

Archaeological works at Bleak House Farm, Wythall, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire



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Status: Revision 1
Date: 12 November 2014
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Project reference: 4206
Report reference: 2152
HER reference: WSM 58051

Contents

Summary

1

Report

1 Background.....	2
1.1 Reasons for the project	2
2 Aims.....	2
3 Methods.....	2
3.1 Personnel.....	2
3.2 Documentary research	2
3.3 Fieldwork strategy	3
3.4 Structural analysis	3
3.1 Artefact methodology, by Laura Griffin	3
3.1.1 Recovery policy	3
3.1.2 Method of analysis.....	3
3.1.3 Discard policy	3
3.2 Environmental archaeology methodology.....	4
3.2.1 Sampling policy.....	4
3.3 Statement of confidence in the methods and results	4
4 The application site	4
4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context.....	4
4.2 Current land-use	4
5 Structural analysis.....	5
5.1.1 Trench 1	5
5.1.2 Trench 2	5
5.1.3 Trench 3	5
5.1.4 Area 4.....	6
5.2 Artefact analysis, by Laura Griffin.....	6
5.2.1 Summary artefactual evidence by period	7
5.3 Significance of the artefactual assemblage.....	8
6 Synthesis	8
7 Publication summary	9
8 Acknowledgements	9
9 Bibliography.....	9

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Jonathan Webster

With contributions by Laura Griffin

Summary

A series of archaeological works was undertaken at Bleak House Farm, Wythall, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire (NGR: SP 08592 75538). The works were commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of their client JJ Gallagher, who have outline planning permission for 178 residential properties with associated open space, surface water attenuation pond and associated works.

The works were undertaken to assess whether there was any evidence for medieval settlement activity extending from the moat platform. Two areas either side of the moat were stripped of topsoil to the top of natural deposits and an additional evaluation trench was opened in the south-west corner of the proposed development.

The investigations revealed the truncated remains of ridge and furrow, No features of archaeological significance were revealed.

A substantial north to south ditch of Victorian/Edwardian date was revealed during remediation works beneath the modern concrete farm yard. The location, profile and defuse fill of this feature suggest that it would have formed the eastern arm of the former moat and, had been re-excavated at some point prior to the late 18th century, removing any trace of the earlier feature or associate deposits. A second smaller ditch was noted on the same alignment in the centre of the former moat platform.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

A series of archaeological works was undertaken at Bleak House Farm, Wythall, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire (NGR: SP 08592 75538). It was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of their client JJ Gallagher, who have outline planning permission for 178 residential properties with associated open space, surface water attenuation pond and associated works approved by Bromsgrove District Council (reference B/12/0912/OUT).

The proposed development site is considered to include heritage assets and potential heritage assets in the form of a medieval moated farm complex, the significance of which may be affected by the application (WSM 01873).

The project conforms to a brief prepared by the archaeological planning officer, Worcestershire County Council on behalf of Bromsgrove District Council (WCC 2013) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (CgMs 2013).

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008) and the *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010).

The event reference for this project, given by the Worcestershire Historic Environment Records is WSM 58051.

2 Aims

The aims of these investigations are:

- to describe and assess the significance of the heritage asset with archaeological interest;
- to establish the nature, importance and extent of the archaeological site;
- to assess the impact of the application on the archaeological site.

And specifically to:

- Assess the evidence for settlement activity and whether this affected the development of the medieval moat.
- To inform the production of a management plan to ensure the future appropriate use and maintenance of the moated site and earthwork remains.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was undertaken by Jonathan Webster, BA (hons), who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2009 and has been practising professional archaeology since 2001; assisted by Simon Woodiwiss, MIfA, BA (hons). The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers MSc, BA (hons). Finds were analysed by Laura Griffin, AIFA, PGC Hist, BA (hons), who has been working in professional archaeology since 1996. Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt MIfA, BSc (hons).

3.2 Documentary research

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) was undertaken by CgMs Consulting on behalf of their client (CgMs 2012). The DBA identified that although a medieval moat (WSM 01873) existed within the centre of the investigation area (development area B), it existed in apparent isolation, with the exception of post-medieval ridge and furrow, the remainder of the study area

was recorded as having no known archaeological remains or deposits that had been previously noted and the overall potential was considered low.

3.3 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by CgMs Consulting (CgMs 2013).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 22 September and 26 September 2014. The site reference number and site code is WSM 58051.

Three trenches (Trench 1-3), amounting to just over 1186m² in area, were excavated over the site area representing a sample of a little over 2%. A further area (Area 4) was archaeologically monitored. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

3.4 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

3.1 Artefact methodology, by Laura Griffin

3.1.1 Recovery policy

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012; appendix 2).

3.1.2 Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date was produced for each stratified context. The date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on a *pro forma* Microsoft Access 2007 database.

Artefacts from environmental samples were examined, but none were worthy of comment, and so they not included below, nor included in the Table 1 quantification.

The pottery was examined under x20 magnification and referenced as appropriate by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology (Hurst and Rees 1992 and www.worcestershireceramics.org).

3.1.3 Discard policy

The following categories/types of material will be discarded after a period of 6 months following the submission of this report, unless there is a specific request to retain them (and subject to the collection policy of the relevant depository):

- where unstratified
- modern pottery, and;
- generally where material has been assessed as having no obvious grounds for retention.

3.2 Environmental archaeology methodology

3.2.1 Sampling policy

Sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

3.3 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The area of investigation is located to the south-west of Solihull between the villages of Wythall and Tidbury Green. It is bounded to the south by Station Road and to the west by Gorsey Lane. Domestic properties bound the site to the south-east and east whilst to the north of the development area the landscape comprises pasture fields. The ground is primarily flat at an approximate height of 158m above Ordnance Datum (AOD), with a small degree of undulation occurring with the ground progressively dipping towards the east and south across the study area.

