

Archaeological assessment of Bridgnorth, Shropshire

Victoria Buteux

with contributions by Derek Hurst, Richard Morriss, Elizabeth Pearson
and Paul Stamper

Summary

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evidence relating to the historic core of Bridgnorth was carefully analysed, comprising topographic data, published and unpublished archaeological reports, museum collections, primary and secondary historical sources, historical maps, and field data recorded by the project team.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

The historic core of Bridgnorth contains buried archaeological deposits, and these are judged to have high potential. There is moderate potential for the recovery of artefact and ecofact assemblages, although this assessment may be revised if waterlogged deposits are located (for example in Low Town). The historic buildings constitute a complementary body of evidence for the post-medieval period, and are judged to have high potential for detailed study and recording. The surviving documentary sources are few for the medieval period, but 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 Bridgnorth is located at NGR SO 716 930 in Bridgnorth District. The modern settlement is much larger than the historic core of the High and Low Towns and 20th century residential and industrial development spreads out over a large area particularly to the west and east.

1.2 Topography, geology and soils

Bridgnorth lies at a height of between 30m and 65m OD on either side of the river Severn. The High Town, on the west bank, stands on a sandstone promontory dominating the river,

and Low Town on the east bank. The soils, although unclassified, lie within the area of well drained typical brown sands of the Bridgnorth association (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Ragg *et al* 1984) overlying Permian Bridgnorth sandstone (British Geological Survey 1:250,000, sheet 52°N-O.4°W).

1.3 Chronological outline

The origin of the settlement at Bridgnorth is a matter of some dispute (see section 2) but the present town was established *c* 1100 when Robert de Bellesme, Earl of Shrewsbury, rebelled against the accession of Henry I and, in preparation for the ensuing military struggle, removed the castle, church and borough set up by his father at Quatford to the more easily defensible site at Bridgnorth (Slater 1988). Documentary evidence suggests that at this date or soon after the town was situated within the outer bailey of the castle (Eyton 1854). In 1102 Henry I besieged the castle, possibly from the motte and bailey castle now called Panpudding Hill (SA 369), and after its fall maintained it as a royal fortress (Eyton 1859). After Henry's death in 1135 the castle was held for Stephen by Hugh de Mortimer who refused to surrender it to Henry II on the death of Stephen in 1154. The castle was besieged and captured by Henry II in 1155 and continued to serve as a fortress, goal and royal residence until the 17th century although it seems to have been in disrepair and infrequently visited from the later 13th century onwards (Mason 1957).

The town of Bridgnorth seems to have been successful from its foundation and this was in large part due to its position at a route centre. Until 1447, when a bridge was built at Bewdley, Bridgnorth was one of only three bridging points over the central River Severn, and as such attracted both river and road trade. From the 12th to the 14th century, however, Bridgnorth was also an important strategic and military as well as commercial centre and in 1322 part of the town was burnt and the bridge damaged by forces in rebellion against Edward I (Mason 1957, 14).

In 1157 Bridgnorth's customary liberties and rights were confirmed by a royal charter and the town was firmly established as a self-governing borough with a weekly market and a fair on St Mary Magdalene's day. Additional fairs were granted in 1226 and 1359. By the later 12th century the town had grown and was no longer confined to the outer bailey of the castle (Slater 1988). In the 13th century town defences were erected. A merchant guild was founded in 1227 and the borough sent two MPs to parliament in 1295 (Mason 1957, 14).

By the early 14th century Bridgnorth was, in terms of the tax paid in the lay subsidies, the second most important town in Shropshire and eighth in the five West Midlands counties (Slater 1988). It was important enough to appear on Matthew Paris's map of great Britain *c* 1340 (Beresford 1988, 252). Bridgnorth was a manufacturing town as well as a trading centre. Its main product was cloth, although tanning and brewing were also important (Rowley 1986, 91). There is documentary evidence of cloth manufacture in the town from at least the 13th century and occupational surnames in the Subsidy of 1327 include dyers, tailors, mercers and glovers. Fishermen, a cooper, a cook, a barker, a potter, a barber, a fiddler and a goldsmith are also mentioned, and the town had a small community of Jews (Slater 1988). Bridgnorth's population enjoyed a number of privileges and municipal services including a mercantile Guild and hanse, a conduit house and water supply and a communal oven (Croom 1992, 29).

In the 1540s the antiquarian Leland visited Bridgnorth and noted that "the town depends on the cloth industry, but this has declined there, and the town has very badly declined with it" and that "it used to be strongly walled but the walls are all in ruins" (Chandler 1993, 392). Despite its economic decline in the 16th century Bridgnorth still had some political status. From the late 15th to early 17th century the Council of the Marches occasionally met there, as did the Shropshire assizes until 1739 (Mason 1957, 16).

At the outbreak of the Civil War the inhabitants of Bridgnorth supported the King, and

between 1642 and 1646 the town and castle were an important royalist centre. As the war dragged on, however, the population became less enthusiastic and in 1646 complained, in vain, to the King's officers of the "great spoil and detriment " caused by the royal troops (Mason 1957, 24). On the 31st March 1646 Bridgnorth was attacked by parliamentary troops. The royalist garrison retreated to the castle and fired St Leonard's church and parts of the town adjacent to the castle causing £90,000 worth of damage (Wanklyn 1993). The garrison held out for three months but the castle was eventually taken by Parliamentary troops and its fortifications demolished (Mason 1957, 25).

Bridgnorth was still a manufacturing centre in the post-medieval period. Barge- and boat-building were important as was cloth manufacture, tanning, gun-making, malting and the production of stockings and black silk lace (Mason 1957, 41). Its prosperity during the 17th and 18th centuries, however, was largely based on the river trade, and the growth in this after 1660 created new employment possibilities and resulted in a large rise in population (Wanklyn 1993, 40). At this period the main commodities carried down the river were coal, from pits in and around Broseley, and farm produce, especially butter and cheese. Upstream came a variety of products of both foreign and domestic origin such as hops, sugar, wines, and brandy (Mason 1957, 39). In 1756 the river between Buildwas and Bewdley was the busiest stretch of the Severn, and Bridgnorth was second only to Broseley in the number of vessels operating from it. The number of people employed in boat-building and ancillary trades increased almost four-fold between 1641 and 1760 (Wanklyn 1993, 43). In 1763 the town was described as a "Place of great trade, both by Land and Water" (Mason 1957, 40).

At the end of the 18th century (and the beginning of the 19th) two new industries, iron founding and carpet manufacture, began in Bridgnorth. By 1798 John Hazeldine was established as an iron founder and he, his brother Robert, and their partner John Rastrick carried out much important pioneer engineering work at a yard between Mill Street and the Severn including the construction of locomotives (Mason 1957, 42). A number of carpet factories were operating in the early 19th century but the most successful was Southwell's on the site of the medieval friary. Carpet manufacture became the most important industry in the town in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Whilst Bridgnorth continued as a manufacturing town into the 19th century the river trade, its main source of prosperity, decreased after the opening of the Stour canal and the early 19th century was a period of decline. This situation was made worse with the coming of the railway age and although coal still continued to be brought to Bridgnorth by trow until c 1880, by the middle of the 19th century the river trade was of little importance in the economics of the region. In 1859 it was stated "that our town is retrograding, for want of railway communication, is too evident from the depreciation of the value of property, and diminution in our markets since the opening of the various railways surrounding us....We are in the midst of a circle, cut off as it were from them all... If we loose this line.. it is to be feared...that Bridgnorth will diminish into a mere village, and be reckoned an obscure unapproachable spot" (Mason 1957, 50). In 1862 the Severn Valley Line of the Great Western Railway was opened with a station at Bridgnorth but the reduction of the track to a single lane in the interests of economy ensured that the line would never be of great importance. The railway arrested a decline in the towns prosperity, but could not return it to its former importance.

