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Cover: View northeast showing culvert (1012)

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1 Executive summary

Border Archaeology Ltd (BA) was commissioned by Janine Young Archaeological Consultant National Trust Attingham Park Shrewsbury to carry out a programme of archaeological excavation associated with the installation of two LPG tanks on the North Lawn of Croome Court, a Grade I Listed mid-18th -century National Trust property at High Green Severn Stoke Worcestershire.

The work took place in two stages and involved the excavation of two 6m square trenches. The first of these revealed a substantial culvert (Plates 1 & 2, figs. 2 & 3) crossing the trench diagonally and probably forming part of the drainage system for the landscape parkland begun in 1751 by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. The culvert was fully recorded and the area backfilled to avoid any potential damage to this feature.

An alternative location was identified 2m to the east and a second area was opened, also measuring 6m × 6m. The trench was excavated to natural deposits and, with the exception of a layer of rubble and rubbish on the south side of the trench, no features or deposits of archaeological significance were seen.

2 Introduction

Border Archaeology Ltd (BA) was commissioned by Janine Young Archaeological Consultant National Trust Attingham Park Shrewsbury to carry out a programme of archaeological excavation at Croome Court High Green Severn Stoke Worcestershire associated with the installation of two LPG tanks. Work involved the excavation of two areas on the N lawn of the house, each measuring approximately 6m × 6m.

2.1 Soils & Geology

The area comprises typical calcareous pelosols of the EVESHAM 2 series (411b), consisting of slowly permeable calcareous clayey with some slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged non-calcareous clayey and fine loamy or fine silty over clayey soils. The underlying geology is Jurassic and Cretaceous clay.

To the W of Croome Court and extending beyond the M5 motorway, soil composition reflects an area of typical calcareous pelosols of the WHIMPLE 3 series (572f), consisting of reddish fine loamy or fine silty over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging overlying drift over Permo-Triassic and Carboniferous reddish mudstone.

Croome Court lies on the S side of Worcester and to the W of Pershore and at a height of some 22m AOD.

3 Historical and Archaeological Background

Croome Court lies close to the M5 motorway and W of Pershore in south Worcestershire. It is the former residence of the earls of Coventry and comprises a remodelled mid-18th-century Neo-Palladian mansion set within extensive landscaped parkland designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (1716-83). Some of the earliest evidence from the area dates to the Bronze Age, with the discovery of a palstave during survey work in the parkland, while a scatter of Roman pottery was found some 500m from the court and could hint at Roman settlement in the area. A fragment of Roman tile was found in the Walled Gardens (Kay 2012, 375).

Croome was mentioned in the Domesday survey although the exact location of the medieval village is uncertain. The original church, dedicated to St James the Apostle, is thought to have lain to the NW of Croome Court while the village probably lay to the NE (Kay 2012, 375). The medieval church was first mentioned in documents dating to the 13th century although the existence of the village at the time of the Domesday Survey suggests that it predated this. The village was removed to High Green during the as part of Lancelot Browns scheme to landscape Croome Park, while the church was moved some 425 m to the NE of Croome Court and to an area of high ground. The new dedication was to St Mary Magdalene.

