

Marches Archaeology

17-21 Greenhill

**Lichfield
Staffordshire**

**Report on a
desk based assessment**

May 1999

Marches Archaeology Series 067

Archaeological Consultants and Contractors

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Marches Archaeology is a partnership between Nic Appleton-Fox and Richard Stone, who have worked in close association since 1991. They belong to the Institute of Field Archaeologists and abide by its code of practice. The business provides a full range of archaeological services to a client base of architects, local authorities, national bodies and private individuals. Our standard services include; excavation, watching briefs, building survey, building analysis, planning advice, landscape survey, photographic recording and historical research. Specialist consultants are available to provide environmental, geophysical and finds advice and analysis.

VAT Reg. No. 656 0767 15

**Report on a Desk-based Assessment at
Land to the rear of 17-21 Greenhill
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Report by
Richard Stone

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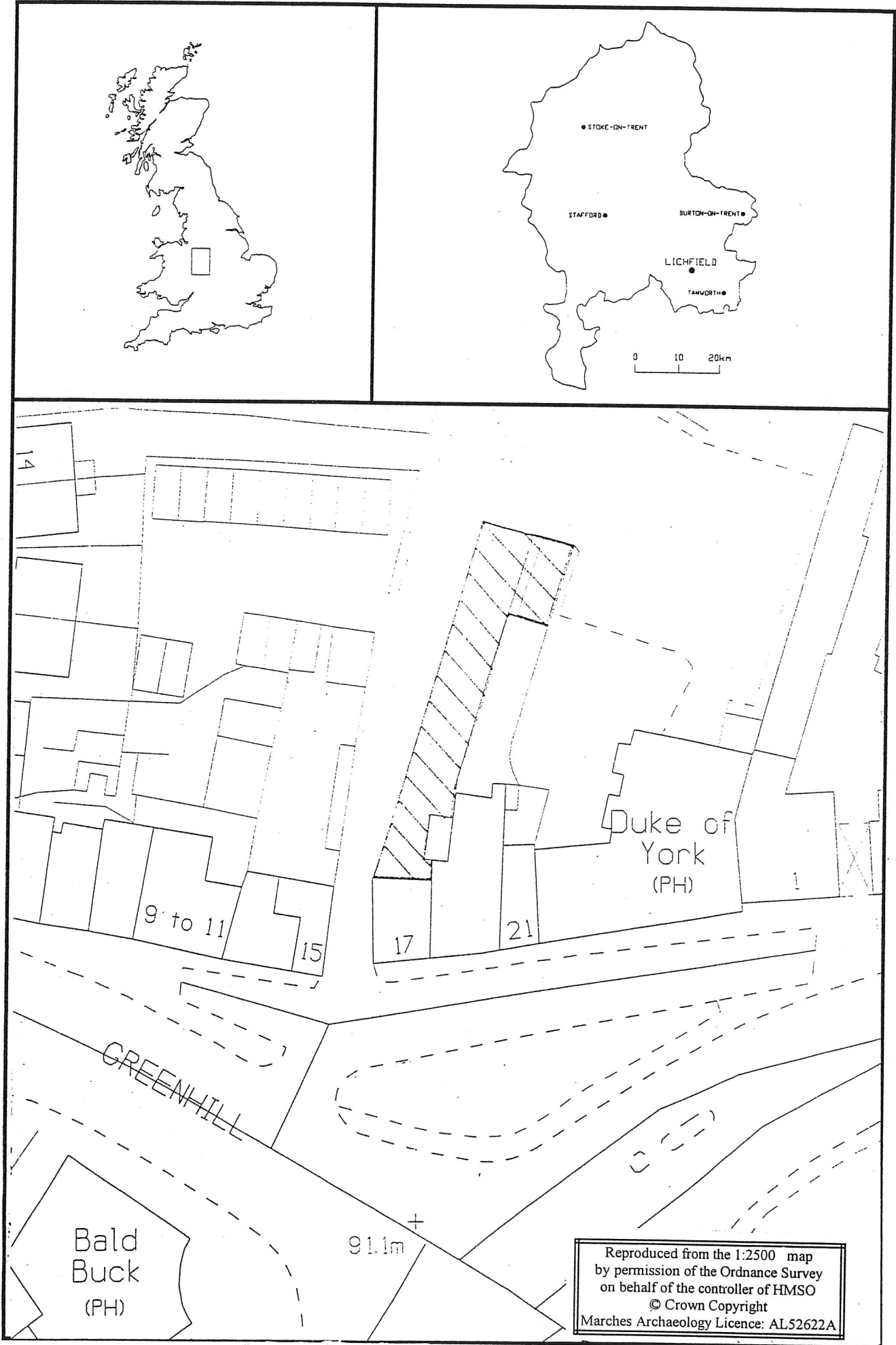


