An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of land at Shrewsbury Sixth Form College

by H R Hannaford



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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT OF LAND AT SHREWSBURY SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

by

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A Report for SHREWSBURY SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

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Photo 3: The site of the New Work tower (HER 01096), looking south

SUMMARY

There is currently a proposal to erect a new teaching block at the Shrewsbury Sixth Form College. The Sixth Form College lies within the historic core of the medieval and post-medieval town of Shrewsbury. The area around the study area is known to have been occupied in the medieval and post-medieval periods and because of the potential significance of the archaeological resource it has been considered necessary that an archaeological Desk-based Assessment be carried out prior to the determination of the planning application. The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council, has carried out this assessment, and has identified that the proposed development probably lies within the area of the cemetery of the town's medieval Augustinian Friary. Part of the town's medieval defences in the form a stretch of defensive wall and part of a round tower lie along the north edge of the study area. In the post medieval period a tannery may have occupied the northwestern corner of the study area, while the rest of the area was developed as a substantial private house and gardens. The house was rebuilt in c. 1810, with outbuildings and other houses also built within the grounds. In the early 20th century the site was acquired by Shropshire County Council for the new Priory School, and work on the present main school building began c.1909. Human remains were encountered here during that work, and again in 1984. The desk based assessment has recommended that field evaluation would be required in order to determine the extent, survival, quality, and significance of any below-ground archaeological remains, and to thus enable an informed and reasonable decision to be taken regarding the provision for the archaeological resource.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Shrewsbury Sixth Form College lies within the historic core of the medieval and post-medieval town of Shrewsbury, on the northern side of the area enclosed by a loop of the River Severn (NGR SJ 487 126). The site lies just to the west of one of the major historic crossing points of the River into the town.

1.2 There is a proposal to erect a new teaching block at the Shrewsbury Sixth Form College, Shrewsbury. The proposed development site (Fig. 2; the study area) is currently occupied by two temporary de-mountable classroom blocks and it is proposed to replace these with a new permanent structure.

1.3 The area around the study area is known to have been occupied in the medieval and post-medieval periods. The study area lies within the area covered by the Shrewsbury Urban Archaeological Database and Assessment (Baker, 2010). This Assessment and information held by the Historic Environment Record, indicate that the study area probably lies within the precincts of the town's medieval Augustinian Friary (Historic Environment Record no. [HER] 01466), and within the grounds of a substantial post-medieval house, The Priory (Baker, 2010). Previous archaeological observations on finds of human remains in the vicinity of the proposed development site suggest that it may be located on the site of the Friary's cemetery (HER 08212). Part of the town's medieval and post-medieval defences, the New Work (HER 01459) also lies along the northern edge of the study area. Part of these defences, a round tower (HER 01096) is a scheduled Ancient Monument (County No. Salop 211, Remains of tower in Victoria Avenue). It is possible therefore that archaeological remains relating to both the medieval and post-medieval development of this part of the town may survive within the study area.

1.4 Because of the potential significance of the archaeological resource it has been considered necessary that an archaeological Desk-based Assessment be carried out prior to the determination of the planning application. This assessment will recommend options for the management of the archaeological resource within the study area.

1.5 The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council, has been commissioned by Baart Harries Newall on behalf of the Shrewsbury Sixth Form College to carry out the desk-based assessment element of this programme of archaeological work to a scheme of investigation agreed by Shropshire Council's Historic Environment Team. This report is based on the findings of this Desk-based Assessment.

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 The aim of this archaeological desk-based assessment is to provide information that will enable an informed and reasonable decision to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the area affected by the proposed development at the Shrewsbury Sixth Form College.

- 2.2 The objectives are:
 - a) To locate from documentary sources any known archaeological features and deposits within the study area.
 - b) To assess the likely survival, quality, condition and relative significance of any archaeological features, deposits and structures.
 - c) To identify and recommend options for the management of the archaeological resource, including any further archaeological provision where necessary.
 - d) To recommend a strategy for further archaeological Field Evaluation, where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy or other response to be devised.

2.3 The methodology for this assessment is based on requirements set out in a specification agreed by the Historic Environment Team, Shropshire Council.

2.4 This desk-based assessment aims to examine and assess all appropriate sources. These have included: archaeological databases, historic documents (including cartographic and pictorial documents), aerial photographs, geotechnical information, and secondary and statutory sources. The assessment includes an outline history of the development and land use of the study area, supported by copies of relevant historic maps and documents.

