ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT HAMPTON LANE, MERIDEN, WARWICKSHIRE

Revision 1

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With contributions by Derek Hurst

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25 November 2010

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Project 3298
Report 1801

Contents

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Part 1 Project summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Hampton Lane, Meriden, Warwickshire (NGR 423794, 282167). It was undertaken at the instruction of CgMs Consulting on behalf of their client, David Wilson Homes (Mercia), who intend to construct a recreational ground and associated car park at land to the south of Main Road and Hampton Lane, Meriden for which planning permission has been granted (reference 2003/2614). The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological deposits were present and if so to indicate their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation.

No features or deposits of archaeological significance were observed in the monitored areas. The topsoils were well sorted and mixed with stones showing agricultural usage, and substantial quantities of post-medieval and modern artefactual material were recorded within the subsoil. The inclusion of quantities of coal in the topsoil in the area of the pavilion suggests that this area may have been used as a dumping ground in the modern period.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Planning background

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Hampton Lane, Meriden, Warwickshire (NGR 423794, 282167; Fig 1). It was undertaken at the instruction of CgMs Consulting on behalf of their client, David Wilson Homes (Mercia), the client. The client intends to construct a recreational ground and associated car park at land to the south of Main Road and Hampton Lane, Meriden. Planning permission has been granted by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (reference 2003/2614), who considered that the site lies in an area of archaeological potential, within the late Medieval/early post-medieval settlement of Meriden.

2. Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to locate archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation. The purpose of this is to clarify the presence and character of any late medieval or early post-medieval activity on the site.

3. Methods

3.1 Documentary search

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (HER).

3.2 Fieldwork methodology

3.2.1 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification was prepared by CgMs Consulting (CP/10434, 2009). Observation and recording of archaeological deposits were restricted to areas of ground disturbance associated with the development of the site as a recreational ground (ground breaking and preparation, services, access route etc) following the progress of the construction team and to the area of archaeological significance as defined by Anna Stocks, Planning Archaeologist for Warwickshire County Council and illustrated in the Specification (fig 2).

Initial fieldwork was undertaken on 19 January 2009 and 20 January 2009 and an interim report was completed on 23 March 2009 (Curran, 2009). Further visits to the site were made on 7, 11 and 19 October 2010. Following the negative results of this exercise and consultation with Anna Stocks, it was decided that there was little potential for the survival of archaeological deposits and the remaining groundworks were not to be monitored. This report combines the findings from the Interim Report with the results from the site visits carried out in 2010.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 360º wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand and clean surfaces were inspected. Deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995).

3.2.2 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.

3.3 Artefact methodology by Derek Hurst

3.3.1 Artefact recovery policy

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 2).

3.3.2 Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined and a primary record was made on a Microsoft Access 2003 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. Only hand-retrieved finds were retained from site, as no samples were taken.

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

3.4 Environmental archaeology methodology

3.4.1 Sampling policy

No deposits or horizons were identified that were considered suitable for environmental analysis.

3.5 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

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

4. Topographical and archaeological context

The underlying geology in the area off Hampton Lane is Triassic Keuper Marl (CgMs 2008).

Meriden is located between Solihull and Coventry, and the surrounding countryside, known as the Meriden Gap, forms a green belt between the two urban areas of Birmingham and Coventry. The parish Church of St Lawrence (MWA 230) is situated on a hill overlooking Meriden, marking the original location of the village, known as Alspath before the village shifted to its current focus around the London to Birmingham Road, reflecting the increasing importance of that thoroughfare (VCH IV, 147). The development site is situated to the west of the modern village and is therefore considered to be in an area with potential for the survival of archaeological remains of later medieval or post medieval date.

Prior to the development the site was a field, immediately south of the roundabout junction of Birmingham Road, Hampton Lane, Main Road and Fillongley Road. The size and shape of the field had been established by the time of the 1889-91 Ordnance Survey. Several trees are shown on the survey crossing the field from east to west probably represent a former hedgeline. A group of houses on the road frontage to the east is also shown but otherwise the land surrounding is open. On successive 20th Century surveys, the field remains unchanged, although houses are built on Hampton Lane to the west between 1905 and 1926 replacing a farm and a close of houses, Strawberry Fields is built in a small field immediately to the east some time after 1989.

Within the village of Meriden are a number of Grade II listed buildings dating from the seventeenth to early nineteenth century. Of those built in the seventeenth century, Brookside (SI 218223) is a two-story house constructed from colour washed plaster with a tiled roof and red brick chimneystack. The Centre of England Stores, on the village green, also dates from the seventeenth century but has been altered to serve its current use with modern shop windows, however the timber frame is exposed to the side elevation (SI 218232).

