



An archaeological profile of
Ross-on-Wye

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1. Introduction

Ross-on-Wye and the Herefordshire market-town profiles

Herefordshire is widely regarded as the most rural of all English counties, closely identified with images of rich farmland and the wild beauty of the lower Wye Valley. Nevertheless, the great majority of the population is urban, living in the county town and the five market towns. It is also true that, at the peak of its prosperity before the Black Death of 1348-9, Herefordshire had as many as twenty-nine towns within its borders, although already by c.1500 this was reduced to eight (Ray 2001, 3). The urban past is important to Herefordshire – because so many of its inhabitants live and work in its present towns, because these places have such a major role in the economy of the county and of the region, and because the long-term trends that result, in some places, in sheep grazing where market traders once bargained, are of major historical significance. It is an unfortunate inevitability that the archaeological evidence for the urban past is most at risk in those places that continue to be most successfully urban.

This is an archaeological study, or profile, of the town of Ross-on-Wye in south-east Herefordshire, the first of a series of profiles of the county's market towns designed to provide new summary overviews of the character, quality and significance of the archaeology of each place. This is in fact the third such document to be produced for Ross. In 1982 a report on its archaeology and history was produced by Jan Wills for the then Hereford & Worcester County Council. In many respects it covered much the same ground as the present profile, with a summary of previous research, a historical summary, topographical analysis and policies for conservation and management. Never published, this useful document has remained within local government ever since. It was partly superseded in May 1996 by the archaeological assessment compiled by Victoria Bryant (then Buteux), also for HWCC. This was one of a series of such reports produced by the *Central Marches Historic Towns Survey*, a project that covered about eighty past and present urban places in the three historic counties of Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire. The CMHTS, funded by English Heritage, served as a pilot study for the *extensive urban surveys* that this body has since sponsored in most English counties.

The CMHTS was, in this regard, most definitely a pioneering project. Assessments were made of existing models of urban development, the archaeological resource below- and above-ground, artefactual and environmental potential, and archival resources available. However, the scope and depth of the individual town reports were very tightly circumscribed by the resources then available. Additionally, in the decade that has passed since the CMHTS reports were written a large amount of archaeological fieldwork has taken place, much of it under the provisions of PPG16, government guidance that allows planning authorities to request the prior archaeological investigation of prospective development sites. For these reasons – to widen the scope of the enquiry, to address some issues in more detail, and to bring the information up to date – the need for market-town profiles was identified in

a 2001 management review of Herefordshire towns (Ray 2001, 35). Ross is the first to be produced, with others to follow in 2007-8. In their attention to the character of historic townscapes, these profiles have an additional function in supporting and informing the production of *Conservation Area Appraisals* – reviews of the validity and scope of Conservation Areas now required by central government.

This profile commences with a brief topographical introduction to the town and a summary of current historical research, concentrating on the medieval and early modern periods. The archaeology of Ross is, in this study, defined very broadly, with buried remains and deposits, historic buildings and the urban landscape all included. The above-ground elements are addressed in chapter 3, which opens with an examination of what constitutes the historic urban core and how the current Conservation Area relates to it. Next, the impacts of particular historic periods on the present townscape are defined, principally in terms of the distribution of buildings of different dates but also in the creation of new streets after the middle of the 19th century. The issue of earlier building fabric concealed by later facades is raised – but can only be addressed in the future by detailed interior surveys, work that is well beyond the scope of the current profiles. The question of building materials is also examined, as they are fundamental to the distinctive character of the townscape. The townscape itself (existing, and as recorded by historic maps) is then analysed for evidence of the growth of the town in its earliest centuries. Below-ground archaeology is examined in chapter 4, principally via an archaeological deposit model that predicts variations in the survival and preservation of buried archaeological remains across the town, from the evidence of small-scale archaeological investigations and from the nature of the surface topography and the incidence of terracing. Finally, chapter 5 presents a tripartite strategy for the future of Ross's past. The first part is the identification of a number of issues that have implications for the long-term management of the archaeological resource, both above ground and below. The second is a brief exploration of the question of the 'heritage dividend', an examination of ways in which the archaeological heritage (again, broadly defined) can support local economic regeneration, in general terms via the external marketing or 'branding' of Ross-on-Wye, and more particularly via a number of specific initiatives. The final part is an agenda for future archaeological research that can be pursued both by development-led professional investigation and by local community action.

Previous archaeological-historical research

Ross has until fairly recently escaped serious archaeological and historical attention. The Reverend T D Fosbroke wrote about it in his early 19th-century *Companion to the Wye Tour* (1821, 1826), a guidebook compiled for those exploring the surrounding countryside and in particular journeying from Ross to Monmouth, one of the earliest of English river 'pleasure cruises' pioneered by Bishop Swinfield for his guests at Ross Rectory in the mid-18th century. Duncomb was unable to complete the Ross (Greytree Hundred) section of his *History and Antiquities of the County of Hereford* (1804) and it was left to his

successor, W H Cooke, to do so in 1882. The account of Ross is fairly detailed for the period, though with an inevitable emphasis on episcopal and manorial descents, the benefactions of wealthy townspeople, and ecclesiastical history. St Mary's parish church was the subject of a scholarly article in 1920 by the rector (Money-Kyrle 1920) and, together with over fifty of the town's historic buildings was surveyed not long after by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (1932). Significant relevant historical work followed a generation later with Joe Hillaby's 'Boroughs of the bishops of Hereford' (1970), an analysis of the late 13th-century *Red Books*. The first in-depth historical treatment of Ross appeared in 1999 with *The Story of Ross*, by Pat Hughes and Heather Hurley, which gave expert treatment to primary documentary sources and to selected historic buildings; this was rapidly followed by *Historical Aspects of Ross*, by various authors for the Ross & District Civic Society.

In addition to the town assessments by Wills (1982) and Buteux (1996), archaeological fieldwork commenced in the town with an archaeological evaluation in the churchyard in 1991 (Jones 1991). Since then, several archaeological projects have taken place within the town centre (see appendix), all linked to the planning process, since 1998 as a result of advice to the Unitary Planning Authority by its in-house Archaeological Advisor. This officer, working within *Herefordshire Archaeology*, the county archaeological service, advises on the need for prior field evaluation or other information to support planning applications, advises on an appropriate mitigation strategy (usually 'preservation by record'), provides the applicant and/or their agent with a written brief specifying the nature and level of archaeological recording or investigation, and then monitors the work (carried out by an archaeological contractor on behalf of the client) to ensure compliance with the brief.

A topographical introduction (fig.1)

[Fig.1]

Ross, or Ross-on-Wye as it has been officially since 1931, is situated on the left bank of the river Wye 18km south-east of Hereford. The historic core, with which this profile is concerned, is dominated by the end of a ridge, rising to about 60 metres above sea level, on which stands the medieval parish church of St Mary. The town was founded on the north-facing slope below the church, around a simple triangular road junction and the main road leading north from it, which descends to cross the Rudhall Brook some 500 metres from the church. Markets have been held at the road junction and in the adjacent streets since at least the 13th century and most probably since 1138, if not before. The triangular market place has, since the 1650s, been dominated by the arcaded, sandstone-built Market Hall (fig.2).



Fig.2 Ross Market Place and the mid-17th-century Market Hall

The local road network forms a skeleton, or morphological frame, around which the built-up area has been planted, and has developed and grown. High Street, leading west from the market place, gives access to the Wye crossing below the town to Wilton, thence west and north to the county town. Running north from the market place, Broad Street becomes Brookend Street to cross the level ground around the brook, then climbs again and divides, one branch (Brampton Street) heading into the rural parishes further up the east bank of the Wye (Brampton Abbots, Foy, How Caple), the other (Over Ross) leading north-east towards Ledbury. Copse Cross Street (formerly Corpse Cross Street) gave access southwards towards the lower Wye and the Forest of Dean, with a branch east, within the historic built-up area, towards Weston-under-Penyard and ultimately to the Severn crossing at Gloucester and thence towards London.

The topography of the town site is further shaped by its watercourses. The Rudhall Brook rises from springs about 6km south-east of the town in the Bromsash area. Flowing south-west at the foot of the gradient below St Mary's, it is joined by two other smaller watercourses in the area of the Town Mill on Brookend Street. The Small Brook rises at Merrivale, on the lower slopes of Chase Hill about a kilometre south-east of the town centre. It flows north, occupying a narrow defile just east of the town centre through the grounds of the Chase Hotel. Here it formerly powered the Chase or Chests Mill, first recorded by the end of the 17th century (Hughes and Hurley 1999, 24). Its site can be identified from the Tithe Map of 1844-5 lying between two large ponds (still extant; Hurst 1996). The Small Brook continues northwards,

east of the hospital site, and from there across Station Street about 275m east of its junction with Broad Street. Turning west it emptied into the Town Mill millpond which was also fed by the Rudhall Brook from the east, and by the Chatterley Brook, another minor watercourse that rises from springs about 1.5 to 2.5km due east of the town. There were other channels immediately upstream and downstream of the Town Mill site, and it is clear that there has been a long history of modifications to the watercourses in this area, associated with the demands of milling, and perhaps other industries.

While the historic town centre was always free to grow northwards, eastwards and to the south, the escarpment and the Wye floodplain below it always ensured a sharp edge to its western side, broken only by the growth of housing south-westwards down Wye Street (formerly Dock Street or Dock Pitch) towards Wilton Bridge, down to the edge of the floodplain.

2. The development of Ross: the current historical model

The earliest form of the place name *Rosse* occurs in Domesday. It may derive from the Welsh *rhos*, used either to denote a promontory, which would be appropriate for the site of the church, or a moor or heath (Coplestone-Crow 1989, 174; Bannister 1916, 163).

There is, so far, no evidence of prehistoric occupation or activity on the site of what would become the town centre of Ross; the area was probably agricultural in the late prehistoric period, overlooked by the Iron Age hillfort on Chase Hill, 2km to the south-east. It is however increasingly likely that the site was occupied in the Roman period, but the nature of that occupation is not known. This arises from a small but possibly significant number of Roman artefacts found in and around the centre of Ross over the years. A Roman coin was found somewhere in Ross in 1804 (SMR 12103); another was found in 1959 at the cricket ground, in the floodplain below the church (SMR 4059). A sherd of 3rd-century pottery was found near the Vine Tree Inn in c.1952 (SMR 4057). Two pieces of Roman pottery were found in 1991 in archaeological evaluation trenches immediately south of the church (Jones 1991: see appendix); two more were found in 1997 in another evaluation on a site on the south side of New Street (Topping, Hurst and Pearson 1997: see appendix). Seven artefacts found over two centuries could be accounted of no significance whatever – Ross lies only 4km north-west of the Roman town of *Ariconium*, Weston-under-Penyard and a scatter of artefacts is perhaps to be expected from the densely-settled countryside around it. However, the fact remains that a handful of archaeological investigations has produced almost as many Roman objects as medieval, hinting perhaps at occupation of some kind in the immediate vicinity.

Origins: the episcopal manor and its pre-Conquest church

The story of the present settlement begins at an unknown point in the pre-Conquest (Anglo-Saxon) period. By the time Domesday Book was compiled shortly after the Norman Conquest, the manor of Ross belonged to the Bishop of Hereford. The origins of the episcopal ownership of Ross are uncertain, but a lost charter and a late 12th-century tradition ascribe it to a gift in 1016 by Edmund Ironside, who is said to have died there having been wounded at Minsterworth on the Severn (Finberg 1961, no.420; Cooke 1882, 98). Parsons assessed the evidence as 'at best circumstantial' (1990, 62). Prior to this Ross would appear to have been a royal manor. It may, at this stage, be worth briefly considering the origins of the manorial centre – what was to become the Bishop's Palace. If, as seems likely from the above, it had a pre-11th-century existence as a royal establishment, the question arises as to what it was doing there. One possibility is that it had a strategic function on the east bank of the Wye, placed on a strongly defensible position (its natural defensibility emphasised by the mock castle architecture built on the site in the 1830s) overlooking and controlling the Wilton ford.

The Domesday account states that there were seven hides that paid tax. There was one plough on the demesne, 'another would be possible'. The recorded population was 18 villagers, 6 smallholders and a priest; these people were able to muster 23 ploughs and paid 18 shillings to their lord. There were also 3 slaves; the mill yielded 6s 8d, and there was 16 acres of meadow. The woodland was said to be 'in the king's enclosure' (*defensu regis*) (DB f.182a: Thorn & Thorn 1983). In summary, Ross can be seen to have been an unremarkable rural manor with a total population somewhere around 120 individuals, a church and its priest, a mill, arable, meadows and woodland.

Although there is little sign of it in the Domesday entry, it is possible that Ross church had been a pre-Conquest minster with responsibilities over a much wider area than its modern parish; its prominent hilltop site overlooking the Wye is certainly consistent with such an origin (Hillaby 2001, 70). St Mary's had three dependent chapels in the middle ages: Brampton Abbots (2.5km north), Weston-under-Penyard (3.4km SE) and Hom (2.5km SW). The first two developed their own parishes and became independent, the latter declined into obscurity. It has however been suggested that Brampton and Weston's relationship with Ross post-dated the latter's acquisition by the bishops of Hereford: they each had links elsewhere – Brampton owed two shillings annually to Upton Bishop, and may have been in the latter's *parochia* before being attached to Ross (Skelton 2000, 266-7).

