

Archaeological Evaluation

**Abbey Funeral Services
Nos 2-4 New Street
Leominster
Herefordshire**

NGR: SO 49513 59204
SMR No: 48667

BORDER ARCHAEOLOGY

PO Box 36
Leominster
Herefordshire
HR6 0YQ

Technical Services

Chapel Walk
Burgess Street
Leominster
Herefordshire
HR6 8DE

Tel: 01568 610101

Fax: 01568 616900

E-mail: borderarch@btconnect.com

Contents

1.	NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY	3
2.	INTRODUCTION	4
	2.1 Soils & Geology	5
3.	HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	5
4.	METHODOLOGY	6
5.	EVALUATION RESULTS	7
	5.1 Trench 1	7
	5.2 Trench 2	9
6.	CONCLUSION	13
7.	COPYRIGHT	13
8.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	13
9.	CARTOGRAPHY	14
10.	CONTEXT REGISTER	15
11.	SITE SUMMARY	19

Report specification:

Archaeological Evaluation: James Archer BA, Gwynfor Maurice BA, Will Logan BA & Ben Gough BSc

Report compilation: Will Logan BA

Artwork: Michelle Bithell BA AIfA

Report editing: George Children MA MIfA

Approved: Neil Shurety Dip.M. G.M.Inst.M

1. Non Technical Summary

- *The excavation of three evaluation trenches at Abbey Funeral Services New Street Leominster revealed deposits, features and finds relating to post-medieval (17th-19th century) occupation of the site.*
- *A large amount of brick and stone rubble from the demolition of late post-medieval buildings on the site was observed.*
- *Much of the site appeared to have been built up with imported or redeposited material, partially removing or truncating underlying deposits in places*
- *Underlying these deposits was an accumulation of late post-medieval occupation/garden soils across the entire site.*
- *A number of 17th-18th century features and deposits were uncovered below this layer, including a stone-lined pit and a substantial deposit of cattle horn cores, probably representing horn working or tanning activity.*

2. Introduction

Border Archaeology was instructed by Mr G Seaborne to undertake an archaeological field evaluation of the site at Abbey Funeral Services, Nos 2-4 New Street, Leominster, Herefordshire, (NGR SO 49513 59204) (**Fig. 1**) prior to the proposed erection of eight dwellings (Ref. DCNC2007/3807/F).

Julian Cotton, Archaeological Advisor, Herefordshire Archaeology, advised on 11th January 2008 that an archaeological evaluation should be carried out to provide further information regarding the archaeological potential of the site, which lies within the historic urban core of Leominster, as defined by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey (Buteux 1996).

Copies of this report will be sent to Mr Seaborne, Herefordshire Archaeology and the county Sites & Monuments Record.

