

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
EVALUATION AND WATCHING  
BRIEF AT SEVERN SIDE SOUTH,  
BEWDLEY, WORCESTERSHIRE

Darren Miller and Erica Darch

Illustrated by Laura Templeton

4<sup>th</sup> October 2002  
Revised 9<sup>th</sup> October 2002

© Archaeological Service, Worcestershire County Council

Archaeological Service,  
Worcestershire County Council,  
Woodbury Hall,  
University College Worcester,  
Henwick Grove,  
Worcester WR2 6AJ



Project 2122  
Report 1115  
WSM 31934



# Contents

<b>Part 1 Project summary</b>	<b>1</b>
-------------------------------	----------

## Part 2 Detailed report

<b>1. Background</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 Reasons for the project	2
1.2 Project parameters	2
1.3 Aims	2
<b>2. Methods</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 Fieldwork	2
2.1.1 Fieldwork strategy	2
2.1.2 Stratigraphic analysis	3
2.2 Documentary research	3
2.3 Artefacts	3
2.3.1 Artefact recovery policy	3
2.3.2 Analysis	3
2.4 Environmental evidence	3
2.5 The methods in retrospect	3
<b>3. Historical and archaeological background</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Results</b>	<b>5</b>
4.1 Description of deposits by trench	5
4.1.1 Trench 1	5
4.1.2 Trench 2	5
4.1.3 Trench 3	6
4.1.4 Trench 4	6
4.1.5 Trench 5	6
4.1.6 Trench 6	6
4.1.7 Trench 7	6
4.2 Descriptions of deposits by phase	6
4.2.1 Phase 1: pre-19 <sup>th</sup> century	6
4.2.2 Phase 2: 19 <sup>th</sup> century	7
4.2.3 Phase 3: 20 <sup>th</sup> century	8
4.3 Artefactual evidence	8
4.3.1 Analysis	8
4.3.2 Discussion	9
<b>5. Synthesis</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>6. Research frameworks</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>7. Publication summary</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>8. The archive</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>9. Acknowledgements</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>10. Personnel</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>11. Bibliography</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	
<b>1. Location of evaluation</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2. Location of trenches and observations</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>3. 18<sup>th</sup> century views of the bridge at Bewdley</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>4. Views of Severnside South and Trench 1 during the evaluation</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>5. Trench 1</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>6. Trench 3</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>7. Trench 4</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>8. Trench 5</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>9. Trench 7</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>10. Interpretative plan of bridge and quaysides</b>	<b>27</b>



---

## **Archaeological evaluation and watching brief at Severn Side South, Bewdley, Worcestershire**

**Darren Miller and Erica Darch**

### **Part 1 Project summary**

An archaeological evaluation and watching brief was undertaken by the Service on behalf of The Environment Agency at Severn Side South, Bewdley, in order to provide information on the archaeological implications of a proposed flood defence scheme (NGR SO 7875 7538; WSM 31934). The evaluation element of the project involved the excavation of a trench (11 x 2 m) in the area of a bandstand on the north side of the street. Here masonry projecting from the riverside wall suggested structural remains of a medieval bridge, and documentary evidence suggested the site of a medieval chapel. The watching brief element involved observation and recording during the excavation of six small ground investigation trenches at intervals along the length of the street.

The evaluation trench did not encounter any remains of the medieval bridge; across most of the trench, only loose sandstone rubble was encountered to a depth of over 2.5 m below the present surface. However, in the north-west corner of the trench, the rubble was found to abut a truncated, but originally substantial wall of medieval character. This wall was interpreted as part of the south wall of a building on the north side of the bridge shown on 18<sup>th</sup> century engravings. A re-used fragment of late 15<sup>th</sup> to late 18<sup>th</sup> century brick contained within the rubble core of the wall suggests that the building was not a medieval chapel, but a later building in a vernacular style to which local tradition of a chapel became attached. The sandstone rubble abutting the wall and filling the rest of the trench was interpreted as landfill deposited behind the present retaining wall, where this had been built outwards in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to incorporate the surviving first pier of the medieval bridge. The projecting masonry is considered to represent this pier, rather than the point at which the bridge left the quayside.

The watching brief trenches were excavated across the street from pavement to pavement in two stages. Surfaces and deposits of 19<sup>th</sup> century and possibly earlier date were observed during the first stage of excavation beneath the northern pavement, although it appears that almost all pre-existing deposits in the road were removed and replaced with compacted clay during the construction of the present road. Further structural remains were found in a trench close to the present bridge, and interpreted as the foundations of one of a row of buildings that formerly closed off the east end of Load Street, and was demolished to make way for the construction of the bridge. The remains of an earlier quayside wall were also found behind the present structure.

Taken together, the results of the project provide significant new information on the location of medieval structures in the area of the bandstand, the development of Severn Side South over the last few centuries, and the archaeological implications of the proposed flood defence scheme.

## **Part 2 Detailed report**

### **1. Background**

#### **1.1 Reasons for the project**

The project was requested by Atkins Heritage on behalf of the Environment Agency, who intend to construct removable flood defences along Severn Side South, and were required by the Planning Section of Worcestershire County Archaeological Service to take into account the potential archaeological implications of this scheme. The presence of archaeological remains in the area of the proposed flood defences was suggested by upstanding structures, previous finds and documentary evidence.

