

Archaeology Wales

Sutton Grange, Oteley Rd Shrewsbury

Archaeological Field Evaluation



By
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Report No. 1091

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Sutton Grange, Oteley Rd Shrewsbury

Archaeological Field Evaluation

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Report No: 1091

Date: **December 2012**

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Non-Technical Summary

This report results from work undertaken by Archaeology Wales Ltd (AW) for Andrew Josephs Associates on behalf of Taylor Wimpey. It draws upon the results gained by a field evaluation on land at Oteley Rd, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, as part of the submission of a planning application for the construction of residential properties with associated access, drainage and landscaping. Previous archaeological work in the area includes a geophysical survey undertaken by WYAS. St John's, an originally 12th century church, is located on the south eastern boundary of the site. Trenches in this area showed it to be the only site of archaeological potential within the assessment area.

1 Introduction

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In November 2012 Archaeology Wales Ltd (AW) carried out a field evaluation on land adjacent to Oteley Rd, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. The assessment area covers approximately 52000sqm, sits at approximately 60m above ordnance datum and is centred on NGR SJ 50078 10459 (Figs 1&2). The work was carried out at the request of Andrew Josephs Associates on behalf of Taylor Wimpey.
- 1.1.2 A WSI for the work to be undertaken was drawn up by Chris E Smith (AW) which was subsequently approved by Andy Wigley, Shropshire County Council's Historic Environment Officer.
- 1.1.3 Previous work undertaken in the area includes a recent geophysical survey by WYAS.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The underlying solid geology of the site is composed of Westphalian and Stephanian rocks, undivided of 'barren' red lithology (Geological Survey Map, 2001).
- 1.2.2 The site is located on the southern outskirts of Shrewsbury. It is bounded to the south by the route of the B4380 and to the north by the course of the Rea Brook. The site is composed of ploughed arable fields sloping off to the north.
- 1.2.3 The archaeological field evaluation pertains to the proposed development of the site for new dwellings with associated landscaping, services and access provision.

1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 1.3.1 The site has been the subject of a detailed cultural heritage desk based assessment undertaken prior to the field evaluation by Andrew Josephs Associates (2012). Below is a brief summary of the archaeological and historical background to the assessment area and its surroundings.

- 1.3.2 The landscape immediately surrounding the assessment area contains a large amount of archaeological features dating from the Neolithic period onwards.
- 1.3.3 Located in 1965, some 380m to the east of the assessment area, were a Neolithic pit and linear ditches together with Neolithic pottery, a Bronze Age Ring ditch and urn, a Bronze Age cremation cemetery containing charcoal, cremated bone and pottery and some undated linear features. Further Neolithic features including a causewayed ditch, possible palisade and residual Neolithic pottery were located 100m to the east of the assessment area (Josephs, 2012).
- 1.3.4 The landscape around the assessment area appears to contain only a limited amount of features of Iron Age and Roman date. Though the Roman town of Wroxeter, the fourth largest Roman settlement in Britain, is only 6.5km to the south east, and the disputed line of a Roman road passes either directly to the north or south of the assessment area, during the Roman period Shrewsbury appears not to have been a settlement of any significance (Josephs, 2012).
- 1.3.5 Excavation in 2005, in advance of the construction of a new football stadium, located two circular drip gulleys dating from the Late Iron Age. Late Iron Age/early Roman activity was represented by a double ditched enclosure. Ceramic analysis dated this phase to the 1st-2nd century AD (Josephs, 2012).
- 1.3.6 Notwithstanding its proximity to Shrewsbury, and being within the Hundred of Shrewsbury, in the late-Saxon period the township of Sutton belonged to Wenlock Priory, some 18km to the south-east. The translated Domesday Book entry of 1086 reads '*The church [of St. Mildeburga, i.e. Wenlock Priory] itself held and holds Sudtone*'; there was 1 hide, eight men (freemen and villans) and four ploughs and it was worth 16 shillings, a rise from the 12 shillings of its 1066 valuation.
- 1.3.7 The entry would suggest a fairly small settlement and there is no mention of either a church or a mill. Whilst the absence of a reference to the former does not prove that there was no church – the Survey being concerned mainly with income – the lack of any reference to a mill possibly indicates that one did not then exist despite the proximity of the Rea Brook.
- 1.3.8 Approximately 100m east of the assessment area, a number of features associated with the deserted medieval village of Sudtone have been excavated. These included: a large C13 or C14 baking oven; a gully-defined sub-rectangular structure, possibly a long house; seven further ovens and a sunken floor of large stones in association with which were large quantities of C13 and C14 pottery. An eighteenth century furnace or kiln and a deeply rutted cobbled road were also found.
- 1.3.9 The former parish church of St. John is located butting the south eastern corner of the assessment area. The church has 12th or early 13th century origins and possibly replaced an earlier timber structure.
- 1.3.10 At the dissolution of Wenlock Priory, Sutton church became the charge of the owner of the manor, John Mackworth. The church appears to have been in fairly poor condition,

because it had to be re-roofed in the later-16th century; a pulpit and reading desk in the church were dated to 1582, which could also date the present roof trusses (Morris *cited in* Josephs, 2012).

