Archaeological watching brief at the field adjacent to Pershore Cemetery, Defford Road, Pershore, Worcestershire

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With contributions by Rob Hedge

Background information

Client	Pershore Town Council
National Grid reference	SO 9370 4530
Historic Environment Record reference	WSM 67184
Planning authority	Wychavon District Council
Reference	W/14/0333
Brief	WCC 2015
Project design	WA 2015
Project parameters	CIfA 2014a

Project Background

This stage of works relates to the watching brief required of the construction of a car park for the cemetery in the south-east portion of the larger cemetery extension site. It involved monitoring the topsoil strip and ground reduction to level the car park, alterations to the entrances and associated drainage works.

Archaeological Background

Archaeological investigations following a geophysical survey on the site (WSM 39879 and 40600) uncovered an enclosed settlement, bounded by large rectilinear ditches, with zones of activity defined by smaller internal ditches. Occupation of the settlement was probably from the Late Iron Age to the 3rd century AD (Hughes and Vaughan 2009).

Archaeological works have also taken place in the surrounding area to the north and north-east in the fields adjacent to the site. Excavations to the north-east, uncovered further evidence of the Late Iron Age and Romano-British settlement, including a number of enclosures flanking two parallel ditches and a droveway with occupation peaking in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD (Mann *et al* 2013). An evaluation to the north uncovered an area of Romano-British activity in close proximity to a rural settlement, with a later medieval and post-medieval agricultural landscape overlying this (Bradley 2013).

Aims

The aim of the watching brief was to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

Methods

General specification for fieldwork

WA 2012

Sources consulted

HER

Date(s) of fieldwork

3 to 26 November 2015

Area of site (indicated on Fig 1)

> *c.* 1,500m²

Dimensions of excavated areas observed –

General Topsoil strip (Tr 1)	length	89.00m
	width	40.00m
	depth	0.30m
North-east entrance (Tr 2)	length	28.00m
	width	4.00m
	depth	1.38m
Drainage channels (Tr 3)	length	25.00m
	width	0.40m
	depth	0.30m
Oil Trap tank (Tr 4)	length	2.00m
	width	2.00m
	depth	2.50m

Access to or visibility of deposits

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken during and after machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits. Selected areas were cleaned by hand. Access to deep trenches was not made for safety reasons.

Statement of confidence

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

Artefact Methodology

Artefact methodology, by Rob Hedge

The finds work reported here conforms with the relevant sections of *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014b), with archive creation informed by *Archaeological archives: a guide to the best practice in the creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (AAF 2011), and museum deposition by *Selection, retention and dispersal of archaeological collections* (SMA 1993).

Recovery policy

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard WA practice (WA 2012; appendix 2).

Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified to type, and quantified and dated to period.

This report comprises a brief quantification and assessment. No identification to fabric or form was undertaken, but identifications are based on the fabric reference series maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology (Hurst and Rees 1992 and www.worcestershireceramics.org). Where appropriate, full analysis of the material will be undertaken during subsequent phases of works.

Discard policy

The following categories/types of material will be discarded after a period of 6 months following the submission of this report, unless there is a specific request to retain them (and subject to the collection policy of the relevant depository):

- where unstratified

- post-medieval material, and;

- generally where material has been specifically assessed by an appropriate specialist as having no obvious grounds for retention.

Deposit description

The description of the deposits is given in Appendix 1.

Discussion

Excavations and landscaping were monitored by an archaeologist. Undisturbed natural deposits were only reached in the deeper excavations at the car park entrances and drainage service trenches (Fig 2). All finds were residual within the topsoil and subsoil layers. Modern disturbance of the natural geology in the form of services, sewers and the existing hedgerow roots were noted. Redeposited made ground was found along the hedgerow area, associated with the modern use of the field. The burial of a dog, of modern date, was seen in the centre of the site but was of no archaeological significance (Plate 2).