Fig. 1 Location of the site

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Summary

An archaeological desk based assessment of 17-21 Greenhill has established the possibility of the survival of medieval remains associated with the development of the eastern suburb of Lichfield and possible earlier road systems. Post-medieval development on the site may have some archaeological interest. The extent to which this later development may have removed earlier remains is unknown.

1 Introduction

It is intended to apply for planning permission to develop land at the rear of 17-21 Greenhill, Lichfield (Fig. 1). The site is situated at NGR: SK 121 096. The County Archaeology Office has advised that an archaeological desk-based assessment be carried out and has produced a 'Brief with specification: Desk-Based Archaeological Assessment'.

Building Design Group commissioned Marches Archaeology to provide the archaeological services detailed in the Brief based on a project proposal prepared by Marches Archaeology and approved by the Local Planning Authority's Archaeological Advisor.

2 Aims of the project

The purpose of Desk-based Assessment is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists as "to gain information about the known or potential archaeological resource within a given area or site in order to make an assessment of its worth in the appropriate context leading to the formation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource or for further investigation where the character of the resource is not sufficiently defined, or the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research".

The brief stated that the aim is 'to define the character and extent of the archaeological remains that may exist in the area of proposed development and to facilitate discussions regarding the need for further assessment and evaluation within the development area'.

3 Description of the site

The site lies on the northern side of Greenhill, within the parish of St Michael to the east of the historic core of Lichfield and roughly equidistant from the two medieval parish churches of St Mary and St Michael. The land is at a height of approximately 91m O.D. on a hillside rising to the south, at the top of which is the medieval church of St Michael (approx. 104m O.D.). The underlying solid geology is of Keuper Sandstone (VCH, 1990, 1). This is overlain by sands and gravels. It is on the northern side of a wide open area at the junction of the roads which historically led to Burton (Greenhill) and to Whittington (Rotten Row).

17-21 Greenhill consists of buildings on the eastern side, fronting onto the street. To the rear of the main buildings are various later additions. To the west of these are open areas which run northwards at an oblique angle. Behind number 17 is a tarmac area used for car parking. Behind number 19 is a garden area, with a shed at the rear of the property. The area at the north of number 21 is now reduced to a small yard, the remainder being included within the grounds of The Duke of York public house.

A report has been produced on the buildings on the site (Joyce, 1998). Number 17 is a late seventeenth or early eighteenth century brick building. Number 19 is of late seventeenth century with a late eighteenth or early nineteenth century rear wing. Both of these are listed and are of some historical interest. Number 21 is both older and more interesting. It has late medieval origins, when it was a two bay two storey building with the upper floor open to the roof. This is interpreted as a cross wing of mid fifteenth century date. The hall with which this was associated is now lost but it is thought that it may have been aisled and occupied the site of number 19 and possibly number 17.

The area specifically under consideration for the proposed development is confined to the area to the rear of number 17 and to the shed at the northern extremity of number 19. If the postulated medieval hall was as wide as an aisled construction would suggest and if it extended backwards, as would be normal, remains of its construction may survive within the study area.

