Archaeological evaluation at Allesborough Farmhouse, Pershore Worcestershire

Worcestershire Archaeology for Robinson Wild Consulting

September 2020



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ALLESBOROUGH FARMHOUSE PERSHORE WORCESTERSHIRE

Archaeological evaluation report





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SITE INFORMATION

Site name:	Land adjacent to Allesborough Farmhouse
Site code:	WSM73404
Local planning authority:	Wychavon District Council
Planning reference:	20/01185/LB
Central NGR:	SO 9391 4631
Commissioning client:	Robinson Wild Consulting
WA project number:	P5922
WA report number:	2843
HER reference:	WSM73404
Oasis reference:	fieldsec1-402904

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Archaeological evaluation at land adjacent to Allesborough Farmhouse, Pershore, Worcestershire

By Richard Bradley

With contributions by Rob Hedge

Illustrations by Laura Templeton and Richard Bradley

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology in September 2020 at Allesborough Farmhouse, Pershore, Worcestershire (NGR SO 9391 4631). Two trenches of varying size were excavated on ground adjacent to the farmhouse along the planned route of external drainage. The project was commissioned by Esther Robinson Wild of Robinson Wild Consulting on behalf of Janus Associates, who are undertaking the renovation works to Allesborough Farmhouse.

Both trenches showed evidence of considerable disturbance and landscaping, with deep deposits of dumped made ground that included redeposited natural sands of post-medieval and modern date. There was no evidence of earlier features, but the deposits included abraded tiles and pottery finds dating from the 13th to 19th century. These can likely be associated with medieval and post-medieval occupation of Allesborough Farm.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in September 2020 at Allesborough Farmhouse, Pershore, Worcestershire (NGR SO 9391 4631; Figure 1; Plate 1). The project comprised the excavation of two evaluation trenches on ground located adjacent to the farmhouse, a Grade II listed building thought to date from the 15th century (List Entry number 1386896) and which may have links to deserted medieval settlement in the vicinity (WSM48878; WSM02672). Nearby associated buildings include a 17th century barn (WSM32476) and other post-medieval outbuildings, for which a separate application for the conversion of historic farm buildings has been approved and is in progress (W/16/01966/PN). These ancillary buildings were subject to a building record (Cornah 2019; WSM71826). Further investigation of the surrounding farmyard has included archaeological evaluation and small-scale excavation following the demolition of modern agricultural buildings (Iliff and Bradley 2020; Lovett 2020; WSM72799).

This stage of work was commissioned by Esther Robinson Wild of Robinson Wild Consulting on behalf of Janus Associates, who are undertaking the renovation works to Allesborough Farmhouse. An application has been lodged with Wychavon District Council for listed building consent to carry out the development (20/01185/LB), for which a decision is pending. Prior to consent being granted, however, a small amount of drainage work had been carried out in close proximity to the farmhouse: as a result, it has been considered by the archaeological advisor to Wychavon District Council that archaeological evaluation of the area in which the drainage will be completed should be undertaken to determine the presence or absence of any buried archaeological assets.

No brief was provided but a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared for the project by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2020) and approved by the archaeological advisor (Aidan Smyth; Wychavon District Council). The evaluation was undertaken in line with the WSI and conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and guidance: for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014a) and the *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2019).

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site is located approximately 1km to the north-west of Pershore town centre on the plateau of a ridge forming the highest of the River Avon terraces (5th Avon terrace). The ground slopes gently towards the east from a height of about 55m AOD. It is bounded by the Pershore to Worcester road to the north, the road from Besford to Pershore to the east and south-east, and by Allesborough Farmhouse and farmyard to the west and south-west. Most of the farmyard, alongside the surviving farm outbuildings, is currently subject to ongoing landscaping, refurbishment and redevelopment works.

The underlying geology comprises bedrock of Charmouth Mudstone formation overlain by superficial deposits of Pershore Sand and Gravel (BGS 2020).

2 Archaeological and historical background

The following summary is derived from the archaeological building recording, evaluation and excavation projects undertaken on an immediately adjacent part of the site, all completed by Worcestershire Archaeology prior to residential development (Cornah 2019; Iliff and Bradley 2020; Lovett 2020), and uses information provided by the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) within a 500m radius search area.

