

Archaeological Watching Brief of access works for Upper Norton Farm, Craven Arms, Shropshire

Worcestershire Archaeology
for ADS Architects

May 2019



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UPPER NORTON FARM, CRAVEN ARMS, SHROPSHIRE

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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SITE INFORMATION

Site name: Upper Norton Farm, Craven Arms, Shropshire
Local planning authority: Shropshire Council
HER reference: IR0925_DSA
Planning reference: 16/01527/FUL and 19/00028/DIS
Central NGR: SO 46059 81555
Commissioning client: ADS Architects
WA project number: WA P5201
report number: 2685
Oasis reference: Fieldsec1-350761

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An archaeological watching brief of access works for Upper Norton Farm, Craven Arms, Shropshire

Graham Arnold and Tom Vaughan

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Upper Norton Farm, Craven Arms, Shropshire (NGR SO 46059 81555). It was commissioned by ADS Architects on behalf of their client, in advance of a proposed development including alterations to four agricultural buildings for holiday lets and leisure use for which planning applications have been submitted to Shropshire Council. This report relates to the access and enabling works off the B4368 road on the west of the site.

The works monitored included ground reduction for the access road into the main site and the relocation of an oil tank on site.

The site was in a garden of an existing property, with the ground sloping to the east towards the farmyard and barns. Ground reduction for the access road was to a maximum of 1.00m below ground level. No significant archaeological deposits, layers, structures or horizons were identified, nor artefacts recovered during the watching brief. The natural undisturbed geology was observed at approximately 0.70m depth across the full depth of the Trench 1 access road. However there was no defined undisturbed subsoil deposit above this. The modern turfed topsoil overlay a mixed made ground deposit of garden soils with occasional later post-medieval rubble and debris, which appeared to relate to previous phase/s of landscaping, and had involved intensive disturbance of the soils down to the natural geology.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in March 2019 at Upper Norton Farm, Craven Arms, Shropshire (NGR SO 46059 81555). This comprised the observation of ground reduction for the construction of an access road and the siting of a new oil tank.

The project was commissioned by ADS Architects, on behalf of their client. Planning permission has been granted subject to a programme of archaeological works (planning reference 16/01527/FUL; discharge condition application 19/00028/DIS). These works were carried out in order to enable alteration of four barns on site (planning references 12/05241/FUL, 16/01527/FUL, 17/00904/FUL, 15/01572/FUL). The main works are programmed for Autumn 2020.

The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the development had the potential to impact upon a number of heritage assets. Building recording of the historic barns within the farm was carried out prior to the current works and is reported on separately (Cornah, forthcoming; planning ref 12/05241/FUL).

No brief was provided but a written scheme of investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (2018) and approved by Shropshire Council. The watching brief also conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in the *Standard and guidance: for an archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014a).

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

Upper Norton Farm is located in the hamlet of Norton to the south-east of Craven Arms. The site is within a garden with a residential house to the north, bounded by a road on the west and the farmyard to the south and east. The site is situated on sloping ground, at approximately 167m AOD dropping down to around 165m AOD from the road in the west down to the farmyard in the east.

The underlying geology comprises bedrock of the siltstone Upper Ludlow Shales Group and the Downton Castle Sandstone formation. No other superficial deposits are recorded (BGS 2019).

2 Archaeological and historical background

The archaeological background derives from the Shropshire Historic Environment Record data.

The B4368 road that passes the western side of Upper Norton farm has been suggested to follow the line of a Roman road from Marshbrook to Ashton (PRN 02613), although this remains largely conjectural.

Approximately 60m to the north of the barns, a pit containing a number of human skeletons was discovered in the 1950s (PRN 03198). These have been suggested to relate to either a Roman burial ground or to the Battle of Stokesay in 1645. It is also possible that they relate to a former chapel (PRN 03541) which is said to have existed at Norton, but its exact location remains unknown.