4 Archaeological and historical background

4.1 Prehistoric and Roman

Although archaeological investigation has shown that areas of south-east Staffordshire were occupied from the prehistoric period there is little evidence of Lichfield itself having been intensively used (Hodder, 1982). Settlement during this period was generally based close to the rivers Tame and Trent and the various streams which fed them. Archaeological research into the extent of the land use, however, is biased by survival of earthworks and cropmarks, by the extent of surveys (especially on Cannock Chase) and by the location of excavation work. Further work may well refine the understanding of the general pattern(s) of land use.

Although there is a paucity of evidence for use of the Lichfield area in the prehistoric period this may well be a combination of lack of archaeological investigation, previous destruction within the town by medieval and later development and the generally fragmentary nature of prehistoric remains. It is of great interest that five Mesolithic flints were found at St Michael's church (SK 124 095) in 1978 (Wilson, 1982, 70). It is perhaps less likely that the area of 17-21 Greenhill would have been a favoured settlement site as it faces northwards and is not adjacent to any known watercourses.

Further west, within the centre of Lichfield, evidence for settlement during the Neolithic period has been found south of the cathedral (Carver, 1982b, 37). The only other evidence is the existence of two Middle Bronze Age bronze palstaves, found in unspecified locations somewhere in Lichfield (Hodder, 1982, 21).

The Roman period is also elusive. Two single burials of this period were identified in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Harwood, 1802; Carver, 1982a,6). However, the only

possible object suggesting settlement was a flue tile, but this was found from a deposit of Saxon date and could well have been brought as building material from another place such as Wall (*Letocetum*) 3km to the south-west (Carver, 1982b, 37).

4.2 Medieval

Bishop Chad settled the centre of his bishopric at *Lyccidfelth* (Lichfield) *circa* 670 (Bede, 1968, 208). From at least this time there was a settlement at Lichfield, based on the cathedral. To the east of this lay the church of St Michael on its promontory. It is not known when this church was founded, nor is its early status known. The earliest reference was in 1190 (VCH, 1990, 135). However, it has been suggested that the large cemetery (7 acres, later extended) betrays a late Roman or early Christian origin (Gould and Gould, 1975). Excavations adjacent to the church failed to identify such an early origin, without excluding it, but suggested that one crouched burial may well have been of the Saxon period (Wilson, 1982, 70-73). Whatever its origins, St Michael was the main burial ground for the whole of the town of Lichfield and for several outlying areas (VCH, 1990, 135). Throughout the medieval period the church remained dependent on the cathedral as part of its *parochia* (*op. cit.* 137-9). nevertheless, the evidence of wills indicate that it was considered to have parish status by the fifteenth century (Bassett, 1982, 114).

Taylor suggested that St Michael's formed part of a settlement prior to the formation in the twelfth century of the new town of Lichfield which was laid out south of what is now Minster Pool (Taylor, 1969, 49). The new town filled in much of the area between the settlements around the cathedral and St Michael's and it is most likely that the town ditch and town gates were part of this new work (Bassett, 1982, 112; Slater, 1985, 18).

The focus of the Greenhill/St. Michael's settlement was, Taylor contended, the green at the junction of Greenhill and Rotten Row (Taylor, 1969, 49). Bassett, however, has argued that the early road layout was different, and that the junction of these two roads was a consequence of the construction of Tamworth Gate (and an earlier gate nearby which it replaced), just to the west of the green (Bassett, 1982, 110). He interpreted this new trapezoidal area in Greenhill as a market place with new 35 foot wide burgage plots laid out to the north and south, running back 200 feet. These would include 17-21 Greenhill, which he suggested originally had their street frontage further north, with a later move westwards, accompanied by a change of orientation when the road moved southwards (Bassett, 1982, 110 and Fig. 3). This interpretation was disputed by Slater, who considered that the change of orientation resulted not from changes to the road but to a pre-existing field system which was itself irregular (Slater, 1985, 18). He considered that the area directly outside Tamworth Gate was originally clear for 250 feet, which comes to just beyond 21 Greenhill. The evidence produced by Slater and Bassett could support either of their interpretations. Archaeological fieldwork may resolve the question.

