

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

HUNTINGTON, WATER TREATMENT WORKS, CHESTER

For C2V+ on behalf of Untited Utilities

R Matthews BSc

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

HUNTINGTON, WATER TREATMENT WORKS, CHESTER

Client: C2V+ on behalf of United Utilities

Local Authority: Cheshire West and Chester Council

NGR: 341970, 363850

Planning App: Permitted development

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Abstract

An Archaeological Watching Brief was carried out during groundworks at Huntington Water Treatment Works, Cheshire. The Watching Brief was implemented because of the potential for archaeological remains on the site. The work was carried out by L - P : Archaeology. This report has been prepared by Rachael Matthews of L - P : Archaeology for C2V+ on behalf of United Utilities.

The site lies to the north of the modern A55, to the immediate south is the Scheduled Monument of a Medieval moated site called Huntington Hall (1012112) with associated outbuildings (1187379 & 1130633). To the east of the site is the former Saughton Camp where Romano-British occupation and elements of a co-axial field system have been discovered. Further Roman activity is identified to the west at the Scheduled Monument of Heronbridge (1006774, 1375779). With several listed buildings including Eaton Hall (1000127) and Meadowhouse Farmhouse (1330233) within a 500m radius.

The objectives of the Watching Brief were to determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits and where appropriate to record any archaeological remains on site.

During the Watching Brief a curvilinear feature was encountered at the south of the site, potentially a removed hedgerow, its

identification and date are uncertain. Several large areas of disturbance were identified as 19th century pond features on the historic mapping, which have since been filled in and several intact 20th century north-south aligned field drains were observed. The site produced a sherd of 13th/14th century Medieval pottery and a 14th/15th century fragment of Medieval floor tile. The remaining ceramics dated from 1740s to 20th century, with remains of building material and industrial waste identified from across the site.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report details the results of an Archaeological Watching Brief carried out at Huntington Water Treatment Works, Huntington, Chester, CH3 6DQ for C2V+ on behalf of United Utilities. The local authority is Cheshire West and Cheshire Council (FIGURE 1).
- 1.2. The fieldwork was carried out by Rachael Matthews and Rebecca Jones of L – P : Archaeology between 21st August and 7th September 2017. This report was written by Rachael Matthews of L - P : Archaeology.
- 1.3. The site is located on land at Huntington Water Treatment Works. The NGR is (SJ) 341970,363850 (FIGURE 2).
- 1.4. The site code allocated by L – P : Archaeology is LP2609C.
- 1.5. The work was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Rebecca Jones of L – P : Archaeology (JONES 2017).
- 1.6. The work was carried out in accordance with Cheshire County Council's revised General Conditions for Archaeological Contractors and Consultants (CHESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 2003) in conjunction with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (Cifa) Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief (CHARTERED INSTITUTE FOR ARCHAEOLOGISTS 2014B).

2. Site Background

2.1.PLANNING

- 2.1.1. Development was permitted for the extension of an existing compound and the installation of the a pipeline and associated enabling works at land on Huntington Water Treatment Works, Huntington, Chester, CH3 6DQ. The site is located at NGR 341970,363850.
- 2.1.2. The site lies to the north of the modern A55 and to the immediate south lies the Scheduled Monument of a Medieval moated site called Huntington Hall(1012112) with associated outbuildings (1187379 &1130633). To the west is the Scheduled Monument of Roman Heronbridge (1006774, 1375779) and the grade II* listed building of Eaton Hall (1000127) and to the immediate north of the Water treatment works is the grade II listed Meadowhouse Farmhouse (1330233) and associated barn (1279866).
- 2.1.3. Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC) are the Local Planning Authority. At present they refer to the Chester Local Plan, in this case policy ENV32. On matters concerning archaeology and the historic environment the Local Planning Authority take impartial advice from Cheshire Archaeological Planning Advisory Service (CAPAS).
- 2.1.4. In March 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government issued the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Department for Communities and Local Government 2012). This document sets out planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment and replaces all previous Planning Policy Guidance, specifically PPS5. Section 12 of this document sets out planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment.
- 2.1.5. Paragraph 128 of the NPPF indicates planning decisions should be made based on the significance of Heritage Assets. These are defined as buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions.
- 2.1.6. C2V+ and United Utilities, along with Cheshire West and Chester Council have

agreed the methodology for these works in an approved Written Scheme of Investigation, LP2609C-WSI-v1.3. This document seeks to satisfy the condition by describing the results of the Watching Brief and clarifying the status and location of the project archive.

