

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING  
BRIEF AT  
THE FORMER FRUIT AND  
VEGETABLE MARKET,  
HYLTON ROAD,  
WORCESTER

Tom Vaughan

With a contribution by Dennis Williams

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

3 December 2008

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Project 3245  
Report 1665  
WCM 101672



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## Archaeological watching brief at the former Fruit and Vegetable Market, Hylton Road, Worcester

**Tom Vaughan**

**With a contribution by Dennis Williams**

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### Background information

<i>Client</i>	The Environment Agency
<i>Site address</i>	The former Fruit and Vegetable Market, Hylton Road, Worcester
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SO 8425 5500
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	WCM 101672
<i>Project design</i>	HEAS 2008
<i>Project parameters</i>	IfA 2008

### *Previous archaeological work on the site*

The Service has previously undertaken archaeological work on the site (Lockett and Jones 2001; (WCM 100784).

Deposits of prehistoric, Roman, and modern date were identified. However, the earliest deposits were poorly attested, with the majority of features being of modern, particularly 20<sup>th</sup> century origin. Despite the poor preservation of earlier deposits, alluvial layers derived from inundation by the River Severn, were encountered on the western side of the site, to a depth of c 1.80m. In the upper horizons a Mesolithic flint tool was recovered and a single sherd of Roman pottery, both of which were considered to be residual.

On the eastern side of the site, adjacent to the railway viaduct and Hylton Road, the footings for a probable early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century brick warehouse and associated yard was observed. To the rear of the site extensive deposits of late 19<sup>th</sup> century and later refuse were recorded, within an area of brick pits are shown on 18<sup>th</sup> century maps.

A medieval aqueduct identified from documentary sources (WCM 96631) and conjectured to have lain across the site was not identified, although the considerable modern dump deposits and high groundwater may have obscured archaeological features during this investigation.

In 1997 a survey of the site by The Defence of Britain Project identified the presence of a WWII roadblock, consisting of two large cubes of concrete located alongside a gateway toward the street frontage (WCM 92171).

### *Previous archaeological work on associated sites*

A project of archaeological works was recently been carried out by the Service in association with the on-going flood alleviation works being undertaken on behalf of the Environment Agency between Hylton Road and the River Severn adjacent (Vaughan 2008a; Vaughan 2008b). This identified a sequence of deposits containing variable 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century material which were considered to be deliberate make-up and dump deposits resulting from the demolition of the buildings which occupied the southern half of the site from at least the later 18<sup>th</sup> century to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century and the raising of the ground level to prevent seasonal flooding. Alluvium was noted, at a depth of 1.40m to 2.30m below the present ground surface, directly below modern make up and demolition deposits. A small quantity of Roman and medieval artefacts identified were considered to be residual within these later layers (WCM 101644 and 101649).

A watching brief of test pits and pile holes was undertaken in 1990-1991 on either side of the river, including the area of the current flood alleviation works (WCM 100751). Within the footings for

the Sabrina Bridge a well-preserved timber waterfront structure was identified (WCM 99094), sealed 0.80m below the foundations of an 18<sup>th</sup> century building. It is unclear exactly what depth this would be below the present ground surface, however the timbers were noted to be waterlogged. The wharf is conjectured to be of late medieval date. Elsewhere up to c 3m of made ground was identified, overlying alluvial deposits and former river channels, considered to have been in-filled during the Flandrian period over the last 10,000 years. No Roman deposits were observed along the west bank, although iron tap slag (of possible Roman date) was recovered on the east bank (De Rouffignac 1991).

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### **Aims**

The aim of the watching brief recording was to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

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### **Methods**

General specification for fieldwork	CAS 1995
Sources consulted	HER 1 <sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey, 1887/8, sheets XXXIII.3 & XXXIII.7, scale 1:2,500

Date(s) of fieldwork	28 August 2008
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Test pits observed	5
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#### *Access to or visibility of deposits*

Observation of the 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. Access to the test pits was not made for safety reasons and all recording was undertaken from the present ground surface.

#### *Statement of confidence*

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. However the walkover in search of the WWII roadblock should not be considered as a comprehensive survey of the site.

