

INTERIM REPORT:
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF
AT
HAMPTON LANE, MERIDEN,
WARWICKSHIRE

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Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

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Project 3298
Report 1691

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Archaeological watching brief at Hampton Lane, Meriden, Warwickshire

Elizabeth A. Curran

Part 1 Project summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Hampton Lane, Meriden, Warwickshire (NGR 423794, 282167). It was undertaken at the instruction of CgMs Consulting on behalf of their client, David Wilson Homes (Mercia), who intend to construct a recreational ground and associated car park at land to the south of Main Road and Hampton Lane, Meriden for which planning permission has been granted (reference 2003/2614). The project aims to determine if any significant archaeological deposits were present and if so to indicate their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation.

Due to the works programme, only the footprint of proposed tennis courts were stripped of topsoil and it is intended that the remaining works be carried out in 2010. Consequently this document is an interim report. A full report will be produced on the completion of fieldwork.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Hampton Lane, Meriden, Warwickshire (NGR 423794, 282167). It is undertaken at the instruction of CgMs Consulting on behalf of their client, David Wilson Homes (Mercia), the client. The client intends to construct a recreational ground and associated car park at land to the south of Main Road and Hampton Lane, Meriden and have been granted planning permission by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (reference 2003/2614), who consider that the site lies in an area of archaeological potential, within the late Medieval/early post-medieval settlement of Meriden.

To date the watching brief has been carried out during the topsoil stripping on the footprint of the proposed tennis courts. Due to the works programme future fieldwork is not expected to continue until 2010. Consequently this document is an interim report and a full report will be produced on the completion of fieldwork.

1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IFA 1999)

The project also conforms to a specification prepared by CgMs Consulting (CP/10434).

1.3 Aims

The aims of the watching brief are to locate archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation. The purpose of this is to clarify the presence and character of any late medieval or early post-medieval activity on the site.

2. Methods

2.1 Documentary search

A search has been made of the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (HER). It is intended that further documentary sources listed in the brief will be consulted prior to the completion of fieldwork.

2.2 Fieldwork methodology

2.2.1 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by CgMs Consulting (CP/10434). Observation and recording of archaeological deposits are restricted to areas of ground disturbance associated with the development of the site as a recreational ground (ground breaking and preparation, services, access route etc) following the progress of the construction team and to the area of archaeological significance as defined by Anna Stocks, Planning Archaeologist for Warwickshire County Council and illustrated in the Specification (fig 2).

Fieldwork was undertaken from 19 January 2009 to 20 January 2009 but future fieldwork is expected to continue in 2010.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 360° wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand and clean surfaces were inspected. Deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995).

2.2.2 **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.

2.3 **Artefact methodology by Derek Hurst**

2.3.1 **Artefact recovery policy**

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 2).

2.3.2 **Method of analysis**

All hand-retrieved finds were examined and a primary record was made on a Microsoft Access 2000 database. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date was produced for each stratified context. The date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. Only hand-retrieved finds were retained from site, as no samples were taken.

The pottery and ceramic building material was recorded by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by the service (Hurst and Rees 1992; Hurst 1994).

2.4 **Environmental archaeology methodology**

2.4.1 **Sampling policy**

The environmental sampling strategy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 4). No deposits or horizons have yet been identified that were considered suitable for environmental analysis, and no samples have been taken.

3. **Topographical and archaeological context**

The underlying geology in the area off Hampton Lane is Triassic Keuper Marl (CgMs 2008).

Meriden is located between Solihull and Coventry, and the surrounding countryside, known as the Meriden Gap, forms a green belt between the two urban areas of Birmingham and Coventry. The parish Church of St Lawrence is situated on a hill overlooking Meriden, marking the original location of the village, known as Alspath before the village shifted to its current focus around the London to Birmingham Road, reflecting the increasing importance of that thoroughfare (VCH IV 1947).

