

Bleachfield Street, Alcester

In 2005 we excavated a large site on Bleachfield Street within the known area of the major Romano-British town of Alcester, immediately to the south of the defended area. The earliest archaeology on the site dated to the Late 1st/Early 2nd centuries AD. The most notable features were a rectilinear arrangement of beamslots surrounded by a sequence of ditches. Five phases of occupation were identified. Phase three witnessed a more formal arrangement of structures. Substantial stone walls were revealed in the west of the site. In the east of the excavated area, an arrangement of clay post pads mapped out the groundplan of a large (20m x 8m) structure with an apsidal southern end. The site appears to have been used sporadically for burial. Adult inhumations were concentrated in the southwest of the site. Burials occurred on numerous different alignments suggesting either changes in burial practice, or a lack of formalisation of the burial ground. A total of 17 inhumation burials and 8 cremation urns were revealed during the excavation. A number of the urns were concentrated around the apse end of the post pad structure. During the excavation many soil samples were taken for the recovery of plant and other environmental remains. The most interesting plant remains were mineralized (probably in cesspits) and have provided evidence of the type of food people were growing and eating almost 2000 years ago. The mineralized remains included numerous fruit stones and seeds including; cherry, plum and figs (which would have been imported). There were also many charred plant remains including the chaff from spelt, a type of wheat. The chaff is what is left over after the cereal has been cleaned. A deep 'dark soil' deposit marked the abandonment of the site during the mid 4th century. Medieval activity was represented by two stone built corn dryers located in the north of the site. Evidence for post-medieval activity was limited. Most of the later disturbance on the site was attributed to the factories that were present on the site prior to the current development. An archaeological assessment report has been produced on our excavation and we hope to carry out more work on this significant project in the near future.