

FINDS FROM FIELDWALKING BY
THE FOUR PARISHES
ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP
ON
LAND AT WYRE PIDDLE,
WORCESTERSHIRE

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Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Finds from fieldwalking by the Four Parishes Archaeology Group on land at Wyre Piddle, Worcestershire

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Part 1 Project summary

Fieldwalking has recovered a scatter of Romano-British pottery and other finds of mid 1st to 4th century date. The full extent of the pottery scatter was not established, however, two distinct concentrations were identified. To the north a concentration of fired clay suggested a different former use of this area.

The scatter indicates the presence of a Romano-British settlement with a domestic focus and possibly an industrial or craft production area to its north. This supports the evidence from excavations and other work in the immediate vicinity and will contribute to the development of an understanding of the extents of Romano-British settlement and patterns of landuse in this part of the Avon Valley.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. **Background**

1.1 **Reasons for the project**

Archaeological fieldwalking was undertaken by the Four Parishes Archaeology Group (4PAG) on land at Wyre Piddle, Worcestershire (NGR SO 9720 4790). The group are funded by a Local Heritage Initiative grant and are undertaking a community project to investigate, interpret and promote the heritage of four parishes, Pinvin, Wyre Piddle, Hill and Moor and Throckmorton. The group is working closely with Worcestershire Archaeological Service (the Service) who provide advice and support, including the specialist analysis of the fieldwalking finds reported here.

1.2 **Aims**

The aim of the fieldwalking was to investigate land to the north of an area of an ongoing excavation. This excavation (and prior evaluation), undertaken by the Service in advance of construction of the Wyre Piddle Bypass, has revealed evidence of Bronze Age through to Romano-British activity. The fieldwalking undertaken by 4PAG concentrated on an area to the immediate north of a concentration of excavated Iron Age and Romano-British deposits. The character of these was predominantly indicative of field systems and enclosures on the margins of a settlement, although two inhumation burials and some structural features (posts and roundhouse gullies) were present.

Overall the evidence suggested that the settlement focus lay to the north, in an area not investigated through the programme of fieldwork associated with the construction of the bypass. The specific aim of the fieldwalking was therefore to provide further evidence for the extents and character of this settlement and support the ongoing work to develop an understanding of the character of former settlement and landuse in this area.

1.3 **Topography and geology**

The site lies on land which is fairly flat giving way to a gentle upwards slope at the northern extent of the fieldwalked area. The land drains to the south and was under arable cultivation at the time of the fieldwork.

The overlying soils are stagnogleyic argillic brown earths of the Bishampton Series. These are slowly permeable and subject to slight seasonal waterlogging (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1985 *Soils of the Worcester and Malvern District*, 1:50,000 Series, Sheet **150**). These are mapped as overlying Jurassic Lower Lias (Geological Survey of Great Britain, 1974 *Stratford-upon-Avon*, 1:50,000 Series, Solid and Drift edition, Sheet **200**) which is predominantly clay, however, excavations in the area have revealed pockets of sand and gravel which are probably fluvio-glacial in origin.

The fieldwalking has been accessioned onto the County Sites and Monuments Record (reference WSM 30863).

2. **Methods**

2.1 **Fieldwork**

Fieldwalking was undertaken on October 4th 2001 by a group of 28 people from 4PAG, coordinated by Deborah Overton from the Service. Conditions were good for fieldwalking,

being dry but lightly overcast. Ground visibility was also good with minimal crop cover, the field having only recently been sown.

An area of 49,200m² (c 5ha) was covered (Figs 1 and 2). This was fieldwalked on the basis of 20m² grids, laid out from a baseline running approximately north to south and tied into Ordnance Survey map detail. One person walked each 20m² area for a period of fifteen minutes. All artefacts were retrieved by hand and retained in self-seal bags with appropriate locational information written on them.

2.2 Processing and analysis

Washing, preliminary sorting and identification of finds was undertaken by members of 4PAG under the supervision of Erica Darch and Laura Griffin from the Service.

Subsequently analysis was by Erica Darch from the Service. All hand-retrieved finds were examined. Artefacts were identified, quantified, dated and recorded on a Microsoft Access 1997 database.

Pottery was examined and recorded by fabric type according to the fabric reference series maintained by the Service (Hurst and Rees 1992).

Standard Service methods were used to establish statistically sound ranges when plotting finds distributions (Figs 2 and 3).

3. Description

Most of the material recovered was highly abraded. The assemblage contained a large amount of Roman and post-medieval material, but ranged in date from possible Iron Age to modern. A total of 1,457 sherds of pottery, weighing 15.557kg were recovered. This is summarised below (Table 1).

