

Archaeological evaluation of land off the A4104, Holly Green

Worcestershire Archaeology
for Martin Teale

October 2018



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LAND OFF THE A4104 HOLLY GREEN WORCESTERSHIRE

Archaeological Evaluation Report



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SITE INFORMATION

Site name: Land off the A4104

Local planning authority: Malvern Hills District Council

Planning reference: TBC

Central NGR: SO 8594 4110

Commissioning client: Nigel and Martin Teale

Client project reference: N/A

WA project number: P5278

WA report number: 2623

HER reference: WSM70779

Oasis reference: fieldsec1-331532

Museum accession number: TBC

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

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Archaeological evaluation of land off the A4104, 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 the A4104, Holly Green, Worcestershire (NGR SO 8594 4110). This comprised five evaluation trenches laid out in a random non-gridded array. No archaeological features were known prior to the evaluation. A preceding desk-based assessment prepared for the land adjacent to the northern boundary of the site (also evaluated during this project; WSM70294) had, however, indicated some potential for artefact scatters in the area due to the presence of archaeological remains in the wider area.

A small cluster of irregular features were identified. These appeared characteristic of rooting or depressions in the natural, although one may have been a small agricultural drainage gully. This was diffuse but contained a small fragment of medieval pottery. There was no indication of direct occupation on the site and it appears to have been used as agricultural land for a considerable period. The artefactual assemblage recovered did, however, suggest that general Roman and medieval activity nearby has produced material that has been incorporated into the subsoil. The Roman pottery finds were of particular interest and were perhaps related to trade passing through the area, reflecting the location of the site on rising ground to the east of the river. The known cropmark of an enclosure to the east (possibly prehistoric or Roman in date, although this is uncertain) could also be a factor in the presence of this material.

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 the A4104, Holly Green, Worcestershire (NGR SO 8594 4110). This comprised five evaluation trenches (Trenches 1-5; WSM70779) and was undertaken concurrent with evaluation of adjacent land to the north-east, which is reported on separately (Trenches 6-9; WSM70294). 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 will be submitted to Malvern Hills District Council.

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 land to the immediate north of 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 two land parcels divided by an access track within a single field, 7,400m² (0.74ha) in size, located to the north-west of Holly Green and immediately north of the A4104 road. In recent years it has been used for rough grass pasture (Plate 1), with storage sheds in the northern part. It is bounded by hedging and fencing dividing the land from the road to the south, residential properties to the east and west, and a further pasture field to the north. Overhead power lines cross the site area.

The field occupies undulating ground, though it broadly rises from the south (c 14.60m AOD) to the north and north-east (c 17.80m AOD). 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 land adjacent to the northern boundary of the site has been undertaken (the land also evaluated during this project) by Mike Napthan Archaeology (Napthan 2014; WCM66222). The assessment of land use and the potential for the site detailed in the DBA are directly relevant and the summary 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, 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."

Immediately south of the site, land on the opposite side of the A4104 was subject to desk-based assessment and field evaluation during 2013 (Platell 2013; Walsh 2013; WSM49624). Fifteen trenches were excavated. One Roman ditch was revealed, with no other archaeological features or deposits identified. Later medieval pottery was recovered from unstratified deposits. This was thought to be indicative of medieval manuring practice, rather than settlement activity.

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 Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2018). Fieldwork was undertaken between 8 and 9 October 2018.

Five trenches of varying sizes, amounting to 141m² in area, were excavated over the site area of 7400m² (0.74ha), representing a sample of c 2%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

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 both underground and overhead services, and also with consideration for the available working space and site access. Two trenches (Trenches 1 and 2) were opened in the eastern part of the site, and three in the western part (Trenches 3, 4 and 5). It was originally intended to open a single long trench in the western part but due to considerable ground disturbance and dumping of modern material down to at least 1.20m in depth this was curtailed and two additional smaller trenches were put in to attempt to identify any areas of undisturbed ground.

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 Worcestershire 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 Worcestershire Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner it is anticipated that it will be deposited with Worcestershire Museums.

5 Archaeological results

5.1 Introduction

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figures 2-3 and Plates 2-4. The trench and context inventory is presented in Appendix 1.

