

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

**MILTON FARM
PEMBRIDGE
LEOMINSTER**

**NGR: SO 33119 260290
Job No: BA1327MFP**



**border
archaeology**
unearth the past...resolve the future



Border Archaeology Limited

Registered in England and Wales

Company Registration Number 07857388

Registered Office: 45 Etnam Street Leominster Herefordshire HR6 8AE

Midlands and North (Head Office): Chapel Walk Burgess Street Leominster Herefordshire HR6 8DE Tel: 01568 610 101

West & South West Bristol Tel: 0117 907 4735 **East** Milton Keynes Tel: 01908 933 765

South & South East Winchester Tel: 01962 832 777

Table of Contents

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
2. INTRODUCTION	3
3. BRIEF HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	4
4. METHODOLOGY	5
5. RESULTS	6
6. CONCLUSIONS	9
7. COPYRIGHT	10
8. BIBLIOGRAPHY	10
9. APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT REGISTER	11

Frontispiece: General view of Trench 1

REPORT SPECIFICATION

Excavation staff: Kath Crooks BA, Will Logan BA Dip, Laura Watson BA

Report: Kath Crooks BA

Artwork: Will Logan BA Dip

Editing: George Children MA MifA

Approved: Neil Shurety Dip. M. GM. Inst.M

1. Executive Summary

This report details the results of a programme of archaeological evaluation undertaken by Border Archaeology at Milton Farm in Pembridge.

The site is located immediately N of the Torvale Industrial Estate, within the floodplain of the River Arrow, a rich multi-period landscape of high archaeological sensitivity, with significant evidence for prehistoric occupation and funerary activity, Romano-British and medieval settlement. It also lies within the former boundaries of Shobdon Airfield, established in 1940 and extended in 1941-2.

During the course of the work five trenches were excavated to the natural gravel. No features of archaeological significance were revealed during the evaluation. It was apparent that the site had been intensively cultivated in the modern period with plough furrows visible in natural silting deposits.

The only finds were two small flint flakes recovered from the natural interface in Trenches 1 and 5. The lack of finds of later date could suggest that the site was cleared following abandonment of the airfield by the RAF following the Second World War.

2. Introduction

Border Archaeology was instructed by Mr Andrew Morris of Milton Farm Pembridge, Leominster, Herefordshire to carry out a programme of archaeological evaluation on the site of a proposed 500kw anaerobic digestion plant for the production of renewable energy incorporating manure and feedstock storage, 1 processing tank, 1 storage tank, 1 buffer tank, a solids separator, a control room, a CHP unit and associated work (NGR: SO 339119 260290).

The proposed site extends to 0.86 hectares, a substantial proportion of which consists of a stone-based hard-standing, the remainder comprising the corner of a field, in continuous arable production. The area of existing hard-standing was specifically excluded from the evaluation area. The site lies at a height of some 96.50m OD.

The aim of the Archaeological Evaluation was to carry establish the character and likely extent of any surviving archaeological features, to recover artefactual and ecofactual evidence and to produce an interpretation of the archaeological potential of the study area.

Site work took place on 14th and 15th October 2013.

Copies of this report will be supplied to Mr Morris and to Julian Cotton Esq, Archaeological Advisor, Herefordshire Council.

2.1 Soils & Geology

The site is located in an area of typical argillic brown earths of the Rowton series (571A) and typical alluvial gley soils of the CONWAY series (811b). The former consist of well-drained fine silty and fine loamy soils, locally over gravel, overlying glacio-fluvial or river terrace gravel and till, while the latter soils are deep stone-less fine silty and clayey soils variably affected by groundwater over river alluvium (SSEW 1983).



Fig.1: Site location plan

3. Brief Historical & Archaeological Background

The site, located immediately N of the Torvale Industrial Estate, is situated within the floodplain of the River Arrow, a rich multi-period landscape of high archaeological sensitivity, with significant evidence for prehistoric occupation and funerary activity, Romano-British and medieval settlement. The site also lies within the former boundaries of Shobdon airfield, established in 1940 and extended in 1941-2.

The earliest evidence for human activity in the immediate vicinity of the study area is represented by a Neolithic axehead found within fields close to Shobdon airfield in 1978, although its precise location is not specified (SMR No. 6234). Excavations at the Leen Farm, Pembridge in 2008 identified evidence for a sub-circular ditched enclosure, possibly a

Neolithic henge monument, located immediately W of the Rowe Ditch (Border Archaeology, 2008).

