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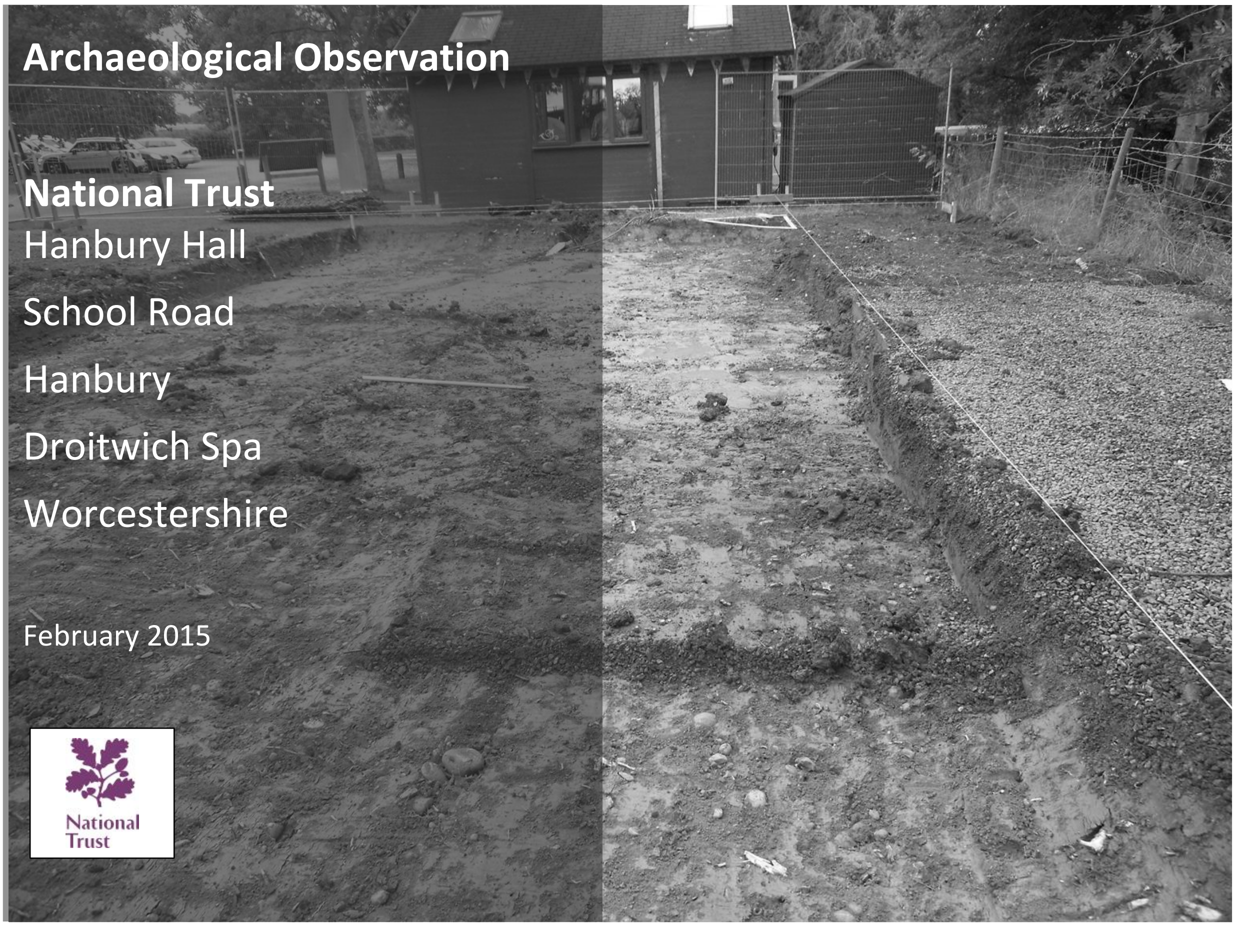

Archaeological Observation

National Trust

Hanbury Hall

School Road

Hanbury

Droitwich Spa

Worcestershire

February 2015

border archaeology

archaeology & built heritage working throughout the UK

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Cover: View northwest of the site following topsoil removal

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Contents:

1 Executive Summary

Border Archaeology Limited (BA) was instructed by Janine Young Archaeology Consultant National Trust Attingham Park Shrewsbury to carry out a programme of Archaeological Observation during the excavation of foundations for a new visitor centre at Hanbury Hall Worcestershire (NGR SO 94591 63713). The site comprised an area to the southeast of the existing visitor centre and to the east of the drive (fig. 1).

