

# Archaeological Evaluation

Castle Gates  
Shrewsbury Castle  
Shrewsbury  
Shropshire

NGR: SJ 4940 1278

## BORDER ARCHAEOLOGY

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# 1. Non Technical Summary

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*Border Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation in the approach to Shrewsbury Castle (SJ 4940 1278) on behalf of Shropshire Horticultural Society. The castle was founded prior to the Domesday survey of 1086, where it is recorded that 51 properties were destroyed to make way for its earthworks. The castle initially belonged to Robert of Montgomery, although by 1102 it was in the hands of Henry I and remained a royal castle until the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Colvin 1963, 835).*

*The aim of the evaluation was to investigate the extent of any remains in the location of a proposed disabled access path running along the western side of the castle entrance. In view of the location of the proposed path within the Anglo-Saxon and medieval core of the town, a trench measuring 4.0 × 1.2m was excavated to investigate the depth, location and nature of any surviving archaeological deposits.*

*The trench revealed that the area appeared to have been subject to extensive post-medieval build-up, with more than 2.0m of such material observed within the trench. No medieval deposits were identified and what appeared to be natural gravels were encountered at between 2.0 and 2.2m. A cobbled post-medieval path was located running roughly N–S approximately 1.7m below the existing ground level and a single residual piece of medieval floor tile was recovered, probably dating to the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries.*

*The evaluation has thus confirmed that no medieval deposits appear to exist to be impacted during the installation of the path.*

## 2. Introduction

Border Archaeology was instructed by Shropshire County Council (SCC) to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land owned by the Shropshire Horticultural Society, comprising a landscape garden within the approach to Shrewsbury Castle, in pursuance of a Brief issued by Michael Watson Esq. Historic Environment Officer SCC (**Fig. 1**).

The SCC Brief was issued in respect of a proposal to install a footpath link between The Dana and Castlegates Shrewsbury, the works necessitating a reduction of the existing ground level across the width of the path for a distance of c.40m.

Copies of this report will be sent to Mr Watson, E. Butcher, Esq. of the Shropshire Horticultural Society and the Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER).

