

SUEH11



STONEBOW UNIT EXTENSION HEREFORD

Trial Trenching

for Herefordshire Primary Care Trust

DMS/112660/F

March 2012

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Project Manager

Author

Fieldwork

Graphics

Approved by

Andy Boucher

Kath Crooks

Kath Crooks

Caroline Norrman & Julia Bastek

Andy Boucher – Project Manager

..... 



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Unit 1, Premier Business Park, Faraday Road, Hereford HR4 9NZ
T 0143 236 4901 • F 0143 236 4900 • E hereford@headlandarchaeology.com
www.headlandarchaeology.com

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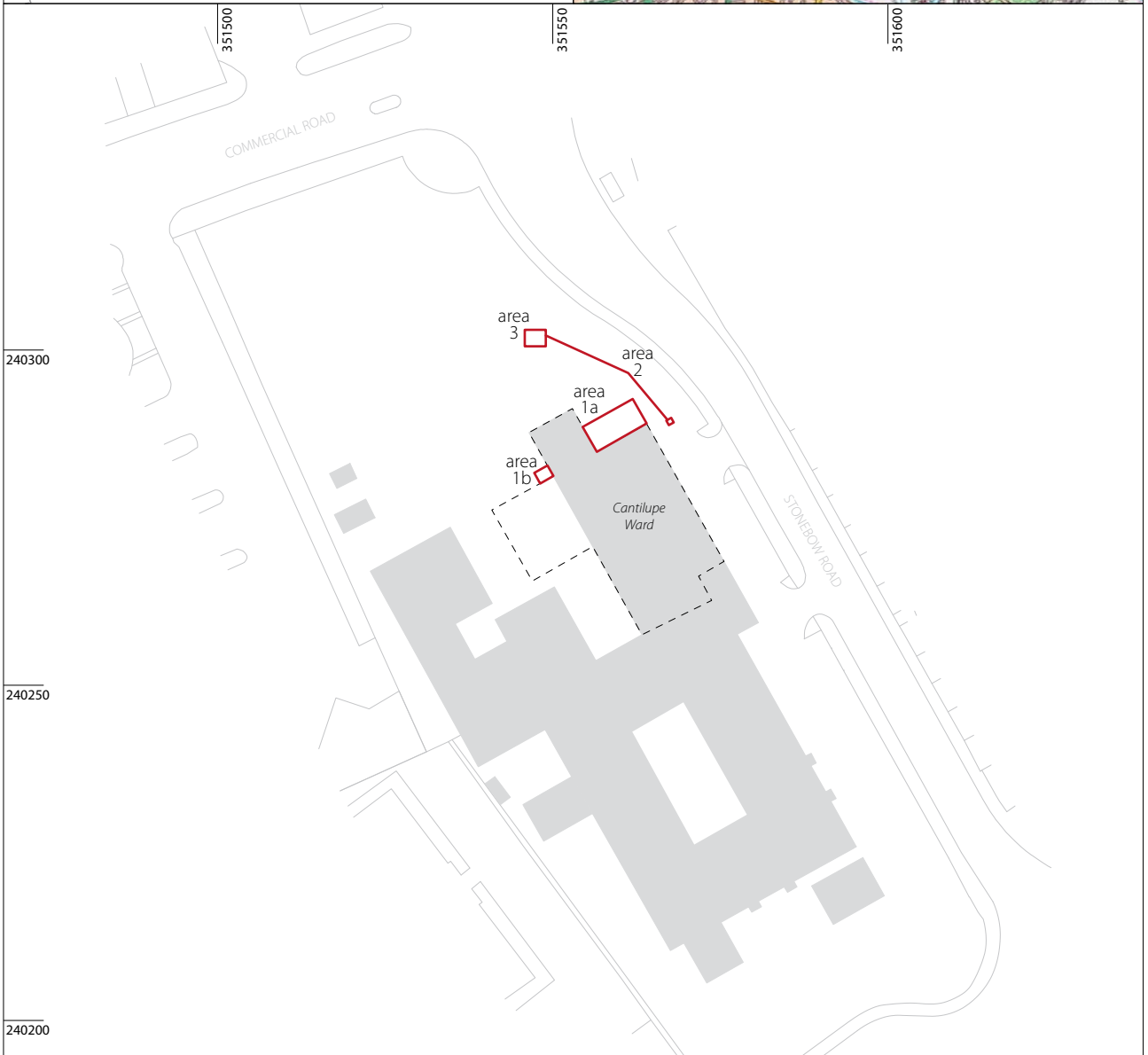
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Stonebow Unit
Hereford County Hospital
Stonebow Road
Hereford



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Scale 1:1,000 @ A4



Illus 1
Site location

STONEBOW UNIT EXTENSION HEREFORD

Trial Trenching

Headland Archaeology was commissioned by Herefordshire Primary Care Trust to undertake an archaeological watching brief during work on two single storey extensions to the Stonebow Unit at Hereford County Hospital (Illus 1). The groundworks incorporated the excavation of foundation trenches and associated drainage.

