

CPAT Report No. 1443

St Stephen's Place, Bridgnorth, Shropshire




Archaeological Watching Brief



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CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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Cover photo: View from the east across the site towards St Mary's Church. CPAT 4225-0007



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Summary

A watching brief was conducted by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust in July 2016 to monitor groundworks in connection with a new residential housing development at St Stephen's Place, Bridgnorth.

The site is situated in an area of open ground to the east of the former site of a 19th century textile mill. Mapping from the early 20th century depicted two small buildings within the development area, probably associated with the complex. The northernmost of these buildings appears to have been still extant by 1990, by which point the textile mill had been demolished.

The initial phase of groundworks, comprising the removal of topsoil and laying of hardcore, had already been conducted before the watching brief was initiated. Monitoring subsequently focusing on the foundations for those houses located in the area of the 19th-century buildings. However, this revealed no trace of the either building, although several brick-built chambers were revealed which may have been associated with various phases of industrial activity at the mill or possibly with the nearby workers cottages to the north and west of the site.

1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by Richard Bailey, on behalf of the Bridgnorth Housing Trust, to carry out a programme of archaeological work in connection with a new residential housing development of 22 houses, including the erection of an estates office and the formation of communal garden areas, on land at St Stephen's Place, Bridgnorth, Shropshire (SO 7211 9282). The site was formerly occupied by a carpark.



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Fig. 1. Location plan showing the development area (marked in red)

- 1.2. The initial phase of groundworks, comprising the removal of topsoil and laying of hardcore, had already been conducted before the watching brief was initiated. Following discussion with Hugh Hannaford of Shropshire Council, a programme of targeted watching brief was carried out on the areas of the site where the buildings recorded on the historic mapping were believed to be located, in addition to a sample of the trenching covering the remainder of the site (Fig. 2)

