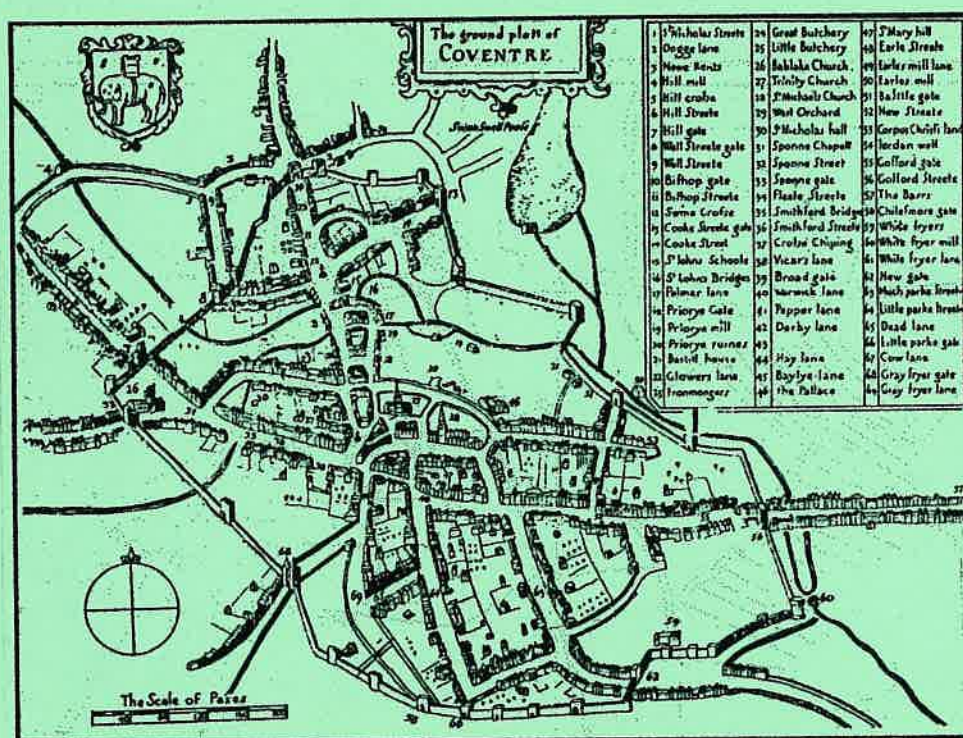


Archaeological Recording at The Tiny Tim Centre, Whitefriars Lane, Coventry



Archaeological Observation at the Tiny Tim Centre, Whitefriars Lane, Coventry

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Report 0339
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Summary

Archaeological observation at the Tiny Tim Centre, Whitefriars Lane, Coventry, within the medieval Carmelite Friary precinct, revealed the remains of the stone wall of the friary boundary. The wall had incorporated three medieval architectural fragments, possibly from the friary, and was surmounted by a later brick wall the line of the old boundary. The wall of a possible lean-to building against the precinct wall were recorded, along with some early pits.

1. Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Coventry City Council for the erection of an extension to the front of the Tiny Tim Centre, Whitefriars Lane, Coventry (Planning Ref. S98/1660). Because the site lies within an area of archaeological potential, close to the boundary of medieval Whitefriars, it was thought that medieval archaeological deposits might be disturbed during the work. It was therefore a condition of planning permission that the applicant should secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work to be carried out in conjunction with the development.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork, consisting of archaeological observation of the excavation of the foundation trenches for the new extension, in accordance with a Brief prepared by the Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority, was commissioned from the Warwickshire Museum Field Archaeology Projects Group and carried out in March-April 2003. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be deposited with Coventry City Museums Service under the site code WL03.

2. Location

2.1 The site is located at national grid reference SP 3393 7873 on the south side of Whitefriars Lane, within the city of Coventry. The development area was previously within the yard north of the Tiny Tim Centre.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Mercia Mudstone (British Geological Survey 1994).

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 The Carmelite Friary, or Whitefriars, in Coventry was set up in 1342 and the church and cloister lay to the south-east of the present site. Whitefriars Lane lies immediately north of the friary precinct (Fig. 1).

