

**An Archaeological  
Evaluation at Bradbury  
Lines, Hereford:  
Phase One**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
**Project No. 941.1**  
June 2002

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Phase One**

by  
Melissa Conway

*For further information please contact:*  
Simon Buteux or Iain Ferris (Directors)  
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
The University of Birmingham  
Edgbaston  
Birmingham B15 2TT  
Tel: 0121 414 5513  
Fax: 0121 414 5516  
E-Mail: [BUFAU@bham.ac.uk](mailto:BUFAU@bham.ac.uk)  
Web Address: <http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk>

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### *Summary*

*George Wimpey UK Ltd have applied for planning permission to redevelop the existing MOD site known as Bradbury Lines, Hereford. The site is c 20.5 hectares in size and is the former 22<sup>nd</sup> Special Air Service and 264 (SAS) Signal Squadron barracks. The redevelopment is to be carried out in two phases. An archaeological desk-based assessment of the site was carried out by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants in March 2002 but this did not establish whether any archaeological deposits were contained within the site. Following on from this assessment a programme of archaeological evaluation was deemed necessary prior to the granting of planning permission by the County Council. Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) were commissioned to carry out the evaluation by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants acting on behalf of the developer George Wimpey UK Ltd. The evaluation, which was carried out on two separate areas for development called Phase One and Phase Two, consisted of 420m of linear trenches totalling an area of 840m<sup>2</sup>. The positioning of the trenches was limited by the presence of standing buildings across large parts of the site; the trenches were, therefore, excavated in the existing open areas of the site. The three trenches, Trenches 1b, 2 and 5, excavated in the Phase One part of the site did not uncover any archaeological deposits. The trenches showed that these parts of the site had been subject to several episodes of landscaping. Trenches 1b and 5 showed that the surrounding areas had been terraced and levelled, removing earlier deposits. Trench 2 showed that this area had been built-up with an extensive deposit of gravel overlying the subsoil. Trenches 2 and 5 were both heavily disturbed by services and drains.*

### **1.0 Introduction**

This report outlines the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out at the former 22<sup>nd</sup> Special Air Services and 264 (SAS) Signal Squadron barracks at Bradbury Lines, Hereford, hereafter referred to as the site, in advance of proposed redevelopment (centred on NGR SO 50948/38192). John Samuels Archaeological Consultants, acting on behalf of George Wimpey UK Ltd, commissioned Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) to carry out this fieldwork in June 2002.

The site lies within an area of known prehistoric and medieval activity. No archaeological information exists for the site, as it has been a restricted place under the terms of the Official Secrets Act since its inception as an military facility in the 1930s. A programme of archaeological assessment was therefore deemed necessary by the County Council's archaeological advisor prior to the approval of planning permission for the redevelopment. This evaluation forms the second stage of the programme of archaeological assessment and follows a desk-based assessment of the site by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants (2002a). The redevelopment is envisaged as comprising two separate stages of development. The Phase One redevelopment will

affect the northwestern part of the former base; Phase Two will affect the southeastern portion of the base. This report outlines the results of the evaluation trenches excavated in the area affected by the Phase One redevelopment only.

The evaluation method was agreed with Julian Cotton of Herefordshire County Council on site. The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with the specification prepared by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants for this project (2002b) and with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

## **2.0 Site Location**

The site lies c 1.4 miles to the south of Hereford town centre at the southern edge of the city's associated suburbs (Figure 1). The site lies about half a mile to the southwest of the River Wye. The site is bounded to the north and northwest by the rear of the housing plots along Web Tree Avenue, Garrick Avenue and Ross Road. To the east the site is bounded by Hoarwithy Road. The western side of the site is bounded by Bullingham Lane. The south boundary of the site is formed by the Crewe – Cardiff railway.

## **3.0 Topography and Geology**

The topography of the site is generally flat. Slight changes in level, between 59 – 61m AOD, exist between areas of different usage indicating that levelling activity has probably occurred in parts of the site. The first and second gravel terraces of the River Wye form the underlying drift geology of the site. These are overlain by red and orange clays in places.

## **4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

The fact that access to this site has been restricted due to its status as a military facility means that many of the traditional sources of archaeological information, for example aerial photographs, are not available for the site itself. No archaeological work is known to have been carried out on the site prior to the current programme of archaeological assessment.

The desk-based assessment of the site failed to find any records on the Hereford SMR which lay within the site itself (JSAC 2002a, 8). An assessment of SMR records for the vicinity of the site showed that evidence of prehistoric (Neolithic) and medieval activity exists around the site (JSAC 2002a, 8). The site itself lies around a mile and a half northwest of the hillfort at Dinedor Camp (Figure 1).

