



**St. DAVID'S PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT,  
BLACKFRIARS  
Hereford**

*Archaeological Monitoring*



**September 2005**

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**Cover picture: Trench 5 looking North, St. David's PRU, Hereford**

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# St. DAVID'S PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT BLACKFRIARS, HEREFORD

Herefordshire.  
NGR SO 5119 4043

*Archaeological watching brief*

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## **Text**

B. Ward

## **Site Work**

B. Ward

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September 2005

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St. David's Pupil Referral Unit  
Blackfriars, Hereford  
Herefordshire.  
(NGR SO 5119 4043)

*Archaeological Watching Brief*

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**1. Summary**

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*Archaeological Investigations Ltd was commissioned by Herefordshire Council to undertake archaeological monitoring of ground works before the construction of a boundary fence round St. David's PRU. The area being excavated is situated to the east of the upstanding remains of the Blackfriars Dominican Friary, which is a Scheduled monument No.HWCM 3984 and Scheduled Ancient Monument no. 13610.*

*Following the advice of English Heritage, Scheduled Monument Consent the construction of a new fence had been granted by the Secretary of State under Section 2 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, on the 20th of April 2005.*

*As the site lies within the boundaries of the Friary, the main aim was therefore to enable archaeological features to be adequately recorded in the areas affected by the proposal.*

*Archaeological Investigations Ltd would like to thank staff from S C Joseph, the on site contractor for their co-operation while the archaeological monitoring was carried out and Herefordshire Jarvis Services for liaison and planning.*

*Due to the shallow depth and disturbed nature of the excavation, no archaeological features or finds were recovered during the excavation. This was the intended outcome and shows that the proposals had been adequately designed to avoid damage to buried archaeology.*

*The fieldwork was undertaken between the 17th and 24th of August 2005.*

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## **2. Introduction**

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The site lies to the north of the historic city of Hereford at the northern extent of the Widemarsh Street suburb of the medieval town, grid reference NGR SO 3109 4910 (Fig 1).

The underlying geology comprises mudstones and marls associated with the Old Red Sandstone. The site lies at approximately 54m OD with a gradual slope down to the west towards Coningsby hospital. The Tan Brook runs west-east along the northern edge of this site.

The site is situated immediately to the east of a 14th Century Dominican Friary, which contains one of the only upstanding examples of a preaching cross in the country.

The project followed in response to an application for Scheduled Monument Consent submitted by Hereford Council to construct a boundary fence around the St. David's pupil referral unit and Archaeological Investigations Ltd was contracted to fulfil the archaeological work. The fieldwork was carried between the 17th and the 24th of August 2005.

The site was given accession number HFDMG 2005-106.

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## **3. Historical Background**

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### **History**

Widemarsh Street is the main street leading northwards from the city and it is assumed that it was constructed even before the Norman Conquest. It does not line up with the northern gate in the Saxon defences which is presumed to have been at the northern end of Broad Street, just in front of All Saints' Church. This may well mean that Widemarsh Street predates the construction of the Saxon defences in the latter part of the 9th century.

The Dominicans (Blackfriars) arrived in England at the beginning of the 13th century. The Order was founded in Spain by the Augustinian Canon, Dominic of Asma, as a preaching Order. The Order reached Hereford in the mid-13th century and settled outside St. Owen's Gate in the Portfields, and were granted 10 oaks towards building of a house in 1246. They met opposition when trying to build a church and therefore continued to occupy the Portfields until about 1319. However Edward II granted them lands and tenements on which they could build a completely new priory. The Order had already been given land by Sir John Daniel and the Bishop of Hereford and this new piece of land was adjacent to the land given to them by Edward II forming the nucleus of the site in Widemarsh Street. The limits of the priory precinct are considered to be delineated by the present day Widemarsh Street on the west; Coningsby Street to the south; the Widemarsh/Tan Brook on the north/east and possibly the line of Canal Road to the east. The northern limit is somewhat uncertain as it may have included the triangle of land between Widemarsh Street and the stream.

One part of the Priory was occupied by the chapel of the Knights Hospitallers (Order of St. John of Jerusalem) since about 1200. Their buildings were presumably taken over by the

priory and the chapel, which still partly survives in the northern wing of the Coningsby Hospital, although altered.

It is thought that the priory reached the height of its prosperity in Richard II's reign (1377 – 99) and therefore also assumed that the building work was then complete.

From 1376 onwards there were regular interments in the priory choir so *that* part of the church was certainly complete by then. Blackfriars was burnt down three times in 1424 but received grants towards repair of the buildings. On the 25th of August 1538 the priory was eventually suppressed by which time there was one Prior and seven Friars in residence. The Prior, Richard Grey surrendered the priory to the Suffragan of Dover.

