

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION
AT
202, BRANSFORD ROAD,
ST JOHNS,
WORCESTER

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With contributions by Dennis Williams

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Project 3227
Report 1626
WCM 101643

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Archaeological evaluation at 202, Bransford Road, St Johns, Worcester

Tom Vaughan and Justin Hughes

With contributions by Dennis Williams

Part 1 Project summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at 202, Bransford Road, St Johns, Worcester (National Grid ref. SO 833 541). It was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting, whose client intends to redevelop the site for residential use, for which a planning application has been submitted. The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological site was present and if so to indicate its nature, date and location. The evaluation followed the preparation of a desk based assessment, which identified the potential for the recovery of artefactual evidence (CgMs Consulting 2007).

Three trenches were excavated near to the southern and northern perimeter. Within the two trenches to the south, three small test areas were hand-excavated in spits and all deposits sieved for full artefact retrieval. The assemblage was predominantly modern and lay within a heavily disturbed soil matrix. In the northern trench moderate disturbance was apparent. A sequence of undisturbed soils was observed, although no dating material was encountered through the soil profile.

Following the removal of the warehouse floor slabs, it is understood that the ground was found to have been reduced, so removing any archaeological deposits that might have previously survived up to the construction of the shoe factory in the early 20th century (pers comm Cathy Patrick).

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at 202, Bransford Road, St Johns, Worcester (National Grid ref. SO 833 541; Fig 1), on behalf of CgMs Consulting. Their client, Barratt Homes West Midlands, intends to develop the site for residential use and has submitted a planning application to Worcester City Council (ref. P07C0246), who considers that remains of archaeological interest may be affected. The evaluation followed the preparation of a desk based assessment, which identified the potential for the recovery of artefactual evidence (CgMs Consulting 2007).

1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 1999).

The project also conforms to a specification prepared by CgMs Consulting (2008) and a project proposal (HEAS 2008).

1.3 Aims

The aims of the evaluation were to locate archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation. The purpose of this was to establish their significance, since this would make it possible to recommend an appropriate treatment which may then be integrated with the proposed development programme.

More specifically the following aims have been identified:

- To clarify the presence/absence and extent of archaeological remains and associated artefactual evidence on the site;
- To identify the date, character, condition and depth of any surviving remains within the site;
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features encountered;
- To establish the presence/absence, extent and significance of any prehistoric activity whether surviving as below ground features/deposits or as remnant artefact scatters;
- To establish the presence/absence, extent and significance of any potential Roman activity;
- To establish more clearly the level of below ground impact on the site from previous development.

2. **Methods**

2.1 **Documentary search**

A desk based assessment has previously been prepared by CgMs Consulting (2007).

2.2 **Fieldwork methodology**

2.2.1 **Fieldwork strategy**

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (HEAS 2008).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 13 and 20 May 2008. The site reference number and site code is WCM 101643.

Three trenches, amounting to approximately 200m² in area, were excavated, over the total site area of 1.95 hectares. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a 180° wheeled 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 Service practice (CAS 1995). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

All trenches were shorter than proposed in the brief because of the level of disturbance in the vicinity of the demolished cottage (trenches 1 and 2) and because of impeding extant structures due for demolition to the rear (west) of the out-of-use Cinderella shoeworks.

Three of the four soil deposit profiles within Trenches 1 and 2 were hand dug in 0.10m spits and dry sieved through a 5mm mesh to search for microliths and other small finds. The fourth was not undertaken due to the level of disturbance and building rubble in the western area of these trenches.

2.2.2 **Structural analysis**

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural and artefactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources; including the specification (CgMs Consulting 2008) and desk-based assessment (CgMs Consulting 2007).

2.3 **Artefact methodology, by Dennis Williams**

2.3.1 **Artefact recovery policy**

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995, appendix 4).

2.3.2 **Method of analysis**

All hand-retrieved finds were examined and a primary record was made on a Microsoft Access 2000 database. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date was produced for each stratified context. The date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on *pro forma* sheets.

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and recorded by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by the service (Hurst and Rees 1992; Hurst 1994).

2.4 **Environmental archaeology methodology**

2.4.1 **Sampling policy**

The environmental sampling strategy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 4). In the event, no deposits or layers were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

2.5 **The methods in retrospect**

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

3. **Topographical and archaeological context**

The site has been the subject of a desk-based assessment (CgMs Consulting 2007, 9-13). In summary:

The site lies within an Archaeologically Sensitive Area, an area formerly designated as a Conservation Area, and within a defined prehistoric landscape, although there are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments or Listed Buildings on-site.

