

# Archaeological Observation

**Pinsley Mead  
Leominster Priory  
Leominster  
Herefordshire**

**NGR SO 4993 5939  
SMR No. 51342  
Scheduled Monument No HE145**

## **BORDER ARCHAEOLOGY**

PO Box 36  
Leominster  
Herefordshire  
HR6 0YQ

### **Technical Services**

Chapel Walk  
Burgess Street  
Leominster  
Herefordshire  
HR6 8DE  
Tel: 01568 610101  
Tel/fax: 01568 616900  
E-mail: [borderarch@btconnect.com](mailto:borderarch@btconnect.com)

Winchester Office  
Unit 25  
Basepoint Business Centre  
Winchester  
Hampshire  
SO23 0LD  
Tel: 01962 832720





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**Report specification:**

*Archaeological Observation:* Will Logan BA Dip  
*Report compilation & artwork:* Will Logan BA Dip  
*Report editing:* George Children MA MifA  
*Approved:* Neil Shurety Dip.M. GM Inst.M



# 1. Non Technical Summary

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*Border Archaeology carried out archaeological observation of groundworks relating to a replacement gas main extending approximately east/west across Pinsley Mead, an amenity area located immediately to the north of the Old Priory and within the Leominster Priory Scheduled Monument Area.*

*Previous excavations in 1979 revealed evidence of a clay lining, possibly associated with fish ponds alluded to in historical sources; however, no evidence of this material was identified during the course of the present archaeological observation.*

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 Border Archaeology was instructed by Paul Jones Esq. National Grid Perseverance Road Hereford to carry out archaeological observation of groundworks relating to a replacement gas main extending approximately E-W across Pinsley Mead amenity area immediately N of the Old Priory building and within the Leominster Priory Scheduled Monument Area (NGR SO 4993 5939) (Scheduled Monument No.HE145) (**Fig. 1**).
- 2.2 The area subject to groundworks is detailed in drawings and photographs dated 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2009 submitted to Border Archaeology by Darrell Williams Esq. for information.
- 2.3 An application for Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) (Ref. S00005029) was submitted to Tony Fleming Esq. of English Heritage by Mr Williams on October 29<sup>th</sup> 2009. Mr Fleming replied on January 6<sup>th</sup> 2010 requesting additional information in order to 'understand the full extent of the works and their impact upon the monument', which was duly supplied.
- 2.4 Copies of this report will be remitted to National Grid, Julian Cotton Esq. Archaeological Advisor Herefordshire Council and the Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record.

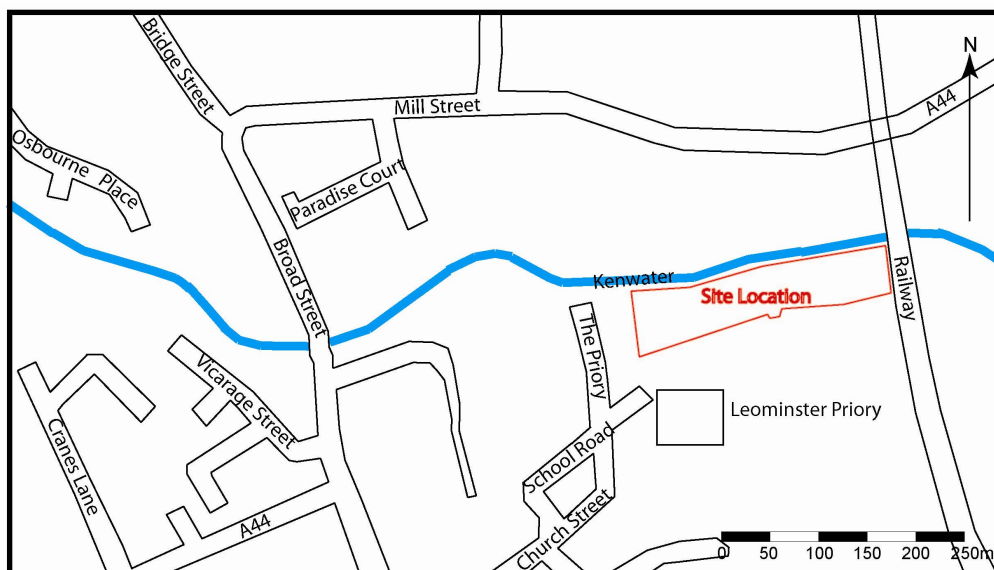


Fig. 1: Plan showing location of site

### 2.2 Soils & geology

- 2.3 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.

