

**Archaeological watching brief  
at The Old Mill,  
Fockbury Mill Lane,  
Dodford,  
Bromsgrove,  
B61 9BA**

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Suzanne Macleod BA

5th October 2018

WSM 70767

Oasis ref martinco1-330186

Sundowner  
Circus Field Basin  
Stocklake  
Aylesbury  
HP20 1AP

07850 918755

# **Archaeological watching brief at The Old Mill, Fockbury Mill Lane, Dodford, Bromsgrove, B61 9BA**

## **Introduction**

An archaeological watching brief was carried out at The Old Mill, Fockbury Mill Lane, Dodford, Bromsgrove, B61 9BA (SO 94965 72358; Fig 1) at the request of Barbara De Santis of Donald Insall Associates, on behalf her client. This work was undertaken in compliance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by Emma Hancox of the Archive and Archaeology Service of Worcestershire County Council, on 11th September 2018 (planning ref: 18/0093/FUL and 18/00994/LBC, event number WSM 70767), an email from Barbara De Santis, information on the Bromsgrove District Council planning website and a conversation with Emma Hancox of Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service.

## **Summary**

An archaeological watching brief was carried out at The Old Mill, Fockbury Mill Lane, Dodford, Bromsgrove, B61 9BA. The 1885 Ordnance Survey mapping shows a pond immediately to the north-west of the mill building, narrowing to a neck as the channel approaches the front of the mill. At the bottom of the northern section of the excavation for a gas tank was a clear cut in the natural subsoil, approximately 0.7 or 0.8m wide. It is thought that this is the narrow neck depicted on the early map. The rest of the section, to ground level, comprised various dumps of modern building materials, including concrete and tarmac. It has been suggested that this was deposited during the construction of the nearby motorway.

A summary will be published in West Midlands Archaeology.

## **The documentary material**

### **Geology and topography**

The search area sits within an intermediate, undulating landscape based on sandstone bedrock with superficial deposits of alluvium and free draining brown soils mainly utilised for mixed agriculture. The small to medium scale fields which characterised much of this landscape have undergone modern reorganisation and sub division within the search area and the M5 motorway cuts through the centre. The historic settlement character of clustered farmsteads and wayside dwellings is mostly maintained with little change although there has been some modern expansion at Little Dodford.

### **Historic mapping**

The earliest available map is the tithe map of Bromsgrove (1840) but this is at too small a scale to be useful. The earliest useful map is the Ordnance Survey map of 1885 (Fig 2.1). This shows a substantial mill pond to the north-east of Fockbury Mill (now known as The Old Mill), fed, at its eastern extremity, by Battlefield Brook. The brook continues around the north-east and north-west sides of the pond, presumably on its original course. The pond discharges back into the brook near its western extremity. The discharge then enters a wider section of waterway, presumably a leat, running alongside a road. A short distance to the south-west, along the course of this leat, the original course of Battlefield Brook continues, looping around to the south-west. The leat continues to the south-west until it reaches the Fockbury Mill to Worms Ash road. Here it must pass under the road, presumably in a culvert, by which it feeds the small mill pond immediately to the north-west of Fockbury Mill. This smaller pond, which is embanked on its north-east side, reduces in steadily in width, finally becoming a narrow neck immediately in front of the north-west elevation of the mill. It must then enter and pass through the mill building, and a subsequent culvert, before re-emerging as a leat to the south-east. This leat eventually rejoins Battlefield Brook.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1902 (Fig 2.2) shows no significant differences in the general layout of the water system. However, three sluices are marked that were not shown before. It is likely that these sluices existed previously or the mill could scarcely have functioned. The sluice immediately

adjacent to Fockbury Mill may have particular relevance for this project (see below: **Interpretation**).

The Ordnance Survey map of 1927 (Fig 2.3) shows the large mill pond to the north-east as silted up and abandoned although the leat and the small pond immediately in front of the mill still appear to be clear. Fockbury Mill itself is marked as disused.

### **The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record**

There are a number of entries on the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record for the area including or surrounding the development site.