3.2 Standing remains of the cloister wing of the Carmelite friary, now Whitefriars Museum, lie less than 100m away to the south-east but the building was separated from Whitefriars Lane by the construction of the ring road in the later 20th century. The medieval Whitefriars Gateway, dating to 1352, lies to the south-west of the site; it is now a toy museum.

3.3 Excavations in the vicinity have revealed medieval remains. At 114-115 Gosford Street, to the north, pits of 12th-13th century date were uncovered, along with traces of medieval ridge and furrow (SMR No. 684). Excavations to the west, at the former Green Dragon Inn, revealed beam slots and postholes relating to a possible medieval building; a silver penny of Edwards I and a coin dating to 1320 were retrieved from the remains of a stone building (SMR No. 733). Excavations in 1994/5 on the east

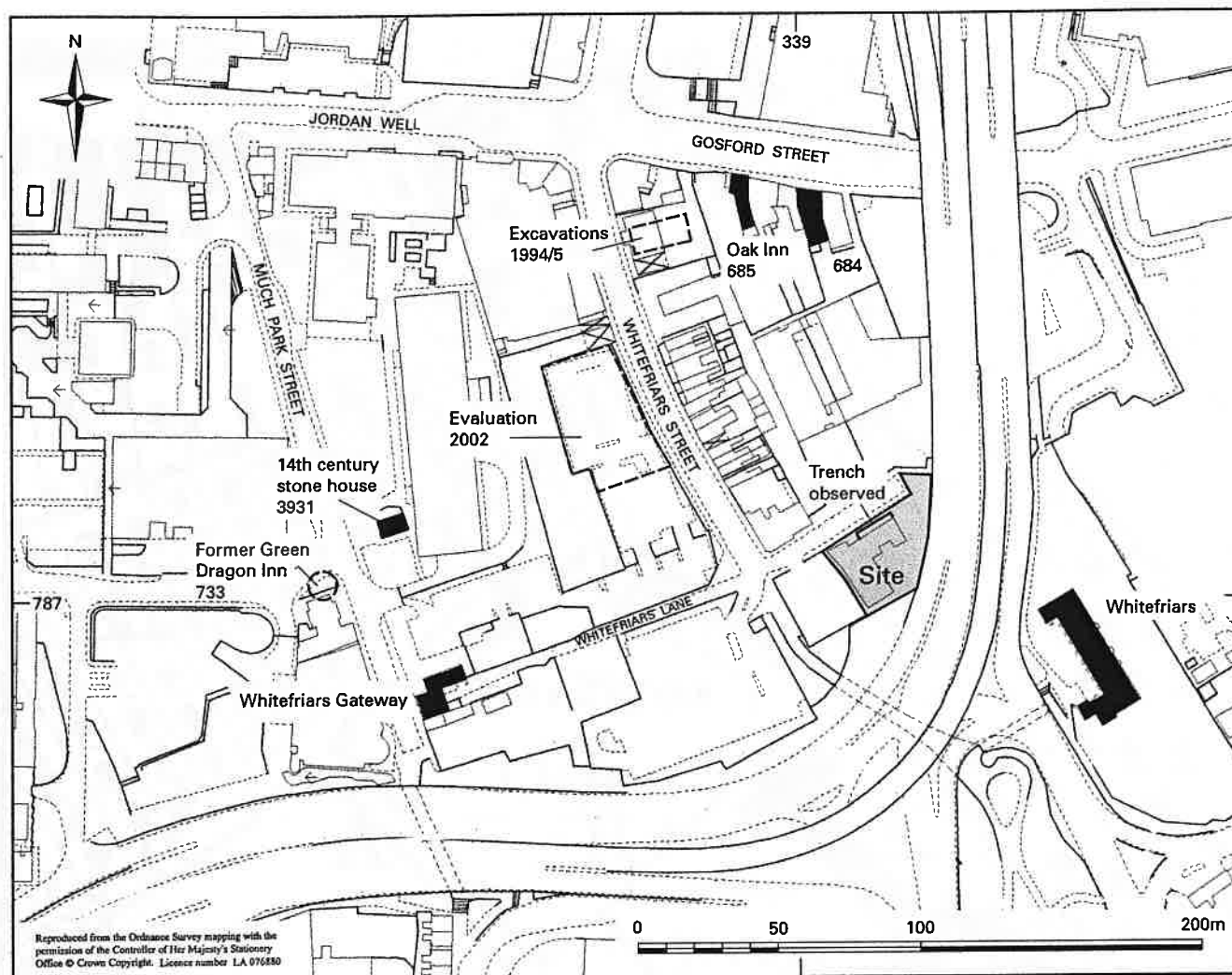


Fig. 1: Site location

side of Whitefriars Street (No. 76) uncovered the back of plots and extensive medieval pitting with evidence for occupation dating back to the early 12th century (Coventry Museums Archaeology Unit 1995).