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## Deposit descriptions

### Test Pit 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 1.60m Width: 0.40m Depth: 3.25m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Tarmac	Black tarmac surface.	0.00-0.05m
101	Hardcore	Grey sub-angular gravel and gravel dust. Compact.	0.05-0.20m
102	Dump deposit	Mid greyish yellow sand, crushed modern mortar and concrete.	0.20-0.40m
103	Dump deposit	Dark brownish black sandy silt. Frequent coal and ash; moderate small-medium CBM; occasional mortar flecks, frags and large CBM. Compact.	0.40- c 1.70m
104	Dump deposit	Sand, mortar and brick rubble deposit. Loose.	1.70-2.67m
105	Dump deposit	Greyish yellow silty clay. Compact. Redeposited natural clay?	2.67-2.97m
106	Alluvium	Dark blackish grey sandy clayey silt. Occasional small-medium stone, CBM and red sandstone. Compact. Humic and waterlogged.	2.97-3.00m
107	Alluvium	Dark blackish grey sandy clayey silt. Frequent iron slag, charcoal and ash; occasional small-medium stone. Compact.	3.00m+

### Test Pit 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 1.00m Width: 0.40m Depth: 2.25m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Concrete	Concrete surface.	0.00-0.18m
201	Dump deposit	Dark blackish brown sandy silt. Frequent ash and charcoal.	0.18-0.21m
202	Structure	Brick wall associated with tile floor at 0.48m depth, bedded in lime mortar. Bricks 7x11x24cm. Wall only observed in south east section.	0.48m+
203	Fill	Mid brown sandy clayey silt. Moderate small-medium rounded stone, animal bone, CBM and mortar. Fill of 204. Butts 202.	0.56-1.25m
204	Cut	Sharp break of slope, steep concave sides curving to concave base. Orientation unknown. Probable foundation trench for 202? Filled by 203.	0.56-1.25m
205	Dump deposit	Mid blackish brown sandy clayey silt. Frequent CBM, mortar flecks and frags; moderate ash charcoal, medium-large red sandstone frags and bricks. Compact.	0.56m+

**Test Pit 3**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 1.50m Width: 0.40m Depth: 3.00m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Tarmac	Black tarmac surface.	0.00-0.05m
301	Hardcore	Grey sub-angular gravel and gravel dust. Compact.	0.05-0.30m
302	Dump deposit	Mid brown sandy silt. Frequent large CBM, charcoal flecks and frags, mortar flecks and frags; moderate small-medium rounded stone. Compact.	0.30- c 1.40m
303	Dump deposit	Mid brown sandy clayey silt. Moderate CBM, charcoal flecks and mortar flecks; occasional small-medium stone. Compact.	1.40-1.90m
304	Structure	Brick. Below 301. On north east side of trench. Below 301.	0.30-1.00m

**Test Pit 4**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 1.60m Width: 0.40m Depth: 3.30m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
400	Tarmac	Black tarmac surface.	0.00-0.05m
401	Hardcore	Grey sub-angular gravel and gravel dust. Compact.	0.05-0.20m
402	Dump deposit	Mid blackish brown sandy clayey silt. Frequent large CBM; occasional mortar flecks and frags. Variably loose-compact.	0.20-0.85m
403	Dump deposit	Dark grey brown sandy clayey silt. Moderate large CBM; occasional mortar flecks. Waterlogged. Compact.	0.85m+

**Test Pit 5 (reconstructed from Jacob’s log)**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 2.00m Width: 0.60m Depth: 2.00m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
500	Dump deposit	Brown gravel and sand, below concrete. Occasional concrete frags and brick.	0.00-0.1.00m
501	Dump deposit	Red and grey gravels and clay. Loose. Wet.	1.00-1.50m
502	Alluvium	Grey gravel and clay. Variably loose-compact. Waterlogged.	1.50m+

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### Artefacts, by Dennis Williams

The only finds presented for examination were 29 pieces of slag, with a total weight of 1.9 kg, from alluvial layer 107. All other finds were determined on site to be of modern origin, and were not retained for further analysis. The slag was very dense and ranged in colour from 'rusty' brown to dark purplish-grey. It was therefore characteristic of waste from Roman iron smelting (this charcoal-fired process was an inefficient process which left substantial amounts of iron in the slag). A single large block, weighing 878g, had a rough upper surface, and was probably from the internal base of a smelting furnace. The remainder appeared to be broken pieces of tapped slag, which exhibited distinctive pre-solidification flow marks on upper surfaces (none of these pieces were of a low density, as would be expected of the waste material expelled during secondary forging processes).

