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**A Desk-Based Assessment of the  
Star Hotel, Worcester and Adjacent Land**

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# **A DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT OF THE STAR HOTEL, WORCESTER AND ADJACENT LAND**

by Roger White, BA PhD MIFA and Nigel Baker, BA PhD MIFA

## **Summary**

A desk-based assessment was carried out on the Star Hotel, Worcester and adjacent land to the north, the study area being defined by a proposed development of the site. The assessment involved an examination of the development of the site through existing historical records, including relevant archaeological records. It also involved an examination of the standing buildings on the site. The assessment showed that the site is likely to contain significant Roman, medieval and post-medieval remains. The nature of the Roman remains is problematic, but they are likely to be industrial in character. The medieval remains are likely to be of tenements, belonging to a northern suburb of Worcester which developed after 1100, and evidence for industrial processes, specifically tile-making, or domestic occupation is likely to survive. These remains are probably best preserved away from the street frontages, especially the Foregate Street frontage, in the former yard of the inn. Post-medieval remains are likely to relate to the development of the Star Hotel, an important coaching inn, from the sixteenth century. Recommendations for further archaeological work in advance of the proposed development are made in the light of the assessment.

## **1. Introduction**

This report is an archaeological assessment of the Star Hotel, 61 Foregate Street, Worcester (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference SO 8593 5514). Its aim is to determine the potential of the site in terms of below-ground archaeology, assessing the likely depth, nature and state of preservation of archaeological deposits. This assessment is achieved in the light of previous archaeological work carried out in the area and through an examination of historical sources. These sources are detailed in an appendix to this document. The report also provides an assessment of the standing remains of the buildings within the study area with a view to establishing their character, date and state of preservation. Both the standing buildings and the below-ground archaeology will be rated according to their perceived importance at local, regional and national level. Recommendations for future work in advance of any further development work on the site will then be made on the basis of these ratings.

### *1.1 Background*

The Star Hotel occupies much of a parcel of land defined by Foregate Street to the east, Farrier Street to the west, Shaw Street to the south, and the Hereford to Worcester railway line to the north. This block thus lies immediately to the north of the site of the city wall and historically formed part of the suburbs of Worcester (section 2.2.4, below). The remainder of the block is occupied to the south by the former Hop Pole Inn, including its Grade II\* listed assembly room, and a number of properties fronting onto Foregate Street between the Star Hotel and the railway line (Figure 2). The whole block lies within the boundary of the conservation area of the historic city.

The hotel presently consists of a four-storey brick building with stuccoed ground floor and a balcony on the street frontage at first floor level. A covered passageway on the south side leads into a large yard currently occupied by a single building in the north-west corner, but away from the Farrier Street frontage. The whole of the Farrier Street frontage is blocked by a substantial metal fence. The rear elevation of the hotel presents a confusing array of roof lines and different styles and periods of masonry (Figure 8). The adjoining properties to the south and north-east show the scars of buildings recently demolished and to the north, beyond a boundary fence, lies a newly refurbished brick-built structure that fronts onto a minor road running parallel with the railway line.

In the light of proposed redevelopment by Mr Nicholas Sinclair of the Star Hotel and adjacent land, an archaeological brief was drawn up by the Worcester City Archaeologist, James Dinn (Dinn 2000). The Field Archaeology Unit of the University of Birmingham were commissioned by Tyler-Parkes Partnership to fulfil the conditions of this brief. The nature of this desk-based assessment is described in the written scheme of investigation (Dingwall 2000). The report follows the guidelines for desk-based assessments drawn up the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

### *1.2 Aims of assessment*

The aims of the assessment were set out in the brief and may be quoted for convenience here (Dinn 2000, 3). The desk-based assessment should 'aim to determine...the extent, type, state of preservation, date, vulnerability, documentation, quality of setting and amenity value of surviving archaeological remains present on or around the site.' Remains of all periods are to be assessed, including the palaeoenvironmental evidence. The assessment should aim also to determine the nature and extent of any previous disturbance or destruction of archaeological levels so that the degree of survival of buried remains might be determined.

In addition to these broad aims, three specific research aims were highlighted for study:

- the extent and character of Roman activity on the site
- the nature of medieval activity in the Foregate suburb
- the extent and nature of civil war demolition and reconstruction of the site

### *1.3 Methodology*

The methodology adopted to fulfil the requirements of the brief comprised:

- consultation of the City of Worcester Sites and Monuments Records
- consultation of the County of Worcestershire Sites and Monuments Records
- searches of the City Records Office at St Helen's, Worcester
- searches of the Cathedral Library
- searches of the City Library
- searches of the County Records Office
- searches of the University of Birmingham Main Library
- consultation with staff of the Worcestershire Archaeology Service regarding previous archaeological work within the city
- consultation with the City of Worcester archaeologist.

The documents examined in these searches are listed below in Appendix 1.

#### *1.4 Report structure*

In order to meet the requirements of the brief, two elements of assessment were required: a summary of the available knowledge relating to below-ground archaeological deposits, and an assessment of the standing remains of the present buildings, and of recently-demolished buildings that are recorded in documentary form. These two elements will be combined to allow an assessment of the archaeological potential of the site to meet the specified research and cultural resource management aims.

## **2. Assessment of below-ground archaeology**

### *2.1 Geological and environmental background*

The Star Hotel lies on a natural gravel ridge running parallel to the River Severn that underlies the historic core of the City of Worcester (Palmer 1982). The natural gravel has been seen in excavations in Farrier Street, immediately west of the site at a level of c. 25 m OD (Dalwood *et al* 1994) and at a level of c. 23m OD on the Kardonia and Castle Street excavations to the north (CAS 1995; Dalwood *et al.* 1997).

There is no evidence for substantial waterlogging of the geological or archaeological levels in the vicinity, with the exception of the city ditch to the south of Shaw Street (Bretherton 1998). The circumstances of deposition within this substantial feature are clearly different to what might normally be expected on a gravel sub-soil site and the probability of waterlogged remains on the Star Hotel site might therefore be low. The exception to this would be deeply cut archaeological features, such as wells, that might contain waterlogged levels. Having said this, however, the potential for palaeoenvironmental evidence from charred plant remains might be higher, given that such remains were found on the adjacent Farrier Street site. Indeed, the same site also surprisingly produced samples of uncharred plant remains and similar conditions might be expected on the Star Hotel site too (de Rouffignac 1994). In contrast, the animal bone from the Farrier Street site was differentially preserved with quite severe exfoliation of bone in Roman contexts and progressively better preservation at higher levels (Pinter-Bellows 1994). At the Kardonia site, bone preservation was poor and the environmental samples produced only low levels of ecofacts (CAS 1995). Soil acidity, therefore, seems quite unpredictable but there is a good chance of significant levels of preservation of ecofacts in any potential evaluation or excavation.

### *2.2 Historical background*

#### *2.2.1 The prehistoric period*

There is no significant evidence for prehistoric activity within the vicinity of the site. No prehistoric finds were made on the adjacent Farrier Street site, nor on Castle Street site. However, a small quantity of lithics and prehistoric pottery from the Kardonia site hint at activity in the area (Dalwood *et al.* 1997). If so, then this activity is likely to be agricultural since the light soils associated with gravel geology was attractive to

farmers of the period. Alternatively, this might be activity associated with the trade in salt from Droitwich since it has been argued that Castle Street (formerly Salt Lane) was in origin a prehistoric trackway (*ibid*). Settlement evidence is less likely given that the focus of Iron Age settlement is thought to lie largely in the southern part of the historic city close to the postulated ford (Barker 1969, 14-15) while a Neolithic enclosure was found on the Deansway site (Dalwood 1996).

