

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING  
BRIEF AT  
ROSS-ON-WYE FLOOD  
ALLEVIATION SCHEME,  
HEREFORDSHIRE

Elizabeth A. Plane

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

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Historic Environment and Archaeology Service,  
Worcestershire County Council,  
Woodbury,  
University of Worcester,  
Project 3138  
Henwick Grove,  
Worcester WR2 6AJ



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Report 1634  
HSM 45002



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## Archaeological watching brief at Ross-on-Wye Flood Alleviation Scheme, Herefordshire

Elizabeth A Plane

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### Background information

<i>Client</i>	Owen Williams of Hereford
<i>Site address</i>	Phoenix Yard Ashburton Industrial Estate Station Approach Ross-on-Wye Herefordshire
<i>National Grid reference</i>	NGR SO 596 244 - SO 611 248.
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	HSM 45002
<i>Planning authority</i>	Herefordshire Council
<i>reference</i>	DCSE2004/1470
<i>Brief</i>	HEAS 2007
<i>Project design</i>	HEAS 2007
<i>Project parameters</i>	IFA 1999

### *Previous archaeological work on the site*

Previous archaeological projects included a desk-based assessment and soil investigation by CgMs Ltd in 1998, on behalf of Dwr Cymru Welsh Water, in advance of the Combined Sewage Outfall Strategy at Homs Road (Hunter 1998). The investigation consisted of five boreholes and two test pits. The three boreholes dug in Homs Road Car Park revealed made ground at a depth of between 1.5m and 2.8m, the result of a 19th century refuse dump. The other boreholes dug on the north-east bank of the Rudhall Brook and on the bank of the River Wye revealed no significant archaeological deposits. The two test pits in Rope Walk Meadow did not reveal any significant archaeological features or waterlogged deposits. In test pit 6 a deposit of cobbles and boulders was noted at a depth 0.50m, but no associated artefacts were retrieved. This deposit was not structural and was possibly associated with the landscaping of the park.

### *Archaeological and historical background*

The development site encompassed various locations along the Rudhall and Chatterley Brooks in Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire (NGR SO 599 241). The town lies at a height of between 35m and 65m OD on raised ground to the east of the River Wye.

The name Ross originated from the Welsh for “promontory” which described the town’s topographical location (Hughes and Hurley 1999). In 1931 the Post Office recognised Ross-on-Wye as the town’s official name, having come into use in the 19th century to emphasise the advantageous location that Ross occupied on the river.

Along the development route the areas of potential archaeological interest included the Rudhall Brook channel enlargement and the Marsh Farm floodwall bund, located to the west and east end of the scheme respectively. Also of possible interest was the inverted syphon that ran along the Rudhall and Chatterley Brooks. The Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record contained several records relating to the area.

The site lies outside the main historic settlement of the town but in an area where mills have been recorded. Three mills on the Rudhall Brook dating to as early as 1086 were located at the junction of the present day Brookend and Brampton Street. These mills later became known as Brookend or Town Mill (SMR 12409) and the buildings that still exist date from early 18th century onwards. The pond associated with the mill drained a large low lying area and when the mill ceased to operation in 1947 the millpond was filled in and the area later became a car park (Hughes and Hurley 1999). The falling shaft associated with the inverted syphon was located within the site of

the former millpond and a limited potential for remains associated with the mills was identified (Hunter 1998). It was also possible that the falling shaft could reveal waterlogged remains.

No evidence of prehistoric settlements had been recovered from within Ross-on-Wye, although in the vicinity of the town there were Neolithic to Iron Age settlements. To the east of the town is the Roman settlement of Ariconium, and in the Roman period the area was intensively occupied (Jackson 1996). During the archaeological evaluation of St Mary's Church (HWCM 1179) in 1991 unstratified Roman pottery was revealed but the nature of occupation remained uncertain. A limited potential for Roman archaeological remains had been identified. There remains no archaeological or documentary evidence for a town on the site of Ross-on-Wye before the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Buteux, 1996).

