

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF
AT
QUARRY LANE, CLEEVE PRIOR,
WORCESTERSHIRE

Simon Sworn

With a contribution by Angus Crawford

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Project P2625
Report 1315
WSM 34186

Archaeological watching brief at Quarry Lane, Cleeve Prior, Worcestershire

Simon Sworn

Background information

<i>Client</i>	Severn Trent Water
<i>Site address</i>	Quarry Lane, Cleeve Prior, Worcestershire
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SP 0791 4904 – SP 0844 4893
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	WSM 34186
<i>Curator</i>	Worcestershire County Council
<i>reference</i>	P99A0347
<i>Brief</i>	HEAS 2003a
<i>Project design</i>	HEAS 2004b
<i>Project parameters</i>	IFA 1999

Previous archaeological work on the site

There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken on site.

Previous archaeological work on associated sites

The village of Cleeve Prior lies in secluded countryside approximately 7km (4.5 miles) to the north-east of Evesham, Worcestershire. The natural geology consists of calcareous clayey soils of the Sherborne series over bedded limestone to the west of the site, in Field 1, and very dark greyish brown, slightly stony clay of the Haselor series over fine grained limestone bands with inter-bedded clay shale to the east of the site (Beard *et al* 1986).

Situated within the fertile Vale of Evesham, there are a number of sites of archaeological interest within the surrounding landscape. Cleeve Prior is located just 2km (1.25 miles) to the west of the major Roman road (Ryknild Street), leading to the Roman town of Alcester, 8km (5miles) to the north. Alcester has been identified as a small town of some importance with a number of buildings of higher quality than many other similar sized small towns (Burnham and Wachter 1990). To the south of Cleeve Prior two probable villa sites are also known, at Middle Hill, cropmarks and surface finds, including metalwork and numerous coins, indicate the presence of a fairly wealthy settlement (Watson 1985, WSM 03916). Near Middle Littleton, unpublished excavations revealed walls, floors and Roman artefacts (Cox 1967, WSM 02803). Across the River Avon in Harvington, excavations at Leyandii House Farm revealed further evidence of the extensively exploited soils of the Vale of Evesham in the Roman period (Jackson *et al* 1995, WSM 02848).

There have been no archaeological excavations within the immediate vicinity of the site, yet information contained within the SMR suggests the potential for deposits of a prehistoric, Roman, medieval or post-medieval nature. Various artefacts from these periods have been discovered in the vicinity (Fig 1).

A fieldwalking survey took place in 1999 as part of a project to create a Millennium Green, just the north of Field 2 (WSM 23281). This identified a small number of worked flints from the prehistoric period, along with a spread of Romano-British, medieval and post-medieval pottery. This was interpreted, however, as not representing an occupation area, but merely a background scatter representing farming activity in the Roman and latter periods (Hurst and Dalwood 1999).

A number of Roman finds have also been found around the outskirts of Cleeve Prior, the most significant being the ‘Sheppey Hoard’ (WSM 02793). Discovered in 1811 by Thomas Sheppey whilst digging for stone. The hoard comprised *c* 3000 coins, including *c* 100 gold, *c* 600 silver coins and the rest comprising bronze and copper coinage, contained within two red earthenware pots (VCH I). Unfortunately the hoard was rapidly dispersed, the finder using the coins as currency and

selling some to local residents, only brief descriptions of the coins have survived. The coins ranged in date from Valerian (253-260AD) to Theodosius (379-395AD), implying that this hoard was deposited towards the end of Roman rule in the British Isles. Roman pottery has also been found in this vicinity (WSM 26362).

During the reconstruction of the garden at Cleeve House in 1935 a human burial was found, placed in the ground in a sitting position and with two pots, one by each hand. A description of the two vessels notes that one is a tankard, probably no earlier than the middle 4th century. The second vessel is a so-called Tazza, thought to have been used in domestic rituals and does not appear in Britain until the 2nd century AD (WSM 02794).

A small Anglo-Saxon brooch, probably originating from East Anglia and dated to c 6th century was found to the north-west of Cleeve Prior (WSM 22898). These types of trefoil headed brooches with a square central plate with triangular projections have been found on a number of cemetery sites.

In the fields adjacent to the site there is evidence of medieval ridge and furrow, including a number that still survive as prominent earthworks within Field 2. There has also been small-scale limestone quarrying and limekiln construction within the vicinity during the post-medieval and modern periods.

