

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
EVALUATION AT DROITWICH  
BOXING CLUB, HAMPTON ROAD,  
DROITWICH

Darren Miller, Erica Darch and Elizabeth Pearson

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

13<sup>th</sup> June 2003

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Project P2383  
Report 1163  
WSM 32605



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## Archaeological evaluation at Droitwich Boxing Club, Hampton Road, Droitwich

**Darren Miller, Erica Darch and Elizabeth Pearson**

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### Background information

<i>Client</i>	Evesham and Pershore Housing Association
<i>Agent</i>	Pentan Partnership
<i>Site address</i>	Hampton Road, Droitwich
<i>National Grid Reference</i>	SO 8957 6360
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	WSM 32605
<i>Planning authority reference</i>	Wychavon District Council W/03/0569
<i>Brief</i>	WHEAS 2003
<i>Project design</i>	AS 2003
<i>Project parameters</i>	IFA 1999

### Planning background

The archaeological evaluation was required as a condition of planning consent for the construction of a block of flats in association with a planning application (ref: W/03/0569) submitted to Wychavon District Council by Pentan Partnership on behalf of the Evesham and Pershore Housing Association. Information held in the Worcestershire Historical Environment Record (of Worcestershire Historical Environment and Archaeology Service (WHEAS) suggested that archaeological remains might be present on the site, and that these might be affected by groundworks associated with the development. The evaluation was intended to resolve these issues, and allow appropriate action to be taken if necessary.

### Topographical and archaeological background

The site lies at the edge of the floodplain of the River Salwarpe, just west of the medieval core of Droitwich (Fig 1). It presently comprises an irregular-sized plot defined by Hampton Road to the east, an Industrial Estate to the south, a railway embankment to the west and the Droitwich Canal to the north; it contains a single-storey prefabricated building (the Boxing Club) which backs onto the Droitwich Canal. The geology of the site has been mapped as Triassic Mercian Mudstone overlain by Pleistocene river terrace gravels (British Geological Survey 1976). The soils of Droitwich have not been mapped, but the floodplain of the Salwarpe is characterised locally by ground-water gley soils of the Compton series, while various brown earths have developed on the terraces (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1985).

Archaeological remains of various periods have been recorded in the vicinity of the site. In particular, the site lies approximately 100m south-west of Netherwich brine-pit, which was first documented in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and probably had earlier origins, as suggested by the example of the Upwich pit further upstream of the River Salwarpe (WSM 21427), and by a scatter of 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century coins and pottery (WSM 666, 669 and 670). Nationally significant remains of Roman, Saxon and medieval date were recovered in excavations adjacent to the Saltway and Friar Street in the 1980s (WSM 600, 605, 4575), and were observed during the construction of the Vines Park canal basin in c 1986 (D Hurst, pers comm). More recently, remains of medieval and later date were found during an evaluation behind Union Lane in 2001 (WSM 30440; Whitworth, Jones, and Pearson 2001). The results of these investigations indicated that archaeological remains might be present on the Boxing Club site, and suggested that considerable depths of made-ground and alluvium would almost certainly be encountered. A series of maps beginning in the 17<sup>th</sup> century also indicated that remains of buildings and other features might be present.

## Aims

The aims of the evaluation were to establish the character, extent and relative quality of archaeological remains on the site, in order to provide information on the archaeological implications of a proposed redevelopment, and to contribute to local, regional and national research frameworks.

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## Methods

Specifications	CAS 1995; IFA 1999; WHEAS 2003; AS 2003
Sources consulted	SMR: (records of Sites, Monuments and Activities within 1km radius of the site) Reports: Buteux and Hurst 1996; Whitworth <i>et al</i> 2001 Maps: Anon 1731; Anon 1794; OS 1888, 1889, 1903, 1924, 1961, 1970 and 2003 Ground investigation data: GSP 2002
Dates of fieldwork	27 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup> May 2003
Area of deposits observed	c 20.70m <sup>2</sup> . Indicated on Fig 2
Dimensions of excavated areas observed	Trench 1            length 3.00m width 2.30m depth 2.18mm Trench 2            length 4.60m width 3.00m depth 3.08m

### *The methods in retrospect*

The dimensions of both trenches were limited by the presence of sewers and electric cables, and visibility of deeply-stratified deposits was restricted by the need to step in and batter the sides of the trenches to allow safe access. However, in both cases it was possible to expose areas that were large and deep enough to meet the requirements of the brief and allow adequate levels of recording and artefact/environmental sampling. The level of post-fieldwork analysis is thought to have been consistent with the requirements of the brief, and with the inference potential of the records, artefacts and other information bearing on the site. A high degree of confidence can therefore be placed in the conclusions drawn from the two sample trenches, although the extent to which these can be applied to the site as a whole is inevitably less certain.

