



# An Archaeological Evaluation of Land Adjacent to Dundas House, Rosenhurst Drive, Bewdley Worcestershire

*A Report for Dr J Ball*

May 2003

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**Project: PJ 104**

**WSM: 32540**

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## Summary of Results

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at land adjacent to Dundas House, Rosenhurst Drive, Bewdley on May 12<sup>th</sup> 2003. The results determined that there were no significant archaeological deposits or features within the evaluated area. It was concluded that the hillside was too steep for occupation prior to terracing from the 1970's onwards.*

## 1. Project Background

### 1.1. Location of the Site

Dundas House is situated off Rosenhurst Drive, a modern development that stands high on Wyre Hill overlooking the town of Bewdley (Figure 1). The proposed building plot is on a raised platform with a terraced access road below to the northeast. The gradient of the land is steep and the access road was constructed specifically with possible future development in mind.

The River Severn flows in a southerly direction in the valley below. The planned medieval core of Bewdley lies to the northeast, the tenement plots and street pattern still visible in the townscape today.

### 1.2. Development Details

A planning application has been made to Wyre Forest District Council for the construction of a bungalow and double garage on land adjacent to Dundas House (reference WF/54/2000). The planning process determined that the proposed development was within an archaeologically sensitive area (WSM 29084) as defined by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey (Buteux *et al* 1996). As a result, the Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council, advised that the site be subject to an archaeological evaluation prior to any development taking place, for which a brief of work was written (WAS 2000).

### 1.3. Topography, Geology and Archaeology

The site lies on the western slope of the Severn Valley above the market town of Bewdley, at a height of around 84 metres AOD. The soils are brown podzolic and loamy brown earth of the Rivington 2 Association, with an underlying geology of Mercian Mudstone (Ragg *et al* 1984). To the west the topography is of dispersed woodland and hamlet, peripheral to the Wyre Forest.

There is no documentary reference to Bewdley prior to 1304 when it first appears as 'Beaulieu'. Records state that by 1336 there was a ferry operating at Bewdley (Buteux 1996). Burgesses are first recorded in the town in 1667 and in 1376 Edward II granted licence to hold

a market and fair to Phillipa, Countess of March. For further detail see Buteux (1996) or Page (1913).

There is evidence of prehistoric activity in the area. Less than 200 metres to the southeast is the site of a round barrow (WSM 10855) probably dating from the Neolithic or Bronze Age. There have also been flint implements found in the same area (WSM 12780), possibly evidence of the lives of those buried within the earthen barrow at Tickenhill.

The Roman period is also represented within the archaeological evidence. A hoard of Roman coins was found within the gardens of Tickenhill Manor (WSM 03723).

Evidence from the medieval and late medieval period can still be seen within the town and landscapes. There are many tenement plots and upstanding buildings from this period. Most of the timber-framed buildings date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Less than 250 metres to the southeast of the proposed development lies the site of medieval Tickenhill Palace and Deer Park (WSM 28984 ). After the Norman Conquest, the Manor of Tickenhill transferred into the ownership of Roger Mortimer. The bloodline of Mortimer led to King Edward IV some 300 years later, thus Tickenhill became private royal property and a palace was built, chiefly for Prince Arthur (Mee 1938, 34). Parts of the present house on the site date from the 15<sup>th</sup> century with later additions and modifications in 1738 and the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was at Tickenhill Palace that Prince Arthur was married by proxy to Catherine of Aragon in 1499. The prince was just 14 years old. It was probably the remains of buildings or deer park features associated with the palace that the antiquarian Prattinton noted in 1810 when visiting the area. He commented that the “uneven ground to all appearance carved by the remains of foundations”, suggesting a ‘castle’ had once stood on the site (Buteux 1996).

#### **1.4. Reasons for the Evaluation**

The data contained within the Sites and Monuments Record and the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey as outlined above, suggested that the development site lies within an archaeologically sensitive area. As such the Planning Archaeologist requested an archaeological evaluation of the proposed development site be carried out under Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (Section 30).

## **2. Methods and Process**

### **2.1. Project Specification**

- ❑ The project conforms to the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (IFA 1999).
- ❑ The project conforms to a brief prepared by the Planning Advisory Section, Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Section, Worcestershire County Council (WHEAS 2000) for which a project proposal and detailed specification was produced (Cook 2003).
- ❑ Mercian Archaeology adhere to the service practice and health and safety policy as contained within the Mercian Archaeology Service Manual (Williams 2003)

## 2.2. Background Research

Prior to the commencement of fieldwork relevant available cartographic sources were consulted. A full search of the Worcestershire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) was commissioned and various archaeological reports were also viewed. The following cartographic sources were specifically consulted:

### Cartographic Sources

Source	Reference Number
Tithe Map of Bewdley (1840)	WRO BA8377/25: r850
Ordnance Survey 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition 6”(1884)	SMR

Other sources used are referenced within the report.

