

Archaeological Watching Brief at Red Hill Primary School, Worcester, Worcestershire



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Jamie Wilkins

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Red Hill Primary School, Worcester, Worcestershire (NGR SO 386150 253976). It was commissioned by Robert Lewin-Jones of Jacobs (Agent) acting on behalf of Worcestershire County Council, in advance of construction of new classroom facilities, a community room extension, a new hard play area and new parking areas.

No archaeological features or deposits were observed within the four areas of groundworks. The stratigraphic deposits recorded, indicated heavy ground disturbance within the investigation area. Subsequently, all but one of the excavated trenches recorded the presence of made ground material, with some evidence of truncation to the natural red marl clays.

It is highly likely that the ground disturbance around Redhill Primary School is related to various phases of construction of the school itself. With the *Cotswold Line* railway line situated *circa* 20m to the east, landscaping associated to the construction of the railway also remains a possibility.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Red Hill Primary School, Worcester, Worcestershire (NGR SO 386150 253976; Figure 1). It was commissioned by Robert Lewin-Jones of Jacobs (Agent) acting on behalf of Worcestershire County Council, in advance of construction of new classroom facilities, a community room extension, new hard play and parking areas, and associated SUDS work, for which a planning application has been submitted (reference 17/000013/REG3).

The proposed development site was considered to include potential heritage assets, the significance of which may be affected by the application.

No specific brief was prepared by the Curator; however, this project conforms to the generality of briefs previously issued. A project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2017) and approved by the Curator.

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a), and *Guidelines for archaeological work in Worcester* (Worcester City Council, November 2016 draft).

2 Aims

The aims and objectives of the watching brief were to observe, investigate and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible within the constraints of the Client's groundworks.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Jamie Wilkins (BA (hons.)); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2015 and has been practicing archaeology since 2013, assisted by Richard Bradley (BA (hons.), MA; ACIfA) and Peter Lovett (BSc (hons.)). The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Robin Jackson (BA (hons.); ACIfA). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA).

3.2 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER).

3.3 List of sources consulted

Cartographic sources

- 1st edition, 1886, Ordnance Survey Mapping, Sheet XXXIII, 6":1 mile
- 1905, Ordnance Survey Mapping, Sheet XXXIII, 6":1 mile
- 1930, Ordnance Survey Mapping, Sheet XXXIII, 6":1 mile

Documentary sources

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

3.4 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2017).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 29 August and 14 November 2017. The site reference number used by the Historic Environment Record to record archaeological "events", and site code used in the archive is WCM 102248.

The scope of the watching brief encompassed the monitoring of groundworks in four main areas. In the south of site these comprised a temporary compound strip, a new hard play area, and the main extension foundation strip. The final area comprised a strip for a new car park, following the demolition of an existing building. These areas are presented in Figure 2.

Following the results observed within the above areas, and subsequent discussion with the Curator, it was agreed that the monitoring of impending service trenches was unlikely to be of value.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Any subsequent investigation 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 Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012).

3.5 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.

3.6 Artefact methodology

3.6.1 Artefact recovery policy

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no artefacts pre-dating the modern period were identified.

3.7 Environmental archaeology methodology

3.7.1 Sampling policy

Sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

3.8 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

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

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and current land-use

The site is situated in the southeast of Worcester, and lies between London Road in the north, and Arundel Drive in the south. The site is bounded immediately to the west by the Cotswold Line railway line and by the gardens of properties on Sebright Avenue to the east. The site is relatively flat, but situated at *circa* 36m AOD (*above ordnance datum*), is significantly lower than London Road at *circa* 40m AOD.

The bedrock geology for the site is listed as Sidmouth Mudstone Formation, which is fluvial, lacustrine and marine in origin (BGS 2017). No associated superficial deposits are identified by the British Geological Survey.

The site is currently in use as a primary school, with associated car parking, hard and soft play areas.

4.2 Archaeological background

There are no known designated or undesignated heritage assets within the investigation area. Additionally, the site has not previously been subjected to any archaeological works.

Evidence of prehistoric activity within the immediate vicinity of the site is scarce with no features or deposits recorded. Some prehistoric evidence, comprising a residual flint flake is recorded *circa* 530m to the south off Battenhall Road (WCM101928; Mann 2017).

A Roman coin, dating to the 1st century AD and the reign of Domitian, was recovered during development works at Lark Hill Crescent, *circa* 200m to the north (WCM100707).

During the 19th century a significant hoard of 12th century, medieval coins and jewellery was discovered at Lark Hill (WCM100963). The hoard comprised 7 rings, 208 silver English coins, and 21 foreign (likely French) coins. The coins were minted during the reign of Henry II (1154-1189) and the hoard is likely to represent a deliberate deposition of valuables for protection.

Extant ridge and furrow is recorded c 300m to the north (WCM91137) and is consistent with cartographic courses indicating this area as predominantly agricultural during the medieval and post-medieval periods.

