

Archaeological assessment of Pershore, Hereford and Worcester

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Summary

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evidence relating to the historic core of Pershore was carefully analysed, comprising topographic data, published and unpublished archaeological reports, museum collections, primary and secondary historical sources, historical maps, and field data recorded by the project team.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

The historic core of Pershore contains buried archaeological deposits, and these are judged to have high potential. In addition there is high potential for the recovery of artefact and ecofact assemblages. The historic buildings do not constitute an extensive body of complementary evidence, but the post-medieval buildings are judged to have moderate potential for detailed study and recording. The surviving documentary sources are moderately extensive and there is moderate potential for further study.

1 Introduction

1.1 Location and landuse

The urban area of Pershore is located at NGR SO 950457 in Wychavon District. Pershore is a modern town situated on the A44 where it crosses the River Avon.

1.2 Topography, geology and soils

Pershore lies in a meander of the River Avon at a height of approximately 20m OD. The underlying topography consists of a terrace sloping down to the river floodplain to the east. The local soils are clayey pelo-alluvial gley soils of the Fladbury Series close to the river and stagnogleyic argillic brown earths of the Bishampton Series (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Beard *et al* 1986). The underlying geology consists of Jurassic Lower Lias clay overlain by alluvium and river terrace deposits (British Geological Survey 1:50,000, sheet 199).

Alluvial deposits have been recorded in the river floodplain (Pearson 1994; HWCM 20690, see also Barrett and Wilson 1980, 14). Excavation has located a Flandrian river channel west and north of the abbey which was partially open in the historic period (Vince and Whitehead 1979; HWCM 16036); the Flandrian river channel has also been provisionally identified elsewhere (Jackson and Topping 1994; HWCM 21750).

1.3 Chronological outline

There is evidence of Roman occupation in Pershore, in the form of a number of chance finds and excavated deposits (section 2), and the focus of Roman occupation can tentatively be identified northwest of the abbey in the Newlands area. There is little direct evidence for early Anglo-Saxon occupation although documentary research indicates that Pershore formed the centre of a large estate (Hooke 1990, 177-90). The minster church was founded *c* 689 but there is little evidence of the life of the community until it was reconstituted as the Benedictine abbey of St Mary and St Eadburga in *c* 970 (Bond 1977, 8). It is probable that a rural settlement grew up at the gate of the abbey, north of the church. It has been suggested that there was a mint at Pershore in the mid-11th century (Bond 1977, 8), and from this the existence of a defended *burh* has been inferred (*ibid*, 26). The evidence for either the mint or the defences is not strong at present.

In 1065 King Edward granted many of the estates of Pershore abbey to the new abbey of Westminster, including half the estate of Pershore itself (Bond 1977, 9). The right to establish a borough was granted by King Edward to the abbot of Westminster in 1065, and in Domesday Book a total of 28 burgesses are recorded (Thorn and Thorn 1982, 8-9). The new borough was the possession of Westminster abbey and, if the historic parish boundaries reflect Anglo-Saxon estate boundaries, it is likely that the borough was represented by the tenement plots that line Bridge Street, probably a pre-existing routeway (Bond 1977, 19; Slater 1982, 195). It is probable that the abbot of Westminster attempted to develop a borough on the abbey's remaining land from the same period, although it was not formally recognised until the late 12th century (Bond 1977, 15-16). The abbot of Pershore's part of the town was High Street, where excavation shows occupation commenced in the late 11th or 12th century (Ratkai 1994, 159), and Newlands (west of the abbey) where a new suburb was laid out by the 13th century (Bond 1977, 24).

Medieval Pershore was divided into the two parishes of Holy Cross and St Andrew's. This division reflected the manorial holdings of (respectively) the Abbey of Pershore (the manors of Oldland and Newland) and the Abbey of Westminster (the manors of Binholme and Portsmouth). The historic parish boundary between Holy Cross and St Andrew's is assumed to reflect the boundary between the two lordships, and shows a fractured pattern on the tithe map (1842).

Documentary evidence indicates that Pershore was a moderately prosperous medieval town, and its bridge and associated routeways gave it a certain economic importance (Bond 1977, 15). The bridge was vital to the commerce of the town but there were disputes about responsibility for its repair through the 14th century (*ibid*, 32). There was a significant wool trade in the town, although not on a large scale (*ibid*, 4). The evidence for medieval industries is largely restricted to occupational names, which include butchers, bakers, brewers, tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, blacksmiths, farriers, porters, carters, innkeepers, candlemakers and plumbers - the last two would have been closely associated with the abbey (Bond 1977, 18). The town was burnt down twice in the 13th century which may have led to replanning of large areas of the town including the laying out of Broad Street (Slater 1983, 195). It is documented that Pershore returned two members of parliament in 1295 (VCH Worcs 4, 153).

The town was in decline towards the end of the medieval period (Bond 1977, 16). Following its dissolution in 1539 most of the abbey precinct became a private house and

grounds (*ibid*, 12). Pershore remained a market town, and had a Royalist garrison in 1644 when the bridge was partly destroyed (*ibid*, 16). Although the River Avon was made navigable in 1639, no evidence of the significance of river trade in the town has been found; in the 18th century sugar, oil, wine, tobacco, iron and lead were shipped upriver from Bristol to Warwick, and corn and cheese were taken downriver (Bond 1977, 37-8).

Recorded trades in the 17th century included gloving (probably the major industry), other leatherworking crafts, tanning, and silkweaving (*ibid*, 18). Orchard and market-garden cultivation were a feature of the 19th century economy. The railway reached Defford in 1840, and Pershore in 1853 (Bond 1977, 38).