- 1.3.11 The church was still being used in the mid-19th century, and burials took place in the aisle in 1851 and 1853. In 1886 it was ‘used as a farm building, the roof ruinous, windows unglazed, and the door open to sheep which grazed in the churchyard...The Norman font and holy table remaining in the general neglect’. Local protests led to Lord Berwick, still the impropriator, funding repairs to the roof and railing the churchyard and in 1887 the Archdeacon wrote that ‘through the liberality of Lord Berwick, the preservation of the remains in the future, and the protection of the consecrated ground, had been secured in a most satisfactory manner’ (Morris *cited in* Josephs, 2012).
- 1.3.12 In the Post-medieval period there were small and unsuccessful coal mines sunk in the southern part of the parish, part of the Shrewsbury coalfield. Coal was discovered near to the town as early as the 16th century but the output of the field was always fairly small. At its peak in the mid-19th century there were around 300 miners, mainly around Hanwood and Asterley, but by that time the Sutton section, apparently mainly productive in the 18th century, had been worked out. There were still cottages to the south of Sutton called ‘Coalpit Cottages’ until the early-20th century (Josephs, 2012).

2 Aims and Objectives

2.1 Field Evaluation

2.1.1 The field evaluation was undertaken to:

- Establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within and immediately surrounding the area of proposed development
- Determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present
- Establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological features and deposits
- Produce a record of the features.

3 Methodology

3.1 Field Evaluation

3.1.1 Excavation of the twelve evaluation trenches (Fig 2) was undertaken using a JCB 3CX mechanical excavator under close archaeological supervision and by hand.

- 3.1.2 Each trench measured 30m in length by 1.8m wide. The maximum depth reached was 1.2m in trench 9.
- 3.1.3 The on-site work was undertaken by Ian Davies. The overall management of the project was undertaken by Chris E Smith (MifA). All areas were photographed using high resolution digital photography.
- 3.1.4 All on-site illustrations were undertaken on drafting film using recognised conventions and scales (1:10, 1:20, 1:50) as appropriate.
- 3.1.5 All works were undertaken in accordance with the IfA's *Standards and Guidance: for an archaeological evaluation* (2008, revised 2011) and current Health and Safety legislation.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the excavation.

4 Evaluation Results

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 4.1.1 The topsoil varied between the trenches across the assessment area. Topsoil deposits in those trenches located with the western field of the assessment area were much deeper (between 0.3m and 0.5m) than those in the eastern fields (up to 0.2m). The natural deposits also varied between areas with trenches to the south showing a compact gravel natural whilst trenches elsewhere showed hard orange clay deposits.
- 4.1.2 The ground conditions were predominantly dry in the majority of trenches though the three most northerly trenches contained a lot of standing ground water resulting in localised flooding.

4.2 Description

- 4.2.1 Trench 1. Trench 1 (Fig 2, Plate 1) measured 30x1.8m and was aligned north-south. It was located in the south western corner of the western field. Mechanical excavation showed the mid brown silt topsoil (101) to be approximately 0.35m deep. It overlay a more compact orange brown clay subsoil (102). This was found to be approximately 0.3m to 0.45m deep. Natural orange brown clay deposits (103), with occasional gravel inclusions, were exposed at a depth of around 0.7m below the current ground surface. No finds or features of archaeological significance were located within this trench.

