Archaeological excavation at Grove Farm, Bromyard Road, Rushwick, Worcestershire

> Worcestershire Archaeology for Orion Heritage

October 2020



Find out more online: www.explorethepast.co.uk





GROVE FARM BROMYARD ROAD, RUSHWICK WORCESTERSHIRE

Archaeological excavation report





©Worcestershire County Council

Worcestershire Archaeology Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service The Hive Sawmill Walk The Butts Worcester WR1 3PD



SITE INFORMATION

Site name:	Grove Farm
Site code:	WSM72809
Local planning authority:	Malvern Hills District Council
Planning reference:	16/00972/OUT
Central NGR:	SO 82075 54497
Commissioning client:	Orion Heritage
Client project reference:	PN2069
WA project number:	P5802
WA report number:	2808
HER reference:	WSM72809
Oasis reference:	fieldsec1-391325
Museum accession number:	-

DOCUMENT CONTROL PANEL						
Version	Date	Author	Details	Approved by		
1	21/08/2020	Andrew Walsh	Draft for comment	Tom Vaughan		
2	16/10/2020	Andrew Walsh	Client comments incorporated	Tom Vaughan		

This report is confidential to the client. Worcestershire Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability to any third party to whom this report, or any part of it, is made known. Any such party relies upon this report entirely at their own risk. No part of this report may be reproduced by any means without permission.

CONTENTS

SUMMARY	1
REPORT	2
1 INTRODUCTION 2 1.1 Background to the project 2 1.2 Site location, topography and geology 2	2 2 2
2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	2
3 PROJECT AIMS	2
4 PROJECT METHODOLOGY	3
5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS. 5.1 Introduction 5.1.1 Phase 1: Bronze Age 5.1.2 Phase 2: Post-medieval 5.1.3 Undated	3 3 3 3
6 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE BY ROB HEDGE	4
7 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE BY ELIZABETH PEARSON	4
8 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	6
9 PROJECT PERSONNEL	6
10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ô
11 BIBLIOGRAPHY	6

FIGURES

PLATES

APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF PROJECT ARCHIVE (WSM72809)

APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF DATA FOR HER

Archaeological excavation at Grove Farm, Bromyard Road, Rushwick, Worcestershire

By Andrew Walsh

With contributions by Rob Hedge and Elizabeth Pearson

Illustrations by Laura Templeton

Summary

An archaeological excavation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology in March 2020 at Grove Farm, Bromyard Road, Rushwick, Worcestershire (NGR SO 82075 54497). This comprised the excavation of a 30m by 30m trench. The project was commissioned by Orion Homes on behalf of Bloor Homes Western, in advance of a residential development.

An evaluation at the site had identified a pit dated by radiocarbon dating to the Middle Bronze Age, and part of another feature which appeared likely to be contemporary. The excavation fully exposed this feature, which was revealed to be a pit, and also a third pit nearby. No finds were recovered from the pits although they did yield a quantity of burnt stone, suggesting they may have been used for cooking and/or heating water. However, there was no evidence for in-situ burning and the environmental material recovered from the excavated pits was not suitable for radiocarbon dating. Given their proximity and similar fills (all containing burnt stone), it is considered that all three were contemporary, and they probably related to a brief period of transient activity in the Middle Bronze Age, rather than any longer term or focussed settlement.

Two undated linear features were also identified orientated parallel to one another. Both were filled by similar sterile fills which did not yield any finds and there was no evidence (such as burnt stone or charcoal) to suggest they were contemporary with the pits. One was cut by a post-medieval ditch. This contained post-medieval to modern finds comprising of roof tile and bottle glass and was considered to be the remains of an historic field boundary infilled in the 19th century.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological excavation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in March 2020 at Grove Farm, Bromyard Road, Rushwick, Worcestershire (NGR SO 82075 54497). This comprised the excavation of a 30m by 30m trench. The project was commissioned by Orion Homes on behalf of Bloor Homes Western, in advance of a residential development. Planning permission had been granted subject to a programme of archaeological works (Malvern Hills District Council planning reference 16/00972/OUT). An archaeological evaluation had identified Bronze Age features and the archaeological advisor to the local planning authority, considered that the proposed development had the potential to impact upon further heritage assets.

No brief was provided but the project conforms to the generality of previous briefs. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2020) and approved by the archaeological advisor. The excavation also conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and guidance: for archaeological excavation* (CIfA 2014).

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site was located approximately 800m north of Rushwick, on the corner of the A44 Bromyard Rd, and the A4440 Grove Way. The excavation trench, which lay at approximately 42m AOD, was located on a former Christmas tree plantation. This parcel of land was part of a larger development site comprising 6 hectares.

