

Land Off Canal Road (Blackfriars) Hereford

(NGR SO 5124 4043)

Archaeological evaluation and assessment of ground conditions



January 2008

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This report is produced by

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Cover picture

View of Blackfriars Preaching cross

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Land Off Canal Road (Blackfriars)

Hereford (NGR SO 5124 4043)

Archaeological evaluation and assessment of ground conditions

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Land Off Canal Road (Blackfriars)

HEREFORD (NGR SO 51240 40430)

Archaeological Evaluation and assessment of ground conditions

1. Summary

The land off Canal Road is due to be developed into residential properties by Mr M. Oseman. The development works affect a Scheduled Ancient Monument so this investigation was carried out in response to a request from English Heritage for more information on the site in order to determine an SMC application.

To obtain the required information a ground investigation for engineering had to be undertaken. To enable the ground investigations English Heritage issued a Class 7 consent (Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, Class consent amendment).

The aim was to establish the upper and lower levels of archaeology across the site.

A series of twenty seven possible bore hole locations, consisting of three rows of nine in a five metre sample grid were laid out. Ten of these were tested. Four trenches were also excavated on the location of four bore holes for the purposes of pressure plate testing and archaeological research. The entire process was monitored by an archaeologist.

The investigation revealed that there was no archaeology in the top 0.50m and this was confirmed by the borehole cores. The first true archaeological horizon is present at approximately 0.80m below the surface. The depth of the archaeology is approximately 2.00m across the site.

2. Introduction

Archaeological Investigations Ltd. was commissioned by Mr. M. Oseman to undertake an evaluation of the surviving archaeology on an area of land to the rear of a number of commercial business units at the north end of Canal Road, Hereford (SO 51240 40430) (Fig. 1). The Site is currently wasteland. To the north of the Site is the line of Tan Brook, one of many watercourses draining the Widemarsh area of Hereford. To its south is the access road to the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), and on its west is an overgrown field that separates the Site from the PRU.

Planning permission had been granted by Herefordshire County Council to develop the site for residential purposes (Planning Ref: CE2002/1401/F). As the Site lies within a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM13610) an application to carry out work on the Site was submitted to the DCMS. In response to this application English Heritage have requested that further evaluation and information on the nature of the buried archaeological deposits. English Heritage established that a Class 7 consent was appropriate (Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, Class consent amendment) for the scale of the ground investigations.

To obtain the required information a ground investigation for engineering had to be undertaken. The scope of the work encompasses bore holes, probe holes, trenching for pressure plate testing and reporting/archiving.

Borehole cores were taken on the 23^{rd} and 24^{th} January 2008 and pressure plate test pits were excavated on the 30^{th} and 31^{st} January 2008.

The geology of the Site comprises of Old fluvio-glacial gravels overlying Old Red Sandstone. There is the potential for alluvial deposits associated with the stream in the northern part of the Site and peat deposits were discovered during an evaluation on the north side of the stream.

3. Historical background, (From H.A.S 554)

3.1. The Blackfriars priory and its boundaries

The Friary is documented as having been granted this site in 1319 and was dissolved in 1539. The Dominicans, Blackfriars or Friars Preachers, as they were variously known arrived in England at the beginning of the 13th century. The Order imposed strict personal poverty on the Friars and they were not allowed to own land and buildings apart from their churches and conventual buildings. Other buildings and land were often held in trust for them by corporations of citizens because, as they rapidly established themselves throughout the country, their sermons attracted much interest and large congregations. The cemeteries associated with their churches also grew in popularity as fashionable burial places.

Together with the Franciscan Grey Friars, they had set up some 70 priories by the mid-13th century, which had increased to over 100 by the early years of the 14th century. Their houses were mainly in the cathedral cities and county towns, sometimes in rather cramped quarters near the centre, but often, as in Hereford, in more spacious grounds in the suburbs. Although there was quite a variety in the design of their houses, there is relatively little evidence left standing. The more notable remains are at Gloucester, Newcastle and Canterbury.

