

Shenstone Park, Park Lane,
Little Hay, Staffordshire:
An Archaeological Watching
Brief.

**Shenstone Park, Park Lane, Little Hay, Staffordshire:
An Archaeological Watching Brief**

by
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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Birmingham Archaeology in November 2004 at Shenstone Park, Park Lane, Little Hay, Lichfield, Staffordshire (NGR SK 1198 0361). The work was commissioned by R. and R. K. Bartlett as part of planning conditions laid down by Lichfield District Council (planning ref 04/00102/FUL).

All groundworks associated with the construction of an agricultural storage building were monitored, as the development area lies within 50m of a Scheduled Ancient Monument (a 13th century moated manor house, SAM No. 22437 and HER No. PRN 01104). The site is also within what were the grounds to an 18th century manor house, close to the stable block which still survives and is Grade II listed (HER No. PRN 11630, Listed Building Volume No. 1908).

No significant archaeology was recorded. The natural sand and gravel was located c.0.4m below ground level across the site, overlain by a modern yard surface. A small, undated posthole was noted in the east corner of the stripped area and a large pit probably associated with the farm was located in the north corner. An area of modern disturbance was also found in the pipe trench excavated around the edge of the stripped area, along with an earlier pit or ditch dated to the 16th-17th century.

1.0 Introduction

This report outlines an archaeological watching brief undertaken at Shenstone Park in November 2004. Due to the possibility of archaeological features and deposits related to a nearby Scheduled Ancient Monument being disturbed during the development, an archaeological watching brief was recommended by the Historic Environment Officer, Staffordshire County Council, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, Lichfield District Council. It follows on from a written scheme of investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2004), required by Lichfield District Council and is part of the conditions of planning permission (planning reference 04/00102/FUL) granted by Lichfield District Council to R. & R. K. Bartlett. Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by R. and R. K. Bartlett to monitor all groundworks associated with the construction of an agricultural storage building.

2.0 Site location

The proposed development site is located at Shenstone Park, Park Lane, Little Hay, Lichfield, Staffordshire (centred on NGR SK 1198 0361, see Fig. 1). The site is on agricultural land and covers an area of less than 800 sq. metres and is at a height of approx. 90m AOD. The solid geology of the area is characterised by Permian and Triassic sandstones including undifferentiated bunter and keuper with superficial deposits of boulder clay and sands and gravels.

3.0 Archaeological background

Shenstone Park is mentioned in documentary sources of 1236 and Henry VIII had a royal deer park here that was still in existence in 1642 (Page 1908; Shaw 1976). The site is less than 50m northeast of a Scheduled Ancient Monument recorded on the Staffordshire County Council Historic Environment Record (Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 22437 and Historic Environment Record No. PRN 01104). The monument consists of a rectangular moated site, approximately 100m x 80m, with a moat up to 15m wide and 4m deep. The moat contains a central platform, approximately 80m x 50m, now overgrown but in a good state of preservation (Plate 1). This is thought to be the site of a hunting lodge erected here by the Doyley family after the Norman conquest and it was probably abandoned in the 17th century (Shaw 1976).

The site is also in the grounds of a former 18th century house and an associated 18th century grade II listed red brick stable block (Historic Environment Record No. PRN 11630, Listed Building Volume No. 1908), lies 50m to the east. This stable block is the only known surviving above ground evidence of the house.

4.0 Aims

The archaeological watching brief was intended to provide a record of any archaeological deposits or features which might be revealed during groundworks in the development area, and to provide an understanding of the history and the significance of the archaeology of the site as a whole.

These aims were achieved through a programme of archaeological monitoring visits to the site during groundworks:

- to monitor all groundworks, including the excavation of foundation and service trenches,
- to record the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains affected by the development works,
- to preserve any archaeological deposits exposed 'by record', and conserve for future analysis all artefactual/ ecofactual material recovered from the site.