The underlying bedrock was mapped as Sidmouth Mudstone Formation, overlain by superficial deposits of the Kidderminster Station Member (BGS 2020). The predominant soils on the site were mapped as Newnham Soil Association (541w), described as well drained reddish coarse and fine loamy soils over gravel (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

2 Archaeological and historical background

Previous archaeological investigation of the site consisted of geophysical survey and an archaeological evaluation. It was also understood that the University of Worcester had undertaken archaeological investigations on the site, which had revealed a possible cobbled surface within part of the site. However, the exact extent and location of these investigations was unknown as no report was available.

The geophysical survey did not reveal any archaeological anomalies, but did identify linear trends of uncertain origin, a former field boundary, an infilled pond and traces of ridge and furrow agricultural activity (Davies 2019).

The archaeological evaluation identified two adjacent features within one of the trenches (Vaughan 2019). No finds were recovered from either of the features but radiocarbon dating of charcoal recovered from Pit 303 gave a radiocarbon date of 1660 – 1500 cal BC at 95.4% probability (Middle Bronze Age). This feature was fully excavated during the evaluation. The other feature (305) was not fully exposed during the evaluation, and only partially excavated.

3 Project aims

The aims and scope of the project, as outlined in the WSI, were to further determine the character, extent, date, complexity, integrity, state of preservation and quality of archaeological remains identified in the evaluation, therefore ensuring their preservation by record.

4 **Project methodology**

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2020) and approved by the archaeological advisor to Malvern Hills District Council. Fieldwork was undertaken between 16 and 23 March 2020. One area, measuring 30m by 30m, was excavated, targeted on the Bronze Age features identified during the evaluation. The location of the excavation area is indicated in Figure 1.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket. 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. Features which were determined to be prehistoric in date were fully excavated. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and the excavation area and feature locations were surveyed using a GNSS device with an accuracy limit set at <0.04m. On completion of excavation, the trench was reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

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

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner it is anticipated that it will be deposited at Museums Worcestershire.

5 Archaeological results

5.1 Introduction

The features recorded in the excavation trench are shown in Figures 2 and 3 and Plates 1-4.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Bronze Age

Removal of the topsoil and subsoil revealed the two prehistoric features identified during the evaluation (pit 303 and feature 305) and one further pit (1007), located approximately 4m to the south-west of the original features. Pit 1007 measured approximately 0.8m in diameter and 0.1m in depth (Plate 1). It was filled by a greyish black silty sand (1008), which contained fire cracked pebbles and cobbles but which yielded no finds. An environmental sample from this pit produced oak charcoal.

During the evaluation pit 303 was fully excavated but feature 305 extended beyond the extent of the evaluation trench. As part of the excavation works most of the remaining fill of the pit, now recorded as Pit 1012 was excavated (Plate 2). It was filled by a greyish black silty sand (1013) which contained fire cracked pebbles and cobbles but which yielded no finds. An environmental sample from this pit produced oak charcoal.

None of the pits displayed evidence of in-situ burning (Plates 1 and 2).

5.1.2 Phase 2: Post-medieval

Ditch 1009 measured 1.36m in width and 0.32m in depth, and was orientated broadly north-west to south-east across the excavation trench. It cut Pit 1007 and contained two fills (1010 and 1011). The upper fill yielded post-medieval and modern bottle glass and ceramic roof tile.

5.1.3 Undated

Two parallel features were identified orientated broadly north-west to south-east, spaced approximately 2m apart. Gully 1003/1014 measured approximately 0.5m in width and 0.3m in depth, while Ditch 1005/1016 measured approximately 0.7m in width by 0.15m in depth. Both contained single, largely sterile, fills and no finds were recovered from either feature. They were visible for approximately 25m within the excavation area although to the south they were not visible, probably as

a result of truncation. Ditch 1005/1016 was cut by post-medieval ditch 1009, indicating they were probably post-medieval or earlier in date.

6 Artefactual evidence by Rob Hedge

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). The only artefacts recovered from the site came from the upper fill (1010) of Ditch 1009. They comprised:

- a single (18g) fragment of 19th or early 20th century green bottle glass;
- an abraded piece (86g) of fabric 2c flat ceramic roof tile. This is a long-lived type, produced in the Worcester area from the late 15th to at least the end of the 17th century.

These finds indicate that Ditch 1009 was infilled no earlier than the 19th century. The assemblage is not considered to be significant so will not be retained, unless otherwise required by the archaeological advisor.

7 Environmental evidence by Elizabeth Pearson

Environmental sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). A total of two samples (each of up to 30 litres), were taken from Bronze Age pits on the site (Table 1).

7.1 Processing and analysis

The samples were processed by flotation using a Siraf tank. The flots were collected on a 300µm sieve and the residue retained on a 1mm mesh. This allows for the recovery of items such as small animal bones, molluscs and seeds.

