



# Bastion Mews Hereford

(NGR SO 5120 4010)

*Archaeological Trial Trenching*



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Hereford Archaeology Series 770

This report is produced by

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### **Cover picture**

*Bastion Mews: Trench 3 in foreground*

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# Bastion Mews, Hereford

## Archaeological Trial Trenching

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# Bastion Mews

HEREFORD

## *Archaeological Trial Trenching*

NGR 5120 4010

SMR 45145

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### **1. Summary**

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*Archaeological Investigations Ltd was commissioned by Mr Z Dutton-Thompson to undertake trial trenching on the site at Bastion Mews in Hereford (Fig. 1). The site lies in the Hereford Area of Archaeological Importance close to the site of the medieval Byesters Gate. The line of the medieval city wall runs along the eastern side of the site.*

*Three trenches were excavated, two measured 1.2m wide and 3m in length and the third – Trench 1 - was 1m wide and 2m in length. Despite the position of the site in the immediate vicinity of the city wall and Byesters gate, the eastern entrance to the medieval city, no archaeological features or deposits were present in the trenches excavated.*

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## **2. Introduction**

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As a result of the proposed submission of a planning application submitted to Herefordshire council by Mr Zane Dutton-Thompson, Archaeological Investigations Ltd was commissioned to undertake trial trenching at Bastion Mews in Hereford. The site lies on the western site of Bath Street and to the south of Union Street, east of the city centre (Fig. 1). The medieval city defences, parts of which are a Scheduled Ancient Monument, run along the eastern side of the site, which also lies within the Hereford Area of Archaeological Importance. Underlying geology consists of old fluvio-glacial gravels overlying Old Red Sandstone.

A desk top survey undertaken in 2002 revealed the likelihood of deposits and features of archaeological significance and in accordance with PPG16 the planning department was advised by Herefordshire Archaeology that archaeological intervention would be required, taking the form of trial trenching.

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## **3. Historical and Archaeological Background**

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A desk top survey undertaken in 2002 suggested the possibility of deposits dating back to the Saxon period (Sherlock 2002). Speede's map of 1610 (Fig. 2) shows the excavation area as open ground, a situation that appears much the same on Taylor's map of 1757 (Fig. 3), with the site shown as garden or orchard. By the time of the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map (1885, Fig. 4) the north-western (Union Street) end has been built upon but the south-eastern end of the site is shown as garden, with paths and trees.

No archaeological work has taken place on the site itself; geological testing (Geotechnical Engineering, 1998) demonstrated layers of 'made ground', a description possibly indicating the presence of archaeological deposits. A number of archaeological excavations in the immediate area demonstrated the presence of medieval industrial activity and occupation surrounding the site. Of these, the Magistrates' Court site, immediately to the east of Bastion Mews, but outside the city wall, revealed evidence for tanning. To the south of the site medieval pits were excavated, while on land lying between Union Street and Commercial Street recent excavation of a small trench and two pile holes revealed features and surfaces of 12<sup>th</sup> century and later date thought to relate to activity fronting onto Commercial Street. On land lying between Gaol Street and Bath Street two phases of building dating to before the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century were encountered together with debris suggesting industrial activity, possibly on adjoining plots, including tanning and metal working.

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## **4. Aims and objectives**

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The project was thought likely to produce results of local or regional archaeological significance.

The aim was to enable archaeological features to be identified in the areas affected by the proposal. The objectives were to excavate an area of at least 8m<sup>2</sup> using three trenches, one of

2m in length and the others of 3m. It was intended to identify the date of any features excavated. Further objectives were to assess their survival quality condition and significance and to produce a record. Objectives also included producing a report and deposition of the site archive.

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## 5. Method

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A total of three trenches were excavated on the site, using a mechanical excavator. Two of the trenches measured 3m in length and 1.2m wide, with the third 2m in length and with a width of one metre. The small sizes of the trenches were a result of constraints on space due to the presence of surrounding retail units. A toothless bucket was used to excavate the two larger trenches but the size of Trench 1 meant that it was necessary to use a smaller toothed bucket.