- 4.2.2 Trench 2. Trench 2 (Fig 2, Plate 2) measured 30x1.8m and was aligned north-south. It was located in the middle of the western field. Mechanical excavation showed the mid brown silt topsoil (201) to be approximately 0.4m deep. It overlay a more compact orange brown clay subsoil (202). This was found to be approximately 0.4m to 0.5m deep. Natural orange brown clay deposits (203), with more frequent gravel inclusions, were exposed at a depth of around 0.8m – 0.9m below the current ground surface. No finds or features of archaeological significance were located within this trench.
- 4.2.3 Trench 3. Trench 3 (Fig 2, Plate 3) measured 30x1.8m and was aligned east-west. It was located in the middle of the western field, to the north of trenches 1 and 2. Mechanical excavation showed the mid brown silt topsoil (301) to be approximately 0.55m deep. It overlay a more compact orange brown clay subsoil (302). This was found to be approximately 0.2m deep, significantly shallower than in trenches 1 and 2. Compact natural orange brown clay deposits (303), with frequent gravel inclusions, were exposed at a depth of around 0.7m below the current ground surface. No finds or features of archaeological significance were located within this trench.
- 4.2.4 Trench 4. Trench 4 (Fig 2, Plate 4) measured 30x1.8m and was aligned east-west. It was located in the middle of the western field, adjacent to the eastern field boundary. Mechanical excavation showed the mid brown silt topsoil (401) to be approximately 0.3m deep. It overlay a compact orange brown clay subsoil (402). This was found to be approximately 0.5m deep. Natural orange brown clay deposits (403), with more only occasional, localised, gravel inclusions, were exposed at a depth of around 0.8m below the current ground surface. No finds or features of archaeological significance were located within this trench.
- 4.2.5 Trench 5. Trench 5 (Fig 2, Plate 5) measured 20x1.8m and was aligned east-west. It was located in the south eastern corner of the western field, adjacent to the eastern and southern field boundaries. Mechanical excavation showed the dark brown silt topsoil (501) to be approximately 0.3m deep. It contained frequent inclusions of modern material such as brick, rubble, tarmac, glass and plastic. It overlay firmly compacted orange brown clay subsoil (502) which contained further large amounts of modern material including bricks and breeze blocks. Excavation ceased at a total depth of 0.7m owing to the extremely compact nature of the ground and the obvious large dump of modern material. No finds or features of archaeological significance were located within this trench.
- 4.2.1 Trench 6. Trench 6 (Figs 2&3, Plates 6-8) measured 30x1.8m and was aligned north-south. It was located in the centre of the eastern field of the assessment area, overlaying the line of a defunct field boundary. Mechanical excavation showed the mid brown silt topsoil (601) to be approximately 0.2m deep. It overlay a more friable orange brown clay subsoil (602). This was found to be approximately 0.3m deep. Natural orange brown stiff clay deposits (603), with no gravel inclusions, were exposed at a depth of around 0.5m below the current ground surface. At the southern end of the trench, located on a slope, only dark brown/black silt deposits (606) were exposed beneath the topsoil. Within the deposits on the slope the line of a land drain (604) was evident. It

also appeared to cut an earlier land drain (605). Owing to the presence of the land drains excavation on the slope ceased at a depth of around 0.25m. Cut into the dark brown/black deposit (606) was the line of a modern ditch [607]. This was backfilled with broken ceramic tiles and plastic material (608) and was found to be 0.4m deep. A further ditch [609] was observed within the middle of the trench, at the base of the slope. This was clearly cut through both the subsoil (602) and the natural clay deposits (603). Excavation of a section across the ditch showed it to be 2m wide with a maximum depth of 1m. The primary fill (610) was composed of a dark brown silt clay with modern inclusions whilst the secondary, upper, fill (611) was composed primarily of mixed clay, rubble and brick. Excavation of the ditch showed a natural gravel deposit (612) beneath the natural clay (603) into which the ditch was cut. No finds or features of archaeological significance were located within this trench.

4.2.2 Trench 7. Trench 7 (Figs 2&4, Plate 9) measured 30x1.8m and was aligned east-west. It was located in the south eastern corner of the eastern field. Mechanical excavation showed the mid/dark brown silt topsoil (701) to be approximately 0.15m deep. It overlay a firmly compacted orange brown silt deposit (702) with frequent gravel inclusions (gravel making up c. 85 of the context). Excavation into this deposit ceased at a depth of 0.3m below the current ground surface owing to the presence of features cut into the gravel deposit (702). At the eastern end of the trench an area of crushed brick and rubble (703) was found to be a rough track surface of modern date, laid down to improve hearse access to the nearby Greek Orthodox church. A small (0.4m radius) pit feature [705] was located in the centre of the trench. Excavation of a half section of the pit found it to be 0.2m deep with shallow sloping sides and a flat base. It contained a single mid brown silt fill (706). Several animal bones were located within the fill including a small long bone complete with attached animal identification leg ring. The pit feature was thus deemed to be modern and represent either an animal burial or an animal's burrow. At the western end of the trench a row of three post holes [707-9] were located. Each was small, up to 0.25m in diameter, and equally spaced. Excavation of the postholes proved them to be quite shallow, the deepest being only 0.2m. Each contained a single mid brown silt fill containing coke fragments. The line of the posts matches that of the access track to the church so may represent the line of a comparatively modern boundary. The final feature located with trench 7 was a 0.3m wide linear feature [710] crossing the centre of the trench at 90°. Excavation of the feature proved it to be extremely ephemeral with a maximum depth 0.05m. It contained a single fill composed of grey brown silt (711) with no finds. No further finds or features of archaeological significance were located within this trench.

