

Archaeological evaluation at
Number 99
St Georges Lane North
Worcester

Worcestershire Archaeology
for Matthews Construction

January 2020



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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT NUMBER 99 ST GEORGES LANE NORTH WORCESTER

Archaeological evaluation report



Worcestershire Archaeology
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The Butts
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WR1 3PD

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SITE INFORMATION

Site name:	Number 99, St Georges Lane North, Worcester
Local planning authority:	Worcester City Council
Planning reference:	19/00069/FUL
Central NGR:	384909, 256301
Commissioning client:	Matthews Construction
WA project number:	P5708
WA report number:	2777
HER reference:	WCM 102396
Oasis reference:	fieldsec1-378088
Museum accession number:	TBC

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY	1
REPORT	2
1 INTRODUCTION	2
1.1 Background to the project	2
1.2 Site location, topography and geology.....	2
2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	2
2.1 Introduction	2
3 PROJECT AIMS	2
4 PROJECT METHODOLOGY	3
5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS	3
5.1 Introduction	3
5.2 Phasing/Trench descriptions.....	3
5.2.1 Natural deposits	3
5.2.2 Phase 1: Roman	3
5.2.3 Phase 2: Post-medieval	3
6 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE BY ROB HEDGE	4
6.1 Project aims	4
6.2 Project methodology	4
6.2.1 Recovery policy	4
6.2.2 Method of analysis	4
6.2.3 Discard policy	4
6.3 Results	4
6.3.1 Summary of artefacts by site phase	5
6.4 Discussion	5
6.5 Recommendations	6
6.5.1 Discard/retention.....	6
7 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE	6
8 DISCUSSION	6
9 CONCLUSIONS	7
10 PROJECT PERSONNEL	7
11 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
12 BIBLIOGRAPHY	7

FIGURES

PLATES

APPENDIX 1: TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF PROJECT ARCHIVE

APPENDIX 3: SUMMARY OF DATA FOR HER

Archaeological evaluation at 99, St Georges Lane North, Worcester.

By Andrew Mann

With contributions by Rob Hedge

Illustrations by Laura Templeton

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at 99, St Georges Lane North, Worcester (NGR 384909, 256301). It was commissioned by Phil Deeley of Matthews Construction, during the construction of residential properties in the former garden of the property.

Planning permission has been granted subject to a programme of archaeological works. A single trench 14.5m long was excavated across the development area which exposed a Roman buried soil containing many pottery sherds of 1st-3rd century AD date and occasional slag remains. The finds are of comparable in date to finds and Roman features discovered to the north in the former Worcester City football ground. The lack of comparable features in the evaluation trench suggests however that the site was beyond the limits of the main Roman activity there.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in November 2019 at 99, St Georges Lane North, Worcester (NGR 384909, 256301). This was commissioned by Phil Deeley of Matthews Construction who have constructed a block of residential properties in the former Garden of number 99. Planning permission for the development of the site was granted by Worcester City Council (Planning reference 19/00069/FUL) subject to archaeological conditions, including a watching brief on groundworks associated with the development. A Written Scheme of Investigation for this was prepared by Orion Heritage (2019), however the groundworks for the development were carried out without an archaeologist being present. As a result, James Dinn (the Curator) required that given this circumstance a single trench should be opened across the remaining frontage to both evaluate the site and excavate any archaeological remains present.

No brief for the evaluation was prepared by the Curator but a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2019) which conformed to the generality of briefs which have previously been issued by the planning authority.

The project conforms to this WSI and to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and guidance: for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014).

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site was formerly a garden and area of hardstanding associated and located to the west of 99, St Georges Lane North, an Edwardian end terrace house first recorded on the six-inch OS map XXXIII.NE, published in 1930. The site covers an area of 550m² and is bounded by roads (the Lane and St Georges Lane North, to the west and south respectively) and by gardens to the north and east. The site lies at around 20m AOD and the underlying geology comprises pinkish red clays of the weathered Sidmouth Mudstone Formation and patches of sand and gravel representing the eastern limits of the Worcester terrace member (BGS 2019).