Although by the end of the twelfth century St Michael clearly lay outside the formal town, separated by a ditch, the community around St Michael's did not wither. This may well have been due in large part to the burial rights enjoyed by the church. The earliest reference to property in this area is a tenement outside Tamworth Gate *circa* 1208 (*op. cit.*, 111). Bassett further argued that the growth of the area was due to the creation of a new market place in this area either to offset congestion or as a holding area. Not only were these burgages larger than those within the town defences, but they carried the same rent (12d *per annum*).

Until recently, excavated archaeological evidence showed a distinct absence of thirteenth and fourteenth century material in Lichfield and it has been argued that this represents 'depression, if not desertion' at this time (Carver, 1982a, 4). However, recent work in Sandford Street and Bird Street has provided evidence to suggest that this was not the case (Stone 1999a, b and forthcoming). The national decline in population caused by poor harvests in the 1320s and severe outbreaks of plague for some fifteen years from 1348 undoubtedly would have affected Lichfield, but may in fact have helped to bolster the importance of the area around St Michael. At the time of the plagues markets were often moved outside towns for reasons of sanitation. It is quite possible that the Greenhill area became more important at this time. By 1498 a pinfold (a pound for stray cattle) existed in Greenhill, presumably at the junction of Greenhill and Rotten Row where one is shown on Snape's map of 1781 (VCH, 1990, 75).

Some aspects of the land use of Greenhill can be traced by evidences and leases from the Vicars Choral who owned land in the area (Cox, 1886, 180). The earliest reference to a messuage (dwelling) is in the time of Edward I or Edward II (1272-1327). Another fourteenth century reference is to a bellfounder, while a burgage is mentioned in the time of Edward III (1327-1377). This suggests that the land was deliberately laid out in plots, as Bassett suggested, rather than having grown haphazardly. Unfortunately, it is not clear how much land was owned by the Vicars, or where precisely it was.

The antiquary Stebbing Shaw quoted 'an ancient manuscript' which mentioned four cottages in Greenhill (Stebbing Shaw, 1798, 313). Unfortunately neither the date of the manuscript nor the location of the cottages has been established, although they probably relate to the late medieval or early post-medieval period.

In the time of Henry VIII (*circa* 1535) the Vicars Choral owned 'twelve tenements, gardens orchards and land and the 'pynefoolde' named Castledyke: a garden' in Greenhill (Cox, 1886, 166). Because of the reference to the pinfold these tenements were probably in the vicinity of 17-21 Greenhill, and may have included them.

The site itself retains physical evidence of the layout of the area in the late medieval period in the form of the cross wing of a mid-fifteenth century building at number 21 (Joyce, 1998). At number 11 is a cruck framed building which is probably also late medieval (VCH, 1990, 43). These buildings would have bordered the market place, which was also the site of the Witsun fair in the early fifteenth century (VCH, 1990, 117)

4.3 *Post medieval*

Little is known of the development of the area in the early post-medieval period and such information as exists is fragmentary. Gregory King's Census of 1695 indicates that 44 of the 63 households in Greenhill were pauper households. This contrasts with the high status of the fifteenth century hall and cross wing represented by 21 Greenhill.

Some indication of the status and use of the area can be gleaned from documentary references to occupations and industries. In the early sixteenth century there was a tilehouse, for the manufacture of roof tiles and probably also bricks (VCH, 1990, 120). Later, in 1818, a George Gilbert was also recorded as a brickmaker and there was a flax dresser in the area (*op. cit.* 123). In 1814 there was a paper maker (*op. cit.* 281).

Probate inventories from 1568-1680 include wills from eight men who had interests in the Greenhill area (Vaisey, 1969). The amounts left ranged from one Richard Harper who left debts, to a Richard Knighte, whose estate was valued at £81 16s 4d. Four of the wills mention occupations - Thomas Hall was a husbandman, Richard Knighte was a capper, William Fletcher was a tailor and Richard Riley was a silk weaver.

There are continuing references to the Greenhill market, but it is not shown on Snape's map, which does, however, show a pinfold. This was removed in the early nineteenth century and does not appear on the tithe map. The Greenhill market continued into the nineteenth century and when the livestock market was finally moved from the town centre in 1844 its new location was somewhere in Greenhill. Its precise position is unknown, but by the 1880s, land north of St Michael's Church had been cleared for the new Smithfield Cattle Market.

