

# Archaeological assessment of Shifnal, Shropshire

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## Summary

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evidence relating to the historic core of Shifnal was carefully analysed, comprising topographic data, published and unpublished archaeological reports, museum collections, primary and secondary historical sources, historical maps, and field data recorded by the project team.*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

*The historic core of Shifnal contains buried archaeological deposits, and these are judged to have moderate potential. There is moderate potential for the recovery of artefact assemblages, but the potential for the recovery of ecofact assemblages is judged to be low. The historic buildings constitute a small complementary body of evidence, and are judged to have low to moderate potential for detailed study and recording. The surviving documentary sources are moderately extensive (although there are rather few medieval records) and consequently the potential for further study is limited.*

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Location and landuse

The urban area of Shifnal is located at NGR SJ 749 077 in Bridgnorth District. The modern settlement comprises a small town centred on Broadway and the Market Place surrounded by large area of modern housing.

### 1.2 Topography, geology and soils

Shifnal lies at a height of between 80m and 95m OD on a gentle north-south ridge with the shallow valley of the Wesley Brook running down its west side. On the west side of the brook the church and the site of the medieval moated manor sit on a small spur. The soils are seasonally waterlogged stagnogleyic argillic brown earths or well drained typical brown earths of the Salwick association depending on the nature of the drift geology

overlying Permian Bridgnorth Sandstone (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Ragg *et al* 1984; British Geological Survey 1:250,000, sheet 52°N-O.4°W). Deposits of iron ore found within the area have been exploited, using water power, since at least the 16th century (Burrow 1978).

### 1.3 Chronological outline

Despite the fact that the Domesday survey does not mention a church or priest at Shifnal there is strong evidence that it was the site of an Anglo-Saxon minster (Croome 1988, 72). A church certainly existed at some time between 1086 and 1094 when it was granted to Shrewsbury Abbey (Croome 1988, 72). At Domesday the manor was held by Robert Fitz Tetbald from Roger de Montgomery (Thorn and Thorn 1986). In the 12th century the manor passed to Henry I who granted it to Alan de Dunstanville (Thorn and Thorn 1986).

A moated manor house to the south of the church was occupied during the 13th and 14th centuries (Barker 1961-64) and it is likely that at this period, if not before, there was a settlement around the church and manorial enclosure. A market and fair was granted in 1244-45 (Eyton 1855) and burgage tenure was recorded in 1402 (Beresford 1981) and 1441 (Beresford and Finberg 1973). A planned town developed to the east of the earlier centre on both sides of the main north-south road. Little is known of the economic structure of Shifnal at this period and no industries are recorded although the local iron industry may have been important to the town particularly in the post-medieval period (Burrow 1978). The charcoal blast furnace just to the south of the town (SA 750) dates from 1564 and is the earliest in Shropshire.

In 1591 "thirty-two houses with their goods and household stuff were consumed and the parish church together with the chancel and steeple and six bells in the same utterly consumed and molten" (Philips 1901). At this period it is known that the main town of Shifnal lay to the east of the church on the other side of the Wesley Brook and there is no evidence for the suggestion that before the fire the town was sited to the west of the church (Barker 1961-64, 195).

Iron production continued in importance during the 16th and 17th centuries and Shifnal's geographical position, midway between the Shropshire coal field and the Black Country gave it considerable importance in the 18th and 19th centuries when it was used as a convenient meeting place for business transactions. The town has declined in the 20th century.

### 1.4 Placename studies

*Scuffanhalch* is first recorded in a forged 7th century charter dating to the 12th century although the spelling of the name indicates that the forger had a pre-Conquest record to draw on (Gelling 1990, 263). The first element *Scuffa* may be a personal name and the second *halh* refers to the large shallow depression in which the town lies (Gelling 1990, 263). The manor is referred to as *Iteshale*, or Iddi's valley, in the Domesday book. Variants of both *Iteshale* (*Idessalla*, *Hideshal*, *Idsall*) and *Schuffanhalch* (*Shifnael*, *Schophenale*, *Shiffenhall*) appear throughout the middle ages and into the 18th century. It has been suggested that the names refer to two different settlements or manors (Eyton 1855, 265) but there seems to be no real evidence of this (Gelling 1990, 263; Burrow 1978).

