

Watching brief at The Wharf Flood Defence Scheme, Coombe Hill, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire



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Background information

<i>Client</i>	Mr Stuart Bengé
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SO 88616 27216
<i>Planning authority</i>	Tewkesbury Borough Council
<i>reference</i>	12/01107/FUL
<i>Project design</i>	WA 2014
<i>Project parameters</i>	IfA 2012
<i>Previous archaeological work on the site</i>	

There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken on the site.

Previous archaeological work on associated sites

A GHER search was undertaken as part of an archaeological desk-based assessment of the site (GCCAS 2012; GHER 42985). Of most relevance is the presence of the terminal end of Coombe Canal (GHER 5548), built between 1792–95 and its associated buildings, dwelling houses, a weighbridge, a barn, tenements, stables and a slaughter house. No archaeological work has taken place on these buildings.

A number of earthworks and enclosures (GHER 41803; 4466; 8730; 4462; 4659 and 5542) have also been noted within 600m of the site, but no work has thus far been undertaken on them and they remain undated.

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.

Methods

The watching brief was undertaken with regard to a general specification for fieldwork (WA 2012)

Sources consulted

The desk-based assessment of the site (GCCAS 2012) summarised the results from the HER.

Sources cited by the desk-based assessment:

Cartographic sources

- 1815 *Deerhurst and Leigh Tithe Map*
- 1st edition, 1880 Ordnance Survey County Series Map, scale 25":1 mile
- 1902 Ordnance Survey County Series Map, scale 25":1 mile
- 1923 Ordnance Survey County Series Map, scale 25":1 mile

Documentary sources

- Elrington, C, 1968 *A history of the county of Gloucester: Parishes: Leigh*, vol 8
- Hadfield, C, 1985 *The canals of the West Midlands*, 3rd edition

Date of fieldwork

18 September 2014

Area of site

Indicated on Fig 2

Dimensions of excavated areas observed –

Area 1	length 50m
	width 7m
	depth 0.20m
Area 2	length 75m
	max. width 10m
	depth 0.50m

The new access track (southern area of Area 1) had already been excavated and this was only visible in section.

Access to or visibility of deposits

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

Description of the deposit details is given in Appendix 1.

Discussion

The only finds came from Area 2 and these consisted of three fragments of cooked animal bone, likely to be from a cow, and a small piece of clay pipe. These were all found in the subsoil and were not retained. Despite the lack of finds, two areas of interest were noted, both in Area 1. The section of the new access track at the southern end of Area 2 (Plate 3) revealed a redeposited clay layer (103), overlain by a 40mm layer of compacted pieces of coal (102), a maximum of 20mm across. It is suggested that this area was either used for the storage of coal or that the coal provided a permeable surface on an access route. Both options would lead to the coal pieces becoming compacted.

The redeposited clay (103) was seen in other parts of Area 1. It was likely to have been put down as a levelling material. Clay is abundant in the area and would have provided a readily available material. The redeposited clay was also observed at the northern end of Area 1, but this time it was overlain by a patch of cobbling (104). The cobbling (Plate 2) may have provided a pedestrian access to and from the wharf, especially to the row of cottages and the associated buildings to the east of the wharf.

Area 2 (Plate 4) contained a large area of grey clay (202), that easily peeled away to reveal the former land surface. The farmer alerted us to the fact that over the years he has been periodically dumping clay and waterlogged material from ditch-cleaning activities into the natural hollow in this area of the site, explaining the presence of (202). At the western end of Area 2 an area of compacted redeposited clay (203) was seen. This is thought to be the same as (103) and would have formed the edge of the surface seen across Area 1.

Conclusions

Former hard-packed land surfaces associated with the wharf were observed. A cobbled area is likely to have provided access to the cottages and the second surface would have had a more industrial use, either for storing coal or for providing a drainable road surface.

The groundworks undertaken will not have significantly affected any underlying deposits on the site and the bund that will form the flood defence will protect any deeper archaeological deposits not observed during this watching brief. Hitherto unidentified former structures associated with the wharf, i.e. weighbridge, barns, slaughter houses, etc., were not observed. No significant features, layers, structures or deposits were uncovered, nor finds identified.

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 Mr Stuart Bengé at The Wharf, Coombe Hill, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire (NGR ref SO 88616 27216). Previous post-medieval/modern ground surfaces were noted, including a cobbled surface and also an area where coal was stored or deposited, indicating differential use of the wharf area. No significant features, layers, structures or deposits were uncovered, nor finds identified.

Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the conclusion of this project: Stuart Bengé (Leigh Parish Council) and Charles Parry (Curator).

Personnel

The project fieldwork and report preparation was undertaken by Suzi Richer (PhD, MSc, BSc). The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan (BA MA AIfA). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc PG Cert MIfA).

