

Archaeological evaluation of land off Ryall Court Lane, Holly Green

Worcestershire Archaeology
for Martin Teale

October 2018



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LAND OFF RYALL COURT LANE HOLLY GREEN WORCESTERSHIRE

Archaeological Evaluation Report



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SITE INFORMATION

Site name: Land off Ryall Court Lane

Local planning authority: Malvern Hills District Council

Planning reference: 15/00751/OUT

Central NGR: SO 8606 4115

Commissioning client: Martin Teale

Client project reference: N/A

WA project number: P5278

WA report number: 2622

HER reference: WSM70294

Oasis reference: fieldsec1-331509

Museum accession number: TBA

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Version	Date	Author	Details	Approved by
1	29/10/2018	Richard Bradley	Report for Curator	Tom Vaughan

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Archaeological evaluation of land off Ryall Court Lane, Holly Green, Worcestershire

By Richard Bradley

With contributions by C Jane Evans

Illustrations by Laura Templeton

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology in October 2018 of land off Ryall Court Lane, Holly Green, Worcestershire (NGR SO 8606 4115). This comprised four evaluation trenches laid out in a random non-gridded array. No archaeological features were known prior to the evaluation, but a preceding desk-based assessment had indicated some potential for artefact scatters on the site due to the presence of archaeological remains in the surrounding area and the location of the site on rising ground close to the River Severn.

A single possible archaeological feature was identified. This comprised a small shallow linear, possibly a gully, but this was diffuse and insecurely dated. There was no indication of direct occupation on the site which appears to have been used as agricultural land for a considerable period. The residual artefactual assemblage recovered did, however, suggest that general Roman, medieval and post-medieval activity in the surrounding area has produced material that has been incorporated into soils through manuring or dumping.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) between 8 and 9 October 2018 of land off Ryall Court Lane, Holly Green, Worcestershire (NGR SO 8606 4115). This comprised four evaluation trenches (Trenches 6-9; WSM70294) in a single field and was undertaken concurrent with evaluation of adjacent land to the south-west, which is reported on separately (Trenches 1-5; WSM70779). The project was commissioned by Martin Teale (Nigel J Teale surveying and building consultancy) on behalf of their client, in advance of a proposed residential development, for which a planning application has been submitted to Malvern Hills District Council (ref. 15/00751/OUT).

The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority (the Curator) considered that the proposed development has the potential to impact upon possible heritage assets of archaeological interest. This was based on a previous desk-based assessment (DBA) prepared for the site (Napthan 2014; WCM66222).

No specific brief for the project was prepared but the project conforms to a model brief previously provided by Worcestershire County Council (WCC). A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2018) and approved by the Curator.

The evaluation also conforms to the *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010) and the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and guidance: for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014a).

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site comprises an irregular land parcel, 9,750m² (0.975ha) in size, currently in use as rough grass pasture, located to the north of Holly Green and immediately west of Ryall Court Lane. It is bounded by hedging and fencing dividing the land from residential properties to the north-east, east and south-east, and agricultural fields to the north-west. Numerous overhead power lines cross the site.

The field occupies relatively level ground (c 20m AOD), with a gradual slope towards the south and south-west (c 19m AOD). Land to the west forms the terrace edge of the River Severn, with a wide flood plain. The underlying geology comprises bedrock of the Branscombe Mudstone Formation, overlain by superficial deposits of the Holt Heath Sand and Gravel Member (BGS 2018).

2 Archaeological and historical background

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) of the site was undertaken by Mike Napthan Archaeology (Napthan 2014; WCM66222). This details the history of land use on the site and the archaeological potential. The summary of the findings presented in the DBA is as follows:

"Historic and cartographic sources indicate that this area has long been in agricultural use, though formal inclosure only occurred in 1807. The place name Flax Hill is associated with the immediate vicinity, and the modern house to the north is known as 'Flaxmoor', strongly suggesting that the site was used for growing and/or retting of flax in the post-medieval period and possibly earlier. There is cartographic evidence of a former pond just to the south-west and a further pond to the north – this raises the possibility of former retting pits within the proposed development area.

