



Dairy Farm, Weobley, Herefordshire  
archaeological evaluation

Huw Sherlock & P J Pikes  
2001



## archenfield archaeology ltd

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*Dairy Farm, Weobley, Herefordshire: archaeological evaluation  
2001*

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## Contents

1.0	Introduction .....	2
2.0	Geological, historical and archaeological background .....	4
2.1	Geological background and land use .....	4
2.2	Historical background .....	4
2.3	Archaeological background .....	12
3.0	Project Aims and Objectives .....	14
4.0	Methodology .....	14
4.1	Field methodology .....	14
4.2	Processing methodology .....	14
5.0	The results .....	15
5.1	The stratigraphy .....	15
6.0	Conclusions .....	16
7.0	Archive deposition .....	21
8.0	Publication and dissemination proposals .....	21
	General bibliography .....	22
	Cartographic material .....	24

## Figures

Figure 1: Site Location Plan .....	3
Figure 2: Medieval Boroughs in Herefordshire .....	6
Figure 3: Archaeological Projects in Weobley .....	12
Figure 4: Trench Location Plan .....	15
Figure 5: Plan of Trench .....	15
Figure 6: Extract from the 1838 tithe map of Weobley .....	17
Figure 7: 1887 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition 1:2500 plan of Weobley .....	18
Figure 8: Buildings demolished between 1838 (tithe map) and 1887 (1 <sup>st</sup> edition OS) .....	19

## Summary

*Dairy Farm house, Weobley, Herefordshire, is a Grade II\* listed building which has been dated to the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century. It stands on Meadow Street, a medieval street which leads north-west out of the centre of Weobley.*

*The De Lacy family founded the medieval borough of Weobley. Their castle there was probably built at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century or early in the 12<sup>th</sup> and the borough seems to have been founded outside its gates shortly afterwards. It apparently superseded an earlier village, which may have lain slightly further to the north, in the area of the present church. The area in which Dairy Farm stands, to the east of the Meadow Street, had been identified as being likely to have contained burgage plots.*

*The Synock family, which owns Dairy Farm, has been recorded in Weobley for six centuries.*

*During December 2000 Archenfield Archaeology conducted an evaluation on land 30 metres to the north-east of the house. This was in advance of a proposed housing development.*

*No material earlier than the 19<sup>th</sup> century was recovered and the only feature was a single posthole, which was on the line of a field boundary which existed in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

*The absence of early archaeological evidence, the distance of the excavation from the house, together with the distance from a possible early medieval village core near Weobley church, and from the later medieval centre of the borough to the south-east, suggest that there are not likely to be significant archaeological remains in the immediate area.*

*Some of the reasons for this inference are expanded in the conclusions section of this report.*

## 1.0 Introduction

NGR SO 4005 5182

Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record - Event No 30643

Hereford City Museum Accession No 2000-53

Mr B Synock (the client) commissioned a programme of archaeological evaluation in advance of a proposed housing development at Dairy Farm, Meadow Street, Weobley, Herefordshire. This was in response to a brief (Reference: HSM 19493) issued by Herefordshire Archaeology on 13/11/2000.

This brief stated that the development proposal might have significant archaeological implications. Consequently, the potential developer was advised that more information about the archaeological impact of his proposal was needed before any potential planning applications could be determined. This information was to be obtained by means of an archaeological evaluation commissioned by the applicant.

The brief added that the site was within the historic medieval part of the town, and was within a defined medieval tenement plot (ref. HSM 19493). It was therefore in a location where medieval archaeological deposits, and possibly other archaeological features, could still have been present.

The fieldwork element of the evaluation took place in December 2000.

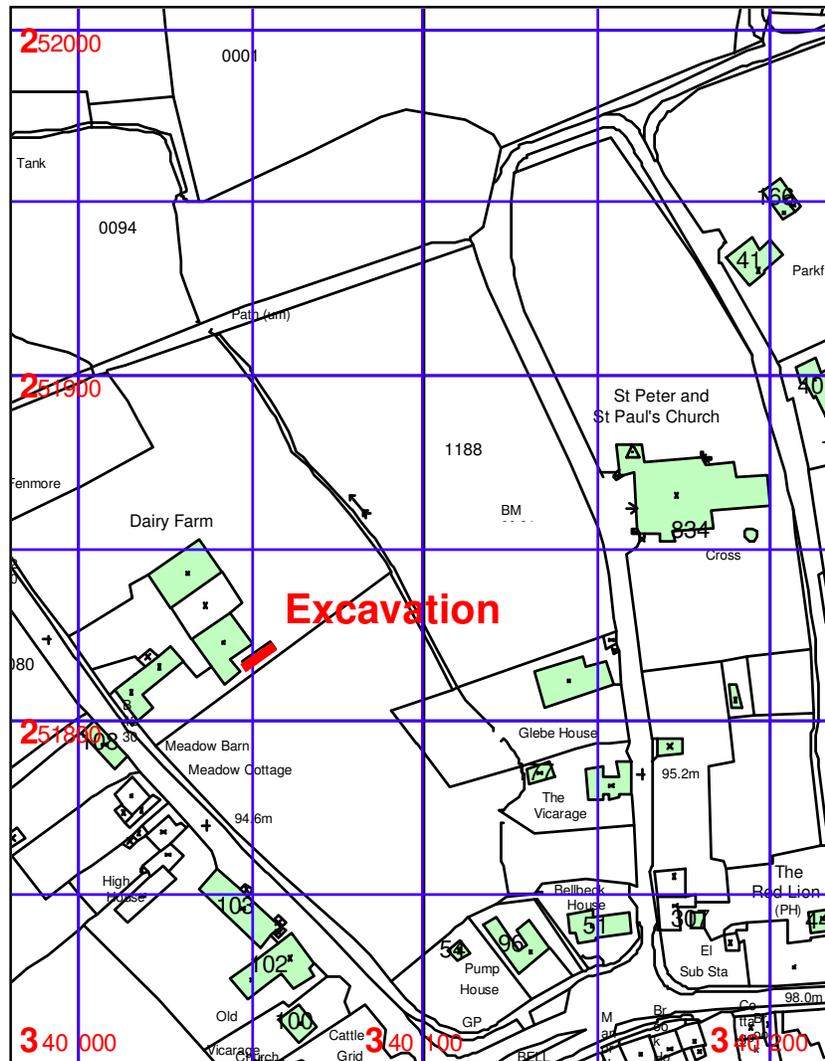
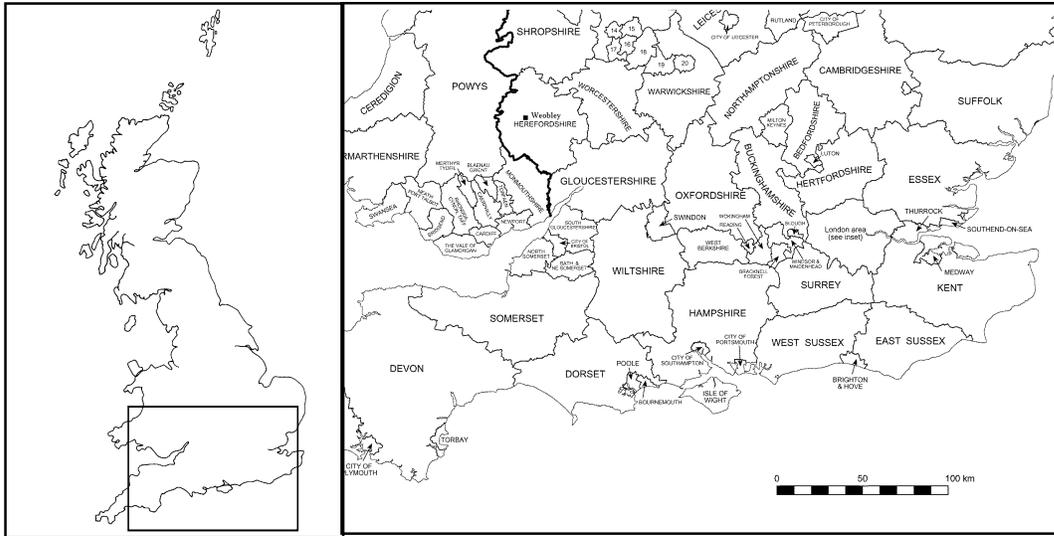


Figure 1: Site Location Plan (OS Superplan data reproduced under license drawing ref. Number 26103688)

## 2.0 Geological, historical and archaeological background

### 2.1 Geological background and land use

Weobley lies in a shallow valley and is bisected by the Marl Brook, which flows north through the village to its confluence with the Stretford Brook, which in turn flows westward into the River Arrow. The underlying geology is the Raglan Mudstone formation of the Old Red Sandstone (Brandon, 1989).

