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**Land at Tybridge Street, Worcester:
An Archaeological Watching Brief
2002**

by
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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on land at Tybridge Street, Worcester (NGR SO 8435 5483) on the western bank of the River Severn, between March and August 2002. The watching brief was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of AXA Equity & Law Life Assurance plc, as a condition of planning consent for the construction of a new retail and industrial unit. The area was potentially archaeologically sensitive, due to its close proximity to the River Severn, where past activity, including settlement and river crossing, may have been located. An archaeological evaluation was carried out in 2000, but failed to locate any archaeological deposits. The aim of the watching brief was to assess the site for any possible archaeological remains and salvage record any archaeology revealed by the contractors groundworks. The only feature found during the watching brief was a brick-built cellar or culvert located in Trench 5.

1.0 Introduction

This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief, which was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit, in advance of the completion of the construction of a retail and industrial unit at Tybridge Street, Worcester (Fig. 1, Plate 1). The watching brief was required as a condition of planning consent by Worcestershire County Council (Planning Refs: P99A0564; P00A0085; L99A0082). The guidelines set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999) and in the *Requirements and Guidelines for Archaeological Projects in the County of Worcestershire* were followed.

The watching brief undertaken during the excavation of trenches to install storm drainage and reinstatement of manholes. All groundworks were monitored in the area along the frontage to the site, as were all excavations below 1.5m across the rest of the site.

2.0 Site Location

The development site (centred on NGR SO 8435 5483) lies to the west of the River Seven, on the opposite bank to Worcester city centre, and consists of a block of land bounded by Tybridge Street to the south-east, Hylton Road to the south-east, St Clement's Gardens to the south-west and the railway line to the north-west.

3.0 Archaeological background

The archaeological background of the site is described in detail in a desk-based assessment, (Dingwall 2000) which identified a number of areas within the proposed development site that may have archaeological potential. Potential evidence detailed in the desk based assessment were outlined as:

- Evidence of prehistoric activity within the Severn floodplain and evidence for the contemporary river environment, possibly including associated waterlogged deposits.
- Evidence of a causeway of Roman or Saxon date, leading to a bridging point.
- Evidence for medieval activity along the Tybridge Street frontage.
- Evidence for defensive or other ditches, which could potentially contain waterlogged deposits or finds.
- Evidence of post-medieval settlement, industry or other activity.

The archaeological evaluation of the site (Williams 2000) did not reveal any dateable deposits or archaeological features, but outlined that if ground disturbance was limited to 1.5-2ms depth any archaeology present may not be affected. However, it was also suggested that there was survival potential for archaeology if it existed in isolated islands at a higher level. One of the targeted areas with possible survival potential was suggested as being the area fronting onto the street.

4.0 Aims

The objective of the watching brief was to monitor any groundworks and to salvage record any archaeological deposits or features revealed by these activities. All artefacts were to be recovered and recorded. All stratigraphic sequences were also to be recorded whether or not they held an archaeological potential.

5.0 Method

All groundworks within the area of the frontage and those deeper than 1.5m were monitored by an appropriately qualified archaeologist. This included the JCB excavation of foundation and service trenches. All artefacts were recovered and recorded and environmental samples would be taken where appropriate. All stratigraphic sequences were also recorded whether or not they held any archaeological potential. Information from the site was recorded with the use of *pro-forma* record sheets, scale drawings and photography. The trenches were approximately plotted on a plan, except for Trench 2, which was not situated on the frontage. These records comprise the site archive, which is stored at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

5.0 Results

Trench 1 (Fig. 2)

Trench 1 was located next to the south-eastern boundary of the site, fronted by Tybridge Street. The trench measured 2m in width and 7.20m in length and was aligned south-east to north-west. The trench was excavated to a depth of 1.57m (Plate 2). A Grade II listed building is located to the north-eastern side of this trench. Beneath the modern ground surface layers, a layer of brick ash containing a significant number of tiles was seen (1004), this may be associated with the building to the south-east of the trench. In the earliest layer of stratification a fragment of 19th century pottery was found. Although not seen in section, a large number of mollusc shells were present in the removed spoil. Nothing was seen in this trench that was considered to have any archaeological value.

Trench 2 (Not Illustrated)

Trench 2 was located to the north-west of Trench 1 and aligned south-west to north-east along the edge of the retail unit under construction. At the south-west corner of the unit the trench turns through 90 degrees to run north-west to south-east. This trench was, at its maximum, 1.10m deep and only two stratigraphic layers could be seen, the uppermost being the make up layer placed immediately prior to the construction of the unit. A small amount of the previous, silty clay, ground surface could be seen at the base of the section.

Trench 3 (Fig. 2)

This trench was located to the north-east of the site access fronting onto Tybridge Street. The trench was very shallow, as it was only excavated in order to fit a new concrete ring to the manhole. This was cut through the hardcore/rubble make up layer and no further stratification was seen in section.

