

Archaeological evaluation at Perdiswell Leisure Centre, Worcester, Worcestershire



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An archaeological evaluation at Perdiswell Leisure Centre, Worcester

Andrew Walsh

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Perdiswell Leisure Centre (NGR SO 8560 5717). It was commissioned by Mr P Weston (the Client), whose client intends to construct a swimming pool and additional car parking for which outline planning permission has been granted. A number of archaeological sites have been recorded from the wider vicinity of the proposed development site, including a Bronze Age ring ditch to the north west of the site and a possible Roman settlement to the north.

Nine trenches were excavated across the proposed development site which comprised open ground and a tarmac car park to the south existing leisure centre buildings. A possible ditch terminus was exposed, orientated approximately north to south, in a trench to the north west of the site. No finds were recovered from this feature and no evidence of any other archaeological activity was identified during the evaluation.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Perdiswell Leisure Centre (NGR SO 8560 5717). It was commissioned by Mr P Weston (the Client), whose client intends to construct a swimming pool and additional car parking for which a planning application has been submitted to Worcester City Council and outline permission granted (reference P12M0470). The proposed development site was considered to include heritage assets and potential heritage assets, the significance of which may have been affected by the application.

The project conforms to a brief issued by the Curator (Worcester City Council; WCC 2014) and a written scheme of investigation produced by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2015). The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014) and the *Statement of standards and practices appropriate for archaeological fieldwork in Worcester* (Worcester City Council 1999). The event reference for this project, given by the HER is WCM102086.

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

The fieldwork was led by Andrew Walsh BSc MSc FSA Scot ACIfA who joined WA in 2013 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004. He was assisted in the field by Graham Arnold BA MSc and Tim Cornah BA. The report preparation was led by Andrew Walsh and the project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers BA MSc. Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt BSc MCIfA.

3.1 Documentary research

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

3.2 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed written scheme of investigation was been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2015). It was proposed that eight trenches would be excavated, although Trench 4 was split (4A and 4B) due to the presence of a gravel track. The trenches, which amounted to an area of 210m², were excavated across the proposed site and represented c 4% of the proposed swimming pool site (Area A) and c 1.5% of the proposed car park site (Area B). The location of the trenches is illustrated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 6 tonne 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 reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

The fieldwork was undertaken between 16 and 20 February 2015 and the site code is WCM102086.

3.3 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.

3.4 Artefact methodology

3.4.1 Artefact recovery policy

Artefact recovery was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no artefacts were identified on site.

3.5 Environmental archaeology methodology

3.5.1 Sampling policy

Sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

3.5.2 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 proposed development site occupies two areas of land immediately south of Perdiswell Leisure Centre. Area A mostly comprised of a tarmaced car park used for the adjacent golf course and a small amount of landscaped grounds. Area B was comprised of an area of the ground located between the main Leisure Centre car park and the Worcester and Birmingham Canal. Both sites were generally flat, lying at a height of 31m and 30m above Ordnance Datum (AOD) respectively, although some modern banks were present in both areas. The underlying geology is mapped as Sidmouth Mudstone Formation, overlain by superficial deposits of sand and gravel of the Holt Heath Member (BGS 2015).

No archaeological sites are recorded by the HER on the proposed development site. However the site is located in a landscape which has been exploited since the prehistoric period. A Neolithic polished flint axe (WCM100687) was found 150m south of the site in Bilford Pit (now Bilford Household Recycling Centre) during the 1950s. Six hundred metres north-west of the site a middle Bronze Age ring ditch (WCM91009) was excavated during the construction of Perdiswell Park and Ride station. Roman activity has also been identified as cropmarks on aerial photographs 550m (WCM91158) to 700m (WCM91010) north of the proposed site and the remains of a medieval settlement are recorded 500m north-west of the site (WCM91133). The site is also located adjacent to the Worcester and Birmingham Canal Conservation Area, and on the site of the former Perdiswell Airfield (WCM91045).

4.2 Current land-use

The site is currently car parking and grounds associated with Perdiswell Leisure Centre.