Aims

The aim of the archaeological watching brief was to observe areas of ground disturbance associated with the preparation of a new haul road between the B4085 and the Quarry Lane sewage treatment works. The observations would be carried out in order to record archaeological deposits and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type.

Methods

General specification for field work	CAS 1995
Sources consulted	SMR Sources cited by the SMR 1st Edition OS Map 1884
Dates of fieldwork	5 th – 13 th January 2005
Area of deposits observed	c 1960m ² . Indicated on Fig 2
Dimensions of excavated areas observed	Roads length 490m width 4m depth 0.35m

Statement of confidence

Observation of the service trench was undertaken during and after machine excavation. Excavation was undertaken using a 360 degree tracked excavator using a 1.6m toothless bucket to a depth of 0.35m. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe any well-differentiated archaeological deposits. Access to the trenches was possible throughout. Selected areas were cleaned by hand to confirm the depth and nature of the deposits present. All artefacts from the area of recording were retrieved by hand and retained in accordance with the service manual (CAS 1995 as amended). Access to, and visibility of the deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

Artefact analysis (by A. Crawford)

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* produced for each stratified context where possible. 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

A summary of the artefacts recovered from the watching brief can be seen in Table 1. The pottery assemblage retrieved consisted of 34 sherds of pottery weighing 2.845kg. The pottery was identified and grouped by fabric (see Table 2). The majority of the sherds were undiagnostic but could be dated between the mid 1st and 20th century by fabric type. Other artefacts comprised ceramic building material, clay pipe stem, animal bone, glass, iron objects, copper alloy objects, and a musket/pistol ball. The site assemblage came from five stratified contexts and four topsoil/subsoil contexts. Overall the material could be dated from the Roman to modern periods.

Condition

The level of preservation was generally poor with the majority of sherds displaying moderate or high levels of abrasion.

Discussion of the pottery

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.

Roman

The Roman assemblage consisted of a single sherd of oxidised organically tempered Severn valley ware and a small fragment of ceramic building material (possibly brick). While the pottery sherd dated to the mid 1st to 2nd century the tile/brick is compatible with this. Unfortunately both were recovered within a subsoil context (101) and are, therefore, residual.

Medieval

Two sherds of medieval pottery were identified. Both were of small size and abraded condition (total of 3g) and could only be attributed to the medieval period (miscellaneous fabric 99). While one sherd was residual, the other was the only datable evidence from a charcoal filled pit feature (context 111) and therefore provides a date (*tpq*) of 13th to mid 16th century. No further material could be definitely identified as medieval in date. The roof tile assemblage, which was in an abraded and fragmentary condition, may have contained medieval material but could only be loosely dated as medieval to post medieval (13th–18th century).

Post-medieval

The post-medieval/modern assemblage contained pottery fabrics that are typically encountered within the region. These included post-medieval red sandy wares, buff wares and cream wares datable to between 1750 and 1780. This material was associated with only two contexts identified as post-medieval in date, a furrow feature (context 103) and a quarry pit (context 109) both dating broadly within the period.

Modern

The modern pottery assemblage consisted of porcelain and modern stone china. Of the stratified contexts only one (context 113) contained modern material giving it a date of early 20th century. All topsoil and subsoil contexts included material dating from the 20th century.

Significance

The assemblage does not indicate any significant activity during the Roman period but does suggest some level of activity during the medieval to post-medieval periods. The medieval is difficult to define with the only recognisable activity represented as a charcoal filled pit. The association of post-medieval material with furrows suggest that the finds associated with this period are the result of field manuring with midden material. The types of modern material recovered are more indicative of general rubbish discard.

Context	Material	Type	Total	Weight (g)	Context date (tpq)	
100	Brick	Post-medieval	6	99	20th c	
100	Glass	Mod	2	15		
100	Pot	Late post-med-Mod	1	20		
100	Pottery	Post-medieval	12	136		
100	Tile	Modern	4	129		
100	Tile	Roof	15	228		
101	Cbm	Roman	1	12	20th c	
101	Coal	Charcoal	1	0.5		
101	Iron	Fastener	2	7.5		
101	Pottery	Roman	1	5		
103	Bone	Animal	4	1	18th c	
103	Pottery	Post-medieval	2	6		
109	Brick	Unidentified	1	58	Post-medieval	
109	Coal	Charcoal	1	3		
109	Iron	Unidentified	1	5		
109	Tile	Roof	1	73		
111	Bone	Animal	1	0.5	Medieval	
111	Pottery	Med	1	1		
113	Cbm	Post-medieval	5	29	Modern	
113	Glass	Vessel	1	13		
113	Iron	Fastener	3	24		
113	Iron	Tool	1	12		
113	Pottery	Post-medieval	2	2.5		
200	Claypipe	Stem	1	2	20th c	
200	Coal		1	6		
200	Gilded	Unidentified	1	2		
200	Iron	Hardware	1	10		
200	Iron	Unidentified	2	50		
200	Lead	Shot	1	10		
200	Pottery	Medieval	2	3		
200	Pottery	Modern	1	2		
200	Pottery	Post-medieval	12	109		
200	Tile	Roof	2	17		
201	Cual	Disk	1	9		Post-medieval/modern?

