



163 & 165 Birmingham Road
Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, B61 0DJ.

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Archaeological Evaluation

NGR: *SO 96558 71574*

Site code: *brom22*

HER ref: *wsm77959*

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Front cover; View southeast showing the rear of 163 & 165 Birminham Road in the process of demolition with trench 1 in the foreground

SUMMARY

Archaeological evaluation was carried out at land to the rear of 163 & 165 Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire during July 2022 in advance of residential development of the site comprising demolition of the existing properties and construction of eight detached dwellings. The investigation revealed a single undated and truncated post hole feature. Modern truncation likely associated with landscaping activities and subsequent pitting was also recorded within the same area. The west end of trench one and the remaining three trenches revealed a stratigraphy of alternate layers comprising an undated relict subsoil overlain by the modern topsoil. In trench three there is evidence of ground consolidation resulting from redeposition. The results were largely negative and recorded a stratigraphy indicating that the site unoccupied until its development in the nineteenth century. The results of the investigation suggest that archaeological deposits are unlikely to exist within the proposed development area and that the construction of the new dwellings and associated services and driveways will have no impact.

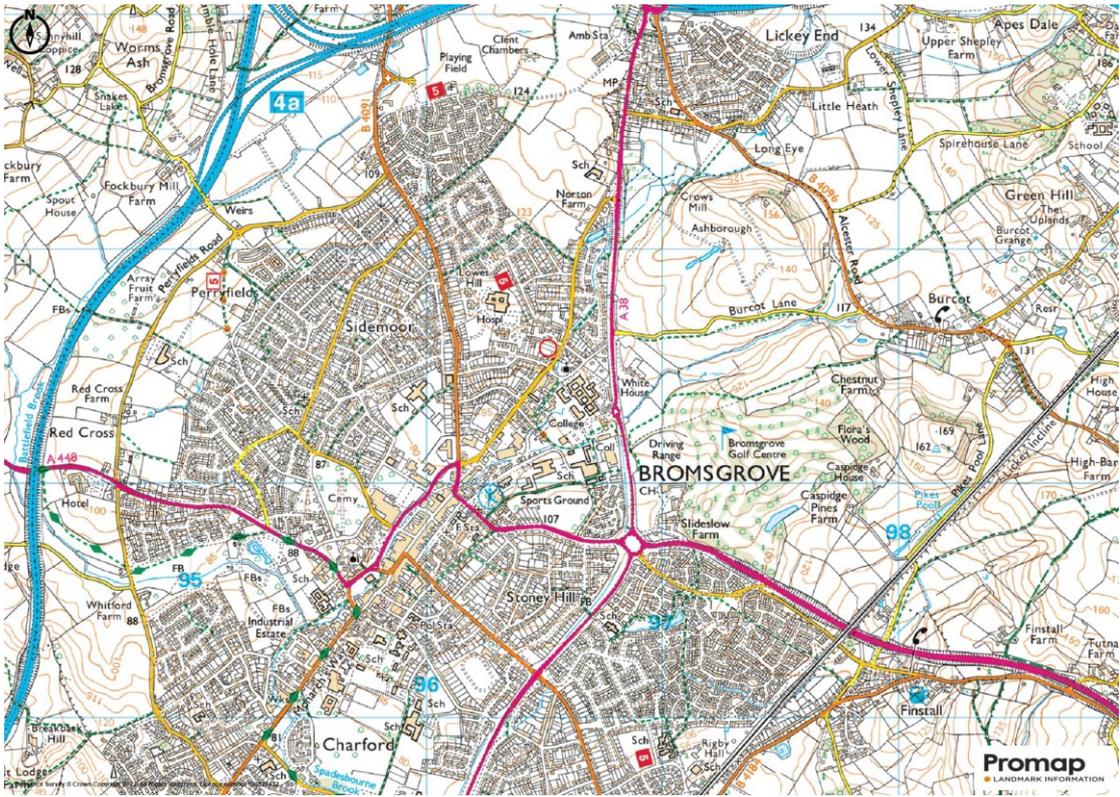


Fig. 1: Site location circled in red.



Fig. 2: Area of study outlined in red.

INTRODUCTION

Location and scope of works

This document sets out results of an archaeological evaluation at 163 & 165 Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, B61 0DJ during 19th and 20th July 2022 at the request of the landowner. A planning application (*Planning ref. 20/01565/FUL*) had been granted by Bromsgrove District Council for the development of the site comprising demolition of the existing properties and construction of eight detached dwellings conditional (condition no.7) on the completion of an evaluation (trial trenching) the results of which would, if necessary, inform a mitigation strategy for further archaeological work on site prior to or during the commencement of development. The evaluation was part of a wider programme of archaeological works conditioned as part of the planning consent to ensure compliance with NPPF 205 and local planning policies laid out in Policy BDP20 of the Bromsgrove District Plan 2011-2030. Other works include historic building recording of the properties before their demolition which is the subject of a separate report. If significant archaeology was identified during the investigation, the grubbing out of the slab/foundation would need to be archaeologically monitored following demolition of the buildings.