5.2 Phasing

5.2.1 Natural deposits

Natural deposits were identified in Trenches 1 and 2, but were not reached in Trenches 3, 4 and 5 due to extensive ground disturbance of modern date. Where observed, this was slightly variable: soft light yellow brown sand (Plate 2) transitioned through greyish brown sand with sandstone and manganese to firm mid pink-brown sandy clay with manganese and sub-round stones (Plate 3; contexts 102 and 202). The natural substrate was encountered between 0.77-0.80m below the current ground surface.

5.2.2 Phase 1: medieval/post-medieval deposits

A thick silty sand subsoil layer (0.46m in depth) was present in both Trenches 1 and 2 (contexts 101 and 201). This deposit included fragments of animal bone and frequent Roman and medieval domestic pottery, as well as medieval and post-medieval tile.

Beneath this layer, towards the southern end of Trench 1, was a small group of irregular features – [104], [106], [108]. These were less than 0.30m deep and not well defined, being characteristic of rooting or depressions in the natural. One, however, included a small fragment of medieval pottery and some fired clay (fill 105). This appeared to terminate within the trench [104] and could be the end of a small gully (Plate 3; Figure 3).

5.2.3 Phase 2: Modern

The three trenches opened in the western part of the field (Trench 3, 4 and 5) contained deep deposits of dumped made ground including modern material and re-deposited natural clay (contexts 301; 302; 401; 501), appearing to represent a considerable area of landfill (Plate 4). This included blue and white china and 20th century glass, as well as general ceramic building material (not all retained). These trenches were excavated down to 1.28m, 1.29m and 1.32m below the current ground surface, and a sondage 1.50m deep was also opened, yet the natural substrate was not encountered.

All deposits were overlain by sandy topsoil, between 0.18m and 0.34m in depth, the upper surface of which consisted of rough grass. A single piece of modern bottle glass was recovered.

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. The majority of 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 Recovery policy

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

6.3 Artefact analysis

Artefacts were recovered from four trenches (Trenches 1, 2, 4 and 5); these are summarised in Tables 1 to 3. Most were from topsoil or subsoil layers, with the exception of some fragmentary and undiagnostic finds from the fill (105) of a possible gully [104]. The assemblage included pottery, ceramic building material, glass, iron and animal bone.

The largest assemblage of Roman pottery came from subsoil layer (101) in Trench 1. This mainly comprised Severn Valley ware (fabric 12), including rims from jars dating to the 2nd to 3rd centuries (Webster 1976, fig 1.A3, A5, A6). The presence of BB1 (fabric 22) and Central Gaulish samian (fabric 42.3) both support a 2nd-century or later Roman date. Of particular interest was a rim from a grog-tempered storage jar (fabric 16), with two converging incised lines on the inner surface after firing. Such marking tends to be associated with later 1st to 2nd century sites and, in particular, sites where there is a need to keep a tally of storage jars or their contents. This may reflect early Roman trade passing through the site, perhaps related to its location on rising ground to the east of a river crossing point. The only other Roman pottery came from subsoil layer (201). This included wheelmade Malvernian ware (fabric 19), produced from the 2nd century on, and undiagnostic sherds of Severn Valley ware.

The subsoil in Trench 1 (101) also produced the best assemblage of medieval pottery. This was less abraded than the rest of the assemblage. Two vessels were represented, both jugs. A number of distinctively hard-fired body sherds, with a dark green glaze and clearly from the same vessel, were in Worcester-type sandy glazed ware (fabric 64.1), dating broadly to 1200–1500. The other jug was represented by a rim and handle, the latter with stabbed decoration. This was in Oxidised glazed Malvernian ware (fabric 69) and based on parallels from Worcester, Deansway, dates to the mid-13th to 14th century (Bryant 2004 fig 185.2, type 2). The other sherds of medieval pottery were from a cooking pot in Worcester-type sandy unglazed ware (fabric 55), dating to the later 11th to 14th century, and very small sherd that could not be identified with confidence, from possible gully fill (105).

