

# West Coast Mainline Coton Lane Tamworth Staffordshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



**Oxford Archaeology**

November 2005

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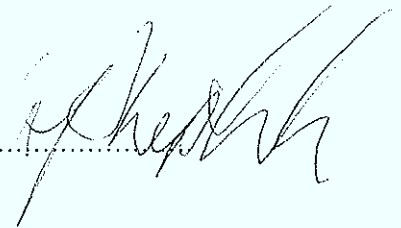
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Signed.....



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# West Coast Mainline, Coton Lane, Tamworth, Staffordshire

## *ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*

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## SUMMARY

*In October 2005, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief on the West Coast Mainline at Coton Lane, north of Tamworth, Staffordshire (NGR: SK 1885 0621). The work was commissioned by Severn Trent Water Ltd in advance of a programme of asset diversion. The watching brief revealed deposits of post-medieval worked soils directly overlying the natural Terrace deposits. No intrusive features or deposits indicative of earlier archaeology were encountered.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 In October 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief on the West Coast Mainline at Coton Lane, north of Tamworth, Staffordshire (NGR: SK 1885 0621). The work was commissioned by Severn Trent Water Ltd in respect of a planning application for a programme of asset diversions prior to the upgrading of the West Coast Mainline.

1.1.2 A project brief was set by the County Archaeological Officer for Staffordshire County Council (SCC 2005) and OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2005).

### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on the edge of the north-west suburbs of Tamworth and is bounded to the east by the West Coast Mainline railway and to the south, north and west by agricultural land (Fig. 1). The site was level, arable farmland and occupied an area of 0.15 hectares, at a level of approximately 58 m above OD. The underlying geology is First Terrace Gravels (British Geological Survey Sheet no.154).

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA,2005) and is reproduced below.

1.3.2 The proposed site lies within an area thought likely to contain archaeologically sensitive material. The Historic Environment Record (HER) has indicated three records in particular close to the site. All three are recorded as cropmarks and have been transcribed from aerial photographs. Two of the entries are registered as settlement enclosures of unknown date (Primary Record Numbers 01546 and 01551). The third is registered as a series of cropmarks near Comberford Hall (PRN 01547). There also exists cropmarks of a possible ring ditch to the west of Coton Lane (PRN 01550), although this lies outside the proposal area.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits that will be disturbed or removed by the development.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as a series of site visits during intrusive groundworks likely to occasion soil disturbance. These works included the top and subsoil stripping of the area, installation of new land drains and excavation of a shaft for "pipe jacking" operations.
- 2.2.2 The area was machine stripped using a mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8 m wide toothless grading bucket.
- 2.2.3 A plan showing the area of excavation was drawn at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2, plan 1) and sample sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20 (Fig. 2, section 1). The excavated area and the sample sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The underlying natural, an orange-brown sandy clay containing many small sub-angular gravels, (3), was encountered at a depth of 0.45 m below the current ground level. This layer was very clean with some plough marks visible in its surface, but with no evidence of ridge and furrow or other intrusive features. This deposit was overlaid by a 0.15 m deep layer of olive-brown clay loam (2). This contained charcoal flecking and some sub-angular gravels and represents an earlier, buried, ploughsoil. Sealing this layer was a 0.3 m thick layer of dark brown clay loam (1), which contained charcoal flecking, many medium to large pebbles and fragments of brick. These fragments were intrusive from the farm tracks laid over culverts nearby and were not indicative of any significant archaeology. This layer represents the present day ploughsoil.

3.1.2 Since the stripping operation had exposed undisturbed natural throughout the area of the site it was deemed unnecessary to monitor the installation of the land drains and the excavation of the shaft.

### 3.2 **Finds**

3.2.1 Other than the brick fragments previously noted, no other dating evidence or finds were recovered during the course of the watching brief.