5 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figure 2-3. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

The underlying natural deposit in Trenches 1 to 4 was a light brown orange sand with irregular patches of gravel, lying at a depth of 0.45m to 0.7m. In Trenches 5-8 the natural strata was an orangey brown gravelly sand.

5.1.2 Phase 2: Undated deposits

A possible ditch terminus was identified in Trench 1. It measured 1.29m in width and 0.58m deep although the eastern edge of the feature was indistinct from the natural sand. The ditch was filled by four deposits which did not yield any finds.

A tree bowl (403) was identified in Trench 4A.

5.1.3 Phase 3: modern deposits

In all the trenches the earlier deposits were sealed by a mid brown silty sand subsoil measuring 0.18m to 0.25m in depth. In Trenches 1, 2, 4A, 4B, and 5 to 7 this was overlaid by a dark brown sandy silt topsoil. In Trench 3 the subsoil was overlaid by the hardcore and tarmac of the existing car park, and in Trench 8 it was overlaid by a layer of tarmac which was sealed by topsoil.

6 Synthesis

Nine trenches were excavated across the site. One possible ditch feature was identified in Trench 1. It was orientated roughly north to south and measured approximately 0.6m in depth, although no finds were recovered from any of its fills. It may have had an agricultural function or is perhaps a natural feature. No boundary is depicted here on historic Ordnance Survey maps. No other archaeological features, deposits or finds were identified during the evaluation.

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 evaluation was undertaken at Perdiswell Leisure Centre (NGR SO 8560 5717). It was commissioned by Mr P Weston (the Client), whose client intends to construct a swimming pool and additional car parking for which outline planning permission has been granted. A number of archaeological sites have been recorded from the wider vicinity of the proposed development site, including a Bronze Age ring ditch to the north west of the site and a possible Roman settlement to the north.

Nine trenches were excavated across the proposed development site which comprised open ground and a tarmac car park to the south existing leisure centre buildings. A possible ditch terminus was exposed, orientated approximately north to south, in a trench to the north west of the site. No finds were recovered from this feature and no evidence of any other archaeological activity was identified during the evaluation.

8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project; Mr P Weston for commissioning the project, James Dinn (Worcester City Council) for his advice, and the staff and users of Perdiswell Leisure Centre for their help and patience during the works

9 Bibliography

BGS 2015 *Geology of Britain Viewer*, <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>, British Geological Survey, accessed February 2015

