

Archaeological evaluation  
at  
Wheler Road,  
Coventry



© Worcestershire County Council

**Worcestershire Archaeology**  
Archive and Archaeology Service  
The Hive, Sawmill Walk,  
The Butts, Worcester  
WR1 3PD

Status: Revision 2 - curator comments  
Date: 22 August 2014  
Author: Graham Arnold – [garnold@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:garnold@worcestershire.gov.uk)  
Illustrator: Steve Rigby  
Project reference: P4344  
Report reference: 2126  
HER reference:



# Contents

## Summary

1

## Report

<b>1 Background.....</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 Reasons for the project .....	2
<b>2 Aims.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3 Methods.....</b>	<b>2</b>
3.1 Personnel.....	2
3.2 Documentary research .....	2
3.3 Fieldwork strategy .....	2
3.4 Structural analysis .....	3
3.5 Artefact methodology .....	3
3.5.1 Artefact recovery policy.....	3
3.6 Environmental archaeology methodology.....	3
3.6.1 Sampling policy.....	3
3.6.2 Processing and analysis .....	3
3.6.3 Discard policy .....	3
3.7 Statement of confidence in the methods and results .....	3
<b>4 The application site .....</b>	<b>3</b>
4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context.....	3
4.2 Current land-use .....	4
<b>5 Structural analysis.....</b>	<b>4</b>
5.1.1 Phase 1: natural deposits.....	4
5.1.2 Phase 2: post-medieval deposits .....	4
5.1.3 Phase 3: modern deposits .....	4
<b>6 Synthesis .....</b>	<b>5</b>
6.1 Medieval.....	5
6.2 Post-medieval .....	5
<b>7 Significance .....</b>	<b>5</b>
7.1 Nature of the archaeological interest in the site .....	5
7.2 Relative importance of the archaeological interest in the site .....	5
7.3 Physical extent of the archaeological interest in the site .....	5
<b>8 Publication summary .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>9 Bibliography.....</b>	<b>6</b>



---

## Archaeological evaluation at Wheler Road, Coventry

Graham Arnold

### Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Wheler Road, Coventry (NGR 435380, 277410). It was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting, acting for Western Power Distribution, who intends to make an extension to the existing substation for which a planning application has been approved.

The site had a moderate potential for significant medieval agricultural features and was the location of medieval fish ponds associated with Pinley Manor to the west. The former fish ponds are visible on a variety of maps of the area although slightly different locations are indicated when the maps are compared.

One trench was excavated to locate the pond. A dark organic deposit, likely to be the infilled pond, or an associated former field boundary ditch linking a pond to the east with another to the south-west, was discovered in the southern half of the trench. The fill contained very few artefacts and was overlain by a thin layer of what appears to be industrial waste, presumably used as a surfacing material, and re-deposited natural. Although a monolith and a bulk sample were taken, the pond / ditch fill was very sandy, and had very low environmental survival potential. The only finds within the fill were occasional fragments of modern porcelain. There was a deeply buried pit or ditch at the north end of the trench, which contained only later post-medieval debris and may relate to another field boundary.

No evidence of medieval settlement was found nor that the features relate to a medieval moat, although a site of medieval date is known from the adjacent property.

## Report

### 1 Background

#### 1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Wheler Road, Coventry (NGR 435380, 277410; Fig 1). It was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Western Power Distribution, who intends extension of the current substation for which a planning application has been approved by Coventry City Council.

The proposed development site is considered to include heritage assets and potential heritage assets, the significance of which may be affected by the application (MCT1016). Principal of these was the remains of medieval settlement which had been identified on the adjacent property and it was felt that the ponds showing on early maps may have medieval origins (CgMs Consulting 2013, 16).

The project conforms to the standard brief for evaluations and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2014).

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008).

### 2 Aims

The aims of this evaluation are:

- to describe and assess the significance of the heritage asset with archaeological interest;
- to establish the nature, importance and extent of the archaeological site;
- to assess the impact of the application on the archaeological site.

### 3 Methods

#### 3.1 Personnel

The project was undertaken by Graham Arnold (BA, MSc); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2009 and has been practicing archaeology since 2003. The project managers responsible for the quality of the project were Simon Woodiwiss (BA, MIfA) and Tom Vaughan (BA, MA, AlfA). Illustrations were prepared by Steve Rigby.

