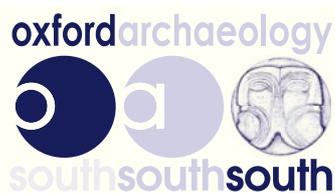


# Compost Site Manor Farm Wall Lichfield Staffordshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



July 2011

**Client: Richard Ryman**

Issue No: 1

OA Job No: 4922

Planning Reference No: L07/15/8923 W

NGR: Centered at SK 111 066





Client Name: Richard Ryman  
 Document Title: Compost Site, Manor Farm, Wall, Lichfield, Staffordshire  
 Document Type: Archaeological Watching Brief Report  
 Issue/Version Number: 1  
 Grid Reference: Centred at SK 111 066  
 Planning Reference: L.07/15/823 W  
 Invoice Code: WAMACOWB  
 OA Job Number: 4922  
 Site Code: WAMACO 10  
 Receiving Museum: The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent  
 Museum Accession No.: tbc

Issue	Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by	Signature
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Document File Location: Smallworks on server 1\PROJECTS\Staffordhire ST\12630 WAMACO  
 Manor Farm, Wall, Lichfield\ wbReport (1).odt  
 Graphics File Location: Server 10/oaupubs 1\_WAMACO10\*WAMACOWB\*Manor Farm,  
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## Compost Site, Manor Farm, Wall, Lichfield, Staffordshire

*Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

*Written by Mike Sims*

*Illustrated by Julia Collins*

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Plate 1 Topsoil strip for bund (looking south)

Plate 2 Subsoil strip for new building in progress (looking east)



## Summary

*Between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2011 Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief on the site of a proposed new building at Manor Farm, Wall, near Lichfield, Staffordshire (centred at NGR SK 111 066). No evidence linking activity within the development area to either the nearby Roman town of Letocetum or Rykniel Street was encountered.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 In May 2011 Oxford Archaeology (OA), was commissioned by Mr Richard Ryman to undertake a watching brief on the site of a proposed building on land at Manor Farm, Wall (centred at NGR SK 111 066) to house a new in-vessel composting facility (Planning ref: L.07/15/823 W).
- 1.1.2 As part of this planning application it was recommended that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken during the period of intrusive groundworks. This is in accordance with local and national planning policies, specifically Planning Policy Statement 5 (Communities and Local Government, 2010).
- 1.1.3 A brief was set by Stephen Dean from the Environmental Planning Unit of Staffordshire County Council (SCC 2010) specifying the requirements to met during this period.
- 1.1.4 OA produced a Written Statement of Investigation (WSI) showing how it would meet these requirements (OA 2010).

### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The village of Wall is located approximately 4 km south of Lichfield, Staffordshire (Fig 1). The development site is located approximately 900 m to the east of the historically significant settlement of Wall and lies immediately to the south of the line of the Rykniel Street Roman Road.
- 1.2.2 The area of proposed development currently consists of agricultural land at an approximate level of 102 m OD. There is a large concreted area to the immediate south of the proposed area.
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is Keuper sandstone overlying Bunter soft sandstone with pebble beds (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet number 154).

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site has been described in Staffordshire County Councils Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief and is reproduced here.
- 1.3.2 The site lies immediately to the south of the line of the Rykniel Street Roman road (PRN 01144) which is fossilized to the north-east within the line of Knowle Lane. The site also lies some 900 m to the east of the historically significant settlement of Wall. Known as *Letocetum* during the Roman period Wall was a significant settlement containing a postal station, bath house and other municipal buildings. There was also a series of small forts at Wall in the area of the current parish church while at the convergence of several roads extensive cemeteries have been excavated. To the south



and south-east lie a series of crop-mark enclosures thought to represent the site of a Roman period farmstead and other possible prehistoric enclosures.

- 1.3.3 The recent discovery of the Staffordshire hoard approximately 3 km to the west of the current scheme has highlighted the potential for Anglo-Saxon activity in the area. It is currently not known what the hoard may represent and so its connection with contemporary activity in the wider landscape around Hammerwich and Wall. To date excavations within the heart of the modern settlement of Wall have recovered extensive evidence of Roman activity but little evidence for a Saxon presence. It may be that settlement in the area avoided the Roman sites or that it has not been identified or is too ephemeral in nature. However, there remains the potential for evidence of Anglo-Saxon activity to be present within the area of the scheme.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the watching brief were to:

- To monitor all aspects of the development programme likely to impact archaeological remains related to the Roman site at Wall and its hinterland and the potential for Anglo-Saxon activity in the area;
- Preserve by record any archaeological deposits encountered during the course of ground intrusions;
- Seek to establish the nature and date of any archaeological deposits;
- To secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site;
- To disseminate results through the production of a grey literature report;

