



Royal British Legion

Salwarpe Road, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire, WR9 9BH.

Royal British Legion

Salwarpe Road, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire, WR9 9BH.

Archaeological Evaluation

NGR: *SO 89357 36468*

Site code: *dro22*

HER activity number: *wsm78326*

OASIS ID: *110archa1-509681*

Sean Cook BA (Hons) MCIfA

Illustration; Jill Atherton MCIfA

30th September 2022

Contents

<i>SUMMARY</i>	4
<i>Geology and topography</i>	6
<i>ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND</i>	7
<i>EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY</i>	7
<i>Aims of the work</i>	7
<i>Fieldwork methods and recording</i>	8
<i>RESULTS: GENERAL</i>	8
<i>Soil and ground conditions</i>	8
<i>Reliability of field investigation</i>	9
<i>Distribution of archaeological deposits</i>	9
<i>Presentation of results</i>	9
<i>RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS</i>	9
<i>FINDS</i>	12
<i>Environmental data</i>	12
<i>DISCUSSION</i>	15
<i>Summary of results</i>	16
<i>Significance</i>	16
<i>Impact of development</i>	16
<i>Archive Location</i>	17
<i>BIBLIOGRAPHY</i>	17
<i>PLATES</i>	18

List of Figures

Fig. 1: Site location circled in red.

Fig. 2: Area of study outlined in red.

Fig. 3: Trench location plan.

Fig. 4: trench 1, plan & section

Fig. 5: Trench 2 plan & section

Fig. 6: Trench 3 pan & section

Fig. 7: Trenches 4 & 5, plans & section

Front cover; view south of the development site.

SUMMARY

Archaeological evaluation was carried out at the former Royal British Legion, Salwarpe Road, Droitwich Spa, WR9 9BH. Planning permission had been granted for the demolition of the existing building and the erection for up to 22 dwellings conditional on a programme of archaeological work. Grubbing out of the foundations for the demolished building was to be recorded by a watching brief.

The investigation revealed that the site has been subjected to significant levels of truncation associated with various phases of development beginning in the late C19 and much of the historic landscape no longer survives and the surface of the geological clay is overlain by modern deposits of consolidation. In some areas there are traces of a former relict subsoil surviving from the historic landscape which shows later truncation across the site was variable but also considerable. A single undated ditch, partially truncated, was recorded aligned northeast southwest across the central area of the site.

Although the results of the investigation were largely negative, some evidence of earlier human activity was shown by a single undated ditch feature aligned northeast southwest across the central area of the site probably representing an historic field boundary within a former agricultural landscape. It does not align with any of the boundaries mapped in 1885 which suggests an earlier origin. The evidence also suggests that the site lies outside the focus of the early settlement at Droitwich.

