

Archaeological assessment of Ross-on-Wye, Hereford and Worcester

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Summary

The historic town of Ross-on-Wye was surveyed during the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey, a desk-based study of the 64 smaller historic towns in Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Archaeological and documentary evidence relating to the historic core of Ross-on-Wye was carefully analysed, comprising topographic data, published and unpublished archaeological reports, museum collections, primary and secondary historical sources, historical maps, and field data recorded by the project team.

Detailed evidence is provided on the character and layout of the settlement in the medieval and post-medieval periods. For each period the available information is analysed and mapped in detail, and a model of the development of the town is proposed. In addition, the evidence for pre-urban occupation is considered, together with evidence of 19th century occupation. All archaeologically-relevant information has been recorded as part of the county Sites and Monuments Record. Specialist assessments of artefacts, ecofacts, standing buildings and documentary sources are included. A detailed archaeological research framework has been developed for Ross-on-Wye, which will inform future archaeological investigations as well as management decisions.

The historic core of Ross-on-Wye contains buried archaeological deposits, and these are judged to have moderate potential. In addition there is moderate potential for the recovery of artefact and ecofact assemblages. The historic buildings constitute a complementary body of evidence for the post-medieval period, and are judged to have moderate potential for detailed study and recording. The surviving documentary sources are very few for the medieval period, and of average quantity for the post-medieval period; consequently there is moderate potential for further study.

1 Introduction

1.1 Location and landuse

The urban area of Ross-on-Wye is located at NGR SO 599 241 in South Herefordshire District. The modern settlement of comprises extensive 19th and 20th century housing and light industrial development centred on the old town on the east bank of the river Wye.

1.2 Topography, geology and soils

Ross-on-Wye lies at a height of between 35m and 65m OD on raised ground to the east of the River Wye. The churchyard and site of the medieval bishop's palace occupy the

highest ground at the southern edge of the town with Broad Street and Edde Cross Street sloping down to the north. The soils of the Eardiston 1 association are mainly typical brown earths (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Ragg *et al* 1984) overlying Devonian Brownstones, Black Nore and Sandstone (British Geological Survey 1:250,000, sheet 51°N-O.4°W).

1.3 Chronological outline

At Domesday the manor of Ross was owned by the canons of Hereford and contained a settlement or settlements with a mill (Thorn and Thorn 1983). A priest is also mentioned which suggests the presence of a church at this date.

In the early 12th century the bishops of Hereford actively promoted the growth of towns within their lands. During the reign of Stephen, probably in the late 1130s, the manor of Ross received the grant of a weekly market. This was confirmed in 1241 when a three day fair was also granted (Wills 1982). In the mid-13th century an attempt was made by Reginald de Grey to establish a borough just across the Wye *c* 500m to the west of Ross. The borough at Wilton was presumably intended to capture Ross's trade but, despite its location at the river crossing, Wilton never developed into a town.

In *c* 1285 the "Red Book" of the bishop of Hereford recorded 96 burgesses and nine other tenants in Ross, including a fuller and a goldsmith (Bannister 1929). The total value of the borough at this time was £10 15s (Beresford and Finberg 1973), less than half of the value of the boroughs of Ledbury and Bromyard also recorded in the "Red Book" (Hillaby 1970, 28). Estimates of population based on the number of tenants also suggests that at this period Ross was half to a third the size of Ledbury and Bromyard (Hillaby 1970, 29).

Ross prospered in the later 13th century but in 1305 Ross declined to send representatives to Parliament due to an inability to pay them the daily fee (Wills 1982; Noble 1964). In the later 14th century the Black Death, combined with frequent attacks across the border from Wales, led to a decline in all the towns in Herefordshire. Before 1349 there were 37 market centres within Herefordshire but by 1500 Ross was one of only nine surviving market towns in the county (O'Donnell 1971).

In 1559 Elizabeth I took possession of the manor of Ross and at her death in 1603 the manors of Ross foreign and Ross borough were bought by the Earl of Essex's widow (Morris 1980, 17). In 1597 Ross was described as "an ancient and great market town for all kinds of cattle, corn and other commodities on a great thoroughfare, passage or portway from the counties of Hereford, Monmouth, Brecon, Carmarthen, Pembroke and most of South Wales to the City of London and other parts of England" (Morris 1980, 115). By 1600 Ross was the only market centre south of Hereford (O'Donnell 1971) and the town prospered during the post-medieval period despite suffering devastating outbreaks of plague in the first half of the 17th century. At the end of the 17th century many changes were brought about due, in large part, to the influence of John Kyrle, the "Man of Ross". These included the laying out of the Prospect for public recreation, the provision of a piped water supply and the restoration of the causeway linking the town with Wilton Bridge (Morris 1980, 22).

