

CPAT Report No. 1564

Potential Development at Old Coleham, Shrewsbury




Archaeological Evaluation



YMDDIRIEDOLAETH ARCHAEOLEGOL CLWYD-POWYS

CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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Ian Grant Senior Archaeologist	Nigel Jones Principal Archaeologist	Nigel Jones Principal Archaeologist
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Cover: Development site, viewed from the south-east. Photo CPAT 4470-0028



YMDDIRIEDOLAETH ARCHAEOLEGOL CLWYD-POWYS
 CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

41 Broad Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7RR, United Kingdom

+44 (0) 1938 553 670

trust@cpat.org.uk

www.cpat.org.uk

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Summary

In March 2018 an archaeological evaluation was conducted by the Clwyd_Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) on behalf of Positive Move Property in connection with a development proposal on the site of a former yard and warehouse at Old Coleham, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. The site lies within the historic core of Shrewsbury's medieval suburb of Coleham.

A previous heritage impact assessment, also conducted by CPAT indicated the potential for plot to contain well-preserved medieval and later archaeological remains associated with suburb of Coleham.

The evaluation, which comprised two trenches; one along the street frontage and the other to the rear of the property, demonstrated that medieval and later archaeological deposits survive along the street frontage, which does not appear to have been disturbed significantly by the construction in the 19th century of a row of terraced housing. There was no evidence to suggest that the terrace contained cellars. A deposit containing exclusively medieval artefacts was revealed along the frontage which, although disturbed by modern services, demonstrates the potential for medieval archaeology to survive.

Investigations at the rear of the plot revealed a significant depth of 19th-century and later material, comprising demolition rubble overlying garden soils, with alluvial deposits beneath likely to have resulted from episodic flooding. The natural subsoil was not attained and the evaluation was therefore unable to confirm the presence or absence of any medieval deposits within this part of the site.

1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited to undertake an archaeological evaluation on behalf of Positive Move Property in connection with a proposal (17/01697/OUT) for a four-storey development including flood storage compensation, car parking and apartments, on the site of a former yard and warehouse at Old Coleham, Shrewsbury, Shropshire (Fig. 1; SJ 4979 1223).

