

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING
BRIEF AT
SNOWHILL STW,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Simon Sworn

With a contribution by Alan Jacobs

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Project 2631
Report 1335
SHSTW05

Archaeological watching brief at Snowhill STW, Gloucestershire

Simon Sworn

Background information

<i>Client</i>	Severn Trent Water
<i>Site address</i>	Snowhill STW, Gloucestershire
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SP 4093 2339
<i>Archaeological curator</i>	Gloucestershire County Council
<i>Brief</i>	GCC 2004
<i>Project design</i>	HEAS 2004
<i>Project parameters</i>	IFA 1999

Previous archaeological work on the site

There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken on site.

Previous archaeological work on associated sites

The north Cotswolds area is well known for extensive prehistoric and Roman remains. The Snowhill area contains a number of important archaeological features, a group of badly damaged round barrows (scheduled ancient monument 301) are located on the lower slopes of a valley, overlooked by higher ground, 0.5km to the south-west of the village. One of these barrows contained the richest assemblage of bronze and stone artefacts from outside the Wessex heartland (Ellison 1984; Darvill 1987). Although there was no known archaeology present along the line of the pipeline, this locality has seen no intensive previous archaeological survey. The archaeological watching brief was therefore carried out to mitigate any potential disturbance along the area through open country to the north and west of Snowhill. Other work along the Broadway Road, and in the existing sewage works was considered to have no archaeological impact.

Geology and topography

The route for the new pipeline runs across undulating countryside on the western slopes of Snowhill. The natural geology consists of fragmented bedded limestone with soil material in the joints, overlain by clay loam soils of the Elmton series (Beard *et al* 1986).

Aims

The aim of the archaeological watching brief was to observe areas of ground disturbance associated with the new sewer pipeline between the entrance of Piper's Grove Farm and the present Snowhill sewage treatment works. The observations were carried out in order to record any archaeological deposits and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type.

Methods

General specification for fieldwork	CAS 1995
Sources consulted	Sources cited by the SMR 1 st Edition OS Map 1891
Dates of fieldwork	6 th – 13 th April 2005
Area of site	c 4000m ² . Indicated on Fig 2
Dimensions of excavated areas observed	length 500m width 8m depth 0.4m

Statement of confidence

Observation of the topsoil stripping for a new haul road was undertaken continually during and after machine excavation. Excavation was undertaken using a 360 degree tracked excavator using a 1.6m toothless bucket to a depth of 0.40m. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe any well-differentiated archaeological deposits. Access to the trenches was possible throughout. Selected areas were cleaned by hand to confirm the depth and nature of the deposits present. All artefacts from the area of recording were retrieved by hand and retained in accordance with the service manual (CAS 1995 as amended). Access to, and visibility of the deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

Deposit description

Context	Type Colour Texture	Description	Date (<i>tpq</i>)	Interpretation	Depth (below ground level)
100	Dark brown friable clay loam	Occasional sub-angular limestone fragments and charcoal flecks	Modern	Topsoil	0-0.30m
101	Mid brown clayey silt	Frequent limestone fragments		Subsoil	0.30- 0.35m
102	Fragmented limestone	Frequent clay loam soil		Natural	0.25m+
103	Sub angular limestone blocks	Frequent silty loam soil and turf	18 th C	Collapsed dry- stone wall	0-0.20m

Artefact analysis (by Alan Jacobs)

Artefact recovery policy

All artefacts from the area of salvage recording were retrieved by hand and retained in accordance with the service manual (CAS 1995 as amended).

Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined and a primary record was made on a Microsoft Access 2000 database. Artefacts were identified, quantified and dated and a *terminus post quem* date produced for each stratified context. Pottery was examined under x20 magnification and recorded by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by the service (Hurst and Rees 1992).

Artefactual analysis

The pottery assemblage retrieved from the excavated area consisted of just six sherds of pottery weighing 21g, in addition fragments of tile and glass were recovered. The group came from two contexts that could be dated from the post-medieval period onwards (see Table 1). Level of preservation was generally fair with the majority of sherds displaying only moderate levels of abrasion.

Material	Total	Weight (g)	Context
Post-medieval pottery	1	9	103
Modern pottery	5	12	100
Tile	1	3	100
Glass	1	14	100
Total	8	38	

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

Discussion of the pottery

All sherds have been grouped and quantified according to fabric type (see Table 2). No diagnostic form sherds were present that would allow for closer dating, the sherds were therefore, only datable by fabric type to the general period or production span. Where mentioned, all specific forms are referenced to the type series within the report for Deansway, Worcester (Bryant 2004).

The discussion below is a summary of the finds and associated location or contexts by period. Where possible, *terminus post quem* dates have been allocated and the importance of individual finds commented upon as necessary.

Fabric number	Fabric name	Total sherds	Weight (g)
91	Post-medieval buff ware	1	9
83	Porcelain	1	8
85	Modern stone china	4	4

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric

A single sherd of post-medieval pottery was recovered from a dry stone wall (context 103), this was most probably a drinking vessel which dated from the 18th century. The remaining material came from the topsoil (context 100) and dated from the 19th-20th century. The sherds were too small to define form beyond that of a porcelain saucer (fabric 83). Other finds consisted of only a single fragment of modern brick and a shard of abraded brown bottle glass, both were of modern 19th-20th century date.

