



Dodderhill Court

Crutch Lane, Elmbridge, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire

Dodderhill Court

Crutch Lane, Elmbridge, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire, WR9 0BE

Archaeological evaluation

SO 90126 63919

Site code: DCD16

HER ref: WSM67773

OASIS ID: 110archa1-248838

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Front cover; view of study site trenching from the north-west (roof of house)

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SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was carried out during February 2016 at Dodderhill Court, Crutch Lane, Elmbridge in advance of a proposed balancing lake and new bund on the adjacent land.

Historic mapping (OS 1885) shows the study site (WSM60555) was one of two farms in the area called Hill Court each at the end of a road extending west from Crutch Lane, itself an earlier route-way. The second Hill Court (WSM00696) currently lies further south next to the Saxon church of St. Augustine's. It seems likely that the study site, which by 1902 (OS Second Edition) was renamed Dodderhill Court, was a later replacement built in the style of a model farm. Much information about the lost elements of the farm were gleaned from the historic maps and photographs of the house (Cook, 2015) showing the working farm in its final form.

The Historic Environment Record shows that a single monument is recorded in the south-west corner where topsoil scraping for the Droitwich Outer Relief Road exposed an inhumation burial with associated Roman pottery. This lay just outside the north-west corner of the Dodderhill Roman fort.

In the event no significant archaeological deposits were observed during the evaluation, instead a sequence of three stratified homogenous layers were recorded comprising a natural clay, overlain by a relict subsoil which was sealed in turn by the modern topsoil. The absence of any archaeological deposits and a lack of residual finds from the study site would suggest that Roman activity did not extend this far north of the fort and burial.

