

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT HARTLEBURY CASTLE, WORCESTERSHIRE

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With a contribution by Alan J Jacobs

Illustrations by Steve Rigby and Carolyn Hunt

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WSM 34417

Contents

Part 1 Project summary	1
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Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background	2
1.1 Planning background	2
1.2 Archaeological background	2
2. Aims	2
3. Methods	2
3.1 Documentary research	2
3.2 Fieldwork	2
3.3 Artefact analysis	3
3.4 Synthesis	3
4. Results	3
4.1 Stratigraphy	3
4.1.1 Medieval	3
4.1.2 Medieval/post-medieval	3
4.1.3 Post-medieval	4
4.1.4 Modern	4
4.2 Artefacts, by Alan J Jacobs	4
4.2.1 Pottery	5
4.2.2 Ceramic building material	6
4.2.3 Stone	6
4.2.4 Other finds	6
5. Synthesis	7
5.1 Medieval	7
5.2 Post-medieval	7
5.3 Modern	8
6. Research frameworks	8
7. Publication summary	8
8. The archive	9
9. Acknowledgements	10
10. Personnel	10
11. Bibliography	10

Archaeological watching brief at Hartlebury Castle, Worcestershire

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Part 1: Project summary

This report presents the evidence from various groundworks around the County Museum. The groundworks were associated with a programme of refurbishment that took place between June 2005 and August 2006. This provided the first opportunity to investigate buried remains on the site, and to add to existing information from earthworks, buildings, documents and maps.

As anticipated, the groundworks exposed significant remains of medieval and post-medieval date. For the most part, these were simply cleaned and recorded although some deposits and features were excavated.

Medieval features included a hearth on the site of the former shop, and three large walls in the yard to the east. The hearth probably represents a kitchen of 13th or 14th century date. If this were the case, then the contemporary hall would have stood nearby to the south. The walls in the yard were not closely dated, but probably belonged to the fortified residence first documented in the mid 13th century. They were certainly demolished by the late 17th century, and may have been slighted by Parliamentary soldiers in 1646.

Most of the post-medieval and modern features related to contemporary buildings. The most notable feature was a brick-lined well beside the former stable to the north of the main entrance. The well was probably contemporary with the building, which is securely dated to the late 17th century. However, excavations outside this building to the south-west exposed two walls of an early 17th century building. Other walls of 17th or 18th century date were exposed in a trench excavated along the access road.

Nearly 200 artefacts were also recovered. These included fragments of a sandstone piscina of 13th or 14th century date, some locally produced bricks and tiles, and a fairly typical range of pottery. The piscina is likely to have come from a contemporary chapel, while the bricks may have come from a clay-pit in the field to the west of the site.

Part 2: Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Planning background

In 2005, the Museum Service of Worcestershire County Council began a programme of work to improve visitor facilities at the County Museum at Hartlebury Castle (NGR SO 8365 7125). The first stages of the programme involved various groundworks in and around the Museum buildings. Recognising the potential impact of these groundworks on archaeological remains, the Museums Service sought advice from the Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service. It was decided that a watching brief on the groundworks was necessary, and the Field Section of the Service was commissioned to undertake the work.

1.2 Archaeological background

Little was known about the archaeology of Hartlebury Castle before the project began. The development of the site was known in outline from scattered documentary references (Hartland 1913; Pearce 1926). These suggested that the site was established as an episcopal residence by 1255 and was substantially rebuilt in later centuries. The architecture of the present buildings was also reasonably well understood (Emery 2000; Molyneux 1987). This context, and the earthworks surrounding the site, implied that significant remains were likely to be present. But until the project began, archaeological investigations had been limited to two earthwork surveys (Montgomerie 1971, 431; Bond nd) and observation of minor groundworks beside the hall (WSM 001).

2. Aims

The main aim of the project was to locate and investigate archaeological remains exposed during the groundworks (WHEAS 2005, 1). More generally, the aim was to “establish and made available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site” (IFA 2001, 2).

3. Methods

3.1 Documentary research

Documentary research was necessary to interpret the evidence recovered during the watching brief. A range of sources was collected and analysed. These included maps and archives held in the Worcestershire Record Office, guidebooks and webpages produced by the Museums Service, and various works of local history. Archives are cited in the text below: published sources are listed in the bibliography.

