



THE UNIVERSITY
OF BIRMINGHAM

**Footbridge, Barton and
Walton Level Crossing
Staffordshire 2002**

**Archaeological Watching
Brief**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit



Institute of Field
Archaeologists

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
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Footbridge, Barton and Walton Level Crossing, Staffordshire 2002
Archaeological Watching Brief

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Footbridge, Barton and Walton Level Crossing, Staffordshire Archaeological Watching Brief

1.0 Summary

Archaeological observation and recording was carried out during ground disturbance associated with the construction of a footbridge at Barton and Walton Level Crossing, Barton-under-Needwood, Staffordshire (SK20801865). The development area lies within an area of extensive cropmarks including a number of round barrows. Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned to carry out the work on behalf of Birse Rail.

No archaeological features or deposits of significance were encountered, and it was concluded that any such features or deposits, which may have once existed, had been scoured out either by construction of the railway or by medieval and post-medieval ploughing.

2.0 Introduction

This report describes the results of archaeological observation and recording carried out during ground works for the construction of a footbridge at Barton and Walton Level Crossing, Barton-under-Needwood, Staffordshire. Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned to carry out the work on behalf of Birse Rail.

The development lies within an area of extensive cropmarks, some of which are of national importance and are Scheduled Monuments. An excavated Bronze Age cemetery is situated nearby. The potential for the presence of archaeological deposits and features within the development area was considered good.

The observation and recording was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by BUFAU (BUFAU, WSI 2002) and a Brief prepared by Staffordshire County Council, Development Services (Wardle 2002). The watching brief was carried out in accordance with guidelines set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999).

3.0 Site Location (Figs. 1 & 2)

The site is situated on the Derby to Birmingham Railway line, between the villages of Barton-under-Needwood, Staffordshire and Walton-on-Trent, Derbyshire (SK20801865).

4.0 Archaeological Background

The following summary of the known archaeology of the area is taken from the Brief prepared by Staffordshire County Council (Wardle 2002).

The proposed development lies within an area of extensive cropmarks. To the east of the railway there is a number of round barrows. To the west of the railway lies another barrow cemetery (SMR PRN 208 & 1447). This group of monuments is of national importance and is a Scheduled Monument. A recent excavation on the scheduled site identified the truncated remains of two barrows and a cremation urn of mid to late Bronze Age date. However, nearly all the cropmarks in the area have suffered damage as a result of recent ploughing. The course of the railway has not been ploughed since the 1840s.

5.0 Aims

The objective of the archaeological observation and recording was to obtain a record of any surviving archaeological remains affected by the ground works associated with the construction of the footbridge.

6.0 Method

The watching brief involved monitoring the excavation of six foundation trenches for the construction of a footbridge over the current railway line. The trenches measured approximately 3m x 3m and were excavated to a depth of approximately 1.3m. Foundation Trenches 1, 2 and 3 were located to the west of the railway line and foundation Trenches 4, 5 and 6 to the east (Fig. 2).

All groundworks associated with the construction of the footbridge were monitored, including soil and overburden stripping and inspection of sub-soil for archaeological features and examination of spoil-heaps for archaeological material was undertaken. A full record of archaeological deposits or features revealed by the contractors' groundworks was made. Recording was by means of pre-printed *pro-formas* for contexts and features, supplemented by plans (at 1:20 and 1:50), sections (at 1:10 and 1:20) and monochrome and colour slide photography.

7.0 Results (Fig. 3)

The stratigraphy recorded in foundation Trench 1 was representative of that encountered in Trenches 2 and 3.

The earliest stratigraphic layer observed in foundation Trench 1 was a natural yellow/orange sandy gravel (1006) encountered at a depth of approximately 0.5m below ground level. At a depth of approximately 0.6m below ground level, the natural subsoil (1006) had been cut by a north to south aligned linear feature, measuring approximately 1m in depth by 1m in width, with a rectilinear profile (F103). Feature F103 was filled with a brown sandy silt with lenses of orange/yellow sand and pebbles (1005). Feature F103 was truncated by a north to south aligned linear feature (F102) only partially visible in section and filled with a mid-brown sandy silt with pebbles and small coal fragments throughout (1004). Feature F102 was, in turn, cut by a north to south aligned linear feature (F101), again only partially visible in section, which was filled with a mixed deposit of brown/black, 'ashy' silt with pebbles throughout and large quantities of grit, brick, clinker, coal and redeposited clay (1003). Feature F101 was cut by a further north to south aligned linear feature (F100) which contained a dark brown, compact sandy silt with grit,

charcoal flecks and slag inclusions (1002). Feature F100 was sealed by a layer of modern railway ballast (1001) which merged with a layer of modern topsoil and overburden (1000).

No archaeological features or deposits of any significance were encountered in foundation Trenches 1, 2 and 3.

