

**An Archaeological Watching Brief During  
Groundworks For A New Sewage Treatment Works  
At Wistow, Leicestershire (NGR SP 641 961)**

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For Severn Trent Water Ltd and Pick Everard

<p><b>Checked by Project Manager</b></p> <p><b>Signed:</b> .....<b>Date:</b></p> <p><b>Name:</b> .....</p>
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## **An Archaeological Watching Brief During Groundworks For A New Sewage Treatment Works At Wistow, Leicestershire (NGR SP 641 961)**

### **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out by ULAS on behalf of Severn Trent Ltd during the construction of a new sewage treatment works at Wistow (NGR SP 641 961). Topsoil stripping, the excavation of the reed-bed and associated features and the excavation of the pipe trench were observed, as the area lies close to the earthwork remains of the medieval village (Leics SM 30246/02). An undated ditch orientated NW-SE was located close to the reed-bed and part of a palaeochannel was observed in the pipe trench. No further archaeological deposits were encountered during this work, which took place intermittently between May and August 2003, although a small number of medieval pottery sherds were retrieved during the watching brief. The archive will be held by LCCHS under the Accession Number X.A134 2002.*

### **Introduction**

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out during groundworks for the construction of a new sewage treatment works at Wistow, Leicestershire. The work followed the *Specification for a Watching Brief during construction, Wistow Sewage Works, Leicestershire* (NUCL 29.04.03). A desk-based assessment and field evaluation for the works identified some areas of archaeological earthworks, probably associated with medieval and post-medieval fields and settlement, which were thought likely to be affected by the construction of the pipe work. The earthworks, which lie within the field immediately to the east of the proposed STW and access road and just to the south-west of the proposed pipeline, are a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Leics SM 30246/02). However, the available evidence indicated that the site and access for the new sewage treatment works were free of archaeological remains (Challis & Kinsley 2003, 2). A programme of archaeological intervention was devised for the scheme following discussions between English Heritage, the Leicestershire County Council Senior Planning Archaeologist and Nottingham University Consultants Ltd (NUCL).

The Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 170, indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of alluvium overlying boulder clay. The land is fairly flat and lies at a height of between 89.5m OD at the southwest to approximately 85m OD.

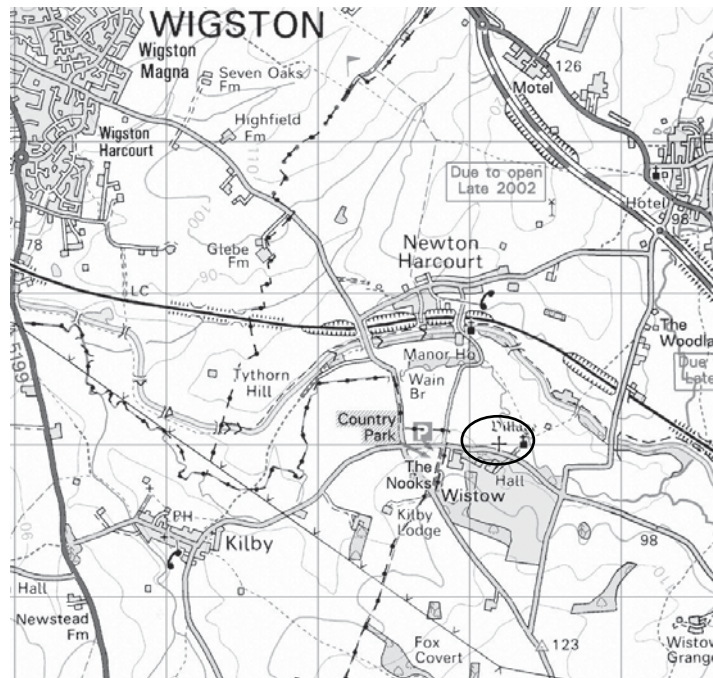


Figure 1: Location Map Scale 1:50000  
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### Aims and Methods

The aim of the archaeological work was to observe the groundworks and to record, as appropriate, any archaeological deposits or features encountered. The work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.

