Worcestershire Archaeology

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT LAND ADJACENT TO THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM, ALREWAS, STAFFORDSHIRE



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1

Archaeological watching brief at land adjacent to the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire

Author Andrew Mann

With contributions by Alan Clapham and Dennis Williams

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at land adjacent to the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire (NGR 417908 314558). It was undertaken on behalf of the National Memorial Arboretum and Lafarge Aggregates Ltd under the direction of Phoenix Consulting Archaeology Ltd. The former intend to construct a temporary car par for which a planning permission has been granted subject to completion of an approved programme of archaeological work (Planning ref: 10/01511/COU, Condition 7).

This site contained two probable north-east to south-west aligned field boundary ditches, one of which contained a fragment of rotary quern that may date to between the Iron Age and medieval periods. Given the density of Iron Age and Romano British archaeology locally however it is thought to be of a similar age. Numerous Late medieval to post-medieval furrows were also identified aligned north to south and north-east to south-west. These differing aligned furrows suggest that the site had previously been separated into two agricultural zones.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at land adjacent to the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire (NGR 417908 314558; Fig 1). It was commissioned by Phoenix Consulting Archaeology Ltd on behalf of Lafarge Aggregates Ltd and the National Memorial Arboretum who intend to construct a temporary car park for which a planning permission has been granted by Staffordshire Council subject to completion of an approved programme of archaeological work (Planning ref: 10/01511/COU, Condition 7).

The proposed development site is considered to include heritage assets and potential heritage assets, the significance of which may be affected by the development (PRN 00207). The project conforms to a brief prepared by Staffordshire County Council (SCC 2011). The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008).

2 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to record and advance understanding of the significance of the heritage asset before it is lost.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was undertaken by Andrew Mann (MA); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2004 and has been practicing archaeology since 2001. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Robin Jackson (BA, AlfA). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (MIfa). Dennis Williams (PhD) contributed the finds report and Alan Clapham (PhD) provided the environmental report.

3.2 Documentary research

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) was undertaken by Pheonix Consulting Ltd on behalf of Lafarge Aggregates Ltd for a proposed extension to their quarrying operations in the area (Phoenix Consulting 2009). This also covered the area to be occupied by this temporary car park. The DBA contained a full HER search and map regression back to Yates map of Staffordshire, dated 1775. The DBA identified a 'moderate' potential for the site to contain prehistoric and Roman archaeology.

3.3 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2012b). Fieldwork was undertaken between 24-10-12 and 21-11-12. An area amounting to just over 10,626 m² in size was excavated. This was further sub-divided into two zones, the main car park and a surrounding coach parking area and access road (Fig 2). The former was 6,834 m² in area and the road and coach park was 3,792 m² in area.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. The main car park area only removed part of the topsoil horizon and did not expose any significant archaeological deposits. In the road and coach park area the topsoil was completely removed and natural sands and gravels were exposed. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012a). On completion of excavation, the trench was covered with plastic mesh and Terram prior to infilling with brick crush and road stone.

3.4 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was affected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

3.5 Artefact methodology, by Dennis Williams

Artefact recovery policy

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard WA practice (WA 2012a; appendix 2).

3.5.1 Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date range was produced for each stratified context. All information was recorded on *pro forma* sheets.

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 and <u>www.worcestershireceramics.org</u>).

3.6 Environmental archaeology methodology, by Alan Clapham

3.6.1 Sampling policy

Samples were taken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (2012a). Samples were taken by the excavator from deposits considered to be of high potential for the recovery of environmental remains. A total of three samples (of 10 litres) were taken from the site but subsequently only one sample (Context 8) was selected for analysis.

3.6.2 Processing and analysis

The sample was processed by flotation using a Siraf tank. The flots were collected on a $300\mu m$ sieve and the residue retained on a 1mm mesh. This allows for the recovery of items such as small animal bones, molluscs and seeds.

The residues were fully sorted by eye and the abundance of each category of environmental remains estimated. A magnet was also used to test for the presence of hammerscale. The flots were scanned using a low power MEIJI stereo light microscope and plant remains identified using modern reference collections maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology, and a seed identification manual (Cappers *et al* 2006). Nomenclature for the plant remains follows Stace (2010).