#### 3.2 Documentary research

A desk-based assessment was undertaken by CgMs Consulting prior to the archaeological evaluation (CgMs Consulting 2013).

#### 3.3 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2014). As a result of the documentary search, adjustments were made to the fieldwork strategy. The trench was slightly shorter and slightly narrower than originally intended due to time and machinery constraints. However, sufficient evidence of the pond location, natural ground and modern truncations was achieved.

Fieldwork was undertaken on 13 June 2014.

One trench, amounting to just over 50m<sup>2</sup> in area, was excavated in the location indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. 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 2012). On completion of excavation, trenches were understood to be reinstated by the client, replacing the excavated material, after a monitoring visit by the archaeological curator.

### **3.4 Structural analysis**

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

### **3.5 Artefact methodology**

#### **3.5.1 Artefact recovery policy**

The only finds retrieved were modern fragments of glazed porcelain from the pond / ditch fill (102) and small undiagnostic ceramic building material fragments and wood from a later post-medieval pit or ditch (107) at the north end of the trench. These are not considered to be significant enough to merit retention and unless WA hears to the contrary they will be discarded eight weeks after the date of this report.

### **3.6 Environmental archaeology methodology**

#### **3.6.1 Sampling policy**

Samples were taken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (2012). Samples were taken by the excavator from deposits considered to be of potential for the recovery of environmental remains. A total of one bulk sample (40 litres) and a 1m column sample were taken from the site from the following context:

- 102 – pond / ditch fill

#### **3.6.2 Processing and analysis**

After analysis of the column sample (Plate 5) and bulk sample there seems to be a limited potential for environmental remains and they will not be processed. The pond / ditch fill was heavily contaminated with modern dump deposits.

#### **3.6.3 Discard policy**

The following samples will be discarded after a period of eight weeks after the date of this report, unless there is a specific request to retain them.

- Column sample.
- Bulk sample.

### **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. However, the trench was limited by the existing electricity structures and the machine available for the work. Despite these limitations, the aims of the project were successfully achieved.

## **4 The application site**

### **4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context**

The following is taken from the previous desk-based assessment for the site (CgMs Consulting 2013):

The solid geology of the study site comprises sandstone of the Bromsgrove Sandstone Formation. The superficial geology is recorded as Wolston Clay for the study site with sand and gravel to the north (British Geological Survey 1994, Sheet 169).

The study site lies within Pinley, a suburb of Coventry, which lies at the south-eastern edge of Coventry on higher ground above the relative bowl of Coventry City centre. The study site lies at approximately 93m above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

Archaeological investigations 50m to the north-west of the study site found evidence of a high status medieval building, which may have been either the manor house or chapel (MCT 1037). Reporting of the discovery also speculated that further remains might extend south into the area of the electricity sub-station. However, its construction 'is likely to have severely damaged any archaeological remains' this being suggested by the drop in level from the recorded remains to the sub-station. This may indicate the study site area itself has been subject to significant previous truncation (Warwickshire Archaeology 2009).

The title apportionment contains the fieldname Moat Close (CgMs Consulting 2013, 13) and it is possible that ponds (see CgMs 2013, figs 4-6) shown on historic maps are remnants of a moat, perhaps surrounding the possible manor house (see above). The ponds may alternatively have originated as medieval fish ponds associated with the manor. If they are of medieval origin the artificial ponds are likely to have been created away from the centre of any settlement activity. Aerial photographic evidence (photographs dating to 1945) of former medieval cultivation is also recorded to the east (MCT 835) and to the south (MCT 752).

## **4.2 Current land-use**

The site is currently rough ground with shrubs and hard standing on an industrial estate, adjacent to an existing electricity substation.

## **5 Structural analysis**

The trench and features recorded are shown in Figure 2. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

### **5.1.1 Phase 1: natural deposits**

The natural orange and red gravels and red sandstone were found 0.50m below the ground surface on the north end of the site and 1.10m below the ground surface in the south side of the site. Below the pond fills was a red sandy gravel and yellowish grey silt, which was at the level of the ground water.

### **5.1.2 Phase 2: post-medieval deposits**

The fill of a former pond or field boundary ditch was found within the south end of the trench (102; Plates 2 and 3). This consisted of a dark brown silty sand that was 0.50m deep. The base of the feature had a layer of large rounded pebbles, probably a deliberate deposition (Plate 5). The feature had a flat base, though the nature of the northern side was obscured by disturbance from recently constructed concrete foundations. There was also a possible large pit or ditch in the north-east end of the trench filled with undiagnostic brick fragments and decayed wood in brown sandy clay (107; Plate 7).