The site occupies a favourable topographic location, on well-drained high ground close to the Laughern Brook, the River Teme and the River Severn; ideal for utilisation and occupation during early prehistory. Within the vicinity of the site, flint implements dating from the Palaeolithic onwards have been found 0.4km to the south (WCM 100692 and 100694), a Palaeolithic hand-axe (WCM 100695) is recorded 1km to the south-east, a Neolithic or Early Bronze Age scraper is documented 0.7km to the north-east (WCM 100693) and scrapers of the same date were found 1.5km to the south-east (WCM 100691).

Although no defined remains of settlement have been identified from the Roman period, three pottery vessels dating from the later 1st century AD have been recovered, approximately 40m to the north of the site (WCM 100697) and the remains of Roman field systems have been identified at The Bull Ring, St Johns, approximately 0.7km to the east (WCM 101422; Dalwood 2007, 6).

Although Boughton deserted medieval settlement lies approximately 0.4km to the south of the site, there is no evidence that the village extended this far north (WCM 96603). During the medieval period the settlement pattern in the area was one of hamlets and villages, clustered around small farmsteads, with the main focus of trade and development at Worcester on the east bank side of the River Severn.

The site is documented as part of a wider field system of meadows, under the ownership of the Dean and Chapter of Worcester Cathedral, in 1777, 1841 and 1870. The earliest recorded structure in the vicinity appears to have been a former timber-framed building at 172, Bromyard Road (WCM 98438 and 101253).

The Cinderella Shoe Factory (included in the Inventory of Buildings of Local Significance) was built along the Watery Lane frontage in 1914 (WCM 98492). During WWII it was converted for the manufacture of Spitfire parts (WCM 92167), whilst the factory tower was also used as an air raid spotters post (WCM 92122). To the south-west of the evaluated area the demolished house and garden at 206, Bransford Road were constructed before 1928 along

with allotments which extended northwards, until the early 1960s, when the Kaye's Warehouse opened for business.

4. Results

4.1 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figure 2. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

The natural matrix (contexts 102, 202 and 303) comprised a base of orange-brown sandy silts containing moderate amounts of pebble stone deposited by river action, which form part of the third terrace of the Severn Valley. The allotment area, adjacent to Bransford Road (Trenches 1 and 2) was overlain by a soil sequence of finer, looser sandy silts of similar hue (contexts 101 and 201) but which have been regularly turned for cultivation in the modern period. To the rear of the shoeworks, which fronts onto Watery Lane (Trench 3) disturbance from modern building debris was apparent, but the subsoil (context 302) which was composed of similar matrix to the south end of the site, was notably less disturbed, below a stabilised topsoil (context 301).

The contrast between modern cultivation activity in Trenches 1 and 2 and the relatively undisturbed soil profile encountered in Trench 3, is further marked by the quantity and residual nature of the artefact assemblage in the former, albeit that the finds recovery sieving strategy employed in the allotment area gives apparent bias to the evidence.

4.2 Artefact analysis, by Dennis Williams

Artefacts from this site were mainly correlated with 100mm deep spits that were hand-excavated and dry sieved from Trenches 1 and 2. The section drawings of the two trenches enabled artefacts to be assigned subsequently to stratified contexts.

4.2.1 The artefact assemblage

The complete assemblage is summarised in Table 1, and was dominated by post-medieval and modern material, mostly of domestic origin. The standard of preservation was generally good (except for the ferrous items).

4.2.2 The pottery

All pottery sherds were grouped and quantified according to fabric type, as summarised in Table 2. Pottery sherds accounted for 35% of the total assemblage by count, but only 21% by weight, as a consequence of the amount of building material that was also recovered. Owing to the fragmentary nature of most of the pottery sherds, dating was achieved by identification of fabric types, rather than forms. A single additional ceramic find, associated with pottery production, was a tapered ring made of biscuit-fired porcelain. This was probably kiln furniture, intended for use as a spacer during the firing of porcelain vessels.

Material	Type	Total	Weight (g)
Brick	Post-medieval/modern	5	594
Brick/tile	Post-medieval/modern	289	631
Ceramic	Modern drainpipe	2	188
Ceramic	Kiln spacer	1	26
Cinder/slag	Undiagnostic	1	2
Clay pipe	Tobacco	32	49
Coal	Post-medieval/modern	2	12
Flint	Undiagnostic	2	22
Glass	Post-medieval/modern	20	125
Metal	Undiagnostic	7	555
Metal	Post-medieval/modern	1	1
Pottery	Post-medieval	22	81
Pottery	Roman	1	2
Pottery	Medieval	10	60
Pottery	Post-medieval/modern	176	774
Slate	Post-medieval/modern	8	29
Tile	Post-medieval/modern	3	59
Tile	Floor	2	167
Tile	Roof	1	197
Tile	Undiagnostic	16	804
Totals		601	4378