The area around the site was probably settled in the Anglo-Saxon period. The nearest Anglo-Saxon settlement to the site was probably Bullingham, now Bullinghope, which lies just over a mile to the south of the site. The placename Bullingham may derive from

the Old English 'bula inghām' settlement/valley of Bula's people (JSAC 2002a, 7). Settlement at Bullingham is attested from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

The site itself does not seem to have been settled in the post-medieval period and seems to have lain in the agricultural hinterland of the surrounding villages (JSAC 2002a, 7). The site seems to have remained undeveloped until the construction of the first army camp there in 1938. This camp comprised several complexes of wooden huts and was subject to various military uses until the site was occupied by the 22<sup>nd</sup> Special Air Service and 264 (SAS) Signal Squadron in 1960. The form of the base seems to have been relatively unchanged until the 1970s when a major reconstruction of the base was undertaken. The site was cleared of the original structures and the barrack blocks and attendant buildings were constructed. The base retains the structures and organisational layout established by this reconstruction to the present day.

## **5.0 Aims**

The aims of this evaluation were to gather sufficient information to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the site, to establish the character, significance, quality and date of any archaeological deposits encountered and to identify the scope of any further archaeological work required prior to development.

## **6.0 Method**

A length of 420 metres of linear trenches, two metres wide, were excavated across both phases of the site, representing a total coverage of 840m<sup>2</sup>. The positioning of the trenches was limited to the existing open areas on the site as the majority of the military buildings have not yet been demolished. Three trenches, totalling 202 metres in length, were excavated in the Phase One part of the site.

The trenches were excavated using a tracked 360 excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket working under direct archaeological supervision. The trenches were excavated down to the natural subsoil or the upper surface of any significant archaeological horizon. All significant archaeological deposits encountered were 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. Finds were retained by context and suitably qualified staff were available to carry out final analysis and any conservation.

The paper records, photographs and finds comprise the site archive. The archive has been prepared according to the guidelines outlined in Appendix 3 of the *Management of Archaeology Projects* (English Heritage 1991), the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage* (UKIC 1990), and *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections* (Museum and Art Galleries Commission 1992). The archive will be deposited with the relevant repository with the prior notification and

agreement of the museum, within a reasonable time after the completion of the evaluation, subject to approval by the landowner.

## **7.0 Results**

The trial trenches, Trenches 1b, 2 and 5, in the Phase One part of the site were located in the former football pitches and in a hardstanding area by the former Sergeants' Mess.

### **7.1 Trench 1b (Figure 2, Plate 1)**

Trench 1b was located in one of the base's former football pitches. The trench was 88 metres long and was aligned approximately northwest-southeast. Trench 1b was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.5m below the modern ground surface (56.79m AOD) at the northwestern end of the trench where the underlying natural gravels (1001) were detected. The depth of the gravel rose gradually along the length of the trench, lying only 0.25m below the modern ground surface at the southwestern end of the trench (57.77m AOD). The natural gravel was heavily disturbed by old electrical service trenches and recent gravel drainage trenches (Plate 1).

The gravel was overlain directly by topsoil (1000). The topsoil was a dark-brown slightly sandy silt which contained frequent pebbles. The frequency of the pebbles within the topsoil rose toward its interface with the gravel (1000). None of the service or drainage trenches which had been cut through the natural gravel seems to have been cut through the topsoil.

No subsoil or any other deposits were visible in any part of the trench. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were encountered.

### **7.2 Trench 2 (Figure 2, Plate 2)**

Trench 2 was also located in one of the base's former football pitches. The trench was 84m long and aligned approximately northwest-southeast. Trench 2 was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.2m below the modern ground surface (57.24m AOD) at the southeastern end of the trench where the underlying natural geology (2003) was detected. The natural was a compact dark orange sandy clay the depth of which rose slightly along the length of the trench. The natural clay was disturbed by old electrical service trenches and recent gravel drainage trenches in places (Plate 2).

The natural clay was overlain by a layer of mid-yellow/brown silty clay (2002). This clay layer was heavily flecked with charcoal and disturbed by drainage and service trenches, including a gas main. This layer occurred at c 0.25m below the modern ground surface at the northwestern end of the trench and at 0.75m below the modern ground surface at the southeastern end of the trench. The clay layer was approximately 0.30m thick along the majority of the trench's length. The thickness of the layer increased to a maximum of 0.60m thick toward the southeastern end of the trench. This increase began

at 20 metres from the southwestern end of the trench. This layer may represent a former soil horizon.