### 2.2.2 The Roman period

Significant Roman remains have been found to the west and north of the study area at Farrier Street, Love's Grove and Kardonia excavations, while an evaluation at Sansome Street to the east of Foregate Street failed to find any evidence of Roman activity (Darlington 1988). The results of these excavations have been usefully summarised by Hal Dalwood (1994, 105-6). To these may be added Castle Street, a site that lay adjacent to the Kardonia site (Dalwood *et al.* 1997). These sites may be tied in with earlier excavations to the south, within the medieval city, by Philip Barker at Broad Street (Barker 1969) and at Deansway (Dalwood, forthcoming).

The essential nature of the Roman occupation – a widespread industrial settlement with an agricultural background – is quite clear even though based on only small samples (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 242). The main focus of the settlement is assumed to be in the heart of the medieval city, enclosed by extensive earthwork defences that have been located at Lich Street (Barker 1969). The major excavation at Deansway added substantially to the understanding of the settlement although the details are yet to be published. Briefly, this site produced evidence for iron-working of second to third century date along with a constant background agricultural activity throughout the Roman period (Dalwood *et al.* 1994, 105).

Evidence has been located for a major Roman road trending north from the defended area of the Roman town which is thought to be heading towards the forts at Greensforge, Staffs. This road has been seen at Broad Street and Farrier Street (Dalwood *et al.* 1994, fig.13), immediately to the west of the study area, but not in an evaluation on the line of the road at 3-5 The Butts where it had presumably been removed by the medieval city defences (Bretherton 1998). A cobbled surface at Love's Grove has been interpreted as a yard rather than a road and is suggested to lie adjacent to and west of this road (Edwards 1990). All of these sites, with the addition of the Kardonia excavation and the exception of 3-5 The Butts, have also produced evidence for iron working in the form of waste products or small furnaces. This fits in with scattered references to earlier discoveries of iron-slag in the northern suburbs of Worcester suggesting an extensive industrial area (Dalwood *et al.* 1994). The dating of this activity centres on the second and third centuries at the Deansway site but on the third to fourth century at Farrier Street, suggesting a possible shift in iron-working activity. Artefactually, the later Roman period is best represented at the Castle Street site where there is pottery considered to be later fourth or even early fifth century in date (Buteux 1997).

It is possible that Foregate Street itself represents a second Roman road heading north from the centre of the settlement. There are four grounds on which this has been argued. First, the High Street, and its continuation in the form of the Foregate Street – Tything road, follows the spine of the gravel peninsula underlying the city: the streets

form an axial ridgeway around which much of the medieval and modern city has developed. Second, the High Street passes through the Roman earthwork defences via what appears to be a gate; this, and recorded sightings of Roman slag metallurgy at a depth of eight feet below the modern street suggest that it perpetuates a Roman road (Barker 1969, 50-51). Immediately outside the suspected gate, the High Street passes St Helen's church, thought to be of early post Roman or even Roman origin (see Baker *et al* 1992); it also passes the City Arcades site, where a recent evaluation found evidence for a major (robbed) masonry structure with an *opus signinum* floor (J. Dinn, pers. comm.; Jackson, forthcoming). Although a very limited exposure was seen, it is tempting to interpret this building as a *mansio* or staging inn, though such a building need not necessarily have been located next to a main road (Burnham and Wachter 1990 fig. 12). Finally, a Roman road on the High Street – Foregate Street line would serve as a termination to the regular series of three east-west minor Roman streets found in the Deansway excavations south of Broad Street (Dalwood *et al.* 1994; Mundy 1989).

To the east of Foregate Street lies another suspected road, thought to be heading north-east via the Lowesmoor area to link Worcester with the salt-production centre at Droitwich; this is the *bradan straete* recorded in an Anglo-Saxon charter of 1038 (S1393; Hooke 1980).

In conclusion, it is thought that Roman occupation is centred on the area enclosed by earthwork defences beneath the medieval city. However, this occupation extends for at least a further 0.5 km to the north in a ribbon development along at least one road (that to Greensforge), and possibly for c. 250m or more along High Street – Foregate Street. This occupation may well be intermittent rather than continuous, and could also have varied in extent chronologically, although with such a small sample it is perhaps unwise to be dogmatic about this.

The Star Hotel site thus lies in an ambiguous position within the northern part of Roman Worcester. In the latest tentative maps of Roman Worcester, the Star Hotel site lies east of the assumed corridor of occupation along the east side of the Greensforge road (Dalwood *et al.* 1994, fig 13) and north of the main centre of the settlement within the defended area. It might be thought, therefore, that this site would lie beyond the occupied area. However, if Foregate Street itself is indeed of Roman origin, and it too supported another ribbon of suburban development, then the Star Hotel site has excellent potential for determining whether or not Roman occupation extended into this important area. As the archaeological deposits have never been assessed here, evaluation of the site would be essential to further our understanding of the development of Roman Worcester (5.2.2).

### 2.2.3 The early medieval period

Evidence for post-Roman, pre-medieval activity in the area in question is limited to the discovery of very late Roman pottery on Castle Street (see above), and to evidence for the continued use as a road or path of at least the southern end of the Roman road found at the Broad Street, Blackfriars, and Farrier Street sites (Mundy 1986). At excavated sites throughout the area Roman levels are invariably sealed with a deep deposit of 'dark earth', a garden-like soil which is a well-known phenomenon in other Roman towns in Britain. At Farrier Street the level was at least 1m thick (Dalwood *et*

*al.* 1994, fig. 6), and at the Kardonia site was up to 1.2m thick (Robin Jackson, pers. comm.). The nature of such soils has been much debated (Esmonde Cleary 1989, 147-8) but scientific analyses, such as that carried out at Farrier Street (Macphail 1994), demonstrate that in Worcester these soils contain abundant charcoal, iron slag, daub and animal coprolites suggesting household refuse that has been subsequently reworked thorough both agricultural activities and local fauna, especially earthworms. Dark earth deposits are known on other sites in the vicinity, including Castle Street (a deposit 0.6m thick) and a layer of a similar depth at Sansome Street (Darlington 1988).

Superficially, such evidence seems conclusive that there was no post-Roman occupation in the area. Instead there was merely an accumulation of humic soils full of organic refuse mixed by natural actions, including those of animals, and human activity in the form of gardening or farming. However, the fact that human activity is evidenced, even indirectly through farming, presupposes that the area had some occupation. Furthermore, any occupation of this date is likely to have been in structures whose largest components will have been organic and thus prone to complete disappearance. Given the generally small-scale nature of the excavations and evaluations on the various sites within the northern suburb, it would be virtually impossible to spot any ephemeral buildings of the type that can be expected in this era (White 2000). Only large-scale open area excavation would be able to demonstrate occupation levels in such soils. It is of interest in this context that Macphail notes the presence of quite large stone-size material in the late Roman soils and concludes that the dark earth levels were once thicker but had been reduced by later activity (Macphail 1994, 84). The presence of stone may also signify buildings such as those identified in dark earth soils at Wroxeter (Barker *et al.* 1997) and, retrospectively, at Chester (White 2000).

