

Archaeological Evaluation

Land in East Street
to the rear of
No. 26 St Owen Street
Hereford
Herefordshire

NGR: SO 5126 3982
SMR No 4924

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1. Non Technical Summary

Border Archaeology carried out the archaeological field evaluation of land in East Street to the rear of No. 26 St Owen Street, Hereford, on June 1st 2009 with the aim of locating evidence of the pre-Conquest defences. The northern section of the defences is presumed to lie along the West Street/East Street axis and it was anticipated that development activity in this area would impact upon significant archaeological remains.

Two trenches were excavated close to the NW and SE boundaries of the site. Trench 1 revealed the remains of post-medieval cellarage while Trench 2 contained further cellarage, together with the remains of a probable bread oven. Due to trench instability, detailed investigation of deposits was not possible.

To the rear of the cellarage, the excavations located a substantial build-up of medieval and post-medieval deposits of c.3.5m in depth, which were suggestive of the fill of the early medieval ditch; a slight bank cut of pink gravel was encountered that may represent one edge of the ditch.

2. Introduction

Border Archaeology was instructed by Patrick James Esq., of Cross & James, to undertake the archaeological evaluation of land immediately to the NE of East Street and to the rear of No. 26 St Owen Street, Hereford, in pursuance of a Brief issued by Julian Cotton, Archaeological Advisor, Herefordshire Council.

Copies of this report will be sent to Mr James, Julian Cotton and the Herefordshire Sites & Monuments Record.

2.1 Soils & Geology

Hereford is characterised by a variety of deposits, including alluvium, lacustrine beds, peat marls and gravel, which, in the centre of the city, occurs relatively close to the surface (Shoosmith, 1982).

3. Brief Historical & Archaeological Background

The site lies to the rear of No 26 St Owen Street and adjoins East Street on its NE side. East Street itself follows the northern line of the pre-Conquest defences, representing some of the earliest Saxon defensive works in the country, which subsequently evolved through several phases of development culminating in the medieval defensive circuit of wall, gates and bastion towers completed in 1264. By this time, the enclosed area had been significantly enlarged to encompass the entire area to the S of modern Blueschool Street.

The defences have been subject to opportunistic investigation over many years, with a significant concentration of activity taking place under the auspices of the Hereford Excavation Committee in the 1960s, during construction of the inner relief road. The main theme of these investigations was the development of the defences from the origin of the city until after the Civil War and a postulated sequence of stages was subsequently proposed based on the findings of these and other investigations.

The earliest, Stage 1, defences appear to have comprised a gravel rampart, probably with external ditch, which were partially replaced by a Stage 2 turf and clay rampart with timber face, extending eastwards. Stonework and an intra-mural road were then added to the Stage 2 defences prior to a period of disuse (Stage 3) and subsequent refortification (Stage 4). Stage 5 represents the extension of the defensive circuit to include an additional area to the N of the city and possibly a further area to the S of the river. The defences were subsequently rebuilt to comprise wall, gates and bastion towers, this latter stage of works being completed by the mid 13th century.

Of particular significance were the investigations carried out along the line of the western defences in Victoria Street in 1968, which revealed a sequence of activity spanning the prehistoric through to the medieval period. In terms of the development of the defences, date ranges were assigned to each of the stages, commencing with a small ditch and bank of late 8th to 9th century date, probably representing a property boundary, with the gravel rampart representing Stage 1 of the sequence outlined above being dated to the mid to late 9th century.

Further investigations carried out in Cantilupe Street commenced in 1972 and revealed exceptionally well-preserved remains of the defensive sequence, the earliest phase of which equated to the Stage 2 turf and clay rampart identified at Victoria Street. The rampart had been faced in timber to give an overall height of some 4m and the timber face was subsequently revetted in stone to a thickness of 2m. Further traces of this rampart have been identified during watching briefs immediately N of and beneath the line of West Street/East Street, which the evidence suggests runs along the tail of the rampart, with the crest lying beneath properties to the N (Shoesmith, 1982, 79).

