

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING  
BRIEF ON THE SEDGEBERROW  
FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME,  
SEDGEBERROW,  
WORCESTERSHIRE

Darren Miller

With a contribution by Alan J Jacobs

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Project 2660  
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WSM 34253



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## **Archaeological watching brief on the Sedgeberrow Flood Alleviation Scheme, Sedgeberrow, Worcestershire**

**Darren Miller**

**With a contribution by Alan J Jacobs**

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### **Background information**

#### *Planning background*

The watching brief was undertaken to mitigate the effects of flood alleviation works on archaeological remains, in line with district and county council policies regarding archaeology and development. The works affected the area around the road bridge across the river Isbourne on the north side of Sedgeberrow (Fig 1). Requirements for the watching brief were set out in a brief prepared by the Planning Advisory Section of the Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service (WHEAS 2004a). The Field Section of the Service prepared a proposal in response to the brief (WHEAS 2004b), and was commissioned to undertake the work.

#### *Archaeological and historical background*

The bridge at Sedgeberrow is a modern (mid 20<sup>th</sup> century) structure at an ancient bridging-point and ford. A ford is at this point is recorded in a charter of 768, making it one of the oldest documented fords in the county (WSM 31154; Hooke 1990, 78-9). Prehistoric and Roman activity is indicated by cropmarks in the field to the north (WSM 15997), and by excavated remains in the village to the south (WSM 23272; Buteux 2000). The village itself may have existed since the mid Anglo-Saxon period. More significantly in the present context, however, prehistoric artefacts of exceptional quality were found in the river-bed at Sedgeberrow during dredging works in 1827 (WSM 28760). The precise location of these finds was not recorded, although they suggest that this stretch of the river was a focus for ritual deposition.

#### *Aims*

The aim of the watching brief was to preserve by record any archaeological deposits exposed during the flood alleviation works (WHEAS 2004a, 3). More generally, as with all watching briefs, the aim was “to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site” (IFA 2001, 2).

#### *Methods*

Before the fieldwork started, existing information relating to the site was compiled and assessed. This included records from the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record, and other documentary sources held by the Service. The comprehensive nature of these sources made further research at the Worcestershire Record Office unnecessary.

The fieldwork took place between the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2005 and the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2005. All deposits exposed by the groundworks were observed, and where necessary cleaned and partially excavated by hand. Drawn, written, and photographic records were made according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995).

After the fieldwork, the artefacts were examined and recorded on a Microsoft Access 2000 database. Pottery was examined under x20 magnification and recorded by fabric type and form. Illustrations were prepared from original drawings using Adobe Illustrator. In the final analysis, the conclusions drawn from the various types of evidence were co-ordinated and synthesised.

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## Results

### *Stratigraphy*

Four trenches were recorded during the watching brief (Fig 2). Trench 1 (for a temporary service bridge) extended westwards from the north-west corner of the bridge. Trench 2 (a trial hole) was excavated in the river bed, at the north end of the east abutment. Trench 3 (for a new west abutment) extended from Trench 2 across the road, and Trench 4 (for a new retaining wall) was excavated along the west bank to the south. The exposed deposits are described in Table 1, and illustrated on Fig 2 and Plates 1-7.

