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Thorley Lane Bridge Replacement Junction 5, M56, Manchester

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Ref: 104680.01
September 2014



Thorley Lane Bridge Replacement Junction 5, M56, Manchester

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Thorley Lane Bridge Replacement Junction 5, M56, Manchester

Archaeological Watching Brief

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Balfour Beatty Mott MacDonald to undertake an archaeological watching brief on groundworks associated with the construction of a new road bridge carrying Thorley Lane over the M56, south of Manchester.

A pre-existing Heritage Assessment of land within a 500m-radius buffer of the development indicated that construction work may impact upon the remains of a post-medieval cottage and associated boundary ditches, known from cartographic sources to have been present within the site.

Archaeological monitoring of topsoil removal prior to the installation of a temporary construction compound revealed traces of the cottage, namely an arrangement of brick walls and a brick-lined well. Three field-boundary ditches were also recorded. The majority of the recorded remains correspond with features known from cartographic sources. A single sherd of 19th- or early 20th-century pottery was recovered.

The recorded remains relate to the occupation and farming of the land in the vicinity of Davenport Green in the late post-medieval period. None of the remains were of substantial archaeological value, and cannot contribute significantly to any established research agenda.

The poor state of preservation of the recorded archaeology indicates that the site has been severely truncated in the past, most probably during the 1970s when the adjacent M56 motorway was constructed.

The site archive is currently stored at Wessex Archaeology's Sheffield office under project number 104680 and will be offered to Manchester Museum for long-term storage.



Thorley Lane Bridge Replacement Junction 5, M56, Manchester

Archaeological Watching Brief

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology are grateful to Claire Walsh and David Waring of Balfour Beatty Mott MacDonald for commissioning this project.

Fieldwork was undertaken by Simon Evans. The report was compiled by Patrick Daniel and illustrations were prepared by Chris Breeden.

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Thorley Lane Bridge Replacement Junction 5, M56, Manchester

Archaeological Watching Brief

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Balfour Beatty Mott MacDonald to undertake an archaeological watching brief on groundworks associated with the construction of a new road bridge carrying Thorley Lane over the M56, south of Manchester at NGR 380753, 386452 (hereafter 'the Site'; **Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 A Heritage Assessment produced for the development (Mott MacDonald 2014) concluded that construction of a temporary site compound would be likely to affect buried archaeological remains associated with the site of Thorley Cottages, which were present at the site until the 1970s. The footprint of the compound is shown as the red-line area on **Figure 1**. The works associated with the construction of the road bridge would be largely confined to previously disturbed areas.
- 1.1.3 In consultation with the Planning Archaeologist at Greater Manchester Archaeology Advisory Service (GMAAS), Mott MacDonald determined that the proposed development had the potential to impact upon buried archaeological remains. An enhanced watching brief was identified as the most appropriate form of mitigation for any potential impacts.
- 1.1.4 This document presents the results of the watching brief.

1.2 The Site

- 1.2.1 The Site lies 12km southwest of the centre of Manchester, and 1.4km northwest of Manchester Airport (**Figure 1**). The Site's boundaries are defined to the southwest by Thorley Lane, to the southeast by the slip road for Junction 5 of the M56, and by hedge lines to the north. Prior to the present development, the Site was under rough pasture, with land boundaries defined by hedges.
- 1.2.2 The Site is relatively flat, with a slight dip aligned in a northwest to southeast direction within the northern extents of the site. Ground levels are typically around 55-60m above Ordnance Datum.
- 1.2.3 British Geological Survey maps show that the superficial deposits within the development area comprise poorly sorted sediments formed by moraines of till, with outwash sand and gravel deposits of the Devensian period.
- 1.2.4 The Site lies close to the source of the Timperley Brook, which runs westwards, draining ultimately into the Manchester Ship Canal.



2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The following text is based upon the archaeological background information presented in the Heritage Assessment (Mott MacDonald 2014).

