Archaeological evaluation at New Holyoakes Field First School, Brockhill East, Redditch, Worcestershire

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Tim Cornah

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at New Holyoakes Field First School, Brockhill East, Redditch, Worcestershire (NGR SP 03270 68790). It was commissioned by Place Partnership Ltd and undertaken on behalf of Worcestershire County Council, who intends the construction of a new school as part of the Brockhill East Estate for which a planning application has been submitted.

Eleven trenches were excavated across the site in order to investigate its varying topographic areas.

No significant archaeological features, layers, structures or finds were identified during the investigations. The Iron Age activity previously identified adjacent to the south was not found to extend within the present site.

The use of the site is considered to have been agricultural, as seen by medieval ridge and furrow in the vicinity and the post-medieval field boundaries. Some quarrying and water management systems were known in the adjacent fields. It is likely that one of the small ditches found within the southernmost trench was part of the water management system, with the other possibly draining into this. The evidence of quarrying seen within the eastern trenches is consistent with the extent of late 20th century quarrying indicated on OS maps.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at New Holyoakes Field First School, Brockhill East, Redditch, Worcestershire (NGR SP 03270 68790). It was commissioned by Place Partnership Ltd and undertaken on behalf of Worcestershire County Council, who intends the construction of a new school as part of the Brockhill East Estate for which a planning application has been submitted to Redditch District Council (reference CM/16/000007/REG3).

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

The project conforms to a brief prepared by the Planning Advisory Section of Worcestershire County Council (WCC 2016) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2016).

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

The event reference for this project, given by the HER is WSM68334.

2 Aims

The aims of the evaluation brief were to

- determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits beyond reasonable doubt;
- identify their location, nature date and preservation;
- assess their significance;
- assess the likely impact of the proposed development

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The fieldwork was led by Peter Lovett (BSc (hons.)); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2012 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004, assisted by Timothy Cornah (BA (hons.), MSc), who also prepared the report, and Graham Arnold (BA (hons.). 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).

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

- *1844 Transcription of the Tardebigge Tithe Map*
- *1st edition Ordnance Survey map 1884, scale 25":1 mile*
- *1905 Ordnance Survey map, scale 25":1 mile*
- *1930 Ordnance Survey map, scale 25":1 mile*
- *1938 Ordnance Survey map, scale 25":1 mile*
- *1952 Ordnance Survey map, scale 1:25,000*

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 2016).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 14 and 18 November 2016. The site reference number and site code is WSM68334.

Eleven trenches, amounting to approximately 960m² in total area, were excavated over the site area of 24ha, representing a sample of 4%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2. The trenches were located in order to gain representative samples of the various topographic areas of the site. Trenches 7 and 9 to 11 targeted the relatively flat topography of the top of the hill. Trenches 1 to 6 and 8 targeted the slope along the western side of the site. Trenches 3 and 6 targeted a possible former channel on the western boundary of the site.

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

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

3.6.1 Artefact recovery policy

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no artefacts pre-dating the modern period were identified, and these were not retained.

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, as all areas of the site were available for trenching, the required trench sample was reached, and potential features were tested and recorded.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The site lies on the upper ground of a hilltop spur, with valleys to its south, east and west. These valleys were the location of the Red Ditch. The upward slope continues to the top of the hill *c* 250m to the north-east. The highest point of the site is at *c* 132m AOD and it slopes down to the south and west where the height is *c* 117m AOD in the south-west corner.

The bedrock geology of the site is Mercian Mudstone, formed in the Triassic period. Whilst no superficial deposits are recorded for much of the site, an area of Mid Pleistocene glacio-fluvial deposits consisting of sand and gravels are recorded on the eastern part of the site (BGS 2016).

The earliest activity within the area of the site was in the form of an enclosure dating to the Iron Age period immediately to the south of the site (WSM46351). The kidney shaped enclosure ditch was excavated by Worcestershire Archaeology. Although no interior features relating to settlement were identified a very rare Iron Age cremation, the first to be found in Worcestershire, was found in the upper fill of the recut ditch. The finds assemblage suggested both habitation and iron working of middle to late Iron Age date. No Roman pottery was recovered from the site, suggesting it was abandoned before this time (Mann 2012). To the south and east of the site was the location of a saltway from Beoley to Droitwich (WSM37590) which was established in the Roman era and is thought to have followed the course of the Red Ditch on its southern side.