<b>Trench number</b>	<b>Context number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>	<b>Date</b>
Trench 1	100	Dark brown silt loam with common small gravels	0-0.34m	Topsoil	Modern
	101	Dark brown silt loam with aggregates of blueish grey silty clay and common small gravels	0.34-0.70m	Made ground	Modern
	102	Light yellowish brown sand	0.70-0.74m	Lower fill of service trench?	Modern
	103	Mid reddish brown sand	0.74-0.76m	Lower fill of service trench?	Modern
	104	Mid brown silty clay with few small gravels	0.48-0.90m	Made ground?	Modern
	105	Dark brown sandy silt with common small gravels	0.76-0.91m	Former topsoil	Undated
	106	Mid brown silty clay with few small gravels	0.91-1.24m	Former subsoil	Undated
	107	Yellowish brown silty clay with few charcoal fragments and molluscs	1.24-1.96m+	Alluvium	Undated
Trench 2	108	Black silty sand with common stone rubble and brick fragments	0-0.87m	Fill of foundation trench for bridge	Modern
	109	Vertically-sided and flat-bottomed cut	0-0.87m	Foundation trench for bridge	Modern
	110	Blueish grey silty clay with few stone rubble, brick, and gravel inclusions	0-0.20m	Alluvium	Modern
	111	Yellowish brown sand and gravel	0.20-0.50m	Reworked fluvioglacial deposit	Modern
	112	Blueish grey silty clay with common wood fragments	0.50-0.58m	Alluvium	Undated
Trench 2	113	Brownish yellow sand	0.58-0.72m	Reworked fluvioglacial deposit	Undated



	114	Dark grey silty clay with common wood fragments	0.72-1.20m+	Alluvium	Undated
Trench 3	115	Tarmac and roadstone	0-0.70m	Surface	Modern
	116	Mid-dark brown clay silt with common brick and sandstone fragments	0.70-0.85m	Made ground	Modern
	117	Light greenish yellow silty clay	0.85m+	Alluvium	Undated
Trench 4	118	Mid brown clay silt with common roots and few gravels	c0-0.60m	Topsoil	Modern
	119	Mid reddish brown clay silt with common roots and few gravels	c0.60-1.30m	Subsoil	Undated
	120	Light yellowish brown clay silt	c1.30-1.50m	Alluvium	Undated
	121	Mid blueish grey silty clay	c1.50-3.00m+	Lower lias	Jurassic

Table 1: Stratigraphy

Trenches 2-4 showed sequences of made ground over alluvium (Plates 4-7). Trench 1 showed a similar sequence, but with an intervening buried soil (Plate 2). All the made ground was of modern date, associated with previous construction and landscaping works. Most of the alluvium was also of modern date, as shown by the artefacts described below. The alluvium immediately above natural deposits may be of considerable antiquity, although it contained no artefacts to demonstrate this, and had little potential for palaeoenvironmental analysis.

*Artefacts (by Alan J Jacobs)*

The artefact assemblage is summarised in Table 2. The pottery assemblage consisted of 53 sherds weighing 3.347kg. Fragments of tile, brick, glass, iron, bone and clay pipes were also recovered.

Material	Total	Weight (g)
Post-medieval pottery	13	1048
Modern pottery	40	2219
Stone	1	2208
Brick	3	113
Tile	9	1309
Sewer pipe	1	177
Glass	1	142
Aluminium	1	148
Iron objects	8	1147
Clay pipe	4	9
Bone	5	56
Total	86	8576

Table 2: Quantification of the artefact assemblage

All pottery sherds were sorted and quantified according to fabric type (see Tables 3 and 4). Three diagnostic sherds were present and could be dated accordingly. The remaining sherds were only datable to a general period or production span.

<b>Fabric number</b>	<b>Fabric name</b>	<b>Total sherds</b>	<b>Weight (g)</b>
78	Post-medieval red sandy ware	13	1048

Table 3: Quantification of the post-medieval pottery by fabric

The post-medieval pottery consisted of sherds of red sandy ware from context 108 (Table 1). All of them came from large storage jars dating most probably to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

<b>Fabric Number</b>	<b>Fabric name</b>	<b>Total sherds</b>	<b>Weight (g)</b>
81.4	Late miscellaneous stoneware	13	1495
83	Porcelain	2	52
85	Modern stone china	25	752
Total		40	2219

Table 4: Quantification of the modern pottery by fabric

The modern pottery consisted primarily of modern stone china. All the sherds came from context 108. The forms represented a variety of plates, saucers and small bowls. Sherds were burnt and fairly abraded and mixed, with early 19<sup>th</sup> century and late 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery occurring together. Thirteen sherds of late miscellaneous stoneware in the form of large storage jars or bottles were recovered from context 108. Smaller amounts of porcelain were also present in the form of small plates or saucers.