2.2 Prehistoric

2.2.1 There is a general lack of evidence of prehistoric activity around the Site. Mesolithic remains have been identified at Tatton Park (8km to the south of the development) and Neolithic and Bronze Age settlement is known at Oversley Farm, Styal (3.7km to the southeast of the development). Closer to the development area, pits or post-holes containing fire-cracked pebbles have been recorded to the north of Shay Lane, approximately 960m to the northwest of the Site.

2.3 Roman

2.3.1 The principal Roman route through the district was the road from the legionary fortress at Cheshire (*Deva*, which was established between AD 75 and 80), to the Roman fort at Manchester (*Mamucium*). This route is still in use today as the main road to Chester (located 5km to the west of the development site). Recent excavations at Broadheath revealed a short section of road with a metalled surface which retained evidence of wheel ruts (Nevell 1997). It is postulated that a secondary Roman road may therefore have run from Warrington (a major crossing of the Mersey) through Warburton and Bowdon, where a Roman coin was found, to Ringway and Wilmslow (Miller 2010).

2.3.2 There is, as yet, no evidence of Roman-era settlement in close proximity to the Site.

2.4 Early medieval

2.4.1 The Site lies within the former parish of Bowdon. The manors listed in the Domesday Survey of 1086 for the parish of Bowdon were held by a single person, Alweard, suggesting a large, Late Saxon estate in the lands between the rivers Bollin and Mersey.

2.4.2 Thorley is derived from the Old English place-name for 'thorn-tree wood or clearing' (Mills 1991, 456), the -ley place-name suffix generally denoting a settlement in woodland clearings (Yarwood 1981, 54).

2.5 Medieval

2.5.1 By 1259 the Site was included within the newly renamed Bucklow Hundred and was formed from the earlier Domesday hundreds of *Bochelau* and *Tunendune*; these lands were now held by Hamo de Masci (or Massey) who also held the estate at nearby Dunham Massey. The Masseys remained lords of Dunham and its environs (including the area of the Site) until the late 1400s.

2.5.2 The heart of the Davenport Green medieval village is considered to be located 450m to the west of the Site. Excavations at Buttery House Farm revealed evidence associated with Davenport Green, including a 13th-century farm thought to have belonged to the de Massey family and an associated moat is also located nearby.

2.5.3 Excavations during the construction of the Hale Waste Water Treatment Plant pipeline between Hale and Wythenshawe recovered late medieval pottery and evidence of associated metalworking from approximately 880m northwest of the Site.



2.5.4 To the immediate west of the Site, ridge and furrow has been documented within the Davenport Green area, but this may be medieval or post-medieval in origin.

2.6 Post-medieval

2.6.1 The general settlement pattern in the Trafford district in the late medieval period was one of dispersed farms and manor halls, with the Davenport Green area conforming to this arrangement.

2.6.2 A succession of first timber and then brick buildings has been documented at Buttery Farm. Post-medieval buildings or their former sites are also known at Davenport Green Hall and Etrop Green. A 17th-century structure latterly known as Keeper's Cottage was once located 200m to the south of the Site.

2.6.3 The local title map of c. 1842 shows Thorley Cottages standing within the Site (**Figure 3**). Furthermore, the remains of plots of land were identified within the Site during the Heritage Assessment. Thorley Cottages comprised two square buildings. According to the Crewe rentals, these buildings were occupied by the Perrin and How families in the 18th century. By 1840 one building was owned and occupied by George Garner, the other was owned by the Earl of Stamford and occupied by Andrew Garner Senior. It is not directly known when Thorley Cottages were built, but they may, like those at Davenport Green and Etrop Green, date from the 16th-17th century.

2.7 Modern

2.7.1 The construction of the M56, located to the immediate east of the Site, occurred in 1972. It is uncertain how much truncation occurred within the Site at this time. Thorley Cottages were demolished when the motorway was constructed. As a further consequence of motorway construction, bunds of spoil were placed along the northern and eastern extents of the Site, where they currently remain (Mott MacDonald 2014).

