ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT EVESHAM CONTACT CENTRE, ABBEY ROAD, EVESHAM, WORCESTERSHIRE

Tom Vaughan and Angus Crawford

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE
Project 2773
Report 1375
WSM 34495

Archaeological watching brief at Evesham Contact Centre, Abbey Road, Evesham, Worcestershire

Tom Vaughan and Angus Crawford

Background information

AgentQMP Management and DesignClientWest Mercia ConstabularySite addressEvesham Contact Centre,

Abbey Road, Evesham SP 0354 4356

National Grid reference SP 0354 4356 Sites and Monuments Record reference WSM 24495

Planning authority Wychavon District Council

reference W/05/0531
Brief HEAS 2005a
Project design HEAS 2005b
Project parameters IFA 1999

Previous archaeological work on the site

There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken on site.

Previous archaeological work on associated sites

Evesham has been the subject of a recent survey undertaken as part of the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey and a summary of previous archaeological work in the town has been compiled as part of this project (WSM 28993; Dalwood 1996).

The site lies within the outer precinct of Evesham Abbey, a Benedictine house whose origins date to the 8th century AD. The abbey was comprehensively rebuilt by Abbot Walter from 1078 and continued to be extended throughout the medieval period until its dissolution in 1540. It was almost completely demolished soon after, apart from the bell tower and the few fragments of the structure that remain today. However, some buildings such as the Abbey Gate became private dwellings and survived, although in an altered state (Patrick *et al* 2003, 2). The inner precinct is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 253). The present site lies within the outer Abbey precinct, an area that would have been occupied by gardens and allotments, with occasional associated structures, such as tithe barns, stables, kennels, byres as well as meadow land and fish ponds (WSM 15209 and 29029)

Recent investigations around the Abbey Gatehouse, 0.2km to the north-east revealed a small 2nd century pit, residual Roman pottery, a medieval flagstone floor and an undated cobbled surface (WSM 32766). The Roman remains may represent peripheral activity associated with settlement identified at Vine Street, approximately 0.3km to the north (WSM 30578; Patrick *et al* 2003)

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 CAS 1995 Sources consulted HER Sources cited by the HER

Date(s) of fieldwork 7th - 15th September 2005

Area of site $c 60.42 \text{m}^2$

Area observed c 11.51m². Indicated on Fig 2

percentage c 19%

Dimensions of excavated areas observed Foundations length 15.53m

width 0.65-1.12m depth 1.09-1.76m

Access to or visibility of deposits

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken after machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, though any less clear may have not been identified. Selected areas of the trench sections were cleaned by hand. Access to the deeper Trench 4 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.

Deposit description (see Appendix 1)

The stratigraphy was very similar between the trench and test pits, comprising a well-developed sandy clay loam topsoil with frequent charcoal flecks and gravel, over gravelly sandy clay subsoil, in turn over a very sandy clay and gravel natural matrix. This had been sealed by modern makeup, hardcore and floor layers for the former dog pound which occupied the area prior to the present works.

No archaeological deposits, structures or features were identified within the soil sequence, which was disturbed by a small number of modern service trenches.

Artefactual analysis

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).

The pottery assemblage retrieved from the watching brief consisted of two sherds of pottery weighing 9.5g, in addition fragments of ceramic building material, clay pipe stems, animal bone and a fragment of corroded iron were recovered. The group came from three stratified contexts and could be dated from the late post-medieval period onwards (see Table 1). Level of preservation was generally fair with the sherds displaying no significant levels of abrasion.

Context	Material	Туре	Total	Weight (g)
1001	Brick	Late Post-Medieval	1	1
1001	Claypipe	Stem	1	0.5
1001	Pottery	Modern	1	9
2001	Bone	Animal	1	22
2001	Claypipe	Stem	2	4
2001	Pipe	Drain	1	5
2001	Pottery	Late Post-Medieval	1	0.5
2001	Tile	Roof	1	5
3001	Bone	Animal	2	7
3001	Iron	Unidentified	1	36
3001	Tile	Fragment	1	1

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

All sherds have been grouped and quantified according to fabric type (Table 2). A total of two sherds were datable 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.

Context	Fabric number	Fabric name	Total	Weight
1001	81	Stoneware	1	9
2001	84	Creamware	1	0.5

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric

Discussion of the assemblage

Late post-medieval period.

