

**Programme of archaeological work
at land adjacent The Boundary,
Bretforton Road,
Badsey,
Worcestershire,
WR11 7JB**

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5th November 2015

WSM 67194

Oasis ref martinco1-226145

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Programme of archaeological work at land adjacent The Boundary, Bretforton Road, Badsey, Worcestershire, WR11 7JB

Introduction

A programme of archaeological work was carried out at land adjacent The Boundary, Bretforton Road, Badsey, Worcestershire, WR11 7JB (SP 866 396; Fig 1) at the request of Jim Sheward, the client. This work was undertaken in compliance with a written scheme of investigation provided by Martin Cook BA MCIfA, based upon an email from Jim Sheward, a letter from Mike Glyde to the local planning authority and an account of a meeting between Jim Sheward and Aisling Nash of Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (planning reference W/15/0550). The written scheme of investigation was approved by Aisling Nash of Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (site code BAL/15, event number WSM 67194).

The programme of archaeological work was to comprise documentary research, a watching brief, a single day for uninterrupted access (if necessary) and a report.

Summary

A programme of archaeological work was carried out at land adjacent land adjacent The Boundary, Bretforton Road, Badsey, Worcestershire, WR11 7JB. The project identified two parallel furrows running approximately north to south. These are believed to be the fragmentary remains of a system of ridge and furrow adjacent to the village of Bretforton.

The finds had a *terminus post quem* of the 20th century. There was, however, a single badly abraded sherd which may be Roman and this could have come from the Romano-British settlement to the south of the site.

A summary will be published in West Midlands Archaeology.

The documentary material

Historic mapping

The earliest available mapping is the Ordnance Survey 1st edition map of 1885 (Fig 2.1). This shows the village of Bretforton lying to the north-east, the greater part of it along what is now known as Main Street, a part of the Badsey to Weston-sub-Edge road. The principal road between these adjacent two villages has now been diverted to the north, forming what is now known as New Road, but at the time of the 1st edition mapping and presumably in medieval times too, it must have continued through the village to the south-east, passing what are likely to have been the principal buildings of the village - St Leonard's church and the Fleece Inn. To the south and west of this road lay small, irregular fields, a stream (which eventually becomes a tributary of the River Avon) and Back Lane, upon which the amenity lake (the subject of this report) lies.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1904 (Fig 2.2) shows no significant differences from the 1st edition.

The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record

There are a number of landscape components or monuments nearby or adjacent to the site. By proximity to the site, and in date order, these are:

Surrounding the site

WSM 32495	Cropmark of settlement and circular feature	4000BC-410AD
WSM 02721	Romano-British occupation Badsey Fields	43 AD-410AD
WSM 66528	Ridge and furrow	1066-1700AD
WSM 66529	Ridge and furrow	1066-1700AD
WSM 67329	Ridge and furrow	1066-1700AD
WSM 67330	Ridge and furrow	1066-1700AD

To the north of the site

WSM 02854	Fish pond west of Grange Farm	1066-2050AD
WSM 59388	Bretforton Grange (Manor Farm)	1301-2050AD
WSM 61372	33 and 35 Station Road (farmstead)	1801-2050AD

To the west of the site

WSM 50791	Site of outbuildings associated with Badsey field barn	1801-2050AD
WSM 58441	Badsey field barn	1801-2050AD

To the north-east of the site

WSM 56936	Area of Palaeolithic potential	476050BC-2050AD
WSM 29872	Area of medieval settlement	1066-1539AD
WSM 60899	Home Farm	1601-2050AD
WSM 61070	45 Main Street (farmstead)	1801-2050AD
WSM 36413	Site of village hall (first aid post)	1939-1945AD

Commentary

The primary reason for the archaeological investigation was the proximity of the pre-Roman and Roman occupation to the south of the proposed development (WSM 32495 and 02721). This consists of an enclosure, a possible building (from aerial photography), a burial and various material culture. Topographical factors affecting the location of this settlement were probably the proximity of the stream to the north and slightly rising ground between the stream and the settlement.

Evidence for ridge and furrow agriculture (WSM 66528, 66529, 67329 and 67330) is recorded on the Worcestershire HER as lying to the south of Back Lane. A short length of furrow was recorded by this project (see below **Interpretation**) in the same position, suggesting that Back Lane was the northern limit of open field agriculture in the immediate vicinity.

The fieldwork

General

Fieldwork took place on the 21st and 22nd September 2015. It comprised monitoring of the excavations. Two linear features, running north to south, were identified. A plan of these features was surveyed and a section was recorded across one of them, with records (drawing, written description and photographs) made as appropriate. A full description of the contexts is given in Appendix 1. Contexts are described in summary form below.