The site lies to the north-east of Dairy Farm house. The immediate area which was mainly covered by modern agricultural buildings at the time that the fieldwork took place.

The general area of the cutting had been used for gardens, chicken runs, and the burial of farm animals in the recent past (pers. comm. B Synock).

### 2.2 Historical background

That there was Roman activity around the village of Weobley is suggested by field-name evidence in the west of the parish (Richardson, 1996, p458) and a small number of Roman coins have been found in the village itself.<sup>1</sup> Early Germanic immigrants commonly utilised existing Romano-British farmland for the obvious reason that it was already there and such land was often extended or renamed by them.<sup>2</sup>

The name Weobley derives from the Old English personal name *Wibba* and in Domesday is *Wibelai*, Wibba's clearing (Copleston-Crow, 1989). *Wibba* appears as an element in *Webbery* (*Wibba's BURG*) in Devon and *Webton* in Herefordshire where the hundred of *Webtree* is also derived from the name (Ekwall, 1960). Although there has in the past been some speculation on the identity of the eponymous *Wibba*,<sup>3</sup> this was largely an idle pursuit. The second element of the name, *leah*, implies 'a permanent glade or clearing in woodland' (Rackham, 1990, p46). (The necessary part of the meaning of the *leah* element is probably the presence of nearby woodland. It should not be associated with any recent activity of actual woodland clearance (Smith, 1956, pp18-22).)<sup>4</sup>

Before the Norman Conquest Weobley was held by Edwi. Domesday has the superscript *Cilt* above his name. Canon Phillot (1888) equated Edwi with Edwin, Earl of Mercia. Edwin was the grandson of Leofric, Earl of Mercia who died in 1057, and whose father Aelfgar, leading eighteen ships companies of Irish Vikings and in alliance with Gruffydd ap Llewellyn, King of Gwynedd and Powys, took part in the destruction of Hereford in 1055. This identification seems unlikely: Certainly in the Worcestershire Domesday, Edwin is *Edouin* with the superscript *Comes*.

Whoever Edwi was (and the *cilt* seems to imply a membership of the English nobility) he held several other Herefordshire manors<sup>5</sup> and his western Herefordshire holdings may reflect some sort of English colonisation of Welsh lands (Wightman, 1966, p 130). Immediate confiscation of English-owned lands seems not to have been a deliberate policy of the Conqueror, who took pains to conform to a show of legality. Although the lands of Harold Godwinson and other 'rebels' were forfeit, and were distributed among the Norman leaders, other

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<sup>1</sup> Two 1<sup>st</sup> century and one 3<sup>rd</sup> century: Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record number 6310

<sup>2</sup> As pointed out by Rackham, 1990, p57

<sup>3</sup> *Notes on Weobley* by the Rev Phillot – a bound, printed document, interleaved with drawings and photographs in Hereford City Library and Salt, 1953, p 6.

<sup>4</sup> For a recent view of the way that the amount of woodland in the ancient and medieval countryside has tended to be exaggerated in the past see Veera, 2001

<sup>5</sup> Among them Fernhill, Letton Brobury and Staunton, the last held by Ernwy of Edwi. In Domesday, Edwi's son, Alwin, holds Butterley of Roger de Lacy (Thorn & Thorn).

English landholders may have retained their manors for some years. It has been suggested that confiscation of their land in the area may have been a result of events surrounding the revolt of Edric 'the Wild' in 1069 (*ibid.* p161).

In any event, William fitz Osbern become Earl of Hereford after the Conquest, and Weobley passed into his hands at some time thereafter. It was given in turn to Walter de Lacy, a member of fitz Osbern's household, who held it of the earl. Walter was the younger brother of Ilbert de Lacy, who founded the Honour of Pontefract in Yorkshire (*ibid.*). Fitz Osbern died in 1072 and in 1074 his heir, Roger of Breteuil, rebelled. Walter de Lacy, together with Urse d'Abitot, Sheriff of Worcester and the Saxon clerics Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester and Aethelwig, Abbot of Evesham, raised an army against Roger and prevented him crossing the Severn. In 1075 Roger forfeited his lands for revolt and Walter became a tenant-in-chief of the crown (Hillaby, 1985). Walter's other holdings included a swathe of land in the south-west of Herefordshire which was Welsh at the time of the Conquest. This area was known as Ewyas Lacy and probably had its main stronghold at Pont Hendre Castle, near Longtown. Also in this area is the village of Walterstone, which may have been named after him (Marshall, 1938).

Walter died in 1085, falling from St Peter's Church in Hereford, during its construction, and his lands passed to his son, Roger de Lacy, who is recorded as holding Weobley in Domesday. Roger held 14 demesne and 50 tenants' manors in Herefordshire and had large holdings elsewhere (Hillaby, 1985, p195). Weobley was to pass down in a direct line of descent for centuries and the lord of the manor was to have considerable influence on its subsequent history.<sup>6</sup>

The Domesday manor of Weobley possessed 3 ploughs in lordship. There were 10 villeins, a priest, a reeve, a smith and 5 bordars with 9½ ploughs. There were 11 serfs, woodland measuring ½ league by 4 furlongs, and a park. Land newly brought into cultivation, or *assarting*, had provided land for one plough. One of the villeins belonged to the church of St Peter in Hereford, by the gift of Walter de Lacy.<sup>7</sup>

Although *assarting* is assumed to occur over many parts of England, Domesday only specifies it in Herefordshire, the other entries being for Fernhill, Much Marcle and Leominster (Darby, 1976, p 189). In general, by the 11<sup>th</sup> century England was one of the least wooded countries of Europe, and Domesday appears to indicate that Herefordshire was even less wooded than most of the rest of the country with woodland occupying perhaps around 8% of the land (Rackham, 1980, p 126). By the 1840s the percentage of woodland in Weobley was less than 10%.<sup>8</sup>

Specific mention of parks is also comparatively rare in Domesday, and only 35 are recorded. Emparking was a recent introduction, the earliest recorded park being at Ongar in Essex which was certainly pre-Conquest. Parks were large enclosures used to contain deer for the table and were not essentially associated with hunting, which took place in unenclosed areas. The deer would have been the native red and roe deer. Later centuries would see a large growth in the number of parks and the introduction of the fallow deer (Rackham, 1990, p152).

In 1088 Roger de Lacy was banished after his father's old ally Bishop Wulfstan, stopped him, in turn, from crossing the Severn, and his brother Hugh took over his estates (Phillot, 1871, p 350). The de Lacys were responsible for the construction

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<sup>6</sup> Major Salt's *The Borough and Honour of Weobley*, 1953, is dedicated to '[1953] Henry Frederick Thynne, seventh Marquis of Bath, Lord of the Manor of Weobley, in direct descent from Roger de Laci. Lord of the Manor of Weobley [1086]':

<sup>7</sup> One of Edwi's manors given to Walter was Priors Frome, which Walter, in turn, gave to his new church of St Peter in Hereford.

<sup>8</sup> See map on page 54 of ADM Phillip's paper on land use in the Herefordshire Tithe Survey in the *Transactions of the Woolhope Nat. Field Soc.*, 1979.

of castles at Weobley and Ludlow. Both castles were associated with early boroughs. Ludlow appears to be a new plantation but Weobley was already a settlement and the street plans of the two boroughs illustrate the difference (Noble, 1964, p65).

The English surname Webley derives from the settlement and a Thomas de Webbele is recorded in 1308 (Reaney, 1976). Webley was the most common of the Herefordshire place-name surnames in the London telephone directory for the year 2000 and is widely distributed. In 1337 Richard de Webbelye was the city of Hereford's mace-bearer (Salt, 1953, p 6) and in the 15<sup>th</sup> century a Walter and a Thomas Webbely witnessed deeds from Eastnor, in the East of Herefordshire.<sup>9</sup>

The castle at Weobley was probably built by either Roger or Hugh de Lacy in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century (Shoemith, 1996). The castle was garrisoned on behalf of the Empress Matilda against Stephen in 1139 and was re-taken by Stephen himself the following year (Phillot, 1869, p47).