The site lies, at its closest point approximately 250m E of a barrow cemetery of probable Bronze Age date (SMR No. 52008), which has been described as the best preserved example of its type in Herefordshire (White, 2003a, 16). The most prominent components of this barrow cemetery comprise an alignment of three round barrows extending WSW-ENE within a large field to the S of the Pembridge-Milton Cross road (Brown, 1972, 316; Grinsell, 1993). These three round barrows (SMR Nos. 1027, 1028 & 1029), which were first identified in 1967, are designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The earthworks of a further two barrows have been identified within the same field (SMR Nos. 31116, 38504) with worked flints recovered from the surface of both features.

Other earthwork and cropmark features, presumably of prehistoric origin, have also been identified in the vicinity of the barrows. These include a curvilinear enclosure, approximately 40m in diameter and enclosed by a single ditch which was identified from aerial reconnaissance within the field containing the barrows (SMR No. 43984), while another linear feature, possibly an enclosure boundary has also been identified from aerial reconnaissance within the same field to the S of the barrow cemetery (SMR No. 31836).

Evidence for later Iron Age or Romano-British settlement has also been recorded in the locality of the site, including a sub-rectangular enclosure within the area of Shobdon airfield (SMR No. 4009). Further to the SW, archaeological investigations at the Leen Farm, Pembridge, to the E of the Rowe Ditch have identified evidence of sub-rectangular enclosures and associated pit and ditch features of late Iron Age and Romano-British date (White 2003b; Border Archaeology, 2008).

Located approximately 1km W of the study area are the scheduled remains of Rowe Ditch (SMR No. 356), a N-S aligned earthwork of likely post-Roman date (c.650 AD), consisting of a bank with a ditch on the western side, which straddles the River Arrow in the parishes of Pembridge, Staunton and Shobdon.

Shobdon Aerodrome (SMR12531) started its existence as a British Army camp and provided a reception point for casualties from Dunkirk as it lay beyond the range of long distance German bombers. It was later used as a glider training school. The last military aircraft left Shobdon in November 1945.

4. Methodology

The archaeological programme of work detailed herein was carried out in accordance with recognised sources of professional guidance including *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008), *Standard and Guidance for archaeological excavation* (IfA 2008) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (EH 2006). Border Archaeology adheres to the *IfA Code of conduct* (2012) and *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology* (2008).

Five trenches were excavated using a machine with a toothless bucket, an area comprising approximately 200 sq. m Trenches 1-4 measured 25 × 1.6m with Trench 5 measuring 20 × 1.6m. Excavation continued until natural gravel was encountered. The area of existing hard-standing was excluded from the programme of archaeological work.

Full written and photographic records were made in accordance with Border Archaeology's Field Recording Manual (BA, 2012). The written record comprised detailed stratigraphic recording using a context numbering system. The photographic record was made using a high-resolution (12 MPX) digital camera, comprising photographs of all excavated contexts and archaeological features and structures. Included in each photograph are appropriate scales and all photographic records have been indexed and cross-referenced to written site records. Details concerning subject and direction of view were maintained in a photographic register, indexed by frame number.

All drawings were produced on gridded, archive stable polyester film in accordance with Border Archaeology Field Recording Manual (2012). All drawings were numbered and listed in a drawing register, these drawing numbers being cross-referenced to written site records.

5. Results

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 lay on the NE part of the site and was aligned NW/SE. It was 25m in length and was excavated to a total depth of 0.40m. No layers or features of archaeological significance were identified in Trench 1 with all contexts relating to either cultivation or being naturally derived. While no obvious subsoil was present a layer of mixed topsoil and natural gravel was thought to derive from disturbance of the natural during ploughing.

DESCRIPTION	INTERPRETATION
(101) Loosely compacted mid-reddish sandy silty-clay with moderate gravel and roots; 0.16m deep trench wide	<i>Active plough soil in Trench 1</i>
(102) Mid reddish-brown sandy-silt with frequent pebbles 0.21m deep trench wide. Unworked flint recovered from this deposit	<i>Interface between topsoil and natural</i>
(103) Localised patch of firm pale yellow silt similar to others seen across the site 3m x 1.6m x 0.23m	<i>Truncated natural silting layer</i>
(104) Compact mid-reddish sand/gravel with silt/sand patches	<i>Natural sands and gravels</i>

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was aligned NE/SW and lay to the S of Trench 1; it was also 25m in length. As in Trench 1 there was little evidence for a subsoil, with an interface between topsoil and natural deposits thought to have been caused by mixing of the topsoil and natural gravels during cultivation. The following deposits were present in Trench 2:

DESCRIPTION	INTERPRETATION
(201) Loosely compacted mid brown with reddish hue slightly sandy-silt with moderate gravel and roots 0.16m deep trench wide	<i>Active plough soil in Trench 2</i>
(202) Mid reddish- brown sandy silt with frequent pebbles. 0.25m deep trench wide	<i>Interface between topsoil and natural</i>
(203) Compact mid reddish sand and gravel with pale yellowish silty.	<i>Natural sand and gravel in Trench 2 – same deposit as in Trench 1 and in Trenches 3-5</i>

5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was aligned NW/SE; it ran parallel to Trench 1 and to its W. No archaeological features or deposits were present in Trench 3, with topsoil, a topsoil/natural interface and natural deposits present.

The trench was 25m in length and 1.6m wide.



Plate 1: Trench 3; natural silts continuing beneath gravels to L of frame; view SW

DESCRIPTION	INTERPRETATION
(301) Loosely compacted mid reddish-brown sandy clay-silt with moderate gravel and rooting 0.16m deep trench-wide	<i>Topsoil/ plough soil in Trench 3</i>
(302) Compact light to mid reddish-brown sandy silt with frequent pebbles. 0.16m deep trench-wide	<i>Interface between topsoil and natural</i>
(303) Firm pale yellow silt filling hollows in the natural gravels. <0.52m deep trench-wide	<i>Natural silting in Trench 3</i>
(304) Compact reddish sand/gravel greater than 0.50m deep extending trench-wide	<i>Natural gravels in Trench 3; same deposit as in Trenches 1, 2, 4 & 5</i>

5.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 lay to the W of Trench 2 and ran parallel to it. It was 25m in length and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.40m deep.

DESCRIPTION	INTERPRETATION
(401) Loosely compacted mid brown silty-clay with frequent rounded pebbles, very rare CBM (not retained) & roots; 0.30m deep trench wide	<i>Topsoil/active plough soil in Trench 1</i>
(402) Firm mid yellow brown silty-clay with frequent pebbles and sub-angular stones 0.10m deep trench wide	<i>Subsoil/interface between topsoil and natural</i>
(403) Firm/hard yellow brown gravel with sandy silt patches	<i>Natural riverine gravels as in Trenches 1-3 & Trench 5</i>

5.5 Trench 5

Trench 5 measured 20m in length and was aligned approximately NNE/SSW. It was the westernmost trench to be excavated. Natural gravel was present at a depth of some 0.38m beneath the existing surface with a sondage excavated a further 0.22m into the natural gravels.

DESCRIPTION	INTERPRETATION
(501) Loosely compacted mid brown clayey-silt with frequent rounded pebbles; 0.20m deep trench wide	<i>Topsoil/active plough soil in Trench 1</i>
(502) Mid yellow brown silty-sand with occasional pebbles 0.10m deep trench wide. Small flint flake recovered from this deposit	<i>Subsoil/interface between topsoil and natural</i>
(503) Firm to hard localised patch of firm pale yellow-brown to grey gravel with silt patches, similar to others seen across the site 3m x 1.6m x 0.23m	<i>Natural gravels and sands identical to those in Trenches 1-4</i>



Plate 2: Trench 5; sample section facing SW showing deposits (501), (502) and (503)

6. Conclusions

The site is situated within an area rich in evidence for occupation from the Neolithic period onwards, including Bronze Age funerary activity and Romano-British and medieval settlement. It also lies within the former boundaries of Shobdon airfield, established in 1940 and extended in 1941-2.

During the course of the evaluation it became apparent that the site had been subject to intensive cultivation, including deep ploughing, with plough furrows visible in the surface of the natural silts. There was little evidence for a subsoil; instead an interface consisting of mixed topsoil and natural deposits which had probably been formed by ploughing was identified. It is therefore likely that, had archaeological features or deposits been present, they would have been damaged by cultivation.

However, it was very noticeable that few finds were present in the plough soil. With the exception of two small unworked flints, both recovered from the subsoil/interface layer in Trenches 1 and 5 only a very small amount of 20th century pottery and ceramic building material were seen on the site. The lack of residual finds in the plough soil, including those of earlier post-medieval date, could imply deliberately clearance in the recent past. As the site was formerly part of Shobdon airfield it is possible that this may have taken place following the abandonment of the airfield by the RAF following the Second World War.

7. Copyright

Border Archaeology shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs & Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the client for the use of the report by the client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Specification.

