



Archaeological Observation

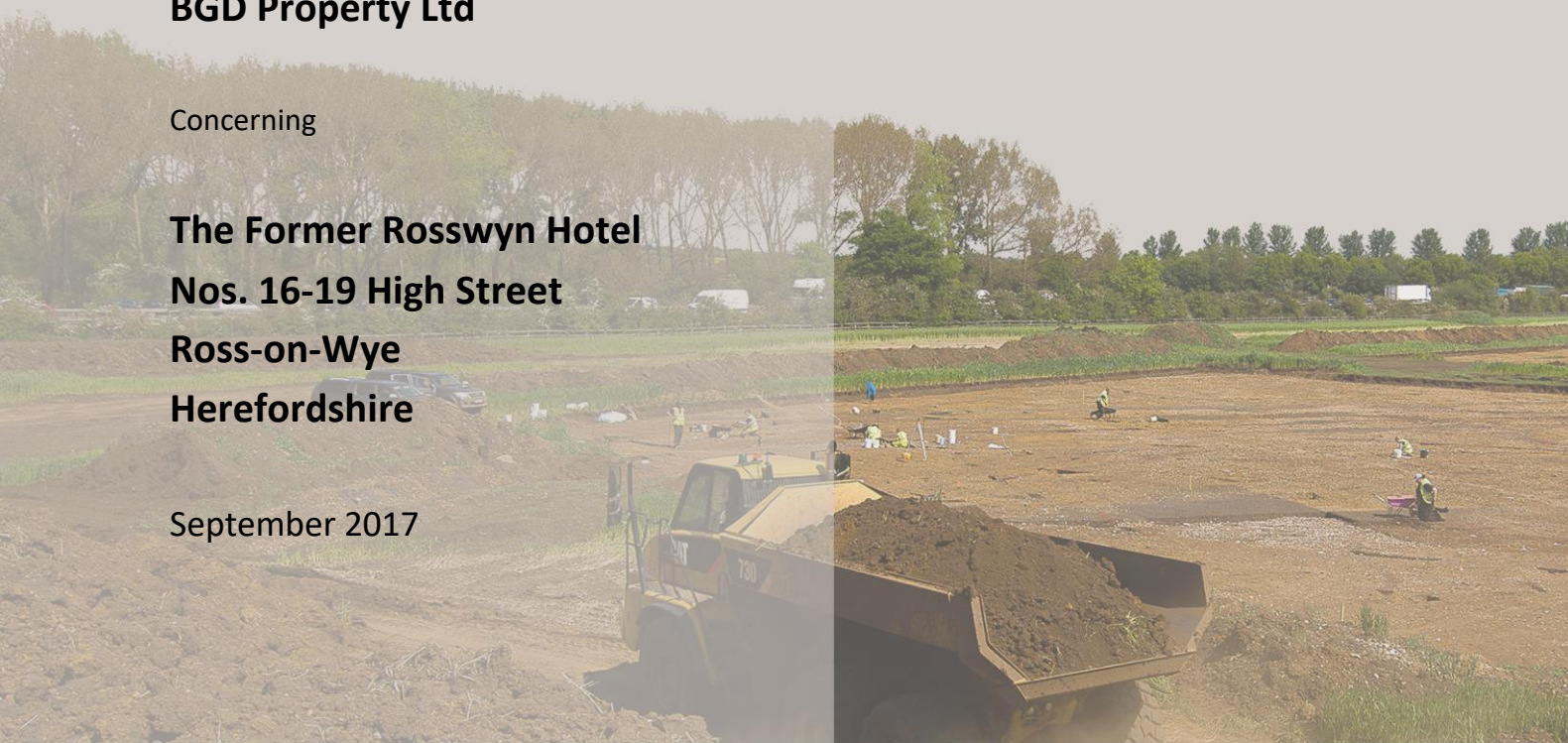
For

BGD Property Ltd

Concerning

**The Former Rosswyn Hotel
Nos. 16-19 High Street
Ross-on-Wye
Herefordshire**

September 2017



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1 Non-Technical Summary

Border Archaeology Ltd (BA) was instructed Guy Drummond Esq of BGD Property Developments to carry out a programme of Archaeological Observation (AO) during groundworks in connection with the conversion of the former Rosswyn Hotel Ross-on-Wye to two retail and 11 residential units together with the erection of seven two-bed dwellings (fig. 1).