This subsoil (101) also produced fragments of coarsely tempered and very abraded Malvernian tile, which might possibly be Roman (Laura Griffin pers comm). Other finds comprised post-medieval tile, modern blue and white china (fabric 85) and bottle glass, fired clay, charcoal and animal bone. The animal bone came from subsoil layer (101) so could be associated with either Roman or medieval activity.

period	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight(g)
Roman	ceramic	earthenware	pot	36	441
medieval	ceramic	earthenware	pot	11	251
	ceramic	earthenware	tile	7	192
post-medieval	ceramic	earthenware	tile	1	122
modern	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	19
	glass	clear	bottle	1	27
	glass	pale green	bottle	1	14
undated	bone	animal bone	fragment	10	116
	ceramic	fired clay	fragment	1	40
	fired clay	fired clay	fragment	5	5
	metal	iron	fragment	1	8
	organic	charcoal	fragment	1	1

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

broad period	fabric code	fabric common name	count	weight(g)
Roman	12	Severn Valley ware	26	316
	15	Coarse sandy grey ware	1	17
	16	Grog tempered ware (BD32/33)	1	25
	19	Wheelthrown Malvernian ware	3	59
	22	Black-burnished ware, type 1 (BB1)	4	21
	43.2	Central Gaulish samian ware	1	3
Medieval	55	Worcester-type sandy unglazed ware	1	10
	64	Glazed sandy wares	7	80
	99	Miscellaneous medieval wares	1	2
Medieval/Post-medieval	69	Oxidized glazed Malvernian ware	2	159
Modern	85	Modern china	1	19
			Total	48
				711

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by period and fabric

context	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight(g)	period	start date	end date
101	bone	animal bone	fragment	8	68	undated		
	ceramic	earthenware	pot	9	239	medieval	1200	1500
	ceramic	earthenware	pot	29	325	Roman	late 1st	2nd/3rd
	ceramic	earthenware	tile	7	192	Roman?		
	metal	iron	fragment	1	8	undated		
105	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	2	medieval	1200	1500
	fired clay	fired clay	fragment	5	5	undated		
	organic	charcoal	fragment	1	1	undated		
200	glass	pale green	bottle	1	14	modern	1900	2018
201	bone	animal bone	fragment	2	48	undated		
	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	10	medieval	later 11th	14th
	ceramic	earthenware	pot	7	116	Roman	2nd	410
	ceramic	earthenware	tile	1	122	post-medieval		
	ceramic	fired clay	fragment	1	40	undated		
401	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	19	modern	1800	2018
501	glass	clear	bottle	1	27	modern	1900	2018

Table 3: Summary of context dating based on artefacts

6.4 Significance

The finds from subsoil layer (101) in particular reflect the presence of Roman and medieval activity in the vicinity of the site. The Roman activity most likely dates to the 2nd century. Amongst the Roman finds the storage jar with an incised graffito is of particular interest, indicating the need to mark ownership or contents and perhaps provides a link to Roman trade. The medieval pottery from this layer is less abraded than most of the assemblage and seems less likely to have reached the site as a result of manuring.

6.5 Recommendations

6.5.1 Further analysis and reporting

No further analysis is required.

6.5.2 Discard and retention

The Roman and medieval pottery includes sherds of particular interest so should be retained. The remaining finds could be considered for discard, subject to consultation with the receiving museum.

7 Discussion

A small cluster of irregular features were identified toward the centre of the site, within Trench 1. These appeared characteristic of rooting or depressions in the natural, although one may have been a small agricultural drainage gully. This was diffuse but contained a small fragment of medieval pottery. Elsewhere, considerable modern disturbance had affected the western part of the field, with deep deposits of dumped made ground that included modern material and re-deposited natural clay. It is possible that the area had been used for landfill in the 20th century. A pond is shown in this area on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map until the later 20th century and it may be that this was infilled relatively recently, although conversations on site with the landowners did not confirm this.