2 Archaeological and historical background

2.1 Introduction

Prior to the construction of the surrounding terraced housing the area appears to have been agricultural land. However, the application site is located to the south of the former Worcester City football ground, where significant Roman remains, including large quantities of industrial waste have been discovered (Bray 2016).

3 Project aims

The aims and scope of the project are to undertake sufficient fieldwork to:

- determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits beyond reasonable doubt;
- identify their location, nature date and preservation;
- assess their significance;

4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2019). Fieldwork was undertaken on 26/11/2019.

The intention had been to excavate a single 15m long (27m²) evaluation trench through the western side of the site. However, as construction equipment constrained the site area, the trench became T-shaped, so it was as close to the proposed dimensions as possible. The final trench measured 14.50m long, and 2.0m wide amounting to 29m² in area, representing a sample of 5%. The location of the trench is indicated in Figure 1.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked excavator, using 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 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 at Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum.

5 Archaeological results

5.1 Introduction

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

5.2 Phasing/Trench descriptions

5.2.1 Natural deposits

The natural substrate (108) was observed across most of the trench at around 1.06m below the ground surface and consisted of firm, pink silty clays overlain by a thin band of coarse yellowish sand and gravel.

5.2.2 Phase 1: Roman

Towards the southern and in the trench's base was a buried soil (6.0 x 2.0 x 0.11m) comprising a firm but friable, light greyish-brown clayey sand. This layer lay directly over the natural substrate (108) and although thin, contained numerous Roman pottery sherds (Figs 1-2, Plates 1 and 3). No contemporary features were seen below this layer or elsewhere in the trench.

5.2.3 Phase 2: Post-medieval

Directly above the Roman soil layer (105) this was another soil layer (106), 0.30m thick, similar in composition to (105) which had been cut a rectilinear feature (3.50m x 4.50m x 0.40m) which extended beyond the limits of the trench. The rectilinear cut had shallow, slightly concave sides and a flat base, and was aligned north east to south west. This had been backfilled filled with a mixture of natural clays and brick/CBM rubble (104) and a layer of clinker/ash (107) which extended over the lower soils layers (105 and 106).

Above this was a 0.37m thick mid greyish-brown loam, containing frequent CBM and mixed a post-medieval pottery assemblage (not collected). This was overlain by another 0.08m thicker clinker/ash

layer (101) and a modern rubble/crush layer (100), lain down will construction was undertaken at the site.

6 Artefactual evidence by Rob Hedge

The project conforms to standards and guidance issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014), as well as further guidance on pottery analysis, archive creation and museum deposition created by various pottery study groups (PCRG/SGRP/MPRG 2016), the Archaeological Archives Forum (AAF 2011), and the Society of Museum Archaeologists (SMA 1993).

6.1 Project aims

This assessment aimed to identify, sort, spot date, and quantify all artefacts and describe the range of artefacts present. The information has been used to provide a preliminary assessment of the significance of the artefacts.

6.2 Project methodology

6.2.1 Recovery policy

Artefacts were recovered according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). All artefacts collected in the field were recovered by hand.

6.2.2 Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. All information was recorded on a Microsoft Access 2016 database, with tables generated using Microsoft Excel.

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; WAAS 2017).

6.2.3 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'). Large assemblages of post-medieval or modern material, unless there is some special reason to retain (such as local production), may be noted and not retained, or, if appropriate, a representative sample will be 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.

6.3 Results

The assemblage totalled 70 finds weighing 1093.5g (Table 1). All came from a single stratified context: buried soil layer (105). The majority were Roman in date.

The results below provide a summary of the finds and of their associated location or contexts by site phase. Where possible, dates have been allocated, and the importance of individual finds commented upon as necessary.

Artefact condition was generally fair. At 12.6g, the mean pottery sherd weight was above average, though many sherds were heavily abraded and surface condition was generally poor.