3.6.3 Discard policy

The samples will be discarded after a period of 6 months after the submission of this report, unless there is a specific request to retain them.

3.7 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The site lies immediately to the south of Barley Green Lane, to the east of the A38, and to the north of the A513 (Fig 1). The site had previously been levelled and grassed to form a temporary car park for the National Memorial Arboretum. The site lies on the sand and gravel terrace bordering the western bank of the River Tame at approximately 52.5m AOD. The overlying soils are slightly stony sandy loams and are classified as gleyic brown earths.

The site lies in an area of high archaeological potential and significant archaeological remains of prehistoric and Roman date have previously been excavated locally.

5 Structural analysis

The site area and features recorded are shown in Fig 3. Detailed results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1 and are summarised below.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

Natural deposits were exposed in the coach park and surrounding road. These consisted of firm mid orange sands and gravels and represent the first significant archaeological horizon.

5.1.2 Phase 2: Iron Age to medieval

There was one curvilinear ditch which dates to between the Iron Age and medieval periods (cut 33; Plate 1; Fig 4). This small ditch measured 0.60m wide and was 0.21m deep. Given its profile and due to the similarity of the fills it is thought to be the same ditch as revealed in three other slots (6, 37 and 39). As the fills of this ditch are almost identical to those of three further ditch sections (3, 35 and 41; Plate 2), both ditches are thought to be similarly dated. However, as one of the ditches [35] cuts the other [37], it must be slightly later in date (Fig 4). This later ditch measured up to 0.55m wide and was 0.20m deep and both had been truncated by a later ditch alignment [16 and 19]. It is probable that one of these ditches [33] continued to the north-east (cut 29), where it was in turn was truncated by further ditches [21 and 23].

5.1.3 Phase 3: Medieval to Post-medieval

The most common features on site were furrows aligned in a north-east to south-west direction. A lesser number of furrows were also identified running in a north to south alignment. These were up to 2.80m wide and a maximum of 0.20m deep and contained moderately compact but friable, medium to light yellowish brown silty coarse sands and medium sub-rounded stone (Plate 3).

The differently aligned furrows between the north and south of the site may imply that the site had formerly been occupied by two agricultural zones. It is also possible that the edge of these zones was marked by paired furrows or ditches [16 and 19] and [23 and 21] (Plate 4). The lack of furrows to the east of the site again suggests ditches [16 and 19] marked the eastern boundary to arable agriculture, although no field boundaries are visible on the 1883, first edition OS map.

Two shallow ditches [44] and [31] cut through the furrows which are thought to be of post-medieval date.

5.2 Artefact analysis, by Dennis Williams

The artefactual assemblage recovered is summarised in Tables 1-3. The level of preservation was fair to good, with pottery sherds displaying variable amounts of abrasion.

Period	Material class	Material subtype	Object specific type	Count	Weight (g)
Iron Age	stone	-	Quernstone	1	326
post-medieval	ceramic	-	Brick	2	774
post-medieval	ceramic	-	Pot	2	12
post-medieval	ceramic	-	roof tile(flat)	1	16
undated	ceramic	-	Brick	2	378
undated	ceramic	-	brick/tile	2	18
undated	ceramic	-	roof tile(flat)	1	30
undated	mineral	-	Coal	1	4
			Totals:	12	1558

Table 1: quantification of the assemblage

5.2.1 Pottery

Pottery sherds were grouped and quantified according to fabric type (Table 2).

Period	Fabric code	Fabric common name	Count	Weight (g)
post-medieval	78	Post-medieval red wares	2	12

Table 2; quantification of the pottery by period and fabric-type

There were just two post-medieval sherds from stratified deposits from the whole site, and these were associated with the upper fill (context 17) of ditch [19] and the fill (43) of furrow [42].

5.2.2 Ceramic building material

Fragments of brick were recovered from the fills of two furrows (43 and 47) and one ditch (17); these were too fragmentary for dimensions to be recorded. Pieces of $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (12mm) thick roof tile were also found in the primary fill of a ditch (cut 19; fill 18) and in the fill of a gully (cut 31; fill 30). All of these finds were probably contemporary with the pottery sherds.

