

MSBW12



LAND ADJACENT TO DALTON HOUSE, MAIN STREET, BECKFORD, WORCESTERSHIRE

Archaeological Evaluation

for Mr M Spice

October 2012

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BECKFORD, WORCESTERSHIRE

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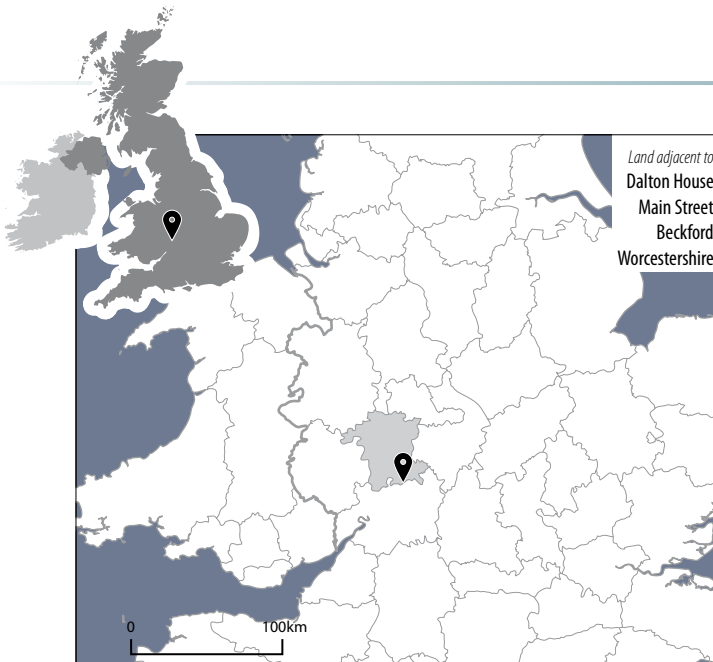