Description

After removal of a mid-grey brown sandy clay loam (context 001, Fig 3.2) two linear features running north to south and of varying width, but generally around 3m wide, were identified (Fig 3.1). They were filled with a light to mid grey very sandy clay (contexts 002 and 007, Fig 3.2). After removal of the fill of one (context 002), a shallow, steep-sided cut was recorded (context 003, Fig 3.2).

Beneath this was a narrow, linear feature (context 005, Fig 3.2), co-axial with the previous feature, with vertical sides. This was filled with a light to mid-grey very sandy clay with a 'horseshoe' section tile in the bottom.

Both contexts 003 and 005 were cut into context 004 (Figs 3.1 and 3.2), a mid-grey orange sandy clay with common small rounded stones. It was believed at the time of excavation that context 005 should also have cut context 002 but no evidence of this could be found.

The finds

Results of analysis

The complete finds report has been presented as Appendix 2.

Discussion

The artefactual assemblage came from two stratified contexts and totalled seven finds weighing 307g (see Appendix 2, table 1). The standard of preservation was generally fair, with finds displaying moderate levels of abrasion.

Commentary

All contexts had a *terminus post quem* of the 20th century but the artefacts dated from the ?Roman period onwards.

Interpretation

The two broad linear features are believed to be the remains of ridge and furrow agriculture. At the bottom of each furrow was a clay pipe land drain. It is possible that the single, possibly Roman sherd, had its origin in the Romano-British settlement adjacent to the south of the development.

Commentary

The distinctive pattern of ridge and furrow, bounded by headlands is a characteristic and widely recognised feature of regular open-field systems (English Heritage 1998). Ridge and furrow is produced by the action of ploughing using a 'heavy plough', ie one capable of turning over the earth. Ridge and furrow is produced by first ploughing a normal furrow across the field. On a return run, a furrow is cut closely parallel to the first and the sod turned inwards to meet that cut by the original furrow. The process is then continued back and forth across the field. A large proportion of surviving ridge and furrow takes the form of a reversed 'S' when viewed in plan. By ploughing in this manner, the plough team could begin by standing on a narrow headland at right angles to the line of ploughing. They would then move onto the ridge so that, on reaching the farthest limit, they would end at right angles to the ridge on another headland. In this way damage to adjacent strips could be minimised.

It is unknown when the ridge and furrow became degraded but the character of the land drains suggest that it could have been during the 19th century when land improvement and 'under-drainage' as it was then known was becoming popular (Scott 1908). This degradation may have had the effect of flattening the headland that might have been expected in the vicinity of the amenity lake. It was not, therefore, possible to confirm that Back Lane was the northern limit of open field agriculture in this vicinity (rather than the stream a short distance to the north) but it is felt to be likely that such a feature formally existed and that this was the limit of this form of agriculture. It is also felt that the paucity of archaeological deposits and material culture reflects the position of the area with respect to the principal areas of settlement in both the Iron Age/Roman period and that of the medieval and post-medieval periods.

Little can be said regarding the earlier periods beyond the simple observation that the area to the north of the settlement, adjacent to the stream, is likely to have been somewhat boggy and unattractive for habitation. With respect to the post-medieval period, broadly contemporary social commentary is available for places on the edge of respectable settlement (Hardy 1886) and such commentary may be appropriate for the medieval period too.

Hardy describes an area of Casterbridge (usually regarded as being Dorchester in Dorset) called Mixen Lane:

It was the hiding-place of those who were in distress, and in debt, and trouble of every kind. Farm-labourers and other peasants, who combined a little poaching with their farming, and a little brawling and bibbing with their poaching, found themselves sooner or later in Mixen Lane...The lane and its surrounding thicket of thatched cottages stretched out like a spit into the moist and misty lowland...A brook divided the moor from the tenements, and to outward view there was no way across it - no way to the houses but round about by the road. But under every householder's stairs there was kept a mysterious plank nine inches wide; which plank was a secret bridge.

If you, as one of those refugee householders, came in from business after dark - and this was the

business time here - you stealthily crossed the moor, approached the border of the aforesaid brook, and whistled opposite the house to which you belonged. A shape thereupon made its appearance on the other side bearing the bridge on end against the sky; it was lowered; you crossed, and a hand helped you to land yourself, together with the pheasants and hares gathered from neighbouring manors.

