

Archaeological assessment of Leominster, Hereford and Worcester

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Summary

The historic town of Leominster was surveyed during the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey, a desk-based study of the 64 smaller historic towns in Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Archaeological and documentary evidence relating to the historic core of Leominster was carefully analysed, comprising topographic data, published and unpublished archaeological reports, museum collections, primary and secondary historical sources, historical maps, and field data recorded by the project team.

Detailed evidence is provided on the character and layout of the settlement in the medieval and post-medieval periods. For each period the available information is analysed and mapped in detail, and a model of the development of the town is proposed. In addition, the evidence for pre-urban occupation is considered, together with evidence of 19th century occupation. All archaeologically-relevant information has been recorded as part of the county Sites and Monuments Record. Specialist assessments of artefacts, ecofacts, standing buildings and documentary sources are included. A detailed archaeological research framework has been developed for Leominster, which will inform future archaeological investigations as well as management decisions.

The historic core of Leominster contains buried archaeological deposits, and these are judged to have high potential. In addition there is high potential for the recovery of artefact and ecofact assemblages. Waterlogged deposits have been recorded in some areas, which enhances the research potential of the area. The historic buildings constitute a complementary body of evidence, and are judged to have high potential for detailed study and recording. The surviving documentary sources are not very extensive for the medieval period, but are much more extensive for the post-medieval period, and the potential for further study is high.

1 Introduction

1.1 Location and landuse

The urban area of Leominster is located at NGR SO 496 590 in Leominster District. The present settlement of Leominster comprises a market town centred on Broad Street with large-scale modern development on the outskirts particularly to the west.

1.2 Topography, geology and soils.

Leominster lies at a height of between 70m and 85m OD. It occupies an area of higher

ground near the confluence of the River Lugg and its tributaries with the River Arrow. Its position within the arm of the River Lugg means that it is protected on two sides by the river and was easily defensible. A number of watercourses run through the town although most are now culverted. These provided power for mills and serviced industries such as tanning and cloth production as well as providing clean water for the medieval Priory. The soils are argillic or stagnogleyic argillic brown earths of the Bromyard association (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Ragg *et al* 1984) overlying Silurian Raglan Mudstone (British Geological Survey 1:250,000, sheet 52°N-0.4°W).

1.3 Chronological outline

Origins of the church. There is a legend that a church at Leominster was founded by St David in the 6th century but documentary sources suggest that the origins of the settlement lie with the foundation *c* 660 of a religious house by Merewalh, King of Magonsaetan. This may have served as the ecclesiastical centre of the area before the see of Hereford was founded in the later 7th century (Finberg 1972, 220). The character or exact location of this early foundation is not known although it has been suggested that the defended rectangular precinct occupied by the 12th century Benedictine Priory was created at this time (Hillaby 1987). The minster was said to have suffered repeated attacks by Welshmen (Price 1795, 6) and possibly also by Danes (Chandler 1993, 224). In 1046, a nunnery here, which had been endowed by Earl Loeffric of Mercia, was involved in a scandal (Garmonsway 1972, 164). The entry for Leominster in the Domesday Book suggests that the nunnery had been dissolved prior to 1066 and the lands transferred to Queen Edith (Thorn and Thorn 1983).

It is likely that some settlement grew up around the Anglo-Saxon religious house. Such a settlement is known to have existed at Much Wenlock, for example, and 18th and 19th century historians believed that there was a town at Leominster in the Anglo-Saxon period (Price 1795, 6; Williams 1808, 131; Townsend 1863, 6). Wills (1981, 10) suggests that there is no evidence to support the existence of a pre-Conquest secular settlement of any kind. The Domesday Survey records the presence of a large and wealthy manor with villagers in 1086 (Thorn and Thorn 1983), but there is no documentary or archaeological evidence to suggest a town before the 12th century.

The development of the settlement. In 1123 the manor of Leominster was transferred to the Benedictine Abbey of Reading and a monastery was refounded at Leominster as a dependency of Reading. The Priors of Leominster seem to have actively promoted Leominster as a commercial centre, and in 1170 Henry II granted the first fair, a right which was confirmed and extended by later monarchs (Wills 1981, 11). The location of the fairground is not known but recent metal detector finds of coins and jewellery to the north east of the town close to the river (HWCM 20146) suggest a possible location. The grant of a fair may have been the first step towards urbanism but does not necessarily imply an urban function.

In 1207 the settlement was attacked and burnt by William de Braose who was in rebellion against King John. There is a tradition, based on an interpretation of a statement by a 17th century historian (Blount 1677-8), that Leominster was re-sited after this event and that the original settlement was to the west of Broad Street/High Street or in The Marsh, ie the Bridge Street area (Price 1795, 15; Townsend 1863, 23). Wills (1981, 13-14) considers this to be a misreading of the text and shows convincingly that Leominster has always occupied its present position.

By 1221 Leominster had acquired the legal status of a borough (Beresford and Finberg 1973, 123). The success of Leominster as a market centre by the mid-13th century is indicated by demands from Hereford and Worcester that the day of the weekly market be changed from Saturday to Friday in order to lessen competition with their own markets (Townsend 1863, 25-26). From 1297 to the Reform Act of 1867 Leominster sent two Members to Parliament. Between 1867 and 1885 it sent one, after which time

the representation was merged with that of the county (Reeves 1973, 273). The prosperity of the town was based on the marketing of agricultural produce, the presence of which encouraged the growth of industries which processed such goods. The most important commodity was local wool, the high quality of which led it to be known as "The Leominster Ore" (Williams 1808, 249).

The later medieval period. Despite the constant threat of attacks by the Welsh a considerable expansion of the town took place during the 13th and early 14th centuries. In the later 14th century Leominster, with the rest of the country, suffered from a worsening in climate, devastating outbreaks of plague and resulting falls in agricultural production. Unlike many market centres in Herefordshire, however, Leominster survived this period of economic decline and flourished in the later 15th century. Its economy was still based on local wool and the production of cloth, including linen, and it was well placed geographically to become the major market centre in north Herefordshire. Trade guilds flourished in the 14th and 15th centuries and Leominster had eight: bakers, butchers, shoemakers, glovers, mercers, tailors, tanners and walkers (Reeves 1973, 57). By 1500 Leominster was one of only nine market towns in Herefordshire (O'Donnell 1971).

The post-medieval period. The Priory was dissolved with its mother house at Reading in 1539 and subsequently the priory buildings were almost entirely destroyed. After the dissolution jurisdiction over the town passed to the Marcher Lords but in 1554 the town was incorporated and the privileges of its inhabitants consolidated (Williams 1808, 132). Leland who visited the town around this time noted that although Leominster was "quite a large town with good timber buildings," it was "in decline" a situation he attributed to the change from a Saturday to a Friday market. This change had occurred following complaints from the county towns of Hereford and Worcester that the popularity of the Leominster market was harming their own cloth trade (Chandler 1993, 224). The evidence of standing buildings (see section 6.4) suggests that the town was becoming more prosperous again by the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Throughout the post-medieval period Leominster remained a small manufacturing town and market centre for north Herefordshire with a modest population growth. By the mid-16th century the population is estimated from the parish registers to have been around 2400 rising to 3000 by the mid-17th century (Wills 1981, 15).

The town was firmly Royalist during the Civil War and was taken and retaken by the Parliamentary and Royalist forces during this period (Townsend 1863, 102-104). During the 17th century the wool trade declined but other industries using or powered by water became increasingly important (Reeves 1973). In 1723 the antiquarian Stukeley noted that "Leominster is a town of brisk trade in manufactures of their remarkable wool in hat making, leather and many other" (Price 1795, 46). Leominster was very prosperous in the 18th century, much more so than Hereford. It was described in a Geographical Dictionary of the period as a "large, handsome and populous town trading considerably in wool, fine wheat, flax, gloves, leather, hats etc; as a great thoroughfare between South Wales and London and as a venue for fairs noted for horses, black cattle etc" (Reeves 1973, 112).

By the early 19th century industry in the town had declined and Leominster was in a state of decay. This may have been due to the competition from factory mass-production and the inability of the water mills to compete with reliable steam engines. Leominster lacked cheap coal and easy communication with the new centres of population (Reeves 1973). The town still retained its function as a market for agricultural produce, however. In 1853 the Shrewsbury to Hereford line with a station at Leominster was opened. In 1857 the Leominster to Kington Line and in 1897 the Leominster to Worcester lines were opened.

1.4 Placename studies

Leominster is probably a translation into English of the Welsh name *Llanllieni*, "church in the district of streams" (Coplestone-Crow 1989). The first element in the name, *leon* was the name given to the district around the River Arrow and the Lugg and is preserved in other local placenames (Wills 1981). The earliest recorded form of the placename Leominster is *Leomynstre* in 1046. In the 13th century the town is referred to as *Leominstrie*, *Lemenstre* and *Leomen'*. In the mid-16th century Leland called the town "Leonminstar (alias Lemster)" (Bannister 1916).

