

BBHH17



16–18 HIGH TOWN, HEREFORD

WATCHING BRIEF
PLANNING REF. P172823/F

commissioned by Alban House (Hereford) Ltd

July 2018

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PROJECT TEAM:

Project Manager **Kate Bain** / Author **Tom Cochrane** / Fieldwork **Harriet Bryant-Buck, Tom Cochrane,**
Stuart Milby / Graphics **Caroline Norrman**

Approved by **Kate Bain**



Headland Archaeology Midlands & West
Unit 1 | Clearview Court | Twyford Rd | Hereford HR2 6JR
t 01432 364 901
e midlandsandwest@headlandarchaeology.com
w www.headlandarchaeology.com



PROJECT SUMMARY

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd undertook an archaeological watching brief within the basement of 16–18 High Town, Hereford, as part of renovation work being carried out on the building. The fieldwork revealed several features of post-medieval date, presumably relating to the construction of and subsequent alterations to the buildings.

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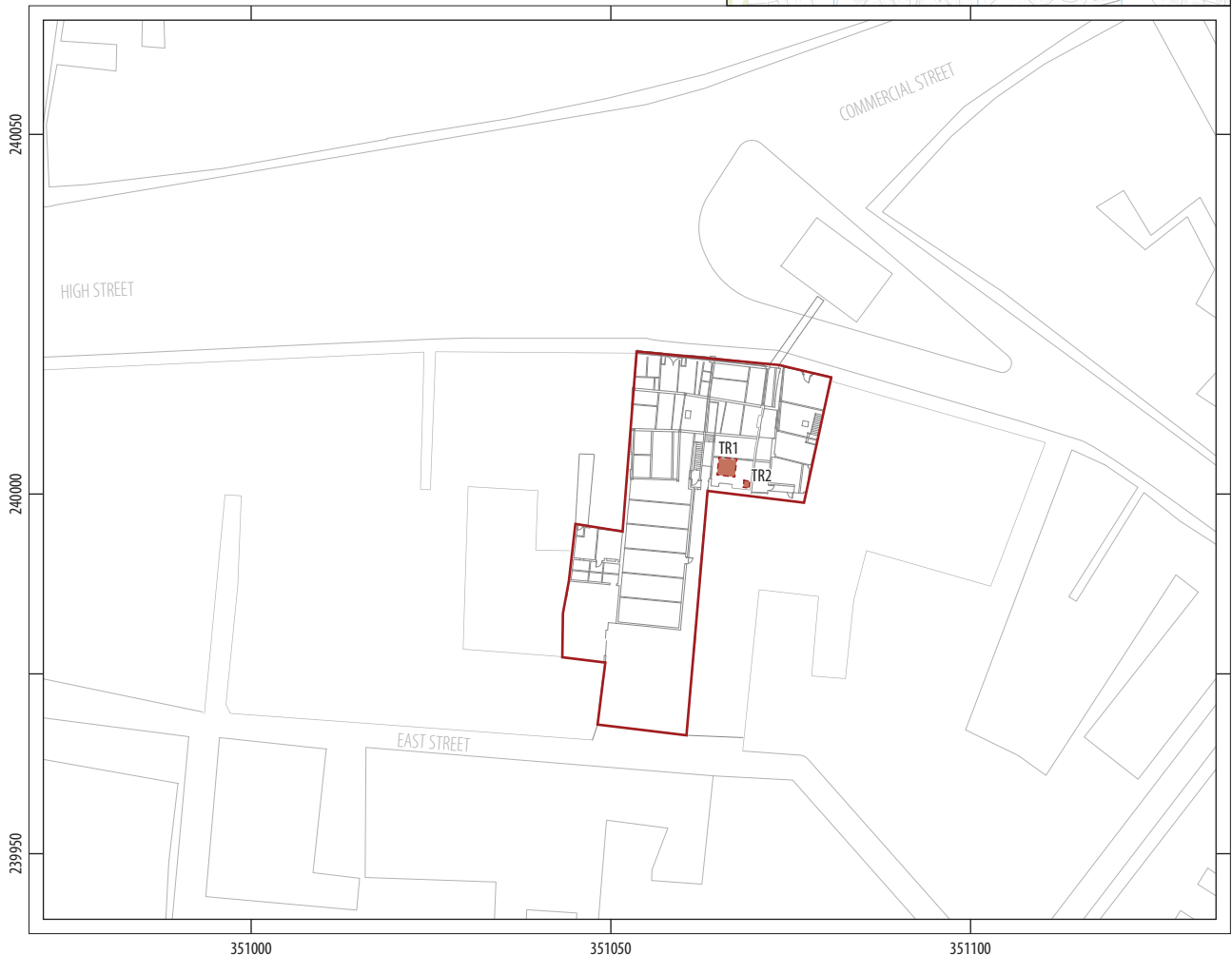
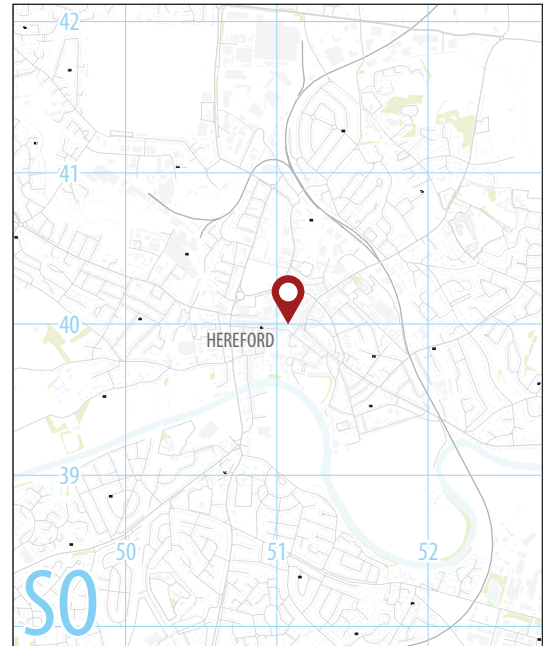
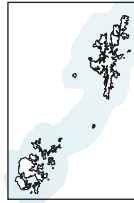
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16-18 High Town
Hereford
Herefordshire

