

Archaeological Evaluation at the former Ice Works 174, Bromyard Road, Worcester

Worcestershire Archaeology
for JJS Developments

July 2019



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THE FORMER ICE WORKS, 174, BROMYARD ROAD, WORCESTER

Archaeological Evaluation report



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SITE INFORMATION

Site name:	The former Ice Works, 174 Bromyard Road, Worcester
Site code:	-
Local planning authority:	Worcester City Council
Planning reference:	P15C0371
Central NGR:	NGR SO 82895 54297
Commissioning client:	JJS Developments
Client project reference:	-
WA project number:	P4996
WA report number:	2657
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Archaeological evaluation at the former Ice Works, 174 Bromyard Road, Worcester

By Tim Cornah

With contributions by Laura Griffin

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at the former Ice Works, 174, Bromyard Road, Worcester (NGR SO 82895 54297). It was commissioned by JJS Developments, in advance of conversion of the main buildings into flats, the construction of new build flats, and after the demolition of a number of the smaller ancillary 20th century buildings. Planning permission has been granted subject to a programme of archaeological works. Three trenches were excavated across the eastern half of the site, with further planned on the western half of the site at a later date.

Despite the documentary evidence suggesting the presence of a mill on the site from 1086, the archaeological features recorded to date were all post-medieval. This included a wide mill pond which contained waterlogged deposits nature, indicating that if any earlier timber mill structures did remain at a greater depth, they would probably be preserved by the anaerobic conditions.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at the former Ice Works, 174, Bromyard Road, Worcester (NGR SO 82895 54297). This comprised three trenches across the eastern half of the site, with a further stage of evaluation intended across the western half at a later date. The project was commissioned by JJS Developments, in advance of conversion of the main buildings into flats, the construction of new build flats, and after the demolition of a number of the smaller ancillary 20th century buildings. Planning permission has been granted by Worcester City Council subject to a programme of archaeological works (planning reference P15C0371).

The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the proposed development had the potential to impact upon possible/specific heritage assets. A desk based assessment (Cornah 2015) highlighted the possibility for a mill to have existed on the site from 1086 onwards and that site conditions are likely to be such that organic elements such as timber remain intact.

The project conforms to a brief prepared by Worcester City Council Development Management (WCC 2016a). A WSI was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2017) and approved by the Archaeological Officer, Worcester City Council (the Curator). The evaluation also conformed to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and guidance: for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014a) and the *Guidelines for archaeological work in Worcester* (Worcester City Council 2016b).

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The western side of the City of Worcester is located above the River Severn to the east and the River Teme to the south. The site sits at the western boundary of the city, alongside the Laughern Brook which is itself a tributary of the Teme. The site is situated in a valley created by the Laughern Brook at a height of around 18m AOD.

The solid geology of the site is Sidmouth Mudstone Formation. The superficial deposits are likely to relate to the Laughern Brook and be comprised of clay, silt, sands and gravels. It is possible that some Holt Heath Sand and Gravel that is found in much of the western side of Worcester also extends into the bounds of the site (British Geological Survey 2018). An archaeological evaluation to the south of the site (WSM33363) recorded alluvial deposits within close proximity to Bromyard Road, these are likely to relate to Laughern Brook but the specific composition of any subsurface deposits on site is currently unrecorded.

2 Archaeological and historical background

2.1 Introduction

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) of the site was previously undertaken (Cornah 2015), on behalf of JJS Developments. The findings presented in the DBA are summarised below.

The desk-based assessment highlighted the potential for archaeological features on the site from the Early Mesolithic period onwards. Archaeological remains within the area are limited from the prehistoric period into the Romano-British era, so would potentially be significant if they exist within the present site.

From the medieval period onwards, activity within the area is increasingly recognised. This is likely to have been due to the foundation of the Bromyard Road in the Anglo-Saxon era. Activity of this period has been seen from excavations to the north of the site where the settlement appears to have been agricultural in nature which expanded until the later medieval period.

