

Friary Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire

Report on a Watching Brief.



View of the foundation trenches after excavation facing south

ARS Ltd Report No. 2009/63
February 2009

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Friary Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire.

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Archaeological Research Services Ltd

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Executive Summary

Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Manor Park Homes to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of two dwellings at 2 Friary Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire. This was undertaken as part of the provision for planning permission on the advice of the County Archaeological Officer and was deemed necessary due to the proximity of the site to, and likelihood of encountering archaeological remains associated with, a former Post Medieval mill, believed to possibly possess a Medieval origin. This report details the findings relating to the first phase of activity on the site during the construction of the building to the east of the plot and is concerned with the archaeological monitoring of excavations to provide the foundations for this building.

Initial excavation of the foundation trenches only extended to a depth of 0.6m and only encountered modern made ground deposits and construction elements associated with modern occupation on the site. Following a visit by the Clerk of Works this depth was found to be insufficient due to the instability of much of the made ground deposits. The developer was therefore required to reduce the trench depths further in order to reach a stable level of natural deposits. This afforded the opportunity to examine a greater depth of deposition and revealed deposits that may indeed have been associated with the mill pond.

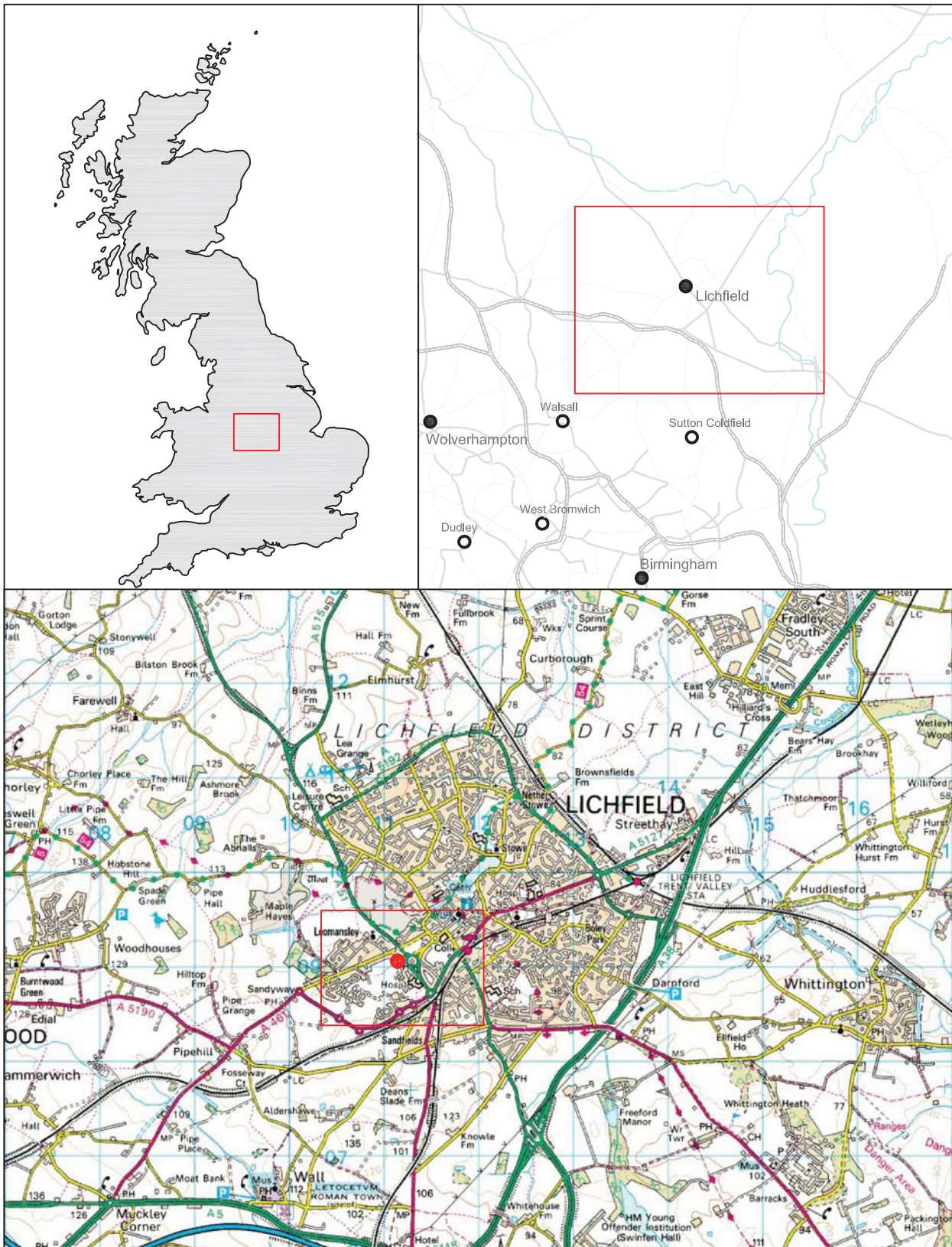


Figure 1. Site Location

1. Introduction

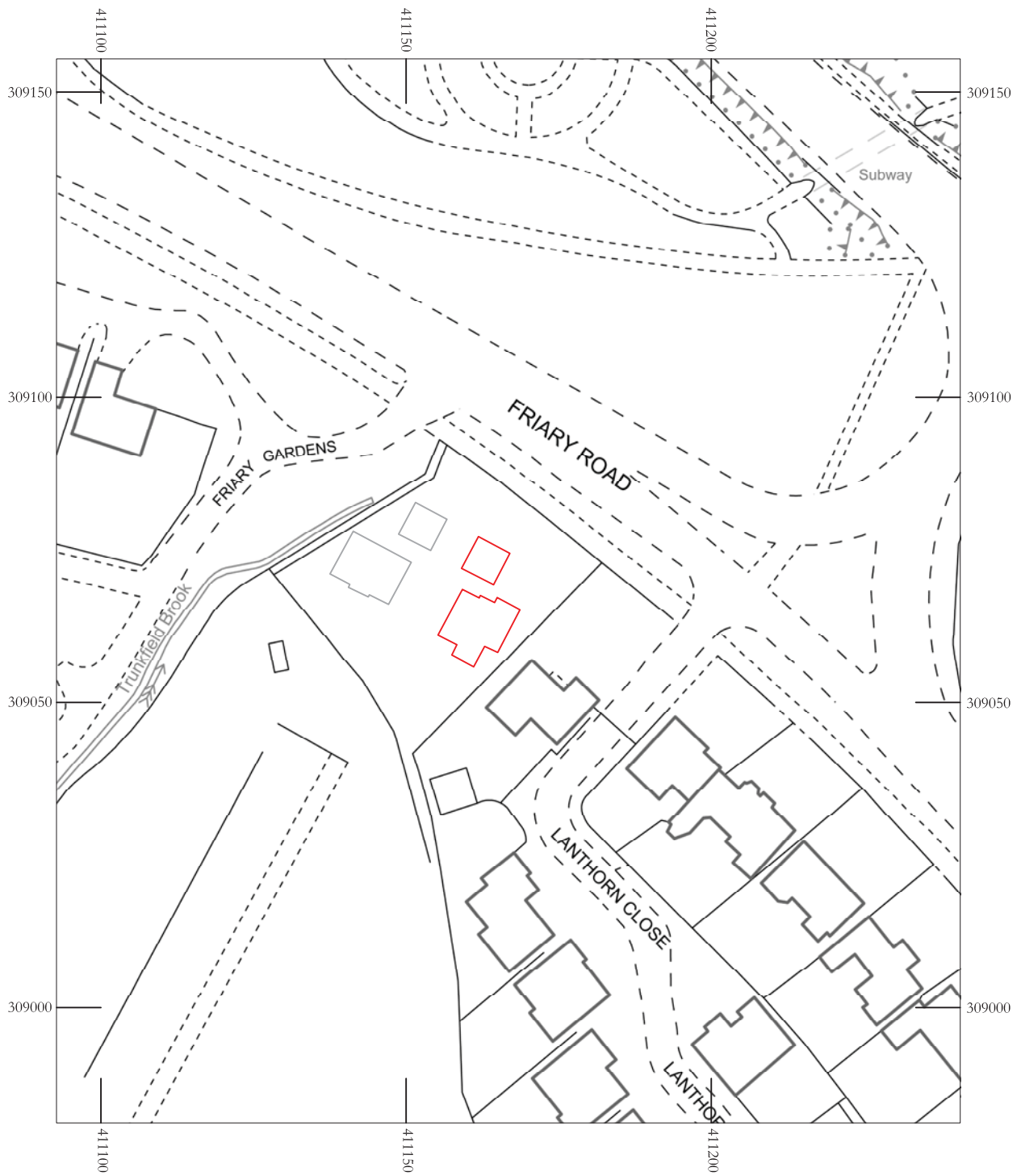
- 1.1 An application for the construction of two dwellings on land at 2 Friary Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire, (Grid Reference SK 11155 09066) by Manor Park Homes was approved by Lichfield District Council on provision that an appropriate level of archaeological mitigation be put in place. This was undertaken on the advice of the County Archaeological Officer and made necessary by the immediate proximity of the site to the location of a medieval to post medieval mill, associated pond and other features, as indicated upon early maps of the area. As the level of ground works were initially deemed to be minimal, being largely confined to the excavation of shallow foundation trenches, a watching brief was deemed the most appropriate level of archaeological mitigation.
- 1.2 Construction of the two buildings was to be undertaken in two separate phases and this report represents the findings of a watching brief undertaken during the first phase of development on the building to the east of the plot. It was undertaken between the 25th and 27th of February 2009 and monitored the excavation of foundation trenches for this building. As the developer specified an interest in taking forward the development of this initial building to the point of sale, prior to beginning the second phase, a second report will be required in relation to this latter stage of development.