### **5.1.3 Phase 3: modern deposits**

Much of the whole area was overlaid by a spread of black clinker (105) and later made ground including sandstone blocks, concrete and rubble. A modern topsoil was overlaying this which had a lot of tree and vegetation rooting as the area was rough ground.



---

## 6 Synthesis

### 6.1 Medieval

There is no evidence of medieval activity from the evaluation trench.

### 6.2 Post-medieval

The location of a silted up former waterlogged feature was found and recorded. It may represent either a fish pond, a moat or a field boundary ditch. Whereas this may have had medieval origins, no cultural evidence of medieval usage was recovered, and it is at least equally likely that the feature is of post-medieval date a *terminus post quem* being provided by its appearance on a plan dating to 1849 (CgMs Consulting 2013, fig 4).

The samples taken from the fills are late in date as indicated by the artefacts, and are unlikely to contain significant environmental evidence. For instance the sandy soils are likely to be acidic and molluscan remains are unlikely to be preserved.

Though the northern edge of the feature was obscured by more recent activity, comparison with the Ordnance Survey maps reproduced by CgMs Consulting (2013, figs 4-6) indicate that the feature is most likely to be a field boundary ditch, associated with ponds to the east and south-west, although the possibility remains that it is part of an earlier moat (Figure 3; Plates 3-4).

The pit or ditch identified to the north end of the trench may relate to the field boundary ditch also noted on the Ordnance Survey maps (CgMs Consulting 2013, figs 4-6).

## 7 Significance

### 7.1 Nature of the archaeological interest in the site

The possible medieval fishpond or moat was located but deposits were heavily truncated and had no medieval cultural material and low environmental potential.

### 7.2 Relative importance of the archaeological interest in the site

The lack of environmental or cultural evidence means that the pond has limited archaeological interest.

### 7.3 Physical extent of the archaeological interest in the site

The archaeological resource has not been significantly damaged by the current development and although the ditch, fish pond, or moat extends to the south it has limited value. It contained only post-medieval material, was consistently 0.60m below the ground level, with modern levelling and topsoil sealing the feature. A later post-medieval pit or ditch recorded to the north is similarly deeply buried. No other archaeological features were identified within the limited confines of the trench.

## 8 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 evaluation was undertaken at Wheler Road, Coventry (NGR 435380, 277410). It was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting, acting for Western Power Distribution, who intend to make an extension to the existing substation for which a planning application has been approved.*

*The site had a moderate potential for significant medieval agricultural features and was the location of medieval fish ponds associated with Pinley Manor to the west. The former fish ponds are visible*

on a variety of maps of the area although slightly different locations are indicated when the maps are compared.

One trench was excavated to locate the pond. A dark organic deposit, likely to be the infilled pond, or an associated former field boundary ditch linking a pond to the east with another to the south-west, was discovered in the southern half of the trench. The fill contained very few artefacts and was overlain by a thin layer of what appears to be industrial waste, presumably used as a surfacing material, and re-deposited natural. Although a monolith and a bulk sample were taken, the pond / ditch fill was very sandy, and had very low environmental survival potential. The only finds within the fill were occasional fragments of modern porcelain. There was a deeply buried pit or ditch at the north end of the trench, which contained only later post-medieval debris and may relate to another field boundary.

No evidence of medieval settlement was found nor that the features relate to a medieval moat, although a site of medieval date is known from the adjacent property.

## 9 Bibliography

CgMs Consulting 2013 *Archaeological desk-based assessment - Wheler Road, Coventry*, unpublished document issued September 2013

IfA 2008 *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation*, Institute for Archaeologists

