

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF OF THE
AVON BOAT BARRIERS,
WYRE MILL AND NAFFORD,
PERSHORE, WORCESTERSHIRE

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Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Project 3475
Report 1839
WSM 42116
& 42117

Archaeological watching brief of the Avon Boat Barriers, Wyre Mill and Nafford, Pershore, Worcestershire

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Background information

<i>Client</i>	Environment Agency
<i>Site address</i>	Wyre Mill and Nafford, Pershore, Worcestershire
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SO 95845 46923 & SO 94091 41906
<i>Historic Environment Record reference</i>	WSM 42116 & 42117
<i>Planning authority</i>	Wychavon District Council
<i>Project parameters</i>	HEAS 2008, IfA 2008

Wyre Mill

The first area of groundworks was located between Wyre Piddle and Pershore, to the north-east of Wyre Mill (Fig 1), on the north-easternmost of a series of small islands on the River Avon (Fig 2). The trench was located on the north eastern edge of the island, abutting the island's landing platform (Plates 1 and 2). The predominant soils along the south bank of the river here are characterised by the loamy brown earths of the Wick 1 association (541r), while along the north bank it is the Evesham 2 association (411b), comprising slowly permeable calcareous clays (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

Nafford

Further groundworks were observed at Nafford Weir, situated along the River Avon between Eckington and Great Comberton, on the island at the south-east confluence with the Berwick Brook (Fig 1). The trench was located in the south-east corner of the island to the north-east of the jetty (Plate 6). Here the soils on the south bank also belong to the Evesham 2 association, while on the north bank they belong to the Wick 1 association (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

Archaeological and historical background

There has been no previous recorded archaeological works undertaken directly on either site.

Wyre Mill and Mil House (WSM 01391, 30319 and 42281) are grade II listed buildings, which date from the late 18th to early 19th centuries. Wyre Lock was originally built by William Sandys of Fladbury, between 1636-40 (WSM 20428). Wyre Mill lies within an agricultural landscape with extant earthworks of ridge and furrow (WSM 05013, 05207, 09217 and 12105) to the west of the villages of Wyre Piddle and Wick. Within one the most well preserved of these earthworks (WSM 05207), east of Hurst Farm, is a trackway which leads to a system of unidentified earthworks possibly representing a settlement of unknown date, to the west of Wyre House (WSM 31191). An undated possible boundary ditch aligned roughly south-east to north-west has been identified from aerial photographs north-east of Wicklands Farm (WSM 30506).

A number of unstratified finds have been made within the parish of Pershore, including a Saxon spearhead (WSM 15732), two Saxon thuribles (metal censers; WSM 15751 and 32287). Several Saxon shield bosses have been recovered from an unknown location within Wyre Piddle parish. Further finds have also been recovered within the parishes of Pershore, Wick and Wyre Piddle and recorded as part of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (WSM 38507).

Documentary evidence indicates the existence of Nafford Mill from 1341 (WSM 02443). A watching brief of works on the sluice in 1999 did not record any archaeologically significant remains (WSM 30042). The site of possible deserted medieval settlement is recorded immediately to the north of Nafford, south of the river (WSM 07718).

Works as part of the Gwen Finch Nature Reserve to the north of the river in 2000 identified evidence of human occupation from the including Mesolithic/Neolithic, possible limited arable use c 1800 BC and hay meadow from the medieval period onwards (WSM 27827). Evaluation of Mill Meadow to the south of the river in 2006 revealed extensive evidence of erosion from the higher

slopes and deposition within the floodplain, residual Roman and post-medieval material, a number of possible prehistoric ditches and alluvial deposits containing Early Bronze Age to Roman pottery (WSM 35772; Sworn and Vaughan 2006).

A Scheduled Ancient Monument lies to the south-east, comprising a double ditched circular enclosure, which is visible as a crop mark. It was originally identified as a henge, but has recently been conjectured to be a small hill fort (SAM 230, WSM 04061). Earthworks of ridge and furrow have been recorded around the village (WSM 03646, 09785, 10504, 10530 and 10541).