The proposed development (PDA) may have affected heritage assets of known archaeological significance. The development site is located on the conjectural line of the former Roman Road that ran through Bromsgrove, known as the 'Upper Saltway' Historic Environment Record (HER) monument ([wsm30529](#)). Recent archaeological investigation, c.85m south of the site (HER ref. [wsm72000](#)) revealed a section of the road. Despite considerable damage to the road surface (a result of C18th or C19th development) the road was recorded over a length of 18m, was between 6 and 7m in width and survived up to 0.65m in thickness; it was comprised of alternating bands of sand and gravel, either representing an agger or a sequence of road surfaces and subsequent repairs. Ditches on either side of the road were filled with post medieval ceramic, while pits, foundation trenches and sandstone footings were likely associated with buildings shown on C19th mapping (Arch. Warwickshire Report No. 2035, 2020, 3).

Northeast of the town's historic core and west of the Birmingham Road, the development site is now comprised of two C19th houses no.163 ([wsm73022](#)) & no.165 ([wsm73023](#)), Birmingham Road with associated ancillary buildings.

Each house is set within a long rectangular garden plot, with its frontage on the Birmingham Road.

Given the scale of the development, and the anticipated archaeological potential, the likely impact on the historic environment caused by this development was offset by the implementation of a conditional programme of archaeological works. This involved an initial programme of trial trenching to determine the presence or absence, extent, date, character, condition and significance of any remains and the likely impact of the development upon them. If archaeological remains were identified that would be damaged or destroyed by the development and could not be preserved in-situ then the evaluation would be followed by a defined programme of archaeological excavation and/or a watching brief to record the remains prior to their loss.

Geology and topography

Bromsgrove is a town in Worcestershire, about 16 miles (26km) north-east of Worcester and 13 miles (21 km) south-west of Birmingham city centre. It had a population of 29,237 in 2001 (39,644 in the wider Bromsgrove/Catshill urban area). Bromsgrove is the main town in the larger Bromsgrove District. In the Middle Ages it was a small market town; primarily producing cloth through the early modern period. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it became a major centre for nail making.

The proposed development site lies about 1.4km to the northeast of the centre of Bromsgrove on the Birmingham Road which for the most part follows the same alignment as the former Roman Salt Way, and comprises an area of approx. 3,500m² situated at approximately 100m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The Geological Survey of Great Britain indicates that the site lies on the cusp of Bromsgrove sandstone and River Terrace Deposits (BGS, 1989).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Bromsgrove (VCH, 1913)

Bremesgrave (xi cent.); Brumesgrave (xiii cent.); Brymmesgrave (xv cent.).

From the ancient parish of Bromsgrove the civil parish of North Bromsgrove was formed in 1894, Catshill, a separate ecclesiastical parish since 1844, being included in it in 1895. In 1880 Crowfield was transferred from

Dodderhill to Bromsgrove and at the same date part of Chaddesley Wood, formerly in Upton Warren, became part of Bromsgrove. Two years later parts of Bromsgrove were transferred to Upton Warren.

The Spadesbourne brook, rising in the Lickey Hills, flows south-west through the parish, and passing through the centre of the town of Bromsgrove, is joined there by the Battlefield brook, which comes from Chadwick, the united streams forming the River Salwarpe. Dyers Bridge, at the bottom of the town, which in 1778 was the largest bridge in the parish, was built of sandstone in one span of 20 ft. It formed the boundary between the manors of Bromsgrove and Dyers. The land falls from 940 ft. at Windmill Hill in the north to the south, the lowest point, 261 ft., being in the town of Bromsgrove. The parish lies on the Keuper Marls and Sandstone, and much of the land in the rural districts is agricultural. Catshill is on the Bunter Pebble Beds, and the soil is loam and clay, producing crops of wheat and turnips.

The parishes of Bromsgrove and North Bromsgrove cover an area of 11,656 acres, of which Bromsgrove includes 196½ acres of arable land and 396¾ acres of permanent grass, while North Bromsgrove has 3,241¾ acres of arable, 4,998¾ of permanent grass and 434½ of woods and plantations. Bromsgrove was formerly divided into yields named Burnford, Fockbury, Catshill, Chadwick, Shepley, Burcot, Padestones or Spadesbourne, Timberhonger, Woodcote and Town Yield, which were recognized at least as late as the end of the 18th century, and some of which are hamlets of Bromsgrove at the present day. Bromsgrove was inclosed under an Act of 1799, the award being dated 25 December 1802.

Borough

There is evidence that a borough existed at Bromsgrove during the 12th and 13th centuries, but it was short lived, and little is known of its history. The mention of a reeve and beadle in the manor in 1086 indicates that it was even then of somewhat greater importance than an ordinary royal manor. In 1156 the 'men of Bromsgrove' paid 10s. to the Sheriff of Worcestershire, in 1169 the 'vill of Bromsgrove' rendered account of £4, and during the latter part of the century 'the men of Bromsgrove' or 'the town of Bromsgrove' paid tallage which amounted to 20 marks with Norton in 1177, to 8 marks in 1187. After this time, the prosperity of the town diminished, and by 1227 its inhabitants had become so poor that tallage was reduced from 37 to 20 marks, and afterwards from 27½ to 18 marks. Later an attempt was made to restore the fortunes of the town, and Henry III in 1260–1 granted the manor to the men of Bromsgrove at fee farm for five years, and two members, Thomas Rastel and Thomas de Burneford,

represented the borough in the Parliament of 1295. This was, however, the only occasion on which Bromsgrove returned members.