The location of the Rudhall Brook channel enlargement and rising shaft was adjacent to Homs Road Car Park. The underlying geology of the area was Lower Old Red Sandstone, Downtonian Group (Buteux 1996). The channel enlargement lay on the floodplain of the River Wye in an area where mills had been recorded. This site was located on the tithe map of 1844, recorded as Rix Common Meadow (Hunter 1998, 8). "A mill pleck and stable adjoining" had been sourced on the Tithe Map (HWCM 18933). While the location of the mill did not appear on the 1823 Ordnance Survey map, it was on the 1840 OS map sited within the area of Homs Road Car Park and was recorded on the 1888 map as "disused". The location of the mill was not confirmed as within the fields affected by the channel enlargement and a moderate potential for post-medieval remains had been identified.

The proximity of the channel enlargement to the Rudhall Brook indicated a potential for the identification of prehistoric remains, possibly in the form of burnt mounds. In addition, it was possible that associated features could have been revealed. The site was thought to have limited potential for Bronze Age archaeological remains.

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## Aims

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

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## Methods

General specification for fieldwork  
Sources consulted

CAS 1995  
Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record  
Ordnance Survey maps: 1888

Dates of fieldwork

17<sup>th</sup> September 2007 to 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2008

Dimensions of excavated areas observed

Trench 1	length 40m width 15m depth 0.50m
Trench 2	length 68m width 12m depth 0.70m
Trench 3	length 35m width 35m depth 0.60m
Trench 4	length 20m width 0.75m depth 0.55m
Trench 5	length 9m

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	width 9m
	depth 5m+
Trench 6	length 45m
	width 6m
	depth 1m+
Trench 7	length 23m
	width 3m+
	depth 1m+
Trench 8	length 23
	width 3m+
	depth 1m+
Trench 9	length 35m
	width 23m+
	depth 0.80m

*Access to or visibility of structure/deposits*

Observation and recording of archaeological deposits was restricted to areas of ground disturbance associated with the development (soil stripping for the channel enlargement at Rudhall Brook and for the construction of the Marsh Farm Floodwall bund, plus deep trenches for the construct new culverts) following the progress of the construction team. The location of the areas and trenches observed is indicated in Figure 1.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 360° wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand and clean surfaces were inspected. Deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995). However, a tracked excavator fitted with large toothed buckets carried out part of the excavation at Marsh Farm. This produced uneven surfaces and identifying deposits and features was often difficult.

Due to the necessary depth of the excavation for the culvert all trenching was carried out using pre-assembled 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 culverts 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 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 deposits, although any less clear, may have not been identified.

*Statement of confidence*

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Having undertaken the project the following comments may be made with regard to the methods adopted. Access to, and visibility of, deposits within the rising shaft (Trench 5) was limited to that made from the top of the trench. The nature of the deposits observed, had clear colour definition between them and their sequence of deposition did not alter along the entire length of the area observed. It must also be stressed that Trenches 3 and 9 were dug to a maximum depth of 0.80m, neither of which reached natural deposits. Due to the shallow depth of excavation in these areas it may be possible, although unlikely, that archaeology in this area remains undisturbed.

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**Deposit description**

**Trench 1**

Site area: Rudhall Brook channel enlarging

Orientation: E-W

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
101	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown fine soft sandy silt with frequent root action and worm sorting. Heavily disturbed, frequent metal, glass, drain fragments. Also contains frequent small – medium sub rounded and rounded pebbles. Overlies 102. As 201?	0-0.30-0.50m
102	Subsoil	Medium orange/brown compact clayey silt with worm sorting and root action present in upper 0.10m. Contains frequent small – medium sub rounded and rounded stones and pebbles. Below 101.	0.30-0.50m+

**Trench 2**

Site area: Rudhall Brook channel enlarging

Orientation: SE-NW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
201	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown fine soft sandy silt with frequent root action and worm sorting. Heavily disturbed, frequent metal, glass, drain fragments. Also contains frequent small – medium sub rounded and rounded pebbles. Overlies 202. As 101?	0-0.25-0.45m
202	Subsoil	Medium orange/brown compact clayey silt with worm sorting and root action present in upper 0.10m. Contains frequent small – medium sub rounded and rounded stones and pebbles. Below 201.	0.25-.0.50m+
204	Natural	Pinkish brown silty clay. Very compact and cohesive. Rare inclusions of small round pebbles. Clear definition between 203 and 204. Below 202.	0.50 -1.50+

