

Bridge Sollers Bridge, Herefordshire:
archaeological evaluation

Huw Sherlock and Gwynfor Maurice
2003



archenfield archaeology ltd

Principal Archaeologist: Huw Sherlock BA, Diparch, MIFA

Archenfield Archaeology Ltd is a multidisciplinary archaeological consultancy, offering a complete range of archaeological advice and services to the public and private sector. We specialise in giving archaeological advice to developers, housing associations and private individuals. We also undertake archaeological intervention, from monitoring to full-scale excavation; building survey; landscape and geophysical surveys and community-based historical and archaeological projects.

*Bridge Sollers Bridge, Herefordshire: archaeological evaluation
2003*

The authors would like to acknowledge the help and support of Civil Engineering Department of Herefordshire Council. Special thanks are also due to Mr. Ron Shoemith who provided a copy of the photograph of the Salmon Inn from the Alfred Watkins collection.

Client: Herefordshire Council

Text: Huw Sherlock and Gwynfor Maurice

Project Manager: Huw Sherlock

Cover Photograph: A photograph showing the Royal Horse Artillery watering their horses at the ford at Bridge Sollers (taken from TWNFC 1922)



Contents

1.0	Introduction	2
2.0	Geological, historical and archaeological background	3
2.1	Geological background and land use.....	3
2.2	Archaeological and historical background	3
3.0	Project aims and objectives.....	5
4.0	Methodology	6
4.1	Field methodology	6
4.2	Processing methodology	6
5.0	The results	7
5.1	The stratigraphy	7
5.2	The finds	9
6.0	Conclusions	9
7.0	Archive deposition	9
8.0	Publication and dissemination proposals	9
	General bibliography.....	10
	Cartographic material	10
	Copyright	10

Figures

Figure 1: Location plan	2
Figure 2: Extract from the 1888 Ordnance Survey six inch map.....	5
Figure 3: Trench location plan.	7
Figure 4: Section drawing of trench. Original scale 1:50.....	8

Plates

Plate 1: A photograph showing the Royal Horse Artillery at Bridge Sollers	4
Plate 2: A photograph taken by Alfred Watkins showing the frontage of the Salmon Inn.....	4
Plate 3: The south western end of the trench showing the end of the south eastern section...	8
Plate 4: The central part of the south eastern section.....	8

Summary

Herefordshire Council commissioned an archaeological evaluation of the area to the north west of the late Victorian bridge at Bridge Sollers. A single trench was excavated and revealed the extent of the embankment supporting the bridge abutments and the road as well as a layer containing a scatter of medieval pottery. This may relate to the shrunken medieval settlement of Lulham.