202	Cual	Unidentified	1	22	Unknown
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Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

Discussion

The watching brief along the length of the new haul road has concluded that there appears to be no significant archaeological remains present within the two fields. A small number of features were exposed within Field 1; these included two small charcoal filled pits (contexts 108 and 112) and two linear features (aligned north to south; contexts 105 and 115). Pit 112 contained burnt material that may have been a small midden pit, dated to the medieval period. The linears though, are likely to have originated as a result of post-medieval cultivation practices, some of which are still clearly visible as earthworks in Field 2. Their shallow depth suggesting furrows rather than ditches. Elsewhere within Field 1 were a number of features that clearly contained post-medieval/modern material (contexts 110 and 113), these features potentially indicate deliberate infilling of limestone quarry pits, a well documented activity that has taken place in various locations around Cleeve Prior over the last couple of hundred years.

In Field 2, the trenching exposed the upper surface of the medieval ridge and furrow earthworks (context 202), the nature of the groundworks meant that the topsoil was stripped down onto the upper surface of the ridge feature, but did not remove any of the underlying soil, so potentially any earlier archaeology that may have been masked would still be preserved *in-situ*. Metal detecting of this surface produced a small number of metal artefacts, including a possible post-medieval coin, a musket ball and two other unidentified objects.

The artefactual assemblage is broadly consistent with a background scatter representing farming activity in the Roman and later periods. The occupation associated with this activity would be located elsewhere, and in the case of the Roman period, it is suggested that this may be to the south-west of the watching brief area (Hurst and Dalwood 1999). The artefactual material would have been moved into surrounding fields as a result of concentrating domestic rubbish in midden heaps, which are subsequently spread about the arable fields. This practice is authenticated historically for the medieval period (Astill and Grant 1988), and has been demonstrated for the Roman period by Gaffney and Tingle (1989).

The small quantity of post-medieval and modern pottery has either derived during more recent manuring/general discard or as part of the deliberate infilling of the small-scale limestone quarry pits, some of which were visible in certain areas of Field 1 (contexts 109 and 113).

Conclusions

The construction of the haul road appears not to have considerably disturbed any buried archaeological remains, but has highlighted the potential for further study within the surrounding area of Cleeve Prior.

The general absence of both archaeological features and associated material culture implies that this area of land has been used essentially for agricultural purposes. The medieval cultivation marks and the heavily abraded Roman pottery found during the watching brief seem to confirm that this area has been primarily utilised for its fertile soil rather than for settlement. That is not to say that further discoveries could not be made at a later date, especially in the surrounding fields where previously occupation has been identified. The residual Roman pottery and medieval cultivation marks imply a possible settlement area somewhere in the vicinity.

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 Severn Trent Water at Quarry Lane, Cleeve Prior, Worcestershire, (NGR ref SP 0791 4904 – SP 0844 4893; SMR ref WSM 34186). The watching brief was conducted during the removal of the topsoil, prior to the construction of a new haul road linking the B4085 and the Quarry Lane Sewerage Treatment Works. The area had moderate potential for the existence of important archaeology, being situated within an area that had in the past yielded substantial Roman finds, including the ‘Sheppey Hoard’. The groundworks for the proposed development were observed and revealed that there appeared to be no earlier archaeological features of any significance. In the field adjacent to the B4085 two small charcoal filled pits, probably dating from the medieval period were uncovered, along with two shallow linears, both running in a north to south direction, and probably post-medieval in date. In the field to the west of Quarry Lane the medieval ridge and furrow cultivation marks, still visible as earthworks, were exposed. However, these were not excavated, implying that any unexposed archaeology would still be preserved in-situ. Metal artefacts from this area were from the post-medieval period. From both fields a small number of Roman and medieval pottery finds were discovered which were broadly consistent with a background scatter representing farming activity in the Roman and later periods. The occupation associated with this activity would be located elsewhere.

Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	5
Photographic records AS3	2
Digital photographs	89
Abbreviated context records AS40	19
Drawings	16
Boxes of finds	1
Computer disks	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

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Deposit description

Field 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 351m Width: 4m Depth: 0.35m Orientation: East - West

Main deposit description

Context	Type Colour Texture	Description	Date (<i>tpq</i>)	Interpretation	Depth (below present ground level)
100	Friable dark brown silty loam	High organic content, frequent limestone fragments, modern finds	Modern	Topsoil	0-0.30m
101	Friable mid-dark brown silty clay	Occasional limestone fragments	Modern	Subsoil	0.30-0.35m
102	Bedded limestone blocks	Set within a light brown silty clay		Natural	0.35m+
103	Friable mid-dark brown silty clay	Frequent limestone fragments and gravel, occasional charcoal flecks	18 th C	Fill of furrow? 105	0.35-0.43m
104	Limestone blocks, forming occasional voids	Set within a light brown silty clay, occasional charcoal flecks		Natural mixed with overlying deposit 103	0.35m+
105	North – south linear cut	Shallow, gentle concave sides and flat base	18 th C	Furrow?	0.35-0.43m
106	Loose/friable dark brown-black silty clay	Frequent charcoal flecks and burnt clay, occasional small sub-angular limestone fragments		Secondary fill of pit 108	0.35-0.55m
107	Firm, well compacted mid-light brown silty clay	Frequent small sub-angular limestone fragments		Primary fill of pit 108	
108	Ovoid cut	Gentle top with moderate concave sides and flat/ level base		Pit	0.35-0.55m
109	Friable mid brown silty clay	Occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-angular limestone fragments	Post-medieval	Possible backfill of quarry pit 110	0.35-0.47m
110	Partially exposed cut	Shallow, gentle sides with slight concave base	Post-medieval	Quarry pit	0.35-0.47m

Field 1 (cont.)

Context	Type Colour Texture	Description	Date (<i>tpq</i>)	Interpretation	Depth (below present ground level)
111	Friable dark brown silty clay	Patches of reddish-brown burnt clay, frequent charcoal flecks and occasional small sub-angular limestone fragments	Medieval	Single fill of oval pit 112	0.35-0.49m
112	Oval pit cut, extended SW-NE	Clear, moderate side with flat/level base onto limestone slabs	Medieval	Pit cut	0.35-0.49m
113	Friable mid brown silty clay	Frequent modern finds, occasional limestone fragments	Early 20 th C	Probable fill of quarry pit, not excavated	0.35m+
114	Friable mid brown silty clay	Occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-angular limestone fragments		Single fill of furrow? 115	0.35-0.41m
115	North – south linear cut	Shallow, gentle sides with level base		Furrow? cut	0.35-0.41m

Field 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 150m Width: 4m Depth: 0.35m Orientation: East - West

Main deposit description

Context	Type Colour Texture	Description	Date (<i>tpq</i>)	Interpretation	Depth (below ground level)
200	Friable dark brown silty loam	High organic content, frequent limestone fragments, modern finds	Modern	Topsoil	0-0.30m
201	Friable mid-dark brown silty clay	Occasional limestone fragments	Modern	Subsoil	0.30-0.35m
202	Friable mid brown silty clay	Occasional limestone fragments and charcoal flecks	Medieval/post medieval	Cultivation earthwork	0.30-0.35m
203	Dark greyish brown silty clay	Occasional limestone fragments		Natural	0.35m+



