

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING  
BRIEF  
OF THE TAME SCHEMES:  
YARDLEY WOOD ROAD,  
KINGS HEATH,  
BIRMINGHAM

Elizabeth A Plane

With a contribution by Angus Crawford

Illustrated by Sarah Phear

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Historic Environment and Archaeology Service,  
Worcestershire County Council,  
Woodbury,  
University of Worcester,  
Henwick Grove,  
Worcester WR2 6AJ



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Project 3153  
Report 1608  
EBM 355



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## Archaeological watching brief of the Tame Schemes: Yardley Wood Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham

Elizabeth A Plane

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### Background information

<i>Client</i>		Severn Trent Water Ltd
	<i>reference</i>	1435_7_44
<i>Site address</i>		Firth Drive, Yardley Wood Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham
<i>National Grid reference</i>		SP 408605 280064
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>		EBM 355
<i>Planning authority</i>		Birmingham City Council
	<i>reference</i>	n/a
<i>Project parameters</i>		IFA 2001

### *Previous archaeological work on the site*

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken in 2006 to the south of the development site. Two test-pits were excavated to between 2.9m and 3.9m in depth. The test pits revealed similar deposits of mixed gravel overlain by pink clay sealed by modern deposits (Halsted 2006).

### *Archaeological work on associated sites*

This project was one of three associated with Severn Trent Ltd's Tame Schemes sewage works along the Chinn Brook. The Service also undertook the additional two archaeological watching briefs, at Cocks Moors Woods and off Bayston Road, Kings Heath. The reports for these sites will be produced separately.

### *Archaeological and historical background*

The ground works were located at the junction of Yardley Wood Road and Firth Drive (Fig 1). The growth of Yardley Wood Road in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is revealed from the historic maps. The Ordnance Survey map of 1887 shows the site lying adjacent to Yardley Wood Common, with some settlement focused along the present day Yardley Wood Road. The present day houses and gardens surrounding the site do not appear until the Ordnance Survey map of 1938, with the site itself remaining undeveloped.

The Birmingham Sites and Monuments Record contains several records relating to the area. A number of Bronze Age burnt mounds have been recorded in the proximity of the Chinn Brook (MBM 02266, 02880, 02881). These sites typically comprise a mound of heat-shattered stones set within a matrix of charcoal-rich soil, often found adjoining stream courses. The proximity of the site to the Chinn Brook, suggested the potential for the identification of further burnt mounds. In addition, it was possible that associated features could be revealed. The site was thought to have limited potential for Bronze Age archaeological remains.

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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.

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**Methods**

General specification for fieldwork	CAS 1995						
Sources consulted	HER Ordnance Survey maps: 1884, 1887, 1938						
Date(s) of fieldwork	24 September 2007 to 20 February 2008						
Dimensions of excavated areas observed	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Topsoil strip</td> <td>length 30m width 20m depth 0.20m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Service Trench</td> <td>length 2.20m width 1.60m depth 1.35m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Shaft</td> <td>diameter 10m depth 1.75m +</td> </tr> </table>	Topsoil strip	length 30m width 20m depth 0.20m	Service Trench	length 2.20m width 1.60m depth 1.35m	Shaft	diameter 10m depth 1.75m +
Topsoil strip	length 30m width 20m depth 0.20m						
Service Trench	length 2.20m width 1.60m depth 1.35m						
Shaft	diameter 10m depth 1.75m +						

*Access to or visibility of deposits*

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken after machine excavation. Due to their depth, all trenching was carried out using pre-assembled shuttering sections. This restricted the visibility and identification of the deposits and only allowed for limited observations at the base of the Shaft and associated Box Trench.

Access to the deep trenches was not made for safety reasons and observations were restricted to those made from the top of the trench. The exposed sections within the Service Trench were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, though any less clear may have not been identified.

*Statement of confidence*

Access to, and visibility of, deposits was limited to observation from the top of the trench. Thus a limited degree of confidence can be offered that the aims of the project have been achieved.