Ross was the main market for the buying and selling of wool in the region (Rowley 1986, 210) but in the 17th century it was also renowned for its smiths and leather products (Hurley 1989; Morris 1980, 101). These industries continued into the 18th and 19th centuries and in 1769 John Partridge brought upward of 100 skilled men from Birmingham and established them in New Street in a long row of nailshops (Morris 1980, 101).

The 18th century was a period of great prosperity in Ross due, in large part, to a growth in facilities for travel. Improvements to roads and the start of regular coach services through the town resulted in a greatly increased flow of traffic with the consequent demand for the provision of accommodation and other services. During the later 18th century the fashion for "Romantic" and "Picturesque" landscapes led to an increasing interest in excursions to areas of great natural beauty. The Wye Valley attracted large numbers of tourists and a fashionable new resort was created at Ross. It was at this period that many older houses were rebuilt or refronted in brick. The population rose from a maximum of 525 in c 1285 to 1600 by 1801 (Hillaby 1970, 29). This was a much larger increase in population than that experienced in Ledbury or Ross over the same time, and was largely due to growth in the 18th century.

In the early 19th century the approaches to Ross from the west and east were radically altered and a considerable expansion of the built-up area occurred. In 1855 the railway line between Hereford and Gloucester was completed and a station opened to the east of the town which led to an expansion of the town in that area. By 1901 the population of Ross had increased to 3292 (Wills 1982). Ross has continued to expand in the 20th century as the building of the M50 and the consequent linking of Ross to the motorway network has allowed easy access for commuters and tourists (Wills 1982).

1.4 Placename studies

The placename *Ross* derives from the Welsh for "promontory" which describes its topographical position (Gelling 1992, 181; Coplestone-Crow 1989). It is written *Rosse* in Domesday and *Ros* in various documents dating to the 12th and 13th centuries. In 1346 it is referred to as *Roos* and in c 1670 *Rosse* (Bannister 1916, 164).

The name Ross-on-Wye began to be used in the 19th century as the attractions of the River Wye to visitors were recognised and it was wished to emphasise the advantageous position which Ross occupied on the river. This form of the name was officially recognised by the Post Office in 1931 (Wills 1982).

1.5 Syntheses of documentary and archaeological data

The history of Ross-on-Wye has not been intensively studied although the "Red Book", including references to the town, has been transcribed by Bannister (1929) and interpreted by Hillaby (1975). Recent popular publications have concentrated on social history (Druce 1980; Morris 1980). The only synthesis of historical, topographical and archaeological evidence for the town was undertaken for development control purposes by Hereford and Worcester County Council (Wills 1982).

The present assessment was carried out by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey in 1994. The text was revised in March 1995 to incorporate the results of fieldwork undertaken by the Survey (see section 1.7). No information published after December 1994 has been incorporated into this assessment.

1.6 Cartographic sources

The tithe map of 1840 (HFNS nd) and the Ordnance Survey first edition 1:2500 maps (*Herefordshire sheet LI.4 and LI.8* (1888)) were used in the identification of remains and the definition of components.

1.7 Archaeological excavations and surveys

The only recorded archaeological excavation to have taken place in Ross-on-Wye was at St Mary's Church (HWCM 11793; Jones 1991). This uncovered unstratified Roman pottery, medieval stonework and late medieval and post-medieval burials. The base of a medieval market cross was found at the junction of New Street and Edde Cross Street

earlier this century (HWCM 4056; Watkins 1917) and a vaulted chamber probably related to the medieval bishop's palace was uncovered by workmen building the Royal Hotel in 1837 (HWCM 4060; Morris 1980). A 13th century stone coffin, now outside the south porch of the church, and four 13th and 14th century coffin lids were discovered presumably in the churchyard (HWCM 19976; Morris 1980, 55; RCHME 1932, 160). Human burials of unknown date were reported during construction work close to Priory House (HWCM 10652; HWCC SMR file) and cellars, also undated, were reported beneath the King's Head and the Saracen's Head (HWCM 19973; Cohen 1954).

Fieldwork was undertaken by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey in November 1994. This identified remains, investigated and revised the extent of components, and recorded 18th and 19th century cellarage and modern developments in the urban area.

1.8 Acknowledgments and personnel

Survey fieldwork was undertaken by Victoria Buteux and Nigel Topping. Analysis and report writing were carried out by Victoria Buteux and the report was edited by Hal Dalwood.

2 Pre-urban evidence

There is evidence of prehistoric settlement in the vicinity of Ross, from the Neolithic to the Iron Age although nothing has been recovered from the town itself. The present town of Ross-on-Wye lies just to the east of the Roman settlement of *Ariconium* and the area was intensively occupied in the Roman period. Unstratified Roman pottery was recovered during the evaluation at St Mary's Church but the nature of any occupation on the site of the later town is not clear. Roman coins have been found in the area (HWCM 4059 and HWCM 12103) but the exact provenance of these is not known.

