

Ambrey Archaeology Ltd

Archaeological Watching Brief at No 2 Willow Cottage, Upton-upon- Severn, Worcestershire

Version 1

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Ambrey Archaeology on groundworks at No. 2 Willow Cottage, East Waterside, Upton upon Severn. It was carried out on behalf of Craig Ross who has been granted planning permission from Malvern Hills District Council for the demolition of an existing detached garage to construct a flood storage/refuge area above a detached garage.

The site lies on the north side of the River Severn adjacent to Upton Marina. Historically the land was utilised for minor industry and osier beds and it was considered by Malvern Hills District Council that the development had the potential to disturb or destroy buried archaeological deposits. Permission was therefore granted subject to conditions including a programme of archaeological works comprising a watching brief to be maintained on all groundworks associated with the development.

The works were undertaken on 27th June 2023. The foundations for the proposed building were dug using a tracked mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision. The buried remains of three walls and a concrete surface were recorded. These are thought to represent the remains of a rectangular building depicted on the 1884 edition Ordnance Survey map forming part of a brickworks. Quarrying for the alluvial clay required to make the bricks resulted in the excavation of a large pond to the east of the site which was later adapted to become Upton Marina.

The building was demolished in the 20th century and replaced with a brick-built garage at its south-eastern end. A large cut filled by material including modern ceramic fragments was also recorded and is interpreted as the bowl of a large ash tree which formerly stood in the location.

Contents

1. Background	4
2. Aims.....	5
3. Site location and topography.....	5
4. Archaeological context.....	6
5. Methods.....	8
5.1 Fieldwork.....	8
5.2 Post excavation works	9
6. Stratigraphic results.....	9
7. Discussion.....	10
8. Acknowledgements.....	10
9. Bibliography	10

Figures 7 & 8

Plates

Appendix

1. Background

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by Ambrey Archaeology of groundworks at No. 2 Willow Cottage, East Waterside, Upton upon Severn, (SO 85422 40748, Figure 1).

It was carried out on behalf of Mr Craig Ross, who was granted planning permission from Malvern Hills District Council (MHDC) for the demolition of an existing detached garage to construct a flood storage/refuge area above a detached garage (21/00286/FUL).