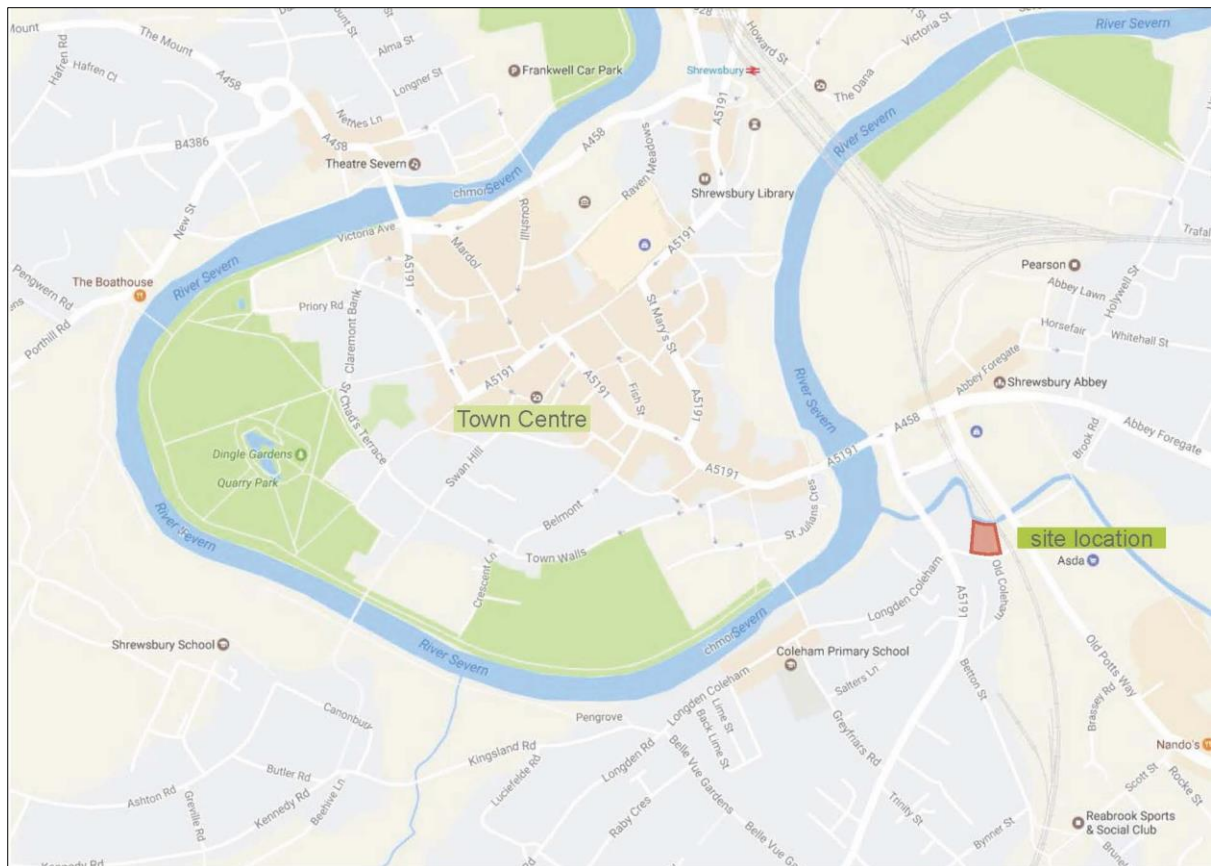


Fig. 1 Location of Development Site (plan supplied by client)

- 1.2. The proposed development site (Fig. 2) lies within the historic core of Shrewsbury's medieval suburb of Coleham (HER PRN 08387), as defined within the Shrewsbury Urban Archaeological Database. Documentary evidence indicates that parts of this area have been occupied since at least 1200. The site also lies within the boundaries of the Belle Vue Conservation Area.
- 1.3. The evaluation follows on from a heritage impact assessment, also conducted by CPAT (Jones 2017). This indicated that there has been very little previous archaeological investigations within the Coleham suburb, such that the available information about archaeological environment in this part of the town remains limited. It notes, however, that since the terraced properties that existed on the frontage were not cellared potential exists for remains of earlier buildings to be present in this part of the site. The report concludes that well-preserved medieval and later archaeological remains associated with suburb of Coleham are likely to be

of medium significance, and that ground works associated with the proposed development would have a moderate impact upon them.

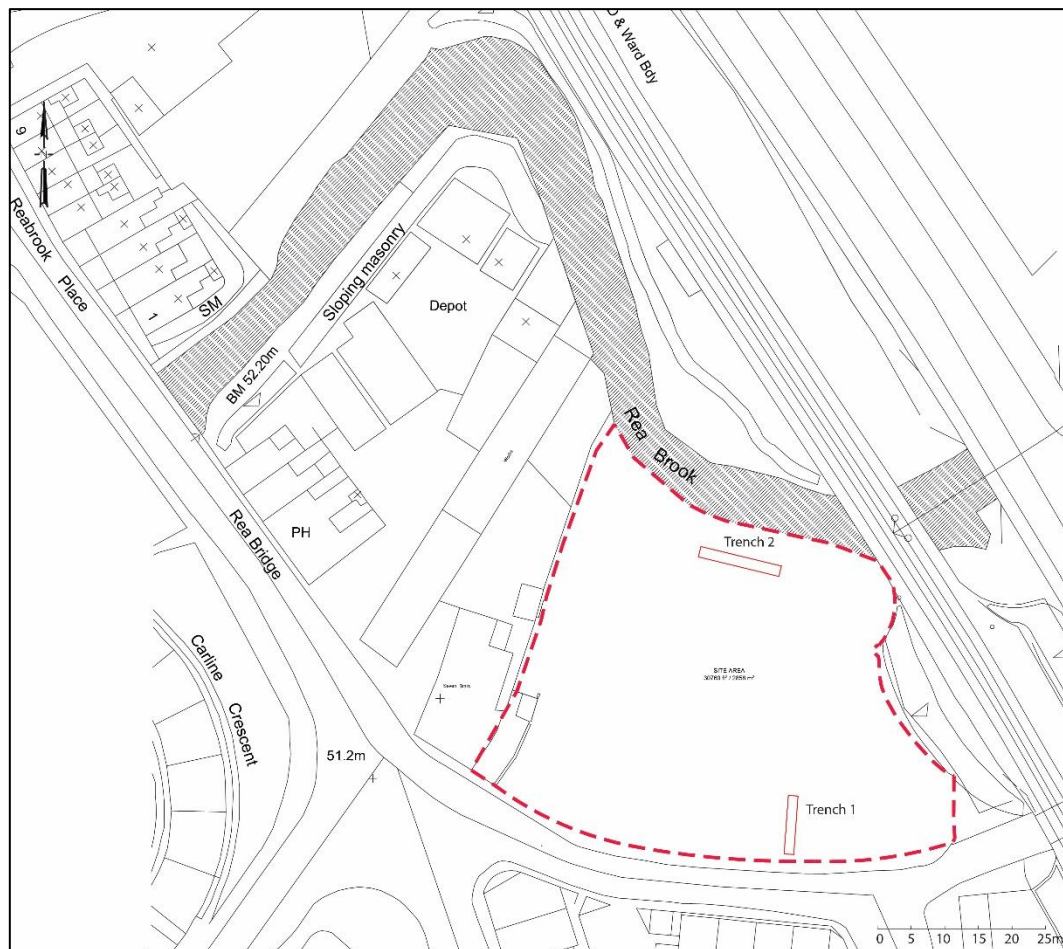


Fig. 2 The development area, outlined in red, showing the location of the evaluation trenches

