

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION AT
44-46, WORCESTER ROAD,
DROITWICH, WORCESTERSHIRE

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Archaeological Evaluation at 44-46, Worcester Road, Droitwich, Worcestershire

Tom Vaughan

Part 1 Project summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at 44-46 Worcester Road in Droitwich, Worcestershire (NGR: SO 8973 6285). The site lies south of Droitwich town centre within what is considered to be the focus of the medieval settlement of Witton (WSM 30690). The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological site was present, and, if so, to indicate what its location, date and nature were.

Two trenches were excavated, one to rear of each property. Neither revealed either archaeological horizons or features, while a full stratigraphic sequence of topsoil and subsoil was noted overlying the natural sand and pebble gravel. However, post-medieval and modern debris was recovered from the subsoil, while a modern garden feature was noted to cut the natural. In addition the natural was observed to slope down towards the road to the east.

Two residential dwellings currently occupy the site. No. 44 is a single-phase building constructed in the early 20th century, prior to 1930. It is a simple detached brick-built house with steep pitched tile roofs and gardens to front and back. No. 46 is a multiphase construction. It is also a brick-built property, which has had at least two extensions. It is considered to have originally been two semi-detached cottages, erected in the early 19th century. It was subsequently extended to the rear in the late 19th century in a similar style, and again with a single storey flat roofed addition and a front porch in the 1920s.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at 44-46 Worcester Road in Droitwich, Worcestershire (NGR: SO 8973 6285) on behalf of Chase Norton Construction Ltd. They intend to redevelop the site for residential use with 16 apartments and have submitted a planning application to Wychavon District Council (ref. W/01/1966), who consider that a site of archaeological interest may be affected (WSM 30690).

1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 1999a), and *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (IFA 1999b).

The project also conforms to a brief prepared by Worcestershire County Council (AS 2002a) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (AS 2002b).

1.3 Aims

The aims of the archaeological 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 that may then be integrated with the proposed development programme.

2. Methods

2.1 Documentary search

Prior to fieldwork commencing a desk-based assessment was undertaken (Patrick 2002). In addition Droitwich has been the subject of a recent survey undertaken as part of the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey (Buteux and Hurst 1996) which contains a summary of previous archaeological work in the town.

2.2 Fieldwork

2.2.1 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (AS 2002b). The initial trench layout had to be modified slightly due to the existence of mature trees on the site. Fieldwork was undertaken between 3rd and 5th July 2002.

Two trenches, amounting to just over 56m² in area, were excavated over the site area of c 0.31ha, representing a sample of c 0.02%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2. The site was divided into two zones, comprising the gardens surrounding house nos. 44 and 46 Worcester Road respectively.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 180° wheeled mechanical excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent

excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and anomalies were excavated with sondages to determine their nature. 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). This in principal determines that all finds, of whatever date, must be collected. However, in this case only a sample of later material was collected from the spoil during machining. These comprised all of the finds recovered from the site.

2.3.2 **Method of analysis**

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* 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.

2.4 **Environment**

2.4.1 **Sampling policy**

No deposits or contexts were identified which warranted environmental sampling.

2.5 **Building recording**

The project conformed to the specification for a photographic/level 1 survey as defined by the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments for England (RCHME 1996), but with the following exceptions.

- The brief only required rapid assessment of the older of the two houses (AS 2002a), no. 46. However photographs of the front and rear elevations of no. 44 were also taken.
- Vegetation prevented perpendicular photography of certain elevations of no. 46, where it was only possible to take oblique shots. Otherwise perpendicular shots were taken where ever possible.

2.6 **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**

Droitwich has been the subject of a recent survey undertaken as part of the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey (Buteux and Hurst 1996) and contains a summary of previous archaeological work in the town. There has been no previous archaeological work on this site.

In addition the site has been the subject of a desk-based assessment (Patrick 2002). In summary: Worcester Road is a Roman Road, connecting the fort of Metchley to the north with the town of Worcester to the south (WSM 22016). The road is also thought to have been a medieval hollow-way. The development area lies opposite the site of St Mary's Witton mediaeval parish church (now a used as a cemetery; WSM 00257). This area is, therefore, considered to be the focus for the medieval village of Witton (WSM 30690). Medieval activity is attested by the discovery of tile kilns of 13th and 15th century date in the immediate vicinity.

The site lies in an urban area, un-surveyed by the Soil Survey of England and Wales. However the adjacent soils belong to the Wick 1 and Whimple 3 soil groups. The soils of the Wick 1 group (541r) comprise deep well drained coarse loamy and sandy soils, locally over gravel, some affected by groundwater with a slight risk of water erosion, over glaciofluvial or river terrace drift. The soils of the Whimple 3 (572f) soil group comprise reddish fine loamy or fine silty over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging over drift above Permo-Triassic and Carboniferous reddish mudstone (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

4. **Description**

Table 1 in Appendix 2 summarises the artefacts recovered. The trenches recorded are shown in Fig. 2.

