

Archaeological investigations at Powick Old Bridge, Powick, Worcestershire



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Archaeological Investigations at Powick Old Bridge, Powick, Worcestershire

Jamie Wilkins

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological investigation was undertaken along the south-west flanking wall of Powick Old Bridge, Powick, Worcestershire (NGR SO 83521 52493). It was commissioned by Worcestershire County Council Highways/CH2M Hill in response to the requirements of the Scheduled Monument Consent prepared by Historic England. The project results from proposals to restore Powick Old Bridge (HER ref WSM 239, SAM 331, HE Listing 1349275 and 1390030). This involved removal of vegetation, roots, trees and scrub, replacement and repair of damaged masonry and repointing. The archaeological investigations were limited to test pits and a watching brief of works along the flanking wall on the south-west approach to the bridge.

The project revealed the presence of an earlier, probably late 18th to early 19th century wall, abutted by the present day south-west flanking wall, which was revealed to be a re-facing. The earlier wall was observed to a depth of 3 courses and was comprised of both blue engineering and orange bricks.

Further deposits included a 20th century sandstone rubble structure, which was potentially intended to create a crude form of surfacing. Made-ground observed on site is likely to relate to the construction and development of the old road on the southern approach to the bridge.

No deposits relating to Civil War era activity were observed. No natural substrates were observed on site, and following repeated alluvial build-up, deeper stratified deposits are likely to survive. This indicates that the archaeological potential for the area remains high.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological investigation comprising test pitting and a watching brief was undertaken at Powick Old Bridge, Powick, Worcestershire (NGR SO 83521 52493). It was commissioned by Worcestershire County Council Highways/CH2M Hill in response to the requirements of the Scheduled Monument Consent prepared by Historic England. The project results from proposals to restore Powick Old Bridge (HER ref WSM 239, SAM 331, HE Listing 1349275 and 1390030). This involved removal of vegetation, roots, trees and scrub, replacement and repair of damaged masonry and repointing. This was considered to have the potential to affect heritage assets with archaeological interest, including the bridge and the registered battlefield of the Battle of Worcester (DWR 6158; WCM 91096; WCM 91095).

The project conforms to the requirements of the Scheduled Monument Consent prepared by Historic England (letter dated 25 May 2017) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2017).

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

2 Aims

The aims of the investigations were:

- to obtain early photographic images of the bridge to determine the form of the southern approach to the bridge
- to excavate one or two test pits (exact number to be determined with the Curator as fieldwork progresses) adjacent to the east (inner) face of the south-west flanking wall on the southern approach to the bridge
- to observe and make a photographic record of the exposed masonry (coping stones and brickwork) following the removal of soil and vegetation around and above the south-west flanking wall on the southern approach to the bridge

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Jamie Wilkins (BA (hons.)) who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2015 and has been practicing archaeology since 2013. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan (BA (hons. Dunelm); MA; ACIfA). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA).

3.2 Documentary research

A desk-based assessment was produced for the nearby site of Powick Weir (Connolly 2015), and the archaeological background for the site (Section 4) will draw upon this report, in conjunction with the detailed background provided in the Historic England List descriptions.

3.3 List of sources consulted

Cartographic sources

- c 1800 Powick iron work; from a survey plan in the Hampton estate papers reproduced in Lloyd (1975)
- 1840 Powick Tithe Map; transcription by David Guyatt

- 1st edition Ordnance Survey map, 1885, 6":1 mile

Archive Photographs

The following photographs represent a selection of those studied for this project.

- WPS (*Worcestershire Photographic Survey*) – 68801, c 1945, Miss O M Pain
- WPS – 1390, 1951, F W Pain
- WPS – 4281, 1952, Mrs W R Young
- WPS – 4283, 1953, Mrs W R Young (Plate 14)
- WPS – 68801, c 1945, Miss O M Pain
- WPS – 20817, 1960, H Cartwright

Documentary sources

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography (Section 9).

3.4 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2017).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 7 and 18 September 2017. The site reference number used by the Historic Environment Record to record archaeological "events", and site code used in the archive is WSM 69393.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a JCB wheeled 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).