1.4 Placename studies

Bridgnorth is probably the place referred to as *Cwatbrycge* or *Brycge* in the Anglo Saxon Chronicles (see section 2). Gelling suggests that it lost the first part of its name and became "Bridge" before the Conquest (Gelling 1990, 58). Bridgnorth is recorded as *Brug* in the 1156 Pipe Rolls. The first documented use of *Bridgnorth* or *Brugg'Norht* was in Close Rolls of 1282 (Mason 1957; Ekwall 1960). The town was still called variations of *Brug* or *Bridge* by local inhabitants up to the 18th century (Mason 1957, 15).

1.5 Syntheses of documentary and archaeological data

The documentary evidence relating to Bridgnorth has been summarised by Eyton (1859) and more recently by Mason (1957) in his popular history of the town. The evidence for the location of the Anglo-Saxon burh is presented in detail by Mason (1964) and Croom (1989). Both Slater (1988) and Croom (1992) have studied the development of the medieval town in detail using historical and cartographic evidence although their conclusions differ in some areas. Wanklyn (1993) has drawn together the documentary evidence for river trade in the post-medieval period.

No synthesis of the archaeological data from the town has been produced. 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

A copy of a 17th century map of the town (Anon nd), John Wood's survey (Wood 1835) and the Ordnance Survey First Edition 1:2500 maps (*Shropshire 25" sheet LVIII.8 and 12* (1884)) were used in the identification of remains and the definition of components.

1.7 Archaeological excavations and surveys

The only substantial excavation to have occurred in Bridgnorth was that undertaken at the Franciscan Friary on the west bank of the Severn in 1989 (SA 5626; Ferrisforthcoming). Trial trenches have been excavated, however, in 1976 at St John's Hospital in the Low Town (SA 383; Carver 1977), in 1982 at Panpudding Hill just outside the urban area of Bridgnorth (SA 2974; Roe 1983) and in 1991 in the grounds of St Mary's Rectory on Castle Hill (SA 5627; Thompson and Walker 1991). Chance finds from the town have included supposedly Anglo-Saxon stonework from St Leonard's Church (SA 5631) and a post-medieval coin hoard from behind the High Street (SA 367). Traces of the castle wall were uncovered during the construction of the Post Office in 1901 although at the time they were interpreted as part of the town wall (SA 371; Watkins-Pitchford 1938). A number of chance finds have also provided evidence of prehistoric and Roman activity in the area (see section 2). A survey of caves within the town was undertaken in 1990 (Sewter 1990).

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

1.8 Acknowledgments and personnel

Survey fieldwork was undertaken by Victoria Buteux and Nigel Topping. Analysis and report writing were carried out by Victoria Buteux, and the report was edited by Hal Dalwood.

2 Pre-urban evidence

Bridgnorth is situated on an easily defensible promontory overlooking a crossing point on the River Severn, and must have been a focus for travellers and settlers from earliest times. A neolithic axe was found at Cann Hall (SA 2696), and an Iron Age coin (now lost) is said to come from the town (SA 402). The parish to the south of Bridgnorth is called Oldbury and there is some suggestion that there was an Iron Age hillfort on Castle Hill (Slater 1988). No evidence for this has yet been recovered. A considerable number of Roman coins have been discovered in the area of the modern town (SA 384, SA 392, SA 394, SA 395, SA 396) but it is not clear if these indicate a Roman settlement.

In 895 the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that the Danish army reached a place called *Cwatbrucge* or *Brycge*, where they built a fortress and spent the winter. The Chronicle of Aethelweard notes that in 910 the Danes crossed the Severn over a bridge called *Cantricge*. In 912 the Mercian Register records that Aethelflaed built a burh at *Bricge*. The historian Ordericus Vitalis, writing between 1123 and 1141, records the transfer in 1101-2 of Robert de Bellesme's headquarters from *Quatfort* to *Brugiam*. The chronicle known as Florence of Worcester written *c* 1130 notes that the burh built by Aethelflaed was on the west bank of the Severn at a place called *Brycge* (Gelling 1990, 57). There has been a great deal of debate as to the whether the Danish defensive work, the bridge and the *Aethelflaedan* burh were at Quatford or Bridgnorth and this is presented in some detail by Mason (1966) and Croom (1989). The arguments hinge on the reliability or otherwise of the various renderings of the records. Gelling (1990, 58) suggests that the bridge and burgh were at Bridgnorth and that there is no evidence to suggest a bridge at Quatford. She suggests that the confusion is due to the fact that both the bridge at Bridgnorth (*Cwatbrucge*) and the ford at Quatford were named after the Old English name of the district *Cwat(t)*.

There is some topographical evidence for the defences being at Bridgnorth. Slater suggests that the Low Town was founded as a defended area on the east side of the river forming, with the bridge and promontory burh, a unified defensive system to prevent Danish penetration up the Severn (Slater 1988, 9). Traces of an enclosure have been observed on the ground (SA 424), which may give some support to his argument of an early bridgehead, but these may represent a natural break in slope.

Bridgnorth is not mentioned in the Domesday Book (Thorn and Thorn 1986) but whatever its political or strategic status it seems clear that there was a settlement in the area of the High Town before the 12th century. The relationship of St Leonard's churchyard to the layout of the medieval town show clearly that it predates the expansion of the town in the later 12th to early 13th century and yet is some distance from the castle and borough founded in the early 12th century (Slater 1988; Croom 1989). It is probable, therefore, that St Leonard's was an Anglo-Saxon foundation. A settlement of that date is likely to have occupied the land around but the extent or status of this settlement is not known.

The origin of the earthwork known as Panpudding Hill to the southwest of Bridgnorth castle is not known, but it may have been built by Henry I during the siege at Bridgnorth in the early 12th century (SA 369: SCC SMR site file).

3 Medieval archaeological evidence

3.1 Medieval remains and buildings

Archaeological excavations uncovered medieval remains in a number of places within the town. At the site of the Franciscan Friary (SA 381) the remains of the medieval stone walls standing in parts to a height of *c* 4m were uncovered, as well as architectural fragments, floor tiles, painted window glass and roof tiles deemed unfit for reuse when the buildings were stripped at the Dissolution (SA 5626; Ferris 1996). On St John's Street the site of the hospital was levelled in the post-medieval period but slight traces of the medieval buildings and cemetery remained (SA 383; Carver 1977). The small evaluation trench at St Mary's Rectory revealed a large ditch running east west across Castle Hill interpreted by the excavators as part of the 12th century castle or an earlier fortification on the site (SA 5627; Thompson and Walker 1991).

Part of the keep and a fragment of the castle wall still stand (SA 371, SA 372) as do small fragments of the town walls (SA 127, SA 374). The only medieval building to continue in use is the church of St Leonard's although this was badly damaged in 1646 and extensively rebuilt in the 19th century. The church has been described and the sequence of construction interpreted (Crannage 1903; SA 410).

3.2 Medieval urban components

Analysis of the evidence summarised above and of cartographic and documentary sources indicated the existence of 37 urban components. The characteristics of these urban components are summarised below.