The Bishop's Palace or manor house is not well represented in the published documentation and little is known of it; according to the bishops' Registers it was seldom used. Given the extent of woodland in the immediate area and the emphasis on hunting rights and woodland issues in the medieval documentation for Ross, its character was probably principally that of a hunting lodge. It is first recorded in accounts for provisioning in the Pipe Rolls for 1167-7, and there are detailed accounts of expenditure during an

episcopal visit in 1289-90. Four days of entertainment climaxed with a day when vast quantities (enumerated) of wine and beer were drunk and stabling had to be found for seventy horses (Cooke 1882, 101). The last recorded episcopal visit was made in 1334 and it was disused, along with five other residences, in 1356 (Tonkin 1976). A dovecote and a gaol had formed part of the establishment and survived its disuse. The gaol was taken over by the town. It was said in the early 19th century to have been a small stone building with an upper storey of timber framing, and to have been demolished in the early to mid-18th century (Hughes & Hurley 1999, 43; see below).

The medieval borough: foundation, functions and growth

In 1138 Robert, Bishop of Hereford, was granted the right to hold a market on each of his manors of Ledbury and Ross, the latter to be held on Thursdays. As was often the case, the grant of this charter may have been a formal recognition and regularisation of a situation that already existed, whether for a few years or for a much longer period of time; the triangular road-junction situated close to the river crossing and below the prominent church could conceivably have been the setting for unrecorded trading activities for centuries. The exact relationship between the granting of the right to hold a market, the foundation of Ross as a borough, and the growth of a permanent urban community there is also not necessarily straightforward. The grant to the bishop in 1241 of the right to hold a three-day annual fair at Ross may be taken as another landmark on the way to fully urban status, but it was also a response to the threat posed by a similar grant a decade before to the lord of the manor of Wilton. There is though no doubt that Ross had all the characteristics of an urban place a generation later (see below), and it is probably fair to assume that it was growing as a town steadily through the 13th century. In 1305 the town was required to send two burgesses to Parliament, though this is the only recorded occasion on which they did so (Cooke 1882, 100).

The crucial text for high medieval Ross is the 1277-85 rent roll contained in the *Red Books of the Bishops of Hereford*, one of a series of surveys and valuations of the episcopal estates at the end of the 13th century. Although streets are not enumerated (as they are, for example, in Ledbury), the tenancies of the borough are listed in such a way that there is little doubt that the bishop's bailiff recorded the plots in order, from the High Street down to Brookend Street and the mill, returning up the other side of the street and around the market place (reconstructed in Hughes & Hurley 1999, 16-22). The probable extent of occupation can therefore be deduced, and the distribution of trades through the streets can be roughly reconstructed. The borough of Ross – as distinct from the foreign, the rural manor beyond – contained about 105 tenancies which may, using a multiplier of 4.5 individuals to each recorded household, imply a total population of around 470.

The occupational structure of Ross may be reconstructed from the recorded surnames, although the connection with the trade actually practiced by their bearers was becoming more tenuous at just this time. The victualling trades

were represented by cooks, bakers, brewers, salters and a miller, the textile industry by weavers, tailors, a dyer, a fuller and a draper; metalworking by smiths, a lorimer and, most surprisingly for a town of this size, a goldsmith. The mercantile community included a merchant and several mercers, and there was additionally a carter, a charcoal burner, a clerk, and someone described as 'the priest's man'. Though they too were part of the working population, household servants and apprentices are invisible, but taken account of in the multiplier used above. With the exception of the goldsmith, the occupational structure is fairly typical of a small medieval market town, though the building industry is absent from the list and leather trades confined to two shoemakers.

The distribution of these occupations that can be reconstructed from the rent roll is also revealing, if not surprising, and still has echoes in the present built environment. The miller was located at the Town Mill at the north end of Brookend Street; amongst his neighbours in this watercourse-rich area were the fuller (walker) and a brewer. The merchants were mainly but not exclusively located up the hill, around and towards the market place. Here too were the dyer (usually a wealthy entrepreneur), draper and goldsmith (Hughes & Hurley 1999, *ibid.*).

Although the bishops were, as manorial lords, principally concerned with ground-rents and plots, rather than buildings, the rent roll also lists nine *seldae* (*selds* or stalls) in the market place, which was then taken to include the whole street space between St Mary's Street and the junction with the (later) New Street (Hillaby 1970, 12). A century after the *Red Book* rent roll, references to *selds* had ceased and been replaced by references to shops, possibly reflecting the growing permanence of structures in the market place. A block of market-place encroachments known as Underhill stood near the eastern frontage of the market place, close to the market hall built c.1650, at which time seven adjacent houses and the Boothall were demolished (Hughes & Hurley chapter 6). Underhill still stood in the early 19th century; illustrations of that period show substantial jettied timber-framed buildings of probable late 16th/early 17th-century date, of three storeys with attics and basements.



Fig.3 The market-hall undercroft

Late medieval and early post-medieval Ross

Documentary sources for Ross after the end of the 13th century appear to be extremely limited in extent and scope, and mostly refer to legal disputes and prosecutions (Hughes & Hurley 1999, 59). There seem to be no readily available sources from which to quantify the long-term effects of the Black Death, though Trevor Rowley expressed the view that the immediate impact in 1349 was particularly severe: Ross 'seems to have suffered particularly badly and it is possible that the deanery of Ross was the real plague-patch of the diocese' (1986, 174).

The bishops ceased to use their palace at Ross in 1356. It may be suspected that this would have had a substantial local economic impact in terms of the loss of patronage for victualling and other service industries, and specialised crafts – would there still have been a place in Ross for a goldsmith, as there had been in the late 13th century? The only evidence so far is negative evidence: an apparently complete absence of 15th-century buildings, suggestive either of a moribund economy or one that was so weak that all trace of rebuilding activity could be obscured by subsequent rebuilding in the more buoyant economic climate of the late 16th century.

The volume of surviving documentation increases slightly for the 16th century and substantially for the 17th century and later, coincident with a period of substantial growth in the urban economy, in Ross and elsewhere. No published accounts have however been found from which population figures

for the town can be reconstructed. Epidemic disease may have been a continuing demographic factor, and, according to the memorial inscription on the churchyard cross, the outbreak of plague in Ross in 1637 killed 315. Iron working appears to have been a major feature of the early post-medieval economy, as local ore sources, woodland fuel, water-power sites and transport links were exploited (Hughes & Hurley 1999, 32-3). This was certainly a feature of the town's immediate hinterland but also appears to have impacted on the town itself, and may have had origins in the late medieval period (see below).

The river and river-crossing

Ross is closely associated with the Wye crossing at Wilton of a major route from Hereford to the Forest of Dean, Gloucester and ultimately to London. Although the route was demonstrably busy and important in the middle ages it was not bridged until the very end of the 16th century. Before, traffic used a natural ford a short distance downstream from where the bridge was to be built, a ferry, and a temporary wooden bridge in the summer months. Drownings arising from the use of the sometimes-overcrowded ferry on the 'furious and dangerous river' led inevitably to calls for a permanent bridge, and the present six-arched stone structure was built between 1597 and 1600. However, even the ford and ferry had required additional infrastructure because, while the riverbank on the Wilton side is slightly elevated above flood level, on the Ross side a width of about 500 metres of floodplain has to be crossed before dry land is reached. This was accomplished by a causeway described in 1518 as a 'great stone public road bridge', expenditure on which featured regularly in the bishop's accounts in the 16th century (Hughes & Hurley 1999, 105; Hurley 2000; see fig. 27). There is no current archaeological understanding of the structure of the causeway; most of the present visible stone causeway relates to Wilton Road and is therefore presumably of early 19th-century date. The medieval structure (which appears on 18th-century maps) was arched where it crossed the Black Pool and the Lady Pool, presumably relict floodplain channels, though neither of these features is now visible.

The lack of dry-land access to the riverbank may, with the steepness of the escarpment, account for the dislocation of the built-up area of Ross from the river (see below). Although Rowley (1986, 174) has described Ross as 'an important river port in the fourteenth century' the evidence behind this assertion requires further investigation.

3. The built form of Ross-on-Wye: a characterisation

Introduction: the historic core and the Conservation Area

The present built-up area of Ross extends over about three square kilometres, much of this being of 20th-century date, mostly residential estates but with substantial commercial developments, particularly on the eastern fringe and along the A40(T) to the north. In comparison, the pre-19th-century urban core accounts for somewhat less than half a square kilometre (c. 375 hectares) lying on the western edge, the town having expanded north, east and south while limited to the west by the river.

The historic core defined

The historic core is distinguished from the surrounding 20th-century town by a built environment that is far more heterogeneous than that of its surroundings. Its heterogeneity is expressed in terms of the date of its buildings, their materials, their scale of development, and land-use. The core is also characterised by its historic framework: its market place, precincts and streets, several demonstrably in existence in the medieval period, and the distinctive urban grain pattern of relatively intact medieval burgages. It is also distinguished by the primary (historically and visually) focus of the church on its hilltop site.

The core is sharply differentiated from the 20th-century town only on its west and south sides. River and floodplain, as explained, form a natural boundary on the west side; to the south, the open spaces of the Prospect and the extended churchyard form a green-belt like buffer between the old town and later development. The edge of the historic core is most permeable and indistinct on the east side, where later 19th-century commercial development following the opening of the railway station cut into the medieval town plan. Piecemeal infilling and replacement of 19th-century buildings in this area (e.g. Cantilupe Street, Gloucester Road) has had the effect of producing a salient of 20th-century fabric cutting into the heart of the pre-modern town. The edges of the pre-modern town are also less distinct to the north and to the south-east, where discontinuous (or discontinuously surviving) early building cover extends outwards from the historic core along Over Ross and Alton Street respectively. Along Over Ross, the former Plough Inn and Brookfield House appear to be 16th-17th- and 18th-century survivors of once fairly continuous ribbon development, but are now surrounded by mainly 20th-century buildings. To the south east, on Alton Street, intermittently built up at the time of the 1st edition Ordnance Survey, 17th to 19th-century buildings survive interspersed with modern buildings.

For the present exercise, the historic core is taken to be a single character area, made distinct from surrounding areas developed later by the factors listed above. While it would be possible to define character areas or townscape components within the core – for example, contrasting the High Street and its larger commercial buildings with Brookend Street – this has not

been pursued because the building cover is of such a uniformly mixed character that drawing distinctions at this scale would be uninformative: only towards the fringes of the core, in mainly 19th-century areas, do structured patterns appear at a scale greater than that of the individual plot. However, this does not apply to the underlying, much older, framework of streets and plots. Here, clear distinctions are visible, even within the small area of the urban core, and these are subjected to an abbreviated town-plan analysis with a view to a clearer understanding of the earliest phases of the settlement.

The Conservation Area

The boundaries of the Ross Conservation Area have been drawn to cover a much larger area than the historic core with which this profile is concerned. On the north side it extends up to the line of the A40 to include a large area of late 19th- and 20th-century housing west of Brampton Street, continuing westwards to embrace the historic built-up area of Wilton, Ross's transpontine suburb and one-time port area, including in the process a large area of undeveloped floodplain. To the east of the historic core the boundary is more tightly drawn, following Millpond Street and Smallbrook Road with a salient projecting east to incorporate further late 19th-century housing along Gloucester Road. Resuming its more westerly line it includes the grounds of the Chase Hotel, with its millponds, and the majority of Alton Street to the south. South of the town centre a large south-projecting salient takes in an area of substantial late Victorian detached villas developed around Walford Road and Ashfield Crescent. Returning north to exclude later housing it then extends westwards into the floodplain towards Wilton.

A townscape characterisation: period impacts on the historic core (fig.4)

The historic core is composed of a complex amalgam of buildings dating (exclusive of the church) across six centuries – from the 16th to the 21st. As already implied, no single century has had or retains a dominant impact on the historic core, though some discrete areas within it are largely the product of building or rebuilding over a short space of time. Historically, the town centre of Ross has developed by means of multiple small-scale infill developments and by the progressive plot-by-plot replacement of single buildings. Some trends are nevertheless apparent, and these have implications for the potential preservation of buried archaeology as well as for the general and more localised character of the built-up area.

The later 20th and 21st centuries. The most recent redevelopments have been concentrated on the eastern edge of the historic core, along streets first developed in the 19th century. These include Cantilupe Road (the library, Goodrich Court) and the supermarket east of Millpond Street, its car-parking extending over the former millpond. Retirement homes have recently been built on the north side of Station Street, the former Alton Court Brewery site. Late 20th-century housing has also been developed on the south side of Kyrle Street and, more extensively on Nursery Road to the north, former 19th-

century terrace housing close to the railway. The impact of recent building on the historic spinal streets (Market Place, Broad Street, Brookend Street) has been limited, with the density of Listed historic buildings limiting opportunities for redevelopment. The most substantial impact has been The Maltings, a shopping centre on the east side of Broad Street, built on the site of the former Roxy Cinema.

