

ESLR/03



EDGAR STREET LINK ROAD, HEREFORD: ROYAL MAIL SORTING OFFICE AND JEWSON SITE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
PLANNING REF. DMCE/092576/F
HER REF. EHE 80166

commissioned by Balfour Beatty Living Places
on behalf of Herefordshire Council

August 2017

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Resource and Learning Centre**

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PROJECT SUMMARY

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd undertook a program of archaeological works during the construction of the Edgar Street Relief Road in Hereford. During ground investigation works on the site of the Royal Mail Sorting Office and Jewson building supplies, a former wharf relating to the Gloucester to Hereford Canal was identified as well as a series of stratified post-medieval made ground deposits relating to multiple phases of demolition and levelling.

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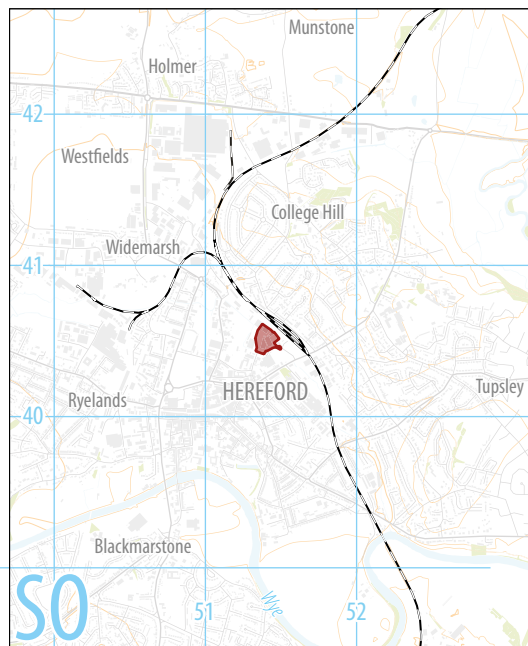
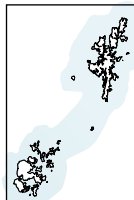
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ESLR/03

Edgar Street Link Road
land west of Widemarsh Street
Hereford

0 200km
1:10,000,000 @ A4

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0 50m
1:2,500 @ A4

 site boundary

 **HEADLAND
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ILLUS 1 Site location

EDGAR STREET LINK ROAD, HEREFORD: ROYAL MAIL SORTING OFFICE AND JEWSON SITE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

1 INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology was commissioned by Balfour Beatty on behalf of Hereford Country Council to undertake a program of archaeological work during the construction of Edgar Street Relief Road in Hereford. A number of archaeological interventions were made along the route of the link road; the subject of this report are the works located at the Royal Mail Sorting Office and Jewson building supplies (Illus 1).

The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority (Mr Julian Cotton) identified that the location was likely to contain archaeological remains that could be adversely affected by the proposed works, and requested the implementation of a programme of works so that any significant remains present and at risk of harm could be suitably recorded or avoided.

The advisors requirements were encapsulated within a brief issued by Herefordshire Archaeology (Ref. b092576s2) and a Written Scheme of Investigation (Kimber 2014, Boucher 2016) issued by Headland Archaeology.

1.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

The new Edgar Street Link Road forms an east-west transport link within Hereford city connecting Edgar Street in the west (NGR SO 50895 40679) with Commercial Road in the east (NGR SO 51589 40388). This document reports on the archaeological works undertaken at the site of the Royal Mail Sorting Office (NGR SO 51412 40513) and Jewson building supplies site located towards the eastern end of the road corridor.

The site is located within the 'Widemarsh' area of the city. Peat deposits have previously been identified both within and

