

# *Marches Archaeology*

## **Furrows Garage, Coton Hill, Shrewsbury, Shropshire**

**Report on an archaeological desk-based assessment and  
building assessment**

February 2004

*Marches Archaeology Series 322*

**This report is produced by**

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**Furrows Garage, Coton Hill,  
Shrewsbury,  
Shropshire**

**A report on archaeological building assessment**

**NGR :SJ 492132**

**Report by  
Susan Fielding**

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**Furrows Garage, Coton Hill,  
Shrewsbury,  
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**A report on an archaeological building assessment**

*Summary*

*Marches Archaeology was commissioned to undertake a programme of archaeological work at the site of Furrows Garage, Coton Hill, Shrewsbury (SJ 492 132). Shropshire Homes (the client) have submitted a proposal for redevelopment of land, on which the main car showroom and offices, workshops and areas of open parking currently stand.*

*The current showroom and offices contain the remains of the former St Mary's Vicarage, which in turn is thought to encapsulate Benbow House, an early post-medieval timber framed mansion. As such the Local Planning Authority's Archaeological Advisor advised that further information was required before the archaeological implications of this work can be fully assessed. Marches Archaeology was therefore requested by the client to carry out an archaeological desk-based assessment of the entire site, and a Level 1 recording of the building containing the car showroom and offices.*

*The desk-based assessment has established that the site lies outside the medieval town walls of Shrewsbury, but that there is activity within Coton from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, when it formed a small island within the River Severn. There are a number of late medieval houses recorded in Coton Hill, as well as the Chapel of St Catherine, but there is no evidence of medieval activity within the site itself.*

*The desk-based assessment confirmed that the main showrooms and offices lies on the site of Benbow House, later used as St Mary's Vicarage. Benbow House is first recorded in association with Admiral John Benbow (1635-1701), but it the exact nature of this association is unclear. The map regression exercise has established that the earliest accurate map depicting a building known to be Benbow House dates to 1838 (Woods map of Shrewsbury). However Roque's map of Shrewsbury dated to 1746 shows a range of buildings of similar plan to Benbow House, and the adjoining Benbow Place, depicted on the later maps. Earlier, pictorial maps of Shrewsbury (Speed 1610, Burghley 1547) show a representation of buildings in the area of the site, but neither is accurate enough for a specific building to be identified.*

*The assessment also identified that Benbow House underwent extensive restoration and rebuilding in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the eastern wing and northern extensions dating to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the current timber-framed facades.*

*The desk-based assessment has also established that there are significant industrial remains of the site in the form of a large workshop or goods shed. This is a large brick built, single storey building that first appears on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map of 1881 and may be contemporary with the first construction of the railway in the 1840s. The Shropshire Sites and Monuments Record highlights the importance of a number of railway buildings in the*

*area, including the Crewe Junction Signal Box and Shrewsbury Station, and their value as part of a larger group of railway buildings.*

*The visual inspection of the main car showroom and offices identified that the core of the current building is likely to relate Benbow House, the building shown on the 1838 map, with extensive rebuilding and additions having taken place in the later 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The conversion of the car showroom on the ground floor has cleared the majority, if not all, of the original and 19<sup>th</sup> century fabric of the house, although the undated cellar (the position of which has been identified in the desk-based assessment) is likely to have been simply infilled.*

*The use of the first floor as offices means that little of the building fabric is visible internally for inspection, with the majority of the rooms plasterboarded or panelled with mid 20<sup>th</sup> century materials. The fabric which is visible, however, relates to the 19<sup>th</sup> century additions or restoration. Inspection of the attic rooms and the north external elevation of the building revealed the much altered remains of a building predating the 19<sup>th</sup> century renovations and which may relate to the 17<sup>th</sup> century house. This consists of external brickwork evident on the first floor of the north elevation which is consistent with brickwork of the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century, together with roof timbers which clearly predate the 19<sup>th</sup> century.*

*The results of this phase of work have identified structural remains both within the core of Benbow House, and in the form of a 19<sup>th</sup> century railway building that are of archaeological and historic interest. Although detailed plans are not available, both structures are likely to be affected by the proposed development and a programme of further investigation and recording is recommended in order to preserve the remains by record.*

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**A report on an archaeological building assessment**

## **1 Introduction**

Marches Archaeology was commissioned to undertake a programme of archaeological work at the site of Furrows Garage, Coton Hill, Shrewsbury (SJ 492 132). Shropshire Homes (the client) have submitted a proposal for redevelopment of land, on which currently stands the main car showroom and offices, workshops and areas of open parking (Figure 1).

The current showroom and offices contain the remains of the former St Mary's Vicarage, which in turn is thought to encapsulate Benbow House, an early post-medieval timber framed mansion. As such the Local Planning Authority's Archaeological Advisor advised that further information was required before the archaeological implications of this work can be fully assessed. Marches Archaeology was therefore requested by the client to carry out an archaeological desk-based assessment of the entire site, and a Level 1 recording of the building containing the car showroom and offices.

A brief was prepared by the Historical Environment Officer of Shropshire County Council, upon which Marches Archaeology's Project Proposal was based.

## **2 Aims and objectives**

The objectives of the project were as follows:

1. The preparation of a Level 1 record, as defined in the RCHM(E) publication *Recording Historic Buildings – A Descriptive Specification*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edn.
2. The consultation of primary and secondary documentary sources relating to the area.
3. Dependant on the results of this report, based on the above objectives, the excavation of up to 50sq. m of trenches.

The Institute of Field Archaeology (IFA) defines Building Investigation and Recording as “a programme of work intended to establish the character, history, dating, form and archaeological development of a specified building, or structure, or complex, and its setting, including its buried components on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater”.

The purpose of Building Investigation and Recording is defined by the IFA as “to examine a specified building, structure, or complex, and its setting, in order to inform [either] the formulation of a strategy for conservation, alteration, demolition, repair or management of a building, or structure, or complex and its setting [or] to seek a better understanding, compile a lasting record, analyse the findings/record, and then disseminate the results”.

### **3 Methodology**

#### *Documentary research*

The study area for the desk-based assessment included the site, and a surrounding area of 200m. Accessible primary and secondary sources were consulted for the desk-based assessment phase of the work. This included a site visit, and sources held at the Shropshire County Record Office, and the Shropshire Sites and Monuments Record. The sources studied included cartographic documents, historical documents, photographic documents and archaeological databases.

#### *Fieldwork*

A building recording implementing the requirements of a RCHM(E) Level 1 record was carried out. This included photographic, written and drawn elements as appropriate. The photographic record includes 35mm colour slides and black and white negatives as well as digital photographs. A written description, and a measured sketch plan were also produced.

#### *Office work*

On completion of the fieldwork a site archive was prepared and the written, drawn and photographic data was catalogued and cross-referenced. This illustrated report was prepared, including a non-technical summary.

### **4 Site description**

The site is centred on NGR SJ 492 132. It is located on the east side of Coton Hill road in the district of Coton Hill, Shrewsbury (Figure 1). The site lies on the east bank of the River Severn which flows north–south at this point, and some to the north west of Shrewsbury’s town centre (Figure 1).