A number of medieval mill sites have been suggested along the Laughern Brook. New Mill, founded in 1086, is thought to be within the development site. Mapping evidence shows that a mill stood on the site in 1729 which was called both Mudwall Mill and St Johns Mill in the 19th century. It is possible that medieval and post-medieval phases of this mill survive below the present buildings. These, along with archaeological remains of all periods, are considered likely to be well-preserved in subsurface alluvial deposits relating to the Laughern Brook.

The site was taken over between 1868 and 1873 for use as a corn mill, and this date represents the earliest phase of the standing buildings. These buildings were developed and changed further from around 1900 when the Worcester and Midland Ice Co Ltd took over the site. The extensive cladding put up for conversion of the buildings for cold storage presently obscures almost all potential internal evidence for the earlier use of the buildings.

3 Project aims

The purpose of an archaeological field evaluation, as defined by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, is 'to gain information about the archaeological resource within a given area or site (including its presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality), in order to make an assessment of its merit in the appropriate context, leading to one or more of the following:

- a. The formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource
- b. The formulation of a strategy to mitigate a threat to the archaeological resource
- c. The formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research'

The Brief indicates that significant deposits may be defined as those likely to be of medieval and post-medieval date.

In particular the project will have the following aims, as identified in *An archaeological resource assessment and research framework for the city of Worcester* (WCC 2007):

- The hinterland of Roman Worcester (RP3.31)
- The agricultural hinterland in the Anglo-Saxon period (RP4.21)
- Other medieval industries (RP5.31)
- Food and drink industries – trading, storage and processing (RP6.12)

4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2017). Fieldwork was undertaken between 11 and 14 December 2018.

4.1 Fieldwork

Three trenches were excavated, amounting to just over 100m² in area within the eastern half of the site which was a 2,560m² in total. This represented an approximately 4% sample of the area. Four trenches were originally planned, though one of these was moved during field work to avoid significant depths of modern deposits and Trench 2 was excavated as a T shape. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2. A further programme of ground investigation with trenches is planned around the buildings in the western half of the site at a later date.

The trenches were laid out in order to test the mill pond and its bounding structure, as well as the higher ground on the southern side of the mill pond that was not likely to have been truncated by later buildings. This layout was decided with reference to historic mapping and agreed with the Curator.

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) and trench and feature locations were surveyed using a differential GPS with an accuracy limit set at 0.04m. On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

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

4.2 Artefact methodology, by Laura Griffin

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

4.2.1 Recovery policy

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

4.2.2 Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date was produced for each stratified context. 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 and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology (Hurst and Rees 1992 and www.worcestershireceramics.org).

4.2.3 Discard policy

Artefacts from topsoil and subsoil and unstratified contexts will normally be noted but not retained, unless they are of intrinsic interest (e.g. 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.

5 Results

5.1 Introduction

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

5.2 Phasing

5.2.1 Natural deposits/

Natural deposits were recorded in Trenches 1 and 2 (104 and 206) and consisted of a compact red clay marl (Plate 1). Within Trench 3, deposit (303) consisted of reddish brown clay with blue mottling and was considered likely to have been natural though this could not be confirmed.

5.2.2 Phase 1: Postmediaeval deposits

Trench 1 contained a shallow sided cut feature running south-west to north-east [106], though only its south-eastern edge was present as it extended beyond the northern extent of the trench (Plate 1). It extended for a width of over 9.8m and was over 1.8m in depth. It was filled by deposits (105) and (103) which consisted of dark reddish brown sandy clays and are likely to have been the same deposits, though were present either side of a modern service. This contained ceramic pipe of 17th century date. It is likely that these deposits represent purposeful backfilling of feature [106]. Below (103) at the northern end of the trench was (109) which consisted of a soft grey clay typical of an alluvial deposit which contained round pieces of wood of small diameter, that did not appear to have been deliberately laid, as well as one piece of round wood of approximately 0.20m diameter vertically set (Plate 2). These could not be closely investigated for health and safety reasons and were well below the impact level of the development. Deposit (109) was present at a depth of 1.20 to 1.60m below the ground surface (18 to 17.40m AOD), though its base extent was not reached.