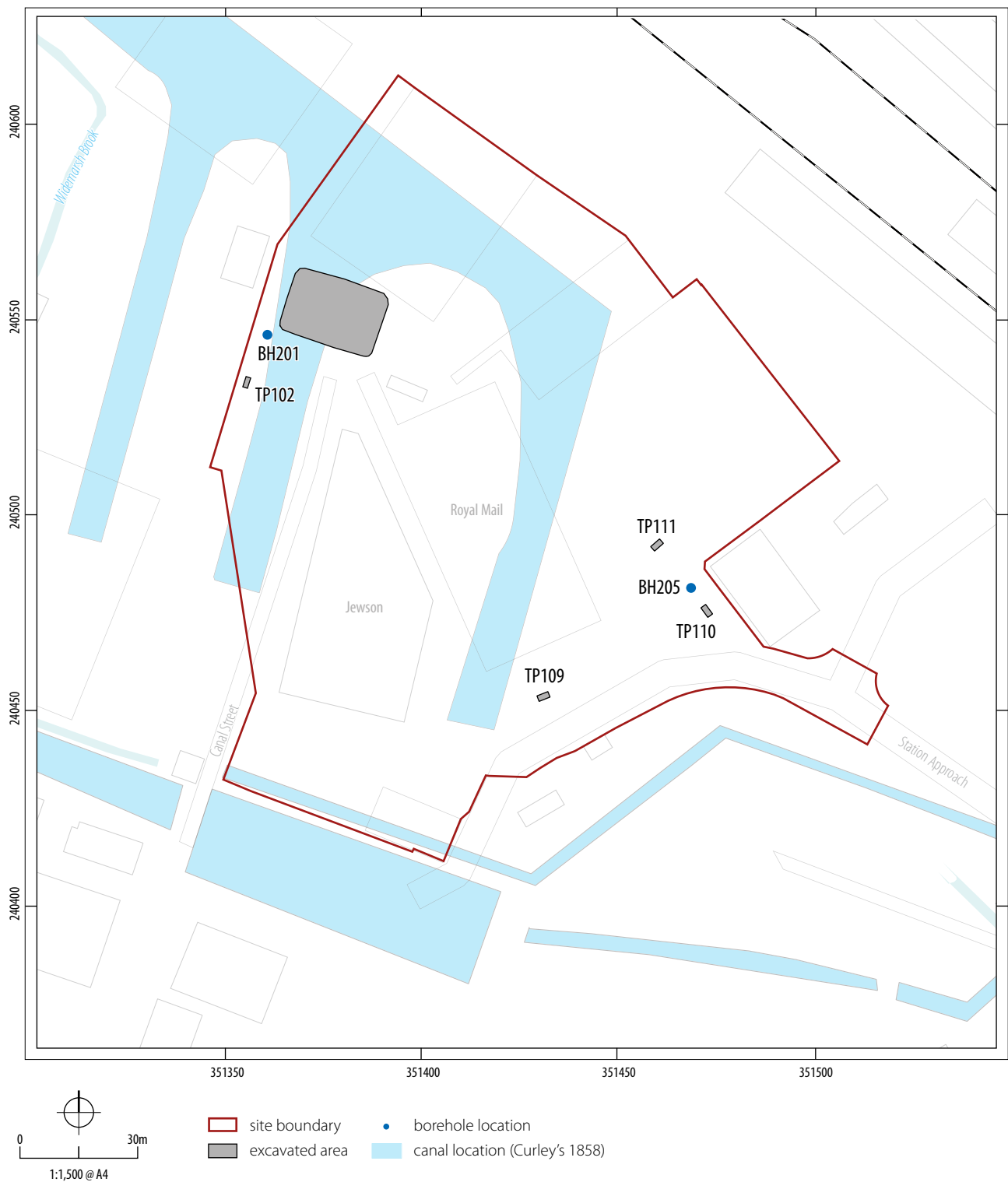
immediately to the west of the site. The solid geology of the site consists of siltstones and mudstones of the Raglan Mudstone Formation, overlain by Alluvium (NERC 2017).

1.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site is situated on the terminus of the former Hereford to Gloucester Canal where three wharfs were located. The canal was in full operation from 1845 until 1904 when it was filled in and the site and surrounding areas sold to Herron & Sons, a London firm (Shoemith 1989) before the construction of several warehouses.

A watching brief was undertaken by Archaeological Investigations Ltd (Vyce 1998) during the construction of the Royal Mail sorting office that currently occupies the site. The works undertaken were unable to establish the survival of any significant structures relating to the canal basin, however, a peat horizon was recorded in all the trenches excavated across the site. Trial trench evaluation of the Essex Arms site, immediately to the west of the Jewson site in 2008 identified a sequence of two distinct peat deposits. The pollen and radiocarbon analysis of samples from the earliest of these suggested that an open landscape was established on the site by the middle Bronze Age (Crooks, Rouse and Boucher 2008).