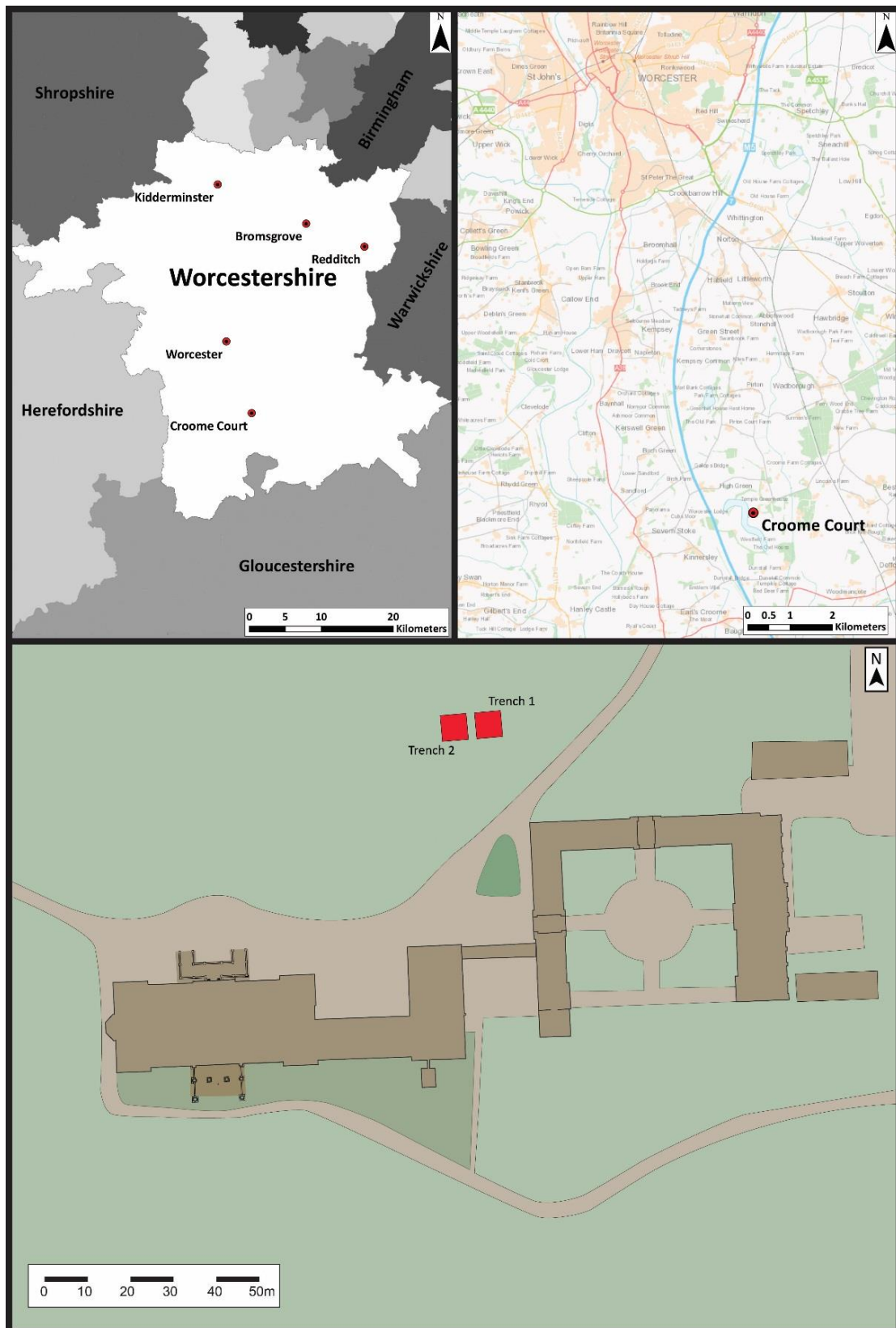


Fig 1: Plan showing location of excavations

The Coventry family had become established in Worcestershire by the late 16th century, and were elevated to an earldom in 1697. George Coventry, the 6th Earl (who inherited in 1751 and died in 1809), was foremost among a group of noblemen known as the 'Earls of Creation', who developed their estates under the influence of classical philosophies and the Grand Tour. His long tenure of the Croome estate saw the full development of the landscape park around a rebuilt house and Croome's recognition as one of the greatest landscape creations of the age. The current 18th -century mansion incorporates substantial parts of the preceding 17th -century structure. Croome Court constitutes a Grade I Listed mid-18th -century limestone ashlar Neo-Palladian mansion.

Brown, with advice from Sanderson Miller (1717-80), started work at Croome in 1751 and the mansion is a rare example of his architectural work, as well as his first major independent commission. The park attests to his use of the sunken fence or ha-ha to visually unify different landscape components. The original 18th -century house consists of principal N and S fronts of 11 bays, with a basement and two storeys, as well as three-storey end pavilions.