#### *Other finds*

Nine fragments of tile were recovered, mostly from contexts 104 and 108. The tiles from context 104 and 108 were primarily of fabric 2a, a long-lived fabric produced between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. A single fragment of tile from context 105 was of fabric 2b, a contemporary but coarser fabric. Several fragments of tobacco pipe stem were recovered from contexts 105 and 108. These belong in a 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date range.

The other finds were of modern (19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century) date. They included eight iron objects from context 108 (a scythe, a handle, a bent chisel and six nails), a fragment from the base of a glass bottle from context 108, five mammal bones from contexts 104 and 108, and part of a rotary whetstone from context 108. The last find was carved from fine sandstone and had a worn surface from repeated use.

<b>Context</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Weight (g)</b>
104	Ceramic tile	13 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> century	1	10
104	Mammal bone	Not analysed	1	17
105	Ceramic tile	13 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> century	1	5
105	Tobacco pipe	17 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century	1	1
108	Aluminium ferule	Late 20 <sup>th</sup> century	1	148
108	Brick	17 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century	3	113
108	Ceramic tile	Roof tile (2a)	7	1294
108	Glass bottle	19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century	1	142
108	Mammal bone	Not analysed	4	39
108	Pottery	17 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> century	13	1048
108	Pottery	19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century	37	1885

108	Sewer pipe	1850-2000	1	177
108	Tobacco pipe	17 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century	3	8
108	Whetstone	?19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century	1	2208
111	Iron objects	19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century	8	1147
111	Pottery	19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century	3	414

Table 5: Quantification of the artefacts by context

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## Discussion

The alluvial deposits in the river bed indicate the disposal of rubbish in the River Isbourne between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. As the deposits have been extensively reworked it is impossible to say exactly where the material came from. However in view of the lack of contemporary settlement nearby, it is likely that most of the material was dropped by travellers crossing the bridge (or bridges) that existed in this period. The earlier alluvium probably dates to much earlier period when the river was forded rather than bridged, although it appears that rubbish disposal in antiquity was not common, or involved organic materials that have long since decayed.

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## Conclusions

The watching brief recovered evidence for post-medieval rubbish disposal and modern construction and landscaping works. Alluvial deposits of earlier, but uncertain date were also observed. There was no evidence of any earlier bridge or ford, nor of prehistoric ritual deposition.

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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, and unless directed otherwise, the Service intends to use the following summary as the basis for publication in local and/or regional journals.

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during flood alleviation works at Sedgeberrow bridge (NGR SP 02463886; WSM 34253). The bridge is a modern structure at an ancient river-crossing first documented in 786. This context, and earlier finds from the river-bed suggested that significant deposits might be present.*

*Four trenches associated with the flood alleviation works were observed and recorded. All four trenches showed sequences of made ground over alluvium. The made ground and upper alluvial deposits were clearly modern, although the latter contained residual artefacts of post-medieval date. These suggest rubbish disposal by travellers using an earlier bridge. The lower alluvial deposits were probably much earlier, but contained no artefacts and no significant palaeoenvironmental remains.*

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## Archive

Fieldwork progress record AS2	7
Drawing number catalogue AS4	1
Context number catalogue AS5	2
Site drawing sheet AS34	2
Trench record sheet AS41	1

Abbreviated context record AS40

15

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum  
Hartlebury Castle, Hartlebury  
Near Kidderminster  
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ  
01299 250416

telephone

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### Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank Will Reed and his associates at Glendale Services Ltd, who commissioned the project, and the site managers from Jackson Civil Engineering, Jim Wallace and Kevin McNeillie.

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### Personnel

The fieldwork was undertaken by Angus Crawford, Darren Miller, Simon Sworn, and Tom Vaughn. The report was written by Darren Miller and Alan Jacobs, and illustrated by Carolyn Hunt. The project manager was Simon Woodiwiss.