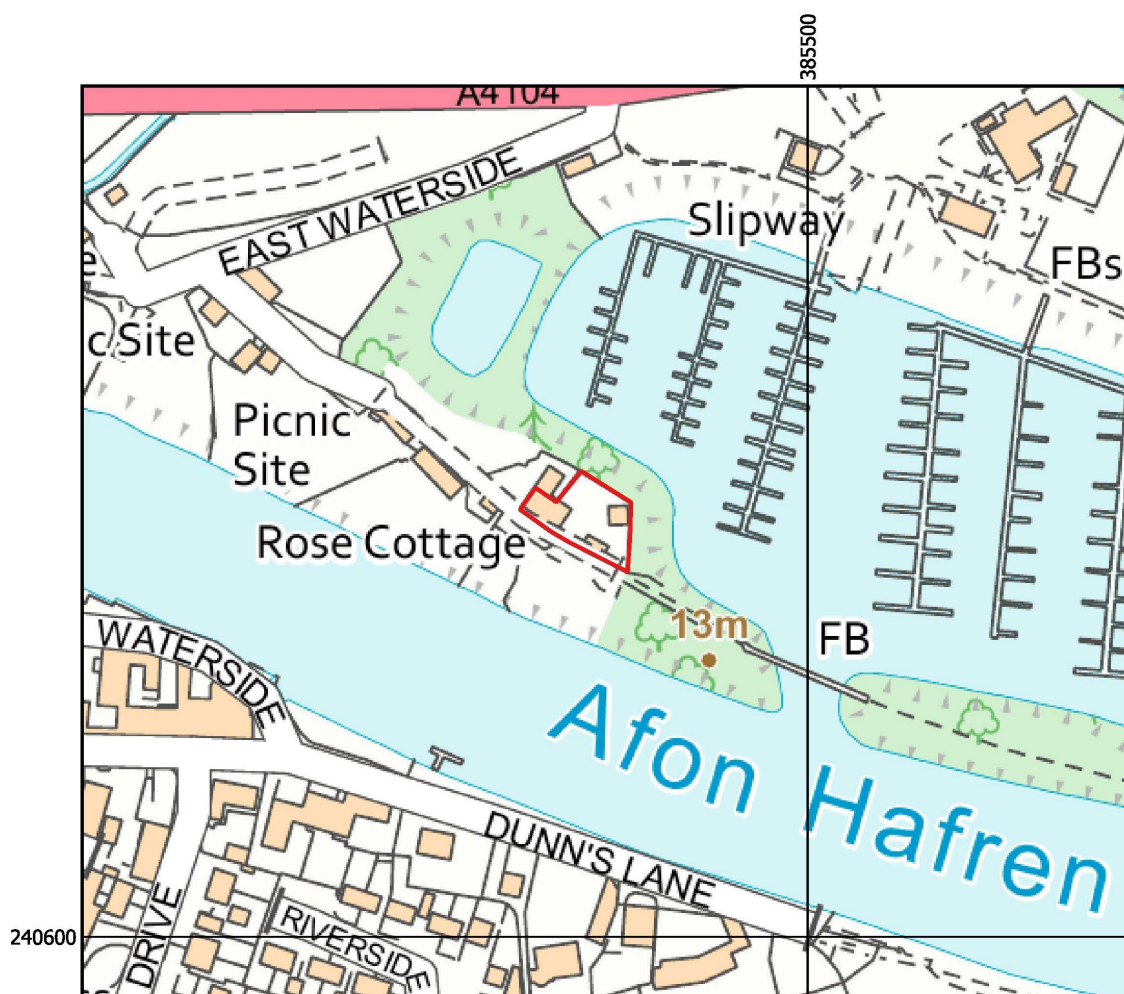


Figure 1. Site location (OS Vector map local)

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A Heritage Consultation Response prepared by Aidan Smyth of MHDC notes that No. 2 Willow Cottage stands within land historically utilised for minor industry and osier beds and that the proposed development area (PDA) was formerly a brickworks dating to the 1860s. It was therefore considered that the development had the potential to disturb or destroy buried archaeological deposits and permission was granted subject to conditions including a programme of archaeological works. The Heritage Consultation Response stated that this should comprise an archaeological watching brief to be maintained on groundworks associated with the development.

Prior to the works a Written Scheme of Investigation was produced by Ambrey Archaeology (AA 2023) and approved by MHDC.