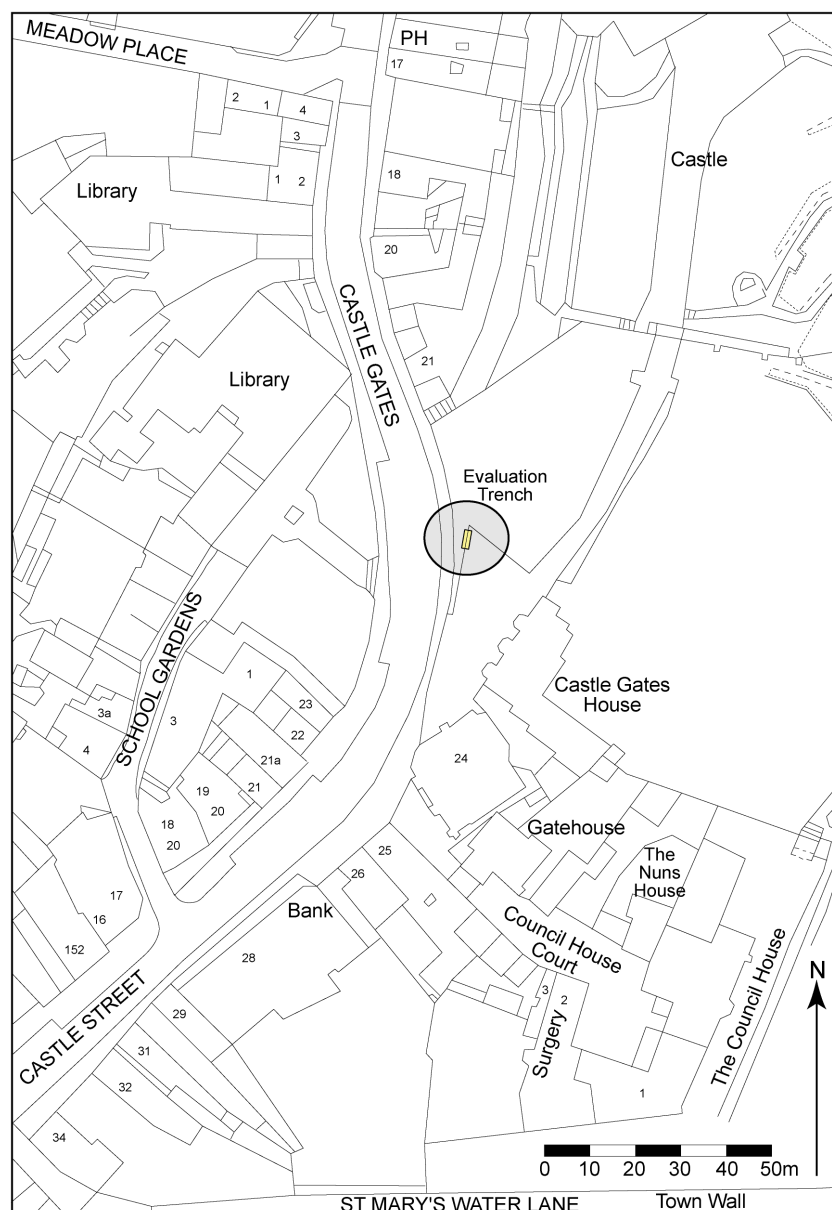


Fig. 1: Plan showing location of evaluation trench

## 2.1 Soils & Geology

Shrewsbury is recorded as an unclassified urban area by the Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW 1983); however, the surrounding soils consist of typical brown earths of the BROMSGROVE and WICK 1 series (541b, 541r). The former consist of well-drained reddish coarse loamy soils mainly over soft sandstone, but deep in places. There are also associated fine loamy soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging. The underlying geology consists of Permo-Triassic and Carboniferous sandstone and siltstone. The WICK 1 soil association consists of deep, well-drained coarse loamy and sandy soils, locally over gravel. There are also some similar soils affected by groundwater.

## 3. Methodology

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Fieldwork was carried out in accordance with archaeological practices set out in *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (Institute for Archaeologists 2001). Border Archaeology adheres to the IfA *Code of conduct* and *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology*.

A single evaluation trench orientated NE–SE was opened within the proposed development area. The trench measured 4.0 × 1.2m, its width being reduced from 2.0m to 1.2m to reflect the confined nature of the evaluation area. The trench was hand dug to a depth beyond which health & safety considerations precluded further manual excavation, at which point a machine was used to attain the final excavation depth of c.2.0m.

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 66.01m AOD.

Full written, graphic and photographic records were made. A stratigraphic record was compiled using a context numbering system and archaeological deposits, features and structures were recorded in plan & section at a scale of 1:20. Features were photographed using a high-resolution (10.3MPX) digital format.

No spoil was deposited on any of the lawn areas within the landscaped garden but on the surface adjoining the trench, using polythene sheeting to protect the underlying tarmac. The evaluation trench was backfilled mechanically on completion, with layers being compacted at a maximum thickness of 0.5m, as per the Brief's requirement.

## 4. Evaluation results

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The uppermost deposits consisted of hard standing for the existing car parking area. These consisted of a mixture of tarmac and grit (101) overlying an orange-coloured gravel sub-base (102), which overlaid a mixture of mid bluish-grey clay and gravel levelling material (103). Underlying (103) was a well compacted mid to dark orangey-brown mixture of clay and gravels (104) interpreted as a levelling or make-up layer for the hard standing, which overlaid a well compacted light to mid bluish-grey mixture of clay and gravels (105). Context (105) overlaid a thin lense of moderately compact clean

orange sand (106) that appeared to seal the underlying deposits. Directly underlying this sealing deposit was a well compacted mid grey gravel with occasional CBM and very occasional white glazed pottery (107), which overlaid a lense of loose dark brown gravel/silt containing occasional CBM, clay pipe and white glazed pottery (108).