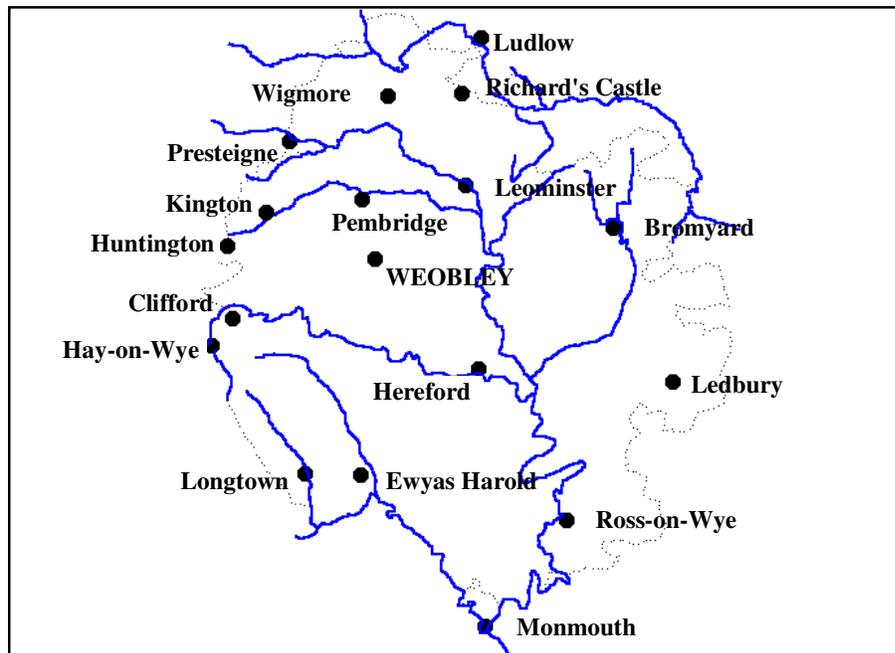


Figure 2: Medieval Boroughs in Herefordshire

Weobley was the *caput* of the de Lacy lands, which included the castles and boroughs at Ludlow and Ewyas Lacy (Longtown), held for the service of 7½ knights.<sup>10</sup> Presumably originally earthen, the castle seems to have been rebuilt in stone by the third Walter de Lacy in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century (Hillaby, 1985). In 1327 the castle was stated to be '*of no value being in ruins*'<sup>11</sup> and in 1328 referred to as '*a ruinous castle of no value*'<sup>12</sup> but this seems to have been a misrepresentation of its condition, for in 1331 it was stated that the castle had been undervalued. In 1332 the value was '*£41 16d by the first extent and £81 10s 8½d by the second extent*'.<sup>13</sup> In 1357 John Ailmond was pardoned for the offence of breaking out of

<sup>9</sup> Mss in the Shrewsbury Talbot Collection – Heref. A14, A22, A28, AA33, AA38, BB1, L12, L27  
Glos:Heref. HH5

<sup>10</sup> Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem for the reign of Henry III, 5<sup>th</sup> August 1271

<sup>11</sup> Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem of the reign of Edward III, 27<sup>th</sup> August 1327

<sup>12</sup> Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem of the reign of Edward III, 7<sup>th</sup> April 1328. In addition to the castle there is also arable land of 240 acres (97.2 Ha), 50 acres (20.25 Ha) of meadow. A water mill and a wind mill.

<sup>13</sup> Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem of the reign of Edward III, March 1332

his prison in '*the castle of Webbeleye*', providing that he stood trial for the felony for which he was detained in the first place.<sup>14</sup> In 1483, Weobley was the centre of the rebellion of Henry, Duke of Buckingham against Richard III. Buckingham was executed in Salisbury and his wife captured in Weobley (Salt, 1953, p 20). John Leland, writing in the 1530s, says of Weobley '*where is a goodly castell, but somewhat in decay*'.<sup>15</sup>

William fitz Osbern, like other Norman lords, had acquired the technique of borough founding in Normandy where William the Conqueror himself had employed it at Caen. Fitz Osbern, having been given the castle of Breteuil-sur-Iton in around 1050, constructed a *boorg* there, as he had previously at nearby Cormeilles (Hillaby, 1983). If they founded boroughs at Ewyas Lacy and Weobley,<sup>16</sup> the de Lacys followed the pattern set by their old patron, and it is possible that the by-laws of these boroughs, as were Hereford's, were based on the customs of Breteuil, a code which was to become widespread among the new boroughs of the Marches, Wales and Ireland. The de Lacy borough at Ludlow has been shown to have been privileged with these customs (Noble, 1964). These laws were designed to encourage immigration from Normandy to provide soldiers and develop trade in the newly acquired lands.

Weobley, situated at a point equidistant from Hereford and Leominster, appears to have been a successful borough. It sent its own Jury to the Assize of 1255. At the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Edward I empowered the Herefordshire boroughs of Weobley, Bromyard, Ledbury and Ross to return two members of parliament each. Weobley returned Adam Sagoun and John Compaygnoun as its members in 1295 and two members to the parliaments of 1298, September and October of 1302 and to the parliament of 1305. It returned Richard Yagon alone in 1306 (Williams, 1896, pp 155,156). At this time, Weobley, Bromyard, Ledbury and Ross had the privilege of representation withdrawn. This was at their own request, the two shillings per day payment to members being, they claimed, beyond their means (Noble, 1964, p69). Hereford and Leominster were then the only two Herefordshire boroughs represented until Weobley regained parliamentary borough status again in 1628.

Whatever problems Weobley may have experienced in paying its parliamentary burgesses (and much larger towns would experience the same problems in succeeding centuries) documentary evidence suggests that Weobley was at least reasonably prosperous. It was situated near the rich sheep farming area centred on Leominster, which produced the wool known as '*Lemster Ore*'. The value of this wool is indicated by a 1454 act of parliament which fixed the price of '*Herefordshire woll in Lemyst*' at £13 per bag in comparison with £8 6s 8d per bag for Cotswold wool (Roskell, 1992, p437).

In 1315 a grant was made to '*the bailiffs and good men of the town of Webbeleye of pavage for three years upon all wares for sale brought into their town*'.<sup>17</sup> When this expired, a new grant was made in 1319, specifically at the instance of Queen Isobella, this time for 5 years.<sup>18</sup> Medieval Weobley possessed a market, a water-mill and by 1327, a wind-mill.<sup>19</sup> Apart from milling, the normal range of medieval trades were represented in the borough; in 1316 the local smith, Miles Smith (*fabri*), had a messuage near the castle<sup>20</sup> and in 1360 a Weobley tanner, John

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<sup>14</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward III, 16<sup>th</sup> June 1357

<sup>15</sup> The Itinerary of John Leland, part V, edited by Lucy Toulmin Smith, 1908,

<sup>16</sup> The date of the creation of the borough at Weobley is unknown.

<sup>17</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward II, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1315

<sup>18</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward II, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1319

<sup>19</sup> Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem of the reign of Edward III, 7<sup>th</sup> April 1328.

<sup>20</sup> Deed A 8495, 30<sup>th</sup> November 1316 and deed A 9295 27<sup>th</sup> February 1323, deeds of the Treasury of the Receipt of the Exchequer, Ancient Deeds Volume IV

Geffes, was murdered in Worcestershire<sup>21</sup>. Deeds mention a tailor in 1363,<sup>22</sup> and a baker and a *muleward in 1370*.<sup>23</sup> A Jewish community was present in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century (Salt, 1953, p19).

The Subsidy of the Ninth and the Fifteenth records only three Herefordshire boroughs where burgesses paid the higher ninth part in 1341. Hereford has 87 names, Leominster 32 and Weobley 17 (Reeves, 1972, p45).

In the poll tax for the year 1377, every person not a genuine pauper, of 14 years or over was liable to pay one groat (four old pence). Unfortunately we do not have the Weobley figures for 1377, but the 1379 tax was on all males and all unmarried females of 16 years or over.<sup>24</sup> In this latter year, 152 persons were recorded as having paid the poll tax in Weobley (Fenwick, 1998). Among the occupations listed are carpenters, shoemakers, *piscator*,<sup>25</sup> a smith, a tanner, a butcher, a *petimarch* and a *tegulat*. The last term refers to someone who worked with bricks or tiles and implies that Weobley had buildings which required this skill, a *petimarch* is a small merchant or trader.