Photographs were taken on colour and black and white negative film throughout. Selected trench sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. A system of context records was kept and numbered independently by trench. Recording was in accordance with Archaeological Investigations Ltd's site manual. Registers were kept for context records. In the event only a single sherd of pottery was recovered from the site. As features were not present environmental sampling was not undertaken.

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## 6. Results

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### Trench 1

A number of deposits were present in Trench 1, which was excavated to a total depth of 1.4m and was aligned north-west/south-east. The only feature seen was an ash pit (cut 103, fill 104) present in the south-western corner of the trench. This feature contained pottery of late post-medieval date, which was not retained, and was excavated using the machine.

**Table 1 – Summary of deposits and features in Trench 1**

Context	Length	Width	Depth	description/interpretation
101	2m+	1m+	0.2m	Concrete surface in trench 1
102	2m+	1m+	0.3m	Dark grey brown/black silt clay former topsoil
103	0.3m+	0.3m+	0.25m	Cut with steeply sloping sides and rounded base. Ash pit
104	0.3m+	0.3m+	0.25m	Black silty fill of pit 103. contained 19 <sup>th</sup> century pottery
105	2m+	1m+	0.28m	Layer of mid to dark brown soil, contained clay pipe
106	2m+	1m+	0.36m	Brown silt clay above natural gravels. No dating evidence
107				Natural silts and gravels in the base of trench 1

### Trench 2

The trench was aligned north-northeast/south-south-west and was excavated to a total depth of 1.3m.

**Table 2 – Summary of deposits in Trench 2**

Context	Length	Width	Depth	description/interpretation
201	3m+	1.2m+	0.2m	Concrete surface in trench 1
202	3m+	1.2m+	0.14m	Dark grey brown/black silt clay former topsoil
203	2m+	0.8m	0.25m	Cut and fill of redundant drain
204	3m+	1.2m+	0.82m	Mixed mid to dark brown silt clay. contained clay pipe
205	3m+	1.2m+		Natural gravel in this trench
206	0.3m	0.3m	0.25m	Circular cut seen in the base of Trench 2
207	0.3m	0.3m	0.25m	Mixed mid/dark brown silt clay fill of 206. Similar/identical to layer 204

### Trench 3

Trench 3 measured 3m in length and was excavated to a total depth of 1.7m. It was aligned north-east/southwest.

A single sherd of a Black Glazed cup of 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century date was recovered from beneath wall 306, possibly suggesting a date for the construction of this feature. The wall (304) running along the opposite side of the trench contained no dating evidence, but it was thought that the mortar bonding it was of post-medieval date.

**Table 3 – features and deposits in Trench 3**

Context	Length	Width	Depth	description/interpretation
301	3m+	1.2m+	0.08m	Concrete surface in Trench 3
302	3m+	1.2m+	0.22m	Laid brick surface showing evidence of wear
303	2m+	1.2m+		Natural gravels in trench 3
304	3m+		0.4m	Wall or footing on northern side of trench. Stone built – possibly a footing
305	3m+	1.2m+	1.1m	Layer of dark brown silt clay; present from beneath modern surfaces to natural gravels
306	2.5m+	0.8m	0.75m	Stone feature on southern side of trench. Large, roughly squared unbonded sandstone. Post medieval pottery from beneath structure.
307				Dark grey green fill. Probably associated with wall 306.

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## 7. Discussion

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As a result of the current use of the site, surrounded by a number of retail units, the trial trenches were necessarily limited in scale. Although it is, therefore, possible that they missed archaeological features in the area, it seems unlikely that these were of any great density, as

may be expected of a site just inside the city wall in an area close to where evidence for both occupation and industrial activity have been shown to be present.

A number of explanations for this lack of evidence are possible. Firstly, truncation followed by levelling could have taken place in the post-medieval period. Such activity might have destroyed much of the evidence for earlier occupation possibly leaving only the very deepest features such as rubbish or cesspits. In areas of intensive occupation, for example on the site between Commercial Street and Union Street, these can be in close proximity to one another and it is unlikely that the trenches would have completely missed a similar configuration of features. It would also seem likely that residual pottery or other material would be present in the trenches but none was found. The only features encountered during trial trenching were of post-medieval date and were at the western end of the site, close to Union Street.