1.5 Syntheses of documentary and archaeological data

Leominster has been the subject of much historical and archaeological interest. In 1793 John Lodge included information on Leominster in his *Topographical history of Herefordshire*. The earliest history was written in 1795 by John Price who had access to documents collected by Lodge including presumably the manuscripts of Thomas Blount (Blount 1677-8) on which he based much of his work. Later historians (Blacklock 1898; Reeves 1973; Townsend 1863; Williams 1808) drew much of their information from these two works. The lives and work of historians Lodge, Price, Williams, Townsend and Blacklock are discussed in an article by Reeves (1985). Hillaby (1987) has provided a survey and interpretation of the documentary sources relating to the early Christian and pre-Conquest religious house.

The most extensive description of the archaeological data so far has been in two documents produced to aid in development control work (Stansfeld 1974; Wills 1981). In these an attempt was made to re-evaluate the conclusions of earlier studies in the light of modern thinking on urban development and by the inclusion of archaeological and topographical studies. The archaeological and documentary evidence for the priory has been summarised by Brown and Wilson (forthcoming).

The present assessment was carried out by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey in 1994. The text was revised in March 1995 to incorporate the results of fieldwork undertaken by the Survey (see section 1.7). No information published after December 1994 has been incorporated into this assessment.

1.6 Cartographic sources

William Gallier's map of 1832, the tithe map of 1850 (HFNS nd) and the Ordnance Survey first edition 1:2500 map (*Herefordshire sheet XII.15* (1887)) were used in the identification of remains and the definition of components.

1.7 Archaeological excavations and surveys

Williams reported the discovery of a cremation burial in Burgess Street (HWCM 9031; Williams 1808, 193) and Romano-British pottery and other finds from the Priory garden (HWCM 725; Williams 1808, 10). A Roman mosaic was supposedly uncovered at the back of 26 Burgess street in about 1960 (HWCM 8912; Stansfeld 1974) and Roman pottery was recovered during the excavation of a gaspipe trench to the east of Bridge Street at about the same time (HWCM 8398; Stanford 1962).

Excavations were carried out on the site of the Benedictine Priory in 1853 (HWCM 725; Freeman 1853) and 1932 (HWCM 725; RCHME 1934) and building recording, salvage recording and a small-scale excavation within the Old Priory building was undertaken in 1979-80 (HWCM 725; Brown and Wilson forthcoming). In 1950, during refurbishment, female skeletons were uncovered in front of the High Altar of the Priory church and in c 1974-5 human bones were observed in flower beds to the east of the hospital buildings attached to the Priory (HWCM 725; Stansfeld 1974). In the 18th century an attempt to discover a passageway leading from the Priory to Ivington Camp

came across a "well vaulted cellar, a skeleton of very extraordinary dimensions, pigs of lead etc" (HWCM 725; Price 1795, 89). In 1979 archaeological observation of a gaspipe trench identified a section of the medieval Priory wall (HWCM 19513; Rahtz 1979) and medieval and post-medieval deposits to the north of the Pinsley Brook in the area of the medieval fishpond (HWCM 8913, 19513; Rahtz 1979). To the west of this in 1983 undated pottery and wood, possibly part of the post-medieval infill of this area were observed at a depth of c2.5m (HWCM 5291).

In the town itself the first report of archaeological deposits was in 1808, when it was recorded that pottery and other finds had been uncovered when the town defences were levelled and the ditch finally filled in (HWCM 2560; Williams 1808). Undated remains of structures in a brickyard to the west of Dishley Street (HWCM 19779), a buried wall in a yard of Church Street (HWCM 19780), and early street levels (HWCM 19781) were reported, at a depth of ten feet (Williams 1808, 351). Recent excavations suggest that this depth may be exaggerated (D Brown pers comm).

In 1970-1 malt kilns, possibly of post-medieval date, were discovered under the former Mission Room floor in Etnam Street (HWCM 16268; Tonkin 1972) and in the 19th century tanning pits, probably of post-medieval date were revealed beneath a house on the east side of Broad Street (HWCM 19620; Townsend 1863, 74). Late post-medieval deposits c 1.0m thick were observed during a watching brief on Dishley Street in 1983 (HWCM 4105).

Chance finds from the town have included a 16th century chafing dish from Broad Street (HWCM 21949), a post-medieval saggar from Etnam Street (HWCM 21950), and medieval pottery and bone from 8 Bridge Street (HWCM 3598). In 1980 medieval pottery was recovered from a back garden of a house fronting Corn Square (HWCM 19585) and in the late 1970s and early 1980s watching briefs located medieval deposits c 1.0m below the present ground surface at 8 Bridge Street (HWCM 3598; HWCC SMR file) and part of the town ditch at the back of Etnam Street (HWCM 19534; Wills 1981, 23). An evaluation and later a small excavation was undertaken in Burgess Street close to the Buttercross between 1990 and 1993 (HWCM 7044; Woodiwiss 1990; post-excavation in progress).

During the preparation of this report a number of excavations and evaluations have taken place in the town. In 1993 a watching briefs at Greyhound Yard, off Rainbow Street (HWCM 12449), and at 5 Broad Street (HWCM 19713) uncovered medieval and post-medieval deposits (Brown 1993; Napthan 1993). In 1994 salvage recording at the Kwik-Save site (HWCM 21947) and evaluations behind Kingdom Hall on South Street (HWCM 21387) and at Bargates (HWCM 21746) uncovered evidence of the medieval town ditch (Cook 1994; Napthan 1994; Napthan *et al* 1994). The evaluation at Bargates (HWCM 21746) also provided evidence of medieval and post-medieval domestic occupation. At Kingdom Hall (HWCM 21387) medieval pottery was found in post-medieval deposits and the Quaker burial ground dating to the mid-17th century was located. A watching brief during underpinning of the Hop Pole Inn on Bridge Street late in 1994 recorded deep waterlogged deposits and evidence of medieval industry in that area (HWCM 21465; Buteux *et al*).

Fieldwork was undertaken by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey in October 1994. This identified remains, investigated and revised the extent of components, and recorded 18th and 19th century cellarge and modern developments in the urban area.

1.8 Acknowledgments and personnel

Survey fieldwork was undertaken by Victoria Buteux and Nigel Topping. Thanks are due to Duncan Brown who commented on an earlier draft of this report. Analysis and report writing were undertaken by Victoria Buteux and the report was edited by Hal Dalwood.

2 Pre-urban evidence

Little is known about the prehistory of the Leominster area before the Iron Age although spot finds of flint tools are quite common in the modern parish. Williams suggests that the name Burgess Street may derive from Barrow Cross Street and notes that a cremation burial in a barrow was excavated in the 18th century towards the west end of Burgess Street (Williams 1808, 193).

The site of the modern town of Leominster lies between two Roman roads both running north to south (Stansfeld 1974). There are a number of reports of Roman artefacts from the town (see section 1.7). These include tessellated pavement fragments and tiles which would indicate a building or buildings of some status. However doubt has been thrown on the accuracy of some of these reports (Wills 1981, 7).

Whilst a church and associated buildings developed from at least the later 7th century there is as yet no archaeological or documentary evidence for a secular settlement at Leominster until the 12th century.

3 Medieval archaeological evidence

3.1 Medieval remains and buildings

Excavations, evaluations, watching briefs and chance finds have demonstrated that buried remains dating to the medieval period do survive in Leominster. In the Priory precinct in 1853, when soil for the railway embankment was taken from the workhouse garden, medieval stonework was uncovered at a depth of 2.5m to 3.0m below ground surface. Further excavation by workmen traced the south transept, presbytery and surrounding aisles and chapels of the Priory. No record was made of any artefacts recovered (Freeman 1853). In 1932 RCHME re-excavated in the same area for display purposes, but produced no report of the work (RCHME 1932, 111). In 1979 evidence of waterlogged deposits possibly associated with the medieval fishponds or river course and part of a medieval stone wall were observed (HWCM 8914, HWCM 19513, Rahtz 1979). In 1979-80 a small-scale excavation was undertaken at the Old Priory (HWCM 721) which revealed a series of surfaces and walls dating from the mid-12th century onwards with associated artefacts and ecofacts (Brown and Wilson forthcoming). In general medieval deposits are close to the surface within the area of the medieval priory as is demonstrated by the discovery of human bone in flowerbeds (HWCM 725; Stansfeld 1974).