Castle (SA 371). A castle, possibly on the site of a Anglo-Saxon burh (see section 2), was built at Bridgnorth by Robert de Bellesme, Earl of Shrewsbury *c* 1100. The castle included the institutions of the Earl's former stronghold at Quatford including the collegiate church of St Mary (SA 5631) in the inner bailey, and the borough (SA 5630) in the outer bailey (Eyton 1854). After its capture by Henry I, Bridgnorth castle became a royal residence. The palace or King's House, retained as a royal residence until the 17th century, was situated in the inner bailey (Watkins-Pitchford 1948). Almost nothing remains of the defences or internal buildings of the castle. Part of the castle wall was uncovered in 1902 (SA 374; Watkins-Pitchford 1938) and the excavation at St Mary's Rectory uncovered what might be the ditch between the inner and outer bailey (SA 5627; Thompson and Walker 1991). Part of the keep survives and is thought to date from between 1166 and 1174 (Croom 1992, 20). More detail comes from exchequer accounts of the 12th to 13th centuries and it is clear that the castle contained a number of stone buildings such as the great hall with a chimney and glass windows, a King's chamber, a Queen's chamber with an oriel at the door, a royal kitchen, pantry and butlery. Other sources also mention a great tower with a dungeon, stables, a well, a tilt yard and outer defences with turrets, a barbican containing the constable's house, and a drawbridge (Watkins-Pitchford 1932).

By at least 1242 the outer bailey was legally part of the town although it still benefited from the castles defences (Pounds 1990, 196). By 1281 the castle was in a poor state of repair, its timbers rotted by rain or stolen by the citizens (Mason 1957, 14). By the end of the medieval period the castle was still a significant landmark in the town but no longer served as a fortification. Leland, the 16th century antiquarian, noted that "its walls rise to a great height, and there used to be two or three strong wards in the castle, which have now fallen into complete ruin...on the north side of the castle there is one mighty gate, but this has been blocked up, and a small postern gate has been forced through the wall next to the castle entrance" (Chandler 1993, 392).

Town defences (SA 5629). The first defences of the town were a moat and timber stockade built between 1216 and 1223 (Mason 1957, 10). From 1220 the town received a number of murage grants (Croom 1992, 34) and the stone defences date from this period. The defences included a ditch except on the eastern edge of the town where the steep slopes down to the river made this unnecessary. The defences had five main gates built between 1256 and 1264: Northgate (SA 379); Whitburn gate (SA 380); Hungary/St Mary's Gate (SA 375); Listley Gate at the top of Railway Street (SA 376); and Cow Gate at the top of the Cartway (SA 378). The town defences were separated from those of the castle by a deep moat in the area of the Victorian Market buildings. Barrier Gate (SA 377) stood on the north side of this moat and was joined to the north gate of the castle by a drawbridge.

A few fragments of the town walls survive and the line in some places is reflected in later property boundaries. The line of the defences has been postulated by a number of authors (Bond 1987; Slater 1988 and 1990), but on the eastern side in particular the line of the circuit cannot be exactly located. It is not clear for instance whether the Franciscan Friary was outside the walls or protected by a wall to the north running

down to the river as suggested by Bond (1987).

Murage grants continued to be given until the 15th century (Watkins-Pitchford 1942) but by the mid-16th century the town walls "are all in ruins" (Chandler 1993, 392).

Churchyard (SA 5633). The shape of the churchyard and its relationship to the medieval burghage plots suggest that St Leonard's church was a pre-urban foundation and may date to the Anglo-Saxon period (Slater 1988; Croom 1992). In the 19th century carvings said to be 8th century were found in the tower (SA 5631; Crannage 1903). The extent of the medieval churchyard is not known, but the shape of plots surrounding it, including that of Palmer's Hospital, suggest that it was larger than at present. St Leonard's Church is not documented until *c* 1350 but architectural fragments within the church date from the 12th century (Slater 1988). The medieval churchyard also included St John the Baptist's Chapel (SA 4135) and a college for the priests serving the chantry chapels (SA 421).

Religious house (SA 381). At some time between 1224 and 1244 a Franciscan Friary was founded on the west bank of the Severn. The site was very cramped and in 1247 the friars were allowed to enlarge it by taking in an area of road. They also attempted to increase the site by dumping in the river, and a complaint about the effect of this was recorded in 1272 (Eyton 1854). The friary is not particularly well-documented but excavations undertaken in 1989 suggest that its main period of importance may have been the late 13th to early 14th centuries when the stone buildings on the site were constructed (Ferris 1996). Refurbishments occurred in the 14th and 15th centuries (*ibid*). Reports of occasional discoveries during the construction and expansion of the carpet factory built over the site suggest that the cemetery was located to the south of the complex (Clark-Maxwell 1922) but it is not clear how far the Friary extended to the north. At the Dissolution the friary was extremely poor and was described as "all...fallyng downe" (Ferris 1996, 77). Large parts of the medieval building were preserved under the 19th century carpet factory and some areas have been consolidated for display.

Hospitals (SA 383, SA 390). Two medieval hospitals are documented in Bridgnorth. The oldest of these was the Hospital of St John or Holy Trinity to the north of Mill Street (SA 383). This was a hospital for the relief of travellers and its foundation between 1179 and 1195 is attributed to Ralf le Strange of Alveley (Clark-Maxwell 1922). By 1368 the patronage had passed to the Crown but allegations were made about the carelessness of the wardens and in 1396 a commission was set up to enquire into this (Clark-Maxwell 1922). By 1414 there were no residents and only one priest, and the buildings were in ruins (VCH 1968). The hospital was dissolved in 1539 (Clark-Maxwell 1922). Trial excavation to the west of the site in 1976 located part of the medieval cemetery quite close to Mill Street and behind it a thin scatter of building rubble. Most of the traces of the medieval hospital in this area had been removed during the post-medieval period, however (Carver 1977).

At some time before 1224 the Hospital of St James (SA 390) was founded, apparently by the town, for the care of the sick, particularly the leprous (Mason 1957, 12). The Hospital was still functioning in 1544 but it seems to have been in private ownership by the end of the 16th century. Fragments of medieval walls were recorded in a post-medieval building on the site when it was demolished *c* 1960 and human burials are reputed to have been recovered from the area (Clark-Maxwell 1922) but almost nothing is known of the extent, form or history of the Hospital.

Bridging point (SA 423). The date of the first bridge is a matter of some contention and is inextricably linked with the arguments over the site of *Cwathbrycge* (see section 2). A bridge did exist by the early 12th century, however (Slater 1988, 10). The bridge had a gatehouse (SA 5607) and a chapel (SA 382) and tenements on the bridge are recorded (Watkins-Pitchford 1938, 211). In the mid-16th century it had "eight large

arches and a chapel dedicated to St Sythe" (Chandler 1990, 392).

Street system (SA 5647). All the main streets of the present town are known to have existed by the 13th century (Mason 1957, 10). Until the construction of the New Road in the 18th century the Cartway was the main route into the town from the bridge. Access from the waterfront to the High Town was also provided by seven passageways cut into the cliff face. These are from north to south, Granary Steps, Friars Load, St Leonard's Steps, Bank Steps, Stoneway Steps, St Mary's Steps and Library Steps (Sewter 1990, 2).

If St Leonard's Church was the focus of a pre-urban settlement at Bridgnorth (see above) then Whitburn Street/Church Street leading to it from the west and Love Lane leading to it from the north, with the steps down to the river, may be the earliest routes in the High Town. Love Lane appears to have been diverted from its original course, probably after the construction of the defences in the early 13th century. The High Street may have been an early road but was laid out in its present form probably around the mid 12th century (Slater 1988; Croom 1992). The area to the west of the High Street was developed some time between the mid-12th century and the early 13th century and St Mary's Street and Listley Street may date to this period (Slater 1988). Slater suggests Mill Street was diverted into the Low Town and had originally joined Hospital Street (Slater 1988).