2.2.GEOLOGY

2.2.1. The British Geological Survey GeoIndex for the site records the bedrock as Chester Pebble Beds Formation - sandstone, pebbly (gravelly), overlain with superficial deposits of Diamicton Till (BRITISH GEOLOGICAL SURVEY 2017). This data is given at a relatively low resolution. No site specific data is, as of yet, available.

2.3.TOPOGRAPHY

2.3.1. The site lies off the northern side of the North Wales Expressway (A55). The site lies to the southwest of Huntington village, c.2.6km south-southwest of Chester city centre (FIGURE 1).

2.3.2. The site is bounded by the A55 to the south and east, by open fields and the River Dee to the west and by reservoirs of the Huntington Waterworks to the north.

2.3.3. The site lies predominantly flat, with an average height of 18.5m OD.

2.4.ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

2.4.1. Geotechnical investigations were conducted prior to archaeological works.

2.4.2. The aim of this section is not to give an entire history of Huntington or Cheshire but to highlight the heritage assets and periods of time with potential archaeological remains specific to the site.

PREHISTORIC

2.4.3. There is no evidence for Palaeolithic or Mesolithic activity on the Site, however Mesolithic artefacts have been recorded in the wider area.

2.4.4. During the Neolithic period Cheshire shows evidence of woodland clearance,

which then led onto a period of farming (EDWARDS 2008). The Bronze and Iron Age in Cheshire were active periods, with Bronze Age metal work and Iron Age hillforts recorded; especially along the sandstone ridge.

2.4.5. Elements of a possible prehistoric field system have been identified during archaeological excavations at Saighton Camp to the east of the development area (Jones 2017).

ROMAN

2.4.6. Roman and Romano-British archaeology can be seen across Cheshire. The Roman Fort in Chester Deva was constructed in the first century AD, its influence and effect can be identified through most of the county. To the immediate west of the site is the Scheduled Monument of Heronbridge, the site of small Roman town with archaeological evidence of buildings and burials, with finds suggesting a date between the first and third centuries AD (PastScapes).

2.4.7. Excavations at the former Saighton Camp have identified Roman occupation in the form of a rectangular enclosure which included pit features with associated pottery dating between the first and fourth centuries AD. Elements of Romano-British field systems were also identified in a network of ditches and track ways, with second and third century ceramic finds.

MEDIEVAL

2.4.8. In the Medieval period in this part of Cheshire, the population was recorded as mainly dispersed with nucleated settlements, predominantly on glacial tills and the edges of the sandstone ridge (EDWARDS 2008).

2.4.9. Huntington is described in Domesday as part of the property of the canons of St Werburgh:

St Werburgh's Church holds and held before 1066 in Broxton Hundred Huntington. 3 hides paying tax. Land for 6 ploughs. In lordship 2; 4 slaves; 2 villagers and 2 small holders with 1 plough. Meadow, 1 acre; a small boat and a net. Before 1066 it was waste; value now 16s. (MORRIS 1978).

Huntington had land confirmed in 1093 to the Benedictine monks of St Werburgh.

2.4.10. To the south of the development area on the southern side of the A55 lies the Medieval moated site of Huntington Hall which is a Scheduled Monument (1012112). The manor of Huntington and Cheaveley belonged to St Werburgh's Abbey throughout the medieval period. A 'grange of the Abbot of Chester at Huntington' is referred to in 1348.

POST MEDIEVAL

2.4.11. All traces of the ancient manor house have now disappeared. Foundations of the building and the remains of a well were encountered when digging in the orchard (within the moated area). The present house is of late 18th or early 19th century date, and is known as Old Hall, being situated south of the moated area (Jones 2017).

2.4.12. Prior to the construction of the water treatment works the development area was an agricultural landscape dominated by enclosed fields interrupted by a scatter of water-filled pits. The site of Meadow House Farm and its associated trackway (Meadow Lane) at the northern end of the pipeline route are shown on Bryant's map of 1831 (FIGURE 3). The line of Meadow Lane extends west towards the banks of the River Dee and may represent a route to a former crossing point of the river by ferry or ford.

