

# *Marches Archaeology*

## **Cross Keys Lichfield Staffordshire**

### **Report on an Archaeological Desk-based Assessment**

February 2005

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**This report is produced by**

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**Cross Keys  
Lichfield  
Staffordshire**

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**Report by  
Nic Appleton-Fox**

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**Cross Keys  
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**Report on an Archaeological  
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*Summary*

*The research into the development site produced no evidence of occupation during recorded history and the site appears to have been in horticultural use for much of its life.*

**1 Introduction**

It is proposed to erect a multi-storey car park on the site at Cross Keys in Lichfield. The site is situated at NGR: SK 1157 0936 (Fig. 1).

The Local Planning Authority's Archaeology Advisor advised that further information was required before the archaeological implications of the application could be adequately assessed and recommended that an archaeological desk-based assessment be carried out. AYH plc commissioned Marches Archaeology to provide the archaeological services required.

**2 Scope and aims of the project**

The purpose of Desk-based Assessment is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists as "to gain information about the known or potential archaeological resource within a given area or site, including its presence or absence, character and extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and relative quality, in order to make an assessment of its worth in the appropriate context leading to the formation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource or for further investigation where the character of the resource is not sufficiently defined, or the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research".

**3 Description of the site**

The site lies to the north of Lombard Street to the west of Stowe Pool and is currently in use as a car park.

**4 Archaeological and historical background**

There is good evidence for continuous human exploitation of the area around Lichfield from the mesolithic period onwards (Hodder, 1982). The settlement pattern tends to cluster around the rivers Tame and Trent and the streams feeding them.

Archaeological research into the extent of the land use, however, is biased by survival of earthworks and cropmarks, by the extent of surveys (especially on Cannock Chase) and by the location of excavation work. Further archaeological investigation may well refine the understanding of the general pattern(s) of land use.

Within Lichfield itself, however, the pattern is somewhat different. Five Mesolithic flints were found at St Michael's church (SK 124 095) in 1978 (Wilson, 1982, 70). There has also been evidence found for settlement during the Neolithic period south of the cathedral in 1976-7 (Carver, 1982b, 37). However, after this there is a general dearth of evidence for any form of settlement in Lichfield. Two Middle Bronze Age bronze palstaves, found from unknown locations apparently in Lichfield (Hodder, 1982, 21) represent all the evidence for any later prehistoric use of the area.

Similarly, there has been a small amount of Roman material (Carver, 1982a,6) from Lichfield, which suggests some form of settlement, but its form and extent remains uncertain. Bassett has emphasised the possible early origins of the settlement, suggesting a Roman or sub-Roman religious structure as the focus for the settlement (Bassett, 1982, 98). Certainly there was a Roman burial in Beacon Street (Harwood, 1802) and Roman flue tile from the excavations south of the cathedral (Carver, 1982b, 37). The flue tile, however, was found in a Saxon context and could have been brought to Lichfield from a disused building in a nearby Roman settlement such as Wall (*Letocetum*).

The town of Lichfield itself came into existence in the Saxon period, and was established *circa* 670, when Bishop Chad settled the centre of his bishopric at *Lyccidfelth* (Lichfield) (Bede, 1955, 208). A cathedral was founded there *circa* 700 by a later bishop, Headda (Studd, 1982, 31). The settlement associated with the cathedral seems to have been relatively small (*ibid.*) and it was only later that the extent of the town was widened.

It is now generally accepted that the resurgence of Lichfield came in the twelfth century when a new town was created by Bishops Clinton and Durdent (1129-1159) (Taylor, 1969). This is seen as being inserted in an area between the cathedral and its settlement at the north, a rural settlement centred on St Michael's to the east, and a possible further settlement in Lower Sandford Street to the west (Taylor, 1969, 49). The creation of a visible boundary around the town, including the building of town gates is attributed to this period (Bassett, 1982, 112).

A new church, St Mary's, was built to serve the new town and, although it was initially a dependant chapel, the church was soon elevated to parish status and its parish covered the new town.

A survey of the bishop's estates in 1298 stated that there were 286½ burgages (Beresford, 1967, 68). Accounts for the early fourteenth century, prepared by the town bailiff, noted that the Franciscan Friary claimed relief of 3s 6d on 3½ burgages (i.e. 1s per burgage) (Isaac, 1977, 60). The excavated archaeological evidence, however, shows a distinct absence of thirteenth and fourteenth century material and it has been argued that this represents 'depression, if not desertion' at this time (Carver, 1982a, 4). Certainly there was a general decline nationally in the fourteenth century caused by a combination of poor harvests in the 1320s and the sporadic outbreaks of

plague for some fifteen years from 1348. However, the documentary evidence is likely to give a truer picture of the period immediately before this and the lack of archaeological evidence probably reflects a lack of excavation work.

Little is known of the development of the site itself during the medieval period. No deeds referring to the land have been traced and no plans are known to exist.

Interestingly the name Cross Keys comes from the name of a public house standing on Lombard Street across the road from the junction. However there is no reference to a pub of that name in any of the directories held by Staffordshire Records Office. In the early 19th century several maltsters occupied Lombard Street and it was also home to the city's only brewery owned by William Watton. An Elizabeth Shaw ran a public house called the Volunteer, the only one listed for Lombard Street. This may in time have changed its name to the Cross Keys as no other named pub is mentioned. In 1870 a Samuel Salt is listed in the Harrods Directory as an innkeeper but no other references could be found.

The earliest plan is that of John Speed in 1610 (Fig 2) this shows the whole of Lombard Street as built up, but Speed's plans are known to be schematic. On John Snape's plan of 1781 (Fig 3) a formal garden is shown at the junction of Cross Keys and Lombard Street with the area of the site shown as what appears to be an orchard. The tithe plan of 1850 (Fig 4) shows that very little had changed though more workshops and outbuildings had been added to the rear of the Lombard Street frontage and the plan names the Cross Keys pub. By the time of the Ordnance Survey 1st Edition in 1882 (Fig 5) more development had taken place to the rear of the buildings on Lombard Street but none of them impinge on the site which is still shown as an orchard. Around the turn of the century the site is occupied by a nursery (Fig 6) and apart from the addition of an occasional greenhouse continued in that usage for some years (Fig 7). During the course of the 20th century the majority of the workshops and outbuilding to the rear of the frontage were demolished (Fig 1) as the usage of the buildings changed to offices and retail shops.

## **5 Conclusions**

From the available evidence it would appear that the site has remained in horticultural use for much, if not all, of its life and lying close to the Stowe Pool and the Moggs may well have been unsuitable for occupation at any time in history.

## **6 Recommendations**

The site appears to have low potential for Saxon or medieval archaeology and in view of the paucity of prehistoric and Roman finds in the immediate vicinity it must be assumed that here also the potential is low. It is therefore recommended that no further archaeological work is required.

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#### Abbreviations:

JRO - Joint Record Office, Lichfield

SCC - Staffordshire County Council

SRO - Staffordshire Record Office

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Aerial photographs