

Archaeological Observation & Standing Building Recording

Refurbishment of Widemarsh Street (High Town-Blueschool Street) Hereford

NGR SO 50986 40155

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1. Non Technical Summary

Border Archaeology carried out a programme of archaeological observation between January and October 2010 in respect of groundworks relating to the refurbishment of the road and pavement running south along Widemarsh Street and Maylord Street from the site of the medieval Widemarsh Gate located at the Blueschool Street junction towards High Town.

Observation was carried out firstly on Central Networks' engineering excavations generally to formation level (550mm below kerb height) at which depth only make-up material and hardcore for the road and services, both current and redundant, were revealed.

Additionally, four drainage trenches and two collector pits were excavated beneath this level and, whilst cutting below the road material, no significant archaeological deposits were encountered. It would appear that any earlier road surfaces had been removed by later, deeper excavation.

No evidence of the Widemarsh Gate was revealed; however, further groundworks excavations revealed a masonry wall foundation on the east side of Widemarsh Street projecting into the line of the present roadway and, probably representing part of an earlier street frontage.



Plate 1: Early 19th century engraved view looking N showing the medieval Widemarsh Gate, which stood at the present-day junction of Widemarsh Street and Blueschool Street

Aside from the these remains, the only deposits of interest were seen - again beneath Widemarsh Street - at a depth of between 1.0m and 1.2m, directly above the natural gravel. Revealed in the collector pits and three of the pipe trenches, these deposits varied between the east and west sides of the carriageway but are tentatively interpreted as palaeosoils relating to former marshland.





Phase 2 of the groundworks comprised the removal of the road surface to allow for repaving with setts and during this phase of works, mitigation included the recording of vaulted cellarage beneath the existing 'Past Times' premises to a recognised English Heritage standard (Level 2) prior to structural reinforcement works being carried out.





2. Introduction

- 2.1 Border Archaeology was instructed by Ms Mairead Lane of Herefordshire Council to undertake archaeological observation of groundworks relating to the refurbishment of that section of Widemarsh Street Hereford extending between High Town and Blueschool Street, together with the eastern end of Maylord Street. A second phase was subsequently undertaken comprising removal of existing road surfacing material and re-paving with natural stone setts (**Figs. 1 & 2**).
- 2.2 Additionally, a programme of Standing Building Recording was undertaken forming a component of the second phase of works and relating to installation of steel plates and associated concrete lintels over part of the existing cellar structure beneath Nos. 6-8 Widemarsh Street, currently a commercial premises occupied by 'Past Times'.

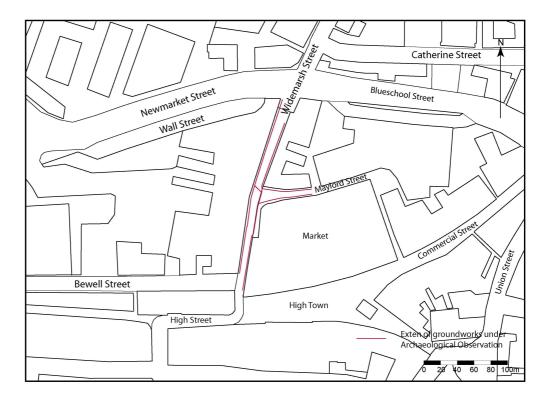


Fig. 1: Site location plan

2.3 Copies of this Report will be remitted to Ms Lane, to Julian Cotton, Archaeological Advisor, Herefordshire Council and to the Herefordshire Sites & Monuments Record.

2.4 Soils & geology

2.5 Although classified as unsurveyed by the Soil Survey of England and Wales, Hereford is known to stand above a complex series of deposits, including alluvium, lacustrine beds, peat, marls and gravel, with peat particularly evident in Widemarsh, part of an extensive marshland, now largely reclaimed,





lying to the NW and N of the city, where the names Faster's Moor, Canon Moor and Monk Moor offer further evidence of the area's marshy character.

The early settlement was built on a gravel terrace (55-57m OD), which, in the town centre, occurs relatively close to the surface. It is possible that the site was chosen partly for the protection afforded by the marsh, although the shallow fords across the Wye (evidenced by the place-name) were presumably of greater significance (Shoesmith 1982).

