

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF
AT
ALLENS CROFT ROAD,
LIFFORD,
BIRMINGHAM

Steve Litherland

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

22nd October 2007

© Historic Environment and Archaeology Service,
Worcestershire County Council

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



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Project 3072
Report 1579
EBM 337

Archaeological Watching Brief at Allens Croft Road, Lifford, Birmingham

Steve Litherland

Background information

<i>Client</i>	Severn Trent Water
<i>Site address</i>	Allens Croft Road, Lifford, Birmingham
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SP 0581 8024
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	EBM 337
<i>Planning authority</i>	Birmingham City Council
<i>Reference</i>	n/a
<i>Brief</i>	Jones 2007
<i>Project design</i>	HEAS 2007
<i>Project parameters</i>	IFA 1999

Previous archaeological work on the site (Fig. 1)

There has been an archaeological desk-based assessment undertaken of the proposed pipeline route of the Severn Trent Water Improvement Scheme for this site (Colls 2006).

Previous archaeological work on associated sites

The desk-based assessment identified seven recorded sites of archaeological interest in the general vicinity of the proposed pipeline (*ibid*, Appendix 1). These included Lifford Mill, possibly dating to the 14th century and certainly later; the nearby 17th century Lifford Hall with an associated wall and watchtower of 18th century date; the site of a post-medieval/industrial era chemical works called the Lifford Chemical Works; and the Lifford Reservoir which is 19th century in date. In addition, the Roman road known as Ryknild Street is believed to have crossed the River Rea near here, while the find spot of a 1st century Roman coin is recorded along Allens Croft Road itself.

Aims

The likelihood of surviving archaeological deposits being affected by the proposed work was not considered to be high, particularly as much of pipeline was to replace existing services. However, a watching brief was to be maintained on the area closest to the River Rea (Fig 2), together with a contingency for environmental sampling of any securely datable water-logged deposits.

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.

Methods

General specification for fieldwork	CAS 1995
Sources consulted	Colls 2006
Date(s) of fieldwork	April - July 2007
Area of site	c 500m length of pipeline trenching
Sampling	c 100m as indicated on Fig 2
area sampled	c 20%
sample size	length 100m
Dimensions of pipeline observed	width 2m max
	depth 3-4m

Access to or visibility of deposits

Due to the necessary depth of the excavation for the pipeline and the unstable and water-logged nature of the deposits through which it was cut, all trenching was carried out using pre-assembled metal-box-shuttering sections. The usual method of work was for a trench approximately 5m in length to be dug by a 360° tracked excavator and the shuttering lowered into place and secured. This process was then repeated and second section of shuttering positioned. The concrete pipes were then laid after the two box sections were fitted together. The work proceeded by digging and fitting the next (third) box and removing and backfilling the first box. This allowed two periods for observation of the excavated deposits and the sections of the deposits through which they were cut. These were during the initial phase of excavation, before the box shuttering was lowered into place, and immediately after the finished section of shuttering was removed. Access to the deep trench was not made by the archaeologist for safety reasons, observations being restricted to those made from the top of the trench. However, deposits were observed as they were removed and the exposed sections were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, although any less clear may have not been identified.

Statement of confidence

Although access to, and visibility of, deposits was limited to that made from the top of the trench a high degree of confidence can be offered that the aims of the project have been achieved. This was due to the nature of the deposits observed, which had clear colour definition between them and the fact that their sequence of deposition did not alter along the entire length of the pipeline observed. In addition, no artefacts or ecofacts were observed within the excavated deposits, which were examined and stored at the side of the trench.

Deposit description (typical trench section)

Context	Description	Date	Interpretation	Depth (below ground level)
001	Brown sandy loam containing much modern building rubble	c 1970 +	Levelling deposit, or 'made-ground'	0.00 - c 1.00m
002	Red sandy clay. Clean and relatively undifferentiated	Geological	Mercia Mudstone deposit	c 1.00 – 3.00m
003	Large rounded pebbles, wet grey clay and sandy banded matrix	Geological	Bunter Pebble Beds	c 3.00 – 4.00m +

Discussion

No significant archaeological features, structures, deposits or horizons were identified, nor were any archaeological artefacts retrieved. The water table was noted at approximately 1.5m depth, although no datable waterlogged archaeological deposits were observed.

The deposit sequence indicated that when the Allens Croft/Brandwood Park Road estate was built (probably sometime in the early 1970s) the soils were scoured off by machine, down into the upper levels of the natural Mercian Mudstone deposits. The original services were then laid, and then the ground level nearest the river was raised by up to one metre, using building rubble and a mixture of original and imported topsoil. All other deposits beneath this were of geological origin.