**Trench 3**

Site area: Marsh Farm topsoil strip

Orientation: N-S-E-W

## Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
301	Topsoil	Mid brown silty clay loam with frequent root action and worm sorting. Contains frequent small – medium sub rounded and rounded pebbles. Overlies 302.	0-0.20-0.40m
302	Subsoil	Med-light orange/brown moderately compact clayey sand with worm sorting and root action present in upper 0.10m. Contains occasional small – medium sub rounded and rounded pebbles. Below 301.	0.20-0.40m+

**Trench 4**

Site area: Homs Road Car Park

Orientation: W-E

## Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
401	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown fine loose sandy silt with frequent root action and worm sorting. Contains frequent small – medium sub rounded and rounded pebbles. Also contains rare glass bottle and ceramic fragments.	0-0.55m+

### Trench 5

Site area: Rising shaft Homs Road Car Park

Orientation: W-E

#### Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
501	Tarmac	Overlies 502.	0-0.60m
502	Made Ground	Dark brown fine loose sandy silt with frequent root action and worm sorting. Contains frequent small – medium sub rounded and rounded pebbles. Also contains frequent glass bottle, ceramic, metal and drain fragments. Overlies 503.	0.60-1.60m
503	Natural	Medium orange brown very compact clayey silt. With frequent rounded sub rounded small to large stones. Below 502	1.60+

### Trench 6

Site area: Rudhall Brook channel enlarging

Orientation: W-E

#### Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
601	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown fine soft sandy silt with frequent root action and worm sorting. Contains frequent small – medium sub rounded and rounded pebbles. Overlies 602. As 701?	0-0.25m
602	Subsoil	Medium orange/brown compact silty clay with worm sorting and root action present throughout. Contains frequent small – medium sub rounded and rounded stones and pebbles. Below 601.	0.25-0.60m+



**Trench 7**

Site area: Rudhall Brook channel enlarging

Orientation: NE-SW

## Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
701	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown fine soft sandy silt with frequent root action and worm sorting. Contains frequent small – medium sub rounded and rounded pebbles. Overlies 702. As 601?	0-0.25m
702	Subsoil	Medium orange/brown compact silty clay with worm sorting and root action present throughout. Contains frequent small – medium sub rounded and rounded stones and pebbles. Below 701.	0.25-0.60m+

**Trench 8**

Site area: Chatterly Brook channel enlarging

Orientation: NE-SW

## Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
801	Made ground	Mid-dark brown friable sandy silt with frequent root action and worm sorting. Heavily disturbed. Contains metal, glass, drain fragments.	0-1m

**Trench 9**

Site area: Spillway

Orientation: NE-SW

## Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
901	Topsoil	Mid brown silty clay loam. Moderately compact. Rare medium sub angular stones. Root activity. Above 902.	0-0.25m
902	Subsoil	Moderately compact and cohesive, light brown silty clay with a small amount of fine sand. Occasional manganese flecks/small lumps. Below 901.	0.25-0.60m+

## Discussion

Trenches 1, 2, 6 and 7 were dug as part of the Rudhall Brook channel enlargement and not all reached natural deposits. Trench 2 revealed mid-dark brown soft sandy silt topsoil (201), recorded as 0.25m deep. Below the topsoil the observed subsoil did not suggest any archaeological features or deposits. The subsoil overlay and sealed the natural matrix. The underlying natural deposit 203 comprised pinkish brown sandy clay and was recorded at about 0.50m below the ground surface.

Trench 1 was dug to a depth of 0.50m and did not reach natural. Deposit 101 was of friable dark brown silty clay, 0.25m deep. The boundary between context 101 and 102 was irregular and diffuse. 102 comprised of reddish brown friable silty clay and appeared to be made ground containing modern pottery, metal and ceramic.

Trench 6 and 7 were dug on the south of the Rudhall Brook and were excavated into the bank of the brook. Topsoil 601 was of mid-dark brown fine sandy silt similar to 701. The subsoil within Trench 6 was compact orangey brown silty clay. Trenches 6 and 7 were dug to a depth of 0.60m and did not reach natural.

Trenches 3 and 9 were excavated at Marsh Farm as part of the spillway and in advance of the floodwall bund. A tracked excavator fitted with large toothed buckets carried out the excavation of Trench 3. This produced uneven surfaces, however, it was still possible to identify the topsoil (301) and subsoil (302). Trench 9 was dug to a depth of 0.80m and did not reach natural. Trenches 4 and 5 were dug within Homs Road Car Park and revealed deposits similar to those found during the boreholes in 1998 (Hunter 1998). Within Trench 5 made ground was revealed directly under the tarmac and above the natural matrix. The made ground consisted primarily of redeposited soils and also contained varying proportions of brick, glass, rubble, concrete, and assorted refuse.

