

Archaeological evaluation at
Bartlett House,
165A Birmingham Road,
Bromsgrove, Worcestershire

Worcestershire Archaeology
for SJD Architects and Developments Ltd

April 2020



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BARTLETT HOUSE, 165A BIRMINGHAM ROAD, BROMSGROVE, WORCESTERSHIRE

Archaeological evaluation report



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SITE INFORMATION

Site name:	Bartlett House, 165A Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire
Local planning authority:	Bromsgrove District Council
Planning reference:	20/01486/FUL
Central NGR:	SO 96575 7164
Commissioning client:	SJD Architects and Developments Ltd
WA project number:	P6060
WA report number:	2919
HER reference:	WSM77496
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DOCUMENT CONTROL PANEL

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1	23/04/2021	Tim Cornah	Draft for comment	T Rogers
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Archaeological evaluation at Bartlett House, 165A Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire

By Tim Cornah

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Bartlett House, 165A Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire (NGR SO 96575 7164). It was commissioned by SJD Architects and Developments Ltd on behalf of their client, in advance of a proposed erection of three residential dwellings on the site. Planning permission for the development was granted subject to a programme of archaeological works.

The site comprised a section of car park located immediately north of Bartlett House on the west side of Birmingham Road (A38) which follows the course of the Roman road from Worcester to Lickey.

Bartlett House is the remaining element of the former Bromsgrove Union Workhouse, built in 1837-8 on a cruciform plan. In the mid Twentieth Century it operated as All Saints Hospital. The building was largely demolished in the 1990s.

A T shaped trench was excavated within the footprint of the three proposed dwellings. A wall of the workhouse was present within the trench in the form of a sandstone foundation structure aligned SE-NW, perpendicular to the road. Mortar imprints on this wall indicate that a brick wall would have stood on this foundation. It is depicted on a plan of the workhouse of 1897 dividing a central courtyard, described as the 'Girls Yard' from a rectangular room or, possibly an open area, labelled 'Female Vagrant Yard'.

The wall was truncated, probably in the middle of the 20th century when the building was being used as All Saints Hospital. At this time the former workhouse wing was extended further west with the addition of brick walls. A concrete surface was laid, onto which parquet flooring and later a plastic flooring had been laid.

A section of the concrete floor was removed revealing natural deposits beneath, indicating either that the Roman Road or associated features did not extend this far west of the current road, or that they had been truncated by the construction of the workhouse.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in April 2021 at Bartlett House, 165A Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire (NGR SO 96575 7164). The project was commissioned by SJD Architects and Developments Ltd on behalf of their client, in advance of a proposed erection of three residential dwellings on the site. Planning permission has been granted by Bromsgrove District Council, subject to a programme of archaeological works (planning reference 20/01486/FUL).

The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the proposed development had the potential to impact upon possible heritage assets. Birmingham, Road follows the line of the former Roman Road (WSM 30529) that ran from Worcester to Lickey through Bromsgrove. A well - preserved section of the Roman Road with ditches on either side, filled with post medieval ceramics was uncovered as part of a 2020 programme of archaeological investigations c.120m south of the application site.

A Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by WA (2021) and approved by Emily Hathaway, Archaeological Advisor to Bromsgrove District Council.

The evaluation also conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and guidance: for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014) and the *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2019).

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site is located on the western side of the Birmingham Road which runs in a north-easterly direction from the centre of Bromsgrove, and at a distance of approximately 1km. The site is 1600m² in area, with a large part of this taken a single element of the former workhouse, now offices, and the remaining area covered by car parking. To the north, west and south, the site is bounded by modern housing and commercial development.

The site is flat at a height of 101m AOD, with the underlying geology recorded as Helsby Sandstone Formation overlain by Holt Heath Sand and Gravel Member (BGS 2021).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

Evidence for prehistoric activity in the area is relatively scant comprising the record of some flint artefacts broadly dated Mesolithic to Iron Age (WSM41827).

The site lies to the west of Birmingham Road (A38) which follows the course of the Roman road from Worcester to Lickey (WSM30529). A damaged section of the Roman road surface was recorded at All Saints Garage c170m to the south of the site (WSM72000) during an evaluation in 2020.

Whilst it is clear that the road stayed in use long after the Roman period, the area was not settled until any consistent way until the 18th century when Bromsgrove expanded along the line of Birmingham Road. Expansion of this date is clear from the survival of a number of buildings and former buildings such as Crab Mill Inn (WSM01912), the site of 75-133 Birmingham Road (WSM03371) and buildings of the former All Saints Garage (WSM7748). It is also possible there was a mill on the opposite side of Birmingham Road to the immediate south-east of the site at this time (WSM71452).