#### 2.2.4 The medieval period

It is more certain that occupation of the site in the medieval period began around or soon after AD 1100. The Star hotel lies within the Foregate suburb, a planned urban extension developed by one of the bishops of Worcester on his manor of Northwick. Extending to some thirty acres (12.15ha) and stretching as far north as the (later) Hospital of St Oswald, the new planned suburb was laid out to a sophisticated plan. The plots on the west side were short, and terminated at a parallel rear service lane, the present Farrier Street. The plots on the east side backed onto a series of large garden crofts and these, in turn, backed onto a second parallel service lane, the present Sansome Walk. As originally conceived, the suburb commenced at the old (Saxon) north gate at the southern end of The Cross. Then, c.1200, the new city defences were built, bisecting the suburb. The Cross and the Foregate were left inside the new circuit, consisting of the North Gate itself (approximately on the site of the Hop Market and in place by 1182), the city wall, and the city ditch, now represented by The Butts, Shaw Street, and Sansome Street). The Foregate suburb was an important event in the growth of the city and, if even moderately densely settled, could have added 10% to the city's post-Domesday population (Baker and Holt, forthcoming; Baker *et al.* 1992; Beardsmore 1980, 61).

Occupation in the suburb in the Middle Ages was not wealthy. Lying within the parish of St Nicholas, the area was noticeably poor in the later thirteenth century, and this

and other suburbs a century later were characterised by single-person households, often labourers and poorer craftsmen, dwelling in cottages – generally single-cell houses, often built speculatively in rows. The area may have suffered slight depopulation in the immediate post-Black Death years of the later fourteenth century. The generally poor socio-economic profile persisted into the sixteenth century (Holt, Worcester Report II, 177; Barron 1989, 12).

The only relevant archaeological intervention in the area is the excavation at Sansome Street, to the east of Foregate Street. Here, a series of ditches and pits dated to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was sealed beneath agricultural soils. These medieval levels appeared at a depth of 0.5m due to truncation of overlying levels in the post-medieval period (Darlington 1988).

Despite the apparent poverty of the area this is not to deny its archaeological significance. The suburbs of Worcester, as elsewhere, are largely unknown archaeologically and the ‘many small cottages erected and builded within the Cittie and suburbs of the same as in Foregate Street’ in which the lower social groups dwelt are conspicuous by their absence from the archaeological record (Worcester City Chamber, 1609, quoted in Whitehead 1989, 8). These are gaps in the archaeological record of the city that need filling, and the identification of surviving deposits that bear on them is of at least local and regional importance.

Medieval and early modern suburbs – this one included – were often characterised by the more expansive industrial and extractive activities that could not compete for space within the city walls. One industry known to have been located in the immediate area and possibly within the Star Hotel plot itself is tile manufacturing. A tiliary belonging to the Cathedral Priory was described as being on the ‘road to Pitchcroft’ in 1533 when its lease was taken over by John Matthews from another tile-maker, John Pinley. A 1548 inventory of Matthews’ property lists a workhouse, and a kiln may also be expected in the area (Hughes 1990, 96 fig.6). Evidence of tile-manufacture in the form of kiln debris was found in excavations at Sansome Street to the east of Foregate Street (Darlington 1988).

#### 2.2.5 Early Modern period and the Civil War

It is thought that the Star Hotel (then called the Star and Garter) was founded in 1588, but its appearance and arrangements are wholly unknown (Baldwin 1997).

The hotel and its surroundings were totally levelled in 1646 during the Civil War to provide a clear firing zone for gun bastions defending the City wall. Two bastions are shown on the 1651 map of the city, south-west of the Star Hotel block, and the ditch of one of these has been seen in an evaluation carried out on the line of the wall (Jackson 1992). Another bastion lay to the east of Foregate Street, but curiously the North Gate, alone of all the major city gates, had no defending bastion. The reason for this anomaly is not apparent and it may be that a bastion has been omitted from the map. If so, then a bastion here might have impinged on the Star Hotel site and would, as has been shown in Gloucester, be archaeologically recognisable (Atkin and Laughlin 1992, 90-1).

Following the end of the Civil War siege, the Foregate suburb was rapidly built up again. A survey of Dean and Chapter lands carried out by Parliament in 1650 noted that large areas of the Foregate were 'great garden(s)' and temporary buildings stood on other plots. However, by 1679, the Hearth Tax Collector's Book recorded that out of 70 people assessed for the tax in Foregate Street, 21 had five hearths or more, suggesting a rapid rise in status for the area (Whitehead 1989, 10-11).

The earliest maps of the city (Speed's, of 1610, and the 1651 map) show the suburbs conventionally, or not at all. The earliest useful map in the present context is Doharty's, of 1741, which shows the streets surrounding the site in their present arrangement, with the southernmost west-side Foregate Street plots extended at the rear over the line of the original back service lane (see below and Figure 3a). Broad's map of 1768 adds no further detail (Figure 3b). George Young's map of 1779 however, is the first to distinguish the buildings of the Star & Garter Inn (Figures 3c; 5). It shows a range of buildings on the principal Foregate Street frontage adjoining a covered entry along the north side of the plot, the whole some 15-20 metres wide (north-south), extending back approximately 25-30 metres. The body of the plot was undeveloped open ground, and then at the rear, immediately behind and alongside non-inn buildings on the (post-diversion) Farrier Street frontage were further inn buildings, possibly the forerunner of the Star Tap, together with (?) stabling. The buildings of the Hop Pole Inn next door (individually surveyed by Young for the ground landlords, the Dean and Chapter; Cathedral Library Map 151), are shown with a more fully developed courtyard arrangement and evident intermingling of land parcels with the Star & Garter.

By this date, Foregate Street had been largely redeveloped in the new, Georgian, style of architecture. Redevelopment seems to have begun in a grand scale between 1725-40 following the tentative adoption of brick in the later seventeenth century (Whitehead 1976, 45-52). The redevelopment was of such quality that Worcester for a time became renowned as 'one of the best paved [cities] in England'. In Foregate Street itself, 'the shops are little inferior to those in London' (Walpole 1784, 130). Such compliments mark out the Foregate Street area, including the Star Hotel plot and its adjacent buildings, as a regionally, if not nationally, important component of the historic cityscape.

#### 2.2.6 Modern

It is apparent from the sequence of detailed maps of the area, which exist from 1779 onwards, that the plot occupied by the Star Hotel rapidly became heavily built up so that by 1928 virtually none of the yard was without a building or cover of some description (Figure 6 and 3.3 for a fuller assessment). All of these buildings have now been demolished with one exception, and it may be assumed that they will have all left traces on the site. While these buildings in themselves may have little merit, as a group they were an important and integral part of the coaching inn. Moreover, the fact that virtually no record of them exists other than their outline on maps prompts the recommendation that a record of their traces should be made if redevelopment is undertaken. As the highest levels on the site, and because of their presumably rather ephemeral nature, the remains of these buildings will be the most vulnerable to any redevelopment work.

### 3. Assessment of standing remains

#### 3.1 Morphological development of the study area

The map evidence and the surviving building pattern on the site shows quite clearly how the property was formed. The site is composed of two parts: the original medieval Foregate Street plot or burgage area, and the former back lane and a portion of a parcel of ground behind (west of) it. At some stage in the post-medieval history of the site, the original rear service lane went out of use, or was closed and diverted, and it and a plot of land beyond it were amalgamated with the frontage plot. This process occurred on all the west-side Foregate Street properties within *c.* 100 metres of the city ditch, and can be seen to have taken place by 1741 (Doharty's map, Figure 3a).

The former course of the medieval rear service lane before its diversion is apparent as a linear discontinuity (plan-seam or fracture-line) in the building cover. This may best be seen on the detailed first edition 1:500 Ordnance Survey plan of 1884 (Figure 6a), but is still perfectly clear on the modern town plan, in the present building cover (affecting even the outline of the Odeon Cinema), and in the present ground surface profile (see below). Within the present site, the former lane is represented by the boundary wall to the north of the hotel building to the rear of nos.58-60.

