

Archaeological watching brief at 18 Little Lane, West Bromwich, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council



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Project reference: P4277
Report reference: 2243

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Archaeological Watching Brief at 18 Little Lane, West Bromwich, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough

Graham Arnold (project leader)

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Mr G Wells, of Civil and Structural Consultants at 18 Little Lane, West Bromwich, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough, Birmingham (NGR ref 408070 292365).

A cellar belonging to The Churchfield Tavern was recorded in the southwest of the site, within the footprint of the previously existing building. A cellar for the adjacent building was also recorded, which had recently been filled with concrete. The footings, services and surfaces of the former Churchfield Tavern were evident in the southern portion of the site.

In the north side of the site an intact soil profile was observed, with frequent modern truncations from concrete surfaces and made ground dumped material. No significant archaeology was observed over the development area.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at 18 Little Lane, West Bromwich, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (NGR 408070 292365). It was commissioned by Mr G Wells of UWC Civil & Structural Consultants who intend to develop the site for residential use. Planning permission for residential development of the site was granted by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council subject to conditions, including a programme of archaeological works (application no DC/13/56491).

The project conforms to the generality of briefs prepared by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2014). The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014).

The specific number for this project, given by the Worcestershire Archaeology is P4277.

2 Aims

The aims and scope of the watching brief project were to locate archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was undertaken by Graham Arnold (BA (hons.); MSc), who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2009 and has been practicing archaeology since 2002. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers (BSc (hons), MSc). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA).

3.2 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER).

3.3 List of sources consulted

Documentary sources

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

3.4 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2014).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 29 June and 13 July 2015. The specific site project number allotted by Worcestershire Archaeology is P4277.

The groundworks of the construction team were monitored, including the ground reduction and excavation of footings. Excavations were undertaken using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket, under archaeological supervision. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012a). No significant deposits with environmental potential were encountered and no significant artefactual material was present within the areas observed.

The monitored groundworks amounting to just over 540m² in area and were excavated over the site area of 3600m². All groundworks were monitored. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2. The footings for plots 7 and 8 were not observed as a typical soil profile with no archaeological deposits had been observed in the rest of the site.

3.5 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.

3.6 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 currently lies in an open space opposite Sandwell General Hospital and is generally on flat ground. The site is accessed from Little Lane to the south and was former the site of The Churchfield Tavern, with a flat bowling green in the northwest corner, to the rear of the Tavern.

The solid geology in the area consists of Alveley Member – sandstone, with superficial deposits of Till, Mid Pleistocene – Diamicton, from Ice Age glaciers depositing sands and gravels (BGS 2015).

Little Lane is a small street which lies to the north of the centre of West Bromwich between Hallam Street and Tenscore Street.

West Bromwich was originally known as *Brom wich*, a name in use by the time of Domesday Book and suggesting a village where broom grew (Baggs *et. al* 1977). The population was small and scattered. In 1086 there were 10 villeins and 3 bordars. There were 172 poll-tax payers in 137 and 116 households in 1563. The settlement was becoming known as West Bromwich by the early 14th century, probably to distinguish it from Castle Bromwich and Little Bromwich.

From the 16th century the iron industry was developing within the town and domestic nailing in particular was taken up in addition to agriculture. Originally the main settlement was at Lyndon the centre of which lies just to the south of Little Lane. Otherwise settlement in the parish consisted of small groups of cottages, or 'ends', around the Heath which extended south-west from Lyndon across the main Birmingham-Wolverhampton road.

The Heath was inclosed in 1804, and by about 1820 it was becoming the new centre of West Bromwich. The population of the parish had risen to 9,505 by 1821, and continued to rise rapidly throughout the 19th Century as industry became predominant in the town.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map published in 1889 shows a group of buildings in the approximate location of the tavern, but with a different layout to the later public house. No other buildings are shown on the lane although terraces are depicted on both Tenscore Street to the west and Hallam Street to the east. Further buildings had been added on the southern side of the lane by 1904 and by 1921 the north side of the lane was entirely built up. The area to the north of the Tavern, the northern part of the development site appears to have been open ground or gardens until the mid 20th Century.

4.2 Current land-use

The site was formerly a public house, The Churchfield Tavern, with hardstanding for car parking on the east side of the building and a bowling green to the rear of the property, in the northeast of the site. The footing of the walls of The Churchfield Tavern were still visible on visiting the site, with associated brick paving, hardstanding and services for the property.

5 Structural analysis

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

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

Natural orange sand and gravels were recorded on site 0.50m below ground level in the north of the site, whilst in the south, the natural ground had been truncated by the footing of the recently demolished building and a cellar, backfilled with modern brick rubble.

5.1.2 Phase 2: Modern deposits

The natural sands and gravels were overlaid by a profile of subsoil and topsoil that was frequently disturbed and contained modern material, including bricks, concrete, tarmacadam and metalwork. The footings of the Churchfield Tavern, modern drains and a backfilled cellar in the southeast corner of the property were observed. The adjoining cellar from the adjacent property to the east of the site had recently been filled with concrete to solve subsidence issues.

6 Synthesis

The archaeological watching brief on the site has demonstrated that no significant archaeological deposits survive within the development area. All features recorded related to the footings and cellar of the former Churchfields Tavern and an adjacent building on the street frontage, both of which probably dated from the 19th Century.

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.

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8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Anthony Bowen (Amphion Construction) Mr G Wells, Civil and Structural Consultants, and the Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council Conservation Officer (curator).