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## Results

### Stratigraphy

Deposits of Roman, Anglo-Saxon, medieval and later date were represented in both trenches, as described below.

#### *Roman*

Deposits of Roman date were represented in both trenches by residual artefacts within later deposits (see below), and by an organic-rich layer lying above the natural gravels in Trench 2 (context 206; Fig 4 and Plate 3).

#### *?Anglo-Saxon*

A deposit of probable Anglo-Saxon date overlay the organic-rich deposit mentioned above (Fig 4 and Plate 3), and was also exposed at the bottom of Trench 1 (Fig 3 and Plates 2). The blue-grey

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colour and fine texture of this deposit, and its height above Ordnance Datum allows it (potentially) to be correlated with a layer excavated at Upwich, which was dated stratigraphically to the middle Anglo-Saxon period and is considered to represent a major phase of overbank alluviation by the adjacent River Salwarpe. Several sherds of Roman pottery were recovered both within and on top of this deposit, although they may well be residual given the likely alluvial origin of this deposit.

### *Medieval*

Deposits and features of medieval date were represented in Trench 1 (Fig 3). The earliest feature was a linear, parallel-sided feature that had been cut into the top of the blue-grey alluvium mentioned above (context 114; Plate 2). This feature contained two fills of clay and clay loam (contexts 110 and 111), and a closely-set group of squared timbers (context 112) which were found inclining at 45° to the horizontal (Plate 2). A small quantity of artefacts recovered during cleaning suggest that the feature went out of use (ie was infilled) between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Due to the small size of the deepest slot in Trench 1, it was not possible to establish the limits of the feature, and rising groundwater made it impractical to excavate any further. As a result, the function of the feature remained uncertain, although its visible shape and dimensions suggest a regular-sized pit for industrial or domestic purposes, while the timbers within the fill suggest that the pit was probably lined in some way, and so represented some specialised use.

The feature discussed above was overlain by a thick layer (probably derived from reworked alluvium) containing further worked timbers (surviving due to waterlogging at this level) and a large quantity of cobbles (context 109), which in turn was overlain by a cobbled surface (context 108; Plate 1). These two deposits appear to represent a single event of landscaping and surfacing, which was dated by a small quantity of associated finds to the later medieval (or early post-medieval period).

### *Post-medieval*

Post-medieval deposits were well represented in both trenches (Plates 1 and 3). In Trench 1, the cobbled surface described above was overlain by more layers (probably deposits of reworked alluvium; contexts 104 and 107) which incorporated a linear spread of cobbles and what appears to have been a dumped deposit of charcoal and ash (context 106; Plate 1). The character of these deposits, and their stratigraphic position suggest domestic or industrial activity and periodic flooding in the early post-medieval period, although no secure dating evidence was recovered.

Above these deposits in Trench 1, and directly above the middle Saxon blue/grey alluvium in Trench 2 was a sequence of dumped deposits comprising redeposited alluvium and marl with brick and charcoal inclusions (contexts 101, 102, 201, 202 and 205; Plates 1 and 3). These deposits are likely to be of late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century date, and associated with the construction of the Droitwich Canal.

Context	Description	Interpretation	Depth below ground level	Depth above Ordnance Survey datum
100	Turf/tarmac over tarmac shavings and brick fragments	Surfaces	0-0.43m	28.72-28.29m
101	Dark grey clay loam with common brick, charcoal and gravel inclusions	Made-ground	0.43-1.01m	28.29-27.71m
102	Brick fragments in dark grey clay loam matrix	Made-ground	1.01-1.21m	27.71-27.51m
103	Redeposited marl (75%) and dark grey clay loam (25%)	Made-ground	1.21-1.53m	27.51-27.19m
104	Mid brown silty sand with common charcoal fragments and few gravels; contains c20 cobbles laid on north-south alignment	Reworked alluvium (=107)	1.53-1.63m	27.19-27.09m
105	Interface between 104 and 106	n/a	1.63m	27.09m