Trench 8 was excavated following the line of the existing services to replace the culvert at Chatterley Brook. The deposit excavated was up to 4m deep, of made ground and consisted of redeposited soils and contained brick, metal and building rubble.

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## Conclusions

No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts of prehistoric, Roman or medieval date were identified during the watching brief.

The deposits within Trenches 4 and 5 dug at Homs Road Car Park were similar to those found during the boreholes in 1998 (Hunter 1998). The made ground recorded is similar to that described in the report and identified as a late 19<sup>th</sup> century rubbish dump. The area of the site at Rudhall Brook had been subject to use as a meadow, dump and car park. Therefore it may be surmised that such activity resulted in the disturbance of the medieval and earlier levels, if indeed they were previously present. Nevertheless, the possibility remains that archaeological deposits survive in areas of the site not disturbed by the Rudhall Brook channel enlargement.

The likelihood of surviving archaeological deposits being affected by the proposed work at Chatterley Brook was not considered to be high, particularly as much of culvert was to replace existing services. The deposit within Trench 8 revealed that, when the original services were laid at Chatterley Brook, the ground level nearest the river was raised up by several meters, using building rubble and a mixture of original and imported topsoil. It is possible this embankment was altered when the area was in use for the Hereford Ross, and Gloucester Railway in 1855.

The deposit within the falling shaft probably related to the back fill of the millpond. All other deposits beneath this were of geological origin, no deposits or features associated with a millpond were revealed and no waterlogged deposits were observed. If archaeological deposits were previously present, it is possible that they had been severely truncated or destroyed by the millpond.

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## 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 Herefordshire Council for flood alleviation works at Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire (NGR ref SO 596 244 - SO 611 248). No significant archaeological features, layers, horizons, structures, or archaeological artefacts were identified during the project.*

*The area of the site at Rudhall Brook had been subject to use as a meadow, dump and car park. Therefore it maybe surmised that such activity resulted in the disturbance of the medieval and earlier levels, if indeed they were previously present. Nevertheless, the possibility remains that archaeological deposits survive in areas of the site not disturbed by the Rudhall Brook channel enlargement.*

*Excavation for the Chatterly Brook channel enlargement revealed that, when the original culvert was laid at Chatterley Brook, the ground level nearest the river was raised by up by several metres, using building rubble and a mixture of original and imported topsoil. It is possible this embankment was altered when the area was in use for the Hereford Ross and Gloucester Railway in 1855.*

*A deposit within the falling shaft probably related to the back fill of the millpond. All other deposits beneath this were of geological origin, no deposits or features associated with a millpond were revealed and no waterlogged deposits were observed. If archaeological deposits were previously present, it is possible that they had been severely truncated or destroyed by the millpond.*

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## Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Will Fracknall and Chris Gilmartin (Owen Williams), Mr Wayne Musa (Edmund Nuttall Ltd), Julian Cotton (Herefordshire Archaeology, Herefordshire Council), and Lucie Dingwall (SMR Officer, Herefordshire Archaeology).

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## Personnel

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by Elizabeth A Plane. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Simon Woodiwiss. Fieldwork was undertaken by Elizabeth A Plane, Simon Sworn, Stephen Potten, Angus Crawford and Adam Lee. Illustration was by Carolyn Hunt.