The site is currently occupied by Furrows Garage, consisting of a range of buildings providing different functions. The main car showroom is located on the ground floor of Benbow House, while offices occupy the first and attic floors. To the south of this building is a small area of showroom forecourt, with a covered forecourt and modern brick workshop to the east of the forecourt. North of the main building is a large area of open car parking, with further modern brick workshops in the south-east corner. To the east of the car park is a large brick building, which appears to have been a former railway building, and which is currently used as an accident repair centre. The site continues to the north of this building in an area of more overgrown car parking, that lies behind the properties of 63-68 Coton Hill. To the south the site is bounded by more residential properties, and to the east it is bounded by the railway line

The site is very level, and sits only 2-3 metres above the River Severn. To the north of the site, the ground level rises into Coton Hill, while the areas to the south and east area also level. The underlying geology of Coton Hill consists of Keele Beds of the Erbistock Group, forming part of the Upper Carboniferous coal measures in the south east half of the area, with Lower Mottled Sandstone of the Triassic period to the north-west. It appears that the site lies just to the north-west of this division, lying on the Sandstone beds. Overlying the solid geology are thick deposits of recent and Pleistocene glacial sands and gravels, with alluvium in the south and west parts of the area.

## 5 Archaeological and historical background

### *Prehistoric*

The earliest evidence for human activity in Shropshire consists of Mesolithic tools (Trinder, 1998), however the earliest prehistoric remains in the county date to the Bronze Age, and are largely funerary or ceremonial remains (Watson, 2002). No finds or sites of Mesolithic, Neolithic or Bronze Age date have been found in the vicinity of the site.

In the Iron Age, the emphasis of known sites shifts towards those relating to settlement of the Cornovii. The more obvious of these are the numerous hillforts that exist around the county, although there have also been a number of lowland sites identified through the study of aerial photographs. In particular sites have been located along the Severn Valley, including a site on the edge of Shrewsbury at Weeping Cross (Trinder, 1998). Although there are no known Iron Age remains in the area of Coton Hill, its position near a natural crossing point of the River Severn (a ford) may have made it a focus for activity. Later in the medieval period it is known that Coton formed a small island in the river, but with a changing river course it is not known how long it had existed as such.

### *Roman*

There is no evidence that Shrewsbury has any origin in the Roman period, with no remains or artefacts of this date discovered within the town. The main focus of known settlement in the vicinity was at Wroxeter, some 7km to the east of Shrewsbury. A legionary fort was established here in around AD 57 and it was later abandoned and the site used for the construction of the civitas capital for the Cornovii.

### *Saxon*

In the 650s AD Shropshire became part of the Kingdom of Mercia, which later in the 9<sup>th</sup> century was split between the Danes and the Kings of Wessex. The first mention of Shrewsbury (*Scrobbesbyrig*) as a town comes in 901 AD, with Shropshire as a county recorded in 1006 (Trinder, 1998). There is only one recorded findspot of Saxon date within the town however, that of a small hoard of coins found during building work at Castle Foregate in 1936 (SALOPSMR 1370). Many of the coins were destroyed during their discovery, but the six that remain indicate a deposition date of c920 AD.

### *Medieval and post-medieval*

Shrewsbury has a number of entries in the Domesday book of 1086, with the city and indeed most of Shropshire in the ownership of Roger de Montgomery. This gives an early indication of the towns dominance with 5 churches and 252 houses listed on the site (Moran, 2003)

The first castle was constructed in 1067, and consisted of a motte with conjoined inner and outer baileys. There are the remains of 12<sup>th</sup> century curtain walls and a gateway, but the body of the current castle is late 13<sup>th</sup> century in date. The defensive town walls, which provided a 2.2km circuit around the town, were ordered by Henry II in 1218, and were largely completed by 1242 (Watson, 2002). The abbey, mentioned in the Domesday Book, was founded in 1086, built by Earl Roger for the monastery of St Peter, with extensive rebuilding taking place in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

By 1334 Shrewsbury was counted as the 7<sup>th</sup> most prosperous town in the country, its royal connections and location in relation to the Welsh border having given it role of some importance in the early part of the medieval period. From this time on however, its prosperity and importance diminished throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods. Also around

this time the pattern of building in Shrewsbury changed, with the emphasis shifting from semi-defensive stone houses to wholly timber-framed structures, and a large number of timber framed houses of medieval date survive within the town (Moran, 2003).

Only a very small number of late medieval buildings have been identified within Coton Hill. A row of four cottages at 19-22 Coton Hill are also thought to be of early 16<sup>th</sup> century date, being of timber framed construction with areas of painted brick cladding. The framing used is close-studded with queen post roofs with cambered tie beams and windbraces, and 20-22 are thought to have originally formed a single barn belonging to Myttons Mansion, a large timber framed mansion built by Thomas or William Mytton in c1550 (SALOPSMR 2025/12052 & 12280)

St Catherine's Chapel is known of only through documentary records having apparently been demolished by the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (SALOPSMR 2014/12051). This is first recorded in 1480 when a Thomas Pryde is fined for not opening the hermitage known as St Catherine's and again in 1521 when rent is charged for it. After this date the site is referenced as Chapel Yard, and appears to have become pasture indicating the demolition of the chapel itself.

That buildings of an earlier medieval date are not recorded in the area appears to be due to the fact that Coton is recorded as an island as late as 1406. Its status as an island was due to the presence of Bagely Brook, and it was reached by Bagely or Bakelar Bridge (SALOPSMR 12049/2080) which was still in use and being repaired in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The brook was later re-routed in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, being diverted into underground pipes, although the bridge remains intact under the modern road. A second, man-made, waterway existed in the form of Barge Gutter (SALOPSMR 12004/2091), first recorded on Burgley's Map of 1547 (Figure 2a). This is shown located at the sharp bend in the river at Coton, where the water becomes shallow to the point where it becomes a crossable ford, and where the town's weir was located. The gutter bypassed both these features allowing traffic along this section of the river into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

By 1547 Coton appears to have ceased to be an island, and by 1575 is referred to as Coton Hill (SALOPSMR 12004/2091). There are a number of known 17<sup>th</sup> century buildings along Coton Hill, including Benbow House (SALOPSMR 2036/12053). The house is referenced as the birthplace, in 1635, of Admiral John Benbow, the son of a tanner called William Benbow of Coton Hill, and the nephew of John Benbow, a renowned royalist, who was executed for his part in the Battle of Worcester. There is no direct evidence as to the origin of Benbow House however, and his father's occupation as a tanner may suggest rather that the Admiral built or purchased the house during his financially successful career in the navy. Speed's map of Shrewsbury dating to 1610 (Figure 2b), shows a large house in approximately the right location in relation to the course of the river and Pintle Brake, but is not accurate enough to specify this as Benbow House. Roque's plan of 1746 shows the first building (Figure 3a), which can in plan be recognised as the group of buildings named as Benbow House and Benbow Place on later maps, but it is not until Wood's map of 1838 (Figure 3b) that Benbow House is named as such.

At this time the house is shown as square in plan, with small outlying building to the east, and this probably represents the original 17<sup>th</sup> century structure. A sales particular of 1865 records it as having lately belonged to, and occupied by a Captain Ryder (SRO P257/V/1/1). A plan (Figure 4) attached to a second sales particular of 1869 (SRO P257/V/1/2) shows that a bay

has been added onto the west side of the house, as well a range of outbuildings constructed to the east. This plan details the layout of the rooms at ground floor level, as well as indicating the position of the cellar, while the written description that accompanies it describes “six bedrooms and two dressing rooms, water closet and housemaid closet on the first floor and two good attic bedrooms on the second floor”. It also mentions that the “whole is in thorough repair having been recently restored and partially rebuilt by the late Mr Treasure for his own residence and is now occupied by R Barkly esq.”.

By the time of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of 1881 (Figure 5a), the house has again increased in size by the addition of the eastern bay. The size and plan of the house remains with little alteration until at least the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition OS map, 1902, (Figure 6a), but by the 1927, Revised Edition OS map (Figure 6b) it appears to have reduced in size, with the eastern extensions having been demolished. This is supported by the photographic evidence, with the earliest dated photograph of 1890 (SRO B3135) showing the central bay with a cross wing either side, and a range of outbuildings to the east. This shows the house with its present ‘timber-framed’ facades on the east and west wings that appear to date to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century restoration (Plates 1 & 2). The central bay is also shown as having a 19<sup>th</sup> century façade.

