

Land Off Swinesherd Way,
Worcester

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION

Project No. 2139

[November 2010]

Land off Swinesherd Way

Spetchley, Worcester

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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for
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c/o J & F Design,
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Land off Swinesherd Way

Archaeological Evaluation, November 2010

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Land off Swinesherd Way, Spetchley, Worcester

Archaeological Evaluation, November 2010

SUMMARY

Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned in [November 2010] by J & J Design, acting on behalf of Diglis Lane Hall Trust, to undertake an archaeological evaluation in respect of the proposed erection of a gospel hall with associated car parking and landscaping at land off Swinesherd Way, Worcester (centred on NGR SO 8820 5414). The evaluation followed the completion of a brief prepared by Worcester City Council (2010).

The evaluation was carried out as the proposed development site was considered to be of possible archaeological significance. The work involved the excavation of eleven 26m long by 1.6m wide trenches across the site in order to assess the archaeological potential. The trenches were located over parts of the site to be most affected by the proposed development and the remainder were regularly spaced over the whole area.

The evaluation aimed to identify the date and extent of any archaeological features which would be adversely affected by future groundwork and to formulate a mitigation strategy. No evidence of any archaeological remains pre-dating the post-medieval period was discovered during the evaluation. A possible hedgeline was exposed in trench 6; the remainder of the trenches were devoid of archaeological features. In terms of the implications of the findings, the trenches located at the base of the natural gradient namely trenches 3 and 7 highlighted the risk of flooding across the eastern area of the site. An extensive network of criss crossing drains in these trenches and trench 11 illustrated the problems which any future development of the area will have to address.

Land off Swinesherd Way, Spetchley, Worcester

Archaeological Evaluation, November 2010

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1. Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by J & J Design on behalf of Diglis Lane Gospel Trust to undertake a programme of trial trenching ahead of a proposed church and car park development at Land off Swinesherd Way, Worcester (hereinafter referred to as the site, Planning Application Number PO8Q0705).
- 1.1.2. This report outlines the results of a field evaluation carried out between the 22nd and 26th of November 2010, and has been prepared in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations (IFA 1999).
- 1.1.3. The evaluation conformed to a brief produced by Worcester City Council (Appendix 1), and a Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2010, Appendix 2) which was approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to implementation, in line with national policy PPS5, points HE6 and HE7

2. LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1.1. The site is located on the north side of Swinesherd, 3km east of Worcester City and is centred on NGR SO 8820 5414 (Fig. 1).
- 2.1.2. The underlying geology consists of Keuper Marls of the middle Triassic period. The natural subsoil was dense reddish brown silty clay.
- 2.1.3. The site is currently in agricultural use.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1. No archaeological fieldwork is known to have taken place on the site. No heritage assets have been identified within the site area, however the site is considered to have the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, comprising buried archaeological remains.
- 3.1.2. Scatters of prehistoric flints from the surrounding areas attest to prehistoric activity from the Mesolithic period onwards. Recently attention has been drawn to small stream valleys on the east side of Worcester, where evidence of Iron Age activity includes preserved timber trackways. One such valley may cross the site (Worcester City Council brief 2010).
- 3.1.3. A sub-rectangular enclosure was recorded as a distinctive cropmark to the northwest of the site. The continuation of an enclosure which was tentatively dated to the Roman period was highlighted by excavation work to the north of the site WCM101287, Fig. 3). A Roman brooch and several sherds of Roman pottery were recovered during test pitting to the immediate north of the site (WCM101628).
- 3.1.4. The first known documented reference to Swinesherd is in 974AD, and a medieval court leet was held here until the 18th century (WCM91034). A partially cobbled

medieval holloway track (WCM98574) is recorded just to the north of the site, leading to the later 19th century Hornhill Farm (WCM98223) which was largely destroyed by the 20th century. Medieval ridge and furrow has also be identified to the north of the site (WCM98435).