Trench 4 (Fig. 2)

Trench 4 was located in the eastern area of the site, to the north-west of Trench 3, and measured 13m in length and 7m in width. The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.20m. The earliest layer seen within the section of this trench was a dark layer of silt-clay, which can be seen in other areas of the site. This layer (5001) was slightly contaminated with modern rubble from the layer immediately overlying it (5000). Both layers had been cut, relatively recently, by pipe trenches. Nothing was seen in section that was thought to have any archaeological value, however the silt-clay layer was thought to have possible potential for environmental evidence. The layer, in this instance, was not sampled due to the amount of modern contamination.

Trench 5 (Fig. 2)

This trench was located between two manholes at the front of the standing listed building, which fronts onto Tybridge Street. The trench measured 13m in length and 1m wide. Below the modern ground surface, at a depth of 0.56m, a brick built structure was observed, made of machine cut red bricks. The structure could be seen

for the full length of the trench. At the south-western end of the structure the wall appeared to return, turning to run northward toward the front of the standing building. Part of the top of the structure was removed near the south-western end, which revealed what appeared to be a vaulted roof and the southern wall, parallel to the street. The northern side and the bottom of the structure were not located within the trench. As only part of the structure was revealed it was not possible to identify it absolutely, however it appeared to be either a culvert or part of a cellar, the latter probably associated with the standing building.

6.0 Discussion

The earliest layer of stratification seen during the groundworks may be associated with the flood plain of the River Severn to the to the east. However, much of the stratigraphy seen was modern build up. It appears that the site has been subject to development and disturbance, the remains of which either overlie any deeper surviving archaeology or has obliterated it. No specific features of archaeological interest were observed during these groundworks, suggesting that the latter was the case.

7.0 Acknowledgements

V&A Project Management commissioned the work on behalf of AXA Equity and Law Life Assurance Society plc. The work was monitored by James Dinn, Archaeological Officer, Worcester City Council. This report was prepared by Kate Bain and Charlotte Neilson and edited by Simon Buteux. The illustrations were prepared by Nigel Dodds. The work on site was carried out by Kate Bain, Mary Duncan, Charlotte Neilson and Andy Rudge.

8.0 References

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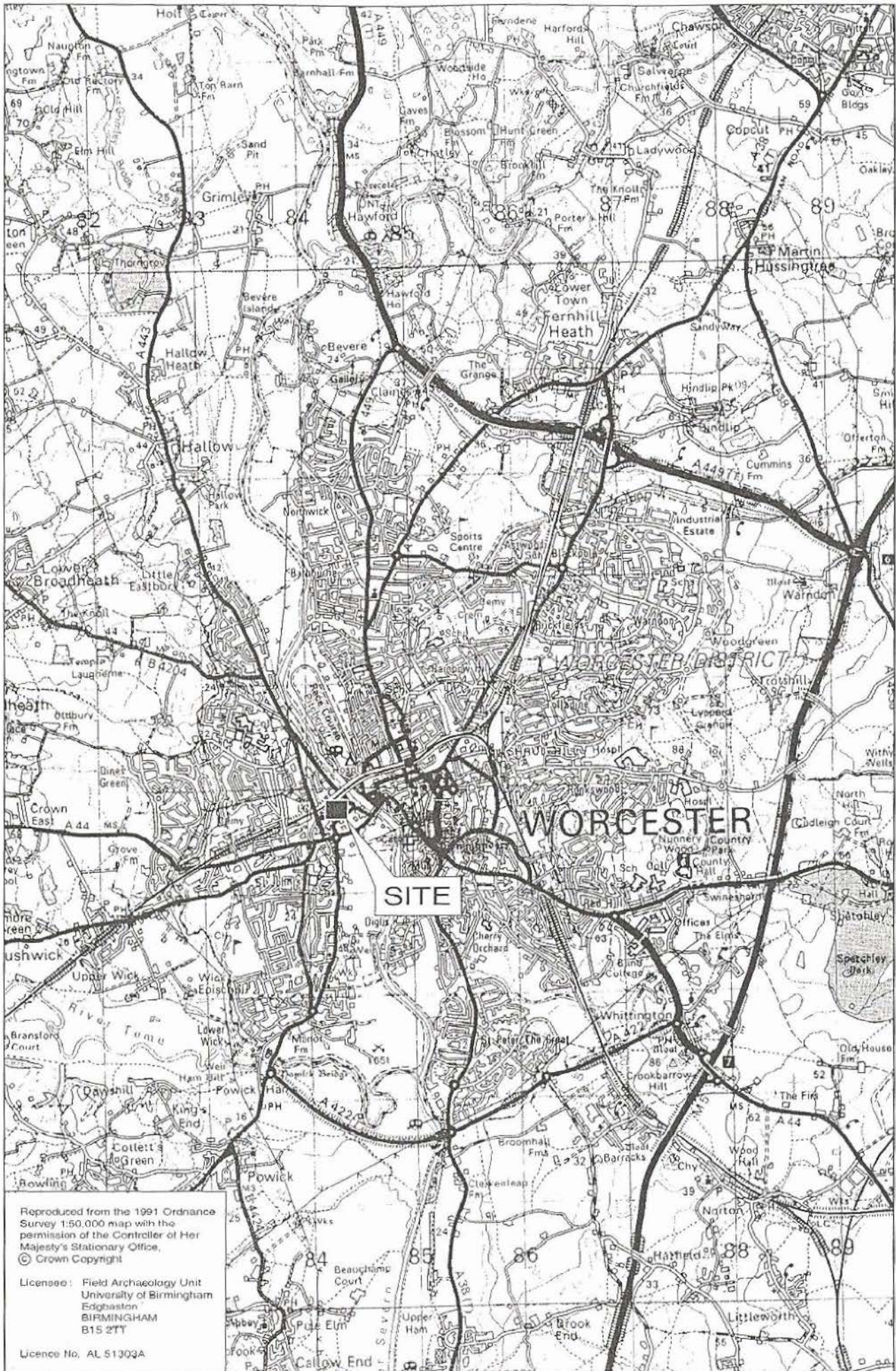