The findings support the desk-based assessment prepared for the land adjacent to the northern boundary of the site (also evaluated; WSM70294), which suggested an overall low archaeological potential for the area, being located outside any previously identified settlement or farmstead boundaries (see Napthan 2014). The site appears to have been used as agricultural land (probably pasture) for a considerable period, likely to have been on the edge of settlement. There was no indication of direct occupation, although the small features in Trench 1 (such as the possible small gully) do suggest some land use in the medieval period. The artefactual assemblage also supports medieval activity in the vicinity that has produced material that has been incorporated into the subsoil on site. The proximity to Holly Green settlement, which developed in the later medieval period, may offer a likely source for these artefacts.

The Roman pottery finds were of interest, all recovered from the subsoil, perhaps related to Roman trade passing through the area and reflecting the site location on the first higher ground to the east of the river. The known cropmark of an enclosure to the east (possibly prehistoric or Roman in date, although this is uncertain; WSM06037) could also be a factor in the presence of this material. Extensive areas of Iron Age, Roman and Saxon settlement have also been identified around 2km to the south, so there is a known activity within the landscape at this time (Barber and Watts 2008).

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 irregular features identified in Trench 1 were of negligible to low archaeological significance, being characteristic of depressions in the natural but possibly being related to limited agricultural use of the field in the medieval period. The artefacts recovered from the subsoil are consistent with agricultural land use and reflect general activity from the Roman period onwards. Some perhaps provides a link to Roman trade in the area, whilst the medieval pottery is potentially derived from Holly Green itself.

9 Impacts

At present, the exact scheme of the proposed development and the form it will take is not known, but is planned to include residential plots with associated access roads and utilities.

