

# Archaeological watching brief at Whittington Village Hall, Whittington, Worcestershire

Worcestershire Archaeology  
*for Whittington Village Hall Committee*

January 2021



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# WHITTINGTON VILLAGE HALL WHITTINGTON WORCESTERSHIRE

Archaeological watching brief report

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## SITE INFORMATION

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Site name: Whittington Village Hall  
Site code: WSM 72529  
Local planning authority: Wychavon District Council  
Planning reference: 19/01823/FUL  
Central NGR: SO 87765 52993  
Commissioning client: Whittington Village Hall Committee  
Client project reference: 1829  
WA project number: P5753  
WA report number: 2877  
HER reference: WSM 72529  
Oasis reference: fieldsec1-412912

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1	20/04/2021	Elsbeth Iliff	Submitted to client	Robin Jackson

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# An archaeological watching brief at Whittington Village Hall, Whittington, Worcestershire

By Elspeth Iliff

Illustrations by Laura Templeton

## Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Whittington Village Hall, Whittington, Worcestershire (NGR SO 87765 52993). It was commissioned by Dan Stiff of Boughton Butler Ltd on behalf of Whittington Village Hall Committee, in advance of the proposed demolition of the existing Whittington Village Hall, and construction of a replacement village hall. Planning permission has been granted subject to a programme of archaeological works.

The site is located on the north-east side of the village of Whittington, 3.5km south-east of the centre of Worcester. Two trenches, amounting to 470m<sup>2</sup> in area were excavated on the site, one for the topsoil strip of the new building's footprint and the other for a soakaway.

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered in either of the trenches. Trench 1 was not excavated deeper than the topmost layer of made ground. Trench 2 encountered the natural substrate 1.05m below ground surface, overlain by a layer of colluvium. The lack of features and residual finds, coupled with the presence of a ceramic land drain, suggest that the site was solely used in use as agricultural land prior to the construction of the village hall in 1954.

# Report

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in December 2020 at Whittington Village Hall, Whittington, Worcestershire (NGR SO 87765 52993). This comprised observation of two trenches during groundworks associated with the construction of a new village hall. The project was commissioned by Dan Stiff of Boughton Butler Ltd on behalf of Whittington Village Hall Committee (the Client), in advance of the proposed demolition of the existing Whittington Village Hall and construction of replacement village hall.

The archaeological planning advisor to Wychavon District Council, Aidan Smyth (the Curator) considered that the development had the potential to impact upon possible heritage assets and planning permission has been granted subject to completion of an agreed programme of archaeological works (planning reference 19/01823/FUL).

No brief was provided but discussions with the Curator established the scope of works required and the project conformed to the generality of briefs issued by the Curator. A WSI was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2019) and approved by the Curator. 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), *Standard and guidance: for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* (CIfA 2914b), and the *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2019).

### 1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site is located on the north-east side of the village of Whittington, c. 3.5km south-east of the centre of Worcester, and is 0.2ha in size. The site is bounded to the north-west by Church Lane, to the south by farmland, and to the north-east by residential dwellings. The site comprised the former, now demolished, village hall and associated tarmac parking areas. The topography is relatively flat, at approximately 54m AOD. Adjacent to the site is a slope rising to the south. The underlying geology comprises bedrock of Branscombe Mudstone formation (BGS 2021).

## 2 Archaeological and historical background

### 2.1 Introduction

Prior to fieldwork commencing, a search of the Worcestershire HER was completed, covering a search area of 1km around the site. Historic mapping was also consulted. A summary of the results of this research are presented below.

### 2.2 Prehistoric

No evidence of prehistoric activity has been recorded within the study area.

### 2.3 Roman

A watching brief undertaken on drains in Whittington village found pottery dating to the Roman period (WSM31886).