5.0 Methodology

The groundworks involved the machine stripping of the topsoil over the footprint of the building prior to the laying of hardcore (Plate 2), followed by the machine excavation of approximately 20 stanchions measuring approx. 1m x 1m intended to hold the uprights for the agricultural building. All groundworks, including a service trench to carry water around the building, were monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist to standards set out by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (2001). Salvage recording of any archaeological deposits and features revealed by contractors' groundworks was carried out. Stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present.

Contextual information was supplemented by scale drawings, plans, sections and photographs that, together with recovered artefacts, form the site archive.

The site archive consists of all artifactual and ecofactual data recovered during the watching brief and will be prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage 1991), the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage (Walker 1990) and Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological collections (Museum and Art Galleries Commission 1992). It is intended that the archive will be deposited with an appropriate museum, such as the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, with the prior notification and agreement of the museum. The *Conditions for the Acceptance of Archaeological Material from Excavations and Fieldwork*, as stated by the museum, will be adhered to.

6.0 Results

Monitoring of the topsoil strip over the footprint of the building (Fig.2, Plate 2) showed the red orange sand and gravel natural (1001) to be c.0.4m below ground level. Overlying this was a dark brown silty organic layer mixed with modern compacted brick rubble and cobbles (1000), which formed a rough yard surface.

A single feature of potential archaeological interest was noted (F100), cutting into the natural, below layer 1000. This feature was a small posthole, 0.4m in diameter and 0.08m deep, filled with a mid-brown silty sand (1002) with occasional small rounded stones (Fig.2, Plate 3). No finds were recovered from this feature. A modern pipe trench was visible running across the stripped area, supplying water to the current storage barns, along with an area of disturbance along the south-east edge of the site. This was an irregular shaped patch of dark brown silty sand, c.2m x >1m in diameter. This appeared to be a tree bowl and contained fragments of modern glass in the top 0.1m of the fill. The strip running along the north-western side of the building footprint had already been covered with hardcore before it could be recorded, therefore it became necessary to monitor the excavation of the stanchions in this area (Fig.2). It was unnecessary to monitor the excavation of the remaining stanchions as the rest of the area had been established to be free of archaeology.

Six of the eight stanchion holes along the north-west side of the development area contained no archaeology, the red sand natural was visible c.0.4m below the surface, directly under the recently laid hardcore. The two excavated holes in the north corner of the building footprint (Fig.2) contained a dark brown organic silty deposit below the hardcore, with reached to a depth of greater than 1.5m. No finds were recovered from this context, however, the contractor suggested that this may be the remains of a very large pit which was excavated in this area, which he remembers being open roughly 20 years ago.

Monitoring of the service trench excavated around the building (Fig.2) revealed only limited evidence for past activity on the site. A large possible ditch (F101) was noted roughly 15m from the north-east end of the trench (Fig.2). This was 4.2m wide and

greater than 0.7m deep (Plate 4). The fill was a dark brown silty sand containing brick rubble and a horse shoe (1003). The brick was determined to be c.16th-17th century (Hislop *pers. comm.*). Another area of disturbance was noted in the south-east end of the trench. Being greater than 6m wide and greater than 0.7m deep, this feature or layer appeared to be modern.

7.0 Discussion

The presence of the large pit or ditch dated to the 16th-17th century, represents occupation to the north-east of the development area at this time. The hunting lodge of the Doyle family, which was erected in the 12th century, is thought to have survived until the 17th century (Shaw 1976). This pit or ditch may relate to activity in the latter years of the lodge's life or to the abandonment of the site and demolition of any buildings prior to the construction of the new house in the eighteenth century.

However, no archaeology relating to the 18th century house was located within the development area. It is possible that the ground level here has been substantially truncated, removing any previous archaeology. Indeed the presence of an isolated shallow posthole, suggests some truncation of the ground level in this area. It is equally possible, however, that no significant prior occupation had existed within the development area, since more substantial features relating to earlier structures would be expected to have survived to some extent. There appears, therefore, to have been no significant structural or occupation activity within the confines of the development area in the past.