The underlying geology is mapped as part of the Mercia Mudstones group of the Triassic period (251-200 million years ago) overlain by Mid Pleistocene Diamicton superficial glacial deposits deposited in the Quaternary Period up to 2 million years ago (BGS 2014).

The area of investigation is centred around the known moat (WSM 01873) and associated farm complex (WSM 11072) that is one of many similar topographic features that are seen as characterising the landscape during the medieval period. It is thought that Bleak House Farm itself may have been associated with Peter Blike in the Lay Subsidy Rolls of 1280 (Price 1970). The remainder of the development site is noted as being associated with field systems and no known earlier features or finds have been recorded from them. In the wider landscape, whilst no prehistoric, Romano-British or Anglo-Saxon sites are known to exist, a medieval holloway is known along the route of Alcester Road to the south (WSM 37589), and a silver coin dated to Henry III was previously recovered from Harmony Wood to the north (WSM 21713).

The farm house and moated platform (WSM 11072) are shown on cartographic illustrations of the area as early as 1577 and by the Kings Norton Tithe map of 1844 the associated farm outbuildings (WSM 39923) had outgrown the earlier moat platform and extended beyond the extant route of the moat to the north and west. By the 1st edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map of 1882-4 the eastern arm of the moat appears to have been replaced by a hedge system and the layout of the fields have altered slightly. While no significant changes appear to have occurred until the 1972 OS map by which time the pond to the south had been infilled and farm buildings extended further to the south, west and east, further changes and extensions occurred in the general farm complex up to the most recent OS map of 2010 that shows the line of the eastern arm completely masked by outbuildings across its former route. With the exception of the progressive development of the farm complex (see above), the site is noted as remaining undeveloped throughout the post-medieval period and up to the present day.

4.2 Current land-use

At the time of the archaeological investigations the former farm complex had been demolished and the central part of the area of investigation was being used as a site compound for the current development. Areas A and C were still in use as arable fields.

5 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figures 2-6 and Plates 1-7. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 in development area C was 12.50m in width by 43m in length (Plate 1). The natural substrate was revealed at an average depth of 0.53m below the present ground surface level (155.45m AOD), and comprised a mixed sandy clay with frequent gravels throughout, consistent with the moraine landscapes and seasonal glacial melt deposits that encompass Diamicton superficial sediments. This was truncated by at least four irregular features that displayed uneven sides and extremely uneven bases, undercutting fills and the hallmark identification features of tree rooting and tree bowls. It is clear that these trees remained *in situ* and rotted in place, by the presence of fibrous organic matter within the fills and the discolouration of the surrounding natural clays due to de-oxygenation of the area by bacteria. Also no evidence was noted of uprooting of underlying material as would be expected if the tree roots had been removed in antiquity. These were sealed by 0.20m of subsoils (102), that was itself truncated repeatedly by a series of east to west aligned furrows that averaged 1.20m in width by 0.24m in depth and an average distance of 5.60m as measured from the centre of parallel furrow bases. Many of these furrows were then truncated themselves by a later series of field drains orientated north-east to south-west and measuring an average 0.30m in width. These drains had been excavated by machine with vertical sides to at least 0.24m in depth and were filled with a single silty clay with moderate gravel and charcoal inclusions throughout. All of the above were then sealed by 0.33m of humic friable topsoil which contained a high level of root disturbance and evidence of having been disturbed by plough action relatively recently.

5.1.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 in the north part of development area A was 10m in width by 62m in length (Plate 2). The geological substrate was revealed at an average of 0.37m below the present ground level (159m AOD). The geology at this point was noted as being the same as that seen in area C within Trench 1. In addition, the gravels present were noted as being primarily aligned on a roughly north-east to south-west alignment that gives an indication of the flow of sediments during the deposition of this glacial wash. This was truncated by a series of furrows that were orientated east-north-east to west-south-west and measured 0.19m in depth by an average width of 0.56m and a distance between the base of furrows of 4m. Unlike the furrows in Trench 1 these were sealed by the subsoil (202) that measured 0.19m in thickness. This in turn was overlain by 0.26m of topsoil which comprised a humic friable topsoil that, like the subsoil, displayed evidence of recent ploughing in a roughly east to west orientation.

5.1.3 Trench 3

Located to the south of Trench 2 in the south-west corner of development area A, Trench 3 measured 1.8m in width by 30m in length. The natural substrate (303) was recorded at an average of 0.35m below the present ground level (158.50m AOD), it comprised the same mixed sandy clays seen to the north and north-east (Plates 3 and 4). As with Trench 2, furrows were noted orientated east-north-east to west-south-west at an average distance of 4m and are thought to be associated with the same phase of farming. Of note however were two parallel ditches, orientated north-east to south-west that cut the earlier furrow features (Plate 4). The westernmost of these features [305], contained a gravel and silt rich fill (304) 0.05m in thickness and overlying 0.08m of silt (306) within the overall feature that measured 0.46m in width by 0.13m in depth with almost vertical sides that dropped onto a moderately concaved base. At present it is thought that this feature was associated with the drainage of the field with the gravels acting as a focus into which groundwater could collect and drain through. Linear [308] which ran parallel to [305] by contrast contained a single fill (307) that was identical in make up to (304) and this feature is thought to

have had the same function as that seen in [305]. While it is thought that these two features represent two phases of a single field drain it is impossible to provide phasing between them as no physical relationship existed. All of the above was sealed by 0.10m of moderately disturbed subsoil that was itself covered by 0.25m of topsoil. As with the topsoil and subsoil seen in Area 2, these deposits displayed evidence of having been subjected to plough action in relatively recent history.