Context	Description	Interpretation	Depth below ground level	Depth above Ordnance Survey datum
106	Mid brown silty sand with common charcoal fragments, few ash fragments and gravels	Reworked alluvium	1.53-1.63m	27.19-27.09m
107	Light, slightly yellowish brown silty sand	Reworked alluvium (=104)	1.53-1.63m	27.19-27.09m
108	Cobbles set in dark grey silty clay with patches of brownish red sand	Surface	1.63-2.03m	27.09-26.69
109	Dark slightly blueish grey clay with common cobbles and gravels	Alluvium/made-ground	2.03-2.18m	26.69-26.54m
110	Dark greyish brown silty clay	Fill of 114	2.18m+	26.54m+
111	Light greyish white clay with common wood fragments	Fill of 114	2.18m+	26.54m+
112	4 squared timbers set closely together, and inclined at c45° from the vertical	Fill of 114 (displaced structural timbers)	2.18m+	26.54m+
113	Not used	n/a	n/a	n/a
114	Parallel-sided cut (unexcavated)	Pit?	2.18m+	26.54m+
115	Light greyish blue silty clay	Alluvium (=204)	2.18m+	26.54m+
116	Worked timbers within 109, ?laid on north-south alignment	Displaced structural timbers	2.03-2.18m	26.69-26.54m
117	Machine-excavated spoil	n/a	n/a	n/a

Table 1: Summary description of deposits and features in Trench 1

Context	Description	Interpretation	Depth below ground level	Depth above Ordnance Survey datum
200	Turf and dark greyish brown clay loam	Topsoil	0-0.39m	28.67-28.28m
201	Dark grey clay loam with common brick, charcoal and gravel inclusions	Made ground	0.39-1.4 m	28.28-27.40m
202	Dark greyish brown sandy silt with common charcoal flecks	Made ground	1.27-1.79m	27.40-26.88m
203	Interface between 205 and 204	n/a	2.22m	26.45m
204	Light greyish blue silty clay	Alluvium (=115)	2.22-2.75	26.45-25.92m
205	Dark grey clay loam	Made ground	1.79-2.22m	26.88-26.45m
206	Light brown and mid grey clay silt with common wood fragments	Buried	2.75-3.08m	25.92-25.59
207	Coarse gravels	Terrace	3.08m+	25.59m+
208	Wall comprising single course of machine-made bricks on concrete foundation	North wall of 19 <sup>th</sup> century canalside building	1.10-1.30m	27.57-27.77m

Table 2: Summary description of deposits and features in Trench 2

### Artefacts (Erica Darch)

All artefacts were retrieved by hand and retained in accordance with the standard Service practice (CAS 1995 as amended). Artefacts were examined, identified, quantified, dated and recorded on a Microsoft Access 1997 database. The pottery was examined and recorded by fabric type according to the fabric reference series maintained by the Service (Hurst and Rees 1992).

The assemblage dated from the Roman to modern period, and included medieval and post-medieval material. Most of the material was relatively unabraded, although some of the colour seemed to have been bleached out of the pottery, probably because of the high salt levels in the soil. The largest

group of material by count and weight was bone, followed by Roman pottery. The assemblage is quantified in Table 3, below.

Context	Material	Type	Total	Weight (g)	Date range
106	Pot	Oxidised glazed Malvernian ware (fabric	1	5	13th - E 17th C
108	Pot	Buff sandy ware (fabric 64.2)	1	14	13 <sup>th</sup> – E14 <sup>th</sup> C (Bryant, 2001, 80)
108	Pot	Oxidised glazed Malvernian ware (fabric	1	5	13th - E 17th C
108	Brick		1	3	
108	Bone		5	23	
109	Bone		2	189	
109	Horn core		1	37	
110	Pot	Severn Valley Ware (fabric 12)	3	99	M1 - 4th C
110	Bone		2	6	
110	Wood		2	14	
110	Pot	Worcester type unglazed ware (fabric 55)	1	29	E 12th - L14th (Bryant, 2001, 59)
117	Pot	Oxidised glazed Malvernian ware (fabric	1	21	13th - E 17th C
117	Tile	Flat roof tile	3	103	Modern
117	Bone		2	3	
117	Stone	Burnt	1	1	
117	Tile	Flat roof tile	1	65	Modern
117	Tile	Flat roof tile	1	70	Post-medieval
203	Pot	Severn Valley Ware (fabric 12)	4	84	M1 - 4th C
203	Pot	Post-medieval red ware (fabric 78)	1	14	Post-medieval
203	Pot	Oxfordshire red brown colour coated ware	1	12	3rd - 4th C
204	Briquetage		1	38	
204	Pot	Severn Valley Ware (fabric 12)	1	11	M1 - 4th C
205	Pot	Oxidised glazed Malvernian ware (fabric	1	35	13th - E 17th C
205	Bone		2	18	