It is easy to see the area to the south of the village of Bretforton, on the edge of the cultivated area, adjacent to a small stream, as being analogous to that of Mixen Lane, being occupied by *thatched and mud-walled houses* of little substance and consequently by the lower strata of society with little or nothing in the way of material culture likely to survive the passage of the years. This sub-set of society, bordering the cultivated area, and possibly being the primary source of workers upon it, would have brought little to the area of the amenity lake, leaving little or nothing to be found.

Significance

The only significant archaeological features located during the evaluation was ridge and furrow (surviving as two furrows) and a narrow trench at the bottom of each furrow which contained a clay land drain. There is no Monuments Protection Programme Class Description specifically for these features. However, ridge and furrow is recognised as a component of regular open-field systems for which there is such a Class description (English Heritage 1998). This has been employed below in order to assess significance in this case.

Period (currency)

Open field systems, and their components, are long-lived. Although difficult to date, examples are known from the pre-Norman period and from the 16th/17th centuries. The majority, however, were of early post-Conquest date.

Rarity

Open field systems, and their components, are common. Although the precise number is difficult to establish, the total is somewhere in the range 250 to 2000. An estimated total of 1000 examples may be suggested although it must be stressed this total refers to field systems rather than individual fields.

Diversity (form)

Open field systems, and their components, are very diverse. Four types exist within this group, determined both by date of origin and the extent of dispersal. Other variations exist in terms of regional diversity and the content of field systems, the range of individual components tending to depend more on environmental and topographic distinctions.

Period (representativity)

Open field systems, and their components, are not highly representative of the medieval period. Field systems are just one of a wide variety of monument classes known from this time.

In summary, the ridge and furrow and the land drain found during the watching brief at Bretforton can only achieve a very low significance.

Depositional and post-depositional processes

Bretforton lies in the valley of the river Avon. The landscape is that of a low-lying, undulating plain through which the Rivers Severn and Warwickshire Avon and their many tributaries flow (English Nature 1997). Much of the Avon Vale is underlain by soft rocks, mostly consisting of Keuper Marls and Liassic Clays, which form heavy loam or clay soils.

These soft Liassic clays give rise to inherently productive, but rather heavy, poorly draining soils which are not particularly suited to arable cultivation. In the vicinity of Evesham, however, much of the underlying bedrock is covered by a varying thickness of fluvio-glacial drift (Allen and Patton 2012). In part this consists of river terrace sands and gravels, but there are also extensive deposits of coarse oolitic material that has been washed down from the Cotswolds and Bredon Hill. This material occurs in wide belts to the north and south of Bredon Hill, at the base of Broadway Hill,

and also at Bretforton and at Badsey. For the most part these drift deposits have developed fertile, free draining, brown soils.

It may have been these drift deposits that attracted the early settlement noted above (**The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record**: Romano-British occupation Badsey Fields, WSM 02721) and, in later centuries, the ridge and furrow agriculture. The site lies immediately to the south of a small stream which floods from time to time. This may have influenced the 19th century owner to install under-drainage in the furrows. The ridge and furrow is not particularly pronounced immediately to the south-east of the site, where it survives as earthworks. Its loss as a visible earthwork on the site itself may relate to 20th century agricultural or horticultural practices, particularly those prevalent during the Second World War, when all manner of land was cultivated in order to provide food for the nation.

Assessment of the need for further work

Two archaeological features of low significance were located during this project (evidence for medieval agriculture and 19th land improvement). It is considered that no further archaeological investigation is required as a condition of this development.

Bibliography

Allen, J, and Patton, J, 2012 *Landscape character assessment: Worcestershire*

English Heritage, 1998 *Monument Class Description: regular open field systems*, Monuments Protection Programme

English Nature, 1997, *Severn and Avon Vales*

Hardy, T, 1886 *The mayor of Casterbridge*

Scott, J, 1908 *Draining and embanking: a practical treatise*

Acknowledgements

The author would particularly like to thank Jim Sheward, Amos, the machine driver, and Mike Glyde, Aisling Nash and Adrian Scruby of Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology Service for their kind cooperation.

Archive

The physical archive consists of:

- 7 Context sheets
- 1 Drawing
- 1 Hard copy of the report
- 1 Hard copy of the brief
- 1 Hard copy of the WSI

It will be deposited at Worcestershire County Museum, Hartlebury upon approval of the report. It is anticipated that the finds, having a *tpq* of the 20th century, will not be of interest to the museum, but the museum will be consulted in this respect before disposal.

The digital archive consists of:

- 1 Digital copy of the report (.doc format)
- 6 Illustrations (.bmp format)

It will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service upon approval of the report.