The site was visited on 12 occasions between the 19<sup>th</sup> May and 26<sup>th</sup> August 2003. The programme of work included topsoil stripping and the excavation of the reed-bed and various features within it. A later phase of work comprised the excavation of a pipe trench to connect the sewer outfall at the existing sewage treatment works with the new sewage treatment works.

The table below shows the dates that the site was visited and the length of the visit, to the nearest half-day.

Date	19.05.03	20.05.03	21.05.03	22.05.03	23.05.03	28.05.03	03.06.03	02.07.03
Staff	SAS	JC	SAS	SC	SC	JB	JC	JB
Length of visit	½ day	½ day	1 day	1 day	½ day	½ day	1 day	1 day
Date	18.08.03	19.08.03	20.08.03	21.08.03	26.08.03			Total
Staff	AH	AH	AH	AH	AH			
Length of visit	1 day	1 day	½ day	½ day	1 day			10 days

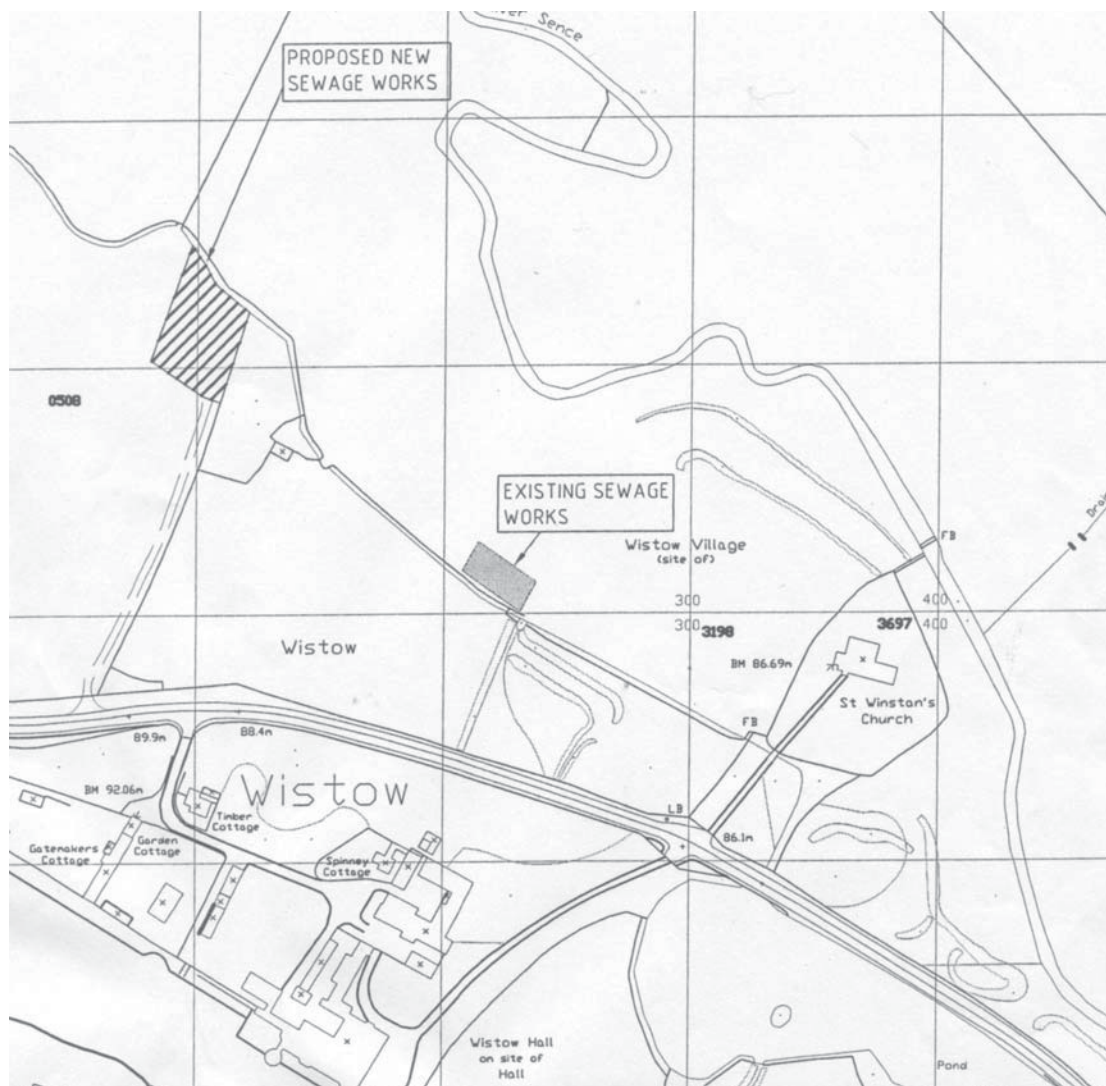


Figure 2: Site location plan. (Pick Everard Drawing 000337/C/001) NTS

## Results

### *Topsoil Stripping*

A temporary roadway was constructed using Terram Geotextile membrane covered with roadstone. No topsoil was disturbed during this process. Topsoil stripping for the new sewage treatment works and contractors compound was observed (figure 3), in the areas marked on the plan. Topsoil was 0.25-0.30m thick and was removed to reveal yellow brown clay subsoil containing occasional pebbles and flint. Occasional patches of grey clay and rotted organic remains were visible. A few sherds of pottery (including modern stoneware and medieval Chilvers Coton) were retrieved from the stripped surface but there was no concentration of material.

The topsoil stripping for the access road was observed on the 3rd June 2003. Although the stripped surface displayed slight variations, no features of archaeological provenance were observed along the route. A sherd of medieval pottery (Potters Marston) and a single flint were recovered.

### *Excavation of reed-bed and associated features*

A trench measuring approximately 14.5m x 7.5m was excavated on the 23rd May 2003, to the north-western side of the reed-bed. The topsoil had been stripped on a previous occasion. The trench was excavated to a depth of approximately 2m with stepped sides. A ditch was observed crossing the trench on a north-west to south-east orientation. The sides of the trench were extremely friable and the trench partially slumped in the middle, making the conditions too hazardous for detailed recording. However, the approximate location is shown on figure 3. The feature was approximately 2m wide and filled with pale orange/grey/brown sandy clay with occasional small pebbles and stones and rare charcoal. The sides sloped at a 45° angle and had a fairly flat base. Unfortunately, no finds were recovered; therefore the feature remains undated.

