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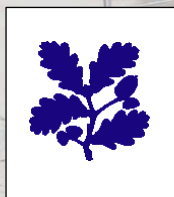
## Archaeological Observation

**National Trust**

Attingham Park Shrewsbury SY4 4TP

Area 3 (Car Parking)

October 2014



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*Cover: View northeast of woodland bordering the car park at Attingham Park*

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## 1 Executive summary

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*Border archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological observation (watching brief) relating to car park improvements at Attingham Park Shrewsbury, comprising the creation of a road and hard-standing parking spaces and the implementation of a drainage design.*

*Observation was carried out on July 9<sup>th</sup> 2014 and on August 19<sup>th</sup> 2014. The ground works comprised the excavation of two long trenches and 12 herringbone trenches which were dug simultaneously. Plastic drainage pipes and associated terram were inserted in the trenches as soon as they were dug and immediately backfilled with pea gravel.*

*A further trench was excavated through the woodland margin to the east of the car park to connect with an existing pond. Again, a plastic drainage pipe and associated terram were inserted in the trenches backfilled with pea gravel.*

*None of the trenches revealed any significant archaeological features or deposits. Modern disturbance in the form of tarmac sub base deposits and associated terram were found across the car park area. A quantity of ceramic drain fragments of modern date was recovered from the topsoil in this area; however no evidence for cut features associated with these modern drains was visible within the trenching. No other finds were recovered from this area.*

*The storm drain trench extending east from the car park towards an existing pond was similarly devoid of archaeological features and deposits, consisting of natural soils overlain by topsoil and modern made-ground deposits.*

*It is thus confirmed that no archaeological structures, features or deposits were affected by the ground works.*

## 2 Introduction

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Border Archaeology (BA) was instructed by Janine Young Archaeology Consultant National Trust Attingham Park Shrewsbury SY4 4TP to carry out Archaeological Observation (Watching Brief) of car park improvements at Attingham Park, comprising the creation of a road and hard-standing parking spaces and the implementation of a drainage design (NGR: SJ 54740 09940) (*fig. 1*).

The Trust required a watching brief on all intrusive ground-works excluding area previously subject to geophysics and watching brief, as detailed in Fig. 1 of the *Brief for an archaeological watching brief* issued to Border Archaeology by Janine Young on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2014.

Copies of this report will be submitted to Janine Young and to Andy Wigley Historic Environment Manager Shropshire Council.

## 3 Aims

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- To determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits or remains
- To fully record the character, date, location and preservation of any archaeological remains on the site
- The results include a comment on the quality and significance of the remains.

## 4 Site description

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### 4.1 Site location

Attingham Park lies to the NE of the village of Atcham, on the B4380 Shrewsbury to Wellington road. The site is centred at NGR: SJ 54740 09940. The existing car park extends over an area of some 1.5ha and comprises a rectangular enclosure located W and NW of the stables. The car park is bounded on the E by the woodland edge parallel to the Mile Walk, to the N by the Robinia walk and Garden Plantation woodland and to the W by a recent hedged field boundary.

### 4.2 Geology

The soils in the vicinity of Attingham Park are predominantly typical stagnogleys of the SALOP series (711m), composed of slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged reddish fine loamy over clayey, fine loamy and clayey associated with fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable sub-soils & slight seasonal waterlogging. The underlying geology comprises reddish till (SSEW 1983).