Artefactual analysis, by Rob Hedge

The artefactual assemblage recovered is summarised in Table 1. The pottery assemblage retrieved from the excavated area consisted of 16 sherds of pottery weighing 172g. In addition fragments of tile, brick and animal bone were recovered, along with a single piece of worked flint. The group was entirely residual within topsoil and subsoil deposits, and could be dated from the prehistoric period onwards (see Table 1). Using pottery as an index of artefact condition, this was generally poor with the majority of sherds displaying high levels of abrasion, although the average sherd size, at 10.75g, was about average.

period	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight(g)
prehistoric	stone	flint	piercer	1	13
Roman	ceramic		pot	5	74
medieval	ceramic		floor tile	5	157
medieval	ceramic		pot	5	43
medieval	ceramic		roof tile	1	50
medieval/early post-medieval	ceramic		pot	2	21
medieval/early post-medieval	ceramic		roof tile	1	180
medieval/post-medieval	ceramic		brick/tile	5	59
medieval/post-medieval	ceramic		roof tile	1	9
post-medieval	ceramic		pot	2	19
modern	ceramic		pot	2	15
undated	bone	animal bone		1	20
undated	ceramic		unidentified	1	27
			Totals:	32	687

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

Artefactual Discussion

The single piece of evidence for prehistoric activity comprised a short flint piercer, which was not readily identifiable to period beyond a broad Mesolithic to Bronze Age date.

Heavily abraded sherds of Roman pottery attest to the settlement activity previously identified to the north of the site.

Several relatively unabraded sherds of Worcester-type 13^{h}/14th century jugs (cf Bryant 2004), and the presence of fragments of encaustic floor tile, the latter presumably originating in a high-status medieval building in the vicinity, attest to medieval activity in the vicinity, although the condition of the assemblage is consistent with having been incorporated into the site from elsewhere in the course of, for example, agricultural activity such as manuring.

The floor tile fragments do not appear to be of known Worcester or Malvern fabrics, which is worthy of note given that the tiles of Pershore Abbey are thought to have been produced in Worcester (L Griffin, pers comm). Several fragments of encaustic tiles of unknown origin have been recently recovered from fieldwalking to the north of Pershore (Arnold 2015a and 2015b; WSM 66266 and WSM 66632). Comparison of the fabrics to these examples and others from the region would be beneficial.

The post-medieval and modern pottery comprises small abraded sherds of typical domestic red-wares and white-wares.

Discard and retention

Given its residual nature and poor condition, the post-medieval and modern pottery and the bulk of the ceramic building material are not considered likely to be worthy of retention. However, the prehistoric flint, Roman and medieval pottery and medieval floor tile should be retained, and full assessment within subsequent phases of work is recommended.

Conclusions

The watching brief did not uncover any in situ evidence or features of the Late Iron Age and Roman settlement activity present to the north of the site. However, as the clean natural ground was only exposed at the entrance way in the south-west of the site the potential for extant archaeological deposits still exists over the majority of the area, except where there has been modern disturbance by drains and services.

Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Pershore Town Council at the field adjacent to Pershore Cemetery, Defford Road, Pershore, Worcestershire (NGR SO 9370 4530; HER ref WSM 67184). Natural deposits were only exposed within the deeper excavations for the car park entrances and drainage service trenches. Elsewhere the natural geology was not exposed. No significant archaeological deposits or features were encountered, with a small assemblage of residual artefactual material recovered from topsoil and subsoil deposits. This largely comprised heavily abraded Roman and medieval pottery, and medieval to early post-medieval tile, including abraded and heavily-worn fragments of medieval decorated floor tile. These latter are of note, as they do not appear to be of Worcester or Malvern fabrics, so differ from those recorded at Pershore Abbey.