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



0 20m
1:1,000 @ A4

development boundary
trench location

HEADLAND
ARCHAEOLOGY

MIDLANDS & WEST

Unit 1, Clearview Court, Twyford Road
Hereford HR2 6JR
01432 364 901
www.headlandarchaeology.com

ILLUS 1 Site location

16–18 HIGH TOWN, HEREFORD

WATCHING BRIEF

1 INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd was commissioned by Alban House (Hereford) Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief as part of early stage enabling works and make-safe operations within the basement of 16–18 High Town, Hereford, prior to refurbishment of the site. The works entailed the breaking existing ground floor slab and excavation of a new lift pit toward the southern end of the basement area and the excavation of a 900mm deep sump in the south-east corner of the basement.

1.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site comprised a block of building land in central Hereford upon which two Grade II listed buildings were located. The buildings were badly damaged as the result of an extensive fire in October 2010. Planning permission to rebuild and redevelop the site was granted by Herefordshire Council on 17th October 2011. Listed Building consent (Ref 161546) was granted for alteration and extension works associated with the planning application.

A brief for the works was provided by the archaeological advisor to Herefordshire Council (Cotton 2017). The brief required precautionary ad hoc monitoring of works associated with the replacement of the ground slab and the monitoring of the excavations associated with both the sump and the lift pit base, due to their sensitive location over the site of the city's Saxon defensive ditch.

Whilst the site was in a very sensitive location within the designated Hereford Area of Archaeological Importance or 'AAI' (Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, 1979). Formal [AAI] notification of works was not necessary under Section 35 of the 1979 Act, due to acceptable notification having already been provided via applicable previous project work here (Cotton 2017).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

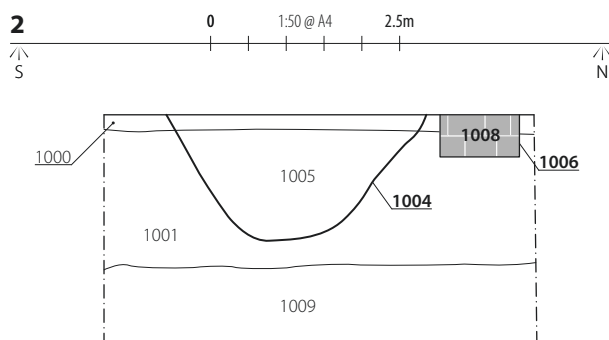
The site of the buildings straddles the buried former line of the Saxon ditch which formed part of the city defences.