Further housing was built in the area in the 19th century, for example 163 and 165 Birmingham Road (WSM73023, WSM73024) along with All Saints Church (WSM01898). The remaining elements of Bartlett House (WSM01908) itself date to 1838, along with the demolished wings and other elements (WSM73771). This was constructed as a Workhouse and was still labelled as the Poor Law Institute

at the time of the 4th edition Ordnance Survey map of 1949. By the time of the 5th edition of 1954 to 1963, it was labelled as All Saints Hospital. During the Second World War, the US 123rd Station Hospital (WSM45452) was also used to the west of the site.

2 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 proposed development.

3 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2021). Fieldwork was undertaken on the 7th to the 8th of April 2021.

Prior to fieldwork commencing, a search of the Worcestershire HER was completed, covering a search area of 500m around the site. Historic mapping was also consulted. A summary of the results of this research are presented below.

A single T shaped trench, amounting to 33m² in area, was excavated on the site. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2. A model of the trench can be found here <https://skfb.ly/onszB>.

The trench was placed in order to interrogate the area of maximum impact in the position of the proposed houses. This was also within the known position of the former workhouse, which remains partially extant on the site.

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 Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and 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 structural 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 Worcestershire County Museum.

4 Archaeological results

4.1 Introduction

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

4.2 Trench description

4.2.1 Natural deposits

The natural deposits (113) consisted of compact orange yellow sand and gravels entirely consistent with the recorded substrate in the area.

4.2.2 Phase 1: 19th century

The earliest deposit (112) consisted of a mixed reddish brown fairly loose sandy silt with high gravel; content, overlain by a dark grey black sandy silt with high coal content (111). These deposits are likely to have been imported to level the ground before the construction of the workhouse in 1837-8.

Above this in the sequence was a sandstone footing (109), the cut of which (110) clearly truncated the earlier deposits. This consisted of partially dressed sandstone up to 0.50m in length and was 0.33m wide. Running centrally along its top was a line of lime mortar with brick imprints, indicating the upper elements of the wall were in brick.

4.2.3 Phase 2: 20th century

The wing of the workhouse was extensively reworked and widened, probably in the middle of the 20th century when the building was changed into a hospital. Brick walls (106 and 107), both represent the exterior walls of this extension, while wall (105) is likely to have been an internal division. A concrete floor (103) was laid over this, part of which (108) was tar covered and laid with parquet evident from the imprint. The parquet floor was later removed and plastic covered (104). This part of the building was demolished in the later 20th century and a carpark surface laid over the top (100).

Context	Context type	Interpretation	Height	Description
100	Structure	Carpark surface	0.32m	Tarmac on a layer of grey bedding gravels
101	Structure	20 th century wall	Not excavated	Concrete slab surface
102	Layer	Concrete and rubble dump	Not excavated	Dump of gravels within a concrete matrix, possibly of demolition phase
103	Structure	Floor surface	Not excavated	Polished concrete internal floor
104	Structure	Floor surface		Plastic lino covering over 108
105	Structure	20 th century wall	Not excavated	Internal brick wall division aligned NE-SW
106	Structure	20 th century wall	Not excavated	External brick wall aligned NW-SE
107	Structure	20 th century wall	Not excavated	External brick wall aligned NW-SE
108	Structure	Floor surface	0.09m	Concrete surface covered with tar which had the imprint of a former parquet covering on top
109	Structure	19 th century wall	>0.25m	Sandstone foundation wall aligned NW-SE
110	Cut	Construction cut for wall 109	Not excavated	Cut for wall 109
111	Layer	Made ground	0.04	Blackish brown gravelly sand with frequent coal pieces

112	Layer	Made ground	0.11m	Mid orangey brown sand and gravels with some coal and blacker patches
113	Layer	Natural	>0.07m	Compact yellow orange sand and gravel

Table 1 Deposit descriptions

5 Artefactual evidence

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

6 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.

7 Conclusions

Although there was a potential for the survival of the Roman Road from Worcester to Lickey within the site, the evaluation demonstrated that the remains of the workhouse, where investigated, lay directly over natural ground. It is likely therefore that the Roman Road or associated features such as roadside ditches did not extend this far west of the current road, or that they had been truncated by the construction of the workhouse.

A T shaped trench was excavated within the footprint of the three proposed dwellings. A wall of the workhouse was present within the trench in the form of a sandstone foundation structure aligned SE-NW, perpendicular to the road. Mortar imprints on this wall indicate that a brick wall would have stood on this foundation. It is depicted on a plan of the workhouse of 1897 dividing a central courtyard, described as the 'Girls Yard' from a rectangular room or possibly open area labelled 'Female Vagrant Yard'.

The wall was truncated, probably in the middle of the 20th century when the building was being used as All Saints Hospital. At this time the former workhouse wing was extended further west with the addition of brick walls. A concrete surface was laid, onto which parquet flooring and later a plastic flooring had been laid.

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in the trench 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.

8 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Tim Cornah, ACIfA, assisted by Martina Locatelli PCIfA.

The project was managed by Tom Rogers, MCIfA. The report was produced and collated by Tim Cornah. Specialist contributions and individual sections of the report are attributed to the relevant authors throughout the text.