In 1881 a report was made that a curved wall of Grinshill stone, 12ft long and 7ft wide had been discovered during works to the property (SALOPSMR 12053). This was located at the east end of the building, but its exact position is unknown. It has been speculated that this formed part of a defensive ‘outwork’ defending Bagley Bridge to the south, but the evidence is inconclusive. No trace of this survives today.

It appears that the house was in use as St Mary’s Vicarage during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although the dates of its use as such are unclear. It is marked as a vicarage only on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition OS map, and there is an undated conveyance document (SRO P257/F/1) in which is mentioned the ‘parsonage fund’ which has arisen as a result of the sale of an ‘old house of residence’ used as a parsonage within the parish of St Mary’s.

The photographic evidence shows that the building was in use as Furrows Garage by 1965 (SRO SN 597B), and the ground floor of Benbow House used as a showroom with large plate glass windows along the west side (Plate 3 & 4). Dormer windows have been inserted in the attic storey, facilitating the conversion of the upper storeys to offices. To the south of the house, the large gardens had been converted into an open forecourt, with a large brick built workshop to the east. This has an façade sporting with ‘The Shrewsbury Motor Works’ inscribed across the front (SRO D71:4, Plate 4). By the 1980s the ground floor had been converted with larger plate glass windows in a steel frame along the west and south side, and the chimney stacks in the western cross-wing had been reduced to their present level below the roof line. The showroom has subsequently been modernised to the current appearance of the showroom (Plate 5).

No.s 19-22 Coton Hill consists of a row of four cottages with a facade dating to c1800, but with 17<sup>th</sup> century cores (SALOPSMR 12285). These have timber-framed ground storeys with brick above, and with plain tiled roofs. No.s 11, 12 and 13 Coton Hill are similarly 17<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed with an 18<sup>th</sup> century brick façade (SALOPSMR 1654). Buildings of interest in the area dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century include No. 27 Coton Hill (SALOPSMR 12283), No.s 73 and 74 Coton Hill (SALOPSMR 12286), No 75 and 76 Coton Hill (SALOPSMR 12287) and the Royal Oak Public House (SALOPSMR 12281).

In the 1840s the railway was introduced to Shrewsbury, with the Tudor-Gothic style station built in 1849 (SALOPSMR 12192). The 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1881 (Figure 5A) shows the railway line running to the east of the property, with two large rectangular buildings located between the garden of Benbow House and the line. The function of these is not marked, but they are likely to be engine sheds or other workshops. Between 1900 and 1903 a programme of improvement was carried out on the railway, resulting in the extension of the main station and the construction of the Crewe Station signal Box (SALOPSMR 1355). The SMR notes that the above buildings, together with the Severn Bridge Junction Signal Box, and other railway buildings, form an outstanding group of industrial structures.

Other industrial structures in the area have been identified from the Ordnance Survey maps. These include two sets of Saw Mills (SALOPSMR 10396 & 10393), and the Corporation of Shrewsbury's waterworks (SALOPSMR 10394). Many of the buildings relating to these works no longer appear to survive.

## **6 The building recording**

Benbow House is H-shaped in plan, with a central bay facing south flanked by a cross wing at each end, and a series of small extensions on the north side (Figure 7). The central bay contains the oldest surviving section of the house, with both cross wings and the majority of the extensions being of 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

The two and a half storey central bay has a rendered south elevation, and only a small portion of the external north elevation is visible on the first floor, due to the later extensions. This is of painted brickwork laid in a random bond, and which, from the size and shape of the bricks, dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The roof is hipped, and covered with plain tiles, and has late 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century dormer windows inserted into the north, south and east sides. Some of the windows in this bay are 19<sup>th</sup> century 4-pane sashes, with some casements of a 19<sup>th</sup> century and later date (Plates 6 & 7).

The west, south and east elevations of the cross-wings are of a 19<sup>th</sup> century timber framing with cement render infill, the south façade of each showing different decorative designs within the close studded frame (Plate 6). The north elevations of both wings are of painted brick, laid in Flemish Garden-Wall bond. Both are of two and a half storeys, with plain tiled, gabled roofs, and the majority of the windows again being 4-pane sashes (Plates 7 & 8). Only the east wing has an extant chimney, which is star shaped in plan. A small external passageway of brick, also of 19<sup>th</sup> century date, has been constructed to provide access to the west cross-wing attic, from the attic storey of the central bay.

On the north side of the building a smaller extension of 19<sup>th</sup> century date extends back from the east cross-wing, while a projecting stairwell and a second small extension wing (Plate 7), both of 19<sup>th</sup> century brick laid in Flemish bond, extend from the north-east corner of the central bay. A further single storey lean-to extension dating to the later 20<sup>th</sup> century runs the length of the building at ground floor level. The two small extensions have plain tiled gabled roofs, while the projecting stairwell extension has a flat roof covered in felt.

The majority of the ground floor of Benbow House is in use as a car showroom, with one small office and a separate cloakroom at the eastern end (Plates 9 & 10). The showroom itself has no internal divisions, and both the south and west walls are formed of floor to



ceiling plate glass windows. The north wall is of modern brick construction, and it appears that the conversion of this floor has removed any original, or even 19<sup>th</sup> century, fabric.

There is currently no access to the cellar and it was impossible to tell from the inspection whether this has been simply blocked off or whether it has been infilled.

The majority of the first floor is used as offices, with a kitchen and cloakroom at the eastern end (Figure 7a). The vast majority of these rooms are plasterboarded or plastered internally, with chipboard wallpaper then applied on many of the walls and the ceilings artexed (Plates 11-14). The meetings room is panelled with plain, raised panels of a light wood, which stylistically dates to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century (Plate 11). These features have effectively covered the building fabric, making it impossible to determine if any of the house on this floor predates the Victorian restoration. Very little of the Victorian fabric is in evidence, being limited to the sash windows, and to covings and skirtings which include a range of different ovolo and ogee mouldings. One exception is in the east end of the securities office, where the base of the 19<sup>th</sup> century roof trusses, including the collars and purlins, of the eastern cross-wing are exposed (Plate 15). There are only two visible fireplaces, one in the small office in the west wing which is boarded over, and a second in the securities office. This has a brown brick fireplace, probably of mid 20<sup>th</sup> century date.

The securities office has been formed from two smaller rooms, the original division marked by a large square headed arch located where the east wall of the central bay would have been. The eastern portion of this room would have formed a bedroom occupying the whole of the eastern wing on this floor, while the rest of the securities office appears to have formed a large room extending to its current limits. The conversion to offices otherwise appears to have caused little disruption to the 19<sup>th</sup> century plan of the house.

The attic storey of the central range is also used as offices (Figure 7). This floor is accessed by a staircase accommodated by the projecting stairwell on the north side of the building, the tongue and groove panelling on the lower half of the stairwell walls also being of late 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

The attic of the central range is currently divided into two equally sized rooms, both of which have some exposed roof timbers which are of 17<sup>th</sup> century date, together with some 19<sup>th</sup> century replacements and supports. The 17<sup>th</sup> century timbers consist of three valley rafters (in the south-west, south-east and north-east corners) and a two principal rafters which formed a central north-south truss (Figure 7b), all exposed only for the central part of their length (Plates 16 & 17). The valley rafter for the north-west corner of the roof appears to have been removed below ceiling level, and a prop inserted. This has taken place in order to accommodate a doorway leading to a passage accessing the west cross-wing attic.