John Hayes was a butcher in Weobley in 1428<sup>26</sup> and in 1455 the tanner John Garston was pardoned of outlawry.<sup>27</sup> There are specific references to shops in 1292 (Salt, 1953, p19), 1294 (*ibid.* p 12) and in 1392, when a licence for alienation in mortmain for property including three shops was granted.<sup>28</sup>

Dairy Farm is one of the two cruck-built houses in Weobley (Alcock, 1981) and dates to perhaps the 14<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>29</sup> in which case it was standing when the then lord of the manor of Weobley, Sir Walter Devereux, was killed at the battle of Bryn Glâs in 1402. In this battle a large force of English under Edmund Mortimer, consisting mainly of the Herefordshire levy, were defeated by a Welsh army led by Owain Glyn Dŵr. It took place on a hill just south of Pilleth, a village to the south of Knighton and just to the west of Offa's Dyke (Davies, R R, 1995, p107). The defeat caused consternation at Henry IV's court and steps were quickly taken to limit the damage by improving defences at Clifford, Brecon and elsewhere (*ibid.*). Men from Weobley would certainly have been among the dead, and the mutilation of corpses by the Welsh added horror to the English accounts of the action. Bryn Glâs is thirteen miles from Weobley, and the alarm in the borough would have been considerable.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward III, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1360

<sup>22</sup> Deed A 9127, 16<sup>th</sup> March 1363, deeds of the Treasury of the Receipt of the Exchequer, Ancient Deeds Volume IV

<sup>23</sup> Deed A 8593, 29<sup>th</sup> September 1370, *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Commonly held to have been subject to much more evasion than the 1377 tax

<sup>25</sup> *Piscator* as opposed to *piscarius* – ordinarily a person who catches fish rather than sells them. This precision may be misleading in this case however.

<sup>26</sup> Deed A 8617, 14<sup>th</sup> November 1428, deeds of the Treasury of the Receipt of the Exchequer, Ancient Deeds Volume IV.

<sup>27</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, Henry VI, 29<sup>th</sup> November 1455

<sup>28</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, Richard II, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1392.

<sup>29</sup> The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments (England) Herefordshire and Department of the Environment Listed Buildings classify it as 14<sup>th</sup> century although Tonkin (1968) dates it to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Pevsner (1963) dates it to either the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Dairy Farm has a hall of two bays spanned by a medial cruck truss (Smith 1952).

<sup>30</sup> '...A post from Wales, loaden with heavy news,  
Whose worst was that the noble Mortimer,  
leading the men of Hereford to the fight  
Against the irregular and wild Glendower,  
Was by the rude hands of that Welshman taken,  
A thousand of his people butchered;  
Upon whose dead corpse there was such misuse,  
Such beastly shameless transformation,  
By those Welshwomen done as may not be  
Without much shame retold or spoken of' (Henry IV, part I, Act I, Scene I)

After the Battle of Bryn Glâs, or Pilleth as the English referred to it, Owain occupied Leominster, which became for a time the seat of his court and from where he distributed local property to his followers (Reeves, 1972, p52).

As in other medieval boroughs, the original Weobley burgage plots would have become split into separate holdings over a period of time. One of the ways in which property could become sub-divided is illustrated in the will of Alice Kimber of Weobley in 1408, a lady who seems to have had no high opinion of the men in her life.<sup>31</sup> Alice left to her daughter, Juliana, and Juliana's two sons, her burgage with buildings except for a chamber at the south end of the hall and a barn course (*cursu orii*) which she left to her husband John Rybbesford (she seems to have retained the surname of a previous husband). If John sold the chamber, Juliana's sons, Hugh and Walter were to be preferred as buyers. The son-in-law was to have no share – '*if John Leather claimed the burgage in right of said Juliana his wife, the said Juliana to lose her right therein for the time (pro illo tempore)*'.

The 16<sup>th</sup> century saw a great growth in the popularity of the House of Commons as vehicle for social and political advancement. During the century the number of MPs rose from 296 to 462 (Neale, 1976). Some of these seats were created in order to increase the political power of magnates who sought to fill them with their clients. Most however were created by the initiative of local gentry who could not compete for the more prestigious county seats, those of the knights of the shire, against the more powerful families who controlled them.

The practice of parliamentary borough creation continued under the early Stuarts. 45 more seats were created in the reigns of James I and Charles I. It was of particular advantage, in order to become a parliamentary borough, to be able to demonstrate that that borough had anciently returned members. It was in this context that James Tomkins, from Garnstone, one mile outside Weobley, sought to regain the borough's ancient seats. Tomkins, one of the MPs for Leominster, was successful and the two new MPs were returned on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1628 (Hillaby, 1967, p110). Sadly for the short-term political careers and social expectations of the pair, William Walter and William Tomkins, Charles I chose to dissolve parliament early in 1629 and ruled by Royal Prerogative for the next eleven years (Davies, G, 1959).

In 1295, Weobley's burgesses, Adam Sagoun and John Compaygnoun presumably had been, like the rest of the commoners, local men. The membership of the House of Commons remained legally defined in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as it always had been, as two knights from every shire and two burgesses from every town.<sup>32</sup> The law was explicit that this should be so and there were occasional challenges to the increasing tendency of boroughs to be represented by non-resident country gentry. These gentry tended to be less parochial in their interests than the burgesses, and the increasing confidence of the gentry class as represented in parliament was ultimately to mount the challenge to royal authority which was to lead to the overthrow of the crown itself.

The disruption caused by the civil wars in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century did not pass Weobley entirely by. In the summer of 1645 the Scottish army besieging the city of Hereford had spread widely across the countryside and was present in

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Westmorland's news may have been optimistic, Adam of Usk tells of '*woeful slaughter even to 8,000 souls, the victory being with Owen*' but Adam is likely to be exaggerating (Adam of Usk's, Chronicon, 237 in Myres, 1969)

<sup>31</sup> Deed A 11565, 10<sup>th</sup> February 1408, deeds of the Treasury of the Receipt of the Exchequer, Ancient Deeds Volume IV

<sup>32</sup> The Welsh boroughs, first represented in the Commons in Henry VIII's parliament of 1523, only returned one member each. Three of the English boroughs first represented in the reign of Mary I, Abingdon, Banbury and Higham Ferrers were also single member constituencies.

Weobley. A letter from 'his excellency, the Earl of Leven, Lord General of the Scottish Armies' orders his troops not to molest the person or family of Thomas Bridges of the Ley, Weobley, nor to plunder his livestock nor property.<sup>33</sup>

Joe Hillaby (1967) has demonstrated how, during the two hundred year period that the post-medieval parliamentary borough of Weobley existed, just six families dominated its politics. He showed that over time each family tended to be eclipsed in its influence by one of less local involvement and of greater national political power. This coincided with the growth of land ownership by the aristocracy. In 1663 peers owned very little property in Herefordshire; around 2% of the total. In Stretford Hundred, of which Weobley formed part, knights, baronets and lesser gentry owned 44% of the land. Peers owned 3%, and the remaining 53% was owned by others (Faraday, M, 1972, p 18). The growth of land ownership by the aristocracy in succeeding decades was to give it greater political influence.

The Thynnes, Viscounts Weymouth, and Marquises of Bath from 1789,<sup>34</sup> although Lords of the Manor of Weobley, exercised their influence from distant Longleat in Wiltshire. In 1749 Viscount Weymouth purchased, from Mansel Powell<sup>35</sup> some ancient (vote) houses in Weobley (Salt, 1953, p43). These houses were only inhabited at election time when tenants from outside the borough were brought in to occupy them and exercise the franchise, and so by 1754 Weobley became a pocket borough of the Thynne family (Hillaby, 1967, p109). The political affiliation of Weobley's members changed from Whig to Tory.

Elections entailed certain expenses for the Thynnes.<sup>36</sup> The payments made for the uncontested elections of 1771 and 1780 amounted to £175 14s 6d and £143 5s 8d respectively. The geographic origin of the electors is apparent in the 1771 expense account when payments were made to 11 Shropshire Burgesses, 4 *Glostershire* Burgesses, 4 Bodenham Burgesses, and 4 Brecknockshire and Radnorshire Burgesses. A 'treat promised the borough' cost £20 9s.