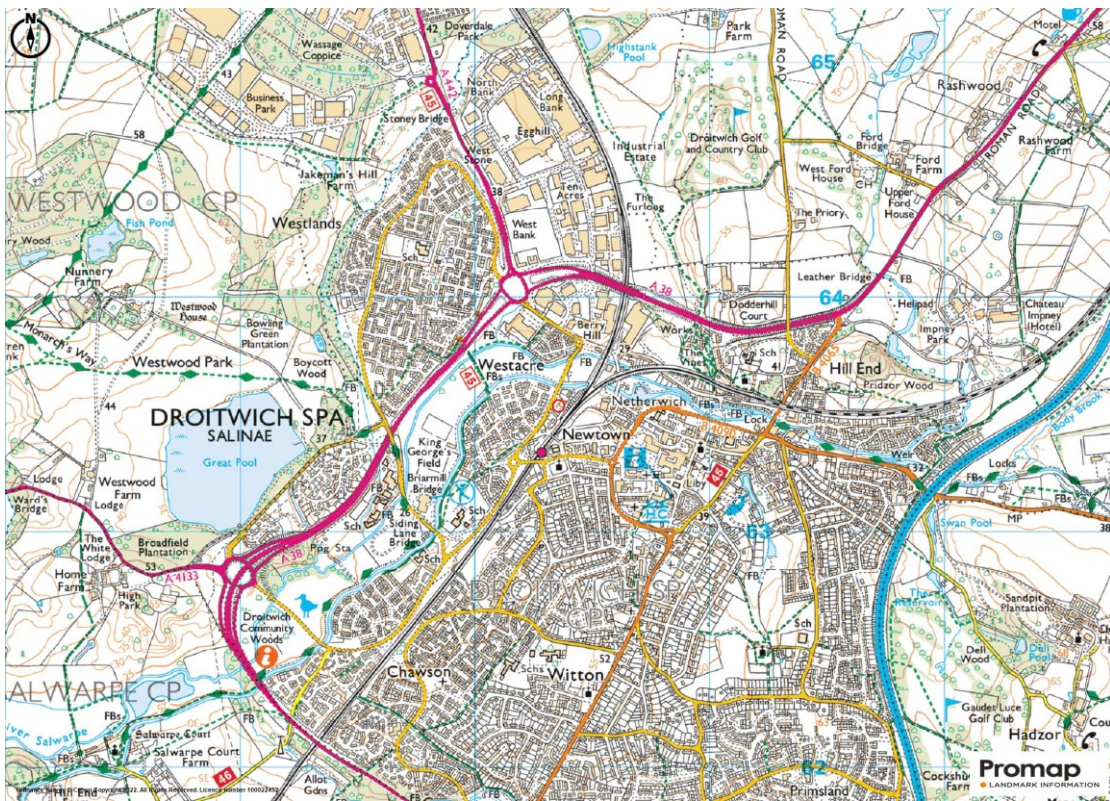


Fig. 1: Site location circled in red.

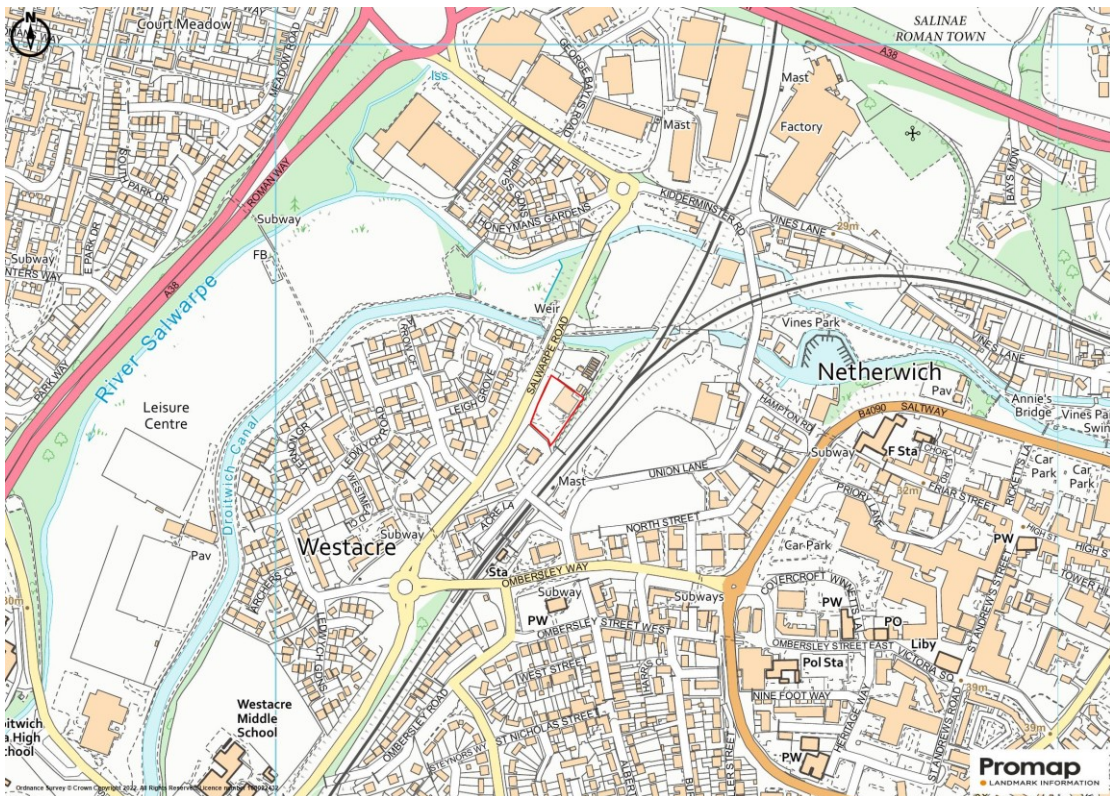


Fig. 2: Application site outlined in red.

