

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION ADJACENT TO
DROITWICH BARGE LOCK,
VINES PARK, SALT WAY,
DROITWICH SPA,
WORCESTERSHIRE

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Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

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Project 3282
Report 1644
WSM 39895

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Archaeological Evaluation adjacent to Droitwich Barge Lock, Vines Park, Salt Way, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire

Tom Vaughan

Part 1 Project summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Droitwich Barge Lock, Vines Park, Salt Way, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire (NGR: SO 90177 63512). It was undertaken on behalf of Halcrow Group Limited, whose client British Waterways is undertaking a general restoration scheme of the Junction and Barge Canals in Droitwich. The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological remains were present and if so to indicate what their nature, date and location.

A single trench was excavated to the south of Junction Canal, to a depth of 2.25m (c 26.75m AOD) along the projected line of a proposed by-pass pipe. A substantial unconsolidated deposit of ash and clinker was recorded from 1.30m depth (c 27.60m AOD) to the base of the trench, sealed by clay loam soils containing occasional 19th/20th century china and brick rubble. These layers are considered to have been deposited from the mid/late 19th century to in-fill areas of subsidence following brine extraction and to consolidate the area prior to laying out the park in the early part of the 20th century. A single brick wall was recorded, which may relate to the construction of the canal in the mid 19th century. Otherwise no significant archaeological deposits, features, layers or structures were observed, nor artefacts recovered.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Droitwich Barge Lock, Vines Park, Salt Way, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire (NGR: SO 90177 63512; Fig 1), on behalf of Halcrow Group Limited. Their client, British Waterways, is undertaking a general restoration scheme of the Junction and Barge Canals in Droitwich. It is proposed to insert a by-pass pipe along side the section of the canal between Barge Lock No. 8, an in-filled canal basin and Chapel Bridge. The site lies within a Scheduled Ancient Monument (ref. 30097), so the development is considered to have the potential to affect remains of archaeological importance.

1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 2001).

The project also conforms to the written scheme of investigation prepared by the client (Halcrow 2008), which was approved by Tony Fleming (West Midlands Regional Advisor, English Heritage), and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (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 mitigation strategy that might be integrated within the proposed development programme.

2. Methods

2.1 Documentary search

The archaeological background to the site has previously been presented within the written scheme of investigation (Halcrow 2008, 2). No further documentary search was required.

2.2 Fieldwork methodology

2.2.1 Fieldwork strategy

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

Fieldwork was undertaken on 8 October 2008. The site reference number and site code is WSM 39895.

A single trench, amounting to approximately 8.50m² in area, was excavated over the route of the proposed by-pass pipe. The location of the trench is indicated in Figures 1 and 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a 180° wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket to a maximum depth of 2.25m. Due to practical and health and safety constraints, the trench was not accessed and all

recording was undertaken from the surface. Deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995). On completion of excavation, the trench was reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

An additional trench was postulated within the in-filled basin (Halcrow 2008, 7). However, practical constraints (a storm drain, tree cover and a public footpath) prevented its excavation.

2.2.2 **Structural analysis**

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

2.3 **Artefact methodology**

2.3.1 **Artefact recovery policy**

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 2). This in principal determines that all finds, of whatever date, must be collected. However, in this case all finds were determined on site to be of 19th and 20th century origin and were therefore not retained for further analysis.

2.4 **Environmental archaeology methodology**

2.4.1 **Sampling policy**

The environmental sampling strategy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 4). However, in the event no deposits or layers were identified which might be considered 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 archaeological background to the site has previously been presented within the written scheme of investigation (Halcrow 2008, 2) and recent archaeological reports for sites in the immediate vicinity undertaken by the Service (Vaughan and Darch 2003; Woodiwiss 2007). In summary:

The site lies toward the eastern end of a Scheduled Ancient Monument (ref. 30097) scheduled under the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, 1979*. This comprises the basin of the River Salwarpe, Vines Park and adjacent plots, which covers an area of extensive salt production remains covering a period of over 2,000 years which include brine tanks, wells, machinery, hearths, drying kilns and a sophisticated water management system, identified during excavations from the 1970s onwards.