The reed-bed was excavated on the 2nd July 2003 through very friable soil to an approximate depth of 0.75m. The ground was compacted prior to excavation to prevent collapse and the sides of the reed-bed were battered. The subsoil consisted of mid-grey brown clay sand with occasional stones and flints. Below this was orange brown coarse clay sand containing occasional stones. A possible feature was observed on the base of the reed-bed, consisting of an area of grey brown clay sand, measuring 1m x 0.5m. However, this was poorly defined and did not appear to be a genuine archaeological feature. It was thought more likely to be a naturally occurring silty deposit.

### *Pipe trench*

A pipe trench was excavated to link the new treatments works with the sewer outfall at the existing treatment works site. The route ran along the edge of an existing brook, passing through the field containing earthworks. However, the contour survey carried out in 2002 (Marsden & Coward 2002) indicated that few earthworks would be directly affected by the pipeline. The area generally sloped naturally down towards the stream. In order to minimise disturbance to any archaeological deposits, the new pipeline was installed without stripping an easement for plant and machine. The progress of work comprised the excavation of a section of trench and the installation of the pipe, after which the trench was backfilled and the next section excavated. The trench was 0.7m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 2.5m. Close to the new sewage treatment works, the trench was excavated through orange brown sandy clay, which overlay heavy dark grey clay. It was thought possible that this was part of an old palaeochannel. A different sequence of strata was observed as the pipeline passed to the north of the copse. Topsoil was relatively thin (between 0.1-0.2m thick). Below the topsoil there was a thick layer of grey brown silty clay subsoil (maximum 0.8m thick). The natural subsoil consisted of orange clay sand. Tree root disturbance was also observed in this area.

At the south-western end of the pipe trench, closest to the church, another minor stratigraphic change was recorded. The subsoil observed was lighter in colour with a higher sand content, while the natural subsoil became more clay in consistency. No obviously archaeological deposits or features were observed during the excavation of the pipe trench, however, a sherd of medieval pottery (Chilvers Coton ware) was



recovered. The lack of archaeological deposits observed does not necessarily mean that no archaeology is present in the area, as it can be difficult to see and define archaeological deposits in the sides of narrow trenches.