A more likely explanation is that the area was not occupied until the later post-medieval period as is indicated by examination of Speede's and Taylor's maps. On Speede's map (Fig. 2) the area, apart from buildings at the corner of Union Street is shown as open ground, while Taylor (Fig. 3) shows it as being garden. Of course, this does not preclude activity at an earlier date, before the Black Death with the population slump meaning that areas previously occupied were used as garden. However, the fact that natural gravels were encountered at a comparatively shallow depth suggests undisturbed ground and that if features had been present they would have survived. The deposits examined during work were very clean and gave the impression of being garden soil.

While the area lay very close to Byester's Gate and may have been kept clear for defensive and administrative reasons it is noticeable that much land just inside the city wall is shown on Taylor's 1757 map as open ground or garden. Further to the south industrial activity such as that recently recorded on land between Bath Street and Gaol Street may relate to the rear of plots fronting onto St Owen's Street. Part of the area still seems to have been garden in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition map (Fig. 4).

Explanations offered for the lack of domestic or industrial activity on the site do not, however, explain the fact that no evidence was found for the rampart for the city defences expected to run through this area. Trench 3, situated closest to the line of the rampart showed only a red natural gravel at the same depth as the natural gravel encountered elsewhere on site. It would seem likely the explanation is either a realignment of Bath Street or that the line of the wall and rampart did not coincide at this point as they did, for instance on the site between Gaol Street and Bath Street. Another possibility is that the immediate proximity of Byesters Gate meant that the rampart was not present in this area.

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## 8. Conclusions

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The aim of enabling archaeological features to be identified in the areas affected by the proposal was not fulfilled as only undisturbed natural gravel was identified in all three trenches excavated. This does, however suggest that no medieval stratigraphy survives on the site.



The objective of excavating all the trenches in the area was fulfilled. Very little dating evidence was present on the site and only one possible archaeological feature was examined, with no associated dating evidence.

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## **9. Bibliography**

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Sherlock, H, 2002, Bastion Mews, Hereford, Desk Based Survey

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## Appendix 1: Site Archive

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The site archive is stored at Hereford Museum (Accession No. 2007- 92)

It consists of:

1 sherd of pottery

18 Colour and Black and White photographs

20 context sheets

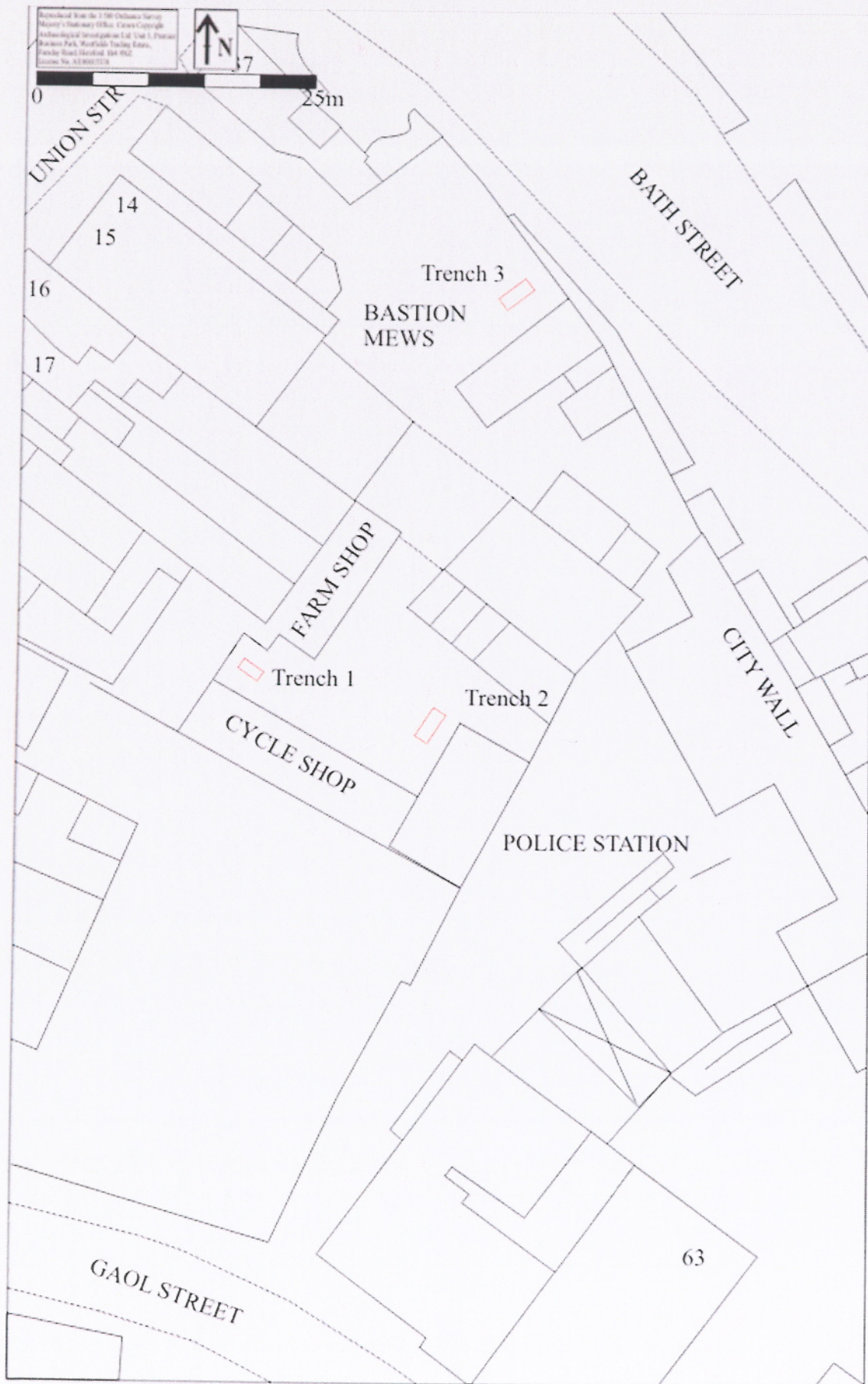
One sheet of drafting film with site drawings