Nearby significant archaeological remains include an Iron Age and Romano-British settlement complex 450m west of the site (WSM36155), identified through extensive investigation involving field walking, metal detecting and evaluation trenches. This was originally located following discovery by metal detectorists of a large hoard (or hoards) of Iron Age coinage (WSM20060), eventually comprising 1494 gold and silver coins as well as a possible fragment of twisted wire gold torc. At the time of discovery in 1993, this was one of the largest caches of Iron Age coins ever found in Britain (see Hurst and Leins 2013). The objects are now in the British Museum.

In addition, around 260m to the north is a conjectured area of a deserted medieval settlement that may have once formed part of the manor of Pershore (WSM02672). Allesborough was first mentioned as a manor in mid-13th century, when Abbot Roger (1234-50) gave 10/- rent of demesnes there to monks at Pershore and was held by the Abbots until the dissolution of Pershore Abbey in the 16th century. There is known to have been a chapel dedicated to St Giles associated with the settlement (WSM02674), though the location is speculative. The farm is surrounded to the north, west and southeast by remnants of ridge and furrow (WSM29121, WSM29116, WSM02680, WSM29117 and WSM08463) which are the result of medieval and post-medieval agricultural practice, and the wider landscape is dominated by piecemeal and parliamentary enclosure broadly typical of the post 1800 period.

It is possible that the Allesborough Farmhouse itself (WSM48878) was contemporary with the latter end of the deserted medieval settlement, as it has been suggested to have 15th century elements, though this is not certain. It is clear, however, that it was a successor to Abbot's demesne farm and part of abbey estates from a 1620 survey. The building underwent various phases of significant change with the largest major addition in circa 1800.

2.1 Previous archaeological work on the site

As mentioned above, Worcestershire Archaeology has undertaken various stages of archaeological work adjacent to this specific part of the site. Building recording of historic farm buildings prior to conversion – namely a threshing barn (WSM32476) and stables (WSM52695) dating to the later 17th century – was carried out in August 2019 (Cornah 2019; WSM71826). The barn was considered to be the earlier building, with the stables likely constructed around 1800. The stables may have originally been a granary, before being remodelled in the 19th or 20th century.

More recently, in January 2020, evaluation trenching around demolished agricultural buildings within the farmyard was completed: this revealed an undated possible field boundary ditch and other features related to post-medieval and modern farm buildings and drainage. There was also a post-medieval keyhole oven, lined with reused late medieval to post-medieval roof tiles and with a large stone slab forming the base of the flue (Iliff and Bradley 2020). Subsequent to this, in May 2020 a 190m² area was excavated around the location of the oven to determine if other structures had survived in the vicinity. The lowest course and foundation of a wall that formed an agricultural building was recorded. A later ceramic culvert appeared to truncate the building, and the internal deposits of the structure were contaminated with hydrocarbons, indicating use well into the 20th century (Lovett 2020; WSM72799).

3 Project aims

The aims and scope of the project were to undertake sufficient fieldwork to:

- determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits beyond reasonable doubt;
- identify their location, nature date and preservation;
- assess their significance;
- assess the likely impact of the drainage works.

4 Project methodology

The Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared for the project by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2020). Fieldwork was undertaken between on 2nd September 2020. The Worcestershire Archaeology project number is P5922 and the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record event reference is WSM73404.

Two trenches were excavated, 13.5m and 13.80m in length and of varying width due to stepped sides, amounting to approximately 55.60m² in area. This represented a sample of just over 2.5% of the 2171m² area forming the part of the site in which the drainage was planned to be inserted. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

The trenches were not targeted on any known archaeology and were positioned where the ground was accessible in order to give as good a coverage of the area of the drainage route as possible, within the constraints of existing vegetation and fencing (Plate 1). Due to the depth of deposits within the trenches, these were excavated in steps where needed in order to reach a natural horizon.