A settlement existed in the manor of Ross by the time of the Domesday survey and the presence of a priest suggests the existence of an Anglo-Saxon or early post-Conquest church. Topographical evidence suggests that this stood on, or close to, the site of the present church, overlooking and controlling an important river crossing (HWCM 19931; Wills 1982). There is no documentary or archaeological evidence of a town on the site of Ross-on-Wye before the 12th century.

3 Medieval archaeological evidence

3.1 Medieval remains and buildings

The limited excavations at St Mary's Church produced evidence of medieval structural changes to the church and 15th century burials (Jones 1991). Remains of the bishop's palace were located in the early 19th century (Morris 1980). St Mary's Church is the only standing building of medieval date within Ross. The church has been described and planned, and the sequence of construction interpreted (RCHME 1932, 158-161; HWCM 4033). The churchyard contains a medieval coffin and coffin lids (HWCM 19976) and the reused base of a medieval cross (HWCM 4083). Another cross base, found at the junction of Edde Cross Street and New Street, has been placed in the Blake Memorial gardens (HWCM 4056).

3.2 Medieval urban components

Analysis of the evidence summarised above and of cartographic and documentary sources indicated the existence of 14 urban components. The characteristics of these urban components are summarised below.

Bishop's palace (HWCM 4060). The medieval bishop's palace lay to the west of the church within the large Anglo-Saxon or early post-conquest precinct defined by the present Wye Street, High Street and Copse Cross Street (HWCM 19931). The date of construction is not known but a building was in existence by 1166-7 when it is mentioned in the Pipe Rolls. At this time it was classed as a defended house (Tonkin 1976, 55). The palace was mostly of timber and had a large gateway and a porters lodge (Morris 1980). It does not seem to have been used after 1334 but was finally abandoned in 1356 when the diocese of Hereford reorganised its property (Tonkin 1976). In the mid-16th century Leland noted that the palace at Ross was "completely ruined" (Chandler 1993, 228). During the construction of the Royal Hotel in 1837 a vaulted underground chamber was discovered on the site. This was interpreted as the bishop's dungeon as it is reported to have contained a stone bench on each side and six massive iron rings for prisoner's chains. The chamber was built into the rock at a depth of *c* 2m with an entrance in the roof. The walls were *c* 1.75m thick and the interior of the chamber measured *c* 4.8m by 3.6m (Morris 1980, 16).

Churchyard (HWCM 19933). A church, possibly in the same location as the present building, existed at Domesday but may have been destroyed in the civil wars of the 12th century (Money-Kyrle 1920, 209). The present church dates to the 13th century although 12th century material is incorporated within it (RCHME 1932; Jones 1991). The extent of the medieval churchyard is not known but it was possibly larger than the present churchyard and may have extended east as far as Copse Cross Street. This land was still largely owned by the church in the 19th century. The churchyard contains the base of a 14th century cross, a 13th century coffin and 13th and 14th century coffin lids (RCHME 1932).

Market place (HWCM 19943). The medieval market place was a triangular open space in front of the churchyard and extended up Broad Street. It formed the axis of the planned borough which developed at Ross after the grant of a market by King Stephen (Wills 1982) and was probably laid out in its present form at the same time as tenement plots HWCM 19936 and HWCM 19937 (see below). It is possible, however, that there has been encroachment of buildings into the market place on the east side of Broad Street and that the line marked by the front of 49 Broad Street represents the original street frontage. The market place would have contained a market cross (HWCM 12125) and references to *seldae* or stalls in the "Red Book" suggest that temporary or permanent stalls may have been set up within the market in the later 13th century (Hillaby 1975).

Street system (HWCM 19942). Ross lies at a natural route centre where the north-south road along the Wye valley meets the east-west roads from southern and central England into South Wales, and the locally important road between Gloucester and Hereford. Wyre Street and the High Street skirt the bishop's palace and churchyard and then join the Old Gloucester Road. This east-west route across the town is at least 12th century in date but may be earlier. The route to the north formed by Broad Street and Brookend Street forms the spine of the medieval town but probably also follows the line of an earlier road. Edde Cross Street is fronted by medieval burgage plots but it is not clear if it was part of the street pattern of the original borough. New Street and Kyrle Street are later additions and narrow where they pass through already existing burgage plots to join Broad Street.