This report follows a Standing Building Recording Survey previously undertaken by Border Archaeology (BA 2016) and concerns observations carried out during foundation and drainage excavations.

No deposits or features of early date were present on the site, although a single sherd of late medieval or early post-medieval pottery was recovered. Further pottery from stratified contexts was of late 18th -or early 19th -century date and would thus seem to derive from activity around the existing buildings on the site.

Structural remains encountered in George Place at the rear of the buildings seem likely to relate to a number of buildings and outhouses shown on 19th -and 20th -century Ordnance Survey maps, together with a possible boundary wall. Although the foundations for these walls were of stone, the surviving superstructures were of machine-made brick. It is thought likely that any earlier deposits or features that may have existed on the site were destroyed during the construction of the existing building and subsequent phases of alteration. This supposition is supported by the fact that later post-medieval and modern deposits were seen to lie immediately above the natural clay and bedrock. Two pits had been excavated in George Place to receive demolition rubble, presumably from this process.

2 Introduction

Border Archaeology Ltd (BA) was instructed by Guy Drummond Esq of BDG Property Ltd Homme Farm Hom Green Ross-on-Wye Herefordshire to carry out a programme of Archaeological Observation (AO) in connection with groundworks during the conversion of the former Rosswyn Hotel Nos. 16-19 High Street Ross-on-Wye HR9 5BZ (NGR: SO59987 24049) to two retail units and 11 residential units together with the erection of seven dwellings (*fig. 1*) (Planning Refs. P150234/F; P150242/F).

The site is located on the E side of the High Street and lies within the Ross-on-Wye Conservation Area. It comprises two components, namely, the former Rosswyn Hotel, comprising Nos. 17 and 17a High Street, both of which are Grade II Listed buildings, and an unlisted two-storey building of 19th-century date to the S, which was formerly divided into two shops at ground-floor level (Nos. 18 & 19 High Street). Structural elements of the site were addressed in the Standing Building Recording Survey previously undertaken by BA (2016). AO concerned groundworks for foundations and installation of drainage in the vicinity of the former hotel and in George Place to the rear.

The AO took place intermittently between November 2016 and March 2017 reflecting the programme of on-site works.

2.1 Site Description

The site lies at a height of some 45m AOD within the historic core of Ross-on-Wye, a settlement of Anglo-Saxon origin.

2.1.1 Soils and Geology

The town lies within an extensive area of typical brown earths of the Eardiston 1 series (541c) which consist of well-drained reddish coarse loamy soils over sandstone overlying Devonian and Permo-Triassic reddish sandstone, silty shale and siltstone (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

3 Historical and Archaeological Background

The site lies within the southern extent of an elongated block of medieval burgage tenement plots extending roughly from N/S along the E side of the Brookend Street, Broad Street and High Street. Its southernmost extent is defined by the course of Old Gloucester Road, formerly the main route into the town from the E. This tenement block (HER 19937) is considered to form the eastern component of the original planned borough, as laid out by the bishops of Hereford in the 12th century. Its eastern boundary followed the rear boundary of the site at Nos. 16-19 High Street and also marked the historic division between the borough of Ross and the neighbouring manor of 'Ross Foreign' (BA 2016).

The building itself appears to date from the late 16th or early 17th century and was built as a three-storey timber-framed townhouse around a central chimneystack. It was largely rebuilt in brick in the early 18th century, with elements of the original building, such as parts of the staircase, reused. Conversion to a hotel in the middle part of the 20th century led to further structural work, not only in the building itself but also to its rear, as did the construction and subsequent demolition of a number of minor buildings and outhouses.