The earliest evidence of what the area was like according to maps came in 1610 with John Speed's map (Fig. 2). Greenhill is shown as built up on both its northern and southern sides, with an open area at the west where it was joined by Rotten Row. This map is clearly schematic with all the buildings fronting onto Greenhill having their gables facing the street. Snape's map of 1781 presents a more detailed and accurate view and shows a more eclectic arrangement (Fig. 3). Number 17 is built up not only on the frontage, but also for the full length of the plot. The rear of numbers 19 and 21 are shown as open ground, presumably a yard.

The same layout is shown on nineteenth century maps, starting with the Tithe Map (Fig. 4) This gives details of the owners and occupiers of the plots. John Gilbert lived in 17 and 19, which consisted of 'house, garden, yard, malt-house, stable and piggeries'. Number 21, a 'house and garden', was occupied by William Williamson. Both were owned by the feoffees of St Michael's Church Property, as was the adjacent 'Duke of York' public house. White's Directory of 1851 recorded a John Gilbert in Greenhill as a maltster and Kelly's Directory of 1860 noted Sarah Gilbert as a maltster. This also recorded a William Williamson as a market gardener in Greenhill but White (1851) had a William Williamson in next door Church Street. He was a town crier, but it is not clear whether this was the same person.

There was little change to the site in the later nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, though the map evidence shows the internal divisions of the site with more clarity (Figs. 5 - 8). It is clear that the built up area to the rear of number 17 was in fact a range of buildings, presumably including the malthouse and stables. The piggeries were probably the buildings shown at the east of the site in the 1840s. By the 1880s these had been moved to the northern end of the site. In the early part of the twentieth century a new outbuilding was added at the east of the site, where the piggeries had once been.

5 The population of Greenhill and Lichfield

The population of Lichfield at various dates (VCH, 1990, 39) is shown below (Table 1). It should be noted that for all the population numbers given until 1695 the figures represent numbers assessed for particular dues (e.g. tax) and the number of inhabitants of the town is substantially higher. For instance, in 1593 1100 people died during an outbreak of plague at a time when there were approximately 400 households. The population was therefore probably

between two and three thousand in the medieval period, with an almost certain drop in the fourteenth century associated with plague.

Date	Number	Comments
1327	108	Assessment for tax
1377	1,024	Assessment for poll tax
1525	391	Liable for tax
1539	286	Muster roll
1563	400	Number of households
1642	706	Protestation return for Lichfield
1642	61	Protestation return for Greenhill area
1664	296	Assessment for hearth tax
1695	2,833	Gregory King's census of Lichfield
1695	63	Gregory King's census for Greenhill area
1781	3,551	Snape's census
1801	4,842	Census
1901	7,902	Census
1931	8,507	Census
1951	10,619	Census
1987	28,310	Estimate

Table 1 - Population of Lichfield

6 Archaeological potential

Medieval archaeological remains may survive on the site. These could include evidence of any earlier road systems in the area, of the development of the Greenhill suburb and possibly of the market area, of earlier buildings and of the use of the land to the rear of the frontage buildings. This may include evidence for craft or industrial activity. Fieldwork would provide the opportunity to test the hypotheses of Bassett (1982) and Slater (1985) concerning the early layout and development of Greenhill. It would also allow for further information to be sought on the form and detail of the hall postulated by Joyce (1999).

Foundations of post-medieval buildings shown on historic maps from the late eighteenth century onwards are expected to survive on the site. The extent to which these may have disturbed earlier, medieval, deposits is not known. Further information about the uses of these buildings and their predecessors, if any, may be obtained by fieldwork, though the importance of this information is likely to be of less archaeological significance than any medieval remains.

7 Recommendations

The excavation of two trenches is recommended as a field evaluation of the site. The aims of this evaluation would be 'to locate archaeological deposits or remains and determine their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability, documentation, quality of setting and amenity value. This is for the purpose of establishing their significance and enables appropriate decisions to be made on the conservation of these deposits' (Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations). Specific objectives would be to determine the value of the site to an understanding of the development of medieval Lichfield and to assess the nature and status of the site, with particular reference to the postulated late medieval hall.