To the north-east of the site is the deserted medieval settlement at Weights Lane (WSM00017). Likely to be of the same date, three areas of ridge and furrow were present to the north and north-east of the site (WSM09858 and WSM57466) as well as to the south-east of the site (WSM21315). The latter of these extended into the southern boundary of the site. A picture of agricultural use continues into the post-medieval era with the establishment of Lowans Hill Farm in the 18th century (WSM54852, WSM41577 and WSM33278) and then Ireland Farm in the 19th century (WSM55271). An number of pits are also recorded around the area that relate to quarrying of marl (WSM57467)

The Red Ditch was also managed through the post-medieval era with the construction of mill ponds (WSM05546) associated with the Old Mills which were used as both needle and corn mills (WSM00038). Immediately to the south of the site is an area which contains earthwork related to water management, feeding the Red Ditch (WSM21314).

The first mapping of the site was in 1844 with the Tithe Map. The site is shown as across three fields labelled as Croft, Spring Piece and Graingers Meadow. A small pond is shown to the west of Lowans Farm, this is also shown on the subsequent Ordnance Survey mapping. The farm is Loans Hill Farm on the OS mapping and the field boundaries are shown broadly as remaining. A sand pit is identified on the OS map of 1971, covering the eastern third of the site and extending beyond the site boundaries to the north-east (Shire Geotechnical 2016, Appendix G).

A significant use of the area in the 20th century relates to the protection of the HAD Forgings buildings (WSM37530) to the south-east of the site which manufactured military components during the Second World War. A Royal Observer Corp monitoring post remains partially extant at the top of the hill to the north of the site (WSM25032), along with a possible gun emplacement, pill boxes, an anti-aircraft gun battery, a flame fougasse and a rifle range.

4.2 Current land-use

The site was in pastoral agricultural use.

5 Results

5.1 Structural analysis

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

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

Natural deposits (103, 203, 304, 403, 503, 603, 702 and 804) consisted of compact red clay marls, consistent with the weathered surface of mudstone. Within Trenches 9 and 11 (Plates 2 and 3), the natural deposits (904 and 1104) consisted of fairly compact red and yellow sands with some gravel content. These are consistent with glacio-fluvial deposits.

At the western end of Trench 6 at the base of the slope, four deposits (604, 605, 606 and 607) were present that consisted largely of silty clay layers with a band of gravels between (Plate 4). The base deposit (607) consisted of mixed orangey brown and mottled blue grey clay with diffuse and poorly defined edges. It is considered unlikely to have been a cut feature but formed as a result of relatively low energy water action. The deposits are consistent with waterborne formation and are within a valley in the lowest part of the site. The same formation process is suggested for the deposits recorded within Trench 3 (303 and 304).

5.1.2 Phase 2: Undated deposits

Colluvial deposits were recorded in the western part of the site towards the base of the slope in Trenches 2-6 and 8. These deposits (202, 302, 402, 502, 602 and 802) consisted of a light to mid-greyish brown silty clay that increased in depth towards the base of the slope. These sealed the waterborne deposits assigned to the previous phase, but were otherwise undated.

Subsoil deposits were seen in most trenches (102, 201, 301, 401, 501, 601, 701, 801 and 903) comprised of a light brown silty clay. These deposits increased in depth towards the base of the hill to the west and were largely not present on the eastern side of the site at the top of the hill. This is likely to be due to the quarrying activity identified as Phase 4.

5.1.3 Phase 3: Post-medieval deposits

Two small ditches were present within Trenches 1 and 5.

Ditch [508] (Plate 5) formed part of an earthwork visible on the ground that ran around the contour of hill. The fill contained a single horseshoe of later post-medieval date. This feature is likely to be part of the water management system discussed in the background section above.

Ditch [105] (Plate 6) ran down the slope of the hill in a north-west to south-east direction and contained material such as ceramic and slate roof tiles, of 19th century date. This feature is likely to have had a drainage function connected to the farm to its east. This feature possibly drained into [508].

5.1.4 Phase 4: Modern deposits

Three large features were present in Trenches 9, 10 and 11. These features [902, 1002 and 1107] extended for the full length of Trench 11, most of the length of Trench 9 and into the eastern end of Trench 11 (Plate 7). All three of these contained modern material. [902] extended to a depth greater than 2.50m below the surface. [1002] extended to at least 1.90m below the surface. This area of the site is recorded as containing sands and gravels, so the quarrying noted on the 1971 OS map is a likely function. Deposit (102) is also considered likely to relate to this activity.