There are no recorded find-spots within the development area or its immediate environs, but there is a crop-mark enclosure of possibly Romano British date approximately 150m to the east on the other side of Ryall Court Lane (WSM06037), and the wider area to the south has ample evidence of Saxon and Roman activity. Due to the position of the site on the first higher ground to the east of the Upton

crossing point it is considered that there is some potential for buried archaeological remains, most probably in the form of artefact scatters of prehistoric to Roman date. The topography and geology indicate some potential for early human (Palaeolithic) activity, though such sites are uncommon, and very rarely are represented by more than a small scatter of artefacts due to subsequent ground disturbance by agricultural activity and natural weathering processes. The site does over-look the bridging point at Upton, and Ryall was the scene of a Civil War skirmish, so there is a moderate possibility of evidence of Civil War actions, though permanent or earthwork fortifications are not known to have been constructed in this area."

3 Project aims

The aims of the project as outlined in the WSI (WA 2018) were to undertake sufficient fieldwork so as to:

- determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits beyond reasonable doubt;
- identify their location, nature, date and level of preservation;
- assess their significance;
- assess the likely impact of the proposed development (if the extent of the groundworks are known).

4 Project methodology

The Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcesterstshire Archaeology (WA 2018). Fieldwork was undertaken between 8 and 9 October 2018.

Four trenches of varying sizes, amounting to approximately 191m² in area, were excavated over the site area of 9,750m² (0.975ha), representing a sample of c 2%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2 (Trenches 6-9).

No archaeological features were known prior to the evaluation so the trenches were laid out in a random non-gridded array, designed to cover the area of the proposed development. These were located within the constraints presented by a series of overhead services, with consideration for available working space, and other minor issues such as existing agricultural feeder locations and access into the site area.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant 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 Worcesterstshire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). Trench and feature locations were surveyed using a differential GPS with an accuracy limit set at 0.04m. Following an existing agreement regarding the provision of mechanical plant, on completion of excavation the trenches were left to be reinstated by the landowner.

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was undertaken through a combination of structural, artefactual and environmental evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcesterstshire Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner it is anticipated that it will be deposited with Worcesterstshire Museums.

5 Archaeological results

5.1 Introduction

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figures 2-3 and Plates 1-3. The trench and context inventory is presented in Appendix 1.

5.2 Phasing

5.2.1 Natural deposits

Natural deposits were identified in all four of the trenches excavated. This was slightly variable: firm light whitish brown sand (Plate 2) transitioned to more compacted orange brownish grey sand (contexts 602; 702; 802 and 902). The natural substrate was encountered between 0.48-0.62m below the current ground surface.

5.2.2 Phase 1: medieval/post-medieval deposits

A silty sand or sandy clay subsoil layer (0.20m to 0.31m in depth) was present in all trenches (contexts 601; 701; 801; 901). In Trenches 6, 7 and 8 this mixed deposit included fragments of Roman, medieval and post-medieval domestic pottery, as well as post-medieval tile and clay pipe.

Beneath this layer, towards the southern end of Trench 6, was a small, diffuse linear depression [603]. This was 0.74m in width, 0.16m in depth and not well defined, with an irregular base more consistent with a shallow hollow in the natural. Although this was uncertain, it appeared to continue beyond the trench side and could be a small drainage gully (Plate 3; Figure 3). It included a small fragment of charcoal but no finds to securely date it (fill 604). The stratigraphy would suggest it is post-medieval or earlier in date.

5.2.3 Phase 2: modern

The subsoil was overlain by silty sand or clay sand topsoil, between 0.23m and 0.36m in depth, the upper surface of which consisted of rough grass.

6 Artefactual evidence

6.1 Artefact methodology

The finds work reported here conforms with the following guidance: for finds work by ClfA (2014b), for pottery analysis by PCR/SGRP/MPRG (2016), for archive creation by AAF (2011), and for museum deposition by SMA (1993).

6.1.1 Recovery policy

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

6.1.2 Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. All finds came from topsoil or subsoil contexts. They were identified, quantified and dated to period, and the date used to suggest a broad date range for activity on the site. All information was recorded on Microsoft Access database.

No artefacts from environmental samples were examined.

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and referenced where appropriate by fabric type and form according to the series maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology (www.worcestershireceramics.org).

6.2 Artefact analysis

The artefacts are summarised in Tables 1 to 3. They came from the subsoil in three different trenches (contexts 601, 701 and 801).

