



Editors:
Elizabeth Wright & Matt Law

AP:

Online Journal in Public Archaeology

*The How and Why of
Archaeology Outreach*



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**Public Archaeology and Memory at The Hive,
Worcester 2008 to 2012:
*A case study of reflexive approaches to
community engagement***

Justin HUGHES
Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service

Abstract

The construction of the Hive, a new library and history center in Worcester, unearthed Roman remains that led to a community excavation in 2008. This article will delve into the process, including an extensive oral history programme conducted during 2011 and 2012.

Keywords

The Hive, Worcester, Community Engagement

Introduction

The following report describes Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service's commissioned community excavation between August and October 2008 and a subsequent oral history programme from June 2011 to March 2012.



Figure 1: The Hive from the train



Figure 2: The Roman site looking towards the city of Worcester

The public programme included a high level marketing policy, not seen in Worcester since the Deansway excavations of the late 1980s. The following audiences were contacted: passers-by, walkers, drivers, train and bus passengers; the general population of Worcester, the wider population of the county and the Midlands region, tourists and visitors to the city, people with an interest in archaeology and local history; the local press, county and city councillors, local community and adult learning groups, schools and colleges, and finally, city and county council staff, encouraged to keep track of progress via a 'Butts Dig Champion scheme' hosted by three staff members.

The marketing campaign promoted three key areas; one, the notion of history on the doorstep explored through objects and stories, two, the excitement of first hand discovery through digging and three, the idea of continuity with a new public building taking the city into a vibrant future. To maximise engagement the site opened to the public seven days a week, with a guide on site at the weekends, and enhanced by weekly tours by archaeology staff.

The marketing strategy included provision for a 'visitor experience' on site to ensure the same standard of experience was offered to all who visited the site and to ensure positive word-of-mouth marketing.

To enhance the experience, tours of the excavation were supplemented with an on-site exhibition focussing on the history of the site which was refreshed frequently with displays of retrieved artefacts and with textual and graphic summaries of the latest archaeological discoveries. The exhibition also showed the full archaeological process including some of the more unusual tools of the trade.

It was assumed that visitors to the dig would also want to know about the Hive (Worcestershire's Library & History Centre, which opened in July 2012) so staff were equipped to talk about this with some level of knowledge about the services going into the new building and how it is being funded.

As a result of this marketing programme the following data were collected:

Type of attendance	Number
Weekday casual visitor	30* per day
Weekend casual visitor	50-60* per day
Total casual visitors	2,000
Tour attendees	100 (10 per week)
City council tour attendees	50
School party visitors	600 (20 parties)
Organised party visitors	200 (two parties per week)
Open Day visitors	900
Total visitors	3,000

*these numbers are approximate, and numbers tailed off in the final month - partly due to return to school and cooler weather.

Newspaper	Column centimetres
Worcester News	1399
Berrow's Journal	277
Worcester Standard	195
Express and star	38
Total	1909
Equivalent advertising value*	£13,363

*total column centimetres multiplied by 7.

Archaeological staff were interviewed for a weekly five minute slot. This was determined to have a total equivalent advertising value for this coverage equal to £12,500* plus VAT.

From anecdotal evidence, a number of volunteers said they joined after hearing the live BBC Hereford and Worcester radio broadcast. Many people also repeatedly came to the site to see the physical changes from when they either worked or (in one case) had relatives who lived in one of the nine almshouses built on the site in the late 1830s and demolished in the mid-1970s.

A visitors' book in the exhibition collected people's comments on the dig. This was full of praise for the archaeology staff and the visitor experience, particularly the Open Day. It also provided the project leader with a continuous public commentary on the archaeological experience.

These included the following samples of remarks:

"This was where my mother, father, sister and me lived upstairs in the flat. My father (Alf Wright) was the storekeeper for the council depot. We were here from 1947 till 1965. What a surprise to see what was beneath our feet".

"My dad...born here. I worked here 30yrs...really interesting...I will be back" (Eric Butt)

"It was infuseyastic.....". (sic)

"Brilliant. We should continue to explore our history. It has lots to offer us for future understanding. Keep it up".

"Fascinating site. Excellent that members of the public encouraged to look around and be given a guided tour".

"Fascinating insight into how archaeology works and a very informed guide to explain to us".

"Well done to everyone working on site...good to find out about where we live".

"Good to see public money spent on something worthwhile".

"Best place I've ever been".

"I wish I could help dig".

The public programme

Volunteers were recruited from the general public, the Service mailing list, universities (targeting undergraduates studying archaeology courses and requiring field work experience). Groups who use/potentially use City and County Adult and Community Services were also targeted. A number of volunteers who joined the programme have been involved with community projects also recently run by the Service – for example, with the Worcester Commandery Project in 2005/6 and at Stourport Basins in 2005.