### 3. Brief Historical and Archaeological Background

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- 3.1 Pinsley Mead comprises 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,<sup>4</sup> a tributary of the R. 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.
- 3.2 A range of medieval buildings forming the Old Priory complex borders Pinsley Mead to the S. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> 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 last settled down into the office of a union workhouse'.
- 3.3 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).
- 3.4 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 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> 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).
- 3.5 A gas pipe trench excavated within Pinsley Mead in 1979 revealed remains interpreted as the clay-lined bank of a fishpond. Silting to the W 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. Methodology

- 4.1 This programme of archaeological observation was carried out in accordance with practices set out by the Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA, 1994 revised 2001). Border Archaeology adheres to the IfA *Code of conduct* (2010) and *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology* (2008) and to Herefordshire Archaeology's *Standards for Archaeological Projects in Herefordshire (Issue 1)* (Herefordshire Council 2004).
- 4.2 All groundworks within the study area were subject to archaeological observation, the aim being to identify, record and, where appropriate, further investigate any surviving deposits, features or structures of archaeological significance. All spoil and removed material was examined and sorted for artefacts; several finds of low archaeological potential were recovered and duly noted but none was retained.

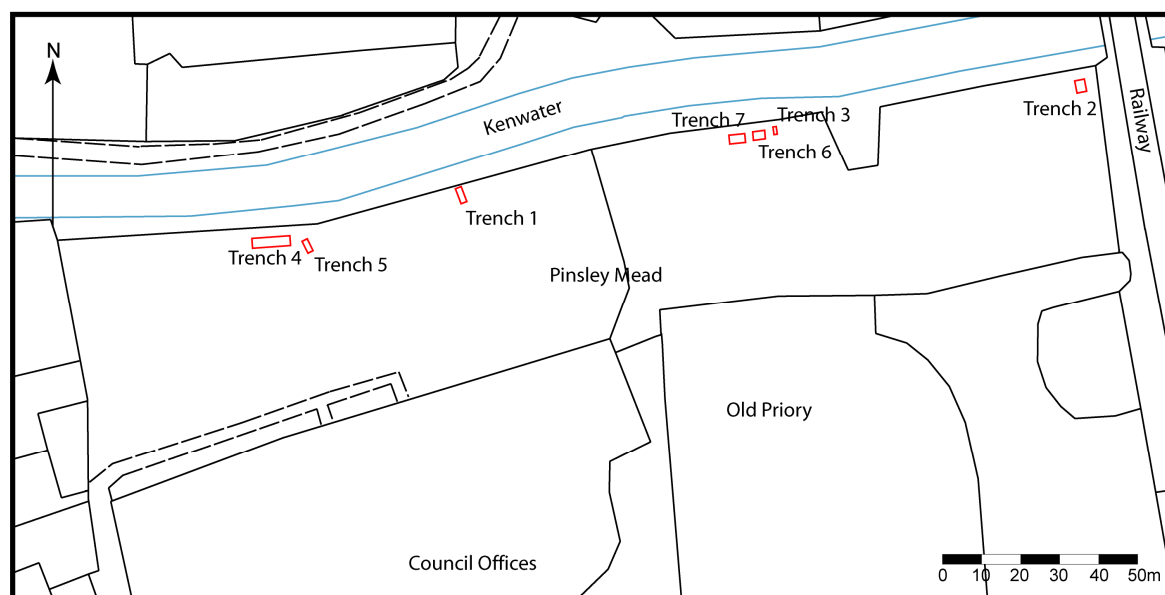


Fig. 2: Plan showing location of groundworks

- 4.3 A total of seven trenches of varying dimensions (as detailed below) were opened by machine within the groundworks area (**Fig. 2**) and were subject to archaeological observation and recording.
- 4.4 Full written, graphic and photographic records were made in accordance with Border Archaeology's *Field Recording Manual*.
- 4.5 Plans and sections were produced on gridded, archivally stable polyester film at scales of 1:50, 1:20 or 1:10, as appropriate. All site drawings are numbered

