

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF OF
LAND TO THE REAR OF
7, BARTON STREET,
TEWKESBURY,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Tom Vaughan

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Project 2950
Report 1567

Archaeological watching brief of land to the rear 7, Barton Street, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire

Tom Vaughan

Background information

<i>Client</i>	Hercules House
<i>Site address</i>	rear of 7, Barton Street, Tewkesbury Gloucestershire
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SO 893 327
<i>Planning authority</i>	Tewkesbury Borough Council
<i>reference</i>	04/10062/1170/FUL & 04/2620/1169/FUL
<i>Brief</i>	GCC 2005
<i>Project design</i>	HEAS 2006
<i>Project parameters</i>	IFA 1999

Previous archaeological work on the site

There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken on site.

Archaeological and historical background

The archaeological background to Tewkesbury has previously been summarized by Patrick (2002, 4-5) as follows:

Tewkesbury is situated at the confluence of the rivers Severn and Avon, with the Carrant Brook and the River Swilgate flowing to the north and south of the town respectively. This position at a crossing point of the Avon, and to a lesser extent of the Swilgate, is an important factor in the town's development as the surrounding area's tendency to flood has resulted in the town being sited on a virtual island. Tewkesbury is sited upon a ridge of Mercian Mudstone, which has been cut through by the Avon and Swilgate rivers. The Mercian Mudstone is then overlain by Quaternary gravel deposits of the Third (main) terrace of the River Severn.

Prehistoric finds have been recovered from a number of locations in Tewkesbury, mainly in the northern Oldbury part of the town. Roman finds of 1st to 4th century date have been found throughout the area of the medieval town, particularly in the northern end of the High Street and in the south close to the Abbey. A Roman road linking Gloucester to Droitwich is thought to have crossed the Avon close to the town but the exact nature of the Roman settlement in Tewkesbury is not known and no indication of an urban settlement has yet been found.

Little is also known about the post-Roman early medieval occupation of the town. The use of the name 'Oldbury' to describe the northern part of the town does suggest the existence of earthworks or other prominent settlement remains during the late Saxon/early Norman conquest period. Tewkesbury grew and flourished in the medieval and early post-medieval period and the form and extent of the town at this time is still visible due to the survival of the street plan and several buildings. The site lies within the area of the medieval town on land to the north of Barton Street. Whilst the High Street is believed to have developed earlier than much of Barton Street, the site is located at the western end, close to the market and is therefore likely to have been laid out at the same time as the burgrave plots on the eastern side of the High Street.

The town entered a period of decline in the 19th century, which is interpreted as being a result of the town's failure to adapt from cottage-based industries to the new factory system of production. This decline was reflected in the population figures and the 1831 population of 5,780 was not reached again until after the Second World War. Consequently buildings dating from the 15th through to the 18th century survive where in other similar towns they would have been rebuilt or re-fronted at a later date. Nelson Street frontage is occupied by three listed buildings; 13 and 14 are 17th century timber framed buildings (GSMR 7744); number 15 is an 18th century brick building (GSMR 7745); number

16 is a 16th century timber framed building (GSMR 7746) which is adjoined to the east by number 17, which is thought to date to the 15th century. Several other buildings of medieval origin survive along Barton Street and this survival suggests that good preservation of below ground archaeological remains is highly likely.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1883 (Fig 3) reveals the site to have been largely occupied by tightly packed buildings off two alleyways accessed from Barton Street to the south, one of which is recorded as Millard's Court.

Previous archaeological work on associated sites

The Service has undertaken a number of archaeological projects within this part of Tewkesbury:

The evaluation of properties to the rear of 15/16 Barton Street and 3, Nelson Street, due east of the present site, revealed well-preserved remains dating from the medieval period onwards, buried approximately 1-1.5m below the present ground level, up to 2.6m in depth. The features consisted of pits and ditches containing evidence for domestic activity in the backyards, such as animal husbandry and the processing of crops (GSMR 21350; Patrick 2002).

A watching brief of groundworks at 40/41, High Street, to the north-west, found that post-medieval development had removed most of the evidence for earlier activity on the site. However, undisturbed deposits surviving on the north side indicated a moderate level of Roman activity, along with medieval settlement from at least the 13th or 14th century. In addition, an undated alluvial channel was identified on the south side of the site. Set against the background of previous archaeological research in Tewkesbury, the Roman deposits add to evidence for intensive activity across a wide area during the period, while the medieval remains represent domestic activity in an urban context. The post-medieval deposits were less significant in themselves, but emphasised the scale and intensity of 18th and 19th century development in the town, and its effect on pre-existing archaeological remains (Miller 2001).