Period	Material class	Object type	Count	Weight (g)
Roman	ceramic	brick/tile	1	6.4
	ceramic	pot	59	742.5
	slag (fe)	iron bloomery slag	5	292
medieval	ceramic	brick/tile	2	12.4

undated	ceramic	hearth material	1	20.8
	stone	Malvernian metamorphic rock	2	19.4
Totals			70	1093.5

Table 1: Quantification of site assemblage

Broad period	Fabric code	Fabric common name	Count	Weight(g)
Roman	3.1	Slab-built Malvernian ware	19	349
Roman	12	Severn Valley ware	25	244.5
Roman	12.2	Oxidised organically tempered Severn Valley ware	7	95
Roman	14	Fine sandy grey ware	2	9.4
Roman	15	Coarse sandy grey ware	6	44.6
Totals			59	742.5

Table 2: Quantification of pottery assemblage

6.3.1 Summary of artefacts by site phase

Roman

As is typical on local sites, Severn Valley Wares (fabrics 12 and 12.2) dominate the pottery assemblage. Only two rims were present: a bead-rim jar (Webster type 15), and a jar broadly corresponding to Webster's Type 3. One Severn Valley ware body sherd had a drilled hole and traces of lead indicative of a repair. It is relatively unusual to encounter these in a utilitarian vessel, particularly considering the close proximity of the markets at Worcester.

There were also both fine (fabric 14) and coarse (fabric 15) grey wares, the former including a rusticated sherd. Sherds from thick-walled Malvernian vessel(s) (fabric 3.1) accounted for almost half the assemblage by weight. The small portion of rim present suggests that at least some of the material is from large storage jars, although it is possible that some may be from portable ovens (J Evans, pers. comm.).

One small fragment of undiagnostic ceramic building material and a small quantity of iron bloomery slag are also likely to be Roman in date.

Medieval

The sole medieval finds were two extremely small, abraded fragments of ceramic building material, probably roof tile. These may be intrusive.

Undated

A small fragment of vitrified clay hearth material is not readily dateable but may be part of a Roman bloomery furnace and have originated in the same place as the slag. It is not possible to determine whether the slag and hearth fragment relate to nearby industrial activity, or whether they represent dumping from elsewhere.

Also, of note are two small fragments of Malvernian metamorphic rock. Although not artefacts, they are unlikely to have occurred on the site naturally and may have been brought to the site in antiquity.

6.4 Discussion

The assemblage is broadly comparable in date and character to that excavated from the adjacent football ground site (Blinkhorn 2016). The absence of black burnished ware from both sites is something of a puzzle, as it tends to be ubiquitous on local sites from the mid-2nd century AD onwards. Markers of earlier Roman activity, such as abraded sherds of rusticated greyware, organic-

tempered Severn Valley Ware, coarse grey wares, and a jar with a grooved base, certainly point to 1st or 2nd century activity. Large Malvernian storage jars are more common in the 3rd to 4th century; the Severn Valley ware bead-rim jar (2nd to 4th century) and necked jar (1st to mid-3rd century) support the hypothesis that these finds reflect activity from the 1st to at least the mid-3rd century, probably related to the enclosures encountered at the football ground.

The generally abraded condition of the earlier finds suggest that they may have been incorporated into a later soil: certainly, the later Malvernian wares are in better condition. The two small fragments of later CBM may be intrusive.

6.5 Recommendations

6.5.1 Discard/retention

The assemblage is small and in relatively poor condition, but it is nonetheless of local interest. It may not be suitable for accession into Museums Worcestershire's collections, but could nonetheless be of value as an educational resource or handling collection.

7 Environmental evidence

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

8 Discussion

Little can be said about the archaeological remains, but the amount of pottery recovered from such a small volume of buried soil suggests that there is a significant Roman settlement in the vicinity. The 1st to 3rd century AD date of this assemblage is of comparable date to the Roman site immediately to the north, at the former football ground (Bray 2016). This comprised several large enclosure ditches and many pits and postholes, although no contemporary structures were identified. As large quantities of iron smelting slag and fragments of furnace lining were recovered, it was suggested that the site may have been the focus of industrial activity but as no furnace structures were identified this could not be confirmed (Bray 2016). It is well known that there was a large iron smelting industry in Roman Worcester, but it is unclear if activity spread continuously this far north, although it has also been suggested that iron ore may have been stored and processed around White Ladies Close c 350m to the south, in preparation for smelting elsewhere in the town (Jones 2018).