The early to mid-20th century. The most substantial cluster of mid/late 20th-century development lies at the northern end of the historic core, where housing has been built in the Nursery Road and Greytree Road area to replace 19th-century terrace housing developed alongside the railway (now closed). Adjacent, south of Greytree Road, are the municipal baths and more recent apartment blocks (Fontaine Court, Brookend Court). Further south, Morley Square on the south side of Kyrle Street represents housing developed on the site of the former gasworks of 1832. Other clusters of 20th-century buildings on the fringes of the core are to be found at the eastern end of Old Gloucester Road (commercial buildings) and centred on Church Close. The latter includes the new rectory, health centre and police station, together with bungalows, all built on what in the 19th century was open space (the rectory gardens) in Church ownership. George Place, on the south side of Gloucester Road, is a development of c.1960 replacing the former George Hotel. Its linear extent combined with its close proximity to the medieval market place gives it a measure of possibly unwelcome emphasis at the very heart of the town. On the opposite side of the Market Place, the rebuilding of nos.1 and 2 c.1970 appears to have a greater impact in plan than in elevation, the properties having been rebuilt with a frontage in an unexceptionable 19th-century style. Individual mid-20th century developments occur intermittently throughout the core.



Fig. 5 New Gloucester Road at its junction with the Market Place. The low-rise, mid-20th-century George Place development, set back from the traditional frontage line of Copse Cross Street, is the only blatant reminder that this street is not part of the medieval townscape

The mid- to late 19th century. Buildings of this date, mostly commercial, dominate the streets added to or cut into the eastern side of the core's ancient spinal streets, in particular along Gloucester Road, Henry Street and Station Street. Small-scale residential developments along Crofts Lane and Corpus Christi Lane represent infill between these new mainly commercial streets and the backs of the old plots on Broad Street. The development of this area appears to have had an impact on the adjacent (east) frontage of Broad Street itself, with most of its building cover being of this date. Otherwise, mid- to late 19th-century buildings occur intermittently on the Market Place frontages and on the west side of Broad Street.

The early 19th century. There are three noticeable concentrations of early 19th-century development within the historic core. The earliest are at the western ends of New Street and Kyrle Street, both being composed of small houses that may well have been in place before 1823, as they appear to be identical to the housing shown in these areas on the map of that date. The other and much more prominent contribution made to the townscape in this period centres on the High Street, including such buildings as the former Corn Exchange, and on the Royal Hotel of 1837 and its surroundings. The latter, including the 'tower' and 'town wall' on Palace Pound and Wilton Street are the most visible expressions of the passion for medievalisation that swept through the town in the 1830s and 1840s, influencing the design of such other

prominent buildings as the former Castle Hotel on the Wye Street/Wilton Street junction, the British & Foreign School on Wye Street (1837) and the New Street lock-up (1838). Other less prominent buildings were built or ornamented in the same style (on and below Wye Street, for example) and these have arguably been strongly influential on the image Ross presents to the outside world – via, for example, countless postcard views, paintings and posters showing the elevated, western aspect of the town from the River Wye.

The 18th century. The 18th-century contribution to the townscape of Ross is more muted and dispersed than that of the 19th century, with Georgian buildings (and/or facades) occurring intermittently along the main spinal streets, on New Street, Church Street and Copse Cross Street.

The 16th-17th centuries. Timber-framed buildings are present intermittently throughout the spinal streets of the core on the High Street, around the Market Place, and down Broad Street, Brookend Street, Copse Cross Street, and probably on Old Gloucester Road. Buildings on Edde Cross Street are 18th-century and later, excepting for the Man of Ross pub at the south end and no.54, in the middle of the east side. There is also one early surviving building on Over Ross, the former Plough Inn. Though now isolated, this is of fully urban plan-type and is a survivor of what was once a continuously built-up frontage. A few buildings of this period, most of which are timber-framed, are visible structures of very high quality, the most prominent being John Kyrle's House (36-7 High Street) and the Saracen's Head (12-13 High Street) both of three storeys and attics. Others also are plainly visible, having never been re-fronted, as at 23-25 Brookend Street, and this applies also to 53-4 High Street, a stone house of the 17th century. There is however little doubt that many more buildings of this period survive but are concealed by 18th- or 19th-century facades. These are considered below.

Medieval buildings and concealed timber frames. Apart from St Mary's Church, which is mostly of late 13th-century and later-medieval date no surviving medieval timber framing is known to have been found in the town, despite the work of the Royal Commission (1932), Morriss (1996), Pat Hughes (Hughes & Hurley 1999) and others. It should be stressed that none of these (or the present writer) have undertaken a comprehensive interior search. Timber-framed building components not visible from the frontage may be revealed by a cursory inspection from the rear. By far the best group in this regard extends through nos. 27-32 Broad Street/1 Brookend Street (west side), where close-studded and other timber-framed rear wings can be glimpsed, together with a possible cruck blade visible in the rear elevation of a rear wing to 27 Broad Street. Timber framing is also visible in the ceilings of the shops of nos. 25 to 27 suggesting that, contrary to the early 19th-century appearance of the frontage, there is substantial survival of early buildings in these properties. These, taken with the part-visible, part-concealed timber frames of 23 to 29 Brookend Street together represent a substantial concentration of surviving early fabric.



Fig.6 Rear view of passage between 1 Brookend Street and 30-32 Broad Street with timber framing and sandstone rear wing

Building materials

The historic core is composed primarily of brick buildings, with intermittent survival of timber frames, some exposed, some re-fronted (see above), and

with a substantial minority of sandstone buildings. It is arguably the latter that is one of the most distinctive facets of Ross's built environment.

Apart from St Mary's Church, the earliest identifiable sandstone buildings in Ross date from the 17th century (e.g. 53-4 High Street; the Old Market Hall c.1650); fragments of earlier buildings may well exist but have not so far been identified. Sandstone, whether as coursed or uncoursed rubble or as ashlar, remained in use well into the 19th century, for houses, commercial buildings, boundary walls and retaining walls. Most of the sandstone used appears to be the local grey-red-brown bedrock on which the town is built, with some sources or strata of a greyish-green hue; the two were sometimes used together for a deliberate polychrome contrast. There is evidence of quarrying on the western escarpment from the slope below the Royal Hotel southwards for several hundred metres, with an additional area of quarrying on the gradient west of Edde Cross Street. Urban terracing also exposed and quarried into bedrock, for example between New Street and Kyrle Street and on Over Ross.



Fig. 7 6 High Street (north side), to left of arch: the frontage. Early 19th century



Fig.8 6 High Street: side/rear view, from entry. Assumed to be early 19th-century

No criteria have yet been found by which plain sandstone rubble walls without architectural features can be dated, and in very many cases where there is no obvious context – for example the use of the material in a building of a particular type – it is impossible to tell whether a wall was built in the medieval period or in the 19th century. The use of sandstone rubble for, in particular, non-public elevations, appears to have been widespread through the 18th century and well into the 19th, a period when, elsewhere, brick was ubiquitous.

The unusual building history of Ross is probably best exemplified by no 36 Broad Street. The façade of this 18th-century house is built of blocks of sandstone cut down to brick sizes and laid in an effective imitation of brickwork.



Fig.9 36 Broad Street. The sandstone facade



Fig.10 36 Broad Street: detail of the sandstone blocks (with polychrome band) cut to brick-like dimensions

Townscape grain: an outline town-plan analysis

While it is possible to reconstruct some details of the topography of Ross from inferences drawn from documentary evidence from the late 13th century on, not until the early 19th century do cartographic sources come more directly to

our aid. The earliest surviving detailed map is the 1823 parish map, drawn to systematise collection of the Poor Rate with plots individually numbered (reproduced in Hughes & Hurley 1999, 18). The particular value of the 1823 map is that it shows the town before a series of changes that took place through the remainder of the 19th century.

Even the most basic scrutiny of the town plan recorded in 1823 and 1887 suggests that pre-modern Ross did not originate in a single act of foundation or planning but was rather (to use Terry Slater's term) a *composite town*, built of a number of discrete plan components that were added sequentially over an as yet unknown period of time. Attaching precise dates to these components is problematic: documentary evidence is critical; archaeological evidence is beginning to provide supporting evidence, but the size of the built-up area at any date before c.1800 is still largely unknown. Examination of the town plans of 1823 and 1887 suggests that the following pre-19th-century plan components can be discerned within the historic core, each of which has characteristics that make it distinct from its neighbours, and each of which raise a number of questions to be answered in future research.

[Fig.11]

Plan-unit 1: the ecclesiastical town

What might also be termed the high town, south of the High Street and market place, this area is distinct topographically, morphologically and (formerly) functionally. Land-use was mainly ecclesiastical, the area dominated by three substantial adjoining sites in ecclesiastical ownership. In the middle stands the church and churchyard of St Mary; to its north-west, the present Royal Hotel and its curtilage stand on the site of the former Bishop's Palace; to its south-east is the former Rectory and its extensive garden. The outer boundaries of this area are determined by the topography of the natural ridge-top: the escarpment on the north-west side, Copse Cross Street running along the base of the gradient on the south-east side. Church Street provides a central axis, one that was prolonged out into the countryside to the south-west by a field boundary and footpath.

St Mary's Church was almost certainly a pre-Conquest foundation, and there are suggestions that it may have been a minster church (see above), a status consistent with its dominant site. The Bishop's Palace was extant by 1166 on its site north-west of the church; the Rectory lay immediately south-east of the church, on its axis. None of the features that act as boundaries to these sites (St Mary's Street, Church Street) can at present be dated, so it is not yet possible to discuss the internal morphological evolution of this area without raising a number of questions that are presently unanswerable. For example, it is probable that a church of any kind of superior status would have been contained within some kind of enclosure, even if its value were more spiritual than defensive. None can be detected with confidence, though it is plausible that its north side lay along the break-in-slope down to the north that was later followed by the Borough boundary. The presence of the Rectory east of the church on its liturgical axis is suggestive, indicating perhaps that they once shared the same space. The precise position of the buildings of the medieval

Bishop's Palace has never been located, but they could also have shared the same NNW-SSE axis, lying west of the church. Such an arrangement could be seen as being perfectly consistent with medieval liturgical planning principles that would have secular functions placed towards the western side of a single site.

Set against the 'single enclosure' hypothesis is the comparative evidence provided by the senior churches on the Bishop of Hereford's manors at Bromyard and Ledbury, both of which exhibit not dissimilar groupings of ecclesiastical components. At Ledbury, three or four ecclesiastical sites lie grouped loosely together. The minster church of St Peter stands in its churchyard just to the south of two substantial properties, Lower Hall and Upper Hall, each representing the holding of one of medieval Ledbury's two senior clergy or *portionists*; these posts were in existence by 1201, and probably originated in the staff of the pre-Conquest minster. The site of the Bishop's Palace at Ledbury is uncertain, but may have been moved in the early 13th century, from the west side of the market place opposite the church to a new site adjoining the parkland to the south (Hillaby 1997, 15). At Bromyard, the houses of its three portionists lay, with the bishop's palace, to the south of the minster (Hillaby and Pearson 1970) though in this case all may have been contained within a single curvilinear enclosure that imprinted its perimeter on the topography of the surrounding streets. But in neither Ledbury nor Bromyard has archaeology much more to add than it does in Ross.

Plan-unit 2: the commercial core – spinal streets and market place

By this is meant the main streets extending from the triangular market place: High Street to the west, Copse Cross Street to the east and south, and Broad Street to the north. The *Red Book of the Bishop of Hereford* (reconstructed in detail by Hughes & Hurley) shows that these streets can be identified with the area that was built up in the late 13th century.

Close attention to the most stable townscape elements (frontage lines and property boundaries) appearing in post-medieval cartography suggests that most of this area was indeed built up or laid out for occupation in a single episode, though it may have been a protracted one, and there are also signs of the action of pre-existing constraints, and/or of later differential processes. Most of the plots lining Broad Street, and beyond into Brookend Street, were about sixty metres long, terminating at continuous back-fence lines and thus presenting a roughly symmetrical strip of burgaged land either side of the axial street. However, while the west side plots were more or less perpendicular to the frontage, the east side plots generally curved northwards towards the rear, suggesting that they were laid out within a constraining field pattern on a roughly WNW-ESE orientation (noted also by Wills 1982). The minor discontinuities in the back-fence lines on this side might also suggest the sequential development of a number of separate land parcels. The only major discontinuity in the street frontage line occurs on the eastern side, either side of Crofts Lane, the frontage to the south projecting further into the street than the frontage to the north. This has been suggested to represent

the northern limit of substantial encroachment forward into the market place (Buteux 1996, 5).

As suggested above, there is no real distinction – no distinct plan seam – to be drawn between the plots of Broad Street and their northern continuation either side of Brookend Street into the Rudhall Brook floodplain. Irregularities in the plot pattern further north can be explained simply in terms of the need to accommodate the various watercourses in this area (considered further elsewhere – see p. 00).

The clarity of the plot pattern down Broad Street is lost on the north side of the Market Place and High Street, not only through the amalgamation of adjacent plots (as on the former Corn Exchange site) but also by the probable rearward extension of plots at the expense of land behind New Street.

The plots on the south side of the High Street and the Market Place are generally shorter than those elsewhere, being terraced into the rising ground to the south. The smaller street blocks here, and the high status and commercial value attaching to land lying between the market place and the church, mean that these are the most densely built-up plots of the historic core. The High Street plots west of St Mary's Street are extremely short (c.24m), terminating against a terrace that is also the side boundary to the southernmost property facing east onto St Mary's Street. The High Street plots in the block between St Mary's Street and Church Street may once have been slightly longer, but have been truncated by the development of properties on their tails facing south towards the churchyard. Their churchyard frontage (Church Row) carried the former borough boundary, which effectively marks the plan-seam between the commercial built-up area and the 'ecclesiastical quarter' represented by the Bishop's Palace site and the churchyard. Further east, the plots on the south side of the Market Place extend slightly further back, terminating in the 19th century against the side boundary of the plot of 10 Church Street, but quite possibly originally running back slightly further to the boundary of the Rectory. Rudhall's Almshouses were developed on the tail of the westernmost Market Place plot alongside Church Street.

