

The Archaeology of Wiltshire's Towns
An Extensive Urban Survey

HIGHWORTH

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The Archaeology and History of Highworth

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Towns are an important component of the historic environment which have developed over many hundreds of years and are under constant development pressures. The archaeological resource within our historic towns is an invaluable and irreplaceable source of data about past societies and the evolution of our culture. Despite these factors the archaeology of many towns, especially the smaller market towns, is poorly understood.
- 1.2. In 1976 the D.O.E. sponsored a study of the archaeology of Wiltshire's historic towns, aiming to assess the relative importance of the towns at different points in time as a basis for future archaeological research. This resulted in the publication of "*Wiltshire Towns: the archaeological potential*" (Haslam 1976). Since then, the book has been one of the key references for archaeologists monitoring urban development and its impact in the county.
- 1.3. A massive increase in the amount of archaeological and historical data available and changes in legislation such as the introduction of Planning Policy Guidance note No.16 have meant that a reappraisal of the situation is now due. The Extensive Urban Survey of Wiltshire has been commissioned by English Heritage, as part of a National programme, to address the need for a new assessment of urban archaeology in the county. The current structure of the historic county of Wiltshire is two-tier, with the County Council working in conjunction with the four District Councils (Kennet, North Wiltshire, Salisbury and West Wiltshire) and the new unitary authority of Swindon - historically part of the county. The survey aims to map the development of all of Wiltshire's and Swindon's historic towns (Fig. 1) and to assess the extent of the surviving archaeology and built heritage. It is also proposed that the threat of development on the historic environment within the county's towns will be examined.
- 1.4. The origins of urban centres in England reach back to the Iron Age. During the Roman occupation new, planned, urban centres were linked by an efficient road system. In the Saxon period, defended towns and royal boroughs were developed and later medieval towns grew around markets as economic conditions improved or were 'planted' as planned new centres.
- 1.5. As far as is known the first towns in Wiltshire appeared during the Romano-British period but all the known examples are now greenfield sites, although some may have given rise to nearby settlements. Most modern towns in the county have their roots as Saxon villages or defended settlements such as Cricklade and Wilton. Many of the villages grew into small towns after the Norman invasion, often focussed around a castle or market and in the early thirteenth century 'planted boroughs', in which individual plots of land were sold by the major landowner.
- 1.6. The definition of a town for inclusion in the survey follows the criteria laid out in Highway (1972), by which the settlement must possess certain facilities such as defences, a mint, a market, a street plan, or a judicial centre, and

demonstrate such urban attributes as high population, a diversified economic base or a central or key location. For the purposes of the survey, however, the towns should meet these criteria historically, even if they no longer do so. This allows, for example, the inclusion of the five Roman towns in the county, and settlements such as the village of Heytesbury, which was developed as a planned town in the 13th century, but which did not succeed as an urban centre. The full list of 34 towns included in the survey and the criteria for inclusion are included as Appendix 1. Highworth satisfies two criteria: it has evidence of a planned street layout (*criteria ii*); it once had a mint (*criteria iv*).

- 1.7. The area of study in each town is defined by the size of the town as it stood in 1945, encompassing both the historic core of the town and the older industrial and suburban development. There is an emphasis on the earlier material, and the later Victorian and 20th century development are covered here only very briefly. Although more detailed than Haslam's report, in most cases each study remains no more than a brief summary of the data, and a guide to the location of more detail for other researchers. The extent of the study area for Highworth is depicted in Fig. 2.
- 1.8. The research into each town will be encapsulated into two reports: a summary and assessment of the data gathered and an outline strategy for future management of specified sections of the urban area. This first report is intended to provide a clear and up-to-date synthesis of the available archaeological and historical data for Highworth, with an assessment of the main areas of historic settlement in the town and of the potential and sensitivity of the archaeologically important areas. The assessment reports are compiled from four main data streams: geographical and geological sources for the location and topographical summary; secondary historical sources for the historical outline; recorded archaeological data for the sites and finds information; the archive of the Wiltshire Building Record (WBR) for architectural data. The architectural summary is not subject to the same level of research as the other three data streams, and the information presented in the reports is based upon evidence compiled from the existing WBR archive, updated in places by field visits to note non-listed buildings of historic interest, combined with the Department Of The Environment schedule of listed buildings.

2. LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 2.1. Highworth stands on an outcrop of Corallian limestones jutting out into the Oxford clay which forms a low-lying plain to the north. The southern end of the town rests on Coral Rag, but most of the settlement is on a local variant known as Highworth Limestone (Barron 1976).
- 2.2. The limestone forms a ridge on the southern side of the Thames valley, rising some 50m above the edge of the valley. To the east and south-east, the River Cole has cut into the ridge en route from Swindon to the Thames. The town

centre lies immediately to the north of the highest point on the hill and developed slowly down the spur along the Lechlade road.