In 1533 Bromsgrove is mentioned as one of the towns in Worcestershire in which cloth was permitted to be manufactured, and a flourishing trade in narrow cloth and friezes then existed, continuing until towards the end of the C18th. In 1778 the manufacture of linsey occupied only about 140 hands, while that of linen employed about 180 hands. The making of nails was introduced in the C17th, and was, until the end of the C19th, the staple trade of the town.

Manors

In 804 AD (the manor of) Bromsgrove was in royal possession. In the time of King Edward the Confessor Bromsgrove was held by Earl Edwin, but it passed at the Conquest into the hands of the king, and in 1086 heads the list of the king's lands in Worcestershire. Attached to it were eighteen berewicks, which, with the manor lands, were assessed at 30 hides. To the manor belonged 13 salt-pans in Droitwich and three salt workers who rendered 300 mits of salt. The manor also contained four eyries of hawks. It evidently remained in the hands of the Crown until the beginning of the C13th.

Cartographic sources

The historical background for the site has been documented in an earlier heritage statement (Baxter, 2020). The study found that the earliest available mapping for the application site is the 1839-40 Tithe Survey of Bromsgrove Parish which shows the application site as arable land with no development at this date. The Union Workhouse, of which Bartleet House is a remnant element, is depicted to the north, with the Crabmill Inn identified to the south. A terrace of residential properties to the south is depicted, as are two detached properties in the plots immediately south of the application site. At this time the Church of All Saints has yet to be built

The first edition Ordnance Survey mapping from 1884-86 shows that nos. 163 and 165 have now been built, as has the Church of All Saints to the eastern flank of Birmingham Road. The detached property to the plot immediately south of the application site has been augmented by a terrace of residential properties, and the presence of a Sunday School building south of the Church and adjacent to the Crabmill Inn is depicted.

By the 1902-04 edition of the Ordnance Survey the development of what is now named as All Saints Road has begun with a mix of terraced, semi-detached properties and detached properties located to the plots to the north and south of

the thoroughfare. The land to the north and east of Church of All Saints remains undeveloped at this time.

The 1927 edition of the Ordnance Survey shows increased development to All Saints Road and the residential development of the plots to the north of the Church of All Saints with pairs of semi-detached houses and rows of terraces configured in this location. Residential development is also shown as beginning to the north of the Union Workhouse, spreading eastward.

By the 1967 edition of the Ordnance Survey the expansion of the former workhouse in its new guise as Bromsgrove General Hospital is apparent, together with an intensification of residential development to the north. To the south-east, beyond the Church of All Saints the development of the Shenstone College of Education is depicted.

The building of a garage to the southern frontage corner plot of All Saints Road and infill development to the rear of the terraces in this location are depicted on the following edition of the Ordnance Survey in 1977-82.

By 1993, the Ordnance Survey from this time shows the residential development of the eastern flank of the Birmingham Road, and the demolition of much of the 1960s expansion of the Hospital and its replacement with the Prince of Wales Community Hospital.

The 2000 edition of the Ordnance Survey mapping shows demolition of most of the Bromsgrove General Hospital and its replacement with residential development. This is the last major alteration to the morphology of the area in the vicinity of the application site which remains broadly the same through the following two decades. The current position is as illustrated in the 2020 edition of the Ordnance Survey.

Historic Environment Record

An HER search was carried out on a buffered 1km radius of the site plan on 17/05/2022, as specified in the search request. There are 46 archaeological activities and 53 HER monuments recorded within the search area. The search area sits within an undulating topography based on bedrock geology made up of sandstone. Superficial geology is made up of large deposits of sand and gravel and alluvial, the latter following the course of the Spadesbourne Brook. Historically, most of this region was comprised of a medieval open field system with areas of Parliamentary enclosure, which was further enclosed in the post medieval period. Settlement outside of the town, during the post medieval period, comprised of farmsteads and wayside dwellings. Massive urban expansion in the 1950's and 1960's, however, has overwritten this historic landscape with large

housing estates. Bromsgrove's historic town originates from the early medieval period, however, the southwest to northeast orientated Roman road from Droitwich could hold potential for associated Roman remains to an earlier settlement. The town began to expand in the C12 and continued to expand into the C19 and C20 with the manufacture of cloth and nails and the development of the Birmingham and Gloucester Railway line. The surrounding region in the east comprises a post medieval piecemeal and later planned enclosure, which remains relatively intact. Land use is mostly pastoral, with the villages of Finstall and Tutnall seen in between farmsteads and strings of wayside dwellings. Within the search area historic town is surrounded by modern expansion and, in the east, borders a golf course, large areas of field amalgamation and reorganisation and smaller areas of piecemeal enclosure, orchard and recent woodland. The Conservation Area of Bromsgrove Town is also included within the search area. Within the search area lie 46 Historic England Listed Buildings and 48 unlisted, historic buildings. The listed structures date to the C15 through to the C20 and include a cruck house, numerous houses and a war memorial. An Historic England funded project to identify the Historic Farmsteads of Worcestershire also recorded 6 farmsteads and 2 out-farms within the search area dating to the C19. In addition to the built environment there are also monument records for prehistoric through to modern archaeological features, which includes a burnt mound, seen from scattered burnt stones, Roman road, seen from sub surface deposits, documentary and conjectured evidence, Saxon Minster, interpreted from documentary and conjectured evidence, medieval hall house, seen from documentary and photographic evidence, post medieval tannery, seen from cartographic evidence, and Second World War military hospital, seen on documentary sources. Archaeological investigations have recovered artefacts including prehistoric lithic implements, medieval and post medieval pottery and post medieval building materials. There have been numerous archaeological investigations within the search area, which includes desk based assessments, finds retrieval, geophysical surveys, watching briefs, evaluations and an excavation. Archaeology in the historic part of Bromsgrove Town records buried archaeological features, artefacts and environmental deposits from the Roman through to modern periods. Archaeology from the surrounding urban areas is mostly made up of C18 and C19 features associated with manufacturing and industry, with artefactual evidence indicating prehistoric and Romano-British activity in the vicinity of the modern town. In the east of the region, archaeology comprises a diverse range of undesignated earthworks,

