



Written Scheme of Investigation
for an
Archaeological Observation at

**Public Path to the North of
the Priory Buildings
Leominster
Herefordshire**

NGR SO 3498 2593
County/National monument No. 18145

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Border Archaeology has been instructed by Tim Thompson Esq. Area Rights of Way Officer and Warden Manager Herefordshire Council to undertake a programme of archaeological observation of groundworks relating to the excavation and relaying of the slab and grass path immediately N of the Old Priory building and within Pinsley Mead & the Leominster Priory Scheduled Monument Area (NGR SO 4993 5939) (Scheduled Monument No.HE145).
- 1.2 The area subject to groundworks was detailed in drawings dated 9th December 2009 submitted to English Heritage to accompany its Scheduled Monument Consent Application by Mr Thompson for information; this has not been altered subsequently and is consequently not been remitted with the document.
- 1.3 An application for Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) (Ref. S00005099) was submitted to Tony Fleming Esq. of English Heritage in December 2009 by Herefordshire Council in addition to an Archaeological Impact Assessment and Mitigation Proposal prepared by Border Archaeology.
- 1.4 This Proposal has been prepared by the company's General Manager George Children MA MIfA and amended/approved by Neil Shurety for submission to English Heritage for approval as a methodology for the archaeological programme of work. A copy of this document when approved will be remitted to Julian Cotton Archaeological Adviser Herefordshire Council and to Tim Thompson for information.

2. Aim

- 2.1 The aim of the archaeological observation is to locate and record any archaeological finds, features or deposits within the groundworks area and to confirm that no impact on the archaeological resource occurred during the course of the groundworks and any associated structural alterations without the implementation of this proposed programme of archaeological work.

3. Brief Historical & Archaeological Background

- 3.1 There appears to have been a religious house on this site since at least the 9th century, although the earliest surviving fabric dates from the late Norman period and represents all that remains of the Benedictine priory that was founded after 1123, when Henry I gave the manor of Leominster to Reading Abbey. These remains comprise a wide nave with a series of typical broad-based sandstone decorative columns, with a highly decorative door surround at the W end, reputedly carved by the Herefordshire School of (Norman) masons (c. 1150).¹ Evidence of re-design, involving the blocking or removal

¹ similar designs of around the same date are present at Kilpeck and Shobdon churches (Herefordshire).



of door- and window-openings, is apparent throughout the Norman section of the church.

- 3.2 Further remains, also dating to this period, lie below ground to the E of the main church building, which stands off-centre within a large churchyard. These buildings consisted of transepts, a chancel and apse (Pevsner, 1962, 223). Most of this part of the Priory was destroyed after the Dissolution.²
- 3.3 The church was subsequently extended during the 14th and 15th centuries, when major building phases were completed to the S and N. The tower above the W front is 15th century with Victorian additions in the form of a parapet, battlements and pinnacles. The W window is in the perpendicular style and the S porch clearly shows Early English influence in the columns and mouldings. The porch was re-erected around 1310 when a wide S aisle was added.
- 3.4 Much of the fine internal detail was lost or subject to alteration during a programme of restoration carried out by Sir Gilbert Scott in 1872-9, an example of Victorian refurbishment not uncommon in this part of Britain. One such 'improvement' was the replacement of Tuscan pillars³ with a series of slender quatrefoil piers.
- 3.5 Pinsley Mead is an area of recreational grassland to the N of the present church. Formerly a water meadow periodically flooded by overspill from the Pinsley Brook (now diverted below ground), the area is today much used by walkers, sightseers and picnickers. During the medieval period, Pinsley Mead formed part of an extensive precinct, the boundaries of which extended S from the Kenwater,⁴ a tributary of the River Lugg located some 80m to the N of the church, towards the former Great West Gate in Church Street, continuing along the W side of the Grange, to the S and SW of the church, before turning E towards the River Lugg.
- 3.6 A range of medieval buildings forming the Old Priory complex borders Pinsley Mead to the S. In the late 19th century, the Old Priory was described as 'a long massive building with immensely thick stone walls of rough rubble masonry... boldly spanning the river Pinsley, which, covered by plain rough barrel vaulting [the remains of which can still be clearly seen], runs under its centre throughout its entire length' (Blacklock, 1897, 64). Blacklock's description remains broadly valid today. Originally the infirmary of the Priory (with chapel) and reredorter, the buildings have undergone several changes of use over the centuries. Townsend (1862) observed that 'the only part of the Priory still remaining.... after passing through many vicissitudes, has at

² all that survives is part of the transept S wall, the nave and N aisle. A cloister to the N also fell victim to the Dissolution.

³ which had replaced the original piers in 1699.

⁴the Kenwater joins the River Lugg at a confluence to the E of the site.

last settled down into the office of a union workhouse'.⁵ The Old Priory is at present occupied by Leominster Youth Hostel.