Tenement plots (HWCM 12030, HWCM 19934, HWCM 19935, HWCM 19936, HWCM 19937, HWCM 19938, HWCM 19939, HWCM 19940, HWCM 19941). The earliest tenement plot components within Ross are probably HWCM 19936 and HWCM 19937. These are made up of long narrow burgage plots fronting the market place and Brookend Street. They may have been laid out in the 12th century. The date of the development HWCM 12030, to the west of Edde Cross Street, cannot be determined at present. The boundaries of the burgage plots on either side of New Street and Kyrle Street (HWCM 19938, HWCM 19939, HWCM 19940, HWCM

19941) show clearly that they were laid out after the market/Brookend Street frontage had been built up. Components HWCM 19934 and HWCM 19935 contain short plots and may be encroachments onto the area of the early churchyard. The area fronting the market place would have been a desirable location for traders and was probably built up in the medieval period.

Mill (HWCM 12049). The sites of three mills are known (HWCM 12049, HWCM 18933, HWCM 19916) and all or none may have medieval origins. The most likely site for the mill associated with the medieval borough, however, is at the northern edge of the medieval town on what in the post-medieval period was known as the Town Brook.

3.3 Medieval urban form

Definition and classification. The medieval urban form (HWCM 19974) has been defined and mapped, based on the extent of the identified urban components and in particular street pattern and tenement plots. The available evidence indicates that the medieval urban form of Ross-on-Wye can be classified as a small medieval market town (English Heritage 1992).

Survival. The limited excavations at St Mary's Church have demonstrated the presence of intact late medieval deposits in that area (Jones 1991). The laying out of the Prospect in the late 17th century and the building of Wilton Road in the early 19th century will have disturbed medieval deposits around the site of the bishop's palace and the church and the construction of the Royal Hotel at the same time seems to have involved substantial terracing into the hill side.

It is not known to what extent medieval deposits have survived in this area although the cellar of the bishop's palace was still a very substantial structure in 1837 (see section 3.2). Lack of fieldwork has meant that there is little information on the survival of buried archaeological deposits dating to the medieval period in Ross-on-Wye but certain assumptions can be made. The continuous occupation of the town from at least the 12th century suggests that stratified deposits are likely to have developed although these will have been damaged by post-medieval and modern development. Waterlogged deposits may have survived in the area of the Town Brook.

The boundaries of the medieval churchyard and bishop's palace are not preserved but the tenement plots, market place and street system of the medieval town can be readily identified within the modern townscape.

4 Post-medieval archaeological evidence

4.1 Post-medieval remains and buildings

Burials dating to the post-medieval period were uncovered during excavations at St Mary's Church (HWCM 11793; Jones 1991). There have been no other recorded observations of buried deposits of post-medieval date from the town although the burials found close to Priory House may date from this period (HWCM 10652) and are possibly associated with the 17th to 19th non-conformist chapel on Kyrle Street (HWCM 19944).

There are five 16th century listed buildings, 27 17th century listed buildings and 45 18th century listed buildings within Ross-on-Wye. The 17th century market house has been described and planned (RCHME 1932, 161) but the majority of the buildings have not been studied in detail.

4.2 Post-medieval urban components

Analysis of the evidence summarised above and of cartographic and documentary sources indicated the existence of 35 urban components. The characteristics of these urban components are summarised below.

Churchyard (HWCM 17443). The post-medieval churchyard has been defined by the 1840 tithe map. It is considerably smaller than the postulated area of the medieval churchyard as it seems that the eastern side of the churchyard was split and parts of it built on by the 17th century (see below). To the north of the church a plague pit dating to 1637 is marked with a cross (HWCM 19905).

Chapels (HWCM 17340 [and HWCM 19944]). The first Quaker congregation met in Ross in 1655 and the site of the present meeting house and burial ground was given to them in 1675 (HWCM 17340). The present meeting house on the site dates to 1804 (RCHME 1986). In 1662 an Independent church was founded in Ross and its earliest meeting house is believed to have been a warehouse in Copse Cross Street. After the Act of Toleration in 1689 non-Conformist sects were able to worship freely and the sect acquired a chapel in Kyrle Street (HWCM 19944); however the location of this chapel is unknown.

Market place (HWCM 19972). Extensive infilling had occurred within the triangular part of the medieval market place by at least the 17th century (see HWCM 19930 below) and the large stone market house was erected some time between 1660 and 1674 (HWCM 582). The market continued to be held in Broad Street but other areas of the town were used for the sale of particular products and animals were still sold in the streets until 1871 (Wills 1982).

Street system (HWCM 19929). The major changes to the medieval street system took place after 1800 (Wills 1982) but during the post-medieval period the medieval street pattern seems to have remained relatively unchanged. Alton Street may be a post-medieval addition to the street system.