In a lease dated 16th April 1540, John Scudamore of Wilton and William Wygmore of Shobdon were given the site for 21 years but in 1557 it passed to John Crose and shortly after 1562 the site was passed to Sir Thomas Coningsby of Hampton Court, Nr. Leominster. He demolished most of the religious buildings and made changes to the west cloistral range to make it his new mansion.

Drawings from early 1680 show that the hospital did survive but that Coningsby's mansion was in ruins. Taylor's map of 1757 is quite detailed and shows the quadrangle of the Hospital and the ruined Coningsby mansion. Between the hospital and the mansion, the ground was given over to gardens.

Curley's map from 1858, which was produced in order to layout the sewerage system in Hereford shows the same area as Taylor. There is still a vacant plot to the north of the site; apparently used as garden.

In the 19th century the area to the south, across Tan Brook, was occupied by a tannery. In the 1890ies the site was the warehousing and furniture stores for Ralph, Preece and Co.

During WWII the area was used as allotments for the "Dig for Victory" campaign.

### **Previous archaeological work at Blackfriars**

There have been several excavations and watching briefs in the area; sufficient to provide a basic understanding of much of the precinct and its underlying stratigraphy.

In 1957 a Ministry of Works rescue project carried out an excavation before the erection of a new school dining room of St. Thomas Cantilupe school. Pits and other earth-cut features as well as pottery and decorated floor tiles came out of the layers associated with the priory. (Butler 1960)

The ruins of Blackfriars were the subject of a comprehensive survey and analysis in 1988 (HAS 38). The Preaching Cross had been examined at an earlier date (Shoemith & Knight, 1983).

In 1984, a desk-based evaluation of the Blackfriars precinct was commissioned by the City Council to establish if there could be a possible route for the sewer through the main part of the monastic grounds to the east or west of the ruin. (HAS 207).

Excavations in the 1990ies revealed the east wall of one of the priory buildings which could possibly have been the priory church itself.

Other more recent archaeological work in the same area, did not reveal any archaeological features or finds.

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#### **4. Aims and Objectives**

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The main aim of the project was to record in detail, during the excavation for fence footings, all the archaeological materials present in the location of the new build. The primary intention was to make a quality record, through full archaeological recording and (possibly) excavation, of those archaeological materials existing in the location of the proposed works. The work also aimed to record other relevant materials and features and result in the deposition of a satisfactory archaeological archive and production of a satisfactory report for publication.

The main objectives were to:

- a) Identify the presence of features/deposits and establish their date and nature.
- b) Record all ground disturbing operations.
- c) Produce a record of archaeological features/deposits through more formal excavation where necessary.
- d) Assess, analyse, report and publish the findings of the work.

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#### **5. Methodology**

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Fence footings were excavated along the boundaries of St. David's pupil referral unit (Fig. 2) using a mechanical digger. An archaeologist was present during the whole excavation.

Full context recording was not deemed appropriate as no archaeological features nor finds were present in the fence footings. Instead site notes were taken during the work.

The footings were photographed using colour film. A register was kept of the photographs.

The site was given accession number HFDMG 2005-106 in accordance with Herefordshire Heritage services accessioning procedure and this code was used to identify all documents associated with the site.

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## 6. Results

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All trenches were dug by a mechanical digger using a toothless bucket. Each trench was 0.50 m wide and 0.30 m deep from the existing ground. (Fig. 2).

Branches of trees overhanging the areas where the fence was going to be erected were cut down to make sufficient room for the width of the trench. In the area of Trench 5, a wooden fence and roses were removed before the digging of the fence footing could commence.

### **Trench 1:**

This trench ran along the eastern boundary of the site along the western side of the Day Centre. The trench was 17 meters long. The soil appeared to be topsoil for the full depth of 0.30 m and only contained a small amount of modern building rubble. The soil was quite light and sandy. Approximately 4 meters from the southern edge of the trench and at a depth of 0.25 m was a patch of black, gravelly soil. The black area stretched approximately 3.0 meters towards the north of the trench. A very small piece of slag was observed in the trench but not retained. Several flower bulbs came out of the trench from a depth of 0.25 meters, indicating that the ground had been disturbed recently. No archaeological features were observed in the trench.

### **Trench 2:**

This trench ran along the north eastern boundary of the site and was 19.3 meters long, running east/west. The soil was extremely sandy and kept collapsing into the trench. It contained builders rubble like bricks, breeze blocks and modern white bathroom tiles. Roots from the trees along the edge had also greatly disturbed the trench. No archaeological features were observed in the trench.