### 1.5 Syntheses of documentary and archaeological data

The documentary evidence relating to Shifnal has been summarised by Eyton (1855) and more recently by Barker (1961-64). A short synthesis of the topographical and archaeological information was prepared by Burrow (1978). The present assessment was carried out by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey in 1993. 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**

The tithe map of 1840 (Foxall nd) and the Ordnance Survey first edition 1:2500 maps (*Shropshire sheet XLIV.1 and 5* (1882)) were used to aid in the identification of remains and the definition of components.

### **1.7 Archaeological excavations and surveys**

Trial trenches were excavated, and medieval remains recovered, on the site of the moat prior to its destruction by a housing development (SA 1070; Barker 1961-64). At the same time field walking was undertaken at the supposed site of the early town of Idsall but only 18th to 20th century artefacts recovered (SA 757; Barker 1961-64). More recently evaluations for planning purposes were carried out at Park Street (SA 5310; Gifford Consulting Engineers 1991) and to the north of the church, just outside the historic town (SA 5312; Hannaford 1991). Both of these uncovered only 19th and 20th century deposits. Pevsner mentions an otherwise unrecorded excavation in St Andrew's church (SA 920; Pevsner 1958) and there have been chance finds of three Roman coins (SA749) and an undated quernstone (SA 751) from the vicinity of the town.

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 cellarage and modern developments in the urban area.

### **1.8 Acknowledgments and personnel**

Survey fieldwork was undertaken by Hal Dalwood and Dale Rouse. Analysis and report writing were carried out by Victoria Buteux and the report was edited by Hal Dalwood.

## **2 Pre-urban evidence**

There is aerial photographic and artefactual evidence for prehistoric activity in the modern parish of Shifnal. Watling Street, the Roman town of Uxacona, and Stoneyford Cottages marching camp lie c two miles to the north, but there is no direct evidence of Roman occupation on the site of the medieval town. Shifnal was probably the site of an Anglo-Saxon minster church and there may have been a contemporary settlement here. The post-conquest village was probably located close to the church and manor until it became part of the town in the 13th century.

## **3 Medieval archaeological evidence**

### **3.1 Medieval remains and buildings**

The limited excavations at the moated site produced evidence of occupation from the 13th to 14th centuries and the remains of stone and timber structures were recovered along with associated artefacts. The site was built on immediately after excavation, however (SA 1070; Barker 1961-64). The only building of medieval date to survive in Shifnal is St Andrew's Church. This building has been described and the sequence of construction interpreted (SA 920; Crannage 1903; Pevsner 1958).

### **3.2 Medieval urban components**

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

**Churchyard** (SA 5342). The extent of the medieval churchyard is not known and the boundary of this component has been drawn using the 1840 tithe map (Foxall, nd). The medieval churchyard may have occupied part of the precinct of the Saxon minster (SA 5340) and it is possible that the 12th century St Andrews is on the site of the 11th century or earlier church. Despite its omission from the Domesday survey it is very probable that a collegiate church at Shifnal was in existence at 1086 (Croome 1988). Pevsner suggests that the collegiate status of the church is reflected in the 12th century structure of St Andrews church and mentions the otherwise unrecorded excavations in the church (Pevsner 1958, 243).

**Manorial enclosure** (SA 1070). The medieval moated site has now been covered by a housing estate and the extent of this component has been drawn using modern boundaries. Originally it was an area enclosed by a circular moat and outer bank with an entrance to the north. Limited excavation within the moat was undertaken prior to its destruction and evidence of stone and timber structures with tiled, or partly tiled, roofs were found as well as artefacts used to date the site to the 13th and 14th centuries. Some deposits may have been waterlogged. The excavator suggested that the abandonment of the site in the 14th century was due to a change of ownership of the manor in 1313-14 when it passed out of the Dunstanville family (Barker 1961-64, 199; Eyton 1855).