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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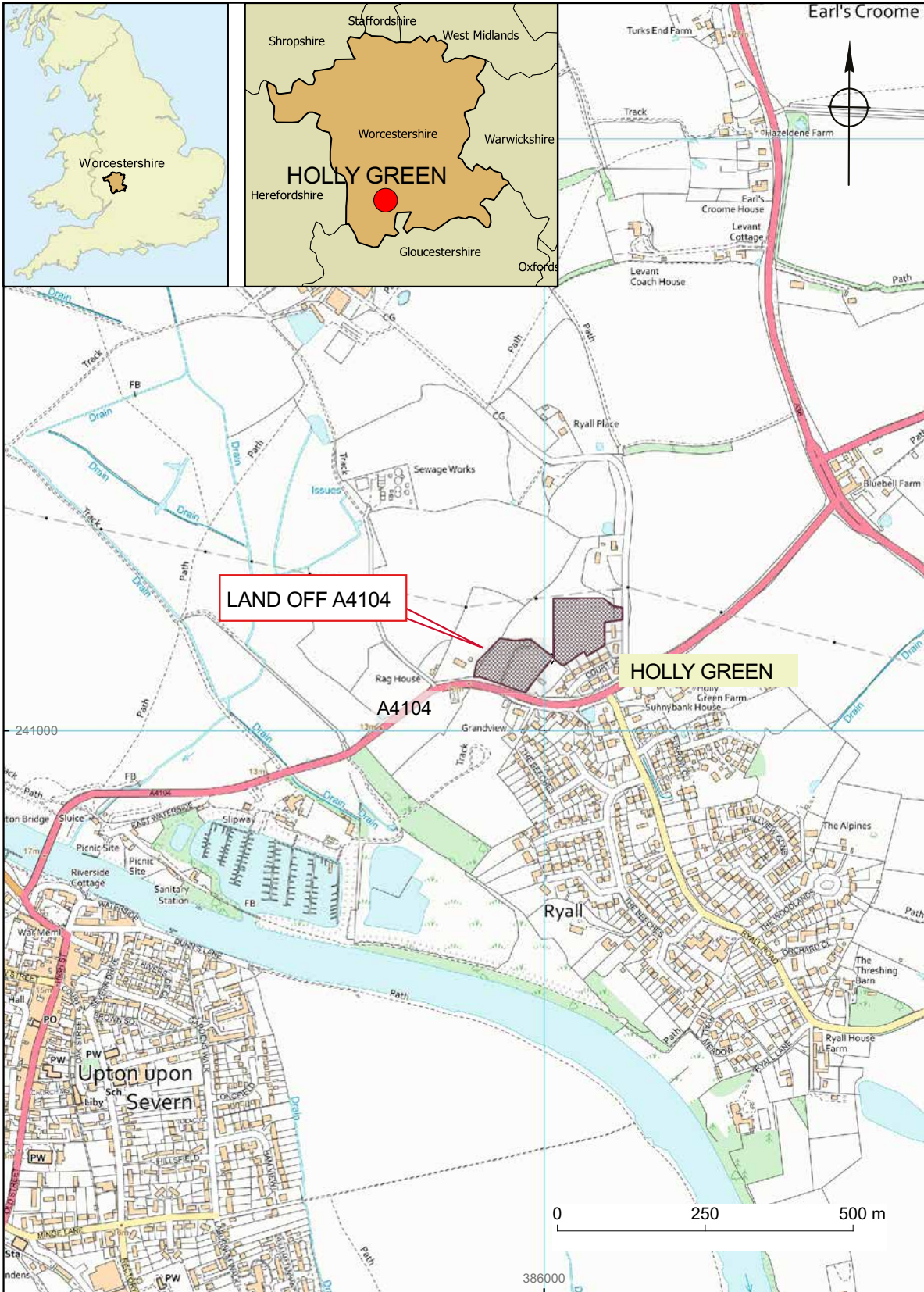
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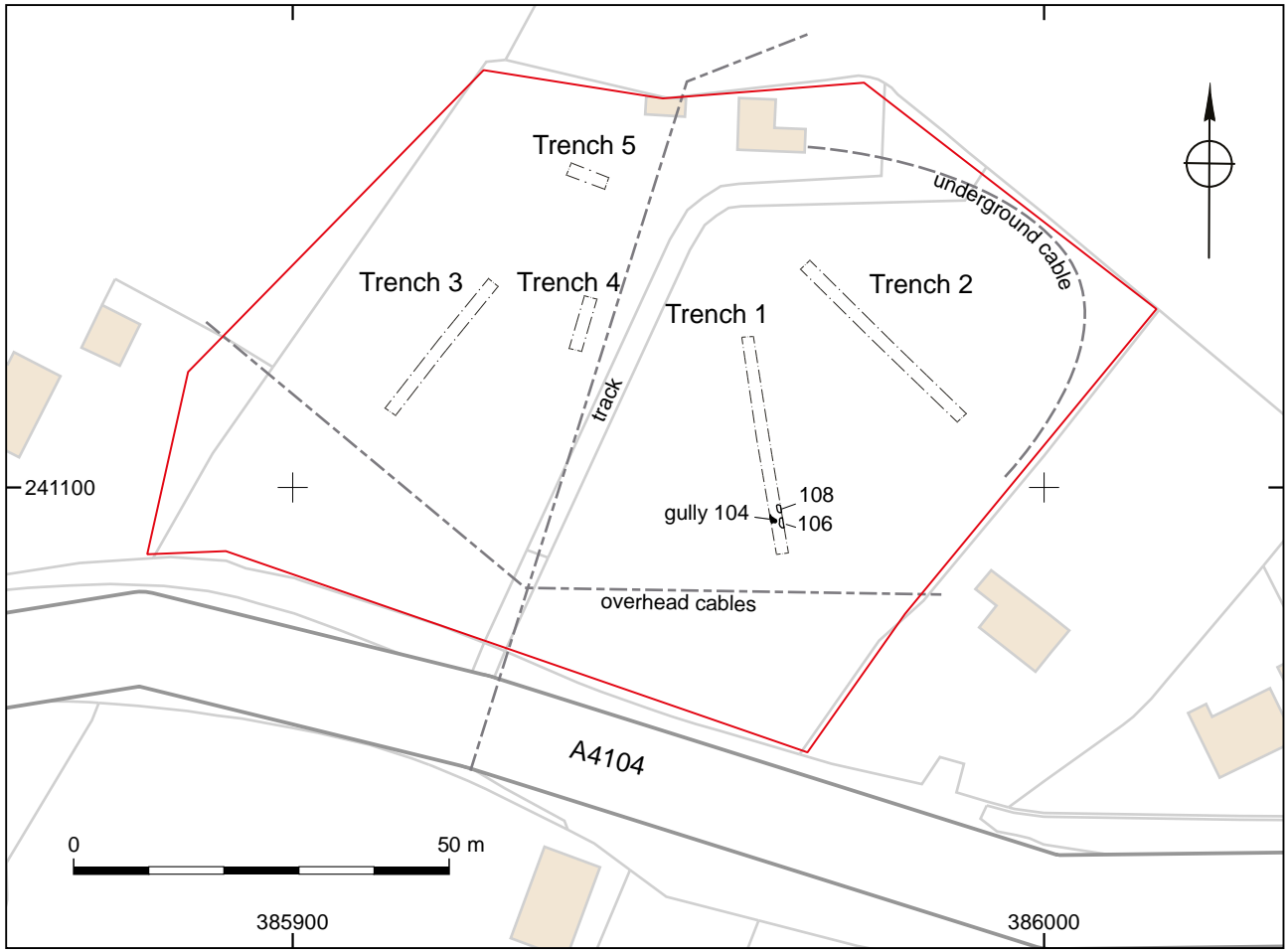
Figures