The work involved the creation of a new visitor reception building within an area of known archaeological sensitivity potentially containing further archaeological features.

However, no archaeological features were observed during excavation of the foundation for the new Visitor Centre, with natural deposits lying immediately beneath the topsoil.

2 Introduction

Border Archaeology Ltd (BAL) was instructed by Janine Young Archaeology Consultant National Trust Attingham Park Shrewsbury SY4 4TP to carry out a programme of Archaeological Observation (Watching Brief) of the excavation of foundations for a new visitor centre at Hanbury Hall School Road Hanbury Droitwich Spa Worcestershire WR9 7EA (NGR: SO 94591 63713) (*fig. 1*).

Archaeological work took place on 24th August 2015.

Fig. 1: Plan showing the location of Hanbury Hall and site of groundworks

2.1 Soils & Geology

Hanbury Hall, its Park and Becks Farm all lie within the eastern part of a large area of Keuper Marl, described as red marl with grey bands.

The soils are 'slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils with freely draining slightly acid loamy soils to the S (NT 2015).

3 Historical and Archaeological Background

Hanbury Hall is a Grade I Listed property built *c*. 1701 by William Rudhall for the chancery lawyer Thomas Vernon, with extensive alterations and restoration works carried out 1856-9. The 18th -and mid-19th -century garden and grounds are set within a landscape park. An early formal garden was reconstructed in the mid-1990s.

The manor of Hanbury was held by the Bishop of Worcester during the medieval period, subsequently passing to the Crown, who sold it in the 1590s to Sir Thomas Leighton of Feckenham Worcestershire (1530-1610), a soldier and diplomat, who served as the Governor of Guernsey and Jersey from 1570 to 1609 and as MP for Worcestershire in 1601.

The Leightons subsequently sold the manor and advowson to Edward Vernon in 1631, whose grandson Thomas (d 1721) used his considerable fortune to enlarge the family estate at Hanbury. A new house was completed *c.* 1701 and remained in the ownership of the Vernons until 1962, when the property eventually passed to the National Trust under the will of Sir George Vernon (d 1940).

A substantial Grade II listed late 18th -century lodge stands at the main entrance to the Hall, which is approached along a curving main drive and through an avenue of trees leading away to the SE.

The present Hall replaced an earlier building and it is possible that a pond immediately to the W may represent the remains of a moat encircling the earlier house. The principal SE front is of brick with stone dressings comprising two storeys and 11 bays; the central bays are recessed with a pediment supported on half columns over three of these. A date of 1701 is displayed between the front door and a centre window. The side elevations are also of 11 bays, those to the centre being recessed to create pavilions to each corner.

Some 30m NW of the Hall, a roughly contemporary Grade II* Listed Long Gallery is linked to the main house by a brick wall rising to a height of some 6m, whilst an early 18th –century stable block and 18th –century game larder, both Grade II listed, are situated to the N.

The Gardens at Hanbury are designated Grade II in the Historic England *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens* (List entry No. 1000883). The original layout of *c*. 1701 appears to have been the work of George London (*c*. 1640–1714), who also evidently established the Grade II listed ha-ha and a number of cedar avenues, largely replaced by oak in the late 19th century, which flank the main approach. London is noted principally for parterre gardens designed in partnership with Henry Wise at Hampton Court, Chelsea Hospital and Chatsworth, along with other notable properties; his gardens at Hanbury appear to have been laid out on the SW side of the Hall. These were evidently replaced later in the century by a more naturalistic landscape but restoration works were carried out in 1993 based on contemporary views and the results of archaeological investigations.

At some point in the mid-18th century, the gardens were extended to the W.

The present gardens were designed *c.* 1855 by R. W. Billings (1813-74) and comprise a number of Grade II listed structures, including walls, gate piers and Moorish gazebos. The main planting of the pleasure grounds within the early 18th century ha-ha probably took place *c.*1860, following the reconstruction of the Hall, and many of the specimen conifers date from that period. Walled gardens lie some 200m W of the Hall and evidently date from a period post-1730s. The walls themselves are Grade II listed and are largely of 19th –century date.

The park contains extensive relict areas of 18th -or early 19th –century ridge-and-furrow cultivation, together with ponds and marl pits; the former Brick Kiln Pool to the N of the Hall is reputed to have provided clay for the bricks used in its construction. The park itself was probably created *c*. 1700 and supported a population of deer until the 1920s. A medieval deer park in the eastern part of the parish, which did not include any part of the later park, was enclosed in the 17th century.