Tenement plots (HWCM 12030, HWCM 19842, HWCM 19930, HWCM 19934, HWCM 19935, HWCM 19936, HWCM 19937, HWCM 19938, HWCM 19939, HWCM 19940, HWCM 19941, HWCM 19946, HWCM 19947, HWCM 19948, HWCM 19949, HWCM 19950, HWCM 19966, HWCM 19967, HWCM 19968, HWCM 19969). The burgage plots laid out in the medieval period continued to be occupied but increasing prosperity, particularly in the later post-medieval period, led to expansion. Components HWCM 19967, HWCM 19968 and HWCM 19969 represent expansion along the main roads out of Ross to the north. Occupation of this area had occurred by at least the 17th century but the area was quite densely occupied by the end of the 18th century (Wills 1982). A similar expansion, perhaps of a similar date, took place along the Old Gloucester Road (HWCM 19946 and HWCM 19947). Properties fronting Copse Cross Street (HWCM 19948, HWCM 19842) were built up by the 17th century although they may have been developed from the late medieval period. Components HWCM 19948 and HWCM 19949 represent small-scale encroachment into the area of the medieval churchyard and components HWCM 19950 and HWCM 19966 represent development in and close to the area of the bishop's palace. At the eastern edge of the market place a row of nine buildings had been constructed by the 17th century. These were variously described as "Underhell", "Underhill", "Behind the Hill", "Nailors Row" and "Middle Row" (HWCM 19930; Wills 1982). These buildings with the market hall greatly reduced the space in the market place and were demolished in the 19th century.

Almshouses (HWCM 7495, HWCM 17372, HWCM 17384, HWCM 19920, HWCM 19932). Post-medieval Ross was well equipped with almshouses. The

earliest was Perrock's Hospital, originally founded in 1510 but endowed in 1605 by Charles Perrock, a mercer. The present building on the Old Gloucester Road was built in 1771 (HWCM 19932). Rudhall's almshouses were founded in 1575 on Church Street (HWCM 7495). Webb's almshouses on Copse Cross Street (HWCM 17372) were founded in 1612 and Pye's almshouses at the northern tip of Edde Cross Street (HWCM 17384) in 1615 (Prescott 1992, 130). Markye's almshouses (HWCM 19920), also in Edde Cross Street, were founded in 1654 but were demolished or fell into disuse at some time between 1888 and the RCHME survey in 1932.

Workhouse (HWCM 18942). In 1788 a small workhouse was founded on the western side of Copse Cross Street (Morris 1980, 25). This workhouse is shown on the 1840 tithe and was greatly extended in the middle of the 19th century (HWCM 19841).

Schools (HWCM 9622 and HWCM 17366). A Latin Grammar school adjacent to the churchyard of St Mary's was founded in the reign of Edward VI. The school declined and was re-endowed due to the efforts of John Kyrle in 1704. The present building (HWCM 17366) dates to the 18th century. In 1717 a Bluecoat School for 60 boys and girls was founded on the Old Gloucester Road (HWCM 9622). This school became disused through lack of funds and was re-endowed by Walter Scott in 1786.

Mill (HWCM 12049). A mill may have existed in this area from the medieval period (see above) but the buildings which survive in the area date from the early 18th to 19th century.

Tannery (HWCM 19904) A tannery next to the mill is recorded from the late 17th century (Hurley 1989). Tanneries are known to have existed at Ross from at least the 16th century but this is the only one whose location has been identified.

Open spaces (HWCM 19970 and HWCM 19975). Around 1700 John Kyrle laid out a walled garden for the benefit of the citizens of Ross. This was known as the Prospect (HWCM 19975) and was on the site of the former bishop's palace. The northern part of the Prospect was sold in 1836 and the area was divided by the building of Wilton Road at around the same time. The area to the east of Church Street (HWCM 19970) was occupied by the rectory and public gardens in the 19th century but its function in the post-medieval period is unclear.

4.3 Post-medieval urban form

Definition and classification. The post-medieval urban form (HWCM 19971) has been defined and mapped, based on the extent of the identified urban components and in particular the limits of street system and tenement plots. The available evidence indicates that the post-medieval urban form of Ross-on-Wye can be classified as a medium sized post-medieval market town (English Heritage 1992).

Survival. The limited excavations at St Mary's church have demonstrated that buried deposits dating to the post-medieval period survive in this area. The burials encountered near Priory House may be post-medieval (HWCM 10652) but their date cannot be confirmed. The continuous occupation of Ross during this period suggests that stratified deposits are likely to have developed although these would have been damaged by 19th century and 20th century development. Buried deposits are likely to have survived next to, or within, the large number of standing post-medieval buildings within the town. Waterlogged deposits may survive close to the Town Brook. The tenement plots, market and street system of the post-medieval town can be readily identified within the modern townscape and there is good survival of the post-medieval form to the present day.