Plate 1: Removal of topsoil in Field 1, facing east



Plate 2: Pit 108, facing north-west

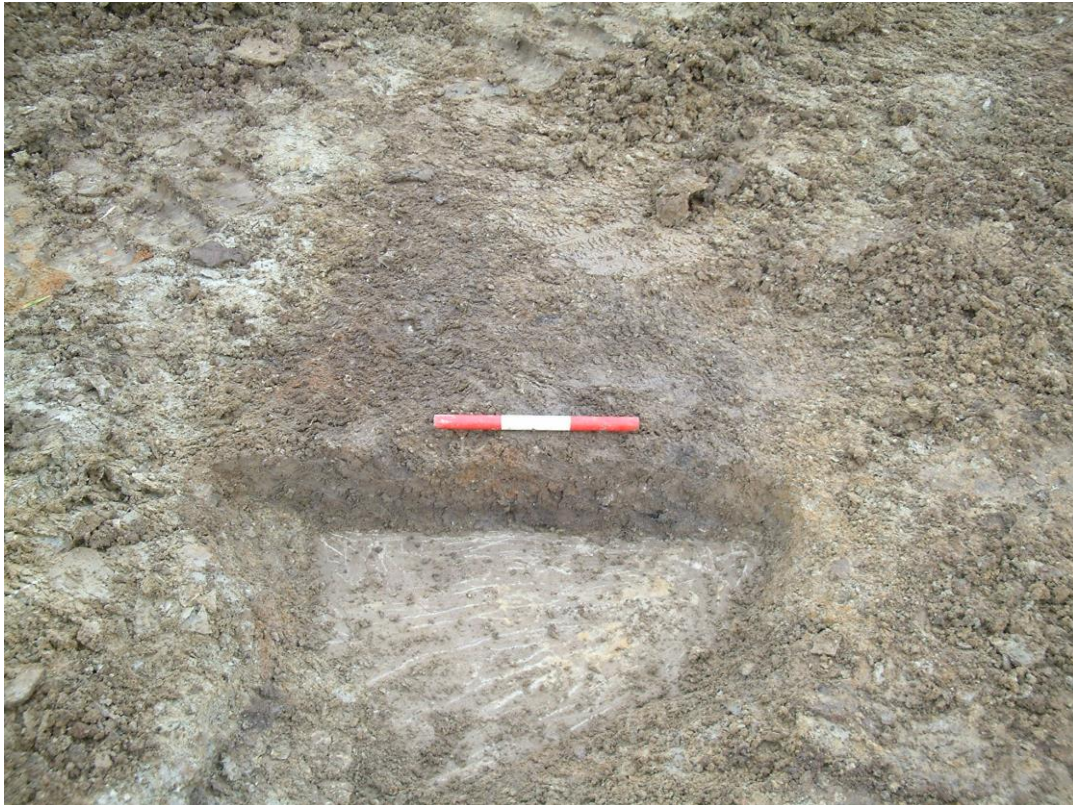


Plate 3: Pit 112, facing north-east



Plate 4: Furrow 115, facing north



Plate 5: Field 2, prior to excavation, showing medieval cultivation earthworks, facing east



Plate 6: Removal of topsoil in Field 2, facing east

Context	Fabric	Fabric name	Total	Weight (g)
100	78	Post-medieval red sandy wares	8	79
100	83	Porcelain	1	20
100	84	Creamware	1	1
100	91	Post-medieval buff wares	3	56
101	12.2	Oxidized organically tempered Severn Valley ware	1	5
103	78	Post-medieval red sandy wares	2	6
111	99	Miscellaneous medieval wares	1	1
113	83	Porcelain	1	2
113	84	Creamware	1	0.5
200	78	Post-medieval red sandy wares	8	90
200	84	Creamware	2	3
200	85	Modern stone china	1	2
200	91	Post-medieval buff wares	2	16
200	99	Miscellaneous medieval wares	2	3

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric

Material	Total	Weight (g)	Date range	Specialist report?	Important research assemblage?
Animal bone	5	1.5	Unknown	N	N
Brick	1	58	15-18?	N	N
Brick	6	99	16-Mid 19C	N	N
Cbm	1	12	Mid 1-3C	N	N
Cbm	5	29	18-19C	N	N
Claypipe	1	2	1840-80	N	N
Coal	3	9.5	Unknown	N	N
Cual	2	31	Unknown	N	N
Gilded	1	2	Unknown	N	N
Glass	3	28	L19-E20C	N	N
Iron	9	107.5	Unknown	N	N
Iron	1	1	Unknown	N	N
Lead	1	10	17-Mid19C	N	N
Pottery	1	5	Mid 1-2C	Y	N
Pottery	3	4	13-16C	Y	N
Pottery	5	12	17-18C	Y	N
Pottery	4	4.5	1750-80	Y	N
Pottery	2	15	17C	Y	N
Pottery	1	2	18-19C	Y	N
Pottery	5	85	18C	Y	N
Pottery	11	135	18-Mid 19C	Y	N
Pottery	1	20	19-20C	Y	N
Pottery	1	2	Mid 19-L20C	Y	N
Tile	18	318	13-18C	N	N
Tile	4	129	Mid 19-20C	N	N

Table 3: Summary of the assemblage