3.2 Fieldwork

The fieldwork was undertaken in four phases, associated with different aspects of the refurbishment.

The first phase, in June 2005, was associated with the excavation of service trenches outside the museum entrance and shop. It took the form of a watching brief, in which deposits and features were cleaned and recorded.

The second phase, in January and February 2006, followed the demolition of the shop. A small-scale excavation was followed by a watching brief on excavations for a lift-shaft.

The third and fourth phases were also watching briefs. The third phase, in May 2006, was associated with the excavation of a service trench beside the approach road, while the fourth phase, in July and August 2006, was associated with groundworks in and around the administration block.

During all four phases, drawn, written, and photographic records were made according to Service practice (CAS 1995). All artefacts from stratified contexts were recovered. The environmental sampling strategy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 4). However, the preservation of plant and animal remains was generally poor, and although one sample was taken (from context 1025) it had limited interpretative potential and was not analysed.

3.3 Artefact analysis

All artefacts 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.

The 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 & Rees 1992; Hurst 1992).

~~3.3.4~~ 3.3.4 Synthesis

Most of this report is concerned with presenting and interpreting the archaeological evidence. However, in section 5, some attempt has also been made to integrate the results with previous work on the history and architecture of the site.

4. Results

4.1 Stratigraphy

4.1.1 Medieval

Deposits and features of medieval date were found on the site of the shop. The earliest deposit was a trampled surface or floor of reddish brown sandy loam (context 1029). On top of this was a rectangular hearth made of squared sandstone blocks and floored with tiles (contexts 1026 and 1027; Plates 1 and 2). The fill of the hearth produced pottery of late 11th to 14th century date. There are few parallels for the hearth in the local and regional literature, but it strongly resembled a hearth found in Worcester in a late 13th or early 14th century domestic context (Jackson 2004, 151-3).

4.1.2 Medieval/post-medieval

Other remains of medieval or post-medieval date were found in the trenches to the north of the shop. These consisted of three large walls built of roughly-hewn sandstone blocks (context 101, 103, and 212; Plates 3-5). All three walls were associated with extensive spreads of sandstone rubble (contexts 102, 106, and 213). The walls were all on different alignments and seem to indicate more than one building or phase of construction. They were abutted and sealed by made ground containing medieval or post-medieval ceramics (context 104=204, 105, 107, 111 214, and 306).

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In addition, several courses of chamfered masonry were exposed around the corner of the building to the west of the shop (contexts 1018=1034; Plate 6). These are likely to relate to a medieval or early post-medieval building on the same footprint (see below, section 5).

4.1.3 **Post-medieval**

Post-medieval buildings and features were found in each of the areas investigated. Excavation beneath the shop exposed the sandstone foundations of the building to the west (context 1035), and some sandstone paving that may be the threshold of a blocked doorway (context 1016; Plate 7). The sandstone foundations of the building to the south were also exposed (context 1030). All these remains were sealed by made ground of post-medieval and later date (contexts 1001, 1017, 1023, 1024, and 1037). Similar deposits were found in the service trenches to the north of the shop (Fig 3, contexts 104=204, 305, and 306). A drain crossing Trench 1 (context 111) may also be of post-medieval date. It was built of squared sandstone blocks and capped with limestone slabs.

Other remains were found in and around the administration block to the east (Fig 6). Two walls were found near the south-east corner of the building. One was made of squared sandstone blocks and bricks of 17th century type (context 427; Plate 8). The other was made entirely of bricks of a similar and broadly contemporary type (context 430; Plate 9). Both walls probably pre-date the administration block, which was built as a stable in the late 17th century (Hartland 1913, 383). They probably formed parts of the same building, in view of their close proximity and shared alignment. Three more walls of similar construction were found further to the south-east (Fig 2, contexts 405, 415 and 416). These were difficult to characterise, but their location and their wider spacing suggests boundary walls rather than buildings.

Excavations within the administration block itself exposed its sandstone foundations and what may have been a hearth set into the south wall of the building (Fig 6, contexts 1007 and 1011). The feature was built of fire-reddened tiles and sandstone slabs. The wall above the feature also showed signs of burning, but no evidence for a fireplace or chimney.