CIfA 2014 *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

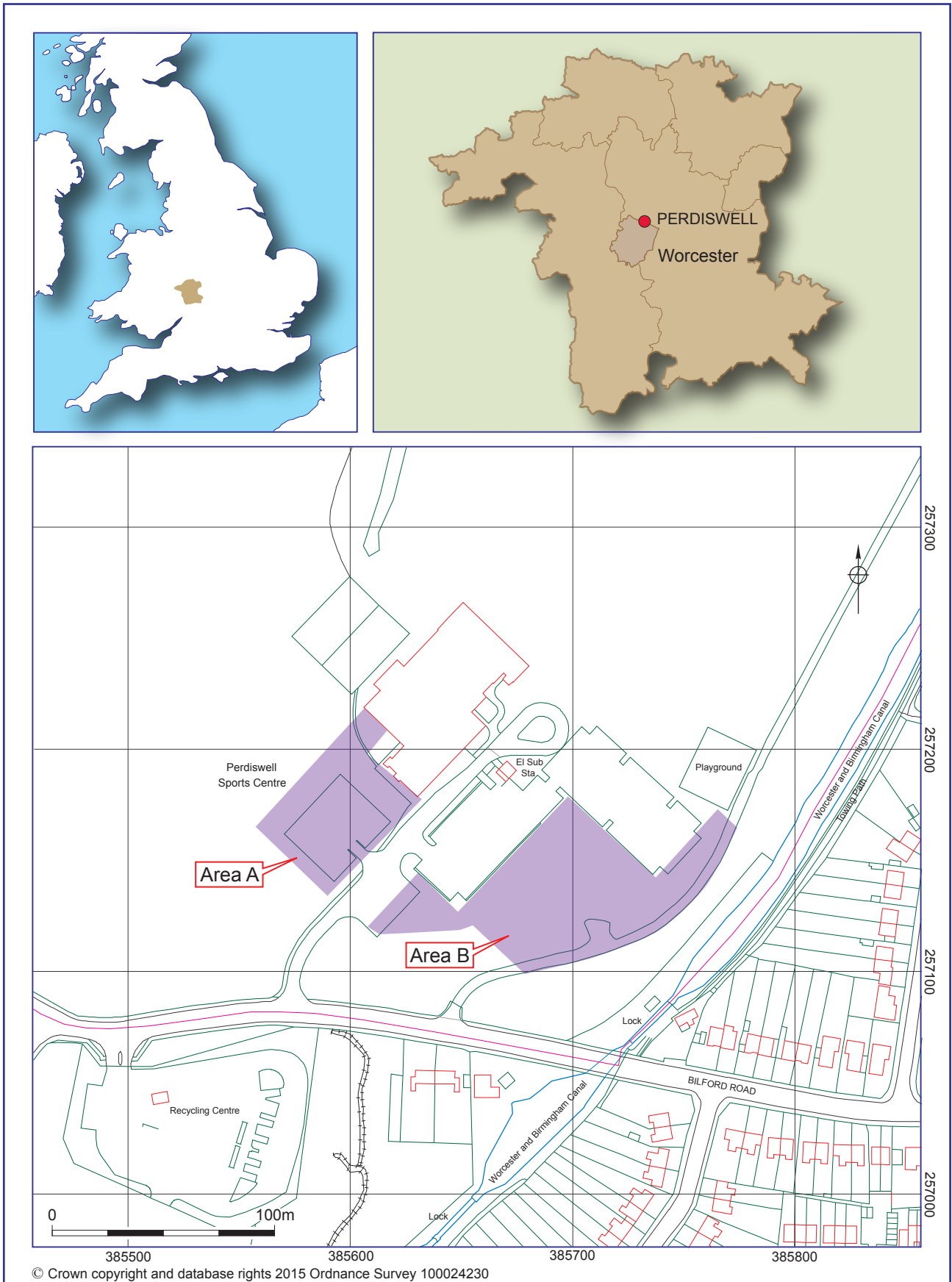
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WCC 2014 *Brief for an archaeological field evaluation, Perdiswell Sports Centre, Bilford Road, Worcester*, Worcester City Council Development Management (Archaeology) dated 7 January 2014

