

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING  
BRIEF  
AT  
49 HIGH STREET, PERHORE,  
WORCESTERSHIRE

Adam Mindykowski

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Historic Environment and Archaeology Service,  
Worcestershire County Council,  
Woodbury,  
University College Worcester,  
Henwick Grove,  
Worcester WR2 6AJ



Project 2556  
Report 1289  
WSM 33590



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## Archaeological watching brief at 49 High Street, Pershore, Worcestershire

**Adam Mindykowski**

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### Background information

<i>Client</i>	Hartley Holdings, Evesham
<i>Site address</i>	49 High Street, Pershore, Worcestershire
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SO 9493 4596
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	WSM 33590
<i>Planning authority</i>	Wychavon District Council
<i>reference</i>	W/03/1543
<i>Brief</i>	HEAS 2004a
<i>Project design</i>	HEAS 2004b
<i>Project parameters</i>	IFA 1999

### *Previous archaeological work on the site*

No previous archaeological work has been carried out on this site.

### *Previous archaeological work on associated sites*

Three other sites have previously been the subject of archaeological work within a radius of 100m of the site. Two excavations were carried out to the rear of numbers 34 (WSM 30605) and 37 (WSM 30137) High Street, while an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at the rear of 64-66 High Street (WSM 21750).

The excavation at 34 High Street (WSM 30605) revealed a range of features, deposits and artefacts dating from the early medieval to post-medieval periods (5<sup>th</sup> century to 18<sup>th</sup> century AD). This evidence was clearly associated with a long sequence of domestic occupation on the site and was probably related to buildings fronting onto the High Street (Wainwright and Stone 2002).

Excavations carried out at the rear of 37 High Street (WSM 30137), again, revealed a long sequence of both domestic and industrial features and deposits dating from the late medieval to the post-medieval periods (11<sup>th</sup> century to 18<sup>th</sup> century AD). Key features of this site were two brick-built basements and a series of clay and wood lined pits associated with a tannery dating to the post-medieval period (Hughes and Pontin 1993).

The evaluation carried out at 26-66 High Street (WSM 21750) revealed no medieval or post-medieval occupation evidence, although sherds of 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century pottery were recovered from disturbed deposits on the site. It was concluded this part of Pershore had probably been maintained as orchard or agricultural use (Jackson and Topping 1994).

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### Aims

The aim of the watching brief was to observe all surfaces exposed during both the ground reduction phase and the excavation of foundation trenches. All observed archaeological deposits were to be assessed and recorded to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

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### Methods

General specification for watching briefs                      CAS 1995

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Sources consulted	HER Sources cited by the HER 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition OS map 1888 sheet XLI SE
Date(s) of fieldwork	4 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> – 11th May 2004
Area of deposits observed	c 80m <sup>2</sup> . Indicated on Fig 2
Dimensions of excavated areas observed	Reduced area    length 11.20m width 7.80m depth 0.20 – 0.80m  Foundations    length 16.50m width 0.50m depth 1.30m

*Access to or visibility of structure*

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken after the initial ground reduction phase and during machine excavation of the foundation trenches. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits. These were cleaned by hand and recorded.

*Statement of confidence*

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

**Trench 1 deposit/structure description**

Context	Type Colour Texture	Description	Date	Interpretation	Depth (OD or below ground level)
100				Machine cut reduced ground and foundation trenches	Up to 2.30m deep
101	Light grey	Course stony concrete	Modern	Concrete yard surface	0.10m deep
102	Dark greyish brown	Loose sandy clay loam with occasional small sub-round stones and heavy root disturbance	Modern	Landscaped topsoil below 101	Up to 0.80m deep
103	Reddish brown	Single layer of hard-fired red brick sets	19 <sup>th</sup> c	Brick yard surface associated with 19 <sup>th</sup> c outbuildings	0.075m deep
104	Dark greyish	Loose sandy clay	19 <sup>th</sup> c	Landscaped topsoil below 103	0.32m – 0.52m deep