3.4.1 Test Pits

The first phase of the archaeological investigations comprised the excavation of two 1m by 1m (1m²) test pits against the east face of the bridge's south-west flanking wall (Figure 2). The first pit was located halfway along the wall, in an area clear of obvious tree rooting (Test Pit 1).

After on site discussion with the Dr Neil Rimmington (Assistant Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Historic England), a second 1m² test pit was excavated (Test Pit 2). This second pit was located 5.70m to the south, adjacent to an alder root identified in the WSI (WA 2017).

3.4.2 Watching Brief

Following the positive results of the archaeological test pitting, and in consultation with Dr Neil Rimmington, the methodology relating to the removal of the coping stones was adapted. It was agreed that a trench, measuring to the depth of the coping stones (c 0.50m), would be excavated along the eastern face of the wall (c 15.60m; Trench 3). It was also required that the removal of the coping stones was undertaken under archaeological supervision, in order to limit any potential damage to earlier deposits.

The location of the test pits and watching brief ground works is indicated in Figure 2.

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.

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 current land use

The investigation area is located immediately south-west of Powick Old Bridge, at 66.33m above ordnance datum (AOD), on the east side of a retaining wall which flanks the southern approach to the bridge. The site is located within the parish of Powick, Worcestershire, whilst the north side of the bridge falls within the parish of Bedwardine, in the City of Worcester. The site has been heavily overgrown with vegetation and scrub which was cleared prior to the commencement of this project.

The bedrock geology for the site is listed as Sidmouth Mudstone Formation. The bedrock is overlain by alluvial deposits, comprising clay, silt, sand and gravel. These deposits are fluvial in origin, associated with the River Teme (BGS 2017).

The site is currently in use as a public footpath, with the bridge no longer accessible to motor vehicles.

4.2 Archaeological background

The archaeological background to the site is given in a desk-based assessment for the nearby Powick Weir prepared by Worcester Archaeology. Though this DBA was not produced specifically for Powick Old Bridge, the scheduled monument is located within the search area (Connolly 2015).

The area has been the focus of two prior archaeological investigations, by Worcester Archaeology. In 2010 a watching brief was undertaken on the east side of the southern approach to Powick Old Bridge, c 8m to the east (Curran 2010). This investigation monitored the instalment of a new fence line, during which no archaeological deposits were revealed.

In 2015 a watching brief was undertaken on the north side of the River Teme, approximately 24m north of site. This project revealed post-medieval industrial deposits relating to the adjacent Powick Mill, and an alluvial sequence, resulting from frequent flooding (Richer 2015).

An archaeological background is also provided in the Historic England List descriptions:

1349275: POWICK CP A 449 (off) SO 85 SW 3/89 Powick Old Bridge 25.3.68 GV I Bridge. Late medieval with C17 alterations. Stone with brick parapets. Has three stone skew arches separated by triangular cutwaters with pedestrian refuges; two further northern arches are C17 and are segmental; the southern one is of brick. The first and second battles of Worcester, which opened and closed the Civil War, took place at the bridge, in 1642 and 1651. The two northern-piers of the bridge were destroyed by the Royalists in 1651. Part of

this bridge is in the City of Worcester (qv). (VCH, vol 4, p 184). Scheduled Ancient Monument, County no 323. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1349275>

1390030: WORCESTER: SO85SW OLD ROAD, Lower Wick 620-1/3/681 Powick Old Bridge (that 22/05/54 part within the City of Worcester) Formerly Listed as: LOWER WICK Powick Old Bridge (that part in the City of Worcester)); GV I; Bridge. C16 with later restorations. Sandstone ashlar, part restored in red brick, with pinkish-brown brick and ashlar copings. 5 arches, three with skew segmental arches and cutwaters, 2 round arches. Surmounted by balustrade approximately 1 metre high. Plaque records: 'Powick Bridge, River Teme. During the English Civil Wars between Royalists and Parliamentarians the first skirmish on 23.9.1642 and the last major battle on 3.9.1651 took place on and near this historic bridge'. Now by-passed by bridge of 1837. Scheduled Ancient Monument. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1390030>

5 Results

5.1 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figures 2 and 3. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

No natural deposits were observed on site.

