

A CONTROLLED
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT
ABBAYWOOD FIRST SCHOOL
REDDITCH
WORCESTERSHIRE



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A controlled archaeological watching brief at Abbeywood First School, Redditch, Worcestershire

Peter Lovett

Summary

A controlled archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Abbeywood First School, Redditch, Worcestershire (NGR SP 0664 6883). It was commissioned by Property Services, Worcestershire County Council, who intends to construct a single storey extension to the existing for which a County Matters planning application has been submitted.

Areas of ground reduction and service trenches were observed across the site. No significant archaeological structures, features, layers or deposits were discovered nor finds recovered. This absence serves to define the western extent of the medieval fish pond known to exist to the east. A number of redeposited soil layers were noted, considered to relate to the original construction of the school.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

A controlled archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Abbeywood First School, Redditch, Worcestershire (NGR SP 0664 6883). It was commissioned by Property Services, Worcestershire County Council, in advance of the construction of a single storey extension to the existing buildings, for which a County Matters planning application has been submitted to Worcestershire County Council (reference cc/13/000044).

The development site is considered to include heritage assets and potential heritage assets the significance of which may be affected by the application (WSM00224).

The project conforms to a brief prepared by Worcestershire County Council (2013) and for which a written scheme of investigation was produced (WA 2013). The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008) and the *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010). The event reference for this project, given by the HER is WSM55826.

2 Aims

The aims of the watching brief are:

- to describe and assess the significance of the heritage asset with archaeological interest;
- to establish the nature, importance and extent of the archaeological site;
- to assess the impact of the application on the archaeological site;

all within the constraints of the groundworks undertaken associated with the development

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The fieldwork was led by Michael Nicholson (BSc); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2008 and has been practicing archaeology since 2008; assisted by Peter Lovett BSc, and Richard Bradley BA MA CAIfA. The report was prepared by Peter Lovett. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan BA MA CAIfA. Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt BSc PG Cert CMIfA.

3.2 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER).

3.3 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2012a). Fieldwork was undertaken between 17 February and 6 August 2014. The site reference number and site code is WSM 55826.

Observation of almost all ground works was undertaken. Areas of ground reduction and trenching was undertaken with a toothless grading bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand as appropriate, with clean surfaces being inspected, in order to determine their nature and significance. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). The location of the areas observed is indicated in Figure 2.

3.4 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

3.5 Artefact methodology

3.5.1 Artefact recovery policy

Artefacts were recovered according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event all finds were noted on site to be of 20th century origin, so were not retained.

3.6 Environmental archaeology methodology

3.6.1 Sampling policy

Sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The area of investigation is within the grounds of Abbeywood First School, Redditch, and is located on level ground at c 94m AOD. The underlying geology of the site is mapped as Mercia Mudstone Group (BGS 2014). Superficial deposits are not recorded.

Abbeywood First School lies within the limits of what was known as Great Pool Meadow. This field name appears on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map, which also shows a large dam on the eastern edge of the field. The land is so named due to its previous use as a fish pond in the medieval period. Logged in the HER as WSM00224, it is one of three known medieval fish ponds in the area (WSM00225 and WSM00062 being the other two, both to the north-east). The land was the property of Pershore Abbey between 972 and 1439 AD. The earliest documentary evidence of ponds is from 1316. They had gone out of use by 1650 (Hancox and Mindykowski 2007).

Ryknild Street Roman road (WSM30441) runs north-south to the west of the site, and an area of potential Iron Age to Roman settlement (WSM29763) exists to the north.

To the north-east, there exists earthwork evidence for medieval ridge and furrow (WSM38682), whilst cartographic evidence puts 19th century farm buildings (WSM42661) and quarrying (WSM42663) directly to the north of the site.

4.2 Current land-use

The site is part of Abbeywood First School, with a mixture of buildings and landscaped grounds.

5 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figure 2 and Plates 1-6. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

A red clay marl (103, 203, 303) was observed between 0.72m (in Trench 3), 0.8m (Trench 4) and 1.1m (Trenches 1 and 2) below current ground level. In Trenches 1 and 2 there lay above this a light yellow clay with orange mottling (102, 202), 0.51m to 0.52m thick. This was probably the original subsoil that was buried beneath later redeposited material. In Trench 3 it is a plastic brownish yellow silty clay 0.24 thick, (303), whilst in Trench 4 it was 0.2m thick.