1.4 Placename studies

The earliest known form of the placename of Pershore is *Pescoran* which is translated as "osier bank" (Mawer and Stenton 1927, 217). Documentary sources indicate the medieval names of open fields, crofts and meadows surrounding Pershore (Bond 1977, 2-4).

1.5 Syntheses of documentary and archaeological data

The documentary evidence relating to Pershore has been summarised by the Victoria County History (VCH Worcs 4, 151-177) and other useful information is contained in Barrett and Wilson (1980), Wilson *et al* (1972) and Trollope (1986). The Anglo-Saxon charters have been transcribed and translated by Hooke (1990, 177-90). Detailed research into archaeological and documentary sources for Pershore has been carried out by Bond (1977), and the latter study formed the single most important source for the present assessment. Slater (1982) surveyed and analysed a limited area of the town plan and suggested a sequence for the development of burgage plots. A more comprehensive plan-unit analysis of the morphology has been carried out by H Wright (this research was not complete at the time of writing, but preliminary results were made available by Dr T Slater).

The present assessment was carried out by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey in 1992. 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 earliest map of Pershore is the sketch map in Ogilby's *Britannia* of 1675 (reproduced in Wilson *et al* 1972, facing p 48). This road map does not show the entire town but contains some useful information. Nineteenth century maps include the title maps of the two parishes of St Andrew and Holy Cross (HWRO BA 489 and HWRO BA 474.29) and Ordnance Survey first edition 1:2500 maps (*Worcestershire sheet XLI.11-12* and *XLI.15-26*).

1.7 Archaeological excavations and surveys

The first recorded excavation took place in the abbey grounds in 1929-30, and revealed the plan of the nave, cloisters, chapter house and other buildings (Andrews 1928). Excavations in the 1970s revealed that stratified deposits could be recovered in Pershore relating to the Roman, Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval periods (Bond and Wilson 1977, Shaw 1977, Vince and Whitehead 1979). In recent years evaluations and excavations east of the High Street have demonstrated the survival of important medieval and post-medieval deposits (Hughes and Litherland 1994; HWCM 15293, and Napthan *et al* 1994; HWCM 15825). Other investigations have helped determine the extent of medieval and post-medieval occupation (Pearson 1994; HWCM

20690, and Jackson and Topping 1994; HWCM 21750). Recent work in the abbey park includes a geophysical survey (Stratascan 1993; HWCM 11870) and limited investigations (Cook 1994; HWCM 21957). There have been detailed structural surveys of Pershore Bridge (Hunt 1994; HWCM 5574) and the roof of St Andrew's church (Napthan 1994; HWCM 5409).

Fieldwork was undertaken by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey in 1992. This identified remains, investigated and revised the extent of components, and recorded 18th and 19th century cellarge and modern developments in the urban area.

1.8 Acknowledgements and personnel

Survey fieldwork was carried out by Hal Dalwood and Victoria Buteux. Analysis and report writing was carried out by Hal Dalwood. Analysis was aided by Dr T Slater and Dr N Baker (School of Geography, University of Birmingham) who made available unpublished research by H Wright, and by S Ratkai and G Hughes who provided information on the 37 High Street site in advance of publication (now published in Hughes and Litherland 1994). The report was edited by Hal Dalwood.

2 Pre-urban archaeological evidence

There is evidence for Roman occupation at Pershore. Buried deposits containing Roman ceramics have been excavated in Newlands at two sites (HWCM 2222 and HWCM 16037). Other finds include a hoard of Roman coins (HWCM 15733), a set of tweezers (HWCM 7803) and pottery (HWCM 16059). There is no evidence to suggest any continuity between the Roman settlement and the Anglo-Saxon abbey and settlement, and the evidence for Roman occupation should be assessed together with evidence for intensive Roman utilisation of the River Avon valley. The evidence for Iron Age, Roman and earlier Anglo-Saxon occupation in Pershore and its immediate region has been summarised by Bond (1977, 5-6).

3 Anglo-Saxon archaeological evidence

3.1 Anglo-Saxon remains and buildings

One archaeological investigation in Pershore has produced definite evidence of Anglo-Saxon occupation. A single pit containing grass-tempered pottery, dated to the fifth to early seventh century, was excavated in Priest Lane (Vince and Whitehead 1979, 22; HWCM 16038). There are a number of finds of objects dated to between the seventh and ninth centuries: a spearhead (HWCM 15893) and the "Pershore censer-cover" (Backhouse *et al* 1984, 90; HWCM 15751).

The location of the Anglo-Saxon church is uncertain, although it is likely to lie directly beneath the medieval abbey church. No evidence for pre-conquest structures was recorded in the excavations south of the abbey (Andrews 1928), but there is evidence that earlier structures lie below the medieval abbey church (Roberts 1985; HWCM 5408). Little is known of the late 10th century abbey, except that it was burnt down three times in the early 11th century (Bond 1977, 10). A fragment of Anglo-Saxon sculpture has been recorded which is built into the fabric of St Andrew's church; it is thought to derive from the abbey (King 1992; HWCM 5409).

3.2 Anglo-Saxon urban components

Analysis of the available evidence indicated the existence of four Anglo-Saxon urban components. The characteristics of these components is summarised below.