All recent archaeological fieldwork inside the town has produced some evidence of medieval occupation. At the Buttercross (Burgess Street) in 1991 medieval structures with associated artefacts and ecofacts were uncovered (HWCM 7044; Woodiwiss 1990; post-excavation underway). Similar deposits were observed at the Greyhound Inn, (HWCM 12449; Napthan 1993), 5 Broad Street (HWCM 19713; Brown 1993) and Bargates (HWCM 21746; Napthan *et al* 1994). At the Hop Pole Inn (Bridge Street) deep waterlogged deposits associated with medieval industrial activity were recorded (HWCM 21465; Buteux *et al* 1994). Medieval pottery has been recovered from Kingdom Hall, South Street (HWCM 21836; Napthan 1994). The medieval town ditch with associated medieval deposits was partly excavated at Bargates (HWCM 21746; Napthan *et al* 1994) and the line of the ditch was also observed on the Kwik-Save site, Rylands Road (HWCM 21947; Cook 1994), behind Kingdom Hall, South Street (HWCM 21836; Napthan 1994) and behind tenement plots fronting Etnam Street (HWCM 19534; Wills 1981, 23). Chance discoveries of medieval finds have also occurred (HWCM 3598, HWCM 19585, HWCM 21949, HWCM 21950: see section 1.7).

The Priory church of St Peter and St Paul has been described and planned, and the

sequence of construction interpreted by a number of authors (RCHME 1934, 111-115; Brown and Wilson forthcoming; Smith 1964). With the exception of the surviving parts of the Priory (HWCM 724, HWCM 721, HWCM 725) only six buildings of medieval date survive in Leominster. HWCM 128, HWCM 129, HWCM 8840 and HWCM 8861 are of 14th century date and HWCM 16253 and HWCM 16257 date to the 15th century.

3.2 Medieval urban components

Analysis of the evidence summarised above and of other documentary sources indicated the existence of 31 urban components. The characteristics of these urban components are summarised below.

Religious house (HWCM 19591). In 1123 the religious house at Leominster was refounded as a Benedictine Priory (HWCM 19591). Little archaeological evidence survives of the pre-12th century minster, although it has been suggested that the large sub-rectangular precinct may be 6th or 7th century in origin (Hillaby 1987), and that the 16 female skeletons found beneath the central nave are part of the nun's graveyard of the 11th century abbey (Reeves 1973, 30-31).

The 12th to 16th century Priory precinct is defined to the south by a boundary bank (HWCM 728) and to the north by the Kenwater. The western boundary is a wall which, although of post-medieval construction, is thought to mark the line of the medieval precinct wall. The original eastern boundary of the precinct is more difficult to define. It is likely that it was on, or close to, the River Lugg but the course of this river has changed a great deal, even during the last century, and at present the line of the medieval water course cannot be determined.

The main gateway into the precinct was adjacent to the Forbury chapel, on Church Street. The graveyard and the ecclesiastical and domestic buildings, including the almonary, guesthouses, and stables, were clustered in the north east corner of the precinct. The only remaining structures are the nave of the Priory Church (HWCM 725), the earliest recorded masonry of which dates to the 12th century; a 13th century range of buildings including the reredorter and possible infirmary now called the Old Priory (HWCM 721); and the 13th century Forbury Chapel (724).

The rest of the precinct, or outer court, would have contained farm buildings, one of which survived until the middle of the last century (tithe barn; HWCM 19519), orchards, gardens, fishponds and mills (Brown and Wilson forthcoming). Evidence recovered during the excavation of the Old Priory suggests that the diverting of the Pinsley Brook through the northern part of the precinct occurred after the re-foundation of the religious house in the early 12th century (Brown and Wilson forthcoming). This waterway fed the fishponds and provided water for the domestic and ecclesiastical buildings before powering the Priory Mill (HWCM 19589). To the north of the Pinsley was a fishpond, filled in the post medieval period but shown on 19th century maps of Leominster. The identification of another fishpond to the east of this (Rahtz 1979) is questionable, and the deposits observed may have been part of dumping into the marshy area by the river to increase the area of dry land.

Somewhere on Vicarage Street stood a college for the housing of ordained priests and chaplains who served the district (HWCM 19621; Stansfeld 1974, 9). The Hospital of St Clement and St Katherine (HWCM 3203) was thought to have stood on Bargates in the area of Townsend Court (Stansfeld 1974). However recent work has identified the site outside the town, on the road out to the north (Naphan *et al* 1994, 4-5).

Market place (HWCM 19554). The large medieval market place of Leominster was the focus of the planned town and its centre was the Buttercross, opposite the gatehouse to the Priory. This was the site of a medieval market cross around which the

buttermarket was held (HWCM 4013). To the north of the Buttercross, Broad Street market stretched as far as Red Cross (HWCM 12128). To the south of the Buttercross a large triangular market place was located between what is now the High Street and Drapers Lane and ended at Iron Cross (HWCM 12129). This triangular market place has an unusual extension to the east, Corn Square. This may be a remnant of the original market place (Wills 1981, map 1) but it is possible that it is a later medieval or post-medieval addition to the market area carved out of the tenement plots which originally fronted the triangular market place. If this is the case, the remains of medieval buildings may lie under the surface of the Square.

There is one surviving building of late 15th century date within the infilling of the triangular market place which created the High Street and Drapers Lanes (See section 6.4). This suggests that this infilling had occurred by the end of the medieval period. The medieval market place is likely to have contained market buildings such as that replaced at the Buttercross in 1633 (HWCM 19533).

Street system (HWCM 19582). Leominster's success as a commercial centre in the medieval period was based in large part on its position at the junction of a number of river valleys which meant that it was a natural route centre. Communications north-south were particularly important as the Lugg valley gave access to the Wye valley to the south and, via the Lugg tributaries, into north Herefordshire and south Shropshire (Wills 1981). The north-south route through Leominster running past the Priory gatehouse is possibly the oldest part of the street system.

The market place was the focus of the street system and it is possible that the original route running east from the town was not Etnam Street, but a continuation of the modern Grange Walk which would have run from the market place along the edge of the Priory precinct. Wills (1981, 19) suggested that at sometime after the laying out of the main elements of the town this road was replaced by Etnam Street to allow space for burgage plots on both sides of this important routeway. Whatever its origins Etnam Street was certainly in existence by 1393 when a list of burgages and their rents indicates properties in the following streets High Street, New Street, Dishley Street, Church Street, The Marsh (Bridge Street), Etnam Street, South Street, Vicarage Street, Burgess Lane (street), Cronelle Lane (Cranes Lane?), Mappenor Lane (?) and Pyne Furdling lane (?) (Price 1795, 270).

The 15th century building to the west of School Lane (HWCM 16253) over hangs the lane suggesting that the road existed at the time of its construction (D Brown pers comm). Evidence from the evaluation at Bargates suggests that this is a medieval street and it may equate with Mappenor Lane or Pyne Furdling Lane mentioned in 1393. Green Lane runs through a holloway (HWCM 19529) and is an extension of New Street which may indicate that it has a medieval origin. The origins of Westbury Street and Rainbow Street are not known but they have been included as they link known elements of the medieval street system. To the east of the town the pattern of the roads was much altered by the coming of the railway and they have been reconstructed using the 1850 tithe map. In 1808 it was noted that "lately in repairing the public drains of the town three tiers of pavements, one above the other having considerable depth of sand and gravel between them were discovered" (Williams 1808, 351). Whilst the date of these remains are not known it is possible that one or more of them could have been medieval.

Bridging points (HWCM 19545, HWCM 19546, HWCM 19778). The three main bridging points within the town were over the old course of the Lugg (HWCM 19788), the Kenwater (HWCM 19545), and the Pinsley Brook (HWCM 19546). It is not known when these bridges were constructed but stone bridges were in position by c 1540 when Leland visited the town. At this date the bridge over the Lugg was

"the largest of the three, as I recall, and with the most arches" (Chandler 1993, 223).

Town defences (HWCM 8904). Historians in the 18th and 19th centuries recorded traditions of defences around Leominster. A defensive circuit is said to have been built in 1055 (Price 1795, 10; Williams 1808, 33) and it was suggested that additions were made in the early post-Conquest period (Townsend 1863, 8; Williams 1808, 37). Price reports that in 1207, when Leominster was attacked by William de Braose, the inhabitants "fled with all their effects into that part of the town which was fortified and which included the Priory, Church and the eastern part of the Borough" (Price 1795, 14).

The ditch was still visible in parts in the late 18th century and its route was described (Townsend 1863, 80; Williams 1808, 44). This description has been interpreted in a number of ways (Wills 1981; Stansfeld 1974). Recent fieldwork has definitively located the alignment of the ditch in a number of locations. In the east, the defences probably joined the south side of the Priory precinct. The route crossed Etnam Street, and turned west along the back of the tenement plots (HWCM 19534) crossing South Street close to Kingdom Hall (HWCM 21387; Napthan 1994). The alignment continued to the south of Westbury Street, where it started to turn northwards (HWCM 21387, Cook 1994). The route crossed Bargates to the east of Townsend Court (HWCM 21746; Napthan *et al* 1994). From this point the route is less clear, although it is most likely that it crossed Green Lane and then turned northeast to join the river somewhere along Vicarage Street.

