
SYNOPSIS

This report contains the results of a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording undertaken during refurbishment of the property known as No. 26, Town Walls, Shrewsbury, SY1 1TN. No. 26 is a Grade II Listed building located along the alignment of the medieval town walls. The owner of the property is conscious of the historic, archaeological and architectural significance of the house and the fact that Listed buildings are protected under the Planning Act of 1990. The owner consequently requested the programme of archaeological work to be undertaken during refurbishment to the said property.

In the areas of potential archaeological interest refurbishment has included sealing the excavated earth floor in the kitchen with 25mm of sand, before relaying the quarry tiles on an insulated bed; sand blinding the existing basement floors before covering with interlocking floating boards and covering the basement walls with thermal boards.

The kitchen is located on the east side of the property at rear ground floor level. The watching brief monitored the removal of the heavy dense red 19cm square quarry tiles measuring which lay on a compacted sandy earth floor. No archaeological deposits were disturbed. The excavation was minimal, revealing only 19th century or later deposits associated with the previous laying of the quarry tiled floor.

The basement area is accessible via a flight of renewed wooden steps which lead down from rear ground floor level. The main internal fabric of the basement area is hand-made brick but sandstones form the basal layers of seven of the elevations. The basement area comprises the Lobby and two basement rooms which lead off to the west. A drawn record was undertaken of all basement elevations which included sandstone fabric.

The limited amount of current refurbishment undertaken shows that the Listed building is capable of being brought into 21st century use without requiring substantial alterations to its current form. The work has ensured the long-term preservation of the town house, while maintaining its character, historical and social significance.

Observations made inside the property, together with cartographic evidence, suggest the property was constructed before the 1830s period. The house appears to have once formed two properties and the whole subsequently faced in brick gives the impression of a single phase of construction. The mix of sandstones and brickwork in the basement areas suggests that the sandstone fabric located within the house is a mix of medieval and later building stone derived from the demolition of nearby sections of the Town Wall in the late 18th century, which has been re-used in the construction of No. 26.

The current programme of archaeological work has allowed for a record to be made of the existing building and, in particular, the cellar areas prior to refurbishment.

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	Abbreviations:
DOE	Department of the Environment
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists
OS	Ordnance Survey
RCAHME	Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments, England
SA	Shropshire Archives
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report contains the results of a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording undertaken during refurbishment of the property known as No. 26, Town Walls, Shrewsbury, SY1 1TN. No. 26 is a Grade II Listed building located along the alignment of the medieval town walls (NGR SJ 4902 1222; Figs 6-9). The owner of the property is conscious of the historic, archaeological and architectural significance of the house and the fact that Listed buildings are protected under the Planning Act of 1990. The owner consequently requested the programme of archaeological work to be undertaken during refurbishment to the said property.

1.2 The refurbishment work has included the removal and relaying of the existing 19th century quarry tiled floor in the ground floor level kitchen area and facing of the original floors and walls in the basement area in an acceptable manner in order to protect them.

2. PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

2.1 The programme of archaeological work was designed to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains that may have been encountered during the removal of the quarry tiled floor and subsequent reductions in ground level in the kitchen area and to provide a record of the basement floors and elevations prior to refurbishment.

2.2 In order to achieve the above, limited documentary research was undertaken to assist in the on-site investigation; a watching brief was undertaken on site during ground disturbance work in the kitchen area and a drawn record was undertaken of all basement elevations which included sandstone fabric. A general photographic record has been undertaken throughout the programme of work.

2.3 The work was undertaken in September 2008 using proven archaeological techniques, which comply with the Guidelines and Codes of Conduct set out by the Institute of Field Archaeologists; the guidelines of *DoE Planning Policy Guidelines Nos 15 & 16* and the broad specifications defined as Level 2 by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England's publication *Understanding Historic Buildings – A guide to good recording practice (2006)*.

3. BACKGROUND HISTORY OF THE SITE & IMMEDIATE ENVIRONS

The existing building

3.1 No. 26 is a town house constructed c.1800 fronting Town Walls (Plate 1 & 4). The front elevation rises to two storeys and as a result of ground levels falling steeply south towards the River Severn, the two lower floors, which include the kitchen and the basement, are below street level on the front elevation (Plate 2). The house appears to have once formed two properties but the whole is now faced in brick giving the impression of a single phase of construction in the Georgian period. The basement area exists on the west side of the building only (Drawings Nos 3-10).

