

KRAS/02



LAND EAST OF SHAW LANE, ALBRIGHTON, SHROPSHIRE

Trial Trench Field Evaluation

commissioned by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd
on behalf of Boningale Homes Ltd

14/05456/REM

March 2015

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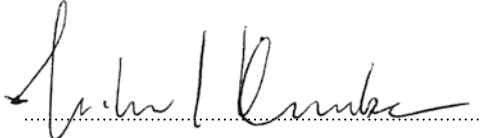
March 2015

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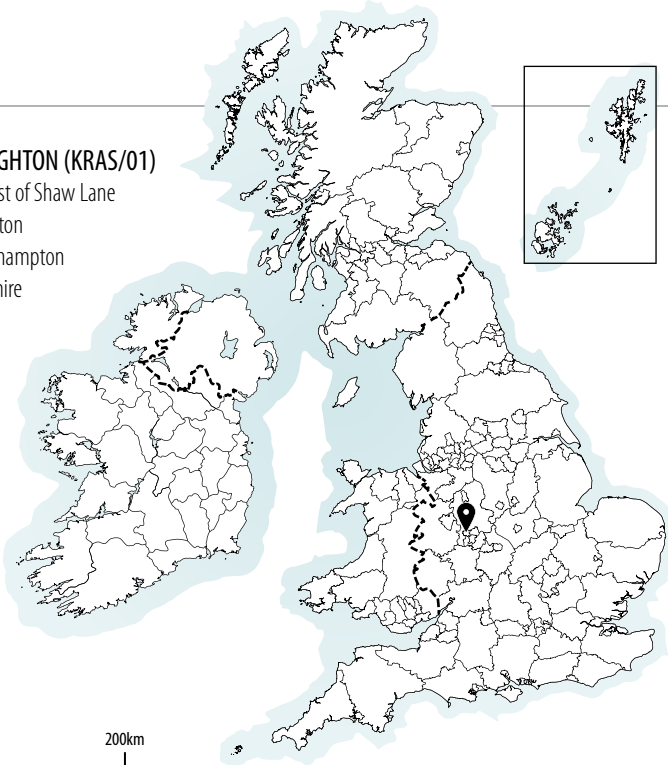
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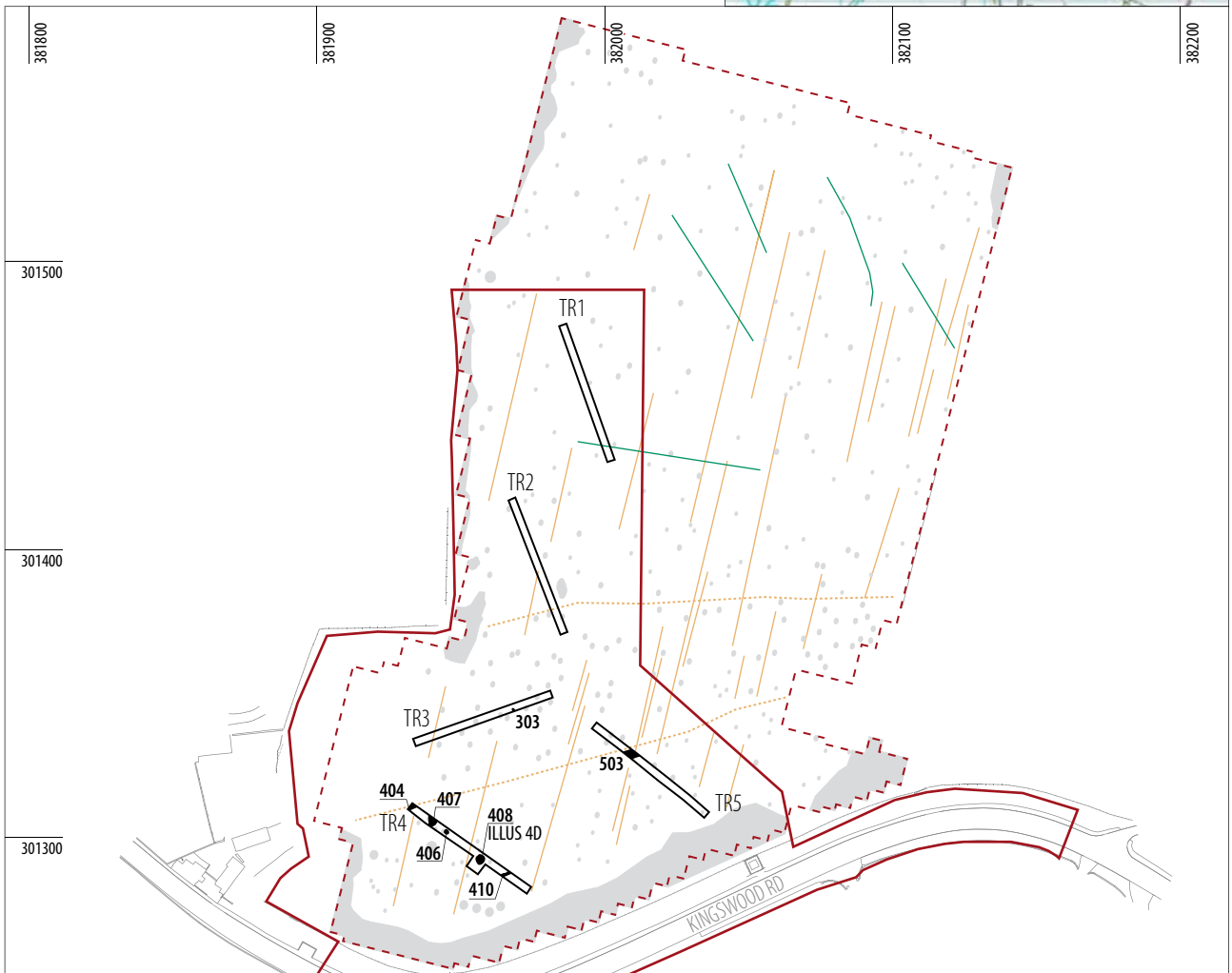
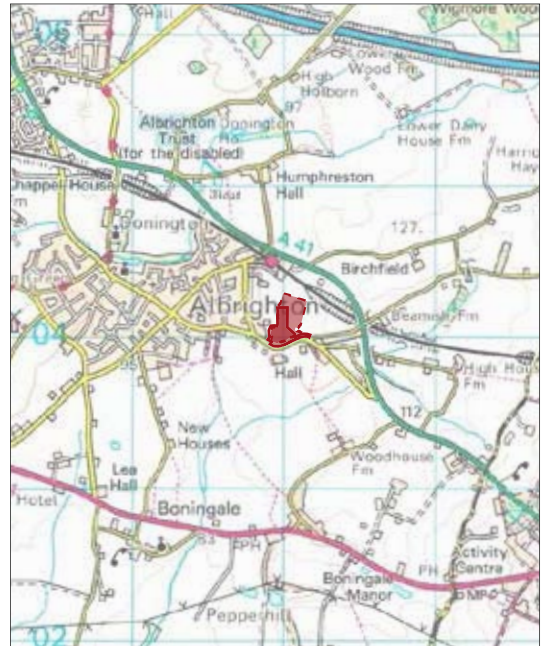
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ALBRIGHTON (KRAS/01)