It is likely that feature [205] (Figure 3 and Plate 3) was the same as [106]. This was again shallow sided, aligned broadly north-east to south-west, though with a slight curve at this point. As in Trench 1, the northern limit of the feature was beyond the end of the trench. This extended for over 6.5m in

width and over 1.10m in depth. It was filled by deposits (202 and 203) which appear to have been deliberate backfill deposits, though contained no dating evidence. Below this was deposit (204) which was of an increasingly blue grey nature, suggesting it formed within standing water. This contained pottery dating from the 17th to 18th centuries. Stratigraphically the earliest feature in the trench was a compacted area of small stones (209) and rubble on the southern edge of [205] that may have formed a path or track on along the side of the mill pond. This contained material dating from the 17th to 18th centuries.

It is probable that deposit (301) (Plate 4) was of the same nature and origin as deposits (109 and 204), which would suggest a wide shallow channel over c16m in width and over 1.16m in depth, though shallower at its eastern end. This is consistent with a mill pond, which from its dating in Trenches 1 and 2 would suggest it was filled in during the 17th to 18th centuries.

5.2.3 Phase 2: 19th century to modern deposits

In the centre of Trench 3 was a large cut feature [303] which truncated deposit (301). The edge of this feature aligns closely with the edge of the mill pond seen on the mapping from 1841 onwards, implying that the Phase 1 mill pond was backfilled and reduced in the first half of the 19th century. Deposit (304) (Plate 4) filled this feature and was of an extremely mixed nature, implying deliberate mechanical backfilling. Photographic and cartographic evidence suggest the mill pond was backfilled in the mid-20th century.

Four further 20th century brick walls with concrete foundations were present. Wall (107) aligned closely with building I as discussed within the building recording element of this report. This structure was known to have been constructed in or shortly after 1934.

Walls (211 and 217) as well as drain feature [215] are considered to be related to building L which was constructed after 1950.

The site was further covered with 20th century levelling deposits (101, 102 and 201), largely consisting of brick and black clinker deposits. This was in turn covered by a layer of brick crush (100, 200 and 300) which was spread over the site immediately before the trenching was undertaken.

6 Artefactual evidence, by Laura Griffin

The assemblage recovered from the site totalled 18 finds weighing 1155g (see Tables 1 and 3). Material came from just three stratified contexts (105, 204 and 209). The level of preservation was fair with finds displaying moderate levels of surface abrasion. The majority of the assemblage was of post-medieval date.

period	material class	object specific type	count	weight (g)
late medieval/early post-medieval	ceramic	roof tile(flat)	8	1018
post-medieval	ceramic	pot	6	108
post-medieval	ceramic	?cbm	1	3
post-medieval	ceramic	cbm	2	22
post-medieval	ceramic	pipe	1	4

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

6.1 Summary of artefactual evidence by period

Late medieval–early post-medieval

Material of this period consisted of eight pieces of flat roof tile (contexts 204 and 209). The most interesting of these was a fragment of a Worcester-produced tile (fabric 2c) which had a circular stamp divided into six wedge-shaped segments. Examples of this stamp have been previously identified within the assemblage from Deansway, Worcester, all on tiles of this same late medieval/early post-medieval fabric (Fagan 2004, 358, fig.207, no.9).

Post-medieval

Finds of post-medieval date formed the bulk of the assemblage and included pottery, ceramic building material and clay pipe (see Tables 1 and 3). Identifiable pottery consisted of two sherds from a 17th century black glazed red sandy ware cup (fabric 78; context 204). In addition, there were three sherds from a late 17th–18th century flared bowl/pancheon form in a fine, oxidised fabric with an olive green internal glaze and red external slip/wash (fabric 100; context 204). The clay pipe fragment (context 105) could be identified as from a pipe of mid–late 17th century date (Oswald 1975, fig.3, G, no.5).