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. Deposits were recorded according to standard WA practice (WA 2012), using the Worcestershire County Council digital Archaeological Recording Kit (ARK). Trench and feature locations were surveyed using a GNSS device with an accuracy limit set at <0.04m. On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was undertaken through a combination of structural and artefactual 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 with Museums Worcestershire.

5 Archaeological results

5.1 Introduction

The trenches are shown in Figure 2 and the trench and context inventory is presented in Appendix 1.

5.2 Phasing descriptions

5.2.1 Natural deposits

The natural substrate was identifiable in areas of both trenches (102; 203), comprising mixed patches of light yellowish-orange sand and gravel, consistent with the mapped geology (BGS 2020). This was encountered at around 53.10m AOD.

5.2.2 Post-medieval/modern

Both Trench 1 and Trench 2 contained significant areas of redeposited natural material (101; 201) directly below the topsoil, used to infill and level the ground. The ground was very loose and uncompacted.

In Trench 1 this light yellowish brown sand infill layer (101) extended for almost the entirety of the trench and was 1.40m in depth (Plate 2), containing a small assemblage of medieval to post-medieval/modern pottery and roof tile (13th to 19th century in date). In Trench 2 the infilling (201) comprised a brownish grey silty sand with charcoal and dumps of modern ceramic building material (bricks and drain; not retained), up to 1.50m in depth. Throughout this trench the redeposited material

was darker and more irregular that that in Trench 1, and within at least one clear moderately sloped cut (202; Plate 3). This may have been the result of previous landscaping or quarrying activity.

The overlying topsoil was a dark greyish brown silty sand, 0.40m in depth, and had recently been cleared of vegetation. Modern plastic waste and other material on the surface was not retained for artefactual assessment.

6 Artefactual evidence by Rob Hedge

6.1 Methods

The artefact report conforms to standards and guidance issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014b) and various pottery study groups (PCRG/SGRP/MPRG 2016), as well as further guidance on archive creation and museum deposition created by the Archaeological Archives Forum (AAF 2011), and the Society of Museum Archaeologists (SMA 1993).

6.1.1 Aims

This assessment aimed to identify, sort, spot date and quantify all artefacts, and describe the range of artefacts present. The information has been used to provide a preliminary assessment of the significance of the artefacts.

6.1.2 Recovery policy

Artefacts were recovered according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012).

All artefacts collected in the field were recovered by hand.

6.1.3 Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date was produced for each stratified context. This date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on a Microsoft Access 2007 database, with tables generated using Microsoft Excel.

The pottery was examined under x20 magnification and referenced as appropriate by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology (Hurst and Rees 1992; Fagan 2004; Griffin 2008; WAAS 2017).

6.1.4 Discard policy

Artefacts from topsoil and subsoil and unstratified contexts will normally be noted but not retained, unless they are of intrinsic interest (e.g. worked flint or flint debitage, featured pottery sherds, and other potential 'registered artefacts'). Large assemblages of post-medieval or modern material, unless there is some special reason to retain (such as local production), may be noted and not retained, or, if appropriate, a representative sample will be retained. Discard of finds from post-medieval and earlier deposits will only be instituted with reference to museum collection policy and/or with agreement of the local museum.

6.2 Results

The results are summarised in Table 1.

The assemblage totalled seven finds weighing 298g. All the artefacts came from redeposited natural layer 101. They could be dated from the medieval period onwards.

The results below provide a summary of the finds and of their associated location or contexts by site phase. Where possible, dates have been allocated, and the importance of individual finds commented upon as necessary.

Using pottery as an index of artefact condition, this was generally poor; all were abraded and relatively small, typical of residual material that has been redeposited or incorporated into agricultural soils.