land East of Shaw Lane
Albrighton
Wolverhampton
Shropshire



0 200km



KEY

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| development boundary | ferrous (discreet anomaly/trend) |
| geophysical survey area | plough (discreet anomaly/trend) |
| trench location | uncertain origin (discreet anomaly/trend) |
| archaeological features | old field boundary (discreet anomaly/trend) |

0 50m
scale 1:2,500 @ A4



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ILLUS 1

Site location

LAND EAST OF SHAW LANE, ALBRIGHTON, SHROPSHIRE

Trial Trench Field Evaluation

Headland Archaeology undertook a trial trench field evaluation on a site to the east of Albrighton in Shropshire. A large circular pit feature containing medieval pottery dating between the 13th and 15th centuries was identified in the south of the proposed development area. No other features of comparable date were identified within the site. A former field boundary visible on 19th and 20th century maps of the site and previously identified through geophysical survey was also located.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PLANNING BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

This report presents the results of an archaeological field evaluation on land to the East of Shaw Lane, Albrighton. The archaeological works, commissioned by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) on behalf of Boningale Homes Ltd relate to a reserved matters planning application (14/05456/REM) for the residential development of the site. As a condition of the outline planning permission, the archaeological advisor to the local planning authority requested a programme of archaeological work. The required works took the form of a geophysical survey which was undertaken in December 2014 (Lawton 2015). After consideration of the results, the archaeological advisor recommended additional mitigation in the form of a trial trench evaluation of the site.