- 3.1.5. A watching brief undertaken on the Strensham to Worcester Aqueduct to the north-west of the site recorded collections of unstratified post-medieval finds (WCM101235, WCM 101236 and WCM101237). The 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 4) indicates that the site was once part of a much larger field.

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 4.1.1. The principal aim of the evaluation was to determine the character, state of preservation and the potential significance of any buried remains.

- 4.1.2. More specific aims were to:

- Understanding of the hydrological system and identification of areas of potential and preservation.
- Evidence of prehistoric activity in minor stream valleys.
- The hinterland of Roman Worcester.
- The agricultural hinterland in the Anglo-Saxon period.
- Evidence for the origins and character of activity at Swinesherd.
- Investigation of rural sites in the Worcester hinterland.

5. METHODOLOGY

- 5.1.1. The proposed development area covers approximately 1.15 hectares. A total of 11 trenches were excavated across the site totalling 460 m² (26m x 1.6m) which provided a 4% sample of the total area (Fig. 2).

- 5.1.2. Trenches were located over areas to be most affected by the proposed development and the remainder regularly spaced over the whole area. The trial-trenches were surveyed-in using an EDM total station and located on the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

- 5.1.3. All topsoil and modern overburden was removed using a JCB type mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket, under direct archaeological supervision, down to the top of the uppermost archaeological horizon or the subsoil. Subsequent cleaning and excavation was by hand. A representative sample of archaeological features and deposits were manually sample excavated. This was done to sufficiently define their character and to obtain suitable dating evidence using the following strategy;

- 50% of discrete features, or an adequate sample to characterise larger features (including pits) which extend beyond the limits of the trench.
- Where practical and including linears, sections were no less than 1m in length

- 5.1.4. Archaeological deposits were not completely excavated unless it was deemed unavoidable. The depth of archaeological deposits across the site was assessed, although the full length of every trench was not necessarily excavated down to natural.
- 5.1.5. All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present. Features were planned at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50, and sections drawn of all cut features and significant vertical stratigraphy at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20. A comprehensive written record was maintained using a continuous numbered context system on pro-forma cards. Written records and scale plans were supplemented by photographs using black and white monochrome, colour slide and digital photography.
- 5.1.6. Deposits were sampled for retrieval and assessment of the preservation conditions and potential for analysis of biological remains. The environmental sampling policy followed the guidelines contained in the Birmingham Archaeology Fieldwork Manual and Environmental Archaeology: a guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation (English Heritage 2002). Sampling strategies for wooden structures conformed to guidelines set out in Waterlogged wood: Guidelines on the recording, sampling, conservation and curation of waterlogged wood. (Brunning 1996).
- 5.1.7. Recovered finds were cleaned, marked and remedial conservation work undertaken as necessary. Treatment of all finds conformed to guidance contained within the Birmingham Archaeology Fieldwork Manual and First Aid for Finds (Watkinson and Neal 1998).
- 5.1.8. The full site archive includes all artefactual remains recovered from the site. The site archive will be prepared according to guidelines set down 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 paper archive will be deposited with the appropriate repository subject to permission from the landowner.

6. RESULTS

- 6.1.1. The following section describes the results from the excavation of the eleven trenches.
- 6.1.2. The trenches were aligned north-south and east-west; trenches numbered 1, 2 and 3 were located across the northern edge of the proposed development area within the footprint of the building and carpark. Trenches 4, 5, 6 and 7 were situated across the central area of the site, also within the proposed development site. However trenches 8, 9, 10, and 11 were positioned across the southern edge of the site outside the immediate area of the building and car park (Fig. 2).
- 6.1.3. In each trench the stratigraphic sequence was the same with the natural subsoil overlain by a layer of subsoil which was sealed by a layer of topsoil. For example, the natural within Trench 2 was a reddish-brown silty clay (202), which was located at a depth of 51.620m AOD (Plates 1 and 2) and overlain by a layer of medium brown silty sandy clay subsoil (201), 0.48 in depth, which was sealed by 0.28m of topsoil (200, Fig. 2).

