

**Land off Long Lane, Craven  
Arms, Shropshire:**

**An Archaeological Watching  
Brief. 2004**

**Project No. 1137**  
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Land off Long Lane, Craven Arms,  
Shropshire:  
An archaeological Watching Brief. 2004

by  
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On behalf of  
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**Land off Long Lane, Craven Arms, Shropshire :  
An Archaeological Watching Brief. 2004**

***Summary***

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Birmingham Archaeology in May 2004. The work was commissioned by Shropshire County Council on behalf of the Highways Agency on land at Long Lane Industrial Estate, Long Lane, Craven Arms (NGR SJ 3430 2833) and took place during groundworks prior to the construction of a Highways Maintenance Depot.*

*Previously, in 1992 an archaeological evaluation including a geophysical survey and a study of aerial photographs was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU). This work revealed the presence of Roman occupation to the south and south east of the development area.*

*Given the location of the site, specifically its proximity to Watling Street and to scheduled monument SA2046, there was a potential for the discovery of associated elements dating to the Roman and post-Roman periods. However, no archaeological features were observed and groundworks revealed nothing of archaeological significance.*

**1.0 Introduction**

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken at Long Lane Industrial Estate in Craven Arms prior to the construction of a new Highways Maintenance depot (Fig. 1). The watching brief took place as a condition of Shropshire County Council's planning process. The archaeological work was informed by a brief written by Mike Watson, Historic Environment Officer for Shropshire County Council and adhered the *Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs* (IFA 2001). The work was commissioned by Shropshire County Council on behalf of the Highways Agency and undertaken by Birmingham Archaeology.

**2.0 Location and Geology**

The site is centred on NGR SJ 3430 2833 and is part of the Long Lane Industrial Estate. A railway depot is located immediately to the east of the development area. Shropshire is the most geologically diverse county in Britain, comprising seven of the twelve geological periods. Craven Arms itself is situated on the Pre-Cambrian volcanics in the basin of the Severn whilst the immediate area comprises primarily sand and gravel.

### **3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

Previous archaeological work carried out by Birmingham Archaeology, formerly Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (hereafter BUFAU), revealed the presence of Roman occupation to the south and southeast of the development area. The site lies immediately to the east of Watling street (SA 108), a Roman road established in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. This was an important military route used in part to link the fortresses of Caerleon and Chester. The road, along with others facilitated the occupation of Britain and ensured that there was a high degree of co-ordination and control over the regions, as well as it being a useful supply and communications route. Craven Arms is located c.30km from Wroxeter (Viroconium Cornoviorum), the fourth largest Roman town in Britain.

The archaeological evaluation undertaken by BUFAU in 1991 included a geophysical survey and study of aerial photographs (Ferris 1991). Trial trenches were dug through the geophysical anomalies and the scheduled monuments visible in the aerial photographs (SA 2045 & 2046). The evaluation established that the two rectilinear enclosures identified in the aerial photographs were Romano-British and dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (Ferris 1991). Whilst their exact function was not discerned their presence indicated that the current development area may well have been located in an area of archaeological significance.

### **4.0 Aims and Methodology**

The aim of this archaeological watching brief was to locate, map and record any surviving archaeological deposits and features uncovered during groundworks, prior to construction of the new depot. The development area was stripped of topsoil down to 0.15m by an excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Subsequently, footings, service trenches and stanchion pits were excavated down to the natural subsoil using a JCB fitted with a toothed bucket. This was encountered at c.0.5m-0.6m.

The requirements of the brief were fulfilled through the observation and recording of groundworks by a appropriately qualified archaeologist. All features were to be recorded with their location, nature, depth of burial, thickness and any potential dating information obtained during the process. As no archaeological features were present arbitrary sections were drawn and the stratigraphy of the site was recorded. All features or changes in geology were recorded using pro-forma context and feature record cards. Where appropriate, scale drawings were made. All records, along with colour print and monochrome photographs, form the site archive, which currently stored at the offices of Birmingham Archaeology. This will be deposited with an appropriate repository following consultation with the Historic Environment Officer and consent from the landowner.

### **5.0 Results**

The first stage of the development was a topsoil strip at the northern end of the development area, the site of the proposed salt dome and haul road. This was

accomplished using a toothless ditching bucket fitted to mini-digger. The area was excavated to 0.15m in order to provide an even base for the hardcore that would overlay the area. Subsequently, foundation trenches and stanchion pits for the proposed office building to the south were excavated using a JCB fitted with a toothed bucket. This excavation was deeper, 0.60m for the trenches and 0.65m for the stanchions pits.

With the exception of the area of the proposed salt dome and haul road, as discussed above, the topsoil was stripped from the site using a toothless bucket to a depth of 0.40-0.50m. After which the areas to the northwest and southeast were excavated down to the natural subsoil. The natural subsoil comprised a very stony mid-grey silty sand (1003, see Plate 1), overlain an orange-brown sandy clay (1001). These natural deposits occurred over the full extent of the site although they became more difficult to distinguish in the southeast. No archaeological deposits or features were noted.