5.1.4 Area 4

Located in the central area of the proposed development (Area B), Area 4 was monitored to investigate a number of archaeological features revealed during the ground clearance of the former farm complex (Plates 5-7). The natural substrate was noted 0.58m below the present ground surface level at a general height of 156.40m (AOD) and, as seen elsewhere, comprised a mixed sandy clay with frequent rounded to sub-rounded gravels throughout. It was truncated by two north to south orientated linear features. Linear feature [402] measured 3.80m in width and 1.12m in depth (155.44m AOD) with moderately steep sides and a concave base. It extended from the northern arm of the existing moat for a length of 21.49m before turning south for a further 42m before a small arm turned back to the west and terminated after 2.24m. The single fill (401) consisted of a humic clay and peat mix that suggested that the sediment had been deposited in still water clogged by large quantities of organic matter and reeds. The clearly fresh nature of much of this organic matter along with the recovery of late 19th century material from the base of the fill demonstrate that this was the last cleaning and abandonment of this large ditch feature before it was sealed with a concrete hardstanding as the farm complex expanded in size to the east. To the immediate west of this linear feature at a distance of 1m and running along a parallel course 12 timber posts 0.22m in diameter and 3m apart were noted to a depth of 2m+ below the present ground level. Clearly 20th century in date they were thought to be the route of a former boundary or wall line within the modern farm complex. It is noted that the northern-most three posts of this line were rectangular in cross section and appeared to be former railway sleepers.

Further to the west, 25m from [402] in the centre of the former moated platform, a second linear feature [405] was noted aligned roughly north to south and was 3.85m wide with a U-shaped profile with steep concaved sides and a moderately concaved base 1.04m in depth (155.84m AOD). It was infilled with a single humic clay and peat mix (406) that contained late 19th century pottery from the base and appears to have been the final cleaning and abandonment of a gully within the moated platform that could have been used for feeding water past the former farm house. Of particular note was a wooden barrel 0.49m+ in length that had been set into the base of [405] (Plates 6 and 7). This was 0.70m in diameter and made of upright wooden staves and was filled with a fine silt that suggested that this feature may have been used as a sump within linear feature [405].

To the immediate east of linear [402] at least five furrows were revealed on a roughly east to west alignment, identical to that seen in Trench 1, and with an almost identical spacing of 5.55m, with an average width of 1.5m and a depth of 0.2m. These were overlain by 0.28m of moderately disturbed subsoil that was in turn covered by 0.30m of humic and friable topsoil.

5.2 Artefact analysis, by Laura Griffin

The artefactual assemblage recovered is summarised in Tables 1 and 3.

The assemblage consisted of 16 finds weighing 456g and came from six stratified contexts. The assemblage could be dated from the post-medieval period onwards (Table 1). Using pottery as an index of artefact condition, this was generally fair with sherds displaying moderate levels of abrasion.

period	material class	object specific type	Total	Weight (g)
post-medieval	ceramic	pot	3	86
post-medieval	ceramic	tile	1	4
modern	ceramic	pot	3	26
modern	ceramic	pot	8	331
modern	glass	vessel	1	9

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

5.2.1 Summary artefactual evidence by period

All material has been spot-dated and quantified. Pottery has been grouped and quantified according to fabric type (Table 2). Diagnostic sherds were dated by form type, whilst remaining sherds were datable by fabric type to their general period or production span.

Post-medieval

Three sherds of pottery and a small fragment of roof tile could be dated to the post-medieval period. All pottery was of post-medieval buff ware (fabric 91; subsoil 102 and furrow fill 104) and displayed a dark brown/black glaze characteristic of this ware type. All were of late 17th–18th century date, with the sherd from subsoil 102 providing a *terminus post quem* for this feature.

Modern

Remaining finds were all of late 18th century date onwards (Table 3). Pottery consisted of domestic forms in modern china, stoneware and porcelain fabrics (fabrics 85, 81.4 and 83). The only other find was a small fragment of bottle glass of the same date (ditch fill 401).

period	fabric code	fabric name	count	weight (g)
post-medieval	91	post-medieval buff ware	3	86
modern	81.4	miscellaneous late stoneware	1	30
modern	83	Porcelain	2	5
modern	85	modern china	8	322

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric type

context	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	Weight (g)	start date	end date	TPQ
102	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	4	L17C	18C	18C
104	ceramic	earthenware	pot	2	82	L17C	18C	20C
104	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	1	L18C	20C	
106	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	10	L19C	20C	20C
202	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	15	L19C	20C	

202	ceramic	earthenware	tile	1	4	13C	18C	20C
401	ceramic	stoneware	pot	4	257	L19C	20C	20C
401	ceramic	stoneware	pot	1	4	L18C	20C	
401	ceramic	stoneware	pot	1	30	19C	20C	
401	glass		vessel	1	9	19C	20C	
406	ceramic	stoneware	pot	2	40	19C	20C	20C

Table 3: Summary of context dating based on artefacts

5.3 Significance of the artefactual assemblage

Despite the focus of this site being the medieval moat, no material of medieval date was retrieved. The finds which did come from the moat deposit (ditch fill 401), appeared to be the result of rubbish discard during the late 18th-19th centuries. This would suggest that the moat had been re-excavated prior to the late 18th century thus removing any trace of earlier material or deposits.

6 Synthesis

The archaeological investigations have helped to understand further the post-medieval usage of the landscape as well as providing an insight into the abandonment of the eastern side of the moat with the progressive expansion of the farm complex into the 20th century.