3. PAST WORK AND THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE

3.1. Introduction

3.1.1. This is a desk-based study, using material available within the County Council research facilities in Trowbridge: the Sites and Monuments Register; The Wiltshire Reference Library; the Wiltshire & Swindon Record Office; and the Wiltshire Buildings Record. Historical data are generally drawn from secondary sources, normally the Victoria County History and histories of the individual towns. Data on archaeological events and their results are drawn directly from the original reports or publications wherever these are available

3.1.2. The use of primary sources in the Record Office is restricted to maps and sometimes other pictorial material, which are consulted to locate accurately individual entities and to trace the growth of the settlement.

3.2. Historic Sources

3.2.1. Several small histories of Highworth were consulted for this report, including Hopkins' 1926 guide. Whilst useful generally, the latter included a number of historical statements which could not be verified from our other sources and were left out as a result. The Highworth Historical Society's collections, now running to three volumes, proved most useful in the absence of a Victoria County History volume.

3.2.2. A number of early archaeological investigations in the town have never been written up or published, and much of the information on these was provided by Mr M Stone, Curator of the Chippenham Heritage Centre.

3.3. Archaeological Work In The Town

3.3.1. This section outlines the known archaeological events that have taken place in Highworth. The list in Table 1 below is compiled from information in the County Sites and Monuments Record, Excavations Record, and the fieldwork reports kept in the County Archaeology Section in Trowbridge. Others have been added as a result of incidental mention in one of the above sources, and where there is enough information to get at least a general idea of the location of the event. The numbers refer to the map included in this report (Fig. 3).

Event	Year	Site Name/Location	Event Type	Excavator	Reference
01	1972	Brookfield	Excavation	M.J. Stone & Swindon Archaeol. Society	(Anon. 1973)
02	1976	Grove Hill	Excavation	M.J. Stone & Swindon Archaeol. Society	(Anon. 1980)

03	1976	Hampton Hill, cemetery extension.	Excavation	M.J. Stone & Swindon Archaeol. Society	(Anon. 1980)
04	1980	Priory Green	Excavation	Highworth Historical Society	(Anon. 1982)
05	1987	Oak Drive	Rescue work	Thamesdown Archaeological Unit	(Digby 1987)
06	1995	Hungerford Barn Field	Watching brief	Cotswold Archaeological Trust	(Manning 1995)
07	1999	Brewery Street	Evaluation	Foundations Archaeology	(Foundations Archaeology 1999)

Table 1: Archaeological Investigations in Highworth .

4. HISTORICAL OUTLINE

- 4.1. This report is not intended to provide a major historical review of the history of Highworth and the material included here relates mainly to events which might have had some impact on the archaeology of the town.
- 4.2. Highworth is first mentioned in the Domesday survey when it comprised three hides of land, a church, and six smallholders and was known as Wrde (Thorn 1979). The 'high' element of the name was not apparently added to the 13th century. In its early form the town is the principal settlement of the Saxon Hundred, first recorded in Domesday as 'Wrde hundred'.
- 4.3. The two tithings of Highworth church, Eastrop and Westrop, derive from a Danish word for "enclosed ground" (Hopkins 1926) but do not in themselves provide evidence for an earlier independent hamlet on the hill.
- 4.4. Apart from the land attached to the church, the Geld Rolls of c.1086 indicate that much of the rest of the Hundred was part of a Royal estate, purported to have belonged to Earl Harold before the conquest (Marshman 1981). If this was the case, it would help to explain the absence of the neighbouring hamlets of Eastrop, Westrop, and Sevenhampton from the Domesday survey, and allows for the possibility of some early settlement around the church.
- 4.5. The borough of Highworth is first mentioned in the 13th century and appears to have been founded by the Earl of Devon who established a market there and settled fifty burghers around the church (Lawton 1981). Lawton suggests that the 14th century tax and population figures indicate that Highworth escaped the worst ravages of the black death, and that its increasing prosperity relative to surrounding villages may have been at least partly due to this fact.
- 4.6. By 1576 Highworth had become one of the more important small towns in north-east Wiltshire and by the time of the plague in the mid-17th century, had a population of over 3800, half again as much as Swindon (Hopkins 1926). According to John Aubrey, Highworth held the biggest cattle market in the county until the Civil War, when the town was garrisoned by Royalist troops and

farmers switched their allegiance to Swindon market. The town was stormed by Parliament in June 1645 (Marshman 1981).

- 4.7. Both the Ordnance Survey maps and the registers of births and deaths (Lawton 1981) show a considerable shrinkage in the population from its peak (4001) in the mid-19th century until the 1930s. Even so the population in 1871 stood at 3707, and the town supported 31 businesses, including five bakers, two harness-makers, a shoemaker, and a gunsmith (Archer 1978). The majority of the population were farm labourers, however, and worsening conditions in agriculture led to unemployment and emigration, either to the rapidly growing town of Swindon or further afield, to America (Lawton 1981).
- 4.8. The opening of the Oriental Fibre Mat and Matting Company, the town's only factory, in the second half of the century, and of the light railway branch line to Swindon in 1883, slowed the emigration rate for a while. After a further period of decline in the early 20th century, the population again began to rise, and has continued to attract new residents despite the early closure of the railway in 1953.