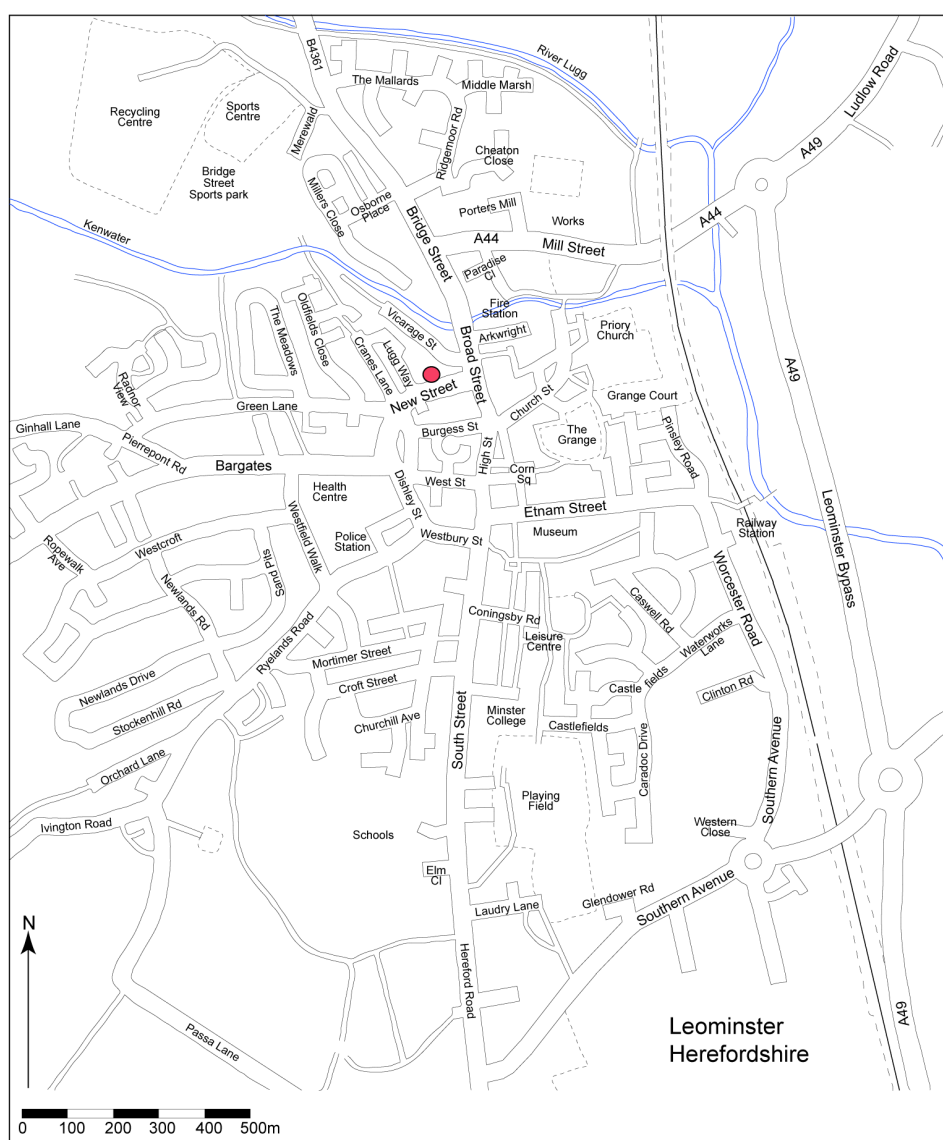


Fig. 1: Map showing location of site

2.1 Soils & Geology

The site lies within an area of typical argillic brown earths of the BROMYARD (571b) and ESCRICK 1 (571p) series (SSEW 1983).

3. Historical & Archaeological Background

The site at New Street is located on the northern periphery of the medieval urban settlement of Leominster. 'New Street' is first mentioned specifically in a survey of Leominster dated 1393 (Buteux, 1996, 8) and a series of rectangular tenement plots presumed to be of medieval date, extending to the N of the street, can be traced on Gallier's 1832 map of Leominster (SMR Record No. 19531). The site of a college of priests, established in the 14th-15th centuries, is presumed to have been located somewhere to the N of New Street; however, its precise location is not known (SMR Record No. 19621).



Fig. 2: Extract from Gallier's map of Leominster (1832) showing isolated groups of cottages along the N side of New Street

Although New Street lay just within the northern extent of the medieval walled borough, it never appears to have been densely occupied. Gallier's map shows the N side of New Street to be only sparsely built up by the early 19th century, depicting only isolated rows of cottages. The OS 1st edition 6 inch map of 1890 shows a largely similar picture. These cottages, which were recorded by the RCHME in the early 1930s, were largely timber framed buildings of 16th-17th century date and survived until the late 1960s, when they were demolished to create the Leominster relief road, opened in 1974 (RCHME 1934; Turton 2005).

The fact that the N side of New Street was not densely occupied probably made it an ideal location for industries such as leatherworking, horn working or tanning, which would normally be situated in open areas on the periphery of urban settlement. Although the main focus of tannery and leatherworking activity in Leominster appears to have extended along Bridge Street (Buteux 1996), towards the Hop Pole Inn, where a substantial quantity of horn cores was recovered during salvage recording in the early 1990s, there are reports of tanning pits having been found as far S as Broad Street, although their exact location is unclear (Townsend 1863, 74).

4. Methodology

Fieldwork was carried out in accordance with archaeological practices set out in *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994 revised 2001). Border Archaeology adheres to the IFA *Code of conduct* and *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology* and to Herefordshire Archaeology's *Standards for Archaeological Projects in Herefordshire (Issue 1)* (Herefordshire Council 2004).

Three evaluation trenches were opened in specified locations within the site (**Fig. 3**) and, following the removal of concrete flooring and modern ground layers by machine, these were excavated manually. Trench 1, situated along the SW edge of the site, adjacent to Lugg Way, was orientated approximately E-W and measured 4.0m x 1.0m. Trench 2, measuring 5.0m x 2.0m, was located in the car park immediately to the E of the funeral services building and was orientated approximately N-S. Trench 3 ran N-S at the SE edge of the site and measured 5.0m x 2.0m.

