

Archaeological evaluation of land off Bromyard Terrace, St Johns Worcester



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Worcestershire Archaeology
Archive and Archaeology Service
The Hive, Sawmill Walk,
The Butts, Worcester
WR1 3PD

Date: 27th April 2015
Author: Tom Rogers 01905 765908
Contributors: Rob Hedge
Illustrator: Carolyn Hunt
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Archaeological evaluation of land off Bromyard Terrace, St Johns Worcester

Tom Rogers

With contributions by Rob Hedge and Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at land off Bromyard Terrace, St Johns Worcester (NGR 384059,254548). It was undertaken on behalf of Mr D Stiff of BB Architecture and Planning Ltd, who intend residential development of the site for which a planning application is in preparation.

The site comprises three gardens to the rear of Angel Inn and other buildings fronting the centre of St Johns, part of Worcester City which lies to the west of the River Severn.

Cartographic evidence demonstrates that the site has been gardens since, at least, 1840.

Three trenches were excavated across the site. A single sherd of Roman pottery was recovered as residual in a later layer which may relate to other early Roman activity known in St Johns.

In two trenches the natural substrate comprising river terrace sands and gravels was revealed at a depth of c1.7m whilst in the central trench it was not present. A machine-dug sondage revealed Mercian mudstone bedrock at a greater depth and it is thought that localised quarrying of the gravel had taken place here. The mudstone was cut by a shallow possibly linear feature overlain by two layers from which Medieval pottery was retrieved.

Two brick walls recorded which are likely to have been a garden features or divisions. It is likely that the site has been backplots to properties fronting St Johns since the medieval period. It is clear that the ground level within the gardens has been built up with waste and rubble relatively recently.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at land off Bromyard Terrace, St Johns, Worcester county (NGR 384060, 254545). It was commissioned by Mr D Stiff of BB Architecture and Planning Ltd, who intend residential development of the site for which a planning application to Worcester City Council is in preparation.

A pre-application enquiry in relation to the proposed development was made to Worcester City Council and the response to this indicated the requirement for an archaeological evaluation to support the application. The scope of the evaluation was established in email correspondence with James Dinn, Archaeological Officer, Worcester City Council.

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014) and *Statement of standards and practices appropriate for archaeological fieldwork in Worcester* (Worcester City Council 1999).

The event reference for this project, given by the HER is WCM102092.

2 Aims

The aims of this evaluation are:

- 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 Written Scheme of Investigation identified the opportunity to address a number of research questions as identified in *An archaeological resource assessment and research framework for the city of Worcester* (version 2.51, dated September 2007), listed below.

- The medieval suburbs (RP5.1)
- Sampling of medieval backplot areas (RP5.12)
- Industry and land-use patterns in the suburbs (RP5.14)
- Colonisation of back-plot areas and land in suburbs in the post-medieval period (RP6.1)
- Investigation of the historic suburbs (RP7.5)

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

Andrew Walsh (BSc; MSc; ACIfA; 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 Rogers, (M.Sc.) Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (Hons.)); Rob Hedge (BA, MA Cantab) contributed the finds report.

3.2 Documentary research

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

3.3 List of sources consulted

Cartographic sources

- St John in Bedwardine Parish Tithe Map of 1840

-
- Ordnance Survey, 1885 Sheet 33 NE
 - Ordnance Survey, 1928 Sheet 33 NE

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 31st March and 1st April 2015. The site reference number and site code is WCM102092. The WSI stated four 10m trenches would be excavated. However due to the presence of two spoil heaps only three trenches could be excavated. Trench 3 was extended to c.15m and two westward extensions to the trench were excavated to give a total length of c.20m. Three trenches amounting to just over 97m² in area, were excavated over the site area of 1165m², representing a sample of 8.3%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2. These were placed in order to assess all three land parcels.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. 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 2012a).

Initially natural deposits were not reached in Trench 2 and, with the agreement of Sheena Payne-Lunn of Worcester City Council, a machine dug sondage was excavated in the southern end of the trench.

On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

The locations of trenches were determined to some degree by the presence of debris on the site.

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 Rob Hedge

3.6.1 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).

3.6.3 Discard policy

The following categories/types of material will be considered for discard after a period of 6 months following the submission of this report, unless there is a specific request to retain them (and subject to the collection policy of the relevant depository):

- where unstratified
- post-medieval pottery, and;
- generally where material has been assessed as having no obvious grounds for retention.