Despite the discovery and excavation of parts of the ditch, the date of construction of the defences has not been proved archaeologically. However 14th century pottery in deposits backfilling the ditch provide a *terminus ante quem* (HWCM 21746; Napthan *et al* 1994), and by the early 14th century the town may have expanded outside its defences. The defences probably fell out of use by the end of the medieval period. In the 19th century it was noted that in the 16th century the town's main streets were "intersected with a large, stagnant and uncovered ditch which extended through the greater portion of the town" (Townsend 1863, 80). The defences, or what was left of them, were finally levelled in the 18th century when "utensils of pottery, burnt bones, black mould, heads of spears and arrows, brick tiles, tessellated bricks and fragments of sculptured stones" were observed (Williams 1808). Evidence from the excavation of the ditch on the Kwik-Save site confirms that it was finally backfilled in one operation in the late 18th century (HWCM 21947; Cook 1994).

At present there is no archaeological evidence of the form of the defences although they probably consisted of a ditch and rampart with a timber palisade on the top. Where the defences crossed the main streets, gatehouses and bridges must have been constructed. Such structures may have been found at Etnam Street (HWCM 21951), South Street (HWCM 8905), Bargates (HWCM 21952) and Green Lane (HWCM 21953). No documentary or archaeological evidence of gatehouses exists but a bridge on South Street existed into the post-medieval period. This was known as Battle Bridge (HWCM 8905) as it was reputed to have been the site of the battle in 1052 between Welsh and English forces (Reeves 1973, 32).

Tenement plots (HWCM 19530, HWCM 19531, HWCM 19532, HWCM 19556, HWCM 19557, HWCM 19558, HWCM 19559, HWCM 19560, HWCM 19580, HWCM 19581, HWCM 19583, HWCM 19584, HWCM 19586, HWCM 19587, HWCM 19593, HWCM 21461, HWCM 21466, HWCM 21467, HWCM 21954). If, as seems most probable, the town grew up around the Priory after 1123 and was not re-sited after its destruction by the forces of William de Braose in 1207 (see section 1.3) the earliest occupation is likely be close to the precinct with the tenement plots fronting the large market place (HWCM 19530, HWCM 19557, HWCM 19558, HWCM 19559) being the earliest element of the planned town.

HWCM 19567 and HWCM 19558 form what may be one planned unit, with plots fronting the market place and stretching back to the precinct wall. Components HWCM 19559 and HWCM 19530, to the west of the market place, stretch back as far as Rainbow Street. Boundaries within these components indicate that they were developed in a series of stages. Wills (1982, 21) suggested that the Broad Street/High Street frontages were the first areas to be developed. The evidence from the evaluation and excavation at the Buttercross on Burgess Street (HWCM 7044) and the watching brief at the Greyhound Inn (HWCM 12449), however, point to occupation over all this area from the late 12th to 13th century onwards (HWCC 1993; Napthan 1993; Woodiwiss 1990). One 14th century building survives in this area (HWCM 8840).

Tenement plot components HWCM 19531, HWCM 21461, HWCM 21466 and HWCM 21467 are within the supposed line of the town defences and HWCM 19531 and HWCM 21561 front the market place and main north-south road through Leominster. Burgages are known to have existed off Vicarage Street and Cranes Lane in the 14th century but 19th century maps do not show the typical long thin burgage plots in this area. The reasons for this are not known at present but may relate to the density of occupation in the area in the medieval or post-medieval periods. A college for priests and chaplains is known to have existed somewhere on Vicarage Street but the size or position of this establishment is not known.

Tenement plot components HWCM 19560 and HWCM 19580, close to the precinct and market and within the line of the defences, are also probably part of the earliest town. If the suggestion that the original road out of Leominster to the east ran just to the south of the Priory precinct is correct (see above), then HWCM 19560 must have been developed first. If the frontage did shift from Grange Walk to Etnam Street some time in the medieval period, deposits relating to the earlier medieval houses on Grange Walk may be well preserved as they would have been relatively undisturbed by later medieval and post-medieval rebuilding. The western limit of HWCM 19560 has been drawn using the 1832 map of Leominster (Gallier 1832). This area may have expanded outside the defences in the 13th and early 14th century. Medieval pottery was found at Kingdom Hall in the southwest corner of component HWCM 19580 (HWCM 21387; Napthan 1994). Two medieval buildings were recorded in this area (RCHME 1934), although these were demolished some time before the 1960s.

Tenement plot component HWCM 19581 is slightly out of the centre of the town, but within the supposed line of the town defences. The break in plot boundaries at the southwest corner of the component was taken to be an indicator that the town ditch cut across this area (Wills 1981). A watching brief in 1983 however revealed no ditch or evidence of medieval deposits (HWCM 4105: information in SMR file). Dishley Street is mentioned in 1393 (Price 1795, 20) but it is possible that only the High Street and West Street frontages of this component were occupied in the medieval period.

Leominster was very prosperous by the 13th century (see section 1.3) and in the 13th and early 14th centuries the town expanded creating suburbs to the south along South Street (HWCM 19583, HWCM 19584) and to the west along Bargates (HWCM 19586, HWCM 19587, HWCM 21954). Along both these streets the back boundaries of the known plots extend much further than the occupied area. This may reflect the use of pre-existing field boundaries or that more land was laid out for development than was ever needed. The westerly extent of the component on Bargates and the southerly extent of the components on South Street have been defined using the Gallier's 1832 map. Evidence from an evaluation near Townsend House indicated that on Bargates the area outside the defences was not occupied until the 12th to 13th century. Occupation continued until the later 14th century after which the area was ploughed and not re-occupied until the post-medieval period

(HWCM 21746; Napthan *et al* 1994). This abandonment in the later 14th century, perhaps connected to the Black Death and economic decline, may be the reason that burgage plot boundaries have not survived in this area nor in HWCM 21954 to the north.

Leominster also expanded to the north of the defences in the later medieval period. Long narrow tenement plots can be seen on both sides of Bridge Street between the Kenwater and the former (Mill Street) course of the River Lugg (HWCM 19532 and HWCM 19556) on Gallier's 1832 map. Both the western boundary of component HWCM 19556 and the eastern boundary of component HWCM 19532 are defined by streams/mill leats running into the Kenwater. Component HWCM 19556 contains two surviving 14th century buildings (HWCM 128 and HWCM 129) and it was assumed that the development of this area had occurred by the 14th century. Evidence from a watching brief at the Hop Pole Inn, however, indicates that the northern end of HWCM 19532 was not built up until sometime after the late 14th or early 15th century. Until then the area was very marshy and was a dumping area for rubbish from industrial processes carried out nearby (HWCM 21465; Buteux *et al* 1994).

The presence of one surviving building dating to the late 15th century (HWCM 16257) within the infilling of the triangular market place which created the High Street and Draper's Lanes (HWCM 19593; see section 6.4) suggests that this infilling had occurred by the end of the medieval period.

Mills (HWCM 8909, HWCM 8910, HWCM 19589). No standing structures or buried remains of medieval mills have been located in Leominster but from documentary sources it is clear that there were a number of mills in and near the town. Pinsley Mill (HWCM 19589) is a 19th century building but its position on the Pinsley and next to, or within, the priory precinct suggests that it was one of the Priory mills. Two other mill sites (HWCM 8909 and HWCM 8910) are known, and documented in the earlier 19th century. These are situated on an old course of the River Lugg (HWCM 19517), and it is suggested that these are also medieval in origin.

Tannery (HWCM 19592). Tanning was an important industry in Leominster from the medieval period. Horncores, possibly the waste from a tannery, were retrieved from waterlogged deposits during salvage recording outside the Hop Pole Inn in Bridge Street (HWCM 21465; Buteux *et al* 1994). A 17th century building referred to as the old tan works was noted just to the north of the Hop Pole in 1934 (RCHME 1934) but it is likely that with running water on both sides this block to the west of Bridge Street was an industrial area from the medieval period.

Open space (HWCM 19588). This component is land within the proposed line of the medieval town defences (HWCM 8904) but outside the area of known tenement plots as they survived into the 19th century. Its function in the medieval period is not known.

3.3 Medieval urban form

Definition and classification. The medieval urban form (HWCM 19622) has been defined and mapped, based on the extent of the identified urban components and in particular the limits of the Priory precinct, the streets mentioned in medieval documents and the boundaries recorded on early 19th century maps. The available evidence indicates that the medieval urban form of Leominster can be classified as a medium sized medieval market town (English Heritage 1992).

Survival. Excavations and watching briefs have demonstrated that medieval deposits survive in both the Priory precinct and within tenement plots. The excavations on

Burgess Street, in particular, have demonstrated that high quality artefactual and ecofactual assemblages survive within the town and that they are relatively undisturbed by later activity. From the available evidence (Brown 1993; Buteux *et al* 1994; Cook 1994; HWCC 1993; Napthan 1993; Napthan 1994; Napthan *et al* 1994; Woodiwiss 1990) it would appear that within the town medieval deposits can be found at a depth of *c* 0.5m to 1.8m below present ground surface and are between 1.2m to 1.5m thick. This would suggest that the *c* 3.0m of deposits indicated by Williams (1808, 351) is exaggerated.