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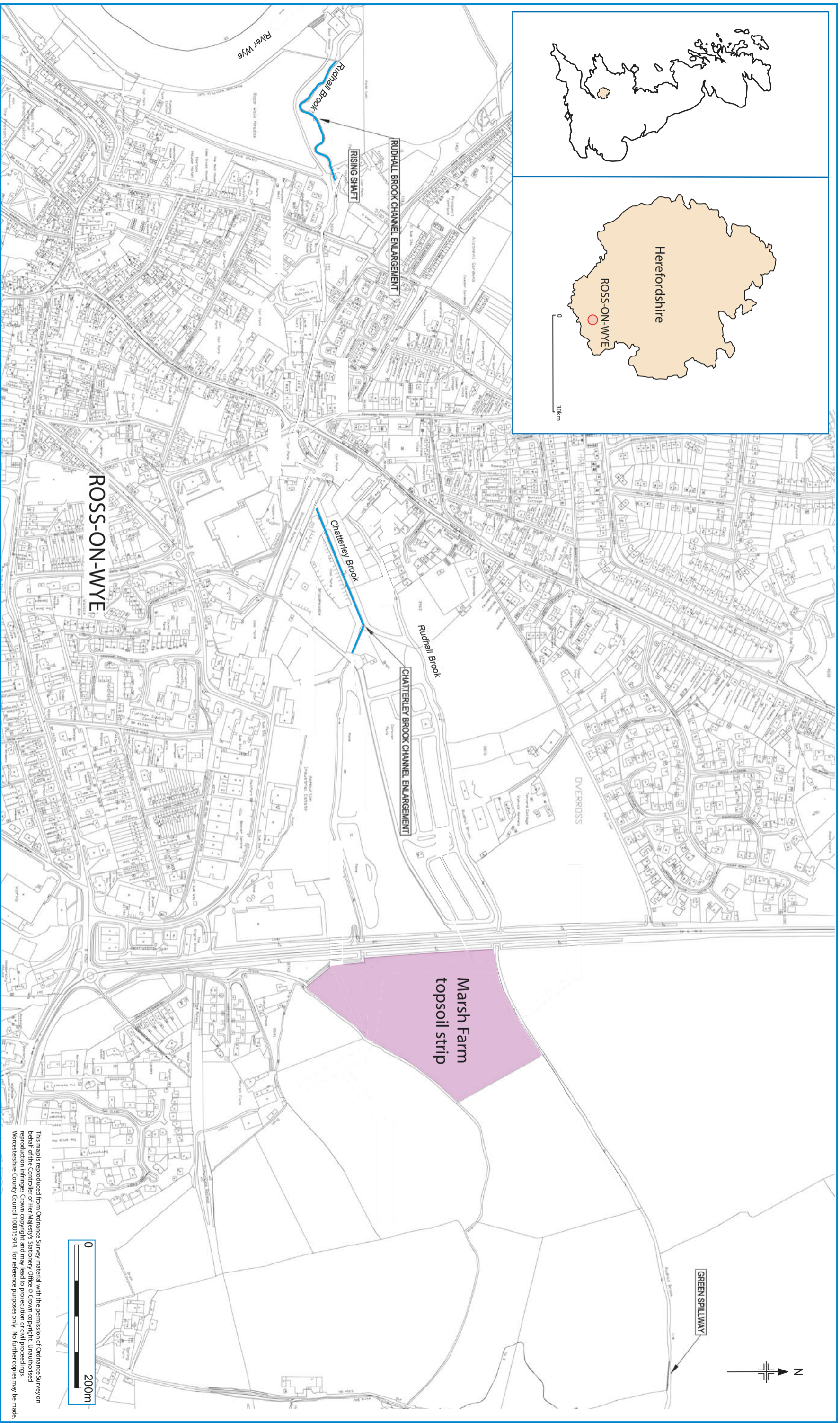
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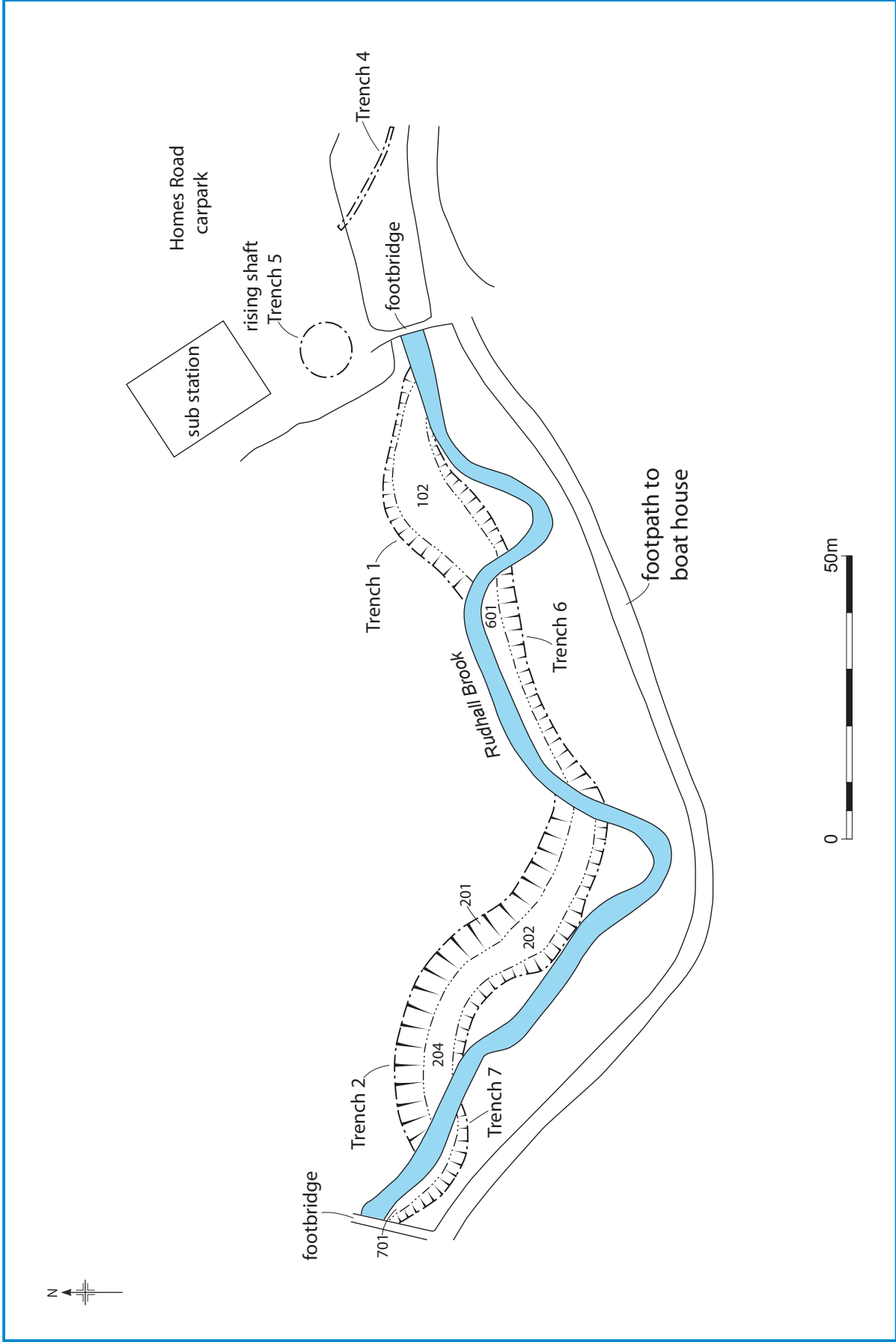
## **Figures**



