MID CHESHIRE 3 PIPELINE,

Cheshire East



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SUMMARY

United Utilities have proposed the construction of a 5km long pipeline to the north of Elworth and Sandbach in Cheshire (Fig 1; NGR SJ 74004 61728 to SJ 76137 60653). Following the results of recommendations made by the Cheshire County Council Historic Environment Officer, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was commissioned to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment, walkover survey, and topographic survey of the proposed development area (OA North 2009). Due to the significant number of archaeological sites identified along the development route, a programme of archaeological works was recommended, comprising an archaeological watching brief to be maintained during all groundworks proposed for areas of previously undisturbed ground. This was duly undertaken during January and February 2010.

Very few of the sites previously identified were directly impacted upon during the groundworks. The majority of the archaeology affected and observed during the watching brief related to the continuous use of the landscape in an arable capacity; several field boundaries were observed, as were a number of areas of ridge and furrow. The majority of the archaeological features observed proved to be post-medieval field drains.

The pipe laying activities are complete and, therefore, no further work is recommended.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) would like to thank United Utilities for commissioning the project.

Tim Christian, Liz Murray and Des O'Leary undertook the watching brief. Kelly Clapperton compiled the report. Mark Tidmarsh produced the drawings. Sean McPhillips commented on the finds. Alison Plummer, who managed the project, also edited the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 United Utilities have proposed the construction of a 5km long pipeline to the north of Elworth and Sandbach in Cheshire (Fig 1; NGR SJ 74004 61728 to SJ 76137 60653). Following recommendations made by the Cheshire County Council Historic Environment Officer, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was commissioned to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment, walkover survey, and topographic survey of the proposed development area (OA North 2009). The desk-based research identified 39 sites along the length of the proposed pipeline, while the walkover survey located a further 26 sites, dating from the prehistoric period to the modern era. Due to the significant number of archaeological sites present along the development route, a programme of archaeological works was recommended, comprising an archaeological watching brief to be maintained during all groundworks in areas of previously undisturbed ground.
- 1.1.2 The following report presents a statement of the results of this archaeological watching brief, and should be read in conjunction with the previous report.

1.2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

1.2.1 The proposed pipeline route is situated to the north of Sandbach (NGR SJ 74004 61728 to SJ 76137 60653), on the eastern edge of the Cheshire Plain (Fig 1). The west end of the route heads north-west from Elworth, then turns to the north-east, where it is located at approximately 60m OD, and then runs eastwards through fields to the north of Sandbach. The land rises gradually through this area to 75m OD just west of the M6 motorway. At this point the route turns south-westwards into Sandbach, drops slightly in height where it follows the route of a tributary of the River Wheelock and runs along the A534, where it terminates at its junction with the A533. The solid geology consists of Triassic mudstones, which is overlain by glacial deposits of sand and gravel (British Geological Survey 2007).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT BRIEF

2.1.1 The archaeological watching brief was carried out in accordance with the relevant IFA and English Heritage guidelines (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999, English Heritage 1991, *Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edn, London, and English Heritage 2006, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE)).

2.2 FIELDWORK

- 2.2.1 The archaeological watching brief monitored the topsoil stripping of 11 fields distributed along the length of the pipeline; these comprised Fields 2, 6, 7, 9, 11, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, and 22 (Fig 2). The field numbers are taken from the OA North 2009 report. The overburden was removed by a 360° mechanical excavator, fitted with a 2m wide ditching bucket, down to natural geology, under the constant supervision of an archaeologist. Field 15, however, was stripped using a mini-digger due to the presence of overhead cables.
- 2.2.2 The watching brief comprised the systematic examination of any subsoil horizons exposed during the course of the groundworks, for potential archaeological remains. The location, extent, and character of any surviving archaeological features and deposits identified during the course of the groundworks were recorded accurately.
- 2.2.3 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded on OA North's *proforma* sheets, using a system based on that of the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology, while a digital photographic record was maintained throughout. Where appropriate, scaled plans and sections were produced to locate the presence of archaeological features and deposits as accurately as possible on the Ordnance Survey Datum.

2.3 FINDS

2.3.1 All finds were exposed, lifted, cleaned and bagged in accordance with current best practice. The finds were retained for assessment.

2.4 ARCHIVE

2.4.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the project design (*Appendix 1*), and in accordance with current IFA and English Heritage guidelines. The paper and digital archive will be deposited in the relevant Cheshire East repository, on completion of the project and copies of this report will be deposited with the Historic Environmental Record.

