

***Archaeological Recording at
1 Ebenezer Row, Bridgnorth,
Shropshire, 2013***

by
H R Hannaford

Archaeology Service



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING AT
1 EBENEZER ROW, BRIDGNORTH, SHROPSHIRE, 2013**

by

H R HANNAFORD MIFA

A Report for

BJMM Developments Ltd

Archaeology Service Report Number 338
© Shropshire Council
June 2013

Archaeology Service

Historic Environment Team, Business Growth & Prosperity,
Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND
Tel: (01743) 252575 Fax: (01743) 252505
Email: archaeology@shropshire.gov.uk

CONTENTS

	Page No
SUMMARY	1
1 INTRODUCTION	2
2 THE HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	3
3 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING	4
4 REFERENCES	5

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: The location of the site

Figure 2: The yard and cave to the rear of 1, Ebenezer Row, plan view showing the location of sections in Figure 3; scale 1:50

Figure 3: Internal sections through the cave (for locations see Figure 2), a) north-south section through front of cave b), north-south section through rear of cave, c) east-west section through cave; scale 1:50

Photo 1: Photo 1: The entrance to the cave, looking NE

Photo 2: The back of the cave looking E, (scale bar 0.5m)

Photo 3: The interior of the cave, looking N, (scale bar 1m)

Photo 4: The interior of the cave, looking S, (scale bar 1m)

SUMMARY

In June 2013 the Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council carried out archaeological recording of a small cave at 1 Ebenezer Row, Bridgnorth, Shropshire. The cave was cut into a sandstone cliff at the rear of the property. No dating evidence for the cave was seen, though it is likely to pre-date or date to the construction of the terrace in the 18th century. No other significant archaeological features or deposits were seen during the recording exercise.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Bridgnorth is situated in southeast Shropshire, about 28.5km southeast of Shrewsbury. The town is at a bridging point of the River Severn; the High Town on the west bank stands on a sandstone promontory overlooking the river and the Low Town on the east bank.

1.2 In June 2013 work began on the renovation and extension of a terrace house at 1 Ebenezer Row, Bridgnorth, Shropshire (NGR SO 715 928).

1.3 The study area lies on the edge of the historic medieval and post-medieval core of the town of Bridgnorth (Historic Environment Record [HER] No. 06044) within a group of tenement plots (06055) of medieval and post-medieval date fronting onto Railway Street. The study area lies within the area covered by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey's assessment of Bridgnorth (Buteux, 1996).

1.4 Documents supplied in support of the application (12/00558/FUL) indicated the presence of a cave immediately adjacent to the proposed development that had not been previously recorded on the Historic Environment Record. Caves in Bridgnorth have played a significant part in the past social and economic life of the town and as such form a local heritage asset of some archaeological interest. It was considered that the proposed development site had some archaeological potential and that any works adjacent to the cave would impact on the spatial and functional historic relationships.

1.5 Because of the potential significance of the archaeological resource it was made a condition of the planning consent (condition 7) that the proposed development should be accompanied by a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by the Local Planning Authority.

1.6 The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council, was commissioned by B.J.M.M. Developments Ltd to carry out the programme of archaeological work. This report details the results of this work.

2 THE HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Prehistoric activity and early medieval settlement

No evidence of human occupation of the prehistoric, Roman or early Saxon periods has been recorded within the immediate vicinity of the study area. However, there is a ford across the Severn at Quatford which may have been in use since prehistoric times. A Danish army over-wintered in the area around *Brycge* or *Cwatbryge* in 895-6AD, and in 912 Aethelflaeda of the Mercians established a burgh at *Bricge*. There has been a bridge across the River Severn near Bridgnorth possibly since 910, when another Danish army crossed the Severn here. The location of *Brycge*, *Bricge*, or *Cwatbryge* has been disputed, with some writers favouring modern Bridgnorth, others Quatford. The latest research suggests that the early bridge (possibly HER 00406) and Saxon burgh were located at Quatford (Horowitz, 2010).