2 Historical Background

- 2.1. The proposed development site lies in an area now known as Old Coleham, part of a medieval suburb of Shrewsbury lying to the south-west of the River Severn and south of its confluence with the Rea Brook. The site lies on the opposite side of the Rea Brook from Shrewsbury Abbey, the brook forming the limit of the abbey precinct. Coleham is first mentioned in charters from c. 1200 onwards. The suburb is based along two roads, Longden Coleham, providing access to the south-west, and Old Coleham, which is part of the ancient regional routeway from Hereford (Baker 2010, 123).
- 2.2. Coleham has a fairly regular layout of property boundaries, at least along Longden Coleham, which may suggest that settlement in this area was deliberately planned. There are numerous references in the tax records to families of potters working in Coleham between 1297 and 1334 (Baker 2010, 158). There is evidence to indicate that this area consisted largely of artisan housing until the 18th century, at which point there was a degree of gentrification, with some larger and slightly grander properties being built (Morris 2014).

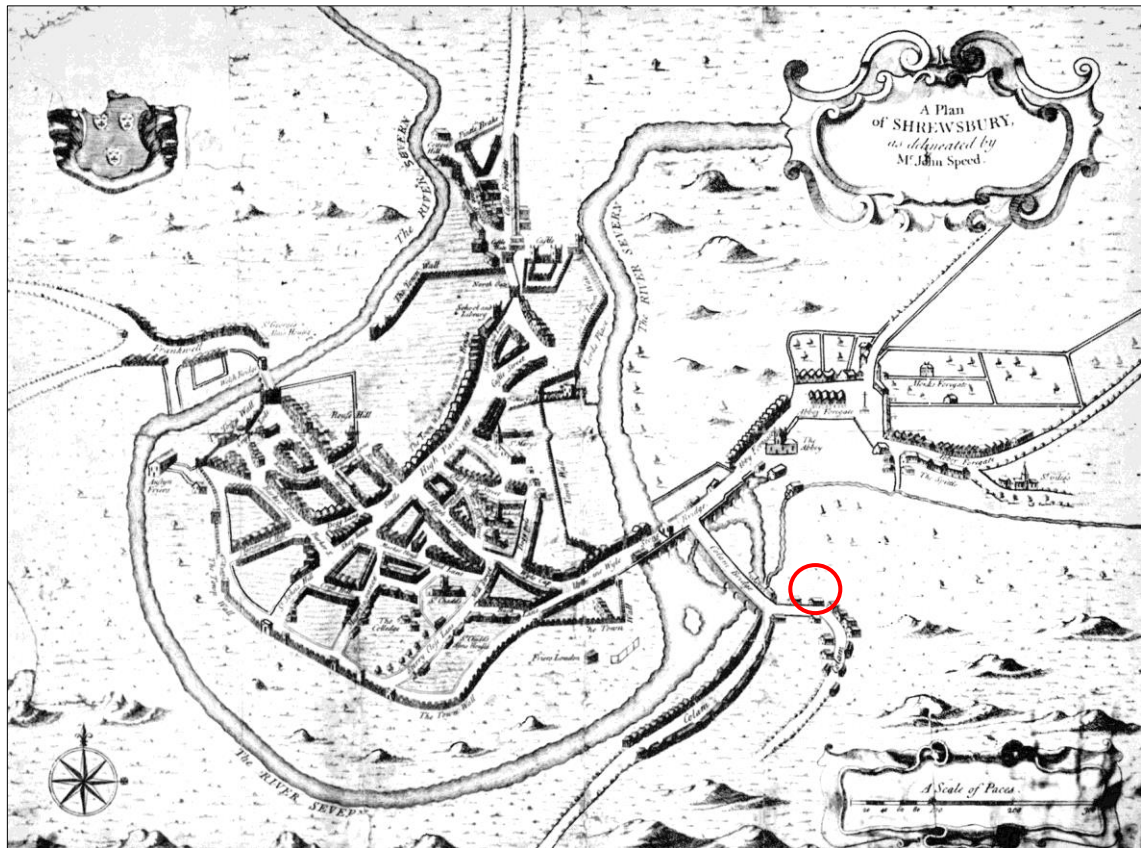


Fig. 3 John Speed's plan of Shrewsbury in 1610

- 2.3. The earliest mapping for Shrewsbury is a survey by Burghley in 1575. Although this shows the eastern end of Coleham, with the bridge of the Rea Brook and an adjacent building, it provides no useful information regarding the development site. John Speed's plan of 1610 (Fig. 3) is of more illuminating, showing the original layout of the two main roads in Coleham noted above, as well as buildings in the area of the proposed development. To the east of the Rea Bridge, the main road south towards Hereford turned left at a point close to the present Seven Stars public house and headed eastwards before turning 90 degrees to the south, while what is now known as Longden Coleham turned right, broadly following the line of the Severn. This arrangement was altered in 1826 when a new turnpike was constructed, adopting a straight line beyond the Rea bridge and isolating part of the Hereford road, which became known as Old Coleham (Trinder 2006, 80-1). Further detail still is provided by John Rocque's survey of 1746 (Fig. 4).