**Market place** (SA 5341). The medieval market place included the triangular area at the south end of the town and the wide street leading north which includes the modern Bradford Street, Cheapside and Broadway. It is possible that, given its proximity to the early settlement nucleus (see below), the triangular area is the earliest market and that the Broadway area was laid out as part of the new planned borough.

**Street system** (SA 5343). The north-south road through the town is probably an ancient route, leading as it does from Watling Street two miles to the north. The medieval burgage plots are laid out to front it. Church Street leading to the west provides access to the church and manorial enclosure and is likely to be medieval in date. The dates of the Shrewsbury and Aston Roads is not known but they are probably medieval.

**Bridging points** (SA 5362, SA 5363). In the medieval period the burgage plots to the west of the main street backed on to the Wesley Brook (SA 5339) for almost the entire length of the town. This water course is crossed by the Shrewsbury Road and Church Street and it is likely that there were fords or bridges at these points in the medieval period.

**Tenement plots** (SA 5344, SA 5345, SA 5346, SA 5347, SA 5348, SA 5349). Components SA 5344 and SA 5345 are close to the church and manorial enclosure and have very irregular plot boundaries. It is probable, therefore, that these are the earliest tenement plots in Shifnal and may represent the original village on the site. Components SA 5346, SA 5347, SA 5348 and SA 5349 on either side of the main road and market place are part of the planned development of Shifnal in the 13th and 14th centuries. It has been suggested that at least two phases of development occurred in this area (Burrow 1978). The back boundary of the plots to the west of the road is formed by the Wesley Brook and industries such as tanning may have taken place here. The back boundary of the tenement plots on the eastern side of the road may originally have been continuous from north to south but some changes seem to have occurred to allow for later development along the Aston Road. With the exception of SA 5345 where the medieval boundaries were destroyed by Victoria Road and the railway in the 19th century the individual burgages within tenement plots were very well preserved until the present century.

**Open space** (SA 5350). This component represents an area between the church and manorial enclosure whose function in the medieval period is not clear. It may have been a part of the original settlement or have been church land. The area has now been covered with a housing estate.

### 3.3 Medieval urban form

**Definition and classification.** The medieval urban form (SA 5359) has been defined and mapped, based on the extent of the identified urban components and, in particular, the limits of the tenement plots. The available evidence indicates that the medieval urban form of Shifnal can be classified as a small medieval market town (English Heritage 1992).

**Survival.** The earthworks of the medieval moated site no longer exist but excavations within the moat demonstrated that buried deposits survived into the modern period on the fringes of the town and that some of these may have been waterlogged (Barker 1961-64, 196). This may have implications for the survival of deposits around the medieval church just to the north. In the rest of the medieval town the survival of buried archaeological deposits has not been demonstrated. A very small machine dug trench failed to locate any pre-19th century deposits at the southern edge of the town (SA 5310; Gifford Consulting Engineers 1991) but it is possible that the 19th century building which had stood on the site had destroyed traces of earlier occupation. The size of the settlement and its continuous occupation from the medieval period suggest that medieval deposits, where they have not been disturbed by later activity, may be relatively substantial and at some depth. It is possible that waterlogged remains survive in this area particularly next to the Wesley Brook.

The only medieval building still standing in the town is the church (SA 920) but the boundaries of the medieval town including the streets and some of the 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

There is no information on buried deposits dating to the post-medieval period but Shifnal contains many standing buildings of this period. There are four 16th century, fourteen 17th century, and thirteen 18th century listed buildings within the post-medieval town. The majority have not been studied in detail and other early buildings may be discovered behind later facades.

### 4.2 Post-medieval urban components

Analysis of the evidence summarised above and of cartographic and documentary sources indicated the existence of 19 urban components. The characteristics of these urban components are summarised below.