Around the corner on Copse Cross Street, the plots on the west side were again very short, ending at a terrace cut into the rising gradient to the west, on the boundary of the Rectory garden or one of the adjoining closes. The east side plots share a straight common back fence representing the side boundary of a large plot (the former workhouse site, now the hospital) running north-south between Old Gloucester Road and Alton Street. Hughes' analysis suggests that Copse Cross Street was not built up south of the Market Place in the late 13th century (Hughes & Hurley 1999, 17).

Plan-unit 3: the western street grid

The simple inverted T-plan of the late 13th-century town was complicated by an apparent grid of streets on the west side of Broad Street and Brookend Street: New Street and Kyrle Street running west-east, joined at their outer

end by the north-south Edde Cross Street. There is some documentary evidence for the existence of the latter by 1339, though this is complicated by the ambiguous use of street names in this area (Hughes & Hurley 1999, 20-21). Although straight and wide, Edde Cross Street was not a major through-street but terminated in the Rudhall Brook floodplain at One Mill (see below). The plots fronting Edde Cross Street were anything but uniform. On the east side, plots of various shapes and sizes appear to have been contrived within earlier plots belonging to New Street and Kyrle Street. On the west side there is a contrast between the broad and irregular plots at the south end and a more regular series of shorter, narrower plots at the north end. The latter contained Markey's Almshouses; Pye's Almshouses survive on a shorter plot to the north; the occurrence of both institutions is suggestive of a location that was marginal to the early post-medieval built-up area.

Both topographical and historical evidence suggest that New Street and Kyrle Street were additions to the medieval town. The plan form of New Street strongly suggests that it post-dates the formation of plots along Broad Street. It divides into two sections on different alignments. Where it passes between the Broad Street plots it is narrow and shares the orientation of the neighbouring plots, perpendicular to the main street, but once clear of their rear boundary it broadens out and adopts a more southerly course to produce a more nearly perpendicular junction with Edde Cross Street. Kyrle Street has similar characteristics, though less pronounced, and both appear to have been created by clearing one burgage or part of a burgage on the main street and laying out the street beyond to connect with Edde Cross Street and produce a simple grid. The impression of deliberate planning in this area is strengthened by the plots on the north side of New Street, all of which terminated on a common back-fence line roughly parallel with and equidistant from the two streets.

The evidence of the Red Book (which does not name the streets) suggests that the bishop's tenants were distributed down Broad Street and Brookend Street, but not, at least identifiably, into New Street and Kyrle Street, if they existed. New Street was only certainly extant by the 1640s; its alternative name 'Back Lane' suggesting how it was used and regarded in relationship to the plots facing south onto the High Street. Hughes and Hurley (1999, 20-21) suggest that New Street bisected a large, possibly late medieval, industrial undertaking referred to as the Bell Forge. The separated halves were subsequently known as the Upper and Lower Bell Forge. Like New Street, Kyrle Street appears to have been an addition – possibly an early post-medieval addition – to the town plan and largely occupied by gardens in the 17th century (Hughes and Hurley 1999, 60). One archaeological investigation has taken place on the south side of New Street (fig. 12, SMR 24440). It found no evidence of medieval occupation other than a cultivation soil, together with some evidence of metalworking in the vicinity – results which are consistent with the topographical and documentary evidence.

Plan-unit 4: the riverside

The development of the built-up area in relation to the river appears to have been surprisingly limited. The 1823 map shows building cover that can be identified with the early 19th-century housing descending the gradient either side of Wye Street as far as, but scarcely into, the floodplain. Alleyways, now represented by footpaths either side of Memorial Gardens, led from the top end of the street straight down the gradient into the floodplain next to the either side of the Hope & Anchor Inn, around which there was a small concentration of buildings. The documentary evidence suggests that this was not part of the built-up area c.1300. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Wilton, downstream on the opposite bank, was regarded as the port area of Ross, presumably because Wilton offered a dry-land (as opposed to floodplain) riverbank.

Plan-units 5 (Over Ross) and (6) Old Gloucester Road

Very little is known of these marginal areas. From the surviving building of the former Plough Inn on Over Ross, that street may have been continuously built up by c.1600 (see p.00), at least on the east side, with plots running back to the brook. The shorter, irregular plots of Old Gloucester Road may too have been built up by around this time.

19th-century changes to the medieval core

The first of these was the opening of New Gloucester Road c.1825, one of the later stages of the turnpiking of the roads around Ross, a process that had begun in 1749. Wilton Road, providing an easier climb up the western escarpment than Wye Street (formerly Dock Pitch), followed in 1833 and Station Street followed the opening of the Hereford, Ross & Gloucester Railway in 1855 (Hughes & Hurley 1999, 107-9). By the time of the 1887 first edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan, the eastern side of the old built-up area had been transformed by the further addition of Henry Street, Cantilupe Street and The Crofts; Millpond Street and Crofts Lane had been transformed from rural lanes behind and between the plots respectively, widened and built up. Though elements of the old back-fence lines of the Broad Street plots can still be distinguished in the property boundaries of the expanded built-up area west of Henry Street in 1887, these have since disappeared, particularly as a consequence of the creation of the surface car-park and the redevelopment of the former Roxy Cinema site (now The Maltings shopping centre) next door in the later 20th century.

Another important change made to the historic core after 1823 was the removal in 1862 of a block of shops and houses known as Underhill, or alternatively Butchers' Row or Middle Row, that stood in the market place to the east of the Market Hall (see below). This row of typical market-place encroachments stood very close to the present eastern frontage, and surviving illustrations show it to have been composed at least in part of jettied, timber-framed buildings, one of which had a bridge connection at first-floor level with the main frontage to the rear (Hughes & Hurley 1999, 120-121).

4. Buried archaeological remains and deposits

If Ross were better explored archaeologically, it would be possible to use the evidence of excavations that had taken place to build up a comprehensive picture of the town as an archaeological site: to map the presence or absence, depth, date and character of buried, stratified, archaeological deposits. However, although there have now been a fair number of archaeological investigations, these have not been uniformly distributed across the town – some areas remain completely unexplored – and a proportion of the excavations were of limited depth. It is nevertheless still possible, to an extent, to predict where archaeological deposits will be most likely to survive, and where they will be best preserved. This can be achieved by close attention to the present surface topography in the light of the documentary, cartographic and architectural evidence of pre-modern settlement.

The pre-modern built up area of Ross can, on this basis, be divided into a number of discrete deposit prediction zones (fig.12) in each of which archaeological depositional processes are likely to have been different.

[FIG 12]

Zone 1: the southern plateau: the church and the episcopal palace site

This is the high ground that dominates the town, the majority of it occupied by the medieval parish church and its extensive churchyard. They occupy the end of a ridge running south-west to north-east. Levels fall from the church on three sides (NW, N, E) but continue to rise slightly along the ridge to the south-west, occupied by a churchyard extension made in the mid-19th century, and by the Prospect, a public open space and viewpoint over the river created c.1700. To the east and south-east the churchyard is up to c.2 metres above the level of Church Street, retained by a substantial terrace wall. Further east (down Church Close and Old Maid's Walk) levels continue to fall and house plots fronting eastwards onto Copse Cross Street are terraced into the slope. To the north of the church levels drop and the churchyard is retained by a terrace wall above the end of St Mary's Street.

The courtyard of the Royal Hotel, the probable location of the site of the medieval Bishop's Palace, is at the same level as St Mary's Street and is terraced into the rising ground to the south-west. At the south-west end of the hotel's grounds a small walled garden adjoins the Prospect. This garden, opposite the west end of the church, appears to be the only ground within the hotel curtilage that has not been terraced and therefore assumes a particular level of archaeological significance (see below). In general terms, conditions

for archaeological deposit formation and survival are likely to be relatively poor in a hilltop situation such as this, but such general conditions may be mitigated or transformed by local circumstances, for example the accumulation of deposits behind retaining walls. Additionally, this zone covers what are likely to be the earliest and most significant pre-urban sites in Ross, and these deserve the most careful consideration.

The church and churchyard. The parish church of St Mary is a good example of an important medieval town church with a fully-aisled nave, south chapel, chancel, west tower and porches north and south. The earliest identifiable components in the standing fabric are the late 13th-century aisles and chancel, though, as the RCHM noted in 1932, the presence of calcareous tufa in the walls may indicate the re-use of 12th-century (or earlier) materials. The south porch and west tower were added in the 14th century; the north porch is later. The chancel was extended in the late 14th century and the Markye Chapel added to the south of the south aisle in 1510 (RCHM 1932, 158-9). The walls are bare masonry externally and internally and it is probable that the broad phasing identified by the RCHM is reliable, with no further concealed significant structural features or relationships. Further understanding of the structural history of the building will only be derived from excavation within it. Despite the use of the church interior for burials from the medieval period on, it is highly likely that the church will contain stratified archaeological deposits and structures. If, as suspected, St Mary's was founded in the pre-Conquest period, these deposits will have the utmost significance, both for the church and, indirectly, for the town as a whole.



Fig.13 St Mary's from the south-west with the churchyard cross commemorating the victims of the 1637 epidemic, right foreground

The churchyard too must be considered significant archaeologically. If the origins of the present parish church lie in a pre-Conquest minster, this would certainly have stood within a cemetery, possibly an extensive one to cater for a substantial rural *parochia*. In 1991, three evaluation trenches were excavated to the south of the west tower. The first trench was excavated against the tower footings and found natural sandy subsoil at a depth of 1.3m.

The lowest footings, of rough green sandstone, were misaligned with the wall above but seemed to be of the same phase as courses of red sandstone ashlar above including a single block of tufa. The second trench found natural subsoil at 1.0m depth, between grave cuts. A number of graves were identified at this depth, variously containing 15th-16th- and 17th-18th-century pottery, sealed by post-medieval levelling deposits one of which contained two residual Roman sherds. The third trench was restricted by an undisturbed burial, but natural subsoil was found at 1.3m depth by augering (Jones 1991: see appendix). The evaluation did not locate any demonstrably early burials, structures or deposits but gave a useful insight into conditions in the southern half of the churchyard which, unusually, may have been the less intensively used half, being on the far side of the church from the town. Whether the southward extension of the churchyard limited damage by constant intercutting of burials in the core area close to and north of the church remains to be seen, and issues such as the location, density and date of the earliest cemetery cannot yet be discussed. The documented mass grave of 17th-century epidemic victims may represent a substantial intrusion into earlier churchyard deposits but could itself be considered to be an important potential source of demographic data. The difference in height between the churchyard within its retaining walls and the streets beyond suggest that there has been a substantial accumulation of churchyard soil behind the retaining walls, overlying the natural gradient, even though the depth of deposit close to the church, at 1.3m, seems relatively modest for an ancient urban churchyard.

The site of the Bishop's Palace. The account of John Leland in 1540 and other historical evidence place the medieval Bishop's Palace, disused after 1356, on the site of the courtyard of the Royal Hotel. Leland described the palace, by then in ruins, as being at the west end of the parish churchyard. The site of the Bishop's Palace or 'Bishop's Court' was held by the lords of the manor after the latter passed into secular ownership in 1599, and was rented out to a number of individuals. The documentary evidence discussed by Hughes and Hurley (1999, 42-47) clearly identifies the 'Bishop's Court' with the tenement that was to become the Pounds Inn by 1649, located immediately north of the Prospect and west of the churchyard and St Mary's Street, on the site of the Royal Hotel.

The site owes its present arrangement to the construction of the hotel, together with its new access via Wilton Road and Royal Parade, in 1837. Prior to that, the 1823 map of Ross (demonstrably accurate in its detail and general surveying) shows that the Pounds Inn had been a tenement of normal urban plan, with a street frontage range facing east onto St Mary's Street (then Upper Church Lane), and a substantial building range running back from the frontage along the north side of the plot. The boundary was slightly curved, and was followed by the borough boundary, the housing beyond being within the borough, the palace site within Ross Foreign. This boundary was removed by the insertion of Royal Parade but is approximately followed by the latter's northern frontage together with its Gothic 'town wall' and mural tower.



Fig.14 Royal Parade, on the north side of the Royal Hotel (left), with its 19th-century imitation town wall and mural tower

Stereoscopic air photos reveal that the ground level north of the 'town wall' (i.e. on the town side) is higher than that of Royal Parade, before dropping sharply via a number of terraces down to the High Street level. This suggests that the level of Royal Parade (east and north of the hotel) has been substantially reduced from the original plateau-top level. If the Bishop's Palace, or a predecessor on the same site, ever possessed a defensive perimeter, the terraces between Palace Pound and the High Street may possibly be may be where such evidence should be sought.