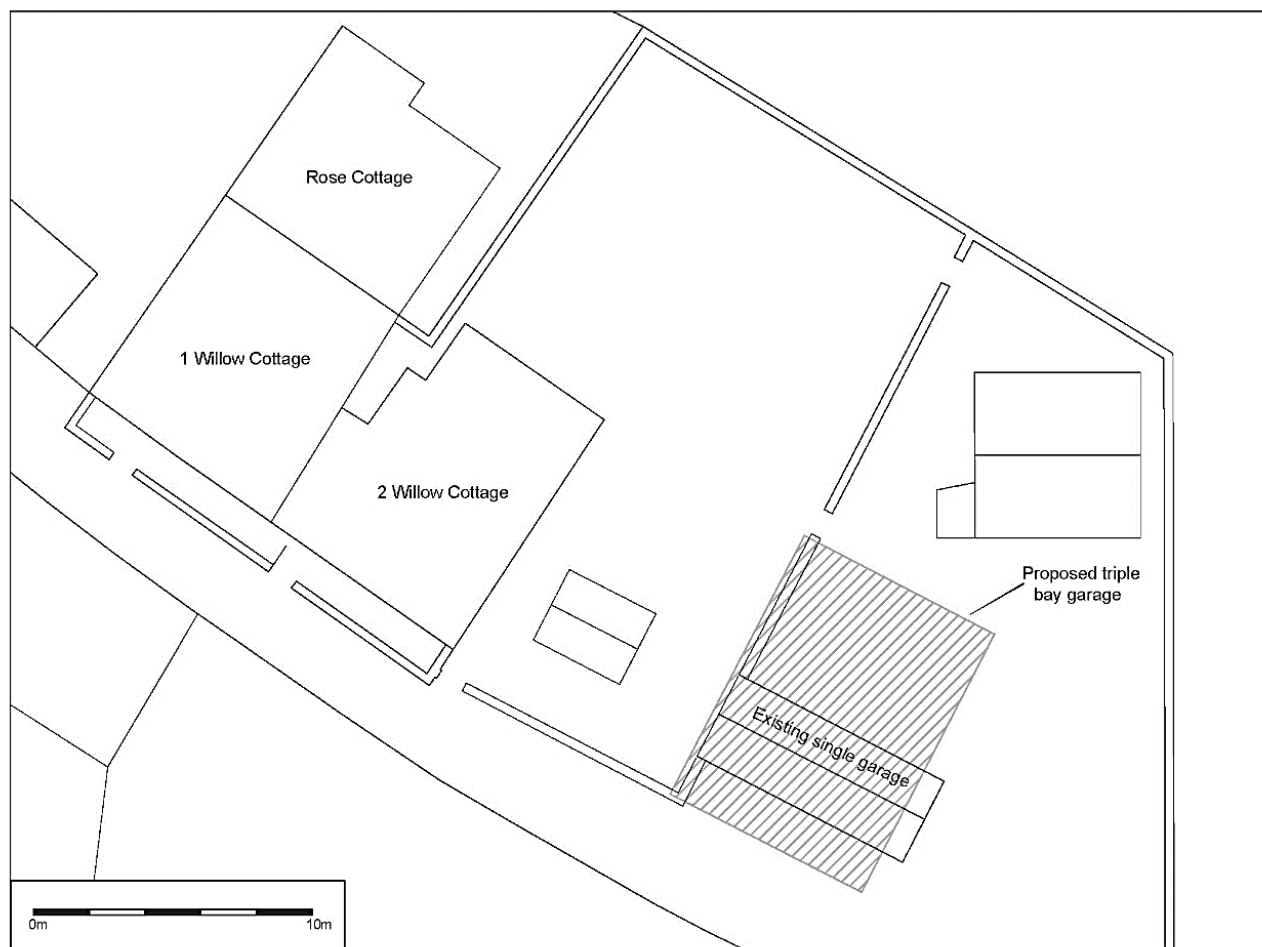


Figure 2. Location of proposed development

2. Aims

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists defines the objective of a **watching brief** as to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on a site;

“The purpose of a watching brief is:-

- a. to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works.
- b. to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard “(Standard and guidance for archaeological watching brief, CIfA 2014).

3. Site location and topography

No. 2 Willow Cottage stands in a group of houses on the north side of the River Severn in Upton upon Severn, some 250m east of the bridge over the river. No. 1 Willow Cottage adjoins No. 2 Willow Cottage to the north-west, and Rose Cottage adjoins No. 1 to the north-east.

Due to the construction of Upton Marina to the north and east, No. 2 Willow Cottage is now on a small promontory of land accessed from East Waterside.

Bedrock at the site is mudstone of the Branscombe formation, with superficial deposits of Worcester member sand and gravel and alluvium also mapped (BGS 2023).

4. Archaeological context

In the 9th century, Upton appears to have been part of the original endowment of Winchcombe Abbey by Coenwolf. In 1086 and 1108-18 Upton appears to have been part of the demesne of the Bishop of Worcester (Page and Willis-Bund 1923).

Although no record of a charter has been found, Upton was described as a borough in the 15th century and divided into Borough and Foreign. The street system was a north-south route aligned on the marketplace (WSM16808) less than 100m to the south-west of the site.

There are references to a timber bridge (WSM12309) being built by about 1480, leading to a ferry becoming redundant (Page and Willis-Bund 1923, 213). The bridge was built at the northern end of the high street, about 80m to the north-west of the site. In 1576, the bridge and the nearby church of St Peter and St Paul, known now as the Old Church, were in a state of disrepair.

A survey of the river carried out by Worcestershire Archaeology in 2008 refers to documentary evidence that the river was being used for freighting luxury goods in the medieval period; the bishop of Hereford brought in his wine through Upton (Hurst & Miller 2008, 9). The survey suggested that an early quay might be expected to be found at Upton, dating from 1289 at the latest.

A substantial bridge was built in 1606-09 (WSM12309), of red sandstone, but was washed away by flooding in the 19th century (Hurst & Miller 2008, 16). The stone bridge is thought likely to have been the location for an earlier wooden bridge.

On the 1840 Tithe Map of the parish of Upton on Severn (Figure 3), a building is shown in the location of Rose Cottage which extends to the south of its current footprint. It is labelled as Plot 37, a cottage and garden owned by Thomas Heach and occupied by George Parsons. The land to the east (Plot 36) which encompasses the remainder of the site is also owned by Thomas Heach and is described as an allotment in Royal Meadow, set to pasture.



Figure 3. Extract of 1840 tithe map of Upton on Severn

On the 1884 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 4) this building remains but another rectangular building has been constructed to the east, labelled 'Brick Works' (recorded on the HER as WSM16802). A substantial pond, presumably the result of extraction of clay, is shown to the east (WSM49512, later adapted as Upton Marina) and smaller, more regular ponds are shown to the north (WSM49509, WSM49510, WSM49511, WSM49512). A kiln is also labelled to the west of Rose Cottage. Areas to the north, south and west are shown with a symbol depicting osier beds, in which willow was grown and coppiced to produce withys for baskets, fish traps and other purposes (WSM49505, WSM49506, WSM49507, WSM49508).