Headland Archaeology undertook the required works in March 2015 in accordance with a Project Design agreed with the archaeological advisor (Craddock-Bennett 2015).

1.2 SITE LOCATION, DESCRIPTION AND SETTING

The proposed development site (illus 1) comprises approximately 2.65ha of arable land located at NGR 381939, 304023 (site centre).

The site is located on the eastern edge of Albrighton to the north of Kingswood Road. To the west the site is bounded by the rear of properties fronting onto Shaw Lane, and to the north and east the site borders arable land.

From topographic high points at c.106.50m in the north and south the land dips to a low point of 104.90m in the centre of the site.

The solid geology of the site comprises Mudstone and Halite-stone of the Mercia Mudstone Group. Superficial deposits of Devensian-Diamicton till are recorded over the northern half of the site (BGS 2015).

1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A desk-based assessment of the site (CgMs 2008) identified a low potential for previously unrecorded archaeological remains, although identified that the area had not been the subject of any systematic investigation.

No prehistoric or Roman remains have been recorded within 500m of the site and no Saxon remains have been identified either, however, Albrighton is included in Domesday suggesting that a settlement existed. The centre for Saxon settlement is believed to be located beneath the present village to the west of the site.

Two medieval sites are identified in the Historic Environment Record (HER), both of which are in Albrighton and relate to tenement plots to the north of the High Street and the street system which is believed to be Medieval in date.

The locations of two windmills believed to date to the post-medieval period are recorded in the vicinity of the site.



Available historic mapping dating to the 19th and 20th century records few changes. The land has remained agricultural and development has only approached the proposal site within the past 20 years, but has not encroached on it.

Prior to the current works an updated HER search was undertaken. No additional archaeological potential was identified for the site.

A magnetometer survey was carried out over the development area by GSB Prospection Ltd. in December 2014 (Lawton 2015) (Illus 1). Two former field boundaries visible on historic mapping were detected on a parallel east-west alignment over the central part of the site. The boundaries which are visible on the Albrighton tithe map (1846) were still present on Ordnance Survey mapping dating to the 1960s. Several trends in the geophysical survey data were classified as being of uncertain origin; however, they were considered to be most likely natural or agricultural in origin. The survey did not identify any anomalies believed to be of archaeological origin.

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the extent, nature and importance of any buried heritage assets within the proposed development area.

Specifically the evaluation aimed to:

- provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site so that if significant archaeological remains are present a strategy for their mitigation can be developed (following the National Planning Policy Framework);
- assess the impact of previous land use on the site;
- produce a site archive for deposition with Shropshire Museums Service and to provide information for accession to the Shropshire Historic Environment Record.

3 METHOD

The fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the following documents:

- *Code of Conduct* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014)
- *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014)

The evaluation comprised the excavation of five trenches each measuring 50m x 1.8m in plan. Excavation was undertaken using a JCB excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision, with topsoil and subsoil deposits being removed by machine and excavation terminating at the uppermost significant archaeological horizon or at the upper surface of geological deposits.

The stratigraphic sequence was recorded in full in each of the trenches.

All recording followed standard archaeological guidelines as set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). The recorded contexts were

assigned unique numbers and recording was undertaken on Headland Archaeology pro forma trench and context record sheets. Digital photographic images, colour slide and black and white photographs were taken of all trenches with a graduated metric scale clearly visible. Digital surveying was undertaken using a Trimble dGPS system.

Fieldwork was undertaken between the 2nd and 4th March 2015.

4 RESULTS

Full context descriptions are provided in Appendix 1. The following results section summarises the results of the finds (Appendix 2) assessment.

4.1 TRENCH 1

Located at the highest point within the development area on the crest of a rise in the topography, geological deposits were identified at a shallow depth (0.4m) within Trench 1. No archaeological deposits or features were identified.

4.2 TRENCH 2

No archaeological deposits were identified in Trench 2, however, the trench revealed a deepening of the subsoil horizon [201] from a thickness of 0.20m in the north of the trench to 0.5m in the south (Illus 2). The increased thickness of the deposit correlated to the decreasing elevation of the trench which sloped from north to south.