In 2009, during the planning stages for the current works, a trial trench evaluation was undertaken along the proposed route of the link road by Archaeological Investigations Ltd (Crooks 2009). The evaluation comprised eight trenches along the route of the then proposed development. Trench 8, located c 25m to the north-west of the current works, identified modern dumping and levelling deposits down to a depth of 1.06m where the natural substrate was encountered.



ILLUS 2 Site map with excavated areas overlaying the extent of the former Hereford to Gloucester Canal as seen in Curley's 1858 Map of Hereford

2 AIMS

In general, the purpose of the investigation was to record and advance understanding of the significance of the heritage assets before they are lost. This was achieved by determining and understanding the nature, function and character of any remains on the sites, disseminating the results of that work and archiving the material and paper records.

The objectives of the archaeological works were as follows:

- › To identify the extent of peat deposits previously recorded in this area (Vyce 1998);
- › Canal basin: To gather evidence for the structure and layout of the canal basin and any pertinent information relating to its use.

3 METHOD

All monitoring was undertaken by an archaeologist of ACIfA equivalent experience or higher.

The main focus of the watching brief was the monitoring of ground investigation works undertaken by a geotechnical contractor.

An archaeologist was in attendance for the excavation of four test pits and two boreholes. Further monitoring was undertaken during the machine excavation of an area immediately to the north of the Royal Mail and Jewsons buildings.

All recording followed ClfA Standards and Guidance:

- › *Code of Conduct* (ClfA 2014a)
- › *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014b)

All recording was undertaken on Headland pro forma record cards. Black-and-white prints and digital photographs were taken with a graduated metric scale clearly visible. Plans and sections were drawn at 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50 depending on the features in question.

4 RESULTS

The locations of monitored areas are provided in Illus 2. Full context descriptions are presented in Appendix 1.

The geology across the site varied with light grey sandy gravels encountered in the north-west of the site at a depth of 2.70–5.50m Below Ground Level (BGL). In the east of the site around Borehole 205 and Test Pit 110 (Illus 3) gravels were encountered at a depth of c 4.30m BGL underlying an organic rich peaty deposit that was present between 3.00–4.30m BGL.

Overlying the natural stratigraphy was a series of made ground deposits present to a minimum depth of 2.70m and a maximum depth of 3.5m BGL with no consistency in depths or deposits across the site.



ILLUS 3 Test Pit 110 showing stratified made ground facing north

In the north-west of the site a 25m x 18m area was excavated to a depth of 1.50m. A 13m section of canal wharf was exposed orientated approximately north-east to south-west with a 0.8m wide sandstone retaining wall (1036) running along the western side of the wharf (Illus 4 and 5). The eastern side had no evidence for a retaining wall; the eastern edge of the canal appearing to be 'unmade'. The width of the wharf varied between 10.5m in the south and 14m in the north of the excavated area. The observed backfill material within the wharf (1041) comprised a dark grey/brown waterlogged silty clay that contained rubble and post-medieval demolition debris and extended to a depth of at least 1.14m within the confines of the wharf. The canal wharf and associated deposits were sealed by approximately 0.27m of made ground.

5 DISCUSSION

The locations of the boreholes and test pits that were monitored and recorded in the course of the archaeological investigation did not impact on any buried deposits associated with the Hereford to Gloucester Canal. What was primarily encountered was a series of made ground deposits that relate to periods of levelling that have taken place on the site since the infilling of the canal and three wharves in 1904.

The excavated area to the north-west that exposed part of the canal wharf matches approximately with Curley's 1858 map of the area (Illus 2). The lack of a retaining wall on the eastern bank may suggest that the western side of the wharf was used for loading



ILLUS 4 South-west facing plan shot of canal wharf **ILLUS 5** North-west facing plan showing wharf wall [1036]

and unloading cargo from the barges providing the need for a fixed mooring point rather than an earthen bank.

Peat deposits identified in the east of the site suggest a continuation of the peat deposits associated with the Widemarsh area, identified during previous observations on the site (Vyce 1998), and to the immediate west of the site (Crooks, Rouse and Boucher 2008).

6 CONCLUSIONS

The works undertaken on the Royal Mail and Jewson site were successful in locating the central of the three wharves from the Gloucester to Hereford Canal. The identification of a stone retaining wall only on the western side of the wharf provides evidence for only one side being used for the unloading and loading of cargo. The areas outside of where the canal was expected were primarily composed of made ground to a substantial depth. This is something to be expected with the repeated demolition, levelling and construction that has taken place on the site in the past 113 years since the infilling of the canal.