The small assemblage included diagnostic pottery of Roman, medieval and post-medieval date. The Roman pottery included a rim from a Malvernian tubby cooking pot (fabric 3) and the very abraded base of a bowl in Central Gaulish samian (fabric 42.3). Both came from subsoil layer (601) and are consistent with a 2nd-century date. The other sherd, in Severn Valley ware (fabric 12) was less closely datable. The medieval pottery included sherds from Malvernian unglazed ware cooking pots (fabric 56), from layers (601) and (701). This ware dates broadly to late 12th to 14th century but is most common on 13th century sites. The rim from layer (701) is similar to an example dated to the 13th century from Deansway, Worcester (Bryant 2004, fig 184.5, type 3). Trench 8 (layer 801) produced as sherd of Worcester-type sandy glazed ware (fabric 64.1), dating broadly from the late 11th to 14th century.

A handful of post-medieval and modern wares reflected low levels of activity in the vicinity from the late 16th century onwards (manganese mottled ware fabric 91; post-medieval red and orange ware fabric 78 and 90; modern china fabric 85)

The other finds included medieval/post-medieval and undated brick/tile and a clay pipe stem.

period	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight(g)
Roman	ceramic	earthenware	pot	4	48
medieval	ceramic	earthenware	pot	8	53
medieval/post-medieval	ceramic	earthenware	tile	3	127
post-medieval	ceramic	earthenware	clay pipe	1	4
	ceramic	earthenware	pot	3	67
undated	ceramic	earthenware	brick/tile	5	108

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

broad period	fabric code	fabric common name	count	weight(g)
Roman	3	Malvernian ware	1	14
	12	Severn Valley ware	2	15
	43.2	Central Gaulish samian ware	1	19
Medieval	56	Malvernian unglazed ware	3	28
	64	Glazed sandy wares	5	25
post-medieval	78	Post-medieval red ware	1	4
	90	Post-medieval orange ware	1	47
	91	Post-medieval buff wares	1	16
Total			15	168

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by period and fabric

context	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight(g)	start date	end date
601	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	19	2nd	
601	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	14	late 1st	2nd
601	ceramic	earthenware	pot	2	18	late 12th	14th
601	ceramic	earthenware	tile	2	37		
601	ceramic	earthenware	brick/tile	5	108		
701	ceramic	earthenware	tile	1	90		
701	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	47	18th	19th
701	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	4	late 16th	early 19th
701	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	10	13th	
801	ceramic	earthenware	pot	5	25	1200	1500
801	ceramic	earthenware	pot	2	15	43	410
901	ceramic	earthenware	clay pipe	1	4		
901	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	16	c1680	c1740

Table 3: Summary of context dating based on artefacts

6.3 Significance

The finds reflect low levels of activity in the vicinity during the Roman period and from the medieval period onwards, perhaps associated with manuring. They are consistent with previous finds from the general area, although there was nothing to suggest the intervening Saxon period.

6.4 Recommendations

6.4.1 Further analysis and reporting

No further analysis is required.

6.4.2 Discard and retention

The finds could be considered for discard, but this must be after consultation with and the agreement of the receiving museum.

7 Discussion

A single possible archaeological feature was identified on the site. This comprised a small shallow linear depression, possibly a gully. It was diffuse and insecurely dated. It may have been used for agricultural drainage. The findings support the conclusions of the desk-based assessment which suggested an overall low archaeological potential for the site, being located outside any previously identified settlement or farmstead boundaries (see Napthan 2014). The area appears to have been used as agricultural land (probably pasture) for a considerable period, likely to have been at the edge of settlement. As such, there was no indication of direct occupation on the site, although the artefactual assemblage does suggest that low level Roman, medieval and post-medieval activity in the surrounding area has produced material that has been incorporated into the subsoil through manuring or dumping. The known cropmark of an enclosure 150m to the east of the site (possibly prehistoric or Roman in date, although this is uncertain; WSM06037) and the proximity to Holly Green settlement itself, which appears to have developed in the later medieval period, offer likely sources for these artefacts.

The fieldwork methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features. Overall, it is considered that the nature, density and distribution of the limited archaeological evidence provides an accurate characterisation of the development site as a whole.

