



NURSERY and FAMILY CENTRE

Off Coningsby Road Leominster

Archaeological Monitoring



March 2005

SMR 41532

Hereford Archaeology Series 668

This report is produced by

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Cover picture:

The site at the new Nursery and Family Centre, Leominster; looking north.

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NURSERY AND FAMILY CENTRE
off Coningsby Road,
LEOMINSTER
Herefordshire.
NGR SO 4969 5852

A report on Archaeological Monitoring.

Text

B. Ward

Site Work

B. Ward

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Nursery and Family Centre,
off Coningsby Road
Leominster
Herefordshire.
(NGR SO 4969 5852)

A report on archaeological monitoring.

1. Summary

The project followed in response to a planning permission issued by Herefordshire Council (DCNC2004/0430/F) stating that no development of the site could take place without the implementation of a programme of archaeological works to ensure that anything of archaeological interest was recorded.

The site is off Coningsby Road, Leominster, Herefordshire (NGR SO 4969 5852) which is at the south-eastern end of Leominster. A watching brief was carried out during the excavation of foundation trenches for the new Nursery and Family Centre. The developer was Sure Start, Leominster.

The aim was to identify and record any previous occupation or activity on the site, which may be of archaeological importance. However, no finds or features of archaeological significance were present on the site.

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

The fieldwork was undertaken between the 10th of February – 18th of February 2005.

2. Introduction

The site lies on a plot of land 150 metres east of the eastern frontage of South Street, Leominster, to the south of the historic core of the town (Fig 1), and at a height of approximately 74.5 mOD.

The underlying geology comprises shale, siltstone and sandstone of the Devonian Lower Old Red Sandstones with soils of the Bromyard association.

Pevsner (Pevsner 1963 p 229) mentions the 16th century public house, *The White Lion* which lies on the western side of South Street and that the southern end of South Street is essentially Georgian in character.

The proposed development site lies within an area previously known as *Castle Fields* - or possibly a corruption of *Caswall Fields*, approximately 200 meters east of a site shown on the 1927 OS map as Castle Moat (SMR record 542) (Fig. 1). The moat lies approximately 800 yards south of the church and extensive excavations were carried out there in 1962.

The proposed works might have affected a site of archaeological significance so in line with Planning Policy Guidelines Note 16, section 30 the client was advised that a programme of archaeological work was required taking the form of archaeological monitoring and recording of principal groundworks. This method statement was submitted in response to Condition 8 of the permission DCNC2004/0430/f and in accordance with a verbal brief from the Archaeological Planning Advisor at Herefordshire Archaeology.

Archaeological Investigations Ltd was contracted to fulfil the archaeological work. The field work was carried out between 10th and 18th of February 2005.

A watching brief had previously been carried out during the excavation of test pits in March 2004 where no archaeological features or finds were recovered.

3. Historical Background

The earliest reference to Leominster is the possible foundation of a religious house in *ca.* 660AD. In the 10th century the town was known as Leomynster - "Church in *leon*", which is Old Celtic name for the district, meaning "at the streams". Leominster was forming as a settlement by the 11th century and the Domesday Book mentions the Manor of Leominster as consisting of 80 hides and as being formerly held by Queen Edith .

The religious house was dissolved by 1066 after Earl Swein Godwinsson, in the words of the Anglo Saxon Chronicle, "ordered the abbess of Leominster to be brought to him, kept her as long as it suited him and then he let her go home" (Hillaby 1987). Although the nunnery was

dissolved, a community of canons survived. The Minster's relics and some of its books were later passed on to the Benedictine priory, founded in 1128.

By 1221 Leominster had acquired the status of a borough and to lessen competition, both Hereford and Worcester cities demanded that the day of the weekly market be changed. This was a clear sign that the town was by then a successful and thriving urban centre.

The town expanded in the 13th century, with occupation of previously open land. The structures on Bridge Street (formerly Middlemarsh) changed from temporary to more permanent structures. Small scale industrial activities also took place here. Presumably occupation of this area, outside the previously identified limits of the town (the name suggests it was prone to flooding) was a result of population pressure.

The moated site to the east of the Nursery and Family Centre site dates to the 14th – 15th century. Because Leominster Priory, which was under the control of Reading Abbey, seems to have been fairly wealthy, it is possible it belonged to the Priory (Hurst, 2002). There are, however, no written documents to support this. The wool from the sheep in the Leominster area were a very valuable resource, so no doubt the Priory used the pasture to the south of the town for grazing. It is possible they constructed the site with the moat for a subsidiary house or farm building in proximity to the grazing animals.