3.4 A stone house of 14th century date, comprising a first floor chamber and a stone-vaulted cellar, was revealed to the west of the site after bombing in 1941 (SMR No. 3931). 114-115 Gosford Street, to the north, is a timber-framed medieval building which has been re-cased in brick and faced in stucco (SMR No. 684). The Oak Inn, at 120 Gosford Street is another surviving timber-framed building in the vicinity (SMR No. 684). An archaeological evaluation on the west side of Whitefriars Street in 2002 recorded evidence for medieval backyard or agricultural activity and a post-Dissolution boundary wall (ULAS 2002).

3.5 Speed's 1610 town plan of Coventry shows Whitefriars ('White fryers' 59) and the friary precinct. The frontages of Jordan Well and Much Park Street were built up but there were no structures in the vicinity of the development area (Speed 1610; see Cover). Bradford's map of Coventry of 1748-9 shows that the development area lies in the northern part of Whitefriars Close (Fig. 2). The Board of Health map of 1851 shows that the eastern side of Whitefriars Street had been developed and the northern part of what was Whitefriars Close had been divided into five linear areas running roughly NW-SE. These appear to have been under cultivation in the mid 19th century. Between 1889 and 1937 (Ordnance Survey 1889; 1905 Fig. 3; 1906; 1914; 1925; 1937) the frontage of the site remained unoccupied, with an internally buttressed wall running around the perimeter (Fig. 3). The central part of the site