Significance

The assemblage is too small to have any significance. Only the context of the dry stone wall (103) can be implied by the single sherd of post-medieval pottery. The rest of the material dates to the 19th-20th century, representing very residual material in this area. No earlier archaeological activity is indicated.

Discussion

After the removal of topsoil and subsoil the underlying deposits were clearly exposed and observed to fulfil the requirements of the brief. There were clearly no archaeological structures, features or deposits present within any of the three fields (except the collapsed drystone wall, see below). The depth of the topsoil was invariably between 0.20-0.30m. In between the topsoil and the natural was a subsoil layer, roughly 0.05-0.10m deep.

The lack of artefactual evidence for any occupation within the recovered finds suggests that there was no archaeological activity present on the site or within the immediate vicinity.

A single fragment of 18th century pottery was found during the removal of a collapsed dry-stone wall (context 103; Plate 4), marking the boundary between field 2 and field 3. The pottery fragment came from an unsecured context that may date either the wall's construction or subsequent collapse,

though it would appear that the collapse of the wall was likely to have happened sometime in the 20th century.

Conclusions

The construction of the new pipeline appears not to have disturbed any buried archaeological remains. The absence of any archaeological evidence within the extent of the watching brief implies that this area of land has always been used essentially for pasture or agricultural purposes.

The thin scattering of post-medieval pottery throughout the field is broadly consistent with a background scatter representing farming activity in the post-medieval and modern periods. The occupation associated with this activity would be located elsewhere. The artefactual material would have been moved into surrounding fields as a result of concentrating domestic rubbish in midden heaps, which are subsequently spread about the arable fields. This practice is authenticated historically for the medieval period (Astill and Grant 1988).

The watching brief along the length of the new haul road has concluded that there are no significant archaeological remains present within the observed areas of these three fields. The main area of potential archaeology possibly located to the south-west of the village, towards the site of the prehistoric burial mounds.

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 Severn Trent Water at Snowhill STW, Gloucestershire (NGR ref SP 40932339; SMR ref SHSTW05). The watching brief was conducted during the removal of topsoil and subsoil. The groundworks were observed, and revealed that there were no significant archaeological remains present. The examination of all recovered finds indicated that there is no evidence for significant on-site activity. All finds from post-medieval to modern period appear to be the result of manuring or the discard of general rubbish, implying a prolonged agricultural usage for this area. .

Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	4
Photographic records AS3	1
Digital photographs	91
Trench record sheet AS41	1
Drawings	1
Boxes of finds	1 (to be discarded)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Gloucester City Museum and Art
Gallery
Brunswick Road
Gloucester
GL1 1HP

telephone

01452 396131

Acknowledgements

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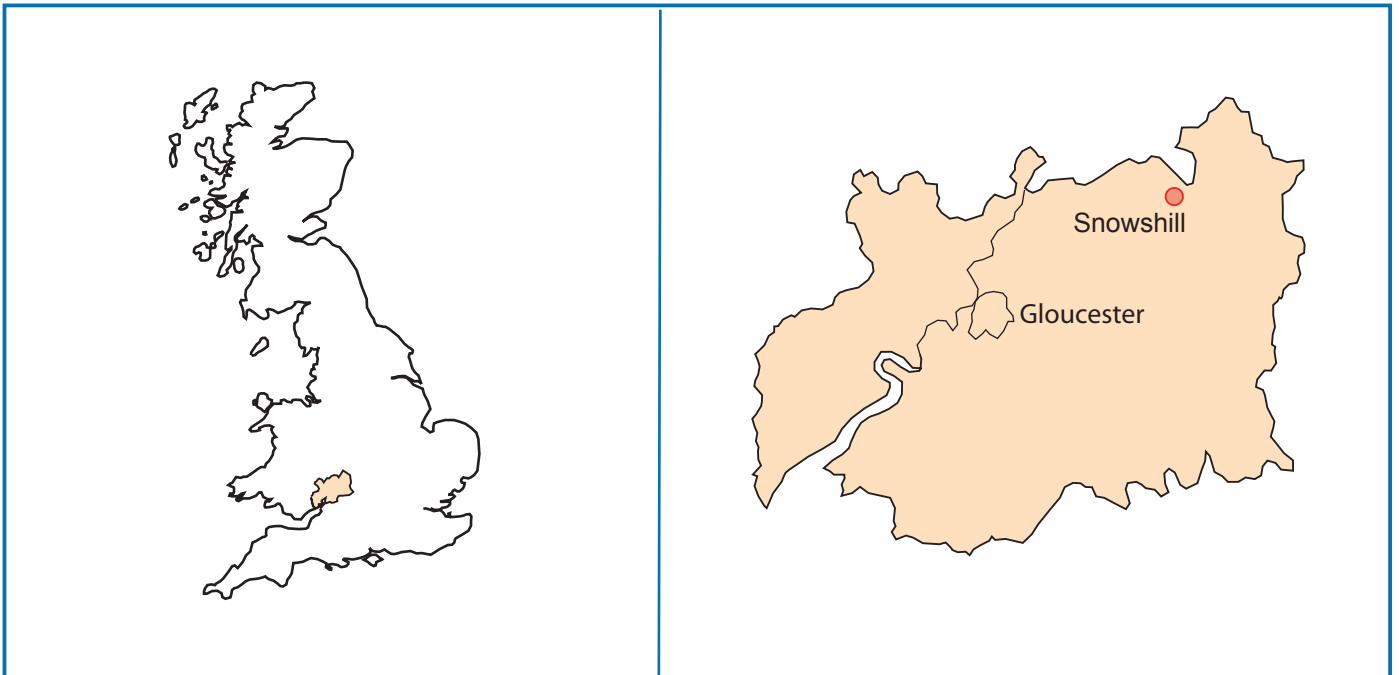
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Location of the site.