CONTENTS

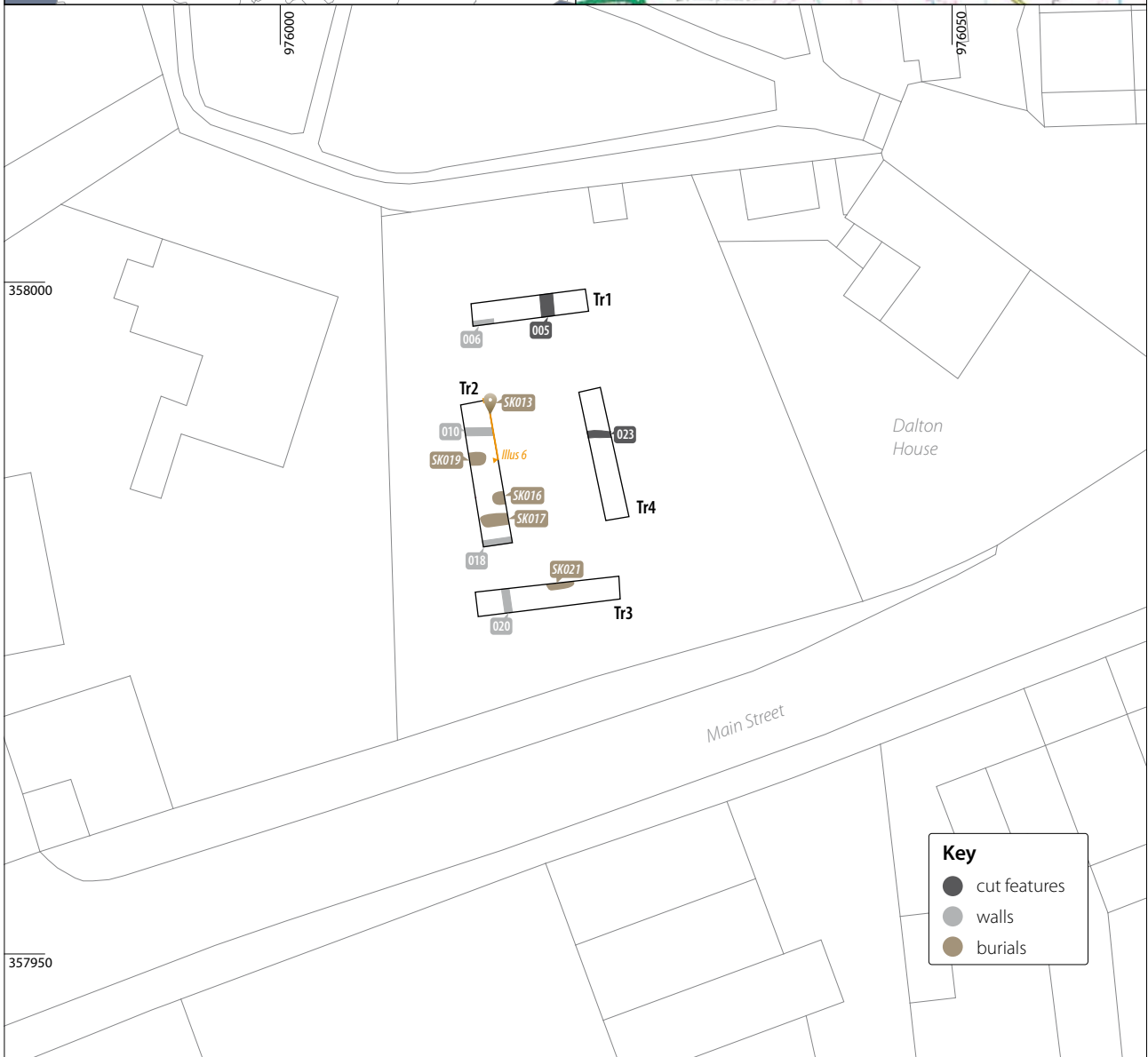
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Site description	1
1.2	Archaeological background	1
2.	OBJECTIVES	2
3.	METHOD	2
3.1	Documentary research	2
3.2	Trial trenching	2
3.3	Recording	2
4.	RESULTS	3
4.1	Phase 1	3
4.2	Phase 2	4
4.3	Phase 3	4
4.4	Phase 4	4
5.	DISCUSSION	5
5.1	The burials	5
5.2	Linear features	5
5.3	The later buildings	5
6.	CONCLUSION	6
7.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	6
7.1	Websites	6
8.	APPENDICES	7
	Appendix 1 Site Registers	7
	<i>Appendix 1.1 Trench registers</i>	7
	<i>Appendix 1.2 Context register</i>	7
	<i>Appendix 1.3 Photographic register</i>	7
	<i>Appendix 1.4 Drawing Register</i>	8
	Appendix 2 Finds assessment	9
	<i>Appendix 2.1 Pottery catalogue</i>	9
	<i>Appendix 2.2 Finds catalogue</i>	9

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<i>Illus 1</i>		viii
	<i>Site location</i>	
<i>Illus 2</i>		3
	<i>Trench 2; W-facing section – SK013 with grave cut visible</i>	
<i>Illus 3</i>		3
	<i>Trench 1; N-facing section with ditch [005]</i>	
<i>Illus 4</i>		3
	<i>Trench 1; Foundation wall [006]</i>	
<i>Illus 5</i>		4
	<i>Trench 2; S-facing foundation wall [010] in foreground, [018] in background</i>	
<i>Illus 6</i>		5
	<i>Trench 2; W-facing section with (011) and [010]</i>	



Land adjacent to
Dalton House
Main Street
Beckford
Worcestershire



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Scale 1:500 @ A4



Illus 1

Site location

LAND ADJACENT TO DALTON HOUSE, MAIN STREET, BECKFORD, WORCESTERSHIRE

Archaeological Evaluation

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd. conducted a trial trench evaluation prior to the submission of a planning application for the construction of a single detached dwelling with a garage in a small plot of land adjacent to the burial ground of the church of St John the Baptist, Main Street, Beckford, Worcestershire. The evaluation consisted of four 10m by 1.6m wide evaluation trenches.