5.2.3 Stone

A worked stone fragment from fill (32) in ditch [32] was coarse-grained, with a smooth face on one side; probably from the edge of a rotary quern-stone, used for grinding corn by hand (Plate 5). This could not be precisely dated but might be from any period from the Iron Age to medieval.

5.2.4 Coal

A single piece of coal was recovered from ditch fill (17).

5.2.5 Overview of artefactual evidence

The finds from this very limited assemblage were indicative of post-medieval activity, except for the worked stone fragment which, given its attribution to a quern, would be of an earlier date. *Terminus post quem* date ranges have been determined for the various contexts, as shown in Table 3.

Context	Material class	Object specific type	Fabric code	Count	Weight(g)	Start date	End date	<i>tpq</i> date range
17	ceramic	brick	-	2	774	1600	1850	1600-1850
	ceramic	pot	78	1	6	1600	1850	1
	mineral	coal	-	1	4	1600	1850]
18	ceramic	roof tile(flat)	-	1	30	1600	1850	1600-1850
	ceramic	brick/tile	-	1	10	1600	1850	1
30	ceramic	roof tile(flat)	-	1	16	1600	1850	1600-1850
	ceramic	brick/tile	-	1	8	1600	1800	1
32	stone	quern- stone	-	1	326	-400	400	400BC- AD400+
43	ceramic	pot	78	1	6	1600	1800	1600-1850
47	ceramic	brick	-	2	378	1600	1600	1600-1850

Table 3; summary of context dating based on artefacts

5.3 Environmental analysis, by Alan Clapham

A single sample from context 8 (for description see Appendix 1), was analysed for plant remains. Only a single charred wheat grain (*Triticum* sp) and a fragment of indeterminate cereal grain were recovered. Small fragments of vitrified charcoal were also recovered from the retained residue. No other remains were identified from this sample. It is most likely that these plant remains represent a 'background flora'.

6 Synthesis

6.1 Iron Age to Romano British

The earliest features on site were the north-east to south-west aligned ditches [3, 35, 41, 33 and 29] and [6, 37 and 39]. Although the fills were black in appearance they did not contain any significant quantities of charred material. Ditch slot [33] did however contain a quern stone fragment that may imply a nearby settlement, although given their size these ditches are only likely to represent field boundary and not enclosure features. The rotary quern is most likely to be of Iron Age or Roman date and suggests the continuation of the activity identified to the south at Whitemoor Haye Quarry (Coates 2002 and Hewson 2006) into this area.

6.2 Post-medieval

The most common features on site are the late medieval or post-medieval furrows. These suggest that the site had been under an intensive agriculture regime until the post-medieval period.

7 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology 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 at land adjacent to the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire (NGR 417908 314558). This identified two north-east to south-west aligned field boundary ditches of probable Iron Age or Romano British date. One of these contained a fragment of rotary quern. Numerous late medieval to post-medieval furrows were also identified, aligned north to south and north-east to south-west. These differing aligned furrows suggest that the site had previously been separated into two open fields.

8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Lafarge Ltd and the National Memorial Arboretum, Gary Coates (Phoenix Consulting Ltd) and Stephen Dean (Staffordshire County Archaeologist).