Two trenches were excavated on the corner of Oldbury Road and Eagle Alley to the north of the present site, through surfaces of 19th century brick and floor tile. Although only dug to 1m maximum, the earliest deposit found was a garden soil containing 15th to 18th century pottery. This was sealed by made ground containing 19th/20th century pottery. The latter deposits were thought to represent the replacement of an earlier substrate, although they contained residual Roman and medieval pottery (Miller et al 2007).

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.

Particular research questions that the project may be able to address include: the nature and extent of Roman and Anglo-Saxon settlement; the date at which this part of the medieval town was developed; and the form of development in the post-medieval period.

Methods

General specification for fieldwork	CAS 1995
Sources consulted	GSMR 1 st edition Ordnance Survey map 1883 VCH VIII
Date(s) of fieldwork	20 th October, 11 th November and 4 th December 2006
Area of site (Fig 1)	c 465m ²
Dimensions of excavated areas observed (Fig 2)	Foundations length c 135m width 0.45-0.60m depth 0.60-0.80m Piles 6 no. diameter 0.30m

Access to or visibility of deposits

Observation of those excavated areas made available for monitoring was undertaken after machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were generally sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, though any less clear may have not been identified.

Statement of confidence

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a good degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. However it must be stressed that the foundations trenches were dug to a maximum depth of 0.80m (Plates 2-5). The piles were drilled to a greater depth, using temporarily supported replacement rotary bored piles, at 0.30m diameter (EH 2007, 4-6). They only sufficed to identify the approximate depth of the natural; it was not possible to distinguish individual layers or archaeological horizons within the overburden and soils overlying the natural matrix (Plate 1).

Deposit description

Boreholes

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (OD or below ground level)
100	Mixed overburden and soils	Mixed layers of mid grey brown loam and sandy loam with mortar flecks and brick rubble within the upper horizon.	0.00-c 1.80m
101	Natural	Dark red mudstone clay.	c 1.80m +

Foundation trenches

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth (OD or below ground level)
200	Mixed overburden	Mixed layers of mid-dark greyish brown loam and sandy loam with mortar flecks and patches of extensive brick rubble. Occasional 19 th -20 th century debris. Variably moderately compact to uncompact; generally not cohesive.	0.00-0.80m +

Discussion and conclusions

No significant archaeological features, layers, horizons, structures, or archaeological artefacts were identified during the project. The observed foundation trenches were generally only dug to a depth of between 0.60-0.80m below the existing ground level. At this depth a mixed soil with variable brick rubble was observed, along with occasional 19th/20th century debris (Plates 2-5).

A single residual find was recorded (and retained on site) which is of minor note: a wine bottle dating from the very late 17th to the first half of the 18th century. It was of dark natural green glass, cloudy; comprising a globular body with rounded basal edge; kick with unpolished pontil mark; the neck had an applied collar set below rim (Plate 6; pers comm Alan Jacobs).

The piles were drilled to a greater depth, although the method of piling employed meant that it was not possible to differentiate discrete layers until the natural matrix was struck at approximately 1.80m depth (Plate 1).

The ground level across the site did not vary substantially from that observed in adjacent properties. During the evaluation of 15/16, Barton Street, to the east, post-medieval and modern soils and overburden layers were identified to a depth of 0.9-1.20m overlying and sealing truncated medieval horizons and features (containing occasional residual Roman material; Patrick 2002). It may therefore be conjectured that medieval and earlier levels remain largely undisturbed below the observed overburden layers across the present site.

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 Hercules House of land to the rear of Nelson Street and Barton Street, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire (NGR: SO 893 327). Piles and foundation trenches were observed across the site. The former identified the natural matrix at a depth of approximately 1.80m depth, although it was otherwise not possible to distinguish discrete layers above. The latter were dug to 0.60-0.80m depth, revealing only mixed soils and overburden with variable brick rubble. No significant archaeological features, layers, horizons, structures, or archaeological artefacts were identified. On the basis of this and the findings of adjacent sites, it is conjectured that medieval and earlier levels remain largely undisturbed below the observed overburden layers across the present site.

Acknowledgements

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Personnel

Fieldwork was undertaken by Alvaro Mora-Ottomano and Justin Hughes. Report preparation was undertaken by Tom Vaughan.

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Figures

Plates



Plate 1: Example of borehole drilling in progress



Plate 2: Foundation trenching along west side of site, view north-east



Plate 3: General view of foundation trenches in north end of site, view north



Plate 4: Trenching on north side of site, view west



Plate 5: General view of trenches, view south



Plate 6: Globular wine bottle, very late 17th to first half of the 18th century

Appendix 1 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

2	Fieldwork progress records AS2
21	Digital photographs
2	Scale drawings
1	Computer disk

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum
Clarence Street
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL50 3JT

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