

EVALUATION OF LAND
ADJACENT TO LITTLE
ORCHARD, MAIN STREET,
CLEEVE PRIOR, NEAR EVESHAM,
WORCESTERSHIRE

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Robin Jackson and Erica Darch

Part 1 Project summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out on land adjacent to Little Orchard, Main Street, Cleeve Prior, near Evesham, Worcestershire (NGR SP 0858 4932; Fig 1). It was undertaken on behalf of Roland Jones Homes Limited in advance of construction of four houses.

Although the surrounding area has produced significant quantities of Iron Age and Romano-British finds, and the site lies within an area of medieval settlement, only a single boundary ditch and a small number of finds of post-medieval and later date were present. It therefore appears that the site lies in an area between areas of Romano-British occupation and away from areas of medieval activity, probably within field systems surrounding the settlements.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on behalf of Roland Jones Homes Limited (the client) of land adjacent to Little Orchard, Main Street, Cleeve Prior, near Evesham, Worcestershire (NGR SP 0858 4932; Fig 1). The client is to construct four houses with associated garages, services and access, for which a planning permission has been granted by Wychavon District Council (reference number W/02/0096). The site is considered to be of archaeological interest (WSM 20008) and a condition of the permission was that an agreed programme of archaeological works be completed in advance of construction.

The project conforms to a brief prepared by the Planning Advisory Section of Worcestershire County Council (20 February 2002 *Brief for a programme of archaeological work at land adjacent to Little Orchard*) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (AS 2002) and approved.

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

1.2 Aims

The aims of the project 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, and inform a subsequent programme of small-scale excavation to further investigate their date, function and importance prior to commencement of construction.

More specifically, in the event of significant archaeological deposits being present, the project aimed to:

- examine the character and function of any settlement present;
- investigate any evidence for the rural economy;
- contribute to regional and, if appropriate, national research frameworks.

2. Methods

2.1 Documentary search

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). In addition the following sources were also consulted:

Cartographic sources

- Map dated 1772 (WRO BA 1691/7 r 971.2)
- Ordnance Survey 1st edition (XLIII NW; 1891);
- Ordnance Survey 2nd edition (XLIII NW; 1905).

Documentary sources

- Place-names (Mawer and Stenton 1927).
- County histories (VCH 1913).
- Domesday (Thorn and Thorn 1983).

2.2 **Fieldwork**

2.2.1 **Fieldwork strategy**

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (AS 2002). No adjustments were made to the fieldwork strategy as a result of the documentary search. The following techniques were considered for use but were not considered to be appropriate for this project; geophysical survey, fieldwalking and topographic/earthwork survey.

Fieldwork was undertaken on 25 September 2002.

Three trenches, amounting to just over 140m² in area, were excavated over the site area of approximately 2000m², representing a sample of over 5%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice (AS 1995). Trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

Due to the absence of deposits of any potential significance within the trenches it was not considered necessary to undertake any further investigation of the development area.

2.2.2 **Structural analysis**

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural and artefactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

2.3 **Artefacts**

2.3.1 **Artefact recovery policy**

All artefacts were retrieved by hand and retained in accordance with the service manual (CAS 1995 as amended). Artefacts were recovered both during machining and from stratified deposits.

2.3.2 **Method of analysis**

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. Artefacts were identified, quantified, dated and recorded on a database (Microsoft Access 97). A *terminus post quem* (TPQ) was assigned to each stratified context. The pottery was examined and recorded by fabric type according to the fabric reference series maintained by the Service (Hurst and Rees 1992).

2.4 **Environment**

No deposits warranting sampling for environmental analysis were identified.

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, archaeological and historical context**

The site is situated on the south-west side of the village of Cleeve Prior, a short distance to the west of St Andrew's Church (Fig 1). The site comprises a rough grassed area, small orchard and overgrown garden within a plot attached to the property known as Little Orchard.

The solid geology is of Jurassic Blue Lias (Geological Survey of Great Britain, 1:50,000 series, Sheet 200, Stratford-upon-Avon) overlain by soils of the Haselor association (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1:50,000 series, sheet 150, Soils of Worcester and the Malverns District).

The blue lias and overlying soils form a north-south aligned ridge running down the eastern side of a scarp sloping to the River Avon below. This ridge has provided a focus for former activity from the early prehistoric onwards. Romano-British activity is particularly evident and this is focussed upon a Roman road or track (WSM 30621) which runs along the ridge to the west of the development area (Cox 1959, 65–7).