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

Fabric no.	Fabric name	Total	Weight (g)
69	Oxidized glazed Malvernian ware	9	58
78	Post-medieval red wares	23	221
81	Stonewares	6	44
81.5	White salt-glazed stoneware	1	1
83	Porcelain	5	6
84	Creamware	9	11
85	Modern stone china	35	89
91	Post-medieval buff wares	11	17
98	Miscellaneous Roman wares	1	2
99	Miscellaneous medieval wares	1	2
100	Misc. post-medieval wares	108	466
Totals		209	917

Table 2: Quantification of the excavated pottery by fabric

4.2.3 Other artefacts

Ceramic building materials constituted a substantial part of the assemblage, along with a small amount of slate roofing material. Most of the brick and tile fabrics and forms could only be assigned to the broad post-medieval/modern range of dates. Similarly, metal objects were also likely to have come from buildings within this date range. All the ironwork was

heavily rusted. Glass sherds were either from domestic vessels or glazing, and all appeared to have been produced using techniques that would not have predated the late post-medieval period. Other finds included clay pipe stems, but none of these was sufficiently intact to provide clear evidence of dating, except for their post-medieval period of manufacture.

4.2.4 Overview of artefactual evidence

A single Roman coarseware sherd (possibly produced in Oxfordshire) and a small number of locally-produced, Malvernian medieval pottery sherds (fabric 69) provided the only clear evidence of earlier activity, but were all residual within their contexts. The Roman sherd was from context 101, which also contained medieval sherds, as well as post-medieval/modern finds. Likewise, context 200, which was the uppermost layer in trench 2, contained medieval, post-medieval and modern material. None of the Roman and medieval sherds were datable according to form, and were assigned only to broad production ranges of 1st-4th century, and 13th-16th century, respectively.

The post-medieval pottery consisted of fabrics commonly encountered in Worcestershire. They included red wares (fabric 78), which ranged in date from the 17th century (in the case of vessels coated decoratively with black glazes on all surfaces), through to coarser, functional wares, which were glazed internally and produced during the 18th century. A smaller number of buff ware (fabric 91) sherds were found, and these also date to the 18th century. No clear distribution as a function of depth was evident for these pottery fabrics, nor for clay pipe fragments. None of the post-medieval/modern brick and tile fragments were closely datable, and were found in all contexts except 204.

Among the later pottery fabrics, the late 18th century creamwares (fabric 84) were in all contexts from which finds were recovered. There were also wide distributions, with depth, of stonewares and stone china, though porcelain finds were confined to context 200. The porcelain kiln spacer was also found in this context, suggesting that this area of ground was possibly made up from imported soil or refuse.

Furthermore, all contexts contained sherds of orange, oxidised pottery with a hard, well-preserved fabric (recorded as fabric 100). These sherds included rims and sections of perforated bases, which appeared to be from flowerpots, consistent with domestic gardening activity in the area, from Victorian times onwards.

In view of the ground disturbance, and hence residuality of finds, associated with this site, the allocation of a *terminus post quem* date for each context is of doubtful value. However, one specific piece of dating evidence was obtained from context 200, where a sherd of blue, asiatic-decorated china bore the title 'IRONSTONE CHINA' and the maker's inscription 'B & B'. This was a product of Blackhurst and Bourne, who traded in Burslem during the years 1880-92 (Asiatic Pheasants, 2008).

5. Synthesis and conclusions

5.1 Roman

No significant Roman features, layers, structures or horizons were identified.

The single sherd of 1st-4th century pottery recovered from context 101 can only be considered to be a residual find and gives no indication of Roman activity in the immediate vicinity.

5.2 Medieval

No significant medieval features, layers, structures or horizons were identified.

Similarly the small assemblage of residual finds (ten sherds of pottery) dating to this period is insufficient to attest to medieval activity on the site.

5.3 Post-Medieval and Modern

The remainder of the finds assemblage and the nature of domestic activity indicated on cartographic sources of the area from the 18th century, makes it clear that the site has been utilised for domestic purposes on a regular basis for at least the last two centuries. During the 20th century the evaluated area formed two discrete plots; with a residential property fronting onto the road and by industrial units to the north and east, leased by Kay's (a clothing distribution company) and by the Cinderella Shoe Factory, which fronts onto Watery Lane.

6. Significance

In considering significance, the Secretary of State's criteria for the scheduling of ancient monuments (DoE 1990, annex 4), have been used as a guide.