#### 3.2 The standing buildings

It is thought that the present hotel building, a grade II listed structure, dates to *c.* 1800 (Whitehead 1976, 72-3), a date suggested by the use of stucco at ground floor level to create a rusticated facade, and the elegant 'Gothick' cast iron balcony at first floor level. Pevsner dates the structure to *c.* 1850, however, while the draft revision of the listing schedule indicates that the hotel was built in its present form between *c.* 1800 – 1835 (Pevsner 1968, 332). This uncertainty about dating is a result of the piecemeal development of the site in the early nineteenth century (see 3.3). This period was the heyday of the hotel, when it vied with its competitors for running the quickest coach service to London and other destinations (Gwilliam 1993, 68-9). Extensive provision was made behind the building for stables and accommodation for servants, grooms and ostlers so that the 1884 Ordnance Survey plan shows a dense concentration of buildings behind the main block of the hotel. An auction prospectus of 27<sup>th</sup> July 1907 gives perhaps the most detailed picture of the hotel at its height. It lists accommodation on ground and first floor levels with 'six spacious dry cellars' in the basement, and stabling for 60 horses and 12 loose boxes complete with manure pits (WRO 5240/7 b.705:358).

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there seem to have been many additions to the rear of the hotel building giving it a confusing and piecemeal appearance. More detailed analysis might, however, unravel some of the complex history of the site and identify significant elements embedded in apparently modern structures. Further buildings were added as the transition from horse power to cars meant that the yard could be largely covered over. An aerial photograph of 1939 shows that virtually the whole yard was filled with buildings, a density seen as early as 1928 on the Ordnance Survey map (Figure 6b). All of these were swept away in the 1970s and 1980s so that

only a single building remains; a refurbished structure that is now the staff accommodation. During 1940 the 'spacious dry cellars' were refurbished for use as air raid shelters (WRO 8077/47(iii) 705:876).

### *3.3 Architectural description*

It was not possible, in the present context, to undertake more than a superficial examination of the standing hotel building; this was, however, sufficient to show that behind the uniform frontage it is a complex structure that has evolved over c.200 years by successive additions. No detailed site or building survey plans were available during the examination.

Inspection of the building at roof level was particularly informative. This suggested that the earliest externally-visible element of the structure is the block on the Foregate Street frontage north of the present entry. This element consisted of an (externally) brick-built wing, perhaps c.6 metres deep along the frontage with a wider central block projecting further back. This phase of building is characterised by dentilation under the eaves to the rear and side elevations, the projecting dentils each being two bricks wide. Pronounced, but probably old, subsidence visible as distorted window openings at the south end of this range may just possibly indicate the presence within of an encapsulated timber-frame (Figure 7). This phase of building is probably the set of buildings shown on Young's map. Certainly, Young shows that the Star and Garter hotel was at that point markedly inferior in extent to the neighbouring Hop Pole Inn (Figure 5). His map shows a single narrow-fronted building extending only as far as the back lane, already by this time showing as a fracture line within the plot. Another building, apparently on the site of the Star Vaults and fronting onto Farrier Street, is also shaded to show that it belongs with the Star and Garter Hotel. Between the Hop Pole Inn and the Star and Garter is another property that Young's manuscript map identified as the residence of James Turnbull (Cathedral Library, map 151).

The second phase of building suggested by roof-level inspection appears to be a wide rear wing projecting back from the north side of the phase-one frontage block. This rear wing was again characterised by dentilation to the eaves, in this case the dentils consisting of a single brick each. This part of the building was probably constructed during the expansion of the Star Hotel that coincided with the decline of the Hop Pole Inn during the protracted campaign to widen Gardiner's Lane to create Shaw Street, culminating in the final demise of the Hop Pole Inn during 1842 (Hughes 1990, 3). This allowed the then landlord of the Star Hotel to substantially expand his premises by purchasing the stabling facilities of the former inn (*ibid*, 4).

A third phase of building appears to abut the frontage range at its south end, extending back as another substantial rear wing, bounded to the south by the entry. This is presumably the 'new range' mentioned in the 1835 sales particulars (City Library, Pamphlet W33.333). Between these two later wings, in what appears to be an infilled courtyard, are numerous small-scale later additions.

The existing accessible cellarage appears to reflect what has been gleaned of the development of the superstructure. All the cellarage is brick-built: there is no evidence of sandstone masonry structures. The Foregate Street frontage is occupied by two rooms with flat ceilings in part supported by re-used timber components (post-

medieval main beams); the larger of the two rooms, approximately in the centre of the frontage, has symmetrically-placed fireplace foundations at each end (north and south). Behind the frontage (and presumably underlying the phase 2 rear wing identified above) a passage runs west towards the rear of the plot; off its south side is a series of three broad north-south barrel-vaulted chambers (used as wine and spirits store-rooms). Further west is a single room with an east-west barrel vault, the room defined by west and east walls that are at a slightly diagonal angle to the cellarage further east. The orientation of these walls appears to be derived from the plot boundary to the north. A further small chamber lies to the west of this room, roofed by an east-west barrel vault. It is in turn bounded to the west by a brick wall of very substantial thickness (c.2 metres). Beyond this, the western end of the cellarage consists of a further two rooms roofed by an east-west barrel vault, terminating at trap access just within the west end of the superstructure.

In summary, the cellarage is what is to be expected beneath a major late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century urban hotel or inn, the extensive barrel-vaulting being similar in character to that of, for instance, the Lion Hotel in Shrewsbury. Here, however, it has evolved with the superstructure by means of successive additions, developing westwards from the frontage which alone was conceived on a more domestic scale. Depth of the cellarage below existing exterior ground level appears to be c.2.5 metres throughout.

#### *3.4 The Farrier Street frontage and yard area; demolished buildings.*

The Farrier Street frontage always seems to have been less built up. In the centre of the plot was the Star Vaults public house, the favoured drinking house for drivers and ostlers whose employers were staying at the Star (Gwilliam 1993, 69). It was a long building only one bay wide and with a rounded end designed so that coaches might not clip its corners. It survived until the late 1970s when it was demolished. Colour photographs of it in the Worcester City SMR show a passageway on the north side with a timber-framed range on the south side. This was not adequately recorded but the central of three roof trusses was drawn and showed a king-post construction (Worcester City SMR file 100596). The close vertical studding of the walls and this roof design perhaps suggest an early eighteenth century date for the building.

#### *3.5 The buildings and their significance*

The major significance of the site is that its standing architecture is representative of an important, influential, well-defined, and widely recognisable episode in the history of Worcester and English provincial towns in general. This is the late eighteenth century. As a major coaching inn, the Star Hotel represents, and is a product of, a period of rapidly expanding communications and economic and cultural horizons. The Star Hotel may be seen in this context as a key component in the economic and cultural motors of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century city. In this respect it further gains significance via 'group value' and its immediate proximity to the Assembly Rooms, another of the key buildings of the contemporary provincial town, despite the loss of many ancillary buildings in the former yard area.

As a coaching inn, it may also be taken as an example of a particular trajectory in the development of a common site type in Worcester, as elsewhere. Young's map of 1779

is marked by a number of substantial coaching inns, developed in a recurrent rear-accessible courtyard or double courtyard pattern. Some have changed use, some remain as licensed premises; the Star via its major rebuilding and subsequent expansion/courtyard infill, represents the consequence of a more successful/expansionary site trajectory.

#### **4. Archaeological deposit characterisation**

##### *4.1 Site characterisation*

The site is more or less level from north to south but is dominated by a slope up to the east, towards the Foregate frontage, suggesting either a greater accumulation of deposits here or perhaps reflecting a natural slope of the gravel terrace. The boundary wall to the rear of the plots to the north of the hotel acts as a minor terrace on this slope, with the ground level rising by about 0.8m from west (outside it) to east (inside) (Figure 8). The break in slope continues into the adjacent cleared plot to the north as an unretained slope. The differential ground level may simply be a product of successive boundary walls on this line (that of the old back lane) retaining soil moving down the slope, but it may also be a product of different depositional activities. Only excavation would resolve this question.

