

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION
AT
ABBAY LANE BUS DEPOT,
EVESHAM, WORCESTERSHIRE

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Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Evaluation at Abbey Lane bus depot, Evesham, Worcestershire

James Goad

Part 1 Project summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Abbey Lane bus depot, Evesham, Worcestershire (NGR SO 403362 243503). It was undertaken on behalf of Morbaine Ltd., who intends to develop the area for housing, for which a planning application has been submitted. The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological site was present and if so to indicate what its location, date and nature were. Despite the evidence of possible archaeological activity in the surrounding fields identified from aerial photography, the trenching did not reveal any deposits or features that were of significant interest.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Abbey Lane bus depot, Evesham, Worcestershire (NGR SO 403362 243503), on behalf of Morbaine Limited. Morbaine intends to develop the site for housing and has submitted a planning application to Wychavon District Council (reference W/03/2173), who considered that a site of archaeological interest was affected (WSM 15209).

1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 1999)

The project also conforms to a brief prepared by Worcestershire County Council Historic Environment and Archaeology Service (HEAS 2004a) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (HEAS 2004b).

1.3 Aims

The aims of the evaluation were to locate archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation. The purpose of this was to establish their significance, since this would make it possible to recommend an appropriate treatment, which may then be integrated with the proposed development programme.

2. Methods

2.1 Documentary search

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER). In addition the following sources were also consulted:

Cartographic sources

- 1:3000 Landmark Digital Map based on Ordnance Survey 1886. 39sp0343
- 1:10000 Ordnance Survey map 1886
- 1:10000 Ordnance Survey map 1904
- 1:10000 Ordnance Survey map 1923
- 1:10000 Ordnance Survey map 1938
- Geological Survey of Great Britain 1:50000 map
- Soil Survey of England and Wales 1:50000 map

Aerial photographs

- www.getmapping.com sp 0343

Documentary sources

- The estates of Evesham Abbey: a preliminary survey of their medieval topography (Bond 1973)
- The medieval topography of the Evesham Abbey estates (Bond 1975)
- English medieval boroughs: a hand-list (Beresford and Finberg 1973)
- The small town and urbanisation: Evesham in the Middle Ages (Hilton 1982)
- The book of Evesham: the story of the town's past (Cox 1977)
- The building, destruction and excavation of Evesham Abbey: a documentary history (Cox 1990)
- Archaeological assessment of Evesham and Bengeworth, Hereford and Worcester (Dalwood *et al*)

2.2 **Fieldwork**

2.2.1 **Fieldwork strategy**

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (HEAS 2004b).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 23rd and 27th March 2004.

Five trenches, amounting to just over 95m² in area, were excavated over the site area of 0.23ha, representing a sample of 4%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

Trenching took place at the southern and western edges of the car park in order to leave the central and northern areas free for buses to turn around in and park. Excavation was undertaken by standard-sized JCB using a toothed bucket initially to break the tarmac surface of the car park and the immediate underlying compacted aggregate layer, then with a toothless ditching bucket to remove the soil layers to the relevant level. Subsequent excavation and cleaning were undertaken by hand. Deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

2.2.2 **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.

2.3 **Artefacts**

2.3.1 **Artefact recovery policy**

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 2).

2.3.2 **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 *pro forma* sheets.

Pottery fabrics are referenced to the fabric reference series maintained by the Service (Hurst 1994).

However during the course of the evaluation no significant archaeological artefacts were found.

2.4 **Environment**

2.4.1 **Sampling policy**

The environmental sampling strategy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 4).

Due to the absence of significant archaeological deposits no environmental samples were taken.

2.5 **The methods in retrospect**

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

3. **Topographical and archaeological context**

Evesham lies in a meander of the River Avon at a height of between 25m and 40m OD. The underlying topography consists of terraces either side of the river. The soils are alluvial clay soils of the Uffington series along the river on the west side. On either side of the river the soils are clayey alluvium of the Drayton series and brown earths of the Bishampton series (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1:50000 map, sheet 150 and Beard *et al* 1986). The underlying drift geology consists of gravels of the Second and Third Terrace of the River Avon (Geological Survey of Great Britain 1:50000 map, sheet 22).