Market places (SA 5683, SA 5685). The original market place of the borough of Bridgnorth must have been within the outer bailey of the castle. From the mid-12th century the High Town market was probably held in the High Street. Stalls were put out in front of burgages on market days (Slater 1988, 12) but there were also permanent shops with covered walkways. Leland describes the High Street in the mid-16th century as a "most attractive street which runs from north to south. The houses on each side of this street have galleries, like those in some of the city streets in Chester, and these enable people to pass along in the dry when it rains" (Chandler 1993, 392). The market contained a market cross (SA 5614) and possibly market buildings. A building referred to as the "Old Town Hall" (SA 5612) is said to have stood outside the Northgate (Bellett 1856, 147). This may refer to the northgate of the castle, at the top of the High Street, as it seems unlikely that a town hall would be situated outside the town walls. Whatever its location, the building was demolished in 1645 (Mason 1957, 24). Another building in position in the High Street by 1600 but possibly medieval in origin was the "New House" (SA 5613).

The Low Town may have been more than just a bridgehead suburb. Slater suggests that it developed from an Anglo-Saxon burh, and notes that burgesses are mentioned in this area in the medieval period (Slater 1988, 9-10). A market cross at the south end of Mill Street is shown on the 17th century map of the town (Anon nd) and it is probable that the triangular area created by the widening of Mill Street at this point was a second market place. The relative size of the two market places suggests that the High Street was the most important at least from the 12th century.

Tenement plots (SA 366, SA 5630, SA 5634, SA 5635, SA 5636, SA 5637, SA 5638, SA 5639, SA 5640, SA 5641, SA 5642, SA 5643, SA 5644, SA 5645, SA 5646, SA 5648, SA 5649, SA 5650, SA 5680, SA 5681, SA 5682, SA 6052, SA 6053, SA 6055). At an inquest in 1342 the burgesses of Bridgnorth informed the king that they lived in the outer bailey of the castle by grant of Robert de Bellesme (Slater 1988, 7), which means, if their testimony is believed, that this area (SA 5630) is the earliest part of the town. Little is known of the arrangement of this component other than that c 1540 it contained "many new wooden buildings" (Chandler 1993, 392) and that it contained the house of the castle governor and a well (Slater 1988, 7). Slater suggests that West and East Castle Streets are of medieval origin (Slater 1988), but Croom maintains that this area was completely rearranged post-1646 and that in the medieval period there was only one road running from the inner bailey to the outer gate (Croom

1992).

Bridgnorth expanded during the 12th century and piecemeal development of burgage plots occurred along the High Street (SA 5640, SA 5641, SA 5645, SA 5646) (Slater 1990, 168). These burgage plots contained the homes of the wealthy as well as industrial and commercial premises and plots fronting the market were at a premium (Croom 1992, 30).

At some time prior to the construction of the town defences in the early 13th century a series of burgage plots were laid out to the west of the High Street (SA 5642, SA 5643, SA 5644), fronting Whitburn Street, St Mary's Street and Listley Street. All these plots, unlike those on the High Street, appear to have been laid out at one time and are discussed in detail in Slater (1988 and 1990) and Croom (1988 and 1992).

At the western edge of the town are a group of components with irregular boundaries (SA 5681, SA 5682, SA 6052, SA 6053). Land in this area was given to the de Pitchford family in 1102 for their services to Henry I during the siege of Bridgnorth, and developed somewhat separately from the rest of the borough though it was within its bounds (Slater 1988, 16). After the erection of the town defences in the early 13th century most of this area became an extra-mural suburb known as Little Brugg. The de Pitchford family may have also owned land on either side of the steep lane now called Railway Street, but in the medieval period referred to as New Town (SA 6055). This area never seems to have been particularly prosperous, and was typically a suburb in function although its name suggests that it may have had greater pretensions (Slater 1988, 17-18).

On the west bank of the Severn is an area of irregular, small plots and switch-back lanes leading down to the wharves and containing warehouses and storerooms etc as well as houses (SA 5648, SA 5649, SA 5650, SA 5680). In the post-medieval period many of these buildings were cut out of the cliffside and had artificial caves as cellars and storehouses (Sewter 1990; Watkins-Pitchford 1938, 197). These may have originated in the medieval period. Slater suggests that this area may already have developed before the foundation of the 12th century borough and it is perhaps this community that St Leonard's was serving (Slater 1988, 10).

Tenement plots in the Low Town may also have early origins. Slater suggests that they were laid out in the post-Conquest period within the area of an Anglo-Saxon burh (Slater 1988, 9). It has been suggested that a defensive circuit somewhat similar to that proposed by Slater can still be traced (SA 424), but fieldwork undertaken during the present survey failed to locate any definitely artificial features on this alignment. The burgages in the Low Town were laid out fronting Mill Street and the market area (SA 5635, SA 5636, SA 5637, SA 366), St John's Street (SA 5634), and Hospital Street (SA 5638, SA 5639). It is possible that by the later medieval period shops and houses had encroached on land owned by St John's Hospital, but there is no evidence for this at present.

Quaysides (SA 5610, SA 5611). Most of Bridgnorth's prosperity was based on its function as a river port, and until the 19th century the quays must have been one of the most important parts of the town. The main quay, Town Quay, was immediately south of the bridge, but to the north were Foster's Load, Friar's Load and Skinner's Load (Slater 1988, 10; Wanklyn 1993). Little is known of the extent or structure of these components.

3.3 Medieval urban form

Definition and classification. The medieval urban form (SA 6044) has been defined and mapped, based on the extent of the identified urban components and in particular the limits of the castle and tenement plots. The available evidence indicates that the

medieval urban form of Bridgnorth can be classified as a large medieval market town (English Heritage 1992).

Survival. Within the castle the survival of the keep and sections of wall suggests that the truncation and disturbance of deposits in some areas may not be too severe but the slighting of the defences in 1646 and the development of the outer and inner baileys as a residential and recreational area from the later 17th century onwards has meant that the line of the defences is almost impossible to trace on the ground. The area between the inner and outer bailey seem to have been very severely damaged. At St Mary's Rectory (SA 5627) the inner bailey ditch only survived to a depth of about 3m (Thompson and Walker 1991). What little evidence there is suggests that survival is better in the outer bailey. The 19th century market buildings were constructed over the moat between the castle and the town walls. When they were being constructed the workmen had to dig down to a depth of *c* 10m before hitting bedrock (Mason 1957). A huge depth of medieval and later deposits are likely to be preserved beneath the much less substantial foundations of the smaller buildings in the area.

Less is known about the survival of deposits in the rest of the town. The continuous occupation of Bridgnorth from the medieval period suggests that significant medieval deposits may have developed in some areas but that they are likely to have been damaged by post-medieval activity. The survival of deposits will be influenced by the topography. Excavations at the site of the Franciscan Friary have demonstrated that substantial early deposits can be protected by the terracing of the steep slopes down to the river, and the constraint this may have had on later constructions (SA 5626; Ferris 1996). The excavation in the Low Town (SA 383; Carver 1977) revealed that most of the medieval deposits had been removed at sometime in the post-medieval period. It is possible, however, that this levelling was restricted to the area of the private house built on the site of the medieval hospital (SA 5686), and that deposits of medieval date do survive elsewhere in the Low Town. Any surviving deposits in this area may be waterlogged.

The medieval castle and town defences have left relatively little traces on the modern town plan, but the majority of the boundaries of the medieval town including the streets and burgage plots can still be observed and the medieval form is moderately well-preserved in the present settlement.