8 Significance

The single possible feature was of negligible archaeological significance, probably being related to agricultural use of the field in the medieval or post-medieval period. The artefacts recovered from the subsoil reflect general low levels of activity from the Roman period onwards and are consistent with agricultural land use.

9 Impacts

At present, the exact scheme of the proposed development and the form it will take is only indicative, but is planned to include residential plots with associated access roads and utilities and introduce new hedged and fence boundaries.

Based on the results of the evaluation trenching, it would be expected that ground works usually associated with this type of development are unlikely to cause the loss of any significant heritage assets on the site.

10 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Richard Bradley, assisted by Elspeth Iliff, Gwyneth Thomas and Hazel Whitefoot.

The project was managed by Tom Vaughan. The report was produced and collated by Richard Bradley. Specialist contributions and individual sections of the report are attributed to the relevant authors throughout the text.

11 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their help during the project: Martin Teale (Nigel J Teale surveying and building consultancy); and Aidan Smyth (Archaeology and Planning Advisor, Wychavon and Malvern Hills District Councils).

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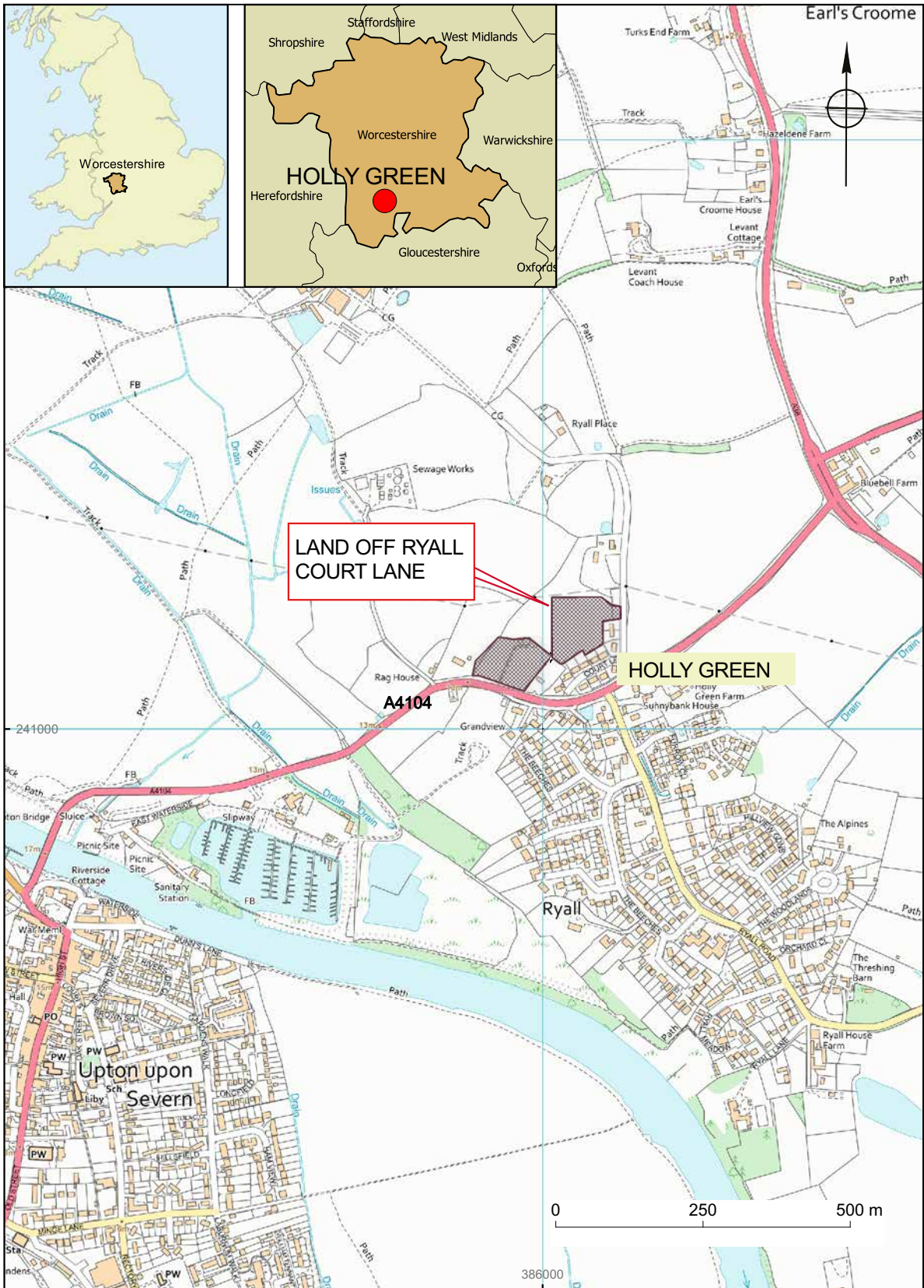
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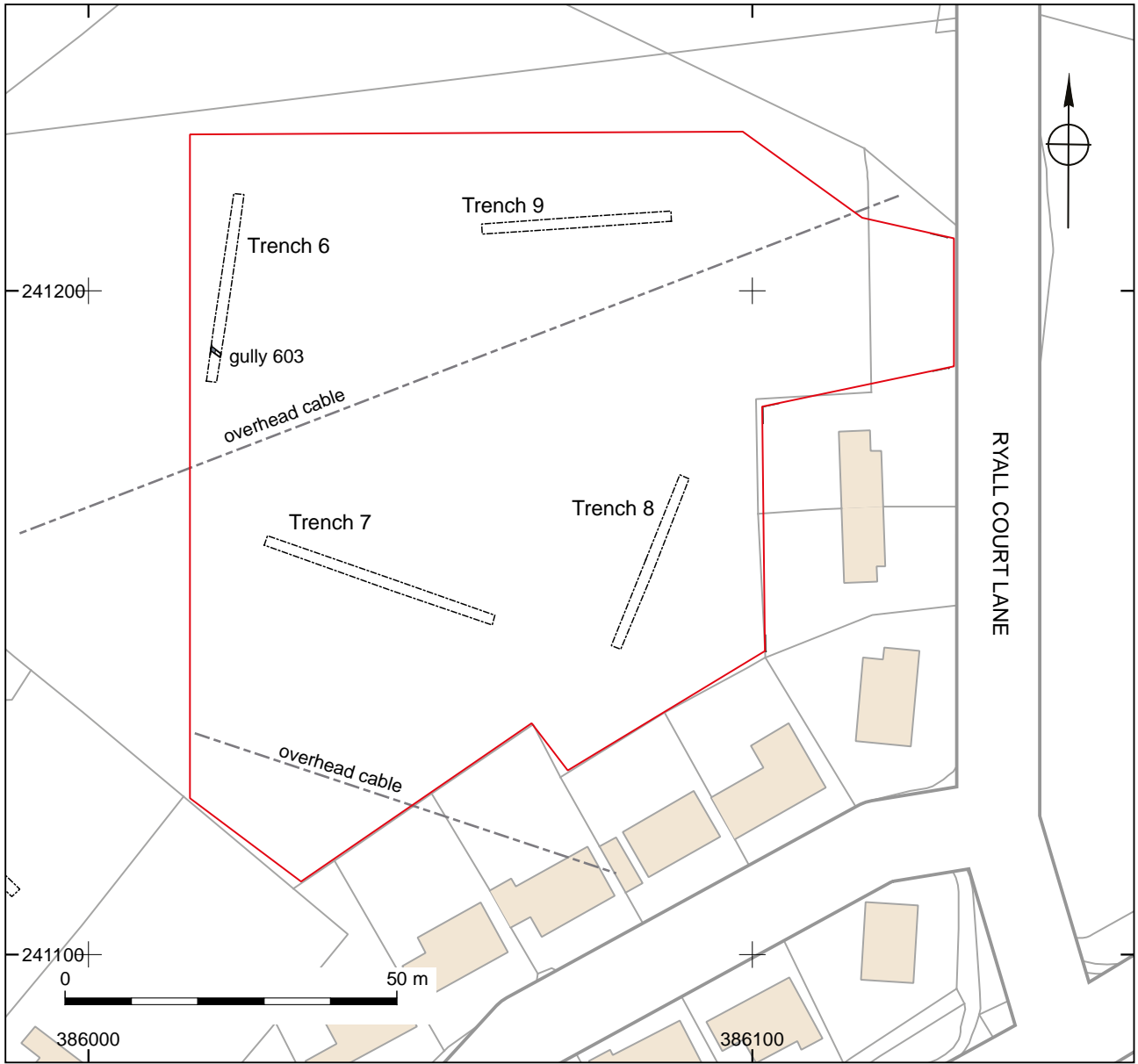
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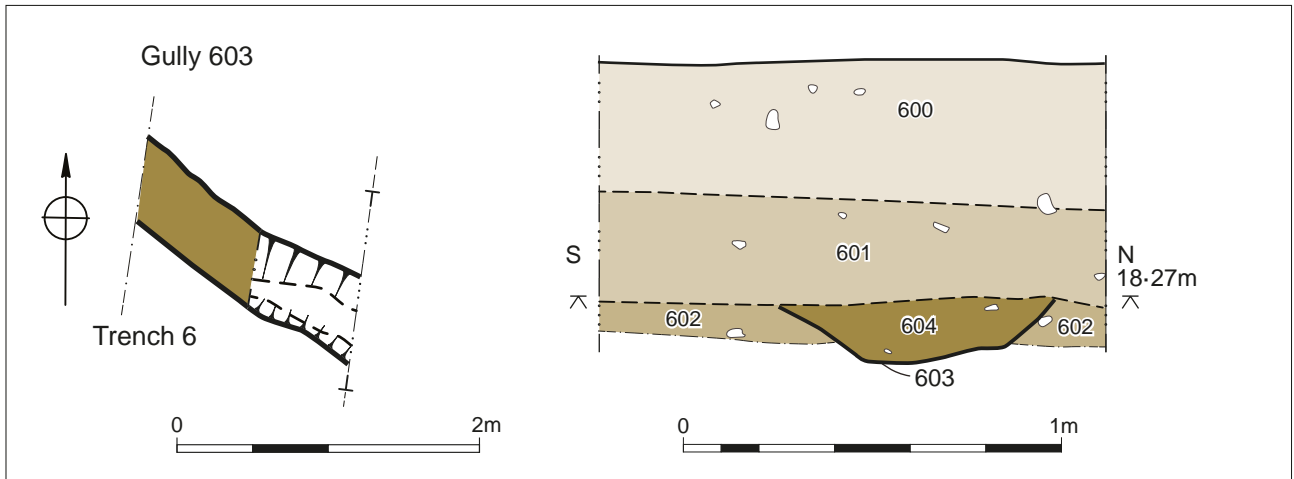
Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench plan

