

# Archaeological evaluation of land west of Severn Valley Railway, Bridgnorth, Shropshire





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

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Date: 31 July 2018  
Author: Peter Lovett [plovett@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:plovett@worcestershire.gov.uk)  
Contributors: Laura Griffin  
Illustrator: Carolyn Hunt  
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Issue	Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by	Signature
1	Pete Lovett	Tom Vaughan	Tom Vaughan	
2	Pete Lovett	Tom Vaughan	Tom Vaughan	

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## **Archaeological evaluation of land west of Severn Valley Railway, Bridgnorth, Shropshire**

Peter Lovett

With contributions by Laura Griffin

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

### **Summary**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken of land west of Severn Valley Railway, Bridgnorth, Shropshire (NGR SO 71408 92626). It was undertaken on behalf of David Symonds Associates on behalf of their client, Severn Valley Railway, who intends to construct an overflow carpark and railway turntable, for which a planning application has been submitted.

Nine trenches were excavated over an area of 1.9ha. This was a reduction from the original 2.8ha intended for evaluation, due to unforeseen site restrictions. Bedding trenches containing 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery relating to a previous use as a nursery were identified in the northern part of the site, along with an undated and isolated posthole. No other archaeological features were encountered.

## Report

### 1 Background

#### 1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken of land west of Severn Valley Railway, Bridgnorth, Shropshire (NGR SO 71408 92626). It was undertaken on behalf of David Symonds Associates on behalf of their client, Severn Valley Railway, who intends to construct an overflow carpark and railway turntable, for which a planning application has been submitted to Shropshire Council (reference 16/00156).

The proposed development site was considered to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, the significance of which may be affected by the application.

No specific project brief was produced, but this project conforms to the generality of briefs that have previously been issued by the Senior Archaeological Advisor for Shropshire Council. A project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2018).

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014a).

### 2 Aims

The aims of the evaluation brief were;

- 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 project was led by Peter Lovett (BSc (hons.)), who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2012 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004, assisted by Jem Brewer (BA (hons.)). 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). Laura Griffin (BA (hons.); PG Cert; ACIfA) 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*

- 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1883, Ordnance Survey, sheet Shropshire LVIII.S.E., scale 6":1 mile
- 1903 Ordnance Survey, sheet Shropshire LVIII.12., scale 25":1 mile
- 1927 Ordnance Survey, sheet Shropshire LVIII.12., scale 25":1 mile

##### *Documentary sources*

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography (Section 11).

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### 3.4 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2018).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 25 and 26 June 2018. The Worcestershire Archaeology project number is P5301.

Nine trenches, amounting to just over 345m<sup>2</sup> in area, were excavated over the site area of 2.8ha, representing a sample of 1.2%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2. The land is divided into three fields, known as Areas 1-3. Trenches 1-4 were located to test geophysical anomalies as indicated by the survey conducted by Sumo (2018). Trench 8 was located across the proposed road, whilst Trench 9 was located over the proposed turntable. The remaining trenches were positioned to give as best coverage as possible, within the constraints of the landscape. Further trenching was intended, up to 600m<sup>2</sup>, to give a total sample of 2%. However, unforeseen site restrictions along the hedge line that divides the southern and central fields (Areas 2 and 3), and along the western hedge line in the central field (Area 2), precluded this. Access to Area 3 was not possible at all. These restrictions reduced the area to c 1.9ha, with the trenching therefore representing a 1.8% sample of the available site.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a 360° 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, by Laura Griffin

The finds work reported here conforms to the following guidance: for finds work by ClfA (b, 2014), for pottery analysis by PCRG/SGRP/MPRG (2016), for archive creation by AAF (2011), and for museum deposition by 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 (see table 1). A *terminus post quem* date was produced for each stratified context (see table 3). This date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on a Microsoft Access 2007 database.

The pottery was examined under x20 magnification and referenced as appropriate by fabric type (see Table 2) and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology (Hurst and Rees 1992; [www.worcestershireceramics.org](http://www.worcestershireceramics.org)).

