

# birmingham archaeology

FORMER CORUS STEELWORKS, OLD-  
BURY, SANDWELL  
(PHASE 1)

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION  
2006

UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM



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**FORMER CORUS STEELWORKS, OLDBURY, SANDWELL (PHASE 1)**  
**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION, 2006.**

By

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For

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## SUMMARY

*The first phase of an archaeological evaluation was carried out at the former Corus Steelworks, Birmingham Road, Oldbury, Sandwell (NGR SO 997 895) in April 2006. Documentary and cartographic evidence suggested there was potential for the survival of buried remains associated with the medieval Blakeley Mill. Three trial-trenches were excavated and no significant archaeological features, deposits or finds were identified. In two of the trial-trenches evidence of a buried soil layer predating the 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial development of the site was recorded. A brick culvert of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century date, probably associated with the adjacent Birmingham Canal, was also revealed.*

## **FORMER CORUS STEELWORKS, OLDBURY, SANDWELL (PHASE 1)**

### **AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION, 2006.**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background to the project**

Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by Henry Mein Partnership, on behalf of Geopost UK Ltd, to undertake a programme of trial trenching ahead of a development at the former Corus Steelworks, Birmingham Road, Oldbury, Sandwell (hereinafter referred to as the site). The work was carried out as a condition of planning consent (Planning Application No. DC/05/4437) prior to the proposed construction of a parcel-sorting unit, associated offices and hardstanding.

This report outlines the results of a the first phase of a field evaluation carried out in April 2006, and has been prepared in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations (IFA 2001). Two further phases of building recording and trial-trenching are due to be carried out in the future, following the vacation of these areas and buildings.

The evaluation conformed to a brief produced by Sandwell MBC, and a Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2006) which was approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to implementation, in accordance with guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoE 1990).

### **1.2 Location and geology**

The site is located on Birmingham Road, Oldbury, Sandwell to the east of Oldbury town centre, and is centred on NGR SO 997 895 (Fig. 1). The Phase 1 area of this site is located at the eastern side of the development area (Fig. 2).

The present character of the site (Fig. 2) consists of the former Corus Steelworks buildings and associated infrastructure. The Phase 1 area consists of an area of car park and hard standing. The Birmingham Canal and the Stour Valley Railway line bound the site to the north. To the immediate south is the Birmingham Canal (Wolverhampton Level) and the Spon Lane Basin, with the M5 Motorway elevated above this. Further industrial buildings border the site to the west.

## **2 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

The place name Oldbury may indicate a possible Iron Age hillfort could be located in the area and several prehistoric finds have been recorded in the area, as well as numerous Roman coins. The site is near to the historic core of Oldbury town and although the earliest cartographic evidence of Oldbury town is Ogilby's map of 1675, finds dating to the medieval period have been recorded.

The site is close to the probable location of the former medieval Blakeley Hall Mill, to the west and to the former location of Blakeley Hall, to the south. Blakeley Hall Mill is depicted on

Ogelby's map of 1675 and there is also documentary evidence for the mill from as early as 1302:

"when the millers of Blakele, Walwyke and of the new mill were summoned to appear before the next court in order that they should take an oath to observe manorial regulations as to the grinding of malt (brasii)" (Dilworth 1976, 179).

It is not certain where this mill was located and the approximate location is registered on the Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record (PRN 6354) (Birmingham Archaeology 2006, 3). However, it is probable that this is the same mill illustrated on the 1844 Tithe map (Fig. 3). It is possible that archaeological features associated with the mill maybe present within the site.

The Tithe map (Fig. 3, 1844) illustrates the area of the site, which was mainly open fields in 1844. The Phase 1 evaluation area, in the main, comprises of 'Big Meadow' with a footpath or trackway leading from the Blakeley Hall across the canal bridge, which is still present today, into the field. It is possible that this could be an ancient route, which appears to have been abandoned in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, having been cut off by the construction of the canals and the railway.

The first edition Ordnance Survey Map (1890, Fig. 4) shows 'Mill Farm', at the western boundary of the site, which may suggest the location of Blakeley Mill. The first edition Ordnance map also clearly shows the footpath or trackway leading from a tollhouse at the canal bridge across open fields. The railway and a railway carriage works, remnants of which are, at present, part of the former Corus steel works (Fig. 2) are also depicted. This arrangement seems little changed on the 1904 (Fig. 5) and 1919 (Fig. 6) Ordnance Survey maps until the 1937 map (Fig. 7) when the Phase 1 evaluation area is illustrated as the location for the Simplex Works (Electrical Engineering) building. By 1956 (Fig. 8) the majority of the site seems to be occupied by the buildings of the Broadwell engineering works.

### **3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The principle aim of the evaluation is to determine the character, state of preservation and the potential significance of any buried remains.

More specific aims as stated in the archaeological brief (Sandwell MBC 2005,4) were to:

- Establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area
- Determine the nature, extent, condition, character, quality and dated of any archaeological remains encountered
- Provide further information of the origins and development of Oldbury from the medieval period to the present day
- Contribute to any existing corpus of academic knowledge
- Make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions

### **4 METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Fieldwork**

Phase 1 of the proposed development area covers approximately 4.6 hectares. A total of 3 trenches were excavated across the Phase 1 area of the site (Fig. 2).

Trenches 1 and 2 were positioned to locate and assess a trackway, together with any associated features, visible on the Tithe map (1844, Fig. 3). Trench 3 was positioned within an area of archaeological interest, as defined by Sandwell Unitary Development Plan.

All topsoil and modern overburden was removed using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket, under direct archaeological supervision, down to the top of the uppermost archaeological horizon or the subsoil. Subsequent cleaning and excavation was by hand.

All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present. Features were planned and sections were drawn through all cut features and significant vertical stratigraphy. A comprehensive written record was maintained using a continuous numbered context system on *pro-forma* context and feature cards. Written records and scale plans were supplemented by photographs using digital, monochrome and colour slide photography.

The site archive will be prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage, 1991), the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage (UKIC, 1990) and Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections (Museum and Art Galleries Commission, 1992). The archive will be deposited with the appropriate repository, subject to permission from the landowner.

## 5 RESULTS

### 5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1, 50m long and 2m wide, was aligned northeast-southwest and was located close to the southeast boundary of the site (Fig. 2). The majority of the trench was excavated to a depth of 1.2m, this was an arbitrary depth and not the top of the natural subsoil. A short sondage was dug at the northeastern end of the trench (Fig. 9 and 10, Plate 1). This was excavated to a depth of 2m, but could not be made safe to enter due to the quality of the overburden. No significant archaeological features were encountered in this trench.

The natural subsoil (1006) consisted of yellow clay with pebble inclusions and was encountered only at the northeast end of the trench at a depth of 2m below the present surface (142.17m AOD). Sealing this was a layer (1005) of compact grey clay, 0.3m deep, and sealing this was a layer (1004) of dark brown humic soil and silt 0.4m deep. Overlying this was a mixed layer (1002) of dumped material including redeposited natural clay, and assorted building rubble, 0.65m deep.

Two brick-built walls cut 1002. Towards the southwest end of the trench was a brick-built wall sitting on a concrete foundation (1003). This was aligned north-south, 0.5m wide and at least 1m high. Associated with wall 1003 was a concrete floor surface (1008) and two concrete-built tanks (1010 and 1011) which were filled with oil and water. Towards the northeast end of the trench was a further brick built foundation wall (1012) aligned east-west. This was 0.4m wide and 0.3m deep.

Sealing this was a layer of mixed ashes, clinker and rubble (1007) which had a maximum depth of 0.5m. This was present over the majority of the trench, apart from to the southwest of wall 1003. The majority of the area of the trench was sealed by reinforced concrete (1000) 0.3m deep, apart from the northeast end of the trench, to the northeast of wall 1012.

## 5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was aligned northeast-southwest and was located in approximately the centre of the Phase 1 area (Fig. 2). Due to the depth of overburden this trench was excavated to a length of 8m, 2m wide and 3m deep (Fig. 9 and 10 Plate 2). The natural subsoil (2004) was encountered at about this depth, however the trench flooded and started to collapse at this point making accurate recording problematic. No archaeological features were observed. Overlying the natural, as in Trench 1 was a layer (2003) of grey silt and clay, c. 0.3m deep, and a layer of dark brown humic silt (2002), c. 0.35m deep. Sealing this was a deposit (2001) of mixed material including redeposited natural clay, grey silt and some building rubble with a maximum depth of 2m. Cutting this at the northeast end of the trench was a concrete footing wall (2006), aligned east-west 0.8m wide. At the southwest end of the trench was a concrete and brick built manhole (2005). The area of the trench was sealed by broken concrete and brick rubble (2000), 0.4m deep.