If archaeological deposits were previously present, these would have been severely truncated or destroyed by this activity.

Conclusions

The results of the watching indicate that no archaeological deposits are likely to have survived between the area of the Allens Croft/Brandwood Park Road estate and the River Rea, due to the groundwork clearance associated with the construction of that estate. Nevertheless, the possibility remains that archaeological deposits survive on the other side of the river, which was unaffected by that work.

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, (in this case the Council for British Archaeology Group Eight upon recent work in the region). 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 at Allens Croft Road, Lifford, Birmingham (centred on NGR: SP 0581 8024; WMSMR ref. EBM 337) during the construction of a relief drainage system. This watching brief established that previous groundworks for the nearby Allens Croft Road housing estate, including the scouring away of the topsoil and the subsequent raising of the ground level by up to 1m, adjacent to the flood-prone River Rea, had removed any archaeological deposits, if indeed they were present, here.

Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Dr Alex Jones (Archaeological Consultant, Severn Trent Water Ltd), Mark Kerr (Engineer, Severn Trent Water Ltd), Barhale Construction, and Dr Mike Hodder (Planning Archaeologist, Birmingham City Council).

Bibliography

Barclay, W J, Green, G W, Holder, M T, Moorlock, B S P, Smart, J G O, Strange, P J, and Wilson, D, 1988 *Bristol Channel (sheet 51°N-04°W): solid geology*, 1:250,000 map, British Geological Survey, Keyworth

CAS, 1995 (as amended) *Manual of Service practice: fieldwork recording manual*, County Archaeological Service, Hereford and Worcester County Council, report, **399**

