

**A WATCHING BRIEF AT 27 ASTON STREET,
WEM, SHROPSHIRE 2014**

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A report for
JENKS PROPERTY

Contents	Page No.
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 THE WATCHING BRIEF	1
3 REFERENCES AND SOURCES CONSULTED	2

Figure 1: Location of the development

Figure 2: a) East-facing section at the southeastern corner of the development, showing the 19th century rubbish pit (5); 1:20 scale

Photo 1: The development site, following the topsoil strip, looking SE

Photo 2: The development site, looking NW

Photo 3: Sample section, looking S; scale bar 1m

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The small town of Wem, Shropshire, is situated in the northern part of the county, 15km north of Shrewsbury and 12km south-southwest of Whitchurch. In September 2014 work began on the construction of 2 semi-detached houses with forecourt parking and gardens at 27 Aston Street, Wem (NGR SJ 5159 2895)

1.2 Wem was a Domesday manor that developed into a medium sized market town in the middle ages. The town was a parliamentary stronghold during the English Civil War, and suffered a major fire in 1677. Although the industrial period saw some growth, Wem remains today a small to medium sized town. The development site lies in the historic town centre and within a group of historic tenement plots of probable medieval origin. The line of Civil War defences, constructed in c.1643, are thought to run somewhere in the vicinity of the development site. However, recent work on several adjacent sites has failed to locate these defences and their course on this southeastern side of the town remains uncertain.

1.3 Because of the potential significance of the archaeological resource, it was a condition of the planning consent (that the groundworks be accompanied by an archaeological watching brief Planning Ref: 11/02742/FUL). The Archaeology Service was commissioned by Jenks Property to carry out the watching brief.

1.4 The aim of the watching brief was to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains that might be encountered during the groundworks.

2 THE WATCHING BRIEF

2.1 The topsoil was removed by mechanical excavator from the development area 13m x 13m to a depth of 0.45m. The removed soil comprised a very dark greyish brown humic sandy loam topsoil (Fig. 2; 1) 0.3m thick and an underlying deposit of dark greyish brown sandy loam 0.15m thick (2). The removal of these deposits revealed the surface of a layer of light brown sand with rounded gravel (3). In the southeast corner of the development area, a 19th century rubbish pit (5) had been cut into this sand deposit. The pit was oval in shape, 1.4m E/W by 1.2m N/S and 0.5m deep; its fill comprised very dark grey sandy silty loam (4) containing later 19th century pottery, tile, a fragment of iron guttering, and animal bone (these finds were discarded). The new foundation trenches were excavated into the sand deposit (3), which was seen to be 0.2m deep and to overly a cleaner natural deposit of rounded gravel and grit in a light reddish brown sand matrix (6).

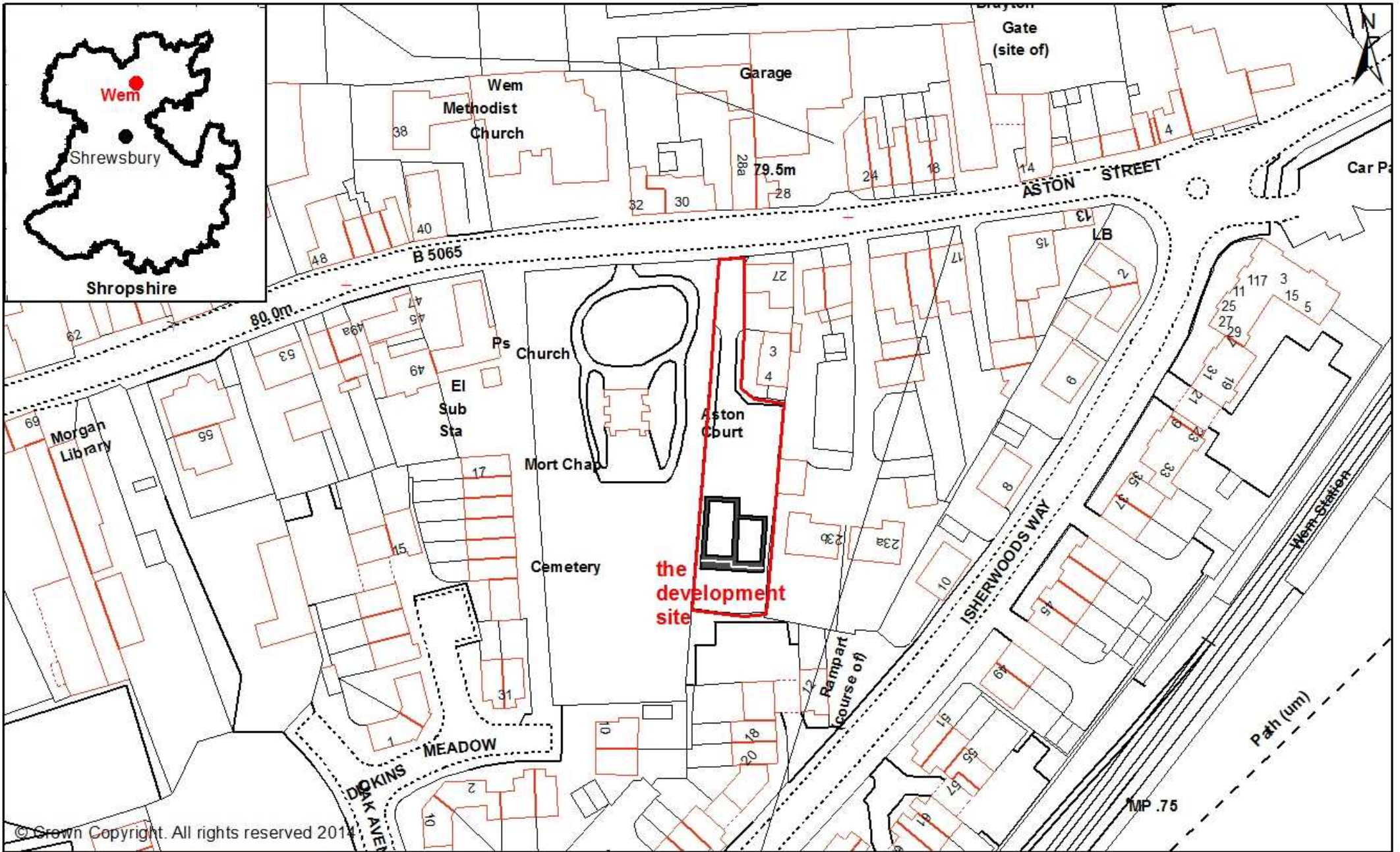
2.2 No other significant archaeological features or deposits were recorded during the watching brief. The only archaeological feature encountered was the late 19th century rubbish pit. There was no sign of any earlier activity within the area stripped for the new development.