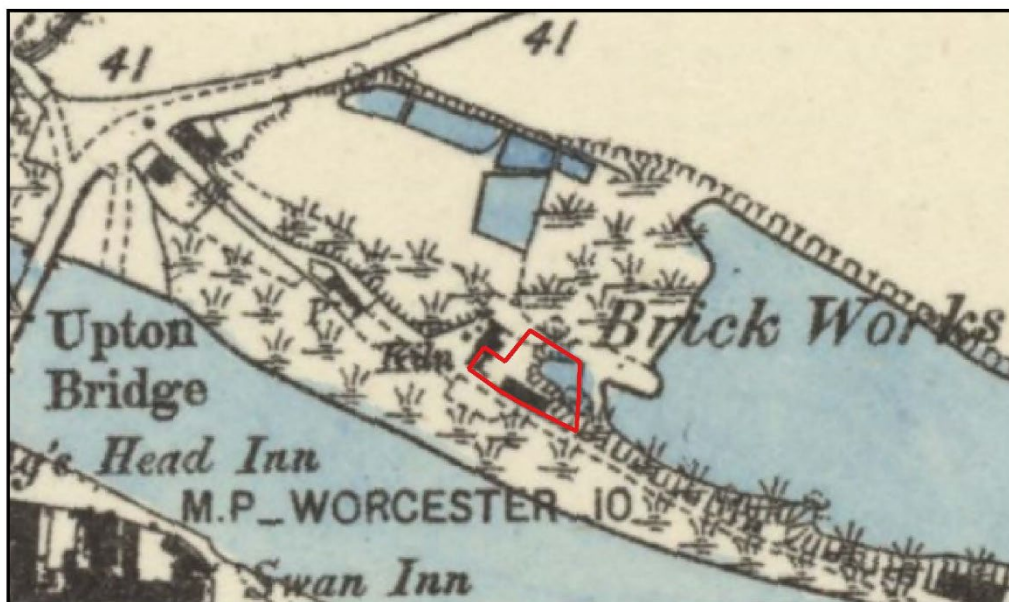


Figure 4. Extract of 1884 Ordnance Survey sheet XLVII.NE

On the Ordnance Survey map of 1903 (Figure 5), Nos. 1 and 2 Willow Cottages have been built and the rectangular building to the south-east is shown with small extensions to the rear.