The Dominicans reached Hereford in the mid-13th century and in the first instance settled on a site in the Portfields, a little way outside St Owen's Gate. However, they were opposed by the local clergy and, in the 1250s, as they built their church by day, the Canons appeared by night, turned out the Friars by force, and pulled down the unfinished buildings. This controversy continued for some time until, in 1270, the Friars received letters of protection from the king. The dispute was then referred to arbitration and was presumably resolved. The Friars continued to occupy the site in the Portfields until about 1319, but it is uncertain what buildings they actually erected.

In 1319 their fortunes changed considerably for the better when Edward II granted them certain lands and tenements on which they could build a completely new priory. This land was apparently adjacent to grounds which had already been given to them by Sir John Daniel and the Bishop of Hereford and formed the nucleus of the site in Widemarsh Street. They consolidated their holding in 1351 when they took over a roadway called Frog Lane, which led from Widemarsh Street to the brook. The precise position of this lane is not known but it presumably cut their holding into two parts.

The limits of the priory precinct are considered to be delineated by the present day Widemarsh Street on the west; Coningsby Street on the south; the Widemarsh / Tan Brook on the north-east, and possibly the line of rear of properties fronting Canal Road to the east. The northern limits are also somewhat uncertain; the precinct may have included the triangle of land between Widemarsh Street and the stream, or it may have been more rectangular, excluding that area, as is indicated on Speede's Map of 1610. The precinct boundary would have been walled, as shown on Speede and would have had a main gateway leading in from Widemarsh Street.

One part of the priory site had been 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, at least, retained. The chapel, although altered, still comprises the northern wing of the Coningsby Hospital.

The precise constructional dates for the many individual buildings that would have been within the precinct wall are not known. However, as the priory reached the height of its prosperity in Richard II's reign (1377-99), when three successive priors occupied the post of Royal Confessor, it can be assumed that most, if not all, of the building work was then complete.

3.2. The recent history of the priory site, (From H.A.S 623)

After the Dissolution, the Prior, Richard Grey, surrendered the priory to the Suffragen of Dover. The priory's debts of £52 14s 3d were paid off by selling £15 worth of jewels and paying the balance from the sale of fruit, saffron, wood and corn held in store, and the profits from a cider mill. The priory's inventory lists a pair of organs, two bells in the steeple, two alabaster tables, a large number of vestments in the sacristry, and a fireplace in the chapel.

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. In 1562 Ellis (or Elizabeth) Wynne had the site, which was then valued at £6 1s. 6d. per annum. Shortly afterwards it passed to Sir Thomas Coningsby of Hampton Court near Leominster.

The earliest map of the city is that produced by John Speede in 1610. It is largely diagrammatic but includes the Blackfriars precinct as walled (Fig). The precinct area is shown as rectangular and includes a house with chimneys, some ruins, and an indication of a gatehouse as well as the well-known preaching cross. Immediately to the north of the walled precinct a road is shown running eastwards from Widemarsh Street. Could this be the Frog Lane that was mentioned in 1351? North again from the lane, Speede shows in diagrammatic form a continuous row of houses on the eastern side of Widemarsh Street as far as the edge of the map. The accuracy has to be suspect - Speede shows a similar distribution outside each gate.

When Coningsby bought the site he wanted a town house in the city and the old priory site was ideal. He demolished most of the religious buildings, but converted and added to the west cloistral range to make his new mansion. The architectural style of the surviving inserted domestic features such as the windows and doorways indicates that this work took place in the early years of the 17th century and he was certainly in residence by 1613. It may well be that this is the building represented with chimneys on Speede's map of 1610(Fig 4a).

Using material recovered from the demolition of the priory Coningsby then built the Almshouses, which are now called Coningsby's Hospital in the area between his new house and Widemarsh Street. The foundation date for this establishment is 1613. The carved initials T P C occur frequently in the Hospital buildings and also on the first-

floor fireplace in the ruins of the house. They stand for Thomas and his wife Phillipa Coningsby. The house was approached through a gatehouse immediately to the south of the Hospital. This may well have been on the site of the gatehouse that originally led to the priory. This gatehouse still survives although the arch has been infilled for many years.

Taylor produced a detailed map of the city in 1757 (Fig 4b), over a century after the Civil War. The quadrangular Hospital is apparent in the lower part of the excerpt with, to the right, the northern part of the then ruined Coningsby house. Between the two, and to the north of the Hospital, the ground is given over to gardens. To the north again there appears to be several properties with frontages onto Widemarsh Street and gardens stretching back to the brook. The street frontages appear to widen as the depth of the property from road to stream decreases.