2.5 A site visit was also undertaken in order to assess possible factors such as existing or previous land use and their effect on the survival or condition of the archaeological resource.

3 THE HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Documentary sources

3.1.1 The historic core of the medieval town of Shrewsbury lies within a loop of the River Severn, with its "neck" to the northeast. The loop contains a low hill, with two summits occupying the northern and southern sides of the loop, comprised of sands and clay/silts of glacial deposition overlying bedrock of Keele beds sandstone. The Shrewsbury Sixth Form College is situated in the northern part of the river loop, and the main part of the campus, including the study area occupies a low terrace on the bank of the river. In the early medieval period this was marginal land bounded to the east by a stream, the Gullet (which emptied into the river in an area known as The Mudholes) and to the south by the early 13th century town defences.

3.1.2 The Augustinian Friary

The Augustinian or Austin Friars established their first house in Shrewsbury c. 1254. Initially, the friars are thought to have settled just outside the defences at the northern end of the town at Cowlane, close to the castle at the neck of the river loop. In the same year Henry III made the friars a grant of land beyond the Romaldesham Gate on land previously used as a temporary burial ground (Baker, 2010, p146), and in 1269 made them a grant of 10 marks towards the building of their church. It is unclear however exactly when the friars moved to the Romaldesham Gate site – they were given further land there in c. 1295 and granted a royal licence for the move in 1298. The friars developed their new site during the early 14th century, and were given several further grants of land there at this time. In 1392, in return for being allowed to enclose some of this land, the friars were required to provide a "good broad way for men and carts from the town wall to Severn"; this may refer to the St Austin's Friars street. The friary prospered in the later 14th century, but by the time of its surrender in 1540, it was impoverished and most if not all of its buildings were ruinous. (Morriss, 1996, pp30-9; HER 01466) One fragment of the friary, a red sandstone two-storey structure with a first floor hall over an undercroft, still stood as late as 1942 on the east side of St Austin's Friars, adjacent to the present Armoury building (W Champion, 2006).

3.1.3 The New Work

The New Work (HER 01459) was an outlier to the town's defences which ran along the river frontage to the west of the Welsh Bridge. It seems to have been built in the late 13th century to guard a ford which crossed the river from Frankwell. It comprised a stretch of wall some 100m long with a circular tower at each end. The north half of the tower at the west end of the wall (HER 01096) lies beneath the present road (Victoria Avenue), the southern half within the study area. In 1337 the Borough granted the Augustinian Friars the New Work, on the condition that they built an "embattled house" there and allowed it to be garrisoned in time of war (Baker, 2010, p146). By 1620 the post-Dissolution owner of the friary, the barrister Roger Pope, had converted the round tower (of the New Work) into a tanning room (W Champion, 2006). The tower is shown on several 18th-century engravings and paintings (Fig. 3) with a building adjoining its east side, aligned northsouth (Bowen, 1720; Buck, 1732; & anon, 1739). The Bowen painting also shows boatbuilding on the land to the west of the tower. Rocque's map of 1746 shows a similar arrangement of buildings in this location (Fig. 4a), though the tower is not obvious as a separate feature. The tower, by then known as the Round House, was demolished c.1800 (Owen, 1808, p75). The site of the tower is a scheduled Ancient Monument (County No. Salop 211, Remains of tower in Victoria Avenue).

3.1.4 The post-Dissolution house

After the Dissolution, the Augustininan Friary was acquired by the Pope family, and in 1606 Roger Pope built a large house on the site. The house is shown on Rocque's map as a rectangular building aligned north-south set in substantial gardens and orchards (Fig. 4a). In 1712 the property passed to the Powys family, and in 1802 it was sold to Edward Hythe (Morriss, 1996, p35). He altered the house, and the altered building (HER 10494) appears on Wood's plan (Wood, 1832) aligned west-east (Fig. 4b). Hythe also erected two parallel structures to the northwest within the present study area, the northern of these structures built on the site of the former Round House. The Priory appears to have had a number of occupants during the 19th-century, including a Mrs Mary Hawley, Edward Haycock Esq. (architect and County Surveyor), Arthur Heitland, William Godley, John Jones, and Thomas Richards (Pigot, 1828; Bagshaw, 1851; Kelly 1870 & 1891). A house, originally Claremont Cottage (Wood, 1832) later Priory House (10495) and Priory Lodge (HER 10496), were also built in the early 19th century to the southeast of the study area (Fig. 4b). In the early 20th century the site was acquired by Shropshire County Council for the new Priory School, and work on the present main school building (HER 20160) began c.1909. Various works have taken place on the site in the 20th century, including the removal by c. 1950 of the early 19th century buildings in the study area (OS 1927 & 1954), and the erection of a science block in 1959.