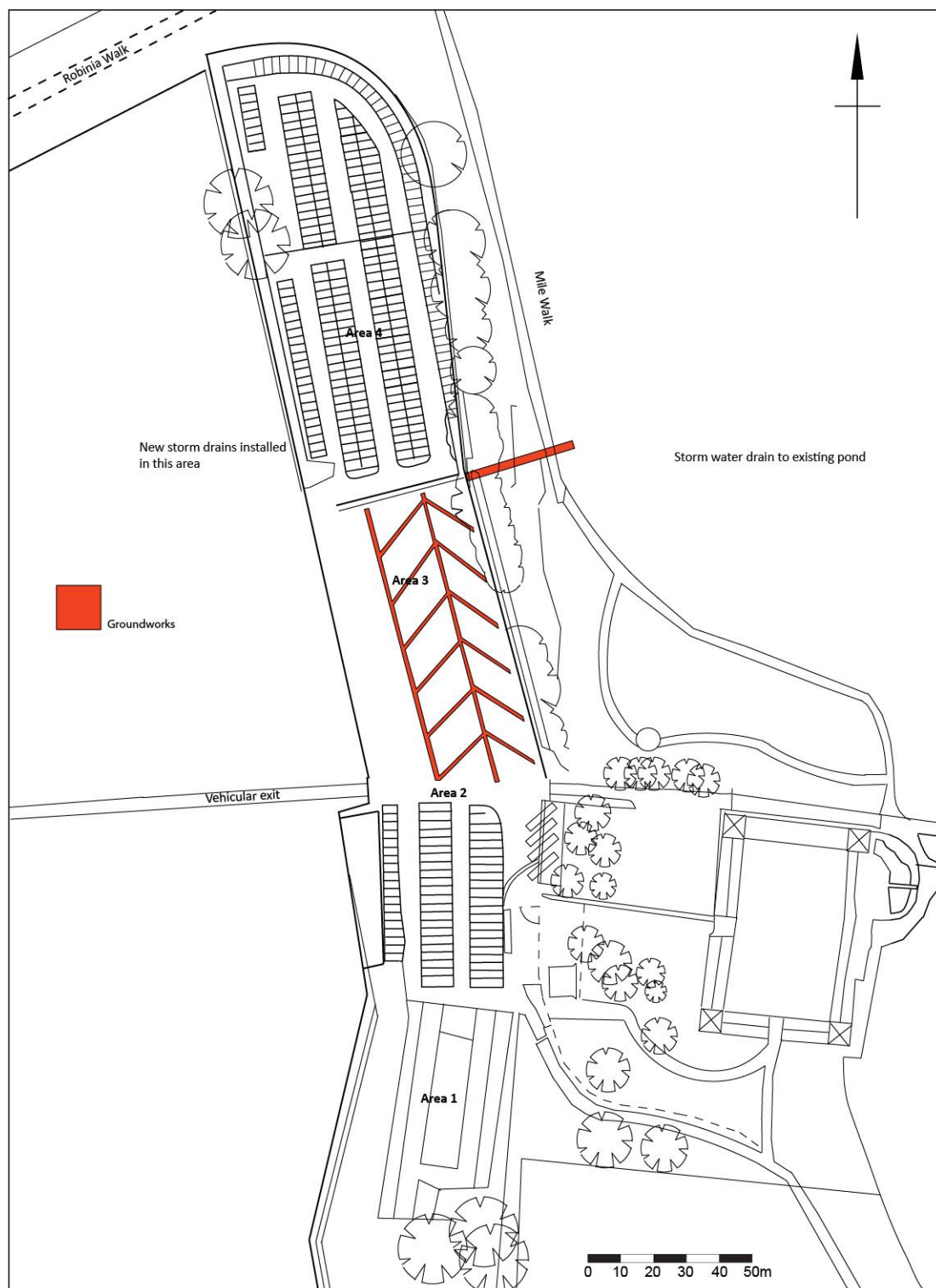


Fig. 1: Plan showing location of ground works (based on plan supplied to BA by the National Trust)



## 5 Brief Historical & Archaeological Background

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Attingham Hall (SJ 550 099) (EH Ref: 70131) at its centre is a substantial Grade I Listed late 18<sup>th</sup> -century country house, largely of grey Grinshill sandstone ashlar, with some red brick at rear. The house was built in 1783-5 by George Steuart for the first Lord Berwick and comprises a large central three-story block beneath a hipped slate roof with basement and central portico supported on four Ionic pillars rising through all storeys. Steuart was also responsible for the Grade II\* Listed Stables at Attingham Park (NGR: SJ 5480 0999) (EH Ref: 1410335) built c. 1785 in red brick with grey Grinshill sandstone ashlar dressings and facing to S.