## **6.0 Discussion**

The watching brief carried out during the groundworks at Long Lane Industrial Estate was comprehensive. Almost the entire site was monitored as it was stripped down to the natural subsoil. It is likely that surviving archaeological features or deposits would have been located. During the course of the watching brief nothing of archaeological significance was identified and the subsoil appeared sterile. The proximity of the Roman enclosure (SA 2046) indicated that there was a potential for the development area to have provided further evidence of Roman occupation or activity. However, this proved not to be the case.

## **7.0 Acknowledgements**

Shropshire County Council's Department of Community and Environment Services commissioned this project on behalf of The Highways Agency. Thanks are due to Neil Holding, who managed the site on behalf of JDM Accord. The watching brief was undertaken by Kate Bain, Emma Hancox and Kristina Krawiec. Kristina Krawiec wrote this report and Nigel Dodds prepared the illustrations. Mark Hewson edited the report and managed the project for Birmingham Archaeology.

## **8.0 References**

- Department of the Environment (DoE), 1990 *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning*
- Ferris, I. 1991. *An Archaeological Evaluation at Craven Arms, Shropshire 1991*. B.U.F.A.U Report No.157
- Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief*. Revised 2001

LAND OFF LONG LANE, CRAVEN ARMS, SHROPSHIRE:  
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF. 2004

Watson, M.D 2004. *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Work at Land Off Long Lane, Craven Arms, Shropshire.*

THE UNIVERSITY  
OF BIRMINGHAM

**Proposed Highway Depot  
Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological  
Strip and Record  
Land off Long Lane, Craven Arms, Shropshire  
Developer: Shropshire County Council  
Project Contractor: JDM Accord  
Archaeological Contractor: Birmingham Archaeology**



Birmingham Archaeology

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This document outlines a proposed programme of work required to undertake archaeological investigation at the above site, land off Long Lane, Craven Arms, Shropshire, located specifically at Long Lane Industrial Estate. Any variation in the scope of work would be agreed with Mike Watson, Historic Environment Officer, prior to implementation.
- 1.2 The development proposal involves the construction of a Highways Maintenance Depot on land at Long Lane Industrial Estate, National Grid Reference SO 430 833. The depot will measure approximately 5400m<sup>2</sup>. In addition, the construction of an access road approximately 176m in length with a working width of 12.5m is required to link to existing service roads.

## **2. Site Location**

- 2.1 The proposed development area lies immediately north of a cropmark enclosure SA2046. An evaluation in 1991 of this enclosure by geophysical survey and sample excavation confirmed a Romano-British date for the enclosure (Ferris 1991). Immediately to the west lies Watling Street which is orientated northeast – southwest, and to the north the main extent of Long Lane Industrial Estate.

## **3. Geology**

- 3.1 The geology of the immediate area comprises primarily sand and gravel.

## **4. Archaeological background**

- 4.1 The location of the proposed development lies along the eastern edge of Watling Street. In 1991 an evaluation was carried out on behalf of Shropshire County Council (Ferris 1991). This was done by means of geophysical survey and trial trenching in order to investigate two cropmarks which were located in the broader development area. It had been speculated that one, SA2045, may have been a Romano-British temple. Whilst this proved not to be the case it was, however, interpreted as an example of a fairly common type of single ditched enclosure of



the Romano-British period. Site SA 2046, which lies close, but not within the site of the development, was interpreted as a rarer type of double ditched enclosure, also of the Romano-British period.

## **5. Methodology and Aims**

### *Aims*

- Establish the extent of any archaeological features in the proposed development area and to preserve by record any archaeological remains that are encountered.
- Ascertain the northernmost extent of the impact of the proposed development on Romano-British enclosure SA2046.
- To provide sufficient information to enable any subsequent archaeological works or excavation to be conducted within clearly defined research aims.

### *Strip, map and record*

- 5.1 It is proposed that an archaeologist will attend the site and monitor the removal of the topsoil. All ground disturbance works associated with the proposed development shall be carried out under archaeological supervision. Where more than one machine is in operation an archaeologist will work with each machine to a level that will allow him/her to accurately determine the nature of any archaeology.
- 5.2 Excavation will be carried out using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a 2m toothless ditching bucket down to the upper surface of the natural geology or the upper horizon of the archaeological deposits (whichever is uppermost). Subsequent cleaning for definition will be by hand. Plant or machines will not be allowed to track across areas once they have been stripped to the archaeological level, and pedestrian traffic will be kept to a minimum until the area has been signed off.
- 5.3 The attending archaeologist may request a delay in machine excavation or works in order to allow the recording of any features identified. Once the area has been stripped the deposits will be cleaned selectively and recorded. If digital mapping by total station EDM is necessary, this will require that a team of two be present. The attending archaeologist will confirm when mapping and recording in each area has been completed.
- 5.4 A full graphic, photographic and written record of all findings will be made. This recording will be by means of pre-printed pro-forma record cards for contexts and features, supplemented by plans (at 1:20 and 1:50), sections (at 1:10 and 1:20), and monochrome print and colour slide photography. All drawn records will be related to Ordnance Survey datum and published boundaries.
- 5.5 Provision will be made for the sampling of deposits for environmental and technological evidence where appropriate. Any environmental samples taken shall be bulk samples of a minimum of 20 litres. These shall be taken only from contexts

considered to be of a high potential and will be used as a basis for assessing potential further analysis.