4.1 **Phase 1 Natural deposits**

The natural undisturbed sand and gravel was identified beneath a well-defined stratigraphic sequence of subsoil and topsoil in both trenches at a depth of 0.64m + below the present ground surface. It was, however, noted to have been radically truncated towards the east side of the site where it sloped down toward the present Worcester Road. In neither trench was it identified to have been cut by archaeological features, although root activity or animal burrows were observed.

4.2 **Phase 2 Modern deposits**

As described above, a full stratigraphic sequence of topsoil, subsoil and natural was observed within both trenches. However post-medieval and modern material was recovered from the subsoil in Trench 1 while a modern garden feature was observed to cut into the natural in Trench 2, indicating that modern activity has encroached into this sequence.

4.3 **Phase 2 Modern buildings**

Two residential dwellings currently occupy the site. No. 44 is a single phase, built in the early 20th century, prior to 1930. It is a simple detached brick built house with steep pitched tile roofs and gardens to front and back (Figs. 3 and 4). No 46 is a multiphase construction. It is also a brick-built property, which has had at least two extensions. It is considered to have originally been two semi-detached cottages, erected in the early 19th century. It has been subsequently extended to the north-east sometime in the 19th century, and to the north-west after 1889. The north-east extension was then removed, and the single storey rear-extension inserted along with the front porch in the 1920s (Figs. 5-10).

5. Discussion

The site lies adjacent to the Roman road. It also lies within the medieval settlement of Witton, which centred on the parish church on the opposite side of Worcester Road. However there were no defined archaeological features or horizons in either of the two excavated trenches, nor any finds predating the post-medieval period (with the exception of a tile that may date from as early as the 13th century). While it was clear that there had been some disturbance of the stratigraphy in the post-medieval and modern period, and particularly on the east side of the site, there has clearly been no wholesale removal of overburden.

Of the two buildings located on the site, no. 44 is clearly a single phase cottage, from the early 20th century. No. 46 is of early 19th century date, and was initially two semi-detached dwellings. This was extended to the rear in the same century, and further extensions were built in the mid 20th century to the rear plus a porch to the front.

It is clear that the site has not been used at any period in the more distant past for settlement occupation, and so it was probably simply in agricultural use prior to the construction of the two houses.

6. 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 Chase Norton Construction Ltd at 44-46 Worcester Road in Droitwich, Worcestershire (NGR: SO 89733 6285; SMR ref WSM 31910) in advance of redevelopment of the site for residential use with the construction of 16 apartments. The site lies south of Droitwich town centre adjacent to the Roman road and within the focus of the medieval settlement of Witton.

Two residential dwellings currently occupy the site. No. 44 is of a single phase building constructed in the early 20th century. It is a simple detached brick-built house with steep pitched tile roofs and gardens to front and back. No 46 is of multiphase construction. It is also a brick-built property, which has had at least two extensions. It is considered to have originally been two semi-detached dwellings, erected in the early 19th century. It was subsequently extended to the north-east soon after in similar style, and to the north-west in the late 19th century. The initial extension was torn down and a single storey replacement erected, in addition to a porch on the front.

Two trenches were excavated, one being to rear of each property. Neither revealed any archaeological horizons or features, while a full stratigraphic sequence of topsoil and subsoil was noted overlying the natural sand and pebble gravel. However, post-medieval and modern debris was recovered from the subsoil, while a modern garden feature was noted to cut the natural. In addition the natural was observed to slope down toward the road to the east. It is, therefore, determined that the site was probably only used for agricultural purposes prior to the construction of the two houses.

7. **The archive**

The archive consists of:

- 8 Abbreviated context records AS40
- 3 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 2 Colour transparency film
- 2 Black and white photographic films
- 1 Box of finds
- 1 Computer disk

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum, Hartlebury Castle, Hartlebury, Near Kidderminster,
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ

Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

8. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project: Peter Robson (Chase Norton Construction Ltd), and Mike Glyde (Worcestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist).

9. **Personnel**

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by Tom Vaughan. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Derek Hurst. Fieldwork was undertaken by James Goad, finds analysis by Erica Darch, and illustration by Carolyn Hunt. Shona Robson-Glyde gave advice on the buildings analysis.

10. **Bibliography**

AS 2002a *Brief for an archaeological field evaluation at 44-46 Worcester Road, Droitwich, Worcestershire*, Archaeological Service, Worcestershire County Council unpublished document dated 18th January 2002

AS 2002b *Proposal for an archaeological evaluation at 44-46, Worcester Road, Droitwich, Worcestershire*, Archaeological Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 1st July 2002, **P2255**

Buteux, V & Hurst, D, 1996 *Archaeological assessment of Droitwich, Hereford and Worcester*, County Archaeological Service, Worcestershire County Council, report **312**

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

IFA, 1999a *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation*, Institute of Field Archaeologists

IFA, 1999b *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures*, Institute of Field Archaeologists

Patrick, C, 2002 *Desk-based Assessment at 44-46, Worcester Road, Droitwich, Worcestershire, Archaeological Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 5th February 2002, P2167, report 955*

RCHME, 1996 *Recording historic buildings: a descriptive specification (3rd edition), Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England*

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

11. **Abbreviations**

NMR National Monuments Record.