Nationally accepted criteria are used to assess the importance of an ancient monument and considering whether scheduling is appropriate. Though scheduling is not being considered in this case they form an appropriate and consistent framework for the assessment of any archaeological site. The criteria should not, however, be regarded as definitive; rather they are indicators which contribute to a wider judgement based on the individual circumstances of a case.

Bransford Road could be considered to fall within two of these criteria: *survival* and *vulnerability* because the presence of undisturbed depositional sequences within a formerly designated Conservation Areas is archaeologically significant but, at the same time, is vulnerable to the increasing pressures from residential and commercial development within such suburban fringes.

7. Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

An evaluation was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting at 202, Bransford Road, St Johns, Worcester (National Grid ref. SO 833 541; HER ref. WCM 101643). The artefact assemblage was predominantly modern and contained no indication of the suspected prehistoric activity. The sequence of undisturbed deposits observed toward the north side of the site contained no dateable material, however the survival of such a soil profile is of potential archaeological significance.

Following the removal of the warehouse floor slabs, it is understood that the ground was found to have been reduced, so removing any archaeological deposits that might have previously survived up to the construction of the shoe factory in the early 20th century.

8. Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Cathy Patrick (CgMs Consulting), James Dinn (Archaeological Officer, Worcester City Museum Archaeology Service, Worcester City Council), and James Naylor (Site Manager, the Armoury Demolition Group).

9. **Personnel**

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by Justin Hughes. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan. Fieldwork was undertaken by Adam Lee and Anna Martinus, finds analysis by Dennis Williams and illustration by Carolyn Hunt.

