

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING  
BRIEF  
AT  
WELLINGTON ROAD,  
BURTON-UPON-TRENT,  
STAFFORDSHIRE

Adam Lee and Tom Vaughan

Illustrated by Sarah Phear and Carolyn Hunt

24 April 2008

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Project 3063  
Report 1613



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## Archaeological watching brief at Wellington Road, Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire

**Adam Lee and Tom Vaughan**

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### Background information

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <i>Client</i>                           | Pam Brown Associates on behalf of<br>Anson Properties Limited           |
| <i>Site address</i>                     | Wellington Road,<br>Burton-upon-Trent,<br>Staffordshire                 |
| <i>National Grid reference</i>          | SK 236 227  |
| <i>Planning authority<br/>reference</i> | East Staffordshire Borough Council<br>PA/00588/069/PO (Phases I and II) |
| <i>Brief</i>                            | SCC 2007  |
| <i>Project design</i>                   | Phase I: HEAS 2007b<br>Phase II: HEAS 2007a                             |
| <i>Project parameters</i>               | IFA 2001  |

### *Previous archaeological work on the site*

There has been no previous intrusive archaeological work undertaken on site, although a desk-based assessment has been compiled by the Service (HEAS 2006) and the following is a summary from that report.

### *Archaeological background*

There is cropmark evidence of a number of prehistoric enclosures within the immediate vicinity of the site (PRN 01409 and 01410). The line of the Ryknild Roman road (PRN 05156) is thought to cross the site on a northeast to southwest alignment. This projected route is based on investigations at Stretton to the northeast and Barton-under-Needwood to the southwest where evidence of the road was found. Other Roman activity identified close to the site suggests there was Roman settlement in the area.

Prior to the development of the site in the mid/late 19<sup>th</sup> century the area was part of a large area of meadows or pasture. It was the construction of the North Midland Railway through Burton, completed in 1839, which led to the development of the site. By 1888 sidings connected to the mainline railway had been constructed along with an engine shed and other ancillary buildings. The railway infrastructure remained on the site until the 1950's at which time it was demolished to make way for the Wellington Iron and Steel Works, which gave its name to the present road. At a later date the foundry became William Cook Casting products, whose buildings remained on the site until the present development by Anson Properties Limited.

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## 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.

In particular the project had the following aims (HEAS 2007a; HEAS 2007b):

- To define the presence or absence of the Roman road considered to cross the development site; its state of preservation, form and character;
  - To define the presence or absence of Roman activity associated with the Roman road, as indicated by adjacent finds;
  - To determine if features associated with the (prehistoric) enclosures identified in an aerial photograph dated 1963 adjacent, continue within the present site (pers comm Stephen Dean).
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## Methods

General specification for fieldwork  
Sources consulted

CAS 1995  
Desk-based assessment (HEAS 2006)

### *Phase I:*

Date(s) of fieldwork

13 November 2007 to 1 May 2008

Dimensions of excavated areas observed  
(Fig 2)

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| Trench 1 | length c 30m<br>width c 30m<br>depth 2.50m     |
| Trench 2 | length c 45m<br>width 0.90m<br>depth <1.20m    |
| Trench 3 | length c 358m<br>width <13.50m<br>depth <2.00m |
| Trench 4 | length c 144m<br>width 0.90m<br>depth <1.70m   |
| Trench 5 | length c 76m<br>width 2.40m<br>depth <2.00m    |
| Trench 6 | length c 65m<br>width 3.00m<br>depth <1.60m    |
| Trench 7 | length c 92m<br>width c 50m<br>depth 1.00m     |

In addition to the above trenches, approximately twenty foundation bases were also observed.

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**Phase II:**

Date(s) of fieldwork

6 September 2007

Dimensions of excavated areas observed  
(Fig 2)

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Test Pit 3  | length 1.50m<br>width 1.00m<br>depth 2.20m   |
| Test Pit 4  | length 1.50m<br>width 1.00m<br>depth c 2.30m |
| Test Pit 5  | length 1.50m<br>width 1.00m<br>depth c 2.00m |
| Test Pit 7  | length 2.00m<br>width 1.00m<br>depth c 2.00m |
| Test Pit 8  | length 2.00m<br>width 1.00m<br>depth 2.20m   |
| Test Pit 9  | length 2.00m<br>width 1.00m<br>depth 2.20m   |
| Test Pit 10 | length 2.00m<br>width 1.00m<br>depth 2.30m   |

*Access to or visibility of deposits*

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken during and after machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, although any less clear may not have been identified. It should be noted that Figure 2 identifies the only those areas monitored, not the full extent of ground disturbance associated with the development.