## 5.3 Trench 3

This trench was located towards the southern boundary of the site (Fig. 2). It was aligned east-west and was 50m long, 2m wide with a maximum depth of 0.6m. The natural subsoil consisted of yellow-brown clay with cobble inclusions (3005). This was sealed by a layer of brown silt and clay (3002) with a maximum depth of 0.5m (Fig. 9 and 10, Plate 3).

An arched brick-built culvert (3006), aligned north-south, was located in the middle of the trench. Culvert 3006 was 0.6m wide and exposed to a height of 0.4m. The culvert 3006 was made of red hand clamped bricks measuring 0.07m(3") x 0.22m(9") x 0.1m(4"). Several modern electrical services crossed this trench, two of which cut the culvert and the natural subsoil (3005). A drain (3009) which had a primary fill of large cobbles (3010) also cut 3005, aligned east-west.

At the western end of the trench a layer of clinker (3004), 0.1m deep, formed the bedding for a brick built surface (3003), 0.4m deep. A layer of hardcore (3001), 0.2m deep, sealed the area of the trench and this was covered with a layer of tarmacadam 0.04m deep.

## 6 FINDS

The only finds were recovered from layers 1007, 2001 and 3001 and these dated to 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The finds were not retained.

## 7 DISCUSSION

No significant archaeological features, deposits or finds. Probably the earliest feature encountered was located in Trench 3. This consisted of a brick-built culvert. It is probable that this was of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century date and related to the adjacent Birmingham Canal, perhaps functioning as an overflow culvert. In Trenches 1 and 2 an undated buried subsoil layer (1005 and 2003) and a buried soil layer (1004 and 2002) was identified. These layers were overlain by over 2m of relatively modern overburden. It seems likely that these layers pre-date the 20<sup>th</sup> century development of this area of the site. This would suggest that if any significant archaeological activity were present on the site, it would, most likely, be preserved below these layers. However no evidence of any activity prior to the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century was encountered within the Phase 1 evaluation. The various footings and walls revealed can be related to the works buildings shown on the 1937 Ordnance Survey Map (Fig. 7) and 1956



Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 8) which illustrate the continuing industrialisation of the area during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The project was commissioned by Geopost UK Ltd. Thanks are due to Miller Construction and DSM demolition for their co-operation and assistance throughout the project. Thanks also go to Graham Eyre-Morgan and Charlotte Lewis, who monitored the project on behalf of Sandwell MBC. Work on site was undertaken by Mary Duncan and Kristina Krawiec. Mary Duncan produced the written report which was illustrated by Bryony Ryder, and edited by Laurence Jones who also managed the project for Birmingham Archaeology.

## **9 REFERENCES**

Birmingham Archaeology 2006 *Land at the Former Corus Steel Works, Off Broadwell Road and Birmingham Road, Oldbury, Sandwell Archaeological Evaluation and Building Recording: Written Scheme of Investigation.*

Department of the Environment (DoE) 1990 *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning.*

Dilworth, D. 1976 *The Tame Mills of Staffordshire.* London, Philimore.

Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) 2001 *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations.*

Sandwell MBC 2005 *Archaeological Evaluation Former Corus Steel Works, Off Broadwell Road and Birmingham Road, Oldbury.*