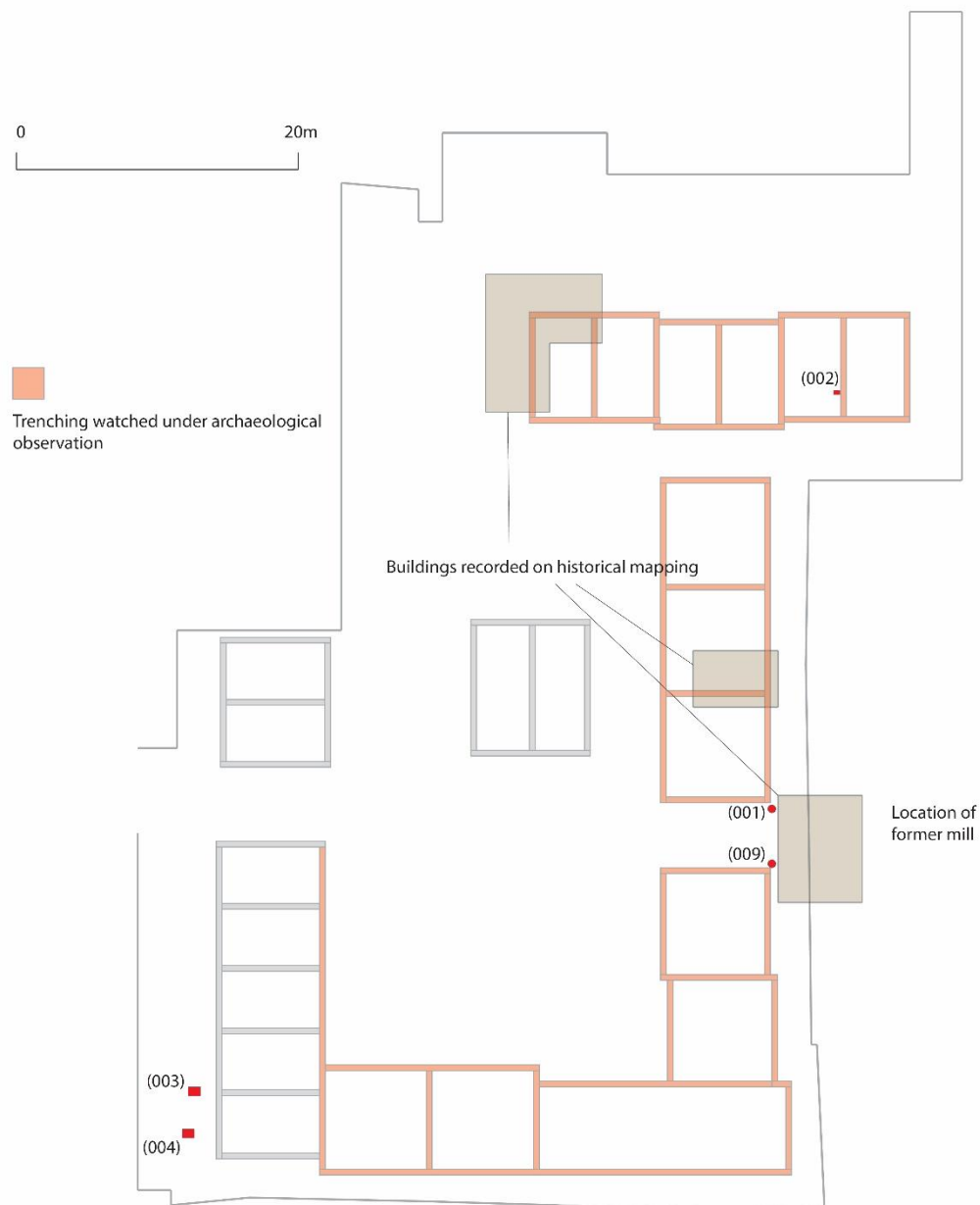


Fig. 2. Trench location plan showing positions of features

2 Historical Background

- 2.1. The development site lies within the Low Town area of Bridgnorth, in close proximity to the site of the former Pale Meadow Mills. Originally a Carpet Mill, by 1884 it was known as Pale Meadow Mill, producing woollen yarn, while by 1927 it had become the Pale Meadow Works (Textile Printers). It was formerly owned by the Baldwins, a prominent industrialist family in the West Midlands.
- 2.2. The study area was formerly open ground located in a rural setting well to the south of the thoroughfare of St John's St, leading to Bridge Street and the bridge across the River Severn located to the northwest. The west and north extent of the study area were bounded by workers cottages throughout much of the 19th century, these were

referred to as 'Pale Cottages' on the 1903 Ordnance Survey map, clearly linking them to the mill. The access road running east-west to the north of Pale Cottages was formalised as Severn Street by this point, and a row of terraced houses, and a school had been constructed to the north of it. Severn Street also provided access via a footbridge to 'the Bylet' an island in the river, formerly only accessible by ferry, where a bowling green was located.

- 2.3. Two presumably 19th century buildings were recorded on mapping as being within the study area, with a third being located partially within it (Fig. 2). It is unclear whether these formed part of the mill, although the two located to the east of the site were in close proximity to the main body of the complex.

3 Archaeological Watching Brief

- 3.1. The site had been topsoil stripped and stoned down for vehicular access prior to the watching brief taking place. The watching brief therefore comprised an observation of a sample of the foundation trenching across the entire site and all the trenching in areas where buildings were formerly located. The watching brief was carried out between the 18th and 26th of July 2016. Ground stability was noted as exceptionally poor across the site, this necessitated filling of trenches with concrete almost immediately following excavation.
- 3.2. The uppermost visible deposit, extending across the entire site, was a modern hardcore layer (007,) 0.3m thick. A number of brick-built chambers were visible at this level.
- 3.3. Two circular drain chambers (001) and (009) were located in the east of the site (Fig. 2). They both measured 0.95m in diameter and were constructed from machine-made bricks.



Fig. 3. Circular drain chamber (001) CPAT 4225-0005

- 3.4. A rectangular brick-built chamber (002) was located in the north-east of the site (Fig. 2), the purpose of which was unclear.



Fig. 4. Rectangular chamber (002) CPAT 4225-0002

- 3.5. Two further rectangular chambers, (003) and (004), were located in the south-west corner of the development area (Fig. 2). These were concrete-capped access chambers for pipework and probably date from the 20th century.



Fig. 5. Access chamber (004) CPAT 4225-0017



Fig. 6. View from the north-east of trenching in the north of the site CPAT 4225-0001

- 3.6. Underlying the modern stoning layer, a soft reddish clayey silt sand subsoil deposit (006) was exposed extending to 0.7m in thickness across the entire site. Underlying this was a soft reddish clayey silt deposit (008) over 1m thick.