**Churchyard** (SA 5351). The post-medieval churchyard has been defined using the 1840 tithe map (Foxall nd) and partly survives as an earthwork of slightly higher elevation than adjacent areas. The size of the churchyard is smaller than in the medieval period due to encroachment by the grammar school and 18th century or earlier housing (see below).

**Market place** (SA 5364). By at least the 17th century, but possibly before, buildings began to encroach on the medieval market place. Cheapside and Bradford Street were formed by this encroachment but no doubt continued to act as part of the market area

as did Broadway to the north.

**Street system** (SA 5343). With the exception of the new streets formed by the encroachment on the market place the medieval street system continued in use in throughout the post-medieval period although it was improved in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Burrow 1978).

**Bridging points** (SA 6361, SA 5363). The Wesley Brook is crossed by the Shrewsbury Road and Church Street and it is likely that there were fords or bridges at these points in the post-medieval period.

**Tenement plots** (SA 5329, SA 5344, SA 5345, SA 5346, SA 5347, SA 5348, SA 5349, SA 5352, SA 5353, SA 5354, SA 5356, SA 5357). The tenement plots laid out in the medieval period continued in use during the post-medieval period, and there was some extension of the town along the Shrewsbury and Aston Roads (SA 5353, SA 5354). From at least the 17th century buildings encroached on the medieval market place (SA 5356, SA 5357) and the churchyard (SA 5352). In the 18th century a vicarage was built to the south of the church possibly on the site of an earlier building (SA 5329). The town had an important market function in the post-medieval period but industries related to iron production may have played an important role in the local economy particularly in the 16th and 17th centuries. Tanneries, using water from the Wesley Brook, existed in the 19th century and probably had medieval or post-medieval origins.

**Town hall** (SA 5358). In 1840 a strip of post-medieval buildings standing at the south end of Broadway, these included the magistrate's office and the town lock up (Foxall, nd). These were probably the site of Shifnal's town hall and administrative buildings from at least the post-medieval period.

**Grammar school** (SA 3341). A grammar school existed at Shifnal in 1595 but its location at that period is unknown. In 1616 it occupied a plot of land to the west of the church where it remained until 1854 when it was moved to the High Street.

#### 4.3 Post-medieval urban form

**Definition and classification.** The post-medieval urban form (SA 5360) has been defined and mapped, based on the extent of the identified urban components and in particular the limits of the tenement plots. The available evidence indicates that the post-medieval urban form of Shifnal can be classified as a medium sized post-medieval market town (English Heritage 1992).

**Survival.** There is no archaeological evidence to demonstrate the survival of buried archaeological deposits dating to the post-medieval period in Shifnal. A very small machine-dug trench failed to locate any pre-19th century deposits at the southern edge of the town (SA 5310; Gifford Consulting Engineers 1991). It is possible that the 19th century building which had stood on the site had destroyed traces of earlier occupation. The large number of standing buildings dating to the 16th to 18th centuries in Shifnal suggest that substantial areas of the deposits associated with them may have survived. Such deposits often lie close to the present ground surface and are easily damaged. It is possible that waterlogged remains of post-medieval date survive in the town particularly in the area of the Wesley Brook.

The components of the post-medieval urban form comprising churchyard, tenement plots, street system, market place, grammar school and town hall can be readily identified. The survival of all these components in the present town is good.

## 5 Post-1800 archaeological evidence

The remit of the present study has not allowed for a detailed survey and assessment of the archaeological evidence relating to Shifnal in the period from 1800. Further work is required before such an assessment can be carried out. Major 19th century archaeological remains have been identified, however, including the railway station (SA 5327) and cattle market (SA 5355). Industrial sites such as a tannery (SA 5316), gas works (SA 5315), rope walk (SA 5336) and timber yard (SA 5319) have been identified as well as a number of chapels and schools (SA 5314, SA 5318, SA 5320, SA 5321, SA 5322, SA 5328, SA 5335) and the workhouse (SA 5330). There are eight listed buildings dated to the 19th century within the study area.