Whilst little can be said about the known medieval occupation of the site it is possible from the investigations undertaken in areas A and C to determine that no satellite occupation was undertaken outside the moated farm area and that the fields appear to have remained in agricultural use. The presence of former tree rooting in Area C may suggest that this field was one of the last parts of the investigated landscape to be converted for agriculture. The ridge and furrow that was noted throughout areas A, B and C along with the evidence of later plough scarring reveal that the landscape as a whole was subjected to relatively intensive farming practices throughout the post-medieval and modern periods and that the active field system reached the very edge of the occupation site on the moated platform before being progressively pushed back as the farm complex expanded.

The main features of archaeological interest were the two north to south linear features recorded within Area 4, the easternmost [402], tracing a route that presumably followed the east arm of the former moated complex. Whilst it is clear from the archaeological investigations that this feature represented the final 19th century phase, its profile, position and alignment would suggest that it traces the route of an older feature. The single organic rich fill (401) demonstrated that much like the current northern arm, the final phase of this feature comprised standing water with sediment and organic matter being impeded and deposited due to the action of a thick bed of reeds, after which a concrete cap was placed over the whole length and the farm complex expanded.

To the west of this a second north to south linear [405] was noted running through an area that would be central across the moat platform. Again, datable material from the base of the feature indicates that all that remained was the final 19th-20th century phase of what is thought to be an earlier feature. It is thought that this linear may have acted as a leat, feeding water off the main moat route and through the centre of the farm complex. While it is probable that this would have provided a running water source to help remove waste from the occupation area it could have also been used for the easier collection of water. The presence of an old barrel at the base of this ditch is thought to have potentially acted as a sump or additional storage for periods when the ditch may

have ran dry, and to that end it is of interest to note that the relative heights of this ditch when compared to [402] shows that this ditch is 0.4m higher which would have made a substantial difference to the flow of water during dry spells.

The late nature of both of these features suggested that they had been re-excavated at some point prior to the late 18th century removing any traces of earlier deposits or features. While this is more difficult to prove with linear [405] due to our lack of understanding on the earlier phases of the moat platform, ditch [402] can be confidently interpreted as the last phase of an older feature.

7 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology 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.

A series of archaeological works was undertaken at Bleak House Farm, Wythall, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire (NGR: SP 08592 75538). The works were commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of their client JJ Gallagher, who have outline planning permission for 178 residential properties with associated open space, surface water attenuation pond and associated works.

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8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Paul Hill (Site Manager, JJ Gallagher), Cathy Patrick (CgMs Consulting Ltd) and Aisling Nash (Historic Environment Planning Officer, Worcestershire County Council).

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Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983 *Midland and Western England*, sheet 3, scale 1:250,000 + Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales (A brief explanation of the constituent soil associations)

