

New Toilet Block Gaol Street Hereford

Archaeological Watching Brief



February 2007

Hereford Archaeology Series 749

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This report is produced by

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Cover picture: Trench 4 under excavation, facing west

New Toilet Block Gaol Street, Hereford

Archaeological Watching Brief

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New Toilet Block, Gaol Street, HEREFORD

Archaeological Watching Brief

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1. Summary

Archaeological Investigations Ltd was commissioned by Herefordshire Council to undertake a watching brief during groundworks for the construction of a new toilet block in Gaol Street, Hereford. The work involved the excavation of foundations and of a service run.

The work revealed deposits dating to the 13th to 14th century, including a yard surface or midden. At the eastern end of the service trench, a layer of red clay and one of burnt material suggested activity, possibly industrial, though no dating evidence was recovered from the deposits. In Gaol Street itself observation of the service connections revealed that deposits in the road were disturbed to a considerable depth. Animal bone and pottery of 18th century date was present in this material.

Archaeological Investigations Ltd would like to thank staff of Hereford Jarvis Ltd, particularly Mr Jeff Thomas, for their help and cooperation during the work.

Archaeological work on the site took place between 8th November and 6th December 2006.

2. Introduction

Archaeological Investigations Ltd was commissioned by Herefordshire Council to undertake a watching brief during groundworks for the construction of a new toilet block. The site lies in the Hereford Area of Archaeological Importance (Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979) and close to line of the city defences (Fig.1). The planning authority was advised that a programme of archaeological work was required, taking the form of monitoring and recording of groundworks. Work consisted of excavation of the foundations for the building, of a service trench running northeast to the mains in Gaol Street, and trenches for the service connection.

The site is positioned on the northwestern side of a car park, adjacent to the boundary wall. Gaol Street lies to the east and St Owen's Street to the west. No previous archaeological work has taken place on the site itself.

The site lies at a height of approximately 56.9mOD.

3. Historical and Archaeological Background

The site lies inside the medieval city defences built in the late 12th century, before which time the market place established by William FitzOsbern immediately after the Conquest, lay outside the existing Saxon defences (Shoesmith 1982 p.18).

A charter of 1189 gave the citizens the right to farm the rents of the city in return for their help in enclosing it. In addition to a defensive circuit, the city defences would have provided a legal boundary between town and the countryside. Four wooden gates were also constructed though the defences which seem to have consisted only of the rampart. When King Henry III visited the city in 1223, the defences were strengthened by the addition of brushwood and thorn palings. The first murage grant was dated around 1224. The wall ran to the east of the present Gaol Street, with the city ditch running close to the edge of Bath Street. Gaol Street existed as 'Gropelone' existed by 1368, when it is mentioned in the cathedral muniments (Tonkin 1966 p.243). On Taylor's map it is shown as Grope Lane (Fig. 2b); it was renamed, sadly, in 1841. St Owen's Street was formerly known as Hungreye Street, the name possibly referring to the poor and marshy nature of the ground (Tonkin 1966 p.247). In addition to the distance from the more prestigious surroundings of High Town, with less pressure on land, this might help to explain the greater length of the plots. Speede's and Taylor's maps (1610 and 1757) show few buildings along Gaol Street with the site shown on Speede's map as open ground and on Taylor's as garden (Fig. 2).

Archaeological examination of two test pits to the east of the site at No. 53 St Owens Street (Crooks 2004) revealed that earlier deposits had been disturbed by post-medieval pits. However a layer of grey brown soil contained a single sherd of pottery of 13th century date. If this date is reliable the deposit from which it came could be a buried medieval soil horizon. No features of medieval date were, however, encountered on this site. Further to the southeast, at No. 65 St Owens Street, a sandstone wall surrounded a deposit containing two sherds of pottery of late medieval date (Poole 2002). In this case excavation did not proceed to a greater depth but it is likely that medieval deposits of earlier date also survived.

Recent excavations some 50m to the east of the site, on land between Gaol Street and Bath Street, have demonstrated deposits relating to possible back plot industry, including pits containing horn cores and debris from smithing (report in preparation).

4. Aims and Objectives

The aim of the project was to enable archaeological features to be adequately recorded in the areas affected by the proposal. The objectives were to identify the date and nature of any features investigated and to assess their survival, quality, condition and relative significance. Further objectives were to produce a record of the features, with the aim of producing a report and an archive for deposition in an approved depository (Archaeological Investigations 2006).