To the E of the main house is the Stable Court, a Grade II Listed Building constructed c. 1752 by Capability Brown of red brick with Bath stone dressings. The Stable Court is three-sided and is open to the S, with central pedimented archways each side. To the E of the Stable Court is the late-18th -century walled kitchen garden (Grade II Listed), which was remodelled in the mid-19th century with a heated wall. The kitchen garden lies within a ha-ha which encompasses the house and surrounding pleasure grounds. The house faces N and S onto lawns with and, to the N, a cricket pitch. To the W the grounds of the house run down to a serpentine lake, known as Croome River. The house and gardens are surrounded by parkland, which contains a number of follies and designed panoramas.

After the mid-19th century, there were few alterations at Croome, the landscape of which matured and then decayed through neglect. During the Second World War, the house was the residence of the Dutch royal family, who were escaping the Nazi occupation of Holland. For part of the war, the eastern portion of the parkland also housed installations associated with RAF Defford. The house remained as the main seat of the Coventry family until 1948, when it was sold for institutional use as a school. It remained a school until 1979 and was then occupied by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness until 1984. In 1996, the National Trust purchased 271ha of the park and began its restoration.

4 Methodology

The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with practices set out in *Standard and Guidance for archaeological excavation* (ClfA 2014), *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014) and the *ClfA Code of conduct* (2014). BA also adheres to the methodology set out in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (Lee 2015). Work was carried out in accordance with *Croome Court: Brief for Archaeological Excavation in advance of construction of LPG tanks* (National Trust 2015) and *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010).

The initial excavation (Trench 1) comprised an area measuring 6m × 6m. Excavation proceeded using a mechanical excavator and toothless bucket to the top of archaeological deposits and thereafter by hand. The discovery of a

substantial culvert evidently forming part of the 18th -century drainage system associated with the landscape park designed by Lancelot Brown necessitated the opening of a second area (Trench 2) of similar dimensions. Trench 2 lay 2m to the E of Trench 1 and was excavated down to natural clay.

4.1 Recording

The 18th century culvert of brick construction was fully recorded in accordance with BA's *Archaeological Field Recording Manual* (2014) using the Company's *pro-forma* context record sheets and archive-stable drafting film, together with high-resolution digital photography.

Records of all features and deposits identified included:

- A *pro-forma* context record for each stratigraphic unit encountered
- Plans of each area excavated showing the extent of the area (tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid and located on a 1:2500 plan) and the extent of all stratigraphic units and appropriate detail within stratigraphic units
- Sections or profiles (at a scale of 1:10 in areas of detailed excavation) of all stratigraphic units, all drawings being numbered, listed in a drawing register and cross-referenced to written site records
- A high-resolution digital photographic record, with each photograph containing an appropriate scale. Photographs are indexed and cross-referenced to written site records with details of subject and direction of view recorded on a photographic register, indexed by frame number
- Ordnance Survey datum levels derived from a benchmark located on the NW corner of the stable block

4.2 Recovery, processing and curation of artefactual data

No finds were recovered during the excavations. Occasional sherds of later 19th or 20th -century pottery and non-diagnostic brick and tile fragments were seen during machine excavation but these were not retained.

No deposits or features suitable for palaeoenvironmental/palaeoeconomic sampling were identified.