INTRODUCTION

Location and scope of works

This document details the results of an archaeological evaluation (trial trenching) at the former Royal British Legion, Salwarpe Road, Droitwich Spa, WR9 9BH. A planning application (*Planning ref. No 20/00123/OUT*) had been approved by Wychavon District Council for demolition of the existing building and erection for up to 22 dwellings conditional on a programme of archaeological work.

The proposed development may affect heritage assets of known archaeological significance ([wsm00683](#)). The 'historic environment' encompasses all those material remains that our ancestors have created in the landscapes of town and countryside. It includes all below and above-ground evidence including buildings of historic and architectural interest. The proposed development area (PDA) is within an area of modern development. The PDA is adjacent to an Augustinian Friary ([wsm00683](#)) founded in 1331 and was in place until at least the C16. A recent excavation 100 metres to the north identified Iron Age and Roman ditches. Historic mapping shows a field boundary within the PDA. Development of the site in the C20 may have truncated any archaeology within the site, however recent trench evaluation to the north identified that the archaeology was deeply stratified and therefore may remain intact. Given the scale of the development, and the anticipated archaeological potential, the likely impact on the historic environment caused by this development could be offset by the implementation of a conditional programme of archaeological works. This would comprise the archaeological trench evaluation of the PDA, further mitigation may be required, but would be dependent upon the results of the evaluation. Demolition/grubbing out of the existing buildings foundation/slab would be archaeologically monitored and recorded through a watching brief.

Geology and topography

The development site, which comprises an area of about 3,000m² situated between 30m and 32m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) is located to the west of Droitwich Spa's historic centre; it is bounded by Salwarpe Road to the west, a small-scale business to the north, carparking and a raised railway embankment to

the east; a Scout and Guides HQ with parking are located to the south. The River Salwarpe is located c.52m north of the site.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

An archaeological desk-based assessment (Patrick, 2019) established that there are no designated archaeological heritage assets within the study site. There are four scheduled monuments within a 1.5km radius of the study site, comprising multi-period salt production remains in Droitwich (Listing Entry 1020256), Roman Settlement at Bays Meadow (Listing Entry 1020620), Roman fort, Saxon church and medieval hospital at Dodderhill (Listing Entry 1020621) and Roman camp 430n east of Dodderhill Court Farm (Listing Entry 1020622). The assessment concluded that the study site lay beyond the archaeological and historic focus of activity within Droitwich Spa and appeared to have formed part of an undeveloped landscape until construction of the adjacent Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton railway line in the later C19, becoming part of a depot in the early C20. Historic mapping suggests extensive ground remodelling through the mid-C20 prior to the British Legion Club being constructed. Given that the study site appears to be removed from the focus of archaeological and historic activity, and that the site has been subjected to considerable ground remodelling through the C20, it was considered that any archaeological remains are likely to have been significantly truncated.

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 deposits within the site.

Sample size and scope of fieldwork

The evaluation comprised five trenches, all were 15m long and 1.80 m wide, the total representing an 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 wet during the excavation, the soil layers showing some moisture retention. Excavation was difficult, the upper stratigraphy at ground level throughout all five trenches was comprised of a thick compacted layer of hardcore consisting of brick and stone rubble and required the use of a toothed bucket to break through to the underlying deposits where excavation continued with a toothless bucket.

Reliability of field investigation

Overall, the results of the trenching suggest that the surface of the natural clay substrate has remained relatively intact despite a series of developments since the late C19. However, most of the earlier deposits were stripped and the clay is overlain by a series of modern layers of consolidated rubble with what appears to have been a relict subsoil surviving in parts within the southern area of the site. Modern service trenches were also recorded.

Distribution of archaeological deposits

A single undated and truncated ditch feature [308] aligned northeast-southwest across the centre of the site and probably representing an historic field boundary, was recorded within trench three.

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

The natural substrate (102) comprising a stiff light yellowish-brown clay was observed through the length of the trench at a height of about 32.30m AOD. no archaeological deposits or cut features were observed overlying or within the surface of the clay. Sealing the clay throughout the trench was a 0.25m thick deposit (101) of mainly brick rubble which was in turn overlain by a 0.40m thick layer of redeposited stone rubble forming the sub-base for the existing asphalt car park.