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### Bibliography

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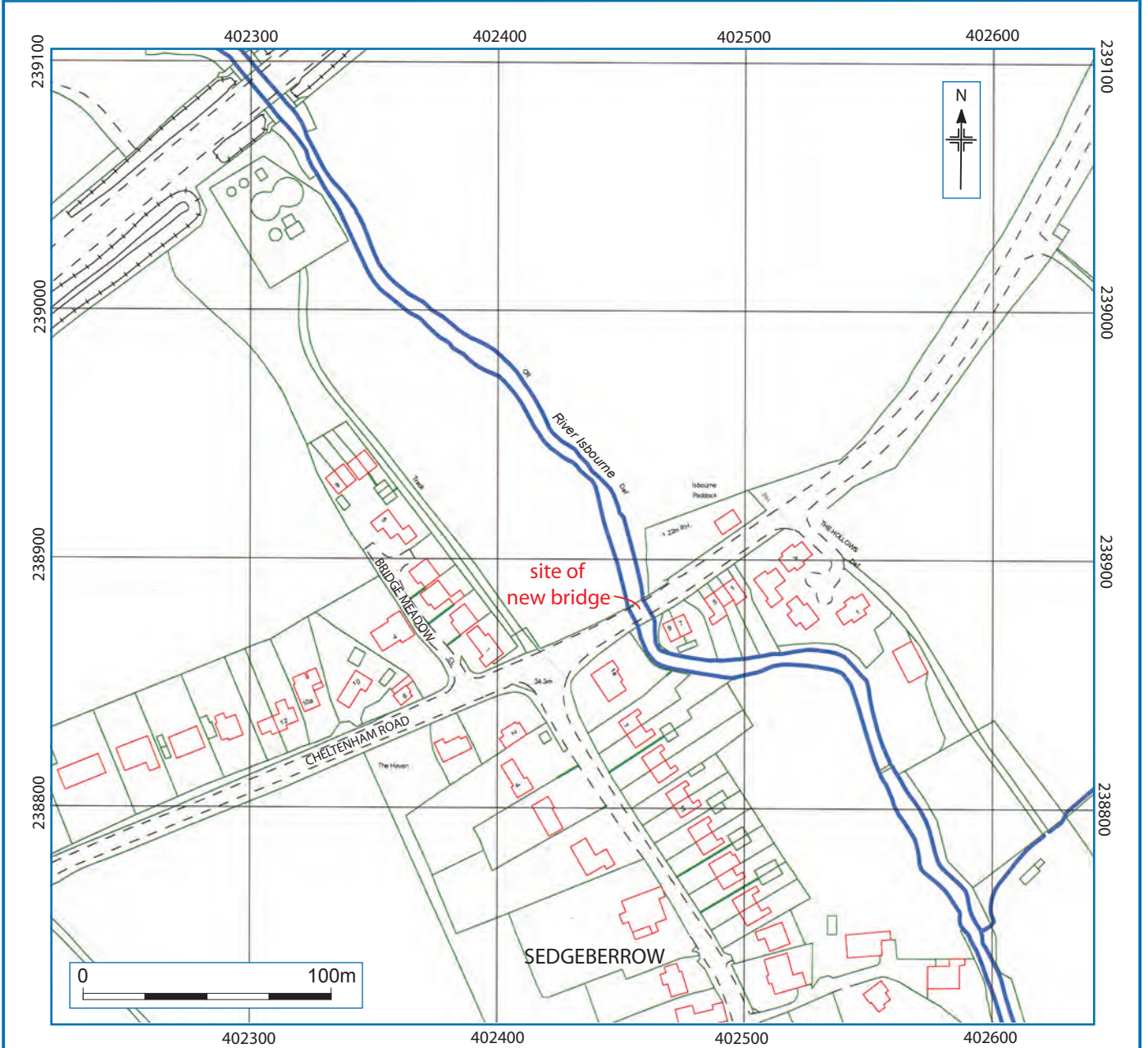
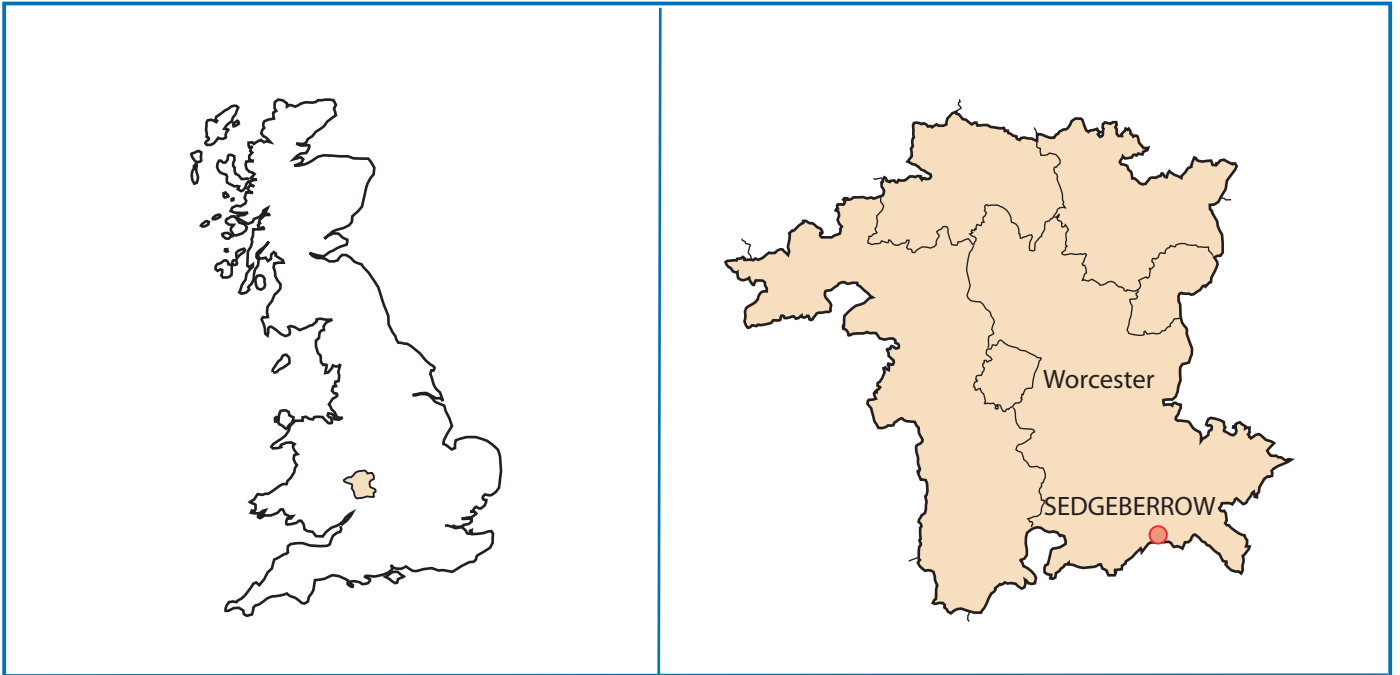
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WHEAS, 2004b *Proposal for an archaeological watching brief at Sedgeberrow Flood Alleviation Scheme, Sedgeberrow, Worcestershire*, Field Section, Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, document dated 5<sup>th</sup> November 2004

