

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION
AT
MEADOW FARM, REDDITCH,
WORCESTERSHIRE

Simon Sworn

With a contribution by Alan Jacobs

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

28th July 2006

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Historic Environment and Archaeology Service,

Worcestershire County Council,
Woodbury,
University of Worcester,
Henwick Grove,
Worcester WR2 6AJ

Project 2912
Report 1457
WSM 35085

Archaeological evaluation at Meadow Farm, Redditch, Worcestershire

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Background information

<i>Client</i>	Anglo Holt Construction Ltd
<i>Site address</i>	Meadow Farm, Redditch, Worcestershire
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SP 0420 6937
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	WSM 35085
<i>Planning authority</i>	Redditch Borough Council
<i>Brief</i>	HEAS 2006a
<i>Project design</i>	HEAS 2006b
<i>Project parameters</i>	IFA 1999

Previous archaeological work on the site

The site lies in open, level country, roughly 1.5 miles to the north of Redditch town centre. The evaluation trench is located just to the south of the derelict farmhouse, which is recorded in the listing as a c.1600 building with an adjacent granary dating from the early 17th century (WSM 00014). There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken on the site.

Previous archaeological work on associated sites

In the field to the west of the present farmhouse a number of earthworks have been recorded (Cook 1994: WSM 07249). These earthworks, some of which are indistinct, indicate the presence of a possible deserted medieval settlement. The Domesday Book (1065-86) records the presence of medieval fishpond(s), a church and farm(s) (Thorn and Thorn 1982). An evaluation in 1995 found evidence for a holloway (Cook 1995).

Aims

The aim of the evaluation was to observe and record archaeological deposits associated with the Grade II listed farmhouse, prior to its conversion, and the construction of a new Travelodge building to the south, 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	SMR/HER Sources cited by the SMR/HER 1 st Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1884-7
Date of fieldwork	5 th June 2006
Area of site	c 36m ² Indicated on Fig 2
Dimensions of excavated areas observed	Trench length 22.50m width 1.60m depth 0.50m

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.

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

Context	Type Colour Texture	Description	Date (<i>tpq</i>)	Interpretation	Depth (below ground level)
100	Friable dark brown loam	Frequent sub-rounded pebbles and charcoal flecks, heavy root action	18 th century - modern	Topsoil	0-0.22m
101	Friable mid brown sandy loam	Frequent charcoal flecks, occasional sub-rounded pebbles, heavy root action	18 th century - modern	Subsoil	0.22-0.45m
102	Loose yellowish brown sand	Frequent sub-rounded pebbles and occasional patches of reddish yellow sandy clay		Natural	0.45m+
103	Firm dark brown/black clayey sand	Frequent charcoal flecks and small sub-rounded pebbles, occasional crushed mortar fragments	18 th – 19 th century	Fill of stake hole 104	0.40-0.58m
104	Circular cut	Steep sided with 'V' shaped base. No evidence of post pipe. Filled by 103	18 th – 19 th century	Stake hole	0.40-0.58m
105	Mixed friable dark brown loam and reddish brown sandy clay	Frequent sub-rounded pebbles and charcoal flecks	17 th – 18 th century	Fill of pit 106	0.41-0.70m
106	Ovoid cut	Steep concave sides and sharp concave base, filled by 105	17 th – 18 th century	Pit cut	0.41-0.70m

Context	Type Colour Texture	Description	Date	Interpretation	Depth (below ground level)
107	Very loose grey/brown silty clay	Occasional sub- rounded pebbles and brick fragments	17 th – 18 th century	Fill of brick culvert 108	0.19-0.44m
108	Brick and tile structure	Brick size 230 x 115 x 60, tiles 17mm thick. Aligned north - south	17 th – 18 th century	Brick and tile culvert	0.21-0.44m
109	Friable dark brown loam	Frequent sub- rounded pebbles and charcoal flecks, heavy root action	17 th – 18 th century	Backfill of cut 110	0.21-0.30m
110	Linear cut	Vertical sides, flat base	17 th – 18 th century	Cut for brick/tile culvert 108	0.21-0.44m

Artefact analysis by Alan Jacobs

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).

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.

Pottery 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).

Artefactual analysis

The pottery assemblage retrieved from the excavated area consisted of just 7 sherds of pottery weighing 306g, and in addition fragments of tile, brick, iron slag, mortar and bone were recovered. The group came from four stratified contexts, and could be dated from the Roman period onwards (see Table 1). Level of preservation was generally varied with the majority of sherds displaying only moderate levels of abrasion.

Context	Material	Type	Fabric	Total	Weight (g)
100	Pottery	Post-medieval	91	3	22
101	Pottery	Post-medieval	78	1	1
101	Pottery	Post-medieval	91	1	281
101	Pottery	Roman	12	1	1
101	Tile	Medieval-post-medieval	2a	9	266
103	Mortar	Lime		2	16
103	Slag	Modern		1	1
105	Bone	Bird		6	15
105	Pottery	Post-medieval	78	1	1
105	Tile	Medieval-post-medieval	2b	2	50
108	Brick	Post-medieval	2c	1	2620
108	Tile	Post-medieval	2c	4	3357

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

Discussion of the pottery

All sherds have been grouped and quantified according to fabric type (see Table 2). No diagnostic form sherds were present, and the sherds were therefore, datable by fabric type to the general period or production span.

The discussion below is a summary of the finds and associated location by period. Where possible, *terminus post quem* dates have been allocated and the importance of individual finds commented upon as necessary.