Based on the present building coverage and what is known of the historical/morphological development of the site, the assessment area can be divided into two zones:

- The Foregate Street frontage, comprising the footprint of the present hotel building and its immediate environs. In origin, the medieval suburban plot (Figure 8).
- The Farrier Street frontage, including the present yard area. Historically a separate and more recently built-up land parcel (Figure 9).

It can be anticipated that the depositional processes at work forming the buried archaeology in these areas will have been different, at least for post-dark earth deposits. Occupation and ground-affecting activities may be expected to be denser and of longer duration on the original Foregate Street plot/frontage, though the Farrier Street end, away from the main street frontage, may have been subject to the impact of industrial activities, possibly extractive.

##### *4.2 Cellarage extent; known intrusions and obstructions*

The existing cellarage of the Star Hotel was rapidly surveyed as part of this assessment and is reproduced here (Figure 4). This should not replace a more accurate measured survey if required in any future assessment. The survey showed that the cellarage beneath the hotel is extensive and is at a level of c.2.5m throughout (section 3.3). The cellars do not appear to extend beneath the covered passage leading from Foregate Street and this area in consequence has great archaeological significance as the only part of the evaluation area where frontage is likely to have survived.

In addition to these existing cellars, the twentieth century sale particulars refer to manure pits associated with the extensive stabling that once existed in the yard (WCRO 5240/7 b.705: 358). The depth of these is unknown. The Star Vaults tap and the other buildings on the Farrier Street frontage presumably also had cellars, especially the former, but the depth of these is unknown. It was not possible to gain access to the building on the Farrier Street frontage north of the Star Hotel plot but this too may be cellared.

In conclusion, therefore, it is suggested that deep intrusions are likely to be limited to the frontage of Farrier Street and the existing cellars beneath the Star Hotel. Some minor intrusions, such as manure pits, are probable in the former hotel yard but the extent and depth of these is unlikely to have caused serious damage to underlying stratigraphy.

#### *4.3 Deposit data*

In the absence of any borehole information and previous assessments within the plot, it is difficult to gauge the overall depth of deposits. Some guide may be given by the Farrier Street site where overall archaeological stratigraphy was *c.* 2m deep (Dalwood *et al.* fig.6). Of this, 0.3-0.5m was Roman levels, with the remainder dark earth deposits and post-medieval levels. Similar depths of deposits have been recorded at other sites, for example Castle Street (Dalwood *et al.* 1997), but the archaeological levels at Kardonia were slightly thicker at 2.3m (CAS 1995).

On the basis of this comparative data, the depth of deposits on the Star Hotel plot can be estimated to be between 1.5 - 2.5m thick. However, given the lack of medieval stratigraphy on these comparative sites, and the likelihood of extensive medieval occupation in the Foregate Street suburb, it is possible that the depth of deposits here exceeds 2.5m.

Observation by the writers of a partially backfilled pipe trench, running east-west up the Farrier Street end of the property to the north of the hotel site, suggests that the top *c.* 500-800mm of ground there, and possibly within the adjacent part of the hotel site, is of black ashy soil containing noticeable amounts of later post-medieval pottery (18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century). The inn site has the potential to yield similar and perhaps much larger ceramic assemblages (see 5.2.7, below).

### **5. Discussion**

#### *5.1 The survival and significance of buried archaeological deposits*

It is certain that the survival of archaeological strata over the site will vary considerably. Beneath the Star Hotel itself, the cellarage will have removed much, if not all, of the evidence for medieval buildings. However, cellars that have been excavated in other localities nearby have been found to bottom out directly onto Roman levels (James Dinn, pers. comm.) and this may well be the case here. The Farrier Street frontage in contrast is probably much better preserved with only localised cellarage and a much clearer picture of development should be possible here.

The area between the two frontages is likely to be quite well preserved since the nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings on the site probably only had shallow foundations. Below these there should be evidence for medieval occupation in the form of pits, wells, and possible ancillary buildings. These latter might include workshops associated with tile making or other industries. Beneath this should be a 'dark earth' level, between 0.5m - 1.3m thick, which seals any possible Roman evidence. It is thought unlikely that there will be any prehistoric evidence below the Roman levels.

### *5.2 Assessment of potential importance of the archaeological resource*

This brief characterisation of the site allows an assessment of the potential importance of the archaeological resource on the site. This is best outlined in chronological order:

#### 5.2.1 Palaeoenvironmental

The degree of survival of palaeoenvironmental data is likely to be variable across the site. Bone preservation in particular will vary according to the depth of its deposition as soil pH is likely to increase with depth. The same problem may also effect plant remains, except the charred material which is likely to be well-preserved.

#### 5.2.2 Prehistoric

Little possibility of surviving evidence. If any evidence were found, it would have local significance only.

#### 5.2.3 Roman

There is high potential for the survival of Roman remains on the site, but their character will depend upon the extent and nature of Worcester's Roman suburbs. The remains should at the least reveal evidence of an industrial or agricultural nature, but could also include habitation. The depth of deposits is unlikely to exceed 0.3-0.5m in depth. The site has high local and regional importance for determining the nature of Roman Worcester, the principal Roman settlement in the locality.

#### 5.2.4 Early medieval

The Roman layers are likely to be buried beneath a deep 'dark earth' deposit in the centre of the plot. This may extend to the frontage of Farrier Street. As the suburb was not laid out until after 1100, pre-Conquest structures are unlikely, but if structures of this date (which tend to be ephemeral) were uncovered they would be the first non-ecclesiastical buildings of this era found in the City and would be of local, regional and potentially national importance.

#### 5.2.5 Medieval

The medieval occupation of the site perhaps holds the richest potential. It will be the first opportunity to examine the medieval suburbs of Worcester and trace the development of the plots. One important aspect will be to establish the date that the back lane was subsumed within the overall plot. Industry in the form of tile-making

can be expected in the vicinity, if not on the site, along with all the usual evidence for habitation. There should be pits and wells with groups of artefacts in closed contexts allowing tight dating evidence and there should be reasonable level of contextual preservation allowing some insight into the environment of the site. Any evidence for the development of the Foregate Street suburb in the medieval period will be extremely important, especially in relation to the known historical information for the area. This information will be of at least regional importance, and even possibly of national importance.

#### 5.2.6 Civil War period

There is a possibility that there may be part of a bastion on the site, but more likely is that there should be destruction levels associated with the levelling of the site. The speed with which this was done should allow a good insight into the nature of the block in the later medieval and early modern period. The significance of such evidence is likely to be of local and regional importance only.

#### 5.2.7 Post-medieval and modern

The development of the Star Hotel as a major coaching inn will be reflected in the large number of temporary buildings constructed in the yard. The Star Vaults public house and its timber-framed associated range should be comprehensively studied to establish their construction date and relationship to earlier buildings. A programme of building recording should be devised to mitigate the impact of proposed alterations to the structure, and to enable the impact of any such changes to be clearly understood in terms of the development of the hotel buildings and their significance.

The presence of an inn on the site since the sixteenth century will almost certainly have implications for the artefact assemblages that any excavation is likely to encounter and recover. As major consumers of cheap tablewares of various types, and clay pipes, inn sites are not infrequently artefact rich, depending upon rubbish disposal patterns, and offer a useful sample of changing material culture.

The remains should thus be graded being of local and regional importance.