See the environmental section for other discard where appropriate.

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

Evaluation of the site was constrained to some degree by the presence of debris and spoil within the site which did not allow the trenches to be laid out as the original project design. Despite these adjustments, however, the methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. It is unfortunate that, due to a technical error, digital photographs taken during the evaluation did not survive.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The site is recorded as lying on the Holt Heath Sand And Gravel Member, Quaternary deposits derived from the River Severn which lie over bedrock comprising Sidmouth Mudstone.

Archaeological investigations (WCM101591) in the vicinity of Swanpool Walk to the south of the site have revealed evidence for activity between the Middle Iron Age to the post-Roman periods including a large rectangular enclosure which was later re-used as a Saxon burial ground. An evaluation at No 5 The Bull Ring c80m to the east of the site revealed two ditches interpreted as a 1st century enclosure (WCM 98616).

St John's was one of the four suburbs of medieval Worcester. Originally a hamlet based on two clusters of copyhold tenements, it was provided with a chapel, later the parish church in the 12th Century situated at the junction of the Bromyard and Hereford roads to the south west of the site (WCC 2010). During the 13th century housing plots were laid out in this area on land belonging to Worcester Priory and a market place established (WCC 2010).

Substantial industry was never established in the suburb, though evidence for tanneries in the vicinity of the Malvern Road was recorded in the form of pits containing horn cores. A tannery (WCM98099) is marked on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map immediately to the north-east of the site, now Co-op car park. A steam saw mill to the north-west of the site (WCM98097) is also shown on the map.

Numerous historic buildings are recorded on the HER fronting St Johns and The Bull Ring. The former Angel Inn (WCM98591) which stands on the frontage of the site is a brick building with a slate roof dating from the first half of the 19th Century.

The St John in Bedwardine Parish Tithe Map of 1840 depicts the site as gardens to the rear of the St Johns frontage with three long, narrow outbuildings. These, and other smaller buildings are shown on the 1st edition Ordnance survey map, at which point the building to the front of the eastern parcel is labelled 'Inn' referring to the Angel Inn. It is likely that the long buildings were stables.

4.2 Current land-use

The site currently three gardens to the rear of St Johns and to the east of Bromyard Terrace. The site lies within the conservation area for St Johns.

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

Natural deposits were observed in all trenches. Within trenches 1 and 3, this comprised a light yellowish-orange silty sand consistent with the river terrace deposits recorded in this area (104 and 304). Within trench 2, weathered clay mudstone (212) was recorded at a depth of 2.13m within the machine-dug sondage in the southern part of the trench. No sand and gravel deposits were recorded above this stratum.

5.1.2 Phase 2 Roman

A single sherd of Severn Valley Ware was recovered from layer 204 in trench 2. This sherd was residual in this context.

5.1.3 Phase 3: Medieval

Three deposits (204, 209, 302) within trenches 2 and 3 were dated, from artefactual analysis to the medieval period. Layer 204 is a mid greyish-black silty clay revealed at a depth of 1.28m within Trench 2, beneath a series of modern layers of topsoil and rubble. It may represent a former topsoil or subsoil. A sondage dug through this layer in southern half of the trench revealed layer 209 a mid-greyish brown sandy, silty clay, also with medieval pottery, lying over the mudstone bedrock. A shallow possible linear feature, 211 beneath 209 was cut into the natural substrate and was filled by 210 a light orangey-grey silty clay, from which no finds were recovered.

Within Trench 3, layer 302m interpreted as a buried subsoil was also dated to the medieval period by the inclusion of brick and tile fragments, although it is thought that this material may be intrusive in this deposit.

5.2 Phase 4: Post medieval and Modern deposits

Two brick walls were present within Trench 2. Wall 205, which survived to a height of 0.93m and was built of machine made bricks crossed the centre of the trench on an east-west orientation. At the southern edge of the trench, a second wall on a similar orientation survived to a height of 0.8m.

In all three trenches, layers of modern demolition rubble or rubble mixed with topsoil (100, 201, 300) had been deposited on the site.

6 Artefactual analysis, by Rob Hedge

6.1 Introduction

The artefactual assemblage recovered is summarised in Tables 1 and 2.

