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**The Cornbow Shopping Centre, Halesowen  
An Archaeological Watching Brief 2007**

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For  
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**THE CORNBOW SHOPPING CENTRE, HALESOWEN  
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF 2007**

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## SUMMARY

**Site Name:** The Cornbow Shopping Centre, Halesowen  
**NGR:** SO 9655 8335  
**Type:** Watching brief  
**Date of fieldwork:** 11/Dec/2007  
**Planning Ref:** P05/0878  
**Client:** Bowmer Kirkland

In June/July and December 2007 and February 2008 an archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Birmingham Archaeology at The Cornbow Shopping Centre, Halesowen on behalf of Bowmer Kirkland during groundworks associated with the construction of an extension to the Cornbow Shopping Centre.

No archaeological features, structures, deposits or horizons were identified during the course of the groundworks. No artifactual material predating the modern period was recovered. In the 1960's it appears that the concrete foundations of the Cornbow Shopping Centre were built directly onto the natural sandstone so had there been any archaeological remains, they were destroyed.

## **THE CORNBOW SHOPPING CENTRE, HALESOWEN: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF, 2007.**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

In June/July and December 2007 and February 2008 Birmingham Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief at The Cornbow Shopping Centre, Halesowen (hereafter referred to as the study area). The work was commissioned by Karen Griffin on behalf of Bowmer Kirkland in advance of a proposed the construction of an extension to the Cornbow Shopping Centre (Planning Application P05/0878).

This report outlines the results of the archaeological monitoring, which was carried out in accordance with a brief produced by Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (Dudley MBC 2007), and a Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2007) which was approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to implementation, in accordance with guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoE 1990). The project conformed to the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (IFA 1999).

### **2 LOCATION AND GEOLOGY**

The site is located at the west edge of the Cornbow Shopping Centre on Queensway in Halesowen Town Centre, and is centred on NGR SO 9655 8335 (Fig. 1).

The underlying geology consists of Grey-green, micaceous sandstone (litharenite), and grey-green mudstone, with thin coals and limestone beds known as the `Spirobis` limestone, with local intraformational conglomerate, strata may be reddened, locally.

The present character of the site is retail with part of the Cornbow Shopping Centre and a multi-story car park (Fig. 2). To the north of the site is Maybrook House and the cemetery connected to St John the Baptist's Church, to the east of the site is more of the shopping centre and Hagley Street, to the south of the site is Precinct House and to the west is The Queensway Centre. Queensway runs from the south of the site, round to the west and up to the north.

### **3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The principle aim of the watching brief was to record any archaeological features, structures, deposits, or horizons exposed during intrusive groundworks across the site.

More specific aims were to:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains uncovered during groundworks.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To preparation of a report summarising the findings.

## 4 METHODOLOGY

Groundworks comprised of the demolition of the existing multi-story car park and sections of the Cornbow, the diversion of existing services and the excavation of foundations for the new extension of the centre and additional car parking with a 360 digger. This was monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist and complemented with the salvage recording of any archaeological deposits and features revealed during works.

Stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no significant archaeology was present. A comprehensive written record was maintained using a continuous numbered context system on *pro-forma* context cards. Photographs supplemented written records and scale plans and sections.

The full site archive includes all artefactual remains recovered from the site. The site archive will be prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage, 1991), the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage (UKIC, 1990) and Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological collections (Museum and Art Galleries Commission, 1992). The paper archive will be deposited with the appropriate repository subject to permission from the landowner.

## 5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The settlement of Halesowen is situated on the east bank of the River Stour and is of Saxon origin, first referenced in the Domesday Book under the settlement of Hala. Halesowen was originally part of Worcestershire in 1086, formed part of Shropshire from the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup>, but was finally transferred to Worcestershire under the Acts of 1832 and 1844.

In the medieval period the town centred round the High Street, which is mentioned in the time of Edward III as the site of the market, and possibly extended along Great and Little Cornbow towards Cornbow Bridge over the Stour. By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the town had not grown markedly and consisted of the main High Street with side streets extending from it. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the town extended considerably towards the west.

Small-scale manufacture of nails, screws and chains as well as other iron manufacturing industries has been carried out in Halesowen to some extent since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The main routes linking Halesowen were the Dudley No. 2 canal, opened at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Halesowen branch of the Great Western railway opened in 1878 and the principal roads were those from Dudley to Bromsgrove and from Birmingham to Kidderminster, which intersect near Halesowen station (VCH 1913).

