



Nethercote, Great Wolford, Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

January 2020

Client: Severn Trent PLC

Issue No: 2

OA Reference No: GWNEEV

NGR: SP 25587 34389



Client Name: Severn Trent PLC
Client Ref No.: 4514248907
Document Title: Nethercote, Great Wolford, Warwickshire
Document Type: Evaluation Report
Report No.:
Grid Reference: SP 25587 34389
Planning Reference: -
Site Code: GWNE 19
Invoice Code: GWNEEV
Receiving Body: Warwickshire Museum
Accession No.: To be confirmed
OA Document File Location: X:/w/Warwickshire_Great-Wolford_Nethercote_EVAL/Report
OA Graphics File Location: X:\w\Warwickshire_Great-Wolford_Nethercote_EVAL\010Geomatics
Issue No: 2
Date: 2019-10-22
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Nethercote, Great Wolford, Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology carried out a four-trench evaluation on the proposed site of a sewage treatment works extension for Severn Trent PLC. The evaluation did not reveal any archaeological deposits other than ploughed out ridge and furrow cultivation of probable late medieval date on land belonging to the deserted village of Nethercote. No finds were recovered.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Severn Trent PLC for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Anna Stocks, Planning Archaeologist who monitored the work on behalf of Warwickshire County Council (WCC).

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Stuart Foreman, assisted by Joakim Thomasson. The fieldwork was directed by Jim Mumford, who was supported by Rebecca Coombes. Survey and digitising were carried out by Simon Batsman and Matt Bradley. The plates were compiled by Magdalena Wachnik. Thanks are also extended to the team of OA staff that prepared the archive under the supervision of Nicky Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Severn Trent PLC to undertake a trial trench evaluation at the site of a proposed sewage treatment works extension.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken to inform the Planning Authority in advance of a submission of a Planning Application. A written scheme of investigation (OA 2019a) was produced by OA detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to inform the planning process. This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site is located within the Cotswolds, approximately 6km to the south of the town of Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire (Fig. 1, NGR SP 25587 34389). It is situated between the village of Great Wolford and Little Wolford, which are located c 0.5km to the west of the site and c 0.8km to the north-east of the site respectively. The site was historically situated within the parish of Wolford, which encompassed both Great and Little Wolford, and is now located within the civil parish of Great Wolford.
- 1.2.2 The site comprises approximately a 0.6hectare (ha) area of open land and lies between c 87-89m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). An active sewage treatment works is situated immediately east of the site.
- 1.2.3 Sedimentary River Terrace Deposits primarily underlie the site, comprising sand and gravel formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period. Alluvial clay, silt, sand and gravel deposits may also be present to the eastern and northern extents of the site. These superficial deposits overlie a bedrock geology of Charmouth Mudstone Formation, a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 183 to 199 million years ago in the Jurassic Period (BGS 2019).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The following archaeological and historical background derives from a Desk Based Assessment (OA 2019b). It comprises a review of known archaeological assets within a 1km radius of the site held on Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (HER), the Warwickshire County Record Office for historic maps and manuscripts, Groundsure Mapping for Historic Ordnance Survey Maps, Aerial photographs as held by the Historic England Archive in Swindon and other relevant primary and secondary sources, including published and unpublished works as held by OA and other relevant libraries. The following summary provides a context for the proposed works.
- 1.3.2 A scheduled moated site, one Grade II* (Church of St. Michael) and five Grade II listed buildings are situated within the 1km proximity of the site. In this area, there have been four previous archaeological events comprising three archaeological watching briefs and a strip, map and sample excavation. None of the investigations recorded any archaeological remains. The majority of the HER monument recordings are located within the Great Wolford Conservation Area.

Prehistoric Period (500,000 BP – AD 43)

- 1.3.3 A series of cropmarks visible on aerial photographs have been identified between c 820m and c 1.1km to the north-west of the site. These types of cropmarks, although presently undated, are typical of multi-phased prehistoric sites. The earliest features appear to be two Bronze Age ring ditches, surrounded on three sides by segmented curvilinear ditches. Five rectangular enclosures are thought to be of Iron Age date and a field system, comprising interconnecting linear ditches, appears to be part of an Iron Age or Romano-British field system.

Romano-British Period (AD 43 – 410)

- 1.3.4 There is a scarcity of Romano-British archaeological remains within the area. Evidence of this date comprises a potential field system, c 820m-1.1km to the north-west of the site, and a single Romano-British coin found c 890m to the north-west of the site.