5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SUMMARY

5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. The following is a resume of the archaeological record of the town, drawn from the county SMR and the various excavation reports. Data on surviving buildings come from the Wiltshire Buildings Record unless otherwise stated. The bold print numbers in this section refer to entries in the Urban Survey database, and appear on the sites and findspots location maps forming Figs. 4 - 8, which were created from the database and the SMR.

5.2. Prehistory (Fig.4)

- 5.2.1. Early prehistoric activity found along the ridge on which Highworth stands is concentrated around two springs on the sides of the hill. On the east side around The Willows, Mesolithic (**HG047**) and Neolithic (**HG048**) flint implements have been found, with similar material also discovered a little to the north at Priory Green. (**HG068**). Also east of the town, flint flakes, blades, scrapers were found around the Spa Spring, together with a small Iron Age pit (**HG069**, all above Collins 1986). A Bronze Age arrowhead (**HG046**) was recovered near the base of the slope to the north.
- 5.2.2. On the extreme western edge of town the remains of an Iron Age settlement containing storage pits, postholes and animal bones was excavated (**HG050**, Anon. 1980, 204), together with a scatter of pottery. More pottery was recovered from the soil (**HG004**, **HG030**) and from occupation horizons to the east (**HG029**) and north-east (**HG028**), and a bone weaving comb (**HG027**) was found at 52, Cricklade Street.

5.2.3. There are in the same area a number of undated burials, at least one group of which may date from the Bronze Age (**HG009**, Anon. 1980, 203). The others (**HG018**, **HG019**) are not attributed and could equally be Romano-British, although in view of the nearby Iron Age settlement an earlier date cannot be excluded.

5.3. Roman (Fig. 5)

5.3.1. Overlying the Iron Age settlement and extending as far as the Swindon – Lechlade road is a wide scatter of Romano-British pottery and coins representing the entire span of the Roman occupation from Nero (1st century: **HG025**) to Gratian (5th century: **HG021**). Most of the pottery is loosely dated to between the 2nd & 4th centuries although some is clearly late (**HG024**: 4th century) At the centre of this scatter stone wall foundations were apparently seen during modern construction work in 1958 (**HG003**) along with pottery, coins, tile, and a shale pendant. Pottery and ash from a nearby occupation layer (**HG002**, Anon. 1980, 205) add weight to the hypothesis that the focus of settlement lies in the immediate area. To the south-west, numerous inhumations were found, some with associated coins and coarseware pottery. (**HG014**).

5.3.2. A second discrete zone of settlement occurs in the area of Westrop with more coins and potsherds dating between the 1st and 4th centuries, and a 1st century pit was recorded from Vorda Road (**HG045**, Anon. 1973, 133). Further to the north and some 20m down the slope a watching brief in 1976 revealed three pits, ditches and a male inhumation beneath a stone slab with a variety of smaller finds and pottery (**HG040**, Anon. 1980, 205). There may also have been building foundations visible.

5.3.3. The third focus of Romano-British settlement lay on the eastern edge of the modern town. Pottery was found within an extant earthwork - a double ditched enclosure - and at a nearby spring head. Excavations by the Highworth Historical Society in 1980 located four stone buildings linked by paths (**HG039**, Collins 1986). Evidence has also been noted by Collins of a series of tracks linking the eastern and northern settlements, the whole picture forming an intriguing hint of early settlement at, and connections between, Estrop and Westrop (**HG006**)

5.4. Saxon (Fig. 6)

5.4.1. In the area of the Romano-British settlement east of the town centre there are clear indications of a Saxon site, possibly the origin of Estrop (**HG038**, Collins 1986). The remains of a sunken house were uncovered, within a Roman building which itself was found to have had a further continuation of use during the Saxon period. The southern corner of the building had a hearth area superimposed on the remnants of the original floor.

5.4.2. Other Anglo-Saxon activity in the Study Area is represented by finds of two single sherds of grass-tempered pottery (**HG001, HG037**).

5.4.3. The reference in Domesday to a church is an indication that St Michael's Church is on the site of an Anglo-Saxon predecessor (**HG051**). Its location is of particular interest. There are however no identifiable Anglo-Saxon features within the fabric of the building, and no discoveries from the immediate area to confirm the presence of a settlement.

5.5. Medieval (Fig. 7)

5.5.1. Current entries on the Sites & Monuments offer little insight into the nature of the Medieval town, consisting of a few scatters of Medieval pottery around the outskirts (**HG016, HG033**).

5.5.2. Some architectural fragments survive. The mainly 15th century Grade I church of St Michael (**HG051**) with its possible Anglo-Saxon origin contains vestigial Norman (tympanum over the south door) and Early English (south porch and arcade) work. The Old Manor House (**HG052**), 1 & 2 High Street (Grade II*) contains the remains of a 15th century hall much rebuilt in 1656. The physical evidence of Medieval Highworth lies in its plan (Section 6, below)

5.5.3. The Domesday settlements of Westrop (**HG034**) and Estrop (**HG035**) are known from documentary sources, and whilst the former has been built over, Estrop survives as extensive earthworks along the Faringdon Road. Also within the area is a circular earthwork of a type known as a Highworth circle (**HG031**) thought to be Medieval stock enclosure.

