

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION AND WATCHING
BRIEF
OF
LAND OFF WALCOT LANE,
DRAKE'S BROUGHTON,
WORCESTERSHIRE



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Archaeological evaluation and watching brief of land off Walcot Lane, Drake's Broughton, Worcestershire

Andrew Walsh and Tom Vaughan

Summary

An archaeological evaluation and a watching brief were undertaken of land off Walcot Lane, Drake's Broughton, Worcestershire (NGR SO 9465 4831). The works were undertaken on behalf of Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, who were creating five excavated features to improve the habitat for wildlife and the water quality of the Bow Brook for which a planning application has been submitted.

Four evaluation trenches were excavated over a proposed meander and a fish refuge. Three areas, where re-profiling of the bank was undertaken, were monitored as part of a watching brief. No significant archaeological features, deposits, horizons or structures were identified, nor artefacts recovered during the archaeological works. A thin shallow band of alluvial sandy silt was observed within two trenches, although it was not considered suitable for palaeoenvironmental analysis.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation and watching brief was undertaken of land off Walcot Lane, Drake's Broughton, Worcestershire (NGR SO 9465 4831). It was commissioned by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, who intend to create five excavated features to improve the habitat for wildlife and the water quality of the Bow Brook, for which a planning application has been submitted to Wychavon District Council (reference W/12/02007).

The development site is considered to include heritage assets and potential heritage assets, the significance of which may be affected by the application (WSM 09791).

The project conforms to a brief prepared by Worcestershire County Council (WCC 2012) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2012a).

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008), the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2009), and *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010).

The event reference for this project, given by the Historic Environment Record (HER) is WSM 49646.

2 Aims

The aims of the evaluation were:

- 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.

The aim of the watching brief was to observe all ground breaking activity and make a suitable record of archaeological deposits, features or structures revealed.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was undertaken by Andrew Walsh (BSc MSc AIfA FSA Scot); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2013 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan (BA MA AIfA). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt.

3.2 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the HER.

3.3 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2012a). Fieldwork was undertaken between 29 and 30 July 2013. The site reference number and site code is WSM 49646.

Four evaluation trenches, amounting to just over 80m² in area, were excavated over the proposed meander and fish refuge (Plates 1 and 2). Three areas, where re-profiling of the bank was undertaken, were monitored as part of a watching brief (Plates 3-5). The location of the trenches and watching brief areas are illustrated in Fig 1.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. 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 2012b). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

3.4 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.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The site is located approximately 2.25km north of Pershore. At this location the Bow Brook flows approximately north-west to south-east and lies in the base of a shallow valley at a height of approximately 20m AOD. The underlying geology is mapped as Charmouth Mudstone Formation, overlain by superficial deposits of alluvium along the Bow Brook, and sands and gravels of the Bretford Sand and Gravel Member to the south-west (BGS 2013). The soil along the Bow Brook is mapped as pelo-alluvial gley soils of the Compton series in the base of the valley, with typical stagnogley soils of the Pinder and Wickham series mapped on the higher ground (SSEW 1986).

There is evidence of human occupation in the Drake's Broughton area since the Neolithic period, although no prehistoric or Roman activity has been recorded with the immediate vicinity of the site. However, by the medieval period, research indicates that the area around the site was being heavily exploited. The present A44 road follows the course of a possible Saxon road to the north of the site (WSM 30402) and there is a notable concentration of farmsteads along this route, which may originate in the medieval period. The proposed meander and fish refuge are located on or near an area of medieval ridge and furrow (WSM 09791) visible on current online mapping (Google 2013). Ridge and furrow (WSM 02612 and WSM 09792) is also located around Walcot Farm, to the south-west of the site. A possible deserted medieval settlement (WSM 41488) has also been identified approximately 250m east of Lower Walcot Farm.

4.2 Current land-use

The site is currently used for pasture.

5 Structural analysis

The trenches and watching brief areas are shown in Fig 1 and Plates 1-5. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

Natural deposits were encountered in all trenches and watching brief areas. These were a light greyish blue clay, 302, 402, overlain by an orangey brown clay with blue mottling, 102, 201, 301, 401, 1001, 2001, 3001 (Plate 1). They generally lay at a depth of approximately 0.20m below the present ground surface, although within Trench 1 it lay at 0.40m depth.