2.4.13. Llyn Celyn is a large reservoir constructed between 1960 and 1965 in the valley of the River Tryweryn in Gwynedd, Wales. The reservoir was constructed to help maintain the flow in the River Dee, so drinking water could be abstracted further downstream as part of the regulation Scheme. These abstractions include the one at Huntington water treatment works operated by United Utilities, which supplies water to Liverpool and the Wirral (Jones 2017).

2.5. SITE CONDITIONS

2.5.1. The site comprised three open grass fields, the first a long flat field leading to a second L shaped plot which had a one metre wide ditch creating a boundary at

the east and south access points; one of which had to be filled in to allow plant to travel freely. The second field had been used as a through way to give access into several adjoining fields and as such appeared to have become an area of dumping with gravel trackways created. The third field had been fenced off to create a small corridor in which the plant could work, the remainder of the field was not accessible as part of the works. The strip was located on a steep hill which made conditions difficult for plant operation. There were no indications of previous buildings on the site.

- 2.5.2. The site conditions were variable from hot sun to rain, the clay deposits made the ground soft and muddy underfoot during wet conditions. There were minor disruptions to the works programme due to encountering unknown services.

3. Aims and Objectives

3.1. The general aims of the Archaeological Watching Brief were

- ◆ To determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits or remains.
- ◆ To record the character, date, location and preservation of any archaeological remains by record.
- ◆ To record the nature and extent of any previous damage to archaeological remains on the site.

4. Methodology

- 4.1. For a full description of the archaeological methodology please refer to section 4 of the Written Scheme of Investigation (Jones 2017).
- 4.2. Groundworks were archaeologically monitored at the initial stages of work in the extension of an existing compound and stripping for additional services to the water treatment works. Initial works stripping the area near the compound, and then continuing through fields two and three. The majority of the site had been heavily disturbed previously, disturbing the ground down to the natural stratigraphy of the site. In area a sub natural was identified between 0.25 to 0.3m deep.
- 4.3. There were no deviations from the WSI and only minor hindrances were encountered throughout works monitored.

5. Results

5.1. The results of the Watching Brief are given below. Not all context numbers referred to in the text are illustrated, but all are in the archive. Deposit numbers are given in (parentheses) and cut numbers are given in [square brackets].

5.2. The archaeological Watching Brief monitored work across four areas (FIGURE 11), results will be given in this format.

5.3. Area 1

5.3.1. Area 1 was the initial stripping of the compound extension to the immediate north of the existing site compound. This area had previously been disturbed from the initial construction of the existing compound, as well as, an artificial bund and a pond seen on the historic mapping (FIGURE 4, FIGURE 5). The construction of the A55 running east to west located to the south, may also have impacted upon this area. The area comprised a long plot which tapered towards the northern end.

5.3.2. The topsoil (01) was a dark brown loose silty loam, with small stones and modern ceramic fragments. It was identified to a thickness of 0.1m, which covered the entire area.

5.3.3. Below this was an imported firm brown and red clay (02), at a varying thickness of 0.34-0.6m with inclusions of 19th to 21st century ceramics, glass, modern plastic and metal.

5.3.4. A natural subsoil (03) was encountered beneath this, a compact grey orange sandy clay covering the entire site.

5.3.5. In the western corner of Area 1 a curvilinear feature [04] around 5m in length (PLATE 1), 0.6m wide and 0.13m in depth was encountered cut into the natural subsoil (03); and sealed by layer (02). The full length was not established as the west end extended beyond the limits of the site and the east was truncated (FIGURE 7). The feature had a single fill of a compact grey orange silty clay (05) (PLATE 2), evidence of bioturbation was identified at a depth of 0.13m (FIGURE 8). A flint flake and fragment of CBM were retrieved from this fill. The feature was possibly an old hedgerow which had been

removed prior to the creation of the original compound.