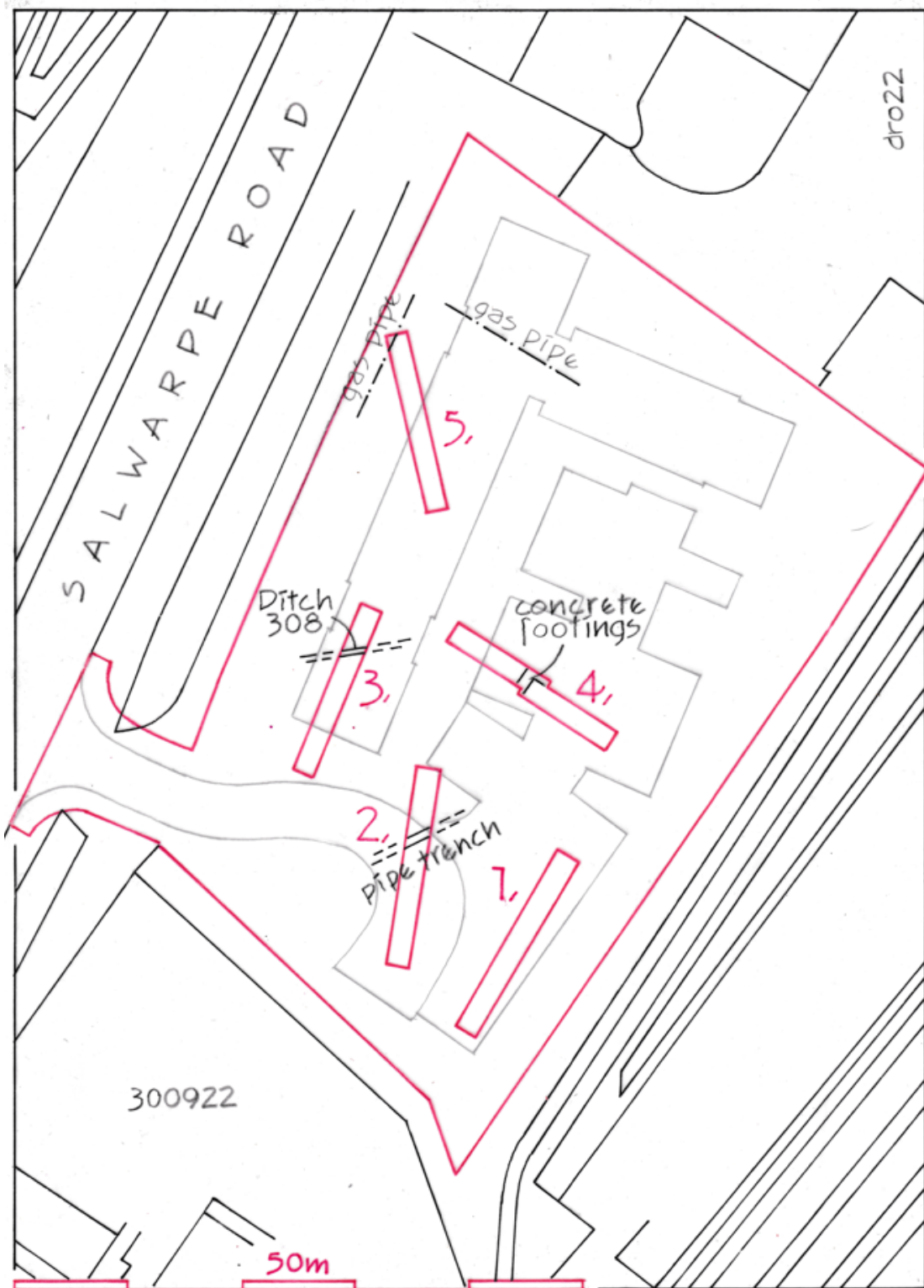


Fig.3: trench location plan.

Trench 2

The surface of the natural clay substrate (202) was observed through the length of the trench at a height of 31.63m AOD. No archaeological deposits or cut features were observed overlying or within the clay. Sealing the clay throughout the trench was an undated 0.12m thick deposit (201) of greyish-brown, clayey-silt which was itself sealed by a 0.20m thick deposit of modern stone and a thin layer of asphalt.