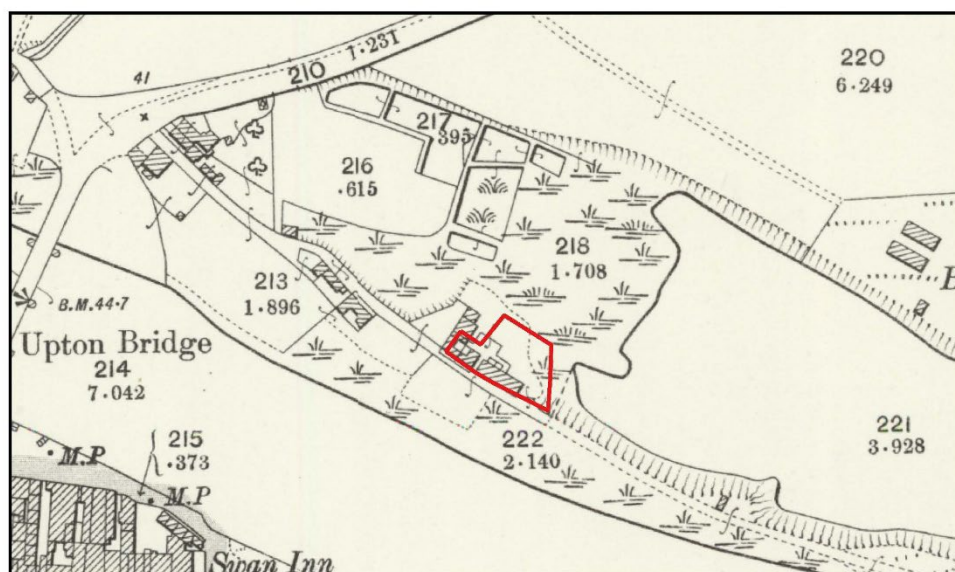


Figure 5. Extract of 1903 Ordnance Survey Worcestershire sheet XLVII.8

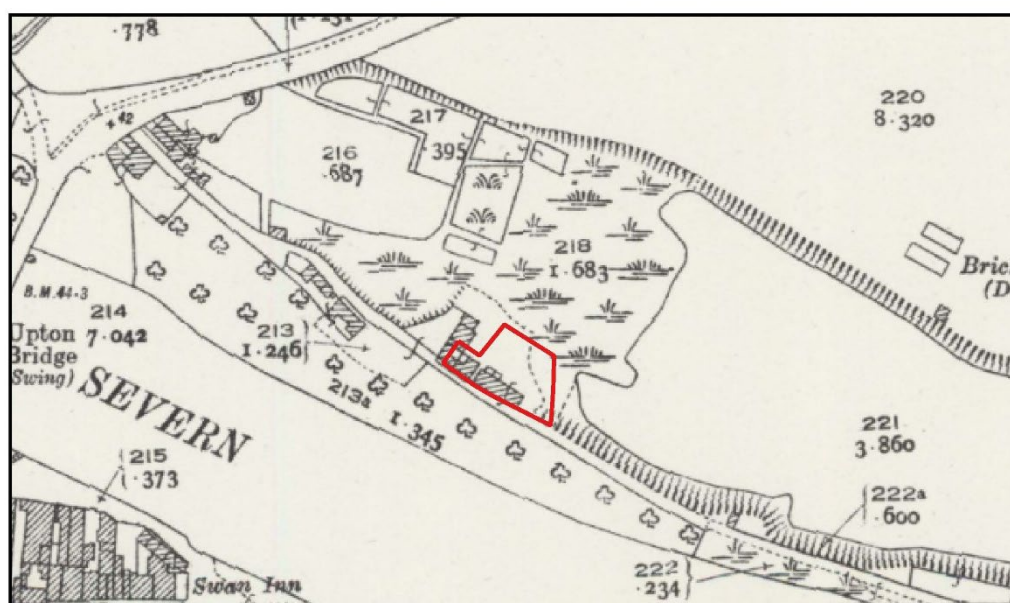


Figure 6. Extract of 1926 Ordnance Survey Worcestershire sheet XLVII.8

There is little change on the 1926 Ordnance Survey edition (Figure 6) except that the Osier beds to the south, adjacent to the river, are now shown as trees.

5. Methods

5.1 Fieldwork

The watching brief was carried out by Tom Rogers MSc, MCIfA on 27th June 2023.

Excavation of the foundation trenches was undertaken using a tracked mechanical excavator operated by Craig Ross and under archaeological supervision. Excavations comprised two foundation

trenches (Plate 1, Figure 6); the south-western side and the part of the eastern side south of the proposed garage door (Trench 1, Plate 2) and the north-eastern arm and northern part of the eastern side, north of the proposed door (Trench 2). It is understood that the north-western side of the foundations will be constructed using existing wall foundations.

Context recording was undertaken using context sheets and other pro-forma recording sheets and photographs were taken with a Nikon D3200 SLR camera. Plans and sections of trenches and features were drawn on permatrace at 1:10 and 1:50 scales.

5.2 Post excavation works

Following excavation, all context sheets were checked and cross referenced. Provision will be made to upload the digital archive of the project via OASIS (project id.: ambreyar2-517577).

6. Stratigraphic results

Trench 1

The upper layer (101) comprised a loose, light brown silt with frequent brick, tile, mortar and concrete fragments which was interpreted as the construction layer for the adjacent garage and wall. Beneath this a firm, mid-brown, sandy silt with occasional charcoal flecks, slate and tile (102) is thought to represent made ground possibly imported to raise the ground level in this area.

Set within this material were three brick walls (105, 106 and 107), evenly spaced (2m apart) which terminated at the north-eastern baulk of the trench, extending into the baulk and beneath the garage to the north-east. They were built of unfrosted bricks (220mm x 100mm x 70mm) bonded with a lime mortar. Each wall was 0.45m wide, comprising rows alternating between two stretchers or one stretcher and two headers. Wall 105 (Plate 3) to the north-west was six rows deep, while the central wall 106 (Plate 4, Figure 8) was nine rows, the lowest of which comprised headers on their side. Wall 107 (Plate 5) to the south-east and at the corner of the foundations, comprised eight rows.

The bases of the three walls were set onto layer (103) a firm, brick red silty clay with frequent brick fragments, charcoal, ash, cinders and lenses of clay (Plate 6). This is interpreted as waste material from the functioning of the brickworks and survived to a depth of 0.3m, beneath which a compact, light buff clay was interpreted as a natural alluvial deposit (104).