Evidence for five articulated human burials was identified within the trenches therefore confirming the presence of outlying medieval burials associated with the parish church. Also uncovered were two linear features of undetermined date.

A series of 18th or 19th century foundation walls were uncovered which may be associated with a series of buildings that were previously present on site. Rubble possibly associated with the demolition of these outbuildings was also discovered.

1. INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd was commissioned by the client to undertake an archaeological evaluation for the construction of a single detached dwelling with garage adjacent to the parish church of St John the Baptist in Main Street, Beckford, Worcestershire.

The results of the archaeological evaluation will form part of the application submission, in line with Section 12.128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012): 'Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.'

A brief for the work was produced by the Archaeological Advisor the Planning Authority, Mike Glyde of Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service (WHEAS). The evaluation was conducted in line with a project design (Kimber 2012) produced in response to the brief and agreed with the planning authority.

1.1 Site description

The proposed development site is located at NGR SO 97622 35787 (site centre) and covers a total of 1,115m² within a roughly square grassed area located immediately south of the churchyard boundary and adjacent to Main Street, Beckford. The site is currently in use as a garden and was previously landscaped in

the early 20th century for use as a tennis court. The properties on either side are both listed 18th or 19th century structures.

Beckford retains a degree of its historic layout, the axis of the settlement lying along Main Street. Originally narrow house-plots would probably have extended back from either side of the street, many of these appear now to have been amalgamated into larger plots around reasonably large post-medieval houses.

The site is located on gravel terraces of the River Carrant, which overlie the Jurassic era Charmouth Mudstone formations (British Geological Survey website; <http://www.bgs.ac.uk>).

1.2 Archaeological background

The area is known for Romano-British settlement, with Iron Age stock enclosures known to the east of the village of Beckford, and a 6th century cemetery located to the west of the parish (British History Online: Beckford). There are reports in the county Historic Environment records that stray finds of Iron Age date have been located in the local area (WSM 40405), and Iron Age and Roman occupation has been reported to the north of Beckford Hall (WSM02908).

The estate of Beckford was held by the Bishop of Worcester in the 8th century AD, although the Bishop's rights appear to have passed to the king by 1066 – the Domesday book records that Beckford was held by Rotlesc, a housecarl (British History Online: Beckford). The church at Beckford – dedicated to St John the Baptist – has extant Norman architecture, but a pre-conquest Minster is referred to historically in the early 9th century AD



(WSM00321). An unstratified find of Saxon brooches from Beckford is recorded in the HER (WSM10865).

Following the Norman conquest Beckford was apparently held by William FitzOsbern, Earl of Hereford (British History Online: Beckford), although the Domesday survey records that in 1086 it was held by Ansfrid de Cormeilles. The settlement appears to have been large for the time, comprising some 67 households (Open Domesday). Changing hands several times over the succeeding decades, Beckford was granted to the Augustinian monastery of St Barbe-en-Auge in 1128. A prior and one or two canons were sent to occupy the manor; presumably they also provided services at the Norman parish church.

The priory (WSM07107) was located to the north of the parish church; in the mid-20th century the undercroft of the priory was located during alterations to Beckford Hall. The Alien Priors, including Beckford, were seized several times by kings of England, the final end coming in 1414, when Beckford was suppressed by Act of Parliament (British History Online: The Priory of Beckford).

The manor of Beckford was broken up in the 16th century, and much of its subsequent history of ownership is not relevant to the proposed development area. There is reportedly a local tradition that much of the main street was damaged by fire in the 1860s, resulting in many of its old houses being replaced by brick houses (British History Online: Beckford). There is a limited amount of supporting evidence for this in the property boundaries of the main street – many of the plots of land on the north of the street (including the proposed development area) do not appear to be medieval in character, being too large. The architectural evidence is more ambiguous – although Beckford Grange fits with this story (WSM23287, built 1865), two other properties on the north of Main Street (Dalton House WSM03618; The Old Vicarage WSM46579) appear to be 18th century in origin, albeit with mid 19th century alterations.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map (1884) shows the proposed development area was part of a single plot of land, joined together with Dalton House (east of the area). Dalton House is marked as the Vicarage. There is some suggestion of small structures along the northern boundary of the proposed development area, in all other respects it appears largely as it is at present. A partial dividing wall between the two plots is shown on the OS 1902 map, although the two areas still appear linked.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the project were to ascertain whether any archaeological remains were present within the area of the development, and to characterise them by date, extent, preservation, and significance.

