

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

ROPES COURSE CONDOVER HALL

For Travel Class Ltd

Matthew Williams MA MCIfA

L~P:ARCHÆOLOGY

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

ROPES COURSE CONDOVER HALL

Client:	Travel Class Ltd
Local Authority:	Shropshire County Council
NGR:	349390,305690
Planning App:	14/03855/FUL
Author(s):	M. Williams
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A trading name of L – P : Heritage LLP.

The Pump House | Coton Hill | Shrewsbury, SY1 2DP | +44 [0]1743 361552 | marches@lparchaeology.com

www.lparchaeology.com

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Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during groundworks for a new Ropes Course at Condover Hall, Condover. The Watching Brief was implemented because of the potential for archaeological remains, specifically any deposits relating to an historic road leading south from Condover to Ryton.

The site is on the south side of Condover Hall on the lower terrace. Condover Hall is a Grade I Listed stone hall dating to 1598.

No evidence for a road was seen. However, a large brick culvert was exposed within the stripped area. It consists of a 2.25m wide brick arch, a large section of which had collapsed. The exposed northwest section was made from pre-cast concrete and is clearly modern. The culvert probably relates to the construction of the lower terrace in the early 19th century. It is no longer functioning and is considered of low significance.

1. Introduction

1.1. This report details the results of an archaeological Watching Brief carried out at Condover Hall for Travel Class Ltd. The site is located at Condover, SY5 7AF (NGR 349330,305622) hereafter referred to as 'the site' (FIGURE 1). The local authority is Shropshire County Council (SCC).

1.2. Planning consent has been granted for the construction of a new Ropes Course on the south side of the Hall. The application reference is 14/03855/FUL.

1.3. The fieldwork was carried out by Marcus Headifen on the 15th and 16th January 2015 and this report was written by Matthew Williams of L - P : Archaeology. The site code allocated by L - P : Archaeology is 1713M.RPS.

1.4. The work was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by L - P : Archaeology, doc ref LP1713M-WSI-v3.1 (L - P : ARCHAEOLOGY 2014).

2. Site Background

- 2.1. The bedrock geology is Salop formation (mudstone, sandstone and conglomerate) and the drift deposits are alluvium and river gravel terraces associated with the River Cound (BRITISH GEOLOGICAL SURVEY 2014). This was confirmed by the observations during the watching brief.
- 2.2. The site is within a lawned terrace on the south side of the Hall at approximately 80m OD.
- 2.3. The historic core of the village of Condover comprises the church and settlement to the west of the church along Church Street and Station Road. Condover Hall and estate was built at the turn of the 17th century just to the southeast of the church. The village has expanded considerably to the west of Station Road and this area consists of mid to late 20th century low density houses and bungalows. The area to the south and west of the Hall is still open fields.
- 2.4. The original 17th century ornamental gardens are to the north of the Hall. In the 19th century two terraces were landscaped to the west of the Hall and the site is at the north end of the lower terrace. Just above the site are steps and a Grade II Listed seated exedra (List Entry 1059709, PRN18280). The bottom of the terrace is retained by a 19th century Grade II Listed wall (List Entry 1055708, PRN18278) that curves in at the northwest corner and terminates in a square pier, on which is a grotesque dwarf figure which is located about 9.5m northeast of the site. The statue is thought to have been designed by Reginald Cholmonley and originally held a wooden flag pole (Grade II Listed, List Entry 1308124, PRN18279).
- 2.5. The site is in the approximate location of an historic route, shown on an estate map of 1752, that ran south from Condover to Little Ryton.

3. Aims

- 3.1. The general aim of the watching brief was to record the character, date, location and preservation of any archaeological remains on the site.
- 3.2. The specific aim was to observe any remains relating to the historic route shown on the 1752 estate map, for example compacted or metalled surfaces.

4. Methodology

- 4.1. For a full description of the archaeological methodology please refer to the Written Scheme of Investigation (L - P: ARCHAEOLOGY 2014)
- 4.2. A roughly circular area with a diameter of 24m was stripped. The total area was approximately 450 sq. m. A live electricity cable was revealed in the northeast of the site at a depth of 0.20m. This area was not excavated further and the strip was extended 2m to the southwest to compensate (FIGURE 2).
- 4.3. The remaining area was stripped and archaeologically recorded (FIGURE 2). The natural drift geology was exposed and it was decided that further monitoring of the post holes would not be beneficial. This was agreed in discussions with the advisor to the Local Planning Authority, Andy Wigley, and confirmed in an email of 19th January 2015.