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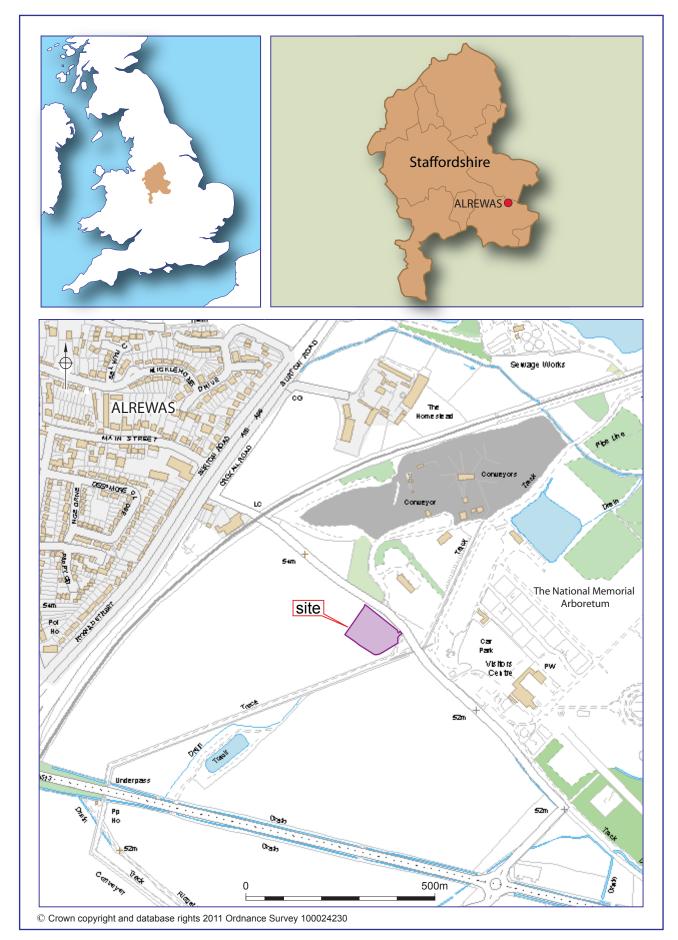
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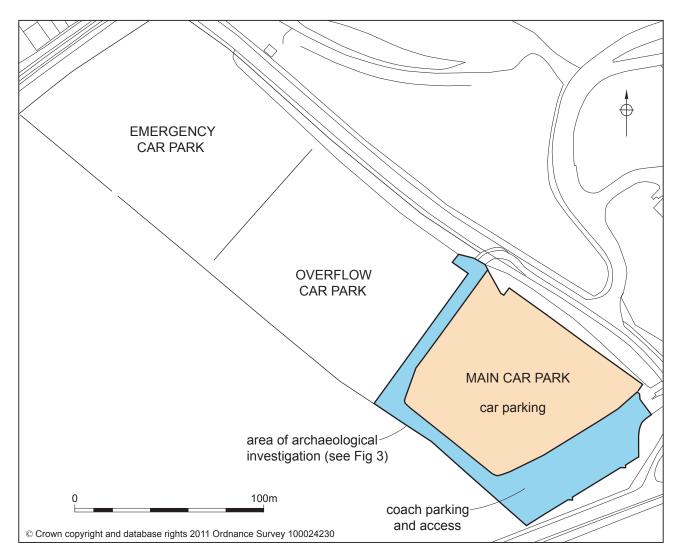
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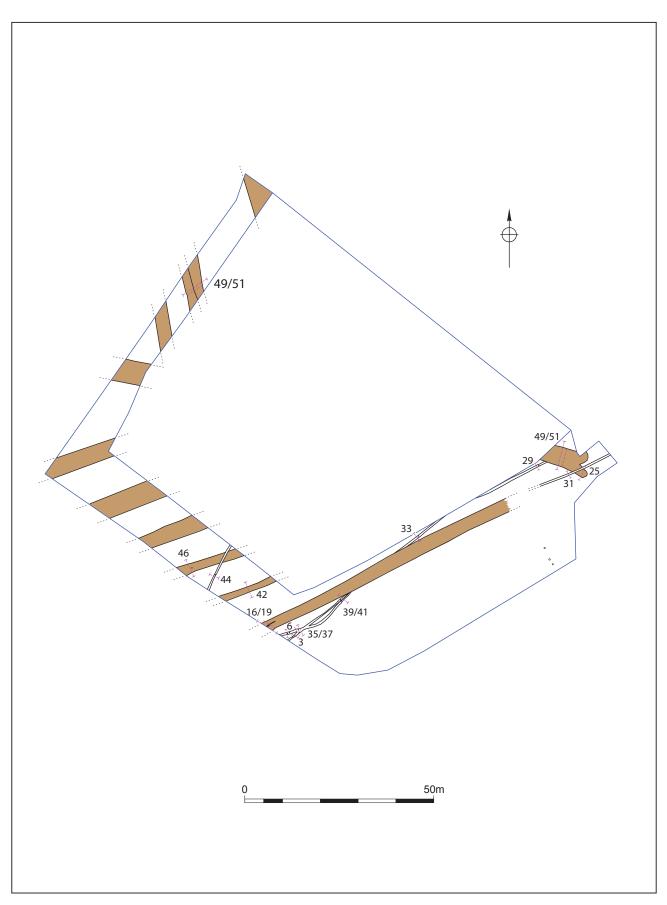
Figures