The 1841 tithe map provides (not included) little additional detail except to show that the area immediately to the north of the hospital was garden ground belonging to the hospital. There were several small buildings in the plots to the north again

The next available map is a century later. It was made by Thomas Curley in 1858 (not included) and was produced in order to design and lay out the proposed sewerage system in Hereford. Curley's plan shows the same area as Taylor. The Hospital is at the lower end and once again there is a vacant plot to the north, apparently used as a garden. The buildings on the plots to the north are broadly the same as those shown on Taylor's Map apart from a roadway that is shown running eastwards from Widemarsh Street to cross a bridge over the stream. The northernmost property, in the triangle of land between Widemarsh Street and the stream is shown as a Tan Yard with the tan pits adjoining the stream.

The Ordnance Survey produced their detailed 1:500 survey of the city about 1885 (Fig 5). Once again, the Coningsby Hospital is shown with open ground to the north. There is a recognisable correlation between this plan and the preceding one and individual properties can easily be identified. The roadway and bridge over the stream have disappeared to be replaced by a large building that continues back to the brook. To the north again, the individual buildings merge into the triangular tannery area. Here, the brook has been culverted, possibly after tanning had ceased in that area.

In the 19th and 20th centuries large amounts of soil and some gravel were dumped on this site possibly as a result of the construction of the Hereford to Gloucester canal (Stone, 1991, HAS 107).

3.3. The upstanding parts of the Blackfriars buildings

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

4. Previous archaeological work at Blackfriars (From H.A.S 623)

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.

The 1957 excavation

This was a Ministry of Works rescue project that took place in advance of the erection of a new school dining room. The excavation consisted of a trench, 38.1m long north to south across the presumed cloister, and four test holes. The published results include a plan and a section of the southern 7.6m of the long trench.

Along the trench there were, on average, 0.6m of post-priory deposits. The surface of the natural gravel varied in depth from 1m at the southern end to 3.1m at the north. Stone walls were encountered standing to a maximum height of 0.6m above rubble foundations; others had been substantially robbed out. The occupation levels associated with the priory included pits and other earth-cut features which were rich in pottery and decorated floor-tile. The lower, pre-priory levels had no features, but contained pottery of late 13th to early 14th century date (the half-century before the establishment of the priory on that site).

The 1984 study and 1994 survey

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 upstanding buildings (Shoesmith, 1994, HAS 207).

As a follow-up to this evaluation, Stratascan carried out a comprehensive geophysical survey in November 1994. The Archaeological Unit reported on the Survey in February 1995 (Shoesmith, 1995, HAS 236) and concluded that it was unlikely that permission would be granted to construct the proposed sewer in a north-south direction through the Scheduled area of the Blackfriars Gardens and neighbouring properties.

The Stratascan survey was limited on the north by the extent of the present gardens. A detailed survey was made of the area between the upstanding ruins and the Coningsby Hospital building. Within that area the radar survey produced significant results

although they tended to be fragmentary due to the surface problems. Effectively, areas covered in tarmac were non-productive due to the conductive nature of the asphalt surface. However, the anomalies that did show in this area have been interpreted as wall foundations or robber trenches for walls running west-east or north-south in a rectilinear manner. There are indications in the northwest corner of the survey area that walls continued further to the north and west.

The 1990-91 evaluation excavations

Evaluation excavations towards the eastern side of the suggested precinct area, on sites adjoining Canal Road, produced mixed results. The site on the corner of Coningsby Street and Canal Road had suffered from much modern disturbance and no definite friary levels were encountered. (Thomas, 1990, HAS 85)

In an area further north medieval deposits including a possible boundary ditch and later property divisions were encountered. Evidence for the east wall of one of the priory buildings, possibly the priory church itself, was recovered. It had been rebuilt twice, the latter rebuild possibly being the documented one of 1424. A large ditch, some 2.5m deep, containing tanning waste and crop-processing residues, may have been a water channel.

An area between the upstanding monument and the northern area was examined in 1991. This evaluation excavation established evidence for pre-priory occupation, traces of wall foundations and floors of the monastic period and substantial evidence relating to the demolition of the priory buildings and the subsequent re-use of the site. Individual features were in excess of 2m deep (Stone, 1991, HAS 107).