The assemblage came from three stratified contexts and could be dated from the Roman period onwards (see Table 1), although the majority was medieval in date. Using pottery as an index of artefact condition, this was generally fair, with the majority of sherds displaying moderate levels of abrasion, and the average sherd size being just over average (ie >10g).

period	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight(g)
Roman	ceramic		pot	1	20
medieval	ceramic		pot	6	62
medieval	ceramic		ridge tile	1	128

medieval	ceramic		roof tile	7	402
modern	glass		vessel	1	2
undated	ceramic		brick/tile	1	1
undated	slag	slag(fe)	slag	1	172
Totals:				18	787

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

Broad period	fabric code	Fabric common name	count	weight(g)
Romano-British	12	Severn Valley ware	1	20
Medieval	55	Worcester-type sandy unglazed ware	3	26
Medieval	56	Malvernian unglazed ware	2	24
Medieval	69	Oxidized glazed Malvernian ware	1	12
Totals:			7	82

Table 2 Quantification of the pottery by fabric

6.2 Summary artefactual evidence by period

For the finds from individual features, including specific types of pottery, consult Tables 3 and 2 in that order and in combination.

Roman

A single abraded residual sherd of oxidised Severn Valley Ware, of mid-1st to 4th century date was recovered from context (204).

Medieval

Context (204): rim sherds of a mid-13th to 14th century Malvernian unglazed ware (fabric 56) wheelmade cooking pot (type 3 or 4; Bryant, 298); a Worcester-type sandy unglazed ware (fabric 55) sherd, the latter abraded; 13th–14th century tile (fabric 2b; Hurst 1992, 155) with traces of decayed glaze, possibly a body fragment of ridge tile.

Context (209): two abraded sherds of 13th–14th century Worcester type sandy unglazed ware and a rim sherd from a mid-13th–14th century oxidised glazed Malvernian ware (fabric 69) type 2 jug; medieval roof tile of 13th–14th century date (fabrics 2a and 2b).

Two further fragments of fabric 2a tile were found within context (302)

Modern

The sole artefact post-dating the medieval period was a shard of modern bottle glass from context (204), dismissed here as intrusive as result of 'trample' (A Walsh, pers. comm.).

Undated

Ironworking slag from context (204) was intrinsically undatable, but, by association with other finds, it has been presumed here to be most likely of medieval date.

context	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight(g)	start date	end date	TPQ date range
204	ceramic		pot	1	20	43	400	1225-1500 (1800-2000*)
	ceramic		pot	1	2	1075	1400	
	ceramic		pot	2	24	1225	1400	

context	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight(g)	start date	end date	TPQ date range
	ceramic		ridge tile	1	128	1200	1500	
	slag	slag(fe)	slag	1	172			
	glass		vessel	1	2	1800	2000	
209	ceramic		roof tile	3	88	1200	1500	
	ceramic		roof tile	2	264	1200	1500	
	ceramic		pot	1	12	1225	1400	
	ceramic		pot	2	24	1075	1400	1225-1500
302	ceramic		brick/tile	1	1			
	ceramic		roof tile	2	50	1200	1500	1200-1500

Table 3: Summary of context dating based on artefacts (* date of intrusive material)

7 Synthesis

A single sherd of Roman pottery was recovered as residual in a later layer. Roman activity on this side of the river is known from two ditches interpreted as a 1st century enclosure (WCM 98616) identified in an evaluation at No 5 The Bull Ring c80m to the east of the site. Roman activity was also recorded during archaeological investigations (WCM101591) in the vicinity of Swanpool Walk in which occupation activity from the Middle Iron Age period to the post-Roman period was recorded including a large rectangular enclosure.

In trenches 1 and 3, the natural substrate comprised river terrace sands and gravels revealed at a depth of c1.7m. This layer was not, however, present in the Trench 2 in the centre of the site. Here layers 204 and 209, both dated to the medieval period, overlay mudstone bedrock into which a feature containing a single undated fill was cut. It is probable that the sands and gravels at this location had been quarried in the medieval period, but if so, this was a very localised activity as trenches 1 and 2 were both less than 7m from the edge of the trench. The linear feature may represent a phase of gravel extraction.

The medieval assemblage retrieved from layers 204, 209 and 302 is consistent with medieval domestic activity of the mid-13th to 14th century and probably relates to occupation of the buildings on the frontage. Two brick walls recorded in Trench 2 are likely to have been a garden features or divisions. It is clear that the ground level within the gardens has been built up with waste and rubble relatively recently.