#### **1.2 Project parameters**

The project conforms to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Atkins Heritage (Atkins 2002), to the Service's own specification (AS 2002b), and ultimately to a brief set by Worcestershire County Council (AS 2002a). The project also conforms to the Institute of Field Archaeologist's *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 1999a) and *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IFA 1999b).

#### **1.3 Aims**

The project involved the excavation of a single evaluation trench in the area of a bandstand on Severn Side South, and a watching brief on several ground investigation and service location trenches excavated at intervals along the length of the street. The aim of the evaluation trench was to identify the precise location of medieval structures known or suspected in the vicinity. The aim of the watching brief was to identify and record any archaeological remains exposed during the ground investigations. Both elements of the project were intended to inform subsequent decisions regarding the archaeological implications of the proposed flood defences. The project was also intended to advance understanding of the archaeology of Bewdley by taking into account and building on recent field-and desk-based archaeological work.

### **2. Methods**

#### **2.1 Fieldwork**

##### **2.1.1 Fieldwork strategy**

The evaluation trench was located on the north-east side of the bandstand on Severn Side South (opposite no. 5), close to where masonry projecting from the riverside wall suggested structural remains of a medieval bridge, and on the approximate site of a documented medieval chapel. The curving shape of the trench was intended to take in part of the projecting masonry and maximise the potential for exposing remains of the chapel, while avoiding obstacles to excavation in the form of large flagstones, concreted cobbles, and an iron rail fence. The trench was excavated in spits to depths of 1.20-1.50m below ground level by a wheeled mechanical excavator fitted with a ditching bucket, and selected deposits were excavated to establish their character and date. Drawn, written and photographic records were made according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995).

The watching brief was essentially reactive, and followed the progress of the ground investigation team. By maintaining close contact with the contractors and on-site Atkins staff, site visits were generally made at optimum times for recording deposits beneath modern

---

surfaces and made ground (each trench took around 2-3 days to excavate, record and backfill, and it was not reasonable or necessary for an archaeologist to be present throughout the investigations). For the most part, the trenches were excavated across the street in two stages, beginning with lengths taking in the northern pavement or footpath and the northern half of the road. Most attention was focused on these initial lengths, as it became apparent that pre-modern deposits were better-preserved in these areas. Some of the southern lengths of trench were not observed, although information on the deposits exposed within them was obtained. As with the evaluation trench, deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice.

### 2.1.2 **Stratigraphic analysis**

Stratigraphic analysis involved defining deposits and structural features on the basis of a range of properties, inferring their original character and the extent of post-depositional change, and establishing their relative sequence. This information formed the basis for interpretations of structural and depositional history, and provided a framework for the artefactual analysis.

## 2.2 **Documentary research**

The results from the fieldwork were integrated with information contained in recent archaeological assessment of Bewdley and Wribbenhall (Buteux 1996), and with information on find-spots and previous investigations from the Worcestershire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). Other sources held by the Service were also consulted including copies of historic maps, lists of historic buildings and other papers relating to Bewdley held by the SMR. The Index to the Inventory and Inventory of Records held at the Worcestershire County Record Office were also searched for relevant sources, several of which were consulted. The results of this research are incorporated where appropriate in the main body of the report.

## 2.3 **Artefacts**

### 2.3.1 **Artefact recovery policy**

All artefacts were retrieved and retained in accordance with standard Service practice (CAS 1995 as amended).

### 2.3.2 **Analysis**

All artefacts were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* was produced for each stratified context. Pottery fabrics were referenced to the fabric reference series maintained by the Service (Hurst 1994).

## 2.4 **Environmental evidence**

The environmental sampling strategy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 4). No deposits encountered during the project were considered likely to contain significant environmental materials, and although small quantities of animal bone were noted, these were all from recent contexts and had a limited interpretative potential. Consequently, no samples were taken, and no animal bone retrieved.

## 2.5 **The methods in retrospect**

In general, the methods are considered to have been appropriate to the aims of the project, the circumstances of the fieldwork, and the nature of the evidence.

With regard to fieldwork methods, the evaluation trench provided a reasonable opportunity for providing the information required on anticipated medieval structures in its vicinity, and the results allowed reasonable inferences to be made regarding their location and survival. The ground investigation trenches provided only limited windows into pre-modern deposits, although significant archaeological information was retrieved from three of the seven trenches recorded, and the results as a whole allowed a reasonable understanding of the development of the street-front over the last few centuries.

With regard to the post-fieldwork methods, the level of artefactual analysis is considered to have been appropriate to the nature and interpretative potential of the material, while the amount of documentary research was sufficient to confirm the implications of the archaeological evidence.

In general, the methods are considered to have provided enough information to allow an informed assessment of the archaeological implications of the proposed flood defences.

### 3. **Historical and archaeological background**

Severn Side South presently forms the southern half of Bewdley's riverfront, extending from Load Street in the north to Lax Lane in the south (Fig. 1). The history of the street is uncertain, being poorly documented before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, although various lines of evidence suggest something of its origins and development. The earliest buildings on the present frontage are of 17<sup>th</sup> century date, although the pattern of tenements extending back from the frontage suggests that they were laid out as a planned unit in the medieval period, possibly as part of a planned expansion in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Buteux 1996, 6). It is also possible that the street is of even greater antiquity, as it ends (or begins) at an ancient ford across the Severn at the head of Lax Lane, which was also the site of a ferry crossing in 1336 (Buteux 1996, 6).