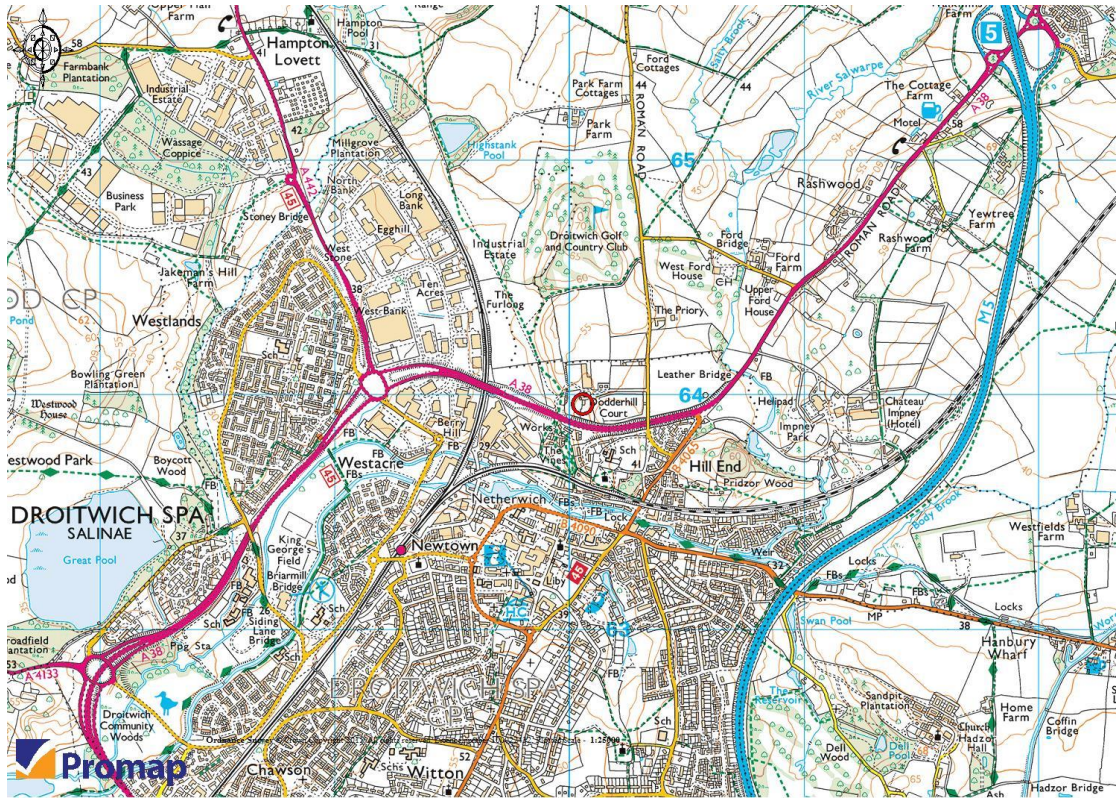


Fig. 1; site location (circled in red)

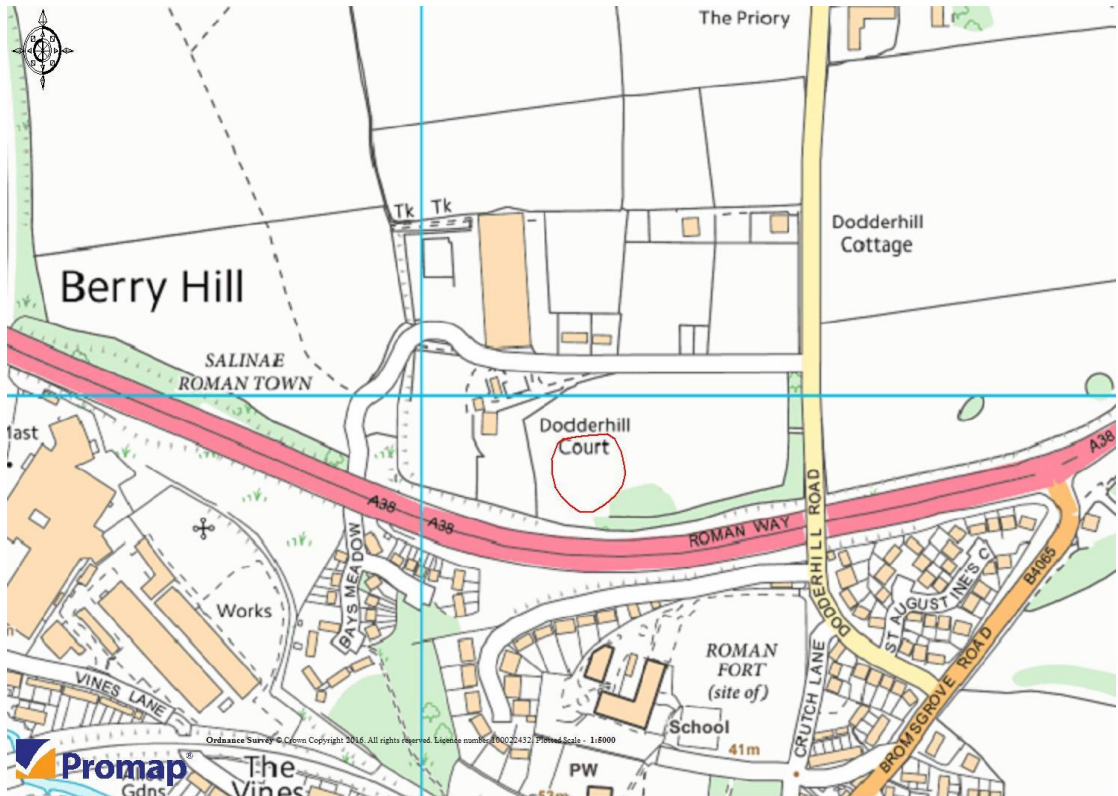


Fig. 2; study area (outlined in red)

INTRODUCTION

Location and scope of work (Figs. 1 & 2)

This document details the results of an archaeological evaluation during 16th and 18th February 2016 at Dodderhill Court, Crutch Lane, Elmbridge, Droitwich Spa, WR9 0BE Worcs. at the request of the owner and in accordance with a brief issued (14th Jan., 2016) by Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service.