1.0 Introduction

NGR SO 41204240

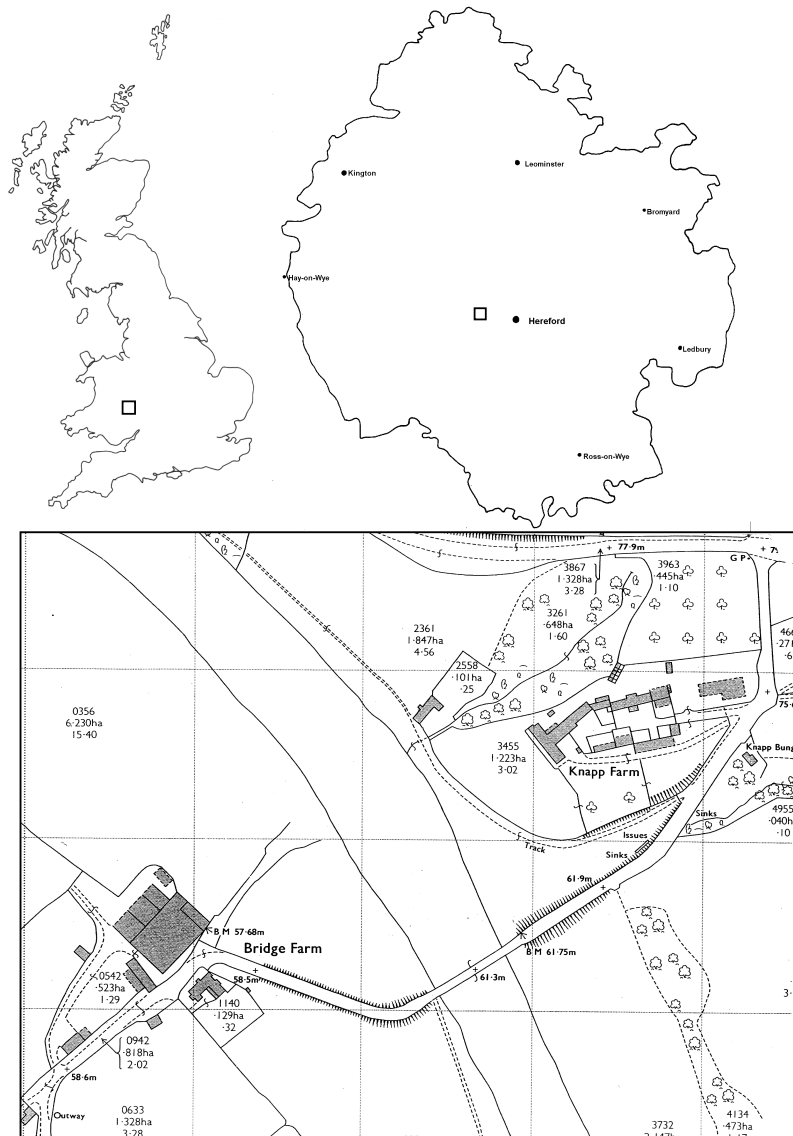


Figure 1: Location plan

Herefordshire Council (the client) commissioned a programme of archaeological work in accordance with the brief issued on 28/11/2002 by Julian Cotton, Archaeological Adviser to Herefordshire Council. This was issued in response to

the proposal to replace the existing bridge across the Wye at this site (application ref. NW2002/3286/F). This document gives details of how the archaeological project was conducted, as stipulated in the brief.

2.0 Geological, historical and archaeological background

2.1 Geological background and land use

The underlying geology of the area consists of beds of Old Red Sandstone with the drift geology consisting of overlying drifts of poorly sorted sands and gravels of the Staunton Moraine and alluvium (British Geological Survey Ten Mile Map). The field in which the trench was located is currently in use as rough grazing.

2.2 Archaeological and historical background

The earliest local environmental evidence was derived from pollen samples taken at Stansbatch (Herefordshire SMR record 32803) located 19 km NNW of Bridge Sollers and at Bridge Sollers itself (NGR: SO 4220 4170; Herefordshire SMR 32802). The pollen sequence recovered at Bridge Sollers gives good dates for the late glacial interstadial, return to cold conditions and beginning of the present Holocene period. An asymmetrical kettle hole with gravel at base, mud and then peat was sampled for peat as part of a PhD studentship (Waller, 1999). The lowest stratigraphy was dominated by herbs, typical of the Late Glacial. At 5.5m the assemblage changed to one dominated by birch, the beginning of this was dated to 11,861 BP. This is interpreted as the late glacial interstadial. 0.8m above this the birch declined, at 10,813BP. This was considered to be the beginning of the return to cold conditions. At 3.5m below ground surface birch again dominates, dated to 9433 BP, the beginning of the Holocene. Peat builds up quite quickly at this time, at 2.5m below surface, dated to 9254 birch dies out and hazel totally dominates. At 1.3m below surface, dated to 8314 BP oak and pine appear comparatively abundantly in the record, elm had appeared at 1.8m below surface. The sequence ends 0.5m below the surface.

Further evidence relating to the possible prehistoric background to the site comes from aerial photography. North of the river (NGR: SO 4100 4200, SMR 30992) a cropmark enclosure and associated linear features, about 50m by 40m was identified from a series of Ordnance Survey vertical photographs (Ordnance Survey, 1970).