2.7.2 Trafford Urban Historic Landscape Characterisation Report describes the area within which the Site lies as enclosed land of agglomerated fields. These fields were generally products of late 19th-20th-century changes related to the mechanisation of agriculture (GMAU 2008, 34).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims and objectives

3.1.1 The aim of the watching brief was to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains, and characterise (nature, date, complexity and extent) any deposits located within the Site.

3.1.2 The objectives of the watching brief were to:

- Identify the nature of the ground conditions and identify any areas of truncation of archaeological horizons;
- Identify any remains associated with Thorley Cottages;
- Identify any remains associated with the medieval development of the area; and

- Identify the nature and extent of any unknown archaeological deposits within the Site.

3.2 Fieldwork methodology

- 3.2.1 Full details of the methodology employed during monitoring, excavation and recording can be found in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Mott MacDonald (2014).
- 3.2.2 In brief, constant archaeological supervision was maintained on topsoil removal and other preparatory groundworks. Any archaeological deposits revealed were hand-cleaned and sample excavated as necessary, and recorded using Wessex Archaeology *pro forma* recording sheets.

3.3 Finds methodology

- 3.3.1 The Site produced little in the way of finds. The artefactual assemblage was treated in accordance with the WSI and relevant guidance (IFA 2013a).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 Topsoil stripping for a temporary site construction compound formed the focus of the archaeological monitoring (**Figure 1**). Within this area structural remains comprising brick walls were encountered. In addition, a series of ditches marking former field boundaries was identified in the northern part of the Site (**Figure 2**).

4.2 Structural remains

- 4.2.1 An arrangement of brick walling was identified in the southern part of the Site, close to its eastern edge. Wall **1004** ran on a northeast to southwest alignment for 1.65m, seemingly having been truncated to the southwest. Two courses survived, with the wall being 0.25m wide, and consisting of a double skin of stretchers, that is bricks laid with their long sides sharing the alignment of the wall. Beneath wall **1004** a bedding layer of angular fragments of sandstone (**1007**) was recorded (**Plates 1 and 2**).
- 4.2.2 Together, **1004** and **1007** probably formed the outer wall of the final manifestation of Thorley Cottages, prior to demolition in the 1970s. The bricks were unfrogged, which would suggest a relatively early construction date.
- 4.2.3 A second segment of brick walling, **1005**, was present at the northeastern end of **1004** (**Plate 1**). This measured 2.4m in length, and also stood two courses high. When recorded this wall was not aligned at right-angles to **1004**, but ran on a NNW to SSE alignment. Its skewed orientation may, however, have been due to machine disturbance, rather than signalling a lack of contemporaneity with **1004**. Wall **1005** appeared to butt against (and therefore post-date) wall **1004**. Like **1004**, the component bricks of wall **1005** were unfrogged, again suggesting a relatively early construction date.
- 4.2.4 Approximately 20m to the south of the walls described above, lay a c. 1.6m-diameter brick-lined well, **1006** (**Plate 3**). The bricks were unfrogged and aligned so their long edges radiated out from the centre of the circle. The arrangement did not form a complete circuit: a c. 0.5m-long gap in its eastern segment was probably the result of machine truncation.



4.3 Field boundaries

- 4.3.1 A trio of ditches was intermittently visible running across the northern part of the Site. Ditches **1011** and **1013** followed a northwest to southeast alignment; to their south, ditch **1009** was aligned more ENE to WSW. Ditch **1013** was the most substantial of the three features, measuring 3m in width by 0.45m deep (**Plate 4**). All of the ditches contained a similar greyish brown sandy fill. No relationships were recorded between any of the ditches, or between the ditches and the structural remains described above.

5 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE

5.1 Pottery

- 5.1.1 A single sherd of a refined whiteware plate with green transfer-printed decoration of probable 19th- or early 20th-century date (L. Mephram, pers. comm., 06/08/2014) was recovered from ditch **1013**. The sherd weighs 26g and is in a fresh, relatively unabraded condition.
- 5.1.2 No other finds were recovered.