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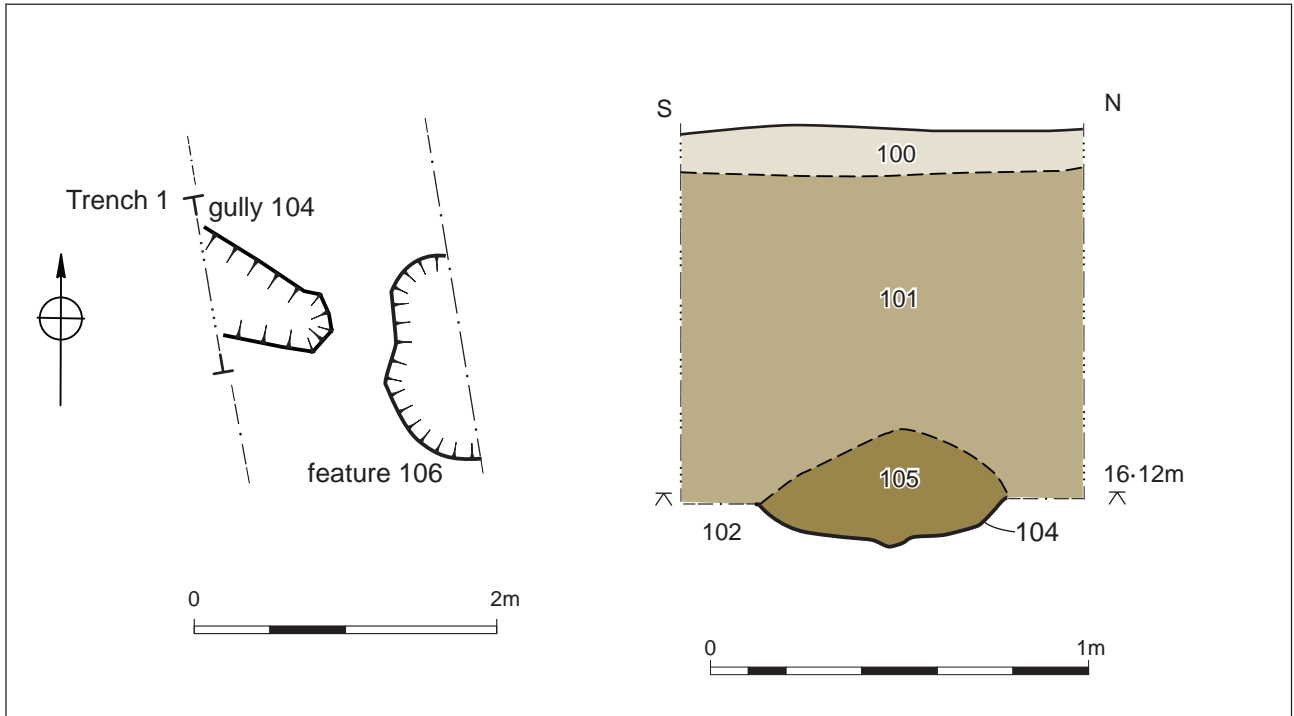
Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench plan

Figure 2



Plan and section: gully 104

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1: General view south-west of the western part of the site, no scales



