

Network Rail
Trent Valley West
Coast Mainline Upgrade
Staffordshire
Tamworth to
Lichfield
Site 6 TA Centre
Tamworth



**Archaeological
Watching Brief Report**



March 2007



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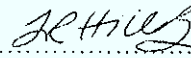
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**B n Network Rail, Trent Valley
West Coast Mainline Upgrade
Tamworth to Lichfield
Site 6 Tamworth TA Centre**

NGR: SK 202 046

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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Fig. 1 OS Site location map and area of watching brief

SUMMARY

Between the 18th of June and the 24th of July 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Tamworth, Staffordshire, adjacent to the TA Centre and alongside the existing rail track (NGR: SK 202 046). The work was commissioned by Network Rail for the observation of geo-technical test-pits, in advance of the upgrading of the rail track. No archaeological features or deposits were observed. Natural was overlain by soils of alluvial origin.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 Between the 18th of June and the 24th of July 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Tamworth, Staffordshire, adjacent to the TA Centre and alongside the existing rail track at NGR: SK 202 046 (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Network Rail ahead of works for upgrading of the rail line between Tamworth and Lichfield (known as Network Rail 'Order2'). The Watching Brief monitored the excavation of eleven geo-technical test-pits and the stripping of topsoil and subsoil.

1.1.2 Discussions between Steve Dean, Archaeological Officer for Staffordshire County Council and OA, led to an agreement that in areas where there was the potential for damage to possible archaeological remains, due to temporary or permanent land-take disturbance, archaeological fieldwork would be carried out.

1.1.3 An outline project proposal detailing how OA would implement the evaluation and watching briefs was agreed between all parties (OA 2004 - and see 1.3 below).

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on recent and pleistocene first terrace gravels (BGS sheet 154) at *c* 77 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The site is situated on level ground between the current rail line and industrial units/TA centre and is approximately 0.5 hectares in area.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

Previous work and project background

1.3.1 In 2002, an initial phase of field-walking was carried out by OA for *Railtrack* along the northern side of the railway line between (approximately) Whittington and the Sewage works to the north-west of Tamworth.

1.3.2 The report for this work has not been issued, as the project did not continue once *Railtrack* as a company had ceased to exist. The results of the work, however,

revealed post-medieval material throughout the study area in the vicinity of a former track-way. It was thought, nonetheless, that there would have been greater potential for archaeological finds along the walked route, owing to the number of crop marks within the vicinity of the track-way and in adjacent fields.

- 1.3.3 In 2002, when Network Rail Order 2 went to Public Inquiry, Staffordshire County Council requested that further and more detailed archaeological work should be undertaken on known crop-marks along the route and within fields with ancient field names depicted on Parish Tithe maps.
- 1.3.4 The Council also requested that an all-encompassing archaeological project design be produced to cover the construction works proposed under Order 2. This work (*West Coast Mainline Upgrade - Trent Valley. Outline Proposal for Phase 1 Works, OA 2004*) was undertaken by OA and included provision for both evaluation trenches and watching briefs.
- 1.3.5 As part of the mitigation works OA monitored the construction of the haul road adjacent to the west coast mainline (OA 2005b) and the results of this watching brief and previous field-walking were used to determine a programme of work to mitigate the effects of the upgrading of the railway upon any potential archaeology.

Archaeological and Historical Background

- 1.3.6 The following background information is reproduced from the Heritage Impact Assessment produced by OA for Railtrack but never issued due to the collapse of the latter. The “study corridor” refers to a corridor 500m either side of the railway line which was the subject of the Impact Assessment.