There is evidence that at least part of the area was maintained as a quay in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, in the form of several timbers found c3m beneath the ground during sewer-laying in 1991 (WSM 11174; Taylor 1991). This find was made in the road opposite number 17 (Fig. 2), and is comparable to a consistent layer of timbers noted at a similar depth along Severn Side North during a watching brief on earlier flood defence works (Miller and Darch, in prep). Taken together, the finds of timber suggest a substantial medieval quayside, comparable in size to that of later periods.

It is also clear that at least one of Bewdley's documented medieval bridges linked Severn Side South with Wribbenhall on the other side of the Severn. At a point opposite no 5, just beneath a raised bandstand, the riverside wall projects outwards into the river and ends in what appears to be a foundation for a stone bridge; another similar structure lies directly opposite on the Wribbenhall side. In addition, the remains of two foundations were discovered between these projections by divers in 1973 (Worcestershire Archaeology Newsletter, no. 13 (1973)). All of these structures can be identified with the bridge shown in several 18<sup>th</sup> century engravings (Fig 3) and described in several contemporary statements and later reminiscences (Burton 1883, 28-30).

The bridge had five semi-circular arches supported by four piers, the first or second of which (from the Bewdley side) carried a two-storey timber-framed gatehouse (the engravings differ on this point). The style of the bridge and the bridge-house suggests a later medieval date of construction, and a context for it is provided by a grant from Richard III towards the construction of a bridge at Bewdley in 1483 (VCH III, 298). By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the later stone bridge had been damaged and repaired several times and it was finally destroyed by a flood in 1795, and replaced by the present structure at the end of Load Street, begun in 1798 and completed in 1801 (WSM 10691; Burton 1883, 30). A medieval chapel is reputed to have stood at the Bewdley end of the bridge, on its northern side (WSM 8161), and this has been associated with a building shown on 18<sup>th</sup> century engravings by Ross and Walker (Fig.



3; Burton 1883, 16). The building is thought to have survived into the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a hearse-works before being demolished.

The earlier stone bridge is thought to have replaced a timber structure, mentioned in 1478, which was itself a replacement for a stone bridge built sometime after 1447, and destroyed during the Wars of the Roses. The location of both of these earlier bridges is uncertain, although sandstone foundations (and a wooden stake) were exposed in the same sewer trench that disturbed the timbers on Severn Side South, and these might relate to one or both of these structures. Similar evidence of sandstone foundations was recorded on the north side of the abutment in a recent watching brief (Miller and Darch, in prep). The evidence in both cases is equivocal, although there are *prima facie* grounds for assuming that the earlier 15<sup>th</sup> century bridges would have been built in line with Load Street, which was almost certainly in existence at this time (Buteux 1996, 7). There are also no indications that the town plan was oriented on the later stone bridge, suggesting that it was a secondary feature of a pre-existing townscape. This is also supported by descriptions of the “narrow and incommodious” passages leading to the bridge mentioned in the Act relating to the construction of the present bridge (BA 4600, parcel 1063).

Finally, the later development of Severn Side South is well illustrated by a series of historic maps, beginning with Dewhirst’s map of 1837 (WRO BA 5562) and the Tithe Map of 1845 (WRO BA 5351) and continuing with a series of Ordnance Survey maps dating from the 1840s. These maps show a relatively stable situation with the main changes taking place behind the street frontage, and in the addition of footpaths and garden features along the riverside.

## 4. Results

Archaeological remains were found at the west end of the evaluation trench (Trench 1), and in the pavement or footpath sections of four of the six ground investigation trenches (Trenches 3, 4, 5 and 7); slight indications of archaeological remains were also found at depth in the road section of Trench 3. No archaeological remains were found in any part of the other two ground investigation trenches (Trenches 2 and 7). The trench locations are shown in Figure 2, and selected plans and sections are reproduced as figures 5 to 9, in which all deposits and structures are numbered. Summary descriptions of numbered deposits are contained below, by trench and then by phase, and full descriptions are contained in Appendix 1.

### 4.1 Description of deposits by trench

#### 4.1.1 Trench 1

The basic sequence of deposits in Trench 1 comprised (from the present ground surface downwards), 0.9 m of tarmac and made ground (contexts 101-105 and 107) overlying at least 1.6 m of loose sandstone rubble in a silty sand matrix (contexts 106 and 108). The sole exception to this sequence was a truncated length of stone wall in the west end of the trench, which underlay the tarmac and was abutted by the sandstone rubble (contexts 109-112).

#### 4.1.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was observed at an early stage of excavation. The sequence comprised tarmac (context 200) over roadstone (context 204) to an observed depth of 0.74 m (the roadstone having been cut by two services (contexts 203/4 and 205/6).

#### 4.1.3 **Trench 3**

The uppermost deposits exposed in Trench 3 comprised brick pavement and tarmac road surfaces (context 302 and 303) overlying concrete and silty sand beneath the pavement (contexts 306 and 308), and roadstone beneath the road (context 304), both to a depth of around 0.6 m below the surface. Thereafter, beneath the pavement, a sandstone surface was found to overlie a sequence of finely-stratified deposits (contexts 300, 301 and 317). Beneath the road, it was apparent that a near-vertical sided and flat-based cut (context 318) bottoming at 2 m below the surface had removed all pre-existing deposits. This cut had been backfilled with compacted silty clay (contexts 313 and 311). Earlier soils were identified below the level of this truncation to a depth of 2.4 m (contexts 313-315).