As well as the football ground site local Roman activity including ditches, a soil layer and pottery sherds have also been found at 22 St Georges Lane North (James Dinn pers comm), c 89m to the southwest and residual Roman pottery sherds were also located in post-medieval features beneath the former Cavalier Pub c 60m to the east (Wood and Searle 2016). Unlike the football ground however, no features were seen at Number 99, which may suggest the site is beyond the southern limits of that focus of activity. The depth of the deposits overlying the buried soils at Number 99 suggest that either the overlying soils have either been heavily worked, perhaps in a back-garden allotment, and /or they have been thickened by regular dumping of soil. This may have occurred when the soils were stripped prior to the construction of the neighbouring terraced houses, which has also been suggested at 39 Shrubbery Avenue (WCM102403) where thick soils also overlie a Roman soil horizon. Although little can be said about the pottery assemblage recovered from Number 99, the results from this and other small archaeological investigations in the area illustrates that even in a heavily urbanised environment patches of Roman archaeology survive.

Later activity is of less interest. The grubbed-out foundations (Cut 103) are not visible on any OS maps, suggesting it was a short-lived structure, perhaps an air-raid shelter from the second world war. Several other air-raid shelters (WCM 92079, 92075 and 92428) were located in the immediate vicinity, however as the structure is not in alignment with the surrounding terraced houses, it may suggest it predates them.

9 Conclusions

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. Although Roman pottery and soil were identified the lack of features may suggest that the settlement activity located under the former football ground does not extend this far south. Their presence does suggest however that Roman archaeology remains can and do survive even in the smallest patches of the urban zone as has been illustrated at a number of other properties in the area.

10 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Andrew Mann, MCIfA. The project was managed by Tom Rogers, MCIfA. The report was produced and collated by Andrew Mann. 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 the successful conclusion of the project: Phil Deeley of Matthews Construction and James Dinn (the Curator).