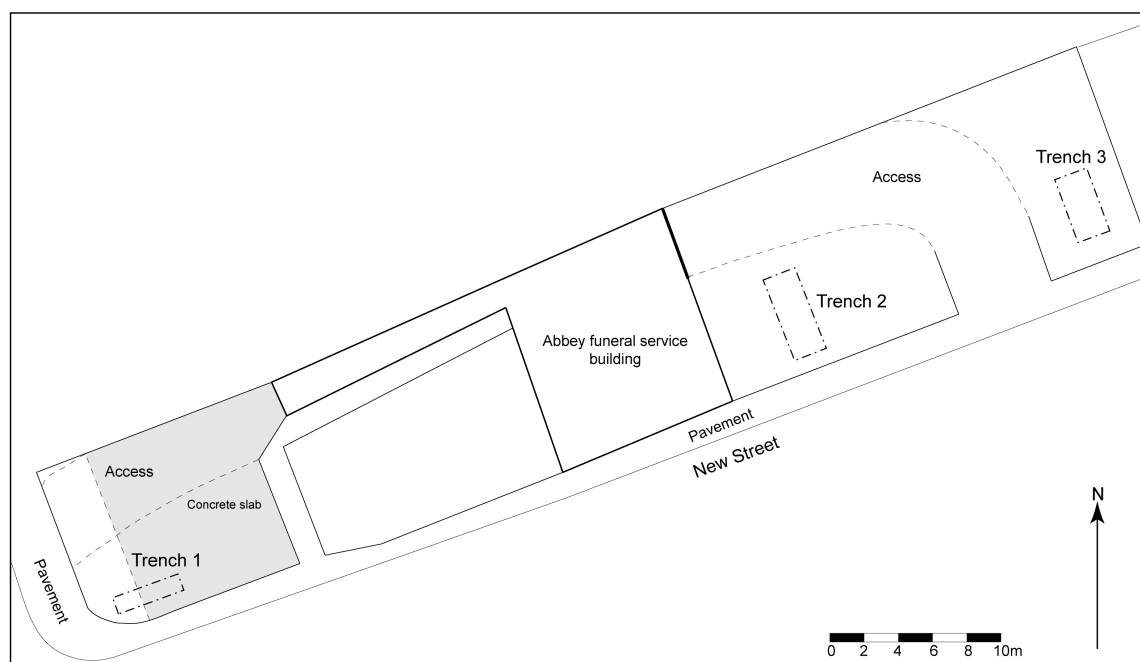


Fig. 3: Plan showing location of trenches

Full written, drawn and photographic records were made, including a detailed stratigraphic record comprising *pro forma* context recording sheets and plans and sections of archaeological deposits, features and structures drawn at 1:10 or 1:20, as

appropriate. All features and structures were photographed using a 10.3 MPX digital camera.

All spoil and removed material were visually scanned for artefacts, which were recorded and, where appropriate, retained. A temporary benchmark was established on the site with a value of 75.06m AOD.

5. Evaluation results

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was oriented E-W and measured 4.0m x 1.0m. The trench produced 13 contexts, the uppermost of which comprised the existing concrete floor surface (101) extending to a depth of 0.11m. Underlying this was a demolition rubble layer composed of brick stone cement and industrial waste (102), which extended trench-wide and measured 0.26m in thickness.

Following the removal of (102), a late post-medieval tipping deposit (103) was revealed, consisting of dark brown sandy silt clay containing very frequent pebbles, sandy lensing and CBM extending trench-wide and measuring 0.37m in thickness.



Plate 1: Post-excitation view of Trench 1, looking W

Underlying this was a mid brown silty clay garden soil deposit (104) extending trench-wide to a thickness of 0.24m. Cut into (104) and visible in the northernmost edge and S-facing section was a steep-sided pit [108] measuring 1.36m E-W x >0.16m N-S x 0.65m containing a single fill (109) consisting of light to mid brown silt with occasional degraded stone and burnt organic inclusions.



Plate 2: S-facing section of Trench 1 showing slot through [106] & [108]