Fig.15 The Royal Hotel, south-east range with blocked features in its rear (courtyard) elevation

The present south-east courtyard range of the hotel, along the St Mary's Street frontage, clearly incorporates in its yard elevation masonry pre-dating the building of the hotel (see Hughes and Hurley 1999, 46). It includes blocked window openings with flat heads and flared voussoirs, and is unlikely to be earlier in date than the 17th century. The courtyard wall containing these features appears to have been the former street front wall of one of the Pounds Inn ranges, the present buildings having encroached into St Mary's Street, which had been wider before the 1830s. The presence of this masonry suggests that the present courtyard level was also that of the 17th-century inn and that, beneath the courtyard, pre-hotel archaeological strata and structures might survive, including the footprint of the inn frontage range represented by the standing masonry. It is however unknown whether the medieval buildings would also have been at this level, or whether the terrace was created after the Middle Ages, with the consequent loss of any deposits relating to the medieval Bishop's Palace or any preceding structures; exposures of natural bedrock are visible at the base of the perimeter retaining walls. The sandstone rubble structure of the retaining walls themselves clearly represents several phases of work, but none can be dated and none are certainly pre-modern.



Fig. 16 The courtyard/car-park of the Royal Hotel, deeply terraced into the rising ground towards St Mary's Church

Only at the south-west end of its curtilage does any part of the Royal Hotel site appear never to have been terraced. This is a small, currently overgrown, walled garden lying opposite the west end of the church.



Fig. 17 Walled garden belonging to the Royal Hotel opposite the west end of the church. Probably never terraced, this small plot of ground may be of key archaeological significance

The only archaeological discovery made when the Royal Hotel was built in 1837 was a small stone cellar (c. 4m by 5m internally) identified as the bishop's prison, 'complete with the iron rings for shackling the prisoners' (Hughes and Hurley 1999, 43). Tonkin (1976, 55) claimed that cellars belonging to the palace 'were found on the site of the present Royal Hotel' but whether this too refers to the same alleged prison is not clear. As the present buildings depart entirely from the footprint of those recorded by the 1823 map, it is highly unlikely that any extant cellarage will contain early fabric, unless it is re-used.

The Rectory site. The third substantial ecclesiastical site in this zone is that of the Rectory and its grounds. The present rectory is a building of the 1950s south-east of the church, built within the garden of its predecessor. This stood immediately opposite the east end of the church, on its axis. As recorded by the RCHM it was largely a product of rebuilding in 1790, with one room surviving at the south-west corner from an earlier, 16th-century, building (RCHM 1932, 162). The rectors of Ross were generally absentees, their duties being undertaken by vicars though, by the 17th century, these too were men of status and lived in the Rectory. The 'parson's house' was said in the 1630s to have a hall, two parlours and a kitchen, with sixteen chambers and 'houses for offices'. There is however some confusion as to the identification and location of the vicarage, the rectory and the parsonage. Fosbroke (1821) refers to 'the Bishop's Palace in the Prospect, the Rector's in the meadow

below, and the Vicar's [i.e. 'the Rectory'] at the other end of the church... The Vicarage, now the rectory, still subsists. The Parsonage, a small building, was taken down in 1793' (Fosbroke 1821, 00). The location of the latter is uncertain but may have been near the Prospect, to the south or south-west of the church, in an area now covered by the extended churchyard (Hughes and Hurley 1999, 38-9).

Archaeological conditions on the Rectory site are largely unknown, but survival of early deposits is likely to be poor. The site of the Rectory building itself is now occupied by a modern house, 1-2 Church Close, and by the Church Close/Church Street road junction. Ground levels drop to the east, diminishing the probability of any substantial accumulation of archaeological deposits, so damage to early levels (if any were present) may be anticipated. This is consistent with the findings of the only archaeological investigation to have taken place in the vicinity, an evaluation trench outside the Police Station, 75m south-east of the Rectory site. This found natural brown soils at a depth of only 0.44m below the surface, overlying the parent rock at 2.1m. Beneath modern superficial deposits was a 4cm thick layer of green silt that could have represented a truncated archaeological deposit (Cook 1995: see appendix). Lacking any archaeological data for the garden ground north-east of the Rectory site it is impossible to say whether deposit formation/survival conditions are of the same low order as they appear to be on the Police Station site to the south. The terrace separating this area from the properties facing the market place and Copse Cross Street may have served to retain deposit at the higher level; it is also conceivable that – if the Rectory site was part of a larger ecclesiastical hilltop enclosure – evidence for its perimeter may be encapsulated in the terracing.



Fig. 18 The site of the medieval Rectory (occupied by modern housing) to the east of the church

In summary, this first zone, occupying the hilltop, was largely divided between three ecclesiastical sites: the bishop's palace, the church and churchyard, and the Rectory. Archaeological conditions at the first have never been established; the church and churchyard offer the highest archaeological potential of the three; the last, the Rectory, is largely unknown but current indications are that archaeological survival, at least towards the south, is likely to be fairly limited.

Zone 2: the High Street-Broad Street terraced gradient

This terraced gradient, densely built up with historic buildings within a traditional plot pattern, is arguably one of the most distinctive components of the historic core of Ross-on-Wye. Seven small-scale archaeological investigations have now taken place within this part of the town and these, together with the experience of better-explored, similarly built up, areas elsewhere, allow some predictions to be made as to the likely presence and character of buried archaeological deposits.

The most directly relevant field investigation took place either side of Crofts Lane, on the east side of Broad Street. Three trial trenches showed that natural bedrock occurred within 0.8m to 1.0m of the surface, overlain by post-medieval strata. Sandstone rubble walls forming small terraces and building footings were also probably of post-medieval date even if the boundaries they followed may have been earlier (Boucher 1997: see appendix). The other investigations were less informative. One, under the Old Market Hall, found a scrap of 17th-century street metalling surviving from before the building was constructed. Another, immediately adjacent, was confined to superficial deposits (Hoverd 1996, 1997: see appendix). A watching-brief on the frontage of the former Corn Exchange on the High Street found only the early 19th-century footings and cellar vaults (Dalwood 1998a: see appendix). Salvage recording behind 12 High Street found the top metre of ground composed solely of modern materials (Williams 1998: see appendix)

[FIG 19]

The archaeological potential of this area may be most simply characterised as generally poor but locally potentially very variable. The archaeological dimension of urban terracing was first investigated by Martin Carver, in Shrewsbury and France (1983). These studies and a subsequent deposit model of central Shrewsbury (Baker forthcoming) suggest that deposit formation and survival in such conditions will have a very distinctive and spatially very variable character. The initial establishment of terracing will first be likely to result in the removal of any preceding deposit accumulation, particularly at the point where new retaining structures are cut into the gradient. However, once installed, archaeological deposits may accumulate immediately behind retaining structures, sometimes to a considerable depth – what Carver called the 'cake tin effect'. Over time retaining structures are likely to fail, because of the loads imposed on them from the retained ground

behind. This may result either in progressive repair or replacement of the retaining structure *in situ*, particularly if it serves as a property boundary and cannot be moved; or, if the terrace falls within a single property, a process of outward replacement may take place by which a new retaining structure is built in front of the old, failing, one, and the space behind is backfilled. The consequence is intense variability in the presence/absence and depth of archaeological deposits, plot by plot. The structure of the terraces themselves – the fabric of the retaining walls – is also part of the archaeology.



Fig. 20 Urban terracing: the terrace/retaining wall follows the property boundary between the New Inn and 22 Broad Street next up-slope

Terrace (retaining) walls (figs. 19-21) occur as common boundaries to series of plots, party boundaries between neighbouring plots, and as simple terraces in gardens and along street frontages. Terraces were located and plotted during the fieldwork programme for this document, and the more substantial terraces in inaccessible areas behind street frontages have been plotted from stereoscopic air photo cover taken in 1966. Much has undoubtedly been left unrecorded, particularly where dense building cover is likely to mask complex terracing integrated with the basements of the standing buildings (as between the south side of the High Street and Church Row). Terracing is more clearly evident and accessible amongst the less dense building cover on both sides of Broad Street, where retaining walls generally form property boundaries between adjoining plots. Some (e.g. between 48 Broad Street and the 19th-century Baptist Church) were clearly built contemporaneously with a particular, dateable, building. Others, however, are not dateable from their context and suffer the same chronological uncertainties as much of the

sandstone-built building stock (p.00). The evolution of the natural gradient into a terraced and built-up one is very definitely part of the archaeological story of the developing townscape.



Fig. 21 Urban terracing: two terrace-levels in the former back-plot area on the east side of Broad Street (now the Maltings car-park), looking south-west towards the Baptist Church on a still higher terrace

Cellarage can be identified from external evidence (e.g. cellar lights) along most of the southern frontage of the High Street and around the corners into Church Street and St Mary's Street, and intermittently along the northern frontage. It also occurs intermittently down that part of Broad Street that lies on the gradient, but appears to be absent from the floodplain below. In other words the properties fronting Brookend Street appear to be uncellared. This is consistent with a long history of flooding in the vicinity of the Rudhall Brook.

Zone 3: Brookend and the Rudhall Brook floodplain

The limits of this zone can be fairly precisely drawn from the present surface topography. The steep Broad Street gradient ends at about the junction with Station Street, but the ground continues to fall by a few centimetres until dead level ground is reached at about no. 31 Brookend Street. The 1823 map shows a watercourse just a few metres further north, crossing the street from 29-30 Brookend Street to 7-8 Brookend Street opposite; sounds of running water from beneath an inspection cover on this line near Millpond Street suggests that the watercourse has been culverted but continues to flow. The

ground remains level for a distance of thirty metres along the street until it begins to rise again, from a point by 25 Brookend Street, past the Town Mill site and the present course of the Rudhall Brook, before levels rise steeply again at the Brampton Street and Over Ross Street junction. The presence of the brook slightly above the lowest ground suggests that it is in an artificial channel, a mill leat, and that the natural course is more likely to be represented by the watercourse following the boundary between 29 and 30 Brookend Street, or in an unknown location nearby. On the north-west side of Brookend Street the ground remains flat across the area of the car parks (formerly Red Meadow) towards the swimming baths, the back of the plots facing Kyrle Street marking the beginning of the gradient up to the south-west. To the south-east of Brookend Street the ground remains level across the back of the main street plots towards Millpond Street and Station Street.

This zone probably has, at least in the immediate vicinity of Brookend Street, the highest archaeological potential of any in the historic core, with the twin possibilities of good deposit accumulation in the valley bottom and waterlogging of strata (with consequent survival of organic materials) around the watercourses. No archaeological observations have to-date been recorded in this zone, though an interview with an elderly well sinker in the 19th century recorded his recollection of slag deposits ('numerous heaps of cinders') at 'a considerable depth' (Webb 1861-2). One other, possibly related, archaeological curiosity worth noting (if not necessarily taking at face value) was the belief, expressed in a brief historical account of the mid-1940s, that the first inhabitants of Ross lived in the Brookend area and built their houses of masonry taken from the site of Roman *Ariconium* (Greer, n.d. 11).

There are indications that the natural drainage pattern has been modified for milling, and more than one redundant channel may lie within this narrow floodplain. The former millpond to the east (which gave its name to Millpond Street) has some importance as part of the developing infrastructure of the Rudhall Brook mills, though the deposits it contains will mostly post-date its disuse in the mid-20th century. Being well watered, the area was suitable for the tanning industry, and a tannery was recorded at Brookend from the 17th century through to the late 1830s (Hughes and Hurley 1999, 135).



Fig. 22 Brookend Street (east side). These historic structures in the floodplain of the Rudhall Brook may contain key archaeological deposits beneath their floors

Of great potential significance are the frontages of Brookend Street. The present building cover is light and discontinuous on the north-west side, continuous but at least in part timber-framed opposite. Any uncellared areas on either frontage offer a substantial possibility of stratified, superimposed building remains going back into the medieval period, certainly into the 16th century when the earliest surviving buildings demonstrate that this area was built up, but possibly as far back as the 12th. The same is as likely to be true for sequences within and beneath standing buildings as for sites that are currently not built upon. Well-stratified, well-preserved archaeological deposits not only offer the possibility of recovering sequences of building remains but also the evidence of the economic activities that supported them, potentially a significant contribution to developing an understanding of the occupations being followed in the town in its earliest centuries.

No archaeological field investigations are known to have taken place in this area, though a desk-based assessment by Rachel Edwards (1998) came to the same conclusions.

The Town Mill site. The Town Mill, at the north end of Brookend Street, is the most likely site of the mill recorded by Domesday Book which rendered 6s 8d annual rent to the manor of Ross. This was not a particularly substantial revenue but reflects what might be expected from moderate infrastructure, on a millstream of moderate capacity, operating on a rural manor without a particularly substantial population. Although the mill may not have been a

large one, its presence in Domesday suggests that it had been part of the bishop's pre-Conquest manor.

The mill is next referred to in 1277-85 in the Red Book entry, Walter of the Mill holding three burgages at the bottom of Brookend Street. The site then consisted of three mills, two corn mills and a fulling or 'tuck mill', and yielded the substantial rent of £20 6s per year, doubtless reflecting previous significant investment in buildings and watercourses and the presence of a large captive market in the form of the growing urban population obliged to use their lord's mill. The site appears in later documentation as 'Two Mills' or 'Three Mills'. The millpond was present by 1656, when the need to repair a breach in its wall was reported. 17th-century records also contain numerous instances of presentments for obstructing watercourses in the vicinity of the mill. The present buildings date from the 18th century and later; milling ceased only in 1947.