### **Monuments and buildings**

WSM 57571

Valentine Cottage and Rose Haven, Snakes Lake, 19th to 21st century

Unlisted three and two storey red brick cottages with slate gable roofs. Buildings have been extended and altered as evidenced by changing brick colour and size. One half height wall is of course sandstone blocks. Possibly former industrial buildings? Visible on Google Streetview (image date August 2009) and on Ordnance Survey 1st Edition map, which also shows a well to the south of the house for water supply. Dates are conjectural

WSM 57572

Snake Lake Cottages, Snakes Lake, 19th to 21st century

Pair of ?19th century two storey red brick cottages with tile gable roof and dentillated eaves. Square headed window openings with late 20th century replacement windows to the upper floor, segmental arched window openings to the ground floor. Probably originally single storey plus attic but different coloured bricks show that roof has been raised at some point in the past. Well for water supply shown on Ordnance Survey 1st Edition map, to the south-west of cottage number two, still visible on Google Streetview covered with a manhole in the garden. Buildings visible on Google Streetview (image date April 2010) and shown on the Ordnance Survey 1st Edition map. Dates are conjectural.

WSM 56633

Palaeo-channel, east of Fockbury Farm, Bromsgrove

Palaeo-channel identified from cartographic sources only. This feature is mostly under the M5/M42 motorway, therefore it is presumed there is little to no potential for remaining environmental deposits within this vicinity.

WSM 56634

Pond, north-east of Fockbury Farm, Bromsgrove

Pond identified from cartographic sources only. This feature is mostly under the M5/M42 motorway, therefore it is presumed there is little to no potential for remaining environmental deposits within this vicinity.

### **Landscape components**

WSM 42160

Feckenham Forest

13th century boundary of Feckenham Forest, taken from a shapefile based from historical maps and documentary evidence.

### **Historic landscape character**

HWR 12361

Fockbury Mill, mill complex.

### **Commentary**

The palaeo-channel (WSM 56633) and the pond (WSM 56634) are the original course of the Battlefield Brook and the large mill pond, described in **Historic mapping** above.

## The fieldwork

### General

Fieldwork took place on the 13th September 2018. The aims of the project were to determine the:

- presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts.

If such archaeological remains were present to:

- define their character
- extent
- quality
- preservation and
- enable an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context.

The fieldwork comprised the recording of an excavation for a gas tank, approximately 3.0m long, 2m wide and 1.7m deep. The excavation had already taken place and the archaeological work comprised cleaning of the sides of the trench by hand and recording and sampling as necessary.

A full description of the contexts is given in Appendix 1. Contexts are described in summary form below.

### Description

A brick retaining wall, (Fig 3; context 008) was built perpendicular to the north-west elevation of Fockbury Mill. The brick component of this wall sat upon breeze blocks, themselves laid upon a foundation of mass concrete. Against this wall, the following deposits were laid down.

A very thin topsoil covered a series of dumps of concrete (Figs 3 and 4; context 001). Tip lines in the concrete were clearly visible and substantial slabs of tarmacadam followed these tip lines. This layer overlay a dark reddy brown, slightly clayey sand (context 002) which in turn overlay a layer of light buff, small angular aggregate (context 003). This overlay a very mixed layer of building rubble including concrete lumps, broken bricks and other debris (context 004).

This in turn overlay a fill of irregular red sandstone fragments in a dark reddy brown clayey sand matrix (context 006). This fill sat in a slightly trapezoidal channel (contexts 009 and 010), cut into the natural subsoil on its south-west side (context 005) and a light reddy brown clayey sand on its north-east side (context 007).

### Interpretation

The brick retaining wall and the layers associated with it (contexts 001, 002, 003, 004 and 008) are clearly modern, are reputed to have been deposited at the time of the construction of the nearby motorway, and to have come from it. These modern layers overlay deposits associated with the use and disuse of Fockbury Mill.

The fill of the trapezoidal channel (context 006) must date to the disuse of the mill between 1902 and 1927. The channel itself (contexts 009 and 010) is narrow, steeply sided and flat-bottomed. It is unlikely that the materials through which it is cut (contexts 005 and 007) could have resisted the erosional forces of a mill stream and it is likely that it was lined. No trace of a wooden lining was found and it is possible that the lining was of the same red sandstone that was found in its fill. This may have been of 'dry- or rubble stone' construction. There is a long tradition of such unmortared, rubble stone construction being widely employed in the construction of canals. Examples recently recorded by the authors (Cook and MacLeod 2018 and Cook 2017) being, respectively, on the Montgomery Canal (Fig 6) and a disused loop of the Grand Union Canal (Fig 7). The sluice referred to above (**Historic mapping**) may have been located within this narrow section of the channel as its width (approximately 0.8m) is comparable to the width of paddles employed on the canal system.