A planning application (W/14/02595/PN) was submitted to Wychavon District Council in November 2014 for a Proposed balancing lake and new bund on land at Dodderhill Court. The development site is located on the northern edge of Droitwich, in an area of pasture situated between the A38 Roman Way and Bays Meadow Road, with Dodderhill Court located immediately to the west. The development site is situated in an area of some archaeological potential (see Section 2 below) and WAAS, in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the local planning authority, recommended that in order to more fully determine the presence or absence, extent, date, character, condition and significance of any such remains and the likely impact of the proposed development upon them a programme of archaeological works would be required, commencing with an initial field evaluation of the development area.

Geology and topography

Dodderhill Court is situated north of Droitwich off a road to the west of Crutch Lane. The development site is represented by a large sub-circular area consisting of a proposed pond with bank/bund comprising the excavated material along its eastern edge. The site lies at a height of about 45m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) and the underlying geology comprises Keuper Marl (BGS, 1976). This was confirmed during excavation of the foundation trench for the extension in 2015 as a stiff clay.

Archaeological and historical background

The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) was consulted in 2014 with a search carried out over a 500m radius centred on the site during work associated with a new side extension to the nearby Dodderhill Court (Cook, 2015).

The development area is located approximately 130m northwest of the Roman fort at Droitwich (WSM00603, NHLE 1020621). The fort was located in a prominent position on rising ground to the north of the Roman town known as Salinae, which underlies the historic core of medieval and modern Droitwich, above the River Salwarp and adjacent to a road running north from the town. Excavations in the 1970s recovered evidence for Iron Age activity, followed by the establishment of the fort. The fort is believed to have been constructed in the first century AD with occupation ending in AD 70, followed by a second period of occupation during the mid-second century. Outer defences were located on the west, east and north sides, whilst on the southern side the defences are believed to have been provided by the steep natural topography. It is also suggested that there was a possible annexe/ enclosure to the north of the fort. Stray finds of Roman material including coins have been made during metal-detecting in the vicinity of the site.

No archaeological interventions (events) are recorded within the application site, but a monument (WSM00667) is recorded in the south-west corner. Topsoil scraping for the Droitwich Outer Relief Road exposed a single inhumation burial on a NNE - SSW alignment with the head to the N, just outside the NW corner of the Dodderhill Roman fort. A couple of sherds of Roman pottery were associated with the burial. The remains were in extremely poor condition, only part of the right arm and traces of the backbone and a few ribs surviving (CBA, 1971).

EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

Aims of the work

The objective of the trial trenching was to determine the date, character, quality, survival and extent of the archaeological deposits within the application area likely to be threatened by the proposed development. Should significant finds or features had been identified then an appropriate excavation strategy would be implemented as a final stage of mitigation by the planning advisory service. This would be the subject of a separate brief.

Sample size and scope of fieldwork

The trial trenching comprised four linear trenches each approximately 1.80m wide in the location shown in the trench plan. Two trenches each at 15m in length were excavated in the proposed pond area and a further third 10m trench in the area of the new bund. A final fourth 5m trench was excavated near to the footprint of the proposed soakaway.

Fieldwork methods and recording

The archaeological field work and post-excavation was carried out in accordance with standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluations produced by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA, 2014). All deposits were excavated removing the overburden under close archaeological supervision and investigated for archaeological features. A plan and section of the trench was made and recorded during excavation.

RESULTS: GENERAL (Fig. 3)

Soil and ground conditions

Conditions alternated between dry and wet during excavation with the deposits showing some moisture retention. Excavation by machine of the underlying deposits was smooth and controlled, but differentiating between the relict subsoil layer and the underlying natural substrate was difficult and the interface fairly diffuse. The contrast between the two deposits was more visible in the trench section.

Reliability of field investigation

Deposits appear to have survived relatively intact throughout the study site with stratified layers recorded in all three trenches. A single small water pipe trench represents the only noticeable truncation.