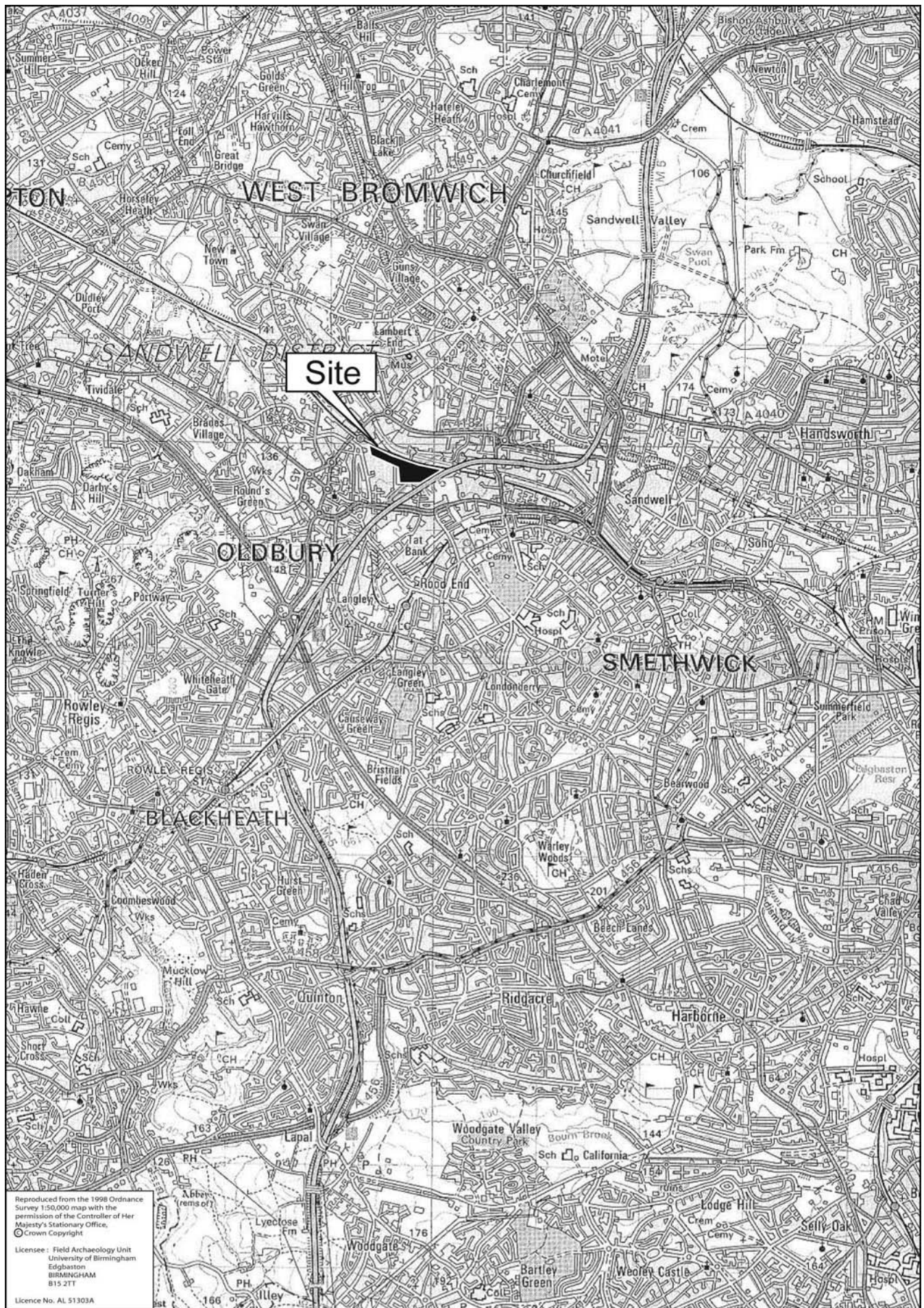


Fig.1







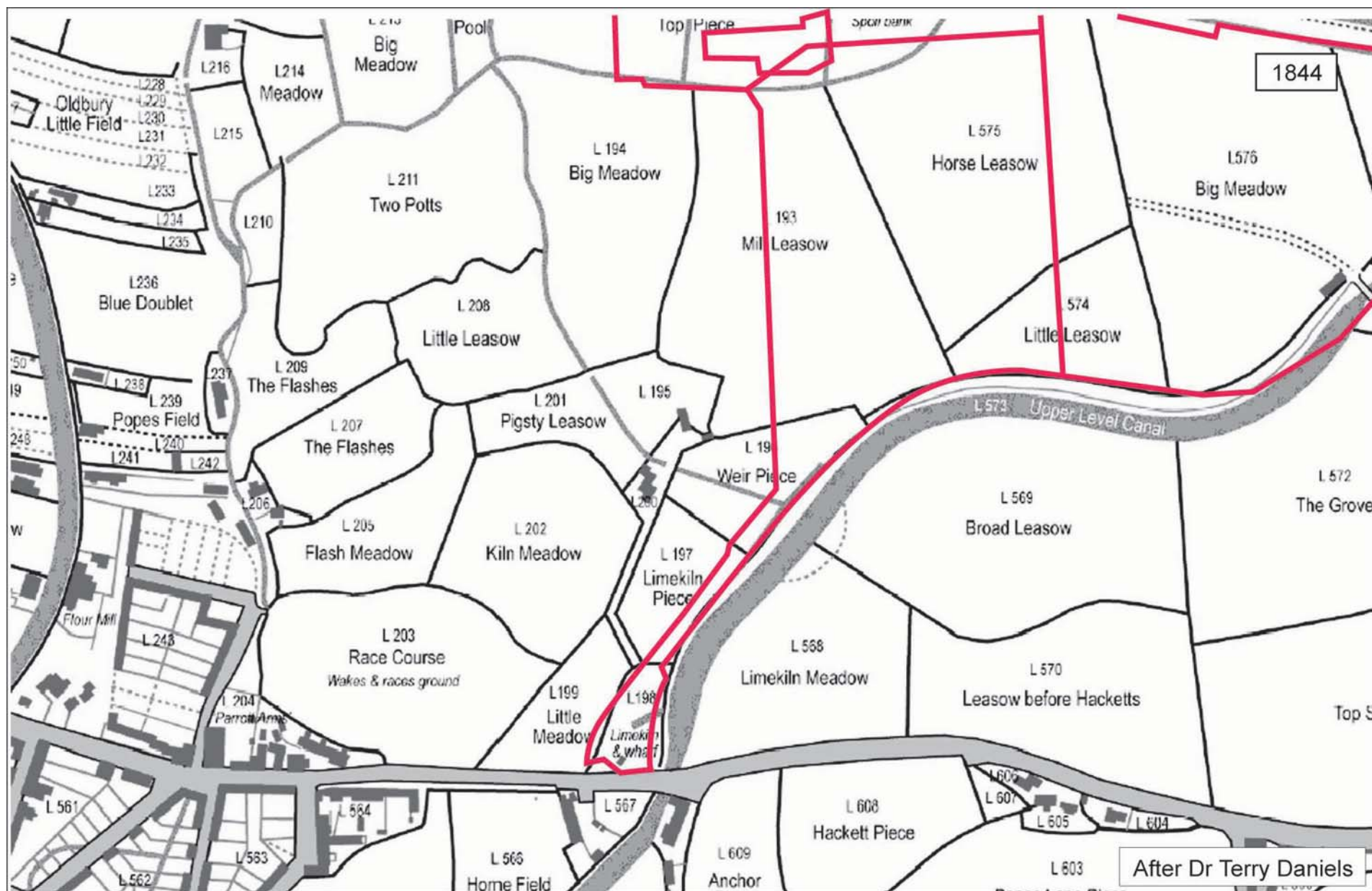


Fig.3







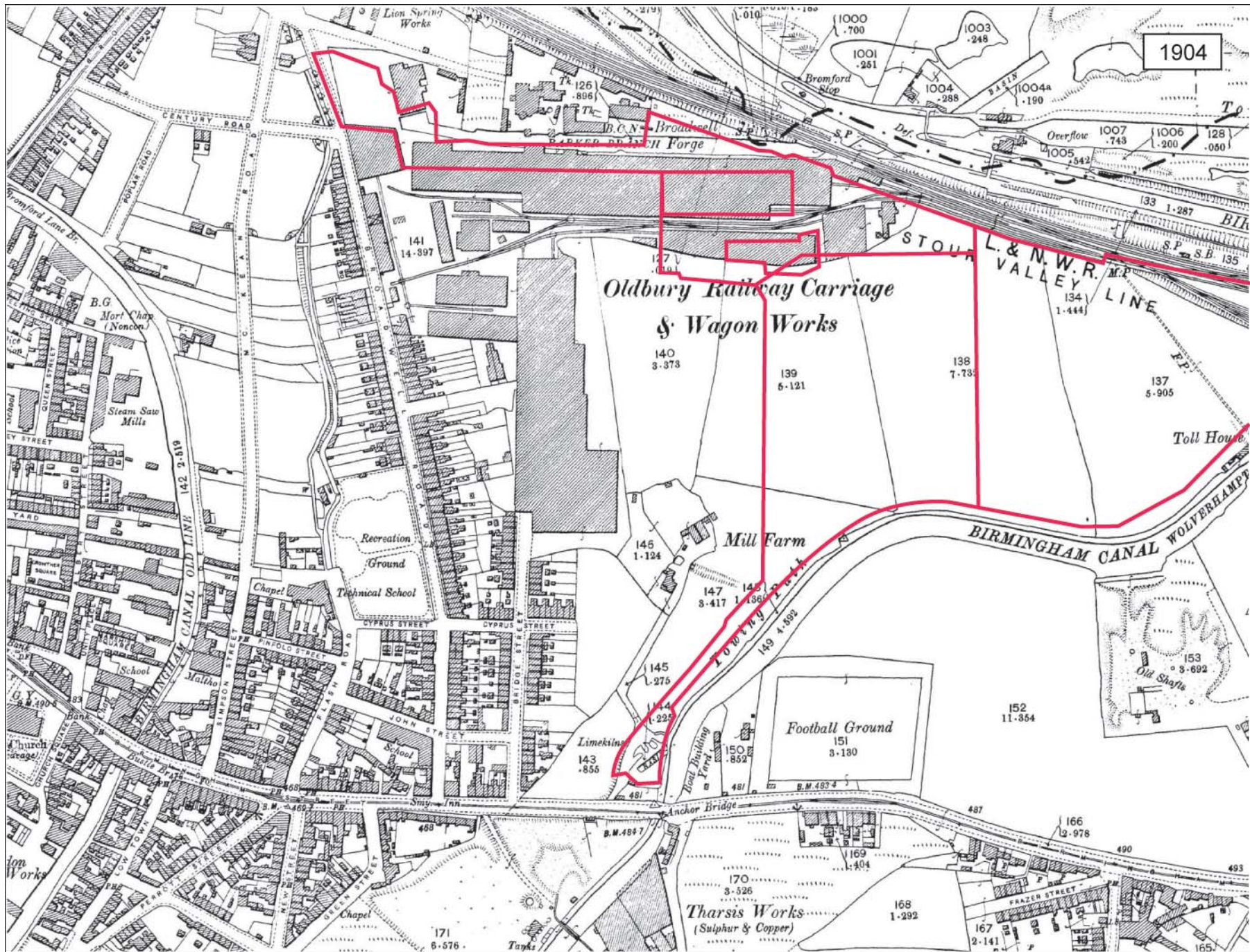


Fig.5







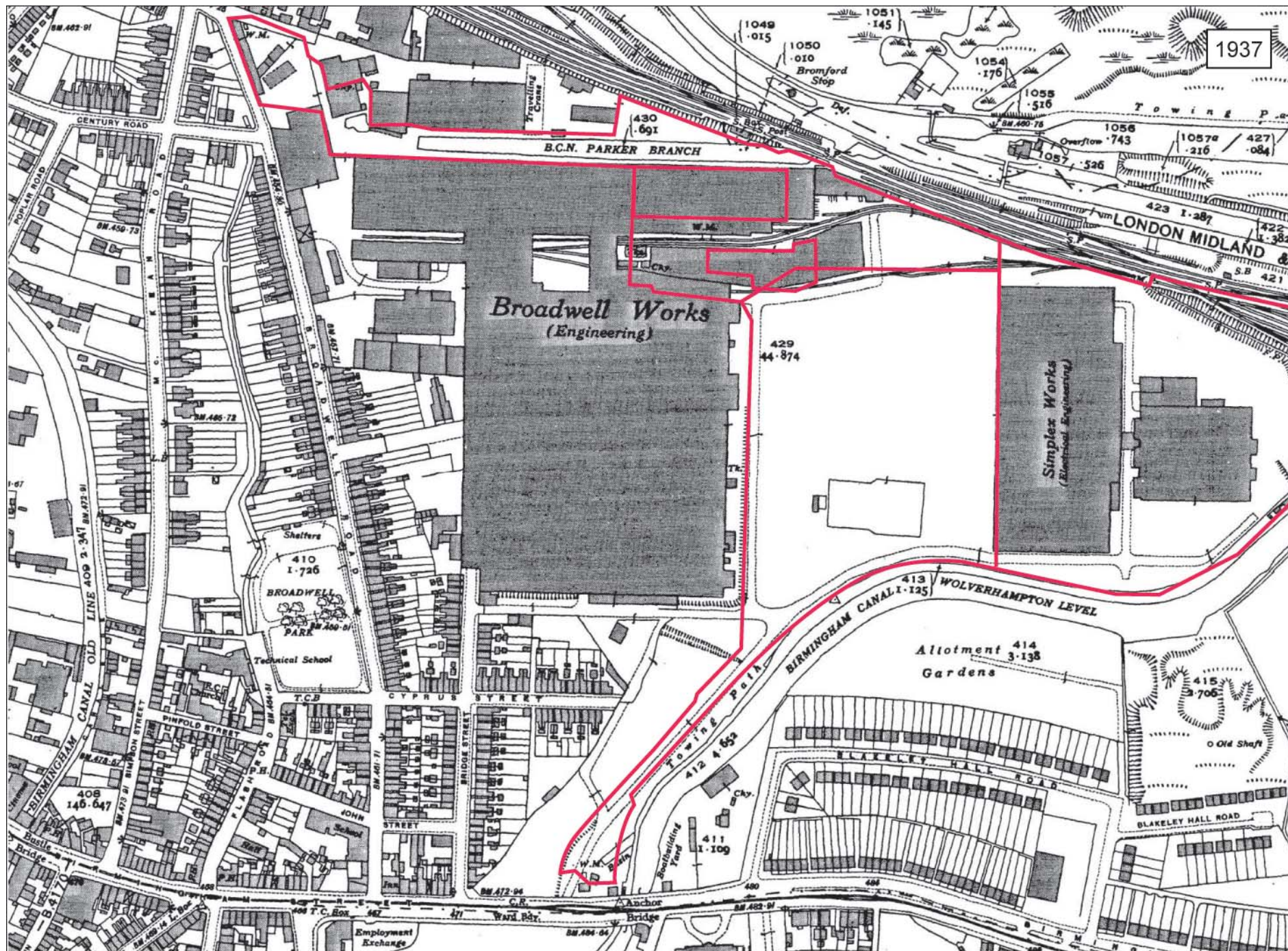


Fig.7



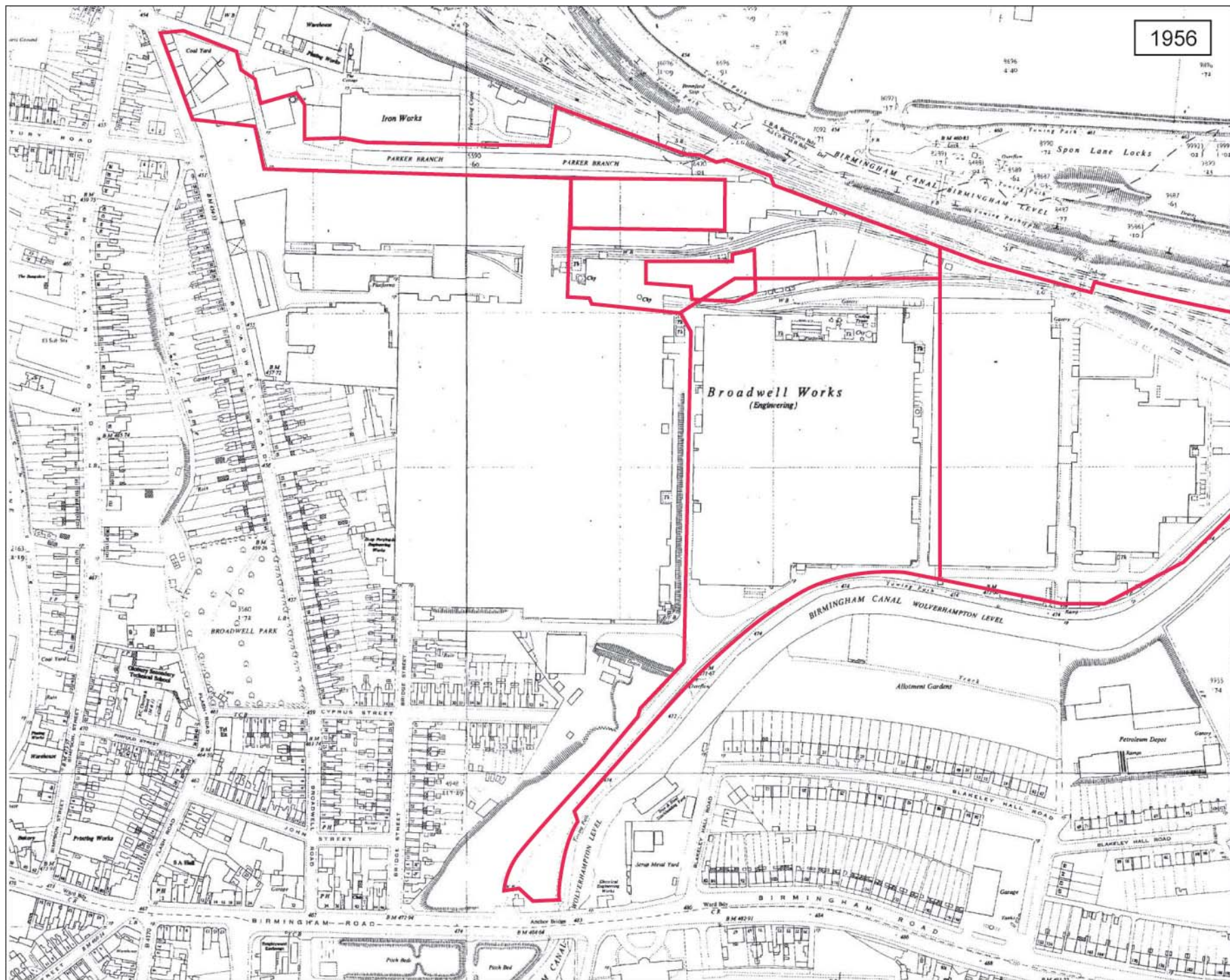


Fig.8

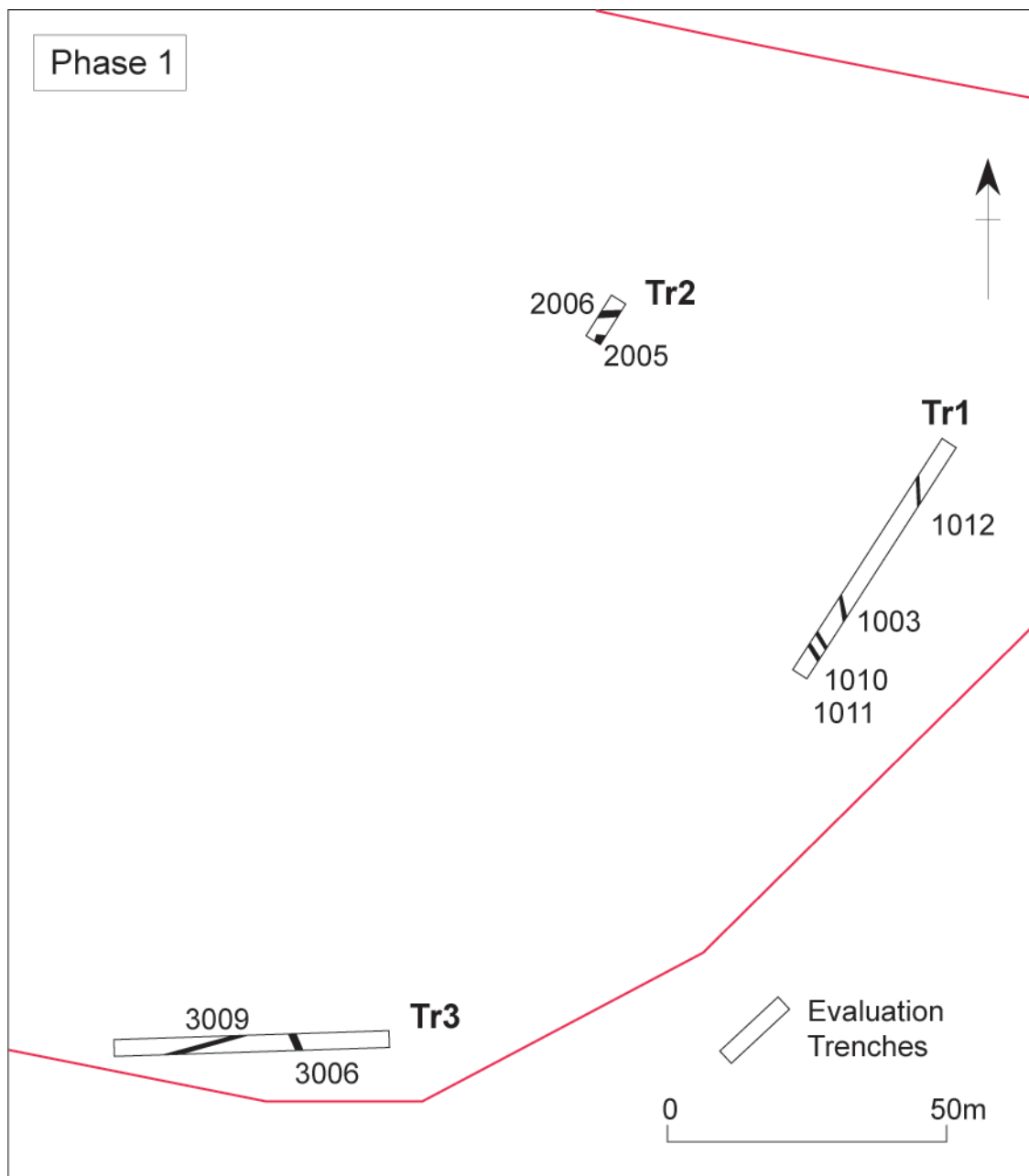


Fig.9

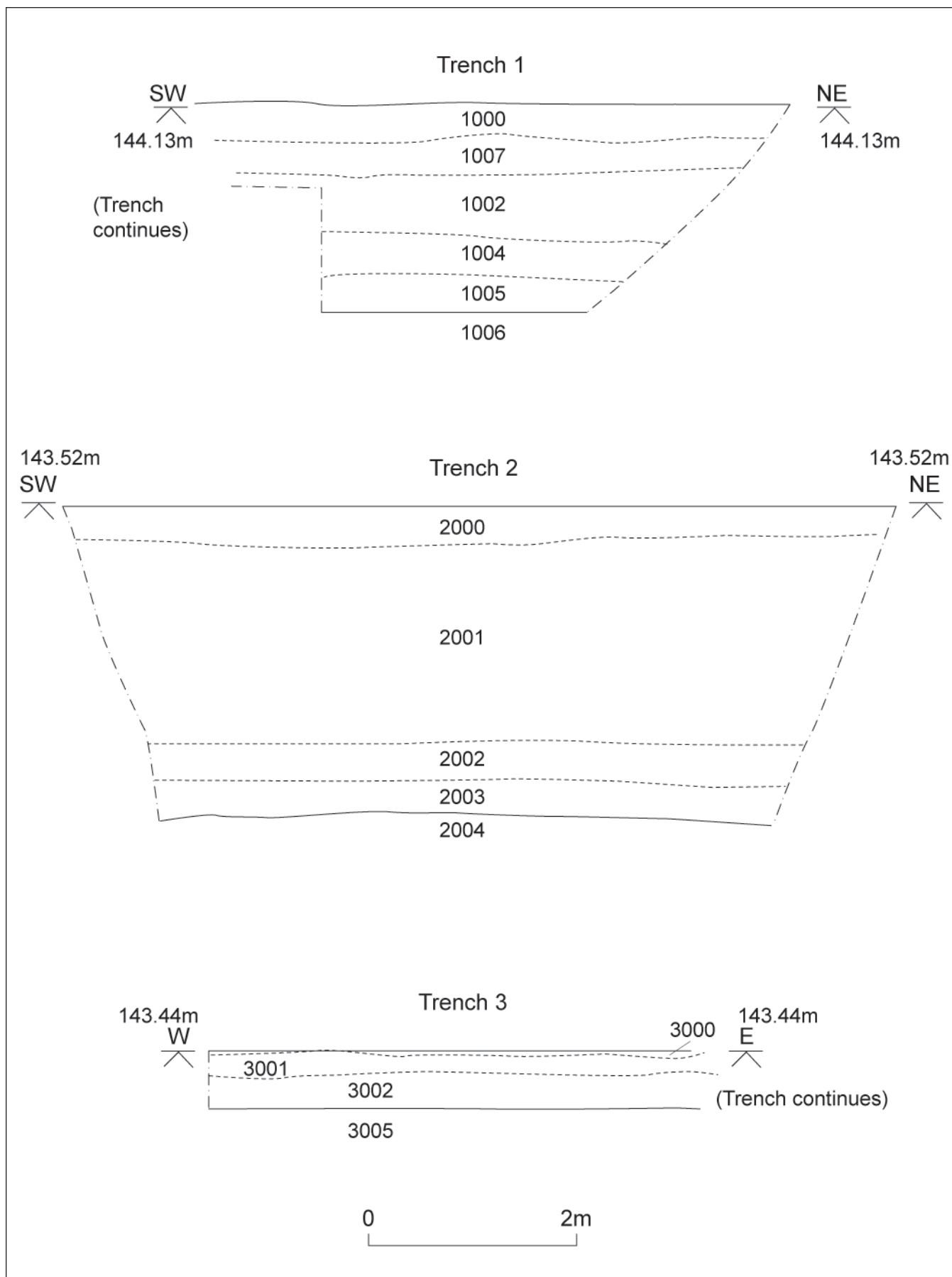


Fig.10





Plate 1



Plate 2

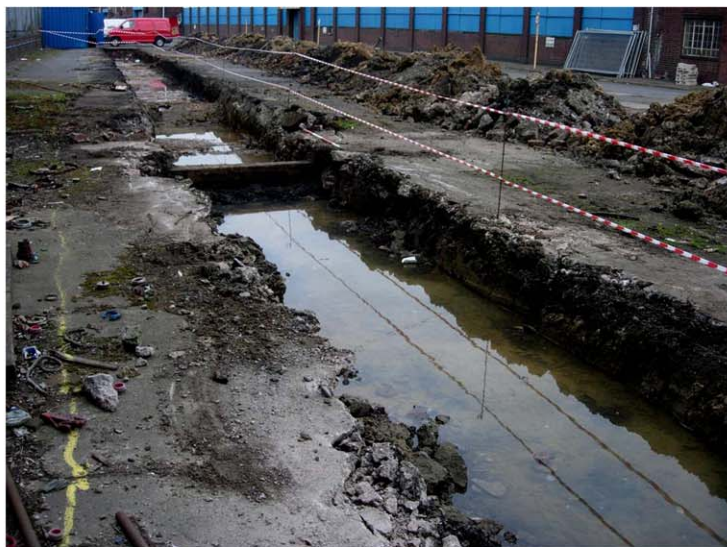


Plate 3

**SANDWELL MBC SMR  
SUMMARY SHEET**

<b>Site name/Address:</b> Former Corus Steelworks, off Broadwell Road and Birmingham Road, Oldbury	
<b>Borough:</b> Sandwell	<b>NGR:</b> NGR SO 997 895
<b>Type of Work:</b> Evaluation	<b>Site Code:</b> ODFCW05
<b>Archaeological Contractor:</b> Birmingham Archaeology	<b>Date of Work:</b> April 2006
<b>Location of Finds/ Curating Museum:</b> NA/ Sandwell Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick	
<b>Title of Report:</b> Former Corus Steelworks, Oldbury, Sandwell (Phase 1): An Archaeological Evaluation, 2006.	