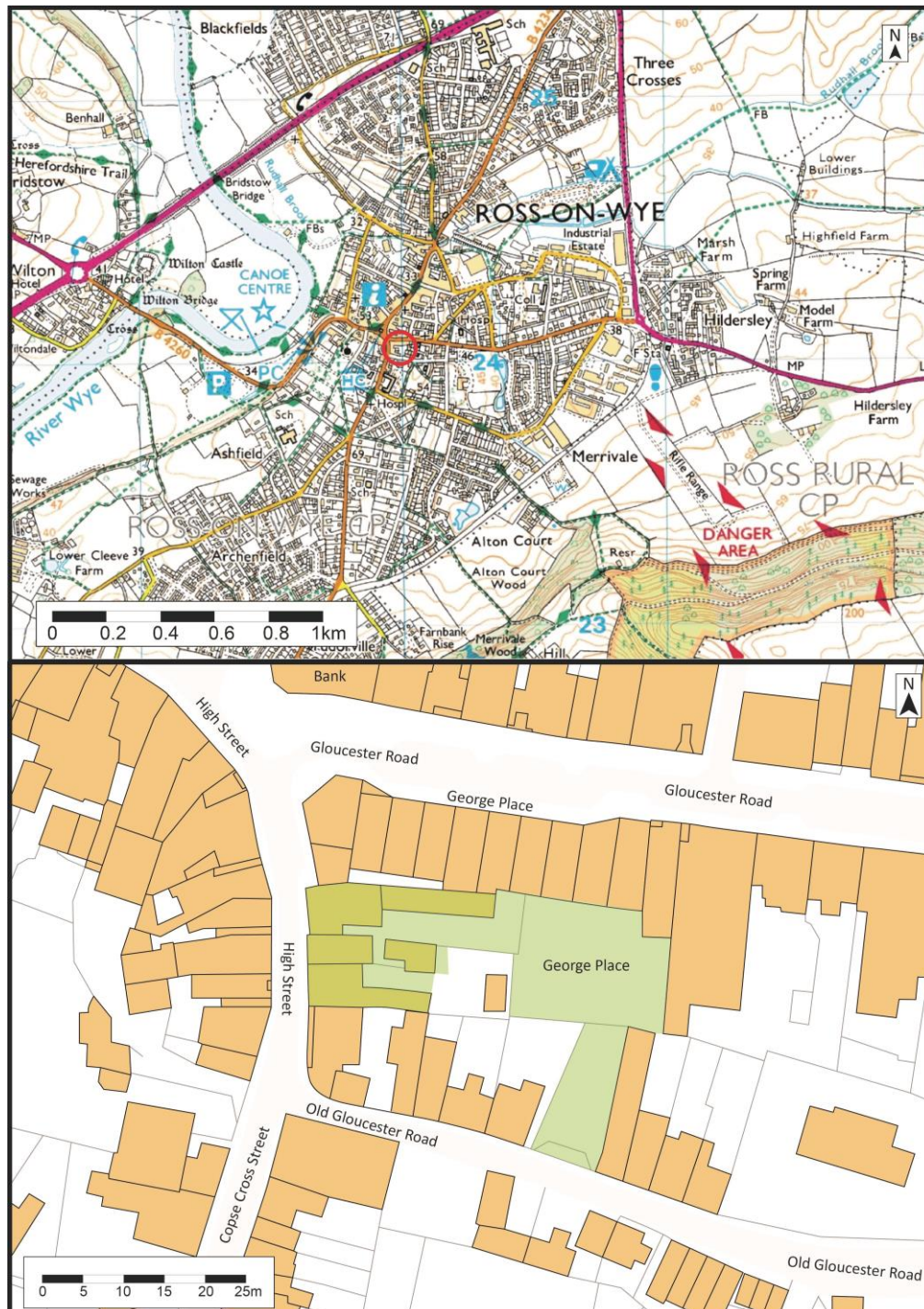


Fig. 1: Site location

4 Methodology

Observation within the area specified was carried out in accordance with *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (Lee 2015) and *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014). BA adheres to the *ClfA Code of conduct* (2014) and to *Standards for Archaeological Projects in Herefordshire (Issue 1)* (Herefordshire Council, 2004). BA is additionally cognisant of *Archaeology & Development Supplementary Planning* (Herefordshire Council 2010).