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**Deposit description**

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth below ground level (top and bottom of deposits)
100	Made ground	Soft dark greyish brown sandy silt with common small gravels, abundant at bottom of deposit.	0.00-0.30m
101	Made ground	Soft mid dark greyish brown sandy silt with abundant small gravels.	0.30-0.40m
102	Made ground	Firm light reddish yellowish brown silty clay and redeposited/disturbed material from 101 and 103.	0.40-1.10m
103	Topsoil	Firm mid greyish brown silt loam with few charcoal fragments and flecks.	1.10-1.35m
104	Subsoil	Firm mid light brown sandy loam with few small gravels, common at bottom of deposit.	1.35m+

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**Artefact analysis, by Angus Crawford**

**Artefact recovery policy**

All artefacts from the area of salvage recording were retrieved by hand and retained in accordance with the service manual (CAS 1995 as amended).

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## Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined and a primary record was made on a Microsoft Access 2000 database. Artefacts were identified, quantified and dated where possible.

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and recorded by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by the service (Hurst and Rees 1992; Hurst 1994; [www.worcestershireceramics.org](http://www.worcestershireceramics.org)).

## Artefactual analysis

The pottery assemblage retrieved from the excavated area consisted of two sherds of pottery weighing 13g. The remaining finds assemblage consisted of two fragments of tile. The group came from two stratified contexts and could be dated from the post-medieval period onwards (see Table 1). The level of preservation was generally fair.

Context	Material	Type	Total	Weight (g)
103	Pottery	Modern	1	2
104	Pottery	Unidentified	1	11
104	Tile	Roof	1	90
104	Tile	Unidentified	1	57

*Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage*

## Discussion of the pottery

Only one sherd of pottery was identified to fabric type (see Table 2). This consisted of a single sherd of modern china (fabric 85, context 103) and could be dated to a general production span of later 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century. The remaining sherd is a sandy oxidised fabric in very abraded condition (context 104) and could not be identified to a specific period of manufacture.

The remaining finds assemblage consisted of a fragment of over fired roof tile (context 104) with a general production span of 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century, but probably of post-medieval rather than medieval date. The remaining artefact was a fragment of tile in similar sandy oxidised fabric as the pottery sherd from the same context 104 and was also undatable.

Context	Fabric	Fabric common name	Total	Weight (g)
103	85	Modern china	1	2
104	Unidentified		1	11

*Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric*

## Significance

The assemblage from Yardley Wood Road was of little archaeological significance. While the tile and pottery sherd of oxidised sandy fabric were unidentifiable, their abraded surfaces are indicative of redeposition on the site. This, considered with the remaining material, suggests that the assemblage is indicative of either field manuring practices or general discard.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

The general topsoil strip only removed 0.20m of material, which was not enough to expose the subsoil, natural matrix, or any pre-modern made ground deposits.

The excavation of the Shaft was carried out using a pre-assembled concrete ring. Prior to the archaeologist's arrival on site, the Shaft had been dug to a depth of 1.75m. The concrete ring restricted the visibility and identification of the deposits and only the natural matrix of red Keuper Marl was observed at the base of the shaft. It was however unclear at what depth below the present ground surface it lay. The sections within the Box Trench were not visible for observation.

The Service Trench site revealed a subsoil of sandy loam, 104, recorded at approximately 1.35m below the present ground surface. A firm loam, 103, overlay this. This soil horizon was sealed and overlain by made ground probably relating to a time when the area was heavily landscaped. The original ground level here had been raised by up to 1.10m, using a mixture of original and imported topsoil. To the south east of the trench a brick culvert dating to the 1930's cut through contexts 102, 103 and 104, dating these deposits to before the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The finds retrieved were from context 103 consisted of a single sherd of 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery and was of no archaeological significance. The scattered post medieval and modern materials found within context 104 are of a type commonly encountered on agricultural sites and are usually indicative of general rubbish discard or field manuring practises during the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century.

No significant archaeological features, horizons or deposits were observed and no artefacts were recovered. However, as the natural matrix was only exposed within the Shaft whilst a full soil sequence was observed sealed below substantial modern made ground in one small Service Trench, there is still considered to be a potential for the survival archaeological and ecofactual deposits within the site.