By the 14th century the town declined, probably due to the plague. At this time the 12th and 13th century ribbon development appears to have been abandoned.

The field name *Caswall field* goes back to the 18th century but it is not known when the association with the Caswall family began, although the Caswall family was known in the town back in the 16th century.

By the 18th century, the town was known for wool, leather, fine wheat and flax.

4. Aims and Objectives

The main aim for the archaeological work was:

- a) To enable archaeological features to be adequately recorded in the areas affected by the proposal.

The main objective of the work was:

- a) To 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 the features.

5. Methodology

Prior to the excavation of the foundation trenches, a depth of 0.15 metre of topsoil was removed across the site without an archaeologist being present.

Mechanical diggers using a 0.60 metre wide toothed and toothless bucket excavated the foundation trenches to a depth of 1.10 metres below the newly lowered ground surface. An archaeologist observed foundation trenches during excavation and occasional monitoring visits were made to the site while excavation was in progress.

Full context recording was not deemed appropriate as no archaeological finds or features were present in the foundation trenches.

The trenches were photographed using both colour and black and white film. A register was kept for photographs.

Recording was carried out in accordance with Archaeological Investigations Ltd's site manual.

The site was given accession number HFDMG 2005-11 in accordance with Herefordshire Heritage services accessioning procedure and this code was used to identify all documents associated with the site.

6. Results

The weather conditions were very poor throughout the watching brief and most of the work was carried out during heavy rain making the ground conditions very poor and inspection of the trenches difficult.

The first foundation trench to be dug was the south facing foundation (Fig 2) and to prevent the trench from collapsing, concrete was poured in practically as soon as digging had been completed. This procedure was followed throughout the excavation. The only previous disturbance was the line of a water main running east-west through the site at a depth of about 1.0 metre.

The stratigraphy in the foundation trenches showed a layer below the topsoil of friable red brown fine silt and clay of approximately 0.30m. This layer appeared naturally deposited with no features or finds present. This layer was above a layer of red sand with a depth of approximately 0.3m and natural was reached at around 1m depth. No archaeological features or finds were observed.

However, immediately to the south east of the southern foundation trenches, and outside the area of the watching brief was a patch of charcoal (approximately 1.0m x 1.0m) in which a

few small pieces of post medieval pottery were seen but not retained. This area was not disturbed by the development.

7. Discussion

Although the site lies in close proximity to the historic core of the town and to the west of the Castle Moat, no features or finds were recovered from the site. This may be because the area was used as arable during the medieval and later period of Leominster's expansion.

8. Conclusion

The aims of this project were to record, date and assess any archaeological features discovered during the excavation works for the foundations of the Nursery and Family Centre, off Coningsby Road, Leominster

No archaeological finds, features or deposits were encountered during the watching brief at the above mentioned site, confirming that archaeological monitoring during excavation of the foundation trenches was an appropriate means to fulfil the aims of the project.