4.2.3 Trenches 8&9. Trenches 8 & 9 (Figs 2, 5 & 6, Plates 11-16) each measured 30x1.8m and were arranged so as to form a 'T' shape (Trench 8 ran east-west with trench 9 running north-south, butting the eastern end of trench 8). Mechanical excavation of trench 8 showed the mid/dark brown silt topsoil (801) to be approximately 0.2m deep. Subsoil deposits in the western end of trench 8 varied from those in the eastern half. Within the western half, beneath the topsoil, a friable orange brown clay subsoil (802) was located. This was found to be approximately 0.2m deep and overlay a compact orange/brown clay deposit with frequent gravel inclusions (803). Beneath the topsoil

(801) in the eastern half of the trench, a gravel rich dark brown silt subsoil was present (804). This measured 0.3m in depth and was found to overlie a firmly compacted natural gravel and silt deposit (805). The extent of the natural gravel deposit (805) appeared to spread halfway along the length of trench 8 where it eventually gave way to the orange brown clay and gravel natural (803) seen elsewhere.

- 4.2.4 Two features were located cut into the natural deposits within the base of trench 8. The first was a linear feature [806] 0.5m wide and running north-south, crossing the trench at 90°. Excavation showed it to be 0.2m deep, contain a single silt fill (807) and no finds. The second feature [808] was roughly rectangular in shape, measuring 0.7x0.5m. Excavation showed it to be shallow (c.0.15m) and contain the skeletons of two dogs, each deliberately placed. Two sherds of medieval ceramic were recovered from the grave, one directly below the skeleton and at the base of the cut. A further feature located within trench 8 proved to be a modern drain.
- 4.2.5 Trench 9, butting trench 8, showed the same compact natural gravel deposit (903) beneath a mixed clay and gravel subsoil (902). The gravel deposit extended across the whole of trench 9 though was partially obscured at the northern end by deep silt deposits (904) associated with a now backfilled pond feature [905]. Excavation of a sondage through the silt deposits showed the continuation of the natural gravel deposit beneath. Hand cleaning of the natural deposit (903) at the southern end of trench 9 revealed a total of 20 sherds of medieval ceramic located on the surface of the gravel. All of the sherds appeared unabraded. Further excavation of the natural gravel deposit (903) in this area located what were initially interpreted as features though, upon excavation of a sondage, appeared to be variations within the natural gravel banding which makes up the topographic ridge bounding the southern side of the assessment area.
- 4.2.6 The pond feature [905], at the northern end of trench 9, appears to have covered a large area and was backfilled within the last 30 years by the landowners (Frank Pers.Comm). The evaluation trench was cut to the bottom of the pond feature and no features of archaeological interest were located beneath.
- 4.2.7 Trenches 10/11/12. Trenches 10-12 (Fig 2, Plates 17-19) each measured 30x1.8m. Trench 10 was aligned north-south whilst trenches 11 & 12 were both aligned east-west. Each were located in the northern area of the eastern field. The topsoil deposit in the three trenches was found to be reasonably uniform, being composed of dark brown silt up to 0.2m deep in each. The subsoil deposits were similarly uniform and were composed of mid brown silt with no gravel inclusions. The natural clay deposits in the three trenches were composed of a heavy mottled yellow/brown/grey and, owing to seepage of groundwater, were very waterlogged. Two very narrow (0.1m) linear features were noted cut into the natural clay of trench 12. After consultation with the landowner these were taken to represent moled land drains. No finds or features of archaeological significance were located within these trenches.

5 Finds

5.1 Ceramics

- 5.1.1 The ceramics located within trenches 8 & 9 all appeared to be medieval, with the exception of two likely early post-medieval sherds. They are currently with Paul Courtney undergoing specialist analysis.

5.2 Animal Bone

- 5.2.1 The bones from the two animal skeletons recovered from trench 8 are very poorly preserved and very friable. Initial analysis of the skulls and scapulae with comparative examples (O'Connor, 2000 & Rackham, 1994) would suggest that they were both dogs.