5.1.2 Phase 2: Modern deposits

A redeposited bluish grey silty clay layer covers the earlier subsoil, and represents a later, well-rooted subsoil (101, 201, 301). This is likely to be the result of landscaping of the ground associated with the original construction of the school. In Trench 4 this was a more mixed soil of yellow clay and brown loam, with brick and plastic rubble throughout (401). In the southern part of

Trench 4, this was overlain by (402) a brick rubble and gravel linear, c 6m wide and running east to west, being the remnant of a haul road associated with the original construction of the school.

The topsoil (100, 200, 300, 400) was a dark brown loam with a thin turf line, ranging in thickness from 0.30 – 0.35m in Trenches 1, 2 and 4, down to 0.15m in Trench 3.

5.2 Artefact analysis

All artefacts recovered were identified on site as 20^h century ceramic building material (CBM), and were not retained.

6 Synthesis

No significant archaeological features or deposits were observed during the watching brief. Indeed, only modern redeposited horizontally stratified sediments and soils existed in the excavated areas.

No evidence for the medieval fish pond which lies to the east was observed during these excavations, indicating that the pond never extended this far. Concurrently with this project, an auger survey of the neighbouring Churchill Middle School to the east was undertaken. This better defined the pond's limits and depth (Richer 2014). This report, along with the survey by Hancox and Mindykowski (2007), provide a more detailed view of the landscape.

7 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 Property Service, Worcester County Council at Abbeywood Primary School, Redditch, Worcestershire (NGR SP 0664 6883; HER ref WSM 55826).

Areas of ground reduction and service trenches were observed across the site. No significant archaeological structures, features, layers or deposits were discovered nor finds recovered. This absence serves to define the western extent of the medieval fish pond known to exist to the east. A number of redeposited soil layers were noted, considered to relate to the original construction of the school.

8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Lindsay Harris (Property Services, Worcestershire County Council), Matt Gould and Pete Scott (Leon Building Services), Robert Morris (Baart Harries Newall Architects) and Aisling Nash (Historic Environment Record Manager, Worcestershire County Council).

