

ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION

**FORMER VETERINARY SURGERY
CHURCH STREET
LEINTWARDINE
HEREFORDSHIRE**

**NGR: SO 40488 74040
JOB N^o: BA1120CSL**



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Cover: Site clearance and levelling prior to foundation excavation.

REPORT SPECIFICATION

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1. Non Technical Summary

Border Archaeology was commissioned by Paul Cutting of Manor Developments to undertake Archaeological Observation during the excavation of foundation trenching at the site of the former veterinary surgery Church Street Leintwardine. The works took place during replacement of the former surgery with a timber-framed dwelling.

Whilst any archaeological impact was minimised by the reuse where possible of previous foundations, foundation excavations were required in the northeast corner of the building plot (fig. 2). These were up to 0.9m depth and 0.45m wide, but were largely excavated through soils previously disturbed by evaluation trenching and below-ground services. Work was undertaken on 15th and 16th April 2013.

The site lies within the designated Scheduled Area and in close proximity to the presumed location of the eastern defences of the Roman defended settlement of Bravonium. A timber-laced rampart and possible road aligned west/east were revealed during the course of investigations carried out in the 1970s (Stanford 1972). Whilst these features were not encountered during the 2013 works, a previous programme of archaeological evaluation carried out by Border Archaeology in 2010 revealed a deep ditch, presumed to be associated with the rampart and town defences (BA 2011a).

In summary, the present programme of Archaeological Observation revealed no features, structures or deposits of archaeological significance. No residual or re-deposited finds were discovered, making it plausible that the previous archaeological works and construction in the 1970s had removed any archaeological material from the limited area excavated as part of the building footprint extension.

2. Introduction

Border Archaeology has been instructed by Paul Cutting of Manor Developments to undertake Archaeological Observation in respect of ground works pertaining to the construction of a new timber-framed dwelling onto a reinforced concrete raft foundation on the site of the former veterinary surgery at Church Street Leintwardine Herefordshire (NGR SO 40488 74040) (*fig. 1*).