Within the village of Meriden are a number of Grade II listed buildings dating from the seventeenth to early nineteenth century. Of those built in the seventeenth century, Brookside (SI 218223) is a two-story house constructed from colour washed plaster with a tiled roof and red brick chimneystack. The Centre of England Stores, on the village green, also dates from the seventeenth century but has been altered to serve its current use with modern shops windows, however the timber frame is exposed to the side elevation (SI 218232).

Forest Hall, the headquarters of The Woodmen of Arden (a famous archery club founded in 1785) was designed by Joseph Bonomi and built in 1788. Forest Hall is also a Grade II listed building, later enlarged in the eighteenth century (SI 218209).

A medieval village cross stands on the village green, on a platform of three badly worn steps (SI 218231). The steps support a square plan base stone, the octagonal top tapers to an octagonal shaft.

No prehistoric records are held at the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record within the immediate vicinity of the Hampton Lane. However to the northwest at Somers Lane, archaeological investigations in advance of sand extraction revealed significant remains existing on the site dating from the early Bronze Age period (MSI 1274). A number of pits were recorded, containing pottery, and grouped to form a rough circular shape.

Further postholes were located during the excavation but these did not contain dating evidence, however they formed both an inner and outer circle of concentric post holes similar to double-ringed houses associated with the late Bronze Age through to the Iron Age (MSI 1276).

During the same excavation a post medieval double-ditch enclosure was recorded and possibly formed an early garden boundary for Laburnam Cottage. Within the enclosure a series of post holes and pits were thought to be associated with an orchard and probable outbuildings (MSI 1275).

Further artefacts relating to the prehistoric period have been recorded as finds spots on the HER in the area east of The Somers, Meriden including the recovery of flints and scrapers, although no known artefacts of this period have been recovered within the immediate vicinity of the site.

The HER shows that the site lies within an agricultural landscape within which is a preserved system of ridge and furrow, two entries are recorded within a 1km radius of the site (MSI 8858, 8859). South west of Strawberry Bank Farm is a visible system of ridge and furrow running in varying directions and a further system running NE-SW can be observed to the west of the farm.

4. Results

4.1 Structural analysis

The area of ground reduction recorded is shown in Fig 1 and in plates 1-3. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

4.1.1 Phase 1 Modern deposits

Ground reduction covered an area 37m long, 37m wide to a maximum depth of 0.35m, the footprint of proposed tennis courts. The dark brown sandy silt topsoil was recorded as 0.25m deep. The topsoil was heavily disturbed by root action and contained occasional small to large rounded stones and moderate inclusions of pottery, glass and animal bone.

Below the topsoil the observed subsoil was of firm mid orange brown silty sand, with frequent small to large rounded stones and small to medium lumps of fuel ash. The subsoil also contained modern inclusions of ceramic building material, pottery and animal bone.

5. Artefact analysis, by Derek Hurst

5.1.1 The finds assemblage

There were a range of finds in a variety of materials from a single subsoil layer (101; see Table 1).

Finds period	Material	Count	Weight (g)
Medieval/post-medieval	Flat roof tile	4	98
post-medieval	brick	1	36
post-medieval	Clay pipe	1	1
post-medieval	pottery	12	148
modern	pottery	8	22
undated	coal	1	2
undated	Stone (roof slate)	1	10

Table 1 Quantification of the site assemblage

Pottery

The pottery assemblage consisted of 20 sherds of pottery weighing 170g (Tables 1-2). Level of preservation was generally good and abrasion was not in evidence.

5.1.2 The pottery

All sherds have been grouped and quantified according to fabric type (Table 2). The sherds were dated by fabric-type to their general period or production span, unless form-types were identifiable to a more precise date range.

period	Fabric common name	Fabric number	Count	Weight (g)
Post-medieval	Post-medieval red ware	78	6	100
	Post-medieval buff ware	91	2	18
	porcelain	83	1	8
	Agate ware	89	1	4
	creamware	84	2	18
Modern	Modern china	85	8	22

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric-type by broad period

The mid-later 18th century was represented by a range of types, including sherds of two relatively uncommon fabrics, both of which may signify higher status consumption: Agate ware and porcelain. However, the small size of the assemblage prevents any confident assertion of this interpretation.