Forest Hall, the headquarters of The Woodmen of Arden (a famous archery club founded in 1785) was designed by Joseph Bonomi and built in 1788. Forest Hall is also a Grade II listed building, later enlarged in the eighteenth century (SI 218209).

A medieval village cross stands on the village green, on a platform of three badly worn steps (SI 218231). The steps support a square plan base stone, the octagonal top tapers to an octagonal shaft.

No prehistoric records are held at the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record within the immediate vicinity of the Hampton Lane. However to the northwest at Somers Lane, archaeological investigations in advance of sand extraction revealed significant remains existing on the site dating from the early Bronze Age period (MSI 1274). A number of pits were recorded, containing pottery, and grouped to form a rough circular shape.

Further postholes were located during the excavation but these did not contain dating evidence, however they formed both an inner and outer circle of concentric post holes similar to double-ringed houses associated with the late Bronze Age through to the Iron Age (MSI 1276).

During the same excavation a post medieval double-ditched enclosure was recorded and possibly formed an early garden boundary for Laburnam Cottage. Within the enclosure a series of post holes and pits were thought to be associated with an orchard and probable outbuildings (MSI 1275).

Further artefacts relating to the prehistoric period have been recorded as finds spots on the HER in the area east of The Somers, Meriden including the recovery of flints and scrapers, although no known artefacts of this period have been recovered within the immediate vicinity of the site.

The HER shows that the site lies within an agricultural landscape within which is a preserved system of ridge and furrow, two entries are recorded within a 1km radius of the site (MSI 8858, 8859). South west of Strawberry Bank Farm is a visible system of ridge and furrow running in varying directions and a further system running NE-SW can be observed to the west of the farm.

5. Results

5.1 Structural analysis

The area of ground reduction recorded is shown in Fig 2 and in Plates 1-7. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Phase 1 Natural deposits

The natural deposits were observed in Trenches 2 and 3 and were seen at about 0.50m below the ground surface. These deposits consisted of dark orange red sands and pebbles.

5.1.2 Phase 2 Modern deposits

Trench 1 (Plates 1-3)

Ground reduction covered an area 37m long, 37m wide to a maximum depth of 0.35m, for the footprint of proposed tennis courts. The dark brown sandy silt topsoil 100 was recorded as 0.25m deep. The topsoil was heavily disturbed by root action and contained occasional small to large rounded stones and moderate inclusions of pottery, glass and animal bone.

Below the topsoil the observed subsoil 101 was of firm mid orange brown silty sand, with frequent small to large rounded stones and small to medium lumps of fuel ash. The subsoil also contained modern inclusions of ceramic building material, pottery and animal bone.

Trench 2 (Plates 4-5)

The stratigraphy excavated in this drainage trench was of topsoil 200 which overlay a subsoil 201. The natural sands and pebbles 202 were observed below 201 at 0.58m below the ground surface. In the west of the trench was a modern make-up layer 203 which overlay 201.

Trench 3 (Plates 6-7)

Trench 3 was excavated for the footings of the new pavilion. A modern make-up layer 300 was above the remnants of the topsoil 301. Below this was the subsoil 302 and the natural 303 was observed at 0.51m below the ground surface.

6. Artefact analysis, by Derek Hurst

6.1.1 The finds assemblage

There were a range of finds in a variety of materials from a single subsoil layer (101; see Table 1).

Finds period	Material	Count	Weight (g)
Medieval/post-medieval	Flat roof tile	4	98
post-medieval	brick	1	36
post-medieval	Clay pipe	1	1
post-medieval	pottery	12	148
modern	pottery	8	22
undated	coal	1	2
undated	Stone (roof slate)	1	10

Table 1 Quantification of the site assemblage

Pottery

The pottery assemblage consisted of 20 sherds of pottery weighing 170g (Tables 1-2). Level of preservation was generally good and abrasion was not in evidence.

6.1.2 The pottery

All sherds have been grouped and quantified according to fabric type (Table 2). The sherds were dated by fabric-type to their general period or production span, unless form-types were identifiable to a more precise date range.

period	Fabric common name	Fabric number	Count	Weight (g)
Post-medieval	Post-medieval red ware	78	6	100
	Post-medieval buff ware	91	2	18
	porcelain	83	1	8
	Agate ware	89	1	4
	creamware	84	2	18
Modern	Modern china	85	8	22

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric-type by broad period

The mid-later 18th century was represented by a range of types, including sherds of two relatively uncommon fabrics, both of which may signify higher status consumption: Agate

ware and porcelain. However, the small size of the assemblage prevents any confident assertion of this interpretation.