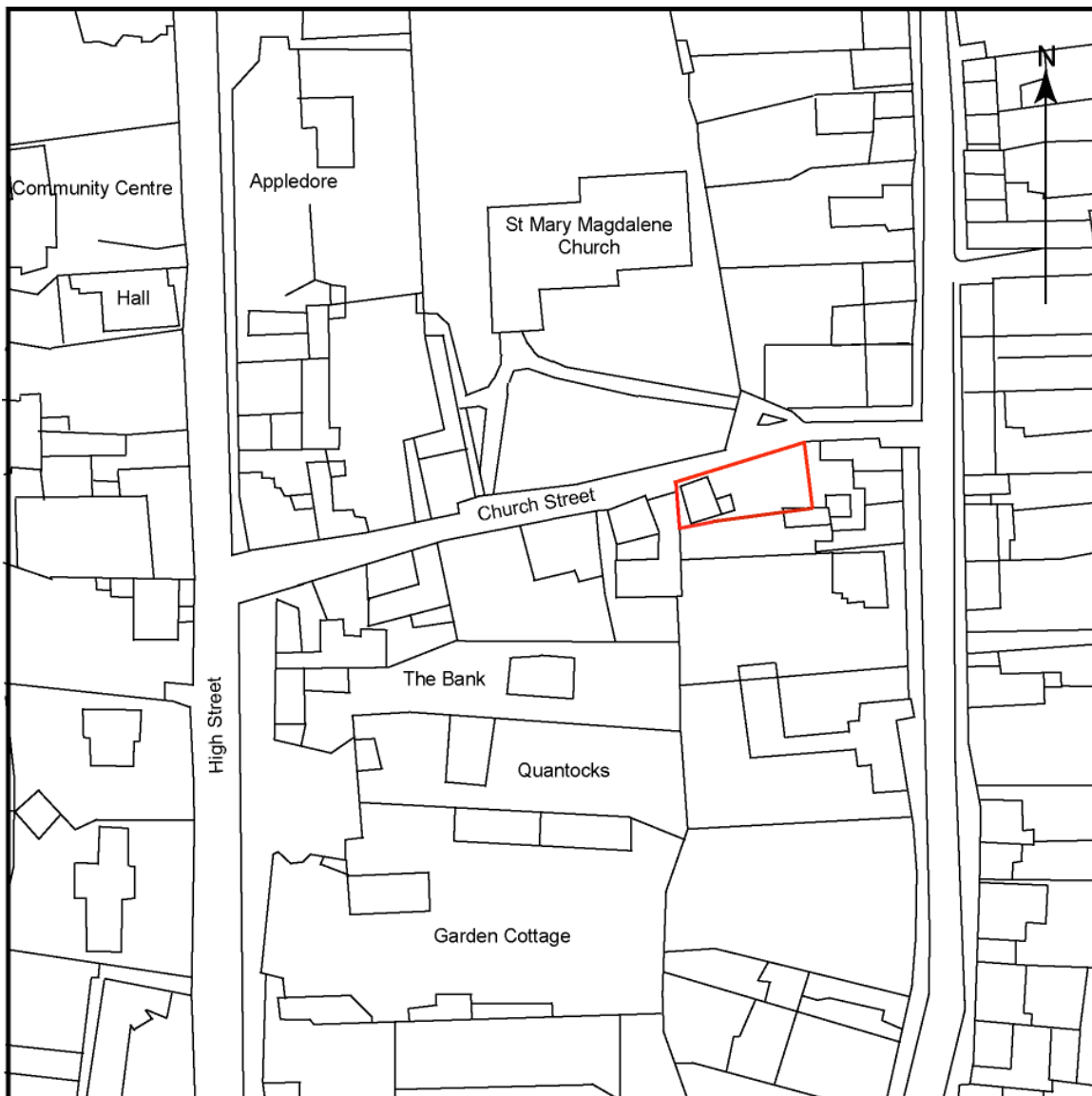


Fig. 1: Site location

2.1 Soils, geology & topography

In the immediate vicinity of the site, the predominant soils are typical argillic brown earths of the ROWTON series (571A), comprising well drained fine silty and fine loamy soils, locally over gravel, and some fine silty over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and seasonal waterlogging. Drift deposits of glaciofluvial or river terrace gravel and till overlie the solid undivided Old Red Sandstone formation (SSEW, 1983).

The topography of the site is flat, probably as a result of post- medieval terracing as revealed by nearby excavations at Swan House on Watling Street. It is likely the ground originally sloped down to the south from the seemingly undisturbed topography of the church to the north of the site.

3. Brief historical & archaeological background

The site of the former veterinary surgery in Church Street is located on the eastern side of the Roman defended settlement of Leintwardine, referred to as *Bravonium* (or *Branogenium*) in the Iter XII of the Antonine Itinerary. The settlement was established at a strategic point at the confluence of the Rivers Teme and Clun, on the line of the Roman road known as Watling Street (West) and commanding a key route leading into mid Wales.

The earliest occupation at Leintwardine dates from c. 65-70 AD, consisting of a *vicus* settlement containing a *mansio* (posting station) and bathhouse (built c. 140 AD). This occupation was associated with the nearby cavalry of Jay Lane and Buckton, which were successively occupied from c. 50 AD to 160 AD (Stanford, 1968). It appears that the fort at Jay Lane was probably established c. 47-50 AD and that it was finally dismantled in about 70-80 AD, to be replaced by another fort at Buckton, about 1km SW of Leintwardine.

Following the abandonment of Buckton fort in about 160 AD, it appears that the *vicus* settlement at Leintwardine was reorganised as a defended settlement, comprising a rectangular enclosure fortified with a timber-laced rampart, while an annexe rampart was constructed around the bathhouse, which was partially rebuilt and enlarged. Although the construction of the ramparts strongly suggests a military function, there is a lack of evidence for regularly laid out structures which would normally be found with a late 2nd century Roman fort, which has led recent writers to suggest that it might have functioned as a supply base or defended small town (Brown, 1966).