#### 4.1.4 **Trench 4**

The sides of trench 4 showed concrete and roadstone beneath the pavement slabs and roadstone to a depth of 0.8 m (contexts 401-405). Beneath the pavement, the concrete overlay a deposit of silty sand (contexts 411) which gave onto a cobbled surface (context 400). Beneath the road, the surface and underlying deposits had been truncated by a cut similar to that observed in Trench 3 and backfilled with similar material (contexts 406 and 410).

#### 4.1.5 **Trench 5**

The deposits in Trench 5 were complex, but consisted basically of loose sandstone rubble (contexts 501 and 509) to a depth of around 1.1 m beneath the cobbled surface which overlay the remains of three stone walls (contexts 501 and 506-8). Each of the walls continued below 2 m.

#### 4.1.6 **Trench 6**

Trench 6 was observed at an early stage of excavation. The sequence comprised a shallow depth of tarmac and roadstone (contexts 600 and 601) overlying silty sand to an observed depth of 0.7 m (context 603).

#### 4.1.7 **Trench 7**

The deposits in the pavement section of Trench 7 comprised concrete and roadstone beneath the brick paviers to a depth of 0.6 m; beneath this, a deposit of compacted silty clay ("pressure grout") was found to overlay a sandstone block at 1.04 m beneath the surface.

### 4.2 **Descriptions of deposits by phase**

#### 4.2.1 **Phase 1: pre-19<sup>th</sup> century**

Structural features earlier than 19<sup>th</sup> century in date were recorded at the west end of Trench 1 (beneath the bandstand), in Trench 5 (on the south side of the present bridge), and possibly also in Trench 3 (opposite nos. 7-12 Severn Side South).

In Trench 1, excavation began at the west end and revealed an area of sandstone rubble bonded with light brown sandy mortar (context 110). When fully excavated, the mortared rubble proved to be faced on its south side by at least four regular courses of squared and diagonally-tooled sandstone ashlar blocks, the lowest visible course being slightly offset from those laid above (context 109). The "fair face" and offset course, and the thickness of the mortared rubble suggest that they formed part of a substantial wall aligned east to west.

However, the wall was highly truncated to the east, and also on its northern side (as proved by a small extension excavated by hand), so that neither its eastern extent, nor its full width

could be established. No surfaces associated with the wall were apparent in plan or section; instead it appears that all pre-existing deposits had been removed and replaced by dumps of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century made ground. These deposits give an indication of date by which the wall was no longer visible above ground, although its date of construction is uncertain. However, a single brick of a type current between the late 15<sup>th</sup> to late 18<sup>th</sup> centuries was present within its sandstone rubble core. In addition, there are no buildings shown on this location on the earliest detailed maps of Bewdley produced in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is therefore likely that the wall is of post-medieval date, and it may well be the short length of wall flanking the north side of the abutment of the 1483-1795 bridge shown in a late 18<sup>th</sup> century drawing (Fig. 3). The survival of the wall into the 19<sup>th</sup> century seems likely in view of its relatively shallow depth, although it appears to have been entirely buried by the time of the earliest detailed surveys in the 1840s.

The remains in Trench 5 were more complex, comprising a brick and sandstone wall (context 506) running parallel to and 3 m behind the present riverside wall, which abutted or was butted by a more substantial wall made of large sandstone blocks (context 509). The latter wall appears to have been built at right angles to the riverside, with its south face lying just outside the southern limit of the trench; this was apparent from the decayed sandstone fragments adhering to the undisturbed deposits in the north-facing section. The northern face of the wall was not exposed, but should lie just beyond the north side of the trench. Taken together, the structural remains suggest two sides of a building backing onto the river, and presumably fronting onto the east side of Severn Side South. The date of this building would be uncertain from the few finds that were recovered from the walls, as these were either of long-lived types, or undiagnostic (see Section 5 below). However, the proximity of the building to the bridge makes it clear that it was one of those that closed off the east end of Load Street for some time prior to 1795, and were demolished to make way for the construction of the present bridge (Burton 1883, 30). In addition to the walls of this building, a section of a quayside wall was exposed 1.2 m behind the present structure. Similar lengths of wall were exposed during the watching brief along Severn Side South, and there is little mistaking it, although its date is still open to question. The 19<sup>th</sup> century maps of the area are not drawn at large enough scales to distinguish between two walls so close together, and while much of the present riverside wall is considered to be of 18<sup>th</sup> century date, it has clearly been modified in sections since, and may even contain earlier elements (Buteux 1996, 12). Nevertheless, it appears that the wall shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884 is the present wall, and the line of the wall from the bridge to the bandstand appears to be the same on earlier maps of 1847 and 1845. It is therefore likely that the present wall is at least 155 years old, and that the wall it replaced is substantially earlier.

Finally, deposits of perhaps 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century date were found towards the bottom of Trench 3, beneath the level of modern truncation (Fig. 6). These deposits comprised a sequence of mid brown silty sand overlying a thin layer of decayed stone fragments, which in turn overlay a firm dark grey humic soil. Augering beneath the bottom layer showed that it was approximately 0.3 m thick, and gave way to reworked grey alluvium. No finds were recovered from these layers, although their depth, and the quantity of 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century tile and the few sherds of 17<sup>th</sup> century pottery recovered from excavated spoil strongly suggest that they date from around this period.