Three abraded pieces of medieval flat roof tile in fabrics 2a and 2b were of 13th to 15th century date. Also present were two fragments of post-medieval fabric 5, a type most frequently found in 18th century deposits (Griffin 2008). Only two sherds of pottery were recovered: one piece of 16th or 17th century salt-glazed German stoneware, and a piece of 19th century glazed stoneware.

period	material class	object specific type	fabric	count	weight (g)	start date	end date
medieval	ceramic	roof tile	2a common sandy	2	71	1200	1500
medieval	ceramic	roof tile	2b reduced sandy	1	43	1200	1500
late med/early post-med	ceramic	pot	81.1 / 81.11 Frechen / Cologne Stoneware	1	6	1500	1700
post-medieval	ceramic	pot	81.4 Late Stoneware	1	16	1800	1900
post-medieval	ceramic	roof tile	5 slag and grog sandy type	2	162	1600	1900
			totals	7	202		

Table 1: Quantification of the site assemblage

6.3 Summary

The artefacts are typical of the domestic refuse and building material associated with the later medieval and post-medieval occupation of Allesborough Farm.

The finds are of local significance, given their association with the historic Allesborough Farm, but this is somewhat compromised by their poor condition and presence within redeposited material.

6.4 Recommendations

6.4.1 Further analysis

No further analysis of the artefacts is required.

6.4.2 Discard/retention

The assemblage is not considered to warrant retention, though the final decision rests with Museums Worcestershire.

7 Environmental evidence

Environmental 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.

8 Discussion

The archaeological deposits identified during this evaluation were all post-medieval or modern in date. Despite the presence of important and extensive prehistoric and Romano-British occupation in the wider vicinity, earlier settlement and any associated activity did not appear extend into this area.

Both trenches showed evidence of considerable disturbance and landscaping, with deep deposits of dumped made ground that included redeposited natural sands and abraded tiles and pottery finds dating from the 13th to 19th century. These finds, and the areas of disturbance, can likely be associated with medieval and post-medieval occupation of Allesborough Farm to the immediate west,

previously investigated through earlier stages of work undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (Cornah 2019; Iliff and Bradley 2020; Lovett 2020). Early Ordnance Survey mapping and aerial photographs show this eastern plot of land outside of the farm complex as an area of open ground or gardens that has not been subject to agricultural building: it is therefore possible that previous quarrying of natural material had occurred, and that subsequent infilling or landscaping has taken place creating more regular topography. The farmhouse is known to have undergone various phases of change, with the largest major addition around 1800AD, so there is the potential for major landscaping to have also occurred around this time.

It is perhaps of most interest that two of the residual tile fragments were of a fabric in use between the 13th and 15th centuries. They may have been salvaged from buildings elsewhere in Pershore – or from an as yet unlocated building nearby – and then used on the farm. Alternatively, the presence of these tiles may lend some support to the suggestion that Allesborough Farmhouse itself has 15th century origins and was in existence towards the latter end of nearby deserted medieval settlement.

9 Significance and conclusions

The redeposited natural layers infilling possible landscaping are of negligible significance, all being products of post-medieval or modern activity related to surrounding agricultural land use. It is likely that given the depth of deposits, such disturbance has affected this part of the site for a considerable area and may have removed the potential for any earlier archaeological remains. The artefacts recovered reflect this activity, but may be considered to be of local significance, given their potential association with the early phases of the adjacent historic Allesborough Farm.

Overall, the methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in all of the trenches to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features. It is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features provides an accurate characterisation of the development site as a whole.

Based on the results of the evaluation trenching, it would be expected that ground works usually associated with drainage are unlikely to cause the loss of any significant heritage assets on this part of the site.

10 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Richard Bradley, MCIfA.

The project was managed by Tom Rogers, MCIfA. The report was produced and collated by Richard Bradley, with specialist artefact reporting completed by Rob Hedge, MCIfA.

11 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for the successful conclusion of the project: Esther Robinson Wild for commissioning the project, as well as Declan Vaughan for his assistance throughout.

The project was monitored by Aidan Smyth of Wychavon District Council and Worcestershire Archaeology would also like to thank him for his advice and prompt responses to queries.