3.1.5 The Quarry Park

The northern boundary of the study area is formed by Victoria Avenue, which is part of the Quarry Park (HER 07785), a Grade II Registered Park or Garden (GD2137 Quarry Park and Dingle Gardens, Shrewsbury). The present Quarry park is a late 19th century public park of 9ha including a central sunken garden, The Dingle Gardens. Already a popular place of public recreation, in 1719 the Quarry park was laid out with formal tree-lined walks at the mayor's expense by the nurseryman Thomas Wright, and a bowling green and summerhouse were added in 1734 (Baker, 2010, p205; Anon, 1739; Rocque, 1746). The Dingle lies in a former sandstone quarry, developed as a sunken garden within the park with help from the Shropshire Horticultural Society.

3.2 Previous Archaeological Work

3.2.1 At the beginning of the 19th century, the antiquarian the Rev. Hugh Owen remarked on "the great quantity of human bones that have been from time to time dug up in the precinct" of the friary (Owen, 1808). On the Sixth Form College site itself, during building work in 1910, six human skeletons were found at a depth of 7 feet (2.1m) in excavations for the boiler room; one of these was enclosed in lead (HER 60291). A pebble pavement, walls and steps, possibly part of the priors' garden (or possibly of the post-medieval house's gardens) were found to the west. (Auden, 1910; Morris, 1910). In 1984, human remains were found at a depth of between 1.0m and 1.5m below ground level between two of the present college buildings about 20m to the east of the southeast corner of the study area (HER 60292). The burials appeared to have been cut through a mortar floor (Bennison, 1985).

3.2.2 The tower (HER 01096) at the west end of the New Work (HER 01459) was excavated in 1911 (Auden, 1912; anon., 1912). The tower was seen to be 5.7m in diameter and built of coursed red sandstone. In 1912 it was reported to the Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club that the Borough Council had "arranged that the foundation...shall be properly protected and left visible" (Auden, 1912). The outline of the

northern half of the tower is currently marked by stone sets in the road surface (see Photo 3). The south face of the New Work wall was seen in 1959 when a new science block for the Priory School (now the Shrewsbury Sixth Form College) was built; the wall was seen to run between the steel stanchions of the north end of the new block (SNL 1959).

3.2.3 In 1995, some 75m to the northeast of the study area, service trenches cut along the east side of the Armoury building revealed two sets of two parallel sandstone walls. The walls were of rectangular, faced, blocks of purple sandstone bonded in a buff mortar, and were aligned approximately east - west. These may have been the northern and southern end walls of the friary building demolished in 1942. (Hannaford, 1997a, p5)

3.2.4 Subsequent to a desk-top study (Morriss, 1996) of the eastern part of the friary site (60m to the east of the study area) an archaeological evaluation of the St Austin's Friars area was undertaken in 1997 (Hannaford, 1997b). This evaluation found the remains of the east wall of a building which almost certainly belonged to the friary. The wall ran north to south and at least two courses of faced red sandstone ashlar blockwork survived at its southern end adjacent to St Austin's Friars. At this end of the trench, the remains of a second sandstone wall (24), bonded in buff mortar and orange sandy clay, ran off to the west beyond the trench edge. A pebble surface also of medieval date may have represented the edge of a medieval street or roadway giving access into the friary precinct. The only deposits dating to the post-medieval period were a layer of demolition rubble, presumably deriving from friary buildings, and an 18th- to 19th-century garden or yard soil. (Hannaford, 1997b, p4). In 2007 work was carried out to relocate the former school house building on Bridge Street to land at St Austin's Friars, Shrewsbury. Archaeological work carried out by the Archaeology Service, SCC, in April and May 2007 on the St Austin's Friars site prior to this work revealed a sequence of medieval features and yards, a late medieval sandstone wall and the remains of a post-medieval house, the White House, demolished in 1978 (Hannaford, 2007).

