

# *Marches Archaeology*

**6 Friars Street  
Hereford  
Herefordshire**

**A report on an  
archaeological evaluation**

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*Marches Archaeology Series 394*

**This report is produced by**

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**6 Friars Street  
Hereford  
Herefordshire**

**A report on an  
archaeological evaluation**

**NGR: SO 505 400**

**SMR: HSM 42794**

**Report by  
Jo Wainwright**

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**6 Friars Street  
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*Summary*

*An evaluation excavation at 6 Friars Street, Hereford uncovered features and deposits dating from the medieval period. It is possible that two features could date from the late Saxon period. Only about 4 square metres of the site were excavated and interpretation of features was difficult. However, the density of medieval or earlier features excavated suggest that a high level of activity was taking place on the site during the medieval period. Cultivation or gardening activities from the medieval period onwards may have disturbed or truncated some of the earlier features.*

## **1 Introduction**

A planning application has been submitted to the local planning authority for permission to develop land at 6 Friars Street, Hereford. The site is situated at NGR: SO 505 400 (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 field evaluation be carried out to provide this information.

The Local Planning Authority's Archaeology Advisor did not produce a brief. RRA Architects, on behalf of the client, commissioned Marches Archaeology to provide the archaeological services required for the project.

## **2 Aims and objectives**

The project proposal stated that the archaeological project would consist of:  
the excavation of four trial pits to the rear of the standing structure

An archaeological evaluation aims to "gain information about the archaeological resource within a given area or site (including presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality) in order to make an assessment of its merit in the appropriate context, leading to one or more of the following: the formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource; the formulation of a strategy to initiate a threat to the archaeological resource (*sic*); the formulation of a proposal

for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research” (Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations).

The objectives of the evaluation, based on the above stated aim, were to establish the presence/absence of archaeological deposits and to assess their significance.

### **3 Methodology**

#### *Documentary research*

Primary and secondary sources have been consulted for work on adjacent sites so no further documentary research was undertaken for this project.

#### *Fieldwork*

Four 1m x 1m trenches were excavated. Because of difficulties of access they were excavated by hand (Fig. 2). On completion of the fieldwork the trenches were backfilled.

The recording system included written, drawn and photographic data. Trench recording sheets were completed and context numbers were allocated. Site notes were also made. Plans and sections of significant data were made. The photographic record was made using black and white negative and colour transparency film. Digital photographs were also taken.

#### *Office work*

On completion of the fieldwork a site archive was prepared. The written, drawn and photographic data was catalogued and cross-referenced and a summary produced. The artefactual data was processed, catalogued and cross-referenced and a summary produced.

Assessment was based on the site archive. The pottery, which required specialist assessment, was submitted for such work.

### **4 Site description**

The site consists of a house and several outbuildings which front onto Friars Street (Fig. 2, Plates 1 and 2). There is a cellar under part of the house. Behind the house and outbuildings is a walled garden with a summer house situated in the north-west corner of the garden. The central part of the garden is grassed and an overgrown flower bed is situated along the south wall. The western and north-western parts of the garden are overgrown. Several small raised earthworks are visible in the central part of the lawn.

The underlying drift geology has been identified as Fluvio-glacial deposits and the site is about 56.50 metres O.D.

### **5 Archaeological and historical background**

Only a summary of the archaeological and historical background of the area is produced here and includes the results of documentary study carried out on a sites to the south (Appleton-Fox, 2001, Tavener, 2002, Wainwright 2002 & 2003). The street has been identified as being occupied during the medieval period and possibly as early as the Saxon period.

A desk based assessment on a site to the south concluded that there was no evidence for any prehistoric, Roman or Saxon activity in the area (Hunter, 2000). That study considered it likely that there could be some medieval activity in the area given its close proximity to the west edge (city wall) of a major medieval settlement. However, excavations to the north of the site towards the Eign street frontage identified features dating from the late Saxon period (pers comm. Julian Cotton). Low level medieval activity in the form of gullies and pits has been excavated at a site about 100 metres to the south. (Wainwright, 2003).

A search of the records held at the county Records Office found no readily accessible medieval documents or references to Friars Street. The Victoria County History for Herefordshire remains largely unfinished and unpublished. Duncumb (1804) does not mention any medieval records for the street. The absence of medieval records may be more apparent than real, but their scarcity does seem to indicate a paucity of activity along Friars Street in the medieval period. On a cautionary note, it is possible that the street has only been known as Friars Street in comparatively recent times. In 1757, Taylor marked the street as Quakers Lane (Fig. 3).