4 Post-medieval archaeological evidence

4.1 Post-medieval remains and buildings

Archaeological excavations have produced evidence of post-medieval activity on the site of St John's Hospital (SA 383; Carver 1977) and at St Mary's Rectory (SA 5627; Thompson and Walker 1991). The excavations at the site of the Franciscan Friary (SA 5626; Ferris forthcoming) produced extensive information on the stripping of the buildings at the Dissolution and their subsequent remodelling and reuse in the post-medieval period. A coin hoard dating to the Civil War period was found behind 73 High Street in 1908 (SA 367).

Bridgnorth contains a great number of standing post-medieval buildings including the present church of St Mary Magdalene built in 1792 (SA 389; Crannage 1903, Pevsner 1958). There are 18 listed 16th century buildings, 33 listed 17th century buildings and 99 listed 18th century buildings within the town. The majority of these have not been studied in any detail. In addition a large number of artificial caves, mainly on the steep slopes leading down to the river, have been identified (Sewter 1990). These were used from the 18th century although they may have had earlier origins.

4.2 Post-medieval urban components

Analysis of the evidence summarised above and of cartographic and documentary sources indicated the existence of 52 urban components. The characteristics of these urban components are summarised below.

Churchyards (SA 6037, SA 6029). At St Leonard's the encroachment on to the churchyard which occurred in the later medieval or post-medieval period created a small circular cathedral-like close (SA 6037). This component also included the Grammar School (see below).

St Mary Magdalene was founded as a collegiate church within the inner bailey of the castle at the beginning of the 12th century. This church had a high status in the medieval period but originally functioned as a castle chapel although it may have acquired parochial status by 1472 ((Mason 1957, 12). Leland, in the 1540s, thought that there was only one parish church, St Leonard's, and notes that St Mary's "is now a rather rough building" (Chandler 1993, 392). The medieval church (SA 5631) was demolished in 1792 when the present church was built to the southeast of the original site. The present churchyard (SA 6029) dates to the end of the 18th century and the extent of the earlier churchyard is not known.

Chapels (SA 5616, SA 5617). A Baptist Society existed in Bridgnorth by 1652. In 1699 they met at a chapel at the end of the bridge, possibly the former chapel of St Sythe, but the first Baptist chapel was built on West Castle Street (SA 5616) *c* 1701 (Mason 1957, 35). The present building on the site dates to 1842 (SA 11703).

A Presbyterian congregation had also formed in Bridgnorth by the early 18th century. They originally met in a house in the High Street, but in 1709 a meeting house was built on the Stoneway steps (SA 5617). The present building on the site dates to 1829 (SA 16699).

Bridging point (SA 423). The medieval stone bridge continued to function throughout the post-medieval period although it was often in need of repair (Watkins-Pitchford 1938, 206). The bridge was largely rebuilt in 1795 and 1823. The buildings on the bridge, including the gatehouse and chapel, stood more or less intact until the end of the 18th century, but from then on they were gradually removed to aid traffic flow. By 1924 no buildings survived (Clark-Maxwell 1924b).

Street system and town gates (SA 6046). The medieval street system (SA 5647) continued in use with little change throughout the post-medieval period. In the 1540s Leland considered the High Street to be a "most attractive street" and Bridge Street/St Johns Street "an attractive long street of modest buildings" (Chandler 1993, 392). Hollybush Road, which had been a great thorough fare in the medieval period had by the 18th century become "narrow, filthy and disagreeable" (Watkins-Pitchford 1938, 195). The town defences were in ruins by the 16th century but the gates continued to control traffic into and out of the town into the 18th century. Only Hungry/West Gate and Northgate survived into the 19th century. West gate was demolished in 1821 but the Northgate, although rebuilt in the late 18th century, still stands.

New roads in the post-medieval period included Moat Street, on the line of the town defences, and Bank Street and Castle Hill Walk, on the site of the castle defences. New Road was opened in 1786 to provide a gentle gradient for coaches and wagons between the High Town and the bridge (Watkins-Pitchford 1938, 197, Slater pers comm). West Castle Street and East Castle Street may have been new streets dating to the 17th and 18th century but this is a matter of some debate (see section 3.2; Slater 1988; Croom 1992).

Market places (SA 5683, SA 5685). The High Street still served as the main market

place of the town throughout the post-medieval period. The High Cross (SA 5614), the Old Town Hall (SA 5612) and a market building referred to as the "New House" or the "Town hall" (SA 5613) were pulled down in 1645 (Mason 1957). Many of the galleried shops fronting the market place were destroyed in the fire of 1646 and those that survived were blocked up to create extra rooms in the 18th century (Cornes 1886, 199). The present town hall (SA 368) was built *c* 1650.

Very little is known about the market place in Mill Street (SA 5685). It presumably continued to be used as a market, at least in the early post-medieval period. Its market cross was still standing in the later 17th century (Anon, nd)

Tenement plots (SA 5630, SA 5634, SA 5635, SA 5636, SA 5637, SA 5638, SA 5639, SA 5640, SA 5641, SA 5642, SA 5643, SA 5644, SA 5645, SA 5646, SA 5648, SA 5649, SA 5650, SA 5681, SA 5680, SA 5682, SA 5688, SA 6030, SA 6031, SA 6032, SA 6033, SA 6034, SA 6036, SA 6040, SA 6041, SA 6042, SA 6043, SA 6052, SA 6053, SA 6055). The medieval tenement plots continued to be occupied throughout the post-medieval period, but there was some small-scale expansion along Salop Road to the west (SA 6041, SA 6042) and Mill Street to the east (SA 5688). The demolition and infilling of the castle and town defences provided space for new tenement plots within the centre of the town (SA 6033, SA 6034), and between Moat Street and Cliff Street (SA 6043). The area within the outer bailey was substantially rebuilt in the 17th century (SA 6030, SA 6031, SA 6032). By the 18th century the site of the original borough contained many gentry houses and had become a high class residential area (Slater 1988).

Many of the buildings fronting the main routes from the quays to the High Town were cut into the cliffside and included artificial caves used for the storage of bulk goods such as beer (Sewter 1990; Watkins-Pitchford 1938, 197)

By the river the area of the Franciscan Friary became available for redevelopment after the Dissolution (SA 6040). Documentary evidence indicates that parts of the Friary buildings were re-used for domestic and commercial purposes and this was confirmed by the 1989 excavations (SA 5626; Ferris 1996). In 1618 a "capital messuage called Fryers House" may refer to this area, and in 1770 Sir Richard Acton is recorded as living there. In 1795 there is mention of a malthouse on the site, but this along with the 18th and 19th century cottages on Friar's Load was demolished *c* 1860 to make way for the extension of the carpet factory (Ferris 1996).

To the east of the river, the area to the north of St John's Street (SA 5687) was built up by the later 17th century (Anon nd). This was land originally owned by St John's Hospital and the encroachment may have started in the medieval period.

Mansion Houses (SA 366, SA 5686). In the 14th century one John Canne purchased or exchanged a number of burgages on the east side of Mill Street to create a small estate. This house, Cann Hall (SA 366), was rebuilt in 1594 and was one of the most prominent houses in the Low Town (Slater 1988, 10). The house was demolished between 1957 and 1960.

Just to the south of Cann Hall stood another large post-medieval mansion, St John's House (SA 5686). At the Dissolution the site of St John's Hospital became a private estate, and in 1698 St John's House was built by the lawyer Lancelot Taylor. It was, according to a description of 1739, a "large and very fair structure", and may be the house shown in large grounds on the 17th century map of Bridgnorth (Cornes 1886: Anon nd). The house seems to have been demolished prior to Wood's 1835 survey. Traces of this house are reported to have been uncovered in trial trenches on the site in 1976, but no details are given (Carver 1977).