Only a single sherd of pottery was datable to this period (context 2001). This was a body sherd of creamware with a white glaze present on both the inner and outer surface. The thinness of the sherd suggests that it originated from either a dinner service side-plate or a very fine dinner plate. Creamware's usage as a ceramic fabric for domestic dinner services was at its height around 1760-1780 when English porcelains and finer decorative stone chinas finally superseded it.

Other materials datable to this period were two small brick or roof tile fragments (dating from the 18th to mid 19th century, context 1001 and 2001) and fragments of clay pipe stems from contexts 1001 and 2001.

Modern Period.

As with the late post-medieval assemblage only a single sherd of pottery was datable to the modern period. This was a stoneware rim sherd with an ochre glaze (context 1001). This type of stoneware is extremely common in modern ceramic assemblages dating to the 19th - early 20th century. This particular ceramic fabric had a wide range of practical applications, of which the vast majority was for the production of storage jars, flagons and bottles.

The remaining material dating to this period were a small tile fragment (unglazed, context 3001), and a fragment of salt-glazed drainpipe similar to that for sewage or underground rainwater drainage (context 2001).

Conclusions

The small number of artefacts recovered during the watching brief indicates that there are no significant archaeological deposits or structures within or in the immediate vicinity of the site. The artefacts recovered and their late post-medieval to modern dates suggests that their disposition is the result of low level discard of general household and food waste. This is further confirmed by the small quantity of undatable animal bone also present.

The small size of the assemblage and the well-developed nature of the soils also indicate that the area has not been subject to intensive ploughing during the medieval or later periods, where large quantities of discarded material, are unintentionally introduced to the soil as part of the manuring process. The site was therefore probably largely undisturbed prior to the construction of the Abbey in the 8th century, and remained so, perhaps under pasture or low-intensity agriculture and gardens throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods.

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 watching brief was undertaken on behalf of West Mercia Constabulary at Evesham Contact Centre, Abbey Road, Evesham, Worcestershire (NGR: SP 0354 4356; HER ref. WSM 34495). Three underpinning pits and one foundation trench were observed, within which was revealed a well-developed soil sequence overlying a sandy clay and gravel natural matrix. No archaeological horizons, structures or features were identified. The small assemblage comprised largely late post-medieval ceramic finds and undatable animal bone. It is considered that the site was largely unoccupied prior to the construction of the Abbey, and that it remained undisturbed except for low intensity agricultural use throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods.

Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	3
Photographic record sheets	1
Digital photographs	16
Trench records AS41	4
Boxes of finds	1
Computer disks	1

It is intended to be place the project archive at:

Worcestershire County Museum

Hartlebury Castle, Hartlebury

Near Kidderminster

Worcestershire DY11 7XZ

telephone 01299 250416

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1 - Deposit description

Context No	Context type	Feature type	Colour	Texture	Consistency	Notes	
						PIT 1	
1000	Layer	Natural	Yellowish orange	Sandy clay	Firm	natural, occ fawn/grey streaks, frequent small pebble gravel, root holes/worm holes, irreg. boundary w/1001 above, >0.89m bgs.	
1001	Layer	Subsoil	orangey brown	Sandy clay	Compact	tr 1, occ small pebbles, v occ charcoal flecks, v diffuse boundary w/1002 above, irreg w/1001 below, 0.64-1.01m bgs.	
1002	Layer	Topsoil	Mid-Brown	Sandy clay loam	Compact	tr 1, v diffuse boundary w/1001 below, irreg w/1003 above, frequent medium charcoal flecks, small pebbles & gravel, 0.39-0.64m bgs.	
1003	Layer	Modern Layers	Dark grey	Sandy clay loam	Compact	tr 1, redep soil, frequent small-medium charcoal flecks, occ mortar lumps, irreg boundary w/ 1002 below & 1004 above, 0.13-0.44m bgs.	
1004	Layer	Modern Layers	mixed	tarmac & brick	cemented	tr 1, modern tarmac surface w/ brick, pebble & cement hardcore, irreg boundary w/1003 below 0.00-0.23m bgs.	
				Ī		PIT 2	
2000	Layer	Natural	Yellowish orange	Sandy clay	Firm	tr 2, natural, occ fawn/grey streaks, frequent small pebble gravel, root holes/worm holes, irreg. boundary w/2001 above, >0.90m bgs.	
2001	Layer	Subsoil	orangey brown	Sandy clay	Compact	tr 2, occ small pebbles, v occ charcoal flecks, v diffuse boundary w/2002 above, irreg w/2001 below, 0.55-0.96m bgs.	
2002	Layer	Topsoil	Mid-Brown	Sandy clay loam	Compact	tr 2, v diffuse boundary w/2001 below, irreg w/2003 above, frequent medium charcoal flecks, small pebbles & gravel, 0.31-0.69m bgs.	
2003	Layer	Modern Layers	Dark grey	Sandy clay loam	Compact	tr 2, redep soil, frequent small-medium charcoal flecks, occ mortar lumps, irreg boundary w/2002 below & 2004 abov 0.22-0.48m bgs.	
2004	Layer	Modern Layers	mixed	gravel & concrete	cemented	tr 2, modern pea gravel & concrete, defined boundary w/2003 below, 0.00-0.31m bgs.	
				Ī		PIT 3	
3000	Layer	Natural	Yellowish orange	Sandy clay	Firm	tr 3, natural, occ fawn/grey streaks, frequent small pebble gravel, root holes/worm holes, irreg. boundary w/ 3001 above, >1.03m bgs.	
3001	Layer	Subsoil	orangey brown	Sandy clay	Compact	tr 3, frequent small pebbles, v occ charcoal flecks, v diffuse boundary w/3002 above, irreg w/3001 below, 0.72-1.07m bgs.	
3002	Layer	Topsoil	Mid-Brown	Sandy clay loam	Compact	tr 3, v diffuse boundary w/3001 below, irreg w/3003 above, frequent medium charcoal flecks, small pebbles & gravel, 0.53-0.84m bgs.	
3003	Layer	Modern Layers	Dark grey	Sandy clay loam	Compact	tr 3, redep soil, frequent small-medium charcoal flecks, occ mortar lumps, irreg boundary w/3002 below & 3004 abov 0.28-0.57m bgs.	
3004	Layer	Modern Layers	mixed	gravel & concrete	cemented	tr 3, modern pea gravel & concrete, defined boundary w/3003 below, 0.00-0.34m bgs.	
						TRENCH 4	

Context No	Context type	Feature type	Colour	Texture	Consistency	Notes
4000	Layer	Natural	Yellowish orange	Sandy clay		tr 4, natural, occ fawn/grey streaks, frequent small pebble gravel, root holes/worm holes, irreg. boundary w/ 4001 above, >0.85m bgs.
4001	Layer		Light greyish brown	Sandy clay		tr 4, frequent small pebbles, v occ charcoal flecks, v diffuse boundary w/4002 above, irreg w/4001 below, 0.57-0.88m bgs.
4002	Layer	Topsoil	Dark-Brown	Sandy clay loam	Compact	tr 4, v diffuse boundary w/4001 below, irreg w/4003 above, occasional charcoal flecks, small pebbles & gravel, 0.39- 0.65m bgs.
4003	Layer	Modern Layers	Dark grey brown	Sandy clay loam		tr 4, redep soil, frequent small-medium charcoal flecks and brick rubble, irreg boundary w/4002 below & 4004 above, 0.08-0.42m bgs.
4004	Layer	Modern Layers	mixed	tarmac & brick	cemented	tr 4, brick rubble hardcore and tarmac, defined boundary w/4003 below, 0.00-0.22m bgs.

Appendix 2 - Photographs



Plate 1: Pit 1, west-north-west section



Plate 2: Pit 3, west-north-west section



Plate 3: Trench 4, south-south-west section at east end



Plate 4: General shot of site, view south-west

Appendix 3 - Worcestershire Historic Environment Record: Artefacts

Date range	Material	Total	Weight (g)	Specialist report?	Important research assemblage?
	Bone	3	29		N
	Iron	1	36		N
17-18C	Claypipe	1	0.5	Y	N
1760-80	Pottery	1	0.5	Y	N
18-19	Brick	1	1	Y	N
18-19C	Claypipe	2	4	Y	N
18-19C	Tile	1	5	Y	N
20C	Pipe	1	5	Y	N
20C	Pottery	1	9	Y	N
20C	Tile	1	1	Y	N