West, south and east trenched purlins are visible at ceiling height, although no northern purlin is exposed. Either side of the dividing wall is a single upright, in each of which is a empty mortice hole (mirrored in the principal rafters) indicating that they carried the ends of an interrupted collar from the principal rafters (Plate 18). There was a second mortice hole in each upright indicating that the collar continued between the two uprights at a higher level. This was removed when the dividing wall was inserted at a later date, certainly by 1869 (SRO No.P257/V/1/2).

A small length of the wall plate along the western wall was visible in the northern office. There were also a number of reused and 19<sup>th</sup> century timbers that had been placed to support the original roof timbers. The dividing wall contains the chimneystack, with no evidence that this provided fireplaces at attic level at any time.

A doorway in the north-west corner of the northern office leads to the external, roof height passageway which accesses the attic of the west cross wing (Plate 19). This was of a queen post roof structure, within which was contained the remains of two diamond plan chimneys, which had been demolished to just below roof level (Plate 20). These appear on early photos of the wing, each with two small diamond-shaped chimneys (Plates 1 & 2). The attic of the east wing was not accessible for inspection.

## **7 Discussion**

The desk-based assessment has established that the potential for prehistoric or Roman remains within the site is low. However, the proximity of a Saxon coin hoard from Castle Foregate and the known extents of the medieval town of Shrewsbury, as well as the activity recorded within Coton from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, suggests that the potential for remains of this date is higher.

The site lies on the lower southern slopes of Coton Hill, which once formed a small island within the River Severn. There are a number of late medieval houses recorded in Coton Hill, as well as the Chapel of St Catherine, but there is no evidence of medieval activity within the site itself. However the site is located adjacent to the late medieval road and the possibility of an earlier structure on the site, predating Benbow House cannot be discounted.

A map regression exercise has established that the main showrooms and offices of Furrows Garage lies on the site of Benbow House. Benbow House is first recorded in association with Admiral John Benbow (1635-1701), and is mentioned as his birthplace. It is unclear exactly when the house was constructed, or exactly what his association with the house was. John Benbow spent very little time in Britain during his adult years, and in fact only one visit to Shrewsbury (in 1698) is recorded. The house is not specifically mentioned in his will, and the house's interest in relation to its link with the admiral is minor.

The earliest accurate map depicting a building known to be Benbow House dates to 1838 (Wood's map of Shrewsbury). However Roque's map of Shrewsbury dated to 1746 shows a range of buildings of similar plan to Benbow House, and the adjoining Benbow Place, depicted on the later maps. Earlier, pictorial maps of Shrewsbury (Speed 1610, Burghley 1547) show a representation of buildings in the area of the site, but neither is accurate enough for a specific building to be identified.

The building assessment of the main car showroom and offices has shown that the core of the current building relates to the building shown on the 1838 map. The roof structure, which appears to be a variation on the queen strut roof, together with the area of brickwork visible on the north elevation of the building indicates a 17<sup>th</sup> century date for this structure. How much else of this phase of house remains on the first floor behind all the modern fittings, and behind the 19<sup>th</sup> century façade known to underlie the cement render covering the south elevation is impossible to ascertain however. It is certain that on the ground floor no trace of this building survives, but the position of the cellar on the sales plan of 1869 suggests that it

dates to this phase of the house, and it is possible that this remains largely intact below ground.

The west and east wings form part of the extensive rebuilding and additions having taken place in the later 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Both cross-wings were constructed between 1838 and 1881, but their lack of symmetry suggests they were not built as one phase of work. The desk-based assessment identified a major programme of restoration and rebuilding in the 1860s, and much of the work will date to this period. The smaller extensions at the back of the house also all appear to be in place by 1881.

The use of the first floor as offices means that little of the building fabric is visible internally for inspection, with the majority of the rooms plasterboarded or panelled with mid 20<sup>th</sup> century materials. The fabric which is visible, however, relates to the 19<sup>th</sup> century additions or restoration and updating of the rooms of the existing building. It is likely that this restoration was largely superficial however, and there is a possibility of original fabric remaining within the internal partition walls, as well as the south external wall. It is clear that the original east wall of the house has been removed at this level, its position indicated by the large square-headed arch within the securities office,

In addition to Benbow House the site contains the large brick built workshop or goods shed that lies on the west side of the railway line. This building first appears on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map, but possibly dates to the 1840s when the railway was first constructed. In itself the building may only merit minor interest, but its significance is increased when it is considered as part of a larger group of buildings that include Shrewsbury railway station itself, and the Crewe Junction and Severn Bridge Junction Signal boxes. Although the shed does not date from the improvements of the railway in the early 1900s, as the above building partially or wholly do, its significance as part of the outstanding railway heritage of Shrewsbury, and the wider industrial heritage of this area of Shrewsbury, must be taken into account.

## **8 Conclusion and recommendations**

On the basis of this study it is considered likely that the current building does retain elements of the original Benbow House, and that these are most likely to survive at first floor and attic level. There is also a chance that the original cellar may survive. Whilst much of these are not visible at present, they are likely to be exposed during the development of the Site and it is recommended that a further programme of archaeological work is recommended in order to preserve the remains by record

Further remains in the form of a 19<sup>th</sup> century railway shed have also been identified. These are of local archaeological and historical significance. It is currently proposed to keep this structure, although the plans for the use of the internal space are not known. Prior to any conversion works taking place on the building taking place, a programme of low level recording would be recommended.

The desk-based assessment has revealed a low potential for Iron Age remains in the area of the site, together with a higher potential for remains of a medieval date. The reference in the SMR of a curving stone wall at the east end of the house is interesting, as is the potential survival of the 17<sup>th</sup> century cellar below the central bay of Benbow House. It is also

recommended therefore, that a programme of archaeological evaluation in the form of trial trenches is carried out before any ground works commence on the site.

## 9 References

### *Maps*

Burghleys *Map of Shrewsbury* 1547

Speeds *Map of Shrewsbury* 1610

Roque's *Plan of Shrewsbury* 1746

Wood's *Map of Shrewsbury* 1838

1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 25" Series, Sheet XXXVI.6, 1881

1:500 Ordnance Survey Town Plan, Sheet XXXVI.6.25, 1882

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 25" Series, Sheet XXXVI.6, 1902

Revised Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 25" Series, Sheet XXXVI.6, 1927

Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales) Solid Geology, Sheet 152

Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales) Drift Geology, Sheet 152

### *Unpublished references*

#### *Photographs*

Shropshire Record Office No.362/32 – photograph of Benbow House, undated

Shropshire Record Office No.? – Photograph of Benbows House, Coton Hill, undated

Shropshire Record Office No.5 387 CROSS – photograph, undated

Shropshire Record Office No.B3135 – photograph of Admiral Benbows House, 1890

Shropshire Record Office No.D71:4 – photograph of Benbow House now Furrows Garage, 1961

Shropshire Record Office No.SN 597 B – photograph of Furrows Garage, 1965

Shropshire Record Office No.SN 597 B – photograph of Furrows Garage, 1965

Shropshire Record Office No.323/27 – photograph of Furrows Garage, 1980

Shropshire Record Office No.S23/26 – photograph of Furows Garage, 1980

#### *Documents*

Shropshire Record Office No.P257/V/1/1 – Sales particulars for Benbow House, 1865

Shropshire Record Office No.P257/V/1/2 – Sales particulars for Benbow House, 1869

Shropshire Record Office No.P257/F/7/1 –Conveyance

Shropshire Record Office No.P257/V/1/3 – Notice to let for Benbow House,

### *Published references*

Mercer, E. 2003. *English Architecture to 1900: The Shropshire Experience*

Moran, M. 2003. *Vernacular Buildings of Shropshire*

Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society IV 1883

Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society, Series 4, Volume XI

Trinder, B. 1998. *A History of Shropshire*

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## **10 Archive**

The site code is CHSS 04A. The archive consists of:

- 8 sheets of site diary and notes
- 4 photo record sheets
- 2 films of black and white photographic negatives
- 2 films of colour photographic transparencies

The archive is currently held by Marches Archaeology awaiting transfer to Rowley's House Museum, Shrewsbury.