Early-Medieval Period (AD 410 – 1065)

- 1.3.5 The Old English toponym of Wolford derives from Wolwarde, meaning 'place protected against wolves'. Wolford is referred to in the Domesday Book of 1086 as comprising four entries/units with a substantial population of 50 households (Palmer & Powell-Smith 2019).
- 1.3.6 Archaeological remains within the study area dating to the early medieval period comprise isolated findspots. A 9th-10th-century Anglo-Saxon brooch was found c 140m to the north-east of the site whilst a coin, struck during Æthelred II's reign and dating to c 997-1003, was found c 200m to the south of the site.

Later Medieval Period (1066 – 1550)

- 1.3.7 The history of the subinfeudation of Wolford is obscure. By 1242, when the manor was held by Robert de Stafford, the fee was divided into two half-fees, Great and Little Wolford respectively.
- 1.3.8 The documented medieval settlement of *Great Wolford*, c 185m – c 860m to the north-west of the site, was of a considerable size and encompasses a series of scheduled earthworks to the east of the present village. These earthworks comprise building platforms and a hollow way indicative of a shrunken medieval settlement. The settlement was encompassed by a double bank and ditch moated defence, part of which is visible as an extant earthwork, c 380m to the north-west of the site. The feature may originally have been erected as a wolf defence, consistent with the toponym of Wolford. A further earthwork, slightly to the west of the village and c 975m to the north-west of the site, comprises the remnants of Great Wolford Mill, a medieval watermill with 13th-century origins.
- 1.3.9 A church has been recorded on the site of the present Church of St Michael since the 12th century, and formed an important focal point within the village. Medieval finds, comprising an ampulla c 250m to the north of the site, and two medieval coins c 890m to the north-west of the site, have also been found in the vicinity.
- 1.3.10 The documented medieval settlement of Little Wolford, which is located c 730m to the north-east of the site, includes the earthworks of a shrunken settlement, on the south

side of the present hamlet. A medieval Manor House, a Grade II* listed building with late-15th to early-16th-century origins, is located c 980m to the north-east of the site.

- 1.3.11 A settlement at *Nethercote*, meaning 'Lower Cottage/Shelter' (being situated on lower lying ground than Great and Little Wolford), is first referred to in 1321. Earthwork remains of a possible deserted medieval settlement, identified on aerial photographs, have been recorded immediately to the east of the site. These remains have been recorded as encroaching into the eastern part of the proposed development. The earthworks comprise enclosures, hollow ways and several rectangular building platforms. Toward the east of the settlement, the Nethercote Brook appears to have been straightened, leaving two meanders as ponds, which were potentially used as fishponds. It is unclear when the settlement was abandoned.
- 1.3.12 Ridge and furrow earthworks, characteristic products of medieval agricultural techniques, are recorded within the development site and throughout the study area. The ridge and furrow earthworks are surviving remnants of a once extensive open field system, which surrounded the settlements of Nethercote and Great and Little Wolford in the medieval period.

Post-medieval (AD 1500 – AD 1900)

- 1.3.13 The Enclosure and Tithe maps for Wolford indicate that during the post-medieval period the settlement remained focussed toward Great and Little Wolford, whilst cultivated land dominated the surrounding landscape. The 1847 Great Wolford Enclosure map illustrates the post-enclosure layout of the former open fields. Whilst much of the area surrounding the site is characterised by large fields, the site of the deserted medieval village at Nethercote comprises a distinctive field pattern of irregular, small fields. This pattern is clearly distinguishable from the large open fields to the west which mark the site of the open agricultural fields associated with the deserted medieval settlement and shows a distinctive pattern of cultivation earthworks (ridge and furrow). The Enclosure map and the accompanying apportionment records the landowner of the site as Lord Redesdale. The Sewer Works encompassed a plot (36), referred to as 'Nethercot Close', occupied by Elizabeth Fletcher, whilst the site extended into a larger field (plot 33) referred to as the 'Ninth Allotment' occupied by both Elizabeth Fletcher and William Sheppard. The Tithe map and apportionment of 1850 illustrates the continuity of the plots, which remain under the same ownership and occupancy. The 'Ninth Allotment' (plot 33) is recorded as comprising both arable land and pasture.
- 1.3.14 The 1885 Ordnance Survey (OS) map illustrates that by 1885 the field pattern in the vicinity of Nethercote had become more consistent with the surrounding area, with some of the smaller fields to the east of the site having been amalgamated and the larger field to the west of the site having been sub-divided. The south-western boundary of the existing site appears to remain consistent with that shown on the 1847 map, and a branch of the Nethercote Brook is illustrated bounding the north-west of the site.