2. Location and geology

- 2.1 The site is located upon Friary Road a current major route into the centre of Lichfield (Figure 1).
- 2.2 A small brook, the Trunkfield Brook, runs to the west of the site upon a north south orientation and was presumably the reason for the location of the former mill.
- 2.3 The underlying geology is Keuper Sandstone and Bunter.

3. Background

- 3.1 No archaeological desk based survey was undertaken prior to the commencement of works.
- 3.2 The County Archaeological Officer identified that the site lay in close proximity to the recorded location of a post-medieval and possibly medieval mill as identified on the 1775 Yates and Ordnance Survey First Edition maps of the area. It is uncertain as to which mill the location may be associated this being either the Lemonsley or the Trunkfields/Sandford Mill. Nevertheless there remains the possibility that the mill, mill pond and other associated features such as the mill race may be fossilised within subsequent redevelopment of the site.



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Title:
Figure 2: Site plan

Key:

Site Code: FRI09
Drawing Ref: Report Fig2
Date: 12 March 2009
Drawn: DA
Scale: 1:1000

Notes:

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4. Aims and Objectives

- 4.1 To ensure the archaeological monitoring of all aspects of the development programme likely to affect archaeological remains.
- 4.2 To identify and record archaeological features and deposits associated with the Leamonsley Mill, including the millpond, mill race etc, and subsequent phases of occupation and development across the site.
- 4.3 To secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site.

5. Methodology

- 5.1 The initial phase of activity to which this report refers was undertaken between the 25th and 27th of February 2009 and comprised the monitoring of the mechanical excavation of foundation trenches for the eastern building on the plot. (Figure 2).
- 5.2 Mechanical stripping of the topsoil had been undertaken prior to the arrival of the representative of Archaeological Research Services Ltd and was therefore not monitored. The ground level had been reduced by an approximate depth of 0.3m. However, this was found not to have compromised any archaeologically significant deposits
- 5.3 Excavation of the foundation trenches was undertaken by a hydraulically powered excavator equipped with a toothless bucket at all times.
- 5.4 During excavation a photographic record was compiled of all significant archaeological deposits.
- 5.5 Initial trenching reached a depth of 0.6m, however, due to the requirements of the Clark of Works this had to be taken down further, in some places reaching a maximum depth of 3.2m.
- 5.6 During this subsequent activity a photographic record continued to be maintained, however, due to the depth and instability of trench sections lower deposits could not be recorded in detail for reasons of health and safety.



Figure 3. Stripped area prior to excavation of foundation footings

6. Assessment Results

- 6.1 As detailed above, removal of the topsoil prior to arrival on site had reduced the ground level by an average depth of 0.3m across much of the eastern area in the vicinity of the intended building. This had also involved the removal of several concrete foundation deposits apparently associated with the modern 20th- century houses that formerly occupied the site. These were observed in the spoil heap and appeared not to exceed a depth of 0.4m. Reduction of the ground level in this case did not appear to have interfered with any potentially archaeologically significant deposits but had removed sections of modern 20th- century made ground deposits (Figure 3)



Figure 4. Oblique section of the most easterly foundation trench after initial ground reduction. Facing north.