In the 1780s and 90s, the hon. Thomas Thynne<sup>37</sup> (1786), Lord George Thynne (1790 and 1796) and Lord John Thynne (1796) all represented Weobley.<sup>38</sup> Thomas Thynne's sons took their turn; his eldest son Thomas, Viscount Weymouth in 1818 and his fourth son Lord William Thynne in 1830. In 1831 his second son, Lord Henry Frederick Thynne, and his fifth son, Lord Edward Thynne, were elected as members for the borough. These were the last MPs for Weobley: when parliament was dissolved in December 1832 the parliamentary borough ceased to exist.

With the passing of the 1832 Reform Act, the houses that had been used specifically for lodging the out-of-borough voters at election time were no longer required. In 1844-5 the Marquis's agent was instructed to pull down the vote houses. Local estimates put the number of them at the time as 84 but this has been thought to be an exaggeration (Leather, 1926).

Leominster's fame for wool became supplemented by the high quality of its bread. Weobley, in the post-medieval period, was famous for its ale, so that Leominster bread and Weobley ale became by-words for the highest quality of the two main

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<sup>33</sup> Document in Herefordshire Record Office, AA1770

<sup>34</sup> The title Viscount Weymouth remained within the family to be bestowed upon the eldest sons of the marquises.

<sup>35</sup> Powell had been acting surreptitiously as Lord Weymouth's agent in order to conceal his intentions

<sup>36</sup> Figures quoted are from Salt, 1953, who used documents preserved at Longleat.

<sup>37</sup> The eldest son of 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Weymouth, later 1<sup>st</sup> Marquis of Bath

<sup>38</sup> *Notes on Weobley* by the Walter Pilley – a bound, printed document, interleaved with plans, photographs, MSS etc dated 1888 in the Pilley Collection, Hereford City Library

ingredients of the contemporary staple diet. The brewing trade began to disappear shortly after the loss of the parliamentary borough status. Another Weobley industry was glove making, which had disappeared by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Phillot, 1869, p49). The last nail-maker died in 1840 (Education through History Group, 1972) and an industry associated with glove making, tanning, also disappeared with the closing of the tannery in 1850, and another aspect of local self-sufficiency was lost (*ibid.*).

In 1839 the Tithe Apportionment records William Davies as the occupier of the property now known Dairy Farm, and the Marquis of Bath as the owner. The property was sold at auction at the Red Lion Inn in Weobley on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1871 when the occupier was Martha Maython.<sup>39</sup>

The presence of the Synock family in Weobley appears to be unbroken for over 600 years (Salt 1941, p 166). In 1468 a burgage and property was transferred to John Badam, John Wircetre, Thomas Halle and John *Synaugh*.<sup>40</sup> In 1520 James Tomkyns of Garnstone married Eleanor, the daughter of William *Synoghe*. In 1652 the parliamentary survey included James and Edward *Synnock* among the householders and James, Thomas and Edward Synnock were assessed for 2, 1 and 1 hearths respectively for hearth tax in 1665.<sup>41</sup> Edward Synnock died in 1671 and letters of Administration were granted to Francis Synnock, glover, and Thomas Synnock his son (*ibid.* p68); the *chirurgion* Edward Synnock died in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (*ibid.* p71).

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<sup>39</sup> Herefordshire Record Office document BD 33/9

<sup>40</sup> Deed A 11484, 26<sup>th</sup> April 1468, deeds of the Treasury of the Receipt of the Exchequer, Ancient Deeds Volume IV

<sup>41</sup> Microfilm in Herefordshire Record Office of original in the Public Record Office.

## 2.3 Archaeological background

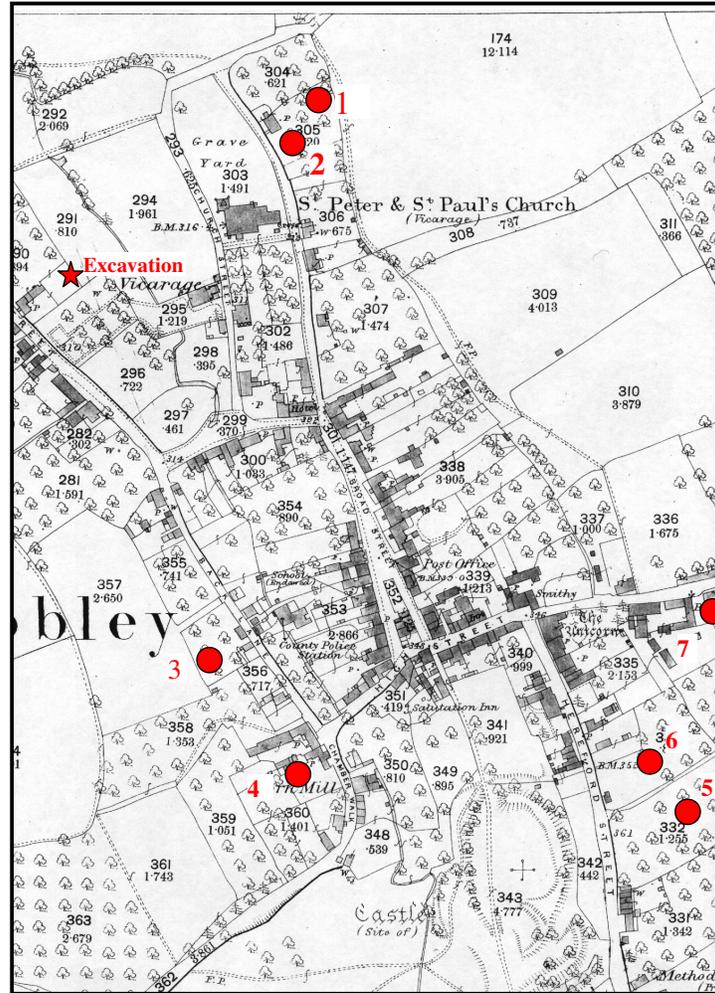


Figure 3: Archaeological Projects in Webley (based on the 1st edition 1:2500 OS plan)

- 1 'Town Ditch' – Crosskey, 2001
- 2 Parkfields – Sherlock and Pikes, 2001
- 3 Back Lane Nursery - Bartlett, 1982
- 4 Old Forge – Fagan and Topping, 1994
- 5 Burton Gardens – Rouse, 2000
- 6 Watching brief unpublished - Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record number 3705
- 7 Throne Farm – watching brief 2000-2001, by Marches Archaeology ongoing - April 2001

Webley was investigated as part of the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey, a project designed to record the archaeology of towns in the Welsh Marches undertaken in the 1990s (Dalwood, 1996). Dairy Farm lies within a part of Webley identified as a distinct medieval urban element by this survey.<sup>42</sup> This area, defined by Meadow Street to the west, and the stream to the east, currently contains three old timber framed buildings apart from Dairy Farm itself.<sup>43</sup> A raised

<sup>42</sup> Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record number 19493

<sup>43</sup> RCHME 12, SMR number 12484; RCHME 13, SMR numbers 17501 and 12485

area to the north-west of Dairy Farm has been suggested as the site of another house,<sup>44</sup> although modern dumping appears a more likely explanation for this feature (pers. comm. B Synock). The western side of Meadow Street has more timber-framed buildings. The inference drawn is that the eastern side of Meadow Street was occupied by tenement plots and indeed, given the distribution of medieval buildings, the whole area of the old borough of Weobley was much more densely occupied in the medieval period (Morriss, 1996). Whereas it can be demonstrated that old Weobley did indeed possess a larger number of houses (see below), it should be added that there is no visible evidence of occupation in the field immediately to the south of Dairy Farm.

Little other archaeological work has taken place in the area of the old borough. Kiln debris and pottery found west of Back Lane led to an inconclusive geophysical survey in 1982 (Figure 3, no 3 - Bartlett)<sup>45</sup> and later salvage recording (Figure 3, no 4 - Fagan and Topping, 1994).<sup>46</sup> A small evaluation excavation at Burton Gardens, to the east of the castle in 2000, (Figure 3, no 6 – Rouse, 2000), found no archaeological evidence apart from post-medieval pottery, and a watching brief at Throne Farm (Figure 3, no 7) by Marches Archaeology was still on-going when this report was completed (April 2001).