One feature of possible archaeological significance was encountered during the work; thought to be either the foundations of a wall or a dump of masonry potentially associated with the position of St Guthlac's priory. After discussion on site it was agreed that the position of the soakaway would be moved slightly to the south leaving this feature in situ.

1

1. INTRODUCTION

The site is situated on the northern side of the County Hospital complex on the western side of Stonebow Road (NGR SO 51556 39775) and at a height of some 53m OD. It lies within the Hereford Area of Archaeological Importance.

Previous excavations in the vicinity have located the burial ground of St Guthlac's priory which was founded on the site in 1143 and remained there until the Dissolution in 1539. While it was not thought that the burial ground extended as far north as the site, stone walls thought possibly to be of medieval date have been identified beneath the Stonebow Unit (Illus 4).

2. METHOD

The method used during the archaeological work was described in the Written Scheme of Investigations (Headland Archaeology 2011). Excavation was carried out by the contractors throughout, using a machine with a toothed bucket, with an archaeologist present on site. A written, drawn and photographic record was maintained.

3. RESULTS

3.1 The foundation trenches

Deposits examined during the excavation of the foundation trenches were of modern date to a depth of between 0.5m and 1m below the existing ground surface. They related to the Stonebow Unit itself, its construction, and the landscaping around it. Full context descriptions can be found in Appendix 1.

Area 1a

Features and deposits in Area 1a included the foundation cuts for the existing building, the slabbed surface and associated aggregates together with a levelling deposit or similar also of modern or post-medieval date. Natural gravel varied between 0.8m beneath the existing surface at the eastern end of the trench and 1.3m at the western end.

Area 1b

The trench was excavated to a depth of 1.3m, at which point natural gravel was seen in the base. The only deposits present were a layer of made ground into which features associated with the existing building had been cut.



Illus 2
Wall or rubble [301]

3.2 Area 2 – The drainage trench

The drainage trench (Illus 1, Illus 4) ran along the eastern side of the existing building, from an existing manhole, to a soakaway to the north. At the commencement of the trench the natural gravel lay some 1.6m beneath the existing surface. Remaining deposits and features in this part of the trench were of later post-medieval or modern date including a substantial modern levelling dump and existing surfaces on this part of the site.

At a point some 1.2m north of the of the commencement of the trench was an area of considerable modern disturbance approximately 2m wide, including a brick and concrete foundation, an area of unbonded brickwork which may have been a path, and a number of surfaces.

Beyond this point less disturbance was present and the natural gravel lay only 1.1m beneath the existing surface. Deposits above this resembled garden soil and contained occasional animal bones suggestive of domestic waste.

3.3 The soakaway (Illus 2 & 3)

The only feature of potential archaeological significance observed during the watching brief was a dump or rubble wall foundation on the northern side of the soakaway.

The natural gravel was present at a depth of 1.7m beneath the existing surface. Above it was a layer of fairly clean pink stony clay, possibly a redeposited natural deposit [304]. A line of rubble, either a foundation, or alternatively a dump of building material [301] ran across the northern side of the hole. Only one of the stones may have been worked, this was roughly shaped rather than sawn or carved. There was no bonding material present suggesting that if this was, indeed, part of a wall it would have been a footing rather than a standing structure. The single very small sherd of pottery recovered from it implied a date in the 16th or 17th centuries. The feature lay on the limit of the excavation at a depth of some 1.3m beneath the existing surface. It lay upon, or was cut into the natural red brown gravel and had been cut on its southern side by a very large modern or post-medieval pit [302] with a vertical edge curving to a flat base. It was filled by a mixed brown clay silt [303] containing stone rubble and mortar flecks. Fill [303] was sealed by a 0.9m deep layer of topsoil.