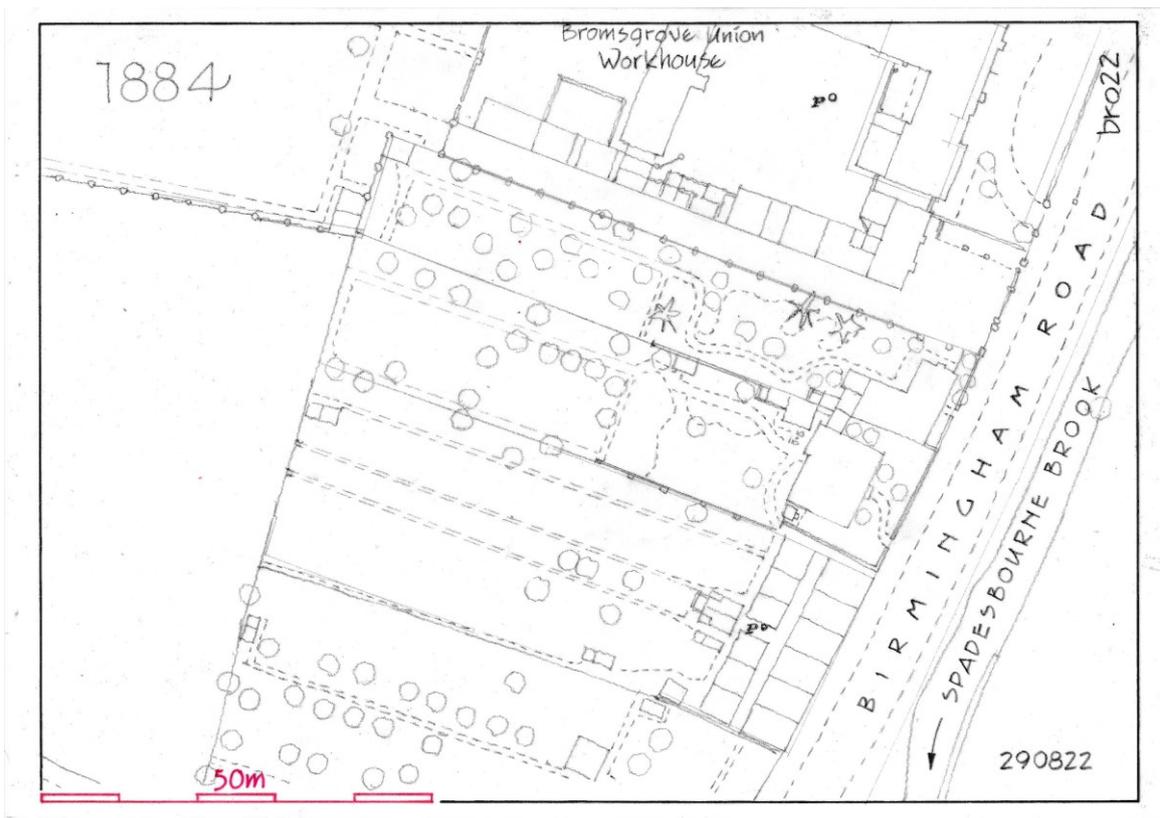


Fig. 3; Historic environment based on OS 1884.