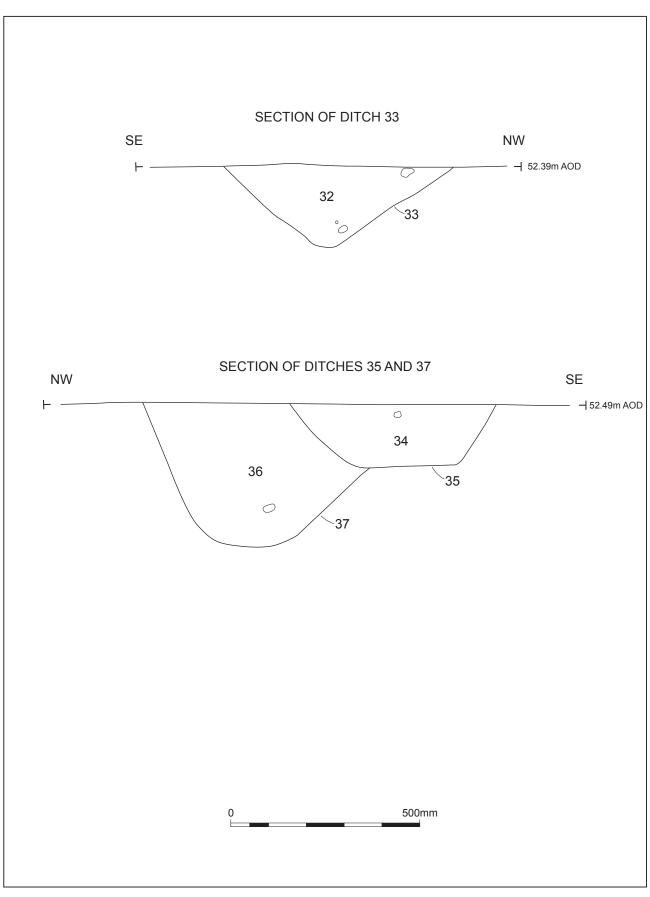
Location of the site



Overflow Car Park development plan (based upon Ritchie & Ritchie LLP drg 7039.02B) Figure 2