The most abundant fabric was Severn Valley ware (fabric 12), a local fabric which dates from the mid 1st to the 4th century, with 978 sherds. This is an orange coloured fabric which usually dominates assemblages of Roman pottery in the region. There were very few sherds of 'high status' pottery. For instance, only two sherds of Samian (fabric 43), imported from Gaul, were recovered. Several regional wares were represented including black burnished ware produced in the south-west, Oxfordshire red/brown colour coated ware and Oxfordshire white mortarium, and Hartshill-Mancetter ware produced on the Warwickshire/Leicestershire border (Tyers, 1996, 123). Although the pottery was not dated by form, it is clear from the fabrics that the full Roman period was represented. The Roman pottery would be consistent with a domestic function.

A distribution of the Roman pottery is presented in Figure 2. A large amount of fired clay was also recovered, some of which was probably post-medieval or modern abraded tile and brick. The distribution of fired clay (Fig 3), does not seem to correspond with the distribution of Roman pottery. The main concentrations surround a square which contained no fired clay, but a higher proportion of Roman pot. Since most of the fired clay is undated, the possible significance of this is unclear, but it may represent different activity areas in the Roman period.

There were 316 sherds of post-medieval pottery, mostly red ware (fabric 78), but only 44 sherds of medieval pot. The pottery from these periods was also originally domestic, but was then probably re-deposited as part of manure scattering.

Fabric Name	Fabric Number	Total	Weight
Unknown date or type		13	93
Miscellaneous post-medieval wares	100	5	39
Midlands purple ware	108	8	231
Severn Valley ware	12	978	9350
Reduced Severn Valley ware	12.1	23	274
Wheel-thrown Malvernian ware	19	4	176
Black burnished ware	22	11	55
Shell gritted ware	23	1	20
Oxfordshire red / brown colour coated ware	29	1	2
Malvernian metamorphic	3	13	187
Hartshill Mancetter ware	32	6	84
Oxfordshire white mortarium	33	3	32
Severn Valley mortarium	37	3	44
Samian	43	2	17
Brill / Boarstall ware	63?	2	14
Worcester type sandy glazed ware	64.1	2	14
Oxidised glazed Malvernian ware	69	23	243
Post-medieval red ware	78	257	3891
Stoneware	81	20	226
Modern stone china	85	31	154
Post-medieval buff ware	91	22	178
Miscellaneous Roman wares	98	11	118
Miscellaneous medieval wares	99	18	95
Total		1457	15557

Table 1: Summary of pottery fabrics

Also recovered were 27 pieces of flint, mostly waste flakes and 1.735kg of slag, but both were widely distributed with no clear concentrations.

There were large quantities of post-medieval and modern tile and land drain, and a small amount of medieval floor tile. Other material included possible stone building material and small amounts of miscellaneous iron objects, burnt flint, glass, shell, and clay pipe.

4. Discussion

The fieldwalking has recovered a significant quantity of Romano–British pottery and other finds of mid 1st to 4th century date. Although the full extents of the finds scatter were not established, a distinct concentration lay in the south-eastern quadrant of the fieldwalked area and there were indications of a further concentration extending to the west. The pottery scatter was less intense to the north but here a concentration of fired clay suggested a different landuse.

The scatter can be interpreted as reflecting the presence of a Romano–British settlement with a domestic focus and possibly an industrial or craft production area to its north. This supported the evidence from the bypass excavations, which had revealed ditches and other deposits indicative of field boundaries, enclosures and activity at the periphery of an Iron Age and Romano-British settlement. In addition, since completion of the fieldwalking, further excavation in advance of development of an area to the immediate east, has revealed Roman occupation dated to the 3rd to 4th centuries and focussed on several small enclosures. The latter clearly extend westwards beyond the confines of the excavation, supporting the evidence from the fieldwalking for settlement of this period at this location. Lastly, salvage

recording associated with the laying of a pipeline across the fieldwalked area has revealed a major enclosure ditch of Romano–British date (Goad and Darch 2002).

The evidence from the fieldwalking, therefore, supports that from excavation and other fieldwork in the area. Together these are revealing a well preserved and intensively used later prehistoric and Romano-British landscape and settlement pattern in an area which had previously been little researched, and which had been assumed to have only limited former occupation with poor survival of archaeological deposits.