5.1.2 Phase 2: 19th – 20th century deposits

Coping Stones and Iron Strapping

Following the removal of vegetation, the coping stones of the south-west flanking wall were exposed (108). The largest coping stone measured 1.80m long, and the smallest 0.70m. All of the stones measured 0.57m wide and 0.40m thick. Iron strapping was present along the entire length of the stones (c 15.60m) and was located both on the top and underneath the stones. The strapping was 7cm wide and 2cm thick and was welded together via iron rods in between the joints of the stones (Plate 6). Furthermore, the strapping was leaded into a chiselled-out cavity in the centre of each of the stones, to provide structural support to the stones, to prevent sagging or movement.

Outer Re-facing Wall

The west (outer) face of the south-west flanking wall was comprised of 14 visible courses of machine-made blue engineering bricks below the coping stones, laid in Flemish bond (107). The bricks measured 240mm by 110mm by 70mm. After the removal of the coping stones, it was identified as just two courses in width (0.24m), and abutting the west face of an earlier brick wall with some areas also block tied into it (Plates 8 and 9).

Inner Wall

The inner, earlier brick wall was identified in both test pits, and investigated further in Trench 3 after the removal of the coping stones. Wall (104) was comprised of probable handmade orange bricks, and blue engineering bricks which both measured 230mm by 110mm by 80mm. The top course of wall (104) had been laid on edge. Further investigations identified this top course as a later addition, contemporary with the re-facing of the wall, providing a level surface for the coping stones to sit over walls (104 and (107). In Test Pit 1 only the very top of this structure was exposed, however, in Test Pit 2 and Trench 3 a further 3 courses were revealed, indicating a depth of at least 0.28m. The visible width of the inner wall was 0.48m. The bonding of the wall could not be determined, though the lower two courses observed may suggest a form of stretcher bonding.

The surviving structure of wall (104) is considered to represent a flanking wall of late 18th or 19th century date, which has been repaired.

It is likely that both the flanking walls functioned as retaining walls for the deposits located immediately east. The bank of the Teme is steep in this location, and so it is likely the walls protected the structural integrity of the southern approach to the bridge.

5.1.3 Phase 3: 20th century – modern deposits

Made Ground

In Test Pit 1, wall (104) was overlain by a compact, orangey brown, silty sand deposit (103). The deposit was 0.12m in depth and was visible in the entirety of the test pit. It contained frequent fragments of sandstone, orange brick, and mortar. Deposit (103) was overlain by a layer (102) comprised of loose, brownish pink sand and gravels, observed to a depth of 0.49m. This deposit (102) was a layer of redeposited natural, and both layers (103) and (102) are likely to be deliberate made ground deposits, intended on building up, or levelling the area around the old road.

Sandstone Rubble

A construction cut [106] was observed to truncate layers (102) and (103) in the west of Test Pit 1. The cut had steep convex sides, a flat base, and was visible to a depth of 0.50m. It appeared to be associated with a crude sandstone structure (101) which abutted the coping stones of the flanking wall. Structure (101) comprised roughly hewn green and red sandstone blocks. The largest of these blocks measured 500mm by 300mm and 260mm deep. The structure was just one course deep and two courses wide, and abutted the coping stones of the flanking wall for the entire length of Trench 3. Additionally, these stones were located directly above the earlier wall (104). The sandstone blocks had no bond, and no clear bonding material, though they were contained within a topsoil-like matrix (105). The sandstone is considered to be the result of earlier remedial works to the bridge, but the function remains unclear. It may be discarded construction material, related to drainage or a surface of some kind.

Subsoil (201) was observed within Test Pit 2. The deposit comprised a compact, orangey-brown sandy loam, with frequent pebble inclusions. This deposit was not present in Test Pit 1 and may be localised in the south of site, further from the bridge. Overlying each of the pits and trench was a dark-brown, sandy loam topsoil.

5.2 South-west Buttress

At the request of Dr Neil Rimmington a rapid photographic record was made of a small area at the base of the south-west buttress, in advance of repairs to a patch of heavily eroded blockwork with new masonry (Plates 12 and 13). The masonry had been eroded by repeated flooding. The area comprised eight sandstone blocks and measured 1.10m in height, and 1.50m in width.