The clay layer (2002) was directly overlain by a layer of coarse gravel intermixed with rubble (2001). This layer occurred at c 0.20m below the modern ground surface at the northwestern end of the trench and at 0.10m below the modern ground surface at the southeastern end of the trench. The layer varied in thickness, between 0.30 – 0.60m, across the trench. This layer sealed some of the older service trenches and was cut by the more recent services. This layer seems to represent an episode of hard landscaping intended to create a level surface for the playing fields which currently occupy the area.

The gravel levelling layer was directly overlain by topsoil (2000). The topsoil was a dark brown sandy silt which contained occasional small stones and small pieces of rubble. The thickness of the topsoil varied between 0.10 – 0.20m.

No archaeological features or deposits were detected in this trench.

### **7.3 Trench 5 (Figure 2, Plate 3)**

Trench 5 was located in a hardstanding area by the former Sergeants' Mess. The trench was 30m long and aligned approximately northwest-southeast. Trench 5 was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.85m below the modern ground surface (58.31m AOD) at the southeastern end of the trench where the underlying natural geology (5003) was detected. The natural was a compact red clay, the depth of which rose slightly along the length of the trench. The natural clay was disturbed by recent gravel drainage trenches in places (Plate 3).

The natural clay was overlain by a layer of orange brown silty clay which contained a large amount of building rubble and was flecked with charcoal (5002). This layer occurred at 0.40m below the modern ground surface and was disturbed by service and drainage trenches. This layer appears to have been truncated by recent levelling activity.

This rubble layer was overlain by a thick layer of dark grey stone chippings (5001). This layer was approximately 0.25m thick and occurred at a depth of 0.15m. This layer was overlain by a thinner layer of light pink coarse stone chippings (5000). This layer formed the modern ground surface and was 0.15m thick. Both 5000 and 5001 were of uniform thickness across the length of the trench. Layers 5000 and 5001 represent the fabric of hardstanding.

No archaeological features or deposits were detected in this trench.



## 8.0 Discussion

The programme of trial trenching in Phase One failed to locate any archaeological features within the three areas sampled. It seems apparent from the strata uncovered within the trenches that these areas have been subjected to extensive landscaping and levelling activities in recent years. In Trench 1b the subsoil has been totally removed by this activity, so that the topsoil (1000) directly overlay the natural gravel (1001). In Trench 2 a thick gravel layer (2001) had been spread over the subsoil (2002), filling in the hollows that had existed, to create a level surface. The area around Trench 5 seems to have been levelled in order to provide a level surface for the hardstanding (5000, 5001).

It is possible that the greater depth of subsoil (2002) observed toward the southeastern end of Trench 2 may represent a buried soil horizon. The date of this layer is unfortunately unclear. No archaeological features were observed within this layer in Trench 2. It is, however, possible that this layer contains or seals archaeological features in other areas. This layer of subsoil (2002) seems similar to layers observed in the trial trenches in the Phase Two part of the site and does not seem to have survived well across the majority of the Phase One area. It seems likely that the landscaping activities observed in all trenches in Phase One of the site have removed any archaeological deposits that may have existed in these areas.

## 9.0 Acknowledgements

This report was written by Melissa Conway and edited by Iain Ferris, who also managed the project. The illustrations were prepared by John Halsted. The fieldwork was carried out by Maurice Hopper, Kate Bain and Andy Rudge, supervised by Melissa Conway. Many thanks are due to Forbes Marsden of John Samuels Archaeological Consultants, acting for George Wimpey UK Ltd., for commissioning this project. Many thanks are due to Karl Newell and Paul Elsmore of Hydrex Ltd. for their expert machine driving.