6 Discussion and Interpretation

6.1 Overall interpretation

- 6.1.1 The overall interpretation gained from the work carried out is that past activity appears to have been limited to the area immediately around the church. The remainder of the assessment area appears to be largely archaeologically sterile.
- 6.1.2 Based on the results of the field evaluation, the area around the Greek Orthodox Church, in the south east corner of the eastern field, is the only area to have shown any archaeological potential. Only trenches 8 & 9 produced medieval ceramic which indicates activity being local to the site of the church.
- 6.1.3 A lack of further discarded domestic debris and complete lack of structural features within trenches 8&9 suggests medieval activity other than settlement. Also, the unabraded nature of the ceramics appears likely to suggest that they have not been moved since deposition. The location of unabraded medieval ceramic sat on top of the natural gravel ridge appears to suggest an area of dumping rather than settlement activity. Specialist analysis of the ceramics is currently being undertaken which will allow for closer dating.
- 6.1.4 Given the waterlogged nature of trenches 10-12, it is perhaps somewhat unsurprising that past activity has been limited to the drier, raised, gravel ridge to the south.
- 6.1.5 The two dog skeletons located in trench 8 had medieval ceramic with the grave cut. Whilst it is possible that the ceramic was residual the possibility remains that the double dog burial is medieval in date. No comparable examples could be located though the bones will form part of the archive should further study be deemed necessary.
- 6.1.6 Trenches 1-7 & 10-12 produced no finds or features of archaeological significance.
- 6.1.7 The large area of disturbance located on the geophysical survey in the area of trenches 8 and 9 was formed by both the rubble backfill of the pond feature and the natural gravel ridge to the south.

- 6.1.8 Similarly, the area of disturbance on the geophysical survey in the area of trench 5 was caused by large amounts of dumped modern building material.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1.1 Based on the results of the field evaluation it is felt that the only area within the red line boundary as shown on figure 7 to have shown any archaeological potential is that highlighted around the church.
- 7.1.2 Should any further archaeological mitigation works be required, it is suggested they be limited to this area.

8 Acknowledgements

- 8.1.1 Thanks are due to Andrew Josephs for liaising on-site, to Andrew Frank for his on-site assistance and to Andrew Wigley (SCC) for assistance with monitoring.

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O'Connor, T. 2000. *The Archaeology of Animal Bones*. Sutton Publishing, Stroud