5. Aims and Objectives

The aim was to establish the nature and relative compaction of archaeological deposits to assist in designing a foundation for the proposed development that would have little or no impact on the archaeology below ground level.

The objectives were;

- To undertake borehole tests and recover samples.
- To undertake probe testing.
- Where necessary to test the ground bearing pressure at 500mm beneath present ground level using plate bearing tests.
- Produce a record of the interventions.
- Produce an archaeological report.
- Deposit the archive.

6. Method

The borehole positions were aligned on a five metre grid over the footprint of the proposed residential development (27 boring locations were identified). Ten locations were selected by the geotechnical team as a representative sample to give a balanced interpretation across the site. At each location a core of deposits was taken. Natural glacial gravels were reached on each occasion and any further coring beyond this point was at the discretion of the geotechnical team. The completed cores were photographed using 35mm colour film. Borehole recording sheets were completed, noting the composition and depth of deposits. The cores were then removed from site for post-excavation analysis by Archaeological Investigations Ltd. The bore holes were refilled with Bentonite. Probe testing was also carried out on other borehole locations which were again selected by the geotechnical team. These procedures were overseen by an archaeologist.

Four borehole positions, B2, C4, A6 and B8, were also selected by the geotechnical team for the ground bearing pressure tests. This involved digging a trench, over the position of the holes to a maximum depth of 500mm. The first 400mm was excavated by machine and then a further 100mm by hand to accommodate the position of the plates. The excavation of each trench was monitored by an archaeologist, photographs taken and records made of the composition and depth of deposits. Each trench was then backfilled using the material removed from the trenches.

Archaeological deposits recovered from the borehole cores were sieved using a flotation tank to recover datable material and any environmental material that might have been present.

7. Results

Boreholes (Fig. 2a, 2b)

The borehole cores revealed that the natural deposits on the site gradually sloped from 53.00mOSL in the south of the site to 51.00mOSL in the north.

The earliest deposits in the north of the site were variations in the natural gravels. A peat-like lens (112) was also present within the natural gravel in borehole C1.

Three distinct clay deposits were present overlying the gravels. The earliest (110) was the lightest in colour and contained fragments of degraded sandstone. It was present in only two of the boreholes. A mid brown clay deposit (109) overlay this and was present in seven of the ten boreholes.

Redeposited natural gravel (115) was found to be overlying the mid brown clay in borehole A3, and crushed sandstone (107) was found over the clay in the north of the site.

A deposit of dark brown/black silty clay (106) was present in nine of the ten boreholes. Above this was a modern layer of crushed red bricks and a layer of broken white wall tiles. A thin layer of topsoil disturbed by rubble dumps covered the site.

Some fragments of red brick and a small quantity of pottery and roof tile was recovered from some of the Borehole cores (Appendix 4).

Plate bearing test pits (Fig. 3)

No archaeological deposits were revealed during the excavation of the plate bearing test pits over A6, B2, B8 and C4. The sequence of deposits was the same as identified through the borehole cores.

Probe testing

The probe testing did not show up anything of archaeological importance.

8. Discussion

The pottery and the tile recovered from the core samples were from a broadly similar date range. It is likely that the deposits they were recovered from, (109) and (110) consist mainly of rubbish and debris associated with demolition of the priory buildings in the mid 16th century.

The small sherds of Herefordshire fabrics A3 and A8 were residual in the deposits in which they were found – context (109). A previous excavation recovered a similar fabric of 13th century date (Stone, 1991, HAS 107). This suggests that occupation predating the priory was present on or near to the site.

The red brick fragments date from the 16th to 18th century. This type of brick was commonly used in Hereford during this period.

The mid brown clay deposit (109) is the most significant archaeological deposit encountered at 0.80m below ground level in the north of the site and a depth of 0.58m at the south. From the ceramic evidence this may be a mid 16th century layer possibly associated with Blackfriars priory at the time of its dissolution. Some 20th century tile fragments were recovered from this layer but they were probably pushed to this level by the boring rig. Previous excavations show that significant archaeological deposits were only encountered at 0.75m below the present ground level and that there were no features of archaeological importance above an absolute

level of 53.82 O.D (Stone, 1991, HAS 107) which corresponds closely with the findings from this evaluation.