5. Results

- 5.1. A plan of the stripped area is given in Figure 2.
- 5.2. The upper layer was 0.30m of loose dark brown topsoil (01). This overlay moderately loose mid grey brown sand and gravel natural geology (02) (PLATE 3) which was excavated to a maximum thickness of 0.60m.
- 5.3. In the south of the site, overlain by (01) and cut into (02), was a large culvert. It ran the length of the stripped area of 24m and consisted of several distinct sections.
- 5.4. The western 3.50m was constructed of pre-cast concrete (07) which was partially visible in the lawn. It was filled with silt and rubble (PLATE 1).
- 5.5. The central 15m consisted of a collapsed brick culvert arch 2.25m wide (03). The arch had collapsed from a single break down the axis leaving the single course of foundation bricks in place at the base of the arch (PLATE 2 and PLATE 3) which were bedded into clean yellow sand. The arch bricks measured 300mm long by 120mm wide and 70mm deep and were laid on edge to form the arch. The foundation bricks were 200mm long and laid in a single row of headers. No bonding material was used in the arch or foundation. The collapse was overlain by mid brown silt (04).
- 5.6. The western section of the culvert consisted of an upstanding arch (06) supported at the base by a mortared brick foundation (08) (PLATE 2 and PLATE 3). The arch measured 2.25m across and was constructed of bricks 300mm long by 120mm wide and 70mm deep. The foundation (08) consisted of broken bricks 120mm wide (no full length bricks were present) and was bonded by a hard pale grey sand mortar. Between the two sections was a poorly constructed single brick width arch (05) of the same type of bricks as (03).
- 5.7. It appears that the arches (03) and (06) are part of the same build. The eastern section (03) collapsed and the arch (05) and bonded foundation (08) were constructed to strengthen the remaining standing part of the culvert (06). The concrete section (07) is the latest section and may relate to insertion or replacement of the metal drain in the lawn.
- 5.8. The thick deposit of silt and rubble infill of the concrete section demonstrate that it

is no longer functioning as part of a drainage system.

5.9. The initial construction of the culvert is likely to date to the construction of the lower terrace, the Listing Description (List Entry 1055708) suggests this took place in the early 19th century. There is no record of the repair although the use of brick suggests it occurred soon after the initial construction or during the first half of the 20th century. The concrete section is a modern build.

6. Finds and environmental samples

6.1. No finds were recovered and no environmental samples were taken during the work.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

- 7.1.1. A sub-circular area measuring 24m in diameter was stripped to a maximum depth of 0.70m. Natural gravel deposits were recorded at a depth of 0.30-0.40m.
- 7.1.2. The strip revealed a culvert which ran NW-SE at a depth of 0.20m. It was 2.25m wide and ran the full length of the stripped area. It had partially collapsed and a crude arch separated the standing section from the collapsed section. A mortared foundation had been added to the base of the standing section to strengthen it. The northwest exposed part of the culvert was made of modern pre-cast concrete.
- 7.1.3. The original construction of the culvert probably dates to the creation of the lower terrace (where it is located) in the early 19th century. The date of the collapse and subsequent repair is difficult to suggest but the crude arch and mortared foundation suggest it was pre WWII. The concrete section is clearly modern. The culvert is of local importance due to its association with the terrace and development of the Hall.
- 7.1.4. No evidence for a road or track was noted.

8. Archive

8.1. The paper archive consists of:

- ◆ 2 x Drawing Film
- ◆ 1 x Photographic Register
- ◆ 1 x CD of digital images and report
- ◆ 1 x Context Register
- ◆ 4 x Context sheets

