

# Archaeological watching brief of the Bow Brook Wetland Creation scheme, Grove Farm, Droitwich Road, Feckenham, Worcestershire



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Worcestershire Archaeology  
Archive and Archaeology Service  
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Illustrator: Laura Templeton

Project reference: P4165

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HER reference: WSM 49771

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## Archaeological watching brief of the Bow Brook Wetland Creation scheme, Grove Farm, Droitwich Road, Feckenham, Worcestershire

Graham Arnold and Tom Vaughan

### Background information

<i>Client</i>	Worcestershire Wildlife Trust
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SP 0058 6023
<i>Historic Environment Record reference</i>	WSM 49771
<i>Planning authority reference</i>	Redditch Borough Council R/13/0146
<i>Brief</i>	WCC 2013
<i>Project design</i>	WA 2013
<i>Project parameters</i>	IfA 2012

### Background

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on behalf of Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, in partnership with the Environment Agency, at a confluence of the Bow Brook at Grove Farm, Feckenham. This watercourse has issues with siltation and lowered diversity and as part of this solution two wetland habitats were created in the vicinity of Peopleton. Advice was been sought from the Planning Advisory Service of Worcestershire County Council who considered that the works had the potential to affect buried archaeological remains. It was advised that a watching brief be carried out. Works included monitoring of the topsoil strip for the Wetland Creation and a test pit was excavated through the natural clay to understand the general stratigraphy of the site.

### Previous archaeological work on the site

There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken on site.

### Archaeological Background

A HER search of the area was completed prior to works commencing. The relevant information is discussed below:

The site lies opposite Beanhall Mill (WSM 00082) which is listed as a corn mill and watermill in use from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is listed as Astwood's Mill on Blagraves map of 1591 and later as Lower Mill in 1832. It was water powered corn-mill and was in use from 1591 and was still in operation in 1913. An associated mill leat (WSM 41820) of possible medieval date runs off Bow Brook and Brandon Brook to the east of the site. The leat, complete with sluices and a weir are indicated on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886. The leat has since been partially backfilled, but does not appear to have been destroyed and probably survives beneath the ground.

Later post-medieval buildings including a 19<sup>th</sup> century outbuilding for the mill (WSM 39501), the farmhouse (WSM 39499) and a further outbuilding (WSM 39500) are also noted in this location.

Historic OS maps indicate that the site has remained as undeveloped agricultural fields through the last 125 years. The area to the south of the confluence of the Bow Brook and Brandon Brook were noted as marshland, so the potential for waterlogged palaeoenvironmental deposits was considered to be high.

### 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 brief indicated that there was a low potential for medieval and post-medieval remains related to the mill opposite,

with a greater potential for well preserved organic deposits and palaeoenvironmental remains sealed within any waterlogged material or alluvial clays.

## Methods

General specification for fieldwork

WA 2012

Sources consulted

HER

Date of fieldwork

19 August 2013

Area of site

c. 1,250m<sup>2</sup> indicated on Fig 2

Dimensions of excavated areas observed –

Wetland Creation Pond      length 50.00m  
    width 25.00m  
    depth 1.30m max

### *Access to or visibility of deposits*

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken during machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits. Selected areas such as the sections of the test pit and the gravel ridges were cleaned by hand.

### *Statement of confidence*

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

### *Deposit description*

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Friable Medium grey brown soft sandy silt with frequent root action and worm sorting. Contains occasional medium flecks of charcoal, rare tile and rare white china and brick fragments.	0.00 – 0.20m
101	Subsoil	Medium orange friable silty sand with worm sorting and root action present in upper 0.10m. Also cut by water pipe trench.	0.20 – 0.30m
102	Alluvial clay	A compact reddish clay with a natural gravel pockets and bands in the north-west and south-east of the area. Sterile clay alluvium.	0.30 – 0.50m
103	Natural	Gravel bands with orange sands and clays	0.50 - 0.70m
104	Natural	Sterile loose grey sand and gravel band with water table at base.	0.70 – 1.15m
105	Natural	Compact red sandy marl.	1.15 – 1,.30m +

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## Discussion

The area of the wetland creation pond had a naturally occurring depression at the centre orientated north to south, sloping towards the Bow Brook. A shallow sandy silt topsoil (100) overlay a thin silty sand subsoil (101). To the north-west and south-east of the area a sterile alluvial clay (102) was observed, over varying bands of gravels, sands and clay (103-5).