- 3.7 An 'enigmatic' building on the western boundary of Pinsley Mead was investigated as part of an archaeological assessment of the area in 1995. Although records indicate its use as a pigsty and stable, the earliest phase of stonework suggests a different, though now obscure, function (Brown & Templeton, 1995).
- 3.8 Price (1795) mentions fishponds 'in front of the House [the Old Priory] near to the river [Kenwater]'. Apparently, in 1897 they were still visible. Blacklock states: "The site of the Fish Ponds can still be easily made out, notwithstanding the recent changes made by the deposit of hundreds of tons of soil on the spot in 1893, when the new large Gasometer was erected,' (1897, 75). The Castle Moat, a set of earthworks on the S side of Leominster, has also been linked to the Priory's fish farming activities during the medieval period. The site, which has been dated to the 14th/15th century, may have been functioned as a 'supplementary grange' (Hurst, 2002). Considering possible functions, Hurst comments: 'The provision of fish for the table could have been another purpose of the site, thereby supplementing the priory fishponds situated adjacent to and just north of the priory church" (ibid., 45).
- 3.9 A gas pipe trench excavated within Pinsley Mead in 1979 revealed remains interpreted as the clay-lined bank of a fishpond. Silting to the west of the bank supported this interpretation (Brown & Templeton, 1995). The re-excavation of the original trench offered the opportunity to subject this interpretation to further scrutiny.

4. Geology

- 4.1 The solid geology comprises Pridoli Series mudstones and siltstones directly relating to the Devonian Old Red Sandstone formation [massif] series, while the drift geology consists of typical argillic brown earths of the ESCRICK 1 series (571p). These soils are deep, well-drained, reddish and of a coarse loamy composition and occur within the priory grounds at around 1m below existing ground level. The soils can be further described as possessing a clayey fraction, possibly due to subsoil percolation.

5. Scheme of works

- 5.1 Archaeological observation within the area specified will be carried out in accordance with *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA, 2001). Border Archaeology adheres to the *IfA Code of conduct (2002)* and *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements*

⁵"August 3, 1759. Ordered, that the present overseers of the poor have leave to make use of the Priory House, garden and orchard as a School of Industry for the benefit of the poor of the said Borough." The building is marked as the Leominster Union Workhouse on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey 25" map (1886).



in field archaeology (2002) and to Herefordshire Archaeology's *Standards for Archaeological Projects in Herefordshire (Issue 1)* (Herefordshire Council, 2004).

5.2 All groundworks will be machine excavated under archaeological supervision using a toothless bucket and associated spoil scanned for artefacts; all structural alterations such as the replacement of the kissing gate will be observed and an appropriate record made.

5.3 Recording

5.4 Full written, graphic and photographic records will be made in accordance with Border Archaeology's *Field Recording Manual*. The written record will comprise detailed stratigraphic recording using a context numbering system.

5.5 Plans, sections and elevations will be produced on gridded, archivally stable polyester film at scales of 1:50 or 1:20, as appropriate. Representative measured sections will be prepared as appropriate showing the sequence and depths of deposits. A temporary benchmark (TBM) will be established on the site and plans, elevations and sections will contain grid and level information relative to OS data. All drawings will be numbered and listed in a drawing register, these drawing numbers being cross-referenced to written site records.

5.6 A photographic record will be made using a high-resolution 10.3MPX digital camera, comprising photographs of archaeological features and appropriate groups of features and structures. Included in each photograph will be an appropriate scale and all photographic records will be indexed and cross-referenced to written site records. Details concerning subject and direction of view will be maintained in a photographic register, indexed by frame number.

5.7 Recovery, processing and curation of artefactual data

5.8 Any associated artefacts recovered will be retained, cleaned, labelled and stored according to *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2001) and *First Aid for Finds* (Watkinson & Neal 2001). The aim will be to create a stable, ordered, well-documented, accessible material archive forming a resource for current and future research (IfA 2001).

5.9 All artefacts will be bagged and labelled with the site code and context number before being removed off-site. Each assemblage will be examined according to typological or chronological criteria and conservation needs identified. Conservation, if required, will be undertaken by an approved conservator on advice provided by a suitable specialist to be agreed by Mr Cotton and in accordance with guidelines issued by the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (now part of the Institute of Conservation).

5.10 Any artefacts recovered that fall within the scope of the Treasure Act 1996 will be reported to English Heritage, Herefordshire Archaeology and to HM Coroner.

- 5.11 The Company is cognisant of the deliberations by the Ministry of Justice in 2007 in respect of Section 25 of the Burial Act 1857 and the recent reversal of this advice following representations from archaeological groups concerned that those engaged in the archaeological exhumation would be exposed to prosecution at common law (Gallagher, 2008). Thus, any arrangements regarding the discovery of human remains will be at the discretion of HM Coroner whose instructions/permission will be sought.
- 5.12 Processed assemblages will be boxed according to guidelines issued by Hereford City Museum and a register of contents compiled prior to deposition of the *Project Archive*.
- 5.13 Sampling**
- 5.14 Border Archaeology has sought advice from Ms Lisa Moffett, English Heritage Regional Science Advisor for the West Midlands, regarding the implementation of an appropriate sampling strategy during the course of the proposed groundworks.
- 5.15 Neil Shurety (Director) and George Children (General Manager) met with Ms Moffett on site and it was agreed that the proposed programme of works offered some potential for the recovery of environmental material, such as fish bones, pollen and waterlogged organic material, but that this was likely to be markedly limited due to the shallow engineering depth required to complete these works, namely 160mm.
- 5.16 However, in the event of undisturbed pond deposits being identified, it was agreed that a block sample of material would be taken for subsequent pollen analysis and that any bulk samples removed would be wet-sieved for the recovery of fish remains, with the presence of species not present in the adjacent river being of particular interest.