## 11 Appendix I: Sites and Monuments Record Entries

SMR NO.	Name	E°	N°	Date	Description
SALOPSMR 1370/ 11682	Castle Foregate Coin Hoard	494	131	Saxon	Hoard of around 200 coins found by workmen in 1936. Coins arranged in neat piles as though closely stacked on a level bottom. Badly damaged by picks during their discovery and only 6 now survive. Coins are of Edward the Elder (901-925) and a deposition date of c920 is suggested.
SALOPSMR 12054/ 2180	Winmill Field	490	130	Medieval	Place name evidence for medieval windmill.
SALOPSMR 2025/ 12052	Myttons Mansion	491	133	Medieval	No.s 20, 21 and 22 Coton Hill are thought to have originally formed the barn for Myttons Mansion, which formerly covered a considerable part of the adjoining land. Mansion built by Thomas or William Mytton in 1550, probably facing the river. No remains visible.
SALOPSMR 2014/ 12051	Site of St Catherines Chapel	492	134	Medieval	First documented in 1480 when Thomas Pryde fined for not opening hermitage of St Catherines. Further records throughout 15 <sup>th</sup> and 16 <sup>th</sup> century of the chapel and of land called chapel yard. Name of Chapel Yard confirmed on Tithe Map of 1850 where described as pasture. Later redeveloped as Coton Crescent-Berwick Road in 1895.
SALOPSMR 12049/ 2080	Bagley Bridge	493	130	Medieval	The ' <i>Pontem sub Castello</i> ' mentioned in 1275-77 probably refers to Bagley or Bakelar bridge, north-west of the castle and leading to the island of Coton, which was still an island as late as 1406. Bridge repaired in the 17 <sup>th</sup> century by the Corporation of Shrewsbury. Bagley Brook was later diverted by the railway construction and is now piped underground. No visible trace remains of the bridge, but it is intact under the road, visible from the culvert.
SALOPSMR 12004/ 2091	Barge Gutter	489 491	133 132	Medieval	Channel known as Barge Gutter cut at the point where the River Severn takes a sharp bend, and consequently has a shallow ford. Date of the cutting is unclear, but it appears on Burgeleys map. Also mentioned in a document of 1531. In 1575 Coton is referred to as Coton Hill indicating it is no longer an island. Gutter has averaged width of 10m and depth of 2m at south bank and 7m at north bank. Has been ruled out as a previous river course.
SALOPSMR 8803	Coton Hill	490	133	Medieval to post- medieval	Evaluated for MPP in 1990-1. One of 23 river Fisheries, Shrewsbury's town fish weir was at Coton Hill but had decayed by the 16 <sup>th</sup> century. The Barge Gutter continued to function into the 19 <sup>th</sup> century taking traffic. Common weir of town mentioned here in 1531 but not in 1575; petition to repair it in 1617-18.
SALOPSMR 12287	75 & 76 Coton Hill	492	131	Post- medieval	Pair of houses dating to c1830. Stucco over brick with slate roofs.
SALOPSMR 1654	11, 12 & 14 Coton Hill	491	133	Post- medieval	Row of 3 cottage. 17 <sup>th</sup> century date with 18 <sup>th</sup> century facades. One and a half storeys, single unit cottage either side of a two unit central cottage. Timber framing exposed in gable end wall of No.14.
SALOPSMR 12286	73 & 74 Coton Hill	492	131	Post- medieval	Pair of houses which have undergone remodelling in the early 19 <sup>th</sup> century. Stucco over brick with slate roof.
SALOPSMR 12285	28-31 Coton Hill	492	134	Post- medieval	Row of 4 cottages. 17 <sup>th</sup> (?) century core with façade of c1800. Brick over timber frame with slate roof.

SALOPSMR 12283	27 Coton Hill	492	134	Post-medieval	House, 19 <sup>th</sup> century in style but with an earlier core. Roughcast render with tiled roof.
SALOPSMR 12281	Royal Oak Public House, 23 Coton Hill	491	133	Post-medieval	Early 20 <sup>th</sup> century public house, possibly incorporating an earlier structure. Brick lower storey with jettied floor of timber framing above and a tiled roof.
SALOPSMR 12280	19-22 Coton Hill	491	133	Post-medieval	Row of 4 16 <sup>th</sup> century houses now converted into 2. Timber framed with some painted brick cladding to side and gable wall and exposed square-panelled framing to rear. 19 forms gabled cross-range to south.
SALOPSMR 12192	Shrewsbury Station	491 494	133 129	Post-medieval/ modern	Station built in 1849 and extended in c1900. Built by Thomas Penson Jr of Oswestry of ashlar facing with a Welsh slate roof, in the Tudor Gothic style. Originally 2 storeys, with a lower ground floor later inserted.
SALOPSMR 2036/ 12053	Benbow House	492	132	Post-medieval	Benbow House, later St Mary's Vicarage, is an early 17 <sup>th</sup> century black and white mansion, much altered and added to. The birthplace in c1635 of Admiral John Benbow. Now used as a car showroom on ground floor which is completely modernised. No trace of 17 <sup>th</sup> century building found during conversion. A discovery in 1881 describes 'a curved segment of wall built of Grinshill stone, and at present measuring about 12ft by 7ft' at the east end of the building. Speculated that it was part of an 'outwork' defending Bagley Bridge to the south.
SALOPSMR 10393	Saw Mill	494	133	Post-medieval/ modern	Saw mill indicated through study of historic maps. Probable survival of historic buildings.
SALOPSMR 10394	Water Works	493	130	Post-medieval/ modern	Water works belonging to the Shrewsbury Corporation indicated through the study of historic maps. Maps indicate that the historic buildings are now demolished.
SALOPSMR 10396	Saw Mill	493	130	Post-medieval/ modern	Saw mill indicated through study of historic maps. Maps are unclear about the survival of historic buildings.
SALOPSMR 1355	Crewe Junction Signal Box	493	130	Modern	Signal box constructed in 1902-3 for the London and North Western and Great Western Railway Joint Committee. Brick with slate roof, weatherboarded 4 <sup>th</sup> storey. Much of original machinery still intact. Part of a group of outstanding buildings built as an improvement for Shrewsbury Station.

## 12 Appendix II: Domesday Book entries

### Land of the Bishop of Chester

The Bishop of Chester has 16 dwellings in Shrewsbury and as many burgesses who paid tax with the other burgesses. Of these 10 dwellings are now unoccupied and the remaining pay 4s 7d.

The Bishop also had 16 canons in this city, they did not pay tax and it is not known how much they paid the Bishop.

The Bishop also has a manor in Meole. It is not and was not occupied. Before 1066 it paid 20s, now 17s 4d.

### What St Peter holds

In the city of Shrewsbury Earl Roger is building an Abbey and has given it to the monastery of St Peter where the parish church of the city was. From his burgesses and mills (he has given) to the monks as pay £12.

### What St Alkmunds holds

At Alkmunds church holds 12 burgesses in Shrewsbury besides 12 canon houses. These burgesses pay 8s 5d.

The church also has 2 hides of the 100 hides which are accounted in the city's tax. 2 canons hold them. They have 11/2 ploughs and 4 villagers who have 21/2 ploughs. Value 15s.