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Abbreviations:

JRO - Joint Record Office, Lichfield

SCC - Staffordshire County Council

SRO - Staffordshire Record Office

John Speed's map of Lichfield, 1610 - in VCH, 1990

John Snape's map of Lichfield, 1781 - SRO

Map of Lichfield, 1832 (unnamed) - SRO D615/M/3/8

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Aerial photographs

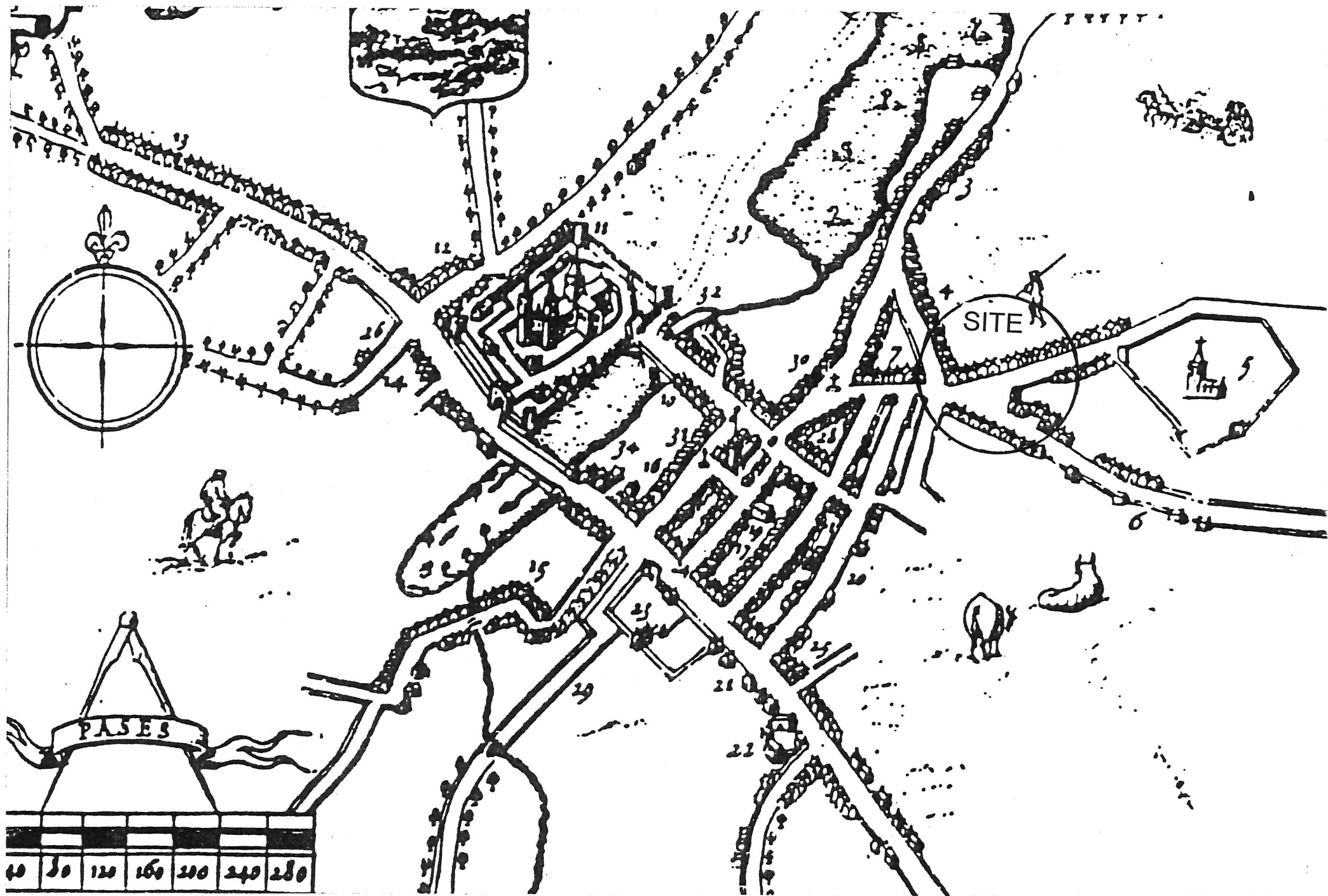


Fig. 2 John Speed's map of Lichfield, 1610

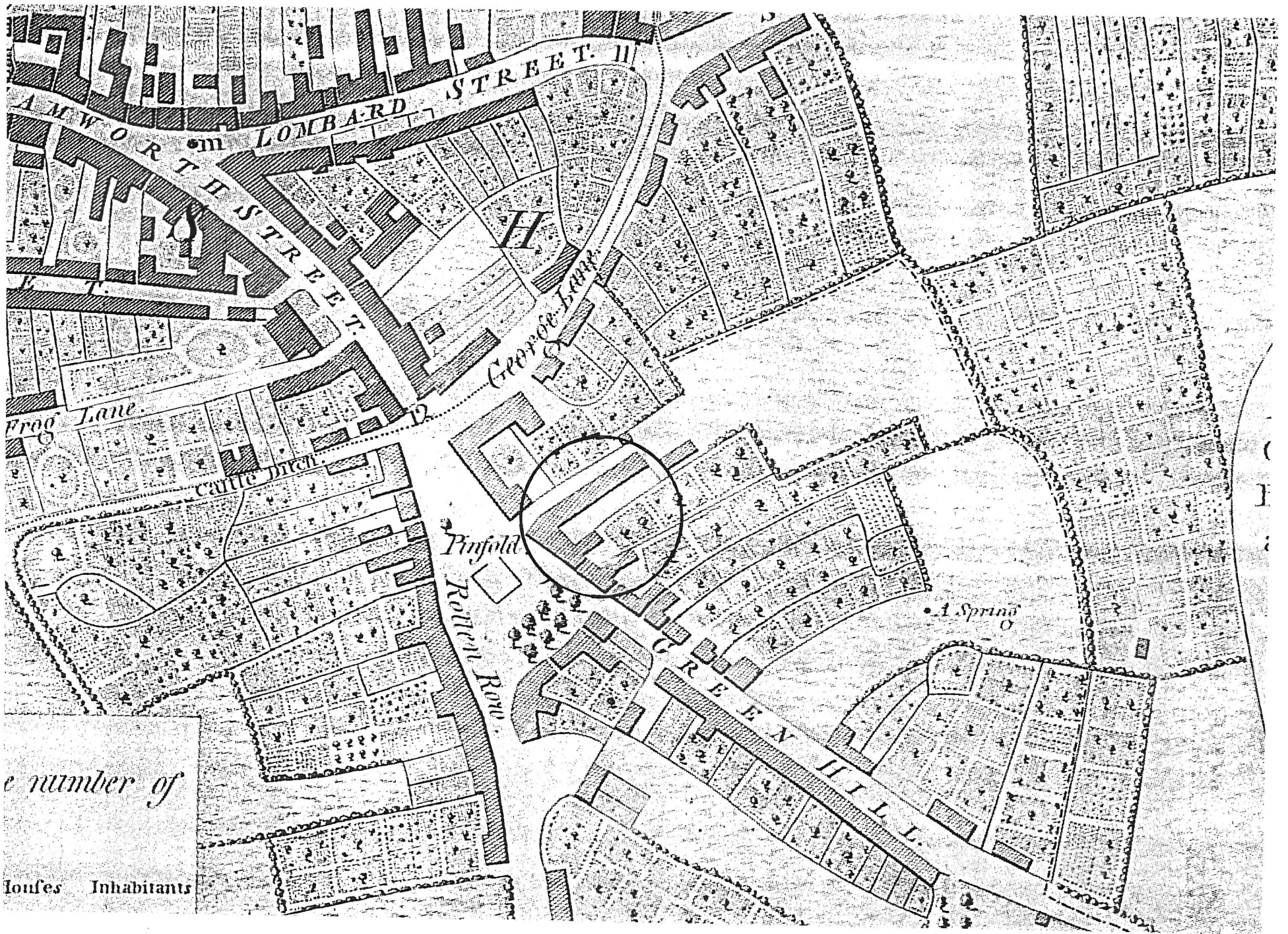