6.1.3 **Other finds**

In addition a small quantity of ceramic and stone (slate) flat roofing tile, a brick, and clay pipe were recovered.

6.1.4 **Overview of artefactual evidence**

context	material	Object type/fabric ref	count	wt (g)	finds date range	context *terminus post quem* date
101	pot	78	6	100	17th-18th century	19th century
		91	2	18	18th century	
		83	1	8	?late 18th century	
		89	1	4	mid 18th century	
		84	2	18	Late 18th century	
		85	8	22	19th century	
	brick		1	36	Medieval/post-medieval	
	Ceramic flat roof tile		4	98	Medieval/post-medieval	
	Clay pipe		1	1	Post-medieval	
	Stone roof tile (slate)		1	10	undated	
	coal		1	2	undated	

Table 3 Summary of context dating based on finds

7. Significance

This site assemblage is of minimal overall significance, especially given its small size.

8. Synthesis

8.1 Prehistoric, Roman and Medieval

No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts of this broad date range were identified during the watching brief.

8.2 Modern

The topsoils were well sorted and mixed with stones suggesting agricultural usage, and there are substantial quantities of post-medieval and modern artefactual material within the subsoil. The inclusion of quantities of coal within topsoil 301 suggests that this area may have been used as a dumping ground in the modern period. Map evidence shows that the site has been in

agricultural use since at least the late 19th Century and it is likely that artefacts in the soils are present due to manuring.

9. Publication summary

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10. Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Cathy Patrick and James Gidman (CgMs Consulting), Anna Stocks (Planning Archaeologist for Warwickshire County Council) and the client David Wilson Homes (Mercia).

11. Personnel

The report preparation was led by Jo Wainwright with assistance from Elizabeth A. Curran. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers. Fieldwork was undertaken by Jo Wainwright, Adam Lee and Tegan Cole. The illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt.