In the south-eastern arm of the foundations, a hard, buff yellow layer of concrete (108) was present at a depth of 0.4m (Plate 7). This feature is interpreted as a possible former floor surface of a building which had been laid over a base of loose, broken tiles.

Trench 2

The upper layer was a coarse grey gravel, laid as a driveway surface (202) which overlay a firm, mid-brown sandy silt with occasional charcoal flecks and some brick and tile (203). This was very similar to deposit (102) and was also interpreted as made ground imported to raise the ground surface.

In the central part of the north-western section of the foundation trench, a large, shallow, U-shaped cut [204] was filled by a firm, blueish grey sandy silt with frequent rooting and occasional brick and tile (Plate 8). This feature is interpreted as a tree bowl and is in the location of a large ash tree, which

according to the owners, once grew in this location. The tree is visible on Google Earth images until 2013.

At its base, this cut into a compact, light buff clay (205, same as (104)). At the north-western end of the trench, a further layer of ash and clinker (206) was visible in the base of the trench but not disturbed by the excavations.

7. Discussion

At the time of the 1840 tithe map there was no indication of industrial activity at the site. A building, the northern part of which survives as Rose Cottage was recorded simply as a cottage and garden and the surrounding area is pasture. However, by the Ordnance Survey of 1884, this building and another rectangular building with a long axis approximately NW-SE were marked as a brickworks. The size of the adjacent flooded quarry pit would suggest that this activity had been carried out for some decades by this time. Such a site would be suitable for brick production during this period as a ready source of alluvial clay (recorded in the trenches as 104 and 205) could be processed into bricks and readily transported on the river to growing settlements such as Worcester, Gloucester, Stourport or Bewdley.

It is almost certain that the structures uncovered in the watching brief relate to the later rectangular building of the brickworks. The three walls clearly only represent part of the building, which is estimated from the maps to have been more than 17m long. It may have been divided into bays at this end, hence the close spacing of the walls.

It is thought that the concrete surface uncovered in the south-eastern section of Trench 1 represents the internal floor surface of the building. This would suggest that the foundations of the building were relatively shallow and set on a layer of material (103) which was already the product of brick making in the vicinity. The function of the building is not clear, but it may have been for activities such as moulding the bricks.

The building survived into the 20th century but was then demolished and replaced by a garage at its eastern end and on the same orientation, possibly to partially re-use the existing foundations. At this time, a quantity of made ground (102) was imported, perhaps to raise the ground which is prone to flooding.

Apart from the loss of some loose bricks, the walls will remain *in situ* beneath the new building.

8. Acknowledgements

Ambrey Archaeology would like to thank the following for their assistance in completing this project; Craig Ross the developer and machine driver and Aidan Smyth of MHDC for monitoring the project.

