

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF AT
POWICK OLD BRIDGE,
POWICK,
WORCESTERSHIRE

Elizabeth A Curran

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

11 March 2010

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



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Project 3487
Report 1743
WSM 42106

Archaeological watching brief at Powick Old Bridge, Powick, Worcestershire

Elizabeth A Curran

Background information

<i>Client</i>	David Jones, Countryside Services Worcestershire County Council
<i>Site address</i>	Powick Old Bridge, Powick, Worcestershire SO 83512 52450
<i>National Grid reference</i>	WSM 42106
<i>Historic Environment Record reference</i>	Worcestershire County Council
<i>Planning authority reference</i>	n/a
<i>Project design</i>	HEAS 2009
<i>Project parameters</i>	IfA 2008

Archaeological and historical background

Powick Old Bridge (WSM 239, SAM 331) is a scheduled ancient monument and listed grade II structure, of 15th century sandstone construction (SAM 323; LB ref 153407 and 488981). The bridge has three segmental skew arches over the River Teme, with two further northern arches over the Laughern Brook. The latter arches date to the 17th century when the bridge underwent major alterations following damage during the Civil War. The bridge was the scene of the opening and closing battles of the Civil War, in 1642 and 1651. It was during the 1651 battle that the Royalists destroyed the northern part of the bridge (Brooks and Pevsner, 2007; EH 2010).

There has been no previous archaeological recording of the bridge, although recording of Powick Weir (WSM 8604) was carried out in 1996 (WSM 29642) and the report summarised what was known of the weir and associated sites, including Powick Old Bridge (Cook 1996).

The phases of construction of the weir were summarised as

'...dating from *c* 1795 to recent times. The earliest remains comprise the remains of two adjacent spillways of ashlar separated by the remains of an upstream cutwater and a downstream glacis surfaced with pitched stone and iron working hearth bases. The fragmentary remains of a spillweir are also present. The remains continue beneath 20th century repairs. The remaining phases comprise repairs carried out in both the 19th and 20th century' (Cook 1996, 1).

An archaeological watching brief (WSM 27044) was later carried out at Powick Weir prior to its demolition. Due to the nature of the deposits within the river little additional dating evidence or structural information was identified (Edwards and Cook 2000).

Powick Mills are located to the north of the Old Bridge, where evidence has been found for industrial activity from the 11th century onwards (WSM 8606).

Vehicular access over the River Teme is 0.1km down stream, at Powick New Bridge (WCM 91054); a grade II listed dating from 1836-7. The bridge is of Arley sandstone, with slight Gothic detail and has segmental arches with lattice spandrels, and iron railings (EH 2010, LB ref 153408).

An archaeological watching brief (WCM 101562) was undertaken at Powick New Bridge in 2009. Cast iron plates spanning the north, south and main arches were revealed and dated to the original 1837 structure. On the northeast side of the bridge an earlier line of kerbstones which defined the edge of an original footpath were recorded. In addition two brick culverts were exposed to the northeast of the bridge. The bricks dated to the 18th century and were different to those used within

the bridge construction suggesting the culverts were commissioned separately, possibly by the owner of the adjacent field to improve drainage (Vaughan and Hughes 2009).

Aims

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. The fieldwork was restricted to areas of ground disturbance associated with the development following the progress of the construction team.

Methods

General specification for fieldwork	CAS 1995
Sources consulted	Brooks and Pevsner 2007 Cook 1996 Edwards and Cook 2000 English Heritage Listed Buildings Online Vaughan and Hughes 2009
Date(s) of fieldwork	26 January 2010
Dimensions of excavated areas observed	Trenches 1-6 length 0.30m width 0.30m depth 0.82m max. Trench 7 length 1.90m width 0.30m depth 0.80m Trenches 8-9 length 0.30m width 0.30m depth 0.60m max.

Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent to carry out the works had been obtained from English Heritage (MM84502/RJ). No brief had been prepared but following consultation with the Historic Environment Planning Officer for Worcestershire County Council and English Heritage, it was agreed that a watching brief on groundworks was appropriate.

Access to or visibility of deposits

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken during and after hand excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, although any less clear may have not been identified.

Statement of confidence

Having undertaken the project the following comments may be made with regard to the methods adopted. Access to, and visibility of, deposits was restricted, due to the very narrow width of the trenches, although the excavated deposits were examined on site. However, it is considered with a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

Deposit description

Trenches where no archaeological features were present have been grouped together and only a general description of the deposits provided.

Trenches 1, 2, 4-9

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
--00	Topsoil	Fine mid dark blackish brown silty loam.	0.00-0.72m
--01	Subsoil	Light mid orangey brown silty loam	0.64-0.82m+

Trench 3

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
--00	Topsoil	Fine mid dark blackish brown silty loam.	0.00-0.72m
--01	Subsoil	Light mid orangey brown silty loam	0.66-0.82m
--02	Brick	Portion of red brick	0.70m+

Discussion and Conclusions

Nine trenches were excavated for the erection of new fence and a reverse kissing gate. The trenches recorded are shown in Figure 2, and Plates 3-8.

Trenches 1, 2 and 4 to 9 were excavated to a depth of 0.50-0.82m below ground surface. The topsoil (--00) was a mid dark blackish brown silty loam and was generally between 0.64m and 0.72m in depth. The subsoil (--01) was a homogeneous light mid orangey brown silty loam and lay to an indeterminate depth.

Trench 3 was excavated immediately to the south of Powick Old Bridge abutment. The topsoil and subsoil deposits were the same as those in the aforementioned trenches. Observed at 0.70m below the ground surface was a portion of red brick (Plate 4), considered to be part of a complete brick that continued beyond the edge of excavation. Due to the narrow window of observation it was not possible to determine whether the brick was part of the abutment or debris related to its construction.

The soil deposits observed were considered as of naturally occurring origin. None of the trenches was excavated into the natural matrix. No deposits of archaeological significance were observed. Nevertheless the possibility remains that archaeological deposits survive in areas of the site not disturbed by the present development or at a greater depth than the present trenches.

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 Worcestershire County Council, Countryside Services at Powick Old Bridge, Powick, Worcestershire (NGR SO 83512 52450, HER ref WSM 42106).

Nine trenches were excavated. The topsoil was observed to between 0.64m and 0.72m in depth, overlying subsoil to an indeterminate depth. At no point was the underlying natural matrix exposed. It was unclear if a red brick recorded at 0.70m depth adjacent to the south abutment of Powick Old Bridge was part of a structure or was construction debris.

The soil deposits were interpreted as of naturally occurring origin. No deposits of archaeological significance were observed. Nevertheless the possibility remains that archaeological deposits, survive in areas of the site not disturbed by the present development, or at a greater depth than the present trenches.

Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, David Jones (Countryside Access Team Leader, Worcestershire County Council), Tony Fleming (Inspector of Ancient Monuments, English Heritage) and Mike Glyde (Historic Environment Planning Officer, Worcestershire County Council).