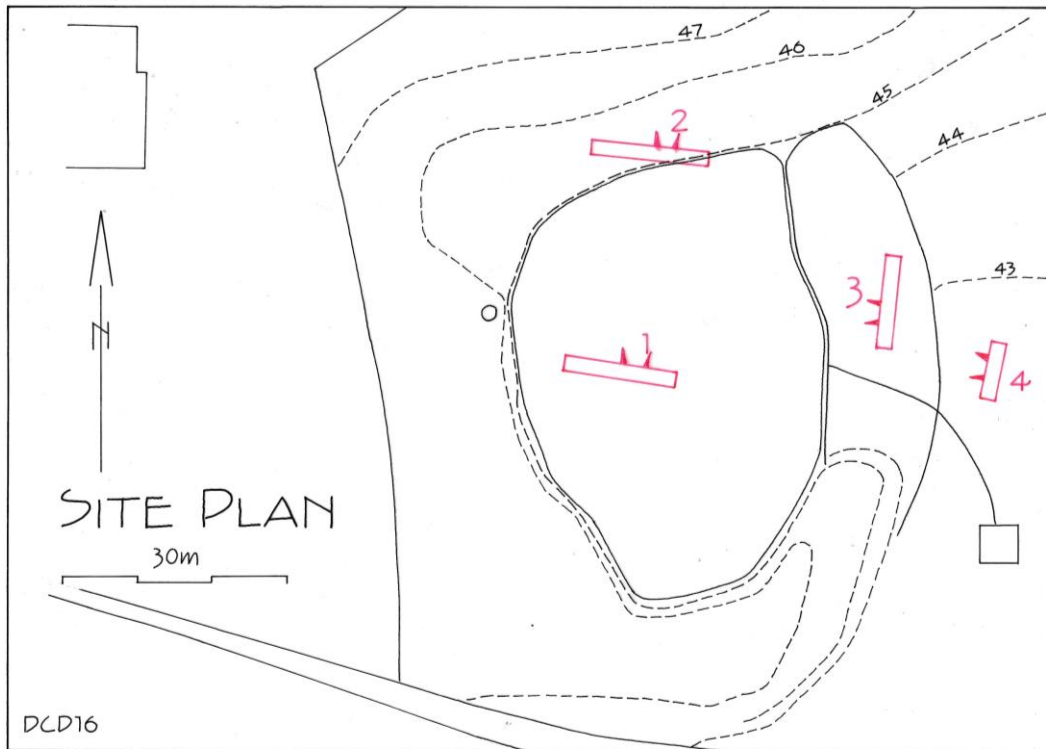


Fig. 3; site plan with trench locations

Distribution of archaeological deposits

No archaeological deposits were observed during the evaluation, instead a sequence of three stratified homogenous layers were recorded comprising a natural clay, overlain by a relict subsoil and sealed in turn by the modern topsoil.

Presentation of results

The results of the excavation (below) are described from the earliest to the latest deposits. The trench was attributed context numbers with a numerical value equivalent to the number of the trench.

RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS (Fig. 4)

TRENCHES 1-4

Contexts 102, 202, 302 & 402 (natural substrate)

The surface of the natural substrate comprised a light reddish-brown clay with small patches of green mottling and was revealed throughout all of the excavated trenches. In all of the trenches the natural was truncated during machining to ensure that the geological horizon had been reached and did not instead comprise redeposited clay. In trench 1 the surface of this clay was at 43.44m AOD, in trench 2 it was 45.15m AOD, in trench 3 at 42.93m AOD and in trench 4 at 42.27m AOD. No features or deposits were observed cut into or overlying this layer.

Contexts 101, 201, 301 & 401 (relict subsoil)

Overlying the natural clay in all of the trenches at a depth varying between 0.20m and 0.30m was a relict subsoil comprising a dark reddish-brown silty-clay with a small pebble component. Two finds in total were recovered from this layer, a single fragment of abraded brick from context 101 and small piece of clay pipe stem from context 201. No finds were recovered from the equivalent layers (contexts 301 and 401) in trenches 3 and 4.