5.5.4. Discoveries at The Willows (**HG017**, Collins 1986) indicate Medieval settlement which may be the continuation of the Saxon occupation (5.4.1 above). This site is unlikely to be the original Eastrop, being located too far to the west of the Medieval earthworks. Aerial photographs indicated the presence of a roughly rectangular feature, with another clear area of ridge and furrow to the west. As site clearing for a housing development progressed, fragments of a boundary wall were noted. Traces of a walled enclosure were found which coincided with the aerial photographic evidence. The interior of the enclosure appeared to have been roughly covered with cobbles, above which was a distinct midden layer.

5.5.5. There are similar indications around Westrop. Excavations by Swindon Archaeological Society at Grove Hill revealed an extensive occupation layer, seven pits and three parallel walls and gullies dating to the 11th to 12th centuries (**HG020**, Anon 1980). A scatter of 12th-13th century sherds covering a wide area was reported to the east of the hamlet (**HG032**, Anon 1973). Again, the spread of these discoveries is considerably beyond what might have been anticipated for the Westrop settlement.

5.6. Post Medieval

5.6.1. No records are available of any post-medieval finds from the various excavations and watching briefs in the town.

5.7. Industrial/Modern (Fig.8)

5.7.1. The 1876 Ordnance Survey map shows three features of an industrial nature within the Study area. Highworth had a small gasworks (**HG063**) located to the east of the Lechlade road. At the southern edge of the settlement was a rug and mat factory (**HG064**), and nearby the Sun Brewery (**HG065**). West of the town were several small quarries and clay pits, together with a brick yard on the south side of Station Road (**HG066**).

5.8. Built Heritage

5.8.1. This section of the report is intended to provide an introduction to the surviving built heritage of Highworth, and is not designed to be a comprehensive account of the town's notable structures, but is a selection of the salient architectural features and buildings within the Study Area, including, if present, significant unlisted structures. This data has been compiled by Wiltshire Buildings Record. Detailed lists of historic buildings and architectural detail are included as Appendices 3, 4 & 5. Although individual Grade II listed buildings may be (where relevant) discussed in this section, they are not included as a comprehensive list in the Appendices, due to the very large quantities of additional data this would involve. Researchers seeking information on Grade II structures are directed to the appropriate Governmental lists of protected buildings.

5.8.2. Highworth is in origin a planted town of 13th century date. The Medieval property boundaries remain a dominant characteristic of the area around the High Street and Market Place. Here at the core of the settlement most buildings date from the 18th century. All are of stone, mostly rubble construction with some ashlar. A fragment of early timber framing remains in the form of the jetty at the rear of 19A High Street, whilst timber framing to rear of 30 High Street is possibly of C17 date. There are some examples of stucco fronts, possibly hiding timber framing. Roofs at this time tend to be stone slate, less commonly thatch.

5.8.2. The Sixteenth Century

5.8.2.1. Chantry Cottage, 1 Lechlade Road is the only C16 house, which may be older. It is built in rubble with roughcast facing and buttressed.

5.8.3. The Seventeenth Century

5.8.3.1. The survival of C17 buildings is far greater; 18 buildings are still extant, the majority of these in the High Street. 2 of these are brick, the rest rubble with

roughcast or render. Around half have been altered substantially during the C18 and C19 centuries.

5.8.3.2. Some timber framing survives only in fragments (19A, 14 & 15 High Street, 2A & 3 High Street (II*)) dates from 1652, though much restored recently. 14 & 15 High Street appears to be timber framed from the C17 but has been remodelled with a stucco front in the C18.

5.8.4. The Eighteenth Century

5.8.4.1. 45 buildings of listable quality survive from the C18. A third of these are small houses, rather over a third are good stone town houses, and the remaining handful are a group of 3 good quality brick houses at Westrop, and a few brick shops in the town centre. Of these 5 are grade II*; 10 High Street is a grade II* stucco fronted town house dating from c1700, now a shop. 24 High Street (II*) is described as a fine early brick town house of three storeys.

5.8.4.2. At Westrop Jesmond House dates to 1721 and has a good contemporary interior. The White House dates to the mid C18 and has blue headers. 6 Highworth Court has good panelled rooms.

5.8.4.3. 8 Brewery Street, a C18 thatched cottage, is noted as being an interesting survival of burgage plot development, (as are the coach house and barn to the rear of 5 Sheep Street). 12 Lechlade Road is the only example of C18 thatch, whilst 10 Sheep Street was once a 'Bush House' (form of unlicensed beer house on market days).

5.8.5. The Nineteenth Century

5.8.5.1. 24 C19 buildings are listed, only one of which is grade II*. 23 High Street dates to c1800 and was once an inn. It is locally famous for a previous inhabitant who filtered British Secret Agents on their way to Coleshill House during WWII.

5.8.5.2. The best houses are in ashlar. All of the lesser buildings are in rubblestone, some with brick quoins, with only 3 buildings in brick.