During the refurbishment of 16–18 High Town in 1992 a salvage excavation was mounted to record stratified levels going back to the Saxon defences, preserved beneath two bays of a 15th century building. Stratified archaeological deposits over 2m thick were identified.

Evaluation trenches excavated in 2016 (Thomson 2016), towards the south of the properties, revealed evidence of possible late Medieval ground surfaces and other post-medieval activity extending to depths of at least 1.5m below current ground level.

A single trial trench to the rear of the properties was excavated in 2017 (Bennett 2017). The trench revealed what appeared to be the line of the rampart with a possible stone revetment, and the remains of associated ditch deposits, sealed by 1.80m of modern deposits and made ground.

The Grade II listed buildings, fronting onto High Town, comprised one building with 15th century origins exhibiting multiple phases of later alterations; A 15th century timber-frame and plaster ceiling, covered by 17th century plaster work, was identified at 1st-floor level to the front of the building. The properties were extensively damaged by fire in October 2010.



ILLUS 2 East facing section of Trench 1, showing ditch [1004] and wall [1008]



ILLUS 3 North facing section of Trench 1, showing feature [1002]

3 OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY

The objectives of the excavation were as follows:

- to ensure the excavation and recording of any archaeological remains that would be disturbed by the groundworks; and
- to produce and deposit a satisfactory archive and disseminate the results of the work via grey-literature reporting and publication as appropriate.

4 METHOD

Fieldwork was carried out between 20th April 2018 and 3rd May 2018.

All ground works, with the exception of the removal of the concrete floor slab, were carried out by hand, by Demolition Environmental Services Ltd (DES) and were monitored by an archaeologist of ACIfA equivalent experience or higher.

All recording followed standards set out by ClfA Standards and Guidance. All recording was undertaken on pro forma record cards. 35mm black-and-white prints were taken with a graduated metric scale clearly visible. Digital photographs were taken for illustrative purposes only and do not form a part of the site archive.

Sections and plan were drawn at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50, as appropriate.

5 RESULTS

A full trench and context register is included in Appendix 1.

5.1 TRENCH 1 – LIFT BASE PIT

Trench 1 was excavated to form the lift pit and was located to the south of the eastern basement. It measured 2.8m east-west, 2.7m north-south and was 1.5m deep. The deepest deposit encountered in this trench, context (1009), was a mid-brownish red silty sand with

gravel inclusions. This was encountered at a depth of 1.0m below the basement floor level.

Context (1001) was observed across the entirety of the trench and measured 1m in depth. This material was a mid reddish brown clayey sand with coarse gravels which lay over context (1009) and, although it appeared to be similar to (1009), it was seen to contain rare inclusions of animal bone, mortar and brick fragments. The presence of these inclusions suggests that this material had been disturbed or redeposited.

Several features were cut into this deposit. Context [1004] was a possible east-west running ditch which was cut into (1001) and was visible in the east and west sections of the trench. This feature was 1.60m wide and 0.80m deep and had steep sides and a rounded base, Illus 2. It was filled with a very compact mid greyish red clayey sand with gravel inclusions. No anthropogenic material was recovered from this feature.

Wall [1008] was located towards the north of the trench and was orientated east-west. It was constructed of frogged red bricks in regular courses and measured 0.35m wide and extended down 0.30m below the current ground level. This wall appeared to be associated with 19th century renovations to the buildings and was dismantled shortly before the current phase of work in order to facilitate access to the site.

Context [1002] was a cut which was visible in the north facing section of the trench. It measured 0.92m wide and 0.60m deep and did not extend more than 0.15m into the trench. It had steep, almost vertical sides and flat base. It contained a single fill, (1003); a mid greyish brown sandy clay. This fill was very loose with voids throughout and contained frequent broken brick inclusions, as well as occasional stones.