Ground-reduction and drainage works were carried out under archaeological supervision. A number of additional excavations for both foundations and drainage were examined following excavation.

Potential archaeological deposits were cleaned by hand. These were recorded both in plan and section.

Full written, graphic and photographic records were made in accordance with BA's *Field Recording Manual* (2017). The written record was compiled using standard numbered context record sheets and drawings were produced on gridded, archive-stable polyester film at a scale 1:20, where appropriate. Measured sections were prepared as appropriate. All drawings were numbered and listed in a drawing register, these drawing numbers being cross-referenced to written site records.

A high-resolution digital photographic record was made comprising photographs of archaeological features and appropriate groups of features and structures. An appropriate scale was included and all photographic records were indexed and cross-referenced to written site records. Details of subject and direction of view were recorded in a photographic register, indexed by frame number. The progress of the works was recorded and assessed using the Company's ISO 9001 procedures.

No deposits suitable for palaeoenvironmental or palaeoeconomic sampling were encountered during the course of the work, with the only stratified deposits encountered being of later post-medieval date.

Associated artefacts recovered were retained, cleaned, labelled and stored according to *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014) and *First Aid for Finds* (Watkinson & Neal 2001). Artefacts were bagged and labelled with the site code and context number before being removed off-site.

5 Results

5.1 Area 1 - Rosswyn Hotel

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	101		Deposit.	Overburden.	Fairly loose mixed brown/black silty clay; very frequent ash, sandstone fragments, CBM rubble & mortar; 0.4m thick. Overlying (102), (103).	-	✓	-	-	-	Pottery unstratified.
2	102		Structure.	Layer of burnt stone, possible surface, overlying burnt clay & bedrock.	Form in plan unknown; alignment unknown; size of materials: 0.4m × 0.3m × 0.05m, 0.1m × 0.1m × 0.03m, 0.5m × >0.3m × 0.5m × 0.05m; extent of feature >1m (E/W) × >0.6m (N/S) × 0.05m. Underlying (101). Overlying (105).	-	-	-	-	-	Not present over full area. Stones appeared worn. Associated with (103).
3	103		Deposit.	Possible redeposited natural.	Compact strongly pink clay; frequent charcoal flecking, clay pipe & post-medieval pottery; 0.2m × 0.1m. Underlying (101). Overlying (105).	-	✓	-	-	-	Associated with (102).
4	104		Deposit.	Burnt bedrock apparently forming part of a surface or a hearth with (105), (106).	Indurated bedrock. Same as (105), (106).	-	-	-	-	-	Associated with (102), (103).
5	105		Deposit.	Burnt clay natural.	Well compacted mid red clay. Underlying (102), (103).	-	-	-	-	-	More micaceous than (103). Same as (104) and

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
											(106) but varying natural deposits and degrees of burning.
6	106		Deposit.	Unburnt natural clay.	Same as (104), (105), but unburnt. Underlying (101).	-	-	-	-	-	Stratigraphically underlying (102), (103).