3.2.5 Deposits

The study area falls within the area covered by the Shrewsbury Urban Archaeological Database and Assessment's Deposit Zone XXXIII, The Austin Friars (Baker, 2010, p57). There has been little recent archaeological work in this area. The 1997 evaluation trench (see above) in the eastern part of the zone found remains of a medieval sandstone wall at a depth of about 0.25m below the ground surface, with the natural buff clay at about 0.96m below ground level (Hannaford, 1997b, p4). In 1910 burials were seen at a depth of 7 feet (2.1m) below ground level (Morris, 1910), and in 1984, human remains were found at a depth of between 1.0m and 1.5m below ground level (Bennison, 1985). The ground within the deposit zone drops away to the north into the river channel. The medieval defensive wall, the New Work, is thought to have been built along the edge of the river; it is not known whether it was terraced into the river bank or whether the ground was built up behind the wall.

4 THE SITE VISIT

4.1 A site visit was made as part of the desk-based assessment. The study area is currently occupied by two demountable/temporary units. These units are set on concrete pads, surrounded by a tarmac yard surface. There are some manholes and drainage gullies visible in this surface, indicating the presence of underground drains and service ducts.

4.2 In the northwest corner of the study area, the site of the west tower of the New Work is covered by a small area of grass lawn. The line of the New Work itself, which forms the northern boundary of the study area, is marked by a sandstone wall, though this is clearly of modern date and does not comprise original medieval fabric. Victoria Avenue lies about 1.5m lower down on the north side of this wall.

4.3 The land to the south of the study area rises up in a terrace on which the main Sixth Form College building (The Priory) sits. The western half of this terrace is formed by a modern brick wall, the eastern half by a grass bank which slopes down into the southeastern corner of the study area.

4.4 There are no obvious structures of historical or archaeological significance visible above ground within the study area.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 The precinct boundary of the Augustinian friary is poorly defined, though it probably occupied the area between the present Victoria Avenue and Priory Road/Lower Claremont Bank. The scant structural remains that have been documented suggest that the main focus of the friary buildings probably lay around and to the east of St Austin's Friars lane. The western part of the site, now occupied by the Shrewsbury Sixth Form College and a children's playground in The Quarry Park, appears to have been the friary's burial ground (HER 08212).

5.2 The Augustinian Friary's cemetery (the Sixth Form College site) has been identified by the Shrewsbury Urban Archaeological Assessment as a key site for the recovery of skeletal data from cemetery populations. It is considered that the cemetery will contain a closed group of remains that would yield data on population and demography, disease and pathology (Baker, 2010, p222).

5.3 The remains of the New Work are likely to run along the northern edge of the study area, either along or immediately behind the present site boundary. It is not clear whether the medieval defensive wall was terraced into the natural slope or whether the ground was built up behind it as a rampart (possibly both). But it is possible that deposits associated with the construction, life, and demolition of the wall survive here below ground.

5.4 Likewise, it is probable that remains associated with the southern half of the round tower and associated early post-medieval building survive below ground within the study area. Given the post-medieval use of the tower for tanning, there may well be remains of post-medieval industrial activity here. A close parallel might be found in the post-medieval tannery built within the remains of the Shrewsbury Abbey guest kitchen excavated in 1986-7 (Baker, 2002, p83-5).

5.5 The friary site has been redeveloped periodically since the Dissolution. A substantial house, The Priory, was built in1606, just to the east of the study area – the study area itself seems to have lain within the gardens on the west side of the house. In the early 1800s The Priory was rebuilt or re-modelled, and at this time outbuildings were erected across the study area. It may be this work that occasioned the finds of human remains noted by the Rev. Owen in 1808. The site was re-developed again in the early 20th century for the Priory School, although the study area itself appears not to have been directly affected. However by the mid-20th century the outbuildings on the site had been demolished and in the later 20th century the present demountable buildings and yards were put in place.

5.6 The Grade II Registered Quarry Park and Dingle Gardens will not be directly affected by the proposed development, although the development may affect the setting of a component of the park, Victoria Avenue, which lies on the northern edge of the study area.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 In view of the above it is considered that archaeological remains relating to the medieval, post-medieval, and early modern occupation of the Augustinian Friary and The Priory house, and the medieval town defences are likely to survive within the proposed development area at the Shrewsbury Sixth Form College.

6.2 Groundworks in the form of foundation trenches and/or piling work, reduction in ground levels, and the excavation of service trenches would all have an adverse affect on any surviving below-ground archaeological remains in the study area.