Fig. 23 The Town Mill site, Brookend Street (west side). The ivy-clad gable marks the former mill building

The Town Mill site and its immediate vicinity must be regarded as potentially of high archaeological potential and considerable significance. The general conditions in this zone for deposit formation and preservation are, as already noted, good. The mill site offers the possibility of a sequence of mill structures extending in time from the standing buildings back into the pre-Conquest period. The fact that three mill buildings were operating simultaneously for several centuries makes it unlikely that the latest mill buildings will have destroyed all evidence of their predecessors.

The One Mill site. Some time before 1418 a second mill was established lower down the Rudhall Brook, at the bottom end of Edde Cross Street. This was at first known as the New Mill, but from the early 18th century was known as One Mill. Next to it stood a fulling mill servicing the wool trade, first referred to in the 1620s, last referred to in 1813 (Hughes and Hurley 1999, 133). The 1823 map shows that it lay immediately below a small millpond. By 1887 (first edition O.S.) the mill was disused, though its building still stood and the site of its silted-up pond was clearly evident on the west side of Trenchard Street, the name given to the lower end of Edde Cross Street where it had been extended across the brook. One Mill seems always to have been a much smaller operation than its upstream neighbour, and its archaeological remains may similarly be more confined, and possibly more vulnerable to destruction by rebuilding on the same footprint. Nevertheless, a mill building sequence may be present, together with associated infrastructure (channels, weirs, sluices). The area appears not to have been built upon since 1887, so at least the latest archaeology of the mill site may survive in an undisturbed state. The only cause for pessimism is that this section of the brook was earmarked for widening and deepening as part of the Rudhall Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme of 1997-8. While some of these works were archaeologically monitored (SMR 25991: see appendix) no record has been found of observations made on or near this particular site. The watercourse itself seems undisturbed by recent engineering works.

As noted above, the properties fronting Brookend Street all appear to be uncellared.

Zone 4: Over Ross

The surviving historic buildings show that occupation extended at least intermittently north of the Rudhall Brook by c.1600 into what is now Over Ross Street. There is however no indication of such growth in the Red Book of 1277-85, so (unless this source underestimates or misrepresents the extent of medieval occupation) the built-up area must have expanded thus in the late medieval period or, more likely, the later 16th and early 17th century. This is, however, a hypothesis that requires testing through archaeological fieldwork. Exposures of natural bedrock on both sides of the street, but particularly on the north side, show that the street has been cut into the gradient rising to the north west and that archaeological deposits are unlikely to survive or be well preserved close to the street. However, the plots on the south-east side, some of which (like that of the former Plough Inn) are in a relatively well-preserved state, run back down the gradient to the Rudhall Brook at the rear. Back-plot areas may contain surviving archaeological deposits and evidence of economic activity, though deposit formation and survival on the gradient may be limited. One other issue is raised in the historical pamphlet published in 1946-7 by Fred Greer. In discussing the origins of the church at Ross, he was led, in part at least, to the unlikely conclusion that the church and earliest settlement stood in Brookend Street by the fact that 'human remains have been unearthed from time to time from the gardens at the town end of Brampton Street' (Greer n.d., 11). No further record of such discoveries is

known, but the possibility remains that, either the alleged burials are of pre-medieval date, or that they are associated with an unrecorded medieval hospital located on the urban margin.

Zone 5: New Street, Kyrle Street, Edde Cross Street

New Street occupies the upper part, below High Street, of the north-east facing slope down to the Rudhall Brook and its diminutive floodplain. The street also slopes gently up to the west, towards Edde Cross Street. The south side of the street is not intensively built up, with discontinuous, mainly early 19th-century, building along the frontage; this pattern can be seen to have changed little between the present day and the map editions of 1823 and 1887. The ground to the rear (up-slope) is mostly open, in use as car parking, within the remains of a series of irregular plots that can also be recognised on the 1823 map. The north side of the street is almost continuously built up, again with largely early 19th-century buildings though with some 18th-century survivals. There is a record of skulls and lead-lined coffins having been found during building work in 1954-5 in the garden of Priors House (SMR 10652). These apparently post-medieval burials may well be identifiable with Ross's first Congregational meeting house, founded c.1700 on the south side of Kyrle Street (Hughes and Hurley 1999, 75-6).

Ground conditions in this area have been examined archaeologically on one site on the south side of New Street. Most of the deposits observed were of 20th-century origin, raising ground levels by up to 1.2m. A medieval cultivation soil was however found, containing 14th-15th-century pottery, two Roman sherds, tile and iron slag (Topping, Hurst and Pearson 1997: see appendix). These findings are entirely consistent with what might have been predicted from the relief – the largely unretained gradient would not provide ideal conditions for the accumulation and survival of stratified archaeological deposit – and from the historical evidence for the limited extent of pre-modern occupation in this area. Both topographical and historical evidence suggest that New Street, together with Kyrle Street, was an addition to the medieval town plan (see above). While Edde Cross Street was recorded as early as 1339, New Street was only certainly extant by the 1640s; its alternative name 'Back Lane' suggesting how it was used and regarded in relationship to the plots facing onto the High Street. Hughes and Hurley (1999, 20-21) suggest that New Street bisected a large, possibly late medieval, industrial undertaking referred to as the Bell Forge. The separated halves were subsequently known as the Upper and Lower Bell Forge.

In summary, New Street appears, on present evidence, to be peripheral to the medieval built-up area. However, the documented presence of the Bell Forge site somewhere around the eastern end of the street, immediately behind the Broad Street plots, also suggests that though this area may have been peripheral, it may still have been exploited by activities such as metal working. This may be under-represented in the documentary record but will be archaeologically detectable (tap slag was indeed found on the south side of New Street) and investigation of it would add to knowledge of the occupations

upon which the medieval urban economy was based and the scale on which they were practiced.

Kyrle Street runs approximately parallel to New Street towards the bottom of the north-east facing slope. Its south frontage is only intermittently built up, by mainly 20th-century small-scale commercial buildings. In 1823 it was similarly intermittently built up with rows of dwellings, but by 1887 denser commercial development occupied the central portion of the southern frontage. The western end of the north frontage is continuously built up with small early 19th-century houses. The eastern end of the street is more discontinuously developed, as it was in 1823 and 1887. Like New Street, Kyrle Street appears to have been an addition – possibly an early post-medieval addition – to the town plan. The street was, in the 17th century, still largely occupied by gardens (Hughes and Hurley 1999, 60).

The archaeological potential of Kyrle Street is probably limited. The south (up-slope) side has been deeply terraced into the gradient, a substantial retaining wall with some exposures of natural bedrock in its base forming the back boundary of the plots over much of the length of the street. The north-side plots lie on an unretained gradient where the possibilities of archaeological deposit formation are probably limited, even supposing that this area was built up before the early 19th century – which is far from certain.



Fig 24 Terracing (part built, part cut bedrock) on the south side of Kyrle Street on the site of the 19th-century gasworks

Edde Cross Street runs north-south, descending the gradient to the site of One Mill on the Rudhall Brook (see zone 3); along the street the gradient is at its steepest just north of the Kyrle Street junction. The buildings on the west side, of various dates from the 17th century to the 20th, generally occupy large plots, a proportion of which have retaining walls forming their side boundaries as they are terraced down the slope. The plots either extend, with terraces, down the western escarpment to the edge of the Wye floodplain, or have been truncated by quarrying along the escarpment. Buildings on the east side are of various periods, decreasing in density northwards; there has been some 20th-century infilling south of the junction with New Street, but in general the pattern of building is still very similar to that recorded in 1823. The archaeological potential of this street is not easy to gauge but probably varies greatly between the south end, close to the core of the built-up area, and the north end, which was largely open in the 19th century and remains so today. No archaeological investigations are known to have taken place on this street.

Cellarage occurs (from external indications) only occasionally on the frontages of New Street and Kyrle Street, and seems to be concentrated towards the south end of Edde Cross Street.

Zone 6: Wye Street



Fig. 25 The 1837 British & Foreign School on Wye Street, terraced into the escarpment overlooking the river, with the Royal Hotel above and behind

This zone covers the upper (built-up) part of Wye Street, from the floodplain (zone 8) up to its junction with the High Street (zone 2) and Edde Cross Street

(zone 5). No archaeological investigations are known to have taken place in this zone, which is defined solely by the present topography – steep gradients with plots occupying substantial terraces, mostly parallel with the escarpment. Much smaller terraces separate neighbouring houses as the street climbs the gradient. Although unexplored of limited extent, this area has a singular importance in that it covers the approach to the Wye waterfront and represents the connection between the town centre and Wilton Bridge.

Zone 7: Copse Cross/Old Gloucester Road

This zone covers the area of pre-modern settlement along Copse Cross Street and Old Gloucester Road on the east-facing slope of the high ground. The rear of the properties on the west side of Copse Cross Street are deeply terraced into the higher ground of the former Rectory gardens to the west. The present retaining walls are integrated with buildings that appear to be early 19th-century in date, in the Gothic style that appears to have been ubiquitous in Ross in the 1830s, but are presumably the successors to older structures at the rear of the 16th-17th-century and later buildings on the frontage. Watching-briefs within and to the rear of 33 High Street have reported a shallow depth of topsoil, possibly cultivated into the 17th and 18th centuries, overlying bedrock and sealed by modern demolition debris (Clarke 2000b; Wellicome 2004: see appendix).



Fig. 26 Cope Cross/High Street, west side: 19th-century gothic buildings integrated with terraces retaining the higher ground of the former Rectory gardens to the west

Ground levels drop away behind the plots on the east side of the street, the present hospital (on the site of the former workhouse) being terraced into the slope at a slightly lower level. Investigations on the hospital site before its construction found natural sandstone bedrock in one trench within 0.3m of the surface, sloping sharply down to the north. In another trench, about 0.8m of dumped post-medieval soils were cut by the sandstone rubble footings of the

former workhouse. A small amount of medieval residual material indicated low-intensity use of the area in the middle ages, (Napthan and Ratkai 1996: see appendix).

Old Gloucester Road leads eastwards down this gradient into a small natural defile before levels rise again towards Chase Road. This marks the eastward limit of the pre-modern built-up area, as mapped in 1823. Ground conditions are unknown and not easily predicted, though the gradient would not favour the accumulation of archaeological deposits, and below-ground conditions may be expected to be not dissimilar to those found on the hospital site.

There are indications of intermittent cellarage to the properties fronting Copse Cross Street.

Zone 8: The Wye floodplain and river frontage

Again, it is difficult to predict ground conditions in this area in detail, only one archaeological investigation having taken place here. However, general conditions can be predicted from the surface topography and historical/cartographic records. Ross lies on the outside of a tight bend in the Wye, and the floodplain below the town centre is likely to conceal a buried palaeochannel or a version of the present channel which has shifted westwards having once cut into the foot of the high ground on which the town is situated. Observation from the river shows a depth of 1.5m or greater of floodplain silt. To the north of the rowing club, by the confluence of the Rudhall Brook, the floodplain silt overlies gravel deposits; further south, opposite the town, no gravel was visible (at least down to river level as it stood at April 2006), suggesting that it may have been cut away by a former channel. Boreholes and test pits close to the Rudhall Brook found an undated deposit of boulders and cobbles 0.5m deep, possibly landscaping for an early 20th-century park. Natural bedrock was found at depth under the alluvium north of the brook but not (within the limit of excavation) to the south (Hunter 1998: see Appendix)

Along the landward edge of the floodplain south of the built-up area a back-swamp channel follows the foot of the escarpment. The channel may be expected to continue northwards, crossing diagonally under Wye Street and running along the riverside edge of the properties on the north side of the road. At the foot of the gradient below Memorial Gardens, the only area in which housing actually ran down into the floodplain, this channel may have considerable archaeological potential in terms of potential waterlogged deposits and material culture derived from Ross's apparently minuscule 'port area'. The riverbank itself shows only very limited visible structural development. The remains of a sandstone rubble retaining wall are visible from the river in the bank, extending c.50m downstream from a more substantial sandstone wall extending perpendicularly out from the bank opposite the pub below Memorial Gardens. Undateable (though probably 18th- or 19th-century), the walls presumably belonged to quays, though nowhere near as substantial as those still visible downstream at Wilton, which is documented as Ross's principal river port in the 18th and 19th centuries.



Fig. 27 The bottom of Wye Street, seen from the floodplain, looking north. Wye Street descends the gradient and is then raised on a causeway, appearing as a slight embankment, to cross the floodplain. The level of the floodplain falls off to the right of the picture towards an infilled back-swamp channel, probably crossing under the street behind the bandstand

To the south, as it leaves the escarpment and heads across the floodplain towards Wilton Bridge, Wye Street itself becomes an archaeological feature of significance in that it is a raised causeway – a built structure whose engineering history will be susceptible to archaeological investigation – and a key feature in the relationship of the town to the river crossing. The more obvious stone-built causeway, carrying traffic on Wilton Road onto the end of the bridge, must, despite its ancient appearance, be an early 19th-century structure, contemporaneous with the cutting of the road down the gradient above Wye Street in the 1830s.

The escarpment edge, from a considerable distance south of the town up to Wilton Road and the retaining walls below the Royal Hotel, has been extensively quarried. Traces of quarrying cease where the built-up area descends the gradient around Memorial Gardens and Wye Street, but resume further north beyond the northern boundary of Merton House on Edde Cross Street.

