

## A NOTE ON INVESTIGATIONS AT THE FORMER ENRON WORKS, SEVERNSIDE, SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE

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The site known as the former Enron Works, Severnside, (centred on NGR ST 353700 183100; see Ritchie *et al*, this volume, fig. 1) is situated on the Henbury Level, an area of low lying, flat, artificially drained land forming part of the Avon Levels. Geotechnical test pits and boreholes, excavated in 1997 on the adjacent Avlon Works site, identified localised peat deposits within post-glacial alluvial deposits (the Wentlooge Formation). A possible Iron Age/Romano-British buried soil was identified on a site some 0.5 km to the northeast. However, there is no visible evidence for archaeological remains of prehistoric or Romano-British date on the Site itself. Investigation by Wessex Archaeology involved a borehole survey and a watching brief (Wessex Archaeology 2004, 2005).

Four cores taken to a depth of 6 m below local ground surface investigations (Wessex Archaeology 2004) established the sedimentary and geoarchaeological potential of the stratified sequences. Analysis revealed a laterally consistent waterlogged local sequence that belongs to the established Wentlooge Formation (Allen 1990, 1992; Allen and Rae 1987). Periods of localised water recession or sea-level changes, resulting in partial stabilisation of the local area, were demonstrated by the presence of *Phragmites*, indicating emergent reed populations, and by the formation of peat at *c* 4.50-5.00 m depth (2.1-1.6 m aOD, Wessex Archaeology 2004). The peat horizon cannot be directly correlated to those in other sequences in the region since the peat horizons across the middle Wentlooge Formation are neither planar nor continuous.

No archaeological remains were observed during the watching brief or earlier borehole survey. However, a thin horizon containing fine inwashed charcoal and eroded organic (soil)

matter was recorded across the Site at a depth of *c* 2.20 m (4.4 m aOD) near the top of the middle Wentlooge deposits. Comminuted charcoal from the horizon in Borehole 1 (depth 2.31 m) has been dated to 2570-2340 Cal BC (3952±29 BPC13 ‰ - 25.29, KIA-24862). The presence of this charcoal indicates stabilisation, fire and probable human activity in the local area during the early Bronze Age. The date is of interest in indicating that the probable activity predates known sites in the area of later Bronze Age and Iron Age date (see for instance Gardiner *et al* 2002).

The watching brief was undertaken in order to establish the presence of the charcoal horizon beyond the area previously cored and to record its extent and nature across an open section face. A laminated charcoal horizon was again encountered at 4.4 m aOD and formed a consistent band along the section face. When coupled with the borehole findings, the horizon has, therefore, been shown to occur consistently on the Site along a transect of 200 m with little lateral variation. While the majority of the burnt material was finely divided, analysis of a small sample from Borehole 1 showed it included several recognizable charred plant fragments, including a fragment of a grass seed. The analysis of charred plant remains from a bulk sample recovered in the watching brief shows no wood charcoal was present, instead a concentration of charred herbaceous material including remains of large grasses, such as false-oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius ssp. bulbosum*) (Wessex Archaeology 2005), indicating the material had not travelled far and that the source was local.

No artefactual evidence indicative of human occupation of the immediate area has been found, but the presence of charcoal in-wash suggests activity within the vicinity. The plant-

types represented lend to the possibility of pyre burning, although fire within marginal wetland vegetation is not discounted. No wood charcoal was found, instead fresh, intact herbaceous material, indicating the material had not travelled far and that the source was local. The charcoal horizon has been dated to the early Bronze Age.

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The watching brief was carried out by David Budd. Processing of the bulk sample was carried out by Hayley Clark under the supervision of Sarah Wyles and assessment of the environmental remains by Sarah Wyles, Chris Stevens and Catherine Barnett (néé Chisham). The radiocarbon sample was submitted by Mike Allen to the University of Kiel.

The project archive is currently located at Wessex Archaeology under the project codes 55450 and 55451; it will be deposited with Bristol City Museum in due course.

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