

EXCAVATION ON LAND OFF
BUCKLAND ROAD,
CHILDSWICKHAM,
WORCESTERSHIRE

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Excavation on land off Buckland Road, Childswickham, Worcestershire

Tom Vaughan

Part 1 Project summary

An archaeological excavation was undertaken on land off Buckland Road, Childswickham, Worcestershire (NGR: SP 0721 3888). It was undertaken on behalf of Mr P. Taylor, who intends to develop the site with a single residential dwelling for which a planning application has been submitted. The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological site was present and if so to indicate its location, nature and date.

The excavation identified a small number of post-medieval and modern features in the form of gullies, pits and postholes. The topsoil and subsoil were noted to be relatively shallow, indicating that the site may have undergone substantial disturbance. Cartographic evidence indicates that the site was part of a larger field, surrounded by orchards, prior to its development as a rear garden for Childswickham Inn in the late 19th century. There were no finds or features pre-dating the post-medieval period, even though it lies in an area of substantial prehistoric and Roman activity. However this has so far been found to be restricted largely only to areas of free-draining sand and gravel, while clay predominates on the present site.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological excavation was undertaken on land off Buckland Road, Childswickham, Worcestershire (NGR: SP 0721 3888), on behalf of Mr P. Taylor. He intends to develop the site with a single residential dwelling and has submitted a planning application to Wychavon District Council (reference W/02/0991), who consider that a site of archaeological interest may be affected (WSM 27238).

1.2 Project parameters

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

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 excavation were to establish the presence and significance of archaeological deposits, and of artefactual and ecofactual assemblages.

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

- Ordnance Survey 1st edition, 1890, 6" to 1 mile.
- Ordnance Survey 2nd edition, 1903, 6" to 1 mile.
- Ordnance Survey 3rd edition, 1924, 1:10,000.
- Ordnance Survey 1999, 1:10,000.

Documentary sources

- Inclosure award (no map) WCRO s700:33, BA961.
- Site archives (from earlier excavations, evaluations etc).

2.2 **Fieldwork**

2.2.1 **Fieldwork strategy**

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (AS 2002b), and fieldwork was undertaken on the 1st and 2nd of August. The full footprint of the house foundations, amounting to 126m² in area, was excavated over the site area of 443m², representing 29% of the total.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 180° 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 and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995).

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 the majority of the finds recovered from the site. All other artefacts were recovered from stratified deposits.

2.3.2 **Method of analysis**

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. Artefacts were identified, quantified, dated and recorded on a Microsoft Access 1997 database. A *terminus post quem* was assigned to each stratified context.

Pottery was examined and recorded by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by the Service (Hurst and Rees 1992).

2.4 **Environment**

2.4.1 **Sampling policy**

The environmental sampling strategy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 4). There were no waterlogged or organic rich deposits identified as suitable for environmental sampling.

2.5 **The methods in retrospect**

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

3. **Topographical and archaeological context**

Childswickham lies 5.5km to the southeast of Evesham and 2.5km northwest of Broadway. It is on flat ground below an escarpment of the Cotswold, on a tributary of the Badsey Brook, itself a tributary of the River Avon to the northwest. The development site comprises a sub-rectangular parcel of land on the west side of the village. It is a grassed flat area with a number of mature trees, surrounded by hedges to the south and east, and with temporary panel fencing to the north and on the Buckland Road frontage to the west. It was formerly part of the rear garden of Childswickham Inn, and is situated at approximately 55m AOD (Figs. 1 and 2).

A large number of Roman finds have been discovered in the area, with evidence of extensive settlement to the north of the present village, which had Iron Age and Bronze Age antecedents (WSM 31100). Earthworks of enclosures exist to the northwest and west, which have been interpreted to be of prehistoric or Roman origin (WSM 01864 and 04561). In addition a dense scatter of evidence of Iron Age and Roman material has been identified at Burnside Cottage to the west, indicating that the area was extensively utilised in these periods (Napthan and Ratkai 1996).

The village itself is of, at the latest, medieval origin (WSM 26888) while the present parish church of St Mary incorporates a number of mid 12th century elements (WSM 01823; Pevsner, 1968, 118-9). Earthworks of abandoned tofts and crofts north of the church indicate that the village suffered a degree of abandonment and contraction in the medieval period (WSM 04853). Extensive ridge and furrow surrounds the village, including a number of fields adjacent to the development site (WSM 06697 and 24133).