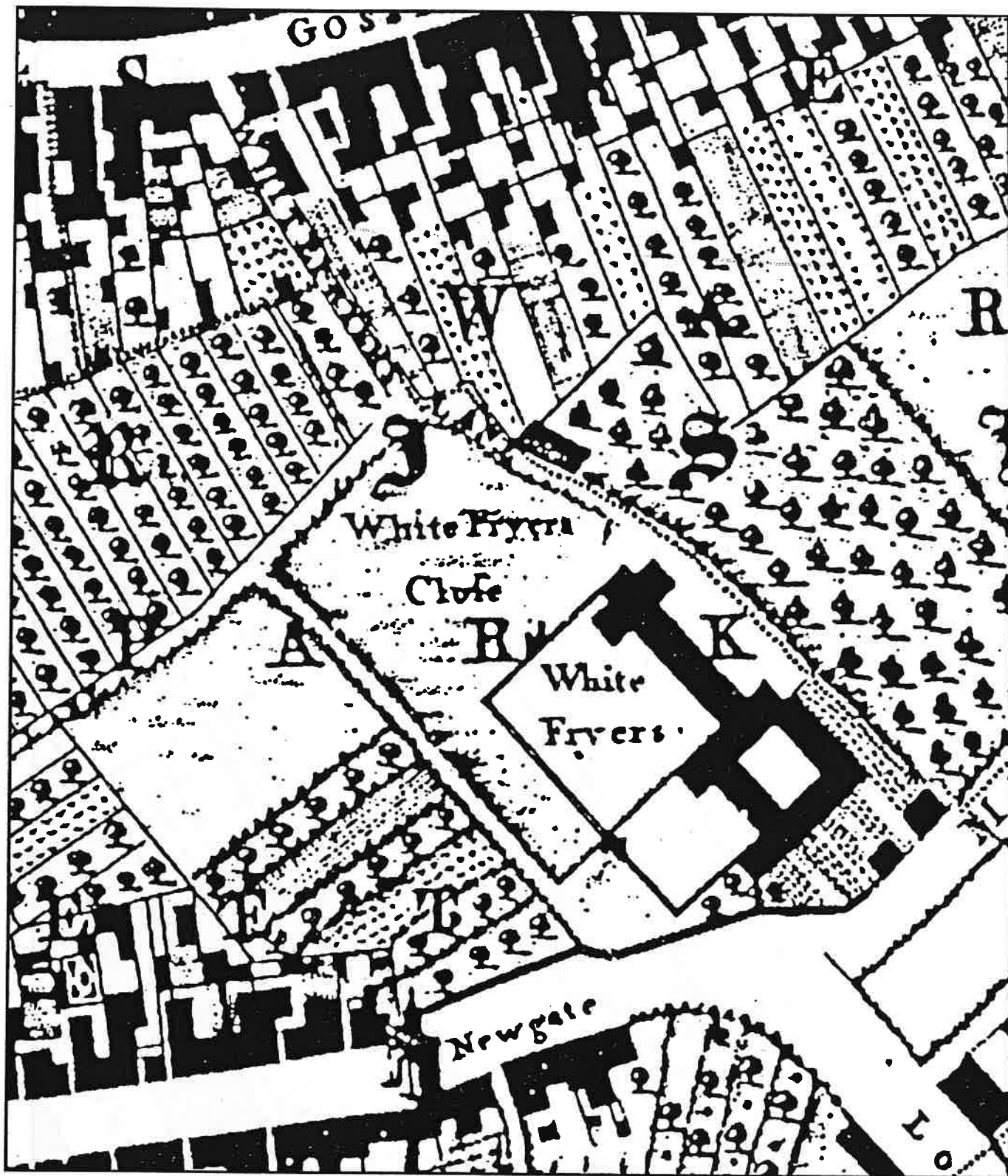


Fig. 2: Detail of Bradford's map of Coventry 1748-9

was taken up by the north-western part of a large building, demolished in the mid 20th century. The 1955 Ordnance Survey map shows a small building marked the 'Polish Ex-Servicemen's Club' on the street frontage within the same compound.

4. Observation

4.1 Prior to the trenches for the new extension being excavated the fence running along the street frontage to the north was removed and the tarmac and overburden of concrete slabs (100) was removed and the floor area within the new extension was lowered by c.0.30m. The excavation of the foundation trenches was carried out using a mini-excavator with a toothed bucket. The trenches were 0.50m wide and were, on average, 1.30m deep from the original ground level. At the request of the building inspector the western trench was lowered further, to a depth of 2.70m at the time of the observation. The northern trench ran along the line of the former street frontage (Fig. 4).

4.2 Natural red clay (104) was recorded intermittently at c.1m below the current ground surface. The intermittent nature of the natural suggests that the ground had been disturbed by early pitting and two cuts (119 and 120) recorded in the eastern trench are likely to be the remains of such early pits. These pits appear to respect the line of a possible sandstone wall (105) which may have belonged to a lean-to building against the precinct wall. However, no dating material was recovered

4.3 Natural clay was overlain by a 0.75m thick layer of grey brown silty loam containing fragments of brick, tile, charcoal and some modern debris (103). This layer appeared to represent a highly disturbed build up of material from the medieval period onwards and had been cut into a number of times for 20th century services. The layer contained pottery dating from the 15th/16th century through to the 18th/19th century as well as the proximal part of a human femur and another smaller fragment of human long bone. The unstratified finds, which were collected by the contractors and are also most likely to come from this layer, also contained a fragment of human tibia and a human rib fragment.

4.4 A sandstone wall (102) lay to the north of 103, on the line of the edge of the site; the wall measured 0.55m wide and its base was 0.70m below present ground level (Fig. 5). This wall appears to represent the foundation of the precinct wall of the friary although it is likely to have been rebuilt and repaired in subsequent years. Three large moulded sandstone blocks; a jamb or springer from a large archway and stone tracery from a large decorated window, presumably from the friary, were recovered from the part of the wall removed during excavation of the foundation trench (Figs. 6 and 7). The wall did not carry on to the north-east end of the trench where it had probably been destroyed by 20th century building activity. To the north of the wall, below the tarmac, was a layer of reddish brown silty loam (121), suggesting a different land use on the north side of the wall to the south side. The sandstone wall was surmounted by a 20th century brick wall (101) which re-used the sandstone wall as its foundation.