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief observed any groundworks which had the possibility of disturbing or destroying potential archaeological deposits. These works included the stripping and levelling of the building's footprint and the area of the proposed bund, the excavation of foundation trenches and the excavation of service trenches.
- 2.2.2 Excavation of archaeological features was undertaken to fulfil the basic objective of retrieval of archaeological data affected by the works.
- 2.2.3 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with the established OA Field Manual (OAU 1992). All contexts, and any small finds and samples from them were allocated unique numbers. Bulk finds were collected by context. Colour digital photographs and black-and-white negative photographs were taken of all groundworks and any archaeological features, if present. A general photographic record of the works was also made.
- 2.2.4 Site plans were drawn at an appropriate scale (normally 1:50 or 1:100) with larger scale plans of features as necessary. Section drawings of features and sample sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20.



### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The groundworks consisted of two areas of activity, the area of the proposed building and its surrounds and a separate bund to be constructed using the material removed during the construction (Fig. 2).
- 3.1.2 Prior to the start of the groundworks on the proposed building a roughly rectangular area of topsoil measuring approximately 30 m east-west and 170 m north-south, running along the eastern boundary of the site was stripped forming the footprint of the proposed bund.
- 3.1.3 A overall layer of reddish brown clay sand (11) was exposed within the base of the stripped area (Plate 1). No features were observed within its surface. This was overlain by a 0.5 m deep layer of a mid orange-brown sandy silt (10) representing the present day ploughsoil.
- 3.1.4 Within the main development area adjacent to the current concrete yard a rectangle measuring 90 m by 80 m was stripped and levelled by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket (Plate 2). The total depth of excavation was between 0.8 m and 1.3 m.
- 3.1.5 Exposed within the base of the stripped area was a layer of fragmented sandstone within a clay-sand matrix (22). There was no evidence of activity visible within the surface of this deposit. Overlying this was a reddish brown clayey sand (21), averaging 0.5 m in depth, but in excess of 0.8 m in places. This is a probable continuation of the subsoil (11) observed during the topsoil strip for the bund. No activity was discernable at this level.
- 3.1.6 Layer 21 was covered by a layer of orange-brown sandy silt (20), a worked (plough) soil similar to layer 10.

#### 3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Only artefactual evidence dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was recovered during the course of the watching brief. All the finds were recovered from the layers of ploughsoil and these finds included clinker, brick and tile, plastic and iron objects. The presence of these was recorded on site but they were not retained.

#### 3.3 Environmental remains

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

### 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 Layer 22 is the top of the underlying natural geology of the area, in this case a layer of weathered sandstone. The layers of subsoil (11) and (21) are most probably continuations of this weathering, possibly aided by 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century or earlier ploughing.
- 4.1.2 Layers (10) and (20) represent the present day ploughsoil horizon.
- 4.1.3 No evidence for the continuation of the cropmarks noted to the south and south-east into the development area was observed.



- 4.1.4 The investigation suggests that the development site was outside the focus of activity despite its proximity to both the Roman town of Letocetum, 1.3 km to the west, and the Roman road (Rykniel Street) running immediately to the north-west corner of the site.
- 4.1.5 There is the potential for ploughing to have destroyed any features or deposits but the absence of any truncated features either within the surface of the natural or the subsoil, or residual finds recovered from the ploughsoil, are a probable indication of this area being predominately agricultural in nature, possibly pastoral, during the period up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



## APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Comments	Finds	Date
10	Layer	Up to 0.5 m	> 30 m	Ploughsoil	Brick, tile, iron, plastic, glass	C19th - C20th
11	Layer	> 0.1 m	> 30 m	Subsoil composed of finely degraded natural, possibly aided by ploughing.	-	-
20	Layer	Up to 0.5 m	> 80 m	Ploughsoil	Brick, tile, iron, plastic, glass	C19th - C20th
21	Layer	Up to 0.8 m	> 80 m	Subsoil composed of finely degraded natural, possibly aided by ploughing.	-	-
22	Layer	> 0.2 m	> 80 m	Top of underlying sandstone natural	-	-



## APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- Communities and Local Government, 2010      *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning and the Historic Environment*
- OA, 2010                      *Manor Farm, Wall, Lichfield: Written Scheme of Investigation*
- OAU, 1992                      *Field Manual*
- SCC, 2010                      *Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief: Manor Farm, Wall, Lichfield*



## APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Compost Site, Manor Farm, Wall, Lichfield, Staffordshire
Site code:	WAMACO 10
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR SK 111 066
Type of watching brief:	Excavation of the base for new building and stripping for a bund
Date and duration of project:	Between the 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 18 <sup>th</sup> of May 2011, 10 site visits.
Area of site:	Approximately 13,300 m <sup>2</sup>
Summary of results:	The watching brief observed no evidence for activity predating the 19 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> century within the development area.
Location of archive:	The Potteries Museum and Art gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, accession number to be confirmed.