8.0 Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by Emma Hancox, who wrote the report. Laurence Jones managed the project and John Halsted edited the report. Bryony Ryder prepared the figures and Dr. Malcolm Hislop dated the brick. Thanks are due to the contractors, Eco Drainage Ltd, for their assistance on site, and to the developers R. and R. K. Bartlett.

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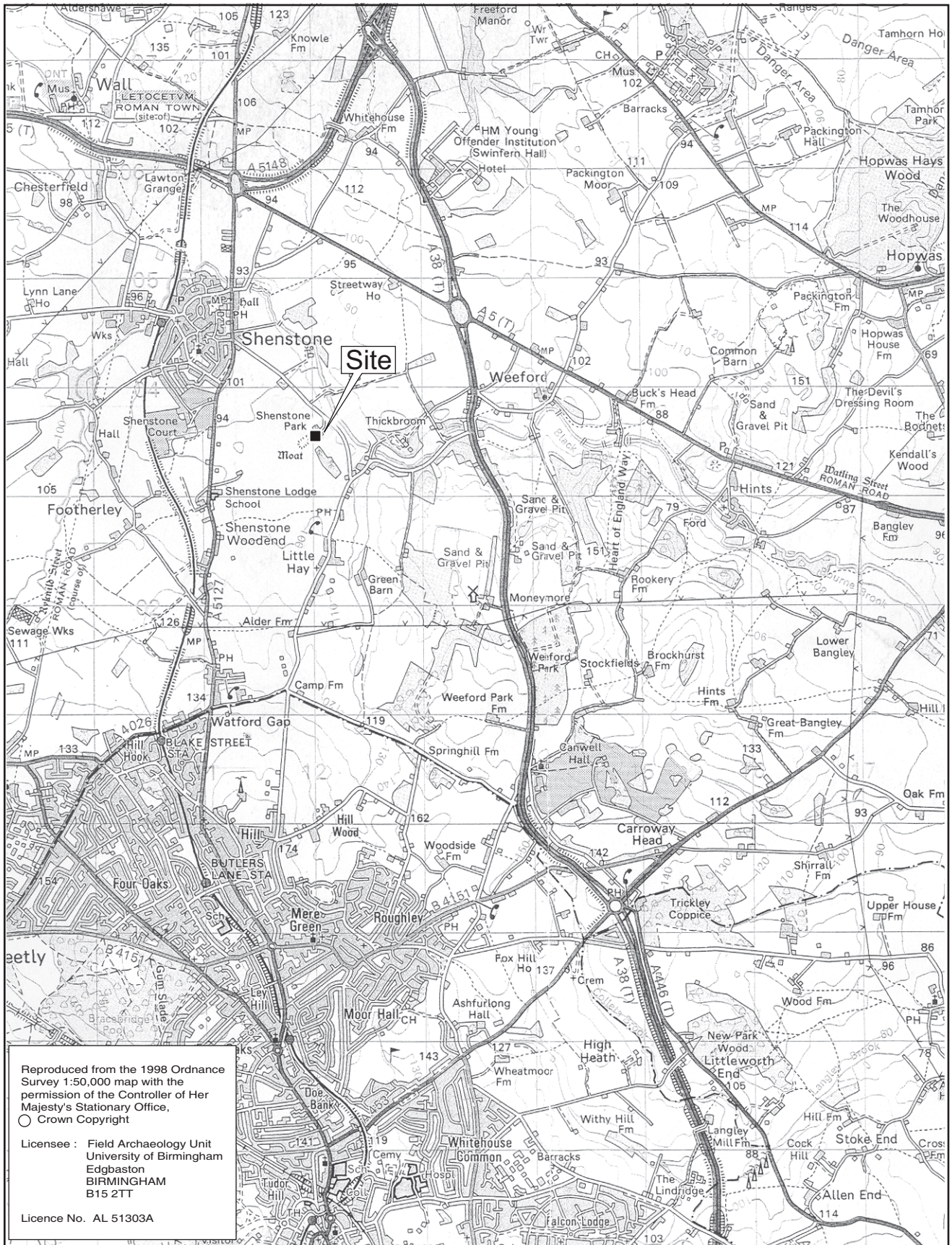