### Land of Earl Roger

Earl Roger himself holds from the King the city of Shrewsbury, the whole of the county and the whole of the lordship which King Edward had there, with 12 manors which the King held himself with 57 outliers belonging there. The Earl also has 11 other manors in the shire. In total, that is the city, hundreds, and the pleas of the city pay £300 and 115s in revenue.





Figure 2a: Burghley's Map of Shrewsbury 1547

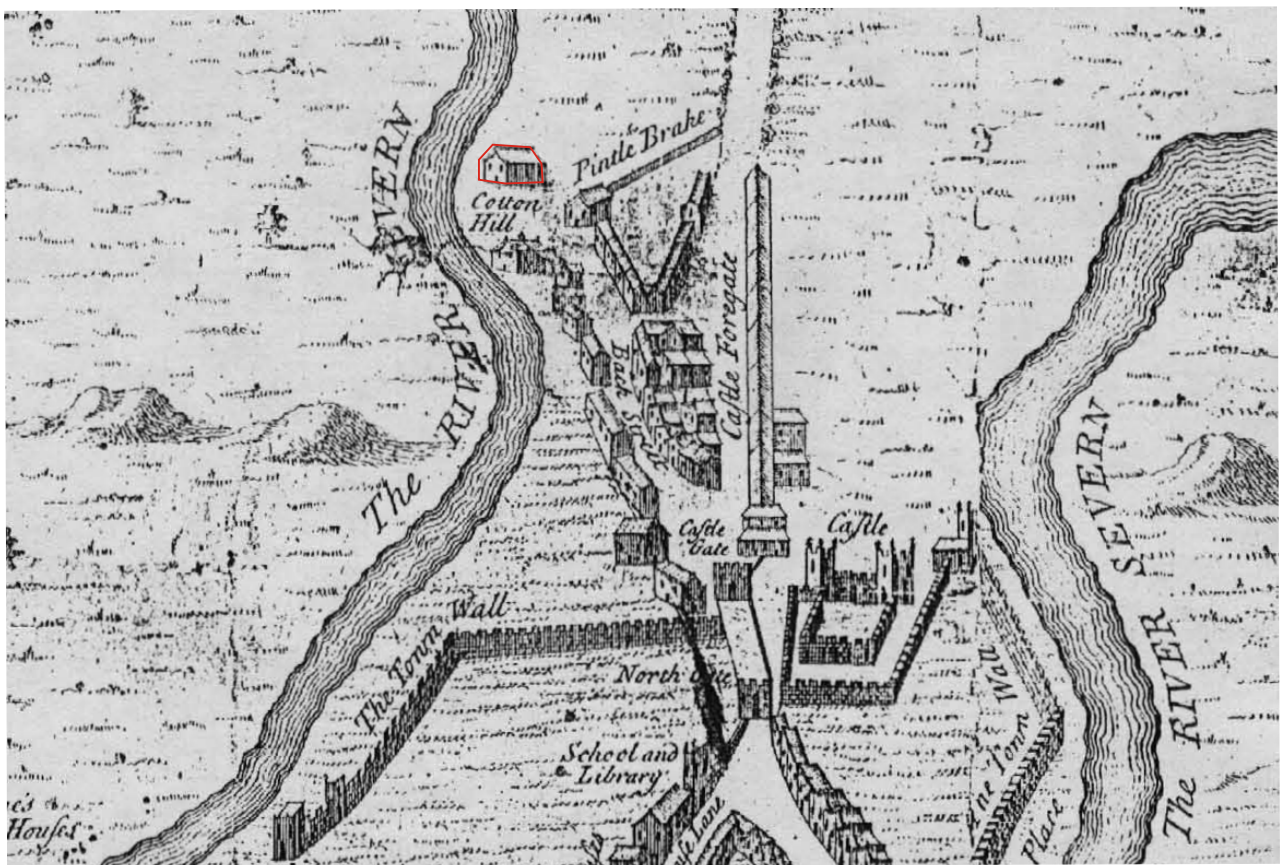


Figure 2b: Speed's Map of Shrewsbury 1610



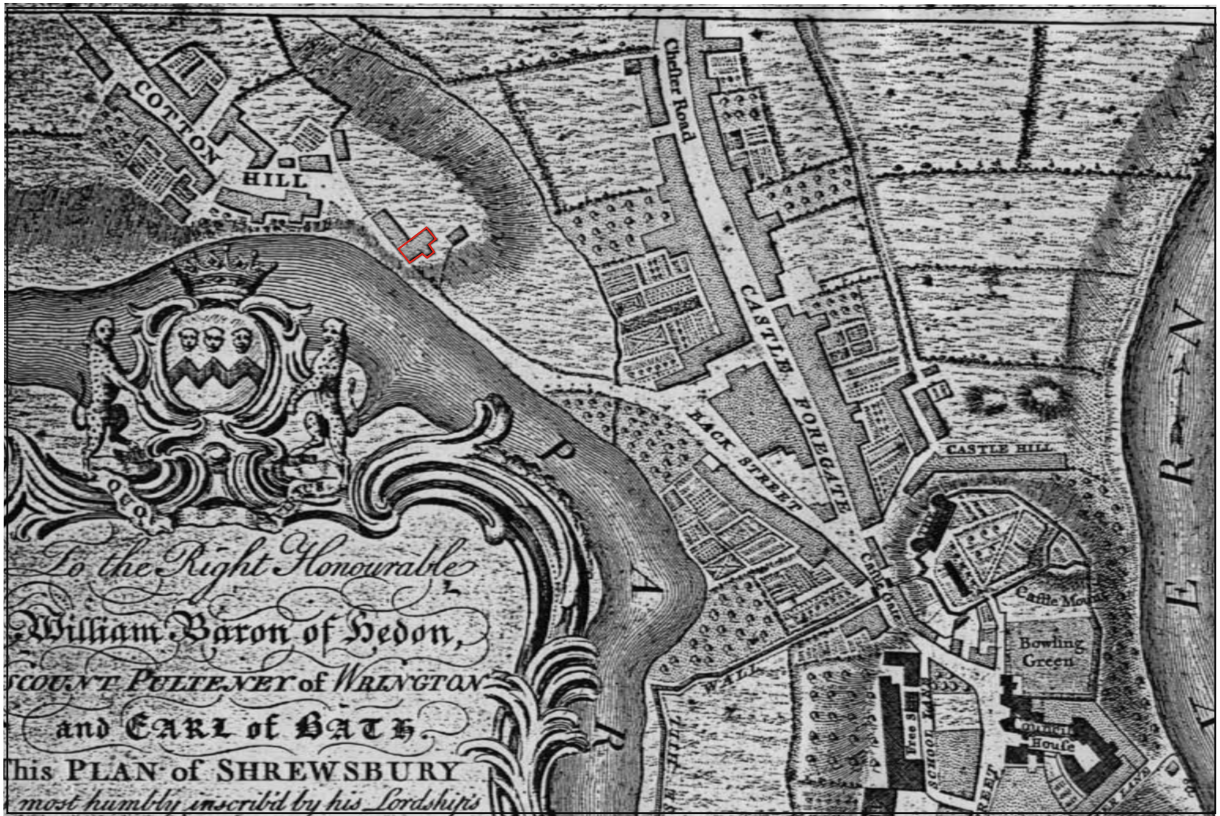


Figure 3a: Roque's Plan of Shrewsbury 1746

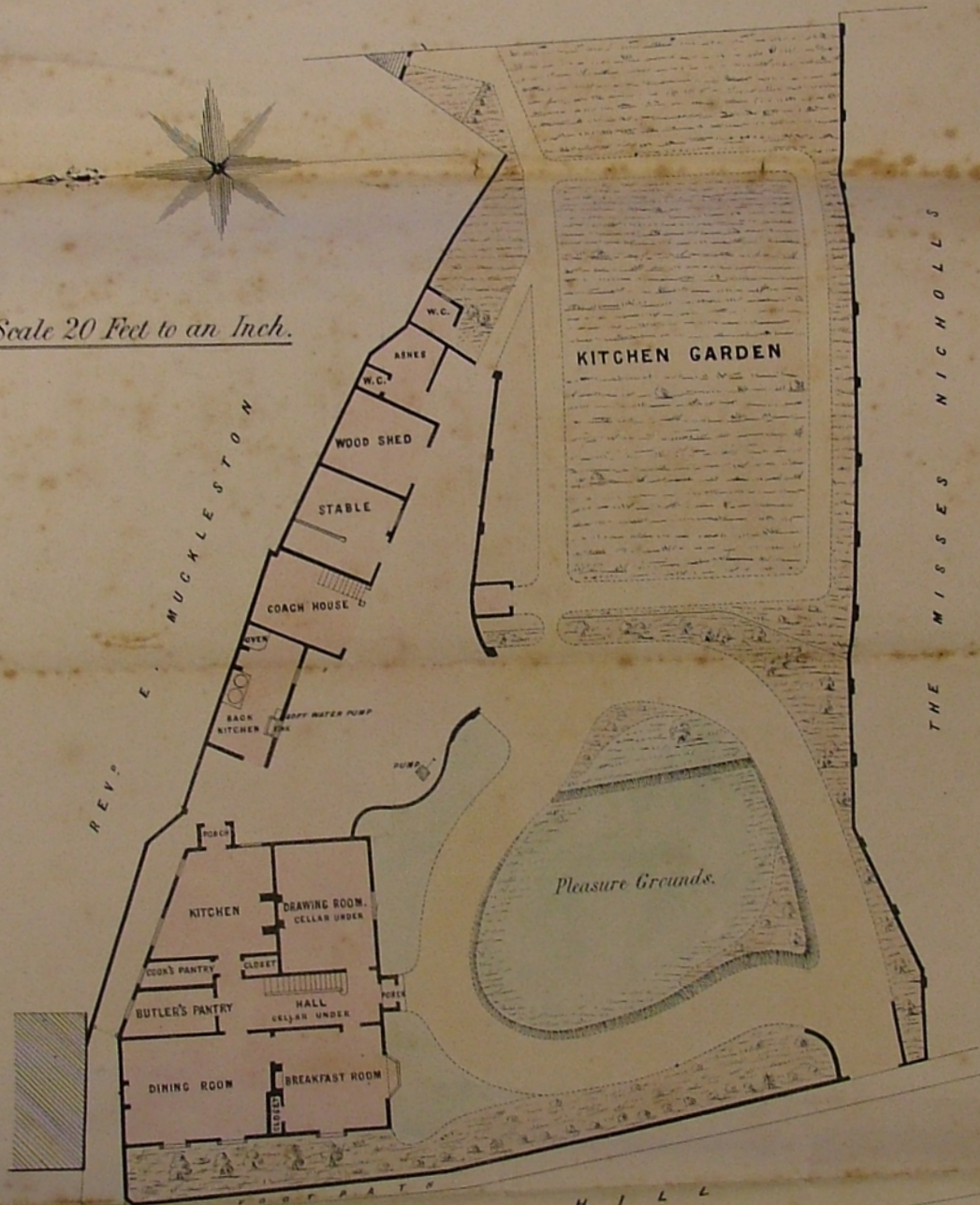


Figure 3b: Woods Map of Shrewsbury 1838



# PLAN

Scale 20 Feet to an Inch.



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Ref:  
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Figure 4: Sales Particular Plan of 1869