*Statement of confidence*

Not all of the excavation areas were made available for observation and recording, particularly in Phase II. However, a good spread of the groundworks across both phases of the development area was monitored. Thus access to, and visibility of deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

**Deposit description: *Phase I*****Trench 1**

| Context | Classification    | Description  | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|-------------------|--|---|
| 1000    | Modern overburden | Mixed modern deposit comprising firm dark brown black sandy silt with frequent large fragments of modern CBM. This deposit contains material from the demolition of the foundry. | 0.00 - 1.60m  |
| 1001    | Subsoil           | Loose mid green silty sands and gravels. Possible alluvial deposit.  | 1.60 - 2.10m  |
| 1002    | Natural           | Loose mid to light orange yellow sands and gravels.  | 2.10m +   |

**Trenches 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7**

| Context | Classification    | Description  | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|-------------------|--|---|
| 2003    | Modern overburden | Disturbed ground. Mixed deposit consisting of firm dark black sandy silt with patches of re-deposited natural sand and gravel. Frequent rounded stones and fragments of modern CBM and concrete. Deposit appears in Trenches 2, 5 and 7. | 0.00 - 1.40m  |
| 2004    | Natural           | Loose mid to light orange yellow sands and gravels with patches of firm light orange yellow silty/clayey sands and gravels. Deposit appears in Trenches 2 and 5.   | 1.40m +   |
| 2005    | Modern overburden | Mixed modern deposit. Firm dark brown sandy silt with patches of mid orange brown stony silt, mid orange silty clay and light brown yellow stony clay. Deposit appears in Trenches 4 and 6.  | 0.00 - 1.70m +  |

**Trench 3**

| Context | Classification    | Description   | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|-------------------|---|---|
| 3000    | Modern overburden | Loose silty ash and clinker deposit consisting of dark brown black sandy silt with a high level of ash and clinker. Frequent large lumps of coal, occasional modern brick and glass.                                  | 0.00 - 0.65m  |
| 3001    | Modern overburden | Mixed modern makeup deposit. Firm mid brown sandy silt with patches of orange sand and mid brown/yellow orange sandy clay. Frequent small to medium rounded stones.   | 0.65 - 1.15m  |
| 3002    | Modern overburden | Firm mid brown sandy silt. Moderate small to medium stones, occasional charcoal flecks and occasional fragments of modern glass. In the SW part of trench 3 this deposit is grey brown with frequent charcoal flecks. | 1.15 - 1.45m  |
| 3003    | Natural           | Loose mid mottled yellow/grey orange silty sands and gravels. Some areas are more brown yellow.   | 1.45m +   |
| 3004    | Modern overburden | Firm dark black brown sandy silt with frequent large lumps of modern CBM and concrete. Deposit contains a high level of modern brick rubble. Deposit only observed in the northeast part of the trench.               | 0.00 - 1.80m  |

**Foundation Bases**

| Context | Classification    | Description   | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|-------------------|---|---|
| 2000    | Modern overburden | Layer of crushed concrete and brick; deposit only appears under building footprint.   | 0.00 - 0.80m  |
| 2001    | Modern overburden | Disturbed ground. Dark black mixed deposit consisting of firm dark brown black sandy silt. Frequent moderate fragments of modern CBM. This deposit contains material from the demolition of the foundry.                  | 0.80 - 1.40m +  |
| 2002    | Modern overburden | Mixed deposit, lumps of orange clay, patches of yellow brown silty sands and gravels, patches of black brown silt with moderate rounded stones. Moderated fragments of modern CBM and concrete.                           | 0.75 - 2.10   |
| 2004    | Natural           | Loose mid to light orange yellow sands and gravels with patches of firm light orange yellow silty/clayey sands and gravels. This deposit was only observed in the deeper bases on the southeast side of the new building. | 2.10m +   |

***Phase II*****Test Pit 3**

| Context | Classification     | Description  | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|--------------------|--|---|
| 301     | Modern overburden  | Crushed concrete and brick; recently imported to raise site level for present development.   | 0.00 - 0.20m  |
| 302     | Modern overburden  | Loose dark brown and black sand with frequent 20 <sup>th</sup> century debris: charcoal, brick, wood, ceramic pipe, ash, clinker, coal and iron waste. | 0.20 - 1.50m  |
| 303     | Disturbed natural? | Firm mid brown clay with frequent charcoal, brick and occasional quartz pebbles.   | 1.50m +   |