The turfed topsoil comprised a uniform greyish brown clayey silt within all observed areas.

5.1.2 Phase 2: Alluvium

A thin layer of alluvial sandy silt, 101 and 202, measuring up to 0.20m thick, at 0.18-0.20m below the ground surface was visible in Trench 1 and the south-east end of Trench 2 (Plate 2). This was not considered to be suitable for palaeoenvironmental analysis, due to its shallow depth.

5.1.3 Phase 3: Modern deposits

A field drain was located in the western corner of Trench 2. This was overlaid by a greyish brown clayey silt topsoil, which overlaid the alluvium in Trench 1 and natural deposits in Trenches 3 and 4 and the watching brief areas.

6 Synthesis

No significant archaeological features, deposits, horizons or structures were observed, nor artefacts recovered during the fieldwork. In addition no evidence of the ridge and furrow, recorded on the HER (WSM 09791), was identified. It is considered that the ridge and furrow did not extend into the base of the valley.

There was limited evidence of depositional processes associated with the Bow Brook. The stratigraphy of the site was largely natural clay directly overlain by topsoil, except around Trenches 1 and 2 where a thin layer of alluvium was identified.

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 and a watching brief were undertaken of land off Walcot Lane, Drake's Broughton, Worcestershire (NGR SO 9465 4831). They were undertaken on behalf of Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, who was excavating features to improve the habitat for wildlife and the water quality of the Bow Brook. Four evaluation trenches were excavated over an artificial meander and a fish refuge. Three areas, where re-profiling of the bank was undertaken, were monitored as part of a watching brief. No significant archaeological features, deposits, horizons or structures were identified, nor artefacts recovered during the archaeological works. A thin shallow band of alluvial sandy silt was observed within two trenches, although it was not considered suitable for palaeoenvironmental analysis.

8 Acknowledgements

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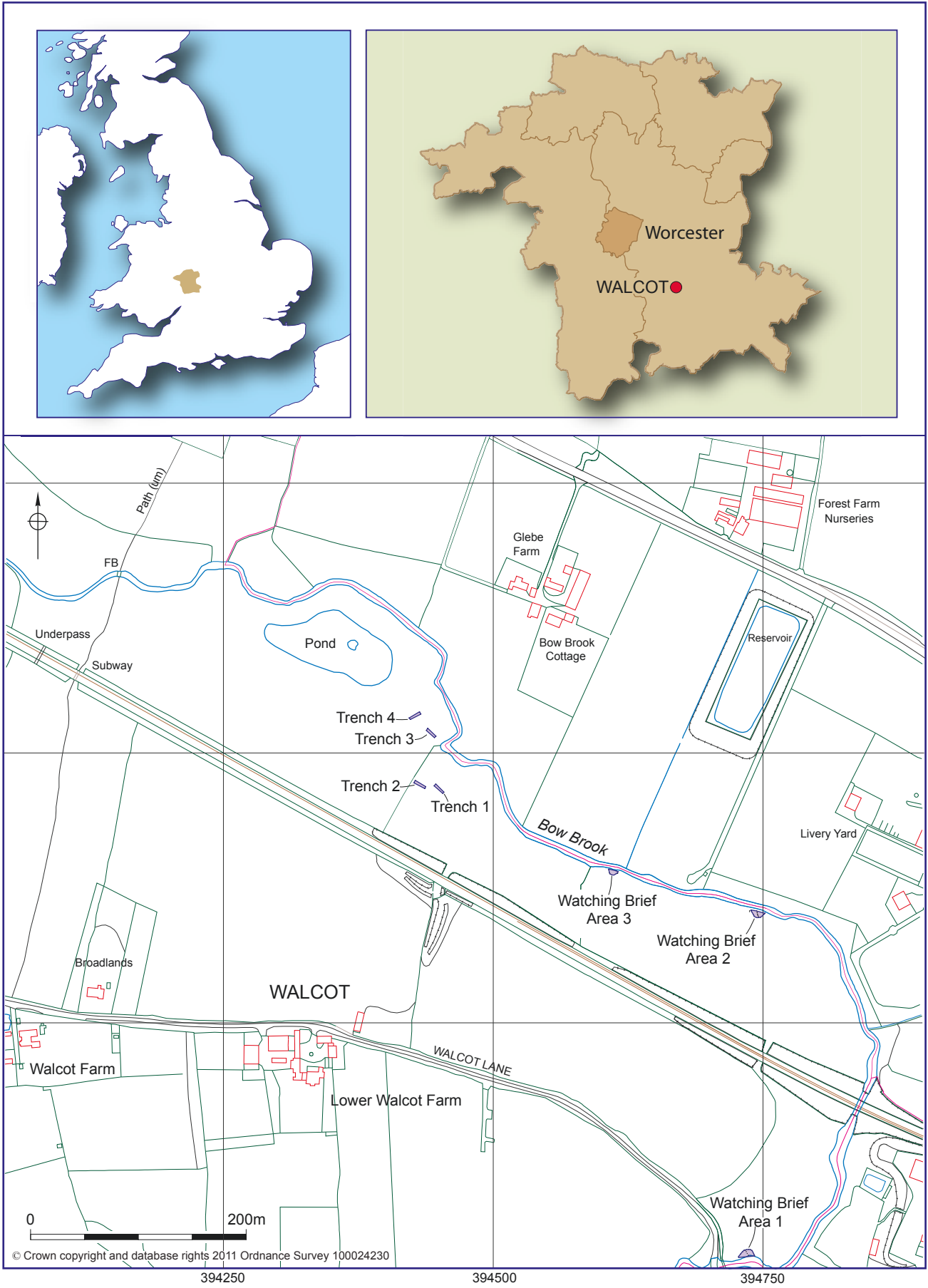
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Figures



