



An Archaeological Evaluation at 2 Bewdley Street, Evesham, Worcestershire

A Report for Mr Ian Tustin

August 2006

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Project: PJ 166

WSM 35096

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1. The Evaluation

Project Background

1.1. Location of the Site

The market town of Evesham is located at a loop in the River Avon, with the historic core of the town on the western side of the river and the medieval suburb of Bengeworth to the east, now joined by modern development. The A46 connects Evesham with Redditch, some 20 kilometres to the north and Tewkesbury, a similar distance to the south-west, with the A44 passing Evesham from Worcester in the north-west to Oxford to the south-east. The town is central within the Vale of Evesham, to the north of the Cotswold Hills (Figure 1). The evaluation was carried out in Bewdley Street, which lies to the west of the town centre (NGR SP 0363 4387)

1.2. Development Details

A request was received from Mr Alan McColm (Architect), on behalf of his client Mr Ian Tustin, to prepare a proposal, specification and costing for an archaeological evaluation to be carried out at 2 Bewdley Street, Evesham.

The archaeological evaluation was proposed by the Worcestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist in response to the threat posed to the archaeological integrity of the site by possible development, for which a planning application had been submitted. It is understood that it is proposed to construct new domestic accommodation with associated infrastructure on the site.

The planning process determined that the site is listed on the Worcestershire County Historic Environment Record (HER) as 'being within an area of medieval development', which is supported by recent archaeological work in the vicinity (WSM 24149; WSM 29622) that encountered remains from the medieval period. As a result, the Planning Archaeologist advised that the site should be subject to an *archaeological evaluation* prior to any development-taking place, as required under Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (Section 30). A brief for works was written (WHEAS 2005; reference: W/02/1391) and a revised proposal and specification submitted and approved in July 2006 (Mercian Archaeology 2005, revised 2006).

The aim of the archaeological project is, therefore, to determine the presence of significant archaeological remains, assess their nature and condition and to place them into context locally and nationally if applicable.

2. Methods and Process

2.1. Project Specification

- ❑ The archaeological project conforms to the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IFA 2001).
- ❑ The project conforms to a brief prepared by The Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council (Brief W/02/1391, WHEAS 2005), for which a project proposal and detailed specification was produced (Mercian Archaeology 2006).
- ❑ Mercian Archaeology adhere to the service practice and health and safety policy as contained within the *Mercian Archaeology Service Manual* (Williams 2003)
- ❑ The record archive will be offered to the appropriate museum after discussion with the client and / or archaeological curator.
- ❑ *The Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists* (1997) will be adhered to.
- ❑ *The Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology, Institute of Field Archaeologists* (1997) will also be followed
- ❑ *Guidelines for Finds Work, Institute of Field Archaeologists* (2001) will be followed.
- ❑ The project and any recommendations will conform to the government advice contained in *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning* (DoE, PPG 16 1990).
- ❑ The documentary research will follow the guidelines contained within the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment* (2001)
- ❑ *Guidelines for the Preparation of Archives for Long-Term Storage* (Walker 1990) and *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections, Museum and Galleries Commission* (1992) will be followed.
- ❑ *Conservation Guidelines No 2, United Kingdom Institute of Conservation.*
- ❑ *Management of Archaeological Projects 2, English Heritage* 1991
- ❑ Environmental Archaeology and Archaeological Evaluations: Recommendation Regarding the Environmental Archaeology Component of *Archaeological Evaluations in England, Association for Environmental Archaeology Working Paper Number 2* (1995)

2.2. Background Research

- Prior to the commencement of fieldwork relevant available cartographic sources were consulted. A full search of the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record was commissioned and various archaeological reports were also viewed.

2.3. Topography, Geology and Archaeology

Abbreviations used

SMR ~ Worcestershire Sites and Monuments Record number

Evesham is located on gravel river terrace deposits of the Second and Third Terrace of the River Avon (Geological Survey of Great Britain 1:50,000: sheet 200). The overlying soils are Uffington series clayey alluvial soils to the west of the River Avon and the Fladbury series to the east, with clayey alluvium soil of the Drayton series and stagnogleyic argillic brown earths of the Bishampton series away from the river (Beard et al 1986).

The clayey soils of the Vale of Evesham are ideal for fruit growing and market gardening. The early edition Ordnance Survey maps of the town (Figure 2), show orchards from the edge of the river floodplain to the west, to the edge of the developed area on the western side of the town.

The placename 'Evesham' appears to derive from the early form Eveshomm, although another form was also used (Cronuchomme). Both forms are likely to refer to personal names (Cornoc or Eof) with the suffix *hamm*, meaning 'bend in the river' (Dalwood *et al* 1996).