General

- 1.3.7 Between 1960 and 1976 JK St Joseph and later J Pickering carried out regular aerial reconnaissance of the central section of the study corridor, following the discovery of a large number of crop-marks on the Gravel Terrace within the Tame Valley. As a result of this research a number of archaeological ‘rescue’ excavations were carried out in the early 1970s in the Fisherwick area in response to gravel extraction, which threatened to destroy a number of crop-mark sites within this area of seemingly high archaeological potential. The majority of these excavations were located c 2 km to the north-east of the study corridor. One excavation was undertaken within the study corridor c 300 m north-east of the line of the railway. The results of these excavations were published in a British Archaeological Reports volume in 1979 entitled ‘*Fisherwick: The Reconstruction of an Iron Age Landscape*’ (Smith *et al.*, 1979).
- 1.3.8 In 1980, Christopher Smith published a summary of his doctoral thesis for the University of Nottingham on the historical development of the parishes of Alrewas, Fisherwick and Whittington, in *Transactions of the Southern Staffordshire Archaeological Society* Vol XIX. Smith’s study area forms a broad north-south strip

which encompasses the central section of the WCML study corridor between eastings SK 16 (Whittington) and SK 19 (River Tame). The study involved detailed examination of documentary and cartographic sources, air photographs, and also involved several field-walking surveys. The survey revealed concentrations of material from the prehistoric to post-medieval period at various locations within his study area. Smith attempted to reconstruct the landscape of his study area at four periods in time: the 1st millennium, AD 200, c AD 1300 and the mid 18th century.

Prehistoric

- 1.3.9 Excavations on the Gravel Terrace at Fisherwick, c 2 km to the north-east of the study corridor, prior to gravel extraction in 1968 and 1973-4, have revealed further evidence of prehistoric activity in the form of a possible Neolithic settlement and extensive Iron Age activity. The latter includes Iron Age settlements believed to have been agricultural in nature - small farmsteads surrounded by extensive field systems. It has been suggested (Smith 1977 quoted in Hodder 1982, 19) that the Tame Gravel Terrace was divided by a series of permanent ditched boundaries during the first millennium BC, as the result of population increase. Excavations at Fisherwick revealed that pre-medieval population levels within the Valley are likely to have been considerably greater than was previously supposed (Smith 1979, 103).

Roman

- 1.3.10 Excavations in 1968 prior to gravel extraction at Fisherwick, c 2 km to the north-east of the study corridor, revealed a Romano-British farmstead consisting of four circular huts, pens and palisaded enclosures, adjacent to a drove-way. The farm, dated to the early 2nd century AD to the 3rd century AD, was believed to have specialised in stock-rearing. In addition, traces of Roman activity have been found within the historic core of Tamworth and it is possible that there may have been an earlier settlement here prior to the early medieval *burh* (Staffs SMR).

Medieval

- 1.3.11 There were a number of known medieval settlements within the study area, some of which later became deserted and which have left no trace. The settlements include Lichfield, Streethay, Whittington (all extant) and *Fisherwick* (deserted), located just outside the study corridor, and *Tamhorn*, *Horton*, *Fulfen* and *Morughale* (all deserted), located within the study corridor. These settlements would have provided a focus for the community within the parish. In addition, there were probably a number of smaller secondary settlements in the form of isolated farmsteads located away from the villages. The identification of these is less straightforward and is primarily based on buildings shown on the earliest maps consulted and place-name evidence.
- 1.3.12 Fisherwick, although not mentioned in Domesday Book, is recorded as a manor in 1167 (VCH XIV, 239). The settlement no longer exists but is believed to lie outside the study corridor, c 1.5 km to the north-east of the railway (Hurst 1967, 45 and VCH Staffs XIV, 239).

1.3.13 Tamhorn and Horton are both mentioned in Domesday and formed a township by the late 13th century, with Horton apparently more important (VCH Staffs XIV, 239). The township of Tamhorn and Horton is listed in a Subsidy Roll of 1327 when 12 people were assessed for subsidy. Smith (1980, 7) identified the possible location of the DMVs of Tamhorn and Horton through concentrations of medieval pottery and building material found during fieldwalking in the early 1970s. The spread of artefacts was too dense to be simply residual material within a manure scatter used to assist cultivation. It should however be noted that the VCH (XIV 1990, 240) suggests that the site of Horton village may also lie close to, or on, the present site of the small cluster of houses at Hademore, immediately to the south of the railway.