## 6 Specialist assessments

### 6.1 Assessment of artefactual evidence J D Hurst

Limited artefactual evidence is available for Shifnal. The earliest artefacts from the study area are a Neolithic macehead (SA 753) and three 3rd to 4th century Roman coins (SA 749). A quern (SA 751) of unknown date and type has also been found. Excavation at the moated site (SA 1070) produced medieval ceramics and other artefacts. Recent evaluation work in the town has produced only finds of 19th to 20th century date.

### 6.2 Assessment of environmental evidence E A Pearson

Although several excavations have been undertaken, there has been no policy of wet-sieving samples for environmental remains. The only reported discovery of environmental remains are the animal bones from a possible pet cemetery to the rear of Idsall House (SA 5312).

### 6.3 Assessment of documentary sources P A Stamper

Shifnal is reasonably, but by no means well, documented. Ownership of land in the parish in the later Middle Ages by Wombridge priory led to the preservation of charters in a cartulary, although otherwise there is little in the way of medieval documentation. For the post-medieval period there are in contrast fairly abundant written records, albeit scattered among various different collections. Principal groups of primary sources are listed in section 9. The main secondary sources consulted during the archaeological assessment include Eyton (1855) and Barker (1961-64). Secondary sources identified but not consulted during the assessment include Morris (1886), Randall (1879), Watts (1989) and Lloyd (nd)

### 6.4 Assessment of buildings surveys R Morriss

Despite being an historic town, and one that clearly once had a good collection of historic buildings, Shifnal has lost much of its architectural character. Large parts of the centre have been affected by development since the arrival of the Shrewsbury to Wolverhampton railway line in the late 1840s which cut a west-east swathe through the town. The town was changed considerably in the later 19th century and throughout the present one. Recent developments, particularly along the west side of Bradford Street, are quite ugly.

The town was largely laid out along a south-north axis made up of Park Street, Market Place, Bradford Street and Broadway. From the Market Place a winding Church Street leads to the parish church of St Andrew a little to the south and west of the centre of the town. The oldest secular building in Shifnal is probably Idsall House (SA 13849) just to the north-east of the church. Although dated in the listing to the late 16th century and later, the lack of mid-rail in its original close-studded timber-framing would indicate a date earlier in that century, or even possibly a little beforehand. With the exception of the

church, and possibly Idsall House, no medieval buildings survive in Shifnal. Other surviving late 16th and 17th century timber-framed buildings in the town are scattered, apart from a concentration around the Market Place and immediate area. Timber framed buildings surviving on the east side of the Market Place include two large examples of similar high status design. Their framing includes the decorative lozenges so popular in late 16th century Shrewsbury. On the west side some of the buildings are of just one bay, and others were raised or otherwise extended in further timber-framing. There is some indication of pressure on land in this area which, considering its location at the centre of the market town, is not really surprising. The remaining timber-framed buildings on Broadway date from the 17th century when this when this central area was almost certainly more populous than it is now.

Although several large brick 18th century houses survive, the radical alterations to the town in the past century or so has effectively destroyed any patterns of Georgian development that may have emerged. It is clear, however, from the existence of quite large detached early and mid-18th century houses, such as Innage House (SA 13850) and The Vicarage (SA 13851), that the area around the church had become a fashionable one. More rebuilding occurred on Bradford Street and Broadway. Curiously the area around the Market Place retained its timber-framed buildings although these were probably covered in render. Other timber-framed buildings were refaced in brick during this period and later. Not all the new build was of high status and there were also low brick terraces of workers' cottages on the Broadway (SA 6319). Much of the backland areas have been cleared, with only limited survival of outbuildings and extensions in the tenement plots.

**Survey and analysis.** There appears to have been little or no survey work in the town and no synthetic work on its architecture.

**Assessment of the listing details.** The list was published in 1980 and amended in 1990. It is comprehensive in scope, largely accurate, and reasonably detailed. There are some problems as to dates and some buildings that perhaps ought to have been listed have not been. Amongst the latter are the aforementioned late-18th century brick workers' cottages, 60-62 and 64-76 Broadway (SA 6319) as well as at least two other detached houses of similar date close by, 41 and 45 Broadway (SA 6320, 13840).