<p><b>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</b></p> <p>The first phase of an archaeological evaluation was carried out at the former Corus Steelworks, Birmingham Road, Oldbury, Sandwell in April 2006. Documentary and cartographic evidence suggested there was potential for the survival of buried remains associated with the medieval Blakeley Mill. Three trial-trenches were excavated and no significant archaeological features, deposits or finds were identified. In two of the trial-trenches evidence of a buried soil layer predating the 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial development of the site was recorded. A brick culvert of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century date, probably associated with the adjacent Birmingham Canal, was also revealed.</p>	
<b>Author of Summary:</b> Mary Duncan	<b>Date of Summary:</b> July 2006  June 2002

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**FORMER CORUS STEEL WORKS,  
OFF BROADWELL ROAD AND BIRMINGHAM ROAD, OLDBURY**

**SANDWELL MBC**

**JULY 2005**

**PHASE I**



**Site:** Former Corus Steel Works, off Broadwell Road and Birmingham Road, Oldbury

**Agent:** David Johnson Henry Mein Partnership

**Borough Archaeologist:** Graham Eyre-Morgan (0121 569 4025)

**Assistant Archaeologist:** Charlotte Lewis (0121 569 4217)

*This archaeological brief is only valid for six months. After this period the Borough Archaeologist should be contacted. Any written scheme of investigation resulting from this brief shall only be considered for the same period. The contractor is strongly advised to visit the site before completing their written scheme of investigation, as there may be implications for accurately costing the project.*

## **1. Introduction**

This brief has been prepared by the Assistant Archaeologist of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. The brief sets out the requirements for an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching. The purpose of evaluation is to determine the presence/absence of archaeological features within the application area so that an informed decision can be made on their preservation or otherwise.