3. Brief historical & archaeological background

- 3.1 Widemarsh Street is an important thoroughfare first documented by name in the 13th century, although in common with Eign Gate, Bridge Street, St Owen Street and King Street, it has earlier origins, forming an integral component of the city's original street plan. As stated above, the name reflects its association with the area immediately N and NW of the city, which formed part of an extensive low-lying marsh, now largely reclaimed.
- 3.2 None of these early arterial routes appear to have been affected by developments in urban traffic management since the end of the medieval period (Baker 2010).
- The townscape grain appears to have remained remarkably well preserved in this and other peripheral areas situated immediately outside the retail core of the city. A common boundary to the rear of properties on the western side of Widemarsh Street, for example, suggests minimal plot amalgamation (although truncation by later development is evident to the E) and whilst today the street is characterised by a blend of Georgian and later buildings, it is probable that the 18th and early 19th century frontages conceal evidence of earlier structures (Baker 2010). Certainly, there is evidence of medieval cellarage associated with some of the properties, fabric of medieval date being noted during the present programme of works beneath Nos. 6-8 Widemarsh Street.

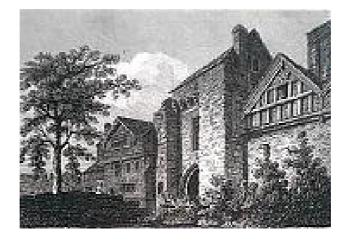


Plate 2: Late 18th century engraved view (from a sketch by Edward Dayes) looking SE showing the former Widemarsh
Gate situated at the northern end of Widemarsh Street





The groundworks were undertaken within the shorter intramural section of the road enclosed by the late 12th century defences. The Widemarsh Gate, part of the city's medieval defences, formerly stood at the northern end of this section, at its junction with Blueschool Street (**Plates 1 & 2**).

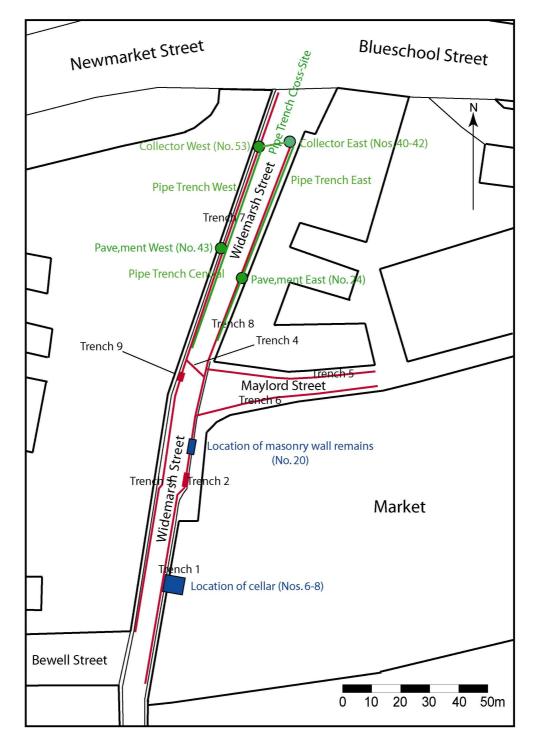


Fig. 2: Plan showing location of trenching and other groundworks excavations





4. Methodology

- 4.1 This programme of 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* (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 The area impacted upon by the groundworks was identified using the scale drawing supplied to Border Archaeology by Herefordshire Council (Drawing Ref. 551180/WC/P/007).
- 4.3 Groundworks were observed within specific locations, the aim being to identify and record any archaeological deposits, features or structures present. All spoil and removed material was examined and sorted for artefacts, which were recorded and, where appropriate, retained.
- 4.4 A written and graphic record was made using *pro-forma* context recording sheets and gridded, archivally stable polyester drawing film, this record being in accordance with Border Archaeology's *Field Recording Manual*.
- 4.5 A photographic record was also made using a high-resolution digital camera, comprising record views of deposits and features revealed during the course of the groundworks, together with a representative record of the progress of site works. All photographs were indexed and cross-referenced to written site records with details of subject and direction of view recorded in a photographic register, indexed by frame number.

5. Results

5.1 Trench 1

5.2 Trench 1 comprised a section of open-cut trenching between 'Accessorise' and 'Melgray' on the E side of Widemarsh Street. It was oriented N-S, linking into Trench 2 at the N end and measured 75m × 0.6m × 0.75m.

Three contexts were identified; underlying the tarmac road surface was a compact greyish gritty stony road base measuring 0.22m in thickness. Underlying this was a compact reddish silty sandy clay containing frequent pebbles and rounded stones to a thickness of >0.44m. No archaeological horizon was attained.