Residual finds were recovered from the topsoil (100). The finds comprised pottery, brick, tile and metal. The pottery consisted of six sherds of white china (fabric 85), of 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century date, and a single sherd of a black-glazed red ware (fabric 78), of 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century date. Two fragments of flat roof tile were probably also of 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century date. A very abraded fragment of brick, and two fragments of unidentifiable brick/tile, were undiagnostic in terms of date, as was a hand-forged iron nail. (pers. comm. Dennis Williams). The finds were discarded after analysis and reporting.

The cartographic sources indicate that the area was used for pasture. The finds probably relate to accidental deposition during manuring of the fields. No significant archaeological remains were observed during the works.

## Conclusions

The watching brief has determined that there was no significant archaeology in the location of the Wetland Creation pond. Only residual finds from post-medieval manuring of the field were recovered from the topsoil.

## 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 watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Worcestershire Wildlife Trust of the Bow Brook Wetland Creation scheme, Grove Farm, Droitwich Road, Feckenham, Worcestershire, (NGR SP 0058 6023; HER ref WSM 49771). The work involved the excavation of an area to create wetland to attract wildlife. The topsoil strip was monitored. Residual finds dating to the 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, probably deposited during manuring of the fields were found in the topsoil. A sterile alluvial clay was observed at 0.30m below the current ground surface, over sands and gravels, above the natural marl. No significant archaeology was encountered during the works.*

## Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Peter Case (Worcestershire Wildlife Trust), Adam Mindykowski (Historic Environment Countryside Advisor, Worcestershire County Council) and Mike Glyde (Historic Environment Planning Officer, Worcestershire County Council).

## Bibliography

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IfA 2008 *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute for Archaeologists

WA 2012 *Manual of Service Practice, Recording Manual*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, report **1842**

