

Archaeological assessment of Kenchester (Roman small town), Hereford and Worcester

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with contributions by Derek Hurst and Elizabeth Pearson

Summary

The Roman small town of Kenchester was surveyed during the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey, a desk-based study of 64 smaller historic towns in Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Archaeological and documentary evidence relating to Kenchester was carefully analysed, comprising topographic data, published and unpublished archaeological reports, museum collections, historical maps, and field data recorded by the project team.

Detailed evidence is provided on the character and layout of the settlement in the Roman period. The available information is analysed and mapped in detail, and a model of the development of the town is proposed. In addition, the evidence for pre-urban occupation is considered, together with evidence of later 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 Kenchester, which will inform future archaeological investigations as well as management decisions.

The historic core of Kenchester 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.

1 Introduction

1.1 Location and landuse

The urban area of Kenchester is located at NGR SO 440 428 in South Herefordshire District. The Roman town was abandoned possibly sometime in the 5th century AD and there is no record of later settlement within the defences. The modern hamlet of Kenchester is situated in the area of the western suburb of the Roman town and Magna Castra Farm is situated in the area of the eastern suburb.

1.2 Topography, geology and soils

Kenchester lies at a height of between 75m and 95m OD on a spur between the valley of the Wye to the south and the valley of a small stream to the north. The soils are typical stagnogleys of the Vernolds association (which may include alluvial gley soils along the stream) and argillic or stagnogleyic argillic brown earths of the Escrick 1 association (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Ragg *et al* 1984). The underlying geology consists of Downtonian Raglan Mudstone Formation overlain by morainic deposits and till (British

Geological Survey 1:50,000, sheet 198).

1.3 Chronological outline

The origins of the Roman small town at Kenchester are obscure. Excavations in the eastern suburb (HWCM 119) uncovered a late Iron Age settlement with a gap of about a century between this and the later Romano-British settlement. This discontinuation of occupation did not necessarily occur in the rest of the settlement, however (Wilmott 1980, 121; Wilmott and Rahtz 1985, 53).

It has been suggested that Kenchester developed from a military *vicus*. The town was in a good strategic position at the crossing point of two military roads, close to the Iron Age hill fort at Credenhill, and overlooking a bridging point of the River Wye. It was also equidistant from the fort at Clyro to the west and that at Stretton Grandison to the east (Wilmott 1980, 120). Despite intensive aerial reconnaissance in the area, however, there is no evidence of a fort and the three pieces of military metal work from Kenchester (Webster 1958) are not in themselves enough to postulate a military origin for the settlement.

Whether it developed from a military centre or a settled native population, finds from the site suggest that occupation was established towards the end of the 1st century (Wilmott 1980, 123). Little is known of the development of the town but it has been suggested that the centre of the earliest settlement was the military cross roads (Wilmott 1980, 121). Aerial photographic evidence and excavated structures suggest that this 1st to 2nd century settlement stretched along the road some 700m to the west and 450m to the east of this focal point.

As well as the military and local road network the River Wye played a major part in local communications. Cargoes landed on the river bank would have had only a mile journey over the gently sloping flood plain to the town and connections with the Rivers Severn, Lugg and Monnow meant that boats could command a wide circle of trade in the south and west Midlands and Wales. Definite evidence of southward trade has been recovered from Kenchester in the shape of Forest of Dean iron ore and quernstones, tile and pottery from Gloucester and Cirencester, as well as Cotswold oolitic limestone for architectural stonework (Wilmott 1980, 127; Wilmott and Rahtz 1985, 41).

The economic base of the town undoubtedly rested in the rural settlements in the countryside around it (Wilmott 1980, 128), but evidence of industry in the form metalworking was recovered during excavations in the defended area (HWCM 16885; Jack and Hayter 1916, 179), and to the east (HWCM 119; Wilmott and Rahtz 1985). Specialists serving the urban population are represented by two oculists stamps (Wright 1964) and a lead forger's piece (Shoemith 1986).

Around the mid-2nd century, an area to the west of the military crossroads, perhaps encompassing the main civic buildings, was enclosed by an earthen rampart. At around the same period there is evidence of a palisade, ditch and bank defining part of the settlement to the east. This survived until the later 3rd century but its extent and function are unclear (Wilmott and Rahtz 1985, 58, 74).