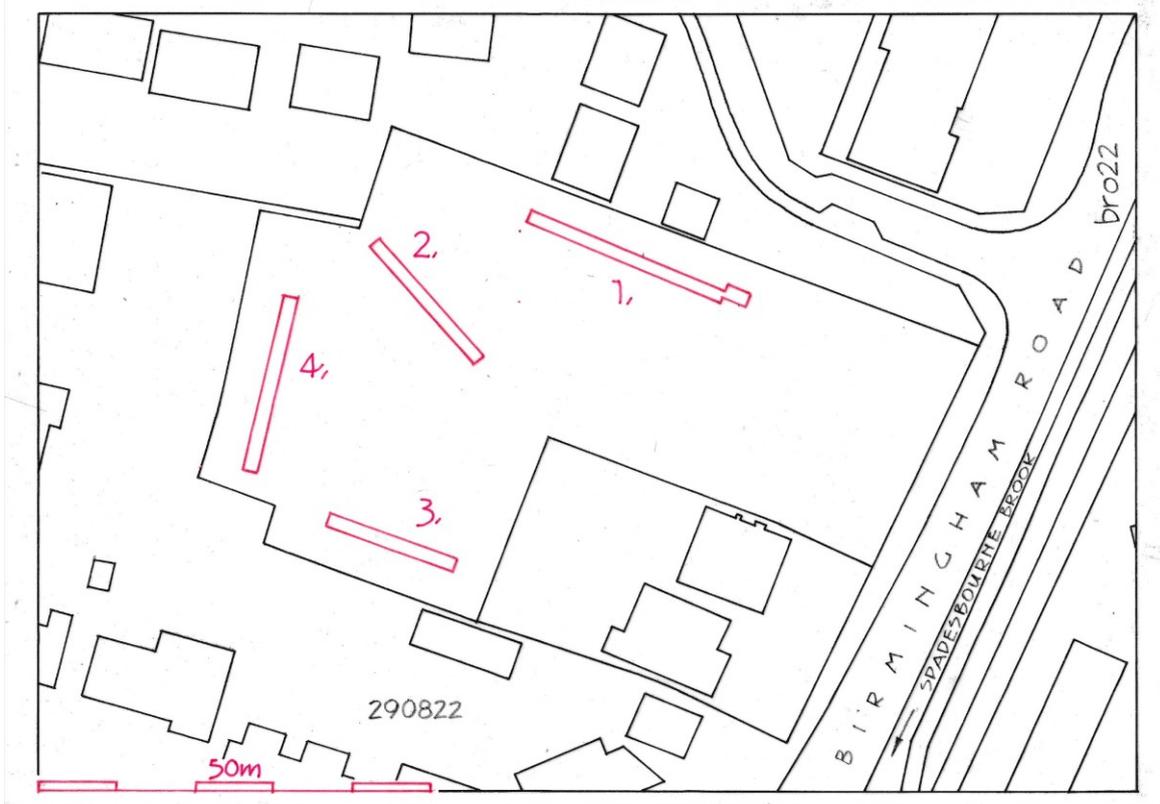


Fig.4: trench plan with section locations.

moats, ridge and furrow and quarries. Within the search area there could be good potential for below ground archaeological features and deposits from the Roman through to modern periods. There could be further potential for the continuation of the Roman road or associated features to be revealed on this site, as a 2020 evaluation that uncovered this feature is immediately to the south of this evaluation. An Historic England funded project to identify the potential for Palaeolithic Archaeology in Worcestershire recorded deposits within the search area with potential for archaeology dating back 189,050 years.

EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

Aims of the work

The objectives of the evaluation were to determine the date, character, quality, survival and extent of the archaeological deposits within the application area likely to be threatened by the proposed development in order that an informed decision on their importance in a local, regional and national context can be made. This information would clarify whether any remains should be considered for preservation *in situ* or form the basis of a mitigation strategy.

In general, the aims of the investigation will include:

- i) establishing the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation on the development site.
- ii) recovering artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region.
- iii) recovering palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

In particular, the aims of the investigation will:

- iv) explore the potential for the Roman road (Salt Way) to align across the site.
- v) explore the potential for road-side settlement deposits associated with the Roman or later periods.

Sample size and scope of fieldwork

The evaluation comprised four trenches, trench 1 was 30m long, trench 2, 20m long, trench 3, 17m long and trench 4 was 22m long, all of the trenches were a minimum of 1.80 m wide, the total representing and approx. 5% sample of the whole of the application area.

Fieldwork methods and recording

The archaeological field work and post-excavation was carried out in accordance with standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluations produced by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA, 2020). All deposits were excavated removing the overburden under close archaeological supervision and investigated for archaeological features. Plans and sample sections of the trenches were made and recorded during excavation.

RESULTS: GENERAL

Soil and ground conditions

Conditions were generally dry during the excavation, the soil layers showing some moisture retention. Excavation was relatively smooth throughout the trench being made through alternate layers comprising of topsoil and an underlying subsoil, leaving a clean and visible surface within the natural substrate itself consisting of gravel.

Reliability of field investigation

Overall, the results of the trenching suggest that deposits, comprising mostly stratified soil layers, survived intact throughout most of the application area. Some truncation of the underlying deposits was recorded within the east end of trench 1

Distribution of archaeological deposits

A single undated and truncated post hole feature [107] was recorded at the east end of trench 1 within the surface of the gravel substrate. This feature and the surface of the gravel was sealed throughout the four trenches by an undated relict subsoil deposit which is associated with an earlier period of cultivation prior to development of the land in the nineteenth century.

Presentation of results

The results of the excavation (below) are described from the earliest to the latest deposits. Trenches were attributed context numbers with a numerical value equivalent to the number of the trench.

RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 1 (30m)

The natural substrate (104) comprising a light yellowish-brown gravel was observed through the length of the trench at a height of about 99.87m AOD at the east end and 100.44m OD at the west end. Within the surface of the gravel at the east end of the trench was the truncated remains of a single undated post hole [107] consisting of a circular cut feature, 0.40m in diameter and 0.16m deep. It was filled by a single deposit (106) comprising a mid-greyish-brown, sandy-silt with a small pebble inclusion.