The information presented in this report is intended to allow the Planning Authority and its Archaeological Advisor to establish the potential impact of the development upon any archaeological assets present within the site boundary prior to the determination of planning consent, and to establish the need for and scope of

any mitigation measures that may be required following grant of planning permission.

3. METHOD

3.1 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing an extract was obtained from the County Historic Environment Record covering an area of 1km around the proposed development area, providing information on previous archaeological work, known sites and monuments, and other reported finds.

A search was made of readily available reference sources for information about the background of the site. These sources were the Victoria County History at British History Online and the Open Domesday Project.

The Worcestershire county records office catalogue was searched for material relevant to the proposed development area. The results of the search indicated that such material was held, and a visit was conducted. Unfortunately whilst the records office held material relating to Beckford parish, none of this material covered the village itself. It appears that relevant material may held within the Gloucestershire county records office.

3.2 Trial trenching

The evaluation comprised of the excavation of four trenches measuring 10m x 1.6m within the principal area of the development. Trench locations were agreed in advance within the WSI.

Excavation of evaluation trenches was undertaken using a mini-digger equipped with a toothless bucket. All mechanical excavation was under direct supervision of an archaeologist and ceased at the first significant archaeological horizon, or at undisturbed geological deposits. The excavated trenches were cleaned and examined for any features and the spoil was re-examined in order to identify any artefacts within the topsoil.

3.3 Recording

All recording followed IfA Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation (IfA 2009). Plans and sections of evaluation trenches and features encountered were drawn on *pro forma* permatrace records sheets and tied to the national grid using an RTK Trimble GPS.

An authority to excavate human remains licence was obtained from the Ministry of Justice once the presence of human remains was confirmed on the site. Graves were investigated sufficiently to confirm the presence of skeletal material. Any human remains encountered were left *in situ* and their position recorded.

Evaluation trenches were photographed with graduated metric scales and include 35mm black-and-white archival prints and digital reference photographs.

4. RESULTS

In general, the sequence of deposits on the site is characterised as a soil profile comprising parent material (or C horizon) [003]; subsoil (B horizon) [002] and topsoil (A horizon) [012]. The existence of the soil profile (and by implication the soil formation processes such as bioturbation that occur within soil horizons), coupled with limited artefactual dating material has complicated the phasing of the site.

In general, it has been assumed that features observed only below the B-horizon [002] are oldest, having had soil formation processes acting to erase their upper parts for the longest time. Next oldest are features observed to truncate the B-horizon [002], but not truncating the A-horizon [012], save where artefactual evidence would make this interpretation absurd. The most recent features have been phased based upon their character and observed or inferred disturbance of earlier features.

4.1 Phase 1

The earliest deposit encountered was a geological river terrace deposit of light yellowish brown sand [003], at a depth of 1.2–1.5m below the ground surface, underlying the entire site.

An east-west orientated linear feature measuring 0.4m wide and 0.2m deep [023] was identified in Trench 4 cutting into [003]. The feature seems to have been sealed by a subsoil deposit [002]. No dating evidence was retrieved from within its fill [025] but this feature could potentially be of some antiquity.

Overlying the natural deposit [003] and linear [023] was a mid pinkish brown silty sand subsoil deposit [002] up to 0.5m thick.