5 Results

5.1 Trench 1

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	1001		Deposit	Topsoil	Mid to dark brown silt/clay topsoil; occasional small stones & CBM flecks; 0.30m thick. Overlying (1002).	-	-	-	-	-	
2	1002		Deposit	Layer of rubble & rubbish on S side of trench.	Loose rubble; measuring >3.0m (N/S) × >6m (E/W) × 0.18m (max depth). Underlying (1001), overlying (1003), cut by [1004].	-	✓	✓	-	-	Sherd of modern white pottery on surface of deposit.
3	1003		Deposit	Subsoil	Moderately compacted mid-greyish-brown silty clay; occasional black flecking; trench wide. Maximum thickness 0.38m. Beneath (1002), above (1007), cut by [1004].	-	-	-	-	-	
4	1004		Cut	Construction cut for culvert (1005)	Linear in plan; aligned NW/SE; sides steeply sloping, base of slope & base not seen; measuring 7.6m × 1.20m × 0.60m. Cuts (1003), filled by (1006), (1005).	-	-	-	-	-	
5	1005		Structure	NE wall of brick culvert - equivalent wall (1011) on SW side of structure	Brick masonry; 7 courses + arched roof (3 bricks thick at base stepping in on uppermost 3 courses); brick size 130mm × 60mm × 230 mm; aligned NW/SE; wall height 0.66m. Below (1008).	-	-	-	-	-	
6	1006		Fill	Backfill of construction cut [1004] - appeared to be packing around culvert, possibly as waterproofing	Compacted red/brown, marbled grey clay. Below (1002), fill of [1004], later than (1012).	-	-	-	-	-	
7	1007		Deposit	Natural	Firm mid brown silty clay; occasional pebble patches; trench wide. Underlying (1003). Not excavated.	-	-	-	-	-	Not excavated

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
8	1008		Structure	Arched brick roof of culvert (1012)	Brick masonry; aligned NW/SE; brick size: 230mm × 130mm × 60 mm; lower course wedged at an angle into (1005) and (1011) forming lower part of segmental arch.	-	-	-	-	-	
9	1009		Structure	Brick inspection chamber in culvert (1012)	Brick masonry; roughly square plan; measuring c. 1.9m square; aligned NW/SE; brick size: 230mm × 60mm × 130mm. Set into/above (1005) & (1011), below (1001).	-	-	-	-	-	
10	1010		Structure	Capping stones over inspection chamber (1009), lying across culvert (1012)	Masonry; aligned NE/SW; stone size: 530mm × 280mm × 80mm, 730mm × 480mm × 100mm & 660mm × 280mm × 110mm; un-bonded & unworked. Overlying (1009), underlying (1001).	-	-	-	-	-	
11	1011		Structure	SW brick wall of culvert	Masonry; aligned NW/SE; brick size 130mm × 60mm × 230 mm; 3 courses (as revealed). Excavated to three courses only as presumed the same as (1005). See above.	-	-	-	-	-	
12	1012		Structure	Culvert	Masonry (incorporating (1005) (1008) (1009) (1010) (1011)); linear in plan; aligned NW/SE; measuring 7.6m × 0.85m.	-	-	-	-	-	

5.2 Trench 2

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	2001		Deposit	Topsoil	Firm mid brown silty clay turf/topsoil; occasional black & red (CBM) flecks; 0.30m thick trench wide. Overlying (2002).	-	-	-	-	-	
2	2002		Deposit	Layer of levelling/building rubble	Moderately compacted red clay; frequent irregular medium stones, occasional fragments of brick & tile; 0.20m thick. Underlying (2001), overlying (2003).	-	✓	✓	-	-	Finds not retained
3	2003		Deposit	Subsoil	Well compacted mid greyish-brown silty clay; 0.20m thick; trench wide. Underlying (2002), overlying (2004).	-	-	-	-	-	

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
4	2004		Deposit	Natural	Firm bright orangey-brown clay; trench wide. Underlying (2003).	-	-	-	-	-	
5	2005		Cut	Cut for modern water main in NW corner of Trench 2	Linear; aligned NNE/SSW; break of slope top sharp, sides steep; measured >0.30m (width) × 0.50m (depth). Filled by (2006).	-	-	-	-	-	Cut not fully revealed
6	2006		Plastic pipework	Modern water main in NW corner of Trench 2	Linear; aligned NNE/SSW, alkathene pipe. Fill of [2005].						