2.2 The medieval town

Bridgnorth is not listed as a separate settlement in the Domesday survey of 1086, but formed one of the 18 berewicks of the manor of *Membrefelde* (Morville). Before 1066 the manor was held by Edward the Confessor. In 1086 it was held by Roger of Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury, and the site of Bridgnorth may have formed part of his demesne lands in the manor (Thorn 1986, 4.1.5). Earl Roger's son, Robert de Belleme built a castle (HER 00371) at Bridgnorth and moved the collegiate church of St Mary (HER 00389) here from the settlement at Quatford. The castle was besieged and captured in 1102 by Henry I and again in 1155 by Henry II. From then on, the castle served as a fortress, gaol, and royal residence until the 17th century. (Buteux, 1996, p2.)

The town at Bridgnorth is thought to have grown up in the outer bailey of the castle. The settlement gradually superseded in importance both Morville and Quatford, no doubt because of its economically and militarily strategic location. The town's status as a borough was confirmed in 1157 by a charter of Henry II, which also granted a weekly market and an annual fair on St Mary Magdalene's day. Further fairs were allowed in 1226 and 1359 (Buteux, 1996, p2). The town rapidly outgrew its original boundaries, extending beyond the limits of the castle outer bailey, and between 1216 and 1223 new defences of turf and timber were built, with an external ditch as well on the north and northwest sides of the town. These turf and timber defences were later replaced in stone, probably in the 1260s. (Phillpotts, 1995, pp5-6.)

The town expanded further in the later middle ages, with a settlement in Low Town, on the east bank of the river, and some un-planned extra-mural development outside the North Gate, Whitburn Gate, and Listley Gate on the north and west sides of the town (Phillpotts, 1995, p6; Buteux, 1996, p2).

A Franciscan friary (HER 00381) was founded at Bridgnorth on the west bank of the Severn sometime between 1224 and 1244. By the Dissolution the friary had declined and was described as "all...fallyng downe" (Ferris, 1996; Buteux, 1996). The town had two documented medieval hospitals: St John or Holy Trinity (HER 00383) to the north of Mill Street, and St James (HER 00390), off Stourbridge Road.

2.3 The Post-medieval Period

During the Civil War the town and castle were an important royalist stronghold. On 31st March 1646 the town was attacked by parliamentary forces; the royalist forces retreated to the castle, setting fire to St Leonard's Church and parts of the town. They held out for three months before the castle was taken and slighted.

Despite economic decline in the 16th century, Bridgnorth maintained its manufacturing industries; however, its economy in the 17th and early 18th centuries was heavily dependent on the river trade. In the late 18th/early 19th centuries two new industries, iron founding and carpet manufacturing, were established in Bridgnorth. The latter became the town's most important industry in the 19th century. (Buteux, 1995, p3.)

2.4 Ebenezer Row lies at the southern end of Railway Street, below the western side of the former castle bailey. The tenement plots on Railway Street may have been laid out on land owned by the de Pitchford family who also owned Little Brugg. These small plots, formerly called New Town, front onto the steep land that led to a postern gate in the town defences along Listley Street (Listley Gate, HER 00376). The tenement plots are now lined with 18th Century cottages. Two small caves (HER 04826) are known to exist about 190m to the south of the study area at 1-2 Hollybush Row. These caves have been dated to the post medieval period, but may have earlier origins.

3 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

3.1 A site visit was made to 1 Ebenezer Row on 18th June 2013 to carry out the programme of archaeological work conditioned by the planning permission for the development. A concrete slab had already been laid in the yard to the rear of the property. A drawn and photographic record was made of the cave cut into the cliff at the rear of the property.

3.2 The cave extended back into the cliff 1.8m from the front of the cliff and was 2.5m wide. The roof was domed, with a maximum height of 2.10m. A small alcove 1m high by 0.4m wide by 0.25m deep was cut into the east face of the cave opposite the entrance. The front of the cliff was faced by a sandstone and brick wall 0.5m thick (see Photo 1).