It is possible that the land belonged to Barton Farm, at one time styled Barton Manor, but no pertinent records could be found. The earliest records that could be found for Friars Street comprise indentures and conveyances amongst a packet of documents relating to purchases of land in connection with the establishment of the Infants School on the east side of Friars Street to the south. The main conveyance date was 1843. The earliest documents date to 1637 and 1712. Later sources record the creation of almshouses on the east side of the street in the 18th and 19th centuries (Duncumb, 1804 & Tonkin, 1975) and there are corporation records for slum clearances in the 1930s.

The early cartographic evidence is perhaps more informative. Speed's map of c. 1610 shows houses along Barton Street to the south but none on either frontage of Friars Street (Fig. 4). However, the Eign Street frontage appears to be built up and it is possible that the study area, or at least part of it, is within backlands of buildings fronting onto this street. Taylor's map of 1757 has more information and at that date the study area lay within an area of cherry orchards (Fig. 3). Taylor's map indicates that the fields to the south west of these orchards belonged to Barton (Manor) Farm.

Taylor's map holds other clues. The property divisions on the east side of Quaker Lane (later Friars Street), i.e. between Friars Street and Taylor's 'Town Ditch' (later Victoria Street) show a neat patchwork of rectangular plots. These do not resemble 'typical' medieval burgage plots. Elsewhere around the fringes of the medieval city wall, medieval extra-mural suburbs are plainly evident on Taylor's map, displaying obvious patterns of planned medieval burgage plots (see Eign Street at the top of Fig. 3). District names such as 'Owen Street without the gate' and 'Bye Street without the gate' on Taylor's map were probably ancient at that date. This pattern does not appear along Barton Lane, situated to the south of the site. Taylor's map demonstrates that if there ever had been a system of medieval burgages along either Barton Lane or Friars Street, then all trace had disappeared before 1757.

Price's map of 1802 (Fig. 5) shows more buildings along the frontage on the west side of Friars Street than Taylor mapped in 1757. However, There is no building shown where the site is situated. The 1904 Ordnance Survey Second Edition 25 Inch Survey shows the building fronting onto Friars Street that exists today (Fig. 6). The summer house is shown in

the north-west of the site and a building situated directly behind the street frontage has since disappeared.

## **6 The evaluation**

### *Trench 1 (Figs 7 and 8 and Plate 3)*

Because the west wall of the now demolished building shown on the 1904 Ordnance Survey Plan (Fig. 6) was picked up in this trench it was decided to enlarge this trench and excavate the western part.

The natural hard pink mottled clay with occasional pebbles and sandstone [116] was seen at 55.23m O.D. Cutting this were two features but because of the confines of the excavation it was difficult to discern what these features represented or which feature was the earlier [107] and [109]. Both cuts had near vertical sides and were at least 50mm deep but were not bottomed. The fills were both a light grey brown silty clay with frequent patches of re-deposited pink clay and contained frequent charcoal, moderate pebbles and occasional sandstone [106] and [108]. One sherd of pottery of possibly a late Saxon date was recovered from [106].

Above [107] and [109] was a layer of light grey brown silty clay with frequent charcoal, moderate pebbles and occasional sandstone [105]. This was about 250mm thick and was interpreted as a medieval cultivation or garden soil which had presumably truncated the tops of features [107] and [109]. Spot dating of the pottery recovered from [105] gives the context a 15<sup>th</sup> century date.

Another cultivation soil or garden soil [104] was excavated above [105]. This was a compact mid grey brown silty clay with occasional pebbles, mortar and charcoal and was about 200mm thick. Pottery recovered from [104] dates from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Cutting [104] was a concave to vertical sided feature which was probably a pit [114]. The fill was a dark grey brown silty clay with frequent pebbles, charcoal and mortar [113]. Sealing [114] was a 19<sup>th</sup> century garden soil [103] which was a compact mid grey brown silty clay with moderate pebbles and mortar and occasional brick and charcoal. This was about 300mm thick.

Cutting [103] was the construction cut [112] for the western brick wall [110] of the demolished building shown on the 1904 Ordnance Survey Plan. The backfill of [112] was a dark grey black silty clay with frequent pebbles and bricks [111]. To the east of [110] was a patchy mortar internal surface or bedding for a surface [115]. Above this was the topsoil which was a dark grey black humic silty clay with frequent inclusions [101].

