

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF
OF THE TAME SCHEMES:
COCKS MOOR WOODS,
KINGS HEATH,
BIRMINGHAM

Elizabeth A. Plane

Illustrated by Sarah Phear

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Project 3185
Report 1606
EBM 369

Archaeological watching brief of the Tame Schemes at Cocks Moors Woods, Kings Heath, Birmingham

Elizabeth A Plane

Background information

<i>Client</i>		Severn Trent Water Ltd
	<i>reference</i>	1435_7_5
<i>Site address</i>		land adjacent to Cocks Moors Woods Leisure Centre, Alcester Road South, Kings Heath, Birmingham
<i>National Grid reference</i>		NGR SP 407620 279725
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>		EBM 369
<i>Planning authority</i>		Birmingham City Council
	<i>reference</i>	n/a
<i>Project parameters</i>		IFA 2001

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Cocks Moors Woods, Kings Heath (Fig 1), on behalf of Severn Trent Water Ltd, of groundworks associated with the construction of new pipelines.

Previous archaeological work on the site

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken in 2006 in connection with the proposed development. To the northwest of the Chinn Brook five test-pits were excavated between 1.8m and 2.7m deep. The test-pits revealed similar sequences of deposits; stiff natural red clays, sealed by alluvial deposits associated with the Chinn Brook. Waterlogged twigs and branches were preserved within two of the test pits, indicating the potential for further surviving waterlogged organic remains (Halsted 2006).

Archaeological work on associated sites

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

Archaeological and historical background

The groundworks were located to the northeast of Alcester Road South, and to the southeast of Cocks Moors Woods Leisure Centre. The growth of Alcester Road South in the 19th century is revealed from the historic maps. The Ordnance Survey map of 1887 shows settlement focused along the present day Alcester Road South, to the west of the site. The Ordnance Survey map of 1938 shows the site is located within enclosed agricultural farmland surrounded by a few associated settlements.

The Birmingham Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) 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 present 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 thus thought to have limited potential for Bronze Age archaeological remains.

The SMR has a number of further sites recorded in the vicinity derived from historic maps and standing buildings. To the south of Cocks Moors West the site of a mill has been recorded adjoining Mill Pool Hall (MBM 1668). Also recorded to the south are the 19th century limekilns, associated with Stratford Canal (MBM 2336).

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. The fieldwork was restricted to areas of ground disturbance associated with construction of new pipelines.

Methods

General specification for fieldwork	CAS 1995				
Sources consulted	SMR Ordnance Survey maps: 1884, 1887, 1938				
Date(s) of fieldwork	21 January to 15 February 2008				
Dimensions of excavated areas observed	<table> <tr> <td>Trench 1</td><td>length 10m width 1.80m depth 3.00m</td></tr> <tr> <td>Trench 2</td><td>length 25m width 1.80m depth 1.60m</td></tr> </table>	Trench 1	length 10m width 1.80m depth 3.00m	Trench 2	length 25m width 1.80m depth 1.60m
Trench 1	length 10m width 1.80m depth 3.00m				
Trench 2	length 25m width 1.80m depth 1.60m				

Access to or visibility of deposits

Observation of the excavated area was undertaken during and after excavation of two trenches, there was no general site topsoil strip. The exposed surfaces were generally sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, though any less clear may not have been identified. Access to deep trenches was not made for safety reasons.

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 description

Trench 1

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth below ground level (top and bottom of deposits)
101	Top soil	Moderately compact and cohesive mid blackish brown sandy silt, with frequent root action and worm sorting. Containing occasional small to medium rounded and sub rounded pebbles.	0.00-0.18m
102	Sub soil	Moderately compact yellowy brown clayey silt. With occasional inclusions of small to medium sub rounded and rounded stone.	0.18-0.35m
103	Natural	Very compact and cohesive orangey red clay. With frequent inclusions of sub rounded and sub angular stones and pebbles.	0.35m+

Trench 2

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth below ground level (top and bottom of deposits)
201	Top soil	Moderately compact and cohesive mid blackish brown sandy silt, with frequent root action and worm sorting. Containing occasional small to medium rounded and sub rounded pebbles. Similar to 101	0.00-0.15m
202	Sub soil	Moderately compact orangey brown clayey silt. With occasional inclusions of small to medium sub rounded and rounded stone.	0.15-0.42m
203	Natural	Very compact and cohesive yellowish grey clay with patches of stony blue grey clay.	0.42m+