Religious house (HWCM 7802). The identification of extent of the Anglo-Saxon precinct is based on documentary evidence for the medieval precinct (cf HWCM 16042). It is suggested that the precinct is broadly defined by the known medieval boundary on the west, south and north (with minor variations). Documentary records indicate that St Andrew's church was built (or rebuilt) in the monastic cemetery, which suggests that the precinct was of greater extent in the Anglo-Saxon period. The limits of the precinct cannot be precisely defined at present and the mapped extent is a provisional interpretation.

As well as evidence for the 10th century abbey church and its associated buildings and cemeteries, it is possible that buried remains may also exist relating to the 7th century minster church.

Market place (HWCM 16050). The triangular area defined by Church Street, Little Priest Lane and Lower Priest Lane is identified as a market place. This area has been identified as the pre-medieval market place by Slater (1983, 180), facing the site of the medieval abbey gatehouse (cf HWCM 16043). Archaeological evidence for this area being the focus of middle to late Anglo-Saxon occupation includes grass-tempered pottery (Vince and Whitehead 1979; HWCM 16038).

Occupation areas (HWCM 16068 and HWCM 16069). It is possible that house plots lay east and west of the market place (cf HWCM 16050). Slater suggested that plots with irregular dimensions in this area were late Anglo-Saxon in date and "represent the original rural vill with a developing market function" (Slater 1983, 183).

3.3 Anglo-Saxon urban form

Definition and classification. The extent of the Anglo-Saxon urban form (HWCM 16070) has been defined and mapped. Although the monastic precinct can be identified with some confidence, the extent of occupation is uncertain and therefore the limits of the Anglo-Saxon urban form has been provisionally mapped as coincident with the medieval urban form (see section 4.3). The evidence summarised above indicates that the urban form should be classified as an Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical centre (English Heritage 1992).

Survival. Buried remains dated to the Anglo-Saxon period survive in Pershore as demonstrated by excavation (HWCM 16038), although the extent of remains is uncertain. Recorded excavated deposits were not waterlogged but there is potential for recovering waterlogged deposits in the town. There is poor survival of the Anglo-Saxon urban form in the present-day urban fabric: the street plan north of abbey may preserve the market place and house plots, but it is probable that much of the plan of the Anglo-Saxon settlement was obscured by medieval development.

4 Medieval archaeological evidence

4.1 Medieval remains and buildings

A total of six recorded excavations in Pershore have produced evidence of medieval occupation. Excavation at the abbey was focused on revealing the plan of the buildings (Andrews 1928; HWCM 5407). At 14-16 Newlands medieval pits and stone-cilled buildings were excavated, together with artefact and animal bone assemblages (Shaw 1977; HWCM 7195). Stratified medieval deposits were salvage recorded nearby in Little Priest Lane (Vince and Whitehead 1979; HWCM 16037). These deposits contained medieval pottery together with animal and human bone, insects and molluscs. Little Priest Lane itself was also investigated and some of the metallurgy may be medieval in date (*ibid*, HWCM 16039). Medieval structures, pits and artefact and

ecofact assemblages have also been recovered from the rear of 37 High Street (Hughes and Litherland 1994; HWCM 15293). A medieval bread oven has been recorded to the rear of 25 High Street (Napthan *et al* 1994; HWCM 15825). There have also been some chance finds of medieval pottery in Abbey Road (HWCM 16058).

The chancel, south transept and crossing of the abbey church survive as standing buildings, dating mostly from the late 11th to 13th centuries (Bond 1977, 10). St Andrew's church dates from the late 12th century, although its roof dates from the 15th century (Bond 1977, 14; Napthan 1994; HWCM 5409). There is a fragment of single medieval domestic building, a stone-vaulted undercroft under 21-3 High Street (HWCM 15294), apparently a chapel associated with the manor house of Portsmouth manor (Bond 1977, 28-9). Most of the structure of Pershore Bridge is also medieval (Hunt 1994; HWCM 5574).

4.2 Medieval urban components

Analysis of the available evidence indicates the existence of 18 medieval urban components. The characteristics of these urban components is summarised below.

Religious house (HWCM 16042). The abbey precinct was defined by Bond on the basis of documentary and cartographic sources (Bond 1977). The precinct contains the partially standing abbey church and the buried remains of its associated buildings (HWCM 5407). It also contains buried remains relating to the fishponds (HWCM 10043). Two gatehouses have been located (HWCM 16043 and HWCM 16054) and the precinct boundary partly defined (HWCM 11870). Documentary evidence indicates the existence of agricultural buildings within the precinct.

A geophysical survey covered a large part of the abbey park and located the sites of buildings and other structures (Stratascan 1993; HWCM 11870); this has been followed by small-scale investigations (Cook 1994; HWCM 21957). Other archaeological evidence includes the chance find of a 12th century bronze thurible (HWCM 21958).

Churchyard (HWCM 16044). St Andrew's churchyard lies east of the abbey and contains St Andrew's church (HWCM 5409) and the graveyard for St Andrew's parish.

Market place (HWCM 16045). The market place is a rectangular area west of the abbey precinct. This area (Broad Street) was used for the medieval market, and was clearly planned as such, divided down the middle between the manors owned by Pershore Abbey and Westminster Abbey. It is documented as *Chepyngestret* and *Rotherchepyng* in the medieval period (Bond 1977, 22). A cross stood at the east end of the market place (*ibid*, 26; HWCM 16034). It is possible that Broad Street was not the original or major market place (Slater 1983); however documentary indicates that this was the focus of the market by the late 14th century, and it was infilled with shops and stalls (Bond 1977, 17).

