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Archaeological Observation

For

Amey plc

On behalf of

Severn Trent Water

Concerning

**Water Main Renewal
(Attingham Park A6W11322 –
01715)**

**Attingham Park
Atcham
Shropshire**

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1 Non-Technical Summary

Border Archaeology Ltd (BA) was instructed by Amey plc on behalf of Severn Trent Water to carry out Archaeological Observation (AO) of groundworks comprising drill pits and trenching to accommodate approximately 800m of 90mm waterpipe at the National Trust property of Attingham Park Shropshire (NGR: SJ 56123 10080 to NGR: SJ 56698 09675) (fig. 1). The area potentially contains evidence of multi-period activity.

Three trenches and eight drill pits were opened across two fields to connect the pipework to an existing water main at the northwest extent of Norton Drive. The length of the drill pits varied according to specific engineering requirements.

Trench 1 and Drill Pit 1 were opened in an area at the southeast entrance to Norton Drive identified as containing remains relating to a Romano-British temple site (MNA184450). However, no evidence of Romano-British activity was encountered in this area during the groundworks, this being due potentially to disturbance resulting from previous utility works.

The pipeline route also passed in very close proximity to two sites associated with the former RAF Atcham, which was opened in 1941 for RAF Fighter Command. However, apart from deposits of demolition material identified in Trench 2 and Trench 3, no evidence was revealed of these sites, namely, Atcham WWII Airfield "dispersed site No 4" (MNA142503) (NGR SJ 561 099), comprising foundation platforms formerly supporting pre-fabricated temporary buildings, and "dispersed site No. 11" (MNA143006) (NGR SJ 564 098), a now-demolished accommodation site.

No other archaeological finds or deposits were encountered during the course of the groundworks.

2 Introduction

Border Archaeology Ltd (BA) was instructed by Amey plc on behalf of Severn Trent Water to carry out Archaeological Observation (AO) of trenching and drill-pit excavations for the installation of approximately 800m of 90mm waterpipe at the National Trust property of Attingham Park (Ref. Attingham Park A6W11322–01715) near Atcham Shropshire (NGR: SJ 56123 10080 to NGR: SJ 56698 09675) (*fig. 1*).

Three trenches and eight drill pits were opened across two fields (Field 1 and Field 2) to connect the pipework to an existing water main at the NW extent of Norton Drive (*fig. 2*). The work was carried out during February and March 2017.



Fig. 1: Location of groundworks

2.1 Site Description

Attingham Park is designated Grade II* in the *National Heritage List for England (NHLE)* (Historic England List Entry No. 1001114) and extends over an area of approximately 270ha. The park lies N of the River Severn and NE of the village of Atcham. The Roman town of Wroxeter and Watling Street lie to the S.

The pipeline route falls from approximately 56m AOD at its SE extent to 53m AOD to the NW. However, the topography is generally flat and underlain in parts by ridge-and-furrow cultivation features, these in turn overlying earlier cropmark features. Mature parkland trees are present in smaller stocks, with plantation belts along the S and W boundaries. The area is currently undeveloped grassland and arable.

2.1.1 Soils and Geology

The pipeline route traverses an area of typical brown earths of the WICK 1 series (541r). These consist of deep well-drained coarse loamy and sandy soils over river terrace drift (SSEW 1983).

3 Historical and Archaeological Background

A complex of intersecting features, including ditches, gullies and pits, was revealed at the E end of Norton Drive close to its junction with the B4394 (NGR: SJ 5665 0968) during strip, map and record excavation along the proposed route of the Shelton Resilience Scheme water pipeline between 2013 and 2014 (Wessex Archaeology 2014). The complex appeared to be focused on a sub-rectangular structure sited at 56.8m AOD comprising four ditches enclosing an area 4.7m × 4.5m; two ditch terminals suggested an entrance on the eastern side. The structure was interpreted as the site of a possible Romano-British temple (MNA184450) (*fig. 2*). The remains of seven cremation burials (MNA184451) were also revealed nearby (NGR: SJ 5684 0963) on the opposite side of the B4394.

Cropmarks relating to trackways and a field system of a prehistoric or early Romano-British date (MNA142113) have been identified in the fields N and S of Norton Drive. The trackways are considered likely to be associated with a 35-acre Roman marching camp (MNA141926) (NGR: SJ 5624 0953) visible as cropmarks on both sides of the B5061.