#### 4.2.2 Phase 2: 19<sup>th</sup> century

Deposits and structures of 19<sup>th</sup> century date were recovered in Trenches 1, 3, 4, and 7. The sandstone rubble in Trench 1 has already been noted: before backfilling the trench, a sondage was excavated through the rubble near the north-east end of the trench, and it was found to continue below 2.5 m with little change. A few finds were recovered from excavated spoil which suggest a 19<sup>th</sup> century date for the sandstone rubble, if not for the overlying made ground. The 19<sup>th</sup> century remains in Trench 3 comprised a truncated surface of sandstone blocks lying beneath the modern concrete and tarmac and set in a bedding layer of light brown clay (context 301; Fig. 6). The surface was not intrinsically dateable, although its character, depth and a single sherd of glass found beneath one of the stones all suggest a 19<sup>th</sup>

century date. These remains were only preserved in the area of the modern pavement: all pre-existing deposits in the road had been removed to a depth of *c.*2 m and replaced by compacted silty clay. A similar situation was observed in Trench 4, where a cobbled surface (context 400) survived 1.2 m beneath the pavement but was not present in the road (Fig. 7). Finally, in Trench 7, a sandstone block was observed 1 m below the pavement (the length of trench in the road was unfortunately not observed). The area exposed was very limited, and it is uncertain whether the stone represents a wall or a surface, although its size and orientation suggest the latter.

#### 4.2.3 Phase 3: 20<sup>th</sup> century

The recent deposits encountered in all trenches were commonplace and require little further description than is contained in the appendix. However, the later deposits in Trench 1 and the truncation noted in Trenches 3 and 4 are both worth highlighting for different reasons. In the first place, it appears that the made ground above the sandstone rubble in Trench 1 is of 20<sup>th</sup> century date, and represents a re-surfacing of this area in relatively recent times. Secondly, the depth of compacted made ground noted in Trenches 3 and 4 (and suspected along the length of Severn Side South) appears far in excess of what would be required to provide a basis for a modern road surface. Some clearance of unstable fill along the line of the road would be expected, but not to a level of 1.6 m below the 19<sup>th</sup> century ground level. It is possible, however, that the removal of pre-existing deposits in the road and their replacement by compacted clay was intended to provide a kind of impermeable barrier to groundwater as well as a foundation for the road. Without further evidence on this point, or professional opinion as to the effectiveness of such a barrier this suggestion is highly conjectural, although it does provide some explanation for an unusual situation.

### 4.3 Artefactual evidence

#### 4.3.1 Analysis

The assemblage dated from medieval / post-medieval to modern, but contained mainly post-medieval material. The level of abrasion was not high.

The largest group of material by weight was brick (three pieces, 3290g) and roof tile (9 pieces, 2117g). The tile was of a long-lived type dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century and the brick was probably post-medieval (based on the height in inches) (Smith, 1985, 44. J D Hurst, pers comm).

The pottery consisted of 19 sherds of post-medieval and 3 of modern. The fabric types can be seen in Table 1 below.

Fabric	Fabric Name	Sherd Count	Weight
75	North Devon Gravel	1	44
78	Post-Medieval Red Wares	9	390
81	Stoneware	1	44
83	Porcelain	1	45
84	Creamware	6	79
85	Modern Stone China	2	28
108	Midlands Purple Ware	2	94

**Table 1: Quantification of pottery assemblage by fabric**

---

Also recovered were three pieces of clay pipe stem and a ceramic tile with holes in it that was probably used in a hop-drying oven. These were all post-medieval in date. A single sherd of green vessel glass was either post-medieval or modern.

#### 4.3.2 Discussion

The artefacts recovered give a *TPQ* of post-medieval to contexts 110, 303, 501, 501/503 and 503 and modern to context 301. Context 501 / 503 only contained one brick, which was 2 3/8 inches in height, which would correspond with a late 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> century date (J D Hurst, pers comm). The assemblage is too small to draw many conclusions about the activities they represent, but the variety of material types and dates suggests this material is residual / re-deposited.

### 5. Synthesis

The sum of the evidence from the fieldwork and post-fieldwork stages of the project allows reasonable inferences to be made concerning the location of medieval structures in the area of the bandstand, the development of the riverfront over the last few centuries, and the archaeological implications of the proposed flood defences.

In the first place, it is clear that no intact structural remains of the 1483-1795 bridge were found in Trench 1, despite its location where – on the information available at the start of the project – these might have been expected. However, an explanation can be offered for the absence of structural remains, and the presence of deep deposits of sandstone rubble, which accords with all the available evidence. Briefly, it appears that the masonry projecting into the river represents the first pier of the bridge (not the point where it left the quayside) which was incorporated into the present riverside wall when this was built at some point in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Several lines of evidence point to this interpretation. First, the projecting masonry cannot be the point at which the medieval bridge left the medieval quayside: the finds of timber opposite no. 17 Severn Side South and along Severn Side North place the medieval quay near the centre of both streets, while evidence from Trench 5 and Severn Side North show that the quayside has advanced into the river in at least two stages since then. Secondly, the combined evidence of several 18<sup>th</sup> century drawings<sup>1</sup> show that the four piers of the bridge each had triangular cutwaters while the western spandrel wall had a simple squared foundation (Fig. 3); the shape of the projecting masonry and the offset stones towards its base strongly suggests the former type of structure. Thirdly, the sandstone rubble found in Trench 1 had no structural integrity, and must therefore be considered as a dumped deposit of building debris, which is most likely to have come from the destruction of the bridge. Fourthly, the earliest detailed maps of Bewdley show Severn Side South in much its present state, and support the suggestion that the present wall was built at some point between the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the 1840s. Finally, the most detailed map of 1884 shows a slight concavity in the street frontage nearly opposite the bandstand which may represent a building line laid out to curve around an existing structure (S. Woodiwiss, pers comm). Taken together, the evidence points strongly to the conclusion that the quayside wall was re-built further into the river to incorporate the first pier of the bridge, while other remains of the bridge were demolished and used to fill the void behind the new quayside wall.