10. **Bibliography**

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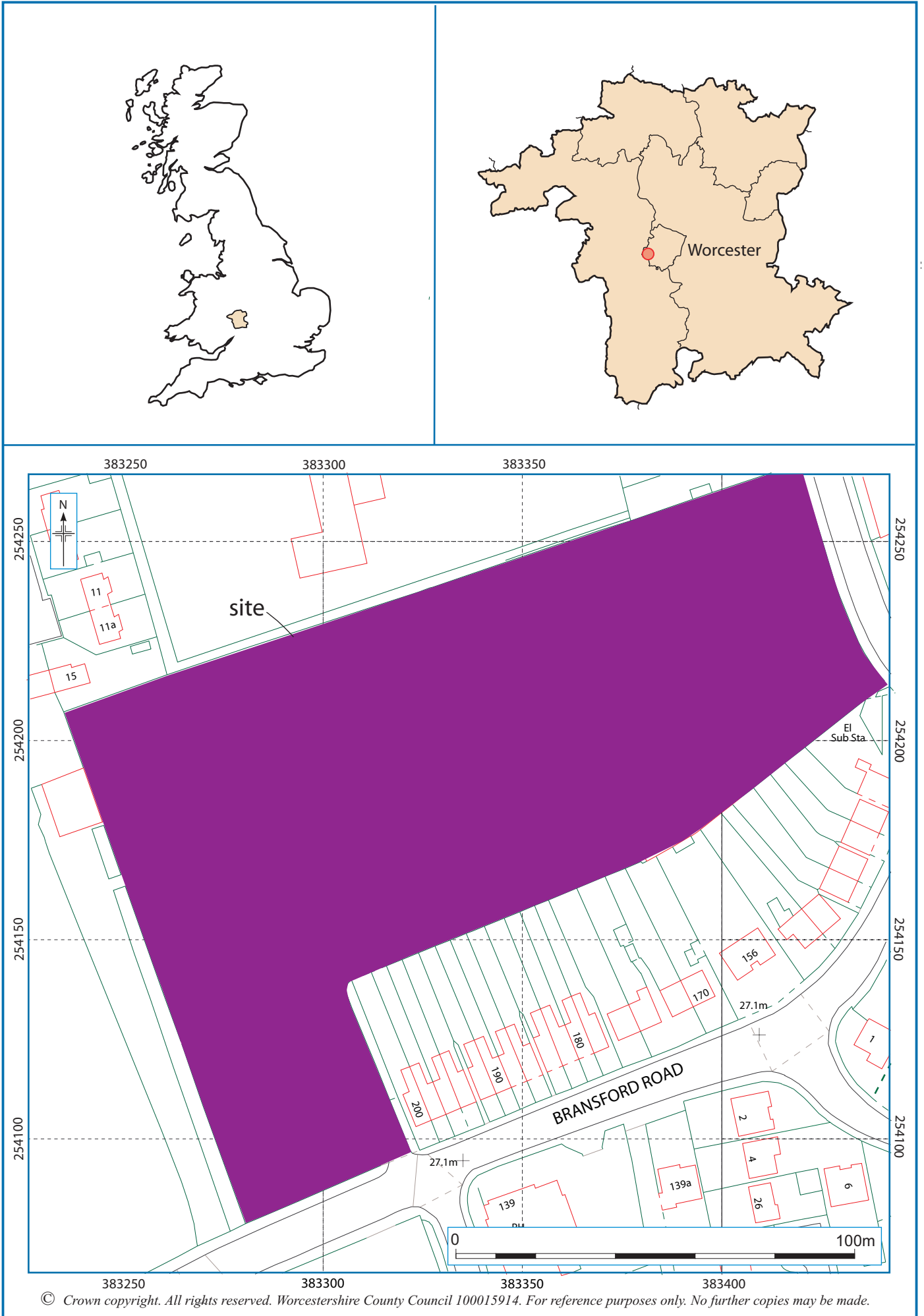
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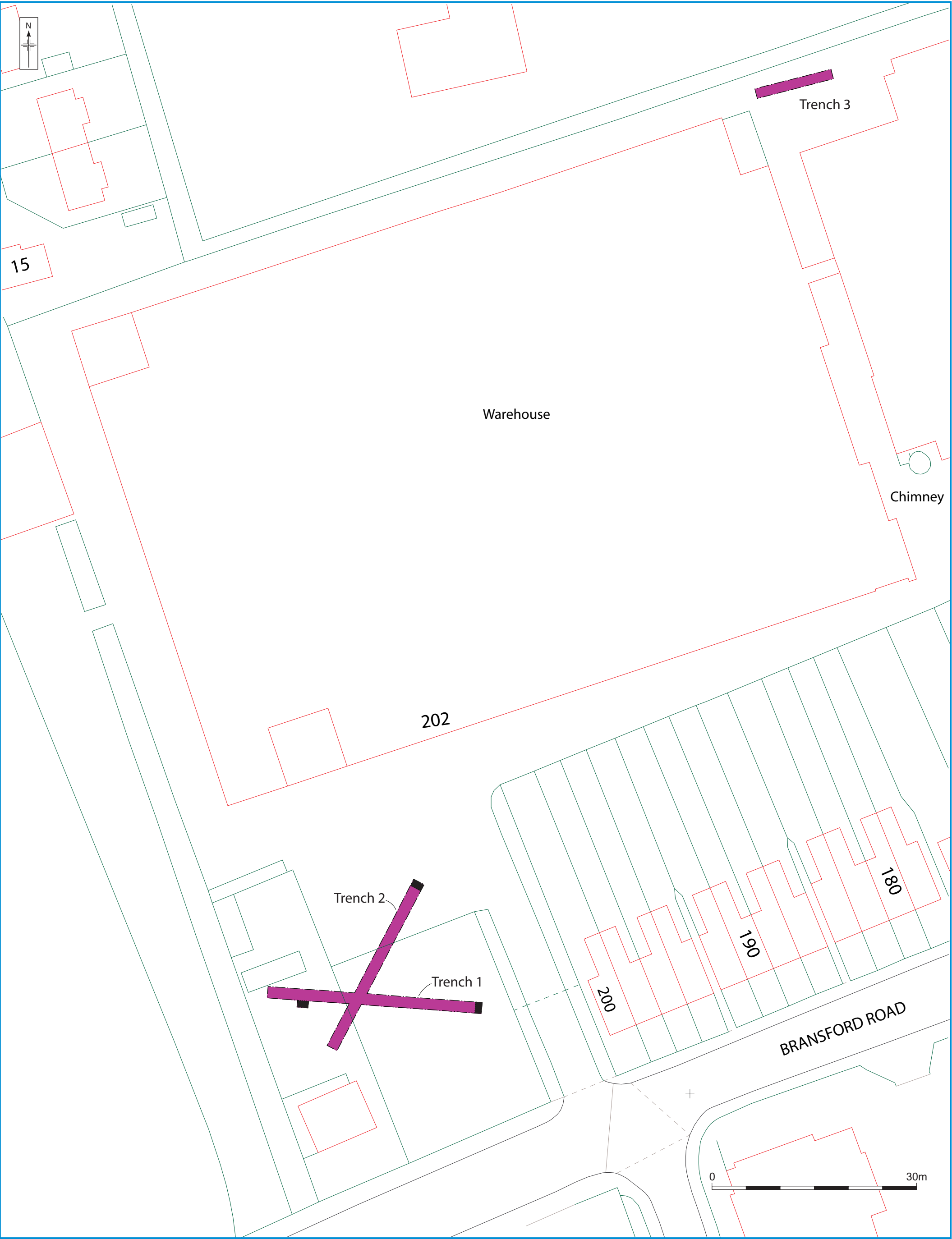
List of Marks found on Asiatic Pheasants wares 1835-2003,
<http://www.asiaticpheasants.co.uk/makersmarks.html>, accessed 29 May 2008

Figures



Location of the site.