In the medieval period the settlement of Lulham is recorded in Domesday as being in Bridge Sollers parish (Herefordshire SMR 25769). This is described as: 'In Lulham 8 hides which pay tax. In lordship 1 plough; 11 villagers and 5 smallholders with 13 ploughs. 1 female slave; meadow, 3 acres; 1 more plough would be possible in lordship. ... Of this land 2 clerks hold 2 hides and 3 virgates and 1 man-at-arms 1 hide. They have 2 ploughs in lordship; 13 villagers and 2 smallholders with 8 ploughs. Before 1066 it was waste. Value now 10'.

This may be the origin of the site of the deserted medieval village that is recorded to be to the west and south of Marsh Court farm (NGR: SO 4200 4100, SMR 1053). This site has been identified from examination of St Joseph Aerial Photographs, which revealed vague earthworks south and west of Marsh Court Farm. Two fields separate these from earthworks around the church (Hickling, TWNFS 1972). This is now a shrunken settlement - a site now having six house sites or fewer, assuming evidence that it was once larger.

Bridge Sollers is documented in Domesday Book (1065-86), Nomina Villarum (1316), Lay Subsidy Rolls (under Staunton on Wye; 1334/36), Poll Taxes (1377,

1379, 1381) and Hearth Taxes¹ (1662-80). Fields at south end of earthworks are called the Priory Meadows on the tithe map.

The church at Bridge Sollers (NGR: SO 4141 4269; SMR 7237) is dedicated to St. Andrew. It has a Norman west tower (unbuttressed) with Norman windows and bell openings. The southern doorway is Norman in the style of the Herefordshire School. There are two arcades dating from the late 12th century, and the chancel dates from *circa* 1300 (Pevsner, 1962). The Nave dates from the mid 12th century and the northern arcade was built and the northern aisle was added *circa* 1180-90 and the west tower built as part of the same phase. Late in the 13th century the chancel was rebuilt and *circa* 1330 the northern aisle was largely reconstructed (RCHM, 1934).

The bridge across the Wye which was removed in 2003 (SMR record 7225) was built (partially by public subscription) in 1896 and consisted of three separate spans - on four circular piers. The abutments were of coursed stone with massive copings. The bridge was built as part of a scheme to build three road bridges across the Wye that replaced ferries. The ferry was situated close to the site of the house some 150 yards to the north. At that time this was the Salmon Inn (see plate 2).

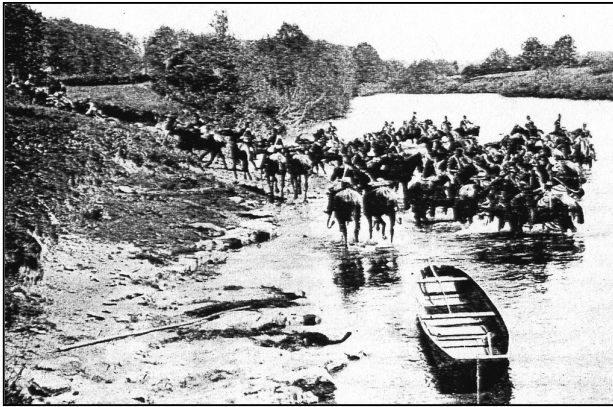


Plate 1: A photograph showing the Royal Horse Artillery watering their horses at the ford at Bridge Sollers (taken from TWNFC 1922)



Plate 2: A photograph taken by Alfred Watkins showing the frontage of the Salmon Inn *circa* 1880