Broad period	fabric number	fabric name	count	weight (g)
Post-medieval	78	Post-medieval red ware	3	34
Post-medieval	100	Miscellaneous post-medieval wares	3	74

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric type

context	material class	object specific type	count	weight (g)	start date	End date	finds tpq
105	ceramic	pipe	1	4	M17	L17C	mid–late 17th century
204	ceramic	pot	2	33		17C	Mid-17th–18th century
204	ceramic	?cbm	1	3			
204	ceramic	roof tile(flat)	3	534	L15C+		
204	ceramic	cbm	2	22			
204	ceramic	pot	3	74	M17C	18C	
209	ceramic	pot	1	1	M17C	18C	Mid-17th–18th century
209	ceramic	roof tile(flat)	5	484	13C	L15C+	

Table 3: Summary of context dating based on artefacts

Recommendations

No further work is recommended on the finds assemblage.

7 Discussion

It is probable that the two shallow cut features within Trenches 1 and 2 represented a single feature that was the south-eastern side a mill pond aligned broadly north-east to south-west over c 16m in width and over 1.16m in depth. Further deposits within Trench 3 were likely to have been part of the same feature. The dating within the latest fills of this feature suggested it was backfilled in the 17th to 18th centuries and potentially part of the relatively sinuous mill pond as illustrated on the Doharty map of 1729. It is possible that a single vertical round wood timber present within Trench 1 at a depth of 18m AOD represented an earlier phase of embankment, or sluices, although it could not be closely investigated, so this was not confirmed. It did, however, confirm the depth at which organic material remained preserved.

It is clear from the mapping the mill pond was reduced in size as it was partially filled in by 1841 and the rest of the mill pond filled in during the 20th century, as confirmed by deposits in Trench 3.

7.1.1 Significance

The deposits and features clearly identified relate to the later stage of the use of the mill pond and therefore add little to even the local aims as outlined within Section 3 above. They may therefore be considered to be of low significance. This level of significance may be substantially increased if further deposits containing preserved wood such as seen in Trench 1 were encountered, as these might relate to a medieval or earlier mill on the site.

8 Conclusions

Despite the documentary evidence for the presence of a mill on the site from 1086, the extant archaeological features recorded to date were all post-medieval. These consisted principally of a wide mill pond which contained some anaerobic deposits with the potential for further organic survival. It is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features within the evaluation trenches provided an accurate characterisation of the areas development site investigated to date.

The methods adopted allow a moderately high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in all of the trenches to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features.

9 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Tim Cornah, ACIfA, assisted by Graham Arnold, PCIfA.

The project was managed by Tom Vaughan, MCIfA. The report was produced and collated by Tim Cornah. Artefactual analysis was by Laura Griffin, ACIfA, and the illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt, MCIfA.

10 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following: Paul Farley and Kelvin Sparrey (JJS Developments) and James Dinn (Archaeological Officer, Worcester City Council).