The status of the town is not clear. Its size and wealth separate it from the other small settlements in the area and it has been suggested that it functioned from its foundation as a *pagus* centre for an area of the *civitas Dobunorum* which was separated from its *civitas* capital at Cirencester by the *territorium* around Gloucester (Rivet 1964 152-3; Wilmott 1980, 128). It has been suggested that at some time after the erection of the town defences in the later 2nd century there was a deliberate remodelling of the area enclosed by them and the focus of the settlement moved to a new crossroads in the centre of defended area (Wilmott 1980, 123). It is possible that this remodelling was connected to a rise in status, possibly elevation to *civitas* capital (Wilmott 1980, 123). Whatever its legal status the

town prospered. The result of this increase in prosperity can be seen in the stone-built buildings, painted wall plaster, mosaics, hypocausts and other outward signs of wealth.

The defences were re-furbished around the mid-4th century, with a stone wall, gatehouses and bastions and a new wider defensive ditch (Heys and Thomas 1962). By this time the military roads passing through the town were probably little used and the town may have only been viable because of its function as an administrative centre (Wilmott 1980, 130). Evidence from the suburbs suggests that there was shrinkage of the occupied area by the late 4th century (Esmonde Cleary 1987).

The hoard of worn late 4th century coins found in a hypocaust within the defended area (HWCM 7252; Jack and Hayter 1916) and the alterations carried out to the western gate and road (Heys and Thomas 1962) have been taken to indicate the presence a monetary economy and of an authority able to carry out substantial public works into the 5th century (Wilmott 1980, 126, 129). It is possible that the remains of buildings contemporary with post-Roman occupation of the town were destroyed by ploughing in the 19th century or that the excavations between 1912 and 1925 failed to identify them. If this were the case there may be parallels between Kenchester and 5th and 6th century development of the *civitas* capital at Wroxeter.

1.4 Placename studies

The remains at Kenchester were first connected with the *Magnis* of the 13th Iter of the Antonine itinerary in 1732 (Wilmott 1980, 117). Rivet (1970, 76) suggests that *Magnis* can be translated as "The Rocks". It has been suggested that *Magonsaete*, the name of the Dark Age kingdom in this area, is derived from *Magnis* (Pretty 1989, 179). There are serious phonological problems with this however, and more likely derivations can be found (Gelling 1992, 82). The name *Kenchester* means "Cena's Roman town" and the earliest recorded form of the placename is *Chenecestre* in 1086 (Coplestone-Crow 1989). On the 1843 tithe map of the parish of Kenchester the eastern area of the defended Roman town is referred to as "The Walls" (HFNS nd).

1.5 Syntheses of documentary and archaeological data

Considerable amounts of Roman masonry were still standing within the defences at Kenchester until the early 19th century, and the town has attracted antiquarian and archaeological interest for some centuries. A useful summary of early investigations on the site is provided in the report of the 1912-13 excavations (Jack and Hayter 1916). A more recent summary of archaeological and topographical information has been produced by Wilmott (1980), and Kenchester is discussed in some detail in several synthetic volumes on Roman towns (Crickmore 1984a; Crickmore 1984b; Esmonde Cleary 1987; Burnham and Wachter 1990).

The present assessment by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey was carried out in 1994. The text was revised in March 1995 to incorporate the results of fieldwork undertaken by the Survey (see section 1.7). No information published after December 1994 has been incorporated into this assessment

1.6 Cartographic sources

Because of the abandonment of the town some time after the early 5th century the only surviving Roman boundary is the earthwork marking the line of the town defences. Nineteenth century maps including the Tithe Map of 1843 (HFNS nd) and the Ordnance Survey first edition 1:2500 maps (*Herefordshire sheet XXXIII.5* (1887)) were consulted however.

1.7 Archaeological excavations and surveys

The site of Kenchester has been robbed for stone and artefacts since antiquity. Antiquarians such as Leland, in the mid-16th century, Camden and Aubrey in the 17th century, and Stukely in 1721, recorded a range of artefactual, ecofactual and structural evidence recovered from the site (HWCM 21005; Chandler 1993; Bull 1882; Jack and Hayter 1916, 171-173). The area within the defences was not cultivated because of the large amounts of masonry present and from at least the 16th century was "completely overgrown with hazel brambles and similar bushes" (Chandler 1993). Between 1810 and 1820, however, it was cleared of standing masonry and ploughed. During the 19th century large quantities of artefacts, including stone and ceramic roof tiles, were recovered from the plough soil (HWCM 21006; Jack and Hayter 1916, 173).