9 Bibliography

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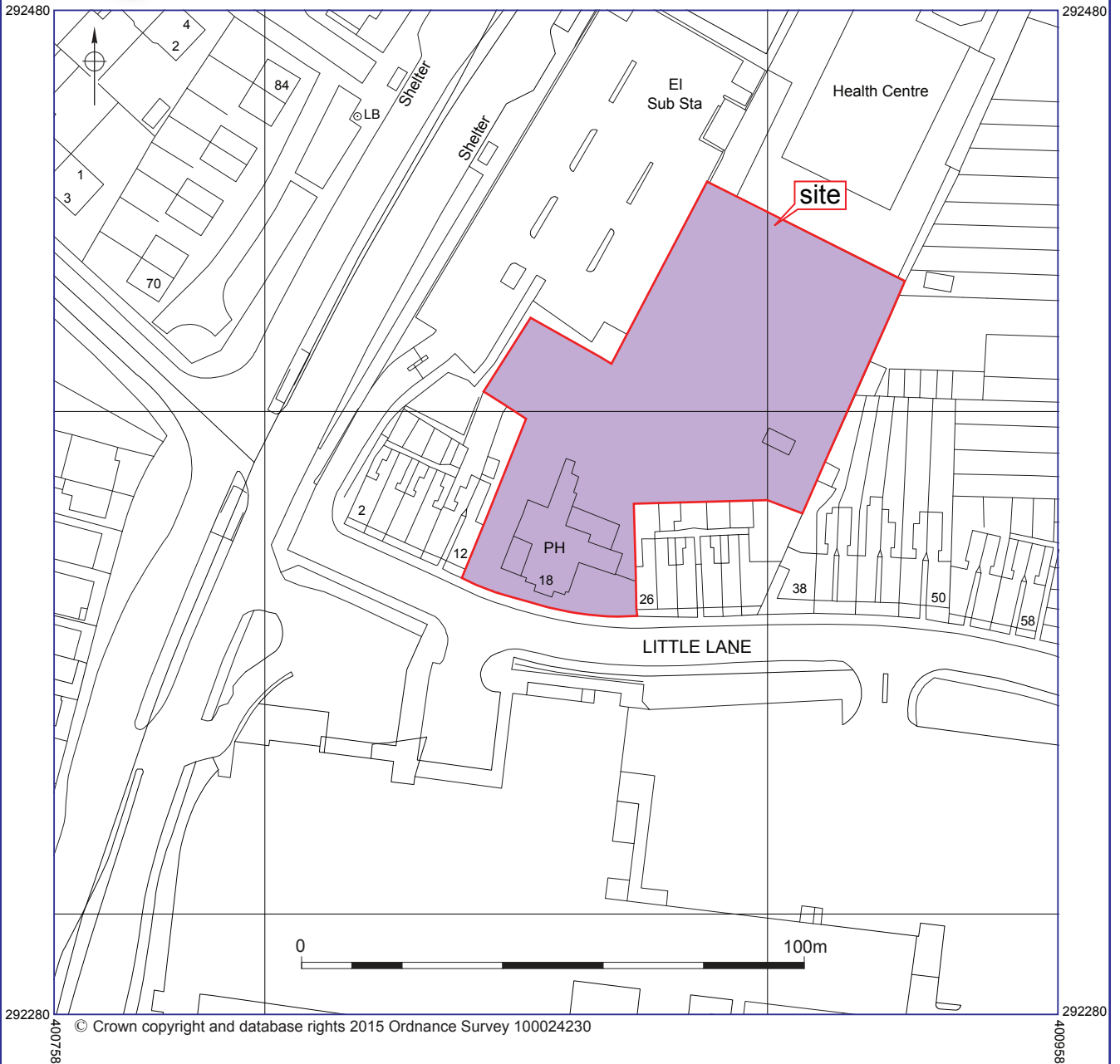
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WA 2014 *Proposal for an archaeological watching brief at The site of the Former Churchfield Tavern, Little Lane, West Bromwich*, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 24th January 2014, **P4277**

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Figures



Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench locations monitored (based upon UWC Drg No 010)

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1 The backfilled cellar in the southwest of the site and adjacent cellar backfilled with concrete. View southeast



Plate 2 The Churchfield Tavern cellar backfilled with loose modern material. View northwest.



Plate 3 The south-eastern footing of Trench 1 view northeast



Plate 4 Plot 4 Foundations. View northwest.



Plate 5 Plots 5 and 6 foundations, view north.



Plate 6 The northern end of the site where Plots 5 – 8 were located. View North

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Site area: Terraced houses – Plots 1-3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30.00m Width: 8.00m Depth: 1.20m

Orientation: East - West

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy silt with frequent modern, engineering brick, ash, rubble and metalwork. Cut by service trenches and wall footings.	0- 0.30m
101	Subsoil	Medium orange friable silty sand with root action present. Also cut by water service trenches and wall footings.	0.30 – 0.50m
102	Natural	Pale orange sand with frequent patches of gravels and soft sandstone. Gets darker with depth.	0.50 – 1.20m +
103	Wall footings and backfilled cellar	Modern brick walls of Churchfield Tavern including a cellar backfilled with modern materials including brick and rubble.	0.20 – 1.20m

Trench 2

Site area: Footings for Plots 4, 5 and 6

Maximum dimensions: Length: see fig 2 Width: 0.75m Depth: 1.30m

Orientation: See figure 2

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy silt with frequent rooting and truncated by modern material including concrete, ash, rubble and metalwork. Cut by service trenches.	0-0.30m
201	Subsoil	Medium orange friable silty sand with abundant gravels and frequent root action present.	0.30 – 0.50m
202	Natural	Pale orange sand with frequent patches of gravels and soft sandstone. Gets darker with depth.	0.50m+

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

- | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|
| 2 | Field progress reports AS2 |
| 1 | Photographic records AS3 |
| 59 | Digital photographs |
| 2 | 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:

Wednesbury Museum and Art Gallery
Holyhead Road
Wednesbury
West Midlands, WS10 7DF
Tel. Wednesbury (0121) 558 2561