



Crowle Jubilee Playing Field

Church Road, Crowle, Worcs.

Crowle Jubilee Playing Field

Church Road, Crowle, Worcestershire, WR7 4AZ.

Archaeological Recording

NGR: *SO 92330 55581*

Site code: *crow21*

HER activity ref: *wsm77817*

OASIS ID: *110archa1-504989*

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1st March 2022

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Front cover; View of site from the northwest.

SUMMARY

Archaeological recording (watching brief) was carried out during October 2021 at Crowle Jubilee Playing Field, Church Road, Crowle, Worcs., in connection with a new community building, car park, relocation of allotments, new shed and proposed covered area. The development area was adjacent to a shrunken medieval village ([WSM07880](#)).

The two areas of works varied in size, archaeological recording of the new parish hall extension was small in scope covering mainly the construction footprint of the internal floor areas of the new building whilst the new carpark covered a much larger area. Both areas were stripped by machine exposing the surface of the natural clay. There was no indication of earlier human activity, instead the clay was sealed by a layer of relict subsoil probably associated with an earlier agricultural landscape which was in turn overlain by the modern topsoil. The absence of archaeological deposits from the excavations and the lack of residual finds supports the hypothesis that there has been little human activity with the development areas other than that associated with agricultural activity.



Fig. 1; site location (circled in red)

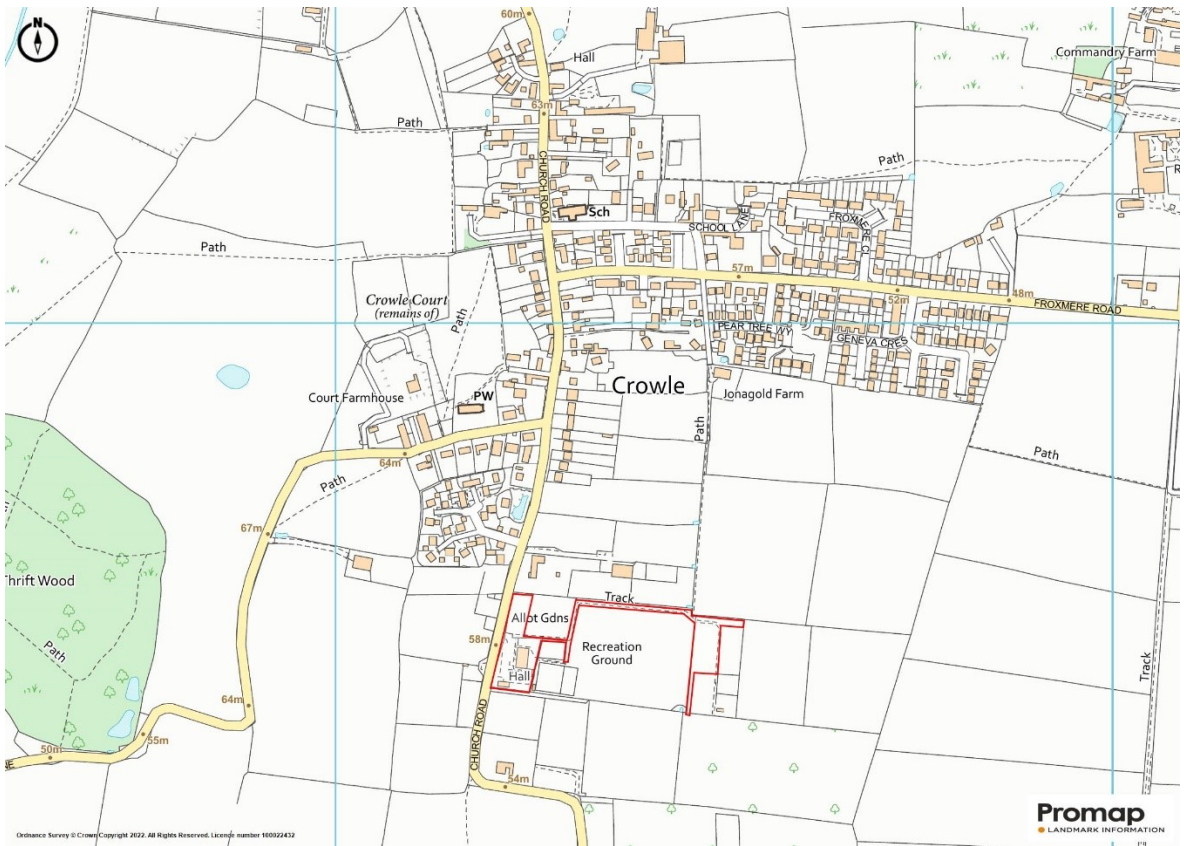


Fig. 2; study site (outlined in red)