The first excavation on the site which might possibly be called "archaeological" was conducted by Dean Mereweather in 1840-42 (HWCM 21003). Contemporary accounts note, however, that "they seem to have gone to work without any system and to have no particular reason for digging a hole in one place rather than the other" and the results of the excavations do not seem to have been published (Jack and Hayter 1916, 174-175).

The first published excavations at Kenchester were undertaken by G H Jack and the Woolhope Club in 1912-13. These involved a series of trial trenches across road lines and the following of walls in the centre of the defended area (HWCM 16885; 16886; 16887; Jack and Hayter 1916). The method of excavation meant that whilst large numbers of structures and artefacts were recovered, they were largely unrelated in the text. In general the sequence of development within the town cannot be determined with any accuracy. In 1920 three skeletons were found where Watling Street approaches the town defences from the south (HWCM 20791; Jack and Hayter 1926, 9), and in 1924 a trench was cut across Watling Street just to the south of this (HWCM 20790; Jack and Hayter 1926, 9).

In 1924-25 more excavations were carried out within the walls (HWCM 20793; HWCM 20794; Jack and Hayter 1926) and across the town defences on the north side (HWCM 20795; Jack and Hayter 1926, 7). In 1926 a trench was put across the road running out of the defended area to the east (HWCM 20792; Jack and Hayter 1926; Anon 1926). As with the 1912-13 excavations the method of excavation and reporting means that it is difficult to use the information provided to build up any picture of town development.

In 1929 trial trenches were undertaken by a Mr Marshall across the western defences (HWCM 20796; Watkins 1929). The exact location of these is not known but one appears to have run across a bastion on the north west corner. In 1932 RCHME published a survey of the defended area with the buildings uncovered during the 1912-13 and 1924-25 excavations marked on (RCHME 1932).

Between 1956 and 1962 a series of trial trenches and small area excavations were undertaken on the western defences with the aim of elucidating their form and date (HWCM 20797, HWCM 20798, HWCM 20799, HWCM 21001, HWCM 21002; Webster 1956; Hays and Thomas 1962). The publication of the results of aerial reconnaissance over Kenchester in the 1950s and 1960s resulted in a clearer definition of the extent and internal layout of the town (Baker 1966; Baker 1970; St Joseph 1953; St Joseph 1958).

In 1975-7 a resistivity and magnetometer survey was carried out by the Ancient Monuments Laboratory on an area to the east of the defences identified from aerial photographs as the possible site of a temple. Excavations were carried out in this area in 1977-9 and an Iron Age settlement and a 1st to 4th century villa complex was uncovered (HWCM 119; Wilmott and Rahtz 1985).

In 1992 a desk top assessment of the land around Magna Castra Farm, to the east of the defended area was carried out by the Archaeology Service of the Hereford and Worcester County Council in response to a development proposal (Brown 1992).

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

1.8 Acknowledgments and personnel

Survey fieldwork was carried out by Hal Dalwood and Paul Godbehere. Analysis and report writing were carried out by Victoria Buteux. The report was edited by Hal Dalwood.

2 Pre-urban evidence

Neolithic flints and an axe have been found on the site of the Roman town (HWCM 8367, 7086) but the first evidence of settlement on the site comes from the 1977-78 excavation of part of the eastern suburb of Kenchester. Beneath Roman deposits traces of buildings and occupation levels dating to between 3rd century and 1st century BC were found (HWCM 119; Wilmott and Rahtz 1985, 50). This settlement was broadly contemporary with the occupation of the nearby hill-fort of Credenhill although the later continued to be occupied until the 1st century AD (Stanford 1970; Wilmott and Rahtz 1985, 53).

3 Roman archaeological evidence

3.1 Roman remains and buildings

A small section of the core of the defensive wall at the northwest corner of the site was standing in the 1930s (HWCM 21011; RCHME 1932, 93) but is no longer visible. It is clear that ploughing has damaged the top of Roman deposits but archaeological excavations have demonstrated the survival of the rampart, ditches, town walls, gateway and bastion on the western defences (Heys and Thomas 1962) and roads, the foundations of stone and timber buildings and associated buried deposits both within the defences and in the suburb to the east (Jack and Hayter 1916; Jack and Hayter 1926; Heys and Thomas 1962; Wilmott and Rahtz 1985).

3.2 Roman urban components

Analysis of the evidence summarised above indicated the existence of six urban components. The characteristics of these urban components are summarised below.