The thin scatter of flint finds provides evidence for earlier prehistoric activity in the vicinity. A similar spread of material has been recovered from the bypass fieldwork and it is clear that an earlier focus of activity must be present in the area.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Processing and analysis

Some material had been repackaged after washing without being fully dried out. As the material is stored in plastic bags, it is essential that it dries out completely before being packaged. Even a small amount of moisture can cause labels included in the bags, and the artefacts themselves, to become mouldy. Materials such as brick, tile and bone take much longer to dry than stone and most pottery and may need to be turned over to dry right the way through. Although it is inadvisable to use an artificial heat source to dry material, placing material in a single layer, not stacking the trays in which it is drying and replacing the paper if it has become very wet should improve drying time. Also, when the material is put back in the bags, small holes can be punctured in them to help prevent condensation.

The priority should be to wash, dry and mark all material before it is sorted. This makes any future analysis of the material easier, and quicker. It may be a more efficient use of the group member's time to sort the assemblage by material, eg: stone, pot (of all periods), tile and brick, flint, bone and teeth, etc. This will also make the analysis done by the Archaeological Unit quicker, which will leave more time available for teaching sessions. A new recording form, designed with the needs and aims of the project in mind, would make this easier and will be provided by the Service.

5.2 Future work

The fieldwalking reported here has produced useful results that supplement and support those from a range of other work in the immediate vicinity. However, two principal areas can be identified for future research:

1. The extents of settlement/activity – These are not presently established. Work to the east is providing valuable further information on the extent and character of activity in that area, while the work on the Wyre Piddle Bypass provides a broad band of high quality information to the south. However, the extents of activity to the west remain uncertain, although indications from the bypass excavations and the fieldwork reported here indicate that settlement extends in this direction. Since fieldwalking has proved effective at this location, it is recommended that further fieldwalking be undertaken of the area to the west. This has good potential to reveal not only concentrations of material indicative of occupation but also to provide evidence of surrounding landuse in the form of thin scatters of finds resulting from manuring of arable land with domestic refuse.
2. The nature of the occupation – The fieldwalking data provides some information relating to the character of site activity. Dating material has been recovered and the composition of the assemblage is consistent with a typical Romano-British rural settlement in this area being dominated by locally produced wares. The work on the bypass has produced

evidence indicative of one or more farmsteads occupied from the late Iron Age to the late Romano-British period. However, this evidence appears to relate to the periphery of occupied areas, the 'core' of which is believed to be the area covered by the fieldwalking and the land to both the east and west of it. As described above, the area to the east is currently being investigated, however, apart from the limited evidence from the watching brief on the pipeline crossing the fieldwalked area, little is known of the layout of the settlement or the character of deposits from which the fieldwalking finds derive. The successful use of geophysical survey on both the stretch of the bypass to the south and on the area to the east indicates that this method is liable to yield good evidence for the layout and extents of the settlement. In addition, geophysical survey has a high potential to reveal further evidence of Bronze Age and Middle Iron Age enclosures known to lie to the west, fieldwalking of which is unlikely to yield good results owing to the paucity of material evidence from deposits of these periods.

6. **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.

Archaeological fieldwalking was undertaken by the Four Parishes Archaeology Group (4PAG) on land at Wyre Piddle, Worcestershire (NGR SO 9720 4790) as part of a Local Heritage Initiative scheme. A scatter of Romano-British pottery and other finds of mid 1st to 4th century date were recovered. The full extent of the pottery scatter was not established, however, analysis indicates the presence of a Romano-British settlement with a domestic focus and possibly an industrial or craft production area to its north. This supports the evidence from excavations and other work in the immediate vicinity and will contribute to the development of an understanding of the extents of Romano-British settlement and patterns of landuse in this part of the Avon Valley.

7. **The archive**

The archive consists of:

- 1 Base map
- 11 Boxes of finds
- 1 Computer disk
- 1 Report

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

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

8. **Acknowledgements**

The fieldwork was led by Deborah Overton. Reporting and analysis were undertaken by Erica Darch (Finds Assistant) with the assistance of Robin Jackson (Project Manager). Illustrations were undertaken by Carolyn Hunt (Illustrator) and the report edited by Derek Hurst (Project Manager).

Members of 4PAG undertook the fieldwalking and preliminary processing of finds.

Mr and Mrs E Massingham kindly allowed access to their land for the fieldwalking.

9. **Bibliography**

Goad, J, and Darch, E, 2002 *Archaeological watching brief on the Hill and Moor pipeline, Wyre Piddle, Worcestershire*, Archaeological Service, Worcestershire County Council, report **972**

Hurst, J D, and Rees, H, 1992 Pottery fabrics; a multi-period series for the County of Hereford and Worcester, in Woodiwiss, S G (ed), *Iron Age and Roman salt production and the medieval town of Droitwich*, CBA Res Rep, **81**

Tyers, P, 1996 *Roman Pottery in Britain*, Batsford, London

10. **Abbreviations**

WSM Numbers prefixed with 'WSM' are the primary reference numbers used by the Worcestershire County Sites and Monuments Record.