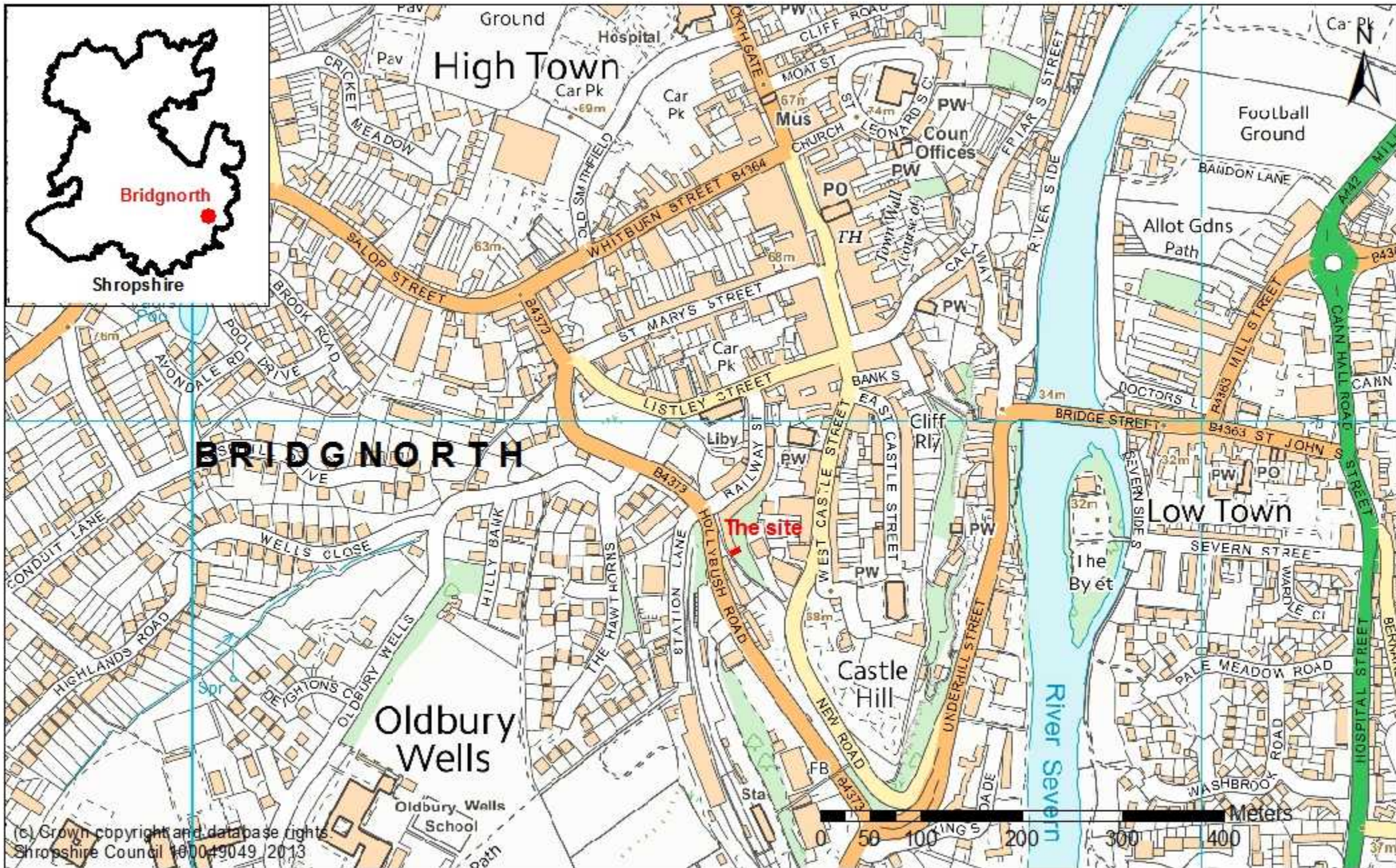
3.3 No further archaeological features or deposits were seen during the recording exercise.

