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Archaeological
Observation

Sanctuary Housing Association
No 32 Coningsby Street
Hereford

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Cover: View south showing the site under excavation

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1 Executive Summary

Border Archaeology was commissioned to undertake a programme of Archaeological Observation during ground-works prior to the construction of 10 one-bedroom flats providing supported accommodation for adults with learning difficulties. The site lies in a suburb of the medieval city of Hereford, close to Blackfriars priory.

No deposits of archaeological significance were revealed during the work. At the northern end of the site, a sterile pink-brown silty clay, thought to be a natural deposit, lay beneath a topsoil that appeared to derive from cultivation. This had been cut by a pit containing numerous stoneware jam jars, dating to the end of the 19th -or early 20th century.

A single sherd of pottery dating to between the 14th and 17th centuries was recovered from the subsoil (102).

To the south, adjoining the frontage, the only deposit present was a mixed demolition layer, of very recent date. It seems likely that any archaeological deposits that may have been present on the street frontage were destroyed during modern construction and demolition.

2 Introduction

Border Archaeology was instructed by Sanctuary Housing Association to carry out a programme of Archaeological Observation of ground-works relating to the construction of 10 flats providing supported accommodation for adults with learning difficulties (Planning Ref: 130878/F).

Observation of topsoil removal to a depth of some 0.70m was carried out within the proposed building footprint, the aim being to identify and investigate any archaeological deposits or features in the area affected by the ground-works.

The site was previously occupied by industrial buildings, subsequently demolished, prior to which it had been in use as allotments. The archaeological work took place between 11th and 17th March 2014.

2.1 Soils & geology

The site (*fig. 1*) is situated on the NW side of Coningsby Street and lies at approximately 54mOD on the gravel terraces of the River Wye, which overlie Devonian mudstones and sandstones (SSEW, 1983).



Fig 1: Site location

3 Historical & archaeological background

Coningsby Street lies within a medieval suburb and may be the 'Cattlesone' mentioned in the late 13th century (Tonkin 1966), although it is also possible that the name might refer to Catherine Street further to the S. Frog Lane ('Vroggelone'), which may have lain to the W of Canal Road, was mentioned in the Hereford Cathedral Muniments in 1333 (Tonkin 1966).

The site lies to the W of the important medieval suburb of Bishop Street or Bye Street centred upon present-day Commercial Road, while Widemarsh Street, lying to the W, was in existence by 1221.

It formed part of the precinct of Blackfriars Priory, the buildings of which lay to the W of the development area. The Dominican Order was founded in 1215 and the Dominicans reached Hereford in the middle of the 13th century. In Hereford, they faced considerable opposition from the bishop and both cathedral and secular clergy to their first building, which lay in the Portfields outside St Owen's gate (Butler 1960, 334). Their attempts to build a church were thwarted by the local Canons, who apparently pulled the building down in the night. In 1270, they received protection from the king; they continued to occupy their Portfields site until about 1319, when they were granted land by King Edward II. Following a further grant of land from Sir John Daniel, building on the Widemarsh Street site was begun around 1322.

The friary flourished during Richard II's reign, with three successive priors holding the post of royal confessor. The preaching cross dates to the 14th century and is the only surviving example in England of a Friars' preaching cross (Pevsner 1963, 183). A measure of the priory's prosperity is the fact that John de Hastings, Earl of Pembroke, chose to be buried in its choir. Following the Dissolution, the priory was unoccupied and the buildings fell into disrepair. The W range was converted into a town house by Sir Thomas Coningsby, who demolished the remainder of the friary and rebuilt the hospital in 1617.

The probable limits of the precinct to the N may lie on the line of the Tan Brook; the E edge may lie near the line of the present Canal Road, while it is possible that Coningsby Street represents the limit to the S (Butler 1960, 335). It is therefore possible that the site lay within the precinct of the priory

A watching brief on Canal Road revealed the remains of a ditch aligned N/S, which may have dated to the medieval period, although all recorded deposits were of post-medieval date. At the former Safeway Store, a watching brief prior to development identified a number of pits, including possible evidence for a tannery, together with evidence relating to the medieval Monkmoor Mill.

4 Methodology

Archaeological observation was carried out in accordance with *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008 updated 22nd Nov 2013). Border Archaeology adheres to the *IfA Code of conduct* (2013) and *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in archaeology* (2008) and to Herefordshire Archaeology's *Standards for Archaeological Projects in Herefordshire* (Issue 1) (Herefordshire Council, 2004), and is cognisant of Herefordshire Council's *Archaeology & Development Supplementary Planning Document* (2010).