6.1.4. Within Trenches 3 and 7 which were situated towards the eastern edge of the site at the base of the gradient, the natural subsoil (302/702) was light grey in colour and the overlying layer of subsoil (301/701) was slightly deeper measuring 0.65m in depth. This area of the site appeared to have been subjected to flooding as the natural subsoil had been cut by a series of modern drainage ditches which were aligned north-south and east-west. In trench 3, which was situated at the bottom of the slope of the field, the natural subsoil was located at a depth of 50.912m AOD.

6.1.5. In trench 5 a possible linear gully (504) was located at the northern end of the trench and was aligned northeast-southwest. The irregular edges and sterile sandy infill (503) suggested a geological feature. At a distance of fifteen metres from the eastern end of trench 6 the natural reddish brown silty clay subsoil (602) had been cut by n-s aligned linear ditch/ gully (604) which measured 0.17m in depth and 1.10m in width and may have represented a former hedgeline. The overlying subsoil (601) contained 19th-20th century pottery. The excavation of trench 8 illustrated that the southwestern area of the site had been used for the dumping of modern waste material. No evidence of archaeological features was uncovered in any of the trenches.

6.1.6. A table of the level of the natural subsoil in each trench.

Trench Number	Level of natural subsoil (North End)	Level of natural subsoil (South End)	Level of natural subsoil (East end)	Level of natural subsoil (West end)
1			52.942m AOD	52.902m AOD
2			52.820m AOD	52.284m AOD
3	51.246m AOD	50.912m AOD		
4			54.872m AOD	55.019m AOD
5	53.630m AOD	52.968m AOD		
6			51.722m AOD	52.544m AOD
7	51.100m AOD	50.864m AOD		
8	54.032m AOD	52.998m AOD		
9			51.865m AOD	52.975m AOD
10	51.451m AOD	50.959m AOD		
11			50.917m AOD	50.853m AOD

7. FINDS

- 7.1.1. A small amount of pottery and ceramic tile was recovered from the site. The material was quantified by count and weight and examined macroscopically for the purposes of this report.
- 7.1.2. Trench 6 produced four fragments of ceramic tile (601). This tile was made from a soft, sandy orange fabric, and was very worn. No diagnostic fragments were recovered, and as such it is difficult to give any definite date for these fragments.
- 7.1.3. Pottery was recovered from Trenches 6 (601) and 11 (1101). Trench 6 produced one rim fragment from a bisque or biscuit-fired porcelain vessel which dated from the late 19th-20th century. Trench 11 produced one base sherd and one body sherd from salt-glazed stoneware jars. A rim sherd from a blue and white transfer-printed plate and one sherd from the rim of a Mottled Ware vessel was also recovered. These sherds were all dated to the mid-late 19th century (Emma Collins, pers. comm.).

8. DISCUSSION

- 8.1.1. The archaeological evaluation did not expose any evidence of activity pre-dating the post-medieval period. A possible field hedgeline was uncovered in trench 6. An increased depth of overburden was recorded in trenches 3 and 7 in the eastern area of the site, which can be attributed to material being eroded down the natural gradient of the field. The extensive network of field drains which were cut into the natural subsoil and were partially exposed in trenches 3, 7 and 11 in the eastern area emphasized the propensity of the site to flooding.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was commissioned by J & J Design, on behalf of Diglis Lane Gospel Hall Trust. Thanks are due to James Dinn, who monitored the project on behalf of Worcester City Council. Work on site was undertaken by Bob Burrows and Lis Bishop. Bob Burrows produced the written report which was illustrated by Nigel Dodds, and edited by Sam Paul who also managed the project for Birmingham Archaeology.