Topsoils were present across the site (100, 200, 300, 400, 500, 600, 700, 800, 900, 1000 and 1100) and consisted of dark blackish grey sandy clay silt.

6 Synthesis

No significant archaeological features, layers, structures or finds were identified during the investigations. The Iron Age activity previously identified adjacent to the south was not found to extend within the present site.

The use of the site is considered to have been agricultural, as seen by medieval ridge and furrow in the vicinity and the post-medieval field boundaries. Some quarrying and water management systems were known in the adjacent fields. It is likely that one of the small ditches found within the southernmost trench was part of the water management system, with the other possibly draining into this. The evidence of quarrying seen within the eastern trenches is consistent with the extent of late 20th century quarrying indicated on OS maps.

7 The impact of the development

The historic environment is a non-renewable resource and therefore cannot be directly replaced. However mitigation through recording and investigation also produces an important research dividend that can be used for the better understanding of the area's history and contribute to local and regional research agendas (cf NPPF, DCLG 2012, section 141).

The development is likely to have no significant archaeological impact, given the absence of notable features.

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 evaluation was commissioned by Place Partnership Ltd and undertaken on behalf of Worcestershire County Council at New Holyoakes Field First School, Brockhill East, Redditch, Worcestershire (NGR SP 03270 68790; WSM 68334).

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9 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Robert Lewin-Jones (Principal Architect, Jacobs UK Ltd), Lindsay Harris (Project Manager, Place Partnership Ltd) and Aisling Nash (Historic Environment Advisor, Worcestershire County Council).

10 Bibliography

AAF 2011 *Archaeological archives: a guide to the best practice in the creation, compilation, transfer and curation,* Archaeological Archives Forum, http://www.archaeologyuk.org/archives/

BGS 2016 *Geology of Britain Viewer*, http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html, British Geological Survey, accessed 28 November 2016

CIfA 2014a *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation,* Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, http://www.archaeologists.net/codes/ifa

CIfA 2014b *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials,* Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, http://www.archaeologists.net/codes/ifa

DCLG 2012 *National Planning Policy Framework*, Department for Communities and Local Government

Mann, A C, 2012 *Archaeological excavation at land east of Brockhill Lane, Redditch, Worcestershire*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished report **1934**, dated 3 October 2012, WSM 46074, P3805

Shire Geotechnical 2016 *Ground Investigation Report: Holyoakes Field First School*, project number **G-16-054**, unpublished report dated April 2016