INTRODUCTION

Location and scope of work

This document sets out the results of archaeological recording (watching brief) during 8th and 9th October 2021 at Crowle Jubilee Playing Field, Church Road, Crowle, Worcs., WR7 4AZ. Planning permission had been granted (planning Ref: 21/00768/FUL) for a new community building, car park, relocation of allotments, new shed and proposed covered area. The permission was subject to condition comprising the archaeological monitoring and recording (watching brief) of all groundworks likely to expose, damage or destroy any archaeological remains that may be present, principally the reduction of ground levels/topsoil stripping/drainage and service channels. The development area was adjacent to a shrunken medieval village ([WSM07880](#)). LiDAR data suggests that the area may also hold evidence of the shrunken village. Satellite images showed some rectilinear anomalies that did not accord with historic or extant field boundaries.

Geology and topography

Crowle is a village and parish in Worcestershire, situated 4 miles (6.4km) east of the City of Worcester. The site is located to the south of the village along the east side of Church Road at a height of about 58m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The application site is approx. 9,450m². The proposed development areas (car park and new building footprint) in total amount to a combined area of about 900m². The underlying geology comprises Wilmcote Limestone Member, a Blue Lias Formation (BGS, 1993). Crowle is a village The search area sits within a gently rolling landscape based on bedrock geology made up of limestone and ribbons of sand and mudstone. This region is mainly agricultural and Parliamentary enclosure dominates the fieldscape around the villages, which survives well in the hinterland of Crowle. Traditional orchards were numerous in this region until the later half of the C20, when they began to decline, leaving behind a field pattern of small, regular, hedged fields. Within the search area interrupted row and nucleated clustered settlement is surrounded by large expanses of Parliamentary and piecemeal enclosure and orchard.

Archaeological and historical background

An HER search was carried out on a buffered 500m radius of the provided site plan ([wsm77817](#)). 27 archaeological activities and 18 HER monuments, including one Scheduled Monument were found.

The search area includes the Scheduled Monument of Crowle Court ([wsm07802](#)) SM1018894, and the Conservation Area of Crowle. There are 11 Historic England Listed Buildings and 25 unlisted, historic buildings. The structures date to the C12, C14 through to the C20 and include several timber framed houses ([wsm45874-6](#), [wsm68934-6](#)), including a cruck house ([wsm04672](#)), tithe barn ([wsm04671](#)) and chest tomb. The Historic Farmsteads of Worcestershire recorded seven farmsteads within the search area dating to the C14, C17 and C19.

There are monument records for prehistoric through to post medieval archaeology, including an Iron Age pit ([wsm67350](#)), medieval moated site ([wsm07872](#)), ridge and furrow ([wsm07876](#), [wsm07877](#), [wsm70048](#)) and shrunken village ([wsm07880](#)) and numerous post medieval agricultural buildings.

The Portable Antiquity Scheme has not identified any finds within the search area; however, archaeological investigations have recovered artefacts including Roman to modern pottery, medieval human remains and post medieval tile and brick. There have been many archaeological investigations including desk-based assessments, geophysical survey, building recording, tree ring analysis, watching briefs and evaluations. Archaeology in the region centres around the hillfort in the east of the area, the Roman road of Church Road and the medieval Scheduled Monument at Crowle Court, all of which could have further associated below ground archaeological features and artefacts.

RESULTS:

Method and nature of the excavation

In general, the purpose of archaeological recording is to determine and understand the nature, function and character of an archaeological site in its cultural and environmental setting. This was to be achieved by obtaining an appropriate record of any archaeological deposits or finds disturbed or exposed during groundworks. The work was carried out in accordance with guidelines set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014).

