

# Archaeological Watching Brief at Oak Grove, St John's Lane, Long Bank, Wyre Forest, Worcestershire

Worcestershire Archaeology  
*for Countryside Services,*  
Worcestershire County Council

November 2019



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# OAK GROVE, ST JOHN'S LANE, LONG BANK, WYRE FOREST, WORCESTERSHIRE

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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## SITE INFORMATION

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Site name: Oak Grove, St John's Lane, Long Bank, Worcestershire  
Central NGR: SO 75466 74928  
Commissioning client: Countryside Services, Worcestershire County Council  
Client project reference: Natural Flood Management Project, Wyre Forest  
WA project number: P5732  
WA report number: 2750  
HER reference: WSM 72140  
Oasis reference: Fieldsec1-372959  
Museum accession number: -

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### DOCUMENT CONTROL PANEL

Version	Date	Author	Details	Approved by
1	22/11/2019	Graham Arnold	Draft for comment	Tom Vaughan

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# Archaeological Watching Brief at Oak Grove, St John's Lane, Long Bank, Wyre Forest, Worcestershire

By Graham Arnold

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

## Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Oak Grove, St John's Lane, Wyre Forest, Worcestershire (NGR SO 75466 74928). It was commissioned by Countryside Services, Worcestershire County Council, in association with a proposed pond to mitigate flooding in the Wyre Forest. The works were carried out under permitted development rights. Worcestershire County Council Historic Environment and Landscape Advisor considered that the works had the potential to impact upon potential archaeological deposits as a Bronze Age flint slug knife (PAS ref-WAW-8C4867) had previously been found on the surface of a track in the vicinity, and there is the potential for worked flint across the Wyre Forest.

The excavated pond was triangular in shape, a maximum of 7.5m by 9m, and 0.90m deep. A sequence of topsoil, subsoil and natural deposits were observed. A trench for a land drain across the adjacent footpath was recorded. The fill consisted of modern materials and redeposited natural. The only finds were of post-medieval and modern date, including white porcelain, machine-made bricks and ferrous metalwork, such as nails. They were residual, and recovered from the topsoil and subsoil. They were identified, photographed and discarded on site. There were no worked flints. No significant archaeological features, layers, structures or horizons were identified.

## Report

### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in October 2019 at Oak Grove, St John's Lane, Wyre Forest, Worcestershire (NGR SO 75466 74928; Figure 1). This comprised the observation of excavations for a pond toward the north-west boundary of Oak Grove, adjacent to a forestry track. The project was commissioned by Countryside Services, Worcestershire County Council. The works were carried out under permitted development rights.

Worcestershire County Council Historic Environment and Landscape Advisor considered that the works had the potential to impact upon potential archaeological deposits as a Bronze Age flint slug knife (PAS ref-WAW-8C4867) had previously been found on the surface of a track in the vicinity, and there is the potential for worked flint across the Wyre Forest.

The project conforms to the model brief for watching briefs within Worcestershire (WCC 2014). 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 2014) and the *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010).

#### 1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site is located in the north-west corner of land belonging to Oak Grove, at the north end of St John's Lane, adjacent to the Ruskin land forest track up to Lord's Yard Coppice, and bounded by forestry to the north and west.

The site is situated at c 130m AOD, on ground sloping to the north-west. The pond was excavated to prevent erosion of the forestry track from flooding.

The underlying geology comprises bedrock of Etruria formation, comprising mudstone and sandstone, with no superficial deposits recorded (BGS 2018).

### 2 Archaeological and historical background

Prior to fieldwork commencing, a search of the Worcester HER was completed, covering a search area of 500m around the site. A summary of the results of this research is presented below.

There has been very little archaeological investigation within the search area aside from a desk-based assessment within the Wyre Forest. There is however considered to be the potential for below ground archaeological features and deposits from the prehistoric and later.

Most relevant to the current works are record of unstratified prehistoric finds within the area, including a gold coin dated to the Iron Age, Bronze Age palstaves, or flint axe heads, flint scatters and debitage (WSM40397).