By comparison with other similar towns, such as Much Wenlock, it could be assumed that medieval deposits within the priory precinct are likely to be close to the surface. The discovery of bones in the flowerbeds east of the hospital buildings may support this (Stansfeld 1974). The 1853 excavations, however, suggested that large-scale dumping and earthmoving had occurred in some parts of the precinct (Freeman 1853). Waterlogged medieval deposits have only been observed at the Hop Pole Inn (HWCM 21465; Buteux *et al* 1994) but these were more than 0.8m deep and preservation was exceptional. The low-lying situation of the part of the town north of Broad Street, and the number of ancient watercourses running through this area, suggests that substantial medieval waterlogged deposits will survive.

The earthworks marking the southern limit of the priory precinct are no longer substantial but are still visible. No evidence of a defensive rampart survives but the town ditch, where it was excavated at Kwik-Save, was greater than 4.0m wide. The medieval ground surface had been removed by post-medieval activity but the ditch survived to a depth of *c* 2.0m (HWCM 21947; Cook 1994).

There are three surviving medieval ecclesiastical buildings and four surviving medieval domestic buildings within the area of the medieval town. The components of the urban form comprising the Priory, tenement plots, street system and market can be readily identified and the survival of these components within the modern town is good. The medieval industrial sites and town defences are harder to locate in the modern town.

4 Post-medieval archaeological evidence

4.1 Post-medieval remains and buildings

Post-medieval have been observed within the Priory precinct. In the northern area of the precinct the fishponds were infilled and the river bank consolidated (HWCM 5291, HWCM 8913). In the town there have been chance finds of a 16th century chafing dish (HWCM 21949) and a saggar (HWCM 21950). Building work revealed post-medieval malting kilns in Etnam Street (HWCM 16268) and tanning pits on Bridge Street (HWCM 19620). Post-medieval structures and associated artefacts were also recorded at the Buttercross, Burgess Street (HWCM 7044; HWCC1993), the Greyhound Inn (HWCM 12449; Napthan 1993) 5 Broad Street (HWCM 19713; Brown 1993) and Bargates (HWCM 21746; Napthan *et al* 1994). At Kingdom Hall the mid 17th to 19th century Quaker burial ground was located (HWCM 21387; Napthan 1994) and the 18th century backfill of the town ditch was observed at the Kwik-Save site (HWCM 21947; Cook 1994).

After the suppression of the Priory the church of St Peter and Paul continued in use as the parish church although it was much altered over the post-medieval period (RCHME 1934, 111-114). The Forbury Chapel (HWCM 724) and the remains of the reredorter and infirmary (The Old Priory; HWCM 721) also continued to be used for a variety of purposes in this period. There are 11 listed buildings dating to the 16th century, 43 listed buildings dating from the 17th century and 81 dating to the 18th century. The majority

have not been studied in detail and there are many historic buildings, particularly of 17th date, which are not listed (RCHME 1934).

4.2 Post-medieval urban components

Analysis of the evidence summarised above and of cartographic and documentary sources indicated the existence of 42 urban components. The characteristics of these urban components are summarised below.

Churchyards and burial grounds (HWCM 19523, HWCM 19524, HWCM 19525, HWCM 19535, HWCM 19596). The post-medieval churchyard of St Peter and St Paul has been defined using Gallier's 1832 map. The north aisle and the nave of the monastic church continued in use as the parish church after the dissolution although it was much altered. In 1699 a great fire destroyed the roof and the arcade between the south nave and south aisle (Price 1795, 96). The arcade was rebuilt and the church restored and re-opened in 1705 (RCHME 1934). The Forbury chapel was used as the parish church in the interim (Price 1795, 97).

In the 17th century a variety of different Protestant, non-conformist traditions gained strength in Leominster. Lord Conningsbury, the local member of Parliament in the late 17th and early 18th centuries gave Leominster the nickname "Little Amsterdam" reflecting the strength of non-conformism in the 17th century (Reeves 1973, 98). After the Act of Toleration in 1689 these sects were legally able to worship openly and one or more house plots within the town were donated by individual members for the construction of a chapel, minister's house and burial ground. These chapels have continued until the present day although the burial grounds are no longer used.

The Quakers first appeared in Leominster in the mid-17th century and the town became the centre for Herefordshire Quakerism. The earliest recorded burials of members of the Friends at the South Street meeting house (HWCM 19524) was in 1650. At this date the site was a private house and garden. Part of the site was purchased by the Friends in 1660 to be used as a burial ground and illegal meeting house. The first purpose-built meeting house was built in 1687, two years before the Act of Toleration. In 1699 there were two recently erected buildings on the site (probably those shown on Gallier's map of 1832). Part of the meeting house collapsed in 1833 and it was restored in 1834 and enlarged in 1869. By the late 19th century the burial ground was full and it was closed in 1904 (Napthan 1994).

The Anabaptists chapel on Etnam Street (HWCM 19523) was founded on that site in 1696 and burials were still taking place in 1795 (Price 1795, 130). The church and burial ground of the Moravian sect (HWCM 19525) was situated on South Street when the first congregation was formed in the mid-18th century (Price 1795, 136-137). The Presbyterians originally had a chapel in Etnam Street but moved to their meeting house on Burgess Street in 1719 (HWCM 19535; Price 1795, 134).

Market place (HWCM 19555). The medieval market place continued in use through out the post-medieval period. The centre of the triangular area to the south of the Buttercross was filled with houses and shops forming the High Street and Drapers Lane in which markets continued to be held (Reeves 1973). Standing building evidence suggests that this infilling dates to at least the later 15th century (see section 3.2). A medieval or early post-medieval market building (HWCM 19533) was erected on the site of the old Buttercross. In 1633 this was replaced by a fine timber-framed building built by John Abel (HWCM 19521). In 1853 this building was demolished and later re-erected at Grange Court (HWCM 4013). The 19th century buttermarket was situated behind the Town Hall on Burgess Street (Malpas *et al* 1993). In Corn Square a similar process of building and rebuilding took place. Barley House probably a timber building in the middle of Corn Square was built in 1605. In 1803 this was replaced by the Corn Exchange, a stone building in classical

style shown on Gallier's 1832 map. This building was itself replaced by a larger building on the western side of the square which also served as an assembly room where plays, lectures and concerts were held. Its use as a corn market ceased in the late 19th century and it was demolished in the 20th century.

Street system (HWCM 19597). The post-medieval street system is for the main part the same as that of the medieval period. The streets were improved during the eighteenth century and it was whilst laying drains that earlier post-medieval and medieval street levels were observed (HWCM 19781; Williams 1808, 351). In the 18th century six tollgates were set up at the exits to the town (HWCM 19537, HWCM 19538, HWCM 19539, HWCM 19540, HWCM 19541, HWCM 19542).

Bridging points (HWCM 8905, HWCM 19545, HWCM 19546, HWCM 19778). In 1808 Williams noted that the three stone bridges were "old, narrow and ruinous fabrics and require to be rebuilt and widened" (Williams 1808, 178). The bridge over the Kenwater was rebuilt in 1828 and the other stone bridges were demolished some time after 1832 when the courses of the Pinsley and the old Lugg were culverted. As they are not mentioned in antiquarian reports it can be assumed that the medieval bridges over the town ditch on the main approaches to Leominster did not survive and the ditch must have been filled in at these points. The exception to this was Battle Bridge on South Street (HWCM 8905) which was repaired around 1772 (Stansfeld 1974) but must have been demolished at the end of the 18th century when the remnants of the town ditch were finally filled in. It does not appear on the 1832 map.

Tenement plots (HWCM 19530, HWCM 19531, HWCM 19532, HWCM 19533, HWCM 19556, HWCM 19557, HWCM 19558, HWCM 19559, HWCM 19560, HWCM 19580, HWCM 19581, HWCM 18583, HWCM 19584, HWCM 19586, HWCM 19587, HWCM 19593, HWCM 19595, HWCM 19598, HWCM 19599, HWCM 21461, HWCM 21466, HWCM 21467, HWCM 21954, HWCM 22048). Archaeological evidence suggests that the town contracted in the later 14th century and tenement plots along Bargates and possibly other outlying areas of the town were deserted around this time (HWCM 21746; Napthan *et al* 1994). Despite Leominster's partial recovery in the later 15th century (see section 1.3) it was described as "in decline" in the mid-16th century (Chandler 1993, 224). At the Bargates site domestic occupation did not resume until the later 17th or 18th centuries, which coincides with an increase in prosperity in the town. Leominster was very prosperous in the 18th century and it was probably at this period that the expansion to the north and east of the town occurred (HWCM 19595, HWCM 19533, and HWCM 22048). 17th century buildings are found within the area of the former priory precinct, but the main encroachment by houses seems to have occurred in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (HWCM 19598 and HWCM 19599).