Trench 3

The surface of the natural clay substrate (306) was observed through the length of the trench at about 30.20m AOD. Truncating this deposit towards the north end of the trench was a single undated ditch feature [108] aligned northeast southwest also seemingly truncated. The roughly U-shaped ditch was about 0.70-80m wide and about 0.30m deep and was filled by a single deposit (107) comprising a mid-greyish-brown, clayey-silt. Sealing the ditch feature and the underlying clay was 0.10m thick undated soil layer (305) extending along the length of the trench consisting of a similar mid-greyish-brown, silty-clay which. Overlying this was a sequence of modern deposits approx. 0.70m thick and comprising compacted brick and gravel (304); compacted brick and mortar (303); ash and clinker overlain by blue clay (302); compacted brick rubble (301) and a stone layer (300).

Trench 4

The surface of the natural clay substrate (402) was observed through the length of the trench at a height of about 31m AOD. No archaeological deposits or cut features were observed overlying or within the surface of the clay, this was directly overlain by two re-reposited modern layers of compacted and concrete and stone and brick rubble (401), amounting to a total thickness of 0.40m. These were sealed by a 0.10m thick deposit of topsoil (400). Modern concrete foundations were aligned across part of the south side of the trench and remained in situ during the course of the excavation.

Trench 5

The surface of the natural clay substrate (502) was observed throughout the length of the trench at a level height of 29.90m AOD. No archaeological deposits or cut features were observed overlying or within the surface of the clay which was discoloured dark grey from recent oil contamination. It was sealed throughout the trench by a 0.30m thick deposit of compacted brick rubble (501) which was in turn overlain by 0.20m thick stone sub-base deposit and asphalt surface (500).

FINDS

No finds, residual or otherwise were recovered from the excavation.