6.3 Field evaluation in the form of trial excavation will be required in order to determine the extent, survival, quality, and significance of below-ground archaeological remains. This would enable an informed and reasonable decision to be taken regarding the provision required under PPS5 for the archaeological resource affected by the proposed development.

6.4 The remains of the southern half of the tower (HER 01096) at the west end of the New Work (HER 01459) are likely to survive within the study area. The views of English Heritage should be sought regarding provision for any remains associated with the tower, part of which is a scheduled Ancient Monument (County No. Salop 211, Remains of tower in Victoria Avenue). Scheduled Ancient Monument consent may be required for any work in this part of the study area.

6.5 Although the Quarry Park and Dingle Garden will not be directly affected by the proposed works, a component of the park (Victoria Avenue) runs along the north side of the study area. English Heritage should be consulted therefore regarding the setting of the Grade II Registered Park or Garden.

6.6 There is a possibility that human remains of medieval date are located within the study area. In the event of human remains being present, additional statutory and Department of Justice requirements (Burial Act, 1857 and amendments) may apply.

7 REFERENCES AND SOURCES CONSULTED

7.1 Sources

The repositories and sources consulted for the desk-based assessment included the Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and Shropshire Archives (SA).

Aerial Photography:

Digital Aerial photographs provided by UK Perspectives.com held as part of Shropshire Council's GIS database

HER computer files for Primary Record Numbers (PRNs):

01466 Augustinian Friary, Shrewsbury

- 08212 Augustinian Friary Cemetery
- 01459 Shrewsbury Town Wall: The New Work
- 01096 The Round House remains of Tower in Victoria Avenue (Scheduled Ancient Monument County No. Salop 211, Remains of tower in Victoria Avenue
- 07785 Quarry Park and Dingle Gardens (EH Registered Park or Garden Grade II No GD2137)
- 60291 1910 discovery of skeletons during building work for the new school
- 60292 1984 discovery of human remains in a gas pipe trench
- 10494 Shrewsbury Sixth Form College The Priory (Listed Building Grade II No 458012) 10495 Priory House (Listed Building Grade II No 457863)
- 10496 Priory Lodge (Listed Building Grade II No 457864)
- 20160 Shrewsbury Sixth Form College Main Building (Listed Building Grade II No 457865)

Shropshire Archives:

Among the various sources consulted at Shropshire Archives, the following proved the most productive sources of information for the particular requirements of this assessment of the study area:

Cartographic sources

Historic maps including Ordnance Survey mapping

OS Town Plan of Shrewsbury 1st Edition Sheet Nos. XXXIV.10.5 and XXXIV.10.10

Websites:

The following websites proved productive sources of historical images of the study area: **Darwin Country** - www.darwincountry.org.uk

Discovering Shropshire's History – www.shropshirehistory.org.uk

7.2 Other sources

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Anon, 1739: Shrewsbury in the Great Frost, SMS ref: FA/1995/001 Bowen, J, c.1720: Prospect of Shrewsbury from Kingsland, SMS ref: FA/1990/12/1 Buck S & N, 1732: South west Prospect of Shrewsbury, SMS ref: FA/1991/171/1