3.1 Site specific archaeological & historical background

A Historic Landscape Survey previously carried out at Hanbury Hall and Park (Bashford *et al*. 2003) identified few features in the existing car park; it is possible that any extant features were removed during construction of the car park.

The historic map evidence, specifically Dougherty's estate map of 1731, shows that the area comprised a field enclosure known at that time as 'Mence Croft'; a single line of trees is shown indicating a possible orchard or fruit-tree hedge. Dougherty's map also shows a complex of buildings located to the N of the car park area; however, these structures are not depicted on the 1830 tithe map.

The 1830 map also shows a footpath bisecting the field and an extant ditch feature forming the western boundary of the site.

4 Methodology

The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the CIfA *Code of conduct* (2014) and with practices set out in *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014) and *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014). BAL adheres to the methodology set out in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (Lee 2015) and to procedures detailed in *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010).

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists states (2014, 4) that the purpose of a watching brief (Archaeological Observation) is:

- To allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works
- To provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard

Ground-breaking works were carried out under archaeological supervision. Topsoil and subsoil were routinely checked during ground works to collect and record any significant finds.

4.1 Recording

No archaeological features or deposits were present on the site. An annotated plan was produced with details of deposits encountered. A high-resolution digital photographic record was made, using an appropriate scale.

4.2 Recovery, processing and curation of artefactual data

The two sherds of pottery were bagged and labelled with the site code and context number before being removed off-site.

4.3 Palaeoenvironmental/palaeoeconomic sampling

No deposits suitable for palaeoenvironmental/palaeoeconomic sampling were encountered.

5 Results

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	101		Deposit	Topsoil over footprint of new visitor centre	Mid greyish-brown silt clay; occasional pottery. Measured 0.27m thick. Overlying (102).	-	✓	-	-	-	2 × sherds of later medieval pottery
2	102		Deposit	Subsoil	Firm yellowish-red silt; moderate water rolled cobbles/rounded stones. Measured 0.30m thick trench wide. Underlying (101), overlying (102).	-	-	-	-	-	
3	103		Deposit	Natural	Firm strongly reddish-brown clay; occasional grey patches (degraded stone or gleying) Measured. >0.50m thick trench wide. Underlying (102).	-	-	-	-	-	

6 Discussion

6.1 Topsoil strip

With the exception of disturbance associated with the roots of recently-felled trees, no archaeological features were observed during the topsoil strip.

The two sherds of 14th -17th century pottery recovered from the topsoil (101) were much abraded and may have been imported with midden material used as fertiliser during cultivation. The larger of the two may possibly be from the base of a jug dating to the 14th to 15th centuries (*Appendix 1*).

It seems likely that, as the site lay at some distance from the Hall, it had continued under cultivation throughout the historic period.

6.2 Foundation trenching

Observation was carried out during excavation of three of the foundation trenches for the new visitor reception building.

Plate 1: View NW of Trench 2

The trenches, measuring 0.60m wide and 1.10m deep, cut through the subsoil (102) into the natural clay (103). No archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

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9 Appendix 1: The later medieval pottery

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9.1 Introduction

Two sherds of pottery were recovered during the removal of topsoil (101). Both were of the same fabric, namely, Malvernian oxidised glazed ware (Fabric 69), and date to the 14th to 17th centuries. The sherds were much abraded. In spite of their abraded condition, the form of the larger sherd suggests that it may have been part of either a baluster or a rounded jug (Bryant 2004, *fig. 185*). If this is the case, then it would date to the 14th to 15th centuries.

9.2 Method

The sherds were washed and were examined by eye and using a hand lens (×10) and classified according to work by Vince (1985) and Bryant (2004).

9.3 The pottery

Two sherds of pottery were present, the larger weighing 9.7g and the smaller 1.9g. A clear green speckled glaze was present on both. In the case of the larger sherd, this was clearly external, also covering the base of the vessel. Although a similar glaze was present on the smaller sherd, and this was thought likely to be external, the small size of the sherd meant that this could not be confirmed.

Malvernian oxidised glazed ware was first produced in the 14th century and became the most common fabric in the area in the 15th and 16th centuries. The proximity of the production site (some 33km away) means that it may have received material from the kiln during the majority of the period of its operation and that this fabric may indeed have been the only pottery available in the region during the 15th and 16th centuries.

9.4 References

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