4.1 Recording

Full written, graphic and photographic records were made in accordance with Border Archaeology's *Archaeological Field Recording Manual* (2014). Records included:

- A pro-forma context record for each stratigraphic unit
- Plans of excavated areas showing: the extent of the area (tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid and located on a 1:2500 plan), the extent of all stratigraphic units, and appropriate detail within stratigraphic units.
- A photographic record of all stratigraphic units, in addition to a representative photographic record of the progress of the archaeological work. The record was made using a high-resolution digital camera and comprised photographs of archaeological features and appropriate groups of features and structures. Included in each photograph was an appropriate scale and all photographic records were indexed and cross-referenced to written site records. Details concerning subject and direction of view were maintained in a photographic register, indexed by frame number.

Retained finds were cleaned, labelled and stored according to *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008) and *First Aid for Finds* (Watkinson & Neal 2001).

5 Results

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	(101)		Deposit	Topsoil in N extent of site	Soft mid brown sandy silt; 11.5m × 16m × 0.26m	-	-	-	-	-	
2	(102)		Deposit	Subsoil	Soft red brown subsoil with roots. 0.5m deep in similar area to (101)	-	✓	-	-	-	1 × sherd of Malvernian oxidized glazed ware (Herefordshire fabric B4)
3	[103]		Cut	Cut of pit	Rectangular pit 7.1m × 3m × >3m deep. Not fully excavated. Steeply sloping sides. Possibly associated with demolition of modern building – may represent the footprint of an outbuilding.	-	-	-	-	-	
4	(104)		Fill	Fill of pit [103]	Firm mixed light brown and black clay silt with stones and modern industrial waste.	-	-	-	-	-	
5	[105]		Cut	Cut for modern rubbish pit	Rectangular cut measuring 3.5m × 1.6m × 0.70m deep with vertical sides	-	-	-	-	-	
6	(106)		Fill	Fill of pit [105]	Loose grey brown gritty sandy silt containing numerous stoneware jars	-	-	-	✓	-	LC19-C20 stoneware jars
7	(107)		Deposit	Possible natural deposit	Compact pink clay silt with rounded stones and frequent roots. Sterile. Extends trench wide at N end of trench	-	-	-	-	-	
8	[108]		Cut	Demolition or landscaping cut	Unclear form – possible rectangular. Edges not within trench. Edges slope gradually.>11m × (?) × 0.7m with gently sloping sides. Demolition or post-demolition landscaping cut	-	-	-	-	-	
9	(109)		Fill	Rubble fill of [108]	Building rubble, mortar, concrete within landscaping/demolition feature [108]. Fill present to S edge of site	-	-	-	-	-	