6 Discussion

The lawns located both to the N and S of the house are considered to be of ‘immense archaeological significance’ (Kay 2012, 457), with the N lawns in particular potentially containing information relating to the 17th -century service buildings.

6.1 Trench 1

The trench was approximately 6m square and was excavated to a maximum depth of some 0.8m. The discovery of a substantial brick culvert (1012) halted further excavation and an area of ground (Trench 2) outside the presumed line of the culvert and some 2m to the E of Trench 1 was identified as an alternative location for the siting of the LPG tanks.

Twelve contexts were recorded in Trench 1, of which eight were associated with culvert (1012).



Plate 1: View inside inspection chamber (1009)

Above the bright red/pink natural clay (1007), was a brownish-grey silt clay subsoil (1003) containing occasional flecks of manganese, suggesting it may have been subject to waterlogging. Cutting this deposit was the cut [1004] for culvert (1012) which ran NW/SE diagonally across the excavated area (*fig. 3*) and was 1.20m wide. The brick floor (1012) of the culvert was laid in the base of the cut. Very little evidence for silting was evident within the

culvert, suggesting either that it was still a functioning drainage channel or that a blockage had occurred elsewhere along its length. No water was seen in it at the time of excavation. The two brick side walls of the culvert (1005) (NE) and (1011) (SW) were seven courses deep, representing a height of 0.66m.

The construction of (1012) resembled that of another, collapsed culvert visible on the site, which appeared to confirm that the structure formed part of the drainage system associated with the 18th-century landscape park.



Plate 2: View SE of culvert (1012)

Its walls, (1005) and (1011), were both three brick courses thick at the base, stepping in to two, with a single course at the top of the structure. The segmental arched roof (1008) was of brick construction, with an angled springer course. Eight brick courses were present: brick size was 130mm × 60mm × 230mm and the bricks were unfrosted; their rather coarse appearance suggests they may either have been reused (although this was not obvious) or that these were poorer quality bricks intended for engineering use rather than for display. The materials themselves

were presumably manufactured within the grounds; a reference in a contract book for 1714 to a large number of bricks manufactured at ‘Seggy Meer’ (the site of the present lake) has previously been noted (Kay 2012, 95). The brickwork was bonded using a cream mortar with white flecks of lime and was laid in running bond. Bedding joints were up to 40mm wide where affected by the curvature of the arch. The culvert ran slightly downslope to the NW, levels taken from the top of the structure being 21.40m AOD at the SE end and 21.27m AOD at the NW, creating a slope of some 0.13m in a length of c.7m. The brick roof (1008) of the culvert lay immediately beneath the topsoil (1001) at the NW end and beneath a layer of rubble and rubbish (1002) to the SE. Pottery from layer (1002) suggested a date in the 19th or 20th century.