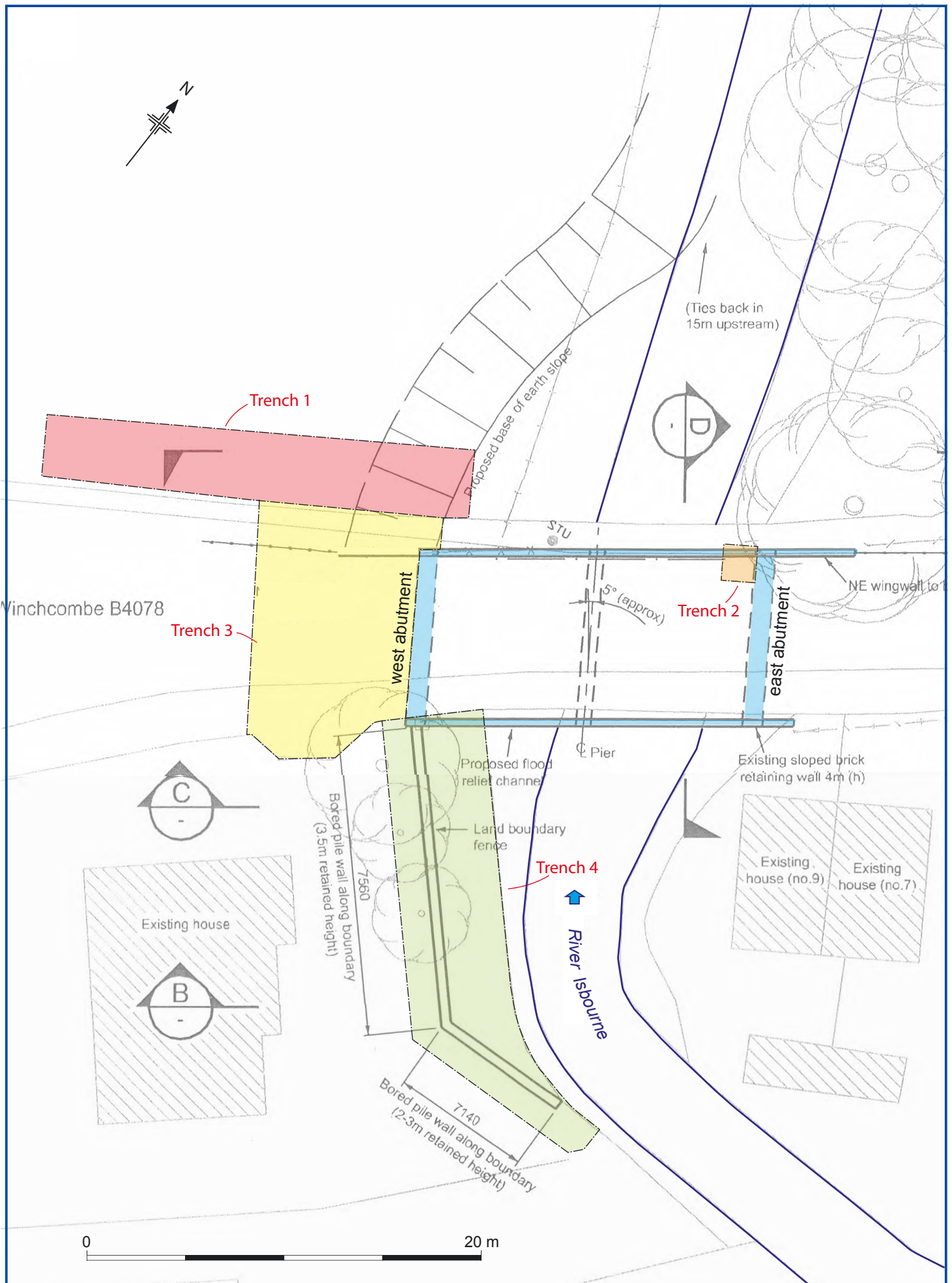
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Location of the site.

Figure 1



*Trench location plan*  
 (based on plan prepared by ARUP for Jackson Civil Engineering; Job No. 116320-00, Dwg S1-102)

Figure 2





*Plate 1: Trench 1 facing north-east*



*Plate 2: Trench 1, north-west facing section showing sequence of made ground, buried soil, and alluvium*

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*Plate 3: Trench 2 beneath east abutment*



*Plate 4: Trench 2, north-west facing section*





*Plate 5: Trench 3, south-east facing section*



*Plate 6: Trench 4, showing ground reduction*

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*Plate 7: Trench 4 showing deep excavations and road bridge*