4 Conclusions

- 4.1. The effectiveness of the watching brief was restricted owing to the initial groundworks having been conducted before archaeological monitoring commenced. However, targeted monitoring thereafter revealed no remains relating to the structures identified on the 19th century historical mapping. The conspicuous lack of demolition rubble and other detritus on the site suggests that the site had been cleared during the 20th century.

5 Archive deposition Statement

- 5.1. The project archive has been prepared according to the CPAT Archive Policy and in line with the ClfA *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives guidance* (2014). The archive will be deposited with the regional Historic Environment Record, maintained by Shropshire Archives, while artefacts are to be deposited with Shropshire Museums. A summary of the archive is provided in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1: Site Archive

4 watching brief visit forms

17 digital photographs, CPAT film 4225

Appendix 2: CPAT WSI 1471

Introduction

1.1 The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) has been invited by Richard Bailey, on behalf of the Bridgnorth Housing Trust, to submit a proposal for a programme of archaeological work in connection with a new residential housing development of 22 houses, including the erection of an estates office and the formation of communal garden areas, on land at St Stephen's Place, Bridgnorth, Shropshire (SO 7211 9282). The site is currently occupied by a carpark.

1.2 The development site lies within the Low Town area of Bridgnorth, in close proximity to the site of the former Pale Meadow Mills Later Works (PRN 06932). A Carpet Mill (PRN 06010) is depicted here on an 1835 map of Bridgnorth and by 1884 it was known as Pale Meadow Mill, producing woollen yarn, while by 1927 it had become the Pale Meadow Works (Textile Printers). It is clear, however, that the textile mill itself was located immediately to the east (see Fig. 1), although there are two presumably 19th-century buildings which do lie within the Development Area (A and B), one of which (B) may be related to the mill.

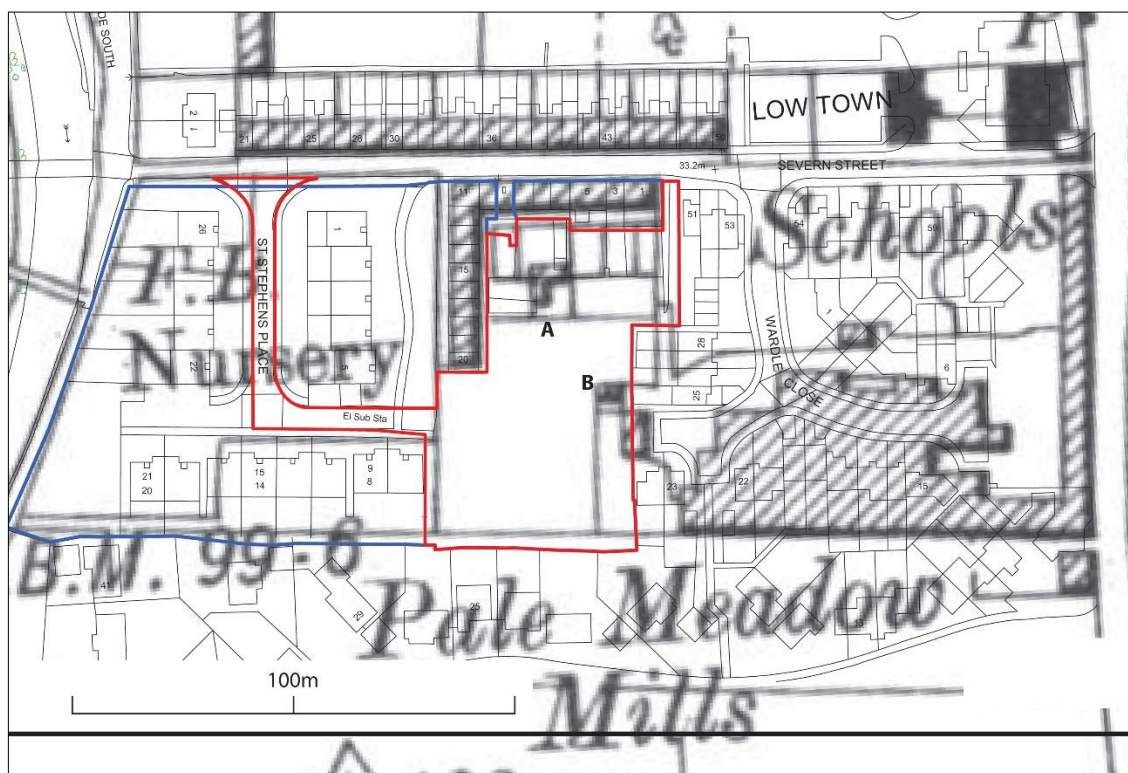


Fig. 1 The Development Area (outlined in red), showing the location of buildings on the 1901 Ordnance Survey 6" mapping.