Finally, excavations for an access ramp on the west side of the administration block exposed a well that may be contemporary with or earlier than the first phase of the building (Fig 6, context 505; Plates 10 and 11). This was an impressive feature, with a diameter of c1.5m, and 21 courses of 17th century-type bricks. The well contained a metal pump of 19th or 20th century date and had been sealed with a metal plate (context 502).

4.1.4 **Modern**

Modern deposits and features were ubiquitous and consisted largely of made ground and services. The only notable features were a brick surface in Trench 2, (Fig 3, context 201), a brick pillar inside the administration block (Fig 6, context 1006), and the cellar of a building 3.5m to the west (Fig 6, context 509). The cellar was partly filled with coal, which probably indicates its function.

4.2 **Artefacts, by Alan J Jacobs**

The assemblage contained 15 sherds of pottery weighing 169 grams. Many more fragments of bricks, tiles, and other artefacts were also recovered. The assemblage came from 32 stratified contexts and could be dated from the medieval period onwards (see Tables 1 and 2). Levels of preservation were generally fair with the majority of sherds and fragments displaying only moderate levels of abrasion.

Material	Total	Weight (g)
Medieval pottery	13	140
Post-medieval pottery	1	26
Modern pottery	4	381
Bone	28	632
Bone handle	1	6
Tobacco pipe	2	6
Burnt clay mould	5	35
Charcoal	14	21
Glass vessel	6	646
Glass window	20	93
Brick	19	21613
Ceramic tile	66	8436
Ceramic floor tile	1	314
Sewer pipe	1	3
Lime mortar	8	1813
Painted plaster	1	64
Stone tile	9	3315
Worked stone	5	55011
Stone	9	1101
Burnt stone	4	136
Slate tile	3	98
Iron object	6	163
Lead waste	1	196
Slag	12	114
Total	186	77367

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

4.2.1 Pottery

All sherds were grouped and quantified according to fabric type (see Table 2). Three diagnostic forms were present and could be dated accordingly. The remaining sherds were datable by fabric type to a general period or production span. All forms were referenced to the type series presented in the report on excavations at Deansway in Worcester (Bryant 2004).

Fabric	Name	Total	Weight
55	Worcester-type sandy ware	4	57
64.1	Worcester-type glazed ware	4	24
69	Malvernian oxidised glazed ware	4	58
71	Red Ware	1	1
78	Post-medieval red sandy ware	1	26
85	Modern stone china	4	381
Total		18	547

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery

Medieval pottery

The medieval and post-medieval pottery consisted of 14 sherds, weighing 166 grams, as quantified in Table 2. The medieval pottery assemblage was dominated by Worcester type wares (fabric 55), with only a single unusual form of a type three cooking pot present (Fig 5, no. 1: context 1030). The only other Worcester type fabric consisted of undiagnostic body

sherds (fabric 64.1: contexts 1001 and 1027) dating to the 12th-14th centuries. There were also four sherds of Malvernian glazed ware (fabric 69) of late 12th-mid 17th century date (contexts 1001, 1006 and 1023), and a single sherd of redware (fabric 71) dating to the late 15th/16th centuries (context 1030).

Post-medieval pottery

The only post-medieval pottery was single sherd of red sandy ware of 17th-18th century date (context 1001). This was a fragment of a pancheon or large storage jar.

Modern pottery

Three sherds from one vessel and one sherd of modern pottery were recovered (contexts 510 and 436). The vessel was a mustard pot from the French factories of Dijon and Sarreguemines. It probably dates from the late 19th or early 20th century. The sherd was a rim of rim of a tea cup in modern stone china. It had a purple band with irregular gilding suggesting a 19th century date, although the design is still produced today.

4.2.2 **Ceramic building material**

The ceramic building material consisted mainly of medieval or post-medieval roof tiles. Most of these were of a long-lived type produced between the 13th and 18th centuries (Hurst 1992, fabric 2a), although others were of a later type (Hurst 1992, fabric 2c). An unusual example of a waster was recovered (context 106), indicating production on or near the site. A single fragment of Malvernian glazed ridge tile was also present (Hurst 1992, fabric 3). This was surmounted by a looped crest similar to a tile found in a late 15th/early 16th century context at Deansway (Fagan 2004, 353, fig 206, no26).

Several examples of post medieval and modern bricks were also recovered. These included a number of thin bricks (2¼ and 2½ inches thick), which probably date between the mid 17th century and around 1784 when the imposition of the brick tax caused an increase in the thickness.