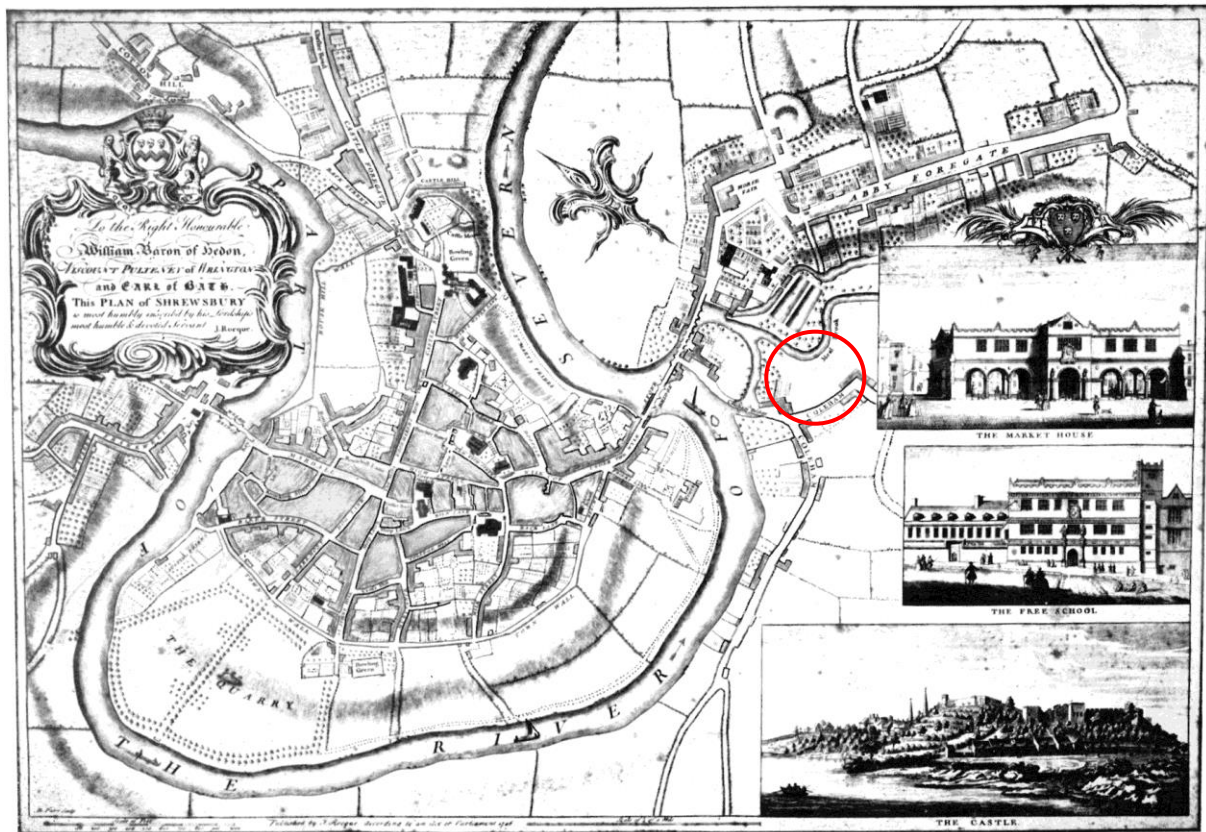


Fig. 4 John Rocque's 1746 plan of Shrewsbury

- 2.4. John Wood's plan of Shrewsbury (Fig. 5), surveyed in 1838, together with the Tithe Survey for St Julian's parish of 1849 (Fig. 6), show the revised road layout in detail, both also depicting street frontage buildings within the development plot.
- 2.5. The arrival of the railways in the mid-19th century changed the character of the eastern part of Coleham. The Shrewsbury & Hereford Railway ran close to the east side of Old Coleham and Shrewsbury became a very important railway junction. The two main companies, the GWR and LNWR, had their running sheds in Coleham and there was also a large manufactory – the Midland Carriage & Wagon Works. The area is shown in detail on the Ordnance Survey 1:500 town plan of 1882 (Fig. 7).



