AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION ON LAND ADJOINING LAURELS ROAD, OFFENHAM, WORCESTERSHIRE

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With contributions by Alan Jacobs

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

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Project 3077 Report 1538 WSM 36113

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An archaeological evaluation on land adjoining Laurels Road, Offenham, Worcestershire

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Part 1 Project summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land adjoining Laurels Road, Offenham, Worcestershire (NGR. SP 0559 4563). It was undertaken on behalf of Rooftop Housing Group Ltd. They intend to construct six shared ownership houses and six bungalows for rental by elderly persons, for which a planning application has been submitted. The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological site was present and if so to indicate its location, date and nature; and more specifically to determine if remains exist relating to Romano-British activity identified during gravel quarrying in the late 19th century thought to be to the immediate west of the present site.

The results revealed no evidence of Romano-British activity on the site, nor remains from the prehistoric period. The features identified date to the 19th to 20th centuries, including several pits and a series of plough marks, which are considered to be related to market gardening or other agricultural activities. This is supported by datable artefactual materials within one pit, some plough marks and the subsoil deposit, which also contained occasional residual medieval and post-medieval material. Otherwise no significant archaeological structures, horizons or deposits were identified, nor artefacts recovered. Therefore the potential for any significant archaeological deposits within the site is considered to be low.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land adjoining Laurels Rd, Offenham, Worcestershire (Fig 1; NGR. SP 0559 4563), on behalf of Rooftop Housing Group Ltd. They intend to construct six shared ownership houses and six bungalows for rental by elderly persons and have submitted a planning application to Wychavon District Council (reference W/07/0487), who consider that a site of archaeological interest may be affected (HER ref. WSM 02827).

1.2 **Project parameters**

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 1999). The project also conforms to a brief prepared by Mike Glyde (Historic Environment Planning Advisor) (HEAS 2007a) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (HEAS 2007b).

1.3 Aims

The aims of the evaluation were to locate archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation. The purpose of this was to establish their significance, since this would make it possible to recommend an appropriate treatment, which may then be integrated with the proposed development programme.

More specifically the following aims have been identified.

• To specifically determine if remains exist relating to Romano-British activity identified during the gravel quarrying in the late 19th century thought to be to the immediate west of the present site.

2. Methods

2.1 **Documentary search**

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

2.2 Fieldwork methodology

2.2.1 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (HEAS 2007b). Fieldwork was undertaken between 2^{nd} May and 3^{rd} May 2007. The site reference number and site code is WSM 36113.

Four trenches, amounting to just over $192m^2$ in area, were excavated over the site area of $4,680m^2$, representing a sample of 4%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Fig 2. One trench (Trench 1) was located slightly outside the western site boundary.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a JCB wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995). On completion of excavation, the trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material (Plates 5 and 6).

The following techniques were considered for use but were not considered to be appropriate for this project; geophysical survey, fieldwalking and topographic/earthwork survey.

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 Alan Jacobs

2.3.1 Artefact recovery policy

All artefacts from the area of salvage recording were retrieved by hand and retained in accordance with the service manual (CAS 1995 as amended).

2.3.2 Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined and a primary record was made on a Microsoft Access 2000 database. Artefacts were identified, quantified and dated and a *terminus post quem* date produced for each stratified context. The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and 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**

The environmental sampling strategy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 4). In the event no deposits were identified during the evaluation that were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

2.5 **The methods in retrospect**

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

3. **Topographical and archaeological context**

The site is located on Laurels Road just to the east of the junction with Boat Lane. The land is located in the southern side of the village. Sub-rectangular in shape, the site is bounded by Laurels Road to the north, Mill lane to the west, a private driveway to the east and pasture to the south. The land is relatively flat and even, and it has recently been used for grazing horses, but in the immediate post-WWII period through to the late 20th century the land was used for market gardens growing root crops and other vegetables (the land owner *pers comm*).

The soils in this part of Offenham are from the Wick series. These comprise deep, welldrained light loams developed in glaciofluvial deposits and are classified with typical brown earths. They are extensive on low terraces along the Avon, Severn and Arrow. These are very good arable soils and support a wide range of crops including cereals, oilseed rape, root crops, hops and vegetables (Beard *et al* 1986).