5 Post-1800 archaeological evidence

The remit of the present study has not allowed for a detailed survey and assessment of the archaeological evidence relating to Ross-on-Wye in the period from 1800. Further work is required before such an assessment can be carried out. Major archaeological remains have been identified, however, including the railway line and station (HWCM 19906, HWCM 19907), chapels (HWCM 19922, HWCM 19923, HWCM 19924, HWCM 19925, HWCM 19944, HWCM 19945) and the workhouse (HWCM 19841). Industrial sites dated to the 19th century include foundries (HWCM 11861, HWCM 11860), mills (HWCM 18933, HWCM 19916), the gasworks (HWCM 19921) and a smithy (HWCM 19917). There are 56 listed buildings dated to the 19th century within the study area.

6 Specialist assessments

6.1 Assessment of artefactual evidence J D Hurst

Little artefactual evidence is available for Ross-on-Wye. The earliest artefacts comprise Roman pottery (HWCM 11793), and possibly coins (HWCM 4059 and HWCM 12103), though the latter were not definitely from within the study area. Other artefacts of medieval and post-medieval date have also been identified. The medieval finds include coffin lids (HWCM 19976) of the 13th to 14th century, and a market cross (HWCM 4056).

6.2 Assessment of environmental evidence E A Pearson

No samples have been taken for wet-sieving/flotation of environmental archaeological remains as a result of archaeological field work to date. However, undated human burials were discovered during construction work close to Priory House (HWCM 10652).

6.3 Assessment of documentary sources P A Stamper

From the 17th century Ross is relatively well documented, although no single collection of family or solicitor's papers in itself stands out. Before that records are very scarce. Principal groups of primary sources are listed in section 9. The main secondary sources consulted during the archaeological assessment include Bannister (1929), Hillaby (1975) and Morris (1980). Secondary sources not consulted during the archaeological assessment include Fosbrooke (1821).

6.4 Assessment of buildings R Morriss

The town's historic buildings are built of a mixture of materials, in general with the oldest being timber-framed, and the later 17th and 18th century buildings being built of local rubblestone or brick. With the exception of the parish church, there appear to be no surviving medieval buildings in Ross and the oldest buildings date from the late 16th century. The spread of surviving post-medieval timber-framed buildings extends from the High Street and market place area down Broad Street and to the end of Brookend Street in the north; along Copse Cross Street to the south (with a little development on Old Gloucester Road leading off it); the area around the north and east of the churchyard; and on the western part of High Street. The lack of significant pre-18th century survivals on Edde Cross Street, which runs roughly parallel to Broad Street, and the two main roads between them, New Street and Kyrle Street, could be of importance in understanding the development of the town.

The grander of the surviving timber-framed buildings are on the High Street, which also has the densest cluster of timber-framed houses. Close-studding and shallow jetties seem to have been the most fashionable design elements of the late 16th to early 17th century, for example at 34-36 High Street (HWCM 703). Several of these houses are very large,

with wide street frontages. Down Broad Street, if the present widths of houses reflect those of their predecessors, it seems there was a mix of property sizes, with several being quite narrow and thus reflecting a degree of pressure on land use.

In the mid-18th to early 19th centuries, the period of Ross's development as a tourist centre, many of the town's buildings were rebuilt or simply refaced in render, stone or brick. Several of these new houses were quite grand, for example 17 Broad Street (HWCM 17346) and 20 Broad Street, a five bay mid-Georgian red-brick house (HWCM 17348). Others could be quite small, though such houses at the top end of Broad Street tended to be relatively tall, often of three storeys. More humble two storey housing lined Brookend Street, Gloucester Road and the back streets. It seems to be in this period that Edde Cross Street, New Street and Kyrle Street were radically rebuilt. Again, the scale is relatively humble.

Survey and analysis. Although several of the houses in Ross have apparently been studied and some surveyed, there has been no recent synthetic study of the town.

Assessment of the listing details. The list dates to 1972 and is comprehensive, with a decent selection of buildings from most periods up until the late 19th century. There are, however, some unreliable entries and a brevity of style typical of the period that leaves certain aspects unexplained or confusing. Often buildings are just dated, with no indication of the materials of which they are built. This omission is particularly important when it comes to the 17th century, when timber-framing was common early on, gradually being replaced by rubblestone or brick by the end. Thus 23-26 Brookend Street (HWCM 17358) is just 'C17', but is actually of close-studded timber-framing and thus of early 17th century date. Other mistakes include 28-29 Brookend Street being listed as two separate buildings when they are clearly just one (HWCM 17359-60); 16 Church Street is 'C18 or later', and is actually late 17th or later (HWCM 17370); 47 High Street (HWCM 706) is 'early 19th' but is actually an early 17th timber-frame. Several entries are derived from the 1930s RCHME survey (RCHME 1932), but not all are correctly transposed. For example, the RCHME noted that 24/25 Broad Street was an early 17th century timber-framed building that had been refronted in stone; according to the list it is 'C17 stone', even though a timber-framed rear portion was noted (HWCM 17352).