There is little evidence of prehistoric activity in the immediate area; a flint knife (WSM 21047) and a leaf shaped arrowhead (WSM 21048) provide isolated finds from around the town and prehistoric deposits have been identified at 95-7 High Street (WSM 26358; WSM 27191 and WSM 28764).

Interpretation of Roman activity at Evesham has been bolstered by archaeological work over the last few years. An archaeological evaluation and subsequent excavation at 13 Vine Street identified Roman deposits and artefacts dating to the 2nd-3rd centuries AD (WSM 30354; WSM 30578) and residual Roman material was found during archaeological work at Abbey gate, adjacent to Vine Street (Patrick and Vaughan 2003). A Roman settlement has been suggested to the north of the town at Twyford Bridge (Roberts 1980, in Dalwood et al 1996) and a Roman church is postulated to have stood on the site of the abbey (Dalwood et al 1996).

There is little evidence for the extent of Anglo-Saxon occupation in the town, with activity proposed at the Hampton/ Fairfield area to the south-west of the town (Roberts 1980, in Dalwood et al 1996). The existence of an Anglo-Saxon minster church at Evesham by around AD 700 suggests further occupation from this period has yet to be discovered in the town.

It was during the medieval period that Evesham prospered and expanded, mainly due to the influence and economic power of the abbey. By the 12th century, Evesham had gained urban status as a borough, with a population of over 1000 (Dalwood *et al* 1996). The abbey continued to influence the economy of the town into the 16th century. For further commentary on the role of the abbey within the town and the post-dissolution changes, see Dalwood 1996.

Evesham continued to prosper into the 18th century, with the now navigable River Avon offering improved trade links. River trade imports consisted of coal, iron, lead, timber, sugar, and tobacco, whilst exports were mainly of corn, other agricultural produce, and leather goods (Cox 1977, in Dalwood 1996).

During the 18th century the towns' economy was based on manufacture of leather and silk wares, paper, rope and nail making (VCH II). Market gardening continues today and is a long-lived occupation in the area.

The Central Marches Historic Towns Survey has identified the northern side of Bewdley Street as being outside the medieval core of Evesham (Dalwood *et al* 1996). However, several archaeological investigations have taken place in the vicinity of Bewdley Street in the recent past; a watching brief on the corner of Avon Street and Brick Kiln Street encountered a series of medieval pits, which were interpreted as quarries and industrial waste pits rather than settlement activity (WSM 33583); further work adjacent to the site at Avon Street / Brick Kiln Street, however, interpreted pits as domestic activity at the rear of medieval burgage plots. The dateable finds included pottery from the 11th to 14th centuries (WSM 33586); medieval pottery was also recovered during archaeological work carried out in 1978 at 63-65 Bewdley Street (WSM 00812) and medieval activity was recorded during work in Brick Kiln Street in 1997 (WSM 29622), which included finds of medieval pottery in sealed contexts. A further excavation in Bewdley Street car park in 1980 encountered no activity, but the site had been heavily truncated by 19th century cellars.

3. The Fieldwork

Abbreviations Used: AOD = Above Ordnance Datum

The brief required that 2 trenches were excavated on the site totalling some 27 square metres of the site, however, it was agreed with the Planning Archaeologist that due to limited space on the site and the possibility of buried services, two 5 metre trenches, totalling 16 square metres, would be adequate to evaluate the development area.

The evaluation was undertaken between the 3rd and 4th August 2006 February by Paul Williams of Mercian Archaeology assisted by Steve Rigby. The evaluation trenches was excavated by a mini-digger fitted with a 1.50 metre wide toothless ditching bucket after the tarmac surface had been broken up.

The two trenches were 5 metres long by 1.50 metres wide, with Trench 1 located on the northern side of the site aligned east-west and Trench 2 on the same alignment to the south (Figure 3).

3.1. Trench 1

The modern tarmac car park surface [100] was at a level of 34m AOD and had been laid onto a hardcore layer of brick rubble [101].

This overlay a layer of loose and well mixed brown silty-sand with clumps of buff clay and small rounded stones [102], many fractured, suggesting that the layer had been churned about in the past, most likely by cultivation processes. The layer had been heavily truncated by drains and disturbed by demolition of former outbuildings associated with the houses that stood on the site until the mid 1960's. The base of a soil stack pipe was seen to be leaking under pressure and raw sewage was entering the trench, meaning that the remainder of the recording had to be done from the trench edge, although this did not distract from the results.

Natural sand [103] was encountered at around 1.00 metre (33m AOD) below the present ground level. There were no cut features encountered in the trench and no finds retrieved.