¹ MSRG index 800

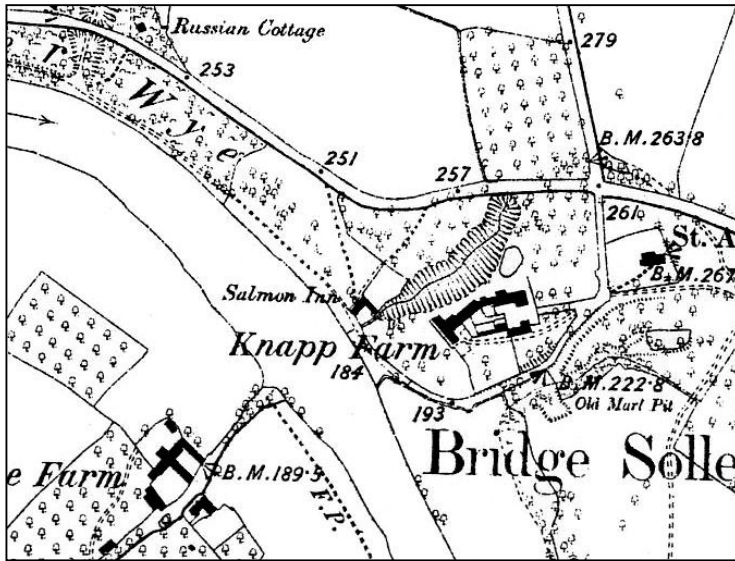


Figure 2: Extract from the 1888 Ordnance Survey six inch map showing the position of the ford and the course of the stream prior to the construction of the bridge.

3.0 Project aims and objectives

The aims of the project were: -

- To monitor the stripping of topsoil by the use of a mechanical excavator. A smooth bucket was to be used to remove the overburden in successive spits of soil, allowing the examination of the spoil for diagnostic artefacts and the recognition of *in situ* deposits and features.
- To clean the area of the trenches using archaeological techniques and to make a contextual, photographic and drawn record of any archaeological features or deposits exposed.
- To manually excavate and record any archaeological deposits within the trench. This work was to be carried out following standard Institute of Field Archaeologists guidelines for archaeological excavation, and the methodology laid out in the Archenfield Archaeology Site Recording Manual.
- To record the presence of sensitive archaeological material within all the trenches and in the spoil removed during the excavation, and to retrieve any potential dating evidence.
- To make a record of all finds and any environmental material recovered.
- To ensure that the location and of the area excavated was accurately recorded on a suitably scaled plan.
- To record negative evidence and to consider its implications.
- To ensure that where important archaeological remains existed plans for the preservation in-situ of such remains was discussed with the Archaeological adviser to Herefordshire Council and the client.
- To ensure that a recording strategy was adopted that allowed for the production of a stratigraphic record of the deposits encountered, and a record of the extent and depth of the excavations.

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Field methodology

The following methodology was employed: -

- Structures and stratigraphic sequences observed were recorded on scaled drawings and the position of the trench, and any archaeological features within it, were located on them.
- The presence of artefacts was recorded with a description of type, quantity and original location. The spoil was scanned for significant finds but in fact none were observed.
- All descriptions of structures and deposits, photographic records and drawing numbers were recorded on the relevant data capture documents in accordance with Archenfield Archaeology's standard site recording procedures.
- Significant features were, where possible, photographed next to an appropriate scale rule, and a board displaying a unique context number. Each photographic exposure was recorded in the photographic log.
- Staff carrying out the evaluation excavation followed the guidelines laid down in the Archenfield Archaeology Health and Safety Policy
- Archenfield Archaeology conforms to the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Code of Conduct and code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual arrangements in Field Archaeology. All projects are, where applicable, carried out in accordance with IFA Standards and Guidance or Draft Standards and Guidance.

4.2 Processing methodology

- All retained artefacts and ecofacts were subjected to further analysis.
- Huw Sherlock examined the ceramic material recovered and has provided spot dates.
- All data were entered into a Microsoft ©Access relational database