Street system (HWCM 16055). The medieval street system of Pershore consists of the major north-south axis of High Street and Bridge Street, related back lanes and other tracks leading out of the urban area. Documentary evidence indicates the names of medieval streets: *le Hiestret* (High Street), *Lichestret* (Priest Lane and Little Priest Lane), *le Hedstrete* (Head Street), *la Newlonde* (Newlands); there are also a number of unidentified medieval streets and lanes (Bond 1977, 18-24). The street system can be reconstructed through cartographic analysis and documentary evidence. There is documentary evidence for three crosses which may have stood at the edges of the town, although the precise sites are unknown (Bond 1977, 26; HWCM 7798, HWCM 7799, HWCM 7800).

Bridging point (HWCM 16062). The bridging point over the River Avon and the flood meadows consists of the bridge site itself, dated to the 15th century (Hunt 1994; HWCM 5574) and a causeway. The main axis of the street system is aligned with this bridging point.

Tenement plots (HWCM 16047, HWCM 16048, HWCM 16049, HWCM 16051, HWCM 16052, HWCM 16053, HWCM 16054, HWCM 16060, HWCM 16061). An extensive series of tenement plots can be deduced from the tithe map and Ordnance Survey first edition maps. These shows regular plot boundaries aligned on the main streets and regular back lanes and rear boundaries. A total of nine different monuments were defined. An analysis of the Bridge Street and High Street area (Slater 1983) showed that there are variations in plot width in different areas which was interpreted as due to different dates of planning, with the tenements east of Bridge Street (HWCM 16047) predating those to the west (HWCM 16048).

Excavation within tenement plots has consistently revealed medieval deposits, as at 25 High Street and 37 High Street (Napthán *et al* 1994; HWCM 15825, and Hughes and Litherland 1994; HWCM 15293), and in Newlands (Shaw 1977).

Manorial enclosures (HWCM 16056 and HWCM 16046). Two manorial enclosures are identified and defined: a third is identified but cannot presently be defined. The two defined manorial sites belonged to the Abbey of Westminster. The manorial enclosure of Binholme manor (HWCM 16056) lay south of Broad Street and west of Bridge Street behind the tenement plots (Bond 1977, 29-30). The site of the manor house has been located (*ibid*, 29; HWCM 16057).

The manorial enclosure of Portsmouth manor (HWCM 16046) lay east of High Street. A medieval undercroft has been recorded at 21-3 High Street, and probably marks the site of the manor house (HWCM 15294). The name derives from *Portmote* meaning "meeting place" (Mawer and Stenton 1927, 217).

A third manorial site (Oldland manor) is provisionally located west of High Street and opposite the site of Portsmouth manor. Oldland was one of two manors held by the Abbot of Pershore. The court building has been located on the site of 12 High Street (Bond 1977, 21). The court house site has been identified (HWCM 22013) but the available information does not allow the manorial enclosure to be defined.

Open space (HWCM 16050). The area of the Anglo-Saxon market place is identified as an open space. It contained "Abbey Pool" (Bond 1977, 12) and large quantities of dumped deposits (Vince and Whitehead 1979; HWCM 16037).

Mill (HWCM 16063). One mill site was identified. Although there are documentary references to other medieval mills (Bond 1977, 31-2) these could not be located.

4.3 Medieval urban form

Definition and classification. The extent of the medieval urban form (HWCM 16071) was defined as the area of the monuments described above. The limits of the urban form are confirmed by documentary and cartographic evidence for the extent of the occupied area and of agricultural land (Bond and Hunt 1977; tithe Map 1846). Ridge and furrow has been recorded in one area (HWCM 2686). The available evidence indicates that the urban form should be classified as a medieval medium-sized town (English Heritage 1992).

Survival. There is good survival of the medieval urban form to the present day. Buried remains survive in both the abbey church and precinct and the tenement plots. It is known that waterlogged deposits survive in the infilled Flandrian river channel, west and north of the abbey.

Two ecclesiastical buildings survive and two other buildings (the bridge and an undercroft). The modern town plan preserves much of the plan of the medieval town in the form of burgage plots, street frontages, market place (Broad Street), bridging point and street plan.

5 Post-medieval archaeological evidence

5.1 Post-medieval remains and buildings

A total of three archaeological investigations have produced evidence of post-medieval occupation in Pershore. Excavation at 14-16 Newlands revealed 16th to 17th century pits with artefact and animal bone assemblages (Shaw 1977; HWCM 7196). Recent excavations east of 37 High Street have produced post-medieval deposits and assemblages relating to a documented post-medieval tannery (Hughes and Litherland 1994; Bond 1977, 18; HWCM 15293). There are many buildings in Pershore of 18th century date as well as some 17th century date (Pevsner 1968, 242-3; Bond 1977, 27).

5.2 Post-medieval urban components

Analysis of the evidence summarised above indicated a total of 18 post-medieval urban components. The characteristics of these urban components is summarised below.

Churchyards (HWCM 16065 and HWCM 16044). The post-medieval churchyard of Holy Cross (HWCM 16065) was formed from part of the abbey precinct following the dissolution in AD 1539, when the partly-demolished abbey church was bought by the town and became a parish church. The medieval churchyard of St Andrew's (HWCM 16044) continued in use and contained the parish church and cemetery for that parish.

Tenement plots (HWCM 16047, HWCM 16048, HWCM 16049, HWCM 16051, HWCM 16052, HWCM 16053, HWCM 16054, HWCM 16060, HWCM 16061, HWCM 16067). The nine identified medieval tenement plots continued in use in the post-medieval period. One area was identified as being infilled with small tenement plots in the post-medieval period (HWCM 16067).