SMR Sites and Monuments Record.

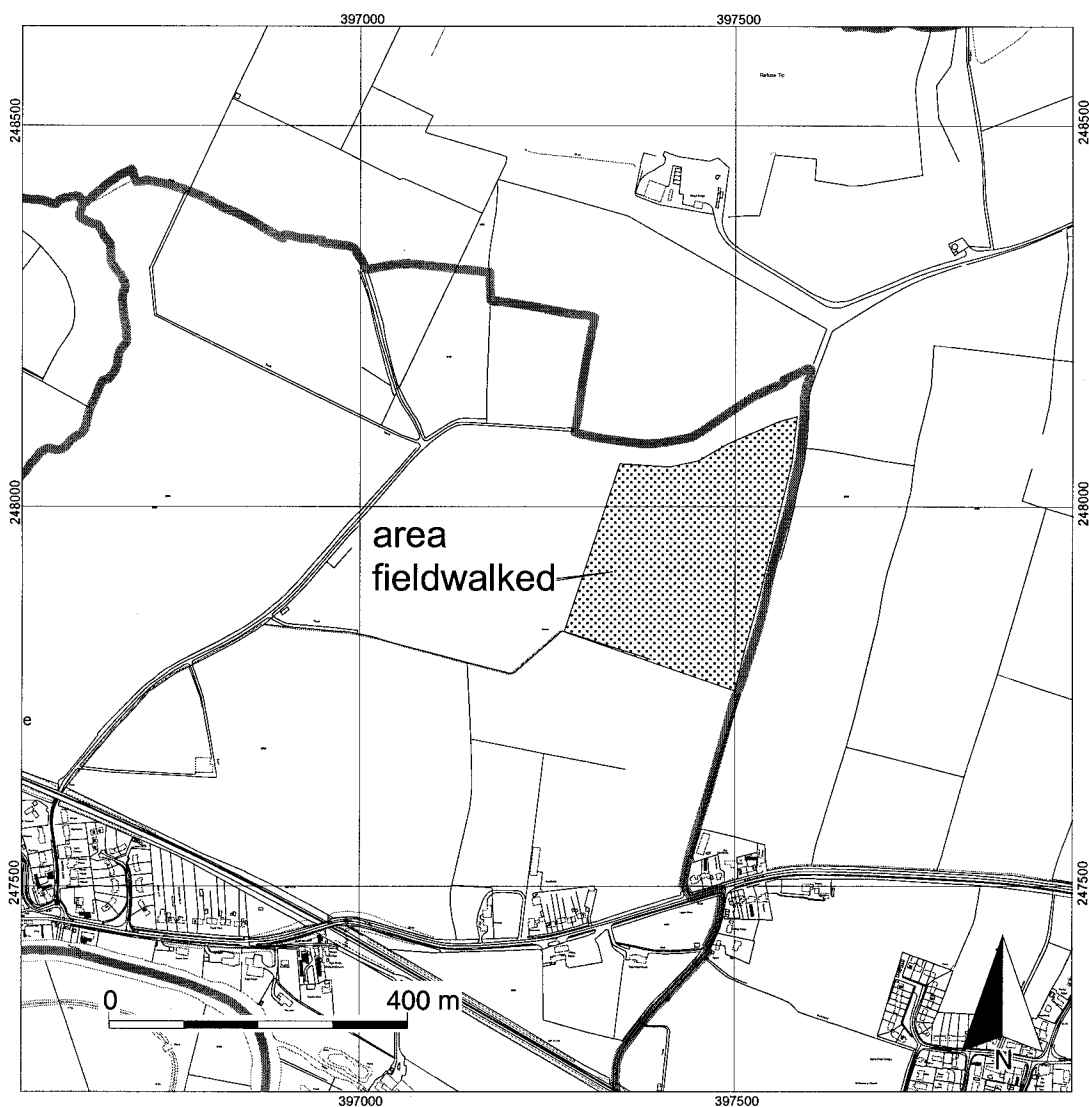
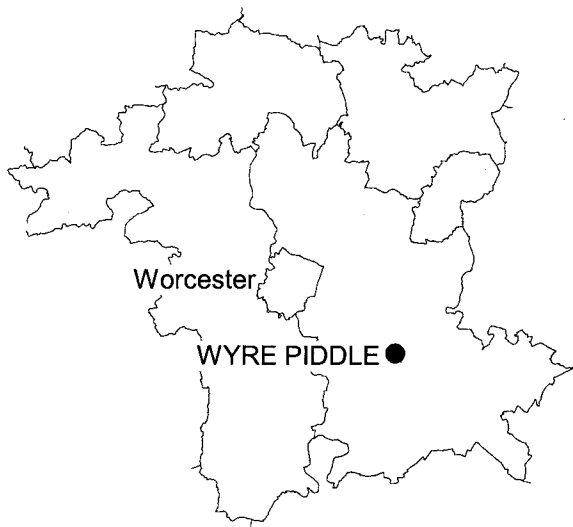
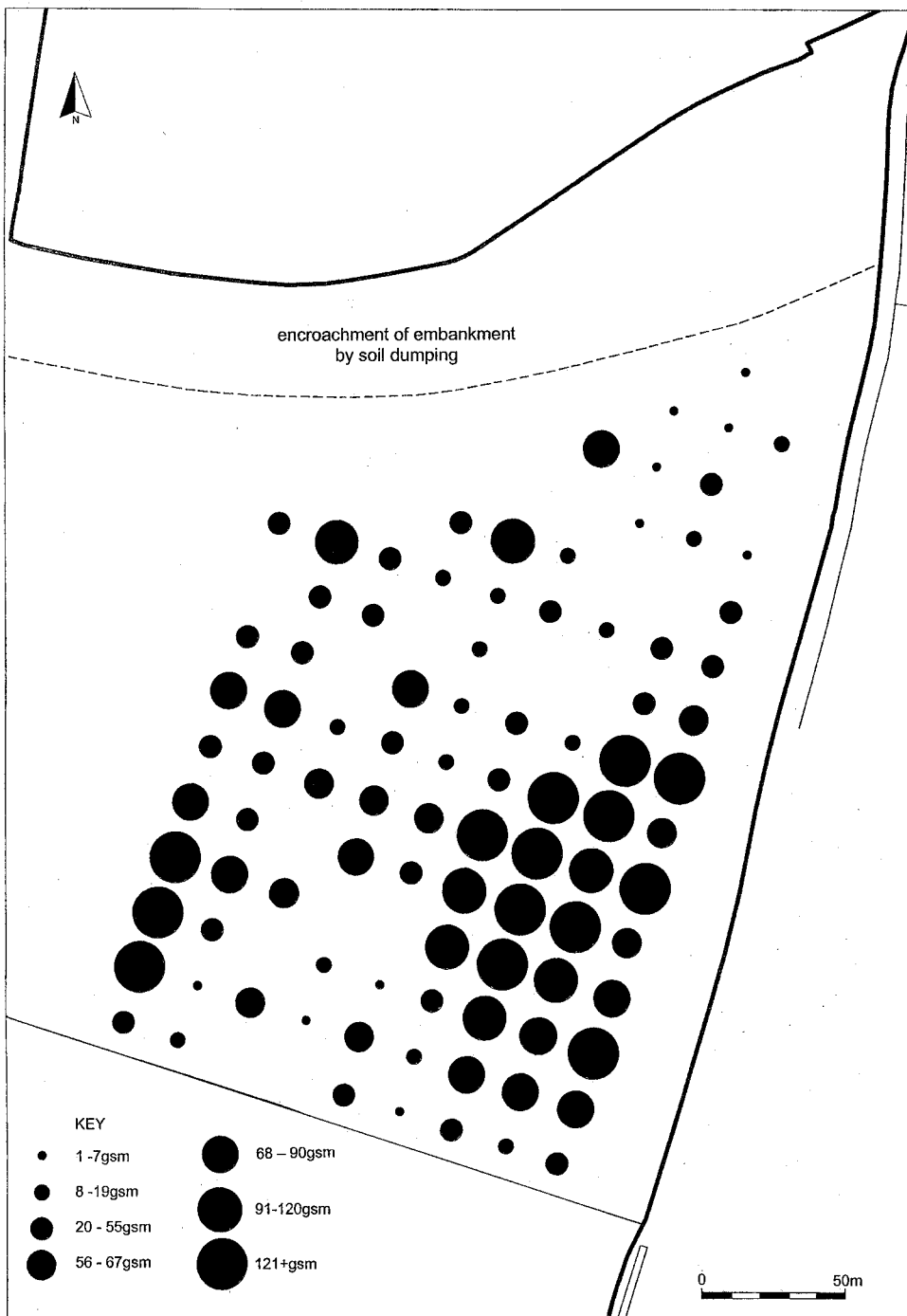


Figure 1: Location of fieldwalking.



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Figure 2: Distribution of Romano-British pottery (by weight).



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Figure 3: Distribution of fired clay(by weight).