The site of the Battle of Worcester is located c 350m northwest of Redhill Primary, and further civil war earthworks have been identified c 420m south, also off Arundel Drive, Battenhall (WCM99848). Subsequently, it remains possible that the investigation area was host to combat or other civil war related activity.

Between 1845 and 1854 the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton railway (Cotswold Line) was constructed (WSM31664). The line between Worcester and Evesham was opened in 1852, and a section of this stretch forms the modern boundary of Redhill Primary School. Construction of the railway line is likely to have disturbed much of the ground within the immediate vicinity.

5 Results

5.1 Structural analysis

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

5.1.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was excavated to a depth of 0.22m below ground surface (*bgs*). No natural substrates or archaeological features were exposed within this trench.

A firm, mid reddish-brown, clayey-loam topsoil (100) overlay the entirety of the area, and was recorded to a depth of 0.22m. Below the topsoil, a made ground deposit was exposed. This deposit (101) comprised a mix of topsoil and gravels with modern waste such as terram sheeting. This is likely to represent made ground relating to an earlier phase of construction at the school.

5.1.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was excavated to a depth of 0.58m *bgs*. No archaeological features or deposits were observed.

A topsoil was observed to a depth of 0.28m, and overlay a firm, mid greyish-brown, clayey-silt subsoil (202). The subsoil deposit contained frequent charcoal flecking, occasional brick fragments and was 0.30m in depth. A small area of firm, red marl clay geology was exposed in the southeast corner of this trench, at a depth of 0.58m *bgs*.

5.1.3 Trench 3

Following the demolition of the former caretaker's house in the north of site, Trench 3 was excavated to a depth of 0.32m *bgs*. No natural substrates or archaeological features were exposed within this trench.

A friable, silty-clay topsoil (300) was recorded in the south of this trench, and was observed to contain copious amounts of modern waste, including but not limited to, plastics, glass, CBM and concrete. A further made-ground deposit (301) was observed, and comprised a dark black silty-sand with frequent rubble, clinker, brick and glass.

5.1.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.27m *bgs*. No archaeological features or deposits were observed.

The entirety of the trench was overlain by a layer of tarmac and associated hard-core deposits, which recorded a joint depth of 0.47m *bgs*. Below the hard-core, another layer of made ground (402) was observed. This made ground deposit comprised mid greyish-red silty-clay with mixed rubble and modern waste, and had a depth of 0.20m. The natural substrate comprised firm, red marl clay and was present below the made ground deposit (402) at 0.67m *bgs*.

6 Synthesis

No archaeological features or deposits were observed within the confines of this project. The results of the investigations indicate that the land around Redhill Primary School has been heavily disturbed during various phases of earlier construction and subsequently made ground was present in all but one of the trenches.

The nature of the made-ground deposits, in conjunction with the depth at which natural substrates were observed, indicates that there has been considerable truncation in the recent past. The truncation is likely to relate to earlier phases of construction at the school, however, it remains a possibility that some made-ground deposits may relate to landscaping work following the construction of the Cotswold Line railway line (WSM31664), *circa* 20m to the east.

7 The impact of the development

7.1 Impacts on sustainability

The NPPF emphasises the importance of sustainability (DCLG 2012, section 131).

The historic environment is a non-renewable resource and therefore cannot be directly replaced. However mitigation through recording and investigation such as undertaken here also produces an important research dividend that can be used for the better understanding of the area's history and contribute to local and regional research agendas (cf NPPF, DCLG 2012, section 141).

8 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology 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.

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9 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Robert Lewin-Jones (Agent), Andy Thompson (Site Manager), and James Dinn (Curator).