The stratigraphy recorded in foundation Trench 4 was representative of that encountered in Trenches 5 and 6.

The earliest stratigraphic layer observed was a natural yellow/orange sandy gravel (4003), which was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.6m below ground level. This was overlain by a band of mid to dark brown sandy silt subsoil (4001), which varied in thickness throughout Trenches 4 to 6 from between 0.2m at the shallowest to 0.5m at the deepest. The subsoil was sealed by a layer of modern railway ballast (4002) which merged with a layer of modern topsoil (4000).

No archaeological features or deposits of any significance were encountered in foundation Trenches 4, 5 and 6.

8.0 Discussion

No evidence for archaeological features or deposits associated with any of the cropmarks or known archaeology of the area were observed during machine excavation or in subsequent examination of sections. This does not necessarily indicate that they did not exist, since any evidence may have been removed by later activity. For example, on the western side of the current railway line the series of linear features encountered in foundation Trenches 1, 2 and 3 (F103, F102, F101, F100) represented considerable ground disturbance, which may have cut away any archaeology that may originally have been present. The linear features all ran on a north to south alignment, parallel to the present railway line, and appeared to represent activity connected with the earlier 19th century railway. They may be the remains of sidings connected with the 19th century station, which was located approximately 100m to the south of the development, or alternatively represent the position of the earlier 19th century railway line itself.

In foundation Trenches 3, 4 and 5, on the eastern side of the present railway line, the mid to dark brown subsoil (4001) is likely to be associated with medieval or post-medieval ploughing activities. The varying depth of the subsoil observed in Trenches 3, 4 and 5, suggests the existence of ridge and furrow ploughing systems in this area. This may have resulted in archaeological deposits on this side of the railway being ploughed out in the past.

It was hoped that as the area of the groundworks had not been subjected to late 19th and 20th century ploughing, due to the presence of the railway since at least the 1840s, the potential for the preservation of archaeological features and deposits was good. However, the foundation trenches for the footbridge were located where activity associated with the 19th century railway and with earlier ploughing systems may have destroyed any archaeology that was present.

9.0 Acknowledgements

The watching brief was undertaken by Helen Martin and managed by Simon Buteux. This report was written by Helen Martin and edited by Simon Buteux. Illustrations were drawn by Bryony Ryder. The site was monitored by Chris Wardle on behalf of Staffordshire County Council, Development Services. Thanks are due to Stephen Christopher of Birse Rail and to the site staff of Birse Rail for their help and co-operation.

10.0 References

- BUFAU, 2002 *Footbridge, Barton and Walton Level Crossing, Staffordshire. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*
- Wardle, 2002 *Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief. Footbridge, Barton and Walton Level Crossing* (Staffordshire County Council)

