

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF ALONG THE LINE OF THE
BEWDLEY TO KIDDERMINSTER
WATER MAIN,
WORCESTERSHIRE

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Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Project 2261
Report 1124
WSM 32081

Watching brief along the Bewdley to Kidderminster water main, Worcestershire

James Goad and Erica Darch

Background information

<i>Client</i>	Severn Trent Water
<i>Agent</i>	Haswell Consulting Engineers
<i>Site</i>	Bewdley to Kidderminster
<i>National Grid Reference</i>	SO 79517650 to SO 80957629
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	WSM 32081
<i>Brief</i>	AS 2002a
<i>Proposal</i>	AS 2002b
<i>Project parameters</i>	IFA 1999

Previous archaeological work on the site

There has been no previous archaeological work in this location.

Previous archaeological work on associated sites

Kidderminster and Bewdley have been the subject of a recent survey undertaken as part of the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey (Buteux 1996). These contain summaries of previous archaeological work in the towns.

In the immediate area of the pipeline archaeological work has been carried out in the mostly in association with the Trimpley to Blackstone Aqueduct past (Jackson 1993). Finds from this salvage recording project included an early medieval cremation, along with some Roman pottery (WSM 15302), post-medieval findspots (WSM 15303, 15307, 15306, 15305), medieval pot (WSM 15307) and Roman pot (WSM 15305 and 15306).

Two large earthworks (WSM 04106 and WSM 04107) were also located in the vicinity prior to the aqueduct project mentioned above. The route of the pipe easement runs almost directly through the middle of the space between them. These “tumuli” were noted as being unnatural features in the landscape. WSM 04106 was the northernmost of the two and was partially revetted by a low wall of sandstone blocks. As a result of these observations these features can be assumed not to be natural. It is not known whether either “tumulus” has been excavated

A large area on the north side of the Habberley Road was evaluated to find a post-medieval settlement (WSM 29225). In addition to this, post-medieval sites were noted in the form of the park and garden building at Spring Grove (WSM 28824) approximately 300m to the south of the pipeline easement.

Geological background

The soils along the route of the easement fall in to two main categories.

“Bridgnorth” or Permo-Triassic and Carboniferous reddish sandstone. These are well drained sandy and coarse loamy soils over soft sandstone and have occasional deeper soils. They are prone to wind and water erosion. These occur more towards the western area of the pipeline (Barclay *et al* 1988).

“Delamere” or Permo-Triassic reddish sandstone is a very well drained sandy soil, commonly with a bleached subsurface horizon over sandstone. Occasional deeper soils. This would be very acid in the

area in question because most of the fields along the route of the pipeline have been uncultivated (Barclay *et al* 1988).

Aims

The aim of the watching brief was to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

Methods

General specification for watching brief	CAS 1995
Sources consulted	SMR Sources cited by the SMR
Date(s) of fieldwork	21 st to 30 th October 2002
Area of deposits observed	c 9500m ² .
Dimensions of excavated areas observed	Services length c1000m width 6-9.20m depth 0.20-0.40m

Access to or visibility of deposits

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken after machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well differentiated archaeological deposits, though in places the stripping was variable and remnants of topsoil may have obscured potential archaeological features.

Statement of confidence

Having undertaken the project the following comments may be made with regard to the methods adopted.

Over the majority of the pipeline easement the topsoil was stripped down to the natural sand and sandstone, which are ideal for spotting archaeological deposits. In some areas however, the topsoil stripping was variable, with remnants of topsoil potentially obscuring any archaeological features. However, the almost total lack of artefactual material indicated that it was highly unlikely that any archaeological deposits existed beneath these occasional patches of topsoil.

A high degree of confidence can be attached to the conclusions of this project.

Deposit descriptions

Context	Type Colour Texture	Description	Date	Interpretation	Depth (OD or below ground level)
1		Machine cut			
2		Finds number for artefacts collected from surface of easement strip			

3				Topsoil	0-0.30m
4				Subsoil	0.20-0.40m
5				Natural	0.30m-

Discussion

Fieldwork took the form of repeated walking over the pipeline easement and inspecting the freshly stripped surface to detect any archaeological features wherever possible as well as trying to locate pottery scatters and other findspots.

Surprisingly, given the background of archaeological findspots and sites in the vicinity, no archaeological features were located, though a small scatter of modern pottery was found along the pipeline easement 65m on the northern side of the Habberley Road. The pottery was located on the surface of the easement but were probably from the subsoil.

The assemblage was unstratified and consisted of three sherds of pottery, two modern (stone china, fabric 85) and one post-medieval / modern (stoneware, fabric 81). The sherds were quite abraded. The internal surface of the stoneware sherd was heavily coated in charred material.

The assemblage was too small to draw many conclusions. Sherds of this fabric type are found in topsoil on many sites, and do not necessarily indicate a specific activity in the area. It is also possible that they were re-deposited from a different area.

Non-ceramic material seems not to have survived. This is probably due to the very acid nature of the soil in the area.

The pipeline easement strip, nor the additional trenching for the installation of the pipe, seems to have affected any significant archaeological deposits whatsoever.

Conclusions

The project located no archaeological site of any significance. A scatter of post-medieval and modern pottery north of the Habberley Road was recorded which seems not to be uncommon in this area. No real significance can be attached to the find, however.

It is perhaps a little unusual that, given the extent of the stripped area and the presence of sites and findspots in the vicinity, that no deposits of archaeological significance were located.

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.

A watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Severn Trent Water on the water main from Bewdley to Kidderminster (between NGR SO 79517650 to SO80957629; WSM 32081).

During observation of the groundworks no archaeological features were located. A findspot comprising post-medieval and modern pottery was located on the section of easement north of the

Haberley Road. Aside from this nothing of significance was found. Given the absence of archaeology from the topsoil strip it was decided unnecessary to observe the pipe trenching.

The absence of significant archaeology along the route of the pipe is surprising given the presence of associated sites and findspots in the vicinity. The area had undoubted potential for the presence of archaeology.

Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	4
Photographic records AS3	1
Colour transparency photographs	4
Black and white photographs	4
Boxes of finds	1
Computer disks	1

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

telephone

Acknowledgements

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