Plate 1: Mid-ex view of trench looking SW

Underlying (108) was a 0.65m thick deposit of loose dark brown silty sand containing moderate post-medieval brick and roof/floor tile, clay pipe and very occasional sherds of white and yellow glazed wares (109). Interestingly, this deposit contained a single residual piece of decorated medieval floor tile (c.13<sup>th</sup> century) and several medium-sized (<0.30m in length) fragments of residual, possibly roughly worked sandstone masonry of a type similar to that used in the castle.

Underlying (109) was loose clean orange sand (118) and a loose mixture of white and brown mortar, ash, post-medieval tile and silty sand with occasional bone and post-medieval white glazed wares (110). This deposit overlaid a small angular cut [111] containing a fill of iron slag material (112). Context [111] cut into the uppermost fill (114) of a large post-medieval pit [113] that extended beyond the evaluation trench to the E, W and S. The edge of the pit sloped down gradually to what appeared to be natural gravels (124), at which point the edge became near vertical for the remaining 0.20m to its base.

Context (114) consisted of loose pinkish-brown clay with occasional post-medieval CBM fragments and overlaid loose to moderately compact dark brown silty clay containing occasional CBM, charcoal and mortar (115). Context (115) overlaid a moderately compact light orange gravel (116), which overlaid the primary fill of the pit, a loose to moderately compact reddish-brown sandy clay with moderate amounts of small pebbles and occasional pieces of brick, some of which, although standard gauge in terms of dimensions, showed evidence of lime mortaring (117). Context [113] cut into compact clean yellow gravel (119), which was also overlaid by (118). This gravel overlaid the

uppermost fill of a lead water service trench [123], which had been heavily truncated by [113]. Filling this trench were two deposits: moderately compact dark brown silty clay (121) overlying loose reddish-brown gravel containing the lead water service (122).



Plate 2: View SE showing final excavation section

The water service cut through a cobbled surface (120) that was orientated on a roughly N–S alignment and measured 1.30 × 0.52 × 0.12m and was set into a moderately compact dark brown silty sand with occasional sherds of post-medieval white glazed ware (125).



Plate 3: Part of post-medieval cobbled surface

The cobbles measured between 0.10 and 0.20m in length and were generally less than 0.10m wide. Some of the spaces between the cobbles at the southern end were filled with what appeared to be melted iron, although most of the cobbles were simply set into the ground. The dimensions of the feature suggest that it formed a pathway that, based

on its orientation, apparently led to the doorway of Castle Gates house, which was moved to its present location from Dogpole in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century by the Earl of Bradford. The path probably dates from this period, as indicated by the presence of white glazed wares.