#### 3.6.3 Discard policy

Artefacts from topsoil and subsoil and unstratified contexts will normally be noted but not retained, unless they are of intrinsic interest (eg worked flint or flint debitage, featured pottery sherds, and other potential 'registered artefacts'). All artefacts will be collected from stratified excavated contexts, except for large assemblages of post-medieval or modern material, unless there is some

special reason to retain such as local production. Such material may be noted and not retained, or, if appropriate, a representative sample may be collected and retained. Discard of finds from post-medieval and earlier deposits will only be instituted with reference to museum collection policy and/or with agreement of the local museum.

### **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**

Although it was not possible to evaluate the southern field (Area 3) and part of the middle field (Area 2) due to unforeseen site restrictions, 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 local geology consists of Alveley Member Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone (BGS 2018). No superficial deposits are recorded.

The site sits on a rise overlooking the Severn Valley Railway station to the east, with residential properties to the north, the playing fields of Oldbury Wells School to the west, and Panpudding Hill lies to the south. The land is split into three fields, with the northern field (Area 1) being generally flat in the western half, at 66m AOD, before dropping steeply away to the east to 54m AOD. Area 2 slopes down from the north-west to the south and east, with a steep fold towards the east, to c 53m AOD. Area 3 is similar, though with a shallower fold.

The site lies just north of Scheduled Monument Panpudding Hill (HER 00369), a fine example of a medieval ringwork and bailey castle. It has previously been suggested that the site is an Iron Age hillfort or a Saxon Burh, but it is now thought that it was constructed in 1102 AD by Henry I. Some 250m east of Panpudding Hill lies Bridgnorth Castle (HER 00371), built c 1100 AD, and being a major Norman castle. It was in ruins by the reign of Henry VIII, though the keep survived until the Civil War, when it was slighted by the Parliamentarians.

Bridgnorth railway station (HER 06023) stands on the eastern edge of the site. This serviced the town for the GWR Severn Valley line, and was opened in 1862, closing in 1963. It was saved from demolition by a preservation group, and is now the north terminus of the Severn Valley Heritage Railway.

As can be seen on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map, the study site is marked as a nursery. This use continued up until at least the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but by the 1920s it was no longer denoted as such.

The summary from the geophysical survey stated that "no archaeological anomalies were identified. Linear features associated with a former nursery were present in the north of the site. Underground services, such as pipes or drains were been mapped in all three areas. Areas of magnetic disturbance were visible across the site, with those in the north likely to be associated with its use as an overflow carpark." (SUMO 2018, 1)

### **4.2 Current land-use**

Area 1 is currently the overflow carpark for the Severn Valley Railway, and consists of a grass field with loose tarmac paths. Areas 2 and 3 are overgrown grass fields.

## 5 Results

### 5.1 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figs 1-3 and Plates 1-8. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

#### 5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

The natural geology was observed in all nine trenches. In Trenches 1-5, which were all in Area 1 in the north of the site, the geology consisted of orange sandy clay with frequent cobbles and pebbles. In the remaining trenches (6-9), all located in Area 2, the geology was a firm pinkish clay. It was between 0.32m and 0.61m below the current ground level in Area 1, and 0.4m-0.5m in Trenches 6 and 8. In Trenches 7 and 9, there was a thick deposit of colluvium present, and this meant the natural stratum was only reached at depths of between 1.1m and 1.3m below the current ground level (Plate 7).

#### 5.1.2 Phase 2: 19<sup>th</sup> Century deposits

Four shallow linear features were excavated in Trench 1 ([1004], [1006], [1008], [1010]). These consisted of parallel gullies, between 0.06m and 0.12m deep, forming two lines (Plates 2-3). They contained 19<sup>th</sup> century ceramic fragments, along with some residual ceramic material from the late 17<sup>th</sup> to 18th century. The 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map shows this land as being a nursery and these features probably represent bedding trenches associated with that.