It is considered likely that the site has been backplots to the properties fronting St Johns since establishment of housing plots in this area in the 13th Century.

8 Significance

8.1 Nature of the archaeological interest in the site

Archaeological interest in the site is comprises the survival of a linear feature of medieval, or earlier date, evidence for the extraction of sands and gravels and the survival of three layers containing domestic medieval pottery.

8.2 Relative importance of the archaeological interest in the site

The evaluation has demonstrated the survival of medieval layers within the site and evidence of gravel extraction. This contributes to the understanding of the use of medieval backplot areas in this suburb of Worcester as identified in research priority RP5.12.

8.3 Physical extent of the archaeological interest in the site

Medieval layers within Trench 2 the survived from a depth of 1.28m below the present ground level. The lateral extent of these deposits is not known but they do not continue as far as trenches 1 and 2.

9 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.

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Cartographic evidence demonstrates that the site has been gardens since, at least, 1840.

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Two brick walls recorded which are likely to have been a garden features or divisions. It is likely that the site has been backplots to properties fronting St Johns since the medieval period. It is clear that the ground level within the gardens has been built up with waste and rubble relatively recently.

10 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Dan Stiff of BB Architecture and Planning Ltd, and James Dinn and Sheena Payne-Lunn of Worcester City Council.

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Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983 *Midland and Western England*, sheet 3, scale 1:250,000 + Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales (A brief explanation of the constituent soil associations)

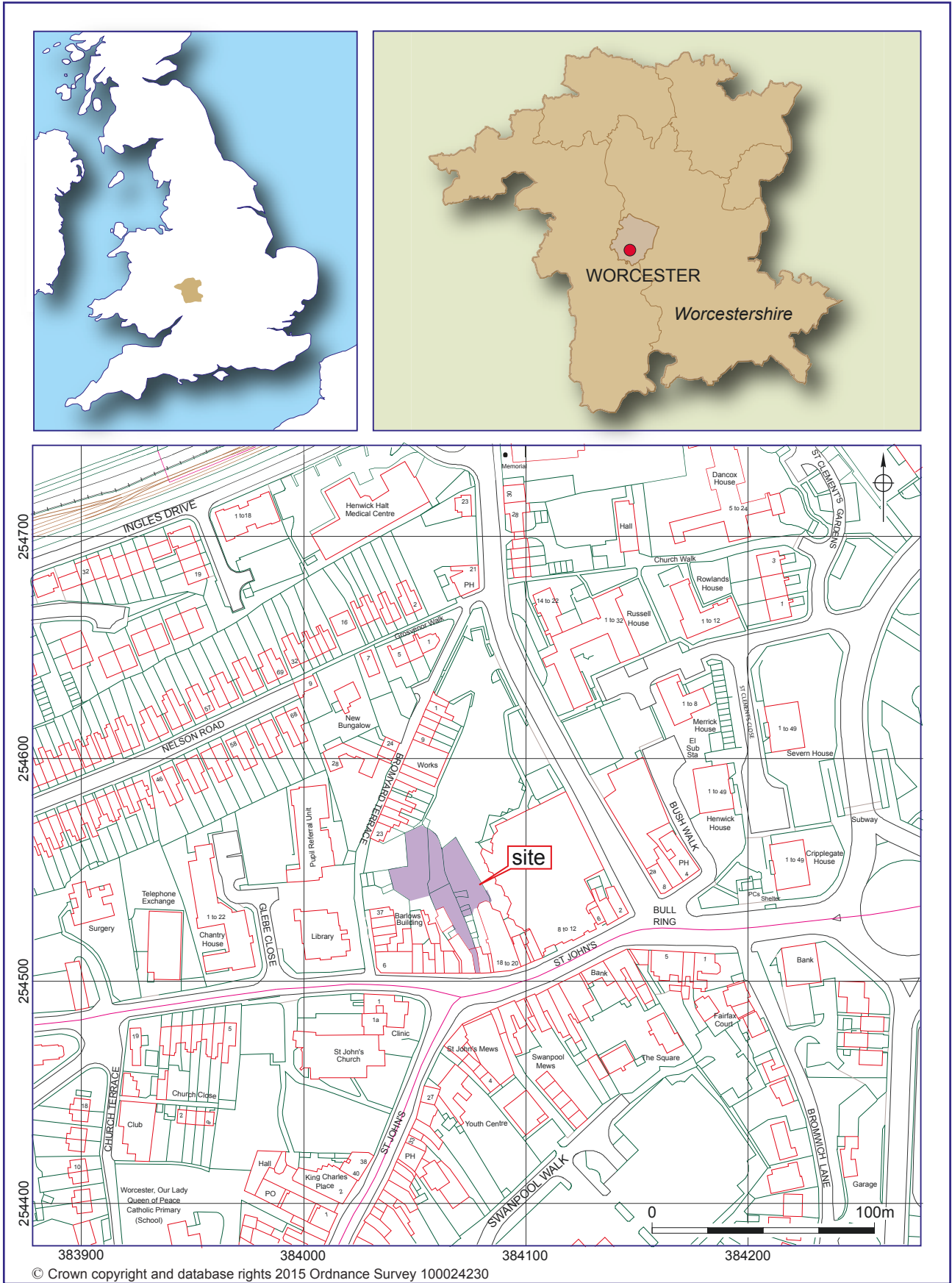
WA 2012 *Manual of service practice, recording manual*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, report **1842**