Finally, it was noted that the trapezoidal channel was located immediately to the north-west of a blocked opening in the north-west elevation of the mill (Fig 5). This is presumably where the head race of the mill entered the mill building.

## **The finds**

There were no finds recovered from the section.

## **Environmental samples**

In spite of the excavation taking place through the end of a mill pond, there was little trace of organic deposits suitable for sampling and there was no dating evidence. No environmental samples were therefore taken.

## **Bibliography**

Cook, M, 2017 *Report on survey and assessment at disused canal loop north of the paired locks 2 and 3, Hillmorton, Oxford Canal, Warwickshire*, Canal & River Trust

Cook, M, and MacLeod, S, 2018 *Archaeological watching brief at Crickheath Wharf, Montgomery Canal, Shropshire*, Canal & River Trust

## **Acknowledgements**

The author would particularly like to thank Barbara De Santis, and Emma Hancox for their kind cooperation.

## **Archive**

The physical archive consists of:

- 10 Context sheets
- 1 Drawing
- 1 Hard copy of the report
- 1 Hard copy of the report illustrations
- 1 Hard copy of the WSI

It will be deposited at Worcestershire County Museum, Hartlebury upon approval of the report.

The digital archive consists of:

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

It will be deposited with OASIS (Appendix 2) upon approval of the report.

