

WATCHING BRIEF
AT
FOREGATE STREET STATION,
WORCESTER



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Archaeological watching brief at Foregate St Station, Worcester, Worcestershire

Peter Lovett

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Foregate Street Station, Worcester, Worcestershire (NGR SO 38747 25416). It was undertaken on behalf of Worcestershire County Council and Network Rail, who intend a refurbishment of Foregate Street Station, for which a planning application has been submitted.

The archaeology revealed was consistently of a later post-medieval and modern date, with the majority of deposits being associated with the construction of Foregate Street Station in 1860. Earlier built structures were observed at the limits of the excavated areas, including a wall made of 16th century bricks, but the limited scope of the works prevented further understanding of its nature or function.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Foregate Street Station, Worcester, (NGR SO 38747 25416). It was commissioned by Worcestershire County Council, on behalf of Network Rail, who intends to refurbish the station for which a planning application has been submitted to Worcester City Council (reference 12/000054/REG3).

The proposed development site is considered to include heritage assets and potential heritage assets, the significance of which may be affected by the application (WCM 98056).

The project conforms to a brief prepared by Worcester City Council (Worcester City Council 2013) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2013).

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008), and *Statement of standards and practices appropriate for archaeological fieldwork in Worcester* (Worcester City Council 1999).

The event reference for this project, given by the HER is WCM 101970.

2 Aims

The aim of the watching brief was to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

The Brief indicates that significant deposits may be defined as those likely to be of Roman or medieval date.

In particular the project will have the following aims, as identified in *An archaeological resource assessment and research framework for the city of Worcester* (version 2.51, dated September 2007):

- Documenting the extents of Roman Worcester (RP3.30)
- The medieval suburbs (RP5.1)
- Industry and land-use patterns in the suburbs (RP5.14)
- Civil War destruction (RP6.21)

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The fieldwork was undertaken by Peter Lovett (BSc), Tom Vaughan (BA MA AlfA) and Jon Webster (BA). The report preparation was led by Peter Lovett. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan. Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc PG Cert MlfA).

3.2 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER).

3.3 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2012).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 24 April and 28 August 2013. The site reference number and site code is WCM 101970.

All ground intrusions were observed, amounting to just over 25m² in area, and were excavated over the site area of 140m². The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

Observation of all ground works was undertaken. Any such ground reduction was carried out with a toothless grading bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand, with clean surfaces being inspected, in order to determine their nature and significance. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012).

3.4 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

Worcester has been the subject of a recent survey undertaken as part of the Urban Archaeological Strategy (Worcester City Council 2007) and contains a summary of previous archaeological work in the town. The following is based on Worcester City Council (2013):

The site is within the medieval Foregate suburb, and in an area where Roman remains may be present. Roman occupation in the area is principally known from the west side of Foregate Street, extending west towards the River Severn, whilst conjectural evidence has suggested the current road could be on the alignment of a Roman road (WCM 91115).

The Foregate suburb was laid out in the early Norman period, and its south end, from Broad Street north, was characterised by long narrow plots. Some of these were later replaced by the city wall, about 100m south of the site (WCM 96338).

Existing buildings in the suburbs were demolished during the Civil War (Hughes and Leech 2011), and the suburb was rebuilt thereafter. During the 18th and early 19th centuries, most of Foregate Street was rebuilt in brick, apparently becoming one of the finest streets in Europe (Gwilliam 1993). In the mid 19th century, the railway and station replaced further medieval plots.

There has been little archaeological work on the east side of Foregate Street, but an evaluation at Sansome Street, about 70m south-east of the site, revealed medieval and post-medieval cut features and deposits (WCM 100075).

4.2 Current land-use

The site is occupied by a railway station and associated forecourt.

5 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Fig 2. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

No natural deposits were observed.

5.1.2 Phase 2: post-medieval deposits

Along the northern edge of Trench 3C were observed the remains of brick structure 302. This was a solidly built red brick wall, with seven courses visible. It was butted on its western side by silty bedding material 304, upon which lay ramshackle brick structure 303. This was potentially a floor, though it could have been deceptively neat rubble backfill, being that it was so loosely held together.