Fisherwick Park

1.3.14 The Railway line between Fisherwick Brook and Hademore cuts the southern edge of a formal post-medieval park called Fisherwick Park. The park is not listed in English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens. The park was created to provide a setting around a '*very proper brick house*' (possibly located on or near the site of the medieval manor) built by John Skeffington in the late 16th century (VCH Staffs XIV, 243-4).

1.3.15 The park was enclosed by a park pale (boundary) intended to keep deer and rabbits out of the park grounds. The park was planted with a large number of trees and by the 1680s the trees had '*grown to a magnitude (in number) almost beyond belief (ibid., 244)*'. Two avenues led through the park to Fisherwick Hall (*c.* 1.5 km to the north-east of the railway) aligned on the Whittington and Tamhorn churches. The park increased in size in the later 18th century, evidently to the north-east (VCH Staffs XIV, 244), absorbing enclosed farmland adjacent (Smith 1980, 5). In 1747 the park covered an area of 450 acres; in 1760 this had grown to 571 acres. A map of the park dated 1760 shows a fence around the perimeter of the park and the broad avenue leading to Fisherwick Park from an entrance by Hademore Lodge. The map shows little detail, other than a depiction of land within the park boundary and the enclosed fields to the east.

1.3.16 Between *c.* 1766-79 Fisherwick Hall was demolished and rebuilt for Lord Donegall. This involved landscaping of the park by Lancelot (Capability) Brown, following an Act of 1766 stopping up all public roads through the park. The two avenues were removed and replaced with two new drives, which led to south to the lodge at Hademore, and east to Stubby Leas (outside the study area). Brown planted 10,000 trees and created a boundary plantation enclosing a ride along the south and east sides of the park (VCH Staffs XIV, 244). A plan of the Estate of Lord Spencer Chichester dated to the late 18th century shows boundary plantations along the southern edge of the park at Hademore as well as a building marked 'Hedimore Lodge' at the southern entrance to the park. Also shown is the developing estate hamlet of 'Hedimore' immediately to the south, consisting of Hademore Farm, Holly Cottage and another cottage (now demolished). It had been intended to build a brick

wall around the whole park, but only about a mile of it was completed, on the south-east side. This wall was evidently still standing in 1990 (*ibid.*, 244). Shortly after 1808 Fisherwick Hall was demolished. A large number of trees were felled and the park divided into fields. The OS 1" map (1834) shows the former park, with a clear boundary in the form of a line of screening trees along the southern edge. This is the earliest map which enables the southern line of the park to be placed in relation to the modern OS mapping with any accuracy. A Plan of the Township of Fisherwick (1842) and the OS 1st edition 6" map (1883-8) both show Hademore Lodge as still extant, the latter showing the lodge to have lain some 50m north-east of the railway.