This report



Bastion Mews site location.

Figure 1a



Location of trenches.

Figure 1b

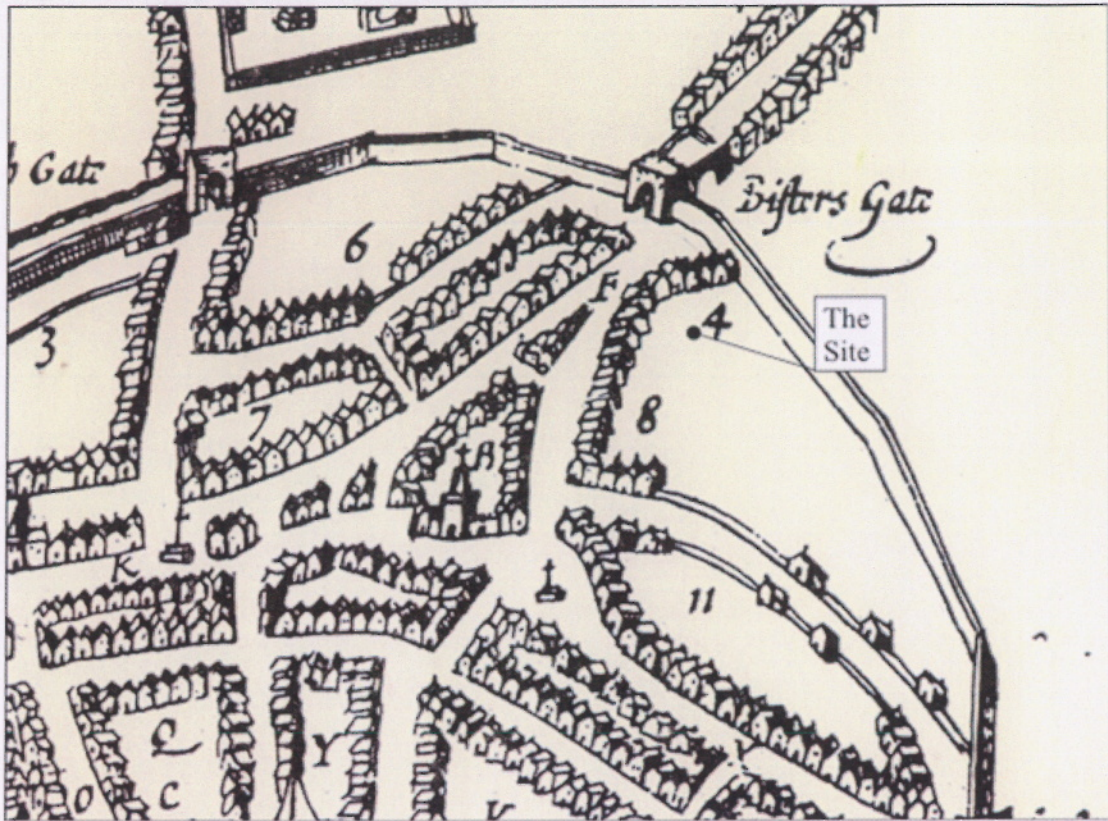
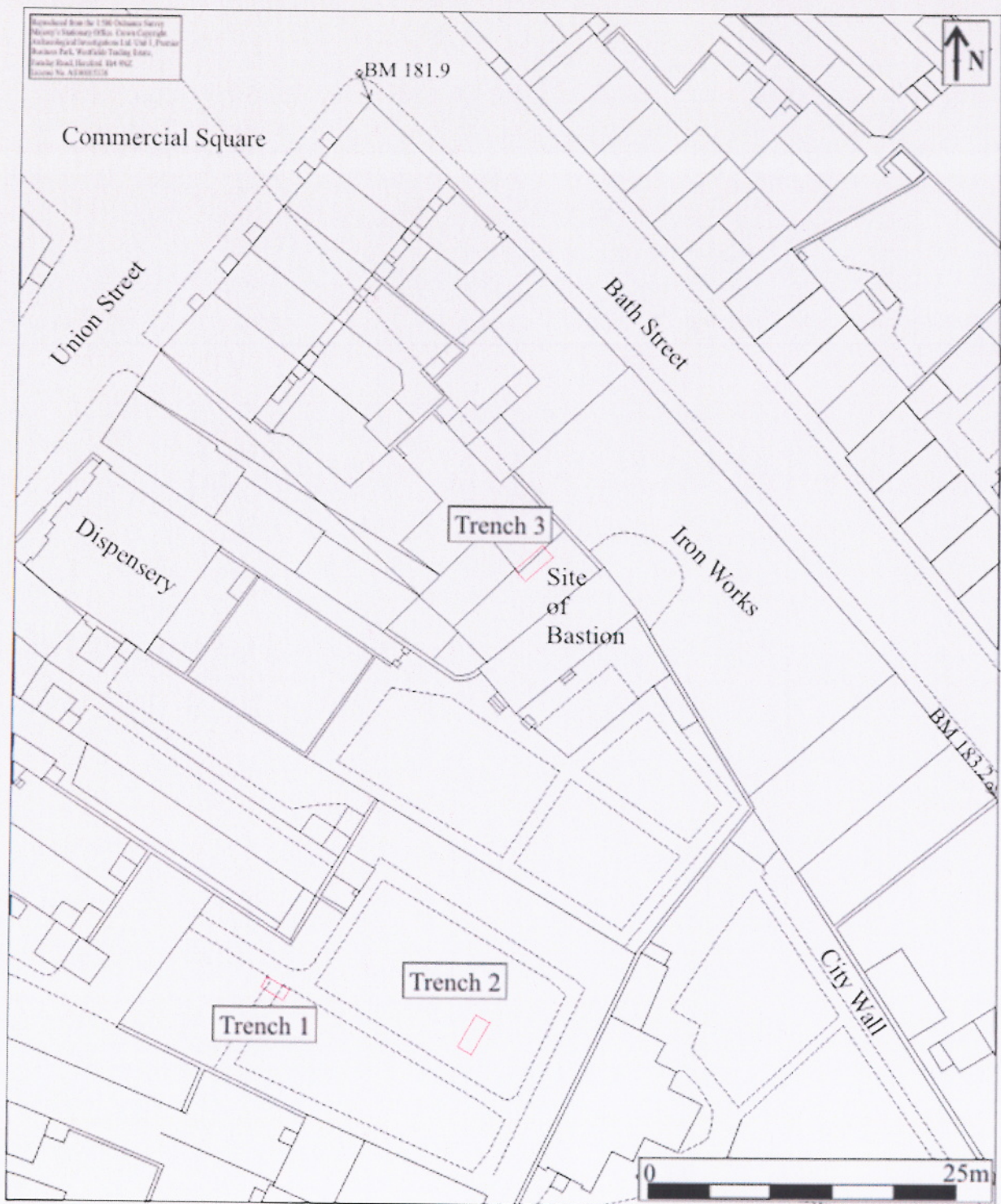