Norton Farm itself (PRN 24051) is considered to date to the 19th century with an E-plan courtyard to the north of the house. The barns recorded during this project are also registered within the HER data (PRN 24052) forming a regular U shape courtyard of 19th century date, though it is not clear from the mapping as to which farm they and farmhouse they relate. On the immediate north-east corner of the barns, an area of quarrying is recorded (PRN 30262), with a further area to the west of the road (PRN 30261).

3 Project aims

The aims of the watching brief were to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible within the constraints of the Client's groundworks.

The Curator indicated that significant deposits may be defined as those likely to be of Roman, medieval or post-medieval date.

4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2018). Fieldwork was undertaken between 7 and 12 March 2019.

Observation of two areas was undertaken: Trench 1: ground reduction for the new access road, c 4m wide by 30m long (amounting to c 120m²), and up to 1m deep; and Trench 2: ground reduction for a new oil tank, 1.75m by 2.50m, and 0.15m deep. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket.

Observation of excavated areas was undertaken during and after machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, although any less clear may have not been identified. Selected areas were cleaned by hand.

Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and trench and feature locations were tied into scaled plans provided by developer and georeferenced in QGIS/CAD.

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was undertaken through structural 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 at the regional Museum.

5 Archaeological results

5.1 Trench descriptions

The watching brief of the groundworks revealed the turfed topsoil to overlie a mixed garden soil and made ground deposit cut by a number of modern service pipes, directly over the natural geological deposits.

5.1.1 Summary trench description table

Context	Brief description	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
Trench 1 Ground reduction for new access road maximum depth 1.00m			
100	Topsoil	0.00-0.40m	Turf and dark blackish brown sandy silt topsoil
101	Garden soil	0.20-0.70m	Loose mixed dark greyish brown silty clay with modern brick rubble, concrete, tree rooting, porcelain, glass and sub-round stones. Modern refuse within garden.
102	Natural substrate	0.70m+	Firm yellow clay with frequent rounded cobbles and angular stone.

Context	Brief description	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
Trench 2 Ground reduction for new oil tank maximum depth 0.15m			
201	Topsoil	0.15m+	Turf and dark blackish brown sandy silt topsoil

Table 1: Summary context descriptions

6 Artefactual evidence

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event, no artefacts were identified which were considered to be suitable for analysis. All cultural material observed related to modern garden activity, domestic debris and landscaping: brick rubble and edging blocks, concrete fragments, glass and porcelain fragments, all of later post-medieval and modern date, none of which was retained.

7 Environmental evidence

Environmental 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.

8 Discussion and conclusions

No significant archaeological deposits, layers, structures or horizons were identified, nor artefacts recovered during the watching brief. The natural undisturbed geology was observed at approximately 0.70m depth across the full depth of the Trench 1 access road. However there was no defined undisturbed subsoil deposit above this. The modern turfed top soil overlay a mixed made ground deposit of garden soils with occasional rubble, which appeared to relate to previous phase/s of landscaping, and had involved intensive disturbance of the soils down to the natural geology.

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. The conditions were suitable in all of the trenches to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features. It is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features provides an accurate characterisation of the development on this part of the site. Further watching brief monitoring will be required for the alteration works around the barns within the farm yard, which are part of a different planning application number.

9 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Graham Arnold, PCIfA. The project was managed by Tom Vaughan, MCIfA. The report was produced and collated by Graham Arnold and Tom Vaughan. Specialist contributions and individual sections of the report are attributed to the relevant authors throughout the text.