Williams noted that "whilst up until recently [ie early 19th century] the town was largely of timber framed buildings, these objects of ridicule are.....rapidly disappearing" (Williams 1808, 124). It would seem that at the end of the 18th century the town was extensively "improved" including paving and lighting the streets (Williams 1808).

Public buildings (HWCM 721, HWCM 724, HWCM 8908, HWCM 10562, HWCM 19547). After the dissolution the majority of the priory buildings were demolished and the stone was re-used in the town. Those that survived, however, served a number of public functions in the 16th to 18th centuries. The priory gatehouse with the Frere Chamber (HWCM 8908) was left intact and housed the gaol. The Frere Chamber had been the scene of the Prior's Court and was also used as a court house by the corporation after the dissolution. In c 1750 the gateway along with the Frere chamber and part of the old gaol collapsed and was demolished (Price 1795, 73). The Forbury Chapel (HWCM 724) was used as the town grammar school in the

post-dissolution period. It also functioned as the parish church between 1699 and 1705 and as the court house after the demolition of the gatehouse (Price 1795, 74).

The building known as the "Old Priory" (HWCM 721) also survived the destruction of monastic buildings (Brown and Wilson forthcoming). It was used as a hall for entertaining in 1605 (Townsend 1864, 280), and as a gaol in the late 17th century (Price 1795, 89). In 1717 or 1718 it was turned into a mansion house of the bailiff and fitted up for feasts and balls (Price 1795, 90). From 1759 the building was used as a workhouse (HWCM 10562) and was sold to the Guardians of the Poor in 1836 (Brown and Wilson forthcoming). The majority of the workhouse buildings were constructed in the earlier 19th century.

Almshouses on the south side of Bargates (HWCM 19547) were endowed in 1735 for the use of decayed widows (Price 1795. 139-140).

Mills (HWCM 8909, HWCM 8910, HWCM 19589). Water power remained essential to manufacturing industries during the post-medieval period and the mills on the old course of the Lugg (HWCM 8909, HWCM 8910) and on the Pinsley are known to have been operating during this period (Reeves 1973, 122).

Tannery (HWCM 19592). The RCHME survey recorded the site of the "Old Tannery". This was a 17th century building (RCHME 1934) but it is not clear if the building had always served that function. Tanneries are known to have existed on Bridge Street from the medieval period (see section 3.2). Tanneries existed in other areas of the town however although their location has not yet been identified. There is, for example, a report of tanning pits being found beneath an unnamed house on the east side of Broad Street (Townsend 1863, 74), but their exact location is unclear.

Malthouse (HWCM 16268). In the early 1970s the floor of the Mission Room on Etnam Street, built in 1855, was taken up and parts of three circular brick structures about 1.0m in diameter were found. These were interpreted as the bases of old kilns as the site had been a malthouse at least by the later 18th century when the Wesleyans had hired it for meetings.

Open space (HWCM 19594). After the dissolution of the Priory and the demolition of many of its buildings, the areas of the former precinct known as the "Forbury" and the "Grange" were used for agricultural and industrial purposes. In the early 18th century this area contained hop drying kilns, sawpits, timber piles and rubbish from the town. From c 1730 this area was levelled and planted with trees and shrubs (Townsend 1863, 265). The area to the north and east of the Pinsley probably continued in use as watermeadows. Observations during the construction of various gas pipe trenches to the north of the Pinsley indicate the infilling of the fishpond and water meadows in the post-medieval period (HWCM 5291 and HWCM 8913).

4.3 Post-medieval urban form

Definition and classification. The post-medieval urban form (HWCM 19623) has been defined and mapped, based on the extent of the identified urban components and in particular the limits of the street system and tenement plots. The available evidence indicates that the post-medieval urban form of Leominster can be classified as a medium sized post-medieval market town (English Heritage 1992).

Survival. Excavations and watching briefs have demonstrated that post-medieval deposits survive in Leominster. Deposits of this date have been recorded at the Greyhound Inn (HWCM 12449; Napthan 1993), Broad Street (HWCM 19713; Brown 1993), Kwik-Save (HWCM 21947; Cook 1994) and Bargates (HWCM 21746; Napthan *et al* 1994). The excavations on Burgess Street, in particular, have demonstrated that high quality artefactual and ecofactual assemblages survive

within the town, although in some cases they have been disturbed by later activity (HWCM 7044; Woodiwiss 1990; post-excavation in progress). The evaluation at Kingdom Hall (HWCM 21836; Napthan 1994) demonstrated the survival of a substantially complete collection of burials dating from the mid-17th century to the late 19th century. Post-medieval deposits can be found at a depth of c 0.3m and 1.2m below present ground surface and up to 2.0m thick.

Waterlogged remains, probably of this period have been observed in the area to the north of the Pinsley Brook (HWCM 5291 and HWCM 8913). At the Hop Pole Inn the earlier post-medieval deposits had been destroyed by modern underpinning of the 17th century building, but in the backs of plots fronting Bridge Street there is a high possibility of post-medieval waterlogged deposits surviving (Buteux *et al* 1994). The low lying situation of the northern part of Leominster and the number of ancient watercourses running through this area indicate that the potential for waterlogged deposits is high.

There are 136 listed buildings of 16th to 18th century date within the town and at least 22 more which are not listed (RCHME 1934). The components of the urban form comprising the church, chapels, public buildings, tenement plots, market place, street systems, and industrial areas can be readily identified and the survival of these components within the modern town is good.

5 Post-1800 archaeological evidence

The remit of the present study has not allowed for a detailed survey and assessment of the archaeological evidence relating to Leominster in the period from 1800. Further work is required before such an assessment can be carried out. Major archaeological remains have been identified, however including the railway station and lines (HWCM 19548, HWCM 19549, HWCM 19550, HWCM 19551), the two 19th century corn exchanges (HWCM 19543, HWCM 19544), 19th century chapels (HWCM 16306, HWCM 19536) and 19th century watercourses (HWCM 19515, HWCM 19516, HWCM 19517, HWCM 19518). There are 55 listed structures dating to the 19th century within the study area, including a bridge and two walls .

6 Specialist assessments

6.1 Assessment of artefactual evidence J D Hurst

Prehistoric flints were recovered from the excavation of a medieval moated site just outside the historic town in 1962 (HWCM 542). In the 18th century the discovery of a wooden chamber associated with a cremation, supposedly of prehistoric date, was reported but the interpretation cannot be confirmed (HWCM 9301). Roman pottery was recovered during the excavation of a gaspipe trench to the east of Bridge Street (HWCM 8398). Other finds of Roman date have been claimed (HWCM 725, HWCM 8912), but have not been adequately authenticated.

Artefactual evidence for the medieval period is extensive, especially from excavations just outside the town at Castle moat (HWCM 542), from the Priory (HWCM 721), and from the Buttercross (HWCM 7044). The earliest medieval material so far recovered from Leominster is 12th/13th century. There is a wide range of artefacts, including pottery (probably 2-3000 sherds), ceramic and stone building materials, copper alloy objects and ironwork. There was evidence for ironworking at the Buttercross (HWCM 7044; post-excavation analysis in progress). A small artefactual assemblage has also been recovered from the Priory, and this includes medieval floor tile (Eames 1980). Post-medieval finds have also been well represented from excavations in the town (eg HWCM 8913, HWCM 7044, HWCM 19713).

6.2 Assessment of environmental evidence E A Pearson

A variety of environmental material has been recovered as a result of both antiquarian studies and modern archaeological fieldwork in Leominster. This includes small items recovered by wet-sieving from the more recent excavations.

Human burials. A barrow towards the west of Burgess Street was partially excavated in the 18th century revealing a cremation burial (HWCM 9031; Williams 1808, 193). Other human remains have been found, none of which have been studied by a specialist (HWCM 725; Stansfeld 1974). The only human remains to have been studied to date were those recovered during an evaluation within the Society of Friends graveyard at Kingdom Hall (HWCM 21386; Napthan 1994). The majority of the burials were not excavated but preserved *in situ*. Some charnel remains in the areas of the foundation trenches were recovered and assessed, including estimation of the number of individuals, their age and sex (Pinter-Bellows 1994). A small number of pathological diseases and deformities were also noted including spondylo-arthropathy (a type of osteoarthritis), a mild cranial deformity and an infection of the outer covering of the bone. This site is of considerable interest as detailed records exist of all the burials between 1650 and 1838. Should the burials need to be removed at any time in the future, it may be possible to identify individuals. The opportunity to compare assessment of age, sex, stature and pathology from the remains with documentary records would be of great value for osteological research.