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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 Severn Trent Water Ltd at Yardley Wood Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham (NGR. SP 408605 280064; SMR ref. EBM 355). The observation and recording of archaeological deposits was restricted to areas of ground disturbance associated with construction of new services. No significant archaeological features, horizons or deposits were observed and no artefacts were recovered. However, as the natural matrix was only exposed within the shaft and a full soil sequence was observed sealed below substantial modern made ground in one small Service Trench, there is still considered to be a potential for the survival of archaeological and ecofactual deposits within the site.*

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## **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Alex Jones (Archaeological Consultant, Severn Trent Water), Joe Laird and Graham Robinson (Severn Trent Water Ltd), Craig Airey (Site Agent, Tomlinson Construction) and (Mike Hodder, Planning Archaeologist, Birmingham City Council).

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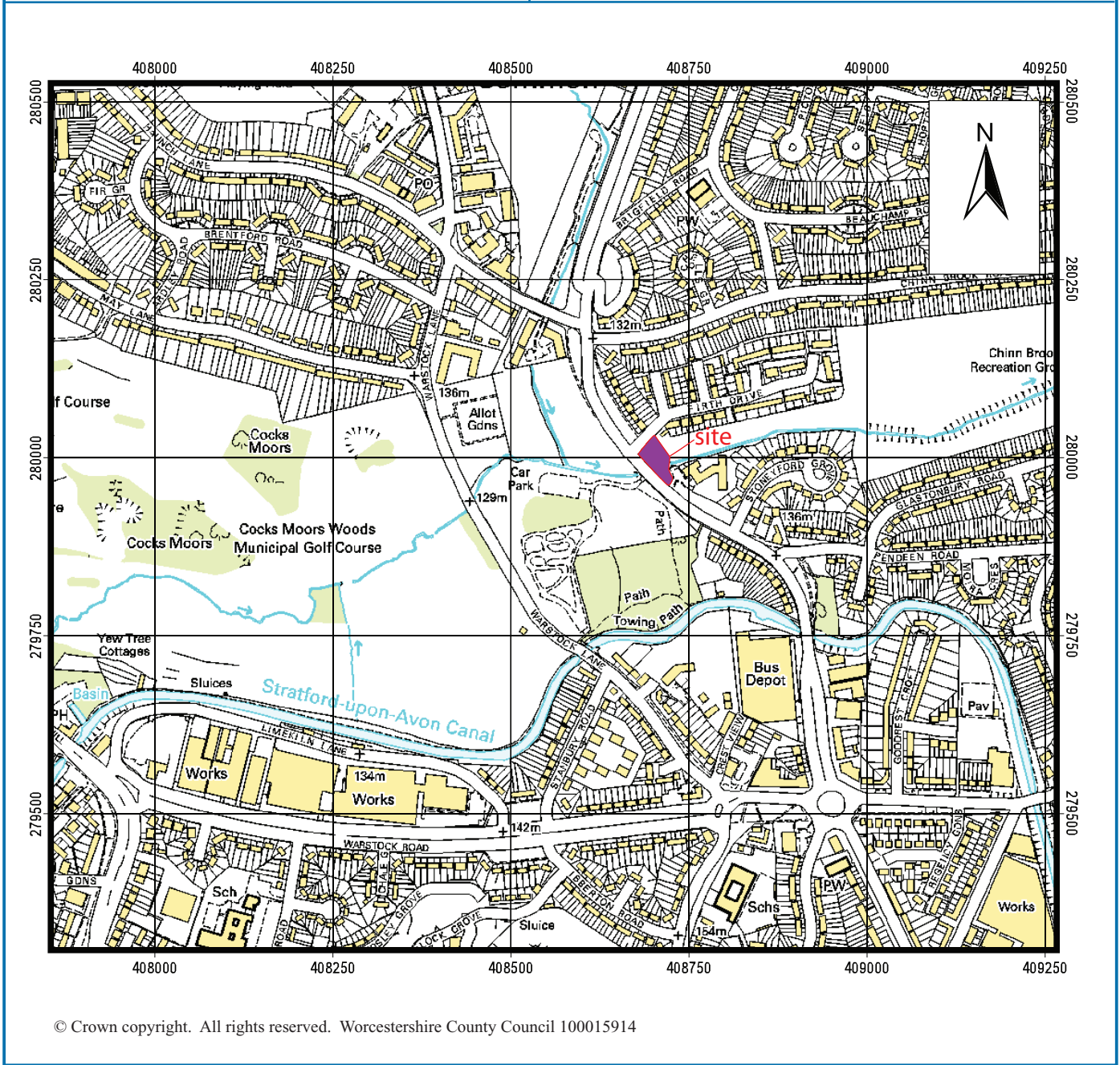
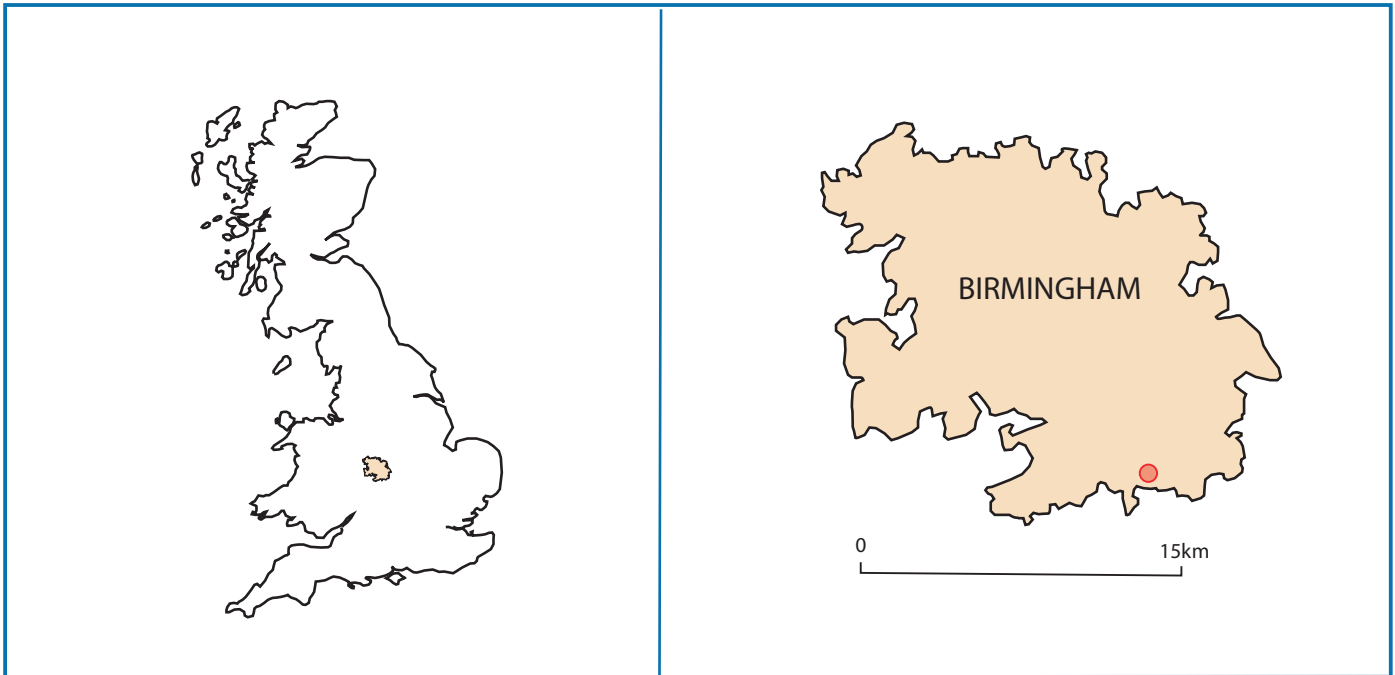
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## Figures