Aims

The aim of the watching brief was to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

Methods

General specification for fieldwork		CAS 1995
Sources consulted		HER
Date(s) of fieldwork	Wyre Mill	10 March 2010
	Nafford	08 March 2011
Areas of site		See Figs 2 and 3

Dimensions of excavated areas observed

Wyre Mill Trench 1	length 2.40m width 1.60m depth 1.40-1.60m
Nafford Trench 2	length 2.36m width 1.20m depth 1.90m

Access to or visibility of deposits

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken during machine excavation. Due to considerations of health and safety, the deep trenches were not accessed and all recording was undertaken from the present ground level. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, although any less clear may not have been identified.

Statement of confidence

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

Deposit descriptions**Wyre Mill Trench 1 (WSM 42116)**

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
1000	Imported soil and rubble	Stone and rubble with silty loam soil. Abutted 1000, recorded only in the south facing section beneath the landing platform. Possibly to create a wall upon which the landing platform sat.	0.12-1.40m
1001	Imported soils	Moderately dark brown silty loam, with some decomposing organic material. No distinct horizons. No finds. Extensive tree roots.	0.00-1.40m
1002	Concrete wall	A concrete wall aligned NW-SE parallel to and 1.60m south of the landing platform. Two reinforced steel bars connected between this and the landing platform. Sealed by 1000.	0.20-1.20m

Nafford Trench 2 (WSM 42117)

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
2000	Topsoil	Mid dark brown friable and cohesive silty clay. Abundant root action.	0.00-0.40m
2001	Mixed topsoil and alluvium	Mid grey, friable and cohesive silty clay. No inclusions.	0.40-0.90m
2002	Alluvium	Light yellowy beige friable and cohesive clay. Sterile alluvial deposit.	0.90-1.40m
2003	Alluvium	Mid greyish blue friable and cohesive clay. Sterile alluvial deposit	1.40m+

Discussion*Wyre Mill Trench 1*

The only soils encountered were a homogeneous moderately dark brown silty loam, containing some decomposing organic material (1001). There were no defined horizons within the deposit and no finds were recovered. This deposit abutted 1000, a mixed rubble and soil deposit, recorded only in the south facing section beneath the landing platform (Plates 3 and 4). Sealed by 1000 was a concrete wall at the base of the trench running NW-SE parallel to and 1.60m south of the landing platform (Plate 5).

Nafford Trench 2

A mid dark brown friable and cohesive silty clay topsoil (2000) with abundant root action was observed, over a mixed topsoil and alluvial deposit (2001), with further sterile, undated alluvial clay deposits below (2002 and 2003; Plate 7). The natural stratum was not reached at the maximum depth of 1.90m. No finds or other dateable material were encountered.

Conclusions

No significant archaeological features, horizons or structures were observed during the course of the watching brief. Trench 1, at Wyre Mill contained modern structures, whilst in Trench 2 at Nafford, sterile, un-dateable alluvial deposits were recorded below soils, to the full depth of the trench.

Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on behalf of the Environment Agency of the Avon Boat Barriers project at Wyre Mill (NGR SO 95845 46923; WSM 42116) and Nafford (NGR SO 94091 41906; WSM 42117), Pershore, Worcestershire. At the Wyre Mill site the only soils encountered were re-deposited imported soils, overlying a concrete wall associated with the landing stage. At the Nafford site a series of sterile alluvial deposits were encountered. No significant archaeological features, layers or deposits were observed.

Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Jen Richards and James Turner (Environment Agency), Clive Matthews (Avon Navigation Trust) and Mike Glyde (Historic Environment Planning Officer, Worcestershire County Council).

Bibliography

CAS 1995 (as amended) *Manual of Service practice: fieldwork recording manual*, County Archaeological Service, Hereford and Worcester County Council, report, **399**

