

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF ON LAND ADJACENT TO
'THE OLD HOUSE', CHURCH
LANE, UPTON SNODSBURY,
WORCESTERSHIRE

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Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Project 2299
Report 1122
WSM 32050

Archaeological Watching Brief on land adjacent to ‘The Old House’, Church Lane, Upton Snodsbury, Worcestershire

Tom Vaughan

Background information

<i>Client</i>	B and P Developments Midlands Limited
<i>Site address</i>	Church Lane Upton Snodsbury SO 9424 5433
<i>National Grid Reference</i>	WSM 32050
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	Wychavon District Council
<i>Planning authority reference</i>	W/01/2049
<i>Brief</i>	AS 2002a
<i>Project design</i>	AS 2002b
<i>Project parameters</i>	IFA 1999

Previous archaeological work on this and adjacent sites

There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken on this site. The church has been the subject of a number of watching briefs, during which a 15th century stone cross base and earlier chancel foundations were recorded (WSM 02951 and 23278; Hurst 1999; Hurst 2000; Pearson and Woodiwiss 2000).

Historical and geological background

The site comprises the western part of a plot of ‘The Old House’ (WSM 09660). This is of timber frame construction with plaster walls built on a stone foundation, dated to the 17th century. This half of the site was previously laid to lawn and gardens. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1890 indicates that the plot surrounding the house comprised an orchard in the late 19th century (Fig. 4).

The village lies on the east side of a narrow sandy ridge at a height of c 50m AOD overlooking the Bow Brook to the west. The soils within the village are of the Wickham series (711), comprising typical stagnogley soils: non-calcareous loams or loams over clays with clay-enriched subsoils (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1986).

The historic core of Upton Snodsbury, centred on the church of St Kenelm, is an area of archaeological interest (WSM 20637). The name *Snoddesbury* or *Snoddesbyri* is first recorded in the 10th century. In the early 13th century Upton was a separate entity, *Upton Stephani*, although by the end of the century it had become *Upton juxta Snodebure/Snodesbury* (VCH IV, 209-212; Mawer and Stenton 1927, 230). Thus the settlement has Anglo-Saxon origins, and was maintained throughout the medieval period, although the earliest surviving buildings date from the 17th century, located predominantly on the south side of the village (e.g. WSM 03071, 20550, 20554, etc). Extant earthworks of ridge and furrow have also been identified to the east of the village (WSM 32056). The present church was rebuilt in the 1870s, although it retains a small number of 13th and 14th century features (Pevsner 1968, 283).

Aims

The aim of the archaeological 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 Ordnance Survey 1 st edition 1890 sheet XXXIV.02, 1:10,560 (6")
Date(s) of fieldwork	4 th -5 th November 2002
Area of deposits observed	c 235m ² . Indicated on Fig. 2
Dimensions of excavated areas observed	Foundations length 60.80m width 0.45m depth 1-1.30m Driveway length 23m width 4-11m depth 0.20-0.35m

Access to or visibility of deposits

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken both during and after machine excavation. The exposed surface of the strip was not sufficiently deep to observe archaeological deposits. Exposed sections within the foundation trenches were sufficiently clean to observe archaeological deposits. Access was possible to all trenches.

Statement of confidence

The good access to and visibility of the foundation trenches allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved within the footprint of the new building. However the general strip for the drive and house plot was not undertaken down to the level of the natural matrix so the degree of confidence must be low for the southern side of the site.

Deposit description

Context	Description	Date	Interpretation	Depth below ground level
100	Dark greyish brown slightly sandy clay loam. Not compact but moderately cohesive. Occasional 20 th century debris. Slightly diffuse boundary with [101] below. Organic rich.	Modern	Topsoil	0.00-0.35m
101	Reddish orange sand with blue grey clay. Occasional medium-large rounded pebbles. Slightly diffuse boundary with [100] below. Root activity in surface.	Natural	Natural	0.20m +
102	South side near vertical, north side ill-defined but concave. Base flattish and irregular. 0.75m long, >0.45m wide.	?Post-medieval/modern	?Pit cut	0.20-0.61m
103	Dark greyish brown slightly sandy clay loam. Not compact but moderately cohesive. Occasional medium-large rounded pebbles. Organic rich.	?Post-medieval/modern	Fill	0.20-0.61m

Discussion

A single feature was identified within both sections of a foundation trench toward the east side of the house. Its shape in plan could not be determined. There were no finds with the exception a single leg bone (tibia) of a calf. It is intrinsically undated, although the fill was of a very similar character to the topsoil. It is therefore considered to be of post-medieval or modern origin, probably representing a rubbish pit or tree throw.

No other archaeological features were identified, although it should be stressed that the general site strip was not taken down to the level of the natural matrix and only occasional patches were visible within the driveway. Thus it was not possible to identify any negative features cut into the sand and clay within the southern half of the site.

There was no defined subsoil and the garden/topsoil was observed to lie directly over the natural sand and clay with only a slightly diffuse boundary.

Conclusions

The lack of archaeological features observed or finds recovered indicates that the site has never been the subject of intensive activity, even though it lies within the centre of the medieval village adjacent to the church. The discovery of a probable rubbish pit of recent origin is not surprising, as burial of domestic (and small-scale industrial) waste was common within tenement plots until the advent of organised rubbish collection in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Alternatively it may represent a tree throw, as cartographic evidence indicates that this half of the plot was an orchard in the late 19th century.

It should be noted that the lack of a developed subsoil indicates that the site may have been the subject of landscaping which would have removed shallow archaeological deposits within the surface of the natural matrix and any unstratified finds. Absence of evidence does not automatically imply evidence of absence. Thus the lack of archaeology cannot be taken to mean that there has never been activity within the site. Furthermore the surface of the natural matrix was only occasionally exposed within the site strip, so the project cannot be said to have realised its full potential.

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 watching brief was undertaken on behalf of B and P Developments Midlands Limited on land adjacent to 'The Old House', Upton Snodsbury, Worcestershire (NGR: SO 9424 5433; WSM 32050). The project involved the observation of the site strip and the foundation trenches for the building. The strip was generally not undertaken down to the surface of natural matrix, so no features were recorded in plan. A single pit or tree throw of recent origin was identified within the foundation trenches.

This lack of archaeological features or finds indicates that the site has probably never been the subject of intensive activity, even though it lies within the centre of the medieval village. However the lack of a developed subsoil indicates that the site may have been the subject of landscaping, removing the subsoil and any shallow archaeological deposits within the surface of the natural matrix. Absence of evidence does not automatically imply evidence of absence. Thus the lack of archaeology cannot be taken to mean that there has never been activity within the site. Furthermore the surface of the natural matrix was only occasionally exposed within the site strip, so the project cannot be said to have realised its full potential.

Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	3
Photographic records AS3	1
Colour transparency photographs	6
Black and white photographs	6
Trench record sheets AS41	1
Boxes of finds	1
Computer disks	1

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

telephone

Worcestershire County Museum
Hartlebury Castle, Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
01299 250416

Acknowledgements

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