### 3.3 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

## 4 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

4.1.1 The soil structures observed were typical of post-medieval agricultural practises. No intrusive features or earlier deposits were encountered. There is the possibility that deep ploughing had truncated any earlier features, however the lack of early residual finds recovered from within the layers of worked soil would mitigate against this.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.3 m	Present day ploughsoil	Brick	C20th
2	Layer	0.15 m	Buried ploughsoil	-	C18th/C19th
3	Layer	> 0.1 m	Natural Terrace deposits	-	-

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

SCC 2005 *West Coast Mainline Asset Diversion: Coton Lane : Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

IFA 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA 1992 *Field Manual (1st edition ed. Wilkinson D)*

OA 2005 *West Coast Mainline, Coton Lane, Staffordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** West Coast Mainline, Coton Lane, Tamworth, Staffordshire

**Site code:** TACLA 05

**Grid reference:** SK 1885 0621

**Type of watching brief:** Machine stripping of top and subsoil

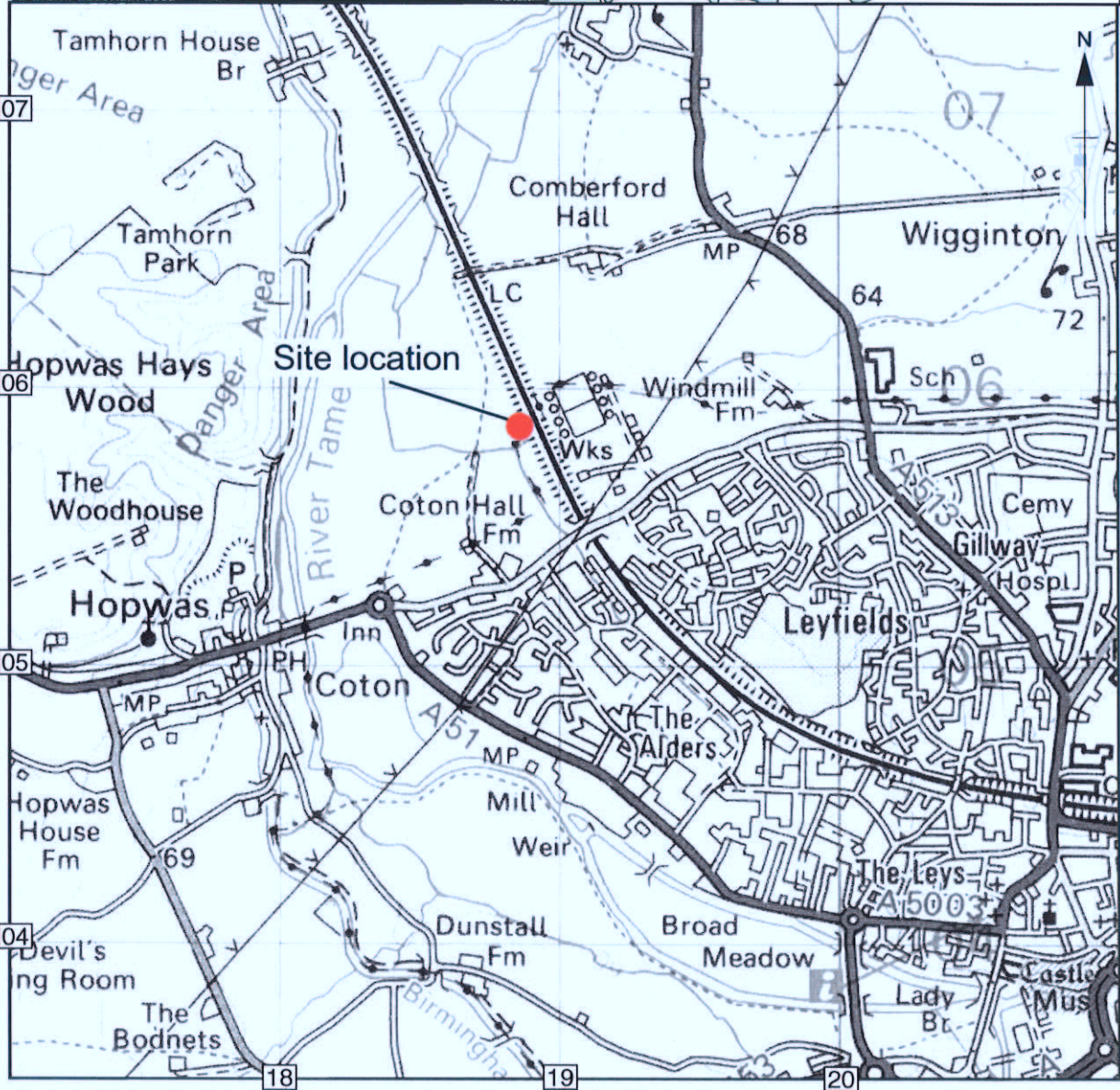
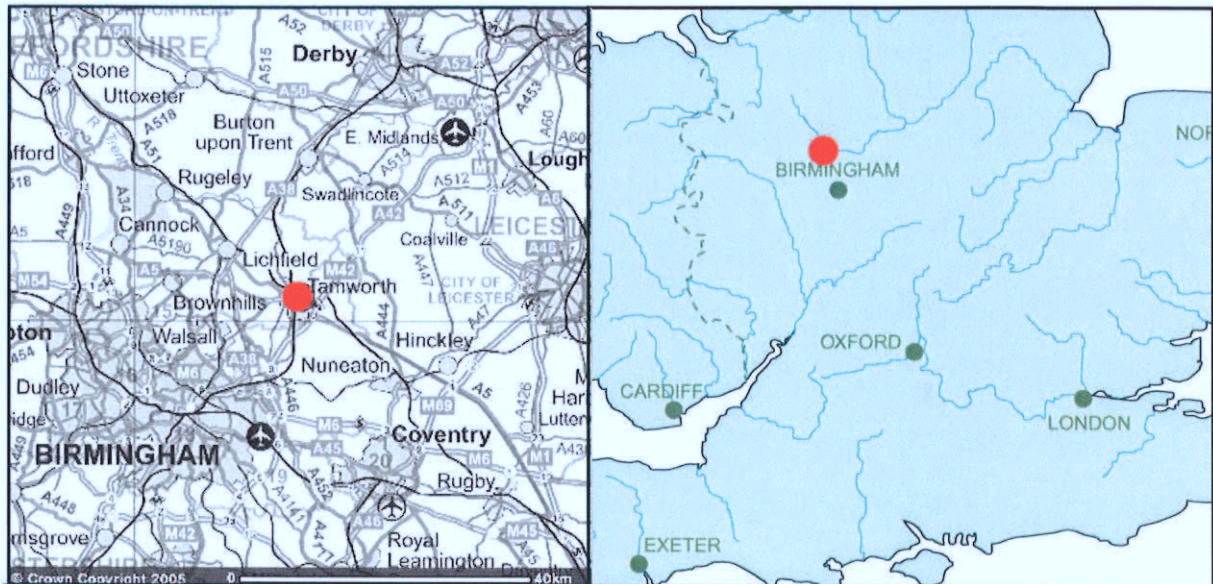
**Date and duration of project:** 12/10/05 to 17/10/05, 4 days

**Area of site:** 0.15 hectare

**Summary of results:** Post-medieval agricultural soils overlying natural terrace deposits

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke in due course.





Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location



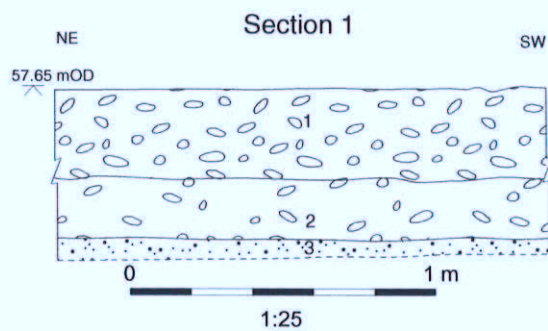
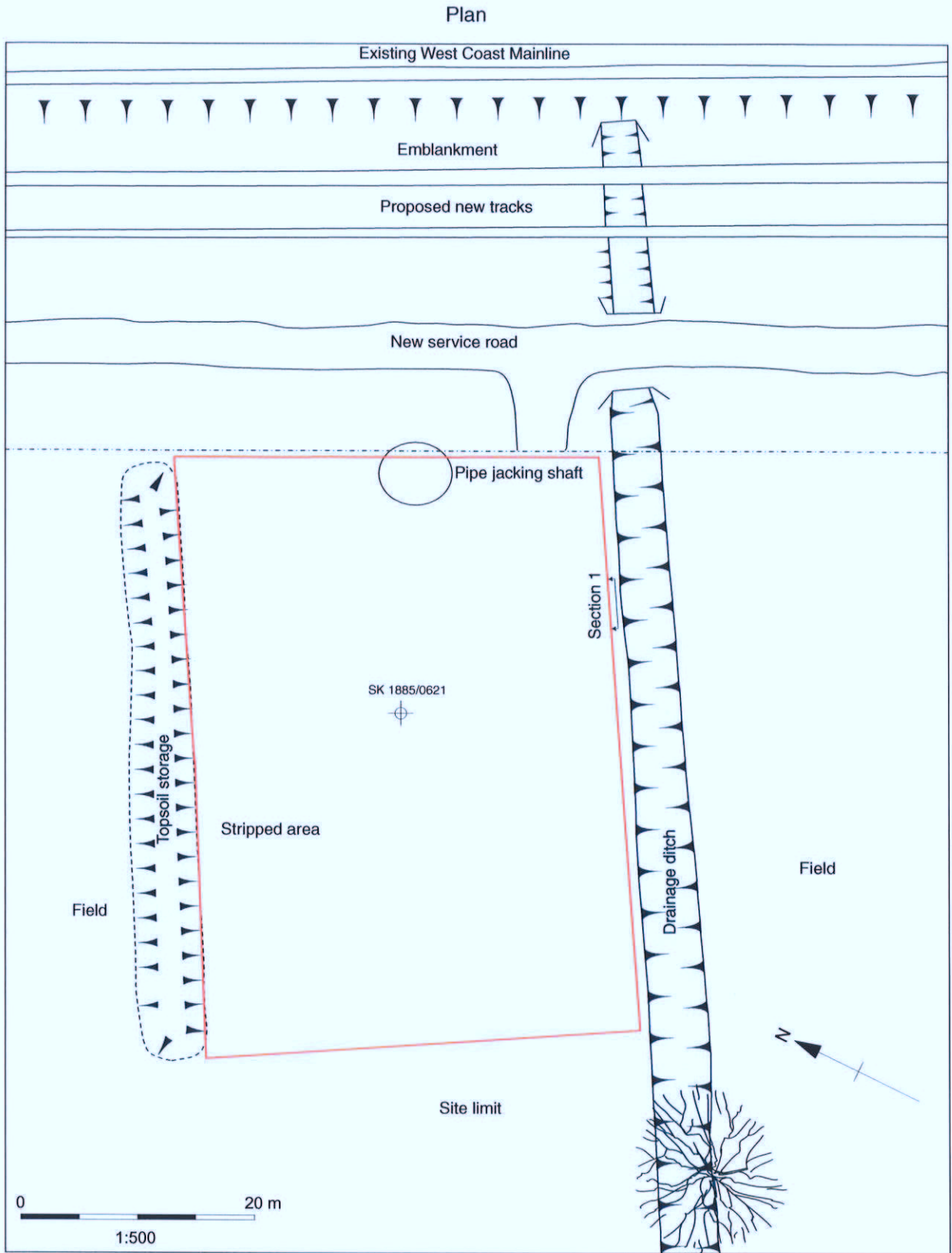


Figure 2: Plan showing area of watching brief and Section 1



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