### *Trench 2 (Fig. 9)*

Natural was not reached in this trench. The earliest deposit excavated was a soft mid grey black silty clay with frequent charcoal and occasional pebbles and bone [207]. The context above this was a similar deposit [206]. It is likely that [206] and [207] are the fills of a pit and the edges of this feature were outside the area of excavation and the base was not reached. This feature was at least 500mm deep and spot dating of the pottery recovered from both fills gives a 15<sup>th</sup> century date to the filling in of the feature.



Above [205] was a cultivation or garden soil horizon of a dark grey brown silty clay with frequent charcoal, cobbles and mortar [205]. This was about 250mm and dates from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Cutting [205] was a pit [204], filled with [203] a dark grey brown silty clay with very frequent charcoal, cobbles and mortar. Pottery recovered from [203] dates from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Above this was a 19<sup>th</sup> century garden soil which was a mid grey brown silty clay with frequent charcoal and was about 500mm thick [202]. Above this was the topsoil [201] which was similar to [101] seen in Trench 1.

#### *Trench 3 (Fig. 10)*

The natural [306] was seen at about 55.30m O.D. Above the natural was a layer of light grey brown silty clay with occasional patches of re-deposited clay and frequent pebbles and charcoal [305]. The layer above this [304] was similar and both these deposits date from the 13<sup>th</sup> century so it is likely that they represent a cultivation or garden soil about 350mm thick.

Overlying [304] was a garden soil which was a mid grey brown silty clay with moderate pebbles and occasional charcoal of probably an 18<sup>th</sup> century date [303]. A darker soil horizon [302] was excavated above [303] and pottery recovered from [302] dates from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Above this was the topsoil [301] which was similar to [101] but was about 500mm thick and probably consists of more than one layer.

#### *Trench 4 (Fig. 11, Plate 4)*

Natural was not reached in this trench. It seems likely that the bottom two deposits excavated are the fill or fills of a large pit and the edges of this feature were outside the area of excavation and the base was not reached but it was at least 600mm deep. Deposit [405] was a light grey brown silty clay with very frequent pebbles, cobbles and charcoal. Deposit [404] was similar except contained less pebbles. Both probably date from the later 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Above [404] was a 19<sup>th</sup> century cultivation or garden soil [403] which was a mid grey brown silty clay with frequent mortar, pebbles and charcoal. Cutting [403] was a pit [407] filled with a dark grey black silty clay with frequent charcoal and mortar [406]. Sealing [406] was another 19<sup>th</sup> century garden soil [402] which was a mid grey brown silty clay with moderate gravel and pebbles. Above this was the topsoil [401] which was the similar to [101].

### **7 The pottery by Stephanie Ratkai**

The pottery assemblage was small and consisted of 204 pottery sherds and ceramic building material, weighing 1218g. The sherd size was small throughout all the contexts with an average sherd weight of just under 6g. There is therefore a strong likelihood that the pottery had been disturbed, re-deposited and subjected to trample. There were very few diagnostic sherds. There was therefore too little material and the sherds too small for any detailed interpretation of the assemblage. The medieval pottery was recorded by fabric (following Vince, 1985) and the post-medieval pottery by ware type. There was one sparsely sandy iron-poor ware, which could not be matched to Vince's typology or otherwise sourced. The pottery was quantified by sherd count (see Table 2) and the total weight for each context group recorded. Each context was dated (see Table 1)

Several contexts contained 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century material but each trench contained at least two contexts which were medieval in date. However, given the nature of the pottery and the

likelihood of disturbance, it was sometimes difficult to determine whether some sherds were intrusive.

There were nine medieval contexts. The earliest was [106] which contained: a thin-walled, reduced, limestone tempered sherd, possibly fabric D1, which could be late Saxon. There was no other pottery such as Stafford ware or Stamford ware, which could have been pre-Conquest.

Apart from the above, the date range of the medieval pottery spanned the 12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Context [205] was dated to the 16<sup>th</sup> century although there was one mottled ware sherd (later 17<sup>th</sup>-mid 18<sup>th</sup> century) which was probably intrusive. Likewise context [305] was dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century but contained one B4 sherd which is assumed to have been intrusive in the absence of any other material later than the early/mid 13<sup>th</sup> century. Context [404] was dated to the mid 13<sup>th</sup>-mid 14<sup>th</sup> centuries since there were several A7b sherds but no B4 sherds. However context [405], recorded in the stratigraphic record as being very little different from [404], contained two B4 sherds, so it is possible that both contexts date to the later 14<sup>th</sup> century.

