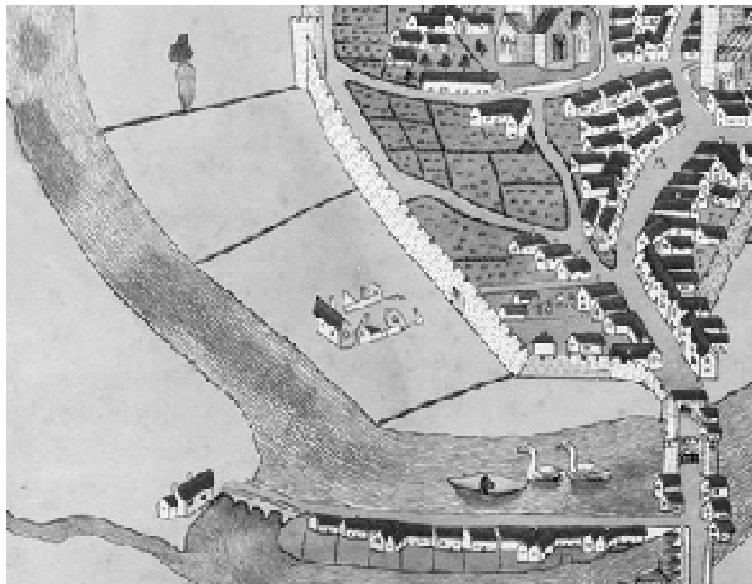


A WATCHING BRIEF AT ST JULIAN'S FRIARS, SHREWSBURY 2017

by
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A Report for
Western Power Distribution Ltd



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SUMMARY

In October 2017 the Archaeology Service carried out a watching brief on groundworks associated with laying an electricity cable below ground at St. Julian's Friars, Shrewsbury, Shropshire (NGR SJ 4948 1219). The works site lay within the precinct of Shrewsbury's Franciscan friary (Shropshire Historic Environment Record [HER] No. PRN 01523), established in c. 1245. The watching brief recorded a pit and a sandstone wall of probable medieval date.

Cover: The remains of the Franciscan Friary in St Julian's Friars, Shrewsbury, from the Burghley map, c. 1575

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In late October 2017 the Archaeology Service carried out a watching brief on groundworks associated with laying an electricity cable below ground at St. Julian's Friars, Shrewsbury, Shropshire (NGR SJ 4948 1219).

1.2 The works site lay within the precinct of Shrewsbury's Franciscan friary (Shropshire Historic Environment Record [HER] No. PRN 01523), established in c. 1245 during the reign of Henry III. The friary was dissolved during the Reformation in 1538. Standing remains of friary buildings are incorporated into 21-25 St. Julian's Friars, and in the lawn immediately to the west. It was considered that there was a possibility that archaeological remains relating to the friary might be encountered during the cable trenching.

1.3 Because of the potential significance of the archaeological resource it was considered necessary that the groundworks associated with the cable trenching at 25 St. Julian's Friars should be accompanied by the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in the form of a watching brief.

1.4 The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council, was commissioned to carry out this programme of archaeological work by Western Power Distribution plc..

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The St Julian's Friars area lies on the flood plain of the river Severn at the base of the outcrop of sand and gravel on which the medieval town of Shrewsbury developed. The area lies outside the circuit of the town defences constructed in the period AD 1218-42 (Barker, 1962, p181). In October 1245, Henry III granted land to the Franciscans immediately outside the town walls to build a friary, also providing 50 loads of lime. The following year he allowed the friars to raise the height of the town wall and make a gate through; they were given permission to widen the gate for wheeled traffic in 1267. The church was built by Richard Pride, and other friary buildings by Laurence Cox. 'But the gifts were too lavish' and Cox was asked by the provincial minister to take down the stone-built refectory walls and replace them with mud walls, which he did. However, further building activity is recorded in the late 14th century, and the friars obtained the use of a stone quarry (perhaps The Dingle in the Quarry park) near their house in 1371. The house, though poor, was maintained in good order until its surrender at the Dissolution in 1538.

2.2 Charges of obstructing the watercourse in 1382 and extending their land into the Severn in 1440 show that the friars were involved in reclamation activities. Indeed, excavations on the friary site in 1993 and 1997 confirmed that the friary was constructed on an artificial platform of reclaimed land c.70m wide north to south and 80m east to west, whose western boundary lay under the west side of the present St Julian's Friars road (Durham, 1993, pp10-11; Hannaford, 1997). The friary's lands included some 3 to 4 acres of arable land, including a walnut grove. The land, however, was liable to

flooding, and during severe floods in 1420 water rose to a height of over 8 feet in the church (VCHS 1973, p90).