## **2. Site Location and Description**

The site lies within the area defined as having archaeological potential and just to the west of Oldbury town centre. The site is located off Broadwell Road and Bridge Street in-between the Birmingham canal and M5 Motorway.

The site is identified on the Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record as "Blakely Hall" dated to around the early medieval period. Historic Map regression reveals the site as having being an agricultural farm "Mill Farm" during 1890 and to the north of the site a railway carriage works which expanded and become Broadwell Engineering works. Today the upstanding fabric of the steel works is mainly modern steel clad buildings.



### **3. Planning Background**

3.1 An application for redevelopment of the former Corus steel works in Oldbury was submitted to Sandwell MBC in June 2005 (DC/05/44537). As the development area was deemed to be of archaeological and historical importance a recommendation was made by the Borough Archaeologist, Sandwell MBC for an evaluation comprising of trial trenching to the determination of the planning application.

3.2 Based on the advice given in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning* (DoE 1990, paras 21-22) the evaluation is designed provide sufficient information on the presence/absence, nature, quality and extent of any below ground remains. If present, the investigation will identify any archaeological remains thereby enabling the formulation, if appropriate, of an additional programme of excavation; should the deposits be of 'national importance' there will be a presumption in favour of their in-situ preservation.

3.3 Based on the advice given in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning* (DoE 1990), the wording is as follows:

*'No development involving any ground disturbance shall take place until an archaeological investigation of the site has been carried out in accordance with a specification to be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing'.*

3.4 This Brief and any resulting Contractors' Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) will ensure that the requirements of any future Condition can be adequately discharged.

### **4. Archaeological Background**

4.1 The site is identified on the Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record and is identified as the location of the former "Blakely Mill" PRN 6354. The mill has its origins in the medieval period with its first historical reference in 1302 (Dilworth "The Tame Mills of Staffordshire") The mill is also identified on Ogilby's Map of 1675, no surface remains are visible due to the industrial nature of the site.

4.2 Lying adjacent to the historic core of the town the site is of archaeological potential. The earliest cartographic evidence for Oldbury town attests to 1675, however earlier occupation



has been established from artefacts dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. The name Oldbury may also suggest an earlier origin possibly relating to an Iron Age hillfort in the vicinity. A considerable amount of Roman coins have also been discovered in the Oldbury area along with several artefacts dated to the prehistoric periods.

## **5. Requirement for Work**

5.1 The purpose of the archaeological investigation is to locate and identify any surviving remains within the constraint area; in this particular instance this office wishes to know the extent, the date, nature and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits, which may be present under the area, proposed for development. The work must also assess the relative importance of these deposits, and the potential loss of any archaeological information by the development, therefore substantiating any need for further excavation or change in the planning consent

5.2 A 5% sample of the development area will be investigated by trial trenching and the layout should be designed to ensure uniform coverage across the site; a trench plan must be appended to the specification.

5.3 The site-specific aims are:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area
- To determine the nature, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered
- To provide further information on the origins and development of Oldbury from the medieval period to the present day
- To contribute to any existing corpus of academic knowledge
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions

5.4 The evaluation recommended above is only the first stage in the archaeological investigation of each of the sites recommended. The scope of any further archaeological recording on each of the sites will depend on the results of the preliminary (and second phase if appropriate) evaluation of surviving archaeological deposits.

5.5 If evaluation indicates that significant archaeological evidence survives on the site, and would be negatively impacted by the proposed redevelopment, a further stage of detailed archaeological excavation and recording will be carried out, in accordance with a site-specific Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the Borough Archaeologist, which sets out specific aims of further recording work.

## **6.0 General Methodology**

6.1 The evaluation shall be supported by a written scheme of investigation.

6.2 The contractor is expected to follow the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

6.3 Details including the name, qualifications and experience, of the site director and all other project personnel (including specialist staff) shall be supplied to the Borough Archaeologist as part of the written scheme of investigation.

6.4 Notification of the supervisor/project manager's name and the members of the team shall be provided in writing to Borough Archaeologist at least one week in advance of commencement of work.

6.5 The site code for this project is ODFCW05.

6.6 All the latest Health and Safety guidelines shall be followed on site.

6.7 Should the client wish to curtail the investigation for any reason at any point in advance of its completion the contractor will still be expected to produce a full report including specialist finds assessments within the timetable set out below.

6.8 The IFA's *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* should be used for additional guidance in the production of the written scheme of investigation, the content of the report, and the general execution of the project.

## **7. Evaluation Methodology**

7.1 The contractor shall ensure detailed study of all mains service locations and avoid damage to these.

7.2 Prior to the commencement of on-site works the contractor must consult the Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record (Fay de Souza 0121 568 4216) and undertake a rapid map regression exercise based on the sources held at the Local Studies Section of Smethwick Library. This information will assist in on-site interpretation.

7.3 It is recommended that a minimum of 5% of the area to be developed is investigated by trial trenching. The trial trenches will be machine excavated using a toothless ditching bucket, and under the supervision and to the satisfaction of a professional archaeologist. The exposed sub-soil or archaeological horizon will be hand cleaned in all trenches and any archaeological deposits or negative features planned.

7.4 At least 50% of all contained features shall be excavated. A stated percentage of structural and linear features to be excavated shall be provided in the WSI. For those trenches where substantial nineteenth and twentieth century masonry remains are encountered hand dug test pits will be excavated within the trench in order to examine the presence/absence of earlier remains. NOTE: In some circumstances it may be necessary to use shoring to support the sides of the trench, but advice must be sought from the Borough Archaeologist before employing this methodology.

7.5 Details of how all archaeological contexts and artefacts will be excavated, surveyed, recovered and recorded shall be provided. The site grid will be tied to the national grid.

7.6 Details of the site planning policy shall be given in the WSI. The normal preferred policy for the scale of archaeological site plans is 1:20 and sections at 1:10, unless circumstances indicate that other scales would be more appropriate.

7.7 The photographic record shall consist of photographs in both monochrome and colour mediums with negatives if 35mm or medium format cameras are used in preference to digital cameras. This shall include both general and feature specific photographs, a photographic

scale (including north arrow) shall be included in the case of detailed photographs. A photographic register and supporting plan detailing as a minimum feature number, location, and direction of shot shall accompany the photographic record.

7.8 The contractor must arrange, through a suitably qualified specialist, the assessment of the environmental and metallurgical potential of the site through the examination of suitable deposits. Guidance should be sought from the appropriate English Heritage Regional Advisor in Archaeological Science and details of the methodology included within the WSI.

## **8.0 Finds**

8.1 All finds, where appropriate, shall be washed and marked with both the site code and context number.

8.2 The WSI shall include an agreed list of specialist consultants who might be required to conserve and/or report on finds, and advise or report on other aspects of the investigation.

8.3 Finds work should be to accepted professional standards and adhere to the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Guidelines for Finds Work*. Details of the finds retrieval policy must be included within the WSI.

8.4 The requirements for conservation and storage shall be agreed with Wednesbury Museum prior to the start of work, and confirmed in writing with the Borough Archaeologist.

## **9.0 Results**

9.1 The draft full report including all specialist assessments of artefact assemblages shall be submitted to the Borough Archaeologist within six weeks of completing the fieldwork for approval. Once approved a total of eight copies plus a copy on CD-ROM are to be supplied to the Borough Archaeologist for general distribution.

9.2 The report must contain:

- The aims and methods adopted during the course of the evaluation.