### 2.4 Medieval to Post-medieval

There are seven Listed Historic Buildings and twelve other unlisted historic buildings recorded within the search area, dating from the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. These include a church and a timber framed farmhouse (WSM00965, WSM50135). There are also records of medieval ridge and furrow



farming systems in the vicinity, along with post-medieval wetland features. A number of watching briefs and other archaeological investigations have been conducted in the area around the site that have encountered evidence of medieval to post-medieval activity. These include a watching brief that recorded medieval pottery and clay pipes (WSM31886), and a salvage recording that found medieval pottery and tile (WSM15345). Part of a medieval copper alloy vessel was also found within the area (WSM65181).

### 3 Project aims

The aims of the watching brief are to observe, investigate 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

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2019). Fieldwork was undertaken between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

Two trenches, amounting to 470m<sup>2</sup> in area, were excavated across the site. 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/JCB 3CX type wheeled excavator.

Observation of excavated areas was undertaken during and after machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, though any less clear may have not been identified. Access to deep trenches was not made for safety reasons.

Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and trench and feature locations were surveyed using a GNSS device with an accuracy limit set at <0.04m.

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 Worcestershire County Museum.

### 5 Archaeological results

No archaeological features or deposits were observed in either of the areas excavated. Trench 1 consisted of a 0.1m deep topsoil strip of an area measuring 36 x 12m. Trench 2 comprised a 10 x 10m trench measuring 1.2m deep for a soakaway.

Trench 1 was located in the centre of the site, immediately south of the footprint of the original village hall. Due to the shallow nature of this trench, the only deposit encountered was a mixed topsoil and rubble made ground that covered much of the site (100).

Trench 2 was located immediately to the south-east of Trench 1. The natural substrate was observed at 1.05m below the current ground surface and consisted of a compacted red clay (204), consistent with the geological mapping of the area. This was overlain by a layer of reddish-brown, clay colluvium (203), measuring 0.46m deep. Above this deposit lay a subsoil consisting of an orangey-brown, clayey silt (201), measuring 0.25m deep. A ceramic land drain was recorded cutting through the subsoil and the colluvium, aligned north-west to south-east. A greyish brown topsoil deposit (200) was present across the majority of this trench, giving way to the made ground deposit seen in Trench 1 at the very northern edge of this Trench 2 (202).

The deposits observed in Trenches 1 and 2 are summarised in the tables below.

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
100	Made ground	0.1 +	0.00	Loose dark greyish brown sandy silt topsoil with modern rubble

Table 1: Summary context descriptions, Trench 1

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
200	Topsoil	0.34	0.00	Friable mid greyish brown sandy silt
201	Subsoil	0.25	0.34	Friable mid orangey brown clayey silt
202	Made ground	0.2	0.00	Loose dark greyish brown sandy silt with modern rubble – seen at northern edge of trench
203	Colluvium	0.46	0.59	Compact mid reddish brown silty clay
204	Natural	-	1.05	Compact mid brownish red silty clay

Table 2: Summary context description, Trench 2

## 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.

## 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

No archaeological features or deposits were identified within the confines of the trenches excavated on this site. A layer of colluvium was encountered in Trench 2 which likely results from soils disturbed by cultivation eroding down the slope immediately to the south of the Trench. A ceramic land drain was seen in Trench 2, post-dating the subsoil deposit. Although the village of Whittington has medieval origins no medieval features or residual artefacts were encountered. The lack of any features or finds and the presence of the land drain may indicate that this area has solely been used as agricultural land in the past.

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in all of the trenches/areas 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 site as a whole.



## 9 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Elspeth Iliff, PCIfA.

The project was managed by Robin Jackson, MCIfA. The report was produced and collated by Elspeth Iliff. 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: Dan Stiff (Boughton Butler Ltd), Ross Watkins (Interclass Ltd) and Aidan Smyth (Archaeological Planning Advisor to Wychavon District Council) and the onsite construction team for their help.