Specific activities for visiting groups and volunteers not participating in the excavation included finds processing, environmental sampling and sieving. Volunteers were also given the opportunity to conduct site tours.

The activities provided for visiting schools and colleges are described below:

- Site tours were conducted for pre-booked visitor groups, with informal daily tours and with a weekly fuller and more formal tour.

- An excavation open day offered tours led by Service staff and volunteers, with handling sessions and displays of artefacts from excavation with interpretation by archaeologists, a mock excavation area, activities for people to take part in, including creating artworks based on objects seen or reconstructions of the archaeological site, and re-enactment displays with Roman, medieval and Victorian themes.

The schools education programme

The archaeological team and voluntary staff provided a schools' programme designed to link with identified, relevant areas of the primary and secondary curricula. The drawing up of a basic education pack is proposed in order to give pupils and students relevant follow up work in the classroom.

Schools programme during archaeological excavations

The main aims were to enable pupils to study the history of The Butts in the context of Roman and medieval Worcester (Key Stage 2 – the Romans and the Victorians, and Key Stage 3 – the growth of towns), to provide pupils with the opportunity to be actively involved with on-site activities, to enable pupils to prepare and produce their own project work, and to be assessed by their teachers as part of the curriculum.

The specific activity took the form of a site tour to give pupils an introduction to the archaeology and history of the area. During the excavations pupils participated in selected archaeological processes, to learn basic archaeological skills, and to demonstrate related skills in their study of their school history syllabus.

This was followed by an investigative element where groups of pupils undertook six tasks: excavation, finds washing, classification of artefacts, animal bone identification, and sorting environmental residues.

General pupil targets

In their study of history, high school pupils are expected to acquire 'knowledge, skills and understanding' in six areas: chronological

events, study of people and changes in the past, historical interpretation, historical enquiry, organisation and communication, and breadth of study, for example, the way of life of people in the past who lived in the area.

Specific pupil targets of the schools programme were:

- to produce topic work relating to the Key Stage 2 history teaching units – Romans and Victorians, which includes the study of political, religious and social changes affecting people in the local area;
- to produce topic work relating to the key stage geography teaching units – ‘Rivers and Settlements’ which includes themes such as the physical evidence for choice of settlement and links to later modules (*cf.* history) which include the study of medieval boroughs, town planning and urbanisation;
- to demonstrate an understanding of ‘key elements’ of the geography and history curriculum; namely: how to find out about (and communicate to others) aspects of the past from ‘a range of sources of information, including artefacts, pictures and photographs...written sources, buildings and sites’;
- to demonstrate and communicate knowledge of how the physical environment changes through time.

Two important aims of primary and secondary school education are to encourage pupils to learn independently, and to form their own studied interpretations of people and environments of the past in order to come to value their place in the present. The schools programme therefore gave a unique opportunity to pupils, in their quest to appreciate our rich local heritage and link it directly with their studies.

For the specific activities the school groups were introduced to the excavations and then split into two groups so that all pupils were able to excavate in mock pits and to follow the process of archaeology through to an understanding of the discoveries being made. The pits had structures and artefacts within, so that children could learn basic excavation techniques, an understanding of stratigraphy and begin to speculate about what they were exposing.

For the indoor activity pupils were told that they were to excavate and record the site of an ancient house. In order to find out about the people who may have lived in this building, the children had to excavate and record the artefacts and environmental samples which archaeologists retrieve. The indoor activity room was therefore prepared with: a soil/sandpit with pottery and other objects, but chiefly pottery sherds, including Severn Valley ware, Greyware, Black Burnished Ware and Samian.

Bowls and brushes were placed next to the pit for washing artefacts so that the pottery could be identified, dated, measured and weighed. Rim fragments were placed on a rim chart in order to establish the form and function of the original vessel.

Trays were used with animal bones from sheep, pig, cattle and dog with illustrations of the skeletal characteristics of each. Identifying labels were also used, for pupils to place against the appropriate animal. Individual bones were then selected for recording by identification of the specific anatomical character, by measuring, weighing and drawing. Pupils also looked for signs of disease and butchery.

A smaller box with environmental samples for sieving was used by pupils who placed residues under a microscope in order to identify grape, fig and blackberry seeds and charred wheat remains, using tweezers to place them into individual containers and write out a label and put it on the pots.

Finally, pro forma sheets were used to record all this information with a series of exploratory questions.

Feedback from schools

These are just a sample of the comments from visiting teachers:

"Thank you for the excellent morning we spent at The Butts. I have only had positive feedback from students directly and positive comments from other staff".

"Thank you very much for our visit to the Community Dig today. All the pupils really enjoyed it and most came back with a much better understanding of the archaeological process.

There was a good range of activities and just the right amount of time to undertake them”.

“A huge thank you to all involved in our day today. It was superb. The children loved it and were really excited by everything they saw. They said the best bit was having a go rather than just having to watch”.