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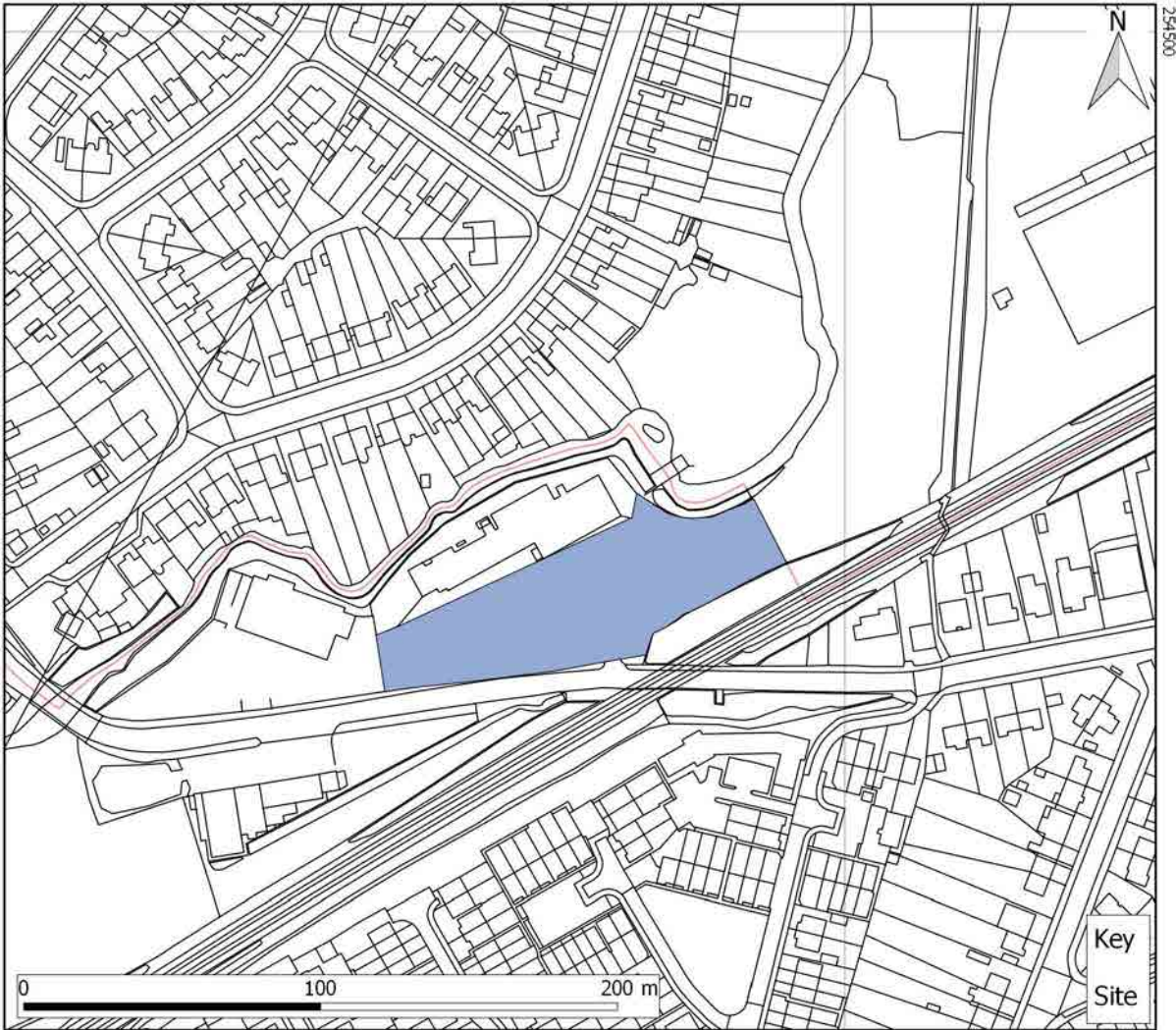
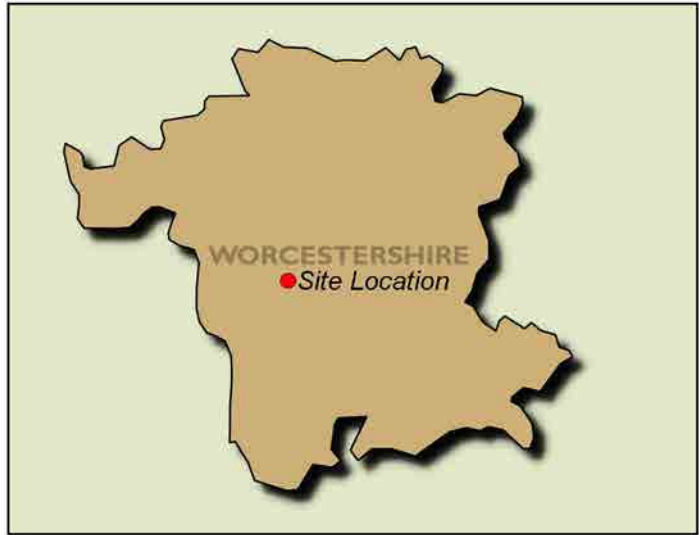