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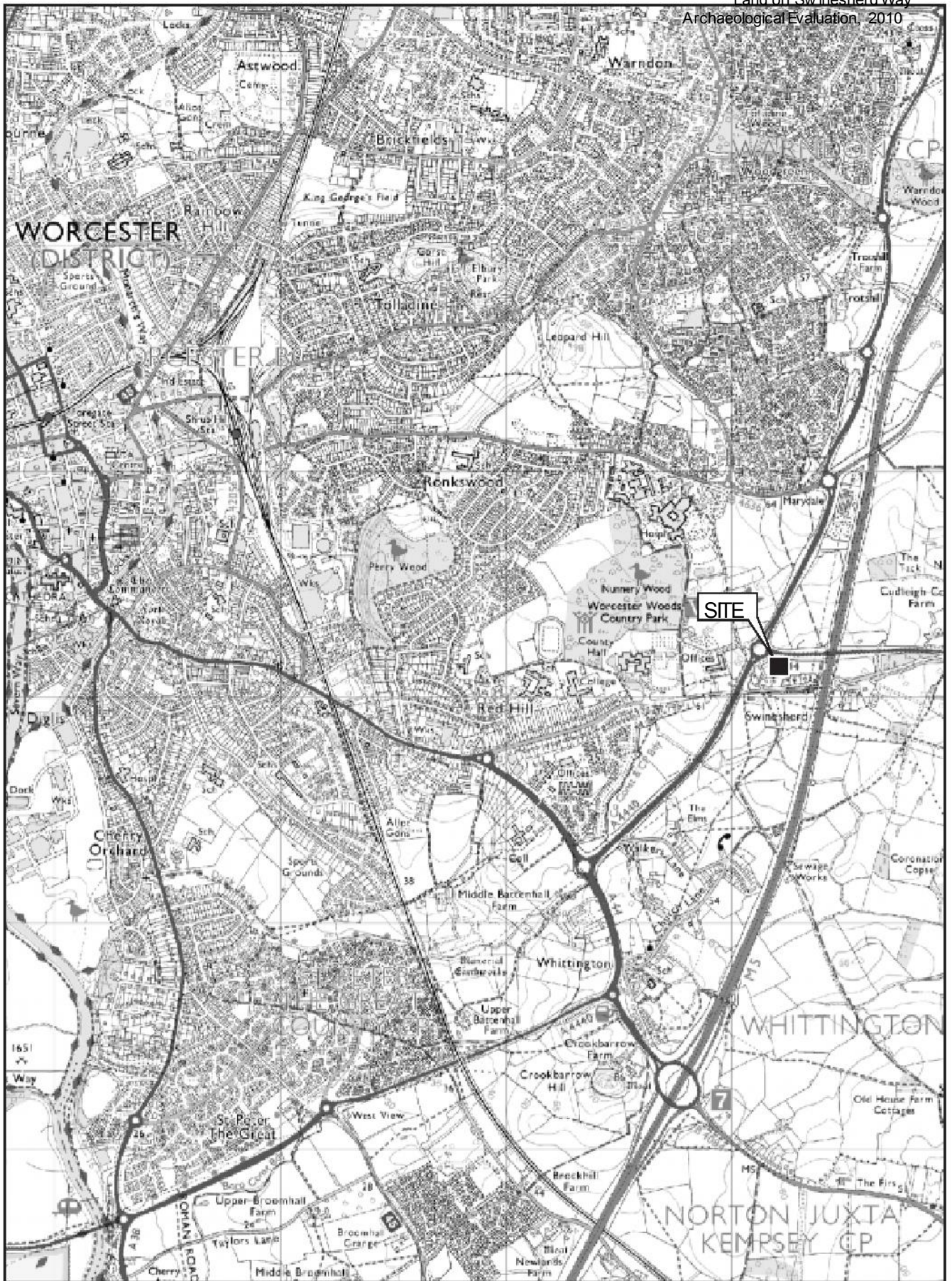
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