2.3 Nos. 21-25 St Julian's Friars incorporate what is believed to have been the Frater (PRN 62465), with a long low building to the west demolished in 1967 being the dormitory (PRN 62466); foundations of this building are visible in the lawn to the west of No. 25. Nos. 20-25 St Julian's Friars (including the frater) are a Grade II Listed Building (National Ref. 1344945). A building range further to the west was destroyed in 1879 when the Greyfriars bridge was built. A 17th century timber-framed range (PRN 62467), west of standing friary building (PRN 62465) and north of the dormitory (PRN 62466) was also demolished in 1967. Discoveries of skeletons (PRNs 60215, 60216 & 60217) were made in 1938, 1952, and 1969 to the north of the standing friary buildings. Excavations in 2003-4 in the area to the north of the standing buildings (Taverner, 2004) found remains of further friary buildings. It is likely that the Franciscan friary consisted of a typical and sizeable complex of friary buildings, and this is perhaps reinforced by the documented decision of the general chapter of the whole order to meet there in 1509.

2.4 The friary was dissolved in 1538 and was purchased c.1544 by the draper Roger Pope (VCHS, 1973, p91); the Pope family also acquired the town's two other friaries (Champion, 1994, p105). The Burghley Map of Shrewsbury, c.1575, shows the partly ruinous friary buildings standing in an otherwise undeveloped plot of land. Speed's map of 1610 shows one building on the friary site, with the land to the west (including the study area) between the town walls and the river, marked as Friars London, still undeveloped. John Rocque's plan of 1746 shows development extending southwards along St Julian's Friars (Friars Lane) from its junction with Beeches Lane and Under the Wyle.

2.5 Substantial redevelopment of the area to the north and east of the standing remains of the Friary took place in the early 21st century. A partial evaluation of the area was undertaken in 1993 (Durham, 1993), and limited excavations in 2003-4 preceded some of the redevelopments (Taverner, 2004), though no subsequent archaeological recording accompanied the development itself, and no analysis and formal publication of the 2003-4 excavations was undertaken.

3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

3.1 The watching brief at 25, St. Julian's Friars was carried out on 30th October 2017. The cable trench was cut by mechanical excavator northwards for 8m from the north side of the building before terminating in a rectangular cut to intercept the existing main in the road. The trench was cut to a width of 0.35m and a depth of 0.6m. .

3.2 A deposit of firm, reddish brown clay (Fig.x, 3) lay immediately beneath the formation of chippings (2) and brick pavers (1) of the yard in front of the house. This clay deposit is likely to represent the documented medieval reclamation, previously seen in the excavations in 1993 and 2003-4. About 3.5m from the house the remains of a pit

(6) filled with silty loam and fragments of red and buff sandstone (5) were cut into the clay deposit. At the northern end of the trench, 6m from the house, the remains of a red sandstone wall (4) also lay immediately beneath the yard, cut into the clay deposit. This wall comprised of large blocks of red sandstone bonded in buff, gritty mortar of medieval type; the wall was 0.5m wide and survived to a depth of 0.5m below the present ground surface. The wall is likely to have been the remains of a friary building, possibly a plinth wall supporting a timber-framed superstructure.

3.3 No other archaeological features or deposits were recorded during the watching brief on the cable trench.

3.4 Both the pit (6) and wall (4) seen in the cable trench lay immediately beneath the present yard surface and had clearly been truncated. Nevertheless, their presence here indicates that archaeological features and deposits belonging to the Franciscan friary still survive beneath the yards and road surfaces within the St. Julian's Friars area.