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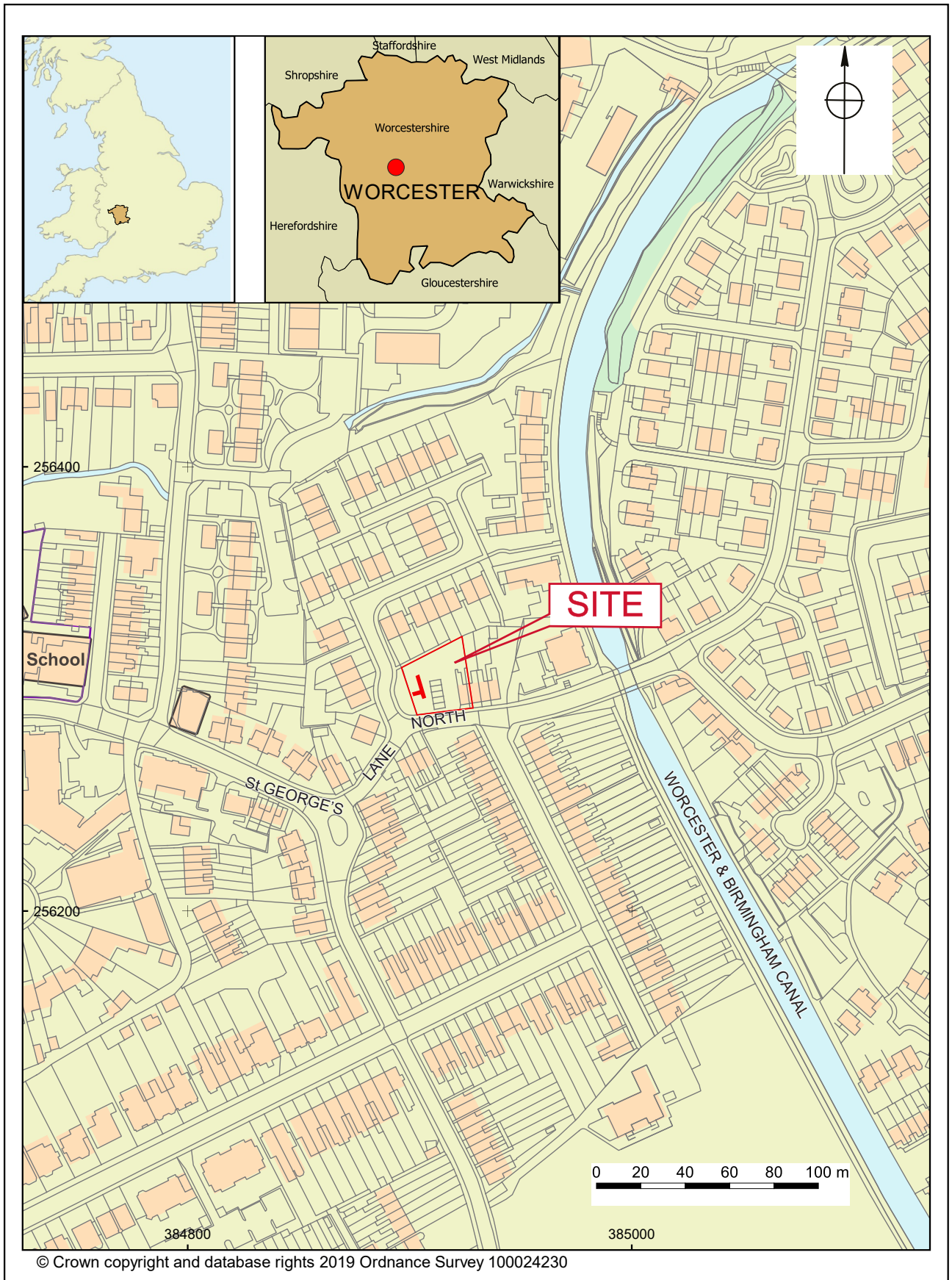
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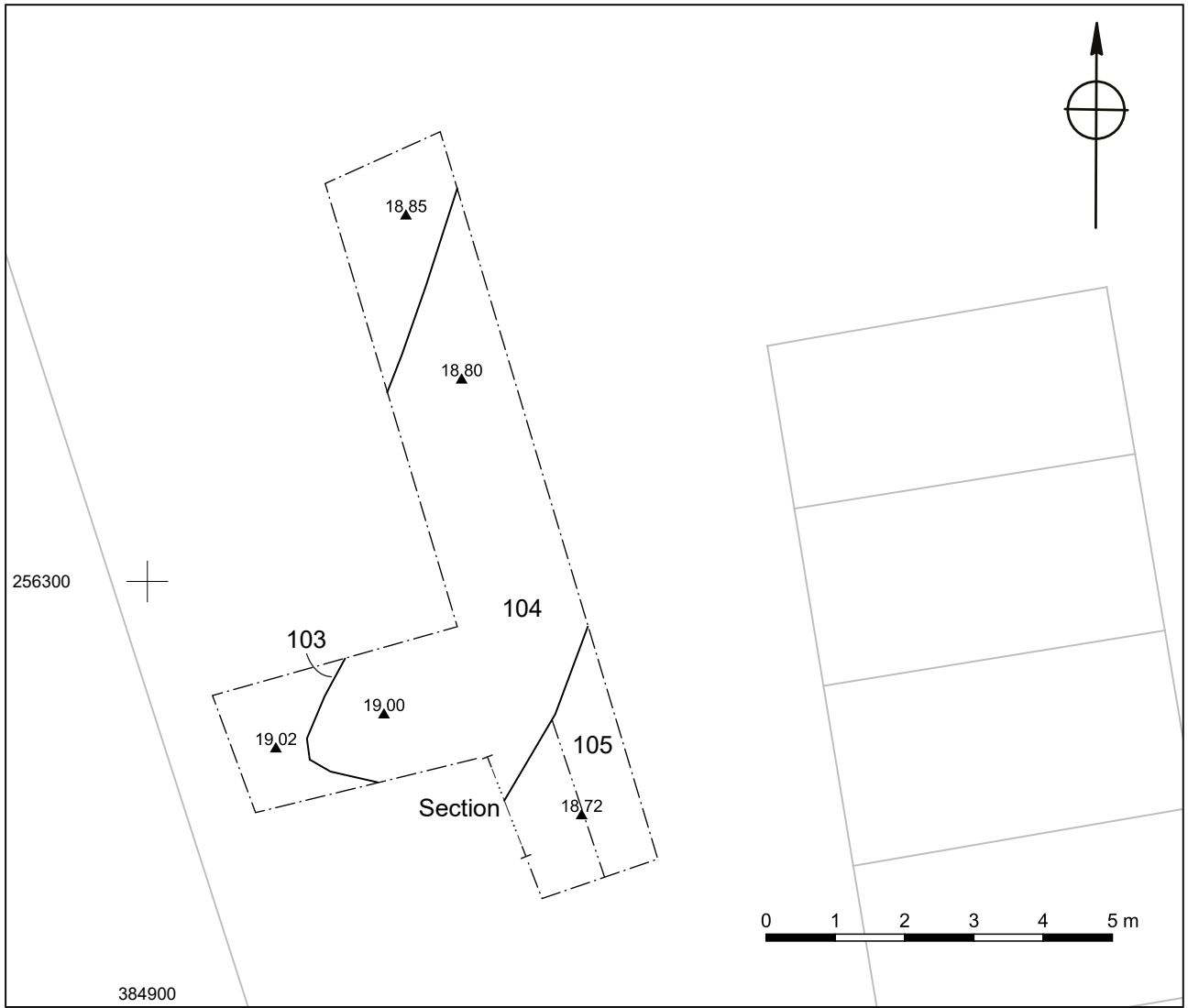
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Figures