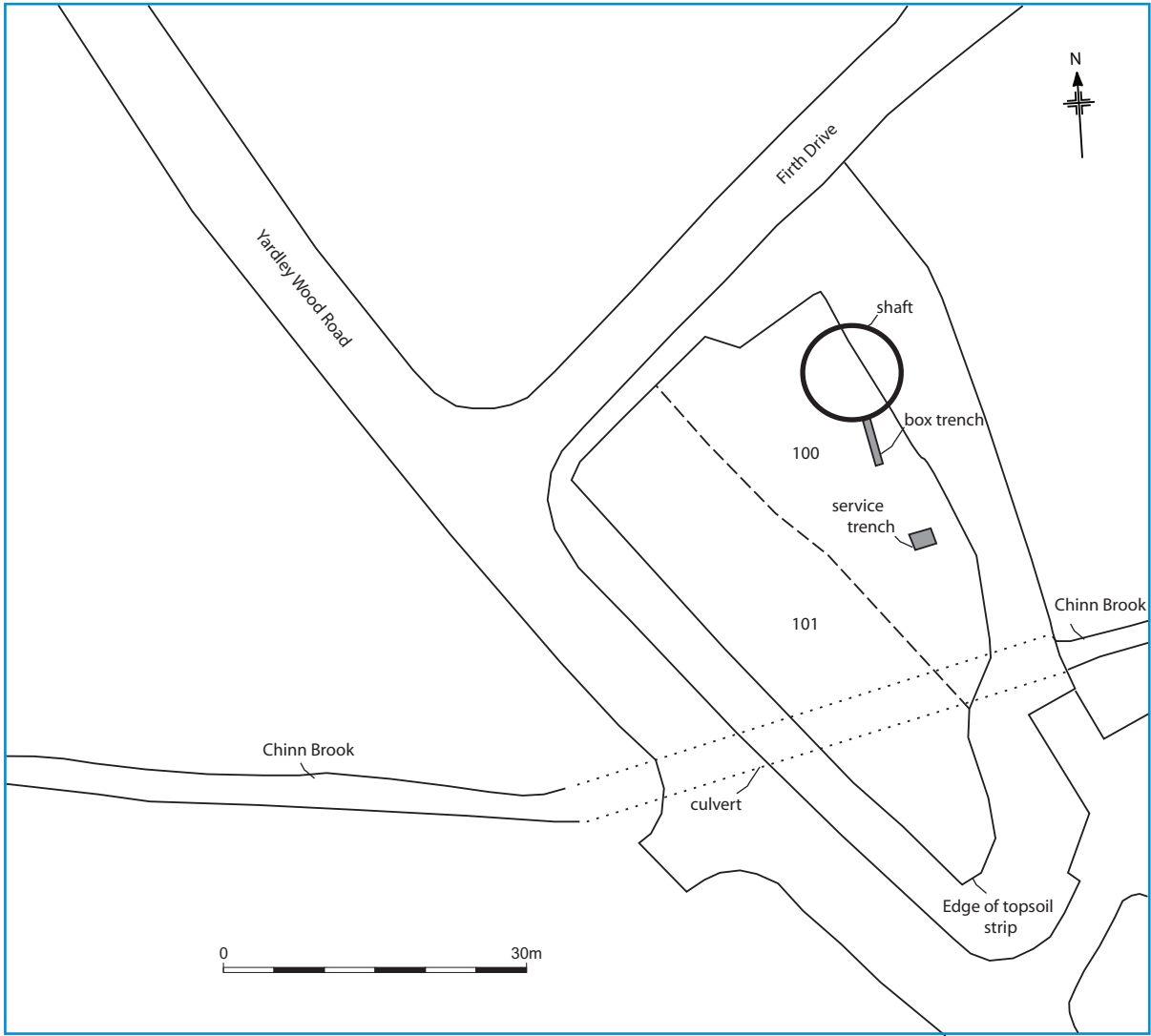




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Location of the site

Figure 1



*Trenches and area of topsoil strip observed during the watching brief*

*Figure 2*

## Plates



*Plate 1: General shot of site after topsoil strip*



*Plate 2: General shot of site after topsoil strip*





*Plate 3: General shot of the Service Trench, facing east*



*Plate 4: West facing section of the Service Trench*



*Plate 5: East facing section of the Service Trench*





*Plate 6: Excavation of the Shaft, facing north west*

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## Appendix 1 Technical information

### The archive

The archive consists of:

8	Fieldwork progress records AS2
1	Photographic records AS3
40	Digital photographs
1	Trench record records AS41
2	Scale drawings
1	Computer disk

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery  
Chamberlain Square  
Birmingham  
B3 3DH

Tel. Birmingham (0121) 303 2834

Fax Birmingham (0121) 303 1394