Fig.1

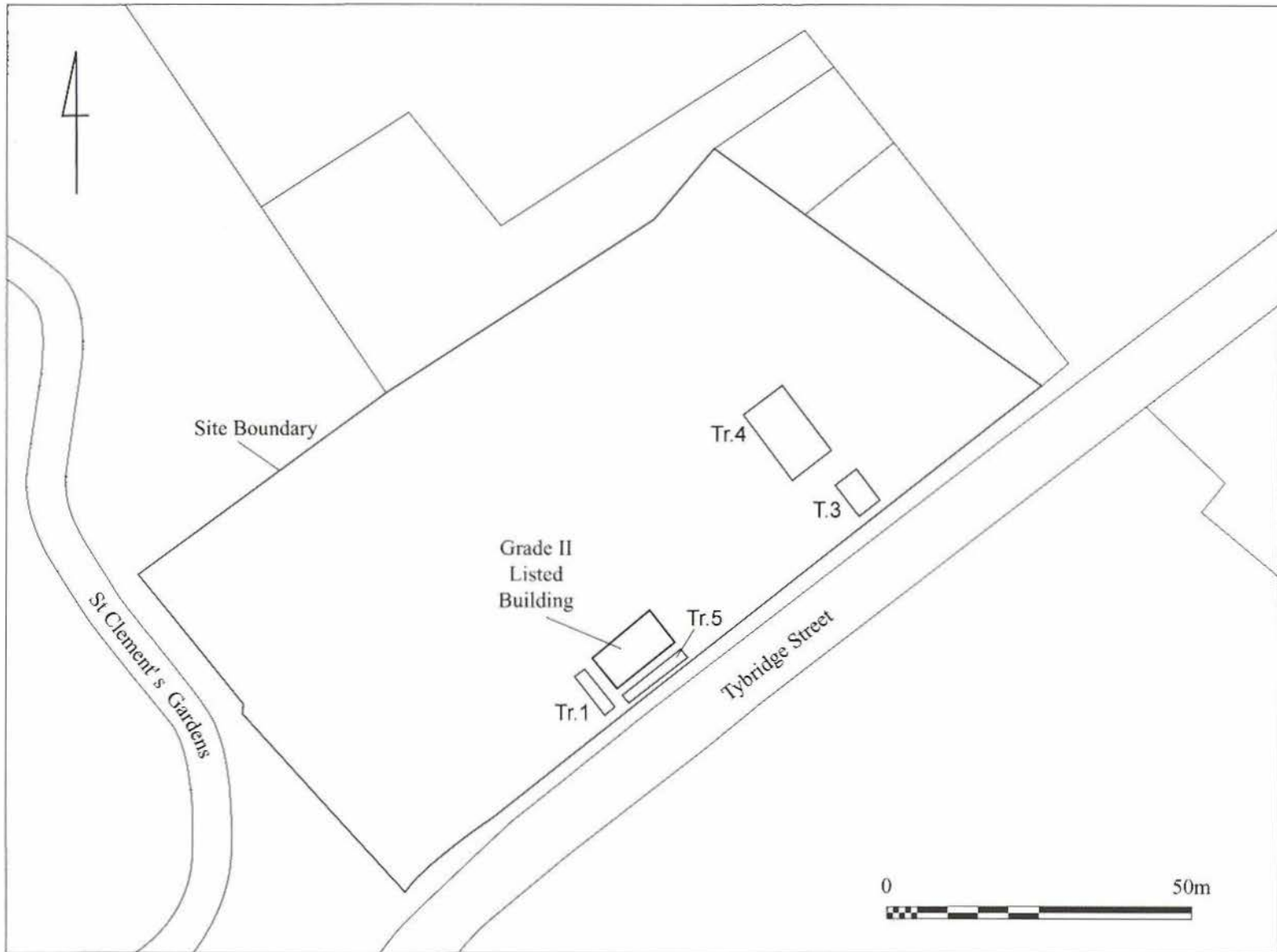


Fig. 2



Plate 1.



Plate 2.