5.2 Area 2 - George Place: Service Trench

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	201		Surfaces.	Tarmac and aggregate.	Tarmac & red aggregate; 0.3m thick. Overlying (210).	-	-	-	-	-	Sealed wall (211).
2	202		Deposit.	Levelling/dump.	Fairly loose black silty clay; fragments of mortar, CBM, coal and charcoal; 0.3m thick. Cut by [209]. Overlying (207).	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	203		Deposit.	Charcoal lens.	Fairly loose charcoal lens; 20-30mm thick. Overlying (204). Cut by [206].	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	204		Deposit.	Probable disturbed ground associated with demolition/levelling.	Moderately compacted dirty mid reddish-brown clay; moderate charcoal, frequent mortar; 0.2m thick. Underlying (203). Overlying (205).	-	-	-	-	-	Cut by modern services.

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
5	205		Deposit.	Disturbed natural.	Moderately compacted mid red silty clay (paler towards base); >0.4m thick. Underlying (204).	-	-	-	-	-	Seen in base of service trench.
6	206		Cut.	Pit for building rubble.	Sub-circular in plan; break of slope top sharp, sides near-vertical, base not visible; 1.2m x 1.2m x >0.6m. Cut (203). Filled by (207).	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	207		Deposit.	Fill of [206].	Loose mixed very dark brown/black silt clay; frequent charcoal, pebbles & CBM. Filled [206]. Underlying (202).	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	208		Structure.	Wall.	Linear in plan; stone & brick; aligned N/S; roughly squared to unshaped Old Red Sandstone, pink mortar with lime & black flecking & brick 170mm x 100mm (thickness unknown); 6m x 0.5m x 0.6m.	-	-	-	-	-	One course only survived
9	209		Cut.	Pit for building rubble.	Form in plan unknown; alignment unknown; break of slope top sharp, sides near-vertical, base not seen; 1.8m x >1m x >1.3m. Cut (202). Filled by (210)	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	210		Deposit.	Fill of [209].	Loose brick (with large lumps of brickwork), stone rubble & plaster. Fill of [209]. Underlying (201).	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	211		Structure.	Wall.	Linear in plan; aligned E/W; 0.8m (width) x >1m (height); Old Red Sandstone, brick above; size of materials: (stones) av. 300mm x 350mm x 100mm. Underlying (201).	-	-	-	-	-	-

6 Discussion

Despite the site's location within the medieval settlement core, the only evidence for occupation of this date was a single sherd of late medieval pottery. No features predating the 18th, or more likely the 19th, centuries were identified. It should be noted that, in some cases, foundations and drainage had been excavated prior to BA's involvement on site.

The majority of the groundworks showed clear evidence of disturbance down to natural clay/bedrock with, at the W end of the site, closest to High Street, only c. 0.5m of deposits surviving above the natural. This disturbance presumably reflects ground reduction and clearance activity associated with the construction phases identified in the Standing Building Recording Survey (BA 2016). The deposits that did survive at this point were very mixed, with the late medieval pottery found in the overburden (101). Whilst it is clear that the bedrock in this part of Ross is very shallow, indeed being utilised to form part of the cellar wall beneath No. 17, this would be unlikely to have prevented occupation in such a prominent location, close to the market.

Disturbance must have commenced as early as the later 16th or 17th centuries, with site clearance in advance of the first phase of construction for No 17 High Street. Further alterations to the building took place early in the 18th century, when the majority of the house was rebuilt in brick (BA 2016). Additionally, cutting of the cellarge beneath the frontage would have been a major undertaking, presumably also causing what may have been the complete removal of any medieval structures or features in that area.

It is significant that the AO area was situated to the rear of existing buildings at some distance from the street frontage and any surviving structural remains of medieval date would therefore lie beneath the former hotel itself. The Standing Building Recording Survey suggests that the 17th century building, occupying the frontage of two medieval burgage plots, may have replaced medieval structures occupying a similar footprint (BA 2016).

Features to the rear of medieval buildings would normally have included rubbish pits or cesspits. Cesspits were frequently sited close to the boundaries of plots and, indeed, privies were sometimes shared between households (Schofield & Vince 1994, 68). The cesspits were usually separated from the building by a small yard or lay towards the rear of properties. No evidence was seen for such features. Whilst it is possible that, in places, the presence of bedrock was considered a deterrent to their excavation in the first place, the limited area exposed during the AO may have meant that discrete features were not encountered. More likely, however, is the probability that wholesale ground reduction and major disturbance has taken place on all parts of the site to a greater depth than that of the drainage and foundations.