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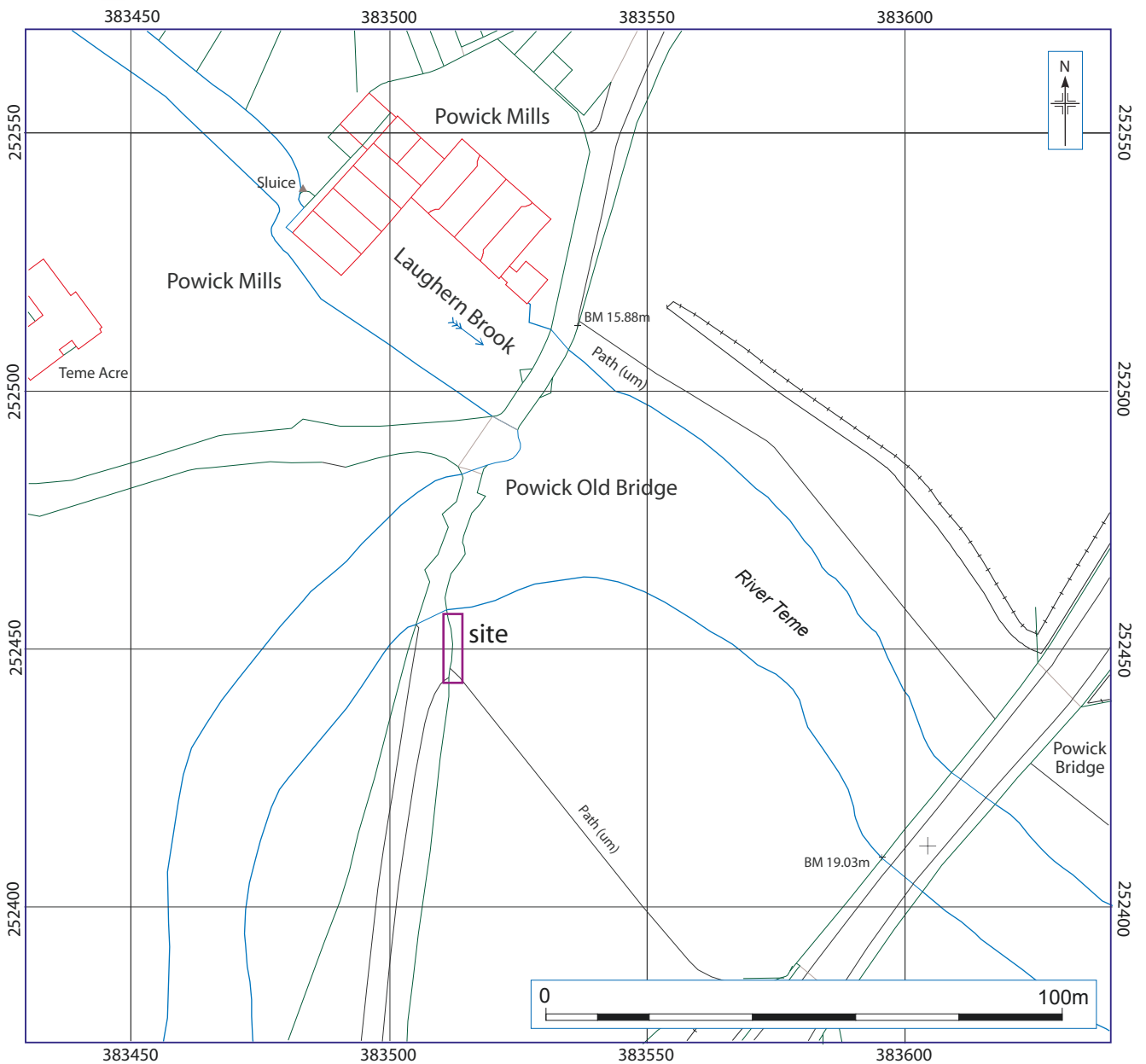
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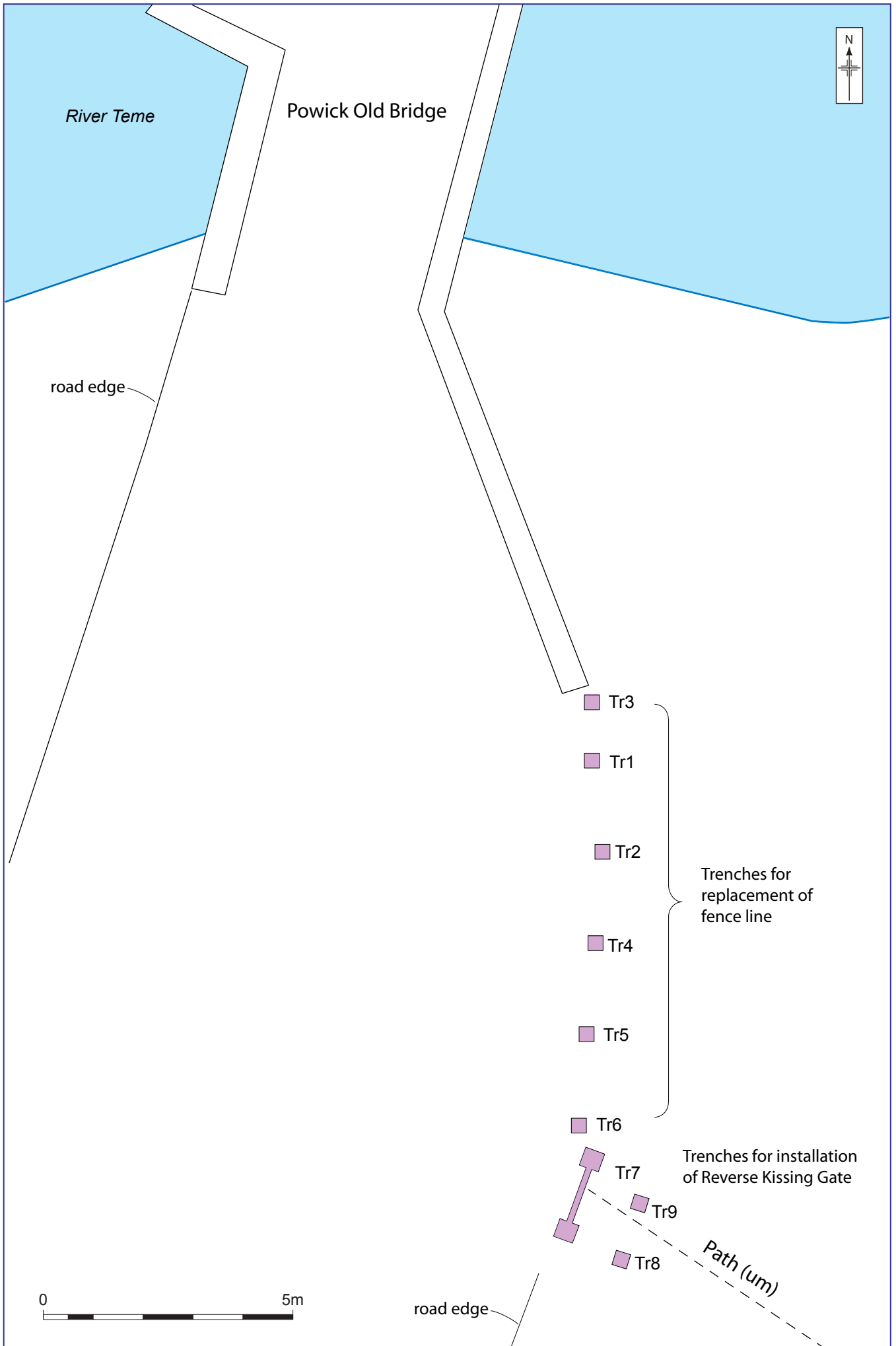
Figures



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Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench location plan (based upon dwg PW-514 by Dr D Jones)

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1: The site, facing northwest



Plate 2: The site, facing north



Plate 3: Trench 2 facing west



Plate 4: Trench 3, facing north



Plate 5: Trench 5, facing east



Plate 6: Trench 7, facing north



Plate 7: South facing section of Trench 7



Plate 8: Trench 8, facing east

Appendix 1 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

- 1 Drawing Number Catalogue Sheet AS4
- 1 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 39 digital photographs
- 9 Trench Record Sheets AS41
- 1 Computer disk

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

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