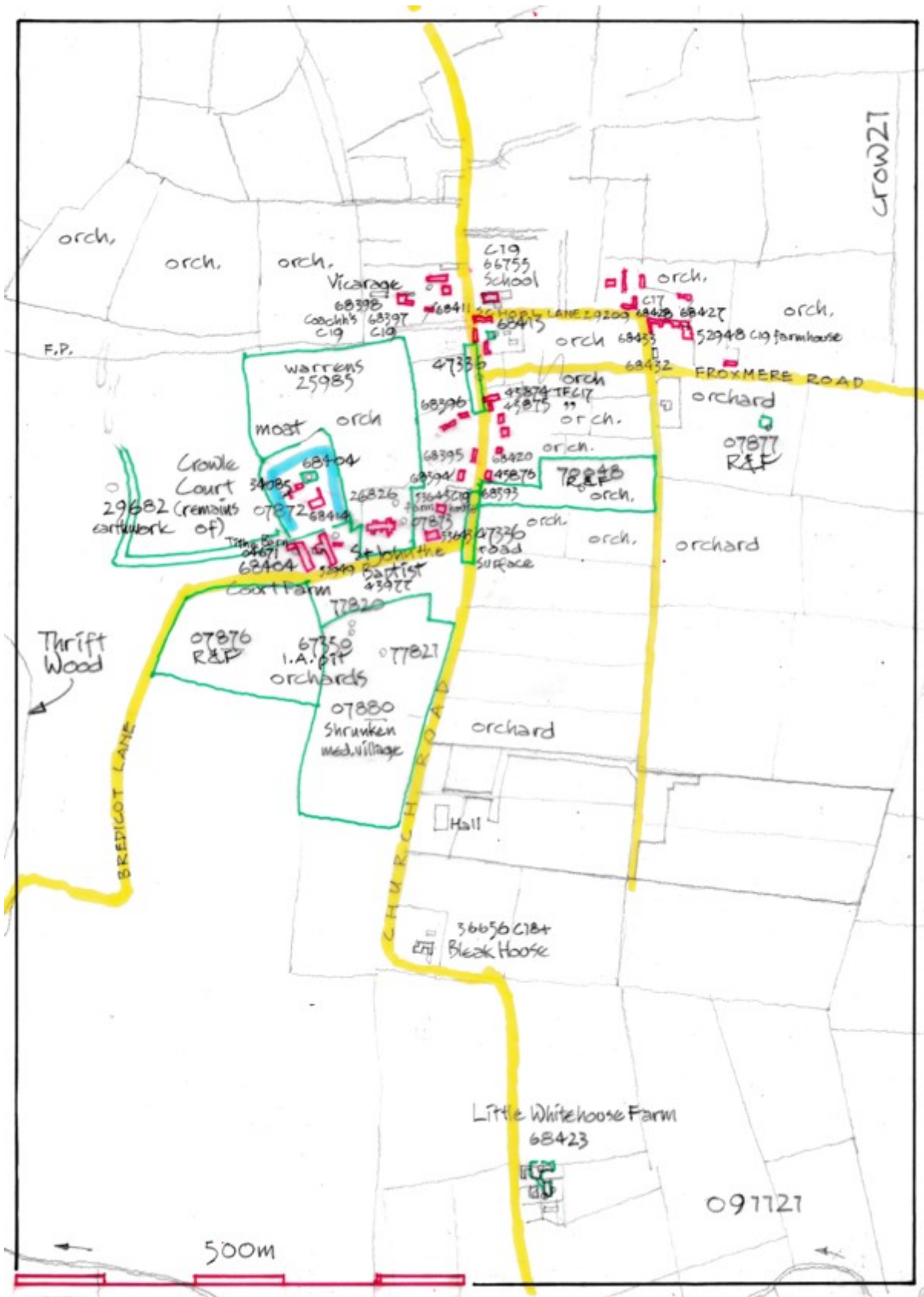


Fig. 3; historic environment plan showing location of fig. 4.

Excavation for the footprint of the new extension to the existing parish hall comprised initially continuous strip foundations 0.60m wide and varying between 0.65-0.90m deep. The two internal floor areas, inside the trench foundations were stripped under close archaeological supervision using a toothless bucket exposing the surface of the natural clay throughout most of the two stripped areas. Excavation for the new carpark comprised area strip by machine using a toothless bucket under supervision, the surface of the natural clay was again exposed throughout the excavation.

Description of deposits

The surface of the natural geological substrate which comprised patches of stiff yellowish-brown clay and blue lias with a component of small stones was exposed throughout most of the two internal floor areas within the footprint of the new building at a level height of 56.80m AOD. There were no archaeological deposits observed cut into or overlying this layer. Sealing the natural clay was an undated layer of relict subsoil (101) comprising a greyish-brown, clayey-silt 0.30 thick throughout the excavated area. This was in turn sealed by the modern topsoil (100), a layer of dark greyish-brown loam 0.26m thick.

The surface of the natural clay was again exposed throughout the entire area of the new car park at a level height of about 57.40m AOD. Frequent irregular patches of dark soil were observed across the stripped area which were interpreted as the remains of former trees. There was little indication of an overlying subsoil layer and the clay was instead overlain by a 0.20m thick layer of topsoil.

FINDS

Finds made during the excavations comprised the occasional residual fragment of red brick and modern roof tile recovered from the topsoil. These were not retained.