1.3 Planning permission was granted in June 2015 (ref: 14/01690/FUL), with the inclusion of Condition 6 relating to the cultural heritage:

'No development approved by this permission shall commence until the applicant, or their agent or successors in title, have secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) which shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of any works. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the details approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.'

Reason: The site is known to be in an area of archaeological importance.'

Objectives

- 2.1 to reveal by means of a watching brief, the nature, condition, significance and, where possible, the chronology of the cultural heritage within the area of the proposed development in so far as these aims are possible;
- 2.2 to record any archaeological features identified during the watching brief;
- 2.3 to prepare a report outlining the results of the watching brief;
- 2.4 to prepare a final publication of the results in an appropriate regional or national journal, depending on the nature and significance of any archaeology.

Methods

Watching brief

- 3.1 The watching brief will be conducted according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (2014).
- 3.2 Groundworks will be undertaken under close archaeological supervision to facilitate the identification of any significant archaeological features, deposits or finds. Should any such remains be identified sufficient time should be allowed within the construction programme to enable an appropriate level of investigation and recording to ensure their preservation by record.
- 3.3 The groundworks will be monitored by a single archaeologist. All excavation will be conducted by hand unless otherwise agreed with the Curator in advance. Should any significant archaeological remains be revealed the client and Curator will be informed and a site meeting may be necessary in order to determine the most appropriate course of action and any additional resources which may be required.

General

- 3.4 Contexts will be recorded on individual record forms and be drawn and photographed as appropriate. All photography will be in digital format to a minimum resolution of 12 mega pixels. All features will be located as accurately as possible with respect to buildings and boundaries identified on modern Ordnance Survey maps and levels will be related to Ordnance Datum where possible, with the use of total station surveying.

3.5 All artefacts will be related to their contexts from which they were derived and treated in a manner appropriate to their composition and will be processed by trained CPAT staff. Provision has been included for sampling deposits for dating, environmental and technological evidence as appropriate.

Reporting

3.6 Following the on-site work an illustrated report will be prepared containing:

- Non-technical summary
- A location map of study area showing area of the proposed development;
- Details of the methodology used;
- A plan showing the location of any archaeological features identified;
- Conclusions, including a statement regarding the importance of the archaeological remains in a local, regional or national context, and an indication of the potential for significant archaeological deposits within the development area;
- Archive location
- Supporting illustrations as appropriate
- References.

3.7 The report will be provided in PDF format, copies of which will be made available to the client and the regional HER.

Archive

3.8 Prior to the commencement of the project CPAT will contact the Curator of Archaeology, Museum Services, Shropshire Council, who will advise on an appropriate repository for the project archive, the provision for any finds, and, when applicable, the fee level for depositing the archive. The deposition of any finds will only take place following receipt of written consent from the owner(s).

3.9 The site archive, including finds and environmental material, will be ordered, catalogued, labelled and conserved and stored according to the UKIC Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage and the ClfA Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives (2014). The project archive will be presented to an appropriate Museum or recipient body within 12 months of completion of the field work, subject to the agreement of the site owner with regards to any finds.

3.10 The Shropshire HER participates in the OASIS scheme, a form for which will be completed at each reporting stage.

Resources and Programming

4.1 The archaeological works will be undertaken by a skilled archaeologist under the overall supervision of Nigel Jones MCIfA, a senior member of CPAT's staff. CPAT is also a ClfA Registered Organisation (RAO No 6) and as such agrees to abide by their Code of Conduct (2014) and the Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology (2014).

4.2 All report preparation will be completed by or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist(s) who conducted the fieldwork.

4.3 The client is advised that should significant archaeological remains or artefacts be revealed additional services may be required for which a contingency should be allowed. The requirements for any addition specialist services will be determined following discussions with the curator and would be subject to a separate WSI and costing.

4.4 CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance, as well as Professional Indemnity insurance.

N W Jones, 14 August 2015