## 10.0 References

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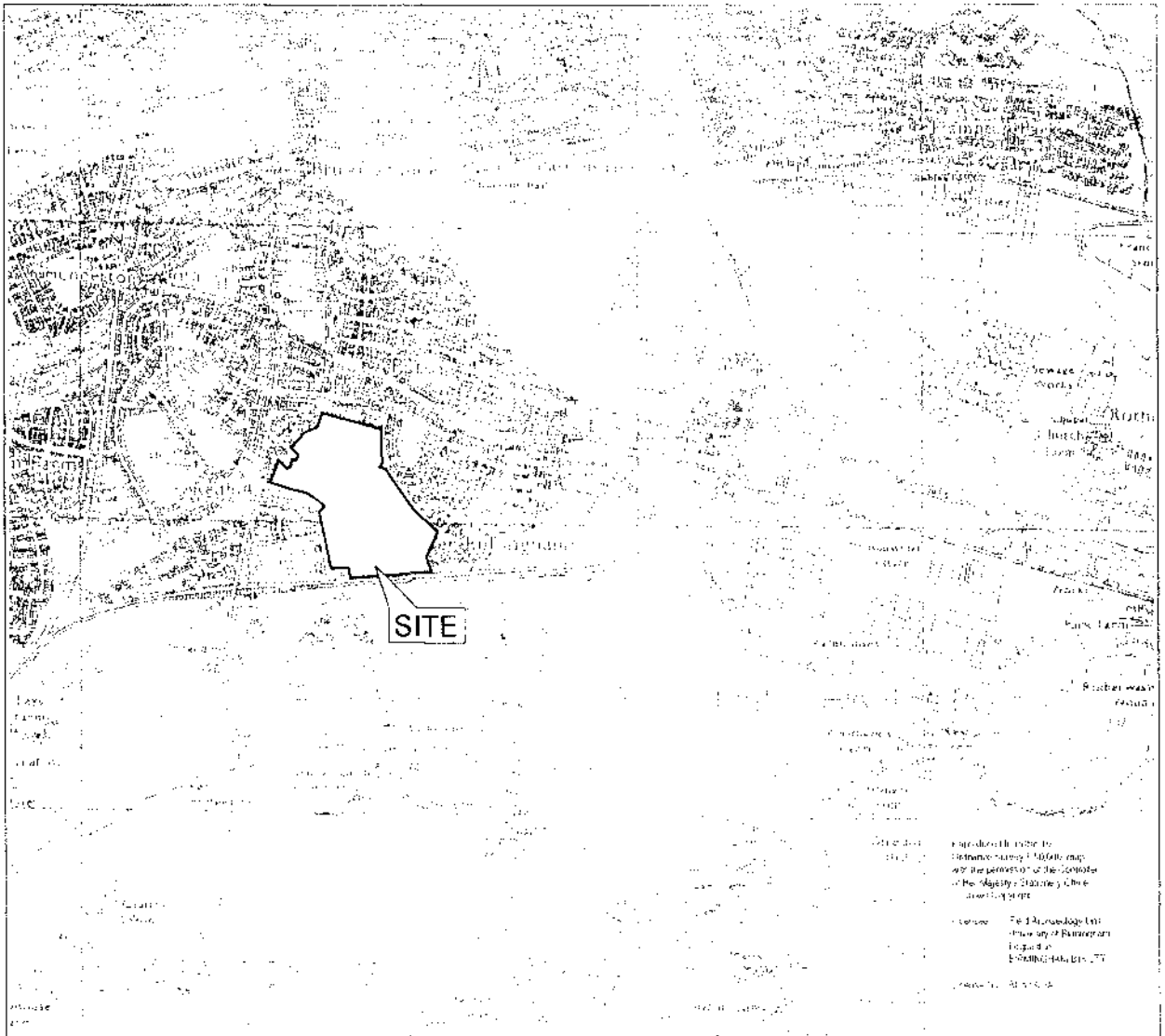