### **Conclusion**

Topsoil stripping, the excavation of the reed-bed and associated features and the excavation of the pipe trench were observed during this watching brief. These were located in an area of high archaeological potential close to the earthwork remains of the medieval village of Wistow (Leics. SM 30246/02). A ditch was observed close to the reed-bed, running on a north-west/south-east alignment. Unfortunately no finds were recovered from the ditch so it remains undated. This may be an isolated feature. However, it does raise the possibility that further features may have been masked by alluvial soils. The thickness of the subsoil may reflect periodic flooding. Part of a probable palaeochannel was observed in the pipe trench, close to the new sewage works; this could not be clearly defined in the narrow pipe trench. No further potentially archaeological deposits were observed during this watching brief.

A small quantity of pottery and tile was retrieved during the watching brief. Unfortunately none of this was recovered from stratified deposits. However, three sherds of pottery and part of a ridge tile are of local fabric and have a 12th-13th century date. These indicate activity related to the nearby earthworks and Scheduled Ancient Monument.

### **Archive**

The archive consists of site notes, finds (5 sherds of pottery, 2 fragments of tile and a flint)1 A3 permatrace plan, colour slides and black and white prints and will be held by LCCHS under the Accession Number XA134 2002.

### **References**

Challis, K. and Kinsley, G., 2003 *Specification for a watching brief during construction, Wistow Sewage Treatment Works, Leicestershire*. N.U.C.L.

Marsden, P. & Coward, J., 2002 *An archaeological desk-based assessment, evaluation and contour survey in advance of proposed sewage treatment works at Wistow, Leicestershire (SP 641 961)*. ULAS Report No. 2002-149.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Cyril Gessler, Dick Rowlett, Darren from Interserve and everyone on site for their help and co-operation during this watching brief. The fieldwork was carried out on successive occasions by SallyAnne Smith, Jon Coward, Sophie Clark, Jennifer Browning and Andy Hyam. Deborah Sawday identified the pottery and tile and Dr. Patrick Clay managed the project.

Jennifer Browning

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## Appendix 1: The pottery and miscellaneous finds from a watching brief at Wistow, Leicestershire by D. Sawday

The pottery, five sherds weighing sixty eight grams and tile, two fragments weighing sixty eight grams, was examined under a binocular microscope and catalogued with reference to the ULAS fabric series (Davies and Sawday 1999). Three of the pottery sherds, weighing twenty eight grams, and part of a ridge tile are in the local Potters Marston and Chilvers Coton wares, and date to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These finds, together with the material from the previous evaluation, evidently relate to the medieval village earthworks nearby.

### *Bibliography*

Davies, S., and Sawday, D., 1999. 'The Post Roman Pottery and Tile' in A. Connor and R. Buckley, *Roman and Medieval Occupation in Causeway Lane, Leicester*, Leicester Archaeology Mon. **5**, 165-213.

Site/Parish: Wistow, Leicestershire Accession No/ Doc Ref: XA134 2002/wistow2 Material: pottery & tile Site Type: adjacent to DMV (SAM)	Submitter: J. Browning Identifier: D. Sawday Date of Id: 3.2.02 Method of Recovery: watching brief
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Context	fabric/ware	sherd nos.	weight grams	comments
POTTERY				
U/S	PM – Potters Marston	1	5	abraded
U/S Pipeline W end	?CC5 – Chilvers Coton B ware	1	13	Jug handle stub
U/S Access Road	PM	1	10	Cooking pot/bowl rim, abraded
Area D U/S	EA2 – Earthenware 2	1	12	mid 17th C+
Area D U/S	SW - Stoneware	1	30	Rim from a modern stoneware beer bottle
TILE				
U/S	CC1 – Chilvers Coton A ware	1	28	Very abraded fragment of ridge tile, circa 1250+
U/S spoil	EA6 – Black Glazed Earthenware	1	42	Lead glazed ?flat roof tile, possibly mid 17th C+
MISC.				
U/S	flint	1		worked



Figure 3: Plan of new sewage treatment works showing areas of topsoil stripping and excavations observed. (Based on drawing 00337/C012L, Pick Everard)