9. Conclusion

The trenches for the pressure plate bearing tests revealed no archaeology in the top 0.50m and this was confirmed by the borehole cores. The cores show that an archaeological layer is presents at approximately 0.80m, which corresponds with the findings from previous excavations.

The small quantity of artefacts recovered show that the archaeology on site is of a later medieval date and is likely to be associated with Blackfriars priory as evidenced in other excavations (Stone, 1991, HAS 107). The small sherds of Herefordshire fabrics A3 and A8 suggest that occupation pre-dating the priory was present on or near to the site.

Excavations were not carried out on a scale large enough give a more indepth insight into the archaeology of the site but do generally conform to earlier deposit models.

The aims and objectives of the project have been satisfied.

10. Bibliography

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Vince, A, 1985, The pottery, in Shoesmith, R, Hereford City Excavations, Volume 3, The Finds

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Appendix 1: Site Archive

- 1x Copy of this report
- 1x Film of colour photographs and negatives
- 1x Context register
- 4x Trench record sheets
- 10x Borehole log sheets
- 43x Small sample Bags:
 - 16x Charcoal
 - 7x Bone
 - 5x Pottery
 - 3x Brick
 - 3x Slag
 - 3x Tile
 - 2x Modern Tile
 - 2x Metal
 - 1x 1 Seed
 - 1x Shell

Appendix 2: Context Database

Context	Description	Maximum Depth	Present in	Datable material recovered
100	Layer of gravel/building rubble and modern rubbish	0.39m	C9	Modern rubbish
101	Grey hardcore	0.30m	A1, C1	
102	Mid brown silty clay topsoil	0.16m	A3/5/7/9, C3/5/7/9	
103	Cancelled	N\A	N\A	
104	Layer of broken and compacted white glazed wall tiles	0.38m	A3, C1/3/5/7	20 th C tile
105	Layer of red brick rubble	0.22m	A1/3/5/7, C3/7	Modern red brick
106	Dark brown silty clay with charcoal flecking	0.79m	A3/5/7/9, C1/3/5/7/9	13 th C, Pottery, 17 th -18 th C Pottery, 16-18 th C red brick
107	Layer of degraded sandstone	0.3m	A1, C1	
108	Red brick rubble. Possibly (105) that has been pushed to a lower level by the boring rig.	0.18m	C1	Modern red brick
109	Mid brown clay with small amount of charcoal flecking	1.00m	A1/3/5, C1/5/7/9	12 th -13 th C, Pottery, 13 th -15 th C, Pottery, 14 th -15 th C, Pottery, 14 th -17 th C Pottery, 14 th -15 th C Tile, 16-18 th red brick, 20 th C tile
110	Light brown clay with degraded sandstone inclusions	0.30m	C3/5	14 th -15 th C Tile
111	Light grey, sandy coarse gravel	0.38m	C1	
112	Black, organic peat-like deposit forming lens within natural	0.08m	C1	

113	Natural glacial gravels	1.85m+	A1/3/5/7/9,	
			C1/3/5/7/9	
114	Grey hardcore	0.58m	A7/9	
115	Redeposited glacial gravels	0.16m	A3	
116	Dark brown, fine gravel.	0.22m	A1	20 th C Tile
	Possibly pushed to a lower			
	level by the boring rig.			
117	Dark brown/black, silty sand	0.07m	A1	Charcoal
118	Gravelly mortar-like deposit	0.57m	A1	
	with degraded sandstone			

Appendix 3: Borehole Levels

Blackfriars, Canal Road, Hereford

Borehole survey 23rd/24th January 2008

Levels to top of boreholes

Borehole	Height (mOSL)
A1	53.245
A2	53.225
A3	53.325
A4	53.443
A5	53.675
A6	53.825
A7	53.890
A8	53.905
A9	53.930
B1	53.282
B2	53.370
B3	53.463
B4	53.500
B5	53.600
B6	53.775
B7	53.915
B8	54.005
B9	54.155
C1	53.365
C2	53.420
C3	53.448
C4	53.555
C5	53.680
C6	53.820
C7	53.956
C8	54.040
C9	54.200

Appendix 4: A note on the pottery and roof tile from land to the rear of Canal Road: K. H. Crooks

A small quantity of pottery and roof tile was recovered from the site at Canal Road. After washing, this was examined by eye and with a hand lens, and sorted according to Vince's classification (Vince 1985, 2002). Pottery and tile from the site are summarised in Tables A and B below. The majority suggested a later medieval date, and would be consistent with dissolution deposits.

