

1 ABSTRACT

Between the 13th February and 20th April 2007 an archaeological Watching Brief, on behalf of George Wimpey Midland, was carried out on a programme of ground works at Shortbutts Lane, Lichfield. This involved the excavation of multiple foundation and service trenches across the area of the site. The line of the backfilled Lichfield canal is known to run approximately north-south through the site. Remains associated with the canal were only observed in Area A, consisting of a short length of wooden canal side revetment. The remaining Areas, B and C, demonstrated evidence for landscaping in the area immediately adjacent to the canal, once backfilling of the canal had been completed in the second half of the 20th century. Of the remaining deposits observed, none were deemed to be of significant archaeological value.

2 INTRODUCTION

Site Location

- 2.1 The site is located on the southern edge of Lichfield, Staffordshire. The site is bounded to the north by Shortbutts Lane, by residential properties to the east and west, and open fields to the south (Figures 1 & 2). The Litchfield canal crosses the centre of the site, but it is now infilled. The site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) SK 11659 08213, is irregular in shape, and covers a total area of approximately 0.664 hectares (6638 m²).

Development Proposals

- 2.2 The development plan is for the construction of 24 new residential properties and a new access road. This will require the excavation of strip foundations and ground reduction prior to the construction of the road.

Planning Background

- 2.3 Planning permission for the development has been granted with a planning condition (Ref No: 06/00905/REMM) stating:

‘No development within the corridor of the former Litchfield Canal shall be commenced until a programme of archaeological work has been implemented in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.’

In accordance with *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16) issued by the Department of the Environment in 1990 (DoE, 1990) an Archaeological Watching brief is to be carried out during the ground works.

- 2.4 AOC Archaeology Group Ltd were commissioned by George Wimpey Midland Ltd to carry out an Archaeological Watching Brief. Subsequently a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced (AOC 2007). This document details how the watching brief would be undertaken.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Geology and Topography

- 3.1 The geology of the area indicates that the site is situated near the boundary between the Upper and Lower Trias, incorporating Kueper Marls, Sandstone, and Pebble Beds.
- 3.2 The site is located in a gently rolling landscape, approximately 1.5km northeast of Bourne Brook. The site is at c. 87m Ordnance Datum (OD).
- 3.3 Geotechnical investigations have been conducted within the proposed development area, in the form of six shallow boreholes. All six boreholes demonstrated similar profiles, with up to 0.4m of dark brown sandy topsoil, sitting over moderately compact brown or orangey sandy gravel (Austin Geotech 2006).

Archaeological Background

- 3.4 The early Ordnance Survey maps covering the site suggests that it was occupied by open fields until the Lichfield canal was constructed in the late 18th century. No other structures are present in the immediate area until Shortbutts lane developed in the early 20th century. The map regression of the site suggests that, except for the canal, the area of the proposed development was never built upon.
- 3.5 Archaeological remains in the area are sparse with few archaeological discoveries in the immediate area. At Wall, c3 miles to the south, there was a Romano-British village called Letocetum. The first mention of the name for the Roman settlement occurs in the late-second century when the site is described as a road-station. The name Letocetum is a romanised version of the original Celtic leito kaito meaning 'the Grey Wood'. It is very likely that a native settlement occupied the site before the advent of the Romans. The first half of the name Lichfield is derived from the same source.
- 3.6 Lichfield is mentioned in Bede's history, where it is called 'Ligidfelth.' The burial of some of kings of Mercia in the cathedral further increased the prestige of Lichfield. At the time of the Domesday survey Lichfield was held by the Bishop of Chester, where the see of the bishopric had been moved in 1075.

- 3.7 In the English Civil War, Lichfield was divided. The cathedral authorities were for the king, but the townsfolk generally sided with the parliament. The cathedral suffered extensive damage during the conflict.
- 3.8 During the 18th century the city thrived as a busy coaching city on the main route to the northwest and Ireland. The main source of wealth to the city coming from the money generated by its many visitors. The invention of the railways saw the decline in coach travel and with it came the decline in Lichfield's prosperity.
- 3.9 Built between 1794 and 1797, Lichfield Canal covers a distance of just over 7 miles and was historically a part of the Wyrley and Essington Canal. The canal ran from Ogley Junction on the northern Birmingham Canal Navigations to Huddlesford Junction on the Coventry Canal. The right to navigation was extinguished by Act of Parliament in 1954 and much of the canal was subsequently infilled. The canal ran through the centre of the site on a NW-SE alignment, passing under Shortbutts Lane Bridge immediately to the north.

4 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

- 4.1 The aims of the Watching Brief were defined as being the following:
- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
 - To record and sample excavate any archaeological remains encountered.
- 4.2 The specific objectives of the Watching Brief are to:
- Record any remains associated with the construction and use of the Lichfield Canal
 - Determine the presence of any structural remains of buildings associated with the canal
- 4.3 The final aim is to make public the results of the investigation, subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

5 METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 The fieldwork was managed by Ron Humphrey for AOC Archaeology and supervised by the author. The site was monitored by Stephen Dean, Principle Archaeologist to the Staffordshire County Council.
- 5.2 A site code **2007·LH·1** was provided by the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-On-Trent, as the unique site identity.