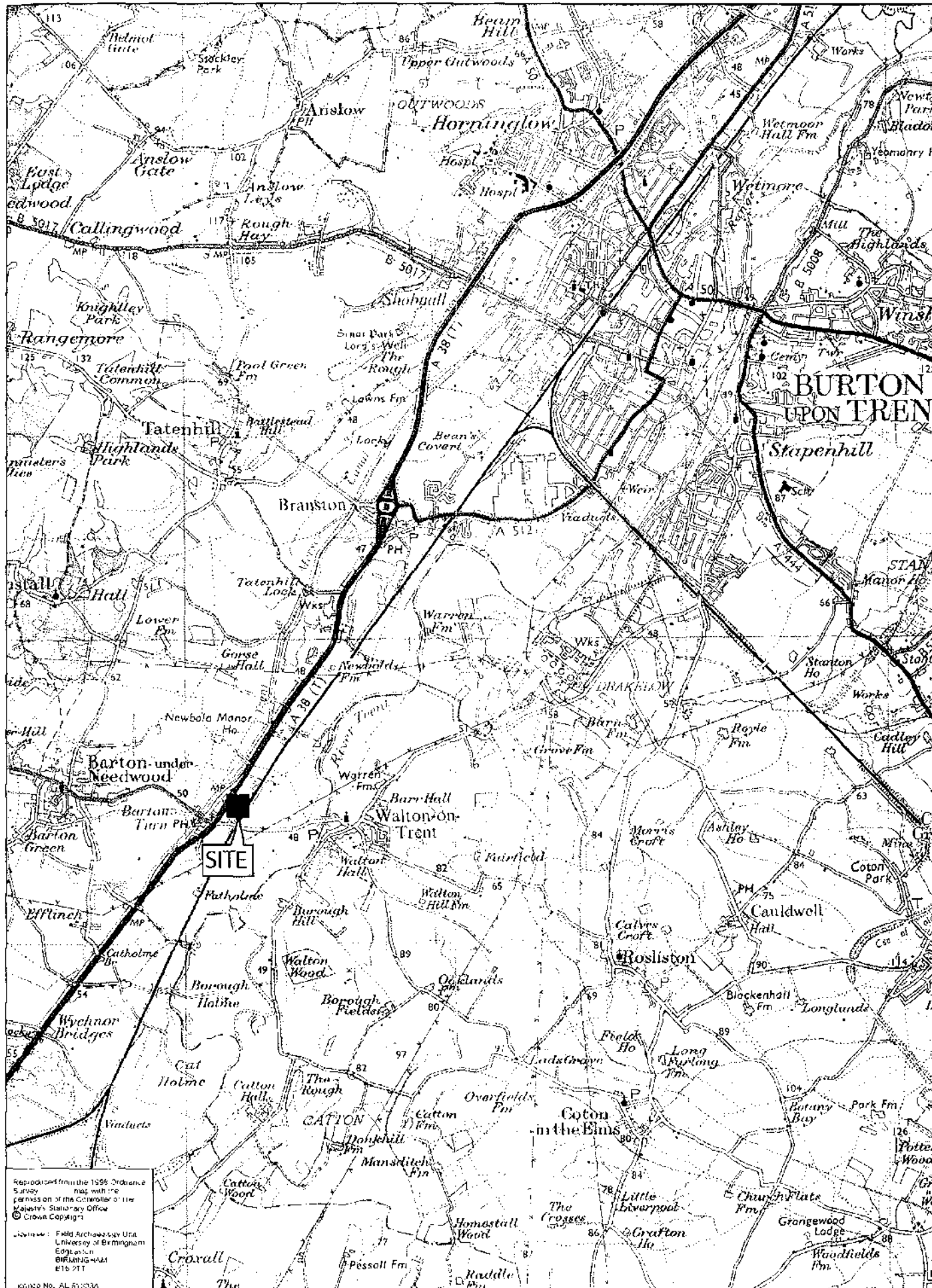


Fig. 1

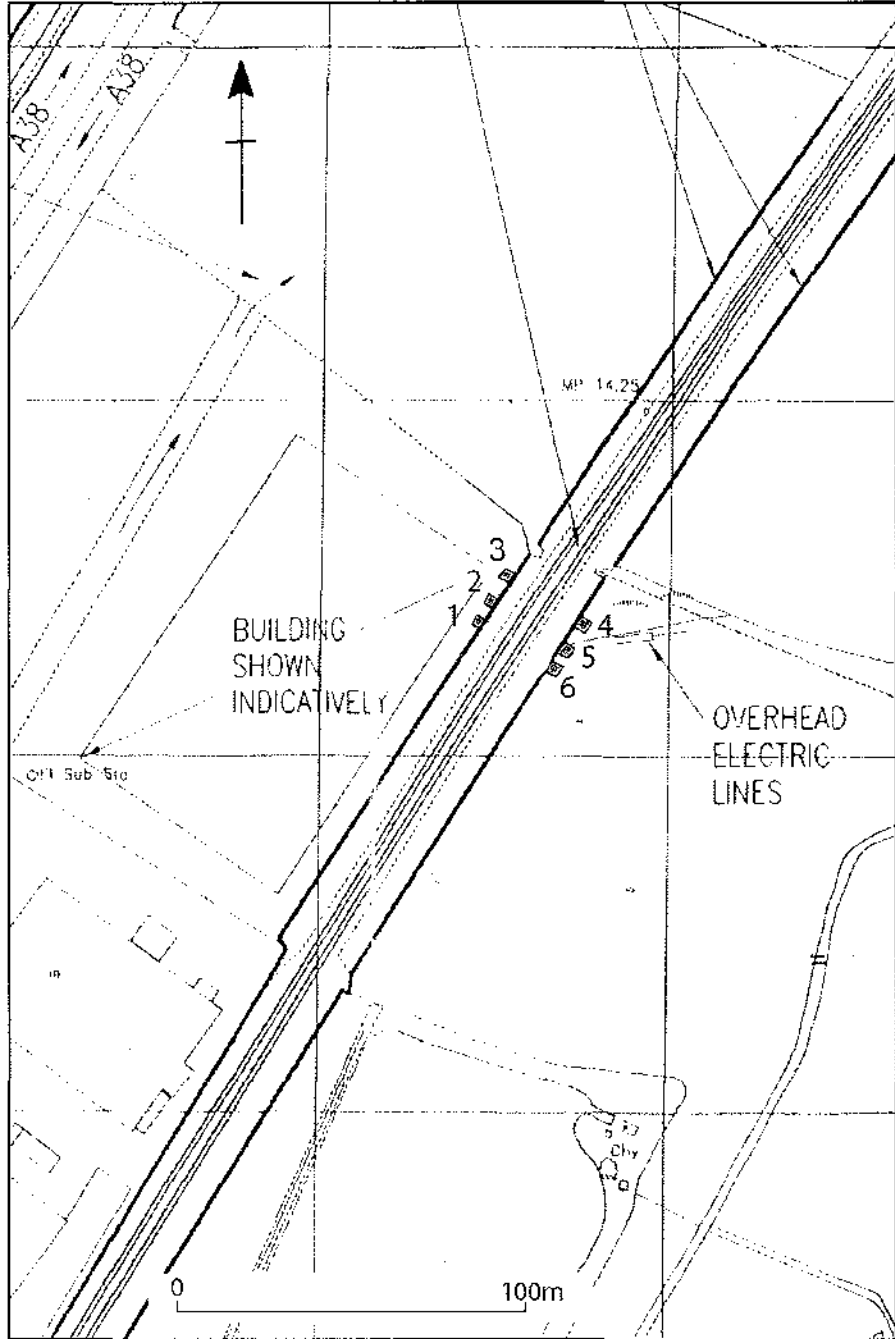
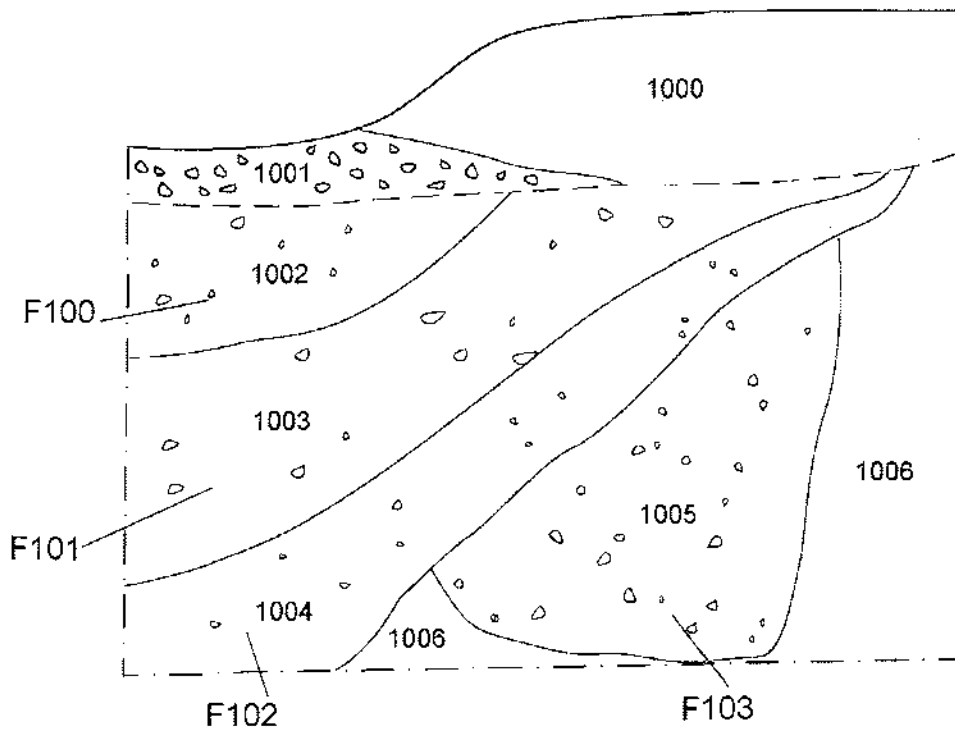