Table A: Summary of the pottery from the site

borehole	context	fabric	Date and comments
A3	109	B4	14 th to 17 th centuries. No external treatment
A5	106	A3	13 th century. Cooking pot.
C3	106	STSL	17 th to 18 th centuries. Staffordshire slipware – sherd
			from a dish in jewelled slipware
C9	109	B4	14 th to 17 th centuries. Traces of a red slip and possibly
			of a clear glaze
A1	109	A8?	12 th to 13 th centuries. Very small sherd of a cooking pot.
			Abraded

Table B: Summary of the roof tile from the site

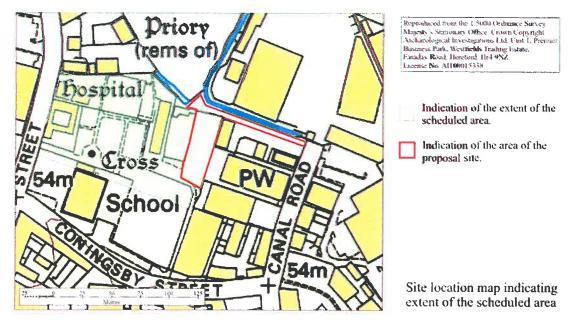
borehole	context	fabric	Date and comments
A3	109	A7B	13 th to 15 th centuries. Abraded. possible remnants of oxidised glaze
C3	110	B4	14 th to 15 th centuries. Three joining fragments of a ridge tile. No surface treatment on fragments present. Also numerous very small fragments of similar material
C9	109	B4	14 th to 15 th centuries. Probably a ridge tile. Traces of a clear/green speckled glaze
C9	109	B4	14 th to 15 th centuries. Clear glaze on surface. Very small fragment

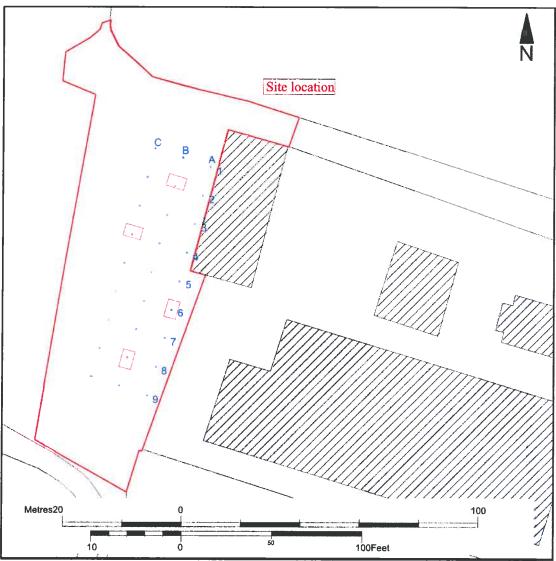
In addition to the above small fragments of either brick or tile in post-medieval fabric A10 were also present in borehole A1, context (109). This material is fairly ubiquitous in Hereford from the 16th through to the 18th centuries.

The small sherds of Herefordshire fabrics A3 and A8 were abraded and were residual in the deposits in which they were found – context (109) also contained Staffordshire slipware. However, they suggest that occupation pre-dating the priory was present on or near to the site.

The remaining pottery and tile was of broadly similar date. It seems likely that deposits from which it was recovered may consist of rubbish from the demolition/dismantling of priory buildings. Items such as roof tiles would certainly have been reused and the proximity of the site to Blackfriars priory suggests that the area may have been used for the purpose of sorting this and similar material.

