PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK AT MORETON-ON-LUGG RAIL LOADING FACILITY, HEREFORDSHIRE

Darren Miller

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

10th November 2003

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

Project 2426
Report 1195
HSM 36591

Programme of archaeological work at Moreton-on-Lugg rail loading facility, Herefordshire

Darren Miller

Background information

Planning background

The project was requested by Tarmac Western Limited, who intend to construct a rail loading facility on the site, and were required by Herefordshire Council to fulfil an archaeological condition of planning consent (Herefordshire Archaeology 2003).

Topographical and archaeological background

The site lies in the lower Lugg Valley, near the point where the Wellington Brook enters the main river channel (Fig 1). The floodplain at this point is generally level (around 55m AOD), and composed of Holocene alluvia over Devensian sands and gravels. The underlying bedrock is Devonian mudstone. Since 1942, the site has lain on the edge of a compound that was formerly an army depot and is now an industrial estate. Before the development began, the site comprised waste ground bounded on three sides by railway tracks, and crossed by a curving road (Fig 2).

The archaeological background to the site was provided by the results of two evaluations. The first evaluation, carried out in December 2001, was limited to the area of the present development (Miller and Griffin 2002). The second evaluation, undertaken in the autumn of 2002, covered more extensive areas to the west and south (Griffin and Jackson 2003). The results suggested that that the present site contained slight remains of Roman, medieval and post-medieval agriculture, and had a limited potential for more significant remains of early prehistoric activity.

Aims

The aims of the project were to record all archaeological remains on the site (and any other relevant features), to publish the results, and to prepare and deposit a project archive (Herefordshire Archaeology 2003, 2).

Methods

General specification	HEAS 2003
Sources consulted	Miller and Griffin 2002; Griffin and Jackson 2003
Dates of fieldwork	28th August, 1st September and 2nd September 2003
Maximum dimensions of excavated areas	Area 1 length 100m width 88m depth *c*1.50m Area 2 length 48m width 38m depth *c*1.50m

Access to, and visibility of deposits

Access to the excavated areas was unimpeded, and the exposed surfaces were reasonably fresh and clean, despite the fact that a toothed bucket was used, and the area was repeatedly tracked over by dumper trucks. Temporary sections were frequent and provided a check on the nature of deposits exposed in plan.

The methods in retrospect

The methods allowed a reasonably detailed record of deposits to be made and compared with the results of previous projects. In particular, it was possible to identify individual features, establish areas of greater or lesser truncation, and relate these findings accurately to the results of the 2001 evaluation. On the basis of this assessment, therefore, a high degree of confidence may be expressed in the conclusions of the project.

Results

No significant archaeological remains were identified during the watching brief. To some extent, the lack of evidence may reflect the effects of modern landscaping, the limited depth of excavation, and the imperfect condition of exposed surfaces. However, it seems more likely that few remains were ever present, and that the site was not a focus of past activity.

Over a large part of Area 1, landscaping had removed all the post-medieval alluvium that once covered the site (context 100), and at least some of the underlying prehistoric to post-medieval alluvium (context 101). The truncated areas had then been levelled up with reworked alluvium and dumped material including concrete foundations, asphalt shavings, and other modern debris (contexts 102 and 103). Truncation was less severe towards the west of Area 1, and in Area 2, where only the upper alluvium had been removed, and where levelling deposits were shallow or absent. Only towards the north-east corner of Area 1 does it seem that both the upper and lower alluvium had survived intact.

Given this degree of landscaping, it is possible that some archaeological remains have been removed or buried under levelling deposits. However, excavation generally reached a level where significant remains were likely to be found, and with the exception of three post-medieval ditches (contexts 104-106), there was no sign of any features or artefacts. In short, it appears that the lack of remains is genuine, and reflects a low level of past activity on the site.

With regard to the post-medieval ditches, one corresponds to a ditch crossing Trenches 2 and 3 of the 2001 evaluation, and the other had similar dimensions and alignments (Fig 3). None of the ditches could be dated directly, although they have the same form as post-medieval ditches found at nearby Wellington quarry, and a similar alignment and spacing to ditches recorded in the post-Enclosure fieldscape to the south (Fig 4).