Acknowledgements

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WA 2012   *Manual of service practice, recording manual*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, report **1842**

WA 2015   *Proposal for an archaeological watching brief of the field adjacent to Pershore Cemetery, Three Springs Road, Pershore, Worcestershire*, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 1 September 2015, **P4631**

WCC 2010   *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire*, Planning Advisory Section, Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council unpublished report **604**, amended July 2012

WCC 2014   *Requirements for an Archaeological Watching Brief as a Condition of Planning Consent,* Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document, Version 1, dated September 2014

WCC 2015   *Requirements for a Programme of Archaeological work at field adjacent to Pershore Cemetery, Defford Road, Pershore, Worcestershire,* Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document, dated 4 August 2015

Figures

Location of the site

Figure 1

23.83

Trench 1 ▲ 23.52

▲ 23.43

▲ 23.04

Trench 2

▲ 21.68

▲ 23.14

Dog burial

▲ 21.80

▲ 22.41

▲ 21.99

▲ 21.08

Entrance way

▲ 20.80

Modern sewer

Trench 4

▲ 21.89

Trench 3

▲ 20.36

▲ 20.20

◼ natural deposits observed

◼ topsoil strip only

0   30m

Trench locations   *Figure 2*

Plates

Plate 1 The site before excavation, looking north-east, towards Pershore Cemetery

Plate 2 The dog burial in the centre of the site. 1m scale

Plate 3 The site after topsoil strip looking south, 1m scales

Plate 4 The site after topsoil strip looking north-east, 1m scales

Plate 5 The north-east entrance ground reduction (Trench 2) looking north-west, 1m scales

Plate 6 Drainage trench (Trench 3) cut into the natural strata, across the southern entrance

Plate 5 Trench 4 north-west facing section to natural sand and gravels, 1m scales

Plate 6 Maximum depth of Trench 4, showing gravels and underlying waterlogged clays

Appendix 1   Trench descriptions

Main deposit descriptions

Trench 1

Site area: General topsoil site strip
Maximum dimensions: Length: 89.00m   Width: 30.00m   Depth: 0.45m
Orientation: NE - SW

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Dark blackish brown sandy silt with frequent gravels and rounded pebbles	0.00 – 0.30m
101	Natural	Soft reddish brown slightly clayey gravelly sand with frequent rounded pebbles. Occasional plough scars and cut by modern services. Southern entrance only.	0.15 – 0.45m
102	Subsoil	Mid brown silty clay with frequent rounded stones in south east corner of site.	0.05 – 0.35m
103	Modern animal burial	Dog grave cutting subsoil and measuring 0.50m x 0.40m	0.30 – 0.42m

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 28.00m   Width: 4.00m   Depth: 1.38m
Orientation: NW -SE

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Topsoil	Dark blackish brown sandy silt with frequent gravels and rounded pebbles	0.00 – 0.30m
201	Subsoil	Soft mid yellowish brown clayey sand	0.30 – 0.82m
202	Natural	Soft reddish brown and yellowish brown slightly clayey gravelly sand with frequent rounded pebbles.	0.82m +

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 33.00m   Width: 0.40m   Depth: 0.30 - 0.50m
Orientation: NE –SW
Topsoil previously removed during Trench 1 excavations

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Subsoil	Mid brown silty clay with frequent rounded stones	0.00 – 0.20m
301	Natural	Soft reddish brown slightly clayey gravelly sand with frequent rounded pebbles.	0.20m +

Trench 4

Site area:
Maximum dimensions: Length: 2.00m   Width: 2.00m   Depth: 2.50m
Orientation: NE - SW

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
400	Topsoil	Dark blackish brown sandy silt with frequent gravels and rounded pebbles	0-0.30
401	Subsoil	Compact dark grey sandy silt with frequent brick fragments and rounded pebbles.	0.30 – 0.50m
402	Natural	Compact reddish brown sandy clay	0.50 – 1.00m
403	Natural	Yellowish orange river gravels	1.00 – 1.50m
404	Natural	Compact mid blue grey gleyed, waterlogged clay, getting darker with depth.	1.50 – 2.50m+