Fig. 3 John Snape's map of Lichfield, 1781



Fig. 4 Tithe map, 1848

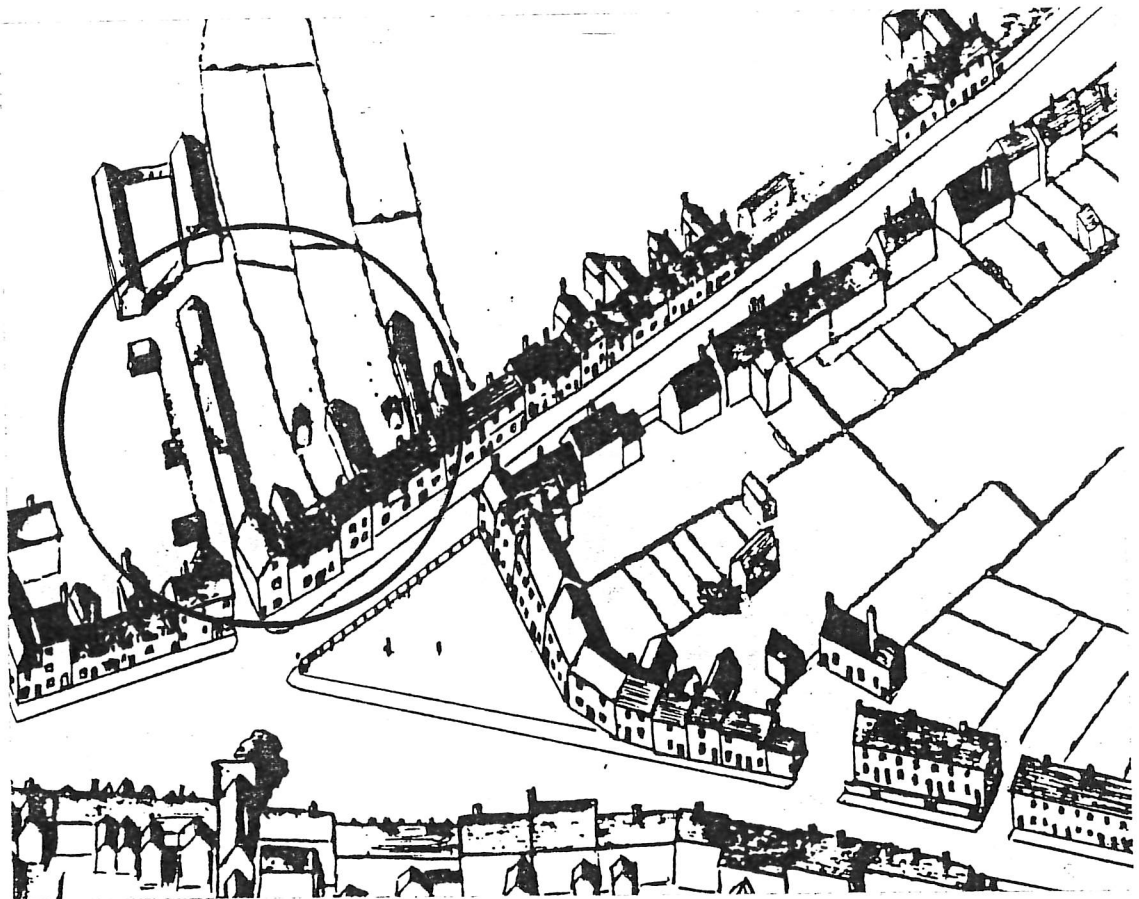


Fig. 5 Crompton's map of Lichfield, 1862



Fig. 6 Ordnance Survey 1:500 First Edition, 1884



Fig. 8 Ordnance Survey 25" Third Edition, 1923