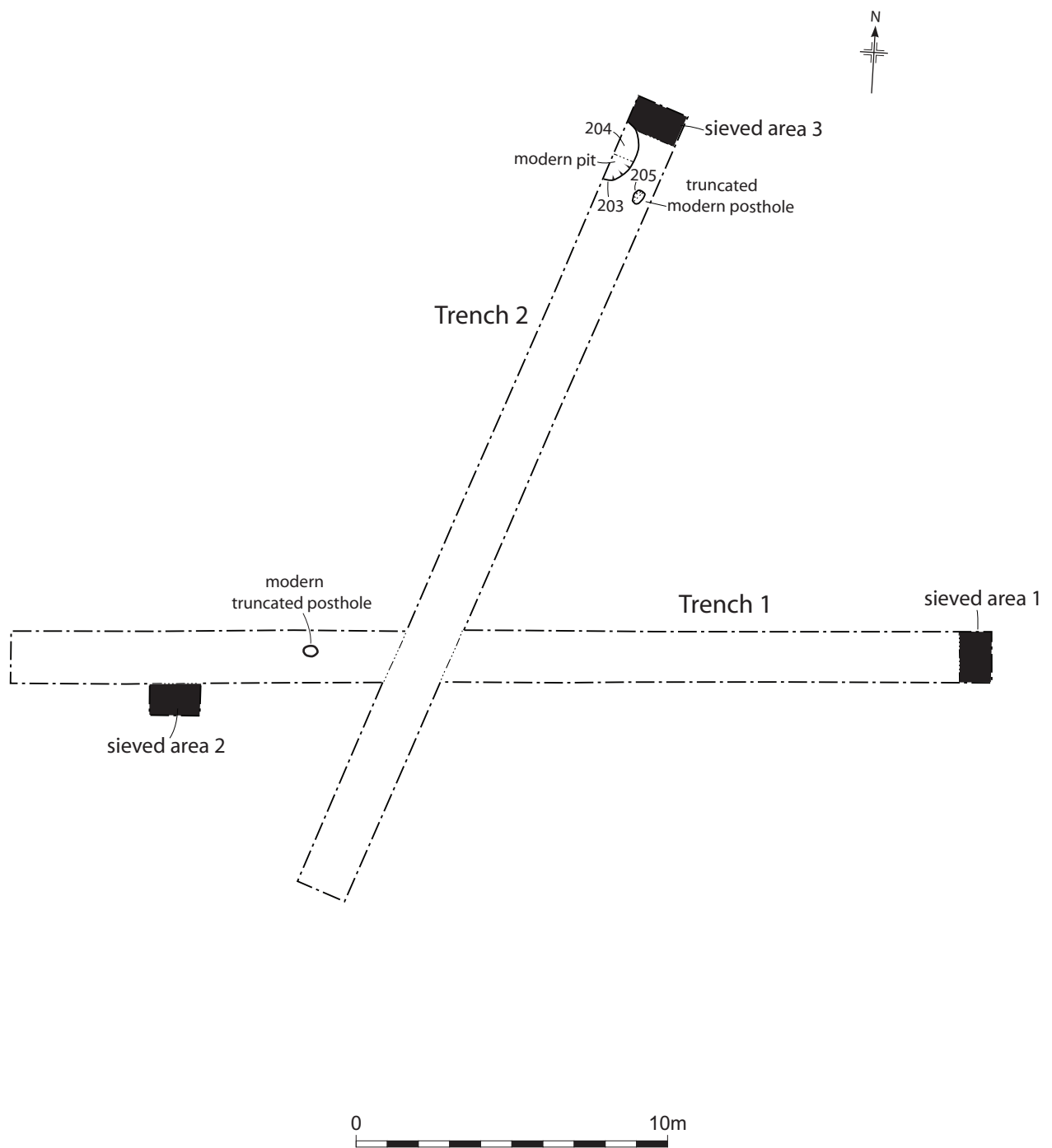
Figure 1



This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Worcestershire County Council 100015914. For reference purposes only. No further copies may be made.