Extensive cropmarks indicative of medieval ridge-and-furrow cultivation (MNA142044) are visible at Norton Farm. These have been impacted by post-War cultivation activity.

RAF Atcham was opened in 1941 for RAF Fighter Command but was subsequently transferred to the United States Army Air Forces Eighth Air Force. Accommodation comprised seven barrack huts, three officers' quarters and three sergeants' quarters, together with six latrine blocks, an ablution building, a picket post and two concrete air-raid shelters. The site was demolished and returned to farmland by 1972. Two associated sites, namely, Atcham WWII Airfield "dispersed site No 4" (MNA142503) and "dispersed site No 11" (MNA143006) are located within the groundworks area at NGR: SJ 561 099 (Field 2) and NGR: SJ 564 098 (Field 1), respectively (*fig. 2*).

In terms of site-specific archaeological potential, it was considered likely that groundworks at the SE extent of the pipeline would encounter evidence of the previously recorded Romano-British temple site, in addition to potentially earlier features, the presence of which has been identified from cropmarks. The fields were also presumed to contain foundation platforms for now-demolished pre-fabricated temporary buildings ("dispersed site No 4") and possible remains of a now-demolished accommodation site ("dispersed site No 11").

4 Methodology

The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Amey 2017) and with guidance set out in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (MoRPHE) (Lee 2014). BA adheres to the professional and ethical standards set by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) in *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (2014), *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (2014) and in the *CIfA Code of Conduct* (2014).

Three trenches and eight drill pits of varying size were opened under Archaeological Observation. Excavations were undertaken by machine and toothless bucket. Trench and drill-pit lengths varied according to specific engineering requirements.

Written and photographic records were made in accordance with BA's *Field Recording Manual* (2017). The written record comprised numbered *pro-forma* context sheets. The photographic record comprised high-resolution digital photographs cross-referenced to the written record, with details of subject and direction of view recorded in a photographic register, indexed by frame number.

No artefacts were recovered during the course of the work and no deposits suitable for palaeoenvironmental sampling were encountered.