- 6.2 After marking out the line of the foundation trenches excavation was undertaken along their line, reducing the ground a further 0.3m on average, to a maximum depth of approximately 0.6m below the modern ground surface. The trenches were observed in all cases to cut through a series of perhaps six or more extensive deposits that, due to the presence of significant quantities of modern building materials, were deemed to be 20th-century in origin (Figure 4). These deposits may relate to the decommissioning of a swimming pool, which reportedly occupied the site during the early 20th-century, and the building up of the ground prior to construction of the housing that occupied the site until this most recent phase of development.
- 6.3 No evidence of the mill or associated deposits or features were therefore encountered at this level.



Figure 5. North facing section of a northern trench showing depth of made ground and upper bands of grey silts.

- 6.4 The footings were initially excavated to a maximum depth of 0.6m in accordance with the original architectural specifications and an initial test survey carried out in the western section of the site. This indicated the presence of natural deposits at this level, however, this clearly was not the case towards the east of the site and as a result the Clark of Works ordered the trenches to be reduced further as the made ground deposits were deemed to be too unstable for the purposes of construction. The trench level was subsequently reduced to the level of the underlying natural. This further phase of excavation revealed the deposition of made ground to continue to a depth of approximately 1.4m at which point a series of dark grey silty deposits were encountered. Due to the instability of the sections and the overall depths of the trenches these deposits could not be examined in any detail but were observed to extend in some areas to a maximum depth of 3.2m (Figure 5 and 6). At this depth they appeared to give way to an identifiable natural deposit of orange sand.
- 6.5 Due to the safety constraints mentioned above in relation to the depth and stability of the trenches the grey deposits could not be examined in situ and consequently could not be properly characterised or recorded in section. The deposits were examined as they were excavated and placed upon the spoil heap and found to differ slightly in character from north to south. Those deposits encountered further to the north of the site appeared to comprise a greater quantity of sand and silt while those to the south, particularly those deriving from the southern most trench of the building, contained a much higher organic content and were almost black in colour. The aroma of water logged deposits was also highly evident in this region

even when stood at some height above them at the level of the current ground surface. No cultural material was recovered from any of the grey deposits.

- 6.5 The level of the natural appeared to rise from south to north occurring at a maximum depth of 3.2m in southern trenches and rising to approximately 2.3m further north. There appeared to be little difference in the levels from east to west.