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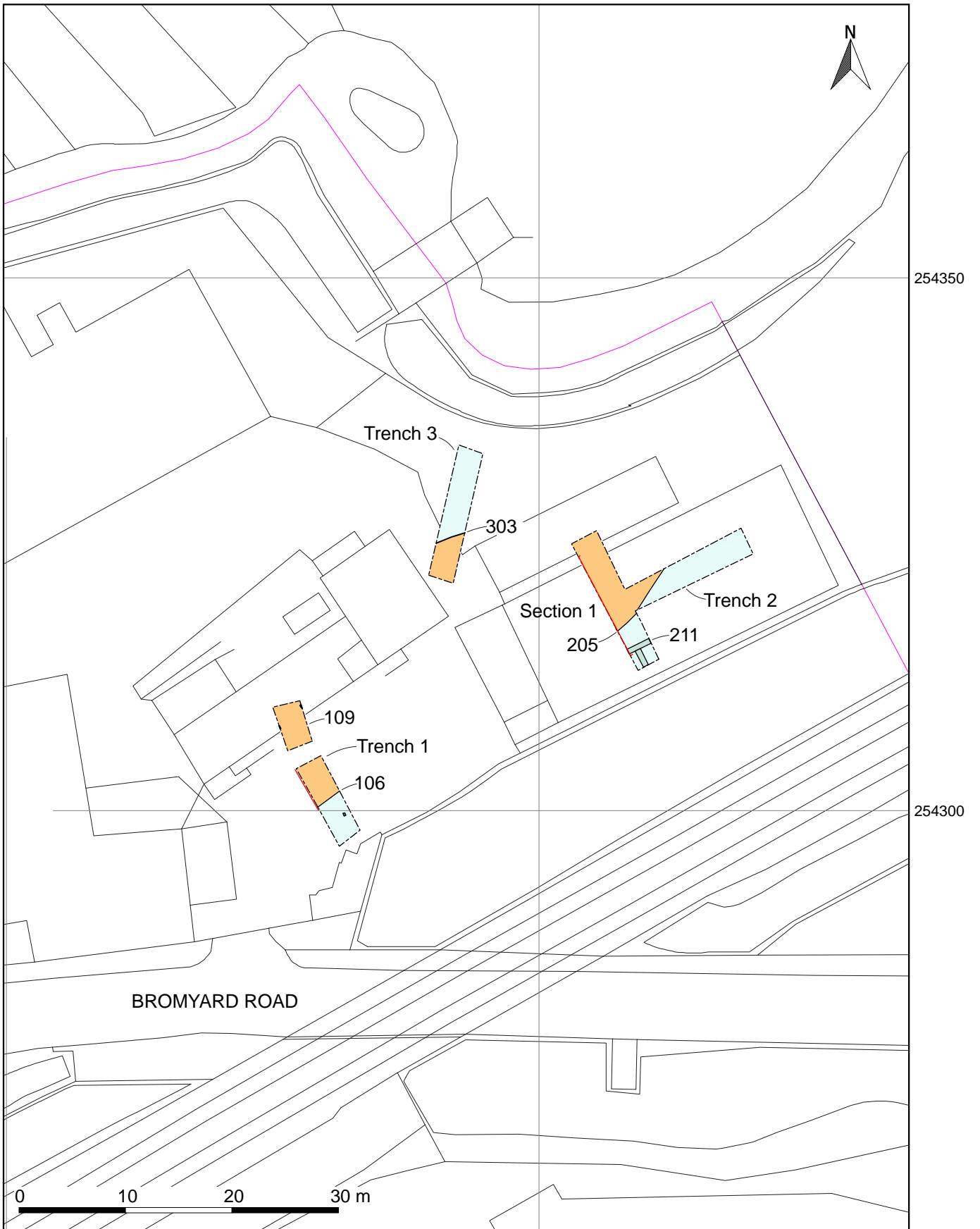
Figures