5.2 Storage and curation

- 5.2.1 The artefact is in a stable condition, with no further work required. The pottery sherd is of no special significance and can be discarded, following consultation with the recipient museum.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Thorley Cottages

- 6.1.1 The structural remains described above appear to correspond with Thorley Cottages as indicated by cartographic sources, including the tithe map of c. 1842 (Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, EDT181/2; **Figure 3**). Wall **1004** appears to represent the northwestern outer wall of the structure. Wall **1005**, to judge by its relationship with wall **1004** and its apparent lack of a bedding course to match that beneath wall **1004**, likely formed an interior partition wall.
- 6.1.2 Unfrosted bricks were used for all of the brickwork on the Site, suggesting that it was relatively early date, perhaps pre-dating the 19th century, with the walls and well potentially being contemporary. The structural remains were poorly preserved; the demolition of Thorley Cottages in the 1970s appears to have been a thorough affair, with no further sections of wall or floor surfaces surviving.
- 6.1.3 The ditches described above are likely to represent former field boundaries. It is thought that two of these (**1009** and **1013**) correspond to plot boundaries marked on the 1840s tithe map. The recovery of the 19th- or early 20th-century pot sherd from one of these features would not be at odds with this interpretation.
- 6.1.4 No remains of ridge and furrow were present on the Site, despite its presence to the west of Thorley Lane. This may suggest that the lane formed the boundary of the land cultivated in this way, with the vicinity of Thorley Cottage being utilised in a different manner, perhaps as untilled pasture or as a kitchen garden. The high degree of truncation



that has evidently affected the Site may also be a factor in this however, with all traces of ridge and furrow removed.

6.2 Survival

- 6.2.1 The archaeological remains survive only in one part of the Site and in relatively poor, fragmented condition.
- 6.2.2 Following the demolition of the cottages in the 1970s, the Site appears to have been comprehensively levelled. This was probably achieved by cutting the western and central areas down into natural deposits, whilst the eastern side was cut to a lesser degree and perhaps filled a little. This allowed some archaeological remains to survive on the eastern side and resulted in the the flat ground recorded by the watching brief (**Plate 5**).

6.3 Conclusions

- 6.3.1 The archaeological watching brief was generally successful in meeting its aims and objectives. Structural remains and boundary ditches corresponding with features visible on cartographic sources were found to survive on the Site. The recorded remains apparently date and relate to the occupation and farming of the land in the vicinity of Davenport Green in the post-medieval period. None of the remains were of substantial archaeological value, and cannot contribute significantly to any established research agenda.
- 6.3.2 Only negative features were recorded, indicating the high degree of truncation that has affected the site, most probably in connection with the construction of the M56 in the 1970s.

7 STORAGE AND CURATION

7.1 Museum

- 7.1.1 It is recommended that the project archive resulting from the watching brief be deposited with Manchester Museum. The museum has agreed in consider accepting the project archive on completion of the project. Deposition of any finds with the Museum will only be carried out with the full agreement of the landowner.

7.2 Preparation of archive

- 7.2.1 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics, artefacts, and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by Manchester Museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; IfA 2013b; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).

7.3 Discard policy

- 7.3.1 Wessex Archaeology follows the guidelines set out in Selection, Retention and Dispersal (SMA 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and ecofact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis. Any discard of artefacts will be fully documented in the project archive.



7.4 Security copy

- 7.4.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.