Table 1: Results of Archaeological Observation

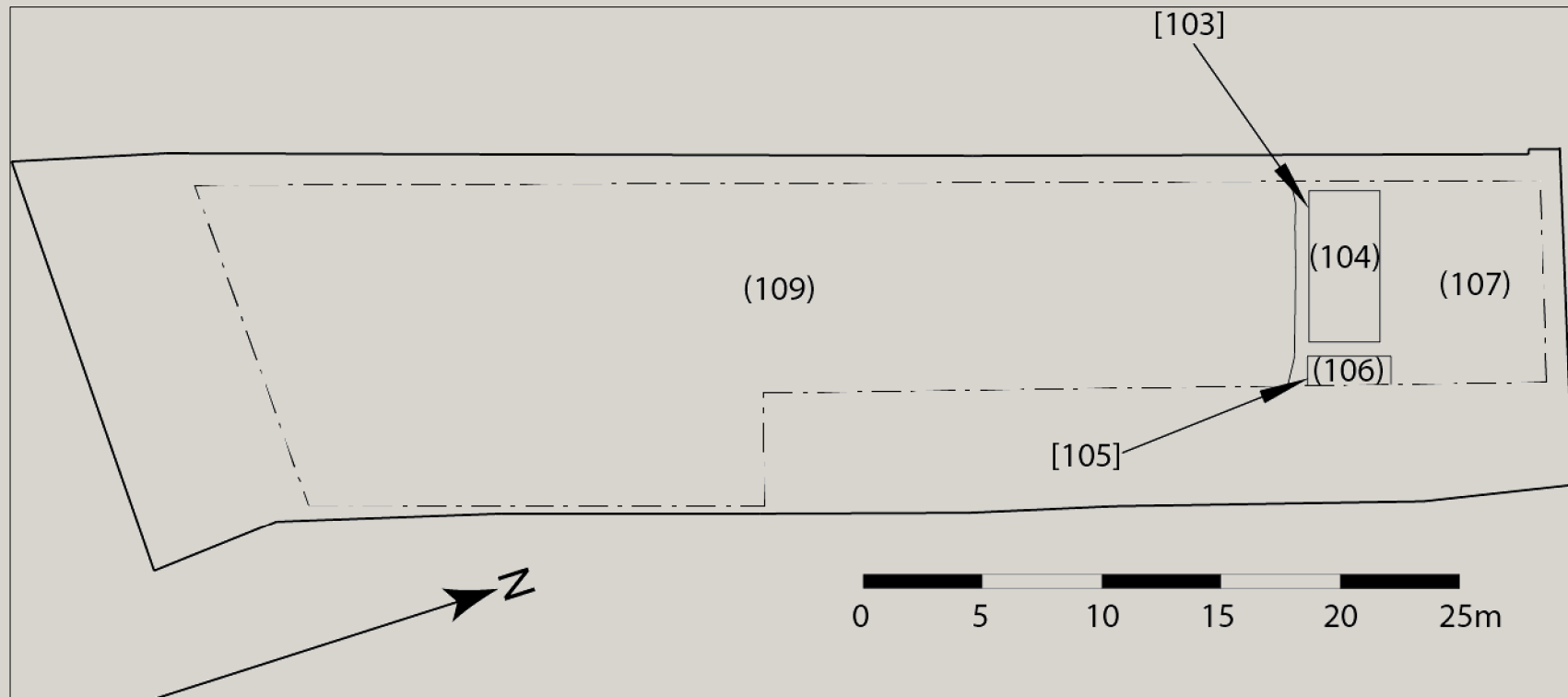


Fig. 2: Plan showing deposits identified on the site



Plate 1: View E of W-facing section at N end of site



Plate 2: View E showing pit [105] containing stoneware jam jars

6 Discussion

The precinct of Blackfriars probably extended from Tan Brook to the N and Coningsby Street to the S; to the E it was bounded by the present Canal Road (Butler 1960, 335). The site therefore lay within its bounds. No features or structures dating to the period of the priory were seen during the archaeological observation, although a single sherd of pottery may have been associated with it. Butler (*Ibid.*) speaks of burials discovered in the allotments, including some in stone-lined graves. The W side of the area shown as allotments would have been occupied by the church and cloister so it seems likely that the E end of the church and the burial ground probably lay in fairly close proximity to the N part of the site. Pevsner (1963, 183) says the preaching cross lay in the burial ground of the friars, in which case, the cemetery was fairly extensive.

As the priory occupied a considerable area, it is likely that some parts would have been used as garden or for agriculture and the sterile nature of the subsoil and natural deposits (*Plate 1*) may reflect this use. Above the clean natural deposits (107) observed on this part of the site, the cultivated topsoil (101) probably derived from allotment use. A pit [105] cutting this soil contained stoneware jam jars (*Plate 2; fig. 2*); the company, Hartley's, was founded in 1871.

Coningsby Street seems to have been established by the late 13th century (Tonkin 1967, 241), before the priory occupied the site, and it is therefore possible that medieval occupation could have been present on the frontage. The friars went through much litigation before the precinct boundaries were established, particularly concerning their enclosure of Frog Lane, and it seems unlikely that the presence of existing occupation would have deterred them. However, later post-medieval occupation on the site, including excavation of modern rubbish pits [103] and [105] (*fig. 2*) and construction and subsequent demolition of buildings and levelling of the site (109) (*figs. 2 & 3*), has destroyed any evidence for such occupation if it existed.

7 Copyright

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8 Bibliography

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9 Appendix: A note on the pottery

A single sherd of Malvernian oxidized glazed ware (Herefordshire fabric B4) weighing 6.4g was recovered from subsoil (102) at the N end of the site.

In Hereford, the fabric is dated to between the 14th and 17th centuries. Unfortunately, the sherd was non diagnostic as to form, although it was moderately fine and with a reduced core. It had a clear green speckled glaze on the exterior; the firing and the fact that the glaze was external rather than internal may suggest an earlier date within the range and, therefore, that it could have been contemporary with the priory.

The sherd was moderately abraded, suggesting disposal in open ground, such as plough-soil.

Fabric B4 was fairly ubiquitous in Herefordshire and the surrounding counties in the later 15th -to mid-16th centuries and, given the abraded condition of the pottery, it is possible that it was imported from elsewhere during agricultural or horticultural use of the site.

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