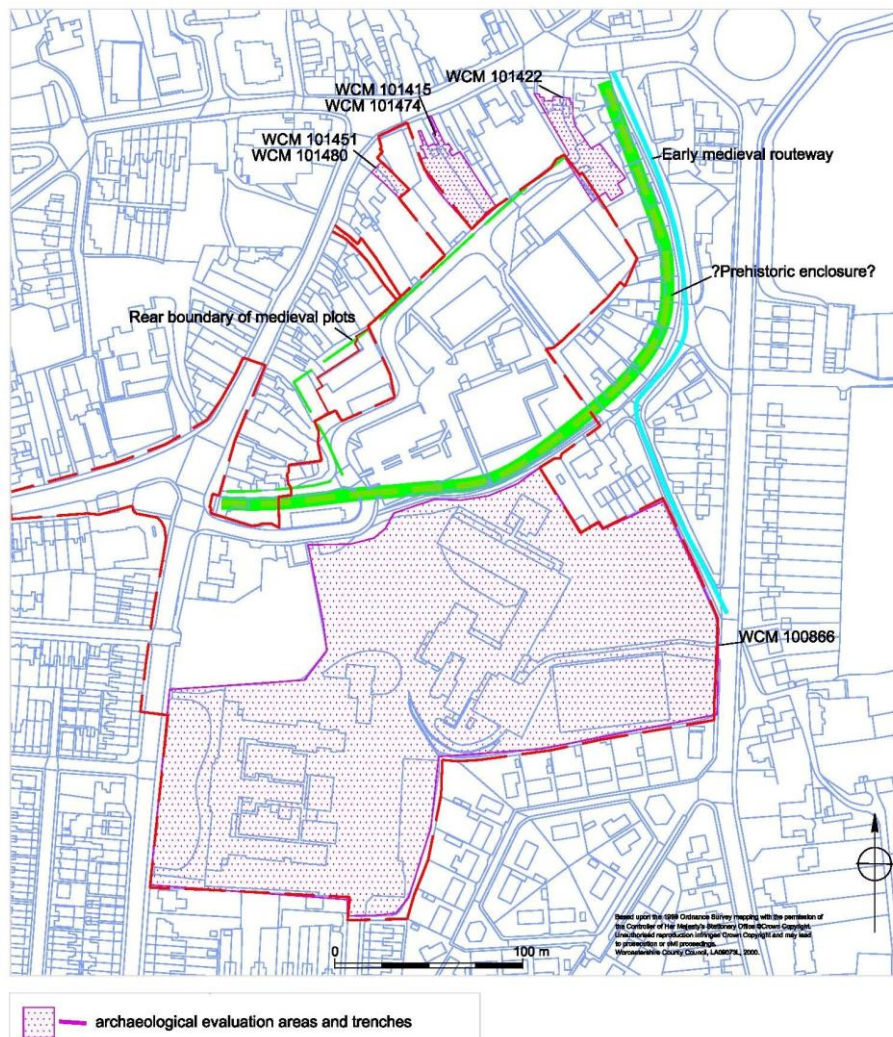


Prehistory at St. Johns Worcester (to the rear of Swanpool Walk)

Three sides of a Late Iron Age to early Roman enclosure ditch were observed, cut into the natural matrix in the north-east corner of the site. Previous works to the rear of 5 The Bullring had revealed two adjacent perpendicular ditches, which appear to form the north corner of this enclosure. The enclosure is therefore considered to be approximately square in plan with sides c 40m in length, enclosing an area of c 1,600m².



The fills of the enclosure ditch were broadly similar within each excavated segment and indicate that the structure underwent a period of silting up before being deliberately backfilled over quite a short period of time. The majority of the artefacts recovered from date from the Late Iron Age and early Roman periods, although a small quantity of residual Middle Iron Age pottery was evident and two of the ditch fills also produced pottery from the 2nd century AD.

There were only a few features excavated that could have been contemporary or associated with the enclosure. The levelling of this area, for the construction of tennis courts, probably removed any shallow features which may have previously existed both within and immediately outside the enclosure.



Six graves (see ellipses above) were cut into the northern arm of the backfilled enclosure ditch, representing a later phase of activity on the site. Four of the grave cuts contained skeletons. The two empty graves are likely to have contained burials, but were entirely degraded. The skeletons have been radiocarbon dated. Two of these probably date from the late Roman period and another two from the early post Roman period. Most of the finds from the grave cuts were probably residual sherds, redeposited when the graves were backfilled. The burial practices, including decapitation and hobnails in the areas of the feet, point to a Roman burial tradition for the inhumations.

No evidence was found for activity predating the Late Iron Age/early Roman period. The excavations along the possible bank and ditch of the putative prehistoric enclosure, running along Swanpool Walk footpath, did not prove conclusive. Although it was demonstrated that a ditch did not exist along the path, it is possible that a ditch may exist further to the south. A deposit to the north of the walkway produced one sherd of Roman pottery. Roman deposits were identified slightly further to the north of where the bank was previously considered to be situated. It is unclear if the current topography represents an accumulated agricultural soil which has been scarped to the south, or whether it is a deliberately raised bank.



The excavations at Christopher Whitehead School revealed deposits and features of probable Roman date.

Residual medieval pottery was recovered from all areas of the site. Evidence for medieval activity was mainly concentrated in the areas of the Old Council Depot and 19-21 St John's. The features were probably domestic in nature, including a possible oven and ditches, delineating the rear of properties off Malvern Road.

Post-medieval features and deposits were also excavated across all areas of the site and included pits, ditches and gullies. The most archaeologically significant were identified at the Old Council Depot. These consisted of sizeable pits containing large deposits of horncores, one of which was constructed with a lining of cores. These are interpreted as evidence of tanning activity. This lay within an area of large ditches, located parallel to, and recessed back from, Malvern Road, and others which appear to relate to boundaries extant in the late 19th century.



It is hoped the stratigraphic data will be combined with further analysis of the artefactual and osteological assemblages so that research questions about the function and status of the site within the hinterland of Roman Worcester; along with the origin, state of health and diet of the individuals, can be addressed.



Further analysis of the post-medieval horncores will also enhance our knowledge of this period of radical national change in cattle breeding practices.