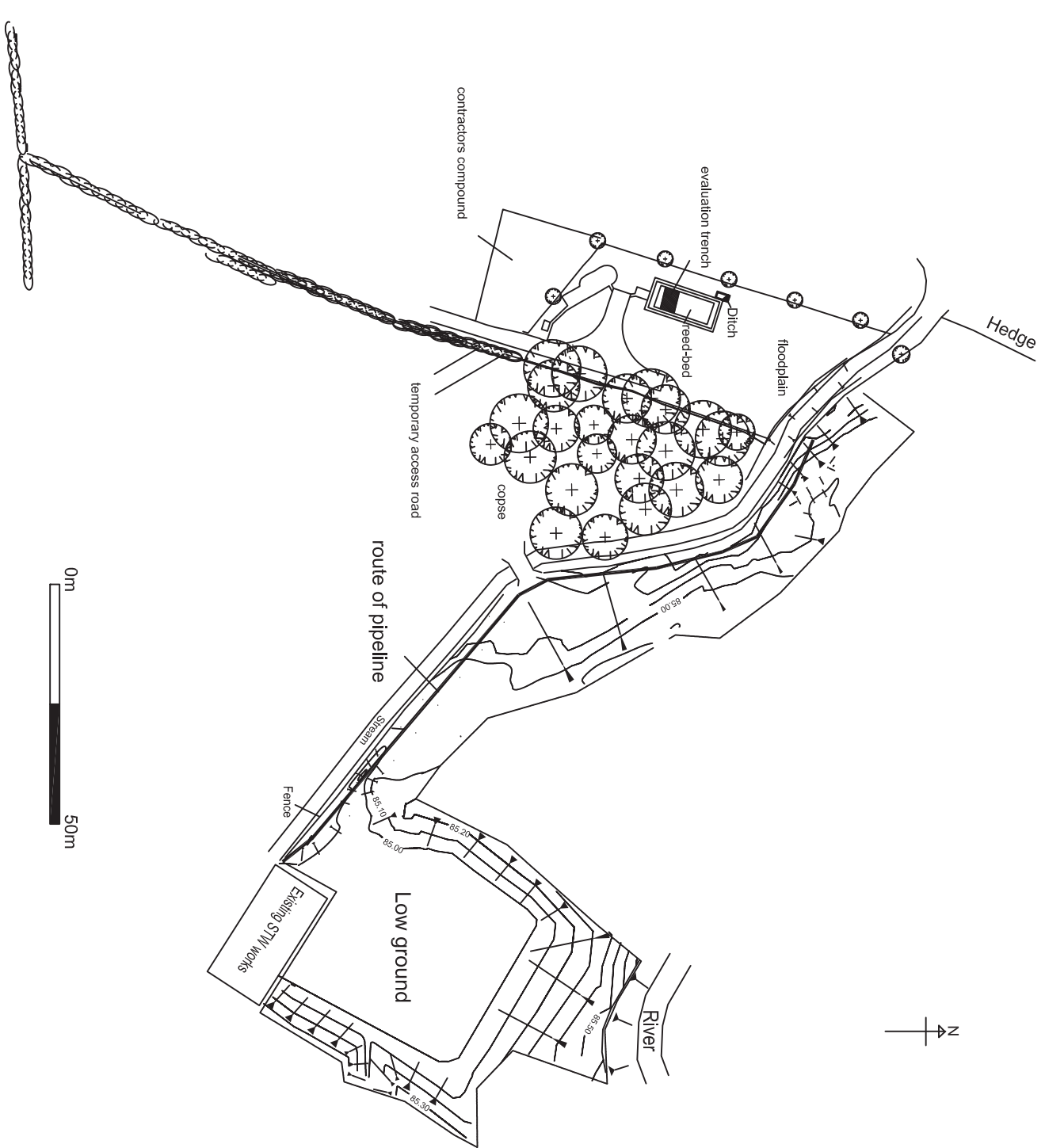


Figure 4: Plan of site, showing route of pipeline. Based on illustrations from the evaluation (J. Coward, ULAS) and Drawing 00337/C/012L (Pick Everard). Scale 1:2500

Road