Archaeological sites registered with the SMR and within 500m of the evaluation area have been considered, a full list of which is held in the project archive. Of particular note are two concentrations of Romano-British and earlier activity, both of which were recorded by a survey of Romano-British occupation sites in the Vale of Evesham undertaken in the late 1960's (Cox 1967; Sites 14 and 15).

The first of these (Cox Site 14; Cox 1967) is evidenced by a major concentration of Romano-British finds centred approximately 600m to the north-west of the development site (WSM 2794, 4021 and 17803). This area, known locally as Froglands, lies adjacent to the Roman road (WSM 30621) and extends over a couple of fields. It has produced nearly 200 Romano-British coins, approximately 80 brooches, pottery and a range of small finds of lead and bronze. A skeleton has also been recorded accompanied by a Severn Valley Ware tankard and a tazza (Webster 1959, 67). A date range of 1st through to 4th century is represented. A brooch (WSM 22898) of 6th century date has also been found and attests to early medieval activity in this area, possibly indicating the location of a cemetery.

The second site (Cox Site 15; Cox 1967) lies to the immediate north-east of the development area. Here, a cast bronze object of Iron Age date and a range of Romano-British finds of 2nd to 3rd century date have been recorded (WSM 2795 and 2836). To the north of these is an undated cropmark enclosure identified through aerial photography (WSM 5482).

Apart from these areas of activity a couple of other recorded sites and historical sources are worthy of mention. To the south-west a recent programme of fieldwalking has produced a thin scatter of prehistoric flint, as well as Romano-British and later pottery probably resulting from manuring of arable land with domestic refuse (Hurst 1999).

At Domesday, the monastery of Worcester is documented as having held land at Cleeve Prior (Thorn and Thorn 1982; VCH III, 308) and the current settlement dates from the medieval period. A number of buildings of medieval date still survive, including the church (WSM 2807) which has elements dating back as far as the 12th century. Other medieval buildings include the grange (WSM 21702), the 16th century manor (WSM 2805) and dovecote (WSM

2806), and the King's Arms (WSM 12981). A 14th century cross (WSM 2204) also dates to this period.

Notable post-medieval buildings include a watermill (WSM 22316) on the Avon which probably occupies the same location as the mill documented at Domesday (VCH III, 310).

4. **Analysis and discussion**

The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1. The trenches and features recorded are shown in Fig 2.

4.1 **Deposits**

All three trenches contained a simple sequence of turf and topsoil (contexts 101, 200 and 300) overlying a subsoil (contexts 100, 201 and 301) and natural (contexts 102, 202 and 302). Soils were generally light, dry and fine with varying sand and silt content. They were much disturbed by roots from hedges and trees and contained small pebbles and stones. The natural was decayed and much weathered limestone.

A number of land drains (fill/cut numbers 103, 104, 105 and 206) cut into the natural and comprised limestone rubble in narrow trenches. Although not directly dated by ceramics, their form and the presence of post-medieval pottery and tile in the topsoil and subsoil suggest that they may be of 18th century origin.

A further drain (fill/cut 304) was recorded in Trench 3 and cut a linear feature (fill/cut 303). The linear feature was observed over *c* 2.00m and was felt to represent a ditch. It extended to both north and south of the trench but was not observed to continue to the north where its projected alignment would be anticipated (see Fig 2). Although this did not continue as projected, examination of cartographic sources suggests that this represents a former property boundary shown on both the 1st and 2nd edition Ordnance Survey of 1891 and 1905. This boundary is not present on the 1772 map and thus can be suggested as a late 18th or 19th century creation as indicated by 19th century pottery recovered from its fill.

4.2 **Artefact analysis**

The assemblage dated entirely to the post-medieval and modern periods and was mostly highly abraded. The largest group of material was pottery, consisting of fourteen sherds of fabric 78 (post-medieval red ware) and four sherds of fabric 85 (modern stone china). The sherd of fabric 78 from context 300 was quite large and unabraded. There were four pieces of brick and two of tile, also very small and abraded, but probably post-medieval in date, and two pieces of bone. The only stratified context, (context 303), can be dated to the modern period by two very small sherds of fabric 85.

The assemblage was too small to draw many conclusions from, other than that there was some activity in the vicinity in the post-medieval and modern periods.