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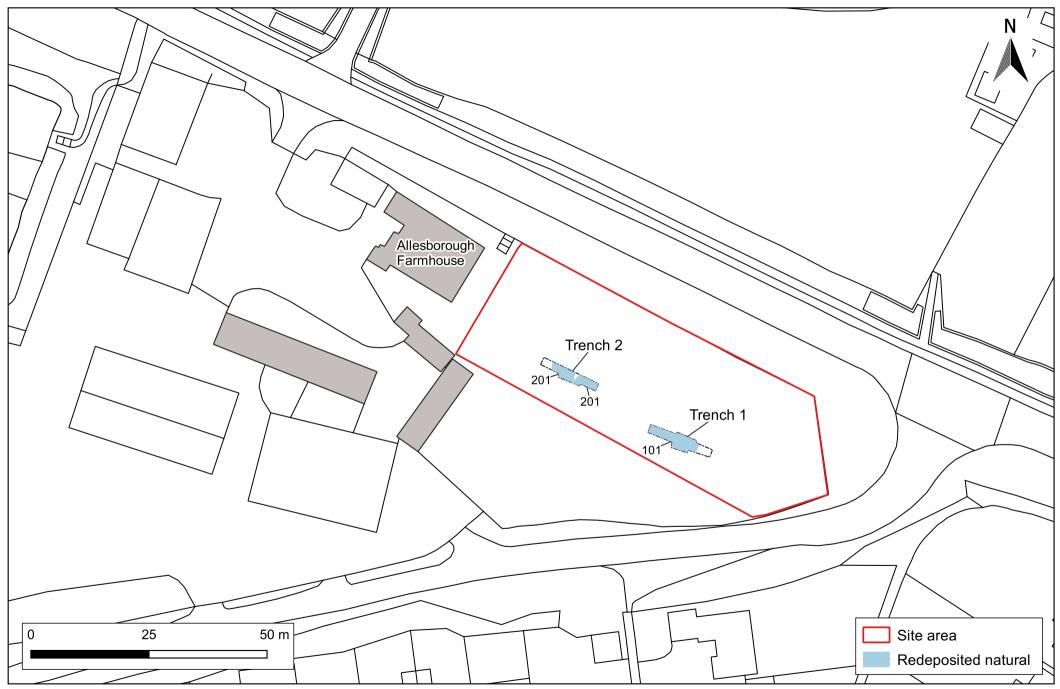
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Figures



Location of the site (based upon Clive Petch Architects Dwg No.27)

Figure 1



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Plates



Plate 1: Site area with trenching about to commence, facing north-west towards Allesborough Farmhouse



Plate 2: Stepped section of Trench 1 with redeposited sand 101 visible, facing north-east, 1m scales



Plate 3: Section of Trench 2 with dumped material 201 in cut 202 visible, facing north-east, 1m scales

Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

Trench 1

203

Length: 13.80m		Width: 1	.60m-2.90m	Orientation:		NW-SE	
Context Phase	Phase Feature Context Inte type type		Interpretation	erpretation Height/ depth		Deposit description	
100	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil		0.40m	Loose dark greyish brown silty sand	
101	Made ground	Layer	Redeposited natural		1.40m	Loose mixed light greyish yellow brown sand	
102	Natural	Layer	Natural gravel		0.05m+	Loose light yellow brown sandy gravel	
Trench 2							
Trench 2 Length: 13.50m		Width: 1	.60m-2.30m	Orienta	tion:	NW-SE	
	Feature type		.60m-2.30m Interpretation	Orienta	tion: Height/ depth	-	
Length: 13.50m		Context		Orienta	Height/	-	
Length: 13.50m Context Phase	type	Context type	Interpretation	Orienta	Height/ depth	Deposit description	

Natural

Natural Layer

0.05m+ Loose light yellowish orange brown sandy gravel

Appendix 2: Summary of project archive (WSM73404)

ТҮРЕ	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	Ceramics
Paper	Diary (Field progress form),
Digital	Database, GIS, Images raster/digital photography, Survey, Text
*OASIS terminology	

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 with Museums Worcestershire.

Appendix 3: Summary of data for HER

WSM73404

period	material	object type	count	weight(g)	start date	end date	specialist report?	key assemblage?
medieval	ceramic	roof tile	3	114	1200	1500	у	n
late med/early post-med	ceramic	pot	1	6	1500	1700	У	n
post- medieval	ceramic	pot	1	16	1800	1900	У	n
post- medieval	ceramic	roof tile	2	162	1600	1900	У	n