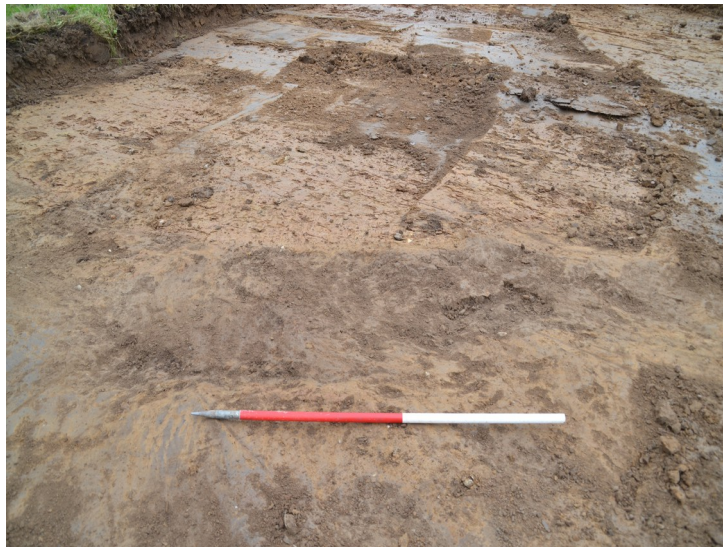


Plate 1 - Curvilinear [04] in Area One, facing towards the northwest. 1m scale.



Plate 2 - West facing section through Curvilinear [04]. 0.5m scale.

5.3.6. This area was then immediately gravelled and used to store plant as well as to provide extra contractor parking spaces.

5.4.Area 2

5.4.1. Area 2 was to the immediate north of Area 1 and was part of the same open

field. At the very northern end of the field was an east to west linear ditch, this was backfilled as part of the works to allow access for the plant into the next field.

- 5.4.2. The topsoil remained homogeneous to Area 1 context (01). Below this was context (06) a firm mottled grey and orange silty clay plough soil with inclusions of gravel, brick and ceramics. It had a varying thickness of 0.18-0.25m and appeared to be of the same make-up as the fill (05) of the curvilinear [04] in Area 1 (FIGURE 6). A sherd of Medieval pottery dating to the 13th/14th century and a fragment of 14th/15th century Medieval floor tile were retrieved from this deposit.
- 5.4.3. Underlying this was a natural subsoil of firm orange clay (07), this had patches of manganese with small flecks of CBM, possibly transferred by worm activity (PLATE 3); it was up to 0.04-0.06m thick. This was possibly an interfacing layer between the ploughsoil (06) and undisturbed natural, which was undulating in nature.

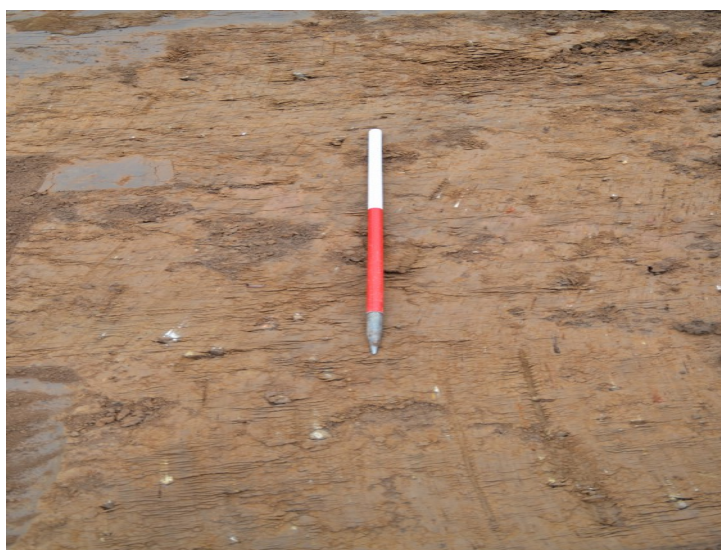


Plate 3 - Area two, (07) the orange sub natural. 1m scale.

- 5.4.4. To the north extending into Area 2 was a large sub-circular feature [08]. Below the topsoil (01) and cut into natural subsoil (07) the feature extended beyond both the east and west edges the site. It appeared sub-circular in plan, with a

stepped, steep curved edge, the bottom of the feature was not located but it had a minimum depth of 1m. The feature [08] had a single fill of hard reddy pink clay (09), this was a deliberate backfill of the feature, with inclusion of modern debris (PLATE 4). Feature [08] corresponds with a series of ponds across the area identified on the historic mapping (FIGURE 4, FIGURE 5).