Fig.1

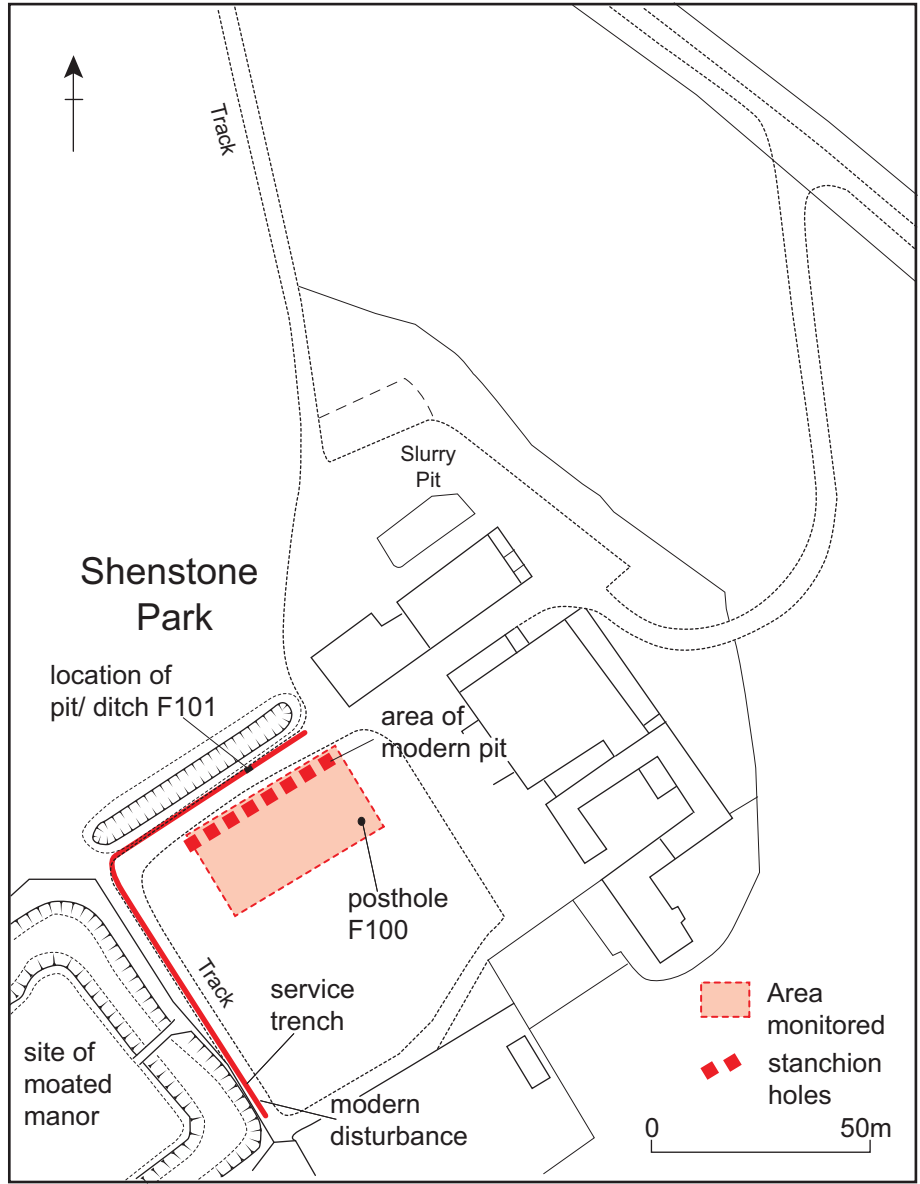


Fig.2



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4