A single posthole was excavated in Trench 2 [2004] (Plate 5). This was undated but the fill was very loose, and was similar to the topsoil, so is probably of 19<sup>th</sup> century date or later.

#### 5.1.3 Phase 3: Modern deposits

The subsoil was present in every trench, and measured between 0.12m and 1m in thickness, due to colluvial action. The topsoil was between 0.2m and 0.3m thick.

A metal water pipe was located in Trenches 2 and 6, and this correlated with the service identified on the geophysical survey.

### 5.2 Artefact analysis, by Laura Griffin

The artefactual assemblage recovered is summarised in Tables 1-3.

The assemblage recovered from the site totalled 26 finds weighing 116g (see Table 1). Material came exclusively from foundation trench fills (contexts 1003, 1005 and 1009) and all datable finds were of post-medieval or modern date. Level of preservation was variable with some finds displaying higher levels of surface abrasion than others. Average sherd weight was notably low at just 2.3g, suggesting broadly that the material had been redeposited and was likely to be mainly residual.

period	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight (g)
undated	clinker			2	3
undated	ceramic		cbm	2	3
undated	ceramic		pot	1	1
post-medieval	ceramic		roof tile(flat)	1	61
post-medieval	ceramic		pipe	1	4
post-medieval	ceramic		pot	3	4



modern	ceramic		pot	15	39
modern	metal	iron	washer	1	1

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

## Summary of artefactual evidence by period

### **Post-medieval**

The post-medieval assemblage consisted of three pottery sherds (contexts 1005 and 1009), a clay pipe bowl (context 1003) and a fragment of well-fired flat roof tile (context 1009). All pottery was undiagnostic but identifiable as black glazed post-medieval red ware (fabric 78; contexts 1005 and 1009) and dated late 17th-18th century.

Although the clay pipe bowl was incomplete, it was similar in form to examples from Broseley, having a wide, splayed base (Oswald 1975, Broseley type 3). This base was stamped but unfortunately so lightly that it was illegible. This form is generally considered to date between the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

### **Modern**

Finds of modern date consisted of 15 sherds of pottery (contexts 1003, 1005 and 1009) and an iron washer (context 1009).

The pottery included small sherds of creamware (fabric 84) and transfer-decorated modern china (fabric 85). The creamware could be dated mid-late 18th century and included one sherd with moulded decoration characteristic of this ware type (context 1009). The transfer-decorated modern china was generally later, the earliest sherd being datable from 1830 onwards by its distinctive foliage sheet-transfer decoration.

The most distinctive sherds in the assemblage came from a single-dipped earthenware cup or jar decorated with a 'cats eye' pattern characteristic of the ware type (fabric 85; context 1009). Vessels of this type date can be dated late 18th-early 19th century.

### **Undated**

Undated finds included two pieces of clinker (contexts 1003 and 1009) and fragments of ceramic building material and pottery too small to be accurately identified (contexts 1003 and 1005).

broad period	fabric number	Fabric name	count	weight (g)
Post-medieval	78	Post-medieval red ware	3	4
Post-medieval	84	Creamware	3	11
Modern	85	Modern china	12	28

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric type

context	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight (g)	start date	end date	finds tpq
---------	----------------	------------------	----------------------	-------	------------	------------	----------	-----------

1003	ceramic		cbm	1	2			19-20C
1003	ceramic		pipe	1	4	L17C	18C	
1003	ceramic		pot	1	6	M18C	L18C	
1003	ceramic		pot	8	4	19C	20C	
1003	clinker			1	2			
1005	ceramic		cbm	1	1			E19C onwards
1005	ceramic		pot	1	1			
1005	ceramic		pot	2	1		18C	
1005	ceramic		pot	1	1	1830 onwards		
1009	ceramic		pot	1	3	L17C	18C	L18- E19C
1009	ceramic		pot	2	5	M18C	L18C	
1009	ceramic		pot	3	23	L18C	E19C	
1009	ceramic		roof tile(flat)	1	61	16C	18C	
1009	clinker			1	1			
1009	metal	iron	washer	1	1			

*Table 3: Summary of context dating based on artefacts*

### **Recommendations**

*No further work required*

## **6 Synthesis**

The features excavated in Area 1 were considered to be bedding trenches, associated with the nursery that was known to have existed on the site from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The date of the pottery correlates with the cartographic evidence, though the presence of earlier residual pottery suggests that the site may have been in use as a nursery from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. No further archaeological features were identified. The lack of archaeological features does not allow for an interrogation of the research frameworks for the area.