**Test Pit 4**

| Context | Classification    | Description  | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|-------------------|--|---|
| 401     | Modern overburden | Crushed concrete and brick; recently imported to raise site level for present development.   | 0.00 - 0.20m  |
| 402     | Modern overburden | Loose dark brown and black sand with frequent 20 <sup>th</sup> century debris: charcoal, brick, wood, ceramic pipe, ash, clinker, coal and iron waste. | 0.20 - 2.20m  |
| 403     | Alluvium          | Firm grey clay with occasional small rounded quartzite pebbles.  | 2.20 - 2.30m  |
| 404     | Natural           | Mixed sands and gravels.   | 2.30m +   |

**Test Pit 5**

| Context | Classification     | Description  | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|--------------------|--|---|
| 501     | Modern overburden  | Crushed concrete and brick; recently imported to raise site level for present development.   | 0.00 - 0.10m  |
| 502     | Modern overburden  | Loose dark brown and black sand with frequent 20 <sup>th</sup> century debris: charcoal, brick, wood, ceramic pipe, ash, clinker, coal and iron waste. | 0.10 - 1.50m  |
| 503     | Disturbed natural? | Firm mid brown clay with frequent charcoal, brick and occasional quartz pebbles.   | 1.50m +   |

**Test Pit 7**

| Context | Classification     | Description  | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|--------------------|--|---|
| 701     | Modern overburden  | Crushed concrete and brick; recently imported to raise site level for present development.   | 0.00 - 0.20m  |
| 702     | Modern overburden  | Loose dark brown and black sand with frequent 20 <sup>th</sup> century debris: charcoal, brick, wood, ceramic pipe, ash, clinker, coal and iron waste. | 0.20 - 1.40m  |
| 703     | Structure - wall   | Brick wall foundation across northern edge of test pit. Bricks 70x120x240mm and unfroged. Below 702 and cut into 704.                                  | 0.60 - 2.00m  |
| 704     | Disturbed natural? | Firm mid brown clay with frequent charcoal, brick and occasional quartz pebbles.   | 1.40 - 2.00m +  |

**Test Pit 8**

| Context | Classification    | Description  | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|-------------------|--|---|
| 801     | Modern overburden | Crushed concrete and brick; recently imported to raise site level for present development.   | 0.00 - 0.70m  |
| 802     | Modern overburden | Loose dark brown and black sand with frequent 20 <sup>th</sup> century debris: charcoal, brick, wood, ceramic pipe, ash, clinker, coal and iron waste. | 0.70 - 1.00m  |
| 803     | Modern overburden | Grey pebble hardcore. Imported.  | 1.00 - 1.40m  |
| 804     | Modern layer      | Sand overlying modern electric cable 805.  | 1.40 - 1.80m  |
| 805     | Modern service    | Plastic encased electric cable. Within 804.  | 1.60m   |
| 806     | Modern overburden | Black cinders with brick frags and loose mixed pebbles.  | 1.40 - 1.80m  |
| 807     | Natural           | Mixed sands and gravels.   | 1.80 - 2.20m  |

**Test Pit 9**

| Context | Classification    | Description  | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|-------------------|--|---|
| 901     | Modern overburden | Crushed concrete and brick; recently imported to raise site level for present development.   | 0.00 - 0.55m  |
| 902     | Modern overburden | Loose dark brown and black sand with frequent 20 <sup>th</sup> century debris: charcoal, brick, wood, ceramic pipe, ash, clinker, coal and iron waste. | 0.55 - 1.10m  |
| 903     | Alluvium?         | Bluish black clayey silt with occasional charcoal and rounded pebbles; organic rich.   | 1.10 – 2.00m  |
| 904     | Natural           | Clay and gravels.  | 2.00m +   |

**Test Pit 10**

| Context | Classification     | Description  | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|--------------------|--|---|
| 1101    | Modern Overburden  | Loose blackish dark brown silt with frequent crushed concrete and brick.   | 0.00 - 0.40m  |
| 1102    | Modern overburden  | Loose light brownish grey sand with frequent brick and crushed concrete.   | 0.40 - 1.00m  |
| 1103    | Structure - cellar | Brick foundation/wall in western edge of test pit; bricks 70x110x230mm, unfrogged; bedded in light yellow sandy mortar; 15 courses visible; wall appears to curve. 19 <sup>th</sup> or early 20 <sup>th</sup> century. | 1.00 - 2.30m  |
| 1104    | Natural?           | Brown clay.  | 1.00m +   |

**Discussion**

Only a small proportion of the total excavated areas were monitored (Fig 2). Initial monitoring determined that the majority of these groundworks would not impact below the level of the deposits laid down during the demolition of the former foundry and the deep modern overburden layers.