3. FIELDWORK RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The following section provides an outline of the watching brief results on a field by field basis, noting the presence and the nature of any archaeological features and deposits identified. Site numbers refer to the site gazetteer presented in the OA North 2009 report. The numbered fields are shown on Figure 2.

3.2 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

- 3.2.1 *Field 2*: projecting west from Bradwell Road, Field 2 is a long narrow field, the amalgamation of four smaller fields as shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1875. Immediately adjacent to Bradwell Road, a construction compound, measuring 40m by 100m, was stripped of topsoil. This revealed a yellow sandy-clay natural, within which extensive plough scarring was visible (Plate 1). Towards the eastern side of the compound a refuse or midden tip was observed, measuring 4m by 1m. The refuse contained fragments of nineteenth century pottery and glass. Generally, across the area of the compound the topsoil contained significant quantities of pottery and clay pipe, all post-medieval in date (*Sections 4.2 to 4.4*, below).
- 3.2.2 To the west of the compound, topsoil stripping of the easement revealed two north/south aligned former field boundaries, **202** and **205**. The easternmost, **202**, being a ditch (Plate 2), and the western (**205**), a relict hedgerow. Located between these two features was a small charcoal-rich rubbish dump.
- 3.2.3 *Fields 6 and 7:* a north/south aligned ditch was thought to be observed within field 7. However, upon further investigation it was revealed to be a modern field drain, approximately 3m in width and 0.80m in depth. No other features or deposits of archaeological significance were identified across the easement.
- 3.2.4 *Field 9:* a linear feature, Site **44**, was investigated but proved to be a modern field drain.
- 3.2.5 *Field 11:* a number of features were observed towards the southern end of the easement. Three linear features running east/west were observed. The southernmost equated to gazetteer Site 46, an area of disturbed ground. All three were almost certainly drainage ditches. The natural geology in this area ranged from a dark brown coarse sand, to a yellow coarse sand.
- 3.2.6 *Field 15:* in this field the topsoil comprised a dark greyish-brown silty-clay, overlying a yellowish-brown silty-clay natural geology. An increase in the amount of ceramic, glass and iron objects was noted towards the western half of the field, and is most likely related to increased activity in the immediate area associated with Bradwell Road.
- 3.2.7 *Field 16:* the topsoil comprised a dark greyish-brown sandy-clay topsoil, and the natural geology varied from a light yellowish-grey sand to an orangey-

- brown sandy-clay. Towards the western end of the field a small L-shaped linear feature was observed, running north-east/south-west for 3m, before returning to the north-west for 4m. This was filled by a mid grey clayey-sand, and although no obvious function could be ascertained, it almost certainly relates to field drainage.
- 3.2.8 Adjacent to the current boundary between Fields 15 and 16, a large north-west/south-east aligned ditch was present. It was most likely the remnants of a field boundary as depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1875, field 16 being an amalgamation of several smaller fields.
- 3.2.9 *Fields 17 and 20:* several pits and deposits of modern debris were located within these fields. These features equated to Sites **50** (a mound), **58** (quarry pit) and **61** (earth bank), while the earthwork identified as Site **57** appeared to be natural in origin. The rubbish pits and dumps varied in size from 1.5m by 2m, to 6m by 7m, and were filled with a dark blackish material (high ash content), stone fragments, brick rubble, lime, bone, glass bottles, iron objects, pottery and fragments of clay pipe. All the material dated to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (see *Section 4*, below). A single area of crushed brick or burnt clay, measuring 1.8m by 2m, was identified midway along the easement.
- 3.2.10 Towards the western end of the easement, the former field boundary (Site **56**) between Fields 17 and 20, remained as a relict hedgerow and treeboles. This is depicted on First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1875. The ridge and furrow observed during the walkover survey (Sites **26** and **55**) did not survive the topsoil strip.
- 3.2.11 *Field 21:* plough scarring was observed along the length of the easement, starkly standing out against the brownish-yellow silty-sand natural geology. A large pit was identified towards the east, and this was partially obscured by the southern limit of excavation. It measured 7m by 4m, and was backfilled with a brownish-grey silty-sand including fragments of post-medieval pottery.
- 3.2.12 Adjacent to Site **65** (earth bank), a bank and a 5m wide ditch were identified. These were aligned alongside the current field boundary. It was most likely that the bank was the result of the excavation of the ditch.
- 3.2.13 *Field* 22: a small area of crushed brick and charcoal, measuring 1m by 0.70m, was observed abutting the western limit of excavation, whilst a modern field drain aligned north/south was identified running along the length of the easement. The remainder of the strip to the west contained extensive plough scarring, but no further features or deposits or archaeological interest were observed.