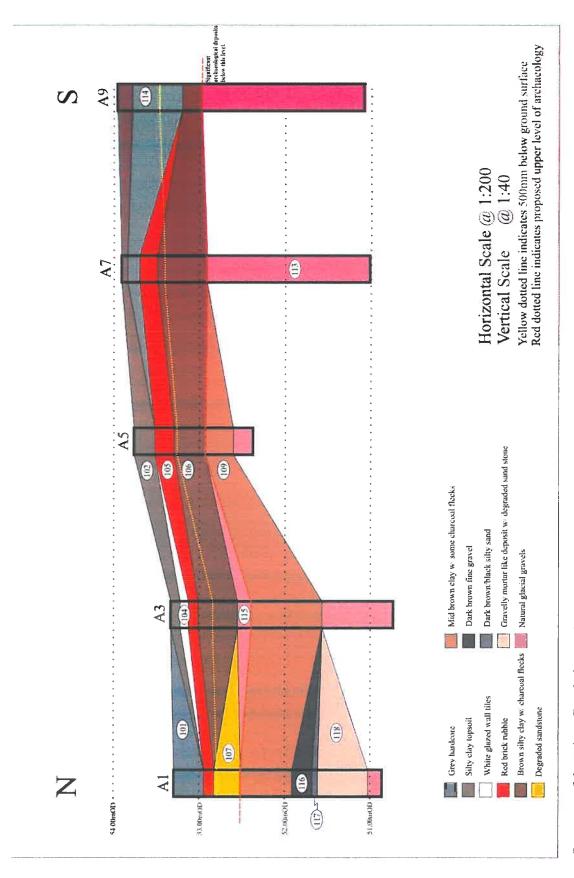
Figures



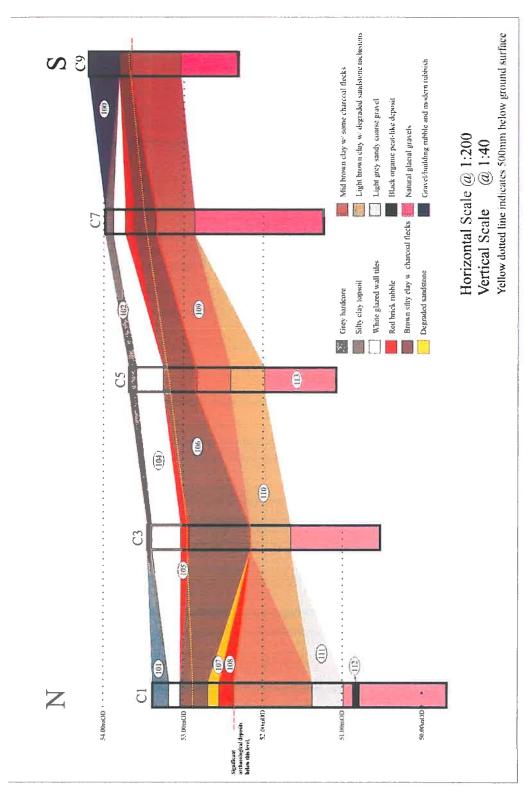


Plan showing the outline of the building and the bore hole sampling grid.

Figure 1



Sequence of deposits - Borehole row A (Postulated sequence indicated between boreholes)



Sequence of deposits - Borehole row C (Postulated sequence indicated between boreholes)