7 Archaeological research framework

7.1 Model of urban development

A model of the medieval and post-medieval town of Ross-on-Wye has been produced which is predictive and capable of testing through archaeological investigation. This model has both chronological and spatial (landuse) dimensions (see sections 2 to 5) and is based on an analysis of documentary, cartographic and archaeological sources. The model is derived from the current academic understanding of urban development in Britain, and forms one element of a developing regional research framework. The model is provisional and will be subject to confirmation or revision in the future as new information becomes available, or new studies lead to changing understandings of towns in the region.

7.2 Chronological framework

The archaeological and documentary evidence indicates that urban occupation commenced in the 12th century but probably developed from the nucleus of a medieval rural settlement possibly dating to before the Conquest. Documentary evidence suggests that a church with a village existed at Ross by 1086. It is probable the high ground around the present church was the site of this original settlement. The settlement was continuously occupied until the present but its period of greatest prosperity was in the late 18th and 19th centuries. The broad outlines of this chronological framework are

provisional and require testing through archaeological investigation. Of particular interest would be information on the date of the construction of the bishops palace and the chronology of the development of the different components of the town particularly with regard to the expansion of the town in the post-medieval period.

7.3 Urban landuse

The medieval and post-medieval components identified here (sections 3.2 and 4.2) have been mapped and constitute a model of urban landuse for each period. These landuse models are partial and provisional and capable of testing through archaeological investigation.

With the exception of the churchyard none of the medieval or post-medieval urban components of Ross-on-Wye have been archaeologically investigated and there is potential for recovering evidence relating to the nature and extent of occupation in the various parts of the town. Of particular interest would be the location of the early church; the extent of the bishop's palace and the relationship of the bishops palace to any earlier religious precinct and the medieval churchyard. Also of interest would be information on any change in the street frontage of the market place and the location of documented and undocumented industries within the town.

7.4 Potential for survival of buried remains

In most areas of Ross-on-Wye there is no information available on the depth of archaeological deposits. The continuous occupation of the site from at least the 12th century, and possibly earlier, means that stratified deposits are likely to have developed but these will have been damaged by later activity particularly in the area of the bishop's palace (see section 3.3). Any surviving deposits would, therefore, be particularly important. Datable artefactual and ecofactual assemblages from stratified deposits would provide a great deal of information on the town itself and may help to improve understanding of Ross's changing significance within the region. Any deposits along the Town Brook by the mill and tannery are likely to be waterlogged and therefore would have high potential for artefactual and environmental studies.

Fieldwork was undertaken by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey in November 1994. The extent of 18th and 19th century cellarage was mapped, together with the extent of 20th century development (new buildings and major landscaping work). This showed that there was moderate observable cellarage along the main streets but it is likely that evidence for more extensive cellarage has been obscured by modern refurbishment of frontages and pavements. There has been a moderate amount of modern redevelopment within the historic core.

7.5 Potential for artefactual studies J D Hurst

Almost no archaeological excavation has been undertaken in Ross-on-Wye, and so the extent of surviving artefactual evidence in buried deposits cannot be assessed. It is likely that contexts that have not been sampled to date, for example in the vicinity of the Town Brook, could be of significance for the survival of artefactual evidence as they may include waterlogged finds. Post-medieval developments are also likely to have disturbed earlier deposits.

Period discussion. None of the Roman finds have been from stratified Roman deposits, and so they may be regarded as stray finds relating to a nearby Roman site. The medieval and post-medieval artefacts have been found in the area of the church, and have consisted largely of burial furniture, and so are hardly likely to be representative of these periods. Clarke (1991, 34) has speculated that Ross-on-Wye had a central role in medieval trade in this area as part of a major trade route leading from Gloucester into the southern part of the Welsh border, with goods reaching Ross being sent both north and south along the

River Wye. Papazian and Campbell (1992) have collated pottery data from the Welsh side of the border including many sites to the south-west of Ross. In contrast little information about medieval ceramics is available on the English side of the border, even from a prominent market centre such as Ross. In general period pottery groups have been of small size (ie less than 100 sherds). No quantification or fabric descriptions were available for this small pottery assemblage.

Comparison with documentary evidence. The documentary evidence suggests that several crafts or industries (eg fulling and goldsmithing) were carried on in the town in the late 13th century. There was also some indication of fish farming (HWCM 19910). The association with wool seems to have continued into the post-medieval period. Many crafts or industries operated in the town during the latter period, for instance leather working, iron smithing and nail manufacture.