## **7 Significance**

The archaeological remains identified on the site were restricted to some shallow bedding trenches from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and an undated posthole of probable contemporaneous date. These were located c 0.36m below the current ground surface, all in just two trenches, with the features being no more than 30m apart. The relative importance of the archaeological interest in the site is considered to be low.

## **8 The impact of the development**

### **8.1 Impacts during construction**

During the construction phase there will be particular impacts, specifically the construction of the access road along the western edge of the site. This will potentially impact upon the buried remains.

### **8.2 Impacts on sustainability**

The NPPF emphasises the importance of sustainability (DCLG 2012, section 131).

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).

## 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.

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken of land west of Severn Valley Railway, Bridgnorth, Shropshire (NGR SO 71408 92626). It was undertaken on behalf of David Symonds Associates on behalf of their client, Severn Valley Railway.*

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## 10 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Chris Bond and Martin White (Severn Valley Railway), Jonathan Symonds (David Symonds Associates) and Hugh Hannaford (Senior Archaeological Advisor, Shropshire Council).

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SMA 1993 *Selection, retention and dispersal of archaeological collections*, Society for Museum Archaeology, <http://www.swfed.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/selectionretentiondispersalofcollections1-SMA.pdf>

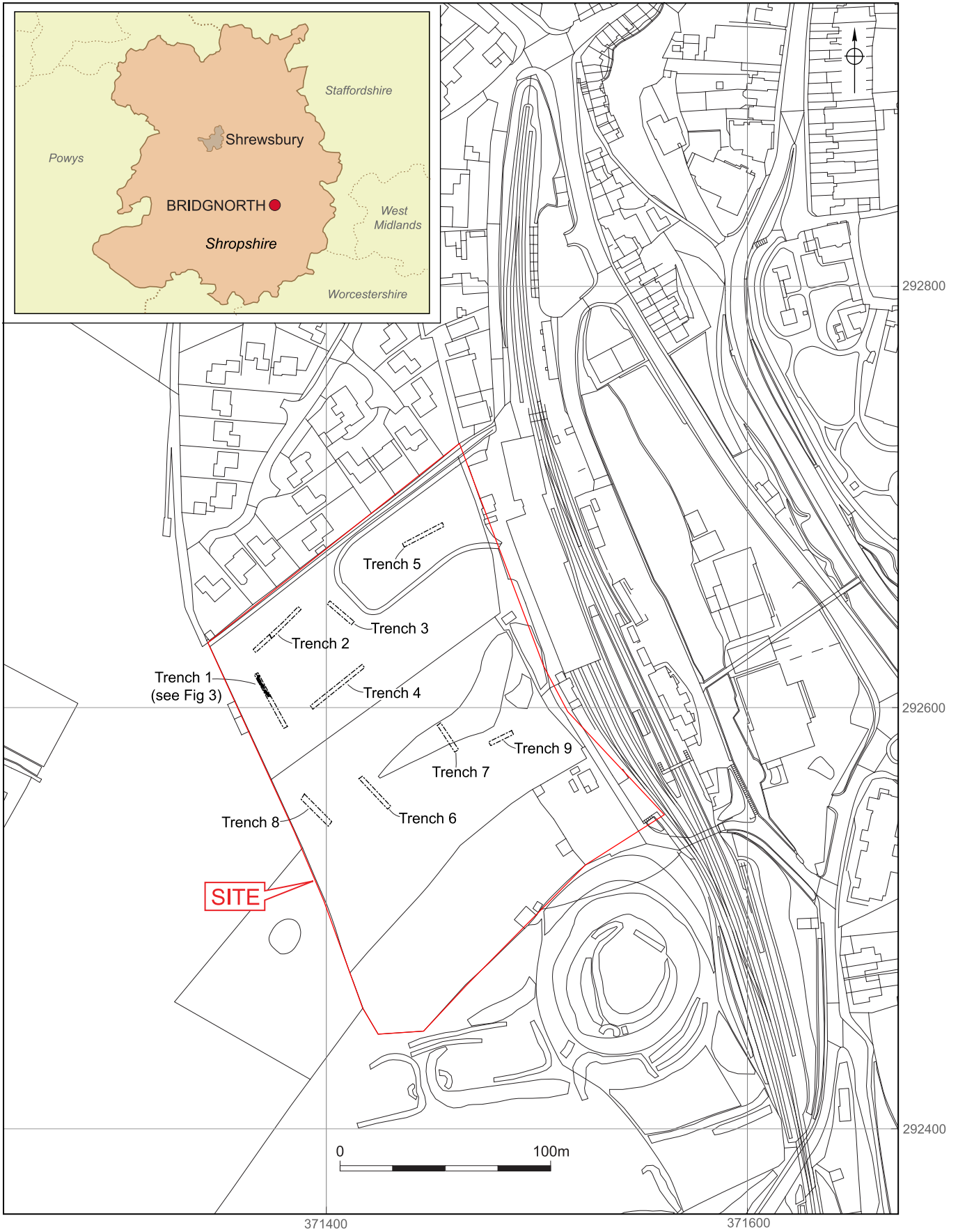
SUMO 2018 *Geophysical Survey Report – Land West of Severn Valley Railway, Bridgnorth, Shropshire*, SUMO Geophysics Ltd, unpublished survey report 12601, dated 24 May 2018