3.2. Trench 2

The stratigraphy in Trench 2 was similar to that in Trench 1, with tarmac [200] laid onto a brick rubble hardcore [201] forming the car park surface.

The Ordnance Survey maps of the site indicate that there were terraced houses standing on the site until the recent past, when they were demolished and the site levelled for a small car park. This was evidenced by a layer of greenish-grey slightly sandy-clay of around 10 centimetres thick [202], which was interpreted as a bedding layer for the quarry tile floor of one of the houses; none of the tiles remained. The floor-bedding layer was laid over an uneven layer of lias stone fragments [209], which must have been put down as a hardcore base for the floor. The floor layers terminated in-line with a handmade brick and lime mortar wall [207] running east to west across the trench, which represented the rear wall of one of the Victorian houses on the site. A series of three lias stone and brick steps dropped down from the floor level into a space adjacent to the east, which may have been the inside of a small lean-to (wash-house?). No structural remains were noted, but the space had been filled with loose demolition rubble [208].

The floor layers of the former house [202/209] had cut into and sealed a buried soil [203] below. This was similar to layer [102] in Trench 1 and was interpreted as the same layer [102=203]. The layer was noticeably loose and well mixed, suggesting that it was a cultivation layer. The layer contained rare fragmented animal bone and teeth and medieval and Roman pottery; this is further discussed below. There was no evidence to indicate definitively that the soil was a garden / back-plot soil rather than a plough soil (fields) and there were no cut features encountered.

The sterile natural parent material [204=103] was identified at between 80 and 90 centimetres below the current ground level (33.10m AOD).

A test pit excavated against wall [207] revealed the foundation cut for the wall [205] and that the wall had been built on a hardcore fill of stone fragments [206] in the base of the foundation trench. The foundation course of the wall was set at 32.53m AOD.

4. The Artefacts

By Laura Griffin

4.1. Aims

The brief required an assessment of the quantity, range and potential of artefacts from the excavation.

The aims of the finds assessment were: -

- ❑ To identify, sort, spot date, and quantify all artefacts
- ❑ To describe the range of artefacts present
- ❑ To preliminarily assess the significance of the artefacts

4.2. Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved artefacts were examined and identified, quantified and dated to period. Pottery fabrics are referenced to the fabric reference series maintained by the Worcestershire County Council Archaeological Service (Hurst and Rees 1992).

Results of Analysis

The artefactual assemblage from 2 Bewdley Street came from a single stratified context (203) and consisted of a single sherd of Roman pottery and three of medieval pottery weighing 56g. (see Appendix 1, Table 1). All sherds have been grouped and quantified according to fabric (see Appendix 1, Table 2).

No sherds were diagnostic, so all were datable only by fabric type to the general period or production span. In general, the assemblage displayed a range of fabric types commonly identified on sites of this date in the Evesham area.

Discussion of the artefacts

The discussion below is a summary of the finds and associated location or contexts by period. Where possible, dates have been allocated and the importance of individual finds commented upon as necessary.

Roman

A single, residual sherd of Roman pottery was identified within the group. This was identified as being of South Midlands shell-tempered ware (fabric 23) and could be dated to the end of the Roman period between the late 4th and early 5th centuries.

In addition, the sherd was highly burnished on the internal surface, indicating it to be from an open form, most likely a bowl.

Medieval

The context could be a *terminus post quem* of the early 14th century on the basis of the medieval pottery retrieved.

All three sherds were from locally produced cooking pot forms and none were glazed or decorated. Two sherds were of unglazed Worcester-type sandy ware (fabric 55) and appeared to come from two individual vessels, which could be dated between the late 11th and early 14th centuries. The remaining sherd was of unglazed Malvernian ware (fabric 56) and could be dated to between the 13th and 14th centuries.

Significance

Although small, this assemblage provides a date of 13th-early 14th century for context 203. Furthermore, the single residual sherd of shell-tempered ware would indicate there to be late Roman activity in the near vicinity.

4. Analysis and Discussion

Abbreviations used

CMHTS ~ Central Marches Historic Towns Survey (Dalwood et al 1996)

The CMHTS suggests that the limits of the medieval urban form of Evesham follows Brick Kiln Street and the eastern end of Bewdley Street, signifying that the proposed development site lay in an undeveloped area until the 19th century (Dalwood *et al* 1996). However, an archaeological salvage recording undertaken in 1997 on the western side of Brick Kiln Street (adjacent to the west and north of the site), identified medieval occupation, within an area enclosed to the west by a north-south ditch, running parallel to Brick Kiln Street. The archaeological evidence came in the form of cut features (cess pits) containing dateable medieval pottery, two stone walls and a flagstone floor, interpreted as medieval in date and associated medieval finds (Cook 1997). This suggests that the ditch identified probably delineates the extent of the medieval burgage plots, which ran back from High Street and that Brick Kiln Street is a later street, proposed as 16-17th century (Cook 1997). This suggests that the original medieval burgage plots were substantial, at around 100 metres in length and the development site lay within the area of medieval occupation.