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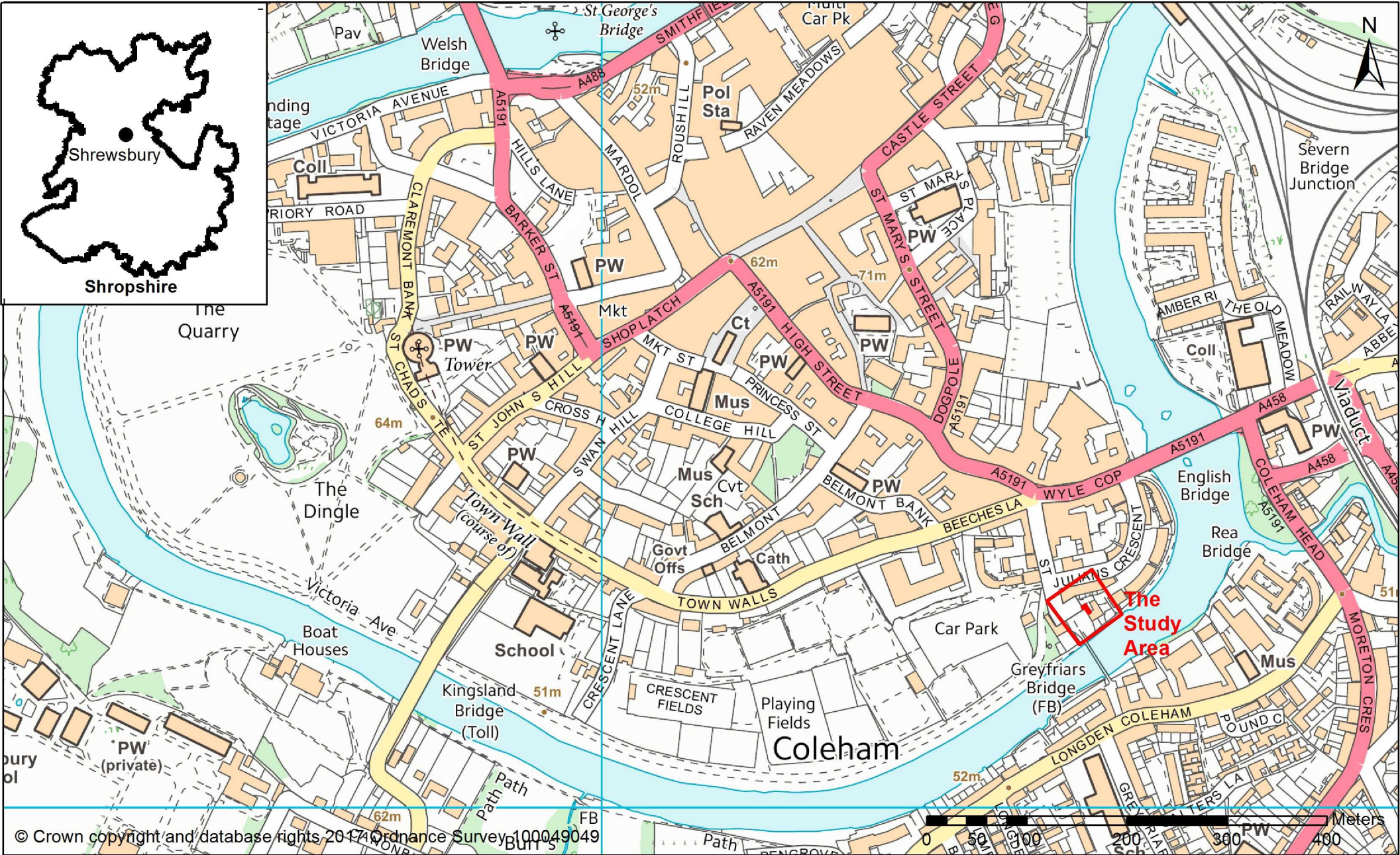
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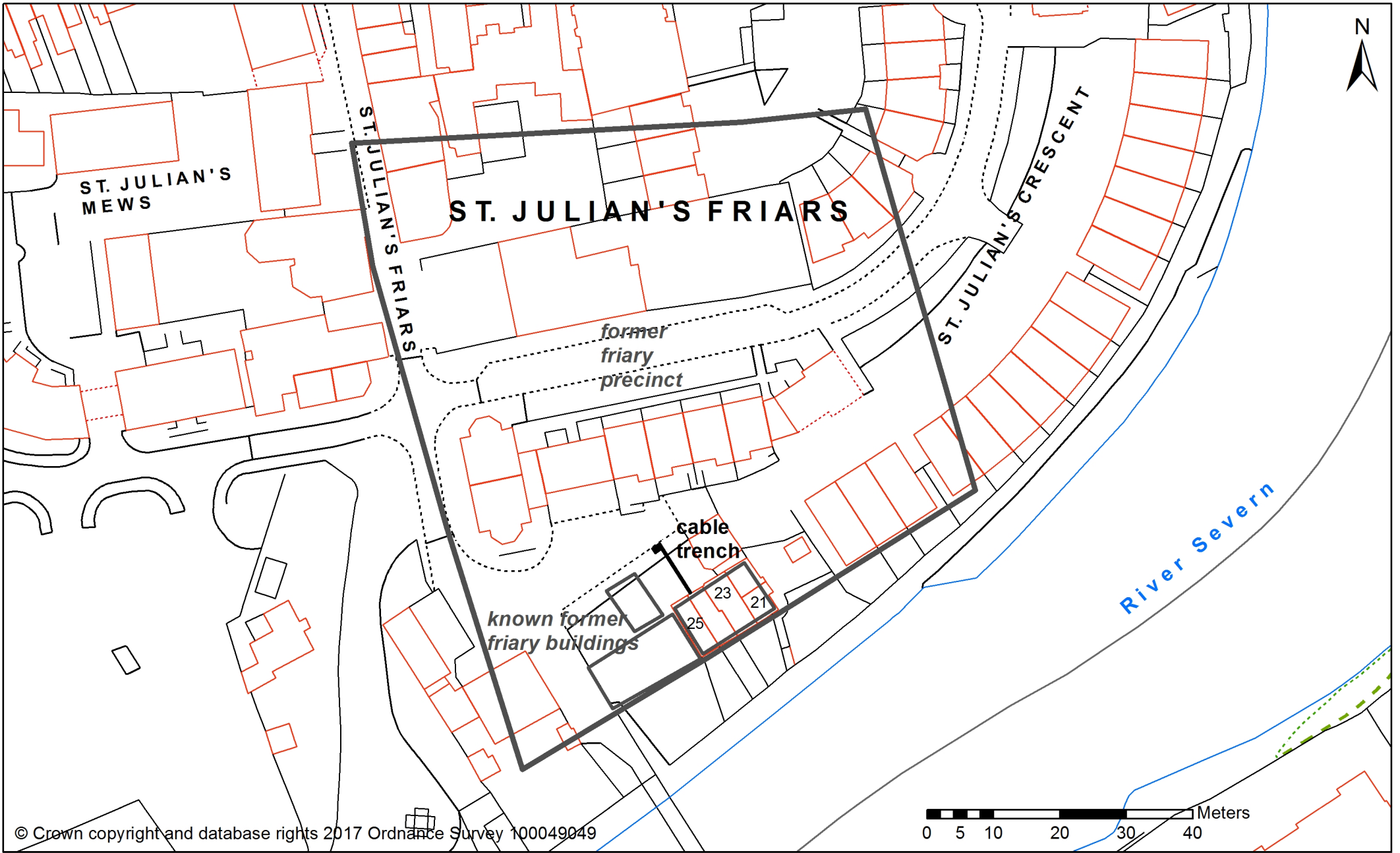