	brown	loam with occasional small sub-round stones and heavy root disturbance			
105	Mid orange brown	Compact coarse sand	Post-medieval	Layer of dumped landscaped material deposited as a means of levelling the ground	Up to 0.56m deep
106	Light grey	Compact silty alluvial clay	Undated	Natural river deposit	0.08m deep
107	Dark bluish grey	Compact silty alluvial clay	Undated	Natural river deposit below 106 same as 209 and 403	Observed depth of at least 0.92m, 0.90m below grounds surface
108		Large irregular cut with irregular sides and a flat base, 2.10m wide, 0.72m deep	Post-medieval	Probable refuse pit	0.90m below ground surface
109	Mid greyish brown	Loose friable clay with occasional small sub-rounded stones	Post-medieval	Primary fill of 108	0.10m deep
110	Mid-yellowish brown	Moderately compact friable clay with moderate small sub-rounded stones	Post-medieval	Upper fill of 108	0.38m deep
111		Cut with irregular sides and a flat base, 1.40m wide, 0.60m deep	Post-medieval	Probable refuse pit	0.90m below ground surface
112	Light creamy brown	Loose mortar rich loam with occasional brick fragments	Post-medieval	Primary fill of 111	0.40m – 0.48m deep
113	Dark grey	Moderate ash rich clay loam with	Post-medieval	Upper fill of 111	0.20m deep

		frequent charcoal flecks and occasional tile			
114		Cut with concave sloping sides and a concave base, 0.70m wide, 0.48m deep	Post-medieval	Probable rubbish pit	0.90m below ground surface
115	Light orange brown	Compact silty clay with frequent small sub-rounded stones	Post-medieval	Fill of 114	0.48m deep
116		Vertical sided cut with a flat base, 0.75m wide, 0.96m deep	Modern	Tree throw or pit	0.90m below ground surface
117	Dark greyish brown	Loose and friable clay loam with occasional small sub-rounded stones and disturbed by heavy rooting	Modern	Fill of 116	0.96m deep
118		Cut of vertical sided trench with a flat bottom, 0.62m wide, 0.60m deep	Modern	Construction trench for wall 119	0.50m below ground surface
119		Reddish brown and yellow bricks bonded with hard light grey mortar, 0.28m wide, 0.52m deep	Modern	NW-SE aligned foundation for demolished garden wall	0.50m below ground surface
120	Dark brown	Loose clay loam	Modern	Backfill of 118	0.60m deep

Trench 2 deposit/structure description

Context	Type Colour Texture	Description	Date	Interpretation	Depth (OD or below ground level)
200				Machine cut reduced ground and foundation trenches	Up to 2.30m deep
201	Dark yellowish brown	Soft clay loam	Modern	Modern garden topsoil	0.90m deep
202	Dark yellowish brown	Moderately compact clay loam	Modern	Garden subsoil	0.65m deep
203	Mid-yellowish brown	Firm silty clay layer	Post-medieval	Buried topsoil	0.15m – 0.50m deep
204	Mid-orange brown	Compact coarse sand and gravel	Post-medieval	Landscaped layer of made ground	0.06m – 0.38m deep
205	Light creamy grey	Compact silty clay	Post-medieval	Landscaped clay layer	0.05m deep
206	Dark greyish brown	Soft clay loam with occasional small sub-round stones	Post-medieval	Upper fill of 208	0.48m deep
207	Dark yellowish brown	Compact clay loam with moderate small to medium sub-round stones	Post-medieval	Primary fill of 208	0.18m deep
208		Steep sided cut with a concave base. 0.95m wide, 0.65m deep	Post-medieval	Probable rubbish pit	1.50m below ground surface
209	Dark bluish grey	Compact silty alluvial clay	Undated	Natural river deposit same as 107 and 403	1.62m below ground surface

Trench 3 deposit/structure description

Context	Type Colour Texture	Description	Date	Interpretation	Depth (OD or below ground level)
300				Machine cut trench	1.00m deep
301	Dark greyish brown	Soft silty clay loam with occasional sub-round stones	Modern	Garden subsoil	0.70m deep
302	Mid- orange brown	Compact course sand and gravels	Post- medieval	Landscaped layer of made ground	0.30m deep

## Trench 4 deposit/structure description

Context	Type Colour Texture	Description	Date	Interpretation	Depth (OD or below ground level)
400				Machine cut trench	1.05m deep
401	Dark greyish brown	Soft silty clay loam with occasional sub-round stones	Modern	Garden subsoil	0.65m deep
402	Mid- orange brown	Compact course sand and gravels	Post- medieval	Landscaped layer of made ground	0.40m deep
403	Dark bluish grey	Compact silty alluvial clay	Undated	Natural river deposit same as 107 and 209	1.70m below ground surface

## Discussion

Observations of the site's deposit sequence revealed one phase of natural deposits and two phases of archaeological activity.