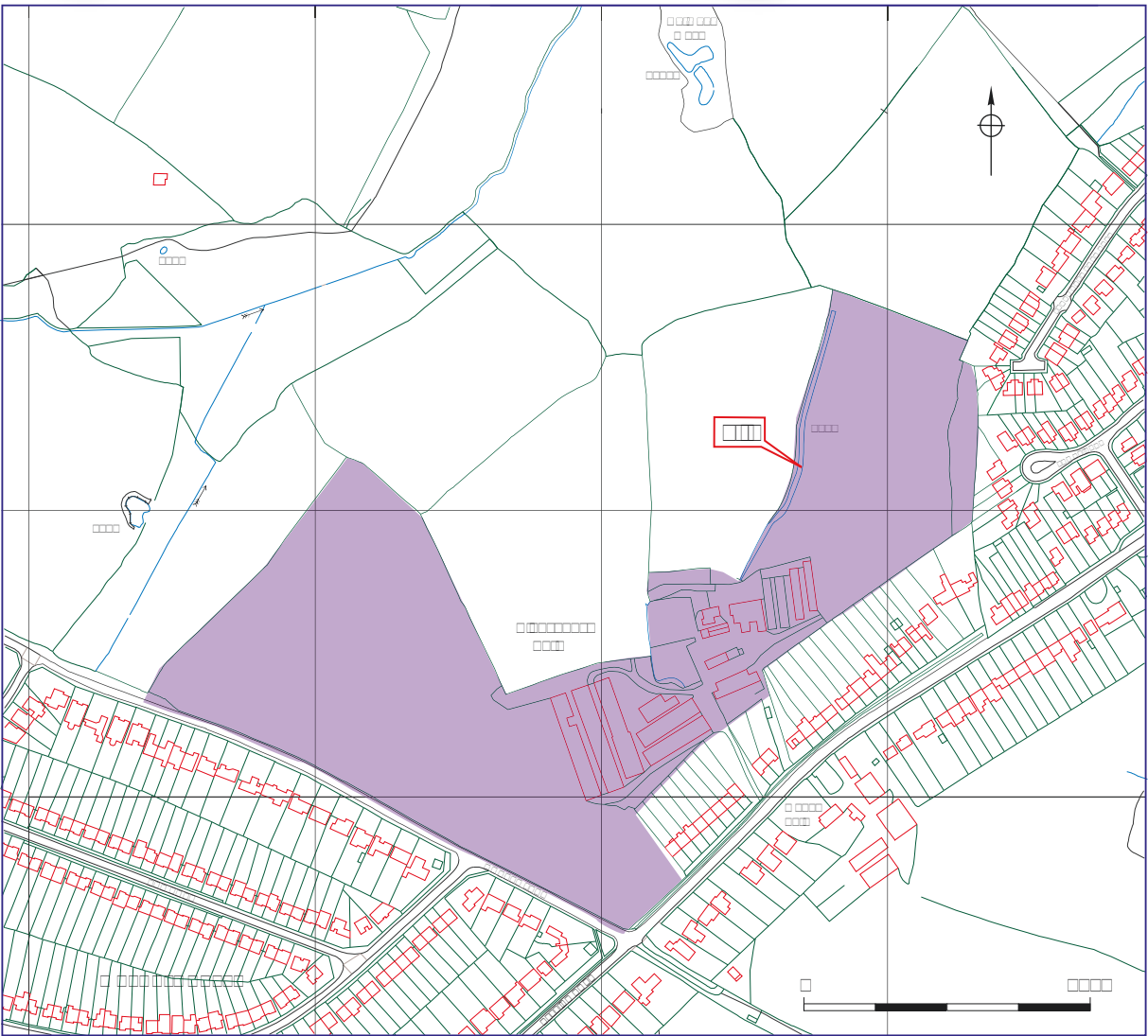
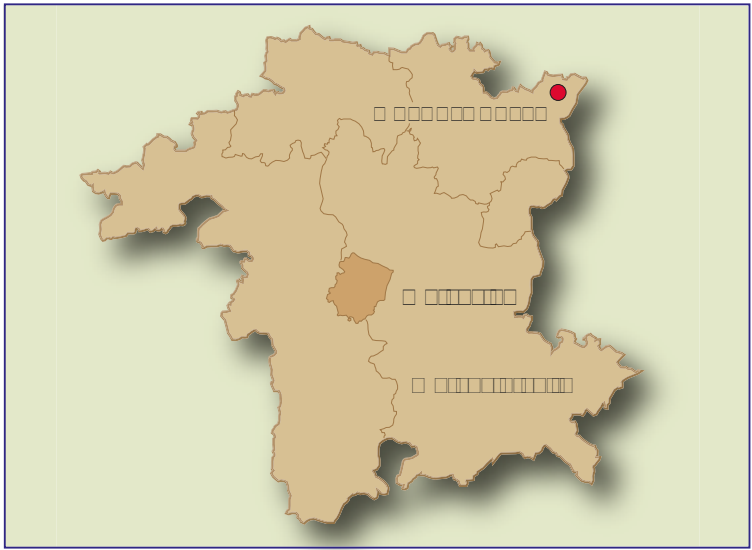
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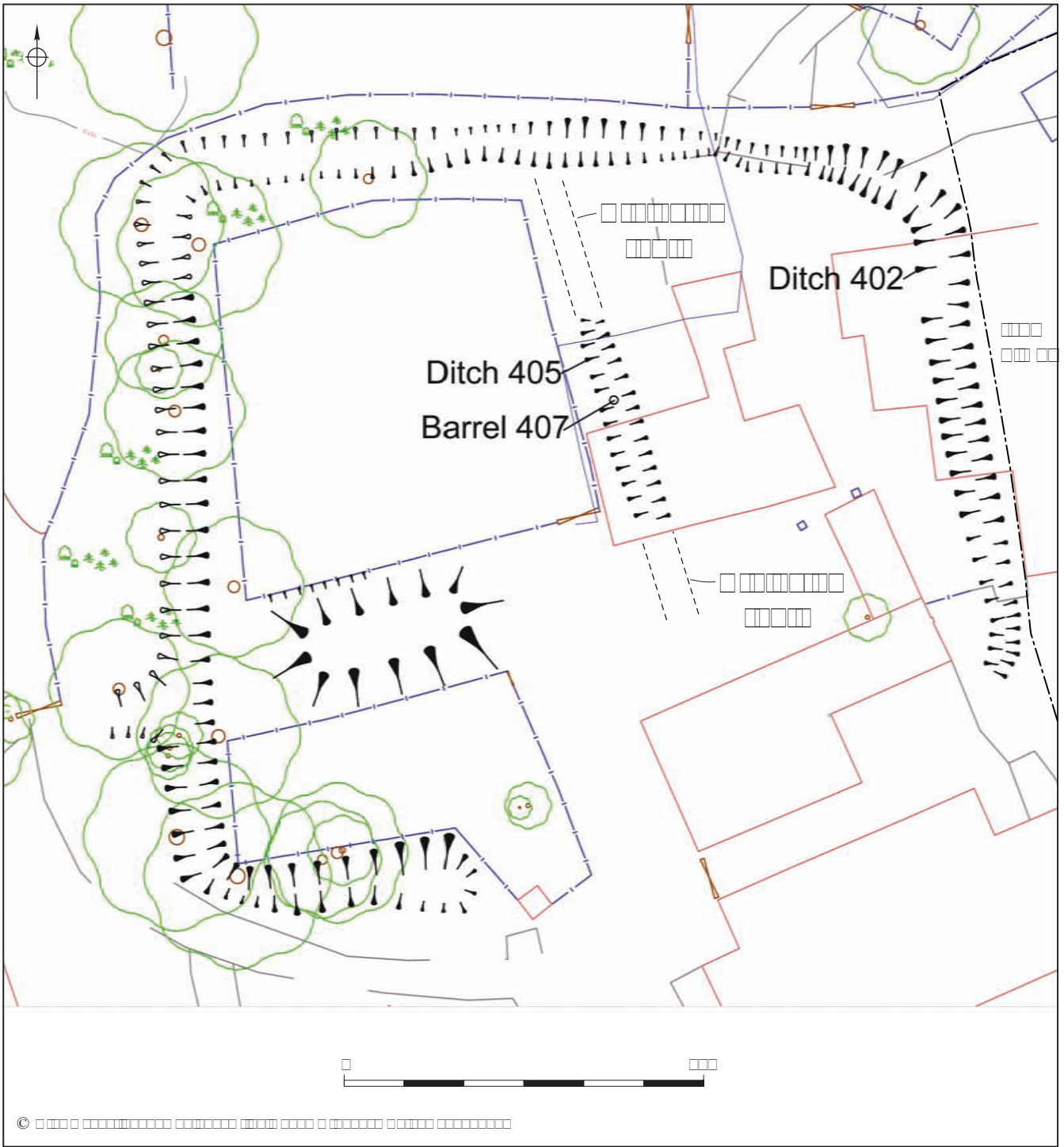
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Figures



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Archaeological site plan showing Ditch 402, Ditch 405, and Barrel 407.