5.8.6. The Twentieth Century

5.8.6.1. Unlike many other towns, Highworth has no listed C20 buildings.

6. PLAN FORM ANALYSIS

6.1. Introduction

6.1.1. The town has been divided into components, each representing blocks of activity, and sub-divided by period. Highworth, perhaps as a result of its elevated location with a view across the Upper Thames Valley, has considerable evidence of settlement activity in the prehistoric and Romano-British periods. The areas of interest are located to the west and north-east of the Medieval centre and would appear to have played no role in the process of

urbanisation. They are therefore not plotted here as components. Historical and documentary evidence indicate the presence of a settlement from at least the 11th century with indications of a Saxon precursor, for which a conjectural reconstruction has been attempted. Otherwise, the town has been divided into different plan components (settlement areas, church, market place, etc.), and these are illustrated in the stated figures.

6.1.2. **Table 2:** Plan form components

COMPONENT	PERIOD OF ORIGIN	COMPONENT TYPE	FIGURE No.
COM1	Saxon	Possible Minster Church	9
COM2	Saxon	Possible settlement	9
COM3	Medieval	Parish Church	10
COM4	Medieval	Market Place	10
COM5	Medieval	Planned town	10
COM6	Medieval	Late Medieval infill	10
COM7	Medieval	Site of Manor House ?	10
COM8	Medieval	Westrop settlement	10
COM9	Medieval	Estrop settlement	10
COM10	Medieval	Roads	10

6.2. *Plan Form – Saxon (Fig 9.)*

6.2.1. **COM1 - possible Saxon Church.** The Domesday reference to a church in Highworth indicates an Anglo-Saxon precursor to St Michael's church. There are no architectural signs of an earlier building, but in view of the special nature of the location on the crest of the ridge and flanking an important road, it is unlikely that the Saxon church was sited elsewhere.

6.2.2. **COM2 - possible settlement area.** The location of the St Michael's , on the crest of the ridge and set back some 50m from Lechlade Road, does not accord with the layout of the planned Medieval town to the south and possibly indicates a small Saxon settlement flanking the important highway between Swindon and the Thames Valley.

6.2.3. The evidence for a Saxon settlement at or near Estrop has been examined above (5.4.1) but is not shown as a component, in the belief that it has no direct bearing on the development of the plan of the town.

6.3. *Plan Form – Medieval (Fig.10)*

6.3.1. **COM3 – Parish Church.** The location of the church, almost certainly sited on an Anglo-Saxon predecessor, occupies a prominent position. It was a not uncommon practice in the 11th to 13th centuries to rebuild new, larger churches on the sites of their Saxo-Norman predecessors (Rodwell 1989), and given that Highworth had a church listed in Domesday this is a likely scenario. The extent of the churchyard depicted in Fig. 10 probably represents its evolved form by the end of the Medieval period.

- 6.3.2. The Old Rectory stands to the north of the church on land which has probably always been church property, at least since the Norman rebuilding
- 6.3.3. **COM4 – Market Place.** The 13th century planned town included a market place east of the church. This has since the 17th century become partly filled with houses and shops. East of the Market Place, an area of apparent later infill (COM6) may itself have been market, perhaps abandoned in the face of competition from Swindon.
- 6.3.4. **COM5 – The planned town.** Such developments were common in England and Wales in the 12th and 13th centuries, part of a widespread speculative urge to generate increased trade, and to create revenues through market and burgage tolls (Butler 1976). A series of typical narrow-fronted burgage plots to the north and south of the market represent the setting out of the town. The preservation of these Medieval boundaries is markedly clear south of the High Street, the plots running back some 160m or more to Brewery Street. Some of the lanes and paths in this zone presumably represent minor streets provided in the original layout, much obscured by later infill. To the north of the Market Place the plots are equally clear, but may have ended on a line with the eastern boundary of the churchyard.
- 6.3.5. **COM6 – possible Late Medieval infill.** A series of short plots have clearly developed along the north of High Street up to the edge of the churchyard. These may be later infill, occupying either a long and narrow section of the Market area or possibly land released by the Church at a late date. Overall, the town shows little sign of expansion in the Middle Ages, in spite of the indications from records that it prospered (paras 4.4 –4.5)
- 6.3.6. **COM7 – Manor House.** None of the early maps show any large house near the centre of the town, and the location of the Medieval manor house, if indeed there was one, is not known. The broadly rectangular area directly to the north of the church seems a likely spot and would fit in with the overall plan of the settlement.
- 6.3.7. **COM8 & 9 –Outlying Settlements.** The origin of the settlements at Westrop (COM8) and Eastrop (COM9) is of some interest in the development of the area. Archaeological discoveries indicate the presence of Romano-British settlers around Westrop, and near Eastrop there are discoveries of both Roman and Saxon buildings.(Figs 5 and 6). The evidence of Medieval activity suggests that these sites developed into villages of substantial size, possibly sharing in Highworth's prosperity and absorbing the growth which this must have generated.
- 6.3.8. **COM10 – Roads.** The main highways believed to be in use during the foundation and development of Highworth and the settlements at Eastrop and Westrop are shown.