Geology and soils

The site lies within the area of the Badsey 1 Soil Association (511h). This comprises well drained calcareous and non-calcareous fine loamy soils over limestone gravel, some deep fine loamy soils over gravel, and similar but shallower soils affected by groundwater. The underlying geology is river terrace gravel. However, immediately to the north and east the Evesham 2 Soil Association (411b) predominates, while immediately to south is the Oxpasture Soil Association (572h). The former comprises slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils, and some slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged non-calcareous clayey and fine loamy, or fine silty over clayey, soils. (The underlying geological deposit is Jurassic and Cretaceous clay. The latter comprises fine loamy over clayey and clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging, plus some slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clayey soils. In this case the geology is drift over Jurassic and Cretaceous clay shale (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983).

4. **Description**

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figs.3-4.

4.1 **Phase 1 Natural deposits**

The natural matrix was found to vary across the site. On the north side it predominantly comprised a blue grey clay with extensive patches of limestone gravel. However to the south a light yellow off-white clay, overlying sterile blue clay was observed.

4.2 **Phase 2 Post-medieval/Modern Deposits**

Five of the nine recorded features were found to contain post-medieval and modern material. The other features have been dated by association to the same period, as they are of similar character and contained the same broad fill. The features comprise two shallow parallel

gullies on the north side of the site, aligned north-south, a large pit, four small pits or large postholes, and two postholes. There is no defined pattern although three of the postholes [105, 117 and 119] form a north-south alignment, while pits/postholes [107] and [109] lie adjacent. A number of well defined modern service trenches and areas of root activity were noted but not recorded (Figs. 3-4).

5. **Artefact Analysis** (Erica B. Darch)

All the artefacts recovered were either post-medieval or modern in date. They were moderately abraded. Contexts 110, 116 and 100 had a *terminus post quem* of modern, 108 was post-medieval (18th century) and 114 and 104 could not be dated. The assemblage contained 23 sherds of pottery from only two fabrics: 17 sherds of modern stone china, (fabric 85), and 6 sherds of post-medieval red ware (fabric 78).

The largest group of material recovered was animal bone, some of which had butchery marks.

There was also post-medieval and modern tile and brick. These were more abraded than the other artefacts. A large fragment of stone (which may have been a weight, but was too broken to be certain) and piece of whetstone (J D Hurst, pers comm) with indentations which may have been from needle sharpening were recovered from context 100. A small number of pieces of glass, clay pipe, burnt stone and metal finds (mostly nails), were also recovered.

6. **Discussion**

The subsoil was found to be fairly shallow over the excavation area and cut through by the majority of features recorded on site, which were determined to be of post-medieval and modern origin. The site lies in the back of the village pub's garden. From cartographic evidence the pub was erected in the last decade of the 19th century, but prior to this the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map indicates that the development site had been part of a larger field of unknown use (Fig. 5). It also indicates that the majority of the surrounding fields were orchards. Therefore it is likely that the field itself was used for an associated activity or was under pasture.

The features recorded on site were all of post-medieval and modern origin, comprising two gullies, a large pit, four small pits or large postholes, and two postholes. They do not conform to any clear pattern indicative of structural activity, although three of the postholes were on a north-south alignment, and two pits/postholes lie adjacent, suggesting that they formed a boundary fence. There were neither features nor finds that could be identified to predate the post-medieval period.

The lack of Roman activity recorded on the site is striking, considering the extensive occupation evidence from the vicinity. However, the Roman occupation largely lay on sand and gravel to the northeast, while the natural matrix on the present site was predominantly clay, with a small amount of gravel to the north. The ground at Buckland Road would have been of poorer quality, both for agriculture and for settlement due to the impermeability of the clay, and this may explain the absence of earlier settlement features in this part of Childswickham village.

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 excavation was undertaken on behalf of Mr Phil Taylor on land off Buckland Road, Childswickham, Worcestershire (NGR: SP 0721 3888; WSM 31935). The excavation identified a small number of post-medieval and modern features in the form of gullies, pits and postholes. The topsoil and subsoil were noted to be relatively shallow, indicating that the site may have undergone substantial disturbance. Cartographic evidence indicates that the site was part of a larger field, surrounded by orchards, prior to its development as a rear garden for Childswickham Inn in the late 19th century. There were no finds or features pre-dating the post-medieval period, even though it lies in an area where substantial prehistoric and Roman activity has been proven. However this has been found to be restricted largely to areas of free-draining sand and gravel, while clay predominates on the present site, and this may explain the absence of earlier settlement features in this part of Childswickham village.

8. **The archive**

The archive consists of:

- 5 Context number catalogue AS5
- 20 Abbreviated context records AS40
- 2 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 1 Drawing number catalogue AS4
- 1 Levels record AS19
- 1 Colour transparency film
- 1 Black and white photographic films
- 1 Scale drawings
- 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

9. Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project: the client Phil Taylor and Mike Glyde, Worcestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist.