Trench location plan

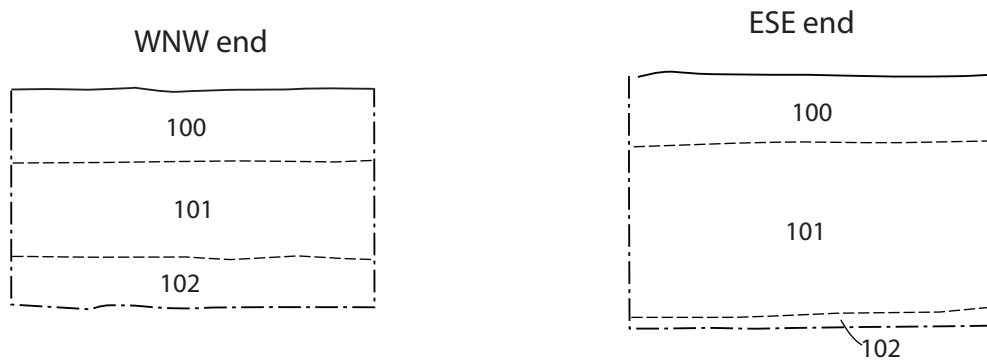
Figure 2



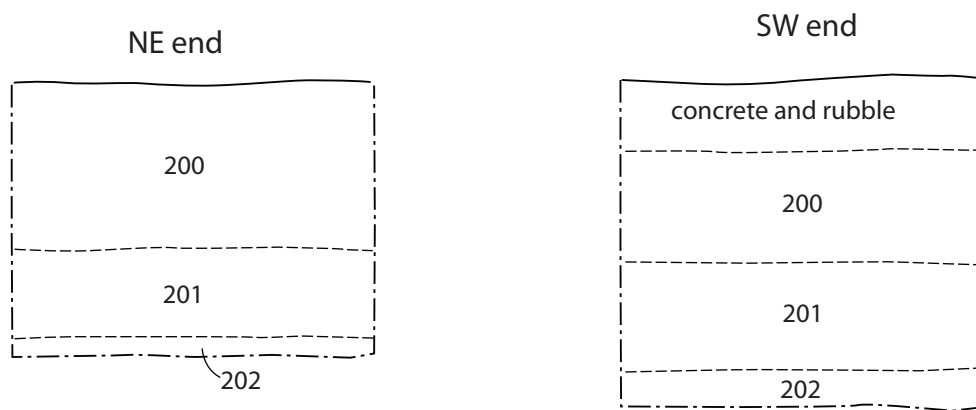
Plan of Trenches 1 and 2.

Figure 3

TRENCH 1: SECTIONS

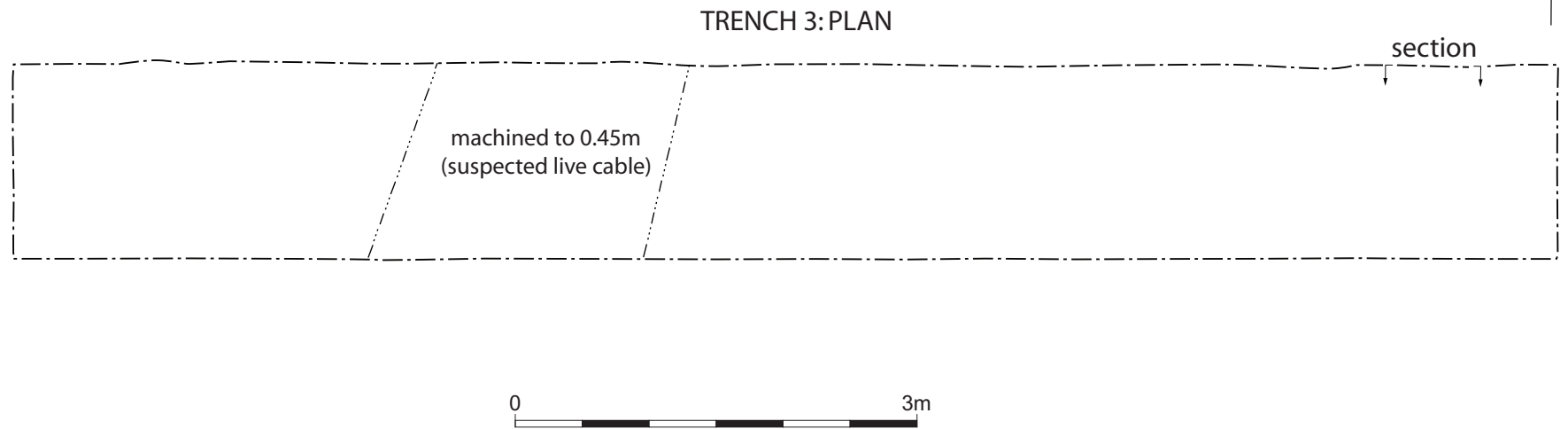
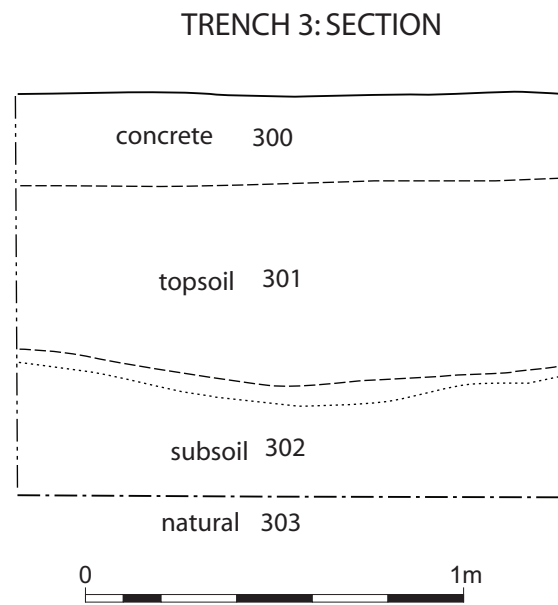