3.2 Sections of the 13th century town wall constructed in coursed and squared red sandstones adjoin each side of the building. On the east side, the wall extends to the junction with Crescent Lane (Plates 2 & 3) and on the west side, the wall extends to Wingfields Tower (SMR No 10618; Plates 1 & 2). The four-storey Tower has

Scheduled Monument and Grade II* Listed Building status as the only surviving watch tower on the alignment of the medieval town walls in Shrewsbury.

The Town Walls

3.3 The Walls that defended the medieval town were constructed from c.1220 following a successful attack on the town by the Welsh. The defensive circuit comprised a stone wall with an external ditch, which may have formed part of the Anglo-Saxon defences of the town. A substantial part of the wall survives along the south side of the street now known as Town Walls, which was laid across the top of the wall parapet. In close proximity to No. 26, the surviving wall and its buttresses overlook land sloping south to the River Severn. The wall has been repaired in the years following its construction and the present structure to either side of No. 26 comprises mainly reddish-purple sandstones interspersed with the whitish-yellow sandstones hewn from Grinshill quarries, the latter believed to indicate later repair work.

3.4 In medieval times, meadowland extended south from the walls towards the river (Cromarty 1991). The land was owned by the Stury family who also owned the land north of the walls in the area of No. 26. Richard Stury is recorded as a merchant in 1305, and his name was given to '*Stury's Close*' or '*Sterry Close Lane*' (now Belmont, the southern continuation of Milk Street).

Early cartographic evidence

3.5 Burghley's 1574 and Speed's 1610 pictorial maps of Shrewsbury (Figs 1 & 2) show the location of Old St. Chad's Church and *Sterry Close Lane* which extends southwest to its junction with the Town Walls, opposite the existing Crescent Lane. Both maps record the substantial survival of the walls in this period including Wingfields Tower. Rocque's map of 1742 records the existing Crescent Lane and two structures fronting the south side of the Town Wall (Fig. 3). The easternmost structure is assumed to be Wingfields Tower and the second feature appears to represent the site of Chadlode Gate (SMR No. 62592); *Chadlode* being the 13th century name for Crescent Lane (Cromarty 1991). Gardens adjoin the west side of Crescent Lane.

3.6 Documentary references and early 19th century cartography suggest that sections of the town wall were demolished in the late 18th century period for street improvements and the construction of properties, including The Crescent built c.1790 (Nos 22-25 Town Walls), east of Crescent Lane. In the late 18th century, the increasing commercial wealth of Shrewsbury and a desire for social distinction had resulted in demands for new housing away from the centre of the town. Merchants and Professionals were drawn towards the south side of the town and Georgian style housing developed in the area of Town Walls, Belmont and St John's Hill. Although much of the housing was new build; many older properties were encased in brick to give the desired fashionable uniform façade (3.1 *previous*).

19th century development

3.7 Hitchcock's 1832 map (Fig. 4) records The Crescent but the small-scale of the map sheds little light on other buildings / structures in the location of the present No. 26. Wood's 1833 Plan is the first large-scale recording of the buildings fronting Town Walls west of Crescent Lane (Fig. 5). Wood records the 'Old Tower' jutting out into the road and east and south of the Tower, the land owned by Sir John Bickerton Williams. The ground plan of the building that fronts Town Walls on Sir John's land represents the existing No. 26 and this is the first cartographic record of the building. Property is also recorded adjoining the east side of No. 26 on the junction with Crescent Lane.

Late 19th century

3.8 Town Walls is unrecorded by name until 1871. Interrogation of Trade Directories from 1828 (Pigott etc.) shows that nobility, gentry and clergy were occupying property on the south side of the town in the area of No.26, although it has not been possible to pinpoint the actual occupant of the house until 1882.

3.9 The 1881 large-scale town plan (Fig. 7) is the first accurate large-scale map of No. 26 and its environs. No. 26 is recorded as two separate buildings with a rear plot similar to that which exists today. Immediately west of the building, the 1881 map records the steps that currently lead down through the sandstone arch and gate to the existing property known as No. 26A. The existing property known as No. 26A occupies the land between No. 26 and Wingfields Tower. East of No. 26, the 1881 map records a further two dwellings fronting Town Walls. These properties are recorded until 1962 by the OS (Fig. 9) but have subsequently been demolished. The site now forms part of a sloping garden area bounded on the north side by the remains of the Town Wall, east of No. 26 kitchen window (Plate 3), suggesting that the aforementioned two dwellings were built up against the wall in this location.

3.10 Crocker's Postal Directory of 1882-1883 records a Mrs M.A. Richards occupying the first property west of Crescent Lane and C. Oakley, a Coachman at No. 26 Town Walls. This suggests that No. 26, which was formerly two properties is now occupied as a single dwelling. Similarly the two smaller properties demolished in the post-1962 period are occupied by Mrs Richards as a single dwelling.