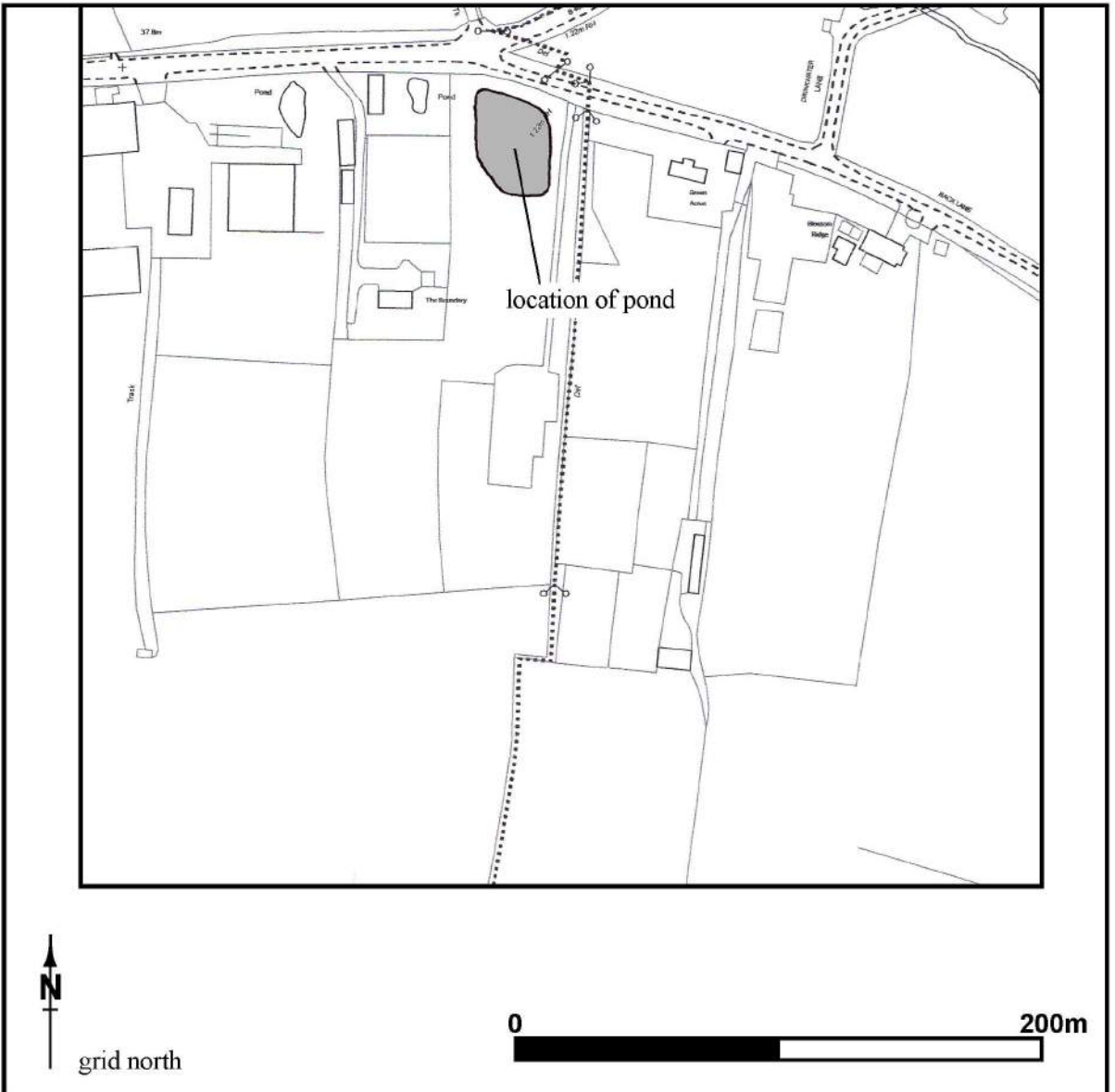
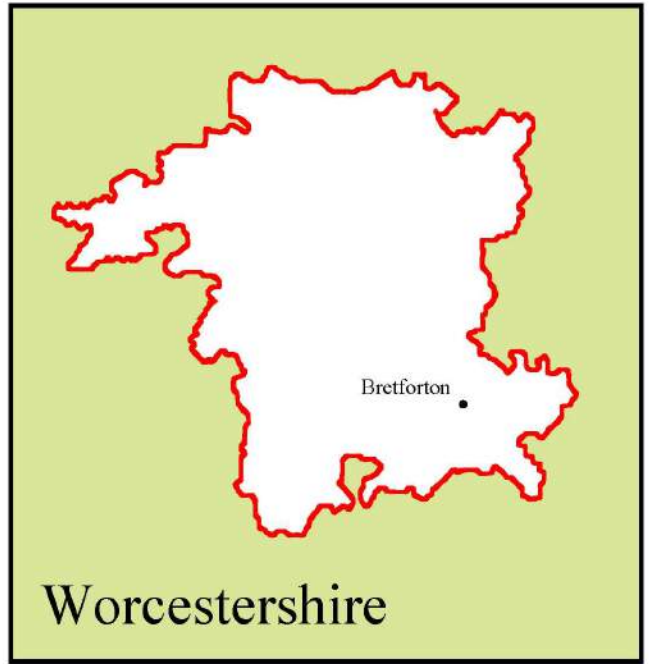