and listed in a drawing register, these numbers being cross-referenced to written site records.

- 4.6 A photographic record was compiled using a high-resolution digital camera. Each photograph, other than general shots of work in progress, contains an appropriate scale and records are indexed and cross-referenced to the written record. Details concerning subject and direction of view are maintained in a photographic register, indexed by frame number.

## 5. Results

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### 5.1 Trench 1

- 5.2 Trench 1 was aligned N-S parallel to the fence line along the S extent of the Kenwater, a short tributary of the R. Lugg, and measured 1.7m x 0.5m x 0.72m (**Fig. 2, Plate 1**).

- 5.3 Six contexts were identified, the first of these being (101), a friable light greyish-brown sandy silt and root biomass containing occasional pebbles and rounded stones and measuring 0.2m thick. Underlying (101) was (104), a firm light brown silt of some 0.3m thickness, cutting which was [103], representing the modern gas pipe trench measuring >0.5m wide and oriented E-W. This trench was backfilled by (102), a moderately compact mid brown sandy silt containing occasional angular stones and post-medieval pottery and extending to a thickness of >0.52m. Underlying (104) was (105), a 0.1m-thick firm, deep silty clay layer exhibiting a reddish hue and containing frequent small rounded stones. Underlying (105) was (106), a firm light yellowish-brown silt extending to a thickness of >0.17m.



Plate: 1: View E showing W-facing section of Trench 1

#### 5.4 Trench 2

5.5 Trench 2 was excavated immediately W of the railway line that runs to the E of Pinsley Mead and immediately S of the Kenwater within a narrow strip of coppice woodland. It was oriented NNW-SSE and measured 1.6m × 1.4m × 1.05m (**Fig. 2, Plate 2**).

5.6 Four contexts were identified, the uppermost (201) forming a deposit of loose light greyish-brown sandy silt 0.12m thick containing tree roots and root biomass intrusions. Underlying (201) was (204), a substantial deposit of firm light yellowish-brown silt containing very frequent charcoal/degraded organic flecking and moderate tree root activity, which measured >0.93m in thickness. Cutting (204) was the modern gas pipe trench [203] of some >0.24m width and oriented N-S, which was filled by (202), a firm light yellowish-brown silt measuring >0.93m thick.



Plate: 2: View ENE showing WSW-facing section of Trench 2

#### 5.7 Trench 3

5.8 Trench 3 was excavated immediately W of the pumping station, to the S of the Kenwater and NE extent of the wildflower meadow. It was oriented N-S and measured 1.08m × 1m × 0.65m (**Fig. 2, Plate 3**).

5.9 The uppermost of five contexts identified (301) consisted of friable light greyish-brown sandy silt and root biomass containing occasional pebbles and measuring 0.17m thick. Underlying this was a firm light brown silt represented by (304) and (305) measuring >0.48m thick. Cutting this was the gas pipe trench [303], which was 0.5m deep, oriented E-W and filled by (302), a >0.48m-thick soft light brown silt containing occasional post-medieval pottery.