Street system (HWCM 21018). The main east to west and north to south roads through the town (HWCM 6883, HWCM 11129, HWCM 11130, HWCM 11131) were military routeways and joined Kenchester to the forts at Clyro to the west, Stretton Grandison to the east, Leintwardine to the north and Abergavenny to the southwest (Wilmott 1985, 20). It has been suggested that the crossroads formed by these military roads was the focus of the 1st and early 2nd century town, and that the minor roads or tracks within the settlement aligned on this crossroads date from this period (Wilmott 1980, 121). Wilmott has suggested that the excavated crossroads at the centre of the defended area (Jack and Hayter 1926) was part of the remodelling of the town in the late 2nd century, after the construction of the defences, and that roads and tracks aligned on this cross roads date from the late 2nd century onwards (Wilmott 1980, 123).

The plan of the side streets as revealed by aerial photography is irregular and there seems to have been no attempt to lay out *insulae* (St Joseph 1953). Little information is available on the date or construction of the minor roads but the main roads have been sectioned in a number of places (HWCM 16885, HWCM 16886, HWCM 16887, HWCM 20790, HWCM 20791, HWCM 20792, HWCM 20793, HWCM 21002). The

details of road construction and date can be found in the reports of the excavations (Jack and Hayter 1916; Jack and Hayter 1926; Heys and Thomas 1958; Heys and Thomas 1962, Wilmott 1980) but it seems clear that from the late 2nd century the roads within the defences were more substantial than those without and were cambered with stone-built drains.

Town defences (HWCM 21019). The town defences create an irregular enclosure of about 22 acres astride the main east to west road through Kenchester, to the west of the military crossroads. They still form a substantial earthwork and have been the focus of a number of excavations in the town since the 1920s. The evidence from these excavations suggests that the original defences were constructed around 150 and consisted of a rampart and V-shaped ditch with timber gateways (Wilmott 1980, 123). The defences did not surround the whole of the 2nd century town but may have been erected around the public buildings (Wilmott 1980). Earlier buildings had been destroyed prior to their construction. In the mid-4th century a stone wall was added to the original rampart; stone gateways and bastions were constructed, and a new defensive ditch excavated (Heys and Thomas 1962; Wilmott 1980, 126). Three phases of development were identified at the west gate, the final phase occurring some time in the later 4th or early 5th century (Heys and Thomas 1962, fig 3; Wilmott 1980).

The only excavated gateway is that to the west (HWCM 273), but there must have been one on the eastern side of the defences where the main east-west road left the town (HWCM 21014). Stukeley's 1721 map of Kenchester shows four gates but his positioning of the eastern gate is not on line with the main road and the accuracy of the map must be questioned (Jack and Hayter 1916, 177). The general arrangement of the road system as revealed by aerial photography gives no indication of gates in the north or south walls (Baker 1966), but it is possible that the north to south road uncovered by Jack in 1924-5 may have lead to gates in the defences.

Occupation areas (HWCM 21020, HWCM 21030, HWCM 21031, HWCM 21032). There are few dated occupation sequences from excavations at Kenchester, but traces of the late 1st to early 2nd century settlement provide evidence for stone and timber buildings, including a possible granary (Webster 1956; Wilmott and Rahtz 1985), hearths, pebble surfaces, and pits (Heys and Thomas 1962). The archaeological evidence combined with that from air photographs indicates that prior to the construction of the first town defences in the mid-2nd century Kenchester was a linear development stretching *c* 700m to the west and *c* 450m to the east of the military crossroads.

Extensive evidence of destruction by fire in the later 2nd century is found in all areas of the town. This may be co-incident, however, as the dating of the burnt material within the ramparts is not very secure and evidence of burning underneath the rampart may be connected with site clearance prior to its construction.

The construction of the first town defences in the mid-2nd century created a central area perhaps containing the main public buildings (HWCM 21020, HWCM 21030), with suburbs to the west (HWCM 21031) and to the east (HWCM 21032). At some time after the mid-2nd century it has been suggested that the central area (HWCM 21020, HWCM 21030) was remodelled and a crossroads built which became a focus of settlement (Wilmott 1980). A number of different types of buildings have been identified by excavation within this area. The main frontages were crammed with closely-packed buildings. Some survived as little more than flag floors, presumably supporting a timber structure, while others had concrete floors and stone foundations. These strip houses, some with timber porticoes, were presumably commercial premises. One building pushed out into the street and had a stone-built portico. It has been suggested that this was a classical temple or some other public building of some importance (Wilmott 1980, 125). The sequence in this area is very unclear, however, and this building may represent the latest occupation in the town and be aligned on a

later street frontage.