The parish of Offenham lies along the west bank of the River Avon. On the south-west extent it is bounded by the Broadway brook flowing into the Avon from Badsey (VCH II, 420). A former route of the old road from Worcester to London branched off the Roman road of Buckle Street. It passed through the south-western portion of the parish to the Avon where a ferry took traffic across the river. Some names of the streets through the village reflect such activity, specifically Ferry Lane and Boat Lane. Prior to the establishment of the ferry service a stone bridge provided the means for crossing the river, and it was known as Offenham or Twyford Bridge (VCH II, 420).

Several archaeological features have been identified to the southeast of the site, close to Broadway Brook. Of particular note is a possible Romano-British cemetery (WSM 02827). Twenty skeletons were discovered in 1887 near Faulk Mill, along with some associated artefacts (WSM 34735) such as copper or bronze Roman coins. Surface finds included Roman pottery such as Samian sherds, flue tiles and a range of roman coins. Nearby to the west some prehistoric finds were recovered in gravels (WSM 02812) and it has been suggested that a hut of some sort existed here (VCH I, 183).

On the site of Faulk Mill itself a threshing barn (WSM 30498) an extant building, along with the watermill (WSM 07807) (based on documentary evidence), date from the 16th to the early 20th century. Further evidence for post-medieval activities was identified in an evaluation just northeast of the site where a north –south oriented ditch was identified (WSM 34043) thought to demarcate a field boundary (Goad 2004).

4. **Results**

4.1 **Structural analysis**

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figs 2-4. Images of the trenches and features recorded can be seen in Plates 2-4. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

4.1.1 Phase 1 Natural

The natural deposits observed conform to the Wick series and were fairly consistent across the extent of the site area, at a depth of between 0.30-0.34m below the current ground surface. The natural deposits were truncated by three modern pits and multiple linear plough marks (Section 4.1.3 below).

4.1.2 Phase 2 Medieval and post-medieval

No medieval or post-medieval deposits were identified. However eleven post-medieval sherds were recovered from the subsoil and are considered to be residual due to the presence of modern materials as well. In addition, fragments of tile dating from the 13th to 18th century were recovered from the fill of the plough marks of modern date and are therefore also residual.

4.1.3 **Phase 3** $19^{th} - 20^{th}$ century

The majority of deposits identified date to the 19^{th} and 20^{th} centuries. One of the pits excavated in Trench 2 (205) contained modern plastic. As the remaining two pits are very similar in form it is therefore posited that these also date to the 20^{th} century. The linear plough marks observed in all four trenches are indicative of deep ploughing, common from

WWII onwards. They contained a mix of artefacts that date to the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as the tile fragments discussed above (Section 4.1.2). The remaining artefacts of this date range were recovered from the topsoil and subsoil across the site.

4.2 Artefact analysis, by Alan Jacobs

The pottery assemblage retrieved from the excavated area consisted of 51 sherds of pottery weighing 395g, in addition fragments of tile, brick, glass, plastic, iron, copper alloy and clay pipe stems were recovered. There were seven stratified contexts which could be dated from the post-medieval and modern period (see Table 1). Level of preservation was generally fair with the majority of sherds displaying only moderate levels of abrasion.

Context	Material	Туре	Date range	Total	Weight (gm)	Context tpq
0	Brick	Modern	19th-20th century	1	18	19th-20th century
102	Brick	Modern	18th-20th century	8	62	19th-20th century
	Glass	Window	20th century	1	1	
	Pottery	Modern	19th-20th century	5	82	
	Pottery	Modern	Mid 19th-20th century	3	9	1
	Pottery	Post-medieval	17th-early 19th century	4	34	
	Slag	Modern	19th-20th century	2	3	
201	Pottery	Post-medieval	17th-early 19th century	1	38	19th-20th century
202	Coal	Undated	Undated	1	1	19th-20th century
	Glass	Bottle	18th-19th century	2	12	
	Glass	Window	20th century	1	1	
	Iron	Nail	Undated	1	31	
	Pottery	Modern	19th-20th century	2	7	
	Pottery	Modern	Mid 19th-20th century	12	30	
	Tile	Modern	19th-20th century	1	22	1
204	Plastic	Modern	1960-2000	1	2	19th-20th century
302	Pipe clay	Stems	17th-19th century	2	4	19th-20th century
	Pottery	Modern	Mid 19th-20th century	5	21	1
	Pottery	Post-medieval	17th-early 19th century	4	104	1
304	Floor Tile	Modern?	19th-20th century	1	222	19 th -20 th century
	Pottery	Modern	Mid 19th-20th century	4	13	
	Roof Tile	Medieval-post- medieval	13th-18th century	5	28	
402	Brass coated	Rod	20th century	1	19	19th-20th century
	Glass	Bottle	18th-19th century	1	25	
	Glass	Bottle	19th-20th century	1	2	
	Pottery	Modern	19th-20th century	2	5	
	Pottery	Modern	Mid 19th-20th century	7	38	
	Pottery	Post-medieval	17th-early 19th century	2	14	