Street system (HWCM 16055 and HWCM 16064). The medieval street system (HWCM 16055) continued in use in the post-medieval period. A number of streets were identified as new streets added in the post-medieval period (HWCM 16064).

Market place (HWCM 16045). The medieval market place (HWCM 16045) in Broad Street continued in use into the post-medieval period, ceasing in the late 19th century (Bond 1977, 17).

Bridging point (HWCM 16062). The medieval bridging point (HWCM 16062) over the River Avon and the flood meadows continued in use in the post-medieval period. There is documentary and archaeological evidence for the repair of the bridge in the 17th century (Bond 1977, 33; Hunt 1994; HWCM 5574).

Open space (HWCM 16066). The majority of the medieval abbey precinct became private land in 1539, forming a park. There is documentary evidence for post-medieval houses in the park (Bond 1977, 12). The last of these was "The Abbey" which was built in the mid-19th century and demolished in the 1970s (HWCM 16035).

Mill (HWCM 16063). The medieval mill continued as a mill in the post-medieval period.

5.3 Post-medieval urban form

Definition and classification. The post-medieval urban form (HWCM 16072) has been defined and mapped, based on the extent of identified post-medieval urban components. There is no evidence that any expansion occurred beyond the limits of the medieval urban form before AD 1800. The available evidence indicates that the urban form can be classified as a post-medieval medium-sized town (English Heritage 1992).

Survival. Excavations demonstrated that buried remains survive. There is good survival of the post-medieval urban form, including many 18th century buildings, the street system, building frontages and roof lines, and tenement plot boundaries.

6 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 Pershore in the period from 1800. Further work is required before such an assessment can be carried out.

7 Specialist assessments

7.1 Assessment of artefactual evidence J D Hurst

Artefactual evidence for Pershore covers a range of different periods. The earliest objects are a flint tool and an Iron Age comb (HWCM 16036). Roman finds are more numerous and include a hoard of Roman coins, pottery (HWCM 15733), and an unusual jewelled set of tweezers (HWCM 7803). Pottery of the second to fourth centuries AD is well-represented, especially in the Newlands region of Pershore. At Little Priest Lane (HWCM 16037) there was some indication of industrial activity, probably metalworking.

A small amount of pottery of early to middle Anglo-Saxon date has been recovered from one site (HWCM 16038). For the later Anglo-Saxon period there are two exceptional objects: a spearhead (HWCM 15893), and a bronze censer cover (HWCM 15751; now in the British Museum).

From the early medieval period onwards artefactual material becomes more numerous. The ceramic evidence includes pottery within a mid-11th to 12th century date range from the High Street area (Ratkai 1994; HWCM 15293). More unusual ceramic finds are an ornate roof finial (Dunning 1965-7, 50), glazed flat roof tile (HWCM 5407), floor tile (Eames 1980), and a Malvernian chafing dish (Vince 1984, 28). A wide range of object types have been recovered, including knives and pins. In the later medieval and post-medieval periods a wide range of finds have also been recorded (eg HWCM 7195, HWCM 15293, HWCM 16039).

7.2 Assessment of environmental evidence E A Pearson

Various types of biological remains have been recovered as a result of archaeological investigations, on which a basic level of analysis and interpretation has been carried out in many cases.

Human burials. Eight human burials were discovered during excavations at the Central Garage (Bond and Wilson 1977; HWCM 4987). Evidence suggested that this cemetery belonged to one of Pershore's 18th century non-conformist communities, the most likely group being the Society of Friends.

Mammal and bird bone. A small amount of animal bone was discovered, chiefly from

pits, during excavations at Newlands, dating from the Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods (Shaw 1977; HWCM 7195). Animal bones were recovered from the fill of a Flandrian river channel and associated features north and west of the Abbey (Vince and Whitehead 1979). Of particular note are the bones of a Devensian woolly rhinoceros and an Iron Age antler comb found from a lower fill of the channel. Larger assemblages of mammal and bird bones were retrieved from the Roman and medieval fill of the channel and from associated post-Roman and post-medieval sites. These results allowed some interpretation and comparison between periods of the method by which the domestic animals were butchered, and the age at which they were culled.

Animal bones have been assessed from recent evaluations within tenement plots on High Street which were occupied during the medieval and post-medieval periods, at 37 High Street (Pinter-Bellows 1994; HWCM 15293) and 25 High Street (Napthan *et al* 1994; HWCM 15825). The two assemblages, although meriting little detailed analysis, were well preserved, and showed differences in character between the two plots.

Insect and mollusc remains. The molluscs from the Roman and medieval backfill of the Flandrian river channel provided limited information on the environment, although insect remains indicated aquatic or sub-aquatic anaerobic organic conditions (Vince and Whitehead 1979).

Plant remains. Charred plant remains of medieval and post-medieval date have been recovered by wet-sieving from 37 High Street (Moffet 1994; HWCM 15293) and 25 High Street (Napthan *et al* 1994; HWCM 15825). Only sparse assemblages were present on the former site. However at the latter site, in addition to sparsely scattered charred cereal crop waste, a rich assemblage of almost fully processed mixed charred cereal grain was recovered from a post-medieval pit.

Alluvial sediments. Observations of alluvial sediments made during salvage recording at Pershore Youth House (Pearson 1994; HWCM 20690) have shown changes in alluvial deposition similar to those recorded by Shotton (1978) in the lower Severn and Avon valleys, which were interpreted as resulting from the onset of forest clearance and ploughing in the prehistoric period. However, as dating evidence was not available from the Youth House site, is not clear whether this site represented a similar sequence.