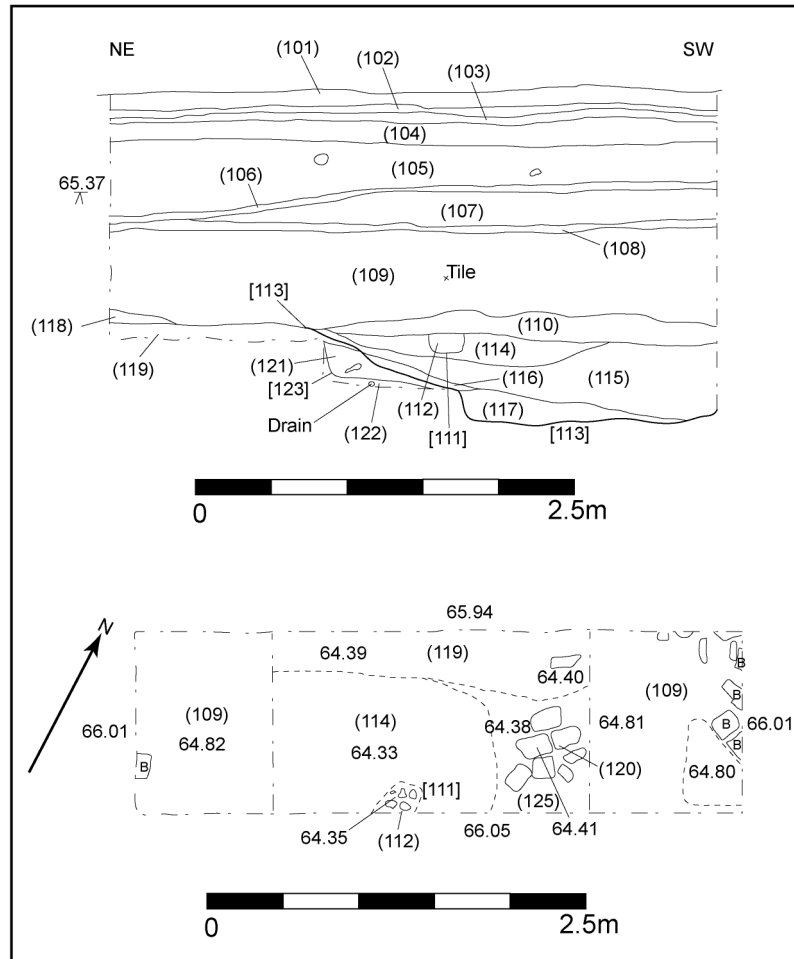


Fig 2: Plan and NW-facing section of evaluation trench

## 5. Summary & Conclusion

The evaluation trench revealed that the area to the S of the castle had been heavily altered during the post-medieval period. A build-up of around 2.0m of post-medieval make-up and landscaping material was encountered and no extant medieval deposits were revealed. A post-medieval cobbled path, probably associated with the reconstruction of Castle Gates House in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, was the only surviving deposit predating the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A lead water service trench was cut through this pathway. What appeared to be natural gravels were encountered between 2.0 and 2.20m below the existing ground level, although due to the depth of the trench these could not be investigated fully.

It appears from the archaeological evaluation that no surviving medieval remains are present at this point and may have been removed as a result of late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century activity. The installation of the lead water service and the excavation of the later



post-medieval pit [113] have removed much of the earlier archaeological horizons and it appears any medieval remains from this area may well have been redeposited in the landscaping make-up layers laid down during the post-medieval period. The 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century decorated ceramic tile and sandstone located during the evaluation may represent the remains of earlier deposits.

It is thus evident that no medieval deposits will be impacted during the proposed installation of the path.

## 6. Copyright

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Border Archaeology shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs & Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the client for the use of the report by the client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Specification.

## 7. Bibliography

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Colvin, H. M. (1963) *History of the Kings Works Vol. II* London