An unusual rusticated oxidised sherd was from a ?jar was found in [403] with a mixed group of pottery of medieval, post-medieval and 19<sup>th</sup> century date. The fabric similar to Severn Valley ware, would not be inconsistent with a Roman date, although the hardness of the fabric and the crispness of the rouletting seems wrong (pers comm. Dr J Evans). The fabric is too fine to be late Saxon. A third possibility is that it is some sort of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century garden furniture. However, the sherd has a drilled hole for a riveted repair, which sits oddly with it being late garden furniture.

Table 1: Spot dating of contexts

Context	Date	qty	wght
101	19th c	4	22
102	early 19th c	1	6
103	19th c	4	28
104	late 18th c	5	20
105	15th	13	46
106	11th c?	1	2
111	18th c	2	32
201	19th c	7	14
202	19th c	27	188
203	19th c	11	40
205	16th	8	24
206	15th-16th c	9	30
207	15th-16th c	9	90
301	19th c	4	18
302	early 19th c	9	38
303	19th c but could be 18th c with intrusive material	21	190
304	13th c	6	12
305	13th c	8	30
402	19th c	4	56
403	19th c	11	40

404	mid 13th-mid 14th c	23	192
405	later 14th c?	17	100

Table 2: Quantification of pottery and ceramic building material by sherd count

Fabric	Sherd count
A2	2
A3	15
A4	2
A5/A6	1
A7b	36
A7e	8
B1	24
B3	1
B4	22
D1/D2	2
D2	2
Medieval iron-poor sandy ware	3
Tudor green	4
Cistercian/blackware	1
Blackware	9
Frechen stoneware	2
Coarseware	6
Mottled ware	5
Slip-coated ware	2
Slip-decorated wares	7
English stonewares	4
Tin-glazed earthenware	4
Porcelain	1
Creamware	5
miscellaneous 19th c pottery	25
cbm	8
flower pot	2
Oxidised rusticated sherd	1
Total	204

## 8 Discussion

The natural subsoil was seen in two of the four trenches (Trenches 1 and 3) at about 55.30 metres O. D. The earliest features excavated were two cuts into the natural subsoil in Trench 1. One of these [107] could date from the late Saxon period and it is probable that the other feature is of a similar date. It is possible that the tops of these features and any contemporary ground surfaces have been destroyed by cultivation in the medieval period.

From the excavation it can be suggested that during the medieval period the ground surface was at approximately 300mm above the natural subsoil as deposits dating from the 13<sup>th</sup>-early

16<sup>th</sup> centuries were excavated below about 55.60 metres O.D. However, cultivation of the site in the post-medieval period may have destroyed any medieval ground surfaces so therefore the ground surface in the medieval period may have been higher than 55.60 metres O.D.

It seems likely that in Trenches 2 and 4, where the natural was not seen, the deposits that were excavated below the depth where the natural subsoil was likely to be found (55.60 metres O. D.) were fills of cut features [207] and [405]. The nature of these deposits suggests that they are probably pit fills. It is more than likely that in Trench 2 deposit [206] is also part of the same feature that [207] is part of as both deposits are very similar. It is probable that [404] in Trench 4 is also the fill of the same feature as [405].

The lack of any early post-medieval horizons could suggest that little activity was taking place on the site. However, residual early post-medieval pottery was recovered from the excavation and it likely that later cultivation has disturbed the ground to an extent that any ground surfaces have been removed. In the later post-medieval period cultivation or gardening was taking place on the site.

## **9 Conclusions**

Features and deposits dating from the medieval period and perhaps the late Saxon period survive on the site. It is possible that these features are associated with buildings fronting onto Friars Street or perhaps Eign Street. Only about 4 square metres of the site was excavated but the density of medieval or earlier features and deposits suggests quite a high level of activity on the site during the medieval period or earlier.

However, disturbance by cultivation during the medieval and later periods may have removed or truncated some of the earlier features.

## **10 Acknowledgements**

The author would like to thank Mark Powles of RRA Architects for his cooperation during the project and Francesca Bradley for assisting in the site work.

## **11 References**

### *Maps*

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## **12 Archive**

The site code is FSH05A. The archive consists of:

- 7 trench sheets
- 1 drawing index sheets
- 6 field drawings on 1 sheet
- 1 sheet of levels
- 2 sheets of site diary and notes
- 24 finds sheets
- 5 photo record sheets
- 2 films of black and white photographic negatives
- 2 films of colour photographic transparencies
- 1 box of finds:

The archive is currently held by Marches Archaeology awaiting transfer to Hereford Museum Services.