Plate 3: View W showing E-facing section of Trench 3

## 5.10 Trench 4

- 5.11 Trench 4 was located towards the W extent of Pinsley Mead, approximately 3m S of the Kenwater. It was oriented E-W and measured 9m × 0.95m (2.5m incorporating the banked sides) × 1.74m (**Fig. 2, Plate 4**)



Plate 4: View N of S-facing section, Trench 4

- 5.12 Eight contexts were identified, the first of these (401) being a friable light greyish-brown sandy silt and root biomass deposit containing moderate pebbles and rounded stones and measuring 0.2m thick. Underlying (401) was a firm reddish-brown sandy silt deposit with frequent small rounded stones, CBM and late post-medieval pottery fragments, represented by (404)/(405), extending to a thickness of 0.6m. Cutting this deposit was the modern gas pipe trench [403] running E-W and measuring 0.9m in width and 1.3m deep. This was filled by (402), a firm mid reddish-brown sandy silt containing frequent angular sandstone fragments, CBM and 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery.

5.13 Underlying (404)/(405) was a layer (406)/(407) comprising soft light reddish-brown sandy silt with small rounded stones and lime mortar flecking to a maximum thickness of 0.11m. Underlying (406)/(407) was (408), a firm light yellowish-brown silt containing occasional organic flecking and measuring >0.89m thick.

#### 5.14 Trench 5

5.15 Trench 5 ran NNW-SSE approximately 4m to the SE of Trench 4 and measured 2m × 1.1m (**Fig. 2, Plate 5**).

5.16 Eight contexts were identified. The topsoil deposit (501) comprised a friable light greyish-brown sandy silt and root biomass exhibiting a moderate quantity of pebbles and rounded stones and measuring 0.2m in thickness. Underlying (501) was a firm reddish-brown sandy silt with moderate small rounded stones (504)/(505) extending to a thickness of 0.8m.



Plate 5: View NNW showing SSE-facing section of Trench 5

5.17 Cutting (504)/(505) was a linear feature [502] exhibiting a sharp, well-defined break of slope at the top of the profile and steeply sloping sides breaking moderately to a flattish base. The feature measured 1m in width and 1.4m in depth and was oriented NNW-SSE. A single fill was identified (502) comprising moderately compact light greyish-brown sandy silt and angular stones with frequent CBM fragments, probably representing a partially collapsed former drain/culvert.

5.18 Underlying (504)/(505) was thin lens of material (506)/(507) measuring 0.12m thick, which consisted of moderately compact light reddish-brown sandy silt and

small rounded stones together with occasional lime mortar particles. Underlying (506)/(507) was a firm light brown silt deposit of >0.5m thickness.

### 5.19 Trench 6

5.20 Trench 6 ran E-W 1m to the W of Trench 3 and measured 3.2m × 1.6m (**Fig. 2, Plate 6**).

5.21 Five contexts were identified. The topsoil deposit (601) comprised a friable light greyish-brown sandy silt and root biomass containing occasional pebbles and measuring 0.3m thick. Underlying (601) was a firm light brown silt (604)/(605) of >1.5m thickness, which was cut by a gas pipe trench [603] 0.5m wide, oriented E-W and filled by (602) a soft moderately compact light brown silt extending to a thickness of 0.77m.



Plate 6: Trench 6 looking N showing S-facing section

### 5.22 Trench 7

5.23 Trench 7 extended E-W approximately 2m to the W of Trench 6 and measured 4m × 2.2m (**Fig. 2, Plate 7**).

5.24 Six contexts were revealed. A friable light greyish-brown sandy silt and root biomass topsoil deposit contained occasional rounded stones and measured 0.23m thick (701). Underlying this was (706), a firm light brown silt, >1.25m thick, which was cut by a sewage pipe [703] of >0.25m width oriented E-W. The trench was filled by (702), a firm mid brown sandy silt with moderate pebbles and CBM and occasional pottery fragments, which measured >1.27m thick. Also cutting (706) was [705], a >0.5m wide feature oriented E-W and filled by (704), a soft light brown silt containing moderate dark brown sandy silt inclusions and extending to a thickness of 1.25m.