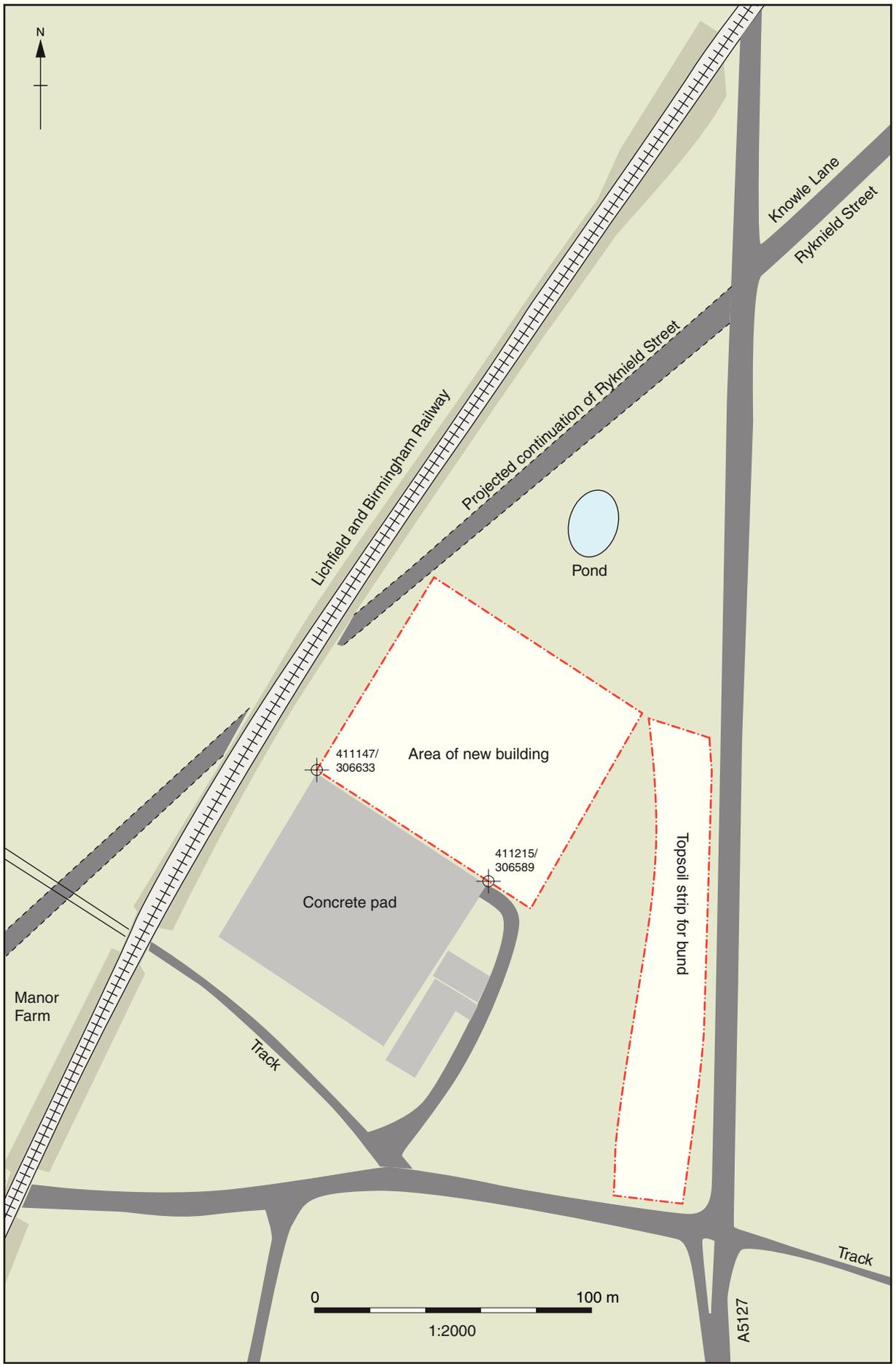


Figure 2: Site plan



Plate 1: Topsoil strip for bund (looking south)



Plate 2: Subsoil strip for new building in progress (looking east)





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