Extensive iron smelting is known to have taken place on the east side of the River Severn during the Roman period (Vaughan 2008a, 5). However, in the absence of other Roman finds from this watching brief, it was not possible to determine whether smelting took place near the present Hylton Road, or if the slag had been transported from further away (e.g. to be used as a metalling material for roads or other surfaces).

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### Discussion and conclusions

Waterlogged alluvium was identified within two of the five test pits; at c 3m depth in TP1 to the north, and at c 1.50m depth in TP5 to the south. Elsewhere brick structures and rubble dump deposits were recorded to the full depth of the test pits, which are reasoned to relate to buildings recorded on cartographic sources for the site from the later 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

No other significant archaeological layers, features, structures, deposits or horizons were observed, nor were the concrete WWII blocks (WCM 92171) identified, which had been identified in 1997.

The small assemblage of Roman iron slag from TP1 is of potential interest, although due to the constraints of the project, it is unclear if it represents in-situ industrial activity, is part of a deliberate dump of waste from iron smelting elsewhere in the vicinity, or is simply residual within the alluvium. No other artefacts pre-dating the modern period were recovered.

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### 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 archaeological watching brief was undertaken on behalf of the Environment Agency at the former Fruit and Vegetable Market, Hylton Road, Worcester (NGR: SO 8425 5500; HER ref. WCM 101672). Five test pits were observed. Waterlogged alluvial material was identified to the north and south sides of the site, at c 3m and c 1.50m depth respectively. Otherwise brick structures and rubble deposits of 19<sup>th</sup> century and later date were recorded. No other significant archaeological layers features or structures were observed, nor were the concrete WWII blocks (WCM 92171) previously identified. A small assemblage of Roman iron slag was recovered from the alluvium to the north. It is unclear if this represents in-situ industrial activity, is a deliberate dump of waste from iron smelting elsewhere in the vicinity, or is simply residual within the alluvium. No other artefacts pre-dating the modern period were recovered.*

## Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Ed Wilson (Senior Archaeologist, Environment Agency), Oye Alabi and Paul Collins (Jacobs Engineer UK Ltd), James Dinn (Archaeological Officer, Worcester City Council) and Sheena Payne-Lunn (HER Officer, Worcester City Council).

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## Personnel

This report was prepared by Tom Vaughan on the basis of field notes presented by Adam Lee. Finds analysis was by Dennis Williams and illustration by Carolyn Hunt.