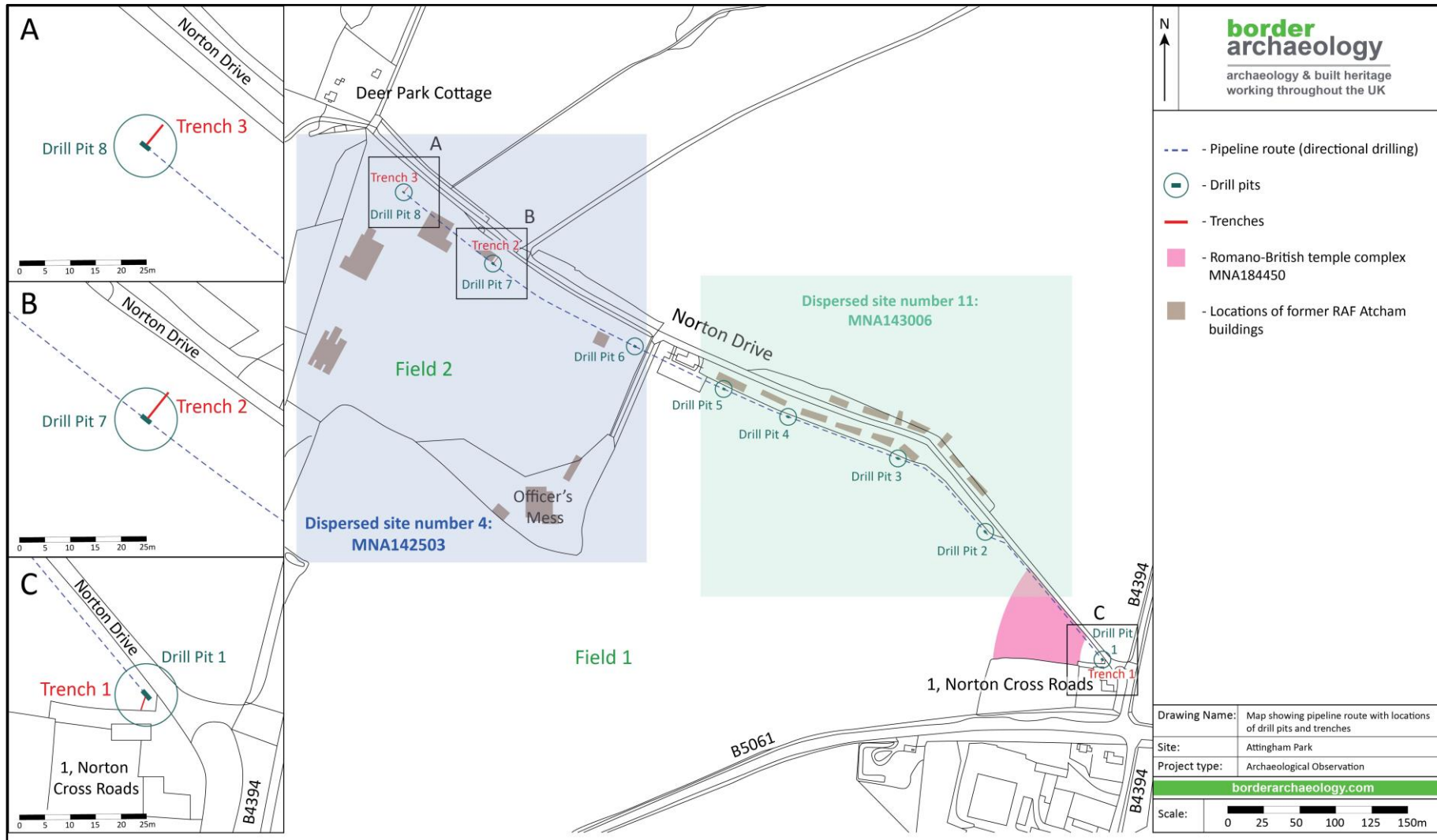


Fig. 2:
Location of
pipeline

5 Results

5.1 Field 1: Trench 1 (Adjacent to No.1 Norton Cross Roads)

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	101		Deposit	Topsoil	Loose mid-brown organic silty clay; 0.08m thickness. Overlying (102).	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	102		Deposit	Subsoil	Moderately compacted mid-greyish-brown silty clay; occasional plastic & modern brick & metal waste; 0.8-0.9m thickness. Underlying (101).	-	-	-	-	-	Mixed deposit of subsoil & natural.

5.2 Field 1: Drill Pits 1 to 5

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	201		Deposit	Topsoil	Moderately compacted dark brown silty clay; occasional small rounded stones; 0.25-0.3m thickness. Overlying (202).	-	-	-	-	-	Ploughed field-frequent small rounded stones on surface.
2	202		Deposit	Natural	Firm mid-reddish-brown clayey silt; occasional small-medium angular stones; >0.5-0.6m thickness. Underlying (201).	-	-	-	-	-	-

One trench (Trench 1) and five drill pits (Drill Pits 1 to 5) were excavated within Field 1 (*fig. 2*). Modern disused services and land drains lay within the route of the pipeline, suggesting extensive previous ground disturbance. The drill-pit and trench sections showed little variation.

Trench 1 (*Plate 1*) (SJ 56698 09681) measured 3m × 0.25m × 0.9m and ran NW/SE adjacent to Drill Pit 1 (*fig. 2*). The trench cut through the eastern extent of the previously excavated Romano-British temple complex (MNA184450). However, this revealed modern disturbance, with no features or deposits of archaeological significance present within either the trench or the drill pit.

The pipeline also ran adjacent to Atcham WWII Airfield "dispersed site No 11" (MNA143006) (NGR: SJ 564 098) (*fig. 2*) but no associated remains were revealed within the dill pits in this area.



Plate 1: NE-facing section of Trench 1 showing modern ground disturbance containing brick, metal and plastic.



Plate 2: View W of Drill Pit 3 in Field 1.