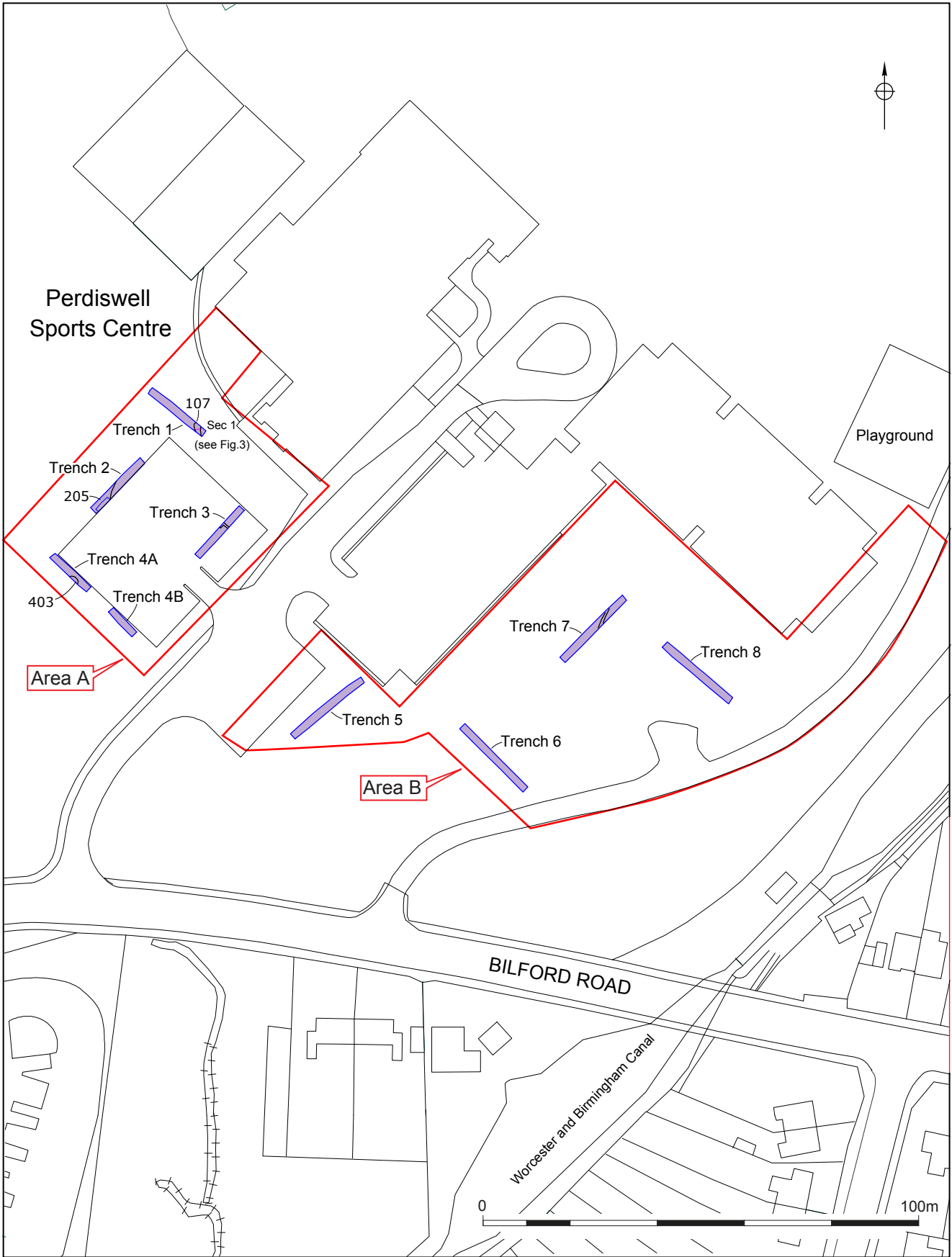
WCC1999 *Statement of standards and practices appropriate for archaeological fieldwork in Worcester*, Appendix 3 in Supplementary Planning Guidance Number 8: Archaeology and Development, Worcester City Council, document revised June 1999