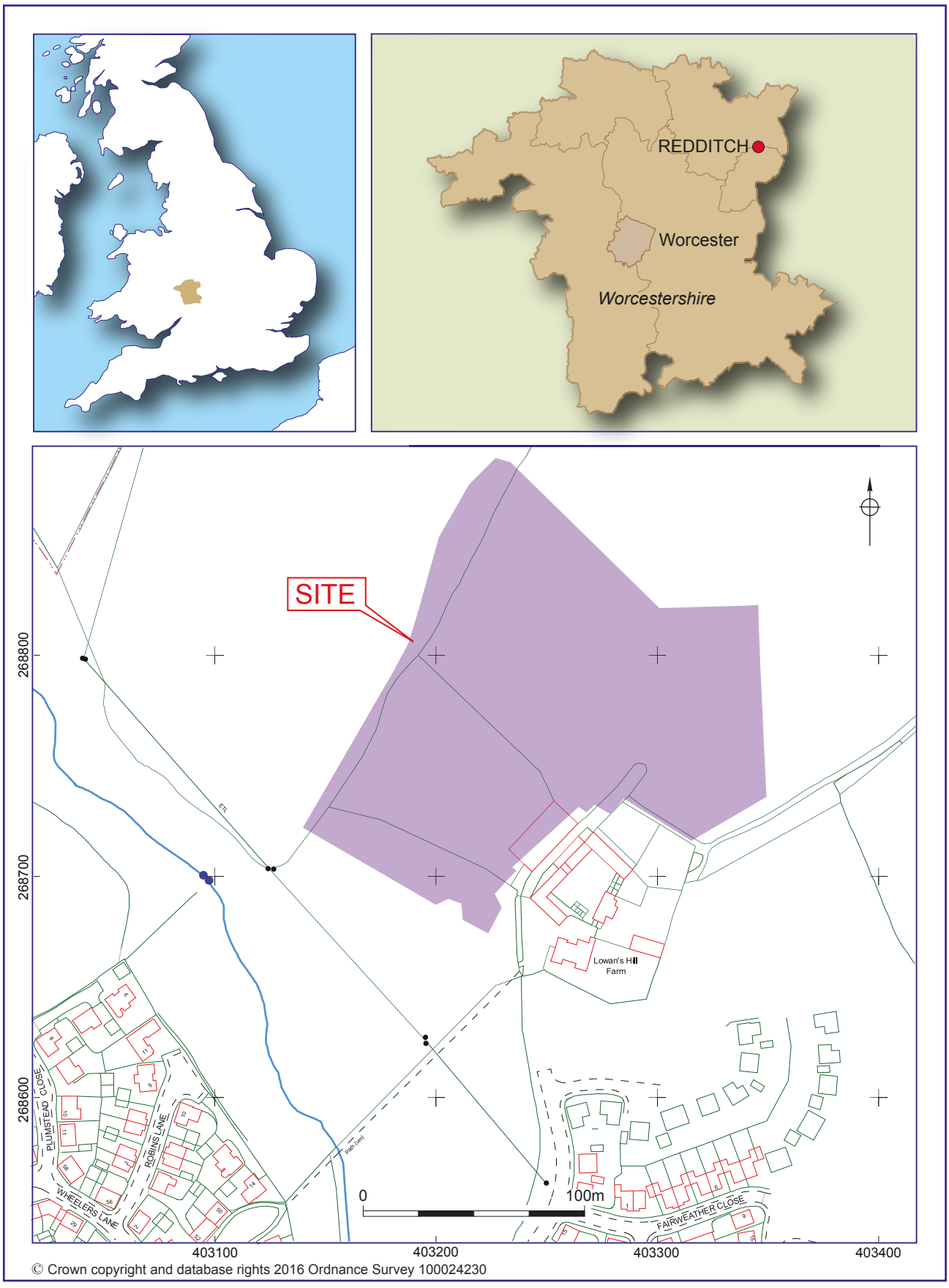
WA 2012 *Manual of service practice, recording manual*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, report **1842**

WA 2016 *Proposal for an archaeological evaluation at New Holyoakes Field First School, Lowan's Hill Farm, Brockhill East, Redditch, Worcestershire*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 20 September 2016, **P4930**

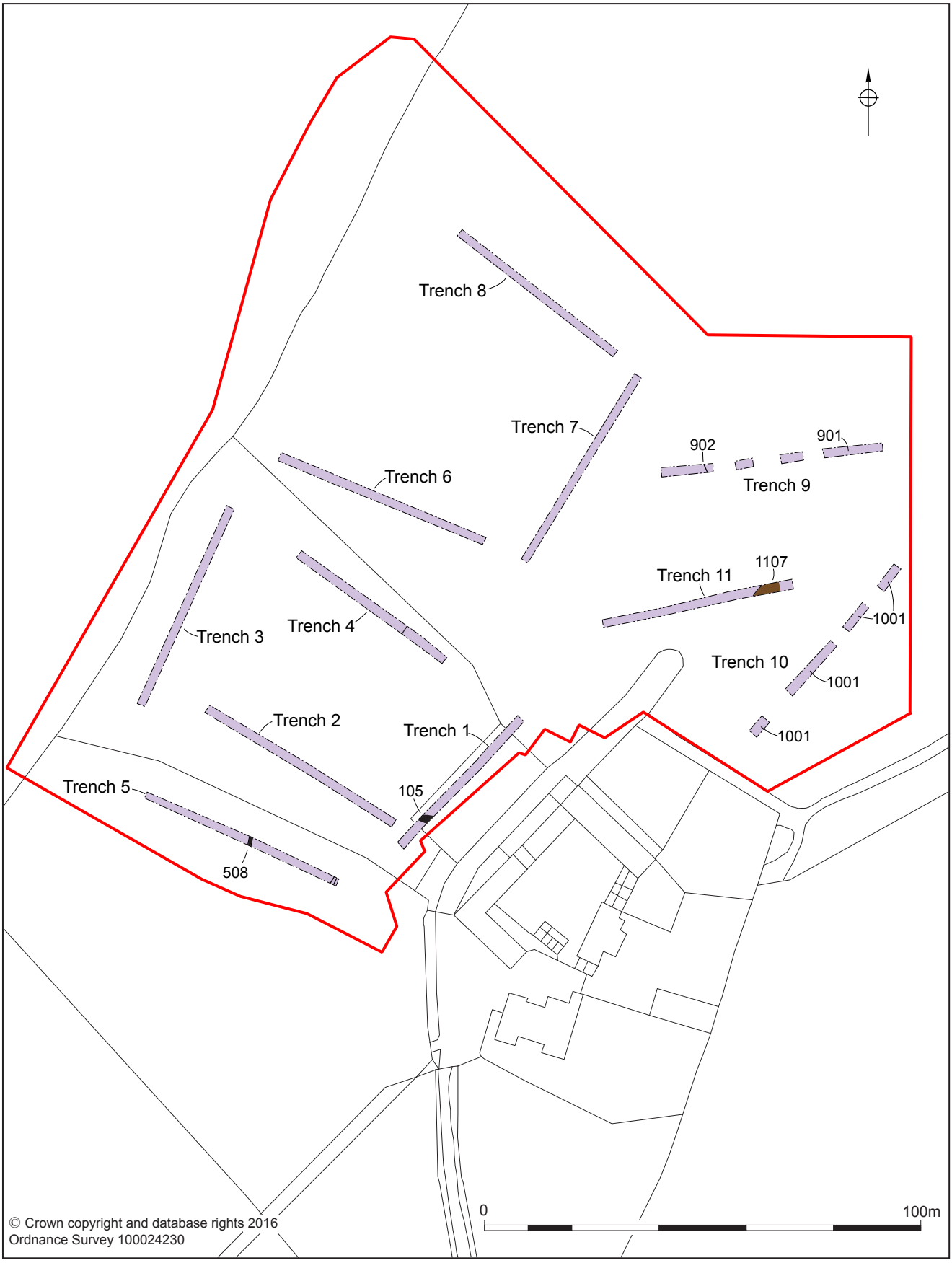
WCC 2010 *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire*, Planning Advisory Section, Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council unpublished report **604**, amended July 2012