1.3.17 When the Trent Valley Railway was built in 1846-7, it cut across the extreme southern corner of the former Fisherwick Park, just to the south of the gate lodge. It is unclear whether the southern edge of the park as shown in 1834 represented the extent of the original 16th century park however. It is therefore possible that remains of the original park pale, in the form of a bank, ditch or fence (the latter is suggested by a map of 1760) may survive in the form of an earthwork, or that remains of a ditch may be preserved as a buried feature beneath and close to the railway. Whilst the site of the Fisherwick Hall is now occupied by a container company, and its grounds now lie under a former explosives depot and a field of crops, a pair of Grade II Listed gate piers dating to the early 19th century still survive at a point some 50 m north of the railway, flanking the former formal drive, which remains in use from this point northward. The course of the driveway southward from the gates has been abandoned following the construction of a later connecting road, although its alignment is still traceable as a double hedge line. This crosses the railway at a disused level-crossing to the west of Fogg Cottages, before passing behind Holly Cottage to emerge onto the public road behind a cast-iron telephone kiosk.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 Where observed all archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 During June and July 2006, 11 geotechnical test-pits were excavated, by contractors, to investigate the underlying soils in preparation for c 170 linear metres of ground stripping and reduction. The test-pits were between 1.5 m and 2.3 m long, 0.6-1 m wide and up to 2.4 m deep. Following the test-pitting the topsoil and underlying subsoil were stripped.
- 3.1.2 In all the test-pits natural alluvial gravel was overlain by a layer of alluvial sand c 0.3 m thick. This was overlain by a pale brown silty sand subsoil up to 0.5 m deep. In places this had been truncated and subsequently buried beneath a recent spoil-heap. Elsewhere the sand had been partially truncated and subsequently buried beneath modern made ground, possibly associated with the construction of the adjacent railway or its maintenance.
- 3.1.3 The test pits did not reveal any archaeological features cutting into either the subsoil or the underlying natural.
- 3.1.4 Following the test-pitting, the stripping of topsoil and sub-soils was monitored, prior to groundwork excavations.
- 3.1.5 No archaeological features or deposits were observed during the ground reduction works.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for paleo-environmental sampling were observed during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The natural alluvial gravel was consistently overlain by c 0.3 m of alluvial sand which was in turn overlain by possibly alluvial soil. The alluvial soil was in places buried below spoil-heaps and elsewhere appeared to have been truncated by modern works, probably associated with the construction of the railway, or its maintenance.
- 4.1.2 Due to the absence of any archaeological remains it is recommended that no further archaeological work need be carried out on this site.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Test-pit</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1		Natural			NA	Alluvial gravel
		Natural			0.3 m	Alluvial sand
		Subsoil			0.9 m	Made ground, modern
2		Natural			NA	Alluvial gravel
		Natural			0.3 m	Alluvial sand
		Subsoil			0.6 m	Buried soil
3		Natural			NA	Alluvial gravel
		Natural			0.3 m	Alluvial sand
		Subsoil			0.5 m	Buried soil
4		Natural			NA	Alluvial gravel
		Natural			0.3 m	Alluvial sand
		Subsoil			0.5 m	
5		Natural			NA	Alluvial gravel
		Natural			0.3 m	Alluvial sand
		Subsoil			0.45 m	Buried soil
6		Natural			NA	Alluvial gravel
		Natural			0.3 m	Alluvial sand
		Spoil			1 m	Modern deposit
7		NA				Abandoned due to height of spoil-heap
8		Natural				Alluvial gravel
		Natural			0.3 m	Alluvial sand (disturbed)
		Subsoil			1.2 m	Possibly modern topsoil, spoil-heap
1a		Natural			NA	Alluvial gravel
		Natural			0.3 m	Alluvial sand
		Soil			0.3 m	Made ground
2b		Natural			NA	Alluvial gravel
		Natural			0.3 m	Alluvial sand
		Soil			0.3 m	Buried soil
3c		Natural			NA	Alluvial gravel
		Natural			0.3 m	Alluvial sand
		Soil			0.3 m	Buried soil

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- OA 1992 OA Fieldwork Manual (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992)
- OA 2000 West Coast Mainline-Historical Impact Assessment -not issued. OA Internal report only.
- OA 2003 West Coast Mainline-Field-walking Report-not issued. OA Internal report only.
- OA 2004 West Coast Mainline Upgrade - Trent Valley. Outline Proposal for Phase 1 Works,
- OA 2005 Written Scheme of Investigation

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: West Coast Mainline TA Centre Tamworth

Site code: WCMA6 05

Grid reference: SK 202 046

Type of watching brief: Observation of geotechnical test-pits and soil stripping

Date and duration of project: Between 27th June and 24th July 2006

Area of site: N/A

Summary of results: No archaeology was observed, in eleven geotechnical test-pits natural was overlain by alluvial soils.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery in due course, under the following accession number: **2005.LH.5**