The area away from the street frontages but within the ramparts appears, from aerial photographic evidence, to have been more open and to have included some large winged corridor villas. These were buildings with some pretensions containing mosaic pavements, hypocausts and painted wall plaster. It is not clear if they had a private or public function but from what little evidence there is it has been suggested that they are late in the sequence (Wilmott 1980, 125-126).

No temples have been excavated but several stone altars have been recovered, mostly re-used in secondary contexts (Jack and Hayter 1916, 180), as well as two busts of Minerva, a pipeclay Venus (Jack and Hayter 1926, 135) and various miniature votive or ritual finds (VCH 1908).

The evidence suggests that a large area of occupation to the east of the defences (HWCM 21032) continued to be part of the town until at least the late 4th century (HWCM 119; Wilmott and Rahtz 1985, 98-99). A number of small metalled roads leading off the main east-west road can be seen on aerial photographs and may indicate dense occupation, at least on the street frontage, with access to rear yards or further buildings (Esmonde Cleary 1987, 100). Evidence of burials alongside the roads to the east of the defended area (HWCM 119, HWCM 20791) suggest the presence of a cemetery. The size and importance of Kenchester suggests that the cemeteries serving the town would have been intensively used and very extensive (Brown 1992, 3) but, as is the case with the rest of the suburb, their boundaries are not known.

Even less is known about the western suburb (HWCM 21031). Aerial photography shows lanes running south from the main road, and coins and other evidence of occupation have been recovered from the ploughsoil to the west and south-west of the defended area (Jack and Hayter 1916, 176). Evidence from excavations is poor, however. Part of this area was certainly occupied prior to the building of the earth rampart (Esmonde Cleary 1987, 101) and the cobbled surface and pit to the west of the 4th century defensive ditch suggests some activity associated with the later town (HWCM 21001; Heys and Thomas 1962, 32). This area was probably on the periphery of the town throughout its life and is now largely obscured by modern Kenchester.

3.3 Roman urban form

Definition and classification. The Roman urban form (HWCM 21033) has been defined and mapped, based on the extent of the identified urban components. The available evidence indicates that the Roman urban form of Kenchester can be classified as a Roman small town (English Heritage 1992).

Survival. The site of the Roman town of Kenchester has been robbed for stone and artefacts since antiquity. It is not known how long the area outside the defences has been ploughed but that within the rampart was only cleared in the early 19th century (see section 1.7) when "in the drought of summer the lines of the streets and foundations of houses are quite visible in the verdure" (Bull 1882, 244). Subsequent ploughing damaged the upper Roman levels and it was noted that "not a ploughing season passed without a share or two being broken against some buried stonework". What were interpreted as stone plinths for timber buildings were removed from a depth of *c* 0.6m below the surface (Bull 1882, 244).

Despite the looting and plough damage excavation has demonstrated that substantial archaeological deposits survive within the area of the Roman town. Trenches across the western rampart show that it still stands to a maximum height of 1.67m, with the 2nd century defensive ditch 2.4m deep and 4m wide, and the 4th century ditch 2.7m

deep and 12m wide (Heys and Thomas 1962). Underneath the defences *c* 0.6m of earlier deposits were noted (Webster 1956)

There have been no modern excavations within the defences but reports of the early 20th century excavations suggest that intact Roman deposits were found *c* 0.2m below the plough soil and that these were at least 1.2m thick. The excavators often stopped at what were considered to be Roman levels, but it was noted that substantial deposits of 1.2m to 1.5m remained largely unexcavated below this (Jack and Hayter 1916, 179).

Outside the defences a section across Watling Street uncovered Roman road surfaces 0.5m thick, 0.15m below present ground surface (HWCM 20790; Jack and Hayter 1926, 9), and on the site of the villa complex in the eastern suburb intact Roman deposits were encountered about 0.25m below the present ground surface and were up to 2m deep. It was noted that in this area there was no disturbance of Roman deposits by activities other than ploughing and stone-robbing (Wilmott and Rahtz 1985, 43), but since the excavation of this area extensive mineral extraction has destroyed much of the eastern suburb.

The only standing Roman masonry to survive into this century was a small section of town wall on the northwest corner of the defences (HWCM 21011). This is no longer visible and may have been destroyed.

With the exception of the town defences the components of the urban form comprising tenement plots and street system cannot be readily identified and above ground survival of these components is very poor.