## 7 Archaeological research framework

### 7.1 Model of urban development

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

The documentary evidence indicates that urban occupation commenced in the 13th century but probably developed from the nucleus of a medieval rural settlement on the site of an Anglo-Saxon minster. The settlement was continuously occupied until the present but has considerably declined in the 20th century. The broad outlines of this chronological framework are provisional and require testing through archaeological investigation. Of particular interest would be information on the development of the town during the middle ages. It has been suggested that the planned town of Shifnal developed in stages. Such a model for growth cannot be confirmed or dated without further 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. With the exception of the undated, but probably 19th century, excavation at the church (SA 920; Pevsner 1958), the rescue excavation at the manorial enclosure (SA 1070; Barker 1961-64) and the small evaluation at 22-26 Park Street (SA 5310; Gifford Consulting Engineers 1991) the medieval and post-medieval components of Shifnal have not been archaeologically investigated and there is great potential in recovering evidence relating to the nature and extent of occupation in the various parts of the town. Of particular interest in the medieval and post-medieval period are the location and structure of industries such as tanning and iron working. Archaeological and documentary evidence would be of particular value in this context.

### 7.4 Potential for survival of buried remains

Buried deposits excavated within the manorial enclosure were between 0.3m and 2.0m deep but there is no information available on the depth of archaeological deposits in the rest of the town. It can be assumed however that the continuous occupation of the centre of the town from at least the 13th century means that stratified deposits are likely to exist particularly in association with historic buildings. The evaluation at 22-26 Park Street, just on the edge of the historic town, uncovered only modern deposits and may indicate that the construction techniques and landscaping associated with the larger 19th century buildings largely destroyed earlier deposits. Medieval and post-medieval deposits, therefore, are most likely to survive in the areas of the town least affected by 19th and 20th century development. The potential of any surviving deposits is very great. Datable artefactual and environmental assemblages from stratified deposits would not only provide information on town life but, by providing evidence of trade and industry, would improve understanding of Shifnal's changing significance within the region. An area of particularly high potential is that around the Wesley Brook where waterlogged deposits may have survived.

Fieldwork was undertaken by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey in November 1994. The extent of 18th and 19th century cellarage was mapped, together with the extent of 20th century development (new buildings and major landscaping work). This showed that there was moderate observable cellarage along the main streets but extensive 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

Little archaeological fieldwork has been undertaken in Shifnal, and so the extent of surviving artefactual evidence in buried deposits cannot yet be assessed in any detail. Medieval artefacts have been recovered (SA 1070; Barker 1961-64) and surviving deposits in waterlogged areas such as fishponds and other sites along the Wesley Brook may be of significance for the survival of artefactual evidence.

**Period discussion.** The few pre-medieval artefacts are likely to be stray finds, as no evidence of earlier occupation has come to light during recent evaluation work in the town. The medieval artefactual assemblage from the excavation at the moated site (SA 1070) comprises a wide range of artefact types (pottery, ceramic roofing material, and metalwork). Assemblages of this quality are rare in Shropshire, although, in this case, the finds come from an adjacent moated site rather than the town itself. Barker (1961-64, 198) has indicated a 13th to 14th century date range for the finds, with none being earlier than c 1200. Barker (1961-4, 198) has also noted that some of the Shifnal pottery was similar to material from Brockhurst castle, Church Stretton, and Roushill in Shrewsbury, while Hurst

(1961-4, 204) has cited Warwickshire parallels for some of the Shifnal medieval ridge tile. The pottery assemblage from SA 1070 was of medium size (ie about 200 sherds). Generalised fabric descriptions were provided for individual illustrated sherds.

No detailed information was available for post-medieval finds from excavations (SA 1070), fieldwalking (SA 757), or the recent evaluation work (SA 5310, 5312) in the town.