WA 2015 Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological evaluation of land off Bromyard Terrace, St Johns, Worcester, unpublished document dated 12th March 2015, **P4534**

Worcester City Council 1999 *Statement of standards and practices appropriate for archaeological fieldwork in Worcester*, Appendix 3 in Supplementary Planning Guidance Number 8: Archaeology and Development, Worcester City Council, document revised June 1999

Worcester City Council 2010 *St Johns Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals*

Figures



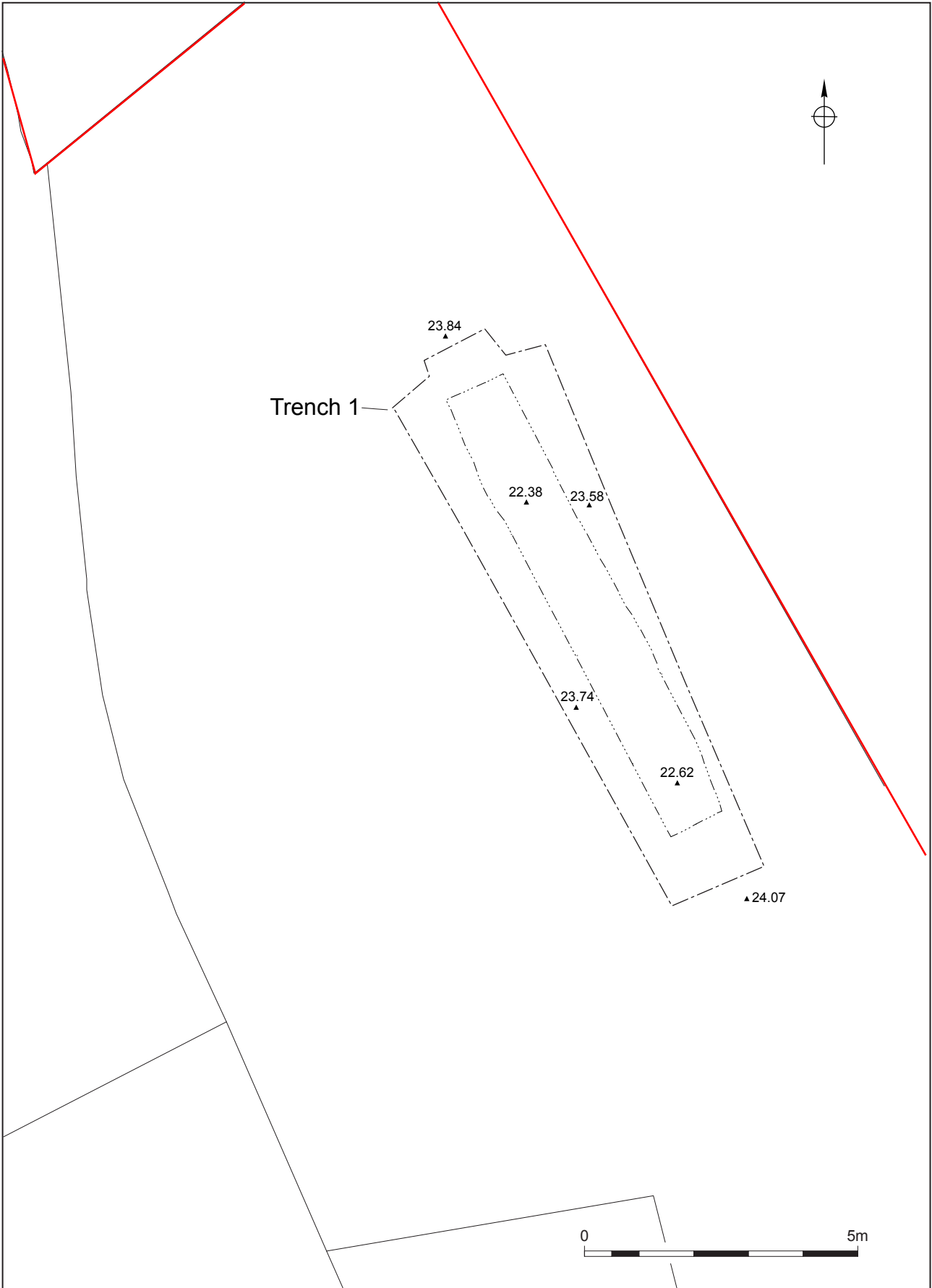
Location of the site

Figure 1



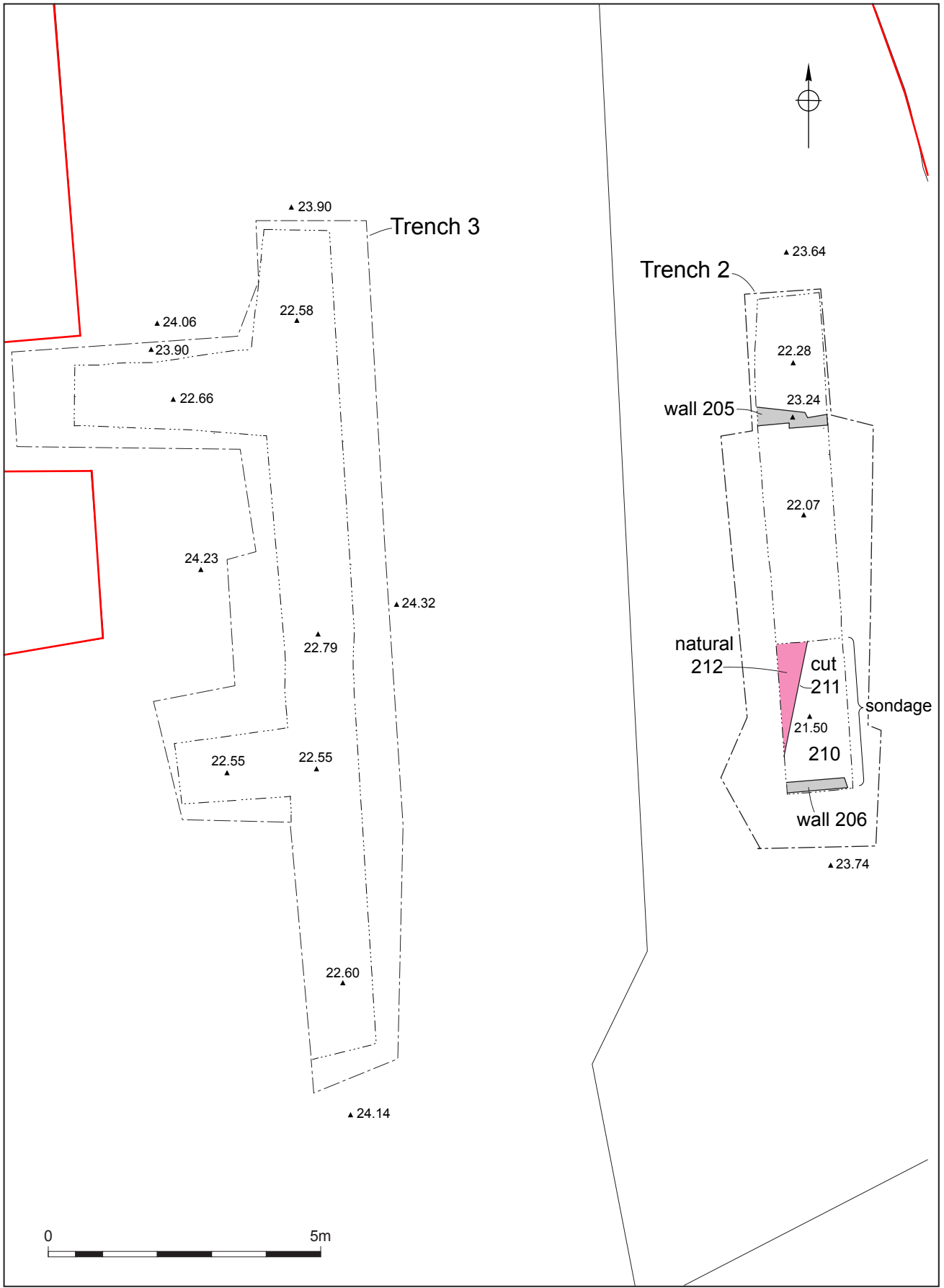
Trench location plan

Figure 2



Trench 1: plan

Figure 3



Trench 2 and 3: plans

Figure 4

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 10m Width: 1.1m Depth: 1.7m

Orientation: NW-SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil with demolition material	Topsoil mixed with construction/demolition rubble. Dark blackish brown with frequent CBM fragments, brick and pebbles. No significant finds. Very dense with tree rooting.	0.0-0.4m
101	Buried topsoil	Secondary topsoil /subsoil under the construction debris. Mid greyish-brown silty loam, soft and loose. Frequent small stones, few CBM fragments, rare charcoal flecks. A typical rich garden soil. Homogenous throughout with limited rooting.	0.4m – 0.85m
