

# Archaeological watching brief at The Cottage and Abbey Road Depot, Abbey Road, Evesham, Worcestershire



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## **Archaeological watching brief at The Cottage and Abbey Road Depot, Abbey Road, Evesham, Worcestershire**

Graham Arnold

With contributions by Derek Hurst

### **Summary**

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at The Cottage and Abbey Road Depot, Abbey Road, Evesham Worcestershire (NGR SP 0331 4335; WSM 67622). It was undertaken on behalf of Greswolde Construction Ltd, who is developing the site with the construction of a fire station and separate fire training facility with associated parking, yard areas and soft landscaping for which a planning application has been granted.

Two discrete adjacent areas were monitored in the northern third of the larger development site. The groundworks revealed that the areas had been heavily truncated by drainage and services related to the former cottage and late 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> century pits with dump deposits and made ground to raise the ground level. The natural was only exposed within the eastern part of the site. Elsewhere the soil strip was not deep enough to impact on the natural. No evidence was revealed for the continuation of the Late Bronze Age settlement discovered in 2007 to the west. No significant archaeological deposits, finds or features were uncovered, although the assemblage of late 19<sup>th</sup>- early 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramics is of local interest.

## Report

### 1 Background

#### 1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at The Cottage and Abbey Road Depot, Abbey Road, Evesham Worcestershire (NGR SP 0331 4335; WSM 67622). It was commissioned by Greswolde Construction Ltd, who is developing the site with the construction of a fire station and separate fire training facility with associated parking, yard areas and soft landscaping for which a planning application has been granted by Wychavon District Council (reference W/14/02389).

The proposed development site is considered to include heritage assets and potential heritage assets, the significance of which may be affected by the application (WSM 37561).

The project conforms to a brief prepared by the Planning Advisory Service of Worcestershire County Council, dated September 2015 (WCC 2015) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2015).

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a) and *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010).

The event reference for this project, given by the HER is WSM 67622.

### 2 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, within the northern third of the site (Figs 1 and 2).

### 3 Methods

#### 3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Graham Arnold (BA (hons.), MSc); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2009 and has been practicing archaeology since 2003; assisted by Andrew Mann (BA (hons.); MSc). The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan (BA (hons.); MA; ACIfA). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA). Derek Hurst (BA (hons) PG Dip) contributed the finds analysis.

#### 3.2 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER).

#### 3.3 List of sources consulted

##### *Documentary sources*

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

#### 3.4 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2015).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 18 and 24 February 2016. The site reference number and site code is WSM 67622.

The northern third of the site was stripped as two discrete adjacent areas. The western area was the former location of a large building that had been demolished, with associated hardstanding and tarmac (Area 1). The eastern area was on higher ground with a retaining wall to the west. It was the site of a former cottage with grass surrounding (Area 2). The site amounted to just over 1,500m<sup>2</sup> in area. The location of the trenches is indicated in Fig 2.

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Deposits were removed using a 360° tracked excavator, down to the natural deposits or the extent of construction impact, 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 appropriate, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012).

### **3.5 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.

### **3.6 Artefact methodology, by Derek Hurst**

The finds work reported here conforms with the relevant sections of *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b), with archive creation informed by *Archaeological archives: a guide to the best practice in the creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (AAF 2011), and museum deposition by *Selection, retention and dispersal of archaeological collections* (SMA 1993).

#### **3.6.1 Artefact recovery policy**

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012; appendix 2).

#### **3.6.2 Method of analysis**

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date was produced for each stratified context. The date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on *pro forma* sheets.

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and referenced, as appropriate, by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology (Hurst and Rees 1992 and [www.worcestershireceramics.org](http://www.worcestershireceramics.org)).

### **3.7 Environmental archaeology methodology**

#### **3.7.1 Sampling policy**

Sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

### **3.8 Statement of confidence in the methods and results**

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

## **4 The application site**

### **4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context**

The following is taken from the HER search (WAAS 2015).

The search area is located in and around a meander of the River Severn as it passes through Evesham. The underlying geology consists of Blue Lias Formation, Charmouth Mudstone (BGS 2016) and Wilmcote Limestone Member bedrock beneath superficial deposits of made ground and mixed sands and gravels. The settlement pattern consists of a large area of historic planned town

with extensive areas of new town and modern expansion throughout the search area. Also present near the centre of the search area are areas of fields and enclosed land.