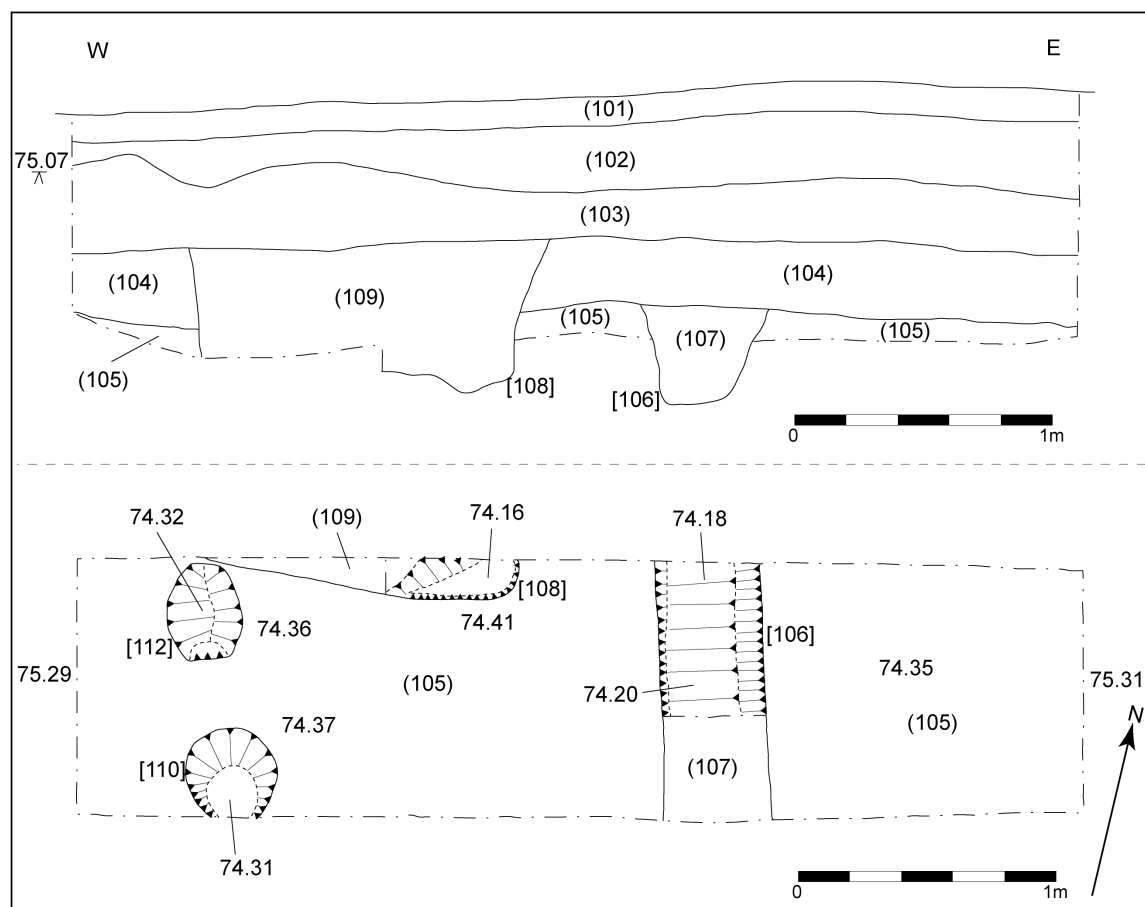


Fig. 4: Post-excavation plan and S-facing section of Trench 1

Underlying (104) was a firm sterile reddish-yellow silt clay cut by a small ditch [106] measuring 0.60m wide and 0.38m deep running approximately N-S across the trench, which was filled by a light to mid brown silt with orangey silt clay mottling. Two small shallow pits, [110] & [112], were identified in the western extent of Trench 1 within (105), measuring 0.27m x 0.27m x 0.07m and 0.40m x 0.29m x 0.06m; both contained a mid brown silt fill, (111) & (113).

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was orientated roughly N-S and measured 5.0m (N-S) x 2.0m (E-W). The trench revealed eight contexts, the uppermost of which (201) comprised a compacted gravel surface, extending to a depth of 0.30m. Beneath this was (202), a moderately compacted dark brown silty garden soil deposit, which similarly extended trench-wide and measured 0.40m in thickness.

Underlying (202) was a distinct earlier garden soil (203) comprising mid greyish-brown humic silt containing moderate gravels and flattish stones extending trench-wide to a thickness of 0.32m.



Plate 3: Post-excavation view S of Trench 2

This garden soil deposit overlay (204), the upper fill of a large rectilinear pit [206], measuring >5.00m (N-S) x >1.40m (E-W) x >0.18m, which the evaluation trench partially exposed and which appeared to have been heavily truncated. This fill material consisted of unfrogged brick and unworked or roughly worked masonry rubble extending to a

thickness of 0.18m and partially overlying a primary fill (205) consisting of dark silt containing a number of cattle horn cores, also about 0.18m thick (**Plate 3, Fig. 5**).

Pit [206] cut what appeared to be a layer of redeposited natural (207) consisting of firm yellowish-brown mottled silt clay extending trench-wide to a depth of 0.18m.

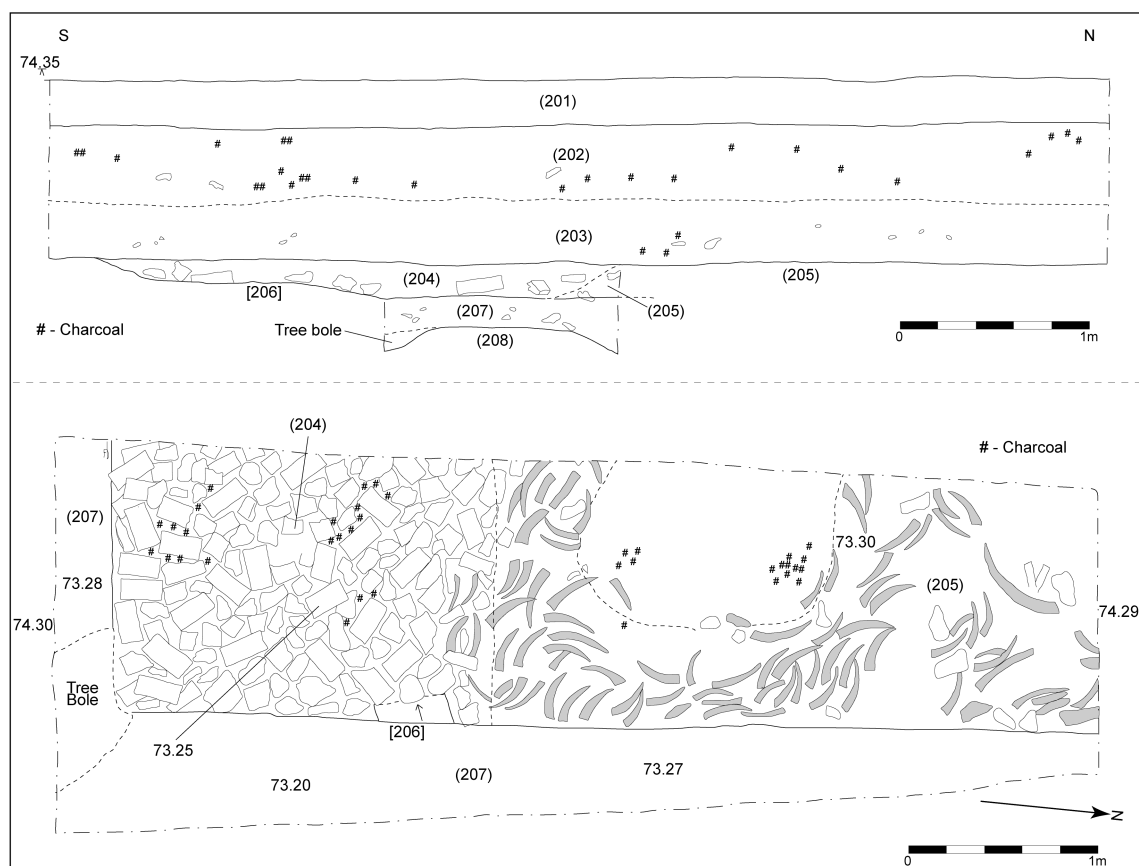


Fig. 5: Plan and section of Trench 2

5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was orientated N-S and measured 5.0m (N-S) x 2.0m (E-W). 24 contexts were identified, the uppermost being a modern gravel surface (301) and sub-base deposit (302) extending trench-wide to a thickness of 0.32m and 0.17m, respectively. Two layers of post-medieval garden soils, (303) & (304), were encountered below the modern deposits, both of which extended trench-wide and measured 0.45m and 0.21m in thickness.