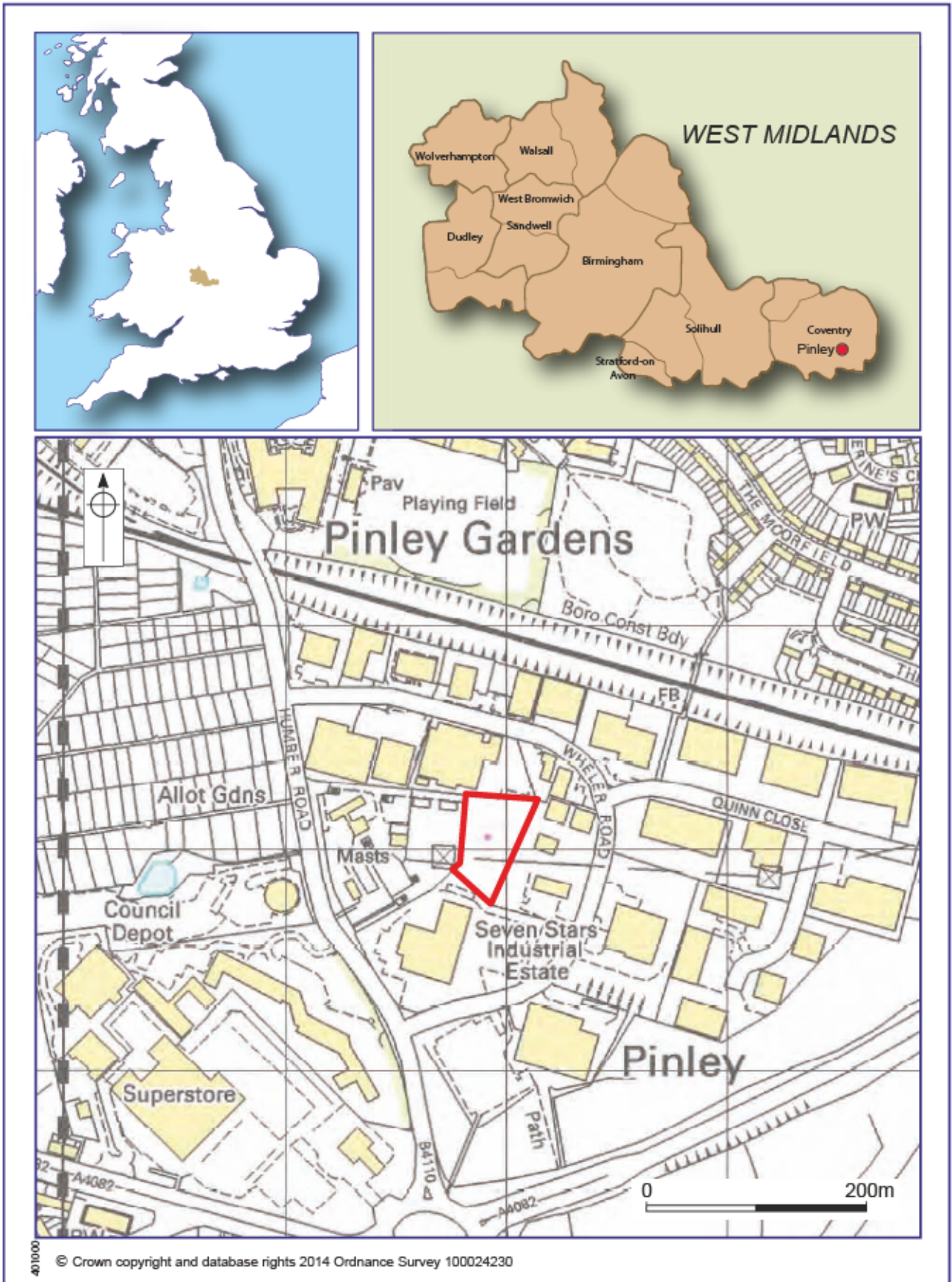
WA 2012 *Manual of service practice, recording manual*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, report **1842**

WA 2014 *Proposal for an archaeological evaluation at Wheler Road, Coventry*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 5 June 2014, **P4344**

Warwickshire Archaeology 2009 *Archaeological recording at Seven Stars Ind. Estate, Wheler Road, Coventry*. Rep **0866**