### **Trench 3:**

This trench ran north/south and was 8 meters long. Only the digging of a length of 4 meters of the trench was observed by an archaeologist as the remaining 4 meters were filled with concrete to a depth of at least 0.35 meters and therefore already disturbed ground. The soil was very sandy and the trench very disturbed by roots from the trees. Modern pottery and tiles were observed, but not retained. No archaeological features were observed in the trench.

### **Trench 4:**

This trench ran east/west on the site and was 16.3 meters long. The soil was again very sandy and kept collapsing into the trench. This trench was also very disturbed by roots from the trees. Modern pottery, glass and tiles were observed, but not retained. No archaeological features were observed in the trench.

### **Trench 5:**

This trench ran north south, close to the ruins of the Blackfriars Dominican Friary and was 39.5 metres long. The soil was light brown and very sandy. This area had previously had a wooden fence with roses growing up it and was therefore extremely disturbed

No archaeological features were found.



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## 7. Discussion

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Although the site lies in close proximity to the Priory, the trench foundations did not contain any archaeological features. This was due to both the disturbed nature of the site, and the shallow depth to which the trenches were excavated.

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## 8. Conclusion

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The aim of this project was to record, date and assess any archaeological features discovered during the excavation of the five trenches. However, no archaeological features or finds were found during the excavation.

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## 9. Bibliography

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## 10. Site Archive

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1. Document archive (notes from site note book, photo register and photographs)

The site archive is stored with Hereford Museum, Accession number HFDMG 2005 – 106.



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NGR SO  
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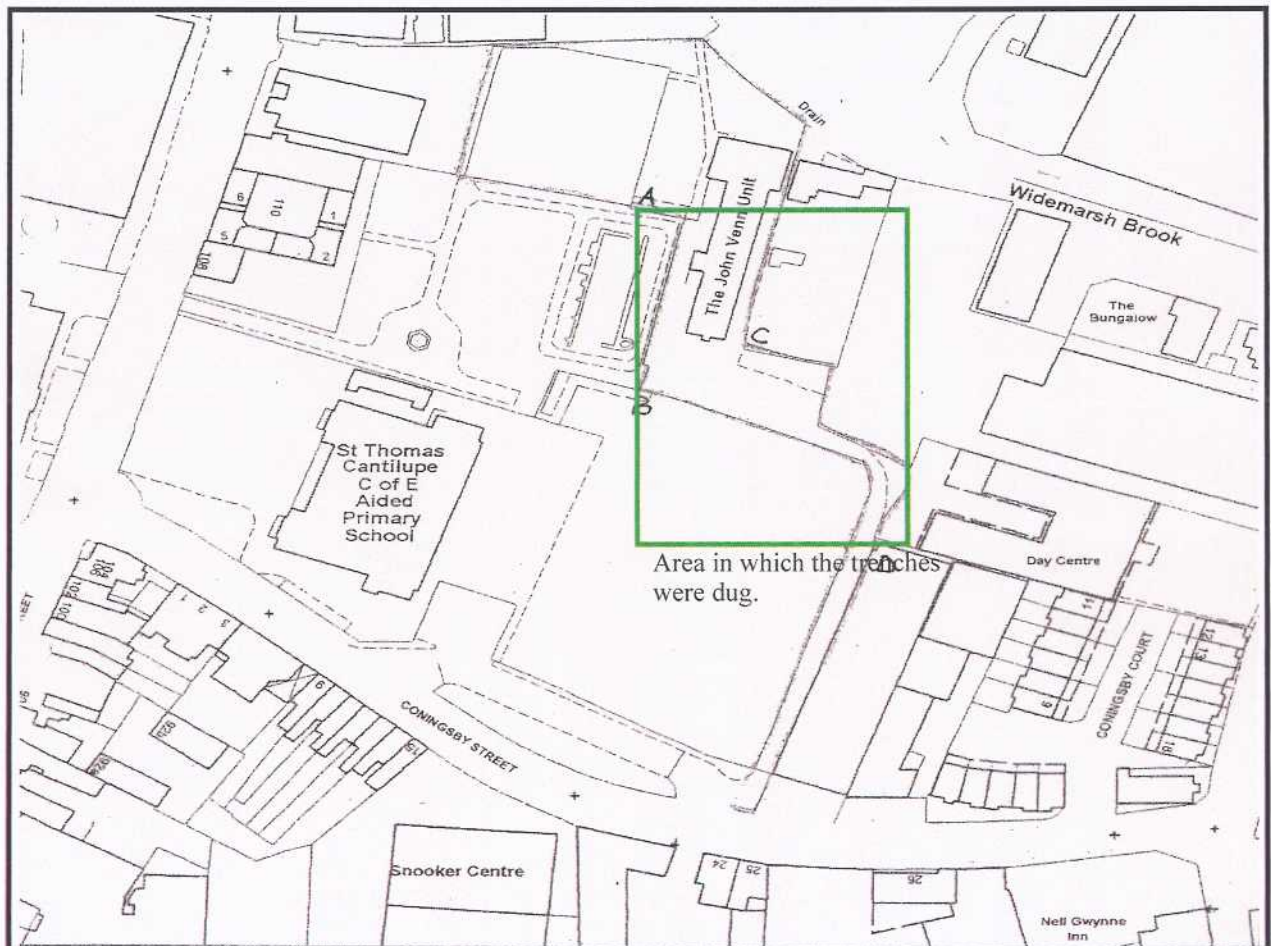