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

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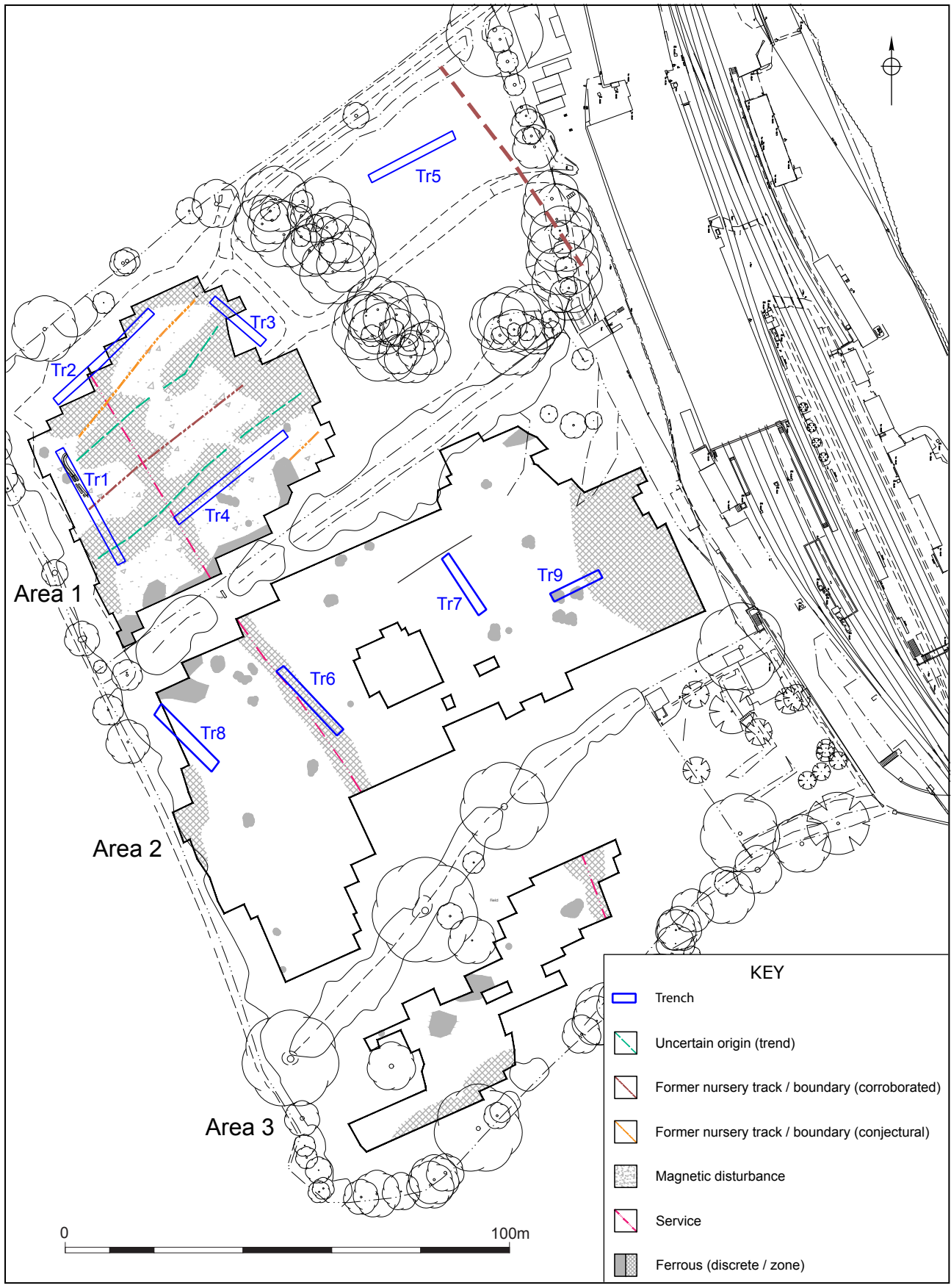
**Figures**