7.3 Assessment of documentary sources P A Stamper

The available documentation for Pershore appears average for its size and status; the principal groups of documents are listed (section 10). There are several good histories relating to the town.

7.4 Assessment of buildings R K Morriss

Historic buildings line the main road through the town, formed by High Street and Bridge Street, and the former market area, Broad Street. Most of the buildings are built of red brick and seem to date from the 18th and early 19th centuries. Their uniformity of design and detail gives the town its essentially Georgian character.

In general the buildings in the centre and south of the town are three storeys high with those towards the north of the High Street being mainly two storeys high. Clearly the north end of the town was of slightly lower status in the Georgian period and this may reflect the historic social make-up of the town. Most of the major buildings in this area are of at least three bays, suggesting that there was no great pressure on land ownership even in the heart of the town.

There is only limited evidence of the present buildings being recasing of earlier structures. 33 High Street (HWCM 15828) has some heavily restored, and apparently intact, 16th to 17th century framing within it (not mentioned in the listing details).

Further north, 103A-105 High Street (HWCM 15837) is a two-storey timber-framed building of the 17th century partly encased in brick. 135 High Street (HWCM 15843) is also of 17th century construction encased in the late 18th century. Other examples of timber framing occur in rear ranges. The most complete group is behind 22-26 Bridge Street. Behind 22 Bridge Street (HWCM 15763) is a jettied timber-framed range of 16th century date (not mentioned in the listing details). Behind 24-26 Bridge Street (HWCM 15764) the "half timbered back wing" is in fact a separate gabled range of perhaps 17th century date and an additional timber-framed wing attached to the rear of the frontage block. There is also some evidence of surviving timber-framing in the party wall between 22 and 24 Bridge Street.

All the evidence indicates that the main streets of the town were virtually completely rebuilt in the 18th century and that few earlier buildings survive. This will clearly have had an influence on the survival and nature of the below ground archaeology.

The area to the west of the main town is of a completely different character, consisting of lower status housing lining the route from the High Street, Church Row and westwards by way of Newlands. A large proportion of the buildings lining Newlands are clearly timber-framed and others may be. Most of the framing is of relatively low quality and seems to date either to the late 16th or 17th centuries. This area gives the impression of being a post-Dissolution development with no evidence of earlier surviving buildings, although documentary evidence indicates Newlands was developed as a suburb in the 13th century and this is supported by archaeological information (see above, section 1.3 and 4.1). It is quite probable that the modern buildings in the street replaced buildings of similar date to the surviving post-medieval timber-framed structures. 11 Church Row, facing the abbey church, is an unlisted timber-framed building as is the probably 17th century barn at the western end of Newlands.

Survey work and analysis. With the exception of work on the abbey church there has been no serious academic study of the buildings of Pershore and no published corpus of survey work.

Assessment of the listing details. The published listing (1972) is out of date and the descriptions quite perfunctory. There are some errors in dating and some omissions but the list is reasonably comprehensive in its scope (a list review has been undertaken by English Heritage and was in draft in 1994).

8 Archaeological research framework

8.1 Model of urban development

A model of the Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval town of Pershore 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.

8.2 Chronological framework

The evidence indicates that there was probably a Roman rural settlement within the urban area of Pershore, but this should be considered in the context of the intensive Roman settlement pattern in the Avon valley, and should not be considered as the origin of the town. The focus of this site may be in the area of Newlands, northwest of the

abbey.

The abbey was founded in the 7th century but little is known of contemporary occupation, although pottery dated to the 5th to 7th century has been recovered from a site north of the abbey. The area focused on Little Priest Lane and priest Lane is regarded as the focus of the Anglo-Saxon settlement at the gate of the abbey, although the origin and development of settlement cannot yet be defined.

The borough developed from the mid-11th century, with the earliest focus possibly on Bridge Street, but with early development along High Street. It is probable that both the Broad Street market place (and its related tenement plots), and Newlands are developments of the later medieval period, (Bond 1977, 23-4). The likeliest period for such development is the 13th century, which is supported by limited documentary evidence.

Documentary evidence suggests the town was in decline in the late medieval period, and there is no evidence of substantial development in the early post-medieval period. Although the River Avon was made navigable in the early 17th century, the effects of this on the economy of the town have not been traced in the documentary record, and no quays have been identified at Pershore as existed in Evesham. The post-medieval economy was based on agricultural products, with a number of craft industries, notably glovemaking. The evidence of standing buildings indicates that the town was comprehensively rebuilt in the 18th century, which must have been a period of relative prosperity.

The broad outlines of this chronological framework are provisional and require testing through archaeological investigation.

8.3 Urban landuse

The Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval components identified here (sections 3.2, 4.2 and 5.2) have been mapped and constitute a model of urban landuse for each period. These landuse models are partial and provisional and capable of testing through archaeological investigation. The urban components of Pershore have been investigated in the case of the abbey, tenement plots, street system and the river crossing.

The abbey. The medieval abbey is probably the site of at least two pre-Conquest churches. There is evidence that structural deposits for the 10th century church beneath the medieval abbey and there is also potential for the survival of buried deposits relating to the original 7th century minster. The location and extent of ancillary buildings and cemeteries is not closely predictable on the basis of the morphology of contemporary sites.