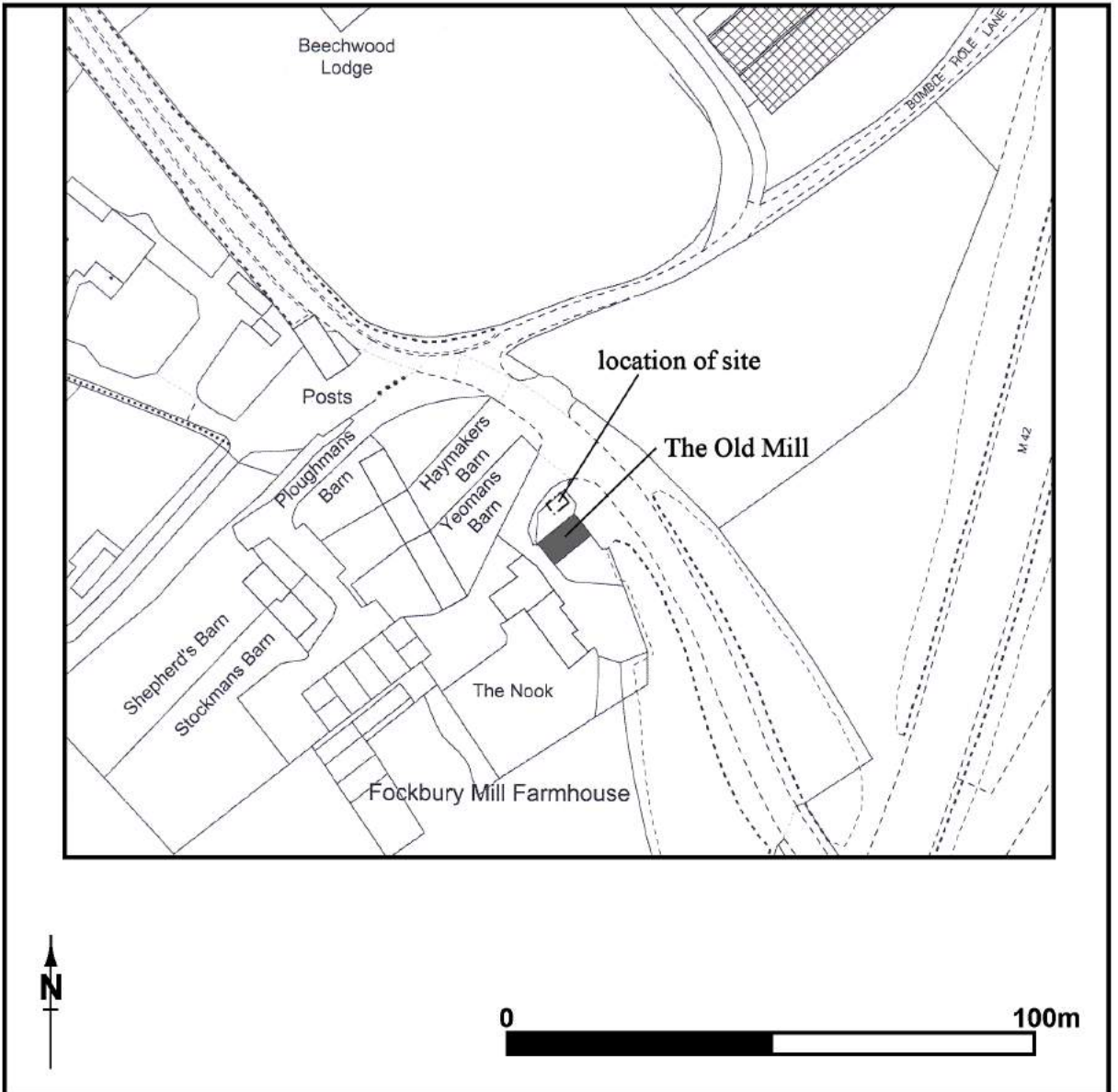


Fig 1: Location of site

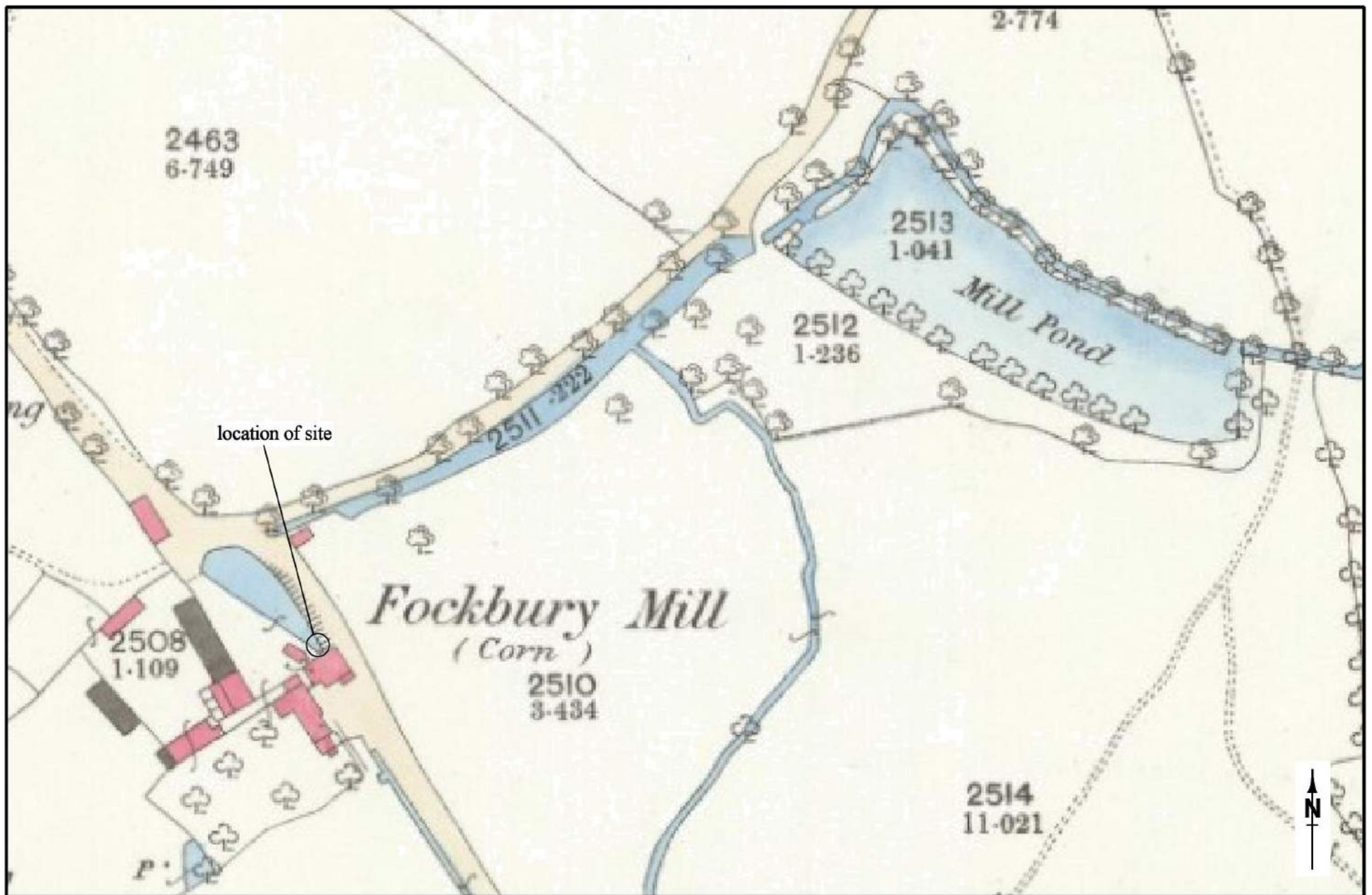


Fig 2.1: Ordnance Survey map of 1885



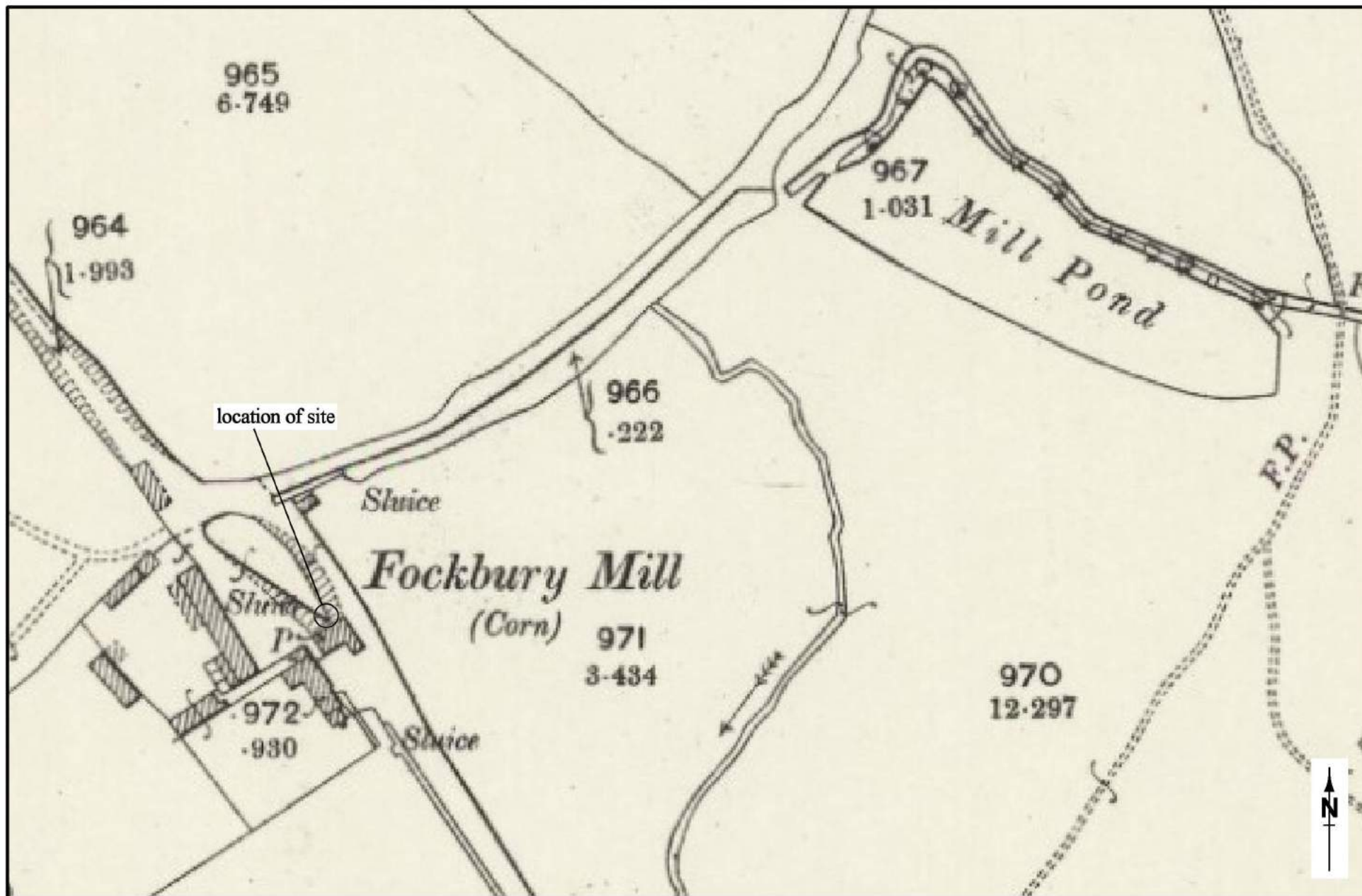


Fig 2.2: Ordnance Survey map of 1902





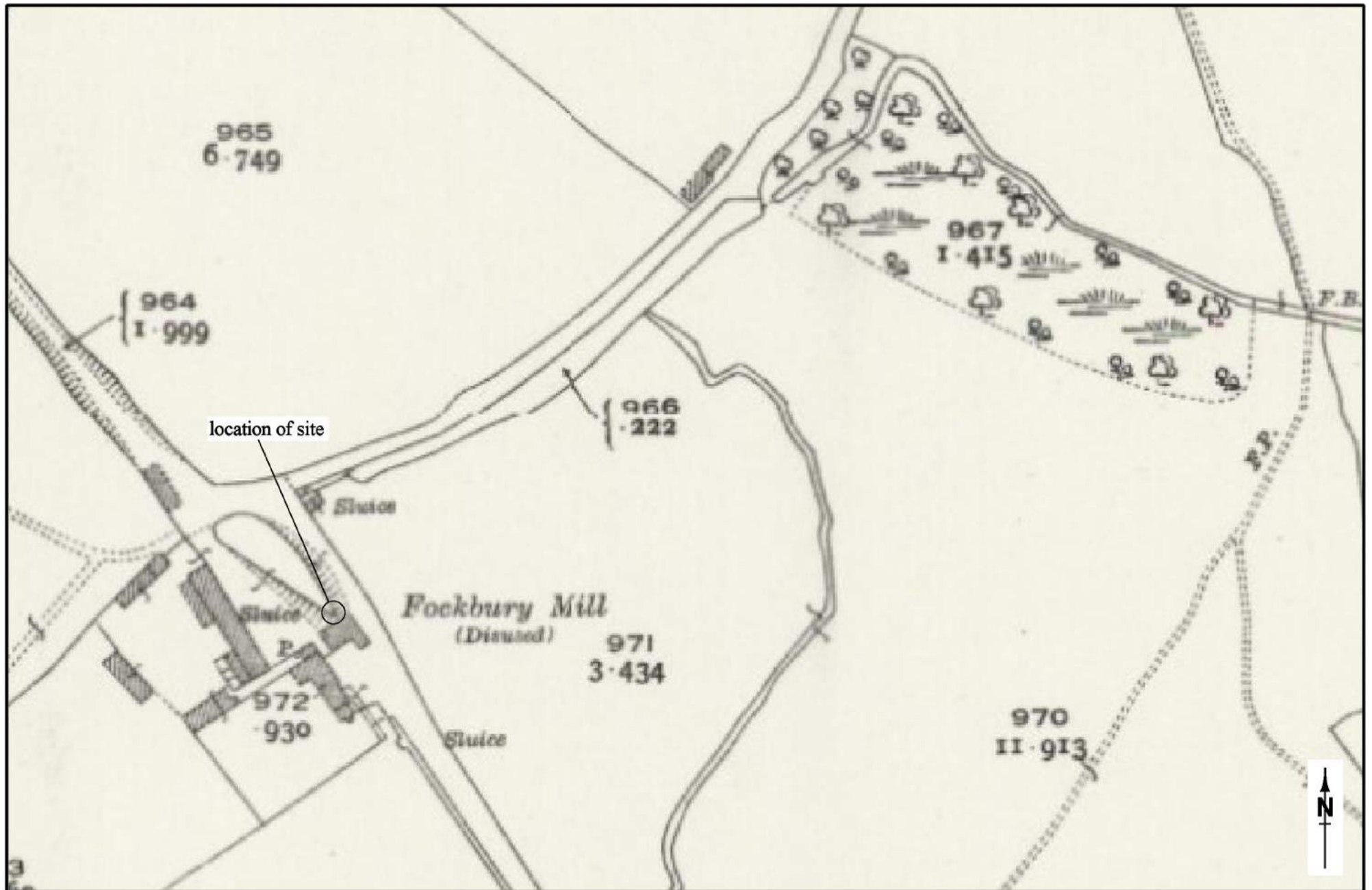


Fig 2.3: Ordnance Survey map of 1927

0 200m

# Section 1

south-west

north-east

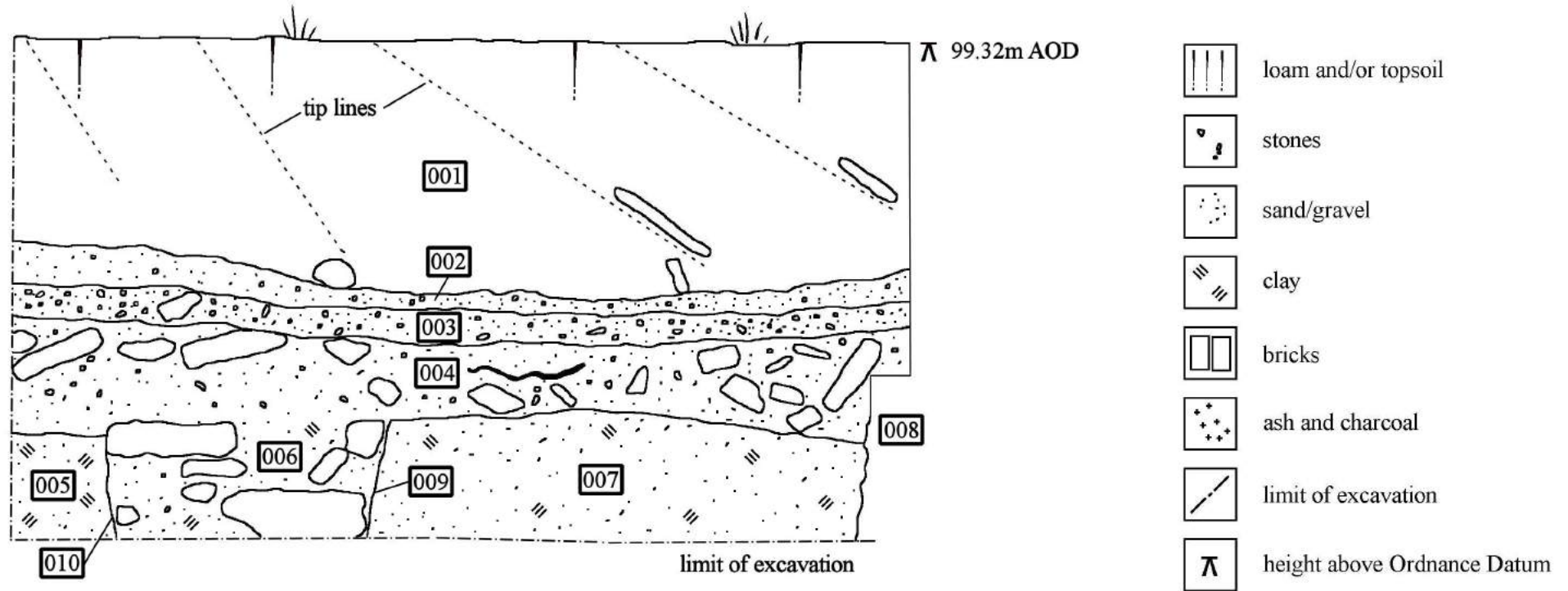


Fig 3: North-west section of excavation for gas cylinder





Fig 4: North-west section of excavation

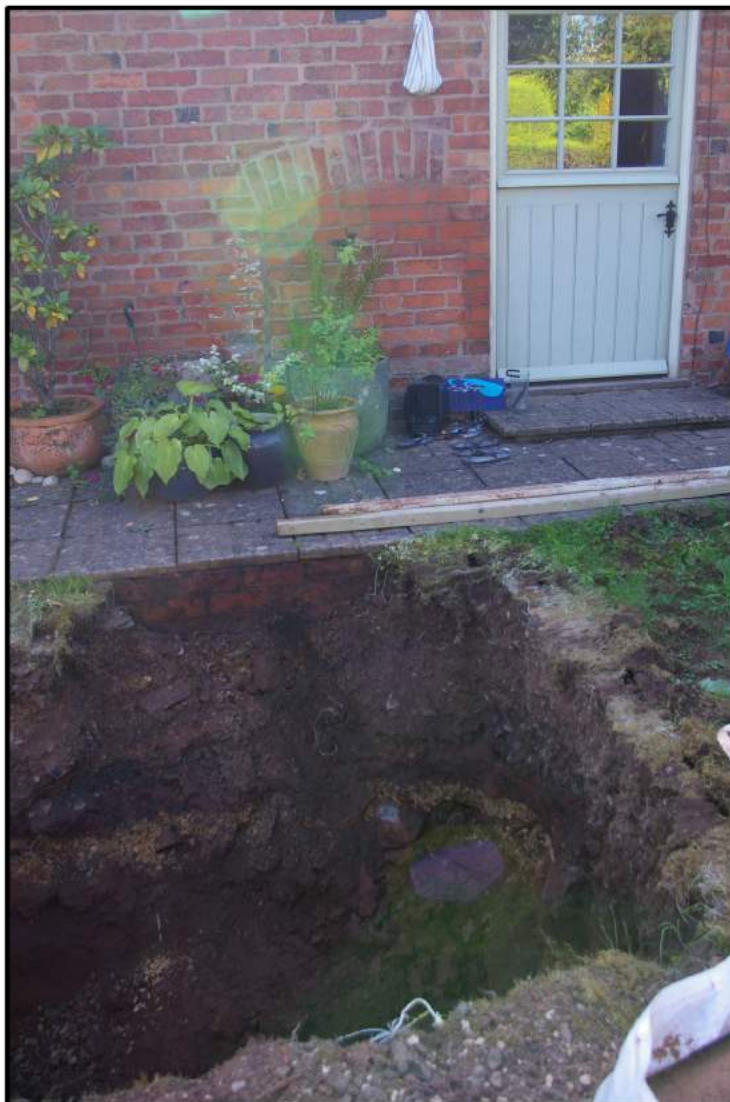


Fig 5: North-west elevation of The Old Mill showing blocked opening