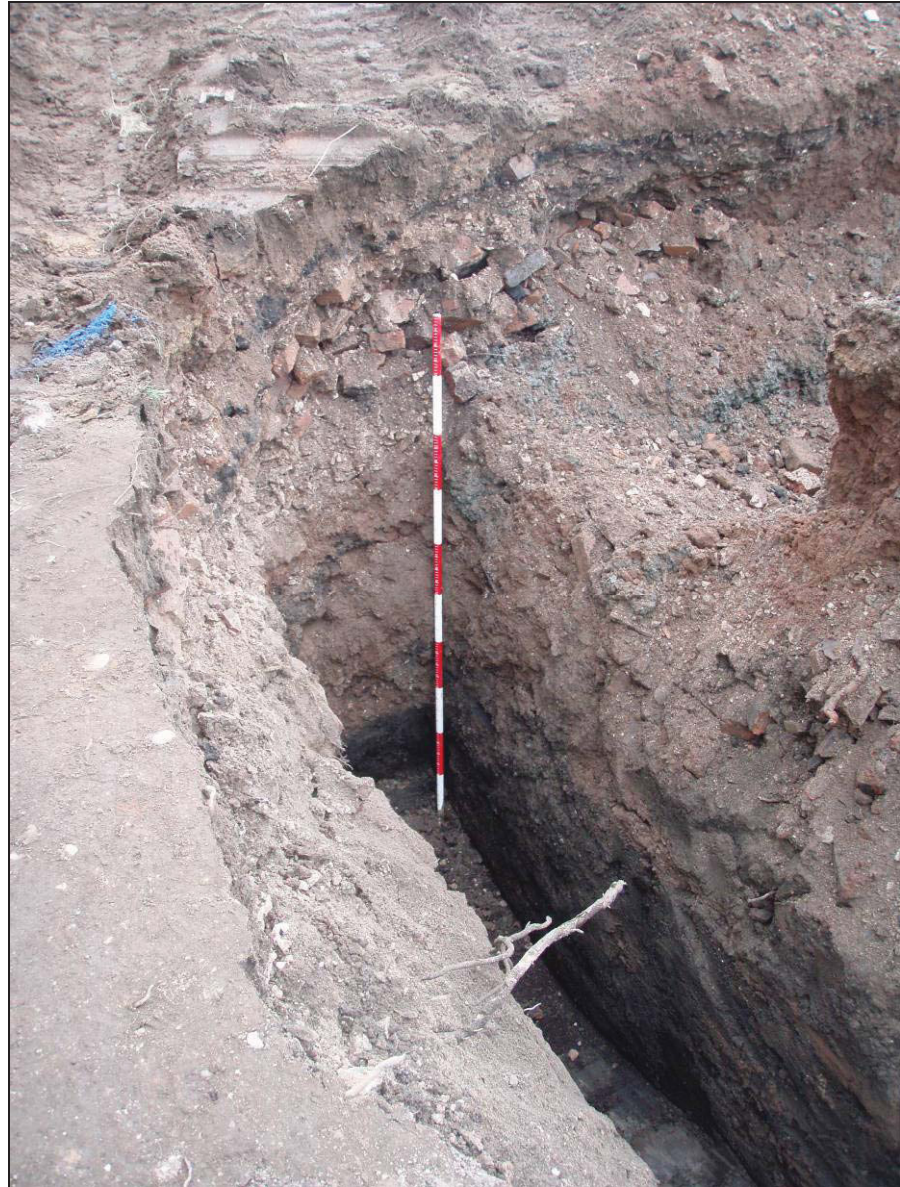


Figure 6. Oblique view of south facing section of most southerly foundation trench showing level of made ground and organic deposits.

7. Discussion

- 7.1 The nature of ground works undertaken, in terms of the width and ultimate depth of trenching, combined with the unstable nature of the made ground deposits encountered on site, considerably hampered and restricted efforts to record and characterise the presence of archaeological features, particularly potentially spatially extensive features such as the mill pond. However, given the limitations of the site it was possible to tentatively identify deposits that may have indeed related to the postulated occupation of the site during the medieval or post-medieval period.
- 7.2 This exclusively relates to the grey and black deposits encountered at variable depths between 1.4m and 2m below the current ground level. The limited examination that was possible, while producing no dateable cultural material, suggests that at least those deposits in the south eastern area of the site, by simple virtue of their high organic content, may potentially be equated with the deposits perhaps expected of that of a mill pond.
- 7.3 No further archaeological features, structures or deposits could be identified in this section of the site other than the considerable depth of modern made ground. This undoubtedly derives from the demolition of a building or buildings that occupied the site prior to the previous phase of housing and may indeed relate to the location of a swimming pool on site. This, however, derives from local knowledge rather than archaeological evidence and in any case is of little archaeological significance.
- 7.4 The fact that no other archaeological remains were encountered in this area may suggest that they have been removed by subsequent phases of development on site. Alternatively, it may actually serve to confirm the presence of the mill pond. If this can be accepted as an interpretation for the grey deposits discussed above, it would make sense that no structural features relating to the mill would be encountered in this immediate vicinity. The presence of the brook towards the west of the site may further corroborate this as it would make sense to suggest that the mill was sited at a point between the pond and brook. If the mill has survived, even in part, it may be that subsequent development of the western half of the site during the second phase of construction will stand a better chance of encountering any relevant structural features.

8. Conclusions

No structural features relating to the presence of a mill of post-medieval or any other date were located during this initial phase of construction. However, following the unexpected directions of the Clark of Works forcing further reduction of the ground level in the vicinity of the foundation footprint of the building under construction, it was possible to tentatively identify a series of sometimes water logged and organically rich deposits. Such deposits were mainly confined to the southern trenches of the building but less organic laden deposits appeared to extend further north across the remainder of the site. The content of these deposits while devoid of dateable cultural material may indicate the presence of the mill pond in this area, the full extent of which is uncertain. This may suggest that structural remains of the mill itself may survive further west between the pond and brook and that

these may be encountered during the second phase of development in the western section of the site.

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- 9.2 Archaeological Research Services Ltd will retain the copyright of all documentary and photographic material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).

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11. Acknowledgements

Thanks can be given to all those involved in the project but specifically Malcolm Price and Jason Cooper acting on behalf of Manor Park Homes for his efforts to accommodate the requirements of the archaeology.

2 Friary Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire

Report on a
Watching Brief – Phase Two.