9. Bibliography

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Cartographic Sources

Tithe map of Upton on Severn 1840

Worcestershire Sheet XLVII.NE six inches to the mile surveyed 1884

Worcestershire Sheet XLVII.8 twenty five inches to the mile revised 1903

Worcestershire Sheet XLVII.8 twenty five inches to the mile revised 1926

Figures

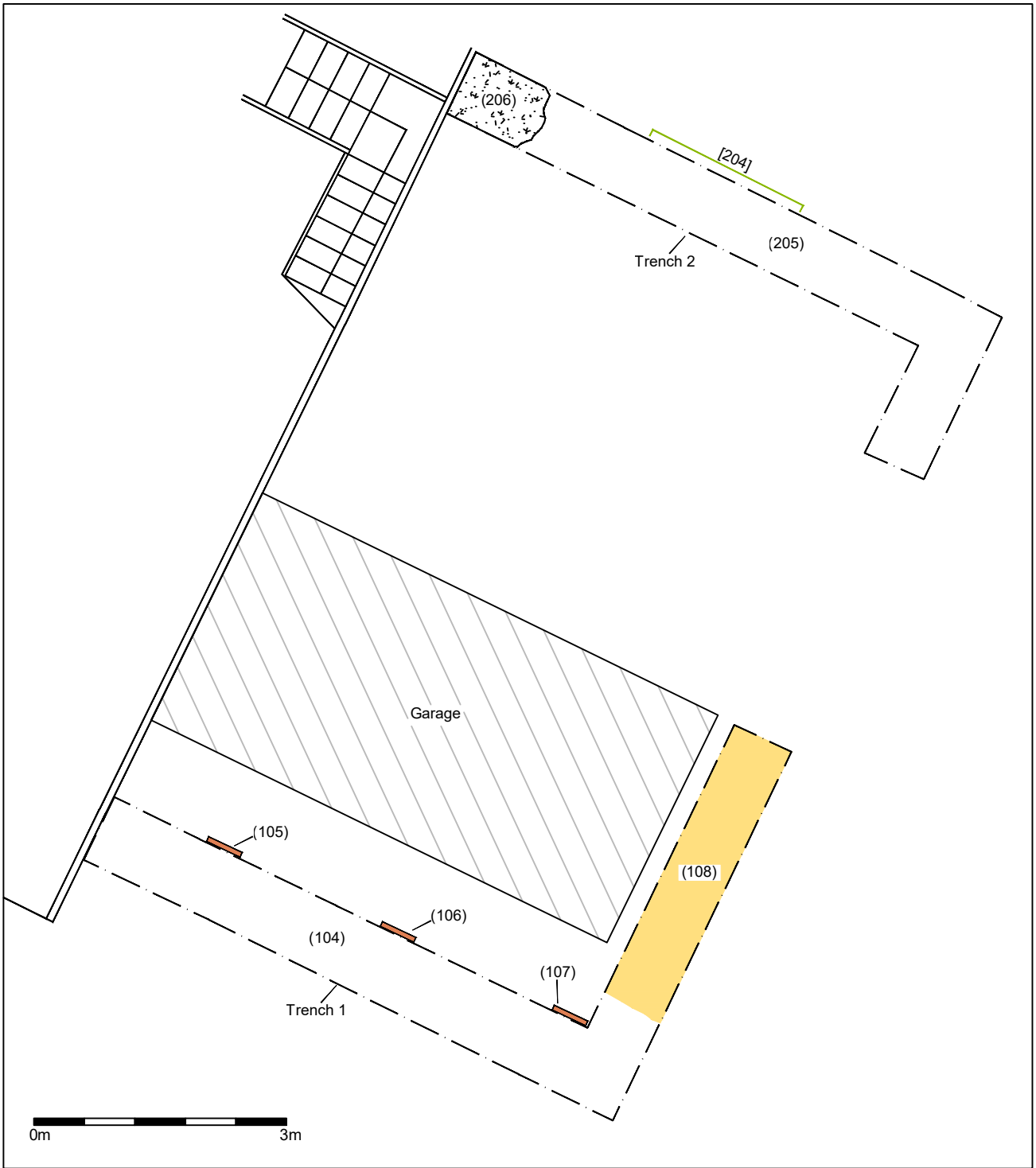


Figure 7. Plan of excavated foundations

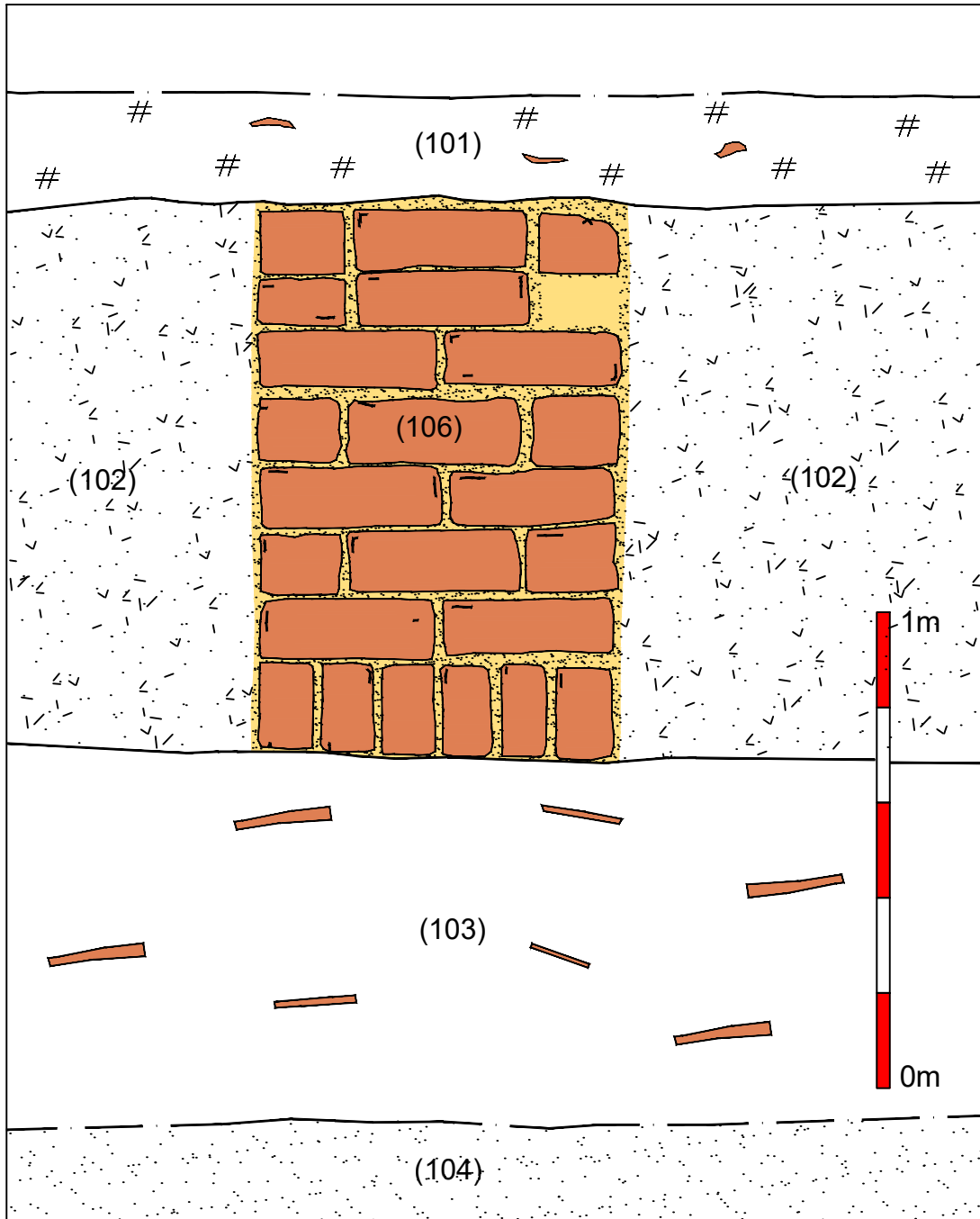


Figure 8. West facing section of brick wall 106

Plates



Plate 1. The site from the south-west



Plate 2. Trench 1 prior to excavation, view north



Plate 3. Wall 105, view north-east, scale 1m

Plate 4. Wall 106, view north-east, scale 1m





Plate 5. Wall 107, view north, scale 1m

Plate 6. Trench 1, view north-west, scale 1m





Plate 7. South-eastern section of Trench 1, view north-east, scales 1m and 0.5m



Plate 8. Trench 2 fully excavated, cut [204] to right of ranging rod, view north, scale 1m

Appendix 1 Context descriptions

Trench 1:

Context	Depth	Description	Interpretation
101	0.0-0.25m	Loose, light brown silt with frequent brick, tile, mortar and concrete fragments	Construction layer for garage wall
102	0.25 – 0.9m	Firm mid brown sandy silt with occasional charcoal flecks, slate and tile	Post-Victorian made ground
103	0.9-1.2m	Firm, brick red silty clay with frequent brick fragments, charcoal, ash, cinders and lenses of clay	Made ground – possibly waste from brick works