Fig. 5 Extract from Wood's 1838 map of Shrewsbury

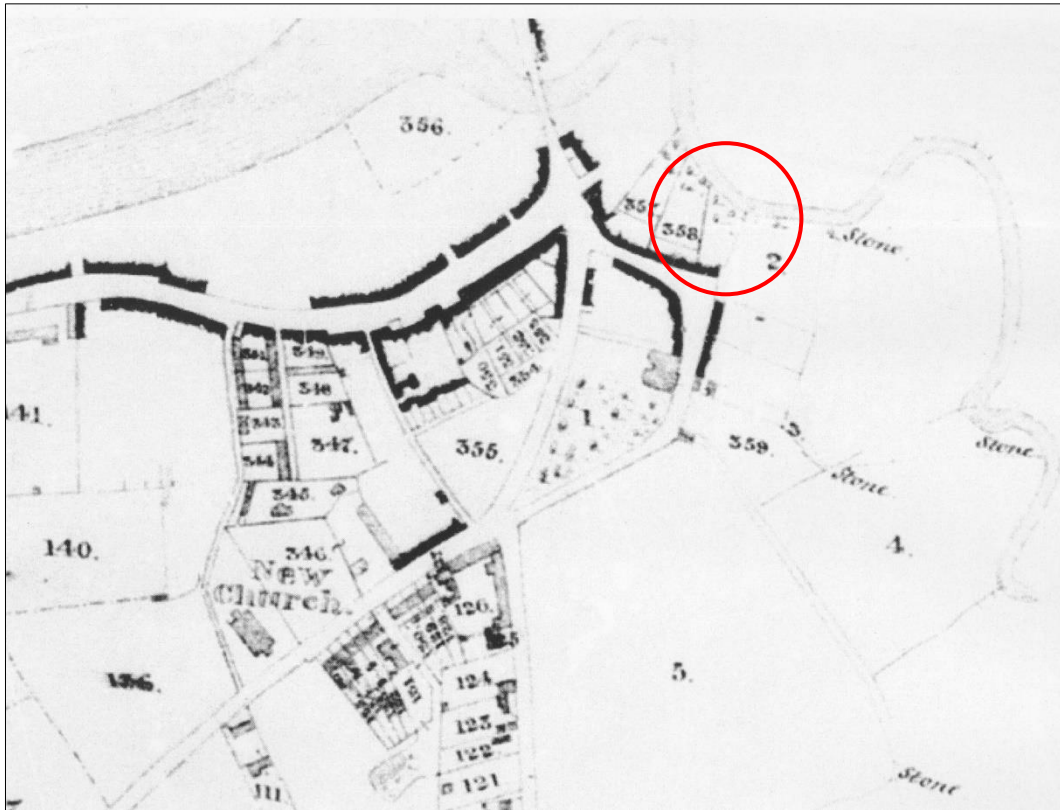


Fig. 6 Extract from the Tithe Survey for St Julian's Parish, 1849



Fig. 7 Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1:500 town plan of Shrewsbury in 1882, showing the development area in red and the location of the evaluation trenches.

The Development Area

- 2.6. The early history of the development area can only be surmised since there are no available records and the site has not been subject to any previous archaeological interventions. It is possible, however, that this area developed as part of the growing suburb of Coleham (PRN 08387) during the 13th century, as defined within the Shrewsbury Urban Archaeological Database. Baker (2010, 125, fig. 8.16) identifies a series of long property boundaries here, extending from the street front to the Rea Brook which are believed to be medieval in origin. From the early 17th century onwards the history of the plot can be deduced through map regression (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8 Map regression for the development area, which is depicted in red. 1610 – John Speed; 1746 John Rocque; 1832 Hitchcock; and 1902 Ordnance Survey. It should be noted that the size and shape of the area has been adjusted to take account of the inaccuracies of the earlier maps

- 2.7. There appear to have been some buildings along the street front by 1610, and by the mid-18th century a building is certainly depicted in the south-eastern corner of the plot. By 1832 there was a row of terraced houses along the street frontage, with another building adjoining the eastern side of what is presumably the Seven Stars public house, but with a gap between the two blocks. This was infilled later in the 19th century so that by 1882 the frontage was almost entirely occupied, apart from an entrance way to the rear area of one of the plots, which contained a number of ancillary buildings, with several small buildings also being located in some of the other plots. It is interesting to note that the southern bank of the Rea Brook, as depicted in 1882, lies just within the development plot suggesting that sometime during the 20th century the rear of the plots was extended slightly, reclaiming part of the riverside.
- 2.8. The Rea Brook viaduct, a mid-19th century construction, is positioned just to the north-east of the development site. This was the largest piece of engineering work on the Shrewsbury and Hereford Railway carrying the railway over the Rea Brook, leading to a bridge over Abbey Foregate. The viaduct, of brick and ashlar, took just four months to build, has 18 arches, and is some 700 feet long. The bridge over the road, designed by E. Jeffreys of Shrewsbury, used the then-novel box-girder principle. Its wrought iron work was originally painted dull red to harmonise with the stone of the nearby Abbey church.