Trench 2 revealed a red brick structure on its northern edge, 203, and whilst this was at first thought to be associated with the more modern services, with the evidence from Trench 3C, it is probably part of 302. Part of 203 overlaid a very charcoal rich deposit, 204.

Within Trenches 3A and 3B was a large brick structure 305. This was only seen at the base of the trenches, so its full extent was not determined, nor its form or function. It was most likely to be a brick surface or the truncated remnant of a wide wall, but it could potentially have been the top of a vaulted cellar roof.

5.1.3 Phase 3: 19th century deposits

Overlying the post-medieval deposits was a ubiquitous deposit of rubble and sands, 301 (the same as 202). This was considered to be backfill and made ground from the construction of the train station.

5.1.4 Phase 4: Modern deposits

Sat upon made ground 301 was concrete bedding 201, to seat modern tarmac surface 200 and 300. Comparable to 201 were 102 and 103, similarly modern bedding material for cobble sets 101 which comprised the former floor surface across Trench 1.

6 Synthesis

The aims of the brief had included possible discovery of Roman settlement and medieval suburbs, but due to the nature of the ground works, and the depth of the 19th century activity, none was observed. Indeed, the majority of the intrusion revealed nothing but 19th century made ground, albeit including some possible 16th century bricks in the rubble. This was probably the remains of what was pulled down to make way for Foregate Street Station before its completion in 1860.

The earliest archaeological remains were the red brick wall seen in the north of the site in Trench 3C, and which was built, at least partially, from 16th century bricks (S. Robson-Glyde, pers. comm.) Whilst the bricks, measuring approximately 10" x 4" x 2", are likely to predate the Civil War, the building is not. In June 1644, Royalist forces began the razing of buildings along the Foregate and its suburbs, to allow clear line of sight upon the approaching Parliamentarian forces (Hughes & Leech 2011). The post-war rebuilding seems to have included reusing the existing materials, from this evidence. Further redevelopment had taken place between then and the construction of the railway station, as evidenced by the building on the corner of Foregate Street and Pierpoint Street, and in a drawing in Harrison (2011, 23), which shows three buildings later knocked down for the construction of the station. There was a trend at the time for building new facades on existing structures (S. Robson-Glyde, pers. comm.), so the brick formation observed here could have existed as part of an extant building until 1860. There was new construction on the opposite side of the road. In 1834 an *Athenaeum* for the education of the working classes was built so that '...instead of spending their evenings in useless frivolity, or what is worse, dissipation...' they could better themselves (Bentley 1840). This building is now lost under the embankment of the railway line (Hughes & Leech 2011).

Another structure, which could be contemporary with this building, is found to the south, though it is poorly understood in both form and function. Observed at the bottom of two trenches, it showed only a mortar and brick face, and was possibly a surface or part of a truncated wall. However, it gave the impression of have a slight curve to it, and could be the ceiling of a vaulted cellar, though that is uncertain.

Overlying all of these structures was brick rubble made ground, containing bricks of various different sizes, including the aforementioned 16th century ones. This material would have been associated with the construction of the railway station in the middle of the 19th century. It was sealed by surfaces of tarmac and cobble sets.

There were no significant finds recovered, nor were there any deposits worthy of environmental sampling. The structures all remain generally intact, and made ground was, on the whole, the only material removed. This bodes well for the preservation of post-Civil War remains, especially in the north of the site, whilst the survival of medieval or Roman archaeology is dependent on the nature of the post-medieval intrusion, and cannot be determined from this investigation.