The excavations in the monastic precinct revealed the plan of the nave and the claustral buildings demolished after the dissolution. These buildings are dated to the 11th to 13th centuries, but it is certain that not all the medieval buildings have been located. In association with the churches and monastic buildings there is documentary evidence for extensive cemeteries together with domestic and agricultural buildings. The sites of the abbey fishponds, the precinct wall and ditch, and possibly the gatehouses have been identified, and further archaeological investigation may indicate the details of form of these structures.

The most significant modification to the town in the post-medieval period was the destruction of the abbey and many of its buildings. There is documentary evidence for the subsequent use of most of the monastic precinct as a private park, including orchards and gardens.

Manorial enclosures. The two identified manorial enclosures relate to the landholdings of the abbey of Westminster. One contains a stone undercroft, and both components

may contain buried remains relating to high-status medieval buildings. The two identified manorial enclosures lost their administrative functions in the post-medieval period, and subsequently Binholme manorial enclosure was subdivided by a new road.

Tenement plots. The evidence for pre-Conquest occupation outside the abbey precinct rests on cartographic and archaeological evidence. The evidence indicates the development of a settlement area around a market place north of the abbey, but the nature and extent of the occupation is unknown. The definition of the extent of pre-conquest occupation is a priority.

Morphological analysis has suggested a model for the chronology of development of burgage plots (Slater 1983) and archaeological evidence is capable of testing this hypothesis. The tenement plots established in the medieval period may have seen some changes in use in the post-medieval period, and there was some limited infill of less built-up areas.

Market places, streets and bridge. The medieval market place (Broad Street) was an important focus. It was cleared of medieval and later infill in the late 19th century, and there is potential for the survival of buried deposits relating to shops and stalls in the market place. The medieval street system and river crossing form part of the medieval communications system. There is some evidence for the survival of road surfaces in Pershore, and there is potential for survival of buried remains relating to street and causeway construction despite modern service trenches.

8.4 Potential for survival of buried remains

There is high potential for the survival of important buried remains relating to the pre-conquest monastic precinct and its churches and similarly for the survival of buried remains relating to the medieval abbey and its claustral buildings. Within the outer precinct, medieval deposits lie beneath 0.40m of modern topsoil (Cook 1994; HWCM 21957). There is also potential for the survival of buried remains relating to the post-dissolution development of the abbey. The two manorial enclosures are well documented and have good potential for the survival of high-status buildings and ancillary structures.

The evidence from excavations in tenement plots indicates that buried remains relating to medieval domestic occupation can be expected to survive throughout the urban area. The evidence of medium-scale excavations has demonstrated that medieval deposits survive beneath shallow post-medieval stratigraphy (Napthan *et al* 1994), although deeply stratified deposits have been recorded in restricted locations. The potential of different tenement plots is variable, but may include evidence relating to the spatial distribution of different industries, the relative wealth of different areas of the town, and how these changed through time.

Fieldwork was undertaken by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey in December 1992. 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 extensive 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.

8.4 Potential for artefactual studies J D Hurst

Pershore has a long occupation sequence, which is rare for urban sites in the region. This, coupled with waterlogged deposits in part of the town, has produced a situation where the potential for artefactual survival is very high. However, the overall character of artefact assemblage does seem slightly unbalanced, as it includes several isolated high quality finds. However, this is increasingly offset by assemblages from more recent

excavations, which are providing a more comprehensive range of artefacts.

Period discussion. Prehistoric finds are rare and they are likely to be a stray finds. The earliest occupation would seem most likely to be of Roman date. Other periods are well represented by artefactual material, which generally indicated the domestic character of occupation.

Ceramics. No detailed identification of Roman pottery has so far been undertaken and assemblages have been too small for quantification. The presence of grass-tempered pottery (Vince and Whitehead 1979, 22), although small in quantity, is highly significant as this ceramic type has only been identified in Worcestershire at Pershore and Droitwich. At Droitwich it was associated with radiocarbon dates of the fifth to seventh centuries, and with a range of other fabrics (Hurst 1991). The presence of pottery at Pershore of sub-Roman to Anglo-Saxon date, and which was probably in a contemporary context, is a good indication that the sequence of occupation in Pershore may be unusually extensive.

The presence of Cotswolds ware and Bath A wares in the early medieval period is paralleled at Droitwich though not at Worcester. This suggests that Pershore's economy in the immediate post-Domesday period was strongly linked to the salt trade. The influence of the salt industry on Droitwich trade in other goods, notably pottery, in the late Anglo-Saxon to early medieval period has been commented on (Hurst 1992, 139).

The medieval pottery for the 13th century and later is similar in form and fabric range to pottery from major centres such as Worcester and Droitwich. The laying out of a new suburb in Newlands in the 13th century may provide a useful *terminus post quem* for ceramic studies. Post-medieval pottery is reported from several sites (eg Vince and Whitehead 1979, 12, and Ratkai 1994, 159). In general the medieval pottery groups have been of small to medium size (ie 100-300 sherds). No profiles of vessels, and limited identification of fabrics has taken place.

Other artefacts. The Roman artefactual assemblage also contains slag, furnace lining, and fired clay, which are indicative of industrial activity. A limited range of other artefacts are more typical of domestic occupation (Vince and Whitehead 1979).

Medieval artefacts include several unusual objects (eg a copper alloy censer and decorative roof finial). Few non-pottery artefacts have been found in medieval deposits, except for some nails, roof tile, and a whetstone from 37 High Street (HWCM 15293; Ferris 1994, 162, and Bevan 1994, 161), and some ceramic building materials and wall plaster from Newlands (respectively Vince 1977, 63, and Bond and Hunt 1977, 64). Post-medieval artefacts include roofing tile and ironwork (Bevan 1994; Ferris 1994).