- 5.3 An archaeologist was present to observe all ground works.
- 5.4 The watching brief was conducted in two phases. The first phase of the watching brief observed the ground reduction associated with the construction of a road and excavation of a service trench along the route of the canal (Area A). The second phase was associated with the excavation of the foundations for the new buildings adjacent to the line of the canal (Areas B & C). All areas were excavated with a 13tonne 360° mechanical excavator.
- 5.5 The ground reduction undertaken in the first phase of work initially involved removal of up to 0.5m of deposits across the full extent of Area A. This was followed by the subsequent excavation of a service trench up to 1m wide and 3m deep. The excavation of foundation trenches during the second phase of work, in Area B & C, was 0.5m wide and up to 0.9m deep.
- 5.5 All of the work was carried out in line with Archaeological Guidance Paper (AGP): 3, Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork (English Heritage June 1998); and IFA Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (IFA October 1994).

6 RESULTS

Trench 1 – AREA A (Figures 2, 3 & 4)

- 6.1 Average Surface Height of Trench = 86.76m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD)

Level (OD)	Depth (BGL)	Context Number	Description
86.76-86.46m	0.00m	(1/001)	Topsoil. Soft, dark brown, silty sand.
86.46-85.36m	0.30m	(1/002)	Made ground. Soft, dark reddish brown, silty sand.
85.36-84.41m	1.40m	(1/003)	Made ground. Loose to compact, highly variable colour and composition .
84.41-84.06m	2.35m	(1/004)	Primary canal deposit. Soft, dark grey, clayey silt.
84.06-83.76m (NFE)	2.70-3.00m	(1/008)	Natural. Compact, reddish brown, sand.

- 6.2 The earliest recorded context, observed at the base of the service trench, was a compact, reddish brown, sand (1/008), interpreted as natural. At its highest it was observed at 84.06m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

- 6.3 It was identified that the construction cut of the canal [1/007] truncated the natural. Due to the limited nature of the investigation, it was not possible to observe the cut of the canal fully or take accurate measure the extent of the cut. At the western most extent of the service trench a deposit of a dark brown, silty clay made ground (1/006), up to 1.05m thick was recorded, partially extending into the trench. Attached to the eastern vertical face of the made ground (1/006) was a wooden revetment [1/005], constructed of planks 500mm wide and 100mm thick, which appeared to be secured by means of vertical metal posts. Smaller, horizontally laid planks were also present on the upper surface of the made ground. Due to the limited area of the revetment exposed, full details of the construction technique could not recorded.
- 6.4 Deposited at the base of the canal cut [1/007], abutting revetment [1/005], was a soft, dark grey, clay silt (1/004) brackish deposit up to 0.35m thick. This was interpreted to be a water effected residual deposit, left once the canal had been drained. Sealing deposit (1/004) was 0.95m of highly variable modern made ground (1/003), containing large fragments of CBM and concrete, utilised to backfill the canal during the second half of the 20th century. A further layer of modern made ground (1/002), 1.10m thick, was present above this, used as a means of leveling off the localised ground level. The sequence was completed by a layer of re-instated topsoil (1/001), 0.30m thick.
- 6.5 No finds of an archaeological nature were recorded in Trench 1.

Trench 2 – AREA B (Figure 2)

- 6.6 Surface Trench = 87.20m AOD

Level (OD)	Depth (BGL)	Context Number	Description
87.20-86.90m	0.00m	(2/001)	Topsoil. Soft, dark brown, silty sand.
86.90-86.30m (NFE)	0.30-0.90m	(2/002)	Made ground. Soft, dark reddish brown, silty sand.

- 6.7 The earliest recorded context, was a soft, dark reddish brown, silty sand (2/002), interpreted as modern made ground. At its highest it was observed at 86.90m AOD. This was sealed by a layer of dark brown, silty sand topsoil (2/001), 0.3m thick.
- 6.8 No finds or features associated with the canal, or its construction, were observed in Trench 2.

Trench 3 – AREA C (Figure 2)

6.9 Surface of Trench = 87.60m AOD

Level (OD)	Depth (BGL)	Context Number	Description
87.60-87.50m	0.00m	(3/001)	Made ground. Soft, dark reddish brown, silty sand.
87.50-87.00m	0.10m	(3/002)	Subsoil. Soft, mid brown, silty sand.
87.00-86.40m (NFE)	0.60-1.20m	(3/003)	Natural. Soft, yellowish brown, silty sand.

6.10 The earliest recorded context was a soft, yellowish brown, silty sand (3/003), interpreted as natural. At its highest it was observed at 87.00m AOD. Above this was a soft, mid brown, silty sand subsoil (3/002), up to 0.60m thick. Sealing the sequence was a layer of dark reddish brown, silty sand modern made ground (3/001), reaching a maximum thickness of 0.80m in the eastern part of Trench 3. The made ground decreased in thickness to 0.10m in the western area of the trench.