Overlying the gravel throughout two thirds of the west part of the trench to a depth of 0.30m was a relict subsoil deposit (105) comprising a mid-greyish-brown, sandy-silt, mottled with orange sand and gravel. Within the remaining east end of the trench this layer was absent and instead the gravel is overlain directly by the modern topsoil deposit (100) consisting of a dark greyish-brown, sandy-silt with a pebble component, to a depth of 0.18. this suggests some previous truncation of the historic stratigraphy and is probably connected with C19 landscaping. A shallow trench [103], constructed to a depth of 0.26m and filled by an undated deposit (102) similar in composition with the relict subsoil layer, is also probably related to this activity. This feature itself is truncated by a modern (C20) pit. A modern service trench aligned roughly north-south was also towards the west end of the trench.

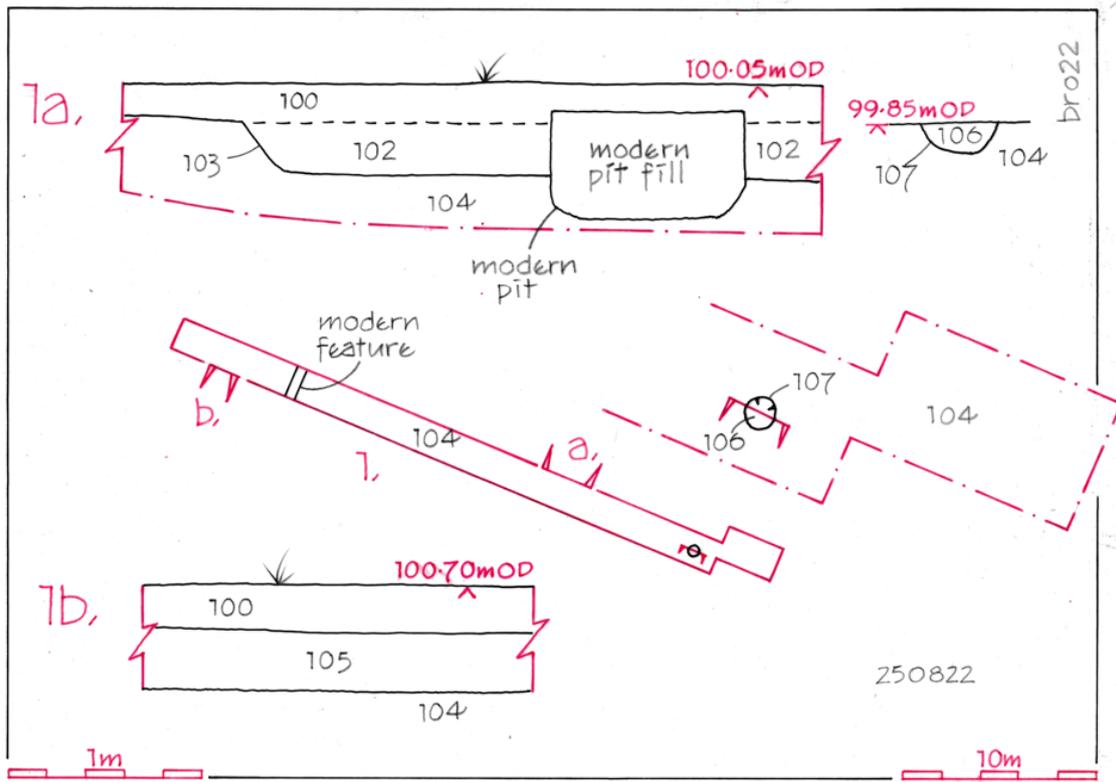


Fig. 5: Trench 1 plan & sections

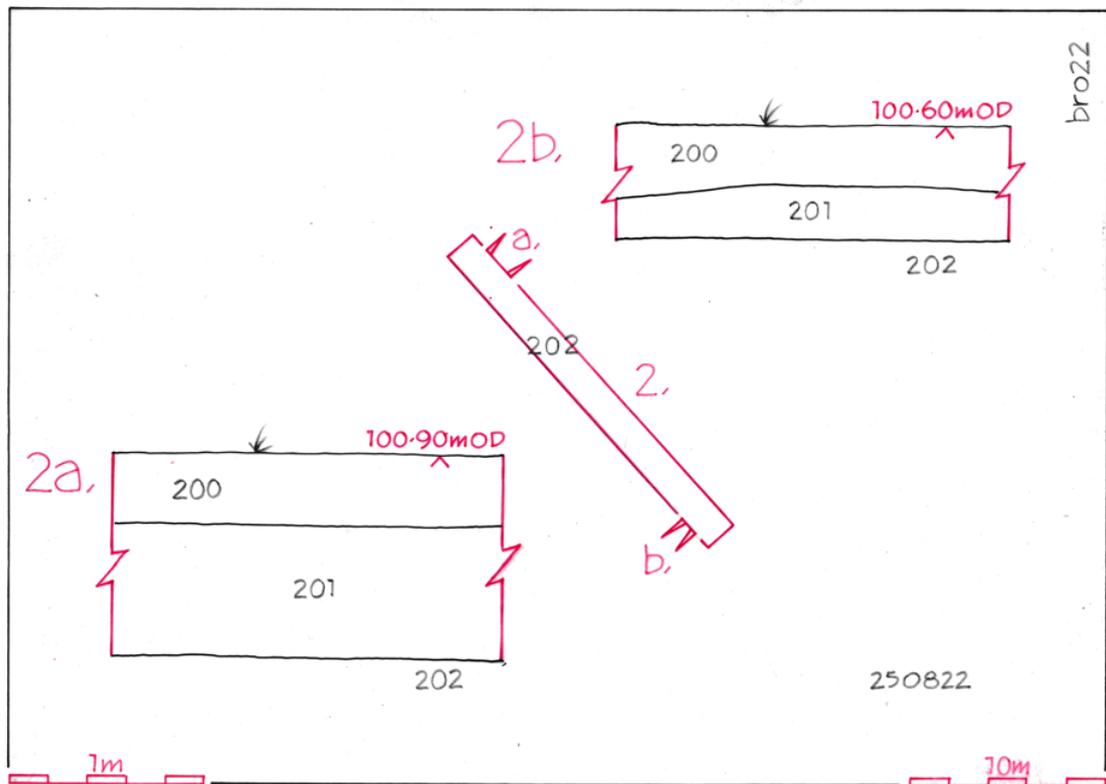


Fig. 6: Trench 2 plan & sections

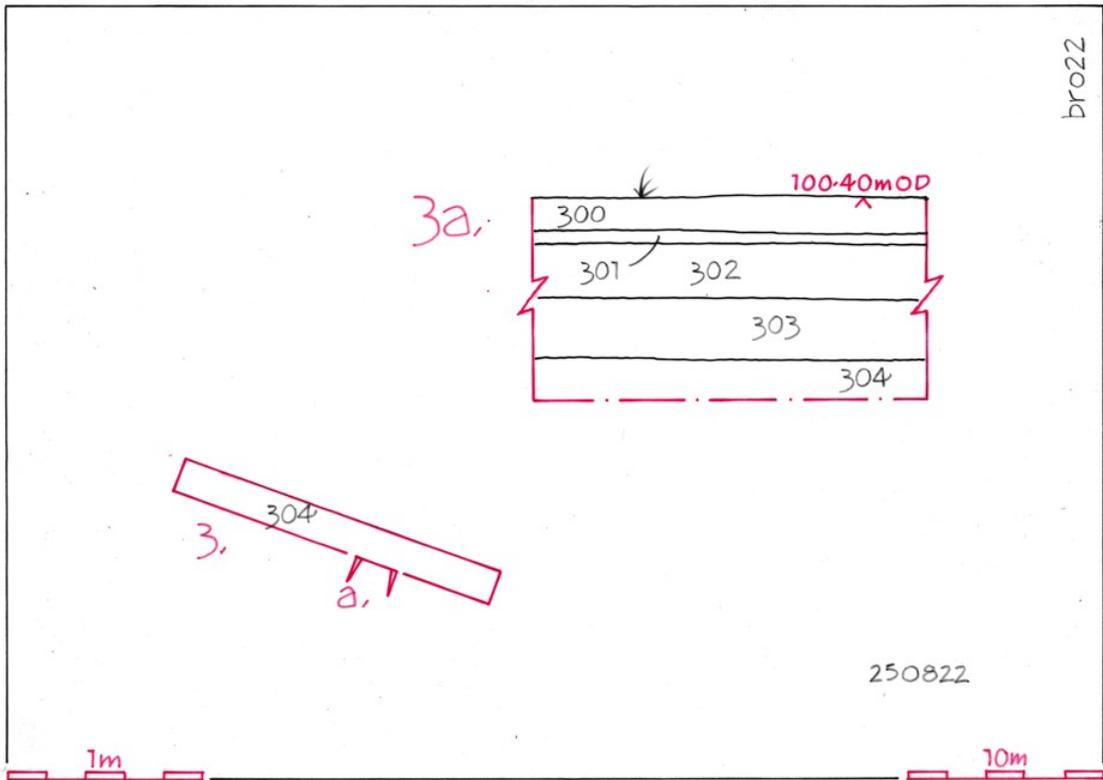


Fig. 7: Trench 3 plan & section

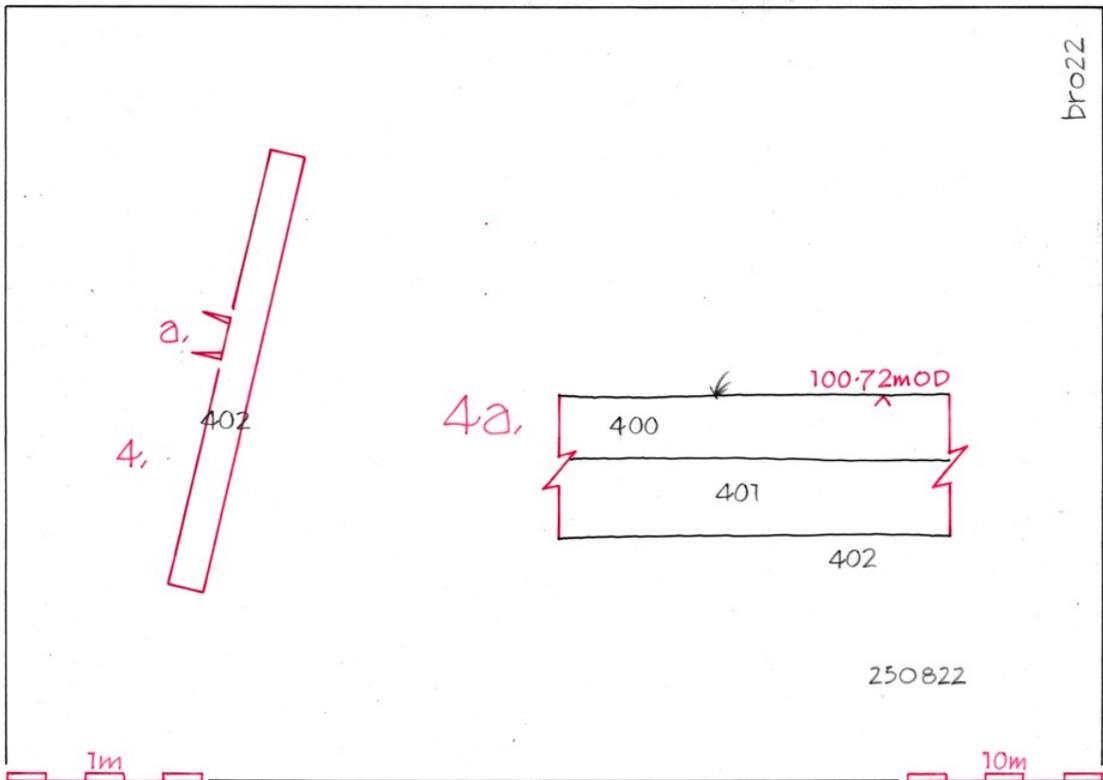


Fig. 8: trench 4 plan & section

Trench 2 (20m)

The surface of the natural substrate (202) comprising an orange sand and gravel was observed through the length of the trench at 99.85m AOD at the northwest end and 100.00m AOD at the southeast end indicating a gentle slope within the natural topography. No archaeological deposits or cut features were observed overlying or truncating the gravel. Overlying the gravel was a 0.68m thick layer of relict subsoil (201) equivalent with layer (105) in trench one. This was sealed by the existing topsoil (200) to a depth of 0.36m which was also equivalent to deposit (100).

Trench 3 (17m)

The surface of the natural substrate (304) comprising an orange gravel was observed through the length of the trench at a level height of 99.35m AOD. No archaeological deposits or cut features were observed overlying or truncating the gravel. Overlying this deposit throughout the length of the trench to a depth of 0.32m was the undated relict subsoil deposit (303) which was sealed by a buried topsoil (302) deposit recorded at 0.30m thick. This was in turn overlain by a 0.07m thick layer of redeposited gravel (301) which was overlain by the existing topsoil deposit (300).