5. Method

The majority of the groundworks, excavation of foundations and the service trench, were carried out by the contractors with an archaeologist present on site. However, a contingency was available for hand excavation and, as pottery of medieval date was recovered from discrete layers, this was carried out on the northern foundation.

Areas of ground disturbance were tied to features shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 mapping. Pottery metal artefacts and stratified bone were retained for further analysis. Archaeological features were not seen in plan, but the layers containing medieval pottery were recorded in section at a scale of 1:20. Photographs were taken on 35mm film throughout.

6. Results (Fig. 3)

The tarmac surface for the car park and the rubble aggregate beneath measured between 0.3m to the west and 0.6m further east, towards Gaol Street, in depth.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was the eastern footing for the toilet block and was 1m deep. Beneath the surface and aggregates was a layer of brown soil. The only dating evidence from this material was pottery of the 18th century and later.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was the southern footing for the building and measured 1m in depth. It was machine excavated throughout. The deposits in this trench were similar to those observed in Trench 1. Although neither archaeological features nor stratigraphy were present, unstratified sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the lower deposits, mixed throughout with 18th century and later material.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was machine excavated throughout, to a depth of 1m. The surface and aggregates occupied the upper 0.3m. No archaeological features or deposits were seen at the southern end of the trench, but a considerable amount of medieval pottery mixed with later (post-medieval and modern) material was seen in the lower levels.

Trench 4 (Fig. 4a)

At this point a number of discrete deposits were seen and it was decided that a hand-excavated sample should be dug. The following deposits were present:

Context	Depth (m)	Description/interpretation
1000	0.26	Tarmac with rubble; modern car park surface
1001	0.12	Compacted gravel and red silt clay: probable previous surface
1002	0.10	Buried modern topsoil
1003	0.33	Mixed dark silty clay. It contained medieval and post-medieval pottery
1004	0.08	Red silt and gravel
1007	0.06	Grey buried topsoil
1005	0.13-0.20	Firm dark grey brown silt with clay inclusions. Contained only medieval pottery and animal bone
1006	0.05m+	Red brown silt clay with pockets of softer grey material. Contained only medieval pottery and animal bone

Trench 5 (Service Trench)

The service trench ran northeast, from the end of the toilet block to the main in Gaol Street. At the southern end of the trench the depth was 1m, increasing to 2m at the carpark boundary wall to accommodate the fall of the drain. The trench was machine excavated with archaeological monitoring throughout.

The following deposits were present in the section for about 10m from the southwestern end of the trench (Fig 4b).

Context	Depth (m)	Description/interpretation
5000	0.36	Tarmac with rubble; modern car park surface
5001	0.12	Compacted soil and gravel: probable previous surface
5002	0.10	Buried modern topsoil
5003	0.35	Pink redeposited gravel/marl. Contained medieval pottery and animal bone
5004	0.23	Mixed brown silt and gravel. Contained 13 th to 14 th century pottery
5005	0.10+	Grey/pink silt. Natural interface

An area of disturbance was then present, with no discrete archaeological layers visible (Fig. 4c). Clay pipe was recovered from this area demonstrating a post-medieval date for these deposits.

Eastern end of the service trench

The following deposits were present for 4.3m at the northern end of the service trench, ceasing at the wall of the car park.

Context	Depth (m)	Description/interpretation
5000	0.60	Tarmac with building rubble; modern car park surface
5001	0.60	Mixed soil and gravel
5006	0.10	Bright pink clay
5007	0.20	Black organic/burnt layer.
5008	0.10+	Natural clay/marl

Observations on the service connection in Gaol Street itself revealed an area of disturbance, with much animal bone and pottery of 18th century and later date. The dark brown silt clay containing this material continued to a depth of over 2m; thus any archaeological deposits present in the area would have been destroyed.

7. Discussion

Although medieval pottery was found in some quantity, both during hand excavation and during observations of machine excavation there was no evidence for cut features. Over much of the site the pottery sherds were small and heavily abraded. They may have originated from a number of layers, probably soil horizons, yard surfaces or middens probably relating to plots fronting onto St Owen's Street (see Appendix 2). No cut features, suggesting buildings, were seen. The site lies on the boundary of two plots, a position frequently used to site rubbish or cesspits (as may have been the case at nearby Commercial Street). There was no evidence for these features in the trenches investigated.