5. **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 evaluation was undertaken on behalf of Roland Jones Homes Limited on land at Little Orchard, Main Street, Cleeve Prior, Evesham, Worcestershire (NGR ref SP 0858 4932; SMR

ref WSM 31972). Although the area contains extensive evidence for areas of Romano-British and other former occupation, only post-medieval land-drains and a former field or property boundary were encountered.

6. **The archive**

The archive consists of:

- 1 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 3 Abbreviated context records AS40
- 3 Trench record sheets AS41
- 22 Colour transparencies
- 22 Black and white photographs
- 2 Scale drawings
- 1 Folder with annotated photocopies of maps and SMR printouts
- 1 Box of finds
- 1 Computer disk
- 1 Report

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

7. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project:

Mike Deering and Gordon Gambling of Roland Jones Homes Limited (the Client) and Mike Glyde from the Planning Advisory Service, Worcestershire County Archaeological Service (the Curator).

8. **Personnel**

Fieldwork and report preparation was led by Robin Jackson who was also the project manager responsible for the quality of the project. Fieldwork was undertaken with the assistance of Richard Lee, finds analysis by Erica Darch and illustration by Carolyn Hunt. The report was edited by Hal Dalwood.

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10. **Abbreviations**

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

WRO Worcestershire Records Office.

SMR Sites and Monuments Record.

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30m Width: 1.8m Depth: 0.50m

Orientation: E-W

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Thickness of deposit and Depth below ground surface (b.g.s)
101	Topsoil	Turf and topsoil. Dark brown-black. Fine silty soil. Root disturbance from turf, and on a larger scale from adjacent trees. Occasional medium sized stones.	0.10m
100	Subsoil	Light-Dark Brown sub-soil. Fine sandy particles, quite well sorted. Occasional pieces of tile and limestone. Root disturbance from adjacent trees.	0.30m 0.10m b.g.s (top) 0.40–0.45m bgs (bottom)
102	Natural	Mixed natural. Limestone mixed with sub-soil, approximately 60% limestone. Occasional small stones. Some root disturbance into natural from adjacent trees.	0.45m (b.g.s.) top

Features/Other deposits.

Contexts	Classification	Description	Dimensions
103	Limestone drain	Cut into natural. Top of drain appearing at the lowest machined level in trench. Orientation N-S/E-W. Width of drain (visible)ca. 0.50m. Comprised broken limestone fill in near vertical sided cut.	Width: 50cm Length: 1.8m (observed)
104	Limestone drain	As 103	
105	Limestone drain	As 103	

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 20m Width: 1.8m Depth: ca. 65cm

Orientation: E-W

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Thickness of deposit and Depth below ground surface (b.g.s)
200	Topsoil	Turf and topsoil. Dry, fine, dark silty sand	0.15m
201	Subsoil	Dry, dark brown-black. Well-sorted deposit with occasional small stones and pebbles. Occasional root action from adjacent trees	0.15–0.20m 0.15m b.g.s. (top) 0.30-0.35m b.g.s (bottom)
202	Natural	Eroded limestone mixed with sub-soil. Approximately 60% limestone with occasional scatters of small stones.	ca. 0.40m b.g.s.

Features/Other deposits.

Contexts	Classification	Description	Dimensions
203	Layer	Crumbling layer of limestone	
204	Limestone drain	Top of drain apparent in natural as pieces of broken stone set in narrow cut. Alignment S–E to N–W.	Width 0.50m
205	Natural feature		
206	Limestone drain	As 204. Alignment N to S	Width 0.50m

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 25m Width: 1.8m Depth: 45cm

Orientation: N/S and E/W

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Thickness of deposit and Depth below ground surface (b.g.s)
300	Topsoil	Turf and topsoil. Dry, fine dark brown silty soil. Root disturbance from turf and nearby hedge	0.15m
301	Subsoil	Compacted sand. Well-sorted and relatively clean deposit, occasional small stones and pebbles. Root disturbance from adjacent hedge.	0.12m 0.15m b.g.s. (top) 0.27m b.g.s. (bottom)
302	Natural	Dry, eroded limestone, occasional scatters of small stones. Root disturbance from adjacent hedge.	0.27m b.g.s. (top)

Features/Other deposits.

Contexts	Classification	Description	Dimensions
303	Ditch	Aligned N/S. Fill is compacted silty soil and very dry. Light brown. Occasional small stones. Tiny flecks of charcoal. Root disturbance from adjacent hedge	Width 0.35m Length 2m (observed)
304	Drain	N/S drain. Cuts 303	Width 0.20m