Location plan (based upon Halcrow Dwg No. KW/HRFA/226)

Figure 1

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Detail of Rudhall Brook channel

Figure 2

## Plates



*Plate 1: Excavation of Trench 1, looking north.*



*Plate 2: Trench 2, looking east.*





*Plate 3: Trench 2, looking east.*



*Plate 4: Trench 2 looking south.*



*Plate 5: Trench 6 fully excavated, looking west.*



*Plate 6: Trench 6, looking east.*



*Plate 7: Trench 7, looking east*



*Plate 8: Part of Trench 4 within Homs Road Car Park, looking north.*



*Plate 9: Trench 4 looking south-east*



*Plate 10: Excavation of the rising shaft, Trench 5, looking east.*



*Plate 11: Excavation of the rising shaft, Trench 5, looking south*



*Plate 12: Soil stripping at Marsh Farm, Trench 3, looking north-east.*



*Plate 13: Section of Chatterly Brook channel enlargement, Trench 8, looking east.*



*Plate 14: Trench 8 for the Chatterly Brook channel enlargement, looking south-west.*



*Plate 15: Excavation using box shuttering for the Chatterly Brook channel enlargement.*



*Plate 16: Trench 9, looking west.*



*Plate 17: Section of Trench 9, looking north.*



## **Appendix 1 Technical information**

### **The archive**

The archive consists of:

- 1 Context records AS1
- 17 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 3 Photographic records AS3
- 1 Abbreviated context records AS40
- 10 Trench Record Sheets
- 1 Computer disk

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Herefordshire Council,  
PO Box 144,  
Hereford  
HR1 2YH  
Tel 01432 383350