- Detailed results including a suitable conclusion and discussion. This must be linked to the research objectives cited above and consider the sites in their local, regional and national context.
- An assessment of the local, regional national importance of the site. The latter should be based on the criteria for scheduling as set out in Annex 4 of PPG 16 (DoE 1990).
- Impact Assessment and recommended mitigation strategy will be used to assess the impact of the proposal on the surviving archaeological resource.
- The contractor is also expected to formulate a mitigation strategy and future research programme. The latter should be based on national/regional/local research frameworks and identify the aims/objectives of any future excavation.
- Although the emphasis should be on those deposits that are likely to be destroyed, the wider potential the site must also be considered
- A concise non-technical summary of the project results
- All specialist reports and assessments
- Site location plan, copies of any historical maps and a representative sample of the photographs including colour prints
- Location plan of trenches in relation to the proposed development. All corners of each trench shall be given a 10 figure grid reference
- A section/s within each trench showing the depth of deposits including the present ground level with Ordnance Datum, vertical and horizontal scale
- Sufficient plans by period and area to aid interpretation
- Artefact illustrations that would be submitted in any future publication

9.3 The following appendices should also be included:

- Location and summary of the archive contents
- Completed summary sheet (copy attached to brief)
- Photographic register
- Archaeological brief, the approved contractors' written scheme of investigation together with the completed pro-forma and site location plan which were submitted as part of the planning application

9.4 The proposed format of the report will be described within the WSI.



## **10.0 Archive**

10.1 Before commencing any fieldwork, the Contractor must contact the Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick Library (High Street, Smethwick, West Midlands B661AB. Tel. 0121 5582561), to determine the requirements for the deposition of the archive.

10.2 The archive should include the record photographs, negatives, colour slides, film register, and digital information together with a copy of the Report.

10.3 Photographic prints should be re-produced at a minimum of five by four inches and labelled on the back using indelible ink with the film and frame number, date, photographers name together with the site code, name and grid reference; the photographs being mounted in archival quality sleeves.

10.4 It is the responsibility of the Contractor to meet the Community History and Archives Service requirements with regard to the preparation of material for deposition.

10.5 Written notification of the commencement of fieldwork shall be given to Community History and Archives Service at the same time as the Borough Archaeologist.

10.6 A summary of the contents of the archive shall be supplied to Borough Archaeologist at the time of deposition.

## **11.0 Monitoring**

11.1 The Borough Archaeologist will be responsible for monitoring progress and standards throughout the project and should be kept regularly informed during fieldwork, interpretation and reporting stages.

11.2 Written Notification of the start date will be given to the Borough Archaeologist at least one week before the commencement of work and once the fieldwork stage of the investigation has been completed.

## **12.0 Contractors Written Scheme of Investigation**

12.1 Any variations to the WSI shall be agreed in writing with the Borough Archaeologist before being implemented.

12.2 This Brief has been written following a cursory examination of the site by the Borough Archaeologist, potential contractors are therefore strongly advised to carry out their own inspection before submitting a written quotation.

12.3 If on first visiting the site or at any time during the recording exercise, it appears that:

- i) part or the whole of the site is not amenable to the recording programme outlined above, and/or
  - ii) an alternative approach may be more appropriate or likely to produce more informative results, and/or
  - iii) any features that should be recorded as having a bearing on the interpretation of the site have been omitted,
- then it is expected that the Contractor will contact the Borough Archaeologist as a matter of urgency.

**For further information regarding the content of this Brief please contact the author at the address below. As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content and presentation of this Archaeological Brief.**

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**LAND AT THE FORMER CORUS STEEL WORKS,  
OFF BROADWELL ROAD AND BIRMINGHAM  
ROAD, OLDBURY, SANDWELL.**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND  
BUILDING RECORDING:  
WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION**

**Planning application reference no. DC/05/4437**

**Agent: Henry Mein Partnership**

**Archaeological Contractor: Birmingham Archaeology**

**THE UNIVERSITY  
OF BIRMINGHAM**



**Birmingham  
Archaeology**

**Land at the former Corus Steel Works, off Broadwell Road and Birmingham Road, Oldbury, Sandwell.**

**Archaeological evaluation and building recording: Written Scheme of Investigation**

Planning application reference no. DC/05/4437

*Birmingham Archaeology*

**1.0 Introduction**

This document describes the programme of work required to undertake an archaeological investigation at the above site. It forms the written scheme of investigation for the work, which is a requirement of the brief prepared by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (Sandwell M.B.C. 2005). Any variation in the scope of work would be agreed with the Borough Archaeologist, Sandwell M.B.C before implementation.

A planning application (Planning Application Reference No. DC/05/4437) has been submitted to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council for the redevelopment of the former Corus steel works involving the demolition of existing buildings and the construction of a parcels sorting unit with ancillary offices and hard standing. As the proposed development site is of possible archaeological significance an archaeological evaluation and building recording was recommended by the Borough Archaeologist, Sandwell M.B.C. Due to the presence of standing buildings on the development site the evaluation of most of the site cannot be carried out until the buildings have been demolished. The building recording and part of the evaluation can be carried out before demolition. The evaluation of the rest of the site will need to be undertaken after the proposed demolition of existing structures (to be carried out in three separate phases) and the removal of floor slab and before any proposed construction works begins.

**2.0 Site description and location**

The eastern part of the former Corus steel works (centred on NGR SO 997 895, see attached plan and hereafter referred to as 'the site') is situated off Broadwell Road and Bridge Street, Oldbury close to Oldbury town centre and east of the River Tame. The site is bounded by an elevated section of the M5 motorway and the Birmingham Canal to the south and east, Birmingham Canal/ railway line to the north and by industrial buildings fronting onto Broadwell Road and Bridge Street to the west. The site covers an area of 10.95 ha. and currently contains structures associated with the former steel works and a former railway carriage works (see attached plan). The site is located at a height of approximately 140m AOD.

### 3.0 Archaeological and historical background

Section 4.0 of the brief provides the archaeological background to the site. The site is close to the location of Blakely Mill, as depicted on Ogilby's map of 1675. This mill was first referred to in 1302, "when the millers of Blakele, Walwyke and of the new mill were summoned to appear before the next court in order that they should take an oath to observe manorial regulations as to the grinding of malt (brasii)" (Dilworth 1976, 179). The approximate former location of Blakely Mill is registered on the Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record (PRN 6354) and is immediately to the west of the site close to the western boundary of the site. It is possible that archaeological features and deposits associated with the medieval mill or later mills may exist within the site.

To the south of the site the former medieval Blakely Hall is depicted on a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Tithe map and the first edition Ordnance Map of 1890 and a trackway or road, aligned northwest- southeast, crosses the site and provides access to Blakely Hall via a canal bridge. The first edition Ordnance Map also shows 'Mill Farm' at the western boundary of the development site. The northwest part of the site is shown occupied by a railway carriage engineering works, Broadwell Colliery and an associated canal basin, with the rest of the site shown as fields. Later editions of the Ordnance Survey maps show that the engineering works expanded to occupy most of the site by the 1930s.

The place name Oldbury may indicate a possible Iron Age hillfort could be located in the area and several prehistoric finds have been recorded in the area, as well as numerous Roman coins. The site is near to the historic core of Oldbury town and although the earliest cartographic evidence of Oldbury town is Ogilby's map of 1675, finds dating to the medieval period have been recorded.

### 4.0 Aims

The aims of the archaeological evaluation are to:

- to establish the presence/ absence of archaeological remains within the site
- to define the nature, date, preservation, extent and significance of archaeological deposits and features
- To provide further information on the development of Oldbury from the medieval period to the present day
- To contribute to the corpus of academic knowledge
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation, subject to any confidentiality regulations

These aims will be achieved through a programme archaeological trial-trenching and building recording.

### 5.0 Method

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The proposed development of the site will be undertaken in three phases (see attached plan). Phase 1 of the development, at the east part of the site, will be carried out first. This will involve demolition of existing structures and the breaking up and removal of existing concrete floor slab. Following this construction of the proposed new buildings would take place. After the completion of the construction at the Phase 1 area, demolition and construction would take place at the Phase 2 area. Finally, this would be followed by demolition and construction at the Phase 3 area. The completion of the proposed development is currently envisaged in June 2007. The Phase 1 area is approx. 4.6ha, Phase 2 approx. 2.45ha and Phase 3 approx. 3.9 ha.

Due to the fact that existing structures and hard standing occupy most of the site the evaluation would have to be carried out in phases, after demolition of the existing structures in each phase and before construction works. However, the building recording in the Phase 2 area must be carried out after the vacation of the site and before demolition. It should also be possible to carry out the trial- trenching in the Phase 1 area before demolition, if required.