TRENCH 2: SECTIONS



Trenches 1 and 2: Sections

Figure 4



Trench 3: Plan and section

Figure 5

Plates



Plate 1, Trench 1 facing northwest



Plate 2, Trench 2 facing southwest



Plate 3, Trench 3 facing east



Plate 4, Trench 3 soil sequence, facing north

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Site area: Immediate north of Bransford Road frontage

Maximum dimensions: Length: 31.50m Width: 1.60m Depth: 0.70m

Orientation: WNW - ESE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Firm dark brown sandy silt with moderate small-large rounded stones and CBM fragments, frequent charcoal flecks, a high level of root disturbance and more frequent CBM inclusions to the WNW end.	0.00-0.20m
101	Subsoil	Firm mid-orange brown sandy silt with moderate small-large rounded stones and occasional charcoal and magnetite flecks.	0.20-0.48m (max)
102	Natural	Loose mid-yellow/orange sand and gravel with patches of light-mid sandy clay and occasional lumps and flecks of magnetite.	0.48m +
103	Cut	Modern posthole, truncated by machine excavation	See Figure 2
104	Fill	Loose, Mid-dark grey sandy silt with occasional flecks of charcoal. Fill of 103	N/A

Trench 2

Site area: Immediate north of Bransford Road frontage.

Maximum dimensions: Length: 27.50m Width: 1.60m Depth: 0.90m

Orientation: NNE - SSW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Topsoil	Firm dark brown sandy silt with moderate small-large rounded stones and CBM fragments, frequent charcoal flecks, a high level of root disturbance and more frequent CBM inclusions to the WNW end.	0.00-0.45m
201	Subsoil	Firm mid-orange brown sandy silt with moderate small-large rounded stones and occasional charcoal and magnetite flecks.	0.45-0.80m
202	Natural	Loose mid-yellow/orange sand and gravel with patches of light-mid sandy clay and occasional lumps and flecks of magnetite.	0.80m +
203	Cut	Modern pit, heavily truncated by machine excavation; oval, >0.60m by 1.60m.	0.45m +
204	Fill	Firm dark brown sandy silt with moderate small-medium rounded stones and modern CBM and pottery fragments. Some animal bone and a high level of root disturbance.	0.45m +
205	Cut	Modern rectangular posthole, heavily truncated by machine excavation; sub-oval 0.16m by .024m.	0.45m +
206	Fill	Firm dark brown sandy silt with occasional small-medium stones and flecks of charcoal. Fill of 205.	0.45m +

Trench 3

Site area: Rear of Cinderella Shoeworks factory

Maximum dimensions: Length: 12.50m Width: 1.60m Depth: 1.15m

Orientation: NW-SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Surface	Aggregate concrete service road	0.00-0.20m
301	Topsoil	Loose-friable mid-grey brown sandy silt with occasional small and medium sub-rounded and angular stones and moderate charcoal fleck inclusions.	0.20-0.53m
302	Subsoil	Firm mid-orange brown sand silt with occasional small sub-rounded stones	0.53-1.03m
303	Natural	Loose orange brown sandy silt with medium rounded stones and lenses of dark-grey/black crushed stone.	1.00m +

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

12	Context records AS1
37	Digital photographs
3	Trench record sheets AS41
6	Scale drawings
1	Box of finds
1	Computer disc

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcester City Museum and Art Gallery
Foregate Street
Worcester
WR1 2PW

Tel. Worcester (01905) 25371