Scale bar: 0 to 10 meters.

Plates



Plate 1; General view of Trench 1 showing furrows, looking east



Plate 2; General view of Trench 2 showing furrows, looking west



Plate 3; General view of Trench 3, looking south-west

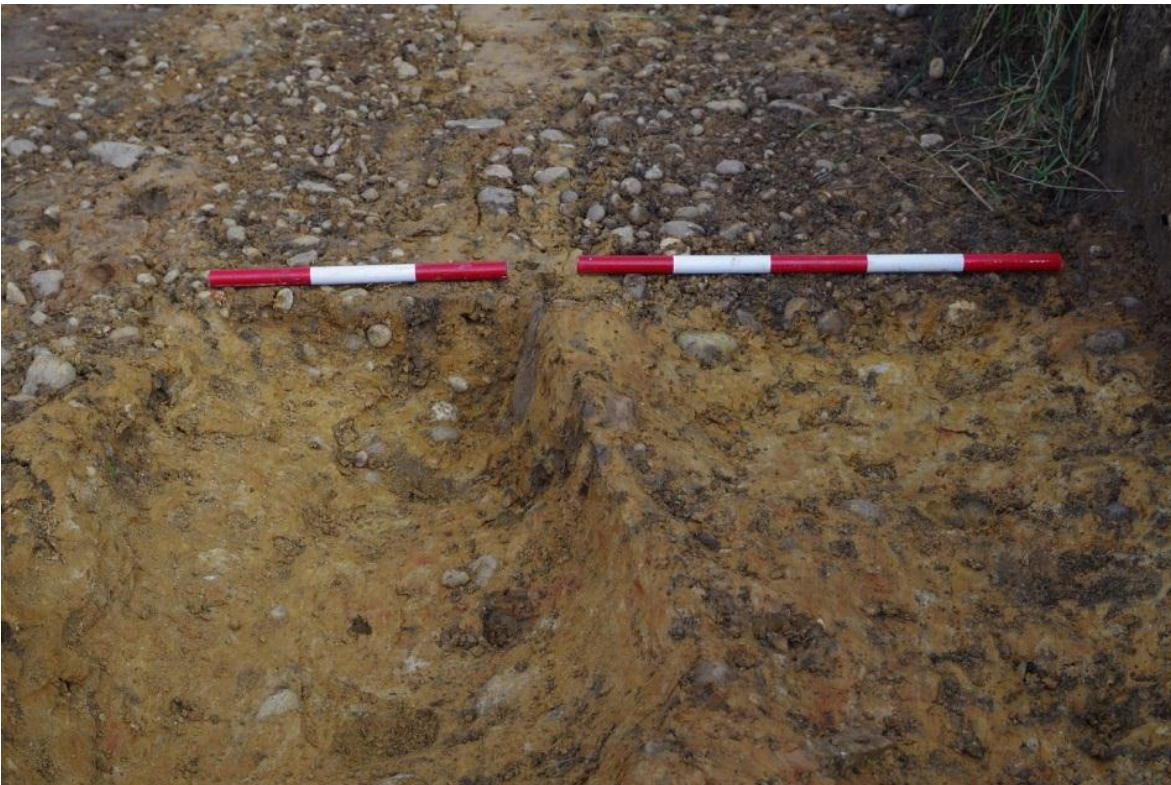


Plate 4; Trench 3, south-west facing section through linears [305] and [308], looking north-east, Scales 0.3m and 0.5m



Plate 5; Area 4, north facing section through ditch [402], looking south



Plate 6; Area 4, barrel 407 within ditch [405], looking north



Plate 7; Area 4, detailed image of barrel 407, scale 0.5m

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Length: 43m

Width: 12.50m

Orientation: Northwest/Southeast

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
101	Topsoil	Layer	Friable dark bluish brown silt loam	0.33m	Heavily disturbed by root action with very occasional gravels, angular to rounded and poorly sorted throughout. Also occasional charcoal flecks noted throughout and evidence of ploughing seen which has also contributed to its heavily truncated nature.
102	Subsoil	Layer	Firm light bluish brown silty clay	0.20m	Moderately disturbed by plough action and later drains and contains moderate angular to rounded, poorly sorted gravels throughout. Clear that this subsoil is also disturbed by moderately recent plough action.
103	Natural	Layer	Firm light orangey yellow sandy clay	0.04m +	Natural substrate with frequent moderately sorted gravels to cobbles, rounded to subrounded with a degree of alignment in the individual clasts orientated northeast to southwest along with occasional patches of light bluish white sandy clays all of which are suggestive of a progressively reduced energy deposition associated with probable seasonal glacial melt and probable anastomosing riverine deposits caused by melt action.
104	Furrow	Fill	Firm light brownish orange sandy silt	0.24m +	Fill of furrow 105 with moderate rounded to sub-rounded gravels poorly sorted throughout. Appears to be comprised primarily of redeposited topsoil that is believed to have slumped into the base of the furrow during its active lifetime. Truncated by later drainage and plough action.