5.3 Trench 2

5.4 Trench 2 was a short access trench to the N of Trench 1 and to the S of Trench 8 located on the E side of Widemarsh Street outside 'Jones Bootmaker' (No. 20 Widemarsh Street). It was oriented N-S and measured 2.5m × 1.5m × 0.75m.





5.5 Five contexts were identified, underlying the tarmac surface and the stony sub base was a cohesive brownish-red gritty sandy clay 0.27m in thickness. Underlying this deposit were the surviving lower courses of a masonry wall in the W-facing section, comprising rough-hewn squared sandstone blocks measuring on average 400mm × 120mm, random coursed with a light pinkish-grey sandy mortar. Occasional brick repairs/inserts were also visible (Plates 3-6). The wall ran N-S, measuring >2.00m in length and 0.35m wide, the remains standing to a maximum height of 0.40m. Beneath the masonry structure was a firm reddish-brown sandy clay to a maximum observed thickness of >0.13m.



Plate 3: View E showing section of masonry walling exposed in trenching on E side of Widemarsh Street immediately S of junction with Maylord Street







Plate 4: View E showing location of masonry wall remains in relation to existing street frontage



Plate 5: View E showing detail of masonry coursing







Plate 6: View S along W-facing elevation of masonry wall remains

5.6 Trench 3

- 5.7 Trench 3 was an open cut trench section on the W side of Widemarsh Street excavated from between the junction with Bewell Street to 'Saxtys'. It was oriented N-S linking into Trench 9 at the N end and measuring $104m \times 0.6m \times 0.8m$.
- Four contexts were identified, underlying the tarmac road surface and sub-base was a cohesive dark reddish-brown gritty clay containing occasional pebbles and CBM measuring 0.45m thick, although outside 'Saxtys' the underlying deposit changed to a friable light reddish-brown sandy gravel containing frequent large pieces of broken tarmac, which overlay a firm dark brown sandy gravel with frequent small angular stones and charcoal flecking. The trench base revealed a firm red sandy clay (003) to a thickness of >0.1m (**Plate 7**). No deposits or features of archaeological significance were revealed.







Plate 7: Trenching on W side of Widemarsh Street outside Saxtys wine bar, looking W

5.9 Trench 4

- 5.10 Trench 4 was an open-cut trench crossing the road between 'The Imperial' on the W side of Widemarsh Street and the junction with Maylord Street on the E side. It was oriented NW-SE and linked Trench 7 and Trench 8. It measured 10m × 0.65m × 1.00m.
- 5.11 Three contexts were identified, the tarmac road surface, overlying sub-base material beneath which was moderately compact brownish-red sandy clay containing moderate rounded stones, pebbles and CBM to a thickness of 0.57m. No deposits or features of archaeological significance were revealed.

5.12 Trench 5

5.13 Trench 5 comprised open-cut trenching along the N side of Maylord Street. This was excavated under archaeological observation from the junction with Widemarsh St at the W end to the service road at the E extent. It was oriented E-W and linked to Trench 8 at the W end. It measured 60.00m × 0.50m × 0.65m.

Three contexts were revealed, the uppermost of which was the existing brick paving some 0.07m thick, which overlay a sandy concrete layer 0.09m thick, which in turn lay above a loose mid brown coarse sand and gravel deposit containing occasional animal bone and CBM, which measured >0.49m in thickness. No deposits or features of archaeological significance were revealed.





5.14 Trench 6

5.15 Trench 6 was an open-cut trench running along the S side of Maylord Street parallel to Trench 5 and connecting with Trench 8 at the W extent. It measured 60.00m × 0.50m × 0.70m

Three contexts were identified. Beneath the brick paving was a concrete layer above a moderately compact mid greyish-brown sand and gravel containing very frequent small pebbles and sub-rounded stones to a thickness of >0.54m. No deposits or features of archaeological significance were revealed.

5.16 Trench 7

5.17 Trench 7 extended along the W side of Widemarsh Street between 'Saxty's' to the S and the junction with Newmarket Street/Blueschool Street to the N. It adjoined Trench 4 and Trench 9 at the S extent and was oriented NNE-SSW, measuring 110.00m × 0.60m × 0.70m.

The uppermost of four contexts was the existing tarmac road surface overlying a stony base material. Beneath this was a cohesive reddish-brown sandy clay containing frequent pebbles and CBM to a thickness of 0.3m. At the base of the trench was a firm reddish-brown sandy clay to a thickness of >0.1m containing occasional pebbles and degraded stone.