A service trench excavated across East Street during the course of recent groundworks relating to the construction of a new Sports Hall for Hereford Cathedral School between No 77 East Street and No 7 Ferrers Street revealed a deposit of 'heavy grey clay' that appeared to represent the Stage 2 turf and clay rampart. This deposit was sealed beneath gravel, possibly relating to repairs carried out during the 11th century (Boucher, 2009).

4. Methodology

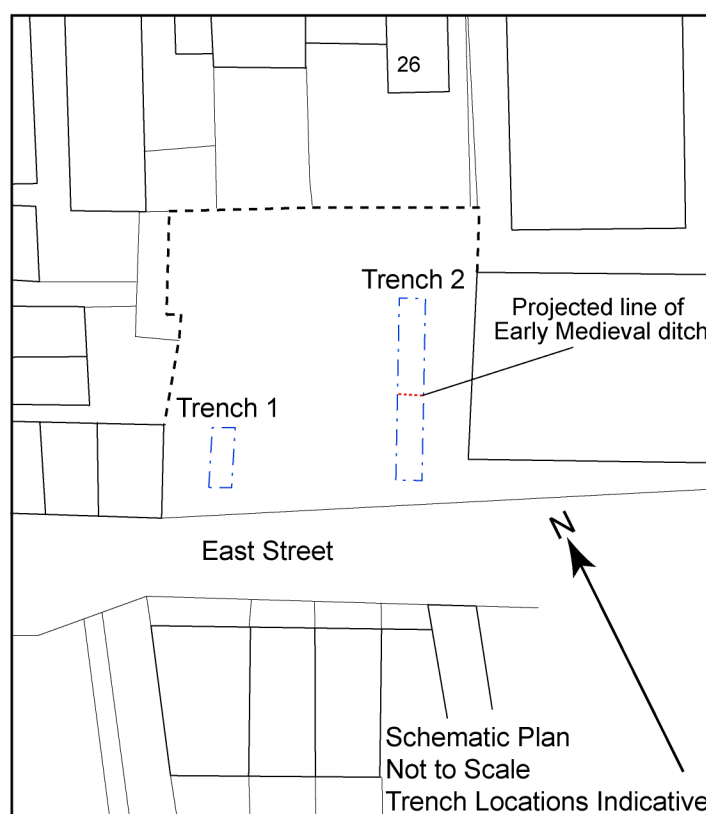


Fig. 1: Plan showing location of site. The dotted line shown in the centre of Trench 2 indicates the possible edge of the pre-Conquest defensive ditch

The main aim of the evaluation was agreed between Julian Cotton and Neil Shurety of Border Archaeology, namely, to locate evidence of the city's pre-Conquest defences, which are believed to extend along the line of West Street/East Street. Mr Cotton nominated the location of the trenching and stated that, in view of the likely depths,

detailed recording of archaeological features and deposits should not be undertaken and that a limited photographic record of the findings would suffice.

Two evaluation trenches orientated roughly SW/NE were subsequently opened by machine in the specified locations, Trench 1 being on the western side of the site and Trench 2 on its eastern side (**Fig. 1**). Trench 1 measured 4m × 1.5m. Trench 2 was 12m in length; however, while the specified width of 1.5m was maintained over much of this length, the trench opened out to 2m in places due to collapse of the sides. All spoil and removed material were visually scanned for artefacts, which were recorded and, where appropriate, retained. Due to Health & Safety issues, Mr Cotton approved prompt backfilling.

A stratigraphic record was compiled using a context numbering system and a high-resolution (10.3MPX) digital camera was used for photographic recording.

5. Evaluation results

5.1 Trench 1



Plate 1: View SW showing overview of Trench 1

The uppermost deposit in Trench 1 was a tarmacadam hard standing (101) which overlaid a substantial brick rubble layer containing patches of dark brown silt (102). This deposit filled the remains of a cellar [105] and covered a floor surface of standard gauge unfrogged brick (103). Underlying the brick floor on the northern edge of the trench, and cut by [105], was a deposit of compact greyish-brown sandy silt containing occasional charcoal and mortar flecks (104).