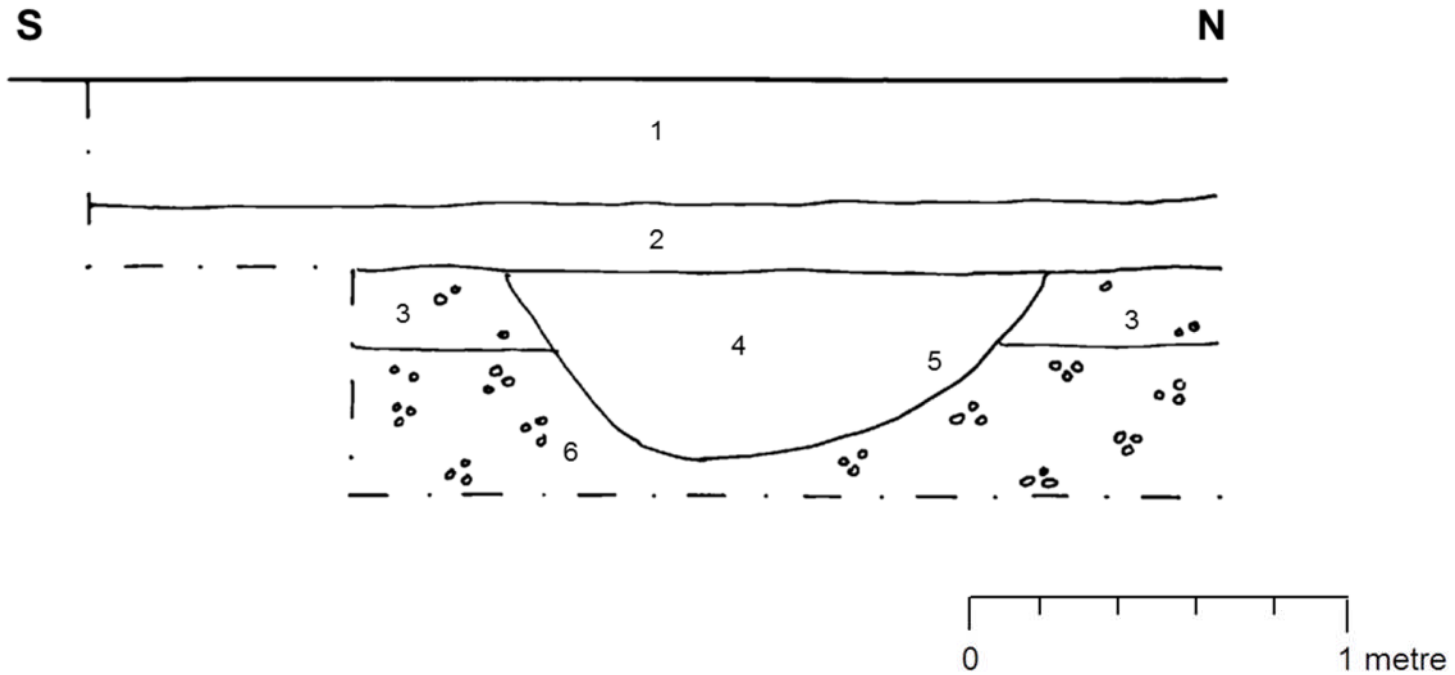
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ABBREVIATIONS

AOD	Above Ordnance Datum
DoE	Department of the Environment
EP-NS	English Place-Name Society
OS	Ordnance Survey
SMR	County Sites and Monuments Record, Shire Hall, Shrewsbury
SA	Shropshire Archives
TSAS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society
TSAHS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society





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