

**Church Street  
Brierley  
South Yorkshire**

*Archaeological Evaluation*

*Summary*

*An archaeological evaluation at Church Street, Brierley, identified a probable structure consisting of a gully and two post holes. Two sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from one of the post holes and a sherd of 11<sup>th</sup>- 13<sup>th</sup> century pottery was recovered from the subsoil. No other archaeological features were identified.*

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## **1. Introduction**

Archaeological Services WYAS (ASWYAS) were commissioned by *Richard Ryder Partnership* to carry out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching in advance of a proposed development on land at Church Street, Brierley, South Yorkshire (NGR 441300 411000, Figure 1). The fieldwork was carried out between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2006.

### **1.1 Site Location and Topography**

The proposed development area is within the historic core of Brierley. The ground is generally flat and lies at approximately 100m above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

### **1.2 Soils, Geology and Land use**

**The soils of the area belong to:**

- Rivington 1 Association, described as ‘well drained coarse loamy soils over sandstone, locally associated with similar deposits affected by groundwater.’ (SSEW 1983, 541f).’ and;
- Bardsey Association, described as ‘Slowley permeable seasonally waterlogged loamy over clayey and fine silty soils over soft rock. Some well drained coarse loamy soils over harder rock (SSEW 1983, 713a).’

**The drift geology of the area is:**

- Alluvium (BGS 2006)

**The solid geology of the area is:**

- Upper Westphalian, including Pennant Measures (BGS 2006)

**Land Use**

At the time of writing the site is vacant and overgrown

### **1.3 Historical and Archaeological Background**

The proposed development area lies within the historic core of the village of Brierley. Brierley is mentioned in the Domesday Book as *Breselai* which is taken to mean ‘clearing among the briar’. The layout of the village is typical of medieval linear settlements, with a main road (Church Street) running through the centre and ‘strip fields’ radiating off.

## **2. Aims of the Evaluation**

The general aim of the archaeological evaluation was ‘to gather sufficient information to establish the presence/absence, character, extent, state of preservation and date of any archaeological deposits within the areas of the proposed development’ (SYAS 2006).

The specific aims of the evaluation were to:

- locate and characterise any surviving below ground archaeological remains dating from the medieval period which may be associated with the medieval settlement of Brierley;
- provide an assessment of the potential and significance of any identified archaeological remains in a local, regional and (if relevant) national context,
- provide information on which a strategy for further evaluation and/or mitigation, if required can be developed

## **3. Method**

The evaluation was undertaken in accordance to a brief prepared by South Yorkshire Archaeology Service (SYAS 2006) and a project design by prepared by Archaeological Services

WYAS (ASWYAS 2006). Four trenches were excavated (Fig. 2), two measuring 20m by 2m (Trenches 3 and 4), one 10m by 2m (Trench 2) and one 15m by 2m (Trench 1) with a contingency of 20m<sup>2</sup> of to be used to help fulfil the stated aims if considered necessary.

The trench positions were surveyed using a Geodimeter Total Station and a Temporary bench mark related to the Ordnance Datum height was established on site.

Each trench was stripped of modern overburden under direct archaeological supervision using a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide smooth-bladed ditching bucket. The overburden was removed in controlled, level spits until the first archaeological horizon or undisturbed natural deposits were identified. The resulting surface was then cleaned manually and inspected for archaeological remains.

Approximately 4m<sup>2</sup> of the contingency trenching was employed to further investigate a feature within Trench 2. This extended the trench to the northeast by a further 2m.

All archaeological and potentially archaeological features were investigated. An appropriate written, drawn and photographic record was made in accordance with ASWYAS standard methodology (ASWYAS 2003).

The resulting project archive is currently stored by ASWYAS and will be deposited with Doncaster Museum, within a timescale agreed between ASWYAS and the recipient museum.

## **4. Results**

Below are the results of the evaluation ordered by trench followed by a summary table of contexts, no archaeological remains were encountered in trenches 1, 2, and 4. Trench 3 contained evidence of a structure of possible medieval date. All heights are expressed Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

### **4.1 Trench 1**

Trench 1 measured 15m by 2m with a maximum surface height of 102.73m. Machine removal of topsoil (100) and subsoil (101) revealed the natural geological deposits at a depth of 102.17m. No archaeological remains were identified within this trench.