Figures



Location of the site

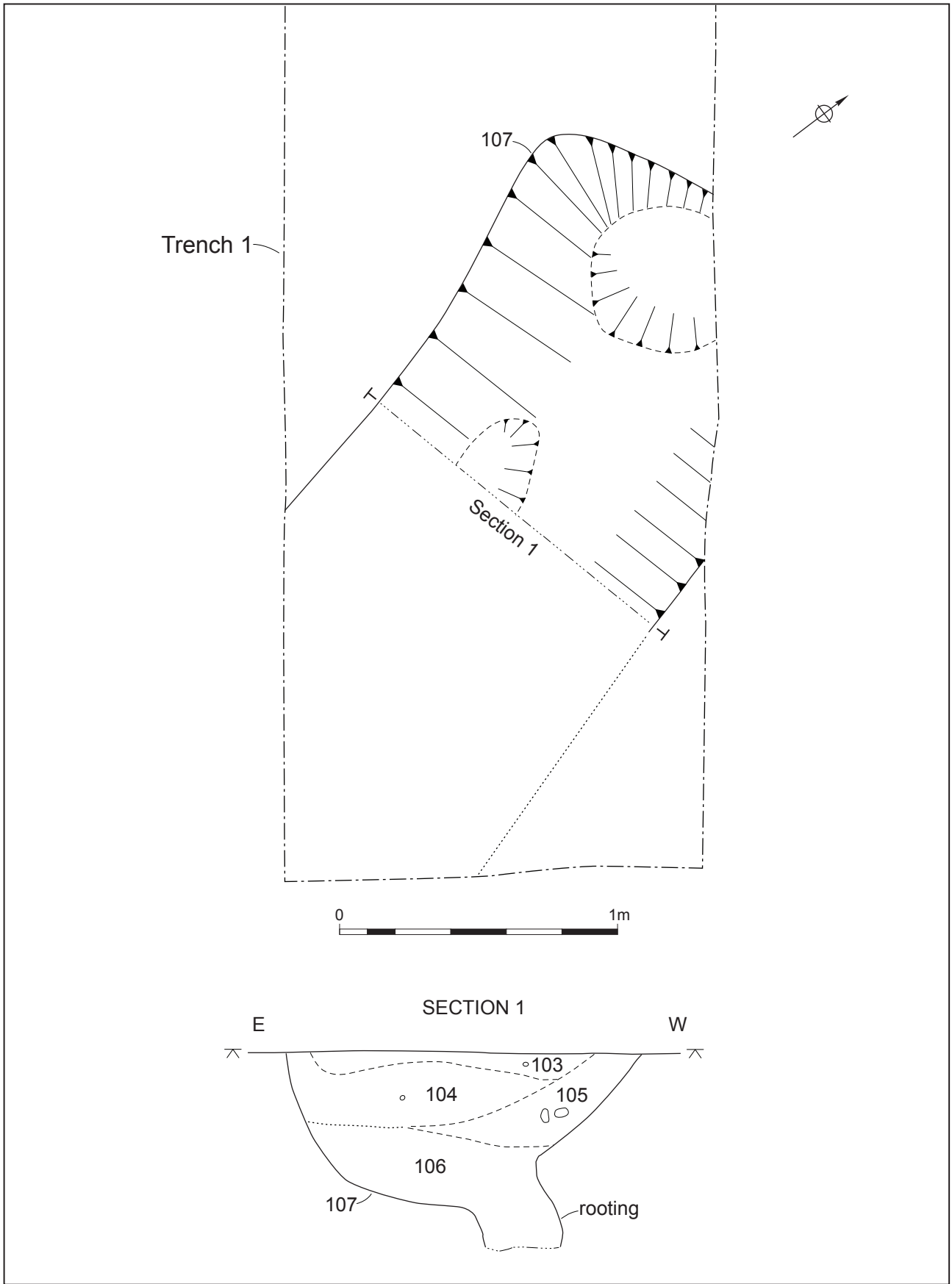
Figure 1



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Trench location plan

Figure 2



Plan and section of Ditch 107

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1: Feature 107. Photo looking south-east



Plate 2: Feature 107. Photo looking south

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Length: 15m Width: 1.5m Orientation: North-west to south-east

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
100	Topsoil	Layer	Friable mid greyish brown silty sand	0.35m	Friable mid greyish brown sandy silt with frequent sub-rounded pebbles and covered by a thin turf mat
101	Hardcore	Layer	Moderately Compact mid brownish orange silty sand	0.20m	Moderately compacted silty sand with moderate sub-rounded pebble inclusions. Hardcore for
102	Natural	Layer	Soft light brownish orange sand		Orange sand with occasional small rounded pebbles and latches of gravels. Natural substrate.
103	Ditch	Fill	Loose mid grey sand	0.11m	Top fill of ditch [107].
104	Ditch	Fill	Loose mid yellowish grey sand	0.28m	Sand fill of ditch [107].
105	Ditch	Fill	Soft mid grey sandy silt	0.36m	Fill of ditch [107]. Contained one piece of burnt stone.
106	Ditch	Fill	Soft mid yellowish grey sand	0.31m	Base fill of ditch [107].
107	Ditch	Cut		0.58m	Possible ditch terminus of undeterminate date and function.

Trench 2

Length: 15m Width: 1.5m Orientation: North-east to south-west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
200	Topsoil	Layer	Firm dark brown sandy silt	0.50m	Firm dark brown sandy silt.
201	Subsoil	Layer	Firm mid brown silty sand	0.18m	Firm mid brown silty sand with frequent rounded pebbles and occasional rounded cobbles.
202	Natural	Layer	Firm light brownish orange sand	0.18m +	Light brown orange sand with occasional, poorly sorted, pebbles.
203	Tarmac	Layer			Tarmac surface.
204	Hardcore	Layer			Hardcore below tarmac (203)
205	Layer	Layer			Large deposit seen within the Southwest end of trench 2.