The evidence from within the evaluation trenches encountered no cut features to suggest domestic occupation earlier than the 19th century, although a preserved buried soil contained medieval and Roman pottery, indicating that it was well mixed and likely to be a medieval cultivation soil containing residual Roman material. The medieval pottery sherds and associated cultural material would have derived from manure created from domestic middens being spread into the soil as a fertiliser. The nature of this soil is unsure, although the loose texture and inclusion of pockets of clay suggest a managed cultivation soil. The results of the archaeological work at Brick Kiln Street point towards this being a medieval back-plot cultivation soil, rather than a plough soil of surrounding fields, as the fields would have been further to the west at this time. Back plots were generally used for everyday domestic activity and sometimes cottage industry and pits, including cesspits, rubbish pits, animal burials and other features associated with medieval living may be encountered. Often this will result in a dark, often blackish organic rich soil. However, with burgage plots of 100 metres in length the soil may vary across the site, with areas of charcoal blackened soil close to the house end, phosphate rich soils where animals may have been kept and other areas of managed cultivation soil and soils containing industrial, or craft residues.

Recent archaeological work has for the first time identified Roman activity in Evesham, which appears to have been focused on Vine Street (without further evidence). Excavation at 13 Vine Street identified Roman ditches and gullies, which were dated to the 2nd and 3rd centuries by the inclusion of a Severn Valley ware (fabric 12) type 7 jar rim and a black burnished ware (fabric 22) flanged rim, within the backfills of the cut features. A small quantity of Roman building material was also recovered (Lockett and Jones 2002). The evaluation at 2 Bewdley Street retrieved one sherd of Roman shell-tempered ware (fabric 23), which was dateable to between the late 4th and early 5th centuries. To date, this appears to be the only evidence for late Roman activity at Evesham. The pottery sherd, however, was residual (being found in a later medieval context - 203) and cannot be used to identify a definitive area of Roman occupation, although it is clear that its presence may be used to suggest late Roman activity in the close proximity and indicates Roman activity at Evesham some two centuries later than previously evidenced.

The post-medieval history of the site was evidenced in the ephemeral remains of a demolished Victorian house and associated outbuildings, as shown on the early Ordnance Survey mapping. There was a distinct lack of cultural material dating from this period and it seems likely that the site was thoroughly cleared during demolition and later laying of car park surfaces.

5. Conclusion

The results of the evaluation demonstrate that there were no significant cut archaeological features within the evaluation trenches. A buried soil containing medieval pottery and one residual sherd of late-Roman ceramic, was encountered in both trenches. This evidence alone indicates that there was medieval and late Roman activity close to the site, but cannot determine the nature of the soil, i.e. whether a plough soil from open fields or a tenement back-plot soil. However, the results of previous archaeological work indicate that the medieval burgage plots extended from High Street to the east, some 100 metres to a boundary ditch parallel to the eastern side of Littleworth Street, indicating that the proposed development site lies in this area of medieval occupation and indicating that the soil represents a burgage plot cultivation soil. The residual Roman pottery was dateable to the late 4th or 5th century, indicating late Roman activity in the vicinity, although this could not be pinpointed to the site.

The evidence from the evaluation suggests that medieval activity on the site was at its zenith in the 13th to 14th centuries, with many plots abandoned, probably around the 16th to 17th century when the long burgage plots were split by the laying out of Brick Kiln Street. Further new development began to take place in the 18th and 19th century, when new houses were laid out on the streets to the west of High Street. The remains of 19th century houses were identified during the site evaluation.

6. Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the client Ian Tustin and his agent Alan McColm. Further thanks are extended to Mick George for supply and operation of the mini-excavator, Steve Rigby for his contribution on site; Laura Griffin for her analysis and report on the ceramic finds; Emma Hancox for carrying out the HER search; Mike Glyde, Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service and the staff of Worcester Records Office.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Artefactual Analysis of Material From 2 Bewdley Street, Evesham

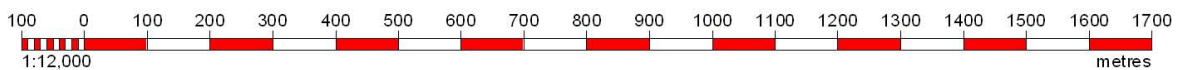
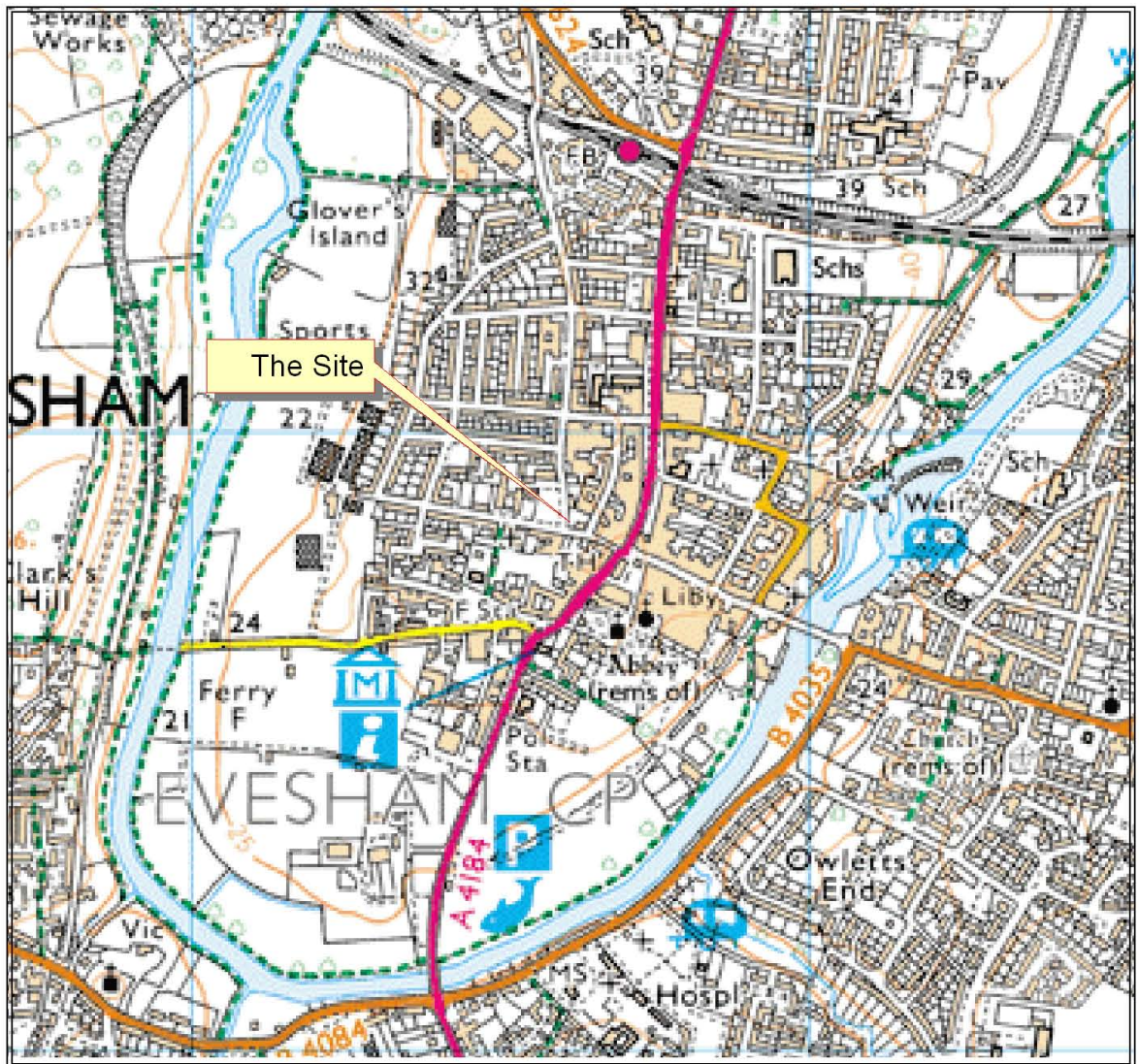
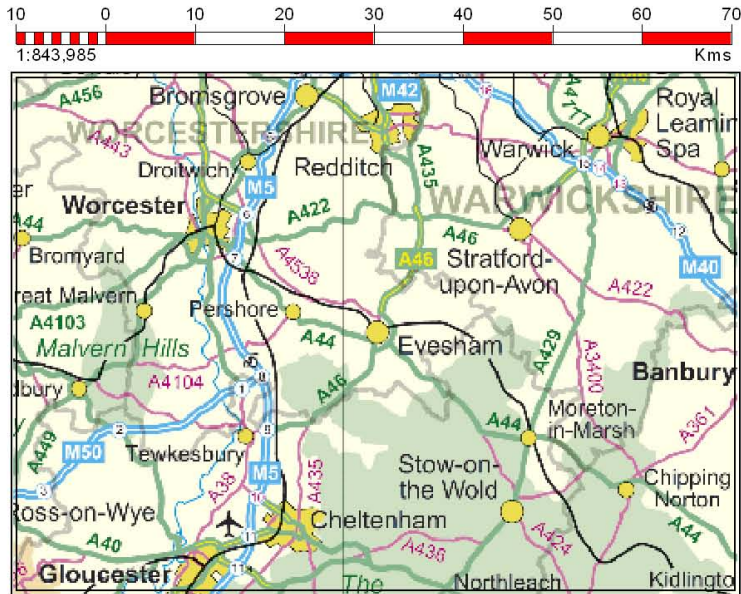
Material	Total	Weight (g)	Context
Roman pottery	1	18	203
Medieval pottery	3	38	203