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Location of the site

Figure 1



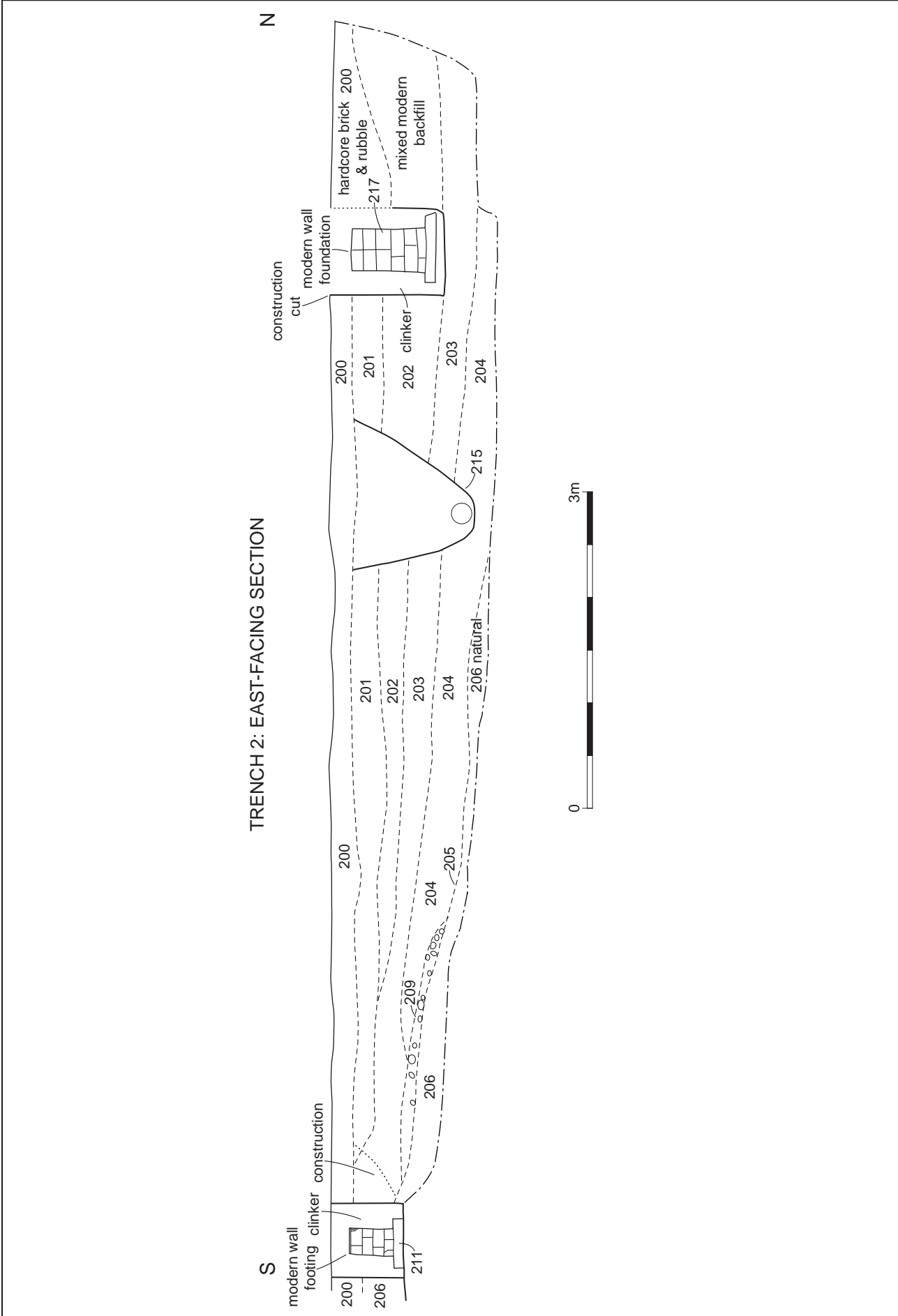
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Trench location plan