4 Post-Roman archaeological evidence

It is not clear at what date the settlement at Kenchester stopped functioning as a town but this presumably occurred at some time between the early 5th century (see section 1.3) and the late 7th or early 8th century when Hereford became the centre of the Magonsaete kingdom (Wilmott 1980, 130; Gelling 1992 162-163). There is no evidence of later occupation within the defences but at some period the hamlet of Kenchester was built on part of the western suburb and Magna Castra Farm was situated in the eastern suburb.

5 Specialist assessments

5.1 Assessment of artefactual evidence J D Hurst

A great many artefacts have been recovered from the site of Kenchester. The earliest finds are flints (HWCM 8367) and an Neolithic axe (HWCM 7086). Iron Age artefacts have also been recovered, including a gold coin (HWCM 8368) and pottery (HWCM 119). The majority of finds, are, however, of Roman date, and a very wide range of types is represented, including many unusual objects, for instance a milestone (HWCM 8929), a silver finger ring (HWCM 21006, now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford), and a number of stone altars (HWCM 7251).

The quantity of artefacts from Kenchester is so great and includes so many examples of similar objects, that it is difficult to equate surviving objects, and their records, with those cited in the various reports from the 19th century onwards. It was noted by Bull (1882), however, that many finds had already been scattered to enrich private collections.

5.2 Assessment of environmental evidence E A Pearson

Environmental remains were recovered and reported on during the excavations by the Woolhope Club in the early part of this century (Jack and Hayter 1916; Jack and Hayter

1918; Jack and Hayter 1926). The trial trenches undertaken between 1956 and 1962 (Webster 1956; Hays and Thomas 1962) have not been published and it is not known whether environmental remains were recovered. More recently the excavations at an Iron Age and Roman site (Wilmott and Rahtz 1985) did uncover large amounts of environmental material but there was no policy of wet-sieving for environmental remains and many remains were discarded during excavation. The majority of the published environmental evidence from Kenchester, therefore, has been hand-collected and is restricted to larger visible items such as bones and shells.

Human burials. A small number of burials have been studied in detail, providing information on age, sex, stature, disease and physical deformity. These include a skeleton of an elderly female dated to 287-93 found in a pit within a stone building during excavations in 1912-13 (HWCM 16886; Jack and Hayter 1916) and several burials recovered during excavations by Wilmott and Rahtz (Everton 1985).

Other recorded skeletons have not been studied in detail. Three skeletons were discovered during excavations in 1924-5. Of these two skeletons, dated to the 3rd century, were found on either side of the road where Watling Street approaches the town from the south, and a third was found on top of the road surface and is assumed to be post-Roman in date. The only details available on these burials are brief notes on one of the skeletons (HWCM 20791; Jack and Hayter 1926, 9). Other human skeletons were reported to have been found in the neighbourhood, suggesting the presence of a possible Roman cemetery (Jack and Hayter 1926, 9).

Animal bones. A considerable number of bones were recovered during excavations in 1912-13 (HWCM 16886; Jack and Hayter 1916). Although only brief notes on the species present are given, the assemblage, which includes a high proportion of pig bones may be of interest as frequent pig bones have often been associated with sites of high social status. A moderately large number of animal bones were recovered during excavations by Wilmott and Rahtz. Analysis included statistics on size and age group (Noddle 1985). As many bones were discarded on-site, however, comparison between periods was not possible. Nevertheless, useful information was gained. For example, of the domesticates, cattle were the most common, and there were indications of wild animals extinct in Britain today such as wild cat and wild boar. The size of the domesticated animals were typical of small Iron Age or Celtic types, and there was a predominance of mature animals, suggesting that animals were imported on to the site. Bones of ox and pig were also found within the cobbled surface of the road during excavations in 1924-5 (HWCM 20792; Jack 1926).

Molluscs. Edible molluscs such as oysters, cockles, mussels and whelks were recovered in large numbers during excavations in 1912-3 (HWCM 16886; Jack and Hayter, 1916) along with *Helix* species (land snails). Similarly large edible molluscs were also found during excavations by Wilmott and Rahtz, but as the assemblage retained for analysis was incomplete, it is not known whether this formed a large part of the diet. Some interpretation of the local environment was also provided (Robinson 1985).