Fig. 9 Aerial photograph taken in 1992 showing the light industrial/commercial buildings within the development plot. Photo CPAT 92-mb-0376

- 2.9. During the 20th century further buildings, probably for light industrial use, were constructed in the rear part of the plot adjacent to the Seven Stars (see Fig. 9). Shropshire Archives hold several photographs from 1960 showing the frontage of J. J. Jones garage with a brick-built house to the left, which are the only buildings which still survive along the street frontage of the development. Interestingly, the

photographs show the garage as being flat-roofed, with a wide entrance vehicular entrance, a door/window to the right and two low first-floor windows. The existing building has been modified significantly, incorporating a full-height first floor with a pitched roof which matches the adjoining house.

- 2.10. A large commercial building, which still survives, was later added on the eastern side of the plot. The buildings were occupied, at least latterly, by the Timberline Yard and the Dulux Warehouse. They survived until the end of the century when most of the buildings were demolished following a fire, after which time the much of the site became a carpark.
- 2.11. Information from the former owner of the site indicates that the terraced houses were demolished in the mid 1960s, the rubble being spread across the area which was then surfaced to form a car park, while two petrol storage tanks were removed from the entrance to the garage.
- 2.12. The only archaeological intervention recorded in the area is a watching brief (ESA5489) conducted in 1995 during the excavation of foundations for new terraced houses on the corner of Moreton Crescent and Old Coleham. This revealed the brick footings for the 19th-century terraced housing and the footings for a red sandstone wall along the street frontage (Hannaford 1996).

3 Evaluation

- 3.1. The evaluation, undertaken over a three-day period from 5-7 March 2018, was conducted according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2014) and comprised two trenches within the current car parking area. Trench 1 was positioned on the street frontage in the south-east corner of the site and Trench 2 towards the rear of the car park adjacent to and parallel with the Rea Brook (see Fig. 2). Owing to the presence of underground electrical cabling it was agreed with Shropshire Council to reduce the overall length of Trench 1 from 12m to 9m. All modern overburden and underlying 18th-/19th-century deposits were removed by machine, thereafter all excavation was undertaken by hand.

Trench 1 (Fig. 10, 9m x 1.5m)

- 3.2. Trench 1, orientated north to south, was excavated to a depth of 0.85m. At the northern end of the trench an undisturbed natural subsoil, a firm orange-brown silty clay (10), was revealed in the base of the trench. Overlying this was a similar layer of re-deposited, mottled clay (07), 0.25m thick, containing numerous fragments of 13th-/14th-century pottery, with no later artefacts being present.
- 3.3. At the southern end of the trench the medieval deposit (07) was truncated by a 0.8m-deep gully (08), orientated east to west which contained fragments of 18th-century pottery and extended beyond the bounds of the excavation (Fig. 11). The gully (08) and the medieval deposit (07) were both sealed by an overlying firm deposit (06), 0.45m thick, of dark grey silty clay containing fragments of 19th-century pottery, brick and tile. It is uncertain whether or not this is a demolition or foundation layer prior to 19th-century building construction.



Fig. 10 Trench 1, viewed from the north. Photo CPAT 4470-0012



Fig. 11 Section through gully [08]. Photo CPAT 4470-0015

- 3.4. The remains of two large, red sandstone blocks (05), laid together, were recorded embedded within the deposit 06. The blocks, both of which had evidence for hand-carved tooling marks, appear to have been re-used for some form of informal/temporary structure (Fig. 12). Apart from the in-situ remains of a brick built wall, orientated east to west and located at the northern extent of the trench, no

evidence of the 19th-century, brick-built terraced housing, remained. The only other feature noted within Trench 1 was a modern drain (11) located towards the centre of the trench, orientated north-east to south-west.