However clay surface 5006 and burnt layer 5007 at the eastern end of the trench suggest either activity fronting onto Gaol Street or, alternatively, industrial activity at the very end of the St Owen's Street plots.

The recent excavations to the northeast of Gaol Street uncovered burnt deposits associated with metal working debris, and further to the south with horn working. If the alignment of Gaol Street changed with the construction of the city wall, as suggested by Shoesmith (1995) then black deposit 5007 may be related to industrial deposits on the other side of Gaol Street. Unfortunately observation of the service connections showed that considerable later activity had taken place in Gaol Street, possibly associated with installation and maintenance of earlier services, severing 5007.

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Appendix 1

The site archive consists of the finds from the site, the written record and the photographs. It is stored at Hereford Museum, Accession No. 2006-76.

Appendix 2: The Pottery

Introduction

A total of 140 sherds of pottery was recovered from the site, of which fifteen were modern (later 18th century or later), twenty were post-medieval and the remainder of medieval date. Later material was sampled, but the majority was not retained (for example modern material from the topsoil deposits). For obvious reasons, the majority of pottery recovered came from hand excavation of the foundation (contexts 1003, 1005, 1006).

Method

The pottery was examined macroscopically and microscopically (x10) and sorted according to Vince's classification (Vince 1985, 2002). The results were entered onto an Access database.

The medieval pottery

The majority of the pottery (98 sherds) retained from the site was of medieval date. It was all locally sourced (Herefordshire, the Malverns and Worcester). This is fairly usual for the medieval period in Hereford and similar to the material found some 50m to the northeast on the site between Gaol Street and Bath Street.

The majority of pottery of the medieval period recovered from the site was fabric B1, the most common cooking pot fabric in Hereford (65 sherds). This accounted for 47% of the total pottery retained, and 68% of the total medieval material. This is somewhat higher than the overall percentage for Hereford in the middle of the 13th century, where the average is 61% of cooking pot – a figure that excludes glazed wares. Eight sherds were of Malvernian oxidized glazed wares (B4). This fabric first came to prominence in the 14th century. It continued into the 17th century, however and was either unstratified or found in mixed deposits on the site. The small size of most of the sherds and the evident abrasion suggested that material had been further broken after it had been discarded, for example having been thrown out onto a yard surface. Two joining sherds of fabric A8, thought to come from the black deposit (5007) adjacent to Gaol Street suggested a date in the later 12th or very early 13th century for this material. However, unfortunately, the provenance of these sherds was uncertain.

A considerable amount of the medieval pottery was unstratified. However, it seems likely to have originated from context 1006 or its equivalent – a layer containing a considerable amount of 13th to 14th century material. It seems likely that the medieval horizon may have been disturbed during later gardening activities.

Post-medieval material (16th -18th centuries)

Twenty sherds dated to the post-medieval period, taken here as dating to between the 16th and 18th centuries. These included three sherds of Staffordshire slipware including brown mottled slipware dating to the second part of the 18th century, local coarseware vessels and black glazed cups, usually dated to the 16th century. It seems likely that much of this material could have been deposited during use of the area as garden, possibly spread with midden material as fertiliser.

Modern pottery (19th century and later)

A considerable amount of the material recovered was unstratified. This included a sample of fifteen sherds of modern material, including two pieces of flowerpot, reflecting the use of the site as a garden.

Discussion

The majority of the sherds of pottery were very small and some considerably abraded. This would be the case if it had been lying around on either a yard surface or had been deposited in a midden. It could suggest that the area at the backs of plots on St Owen's Street had been open ground from an early date, a situation continuing in some cases until the present day.

The high proportion of Malvernian cooking pot fabric B1 might suggest a date for the deposits in the later 13th century, when it increasingly replaced other cooking pot fabrics. The same date is suggested by the glazed wares from the site.