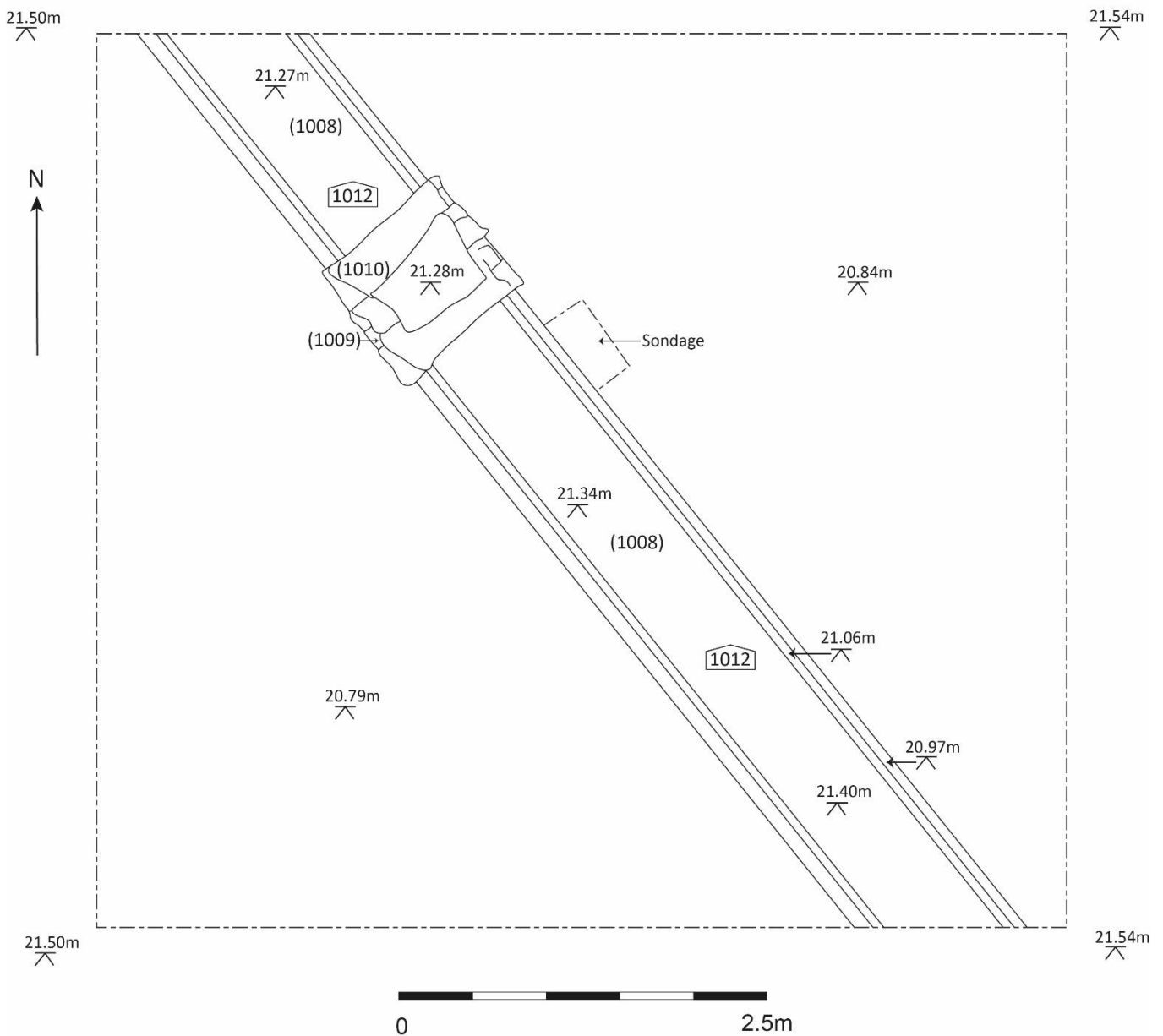


Fig. 2: Plan showing culvert (1012), which incorporates an inspection chamber (1009) and capping stones (1010)