The late 18<sup>th</sup> -century landscape park (NGR: SJ 555 100) (EH Ref: 70474) is a Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden incorporating a possible medieval and later deer park which extends over some 600 acres and is enclosed by fencing, walls and paling. Woodland is present to the N of the park, with tree-belts and screens along the S, E and W boundaries. The park was improved by Thomas Leggett c. 1770 and in 1798 Humphry Repton was commissioned to implement further improvements. The pleasure grounds were improved by John Burkenshaw in 1754-5.

Formal gardens were established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the S of the house but these were removed in 1976. Other features include the Mile Walk, which extends N from the house to the River Tern and back, passing by the walled kitchen garden. A nut walk is also located near the walled kitchen garden. The gardens include a wild garden and formal garden designed by Brenda Colvin in 1929.

Located roughly 150m N of Attingham Home Farm are the scheduled earthworks and buried remains of a medieval moated site and two associated fishponds (NGR: SJ 54373 10251) (SAM 1020281) (Everson & Stamper 1987). The importance of the moated site is enhanced by its association with the settlement of Berwick Maviston (NGR: SJ 5446 1014) (EH Ref: 70606), the earthworks of which lie some 100m to the W of the current car park. The site is not included in the scheduling but presumably represents part of the estate mentioned in Domesday, although the earliest known documentary reference to the settlement is dated 1327, when 11 inhabitants were assessed for lay subsidy. The settlement of Berwick Maviston is marked on Rocque's 1752 map of Shropshire and the plan of 1790 mentioned above shows the extent of the settlement as it existed at that time, when it comprised several houses and ancillary buildings. These were demolished about 1800, prior to the enlargement of the park, and the settlement is not shown on Baugh's later map of 1808. The area forming the northern half of the settlement was subsequently developed as Home Farm, the farmhouse being the only remaining upstanding structure from the 18<sup>th</sup> -century settlement. The earthworks were recorded by RCHME in September 1984 and were found to comprise a series of faint scoops, platforms and hollow ways exhibiting no coherent layout. However, use of this area by the military during the Second World War has obscured much of the detail. The remains of broad ridge and furrow are recorded some 300m to the S of the settlement.

Evidence of an Iron Age/Romano-British sub-rectangular single-ditched enclosure and field system has been identified to the NW of the study area (NGR: SJ 544 103) (EH Ref: 70591). The enclosure measures about 40m E-W × 48m with an entrance to the S. An associated field system to the SW extends over an area of some 200m × 170m and comprises fragmentary straight and curving intersecting, linear single-ditch crop-marks, the fields

being of varying sizes but small. Field investigations carried out in 1980 found no traces of these remains on the ground.

## 5.1 Site specific

Documentary and other sources including geophysical survey and a low-level watching brief as part of works carried out in 2003 have provided reasonably detailed information on the archaeological potential of the car park area and suggested a fairly strong possibility of encountering surviving archaeological remains during the course of the ground works.

The geophysics revealed no evidence of a possible earlier drive to the stables, shown on a 1775 drawing, and, whilst observation did identify a drive, this was of very ephemeral construction. Several small ditches and evidence for a large sand or gravel pit were also recorded.

A network of public roads that survived until the expansion and reorganisation of Attingham Park in the late 18<sup>th</sup> -and early 19<sup>th</sup> -century remain visible in the fields to the W of the specific study area. A park pale originally forming the W boundary of the Tern Hall park - with Berwick Maviston beyond - also survives some 125m to the W of the site.

The remains of a dry pale ditch probably dating to Leggett's improvements of c. 1770 lie on the eastern side of the northern area of the site but none of these ditches extends into the site area.

An RAF plan of Atcham Airfield dated 1945 provides a clear indication of the extent and nature of wartime occupation of the area around the stables. The geophysical survey carried out in 2003 showed that very few traces survive, with most structures and ancillary works having been dismantled and removed. Demolition debris was observed to spread only a short distance from the structures identified on the 1945 plan.

