



# KING GEORGE'S PLAYING FIELD

Fibre-Optic cable duct,  
Hereford

*Archaeological Watching Brief*



**December 2005**

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Hereford Archaeology Series 690

**This report is produced by**

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**Cover picture: Digger with Rowe Ditch in the back ground**

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**KING GEORGE'S PLAYING FIELD  
FIBRE-OPTIC CABLE DUCT, HEREFORD**  
Herefordshire.  
NGR SO 5086 3949

*Archaeological watching brief*

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**Text**

B. Ward

**Site Work**

B. Ward

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**December 2005**

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**King George's Playing Field,  
Fibre-optic cable duct,  
Hereford  
Herefordshire.  
(NGR SO 5086 3949)**

*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 while a fibre optic cable was inserted from the south eastern end of Wye Street to a point approximately 50 metres south of St Martin's Avenue. In this area is the Scheduled monument Rowe Ditch, (SAM 47), which runs east / west along St. Martin's Avenue. During the Civil war, Rowe Ditch was used as the first line of defence on the southern side of the city. The Area is also part of the Hereford Area of Archaeological Importance.*

*As the cable was going to run through this site, the main aim was to enable archaeological features to be adequately recorded in the areas affected by the proposal.*

*Due to the shallow depth and very narrow trench, no archaeological features were recovered during the excavation. The few finds recovered were all post medieval. 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 18th and 19th of October 2005.*

*Archaeological Investigations Ltd would like to thank staff from SCD Construction, the on site contractor for their co-operation while the archaeological monitoring was carried out.*

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## **2. Introduction**

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The site lies to the south of the River Wye, in the area known as Bishop's Meadow or King George's playing field, grid reference NGR SO 5086 3949 (Fig 1).

The underlying geology comprises mudstones and marls associated with the Old Red Sandstone. The site lies at approximately 51 m OD

An application to insert a duct for a fibre-optic cable between Rotherwas and Plough Lane in Hereford had been submitted to Herefordshire Council and the Archaeological Advisor for the County of Herefordshire District Council decided that an archaeological project should be carried out.

Archaeological Investigations Ltd was contracted to fulfil the archaeological work. The fieldwork was carried between the 18th and the 19th of October 2005.

The site was given accession number HFDMG 2005-184.

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## **3. Historical Background**

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Row Ditch is presumed to date at least as far back as the Norman period and may even be of Saxon origin. The ditch and bank is considered to have formed the boundary of the suburb of the city to the south of the river. It is still visible as an earthen bank running from east to west and appears to start opposite the south eastern corner of the castle. The bank now stops short of St Martin's Street to the west but it is assumed that it crossed the road and turned north to line up with the western town defences on the northern bank of the river.

Speede's map of Hereford from 1610 shows a water course on the line of the ditch and it is therefore assumed that Row Ditch was a canalised stream.

Taylor's map of 1757 shows a rough alignment along the ditch, but no water course. The map also shows that the area was made up of fields "belonging to Hinton" (fig. 2 ). The map also shows that the field boundaries do not run in a continuous straight line to the south, which might suggest that the defensive line was being encroached upon.

A potential indication of a former wall to the defensive circuit is a building to the west of the fields called "The Wall". The line of properties to the west of St. Martin's Street do, however, continue further south.

During the Civil War, Row Ditch was being used as the first line of defence on the southern side of the city.



## **Previous archaeological work at King George's playing field**

There have been several excavations in the area.

A trial excavation was carried out in 1975 across the presumed line of the rampart. A clean yellowish clay sealed a layer, dated by pottery to the late 12th century.

A watching brief carried out in 1977 (Sawle, 1977) exposed a section of a ditch at Drybridge House to the west of St. Martin's Street. The ditch ran east-west across the southern part of the site and was approximately 4 m deep and at least 8 m wide. A line of pointed stakes was found in the bottom of the ditch. The earliest pottery retrieved was of the 13th century.

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## **4. Aims and Objectives**

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The main aim of the project was to record any at-risk archaeological materials on the site and to evaluate and make a detailed record of archaeological materials to be destroyed or damaged by the work. An additional aim would be to record relevant features of the site in order to put the work into context.

The main objectives were to:

- a) Identify the date and nature of features being investigated.
- b) Assess survival, quality, condition and relative significance of any archaeological features, deposits and structures within the study area.
- c) Produce a record of archaeological features and an ordered archive for deposition.