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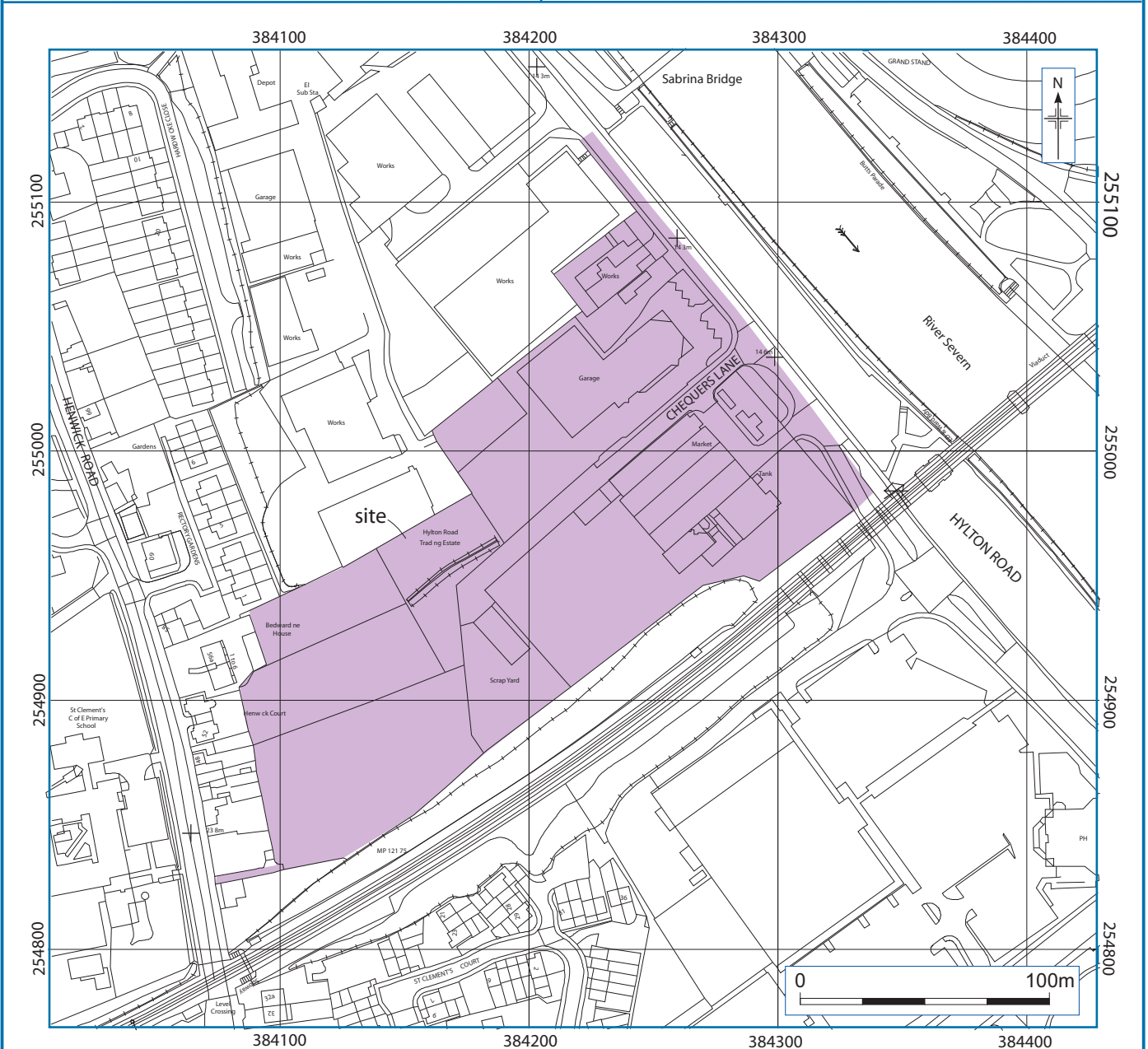
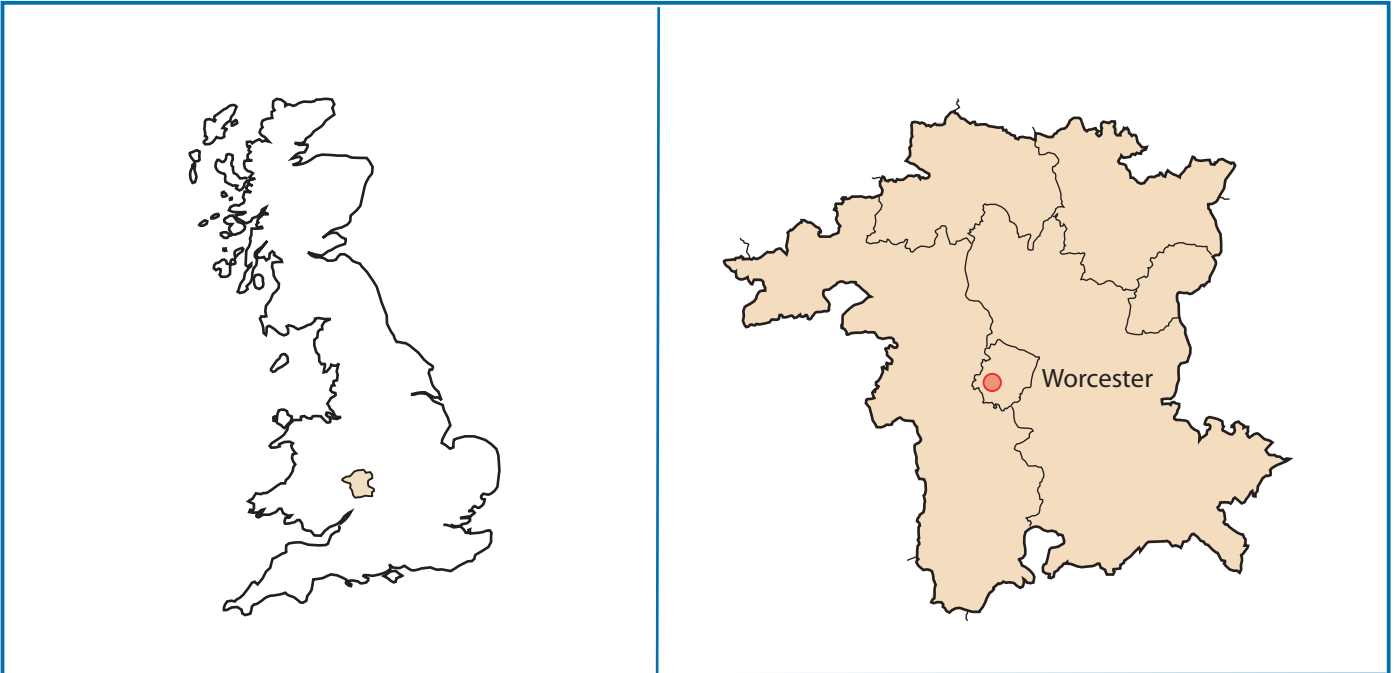
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## **Figures**