Figure 2



Plan and section: gully 603

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1: General view of the site, facing west, no scales



Plate 2: General view of Trench 6, view south, 2x 1m scales

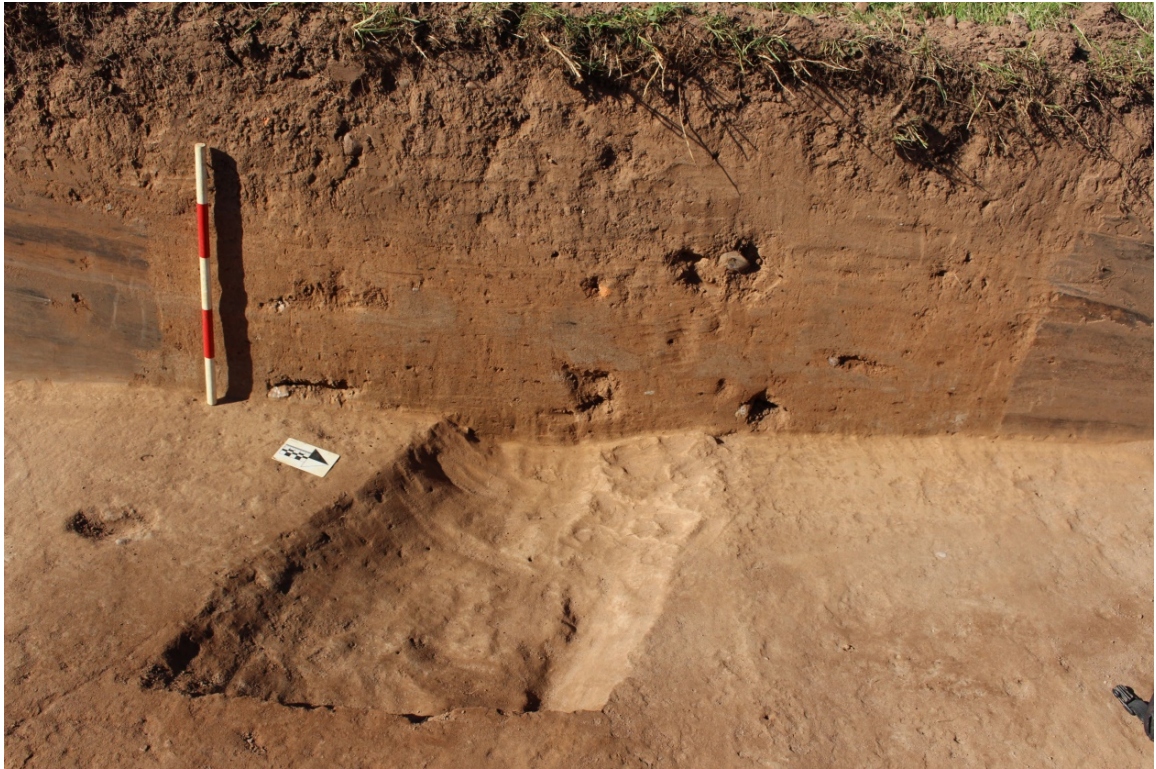


Plate 3: Section of Trench 6, view west, with possible feature [603], 0.50m scale

Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

(Trenches 1 – 5 excavated in field to south-west; site WSM70779)

Trench 6

Length: 28.5M Width: 1.52M Orientation: north to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
600	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil, fine rooting. Rare rounded and sub-rounded pebbles.	0.23M	soft greyish brown silty sand
601	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil. Friable but densely compacted. Occasional sub-rounded pebbles. Rare pottery	0.31M	friable orangey brown silty sand
602	Natural	Layer	Occasional rounded and sub-rounded pebbles.	>0.28M	friable whiteish brown silty sand
603	Gully	Cut	Cut of gully, extending diagonally across the trench approximately east-west. Feature is rather shallow with an irregular base. Function unknown	0.16M	
604	Gully	Fill	Fill of 603. Fairly sterile fill, 1 small piece of charcoal and rare sub-rounded pebbles. Unknown function of gully, possibly natural infill. No dating	0.16M	friable reddish brown silty sand

Trench 7

Length: 36M Width: 1.56M Orientation: east to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
700	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil. Occasional CBM.	0.36M	firm brownish grey clayey sand
701	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil. Occasional pottery and CBM.	0.26M	compact orangey grey clayey sand
702	Natural	Layer	Compacted. Rooting and burrowing present.	>0.10M	firm orangey grey sand

Trench 8

Length: 28M

Width: 1.60M

Orientation: north to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
800	Topsoil	Layer	Occasional rooting, CBM etc.	0.33M	firm brownish grey clayey sand
801	Subsoil	Layer	Compacted. Occasional pottery and CBM.	0.20M	firm brownish grey sandy clay
802	Natural	Layer	Very compacted.	>0.18M	firm brownish grey sand

Trench 9

Length: 28M

Width: 1.58M

Orientation: east to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
900	Topsoil	Layer		0.28M	firm brownish grey clayey sand
901	Subsoil	Layer		0.20M	firm brownish grey sandy clay
902	Natural	Layer	Very compacted.	>0.12M	firm brownish grey sand

Appendix 2: Summary of project archive (WSM70294)

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	Ceramics
Paper	Context sheet, Diary (Field progress form), Plan, Report, Section
Digital	Database, GIS, Digital photographic images, Survey, Text

*OASIS terminology

Appendix 3: Summary of data for Worcestershire HER

P5278

WSM 70294

Artefacts

period	material class	object specific type	start-date	end-date	count	weight(g)	specialist report	key assemblage?
Roman	ceramic	pot	late 1st	2nd	4	48	yes	no
medieval	ceramic	pot	12th	15th	8	53	yes	no
medieval/ post medieval	ceramic	tile			3	127	no	no
post-medieval	ceramic	clay pipe			1	4	no	no
	ceramic	pot	late 16th	2000	3	67	yes	no
undated	ceramic	brick/tile			5	108	no	no