4.3 TRENCH 3

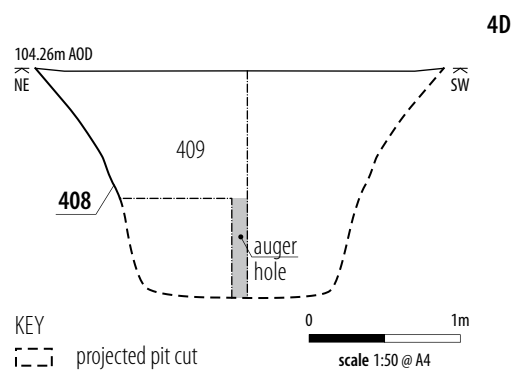
Trench 3 was located at the lowest point of the development area. A dark brown, sandy clay topsoil [300] overlay a mid brown clayey sand subsoil [301] which in turn overlay degraded bedrock [302] at a depth of 0.80m below ground level. The substantial depth of topsoil and subsoil deposits potentially relates to erosional processes depositing material within a natural depression in the topography of the field. An irregular feature [303] at the subsoil/bedrock interface is likely to relate to root activity (Illus 3).

4.4 TRENCH 4

Geological deposits within Trench 4 were identified at a depth of c.0.6m and comprised a sandstone bedrock interspersed with patches of clean sterile sand. The geological deposits were overlain by a mid-brown clayey sand [401] measuring 0.20m in depth and a dark brown humic topsoil [400].

At the north-western end of Trench 4 a NE-SW orientated linear feature [404] was identified. Excavation of the feature revealed a mid-brown clayey sand fill [405] containing a single sherd of coarse roof tile dating to the late medieval or early post-medieval periods. The profile of the feature could not be ascertained as the feature continued beyond the bounds of the trench to the north, however, the location of the feature correlates to the position of the E-W field boundary identified by geophysical survey.

Two areas of modern intrusion were identified to the south-east of linear [404]. Feature [407] was an irregularly shaped cut measuring



ILLUS 4A

Pit feature [408] (camera facing south)

ILLUS 4B

Pit feature [408] NW facing section

ILLUS 4C

Pit feature [408] NE facing section

ILLUS 4D

Pit feature [408] NW facing section drawing

1.7m in length and occupying the full width (1.8m) of the trench. The feature was cut from the level of topsoil [400] and contained rotting crop stalks suggesting that it was of recent date. A further area of modern intrusion [406] was located to the south-east of [407]. Excavation identified modern bottle glass within the dark brown sandy clay fill of the feature.

Feature [408] was a circular pit measuring 2.8m in diameter (Illus 4). The feature originally extended beyond the bounds of the evaluation trench, however, at the request of the archaeological advisor to Shropshire County Council the trench was extended to the south-west to reveal the full extent of the feature. A quarter of the feature was hand excavated to a depth of 1.00m; the clayey sand fill [409] was unstable in section and precluded further hand excavation on safety grounds. The base of the feature was identified at a depth of 1.60m through the use of a hand auger. The pit which was cut through a red sandy clay deposit [403] and sandstone bedrock [402] exhibited a regular double-break profile (45° over upper 0.30m, 70° to depth of 1.00m+). The homogenous fill contained infrequent sherds of pottery dated to between the mid-13th and 15th centuries.

A sherd of pottery dating to the 17th century was identified on the surface of the feature, but is believed to be intrusive. Infrequent charcoal flecks were identified within the fill, however, there was no indication of the original purpose of the feature.

Linear [410] was located on an E-W alignment to the south-east of pit [408] (Illus 5). The feature, which measured 0.60m in width and 0.16m in depth was irregular in section and contained a sterile mid-brown sand fill [411]. The feature is believed to represent a geological variation rather than an archaeological feature.

4.5 TRENCH 5

The continuation of linear feature [404] was identified within Trench 5 (Illus 6). Linear [503] was identified at a depth of 0.40m below ground level and measured 2.70m in width. The feature, which was cut into bedrock [502] was filled with a mid-dark brown clayey sand deposit [504]. Modern white glazed pottery was recovered from the fill.



ILLUS 5

Linear feature [410] (camera facing east)

ILLUS 6

Trench 5 – Field boundary [503] SW facing section

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 GEOLOGICAL DEPOSITS

Geological deposits across the site were generally consistent and were composed of a sandstone bedrock. Although the geology of the site is recorded as Mudstone and Halite-stone (BGS 2015), Bromsgrove Sandstone is recorded as being present adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site. It would appear that sandstone deposits are also present within the site itself.

A natural depression towards the centre of the site has led to increased depths of subsoil.

Although originally identified as an archaeological feature, the irregular nature of linear [410] and the lack of archaeological indicators within its fill [411], suggests that the feature represents a variation in the geology and is not of archaeological interest.