Modern

- 1.3.15 Twentieth century OS mapping illustrates that the field boundaries, both within and in the vicinity of the site, remained consistent throughout the 20th-century. However, in recent years the fields around the site have been largely amalgamated and the 19th-century field boundary between the existing and potential sites has been lost. The Sewage Works was constructed within the existing site in the early-mid 1960s. The site has remained in agricultural use throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. To evaluate the survival of archaeological deposits or features to gain information about the archaeological resource (including its presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation, quality and significance);
- ii. If archaeological remains are identified, to inform the preparation of a strategy to mitigate the impact of development.

2.2 Specific aims and objectives

2.2.1 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation are:

- i. To determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present;
- ii. To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence;
- iii. To test the reliability of the results of the geophysical survey, via a number of trenches in potentially blank areas across the site and trenches targeted in areas where anomalies of uncertain origin were recorded;

2.2.2 The programme of archaeological investigation is conducted within the general research parameters and objectives defined by *The Archaeology of the West Midlands – A framework for research* (Watt 2011).

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 The four trenches were surveyed in and excavated using a JCB 3CX with a 1.6m toothless bucket. The trenches were excavated to the top of the natural geology or archaeological horizon. Archaeological deposits were hand excavated and recorded with written records and photographs. Although there were between two and three furrows in each trench, the fills and cuts uncovered in each trench were treated as a unified group and assigned the same context numbers. The trenches were backfilled after consultation with Anna Stocks, Planning Archaeologist at Warwickshire County Council (WCC).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches that contained archaeological remains. A total of 10 furrows were uncovered in trenches 1-3.
- 3.1.2 The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The soil sequence in the trenches was fairly uniform. The natural geology of light reddish brown silty sandy gravel with patches of clay was overlain by a dark brown silty sandy loam plough soil.
- 3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally poor, and the site remained wet or flooded throughout. Archaeological features, including plough furrows, were easy to identify despite the wet conditions, as they contrasted clearly with the natural geology.

3.3 Trenches 1 to 3

- 3.3.1 Trenches 1 to 3 were all aligned north to south or north-east to south-west and measured 30m long, 1.6m wide and varied from 0.28m to 0.4m in depth. They were excavated through a 0.28m to 0.4m thick plough soil. A total of eight 1.6m to 2m wide plough furrows were exposed, which were aligned north-west to south-east, down the slope of the field. The excavated examples had very shallow concave profiles and were filled with a dark reddish brown silty sandy loam with flinty gravel. These cut into an orange brown silty sand with patches of clay natural. No finds were recovered.

3.4 Trench 4

- 3.4.1 Trench 4 was aligned north-west to south-east and measured 30m long, 1.6m wide and 0.26m deep. It was excavated through a 0.26m thick plough soil, which overlay an orange brown silty sand with patches of clay natural.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Interpretation

- 4.1.1 The evaluation did not reveal any archaeological remains or deposits other than traces of ridge and furrow, which was aligned north-west to south-east, draining towards the brook to the north-west of the site. The features are clearly outlying agricultural elements of the earthworks previously recorded as the deserted village of Nethercote. Ridge and furrow is a characteristic feature of open field agricultural practises of the medieval and post-medieval period. No artefacts were recovered from the furrows, which thus shed no useful light on the chronology of the open field system of Nethercote.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench devoid of significant archaeology. Consists of plough soil overlying natural geology of silty sandy gravel and patches of clay. Two north-west to south-east aligned furrows were uncovered in the trench.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.40
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.34	Topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
102	Cut	2	0.06	Furrows	-	-
103	Fill	-	-	Fill of furrows	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of significant archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty sand. Three north-west to south-east aligned furrows were uncovered in the trench.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.30
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
200	Layer	-	0.15	Topsoil	-	-
201	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
202	Cut	1.6	-	Furrows	-	-
203	Fill	-	-	Fill of furrows	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench devoid of significant archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty sand. Three north-west to south-east aligned furrows were uncovered in the trench.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.28
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
300	Layer	-	0.15	Topsoil	-	-
301	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
302	Cut	1.6	-	Furrows	-	-
303	Fill	-	-	Fill of furrows	-	-

Trench 4						
General description					Orientation	SE-NW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of plough soil overlying natural geology of silty sandy gravel and patches of clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.26
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
400	Layer	-	0.15	Topsoil	-	-
401	Layer	-	0.15	Subsoil	-	-

APPENDIX C FINDS REPORTS

C.1 Finds

C.1.1 No finds were recovered during the evaluation.

APPENDIX D ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

D.1 Environmental Samples

D.1.1 No environmental samples were taken during the evaluations.