Plate 4 - Large pond feature [08] at the northern end of Area two. Facing northeast. 1m scale.

5.5.Area 3

5.5.1. Area 3 was an L shaped field which had been extremely disturbed, a linear ditch created the boundary on the south (PLATE 5) and east (PLATE 6) sides of the field.



Plate 5 - Ditch which ran along the boundary between Area two and Area three, facing west.



Plate 6 - The boundary ditch between Area three and four, facing north.

- 5.5.2. A gravel trackway had been laid across Area 3 to create access in and out of the field into the adjoining fields by the farmer. In this area the top soil had either been removed or had been highly truncated prior to the gravel being laid.
- 5.5.3. Towards the southern part of Area 3 a dump of loose and partially mortared bricks were uncovered, this included brick, tile, metal and electrical wiring which appeared to be derived from the demolition of a building.

5.5.4. Two areas were identified as vegetation dumps, with remains of tree stumps and hedgerow foliage.

5.5.5. Approximately 70% of Area 3 had been disturbed and a layer of red brown clay had been spread across the centre of the area. This may have been due to the wet nature of this field which was noticeable even with the small amount of rain that had fallen while monitoring the works (PLATE 7).



Plate 7 - Evidence of gravels, red clay and dumping in Area three. 1m scale.

5.5.6. The stratigraphy for this area was a brown topsoil (01), the same material as in Areas 1 and 2. Below this was a brown clay silty plough soil (10) up to a thickness of 0.18m, which overlaid a grey-orange silty clay (11) (the same as ploughsoil (06) in Area 2), which in turn was above a natural subsoil of orange clay (12) (Figure 9).

5.6.Area 4

5.6.1. Area four was a long strip that had been fenced off within a larger field. The upper southern part was on flattish ground and the lower northern area formed part of a steep slope descending towards a small road at the northern end.

5.6.2. Below the topsoil (01) the stratigraphy varied between the southern higher

area (FIGURE 10) and the lower northern area. At the south the topsoil (01) was 0.05m thick and over lay a hard friable mid brown silty clay (13), which had inclusions of charcoal and CBM flecks. Clay (13) was up to 0.17m thick, but lack of a clear horizon meant that it was difficult to see where this deposit ended. Deposit (13) overlay a hard friable orange silty clay (14) which was the natural subsoil, containing patches of manganese (PLATE 8). Several north-south aligned field drains were present within this area cut into deposit (14).



Plate 8 - Southern upper area of Area four showing south facing section with (01), (13) and (14). 1m scale.

5.6.3. A large 20m long cut was identified at the eastern edge of Area 4 (Figure 12), cut into silty clay (14) and filled with a redeposited reddy brown clay (the same as feature [08] in Area 2)(Plate 9). This feature correlated to a pond seen on the historic mapping (FIGURE 4, FIGURE 5).



Plate 9- Edge of pond feature, facing south. 1m scale.



Plate 10 - Northern lower end of Area four, west facing section showing (01), (15) and (16). 1m scale.

5.6.4. At the northern end of Area 4 below the topsoil (01) was a soft brown silty clay (15), thought to be a possible plough soil or hill-wash from the upper area to the south; it was up to 0.18m thick. Beneath deposit (15) was a soft red brown silty clay (16), with CBM flecks and areas of manganese, at least 0.3m thick (PLATE 10).

6. Finds

6.1. A small assemblage of artefacts were recovered from the watching brief. The objects recovered are summarised below:

6.2. *Pottery:*

6.2.1. A total of 20 sherds of pottery weighing 243 grams were recovered from the watching brief. The sherds are described by context below:

6.2.2. Context (6) produced 13 sherds weighing 190 grams. From this 12 sherds were of post-medieval date and included: 6 sherds of black-glazed earthenware; a sherd of slipware; 2 sherds of glazed red earthenware; a rim sherd from an Agate ware bowl dated c.1740+; and a sherd of unglazed red earthenware. The remaining sherd was an unglazed body sherd of medieval pottery in an iron-rich sandy fabric typical of Cheshire Plains pottery and dating to the 13th/14th century.