5.18 Trench 8

5.19 Trench 8 was located on the E side of Widemarsh Street, between its junction with Maylord Street to the S and 'The Exchange' to the N. It linked with Trench 2 at the S end and Trenches 4, 5 and 6 at the Maylord Street junction. It was oriented N-S/NNE-SSW and measured 130.00m × 0.60m × 0.68m.

Four contexts were revealed: the tarmac road surface, the compacted stone sub-base, a cohesive brownish-red sandy clay 0.18m thick and a hard reddish-brown sandy clay 0.18m thick.

5.20 Trench 9

- 5.21 Trench 9 was located adjacent to 'Saxtys' and adjoined Trench 3 and Trench 7. It was oriented N-S and measured 5.00m × 1.40m × 1.25m.
- Five contexts were identified. Underlying the tarmac road surface and compacted stone road base was a friable light reddish-brown sandy gravel containing frequent broken tarmac and measuring 0.33m thick. Underlying this deposit was a firm dark brown sandy gravel containing frequent small angular stones and charcoal flecking 0.26m in thickness overlying a mid firm reddish-brown sandy clay 0.44m thick.
- 5.23 The following observations were made over a period of five weeks from September 1st 2010, covering the area of Widemarsh Street between (approximately) Nos. 33-55 on the W side, Nos. 22-42 E side, during the insertion of new services and resurfacing of both street and pavements.





5.24 Carriageway

The Archaeological Observation covered the stretch of road from roughly Nos. 33-55 on the W side, Nos. 22-42 on the E, i.e. from just beyond the entrance to Maylord Street at the S to the junction with the ring road at the N. E and W sides of the roadway were excavated separately. Formation depth was 550mm (**Plate 8**).



Plate 8: Sample section, E-facing, centre of carriageway, opposite No.53 Widemarsh St







Plate 9: Example of roadway at formation level, E side, looking S

5.26 Many services old and new were visible, but no features of archaeological significance were observed at this level, being still within the makeup of the modern road. At the N end, the excavation was shallower, sloping up to meet the ring road. Here, the trenching cut through foam concrete.

5.27 Collector East

5.28 A pit measuring approximately 1.5m (N-S) × 1m (E-W) × 2m was excavated at the E side of the carriageway to take a preformed collector pot. It was situated between Nos. 40 and 42 Widemarsh St. The resulting hole could not be entered for health and safety reasons but the following observations were made.







Plate 10: W-facing section, depth 2m

Beneath deposits of rubble, hardcore etc. to a depth of c.1m, and above the natural gravel at c.1.2m, the W-facing section (depth 2m) revealed a layer of greyish clay between 100 and 300mm in thickness (**Plate 10**). It is possible that this was a gleyed remnant of the original marsh. No archaeological features or artefacts were seen or retrieved. Brick foundations and a dump of clean yellow clay were also seen in section.

5.30 Collector West

5.31 A pit measuring approximately 1.5m (N-S) \times 1m (E-W) \times 2m was excavated at the W side of the carriageway to take a preformed collector pot. It was situated adjacent to No. 53 Widemarsh St. ('Coral' Bookmakers). The pit could not be entered, again, for H&S reasons; however, the following observations were made.







Plate 11: E-facing section, depth 2m

At a depth of between 1.1m and 1.4m, between modern rubble and service trenches and the natural gravel, E-facing section (depth 2m) revealed a layer of firm greyish-brown silty clay. No archaeological features, cuts or surfaces could be seen. No artefacts were recovered. It is possible that this layer represented an early marsh deposit as postulated for the eastern collector (above). However, this deposit lacked the bluish tinge typical of gleying (**Plate 11**).

5.33 Pavement East

The excavation of small sections of pavement, some 5m to10m at a time, was observed. The depth reached was still within makeup material and no archaeological horizon was reached. Excavation outside No. 24 (currently 'White Minx', bridal wear) revealed an old stepped cellar entrance (**Plate 12**). This void was plated over to allow construction of the new pavement.







Plate 12: Cellar steps for 24 Widemarsh St.

5.35 Pavement West

5.36 The excavation of small sections of pavement was observed. The depth reached was still within makeup material and no archaeological horizon was reached.