**Comparison with documentary evidence.** A range of craft and industrial activities are known to have taken place in the town from at least the post-medieval period. These include dyeing, tanning, ropemaking, and brickmaking. Iron smelting is also known to have been carried out in the vicinity of the town from at least the 16th century. No archaeological evidence of any of these activities has so far been recovered from Shifnal.

#### **7.6 Potential for environmental remains E A Pearson**

There has only been a small amount of fieldwork carried out in the town and no wet-sieving of samples for environmental remains. The potential for the recovery of environmental remains and for research is largely unknown. The soils of the Salwick association are not likely to provide good conditions for the preservation of organic remains by waterlogging. Some organic remains may survive, however, in any remnants of the moat surrounding the manorial enclosure, in silty deposits which may exist in the fishponds (SA 5331) and in deposits near to the Wesley Brook. This material may provide information relating to the surrounding environment and to dumped occupational rubbish, particularly where tenement plots are close to the river. The soils are likely to be acid and would not normally provide good conditions for the preservation of faunal remains such as animal bone and molluscs. However 19th century animal bones were found behind Idsall House (SA 5312).

As no environmental remains from Shifnal have been reported on, 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**

Despite being badly affected by recent developments, the town still has a few timber-framed buildings worthy of closer study. It is unlikely that enough survives of any one period to allow a proper synthetic study of the town's architectural; development however.

#### **7.8 Summary of research potential**

The historic core of Shifnal contains buried archaeological deposits, and these are judged to have moderate potential. There is moderate potential for the recovery of artefact assemblages, but the potential for the recovery of ecofact assemblages is judged to be low. The historic buildings constitute a small complementary body of evidence, and are judged to have low to moderate potential for detailed study and recording. The surviving documentary sources are moderately extensive (although there are rather few medieval records) and consequently the potential for further study is limited.

## **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 (Shifnal Urban Archaeological Area). The

significance of the urban archaeological area is assessed below.

## 8.2 Existing protection measures

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

**Scheduled ancient monument.** There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Shifnal. It is possible, however, that following the current Monument Protection Programme English Heritage may add monuments in Shifnal to the schedule.

**Listed buildings.** There are a total of thirty eight buildings listed as of historical or architectural importance within the urban area. Although unlisted, some 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 entirely partially encompasses the archaeological area (Bridgnorth District Local Plan: deposit draft (1992)).

## 8.3 Management approach

The archaeological urban area of Shifnal contains earthworks and buried remains relating to medieval and post-medieval occupation, associated with contemporary buildings. The buried remains may vary in complexity and depth, and will 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.

The course of action recommended will depend upon the nature of the development and current planning legislation and frameworks. The archaeological response will be based on both the archaeological information summarised in this document and any subsequent archaeological information recorded on the County Sites and Monuments Record.

## 9 Principal groups of documentary sources compiled by P A Stamper

(SRO: *Shropshire Record Office*; StaffsRO: *Staffordshire Record Office*; SPL: *Shrewsbury Local Studies Library*)

SRO various	Collections of solicitors' and family papers, including SRO 924 and SRO 1238 have collections of post-medieval deeds and other papers.
SRO 1335	Parish records: registers 1678 onwards
SRO 4665	Parish records: churchwardens' accounts
SRO 4208/200 and 203	Monumental inscriptions 1526-1955
StaffsRO D641/3	The Jerningham collection. A good collection of 16th to 19th century family and estate papers relating to Shifnal,

StaffsRO D641/2  
SPL MS 2600

including deeds, accounts, rentals, surveys and maps (19th century), and extracts from manorial records.  
The Stafford-Howard collection  
Survey of the manor of Idsell, Shifnal, 1720.

*Lichfield Joint Record Office*

Shifnal probate documents 1535-1650: wills and inventories in Lichfield Joint Record Office (typescript, copy in Shrewsbury Local Studies Library, classmark N55.5)

*Huntington Library, San Marino, California*

Court rolls for 1622, 1632, 1633 (transcripts in Shrewsbury Local Studies Library, classmark N63 vf)

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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
- \* Urban area and scheduled ancient monuments