4.2.3 **Stone**

Several fragments of worked stone were recovered from post-medieval deposits. The most interesting fragments were two conjoining pieces of local sandstone, found in made ground beneath the shop (context 1014; Fig 5). Their shape suggests a square rimmed bowl, most likely the top of a stoup or piscina of 13th or 14th century date.

A lias roof tile and two fragments of worked sandstone were recovered from made ground in Trench 2 (context 213). The tile was trapezoidal in shape and finely worked to a smooth surface. The sandstone fragments were more coarsely worked and had mortar adhering to them. One fragment had a curved and sooted surface, and may have formed part of a hearth or fireplace.

4.2.4 **Other finds**

Metal objects accounted for most of the other finds. These included fragments of a mould for a small vessel or candlestick (context 1045), and ten fragments of slag (contexts 1012 and 1023). The form of the mould suggests a medieval or post-medieval date. The slag fragments were very iron poor, suggesting a post-medieval or modern date.

5. **Synthesis**

5.1 **Medieval**

The project has produced significant evidence of medieval arrangements at Hartlebury Castle. Four pieces of evidence are particularly significant when considered alongside other information.

In the first place, it is likely that the walls found in Trenches 1 and 2 relate to the moated residence built by bishops Cantilupe and Giffard in the late 13th century (Emery 2000, 392 and 341; Molyneux 1987, 10). They are possibly later, though the wall in Trench 2 must be earlier than the late 17th century building adjacent, and none of the walls conform to the layout of the late medieval range. As noted above, the walls are likely to represent more than one phase of construction. It is therefore difficult to interpret their plan, although the walls in Trench 1 might have formed part of tower in the angle of the moat (as proposed by Emery 2000, 393 n1; Hartland 1913, 382). At all events, they suggest substantial buildings consistent with the scale of the moat, and it seems likely that the original residence was strongly fortified and fully justified being called a castle.

Secondly, the 13th/14th century hearth beneath the shop suggests a kitchen area, either open or roofed. This would imply that the contemporary hall stood nearby to the south or east, assuming that the walls described above were upstanding, and that the space to the west was insufficient. In all probability, it stood on the site of the present, late 14th or mid 15th century hall (Emery 2000, 393; Molyneux 1987, 10).

Thirdly, if the worked sandstone fragments from the same area did form part of a 13th/14th century piscina, this may represent the chapel documented in contemporary Bishop's registers (Hartland 1913, 382). The present chapel is dated on architectural grounds to the late 14th century (Emery 2000, 392; Molyneux 1987, 12).

Finally, the chamfered courses exposed around the corner of the building to the west are probably contemporary with the earlier masonry exposed in the north wall. This fabric is thought to date to the same period as the hall and chapel (Bond nd). This is consistent with the stratigraphic evidence, which puts the chamfered courses later than the 13th/14th century hearth. The function of the building is uncertain, but as it was apparently preceded by a kitchen, and as the present building was originally a brewhouse (Molyneux 1987, 10-13), it probably served some such purpose.

5.2 **Post-medieval**

The post-medieval evidence also adds considerably to existing knowledge. One piece of evidence is particularly significant: the demolition of the medieval walls to the north of the shop. It is quite reasonable to associate this with the slighting of the castle by Parliamentary soldiers in 1646 (Hartland 1913, 380; Molyneux 1987, 12). All the evidence is consistent with this interpretation, and it removes the difficulty of squaring accounts of decayed and demolished buildings with the survival of the late medieval range (WRO ref b009:1, BA 2636/150 (viii), no. 44004 and WRO ref 009:1, BA 2636/154, no. 952577; Molyneux 1987, 12). Indeed, it is possible that the walls formed part of the "Warwick Tower", described in the Parliamentary Survey of 1647 as "uncovered and ruinous" (WRO ref b009:1, BA 2636/150 (viii), no. 44004).

The evidence for a building pre-dating the administration block is also significant in respect of its date, as it must have been built sometime between the Civil War and Bishop Fleetwood's episcopate (1675-1683). The possible boundary walls to the south-east may belong to the same phase of construction.

For the most part, however, the post-medieval evidence relates to the work of Bishop Fleetwood and his successors. It is less informative than the buildings and documentary sources of this period, with the only significant finds being the well outside the administration block and the hearth set into its south wall. The latter feature must be secondary, however, as the Buck's print of Hartlebury Castle in 1731 shows a door in the same location (Plate 12).