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8.2 Internet sources

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8.3 Primary sources

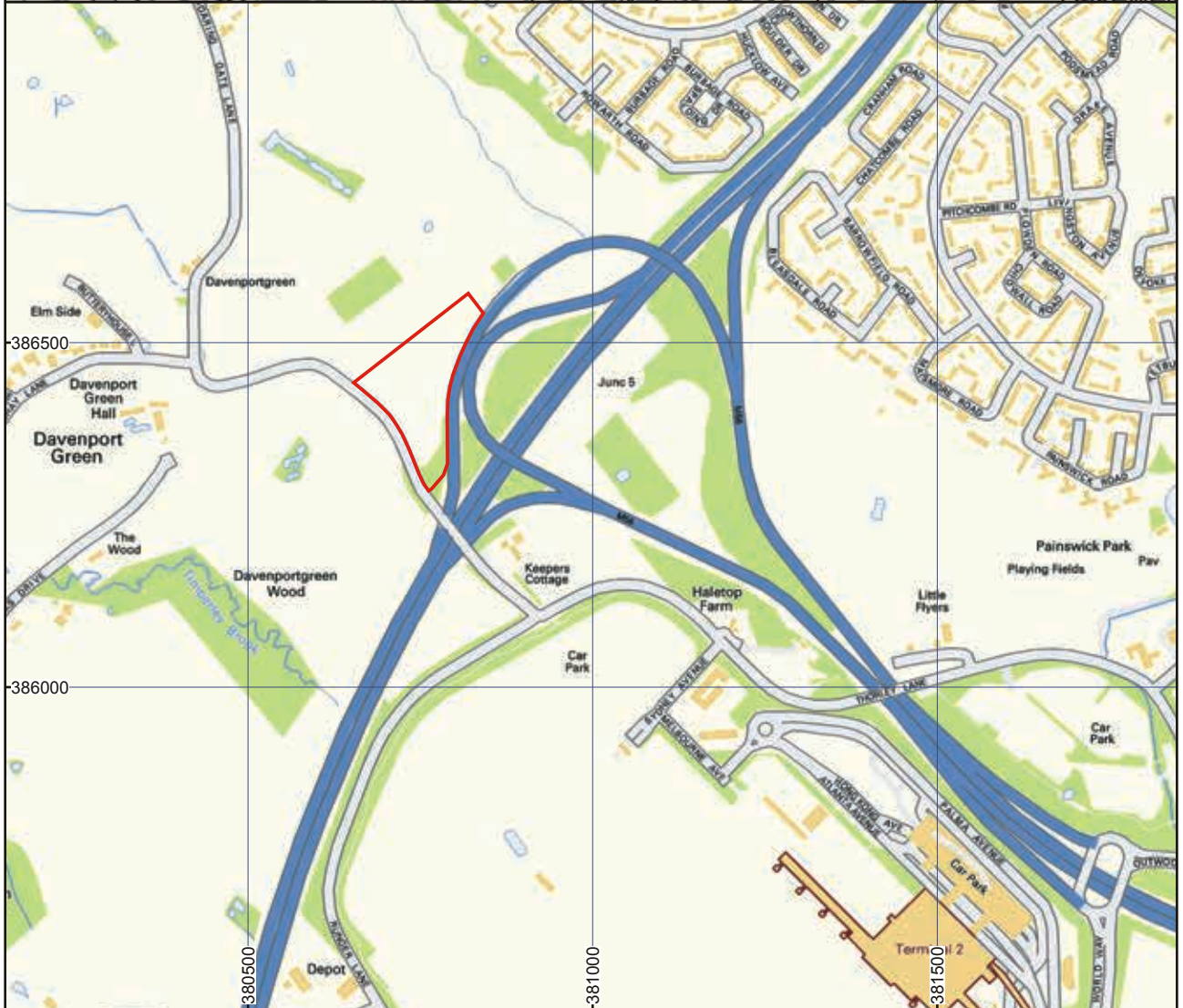
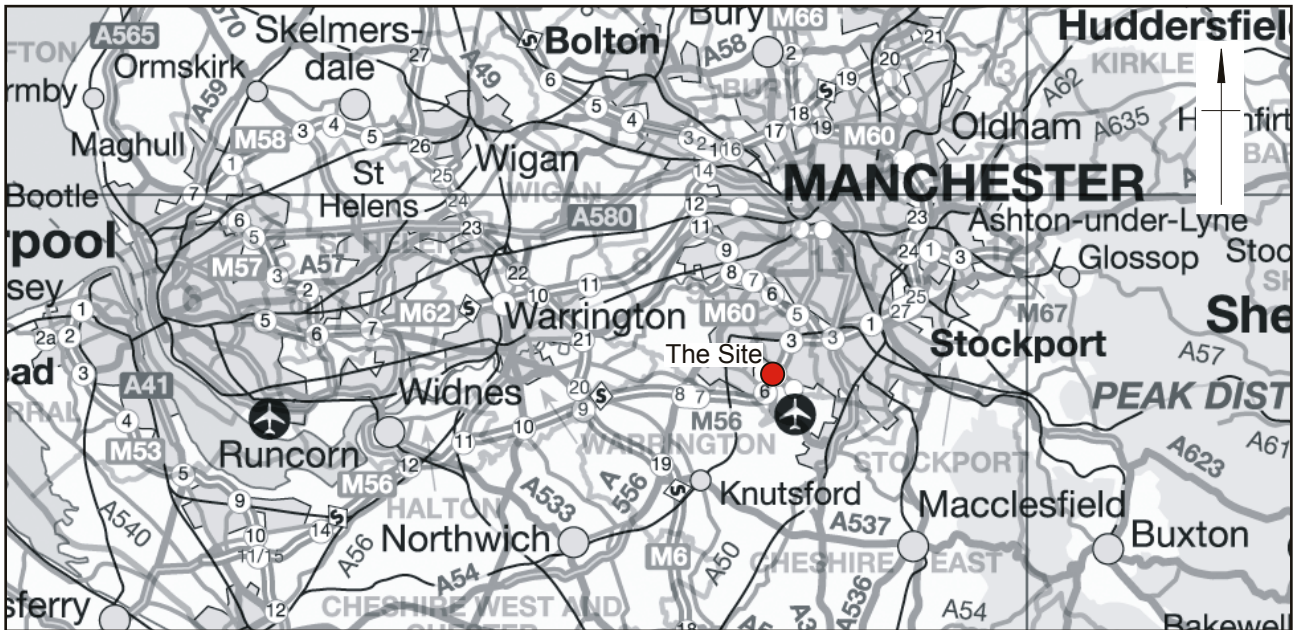
- Plan of the Township of Hale in the Parish of Bowdon and County Palatine of Chester*, c. 1842, Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, EDT181/2



APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Context descriptions

| Context | Description | Depth from ground surface (m) |
|---------|---|-------------------------------|
| 1001 | Topsoil: Sandy loose clay, medium dark brown | 0 - 0.3 |
| 1002 | Subsoil: Mottled orangey brown clay/sand | > 0.3 |
| 1003 | Clinker: Loose black ash | >0.55 |
| 1004 | Wall: Red brick, aligned NE-SW | >0.55 |
| 1005 | Wall: Red brick, aligned NNW-SSE | >0.55 |
| 1006 | Wall: Red brick, circular in plan (well lining) | >0.45 |
| 1007 | Wall: Sandstone, aligned E-W (foundation course) | >0.55 |
| 1008 | Natural: Orange clay | >0.55 |
| 1009 | Cut: Ditch, aligned ENE-WSW | >0.65-0.7 |
| 1010 | Greyish brown sandy silt forming secondary fill of 1009 | >0.65-0.7 |
| 1011 | Cut: Ditch, aligned NW-SE | >0.5 |
| 1012 | Greyish brown sandy clay forming secondary fill of 1011 | >0.5 |
| 1013 | Cut: Ditch, aligned NW-SE | > 0.8 |
| 1014 | Dark brown sandy clay forming secondary fill of 1013 | > 0.8 |