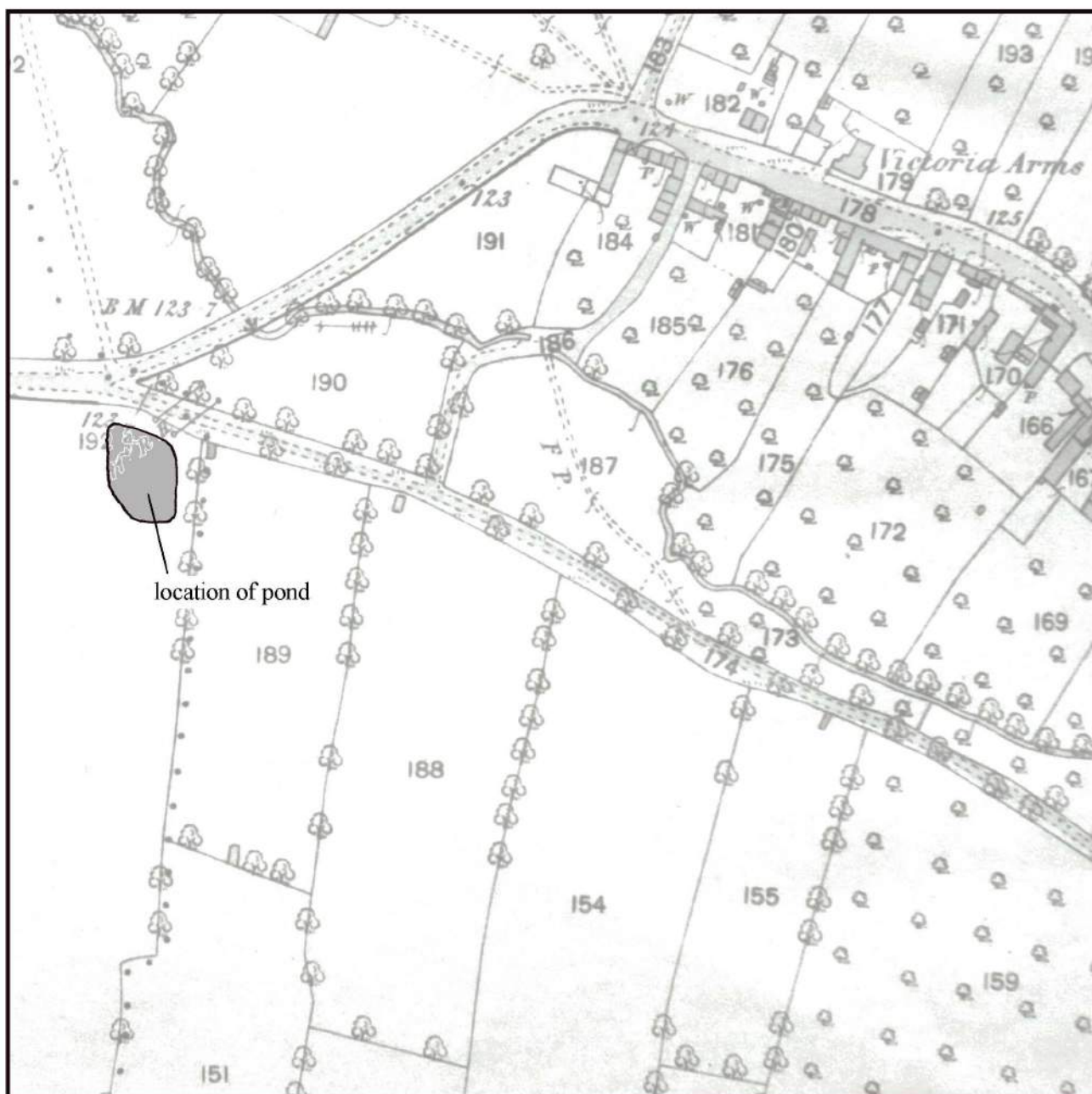
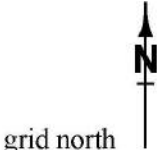