The course of the River Salwarpe was modified and canalised by James Brindley as Droitwich Barge Canal in 1771. This terminated to the south of the later Lock no. 8. This lock formed the start of the Junction Canal opened in 1854, which joined Vines Park to the Worcester and Birmingham Canal 2.25km to the east. The eastern terminus of the Barge Canal subsequently fell out of use and was in-filled by 1903.

An archaeological investigation at Droitwich Garage, immediately north of Salt Way revealed loose clinker and other post-medieval deposits to a depth of approximately 2.55m, overlying alluvium to a depth of 3.15m, over the natural undisturbed matrix, at 25.85m AOD (Vaughan and Darch 2003, 8-9). Elsewhere at Droitwich Garage, geotechnical investigations located the natural at between 21.14m AOD and 25.66m AOD, below probable medieval alluvium and substantial 19th century ash and clinker deposits (Woodiwiss 2007, 14-16).

4. Results

4.1 Structural analysis

The deposits and features recorded are shown in Figure 3. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

The water-table was noted at approximately 1.60m (*c* 27.40m AOD) below the present ground surface (*c* 29.00m AOD). Below this point observation of deposits was intermittent due to water ingress. The trench was dug to a maximum depth of approximately 2.25m (*c* 26.70m AOD).

4.1.1 Phase 1 Natural deposits

At no point were natural, geological deposits identified.

A substantial depth of soils, 1001 and 1003, were observed, to approximately 1.30m depth below the present turfed ground surface, 1000, across the entire trench. However they overlay modern dumped material, 1004 (see Section 4.1.2 below), so cannot be considered to be naturally developed.

4.1.2 Phase 2 Modern deposits

As noted above, a sequence of clay loam soils, 1000, 1001 and 1003, was recorded to a depth of approximately 1.30m (*c* 27.70m AOD), overlying a loose unconsolidated deposit of clinker and ash, 1004. This ash continued beyond the maximum depth of the trench. A thin band of clinker, 1002, was also recorded within the soil layers at 1.00-1.15m depth (*c* 27.85-28.00m AOD).

A single brick structure, 1005, was noted aligned approximately west-south-west to east-north-east within the north section of the trench, continuing into the north-east corner. It comprised at least three courses of bright orangey red machine made bricks set in probable Portland cement below a horizontal roughly squared timber and lay at a depth of 1.33m below the present ground surface (27.64m AOD).

4.2 Artefact analysis

Modern bricks, brick fragments and concrete rubble were observed below the turf within soil 1000. A very small quantity of 19th/20th century china and porcelain pottery was noted within soils, 1001 and 1003. Occasional bands of crushed red brick, pinkish brown mortar along with fragments of coal lay within soil, 1003. Occasional machine made red bricks, frequently frogged, were recorded within the extensive ash and clinker layer, 1004. None of this material was retained.

5. **Synthesis and 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.

These 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.

No significant archaeological deposits, features, layers or structures were observed, nor artefacts recovered, during this investigation.

The ash, clinker and soil deposits are considered to have been deliberately laid down during the mid/late 19th century to in-fill areas of subsidence following brine extraction and in the early part of the 20th century to consolidate the area prior to laying out the park.

It is unclear to what the brick wall, 1005, within the north-east corner of the trench relates. It does not appear to correlate with any structures identified on the available cartographic sources. It can however be tentatively identified as of mid/late 19th century date, and may relate to the original construction of the Junction Canal in 1854.

It is concluded that no significant buried archaeological remains survive within the area of the evaluation.

6. **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 adjacent to Droitwich Barge Lock, Vines Park, Salt Way, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire, on behalf of Halcrow Group Limited (NGR: SO 90177 63512; HER ref. WSM 39895).

A single trench was excavated to the south of Junction Canal, to a depth of 2.25m (c 26.75m AOD) along the projected line of a proposed by-pass pipe. A substantial unconsolidated deposit of ash and clinker was recorded from 1.30m depth (c 27.60m AOD) to the base of the trench, sealed by clay loam soils containing occasional 19th/20th century china and brick rubble. These layers are considered to have been deposited from the mid/late 19th century to in-fill areas of subsidence following brine extraction and to consolidate the area prior to laying out the park in the early part of the 20th century. A single brick wall was recorded, which may relate to the construction of the canal in the mid 19th century. Otherwise no significant archaeological deposits, features, layers or structures were observed, nor artefacts recovered.

7. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Simon Griffin (Senior Archaeologist, Halcrow Group Limited), David Viner (British Waterways) and Tony Fleming (Regional Inspector, English Heritage West Midlands).

8. **Personnel**

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by Tom Vaughan. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan. Fieldwork was also undertaken by Simon Woodiwiss and illustration was by Carolyn Hunt.

9. **Bibliography**

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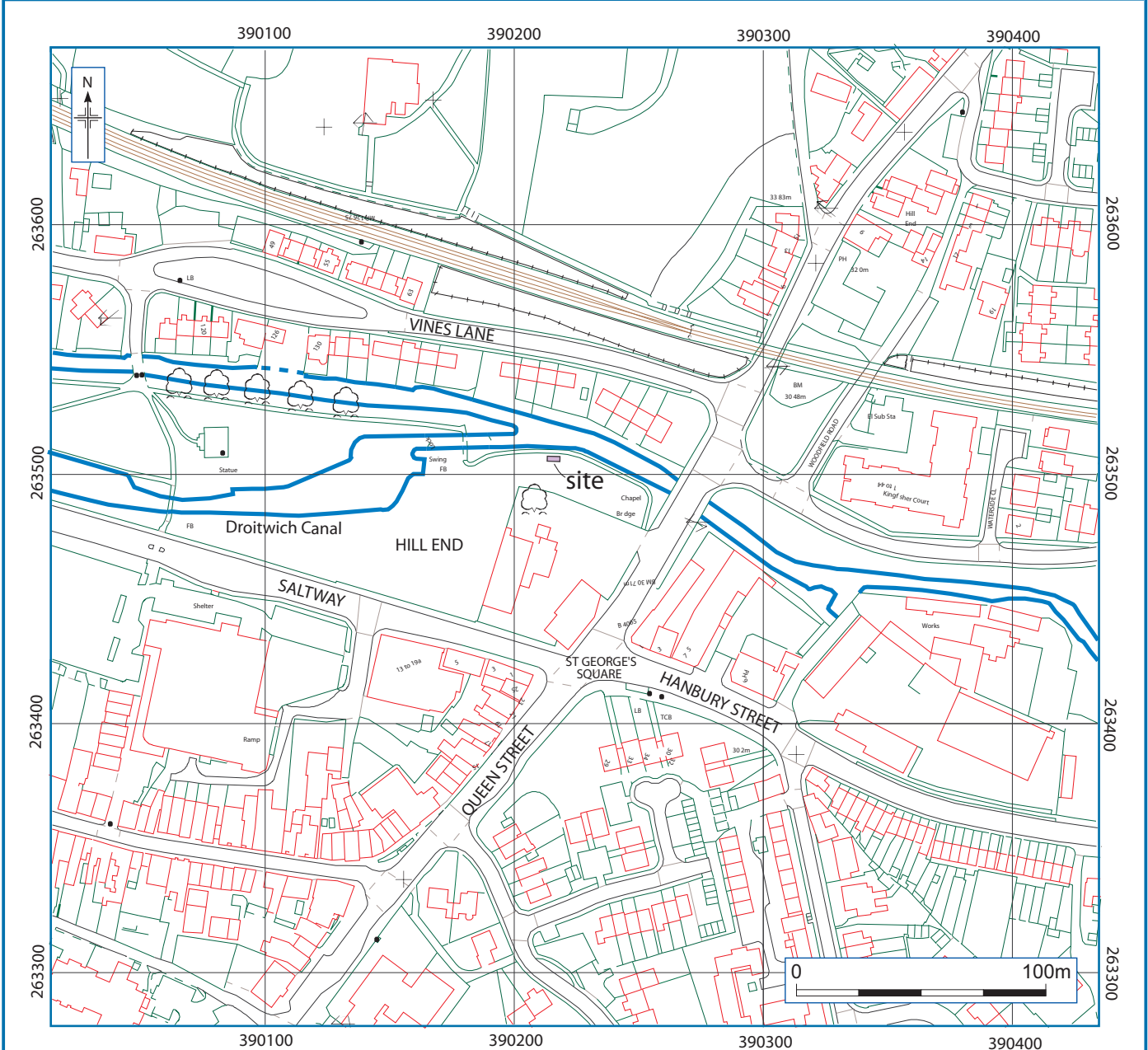
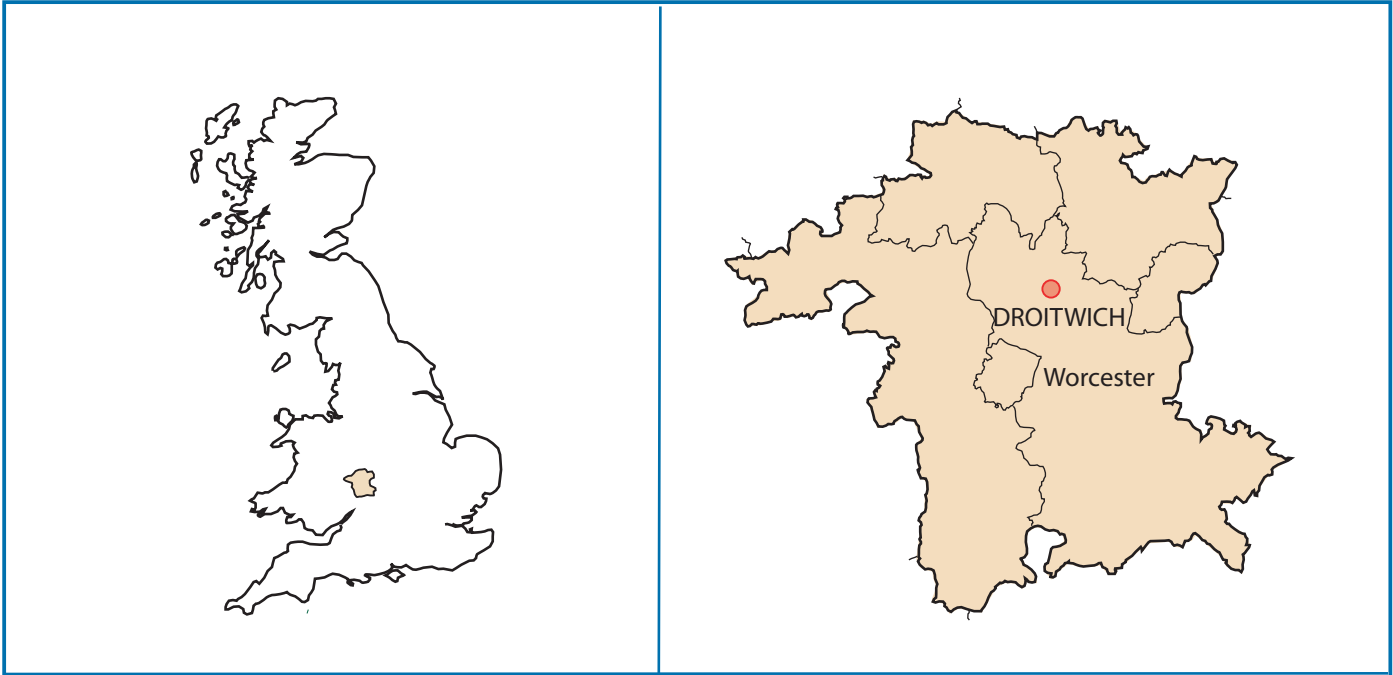
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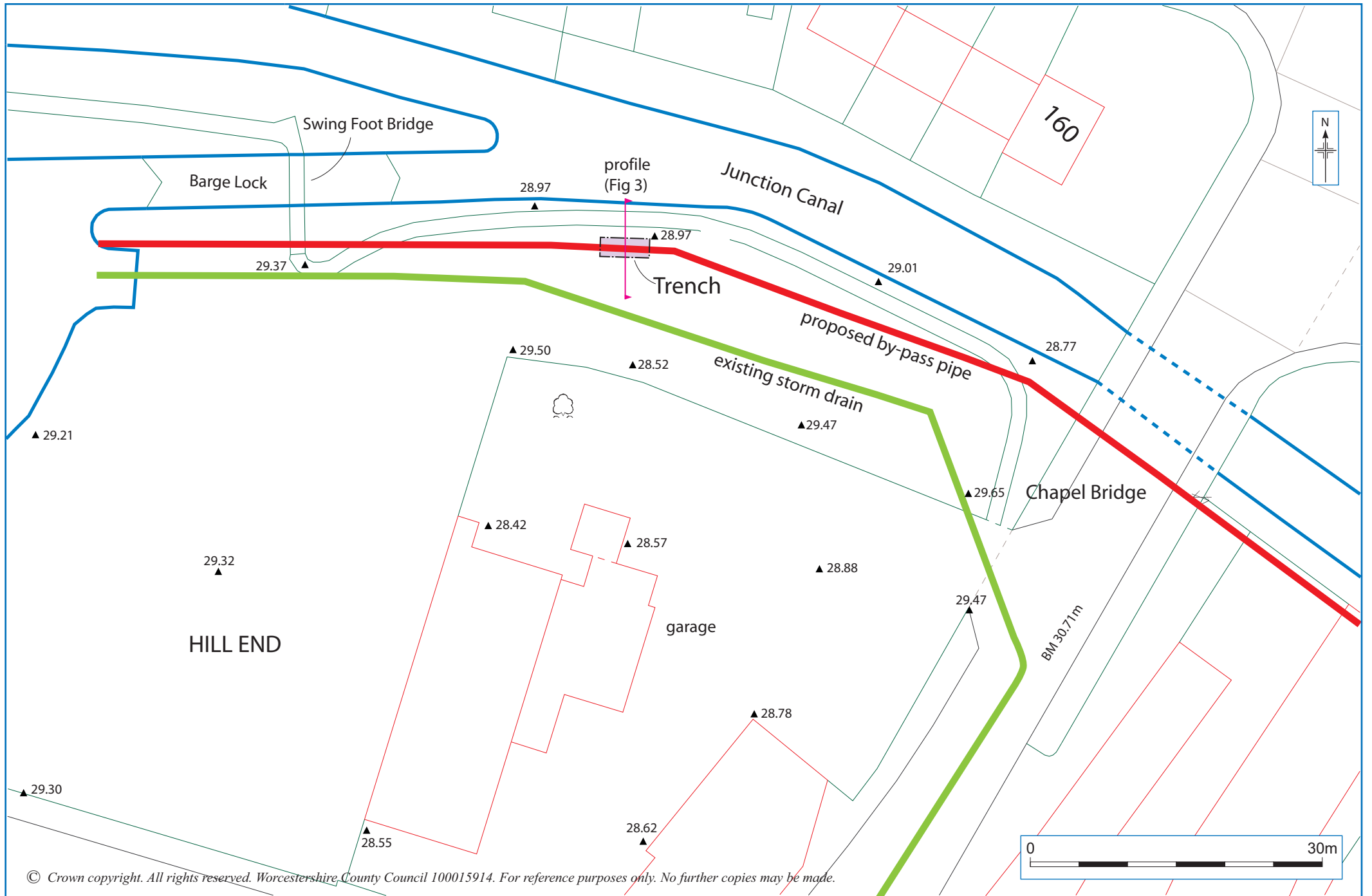
Figures