5.1.3 **Other finds**

In addition a small quantity of ceramic and stone (slate) flat roofing tile, a brick, and clay pipe were recovered.

5.1.4 **Overview of artefactual evidence**

context	material	Object type/fabric ref	count	wt (g)	finds date range	context <i>terminus post quem</i> date
101	pot	78	6	100	17th-18th century	19th century
		91	2	18	18th century	
		83	1	8	?late 18th century	
		89	1	4	mid 18th century	
		84	2	18	Late 18th century	
		85	8	22	19th century	
	brick		1	36	Medieval/post-medieval	
	Ceramic flat roof tile		4	98	Medieval/post-medieval	
	Clay pipe		1	1	Post-medieval	
	Stone roof tile (slate)		1	10	undated	
coal		1	2	undated		

Table 3 Summary of context dating based on finds

6. **Significance**

This site assemblage is of minimal overall significance, especially given its small size.

7. **Synthesis**7.1 **Prehistoric, Roman and Medieval**

No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts of this broad date range were identified during the watching brief.

7.2 **Modern**

The topsoil is well sorted and mixed with stones showing agricultural usage, and there are substantial quantities of post-medieval and modern artefactual material within the subsoil.

The possibility remains that archaeological deposits survive below the subsoil, in areas of the site not yet disturbed by the present development.

8. **Publication summary**

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time and at completion of the project a publication summary will be issued.

9. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Cathy Patrick and James Gidman (CgMs Consulting), Anna Stocks (Planning Archaeologist for Warwickshire County Council) and the client David Wilson Homes (Mercia)

10. **Personnel**

The report preparation was led by Elizabeth A. Curran. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers. Fieldwork was undertaken by Adam Lee and illustration by Carolyn Hunt.