---

<sup>1</sup> All the engravings show the former bridge from the Wribbenhall side of the river (as is evident from the length and similarities of the rooflines along Severn Side South and other landmarks) although they differ in their perspective and level of detail. They are also not wholly trustworthy as historical documents, as indicated by the fact that the bridge-house is placed on the first pier (from the Bewdley side) in one engraving, and on the second pier in the others (another engraving in the Bewdley parish files places it on the third pier from the Bewdley side). However, this apart, the engravings have enough points of similarity to suggest that they are broadly representative, and have at least some value as pictorial evidence.

The consequences of this interpretation for the location and survival of structural remains of the medieval bridge are relatively clear. At least the lower part of the first pier can be assumed to be intact, having been encased by walls on three sides; some degree of preservation is also suggested by the partial survival of two of the piers in the river. The remains of the spandrel wall may also survive, and while its exact location is uncertain, the evidence of the masonry 18<sup>th</sup> century drawings together with the reference points provided by the projecting masonry (on both sides of the river) would place it slightly behind the present bandstand (Fig. 10). The state of preservation of the spandrel wall is uncertain, although the near-total truncation of pre-existing deposits beneath the road shown in the ground investigation trenches would argue against its survival.

With regard to the truncated wall, its interpretation and date are uncertain, but it can possibly be identified with a building shown on two of the three 18<sup>th</sup> century drawings reproduced as Figure 3. The engraving by Walker (Fig. 3, bottom) shows a single storey pitch-roofed building on the north side of the bridge, built directly off a recess in the quayside wall. Apparently the same building is shown on an undated 18<sup>th</sup> century engraving by Ross (Fig. 3, middle). This building appears to have stood near the west end of Trench 1, and it is possible that the truncated length of wall represents a point on the south wall of the building. It is also possible that the wall represents part of the recessed quayside wall, although its construction is different to that of the quayside walls found in Trench 5, and along Severn Side North (Miller and Darch, in prep).

If the interpretation of the wall in Trench 1 with the building shown on the engravings is accepted, then it is worth re-considering the identification of this building with a medieval chapel. This identification was first made by Prattington (reported in Burton 1883, 16), and this has been incorporated into the Sites and Monuments Record (WSM 8161). However, the archaeological evidence from the wall is at variance with this identification. While the materials and construction techniques exhibited by the wall are in keeping with medieval vernacular architecture, the date of the brick fragment securely stratified in its rubble core suggests that it cannot be earlier than the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, and a later date is likely, given that a brick has been re-used (mortar adhering to it was different to that bonding the sandstone rubble) and incorporated into the structure. It is therefore likely that the building was not the medieval chapel, but a building to which was later built on the same site and which was later engraved in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In terms of the survival of the rest of the building, the wall clearly continues outside the trench to the west, and on the evidence of the watching brief trenches, it is likely that it continues beneath the present steps or pavement. Beyond the pavement, however, the evidence from the ground investigation trenches suggests that any remains will have been removed during the construction of the present road. The wall is not likely to have continued far to the east, as this area would have lain beyond the medieval to 18<sup>th</sup> century quayside. For the same reason, it is not likely that any substantial remains of the building survive in the grassed area to the north of the trench.

## 6. **Research frameworks**

The aims of the evaluation and watching brief were directed towards establishing the location of known and suspected archaeological remains at various points along Severn Side South. However, the project also provided an opportunity to advance current understanding of the archaeology of Bewdley, most of which is contained within the assessment prepared as part of the Central Marches Historic Town Survey (Buteux 1996). In terms of specific results, the project provided significant new information on the location of structures associated with of the medieval bridge, and established the survival of archaeological remains along the length of Severn Side South. More generally, the results of the project complement those of a recent watching brief at Severn Side North, and allow a far better understanding of the development of the riverfront since the medieval period. The project also resulted in the recovery of a small artefact assemblage, which, though generally unstratified and of low interpretative

---

value nevertheless adds significantly to the meagre amount of material recovered from Bewdley to date.

## 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 and watching brief was undertaken by the Service on behalf of The Environment Agency at Severn Side South, Bewdley, in order to provide information on the archaeological implications of a proposed flood defence scheme (NGR SO 7875 7538; WSM 31934). The evaluation element of the project involved the excavation of a trench (11 x 2 m) in the area of a bandstand on the north side of the street. Here masonry projecting from the riverside wall suggested structural remains of a medieval bridge, and documentary evidence suggested the site of a medieval chapel. The watching brief element involved observation and recording during the excavation of six small ground investigation trenches at intervals along the length of the street.*