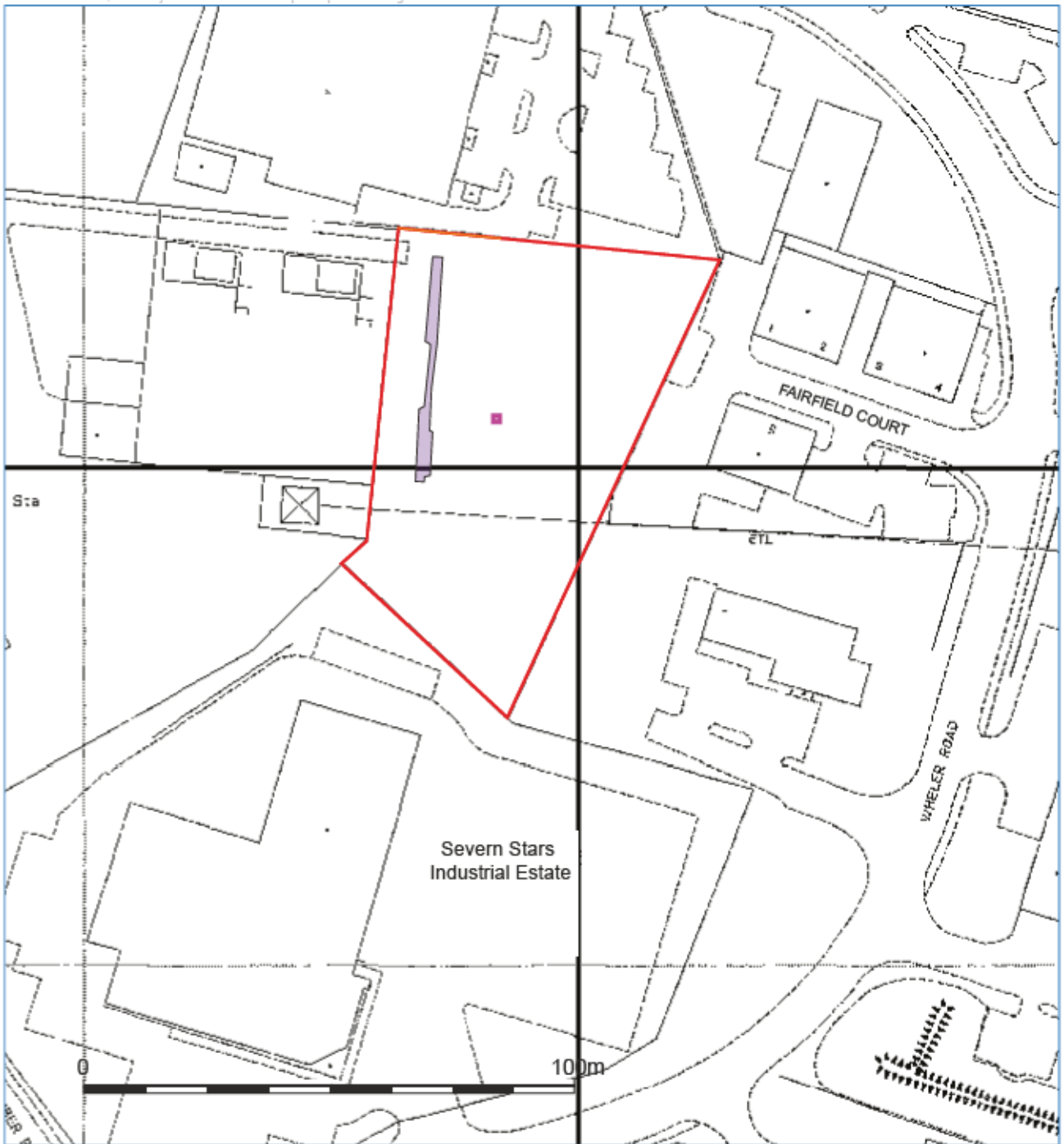
## Figures

---



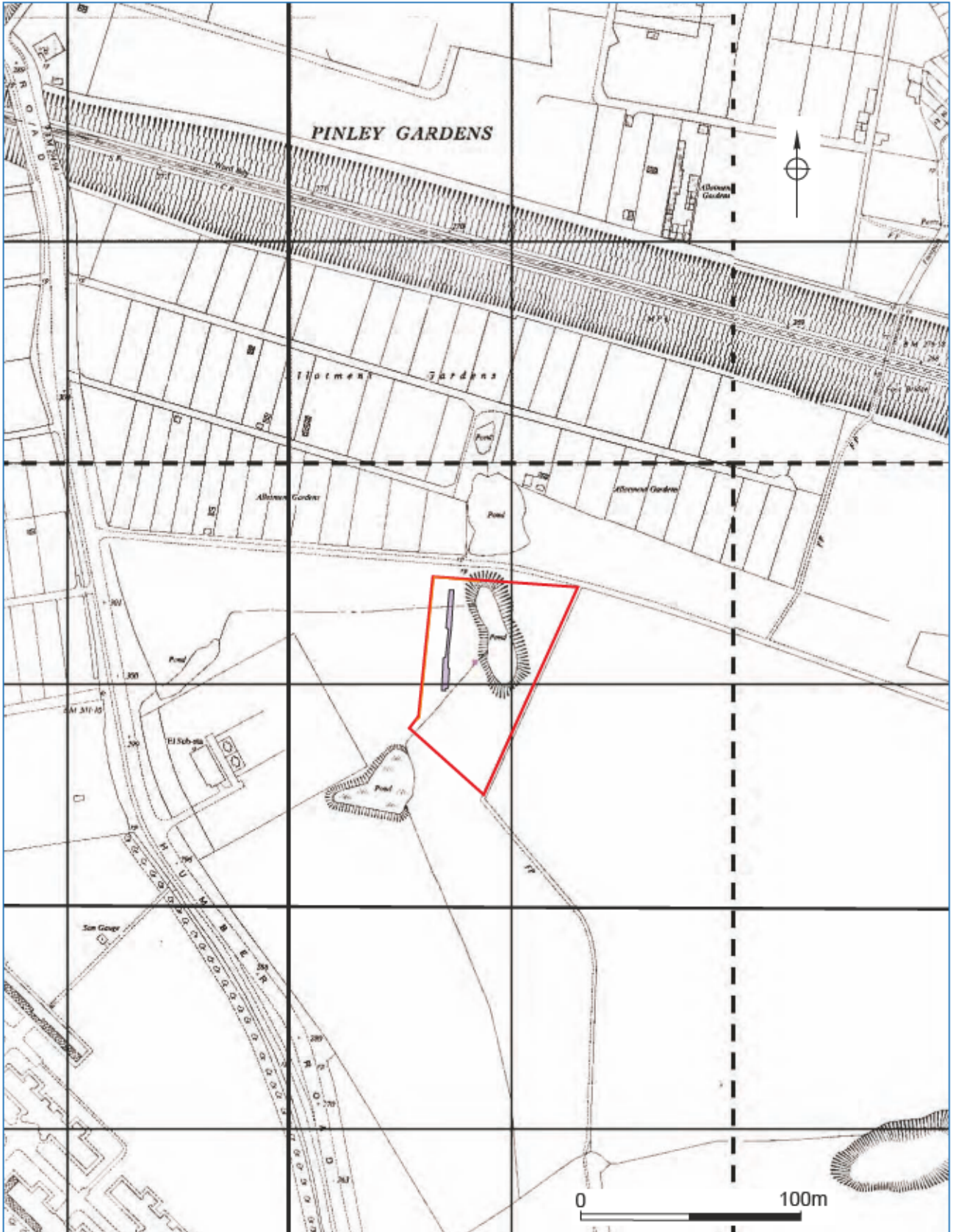
Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench location plan

Figure 2



Trench location overlaid on 1952 Ordnance Survey Map

Figure 3

## Plates



*Plate 1 The location of trench between the new substation structures; facing south-east*