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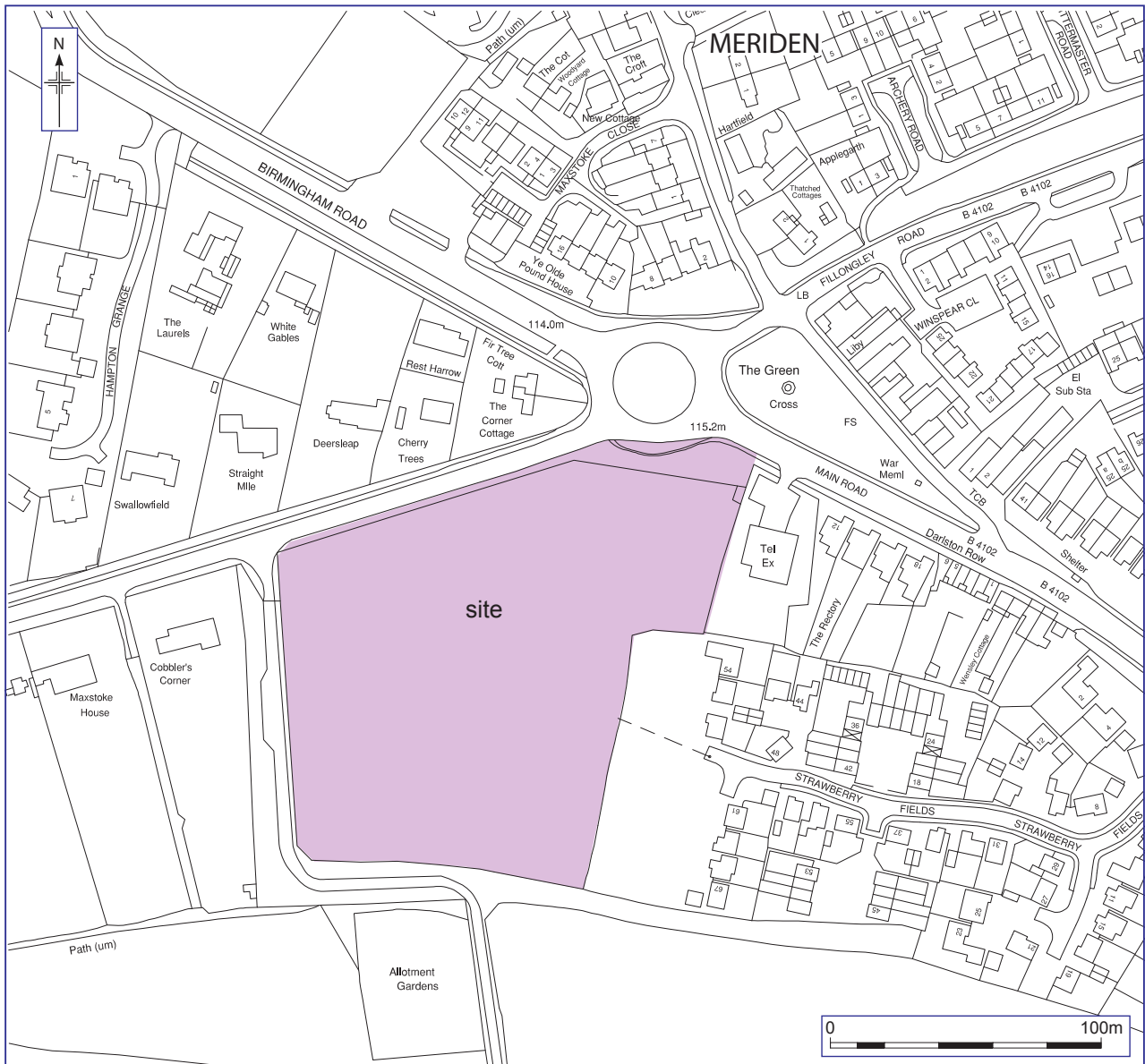
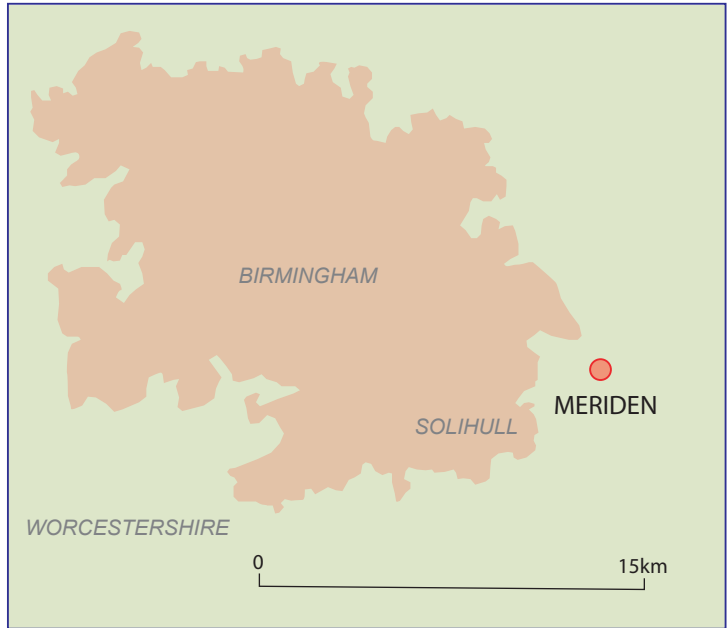
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Figures



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Location of the site

Figure 1



Location of stripped area

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1: The site from the north east



Plate 2: General shot of the area stripped, from the south west



Plate 3: The site following completion of the strip, from the south east

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Site area: Land to the south of Main Road and Hampton Lane, Meriden

Maximum dimensions: Length: 37m Width: 37m Depth: 035m

Main deposit description :

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Firm, mid dark brown sandy silt. Contains occasional small to large rounded stones. Occasional modern pottery, glass and animal bone. High level of root disturbance.	0-0.25m
101	Subsoil	Firm mid orange brown silty sand. Frequent small to large rounded stones and frequent small to medium lumps of fuel ash. Occasional modern pottery, glass and animal bone.	0.25-035m