7.6 Potential for environmental remains E A Pearson

The small amount of fieldwork carried out in the town means that a limited range of biological material has been recovered. The full potential for recovery of environmental remains and research is largely unknown. As the soils are well drained they are not likely to provide good conditions for the preservation of organic remains by waterlogging, although it is possible that some organic material may survive near to the Town Brook and in silty deposits, if they exist in the mill pond (HWCM 12049). This material may provide information relating to the surrounding environment (in some circumstances) and to dumped occupational rubbish. Environmental remains providing information on the occupation of the town may be recovered from, for example, the tenement plots and graveyards associated with the church. The acidic soils are unlikely to provide good conditions for the preservation of faunal remains such as animal bone and molluscs.

The lack of archaeological fieldwork or recorded observation during construction or demolition in the town means that there is little indication of the other types of biological material preserved and its condition. As few environmental remains have been recovered in Ross-on-Wye, any environmental material would be of interest. This could provide information on the surrounding environment, diet, living conditions and agricultural or industrial economy. Any future excavations should include a policy of sampling and wet-sieving soil during excavation in conjunction with hand-collection of larger items.

7.7 Potential for the study of standing buildings R Morriss

Ross has a sufficient number of historic buildings to warrant an extensive architectural survey. This should indicate those buildings that would merit a more detailed intensive survey. This would greatly enhance our knowledge of the town's development.

7.8 Summary of research potential

The historic core of Ross-on-Wye contains buried archaeological deposits, and these are judged to have moderate potential. In addition there is moderate potential for the recovery of artefact and ecofact assemblages. The historic buildings constitute a complementary body of evidence for the post-medieval period, and are judged to have moderate potential for detailed study and recording. The surviving documentary sources are very few for the medieval period, and of average quantity for the post-medieval period; consequently there is moderate potential for further study.

8 Management framework

8.1 Urban archaeological area

The mapped extent of the medieval and post-medieval urban forms defined above indicated the extent of the urban area (Ross-on-Wye Urban Archaeological Area). The significance of the urban archaeological area is assessed below.

8.2 Existing protection measures

The different parts of the urban area are afforded different measures of protection through legislation and the planning process. Directly relevant measures are outlined below.

Scheduled ancient monument. There is one Scheduled Ancient Monument in Ross-on-Wye, the Market Hall (Here and Worc no 27). It is possible that following the current Monument Protection Programme English Heritage may modify the scheduled area or add other monuments in Ross-on-Wye to the schedule.

Listed buildings. There are a total of 134 buildings listed as of historical or architectural importance within the urban area. Buildings of special architectural or historic interest should receive very special attention. Such buildings are limited in their number and there is a need to protect and preserve them. The presumption when considering applications to demolish or alter is in favour of preservation. This presumption is also likely to preserve archaeological remains beneath and immediately around such buildings from development. It is important that the architectural and archaeological interests are considered together.

The alteration of listed buildings requires the greatest skill and care to avoid damage to historic structures. Specialist architectural advice is given by the County Conservation Architect or through the District's own conservation officer where that District Council has their own specialist staff.

Conservation area. A Conservation Area has been defined which entirely encompasses the archaeological area (South Herefordshire District Local Plan. Written statement and proposals map: deposit plan (1994)).

8.3 Management approach

The archaeological urban area of Ross-on-Wye contains earthworks and buried remains relating to medieval and post-medieval occupation, associated with contemporary buildings. The buried remains vary in complexity and depth, and demonstrably contain significant archaeological information. It is desirable that any proposed development within the urban area that has a potential impact on earthworks or buried remains should be assessed by the appropriate archaeological body as early as possible in the planning process.

The course of action recommended will depend upon the nature of the development and current planning legislation and frameworks. The archaeological response will be framed using both the archaeological information summarised in this document and any subsequent information recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record, supplemented by other sources as and when available.

9 Principal groups of primary sources compiled by P A Stamper

(HRO: Hereford Record Office)

- HRO R 8 Manor of Ross Foreign: surrenders etc, 1765-1819
HRO AW 28 Wilton-on-Wye manor. Court books and other records 1614-1831
HRO AG 39 Parish records. Registers from 1671
HRO L 78 Parish records. Churchwardens' accounts from 1772; overseers' accounts 1744-76; vestry minutes 1750-64
HRO passim Divided between several collections are relatively (for Herefordshire) large numbers of deeds of the 17th century and later.
HRO HD L 308 Tithe map and apportionment (1844-5)

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11 Mapping

The illustrations for this report comprise CAD plots of the urban components for each period and a location plot of archaeological remains combined with OS digital map data (1995) at 1:5000. These plots are current at the date of the completion of this report (March 1995). After this date new information will be held by the Hereford and Worcester County Council Sites and Monuments Record.

- * Historic buildings (listed and other recorded buildings) and urban area
- * Archaeological remains and urban area
- * Medieval urban form and components
- * Post-medieval urban form and components
- * Urban area and scheduled ancient monuments