Wharves (SA 5610, SA 5611). The area of medieval wharves to the north and south of

the bridge continued in use during the post-medieval period and flights of landing steps and a continuous iron lath, installed to protect the towing ropes, can still be seen at the Old Quay (Mason 1957, 39).

Almshouses (SA 5609, SA 5615). The almshouses in Church Street (SA 5609) may have originated in the early 16th century, but the present buildings were constructed around 1792 (Pevsner 1958, 81). Palmer's Hospital (SA 5615), to the south of St Leonard's church, is close to the site of the medieval college. It was founded in 1687 for the relief of ten poor widows from money left in the will of Francis Palmer (Mason 1957, 24). The present building on the site dates to 1889 (SA 11661).

Grammar school (SA 6038). The Grammar School was founded in 1503 and was originally supported out of the revenues of the chantries of St Leonard's church. When these were dissolved in 1548 the school received an annual payment of £8 from the Exchequer (Mason 1957, 36). The first school may have been held in the former chapel of St John the Baptist (SA 4135) which stood at the north side of the St Leonard's churchyard. Another school building was recorded as "new" in 1595 (Mason 1957, 36). The present building (SA 11665) was erected in 1629 possibly by Sir Rowland Hayward (Pevsner 1958, 81; Mason 1957, 36).

Waterworks (SA 5619). In 1717 William Whitmore gave the town a "waterwork" shown on the 1835 map of the town (Woods 1835). This was a wheel which rose and fell with the level of the river and lifted Severn water into a 6500 gallon cistern at the back of the Governor's House on East Castle Street. The water was piped to inhabitants who paid the necessary rent (Mason 1957, 43). The water was not filtered, however, and after a particularly lethal outbreak of cholera in 1849 a new reservoir and water system was built and the wheel was abandoned (Mason 1957, 47-48).

Open space (SA 6035). The castle was no longer functioning as a fortification by the end of the medieval period. It was briefly re-fortified during the Civil War but in 1646 the defences were slighted. The evaluation at St Mary's Rectory uncovered what was interpreted as the 17th century recut of the inner bailey ditch backfilled some time prior to the mid-18th century (SA 5627; Thompson and Walker 1991). After the destruction of the castle the outer bailey was extensively remodelled and became an affluent residential area (see above). The inner bailey was used by the townspeople for recreational purposes. Castle Hill was greatly admired for its picturesque qualities (Mason 1957) and by the end of the 18th century it contained a "very curious and spacious bowling green" (Cornes 1886).

4.3 Post-medieval urban form

Definition and classification. The post-medieval urban form (SA 6045) has been defined and mapped, based on the extent of the identified urban components. The available evidence indicates that the post-medieval urban form of Bridgnorth can be classified as a large post-medieval market town (English Heritage 1992).

Survival. In the area of the castle the slighting of the defences in 1646 and the development of the outer and inner baileys as residential and recreational areas from the later 17th century onwards has caused truncation and disturbance of post-medieval as well as earlier deposits. In the area of the inner bailey the levelling involved in the construction of bowling greens and the construction of the 18th century church may have severely damaged deposits dating to the earlier post-medieval period. To the north at St Mary's Rectory excavation demonstrated that truncation of archaeological deposits was quite severe. The 17th century recut of the inner bailey ditch only survived to a depth of about 3m although what remained was protected under *c* 0.7m of later 18th century and 19th century deposits (Thompson and Walker 1991). To the north of Bank Street survival of post-medieval deposits may be better. Tenement components (SA 6033 and SA 6034) overlie the medieval ditch between the castle and

the town defences which is known to be about 4m deep at this point. A substantial part of the backfill deposits of this ditch are likely to date to the post-medieval period.

Lack of fieldwork means that almost nothing is known about the survival of post-medieval deposits in the High Town although the large number of standing buildings dating from the 16th to 18th centuries and the preservation of many of the property boundaries suggest that some deposits may survive although they are likely to be close to the surface and easily damaged.

Excavations at the site of the Franciscan Friary have demonstrated that substantial deposits can be protected by the terracing of the steep slopes down to the Severn but that the construction of rock-cut cellars under the 18th and 19th century cottages in this area may well have destroyed large areas of earlier deposits (SA 5626; Ferris 1996).

The only excavation in the Low Town (SA 383; Carver 1977) revealed traces of post-medieval deposits but the depth or extent of these was not noted. Any surviving deposits in the Low Town may be waterlogged.

Whilst little is known of the survival of buried remains in Bridgnorth, 150 buildings dating to between the 16th and 18th centuries are still standing in the town. These include the church of St Mary Magdalene, the Town Hall, the Governor's House and many other residential and commercial buildings. Little building recording work has been carried out and it is possible that detailed internal inspection may reveal evidence of the Bridgnorth "rows" in the buildings of 16th century or early 17th century date still standing on the High Street.

A substantial number of surviving caves have been identified, cut into the sandstone above the river. Deposits within the caves have been identified (Sewter 1990) but as no excavation has taken place they cannot be dated.

The components of the post-medieval urban form including churchyards, tenement plots, markets, street system, bridge and wharves can be readily identified and their survival within the modern townscape 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 Bridgnorth in the period from 1800. Further work is required before such an assessment can be carried out but major archaeological remains have been identified. These include the Great Western Railway line and station (SA 6023, SA 6024), the lift railway (SA 6024, SA 6023, SA 5624), and industrial sites such as foundries (SA 6012, SA 6017), carpet factories (SA 5689, SA 6010, SA 6039), maltings and breweries (SA 5690, SA 6013, SA 6018), timberyards (SA 6021, SA 6022, SA 6027), a tannery (SA 5618), a ropewalk (SA 5623) and a tobacco pipe factory (SA 6028). Chapels, the Union Workhouse and the infirmary are also recorded (SA 5616, SA 5617, SA 6016, SA 6019, SA 6020, SA 6025, SA 6026). There are 76 listed buildings dated to the 19th and 20th centuries within the study area.

6 Specialist assessments

6.1 Assessment of artefactual evidence J D Hurst

Some artefactual evidence is available for Bridgnorth. The earliest artefacts from the study area are of prehistoric date, such as a Neolithic axe (SA 2696) and an Iron Age coin (SA 402). A number of Roman coins (eg SA 395) have also been found in the area of the town.

Because of a lack of archaeological fieldwork in Bridgnorth the number of recorded medieval and post-medieval artefacts or groups of artefacts is small. The exception to this is the large collection of medieval artefacts which were recovered during the excavation of the Franciscan Friary (SA 5626).

6.2 Assessment of environmental evidence E A Pearson

Although several excavations have been undertaken in Bridgnorth none of them has had a policy of wet-sieving samples for environmental remains. Ecofacts have been hand-collected during fieldwork and are therefore restricted to larger items.

Human burials have been observed in several instances during both archaeological and construction work. Numerous skeletons have been observed during building work in the area of the Franciscan Friary from the 1850s onwards (Bellet 1856; Clark-Maxwell 1928) and human remains have occasionally been noted associated with structural remains of the medieval hospital of St James'. At St John's Hospital the only features attributable to the late medieval period were those of an inhumation cemetery (Carver 1977). The only human remains from Bridgnorth to have been analysed by a specialist were recovered on the site of the Franciscan Friary shortly after the archaeological excavation in 1989. These were identified as those of an elderly male showing signs of chronic periodontal disease (Ferris1996).

6.3 Assessment of documentary sources P A Stamper

The fire of 1646 apparently took with it large quantities of muniments, both of the borough as a corporate body and of private individuals. From the period after the fire, in contrast, excellent records survive, especially of the activities of the borough. Principal groups of primary sources are listed in section 9. The main secondary sources that have been consulted during the archaeological assessment include Eyton (1854), Mason (1957), Wanklyn (1993), Watkins Pitchford (1938). Secondary sources not consulted during the archaeological assessment include Cornes (nd), Partridge (1821), Pee (nd) and Randall (1875).