12. Bibliography

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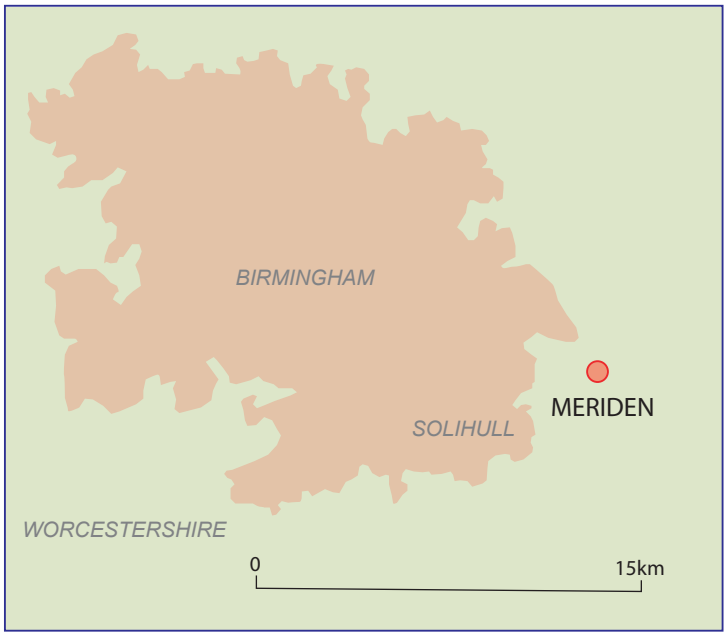
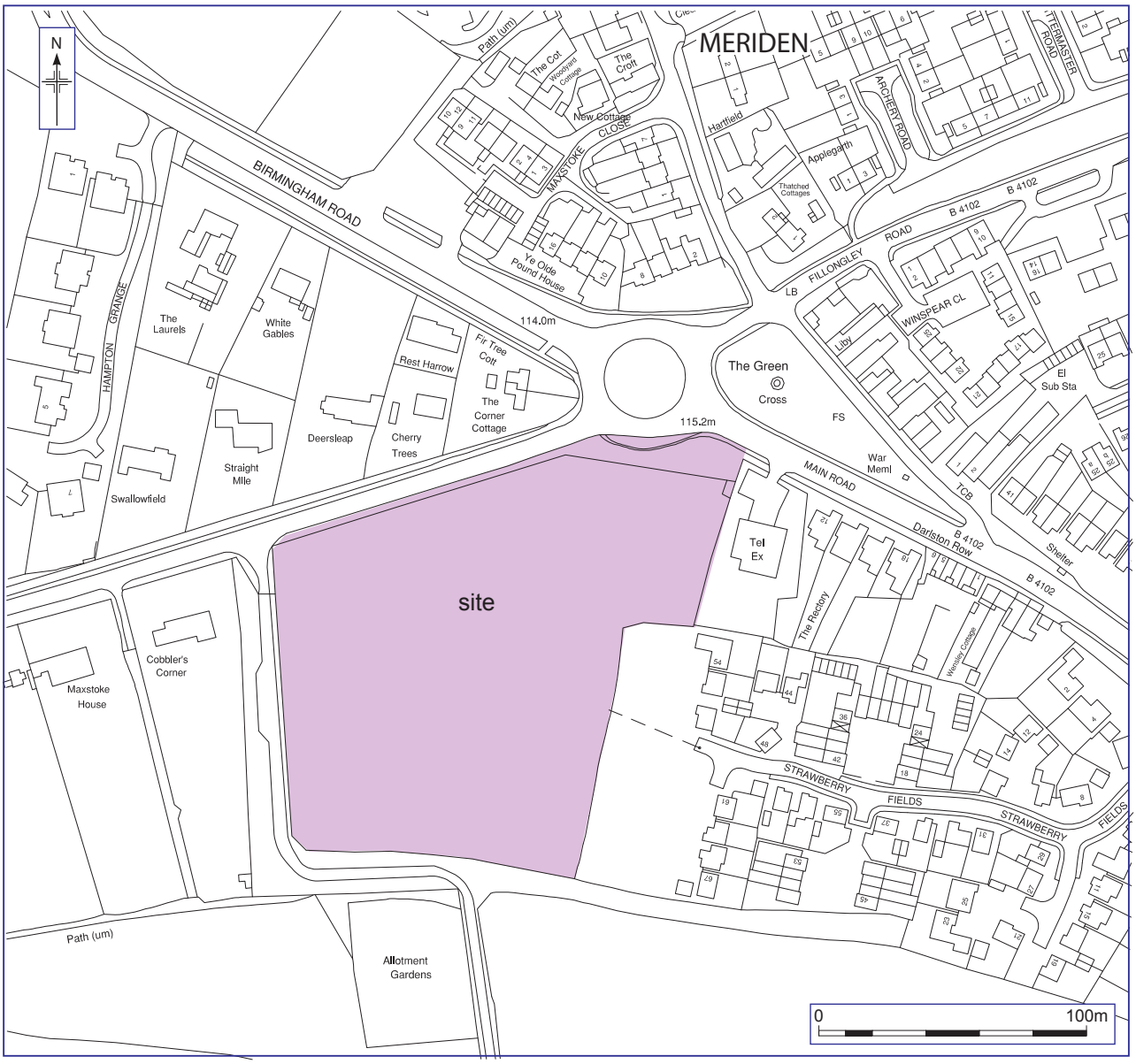
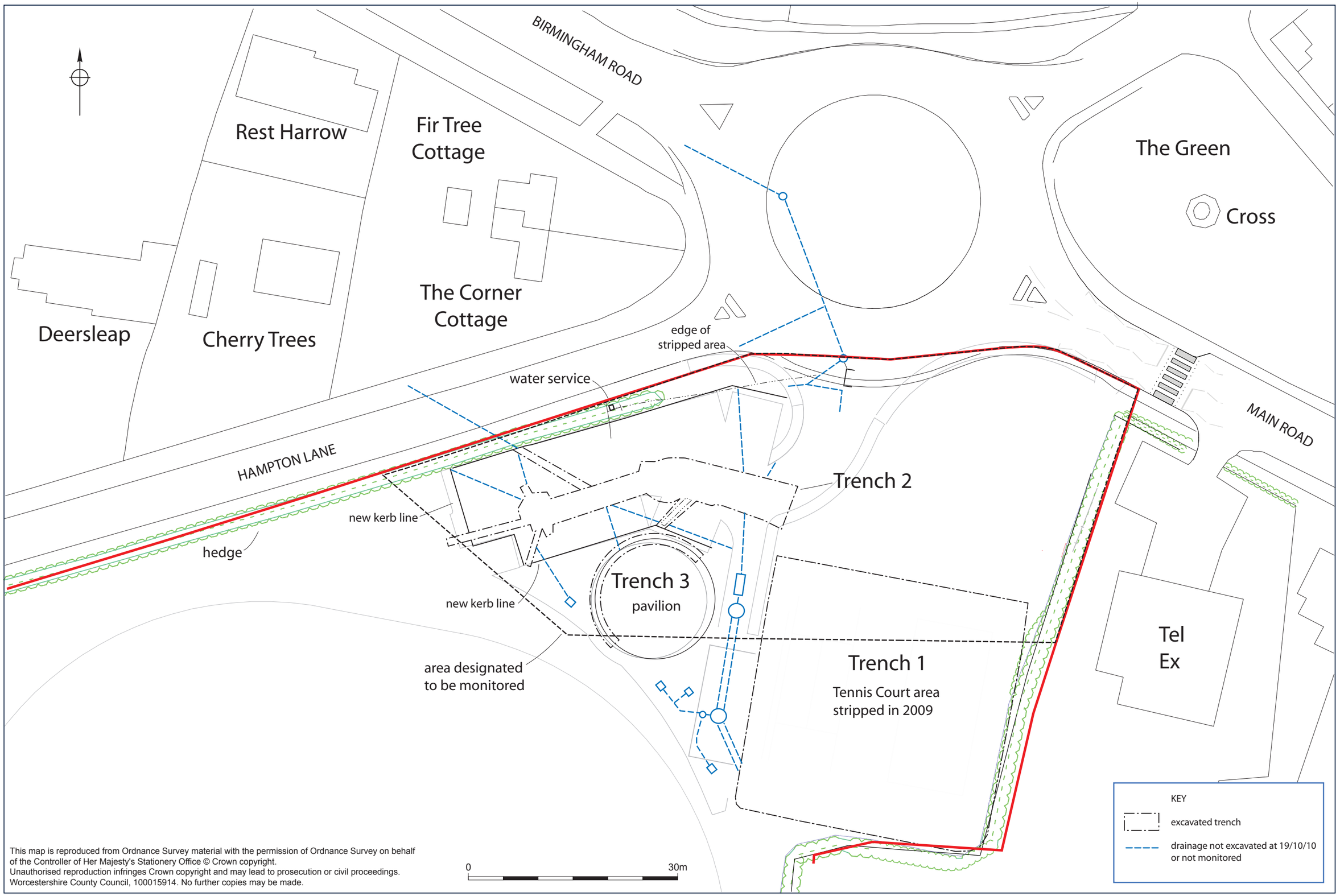
Figures