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

4.2.1 **Discussion of the pottery**

Fabric	Fabric common name	Total	Weight
78	Post-medieval red wares	11	190
81.4	Miscellaneous late stoneware	2	69
83	Porcelain	1	6
85	Modern stone china	6	19
101	Miscellaneous modern wares	31	111

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery

All sherds have been grouped and quantified according to fabric type (see Table 2). No diagnostic forms were present; sherds were therefore dated by fabric type to their general period or production span. The discussion below is a summary of the finds and associated location or contexts by period. Where possible, *terminus post quem* dates have been allocated and the importance of individual finds commented upon as necessary.

A very limited range of pottery fabrics and forms was recovered from this site. The only postmedieval pottery represented was red sandy ware sherds (Fabric 78) most likely of 17th-18th century date although this fabric can continue into the 19th century. Small fragments of large storage jars or pancheons were recovered. The modern pottery was represented by stoneware (Fabric 81.4) in the form of a small kitchenware fragment of bowl, and part of a bottle or jar. A single small fragment of white porcelain was also recovered (Fabric 83), and several fragments of modern china (Fabric 85), with a few small fragments of willow pattern. The ceramic assemblage was however, dominated by modern plant-pot sherds (Fabric 101) dating from the mid 19th-20th century.

4.2.2 **Other finds**

The other finds recovered consisted primarily of small fragments of brick dating from the 19th-20th century and fragments of tile of a long-lived type dating from the 13th-18th century but most likely of post-medieval date. Small fragments of modern window or lens glass were recovered as well as clear, green and brown bottle glass again most likely of modern date. Other fragments consisted of clay pipe stems and slag, as well as a small piece of coal and a square handmade nail.

5. **Synthesis**

5.1 Medieval and post-medieval

While some medieval and post-medieval artefacts were recovered from the site there was no evidence of buildings or structures related to habitation in the site area. This is also supported by the low number of artefacts recovered, which are not indicative of intensive settlement. Consultation of the 1st Edition OS map shows that the site area appears to be arable land at this time (late 19th century). When considered in concert with the results above, it is interpreted that the site had been used for growing crops, possibly those processed at Faulk Mill, and prior to that in the medieval period remained largely uncultivated as pasture for grazing animals.

5.2 **19th and 20th centuries**

The land evaluated has been used for grazing/horticultural activities in more recent years, and this is evidenced not only by artefacts dating to this time and evidence from the OS map discussed above, but also by the heavily compacted nature of the soils on the site observed during excavation.

6. Significance, by Alan Jacobs and Sarah Phear

In considering significance, the Secretary of State's criteria for the scheduling of ancient monuments (DoE 1990, annex 4), have been used as a guide.

These nationally accepted criteria are used to assess the importance of an ancient monument and considering whether scheduling is appropriate. Though scheduling is not being considered in this case they form an appropriate and consistent framework for the assessment of any archaeological site. The criteria should not, however, be regarded as definitive; rather they are indicators which contribute to a wider judgement based on the individual circumstances of a case.

The artefactual material recovered from this site would be consistent with a low level of modern activity and rubbish disposal, with all contexts dateable to the 19th-20th century (Table 1). Only a few fragments of tile could be of earlier date but again were most likely post-medieval and residual in modern contexts. No indication is given of earlier archaeologically significant activity. The small size of the pottery assemblage limits interpretation although the predominant plant potsherds would indicate gardening activity.

The evaluation did not identify any significant archaeological structures, horizons, deposits, or artefacts. Therefore the potential for any significant archaeological deposits within the site is considered to be low.