105	Furrow	Cut		0.24m +	Cut for northwest to southeast aligned furrows that measured 1.40m in width on average with a steep top break of slope that dropped onto an even and moderately steep (75 degrees +) sides that dropped onto what is believed to be a slightly concaved base although this was not seen in its entirety.
106	Drain	Fill	Firm dark bluish brown silty clay	0.24m +	Contains moderate poorly sorted rounded to subrounded gravels along with occasional charcoal flecks. Mainly comprised redeposited topsoil that had been used as part of a deliberate backfill of drainage channel.
107	Drain	Cut		0.24m +	Northeast to southwest aligned linears that measured 0.30m in width with a sharp right angle top break of slope that dropped vertically on two even and clearly machine excavated sides onto an unknown but probable flat base associated with a field drain of modern date.
108	Tree bowl	Fill	Firm dark brownish black silty clay	0.32m +	Mixed silty clay with frequent fibrous organic material throughout and a band of light yellowish grey natural clays that had become discoloured around area of feature. This is thought to be due to the de-oxygenation of the clay as bacteria decomposed the wood associated with former tree rooting.

109	Tree bowl	Cut	0.32m +	Undulating and organic sub-circular to linear shape of former tree rooting with series of smaller root tendrils cut through the natural substrate around a central tap root. This number has been used as a generic for several features which after investigation were revealed to be of the same origin. No dating was noted in association with these features and as such no provisional date can be provided although the presence and nature of the fibrous material noted within 108 would suggest that the date is most likely to be moderately late.
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Trench 2

Length: 62m Width: 10m Orientation: North/South

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
201	Topsoil	Layer	Friable mid greyish blue sandy silt	0.26m	Contained occasional poorly sorted gravels to cobbles, angular to rounded throughout and was heavily disturbed by root action and former plough action. Horizon with 202 was clear.
202	Subsoil	Layer	Firm light bluish grey sandy silt	0.19m	Poorly sorted moderate gravels to cobble inclusions, rounded to subangular. Mixed through plough action with horizon to 203 being clear.
203	Natural	Layer	Firm light greyish yellow silty clay	0.06m +	natural substrate with moderate rounded to subrounded gravels to cobbles with individual clasts noted as being roughly orientated northeast to southwest. Also occasional mottling orientated in the same direction of light blue grey silt rich clays. As with trench 1 this deposit is consistent with the progressively declining energetic deposition and probable later anastomosing fluvial routes associated with seasonal melt and withdrawal of ice sheets in association with a moraine landscape.
204	Furrow	Fill	Firm mid bluish brown sandy clay	0.19m	Fill of furrow 205. Contained occasional charcoal flecks throughout along with moderately sorted rounded to subrounded gravels throughout. Thought to be the remains of redeposited topsoils that has slumped into the base of the furrow during its active lifetime and then further disturbed by plough action along its upper face.

205	Furrow	Cut	0.19m	Northeast to southwest aligned furrow base measuring an average of 0.56m in width with a sharp top break of slope that drops onto moderately sloped sides that descended onto a slightly concaved base. This number has been used as a generic for all features of clearly identical origin.
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Trench 3

Length: 30m

Width: 1.80m

Orientation: Northeast/Southwest

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
301	Topsoil	Layer	Friable dark bluish brown clay silt	0.25m	Highly disturbed topsoil mixed by a combination of root action and later ploughing with moderate poorly sorted gravels to cobbles rounded to subrounded throughout.
302	Subsoil	Layer	Firm mid reddish brown clay silt	0.1m	Moderate poorly sorted rounded to subrounded gravels to cobbles and charcoal flecks noted throughout with disturbance caused by plough action. Horizon with 303 clear.
303	Natural	Layer	Firm light yellowish brown clay silt	0.04m +	Natural substrate with bands of moderately sorted rounded to subrounded gravels to cobbles with individual clasts noted as roughly aligned onto a northeast to southwest alignment and deposition is consistent with a progressively lower energy rate within a glacial moraine landscape consistent with the same processes seen in trenches 1 and 2.
304	Ditch	Fill	Firm mid orangey brown clay silt	0.05m	High frequency of poorly sorted gravels to cobbles, rounded to subrounded throughout although becoming less frequent with depth along with very occasional charcoal fleck. Thought to be a deliberately dumped deposit of gravels to help act as drainage in the field and of probable post-medieval date. Top of deposit has been slightly disturbed by plough action.

305	Drain	Cut		0.13m	Northeast to southwest aligned linear measuring 0.46m in width with a sharp top break of slope that dropped onto steep almost vertical sides that became moderately concaved on the north edge. The bottom break of slope being imperceptible along the north face as the base becomes moderately concaved in profile. Feature is thought to have been used as a drainage route in probable recent history.
306	Ditch	Fill	Firm light greyish yellow silty clay	0.08m	Very occasional rounded to subrounded moderately sorted gravels throughout but otherwise sterile, appears to be the result of low energy natural siltation at the base of drainage feature 305.
307	Ditch	Fill	Firm mid reddish brown silty clay	0.04m	Fill of linear 308 and includes very frequent poorly sorted rounded to subangular gravel inclusions throughout, occasional charcoal flecks also noted. Although the upper part of this fill has been partially damaged by later plough action but the majority has survived enough to help conclude that it had an identical function as fill 304 acting as drainage in the clay rich field.
308	Drain	Cut		0.04m	Northeast to southwest aligned linear 0.47m in width that runs parallel with 805 although not believed to be contemporary and more likely separate phases of the same feature that have migrated, no physical relationship was noted to prove or deny this. The top break of slope was moderate and even, dropping onto a shallow concaved sides which dropped imperceptibly onto a shallow concaved base.