An initial assessment was carried out for both samples, as follows. The residues were scanned by eye and the abundance of each category of environmental remains estimated. A magnet was also used to test for the presence of hammerscale. The flots were scanned using a low power MEIJI stereo light microscope and plant remains identified using modern reference collections maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology, and a seed identification manual (Cappers *et al* 2012). Nomenclature for the plant remains follows Stace (2010).

Charcoal was examined under a low power MEIJI stereo light microscope in order to determine the presence of oak and non-oak charcoal. Subsequently, the cell structure of selected fragments of diffuse porous (non-oak) charcoal were examined in three planes under a MEIJI dark illumination microscope and identifications were carried out using reference texts (Schweingruber 1978 and Hather 2000) and reference slides housed at Worcestershire Archaeology.

Context	Sample	Feature type	Fill of	Period	Sample volume (L)	Volume processed (L)	Residue assessed	Flot assessed
1008	1	Pit	1007	Bronze Age	10	10	Yes	Yes
1013	2	Pit	1012	Bronze Age	30	10	Yes	Yes

As a result of the assessment, no further analysis was carried out.

Table 1: List of bulk samples

7.2 Discard policy

Remaining soil sample and residues (post scanning) will be discarded after a period of three months following submission of this report, unless there is a specific request to retain them.

7.3 Charred plant macrofossils and charcoal

The results of the assessment are summarised in Tables 2 and 3. Only poorly preserved charcoal fragments were recorded from fills 1008 and 1013 in Pits 1007 and 1012, respectively. Oak (*Quercus robur/petraea*) was identified, and whilst diffuse porous (non-oak) fragments were noted, vitrification and mineralisation meant that identification was not possible. None of this material was suitable for radiocarbon dating. Burnt and fire cracked stone was recovered from both samples, indicative of deliberate heating or cooking activities.

Uncharred remains, consisting of mainly root fragments are assumed to be modern and intrusive as they are unlikely to have survived in the soils on site for long without charring or waterlogging.

Context	Sample	Charcoal	Unch*	Full retrieval	Selection only
1008	1	abt	abt	stone (burnt)	charcoal, stone (burnt), uncharred plant
1013	2	abt	abt		charcoal, other (specify), stone (burnt), uncharred plant

No further work was recommended on these samples.

Table 2: Summary of environmental remains; occ = occasional, mod = moderate, abt = abundant, * = probably modern and intrusive

Context	Sample	Preservation type	Species detail	Category remains	Quantity/ diversity	Comment
1008	1	ch	Quercus robur/petraea wood	misc	+++/low	Generally poor preservation
1008	1	unch*	Rubus sect Glandulosus	seed	+/low	
1008	1	unch*	unidentified stem fragments, unidentified root fragments (herbaceous)	misc	+++/low	
1013	2	unch*	unidentified root fragments (herbaceous)	misc	+++/low	
1013	2	ch	Quercus robur/petraea wood, non-oak wood	misc	++/low	

Table 3: Plant remains from bulk samples

Key:

Preservation	Quantity
ch = charred	+ = 1 - 10
?wa = waterlogged or uncharred	++ = 11- 50
	+++ = 51 - 100
	++++ = 101+
	* = probably modern and intrusive

8 Discussion and conclusions

The previous evaluation at Grove Farm had identified a pit dated by radiocarbon dating to the Middle Bronze Age, and part of another feature which appeared likely to be contemporary (Vaughan 2019). The excavation fully exposed this feature, which was revealed to be a pit, and also a third pit nearby (Plate 4). No finds were recovered from the pits although they did yield a quantity of burnt stone, suggesting they may have been used for cooking and/or heating water. However, there was no evidence for in-situ burning and the environmental material recovered from the excavated pits was not suitable for radiocarbon dating. Given their proximity and similar fills (all containing burnt stone), it is likely that all three were contemporary, and they probably related to a brief period of transient activity in the Middle Bronze Age, rather than any longer term or focussed settlement.

Two undated linear features were also identified orientated parallel to one another. These features comprised a small gully and heavily truncated ditch. Both were filled by similar sterile fills which did not yield any finds and there was no evidence (such as burnt stone or charcoal) to suggest they were contemporary with the pits. One was cut by a post-medieval ditch on a similar alignment. This contained post-medieval to modern finds comprising of roof tile and bottle glass and was probably the remains of an historic field boundary infilled in the 19th century.

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in the excavation area to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features.

9 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Andrew Walsh ACIfA, assisted by Beth Williams. The project was managed by Tom Vaughan MCIfA. The report was produced and collated by Andrew Walsh. Specialist contributions and individual sections of the report are attributed to the relevant authors throughout the text.

10 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for the successful conclusion of the project: Cathy Patrick (Technical Director, Orion Heritage Ltd), and Aidan Smyth (Archaeology and Planning Advisor, Malvern Hills District Council).