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Location of the site.

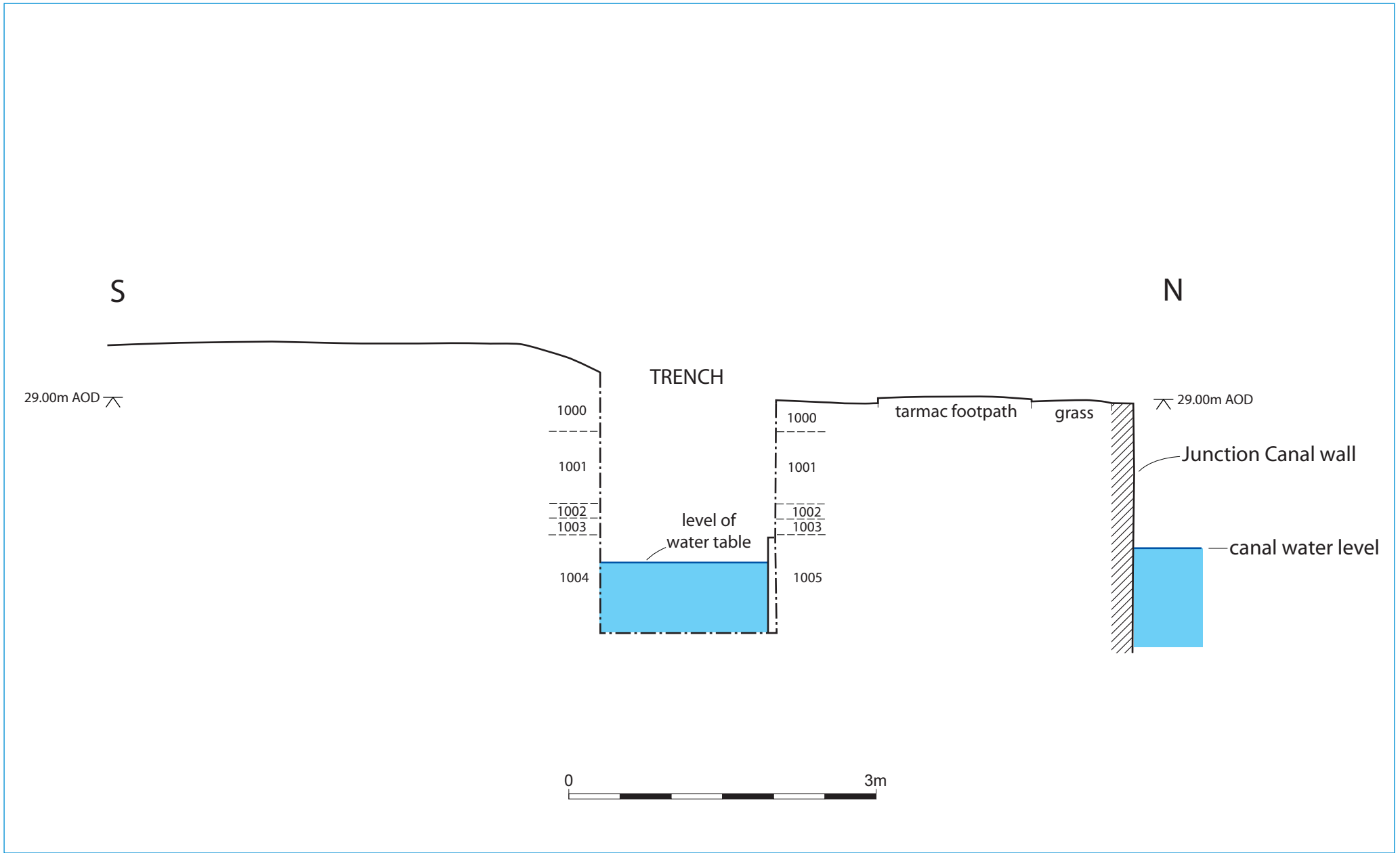
Figure 1



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Trench location plan (all levels in metres AOD)

Figure 2



Profile

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1 General view of north section of trench



Plate 2 Close up on north section of trench



Plate 3 General view of trench, north-west



Plate 4 Close up of north-east corner of trench, brick wall 1005 at water level



Plate 5 Trench as backfilled, view west-north-west

Appendix 1 Trench description

Maximum dimensions: Length: 5.00m Width: 1.70m Depth: 2.25m

Orientation: east-west

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
1000	Topsoil	Medium brown clay loam with extensive modern red brick and concrete; turfed. Well-defined boundary below.	0.00-0.30m
1001	Soil	Medium brown clay loam with coal and mortar flecks and frags. Very occasional pottery. Well-defined boundaries above and below.	0.30-1.00m
1002	Dump deposit	Band of clinker and ash. Well-defined boundaries above and below.	1.00-1.15m
1003	Soil	Medium brown clay loam with lenses of medium pinkish brown mortar and crushed red brick. Occasional coal frags, china and red brick. Well-defined boundaries above and below.	1.15-1.30m
1004	Dump deposit	Extensive clinker and ash with occasional machine made, frogged brick. Well-defined boundary above. Waterlogged.	> 1.30m +
1005	Structure	Wall: horizontal timber beam set above at least three brick courses. Bricks bright orangey red, machine made and bedded in probable Portland cement mortar. Aligned approximately west-south-west to east-north-east. Observed toward the east end of trench within the north section.	> 1.33m +

Appendix 2 Technical information – The archive

The archive consists of:

- | | |
|----|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Fieldwork progress records AS2 |
| 1 | Photographic records AS3 |
| 17 | Digital photographs |
| 1 | Levels record sheets AS19 |
| 1 | Trench record sheets AS41 |
| 1 | Scale drawing |
| 1 | Computer disk |

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire, DY11 7XZ
Tel. Hartlebury (01299) 250416