4.5 In the eastern section of the eastern trench the disturbed layer 103 was overlain by a light brown layer of stone rubble with lots of mortar (115), up to 0.27m thick. The layer appeared to extend some 3m west into the trench and was overlain by a layer of dark grey silty loam (116) containing much modern debris, including bricks and asbestos. This is likely to be demolition debris from a building marked in this area in 1955.

4.6 The foundation cut for the north wall of the existing Tiny Tim Centre (112) could be seen in section. The cut was filled with concrete (113) which had been covered with rubble (114). The posthole (118) for the concrete post-setting (117) of the former

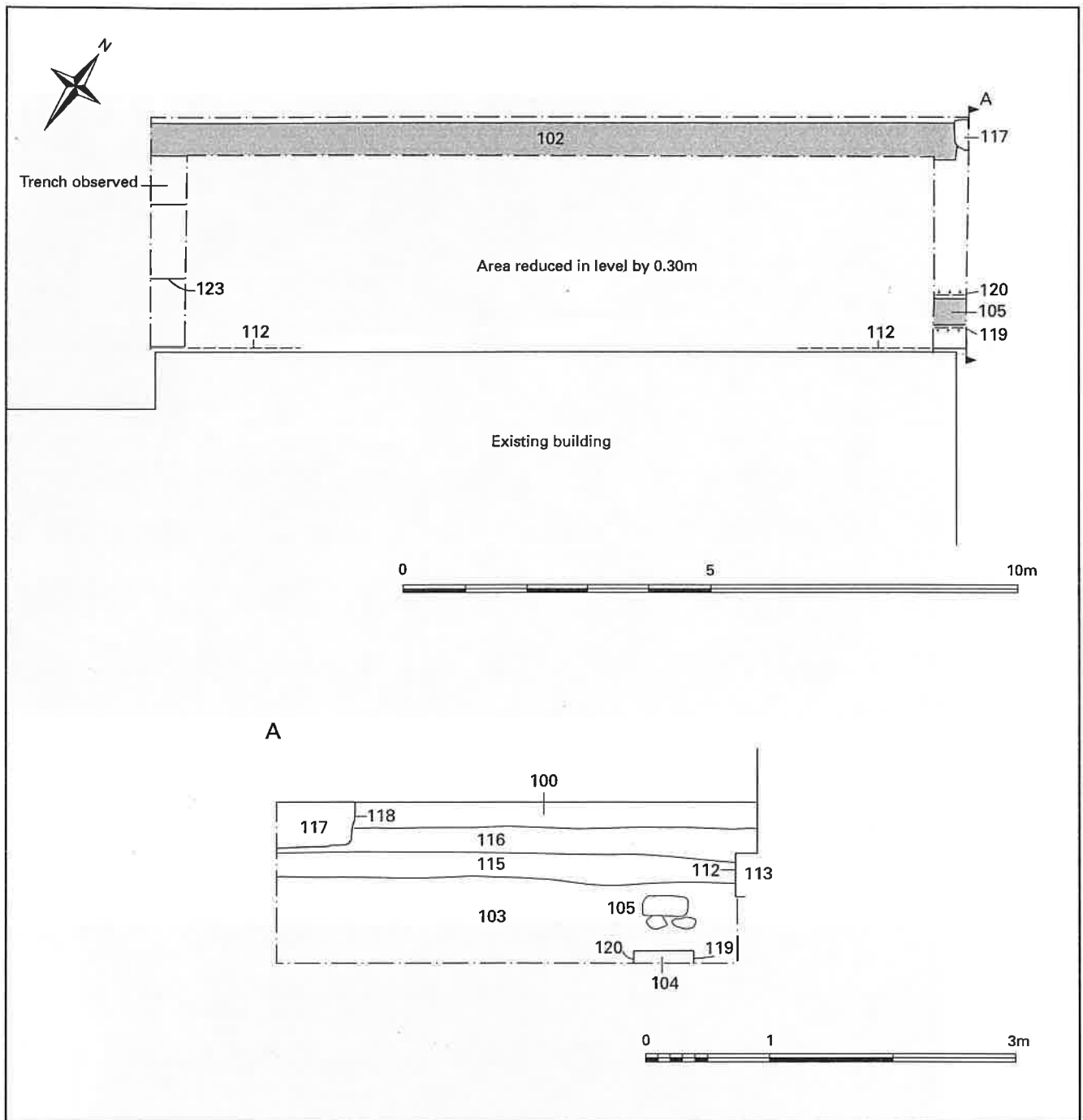


Fig. 4: Trenches observed

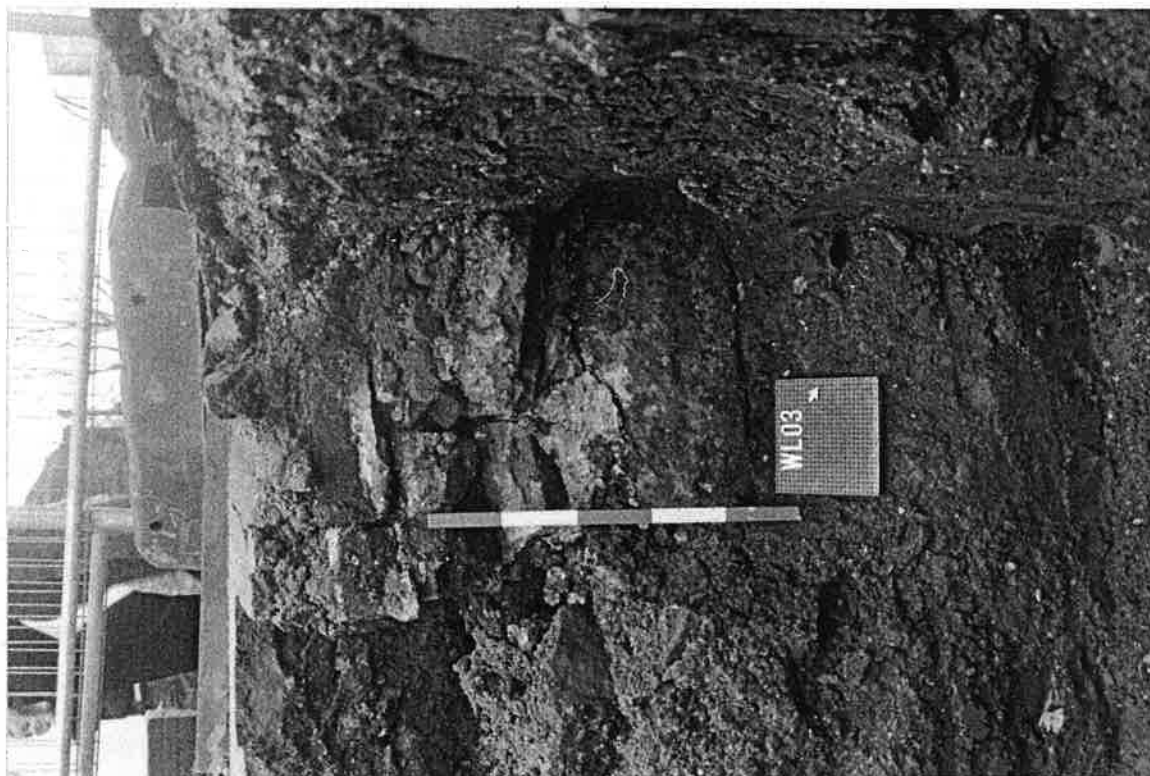


Fig. 5: Wall 102 in section

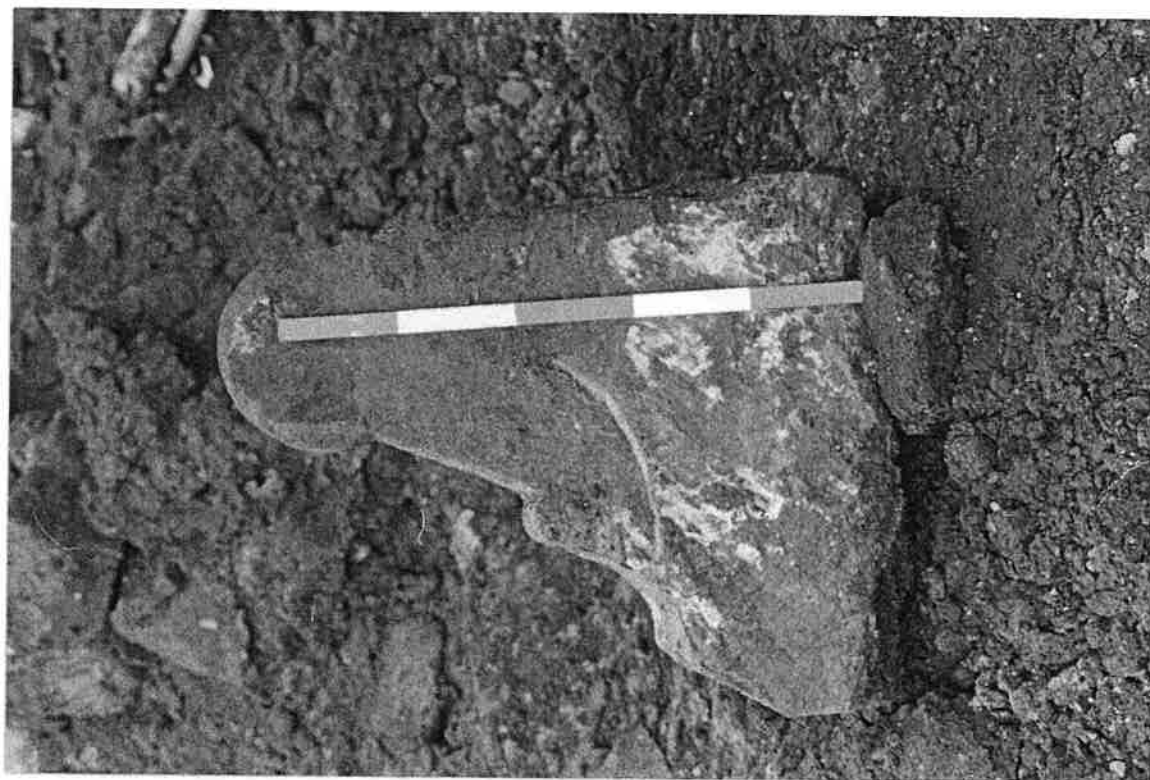


Fig. 6: Fragment of moulded arch jamb/springer
from wall 102



Fig. 7: Fragments of window tracery from wall 102

fence that had stood on the site boundary was still in place in the north-eastern corner of the trenching although other post settings had been removed along the line of the boundary. The posthole had cut 0.50m below the current ground surface suggesting that the setting of these posts must have caused some damage to the sandstone wall below.