Trench 3

Length: 15m Width: 1.5m Orientation: North-east to south-west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
300	Tarmac	Layer		0.10m	Car park surface.
301	Hardcore	Layer		0.20m	Hardcore chippings for tarmac surface (300) with a terram mat at the interface between (301)
302	Subsoil	Layer	Firm mid brown silty sand	0.40m	Firm mid brown silty sand with occasional sub-rounded pebbles and occasional cobbles.
303	Natural	Layer	Firm light brownish orange silty sand	0.10m +	Natural sand substrate.

Trench 4A

Length: 12m Width: 1.5m Orientation: North-west to south-east

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
400	Topsoil	Layer	Firm dark brown sandy silt	0.70m	Firm dark brown sandy silt.
401	Subsoil	Layer	Firm mid brown sandy silt	0.20m	Firm mid brown silty sand with frequent rounded pebbles.
402	Natural	Layer	Firm light brownish orange sand	0.05m +	Light brown orange sand with occasional but poorly sorted pebbles. Frequent root disturbance.
403	Tree bowl	Fill	Loose dark black charcoal		Remains of a tree throw. Filled with black humic sand material with fragments of coal, burnt wood and charcoal.

Trench 4B

Length: 8m Width: 1.5m Orientation: North-west to south-east

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
410	Topsoil	Layer	Firm dark brown sandy silt	0.50m	Firm dark brown sandy silt.
411	Subsoil	Layer	Firm mid brown silty sand	0.20m	Firm mid brown silty sand with frequent rounded pebbles.
412	Natural	Layer	Firm light brownish orange sand	0.10m	Light brown orange sand with occasional but poorly sorted pebbles. Frequent root disturbance.

Trench 5

Length: 20m Width: 1.5m Orientation: North-east to south-west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
500	Topsoil	Layer	Firm dark brown sandy silt	0.30m	Dark Brown sandy silt , firm with occasional sub-rounded gravels/pebbles.
501	Subsoil	Layer	Firm mid brown silty sand	0.25m	Firm mid brown silty sand with frequent rounded pebbles.
502	Natural	Layer	Firm brownish orange sand	0.15m	Firm brownish orange sand with frequent rounded pebbles and rare cobbles, well sorted.

Trench 6

Length: 20m Width: 1.5m Orientation: North-west to south-east

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
600	Topsoil	Layer	Firm dark brown sandy silt	0.20m	Dark brown sandy silt , firm with occasional sub-rounded gravels/pebbles.
601	Layer	Layer	Loose dark brown sand	0.80m	Sand and gravel mixed material. Redeposited topsoil.
602	Subsoil	Layer	Firm mid brown silty sand	0.37m	Firm mid brown silty sand with frequent rounded pebbles.
603	Natural	Layer	Firm mid orangey brown	0.20m +	Firm orange brown sand with frequent sub rounded pebbles.

Trench 7

Length: 20m Width: 1.5m Orientation: North-east to south-west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
700	Topsoil	Layer	Firm dark brown sandy silt	0.25m	Firm dark brown silty sand with occasional small sub rounded pebbles and frequent rooting.
701	Subsoil	Layer	Firm mid brown silty sand	0.25m	Firm mid brown silty sand with frequent rounded pebbles.
702	Natural	Layer	Firm orangey brown sand	0.10m +	Firm orange brown sand with frequent sub rounded pebbles.
703	Service	Cut			Service trench running N-S across the trench, backfilled with yellow sand.

Trench 8

Length: 20m

Width: 1.5m

Orientation: North-west to south-east

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
800	Topsoil	Layer		0.25m	Modern topsoil over former Tarmac surface (801)
801	Tarmac	Layer		0.10m	Former Tarmac surface, found below (800)
802	Topsoil	Layer	Firm dark brown silty sand	0.10m	Buried topsoil. Found below Tarmac surface (801)
803	Subsoil	Layer	Firm mid brown silty sand		Firm mid brown silty sand with frequent rounded pebbles.
804	Natural	Layer	Firm mid brown		Natural gravel substrate.

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code: WCM102086)

The archive consists of:

- 5 Context records AS1
- 4 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 91 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 1 Permatrace scale drawings AS34
- 9 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:

Worcestershire County Museum
Museums Worcestershire
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416