Environmental data

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

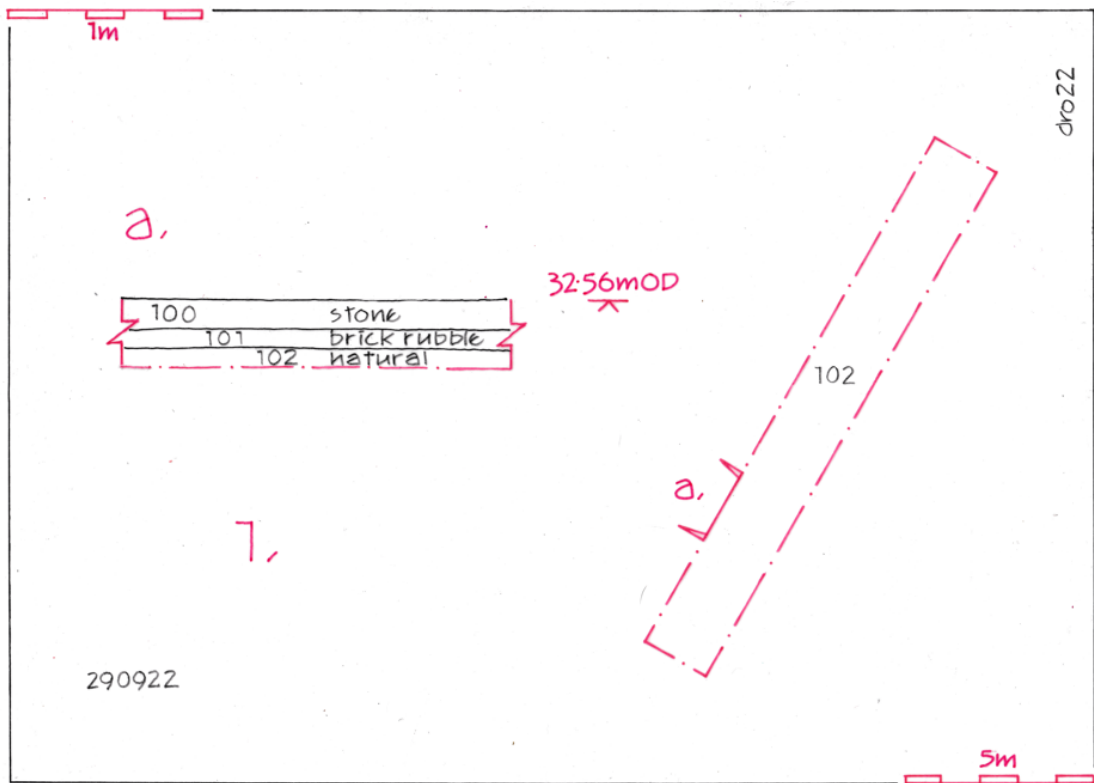


Fig. 4: trench 1, plan & section

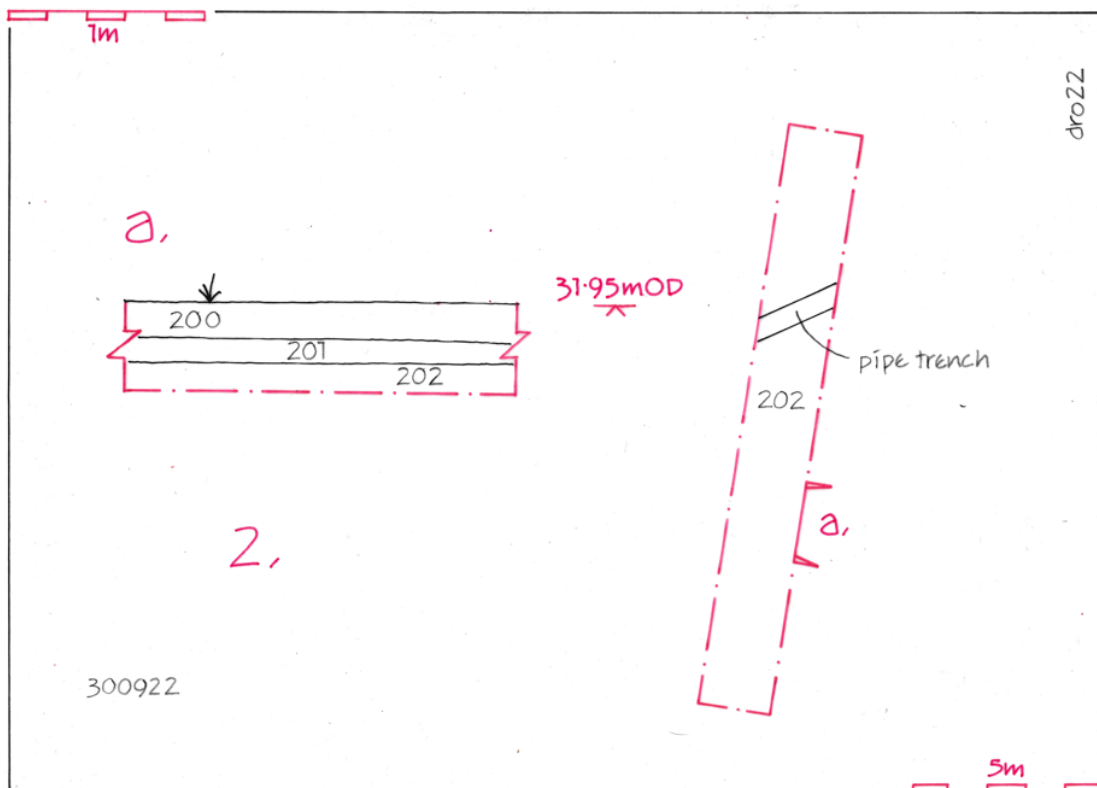


Fig. 5: Trench 2 plan & section

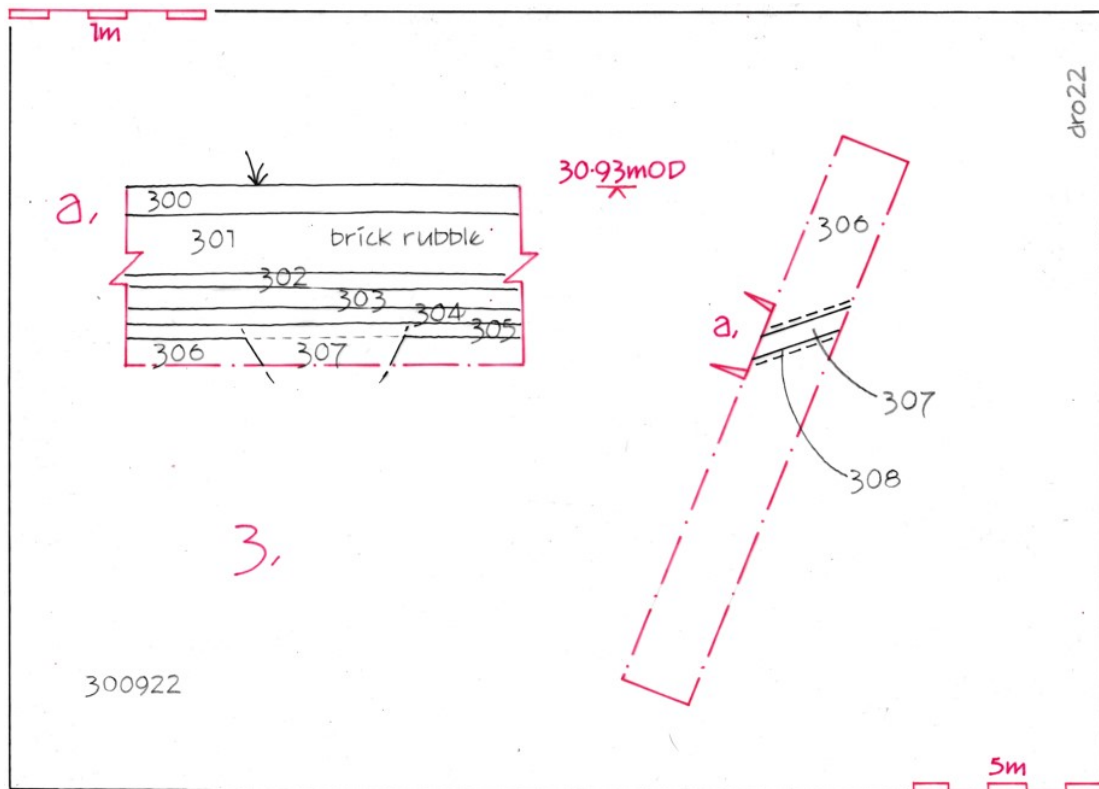


Fig. 6: Trench 3 pan & section

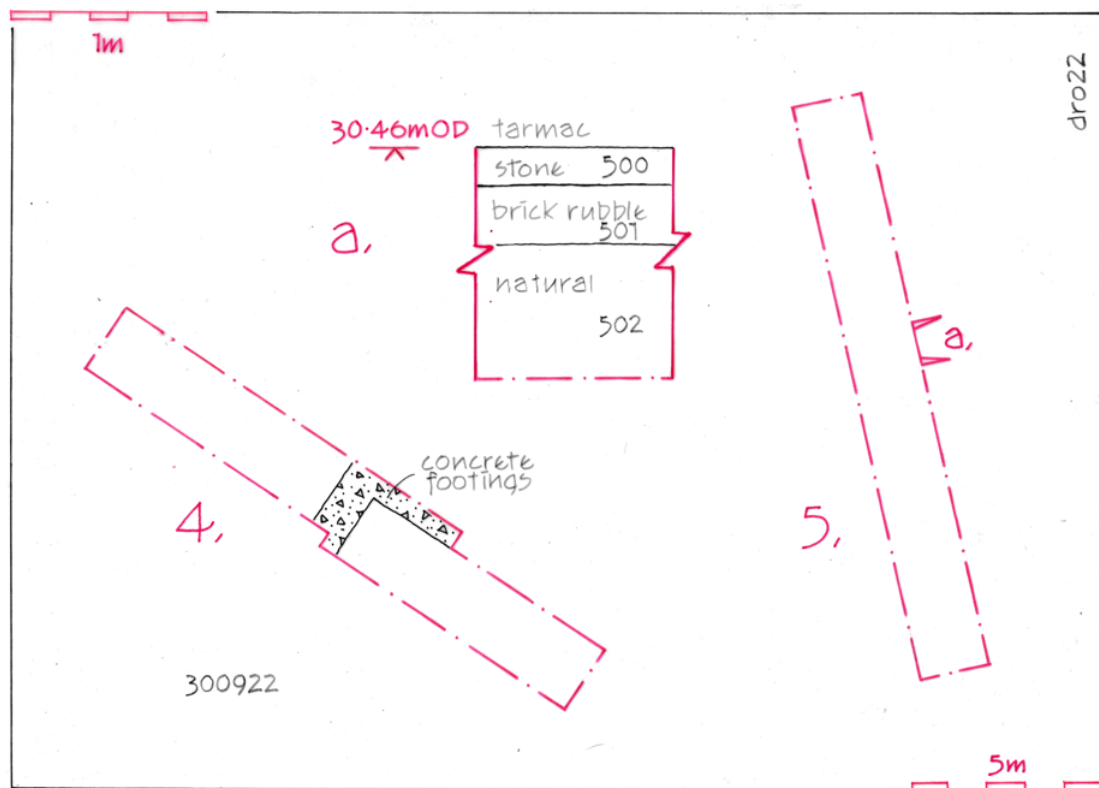


Fig. 7: Trenches 4 & 5, plans & section

DISCUSSION

An historic environment desk-based assessment (Patrick, 2019) established that there are no designated archaeological heritage assets within the development site. Four scheduled monuments lie within a 1.5km radius, comprising multi-period salt production remains in Droitwich; Roman Settlement at Bays Meadow; Roman fort, Saxon church and medieval hospital at Dodderhill and Roman camp 430n east of Dodderhill Court Farm. The assessment concluded that the site lay beyond the archaeological and historic focus of activity within Droitwich Spa and appeared to have formed part of an undeveloped landscape until construction of the adjacent Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton railway line in the later C19, becoming part of a depot in the early C20. Historic mapping suggested extensive ground remodelling through the mid-C20 prior to the British Legion Club being constructed and that any archaeological remains were likely to have been significantly truncated.

The surface heights of the natural clay recorded during the investigation reflect the natural contour of the area in which the site is located, a level of 32.30m AOD is recorded in the south-eastern corner of the development site reducing in level to 29.90m AOD towards the north-western corner indicating a natural sloping down in the topography from south to north.