7. ASSESSMENT

7.1. *Summary of Research*

- 7.1.1. Highworth has still to be covered in the Victoria County History series but there are a few historical summaries of the town. These are augmented by the three volumes of historical papers produced by the Highworth Historical Society (Lawton 1981). Even so, little is known of the Medieval origins and topography of the town prior to its planned layout which dates from the 13th century.
- 7.1.2. The Swindon Archaeological Society and Highworth Historical Society have made a number of important discoveries relating to prehistoric, Romano-British, Saxon and Medieval activity on the ridge on which the town is located. These discoveries came to light in observations during post-war development well away from the historic core, and potentially throw light on the origins of Estrop and Westrop, but not Highworth itself.
- 7.1.3. Little has emerged on the nature of the pre-Domesday settlement, clearly a priority objective in future investigations.

7.2. *The Growth of the Town (Fig.11)*

7.2.1. Saxon

- 7.2.1.1. The town appears to have been named for the Saxon hundred in which it lay, and it may be that the church at Highworth was the mother church for the hundred. It was located on one of the high points of the district, presumably to maximise the visibility and presence of the edifice. There is no direct evidence to suggest that there was any settlement around the church in the pre-conquest period, although an argument based on topography is set out above (para 6.2.1)

7.2.2. Medieval

- 7.2.2.1. The essence of the town is a regular planned settlement, situated to the east and south of the church and apparently developed in the 13th century. It is possible that its market place was original longer than currently recognised, extending westwards the entire length of High Street. There is no clear sign that the town expanded beyond its original design, at least during the Middle Ages, but infilling of part of the Market Place and possibly on some of the land held by the Church may have satisfied local demand (para 6.3.4)

7.2.3. Post Medieval

- 7.2.3.1. The Andrews and Dury map of Highworth in 1773 shows a relatively small cluster of buildings grouped around the church and extending a little way along the Faringdon road towards Westrop, which is not shown at all,

although clearly there must have been a scatter of houses there as some still exist today. By contrast, Eastrop survived as an L-shaped ribbon settlement extending more than 500m along the Coleshill road and continued thus until the mid 19th century, when most of the houses were abandoned during the agricultural decline of that time.

7.2.4. Recent

- 7.2.4.1. Early Ordnance Survey maps show a slight expansion of the town around its northern edges and the establishment of the school and mat factory to the south, but otherwise the decline continued well into the 20th century. By 1942 there had been a little suburban growth around the old mat factory, and the town had spread north to recolonise Westrop.
- 7.2.4.2. The bulk of the settlement now included under Highworth is a post-war development and therefore beyond the scope of this project.

7.3. The Archaeological Potential

- 7.3.1. One of the principal aims of this phase of the Extensive Urban Survey is to examine the archaeological potential of the town to assist with the development of a management strategy in the later phase of the project. Whilst all of the core town may be considered reasonably important archaeologically, it is necessary to try to highlight those areas of greater interest, either because of the importance of the remains or because better than average preservation is expected there.
- 7.3.2. The priorities for future archaeological research must include further work on the size and nature of the Iron Age and Romano-British settlements, especially those in the Hampton Hill area. There is a high probability that more burials await discovery there and it would be useful to have the opportunity to retrieve some through proper excavation, and to attempt to date more of them.
- 7.3.3. There is a dearth of data pertaining to settlement within the historic core prior to the setting out of a regular planned layout in the 13th century. Any opportunity to recover dating evidence in the area of church land (COM3) would be invaluable.
- 7.3.4. With regard to the Medieval town, the location of the possible manor house needs to be established. Excavations in the area north of the church may reveal remains of such a complex, or simply high status finds.
- 7.3.5. Little is known of the survival of archaeological deposits in area of the Medieval planned town. Recent work in Brewery Street (King 1999) was uninformative as a result of the widespread disturbance caused by 19th century industrial use. Elsewhere, however, the potential for recovering information on the architectural trends and economic life of the town must be good. The nature of the town centre with its many listed buildings, is not likely to present many opportunities, and data will need to be sought in minor developments.

- 7.3.6. Even small-scale town-centre investigations will help to clarify whether Roman settlement preceded the Medieval town on this high, well-drained and prominent ridge. It seems unlikely in the light of discoveries to the west, east and north-east of the centre, that this area was untouched in the Roman period. At a minimum, some signs of agricultural activity may be anticipated.
- 7.3.7. The discovery of Saxon structures east of the town (Collins 1986) is especially interesting. Their location suggests they represent the original focus of Eastrop, and any opportunity to recover more data under controlled conditions should be given priority.

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9. MAPS

1773. Wiltshire map series, No 18, Andrews & Dury.

1820. Map of the county of Wiltshire. Greenwood (Chandler 1998).

1839. Tithe Map

1886. Ordnance Survey, 1st Edition, 1:500 series.

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1923. Ordnance Survey, 3rd Edition, 1:2500 Series.

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10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Towns included in the Extensive Urban Survey of Wiltshire, with reference to urban criteria defined by Heighway (1972).