The minster church of Evesham was established around 700, possibly on the site of an older church. The original church was rebuilt in 970 with a new church attached between 1017 and 1037 (Cox 1990, 123-124). The town grew from 1055 when King Edward granted a port and market at Evesham (Beresford and Finberg 1973, 183). An Anglo-Saxon market place is believed to have grown up at the main gate of the abbey (Bond 1973, 46 and 1975, 57).

The abbey was comprehensively rebuilt in the period from 1078 (Cox 1990, 125-126). It is probable that the settlement was urban by the 11th to early 12th century, the population being estimated as over 1000 in 1200 (Hilton 1982, 2-3).

The town grew in prosperity through the 13th and 16th centuries, initially based on demand for goods and services by the abbey (Hilton 1982, 4). However the abbey was dissolved in 1540 and became the property of the crown. Evesham continued to prosper after the Dissolution and through the 17th and 18th centuries (Cox 1977, 125).

The area for the proposed development lies within the precinct of Evesham Abbey (WSM 15209).

There have been various find spots in the area immediately surrounding the depot. A lozenge-shaped copper-alloy harness pendant (WSM33474) was found in the field to the south and west of the site. In a field to the south there is an area bounded by Abbot Chiteron's Wall (HWCM 2821) and monastic buildings (HWCM 6005) to the north and by the river Avon to the south. This area includes fishponds (HWCM 573) and probable site of a dovecote (HWCM 3393). Likely to contain tithe barns, forge, mill, stables, byres as well as meadow land. To the north-east of the site a findspot produced a Neolithic to Late Bronze Age flint flake, some undated lead wights, musket balls, window lead and other post-medieval artefacts (WSM 21047).

4. **Description**

The contexts recorded are presented in Tables 1-5. The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figures 2 and 3.

5. **Discussion**

The trenching around the southern and western edges of the car park depot (Figure 2) didn't reveal any significant archaeological deposits. The modern layers of aggregate and tarmac were laid down over the former topsoil and subsoil of the former field that this area had been prior to its development (see Figure 4). The nature of the deposits and the absence of any significant archaeological features point to the land having been used for agricultural purposes.

5.1 **Phase 1 Natural deposits**

Natural deposits were encountered in all the trenches excavated. There was a degree of variation in their appearance and composition. All of these deposits were put in context and are presented in the context tables in Appendix 1.

5.2 **Prehistoric to medieval**

There were no finds, features or layers from these periods within the trenches.

5.3 **Post-medieval to modern**

There were no significant archaeological deposits from this period present. The sections showed both a buried topsoil and subsoil, along with a variety of ceramic land drains crossing each other at 90 degrees. A variety of modern plastic objects and metalwork were found within the buried topsoils and subsoils.

6. **Significance**

The site appears to have been used as agricultural land within the Evesham abbey precinct. Much of the land within the precinct contained "...stables, byres as well as meadow land" (Dalwood *et al* 1996). It seems that meadow land would have been a likely function for this area of the precinct. Sometime after the abbey's dissolution in 1540, the land became arable, as reflected by the farmland still surrounding the bus depot area to the west and south. The 1887 Ordnance Survey map (see Figure 4) shows the land as labelled "Abbey Gardens" and planted with trees, so use as an orchard seems to be included in the variety of agricultural purposes the land has been used for.

7. **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 on behalf of Morbaine Ltd. at Abbey Lane bus depot, Evesham, Worcestershire (NGR SO 403362 243503; WSM 33543). The evaluation involved trenching in the depot car park, which did not locate any significant archaeological deposits. The trenches revealed strata consistent with agricultural usage, indicating that the site had not been settled on at any time, but merely serving as either meadow-land or arable within the Evesham abbey precinct.

8. **The archive**

The archive consists of:

7	Context record sheets AS1
5	Fieldwork progress report sheets AS2
3	Photographic record sheets AS3
37	Digital photographs
1	Context number catalogue sheets AS5
3	Trench record sheets AS41
6	Scale drawings

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum

Hartlebury Castle

Hartlebury

Near Kidderminster

Worcestershire DY11 7XZ

Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

9. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Alex Brodie of Morbaine Ltd and Mike Glyde

10. **Personnel**

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by James Goad. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Simon Griffin. Fieldwork was undertaken by James Goad and Angus Crawford, with illustration by Carolyn Hunt.