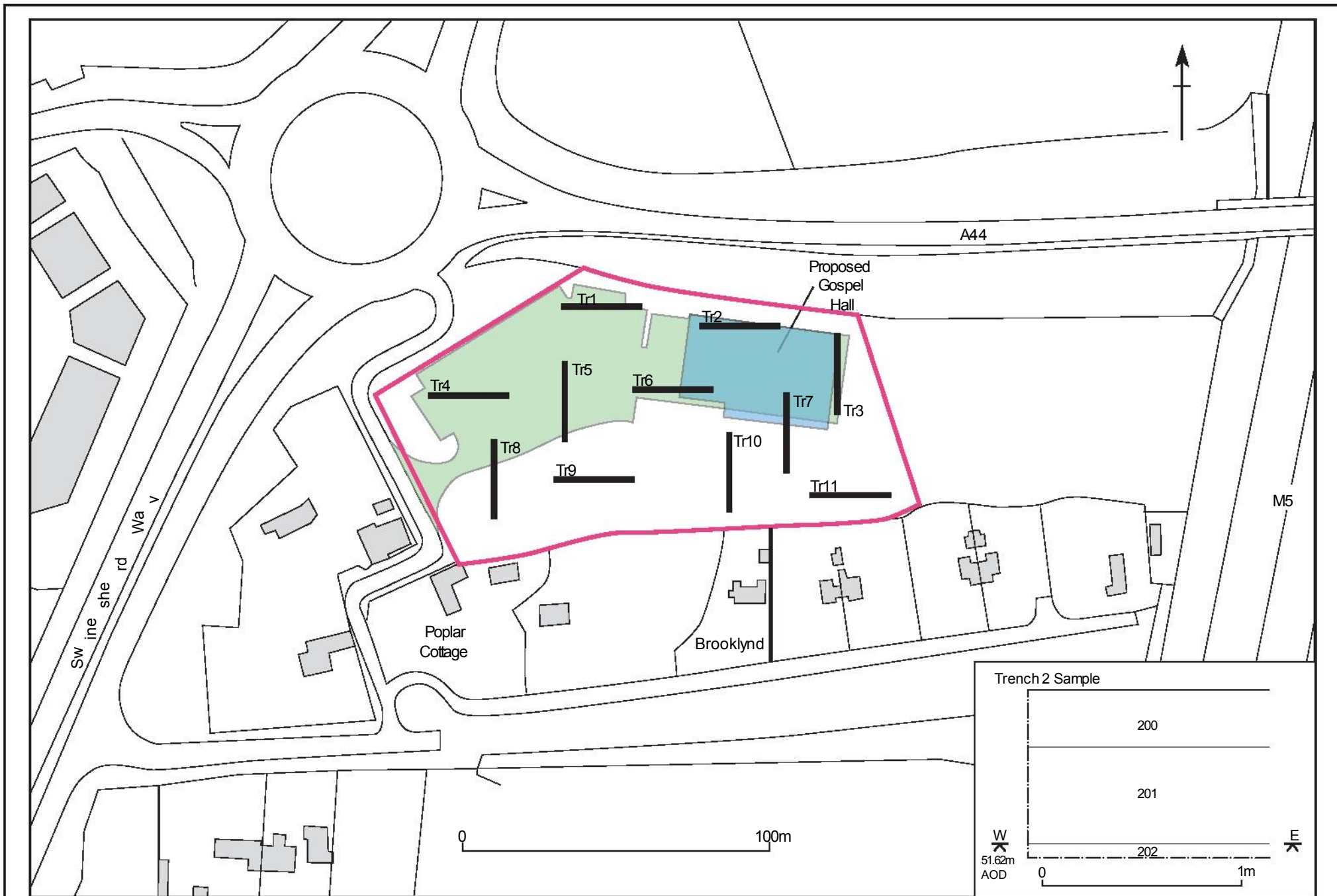
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