5.2 Trench 2

As in Trench 1, the uppermost deposits consisted of a tarmacadam surface (201) overlying a substantial thickness of brick rubble and dark brown silt (202). Underlying (202) in the SE part of the trench were the remains of two concrete floors (204, 205) separated by a brick partition wall foundation (203) running NW/SE within a rectilinear

cut [207]. Adjacent to the SE portion of the southernmost concrete floor were further structural remains comprising what appeared to be a bread oven constructed of unfrogged brick (206) and lined with pale red clay (208) (**Plate 2**). Filled by (202) at the SE end of the trench were the remains of cellarge.



Plate 2: View NE showing brick bread oven (206) and insulating clay lining (208)

Underlying concrete floors (204) and (205), wall (203) and its cut [207] was a dark brown sandy silt containing occasional clay pipe fragments, post-medieval ceramics and charcoal flecking (209). This overlay a 0.85m-thick loose grey sandy silt, again with fragmentary clay pipe and pottery, together with animal bone and flecks of charcoal (210), which appeared to represent a post-medieval accumulation of garden soil (**Plate 3**).



Plate 3: View NW showing post-medieval build-up in Trench 2

Due to the depth attained at this point, subsequent recording was undertaken, where possible, from above. Underlying (210) was a deposit of loose grey sandy silt containing occasional sherds of medieval pottery, together with charcoal flecking and animal bone (211). Cutting into this material was an L-shaped feature [212] measuring $>1.00 \times 1.00 \times 0.10\text{m}$ and orientated NW/SE, turning NE/SW. Filling the NW/SE aligned part of the cut was a series of slender angular stones (possibly shale) (214), while the NE/SW orientated portion was filled by a mixture of loose pebbles and grey sandy silt (213), which contained a single sherd of green glazed ware. The precise nature of this feature could not be determined due its limited exposure and because no investigation was possible. Underlying (211) was a moderately compact yellowish-green silty clay deposit containing very occasional charcoal flecking (219). This overlay moderately compact pale red gravel (215), which, although heavily truncated, may have represented the edge of the ditch associated with the pre-Conquest defences.

Cutting into this deposit and (219) was a sub-circular pit [216] apparently containing two fills, the uppermost of which (211) overlaid a mixture of loose black organic material and grey sandy silt (217). This organic material could not be examined *in situ* due to the excessive excavation depth, although a cursory inspection of the spoil suggested that it was charcoal.



Plate 4: View NW indicating final excavation depth and showing possible base of ditch

Cutting into (215) and underlying/filled by (219) was an undiagnostic elliptical pit that appeared to be cut into natural gravels (220), which occurred at a depth of c.3.50m.

During further excavation to locate the base of the ditch, the trench sides became unstable and only limited photographic recording of the base of the trench could be undertaken (**Plate 4**).

6. Summary & Conclusion

Although the evaluation failed to reveal any conclusive evidence of the pre-Conquest city defences, a sloping section of gravel revealed at c.2.60m below existing ground level has been interpreted as possibly representing the edge of a ditch. Certainly, the depth of natural deposits in this area (at c.3.50m or more below existing ground level) implies that the trench may have been located within the backfill material of such a feature. If so, any associated bank and rampart would probably have been heavily truncated by construction activity relating to the cellarage revealed during the course of the evaluation, which would probably have been excavated into the upper levels of any rampart material in this location, as suggested by the angle of context (215).

There seems to have been considerable garden soil build-up within this area, more than 2m of which appears to have accumulated during the post-medieval period. It is possible that this material was deposited specifically to level out a depression within the area of the ditch; however, such a substantial build-up of soil is not uncommon in urban contexts.