SSEW, 1983, *Soil Survey of England and Wales*, Silsoe



# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Context Register

CONTEXT NO	DESCRIPTION
(101)	Indurated tarmacadam with flint and gravel inclusions. Dimensions: >4.0 x >1.2 x 0.08m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Hard standing/car parking surface</i>
(102)	Compact orange and dark grey gravel. Dimensions: >4.0 x >1.2 x 0.14m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Compacted gravel base for (101).</i>
(103)	Well compacted mid bluish-grey clay and gravel with very frequent small stones. Dimensions: >4.0 x 1.2 x 0.08m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Levelling deposit for contexts (101) and (102).</i>
(104)	Well compacted mid to dark brown clay and gravels with frequent small stones. Dimensions: >4.0 x >1.25 x 0.16 – 0.18m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Levelling/make-up deposit.</i>
(105)	Well compacted light to mid bluish-grey clay gravels with frequent small stones. Dimensions: >4.0 x >1.25 x 0.08m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Levelling deposit.</i>
(106)	Moderately compact orange sand. Dimensions: >4.0 x >1.2 x 0.05m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Sand sealing deposit.</i>
(107)	Well compacted mid grey gravel with occasional post-medieval CBM, very occasional white glazed pottery sherds. Dimensions: >3.40 x >1.20 x 0.20m (at thickest).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Post-medieval make-up layer.</i>
(108)	Loose dark brown gravel and silt with occasional post-medieval CBM, clay pipe and white glazed wares. Dimensions: >4.0 x >1.2 x 0.06m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Post-medieval deposition layer.</i>
(109)	Loose dark brown silty sand, moderate post-medieval brick and CBM, post-medieval ceramic roof/floor tile and clay pipe. Occasional large inclusions of orange sand. Occasional small to medium sandstone fragments and one medieval floor tile (c.13 <sup>th</sup> century). Dimensions: >4.0 x 1.2 x 0.65m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Post-medieval landscaping or make-up layer.</i>
(110)	Loose mixture of white and brown mortar, ash, tile and silty sand with occasional bone and post-medieval white glazed wares. Dimensions: >2.60 x >1.20 x <0.20m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Post-medieval landscaping or make-up layer.</i>
[111]	Cut, angular in plan, rounded corners. Dimensions: >0.20 x 0.20 x 0.12m. Break of slope top sharp, sides steeply sloping, break of slope base gradual, base undulating. Orientation: N–S. Filled by (112).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Cut of small slag-filled pit of unknown provenance.</i>
(112)	Moderately compact mixture of orange iron slag and gravel. Dimensions: >0.20 x 0.20 x 0.12m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Fill of [111].</i>
[113]	Cut, apparently linear in plan, corners not within trench. Dimensions: > 2.60 x >1.20 x 0.75m. Break of slope top gradual, sides gradually sloping & steeply sloping towards base, break of

CONTEXT NO	DESCRIPTION
	slope base sharp, base undulating. Orientation not clear from area exposed during evaluation. Filled by (114), (115), (116) and (117).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Cut of post-medieval pit.</i>
(114)	Loose pinkish-brown clay with occasional post-medieval CBM. Dimensions: 1.90 × 1.2 × 0.20m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Uppermost fill of [113].</i>
(115)	Loose to moderately compacted dark brown silty clay with occasional post-medieval CBM, charcoal and mortar. Dimensions: 2.60 × 1.20 × <0.50m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Fill of [113].</i>
(116)	Moderately compact light orange gravel. Dimensions: 0.70 × 0.70 × 0.08m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Fill of [113].</i>
(117)	Loose to moderately compact reddish-brown sandy clay with small pebbles and post-medieval brick. Dimensions: 1.40 × >1.20 × 0.20m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Earliest fill of [113].</i>
(118)	Loose orange sand. Dimensions: >0.40 × 0.40 × 0.06m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Post-medieval deposit</i>
(119)	Well compacted yellow gravel. Dimensions: 1.60 × 1.20 × 0.10m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Compacted post-medieval gravel deposit.</i>
(120)	Masonry cobbles. Size of materials: <0.20 × <0.10 × <0.08m. Finish: no discernible finish. Coursing/ bond: one course/ no obvious bonding material. Form: Cobbled surface. Orientation: approximately N–S. Bonding: Iron panning in some gaps between cobbles. Dimensions: 1.30 × 0.45 - 0.50 × 0.08m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Cobbled pathway.</i>
(121)	Moderately compacted dark brown silty clay. Dimensions: 0.70 × 0.30 × 0.20m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Secondary fill of [123].</i>
(122)	Loose reddish-brown gravel. Dimensions: 1.0 × 0.60 × 0.06m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Gravel fill of [123].</i>
[123]	Cut, linear in plan, corners beyond limit of trenching. Dimensions: 1.30 × 0.60 × 0.20m. Break of slope top moderate, sides moderate, break of slope base sharp, base flat. Orientation: E–W. Truncated by [113]. Filled by (121) and (122).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Cut for lead water service.</i>
(124)	Moderately compacted yellow/light brown gravel. Dimensions: >3.0 × >1.20 × >0.20m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Appears to be natural gravels.</i>
(125)	Loose dark brown silty sand with occasional sherds of white glazed wares. Dimensions: 1.60 × 1.20 × 0.10m.
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Post-medieval garden soil.</i>

## Appendix 2: Harris Matrix