A considerable amount of archaeological investigation has been undertaken within the search area and consequently the survival of archaeology is well known. Of particular note are the excavations undertaken on the site of the Abbey Road Depot in 2007 (Mann 2008; WSM 37561) which uncovered the partial remains of a Late Bronze Age settlement that is potentially part of a larger site. There is an excellent potential for below ground archaeology from all periods throughout the search area, with a particular potential for Bronze Age and post-medieval deposits in the centre. Finally, a Historic England project to identify the potential for Palaeolithic archaeology in Worcestershire recorded Head deposits within the search area with the potential for archaeology dating to 476,050 BCE (Before Common Era).

The archaeological excavation to the west of the site is summarised below (Mann 2008; WSM 37561).

The excavation uncovered the partial remains of a Late Bronze Age settlement consisting of a small roundhouse and numerous grain storage pits that had been reused as rubbish pits for domestic refuse. Although not fully exposed, it is thought that the settlement was unenclosed with no surrounding enclosure ditch. The central roundhouse consisted of ten postholes forming the central support to a building approximately 8.00m in diameter. The roundhouse was aligned to the west overlooking the River Avon that surrounds the site on the north, west and south. As with other examples excavated across the country, this structure was dismantled, probably after the inhabitant's death, rather than being allowed to disintegrate.

An earlier rectangular structure, consisting of five small postholes was thought to be a temporary grain storage structure.

It is thought that the excavation area only exposed a proportion of a larger settlement. As with other local and national Late Bronze Age examples, the settlement is thought to have been short lived and remained unenclosed until its abandonment (Mann, 2008).

## **4.2 Current land-use**

The site was formerly a council depot (Area 1) and domestic cottage (Area 2) with a water works and electricity substation to the south (not required to be monitored). The buildings had been demolished prior to groundworks and most hardstanding broken up (Plates 1 and 2).

## **5 Structural analysis**

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Fig 2. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

### **5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits**

The natural geological deposits, consisting of mixed sands and gravels, (202), were only observed in Area 2, at 26.90m AOD.

### **5.1.2 Phase 2: Post-medieval deposits**

In the southern portion of the observed areas a series of 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century dump deposits consisting of loose dark brownish grey, silty sand, ash and clinker were revealed. These included pit [104], at least 1.20m deep, and pit [204], at least 1.50m deep, which were associated with a lot of contemporary intact earthenware, stoneware and glass vessels (see more below) from the latter.

### **5.1.3 Phase 3: modern deposits**

Area 1 was covered in modern concrete floor slab and tarmac hardstanding associated with a former depot building. Area 2 had a number of modern intrusions that related to drainage, services and modern works from the cottage. A deep turfed topsoil (200) covered Area 2.

## 5.2 Artefact analysis, by Derek Hurst

The artefactual assemblage recovered consisted of 36 ceramic and glass pots/bottles from (204) (Plates 9–10), which represented a sample only of the material observed. The ceramics were all modern stoneware jugs, bottles, jars and other containers, and the glass vessels were mainly bottles, including narrow sauce and squat, square milk bottles. A variety of maker's and advertising marks were recorded. On the ceramics the former included an earthenware blue and white teapot in sauceboat style marked 'STIRLING HA & Co, L' and on the stoneware a medium-sized bottle was marked 'STIFF G LAMBETH' (datable to c 1850). The teapot maker's mark seems to belong to a manufactory that is not much referred to and so could have been short-lived which, given the quality of the product, would be easy to believe. Advertising marks on the stoneware bottles and jars included: 'GEORGE BREARLEY, EVESHAM'; 'JAMES KEILLER & SONS' with 'DUNDEE WITH GRAND MEDAL OF MERIT VIENNA, 1873'; and 'Virol, a preparation of bone marrow...'. On the glass bottles advertising marks included: 'KINMOND & Co, LEAMINGTON' and on the ubiquitous Camp coffee bottle 'ESS CAMP COFFEE & CHICORY, PATERSON'S, GLASGOW'.

A *tpq* date of around 1900 seemed to be compatible with this ceramic and glass group, and its composition suggests a rubbish dump of this period, where the non-ash component of the domestic waste had been separated out. Pre-20<sup>th</sup> century urban rubbish disposal revolved around the extraction of the coal ash which had many uses and so was recycled widely, whereas the non-ash material would have been separated out and dumped (Muthesius 1982).