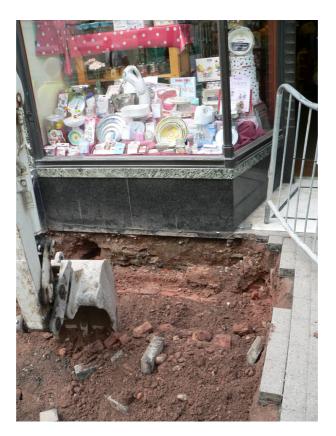


Plate 13: Excavation outside 43 Widemarsh St ('Cookmate') showing foundations

5.37 Pipe Trenches

5.38 During the course of the Archaeological Observation, four pipe trenches were cut through the carriageway, below formation depth of 550mm. These ran down the centre of the road, obliquely across the carriageway connecting the two collectors and on the E and W sides leading into the collectors.

5.39 Pipe Trench Central

Funning N-S along the central axis of the road, this trench was no more than 400mm deep and cut into the backfill of previous service trenches. No archaeological deposits were encountered (**Plates 14 & 15**).







Plate 14: Location of pipe trenches, left, right, centre and foreground

5.41 Pipe Trench Cross-Site

8.42 Running obliquely across the roadway and joining the two collector pots (above), this trench was *c*.600mm deep at the W and 700mm at the E (some 1.2m below kerb height) (**Plates 16 & 17**).



Plate 15: Central pipe trench, looking N







Plate 16: Cross-site pipe trench, looking E

The bottom 100-150mm of the trench cut into natural gravel. Above this was a further 100-200mm of dark grey firm clay. This was similar to the deposit observed in the eastern collector pit (above) and is thought likely to represent the gleyed remains of marsh deposits. This deposit was truncated and sealed by road make-up deposits. No archaeological features or artefacts were seen or recovered.



Plate 17: N-facing section showing strata in cross-site trench





5.44 Pipe Trench East

8.45 Running S-N along the eastern edge of the carriageway, this trench sloped steeply at the N, feeding into the eastern collector pot. For most of its length, the trench cut through make-up deposits; however, at the deepest, northern end it exposed the greyish clay seen in the eastern collector pit (**Plate 18**). A maximum of one linear metre was uncovered at a depth of *c*.1.1m. No archaeological features or artefacts were seen or recovered.



Plate 18: Gleyed clay deposit in the base of the N end of eastern pipe trench, looking S

5.46 Pipe Trench West

8.47 Running S-N along the western edge of the carriageway, this trench sloped at the N, feeding into the western collector pot. For most of its length, the trench cut through make-up deposits but at the deepest, northern end it cut to a depth of c.1.2m. This exposed natural gravel at c.1.1m and, above this, a thin (50-100mm) layer of greyish-brown clay. Colour and composition were notably different from the basal deposit seen on the E side of the carriageway, a difference also observed in the E and W collector pits. This may simply have represented natural variation in the palaeosoil. No archaeological features or artefacts were seen or recovered.







Plate 19: E-facing section in western pipe trench, depth 1.2m

6. Standing Building Recording

6.1 Methodology

- 6.1.1 The existing cellarage situated beneath Nos. 6-8 Widemarsh Street (SO5098140065) was subject to a programme of photographic recording supported by descriptive notes sufficient to inform a brief discussion of the structure's development and use.
- This work conforms to Level 2 as specified by English Heritage in Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice (2006) which states that 'the record will present conclusions regarding the building's development and use, but will not discuss in detail the evidence on which these conclusions are based,' (2006, 14). The record also conforms to guidance set out by the Institute for Archaeology in Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures (2008)
- 6.1.3 The survey was carried out using a high-resolution digital camera and annotated supplied plans and elevations to record features and fabric of historic interest that were accessible prior to the commencement of any structural work. The written observations formed the basis of a brief narrative discussion describing the phasing and function of the cellarage.

6.2 Results

6.2.1 The cellar is situated below a Grade II Listed property of late 18th century date, presently in commercial use under the occupation of 'Past Times', comprising a four-storey brick structure below a slate roof. A 20th century shop front is situated to the left of the façade with an early 20th century shop





- window to the right. There is a two-storey wing with a single 6/6 sash window under a segmental arch with blocked opening over and 20th century coping.
- 6.2.2 The cellars extended N-S on a similar alignment to the street and measured approximately 10m × 1.53m × 2m (height measured to the centre point of the roof structure). Access was via the 'Past Times' premises.
- The greater part of the structure comprised the N, S and W elevations. These were of substantial rough-hewn grey sandstone masonry, randomly coursed and bonded with a pinkish sandy lime mortar. The E elevation comprised the foundation footings for the extant commercial building and was constructed from cement mortared brickwork. Two blocked entrances were observed in the E wall, indicating that the structure originally formed part of a larger cellar complex.
- 6.2.4 The barrel-vaulting was of brick construction (individual bricks measured 230mm × 110mm × 70mm) probably lime-mortared, with a rendered finish and appeared contemporary with the late 18th century building above. The S extent of the vault contained a brick archway possibly forming a subdivision. The vaulting at the N end appeared to show evidence of repair while the NE section was of modern cement mortared brickwork.
- 6.2.5 Evidence of a possible opening was identified in the ceiling immediately adjacent to the cellar entrance, presumably housing some kind of access for the delivery and storage of goods. This opening had been sealed with steel-reinforced concrete.