*The evaluation trench did not encounter any remains of the medieval bridge; across most of the trench, only loose sandstone rubble was encountered to a depth of over 2.5m below the present surface. However, in the north-west corner of the trench, the rubble was found to abut a truncated, but originally substantial wall of medieval character. This wall was interpreted as part of the south wall of a building on the north side of the bridge shown on 18<sup>th</sup> century engravings. A re-used fragment of late 15<sup>th</sup> to late 18<sup>th</sup> century brick contained within the rubble core of the wall suggests that the building was not a medieval chapel, but a later building in a vernacular style to which local tradition of a chapel became attached. The sandstone rubble abutting the wall and filling the rest of the trench was interpreted as landfill deposited behind the present retaining wall, where this had been built outwards in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to incorporate the surviving first pier of the medieval bridge. The projecting masonry is considered to represent this pier, rather than the point at which the bridge left the quayside.*

*The watching brief trenches were excavated across the street from pavement to pavement in two stages. Surfaces and deposits of 19<sup>th</sup> century and possibly earlier date were observed during the first stage of excavation beneath the northern pavement, although it appears that almost all pre-existing deposits in the road were removed and replaced with compacted clay during the construction of the present road. Further structural remains were found in a trench close to the present bridge, and interpreted as the foundations of one of a row of buildings that formerly closed off the east end of Load Street, and was demolished to make way for the construction of the bridge. The remains of an earlier quayside wall were also found behind the present structure.*

*Taken together, the results of the project provide significant new information on the location of medieval structures in the area of the bandstand, the development of Severn Side South over the last few centuries, and the archaeological implications of the proposed flood defence scheme.*

## 8. **The archive**

The archive consists of:

- 10 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 2 Context number catalogues AS5
- 8 Trench record sheets AS 41

- 4 Photograph records AS3
- 8 Colour slide films
- 8 Black and white photographic films
- 8 Scale drawings
- 1 Box of finds
- 1 Computer disk

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum

Hartlebury

Near Kidderminster

Worcestershire DY11 7XZ

Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

## 9. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank Andrew Holmes, Alice Bazen of Atkins (main contractor) and Amanda Lane of FES (geotechnical contractor) for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project.

## 10. **Personnel**

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by Darren Miller. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Simon Woodiwiss. Fieldwork was undertaken by James Goad, Darren Miller, Marc Steinmetzer and Ben Williams, finds analysis by Erica Darch, and illustration by Laura Templeton.

## 11. **Bibliography**

AS, 2002a *Brief for an archaeological field evaluation at Severn Side South, Bewdley, Worcestershire*, Archaeological Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 5<sup>th</sup> September 2001, WSM 8161

AS, 2002 *Proposal for an archaeological evaluation at Severn Side South, Bewdley, Worcestershire*, Archaeological Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 5 July 2002, **P2122**

Atkins, 2000 *Severn Side South, Bewdley, Worcestershire: written scheme of investigation*, Atkins Heritage, unpublished document dated 22 July 2002

Burton, J R, 1883 *A history of Bewdley, with concise accounts of neighbouring parishes*

Buteux, V, 1996 *Archaeological assessment of Bewdley and Wribbenhall, Hereford and Worcester*, Hereford and Worcester County Council, internal report **298**

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

Cook, M, 1998 *Medieval Bridges*



---

DoE (Department of the Environment), 1986 *List of buildings of special architectural or historic interest, District of Wyre Forest, Hereford and Worcester: parishes of Bewdley, Ribbesford and Rock*

Hurst, J D, and Rees, H, 1992 Pottery fabrics; a multi-period series for the County of Hereford and Worcester, in Woodiwiss, S G (ed), *Iron Age and Roman salt production and the medieval town of Droitwich*, CBA Res Rep, **81**

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

IFA, 1999b *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute of Field Archaeologists

Miller, D, and Darch, E, in prep *Watching brief at Severn Side North, Bewdley, Worcestershire*, Archaeological Service, Worcestershire County Council,

Ordnance Survey 1884, 1903, 1929 and 1938 [extracts from] *Worcestershire*, sheet **14** NW

Smith, L 1985 *Investigating old buildings*

## Appendix 1: Stratigraphic data

### Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 11 m Width: 2 m Depth: c.2.5 m

Context	Description	Classification	Max depth below surface
101 and 102	Friable brown and light grey silty sand with common small brick fragments	Made ground	0.15 - 0.85 m
103, 104 and 107	Friable mid brown silty sand with common brick and sandstone fragments filling cut or declivity	Made ground/demolition debris	0.2 - 1.2 m
105	Friable light grey silty sand with common brick and sandstone fragments	Made ground/demolition debris	0.4 - 0.9 m
106 and 108	Medium to large sandstone fragments in light brown silty sand matrix	Made ground/demolition debris	0.9 - 2.5 m+
109	4+courses of large squared sandstone blocks, diagonally tooled	Facing stones of wall	0.2 - 1.2 m+
110	Sandstone rubble bonded with light brown sandy mortar	Core of wall	0.2 - 1.2 m+
111 and 112	Vertical sided cut, backfilled with concrete	Modern truncation	0.2 - 1.2 m

### Trench 2

Maximum dimensions when recorded: Length: 2.8 m Width: 0.8 m Depth: 0.76 m

Context	Description	Classification	Max depth below surface
200	Tarmac	Surface	0.08 m
201	Redeposited roadstone (small-medium angular stones bonded with concrete)	Fill of cut for service	0.08 - 0.3 m
202	Reddish brown sand	Fill of cut for service	0.3 - 0.76 m+
203	Near-vertical cut (not bottomed)	Service trench	0.08 - 0.76 m+
204	Roadstone	Road foundation	0.08 - 0.3 m
205	Redeposited brown silty sand and roadstone	Fill of service trench	0.3 - 0.58 m+
206	Near-vertical sided cut (not bottomed)	Service Trench	0.3 - 0.58 m+