5. *The future of Ross's Past*

Having characterised the main aspects of the historic resource, the question then arises, how to safeguard and make the best use of it? The answer arguably lies in two complementary policy areas: continuing day-to-day management and long-term economic exploitation, both supported and informed by a process of continuing research, with new knowledge (whether from commercial excavation or academic research) constantly recycled back into the management process. A three-part archaeological strategy can therefore be proposed.

Managing the Past

The built environment

The current List of Buildings, the second for Ross, was issued in August 1972. Although amended a number of times, no re-Listing has taken place since. Richard Morriss's 1996 assessment of it was that it is 'comprehensive, with a decent selection of buildings from most periods up until the late 19th century. There are, however, some unreliable entries and a brevity of style typical of the period that leaves certain aspects unexplained or confusing' (Morriss, in Buteux 1996). A subsequent report on the cultural heritage of the region's smaller towns was more forthright, recommending urgent re-Listing (Dalwood 1998b).

Some of the current (second) List's more serious shortcomings arise from the exclusion of buildings that had, in the first List, been accorded Grade III status. The most potentially serious impact of this change identified in the fieldwork for this report is the exclusion of nos. 26-32 Broad Street and 1 Brookend Street (former LB nos. 107, 182, 114, 115), all of which exhibit extensive survival of timber framing, including a probable cruck truss. These buildings are therefore currently without statutory protection, other than that given to all unlisted buildings within the Conservation Area. The buildings should be considered additionally vulnerable in that they back on to a large surface car-park occupying the formerly burgaged backland. This was the subject of an unsuccessful planning application in 1998 (see Edwards 1998), and doubtless will again be the subject of planning applications for development as demand for brown-field sites for residential infill continues. Implications for the buried archaeological resource are considered next.



Fig. 28 The street frontage of 25-32 Broad Street and 1 Brookend Street, looking north from the Broad Street/Kyrle Street corner



Fig. 29 25-32 Broad Street: the rear view, with possible cruck blade in right foreground

Below-ground archaeology

Current government guidance (PPG 16) allows for archaeological issues to be treated as a material consideration in determining planning applications, a process which will allow for the archaeological investigation of sites before and during redevelopment. However, one aspect of the archaeological resource that remains particularly vulnerable can be identified: deposits within and underlying standing buildings, particularly those that do not have cellars on their frontage, and particularly timber-framed buildings likely to have less intrusive foundations. These factors apply most strongly to the early buildings at the bottom end of Broad Street and Brookend Street.

Brookend Street in general was identified by the deposit model as having the highest potential for the survival of buried archaeological deposits, and possibly waterlogged strata in addition. As discussed above, there is a large open area, currently surface car-parking, on the west side of Brookend Street that should be regarded as having a particularly high potential – in terms of settlement and economic activities in and around the watercourses feeding into the Rudhall Brook. Now open up to the rear ranges of the standing buildings, the area encompasses formerly burgaged ground including historic plot boundaries and probable disposal areas.

Using the Past: the historic environment as a community asset

Identity, sense-of-place, and 'branding' the town

What makes Ross distinctive amongst historic towns – even in a region notable for well-preserved, picturesque market towns – are its two dominant focal points, each demonstrating a relatively unchanged morphology over many centuries, and each representative of one the two principal themes in the origins of Ross. The triangular market place remains the primary focus of the town centre – the commercial town – a meeting of routes and a place of business. The Old Market Hall is justly renowned as a historic building and, placed at the head of Broad Street, assumes an added significance as the key vantage point from which to overlook the built-up area that appears, plot-by-



Fig. 30 The 'classic' external (riverside) view of Ross-on-Wye: the church, the Royal Hotel, gothic folly and other 19th-century buildings rising from the terraced gradient

plot, in the Bishops' Red Books of the late 13th century. The church and churchyard, on the other hand, lie off the through-routes and offer a secluded, precinct-like enclave behind the commercial frontages. The Bishop's Palace may be long gone, but its influence lingers in the form of this merest hint of the cathedral close, combined, in the same quarter, with the emulation of the crenellated architecture of medieval lordship by the builders of the 1830s and 40s.

Other aspects of Ross's townscape are unmistakable, if more subtle. Building in stone is far more widespread in Ross than in many another comparable lowland market town. Its own site a quarry, the 'normal' chronologies of building materials are overturned in a place where, evidently, good masonry could be cheaper than brickwork even in the late 18th century (see fig. 10). Terracing is also fundamental to the three-dimensional townscape grain. It is most clearly evident when viewing the town from the outside. Within the urban core, apart from cleared areas such as Kyrle Street, the terracing is less obvious as it is generally concealed behind the frontages; nevertheless it is absolutely fundamental to the character of the private spaces – back yards, gardens – behind the frontages.

Ross-on-Wye has a distinguished but neglected history as an early English tourist destination arising from its role in the development of the Wye Tour from the late 18th century onwards. The marketing of the town from at least the late Victorian period has made good use of its image as seen from the

Wye, with the church on its *castello*-like built-up hilltop, perfectly capturing some of the attributes discussed above. This is, however, still the external view, expressing the town as a centre from which to explore the region; the delights of the centre itself, and one of the two historic foci, are at best implied rather than stated or emphasised. The Reverend Fosbroke was an early exponent of this perspective, stating bluntly ‘...visitors do not come to Ross on account of the town, but of the country’. Nevertheless, even he was not completely immune to its urban charms, contrasting it favourably with other market towns: ‘The town itself consists of narrow streets, and does not look like country-towns in general, two continuous lines of ale-houses, in a wide road, but like the trading streets of a city especially of Bristol, the houses being various, and the shops frequently showy. This relief enlivens the narrow streets...’ (Fosbroke 1826, 18-19).



Fig. 31 The view from the first-floor doorway of the Market Hall, looking north up the spine of the medieval town

The current heritage centre has arguably found the perfect site, in the form of the first floor of the Market Hall, with which to redress this imbalance by offering and emphasising the internal, urban, view. In particular, from the first-floor doorway looking down Broad Street and Brookend Street residents and visitors can, in a single glance, take in most of the original town, with the current businesses as direct descendants of the bishop’s tenants listed plot-by-plot in the *Red Books*. It is perhaps in this direction that current marketing of the town has furthest still to go. Interpretation boards prepared by Ross Civic Society are located at various town centre sites highlighting significant buildings and topographical features. There is arguably further scope for such

on-street interpretation, linked to displays in the Heritage Centre and to published media, to increase appreciation of Ross's architectural and townscape heritage and thus to increase the time spent by visitors within the town centre – with all that implies economically. But, as ever with rich historic townscapes much of whose charm lies in rear wings, alleyways, roofscapes and terraces behind the frontages, access (visual or physical) presents serious challenges. High viewing points, if they can be found, may in some instances resolve the visual access problem. Promoting physical access, either by the signposting and promotion of selected minor alleyways as pedestrian through-routes, or by the commercial exploitation of individual back plot areas (e.g. beer gardens behind pubs, tea gardens and so on) may be another direction worth investigating.

'Heritage', broadly defined, can contribute to the economic regeneration of the town in two principal directions. The first, at the level of the whole town, is what is discussed above: a renewed emphasis on heritage issues and Ross's unique historic identity to bring economic benefits through tourism and local visitors in the short- and medium-term, and longer-term benefits via inward investment and immigration. Heritage issues may also have a significant impact on regeneration at a local, site-specific, level, often via the retention, promotion and/or restoration of key historic buildings, or groups of buildings, or landscapes. The historic core of Ross still offers a number of opportunities for brown-field regenerative redevelopment, one at least on a large scale, all of which possess important but under-developed or neglected heritage assets in the form of the historic plots and buildings that frame them. The town's major historic buildings are generally in good repair and fully used. One significant exception is the Walter Scott School building on Old Gloucester Road, a fine Georgian building of 1786. Currently unused and vulnerable, its restoration could contribute significantly to the regeneration of this moribund area on the edge of the historic core.

Understanding the Past: an agenda for future archaeological research

By this stage it will be apparent that there is virtually no aspect of pre-modern Ross that is well understood, whether from historical or from archaeological sources. An assessment of available documentary resources in 1996 concluded that while the 17th-century and later town is relatively well documented, earlier records are 'scarce' (Stamper, in Buteux 1996). While further archival resources may well yet come to light, the only published exception to this is the appearance of Ross in the episcopal Red Books of the late 13th century, which offers a tiny oasis of data in the middle of an otherwise text-free desert. The assessment of the above- and below-ground archaeological resource (above) concluded that, while historic buildings may have the potential to yield valuable data on the late 16th-century and later town, the medieval period is apparently, once again, unrepresented. Buried archaeology is a different matter. Well-preserved medieval deposits have not yet been found but are very likely to survive. A number of research priorities may therefore begin to be expressed, in terms of gaps in knowledge, the

resources crucial to their resolution, and their significance – expressed locally, regionally and nationally.

While many of the research priorities expressed here can only be advanced by excavation, generally by the commercial sector and linked to the planning process, there are also serious gaps in knowledge that need to be addressed by non-invasive survey methods, both topographical and architectural. These are areas that are unlikely to fall within the remit of the commercial sector, but which would nevertheless contribute directly to the informed conservation of the historic resource. The answer may lie in future community action, as has recently taken place in, for example, Leominster ('Project Genesis' and 'Operation Leofric'), Ledbury ('England's Past for Everyone') or Kington (the Burgage Walls project).

RP1 Pre-urban origins 1: ecclesiastical

The church of St Mary appears indirectly in Domesday Book and is therefore likely to have been a pre-Conquest foundation. How ancient it was by 1086 is not known, nor is its status, although there are indications that it was a minster church. Sub-floor deposits within the church are very likely to contain evidence with which the questions of the date of foundation and evolving form of the church can be addressed. The churchyard immediately around the church may also contain early burials, particularly around the east end and on the north side, closest to the town.

Successful elucidation of the development of a pre-Conquest church on this site would certainly be of regional, and potentially national, significance, given the current rarity of such data.

Key sites: the Church of St Mary (interior); the churchyard around the church

RP2 Pre-urban origins 2: episcopal

Whatever the form and function of the church itself, early medieval Ross (like Bromyard and Ledbury) had a more complex ecclesiastical presence in that an episcopal residence occupied a space adjoining one end of the church, while the priests' residence stood at the other. From currently available information neither the Rectory nor most of the episcopal site are likely to be well preserved below ground, but this has not yet been established by excavation: early deposits may yet be found to survive in either location and could be crucial to understanding the origin and character of this apparent ecclesiastical enclave on the ridge top. Investigation of sites around the periphery of these locations may also answer the question of whether or not they were enclosed, either within a single enclosure or within grouped, functionally-differentiated individual enclosures.

Determination of the answer to this, and the successful exploration of the character of this apparent early medieval ecclesiastical enclave would be of

key significance at regional level in particular, given the likelihood of parallel sequences in other Herefordshire towns (Bromyard, Ledbury). Pre-Conquest episcopal settlements are not well understood nationally (North Elmham, Norfolk, is a substantial exception) and further work in this area would be of exceptional value. The evidence for the limited preservation of archaeological deposits in this part of Ross must, however, be kept in view, but tested.

Key sites: the Royal Hotel (Bishops' Palace) site, particularly the walled garden SW of the hotel; the old Rectory site, Church Street; north side of Palace Close, north side of Church Close, rear of 32-43 High Street.

RP3 The early borough

Historical inference suggests that the borough of Ross was created contemporaneously with the grant of a market charter in the 1130s. The information contained in the Red Books offers a snapshot of the town about a century and a half later, by which time it had a population of just less than 500 engaged in at least seventeen different occupations. How the town grew in this period is unknown – whether, for example, successive agricultural plots were sub-divided and built up from the top of the hill downwards, or whether a craft-working area around the watercourses and the Domesday mill coalesced with other settlement – is unknown. The house types, living conditions and material culture of the earliest burgesses are similarly completely unknown. Evidence with which to answer these questions could be sought almost anywhere within the overall occupied area of the medieval town, but the locations with the highest potential are those in proximity to the street frontages in the lowest-lying areas, around the Rudhall Brook and its subsidiary channels.

The physical character of the smaller medieval market towns in their earliest years is extremely poorly understood not just in the region, but across the country as a whole. In part this is a product of a lack of archaeological attention, in part it is a problem of finding well-preserved deposits containing the necessary structures, sequences, artefacts and ecology (Monmouth represents a notable local exception in this regard). Identification of key deposits in the Brookend area should be regarded as a high priority, with the potential to yield evidence of regional and national significance. The search for well-preserved medieval frontages in particular has been identified as a priority at regional level.

Key sites: Brookend Street (both sides): frontages within and around standing buildings, backplots immediately to rear. The Town Mill. The Wye Street floodplain causeway.