The two larger, joining, sherds of fabric B1 found at the eastern end of the service trench, close to the car park boundary, may imply a change in the type of deposits at this point as it is unlikely that a midden/yard dump would produce two unabraded joining sherds that were, in addition, the largest sherds of pottery recovered from the site. Both sherds contained an internal black deposit or sooting and seem almost certain to have originated from the burnt deposit 5007. The sherd was finished on a wheel, suggesting a mid-13th century date.

pottery

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Decoration/comment	int? cir grn speckled gl	int/ext clr grn speckled gl	abraded	heavily burnt post-breakage	sooting - int greasy deposit	abraded	abraded	abraded	abraded	ext dull tan/grn gi	olive ext gl	olive ext gl			112-m13 rim. Small sherd; measurement uncertain	abraded, int/ext patchy grn/clr gl	incised line. Patchy cir ext gl	gl unfluxed/oxid. Underfired. A5 best guess!
wt (g) Rim diam Rim % Date	0 14-16	0 14-16	0 12-14	0 13	0 12-14	0 12-14	0 12-14	0 12-14	0 12-14	0 13	0 13-14	0 13-14	0 12-14	0 12-14	4 12-14	0 13	0 13-14	0 13-14
Rim diam	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	0	0	0
wt (g)	2.5	2	က	2	2	2.5	2	8.4	2.5	~	2	~	~	2	7	3.5	3.5	9
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ID context fabric form	B4	B4	B1	A3/B3?	B1	B1	B 4	B4	B1	B3	A6	A6	B.	B1	B1	A3/B3	A6	A5?
ID context	5 1003	7 1003	6 1003	14 1005	12 1005	11 1005	10 1005	9 1005	8 1005	13 1005	129 1006	130 1006	131 1006	132 1006	133 1006	134 1006	135 1006	136 1006

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	a	ID context	fabric	form	wt (g)	wt (g) Rim diam	Rim % Date	Decoration/comment	
	138	138 1006	ć	jug/trip?	1.5	0	6.0	patchy clr/grn ext gl. Firing fault. Sandy fab	
	107	107 1006	B1	đ	4.5	0	0 12-14		
	137	137 1006	6	jug/trip?	2.5	0	6 0	patchy cir/grn ext gl. Firing fault. Sandy fab	
	116	1006	B1	đ	2	0	0 12-14	abraded	
	96	1006	B1	8	23	0	0 12-14		
	26	97 1006	18	cb	19	20	4 12-14	pointy rim	
	108	108 1006	B1	0	2	0	0 12-14		
	109	109 1006	B1	8	4	0	0 12-14		
	110	110 1006	B1	8	80	0	0 12-14		
	111	111 1006	B1	a	2	0	0 12-14		
	112	112 1006	B1	do	5	0	0 12-14	abraded	
	113	113 1006	B1	8	2.5	0	0 12-14		
	128	128 1006	B1	8	2	0	0 12-14	sooted	
	115	115 1006	B1	ස	က	0	0 12-14	abraded	
	127	127 1006	A6	jug/trip	4	0	0 13-14	green ext gl	
	117	1006	B1	8	Ŋ	0	0 12-14		
	118	118 1006	B1	cb	က	0	0 12-14		
	119	119 1006	B1	ස	2	0	0 12-14		
	120	1006	B1	đ	25	23	6 12-14	Vince 1985 p46 fig. 1	
	121	121 1006	CI	cb	က	0	0 11-12	abraded	
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ID context fabric	fabric	form	wt (g)	wt (g) Rim diam	Rim % Date	Decoration/comment
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126 1006	B1	a o	-	0	0 12-14	
114 1006	B1	đ	က	0	0 12-14	
124 1006	B1	d	1.5	0	0 12-14	
106 1006	B1	cb	6	22	4 12-13	12-13 rim joins to no. 105
105 1006	B1	do	Ξ	22	4 12-13	12-13 rim
104 1006	A7B	gui	5.5	0	0 13-15	ext olive gl
98 1006	B1	do	8.5	0	0 12-14	abraded
103 1006	B1	do	18	0	0 12-14	abraded
90 1006	B1	do	4	0	0 12-14	abraded
100 1006	P4	dɔ	2	0	0 12-14	
101 1006	B	cb	7	0	0 12-14	rim damaged
102 1006	B1	ф	13	0	0 12-14	abraded
3 503	A7B	jug/trip	9	0	0 13-15	ext olive gl
1 503	5	do	00	0	0 11-12	
2 503	A3/B3	ф	0.5	0	0 13	
4 504	B1	cb	က	0	0 12-14	
28 topsoil	STON	i	2.5	0	0	ext brn (salt?) gl
23 topsoil	A7D	cup/tank	5	0	0 17-18	raised line; int/ext brn gl
29 topsoil	A7D	panch/bowl	8.5	0	0 17-18	rim frag too sm to meas. Int red brn gl