Fig 1: Location Map

# St. David's Pru, Blackfriars, Hereford

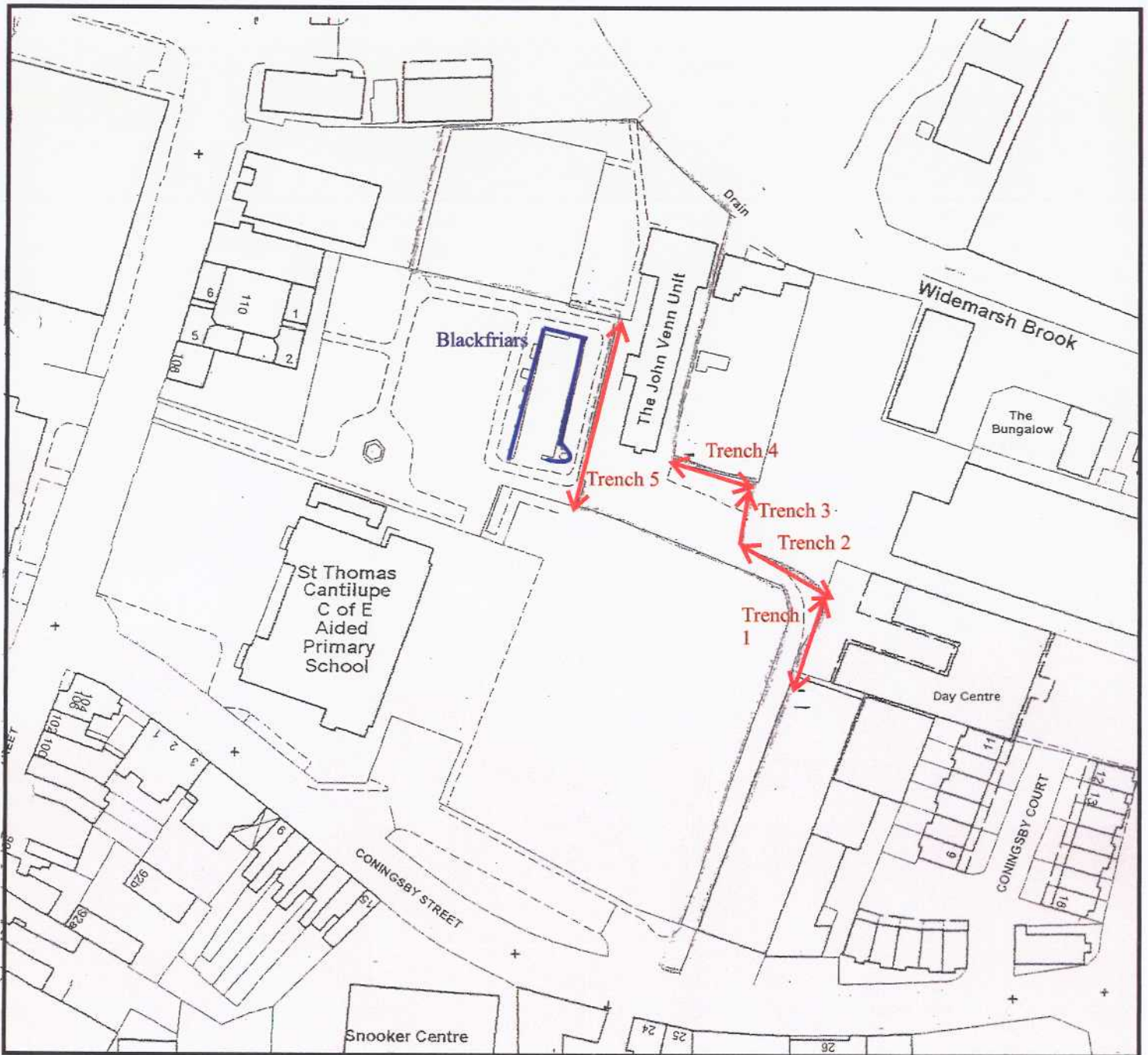




Fig 2. Location of trenches.

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-  Trench outline
-  Outline of Priory