8.2. The archive is to be deposited at the Shropshire Museum Service.

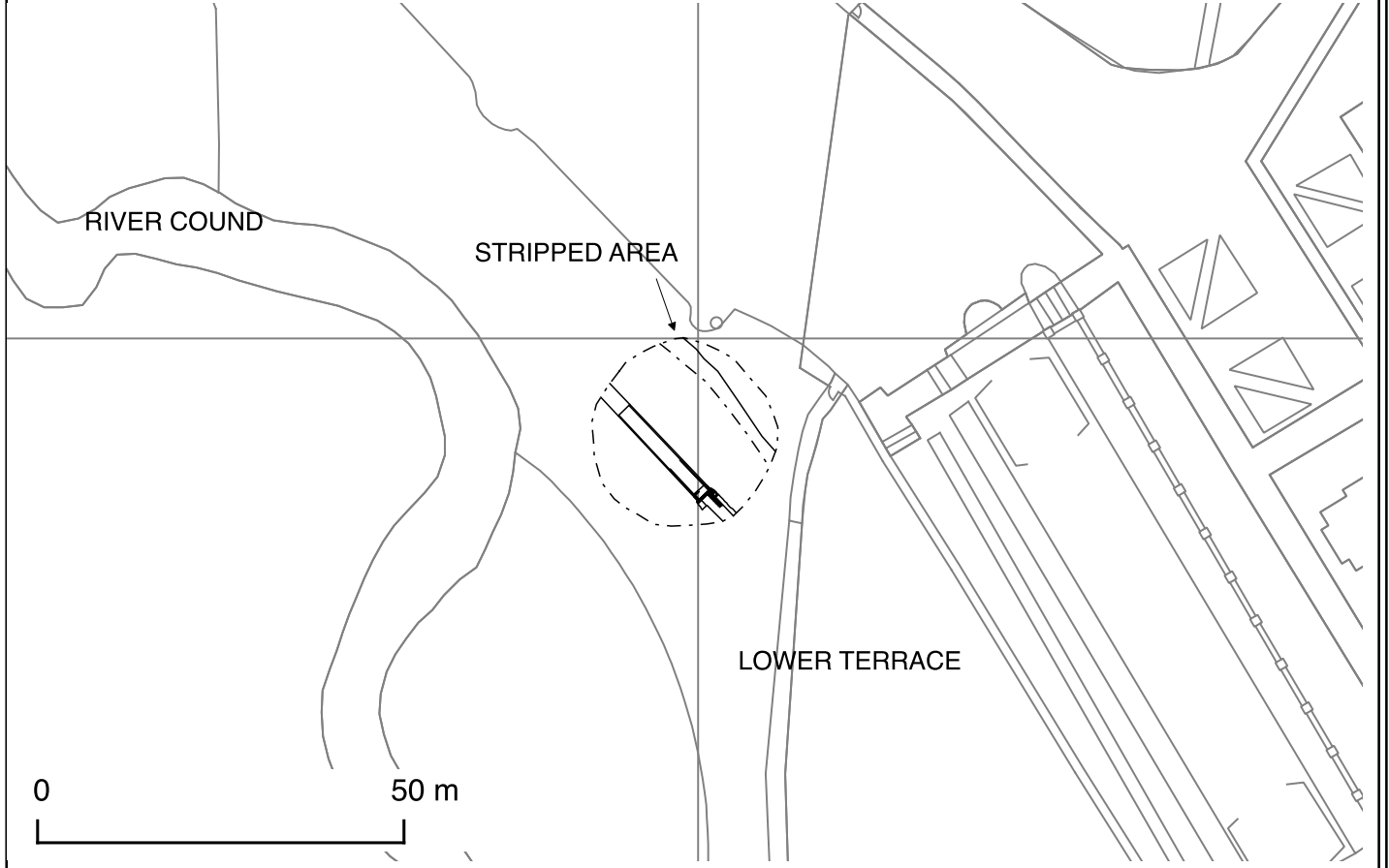
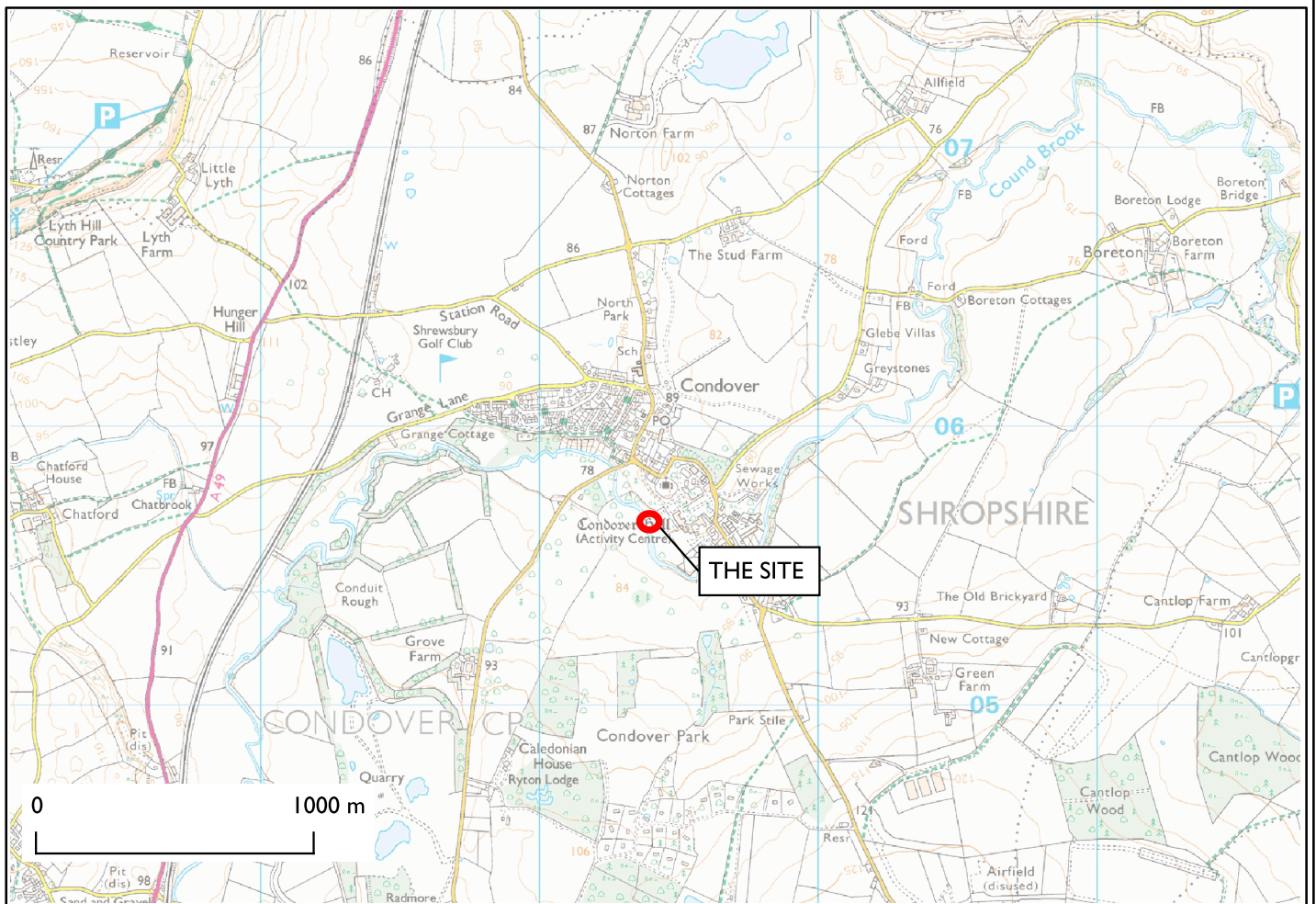
SOURCES CONSULTED