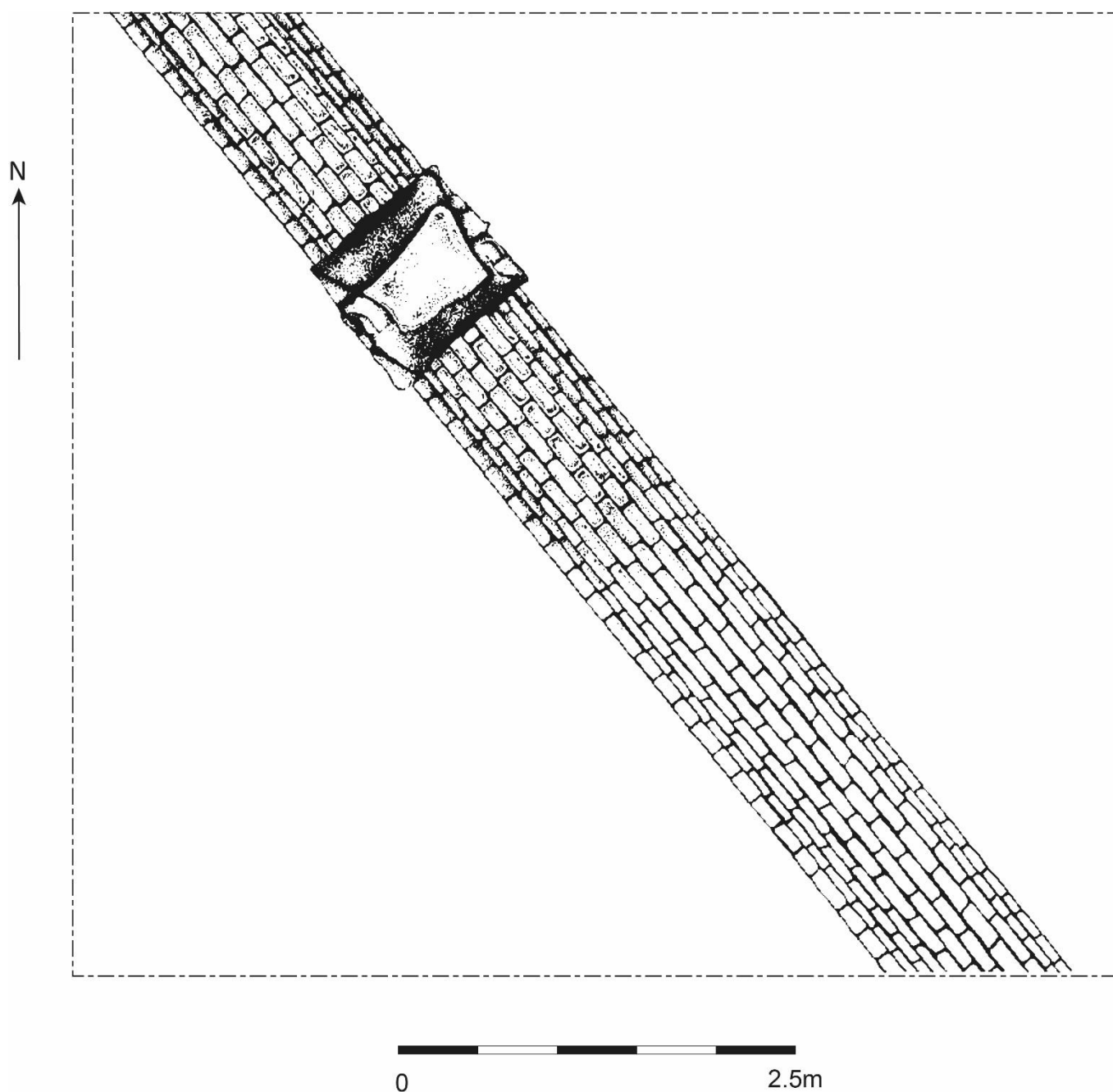


Fig 3: Plan of brick-built culvert (1012) revealed in Trench 1 showing construction detail

Set into the culvert was a square structure (1009) measuring about 1.95m square and probably representing an inspection chamber. It appeared to have been built as part of the original culvert as there was no evidence that it had been inserted into the culvert at a later date