Underlying (304) was a greyish-brown clayey silt, mid to late post-medieval topsoil horizon (323) containing very frequent charcoal and humic flecking. This extended trench wide and was 0.14m thick. Several pits and postholes were identified at this level, including a large stone-lined pit [307] partially visible in the SW corner (**Plate 4, Figs 6-7**). This measured >1.66m (N-S) x 1.40m (E-W) and was at least >0.60m deep. The stones were apparently bonded in place with a reddish gritty clay lining. The pit was filled to a depth of 0.45m by a moderately compacted mid to dark brown clayey silt (306) containing frequent animal bone and several sherds of 18th century brown glazed ware.



Plate 4: Post-excavation view looking S showing stone-lined pit [307] in Trench 3



Plate 5: S-facing section of Trench 3

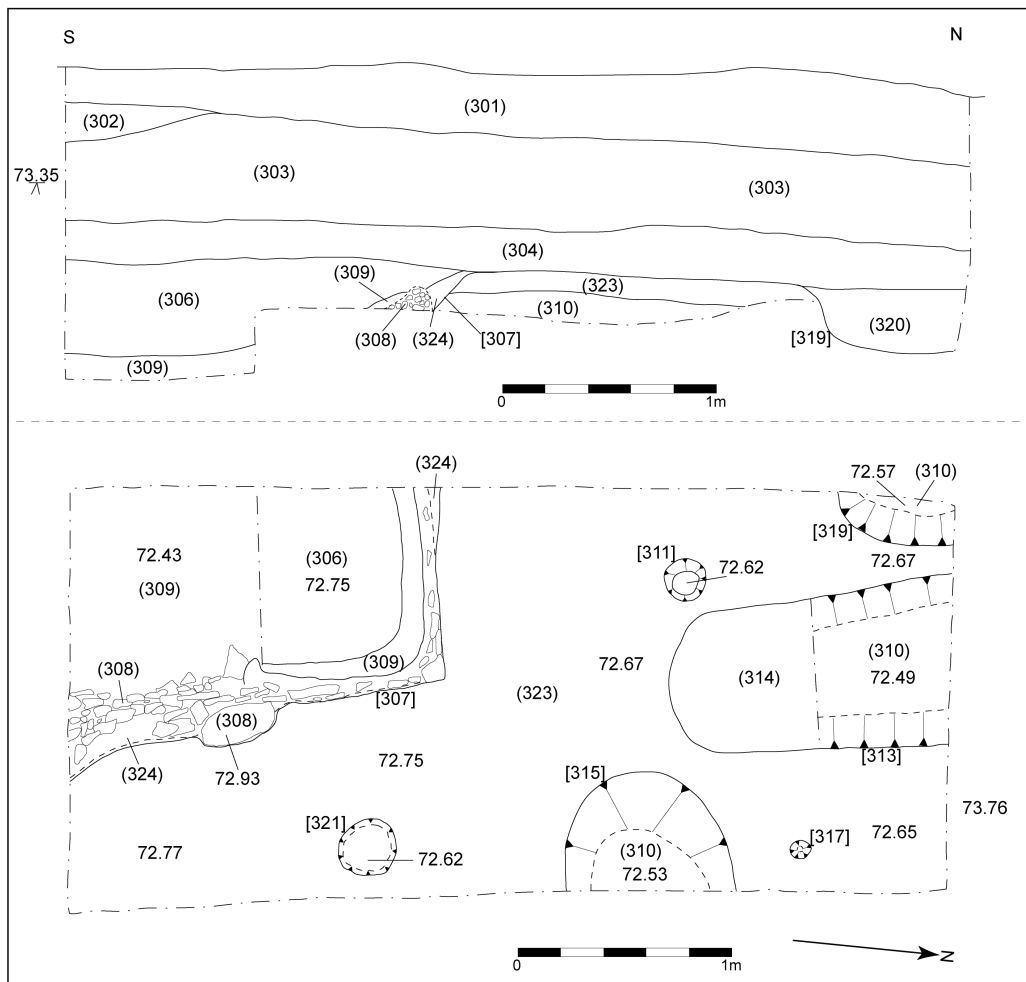


Fig 6: Plan and section of Trench 3

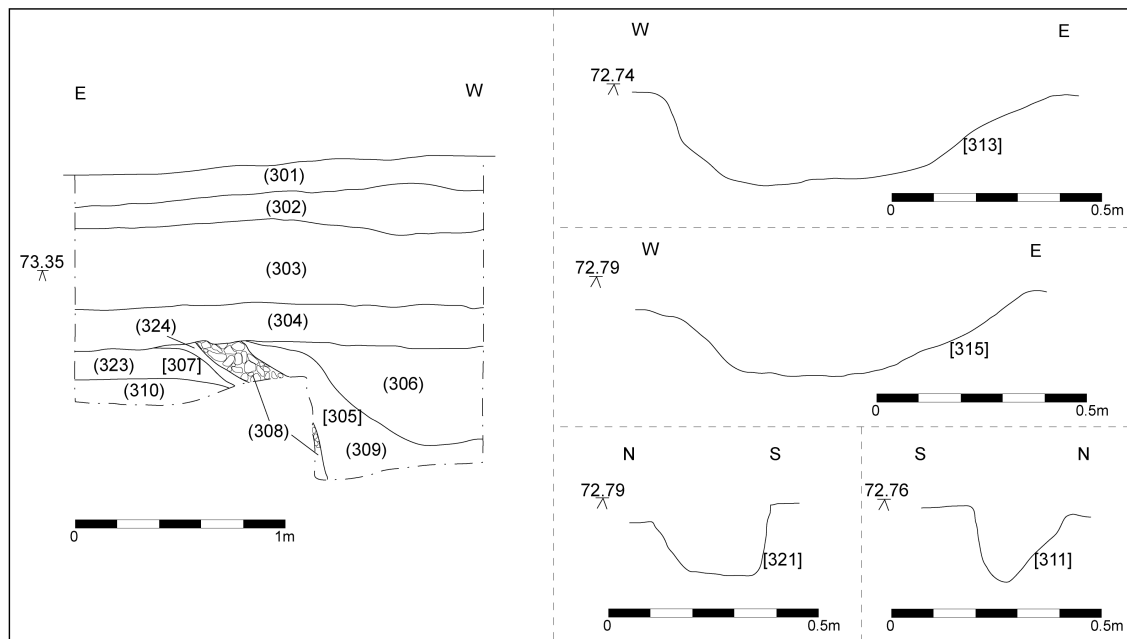


Fig.7: N-facing section of Trench 3 and feature profiles

6. Conclusion

The evaluation revealed evidence of mid to late post-medieval occupation.

Trench 1 contained deposits relating to 19th century domestic occupation, underlying modern demolition rubble. These overlay earlier (post-medieval) features and deposits to a minimum depth of 0.90m, probably truncating them to a certain extent. Two shallow circular features in Trench 1, [110] & [112], probably represented tree-planting activity, [112] and its fill (111) being truncated by a later steep-sided pit [108] cut from the 19th century garden soil (104). A linear feature [106] running N-S across Trench 1 probably represented a boundary ditch; no silting or waterlogged deposits were apparent.

Trench 2 contained little evidence of modern demolition activity, but, as in Trench 1, the presence of two discrete garden soil deposits, (202) & (203), suggests 19th/20th century build-up or landscaping. Earlier deposits were encountered at a depth of approximately 0.95m below modern ground level, comprising a very large shallow sided pit [206] containing a dump of cattle horn cores (205), underlying a scatter of brick and masonry rubble [204].

There was also a considerable build-up of late post-medieval / modern soil deposits in Trench 3, but the presence of an earlier topsoil horizon (323) suggests that the pre- 19th century features and deposits in this trench had not been disturbed or truncated as they appear to have been in Trench 1 and Trench 2.

The large stone- and clay-lined pit [307] in the SW corner of Trench 3 and the substantial deposit of horn cores in Trench 2 are probably indicative of mid to late post-medieval horn working or tanning activity.

7. Copyright

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8. Bibliography