View of phase two excavation area. Facing south.

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June 2010

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Report on a Watching Brief – Phase Two.

ARS Ltd Report 2010/39

June 2010

Archaeological Research Services Ltd

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Executive Summary

Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Manor Park Homes to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of two dwellings at 2 Friary Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire. This was undertaken as part of the provision for planning permission on the advice of the County Archaeological Officer and was deemed necessary due to the proximity of the site to, and likelihood of encountering, archaeological remains associated with a former Post-Medieval mill, which may have had a Medieval origin. This report details the findings relating to the second phase of activity on the site during the construction of the building to the west of the plot and is concerned with the archaeological monitoring of excavations to provide the foundations for this building.

The excavation of foundation trenches to a maximum depth of 0.65m only encountered modern made ground deposits associated with modern occupation on the site. No archaeological feature, deposits or artefacts were discovered during the watching brief.

1. Introduction

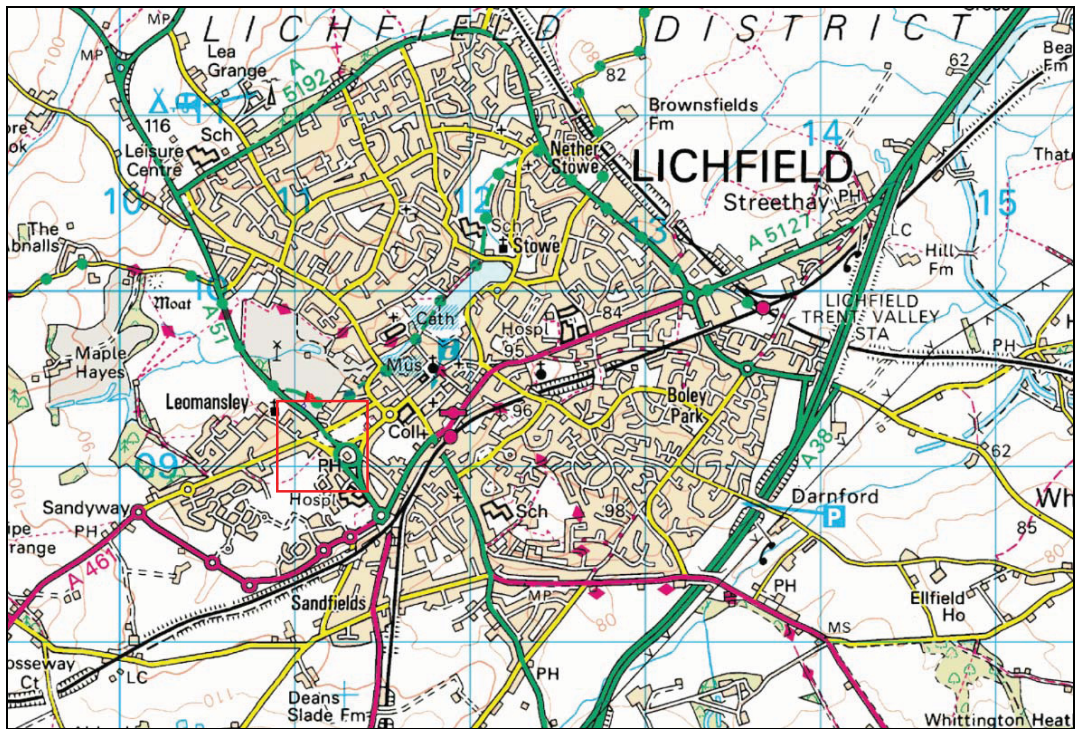
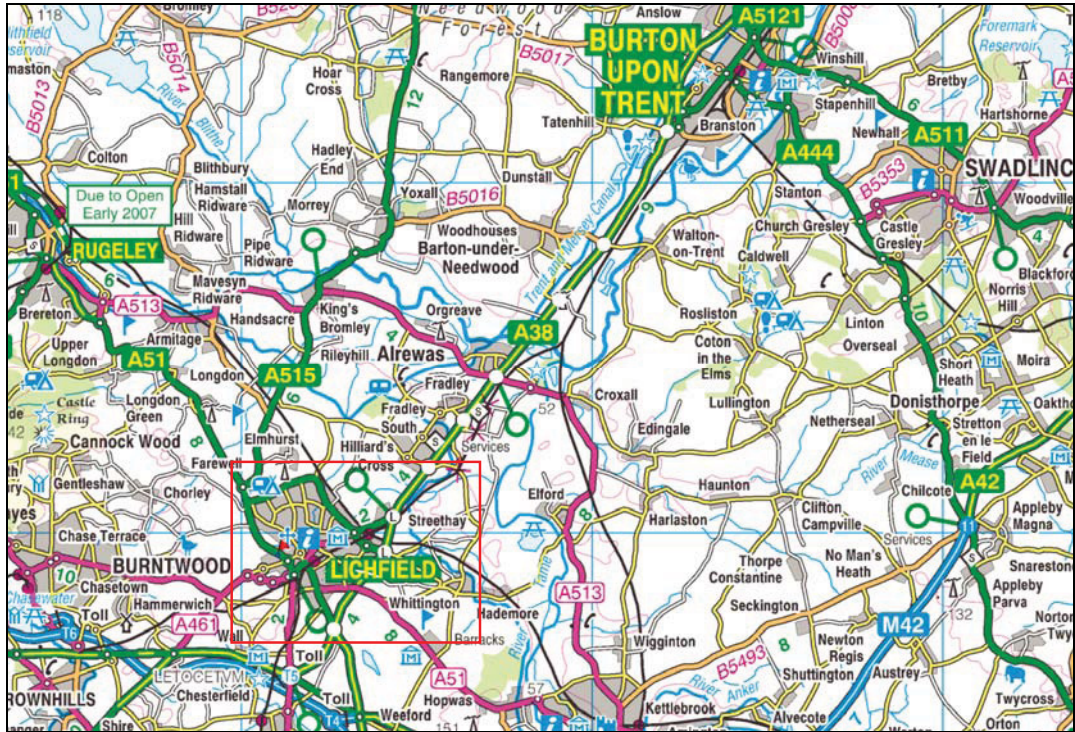
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- 1.2 Construction of the two buildings was undertaken in two separate phases and this report represents the findings of a watching brief undertaken during the second phase of development on the building to the west of the plot. It was undertaken on the 18th of June 2010 and monitored the excavation of foundation trenches for this building.
- 1.3 A report for the first phase of development was produced by Archaeological Research Services Ltd in April 2009, reference no. ARS 2009/63. No structural features relating to the presence of a mill of post-medieval or any other date were located during this initial phase of construction.