102	Diffuse subsoil	Diffuse layer between 101 and 103. Mid brownish-orange moderately firm layer with frequent small and medium sub-rounded stones. Limited rooting and homogenous throughout.	0.85-1.2m
103		Yellowish Orange Soft and friable silty sand with small and medium sub-rounded stones. Similar to 104 but with a more granular consistency.	1.2m – 1.7m
104	Natural	Light yellowish-orange soft and friable silty sand with rare small stones. Natural terrace deposit.	1.7m+

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 10m Width: 1.4m Depth: 1.5m (2.1m in sondage)

Orientation: north-south

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Topsoil	Loose, blackish-grey silty loam. Very rooted with occasional small, medium and sub-rounded stones. Typical garden soil.	0.0 – 0.3m
201	Layer of rubble.	Layer of rubble similar to context 100. Demolition material including fragmented brick and stones mixed with topsoil. Section of tarmac to the west.	0.3m – 0.55m
202	Buried topsoil	Dark greyish-brown silty loam with occasional cbm fragments. Similar to topsoil 200 though less rooted and more compact.	0.55m – 0.88m
203	Layer	Soft, mid greyish-brown silty sand with rare small sub-angular stones but no other inclusions or finds.	0.8m – 1.28m
204	Layer	Mid-greyish black silty clay with occasional small rounded stones.	1.28m – 1.63m
205	Structure	Foundation of garden wall. Machine made mortared red bricks. Wall standing to 0.93m high and 0.4m wide. Its previous extent can be seen as a join in the wall currently standing to the west of the trench.	