104	1.2m+	Compact, light buff clay	Natural alluvial deposit
105	0.3-0.8m	End of brick wall, 0.45m wide and 0.5m high, comprising six rows, alternating two stretchers and one stretcher and two headers. Bonded with lime mortar	Brick wall of former building
106	0.15-0.85m	End of brick wall, 0.45m wide and 0.5m high comprising eight rows, alternating two stretchers and one stretcher and two headers. Lowest row comprising headers on side. Bonded with lime mortar	Brick wall of former building
107	0.4-0.5m	End of brick wall, 0.45m wide and 0.5m high comprising eight rows, alternating two stretchers and one stretcher and two headers. Bonded with lime mortar	Brick wall of former building
108	0.2-0.28m	Hard buff yellow layer of concrete	Possible former floor surface
109	0.28-0.35m	Loose layer of broken tiles	Base of floor surface

Trench 2:

Context	Depth	Description	Interpretation
201	0.0-0.1m	Coarse grey gravel	Imported surface
202	0.1-1.1m	Firm mid-brown sandy silt with occasional charcoal flecks and some brick and tile	Post Victorian made ground (same as 102)
203	0.1-1.1m	Firm blueish-grey sandy silt with frequent rooting and occasional brick and tile	Fill of (204) tree bowl
204	0.1-1.1m	Shallow U-shaped cut visible in both sides of trench. Approximately 2m wide and 1m deep.	Cut of tree bowl
205	1.1m+	Compact light buff clay	Natural substrate
206	1.1m+	Layer of ash and clinker at northern end of trench	Made ground