Truncation of the earlier deposits overlying the clay appears to have varied within the areas investigated and is likely the result of previous development, historic maps record the site was a field late in the C19, by the 1920s it formed part of a depot containing a structure most probably associated with the railway; this depot was cleared and reorganised in the 1960s, with further reorganisation in the 1970s and construction of the British Legion Club by 1978. The reduction of levels across the site suggested by these developments was confirmed during the investigation where in three of the five trenches the surface of the natural clay was directly overlain by a series of modern layers of re-deposition. At the higher southern end of the development site in the area where trenches 1, 2 and 4 were located the sequence of deposits were limited and varied slightly. In trenches 1, 4 and 5 the natural clay was directly overlain by layers of modern re-deposited brick rubble indicating significant truncation of earlier deposits overlying the clay in these areas of the site. In trenches 2 and 3 the clay was sealed by a thin layer of soil (201 & 305) and although undated probably represented the remains of a relict subsoil.

Although the results of the investigation were largely negative, some evidence of earlier human activity was recorded in the northern half of trench 3. This comprised a single undated ditch feature [308] aligned northeast southwest across the centre of the site which probably represents an historic land boundary within the former agricultural landscape. It does not align with any of the boundaries mapped in 1885 which suggests an earlier origin.

Summary of results

The investigation revealed that the site has been subjected to significant levels of truncation associated with various phases of development beginning in the late C19 and much of the historic landscape no longer survives and the surface of the geological clay is overlain by modern deposits of consolidation. In some areas there are traces of a former relict subsoil surviving from the historic environment which shows that the truncation was variable. A single undated ditch probably representing an historic field boundary was recorded aligned northeast southwest across the central area of the site.