The area can be seen as open fields and orchards on the Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> edition map of 1885 (Fig. 3). The main development of buildings at this time lies to the south and east facing Hagley Street. The only significant feature within the study area was a former pool that lay to the northeast. It remained relatively undeveloped until the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century when the area was developed as a shopping centre in the 1960s (Fig. 4). This resulted in the redevelopment of the road layout and the laying out of Queensway that bounds the site to the south and west.

## 6 RESULTS

The initial phase of the watching brief was associated with the stripping of the former made ground associated with the car park (Area A, Fig. 2). The area was subsequently excavated to a depth of 5m and prepared for concrete foundation beams around the edge of the site. No

significant archaeology was encountered. The stratigraphy consisted of (Fig. 4) natural sub-soil of yellow-brown silty-clay (**1003**) was visible up to a depth of 5m below current ground level. Overlying this was a narrow layer of black clinker and slag (**1002**). The make-up for the car park consisted of a layer of crushed brick and brown silt-sand intermixed with clinker, 0.60m deep (**1001**). This was overlain by the metalled tarmac surface of the car park (**1000**).

The second phase of the watching brief involved the excavation of the remains beneath the multi-storey car park and the main part of the shopping centre (Area B, Fig. 2). This was an extensive excavation over several months to depths of between 2–3m for the basement level of the car park. The area was heavily truncated and contained made-ground. As such these were heavily truncated by the concrete foundations of the former shopping centre. No archaeological remains were encountered during this phase of the watching brief. Generally a yellow-brown sand layer (**1006**) of 1.0–2.0m depth overlay a narrow black ash/coke/clinker layer (**1007**) that overlay the natural geological layer of light yellow-brown sandstone (**1003**).

The third phase of excavation concentrated on the excavation of Area C. The natural geology (**1003**), consisting of light yellowish brown sandstone, was identified at a depth of 3m below current ground level. This was sealed by 3m of concrete (**1004**), which was a foundation for the 1960 Shopping Centre development. Large basements beneath the shopping centre were cut into the (**1005**).

## 7 CONCLUSION

Historic maps reveal the site was allotment gardens up until the 1960's and there was therefore potential for surviving remains unaffected by 19<sup>th</sup>-century development. Despite the potential of the development site, the watching brief identified no archaeological remains within the area.

Area A had the greatest potential for archaeological remains but revealed no significant remains beneath the car park. Areas B and C were heavily disrupted by the substantial concrete basements and foundation structure associated with the former shopping centre.

The stratigraphy revealed supports the suggestion that the site was open until the former shopping centre was constructed in the 1960s. The land was levelled at this time to a depth of between 0.80m to 1.0m. Elsewhere substantial foundations and basements were cut through the natural deposits destroying any remaining archaeology.

## 8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was commissioned by Karen Griffin, on behalf of Bowmer Kirkland. Thanks are due to Matt Mazzie and Mike Quinney for their co-operation and assistance throughout the project. Thanks also go to Peter Bowland, who monitored the project on behalf of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Mary Duncan, Shane Kelleher and Emma Sautejeau. Emma Sautejeau produced the written report which was illustrated by Helen Moulden, and edited by Chris Hewitson who managed the project for Birmingham Archaeology.

## 9 REFERENCES

Birmingham Archaeology 2007 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological watching brief at the Cornbow Shopping Centre, Halesowen.*

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# **The Cornbow Shopping Centre, Halesowen**

## **Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Observation and Recording**

### **Birmingham Archaeology**

#### **1. Introduction**

A programme of archaeological observations and recording is to be undertaken during the groundworks associated with the construction of an extension to the Cornbow Shopping Centre, Halesowen. As there is potential for archaeological remains to be affected by the proposed works, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council has placed a condition of planning permission (Application P05/0878) on the scheme that archaeological observation and recording is observed during development. This is in accordance with government advice in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning.

#### **2. Site Location**

The site is located within the centre of Halesowen, Dudley, West Midlands (centred on NGR SO 9655 8335).

#### **3. Historical Background**

The settlement of Halesowen is situated on the right bank of the River Stour and is of Saxon origin, first referenced in the Domesday Book under the settlement of Hala.

Part of Halesowen, which was wholly included in Worcestershire in 1086, formed part of Shropshire from the end of the 11th century to the beginning of the 18th, but was finally transferred to Worcestershire under the Acts of 1832 and 1844.

There are several places of interest near the town, including the ruins of the once famous abbey. The remains of the Premonstratensian Abbey of Halesowen founded in 1215 are situated upon a slight eminence in a secluded valley about half a mile south-east of the village. The buildings appear to have been entirely surrounded by a moat fed from a stream running along the west side and joined by another bounding the abbey grounds on the south, but most of the moat is now either dried up or filled in.