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12. **Abbreviations**

BSB	Break of slope to the base
BST	Break of slope from the top
HER	Historic Environment Record
NMR	National Monuments Record.
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record.
WSM	Numbers prefixed with 'WSM' are the primary reference numbers used by the Worcestershire County Historic Environment Record.

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Table 1

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 27.0m Width: 1.60m Depth: 0.50-0.85m

Orientation: East-West

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Ordnance Datum values (metres)
100	Hard standing bus depot surface	Tarmac layer	27.65-27.56
101	Make-up layer for car park surface	Light grey medium to large aggregate	27.56-27.27
102	Buried topsoil	Rather firm layer of dark grey sandy silty sand. Occasional small rounded stones and occasional pieces of modern metal junk and glass fragments	27.27-27.07
103	Buried subsoil	Friable light orangey brown silty clay	27.07-26.85

Table 2

Trench 1A

Maximum dimensions: Length: 7.30m Width: 1.60m Depth: 0.60-0.90m

Orientation: North-south

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Ordnance Datum values (metres)
100	Hard standing car park surface	Tarmac	27.88-27.78
101	Make-up layer for depot surface	Light grey compacted aggregate layer	27.78-27.52
102	Buried topsoil	Compacted dark grey silty sand	27.63-27.33
103	Buried subsoil	Friable light orangey brown sandy silt. Moderate small to medium large rounded stone inclusions	27.33-27.02
104	Natural feature	Pocket of light grey sandy clay, possibly a glacial ice wedge	27.04-26.75

105	“Cut” of 104	BST-Sharp Sides-Straight BSB-Gradual Base-Flat	
107	Natural clay gravels	Mid to dark brown sandy clay	27.02

Table 3

Trench 1B

Maximum dimensions: Length: 7.10m Width: 1.60m Depth: 0.82m

Orientation: North-south

Main deposit description

Context	Description	Classification	Ordinance Datum values (metres)
100	Car park surface	Tarmac layer	27.86-27.76
101	Make-up layer for 100	Light grey aggregate	27.76-27.41
102	Buried topsoil	Friable dark grey silty sand	27.41-27.21
103	Buried subsoil	Friable light orangey brown sandy silt. Moderate small to medium large rounded stone inclusions	27.34-27.04
106	Silty interface layer	Thin layer of mid grey sandy silt between layers 102 and 103	27.34-27.22
107	Natural clay gravels	Mid to dark brown sandy clay	27.04
108	Natural	Sticky yellow clay	26.90

Table 4

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 6.20m Width: 1.60m Depth: 0.80-1.20m

Orientation: East-west

Main deposit descriptions

Context	Classification	Description	Ordnance Datum value (metres)
200	Car park surface	Tarmac layer	27.90-27.85
201	Make-up layer	Light grey aggregate – bedding for tarmac	27.85-27.65
202	Buried topsoil	Dark grey silty sand with occasional small rounded stones and occasional modern debris	27.64-27.38
203	Interface layer	Sticky mid grey sandy silt	27.38-27.12
204	Buried subsoil	Light brown sandy clay with moderate small to medium rounded stone inclusions	27.34-27.17
205	Natural	Sticky yellow homogenous clay layer – water table present at this layer	27.0-
206	Natural	Light orangey brown sandy clay natural layer overlying 205	27.05-27.00

Table 5

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 11.80m Width: 1.60m Depth: 0.75-1.10m

Orientation: North-south

Main deposit descriptions

Context	Classification	Description	Ordnance Datum (metres)
300	Car park surface	Tarmac	28.03-27.79
301	Make-up for tarmac	Layer of light grey aggregate	27.79-27.69
302	Buried topsoil	Dark grey silty sand	27.69-27.20
303	Interface layer	Sticky mid grey sandy silt	27.20-27.13

304	Buried subsoil	Light brown sandy clay with moderate small to medium rounded stone inclusions	27.13-27.04
305	Natural layer – possible glacial material	Light grey sand	26.89-26.78
306	Natural	Light orangey brown sandy clay	27.04-
307	Natural	Yellow clay layer – water table present	26.69-