5.0 The results

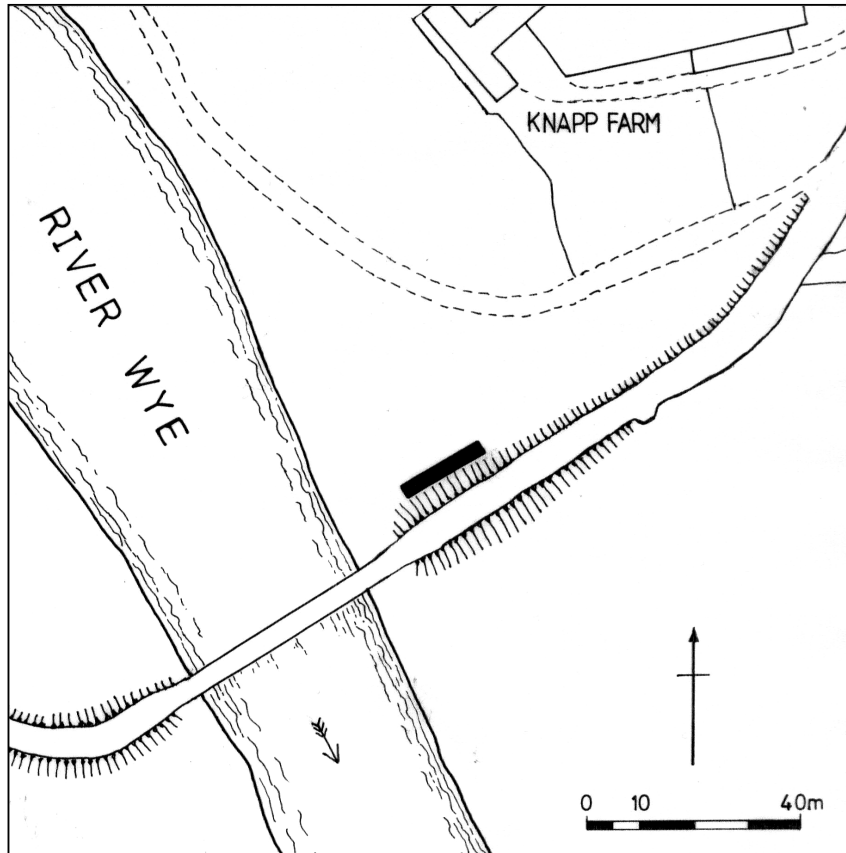


Figure 3: Trench location plan.

5.1 The stratigraphy

A single trench measuring 20m by 1.8m that was aligned NE-SW was excavated. The trench ran parallel to and skirted the edge of the embankment of the approach to the bridge, with the SW end approximately 7m from the rivers edge. It was dug to a depth of 1.2m (57.8 OD), except for the final 5m towards the NE end where it was excavated to a total depth of 1.5m (57.5 OD), in order to examine the underlying geology.

Six deposits were revealed:

1. Topsoil of between 0.10m and 0.25m
2. A deposit up to 0.50m thick, consisting of a mix of mid-red silty clay and gravel and small stones. This deposit appeared in the SE edge of the trench and was of an irregular edge and depth.
3. A mid pinkish brown humic silt with circa 10% small rounded gravels, about 0.40m thick.
4. A colluvium of mid-pinkish brown silt, up to 0.35m thick. This deposit tapered out roughly 7.5m from the SW end of the trench. Similar yet distinguishable from the layer above, this deposit contained both charcoal flecks and fragments, and a scatter of very abraded medieval potsherds.

5. A colluvium of pale pinkish-brown silt with circa 5% gravels, about 0.25m thick.
6. A pale yellowish brown silty clay, of a platy texture interpreted as the top of the alluvium.