Archaeological observation of trenches for the newly constructed veterinary surgery undertaken by S.C. Stanford in 1972, close to the presumed line of the eastern defences of the Roman settlement, identified the remains of a timber laced rampart and downwash associated with the rampart in the northern area of the trenching (Stanford, 1972). Further to the east, evidence for a metalled roadway running approximately ENE/WSW through the rampart was also noted. Based on the absence of evidence for a rampart and associated downwash in the southern trenches, Stanford suggested that there was probably a gateway in this area, which he interpreted as the East Gate of the fort. A wall foundation orientated NNE/SSW identified in the SW extent of the trenching was interpreted as a rampart revetment associated with the gateway (Stanford, 1972).

Although Stanford argued that *Bravonium* experienced several periods of abandonment and reoccupation in the 3rd and 4th centuries (Stanford, 1968), more recent analysis has indicated that the site probable remained in continuous occupation from the late 2nd century through to the mid to late 4th century AD (Brown, 1996). It is unclear when Roman occupation at *Bravonium* finally ceased; Stanford's excavations suggested that the final occupation might have ended in about 350 AD (Stanford, 1968) although recent work has suggested that settlement activity may have continued into the post-Roman period, a possibility further strengthened by the central location of the parish church of St Mary within the defended settlement.

The continuing importance of Leintwardine as a settlement is perhaps indicated by the fact that it appears to have been an important royal manor during the Anglo Saxon period. The Domesday Survey of 1086 records the manor as being held by Ralph de Mortimer and clearly represented a moderately wealthy estate, including a church, mill, eel fishery, 39 householders and land for 16 ploughs, which was valued at £4 (Brown, 1996).

Archaeological evaluation previously carried out by Border Archaeology in October 2010 (BA 2011a) comprised a 4m-long evaluation trench aligned W/E along the new northern foundation and a 0.5m² test-pit located against the foundations of the surgery in the NE corner of the building plot. The test-pit encountered only the foundations of the extension to the veterinary surgery while the evaluation trench revealed a sequence of undisturbed stratigraphy, with a wide, deep 'ditch' identified at the base of the trench that was interpreted as having been associated with the rampart recorded during earlier work (Stanford 1972).

However, the 2013 foundation excavations did not attain the depth of the evaluation trench and, additionally, the W/E foundation, at 0.45m wide, was contained entirely within the 1m width of the evaluation trench and thus impacted exclusively upon the backfill of the previous archaeological work (BA 2011a).

4. Methodology

Archaeological Observation was carried out in accordance with practices set out in *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA, 2008). Border Archaeology adheres to the IfA *Code of conduct (2013)* and *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology (2008)*.

Foundation trench width was generally 0.45m and, aside from the NE corner, was excavated to a depth of 0.4m onto the concrete footing and through archaeologically insignificant material. In the NE corner of the new building footprint, foundation trenching extended to a depth of 0.9m, largely due to the soft consistency of the disturbed sub-soils.

Archaeological observation was undertaken on April 15th and 16th, during which period all excavation was completed.

Full written, graphic and photographic records were made using *pro-forma* record forms and sheets, these being in accordance with Border Archaeology's *Archaeological Field Recording Manual* (2010).

A photographic record was made using a high-resolution 14.1MPX digital camera. 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.

All excavation was undertaken using a mini-digger under archaeological supervision.

5. Results

The former veterinary surgery occupies the southern side of Church Street, with the building plot located to the western end of the site (*fig. 2*). This lies within the Scheduled Area of Roman Leintwardine and consequently required archaeological observation.