Plant remains and other material. Remains of seed cases and possible millet seeds (*Sorghum vulgare*) were recovered during excavations in 1912-13 (Jack and Hayter 1918). These were small samples from unlocated contexts. As millet has rarely been recorded from this country, it is more likely that it had been traded from elsewhere, rather than grown in Britain, demonstrating Kenchester's wide trade networks. A sample of some "yellow material" from these samples was also analysed for its chemical components, providing results which suggested that the material was the baked or partially cooked flour of some cereal.

6 Archaeological research framework

6.1 Model of urban development

A model of the Roman town of Kenchester 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 4) and is based on an analysis of 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.

6.2 Chronological framework

Despite numerous excavations the chronology of the development of the settlement, unlike that of the defences, is not understood. A coherent model for the chronology has been put forward (Wilmott 1980). This suggests that the town may have developed from an Roman military centre and/or an Iron Age settlement and was established towards the end of the 1st century. The town was continuously occupied into at least the early 5th century and underwent a number of internal reorganisations. Without further archaeological investigation, however, this cannot be tested. Of particular interest would be archaeological information on the origin of the town and the extent of its continuation into the 5th century.

6.3 Urban landuse

The components identified here (section 3.2) have been mapped and constitute a model of urban landuse for the Roman period. This landuse model is partial and provisional and capable of testing through archaeological investigation. All the urban components of Kenchester have been archaeologically investigated to some extent, although the nature of the excavations within the defences has meant that there is little evidence of the development and function of the structures located, or of the town in general. Aerial photographic evidence provides some clues, but of particular interest would be more information on the extent and density of occupation in the suburbs, and the relationship between the suburbs and the defended area particularly in the later Roman and post-Roman periods. It is assumed that the economic base of the town was agricultural but evidence of industry, particularly metalworking, has been recovered (Jack and Hayter 1916, 179; Wilmott and Rahtz 1985). It is possible that industry of some sort may have played an important part in the town's economy, as seems to have been the case in other small towns in the region (Crickmore 1984b, 78).

6.4 Potential for survival of buried remains

It has been proved that substantial and significant archaeological deposits survive in Kenchester both within the scheduled defended area and without. These are located beneath modern deposits and relatively shallow plough soil and are easily damaged. Stratified deposits have been demonstrated to exist within the urban area. These deposits contained datable artefactual and environmental assemblages and investigated archaeological deposits are of high integrity. The potential of the buried archaeological deposits in Kenchester is very great as they offer the possibility of answering a range of questions about Romano-British small towns. Such questions might concern layout, function, development and decline, relationships with the surrounding countryside and the place of small towns in the urbanisation of Britain (Esmonde Cleary 1987, 101).

Fieldwork was undertaken by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey in November 1994. One aim was to map the extent of any 18th and 19th century cellarge or 20th century development (new buildings and major landscaping work). This showed that there

was no observable cellarage and little modern redevelopment within the historic core.

6.5 Potential of artefactual studies J D Hurst

The most extensive of the programmes of excavation undertaken at Kenchester were those carried out by the Woolhope Club inside the defended area between 1912 and 1926 (HWCM 16885, HWCM 16886, HWCM 16887, HWCM 20790, HWCM 20791, HWCM 20792, HWCM 20793, HWCM 20794, HWCM 20795; Jack and Hayter 1916; Jack and Heyter 1926). Despite the early date and the method of excavation many of the objects discovered during these excavations are well catalogued and illustrated. As a result it is clear that substantial archaeological deposits associated with exceptional artefactual evidence are present at Kenchester dating from the middle to late Iron Age to Roman periods. The thickness of deposits is also substantial.

Period discussion. The few pre-Iron Age artefacts found at Kenchester are likely to be stray finds, whilst the range and quantity of Iron Age artefacts is indicative of occupation such as that observed during the excavations in 1977-9 (HWCM 119, Wilmott and Rahtz 1985). The volume of Roman artefacts is so great that only general classes of object can be discussed here, except in the case of unusual objects. Broadly the range of object types is representative of a Roman site of some considerable status. The large quantity of pottery included a great deal of imported wares, probably the largest collection of samian in the region. This assessment is based on potters' stamps, of which 86 were recorded between 1916 and 1926.

References to many fine objects are scattered through the publications, and although though no quantification was produced it is clear that this collection of Roman 'small finds' is one of the largest in the region. In addition to more usual Roman objects, there have been many rare objects: for instance, iron window bars, barrel padlocks; copper alloy spoons, bracelets, steel yard weight in the form of a Minerva bust; worked bone handles, and pins, and a stone oculist stamp. Some of the copper alloy pendants appeared to be of military type.