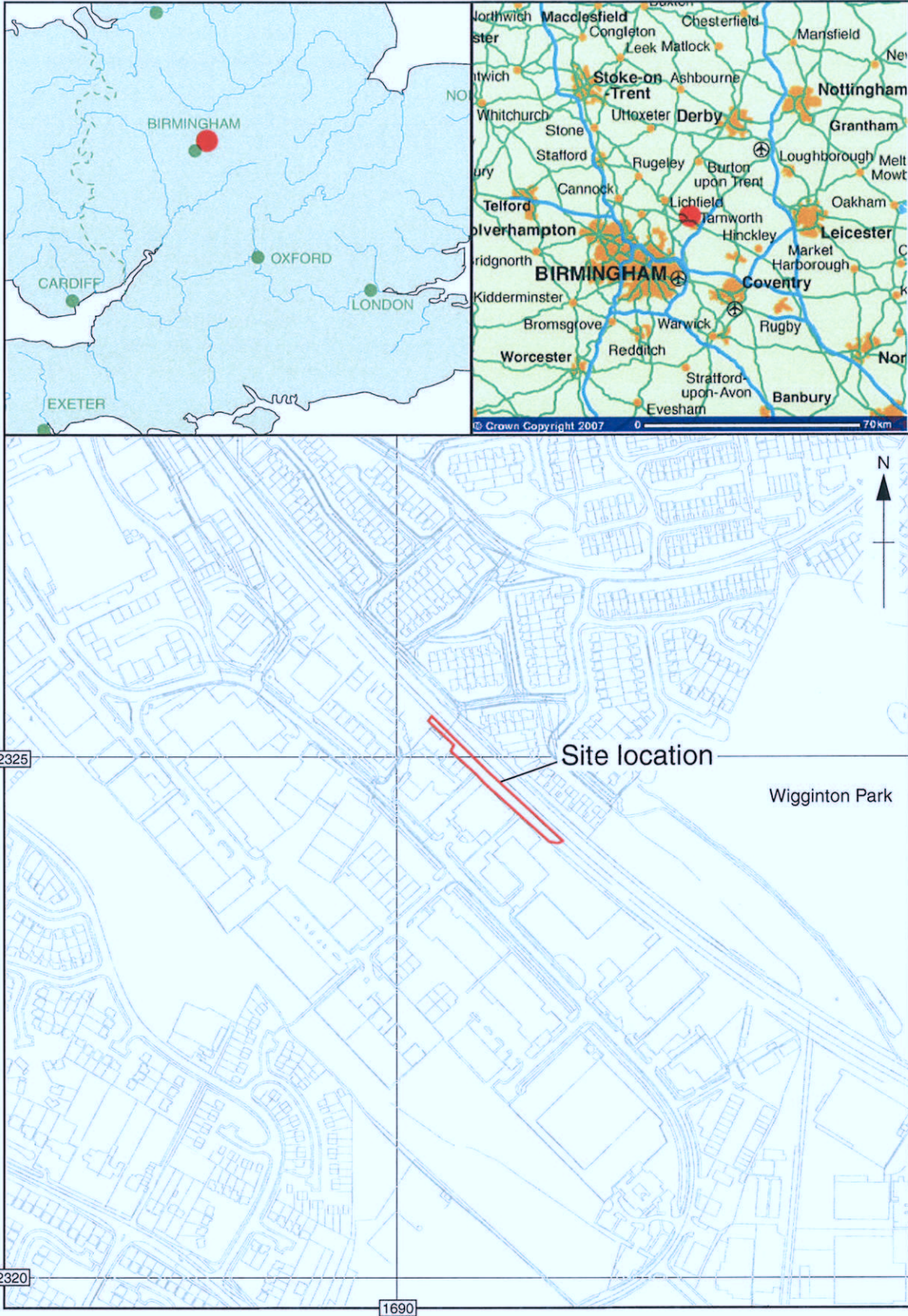


Figure 1: Site location



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