Cartography

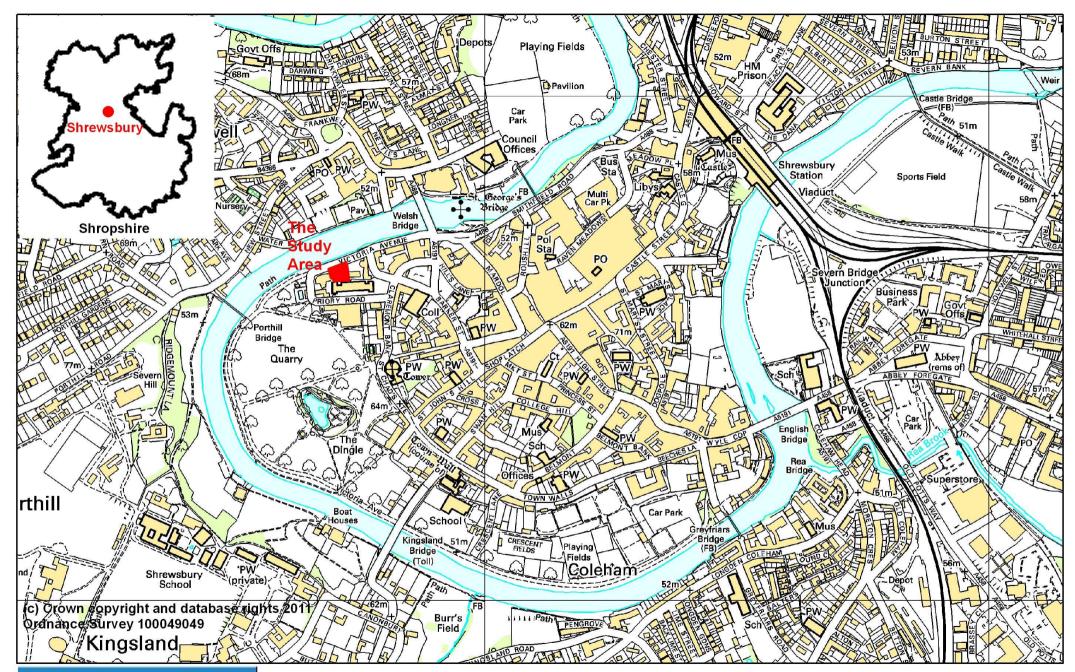
Burghley, 1575: map of Shrewsbury Hitchcock. 1832: map of Shrewsburv Ordnance Survey Town Plan of Shrewsbury 1st Edition 1:500 Sheet Nos XXXIV.10.5 &10.10, 1882 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Sheet No XXXIV.10 1st edition, 1882 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Sheet No XXXIV.10 2nd edition, 1901 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Sheet No XXXIV.10 3rd edition 1927 Ordnance Survey 1:1250 Sheet No SJ 4812 1965 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Sheet No SJ 4812 & 4912, 1965 edition Rocque, J, 1746: Plan of Shrewsbury Speed, J, 1610: map of Shrewsbury in Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain Wood, J. 1838 Plan of Shrewsbury, SA 3551/3

ABBREVIATIONS

- DCI G Department for Communities and Local Government
- DSH Discovering Shropshire's History website
- OS Ordnance Survey
- HER County Historic Environment Record, Shirehall, Shrewsbury
- PPS5 Planning Policy Statement 5
- SA Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury SMS Shropshire Museums Service
- TCSVFC
- Transactions of the Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society TSAHS
- **TSANHS** Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society
- TSAS Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society

Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council

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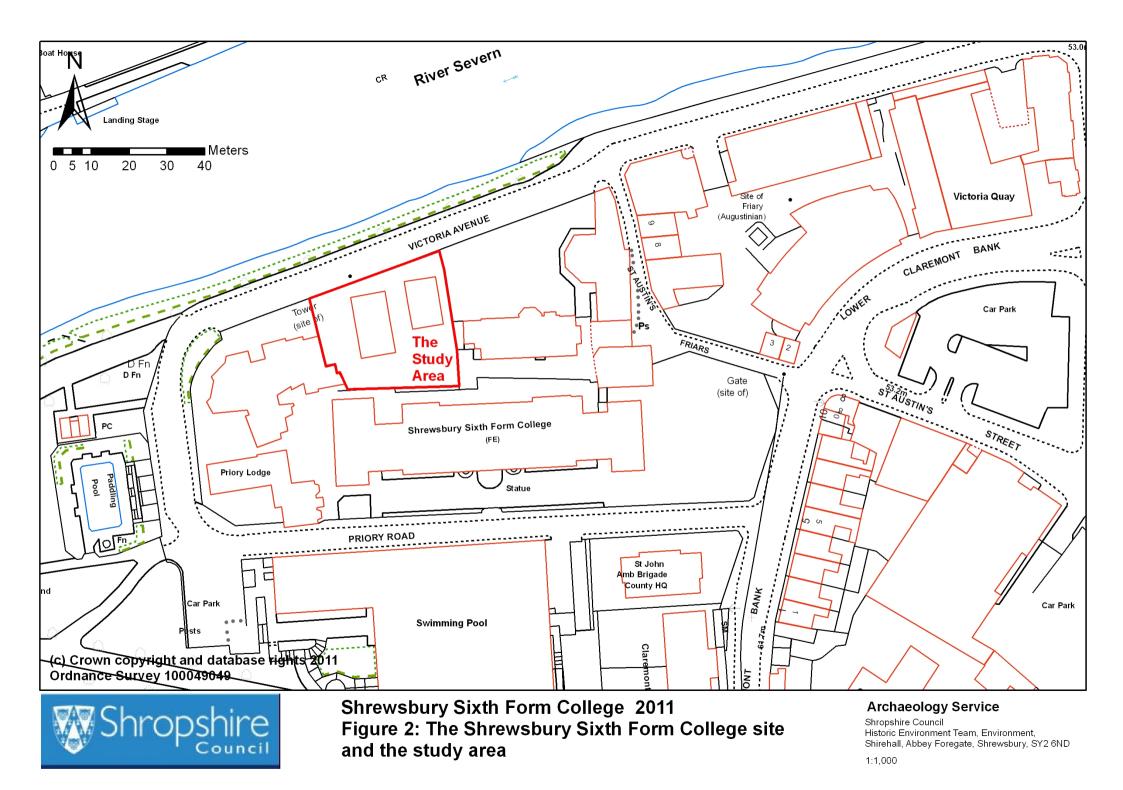