Figure 1

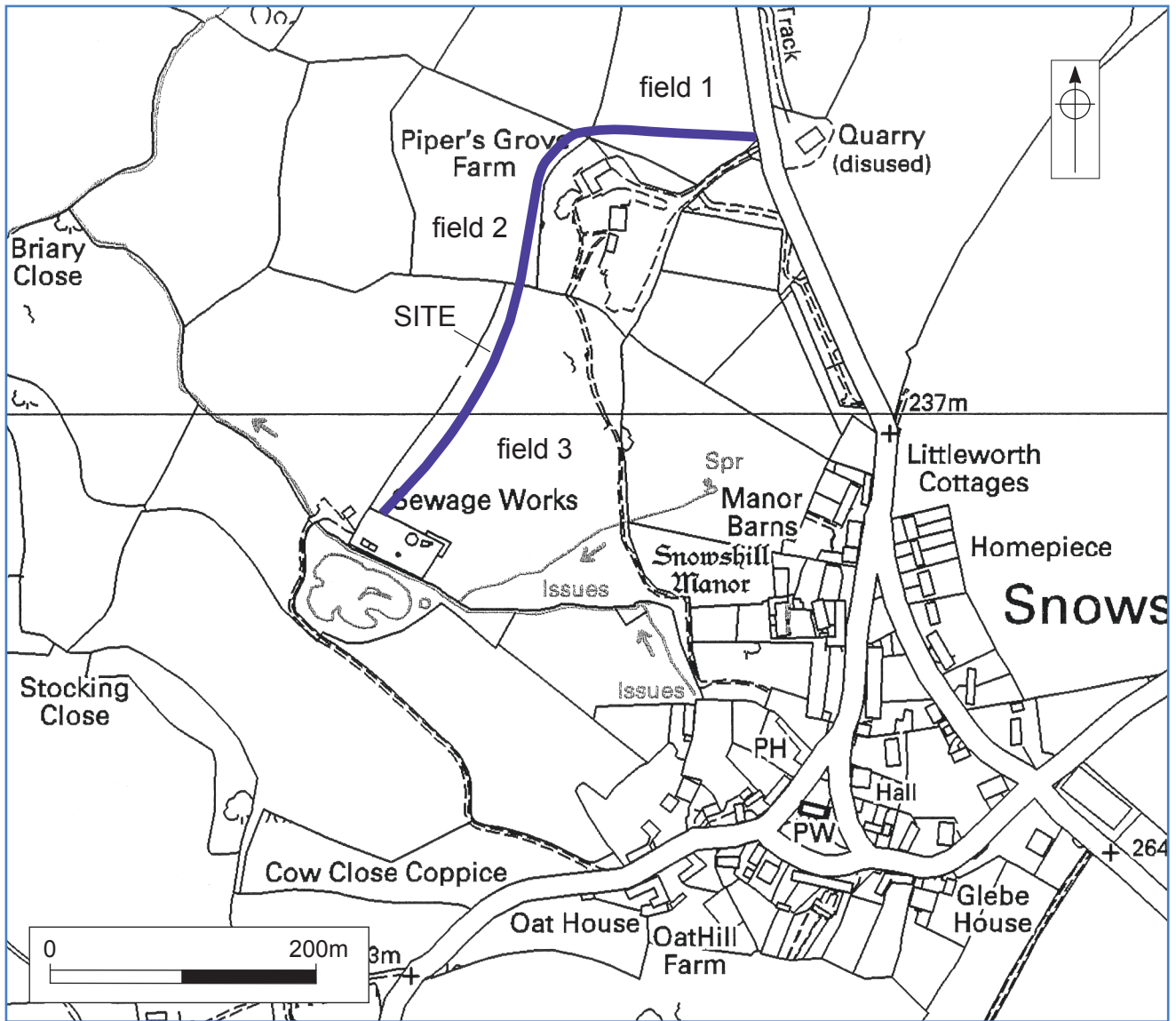


Figure 2: Location of trenches



Plate 1: Field 1 prior to excavation, facing west



Plate 2: Field 1 after excavation, facing west



Plate 3: Field 2 during soil removal, facing north



Plate 4: Collapsed dry-stone wall (103) between fields 2 and 3, facing northwest



Plate 5: Field 3 after soil removal, facing south