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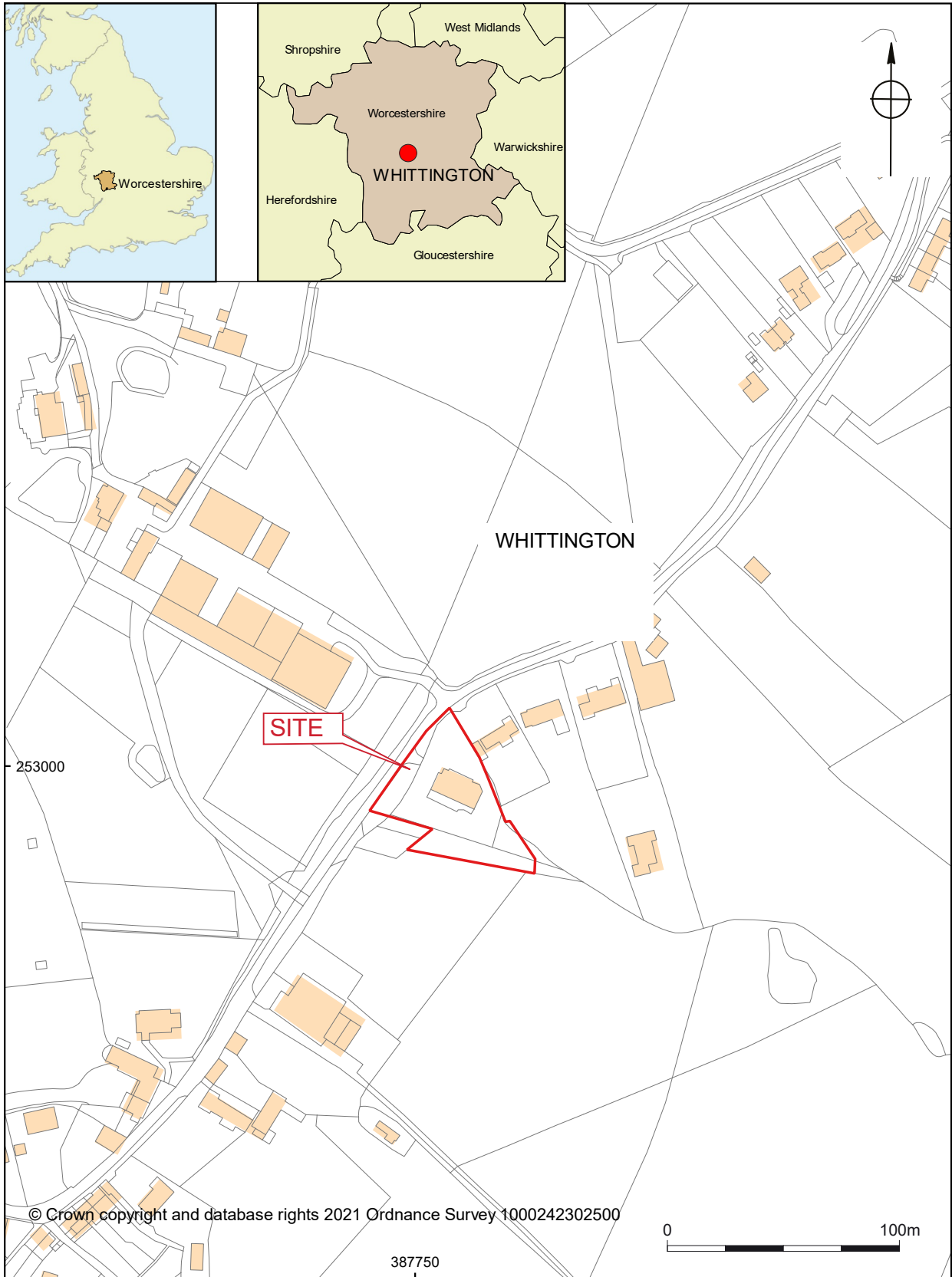
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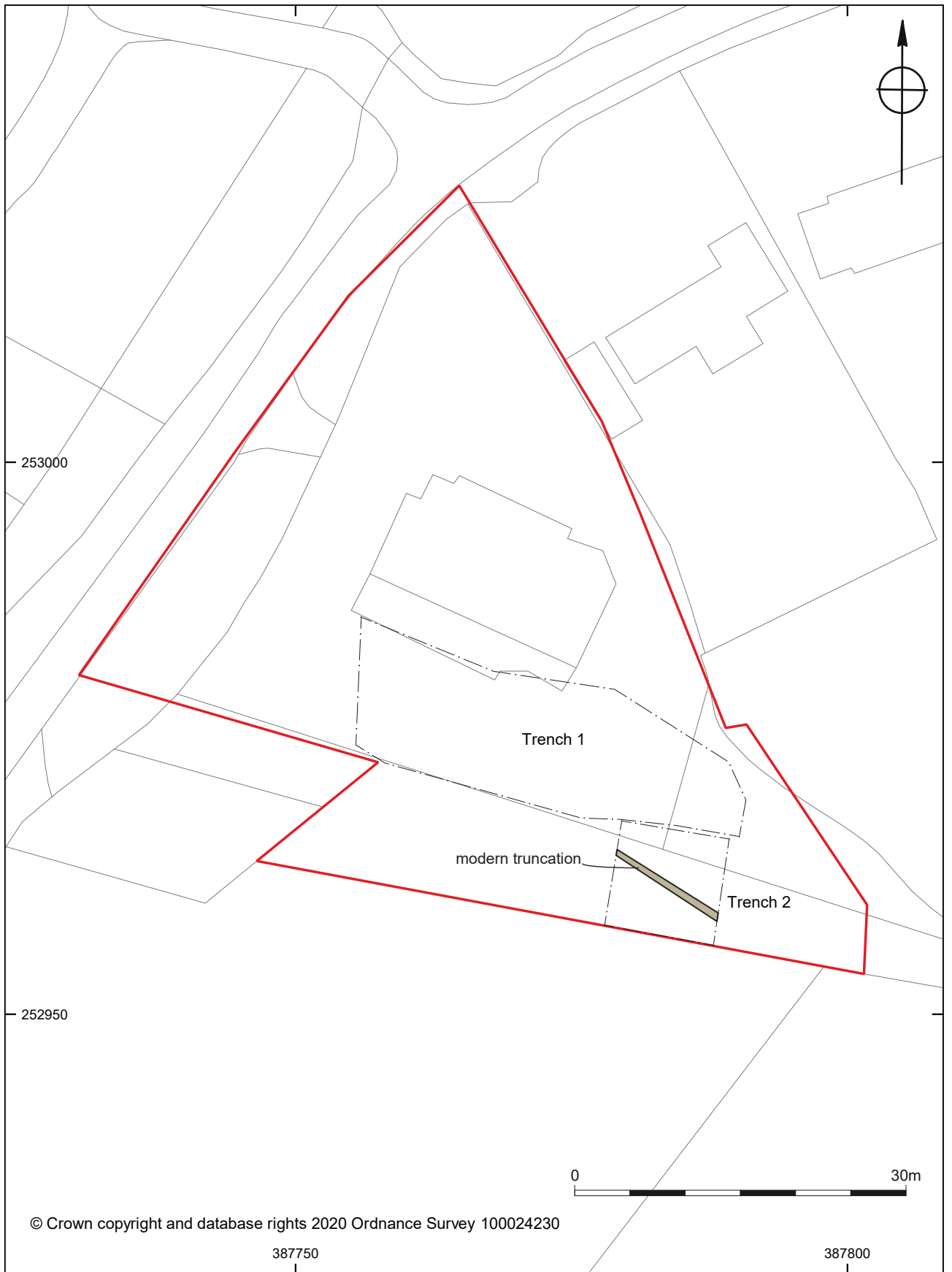
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## Figures



Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench Plan

Figure 2



## Plates



*Plate 1: Trench 1, facing west*



*Plate 2: Trench 2, facing west*





*Plate 3: Trench 2, facing north. Showing exposed natural and colluvium (203) in section*



*Plate 4: Trench 2, facing north-east*

## Appendix 1: Summary of project archive

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	N/A
Paper	Context sheet, Diary (Field progress form), Report
Digital	GIS, Images raster/digital photography, Survey, Text

*\*OASIS terminology*

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 Worcestershire County Museum.