Plate 1: General view of the compound area showing plough scars cut into natural deposits in Field 2



Plate 2: Boundary Ditch 202 in Field 2



Plate 3: Relict hedgerow in Field 2



Plate 4: Section excavated through a field drain within Field 7



Plate 5: Numerous rubbish dumps or middens within Field 20

4. FINDS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 In total, 86 artefacts were recovered from mainly unstratified deposits during the course of the watching brief. Of these, ceramic vessels dominate the assemblage with 42 pottery fragments present. Lesser amounts of other materials include; glass bottles and vessels (18 fragments) many of which are complete (11), clay tobacco pipe (12 fragments), ceramic building material (11 floor and roof tiles), iron (2 objects) and a single piece of lead. For the most part, the material was in reasonable condition, with little evidence of damage caused by the effects of agricultural activities, such as ploughing. Generally, the assemblage falls within a broad date range spanning the sixteenth and twentieth centuries. A summary finds catalogue is presented in *Appendix 1*.

4.2 CERAMICS

- 4.2.1 This category comprised 42 fragments representing nearly 50% of the entire assemblage. The bulk of the material was collected from topsoil deposits within the fields.
- 4.2.2 *Sixteenth century*: the earliest material present included a thin-walled hard red earthenware (1003) bearing a cart wheel applied decoration, which is of a style commonly used to decorate Cistercian ware cups. This style dates to the late sixteenth century. Other material from this period included a piece of highly distinctive Midland Purple ware (1013), recovered from Field 15, from which 34 sherds of other pottery, dating to no later than the mid-nineteenth century, were retrieved.
- 4.2.3 Seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: this period was represented by a small numbers of blackwares (3) in purple, red, and buff fabrics. Mottled wares (2) were also present, as were fine black-glazed buff ware plates (4); feather trailed slipware (1), and a variety of dark and light brown glazed coarse red earthenwares (15), including forms such as pancheons, storage jars and jugs. These were typically manufactured over a long period between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries and, as such, are notoriously difficult to date accurately. In addition, there were two pieces of unfinished Nottingham-type stonewares with roulette decoration, which may have derived from a local source.
- 4.2.4 Late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: this period was represented by several industrial slipware bowls and mugs, including annular and chequered red wares (5), which generally date between the mid- to late-nineteenth century. In addition, several early transfer and sponge-printed plates and dishes were present, including Broseley and Willow patterns, and numerous glazed white earthenwares (bone china). Generally, these date to between the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A complete cream stoneware jar (Plate 6) labelled VIROL, a bone marrow tonic manufactured by the Bovril

company, was recovered (1000). This particular jar probably dated between 1890 and 1900.



Plate 6: Virol tonic manufactured by Bovril Limited London. This particular jar dates between 1890-1900

4.2.5 Finally, an incomplete (headless) Bisque-type unglazed porcelain figurine of a taffeta-dressed girl with traces of gold and red paint is likely to have been manufactured in the Victorian period, although it is unclear whether it was produced in England or Germany.

4.3 GLASS

4.3.1 The assemblage is dominated by several complete bottles and jars (11) of varying type (Plate 7), deriving from a rubbish dump in Field 17. These largely date to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and included three locally produced mineral water codd bottles, two pharmaceutical bottles, four miniatures, a small jar, stopper and a bottleneck. Of these, four were embossed with manufacturers marks including DR KILMERS SWAMP ROOT medicine, an American firm based in London during the late nineteenth century. Of the local manufacturers these included; Nixon & Wood based at the Excelsior Works, and T Kingston & Co, both firms from Sandbach. Kingston is listed in Kelly's 1896 Directory of Cheshire as residing at Wheelock Road, but by 1902 is based at Hope Street, Sandbach. The company is not listed in the 1914 directory suggesting it had gone out of business by this time. The remaining bottle was manufactured by Redfearn bottle makers in

- Barnsley providing vessels for the Crewe Mineral Water Company, who were producing aerated water in Ludford Street, Crewe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Kelly's 1896, 1902 and 1914).
- 4.3.2 Of the remaining fragments, these included two fragments of an eighteenth century pitted brown wine bottle base, and several nineteenth century bottle fragments, including two torpedo Hamilton-type mineral water, and a blue clear lantern window.