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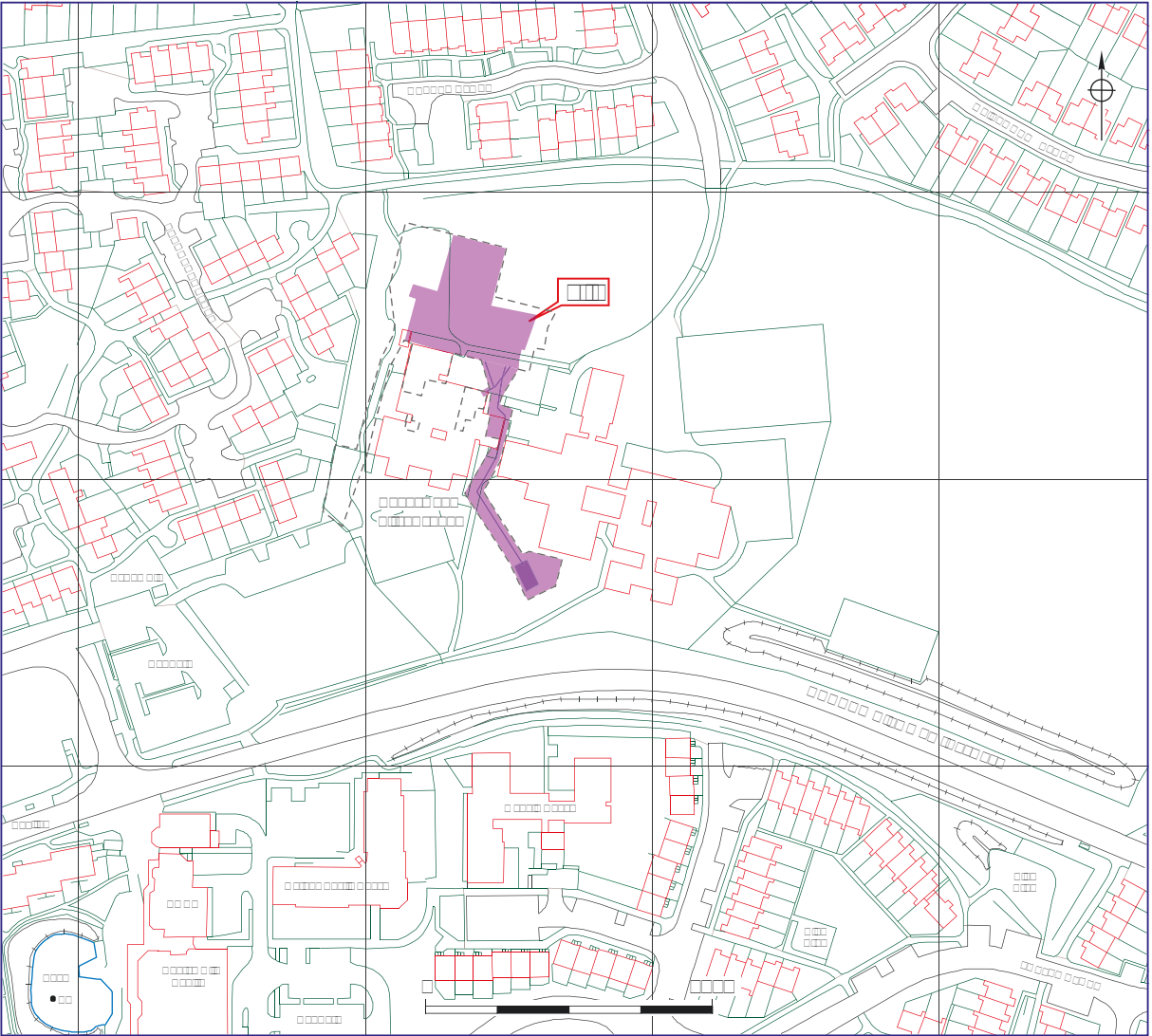
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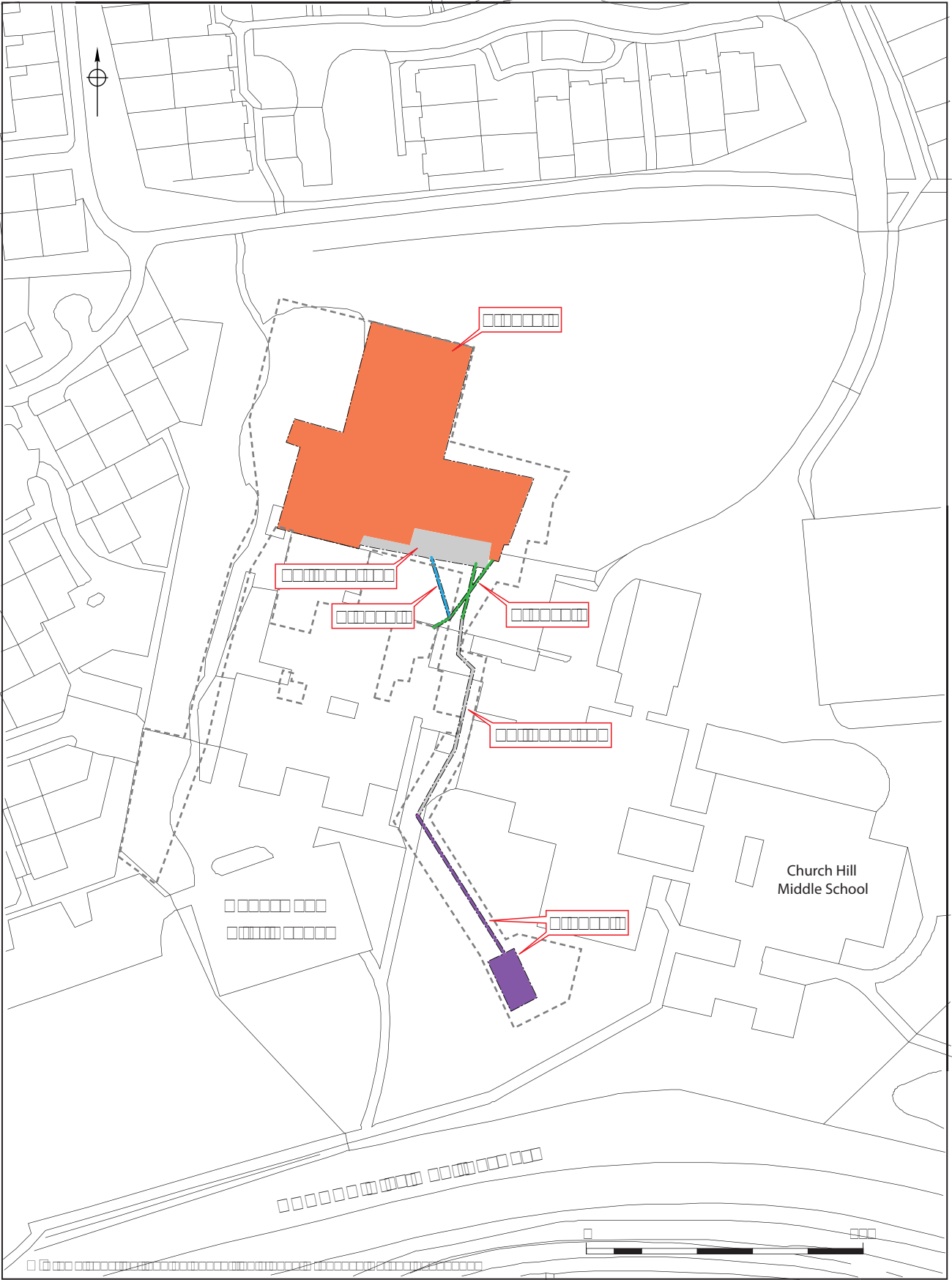
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Figures