	Town	Criteria
1	Amesbury	ii, iii, xi, xi
2	Bradford-on-Avon	iii,vi viii, xi
3	Calne	ii, iii, ix
4	Chippenham	i, iii, iv, viii, ix, x, xii i, ii, v, xii
5	Cricklade	i, ii, vi
6	CUNETIO	i, ii, iii,. v
7	Devizes	ii, iii, v, ix, xi
8	Downton	i,, ii vi
9	DUROCORNOVIUM	i, vi
10	EASTON GREY	iii, iv, v, ix
11	Great Bedwyn	ii, iii, ix
12	Heytesbury	ii, iv
13	Highworth	ii, vi, ix
14	Hindon	ii, iii, xi
15	Lacock	v
16	Ludgershall	i, iii, iv, xi
17	Malmesbury	iii, ix
18	Market Lavington	ii, iii, iv, xi
19	Marlborough	ii, iii, viii
20	Melksham	ii, iii, xii
21	Mere	iii, viii, xi
22	Ramsbury	i, ii, iii, v, vi, vii, viii,
23	Salisbury	ix, x, xi, ii, iii, ix
24	Sherston	i, vi
25	SORVIODUNUM	iii, viii
26	Swindon	iii, v
27	Tilshead	i, vi, xi
28	Tisbury	ii, iii, viii
29	Trowbridge	ii, iii, iv, vii
30	Warminster	iii, viii
31	Westbury	i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, vii,
32	Wilton	vii, ix, xi ii, iii, v, ix, xi
33	Wootton Bassett	ii, vi
34	VERLUCIO	

Appendix 2: Urban Criteria set out in Heighway (1972)

- i) *Urban Defences*: A town, at some time in its history, might have a wall, or bank and ditch with wooden defences.
- ii) *Internal Street plan*: A town may be planned at any moment in its history; part of its street pattern may display evidence of deliberate planning, such as a grid lay-out. A street plan with provision for a market place will also distinguish a town.
- iii) *Market*: Perhaps the only indispensable criterion, although a market alone does not distinguish a town. The date of a market charter is usually taken in this study as indicating the date by which the place had become a town.
- iv) *Mint*: The existence of a mint often denotes a town.
- v) *Legal existence*: This aspect of the town was one of the first to be studied and formed the basis of most of the early studies of towns. It has long been evident that legal history, once a favoured method of study, does not provide the only clue to urban origins, in which economic causes play an important part. However, the date of a borough charter or the dates of taxation at borough rates or of the town's parliamentary franchise may provide a date from which the place may be called a town.
- vi) *Position*: A town may have a central position in a network of communications and this can be a clue to its importance. This can be a difficult criterion to assess as it involves knowledge of the age of the road system in relation to the town itself, the past navigability of rivers, and other related problems.
- vii) *Population*: A town will often have or have had a high density and size of population compared with surrounding places.
- viii) *Diversified economic base*: Archaeological or documentary evidence might suggest a diversified economic base, particularly a concentration of various crafts in one area, and evidence of long distance trade. For earlier periods, only archaeological evidence can determine this; it is a reflection on the state of urban archaeology that so little is known of this aspect.
- ix) *House plot and house type*: The town-plan may show long, narrow 'burgage-type' plots; surviving houses will be urban rather than rural in form.
- x) *Social differentiation*: A town should contain a wide range of social classes and especially possess a middle class. House types, demonstrated in the earlier periods by archaeology, again form part of the evidence.
- xi) The presence of a *complex religious organisation* may also denote a town; i.e. the possession of more than one parish church or the existence of other institutions, especially monastic.
- xii) *Judicial centre*: A town may be a centre for courts of national or local status.

Appendix 3: Listed Buildings by Schedule Category (Refer to Dept. of National Heritage schedule for Grade II buildings)

Grade I

Church of St Michael (Anglo-Saxon origins, some Norman & Early English, mainly C15)

Grade II*

1 & 2 The Old Manor House, High Street (C15 & 1656)
2A & 3 High Street (1652)
10 High Street (c1700)
24 High Street (early C18)
Jesmond House, Westrop (1721)
6 Highworth Court and Highworth House, Westrop (1725)
The White House, Westrop (mid C18 & late C17)
23 High Street (c1800)

Appendix 4: Buildings Survival by Century

15th Century

Church of St Michael (late)
1 & 2 The Old Manor House, High Street (& 1656)

16th Century

1 Chantry Cottage, Lechlade Road

17th Century

33 Cherry Orchard Lane
Wall, Jesmond House, 7, Westrop
28, 29, 30, 31 & 32, 35, High Street: 6 Sheep Street (remodelled mid-late C18)
27 High Street (1616 & later C18)
2A & 3 High Street (1652)
13, 14 & 15 High Street (mid, remodelled C18))
46 High Street (remodelled early C19)
38 & 38A (late, remodelled C18)
48 High Street (altered later C19)
Westrop Farmhouse, & Dovecote, Westrop (mid to late)
6 Swindon Street (late C17/early C18)