Fig 6: View of the nearside towpath stone rubble retaining wall, Montgomery Canal, Crickheath



Fig 7: Area of rubble stone towpath walling, Grand Union Canal, Hillmorton

## Appendix 1: List of the contexts

<b>Context number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
001	Concrete with occasional tarmac sheets, tipped from south-west	Concrete dump, surmounted by very thin topsoil
002	Dark reddy brown slightly clayey sand	Layer - dumped material
003	Light buff small aggregate	Layer - dumped material
004	Mixed layer of rubble including concrete, brick, tile, strapping, etc	Layer - dumped material
005	Dark reddy brown tenacious clay	Natural subsoil
006	Irregular red sandstone fragments in dark reddy brown clayey sand matrix	Possibly fill of mill leat channel, approximately in line with blocked opening in former mill building
007	Light reddy brown clayey sand	Layer
008	Cement block and concrete footing surmounted by brick wall in cement mortar	Modern construction, post-dating mill
009	Cut	Side of mill leat
010	Cut	Side of mill leat

**Appendix 2: The OASIS form**

# OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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## Printable version

**OASIS ID: martinco1-330186**

### Project details

Project name	Old Mill Dodford
Short description of the project	Watching brief on a small excavation adjacent to the Old Mill, Dodford, Worcestershire
Project dates	Start: 13-09-2018 End: 05-10-2018
Previous/future work	Not known / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	18/0093/FUL - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	MILL LEAT Post Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	WORCESTERSHIRE BROMSGROVE DODFORD WITH GRAFTON The Old Mill, Dodford
Postcode	B61 9BA
Study area	6 Square metres
Site coordinates	SO 94965 72358 52.348884441829 -2.073925594729 52 20 55 N 002 04 26 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 98.02m Max: 98.02m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Martin Cook BA MCIfA
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body

Project design originator Martin Cook BA MCIfA  
Project director/manager Martin Cook BA MCIfA  
Project supervisor Martin Cook BA MCIfA  
Type of sponsor/funding body Developer

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No  
Digital Archive recipient ADS  
Digital Contents "none"  
Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography", "Text"  
Paper Archive recipient Worcestershire County Museum  
Paper Contents "none"  
Paper Media available "Report"

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)  
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