More specific to this project, a Late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age Plano-Convex Knife (colloquially called a 'slug knife') (PAS ref-WAW-8C4867; A Mindykowski *pers. comm*) was found in September 2018 on the surface of one of the footpaths in the area and was the reason for an archaeological requirement being placed on the intrusive groundworks. This has been recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme and is in the process of being validated before inclusion on the Worcestershire HER. The Portable Antiquities Scheme description is as follows:

*Late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age date (c 2700 BC to c 1600 BC) plano-convex knife: The knapped flint knife is an elongated asymmetrical pointed-oval with a truncated proximal end. The knife has a sub D-shaped cross section and was probably knapped from a secondary flake/debitage. The flint the knife is knapped from is a mottled dark grey colour. The dorsal*

surface has stepped retouch covering the surface with abrupt re-touch along the edges, thereby forming a convex surface. The ventral surface has no re-touch on the surface, just one shallow scar, obliquely angled at the proximal end. The knife measures 46.79mm long, 19.61mm wide, 7.51mm thick and weighs 7.27g.... such knives are found in late Neolithic to early Bronze Age (c 2700 BC to c 1600 BC) contexts, often associated with food vessels and beakers in the early Bronze Age (Butler 2005, 172). Plano-convex knives could measure up to 150mm long, but this is not common (PAS ref-WAW-8C4867).

### 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.

### 4 Project methodology

Fieldwork was undertaken on 24 October 2019.

The pond was 3.00m from the fence line and was triangular, measuring 7.50m east to west, by 9.00m north to south, amounting to 34m<sup>2</sup> in area, up to 0.90m deep. It was excavated using a 360° tracked excavator employing a toothless bucket. The spoil was placed in a bund along the edge of the excavation, and checked for finds, prior to compact and sealing. The location is indicated in Figure 1.

Observation of the pond was undertaken after machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits.

Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and hand planned and tied into fixed objects recorded on the OS Master Map.

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology.

### 5 Archaeological results

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
100	Topsoil	0.20	0.00	Friable dark greyish brown clayey silt with frequent rooting, occasional rounded pebbles, porcelain, brick and metal nails
101	Subsoil	0.15	0.20	moderately compact mid orangey brown silty clay with moderate angular sandstone and subrounded gravel inclusions
102	Natural substrate	-	0.35	Compact cohesive yellow clay marl with occasional orange mottling
103	Modern made ground and redeposited natural	0.40	0.00	A mixture of modern made ground gravels and redeposited natural clay only seen within the land drain replacement running across the existing forest track, northeast of the excavated pond

Table 1: Summary context descriptions

The natural undisturbed yellow clay marl substrate was recorded at 0.45m below ground level. This was overlain by a moderately compact mid orangey brown silty clay subsoil and friable dark grey brown clayey silt topsoil (Plates 1-4). An existing plastic duct land drain running across the forestry

footpath was replaced (Plate 5). The trench for this was filled with modern materials and redeposited natural.

Only later post-medieval and modern finds were revealed, including white porcelain, machine-made brick and ferrous metal work, such as nails. They were residual, having been recovered from the spoil. All finds were identified, photographed and discarded on site (Plate 6). No archaeological deposits or features were observed in the excavation area.

## 6 Artefactual evidence

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event, all artefacts were determined to be on later post-medieval and modern date. No artefacts were identified which were considered to be suitable for specialist analysis.

## 7 Environmental evidence

Environmental sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event, no deposits were excavated which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

## 8 Discussion and conclusions

The stratigraphy of topsoil, subsoil and natural deposits were observed across the excavation area. The only finds recovered from the topsoil were of later post-medieval and modern date, including white porcelain, machine made bricks and metal nails. There was no evidence of any worked flints. No significant archaeological features, layers, structures or horizons were identified.

The 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 and any associated archaeological finds.

## 9 Project personnel

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

## 10 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for the successful conclusion of this project: Wade Muggleton (Senior Greenspace Officer, Countryside Services, Worcestershire County Council), and Adam Mindykowski (Historic Environment and Landscape Advisor, Worcestershire County Council).