Comparison with documentary evidence. The documentary evidence suggests that some industry in the town from the medieval period onwards was based on wool. Later leather production and the production of leather goods became prominent. None of these industries is notable for leaving a great deal of artefactual evidence in the archaeological record.

8.5 Potential for environmental remains E A Pearson

Excavation has demonstrated well-preserved environmental remains in the town. A basic level of data is also now available which could be used to make inter-site comparisons, particularly with reference to the use of large domestic animals. The local soil conditions and topography also provide in some areas good potential for recovery of environmental remains in the future. As the soils are often seasonally waterlogged, organic deposits including plant macrofossils, pollen and insect remains may survive in some areas. The greatest potential exists for the discovery of such material in the abandoned Flandrian river channel, the Abbey fishponds, and the area

close to the River Avon. The soils also appear to provide relatively good conditions for the preservation of animal bone and molluscs. There is the possibility that charred grain and charcoal may be recovered from any surviving deposits related to the Anglo-Saxon Abbey (particularly from associated agricultural buildings) as it was burnt down three times in this period.

Environmental remains providing information on diet and domestic or industrial activity are likely to be found from tenement plots. In particular, various industries are known to have been situated in plots near to the river, such as the post-medieval tanning yard at 37 High Street (Hughes and Litherland 1994; HWCM 15293). Although environmental evidence of such activities is as yet inconclusive, it may provide vital information on the development of these industries in the future.

The alluvial deposits in this area are of particular interest as such deposits frequently seal rich archaeological landscapes with a high potential for environmental studies (Robinson 1992). Much information can be gained on a changing landscape heavily influenced by human activities, not only from the wide range of biological remains frequently preserved, but also from the sediments themselves. Such studies can highlight periods of alluviation which appear to reflect changes in landscape use (particularly clearance and agricultural activity). Observation of alluvial sediments at Pershore Youth House (Pearson 1994) showed similarities with other sites in the lower Severn and Avon valleys, and such sites may be worthy of further study.

Previous excavation has shown that well preserved environmental material survives in archaeological deposits in Pershore. This material can provide information on the past environment, diet, living conditions and agricultural and 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.

8.6 Potential for study of standing buildings R K Morriss

Most of the buildings in Pershore are of a similar date (18th and early 19th century), a period that is well studied in architectural terms. Therefore there seems no real need for an overall survey of the historic buildings within the town. However, it would be very useful to obtain more detailed knowledge of the surviving post-medieval timber-framed buildings, in order to obtain a more balanced view of Pershore's architectural development.

8.7 Summary of research potential

The historic core of Pershore contains buried archaeological deposits, and these are judged to have high potential. In addition there is high potential for the recovery of artefact and ecofact assemblages. The historic buildings do not constitute an extensive body of complementary evidence, but the post-medieval buildings are judged to have moderate potential for detailed study and recording. The surviving documentary sources are moderately extensive and there is moderate potential for further study.

9 Management framework

9.1 Urban archaeological area

The mapped extent of the Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval urban forms defined above indicate the extent of the urban area (Pershore Archaeological Urban Area).

9.2 Existing protection measures

The archaeological urban area of Pershore is defined above (section 9.1). The different parts of the urban area are afforded measures of protection through legislation and the planning process. The relevant measures are outlined below.

Scheduled ancient monuments. There are two Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the area of archaeological interest, the abbey (Here and Worc 260; HWCM 5407) and the bridge (Here and Worc 321; HWCM 5574). It is possible that following the current Monuments Protection Programme, English Heritage may modify the scheduled area or add other monuments in Pershore to the schedule.

Listed buildings. There are a total of 157 buildings listed as of historical or architectural importance within the urban area. Buildings of special architectural or historic interest should receive very special attention. Such buildings are limited in their number and there is a need to protect and preserve them. The presumption when considering applications to demolish or alter is in favour of preservation. This presumption is also likely to preserve archaeological remains beneath and immediately around such buildings from development. It is important that the architectural and archaeological interests are considered together.

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

Conservation Areas. A Conservation Area has been defined which almost entirely encompasses the archaeological area (Wychavon District Local Plan. Written statement: deposit version (1992)).

9.3 Management approach

The archaeological urban area of Pershore contains buried remains relating to Roman, Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval occupation. The buried remains may vary in complexity and depth, but 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.

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 report and any subsequent archaeological information recorded on the County Sites and Monuments Record.

10 Principal groups of primary sources compiled by P A Stamper

(WRO: Worcester Record Office)

- WRO BA 8965 Court rolls 1664-1701 for Binholme, Pensham and Pershore Portsmouth
- WRO BA 9185 Parish records. St Andrew's: registers from 1641. Holy Cross: registers 1539-1641, and 1682 onwards; vestry minutes and accounts 1753-77
- WRO BA 3469 Account books etc of parish officers of St Andrew's, c 600 items 1743 onwards
- WRO BA 1572 Tithe maps and apportionments for St Andrew's and Holy Cross parishes
- WRO BA 527 Victoria County History research notes
- WRO BA 2388 MSS compilation by F B Andrews

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13 Mapping

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

- * Historic buildings (listed and other recorded buildings) and urban area
- * Archaeological remains and urban area
- * Anglo-Saxon urban form and components
- * Medieval urban form and components
- * Post-medieval urban form and components
- * Observed cellarage and 20th century development
- * Urban area and scheduled ancient monuments