Bleak House Farm, Wythall, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire

309	Ditch	Fill	Firm mid blueish grey silty clay	0.20m +	Occasional poorly sorted rounded to subrounded gravels to cobbles throughout with occasional charcoal flecks also noted. Material seen to be the deliberate backfill of a modern drainage channel.
310	Drain	Cut		0.20m +	Cut for modern east to west aligned drain measuring 0.30m in width with vertical machine cut sides that dropped down onto an unknown base. Not fully excavated due to its clearly modern nature.
311	Furrow	Fill	Firm mid blueish brown sandy clay	0.12m	Moderate poorly sorted rounded to subrounded gravels noted throughout along with very occasional charcoal flecks. Thought to be primarily comprised of redeposited topsoil slumped into the base of the furrow and thought to have occurred during the lifetime of the furrows use.
312	Furrow	Cut		0.12m	Northeast to southwest aligned furrows with a sharp top break of that descends onto a moderately steep and concaved side that drops imperceptibly onto a shallowly concaved base of feature. The sharpness of the top break of slope is thought to have been excenuated by the partial truncation by later plough action.

Area 4

Length: 85m

Width: 75m

Orientation: West/East

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
401	Ditch	Fill	Firm mid blueish grey loamy clay	1.12m	High peat content throughout with fibrous, clearly identifiable plant matter being seen throughout. Deposit is clearly one of natural low energy origin within an area of stagnant water with reed beds acting to further inhibit the transportation of sediments within the watercourse and speeding up the siltation still further. Material recovered from base of feature shows that this deposit is of post-medieval date.
402	Ditch	Cut		1.12m	Large linear ditch feature 3.80m in width (average) which is seen to run 21.49m east from the existing watercourse before turning south for 42m before turning back east for a minimum of 2.24m where it is thought to terminate although this was not fully concluded. Feature had a moderate top break of slope that dropped onto moderately steep sides that themselves dropped imperceptibly onto a moderately concaved base. Clearly seen to be the eastern arm of the known moat this features late date would suggest that the final cleaning event of the feature removed any earlier evidence and as such only the post-medieval
403	Posthole	Structure		1.12m	Series of 12 timber posts located roughly 1m to the west of 402 on a parallel alignment and spaced roughly 3m apart. Majority look like former telegraph poles and measure 0.22m in diameter whilst the northernmost three posts are rectangular in shape and appear to be former railway sleepers. Two posts are seen in section and shown to descend 2m+

					below the present ground level. Thought to be the fence/boundary line seen on the modern OS within the former farm complex.
404	Wall	Structure	0.22m		Sandstone foundation for former Bleak House farmhouse wall comprised of roughly hewn sandstone blocks with the slight remnants of facing on the southern face. Laid in a stretcher fashion at east one course high and bonded with a mid bluish brown silty sand mortar with no inclusions noted. Individual sandstone blocks measured an average 0.58m in length by 0.34m in width by 0.22m in height. 16 individual stone blocks were seen to remain in-situ.
405	Ditch	Cut	1.04m		North to south orientated linear with moderate, even and a rounded top break of slope that drops onto a moderately steep and concaved sides which drop imperceptibly onto a moderately concaved base. Feature extends beyond the limit of excavation to both the north and south and as such the full extent of this linear is not known. Measuring 3.85m in width this feature is thought to have run past the main farm house building and may have helped to provide water for consumption, flowing water to remove waste from the enclosure and/or an energy source to run machinery. Although it should be noted that these conclusions are only theory at present and no evidence exists to suggest that a water wheel was present. There was no evidence to suggest that this feature was any earlier than post-medieval although it is possible that this last phase of the ditch removed any earlier traces of a similar earlier features.

406	Ditch	Fill	Firm mid blueish grey loamy clay	1.04m	Fill contains a high percentage of peat with a large number of fibrous organic matter with still clearly identifiable plant fragments throughout. Clearly relatively recent in deposition, like 403, this deposit is the result of natural siltation through low energy fluvial processes with large beds of reeds further impeding the transportation of silts. Datable material recovered from the base of this feature helps to demonstrate its late provisional date as does barrel 407 seen at the very base of the deposit.
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Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM 58051)

The archive consists of:

- 5 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 74 Digital photographs
- 1 Scale drawings
- 1 Levels records AS19
- 6 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 Box of finds
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

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

Summary of data for Worcestershire HER

period	material class	object specific type	Total	Weight (g)
post-medieval	ceramic	pot	3	86
post-medieval	ceramic	tile	1	4
modern	ceramic	pot	3	26
modern	ceramic	pot	8	331
modern	glass	vessel	1	9

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

period	fabric code	fabric name	count	weight (g)
post-medieval	91	post-medieval buff ware	3	86
modern	81.4	miscellaneous late stoneware	1	30
modern	83	porcelain	2	5
modern	85	modern china	8	322

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric type

context	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	Weight (g)	start date	end date	TPQ
102	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	4	L17C	18C	18C
104	ceramic	earthenware	pot	2	82	L17C	18C	20C
104	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	1	L18C	20C	
106	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	10	L19C	20C	20C
202	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	15	L19C	20C	20C
202	ceramic	earthenware	tile	1	4	13C	18C	

401	ceramic	stoneware	pot	4	257	L19C	20C	20C
401	ceramic	stoneware	pot	1	4	L18C	20C	
401	ceramic	stoneware	pot	1	30	19C	20C	
401	glass		vessel	1	9	19C	20C	
406	ceramic	stoneware	pot	2	40	19C	20C	20C

Table 3: Summary of context dating based on artefacts