4 REFERENCES

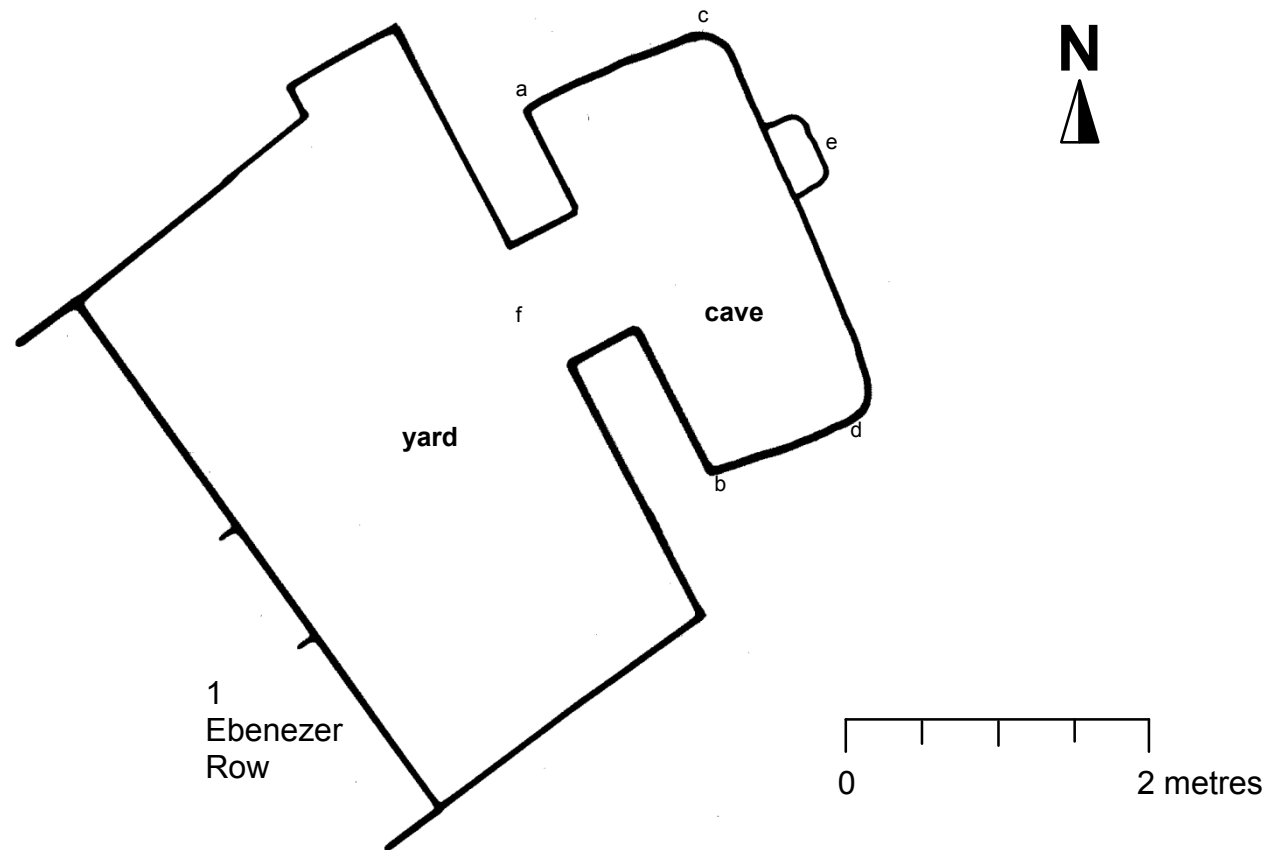
- Buteux, V**, 1996: *Archaeological Assessment of Bridgnorth, Shropshire*, Hereford and Worcester County Council, County Archaeology Service Report No. 301
- Gelling, M**, 1992: *The West Midlands in the Early Middle Ages*, Leicester
- Horowitz, D**, 2010: *A Tale of Two Bridges: Cwatsbrycge and Bridgnorth Revisited*, TSAHS vol LXXXIII 2008, pp1-17
- Ordnance Survey** 1:500 Shropshire Sheet Nos. LVIII.12.8 and LVIII.12.13, 1884
- Ordnance Survey** 1:2500 Sheet No. SO7292-7392 (1970 Revision)
- Pee, E H**, nd: *Map of places of interest in Bridgnorth before the mid 17th-century*, SRRC 6007/108
- Phillpotts, C**, 1995: *An Archaeological Evaluation of the Proposed Whitburn Street Relief Road, Bridgnorth, Shropshire*, Shropshire County Council Archaeology Service Report No. 73
- SA 4001/P/1/39** *Map of Bridgnorth c. 1610*
- Thorn, F and C, eds.**, 1986: *Domesday Book, Shropshire*, Chichester
- Wood, J**, 1835: *Map of Bridgnorth*, SA 4001/P/1/8