### **6. The proposed redevelopment**

The proposed redevelopment consists of the demolition of the last remaining building in the former yard and the construction of a U-shaped four-storey building orientated north - south with the entrance to the south. Links will be provided between the new building and the Star Hotel at various levels. It is proposed that central courtyard area be raised, with two levels of underground parking below. The main buildings will be constructed on driven piles. It is suggested as an alternative to underground parking that individual parking be provided beneath the apartments with lifts to the apartments above. Access to the site will be via a ramp from Farrier Street.

## 7. Assessment of the archaeological impact of the proposed redevelopment

### 7.1 *Impact on below-ground archaeology*

The proposed development is likely to have a substantial impact on the below-ground archaeology of the site, whatever design is adopted. The most destructive part of the proposal is the two level underground parking which would totally remove all existing archaeology in the yard area. Even if this element were abandoned and replaced with parking directly below the apartments, the lifts proposed for each apartment would require the excavation of lift shafts. If the parking below the apartments were at street level, this would minimise the impact. A possible compromise might be to limit parking to one underground level which would fit within the footprint of existing cellars on the Farrier Street frontage. However, the full extent of cellars on this frontage is not clear and this solution still involves some element of excavation. Nor does this solution answer the requirement for parking beneath the apartments on the north and east wings, i.e. within the former yard area of the Star Hotel. Further destruction of archaeological levels on the Farrier Street frontage will also be caused by the construction of a ramp leading into the site.

The impact of development on the yard area is potentially the most significant area of destruction, as highlighted above. The remains most vulnerable to destruction here are the latterly demolished buildings associated with the Star Hotel. These remains are likely to be disturbed whatever development takes place, other than its existing use as a car park. Beneath these levels will be the medieval levels and an agricultural soil lying above Roman remains. Depending on the depth of required building, all of these levels are potentially highly vulnerable.

One final element that needs to be taken into consideration is the proposal to use piles to limit the damage to underlying deposits. A study of the adjacent Farrier Street site that examined the impact of piling on archaeological deposits showed that piling distorts the archaeological levels for up to 0.6m from the pile itself (Dalwood *et al.* 1994, 108-11). In addition, the process is likely to drive later material into earlier deposits causing archaeological contamination. Depending therefore on the number and spacing of piles used, this technique may cause significant loss of information on the archaeology.

It is concluded, therefore, that the proposed redevelopment will potentially have a very severe impact the archaeology of the Star Hotel and the adjacent area.

### 7.2 *Impact on standing buildings*

The impact of the proposed redevelopment on the standing buildings on the site appears to be slight. Some building work will be necessary to link the existing hotel to the new apartments and the existence of an adjoining Grade II\* listed structure (the Assembly Room of the Hop Pole Inn) needs to be taken into account. The building line of the existing hotel and surrounding buildings should be taken into account in any design so that the new structure does not detract from the overall impact of the Star Hotel.

## 8. Recommendations for further work

Several approaches may be taken to further work on the site, according to the proposed level and intensity of development. Given that any development within the frontage and yard areas is likely to have a significant impact on the below-ground archaeology, evaluation by trial trenching of the proposed development area is required to determine the degree of survival and quality of the remains prior to development.

Sample excavation is recommended in the yard area to the north of the hotel, to test deposit composition and depth within the Foregate Street frontage zone, with excavation extending across the line of the former back lane to test for the survival of the lane as a buried feature and to trace the relative depths and sequences of deposits either side of the lane. The Farrier Street frontage is also a high priority. Within the trenches, priority should be given to determining the depth of the stratified sequence in particular and to determining the overall sequence of occupation. This will allow a fuller assessment of the archaeological potential of the site.

It should be emphasised, however, that any development on the site should aim to preserve archaeological strata *in situ*; preservation by record of archaeological deposits being used only when destruction of such deposits is unavoidable in the context of the development.

The standing remains of the Star Hotel itself will require a photographic and written record along with a measured survey while it is still possible to achieve access easily. The last remaining building in the yard should be fully recorded before demolition so that its initial function may be determined.

The archaeological recording work undertaken in the context of redevelopment will provide an understanding of the development of the Star Hotel site, probably from the Roman period through to the present day, and excavations are likely to produce a range of artefacts bearing on the history of the site and of the inn. Consideration should be given to the possibility of using this material for the preparation of interpretative displays or panels which will enhance the distinct historic identity of the property.

## APPENDIX 1

### *Supporting data*

#### **Maps**

J. Speed, 1610

anon, 1651

J. Doharty, 1741

V. Green, 1764

G. Young, 1778 *Plan of several tenements etc. in the Foregate Street held under the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church of Worcester* (Cathedral Library Map 151)

G. Young, 1779

Ordnance Survey 1:1250 map 1884 (revised 1900) Sheet XXXIII, 3 – 4

Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map 1928 Sheet XXXIII, 3 – 4

#### **Photographs**

Aerofilms: D 8404 XXXIII-4; 21/x/1938 (Worcester City SMR)

C. Beardsmore 1976 Film 45, 9-11; 13-14 19-20 (Showing Star Vaults and Jackson's Electrical Shop before demolition (in Worcester City SMR file 80235)

#### **Documents**

Star and Garter Hotel Particulars and Conditions of Sale, 9th April 1839 (City Library Pamphlet W33.333)

Star Hotel Particulars and Conditions of Sale, 27 July 1907 (WCRO 5240/7 b.705: 358; duplicate 9526/44 b.705:1041 (no.248))

Star Hotel Guide (1910) (Original document not traced)

Star Hotel, plan of Air Raid Shelters, 1940 (WCRO 8077/47(iii) b.705: 876)

Sketch of roof truss in Jackson's electrical, C. Beardsmore 1976 (in Worcester City SMR file 100596)

Draft revised scheduling document for structures of architectural and historic interest

#### **Site Concordance listing**

The following list gives a concordance between site names used in the text and their Worcester County Monument number (WCM) and City Monument number.

SITE NAME	WCM SMR	CITY SMR (event PR)
Britannia Square	00231	100327/8/9
Broad Street	00378	100349
The Butts Evaluation	11233	100193
3-5 The Butts	11233	100194
Castle Street	25871	100358/98/414/540
City Arcades	—	100416/526/543/556/561
Deansway	03899	100219/220/221/222
Farrier Street	08229	100181
Kardonia	22105	100182
Love's Grove	09552	100184/237
Rea's Timber Yard	09550	100183
St Oswalds Almshouses	09931	100390/391
Sansome Street	07551	100075

### *Archive listing*

Sketch plan at 1:100 by N.J. Baker of Star Hotel Cellarage  
c.65 Black and White photographs  
c.72 Colour transparencies

### *Acknowledgements*

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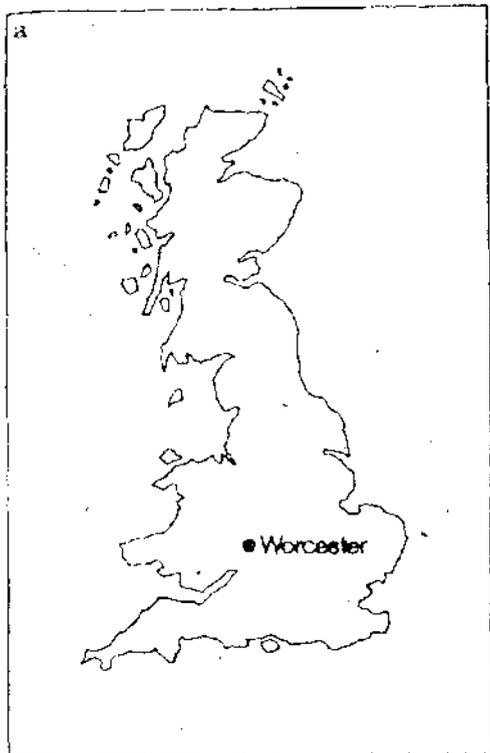


Fig 1: Location of the Star Hotel in relation to the City of Worcester.