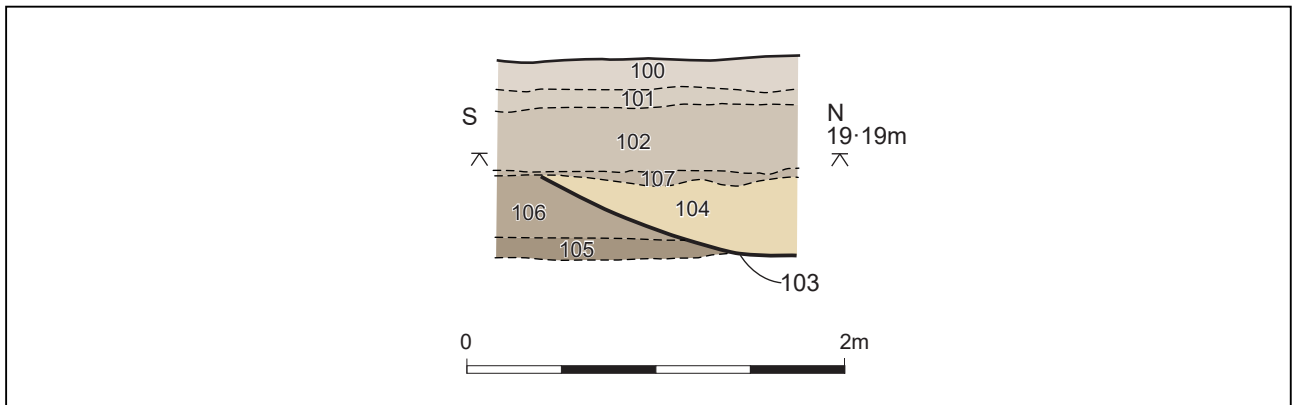
Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench Plan

Figure 2



Section through baulk of Trench 1

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1: Trench 1 facing north, showing soil (105) in foreground and cut [103] in distance, 2 x 1m scales



Plate 2: Trench 1 facing south, showing cut [103] in foreground, 2 x 1m scales



Plate 3: Trench 1 facing west, showing soil (105) in base of trench and cut [103] in section, 2 x 1m scale.

Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

Context	Context type	Description	Interpretation	Dimensions
100	Layer	Crushed concrete and brick hardcore. Firm and compact.	Modern construction matt	0.18m thick
101	Layer	Clinker, ash and rounded gravel. Loose and uncohesive.	Former driveway	0.10m thick
102	Layer	Mid-greyish brown loam. Soft and cohesive.	Post-medieval topsoil	0.37m thick
103	Pit	Rectangular pit cut extending beyond limits of the trench.	Former location of a probable brick structure, that has been removed.	4.50m wide, 3.50m+ long and 0.40m deep,
104	Fill	Fill of pit [103]. Mixture of clay and sand and gravel natural and crushed brick, clinker and ash.	Backfill of pit [103]	0.40m thick
105	Layer	Light greyish-brown clayey sand. Firm and friable.	Buried soil.	0.11m thick
106	Layer	Light greyish-brown clayey sand. Moderately compact and cohesive.	Buried soil	0.30m thick
107	Layer	Black clinker/ash layer. Loose and uncohesive.	Backfill of pit [103]	0.08m thick
108	Layer	Pink silty clay and yellow sand and gravel. Firm and cohesive.	Natural	N/A

Appendix 2: Summary of project archive (WCM 102396)

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	Ceramics, Industrial,
Paper	Context sheet, Drawing, Photograph, Report, Section, Survey
Digital	Database, GIS, Images raster/digital photography, Survey, Text

*OASIS terminology

Appendix 3: Summary of data for HER

WCM 102396

P5708

period	material class	object specific type	start date	end date	Count	Weight (g)	Specialist report? (note 2)	Key assemblage? (note 3)
Roman	ceramic	brick/tile	43	400	1	6.4	Y	N
Roman	ceramic	pot	43	120	6	44.6	Y	N
Roman	ceramic	pot	43	200	8	117.9	Y	N
Roman	ceramic	pot	43	240	3	22.4	Y	N
Roman	ceramic	pot	43	400	22	188.1	Y	N
Roman	ceramic	pot	100	400	1	20.5	Y	N
Roman	ceramic	pot	200	400	19	349	Y	N
Roman	slag (fe)	iron bloomery slag	43	400	5	292	N	N
medieval	ceramic	brick/tile	1200	1540	2	12.4	Y	N
undated	ceramic	hearth material			1	20.8	N	N
undated	stone	Malvernian metamorphic rock			2	19.4	N	N

13

Notes

1. In some cases the date will be "Undated". In most cases, especially if there is not a specialist report, the information entered in the Date field will be a general period such as Neolithic, Roman, medieval etc (see below for a list of periods used in the Worcestershire HER). Very broad date ranges such as late Medieval to Post-medieval are acceptable for artefacts which can be hard to date for example roof tiles. If you have more specific dates, such as 13th to 14th century, please use these instead. Specific date ranges which cross general period boundaries can also be used, for example 15th to 17th century.
2. Not all evaluations of small excavation assemblages have specialist reports on all classes of objects. An identification (eg clay pipe) and a quantification is not a specialist report. A short discussion or a more detailed record identifying types and dates is a specialist report. This field is designed to point researchers to reports where they will find out more than merely the presence or absence of material of a particular type and date.
3. This field should be used with care. It is designed to point researchers to reports where they will be able to locate the most important assemblages for any given material for any given date.

Period	From	To
Palaeolithic	500000 BC	10001 BC

Mesolithic	10000 BC	4001 BC
Neolithic	4000 BC	2351 BC
Bronze Age	2350 BC	801 BC
Iron Age	800 BC	42 AD
Roman	43	409
Post-Roman	410	1065
Medieval	1066	1539
Post-medieval	1540	1900
Modern	1901	2050

Period specific	From	To
Lower Paleolithic	500000 BC	150001
Middle Palaeolithic	150000	40001
Upper Palaeolithic	40000	10001
Early Mesolithic	10000	7001
Late Mesolithic	7000	4001
Early Neolithic	4000	3501
Middle Neolithic	3500	2701
Late Neolithic	2700	2351
Early Bronze Age	2350	1601
Middle Bronze Age	1600	1001
Late Bronze Age	1000	801
Early Iron Age	800	401
Middle Iron Age	400	101
Late Iron Age	100 BC	42 AD
Roman 1st century AD	43	100
2nd century	101	200
3rd century	201	300
4th century	301	400
Roman 5th century	401	410
Post Roman	411	849
Pre conquest	850	1065
Late 11th century	1066	1100
12th century	1101	1200
13th century	1201	1300

14th century	1301	1400
15th century	1401	1500
16th century	1501	1600
17th century	1601	1700
18th century	1701	1800
19th century	1801	1900
20th century	1901	2000
21st century	2001	