WCC 2016 *Requirements for an Archaeological Evaluation on land at Brockhill East, adjacent to Lowan's Hill Farm, Redditch, Worcestershire*, Information and Advisory Section, Archive and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council unpublished document dated 14 July 2016

Figures



Location of the site *Figure 1*



Trench location plan *Figure 2*

Plates

Plate 1 The site, looking south-east

Plate 2 Natural deposits within Trench 6, looking north-west

Plate 3 Natural deposits within Trench 9, looking east

Plate 4 Natural waterborne deposits within Trench 6, looking south-west

Plate 5 Ditch 508, looking south

Plate 6 Ditch 105, looking east

Plate 7 Quarrying backfill deposits in Trench 9, looking south

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Main deposit descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 40m Width: 1.8m Depth: 1.15m

Orientation: NE-SW

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Dark blackish grey sandy silt with occasional stones and brick fragments	0-0.20m
101	Made ground	Moderately compact gravelly sand and clay, fill of 106	0.10-0.90m
102	Subsoil	moderately compact yellowish orange brown silty clay with frequent gravels	0.20-0.60m
103	Natural	Compact natural red clay marl with some gravel pockets	>0.40m

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50m Width: 1.8m Depth: 1m

Orientation: NW-SE

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Topsoil	Friable dark greyish brown clayey silt	0-0.24m
201	Subsoil	light orangey brown silty clay	0.24-0.40m
202	Colluvium	Mid greyish brown firm sandy silt with occasional gravels	0.24-0.58m
203	Natural	Compact natural red clay marl with some gravel pockets	>0.58m

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 45m Width: 1.8m Depth: 1-1.60m

Orientation: NE-SW

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Topsoil	Friable dark greyish brown clayey silt	0-0.30m
301	Subsoil	light orangey brown silty clay	0.30-0.55m
302	Colluvium	Mid greyish brown firm sandy silt with occasional gravels	0.50-0.90m
303	Alluvium	Blue grey gleyed firm silty sand with rare charcoal flecks and occasional gravels	1-1.60m
304	Natural	Compact natural red clay marl with some gravel pockets	1.60->1.90m

Trench 4

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50m Width: 1.8m Depth: 1.20m

Orientation: NW-SE

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
400	Topsoil	Friable dark greyish brown clayey silt	0-0.22m
401	Subsoil	light orangey brown silty clay	0.22-0.42m
402	Colluvium	Mid greyish brown firm sandy silt with occasional gravels	0.42-0.85m
403	Natural	Compact natural red clay marl with some gravel pockets	0.85->1.20m
404	Fill	Mid reddish brown silt sand with frequent rounded stones and modern material	Not excavated
405	Quarry pit	Cut for a modern quarry pit, filled by 404	Not excavated