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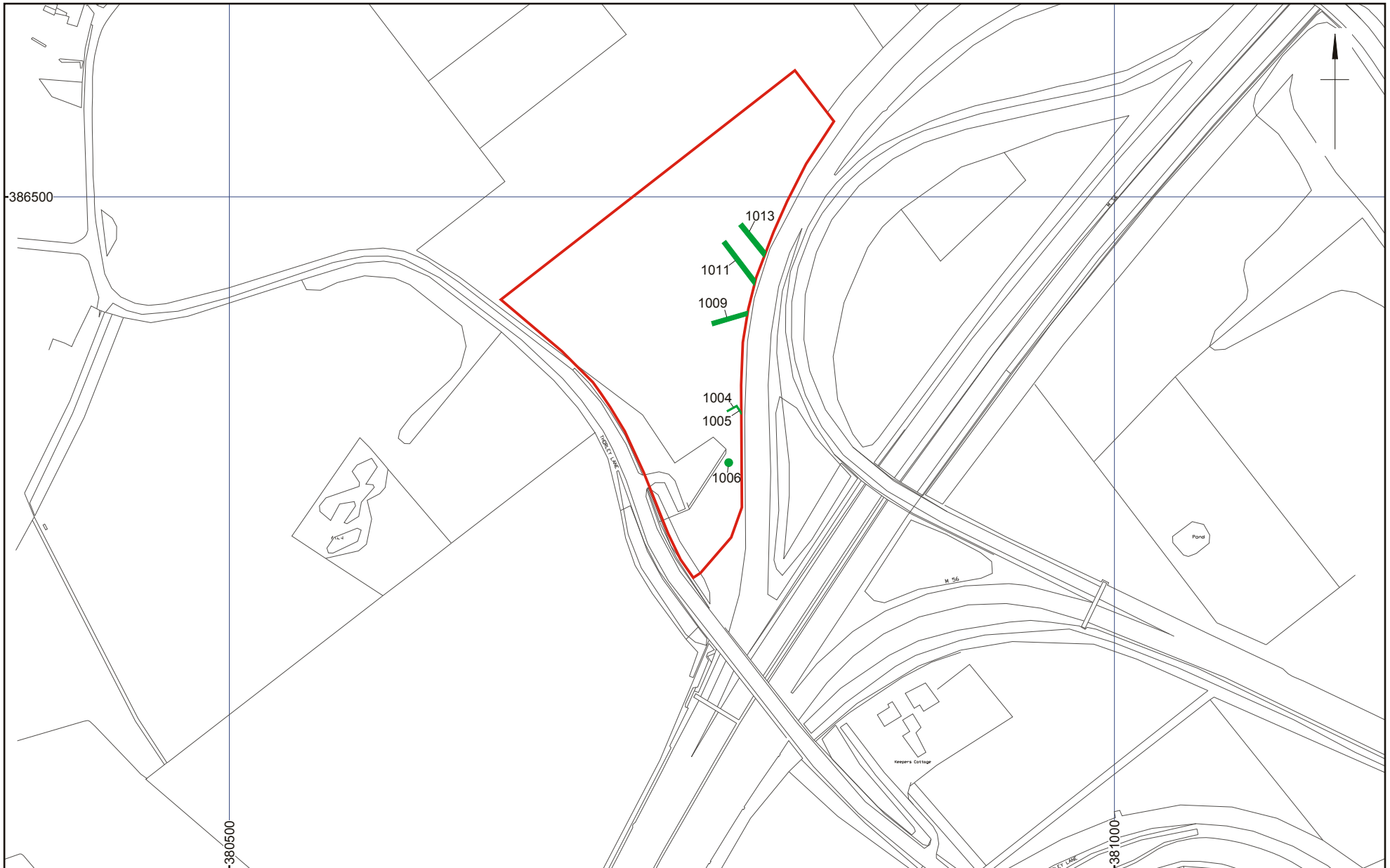
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Site location