20th century development

3.11 The 1902 and 1927 OS maps (Figs 6 & 8) show no change in the ground plan of No 26, continuing to record two separate buildings although they have been merged into one dwelling. By 1962, the property is recorded as a single dwelling (Fig. 9).

4. NO 26 – KITCHEN

4.1 The kitchen is located on the east side of the property at rear ground floor level (Drawing Nos 1 & 2). The room measures c.4.55m east/west by 4.75m north/south with a lofty height of 3.8m, which extends to street level. A window in the east wall looks out to Crescent Lane and the remains of the town wall and buttress on the east side of the house (Plate 3). There is no evidence of sandstone fabric within the room. The internal brickwork comprises a mix of orange to reddish brown hand-made bricks of varying size with pebble inclusions. The internal brickwork is rougher than but similar in size to the external red sandy bricks which measure an average 240 x 110 x 70mm.

4.2 The watching brief monitored the removal of the heavy dense red 19cm square (7.5in) unstamped quarry tiles measuring 3cm (1.5in) thick. The tiles lay on a compacted sandy earth floor which included a large percentage of fragments of slate bricks and small stone which was removed to a maximum depth of 0.3m (Plate 7).

4.3 A single row of bricks aligned c.north-south were uncovered immediately below the tiles (Plate 5); this course bore no association to any existing room plan and may have screened off an old larder.

4.4 The kitchen was presumably altered and replastered in the 1970s during an earlier refurbishment of the house. On the west side, evidence of an earlier grate was revealed in ash stains fronting the fireplace alcove (Plate 6).

4.5 No archaeological features or deposits were disturbed during the reduction in ground level.

5. NO 26 – BASEMENT AREA

5.1 The basement area is accessible via a flight of renewed wooden steps which lead down from lower ground level (Plate 8 & Drawing No. 3). Niches in the brickwork on the east wall indicate the position of the earlier staircase (Plate 11 & Drawing No. 9). The main internal fabric of the basement area is hand-made brick (Context 4) but sandstones (Contexts 2 & 3) form the basal layers of seven of the elevations. The basement area comprises the Lobby and two basement rooms which lead off to the west (Drawing No. 3).

Basement Lobby

5.2 The Lobby measures *c.*4.7m north/south by *c.*2.3m wide and two basement rooms which lead off to the west (Drawing No. 3). The east and south wall of the lobby area include sandstone fabric (Plates 9, 10 & 11; Drawing Nos 9 & 10). Although whitewashed and partly plastered over, it is possible to discern that on both elevations the courses comprise a mix of fine grained red to reddish-purple 'permo-triassic' sandstones of the Keele formation (Context 2) interspersed with the occasional tooled stone and yellowy-white sandstone (Context 3). Both brick and stonework are laid with a lime mortar. The maximum height of the sandstone on the east wall of the Lobby is 0.94m and 0.93m on the south wall. The regularity of the coursing; the heavy use of mortar as infill and the brickwork within the coursing indicates that the sandstones have been re-used.

5.3 The hand-made bricks are of varying sizes with bricks measuring 230 x 100 x 70mm; 230 x 110 x 70mm and 230 x 100 x 80mm. The brick paviors that form the floor of the Lobby measure 240 x 100mm.

5.4 The two basement rooms are accessible from the west side of the Lobby via rough vertically planked doors (Plates 18 & 19).

Basement 1

5.5 Basement 1 is located below the southwest corner of the house. The room measures *c.*4.1m east/west by *c.*3.3m north/south by *c.*2m high. A 1.55m wide brick fireplace with semi-circular head (Plate 16) is located on the north side of the west elevation and a window at rear garden level is located in the west side of the south elevation (Plate 13). A *c.*0.28m wide chamfered beam aligned east/west supports the floor above.

5.6 The two 0.7m high by 0.47m deep brick pillars abutting the east wall may once have supported a shallow stone sink (Plate 17). The room may have been used as a scullery where the washing of cooking utensils or laundry was undertaken. There is no obvious water supply to the room and water may have been raised by a hand-pump into the sink from a wooden water butt placed in the southeast corner against the wall.

5.7 The south, west and east elevations include sandstone basal layers of variable depth. The maximum height of the sandstone courses in on the east wall is 1.12m (Plate 17; Drawing No. 6); 1.46m on the south wall (Plates 14 & 15; Drawing 4) and 1.48m on the west wall, which includes the fireplace built entirely in brick (Plate 13; Drawing No. 5). The floor is laid with reddish-purple brick paviors measuring 220 x 120 x 60mm, which will be retained in situ, but covered.