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Turton, E., 2005, *Images of England: Leominster*, Stroud

9. Cartography

1832 - William Gallier's Plan of Leominster

10. Context Register

CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION
Trench 1	
(101)	Indurated concrete surface extending >4.0m (E-W) x >1.0m (N-S) x 0.11m. Overlies (102).
INTERPRETATION	<i>Modern hard-standing</i>
(102)	Weakly cemented brick stone concrete and cinder layer >4.0m (E-W) x >1.0m (N-S) x 0.25m. Underlies (101) Overlies (103)
INTERPRETATION	<i>Brick rubble demolition layer</i>
(103)	Moderately compacted dark brown sandy silt clay 20% small pebbles/rounded stones reddish sand inclusions > 4.0m (E-W) x 1.0m (N-S) x 0.35m Underlies (102) Overlies (109)
INTERPRETATION	<i>C19 garden soil deposit</i>
(104)	Moderately compacted mid brown silt clay 12% charcoal and organic material >4.0m (E-W) x >1.0m (N-S) x 0.24m Underlies (103) Overlies (111), (107), (113). Cut by [108]
INTERPRETATION	<i>Post-medieval garden soil deposit</i>
(105)	Well compacted yellow/reddish silt clay 15% stony inclusions >4.0m (E-W) x >1.0m (N-S) >0.07m Underlies (104) Cut by [106], [110], [112]
INTERPRETATION	<i>Sterile natural or redeposited natural</i>
[106]	Linear cut oriented N-S measuring >1.03m x 0.60m x 0.38m. Break of slope top sharp, sides moderately sloping, break of slope base sharp/moderate base flat slopes W. Cuts [105]. Filled by (107)
INTERPRETATION	<i>Cut for mid-late post-medieval boundary ditch</i>
(107)	Moderately compact light to mid brown/orange mottled silt/silt clay 6% pebbles and rounded stones >1.03m x 0.60m x 0.38m. Underlies (104). Fills [106].
INTERPRETATION	<i>Fill of cut [106]</i>
[108]	Pit measuring 1.27m x >0.16m x 0.65m Break of slope top sharp, sides steeply sloping-vertical break of slope base sharp, base irregular. Cuts (104). Filled by (109)
INTERPRETATION	<i>Cut for late post-medieval pit</i>
(109)	Moderately compacted light to mid brown silt 3% degraded stone 3% burnt organic material 1.27m x >0.16m x 0.65m. Underlies (109). Fills [108].
INTERPRETATION	<i>Fill of cut [108]</i>
[110]	Circular cut measuring 0.27m x 0.27m x 0.07m break of slope top sharp, sides moderately sloping, break of slope base moderate, base flat. Cuts (105). Filled by (111)
INTERPRETATION	<i>Small pit or planting hole</i>
(111)	Moderately compacted mid brown silt 8% small stones and pebbles 0.27m x 0.27m x 0.07m. Underlies (104). Fills [110].
INTERPRETATION	<i>Fill of cut [110]</i>
[112]	Sub circular cut measuring 0.40m x 0.29m x 0.06m break of slope top gradual, sides gradually sloping, break of slope base gradual/imperceptible, base v-shaped. Cuts (105). Filled by (113). Truncated by [108]
INTERPRETATION	<i>Cut for small pit or planting hole</i>