Illus 2 ▶

Trench 2; W-facing section – SK013 with grave cut visible

Illus 3 ▶

Trench 1; N-facing section with ditch [005]

Illus 4 ▶

Trench 1; Foundation wall [006]



◀ **Illus 5**

Trench 2; S-facing foundation wall [010] in foreground, [018] in background

4.3 Phase 3

Within trenches 1–3 the remains of wall foundations were uncovered; the tops of the foundations were located c.0.2m below ground level.

Within Trench 1 a single course of an east-west aligned roughly faced foundation wall 0.48m wide and 0.30m high [006] was uncovered in the south west corner, constructed of roughly cut square pieces of Cotswold limestone (*Illus 4*). Dating evidence taken from within the wall, in the form of a substantial brick fragment, suggests a 19th century connection. The wall extended 1.5m east from the southern edge of Trench 1 where it terminated, and seemed to turn in a north-south direction.

4.2 Phase 2

Five graves containing articulated burials were encountered during the evaluation, within subsoil deposit [002]. Four graves [013, 016, 017, 019] were observed within Trench 2 and one [021] within Trench 3 (*Illus 2*). All burials lay in a west-east direction, with the heads lying to the west; the skeletons lay at a depth of between 1.2 and 1.5m below ground level. Four adults and one sub-adult were encountered. The human remains were in an excellent state of preservation and seemed to have been undisturbed with no evidence for intercutting burials. [SK019] was damaged during machine excavation of the trench and therefore the lower legs and feet are no longer in situ.

Visible grave cuts [013, 019, 021] were seen cutting into subsoil [002] and river terrace deposit [003] below. Burials [016] & [017] did not have visible grave cuts but are assumed to have the same stratigraphic relationships as those that did.

Grave cuts were not visible in the overlying topsoil deposit [012] suggesting either that this material was imported at a later date, or more likely that soil formation processes have remained sufficiently active over sufficient time to render the upper part of the grave cuts undetectable.

During cleaning of the 19th century wall foundation [010] disarticulated non-adult human remains were encountered suggesting disturbance of a burial during its construction. This indicates that the burials predate the construction of the walls.

A north-south orientated linear feature [005] with a U-shaped profile was located within Trench 1, measuring 1.1m wide and 0.6m deep. It contained multiple deposits (*Illus 3*) – four successive fills were noted [004], [007], [008] and [009] representing the gradual infilling of an open ditch over time. No dating evidence was retrieved from any of the fills. There was no evidence that the cut of the feature extended into [012] therefore suggesting that it is reasonably old.

Foundation walls of similar construction and dimensions were uncovered in Trench 2, orientated east-west [010, 018] and Trench 3 orientated north-south [020] (*Illus 5*).

Pottery retrieved from within and around the foundation walls suggests an 18th – 19th century origin (Appendix 2). Construction cuts for the foundations were not visible within [012], although they must have existed.

4.4 Phase 4

At some point the structures represented by the foundation walls were demolished. Deposits of rubble of similar composition and date to the foundations were observed at various points in the evaluation trenches within topsoil deposit [012].

In two cases the relationship between these deposits and the topsoil was not clear. A vertical sided cut 1.4m wide and 1m deep [014] was observed within Trench 2, truncating subsoil [002] and filled with modern red-brick and limestone rubble [024]. No cut for this feature was observed in the overlying topsoil [012], yet the feature was clearly modern, and ought to have been cut through from the level of the modern ground surface. If the upper part of cut [014] had been backfilled with topsoil it would have not been easily detectable. The alternative explanation is that part or all of topsoil [012] was imported following both the construction and demolition of the 19th century walls directly upon an earlier ground surface lying at the top of subsoil horizon [002] – this seems improbable.