Legend and scale information: A scale bar at the bottom indicates 0 to 100 meters. A legend below the scale bar lists symbols for various map features such as buildings, roads, and the study area.

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Plates



Plate 1 General view of Trenches 1 and 2, looking north



Plate 2 Trench 1 section, looking south-east



Plate 3 Trench 2 section, looking south-west



Plate 4 General view of Trench 3, looking south



Plate 5 Trench 3 section, looking west



Plate 6 Trench 4 looking east

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Main deposit descriptions

Trench 1

Site area: Central Play Area

Maximum dimensions: Length: 22.5m Width: 0.6m Depth: 1.11m

Orientation: NE-SW

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Dark brown loam with frequent small rounded stones, occasional CBM fragments and covered by a turf mat.	0-0.35m
101	Subsoil/redeposited material	Light Grey brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks and CBM fragments. Also contains patches of darker humic material, possibly due to frequent tree rooting the number of services in the area.	0.35-0.6m
102	Buried subsoil	Light yellow clay with patches of orange. Occasional small to medium rounded stones.	0.6-1.11m
103	Natural bedrock	Compacted red marl	1.11m+

Trench 2

Site area: Central Play Area

Maximum dimensions: Length: 16.08m Width: 0.5m Depth: 1.10m

Orientation: NW-SE

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Topsoil	Dark brown loam with frequent small rounded stones, occasional CBM fragments and covered by a turf mat.	0-0.32m
201	Subsoil/redeposited material	Light Grey brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks and CBM fragments. Also contains patches of darker humic material, possibly due to frequent tree rooting the number of services in the area.	0.32-0.58m
202	Buried subsoil	Light yellow clay with patches of orange. Occasional small to medium rounded stones.	0.58-1.1m
203	Natural bedrock	Compacted red marl	1.1m+

Trench 3

Site area: South Playing Field

Maximum dimensions: Length: 10m Width: 5m Depth: 1.08m

Orientation: N-S

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Topsoil	Dark brown loam with frequent small rounded stones and covered by a thin turf line.	0-0.15m
301	Subsoil/redeposited material	Plastic mid bluish grey silty clay with yellow clay mottling. Occasional sub-rounded pebbles, some rooting. Sharp horizon with both overlying and underlying deposits.	0.15-0.46m
302	Buried subsoil	Plastic mid brownish yellow sandy clay with blue grey clay mottling. Occasional sub-rounded pebbles. Some rooting. Diffuse horizon with underlying marl 303.	0.46-0.72m
303	Natural bedrock	Compacted red marl	0.72m+

Trench 4

Site area: Central Play Area

Maximum dimensions: Length: 44m Width: 44m Depth: 0.8m

Orientation: E-W

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
400	Topsoil	Dark brown loam with frequent small rounded stones, occasional CBM fragments and covered by a turf mat.	0-0.3m
401	Made ground	Yellow clay and brown loam mix with brick and plastic fragments	0.3-0.58m
402	Made ground/haul road	Brick rubble and gravels, 6m wide, running E-W, being the remnant of a haul road associated with the original construction of the school.	0.3-0.59m
403	Buried subsoil	Plastic yellow clay with blue mottling and occasional sub-rounded to rounded pebbles and cobbles.	0.58m-0.80
404	Natural	Red clay marl	0.8m+

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM 55826)

The archive consists of:

- 8 Field progress reports AS2
- 2 Photographic records AS3
- 120 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 1 Scale drawings
- 4 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Museums Worcestershire
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
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