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

Fabric no.	Fabric name	Total	Weight (g)
23	South Midlands shell-tempered ware	1	18
55	Unglazed Worcester-type sandy ware	2	28
56	Unglazed Mavernian ware	1	10

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric type

Figure 1: Location of the Site



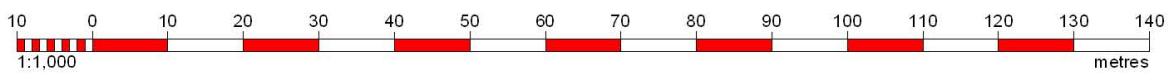
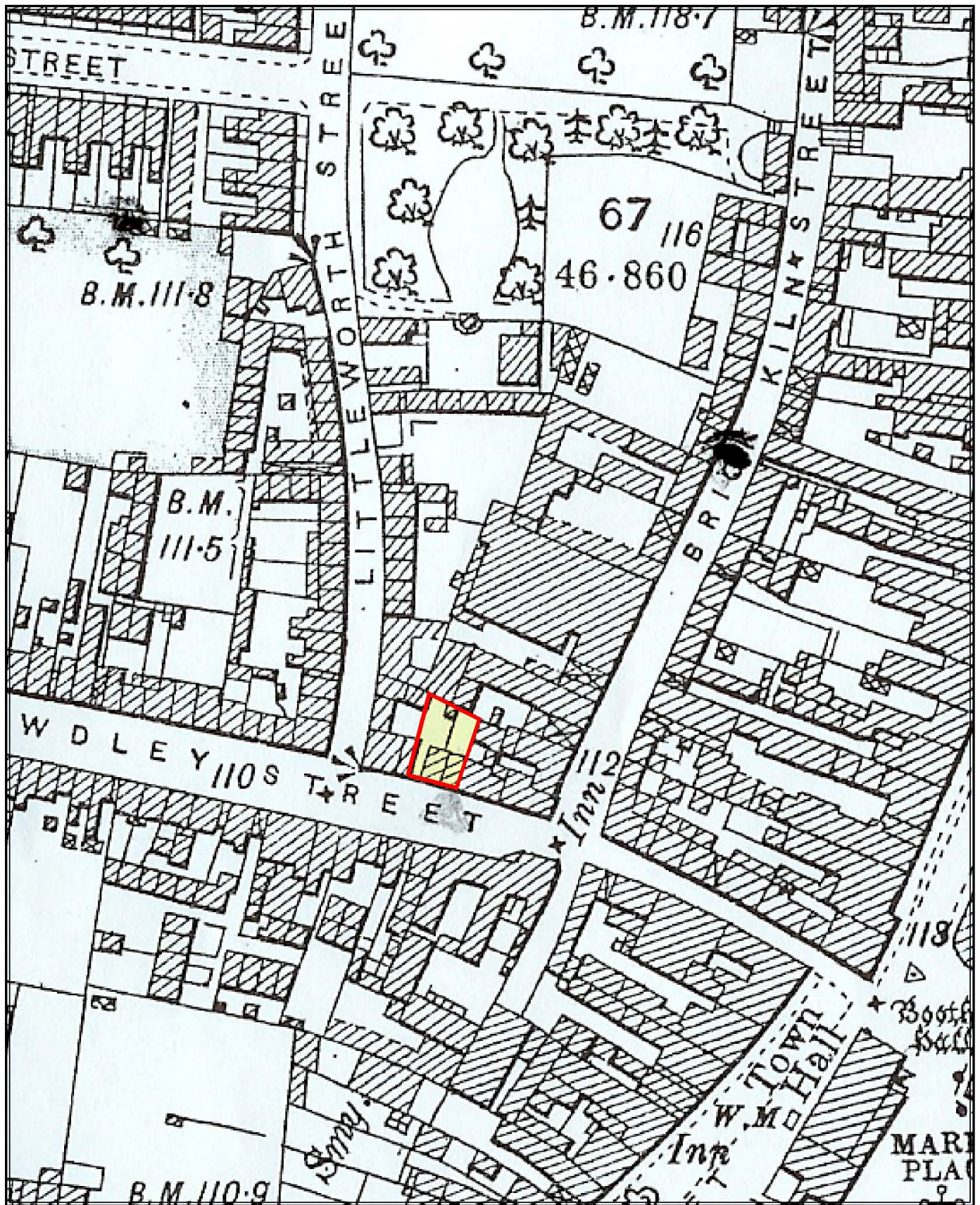
Location of the Site at Bewdley Street, Evesham