The manufacture of nails, screws and screw-shafts for steamers, gun-barrels, files, chains and all kinds of hardware is carried on in Halesowen to some extent. Nail-making was an industry in Halesowen and the surrounding hamlets in the 17th century. As early as 1625 Humphrey Hill of Cradley is described as 'a driver into the country with nails.'

#### **4. Objectives**

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains uncovered during groundworks.

- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To preparation of a report summarising the findings.

## **5. Methods**

Notice will be given to the planning archaeologist before the commencement of fieldwork. Site monitoring meetings will be arranged as required during the fieldwork.

An experienced archaeologist will attend site to monitor the groundworks during the construction. It is envisaged this will include:

- Demolition of the existing multi-storey car park and sections of the Cornbow Centre, focusing on the break up and removal of any concrete slab foundation
- Diversion of existing services
- Foundations for the new extension to the centre and additional car parking.

Where it is safe to do so, hand cleaning of exposed surfaces and vertical sections may be undertaken in order to attain better definition of any archaeological features or deposits present. No excavation of archaeological features, other than hand-cleaning, would be undertaken, except as part of a subsequent agreement with the developer and the planning archaeologist. Where it is unsafe to enter deep trenches archaeological recording will be confined to photography and the completion of pre-printed pro formas.

Should significant, or potentially significant groups of archaeological features be uncovered the Borough Archaeologist will be consulted immediately so that an alternative strategy for more detailed investigation can be devised, in consultation with the developer.

### *Recording*

Recording would be by means of pre-printed pro-formas for contexts and features, supplemented by plans (1:20 and 1:50 as appropriate) and sections (1:10 and 1:20 as appropriate), and 35mm monochrome print and high resolution digital photography.

### *Finds*

Finds would be recovered by context would be washed, marked and bagged. Appropriate conservation work would be undertaken. A metal detector would be used, if appropriate, to aid finds recovery.

## **6. Staffing**

This project will be managed for Birmingham Archaeology by Kevin Colls MIFA. The fieldwork will be undertaken by a suitably qualified member of our field team. Staff CVs are available upon request.

Specialist staff will be, where appropriate:

Dr Lawrence Barfield- Flint artefacts, freelance consultant lithics specialist.

Dr Ann Woodward- Prehistoric pottery, Research Fellow, Birmingham Archaeology, University of Birmingham.

Dr Jeremy Evans- Roman pottery, Honorary Research Fellow, Birmingham Archaeology, University of Birmingham.

C. Jane Evans- Roman pottery, freelance consultant pottery specialist

Stephanie Rátkai- Saxon, medieval and post-medieval pottery, Honorary Research Associate and Finds Researcher, University of Birmingham.

Erica Macey-Bracken- Small finds, Birmingham Archaeology, University of Birmingham

Dr Andrew Howard– Archaeo-Geomorphology, Lecturer in Archaeo-Geomorphology and Remote Sensing, Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, University of Birmingham.

Dr James Greig- English Heritage Archaeological Scientist - pollen and plant macro-fossils.

Matilda Holmes- Animal bone, freelance consultant archaeozoologist.

Dr David Smith- Micro-fauna, Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, University of Birmingham.

Dr Megan Brickley- Human Bone, Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, University of Birmingham.

Dr Roger White- Coins and brooches, Project Manager, Lecturer and Assistant Director (Development), Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, University of Birmingham.

Jane Cowgill- slag and industrial residues, freelance consultant.

Rowena Gale- charcoal and wood. freelance consultant.

## **7. Reporting**

The results of the watching brief will be presented in a report including the following information

- Non-technical summary
- Introduction
- Site location
- Objectives

- Methods
- Results
- Conclusions
- Acknowledgements
- References
- Appropriate illustrations including location plans of fieldwork

Two copies (and a digital CD ROM) will be sent to both the planning archaeologist and the Dudley HER. A further copy will be forwarded to the Black Country SMR. In addition, a summary report will be submitted for publication in *West Midlands Archaeology*.

## **8. Archiving**

The written, drawn, photographic, and finds archive resulting from the watching brief will be deposited with a suitable repository. The fieldwork will also be logged onto the OASIS online archaeological database.

## **9. Professional Standards**

- Birmingham Archaeology is a Registered Archaeological Organisation (RAO) with the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA)
- All Birmingham Archaeology staff will follow the Code of Conduct of the IFA at all times
- The watching brief will be undertaken in accordance with the standards laid down in the IFA's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2001)

*Kevin Colls MIFA*  
*Birmingham Archaeology*  
*30 May 2007*