## 6 Scheme of works

The archaeological watching brief within the area specified will be carried out in accordance with *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008 updated 22-Nov-13). Border Archaeology adheres to the *IfA Code of conduct* (2013 updated 20-Mar-14) and *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology* (2008 updated 20-Mar-14).

The Institute for Archaeologists states (2008, 2) that the purpose of a watching brief is:

- 1) 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;
- 2) 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

Excavation was undertaken by machine with a toothless bucket.

## 6.1 Recording

A full written and photographic record was made in accordance with Border Archaeology's *Archaeological Field Recording Manual* (2014). Records include:

- A completed pro-forma context record sheet for each stratigraphic unit
- A plan showing the location of the groundworks
- A digital photographic record of all stratigraphic units.

## 6.2 Recovery of finds

No artefacts or other finds were recovered during the course of the ground works excavations.

## 6.3 Palaeoenvironmental/palaeoeconomic sampling

No deposits suitable for the extraction of samples for environmental processing were revealed.

## 7 Results

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Archaeological observation was carried out on drainage trenching within an area of hard-standing used as a car parking area immediately N of the main E-W leading to the mansion at Attingham Park (denoted as Area 3). The ground works comprised the excavation of two long trenches and 12 herringbone trenches which were dug simultaneously. Plastic drainage pipes and associated terram were inserted in the trenches as soon as they were dug and immediately backfilled with pea gravel.

### 7.1 Trenches 1 & 2

Two long parallel trenches (Trenches 1 & 2) oriented NNW-SSE were excavated within Area 3. Trench 1 measured 90m long by 0.40m wide and 0.35m deep and Trench 2 measured 86m long by 0.40m wide by 0.35m deep. The stratigraphy within both trenches was identical and may be summarised as follows:



*Plate 1: View looking SSE showing Trench 1*

Within the first 4m from the NNW end of the trench, the stratigraphy consisted of (101=201), a friable mid-brown silty clay topsoil with occasional small to medium rounded and sub-angular stones, occasional charcoal and CBM flecking, 0.10m thick, which in turn overlaid (102=202) a moderately dark reddish brown silty clay topsoil with small to medium rounded stones and occasional charcoal flecking, extending to a depth of 0.25m (max). Crossing both trenches was the near vertical cut [107=207] for a modern linear metallised trackway with a sharp break of slope at the top and a flat base (Plate 2), extending ENE-WSW between Trenches 1 and 2 and measuring approximately 17m long, 6.5m wide and 0.30m deep. It was filled by (103=203) a friable light orange brown sand with occasional small stones, 0.10m thick, which overlaid (104), a moderate to well compacted blackish grey tarmac deposit with terram fragments 0.20m deep, underlying which was subsoil deposit (102=202), 0.05m thick.



*Plate 2: View looking ENE showing trackway feature [207] within WSW facing section of Trench 2*

To the S of the trackway feature, the stratigraphy with both trenches consisted of a friable mid-greyish brown silty clay topsoil (105=205) with frequent small stones, occasional CBM and charcoal flecking and moderate root action (slightly more frequent in Trench 1), 0.10m deep, underlying which was (106=206), a moderately compacted dark reddish brown silty clay, 0.25m thick (max) with moderate quantities of modern red ceramic drain pipe fragments and small to medium angular stone inclusions, decreasing towards the base of the deposit.

## 7.2 Trenches 3-14 (Herringbone trenches)

In addition, 12 shorter trenches in herringbone layout were excavated to the E and W of Trench 1, measuring approximately 18m by 0.30m wide by 0.20m deep. Trenches 3 to 8 were oriented NW-SE while Trenches 9 to 14 were oriented NE-SW.

The stratigraphy within Trenches 3-8 consisted of a friable mid-greyish brown silty clay topsoil (301=401=501=601=701=801) with frequent small angular and sub-angular stones, occasional CBM, moderate root action and charcoal flecking, 0.10m thick, which overlaid a moderately compacted dark reddish brown silty clay (302=402=502=602=702=802) with frequent small to medium angular stones and occasional ceramic drain fragments and terram, 0.10m thick.