#### *Trial-trenching*

The fieldwork at the Phase 1 area will be undertaken over one week including survey location of trenches and the monitoring of overburden removal. Three 50m x 1.8m trial- trenches (totalling 270m<sup>2</sup>) will be excavated in the Phase 1 area. Two of these will be located to investigate a trackway, leading to the former Blakely Hall, which appears on the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Tithe map. The other trench will be situated close to the Birmingham Canal within an area of archaeological interest as defined by the UDP (Sandwell M.B.C. 2004). Two 20m x 1.8m trial- trenches and one 30m x 1.8m trench (totalling 126m<sup>2</sup>) will be located within the Phase 2 area to investigate the possible survival of a canal basin depicted on tithe and early O.S. maps, serving a former railway carriage works and Broadwell Colliery. The highest amount of trial-trenching will be in the Phase 3 area where seven 50m x 1.8m trial-trenches will be excavated (totalling 630m<sup>2</sup>). These trenches will investigate an area close to the location of the former Blakely Mill and the later Mill Farm and are partially located within an area of archaeological interest as defined by the UDP (Sandwell M.B.C. 2004).

Trial-trenches will be surveyed-in using an EDM total station. A 360<sup>0</sup> degree tracked excavator, fitted with a toothless bucket, will be used to remove modern overburden down to either the natural subsoil or the upper surface of the first significant archaeological deposit. All machining will be carried out under the supervision of a qualified archaeologist.

Soil from machine excavation will be temporarily stored on-site, at the side of each trial-trench. Machining will normally be to the top of the uppermost archaeological deposit or to the top of the natural subsoil if no archaeological deposits survive. Any subsequent cleaning and excavation will be by hand. A representative sample of archaeological features and deposits will be manually sample excavated sufficiently to

define their character and to obtain suitable dating evidence. Generally, 50% of pits or postholes and a 1m section of linear/ curvi-linear features will be excavated. Archaeological deposits will not be completely excavated unless this is unavoidable. The depth of archaeological deposits across the site will be assessed, although the full length of every trench will not necessarily be excavated down to natural.

Suitable archaeological deposits and features will be sampled and their potential for environmental analysis will be assessed. Archaeological deposits will be appropriately sampled in line with the guidelines laid out by '*Environmental Archaeology and Archaeological Evaluations- recommendation regarding the environmental archaeology component of archaeological evaluations in England*'. (Association for Environmental Archaeology working paper no 2, 1995). In general, this will include sampling deposits that are archaeologically relevant and/or can be tied into a chronological framework. Guidance may be sought from the English Heritage Regional Advisor for Archaeological science.

Pro-forma trench record forms will be completed for each trench after machining and the locations all potential archaeological features will be recorded on these. Locations of potential archaeological features will be tagged on the ground. Recording will be by means of pre-printed pro-formas for contexts and features, supplemented by plans (at 1:20 and 1:50), sections (at 1:10 and 1:20), monochrome print and colour slide photography. The vertical stratigraphy of all trenches will be recorded.

Recovered finds will be cleaned, marked and remedial conservation work will be undertaken, where necessary. Treatment of all finds will conform to guidance contained within *a strategy for the care and investigation of finds* published by English Heritage and the document *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage* published by UKIC. Finds which are 'treasure' with reference to the Treasure Act 1997 will be reported to the Coroner and the appropriate procedures will be followed. Any human remains uncovered will be initially left in situ and will only be excavated if necessary, following receipt of the appropriate Home Office licence.

### *Building recording*

The building recording will be carried out on two brick- built structures (see attached plan), in the Phase 2 area, probably associated with the former 19<sup>th</sup> century railway carriage works. The level of recording will be equivalent to the Level 1 standard outlined by Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME 1996). This will consist of a photographic survey and written account. The photographic survey will be carried out with 35mm cameras using monochrome print and colour slide film.

At least one weeks notice of the start of fieldwork will be given to the Borough Archaeologist and the Community History and Archives Service, Sandwell M.B.C. Review/ monitoring meetings will be arranged during the fieldwork.

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## **5.0 Staffing**

The project will be managed and directed for Birmingham Archaeology by Laurence Jones Cert He (B. Archaeol) MIFA (or a Birmingham Archaeology Project Manager of equivalent experience) and supervised in the field by a suitably qualified and experienced archaeological supervisor (details to be notified, prior to the commencement of the fieldwork) assisted by a team of up to five experienced site assistants.

Specialist staff will be, where appropriate:

Dr Lawrence Barfield- Flint artefacts, freelance consultant lithics specialist.

Dr Ann Woodward- Prehistoric pottery, Research Fellow, Birmingham Archaeology, University of Birmingham.

Dr Jeremy Evans- Roman pottery, Honorary Research Fellow, Birmingham Archaeology, University of Birmingham.

C. Jane Evans- Roman pottery, freelance consultant pottery specialist

Stephanie Rátkai- Saxon, medieval and post-medieval pottery, Honorary Research Associate, (University of Birmingham).

Erica Macey-Bracken- Small finds, Birmingham Archaeology, University of Birmingham

Dr Malcolm Hislop MIFA- Recording of standing buildings, Research Fellow, Birmingham Archaeology, University of Birmingham.

Dr Andy Howard- Geomorphology, Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, University of Birmingham.

Dr James Greig- English Heritage Archaeological Scientist - pollen and plant macro-fossils.

Dr Wendy Smith- Charred plant remains, Research Fellow, University of Birmingham.

Matilda Holmes- Animal bone, freelance consultant archaeozoologist.

Dr David Smith- Micro-fauna, Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, University of Birmingham.

Professor David Keen- Molluscs, Birmingham Archaeology, University of Birmingham.

Dr Megan Brickley- Human Bone, Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, University of Birmingham.

Dr Roger White- Coins and brooches, Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, University of Birmingham.

Jane Cowgill- slag and industrial residues, freelance consultant.

Rowena Gale- charcoal and wood.

## 6.0 Report

A report would be produced for each of the three phases of evaluation. On completion of the fieldwork post-excavation work for each phase, including finds processing/conservation, analysis and primary research, will be undertaken. A site archive will be compiled and an illustrated report will be prepared. This report would be in the format required by the *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (published by English Heritage), to include:

- (a) Summary.
- (b) Description of the archaeological background.
- (c) Method.
- (d) A narrative description of the results and discussion of the evidence, set in their local, regional and national research context, supported by appropriate plans, sections and photographs.
- (e) Summary of the finds and environmental evidence.
- (f) Specialist assessments of the finds and environmental evidence.
- (g) Impact assessment and recommended mitigation strategy

The written report will be made publicly accessible, as part of the Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record within six months of completion. Eight copies of the report will be lodged with the Borough Archaeologist, Sandwell M.B.C. A digital copy on CD-ROM will be provided. A summary report may be submitted for inclusion in *West Midlands Archaeology*. If the results are considered of regional or national importance it may be appropriate to publish the report in an archaeological journal.

## 7.0 Archive

The site archive will be prepared according to the guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects. The completed archive will be placed with the Community History and Archives Service, Sandwell M.B.C., subject to the approval of the landowner.

## 8.0 Timetable

A timetable has not been agreed at present. It is envisaged that the Phase 1 fieldwork will be undertaken over a period of two weeks, prior to or after the proposed Phase 1 demolition works. The illustrated report would then be available within six weeks of the completion of fieldwork. Demolition works in the Phase 2 and 3 areas may take place in mid 2006 and evaluation of each of these areas could also be carried out over a three week period with separate reports available six weeks after the completion of fieldwork.

## 9.0 General

All project staff will adhere to the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The project will follow the requirements set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994, revised 2001) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standard Buildings or Structures* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1996. Revised, September 2001).

A detailed Risk Assessment will be prepared prior to the commencement of fieldwork. All current health and safety legislation, regulations and guidance will be complied with. The excavation will conform to the *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992*.

## 10.0 References

- Dilworth, D. 1976 *The Tame Mills of Staffordshire*. London, Philimore.
- RCHME, 1996 *Recording Historic Buildings: A Descriptive Specification (Third Edition)*. Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England.
- Sandwell M.B.C, 2004 *Sandwell Unitary Development Plan*. Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council April 2004. <http://sandwelludp.wisshost.net/>
- Sandwell M.B.C, 2005 *Archaeological evaluation, former Corus steel works, off Broadwell Road and Birmingham Road, Oldbury*.

**Birmingham Archaeology,  
25<sup>th</sup> January 2006**