9. Bibliography

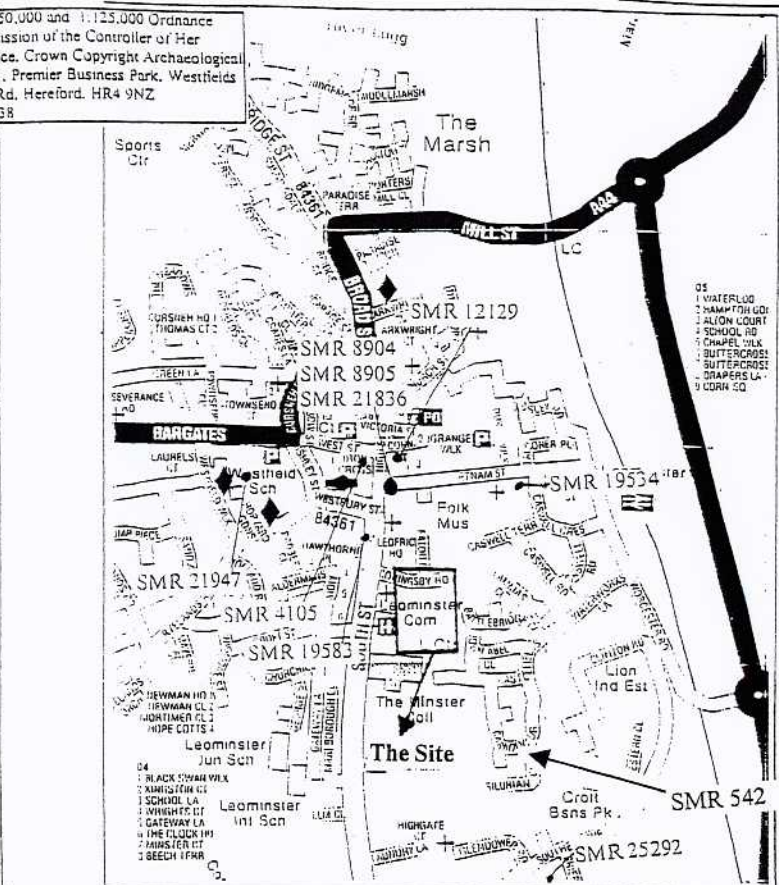
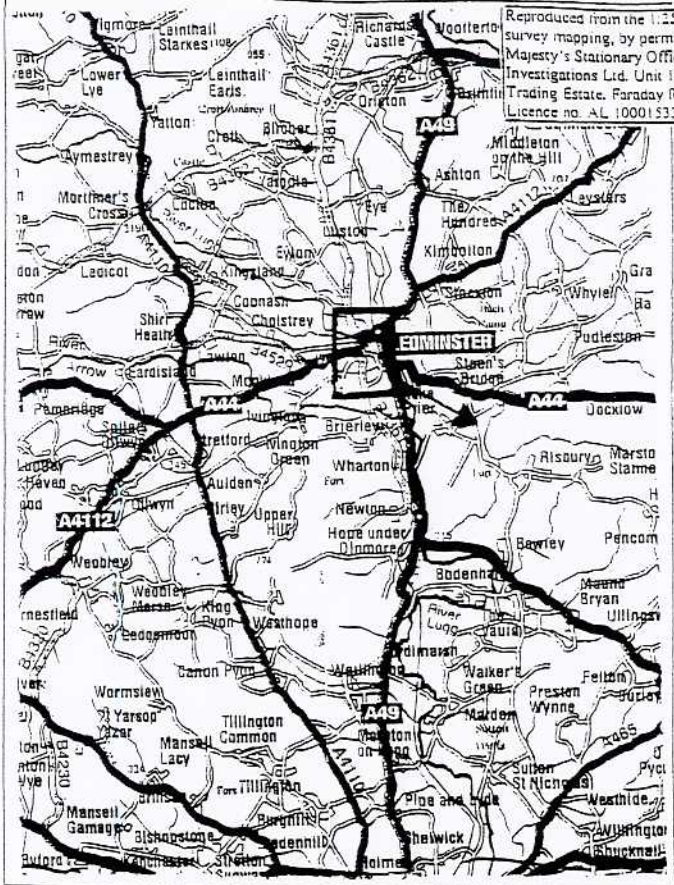
Hillaby, J, 1976, The origins of the Diocese of Hereford *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club, Vol XLII*

Hurst, J, D, 2002; *Castle Moat, Leominster*, Orphans Press

Morris, J. (ed), 1983, *Domesday Book 17: Herefordshire*, Chichester: Phillimore

10. Site Archive

No finds were recovered from the site. The site archive therefore only consists of the paper archive, including the photographs taken on site. The site archive is stored with Hereford Museum, Accession number HFDMG 2005 – 11.



SMR	Description
542	Caswell Moat Medieval
4105	Cattle market site Medieval settlement
8904	Medieval town ditch
8905	Early Medieval/ Dark Age bridge
12129	Iron cross Medieval
19534	Medieval defences
19583	Medieval tenement plots
21836	Medieval defences
21947	Medieval ditch
25292	Medieval Manor

Figure 1. Site location and SMR details

Location plan showing Castle Moat, Leominster (based on 1960 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey map).