Fig 1: Location of site



location of pond



grid north



Fig 2.1: Ordnance Survey map of 1885

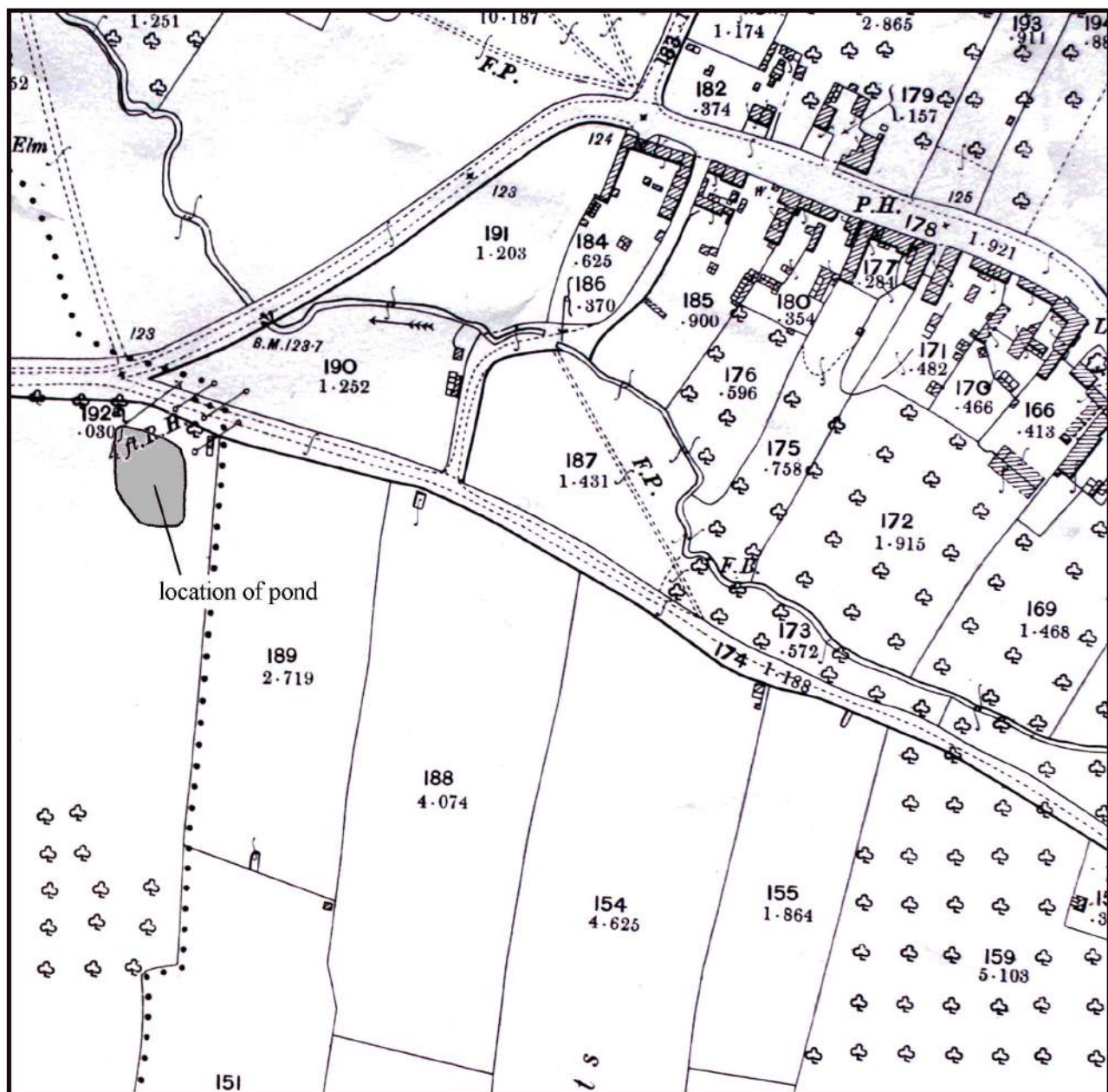