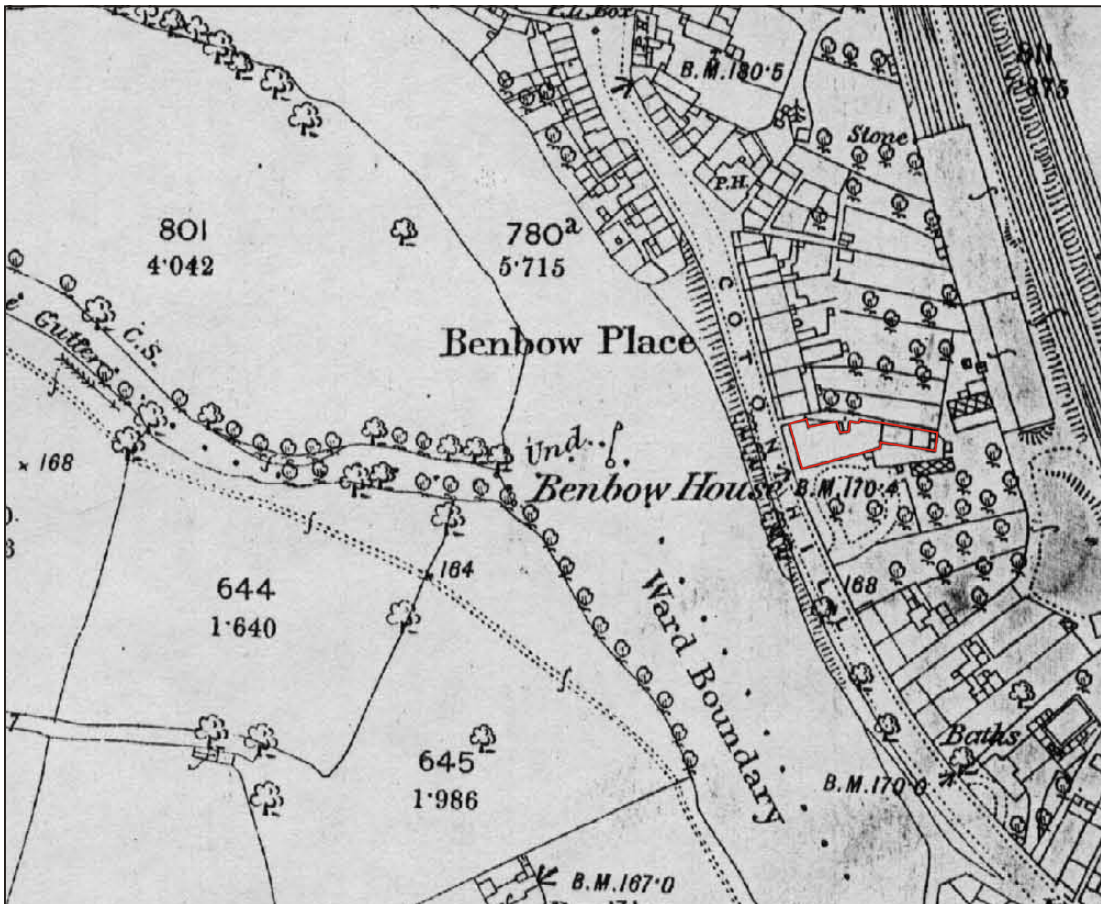


Figure 5a: 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1881

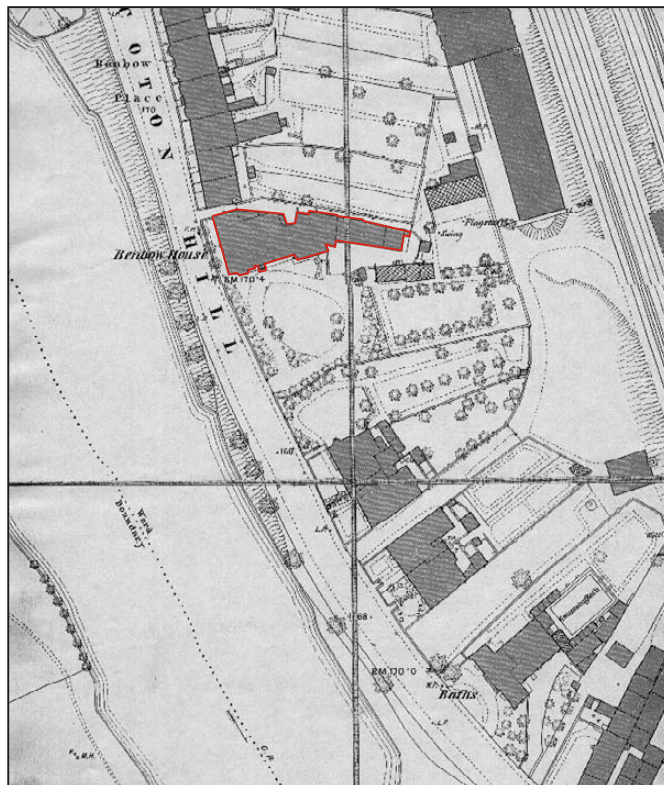


Figure 5b: 1:500 Town Plan 1882

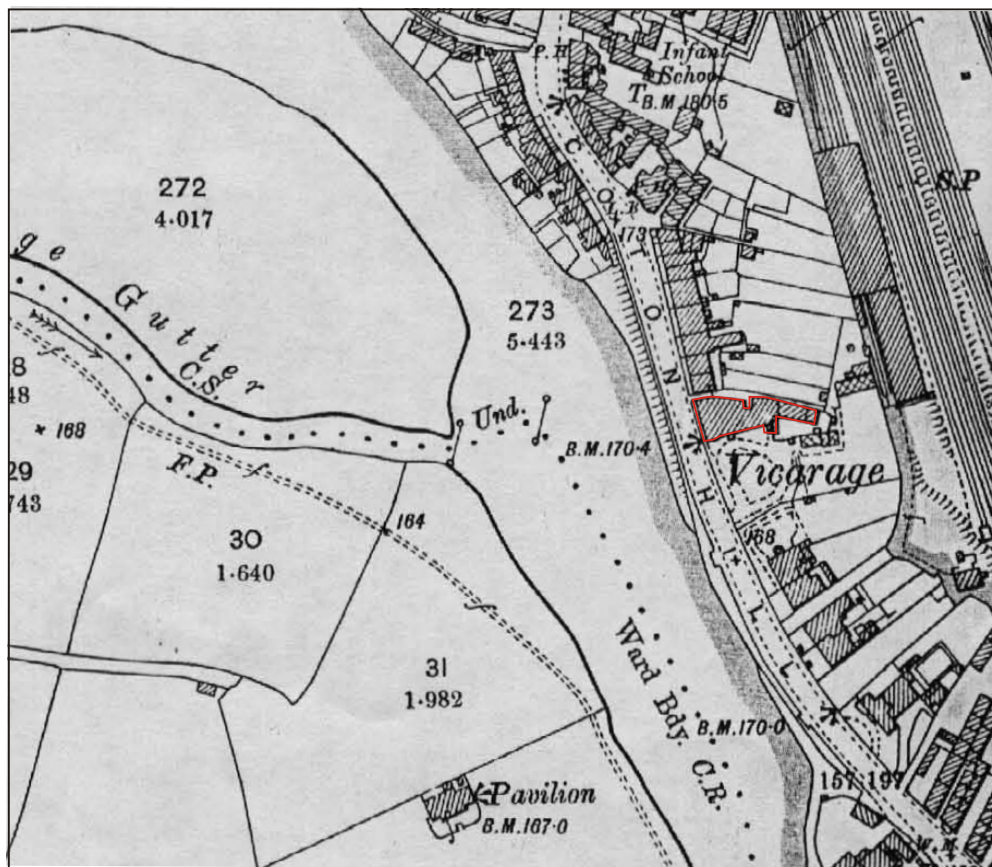


Figure 6a: 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1902

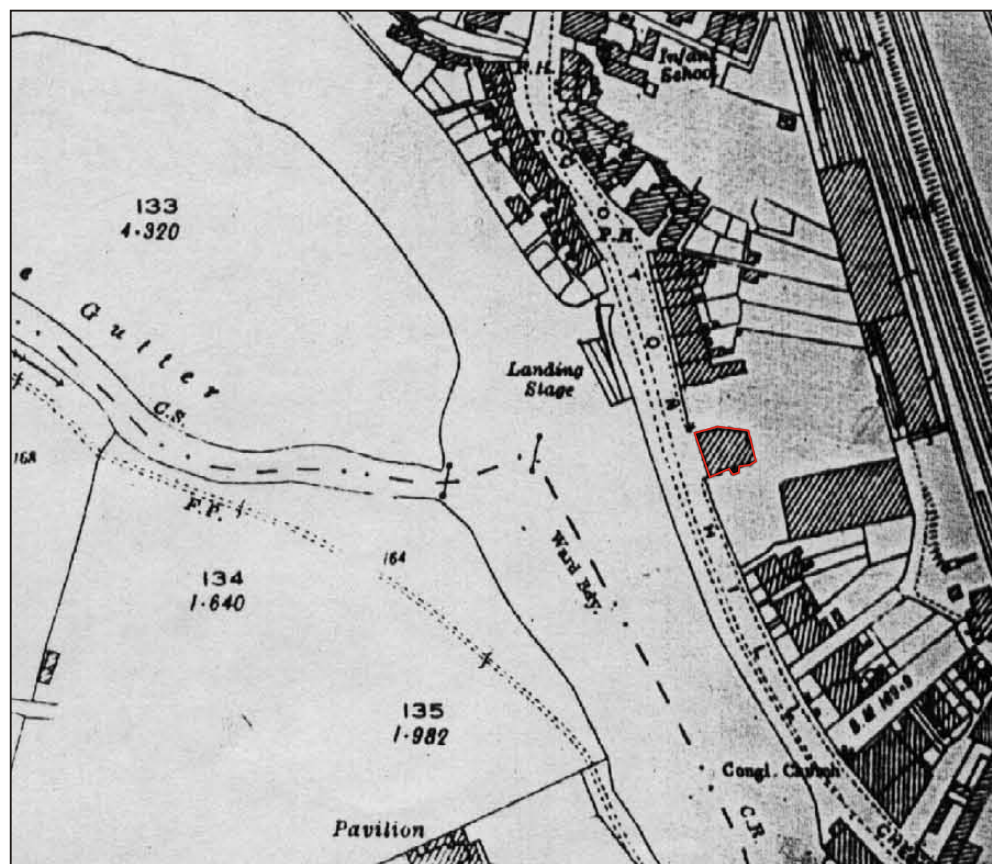


Figure 6b: Revised Ordnance Survey Map 1927





Plate 1: Photograph of Benbow House, 1890



Plate 2: Detail from a photograph of Benbow House, undated



Plate 3: Furrows Garage, 1965



Plate 4: Benbow House, now Furrows Garage, 1961





Plate 5: West elevation of Furrows Garage



Plate 6: South elevation of Furrows Garage





Plate 7: North elevation of Furrows Garage, east end



Plate 8: North elevation of Furrows Garage, west end



Plate 9: Ground floor of Furrows Garage, car showroom and reception



Plate 10: Ground floor of Furrows Garage, car showroom





Plate 11: Meetings Room on first floor



Plate 12: Representative shot of an office room, first floor



Plate 13: Securities office looking east



Plate 14: Securities office looking west





Plate 19: Passageway linking attic offices to attic of west cross-wing



Plate 20: Attic of west cross-wing containing the remains of two chimneys



Plate 15: 19th century roof trusses, east cross wing, viewed from Securities office



Plate 16: Exposed roof timbers in north attic office





Plate 17: Exposed roof timbers in south attic office



Plate 18: Upright timber in south attic office