4.7 Two brick-built inspection chambers (106, 110) and a new breeze block inspection chamber (108) were cut (107, 111, 109) into layer 103 in the centre of the site and on the north side of the north section. One of the brick-built inspection chambers was redundant. These were all for services to the Tiny Tim Centre. The natural clay was cut (123) by a modern drain pipe (122) at a depth of 1.40m below current ground level in the western trench. The cut was filled (124) with the same disturbed material as 103. The western trench was highly disturbed by these modern drain cuts, obliterating any archaeological evidence in the eastern trench.

5. Conclusions

5.1 A number of pits, some pre-dating wall 102 and two (119 and 120) respecting an early stone wall (105), were recorded. The remains of the former priory precinct wall, rebuilt and incorporating three fragments of carved medieval sandstone, were uncovered below ground level, with the stone probably from the priory buildings themselves. The wall is likely to have undergone extensive repairs over time as it was still, apparently, standing in the 20th century before it was replaced by a later brick wall.

Acknowledgements

The Warwickshire Museum would like to thank Alan Inger of the Tiny Tim Centre for commissioning the work. Work on site was carried out by Catherine Coutts, Rob Jones and Chris Jones. This report was written by Catherine Coutts with illustrations by Andy Isham. It was checked by Nicholas Palmer.

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Appendix A: List of Finds

Context	Material	Quantity	Date/Comments
U/S	Pottery	7	15th/16th century – 1 19th/20th century – 6
U/S	Clay pipe	1	stem
U/S	Cu alloy	1	button
U/S	Human bone	2	tibia fragment and rib fragment
102	Architectural stone	3	?14th century – jamb/springer from large archway, 2 fragments of window tracery (Figs 6 and 7)
103	Pottery	18	15th/16th century – 1, German Stoneware 17th/18th century – 10, Midlands blackware, Stoneware, Manganese mottled ware, Slipware 18th/19th century – 7 Pearlware, Mocha
103	Clay pipe	4	1 bowl, 3 stems, early 19th century

103	Human bone	2	(Oswald Type G24 1810-40) femur fragment, long bone fragment
103	Glass	5	2 bottles, 3 vessel fragments
103	Shell	1	Oyster
103	Ceramic	1	small ball (marble?)