Discussion and conclusions

Trench 1 was dug to a depth of 3m below the existing ground level, revealing a full soil sequence. The mid blackish brown sandy silt topsoil (101) was recorded as 0.15m deep. Below the topsoil the observed subsoil did not contain any archaeological features or deposits. The subsoil overlay and sealed the natural matrix. The underlying natural deposit (103) comprised of very compact and cohesive orangey red clay. In this trench the natural matrix of orangey red clay lay at about 0.42m below the ground surface.

Located at the site of Trench 2, the topsoil was observed to 0.15m depth, revealing the subsoil below. The observed subsoil was of moderately compact orangey brown clayey silt, with occasional inclusions of small to medium sub rounded and rounded stone and did not contain any material of significance. This overlay the natural matrix of yellowish grey clay. Trench 2 was dug to a depth of 1.60m below the existing ground level.

No significant archaeological features, layers, horizons, structures, or archaeological artefacts were identified during the project. Nevertheless, the possibility remains that archaeological material or waterlogged remains survive in areas adjacent to the site, as revealed in the previous watching brief undertaken in 2006 (Halsted 2006).

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 Cocks Moors Woods, Kings Heath, Birmingham (NGR SP 407620 279725; SMR ref. EBM 369). The observation and recording of archaeological deposits was restricted to areas of ground disturbance associated with construction of new services. The excavation of Trenches 1 and 2 were observed and recorded because they were in an archaeologically sensitive area. However no significant archaeological features, horizons or deposits were observed and no artefacts were recovered. Nevertheless, the possibility remains that archaeological deposits or waterlogged remains survive in areas of the site not disturbed by the present development.

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 Ltd), Joe Laird and Graham Robinson (Severn Trent Water Ltd), Richard Ward (Site Agent, Barhale Construction) and Mike Hodder (Planning Archaeologist, Birmingham City Council).