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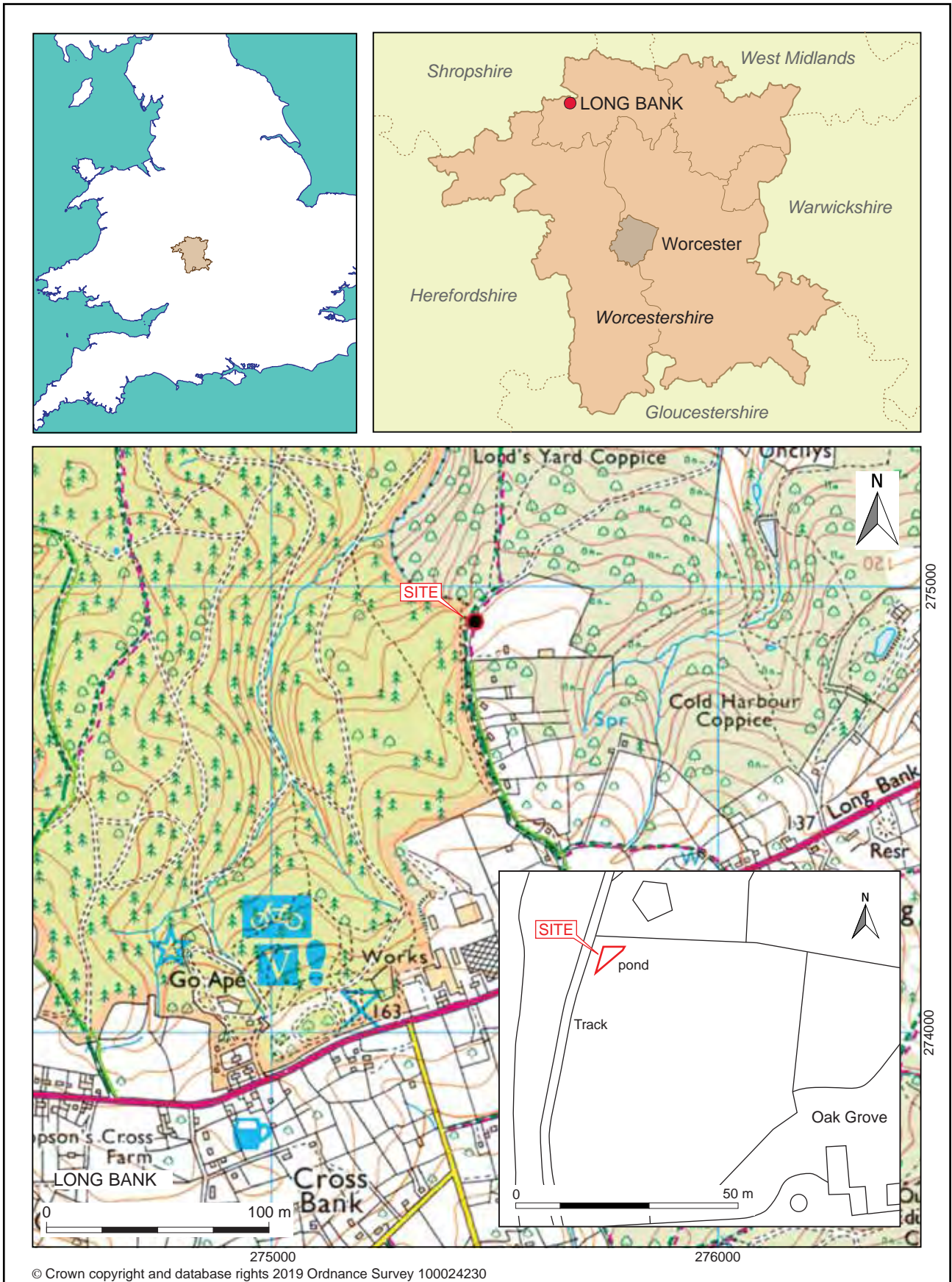
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## Figures



Location of the site

Figure 1

## Plates



*Plate 1: Location of pond prior to excavation, view north downslope, no scales*



*Plate 2: Pond stratigraphy showing topsoil, subsoil and natural deposits, view north, 2x 1m scales*



*Plate 3: South facing section of pond following grading of north-west edge, view north-west, 2x 1m scales*



*Plate 4: Pond as fully excavated, with graded edges and sealed spoil bunds, view west, no scale*



*Plate 5: Replaced land drain across forestry track, view north-west from pond excavation bund, no scale*



*Plate 6: Residual finds (ferrous metalwork, brick and white porcelain), 0.20m scale*

## Appendix 1: Summary of project archive

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	-
Paper	Context sheet, Diary (Field progress form),
Digital	Images raster/digital photography, Text

\*OASIS terminology