6.4 Assessment of buildings R Morriss

Bridgnorth is a large town with hundreds of historic buildings, so a detailed assessment was difficult to make within the remit of the present project. In general, the most notable feature of the town's building stock is its heterogeneity. Throughout most of the central area, both High and Low Towns, buildings of different dates survive next to each other and there are no signs of any radical redevelopments that would either imply economic decline or economic growth. This mix of buildings would, instead, suggest a fairly uniform level of economic prosperity in the town from the end of the 16th century through to the first half of the 19th century. The fact that so many timber-framed buildings have been allowed to survive, and that most have been 'modernised' simply by the expedient of being rendered, would suggest that the townspeople were never generally rich enough to completely rebuild their properties in the newer styles.

Only in two limited areas are there clear signs of more sweeping developments. One is East Castle Street, with its mix of early and late Georgian houses. This confirms the documentary evidence that this area was badly damaged in the fire of 1646 and that houses here were rebuilt after the Civil War. It had become a high class residential area by the 18th century (see section 4.2). On the opposite side of the river in Low Town, the slopes of Bernard's Hill were colonised by housing in the later 18th and early 19th century in a way very reminiscent of the settlements in the Ironbridge Gorge further upstream. None of these buildings, surprisingly, are listed.

The main differences in the town's buildings are those of scale with the larger, mainly three-storey buildings, lining the more important streets, particularly the High Street. On

the outskirts the buildings begin to assume a humbler status, such as those one- and two-storey buildings outside the Northgate in High Town and at the northern end of Mill Street in Low Town. There is, on the other hand, little to indicate that the Low Town area across the river was considered to be in any way inferior to the High Town, with several high status buildings on St John's Street in particular. These include one of the best brick 17th century town houses in the county, Diamond Hall (SA 11656).

The materials used in the town are varied. With the exception of the church and castle, the oldest buildings in the town date to the 16th century. Until the later part of the 17th century most buildings were timber-framed. Brick appears quite early in Bridgnorth, used for example in the 1620s for the Grammar School House in St Leonard's Place (SA 11663) and at about the same time for the Governor's House, East Castle Street (SA 391), formerly in the castle bailey. By the end of the 17th century the use of brick was clearly well established for any buildings of reasonable status, and by the early decades of the 18th had become almost ubiquitous. No doubt its popularity was also helped by the navigable Severn, allowing bricks to be transported downstream from the Ironbridge Gorge brickworks.

Locally quarried sandstone was also being used and can be observed in a number of buildings in the High Street (N Baker pers comm). By the early 18th century sandstone was often used on quite humble buildings such as the low terraces at the north end of Mill Street (SA 11613, SA 11614). Its use seems to have been limited to this type of property and not used to any extent for high status work until the early 19th century. In some cases, the living sandstone cliff was cut into to make dwellings, a process that continued in the Cartway up until the mid-19th century.

The natural topography has caused the development of a very complex and intricate pattern of property boundaries, many of which are still respected by the present buildings. There have been some large-scale clearances and redevelopments, particularly between the river and Hospital Street in Low Town and in some 'backland' areas in High Town cleared for car-parks. Otherwise, the survival of buildings in the rear of properties is quite good.

Survey and analysis. Very few buildings appear to have been surveyed and there has been no synthetic study made of the town's architectural development.

Assessment of the listing details. The listings date from 1974. They are reasonably comprehensive in scope, with the obvious exception of the lack of notice taken of the Bernard's Hill area of Low Town, where several 18th century brick buildings are worthy of listing. In amongst these is 38-39 Bernard's Hill (SA 6300), which is also unlisted despite being clearly a timber-framed building of 17th century date.

There are also several buildings in the main parts of the town whose descriptions are now out of date because of recent clearances of render and other modifications. This is probably why 47 Cartway (SA 11517) is only described as 'C18 Brown brick', when it is actually an early 17th century timber-framed building that has been refronted. Next to it, 48 Cartway (SA 6316) is also timber-framed but is not listed. There are several other examples, as well as some dubious dating.

7 Archaeological research framework

7.1 Model of urban development

A model of the medieval and post-medieval town of Bridgnorth 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

Documentary evidence suggests that Bridgnorth might be the site of a 9th century Danish fortification and a 10th century burh and bridge (Mason 1964, Slater 1988, Croom 1989). These may, however, be situated at Quatford and the matter is not likely to be resolved without further archaeological fieldwork. Analysis of the town plan suggests the presence of a settlement at Bridgnorth before 1100 (Slater 1988, Croom 1992). The town at Bridgnorth was founded in the early 12th century. The relative chronology of the development of the High Town within the town defences has been outlined by Slater (1988), but this has not been tested archaeologically. The date of the original occupation of Little Brugg, New Town, the cliff area and the Low Town is harder to define from documentary sources alone and their subsequent development is little understood. The town has been continuously occupied until the present, but documentary evidence suggests an economic decline at the end of the medieval period, and from the end of the 18th century into the 19th century. The broad outlines of this chronological framework are provisional and require testing through archaeological investigation.

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.

St John's Hospital, the castle and the friary have been archaeologically tested, but only in the later case was the excavation large enough to provide anything other than a superficial understanding of the buried deposits. The various models for the development of the town (Slater 1988; Croom 1992) have not been archaeologically tested. Whilst documentary evidence provides insights into the industries, the location of most of these is not known. The river trade was essential to the success of the town from its inception, but before the 18th century almost nothing is known about the development of the riverside, the construction of dock facilities or the location and type of service buildings.

7.4 Potential for survival of buried remains

Little information is available on the depth of archaeological deposits in Bridgnorth. It is clear, however, that, because of its topography and history, there are a wide range of factors which have led to the formation, preservation and destruction of deposits in the town.

Archaeological excavations have demonstrated that stratified deposits containing datable artefactual and environmental assemblages do exist within the urban area. The long history of urban activity in Bridgnorth means that some deposits are likely to be substantial, although deposits will have been damaged by 20th century activity, particularly where modern development has occurred behind the historic street frontages. Where archaeological deposits do survive their potential is very great. Artefactual and environmental assemblages from these deposits, for example, would not only provide information on town life but would supply evidence of trade and industry to complement the historical record and improve the understanding of Bridgnorth's changing trading links and manufacturing base. One of the areas of greatest potential may be the quaysides and river bank where in other river ports deep waterlogged deposits have been recovered.

Fieldwork was undertaken by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey in November 1994. The extent of 18th and 19th century cellarge was mapped, together with the extent

of 20th century development (new buildings and major landscaping work). This showed that there was extensive observable cellarage along the main streets and moderate modern redevelopment within the historic core. It is likely that evidence for more extensive cellarage has been obscured by modern refurbishment of frontages and pavements.

7.5 Potential for artefactual studies J D Hurst

A limited amount of archaeological excavation has been undertaken in Bridgnorth, and so the extent of surviving artefactual evidence in buried deposits over much of the area of the town cannot yet be assessed in any detail. It is possible that waterlogging occurs in the vicinity of the river, and so artefactual evidence may be exceptionally well preserved in that area. It is also possible that substantial features that have not been sampled to date, for instance the castle ditches, could be of significance for the survival of artefactual evidence, as they may include waterlogged finds. These substantial features are also likely to contain large artefactual assemblages although so far there has not been the opportunity to confirm this (SA 5627; Thompson and Walker 1991). The castle site, if there are well-documented phases of castle development, may provide opportunities for external dating of artefactual assemblages, which would greatly enhance ceramic studies in this region.