The stratigraphy was found to be broadly the same across the site, comprising a sequence of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century overburden deposits of mixed soils and cinders with concrete and ceramic building material (CBM). The natural matrix was generally identified directly below the modern layers, at 1.40m to 2.30m below the present ground surface. Where observed the natural matrix comprised variable sands with gravel, although clay was recorded toward the eastern side, from 1.00m below the surface (Test Pits 9 and 10).

Two fragmentary brick structures were recorded within the north-eastern third of the site (Test Pits 7 and 10). It is unclear exactly what their function was, although they are conjectured to be foundation walls or cellars, of later 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century date, associated with the railway engine sheds.

Within the middle of the site, an undisturbed silty subsoil was recorded, between 1.60-2.10m below the surface (Trench 1). Toward the north-eastern edge of the site an alluvial clay was observed, at its greatest extent, from 1.10-2.00m depth below the surface (Test Pits 4 and 9). These relict layers were sealed by the modern overburden and directly overlay the natural matrix, as described above. No artefacts were recovered from these deposits.

Trenches 2 and 5 along with Test Pits 4, 5 and 9 lay along the projected route of Ryknild Roman Road. However no evidence for it was observed and the natural matrix was identified at the base of all but one of these interventions.

## Conclusions

The overburden layers are interpreted to be associated with the use of the site as a railway siding with associated engine sheds from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and the construction of the iron and steel works in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. This heavy industrial use of the site is considered to have involved extensive landscaping and scarping of the soils across the site, largely down to the level of the natural matrix.

No significant archaeological features, layers, structure or deposits were identified, nor artefacts recovered. There was thus no evidence for the continuation of the prehistoric activity identified in cropmarks adjacent (PRN 01409 and 01410), nor of Ryknild Roman road (PRN 05156). It may be argued that this is a function of the extensive disturbance across the site. However as a few small, but deep, areas of extant subsoil and alluvium exist within the middle of the site and along north-eastern edge, it may equally be argued that the road meandered at this point and did not in fact cross the present site as has been thought.

Thus, although not all areas of groundworks were observed, it is considered that little if any archaeological material survives across the site, although the potential remains within those small pockets where subsoil and alluvium was recorded.

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## 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 Anson Properties Limited of the former William Cooks site at Wellington Road, Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire (NGR ref. SK 236 227).*

*The stratigraphy was found to be broadly the same across the site, comprising a sequence of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century overburden deposits. The natural matrix was generally identified directly below the modern layers, comprised of sands with gravel from 1.40m depth, although clay was recorded toward the eastern side, from 1.00m depth.*

*Within the middle of the site, an undisturbed silty subsoil was recorded, between 1.60-2.10m below the surface. Toward the north-eastern edge of the site an alluvial clay was observed, at its greatest extent, from 1.10-2.00m depth below the surface. These relict layers were sealed by the modern overburden and directly overlay the natural matrix.*

*The overburden layers are interpreted to be associated with the use of the site as a railway siding with associated engine sheds from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and the construction of the iron and steel works in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. This heavy industrial use of the site is considered to have involved extensive landscaping and scarping of the soils across the site, largely down to the level of the natural matrix.*

*No significant archaeological features, layers, structure or deposits were identified, nor artefacts recovered. There was thus no evidence for the continuation of the prehistoric activity identified in cropmarks adjacent (PRN 01409 and 01410), nor of Ryknild Roman road (PRN 05156). It may be argued that this is a function of the extensive disturbance across the site. However as a few small, but deep, areas of extant subsoil and alluvial exist within the middle of the site and along north-*

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*eastern edge, it may equally be argued that the road meandered at this point and did not in fact cross the present site as has been thought.*

*Thus, although not all areas of groundworks were observed, it is considered that little if any archaeological material survives across the site, although the potential remains within those small pockets where subsoil and alluvium was recorded.*

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## Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Anson Properties Limited, Steve Atkins, Pam Brown, Rachel Boyle, Jen Dunn and Charlotte Taylor (Pam Brown Associates), Paul Clements (Sisk Contractors) and Stephen Dean (Senior Archaeologist, Staffordshire County Council).