Fig. 12 Re-used carved sandstone block (05). Photo CPAT 4470-0002

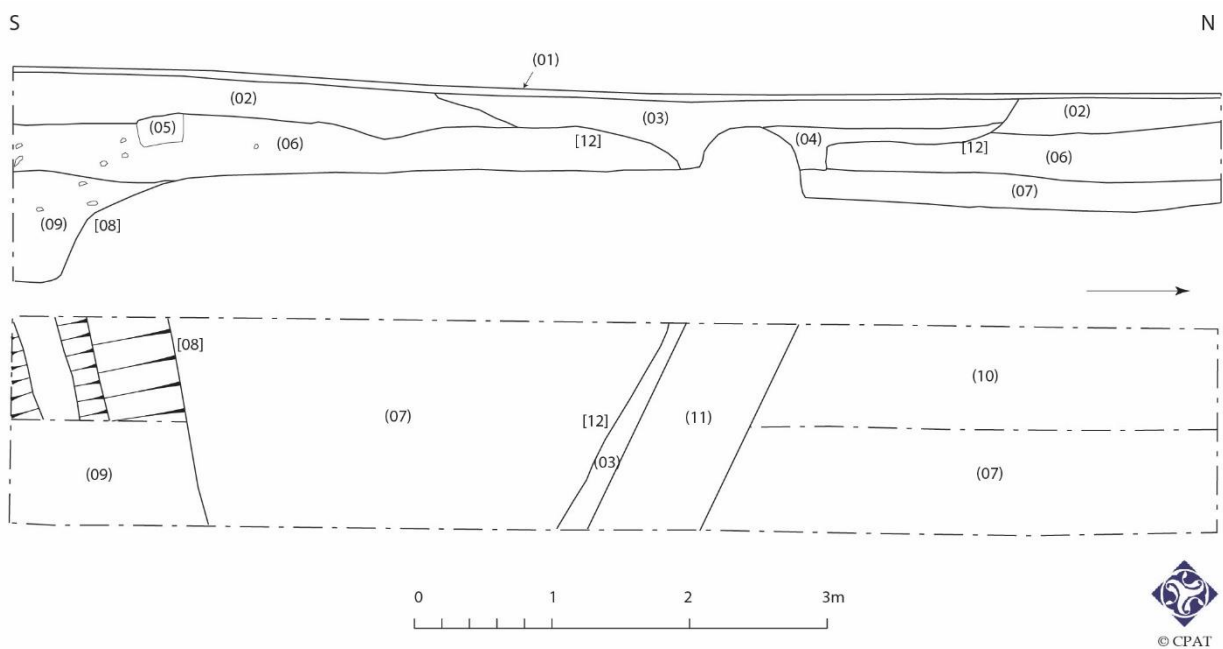


Fig. 13 Plan and east-facing section of Trench 1.

Trench 2 (Fig. 14, 12m x1.5m)

- 3.5. Trench 2 was initially machine excavated to a depth of 1.2m, revealing overlying 20th-century demolition rubble (14 and 15) with a thickness of up to 1.0m, sealing a deposit of dark grey silty clay (16), comprising a mixture of garden cultivation soil and 19th-century rubble.
- 3.6. Further machine excavation demonstrated that this earlier deposit (16) was up to 1.2m thick. A combination of machine-excavated test-pitting (located at the eastern end of the trench) and hand-auguring at 2m intervals (see Fig. 16, A-D) revealed the nature of the underlying deposits. These comprised a series of lightly compacted river silts (17 and 18). No deposits of archaeological significance were recorded, although the natural subsoil was not attained owing to the depth of the overlying deposits. A modern water drain (19, orientated north to south) was located at a point 8m along the trench. The water table was recorded at a depth of 2.7m.