## 6 Synthesis

The groundworks revealed that the area had been heavily truncated by drainage and services, related to the former cottage in Area 2, with late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century pits or dump deposits of refuse material and modern made ground to raise the ground level. The natural sands and gravels were only observed in Area 2, at 26.90m AOD. The soil strip was not deep enough to expose the natural in Area 1 to the west. No evidence of the Late Bronze Age settlement discovered to the west in 2007 was revealed and no significant archaeological deposits, finds or features were uncovered.

## 7 Recommendations

No further work is required on the finds.

### 7.1 Discard and retention

It is suggested that the finds are not worthy of being retained for future research, subject to this being agreed with the relevant museum as an appropriate decision.

## 8 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 Greswolde Construction Ltd at The Cottage and Abbey Road Depot, Abbey Road, Evesham Worcestershire (NGR SP 0331 4335; WSM 67622). The site was adjacent to an archaeological excavation undertaken in 2007 that revealed the partial remains of a Late Bronze Age settlement (WSM 37561).*

*Two discrete adjacent areas were monitored in the northern third of the larger development site. The groundworks revealed that the areas had been heavily truncated by drainage and services related to the former cottage and late 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> century pits with dump deposits and made ground to raise the ground level. The natural was only exposed within the eastern part of the site. Elsewhere the soil strip was not deep enough to impact on the natural. No evidence was revealed*

*for the continuation of the Late Bronze Age settlement discovered in 2007 to the west. No significant archaeological deposits, finds or features were uncovered, although the assemblage of late 19<sup>th</sup>- early 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramics is of local interest.*

## 9 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Peter Franks, Jason Taplin and Martin McTiernan (Greswolde Construction Ltd) and Adrian Scruby (Historic Environment Advisor, Worcestershire County Council).