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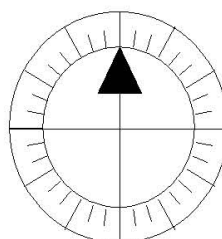
Licence number 100040597



Figure 4: 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey (1904)



The 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map with the proposed development site highlighted



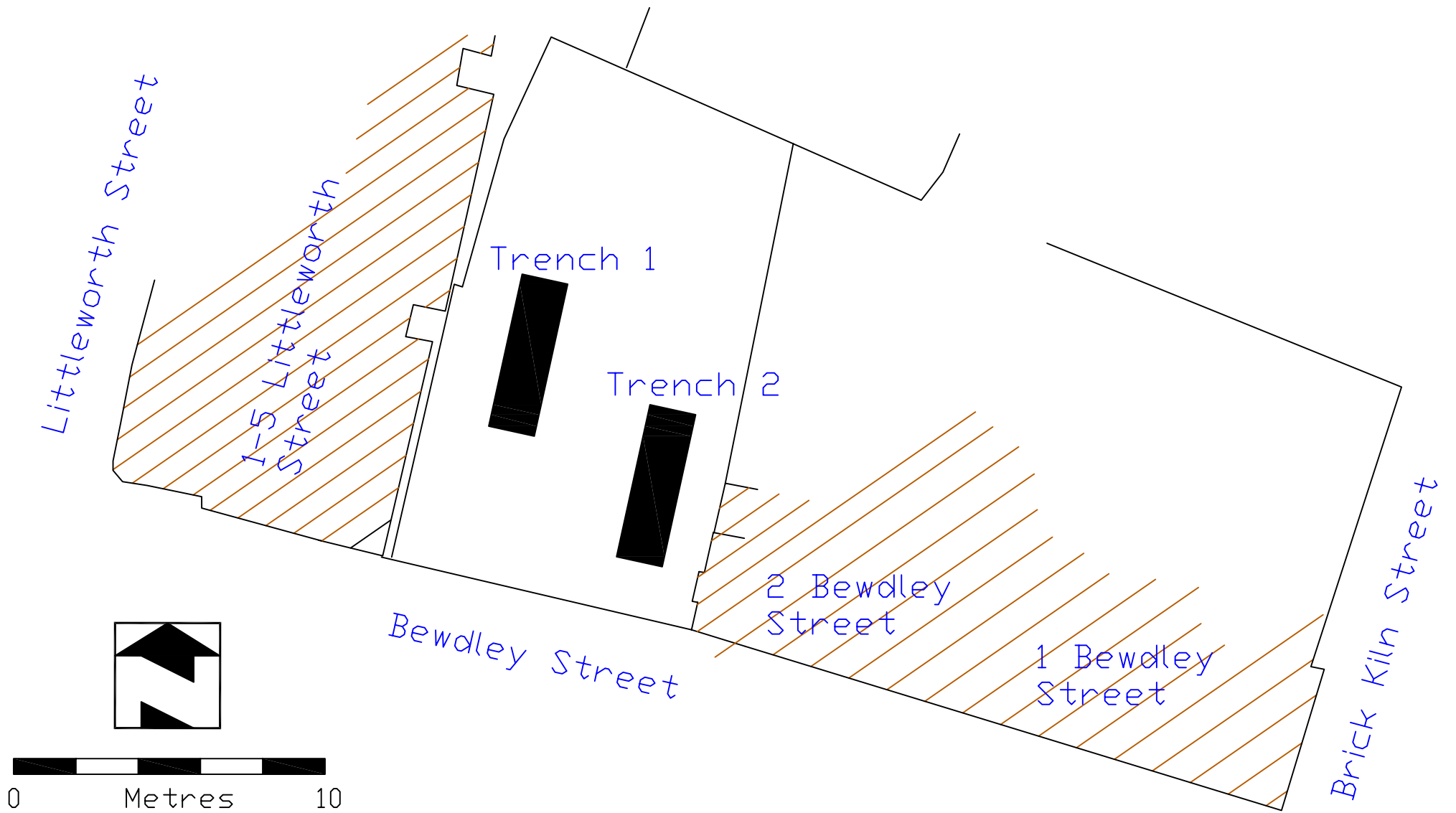


Figure 3: Trench Location

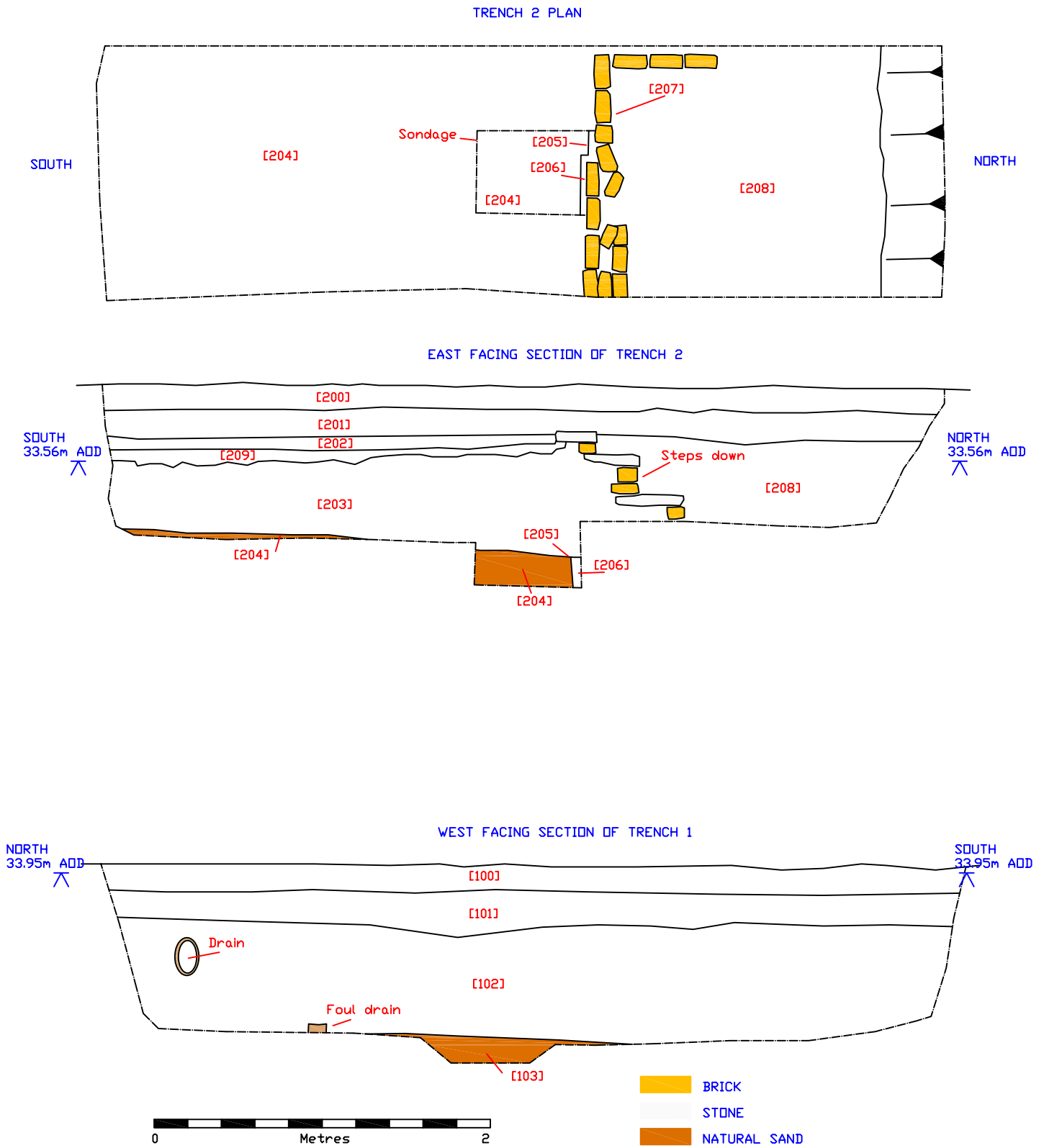


Figure 4: Trench Sections and Plan of Trench 2

Plate 1:

Trench 2 looking north-west (scales 1 metre)



Plate 2:

Rear wall of Victorian house in Trench 2