Contexts 100, 200, 300 & 400 (topsoil)

Overlying the relict subsoil layer in all of the trenches was the existing topsoil layer comprising a dark greyish-brown loam. In trenches 1 and 2 it was about 0.35m thick and in trenches 3 and 4 about 0.20m thick. This layer was devoid of finds in all of the trenches. Only in trench 1 was some later re-deposition observed in the form of a thin lens of redeposited soil and sand overlying the existing topsoil.

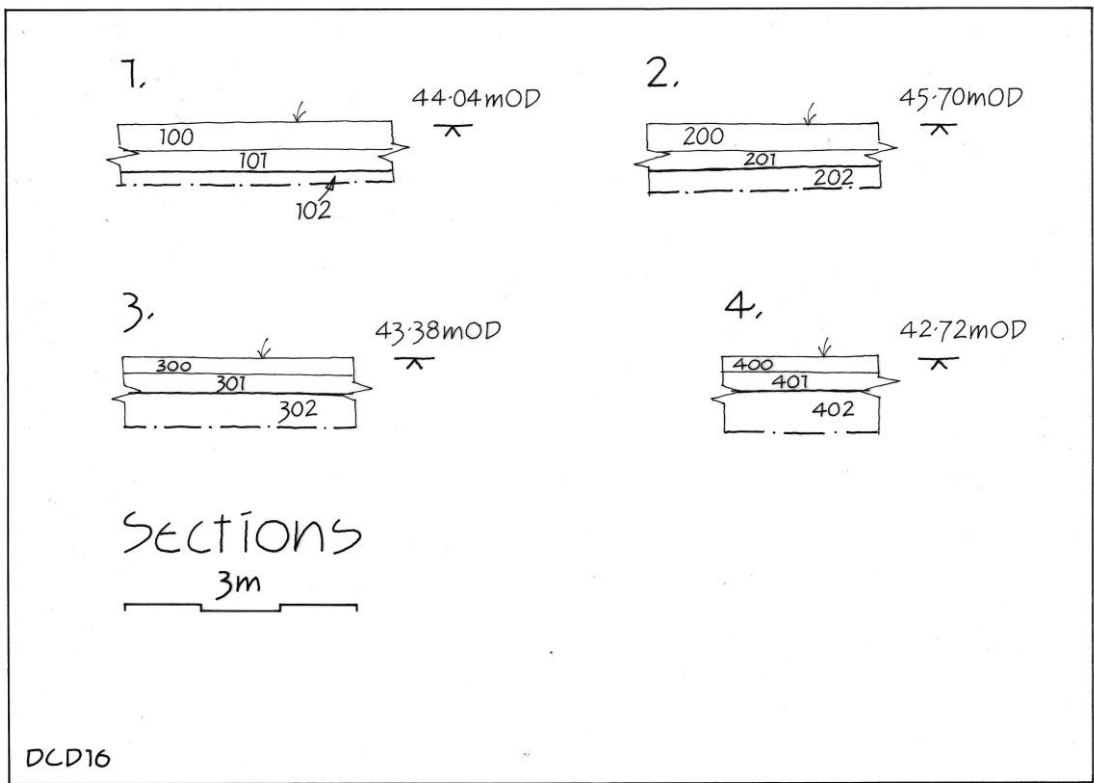


Fig.4; trench sections



Plate 1; trench 1, from the east



Plate 2; section 1a, from the south-east



Plate 3; trench 2 from the east



Plate 4; section 2a



Plate 5; trench 3, from the south-west



Plate 6; section 3a



Plate 7; trench 4, from the north-west



Plate 8; section 4a

FINDS

Finds comprised in total a single abraded fragment of red brick was recovered from context 101 (trench 1) and a short piece of pipe stem from a clay tobacco pipe found within the relict subsoil layer (context 201) in trench 2. These were not retained.