6.2.3. Context (10) produced 3 sherds of pottery weighing 28 grams. This included 2 sherds of black-glazed earthenware and rim sherd from a Creamware chamber pot dated c.1750+.

6.2.4. Context (11) produced 4 sherds of pottery weighing 25 grams. This included 1 sherd of black-glazed earthenware; a sherd of unglazed red earthenware; a sherd of pearlware with blue transfer-printed decoration dated c.1790+; and a sherd of Creamware dated c.1750+.

6.3. *Ceramic Building Material:*

6.3.1. Four fragments of ceramic building material weighing 109 grams were recovered from context (6). Two of the fragments were from modern tile. The third fragment was from a very abraded piece of post-medieval hand-made brick. The last fragment was the corner of a square medieval floor tile of 14th/15th century date; the tile was 18mm thick and had splashes of yellow/brown glaze on the corner.

6.3.2. A small fragment of ceramic building material weighing 2 grams was recovered from context (6). This was very abraded and could equally represent

a piece of unglazed pottery; the fabric is suggestive of a medieval date.

6.4.Industrial waste:

6.4.1. Context (6) produced 3 fragments of industrial waste weighing 148 grams. All three fragments were in a hard, pale grey, vesicular material; one fragment had some glassy dark green residue adhering to it. Based on the material from context (5) this maybe a waste product associated with metal-working (possibly copper).

6.4.2. Context (5) produced 1 fragment of industrial waste weighing 189 grams. The fragment was a dense dark grey material which was probably a waste product associated with metal-working (possibly iron).

6.5.Lithics:

6.5.1. A piece of dark grey flint was recovered from context (5) weighing 4 grams. The object appears to have been struck with evidence for a bulb of percussion and indications of earlier flake removal as part of a deliberate knapping strategy. There is no evidence that the flake was utilised as a tool and it appears to represent a piece of discarded debitage from a knapping episode.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

- 7.1. Development was permitted for the extension of an existing compound and the installation of a new pipeline and associated enabling works at land on Huntington Water Treatment Works, Huntington, Chester, CH3 6DQ. The site is located at NGR 341970,363850.
- 7.2. An Archaeological Watching Brief was carried out as part of works requested by Cheshire West and Chester Council, on the initial groundworks. Works observed included topsoil stripping and ground reduction of the site. A maximum depth of 0.58m was achieved, with the sub natural clays between 0.2-0.3m below topsoil. Archaeological works were carried out by Rachael Matthews and Rebecca Jones of L – P : Archaeology between 21st August and 7th September 2017.
- 7.3. Minimal archaeological features were identified during works monitored. The area had been heavily truncated by a number of different activities within the last 200 years. In the south the construction of an existing compound and the creation of a large grassed bund were associated with earlier phases of the water treatment works. Several 21st century services were also located in this area as well as to the north of Area four (FIGURE 11). Several areas which corresponded with ponds on the historic mapping (FIGURE 4, FIGURE 5) were identified which had since been backfilled with redeposited clay. Area three was extremely disturbed, with layers of redeposited clays, gravels and dumps of rubble. Several north to south aligned field drains were also noted within Area one and four thought to be of 20th century origins.
- 7.4. A single surviving historical feature was identified in the south of Area one, a curvilinear ditch of unknown date. A flint flake was retrieved as well as a small fragment of CBM, potentially an old hedgerow which had been subsequently removed, due to the truncated nature of the site it is was not possible to determine the full extent of this ditch.
- 7.5. The site in general produced few archaeological finds, with material probably being derived from midden spreading on cultivated fields. This included a sherd of 13th/14th century Medieval pottery and a 14th/15th century fragment of Medieval floor tile from within Area two. The remaining ceramics dated from 1740s to 20th century, with finds of building material and industrial waste also retrieved from

across the site.

8. Archive

8.1. The paper archive consists of:

- ◆ 1 x Drawing Register
- ◆ 2 x Drawing Film
- ◆ 3 x Photographic Register
- ◆ 88 x Black and white photographs and negatives
- ◆ 4 x Watching Brief Record sheets
- ◆ 1 x Context Register
- ◆ 10 x Context sheets

8.2. The finds archive consists of:

- ◆ 1 x box artefacts as described in Section 6.

8.3. The archive is to be deposited with Cheshire West Museum Service.

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FIGURES

OASIS FORM

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