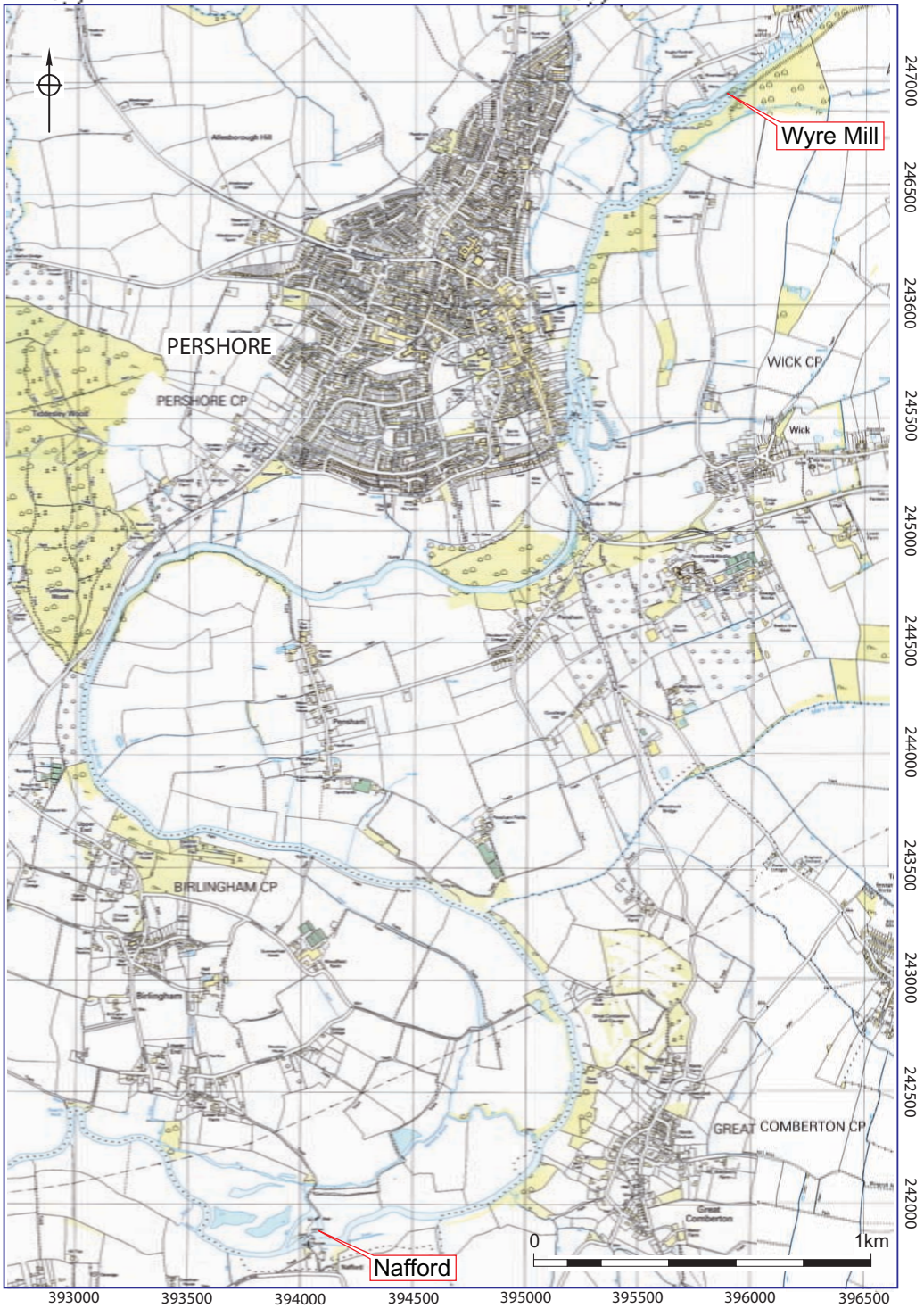
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IfA, 2008 *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute for Archaeologists

Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983 *Midland and Western England, sheet 3, scale 1:250,000 + Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales (A brief explanation of the constituent soil associations)*

Sworn, S J and Vaughan, T M, 2006 *Archaeological evaluation at Mill Meadow, Nafford, Eckington, Worcestershire*, Historic Environment and Archaeological Service, Worcestershire County Council, report **1475**, revised 1 November 2006