Appendix 2   Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM 67184)

The archive consists of:

3	Field progress reports AS2
1	Photographic records AS3
54	Digital photographs
4	Trench record sheets AS41
1	Box of finds
1	Computer disk
1	Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive will be deposited with the museum once the main excavation phase has been completed. It is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum

Museums Worcestershire

Hartlebury Castle

Hartlebury

Near Kidderminster

Worcestershire DY11 7XZ

Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

Summary of data for Worcestershire HER

WSM 67184 (event HER number)

P4631

Artefacts

Period – note 1	material class	object specific type	count	weight(g)	start date	end date	Specialist report (note 2)	Key assemblage? (note 3)
prehistoric	stone	piercer	1	13	-10,000	-700	Y	N
Roman	ceramic	pot	5	74	43	410	Y	N
medieval	ceramic	floor tile	5	157	1200	1550	Y	N
medieval	ceramic	pot	5	43	1200	1630	Y	N
medieval	ceramic	roof tile	1	50	1200	1500	Y	N
medieval/early post-medieval	ceramic	pot	2	21	1200	1700	Y	N
medieval/early post-medieval	ceramic	roof tile	1	180	1200	1700	Y	N
medieval/post-medieval	ceramic	brick/tile	5	59	1200	1800	Y	N
medieval/post-medieval	ceramic	roof tile	1	9	1200	1800	Y	N
post-medieval	ceramic	pot	2	19	1600	1800	Y	N
modern	ceramic	pot	2	15	1800	1950	Y	N
undated	bone		1	20			Y	N
undated	ceramic	unidentified	1	27			Y	N

Notes

1) In some cases the date will be "Undated". In most cases, especially if there is not a specialist report, the information entered in the Date field will be a general period such as Neolithic, Roman, medieval etc (see below for a list of periods used in the Worcestershire HER). Very broad date ranges such as late Medieval to Post-medieval are acceptable for artefacts which can be hard to date for example roof tiles. If you have more specific dates, such as 13th to 14th century, please use these instead. Specific date ranges which cross general period boundaries can also be used, for example 15th to 17th century.

period	from	to
Palaeolithic	500000 BC	10001 BC
Mesolithic	10000 BC	4001 BC
Neolithic	4000 BC	2351 BC

Bronze Age	2350 BC	801 BC
Iron Age	800 BC	42 AD
Roman	43	409
Post-Roman	410	1065
Medieval	1066	1539
Post-medieval	1540	1900
Modern	1901	2050

period specific	from	to
Lower Palaeolithic	500000 BC	150001
Middle Palaeolithic	150000	40001
Upper Palaeolithic	40000	10001
Early Mesolithic	10000	7001
Late Mesolithic	7000	4001
Early Neolithic	4000	3501
Middle Neolithic	3500	2701
Late Neolithic	2700	2351
Early Bronze Age	2350	1601
Middle Bronze Age	1600	1001
Late Bronze Age	1000	801
Early Iron Age	800	401
Middle Iron Age	400	101
Late Iron Age	100 BC	42 AD
Roman 1st century AD	43	100
2nd century	101	200
3rd century	201	300
4th century	301	400
Roman 5th century	401	410
Post roman	411	849
Pre conquest	850	1065
Late 11th century	1066	1100
12th century	1101	1200
13th century	1201	1300
14th century	1301	1400
15th century	1401	1500
16th century	1501	1600
17th century	1601	1700
18th century	1701	1800
19th century	1801	1900
20th century	1901	2000
21st century	2001	

2.   Not all evaluations of small excavation assemblages have specialist reports on all classes of objects. An identification (e.g. clay pipe) and a quantification is not a specialist report. A short discussion or a more detailed record identifying types and dates is a specialist report. This field is designed to point researchers to reports where they will find out more than merely the presence or absence of material of a particular type and date.

3.   This field should be used with care. It is designed to point researchers to reports where they will be able to locate the most important assemblages for any given material for any given date.