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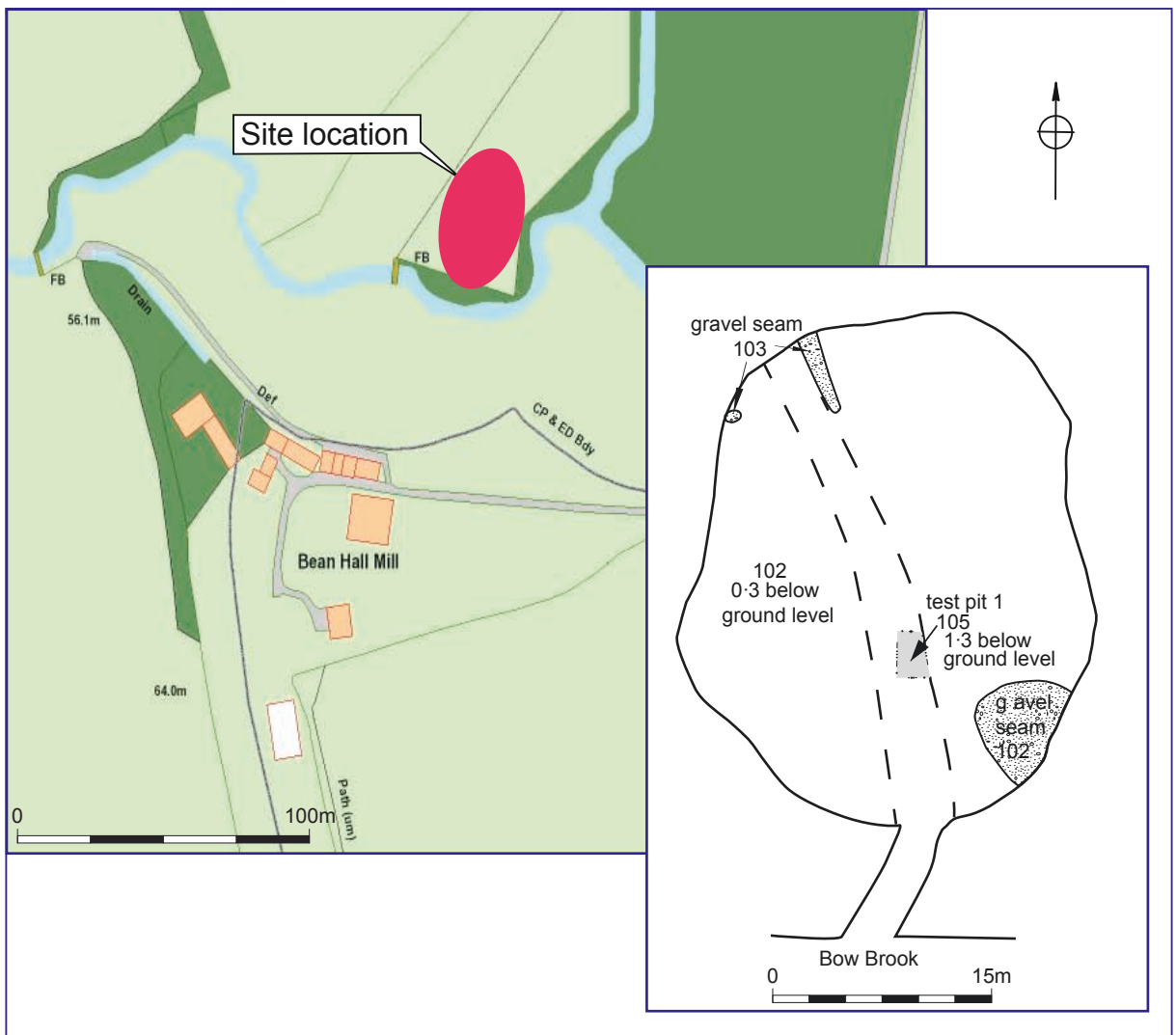
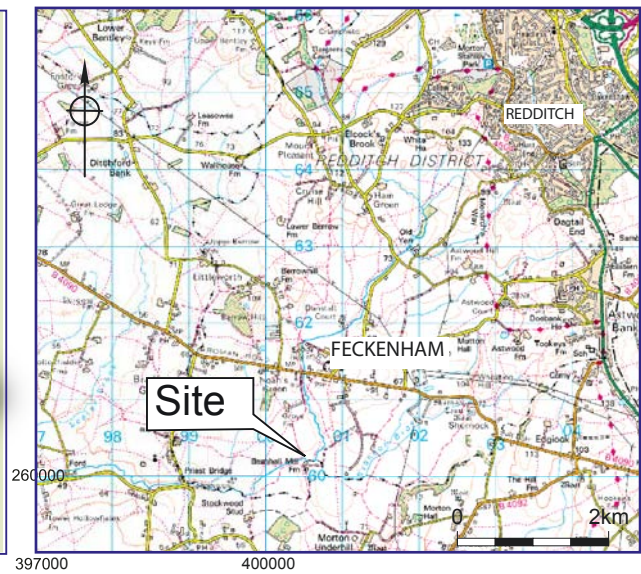
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Worcestershire Wildlife Trust 2013 *Design and Access Statement: Bow Brook Water Framework Directive habitat improvements Grove Farm, Feckenham*, unpublished document

**Figures**



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Location of the site

Figure 1

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## Plates



*Plate 1 Topsoil strip showing natural hollow at location for pond, view north*



*Plate 2 Test pit demonstrating topsoil, clay and gravel profile above the natural red marl, view west*





*Plate 3 Natural gravel ridge protruding through alluvial clay in the north of the study area, view east*



*Plate 4 Band of natural gravel protruding through alluvial clay, in the south-east corner of the pond, view north-west*



*Plate 5 Wetland pond site strip complete, reduced to natural clays, view south*



*Plate 6 General view of wetland pond location after excavation, showing Beanhall Mill Farmhouse behind, view south*

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## **Appendix 1 Technical information**

### **The archive (site code: WSM 49771)**

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 1 Digital photographs
- 1 Scale drawing
- 1 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 Computer disk
- 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