Location of the site

Figure 1



Location of trenches and areas monitored/not monitored (based upon Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council Dwg 0924/101)

Figure 2

Plates

Plate 1: The site from the north east

Plate 2: General shot Trench 1, from the south west

Plate 3: Trench 1 following completion of the strip, from the south east

Plate 4: Trench 2, from the south east

Plate 5: Section of Trench 2, from the south west

Plate 6: Trench 3 during excavation, from the south

Plate 7: Section of Trench 3, from the north east

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 37m Width: 37m Depth: 035m

Main deposit description :

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Firm, mid dark brown sandy silt. Contains occasional small to large rounded stones. Occasional modern pottery, glass and animal bone. High level of root disturbance.	0-0.25m
101	Subsoil	Firm mid orange brown silty sand. Frequent small to large rounded stones and frequent small to medium lumps of fuel ash. Occasional modern pottery, glass and animal bone.	0.25-035m

Trench 2

Main deposit description :

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Topsoil	Friable mid grey black sandy silty clay. Frequent rounded pebbles and charcoal. This context had been removed in west of trench and replaced with 203.	0-0.38m
201	Subsoil	Loose light yellow sand with abundant rounded pebbles. Same as 302.	0.38-0.58m
202	Natural	Loose mid to dark orange red sand with occasional pebbles. In west of trench the pebbles became frequent. Same as 303	0.58m+
203	Made ground	Area of made ground consisting of crushed brick and stone observed in west of trench. Above 201	0-0.40m

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: See plan for length and width Depth: max 0.90m

Main deposit description :

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Modern make-up	Mixture of redeposited topsoil and modern brick	0-0.20m
301	Base of topsoil	Friable mid grey black sandy loam with very frequent coal and pebbles. Remains of topsoil after partially machining out and replacing with 300	*c* 0.20-0.30m
302	Subsoil	Loose light yellow slightly silty sand with frequent pebbles. Same as 201.	0.30-0.51m
303	Natural	As 202.	0.51m+

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

3	Trench Record Sheets AS41
5	Fieldwork progress records AS2
1	Photographic records AS3
48	Digital photographs
1	Black and white photographic films
1	Drawing Catalogue AS4
2	Scale drawings
1	Box of finds

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Warwickshire Museum Services
The Butts
Warwick CV34 4SS
Tel. (01926) 412500