Significance

The results were largely negative albeit for a single undated ditch feature aligned northeast-southwest across the site. This probable field boundary is not shown on the earliest mapping available (OS 1885) and may represent the remains of an historic pre-C19 agricultural landscape that is currently unrecorded. The evidence suggests that the site lies outside the focus of early settlement.

Impact of development

The main impact of the development will result from foundation trenches, services and ground reduction for the new car parking area. The investigation suggests that potential archaeological deposits consist of a single ditch feature [108], probably an historic field boundary aligned across the central area of the site. The only area of the development where this is likely to be impacted on is in the area of the foundations at the south end of the new building.

Archive Location

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

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Geological survey of Great Britain, 1993. *Worcester*, sheet 199; 1:50,000 series (*solid and drift edition*).

Baxter, E., 2020. *163-165 Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire; Heritage Statement*, Orion Heritage report.

CIfA, 2019. *Code of Conduct*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

CIfA, 2020. *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Evaluation*, Chartered OS maps:1884

PLATES



Plate 1: trench 1, view southwest



Plate 2: trench 1, view north



Plate 3: section 1a



Plate 4: trench 2, view south



Plate 5: trench 2, view north



Plate 6: section 2a



Plate 7: trench 3, view northwest



Plate 8: trench 3, view southeast



Plate 9: section 3a



Plate 10: section 3a, detail



Plate 11: trench 4, view west



Plate 12: trench 4, section, view southwest



Plate 13: detail of trench section



Plate 14: trench 5, view northwest