5.3 **Modern**

The modern evidence adds little to knowledge of Hartlebury Castle in this period. However, it is worth noting the evidence for landscaping in each in of the areas investigated. This is not apparent from Ordnance Survey maps, but must have changed the character of the site considerably. It is also worth noting the extent to which modern landscaping has truncated or removed pre-modern deposits.

6. **Research frameworks**

Before the project began, archaeological knowledge of Hartlebury Castle was limited to inferences from earthworks, buildings, and archives. The project provided the first opportunity to investigate buried remains, and has produced significant evidence of medieval and post-medieval arrangements.

That said, many aspects of the site are still unclear. For example, it has been suggested above that the original 13th century castle was strongly fortified, but the evidence rests on walls that are poorly dated and do not form any recognisable plan. To resolve this issue, it would be necessary to undertake more fieldwork in the area and elsewhere around the edges of the moat. It is quite possible that the 13th century castle had a curtain wall and towers like those that survive at Eccleshall in Shropshire (a residence of the Bishops of Lichfield), and if this were the case, substantial remains like those in Trenches 1 and 2 would almost certainly survive. Any opportunity to address this issue should therefore be taken (eg tree works along the bank or repairs to boundary walls).

In addition, it was suggested that the present hall stands on or near the site of an earlier, 13th century hall. The present chapel may also be the second such building to occupy the site. Both buildings has been described and commented on by several authors, but neither has been properly surveyed, and it is possible that evidence of earlier phases might come to light as a result. The date and function of the medieval building to the west of the shop might also be established by a drawn or photographic survey.

Finally, it is worth noting that early arrangements across the rest of the site are very uncertain. The documented gatehouse is likely to have stood opposite the hall, closing off the unmoated east side of the site, but there is as yet no evidence of how the area between these buildings was used. It is possible that most of the area was undeveloped, but some outbuildings would be expected, and may have included some of those recorded in the Parliamentary Survey of 1647. Opportunities to investigate this area are likely to be rare, and it may remain an unknown quantity. However, the issue could be addressed effectively by a geophysical survey, as any buildings identified would almost certainly be of 13th to 17th century date.

7. **Publication summary**

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, and unless directed otherwise, the Service will place the following summary in the most appropriate journal or journals.

A watching brief took place at the County Museum at Hartlebury Castle between June 2005 and July 2006 (WSM 34417; NGR SO 8365 7125). The project provided the first opportunity to investigate buried remains on the site, which has been an episcopal residence since the mid

13th century. As anticipated, the groundworks exposed significant remains of medieval and post-medieval date. For the most part, these were simply cleaned and recorded although some deposits and features were excavated.

Medieval features included a hearth on the site of the former shop, and three large walls in the yard to the east. The hearth probably represents a kitchen of 13th or 14th century date. If this were the case, then the contemporary hall would have stood nearby to the south. The walls in the yard were not closely dated, but probably belonged to the fortified residence first documented in the mid 13th century. They were certainly demolished by the late 17th century, and may have been slighted by Parliamentary soldiers in 1646.

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Nearly 200 artefacts were also recovered. These included fragments of a sandstone piscina of 13th or 14th century date, some locally produced bricks and tiles, and a fairly typical range of pottery. The piscina may have come from a contemporary chapel, while the bricks may have come from a clay-pit in the field to the west of the site.

8. **The archive**

The archive consists of:

- 13 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 5 Photographic records AS3
- 3 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 4 Context number catalogues AS5
- 2 Levels records AS19
- 15 Site drawing sheets AS34
- 55 Abbreviated context sheets AS40
- 7 Trench record sheets AS41
- 6 A3 maps and drawings
- 2 Boxes of artefacts
- 1 CD-ROM

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster

Worcestershire DY11 7XZ

Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

9. Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the construction team and David Kendrick of Hartlebury Museum for their kind assistance.

10. Personnel

The fieldwork was led at various times by James Goad, Andrew Mann, Angus Crawford, Sarah Phear, Darren Miller and Steve Potten. The report was written by Darren Miller, with sections on the artefacts by Alan J Jacobs and illustrations by Steve Rigby and Carolyn Hunt. The project manager was Simon Woodiwiss.

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