9 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for the successful conclusion of the project: Stuart Dudley of SJD Architects and Developments Ltd for commissioning the project and the landowner for their help during the fieldwork. The project was monitored by Emily Hathaway,

Archaeological, Advisor to Bromsgrove District Council and Worcestershire Archaeology would also like to thank her for her advice.

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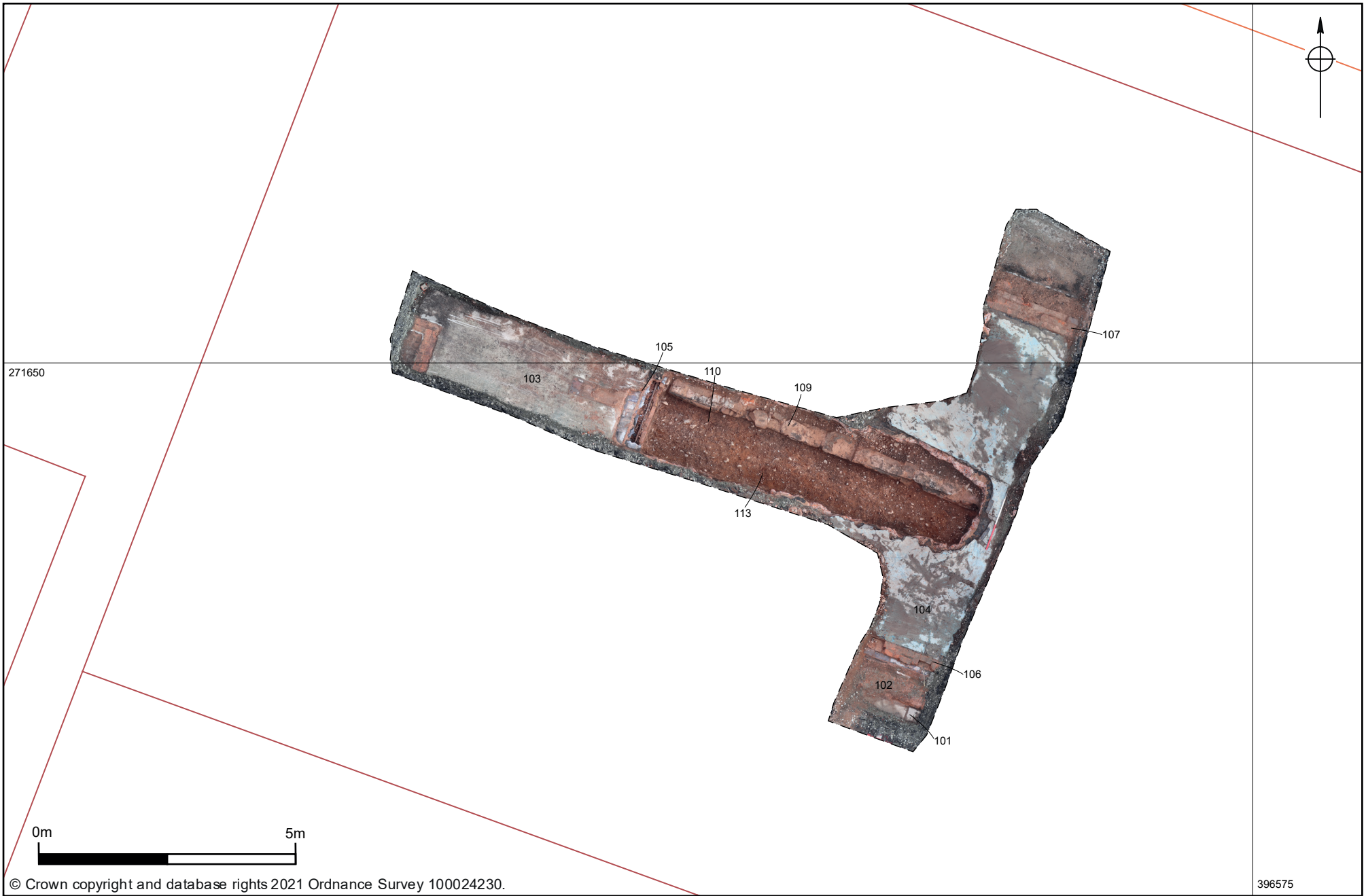
Figures



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Location of the site

Figure 1



Annotated photogrammetric plan of the trench

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1: Tr 1 after tarmac surface removal, scale 2x1m, looking north-east



Plate 2: Tr 1 with wall foundation 109 exposed, scale 1m, looking north-west



Plate 3: Tr 1 with wall foundation 109 exposed, scale 1m, looking north-east



Plate 4: Tr 1 showing deposits 100 and 111 to 113 as well as surface 108 in section, scale 1m, looking south-west

Appendix 1: Summary of project archive (WSM77496)

TYPE	DETAILS*
Paper	Trench sheet, Diary (Field progress form), Photographic register
Digital	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 at Worcestershire County Museum.