Plan of archaeological features



Sections

Plates



Plate 1; ditch [33] facing south west



Plate 2; ditch [35] and [37] facing south west



Plate 3; furrow [46] facing south west



Plate 4; ditches [19] and [16] facing west



Plate 5; quern-stone fragment

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
1	Topsoil	Medium to dark brown silty sand. Soft and friable containg occasional small sub-rounded stones, small charcoal flecks and frequent roots.	0.00-0.43m
2	Natural	Light yellowish orange sand and gravel. Firm and moderately cohesive.	0.43m +
3	Ditch	NE-SW aligned ditch. With near vertical flat sides breaking gradually to a flattish base. Filled by (4), same as [35] and [41], 0.43m wide and 0.20m deep.	0.43-0.63m
4	Fill	Primary fill of ditch [3]. Light pale yellowish sand with mid brown mottles. Moderately compact and cohesive, very sterile. Sealed by (5).	0.56-0.63m
5	Fill	Upper fill of ditch [3]. Dark blackish brown silty sand, moderately compact but friable. Contains occasional small sub-rounded stones and small charcoal flecks.	0.43-0.56m
6	Ditch	E-W aligned ditch with steep, flattish sides breaking sharply to a flat base. Same as [37] and [39]. Filled by (7) and (8), 0.53m wide and 0.27m deep.	0.43-0.70m
7	Fill	Primary fill of ditch [6]. Light pale brownish yellow sand with darker brown mottles. Soft and friable, very sterile. Sealed by (5).	0.67-0.70m
8	Fill	Upper fill of ditch [6]. Dark blackish brown silty sand, moderately compact but friable. Contains occasional small sub-rounded stones and small charcoal flecks.	0.43-0.67m
9	Fill	Fill of posthole [10]. Dark brownish grey silty sand, soft and loose. Contains occasional small rounded stones and charcoal flecks.	0.43-0.70m
10	Posthole	Circular posthole in plan. With vertical sides and a U- shaped base. Truncates furrows [16] and [19]. Filled by (9). 0.27m diameter.	0.43-0.70m
11	Fill	Upper fill of posthole [13]. Light yellowish brown fined grained sand. Contains occasional small rounded stones.	0.43-0.59m
12	Fill	Primary fill of posthole [13]. Dark brown silty sand. Contains occasional small rounded stones.	0.59-0.83m
13	Posthole	Sub-circular posthole in plan with vertical sides and a U- shaped base. Cuts furrows [16] and [19]. 0.40m diameter.	0.43-0.83m
14	Fill	Upper fill of furrow [16]. Dark yellowish brown, silty coarse sand, moderately compact but friable. Contains occasional small sub-rounded stones, small charcoal flecks and roots.	0.43-0.99m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
15	Fill	Primary fill of furrow [16]. Dark blackish brown silty sand. Contains occasional charcoal stains and roots.	0.99-1.33m
16	Furrow	NE-SW aligned furrow with moderately steep concave sides gradually breaking to a flattish base. Filled by (14) and (15). Cut by [10], [13] and [19]. 1.78m wide and 0.34m deep.	0.43-0.77m
17	Fill	Upper fill of furrow [19]. Dark yellowish brown, silty coarse sand, moderately compact but friable. Contains occasional small sub-rounded stones, small charcoal flecks and roots.	0.43-0.69m
18	Fill	Primary fill of furrow [16]. Dark blackish brown silty sand. Contains occasional charcoal stains and roots.	0.69-0.96m
19	Furrow	NE-SW aligned furrow with moderately steep concave sides gradually breaking to a undulating base. Filled by (17) and (18). Cut by [10], [13] and cuts furrow [16]. 2.15m wide and 0.50m deep.	0.43-0.93m
20	Fill	Fill of Furrow [21]. Light greyish brown silty sand, soft and friable. Contains occasional sub-rounded stone.	0.43-0.63m
21	Furrow	NW-SE aligned furrow with shallow undulating sides gradually breaking to a flattish base. Filled by (20). 2.90m wide and 0.20m deep.	0.43-0.63m
22	Fill	Fill of Furrow [23]. Light greyish brown silty sand, soft and friable. Contains occasional sub-rounded stone.	0.43-0.57m
23	Furrow	NW-SE aligned furrow with shallow concave sides gradually breaking to a concave base. Filled by (22). 2.90m wide and 0.24m deep.	0.43-0.57m
24	Fill	Fill of Furrow [25]. Light greyish brown silty sand, soft and friable. Contains occasional sub-rounded stone.	0.43-0.57m
25	Furrow	NW-SE aligned furrow with shallow concave sides and an imperceptible break to a flattish base. Filled by (22). 1.56m wide and 0.14m deep. Cut by [31].	0.43-0.57m
26	Fill	Fill of posthole [27]. Light greyish brown silty sand, soft and loose. Contains occasional sub-rounded stone and rare charcoal flecks.	0.43-0.79m
27	Posthole	Sub-circular posthole with steep near vertical flat sides and a U-shaped base. Filled by (26), 0.44m in diameter.	0.43-0.79m
28	Fill	Fill of ditch [29]. Dark greyish black silty sand, soft and uncohesive. Contains occasional small sub-rounded stones and occasional charcoal flecks.	0.43-0.0.59m