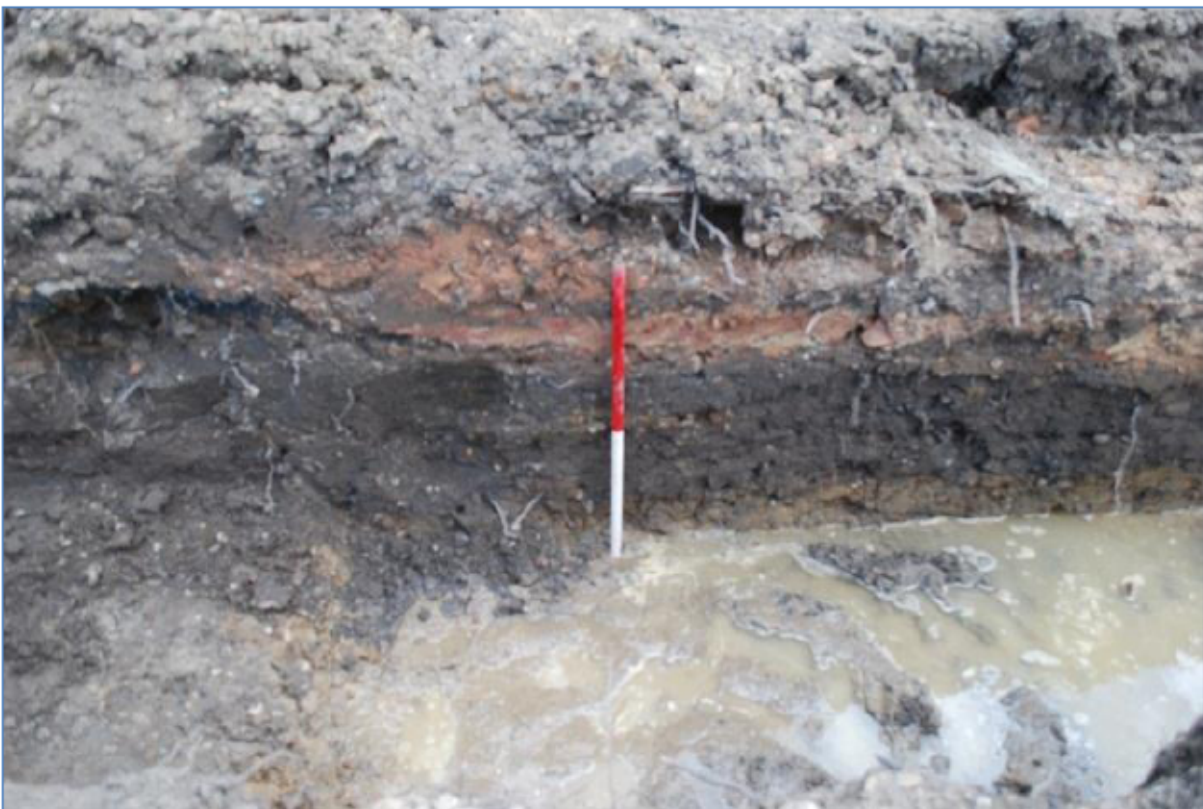


*Plate 2 The trench between the substation structures; 0.50m wide and 0.50m deep to avoid structures; facing north*

---



*Plate 3 The pond or ditch fill (102) east facing section, with modern made ground above*



*Plate 4 The pond or ditch fill (102), west facing section, with modern made ground above*





*Plate 5 Monolith sample showing topsoil (100), hardcore (101), pond fill (102) and natural gravels at base; note the large rounded gravel at the base of the pond at the interface between the pond fill and natural; arrow indicates top of column sample*

*Plate 6 General shot of pond fill (102) being excavated at the south end of the trench; facing south*

---



*Plate 7 Late post-medieval pit or ditch (107) at north end of trench; facing north*



*Plate 8 General shot of trench; facing south*

## Appendix 1 Trench description

### Trench

Maximum dimensions: Length: 37.00m Width: 0.50m – 2.00m Depth: 0.50 – 1.50m

Orientation: East - West

### Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Medium orange/brown fine soft sandy silt with frequent root action and worm sorting. Contains occasional medium flecks of charcoal, rare tile and rare clay pipe. Cut by one modern water pipe trench.	0 – 0.30m
101	Hardcore levelling	Medium orange friable rubble and redeposited natural sandstone blocks used to level area. Modern surface sealing pond fill	0.30 – 0.60m
102	Fill	Dark greyish brown silty sand with occasional vegetation roots and moderate small rounded gravels. Rare modern porcelain pieces demonstrate modern backfilling and disturbance and silting over a period of time.	0.60 – 1.10m
103	Remnant soil	Mid greyish yellow silty clay with occasional small rounded stones. Remnant subsoil underneath industrial waste clinker spread at north end of trench.	0.40 – 0.48m
104	Natural	Red and orange sand, gravels and occasional sandstone blocks. A layer of large rounded pebbles lay at the interface between the pond fill and the natural base of the pond.	0.48m – 1.50m
105	Levelling	Black clinker and industrial waste, particularly at north end of trench, but also overlay pond fills.	0.30m – 0.40m
106	Fill of 107	Loose decaying wood, brick fragments and tile fragments. Late post-medieval.	0.50m – 1.20m
107	Pit / ditch	Large sub-circular pit containing brick rubble and decaying wood. Vertical sides. Not fully excavated.	0.50m – 1.20m

## **Appendix 2 Technical information**

### **The archive (WA project code: P4344)**

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 21 Digital photographs
- 1 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Herbert Art Gallery and Museum  
Jordan Well  
Coventry  
CV1 5QP

Tel. Coventry (024) 7683 2310 / 7683 2386

Fax Coventry (024) 7683 2410

---