18th Century

2 Cricklade Road
17 (1880 refronting), 19B, 22, 33 & 33A, 36 & 37, 46, High Street
12, Lechlade Road, 7, 11, 12, 15, Sheep Street, 4, 8 & 9, Swindon Street, Vicarage, Vicarage Lane
10, 41, High Street (c1700)
24, 42, High Street (early C18)

11 & 12 High Street (c1720)
 Jesmond House, Westrop (1721)
 6 Highworth Court, Westrop (c1725)
 18, 40 & 40A, High Street (early-mid)
 4, 5 (Saracen's Head), 21, High Street; 5 Sheep Street, 2, The White House, Westrop, (mid)
 2 & 3, 8, 10, Sheep Street (but much older site)
 9 Church House, Sheep Street (1765)
 6 & 7 Swindon Street (mid-late)
 8, 14 Brewery Street, in Blandford Alley (late)
 16, High Street; 4 Sheep Street, 5 Burford House, 10 The Fishes Inn, Swindon Street (late)
 2 Boreas Cottage, The Paddock
 Milestone opposite 10 Swindon Road, 32 Vorda House, Swindon Street, 1, Church Room, Vicarage Lane, (lateC18/early C19)

19th Century

30 & 31 Swindon Street
 23, 34 (older core), High Street (c1800)
 28A, 47, High Street; Coach house and barn to 5 Sheep Street, Wall to Vicarage, Vicarage Lane (early)
 24, Covered passages and chambers to Westrop House, Boundary wall to Westrop House, Cricklade Road (1818)
 United Reformed Church, High Street (1825)
 Gloucester House 6, Lloyd's Bank 7, High Street (c1832)
 Former Primary School, Swindon Street (1835)
 Walls south of 18 & 19 High Street, Wall to garden of Westrop Farmhouse, Westrop (early-mid)
 Westhill, Cricklade Road (mid)
 19, 19A & 20, 49, High Street, Garden pavilion to 9 Sheep Street) (mid)
 39 High Street (mid-late)
 Westrop House, Cricklade Road (1878)

Appendix 5: Architectural Detail by Feature Type

St Michael's church has a cruciform plan, and is built of rubble and ashlar on a high moulded plinth. It contains some early work but was largely remodelled in the C15 in perpendicular style. A fragment of early timber framing remains; the rear of 19A High Street is jettied. Some close-studded framing from c1600 is noted in the west gable wall of 16 High Street with later framing noted to the south-west.

Surviving C17 structures are of rubblestone and originally thatched (33 Cherry Orchard Lane), rubble and stone tile with hoodmoulded mullioned windows (1 & 2 The Old Manor House, High Street). On a grander scale is 2A & 3 High Street, dated 1652, which has transomed and mullioned windows. Timber framing to rear of 30 High Street is possibly of C17 date. 38 & 38A retain a double gabled front with gabled first floor oriels, and timber mullions.

From the early C18 brick was used decoratively for polite houses. A group of II* houses at Westrop use red brick with stone dressings (Jesmond House), or brick with blue headers (The White House), or most elaborately, red and blue bricks with rubbed brick oval panels and arches (6 Highworth Court). To a lesser extent, this is seen elsewhere in the town such as at Inigo House, and 25 High Street.

There are some examples of stucco fronts, possibly hiding timber framing. Roofs at this time tend to be stone slate, or less commonly thatch. Other features commonly found are segmental headed windows, moulded cornice (10, 11 & 12 High Street). 18, 22 High Street has a rubble wing with segmentally arched sash windows with keystones to rear dating from c1765. A rare survival is an original transomed and mullioned timber window at 46 High Street.

Mid and late C18 building features a little more brick; on a stone plinth (4, 5 High Street), or of brick and stone (21 High Street), painted rubble with brick dressings (8, 14 Brewery Street), thatch (8 Brewery Street), or more popularly stone tile (2 Cricklade Road).

6 & 7 Swindon Street is held as an interesting design in 'local vernacular' though 'sadly altered'. This is a roughcast rubble building with brick quoined dressings and rusticated segmental arches to windows.

During the C19 ashlar was used for the best quality houses, with slate used for the roofs (Westrop House, Cricklade Road, Gloucester House, United Reformed Church, High Street). Roughcast rubblestone was used for lesser houses (24 Cricklade Road, 7 High Street) with only 3 examples in brick, with grey headers (47 High Street). Again slate or stone tiles were used. 23 High Street is roughcast, but embellished later with a parapet and possibly other features.

Westrop House has remarkable serpentine rock-lined passages leading to services, including an icehouse. Westhill, Cricklade Road is a Picturesque villa in 'faintly Tudor style' with stucco and rustication. In town the facades have the usual embellished front (17 High Street - 1880). Windows are glazing bar casements (28A High Street) or sash windows (34 High Street)

33 Cherry Orchard Lane – no longer thatched, other 2 thatched buildings in Highworth are 8 Balndford Alley & 12 Lechlade Road.

WILTSHIRE BUILDINGS RECORD, *Archive material*

Other Details

Icehouses and underground tunnels noted at Westrop House.