An excavation through what has been interpreted as the north-eastern corner of the town bank was carried out in 1983 (Figure 3, no 1 - Crosskey, 2001) and produced some late medieval pottery.<sup>47</sup> An evaluation excavation in December 2000 on the same property, that is immediately east of the church in the area thought to be the pre-borough core of Weobley, proved inconclusive (Figure 3, no 2 - Sherlock and Pikes, 2001).<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record number 21979

<sup>45</sup> Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record number 1069

<sup>46</sup> Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record number 21980

<sup>47</sup> Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record number 19462, the report of this excavation forms an appendix in Sherlock and Pikes 2001.

<sup>48</sup> Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record number 30644

### **3.0 Project Aims and Objectives**

The aims of the project were: -

- To evaluate by means of excavation, the potential for, and the nature of, archaeological remains in the area of the proposed development.
- To record any archaeological features or deposits exposed.
- To retrieve any potential dating evidence.
- To record all finds and any environmental material recovered.
- To ensure that the location and of the area excavated was accurately recorded on a suitably scaled plan.
- To record negative evidence and to consider its implications.
- To attempt to further the understanding of Weobley with regard to the medieval and post-medieval model postulated in the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey.

### **4.0 Methodology**

#### **4.1 Field methodology**

The following methodology was employed: -

- A 10.0 metre by 2.0 metre trench was excavated by use of a bucket on the back actor of a mechanical excavator supplied and by the client and manned by his staff and monitored by suitably qualified archaeologists.
- The cutting was located in the only area of the proposed development not covered by standing buildings.
- The descriptions of the deposits, photographic records and drawing numbers were recorded on the relevant data capture documents in accordance with Archenfield Archaeology's standard site recording procedures.
- Staff carrying out the fieldwork followed the guidelines laid down in the Archenfield Archaeology Health and Safety Policy

Archenfield Archaeology conforms to the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Code of Conduct and code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology. All projects are, where applicable, carried out in accordance with IFA Standards and Guidance or Draft Standards and Guidance.

#### **4.2 Processing methodology**

- All data were entered into a Microsoft ©Access relational database

## 5.0 The results

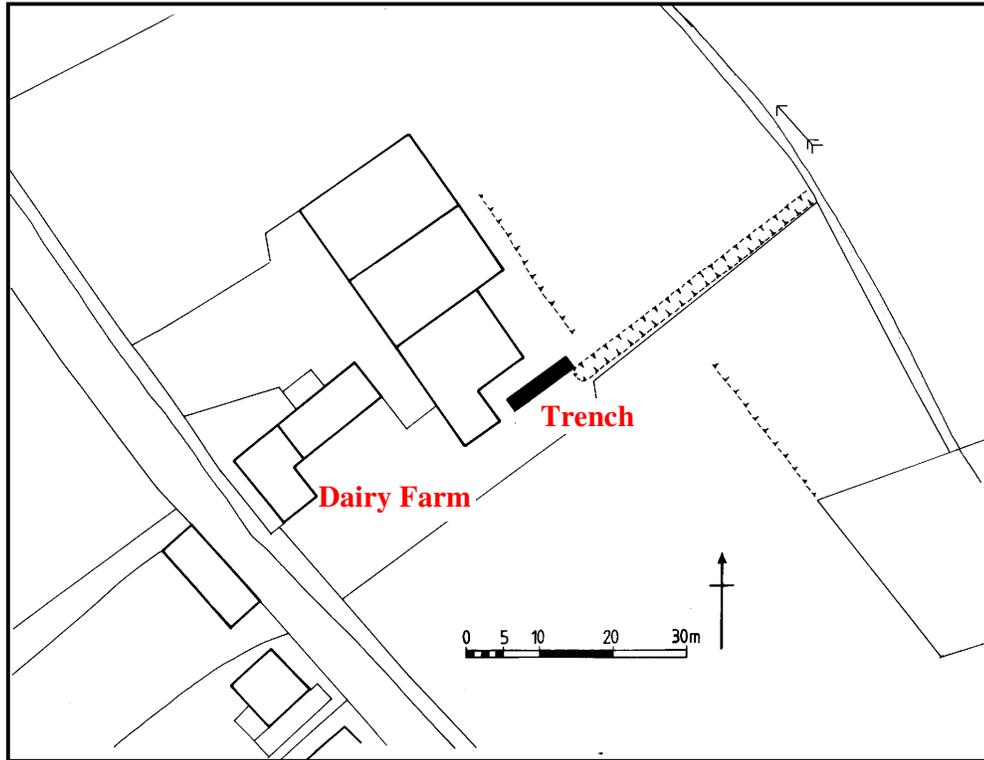


Figure 4: Trench Location Plan

## 5.1 The stratigraphy

The topsoil contained modern detritus and had clearly been disturbed down to the subsoil level in the very recent past. The only feature was a small posthole, context 3,

No finds of other than of a modern date were recovered.

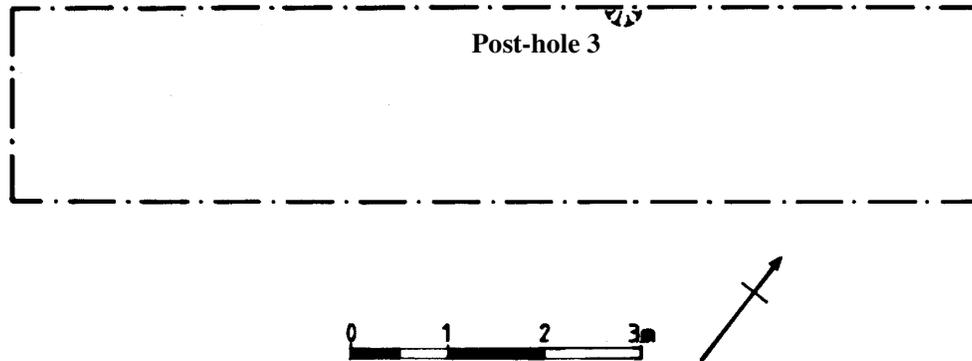


Figure 5: Plan of Trench

## 6.0 Conclusions

The creation of new towns was common in the Middle Ages. Bishops, Monasteries and Temporal Lords created them as a means of increasing revenue. An early English example is St Albans, where the abbot created a triangular market place to the north-east of the monastery in the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century. Other new towns created by monasteries before the Norman Conquest may include Abingdon, Peterborough, Whitby and Hartlepool and certainly Durham (Beresford, 1988, p326). After the Norman Conquest the pace of borough creation accelerated with 21 new towns created between 1066 and 1100 and a further 19 by 1130 (*ibid.*)

In the Welsh Marches the borough foundations of the first phase include a group which were founded by fitz Osbern which include the boroughs attached to the castles at Monmouth (Kissack, 1996, p18) and Chepstow (Noble, 1964, p64).

In Herefordshire, apart from Hereford itself, for centuries the only borough in the county, Domesday records several places which may be identified as boroughs in 1086. At Wigmore the borough was specified '*burgo qd ibi est*' (Thorn and Thorn) as it was at Clifford which Gilbert the sheriff held of Ralph de Tony at a revenue of both the borough and the plough '*ten illud ad firma burga. Car*' (*ibid.*) and which had 16 burghers. At Ewyas Harold, the embryo of a borough might be discernible in the two houses within the castle itself '*in castello*' (*ibid.*).

Other boroughs followed - Kington was probably founded as a borough around its castle in the early years of the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Sinclair and Fenn, 1995) and Richard de Capella (Bishop of Hereford, 1121-1127) seems to have founded boroughs at Bromyard (Williams, 1987), Ledbury, Ross-on-Wye and Bishop's Castle during the same period (Hillaby, 1997).

The street and property boundary layout of Weobley possesses elements that clearly derive from having been planned. The central core of the present village, the main street leading to the castle gate with its tenement plots, would have been part of the de Lacy planted borough. However, if the area around the church is included, the street layout of Weobley possesses a disconformity, which probably results from the church pre-dating the new borough (Beresford, 1988, p450). A similar layout exists at Olney in Buckinghamshire, where there are also two distinct elements in the village plan, an original area round the church, and a later planned borough immediately to the north (*ibid.* p107).