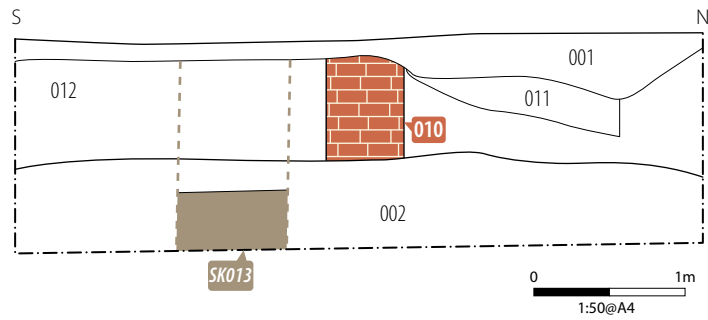
A second lens of sandy mortar [015] was observed within Trench 2, again lying within topsoil [012]. This deposit is interpreted as resulting from recent activity in the garden, possibly relating to the demolition of the 18th – 19th century structures.

Further rubble deposits were definitely of recent character – [011] was observed in Trench 2 and was located against the south face of wall [010], overlying topsoil [012] (*Illus 6*).

Illus 6 ▶

Trench 2; W-facing section with (011) and [010]

Within Trench 4 a similar rubble deposit composed of orange brick, tile and limestone fragments [022] was encountered located directly below the modern turf [001], and overlying topsoil [012]. It extended 0.3m eastward into the trench and 6m in a north-south direction. This same deposit also appeared to extend into the north-east corner of Trench 3. This deposit probably derived from the demolition of the buildings that were previously present on the site or may have been laid down as a foundation layer for the area's previous use as a tennis court in the early 20th century.



5. DISCUSSION

5.1 The burials

The burials appear to lie in a single layer (*ie* without stacking), and if there is any organisation to their positions it is within reasonably loose rows, suggesting that burial within the proposed development area was not particularly dense or well planned.

Based on their orientation it seems very likely that the burials are Christian and their proximity to the parish church suggests that they are associated with its development as a religious site. At the earliest therefore, the burials could date to the Saxon period from around the 9th century AD, when historic records of a minster church at Beckford appear.

According to the available historic maps the boundaries of the present day churchyard date were set as far back as 1884. It might be inferred that the present day bounds of this churchyard date at least as far back as 1538 when the registers of burials begin (British History Online: Beckford). If correct this would provide the most recent cut-off date for the date of the burials.

In light of the research objectives outlined in the regional research framework concerning medieval demographics and the development of parish churches and monastic sites (Hunt 2011), the burials present within the proposed development area are assessed as having a moderate or 'regional' significance.

5.2 Linear features

Of the two linear features within the site, [023] is most enigmatic. It is probably old, but no clues to its purpose were recovered. Feature [005] is more substantial. Its alignment at right-angles to Main Street and the evidence that it stood open for a period of time suggest that this feature could be interpreted as a property boundary, possibly of medieval date. However, the feature was

not recorded crossing Trench 3 as a property boundary running from the High Street would have been expected to.

This feature derives its significance from its evidential potential to provide information on the development of this part of Beckford. As it does not appear very likely to relate to a property boundary, a low or 'local' level of significance is attached to it.

5.3 The later buildings

The stone foundations were associated with artefacts and building material of 18th or 19th century date, suggestive of domestic occupation (Appendix 1). There was no indication that intact floor levels or cellars were present. The walls were thin and did not have deep foundations, suggesting that the structures formed by them were not substantial.

It is possible that the foundations represent structures built in the garden of Dalton house following the reorganisation of property boundaries on this side of the street. There is no evidence on the consulted historic mapping for any structures being located in this area after 1884, although local rumour records that some type of structure may have been built within the garden during this period as part of a feud between neighbours (M Spice pers comm.). A low or 'local' level of significance is therefore attached to these building remains.



6. CONCLUSION

The proposed development has the potential to affect a medieval burial ground of regional significance. Any archaeological remains lying within the construction footprint of the proposed building would be likely to suffer a high degree of disturbance. However, the proposed building will be located in the vicinity of Trench 4, where no burials were found.

The locations of Trenches 2 and 3, where burials were found, are intended to be the driveway and front garden of the new property respectively. Some ground reduction is planned for these areas, but disturbance will not be as severe as within the building footprint. Controlled excavation and analysis of any burials at risk of disturbance from the proposed development would have the positive effect of contributing to regional archaeological research goals relating to medieval populations in Worcestershire.