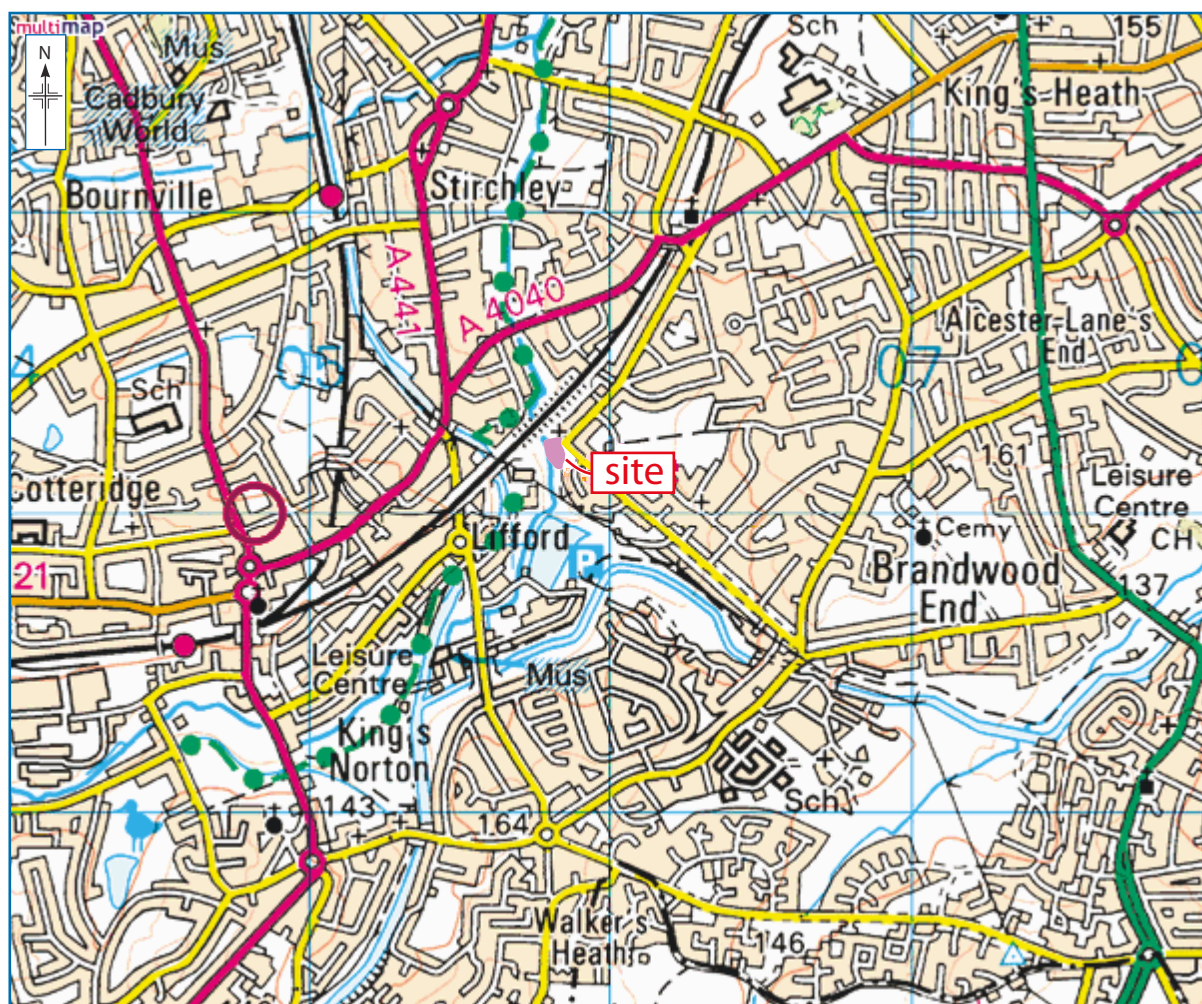
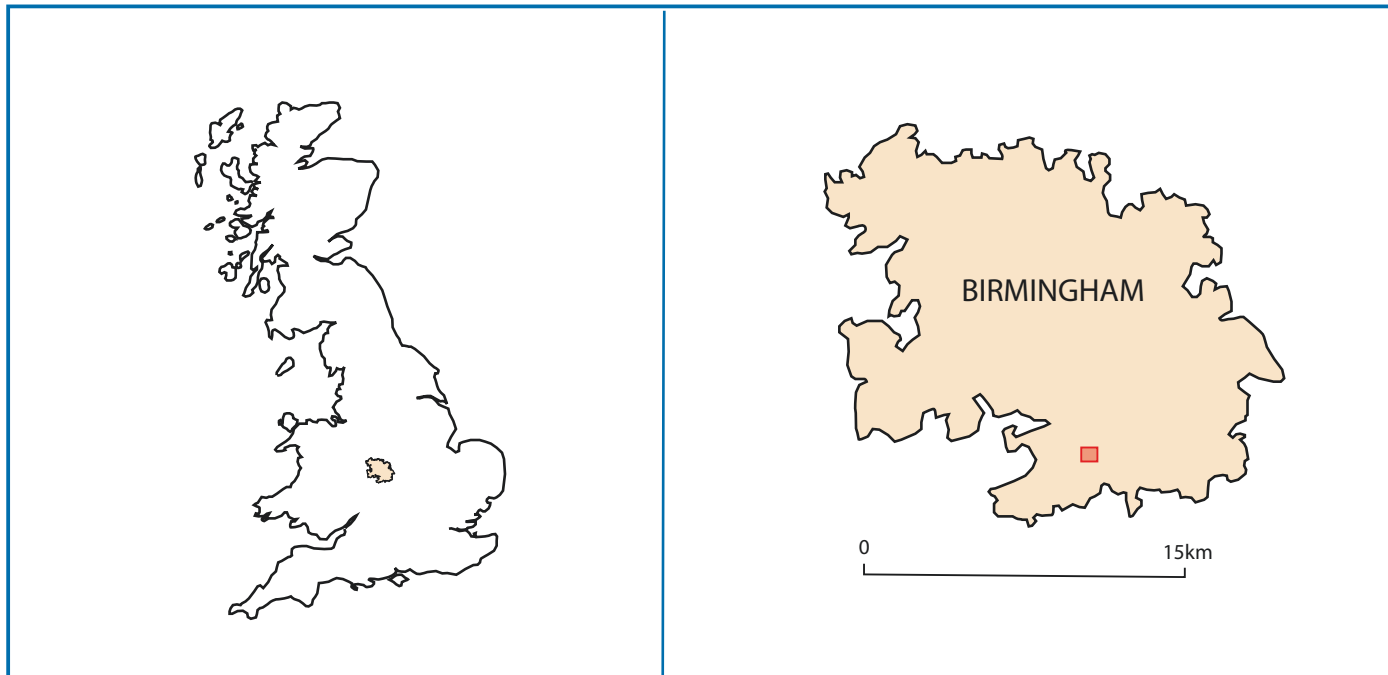
Colls, K, 2006 *Proposed Allenscroft Severn Trent Water Improvement Scheme, Birmingham: An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment*, Birmingham Archaeology, unpublished report **1452**, dated June 2006

Jones, A, 2007 *Allenscroft, Birmingham: Construction of New Overflow Chamber and pipeline: Specification for archaeological watching brief and associated reporting*, Archaeological Consultant, Severn Trent Water Ltd, unpublished document dated 22nd March 2007