The de Lacys also held in the manor of Stanton (Stanton Lacy in Shropshire) in Domesday, where the castle and town of Ludlow was later built on a new site. The original town may have been south of the castle and built around a triangular market place in the area known as Dinham (Shoesmith, 2000, p12). Joce de Dinan, who held Ludlow Castle between 1136 and 1156, may have originally built this town (Faraday, 1991, p3). Both forms of borough development, the totally new plantation and the deliberate development of an existing village, were common. In 1251, the Earl of Derby, William de Ferrers, created the borough of Higham Ferrers by giving burgess status to the villagers of Higham (Beresford, 1988, p105). The Ferrers' borough of Newborough in Needwood Forest, however, was a new plantation (*ibid.* p55).

The original road layout at Weobley appears to consist of an east-west road running north of the church, now represented by footpaths and the northernmost section of Church Street, and a north-south road, now the western part of Church Street. The north-south road may have continued to the north towards Pembridge, via Stockmoor, but if so, little evidence remains. This road seems to have run south from the western end of the church towards the southern part of

Hereford Street and thence on to Hereford, and is likely to have been diverted eastward to accommodate the construction of the castle.

The east-west road, now metalled for a short distance north of the churchyard, was referred to as the Queen's highway in a deed of 1598.<sup>49</sup> To the east of the church this is still a bridle-way to Dilwyn and would originally have been the route to Leominster. To the west of the church the original road seems to be represented by a footpath which joins the northern part of Meadow Street where it takes a sudden turn to the west, from whence it probably led to Kington.

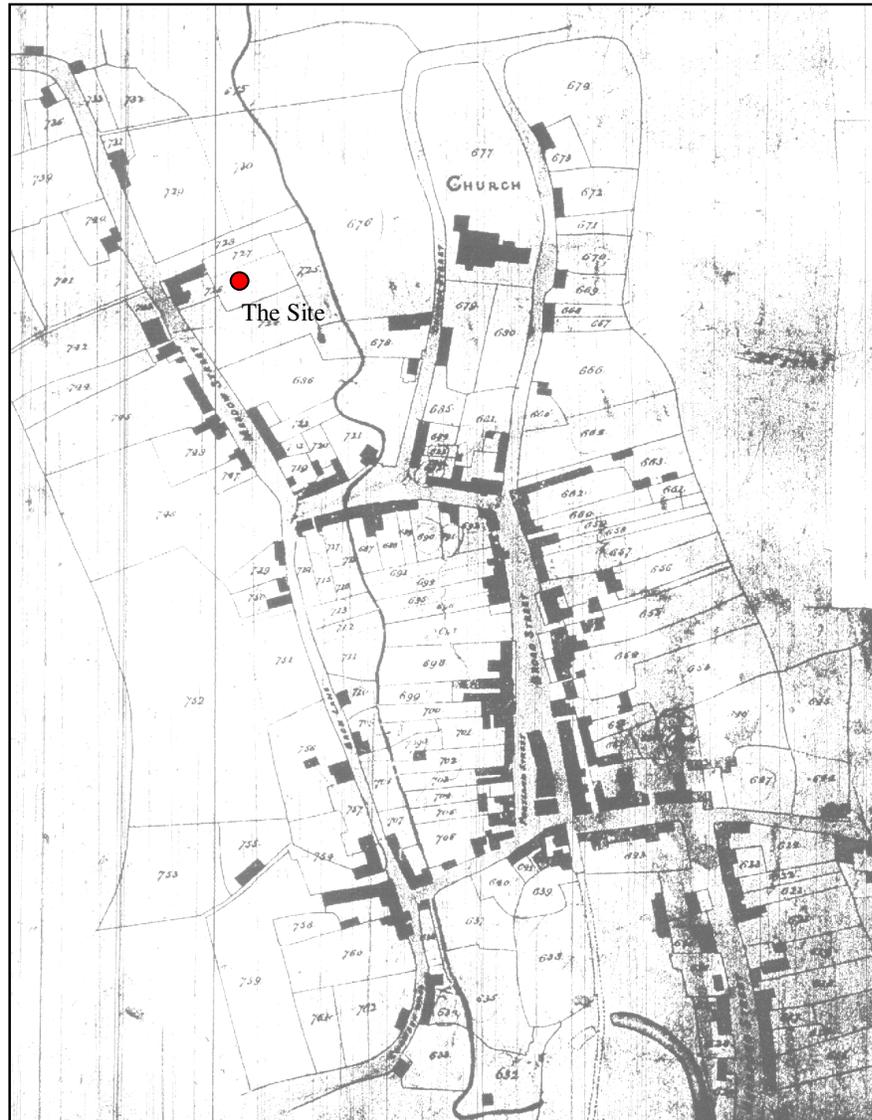


Figure 6: Extract from the 1838 tithe map of Weobley

The creation of the borough, and more specifically its market place, would have created new traffic patterns. The present Meadow Street, which appears, either by design or utilisation, to be a short-cut from the centre of Weobley to the north-west, would have made redundant the original road running west from the church.

<sup>49</sup>

A conveyance between Lancelot Kinsley (Vicar of Weobley) and Robert Davies for the property immediately east of the church now known as Parkfields - *Pasture or arable, bounded East – the Town Ditch and Parkfield; West – Weobley churchyard; South – land of Thomas Blyther; North - Queen's highway*. See Sherlock and Pikes 2001

In any event, the development of the centre of Weobley would have occurred before development on Meadow Street.

Meadow Street is certainly medieval; in 1385 there was a feoffment by John de Norton to several named persons of land with buildings called *Brounyngesplace in le Medustret*.<sup>50</sup> In 1407 there was a feoffment of a half burgage in *le Meduwstret* by Roger Croumpe and Joan, his wife, to John Ekkely,<sup>51</sup> and in 1434 a release of a messuage in *le Medewestrete* is recorded.<sup>52</sup>

The scatter of early housing along Meadow Street has been used as an argument in favour of a much denser occupation of the whole area of the historic borough in the medieval period. Certainly there is evidence of the demolition of buildings. As early as 1436 a grant to Walter *Deveroux*<sup>53</sup> refers to 'two places formerly built on'.<sup>54</sup> Demolition of houses in Weobley is recorded in 1725,<sup>55</sup> and large-scale demolition of the vote houses occurred in 1844-5, estimated locally in the order of 70-80 dwellings.