11 Bibliography

AAF, 2011 Archaeological archives: a guide to the best practice in the creation, compilation, transfer and curation, Archaeological Archives Forum

BGS, 2020 Geology of Britain viewer, <u>http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html</u> Accessed: 6 April 2020

Cappers, T R J, Bekker, R M, & Jans, J E A, 2012 *Digitale Zadenatlas van Nederland: Digital seed atlas of the Netherlands,* Groningen Archaeological Studies, **4**, Barkhuis Publishing and Groningen University Library: Groningen

ClfA, 2014 Standard and guidance: for archaeological excavation, Reading: Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

Davies, R, 2019 Geophysical Survey Report, Grove Farm, Worcester, Sumo Survey Unpubl report **14284**, Sumo Survey

English Heritage, 2011 Environmental archaeology: a guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation, English Heritage, Centre for Archaeology Guidelines

Hather, J G, 2000 *The identification of the northern European hardwoods: a guide for archaeologists and conservators,* London: Archetype Publications Ltd

Schweingruber, F H, 1978 *Microscopic wood anatomy: structural variability of stems and twigs in recent and subfossil woods from central Europe,* Swiss Federal Institute of Forestry Research

SMA, 1993 Selection, retention and dispersal of archaeological collections, Society of Museum Archaeologists

Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983 *Midland and Western England, sheet 3, scale 1:250,000* and *Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales,* Soil Survey of England and Wales

Stace, C, 2010 New flora of the British Isles (3rd edition), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Vaughan, T M, 2019 Archaeological evaluation at Grove Farm, Bromyard Road, Worcester, Worcestershire Archaeology Unpubl report **2694**, Worcestershire County Council

WA, 2012 Manual of service practice, recording manual, Worcestershire Archaeology Unpubl report **1842**, Worcestershire County Council

WA, 2020 Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological mitigation at Grove Farm, Bromyard Road, Worcester, Worcestershire (version 3), Worcestershire Archaeology Unpubl document dated 12 March 2020, Worcestershire County Council

Figures



Location of the site and excavation area







Plates



Plate 1: Pit 1007. 0.5m scale, view south-east. Note that the pit was cut by post-medieval field boundary ditch 1009 which is visible to the right of shot.



Plate 2: Pit 1012. 1m scale, view west. This pit had been partially exposed during the evaluation.



Plate 3: General shot, from left to right, of field boundary ditch 1009, ditch 1005/1016 and gully 1003/1014. View south-east.



Plate 4: General shot showing the spatial relationship of the Middle Bronze Age pits. View west.

Appendix 1: Summary of project archive (WSM 72809)

ТҮРЕ	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	Environmental (Charcoal), burnt stone, Ceramics, Glass
Paper	Context sheet, Drawing, Plan, Section
Digital	Database, Text, GIS, Images raster/digital photography
*OASIS terminology	

Appendix 2: Summary of data for HER

WSM 72809

Artefacts

The only artefacts recovered from the site came from the upper fill (1010) of Ditch 1009. They comprised:

- a single (18g) fragment of 19th or early 20th century green bottle glass;
- an abraded piece (86g) of fabric 2c flat ceramic roof tile. This is a long-lived type, produced in the Worcester area from the late 15th to at least the end of the 17th century.

These finds indicate that Ditch 1009 was infilled no earlier than the 19th century.

Context	Sample	Feature type	Fill of	Period	Sample volume (L)	Volume processed (L)	Residue assessed	Flot assessed
1008	1	Pit	1007	Bronze Age	10	10	Yes	Yes
1013	2	Pit	1012	Bronze Age	30	10	Yes	Yes

Environmental

Table 1: List of bulk samples

Context	Sample	Charcoal	Unch*	Full retrieval	Selection only
1008	1	abt	abt	stone (burnt)	charcoal, stone (burnt), uncharred plant
1013	2	abt	abt		charcoal, other (specify), stone (burnt), uncharred plant

Table 2: Summary of environmental remains; occ = occasional, mod = moderate, abt = abundant, * = probably modern and intrusive

Context	Sample	Preservation type	Species detail	Category remains	Quantity/diversity	Comment
1008	1	ch	Quercus robur/petraea wood	misc	+++/low	Generally poor preservation
1008	1	unch*	Rubus sect Glandulosus	seed	+/low	
1008	1	unch*	unidentified stem fragments, unidentified root fragments (herbaceous)	misc	+++/low	
1013	2	unch*	unidentified root fragments (herbaceous)	misc	+++/low	
1013	2	ch	Quercus robur/petraea wood, non-oak wood	misc	++/low	

Table 3: Plant remains from bulk samples

Key:

preservation	quantity
ch = charred	+ = 1 - 10
?wa = waterlogged or uncharred	++ = 11- 50
	+++ = 51 - 100
	++++ = 101+
	* = probably modern and intrusive