5.8 As with the elevations in the Lobby, it is possible to discern that, although painted and whitewashed over, the courses of stonework in Basement 1 also comprise a mix of fine grained red to reddish-purple sandstones (Context 2) interspersed with the occasional tooled stone and yellowy-white sandstone (Context 3). Likewise both brick and stonework is laid with a lime mortar and the regularity of the coursing; the heavy use of mortar as infill and the brickwork within the coursing indicates that the sandstones have been re-used. The average size of the internal hand-made bricks in Basement 1 is 230 x 110 x 70mm.

Basement 2

5.9 Basement 2 is located below the northwest corner of the house. The room measures *c.*4.1m east/west by *c.*3.1m north/south by *c.*2m high. The cobbled floor is made up with small to medium size sub oval grey cobblestones laid in 2 halves with a narrow central drainage gully (Plate 20).

5.10 The room has been used as a coal store. On the north side, the coal chute *c.*0.95m wide by *c.*0.9m high by *c.*1.12m deep, occupies a central position extending into the north wall of the house (Plate 22; Drawing 8). The chute once opened onto the raised pavement in front of the house, where a raised concrete slab indicates its position (Plate 4). A 1.22m long by 10cm deep steel lintel has been placed above the chute in the 1970s period to support the floor above. The location of the sandstone fabric in the north elevation and the depth of the coal chute suggest that the property abuts the medieval Town Wall, which is hidden by the internal facing brickwork and random stonework.

5.11 The west wall is subdivided by a 220mm wide brick pillar constructed in modern machine cut bricks (MB) which protrude 280mm into the room. The pillar has presumably been inserted during the 1970s period to support the pegged beam that crosses the room in an east/west direction supporting the Lounge floor above. South of the pillar, a central heating boiler installed in 1971 stands on a raised concrete plinth (Plate 21). The 1971 date recorded on the boiler appears to give the general date for the previous refurbishment of the house. North of the pillar, the sandstone rises to ceiling height, although patched with brick. South of the pillar, the maximum height of the sandstone is 1.44m (Drawing No.7). The size of the internal hand-made bricks in Basement 2 varies from 230 x 100 x 60mm to 230 x 110 x 70mm.

5.12 The sandstone basal layers in the basement follow the plan of the Lounge above, indicating that they are contemporary with the house above. No dating evidence was recovered but examination of the surviving Town Wall to the east and west of No. 26 suggests that the sandstone fabric located in the basement areas is a mix of re-used medieval and later building stone derived from the demolition of sections of the Town Walls in the late 18th century.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 The limited amount of current refurbishment undertaken shows that the Listed building is capable of being brought into 21st century use without requiring substantial alterations to its current form. The work has ensured the long-term preservation of the town house, while maintaining its character, historical and social significance.

6.2 No archaeological deposits have been disturbed during the current programme of refurbishment. The excavation in the kitchen was minimal, revealing only 19th century or later deposits associated with the previous laying of the quarry tiled floor.

6.3 In the areas of potential archaeological interest refurbishment has included:

- sealing the excavated earth floor in the kitchen with 25mm of sand, before relaying the quarry tiles on an insulated bed
- sand blinding the existing basement floors before covering with interlocking floating boards
- covering the basement walls with thermal boards.

6.4 The current programme of archaeological work has allowed for a record to be made of the existing building and, in particular, the cellar areas prior to refurbishment.

6.5 Observations made inside the property, together with cartographic evidence, suggest the property was constructed before the 1830s period. The house appears to have once formed two properties and the whole subsequently faced in brick gives the impression of a single phase of construction. The mix of sandstones and

brickwork in the basement areas suggests that the sandstone fabric located within the house is a mix of medieval and later building stone derived from the demolition of nearby sections of the Town Wall in the late 18th century, which has been re-used in the construction of No. 26.

7. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Castlering Archaeology would like to Rev. and Mrs David Jones, the owners of the property for contracting the archaeological work; Michael Eaton, Head of Conservation and Design, Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council for consultation on site; Derek Tomley and John Jones for consultation and permission to utilise the site plans (John Jones, September 2008); and the contractors on site for their full co-operation.