7. **Publication summary**

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service 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 evaluation was undertaken on land adjoining Laurels Rd, Offenham, Worcestershire (NGR SP 0559 4563; WSM 36113). It was undertaken on behalf of Rooftop Housing Group Ltd. They intend to construct six shared ownership houses and six bungalows for rental by elderly persons and has submitted a planning application has been submitted. The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological site was present and if so to indicate what its location, date and nature were, and more specifically to determine if remains existed relating to Romano-British activity identified during the gravel quarrying in the late 19th century thought to be to the immediate west of the present site.

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8. Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Katherine Portman (Rooftop Housing Group Ltd) Mike Glyde (Historic Environment Planning Advisor, Worcestershire County Council).

9. **Personnel**

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by Sarah Phear. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan. Fieldwork was undertaken by Emily Gough, finds analysis by Alan Jacobs, and illustration by Carolyn Hunt.

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Figures

Plates



Plate 1 Excavation of Trench 2, facing north.



Plate 2 Trench 4, with plough marks in central half of the trench, facing north.



Plate 3 Section of pit 205 in Trench 2, facing east.



Plate 4 Trench 3, facing west.



Plate 5 Trench 1 after backfilling, facing north.



Plate 6 The site after backfilling of all trenches, facing east.

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions:

E Length: 30m

Width: 1.6m

Depth: 0.32-0.34m

Orientation: North-South

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface - top and bottom of deposits
101	Topsoil	Mid greyish-brown sandy-silt, moderately compact. Frequent root disturbance, small-medium sub-rounded pebbles. Occasional small CBM fragments. Slightly thicker at west end of trench.	0.24m
102	Subsoil	Mid reddish-brown moderately fine sandy-silt, compact. Frequent small-medium sub-rounded pebbles, moderate root disturbance and natural fragments of flint. Rare charcoal flecks. Occasional small fragments of CBM.	0.24-0.34m
103	Natural	Mid orangey-red find sand, moderate to loosely compacted with frequent small- medium sub-rounded gravels, and natural flint fragments. Truncated by 105.	0.34m +
104	Fill	Greyish-red silty-sand, moderately compact. Occasional charcoal flecks. Plough-soil filling plough marks 105. Not excavated.	0.34m +
105	Plough marks	Series of narrow linear plough marks running east west through the trench. Filled by 104. Not excavated.	0.34m +

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30m

Width: 1.6m Depth: 0.31-0.39m

Orientation: East-West

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface – top and bottom of deposits
201	Topsoil	Mid greyish-brown sandy-silt, moderately compact. Frequent root disturbance, small-medium sub-rounded pebbles. Occasional small CBM fragments.	0.00-0.08m
202	Subsoil	Mid reddish-brown moderately fine sandy-silt, compact. Frequent small-medium sub-rounded pebbles, moderate root disturbance and natural fragments of flint. Rare charcoal flecks. Occasional small fragments of CBM.	0.08-0.3m
203	Natural	Mid orangey-red find sand, moderate to loosely compacted with frequent small- medium sub-rounded gravels, and natural flint fragments. Truncated by 205, 207, 209, 211, and 213.	0.3m +
204	Pit fill	Mid-brownish fine sandy-silt, loose to moderately compact. Frequent root disturbance and small-medium sub-rounded pebbles. Moderate small natural flint fragments, rare pot sherds. Fill of 205.	0.3-0.6m
205	Pit cut	Oval shaped in plan but extends beyond north edge of trench. Sharp BFS, moderate to gradual sloping sides, gradual BTB, concave base. Filled by 205.	0.3-0.6m
206	Pit fill	Greyish-brown silty-sand, compact. Frequent small-medium sub-rounded pebbles and natural flint pieces. Not excavated.	0.3m+
207	Pit cut	Oval-like in shape but extends beyond south edge of trench. Filled by 206. Not excavated	0.3m +
208	Pit fill	Greyish-brown silty-sand, compact. Frequent small-medium sub-rounded pebbles and natural flint pieces. Not excavated.	0.3m+
209	Pit cut	Oval-like in shape but extends beyond south edge of trench. Filled by 208. Not excavated	0.3m+
210	Fill	Greyish-red silty sand, moderately compact. Occasional charcoal flecks. Plough- soil filling plough mark 211.	0.3-0.4m
211	Plough mark	Linear plough mark running east -west through the trench. Filled by 210.	0.3-0.4m
212	Fill	Greyish-red silty sand, moderately compact. Occasional charcoal flecks. Plough- soil filling plough mark 213. Not excavated.	0.3m
213	Plough mark	Linear plough mark running east -west through the trench. Filled by 212. Not excavated.	0.3m