Plate 7: View N of S-facing section of Trench 7

## 6. Summary & Conclusion

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- 6.1 Trench 1 revealed a thin layer of silty clay (105) extending throughout the trench, possibly representing a former soil horizon. Trench 2 contained no finds or features of archaeological significance while Trench 3 revealed occasional residual sherds of post-medieval pottery but no significant archaeological material.
- 6.2 Trench 4 revealed frequent post-medieval CBM and pottery sherds, these probably being residual in origin. A layer of sandy silt containing fragments of lime mortar (406)/(407) was identified in this trench, possibly representing a demolition spread or the result of backfilling or the raising of the ground level in this part of the site.
- 6.3 Trench 5 revealed a former post-medieval drain or culvert (502)/[503] oriented NNW-SSE, probably linking the Pinsley Brook to the Kenwater. No trace of a subterranean channel was identified and no groundwater was encountered, implying that the drain was either open or, more likely, had collapsed, as indicated by the depression in the ground observed prior to excavation. A continuation of the possible demolition spread (506)/(507) observed in Trench 4 immediately to the NW was also visible within this trench.
- 6.4 Trench 6 revealed occasional residual post-medieval pottery and CBM, but no finds or features of archaeological significance were identified. Similarly, Trench 7 contained frequent redeposited CBM and occasional post-medieval pottery but no archaeologically significant remains.



## 7. Copyright

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- 7.1 Border Archaeology shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs & Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the client for the use of the report by the client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Specification.

## 8. Bibliography

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## 9. Cartography

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W. Gallier's Plan of Leominster (1832)

Leominster Parish Tithe Map & Apportionment (1850)

OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition 25 inch map Herefordshire 12.15 (1887)

OS 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 25 inch map Herefordshire 12.15 (1904)

OS 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 25 inch map Herefordshire 12.15 (1927)



## Site Summary

<i>Report Title</i>	Archaeological Observation at Pinsley Mead Leominster Priory Leominster Herefordshire
<i>Contractor's Name and Address</i>	Border Archaeology PO Box 36 Leominster Herefordshire, HR6 OYA
<i>Site Name</i>	Pinsley Mead Leominster Herefordshire
<i>Grid Reference</i>	NGR SO 4993 5939      Planning Application No: N/A
<i>SMR number</i>	51342
<i>Date of Field Work</i>	July 2010
<i>Date of Report</i>	November 2010
	<b>NUMBER AND TYPE OF FINDS</b>
<i>Pottery</i>	<i>Period:</i> Post-med <i>No of sherds:</i> None retained
<i>Other</i>	<i>Period:</i> Post-med (CBM) <i>Quantity:</i> None retained
	<b>NUMBER AND TYPE OF SAMPLES COLLECTED</b>
<i>Sieving for charred plant remains</i>	<i>No of features sampled:</i> N/A <i>No of buckets:</i> N/A
<i>C14/scientific dates</i>	<i>No and Type:</i> N/A <i>Result:</i> N/A
<i>Pollen</i>	<i>No of columns/spot samples:</i> N/A <i>Name of pollen specialist:</i> N/A
<i>Bone</i>	<i>Number of buckets sieved for bone:</i> N/A <i>Quantity Recovered:</i> N/A <i>Period:</i> N/A
<i>Other</i>	<i>Type and specialist:</i> N/A
<i>Summary of the report</i>	<p>Border Archaeology carried out archaeological observation of groundworks relating to a replacement gas main extending approximately E-W across Pinsley Mead, an amenity area located immediately to the north of the Old Priory and within the Leominster Priory Scheduled Monument Area.</p> <p>Previous excavations in 1979 revealed evidence of a clay lining, possibly associated with fish ponds alluded to in historical sources; however, no evidence of this material was identified during the course of the present archaeological observation.</p>



## Document Control

<b>Job title</b>	Archaeological Observation at Pinsley Mead, Leominster Priory, Leominster Herefordshire	<b>Job No</b>	BA1001TLP
<b>Report written by</b>	<i>Will Logan BA Dip</i>		
<b>Report edited by</b>	<i>George Children MA MfA</i>		
<b>Issue No</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Approved for issue</b>
1	Final	Nov 2010	
<i>Neil Shurety Dip M.GM Inst. M</i>			