25 0	
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9.5	
11 0	
0	
7.5 0	
4.5 0	
13 0	
10 0	
13 0	
21 0	
3.4 0	
12.5 0	
19 0	
4 0	
40.5 0	
36 0	
15 0	
10 0	
12 0	

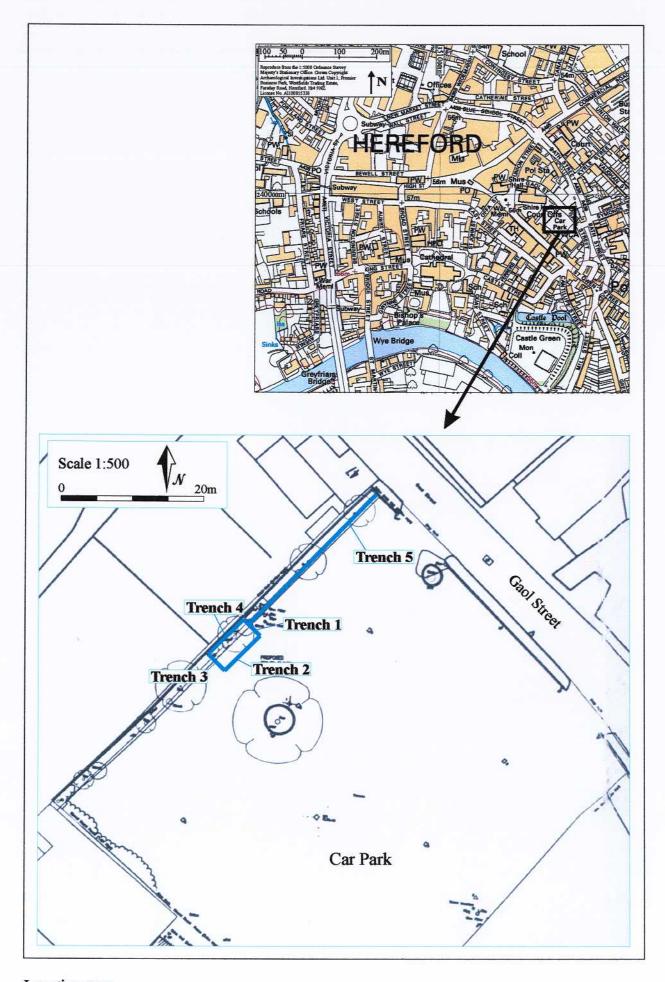
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17. S3	base, abraded none - sooted smoked ext	rimsherd too sm to measure diam base. abraded none - sooted smoked ext brown trailed slip; big vessel but frag too small to be sure of ri incised line, patchy cir/tan gl ext dk grn gl ext sooting and int 'kettle fur'. Fine fab	
	0 12-14 0 14-16 0 12-14	0 12-14 0 12-14 0 12-14 0 13-14 0 13-14	0 12-14
	0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0
fabric form B1 ср B1 ср B1 ср B1 ср B1 ср B1 ср A7B? ? B4 ? B4 ? B1 ср	2.5	21 2.2 2.5 13.5 2 3	0
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text and the state of the state	78 A B	B1 B1 B1 STSL A3/B3	B1
73 u/s 75 u/s 75 u/s 76 u/s 77 u/s 74 u/s 56 u/s 56 u/s 56 u/s 51 u/s 51 u/s	53 u/s 59 u/s 55 u/s	52 u/s 53 u/s 59 u/s 64 u/s 95 u/s 78 u/s	s/n 09