A3 Page: SBR Plan & Photos





7. Summary & Conclusion

- 7.1 All deposits excavated in Widemarsh Street and Maylord Street revealed evidence of considerable disturbance and re-deposition caused by previous groundworks activity.
- 7.2 The section of roughly coursed masonry (004) revealed in Trench 2 probably represents the remains of a wall foundation relating to a building on the former medieval or early post-medieval street frontage. The bonding material comprised a pinkish cement mortar, possibly relating to a later phase of repair to the original masonry structure.
- 7.3 No evidence relating to the former Widemarsh Gate was identified during the course of the groundworks, the only deposits of interest aside from the masonry remains were seen beneath Widemarsh Street at a depth of between 1.0m and 1.2m, directly above the natural gravel. Revealed in the collector pits and three of the pipe trenches, these deposits varied between the E and W sides of the carriageway but are interpreted as palaeosoils, representing the remains of the former marshland.
- 7.4 Phase 2 of the groundworks comprised removal of the road surface to allow for repaving with setts and the reinforcement of the existing cellarage beneath Nos. 6-8 Widemarsh Street, prior to which a programme of standing building recording of the cellars was carried out.
- 7.5 The N, S and W elevations were found to be of substantial rough-hewn grey sandstone masonry, randomly coursed and bonded with a pinkish sandy lime mortar. The E elevation comprised the foundation footings for the extant property and was of cement-mortared brick. Two blocked entrances were observed in the E wall, indicating that the structure originally formed part of a larger cellar complex.
- 7.6 The barrel-vaulting was of brick construction (individual bricks measured 230mm × 110mm × 70mm) probably lime-mortared, with a rendered finish, and appeared contemporary with the late 18th century building above.

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9. Bibliography

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Site Summary

Donart Title	Archaeological Observation & Ctanding Duilding Decard Defurbishment of	
Report Title	Archaeological Observation & Standing Building Record Refurbishment of Widemarsh St, (High Town-Blueschool St), Hereford	
Contractor's Name and	Border Archaeology PO Box 36 Leominster Herefordshire, HR6 OYA.	
Address		
Site Name	As above	
Grid Reference	SO 50986 40155 Planning Application No: N/A	
SMR number		
Date of Field Work	Jan-Oct 2010	
Date of Report	Feb 2011	
,	NUMBER AND TYPE OF FINDS	
Pottery	Period: Late post-med/modern Number of sherds: None retained	
Other	Period: Post-med/modern Quantity: None retained	
	NUMBER AND TYPE OF SAMPLES COLLECTED	
Sieving for charred plant	No of features sampled: N/A	
remains	No of buckets: N/A	
C14/scientific dates	No and Type: N/A	
	Result: N/A	
Pollen	No of columns/spot samples: N/A	
	Name of pollen specialist: N/A	
Bone	Number of buckets sieved for bone: N/A	
	Quantity Recovered: N/A Period: N/A	
Other	Type and specialist: N/A	
Summary of the report		
	A section of masonry wall revealed on the eastern side of Widemarsh St probably comprised the remains of a foundation relating to a building on the former medieval or early post-medieval street frontage.	
	No evidence relating to the former Widemarsh Gate was identified; the only deposits of interest aside from the masonry remains were seen beneath Widemarsh Street at a depth of 1.0-1.2m, directly above the natural gravel. These were interpreted as palaeosoils, representing the remains of the former marshland.	
	Phase 2 of the groundworks comprised removal of the road surface to allow for repaving with setts and the reinforcement of existing barrel-vaulted cellarage beneath Nos. 6-8 Widemarsh Street, which was recorded by Border Archaeology prior to engineering works.	





Document Control

Archaeological Observation &

Standing Building Record

Job title Refurbishment of Widemarsh Job No BA1002WSH

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Issue No Status Date Approved for issue

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