Fabric Number	Fabric name	Total sherds	Weight (g)
12	Severn Valley ware	1	1
78	Post-medieval red sandy ware	2	2
91	Post-medieval buff ware	4	303
Total	Modern stone china	7	306

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric

The pottery assemblage dates from the Roman until the post-medieval period. The only Roman sherd recovered consisted of a very abraded fragment of Severn Valley Ware (fabric 12: context 101), clearly residual. The assemblage consists primarily of post-medieval fabrics of 17th-18th century date. The two fabrics recovered consisted of post-medieval red sandy ware (fabric 78) in the form of two body sherds of small hollow ware vessels (contexts 101 and 105) one of which has trail slip decoration indicating a date from the 17th century. The only other fabric represented was post-medieval buff ware (fabric 91) in the form of body or base sherds of large storage jars or pancheons (contexts 100 and 101) of distinctly 18th century date.

A number of fragments of medieval/post-medieval tile were recovered (contexts 101 and 105). In addition a number of fragments of post-medieval tile in a fabric similar to the county type series 2c were recovered, the largest example being a peg tile with rounded holes, coarsely made and misshapen. This tile has been knife-trimmed and had mortar used on the under surface to level it for use (context 108; Plate 5). A single example of a brick evidently dating to the 17th century was also recovered from this context. Fragments of mortar and slag were recovered (context 103) evidently of 18th-19th century date and fragments of bone from a bird that was larger than a chicken (context 105; Mann pers comm.).

Significance

The assemblage is too small to have much archaeological significance. The single fragment of very abraded Roman pottery merely represents very residual material. The great majority of artefacts could be dated to the 17th-18th centuries. In addition the material recovered from the culvert would support an 18th century date for this feature. The lack of any medieval material in this area is significant in that it would not support the presence of a deserted medieval village in the immediate vicinity of the evaluation.

Discussion

Observations were undertaken during and after the excavation of a machine-dug evaluation trench to the south of the present dwelling (Fig 2). The present surface consisted of a layer of mixed 'garden soil' containing fragments of 18th century pottery and a single residual sherd of Roman Severn Valley ware. This topsoil (100) contained heavy root disturbance from the present vegetation, and appeared well mixed, as a result of previous land use as an orchard. Below the topsoil was a layer of mid brown sandy loam subsoil (101) that again appeared well mixed and with heavy root disturbance.

Towards the centre of the trench a north – south aligned brick culvert (108: Plate 4), with a tile base, truncated the subsoil. The culvert appeared to be made from re-used bricks and tiles, the bricks and tiles dated to 17th century. The tiles appeared to have been reused, as the round peg holes clearly visible indicated that their primary use was as roof tiles. The culvert sat within a cut (110) and was backfilled with material (109) similar to the overlying topsoil

The subsoil directly overlay the underlying natural sands (102) and two isolated features. To the far western end of the trench a small circular stake hole (104: Plate 2) was observed. The stake hole was roughly 0.20m in diameter by 0.17m deep. The sides were steep, but not quite vertical and with a sharp 'V' shaped base, suggesting that a stake had been driven into the ground rather than placed in a pre-dug pit. Although there was no pottery recovered from the fill (103) of this stake hole, a small fragment of modern iron slag and a cement mortar fragment, both dated to the 18th – 19th century was retrieved.

Also to the western end of the trench a small ovoid pit (106: Plate 3) was cut into the natural. This pit contained a single fill (105) of mixed re-deposited natural and topsoil. Pottery retrieved from the pit indicated a date of mid 17th – mid 18th century. Also fragments of bone were recovered from this feature, suggesting it may have functioned as a domestic refuse pit associated with the farmhouse.

Some of the buildings at Meadow Farm have been suggested to be of medieval origin, though the lack of any medieval artefacts in the evaluation may indicate that site occupation here commenced slightly later than previously thought. A more definitive verdict awaits the results of the historic building survey presently in progress.

No other deposits were observed during the evaluation.

Conclusions

The evaluation trench indicated areas of relatively modern disturbance, all of which probably represents activity associated with the existing farmhouse.

The brick and tile culvert appeared to be relatively modern, though clearly re-using earlier structural material, and probably ran from the southern edge of the farmhouse to a pond just to the south of the evaluation area.

The two features cut into the natural sands towards the western end of the trench were also of a post-medieval date.

No features were observed that indicated any activity prior to the post-medieval period. There was no indication that the possible deserted medieval settlement to the southwest extended into the evaluated area to the south of the farmhouse, though the nature of medieval deposition can vary significantly, sometimes affected by the type of agricultural activity, and as such the negative evidence must be treated cautiously.

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 behalf of Anglo Holt construction Ltd at Meadow Farm, Redditch, Worcestershire (NGR ref SP 0420 6937; SMR ref WSM 35085). A single 30m long trench was excavated to the south of the extant farmhouse. The trench uncovered evidence for activity from the 17th – 19th centuries, in the form of a single stake hole, a small ovoid pit and a modern brick culvert, constructed from re-used 17th – 18th century bricks and roof tiles. Within the present topsoil and subsoil residual Roman pottery suggested only a slight level of earlier activity.

A possible deserted medieval village, located in the fields to the west of the site did not extend into the evaluation area.

Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	1
Photographic records AS3	1
Digital photographs	41
Abbreviated context records AS40	11
Trench records AS41	1
Drawings	6
Boxes of finds	1

The project archive is intended to be placed at:	Worcestershire County Museum Hartlebury Castle, Hartlebury Near Kidderminster Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
telephone	01299 250416

Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Rob Earle (Anglo Holt Construction) and Mike Glyde (Planning archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council).

The project was managed by Derek Hurst, who also edited the paper.

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Plate 1: General view of the trench, facing east



Plate 2: Stake-hole 104, facing east, scale at 0.30m



Plate 4: Ovoid pit cut 106, section 3, facing east, scale at 0.30m



Plate 4: Brick and tile culvert 108, section 4, facing south, scale at 0.30m



Plate 5: Re-used 17th – 18th century roof tile from 108