SMR Sites and Monuments Record.

WCRO Worcestershire County Records Office.

WSM Numbers prefixed with 'WSM' are the primary reference numbers used by the Worcestershire County Sites and Monuments Record.

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Site area: Rear of house no. 44

Maximum dimensions: Length: 18m Width: 1.55m Depth: 0.63-0.90m

Orientation: WSW-ENE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface
100	Topsoil overburden	Mid-dark greyish brown turfed organic sandy silt. Defined boundary with [104] below. Occasional small sub-rounded pebbles and tile fragments. Very compact and moderately cohesive.	0.00-0.12m
101	Relict topsoil	Mid-dark greyish brown sandy silt. Occasional small-medium sub-rounded pebbles, charcoal flecks and patches. Frequent tile fragments. Diffuse boundary with [102] below, distinct boundary with [104] above. Very compact and moderately cohesive.	0.50-0.70m
102	Subsoil	Mid orangey brown sandy silt. Frequent medium sub-rounded pebbles and tile fragments. Diffuse boundary with [102] below, distinct boundary with [104] above. Very compact and moderately cohesive.	0.50-0.80m
103	Natural matrix	Mid reddish orange very slightly silty sand with off-white/fawn patches. Very compact and moderately cohesive. Frequent medium sub-rounded pebbles. Disturbed by occasional root activity or animal burrows.	0.70m +
104	Sand	Mid brownish orange sand. Occasional tile fragments and post-med. debris. Compact and moderately cohesive. Distinct boundary with [100] above and [101] below.	0.12-0.50m

Deposit description:

The sand layer [104] lay directly below the present topsoil [100]. It is considered to be a dump deposit related to the construction of house no. 44 adjacent. The topsoil [100] was then deliberately laid down above it as a garden soil and base for the lawn. The soil [101] beneath sand [104] is the original topsoil, lying above the original stratigraphic sequence of subsoil [102] and natural sand and pebble gravel [103].

There were no archaeological horizons or features within this trench. Residual finds were collected during machining and ascribed to the subsoil. All finds were of post-medieval or modern date, with the exception of a single tile fragment that may date from the 13th century.

Trench 2

Site area: Rear of house no. 46

Maximum dimensions: Length: 18m Width: 1.55m Depth: 1.08-1.20m

Orientation: NW-SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s)
200	Topsoil	Very dark brownish grey turfed organic rich slightly clayey silt. Occasional sub-rounded pebbles, charcoal flecks and lumps, china, and tile fragments. Slightly diffuse boundary with [202] below.	0.00-0.45m
201	Natural	Mid orange sand with occasional off-white grey streaks. Extensive patches of sub-rounded pebble gravel. Occasional root activity and manganese flecks. Compact and generally cohesive. Slightly diffuse boundary with [202] above. Slopes down substantially toward the southeast. Cut by a sterile modern garden feature.	0.64m +
202	Subsoil	Mid greyish brown slightly sandy silt. Slightly diffuse boundary with [200] above and [201] below. Compact and moderately cohesive. Occasional sub-rounded pebbles. Cut by a sterile modern garden feature.	0.45-0.64m

Deposit description:

There were no archaeological horizons, structures or features within this trench. The thin nature of the subsoil [202] and steep slope of the natural to the south-east (toward the Roman road and medieval hollow way) may indicate that this area of the site has been subject to landscaping at some point. The observation of clay within the topsoil and absence of any appreciable sand confirms this.

Residual finds were collected during machining, and ascribed to the topsoil. All finds were of post-medieval or modern date.

Appendix 2 Table 1: Finds summary

Cntxt	Material	Type	Ttl	Wg	Fabric	Notes	Date range	Period
102	TILE	FLAT ROOF TILE	1	92				POST-MED
102	TILE		2	16			13th-18th C	MED/POST-MED
102	POT	POST-MED	1	9	78 Post-medieval red ware			POST-MED
102	CLAY PIPE	STEM	2	3		Stamped. W.SOUTHORN BROSELEY	1829 +	POST-MED
102	POT	POST-MED	1	7	81 Stoneware			POST-MED
102	FIRE CLAY		2	6		Abraded tile		POST-MED
200	TILE	FLOOR/WALL	2	5		Bathroom tile		POST-MED/MOD
200	POT	MODERN	6	33	85 Modern stone china		19th C +	MOD
200	POT	POST-MED	1	7	81 Stoneware	Bottle / jar neck		POST-MED
200	GLASS	VESSEL	1	1				POST-MED/MOD
200	POT	POST-MED	1	7	78 Post-medieval red ware	Inlaid slip decoration		POST-MED
200	CLAY PIPE	STEM	2	1				POST-MED
200	CLAY PIPE	BOWL	1	6				POST-MED
200	BONE		1	42				
200	IRON		1	49				
200	TILE		1	3		Abraded fragment		POST-MED