5.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL DEPOSITS

Medieval

Pit feature [408] is very regular in both plan and section and has been carefully excavated into geological deposits. The purpose of the pit is unknown, but the clean nature of the cut would appear to rule out quarrying as a function, and suggests a more long-term use potentially relating to storage or waste disposal.

Post-medieval

Linear feature [404/503] relates to the field boundary identified on historic maps of the site and through geophysical survey.

Modern

Features [406] and [407] relate to an area of modern disturbance associated with recent farming practices or potentially the excavation and backfill of geotechnical trial pits associated with the current planning application.

Assessment of geophysical survey results

The correlation between the results of the trial trenching and geophysical survey has been mixed. The survey clearly indicated the southern field boundary which was subsequently excavated as feature [404/503]. A further field boundary identified by geophysical survey, however, was not identified in the southern part of Trench 2 as expected. It is possible that the feature was only present within the subsoil strata and was not readily observable during trenching.

The presence of pit feature [408] was not clearly identified by geophysical survey. It is possible that the homogenous, undisturbed fill of the feature rendered it undetectable to magnetometry.

6 CONCLUSION

The program of archaeological works has evaluated the archaeological resource within the proposed development site.

A circular pit feature dated to the medieval period has been identified in the south of the proposed development area. No associated features were identified.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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8 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 TRENCH AND CONTEXT REGISTER

TR1	Orientation	L (m)	W (m)	Av. D (m)
	NW-SE	50	1.8	0.4

Context	Description	D of deposit (mBGL)
100	Topsoil: dark brown, sandy clay, very humic.	0.0–0.4
101	Geological deposits: varying between sandstone bedrock and deposits of clean, sterile sand and red clay.	0.4+

Summary

Highest point in field, crown of rise. No archaeological deposits.

TR2	Orientation	L (m)	W (m)	Av. D(m)
	NW-SE	50	1.8	0.7

Context	Description	D of deposit (mBGL)
200	Topsoil: dark brown, sandy clay, very humic.	0.0–0.4
201	Subsoil: mid brown, clayey sand with orange hue, deposit deeper (0.5m) in south of trench compared to the north (0.2m).	0.4–0.9 (max)
202	Geological deposits: varying between sandstone bedrock and deposits of clean red sand.	0.9+

Summary

Topography of site slopes from north to south over the course of the trench. No archaeological deposits.

TR3	Orientation	L (m)	W (m)	Av. D (m)
	E-W	50	1.8	0.8

Context	Description	D of deposit (mBGL)
300	Topsoil: dark brown, sandy clay, very humic.	0.0–0.4
301	Subsoil: mid brown, clayey sand with orange hue.	0.4–0.8
302	Bedrock: degraded in places.	0.8+
303	Area of rooting at interface of subsoil and natural (0.75 x 0.50m in plan) extending out of southern trench face. Black humic fill, no finds, very irregular.	0.8–1.05

Summary

Trench occupies the lowest point in the development area – an apparently natural hollow in the topography. No archaeological deposits.

TR4	Orientation	L (m)	W (m)	Av. D (m)
	NW-SE	50	1.8	0.6

Context	Description	D of deposit (mBGL)
400	Topsoil: dark brown, sandy clay, very humic.	0.0–0.4
401	Subsoil: mid brown, clayey sand with orange hue.	0.4–0.6
402	Geological deposit: sandstone bedrock and clean sand deposits.	0.6+
403	Geological deposit: red sandy clay deposit in vicinity of pit [408]. Approximately 6m in length and occupying full width of trench.	0.4–0.8
404	Cut of field boundary (W=0.8m): aligned E-W, 30° side, base not within trench.	0.6–0.9
405	Fill of field boundary [404]: mid brown, clayey sand.	0.6–0.9
406	Modern disturbance (3x1.3m): cut from topsoil level, dark brown, sandy clay, charcoal flecks and modern glass.	0.1–0.6
407	Modern disturbance (L=1.7m): cut from topsoil level, dark brown, sandy clay, charcoal flecks, rotting stalks, full trench width.	0.1–0.6
408	Cut of pit (L=2.8m, W=2.8m): circular, sides 45° break at top to 70° break, base unknown (identified by auger at 1.6m).	0.6–2.2
409	Fill of pit [408]: mid brown with red hue, clayey sand, clear interface, homogenous consistency, infrequent charcoal and rounded stones (0.05–0.1m).	0.6–2.2
410	Cut of possible linear ditch (W=0.6m): orientated E-W, irregular, not convincing feature.	0.8–0.96
411	Fill of possible linear ditch [410]: mid brown sand, no inclusions.	0.8–0.96

Summary

Located north of the road. Two modern features identified cut from level of topsoil. Possible linear ditch feature orientated E-W also identified. Pit [408] containing medieval pottery investigated and augured to base.