29	Ditch	NE-SW aligned ditch with moderate concave sides gradually breaking to a flattish base. Filled by (28). 0.72m wide and 0.16m deep.	0.43-0.59m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
30	Fill	Fill of ditch [31]. Dark greyish black silty sand, soft and loose. Contains occasional small sub-rounded stones and occasional charcoal flecks.	0.43-0.58m
31	Ditch	NE-SW aligned ditch with moderate concave sides gradually breaking to a concave base. Filled by (30). 0.57m wide and 0.15m deep. Cuts furrow [25].	0.43-0.58m
32	Fill	Fill of ditch [33]. Dark blackish brown silty sand, moderately compact but friable. Contains occasional small sub-rounded stones and moderate charcoal flecks	0.43-0.64m
33	Ditch	NE-SW aligned ditch with moderate flat sides gradually breaking to a concave base. Filled by (22). 0.60m wide and 0.21m deep. Cut by furrows [16] and [19].	0.43-0.64m
34	Fill	Fill of ditch [35]. Dark blackish brown silty sand, moderately compact but friable. Contains occasional small sub-rounded stones and moderate charcoal flecks	0.43-0.60m
35	Ditch	NE-SW aligned ditch with moderate to steep flat sides gradually breaking to a flattish base. Filled by (34). 0.55m wide and 0.17m deep. Same as [3] and [41].	0.43-0.60m
36	Fill	Fill of ditch [37]. Dark blackish brown silty sand, moderately compact but friable. Contains occasional small sub-rounded stones and moderate charcoal flecks	0.43-0.81m
37	Ditch	NE-SW aligned ditch with steep flat sides breaking sharply to a flattish base. Filled by (36). 0.51m wide and 0.38m deep. Same as [6] and [39].	0.43-0.81m
38	Fill	Fill of ditch [39]. Dark blackish brown silty sand, moderately compact but friable. Contains occasional small sub-rounded stones and moderate charcoal flecks.	0.43-0.56m
39	Ditch	NE-SW aligned ditch with moderate flat sides breaking gradually to a concave base. Filled by (38). 0.26m wide and 0.13m deep. Same as [6] and [37].	0.43-0.56m
40	Fill	Fill of ditch [41]. Dark blackish brown silty sand, moderately compact but friable. Contains occasional small sub-rounded stones and moderate charcoal flecks.	0.43-0.56m
41	Ditch	NE-SW aligned ditch with steep flat sides breaking sharply to a flattish base. Filled by (40). 0.26m wide and 0.13m deep. Same as [3] and [39]. Cut by ditch [39].	0.43-0.56m
42	Furrow	NE-SW aligned furrow with shallow flattish sides with an imperceptible break to a slightly concave base. Filled by (43). 1.56m wide and 0.10m deep.	0.43-0.53m
43	Fill	Fill of furrow [42]. Medium to light yellowish brown silty coarse sand. Moderately compact by friable. Contains moderate medium sub-rounded stone, roots and charcoal flecks.	0.43-0.53m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
44	Ditch	N-S aligned ditch with moderate flat sides breaking gradually to a flat base. Filled by (45) and (52). 0.40m wide and 0.15m deep. Cuts furrow [46].	0.43-0.58m
45	Fill	Primary fill of ditch [44]. Light pale brown sand. Soft and loose, very sterile.	0.43-0.49m
46	Furrow	NE-SW aligned furrow with shallow flattish sides with an imperceptible break to a slightly concave base. Filled by (47), 2.50m wide and 0.20m deep.	0.43-0.63m
47	Fill	Fill of furrow [46]. Medium to light yellowish brown silty coarse sand. Moderately compact by friable. Contains moderate medium sub-rounded stone, roots and charcoal flecks.	0.43-0.63m
48	Fill	Fill of furrow [49]. Medium to light yellowish brown silty coarse sand. Moderately compact by friable. Contains moderate medium sub-rounded stone, roots and charcoal flecks.	0.43-0.59m
49	Furrow	N-S aligned furrow with shallow flattish sides with an imperceptible break to a slightly concave base. Filled by (48), 2.80m wide and 0.16m deep.	0.43-0.59m
50	Fill	Fill of furrow [51]. Medium to light yellowish brown silty coarse sand. Moderately compact by friable. Contains moderate medium sub-rounded stone, roots and charcoal flecks.	0.43-0.59m
51	Furrow	N-S aligned furrow with shallow flattish sides with an imperceptible break to a slightly concave base. Filled by (50), 2.40m wide and 0.16m deep.	
52	Fill	Fill of ditch [44]. Dark blackish brown silty sand, moderately compact but friable. Contains occasional small sub-rounded stones and moderate charcoal flecks.	0.43-0.52m

Appendix 2 Technical information The archive

The archive consists of:

- 52 Context records AS1
- 2 Photographic records AS3
- 96 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 30 Scale drawings
- 1 Context number catalogues AS5
- 1 Sample records AS17
- 1 Sample number catalogues AS18
- 1 Flot records AS21
- 1 Box of finds
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs

1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery,

Bethesda Street, Cultural Quarter,

Stoke-on-Trent,

ST1 3DW