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30m Width: 1.6m

Depth: 0.34m

Orientation: East-West

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface – top and bottom of deposits
301	Topsoil	Mid greyish-brown sandy-silt, moderately compact. Frequent root disturbance, small-medium sub-rounded pebbles. Occasional small CBM fragments.	0.00-0.08m
302	Subsoil	Mid reddish-brown moderately fine sandy-silt, compact. Frequent small-medium sub-rounded pebbles, moderate root disturbance and natural fragments of flint. Occasional charcoal flecks. Occasional small fragments of CBM.	0.08-0.28m
303	Natural	Mid orangey-red find sand, moderate to loosely compacted with frequent small- medium sub-rounded gravels, and natural flint fragments. Truncated by 305.	0.28-0.36m +
304	Fill	Greyish-red silty-sand, moderately compact. Occasional charcoal flecks. Plough-soil filling plough marks 305. Not excavated.	0.36m +
305	Plough marks	Series of narrow linear plough marks running east-west through the trench. Filled by 104. Not excavated.	0.36m +

Trench 4

Maximum dimensions:	Length: 30m	Width: 1.6m	Depth: 0.31m
Orientation:	North-South		

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface – top and bottom of deposits
401	Topsoil	Mid greyish-brown sandy-silt, moderately compact. Frequent root disturbance, small-medium sub-rounded pebbles. Occasional small CBM fragments.	0.00-0.05m
402	Subsoil	Mid reddish-brown moderately fine sandy-silt, compact. Frequent small-medium sub-rounded pebbles, moderate root disturbance and natural fragments of flint. Occasional charcoal flecks. Occasional small fragments of CBM.	0.05-0.3m
403	Natural	Mid orangey-red find sand, moderate to loosely compacted with frequent small- medium sub-rounded gravels, and natural flint fragments. Truncated by 405.	0.3m +
404	Fill	Greyish-red silty-sand, moderately compact. Occasional charcoal flecks. Plough-soil filling plough marks 405. Not excavated.	0.3m +
405	Plough marks	Series of narrow linear plough marks running east-west through the trench. Filled by 404. Not excavated.	0.3m +

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

- 2 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 48 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 1 Matrix sheets AS7
- 1 Sample records AS17
- 1 Levels record sheets AS19
- 4 Trench record sheets AS41
- 10 Scale drawings
- 1 Box of finds

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum Hartlebury Castle Hartlebury Near Kidderminster Worcestershire DY11 7XZ Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

Date	Artefact type	Total	Weight (g)	Specialist report?	Important research assemblage?
	Coal	1	1	Ν	Ν
	Iron	1	31	N	Ν
13th-18th century	Roof Tile	5	28	Ν	Ν
17th-19th century	Pipe clay	2	4	Ν	Ν
17th-early 19th century	Pottery	11	190	N	N
18th-19th century	Glass	3	37	Ν	Ν
18th-20th century	Brick	8	62	Ν	Ν
1960-2000	Plastic	1	2	Ν	Ν
19th-20th century	Brick	1	18	Ν	N
19th-20th century	Floor Tile	1	222	Ν	Ν
19th-20th century	Glass	1	2	Ν	Ν
19th-20th century	Pottery	9	94	Ν	Ν
19th-20th century	Slag	2	3	Ν	Ν
19th-20th century	Tile	1	22	Ν	Ν
20th century	CUAL	1	19	Ν	Ν
20th century	Glass	2	2	Ν	N
mid 19th-20th century	Pottery	31	111	Ν	N

Summary of data for Worcestershire HER

Table 4: Summary of the assemblage

*Table 3 is a new table requested by the HER to enable them to input data more efficiently. The table can be imported directly from the Model finds database structure where it is also called 'summary of the assemblage', with the last two fields being filled in once the table has been imported