Animal bone. Mammal, fish and bird bone, probably representing domestic food refuse was analysed from a number of medieval features, mostly pits, at the Buttercross (HWCM 7044; HWCC Archaeological Service 1993), Greyhound Yard (HWCM 12449; Pearson 1993) and the Old Priory (HWCM 725; Brown and Wilson, forthcoming). Unidentified large mammal bone of medieval or post-medieval date was recovered during archaeological fieldwork to the north of the Pinsley Brook (HWCM 5291), 8 Bridge Street (HWCM 3598), Bargates (HWCM 21746) and 5 Broad Street (HWCM 19713). The recovery of undated bone is reported from 18th century destruction of the last remnant of the town defences (HWCM 2560). A significant number of cattle horncores were recovered from a waterlogged organic deposit of medieval date at the Hop Pole Inn (HWCM 21465; Buteux *et al* 1994). These remains may be waste material from tanning or horn working.

Plant remains. Plant remains preserved by charring, waterlogging and mineralisation have been recovered by wet-sieving samples recovered from the Buttercross (HWCM 7044) and Greyhound Yard (HWCM 12449), mostly from pits which appear to have contained both cess and domestic refuse. From the former site, a concentrated deposit of charred plant remains including cereal grains and weed seeds is of special interest. Work at the Hop Pole Inn (HWCM 21465, Buteux *et al* 1994) uncovered rare evidence of flax cultivation from the medieval waterlogged deposit mentioned above, indicated by abundant remains of capsule fragments and seeds of cultivated flax (*Linum usitatissimum*). Other plant remains preserved by waterlogging include wooden piles, possibly of post-medieval date, found in wet deposits of the Castle moat (HWCM 542) just to the south east of Leominster where there were peaty deposits.

Other remains. Insects and Molluscs are present in samples from the Buttercross and Greyhound Yard sites (HWCM 7044, HWCM 12449) showing that a variety of biological material can be expected from pit assemblages in Leominster. Leather was found with a Samian bowl recovered from a gaspipe trench to the east of Bridge Street (HWCM 8398).

6.3 Assessment of documentary sources P A Stamper

The primary documentary sources for the town are poor for the middle ages, although they do improve after *c* 1700. Principal groups of primary sources are listed in section 9.

What is exceptional about Leominster is the number of historians attracted to the town in the past. Reeves's study (1985) is of John Lodge, John Price, Rev Jonathan Williams and F G Blacklock. The last mentioned was a printer and historian, and published his own researches. His press was small and only capable of printing hymn book-sized pages, and accordingly his study stretches over an unwieldy 300 pages. The main secondary sources consulted during the archaeological assessment include Price (1795), Williams (1808), Townsend (1863), Blacklock (1898), Reeves (1973) and Hillaby (1987). Secondary sources not consulted during the archaeological assessment include 18th century copies of records belonging to the manor of Leominster (Anon nd).

6.4 Assessment of buildings R Morriss

With the exception of its later 19th and 20th century suburbs, Leominster has the appearance of a red brick Georgian town, its streets lined with mainly three storey town houses, individually built and abutting rather than terraced. As with many such towns, this appearance is deceptive, and many of the buildings behind the facades are timber-framed. The architectural evidence shows clearly that, until the later 19th century, the town was, apart from a central core around the Broad Street, High Street and Corn Square, a fairly straggling settlement. Buildings line the principal roads leading towards Ludlow (Bridge Street) and to the west (Bargates), and there is a good survival of 16th and 17th century timber-frames in both. The road south (South Street) to Hereford has fewer examples beyond its junction with Etnam Street.

Leominster has a good collection of later medieval buildings, scattered along the main streets and this confirms documentary and cartographic evidence that the medieval town was not much smaller than the post-medieval one. The narrow width of the buildings indicates considerable pressure on land-use and limited availability in the central area, indicative of commercial prosperity. The former triangular market area between High Street, Draper's Lane and Corn Street was probably infilled quite early in the medieval period, but the earliest standing structure visible is 20 Drapers Lane (HWCM 16257). This is listed as being of 17th century date but is quite obviously much earlier, perhaps late 15th.

Leominster was noted as being in decline in the mid-16th century (see section 1.3), but there is evidence in the timber-framed buildings of a major rebuilding of the town from the late 16th century through to the early 17th. Many of these buildings are substantial three storey structures, often jettied both to the street and, where allowed, to the alleys between them, effectively creating ground floor passages beneath projecting jettied first floors. Away from the centre there was clearly less pressure on land, although the continuation of urban settlement northwards along Bridge Street is very marked, with timber-framed buildings surviving several hundred yards beyond the crossing of River Lugg. In general, the status of these out-lying buildings is not as great as those in the centre, and more of them are aligned parallel to the street rather than at right-angles to it.

In Etnam Street the later developments were comparatively spacious, with several large Georgian houses being erected in the later 18th century, mostly of three storeys at the western end and of three to five bays. Towards the eastern end of the street the buildings tend to be of two storeys and narrower. The last large scale redevelopment appears to have been in Church Street during the early 19th century when many of the present houses were built, completely replacing others.

Whilst the extent of the town does not seem to have changed considerably in the 18th century, its outward appearance did as many of the timber-frames were re-fronted in brick. This seems to have been very common and, even in the centre, there seems to have been relatively little wholesale demolition of old buildings. This seems to indicate that whilst the town was still quite successful, it was not as thriving as it once had been which is slightly at odds with the documentary evidence which suggests that the town was very prosperous at this period (see section 1.3).

Survey work and analysis. There have been a handful of outline surveys and site notes on some individual buildings in the town but apart from a survey of the former Priory buildings, little comprehensive work has been done.

Assessment of listing details. The listing details (a 1973 update) are outdated and not comprehensive. Much of their information, and the choice of buildings included, is taken directly from the RCHME work of the 1930s (RCHME 1934). Astonishingly, many of the buildings that were included in the RCHME work are not listed either. The descriptions are often confusing. Many entries are not given even outline dates, particularly, for some reason, those on Etnam Street. Others are dated to the 17th century, but there is no indication whether or not they are timber-framed or brick built, early 17th or late. Some of the dates are clearly wrong and others far too vague. Many timber-frames behind the facades have been missed (eg 7 School Lane, HWCM 8866). Other descriptions are sparse, often confusing, and architecturally inaccurate.

7 Archaeological research framework

7.1 Model of urban development

A model of the medieval and post-medieval town of Leominster has been produced which is predictive and capable of testing through archaeological investigation. This model has both chronological and spatial (landuse) dimensions (see sections 2 to 5) and is based on an analysis of documentary, cartographic and archaeological sources. The model is derived from the current academic understanding of urban development in Britain, and forms one element of a developing regional research framework. The model is provisional and will be subject to confirmation or revision in the future as new information becomes available, or new studies lead to changing understandings of towns in the region.

7.2 Chronological framework

A church and associated buildings were probably situated on the site of the later Priory from at least the later 7th century. It is likely that by the Anglo-Saxon period a small settlement may have grown up at the gates of the precinct as seems to have been the case at Much Wenlock and Pershore. There is at present no archaeological evidence for such a settlement and any investigation in the area of the Priory or close the main north-south road would be informative. Negative as well as positive evidence would be important in this context.

Recent investigations have provided some evidence of the date of occupation in the area of the town to the west of the market place and its expansion and contraction along Bargates. The suggestion that the earliest part of the town, perhaps dating to the 12th century, was laid out around the market place in front of the Priory gatehouse has not been tested archaeologically and the date of the South Street and Bridge Street suburbs cannot yet be accurately dated. Of particular interest would be information on the date of the construction of the town defences. At present the small excavations/evaluations of the ditch have been unable to answer this question.

7.3 Urban landuse

The medieval and post-medieval components identified here (sections 3.2 and 4.2) have been mapped and constitute a model of urban landuse for each period. These landuse models are partial and provisional and capable of testing through archaeological investigation. The evaluations and excavations which have taken place since 1990 in Leominster have added greatly to our understanding of the town and demonstrated that important archaeological deposits do survive. These deposits have provided information on the development of the town, the location of its defences and some indication of the

type and location of industries. Large parts of the town have not been investigated archaeologically, and there is potential for recovering evidence relating to the spatial distribution of different industries, the relative wealth of different areas of the town, and how these changed through time. Also of importance would be evidence relating to particular components, for instance the form of the town defences, the layout of the Priory precinct or the origins of Corn Square. The hypothesis that the main east street in the earlier medieval period was on the line of Grange Walk and not Etnam Street and that Corn Square is a later development of the market place can only be tested through archaeological investigation.

7.4 Potential for survival of buried remains

In almost all of the salvage recording undertaken in Leominster prior to the 1990s stratified deposits were encountered but recent field work has greatly increased our knowledge of the potential of archaeological deposits in the town. Within the tenement plots the modern overburden is between 0.5m and 1.0m thick and archaeological deposits can extend to a depth of over two metres below that. Most of the evaluation/excavation trenches in the town have been very small but at the Buttercross site (HWCM 7044) a larger area was excavated and here medieval deposits were well preserved with relatively little destruction by post-medieval development. The post-medieval deposits were closer to the surface and had suffered more from 19th and 20th century construction and earthmoving (HWCC 1990). The potential importance of the artefactual and environmental assemblages to an understanding of the history of Leominster was demonstrated at the Buttercross site (HWCM 7044; HWCC 1990). To the north of the town in the Bridge Street area the potential is extremely high. At the Hop Pole Inn waterlogged deposits over 0.8m deep were recorded and the environmental samples taken provided the first archaeological evidence for flax processing from the County (Buteux *et al* 1994).