### **4.2 Trench 2**

The surface height of Trench 2 was at 102.02m and on removal of the topsoil (100) and subsoil (101) the natural deposits were encountered at a depth of 102.59m. The trench was partly extended to the northeast to investigate further a feature identified within its north-eastern corner that later was proven to be natural. No archaeological features were identified in this trench; though a single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from the subsoil (see section 4.5).

### **4.3 Trench 3**

Trench 3 (Fig. 3) measured 20m by 2m with a maximum surface height of 100.72m and was machine excavated to a maximum depth of 100.2m. Removal of the topsoil and subsoil revealed three archaeological features, two post holes (103, 109) and a gully (105) cutting natural deposits.

#### **Post hole 103**

##### ***Description***

This post hole was sub-rectangular in plan measuring 0.84m in length, 0.52m in width and 0.1m in depth. It contained a single fill (102) of greyish-black clayey-silt with moderate charcoal flecks and platy/sub-angular sandstone inclusions.

***Finds***

Two sherds of pre-conquest – 14th century pottery were recovered from a soil sample from this post hole.

***Interpretation***

During excavation of the post hole it was observed that a number of platy sandstones were placed flat at the base of the cut and up against its sides. These appear to have functioned as pad and packing stones to support a rectangular shaped post. The presence of charcoal on top of and around the pad and packing stones appear to have originated from the post that was inserted. A similar observation was made during excavation of post hole 109 and it is most likely that these features are contemporary.

Posthole 103 was observed to truncate a sub-circular tree bole (107).

**Gully 105*****Description***

This gully had a U-shaped profile measuring 0.6m in length, 0.8m in width and 0.15m in depth. It contained a single fill (104) of reddish-brown clayey-silt, and rare charcoal flecks and occasional sub-angular sandstone inclusions.

***Finds***

No finds were recovered.

***Interpretation***

This gully was only partly exposed, however, it appears to be associated with post hole 103 and may have formed a large beam slot or be the robbed out remains of a foundation trench.

**Post hole 109*****Description***

Post hole 109 was sub-rectangular in plan measuring 0.65m in length, 0.45m in width and 0.15m in depth. It contained a single fill (108) of greyish-black clayey-silt containing moderate charcoal flecks and platy/sub-angular sandstone inclusions.

***Finds***

No finds were recovered

***Interpretation***

Post hole 109 was of similar character and probably contemporary with post hole 103. Here again, platy sandstones were used as pad stones and packing stones to support a rectangular shaped post.

**4.4 Trench 4**

Trench 4 measured 20m by 2m with a maximum surface height of 102.46m. Removal of a topsoil (100) and subsoil (101) revealed the natural deposits at a depth of 101.45m. No archaeological features were identified within this trench and no finds were recovered.

**Table 4.1: Context summary**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
100	Dark greyish-black, silty loam, maximum 0.2m in depth	Topsoil
101	Reddish-brown clayey-silt maximum 0.2m in depth	Subsoil

Context	Description	Interpretation
102	Greyish-black clayey-silt 0.84m in length, 0.52m in width and 0.1m in depth, containing moderate charcoal flecks and platy/sub-angular sandstone (0.05m – 0.25m) inclusions	Single fill of post hole 103
103	Sub-rectangular, 0.84m in length, 0.52m in width and 0.1m in depth	Cut of post hole
104	Reddish-brown clayey-silt 0.6m in length, 0.8m in width and 0.15m in depth, containing rare charcoal flecks and occasional sub-angular sandstone (<0.02m) inclusions	Single fill of gully 105
105	Linear with U-shaped profile, 0.6m in length, 0.8m in width and 0.15m in depth	Cut of gully
106	Reddish-brown clayey-silt 1.15m in length, 1.3m in width and 0.15m in depth, containing occasional charcoal flecks and occasional sub-angular sandstone inclusions	Single fill of tree bole 107
107	Sub-circular, 1.15m in length, 1.3m in width and 0.15m in depth	Cut of tree bole
108	Greyish-black clayey-silt 0.65m in length, 0.45m in width and 0.15m in depth, containing moderate charcoal flecks and platy/sub-angular sandstones (0.05m – 0.25m) inclusions	Single fill of post hole 109
109	Sub-rectangular, 0.65m in length, 0.45m in width and 0.15m in depth	Cut of post hole filled by 110

#### 4.5 Pottery – Chris Cumberpatch

One sherd of pottery from (Trench 2, Context 101) was examined by the author on the 12th September 2006. It was a small sherd (1g) in a soft orange sandy or fine gritty fabric containing abundant angular quartz grit (up to 0.8mm) and occasional non-crystalline red grit of a similar size.