TR5	Orientation	L (m)	W (m)	Av. D (m)
	NW-SE	50	1.8	0.5

Context	Description	D of deposit (mBGL)
500	Topsoil: dark brown, sandy clay, very humic.	0.0–0.4
501	Subsoil: mid brown, clayey sand with orange hue.	0.4–0.5
502	Geological deposit: reddish brown sand with patches of sandstone bedrock.	0.5+
503	Cut of field boundary (W=2.7m): orientated E-W, cut into bedrock.	0.4–0.62
504	Fill of field boundary [503]: mid-dark brown clayey sand, very stony, contained modern white glaze ceramic.	0.4–0.62

Summary

Flattish field with slight slope to NW. Field boundary containing modern pot.

APPENDIX 2 FINDS ASSESSMENT

STEPHANIE RATKAI

The assemblage numbered eight sherds (97g) of pottery and one sherd (57g) of ceramic building material. All were of medieval to early post-medieval date, the earliest finds being no later than the 14th century.

Context	Pottery (Medi)	Pottery (Medi)	Pottery (PM)	Pottery (PM)	CBM	CBM	Dating
	Count	Wgt	Count	Wgt	Count	Wgt	
401	1	43	–	–	–	–	M13th-14th
405	–	–	–	–	1	57	LMedi/EPM
409	6	27	1	27	–	–	M13th-15
Total	7	70g	1	27g	1	57g	

TABLE 1

Assemblage summary by context

Both medieval and post-medieval pottery was present. The medieval pottery consisted of a buff-white ware jug sherd with a thick blue-grey core and sherds from a pipkin (medieval ceramic saucepan) in an orange sandy ware with buff surfaces. Both fabrics are likely to have been made in the Black Country. The pipkin is in a fabric similar to those known from Birmingham ('ip' fabrics, Rátkai, 2009, 99-100) and Lichfield ('cm' and 'irp' fabrics, Rátkai, 2004, 73) amongst others. The fabric colour is variable from cream to orange to pale pink and salmon pink, often with quite contrasting colours within the same sherd or pot, and indeed the pipkin has in places a distinct cream core. These fabrics are thought to have been made from Coal Measure clays and have a rather broad date range of c1250-1500. Although pipkins were in use in the second half of the 13th century in the West Midlands, mainly on high-status sites, such as castles, they are found more commonly in the 14th and particularly 15th centuries.

Appendix 2.1 Finds catalogue

Context	Qty	Weight (g)	Material	Object	Description	Spot date
401	1	43	Pottery (Medi)	WW	jug base	M13th-14th
405	1	57	CBM	Roof Tile	flat roof tile, coarse dark red fabric	LMedi/EPM
409	1	27	Pottery (PM)	Coarseware	Wide-mouthed bowl	17th
409	6	27	Pottery (Medi)	CMC	pipkin, rim-body, sherds join, trace of internal orange glaze, external soot, quite heavily abraded surfaces	M13th-15th

The post-medieval pottery consisted of an orange coarseware bowl base sherd. The bowl was glazed on the interior with a clear lead glaze, producing a rich tan brown with darker patches where iron impurities in the clay have come to the surface. The exterior of the bowl was covered with a thick red-brown slip. Several very similar vessels are known from Dudley Castle in Civil War deposits (Rátkai 1987). The absence of under-glaze slip suggests a date in the first half of the 17th century, possibly even as early as the late 16th century. The source for the Dudley vessels is without doubt Wednesbury, in the Black Country, and this is almost certainly the source for the Albrighton bowl also.

Despite Albrighton being roughly equidistant between Telford, Shropshire and Wolverhampton (formerly Staffordshire), the pottery from Kingswood Road indicates that its pottery belongs in the south Staffordshire tradition, itself a likely indication that the economic focus of Albrighton was with this area also.

The assemblage is not large and thus any dating evidence gleaned from it should be used with caution. The six sherds of medieval pottery found in pit fill (409) give a reasonably secure date, the single post-medieval sherd being found on the surface of the pit.

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