Feature [1010] was a large cut located on the north side of the trench and was visible in the south facing section. It measured 2.20m in width and was 0.40m deep. It was filled with a mid reddish grey silty sand with frequent building rubble and bricks which was seen to be very similar to (1003), possibly suggesting that [1010] and [1002] were of a similar nature and/or date. This feature did not extend

southwards past wall [1008] and so would seem to be contemporary or later than this wall.

The upper 0.25m of the trench was overlain with a modern concrete surface (1000).

5.2 TRENCH 2 – SUMP PIT

Trench 2 was located in the southeast corner of the basement, a short distance from Trench 1. In this area the concrete slab (1000) was laid directly on to the natural geology, (1012), which was described as a mid reddish-brown sand and gravel, apparently representing the same deposit as (1009).

There were no archaeological features or deposits observed in this trench.

6 DISCUSSION

Several features and deposits were observed during the excavation of Trench 1.

The earliest deposit encountered during the works (1001), appeared to represent a layer of disturbed or redeposited natural. The mortar and brick fragments present within it may suggest that this material was associated with construction or subsequent renovations to the buildings on site, most likely the initial construction of the basement.

Features [1002] and [1010] and their fills appeared to be very similar to each other and probably held a similar use or purpose. The amount of building material present within the fills of these features suggests that they were both associated with renovations to the buildings above. Although their exact nature is difficult to determine, it is possible that they are former foundation cuts for walls within the basement of the building.

Feature [1004] appeared to be an east-west running ditch, although the purpose of such a ditch remains unclear. As it is cut into (1001), it would appear to date to after the construction of the buildings. It is possible that it held some form of drainage purpose, however, it was not possible to confidently ascribe a function to the feature within the restricted confines of the excavation.

Wall [1008] represented a former division within the basement and was probably 19th century in date.

No feature or deposits of archaeological significance were uncovered in Trench 2.

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8 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 TRENCH AND CONTEXT REGISTER

DBGL = Depth below ground level

TR01			
L (m)	W (m)	Min. D (m)	Max. D (m)
2.80	2.70	1.50	1.50
Context	Description		DBGL (m)
1000	Concrete slab and bedding		0 - 0.25
1001	Clayey sand and gravels		0.25 – 1.00
1002	Cut of feature		0.25 – 0.60
1003	Fill of [1002]		0.25 – 0.60
1004	Cut of feature on east and west facing sections		0.25 – 0.50
1005	Fill of feature [1004]		0.25 – 0.50

1006	Cut of W-E cellar wall (recently demolished)	0 – 0.30	
1007	Fill of [1006]	0 – 0.30	
1008	Wall foundations for recently demolished cellar wall	0 – 0.30	
1009	Mid brownish red silty sand and gravel	1.00+	
1010	Cut of rubble filled feature	0.25 – 0.60	
1011	Fill of [1010]	0.25 – 0.60	
Summary	Pit/trench for lift base. In basement of fire damaged building.		
TR02			
L (m)	W (m)	Min. D (m)	Max. D (m)
0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80
Context	Description		DBGL (m)
1000	Concrete slab and bedding		0 – 0.25
1012	Natural: Compact gravel deposit		0.25 +
Summary	Small trench for sump		



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Headland Archaeology South & East
Building 68C | Wrest Park | Silsoe | Bedfordshire MK45 4HS
t 01525 861 578
e southandeast@headlandarchaeology.com

Headland Archaeology Midlands & West
Unit 1 | Clearview Court | Twyford Rd | Hereford HR2 6JR
t 01432 364 901
e midlandsandwest@headlandarchaeology.com

Headland Archaeology North
Unit 16 | Hillside | Beeston Rd | Leeds LS11 8ND
t 0113 387 6430
e north@headlandarchaeology.com

Headland Archaeology Scotland
13 Jane Street | Edinburgh EH6 5HE
t 0131 467 7705
e scotland@headlandarchaeology.com

www.headlandarchaeology.com