- 5.6 Human remains disturbed by the work will be recorded and left *in-situ* in accordance with Home Office guidelines.
- 5.7 It is acknowledged and accepted that the contractor fill in the relevant OASIS data capture form on completion of each report stage of the project, and on deposition of the final archive.

#### *Contingency*

- 5.8 Should stripping reveal archaeology for which the resources allocated are insufficient to provide a satisfactory treatment, the supervising archaeologist will signal to all parties that such a find has been made. This area will then be protected until a site meeting can be arranged. Agreement would then be reached, in consultation with the County Archaeologist, for the appropriate excavation and recording of any archaeological deposits.
- 5.9 Where appropriate, a written summary of the discoveries, and a digitally mapped plan of the deposits will be prepared and forwarded to all parties. In consultation with the Shropshire County Council an amended specification would be prepared which would outline a strategy to deal with such discoveries. In such cases the variation in the scope of work would be agreed in advance with the Historic Environment Officer. A contingency will be set aside for any finds requiring remedial treatment.
- 5.10 Photographic material will be labelled and mounted. All finds will be cleaned and labelled. An appropriate laboratory will conserve any finds which require specialist treatment. Finds will be identified in a summary report produced by an appropriate specialist. The results of the strip and record will be described in an illustrated report which will comprise the following:
  - a. A full written description and interpretation of the results of all elements of the fieldwork.
  - b. A full written description and interpretation account of any excavated or recorded stratigraphic and structural evidence.
  - c. Full illustration with drawings to an appropriate scale showing location, trench layout, recorded structures, features and deposits, section drawings and selected photographs.
  - d. Any documentary research/historical analysis shall be supported by copies of relevant historic maps, documents and aerial photographs. All sources consulted shall be cited.
  - e. The report shall also include a succinct summary of the results suitable for printed publication.

- 5.10 A summary statement may be made available earlier if an early decision on possible mitigation strategies is required (see contingency statement 5.8 above).
- 5.11 Two copies will be submitted to the client, in addition to a copy being provided to the Historic Environment Officer, Shropshire County Council and one copy also to the Shropshire Sites and Monuments Record. This will be finalised within six months of the completion of fieldwork.

## **6. Staffing**

- 6.1 The evaluation will be managed for Birmingham Archaeology by Richard Cuttler BA MIFA, and supervised by an experienced Site Supervisor. Specialist staff will be consulted as appropriate. CVs for all members of staff involved in the project can be provided upon instruction.
- 6.2 Specialist staff will be, where appropriate:
- Dr Lawrence Barfield - Flint artefacts and small finds.
  - Wendy Smith- charred plant remains.
  - Emma Hancox - animal bone.
  - Dr James Greig - pollen and plant macro-fossils.
  - Dr David Smith - micro-fauna.
  - Dr Susan Limbrey - soils.
  - Dr Ann Woodward - prehistoric ceramics.
  - Stephanie Ratkai – Roman, medieval and Post-medieval pottery.
  - Dr Megan Brickley - Human Bone

## **7. Archive**

- 7.1 The site archive will conform to the guidelines set down in of the *Management of Archaeology Projects* (Appendix 3), and in Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for long term storage (UKIC 1990). An archive list will be sent to the County Archaeological Office for subsequent inclusion in the SMR. The written, drawn and photographic archive will be placed in an appropriate repository within a reasonable time of completion of the evaluation. Advice will be taken from the Historic Environment Officer.
- 7.2 The results of the strip and record will be submitted for publication to an appropriate academic journal, dependant upon the nature of the results. A copy of these results will be sent to the Historic Environment Officer and the SMR.
- 7.3 The treatment of all finds will conform to the Treasure Act (1996).

## **8. Timetable**

- 8.1 Commencement of works is scheduled for January 2004 and contact will be made with the client and their contractors JDM Accord in order to provide a specific start date.

## **9. General**

- 9.1 All project staff will adhere to the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The project will follow the requirements set down in the appropriate Standard and Guidance notes prepared by the Institute of Field Archaeologists. A detailed Risk Assessment will be prepared prior to the commencement of excavation works.

## **10. References**

- Ferris, I. 1991 *An archaeological evaluation at Craven Arms, Shropshire, 1991*  
BUFAU Report 157.
- Watson, M 2003 *Brief for a programme of Archaeological Work at Land off Long Lane, Craven Arms, Shropshire*. Shropshire County Council.

*9<sup>th</sup> December 2003, Birmingham Archaeology*