Plate 7: Complete bottles and jars dating between late 19th-early 20th century recovered from a rubbish dump in Field 17

4.4 CLAY TOBACCO PIPE

- 4.4.1 Of the 12 fragments of clay pipe three were bowls, eight stems, and a pipe clay object, possibly a candle snuffer. These broadly date from the early eighteenth to late nineteenth century.
- 4.4.2 The pipe bowls included a coarse oblique-angled variety, with carelessly applied milled decoration below the rim, and a flared heel, which is of a type popular during the early eighteenth century. A similar type recovered in Chester (Davey *et al* 1982), dates to between 1720-1740. However, it is possible the pipe was manufactured slightly earlier, as poorly applied decoration of this style is also common on some seventeenth century pipes (*ibid*). The remaining bowls included an undecorated spurred bowl, and a smooth clay bowl with a simple leaf design along the seam, each of these being common to the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

- 4.4.3 The stems included five coarse, medium-bored types, which probably date no later than the eighteenth century, and a smooth narrow-bored type of nineteenth century date (Plate 8).
- 4.4.4 Two fragments of interest were recovered from Field 17. These include a tapered, thick, smooth clay, and elaborately decorated stem, with a small rounded spur in the form of a tree branch (Plate 9). It is probable that this was manufactured at the Broseley kilns in Shropshire during the late nineteenth century. The other comprised a trapezoid-shaped hollow clay object, which is tentatively interpreted as a candle snuffer (Plate 10).



Plate 8: Clay tobacco pipes dating to the late 17th-early 18th century pipe (left) and 18th century (right)



Plate 9: Pipe clay object and clay tobacco pipe recovered from Field 17



Plate 10: Side view of candle snuffer from Field 17

4.5 CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL

4.5.1 Eleven fragments of thin-walled roof and floor tiles were recorded. A number of the floor tiles were burnt. It is possible that the burnt floor tiles were associated with a hearth, which possibly dated no earlier than the nineteenth century. The remaining tiles were generally hard-fired types of twentieth century date.

4.6 METALWORK

4.6.1 The metalwork comprised two iron objects, these being a blade from a nineteenth century small ploughshare, and a square-shafted nail. The remaining item was a single strip of lead.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 CONCLUSION

- 5.1.1 Generally, the archaeological features observed during the course of the watching brief proved to be agrarian in nature and post-medieval in date. A number of the fields exhibited plough scarring within the subsoil, which is characteristic of the historical agricultural use of the land. Relict field boundaries relating to those depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1875, provided evidence for a change in the approach to land management, with the fields along the route generally becoming fewer but larger.
- 5.1.2 The remainder of the activity observed across the easement relates to the brick works identified during the Desk-Based Assessment (OA North 2009; Sites 15 and 19). Fields 2 and 15 contained evidence of disturbance and deposition of rubbish associated with the brick works (Site 19) located in Field 4 to the north and outside of the easement.
- 5.1.3 Further to the east, Fields 17 and 20 exhibited a high frequency of rubbish pits and midden dumps. The main area of the Brick Fields (Site **15**) is located to the south of the easement (Field 21).
- 5.1.4 The OA North 2009 report and the results of the watching brief provide a detailed account of the archaeology along the route of the pipeline easement. No further work is recommended.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Kelly's 1914 Directory of Cheshire

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7. ILLUSTRATIONS

7.1 LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Map Location

Figure 2: Plan showing fields subject to the watching brief

7.2 LIST OF PLATES

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Plate 7: Complete bottles and jars dating between late 19th-early 20th century recovered from a rubbish dump in Field 17

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Plate 9: Pipe clay object and clay tobacco pipe recovered from Field 17