RP4 Testing the Red Books

(1) The late 13th-century episcopal rent roll is a substantial and invaluable source that informs us directly about the number of occupied plots, and

therefore by inference, the physical extent of settlement at its probable medieval apogee. The inhabitants' occupations can also in many instances be inferred from their recorded surnames. The question should however be asked – how reliable a picture does this single source give? Are there, for example, issues arising as a consequence of unrecorded sub-tenancies and sub-tenants? Is the extent of the occupied area, thus reconstructed, accurate? Extra weight is given to such questions because the *Red Books* have been used for decades to reconstruct the late 13th-century state of other Herefordshire episcopal market towns. There is of course also much more that is not recorded because it was not relevant to the bishops' rental income, questions regarding (for example), evolving house types, living standards, material culture, or the scale of production involved with the recorded craft occupations. Answers to such questions may best be answered in the long term by the cumulative results of multiple PPG16-related small-scale investigations, particularly on the 'growing edges' of the medieval town. *Key sites: Brookend Street (both sides), frontages within and around standing buildings; back-plots immediately to rear. Over Ross (east side).*

(2) Town planning. While it is generally accepted that Ross was founded by the Bishop of Hereford, the actual degree of intervention in the fabric of the new town has not been precisely characterised. The brief plan analysis (above) suggests that the burgages (town plots) may have been laid out within an existing framework of fields, imparting a gentle east-west curve to the townscape grain. Although the bishop's bailiff recorded regular one-shilling rents (the standard burgage rent) in the late 13th century, had the plots been physically planned by his predecessors? An answer to this might be found by measuring the existing plot frontages, to test for recurrent statute-perch-based modules on the lines advocated by Slater, measurements derived solely from Ordnance Survey plans lacking sufficient accuracy for the purpose. Such work could very well be undertaken by a community-based project.

Progress in these two areas would be of great significance, particularly at the regional/county level, mainly on account of the comparative resources available (the documentary evidence of the *Red Books*) and the volume of work that has already been done in this subject area, notably by Hillaby.

RP5 Late medieval urban decline?

The apparent lack of data for the town in the century and a half following the Black Death represents a serious gap in knowledge, one that applies not just to Ross but to all of the county's smaller towns. Routine archaeological fieldwork undertaken within the planning process may in the distant future be able to comment with authority on changes in the extent of the occupied area from period to period, from ceramics finds as well as from *in situ* structures. How did the 15th century, which has apparently left no standing buildings, affect the local building cycle? Is there evidence in other aspects of contemporary material culture for the economic trajectory in this period, for

example in improved living standards for a reduced population, or for the abandonment of peripheral sites in favour of central ones?

So little work has been done in the region within this subject area that any progress would be a welcome addition to knowledge, with the long-term potential of replicating the work elsewhere with a view to building up a comprehensive picture of urban change in the region –and thus contributing to long-running major national debate. So far, this has mainly been the province of historians, but archaeological evidence, when a large enough sample has been analysed, may one day make a significant contribution.

Key sites: Brookend Street (both sides), frontages within and around standing buildings; back-plots immediately to rear. Over Ross (east side).

RP6 The survival of early buildings

From the limited discussion of the survival of timber-framed buildings within and behind later structures, it will be apparent that there is much left to learn about early buildings in Ross, specifically, the extent of such fragmentary survivals and confirmation that medieval (pre-c.1500) structures really do not survive at all. Cellarage is another issue. Rock-cut cellarage of unknown date has been reported in the High Street (Jones 1991) and the general extent of cellarage in the town centre was assessed by the CMHTS in 1996 (Buteux 1996). Whether medieval or early post-medieval undercrofts survive is unknown. Such questions will only be answered by a house-to-house survey that comprehensively checks properties from cellar to attic. Such a survey, while way beyond the scope of a document such as this, could be accomplished in the long term by a community-based project with good local contacts to negotiate access.

Combined with carefully-selected dendrochronological sampling, such a project could make a major contribution to the late medieval/early post-medieval history of the town. Figure 4 should be regarded as an interim statement of understanding of the date of town-centre buildings, to be corrected and refined by such future investigation.

RP7 The chronology of 16th- and 17th-century rebuilding

Further to RP6 (above) a long-term aim should be to secure as many dendro-dates as possible from standing buildings in Ross. This would have a number of aims: to establish the general chronology of rebuilding in Ross, particularly in the 16th and 17th centuries; to link particular buildings and types of building with documented owners/builders; and to place Ross within the larger context of the very variable trajectories of towns throughout the region. While the first two are problems of primarily local importance, the latter is of the greatest potential regional importance, or will be once such results are contextualised by parallel research in the county's other market towns and villages

(Pembridge, for example has recently seen an extended programme of dendro-dating).

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7. APPENDIX: ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN ROSS

This is a gazetteer of the thirteen archaeological field investigations known to have taken place in Ross town centre, together with a recorded observation of the 19th century; it does not include purely documentary studies ('desk-based assessments'), whose results are incorporated into the main text, nor casual object discoveries, similarly reported above. Each entry is preceded by its Sites & Monuments Record number; national grid reference; title/date; type of investigation; and the organisation responsible for it.

SMR 11793
SO 5979 2405
St Mary's churchyard 1991
Evaluation
BUFAU

Three evaluation trenches were excavated to the south of the west tower of the church. Trench 1 was excavated against the tower footings and found natural sandy subsoil at a depth of 1.3m. The lowest footings were three courses of rough green sandstone misaligned with the wall above but seemed to be of the same phase as courses of red sandstone ashlar above including a single block of tufa. The natural subsoil lay under a 0.5m thick brown clay silt deposit with sandstone fragments. Pottery from the context above was of 15th-16th-century and 17th-18th-century date. Trench 2 found undisturbed subsoil at one point at 1.0m depth, between grave cuts. A number of graves were identified at this depth, one sealed by a layer containing 17th-18th-century pottery. Another grave contained pottery of the same date, another contained pottery of the 15th-16th century. A levelling deposit sealed all the burials; a rubble-filled layer over it contained 17th-18th-century pottery and two Roman sherds. In Trench 3 natural subsoil was found by augering at 1.3m depth. Excavation was limited by an *in situ* burial at 1.1m depth. It was sealed by a levelling deposit 0.5m thick with disarticulated bone and a sherd of medieval pottery (Jones 1991).

SMR 22097
SO 5987 2396
Police Station, 1995
Salvage recording
HWCC

Salvage recording for an oil tank found natural rock (Devonian Brownstones and sandstone) at a depth of 2.1m, overlain by natural brown soils with their top at 0.44m below the surface. The contemporary tarmac surface and its bedding occupied a depth of 0.4m. In the 0.04m undisturbed interval below the modern and natural materials was a layer of green silty clay that could have represented a truncated archaeological deposit: the Police Station had been terraced into the ground surface. No other deposits were seen; no artefacts or burials were found (Cook 1995).

SMR 23759

SO 599 239

Deanhill Hospital, 1996

Evaluation and salvage recording

HWCC

Two evaluation trenches were excavated to a depth of c.0.5m on the hospital and former Union Workhouse site on the east side of Copse Cross Street. In the southern trench natural sandstone bedrock was found within 0.3m of the surface, sloping sharply down to the north and sealed by deep deposits of decayed rock and brown soils. About 0.8m of dumped post-medieval soils were cut by the sandstone rubble footings of the former workhouse. A small amount of medieval residual material indicated low-intensity use of the area in the middle ages, but the extent of services and groundworks associated with the workhouse and hospital would have prevented extensive survival of earlier deposits. The pottery included 17th- and 18th-century types and six sherds of earlier, probably late 15th/16th-century local wares Napthan & Ratkai 1996).

SMR 35544

SO 5992 2413

Old Market Hall 1995-6

Evaluation

CHAU

A trial excavation was commissioned in advance of the installation of a lift to give disabled access to the first floor, to check the condition of a pillar base affected by the works and to provide data for the excavation of the pit for the lift motor. The trial excavation for the former was undertaken in 1995, the lift pit excavation in the following year. Under the bedding of the current flagstone floor surface the fragmentary remains of a worn cobbled surface were found, associated with some animal bone and 17th-century pottery. A band of natural blue and red clay was found at a depth of 0.9m. The pillar footings were found to be cut to a depth of 0.88m from the current surface into the natural, in the form of vertical square pits containing alternating layers of rubble and mortar. The cobbles were interpreted as a fragment of the market place surface pre-dating the construction of the market hall (Hoverd 1996).

SMR 38204

SO 5991 2413

Old Market Hall 1997

Watching-brief

AIL

A watching-brief was commissioned on the excavation of two post-holes at the west end of the Old Market Hall to support a town map. In the first hole, the market hall footings were cut into a mixed sandy-silt layer that underlay

the bedding for a modern brick surface. The sandy silt continued for the full 0.6m depth of the excavation. The second hole produced a similar sequence, with a layer of mixed sand, charcoal flecks and sandstone rubble, cut by the market hall footings. No finds were recovered (Hoverd 1997).

SMR 38203
SO 6000 2418
Crofts Lane 1997
Evaluation
AIL

Three evaluation trenches were excavated on a development site spanning Crofts Lane behind the Broad Street frontage. Trench A, north of the lane, found post-medieval deposits to a depth of c.0.8m overlying natural sandstone bedrock and a deposit of decayed natural on top. A shallow scoop or slot was cut into the natural together with two possible fence post holes; there were no dateable finds. Trench B, south of the lane and closest to the frontage, found modern deposits up to 0.5m deep overlying a sandy layer in turn overlying a thicker layer of sandy clay over decayed natural and sandstone bedrock. A sandstone rubble wall running west-east was found, cut into the natural on its up-slope side but standing 0.6m high on the down-slope side; it had been underpinned in brick; below it, modern strata overlay bedrock. Trench C, further east, found modern strata overlying a thick sandy clay layer over natural bedrock at a depth of c.0.9m. The trench B sandstone wall ran through the trench and part of a second sandstone wall was seen. Pottery was 17th-century and later. The walls were interpreted as post-medieval plot boundaries (Boucher 1997).

SMR 24440
SO 5985 2423
r/o Leregos, New Street, 1997
Watching-brief
HWCC

Natural sandstone bedrock was found at the north end of the site. Part of a small post-medieval feature was seen in section and finds recovered from it. The level of the site was lowered, the soil being of 20th-century composition. A terrace in the SW corner of the site proved to be modern, made up with dumped materials. Elsewhere, ground levels had been raised by modern dumping to a depth of 1.2m on the E side and 1.0m on the north side. Installation of a retaining wall at the rear (south) of the site revealed a number of modern strata and the lowest courses of a sandstone wall. The lowest layer, a sandy silty clay soil, contained 13th-14th-century pottery and was interpreted as a cultivation soil. Two Roman sherds, one dateable to the 2nd century but both unstratified, were found, together with medieval pottery, ceramic roof tile and tap slag from iron smelting. There was a wide range of 17th and 18th-century finds (Topping, Hurst and Pearson 1997).

SMR 26298
SO 5984 2415
Corn Exchange, 7-7a High Street, 1998
Watching-brief
HWCC

A watching-brief was undertaken on two contractor's trenches on the frontage. One found the sandstone footings for the early 19th-century façade of the Corn Exchange, the second located the top of the brick vault of the cellars under the building (Dalwood 1998a).

SMR 25991
SO 596 245
Homs Road 1998
Evaluation
CgMs

A desk-based assessment of the archaeological implications of a new storage tank located in the Homs Road car park (to the north of the Rudhall Brook) together with a new outfall pipe from it, across the floodplain to the Wye, was supported by a number of boreholes and test-pits. Three boreholes were sunk in the Homs Road car park, another to the north-east, a fifth on the riverbank, and two test pits were dug in the floodplain (Rope Walk Meadow). A late 19th-century rubbish dump 1.5m to 2.8m deep was found in the car park. No cultural material was retrieved from the other holes though in TP6 in Rope Walk Meadow was an undated deposit of boulders and cobbles 0.5m deep, possibly landscaping for an early 20th-century park. Just north of the Rudhall Brook BH4 encountered alluvium over natural weathered sandstone at 4.5m below ground level. TP5 just south of the brook found alluvium down to the base of excavation at 4m with blue-grey silt/clay strata from 2.8m below ground level. TP6 in Rope Walk Meadow found cobbles and boulders (incl. limestone) from 0.3m to 0.8m depth over brown alluvium, over blue-grey clay. BH7 by the Wye found made ground to 1.6m over brown alluvium, with gravel from 4.1m depth over sandstone bedrock at 5.3m depth (Hunter 1998).

SMR 30308
R/o 12 High Street (Pigs Lane)
Salvage excav 1998
AIL

Five holes and a trench were recorded after excavation by the developer. The top metre of ground across the site was shown to consist of entirely modern deposits (20th-century demolition debris) and service trenches (Williams 1998)

SMR 30525
SO 604 242
33 High Street
Monmouth Archaeology
Building recording
Photographic recording of the standing building during renovation (Clarke 2000a).

SMR 31768
SO 604 242
33 High Street
Monmouth Archaeology
Watching-brief 2000
The excavation of a service trench running up a private drive into the property was monitored. An iron-slag metallised surface was found buried beneath the contemporary surface; it sealed a layer of brown soil of probable agricultural/horticultural origin overlying natural bedrock. Pipe stems and degraded coal pieces suggested that the soil was cultivated into the 17th or 18th century (Clarke 2000b)

SMR 000000
SO 604 242
33 High Street
Observation

Two parallel trenches were excavated to a depth of 0.5m within a standing building. A sandstone flag floor, probably primary to the warehouse building, overlay a shallow layer of sandstone-derived soil, overlying the bedrock. The ground level was reduced at the rear of the property by up to 1m and the process monitored. Bedrock and natural clay were overlain by garden soil containing post-medieval ceramics, sealed in turn by modern rubble (Wellcome 2004).

SMR 00000
Brookend Street
Observation

Phippo [?] the old pumpsinker of Ross...who belonged to the last century...told the Reverend John Webb 'that in that century [i.e. the 18th] there were numerous heaps of cinders found at the Brook End at Ross at a considerable depth' (Webb 1861-2).