6. Archive Review & Compilation

- 6.1 All records created during fieldwork will be checked for consistency and accuracy and will form part of the *P1 Site Archive*. The archive will contain all data collected, including records, ecofacts, artefacts and other specialist materials and will be ordered, indexed, adequately documented, internally consistent, secure, quantified, conforming to standards required by the archive repository and signposted appropriately to ensure future use in research, as detailed in the English Heritage *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) methodology.
- 6.2 The archive will be assembled in accordance with the guidelines published in *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage* (United Kingdom Institute for Conservation, 1990), *Standards in the museum care of archaeological collections* (Museums & Galleries Commission, 1994)

and *Archaeological Archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (AAF 2007).

- 6.3 Border Archaeology undertakes that the following issues will be addressed and concluded to the satisfaction of Mr Cotton:
- 6.4 The written, drawn and photographic records will be of sufficient quality to facilitate publication in an appropriate specialist journal
- 6.5 Data concerning complete identifiable and itemized objects will be transferred to specified object record sheets
- 6.6 All materials contained within the *P1 Site Archive* identified by the *P2 Assessment Report* as appropriate for Analysis will be processed by suitable specialists and the resultant *P3 Research Archive* will be checked and ordered according to *MoRPHE* criteria.

7. The Report

- 7.1 The Report will incorporate clearly and accurately information gained from the archaeological programme of works.
- 7.2 The Report will contain a site plan showing the location of all recorded features etc., as well as plans, sections, detailed drawings and a comprehensive written and photographic record.
- 7.3 Included will also be summaries of artefactual assemblages discovered (if applicable)
- 7.4 Copies (either digital and/or printed) of the Report will be sent to Mr Thompson, Mr Tony Fleming English Heritage, Mr Julian Cotton Herefordshire Archaeology and the Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record.
- 7.5 Dependent upon discovery and where applicable a summary report will be offered to the Editor of *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club* for wider dissemination.

8. Staff & Timescales

- 8.1 All site investigation and recording will be carried out by Border Archaeology's qualified staff
- 8.2 George Children MA MIfA will provide overall technical and editorial guidance to all constituent aspects of the works programme
- 8.3 Overall project management remains the responsibility of Neil Shurety

9. Border Archaeology Operating Standards

- 9.1 All projects are carried out in accordance with IfA *Standard and Guidance* documents as detailed within the Company's *Field Recording Manual*.
- 9.2 A pre-works risk assessment will be completed and lodged in the site Health & Safety File.
- 9.3 Site reporting procedures are completed daily and audited by George Children MA MifA.

10. Copyright

- 10.1 Border Archaeology shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, with all rights reserved, excepting that it hereby provides a licence to the client and the Council for the use of the report by the client and the Council in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Specification to use the documentation for their statutory functions and to provide copies of it to third parties as an incidental to such functions.

11. Monitoring

- 11.1 Border Archaeology staff will be subject to monitoring by English Heritage or Herefordshire Archaeology. All issues of a technical nature should be addressed to George Children MA MifA.

12. References

Herefordshire Archaeology Sites and Monuments Record - Leominster

Blacklock, F.G., 1897, *The Suppressed Benedictine Minster and other Ancient & Modern Institutions of the Borough of Leominster*, Leominster

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IfA, 2002, *Code of Conduct*

IfA, 2002, *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology*

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Watkinson, D. & Neal, V., 2001, *First Aid for Finds*, London

Wills, J., 1981, *Archaeology in Leominster* (internal report), HWCC

13. Appendix 1

12.1 The company's panel of specialist contractors to whom it will refer for appropriate advice and services is as follows:

- *Post-Roman pottery*: Mr S. Clarke
- *Roman pottery*: Dr J. Timby; Dr Felicity Wild
- *Prehistoric pottery*: Dr A. Gibson University of Bradford
- *Glass*: Dr H. Cool
- *Flint*: Dr R. Donahue University of Bradford
- *Human osteology*: Dr A. Caffell University of Durham
- *Plant macrofossil & charcoal assessment*: Dr C. O'Brien University of Durham
- *Animal bone*: Dr D. Jaques Palaeoecology Research Services
- *Geoarchaeology*: Dr M. Allen AEA
- *Conservation*: Mr P. Parkes Cardiff Conservation Services

12.2 Other specialist suppliers will be sourced, if deemed appropriate, after consultation with and the approval of Mr Cotton and suitable management time will be expended to ensure that such external suppliers' work complies with accepted national guidance, such as, for example, the United Kingdom Institute of Conservation guidelines.