In general the pottery groups recovered appear to have been large (ie more than 1000 sherds), although complete quantification was only undertaken for the 1977-79 excavations (Tomber 1985). A number of profiles of vessels have been published, but many of the fabric identifications are now outdated. The ceramics from excavations before 1977 need to be re-appraised.

The following categories of object have been picked out as of especial note:

Coins. Coins have been found in great numbers. For example a hoard dating to the late 4th century was discovered (Jack and Hayter 1916, 210) and the excavations between 1924-5 produced over 400 coins (Hayter 1926). Unusual evidence for the forging of Roman coins (Shoesmith 1986) has also been identified.

Building materials. Building materials recovered included columns of turned oolitic limestone, and painted wall plaster. Unusually the source of ceramic roof tiles has been found to be at some considerable distance from Kenchester.

Metalwork. A lead tank recovered during the 1977-79 excavations may be a late Christian font (HWCM 119; Wilmott and Rahtz 1985, 171) and such is a very unusual find.

Metalworking. There is some evidence of copper alloy working (Jack and Hayter 1941, pl 41), and ironworking ((Wilmott and Rahtz 1985, 172).

Other activities. A collection of mill stones from HWCM 119 is one of the largest from the region and has special significance as they may indicate a watermill nearby (Wilmott and Rahtz 1985, 156).

6.6 Potential of environmental archaeology E A Pearson

Despite the lack of wet-sieved samples from excavations at Kenchester, well-preserved environmental remains have been recovered, although these only have a limited range. Some of this material has been studied by specialists providing useful information on diet and husbandry practices, and indicating good potential for further research. However, the potential for recovery of smaller environmental remains is largely unknown.

The soils are likely to be seasonally waterlogged and organic material may be preserved, particularly in the area near the stream. Waterlogging can also occur in deep features such as the ditches associated with the town defences. This material may provide information relating to the surrounding environment and to dumped occupational rubbish. As there is extensive evidence of destruction by fire in the later 2nd century, it is possible that environmental material may have been well preserved by charring. Charred deposits, including burnt thatch, which were observed but not analysed from fire destruction levels during excavations by Wilmott and Rahtz, demonstrate the potential for recovering such remains. In particular, large cereal grain deposits have previously been found in fire destruction levels, for example in London as a result of the Boudiccan fire in AD 60.

Environmental remains providing information on the occupation of the town may be recovered from features such as pits, ovens and occupation surfaces. The presence of the such features, has been demonstrated during excavations by Wilmott and Rahtz where a large number of cess pits, ovens and a corn-drier were uncovered. Sampling such features should be a high priority in the future.

If buried soils are sealed beneath the earthworks of the town defences, it may be possible to investigate the previous use of the land (for example, whether the land was under cultivation or pastureland) using soil micromorphology and pollen analysis. In some cases there may be little other archaeological evidence for the previous use of the land. In 1977-79 various soil layers were observed sealing different phases of activity of occupation (Wilmott and Rahtz 1985), the study of which may indicate whether these deposits represent abandonment or a change in use of the land.

Relatively good preservation of environmental remains has been demonstrated in Kenchester, providing information specific to Roman animal husbandry. However, material of Roman date in the study region is scarce, and therefore any environmental material from archaeologically relevant features would be of significant interest in order to obtain information on the past environment, diet, living conditions and agricultural or industrial economy. Future excavation should include a policy of sampling and wet-sieving deposits in order to recover plant, insect, molluscs and small animal remains in conjunction with hand-collection of larger items. Where appropriate, specialist sampling for soil and pollen analysis may be required.

6.7 Summary of research potential

The historic core of Kenchester 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.

7 Management framework

7.1 Urban archaeological area

The mapped extent of the Roman urban form defined above indicated the extent of the urban area (Kenchester Urban Archaeological Area).

7.2 Existing protection measures

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

Scheduled ancient monument. The defences and the area within them are a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Here and Worc no 29). It is possible that following the current Monument Protection programme English Heritage may modify the scheduled area.

Listed buildings. There is one building 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.

7.3 Management approach

The archaeological urban area of Kenchester contains earthworks and buried remains relating to Roman occupation. The buried remains vary in complexity and depth, and demonstrably contain significant archaeological information. It is desirable that any proposed development within the urban area that has a potential impact on earthworks or buried remains should be assessed by the appropriate archaeological body.

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

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9 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
- * Roman urban form and components
- * Urban area and scheduled ancient monuments