Context(s)	Description	Interpretation
100	Firm mid reddish brown silty clay	Post-Roman alluvium
101	Firm light to mid grey clayey silt with common orange mottles	Prehistoric to Roman alluvium
102	Mixed deposit comprising redeposited alluvium and gravels with common asphalt fragments, concrete blocks and other modern debris	Levelling deposit
103	As above, with higher frequencies of asphalt and concrete	Levelling deposit
104-106	Linear, parallel-sided features with concave sides and flat bases; filled with firm mid reddish brown alluvium	Post-medieval drainage ditches

Table 1: Summary description of deposits and features

Discussion

The results of the project add little to existing knowledge of the site or the surrounding area, except by confirming the results of the earlier evaluations. In contrast to the surrounding area, it seems that the site was not a focus of prehistoric activity, and was not farmed intensively in the Roman and medieval periods. The reasons for this lack of activity are uncertain, but probably related to the site's topography and hydrology, which would have resulted in damp, if not marshland conditions. The post-medieval ditches show that the site was included within a wider programme of agricultural improvements, although better-preserved remains of this activity survive elsewhere.

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 Tarmac Western Ltd during the construction of a rail loading facility near Moreton-on-Lugg in Herefordshire (NGR SO 5050 4832; HSM 36591). The site, and areas to the west and south, had been evaluated in 2001 and 2002, and the results suggested that significant prehistoric and Roman remains were unevenly distributed across the landscape. The main aim of the watching brief was to record any remains exposed during the groundworks.

The only remains exposed by the groundworks were three ditches associated with 19th century agricultural improvements. The ditches survived in the only part of the site not affected by modern landscaping; elsewhere almost all pre-existing deposits had been removed or buried. Some archaeological remains may have been lost or obscured as a result, although the lack of other features and artefacts in the unaffected part suggests that the site was not a focus of past activity.

Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	4
Photographic records AS3	3
Drawings	7
Computer disks	1

The project archive is intended to be placed at the Hereford Heritage Service

Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank Malcolm Lawer (Tarmac) Chris Kibble (MF Freeman), and Julian Cotton (Herefordshire Archaeology) for their kind assistance.

Bibliography

APS 2001 *Wellington quarry and environs. Aerial photographic interpretation and mapping: archaeology*, Air Photo Services UK, report **156**

CAS 1995 (as amended) *Manual of Service practice: fieldwork recording manual*, County Archaeological Service, Hereford and Worcester County Council, report **399**

Herefordshire Archaeology 2003 *Brief for a programme of archaeological work: proposed rail loading facility at Moreton Park, Moreton-on-Lugg, Herefordshire*, unpublished document dated 3rd July 2003

HEAS 2003 *Proposal for a programme of archaeological work: rail loading facility, Moreton Park, Moreton-on-Lugg, Herefordshire*, Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 19th August 2003 (revised 27th August 2003), **P2426**

IFA, 1999 *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief,* Institute of Field Archaeologists

Miller, D and Griffin, L, *Archaeological Evaluation at Moreon-on-Lugg, Herefordshire*, Archaeological Service, Worcestershire County Council, report, **950**

Griffin, S and Jackson, R, 2002 *Evaluation at Moreton-on-Lugg, Herefordshire*, Archaeological Service, Worcestershire County Council, report, **1142**

Report Name and Title	Programme of archaeological work at Moreton-on-Lugg rail loading facility, Herefordshire
Contractors Name and Address	Field Section, Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, Woodbury Hall, University College Worcester, Henwick Grove, Worcester, WR2 6AJ
Site Name	Brooks Industrial Estate, Moreton Park, Moreton-on-Lugg, Herefordshire
Grid Reference (8 fig)	NGR SO 5050 4832 **Planning Application reference CW2001/3080/M**
SMR number/s of site	HSM36591; neighbouring sites numbered HSM 3185 and 32268
Dates of Field Work	28th August, 1st September and 2nd September 2003
Date of Report	10th November 2003
Number and type of finds and samples collected	No pre-modern finds were present, and no deposits were thought to contain significant ecofactual materials.
Summary of the report	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the construction of a rail loading facility near Moreton-on-Lugg in Herefordshire. The site, and areas to the west and south, had been evaluated in 2001 and 2002, and the results suggested that significant prehistoric and Roman remains were unevenly distributed across the landscape. The main aim of the watching brief was to record any remains exposed during the groundworks. The only remains exposed by the groundworks were three ditches associated with 19th century agricultural improvements. The ditches survived in the only part of the site not affected by modern landscaping; elsewhere almost all pre-existing deposits had been removed or buried. Some archaeological remains may have been lost or obscured as a result, although the lack of other features and artefacts in the unaffected part suggests that the site was not a focus of past activity.