8. Bibliography

IfA, 2008, *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials*

Herefordshire Archaeology Sites and Monuments Record: SMR Printout

Herefordshire Council, 2004, *Standards for Archaeological Projects in Herefordshire* (Issue 1)

IfA, 2008, *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*

IfA, 2008, *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology*

IfA, 2008, *Draft Standard and Guidance for the creation, preparation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*

IfA, 2010, *Code of Conduct*

IfA, 2011, *Standard and Guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment*

Border Archaeology (2012),

Paine, C. (ed.), 1992, *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections*, London: Museum and Galleries Commission

SSEW, 1983, *Soil Map of England and Wales Scale 1:250,000*, Silsoe

Walker, K., 1990, *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage*, UKIC

Watkinson, D. & Neal, V., 2001, *First Aid for Finds*, London

9. Appendix 1: Context Register

CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION
(101)	Loosely compacted mid-reddish sandy silty-clay with moderate gravel and roots; 0.16m deep trench wide. Above (102)
<i>Interpretation:</i>	<i>Topsoil- plough soil in Trench 1</i>
(102)	Mid reddish-brown sandy-silt with frequent pebbles 0.21m deep trench wide. Unworked flint recovered from this deposit. Underlies topsoil (102), overlies natural (103) (104).
<i>Interpretation:</i>	<i>Subsoil or topsoil/natural interface, mixed by ploughing</i>
(103)	Localised patch of firm pale yellow silt 3m x >1.6m x 0.23m. Below (102).
<i>Interpretation:</i>	<i>Localised patch of yellow silt – part of (104) natural</i>
(104)	Compact mid-reddish sand/gravel with silt/sand patches. Trench wide. Includes silt patch (103)
<i>Interpretation:</i>	<i>Natural in Trench 1; same as in Trenches 2-5</i>
(201)	Loosely compacted mid brown with reddish hue slightly sandy-silt with moderate gravel and roots 0.16m deep trench wide. Above (202)
<i>Interpretation:</i>	<i>Topsoil in Trench 2</i>
(202)	Mid reddish- brown sandy silt with frequent pebbles. 0.25m deep trench wide Underlies topsoil (202) overlies natural (203).
<i>Interpretation:</i>	<i>Subsoil or natural/topsoil interface</i>
(203)	Compact mid reddish sand and gravel with pale yellowish silty areas in hollows. Underlies (202)
<i>Interpretation:</i>	<i>Natural in Trench 2; same deposit as in Trench 1 and Trenches 3-5</i>
(301)	Loosely compact mid reddish-brown sandy clay-silt with moderate gravel and rooting 0.16m deep trench-wide. Above (302)
<i>Interpretation:</i>	<i>Topsoil/plough soil in Trench 3</i>
(302)	Compact light to mid reddish-brown sandy silt with frequent pebbles. 0.16m deep trench-wide. Below (301), above (303) and (304).
<i>Interpretation:</i>	<i>Interface/subsoil in Trench 3; caused by cultivation</i>
(303)	Firm pale yellow silt filling hollows in the natural gravels. <0.52m deep trench-wide. Underlies (302) Overlies (304).
<i>Interpretation:</i>	<i>Geological variation</i>
(304)	Compact reddish sand/gravel greater than 0.50m deep extending trench-wide >0.50m deep. Underlies (303)
<i>Interpretation:</i>	<i>Natural in Trench 3; same deposit as in Trenches 1-2 and 4-5</i>
(401)	Loosely compacted mid brown silty-clay with frequent rounded pebbles, very rare CBM (not retained) & roots; 0.30m deep trench wide. Above (402)
<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Topsoil/plough soil in Trench 4</i>
(402)	Firm mid yellow brown silty-clay with frequent pebbles and sub-angular stones 0.10m deep trench wide. Below (401) above (403)
<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Interface/subsoil in Trench 4; caused by cultivation</i>
(403)	Firm/hard yellow brown gravel with sandy silt patches

<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Natural gravels in Trench 4; same deposit as in Trenches 1-3 and Trench 5</i>
(501)	Loosely compacted mid brown clayey-silt with frequent rounded pebbles; 0.20m deep trench wide. Above (502)
<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Topsoil/plough soil in Trench 5</i>
(502)	Mid yellow brown silty-sand with occasional pebbles 0.10m deep trench wide. Small flint flake recovered from this deposit. Below (501), above (503)
<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Topsoil/natural interface or subsoil; caused by cultivation</i>
(503)	Firm to hard localised patch of firm pale yellow-brown to grey gravel with silt patches. Below (502)
<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Natural in Trench 5; same deposit as in Trenches 1-4</i>