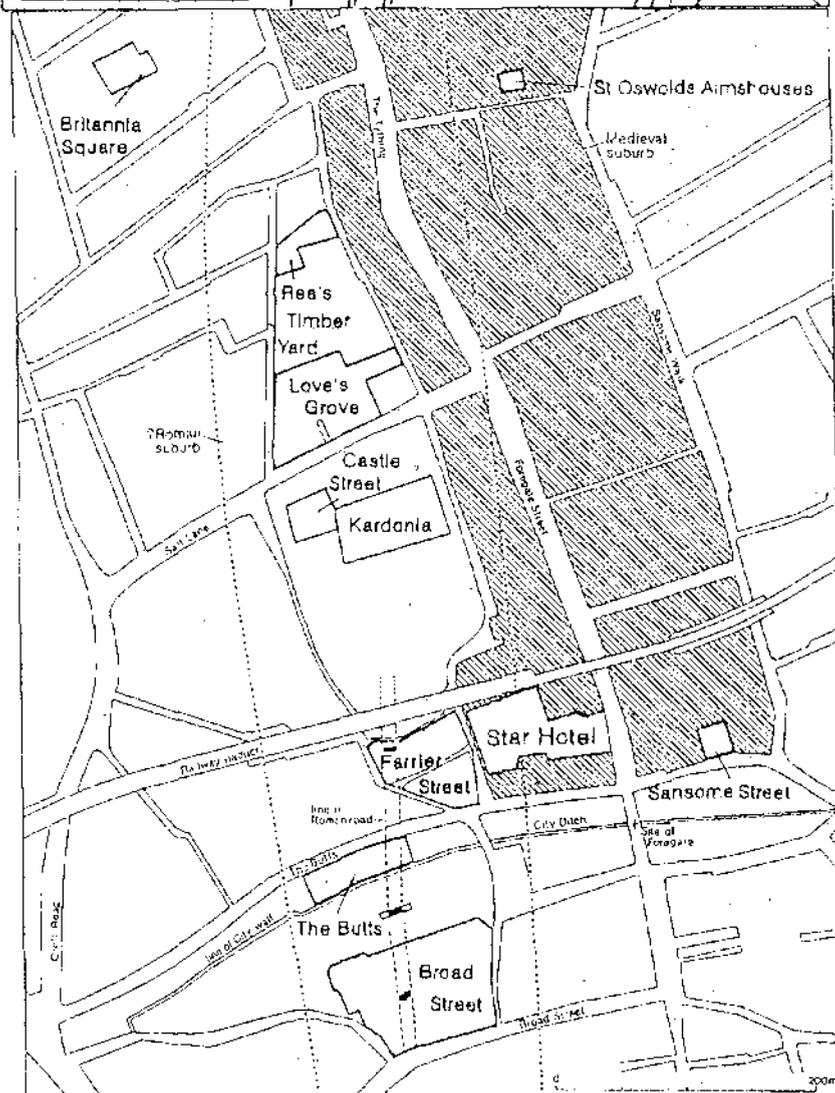
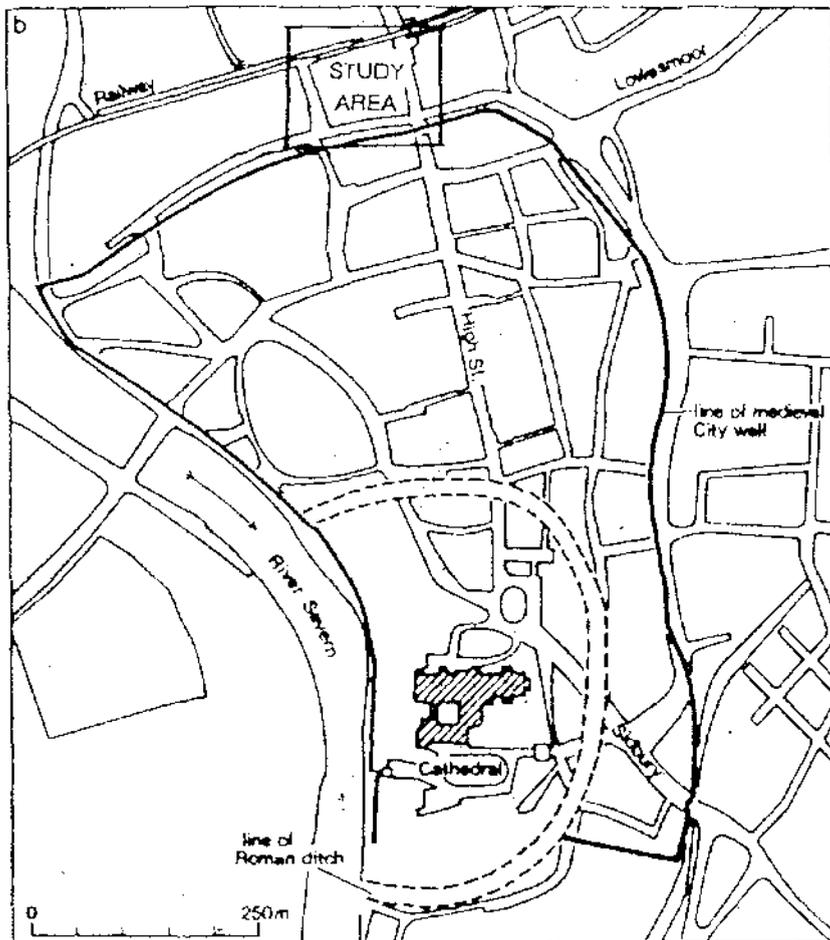
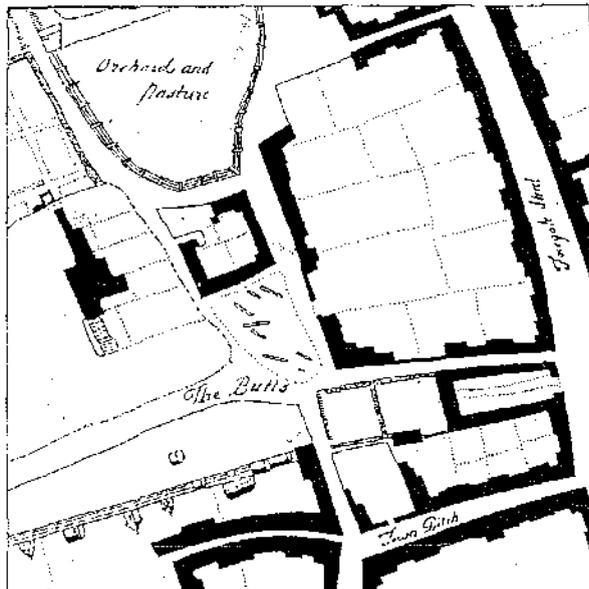


Fig 2: Location of archaeological interventions in the vicinity of the Star Hotel. The medieval suburb is shaded; the estimated limits of Roman settlement are dotted.



a



b



c

Fig 3: Maps showing the development of the Star Hotel site during the eighteenth century.  
 (a) Doharty, 1741 (b) Broad, 1768 (c) Young 1779.

