410360 310560 and NGR SK 411140 309100, on behalf of Severn Trent Water Ltd. The watching brief identified no archaeological deposits within the pipe trench.

### **1.0 Introduction**

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during the groundworks for a sewage rising main running along Eastern Avenue, Western By-Pass and Trunkfield Brook in Lichfield (Figs.1 and 2). The groundworks involved the excavation by a machine with a toothed bucket of a pipe trench measuring approximately 0.40m in width and 2.0m in depth.

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) were commissioned by Charles Haswell and Partners Limited on behalf of Severn Trent Water Ltd., to carry out the watching brief. An archaeologist attended the site between mid-July and mid-September 2001, when excavation of the pipe trench was taking place in the vicinity of sites of archaeological potential. These comprised the site of a watermill and two lead conduits. The section of the pipeline targeted for archaeological monitoring lay between NGR SK 410360 310560 and NGR SK 411140 309100.

### 2.0 Site Location and History

The course of the sewage main runs along the northwestern edge of Lichfield City. The route ran southwestwards along Eastern Avenue, then turned southwards to run parallel to Western By-Pass along its western side, crossing the Leamonsley Brook. At its southern end, it cut across Friary Road and followed Trunkfield Brook southwestwards. It was considered possible that its route may cross three potential archaeological sites.

Two of the sites were medieval lead conduits, which the pipe trench may potentially have crossed. One of these, the 12th-13th-century Lichfield Close Conduit (SMR 04213) ran

from two springs on higher ground at Maple Hayes, about 1km to the west of the route, to the west gate of Lichfield Close, and supplied the Close with fresh water. The springs were sold to the church by Thomas de Bromley before 1166 (Gould 1976).

In 1301, a Lichfield bellfounder gave springs on the high ground at Aldershaw, southwest of Lichfield, to the Friary. A lead conduit brought water from there to the Friary, and another branch fed St. John's Hospital. A further conduit, known as the Crucifix Conduit (SMR 05514), built outside the eastern wall of the Friary, was for the burgesses (Gould 1976), and was probably established at some time between the laying-out of the borough in the 1140s and the foundation of the Friary in 1237. The Friary was built over the line of the conduit and derived an income from the rights to the water. Further branches were laid to other conduits at a later date, and they remained the main water supply to the town until the 19th century.

As the exact lines of the conduits were not known, it was considered possible that the sewage pipeline may intersect them at an unknown point along the route.

At the southern end of the route is the site of a post-medieval watermill (SMR 03726) shown on Yates's 1775 map of Staffordshire. Yates's map shows the symbol for 'watermills and forges' next to a pond and a brook, the present Trunkfield Brook. The exact location of the site is not known, but it was considered possible that the pipeline may pass through it.

#### 3.0 Method

A suitably qualified archaeologist from BUFAU attended the groundworks at those times when excavation of the pipe trench was being carried out in the vicinity of the areas of interest identified above, which had the potential to reveal archaeological remains.

The trench was, on average, 0.40m wide and was excavated to a depth of c.2.0m, cutting through the topsoil and subsoil and into the natural sandstone bedrock. Sections of the trench were inspected and where safe to do so, the exposed subsoil cleaned by hand in order to ascertain the presence of features or artefacts. Cut faces were also inspected to check if features were visible in section.

Where no archaeological deposits were identified, a record of the stratigraphy was made. The site records form part of the archive, currently held at BUFAU.

### 4.0 Results and discussion

Excavation of the pipe trench along the stretch of Western By-Pass between its junctions with Cross In Hand Lane and Abnalls Lane, revealed red sandstone bedrock at a depth of

1.2m, which was overlain by rcd sand approximately 1m in depth. The rcd sand was sealed by topsoil to a depth of 0.2m.

At the corner of Eastern Avenue and Western By-Pass, the natural orange sand was revealed at a depth of about 1.10m. This was sealed by sterile sandy silt over which was a former road surface, comprising a compact gritty matrix and tarmac. Concrete and light stone measuring 0,20m in depth overlay this, which in turn was sealed by 0.50m of light-brown friable silty sand and the modern road surface.

At the southern end of Western By-Pass, a modern culvert and old road surface, similar to that observed at the corner of Eastern Avenue, was noted prior to the parkland carpark entrance.

At the southern extent, the pipeline followed the course of the Trunkfield Brook. Natural sand was revealed in the section at a depth of 0.50m. This was sealed by topsoil which was dense with root disturbance. No evidence for the post-medieval watermill site was observed in the trench.

No archaeological deposits were identified along the route of the pipeline.

The actual route of the medieval culverts was not known and therefore proved difficult to identify within the sections of pipe trench. The pipe trench would have intersected the route of the culvert at some point, however this may have been truncated by make-up layers for the present road. No evidence for the post-medieval watermill was observed which may suggest that the mill was originally sited further to the south than the route of the sewage rising main.

### 5.0 Acknowledgements

The watching brief was commissioned by Charles Haswell and Partners Limited on behalf of Severn Trent Water and undertaken by Charlotte Neilson, Catherine Flitcroft and Richard Cuttler, who also edited this report. Thanks are also due to Chris Wardle who monitored the project on behalf of Staffordshire County Council.

#### 6.0 Sources

Gould, J.	1976	Lichfield Archaeology and Development
		West Midlands Rescue Archaeology Committee

Yates 1775 Map of the County of Staffordshire

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Fig. 1: Location plan Fig. 2: The line of the sewage rising main



Fig.1

