

Ambrey Archaeology

Archaeological Evaluation

at

Tabwell Cottage,
Berrow Green Road,
Martley,
Worcestershire
WSM73557

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Archaeological evaluation at Tabwell Cottage, Berrow Green Road, Martley, Worcestershire

Summary

Ambrey Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation ahead of a proposed development near Tabwell Cottage, Martley, Worcestershire (SO 74728 58764) comprising the construction of a barn to include four stables, hay and machinery store. The evaluation was required as a condition of planning permission granted by Malvern Hills District Council (planning ref. 20/00464/FUL).

The site is located in a pasture field at the foot of the eastern slopes of Berrow Hill, a north-south spur to the north of the Malvern Hills. The site lies within an Iron Age field system probably associated with Berrow Hill Camp, a scheduled Iron Age hillfort surviving as an earthwork at the summit of the hill.

Lynchets forming the field system are evident in fields to the west of the site, and a probable earthwork runs north-south along a field boundary immediately to the east of the location of the proposed barn.

A single evaluation trench was excavated diagonally across the development area. No finds or features of archaeological significance were recorded.

Introduction

Ambrey Archaeology was commissioned by Steve Wintle to carry out an archaeological evaluation of a proposed development near Tabwell Cottage, Martley, Worcestershire (SO 74728 58764; Figure 1).

The proposed development involves the construction of a barn to include four stables, hay and machinery store. Permission for the development (planning ref. 20/00464/FUL) was granted by Malvern Hills District Council subject to conditions including a programme of archaeological works.

Aidan Smyth, Archaeology and Planning advisor to Wychavon and Malvern Hills District Councils, considered that the proposed development had the potential to impact on heritage assets (Iron Age Field System; WSM03171).

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared (Ambrey Archaeology 2020) and approved by Malvern Hills District Council.

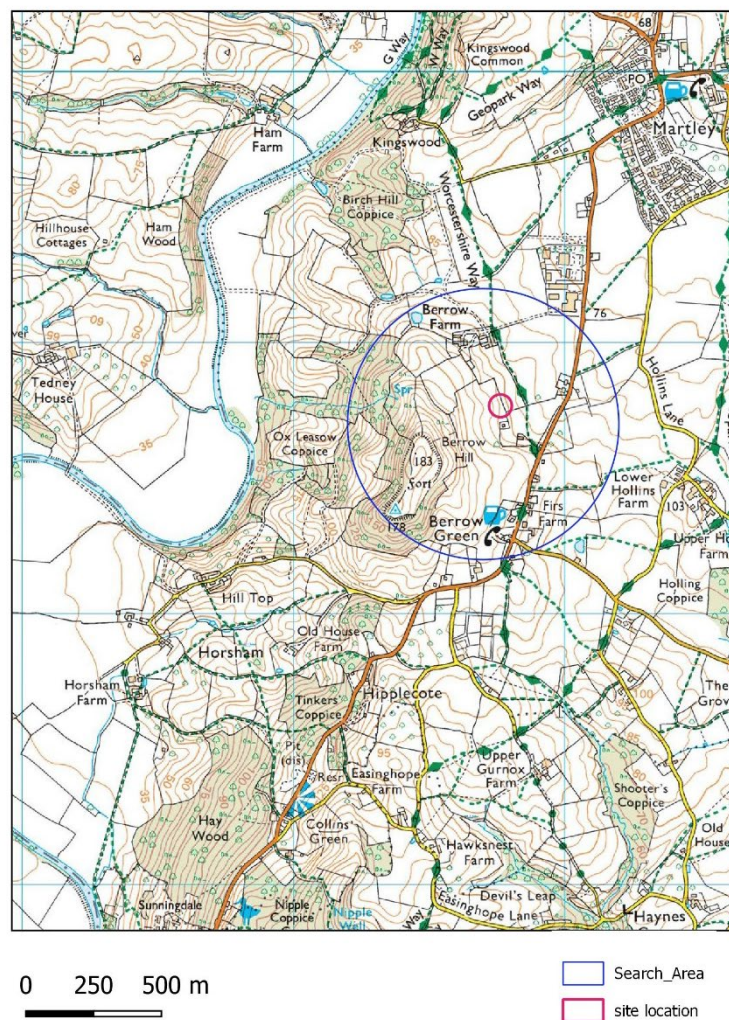


Figure 1 Site location

Location, topography and geology

The site (Plate 1, Figure 2) is located in a pasture field at the foot of the eastern slopes of Berrow Hill, a north-south spur to the north of the Malvern Hills, within an Iron Age field system associated with Berrow Hill Camp. The river Teme runs about 800m to the west of the site on the other side of Berrow Hill.