The proposed development also has the potential to affect locally significant remains relating to the development of the village of Beckford in the medieval and post-medieval periods. These remains are not considered sufficiently significant to warrant preservation in situ. The negative effects of any disturbance of these remains could be balanced by retrieval of evidence about the development of Beckford through implementation of an appropriately designed programme of archaeological work.

6 The presence of Christian burials within the proposed development area has additional statutory implications under the Disused Burial Grounds (Amendment) Act 1981. Advice on the effect of this legislation should be sought from the Ministry of Justice.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Hunt, J 2011 'The medieval period' pp173-210 in Watt, S (ed) *The Archaeology of the West Midlands: A Framework for Research*, Oxbow Books: Oxford.

7.1 Websites

British History Online: Beckford Parish <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=66410&strquery=beckford> accessed 03/10/2012

British History Online: The Priory of Beckford <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=40282&strquery=beckford#s2> accessed 03/10/2012

Open Domesday: Beckford <http://domesdaymap.co.uk/place/SO9735/beckford/> accessed 3/10/12

8. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Site Registers

Appendix 1.1 Trench registers

Trench	Length (m)	Width (m)	Average depth (m)
1	10	1.6	1.4
2	11	1.6	1.4
3	11	1.6	1.5
4	10	1.6	1.5

Appendix 1.2 Context register

Context	Description	Dimensions
001	Modern turf line	0.2m D
002	Subsoil	0.5m D
003	River terrace deposits	–
004	Fill of possible ditch [005]	1.5m W x 0.6m D
005	Cut of linear feature	2.2m x 1.1m D
006	Foundation wall in Tr 1	2m x 0.48m x 0.3m
007	Dark red brown sand fill of [005]	1.2m W x 0.1m D
008	Mid grey brown silt loam fill of [005]	1.2m W x 0.1m D
009	Light grey brown silt sand fill of [005]	2.2m W x 0.34m D
010	Foundation wall Tr 2	1.6m x 0.5m x 0.5m
011	Rubble filled deposit associated with [010] demolition	1.6m x 1.5m x 0.25m
012	Dark brownish grey silty loam topsoil	0.9m D
013	Skeleton – Tr 2	–
014	Cut of rubbish pit – Tr 2	1.4m W x 1m D
015	Lens associated with wall construction	0.68m x 0.15m D
016	Skeleton Tr 2.	–
017	Skeleton Tr 2	–
018	Foundation wall Tr 2	1.6m x 0.5m x 0.38m
019	Skeleton Tr 2	–
020	Foundation wall Tr 3	1.6m x 0.6m x 0.4m
021	Skeleton Tr 3	–
022	Rubble filled debris layer seen in Tr 4	6m x 0.2m D
023	Linear feature	1.6m x 0.4m x 0.2m
024	Fill of rubbish pit [014]	1.4m W x 1m D
025	Light grey brown sand silt fill of [023]	1.6m x 0.4m x 0.2m