ABBREVIATIONS

- AOD** Above Ordnance Datum
- OS** Ordnance Survey
- HER** Shropshire Historic Environment Record, Shirehall, Shrewsbury
- NGR** National Grid Reference
- SA** Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury
- TSAHS** Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society
- TSAS** Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society

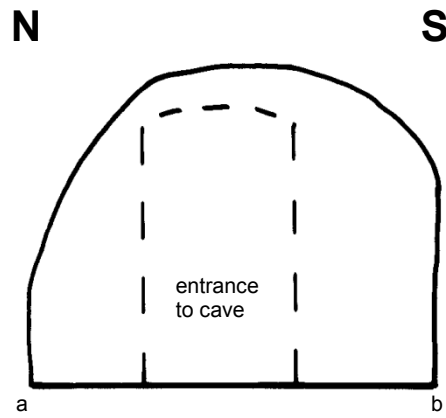


(c) Crown copyright and database rights
Shropshire Council 100049049, 2013

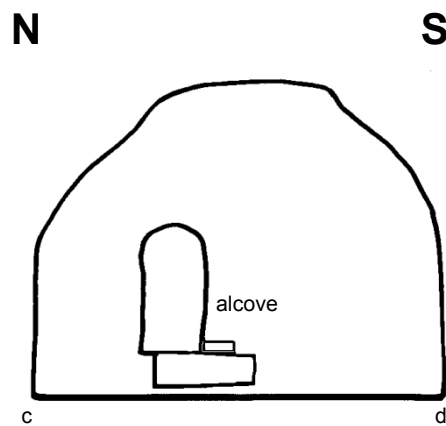


1 EBENEZER ROW, BRIDGNORTH 2013

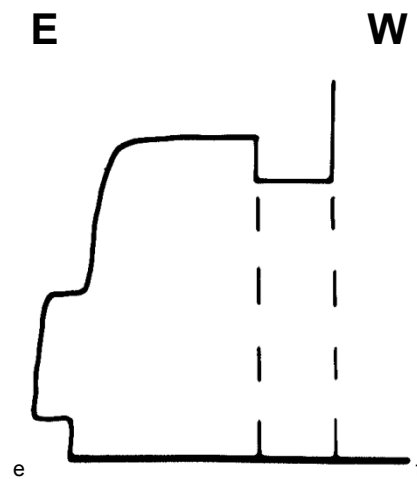
Figure 2: The yard and cave to the rear of 1, Ebenezer Row, plan view showing the location of sections in Figure 3; scale 1:50



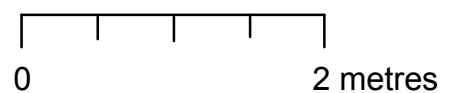
a) north-south section through front of cave



b) north-south section through rear of cave



c) east-west section through cave



1 EBENEZER ROW, BRIDGNORTH 2013

Figure 3: Internal sections through the cave (for locations see Figure 2), scale 1:50



Photo 1: The entrance to the cave,
looking NE



Photo 2: The back of the cave,
looking E, (scale bar 0.5m)



Photo 3: The interior of the cave,
looking N, (scale bar 1m)



Photo 4: The interior of the cave,
looking S, (scale bar 1m)