6 Synthesis

The archaeological investigations focussed on the south-west flanking wall of the southern approach to Powick Old Bridge have revealed the existence of an earlier structure. The earlier wall (104) is abutted by the present day flanking wall, and also sits below the present coping stones.

The remedial works and watching brief indicate that the existing south-west flanking wall is of 19th to early 20th century date and represents a repair to an earlier structure. The later wall, constructed of blue engineering bricks, is just two courses wide, and is a re-facing or cladding on the western face of earlier wall (104). This later construction generally abuts wall (104) but is occasionally block tied in too.

The origin of earlier wall (104) is unlikely to pre-date the late 18th or early 19th century, as it is constructed out of both blue engineering and handmade orange brick. However, it cannot be ruled out that the blue engineering bricks also represent a later phase of remedial work. The trenches

excavated provided only a limited view of this wall and so further investigations would be necessary to provide accurate dating.

The coping stones were designed to sit on both the earlier wall (104) and the later blue brick cladding (107). This would account for the top course of the earlier wall being laid on edge. This was probably a later adjustment which was intended to provide a level across both walls, and allow the coping stones to sit securely on both.

The iron strapping on the coping stones is unlikely to relate to a form of iron railing or fencing. The strapping was present on both sides of the stones, and was welded together by iron bars in the joins between stones. The form of this iron strapping is indicative of structural support, rather than a foundation for railings. The ironwork was intended to support, and clamp the coping stones together, thereby preventing any potential sagging. This is supported by 20th century photographic evidence, though limited in quality, which shows no evidence of iron railings on the southern approach (Plate 14). No 19th century photographic evidence was identified.

The presence of the sandstone structure (101) abutting the coping stones is unusual and interpretations are limited. It was identified as stratigraphically later than wall (104) and the made ground deposits (i.e. 102 / 103) and is likely 20th century in date. However, the function remains unknown. The sandstone material is likely re-used blockwork or waste material relating to a particular phase of bridge construction. This structure may represent a crude surface, as it is only one course in depth, and just 0.06m below the top of the coping stones. It is unlikely to relate to drainage, as the sandstone blocks would appear excessive. Further made ground deposits (102) and (103) are likely to relate to the development of the road and footpath leading to the bridge.

No archaeological evidence relating to Civil War activity was identified on site. This is unsurprising as a watching brief undertaken on the northern bank of the Teme (c 24m north) in 2015 surmised that deposits contemporary with the Civil War are likely to be c 2m below ground surface following alluvial build up on the banks (Richer 2015).

The results of this project indicate that the archaeological potential for the land immediately south of Powick Old Bridge remains high and that future work has the potential to develop our understanding of this area. The test pitting and watching brief have confirmed the presence of an earlier structure associated with the bridge, though the limitations of this project have prevented clear dating. Natural substrates were not observed, and so following the build-up of alluvial and modern material, deeper stratified deposits are likely to survive.

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 investigation comprising test pitting and a watching brief was undertaken on the southwest flanking wall of Powick Old Bridge, Powick, Worcestershire (NGR SO 83521 52493). It was commissioned by CH2M Hill (the Client) in response to the requirements of the Scheduled Monuments Consent (the Brief) prepared by the Historic England Assistant Inspector of Ancient Monuments (the Curator). The Brief results from proposals to restore Powick Old Bridge (HER ref WSM 239, SAM 331, HE Listing 1349275 and 1390030). This proposes removal of vegetation, roots, trees and scrub, replacement and repair of damaged masonry and repointing. This is considered by the Curator to have the potential to affect heritage assets with archaeological interest, including the bridge and the registered battlefield of the Battle of Worcester (DWR 6158; WCM 91096; WCM 91095).

The project revealed the presence of an earlier, probably late 18th to early 19th century wall, abutted by the present day southwest flanking wall, which was revealed to be a re-facing. The

earlier wall was observed to a depth of 3 courses and was comprised of both blue engineering and orange brickwork.

Further deposits included a 20th century sandstone rubble structure, which was potentially intended to create a crude form of surfacing. Made-ground observed on site is likely to relate to the construction and development of the old road in the southern approach to the bridge.