The works also succeeded in establishing that peat deposits are present at the eastern extent of the Sorting Office site. Their presence here, when considered alongside their known presence on the Essex Arms site to the west, suggests that peat deposits previously extended across the whole of the sorting office site.

7 REFERENCES

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8 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 TRENCH AND CONTEXT REGISTER

TP102

L (M)	W (M)	MIN. D (M)	MAX. D (M)
3.00	0.55	4.10	4.10
CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION	DBGL (M)	
1008	Firm brownish red silty clay, occasional stones and gravels.	0–0.70	
1009	Mid brownish red, silty clay, more frequent gravel, slightly darker than (1008).	0.70–1.80	
1010	Dark grey clayey silt, charcoal fragments, organics small, visible laminations.	1.80–2.20	
1011	Compacted light grey clayey sandy gravels.	2.20–2.90	
1012	Loose light grey clayey sandy gravels, waterlogged	2.90–4.10+	
Summary: Test pit located on western site boundary.			

TP109

L (M)	W (M)	MIN. D (M)	MAX. D (M)
2.50	0.55	3.70	3.70
CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION	DBGL (M)	
1018	Concrete	0–0.56	
1022	Black, gritty silty sand, cinders, gravel, vitrified ceramic type clinker, brick fragments.	0.56–0.74	
1023	Mid brown sandy silty clay, frequent CBM.	0.74–0.84	
1024	Brownish red silty clay made ground.	0.84–2.20	
1025	Mid brownish grey slightly sandy silty clay, clinker, animal bone, frequent white glaze, charcoal.	2.20–2.80	
1026	Mid brown silty clay, occasional organics visible, occasional charcoal.	2.80–3.20	
1027	Grey gravel lens.	3.20–3.30	
1028	Organic, mid brown silty clay, frequent shell.	3.30–3.60	
1029	Grey gravels.	3.60–3.70+	
Summary: Test pit located at southern end of Royal Mail building.			

TP110

L (M)	W (M)	MIN. D (M)	MAX. D (M)
2.50	0.55	3.30	3.30
CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION	DBGL (M)	
1018	Concrete and tarmac.	0–0.57	
1019	Made ground - Brownish red silty clay, frequent stones, gravels.	0.57–1.25	
1020	Made ground – Brownish red silty clay.	1.25–3.00	
1021	Dark grey clayey silt, organic deposit, peat formation.	3.00–3.30+	
Summary: Test pit at entrance to sorting office. Peat deposits identified.			

TP111

L (M)	W (M)	MIN. D (M)	MAX. D (M)
2.70	3.10	0.55	3.10
CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION	DBGL (M)	
1034	Concrete, blue sheeting, gravel make up	0–0.28	
1032	Dark reddish brown gritty sandy clay, frequent angular gravel, frequent charcoal, frequent CBM fragments. Occasional white glaze, occasional coal fragments.	0.28–1.00	
1033	Red brick wall foundation	0.60–2.70	
1035	Reddish brown sandy clay, very disturbed.	1.00–3.10+	
Summary: Test pit located in Royal Mail car park.			

BH201

L (M)	W (M)	MIN. D (M)	MAX. D (M)
0.20	0.10	5.50	5.50
CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION	DBGL (M)	
1018	Concrete and tarmac.	0–0.70	
1014	Brownish red silty clay.	0.70–2.00	
1015	Dark grey clayey silt, possibly layer or lens of light blue grey towards base.	2.00–2.70	
1016	Light grey sandy gravels.	2.70–5.50	
1017	Bedrock	5.50+	
Summary: Bore hole located on western site boundary.			

BH205

L (M)	W (M)	MIN. D (M)	MAX. D (M)
0.20	0.10	4.30	4.30
CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION	DBGL (M)	
1018	Concrete and tarmac	0–0.58	
1019	Made ground — Brownish red silty clay, frequent stones, gravels.	0.58–1.30	
1020	Made ground — Brownish Red silty clay.	1.30–3.50	
1021	Dark grey clayey silt, organic deposit, peat formation.	3.50–4.00	
1030	Black peaty type deposit.	4.00–4.30	
1031	Grey gravels	4.30+	
Summary: Borehole located between TP110 and TP111. Peat identified.			



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