Rackham, J. 1994. *Animal Bones*. Bath Press, Avon

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APPENDIX I: Figures

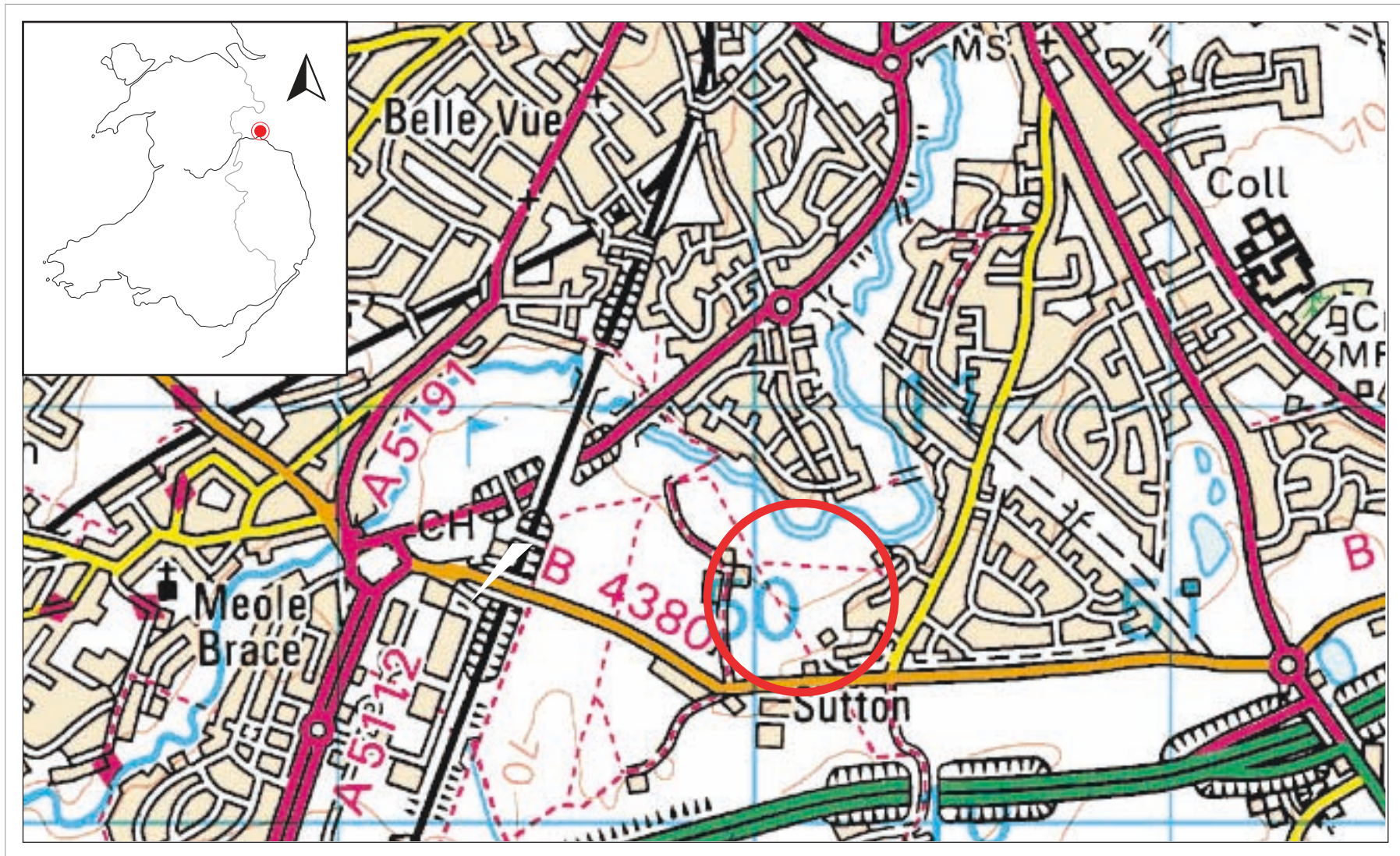