7. Copyright

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8. Bibliography

Herefordshire Archaeology Sites and Monuments Record

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Context Register

9.1 Trench 1

Context Number	Description
(101)	Indurated tarmacadam deposit extending trench wide to a depth of 0.10m
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Modern hard standing overlying both trenches.</i>
(102)	Loose brick rubble with patches of dark brown silt extending trench wide to a depth of >0.60m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Demolition rubble used as base material for (101)</i>
(103)	Masonry–Materials: Brick. Size of materials: Standard gauge. Coursing/ bond: One course with no discernable bonding pattern. Form: Brick floor surface. Orientation/ Direction of faces: NW/SE. Bonding Material: Cement. Dimensions of masonry as found: >2.00 × >0.35 × 0.10m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Brick floor</i>
(104)	Firm greyish-brown sandy silt with occasional charcoal and mortar flecks. Dimensions: >0.30 × >0.05 × >0.20m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Undiagnostic soil exposed in section underlying (103) and cut by cellarage [105].</i>
[105]	Cut. Shape in plan: Rectilinear. Corners: Not within trench. Dimensions: >2.00 × >2.00 × >1.20m. Break of slope top: Appears sharp. Sides: Appear vertical, though only partially exposed. Break of slope base: Below excavation depth. Base: Below excavation depth. Filled by (102).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Cut for cellarage.</i>

9.2 Trench 2

Context Number	Description
(201)	Same as (101)
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Modern hard standing overlying both trenches.</i>
(202)	Same as (102).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Demolition rubble used as base material for (201)</i>
(203)	Masonry–Materials: Brick. Size of materials: Standard gauge. Coursing/ bond: One course remaining bond not identified. Form: Wall/ foundation. Orientation: NW/SE. Bonding material: Cement. Dimensions of masonry as found: 2.00 × 0.33 × 0.10m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Wall remains relating to former property fronting onto East Street.</i>
(204)	Indurated concrete
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Concrete floor associated with (203).</i>
(205)	Indurated concrete
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Concrete floor associated with (203).</i>
(206)	Masonry–Materials: Brick. Size of materials: Some standard gauge brick, but variable. Coursing/bond. Random. Form: Oven. Bonding material: Cement. Dimensions of masonry as found: 1.70 × 1.00 × >1.00m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Bread oven associated with demolished structure.</i>

(207)	Cut–Shape in plan: Linear. Corners: Not within trench. Dimensions: >2.00 × 0.35 × 0.10m. Break of slope top: Sharp. Sides: Steeply sloping to vertical. Break of slope base: Right angle. Base: Flat. Orientation: NW/SE. Filled by (203).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Cut for wall foundation (203).</i>
(208)	Firm pink clay. Dimensions >1.70 × 0.10 × >0.05m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Clay lining material associated with (206).</i>
(209)	Loose dark brown sandy silt with occasional clay pipe, post-medieval ceramics and charcoal flecking. Dimensions: Trench wide × 0.60m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Post-medieval topsoil.</i>
(210)	Loose mid grey sandy silt with occasional post-medieval clay pipe, ceramic (mainly post-medieval, although one fragment of medieval green glazed roof tile was identified), animal bone and charcoal flecking. Dimensions: Trench wide × 0.85m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Post-medieval garden build up.</i>
(211)	Loose mid grey sandy silt with a single sherd of oxidised and partially glazed medieval pottery, charcoal flecking and animal bone. Dimensions: Trench wide × 0.50m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Medieval occupation build-up.</i>
[212]	Cut–Shape in plan: L–shaped. Corners: Right angle where observed. Dimensions: >1.00 × 1.00 × 0.10m. Break of slope top: Sharp. Sides: Moderately to steeply sloping. Break of slope base: Sharp. Base: Appears roughly flat. Orientation: NW/SE. Filled by: (213), (214).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Cut of cobble-filled feature. H&S concerns caused by trench collapse prevented full investigation of this feature.</i>
(213)	Loose mixture of small pebbles and grey sandy silt with a single sherd of green glazed ware. Dimensions: 1.00 × 0.40 × 0.10m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Fill of feature [212]. H&S concerns caused by trench collapse prevented full investigation of this deposit</i>
(214)	Moderately compact deposit of small to medium angular flat sandstone fragments/shale. Dimensions: > 1.00 × 0.40 × 0.10m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Fill of feature [212]. H&S concerns caused by trench collapse prevented full investigation of this deposit.</i>
(215)	Moderately compact pale red gravel. Dimensions: 2.00 × 1.00 × 0.70m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Possible cut natural which may represent the edge of the pre-Conquest defensive bank/ditch; however, H&S concerns caused by trench collapse prevented full investigation of this deposit</i>
[216]	Cut - Shape in plan: Sub-circular. Corners: Rounded. Dimensions: >1.00 × >0.50 × >0.90m. Break of slope top: Sharp. Sides: Steeply sloping. Break of slope base: Below excavation depth. Base: Below excavation depth. Orientation: Appears roughly N/S. Filled by: (217), (211).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Cut of pit. H&S concerns caused by trench collapse prevented full investigation of this feature.</i>
(217)	Loose black organic grey sandy silt. Dimensions: >1.00 × >0.50 × >0.90m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Primary fill of [216]. H&S concerns caused by trench collapse prevented full investigation of this deposit, although cursory</i>