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	ID context	fabric	form	Wt (g)	wt (g) Rim diam	Rim % Date	Decoration/comment
	61 u/s	A?	tile?	N	0	0	shattered. Quartz and v micaceous
	62 u/s	A?	tile?	2.5	0	0	shattered. Quartz and v micaceous
	e3 u/s	STSL	dish	75	30	8 17-18	brown & black trailed slip, white fabric
	54 u/s	B.	do	2	0	0 12-14	
	46 u/s	89	٠	2	0	0 16	inVext black gl
	43 u/s	B5	jar	9.5	21	4.1 16-17	yəllow/tan gl - abraded
	8) n/s	5	do	21	20	8 11-12	Vince 1985 p53 fig 43 no. 5
	41 u/s	FLWR		2	0	0	
	40 u/s	FLWR		5.5	0	0	
	39 u/s	FLWR		4	0	0	
	s/n 62	B2	trip	7	0	0 12	rouletting - rectangles. Oxid ext gl
	37 u/s	STON	c	~	0	0	ext bm gl
	44 u/s	A3	gui	19	0	0 13	ext dk grn gl. 'pie crust' base
	36 u/s	STON	٤	1.5	0	PO	salt gl
	35 u/s	trans	ć	7	0	0 19+	white/clr gl
	34 u/s	trans	c	~	0	0 19+	willow pattern
	33 u/s	G5	c	1.5	0	0 17-18	tin gl int and ext
	32 u/s	G5	bowl	8.5	0	0 17-18	tin gl int and ext
	31 u/s	G5	bowl	20.5	0	0 17-18	tin gl int and ext
	38 u/s	FLWR		10	0	0	
	s/n 98	B	co	2	0	0 12-14	abraded
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ID context	fabric	form	Wt (g)	wt (g) Rim diam	Rim % Date	Decoration/comment
s/n 08	A2	g	9.5	0	0 13	abraded
81 u/s	B1	8	10	19	4 12-14	Vince 1985 fig. 59 no. 32. L12-M13
82 u/s	A3	jug/trip	က	0	0 13	ext cir dk grn gl
83 u/s	A3	jng	5	0	0 13	ext gm gl. Oxid type prob jug
42 u/s	STSL	dish?	5	0	0	white slip spot - white fab
s/n 98	A3	a	4	0	0 13	abraded
45 u/s	B4	chaf?	Σ	0	0 14-16	pointy bit. Shiny olive/green mottled gl
s/n /8	B1	a	5.5	0	0 12-14	abraded
s/n 88	B1	a	4	0	0 12-14	slightly abraded
s/n 68	B1	đ	7	0	0 12-14	abraded base
s/n 06	B1	đ	80	23	4 12-14	abraded, too damaged to be certain of type or diam
91 u/s	B1	đ	7	0	0 12-14	overfired
92 u/s	5	đ	5	20	4 11-12	
94 u/s	18	do	-	0	0 12-14	
84 u/s	B1	đ	3.5	0	0 12-14	ext soot
139 us	A8	ප්	30	30	4 12/13	sooting/deposit inside everted rim. Hand made straight sided
140 us	A8	đ	44	30	4 12/13	sooting/deposit inside -joins to no 139



Location map

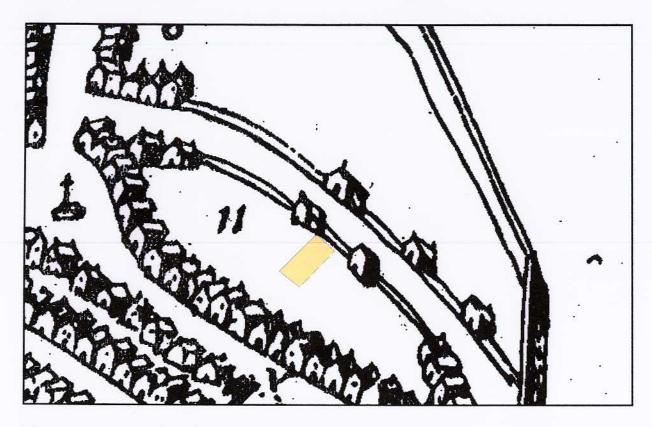


Figure 2a Extract from Speede's map of Hereford 1610

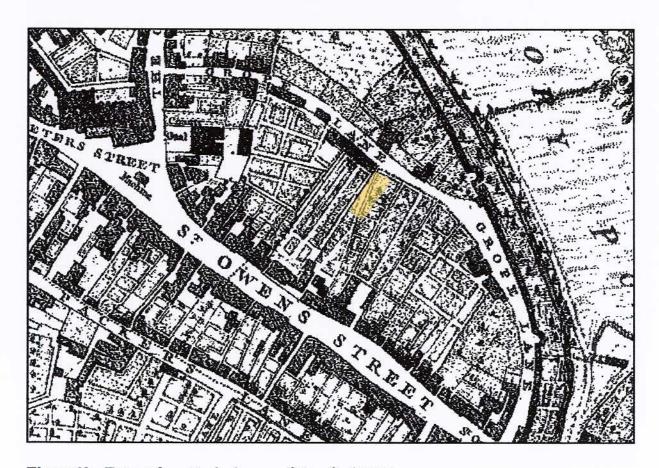


Figure 2b Extract from Taylor's map of Hereford 1757

Approximate position of site

Plan of trench locations and location of section drawings