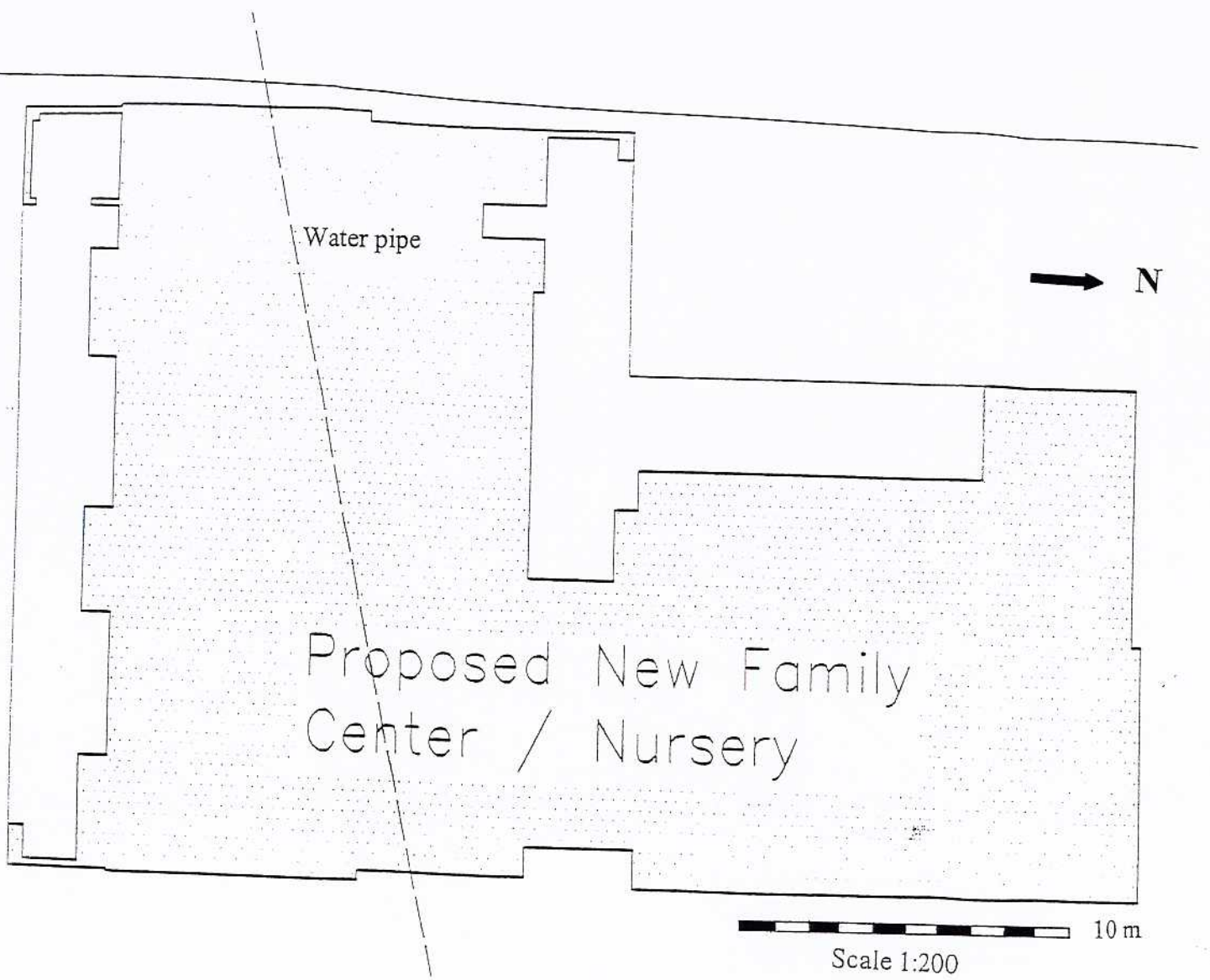


Figure 2. Plan of foundation (Scale 1:200) Leominster Nursery and Family Centre

Report Name and Title	Nursery and Family Centre, Off Coningsby Road, Leominster	
Archaeological Contractor etc (Name & Address)	Archaeological Investigations Ltd., Unit 1, Premier Business Park, Westfields Trading Estate, Faraday Road, Hereford HR4 9NZ	
Site Name	Nursery and Family Centre, Leominster	
Grid References (8 fig)	NGRSO 4969 5852	
SMR Numbers	41532	
Planning or Other Ref	DCNC2004/0430/F	
Date of Field Work	10th Feb. – 18th Feb. 2005	
Date of Report	16th March 2005	
	NUMBER AND TYPE OF FINDS: NONE	
Pottery	Period	Number of sherds
Other	Period	Quantity
	NUMBER AND TYPE OF SAMPLES COLLECTED NONE	
Sieving for charred plant remains	<i>No of Features sampled n/a</i> <i>No of buckets</i>	
C14/scientific dates	<i>No and Type n/a</i> <i>Result</i>	
Pollen	<i>No of Columns/spot samples</i> <i>Name of pollen specialist n/a</i>	
Bone	<i>Number of buckets coarse sieved for bone</i> <i>Quantity Recovered</i> <i>Period</i> n/a	
Insect	<i>No of Columns/spot samples</i> <i>Name of pollen specialist n/a</i>	
Other	<i>Type and specialist</i> n/a	
Summary of the report	The project followed in response to a planning permission issued by Herefordshire Council stating that no development of the site could take place without the implementation of a programme of archaeological works. The aim was therefore to identify and record any previous occupation or activity on the site, which may be of archaeological importance. However, no finds or features of archaeological significance were present on the site.	