10. 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 assisted by Marc Steinmeister, with finds analysis by Erica Darch and illustration by Carolyn Hunt.

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12. Abbreviations

NMR National Monuments Record.

SMR Sites and Monuments Record.

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

WCRO Worcestershire County Records Office.

Appendix 1 Context descriptions

Maximum dimensions: Length: 12m Width: 11m Depth: 0.28-0.46m

Orientation: north-south

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface
100	Topsoil	Dark grey brown slightly silty clay. Turfed with frequent root activity. Compact and cohesive. Diffuse boundary with [101] below. Occasional limestone fragments, charcoal, animal bone, post-medieval and modern finds.	0.00-0.30m
101	Subsoil	Light fawn brown clay. Compact and cohesive. Diffuse boundary with [100] above and [102] below. Cut by modern service trenches.	0.30-0.40m
102	Natural	Variable natural matrix. North: blue grey clay with extensive patches of limestone gravel. South: light yellow off-white clay overlying blue clay. Compact and cohesive. Diffuse boundary with [101] above. Cut by modern service trenches.	0.35m +
103	Pit	Sub-circular feature. Shallow concave sides curving to a shallow concave base. Cut by a modern service trench. 0.60m wide, 0.80m long. Filled by [104].	0.40-0.68m
104	Fill	Mid grey brown silty clay. Compact and cohesive. 5% limestone rubble, 2-3% charcoal flecks, 1% brick/tile flecks. Fill of [103].	0.40-0.68m
105	Posthole/Pit	Sub-circular feature. Steep straight sides curving to a flat base. 0.58m wide, 0.70m long. 100% excavated. Filled by [106].	0.32-0.55m
106	Fill	Mid grey brown silty clay. Compact and cohesive. 1% limestone flecks, 1% charcoal flecks, 1% brick/tile flecks. Fill of [105].	0.32-0.55m
107	Posthole/Pit	Sub-circular feature. Irregular shallow sides curving to a flattish base. 0.78m wide, 0.80m long. 100% excavated. Filled by [108].	0.34-0.45m
108	Fill	Mid grey black silty clay. Compact and cohesive. 2-3% limestone flecks and rubble, 2-3% charcoal flecks, 1% brick/tile flecks. Fill of [107].	0.34-0.45m
109	Pit	Sub-circular feature. Steep concave sides curving to a flat base. 0.73m wide, 0.75m long. Filled by [110].	0.34-0.45m

110	Fill	Mid grey silty clay. Compact-friable. 2-3% limestone flecks, 2-3% charcoal flecks, 1% brick/tiles flecks, 2-3% gravel. Fill of [109].	0.34-0.45m
111	Gully	Linear feature aligned north-south. Shallow concave sides curving to a concave base. 0.43m wide, >1.25m long. Sub-rounded terminus to the south. 100% excavated. Filled by [112].	0.28-0.39m
112	Fill	Mid to dark grey silty clay. Compact and cohesive. 2-3% limestone flecks, 1% charcoal flecks, 1% brick/tiles flecks, 2-3% gravel. Fill of [111].	0.28-0.39m
113	Gully	Linear feature aligned north-south. Shallow concave sides curving to a concave base. 0.44m wide, >0.65m long. Rounded terminus to the south. 100% excavated. Filled by [114].	0.28-0.41m
114	Fill	Dark brown black silty clay. Friable. 1% brick/tiles flecks, 5% gravel. Fill of [113].	0.28-0.41m
115	Pit	Sub-circular feature. Irregular shallow sides to a concave base. 1.24m wide, 1.50m long. 100% excavated. Filled by [116].	0.35-0.61m
116	Fill	Light to mid grey silty clay. Compact-friable. 2% limestone flecks and fragments, 1% charcoal flecks, 2-3% brick/tiles flecks. Fill of [115].	0.35-0.61m
117	Posthole	Sub-circular feature. Steep concave sides curving to a flat base. 0.35m wide, 0.40m long. 100% excavated. Filled by [118].	0.27-0.31m
118	Fill	Mid grey brown silty clay. Compact and cohesive. 2-3% limestone flecks, 1% charcoal flecks, 5% gravel. Fill of [117].	0.27-0.31m
119	Posthole	Sub-circular feature. Shallow concave sides curving to a concave base. 0.40m wide, 0.57m long. 100% excavated. Filled by [120].	0.23-0.32m
120	Fill	Mid grey brown silty clay. Compact and cohesive. 2-3% limestone flecks, 1% charcoal flecks, 1% brick/tile fragments. Fill of [119].	0.23-0.32m