Table 3: Quantification of the artefact assemblage

#### Roman

Roman material was recovered from contexts 110, 203 and 204 and consisted entirely of pottery (see Table 1). Contexts with a *TPQ* date in the Roman period were 203 and 204. Context 204 contained one sherd of Severn Valley Ware and one piece of briquetage (the latter of Iron Age to early Roman date). Context 203 contained four sherds of Severn Valley Ware (fabric 12) and one sherd of Oxfordshire red brown colour coated ware (fabric 29; of 3rd to 4th century date). A sherd of post-medieval red ware (fabric 78) from this context is almost certainly contamination. Most of the Roman pottery recovered was relatively unabraded, even when residual.

#### Medieval

Contexts with a *TPQ* date in the medieval period were 106, 108 and 110. All the material recovered that could be dated to the medieval period was pottery. Only one form could be identified, a thickened everted rim cooking pot (fabric 55) from context 110 dating from the early 12<sup>th</sup> to late 14<sup>th</sup> century (Bryant, 2001, 59). A sherd of fabric 69 from context 108 showed evidence of burning after breakage. Again, the pottery was only lightly abraded. The only context that contained no datable material was 109, although its stratigraphic position would suggest a date in the medieval period. It contained two pieces of bone and a horn core.

#### Post-medieval and modern

Several roof tile fragments of post-medieval and modern date were recovered from machine-excavated spoil (context 117).

## **Environmental evidence (Elizabeth Pearson)**

### *Hand-collected animal bone*

A small assemblage of animal bone (239g; 13 fragments) was hand-collected from contexts 109, 110, 205 and unstratified deposits. This included a juvenile sheep/goat horncore cut at the base, which may be debris from tanning or hornworking activities. Unfused bones of sheep/goat and cattle were noted. Although the bone was well preserved, the assemblage was too small to add significantly to the interpretation of the site.

### *Wet-sieved samples*

One sample of 20 litres was taken from an organic deposit (context 206) of Roman or earlier date overlying gravel and beneath a layer of greyish blue alluvium (context 204).

A sub-sample of 500ml was processed by the wash-over technique as follows. The sub-sample was broken up in a bowl of water to separate the light organic remains from the mineral fraction and heavier residue. The water, with the light organic fraction was decanted onto a 300µ sieve and the residue examined for organic remains. The remainder of the bulk sample was retained for further analysis.

The flot was scanned using a low power EMT stereo light microscope and plant remains identified using modern reference collections maintained by the Service, and seed identification manual (Beijerinck 1947). Nomenclature for the plant remains follows *The Flora of the British Isles*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Clapham, Tutin and Moore 1989). The silty residue was discarded as it contained no organic remains.

### *Discussion of the environmental remains*

The sample was highly organic, comprising mostly woody twig fragments and semi-herbaceous root material (Table 4). Of the identifiable seed remains, elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*) and common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) were the most abundant. Elderberry trees or shrubs are likely to have been growing in close proximity to the sampling location on undisturbed ground, probably with an understorey of nettle, buttercup (*Ranunculus acris/repens/bulbosus*), and other plants. Both elderberry and nettle favour nitrogen rich soils. There was no evidence of aquatic vegetation despite the waterlogged conditions. Although it is possible that the deposit was formed by overbank alluviation, there was some evidence of *in situ* vegetation in the form of penetrating roots. Insect remains were also noted, which may indicate a relatively stable riverside environment.

The deposit, in association with the overlying alluvium (context 115=204) has the potential to provide information on changing environmental conditions (particularly the formation and use of the floodplain) should a combination of macrofossil, pollen and sedimentary analyses be carried out. The time-span these deposits relate to may cover a long period as it is possible that this sequence may correspond with a similar sequence of sub-Roman to Anglo-Saxon date evident from the Upwich excavations (Hurst 1997). However, few samples from this phase at Upwich contained sufficient identifiable macrofossil remains (Greig 1997), moreover pollen analysis and the microstratigraphy of the alluvium was not then considered. Knowledge of this phase of environmental change is therefore limited. Radiocarbon dating of twig material from context 206 in combination with the above mentioned analyses is recommended.