Location of the site and trench locations

Figure 1

Plates



Plate 1, General view of Trench 2, view north-west



Plate 2, A thin layer of alluvium, 101, below the topsoil, 100, in Trench 1



Plate 3, Watching Brief Area 1 topsoil strip complete, view west



Plate 4, Watching Brief Area 2 topsoil strip complete, view east-north-east



Plate 5, Watching Brief Area 3 work in progress, view north-west

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 10.5m Width: 1.8-2.3m Depth: 0.9m

Orientation: NW-SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Greyish brown clayey silt, with moderate rooting	0-0.2m
101	Alluvium	Grey sandy silt	0.2-0.4m
102	Natural	Mottled bluish, orangey brown clay	0.4m+

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 11.1m Width: 1.8-2.2m Depth: 0.8m

Orientation: NW-SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Topsoil	Greyish brown clayey silt, with moderate rooting	0-0.18m
201	Natural	Mottled bluish, orangey brown clay. Cut by field drain at western corner of trench	0.18m+
202	Alluvium	Grey sandy silt. Only visible at SE end of trench	0.18-0.28m

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 10.0m Width: 2.1m Depth: 0.9m

Orientation: NW-SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Topsoil	Greyish brown clayey silt, with moderate rooting	0-0.25m
301	Natural	Mottled bluish, orangey brown clay	0.2-0.8m
302	Natural	Greyish blue clay	0.8m+

Trench 4

Maximum dimensions: Length: 11.3m Width: 2.2m Depth: 0.9m

Orientation: NE-SW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
400	Topsoil	Greyish brown clayey silt, with moderate rooting	0-0.2m
401	Natural	Mottled bluish, orangey brown clay	0.2-0.8m
402	Natural	Greyish blue clay	0.8m+

Watching brief area 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 14.9m Width: 6.6m Depth: 0.3m

Orientation: NW-SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
1000	Topsoil	Greyish brown clayey silt, with moderate rooting	0-0.2m
1001	Natural	Mottled bluish, orangey brown clay	0.2+

Watching brief area 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 13.6m Width: 5.9m Depth: 0.3m

Orientation: NW-SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
2000	Topsoil	Greyish brown clayey silt, with moderate rooting	0-0.2m
2001	Natural	Mottled bluish, orangey brown clay	0.2+

Watching brief area 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 9.2m Width: 4.6m Depth: 0.6m

Orientation: NW-SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
3000	Topsoil	Greyish brown clayey silt, with moderate rooting	0-0.2m
3001	Natural	Mottled bluish, orangey brown clay	0.2+

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM 49646)

The archive consists of:

- 2 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 47 Digital photographs
- 4 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
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