No deposits relating to Civil War era activity were observed. No natural substrates were observed on site, and following repeated alluvial build-up, deeper stratified deposits are likely to survive. This indicates that the archaeological potential for the area remains high.

8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Phil Knight (Worcestershire County Council Highways/CH2M Hill), John Capewell (Site Foreman, Ringway), and Dr Neil Rimmington (Assistant Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Historic England).

9 Bibliography

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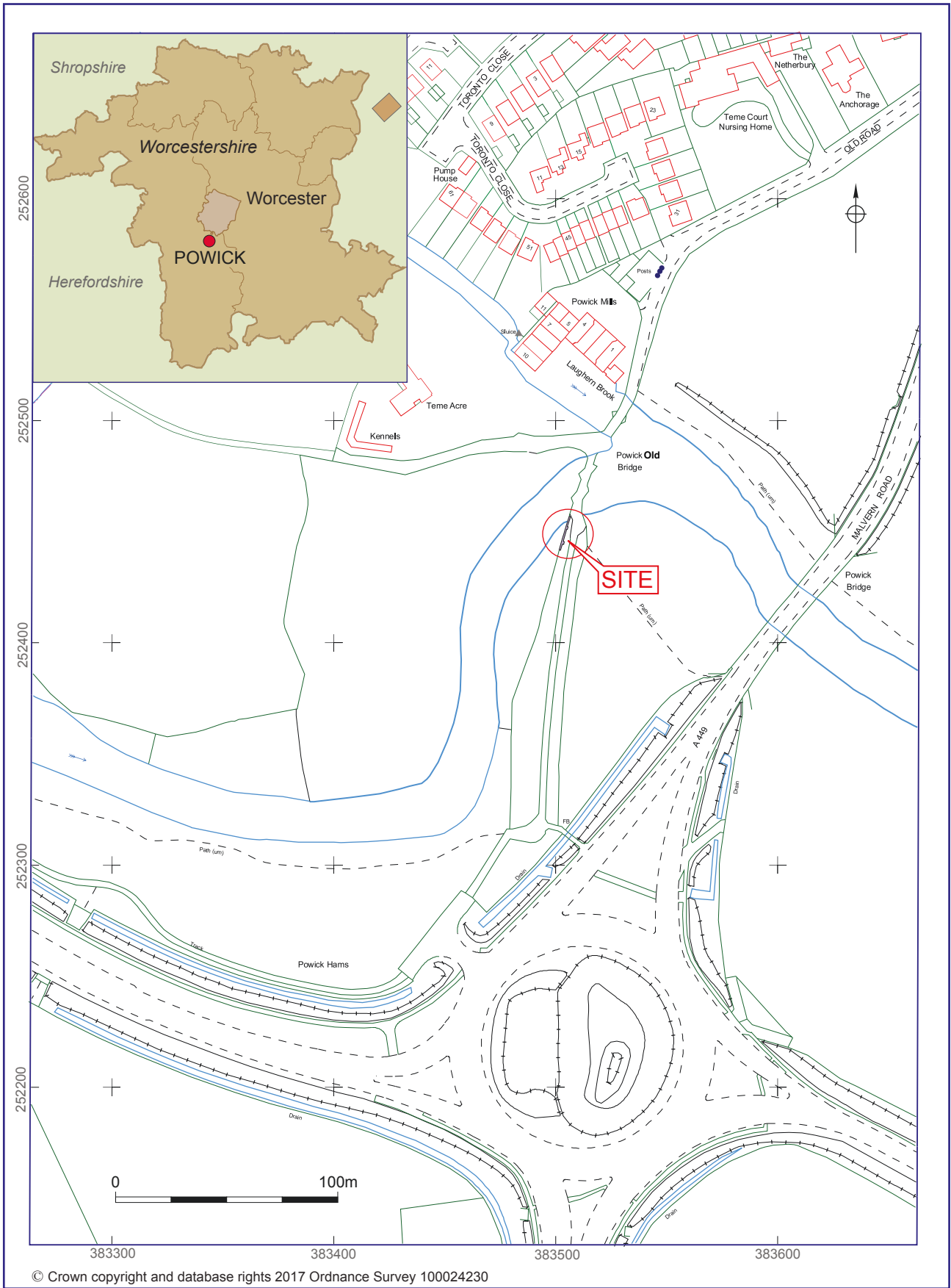
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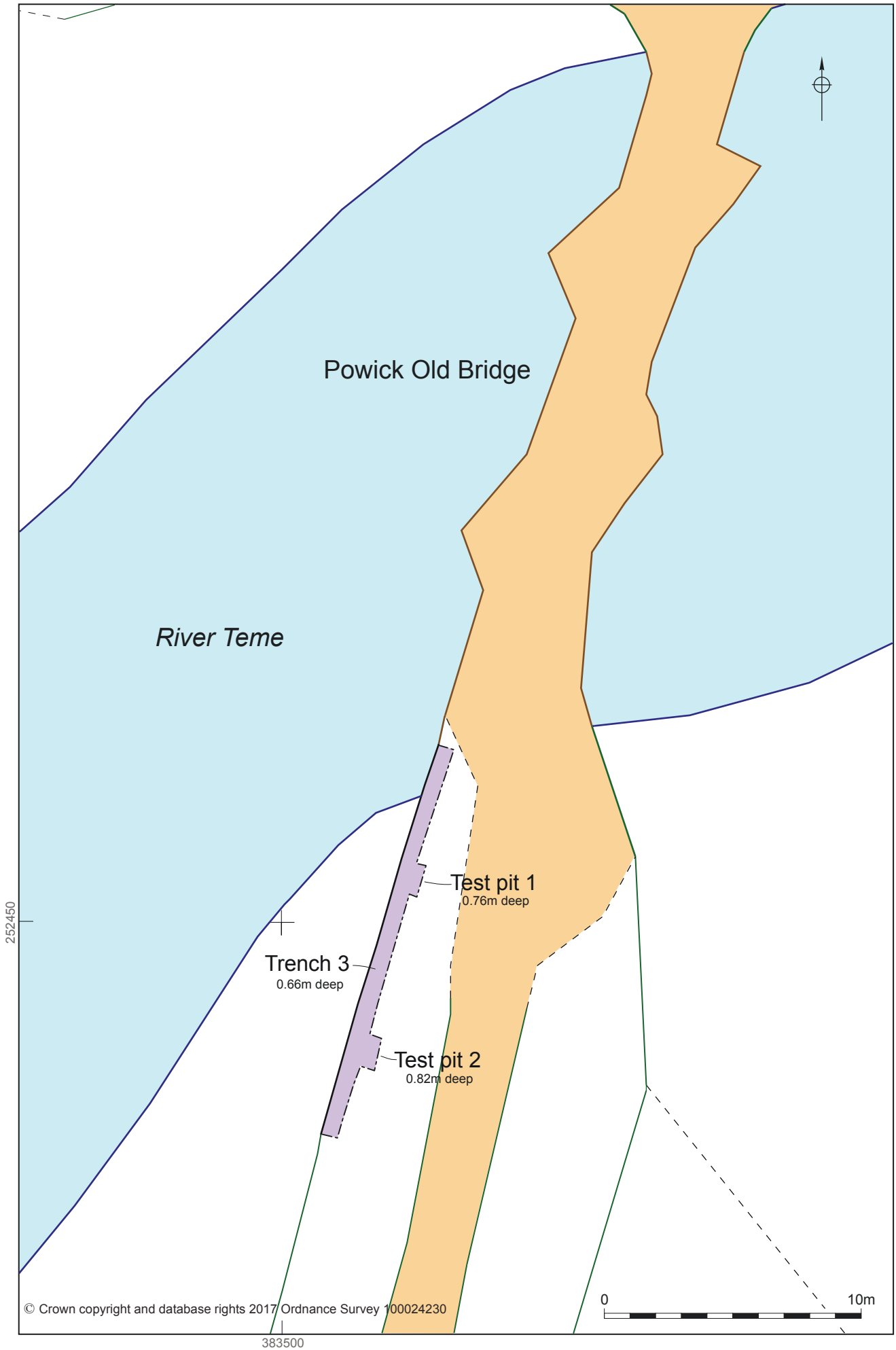
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Figures