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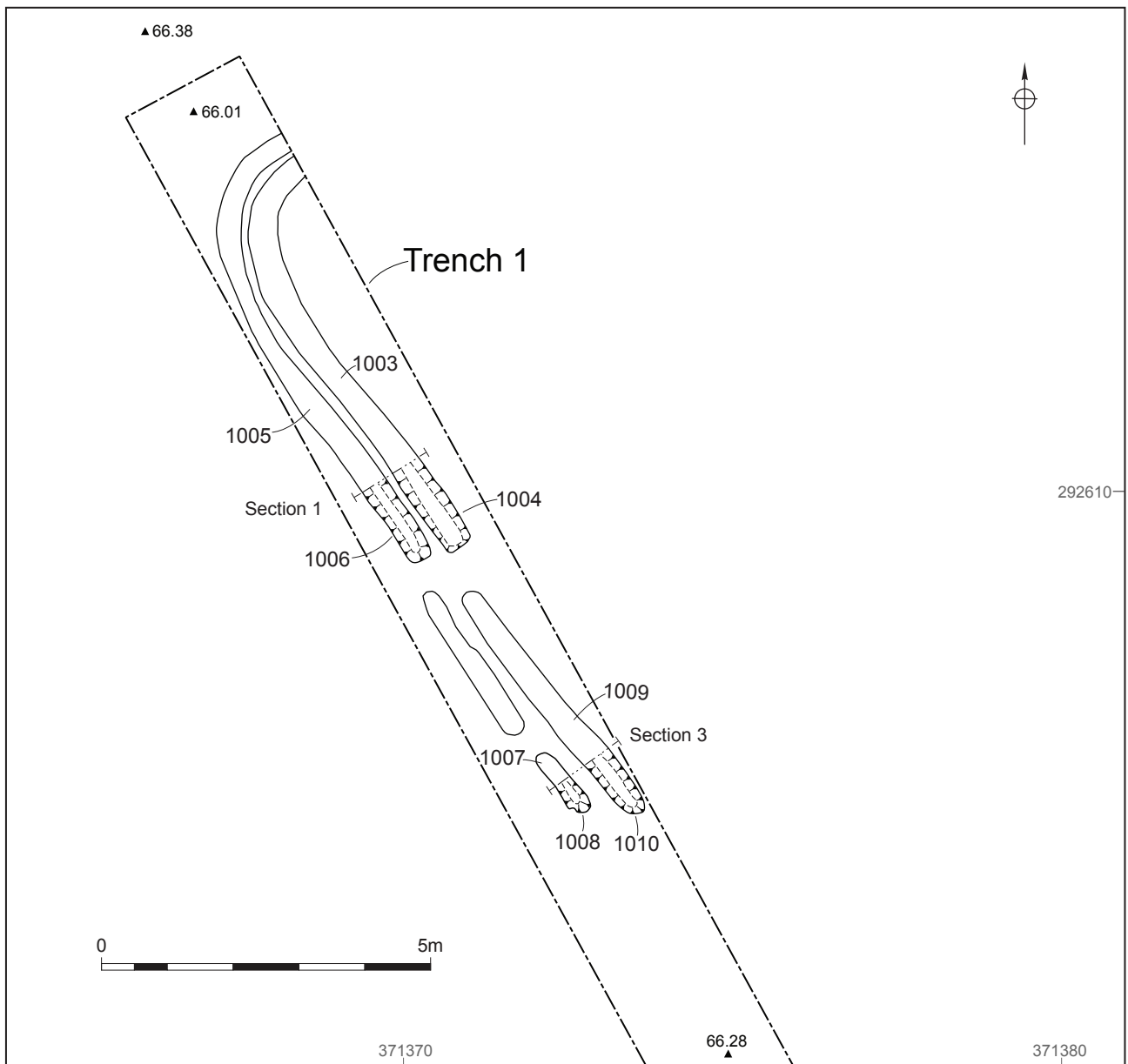
Location of the site and trench locations