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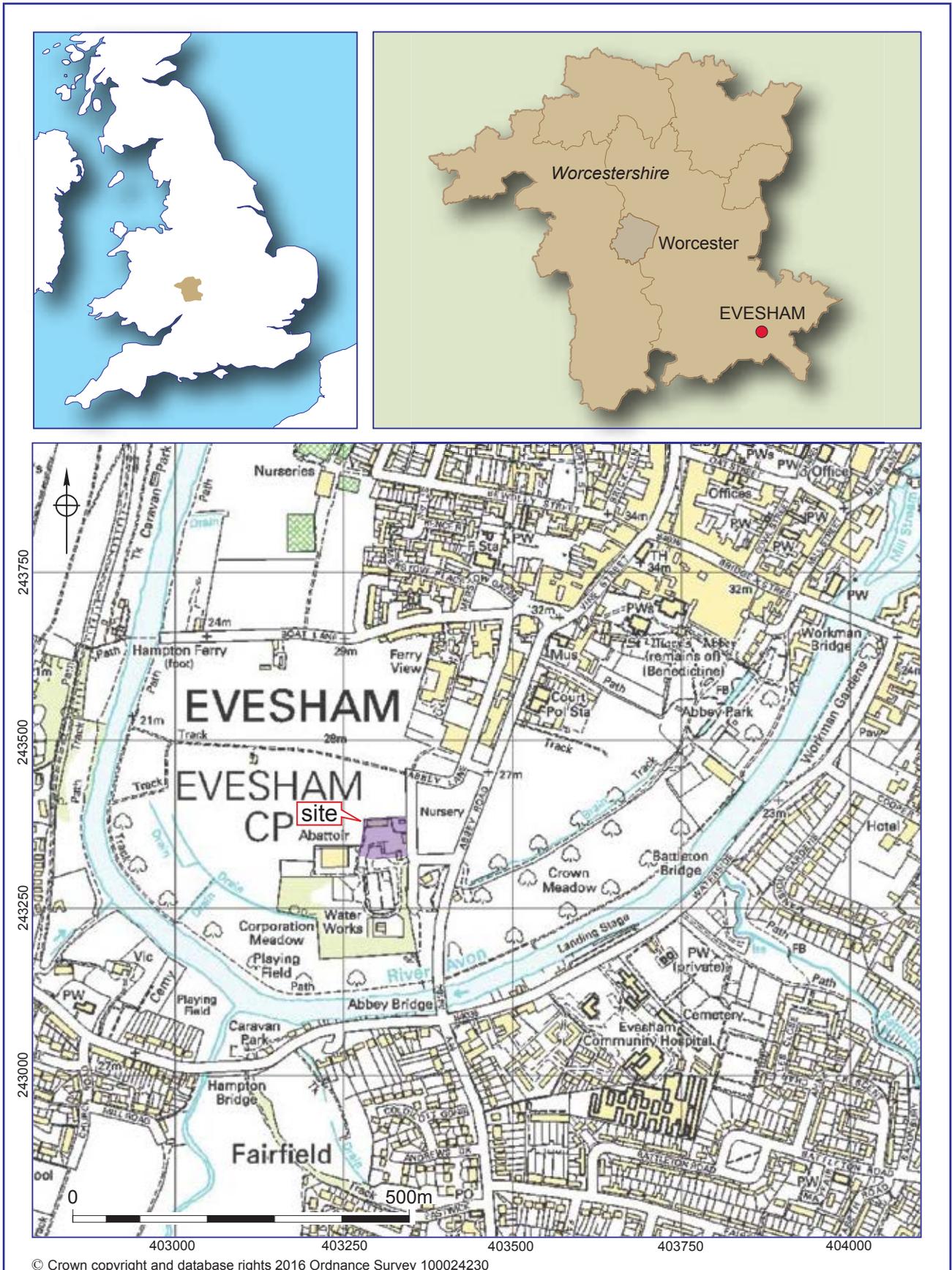
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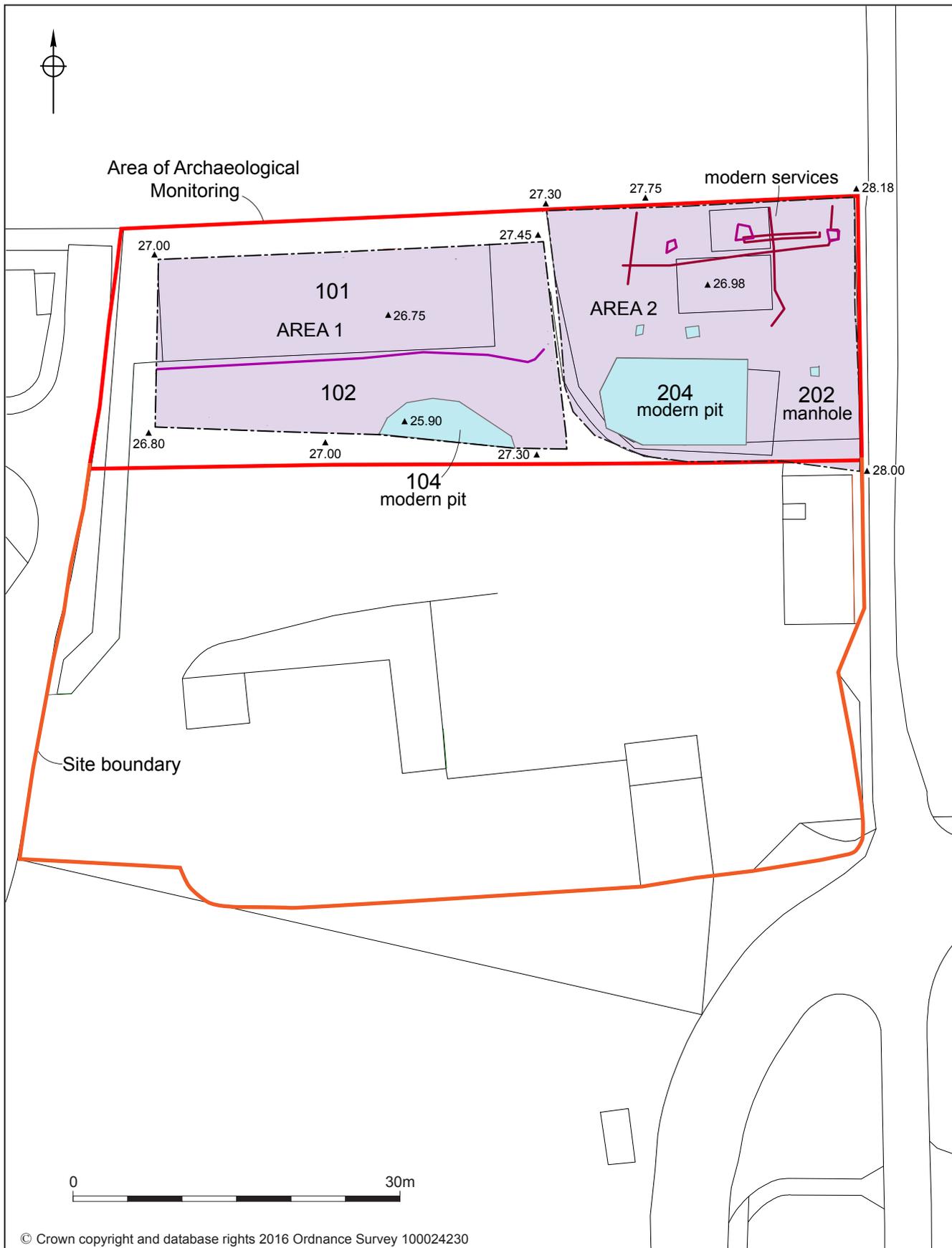
**Figures**