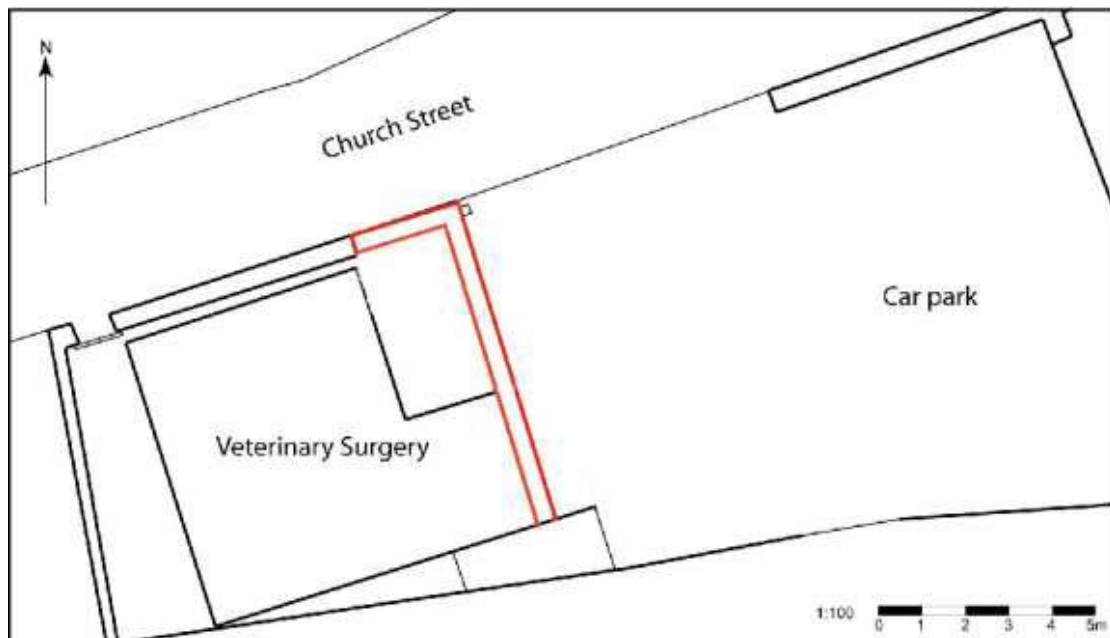


Fig. 2: Trench Location

Impact on the archaeological resource was minimised by reuse of the foundation footprint of the former surgery. However, in the NE corner, new foundations were required. This area was of relatively undisturbed soils and therefore necessitated archaeological observation of the excavations.

The foundations in the NE corner were excavated to a depth of 0.9m and were generally 0.45m wide. Elsewhere, the existing foundation block-work was cleared to the concrete footing, a depth of some 0.4m, and through material of no archaeological significance.

Within the NE corner of the new building plot the stratigraphy predominantly consisted of 0.15m of tarmac or disturbed tarmac overlying 0.25m of modern building make-up material and re-deposited soils. The subsoil below, a fairly loosely compacted yellow brown clay sand, with ceramic building material and charcoal was previously disturbed. In the limited areas of relatively undisturbed stratigraphy, the subsoil was of similar composition. Two probable bovine leg-bones were not retained as these were recovered from the test trench backfill. There was no natural deposits encountered at the depths observed and the W/E foundation trench did not extend below the depth of the previous evaluation trench (BA 2011a) (*Plate 1*). Where potentially undisturbed subsoil was noted, this was at least 0.5m thick.



Plate 1: View W showing the scar of the 2010 evaluation trench reflecting the position of the W/E foundation trench.

At the NE corner of the new building plot, a series of disturbances were present, including a W/E aligned water pipe running along the northern foundation and a NW/SE orientated drain encased in concrete extending across the NE corner (*Plate 2*). The northern site boundary wall had also impacted on the upper stratigraphy of the northern edge of the W/E foundation trench.



Plate 2: View W showing the N/S foundation trench with the NW/SE drain towards the S and the previous archaeological test trench to the N

6. Summary & Conclusion

No features, structures or deposits of archaeological significance were revealed during the course of the observation and it seems likely that little or no undisturbed stratigraphy was encountered.

This would appear to be due largely to the W/E foundation being cut through the backfill of evaluation trenching opened previously during the course of work undertaken by Border Archaeology in 2010 and to the N/S foundation being heavily disturbed by services, particularly a large drain encased in concrete.

No residual or re-deposited finds were discovered, which strongly suggests that construction activity in the 1970s had removed any archaeological material from the limited area of the building footprint extension, essentially resulting in sterile backfill material.

It is also probable that the site had been levelled during the post-medieval period, a suggestion which is supported by the lack of gradient in the direction of the church and the results of previous work at Swan House on Watling Street Leintwardine, where Roman and post-Roman archaeology were found to have been truncated by later activity (BA 2011b).

In summary, the 'ditch' feature previously encountered during the course of Border Archaeology's previous evaluation (BA 2011a) was not identified and no additional archaeology was revealed.

7. Copyright

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