ST. JULIAN'S FRIARS, SHREWSBURY 2017

Figure 1: The location of the study area

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

Scale: 1:5,001



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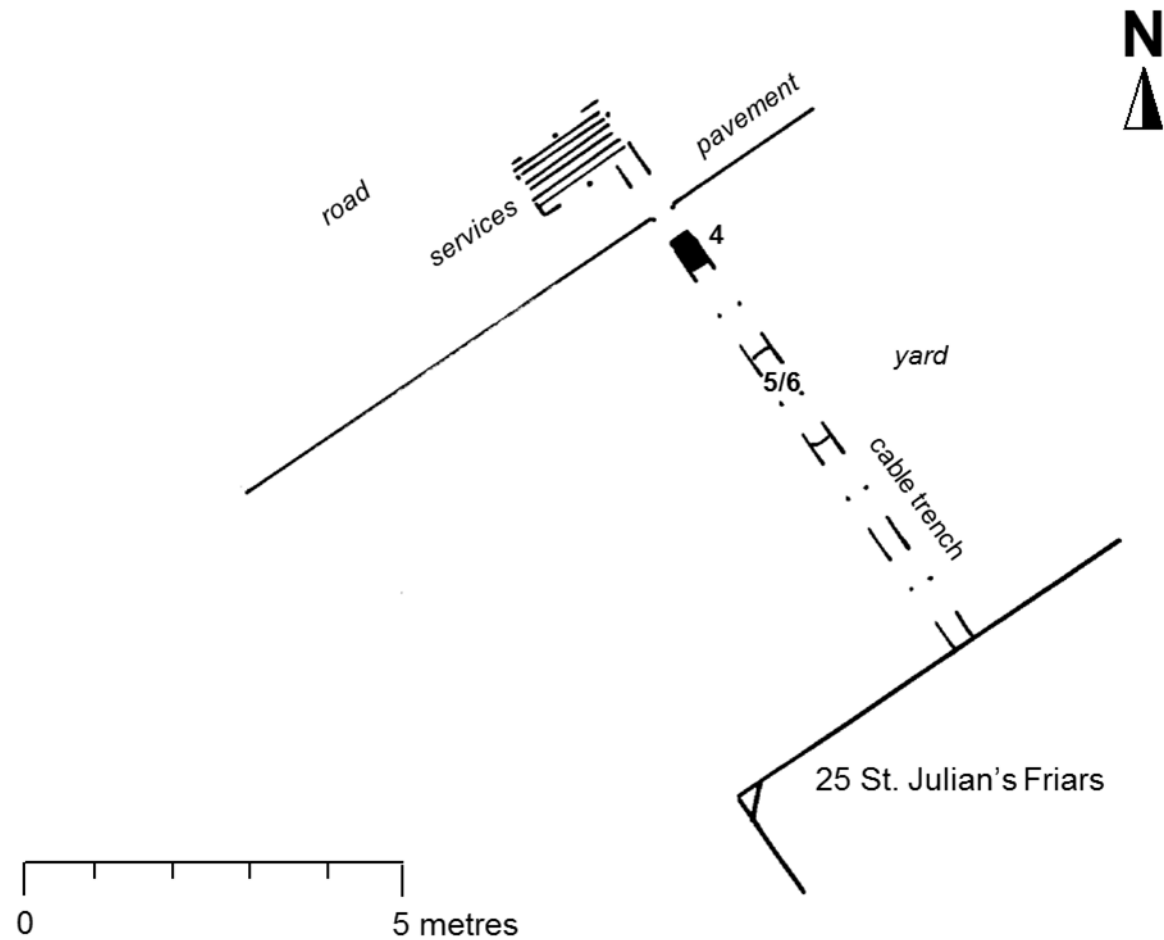