Plate 10: Side view of the candle snuffer from Field 17

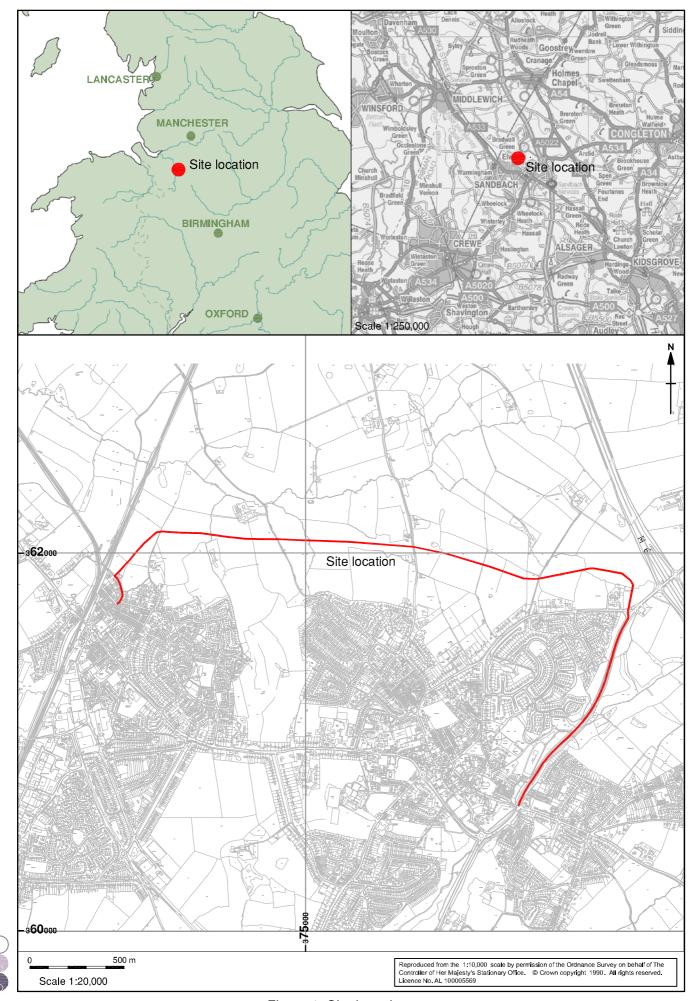


Figure 1: Site Location

Figure 2: Plan showing fields subject to the watching brief

APPENDIX 1: FINDS CATALOGUE

Object no	Quantity	Material	Description	Period
1000	1	Ceramic	Complete cream stoneware bottle, labelled VIROL, being a preparation of bone marrow made by Bovril Limited	1890-1900
1001	1	Glass	Pitted brown bottle body fragment	18th century
1002	2	Iron	Nail and ploughshare blade	19th century
1003	3	Ceramic	Cistercian ware (16th century), incomplete Bisque porcelain figurine (c 1800s), wig curler (19th century)	16th-19th century
1004	8	Clay Tobacco Pipe	Bowls (2); coarse oblique bowl with flared heel and rouletted decoration below rim (early 18th century), spurred bowl (late 18th century), stems; coarse (5) medium-bored (18th century), smoothed narrow-bored (19th century)	early 18th-19th century
1005	2	Clay Tobacco Pipe	Bowl: smooth, small type with simple leaf design on seam, Stem: tapered narrow-bored type	19th century
1006	30	Ceramic	Dark-glazed red earthenware (coarse/lime rich), dark-glazed red earthenware (coarse light red, 18th century x 3), Dark brown glazed red earthenware (hard red x 6), blackware flange rim, jug (purple fabric x3), black glazed buffware plate (4), mottled ware (9), glazed white earthenware (2), industrial slipware (annular and chequered x 2)	17th-19th century
1007	6	Glass	Bottles and jars (incomplete); torpedo (Hamilton) bottle fragments (2), blue clear body, frosted neck	19th century
1008	1	Glass	Clear vessel base with three crosses in a circle trademark	19th century?
1009	6	Ceramic Building Material	Burnt floor tile, thin-walled red fabric, possible fire surround	19th century?
1010	2	Clay Tobacco Pipe	Flat tapered stem with combed decoration; trapezoid shaped object possibly used as a candle snuffer?	19th/20th century
1011	4	Ceramic Building Material	floor tile-modern	20th century

1012	4	Ceramic	Transfer printed ware (2) bowl and plate,	18th/19th
			coarse unglazed stoneware, industrial slipware teapot handle in black and yellow glaze	century
1013	34	Ceramic	Nottingham-type stoneware, mottled ware, feather trailed slipware, porcelain, midland purple-type ware, dark glazed red earthenware (coarse x 3), light brown glazed red earthenware (2), industrial slipware (annular bowl, chequered dish), transfer print (3), glazed white earthenware (17)	17th-19th century
1014	1	Glass	Wine bottle base	18th century
1015	1	Ceramic Building Material	Thick roof tile	20th century
1016	1	Lead	Strip	Unknown
1017	11	Glass	Complete (clear glass) bottles and jars; miniatures (4), pharmaceutical (cough medicine and DR KILMERS SWAMP ROOT), codd bottles (T KINGSTON & CO SANDBACH, CREWE MINERAL WATER CO.LTD THE LIDFORD WATERS CREWE, NIXON & WOOD SANDBACH	19th century