8. SOURCES

8.1 Bibliography

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8.2 Cartographic Sources:

1574	Map of Shrewsbury by Burghley
1610	Map of Shrewsbury by John Speed
1742	Map of Shrewsbury by John Rocque
1832	Map of Shrewsbury by Hitchcock
1833	Map of Shrewsbury by John Wood
1881	OS 1:500 map, Shropshire sheet 34.10.15
1902	OS 25" map, Shropshire sheet 34.10
1927	OS 25" map, Shropshire sheet 34.10
1962	edition OS 1:2500 map, SJ 3309-3409

8.3 Listed Building Information

SMR No. 10617 **No 26 and attached walls and railings, Town Walls, Shrewsbury**
 Listed Building (II) No. 653-1/15/676

Description

House. c.1800. Brick with plain tiled roof. 2 storeys, 3-window range with advanced gable to right. Central 4-panelled door in simple architrave up steps with cast-iron railings. 16-pane sash window to left on each floor and 12-pane sash window over doorway. Blind lower window, and 16-pane sash above in right-hand bay. Plain wood overhanging eaves cornice. Axial stack. Length of C13 town wall adjoins to each side, coursed and squared sandstone with flat copings.

Source

List of Buildings: 47th List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest; Department of National Heritage (DNH) (1995-Nov-17), 458

8.4 Shropshire SMR Additional Sites

SMR No. 10618

Listed Building (II*) – No. 653-1/15/685

Wingfields Tower, Towns Walls, Shrewsbury; Watch Tower & Adjoining Wall

Scheduled Monument and Grade II* Listed Building and the only surviving 13th-14th century watch tower on Shrewsbury's medieval town walls.

SMR No. 62570 Shrewsbury Town Ditch ('La Mote': Victoria Avenue to Beeches Lane)

Description

Ditch & town defences of medieval date located during excavations. Ditch may pre-date the construction of the town's masonry walls in this area. Documentary evidence indicates that a ditch around the town was in existence c.1221. There are also references to la mote of the...wall in 1303-4 when the land known as Stury's Close (between the Franciscan Friary and the Gate (PRN 01448) at the bottom of Milk Street/Belmont) was granted to Richard Stury by the bailiffs and corporation.

SMR No. 62584 Shrewsbury Town Wall (Stretch along Murivance; 13th century to 15th century)

Description

Line of the medieval town wall, south-east from the wall surveyed c.1790 on the new St Chad's Church site up to Wingfields Tower (PRN 10618). Included in this stretch are the former Shoplatch Gate (PRN 01450), Wheeler's Tower (PRN 01451) and Cordlode Gate (PRN 01449). The town wall was associated with the extramural ditch (PRN 62570), which may in fact have been the primary defensive feature constructed. One section of the wall adjacent to Wheeler's Tower was ordered to be demolished in 1745, another in 1782, and 'the walls on the left hand between St John's Hill and Murivance', in the same general area, were ordered to be taken down in 1783. In 1794 'the road leading from the Crescent to Swan Hill' was widened by lowering the wall-walk to the level of the road and lowering the parapet by four feet.

SMR No. 62589 Shrewsbury Town Wall (Section 'W'); 13th century to 15th century; SJ 4904 1222**Description**

Line of the medieval town wall east of Wingfield's Tower to the surviving section of wall PRN 62590. Includes Chadlode Gate (PRN 62592), demolished for the construction of the Crescent c.1790. According to R. E. Davies 'the great breach made for the building of the Crescent houses included the site of one of a series of towers, which extended along the lower level to protect the water lanes' (Davies, 1909/1912, Trans Caradoc Severn Valley Field Club, p181). Baker Nigel pers comm suggests statement is incorrect. Speed's map of 1610 shows a gate tower at (approx.) the bottom of Milk Street/Belmont (presumed to be PRN 62592) but no others; Burghley's map shows a tower in a similar position.

9. LIST OF CONTEXTS

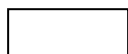
Context no.	Type	Short Description	Date
1	Deposit	Compacted reddish-sandy earth floor with high percentage of brick & slate fragments and small riverborne pebbles. Excavated to c.250 to 300mm below the former kitchen quarry tiled floor	19 th C
2	Structural	Soft red & purplish-red sandstones interpreted as Keele formation from the Permo-triassic period.	13 th C re-used medieval masonry
3	Structural	Whitish-yellow siliceous sandstones hewn from Grinshill quarries	Late-medieval – 17 th century re-used masonry
4	Structural	Tooled red sandstone blocks	Re-used medieval masonry
5	Structural	Hand-made orange to reddish brown brickwork laid with lime mortar; varying sizes.	early 19 th C
MB	Structural	Modern brickwork	1970s

10. CARTOGRAPHY & 11. PLATES *following*

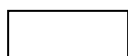
12. KEY TO SITE DRAWINGS



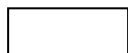
Tooled sandstones



Mortar & plaster



Bricks



Timber

(1)

Context Number

MB

Modern Brick