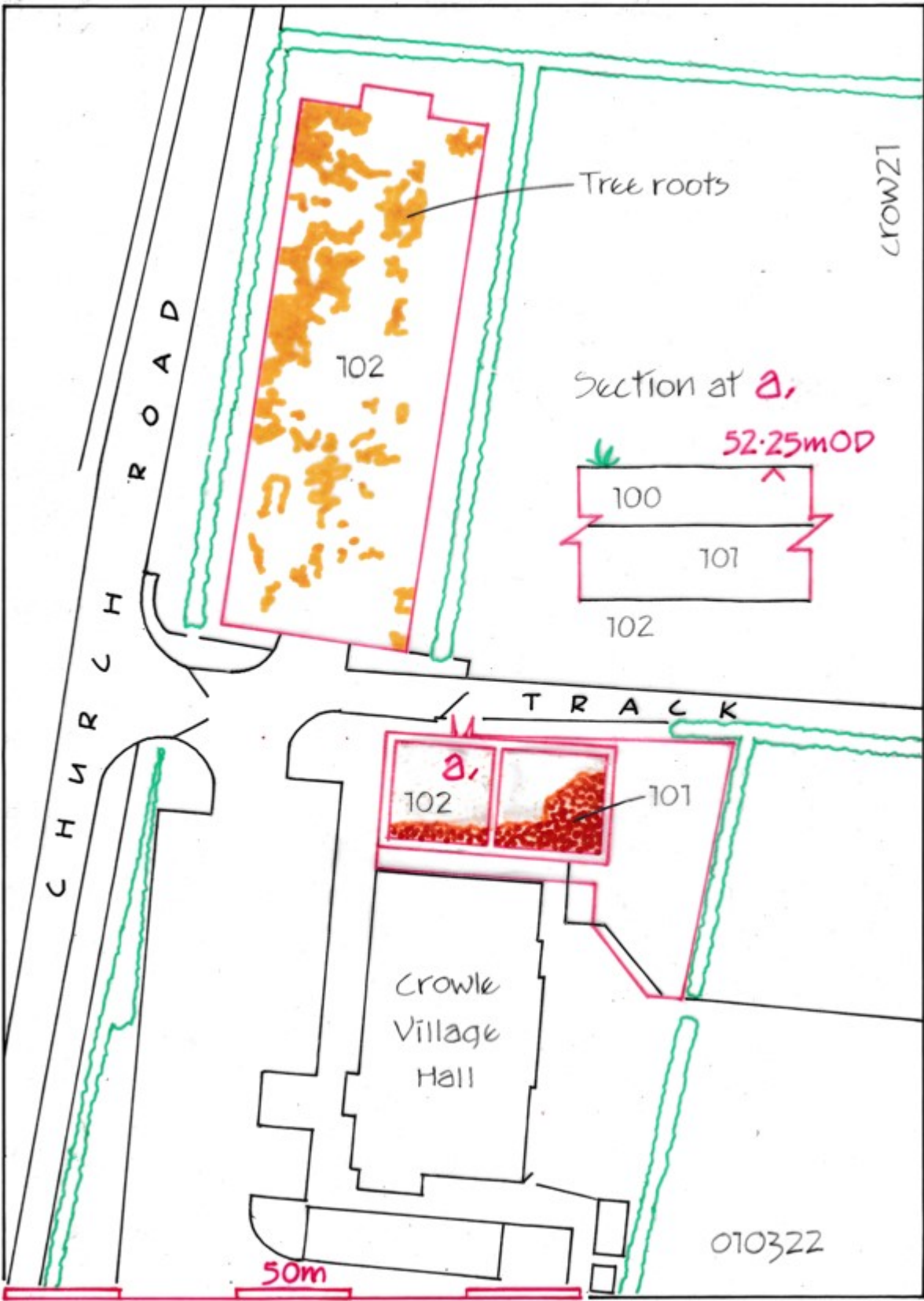


Fig. 4; site plan showing location of new parish hall building and car parking area.

DISCUSSION

The two areas of works varied in size, archaeological recording of the new parish hall extension was small in scope covering mainly the construction footprint of the internal floor areas of the new building which were stripped to the surface of the natural clay apart from a thin strip along the southern edge where some of the overlying subsoil remained intact. There was no indication of earlier human activity, instead the clay was sealed by a layer of relict subsoil probably associated with an earlier agricultural landscape and this was in turn overlain by the modern topsoil. In the new carpark construction the scope of works covered a much larger area and the site strip exposed the surface of the natural clay through the entire carpark footprint. No archaeological deposits were observed during this excavation, instead a series of irregular tree root deposits were recorded. The lack of residual finds from both areas of excavation suggests that the medieval settlement to the north of the site does not extend this far to the south of the village and supports the general hypothesis that there has been little human activity with the development areas other than that associated with agricultural activity.

Archive Location

The digital archive arising from the work will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) via the on-line portal OASIS.

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Plates



Plate 1; overall view northeast of trench for parish hall extension



Plate 2; overall view southwest



Plate 3; detail of stratigraphy in the area of the new extension



Plate 4; overall view southwest of car park area



Plate 5; overall view southeast of car park area



Plate 6; car park area-detail of trench stratigraphy