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## **5. Methodology**

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A 0.30 m wide and approximately 0.60 m deep trench was dug using a mechanical digger from the south western corner of Bishop's Meadow south east across to St Martin's avenue. 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 trench. Instead site notes were taken during the work.

The trench was photographed using both black and white and colour film. A register was kept of the photographs.

The site was given accession number HFDMG 2005-184 in accordance with Herefordshire Museum service's 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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The trench was dug by a mechanical digger using a toothless bucket and was 0.30 m wide and approximately 0.60m deep. The soil was sandy silt loam.

The trench was only open briefly as the pipes containing the fibre-optic cable were put down immediately and the hole covered over. The finds were very sporadic and all post-medieval, consisting of a few animal bones, clay pipe, a cobble stone and post-medieval pottery and glass bottles.

The trench was dug through a gap in Row Ditch approximately 10 metres east of the bank. At that point and approximately 5 meters from St. Martin's Avenue, what seemed to be a small rubbish dump was noted. At a depth of approximately 0.40 m, the soil became very dark and a quantity of post medieval pottery was retrieved. Small medicine glass bottles as well as a coffee extract bottle were also retrieved but not retained.

No archaeological features were observed in the trench.

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## 7. Discussion

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Although the site lay in close proximity to Row Ditch and the site of Civil War activities the trench did not contain any archaeological features. This was probably due to the shallow depth to which the trench was 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 laying of the fibre-optic cable across King George's playing field. However, no archaeological features were found during the excavation.

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## 9. Bibliography

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Sawle, J, 1977 Interim report on trial excavations in Hereford, 1976, *West Midlands Archaeol. News Sheet*, 20, 80 - 81

Whitehead, D 1982: The historical background to the city defences, in Shoesmith, R, *Hereford City Excavations, Vol 2: Excavations on and close to the defences*.

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## **10. Site Archive**

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

The site archive is stored with Hereford Museum, Accession number HFDMG 2005 – 184.





NGR SO  
4000

NGR SO  
5200

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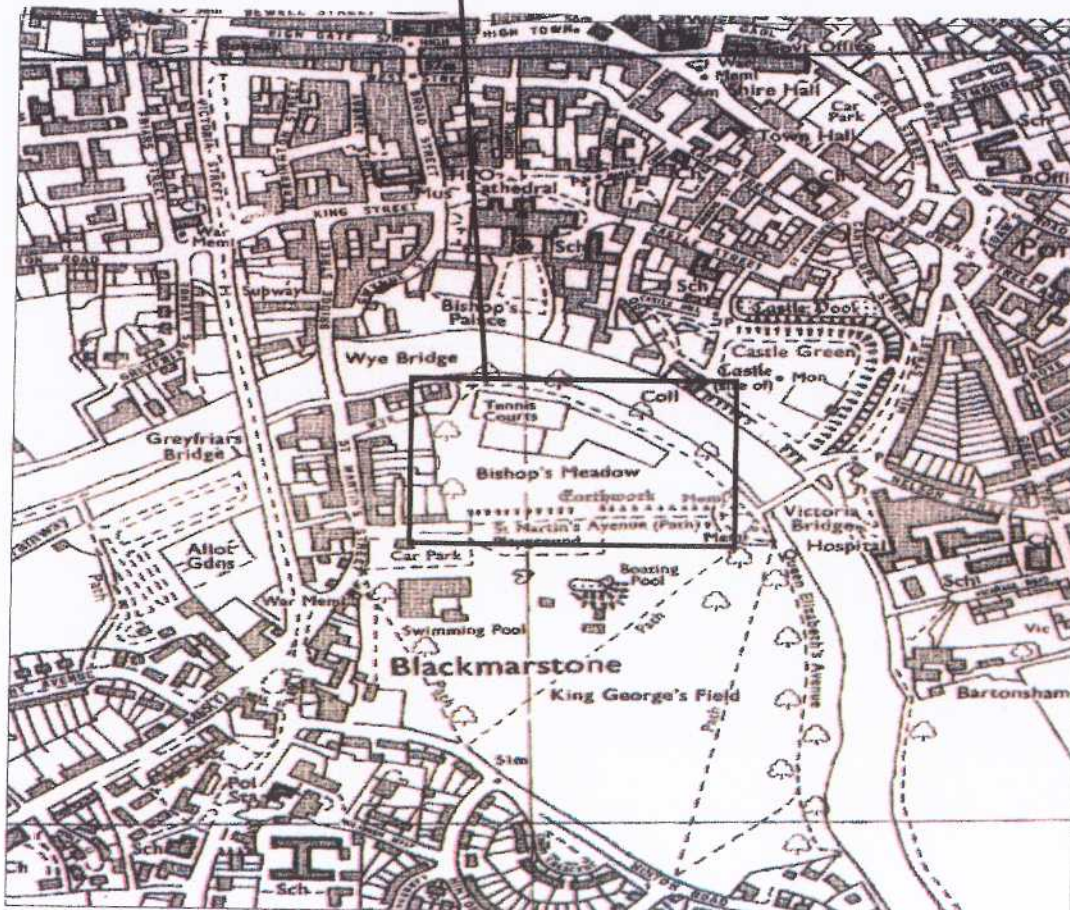