Figure 2



Trench 2: East-facing section

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1 Natural deposits and feature [106] within Trench 1, looking south-west, 2x1m scales



Plate 2 Deposits (109) within Trench 1, looking south, 2x1m scales



Plate 3 Natural deposits and feature [205] within Trench 2, looking west, 2m scale



Plate 4 Deposit (301) and feature [303] within Trench 3, looking north-east, 2x1m scales

Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Length: 12.20

Width: 12.20

Orientation: NW-SE

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
100	Layer	Layer	modern levelling	0.20	
101	Layer		modern made ground	0.20	
102	Layer	Layer	tarmac surface	0.10	
103	Layer	Layer	modern/postmed brick rubble and clinker layer	0.36	
104	Natural	Layer	Natural	>0.28	Compact red clay
105	Layer	Layer	Dump material in the top of probable mill pond cut 106	>0.64	Moderately Compact reddish brown sandy clay
106	mill pond	Cut	Mill pond cut	>0.86	
107	Wall	Structure	modern wall		
108	Foundation trench	Fill	foundation trench for modern wall 107		
109	Layer	Layer	grey clay alluvial deposit with preserved timber and	>0.60	
110	Posthole	Cut	modern post hole	0.05m	
111	Posthole	Fill	modern post hole fill	0.05	
112	Posthole	Cut	modern post hole	0.30m	
113	Posthole	Fill	modern post hole fill	0.30	

Trench 2

Length: 25.70

Width: 25.70

Orientation: NW-SE+NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
200	Posthole	Layer	modern brick crush	0.24	
201	Layer	Layer	modern made ground	0.23	Loose black
202	Layer	Layer	top backfill of 205	0.58	reddish black clay
203	Layer	Layer		0.34	Compact reddish clay
204	Layer	Layer	lower fill of mill pond 205	0.34	Moderately Compact blueish grey silty clay
205	mill pond	Cut	mill pond cut	1.11m	
206			Natural	>0.40	Compact red clay
207	Wall	Structure	E-W aligned modern wall with a concrete footing. Fits with modern building on mapping		
208	Wall	Cut	cut for 207		
209	Surface	Layer	rounded small stones within	0.12	Compact greyish brown

			a clay silt matrix that appears to have been a rough surface or path.		clay silt
210	Wall	Fill	black clinker fill of 212		Loose black
211	Wall	Structure	modern wall	0.50m	
212	Wall	Cut	cut for wall 211	0.70m	
213	Drain	Fill	fill of modern drain cut 215		
214	Drain	Structure	modern drain		
215	Drain	Cut	modern drain cut		
216	Wall	Fill	fill around modern wall 217		
217	Wall	Structure	modern brick wall		
218	Wall	Cut	cut for modern wall 217		

Trench 3

Length: 12.50 Width: 12.50 Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
300	Modern Layer	Layer	modern brick crush layer	0.50	
301	mill pond	Fill	alluvial fill layer, probably filling a mill pond 305	0.60	Soft blueish grey silty clay
302	Natural	Layer	possible natural, though far from clear	>0.30	reddish brown clay
303	mill pond	Cut	mill pond edge as aligns closely with the 1841 mapping into the 20th	1.2	
304	mill pond	Fill	modern back fill of 303	1.2	
305	mill pond	Cut	cut for a possible mill pond	0.60m	

Appendix 2: Summary of project archive (WCM102357)

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	"Ceramics"
Paper	"Contextsheet", "Diary", "Drawing", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Section", "Survey", "Unpublished Text"
Digital	"GIS", "Images raster / digital photography", "Text"

*OASIS terminology