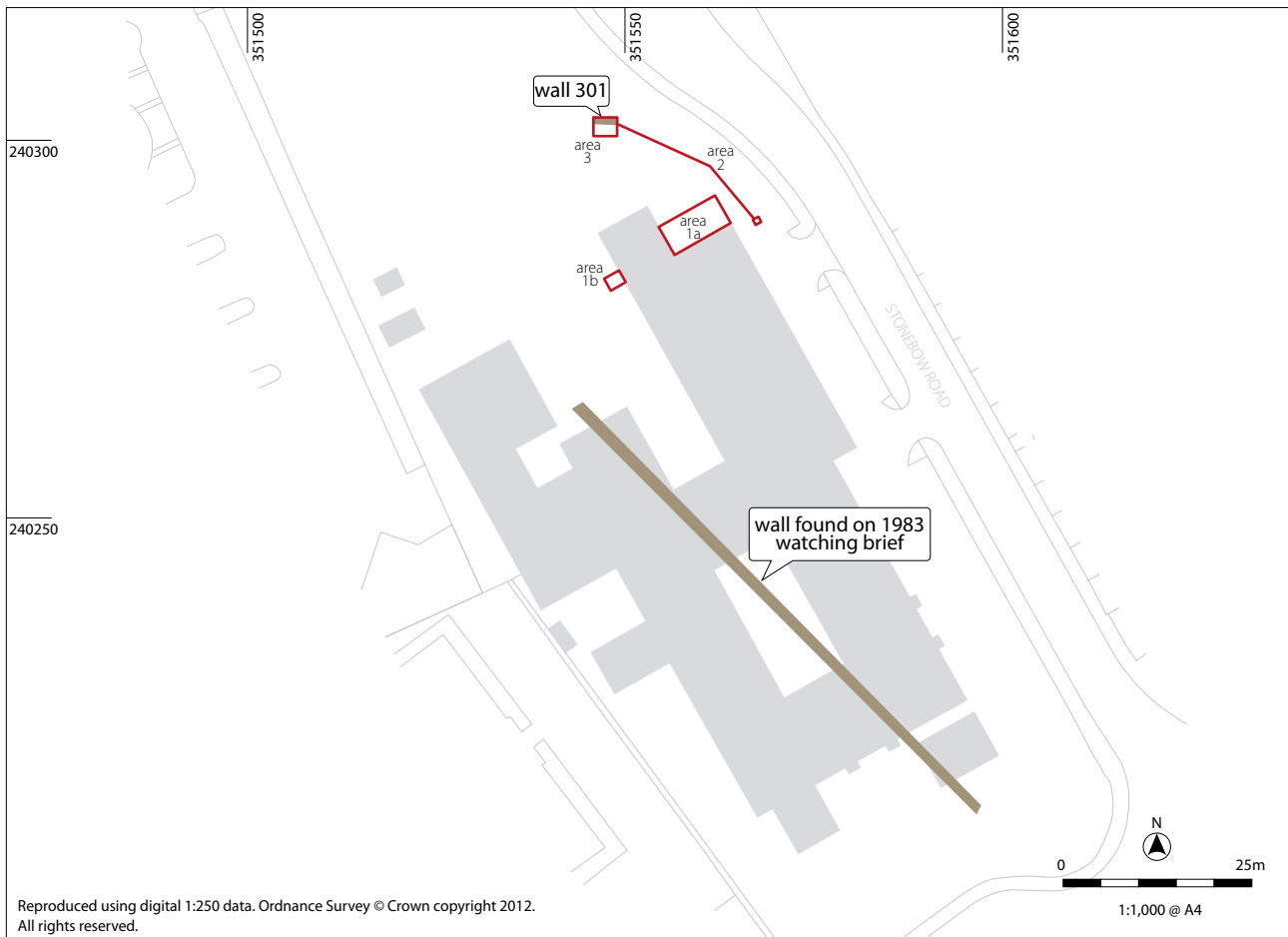
4. DISCUSSION

The watching brief established that no major structures associated with St Guthlac's priory were present to the north of the Stonebow Unit. However, the wall or rubble [301] encountered in the soakaway lay only some 30m from the area in which the footings for walls were recorded during watching briefs in 1983 (Shoesmith 1984

2



Illus 3
Wall [301] in section, showing cut [302]



Illus 4

Relationship of [301] with walls found in 1983

3

p.340). Although no dating evidence was found, these walls predated the tithe map and were on the north-west/south-east alignment associated with the priory. They were, however, far more substantial than masonry [301] – about 1m wide, formed of roughly squared stones and bonded with mortar, in contrast to [301]. A building thought to be the priory church was found some 120m away; at present it seems most probable that the cloisters and domestic ranges probably lay to the northeast of the church. If this was the case then part of the complex may have lain in the area area of the Stonebow Unit.