Figure 2. Speede's map of Hereford, 1610



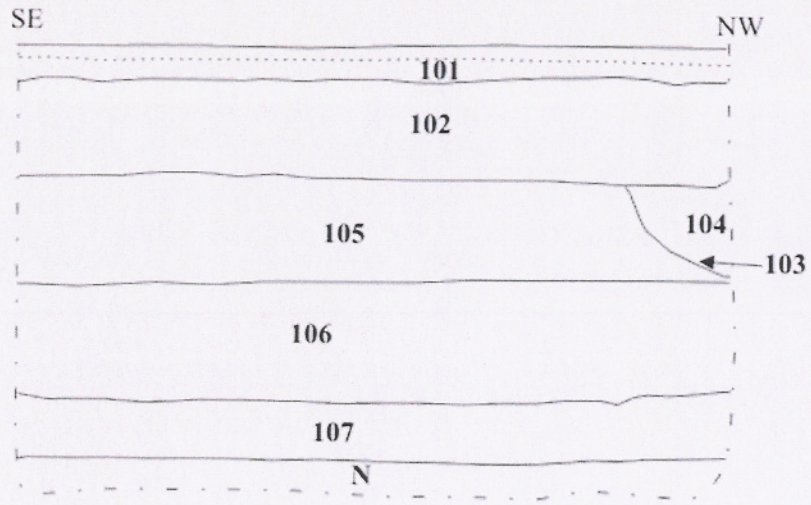
Figure 3. Taylor's map of Hereford, 1757



Trench locations on the 1886 OS Map.

Figure 4

**Trench 1**  
**Scale 1:20**



**Trench 2**  
**Scale 1:20**

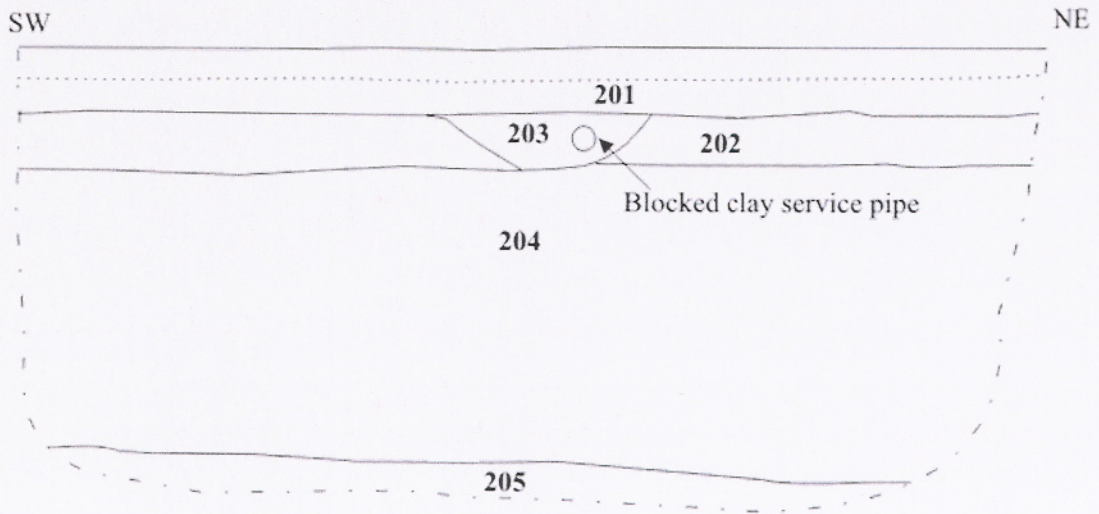


Figure 5a