Fig 2.2: Ordnance Survey map of 1904

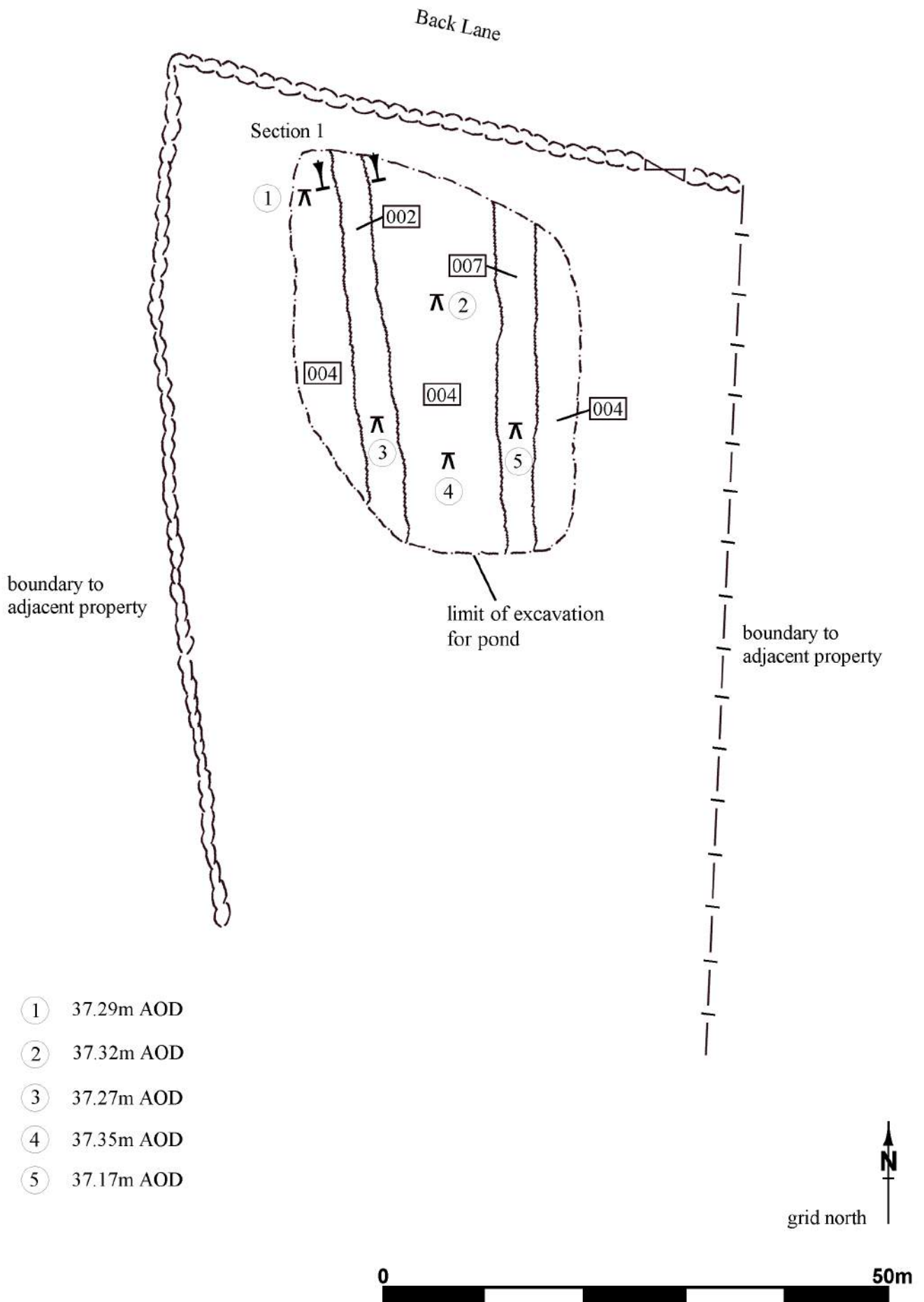
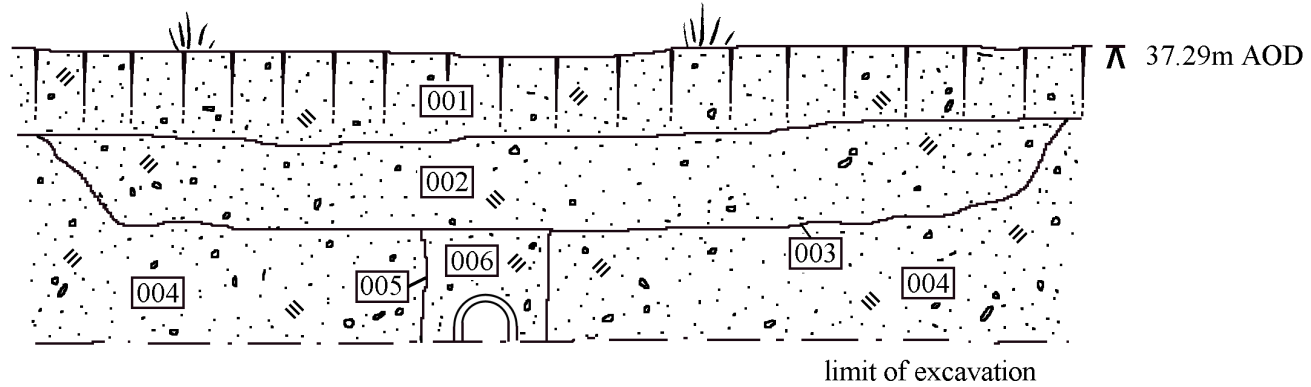