Maps from 1888 onwards show a number of seemingly ephemeral phases of outbuildings and minor structures (BA 2016). Groundworks associated with their construction and subsequent demolition would also have caused considerable disturbance. Additionally, installation and alteration of drainage, probably during conversion of Nos. 17 and 17a to a hotel, had clearly caused considerable disturbance close to the building (*Plate 2*).

The sherd of late medieval pottery suggested that medieval or early post-medieval features and deposits had indeed been present but that these had been truncated/destroyed by later activity in the area. Given the position of the site on High Street in a known burgage plot, the paucity of earlier material would appear to reflect the intensity of post-medieval disturbance rather than an absence of medieval activity. Indeed, the relatively low incidence of pottery generally could well suggest a process of wholesale clearance of potentially fairly recent date.

Possible surface (102) (*Plate 1*) may have been a path or a yard. It comprised flat stones lying directly above a deposit of disturbed natural clay (103) and bedrock (104), with both stones and underlying natural deposits displaying evidence of burning. This did not appear to be of sufficient intensity to indicate a hearth and the late date more plausibly suggests the site of a bonfire or similar, possibly associated with site clearance activity. Evidence recovered from (103) included a small sherd of shell-edged pearlware, suggesting a later 18th -or early 19th -century date. This late date, and the position of the stones immediately above the natural clay, would appear to confirm that the surface was laid following the clearance of earlier deposits. A number of phases of alteration to the house have taken place, including in the middle to late 19th century (BA 2016, 1) when the detached L-shaped building at the rear was constructed. Surface (102) lay adjacent to this building and may have been a yard or path associated with it.



Plate 1: View W of possible surface (102) above natural deposits (103) (104).

Two pits, [206] and [209], almost certainly of 20th -century date, had been dug through already disturbed deposits in George Place to receive demolition rubble, presumably deriving from these structures. The fact that these pits lay almost directly beneath the tarmac surface, with only a shallow levelling deposit (202) sealing them, further indicates a recent date.

The service trench across George Place revealed disturbance to its full depth. Two brick walls on sandstone footings were present at the W end of the trench. It seems likely that these were the remains of structures shown on the 19th and 20th century Ordnance Survey maps, which appear to have been cleared in the mid-20th century.



Plate 2: View S of disturbance to full depth of trench, showing post-medieval footing (208) in base

It would thus appear that the prominent position of the site within the medieval and post-medieval urban settlement core attracted intensive settlement activity from an early period and the poor survival of archaeological deposits is almost certainly attributable to these successive phases of construction and demolition.

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8 Appendix 1: Pottery Assessment

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A single fairly large (105.2g) sherd of later medieval pottery was recovered from spoil during ground-reduction works in Area 1.

The sherd was from a large wheel-thrown jug or pitcher, or possibly a cistern, and was unglazed, although with a thin self slip. The quartz fabric was fired to a pale orange-yellow, although the core of the plain wide strap handle was reduced. The slightly micaceous matrix contained inclusions of sub-angular sand, scarce white clay pellets and voids where inclusions had fired away. It may be from the Bristol/Somerset area, although a more local source is possible. On typological grounds, it is thought likely to date to the 15th or 16th centuries.

Red clay (103), also in Area 1, produced five sherds, three of which were very small sherds of creamware (total weight 3.8g). Creamware was first developed around 1740 and was popular until about 1840. A sherd of shell-edged pearlware (0.5g) and a single sherd of Bristol or Staffordshire-type black glazed coarseware (19g) were recovered from the same context, together with a clay tobacco pipe stem. The date suggested for pottery from this context is at the later part of the 18th or the earlier part of the 19th century.

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