Environmental data

No animal bone was recovered and none of the deposits exposed during the excavation proved suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling.

DISCUSSION

Historic mapping (OS 1885) shows the study site (WSM60555) was one of two farms in the area called Hill Court each at the end of a road extending west from Crutch Lane, itself an earlier route-way. The second Hill Court (WSM00696) currently lies further south next to the Saxon church of St. Augustine's. It seems likely that the study site, which by 1902 (OS Second Edition) was renamed Dodderhill Court, was a later replacement built in the style of a model farm. The architectural fabric of the building suggests it was created during the early 19th century. Much information about the lost elements of the farm were gleaned from early OS maps (1885 & 1902) and photographs of the house (Cook, 2015) showing the working farm in its final form.

No significant archaeological deposits were observed during the evaluation, instead the evidence suggests a predominantly rural landscape with little human activity before the 19th century. A sequence of three relatively undisturbed stratified homogenous layers were recorded comprising a natural clay, overlain by a relict subsoil sealed in turn by the modern topsoil.

The Historic Environment Record shows that a watching brief carried out in 2015 represents the first archaeological intervention (event) within the application site. A single monument (WSM00667) is recorded previously in the south-west corner where topsoil scraping for the Droitwich Outer Relief Road exposed an inhumation burial with associated Roman pottery (CBA, 1971). This lay just outside the north-west corner of the Dodderhill Roman fort. The absence of any archaeological deposits and a lack of residual finds from within the study site would suggest that Roman activity did not extend this far north of the fort and burial.

Summary of results

The results of the evaluation showed that archaeological deposits were unlikely to be present within the proposed pond and bund area. Instead a sequence of three stratified homogenous layers were recorded comprising a natural clay, overlain by a relict subsoil sealed in turn by the modern topsoil. A lack of residual finds from the excavation would suggest that Roman activity did not extend this far north of the fort and the burial recorded during construction of the Droitwich Outer Relief Road to the south of the study site.

Significance

The negative results of the trial trenching carried out north of the burial recorded in 1971 would suggest that Roman activity associated with occupation of the Dodderhill fort did not extend this far north of the fort.

Impact of development

The results of the trial trenching suggest that excavation of the pond and the creation of an adjacent bund will not impact upon archaeological deposits.

Archive Location

The archaeological documentary archive arising from the work will be appropriately conserved and deposited with the Worcestershire County Museum. The digital archive arising from the work will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS)

Digital archive:

Pdf report

X9 digital images

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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OS First Edition, 1885

OS Second Edition, 1902

APPENDIX 1 OASIS

Project name	Dodderhill Court, Crutch Lane, Elmbridge, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire; an archaeological evaluation
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation during February 2016 at Dodderhill Court, Crutch Lane, Elmbridge, Droitwich Spa. Planning permission was granted by Wychavon District Council for a proposed balancing lake and new bund on the adjacent land conditional on a programme of archaeological work.
Project dates	Start: 16-02-2016 End: 18-02-2016
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	WSM67773 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	DCD16 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Service infrastructure (e.g. sewage works, reservoir, pumping station, etc.)
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)
Country	England
Site location	WORCESTERSHIRE WYCHAVON DODDERHILL Dodderhill Court
Postcode	WR9 0BE
Study area	3270 Square metres
Site coordinates	SO 90126 63919 52.272941591129 -2.144725595646 52 16 22 N 002 08 41 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 42.27m Max: 45.15m
Name of Organisation	one ten archaeology

Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	one ten archaeology
Project director/manager	sean cook
Project supervisor	sean cook
Type of sponsor/funding body	Landowner
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	OASIS
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Text"
Paper Archive Exists?	No
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Dodderhill Court, Crutch Lane, Elmbridge, Droitwich Spa; an archaeological evaluation
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Cook, S.
Date	2016
Issuer or publisher	one ten archaeologyt
Place of issue or publication	Warks
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