Fig 3.1: Site plan and location of recorded features

Section 1

east

west











-  loam and/or topsoil
-  stones
-  sand/gravel
-  clay
-  bricks
-  ash and charcoal
-  limit of excavation
-  height above Ordnance Datum



Fig 3.2: Section of furrow



Fig 4: General view of excavation of pond

Appendix 1: List of the contexts

Context number	Description	Interpretation
001	Mid grey brown sandy clay loam	Topsoil
002	Light to mid grey very sandy clay	Fill of 003
003	Linear, broad, flat bottomed cut	Furrow
004	Mid grey orange sandy clay with common small rounded stones	Natural subsoil
005	Indistinct, near vertically-sided narrow cut	Trench for land drain in centre of furrow 003
006	Light to mid-grey very sandy clay with horseshoe-shaped clay tile at bottom	Fill of 005
007	Light to mid grey very sandy clay	Fill of 008
008	Linear, broad, flat bottomed cut	Furrow

Appendix 2: The finds report

The Artefacts by Laura Griffin

Aims

The brief required an assessment of the quantity, range and potential of artefacts from the excavation.

The aims of the finds assessment were:

- a) to identify, sort, spot date, and quantify all artefacts
- b) to describe the range of artefacts present
- c) to preliminarily assess the significance of the artefacts

Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date range was produced for each stratified context. All information was recorded on a Microsoft Access 2007 database.

The pottery was examined under x20 magnification and recorded by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by the Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (Hurst and Rees 1992 and www.worcestershireceramics.org).

Results of analysis

The artefactual assemblage came from two stratified context and totalled seven finds weighing 307g (see table 1). The standard of preservation was generally fair, with finds displaying moderate levels of abrasion.

All contexts had a *terminus post quem* of 20th century but artefacts could be dated from the ? Roman period onwards.

Discussion

The discussion below is a summary of the artefacts and associated context by period. Where possible, dates have been allocated and the importance of individual finds commented upon as necessary.

?Roman

A small and highly abraded sherd of a fine, micaceous oxidised fabric was thought to be of Roman date.

Modern

All remaining finds were of 19th-20th century date and consisted of a piece of field drain (context 006), four sherds of china (fabric 85) and a fragment of window glass (context 001). One sherd from a large dinner plate was particularly distinctive having a speckled glaze and distinctive brown

transfer decoration. This could be identified as Biltons Ironstone Scroll design which was made in Staffordshire and produced during the 1970's.

References

Hurst, J D, and Rees, H, 1992 Pottery fabrics; a multi-period series for the County of Hereford and Worcester, in S G Woodiwiss (ed), Iron Age and Roman salt production and the medieval town of Droitwich, CBA Res Rep, 81, 200-9

Material	Total	Weight (g)
?Roman pottery	1	1
Modern pottery	4	61
Window glass	1	1
Ceramic drain	1	244

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

Appendix 3: The OASIS form

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

[List of Projects](#) | [Manage Projects](#) | [Search Projects](#) | [New project](#) | [Change your details](#) | [HER coverage](#) | [Change country](#) | [Log out](#)

Bretforton amenity lake - Martin Cook BA MCIfA

OASIS ID - martinco1-226145

Versions

View	Version	Completed by	Email	Date
View 1	1	Martin Cook	office@martinjcook.com	10 October 2015

Completed sections in current version

Details	Location	Creators	Archive	Publications
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1/1

Validated sections in current version

Details	Location	Creators	Archive	Publications
No	No	No	No	0/1

File submission and form progress

Grey literature report submitted?	No	Grey literature report filename/s
Boundary file submitted?	No	Boundary filename
HER signed off?		NMR signed off?

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