It would appear that the sherd is of medieval date and most probably dates to between the later 11<sup>th</sup> and later 13<sup>th</sup> century. It would seem to be similar to wares of this date from West Yorkshire and the northern part of South Yorkshire.

#### 4.6 Soil sample – Jane Richardson

One soil sample of ten litres from the fill (102) of post-hole 103 was subjected to a system of flotation. The floating remains (the flot) were collected in a 300µm sieve and the heavy fraction (the retent) was collected in a 1mm mesh.

The flot contained approximately 10ml of carbonised plant remains, in addition to modern root material. The carbonised plant material was exclusively wood charcoal and fragments of sufficient size to be identifiable to genus were present. Should radiocarbon dates be required, fragments should be identified in the expectation that short-lived species can be targeted. Additional wood charcoal fragments were extracted from the retent and these also have the potential to be used for dating purposes.

### 5. Discussion

Both post holes (103, 109) and gully (105) appear to be contemporary and provide evidence of a possible east to west aligned structure within the north-eastern part of the site (Trench 3). These post holes appear to have been well constructed using pad and packing stones to support posts. There is a possibility that the ends of the posts were burnt prior to been installed, probably to prolong the life of the uprights within the ground. It is most likely that further post holes exist on the north eastern side of the trench and possibly on the south eastern side as well.

During the post excavation process two sherds of shell-tempered possibly early medieval pottery (Cumberpatch *pers com*) was recovered from the environmental sample taken from post hole 103. This suggests that the structure may be early medieval in date or be as late as the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

No archaeological features were identified within the centre and to the south-western areas of the site (Trenches 1, 2, and 4).

## 6. Conclusions

The pottery find provides some tentative evidence for medieval activity around the area of Trench 2 however, no archaeological remains were identified within this trench or likewise within Trenches 1 and 4 and it may be concluded that archaeological remains are unlikely to exist in these areas of the site.

Medieval activity was identified around Trench 3 and it is possible that further archaeological remains from this period survive within this area to the western or eastern sides of the trench.

Ground disturbances below 100.7m AOD during the development may impact on the surviving archaeological remains should they exist in the area around Trench 3.

## 7. Archive

The archive consists of this report, all other relevant project documentation, including the project design (ASWYAS 2006), project brief (SYAS 2006), primary archive (see Table 7.1), all non confidential project correspondence and all retained finds from the site. The archive will be prepared in accordance with relevant guidance documents (Walker 1990 and MGC 1994) and deposited at Doncaster Museum.

**Table 7.1: Inventory of primary archive**

File no.	Description	Quantity
1	Context registers	1 (context nos. 100-109)
1	Context cards	10
1	Environmental samples registers	1 (sample nos. 1)
1	Drawing registers	1 (drawing nos. 1-5)
1	Drawing sheets	2 (sheet nos. 1-2 small permatrace)
1	Photographic register	2
1	35mm colour film sheets	1
1	35mm black and white film sheets	1
1	Trench record sheets	4

## **8. Bibliography**

- ASWYAS 2005 Archaeological Services Site Recording Manual, Archaeological Services West Yorkshire Archaeological Service'
- ASWYAS 2006 Church Street, Brierley, South Yorkshire, Project Design, Archaeological Evaluation. Archaeological Services West Yorkshire Archaeological Service'
- BGS 2006 British Geological Survey, <http://www.bgs.ac.uk>, accessed 28/07/2006
- MGC 1994 Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections Museums and Galleries Commission
- SSEW 1983, Soils of Northern England (Sheet 1), Scale 1:250000 Soil Survey of England and Wales and accompanying legend
- SYAS 2006 Brief for Archaeological Evaluation (Trial Trenching), South Yorkshire Archaeology Service, July 2006
- Walker, K. 1990: Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage. United Kingdom Institute for Conservation, Archaeology Section, London

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