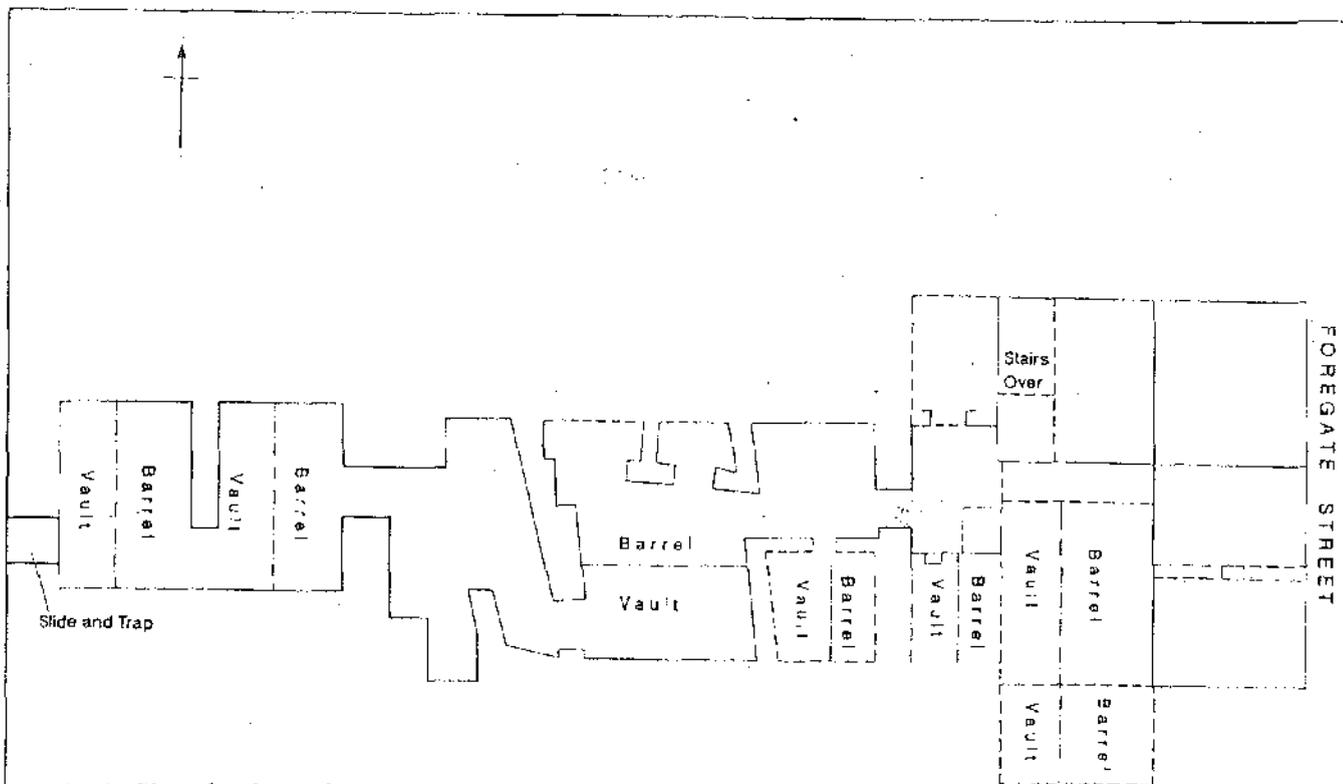


Fig 4: Sketch plan of existing cellars below the Star Hotel.

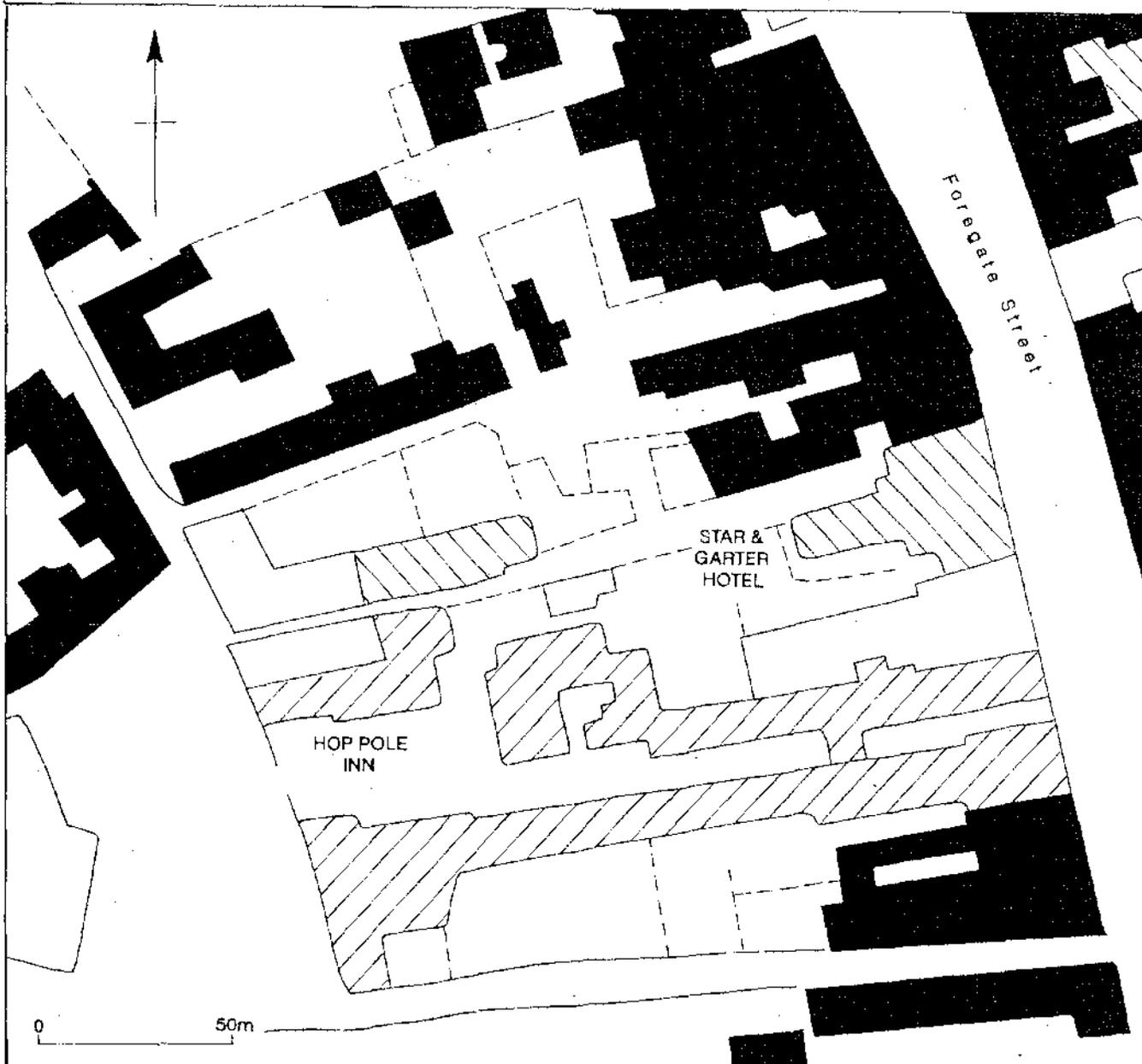


Fig 5: The Star and Garter Hotel, as planned by G. Young, 1779.



Fig 6: The Star Hotel as shown on the OS 1:1250 map (1884) and the 1:2500 map (1928).



Fig. 7: The rear of the Star Hotel, Foregate Street frontage, showing localised subsidence of wall.



Fig.8: The Star Hotel, rear view. Note change of level between plots, marked by low wall.



Fig.9: Views of the Star Hotel yard, Farrier Street frontage (above) and adjacent land (below) from the rear of the Star Hotel, looking west - north-west.