**Trench 3**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Max depth below surface</b>
300	Closely-set medium to large angular sandstone blocks set on bed	Surface	0.6 - 0.7 m
301	Light brown sand	Bedding layer for 300	0.7 - 0.75 m
302	Tarmac	Road surface	0.08 m
303	Brick paviers	Pavement surface	0.08 m
304	Roadstone	Road foundation	0.08 - 0.46 m
305	Light yellowish brown sand	Bedding layer for 303	0.08 - 0.1 m
306	Concrete	Foundation	0.1 - 0.6 m
307	Medium angular sandstone bocks set on end at right angles to long axis of trench	Uncertain	0.32 - 0.46 m
308	Dark grey silty sand with common small charcoal fragments	Made ground	0.42 - 0.6 m
309	Dark brown silty sand	Fill of service trench 310	0.46 - 1.33 m
310	Vertical sided, concave-based cut	Service trench	0.46 - 1.33 m
311	Redeposited clay and silty sand with few brisk and tile fragments	Fill of service trench 312	0.46 - 2 m
312	Steeply-sloping cut with flat base	Service trench	0.46 - 2 m
313	Compact light, slightly reddish brown silty clay with few brick and tile fragments	Made ground filling truncation 318	0.82 - 2 m
314	Soft mid brown silty sand with few small brick/tile fragments	Made ground below level of truncation 318	2 - 2.2 m
315	Soft dark grey loam	Made ground below level of truncation 318	2.2 - 2.26 m
316	Reworked dark grey silty sand	Reworked alluvium	2.26 - 2.4 m+
317	Finely-stratified deposits (not clearly observed or individually distinguished)	Made ground cut by 318	0.7 - 2.4 m+?
318	Near-vertical sided and flat bottomed cut	Truncation horizon signifying removal of pre-existing deposits	0.46 - 0.2 m

**Trench 4**

Maximum dimensions when recorded:      Length: 3.9 m      Width: 0.8 m      Depth: 1.76 m

<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Max depth below surface</b>
400	Small-medium sub-rounded cobbles set in mid brown silty sand	Surface	1.2 m+
401	Brick paviers	Pavement surface	0.1 m
402	Tarmac	Road surface	0.18 m
403	Light yellowish brown sand	Bedding layer for 401	0.1 - 0.2 m
404	Roadstone	Road foundation	0.2 - 0.6 m
405	Concrete and roadstone	Foundation	0.2 - 0.4 m
406	Compact bark brown silty clay	Made ground	0.33 - 1.05 m
407	Concrete	Foundation	0.4 - 0.8 m
408	Light reddish brown sand (not bottomed)	Fill of service trench 409	0.84 - 1.54 m+
409	Steeply-sided cut (not bottomed)	Service trench	0.84 - 1.54 m+
410	Compact dark brown silty clay	Made ground	1 - 1.76 m
411	Mid brown silty sand	Made ground	0.46 - 1.2 m

**Trench 5**

Maximum dimensions when recorded:      Length: 6.5 m      Width: 0.6 m      Depth: 2 m

<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Max depth below surface</b>
500	Brick rubble in light brown silty sand with common mortar fragments	Made ground	0.24 - 1.08 m
501	Large roughly-hewn sandstone blocks bonded with greyish brown sand/clay silt	Wall	1.08 - 2 m+
502	Greyish brown silty sand	Fill of service trench	0.24 – 1 m
503	Mid greyish brown silty sand with occasional tile, charcoal and mortar flecks	Made ground	0.5 - 1.1 m

<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Max depth below surface</b>
504	Light greyish brown silty sand with moderate charcoal fragments and occasional tile fragments and mortar flecks	Made ground	1.84 - 2 m+
505	Mid greyish brown sandy silt with lenses of charcoal and few orange mottles	Made ground	2 m+
506	4+ courses bricks and sandstone blocks bonded with light reddish brown sandy mortar	Wall	1.3 - 1.8 m+
507	Large squared sandstone blocks built to courses	Former quayside wall	0.5 - 1.2 m+
508	Large squared sandstone blocks built to courses	Present riverside wall	c.3 m
509	Loose sandstone rubble	Made ground/demolition debris	0.2 - 1.3 m
510	Loose sandstone rubble in mid greyish brown silty sand matrix	Made ground/demolition debris	0.24 - 1.3 m

**Trench 6**

Maximum dimensions when recorded: Length: 4 m Width: 0.6 m Depth: 0.7 m

<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Max depth below surface</b>
600	Tarmac	Road surface	0.06 m
601	Roadstone	Road foundation	0.06 - 0.15 m
602	Reddish brown silty sand	Made ground	0.15 - 0.7 m

**Trench 7**

Maximum dimensions when recorded: Length: 2.7 m Width: 0.9 m Depth: 1.14 m

<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Max depth below surface</b>
700	Brick paviers	Pavement surface	0.08 m
701	Light yellowish brown sand	Bedding layer for 701	0.08 - 0.18 m

---

<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Max depth below surface</b>
702	Concrete and roadstone	Foundation	0.18 - 0.33 m
703	Concrete/dark brown silty sand with few small concrete fragments	Made ground	0.33 - 1.14 m
704	Medium angular sandstone block on bed	Remains of surface?	1.06 - 1.14 m