Period discussion. The artefactual evidence from Bridgnorth is incomplete chronologically, as there has been only very limited excavation, and only at the Franciscan Friary has excavation established a full stratigraphic sequence down to natural. A neolithic axe (SA 2696) is the only earlier prehistoric find and this is likely to be a stray find. The only Iron Age object is a silver coin (SA 402), while Roman material is also scarce, and mainly consists of coins (SA 384, SA 392, SA 394, SA 395, SA 396). The nature of the Iron Age and Roman activity in Bridgnorth is uncertain, but the range of finds is insufficient to support the possibility of occupation.

A find of Anglo-Saxon stonework (SA 5632) at St Leonard's Church was reported in the 19th century, though this has been dismissed by Mason (1957, 5). Unfortunately no record was available of this stonework, and it was not possible to check the identification.

For the medieval and post-medieval periods artefacts are more numerous. The medieval assemblage includes 414 medieval and post-medieval sherds of pottery and a very large collection of floor tiles (2,654 fragments) from the Friary. The report on the Friary (SA 5626; Ferris 1996) includes a pottery fabric series and some illustrated pottery profiles. The earliest medieval pottery was of early 13th century date, and this is the earliest medieval pottery yet found in the town. The report on the Friary excavations also contains detailed artefactual specialist reports on stone, glass, metal and human and animal bone.

So far little archaeological excavation has taken place on the large earthwork sites (Castle Hill and Panpudding Hill). In the former case a small evaluation trench produced very little (SA 5627; Thompson and Walker 1991) and in the later no medieval finds were discovered (SA 2974; Roe 1983). Despite this both these sites are likely to have deposits with valuable artefactual assemblages. This is perhaps particularly the case at Panpudding Hill where there the short occupation span may mean that artefact assemblages have a narrow date range.

Bridgnorth was the scene of several actions during the Civil War, and was garrisoned. Extensive activity during this period, including the erection of defences is likely to increase the possibility of good artefactual groups from this period. Groups may be well preserved here as the defences were slighted in the 17th century. In contrast, in the central town area there are likely to be considerable problems with residuality for the medieval and post-medieval periods.

A considerable number of medieval and post-medieval coins have been found in Bridgnorth, including a 17th century hoard (SA 367), and various tokens.

Comparison with documentary evidence. Documentary sources suggest that a variety of craft activities were carried on in the medieval town, including cloth making, potting, and tanning. Tanning and cloth manufacture continued into the post-medieval period, and by the later 18th century iron founding was also established in the town. Some of these industries are notable for leaving a great deal of artefactual evidence in the archaeological record, though so far only the iron founding (SA 388) has been recorded in this way in Bridgnorth.

7.6 Potential for environmental remains E A Pearson

There has only been a small amount of fieldwork in the town, and no wet-sieving for environmental remains has been carried out. The full potential for the recovery of environmental remains and for research is therefore largely unknown. The soils are well-drained and consequently are not likely to provide good conditions for the preservation of organic remains by waterlogging, although it is possible that some organic material may survive in ditches associated with castle and town defences and particularly near the river in the area of Low Town. Waterlogged material may provide information relating to the surrounding environment and to dumped occupational rubbish, especially where tenement plots are close to the river. It is known that some land was reclaimed from the river in the mid-13th century at the Franciscan Friary by dumping rubbish into the river. Timbers relating to bridges and wharves may also survive. As nutrients are easily leached from these soils, they are likely to be acidic and would not normally provide good conditions for the preservation of faunal remains such as animal bone and molluscs.

Environmental remains providing information on the occupation of the town may be recovered from the tenement plots, and if buried soils are sealed beneath the earthworks of the castle and town defences, it may be possible to investigate the previous use of the land (eg whether the land was under cultivation or pasture) using soil micromorphology and pollen analysis. In some cases there may be little other archaeological evidence for the previous use of the land.

As few environmental remains have been recovered in Bridgnorth, any environmental material would be of interest. This could provide information on the past environment, diet, living conditions and agricultural or industrial economy. Future excavation should include a policy of sampling and wet-sieving deposits in order to recover plant, insect, molluscs 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

Because of the large number and variety of Bridgnorth's historic building stock, the town is worthy of a full re-survey. The excellent post Civil War documentation (see section 6.3) may mean that there is the material for a model study of 17th century provincial town architecture (N Baker pers comm). Piecemeal studies would be of less use in trying to comprehend the town as a whole, and thematic studies would be rendered difficult because of the multifarious nature of Bridgnorth's architectural heritage.

7.8 Summary of research potential

The historic core of Bridgnorth contains buried archaeological deposits, and these are judged to have high potential. There is moderate potential for the recovery of artefact and ecofact assemblages, although this assessment may be revised if waterlogged deposits are located (for example in Low Town). The historic buildings constitute a complementary body of evidence for the post-medieval period, and are judged to have high potential for detailed study and recording. The surviving documentary sources are few for the medieval period, but 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 (Bridgnorth Urban Archaeological Area). The significance of the urban archaeological area is assessed below.

8.2 Existing protection measures

The archaeological urban area of Bridgnorth has been defined above. 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 Bridgnorth, the castle (Shropshire no 22) and the Town Hall (Shropshire no. 100). Panpudding Hill adjacent to the castle is also a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Shropshire no 42) but is not within the limits of the urban area. It is possible that following the current Monument Protection Programme English Heritage may modify the scheduled area or add other monuments in Bridgnorth to the schedule.

Listed buildings. There are a total of 229 buildings listed as of historical or architectural importance within the urban area. Although unlisted, many other buildings are of considerable historic importance. The management of all historic buildings requires special care and attention, while the management of Listed Buildings is especially important. Listed Buildings are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and unauthorised alteration is a serious offence. This protection is also likely to preserve archaeological remains under and around such buildings and it is important that archaeological and historic building matters are considered together.

In Bridgnorth District, specialist advice on the management of historic buildings is provided by the District Council with support from the County Council. Some grant aid is available for the repair of historic buildings and information and advice is available from the District Council Conservation Officer.

Conservation Area. A Conservation Area has been defined which nearly entirely encompasses the archaeological area (Bridgnorth District Local Plan: deposit draft (1992)).

8.3 Management approach

The archaeological urban area of Bridgnorth 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 documentary sources compiled by P A Stamper

(SRO: Shropshire Record Office; BL; British Library, London)

- SRO 1080, 4001 Borough and associated records including leet books, proceedings, and suit rolls (1434 onwards); common hall books (early 17th century onwards); burgess books and rolls (1696 onwards); chamberlains' rolls (1551 onwards); town court papers (1592-1831); bridgemaster's accounts (1583 onwards); quarter session records (mid-17th century onwards). Also surveys of 1548 and 1693.
- SRO 3662 Parish records of St Leonard's. Include registers from 1556 and churchwardens' accounts from 1656.
- SRO P41 Parish records of St Mary Magdalen. Include registers from 1610.
- SRO 3662 Records of the royal peculiar of the deanery of Bridgnorth including court books from 1727 onwards.
- SRO 253 Collections which include groups of deeds and related documents for properties in Bridgnorth include SRO 253 (Mrs Synge).
- SRO 4001 Map, c 1610
- SRO 4478 Map, 1778
- SRO 4001 Map, 1792
- SRO 4030 Tithe map 1840, St Mary's parish
- SRO 3662 Tithe map 1840, St Leonard's parish
- BL Add MS 50121 Cartulary of Lilleshall abbey. Includes fifteen 12th to 13th century Bridgnorth deeds

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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 Shropshire 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
- * Observed cellarage and 20th century development
- * Urban area and scheduled ancient monuments