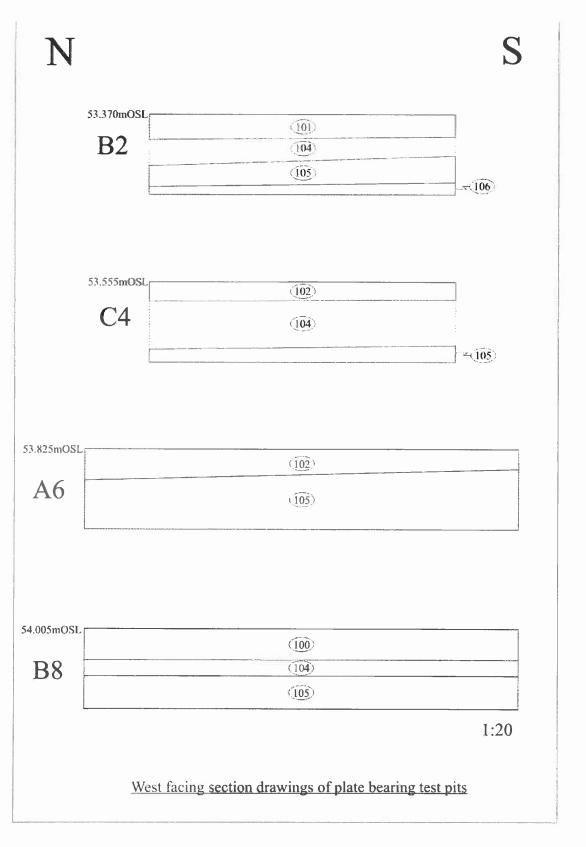


Figure 3

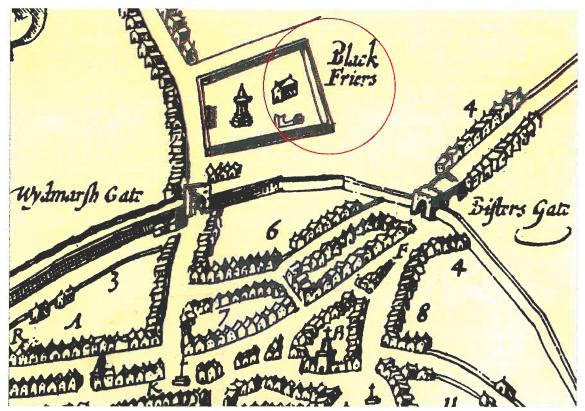


Figure 4a . Blackfriars on Speede's map of Hereford, 1610

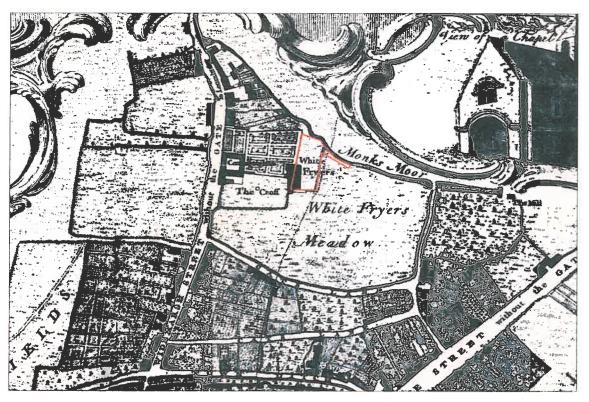
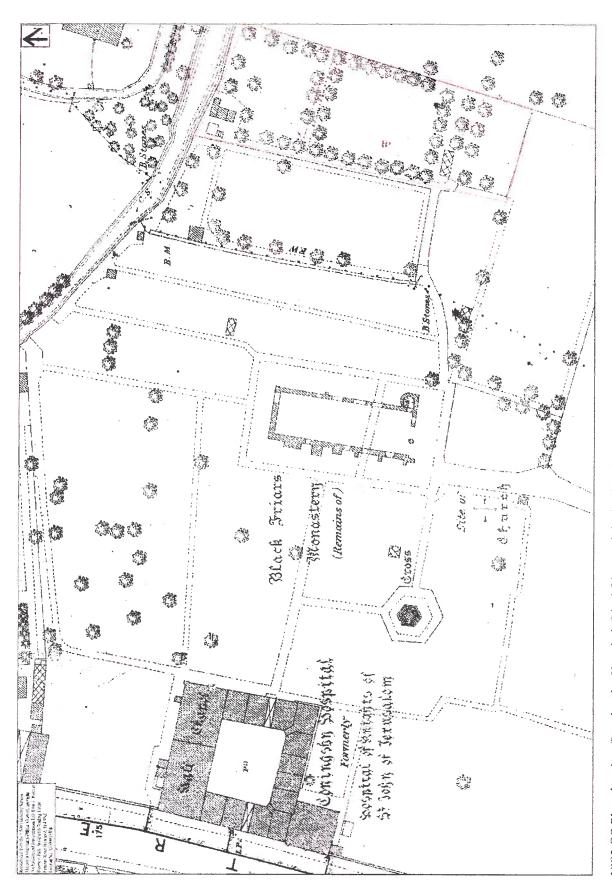


Figure 4b . Blackfriars (Erroneously labelled as White Fryers) on Taylor's map of Hereford, 1757



1885 OS Plan showing Conningsby Hospital, Blackfriars and the land to the east.