Two interpretation for stones [301] are possible. They may have been footings for a wall or a robber trench associated with such a structure. Alternatively they may have been rubble dumped following robbing of a structure, and may therefore possibly be monastic masonry. If this was the case then the line interpreted as a cut [302] may in fact delineate two differing dumped deposits ([303] and [304]) in a larger feature, the edges of which were not seen in the soakaway. The single sherd of pottery recovered from within stones [301] implied a date in the 17th or the earlier part of the 18th century, supporting

the interpretation that they may be the disposal of unwanted robbed masonry following the dissolution of the monastery. Even if this were the case it seems unlikely that such rubble would have been moved a great distance from its original position before being dumped, and it could, therefore, indicate the presence of monastic buildings fairly close by.

The depth at which the natural gravel was seen beneath the surface varied considerably across the site, ranging from approximately 1.1m in those parts of the drain trench where the ground appeared to be relatively undisturbed, to 1.7m in the soakaway where considerable modern disturbance was seen. Trial trenching carried out in 2009 (Craddock-Bennett 2009) revealed natural gravels at a height of 51.54m OD some 1.5m beneath the existing surface in a trench 10m to the west of the soakaway.

On this part of the site this variation was thought to be caused by post-medieval or modern activity rather than by natural or historic processes.



5. REFERENCES

- Craddock-Bennett, L 2009 *Equitable Access Centre, Stonebow, Hereford, Archaeological Desk Top Study and Trial Trenching*, HAS 836.
- Headland Archaeology 2011 *Stonebow Unit Extensions, Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Watching Brief*.
- Shoesmith, R 1984 *St Guthlac's Priory, Hereford, Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, Volume XLIV.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Site register

Context register

Context no.	Trench no.	Description	Dimensions (m)
100	1	Concrete slabs and base.	D: 0.08
101	1	Grass, turf and topsoil.	D: 0.09
102	1	Mid greyish brown, made ground.	1-1.2m
103	1	Red brown natural gravel and sand.	–
104	1	Mixed deposit of soot and building rubble.	W: 1.8+ D: 0.5
105	1	Aggregate base or backfilled cut.	W: 1.8 D: 0.15
106	1	Mixed dark brown fill of foundation cut with modern rubbish.	W: 1.8 D: 0.9
107	1	Mixed organic peaty material and pink clay – pond or slow moving water - redeposited.	–
108	1	Mixed deposit, made up ground beneath slabs [100]. Consists of mixture of [102] and [107].	D: 0.15
109	1	Presumably linear modern feature filled with a dark grey brown clay silt.	W: 0.6 D: 1.12
110	1	Modern inspection chamber, cut and fill.	–
200	2	Modern rubble, brick and mortar.	D: 0.45
201	2	Mixed brown loam with sandstone.	D: 0.85
202	2	Natural red brown gravel as in Areas 1 and 3.	–
300	3	Natural red brown gravel in base of trench.	–
301	3	Rubble footing or dump of stone. Much animal bone between stones. No bonding material.	L: 1.9+ W: 0.6 D: 0.5
302	3	Large cut with vertical sides sloping to flat base.	L: 2.1 W: 2.+ D: 0.9
303	3	Mixed brown clay silt with stone rubble, charcoal and mortar. Fill of [302].	L: 2.1 W: 2.+ D: 0.9
304	3	Pink brown clay with very frequent stone and gravel, possibly a redeposited natural.	L: 2+ W: 0.7+ D: 0.4



Drawing register

Drawing no.	Scale	Plan / section	Description
1	1:50	Section	North facing section Area 1a
2	1:50	Section	West facing Section Area 1a
3	1:50	Section	North facing section Area 1b
4	1:50	Section	West facing section Area 1b

Photographic archive

The photographic archive consisted of two black and white and two colour slide films. In addition 89 digital photographs were taken for illustrative and reference purposes.



Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd
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North East

13 Jane Street, Edinburgh EH6 5HE

T 0131 467 7705 • F 0131 467 7706 • E office@headlandarchaeology.com

North West

10 Payne Street, Glasgow G4 0LF

T 0141 354 8100 • F 0141 332 9388 • E glasgowoffice@headlandarchaeology.com

Midlands & West

Unit 1, Premier Business Park, Faraday Road, Hereford HR4 9NZ

T 0143 236 4901 • F 0143 236 4900 • E hereford@headlandarchaeology.com

South & East

Technology Centre, Stanbridge Road, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 4QH

T 01525 850 878 • E leighton.buzzard@headlandarchaeology.com

www.headlandarchaeology.com