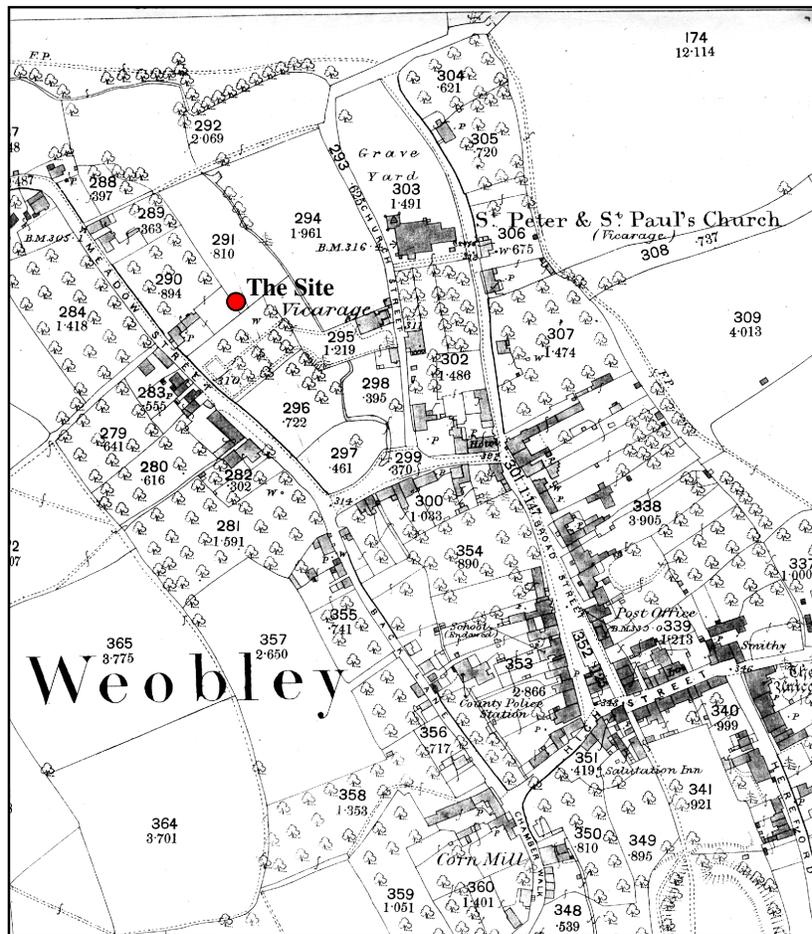
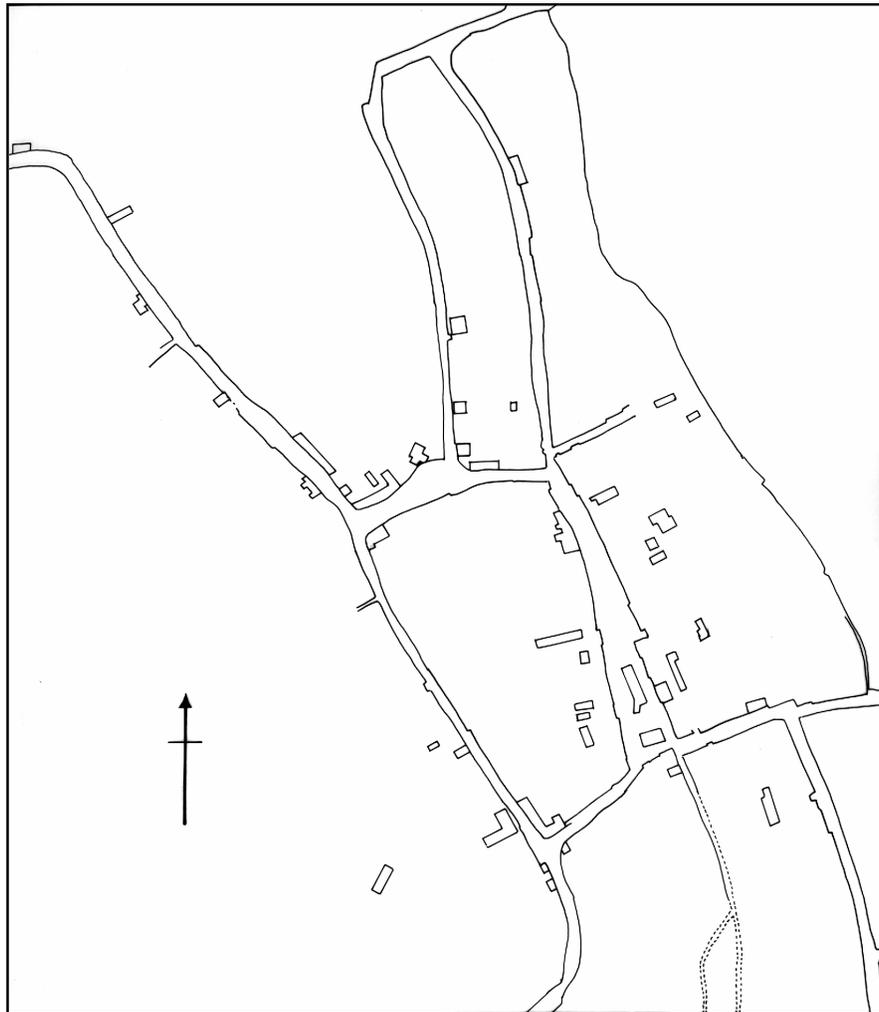


Figure 7: 1887 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1:2500 plan of Weobley

<sup>50</sup> Deed A 9477, 6<sup>th</sup> February 1385, a deed of the Treasury of the Receipt of the Exchequer, Ancient Deeds Volume IV  
<sup>51</sup> Deed A 9274, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1407, *ibid.*  
<sup>52</sup> Deed A 8525, 20<sup>th</sup> October 1434, *ibid.*  
<sup>53</sup> The grandson of the Walter Devereux who fell at Pilleth.  
<sup>54</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, Henry VI, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1438  
<sup>55</sup> Garnstone Estate Papers in Herefordshire Record Office L57/101, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1725

A problem arises with the extent of the area concerned however. The medieval and early post-medieval houses in Weobley are distributed throughout an area which extends approximately 600 metres north to south by approximately 300 metres east to west. In comparison Hereford is less than twice the area. The population of Hereford has been estimated at about 2,850 in 1377.<sup>56</sup> If Weobley's density of settlement was similar to Hereford's then a population in excess of 1,500 would be expected in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. This is an unrealistically high figure and the 1379 poll tax return, with a total of 152 males and unmarried females of 16 and over, suggests a much lower one. Nor do later statistics suggest a high population; the muster of men of Weobley aged 16 and over, who were able to bear arms was 23 in 1539 and 36 in 1542 (Salt, 1953, p21). In 1664 there were 126 houses in Weobley of which 64 were exempt from paying the hearth tax (Faraday, 1972, p106). The hearth tax returns for 1665 list 51 householders who were assessed.<sup>57</sup>



**Figure 8: Buildings demolished between 1838 (tithe map) and 1887 (1<sup>st</sup> edition OS)**

<sup>56</sup> Entry for the Hereford constituency in Roskell, 1992. In 1377 1,903 males and females over the age of 13 were assessed for tax in Hereford (Fenwick, 1998)

<sup>57</sup> Microfilm in Herefordshire Record Office of original in the Public Record Office.

Figure 7 shows those buildings which appear on the tithe map in 1838 but not on the 1:2500 OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition plan in 1887. These number at least 43 with two more possible buildings.<sup>58</sup> Some of these buildings were quite large and are likely to have contained more than one dwelling. The figure of 84 vote houses being demolished in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (see above) may therefore not be very much of an exaggeration. The buildings which survived from 1838 to 1887 numbered at least 67: many of these are also would be occupied by more than one dwelling. Assuming that the demolished buildings were the older, more run-down ones, this would agree with the figure of around 120-130 late medieval and early post-medieval dwellings for Weobley suggested by the hearth tax assessment and may indicate a figure of 700 or more for the early 17<sup>th</sup> century population. Many of the houses would have been built as the result of original burgages being sub-divided over the years and one piece of research has catalogued around 75 sites that might be identified as the original burgage plots.<sup>59</sup> This number fits much more comfortably with the population which might be expected from the 1379 poll tax figures.

Again, although these figures are fairly speculative, the inevitable inference must be that most of the area of the old borough was not built up during the medieval period. It is possible that there was an original intention to build on the whole area of the old borough. Medieval new boroughs were sometimes laid out ambitiously and sometimes the burgage plots were never developed. In 1443 a burgage in the Bishop of Hereford's early 12<sup>th</sup> century borough of Ledbury was still not built on - '*non edificatum*' (Hillaby, 1970, p11). The buildings known to have existed in 1838 are fairly densely concentrated in the southern part of the village and this applies equally both to those which were demolished in 1844-5 and to those which survived.

On balance it seems that the northern part of Weobley was highly unlikely to ever have been as densely occupied as the southern area, around the castle. In this context, the lack of archaeological evidence from Dairy Farm is understandable and expectations of large-scale medieval archaeology existing in the northern part of the old borough are not likely to be warranted. The exception to this might be the possibility of remains of an early village core near to the church.

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<sup>58</sup> One of these is a building which in 1887 was on the same site as a building in 1838 but with a different shape – which may be a new building or an alteration to an existing one. The other seems not be in exactly the same place.

<sup>59</sup> Information drawn from a GCE A level thesis which used a range of techniques to investigate the archaeology of Weobley. These techniques included building surveys, aerial photographs, the tithe map and hedgerow dating (Lucas, 1991).

## **7.0 Archive deposition**

The primary project archive, consisting of the excavated material and any original paper records, will be prepared and stored in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' guidelines for the preparation and storage of archives. The primary archive will be stored with Hereford City Museum.

A copy of the digital archive, stored on CD and consisting of context, artefact and ecofact data, together with the site drawings and selected photographs, will accompany the primary archive.

The client, in consultation with the project manager, will make provision for the deposition of all finds from the excavation with Hereford City Museum. On completion of the fieldwork and the processing, collation, recording and analysis of the finds from the excavation all finds will be handed over to the museum staff, along with the project archive. Arrangements will be made with the museum for the transfer of title.

## **8.0 Publication and dissemination proposals**

Paper copies of this report will be lodged with the Archaeological Adviser to Herefordshire Council, Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record, Hereford City Library, and Weobley Museum. A short note on the project will be prepared for publication in the Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club.

Copies of this report on CD, including the supporting archival material will be available from Archenfield Archaeology.

The complete photographic record, including the negatives, will be retained by Archenfield Archaeology.

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