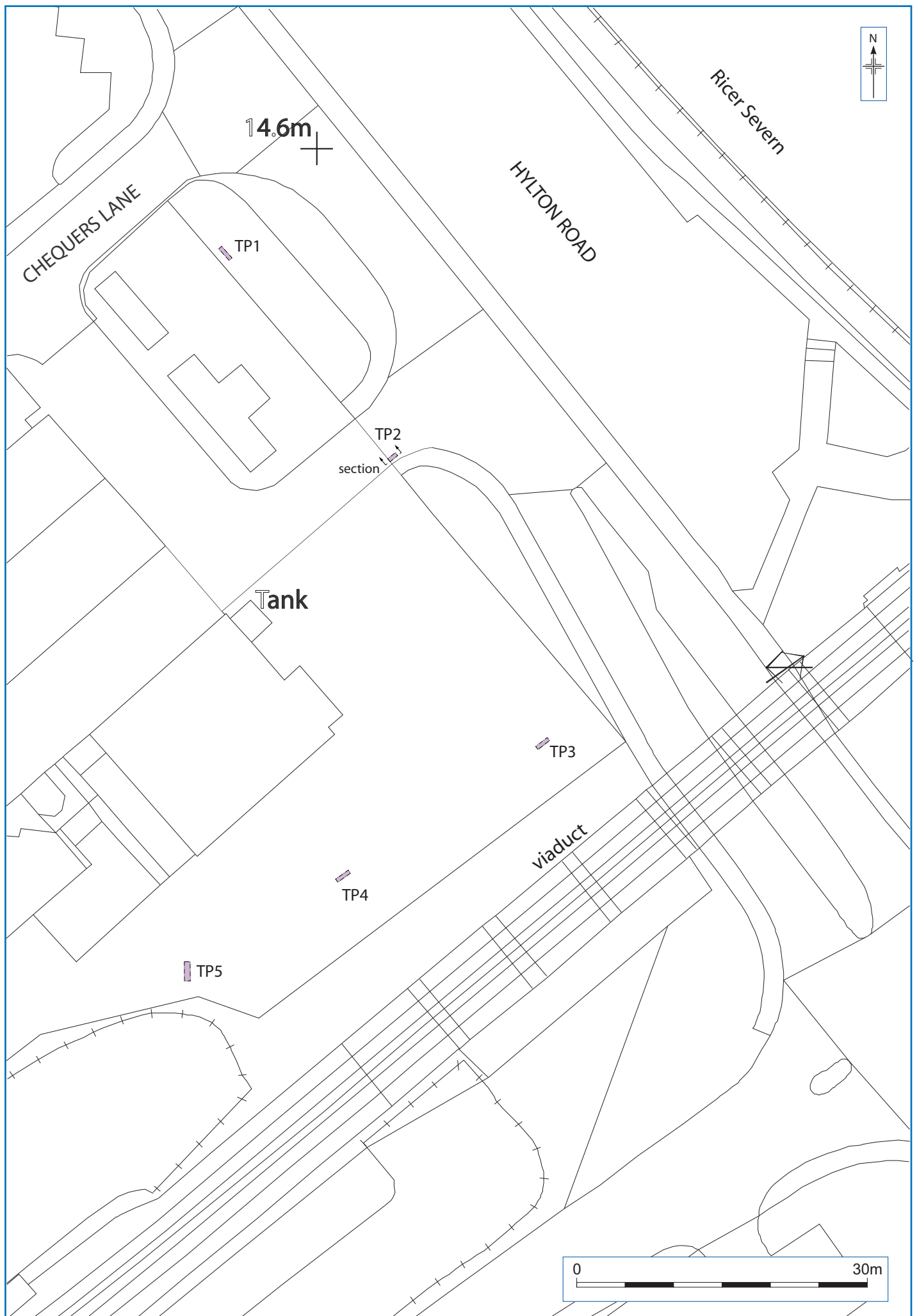




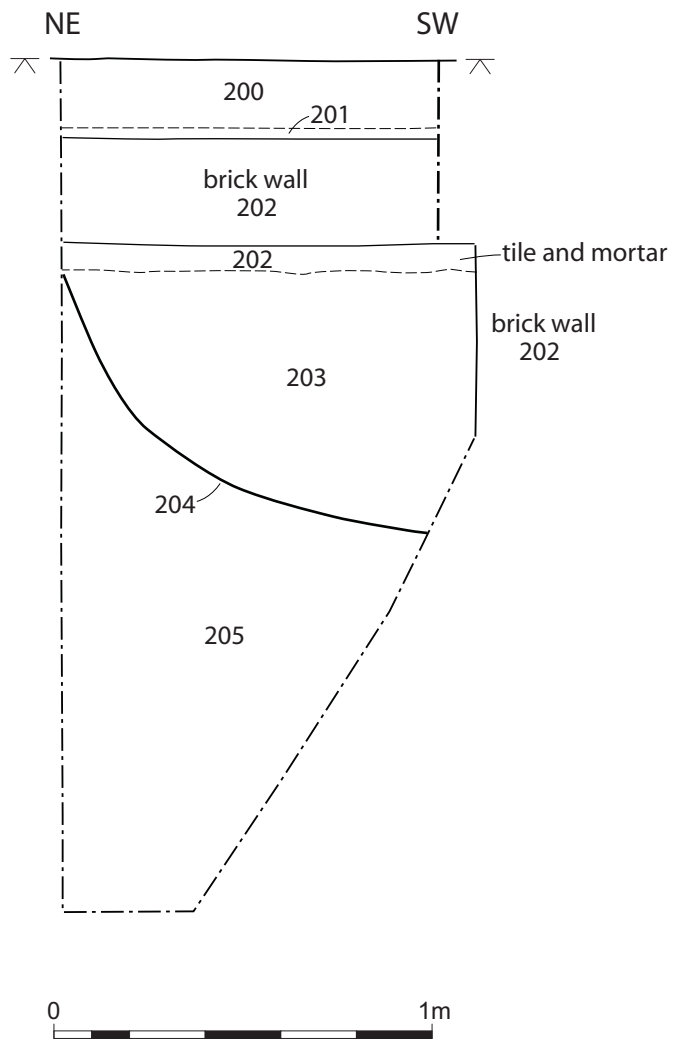
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Location of the site

Figure 1



NORTH WEST-FACING SECTION



North West-facing section of Test Pit 2

Figure 3

## Plates



*Plate 1, Test pit 1, view north east*



*Plate 2, Test pit 1, view south east*



*Plate 3, Test Pit 2, brickwork 202, view south east*



*Plate 4, Test Pit 2, brickwork 202, view south west*



*Plate 5, Test Pit 3, view north west*



*Plate 6, Test Pit 3, brickwork 304, view north east*





*Plate 7, Test Pit 4, view south east*



*Plate 8, Test Pit 4, view south west*

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## Appendix 1 Technical information

### The archive

The archive consists of:

1	Fieldwork progress records AS2
1	Photographic records AS3
39	Digital photographs
1	Context number catalogue AS5
1	Sample number catalogue AS18
6	Trench record sheets AS41
1	Box of finds
1	Computer disk

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

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

Tel (01905) 25371