Bibliography

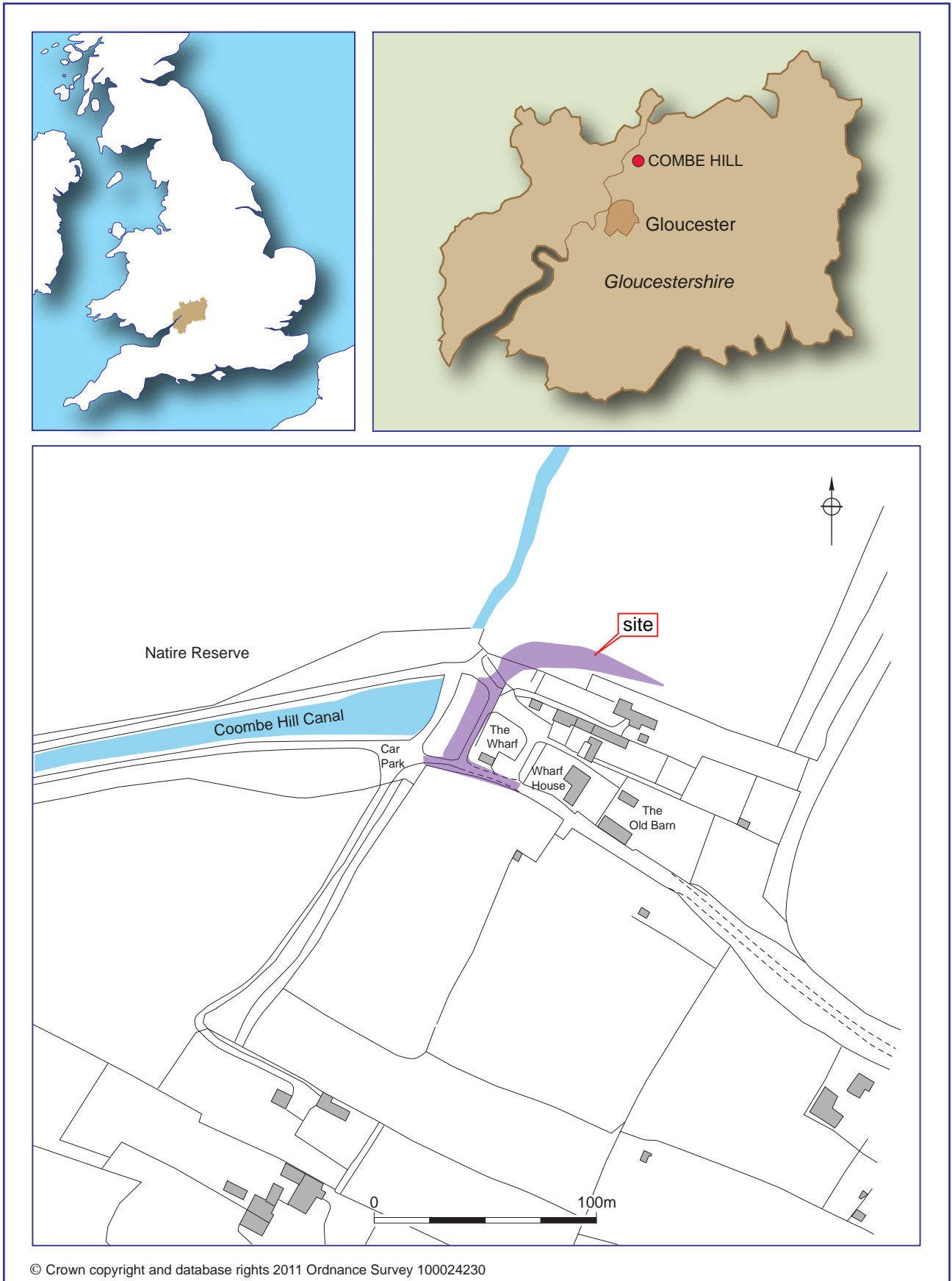
GCCAS, 2012 *An archaeological desk-based assessment of The Wharf, Coombe Hill, Gloucestershire*, Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service, Gloucestershire County Council, dated April 2012, **GHER 42985**