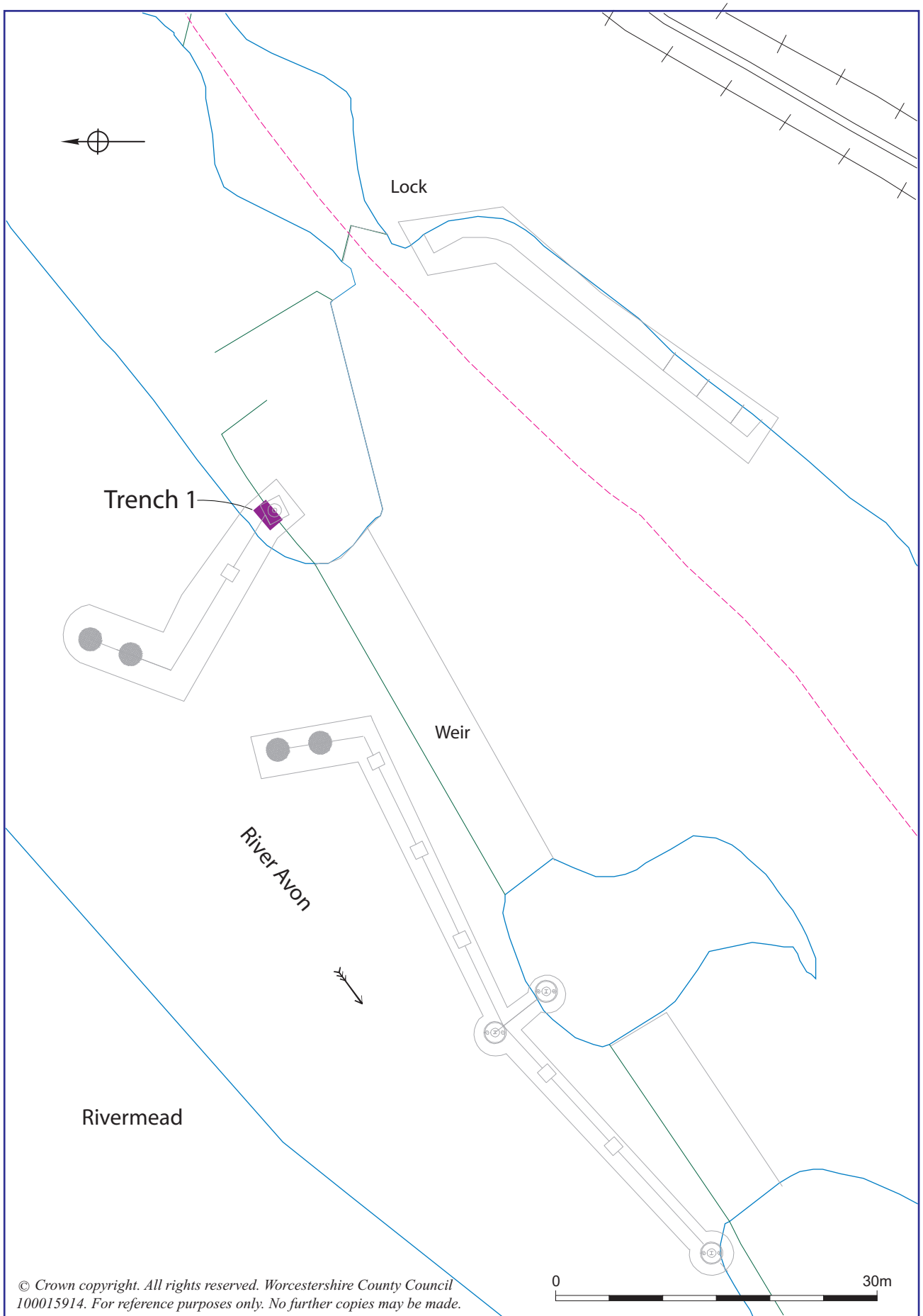
Figures



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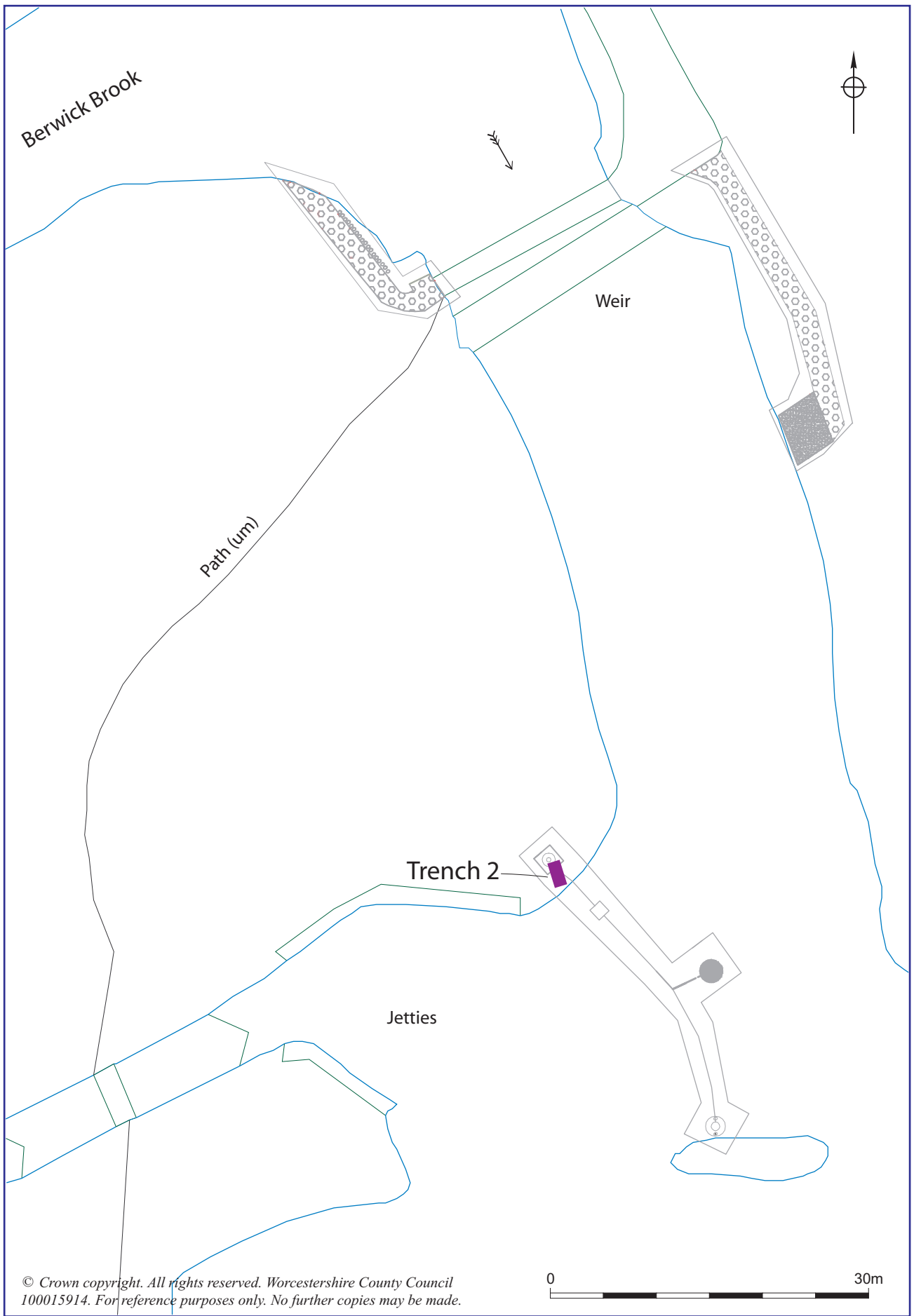
Location of the site

Figure 1



Wyre Mill: location of Trench 1

Figure 2



Nafford: location of Trench 2

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1, Wyre Mill site location, view north-east



Plate 2, Wyre Mill Trench 1 location prior to excavation, view south-west



Plate 3, Wyre Mill Trench 1 north-east facing section



Plate 4, Wyre Mill Trench 1, south-west facing section



Plate 5, Concrete wall (1001) uncovered within Trench 1



Plate 6, Nafford Trench 2 location prior to excavation, view north-east



Plate 7, Nafford Trench 2 south-west facing section showing topsoil and alluvial clay deposits

Appendix 1 Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM 42116 & 42117)

The archive consists of:

2	Field progress reports AS2
1	Photographic records AS3
55	Digital photographs
1	Drawing number catalogues AS4
2	Scale drawings
2	Trench record sheets AS41
1	Computer disk
1	Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416