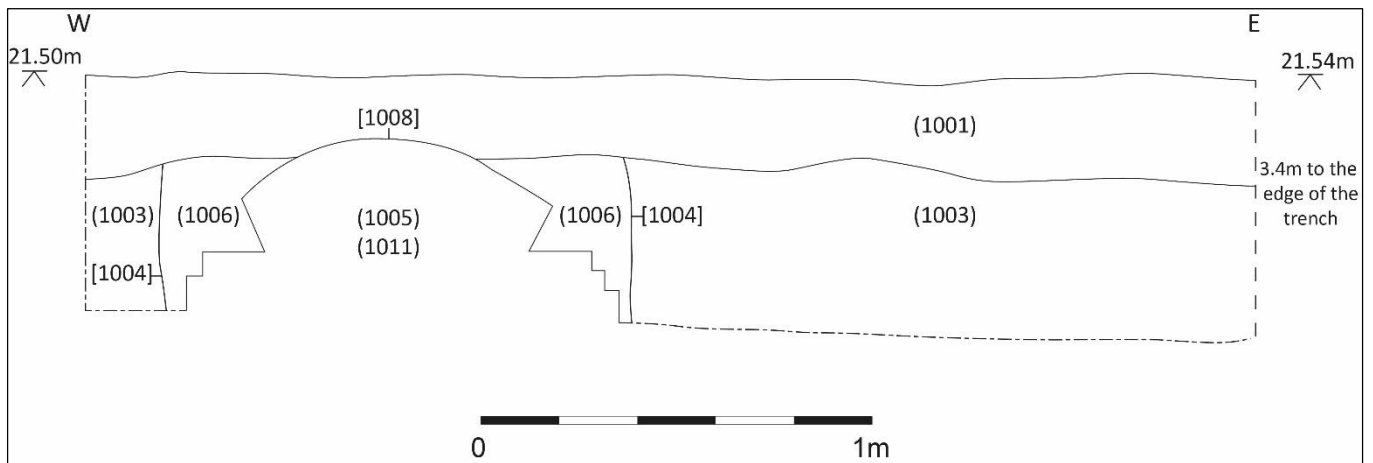


Fig 4: N section of Trench 1 showing culvert (1012) and cut [1004]

The cut [1004] for the insertion of the culvert was backfilled with (1006), a redeposited natural clay, possibly representing material up-cast from the excavation of cut [1004]. However, it is possible that it may have been imported from elsewhere to act as a waterproof sealant for the culvert.

At the NW end of the trench, the roof (1008) of the culvert lay immediately beneath the topsoil (*fig. 3*). However, to the S and E, a layer of rubble (1002) was present, with a maximum thickness of 0.18m. The layer was loosely compacted with numerous angular and sub-angular fragments of stone in a matrix of greyish-brown silty clay. Occasional fragments of tile and brick were present but it was not clear that this material originated as building rubble. It also contained animal bone and a sherd of modern white pottery, dating to the 19th century or later. It seems more likely that it was a levelling deposit composed of general waste.

6.2 Trench 2

The trench (*Plate 3*) was approximately 6m square and lay 2m to the E of Trench 1. A total of five contexts were encountered in the trench, one of which [1005] was allocated for the cut for a modern alkathene water main in the NW corner of the trench.



Plate 3: Trench 2 view S, showing layer of rubble (2002) beneath topsoil

No deposits of archaeological significance were observed in this trench, with the topsoil (2001), subsoil (2003) and natural (2005) similar to deposits encountered in Trench 1. Immediately beneath the topsoil, layer (2002) consisted of loose stone rubble and rubbish. It was stratigraphically similar to (1002) in Trench 1 and it is likely that it was part of the same deposit. As with (1002), it contained angular and sub-angular stones but there was no clear evidence that it consisted of building debris. However, (2002), unlike (1002), exhibited a red clay matrix. The fact that the material was probably part of the same deposit was confirmed, however, by the presence of modern (19th or 20th -century) pottery.

Early drawings conflict somewhat in detail but agree that, prior to the creation of Croome Landscape Park, a number of buildings were present in the area to the N of the house. The structures include possible remains of service buildings associated with the 17th -century house or of the village prior to its removal to High Green during the landscaping of the park

The Worcestershire HER states that the village lies some 500m to the NE of the house and the medieval church, also removed during the creation of the park, lay to the immediate NW of the house. It was not thought that rubble deposits (1002) and (2002) were associated with the demolition of earlier buildings, although occasional fragments of brick and tile were present. The small amount of pottery seen was plain white glazed material of 19th or 20th -century date. It is possible that these rubble deposits either represented the dumping of rubbish from the house or a levelling dump. Levelling may have taken place during the occupancy of the house by the Birmingham Catholic Archdiocese boys' school between 1950 and 1979, when the area was used as sports fields (Kay 2012, 24).

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