(113)	Moderately compacted mid brown silt 7% small stones 0.40m x 0.29m x 0.06m. Underlies (104). Fills [112].
INTERPRETATION	<i>Fill of cut [112]</i>
Trench 2	
(201)	Compacted gravel surface >5.0m (N-S) x >2.0m (E-W) x 0.30m Overlies (202)
INTERPRETATION	<i>Modern gravel surface</i>
(202)	Moderately compacted dark brown silt 15% charcoal flecking 8% CBM fragments 5.0m (N-S) x 2.0m (E-W) x 0.40m. Underlies (201) Overlies (203)
INTERPRETATION	<i>Imported garden soil</i>
(203)	Moderately compacted mid greyish-brown humic silt 5% stones occasional charcoal CBM mortar 5.0m (N-S) x 2.0m (E-W) x 0.32m. Overlies (204). Underlies (202)
INTERPRETATION	<i>Post-medieval soil</i>
(204)	Rubble deposit consisting of masonry and unfrogged brick 5.0m (N-S) x 1.40m x (E-W) x 0.18m. Underlies (203). Overlies (205) Fills [206]
INTERPRETATION	<i>Secondary fill of [206]</i>
(205)	Moderately compacted dark greyish-brown silt, frequent cattle horn cores, occasional sandstone and CBM 5.0m (N-S) x 1.40m (E-W) x 0.18m Fills [206] Underlies (204)
INTERPRETATION	<i>Primary fill of [206]</i>
[206]	Rectangular cut oriented N-S, corners 90 degrees, measuring (visible dimensions) 5.0m (N-S) x 1.40m (E-W) x 0.18m, break of slope top very gradual, sides very gradual, break of slope base imperceptible, base flat. Cuts (207). Filled by (204), (205)
INTERPRETATION	<i>Apparently heavily truncated cut for mid to late post-medieval pit</i>
(207)	Firm yellowish-brown clay silt 10% rounded stones and gravels occasional charcoal flecking >5.0m (N-S) x >2.0m (E-W) x 0.18m. Overlies (208). Cut by [206]
INTERPRETATION	<i>Redeposited natural</i>
(208)	Firm reddish silty clay 10% small gravels >5.0m (N-S) x >2.0 (E-W) visible in trench base. Underlies (207)
INTERPRETATION	<i>Natural deposition</i>
Trench 3	
(301)	Compacted gravel surface 5.0m (N-S) x 2.0m (E-W) x 0.34m Overlies (302)
INTERPRETATION	<i>Modern gravel surface</i>
(302)	Compacted small rounded gravels, occasional CBM >2.0m (E-W) x 0.67m (N-S). Underlies (301). Overlies (303)
INTERPRETATION	<i>Modern gravel sub-base</i>
(303)	Moderately compacted mid greyish-brown sandy silt occasional medium subangular stones >5.0m (N-S) x >2.0m (E-W). Underlies (302). Overlies (304)
INTERPRETATION	<i>Imported soil</i>
(304)	Moderately compacted mid brown silt 15% pebbles 10% charcoal >5.0m (N-S) x >2.0m (E-W) x 0.21m. Underlies (303). Overlies (306)
INTERPRETATION	<i>Post-medieval soil</i>
(305)	VOID
(306)	Moderately compacted mid to dark brown clayey silt 30-40%