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Location of the site

Figure 1



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Location of Areas 1 and 2

Figure 2

## Plates



*Plate 1: Area 1 during demolition phase prior to excavation; view north-west*



*Plate 2: Area 2 during demolition phase, prior to excavation; view north-east*

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*Plate 3: Area 1 with hardstanding removed, to finished depth; view west*



*Plate 4: Area 2 showing raised ground between area 1 and 2; view east*



*Plate 5: Pit 104 excavated to final depth; view north-east*



*Plate 6: Initial topsoil strip of northern area of Area 1; view east*

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*Plate 7: Area 2 stripped to natural construction impact depth; view north-east*



*Plate 8: Made ground deposit in southern extent of Area 2; view north-east*



*Plate 9: Collection of late 19<sup>th</sup> Century glass bottles and ceramic jars from pit 104 and 204*



*Plate 10: Collection of late 19<sup>th</sup> Century glass bottles and ceramic jars from pit 104 and 204*

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## Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

### Main deposit descriptions

#### Area 1

Site area: Western hardstanding

Maximum dimensions: Length: 38.00m Width: 22.00m Depth: 0.50 – 1.20m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Hardstanding	Medium orange/brown fine soft sandy silt with frequent root action and worm sorting. Contains occasional medium flecks of charcoal, rare tile and rare clay pipe. Cut by one modern water pipe trench.	0.00 - 0.30m
101	Modern hardcore	Medium orange friable silty sand with worm sorting and root action present in upper 0.10m. Also cut by water pipe trench.	0.30-0.40m
102	Disturbed Natural and made ground	Pale orange to pink/orange with patches of grey compact bedded sand and soft sandstone. Contains occasional silt channels and patches of grey silty material. Cut by water pipe trench and modern posthole.	0.40m +
103	Fill of pit	Loose dark brownish grey, silty sand, fire ash and clinker with frequent 19 <sup>th</sup> - 20 <sup>th</sup> Century pot brick and glass bottles. Modern rubbish dump.	0.40 – 1.90m +
104	Cut of pit	Area of modern disturbance aligned east-west and measuring 12.50m x 4.00m and at least 1.20m deep	0.40 – 1.90m +

**Area 2**

Site area: Eastern grassed area, formerly cottage

Maximum dimensions: Length: 28.00m Width: 22.00m Depth: 0.60 -1.20m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Topsoil	Medium orange/brown fine soft sandy silt with frequent root action and worm sorting. Contains occasional medium flecks of charcoal, rare tile and rare clay pipe. Cut by one modern water pipe trench.	0.30m
201	Subsoil	Medium orange friable silty sand with worm sorting and root action present in upper 0.10m. Also cut by water pipe trench.	0.10m
202	Natural	Pale orange to pink/orange with patches of grey compact bedded sand and soft sandstone. Contains occasional silt channels and patches of grey silty material. Cut by water pipe trench and modern posthole.	0.40m
203	Fill of pit	Loose dark brownish grey silty sand, fire ash, and clinker with frequent 19 <sup>th</sup> 20 <sup>th</sup> Century pot. brick and glass bottles. Modern rubbish dump.	0.40 – 1.50m +
204	Cut of pit	Area of modern disturbance and contaminated ground. Large pit aligned east west and at least 1.50m deep. Base was not reached.	0.40 – 1.50m +

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## **Appendix 2 Technical information**

### **The archive (site code: WSM 67622)**

The archive consists of:

- 4 Context records AS1
- 3 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 37 Digital photographs
- 2 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 Box of finds
- 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  
Near Kidderminster  
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ  
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

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