Trench 4 (23m)

The surface of the natural substrate (402) comprising a light yellowish-brown gravel was observed through the length of the trench 99.95m AOD. No archaeological deposits or cut features were observed overlying or truncating the gravel which was sealed by a 0.40m thick relict subsoil deposit (401). The upper layer which was 0.34m thick comprised the existing topsoil deposit (400).

FINDS

No residual finds were recovered from the excavation other than the occasional fragment of modern roof tile or red brick.

Environmental data

None of the deposits identified during excavation proved suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling.

DISCUSSION

The earlier heritage statement shows that up until at least 1840, the site remained as undeveloped land sandwiched between residential development to the south and a former workhouse constructed immediately to the north. The results of the HER search show that the location of the site is significant, being situated within proximity to the possible Roman road alignment ([wsm30529](#)) from Worcester to Lickey. North of Bromsgrove the route is not yet proven, although in 2020, a heavily damaged section of the Roman road was recorded at All Saints Garage alongside the Birmingham Road. No accompanying features or artefacts were found, indicating that this location was remote from the local settlement.

The investigation revealed some evidence of human activity in the east end of trench one, but this is likely associated with modern landscaping and pitting connected with the former occupation of no. 163. The single undated post hole recorded at the east end of trench one was isolated and its construction may be attributed to modern activities carried out in the same area although some truncation of the feature may be connected with these works and could suggest an