The village of Martley is located about 1.3km to the north and Berrow Green is located about 400m to the south.



Plate 1 - The site before excavation, from south-east

Lynchets associated with the field system are evident in fields to the west of the site, and a probable earthwork runs north-south along a field boundary immediately to the east of the location of the proposed barn.

Tabwell Cottage is located about 60m to the south. Bedrock at the site is of the Helsby Sandstone Formation. The site is located close to superficial deposits of head – clay sand and gravel (BGS, 2020).

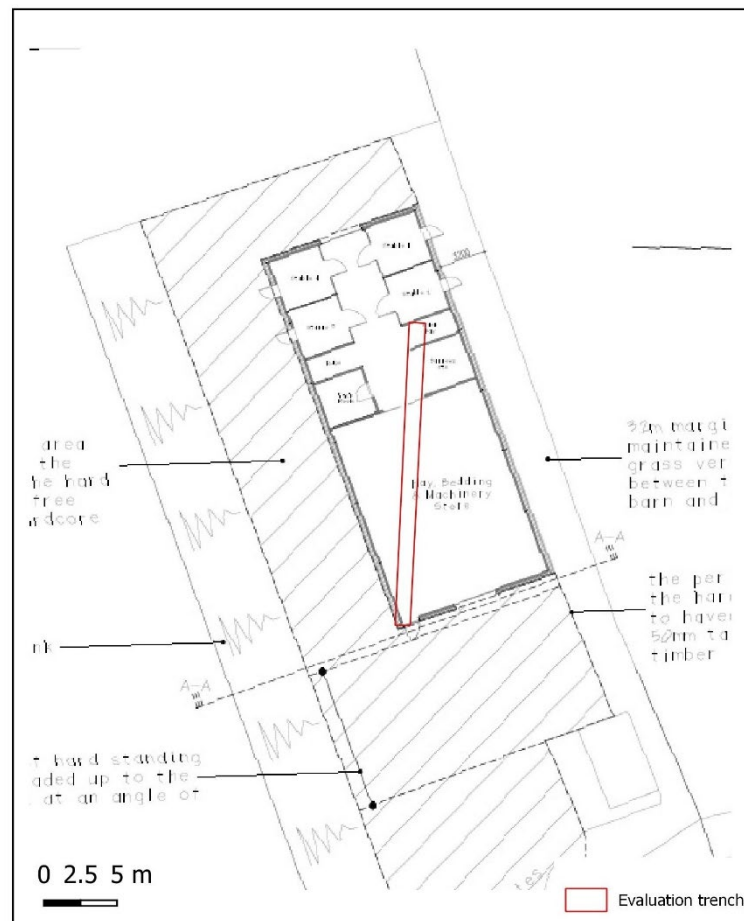


Figure 2 Evaluation trench location, (based on client's site location plan)

Archaeological background

Details of archaeological monuments located within the search area are presented in Appendix 1 and on Figure 3 in the Appendix.

The site is located close to an Area of Palaeolithic Potential as identified by Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (WSM 56936). Head deposits mapped by the BGS (2020) are located within 70m to the west of the site.

The site is located within a field system (WSM 03171, Plate 2) associated with Berrow Hill camp, a Scheduled monument of Iron Age date (WSM01272; NHLE 1005332), located about 240m to the south-west. The camp is a large multi entrance univallate hillfort, orientated north-east to south-west. Further archaeological features survive in the vicinity of the monument.



Plate 2 Iron Age lynchets from field system (WSM03171), to the north-west of the site

The site is located in an area of scattered farm settlements all dating to the 17th century; the remains of farmyard are recorded at Tabwell Cottage (WSM30406, and WSM62403, and WSM54753 Grade II listed farmhouse and farm buildings), Berrow Farm (WSM62221) and associated listed buildings are located about 230m to the north-west and Firs Farm (WSM62220) and associated listed buildings, are located approximately 400m to the south in Berrow Green.

The site is identified as piecemeal enclosure on the Worcestershire

Historic Landscapes Project (no 12631). On the tithe map of the parish of Martley (Figure 4, Appendix 3) the site is located in an irregularly shaped field to the north of Tabwell Cottage, with a small enclosure shown between the site and the cottage.

This field is unchanged on the OS first edition (Figure 5, Appendix 3).