HEAS, 2007 *Proposal for an archaeological watching brief at Allenscroft, Birmingham*, Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 2nd April 2007, **P3072**

IFA, 1999 *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute of Field Archaeologists

Figures

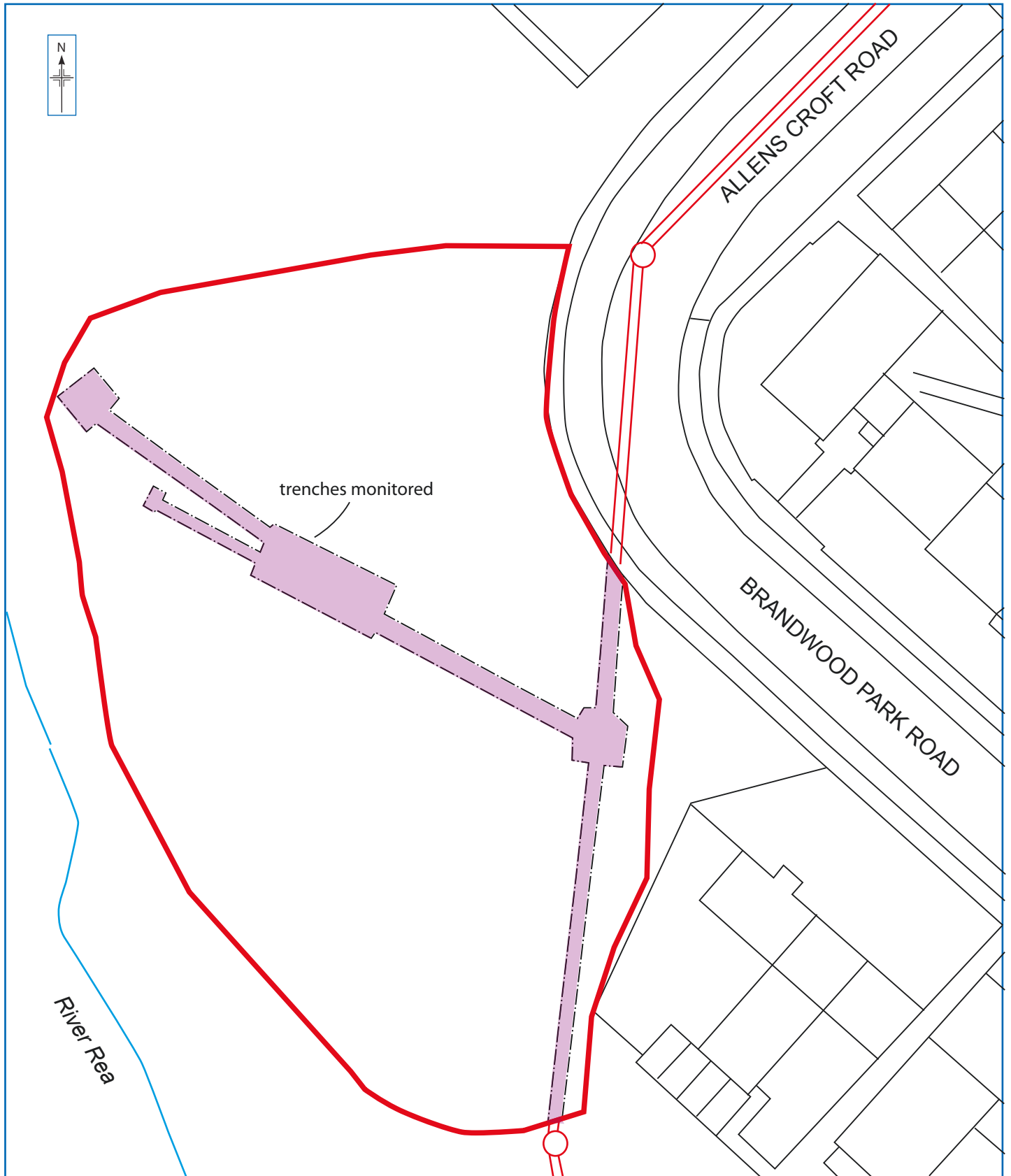


© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Worcestershire County Council 100015914

0 1km

Location of the site.

Figure 1



© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Worcestershire County Council 100015914.
For reference purposes only. No further copies may be made.

0 100m

Trench location plan

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1. Typical riverside view of the River Rea (note deep banks)



Plate 2. Typical working system



Plate 3. Typical trench section



Plate 4. Sample of cobble deposit, 003

Appendix 1 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

5	Fieldwork progress records
1	Photographic record
25	Digital photographs
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