Appendix 1.3 Photographic register

Shot	C/S #692	B/W #699	Digital	Direction	Description
1	1	1	01	–	ID shot
2	2	2	02	S	General site shot
3	3	3	03	S	Wall structure – Tr 2 [010]
4	–	–	04	E	Digging – Tr 3
5	–	–	05	E	Digging – Tr 3
6	–	–	06	–	Grave cut base of Tr 3
7	4	4	07	S	Foundation wall – Tr 1 [006]
8	5	5	08	S	Ditch like feature – Tr 1 [005]
9	6	6	09	S	N-facing section – Tr 1
10	7	7	10	W	E-facing section – Tr 1 with [006]
11	8	8	11	W	Tr 1
12	9	9	12	S	N-facing section [005] Tr 1
13	–	–	13	S	[010] Tr 2 wall (over exposed)
14	10	10	14	S	[010] Tr 2 wall
15	11	11	15	N	[010] Wall Tr 2, S-facing section
16	12	12	16	W	E-facing section with [010] and (011)
17	13	13	17	E	W-facing section with (011)
18	14	14	18	E	SK013 – Tr 2
19	15	15	19	–	SK016 – Tr 2
20	16	16	20	E	W-facing section (015) – Tr 2
21	17	17	21	E	W-facing section (014) – Tr 2
22	18	18	22	–	Sk017 – Tr 2
23	19	19	23	S	[018] Wall – Tr 2
24	20	20	24	–	SK019 – Tr 2
25	21	21	25	N	General shot – Tr 2
26	22	22	26	W	Tr 3
27	23	23	27	E	W-facing section Tr 3 with wall [020]
28	24	24	28	W	E-facing section Tr 3 with wall [020]
29	25	25	29	–	SK021 – Tr 3 grave cut visible
30	26	26	30	N	Tr 4
31	27	27	31	SW	W-facing section Tr 4 with (022)
32	28	28	32	N	[023]
33	29	29	33	W	E-facing section Tr 4 with (022)
34	–	–	34	SW	General site shot
35	–	–	35	W	General site shot



Appendix 1.4 Drawing Register

Drw	Scale	Plan / Section	Description
1	1:20	Section	N-facing section Tr 1
2	1:50	Plan	Tr 1
3	1:50	Plan	Tr 2
4	1:50	Section	Tr 2 – W-facing section
5	1:50	Plan	Tr 3
6	1:50	Plan	Tr 4
7	NTS	Section	Tr 2 – W-facing section
8	NTS	Section	Tr 2 – N-facing section
9	1:20	Section	Tr 4 – E-facing section

Appendix 2 Finds assessment

Julie Franklin & Stephanie Ratkai

The finds assemblage amounted to five sherds of pottery (0.327kg) and one piece of brick. All were modern in date. The pottery included various types of modern stonewares, representing jars or flagons and a yellow glazed mixing bowl. There was also a sherd from a post-medieval redware bowl or pancheon. All are likely to have been deposited in the 19th century, though few types may be a little earlier.

The brick has been subjected to extreme heat at one end. This would be consistent with it being used in a furnace or kiln, or

possibly with an accidental fire while the brick was *in situ* within a structure. Alternatively it may simply have been overfired.

References

Hurst, D & Rees, H 1992 'Pottery fabrics; a multi-period series for the county of Hereford and Worcester' in S Woodiwiss (ed) *Iron Age and Roman Salt production and the medieval Town of Droitwich*, CBA Research Report 1981, pp 200–209.

Appendix 2.1 Pottery catalogue

The pottery fabrics codes are taken from those published in Hurst and Rees 1992.

Context	Sherds	Base	Body	Weight (g)	Ware	Fabric	Description	Spot date	Period
018	1	-	1	141	Misc. Stonewares	Fabric 81.4	Jar/flagon. Large body sherd. Glazed yellow-brown on exterior, clear to yellow-brown on interior	L.18th/19th	Mod
U/S	1	-	1	126	Misc. Stonewares	Fabric 81.4	Jar/flagon. Large body sherd. Salt-glazed mottled two tone brown and pale grey, internal lead glaze yellow brown	L.18th/19th	Mod
U/S	2	1	1	36	Misc. Stonewares	Fabric 81.4	Bowl. Ring base from large mixing bowl. Yellow lead glaze on interior and exterior	19th	Mod
U/S	1	-	1	24	Post-medieval Redware	Fabric 78	Bowl/pancheon. Small body sherd. Dark brown lead glaze on interior	18th/19th	Mod

9

Appendix 2.2 Finds catalogue

Context	Context notes	Qty	Weight (g)	Material	Object	Description	Period
006	from within wall	1	624	CBM	Brick	Large corner sherd of brick. Red earthenware? stock-moulded brick, sandy fabric with very large inclusion of white clay/stone. Overfired at one end to point of vitrification, consistent with use within a kiln, furnace or oven of some kind. Thickness 71mm.	Mod



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