Plate 2: Trench 2 general view south-east, 2x 1m scales



Plate 3: Trench 1, deep subsoil deposit (101), with possible feature [104] below, view west, 0.50m scale



Plate 4: Trench 3, dumped deposits of redeposited clay and made ground (301/302), view north-west, 1m scale

Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Length: 30M

Width: 1.52M

Orientation: north to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
100	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.31M	loose greyish brown silty sand
101	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil. Roman and medieval pottery in southern end of trench, with rare animal bone	0.46M	reddish brown silty sand
102	Natural	Layer	Soft light yellow sand at the northern end of the trench. Approximately 8.5M from the northern end it transitions, incorporating frequent sandstone inclusions with lenses of manganese for a stretch of approx. 8M. The southern end of the trench becomes firm mid pink-brown sandy clay with frequent small manganese flecks and sub-rounded pebbles and cobbles	>0.12M	soft yellowish brown sand
103	VOID		VOID CONTEXT - missed out		
104	Gully	Cut	Cut of a possible gully terminus		
105	Gully	Fill	Fill in terminus 104		friable dark reddish brown silt
106	Unknown	Cut	Cut of a possible feature, Irregular shape. No finds to provide dating evidence. May be of natural origin		
107	Unknown	Fill	Fill of a possible feature 106		friable reddish brown sandy silt
108	Unknown	Cut	Cut of sub-oval possible feature.		
109	Unknown	Fill	Fill of sub-oval possible feature. Occasional manganese flecks.		reddish brown sandy silt

Trench 2

Length: 30M Width: 1.55M Orientation: north-west to south-east

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
200	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil. Very fine rooting, rare sub-angular pebbles, occasional charcoal flecks and rare CBM fragments.	0.34M	soft greyish brown silty sand
201	Subsoil	Layer	Occasional pottery - Roman to medieval, CBM and animal bone.	0.46M	soft orangey brown silty sand
202	Natural	Layer	Last 6M at NW end of trench transitions to a friable greyish pink clayey sand with frequent manganese flecks	>0.12M	soft yellowish brown sand

Trench 3

Length: 20M Width: 1.52M Orientation: north-east to south-west

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
300	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil, frequent fine rooting.	0.18M	soft greyish brown silty sand
301	Re-deposited	Layer	Patches of dark blueish black and frequent sub-angular stone pebbles.	0.54M	friable reddish brown clay silt
302	Made ground	Layer	C19th-C20th landfill/made ground. Natural not found even at a depth of 1.28M	>0.56M	firm reddish black clay

Trench 4

Length: 6.8M Width: 1.54M Orientation: north-east to south-west

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
400	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil, frequent fine rooting.	0.21M	soft greyish brown silty sand
401	Made ground	Layer	Similar to the natural in trench 1 (102) but disturbed with dark black-brown patches and large C19th-C20th waste inclusions - CBM and Pottery, including blue and white china	>1.08M	friable greyish red clayey sand

Trench 5

Length: 5M

Width: 1.54M

Orientation: east to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
500	Topsoil	Layer	Frequent fine and thick rooting.	0.28M	soft greyish brown silty sand
501	Made ground	Layer	Frequent 20th century waste inclusions and mottled patches of ashy grey and grey black material in section.	>1.04M	firm reddish grey sandy clay

Appendix 2: Summary of project archive (WSM70779)

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	Animal bones, Ceramics, Glass
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

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Artefacts

period (note 1)	material class	object specific type	start-date	end-date	count	weight(g)	specialist report (note 2)	key assemblage? (note 3)
Roman	ceramic	pot	120	3rd	36	441	yes	no
medieval	ceramic	pot	1200	1500	11	251	yes	no
	ceramic	tile	1200	1539	7	192	no	no
post-medieval	ceramic	tile	1540	1899	1	122	no	no
modern	ceramic	pot	1800	2050	1	19	yes	no
	glass	bottle	1900	2050	2	41	no	no
undated	animal bone	fragment			10	116	no	no
	fired clay	fragment			6	45	no	no
	metal (fe)	fragment			1	8	no	no
	organic (charcoal)	fragment			1	1	no	no