Fieldwork was undertaken by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey in October 1994. The extent of 18th and 19th century cellarage was mapped, together with the extent of 20th century development (new buildings and major landscaping work). This showed that there was moderate observable cellarage along the main streets although it is likely that evidence for more extensive cellarage has been obscured by modern refurbishment of frontages and pavements. There is extensive modern redevelopment within the historic core.

7.6 Potential for artefactual studies J D Hurst

The site of the modern town of Leominster has been continuously occupied since before the Conquest and this is rare in the region. Continuity of occupation over a long period, coupled with waterlogged deposits in areas of the town, for example on Bridge Street (HWCM 21465), has produced a situation where artefactual survival may be exceptional. Substantial, and well stratified medieval and post-medieval deposits have been located in Leominster.

Period discussion. The limited prehistoric and Roman artefactual evidence may comprise stray finds from a settlement in the vicinity, although there is some evidence of possible structures of Roman date in Burgess Street (HWCM 8912). Roman pottery and other classes of artefact are also known from the area to the east of Bridge Street (HWCM 8398). There is potential for the presence of pre-Conquest finds, since occupation in this period is well documented.

An excellent range of medieval and post-medieval finds have been observed on many sites in the town (HWCM 7044, HWCM 12449, HWCM 19585, HWCM 21746, HWCM 21836). Some unusual objects indicate the high quality of the medieval finds from the town, in particular, coins and jewellery (HWCM 20146), a silver penny (HWCM 19511), and a chafing dish from Broad Street (HWCM 21949; Vince 1984, 25). There is

some evidence that architectural fragments, probably removed from parts of the Priory in the Dissolution period, were incorporated into town buildings (HWCM 8866 and HWCM 8901). Waterlogged medieval deposits have also been identified (HWCM 21465). The back fill of the medieval town ditch has produced post-medieval pottery (HWCM 21947) suggesting that this deposits has the potential to provide large assemblages of this date. A possible saggar of unknown date has been observed in the Leominster Museum collection (HWCM 21950; V Buteux pers comm), but this is at present insufficient evidence for the presence of a pottery industry in Leominster.

Little of the artefactual material has so far been identified and quantified in detail although in the case of the Buttercross (HWCM 7044) post-excavation analysis leading to full publication is currently underway. At present no detailed assessment of the artefactual evidence for Leominster is possible. It is clear, however, that there have been a significant quantity of archaeological finds in the town, and that, for instance, the overall medieval pottery assemblage from the town is large (ie over 1000 sherds).

Comparison with documentary evidence. Documentary evidence suggests that many crafts and industries were based in the town from the medieval period. Of these there is only artefactual evidence for medieval flax processing and tanning (HWCM 21465) and ironworking (HWCM 7044) although the sites of post medieval tanning pits and a malthouse are known ((HWCM 19592, HWCM 19620, HWCM 16268).

7.6 Potential for environmental remains E A Pearson

The increasing amount of archaeological fieldwork in Leominster in recent years has produced substantial evidence of environmental remains. Sampling for environmental remains has been a high priority during this fieldwork and it can now be seen that a variety of biological remains preserved under different conditions can be expected from excavations in the town.

Organic deposits are of great value as they frequently contain the greatest variety of remains. These can provide information relating to the occupation of the town and the surrounding environment. The watching brief at the Hop Pole Inn (HWCM 21465) demonstrated the presence of extremely well preserved, waterlogged, organic deposits on Bridge Street some distance from the Kenwater. This area is referred to in medieval and later documents as "The Marsh" or "Broad Marsh" and the area around the Hop Pole was the confluence of a number of streams and mill leats even into the 19th century. As Leominster is low-lying with many of ancient watercourses, now culverted, waterlogged organic deposits are likely to be encountered elsewhere in the town. Such deposits may be found, for example, in features such as the medieval Priory fishponds (HWCM 19591) and the town ditch (HWCM 8904). Both the town ditch and, just outside the town, the moated site "Castle Moat" (HWCM 542) are known to contain occupational rubbish.

As the soils are neutral to slightly alkaline below the surface animal bone and molluscs will be reasonably well preserved. Good preservation of animal bone has been demonstrated in waterlogged deposits at the Hop Pole Inn providing the first evidence of tanning or hornworking waste in the town. Tanning pits have also been recorded on the east side of Broad Street (HWCM 19620). As tanning is known to have been an important industry in Leominster in the medieval period, sampling of animal bone should be a high priority in areas with documented tanning yards. Bone and horn core assemblages can often confirm whether a pit was associated with the tanning industry and which species of animal were used.

Environmental material has been shown to survive in burgrave plots and the monastic precinct providing information on diet, industrial activity and living conditions. However, agricultural contexts such as farm buildings, and possibly gardens, fishponds and mills are expected to survive within the monastic

precinct, from which environmental remains may give information on animal and crop husbandry.

Future excavation should include a policy of sampling and wet-sieving deposits from archaeologically relevant contexts in order to recover plant, insect, mollusc and small animal remains in conjunction with hand-collection of larger items. Where appropriate, specialist sampling for soil and pollen analysis may be required.

7.7 Potential for the study of standing buildings R Morriss

Leominster urgently needs a relisting programme, and would, in the long term, benefit from a complete urban survey in the RCHME manner. It has a sufficient number of historic buildings to warrant such work.

7.8 Summary of research potential

The historic core of Leominster contains buried archaeological deposits, and these are judged to have high potential. In addition there is high potential for the recovery of artefact and ecofact assemblages. Waterlogged deposits have been recorded in some areas, which enhances the research potential of the area. The historic buildings constitute a complementary body of evidence, and are judged to have high potential for detailed study and recording. The surviving documentary sources are not very extensive for the medieval period, but are much more extensive for the post-medieval period, and the potential for further study is high.

8 Management framework

8.1 Urban archaeological area

The mapped extent of the medieval and post-medieval urban forms defined above indicated the extent of the urban area (Leominster Urban Archaeological Area). The significance of the urban archaeological area is assessed below.

8.2 Existing protection measures

The different parts of the urban area are afforded different measures of protection through legislation and the planning process. Directly relevant measures are outlined below.

Scheduled ancient monument. There are two Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Leominster, the claustral buildings of the medieval Priory to the north east of the present church (Here and Worc no 145), and the Forbury chapel (Here and Worc no 105). It is possible that following the current Monument Protection programme English Heritage may modify the scheduled areas or add other monuments in Leominster to the schedule.

Listed buildings. There are 190 structures listed as of historical or architectural importance within the urban area. Buildings of special architectural or historic interest should receive very special attention. Such buildings are limited in their number and there is a need to protect and preserve them. The presumption when considering applications to demolish or alter is in favour of preservation. This presumption is also likely to preserve archaeological remains beneath and immediately around such buildings from development. It is important that the architectural and archaeological interests are considered together.

The alteration of listed buildings requires the greatest skill and care to avoid damage to historic structures. Specialist architectural advice is given by the County Conservation Architect or through the District's own conservation officer where that

District Council has their own specialist staff.

Conservation Area. A Conservation Area has been defined which partially encompasses the archaeological area (Leominster District Local Plan deposit draft (1996)).

8.3 Management approach

The archaeological urban area of Leominster contains earthworks and buried remains relating to medieval and post-medieval occupation, associated with contemporary buildings. The buried remains vary in complexity and depth, and demonstrably contain significant archaeological information. It is desirable that any proposed development within the urban area that has a potential impact on earthworks or buried remains should be assessed by the appropriate archaeological body as early as possible in the planning process.

The course of action recommended will depend upon the nature of the development and current planning legislation and frameworks. The archaeological response will be framed using both the archaeological information summarised in this document and any subsequent information recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record, supplemented by other sources as and when available.

9 Principal groups of primary sources compiled by P A Stamper

(HRO: Hereford Record Office)

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HRO AK 3 Parish records. Registers 1550-1605, and 1645 onwards;
churchwardens' accounts (with some vestry records) 1722-33; vestry
records 1739-1844
HRO 3/26-8 Glebe terriers, undated, 1630 and 1685
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collections
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11 Mapping

The illustrations for this report comprise CAD plots of the urban components for each period and a location plot of archaeological remains combined with OS digital map data (1995) at 1:5000. These plots are current at the date of the completion of this report (March 1995). After this date new information will be held by the Hereford and Worcester County Council Sites and Monuments Record.

- * Historic buildings (listed and other recorded buildings) and urban area
- * Archaeological remains and urban area
- * Medieval urban form and components
- * Post-medieval urban form and components
- * Urban area and scheduled ancient monuments