Shrewsbury Sixth Form College 2011 Figure 1: Location of the study area

Archaeology Service

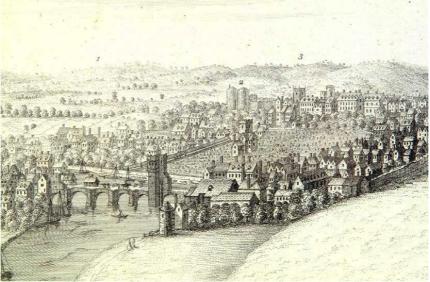
Shropshire Council Historic Environment Team, Environment, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND



An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of land at Shrewsbury Sixth Form College



a) J Bowen, Prospect of Shrewsbury from Kingsland, 1720 (© Shropshire Council)



b) S & N Buck South west Prospect of Shrewsbury, 1732 (© Shropshire Council)



c) Anon, Shrewsbury in the Great Frost, 1739 (© Shropshire Council)

SHREWSBURY SIXTH FORM COLLEGE 2011 Figure 3: Details from 18th century engravings and paintings showing the study area

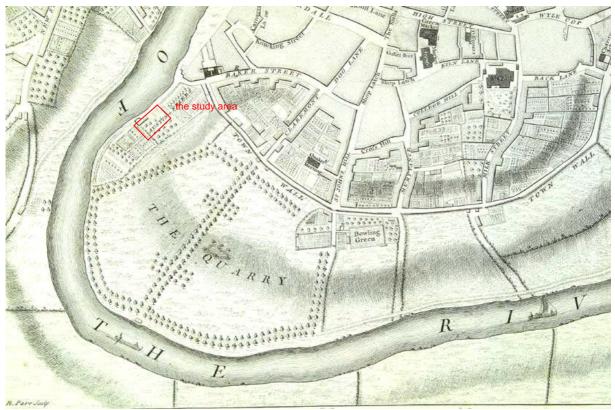


Figure 4 a) Extract from John Rocque's Plan of Shrewsbury, 1746

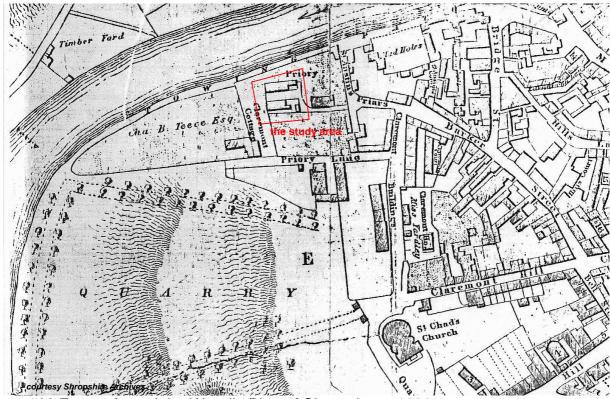


Figure 4 b) Extract from John Wood's Plan of Shrewsbury, 1838

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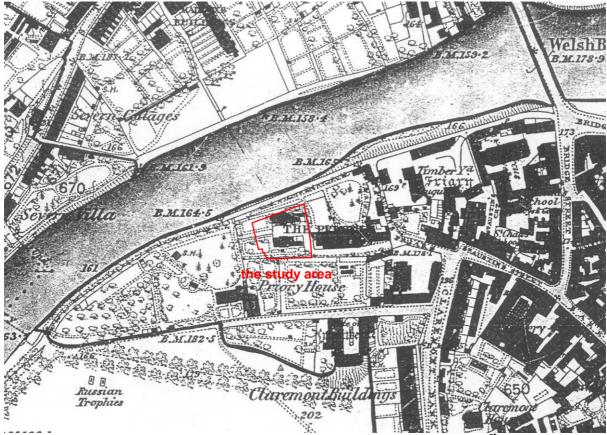