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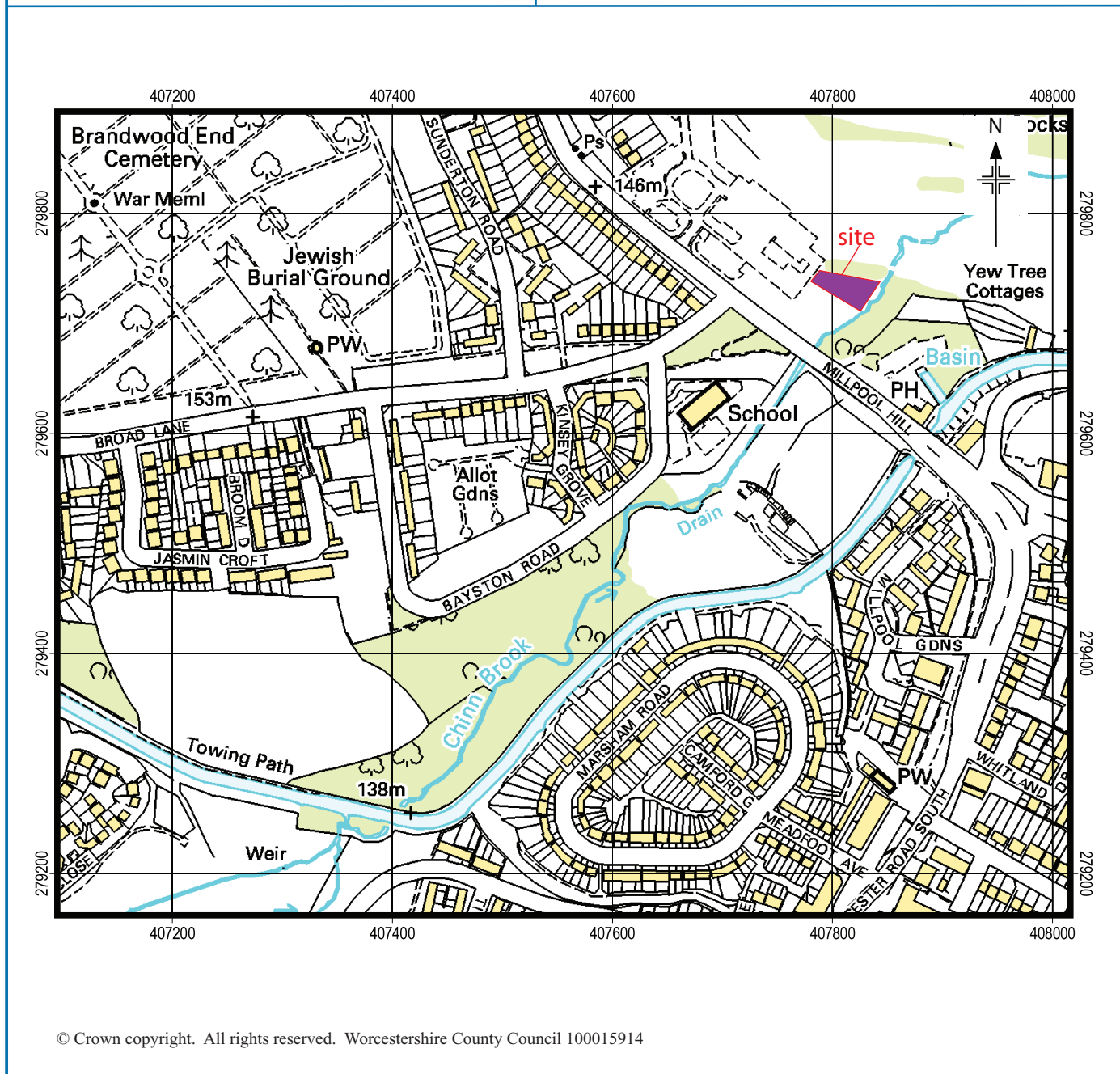
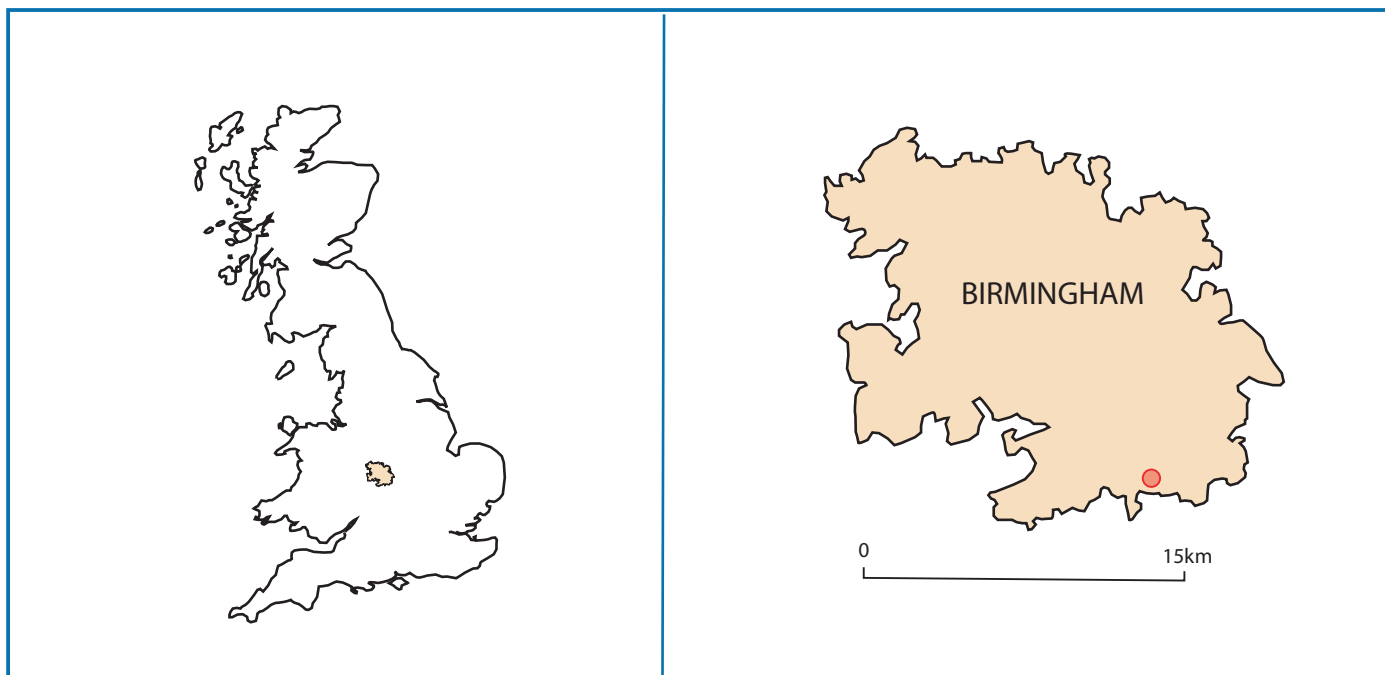
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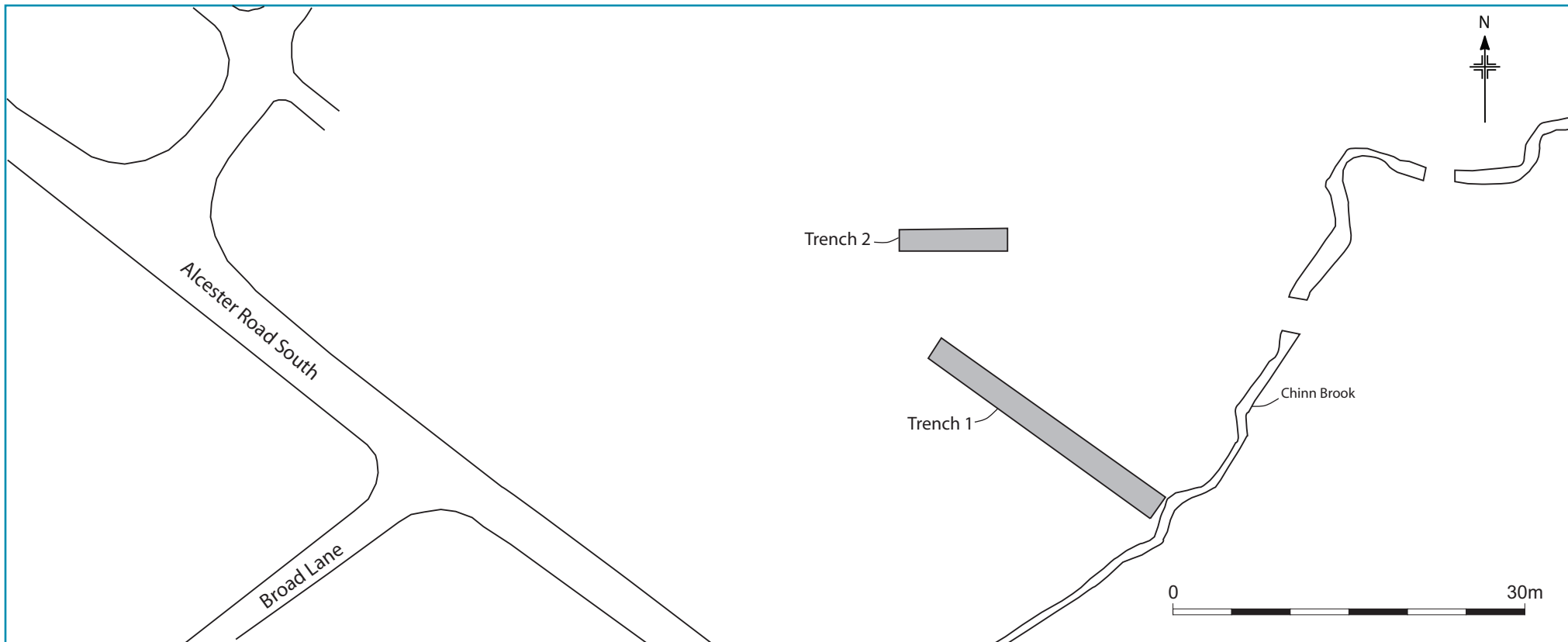
Figures



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Location of the site

Figure 1



Trenches observed during the watching brief

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1: Trench 1 during excavation, facing east



Plate 2: Trench 1 during excavation from the west



Plate 3: Trench 2 during excavation, facing southwest

Appendix 1 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

3	Fieldwork progress records AS2
1	Photographic records AS3
14	Digital photographs
2	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

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