Fig 01: Map showing location of assessment area

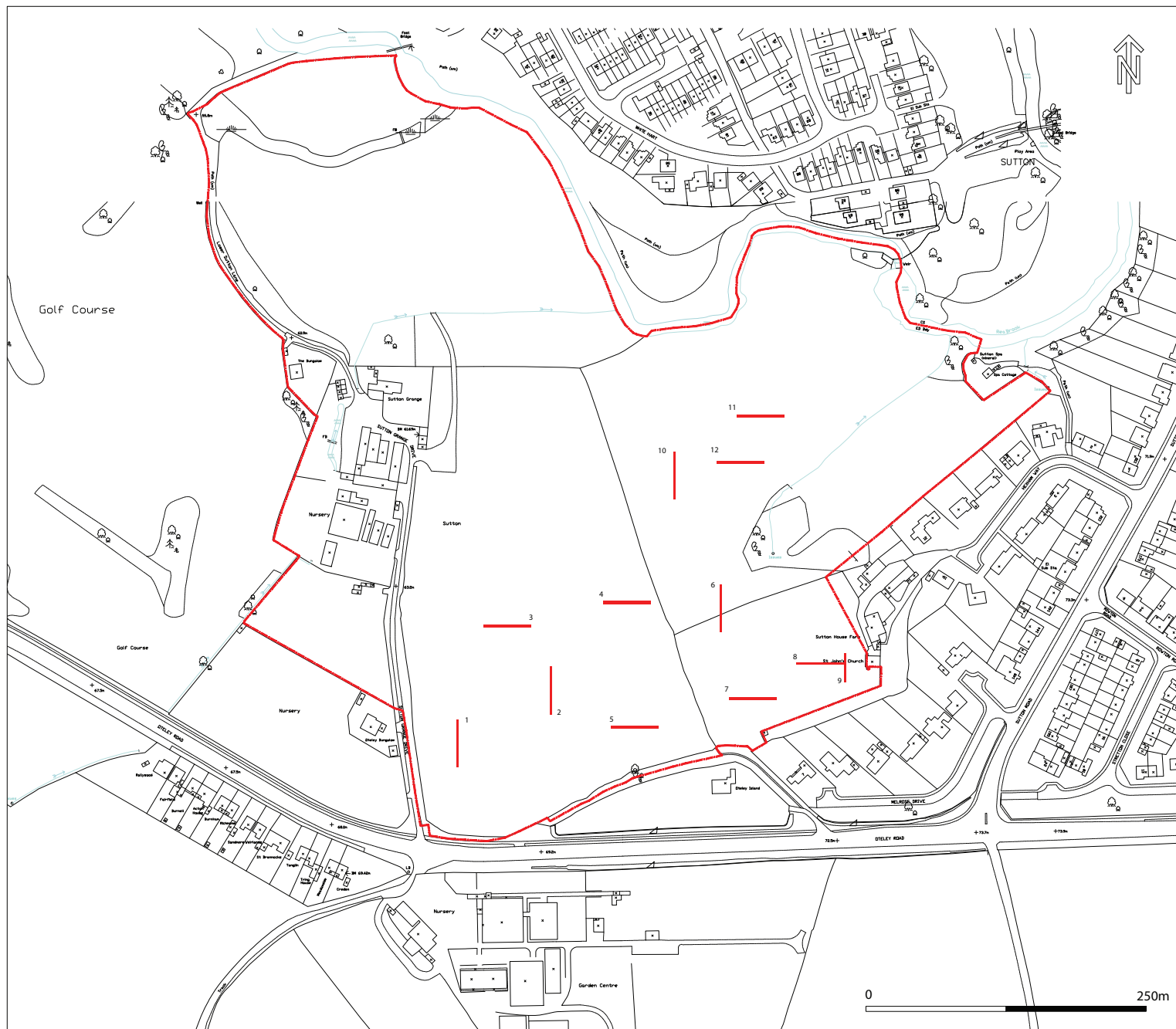
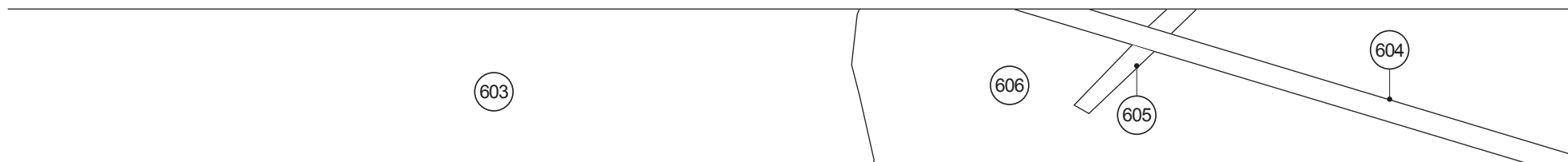
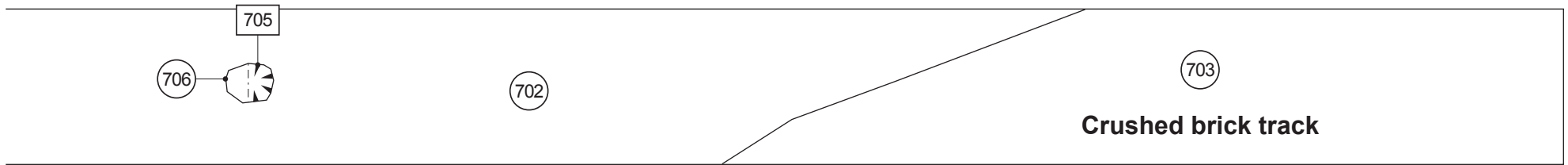
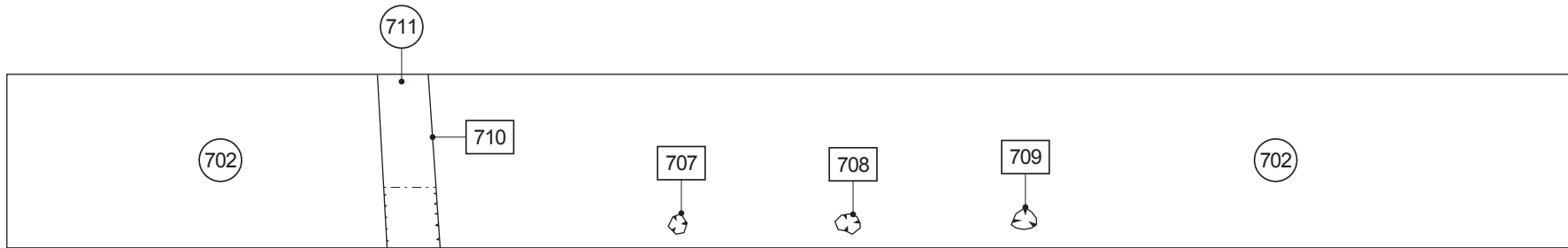