6.11 No finds or features associated with the canal, or its construction, were observed in Trench 3.

7 FINDS

7.1 No finds were recovered during the course of the watching brief.

8 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Natural deposits were identified as being present in Area A and Area C, recorded at the highest point of 87m AOD.

8.2 During the course of the watching brief remains associated with the Lichfield canal were only observed in Area A, consisting of a short length of wooden canal side revetment. Evidence for the 20th century backfilling of the canal was also recorded in this area. The deposits recorded in Areas A, B and C demonstrated that once the backfilling of the canal was completed landscaping took place, primarily in the eastern part of the site, in order to create a level ground surface along the former line of the canal.

8.3 No evidence for structural remains associated with the canal was recorded during the course of the watching brief.

- 8.4 Over the course of the archaeological investigations at Shortbutts Lane no archaeologically significant features, other than those associated with the Lichfield canal, were observed.

9 PUBLICATION

- 9.1 Due to the limited result of the project, publication will be limited to a summary in the Staffordshire Archaeology Round-up and publication via the Archaeological Data Service OASIS form (Appendix C).

10 ARCHIVE DEPOSTION

- 10.1 The archive, consisting of paper records and digital photographs, will be deposited with the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-On-Trent.

11 BIBLIOGRAPHY

AOC Archaeology Group (2007). Land Between 63A and 65 Shortbutts Lane, Lichfield, Staffordshire: *A Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*.

Austin Geotech (2006). *Land at Shortbutts Lane, Lichfield*.

English Heritage. (1998) *Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork 3*.

Institute of Field Archaeologists. (1994) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Briefs*.

Museum of London (1994). *Archaeological Site Manual (3rd ed)*.

Figure 1 Site Location

Figure 2 Detailed Site Location/Trench Location

APPENDIX A Context Register

Context No.	Context Description	Length/m	Width/m	Depth/m
1/001	Re-instated Topsoil	100	1.00	0.30
1/002	Made Ground	100	1.00	1.10
1/003	Made Ground	100	1.00	0.95
1/004	Brackish Deposit	100	1.00	0.35
1/005	Canal Wall Structure	2.00	0.50+	0.20
1/006	Made Ground	2.00	0.50+	1.05
1/007	Canal Cut	100	1.00	N/A
1/008	Natural	100	1.00	0.30+
2/001	Topsoil	50	20	0.30
2/002	Made Ground	50	20	0.60+
3/001	Made Ground	12	9	0.80
3/002	Subsoil	12	9	0.60
3/003	Natural	12	9	0.60+

APPENDIX B Trench Matrices

Trench 1

1/001

1/002

1/003

1/004

1/005

1/006

1/007

1/008

Trench 2

2/001

2/002

Trench 3

3/001

3/002

3/003

APPENDIX C OASIS Form

OASIS ID: aocarcha1-27200

Project details

Project name	Shortbutts Lane, Lichfield
Short description of the project	Between the 13th February and 20th April 2007 an archaeological Watching Brief, on behalf of George Wimpey Midland, was carried out on a programme of ground works at Shortbutts Lane, Lichfield. This involved the excavation of multiple foundation and service trenches across the area of the site. The line of the backfilled Lichfield canal is known to run approximately north-south through the site. Remains associated with the canal were only observed in Area A, consisting of a short length of wooden canal side revetment. The remaining Areas, B and C, demonstrated evidence for landscaping in the area immediately adjacent to the canal, once backfilling of the canal had been completed in the second half of the 20th century. Of the remaining deposits observed, none were deemed to be of significant archaeological value.
Project dates	Start: 13-02-2007 End: 20-04-2007
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	2007.LH.1 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	7711 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Monument type	CANAL Post Medieval
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'

Prompt Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Project location

Country England
Site location STAFFORDSHIRE LICHFIELD LICHFIELD Land Between 63A and 65 Shortbutts Lane, Lichfield, Staffordshire
Postcode WS14 9BU
Study area 6638.00 Square metres
Site coordinates SK 11659 08213 52.6711530733 -1.827561780430 52 40 16 N 001 49 39 W Point
Height OD Min: 84.06m Max: 87.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation AOC Archaeology
Project brief originator Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator AOC Archaeology
Project director/manager Tim Carew
Project supervisor Chris Clarke
Type of sponsor/funding body Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body George Wimpey Midland

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Potteries Museum and Art Gallery
Digital Archive ID	2007.LH.1
Digital Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography'
Digital Archive notes	To be held at AOC until ready to archive
Paper Archive recipient	Potteries Museum and Art Gallery
Paper Archive ID	2007.LH.1
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet', 'Diary', 'Matrices', 'Plan', 'Report', 'Section'
Paper Archive notes	To be held at AOC until ready to archive

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Land Between 63A and 65 Shortbutts Lane, Lichfield, Staffordshire: An Archaeological Watching Brief Report
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