206	Structure	Modern brick wall extending into southern edge of trench. Cuts 205	
207	Cut	Cut for structure 205	
208	Cut	Cut for structure 206	
209	Layer	Soft, mid greyish-brown sandy silty clay with occasional charcoal flecking. Finds include CBM and pottery.	1.63 – 1.93
210	Layer	Loose light orangey-grey silty clay Fill of 211.	1.93 – 2.13
211	Cut	Shallow linear cut, 0.2m deep, cut into natural 212.	1.73m+

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
212	Natural	Mercian mudstone natural.	2.13m+

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 15m Width: 1.2m Depth: 1.7m

Orientation: north-south

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Topsoil with demolition rubble	Soft and friable, dark blackish-grey silty loam with occasional small sub-rounded stones. Some modern rubble material. Well rooted	0.0 – 0.4m
301	Topsoil	Similar to (300) but with no rubble inclusions. Likely to be original topsoil prior to dumping of rubble.	0.4m – 0.8m
302	Subsoil	Soft and loose, dark orangey brown silty sand with rare small stones and rare CBM flecks.	0.8m – 1.45m
303	Interface layer	Very soft dark orangey-brown silty sand with occasional small and medium sub-rounded stones. Similar to 304 but darker.	1.45m – 1.6m
304	Natural	Very fine light yellowish-orange silty sand	1.6m+

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code: WCM102092)

The archive consists of:

- 2 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 4 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