earlier date. Apart from the single undated post hole the overall negative results of the trenching suggest little human activity within the site before its development in the second half of the nineteenth century. This is supported by the stratigraphic sequence of deposits indicating an historic open rural environment which was probably cultivated. The lack of residual finds from the trenches during the excavation supports this hypothesis.

Summary of results

The investigation revealed a single undated and truncated post hole feature [107] at the east end of trench one. Modern truncation likely associated with landscaping activities and subsequent pitting was also recorded within the same area. The west end of trench one and the remaining three trenches revealed a stratigraphy of alternate layers comprising an undated relict subsoil overlain by the modern topsoil. In trench three there is evidence of ground consolidation

resulting from redeposition. The results suggest that there was little human activity within the site before its development in the second half of the C19.

Significance

The results were largely negative and recorded a stratigraphy indicating that the site lay outside the Roman road alignment and was probably part of the agricultural landscape remote from the main areas of earlier occupation.

Impact of development

The results of the investigation suggest that archaeological deposits are unlikely to exist within the proposed development area and that the construction of the new dwellings and associated services and driveways will have no impact.

Archive Location

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

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PLATES



Plate 1: trench 1, view east



Plate 2: trench 1, view west



Plate 3: post hole [107] and fill deposit (106)



Plate 4: post hole [107]



Plate 5: section 1a



Plate 6: section 1b



Plate 7: trench 2, view northwest



Plate 8: trench 2, view southwest



Plate 9: section 2a



Plate 10: trench 3, view west



Plate 11: section 3a



Plate 12: trench 4, view north



Plate 13: section 4a