

Excavations along the route of a proposed access road, Hindlip, Worcestershire.



Excavations in the footprint of the proposed access road, car park and lodge have revealed two main elements of archaeological interest. The first of these is a pit alignment, comprising a single line of 22 pits orientated approximately east-west. The pits are round or oval shaped, with a bowl shaped profile, generally about 2.5m in diameter the entire length of the exposed line being about 75m. Little cultural material was recovered from the fills.



Pit alignments are enigmatic monuments found all across Britain but with concentrations in central-eastern Scotland and the English Midlands. Their function is not known but it appears they formed some sort of boundary and examples exist that appear to delineate fields. There is no evidence that they held upright timbers or trees but they sometimes have a bank to one side. They range in date from the Neolithic to the Roman periods and the presence of slag, the by-product of metalworking, in some of the pit fills, suggests that this example is Iron Age (800BC to 43AD). Several examples are known from Worcestershire as crop marks from aerial photographs, but this is the first known to have been excavated and is therefore a significant finding.

The second element in the excavation is a part of a Roman rural settlement. There are a number of such settlements in the periphery of Worcester, only a handful of which have been excavated.

The settlement largely comprises a series of ditches which represent enclosures and boundaries of a small Roman farmstead. The central feature is an enclosure, a roughly square area just over 40m across enclosed on all sides by a ditch which has been recut three times on its northern side. Considerable amounts of pottery have been recovered from the fills of this ditch. Within this enclosure several smaller features including a large intact pottery vessel 0.5m in diameter have been excavated.

To the south another smaller enclosure has been partially exposed and there is a further possible example to the west. North of the main enclosure, excavation of the northern end of a wide linear feature has revealed a well preserved cobbled area thought to represent a metalled trackway and adjacent surface. Charred cereal grain and fragments of quern stone, recovered from a layer overlying the surface, could indicate that the surface itself was used as a threshing floor. Numerous other Roman ditches cross the site and probably represent other boundaries to fields or paddocks.



Excavation of the large pottery vessel

One cremation, a small pit containing burnt human bone, was excavated in the line of the road itself. Pottery finds mostly consist of Severn Valley Ware, a local type thought to have been made in the Malvern area but imported wares, such as Samian from Central France, are also present. Other finds include part of a shale armlet and a well preserved iron mattock head.

Post excavation examination of artefacts and environmental and structural evidence will cast valuable light not only on this site but also with regard to the Roman town of Worcester and interaction with its hinterland.



Severn Valley Ware pottery vessel *in-situ*