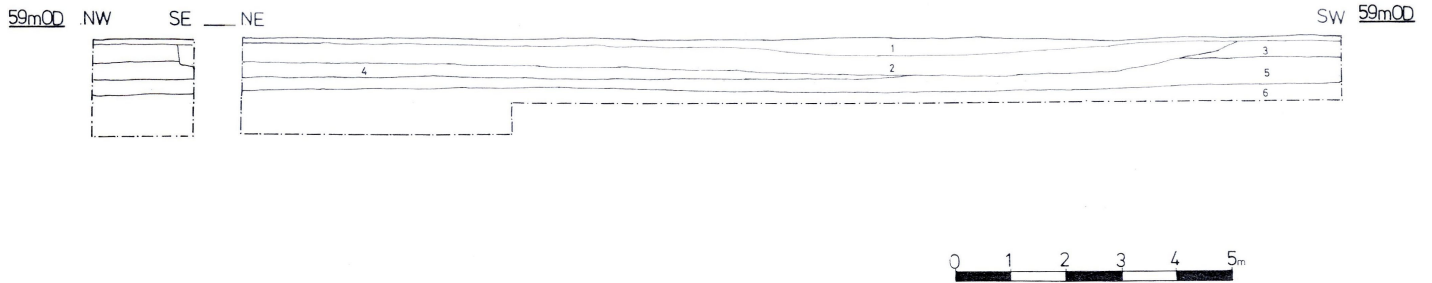


Figure 4: Section drawing of trench. Original scale 1:50.



Plate 3: The south western end of the trench showing the end of the south eastern section.



Plate 4: The central part of the south eastern section.

5.2 The finds

The pottery from layer 4 consisted of small sherds of earthenware. These were all abraded and appear to have been affected by the action of running water as they have no clean breaks or sharp edges. The assemblage contains few diagnostic sherds so it is difficult to state what types of vessel are represented. The bulk of the assemblage would appear to be either unglazed earthenware black cooking pot (ten sherds) or the B4 Malvernian type fabric (eight sherds). The latter are probably derived from hollow wares. The assemblage has been provisionally dated to the 13th or 14th centuries AD.

Layers 1 and 3 contained a small amount of modern (twentieth century) material such as glass, nails, wire and a pair of pliers.

6.0 Conclusions

Apart from layer 4, the pre-modern layers produced no evidence of archaeological activity and amount to colluvium overlying alluvium.

The pottery and charcoal from layer 4 is suspected to have originated from the site of the nearby Deserted Medieval Village (SMR 25769), suspected to be in the vicinity of Bridge Sollers church. Layer 4 may represent outwash from the stream that used to run down to meet the river somewhere close to the current position of the bridge (see figure 2).

7.0 Archive deposition

The primary project archive, consisting of the excavated material and any original paper records, will be prepared and stored in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' guidelines for the preparation and storage of archives. The primary archive will be stored with Hereford City Museum.

A copy of the digital archive, stored on CD and consisting of context, artefact and ecofact data, together with the site plan and selected photographs, will accompany the primary archive.

The client, in consultation with the project manager, will make provision for the deposition of all finds from the excavation with the Hereford City Museum. On completion of the fieldwork and the processing, collation, recording and analysis of the finds from the excavation all finds will be handed over to the museum staff, along with the project archive. Arrangements will be made with the museum for the transfer of title.

8.0 Publication and dissemination proposals

Paper copies of this report will be lodged with the Archaeological Adviser to Herefordshire Council, Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record and Hereford City Library. A short note on the project will be prepared for publication in The Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club.

CDs of this report, together with the supporting archival material will be available from Archenfield Archaeology.

The complete photographic record, including the negatives, will be retained by Archenfield Archaeology.

General bibliography

Royal Commission on Historical Monuments 1934	Inventory of Monuments, Herefordshire North West, Vol III Herefordshire North West, Vol IIIIII, 22
Pevsner, N 1963	Herefordshire The Buildings of England
Hickling, R E 1972	Trans Woolhope Naturalists Field Club XL,401
Lamont, A H 1922	<i>Fords and Ferries of the Wye</i> in Trans Woolhope Naturalists Field Club, pp 73-94
Thorn F and C Thorn 1983	Domesday Book: Herefordshire
Turner, J H 1981	Herefordshire County Treasures-41
Waller, Martyn 1999	Application for Radiocarbon Analysis to Natural Environment Research Council unpublished application

Cartographic material

Ordnance Survey, 1886	1 st edition 1:105600 plan. County Series, Herefordshire Sheet XXXII N.E
-----------------------	---

RAF OS aerial photographs 1970 Box 47 frame 689 RAF OS 1:2,500 vertical aerial photographs

Copyright

Archenfield Archaeology will retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1998* with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provide an exclusive licence to the client for use of such documents by the client in all matters directly relating to the project.