5.3 Field 2: Trench 2 (Adjacent to Drill Pit 7)

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	401		Deposit	Topsoil	Soft mid-brown organic sandy clay; occasional small rounded stones & modern brick; 0.26-0.3m thickness. Overlying (402).	-	-	-	-	-	Ploughed field with some demolition visible
2	402		Deposit	Subsoil	Moderately compacted mid-brown sandy clay; frequent modern brick; 0.16–0.2m thickness. Overlying (403). Underlying (401).	-	-	-	-	-	Demolition material present.
3	402		Deposit	Natural	Firm mid-reddish brown clayey sand; occasional medium stones; >0.5m thickness Underlying (402).	-	-	-	-	-	-

5.4 Field 2: Trench 3 (Adjacent to Drill Pit 8)

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	501		Deposit	Topsoil	Soft mid-brown organic sandy clay; occasional small rounded stones & modern brick; 0.26-0.3m thickness. Overlying (502).	-	-	-	-	-	Ploughed field with some demolition visible
2	502		Deposit	Subsoil	Moderately compacted mid-brown sandy clay; occasional modern brick, concrete; 0.16–0.2m thickness. Overlying (503). Underlying (501).	-	-	-	-	-	Demolition material present.

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
3	503		Deposit	Natural	Firm mid-reddish brown clayey sand; occasional medium stones; >0.5m thickness Underlying (502).	-	-	-	-	-	-

5.5 Field 2: Drill Pits 6 to 8

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	301	-	Deposit	Topsoil	Soft mid-brown organic sandy clay; occasional small rounded stones; 0.26-0.3m thickness. Overlying (302).	-	-	-	-	-	Evidence of deep ploughing.
2	302	-	Deposit	Subsoil	Moderately compacted mid-orange-brown sandy clay; occasional small rounded stones; 0.16–0.2m thickness. Underlying (301). Overlying (303).	-	-	-	-	-	Small lens of blackened soil above (302).
3	303	-	Deposit	Natural	Firm mid-reddish-brown clayey sand; occasional small rounded stones; >0.5m thickness. Underlying (302).	-	-	-	-	-	-

Two trenches (Trench 2 and Trench 3) and three drill pits (Drill Pits 6 to 8) to were opened in Field 2 (*fig. 2*). Trench 2 (NGR: SJ 56197 10022) measured 7m × 0.45m × 0.9m and ran NW/SE adjacent to Drill Pit 7 (*fig. 2*). The trench revealed disused services, with building rubble within the sections.

Trench 3 (SJ 56137 10074) measured 5m × 0.45m × 0.85m and ran NW/SE adjacent to Drill Pit 8 (*fig. 2*). This trench also revealed disused services (*Plate 6*) and evidence of building rubble.

Both trenches thus contained evidence of localised demolition activity within the sections (*Plates 4 & 5*) and areas of demolition were also evident above-ground along the NW boundary of Field 2 (*Plate 3*). This demolition material probably derived from the removal of buildings associated with Atcham WWII Airfield "dispersed site No 4" (MNA142503) (NGR: SJ 561 099) (*fig. 2*). No evidence of demolition deposits was present within the drill pits.

No further features or deposits of archaeological significance were identified.



Plate 3: View N of building rubble clearly visible above-ground within NW boundary of Field 2.



Plate 4: View NW of Trench 2 showing brick and concrete within spoil and trench section.



Plate 5: View N of Trench 2 showing brick and concrete inclusions within subsoil (402).



Plate 6: View of Trench 3 showing disused waterpipe.

6 Discussion & Conclusion

The results of excavations carried out in 2013-14 at the SE extent of the groundworks area suggested a high probability of encountering remains relating to a Romano-British temple complex (MNA184450) within Trench 1 and Drill Pit 1. However, both trench and drill pit revealed evidence of modern disturbance resulting from previous utility works, which would have almost certainly removed any surviving archaeological deposits in this area. No evidence of Romano-British activity was encountered elsewhere along the pipeline route.

Perhaps surprisingly in view of its proximity to the pipeline, no evidence relating to Atcham WWII Airfield "dispersed site No 11" (MNA143006) was revealed in Drill Pits 2-5 within Field 1. However, Trench 2 and Trench 3 in Field 2 did reveal demolition deposits, these probably being associated with Atcham WWII Airfield "dispersed site No 4" (MNA142503). This interpretation is supported by the presence of demolition material which is clearly visible above-ground along the NW boundary of Field 2 (*Plate 3*).

No other archaeological deposits or features were revealed within either the trenching or the drill pits.

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