Trench 5

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50m Width: 1.8m Depth: 0.50-0.80m

Orientation: NW-SE

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
500	Topsoil	Friable dark greyish brown clayey silt	0-0.20m
501	Subsoil	light orangey brown silty clay	0.20-0.40m
502	Colluvium	Mid greyish brown firm sandy silt with occasional gravels	0.40-0.80m
503	Natural	Compact natural red clay marl with some gravel pockets	0.40->0.80m
504	Modern service	Fill of 505	0.20m
505	Modern service	Modern service trench	0.20m
506	Topsoil	Mid greyish brown silty clay, redeposited topsoil fill of 508	0.24m
507	Fill	Light brownish grey silty sand with frequent rounded pebbles, fill of 507	0.10m
508	Ditch	Cut of a small ditch, still visible as an earthwork running around the hill, filled by 507	0.34m

Trench 6

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50m Width: 1.8m Depth: 1.60m

Orientation: NW-SE

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
600	Topsoil	Friable dark greyish brown clayey silt	0-0.20m
601	Subsoil	light orangey brown silty clay	0.20-0.40m
602	Colluvium	Mid greyish brown firm sandy silt with occasional gravels	0.40-0.70m
603	Natural	Compact natural red clay marl with some gravel pockets	1.60m
604	Alluvium	Reddish brown sandy clay and gravels	0.50-0.75m
605	Alluvium	Dark purple grey clayy silt0	0.75-1.00m
606	Alluvium	Light grey mottled reddish brown silty clay	1-1.40m
607	Alluvium	Mixed blue red clay	1.40-1.90m

Trench 7

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50m Width: 1.8m Depth: 0.62m

Orientation: NE-SW

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
700	Topsoil	Friable dark greyish brown clayey silt	0-0.22m
701	Subsoil	light orangey brown silty clay	0.22-0.47m
702	Natural	Compact natural red clay marl with some gravel pockets	0.47->0.62m

Trench 8

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50m Width: 1.8m Depth: 0.85m

Orientation: NW-SE

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
800	Topsoil	Friable dark greyish brown clayey silt	0-0.21m
801	Subsoil	light orangey brown silty clay	0.21-0.33m
802	Colluvium	Mid greyish brown firm sandy silt with occasional gravels	0.33-0.85m
803	Natural	Compact natural red clay marl with some gravel pockets	0.85m+

Trench 9

Maximum dimensions: Length: 51m Width: 1.80m Depth: 2.90m

Orientation: E-W

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
900	Topsoil	Friable dark greyish brown clayey silt	0-0.29m
901	Fill	mixed red brown marl containing modern material, fill of 902	0.10->2.90m
902	Quarrying	Cut for a quarry pit, filled by 901	0.10->2.90m
903	Subsoil	light orangey brown silty clay	0.29-0.59m
904	Natural	Soft red sand with gravel pockets	0.60m

Trench 10

Maximum dimensions: Length: 51m Width: 1.8m Depth: 1.90m

Orientation: NE-SW

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
1000	Topsoil	Friable dark greyish brown clayey silt, redeposited	0-0.40m
1001	Fill	very mixed deposit conaitining marl and gravels along with modern materials, fill of 1002	0.40->1.50m
1002	Quarrying	Cut for quarry pit. This was beyond the limits of the excavated trench	0.40->1.50m

Trench 11

Maximum dimensions: Length: 44m Width: 1.80m Depth: 2.10m

Orientation: E-W

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
1100	Topsoil	Mid light grey brown silt sand	0-0.22m
1101	Topsoil	Dark brown silt sand	0.22-0.45m
1102	Quarrying	Light reddish brown sand and gravels	
1103	Natural	Soft red sand with gravel pockets	0.45m
1104	Quarrying	Mixed red brown grey marl, sand and gravel, containing bricks and modern material	
1105	Quarrying	Dark grey black deposit containing modern materials and hydrocarbons	
1106	Quarrying	Cut for modern quarry pit, filled by 1102, 1104 and 1105	0.45->2.10m

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM68334)

The archive consists of:

1	Field progress reports AS2
2	Photographic records AS3
187	Digital photographs
11	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
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416