Volunteer programme

In the summers of 2005 and 2006 the Service ran a successful community excavation for Worcester City Council as part of a Heritage Lottery programme at the Commandery Museum. Recruitment of volunteers and school activities were integral to this programme and provided a good launching pad for the Butts Dig.

Roughly a quarter of the 90 volunteers who registered for the Butts had gained experience at the Commandery excavations and the remainder comprised a similar array of local ‘recruits’, students and people working part or full time, and retired people. As a training programme was deemed desirable volunteers and the Service signed up to a formal agreement stating the following commitments:

From the Service: an induction to the Service, an outline of roles and tasks, training and support in basic on-site excavation, recording and post-excavation techniques, opportunities to help you to develop skills and experience, specific training and support on health and safety matters.

From the volunteer: working with soils - trowelling, cleaning, and excavating features recording archaeological deposits - written descriptions, photographs, scale drawings, plotting three-dimensional coordinates of features and artefacts caring for the excavated artefacts, explaining evidence to visitors and site tours.

Feedback from volunteers

“I loved it all. The thrill of finding and handling Roman pots. I have a much better understanding now of all the processes used in recording. The archaeologists gave such clear

explanations and were very patient. The team spirit was really good....don't change anything - it was really perfect. I would like to do more and look forward to the next time".

"I would like to thank you now for yet another fantastic opportunity to experience what it is like to be involved on a 'dig'. I had a great time and learnt still more about the processes involved and met some really nice people along the way. Thanks also for your kindness and patience during what was surely a very busy and exciting time at The Butts".

Public involvement

Groups who actively took part in, or visited the dig included: Primary, Secondary and Special Schools and Local Children's Clubs, Lifestyles, Worcester Task Force, MotoV8, University of Worcester undergraduate archaeology students, the Young Archaeologists Club, the University of the Third Age, Natural England Staff, Worcester Archaeology Society and many more casual visitors who were given informal and formal tours of the excavations and exhibition rooms.

For the first 6 weeks of the dig there was an average of 30 casual visitors per weekday and 50/60 on Saturdays and Sundays. Numbers tailed off in the final month, partly due to a return to school and the weather cooling, but over the ten weeks around 2,000 people visited the site. This does not include the formal tours which were conducted for the volunteers each Friday and were joined by an average of 10 per week over a period of 15 weeks.

From August to October there was an average of two organised party visits per week from various sources, from library staff to undergraduate students, from special needs groups to historical and archaeological societies – with a total estimate of around 200 people.

20 schools and up to 30 parties of pupils joined formal activity programmes, to have a hands-on introduction to archaeological processes (excavation, artefacts and environmental) including interpretation. Some schools booked double sessions and pupil

ages varied from 5 to 14 years. The number of pupils including a weekend 'club' numbered around 600.

900 people came to the open day on 20th September, so that the total figure of visits during the 10 week period was 3,000.

The oral history programme



Alongside the archaeological programme several people came forward to give testament to their memories of living or working in The Butts, just outside the northern defence wall of the city. Cyril Cale and Heather Jones shared memories of how the cattle market (which operated here from 1838 to 1983) was physically organized; Barrie Smith and Ken Jenkins described the almshouses as they looked in the 1950s; Janet Draper, Jill Jacobs, Alf Wright & John Sutherland gave their accounts of how the city corporation operated from here with its refuse and cleansing service from the 1950s to the 1990s, and Elsie Brookes-McCully and Josie Jones (twins), meticulously described the communities living in The Butts and Netherton Lane between the two world wars.

As a result, Worcestershire's City Archive Collection now holds 15 hours of recorded oral history relating to the site's use from the 1920s to date. The Collection also has filmed footage of the

people interviewed, sharing further stories of the Hive space and of a dramatized story of the cattle market performed by a local theatre group (VAMOS).



Figure 3: Cyril Cale in 1930 & 2011

Conclusion

The community programmes described here form a blend of activities which were, on the one hand carefully planned for the archaeological work, and on the other, opportunistically carried out when it was recognised that local people were keen to share their memories of the physical space now occupied by the Hive. For such large scale developments it has taught professionals, volunteers, special interest groups in research and education, and the general public, much about how cultural heritage is thoroughly enriched by mutual discovery and exploration.

In a world of mixed economic fortune archaeology as a discipline, in the UK and beyond, will prosper if community engagement is, whenever possible or appropriate, considered integral to project design plans. Archaeology will be enriched further by creative opportunism during the lifetime of specific community programmes.

The coming together of business and culture is vital to this process of breaking down the perceived conflicts between economic necessity and cultural nourishment.

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Editors:

Jaime Almansa Sánchez
Elena Papagiannopoulou
Email: almansasanchez@gmail.com

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Website: www.jasarqueologia.es
Email: jasarqueologia@gmail.com
Address: Plaza de Mondariz, 6, 28029 - Madrid (Spain)

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