Figure 1

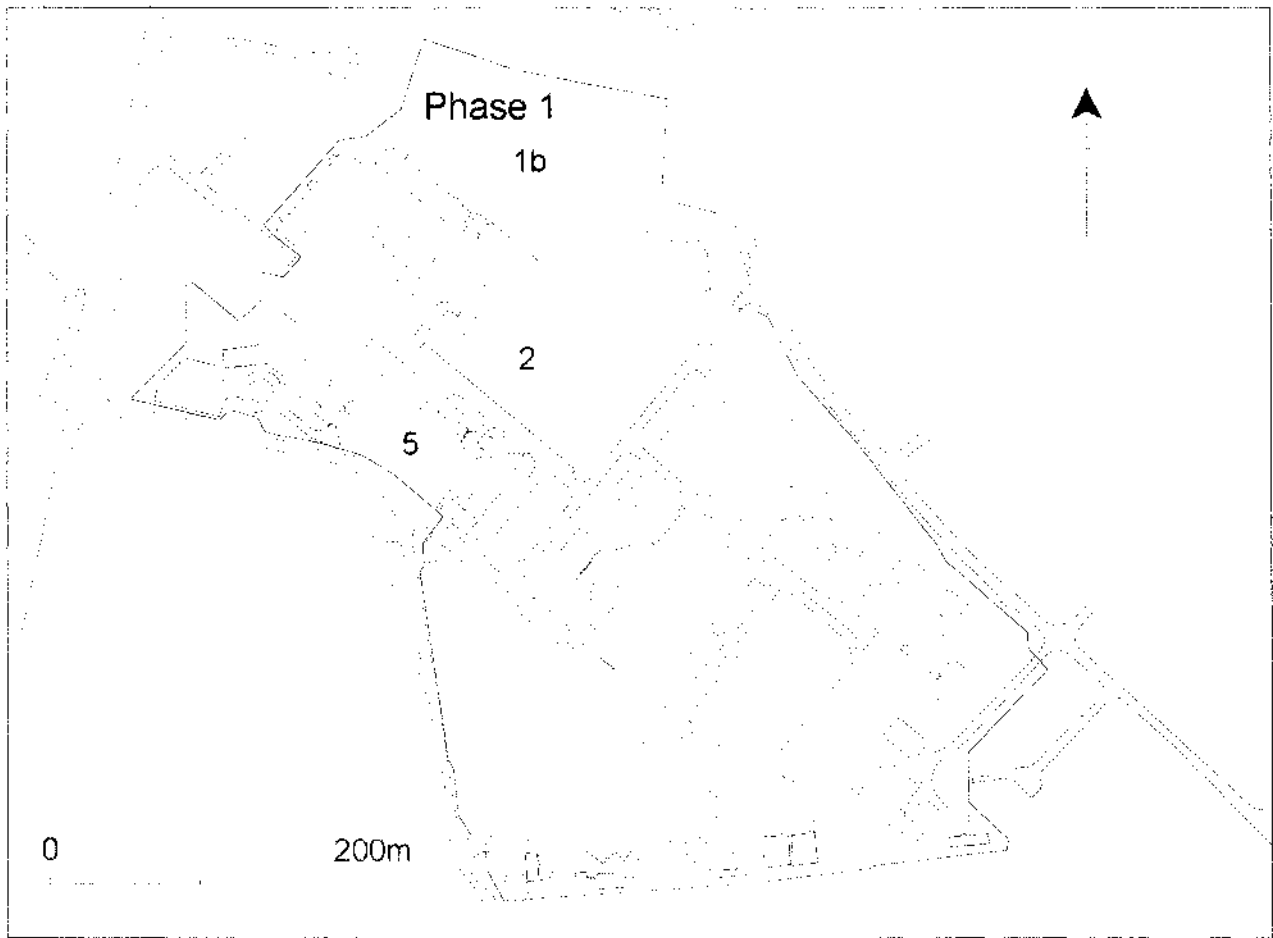


Figure 2



Plate 1

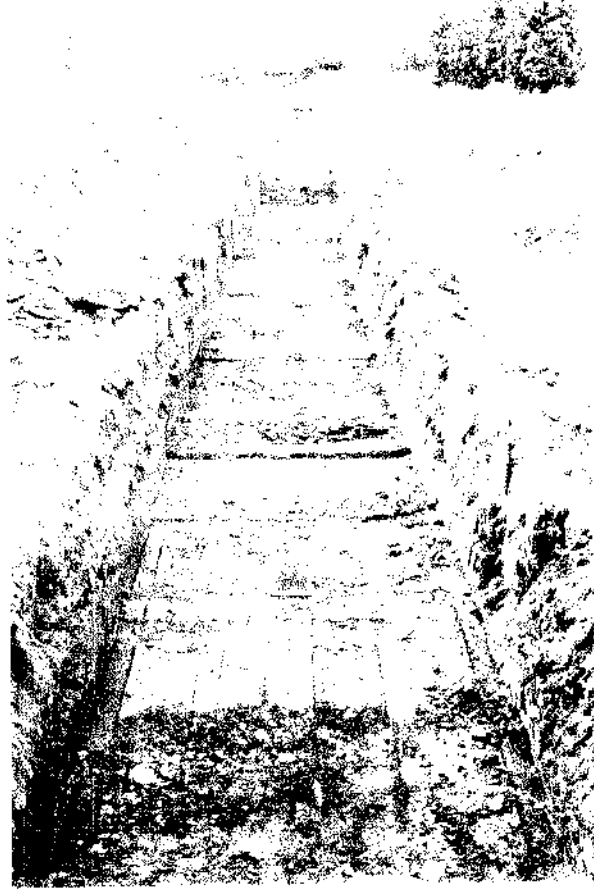


Plate 2



Plate 3