Location of the site

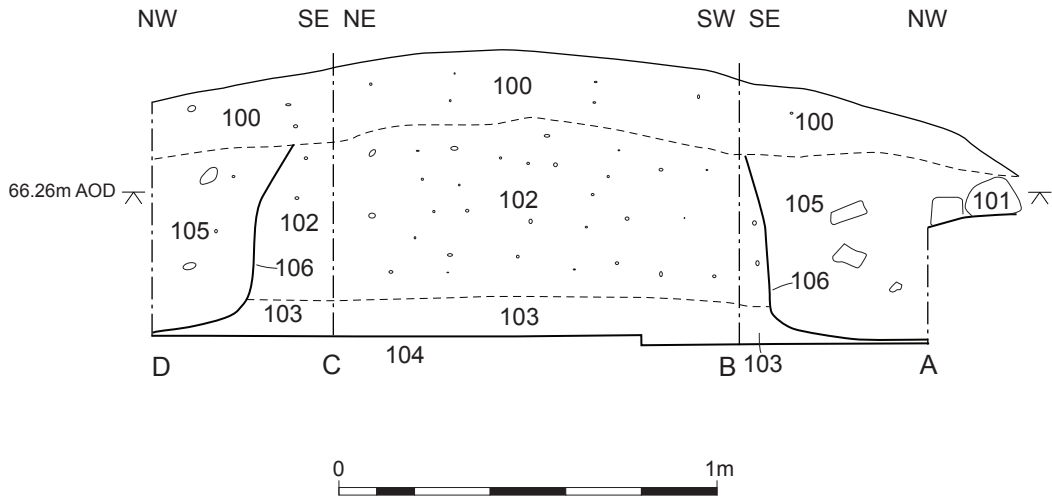
Figure 1



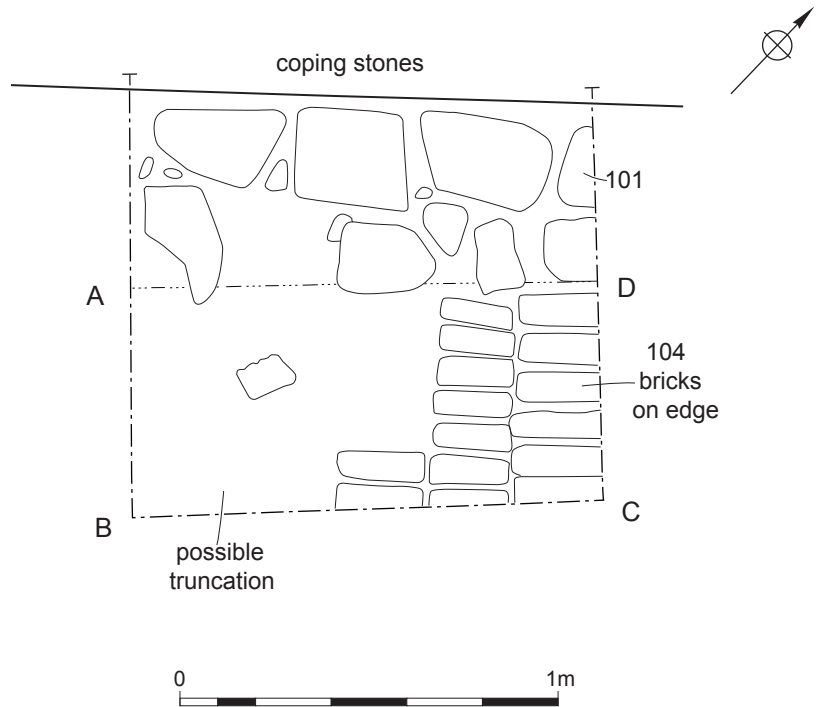
Trench location plan

Figure 2

TEST PIT 1: SECTION



PLAN OF TEST PIT 1



Test Pit 1 section and plan of Test Pit 2

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1. The site after the vegetation was removed, view north



Plate 2. Sandstone structure (101) and wall (104) in Test Pit 1, view north-west, scale 1m



Plate 3. Deposits (102) and (103) above wall (104) in Test Pit 1, view south-east, scale 0.4m



Plate 4. Sandstone structure (202) in Test Pit 2, view north-west, scale 0.4m



Plate 5. Wall (204) within Test Pit 2; visible below sandstone structure (202), view north-west, scale 0.4m