ST. JULIAN'S FRIARS, SHREWSBURY 2017

Figure 2: The location of the cable trench

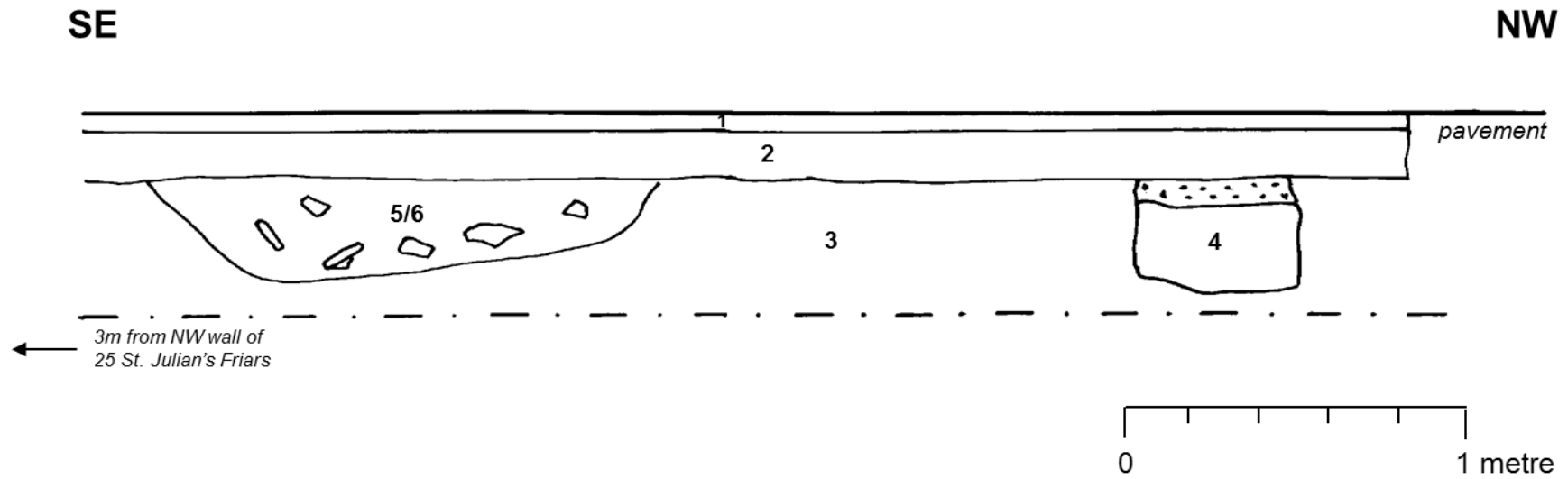
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Historic Environment Team, Shropshire Council,
Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

Scale: 1:750



ST. JULIAN'S FRIARS, SHREWSBURY 2017

Figure 3: The location of the cable trench and archaeological features, scale 1:100



ST. JULIAN'S FRIARS, SHREWSBURY 2017

Figure 4: NE facing section of the cable trench, showing wall 4 and pit 6; scale: 1:20



Photo 1: The study area, looking SE



Photo 2: The pit (6) looking SW; scale bar 1m



Photo 3: The wall (4) looking SW; scale bar 1m