	<i>inspection of spoil suggested charcoal</i>
[218]	Cut – Shape in plan: Elliptical. Corners: Rounded. Dimensions: >1.00 × 0.40 × >1.00m. Break of slope top: Sharp. Sides: Appear vertical. Break of slope base: Below final excavation depth. Base: Below excavation depth. Orientation: N/S. Filled by: (219).
INTERPRETATION:	<i>Cut of undiagnostic feature. H&S concerns caused by trench collapse prevented full investigation of this feature.</i>
(219)	Moderately compact yellowish-green silty clay with very occasional charcoal flecks. Dimensions: >1.00 × 0.40 × >1.00m.
INTERPRETATION:	<i>Deposit and fill of [218]. H&S concerns caused by trench collapse prevented full investigation of this deposit.</i>
(220)	Moderately compacted light brownish-yellow gravel. Dimensions: >3.00 × 2.00 × >0.10m.
INTERPRETATION:	<i>Appeared to be natural deposition of gravels but this could not be confirmed due to depth.</i>

Site Summary

Report Name & Title	Archaeological Evaluation: Land in East Street to the rear of No. 26 St Owen Street Hereford	
Contractors Name and Address	Border Archaeology PO Box 36 Leominster Herefordshire HR6 OYQ	
Site Name	Land in East Street to the rear of No. 26 St Owen Street Hereford	
Grid Reference (8 fig)	NGR: SO 5126 3982	
SMR number/s of site	4924	
Date of Fieldwork	June 1 st 2009	
Date of Report	June 12 th 2009	
	NUMBER AND TYPE OF FINDS	
Pottery	Period: Post-medieval	Number of sherds: None retained
Roof tile	Period: Medieval	Number of sherds: < 5
Clay pipe	Period: Medieval	Quantity: 1
	Period: Post-medieval	None retained
	NUMBER AND TYPE OF SAMPLES COLLECTED	
Samples collected for plant macrofossil assessment	None	
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	
Insect	No of columns/spot samples: N/A Name of pollen specialist: N/A	
Other	Type and specialist: N/A	
Summary of the report	<p>Although the evaluation failed to reveal any conclusive evidence of the pre-Conquest city defences, a sloping section of gravel revealed at c.2.60m below existing ground level has been interpreted as possibly representing the edge of a ditch. Certainly, the depth of natural deposits in this area (at c.3.50m or more below existing ground level) implies that the trench may have been located within the backfill material of such a feature. If so, any associated bank and rampart would probably have been heavily truncated by construction activity relating to the cellarage revealed during the course of the evaluation, which would probably have been excavated into the upper levels of any rampart material in this location, as suggested by the angle of context (215).</p> <p>There appears to have been considerable garden soil build-up within this area, more than 2m of which appears to have accumulated during the post-medieval period. Although it is possible that this material was deposited specifically to fill a depression within the area of the ditch, such substantial soil build-up is not uncommon in urban contexts.</p>	



Document Control

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