Fig. 14 Trench 2, viewed from the north-west. Photo CPAT 4470-0026



Fig. 15 Test pit, viewed from the south-east. Photo CPAT 4470-0006

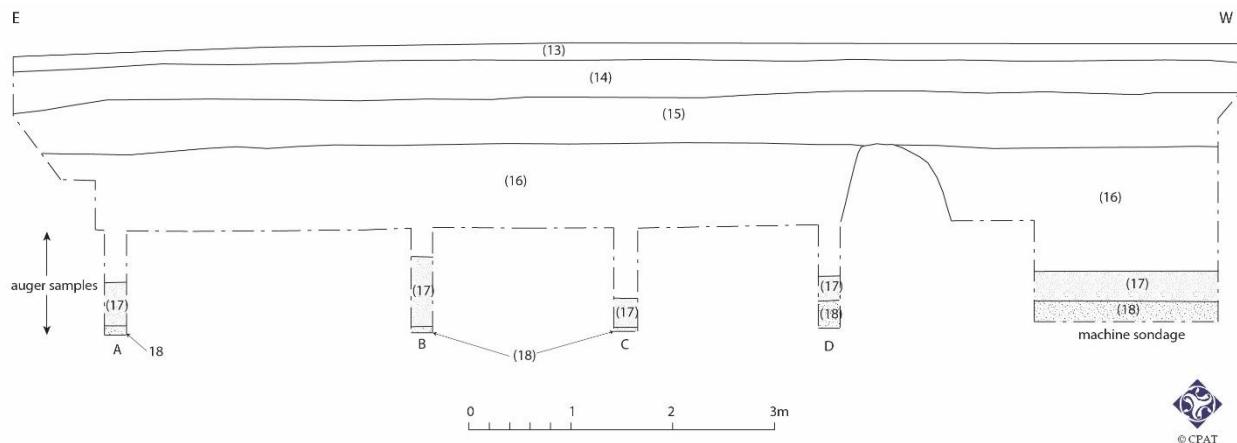


Fig. 16 North-facing section of Trench 2

4 Finds

- 4.1. Nine sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from a relatively undisturbed deposit (07) in Trench 1. The pottery, predominantly fashioned from a reddish/orange reduced fabric with some traces of green glaze (although two buff fabrics were also noted), included two rim sherds and a base sherd. A single decorated body sherd (Fig 17, 2) was also noted. All of the pottery is of 13th/14th-century date (Table 1).



Fig 17. Examples of medieval pottery recovered from deposit 07 – Trench 1

Table 1. Summary of the medieval pottery.

Context	Sherd Type	Comment
07	Rim	Rim fragment from a fine tableware. Light orange/buff fabric. Exterior orange/green glaze.
07	Rim	Seated rim fragment, probably from a large storage jar. Light orange fabric. Olive interior glaze.
07	Body	Body sherd with some evidence of rouletting decoration. Orange fabric with trace of exterior olive glaze.
07	Base	Basal sherd with thumb pinched decoration. Light buff/cream fabric. Traces of exterior olive glazing.
07	Body	Large thin bodied sherd. Light orange reduced fabric, undecorated and unglazed.
07	Body	Body sherd. Light orange reduced fabric, undecorated with trace of orange splash exterior glaze.
07	Body	Large thick bodied sherd. Light orange reduced fabric, pinch thumb decoration with traces of orange splash exterior glaze.
07	Body	Small body sherd fragment, fine tableware. Light orange reduced fabric, undecorated with trace of olive exterior glaze.
07	Body	Small body sherd fragment, fine tableware. Light orange reduced fabric, undecorated with trace of olive and orange exterior glaze.

- 4.2. A typical assemblage of 18th- and 19th- century pottery, building material and floor tile was recovered from the later post-medieval deposits in both Trench 1 and 2. Typical pottery types included black and brown glazed Staffordshire and Buckley wares, slipwares, Pearl-ware and Mottle-ware. None of this material was retained for the archive.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1. The evaluation has demonstrated that along the street frontage (Trench 1) there is no evidence to suggest that the 19th-century, brick-built terraced housing had been cellared. However, within the confines of the excavation, there were no features to suggest earlier street-frontage buildings, although the preservation of earlier deposits, recorded at a depth of 0.6m below the present ground surface, was relatively good and medieval pottery (probably of 13th/14th century date) recovered from the lowest deposit provided evidence for medieval occupation within this part of the development site.
- 5.2. The excavations within Trench 2 confirmed that the rear of the plot had been raised significantly in the 20th century, by at least 2.2m, comprising deposits of demolition rubble overlying garden soils. Further test pitting and hand auguring recorded a series of underlying alluvial deposits up to a depth of 2.7m. The natural subsoil was not attained and the evaluation was therefore unable to confirm the presence or absence of any medieval deposits within this part of the site.

6 Acknowledgements

- 6.1. The author would like to thank Rob Blackburn, Nigel Jones and Will Logan, CPAT; Paul Dunne of Positive Move Property; Evans Construction, for undertaking the groundworks; and Dr Andy Wigley of Shropshire Council.

7 Sources

Published sources

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Cartographic Sources

1575 Burghley plan of Shrewsbury

1610 John Speed plan of Shrewsbury

1746 John Rocque plan of Shrewsbury

132 Hitchcock plan of Shrewsbury

1838 John Woods plan of Shrewsbury

1849 Tithe Survey for St Julian's parish

1882 Ordnance Survey 1:500 town plan of Shrewsbury

1902 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25", Shropshire 34-11

1925 Ordnance Survey 6" map Shropshire 34SE

Shropshire Archives Photographs

1960 J Jones garage Coleham, PH-S-13-C-22-2

1960 J Jones garage Coleham with street, PH-S-13-C-22-3

1960 J Jones garage Coleham with street, PH-S-13-C-22-5

8 Archive deposition Statement

The project archive has been prepared according to the CPAT Archive Policy and in line with the CIfA *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 Council, while artefacts are to be deposited with the Shropshire Museum Service. A summary of the archive is provided in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1: Site Archive

1 Photographic Register Form (Film No. 4470);

29 Digital photographs; CPAT Film Number: 4470

1 Context Register form (Contexts Nos 01 - 19);

19 Context Record forms

1 Drawing Register Form (Drawing Nos 01 - 03)

1 x A1 drawings sheet

1 x A2 drawings sheet

Digital survey data:

Digital site drawings (Adobe Illustrator and JPEG):