## 2.3. The Fieldwork

The evaluation was undertaken on 12th May by Paul Williams and Martin Cook. The evaluation trench was excavated by a JCB fitted with a 1.8 metre wide ‘bladed’ bucket.

The trench was located to test the deposits below the proposed building platform. The JCB excavated the 12 metres by 2-metre trench from the southwestern plot boundary down the slope to the northwest, finishing close to the access drive (Site Drawing 1).

The trench was located on plan and soil profiles were recorded at each end of the trench (Site Drawing 2). Photographs were taken to show the general position of the trench and the soil profiles as recorded.

All finds were collected except homogenous lumps of iron and modern brick, which could supply no valuable dating or processing evidence. These were noted and then discarded.

During reinstatement, the property owner requested that the surplus soil be spread out rather than mounded over the trench, which is normally done to allow for soil sinkage.

The methodology adopted and the favourable working conditions meant that the aims and objectives of the brief could be fully met and the fieldwork was successfully concluded.

### 3. The Results

The proposed building plot had lately been used as a vegetable garden. The topsoil [100] was a medium brown sandy silt-clay with medium root action. This layer was around 0.35 metres thick and fairly uniform down the slope. There were no dateable finds within this layer.

Below the topsoil was a deposit of up to 1.00 metre of degraded mudstone fragments varying in size from 0.05 metres to 0.60 metres [101]. These were in a matrix of grey clay with a slightly red tint. At first this appeared that this was the undisturbed natural. However, it became clear that the matrix was loose and excavation produced occasional fragments of orange brick. Near the bottom of the deposit there was a block of brick and mortar masonry, clearly not in-situ and part of a scaffold tube. This indicated that the material [101] was redeposited from elsewhere. One dateable find was retrieved from this deposit, a fragment of turquoise bathroom tile dating from the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Below this layer was the undisturbed natural [102]. This was very similar to deposit [101] except that it was more compact and slightly greyer in colour.

### 4. Analysis of the Results

The surface evidence from the site indicates that during the piecemeal housing development of the 1970–1980's the hillside was heavily terraced to accommodate buildings, gardens and access drives. The site was visibly elevated on a man-made platform. This platform was formed from deposit [101], which was likely to have been the material moved when the access drive to the site was formed, or possibly material moved from below the base of Dundas House when it was constructed.

There was a distinct lack of evidence for occupation on the site. There was, quite unusually, not one shard of pottery found during the evaluation. The brick fragments may have come from former garden or boundary walls, although there is no definitive evidence. The fragment of 20<sup>th</sup> century bathroom tile can only date the laying down of the deposit to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a date that ties in with the terracing of the area.

## 5. Conclusion

The results of the watching brief demonstrate that there were no significant archaeological deposits or layers within the proposed development plot. The steep hillside had been terraced, probably in the 1970-1990 period during development in the area. The hillside had clearly been too steep for the requirements of past occupation.

## 6. Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Martin Cook. Thanks are also due to Dr John Ball of Dundas House, Mr T.W.R.Elliott of Phipps and Prichard, Mick George for supply and operation of the JCB, Deborah Overton for carrying out the SMR search and Mike Glyde, Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council.

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## CONTEXT RECORD

Context	Type	Level	Thickness	Date Ascribed
100	Topsoil	GL	Max 0.35	20 <sup>th</sup> c.
Comprised of	Sandy silt-clay			
Compaction	Friable			
Colour	Medium brown			
Inclusions	Roots			
Finds	None			

Context	Type	Level	Thickness	Date Ascribed
101	Deposit	0.35	1.00	20th c.
Comprised of	Sand and loose limestone chippings			
Compaction	Loose			
Colour	Orangey grey			
Inclusions	Occasional brick fragment			
Finds	Fragment of tile			

Context	Type	Level	Thickness	Date Ascribed
102	Natural	1.35	Seen to 1.45	
Comprised of	Mercian Mudstone			
Compaction	Compact			
Colour	Grey			
Inclusions	None			
Finds	None			

## THE ARCHIVE

Type	No	Type	No
Black and White Film	1	Computer Disc	1
Colour Film	1		
Photographic Record Form	1		
Fieldwork Report	1		
Site Drawing list	1		
Site Drawing Sheet	1		
Trench Profile Record	1		
SMR Printout			
General Notes			