Figure 1

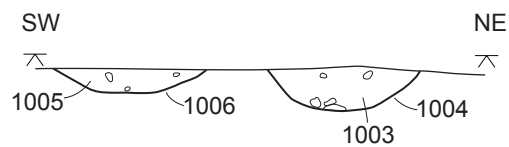


Geophysical survey overlain by trenches (based upon SUMO 2018 Fig.4)

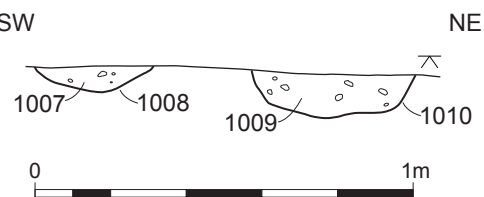
Figure 2



SECTION 1: GULLIES 1004 AND 1006



SECTION 3: GULLIES 1008 AND 1010



Trench 1: plan and sections of gullies 1004, 1006, 1008 and 1010

Figure 3

## Plates



*Plate 1 General site view of Area 1, looking west (no scales)*



*Plate 2 Bedding trenches 1004 and 1006, looking north-west (0.3m and 0.5m scales)*

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*Plate 3 Bedding trenches 1008 and 1010, looking north-west (0.5m scale)*

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*Plate 4 Trench 1, looking south-east (1m scales)*

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*Plate 5 Posthole 204, looking north (0.2m scale)*



*Plate 6 Trench 3, looking north-west (1m scales)*

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*Plate 7 Trench 7, looking south (1m scales)*



*Plate 8 View of Area 2, looking east (no scales)*

## Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

### Main deposit descriptions

#### Trench 1

Length: 30m      Width: 1.8m      Orientation: North-west to south-east

##### Context summary:

Context	Phase	Feature type	Context type	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
1000	0	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.22m	Moderately compact greyish brown sandy silt loam
1001	0	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.14m	Moderately compact reddish brown sandy silt
1002	0	Natural	Layer	Natural		Moderately compact orangey red sandy clay
1003	0	Gully	Fill	Fill of bedding trench	0.12m	Moderately compact reddish brown sandy silt
1004	0	Gully	Cut	Bedding trench	0.12m	
1005	0	Gully	Fill	Fill of bedding trench	0.06m	Moderately compact reddish brown sandy silt
1006	0	Gully	Cut	Bedding trench	0.06m	
1007	0	Gully	Fill	Fill of bedding trench	0.07m	Moderately compact reddish brown sandy silt
1008	0	Gully	Cut	Bedding trench	0.07m	
1009	0	Gully	Fill	Fill of bedding trench	0.12m	Moderately compact reddish brown sandy silt
1010	0	Gully	Cut	Bedding trench	0.12m	