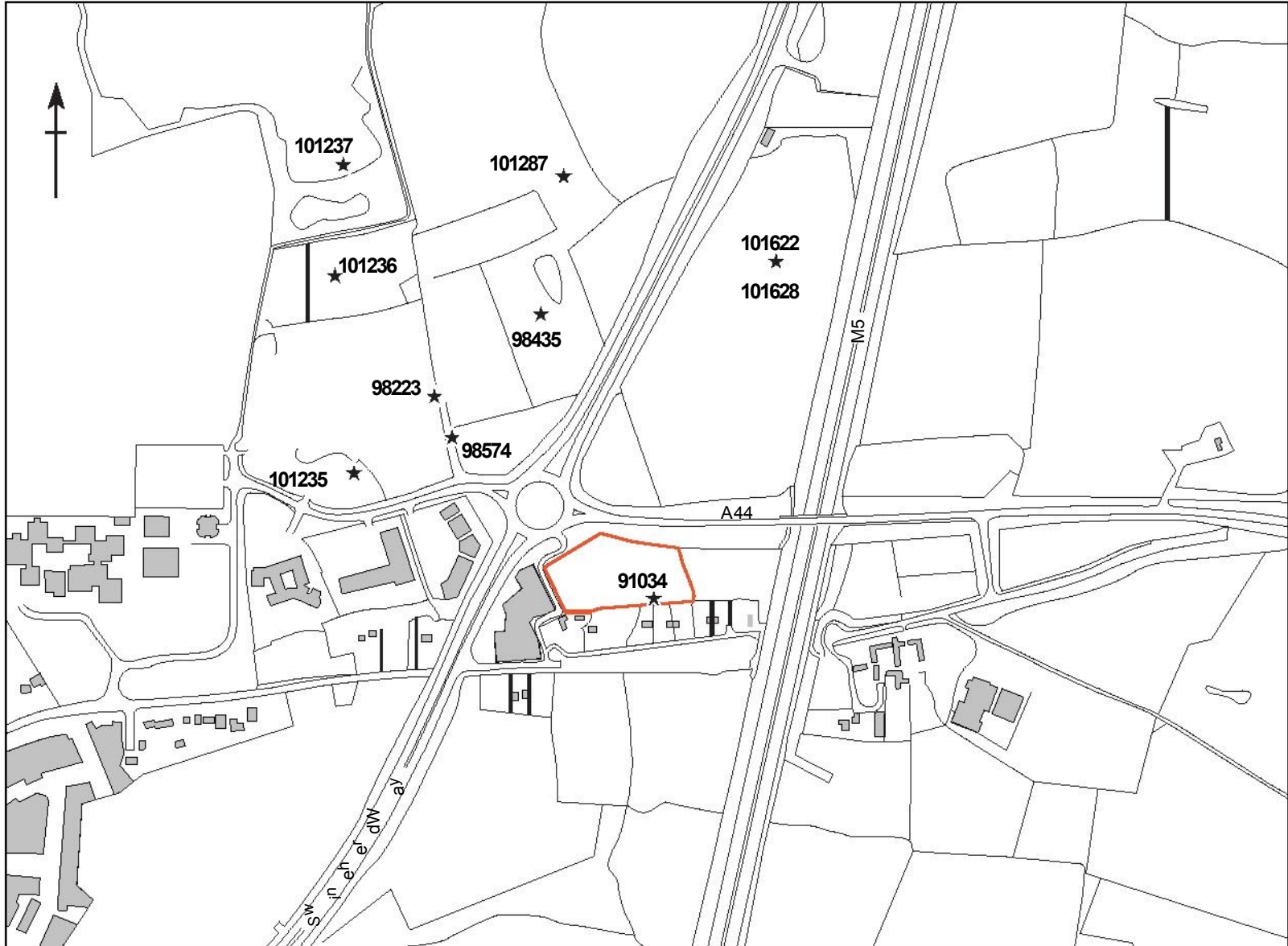
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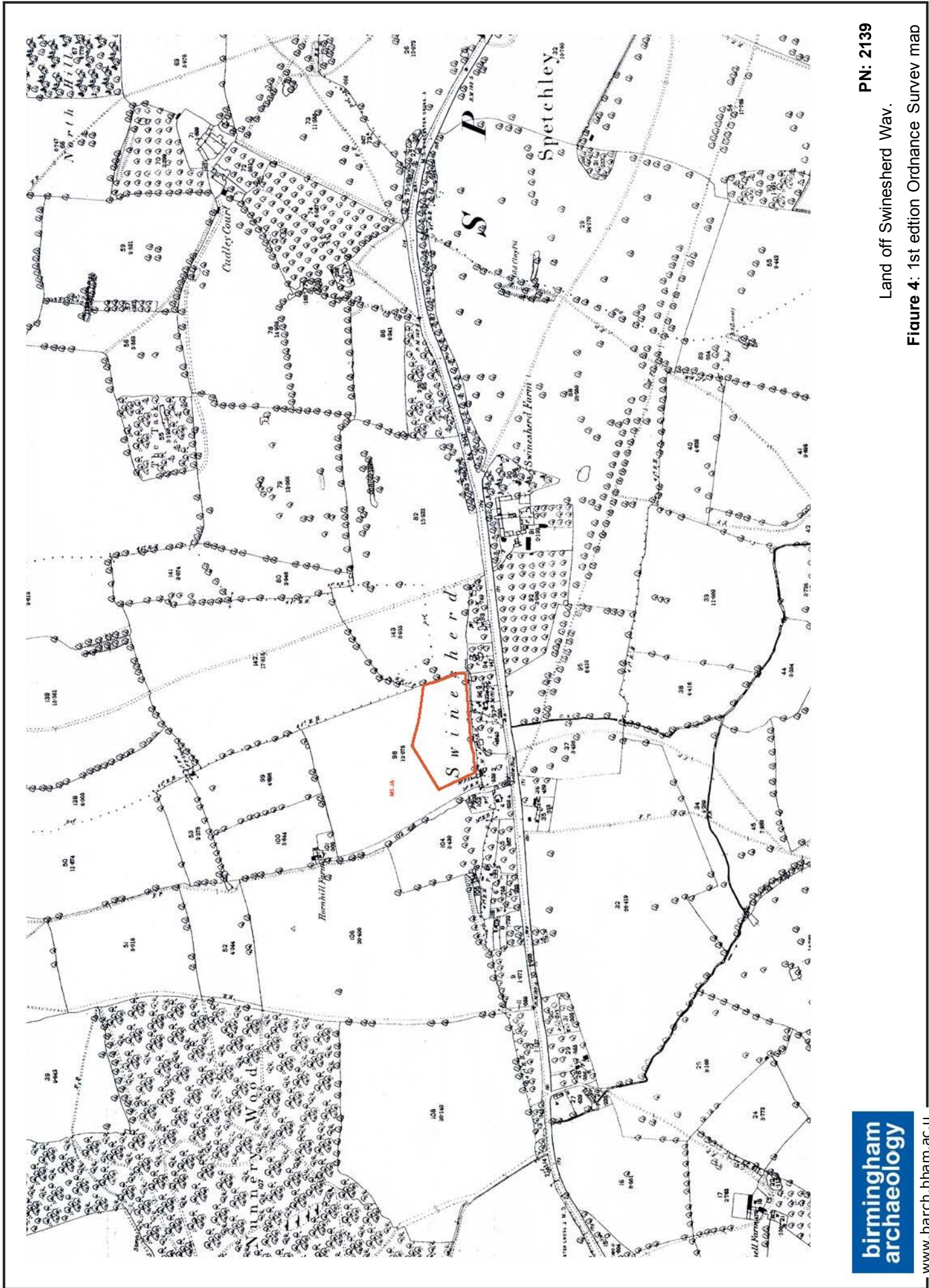
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Land off Swinesherd Wav.

Figure 4: 1st edition Ordnance Survey map