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## Bibliography

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HEAS 2006 *Desk-based assessment at Wellington Road, Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire*, Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished report 1437, dated 9 May 2006, **P2903**

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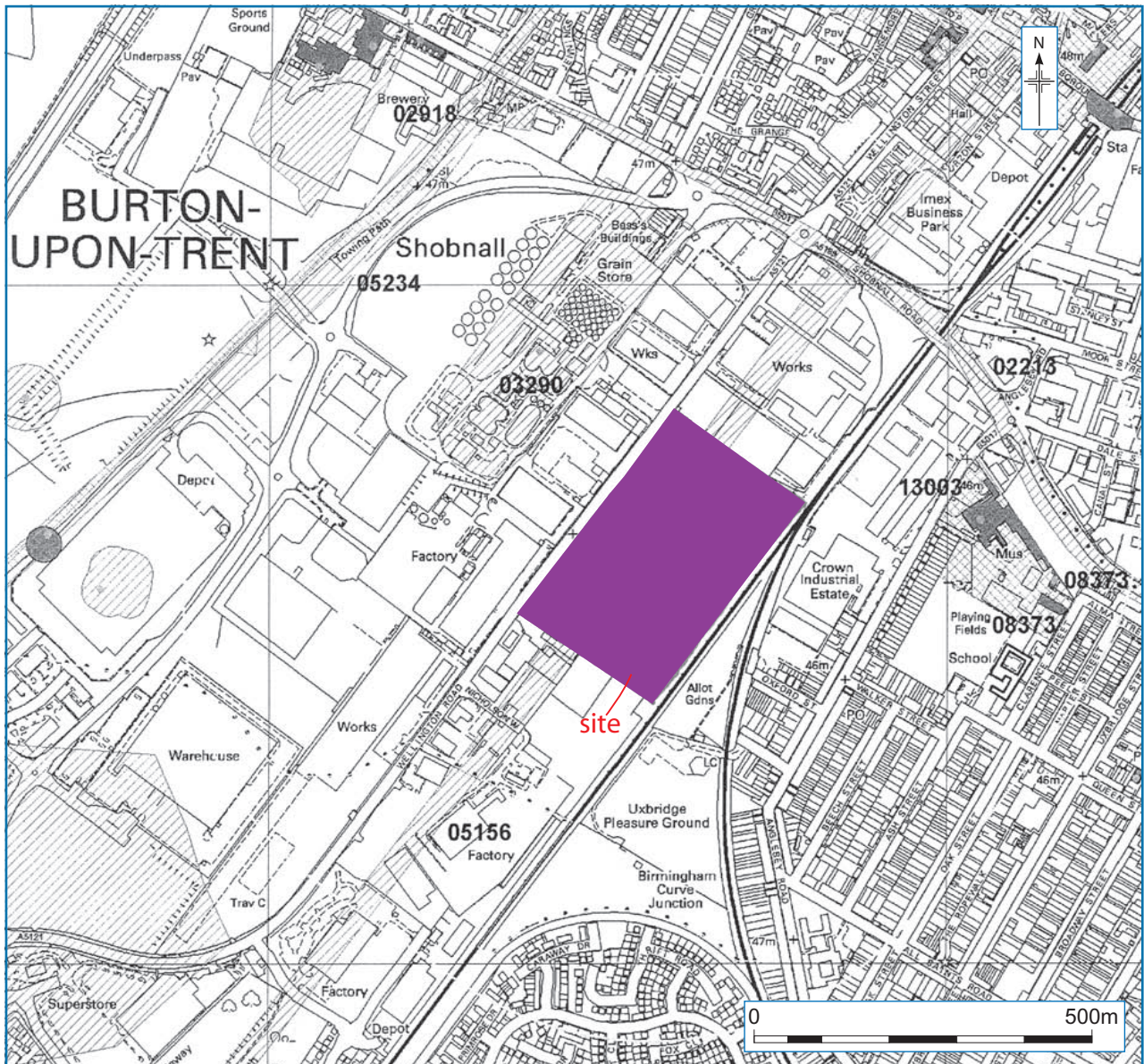
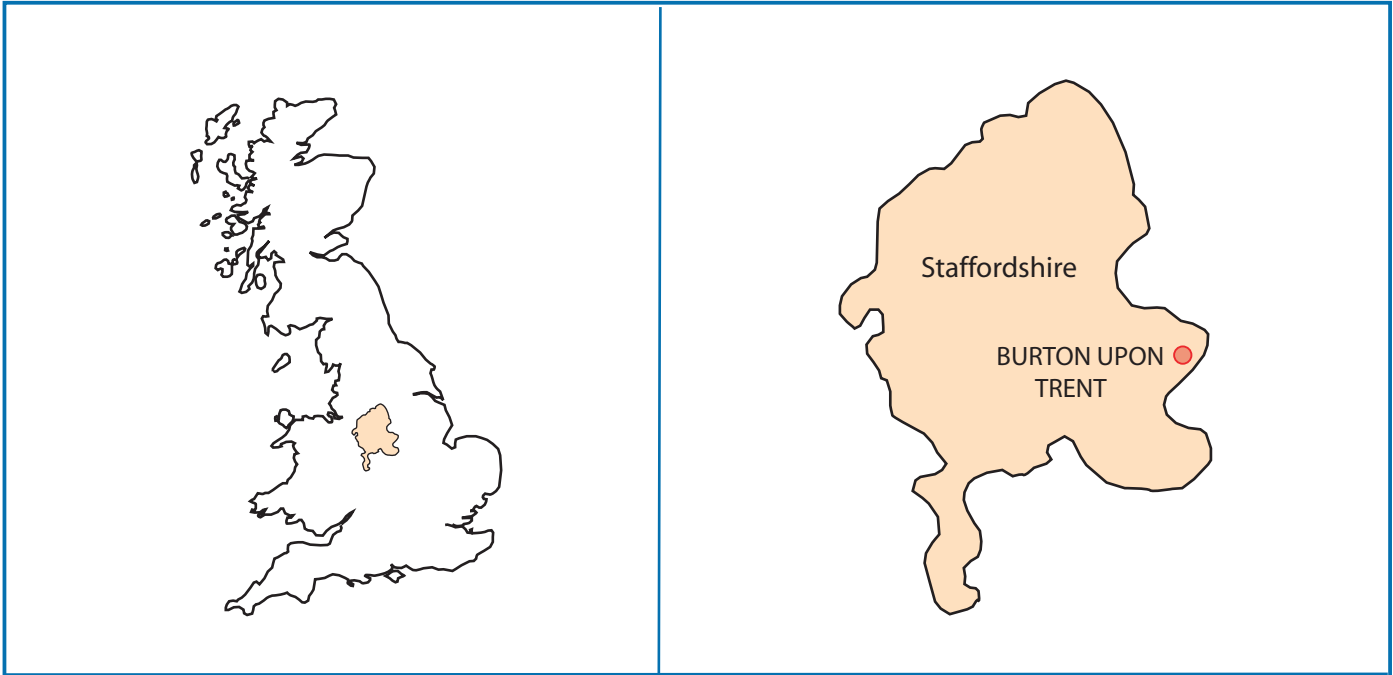
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## Figures





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Location of the site

Figure 1



Location of areas observed

Figure 2



## Plates



*Plate 1: Trench 1, during excavation; looking north*



*Plate 2: Trench 2, through modern overburden deposit 2003; looking southeast*





*Plate 3: Sample foundation base; with natural deposits at the base; looking northeast*



*Plate 4: Trench 3, modern overburden deposits overlying natural deposits; looking northeast*





*Plate 5: Trench 3, modern overburden overlying natural deposits, looking northwest*



*Plate 6: Trench 5, modern overburden 2003 overlying natural deposit 2004; looking southeast*





*Plate 7: northeast stretch of the Trench 6; modern overburden 2005 overlying natural deposit 2004; looking west*



*Plate 8: General view of the site and Trench 7; looking northeast*

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## Appendix 1 Technical information

### The archive

The archive consists of:

|     |                                |
|-----|--------------------------------|
| 15  | Fieldwork progress records AS2 |
| 2   | Photographic records AS3       |
| 11  | Trench records AS41            |
| 115 | Digital Photographs            |
| 10  | Scale drawings                 |

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery  
Bethesda Street  
Hanley  
Stoke on Trent  
Staffordshire, ST1 3DW

Tel: 01782 232323