BRITISH GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, 2014. 'British Geological Survey GeoIndex'. Available at:
www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex.

L - P: ARCHÆOLOGY, 2014. *Specification for Archaeological watching Brief. Ropes Course, Condover Hall*. L - P: Archaeology.

FIGURES

FIGURE I // Site Location



PROJECT // 1713M - Condover Hall

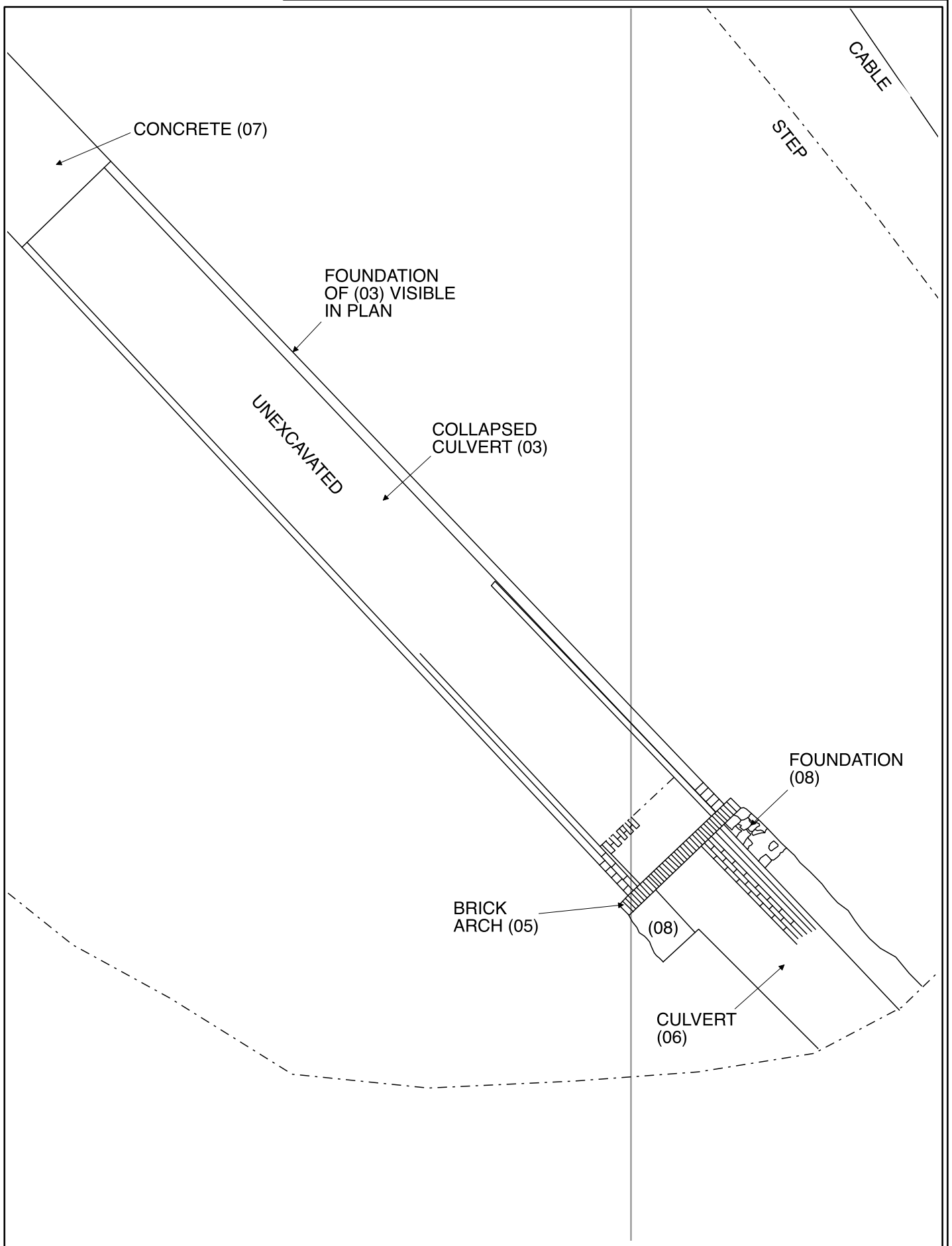
DESCRIPTION // Site Location

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FIGURE 2 // Site plan



0 5 m



PROJECT // 1713M - Condover Hall

DESCRIPTION // Site plan

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PLATES



Plate 1 - Concrete culvert (07) with rubble infill



Plate 2 - Culvert looking southeast showing collapse (03), arch (05) and culvert (06). 1m scale.



Plate 3 - Culvert looking southeast. Natural geology to right of structure. 2 x 1m scale

OASIS FORM

APPENDIX I

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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OASIS ID: lparchae1-205387

Project details

Project name	Condover Hall Ropes Course
Short description of the project	Watching brief in area on lower terrace on south side of Condover Hall, Condover.
Project dates	Start: 15-01-2015 End: 16-01-2015
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	LP1713M - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	14/03855/FUL - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Monument type	CULVERT Post Medieval
Significant Finds	N/A None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS

Project location

Country	England
Site location	SHROPSHIRE SHREWSBURY AND ATCHAM CONDOVER Condover Hall
Postcode	SY5 7AF
Study area	600.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	SJ 493 056 52.6454155905 -2.74942507457 52 38 43 N 002 44 57 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 79.00m Max: 80.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	L - P : Archaeology
Project brief originator	Consultant
Project design originator	L - P : Archaeology
Project director/manager	Matthew Williams
Project supervisor	Matthew Williams
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Travel Class Ltd

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive Exists?	No
Paper Archive recipient	Shropshire Museum Service
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report"

Entered by	Matthew Williams (m.williams@lparchaeology.com)
Entered on	5 March 2015

OASIS:

Please e-mail [English Heritage](#) for OASIS help and advice

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