*Plate 3: View looking NW showing Trench 3 bisected by modern linear metal trackway feature oriented NNW-SSE*

Within each of these trenches, a modern linear metal trackway feature (recorded as [303]=[403]=[503] [603]=[703]=[803]) was observed running on a NNW-SSE alignment across Area 3 (*Plate 3*). The trackway was visible in section as a near vertical cut with a sharp break of slope at the top, its visible dimensions measured 5m wide (ENE-WSW) by 0.20m deep and it was filled by a friable light orange brown sand (304=404=504=604=704=804) 0.10m deep which in turn overlaid a moderate to well compacted blackish grey tarmac and gravel deposit (305=405=505=605=705=805) again 0.10m deep.

The stratigraphy within Trenches 9-14 comprised a friable mid-greyish brown silty clay topsoil (901=1001=1101=1201=1301=1401) with frequent small angular and sub-angular stones, occasional CBM, occasional root action and charcoal flecking, 0.10m thick, which overlaid a moderately compacted dark reddish brown silty clay (902=1002=1102=1202=1302=1402) containing frequent small to medium angular stones and occasional fragments of modern red ceramic drain and terram, 0.10m thick. Trench 9 was bisected by the ENE-WSW aligned track-way [107=207] extending between Trenches 1 and 2; no other features were observed within the remaining trenches.

No significant archaeology was present in any of the trenches. There was substantial evidence of disturbance by modern metal road surfaces (as evidenced by the presence of tarmac sub base deposits and associated terram) extending across the site. A quantity of ceramic drain fragments of modern date was recovered from the topsoil, it is likely these relate to drains formerly present within the site; however no evidence for cut features associated with these modern drains was visible within the trenching. No other finds were recovered from this area of the site.

### 7.3 Trenching extending E through woodland

A storm water drainage trench extending E-W was excavated by machine from the eastern edge of the car park through woodland and across 'Mile Walk' and the adjacent pasture field to an existing pond (*Plates 4-6; fig. 1*). The trench measured 0.50m wide and was excavated to a depth of approximately 0.20m.

The section of trenching extending from the car park at NGR: SJ54728 10156 to NGR: SJ54703 10157 revealed two contexts. The uppermost of these (301) was a friable mid greyish-brown silty clay, with frequent small sub-rounded and sub-angular stones. Beneath this was (302), a friable mid brown clayey silt, containing very occasional sub-rounded stones (*Plate 4*).



*Plate 4: View N of trenching adjacent to car park*

Between NGR SJ54703 10157 and NGR: SJ54756 10167, the uppermost deposit was (303), a rubble deposit within a friable dark brown silty clay extending E from the gateway into the woodland consisting of moderate to large angular stones, with occasional fragmentary unfrosted brick and frequent medium angular and small sub-angular stones. This overlay a continuation of context (302) (*Plate 5*).





*Plate 5: View NE showing rubble deposit in gateway*



*Plate 6: View E showing continuation of trenching*



From NGR: SJ54756 10167, the upper deposit consisted of friable dark greyish-brown silty clay, which was similar in composition to (301) but markedly less stony (*Plate 6*).

The trenching revealed no archaeological features or deposits.

## 8 Summary & conclusion

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Drainage trenching was observed both within the car park area and to the E, where ground works extended through an area of woodland and across 'Mile Walk' into the adjacent pasture field where it connected with an existing pond.

No significant archaeology was present in any of the trenches excavated within the car park area. Substantial evidence of disturbance by modern metalled road surfaces was noted across the site. A quantity of ceramic drain fragments of modern date was recovered from the topsoil, these probably relating to drains formerly present within the site. No evidence for cut features associated with these modern drains was visible and no other finds were recovered from this area of the site.

The storm drain trench extending E from the car park towards an existing pond was similarly devoid of archaeological features and deposits, consisting of natural soils overlain by topsoil and modern made-ground deposits.

It is thus confirmed that no archaeological structures, features or deposits were affected by the ground works.

## 9 Copyright

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