APPENDIX E BIBLIOGRAPHY

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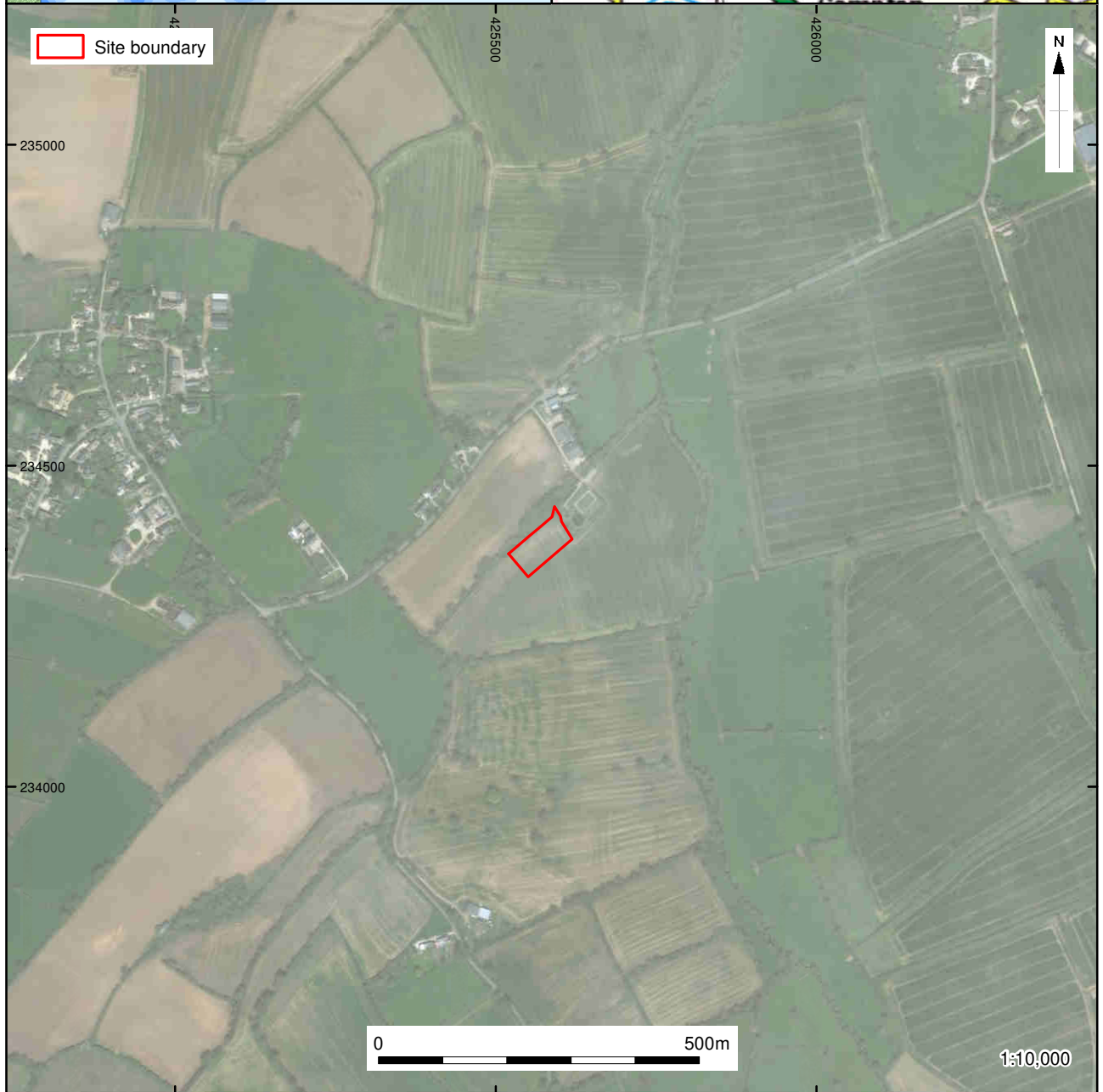
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APPENDIX F

SITE SUMMARY DETAILS / OASIS REPORT FORM

Site name:	Nethercote, Great Wolford, Warwickshire
Site code:	GWNE 19
Grid Reference	SP 25587 34389
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	3 days from the 14 th to 16 th October 2019
Area of Site	Four 30m long trenches
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES and will be deposited with Warwickshire Museum in due course, under the following accession number: To be confirmed.
Summary of Results:	Oxford Archaeology carried out a four-trench evaluation on the proposed site of a sewage treatment works extension for Severn Trent PLC. The evaluation did not reveal any archaeological deposits other than ploughed out ridge and furrow cultivation of probable late medieval date on land belonging to the deserted village of Nethercote. No finds were recovered.



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Trench plan



Plate 1: Trench 1, looking north



Plate 2: Trench 2, looking north-east



Plate 3: Trench 3, looking north



Plate 4: Trench 4, looking north-east



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