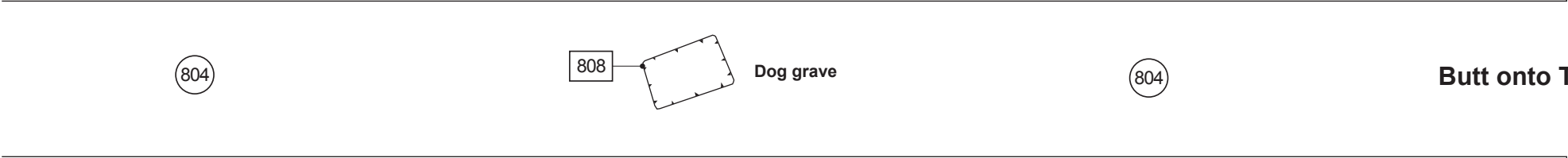
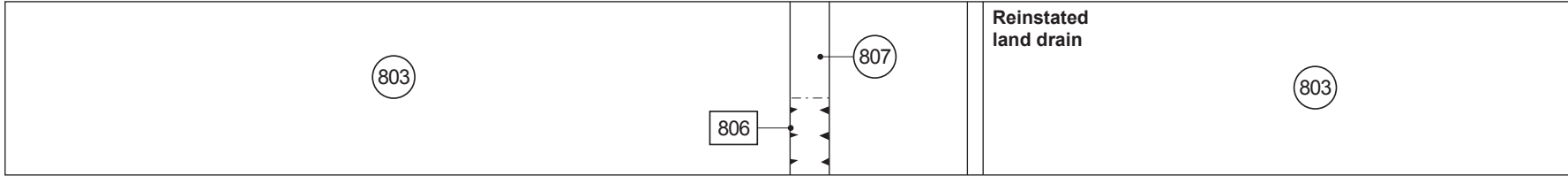
Fig 2: Plan showing exact locations of trenches



Job Title:	Oteley Rd
Drawing Title:	T6
Date:	4/12/2012
Drawn By:	CES
Scale:	See Bar
Figure 03:	



Job Title:	Oteley Rd
Drawing Title:	T7
Date:	4/12/2012
Drawn By:	CES
Scale:	See Bar
Figure 04:	



Job Title:	Oteley Rd
Drawing Title:	T8
Date:	4/12/2012
Drawn By:	CES
Scale:	See Bar
Figure 05:	



904

903

Butt onto T8

Sondage


903

903

Gravel banding with medieval ceramic on surface

Butt onto T8

0 1 2 3 4 5m

Job Title:	Oteley Rd
Drawing Title:	T9
Date:	4/12/2012
Drawn By:	CES
Scale:	See Bar
Figure 06:	
	

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APPENDIX II: Plates



Plate 1: View north along Trench 1. Scales 2x1m



Plate 2: View north along trench 2, Scales 2x1m



Plate 3: View west along trench 3, Scales 2x1m



Plate 4: View east along trench 4, Scales 2x1m



Plate 5: View east along trench 5, Scale 2x1m



Plate 6: View south along trench 6, Scales 2x1m



Plate 7: View north along trench 6, Scales 2x1m
Note land drains and dark deposit in foreground



Plate 8: West facing section through ditch [609] within trench 6
Scales 1x2m & 1x0.5m



Plate 9: View east along trench 7, Scales 2x1m



Plate 10: View east along trench 8, Scales 2x1m



Plate 11: View west along trench 8, Scales 2x1m



Plate 12: View of gully feature [804] within trench 8, Scale 1x1m



Plate 13: View of dog skeletons within cut [805] in trench 8
Scale 1x0.5m



Plate 14: View north along trench 9, Scales 2x1m



Plate 15: View south east of length of trench 9 and pond deposit in section
Scale 1x1m



Plate 16: View of sondage excavated through gravel deposits within trench 9, Scale 1x2m



Plate 17: View north along trench 10
Scales 2x1m



Plate 18: View west along trench 11
Scales 2x1m



Plate 19: View east along trench 12
Scales 2x1m

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APPENDIX III: Archive Cover Sheet

ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

Sutton Grange, Oteley Rd, Shrewsbury

Site Name:	Oteley Rd
Site Code:	ORS/12/EVA
PRN:	-
NPRN:	-
SAM:	-
Other Ref No:	-
NGR:	NGR SJ 50078 10459
Site Type:	Green field
Project Type:	Evaluation
Project Manager:	Chris E Smith
Project Dates:	November 2012
Categories Present:	Modern-Medieval
Location of Original Archive:	AW
Location of duplicate Archives:	-
Number of Finds Boxes:	-
Location of Finds:	-
Museum Reference:	-
Copyright:	AW
Restrictions to access:	None

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