10 Acknowledgements

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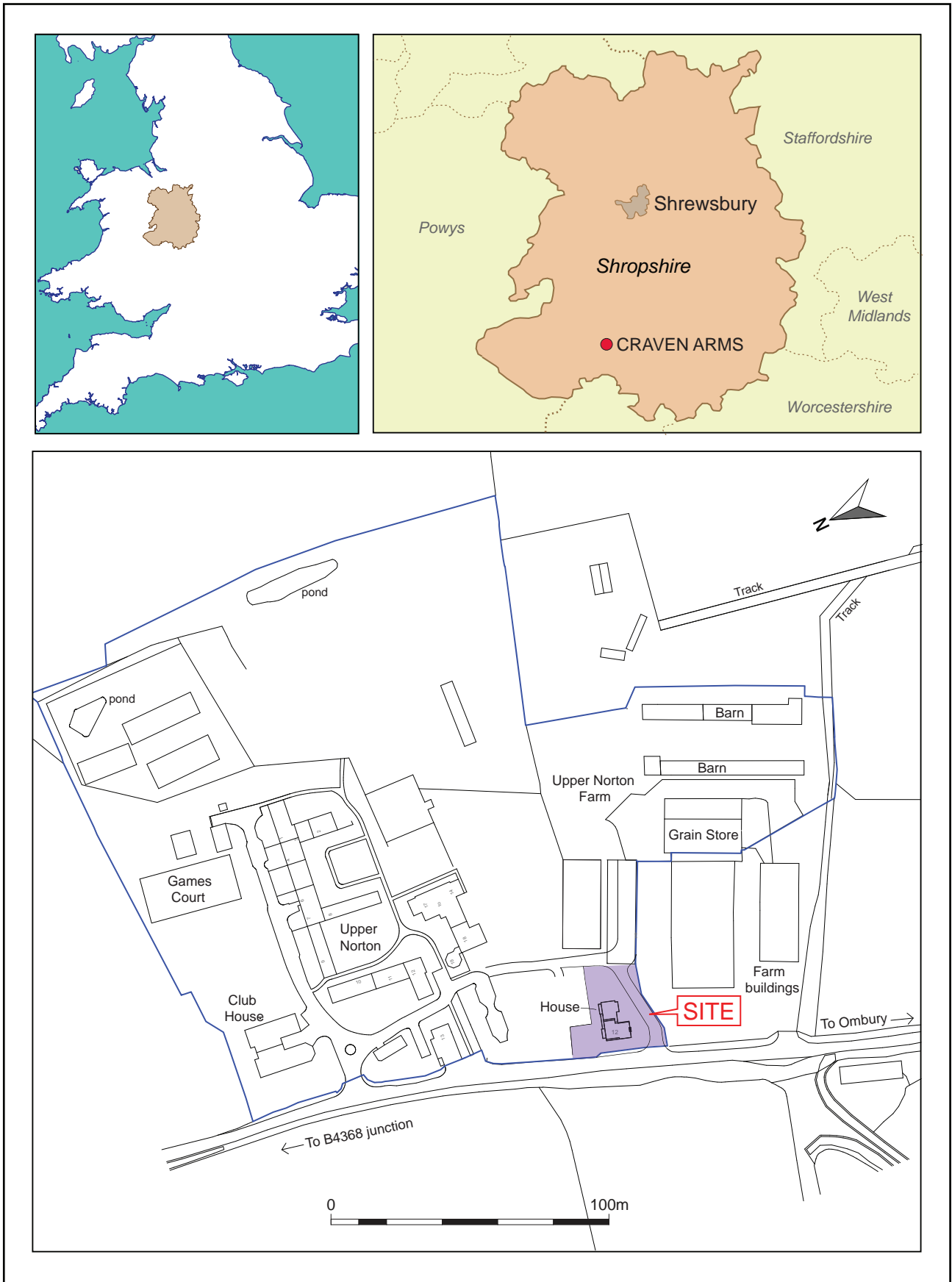
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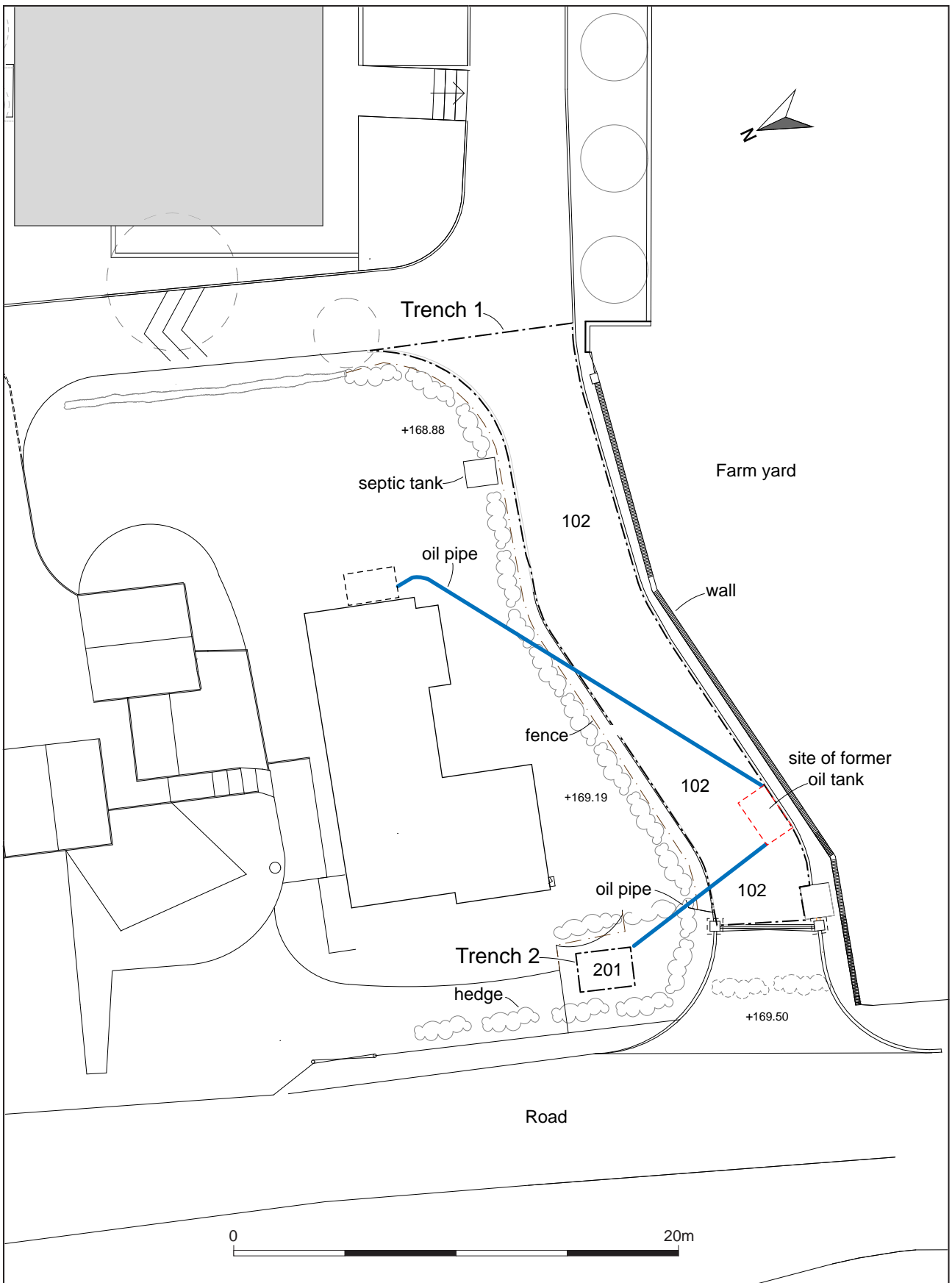
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Figures



Location of the site (based upon ADS Architects Limited Dwg. 891-LB-01)

Figure 1



Trench location plan (based upon ADS Architects Limited Dwg. 891-A-01 Rev C)

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1: General view south-east of the garden before start of groundworks, no scales



Plate 2: Trench 1 access road groundworks, west end, view west to B4368 road, 2x 1m scales



Plate 3: Trench 1 access road, modern oil pipe in foreground, view south-east, 2x 1m scales



Plate 4: Trench 2 base for new oil tank on north-west side of site, view north, 2x 1m scales

Appendix 1: Summary of project archive

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	none
Paper	Context sheet, Correspondence, Drawing,
Digital	Images raster/digital photography

*OASIS terminology