2. Location and geology

- 2.1 The site is located upon Friary Road a current major route into the centre of Lichfield (Figure 1).
- 2.2 A small brook, the Trunkfield Brook, runs to the west of the site upon a north-south orientation and was the reason for the location of the former mill.
- 2.3 The underlying geology is Keuper Sandstone and Bunter.

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Fig. 1: Location Maps of the Development Site

4. Aims and Objectives

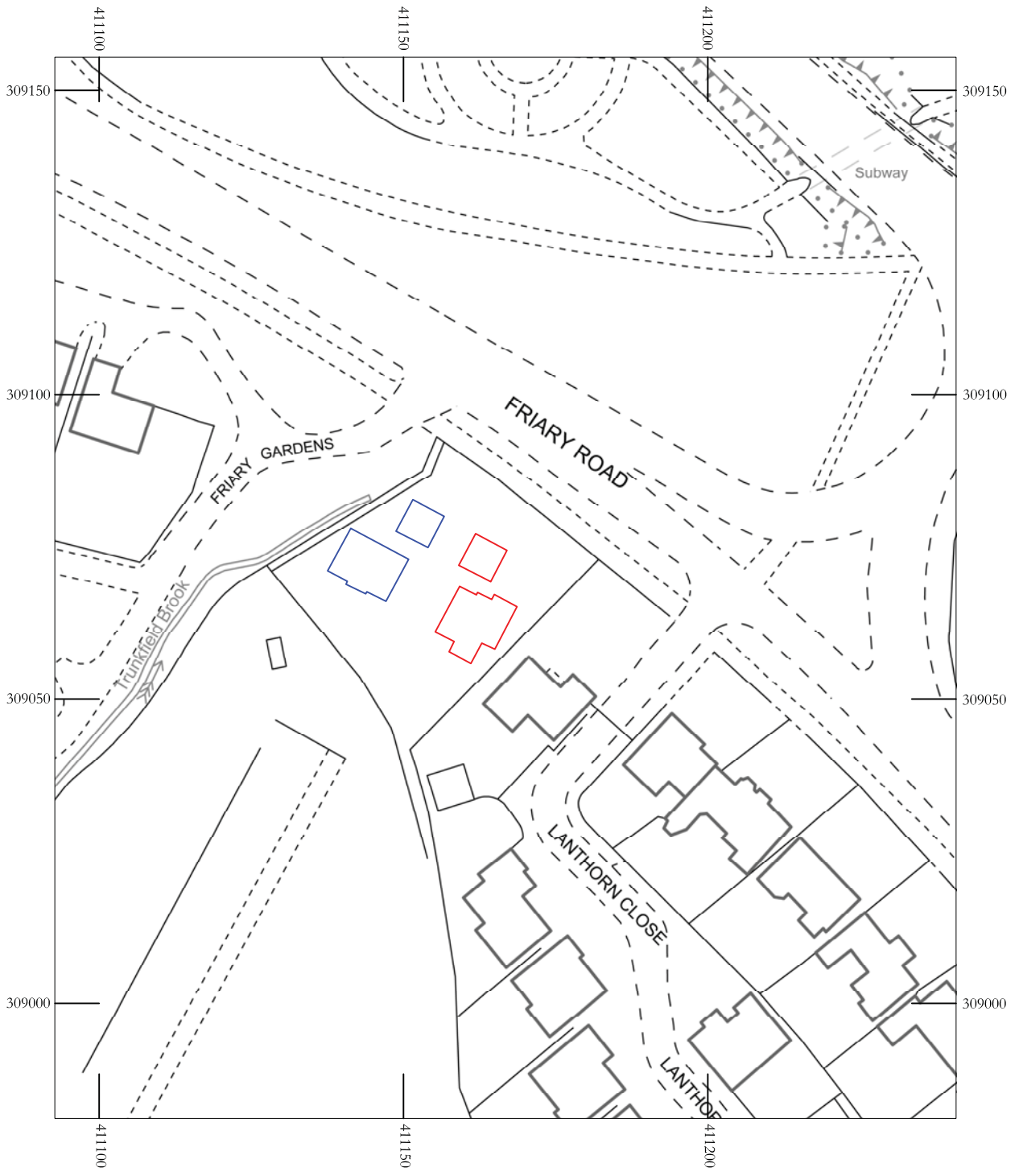
- 4.1 To ensure the archaeological monitoring of all aspects of the development programme likely to affect archaeological remains.
- 4.2 To identify and record archaeological features and deposits associated with the Leamonsley Mill, including the millpond, mill race etc, and subsequent phases of occupation and development across the site.
- 4.3 To secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site.

5. Methodology

- 5.1 The second phase of activity to which this report refers was undertaken on the 18th of June 2010 and comprised the monitoring of the mechanical excavation of foundation trenches for the western building on the plot (Fig. 2).
- 5.2 Excavation of the foundation trenches was undertaken by a hydraulically powered mini excavator equipped with a toothless bucket at all times.
- 5.3 During excavation a photographic record was compiled.

6. Assessment Results

- 6.1. During excavation of phase one the initial deposits encountered were identified as modern made ground containing significant quantities of modern building debris, which extended to a depth of approximately 1.4m. The probability of a raised ground surface was substantiated by a concrete block retaining wall to the west and south of the site, which was standing to a height of 0.85m below site ground level at the western extent of the site, orientated north to south and adjacent to Trunkfield Brook.
- 6.2. The trenches were excavated to a depth of 0.6m and the material excavated consisted entirely of modern made ground (Figs 3, 4 &5).



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Title:
 Figure 2: Site plan

Key:
 Phase 1 excavation
 Phase 2 excavation

Site Code: FRI 10
 Drawing Ref: Report Fig2
 Date: 21 June 2010
 Drawn: BM
 Scale: 1:1000

Notes:

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Fig. 3: Excavated area at the western extent of the site. Facing south. Scale 1m & 2m.



Fig. 4: North facing section of foundation trench. Scale 1m.



Fig. 5: Eastern limit of foundation trenches. Facing south. Scale 1m & 2m.

Conclusion

- 7.1 No structural features relating to the presence of a mill of Post-Medieval or any other date were located during phase two of construction.

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10. Acknowledgements

- a. Archaeological Research Services Ltd would like to thank all those involved with the smooth running of the project, especially Jason Cooper acting on behalf of Manor Park Homes, the ground staff on site of Manor Park Homes and Stephen Dean of the Development Services Directorate at Staffordshire County Council.