Fig 1: Location map



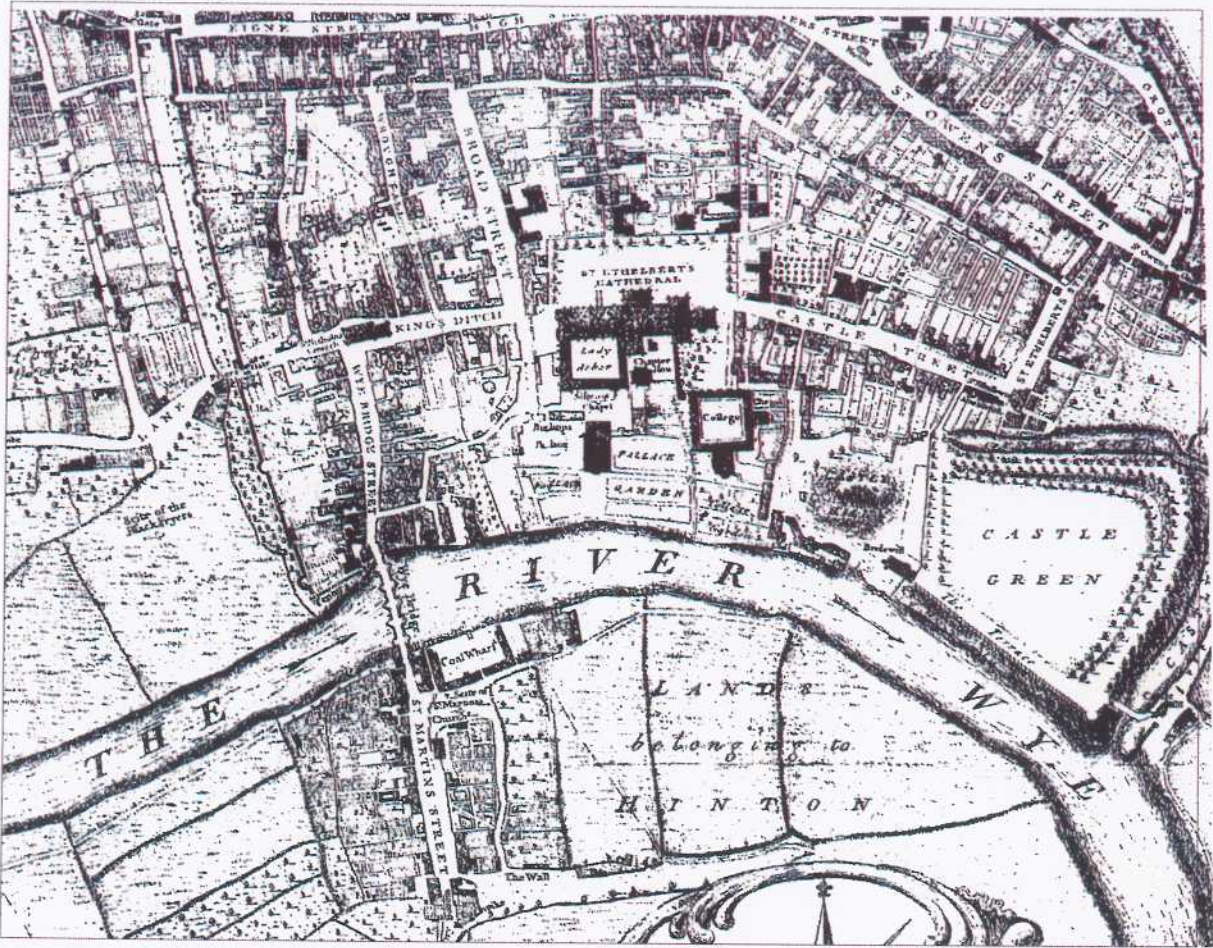


Fig 2: Taylor's map of 1757

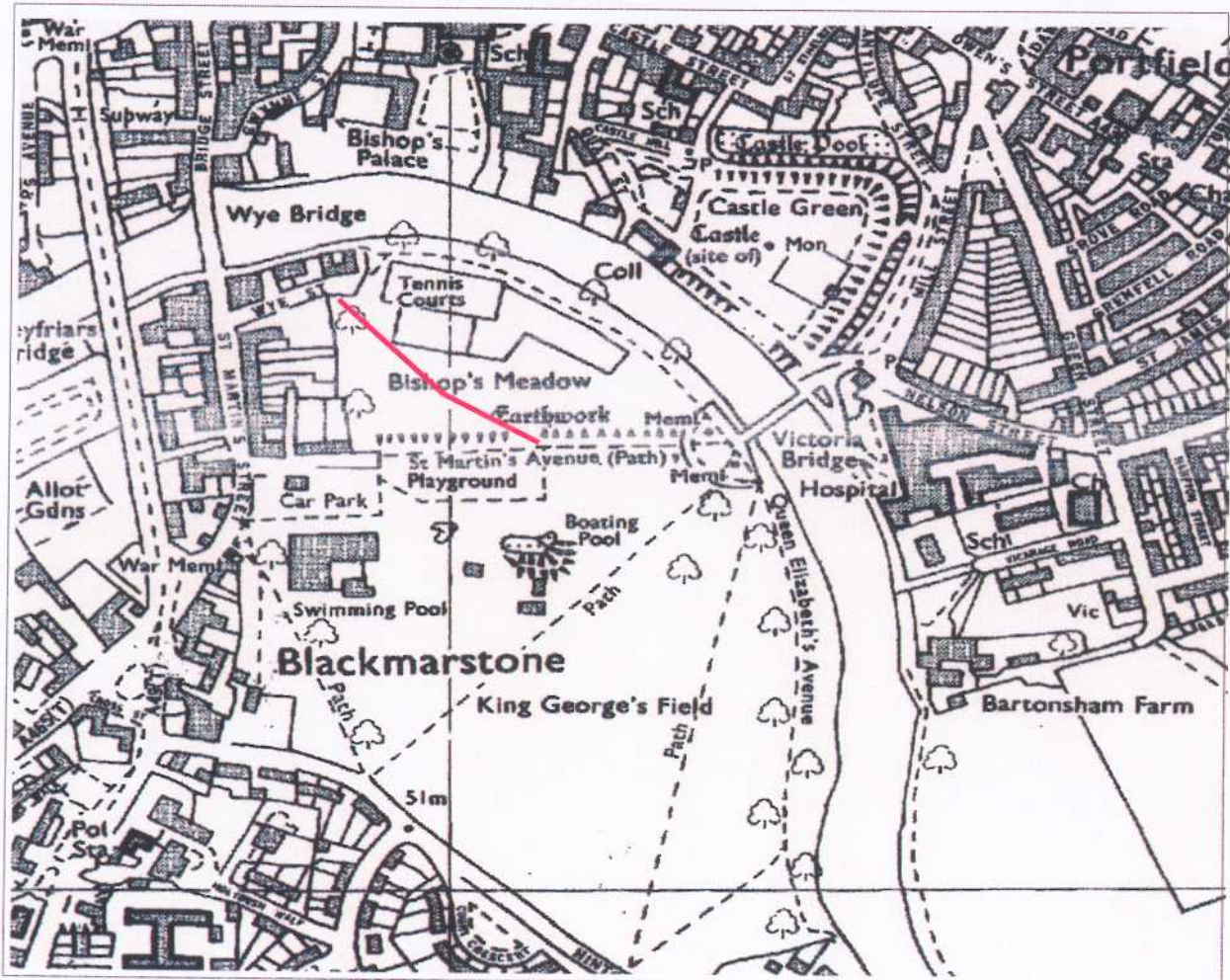


Fig 3: Trench location



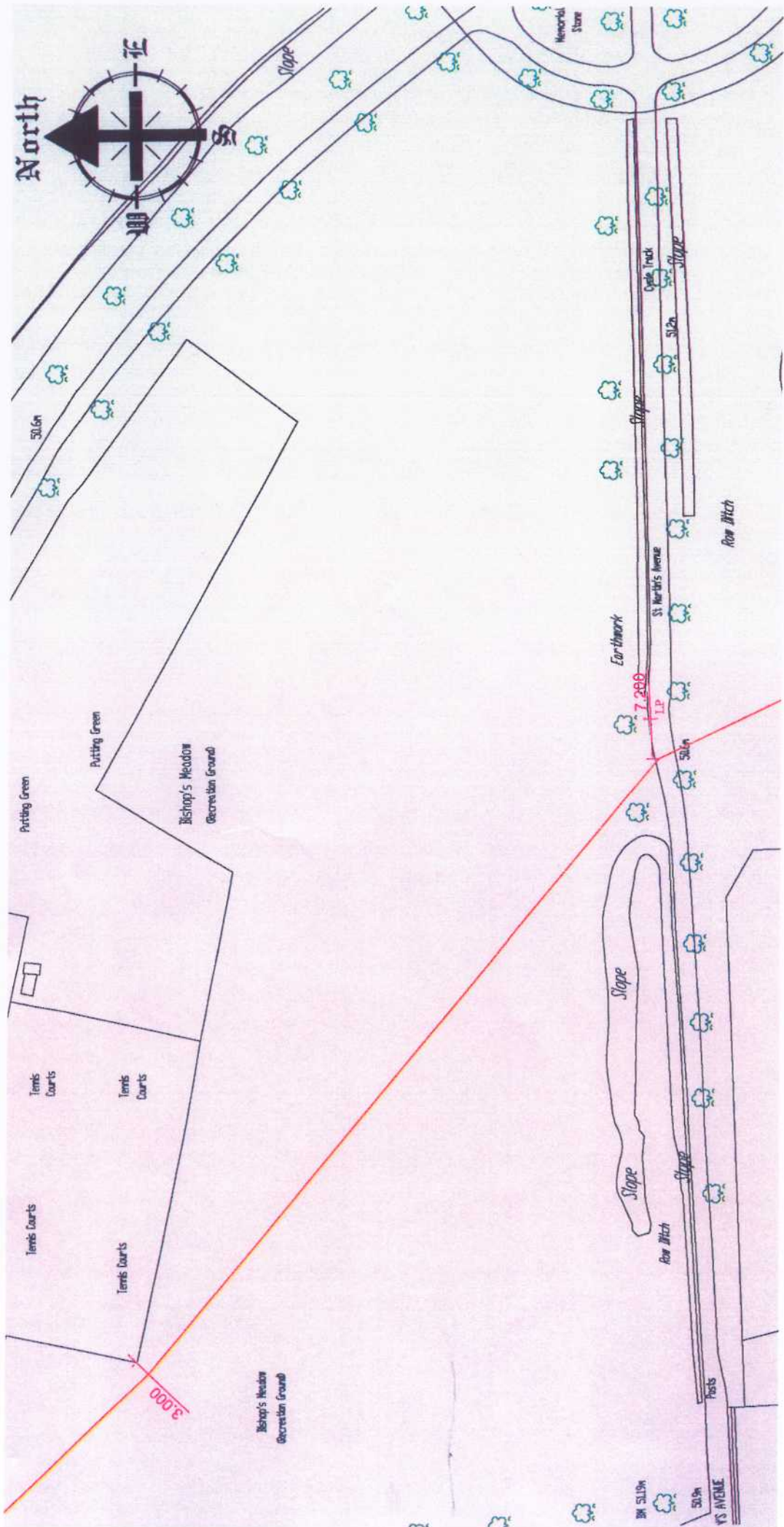


Fig 4: Trench location map. Scale 1:1250



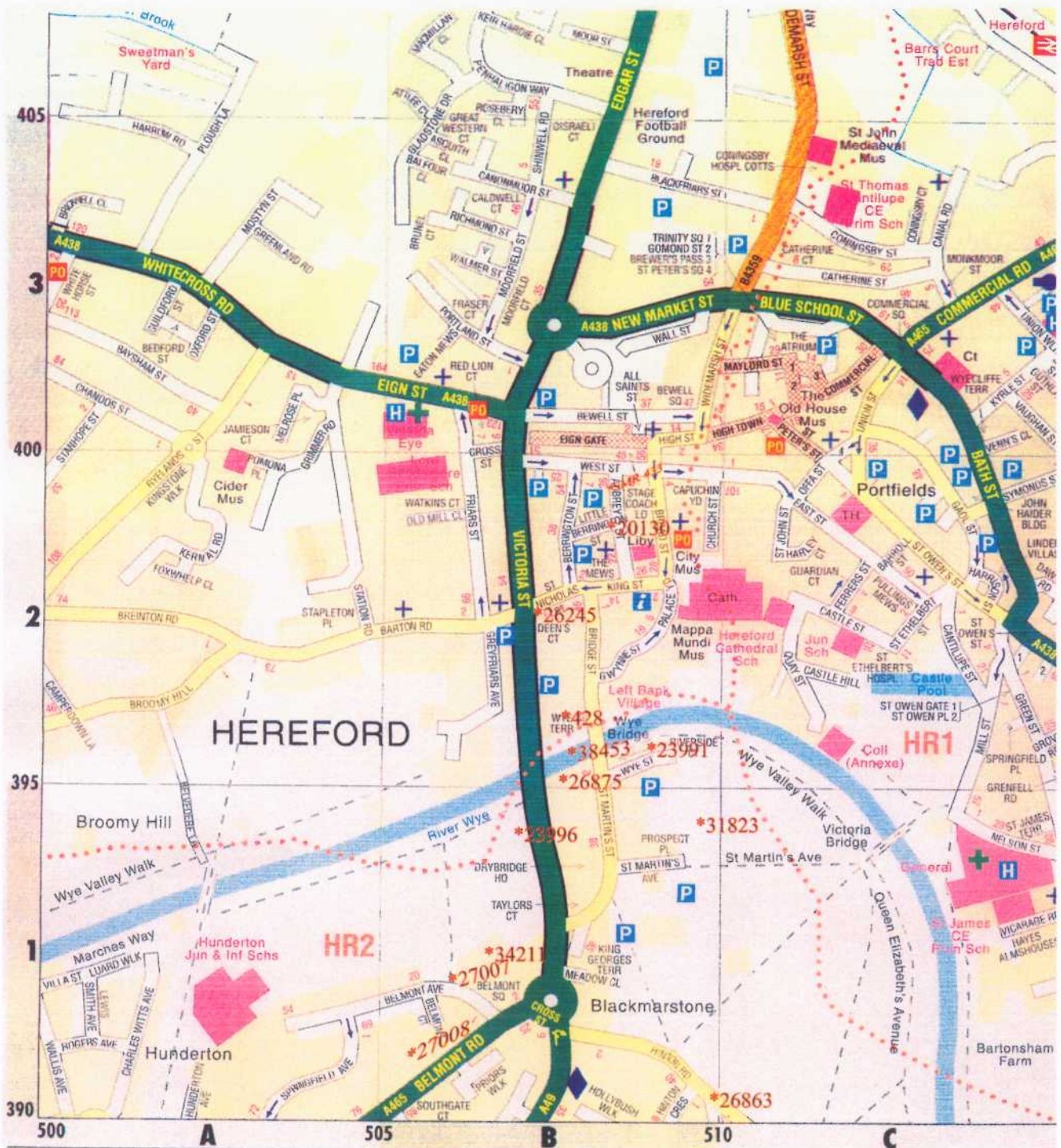


Fig 5: SMR sites near Rowe Ditch - Medieval of date mainly

- SMR 433: NGR SO 5086 3985, Medieval ditch
- SMR 20130: NGR SO 5079 3975 Medieval building
- SMR 26245: NGR SO 5073 3973 Medieval city wall
- SMR 428: NGR SO 5084 3951. Site of S. Martin's church, destroyed in the siege 1645
- SMR 38453: NGR SO 5080 3930. Medieval deposits - C 13 & C 14 pottery retrieved
- SMR 23991: NGR SO 5930 3960. 11th - 12th century pottery found at Old Ford House
- SMR 26875: NGR SO 5080 3945. Medieval settlement
- SMR 31823: NGR SO 5170 3930. Rowe ditch
- SMR 23996: NGR SO 5074 3925. Post medieval building - The Greyhound Dog
- SMR 34211: NGR SO 5070 3920. Post medieval toll road
- SMR 27007: NGR SO 5065 3920. Black & white house C17
- SMR 27008: NGR SO 5062 3913. Black & white farm C 15
- SMR 26863: NGR SO 5100 3900. Hinton medieval settlement