#### Trench 2

Length: 30m      Width: 1.8m      Orientation: East to west

##### Context summary:

Context	Phase	Feature type	Context type	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
2000	0	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.2m	Moderately compact greyish brown sandy silt loam
2001	0	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.12m	Moderately compact reddish brown sandy silt
2002	0	Natural	Layer	Natural		Moderately compact orangey red sandy clay
2003	0	Posthole	Fill	Loose fill of undated posthole 2004. 19th/20th C	0.22m	Loose greyish brown silty sand
2004	0	Posthole	Cut	Undated but probably 19th/20th C posthole.	0.22m	

#### Trench 3

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Length: 16m      Width: 1.8m      Orientation: North-west to south-east

**Context summary:**

Context	Phase	Feature type	Context type	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
3000	0	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.24m	Moderately compact greyish brown sandy silt loam
3001	0	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.13m	Moderately compact reddish brown sandy silt
3002	0	Natural	Layer	Natural		Moderately compact orangey red sandy clay

**Trench 4**

Length: 30m      Width: 1.8m      Orientation: North-east to south-west

**Context summary:**

Context	Phase	Feature type	Context type	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
4000	0	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.26m	Moderately compact greyish brown sandy silt loam
4001	0	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.29m	Moderately compact reddish brown sandy silt
4002	0	Natural	Layer	Natural		Moderately compact reddish orange silty sand

**Trench 5**

Length: 22m      Width: 1.8m      Orientation: North-east to south-west

**Context summary:**

Context	Phase	Feature type	Context type	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
5000	0	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.23m	Moderately compact greyish brown sandy silt loam
5001	0	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.38m	Moderately compact reddish brown sandy silt
5002	0	Natural	Layer	Natural		Moderately compact orangey brown silty clay

**Trench 6**

Length: 20m      Width: 1.8m      Orientation: North-west to south-east

**Context summary:**

Context	Phase	Feature type	Context type	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
6000	0	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.24m	Moderately compact greyish brown sandy silt loam
6001	0	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.25m	Moderately compact

					reddish brown sandy silt
6002	0	Natural	Layer	Natural	Firm reddish pink clay

### Trench 7

Length: 20m      Width: 1.8m      Orientation: North-west to south-east

#### Context summary:

Context	Phase	Feature type	Context type	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
7000	0	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.3m	Moderately compact greyish brown sandy silt loam
7001	0	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil (colluvium)	0.8m	Moderately compact reddish brown sandy silt
7002	0	Natural	Layer	Natural		Firm reddish pink sandy clay

### Trench 8

Length: 17m      Width: 1.8m      Orientation: North-west to south-east

#### Context summary:

Context	Phase	Feature type	Context type	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
8000	0	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.3m	Moderately compact greyish brown sandy silt loam
8001	0	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.2m	Moderately compact reddish brown sandy silt
8002	0	Natural	Layer	Natural		Firm reddish pink clay

### Trench 9

Length: 12m      Width: 1.8m      Orientation: East to west

#### Context summary:

Context	Phase	Feature type	Context type	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
9000	0	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.3m	Moderately compact greyish brown sandy silt loam
9001	0	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil (colluvium)	1m	Moderately compact reddish brown sandy silt
9002	0	Natural	Layer	Natural		

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## **Appendix 2 Technical information**

### **The archive**

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 38 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 2 Scale drawings
- 9 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:

Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery,  
Barker Street,  
Shrewsbury,  
Shropshire  
SY1 1QH

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