Lidar of the site indicates colluvial slippage from Berrow Hill (Figure 6, Appendix 3).

Objectives

In accordance with the requirements of The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CifA 2014), the aims and scope of the project are to undertake sufficient fieldwork to: - determine the presence or absence of archaeologically significant deposits; identify their location, nature, date and preservation; assess their significance and assess the likely impact of the proposed development.

Methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation for the project (Ambrey Archaeology 2020) was prepared and approved by Aidan Smyth, Archaeological Advisor to Malvern Hills District Council.

Prior to commencing fieldwork, a search of the Historic Environment Record (500m radius from the centre of the site) was obtained and a safety method statement for the works was produced.

An online search of gas and electricity services was carried out prior to the project being carried out. Fieldwork was carried out on 20th November 2020. Due to the presence of a powerline in the northern part of the proposed shed location, it was decided to excavate a trench 21m in length rather than 30m as suggested in the WSI. The trench was excavated in the position shown on Figure 2.

Initial excavation of the trench (removal of topsoil and subsoil) was carried out using a mechanical excavator (JCB 3CX) fitted with a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent cleaning of the trench was undertaken by hand.

The trench was excavated to the natural substrate to allow surfaces to be cleaned and inspected. Context recording was undertaken using paper records.

Photographic recording included digital images, at a high resolution, taken with a digital SLR camera.

Details of the contexts recorded are presented in the Appendices.

Archaeological Results

No archaeological features were recorded in the trench.

Natural substrates varied between compact reddish-brown sandy clay which abutted and partially overlay a soft, mottled sandy layer at 1m to 1.2m below present ground level (Plates 3 &4).



Plate 3 – Trench, fully excavated, from south



Plate 4 – Trench fully excavated, from north

A possible feature cut into the grey sand was investigated, but was interpreted as either a variation in the natural substrate or a tree-bowl, as there was no evident cut and poor definition.



Plate 5 – Possible feature (600) from east (0.50m scale)

A thick layer of homogenous silty sand (approximately 0.76 to 0.80m deep) was recorded across the trench. This was interpreted as colluvium, given the trench's location on sloping ground near the base of Berrow Hill.



*Plate 6 – east facing section showing
Topsoil (100), Colluvium (200) and sand
(400)*

A thin layer of topsoil (approximately 0.10 to 0.20m deep) overlay the colluvium. This was similar in composition to the colluvium, being slightly darker in colour.

Conclusion

Although the proposed stable location is located within an Iron Age field system, no archaeological features were recorded in the evaluation trench.

The site's location on the lower slopes of Berrow Hill has resulted in the accumulation of a thick layer of colluvium. This overlies natural substrates of sandy clay and soft sand. Lidar imagery of the site indicates natural colluvial slippage down the slopes of Berrow Hill.

Probable terracing of the slope was observed along the inside of the hedge line to the east of the trench. It is possible that the area of the proposed barn had been modified to create a less steep gradient during the Iron Age or it is possible that slippage of material down the slope evident as a thick layer of colluvium has had the same effect. It is also possible that the field system, prominent in the upper slopes of the hill has been masked by hillwash action on the lower slopes. It is possible that a settlement would have existed on the lower slopes of the hill, in addition to the more defended settlement within the hillfort. There was no evidence, however, of domestic or other archaeology in the trench excavated.

The natural substrate mapped on the British Geological Society is listed as the Helsby Sandstone but Head deposits are noted nearby and are mapped beneath Tabwell Cottage. The natural sand recorded in the trench at a depth of 0.8m to 1m below present ground level may be related to these deposits.

Bibliography

Ambrey Archaeology 2020 Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an evaluation at Tabwell Cottage, Berrow Green Road, Martley, Worcestershire, WSM73557, dated 9th November 2020

BGS 2020, Geology of Britain viewer <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain3d/> [Accessed November 2020]

CIfA, 2014 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*

HE 2020 NHLE listing site available at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1005332> [Accessed November 2020]

Page, W & Willis-Bund, JW, 1924 *A History of the County of Worcester: Volume 4*. London, Victoria County History <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/worcs/vol4> [Accessed November 2020]

Maps

Tithe map of the parish of Martley (provided by WHER)

OS 1st edition of Worcestershire 1;2500, 1885 XXVII.11

Archive

The project archive is currently held by Ambrey Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner, the archive will be deposited with Worcestershire Museum at Hartlebury. The digital archive will be placed with ADS.