

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
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**No.7 St. John's Street, Lichfield**  
**An Archaeological Watching Brief,**  
**February 2000**

by  
E.J. Newton

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## **1.0 Introduction**

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief conducted by the Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit within the back-plot of No.7, St. John's Street, Lichfield, Staffordshire (centred on NGR SK 1168 0938). The watching brief, undertaken on the 19th February 2000, was intended to ensure that any disturbance to archaeological deposits was kept to a minimum, and that where disturbance was unavoidable, a full record was maintained. The work, commissioned by the owner of the site, J.Sambourne, Esq., in accordance with a standard planning permission condition imposed by the Staffordshire County Planning Archaeologist, covered the initial stripping and subsequent foundation trench machining of ground being developed for housing.

## **2.0 The Study Area and its Archaeology**

Lichfield's medieval development represents, for archaeologists, something of a watershed. Little in the way of pre-medieval archaeology has been recovered. To date, the only evidence of prehistoric activity, aside from a handful of scattered finds, has been confined to the area of the Cathedral's Theological College, excavated in the late 1970s (Carver, 1982). Roman material is similarly scarce; various artifacts have been recovered in and around the city, but the only evidence of any occupation to date has been a single burial uncovered within the cathedral (Greene, 1751, 398; Gould, 1976, 10) and a collection of human bones recovered inside a putative Roman pot found to the west of Minster pool (Lomax 1819, 131). Roman settlement of this area seems to have been confined to the fortified settlement of *Letocetum* (Wall). It is therefore the post-Roman development that gives archaeologists and historians the first comprehensible insight into the workings of Lichfield as a community. The construction of the Cathedral, consecrated circa 700AD, established Lichfield as something more than simply a collection of scattered agricultural communities. Pottery recovered from excavations around the existing city demonstrates a persistent, albeit low-profile, occupation throughout the medieval period.

In the immediate vicinity of the St. John's St. development, archaeological field work conducted in the late 1970s has demonstrated that the 12th century saw the emergence of a new settlement centred on Wade Street, although by the time of the foundation of the Franciscan Friary circa 1237 (100m due east of No.7, St. John's St.) this 'new town' seems to have been all but abandoned. However, more recent campaigns of archaeological work nearby, at Sandford Street and Greenhill, may help to further elucidate the date of the medieval town and its components and suburbs, when published.

### **3.0 Results**

The area of development was first levelled with a JCB excavation machine, and then the foundation trenches were inserted to a depth of 1.0-1.1m. An archaeological presence was maintained throughout these ground works, and the spoil was examined for relevant finds, although none was observed. The exposed sections were examined and subsequently recorded photographically.

Trenching revealed a layer of topsoil, fluctuating in depth between 0.40 and 0.60m, overlying a gravel-laden yellow subsoil. Tree root action and post-medieval activity (evidenced by clay pipe and other modern artifacts) were clearly seen in section, but no discrete archaeological features or layers were identified.

### **4.0 Conclusions**

No evidence of archaeology from earlier than the 19th century was observed within the area of development in spite of its proximity to known medieval sites.

### **5.0 Acknowledgements**

Thanks are due for the co-operation of J.Sambourne Esq., and the contractors. N.Dodds prepared the figures and this report was edited by I.Ferris.

### **6.0 References**

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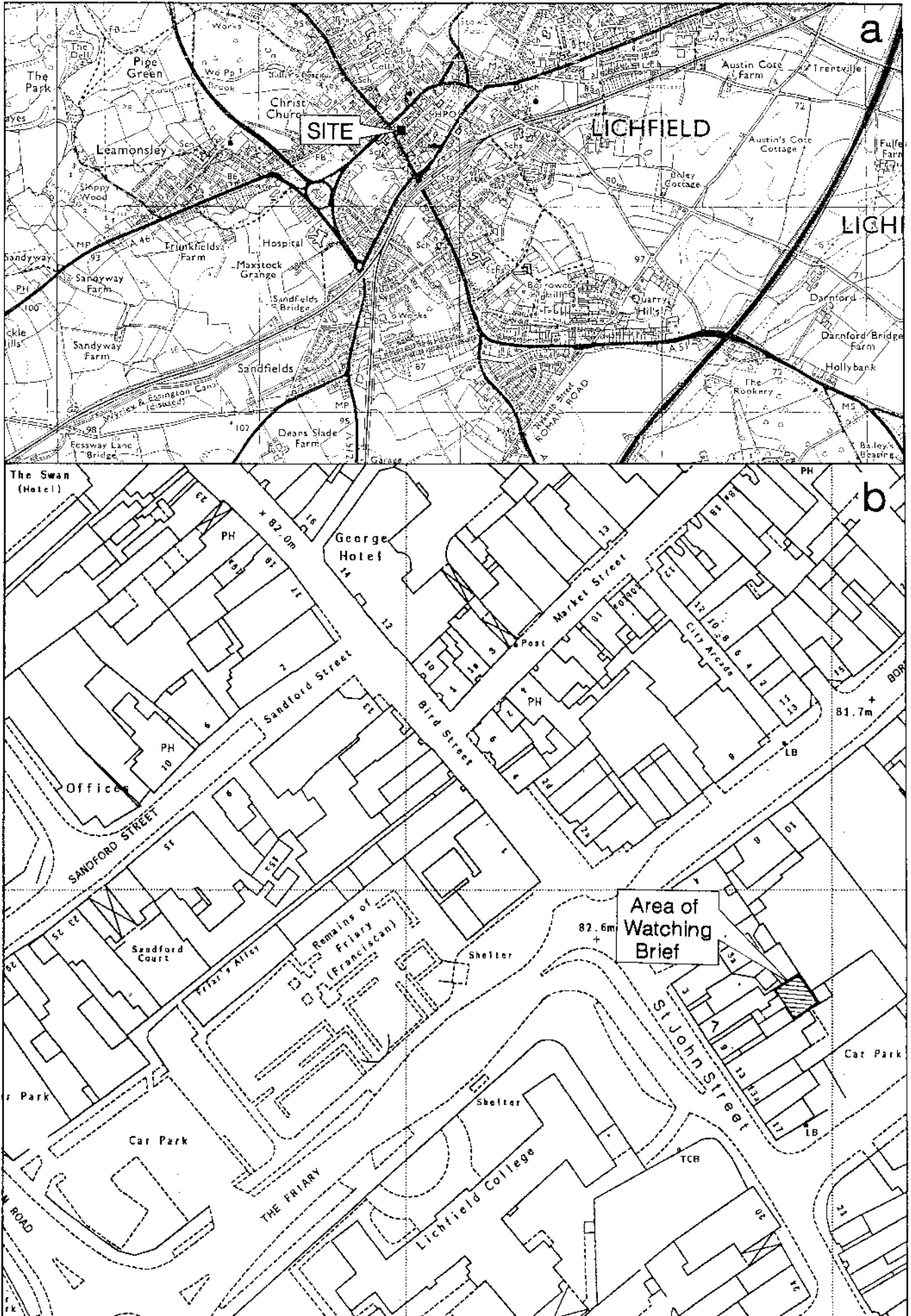


Fig.1