U/S = unstratified

Appendix B: List of Contexts

100	Tarmac/modern surfaces
101	Brick wall running along frontage
102	Sandstone wall
103	Layer of mixed dark grey brown silt loam
104	Natural red clay
105	Layer of sandstone rubble
106	Brick and concrete inspection chamber
107	Cut for inspection chamber 106
108	Breeze block inspection chamber
109	Cut for inspection chamber 108
110	Brick-built inspection chamber
111	Cut for inspection chamber 110
112	Foundation cut for north wall of Tiny Tim centre
113	Concrete fill of cut 112
114	Modern rubble fill above concrete 113
115	Layer of light brown silty rubble
116	Layer of silty loam with rubble
117	Fill of posthole 118
118	Posthole
119	Vertical cut into natural
120	Vertical cut into natural
121	Layer of reddish brown silty loam north of wall 102
122	Modern drain pipe
123	Cut for drain 122
124	Fill of cut 123 (as 103)

Appendix C:

CITY OF COVENTRY

Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief and Excavation

Part B (Site-specific, city centre)

Tiny Tim Centre, Whitefriars Lane, Coventry

- Site:** Land on the south of Whitefriars Lane, Coventry (NGR: SP 3392 7872).
- Proposal:** Single storey extension c13m x 3.5m to north of existing building.
- Appraisal:** The site lies on the south side of Whitefriars Lane which formerly afforded access to the Carmelite Friary (1342-1539). This side of the lane formed the edge of the Friary precinct. While the massing of the proposed extension is relatively insubstantial foundations may nevertheless impinge upon buried remains (see below).
- Potential:** Well-mapped site which has not been repeatedly redeveloped. The proposed extension possibly lies upon the boundary wall which characterised the edge of most monastic precincts. While such precincts (which is here discernible in maps until 1889) accompany almost all monasteries and friaries and encompass a great deal of apparently open space, gardens and courtyards, the use of space in such enclosures is relatively poorly understood. Surviving rural and urban examples of a variety of monastic orders and a handful of widely-excavated examples show that the precinct wall, created for the privacy of the orders, provided a site to erect a variety of lean-to structures, with a choice of aspects since the precinct was a full enclosure.

Work by Leicester University in 2002 on the nearby Whitefriars Street and earlier work by the former Coventry Museum Archaeology Unit (1987) at the rear of 114-115 Gosford St suggest that generally the uppermost medieval levels survive in the vicinity under about 1m depth of recent overburden, locally possibly less. In the 1987 excavation the 14th century (dendro-dated) frontage building (which survives as a standing structure -The Whitefriars Public House) was found to stand over north-south ridge and furrow plough cultivation which had been in-filled to develop the site. This still survived in its entirety and was seen both in plan and section, retaining the cut of the ploughshare in its base and the shod hoofprints of oxen in the sides of the ridges. Such survival in an urban context, undamaged and un-eroded, is extremely rare, worthy of careful record. In Coventry this dates to before the inclosure of the city with its wall from the 1350s when the arable fields extended much closer to the urban core. The survival of such features close to a busy urban frontage is surprising and helps date the laying out of Gosford Street plots at this point. The potential for such survival further back, within the open space of the comparatively less well developed friary precinct is felt to be so much the greater.

Requirements: To comprise

- Watching brief during all ground disturbance, with a contingency of up to 10 person-days for pre-emptive recording of exposed remains prior to their disturbance or re-covering where such remains cannot be dealt with during normal watching-brief attendance. The pre-emptive fieldwork, if required, should be spread over no more than 5 consecutive calendar days since the development will be working to a very tight schedule.
- A report is required to summarise the work.

The work should address the following issues if evidence survives:

- 1 The presence or absence of an east-west aligned monastic precinct wall along the south side of Whitefriars Lane.
- 2 The use of space at the precinct margin.
- 3 Evidence for earlier land use.

Prepared by: Iain Soden, Planning Archaeologist
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