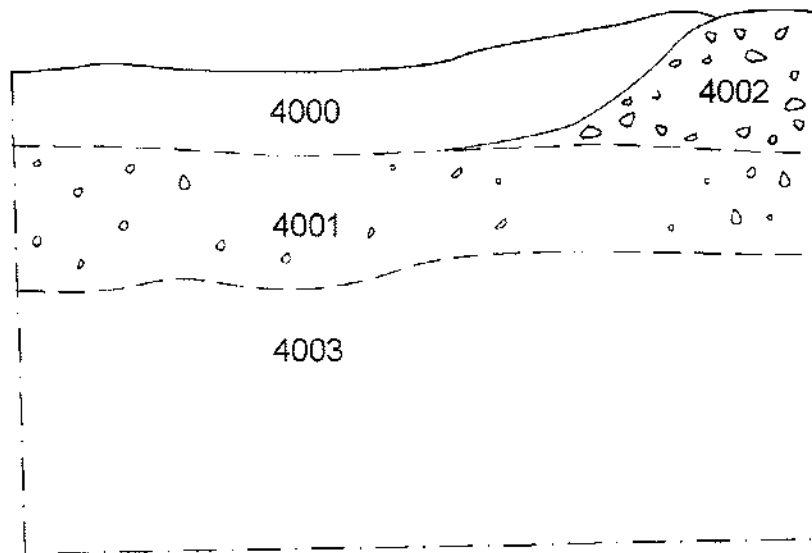


Fig. 2



Trench 1 North Facing Section



Trench 4 North Facing Section

Scale 1:20



Fig. 3