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**

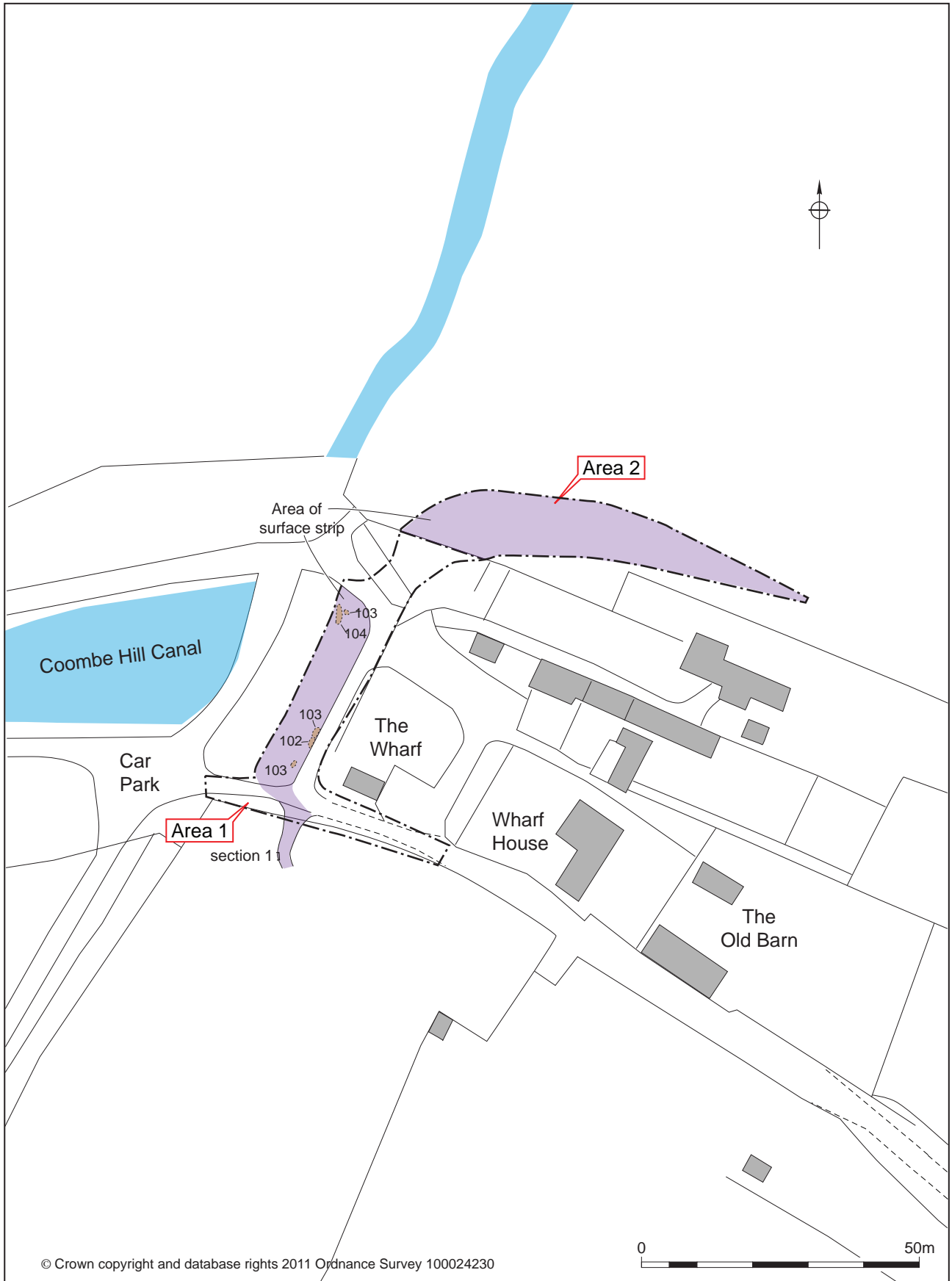
WA 2014 *Proposal for an archaeological watching brief of The Wharf Flood Defence Scheme, Coombe Hill, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document, dated 19 August 2014, **P4419**

Figures



Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench location plan

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1 Area 1 looking south



Plate 2 Cobbled surface in Area 1, looking north



Plate 3 East facing Section 1 of the new trackway excavated at the southern end of Area 1; coal layer visible as a black band



Plate 4 Looking east across Area 2; recently deposited grey clay in the mid-ground; ridge and furrow in the background fields

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Main deposit descriptions

Trench 1

Site area: Area 1 – western end of bund

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50m Width: 4m Depth: 0.2m

Orientation: N-S

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
101	Topsoil	Medium brown clayey silt with frequent root action and worm sorting. Contains pieces of brick, especially in the lower half.	0– 0.20m
102	Surface / layer	Band of charcoal, pieces ranged from dust to 1.5cm.	0.02– 0.08m
103	Redeposited natural	Yellowish orange silty clay with occasional pieces of brick, small stones and coal.	0.08m +
104	Surface	Medium brown clayey silt with frequent rounded pebbles (3–7cm diameter)	0.02– 0.12m

Trench 2

Site area: Area 2 – northern arm of bund

Maximum dimensions: Length: 75m Width: 110m Depth: 0.20-0.50m

Orientation: E-W

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
201	Topsoil	Brownish red clayey silt with frequent root disturbance and rare small rounded stones.	0–0.25m
202	Deposited layer	Compacted grey and grey/red mottled clay, with frequent organic matter.	0–0.10m and 0.08–0.18m
203	Redeposited natural	Yellowish orange silty clay with occasional pieces of brick, small stones and coal.	0.08 +
204	Subsoil	Reddish brown clayey silt with occasional roots, and rare animal bone and clay pipe fragments.	0.25m+

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (WA project reference P4419)

The archive consists of:

- 8 Context records AS1
- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 1 Drawing number catalogue AS4
- 2 Scale drawings
- 1 Computer disk
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

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

Tel. Gloucester (01452) 396131