Deposits within the later re-deposited alluvium may also be of interest, such as the charcoal and ash deposit (106).



Latin name	Family	Common name	Habitat	206
<i>Ranunculus acris/repens/bulbosus</i>	Ranunculaceae	buttercup	CD	+
Caryophyllaceae sp indet	Caryophyllaceae			+
<i>Atriplex</i> sp	Chenopodiaceae	orache	AB	+
<i>Rumex</i> sp	Polygonaceae	dock	ABCD	+
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Urticaceae	common nettle	CD	++
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Caprifoliaceae	Elder	BC	++
unidentified twig/bud fragments	unidentified			++++
unidentified root fragments	unidentified			++++
unidentified	unidentified			+

Table 4: Plant remains from context 206

#### Key:

Category of remains	Quantity
A= cultivated ground	+ = 1 - 10
B= disturbed ground	++ = 11- 50
C= woodlands, hedgerows, scrub etc	+++ = 51 -100
D = grasslands, meadows and heathland	++++ = 101+
E = aquatic/wet habitats	
F = cultivar	

#### Site discussion

The evidence from the sample trenches clearly indicates the presence of significant archaeological remains on the site. In summary, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, and medieval remains can be assumed to cover a large part of the site between 1.50 and 3.00m below the present surface. All of these deposits are regionally significant, not only in terms of their character and date, but also with regard to their waterlogged condition. In particular, the medieval feature partially exposed at the bottom of Trench 1 appears to indicate industrial or domestic activity, while the overlying made ground and cobbled surface suggests that a significant presence was maintained into the post-medieval period. In addition, the amount of Roman pottery recovered from both trenches, and the fresh condition of the material strongly indicates the presence of well-preserved Roman deposits. Finally, the level of preservation exhibited by the worked timbers and the plant and insect remains in the lowest alluvial deposit indicate a high potential for other organic artefacts and palaeoenvironmental remains.

With regard to local and wider research frameworks, the evidence fits the general context provided by previous investigations, but may also have significant implications. In general terms, the evidence confirms the extent of past activity over a large area of present-day Droitwich, and illustrates that high quality remains are not limited to the scheduled historic core. More particularly, the Roman pottery suggests activity at some distance from known areas of settlement and industry, while the medieval remains suggest more intensive activity on what has been considered the periphery of the post-Conquest town. Such indicators suggest that the topography of Roman and medieval Droitwich was even more complex than has been appreciated. It can also be suggested that these areas might contain evidence for settlement and trade, as opposed to salt-manufacture and associated activities, which would enhance existing impressions of Droitwich as a highly-specialised local centre.

#### 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 evaluation was undertaken by the Worcestershire County Archaeological Service at Droitwich Boxing Club at Hampton Road in Droitwich (NGR 8957 6360; WSM 32605). The evaluation was commissioned by Evesham and Pershore Housing Association, who intend to redevelop the site and require information on the archaeological implications of their proposed scheme. The evaluation involved the excavation and recording of two sample trenches, and the analysis of the results in relation to existing archaeological, cartographic and documentary sources.*

*The evidence from the sample trenches clearly indicates the presence of significant archaeological remains on the site. In particular a feature partially exposed at the limit of excavation in Trench 1 appears to indicate domestic or industrial activity, while the timbers from this feature and the overlying deposit indicates the presence of buildings or structures in the vicinity. In addition, the amount of Roman pottery recovered from both trenches, and the fresh condition of the material strongly indicates the presence of well-preserved Roman deposits. Finally, the level of preservation exhibited by the worked timbers, and by plant and insect remains in the lowest alluvial deposit indicate a high potential for organic artefacts and palaeoenvironmental remains.*

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### **Archive**

Fieldwork progress records AS2	2
Photographic records AS3	2
Colour slide films	2
Monochrome films	2
Trench record sheets AS 41	5
Drawings	3
Boxes of finds	1
Computer disks	1

The project archive is intended to be placed at:      Worcestershire County Museum  
Hartlebury Castle, Hartlebury  
Near Kidderminster  
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telephone

### **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank Edward Green (Pentan Partnership, Cardiff) and Mike Glyde (WHEAS) for their kind assistance.

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