10 Bibliography

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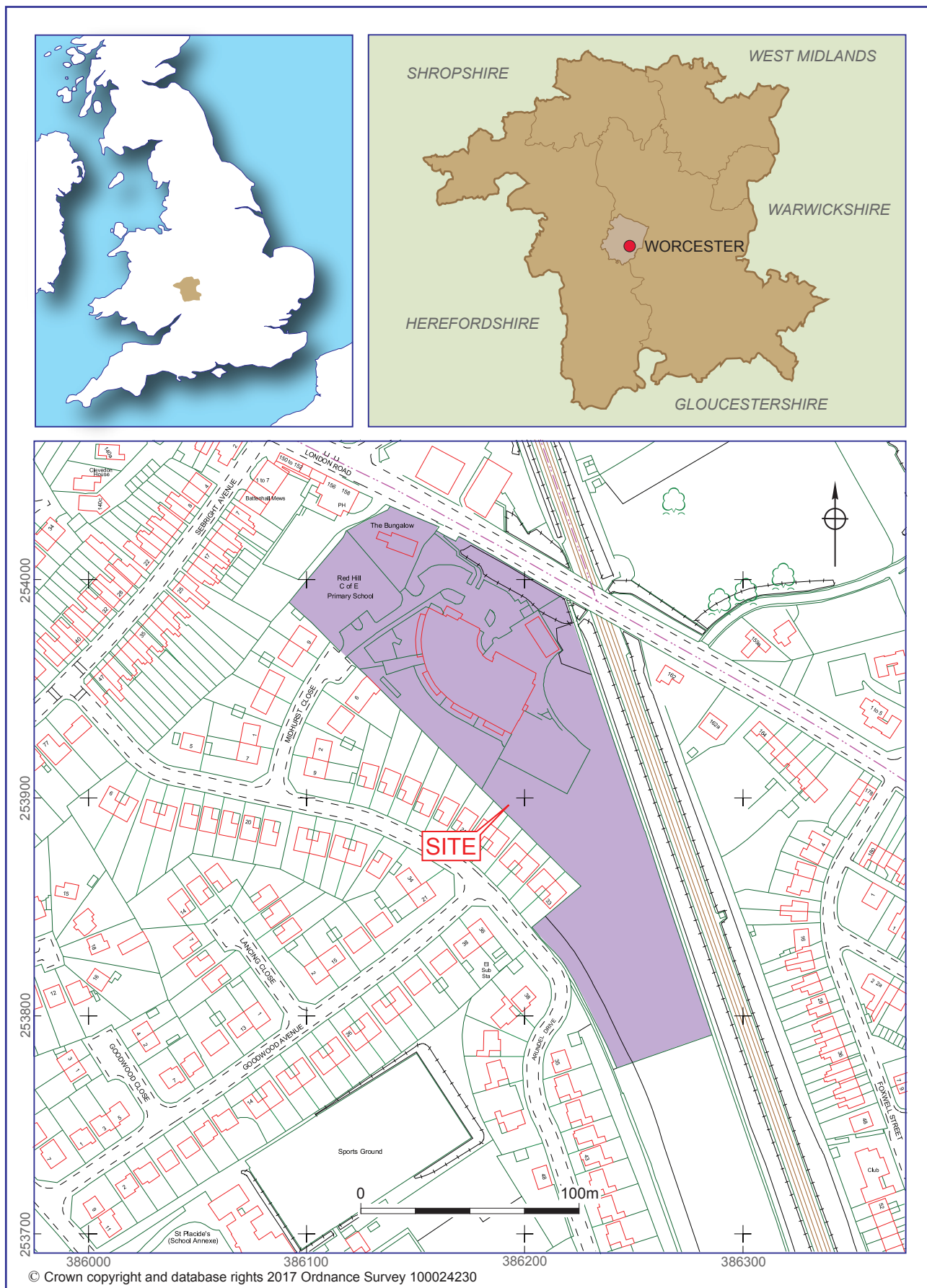
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Worcester City Council 2016 *Guidelines for archaeological work in Worcester*, version 1.1, dated December 2016

Figures



Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench location plan

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1: Trench 1 strip. View northwest. Scales 1m.



Plate 2: Deposits (201) and (202) within Trench 2. View northwest. Scales 1m.



Plate 3: Topsoil within Trench 3 strip. View southeast. Scales 1m.



Plate 4: Demolition / made-ground layer (301) within Trench 3. View southeast. Scales 1m.



Plate 5: Foundation strip within Trench 4. View northeast. Scales 1m.

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Main deposit descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 33.60m Width: 15.60m Depth: 0.22m

Orientation: N/A

Context	Classification	Description	Depth
100	Topsoil	Firm, mid reddish brown, clayey loam, with frequent charcoal flecking, and moderate modern waste.	0.22m
101	Made-ground	Mixed topsoil and gravel deposits with frequent modern waste.	Unexcavated

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 29.10m Width: 14.60m Depth: 0.58m

Orientation: N/A

Context	Classification	Description	Depth
200	Topsoil	Same as (100).	0.28m
201	Subsoil / made-ground	Firm, mid greyish brown, clayey silt with frequent charcoal flecking and occasional brick fragments.	0.30m
202	Natural	Firm, mid brownish red marl clay.	Unexcavated

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 23.70m Width: 20.80m Depth: 0.32m

Orientation: N/A

Context	Classification	Description	Depth
300	Topsoil	Friable / soft, dark brownish black, clay loam with frequent rubble and modern detritus.	0.22m
301	Made-ground	Loose, dark black, silty sand with frequent rubble, clinker, glass, CBM, and some plastics. Present below (300) in the south.	0.10m +

Trench 4

Maximum dimensions: Length: 29.30m Width: 28.70m Depth: 1.27m

Orientation: N/A

Context	Classification	Description	Depth
400	Tarmac surface	Dark blackish grey tarmac surface for play area.	0.11m
401	Hard-core	Loose, light greyish brown hard-core and rubble.	0.36m
402	Made-ground	Moderately compact, mid reddish brown, silty clay with mixed rubble and modern detritus.	0.20m
403	Natural	Firm, mid brownish red clay marl with blue grey siltstone.	0.60m+

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code: WCM 102248)

The archive consists of:

- 2 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 26 Digital photographs
- 4 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcester City Museum and Art Gallery
Museums Worcestershire
Foregate Street
Worcester
WR1 2PW

Tel. Worcester (01905) 25371

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