### Phase 1: natural deposits

The dark bluish grey alluvial deposits observed in three of the four trenches (107, 209 and 403) belong to the broad deposit of pelo-alluvial gley soils associated with areas of Pershore closest to the River Avon (Dalwood et al 1996, 1-2). This material did not appear to have been re-deposited and was consistent with the landform associated with the slope of the river floodplain. A level still represented by the modern car park adjacent to the north-eastern boundary of the site.

### Phase 2: post-medieval

A series of layers clearly intended to build-up the ground level represent the earliest sequence of activity in this phase. The uppermost of these (104 and 203) appeared to be a buried topsoil that has undergone little subsequent truncation as a result of later landscaping of the site. A relatively simple sequence of inter-cutting pits (108, 111, 114 and 208) were observed to have cut this old topsoil.



These features were sealed below a more modern phase of dumped and levelled material (102 and 202). It was clear from observations of the trench sections that the top of layers 104 and 203 represent the exposed post-medieval garden surface. The pit sequence is typical of domestic refuse disposal pits observed in similar urban sites of the period. It is likely the pits recorded here will be a sample of a much more extensive group of similar features across the site. With exposure of the deposits limited to the foundation trench sections the range of artefacts recovered was limited. However, a sufficient assemblage was collected from this phase to enable a post-medieval date to be confidently ascribed to this activity.

The assemblage has been assessed and dated as late post-medieval to modern, and is summarised in the table below (Laura Griffin pers. comm.).

Context	Fabric number	Fabric name	Total sherds	Weight (g)
113	-	Late post-med/modern roof tile	1	144
104	78	18 <sup>th</sup> c red sandy ware	1	120
202	-	Post-medieval dark brown/black vessel glass	1	18

### Phase 3: modern

As noted above, there appears to be little evidence to indicate significant truncation of the site following the post-medieval period. This modern phase of activity appears therefore to be closely associated with the construction of a range of 19<sup>th</sup> century outbuildings at the rear of numbers 49 and 51 High Street. Specific observations indicate a build-up of re-deposited topsoil probably displaced by the excavation of foundation trenches for the outbuildings and levelling of the surface prior to the brick yard (103) being laid. Latterly, a relatively insubstantial wall (119) was built adjacent to the north-east edge of the yard. A large vertical sided pit (114) observed at the junction of Trenches 1 and 2 was filled with very loose, root-packed material and was clearly a relatively recent garden feature.

It is likely the deep layers of modern topsoil and subsoil will have protected other post-medieval features elsewhere on the site. Therefore the level of preservation should be high.

### Conclusions

Although limited in area it is, perhaps, significant that no medieval deposits or artefacts were observed during the excavations. This does not state definitively that there was no medieval occupation on the site. It is possible that medieval features are located closer to the buildings fronting High Street. In this case such evidence might be present below the 19<sup>th</sup> century outbuildings. It can be stated with a high degree of confidence that, especially given the complete lack of medieval artefacts within the assemblage, the observed sequence of features are of a firm post-medieval date.

It is possible the features observed represent the first phase of activity on the site, which may therefore, be located in an area that was not occupied until the post-medieval period.

### 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 Hartley Holdings, Evesham at 49 High Street, Pershore (NGR ref SO 9493 4596; SMR ref WSM 33590). Observations of the exposed surfaces revealed a sequence of inter-cutting pits, cut into a buried topsoil and sealed beneath a deep and well-developed layer of modern garden topsoil. The pits were well-preserved with little evidence of later truncation and were dated to the later post-medieval period. These features also appear to represent the earliest phase of occupation on the site as no earlier features or residual finds were observed.

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### Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	3
Photographic records AS3	1
Trench records (AS41)	5
Digital photographs	24
Drawings	2
Boxes of finds	1
Computer disks (CD)	1

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

telephone

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### Acknowledgements

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