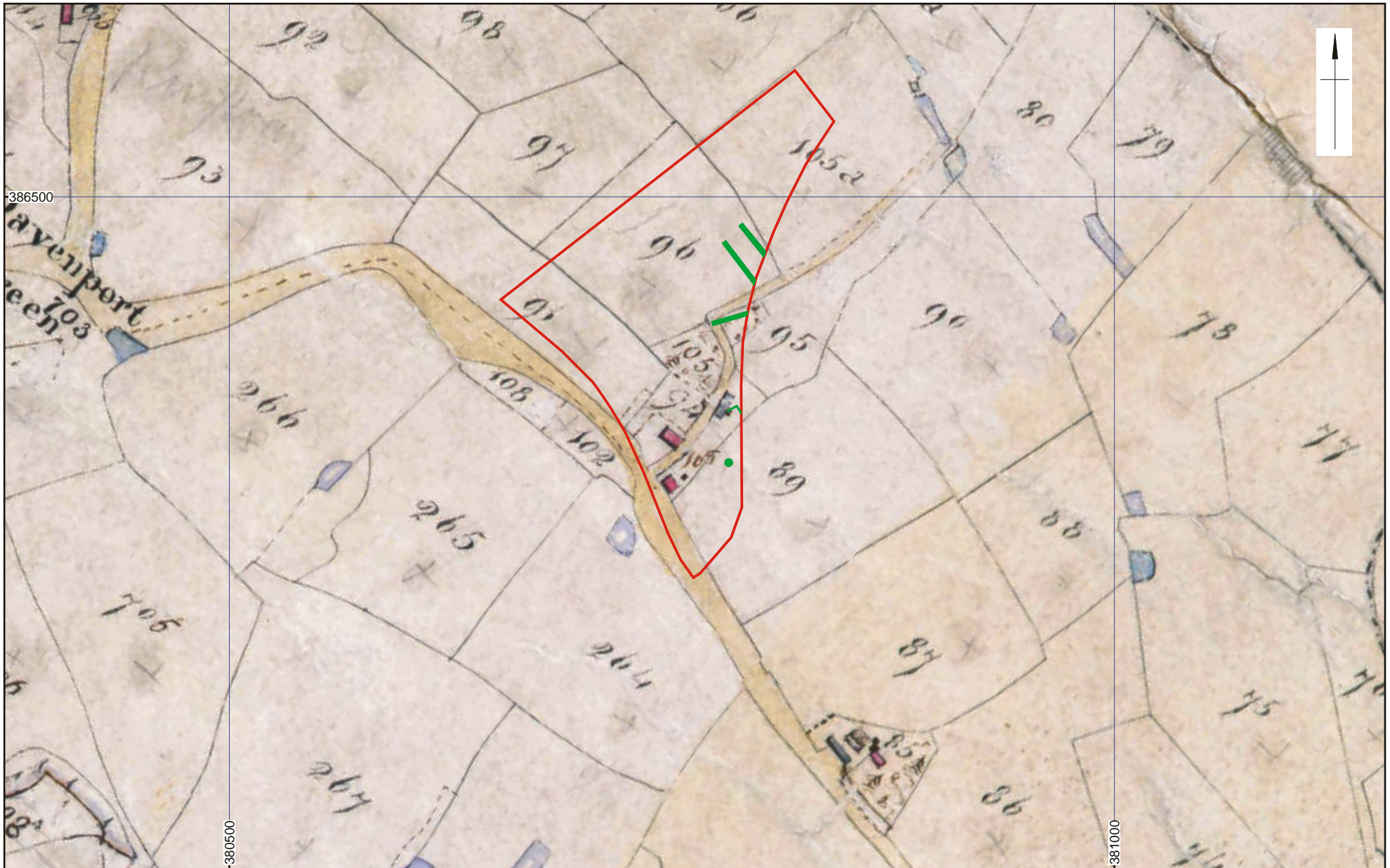
Figure 1



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Features identified during watching brief

Figure 2



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Comparison of watching brief remains and tithe mapping

Figure 3



Plate 1: Walls **1004** (left) and **1005**



Plate 2: Sandstone footings **1007** beneath wall **1004**


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Plate 3: Brick-lined well **1006**



Plate 4: Southeast facing section of ditch **1013**



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Plate 5: Site at the completion of monitoring, looking southwest

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