	rounded stones >1.44m x >1.12m x 0.46m. Underlies (304). Overlies (309)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Upper fill of [307]</i>
[307]	Rectangular cut oriented N-S corners 90 degrees, measuring >1.66m (N-S) x >1.40m (E-W) >0.45m, break of slope top sharp, sides steeply sloping almost vertical, break of slope base/base not determined. Cuts (323). Filled by (324), (308), (309), (306)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Cut for large stone-lined pit</i>
(308)	Loose mid brown silt/unworked & uncoursed masonry, >1.66m x >1.40m x >0.45m x 0.32m (width) Underlies (309) Overlies (324)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Masonry rubble fill of [307]</i>
(309)	Moderately compacted mid reddish-brown gritty clayey silt 10% small gravels occasional charcoal flecks, >1.54m (N-S) x >0.90m (E-W) x >0.46m. Overlies (308). Underlies (306)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Reddish clay fill of [307]</i>
(310)	Firm yellowish-brown / reddish-brown silt clay 10% gravel and small stones >5.0m x >2.0m x >0.14m. Underlies (323)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Redeposited natural</i>
[311]	Circular cut measuring 0.24m x 0.29m x 0.15m break of slope top sharp, sides steeply sloping to tapered base. Cuts (323). Filled by (312)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Cut for posthole</i>
(312)	Moderately compacted dark greyish-brown clay silt occasional flecking 0.24m x 0.29m x 0.15m. Underlies (304). Fills [311].
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Fill of [311]</i>
[313]	Sub circular cut oriented N-S measuring >1.43m x 0.84m x 0.22m break of slope top sharp/sharp to moderate, sides steeply sloping/moderately sloping, break of slope base sharp/gradual, base flat. Cuts (323). Filled by (314)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Cut for sub circular pit</i>
(314)	Moderately compacted dark brown silt clay 5% charcoal flecking frequent pebbles and rounded stones >1.43m x 0.84m x 0.22m. Underlies (304). Fills [313].
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Fill of [313]</i>
[315]	Ovoid cut measuring >0.65m x 0.90m x 0.19m break of slope top moderate, sides gently sloping, break of slope base moderate, base flattish slightly concave. Cuts (323). Filled by (316)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Cut for ovoid pit</i>
(316)	Moderately compacted mid to dark brown clayey silt 5% charcoal 15% pebbles rounded stones >0.65m x 0.90m x 0.19m. Underlies (304). Fills [315].
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Fill of [315]</i>
[317]	Circular cut measuring 0.08m x 0.08m x 0.06m break of slope top sharp, sides steeply sloping near vertical, base tapered. Cuts (323). Filled by (318)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Cut for stake-hole</i>
(318)	Moderately compacted dark greyish-brown clayey silt 0.08m x 0.08m x 0.06m. Underlies (304). Fills [317].
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Fill of [317]</i>
[319]	Sub circular cut measuring >0.49m x 0.17m x 0.18m break of slope top sharp, sides steeply sloping, break of slope base/base not determined. Cuts (323). Filled by (320)

<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Cut for feature partially visible within trench</i>
(320)	Moderately compacted mid to dark greyish-brown gritty silt clay 25% pebbles 5% charcoal flecking >0.49m x 0.17m x 0.18m. Underlies (304). Fills [319].
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Fill of [319]</i>
[321]	Circular cut measuring 0.25m x 0.23m x 0.17m break of slope top sharp, sides vertical, break of slope base sharp, base flat. Cuts (323). Filled by (322).
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Cut for posthole</i>
(322)	Moderately compacted mid brown silt frequent large subangular stones 0.25m x 0.23m x 0.17m. Underlies (304). Fills [321].
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Fill of [321]</i>
(323)	Moderately compacted mid greyish-brown clayey silt 30% charcoal humic flecking >5.0m x >2.0m x 0.14m. Cut by [307] [311] [313] [315] [317] [319] [321]. Overlies (310)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Earlier post-medieval occupation layer</i>
(324)	Firm light orangey-brown silty clay, very frequent small rounded stones, measures >0.42m (N-S) x >0.38m (E-W) x 0.05m. Underlies (308). Overlies [307].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Lining of cut [307]</i>

11. Site Summary

Report Name & Title	Archaeological Evaluation: Abbey Funeral Services Nos 2-4 New Street Leominster Herefordshire	
Contractor's Name and Address	Border Archaeology Chapel Walk Burgess Street Leominster Herefordshire HR6 8DE	
Site Name	Abbey Funeral Services Nos 2-4 New Street Leominster Herefordshire	
Grid Reference (8 fig)	SO 49513 59204	
Planning Application Number	DCNC2007/3807/F	
SMR Number/s of Site	48667	
Date of Fieldwork	Jun-08	
Date of Report	Jul-08	
NUMBER AND TYPE OF FINDS		
Type	Period:	Quantity
Pottery	Post-medieval	42
CBM	Post-medieval	14
Clay pipe	Post-medieval	8
Animal bone	Post-medieval	52
Metal finds	Post-medieval	3
Glass	Post-medieval	4
Other	Post-medieval	4
NUMBER AND TYPE OF SAMPLES COLLECTED		
Sieving for charred plant remains	No of features sampled	N/A
	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	
	N/A	
<p>Summary of the report: The excavation of three evaluation trenches at Abbey Funeral Services New Street Leominster Herefordshire revealed deposits, features and finds relating to post-medieval (17th-19th century) occupation of the site.</p> <p>A large amount of brick and masonry rubble from the demolition of late post medieval buildings on the site was observed.</p> <p>Much of the site appeared to have been built up with imported or redeposited material from modern redevelopment of the site, possibly partially removing or truncating underlying deposits in places</p> <p>Underlying these deposits was an accumulation of late post-medieval occupation/garden soils across the entire site.</p> <p>A number of mid to late (17th-18th century) features and deposits were uncovered below this layer, including a stone-lined pit and a substantial deposit of cattle horn cores probably indicative of horn working or tanning activity.</p>		



Document Control

Job title:	Archaeological Evaluation at Abbey Funeral Services 2-4 New Street Leominster Herefordshire		Job No: BA0815GSNSL
Report written by	<i>Will Logan BA</i>		
Report edited by	<i>George Children MA AIFA</i>		
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