Plate 6. Iron bar within the joins of the coping stones, welded to both upper and lower iron strapping, scale 0.3m



Plate 7. Upper iron strapping which ran the length of the coping stones, led into chiselled-out cavities, view south-west, scale 0.4m



Plate 8. The original flanking wall (104), in the background, abutted by the later engineering brick re-facing (107) in the foreground, view south-east, scale 0.4m



Plate 9. The original flanking wall (104), in the background, abutted by the later engineering brick re-facing (107), in the foreground, view south-east, scale 0.4m



Plate 10. *The damage caused to the flanking wall (107) and the coping stones (108), view north-east*



Plate 11. *The repointed and repaired flanking wall (107) with reinstated coping stones (108), view south-south-east, scale 1m*



Plate 12. *The heavily eroded masonry due to be replaced, at the foot of the south-west buttress, view south-east, scale 0.4m*



Plate 13. *The heavily eroded masonry due to be replaced, at the foot of the south-west buttress, view north-east, scale 0.4m*



Plate 14. *View south across Powick Old Bridge; the photograph indicates that the site of the flanking wall was overgrown by vegetation in the mid-20th century (copyright Mrs W R Young, 1953, Worcestershire Photographic Survey (WPS) Register number 4283; original held by Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service)*

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Test Pit 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 1.24m Width: 1.10m Depth: 0.76m

Orientation: N/A

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth of deposit
100	Topsoil / Vegetation layer	Dark, greyish brown, sandy loam, containing frequent sub-round pebbles, charcoal, and rooting.	0.21m
101	Sandstone block structure	Sandstone blocks abutting coping stones (108). 9 to 11 roughly hewn blocks, just 1 course in depth, and both red and green sandstone used.	0.26m
102	Redeposited sand and gravels	Loose, mid orangey pink, sub-rounded pebbles and gravels in a sandy matrix. No other obvious inclusion.	0.49m
103	Made-ground layer	Compact, mid orangey brown, silty sand, including frequent mortar, sandstone, and red brick fragments.	0.12m
104	Orange and blue brick wall	Wall at base of test pit. Comprised of both orange and blue bricks, only one course visible in this test pit. Top course laid on edge.	Unknown
105	Fill of construction cut [106].	Dark, greyish brown, sandy loam, containing frequent sub-rounded pebbles and occasional brick fragments. Redeposited topsoil within cut [106] and packed around sandstone (101).	0.49m
106	Construction Cut	Steep, convex sided construction cut observed in baulk of test pit 1. Identified as a construction cut for sandstone (101) and also containing backfill (105).	0.49m
107	Blue engineering brick, flanking wall.	Blue engineering brick, flanking wall in a Flemish bond. To be repointed and repaired.	2m +
108	Coping stones	Coping (finishing stones) above walls (107) and (104). To be repointed and re-laid.	0.40m

Test Pit 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 1.22m Width: 1.17m Depth: 0.82m

Orientation: N/A

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth of deposit
200	Topsoil	Same as (100).	0.26m
201	Subsoil	Compact, mid to dark orangey brown, sandy loam with frequent sub-rounded pebbles and occasional charcoal inclusions.	0.42m
202	Sandstone block structure	Same as (101).	0.18 – 0.29m
203	Gravel deposit below (202)	Loose, dark greyish brown, sub-rounded gravels in a silty sand matrix. Backfill of construction cut [205], and situated underneath sandstone blocks (202).	0.08m
204	Brick wall	Orange brick wall, same as (104). Top three courses recorded. Orange bricks in a stretcher bond, apart from top course which has been laid on edge.	0.27m
205	Construction cut	Arbitrary number for construction cut relating to sandstone (202). Not observed.	Not observed

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: c 15.60m Width: 0.72-0.90m Depth: 0.55-0.66m

Orientation: NE - SW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth of deposit
300	Topsoil	Same as (100)	0.24m
301	Sandstone block structure	Same as (101) and (202)	0.29m
302	Soil packing around (301)	Same as (105)	0.29m

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM 69393)

The archive consists of:

- 6 Context records AS1
- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 2 Photographic records AS3
- 96 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 2 Scale drawings
- 3 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