Figure 5 a) extract from Ordnance Survey 25" (1:2500) map Sheet XXXIV.10 1st Edition 1882

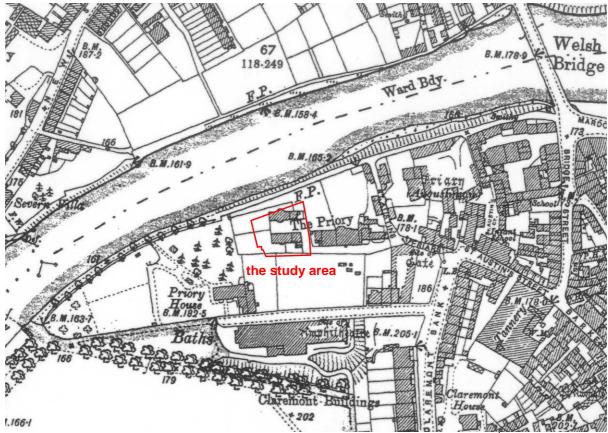
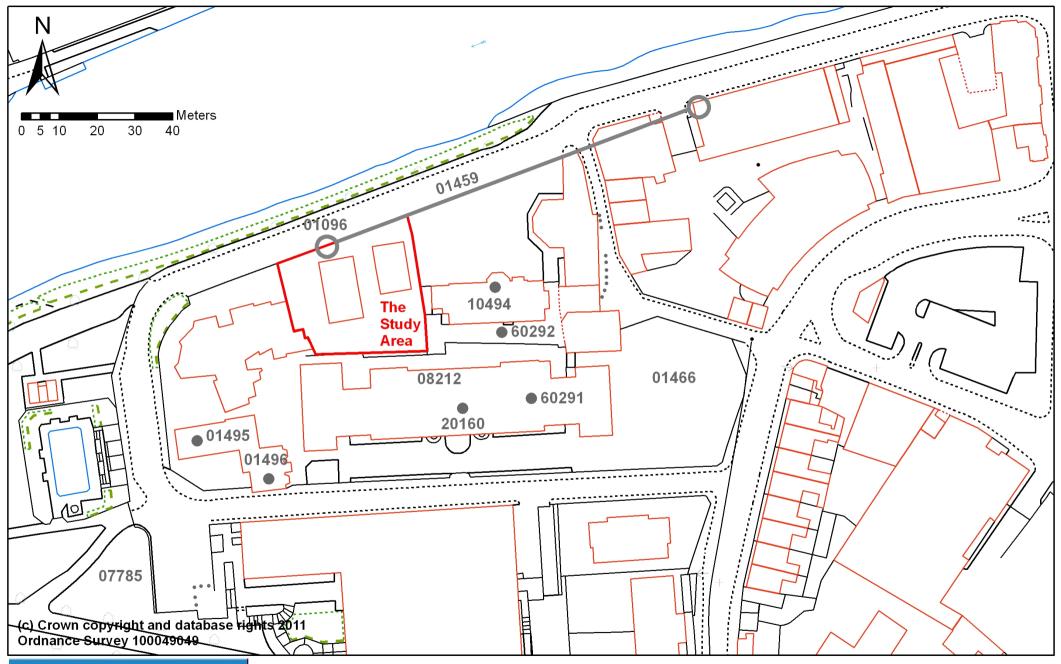


Figure 5 b) extract from Ordnance Survey 25" (1:2500) map Sheet XXXIV.10 2nd Edition 1902

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Shrewsbury Sixth Form College 2011 Figure 6: Archaeological features noted in the text

Archaeology Service

Shropshire Council Historic Environment Team, Environment, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of land at Shrewsbury Sixth Form College



Photo 1: The study area, looking northeast



Photo 2: The site of the New Work tower (HER 01096), looking north



Photo 3: The site of the New Work tower (HER 01096), looking south

SHREWSBURY SIXTH FORM COLLEGE 2011