7 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

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8 Acknowledgements

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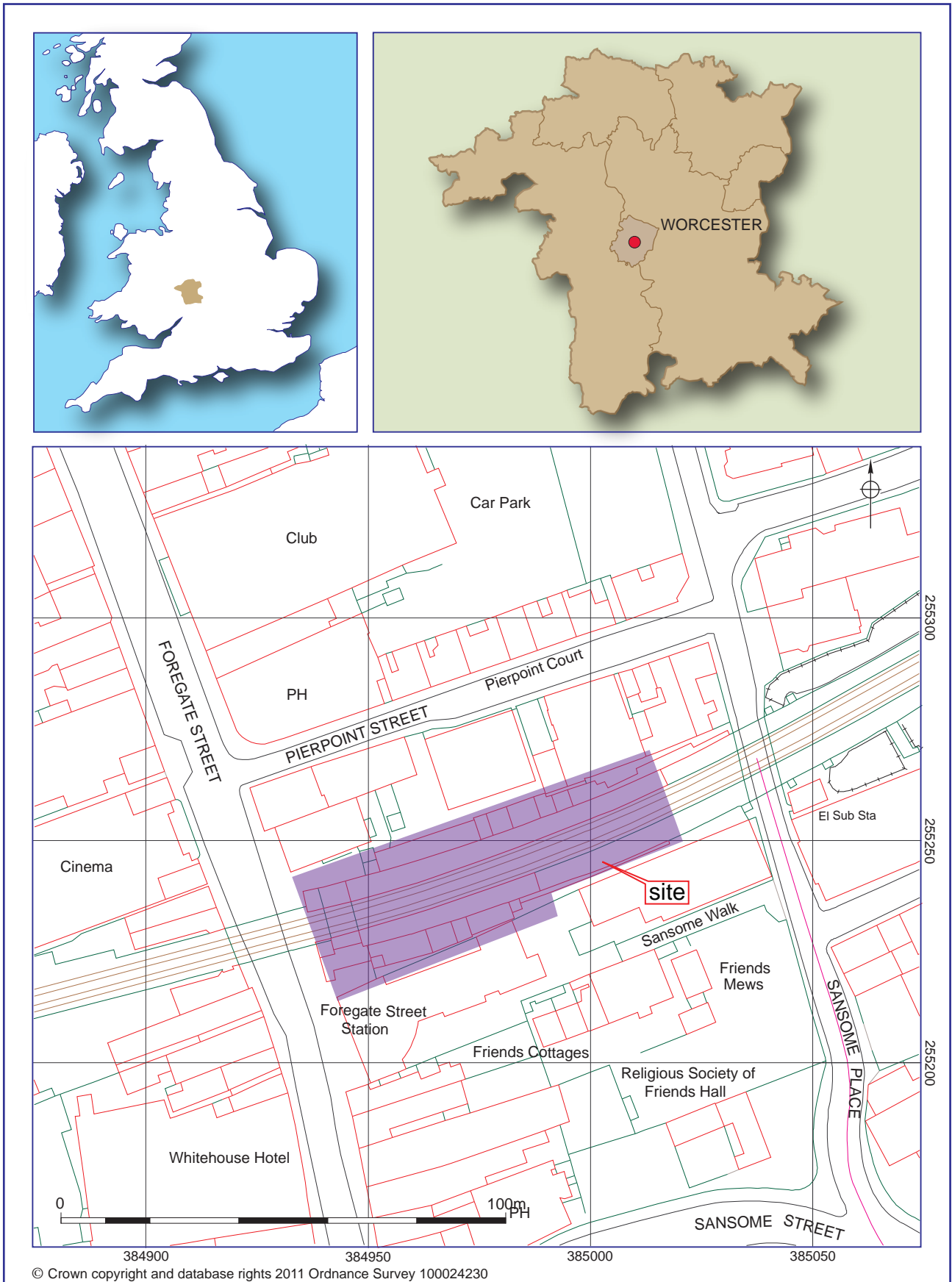
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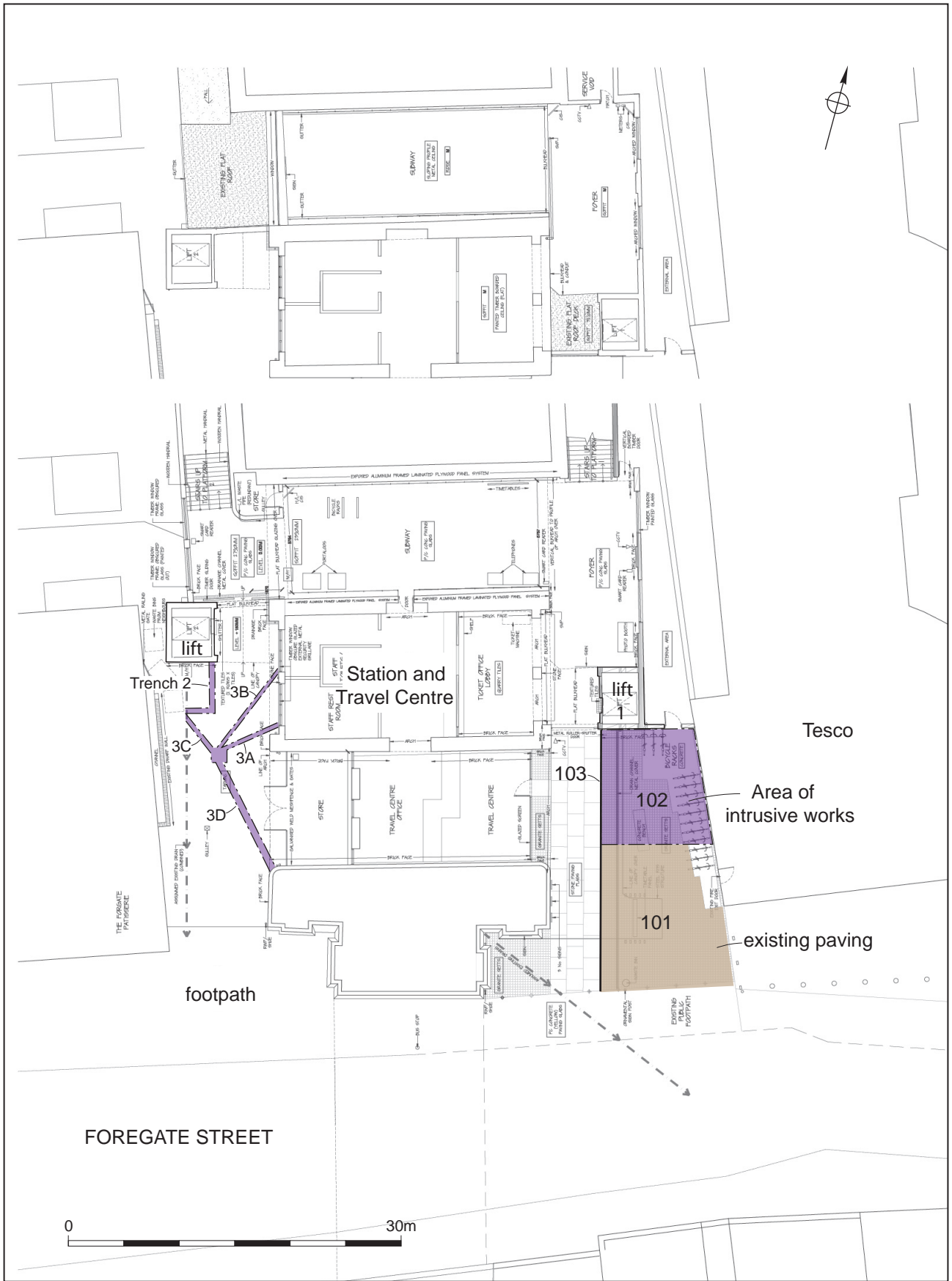
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Figures



Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench location plan (based upon Halcrow Drg.TM/C/WFS/12/110)

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1 The Southern entrance looking south-west to Trench 1



Plate 2 Northern entrance, Trench 2 looking south-east



Plate 3 Trench 3C, looking north-east. Brick structure 302 in left section



Plate 4 Trench 3C, looking north. Structures 302 and 303 in section



Plate 5 Trench 3B looking north-west. Showing brick slab 305

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Site area: South Entrance

Maximum dimensions: Length: 8m Width: 8m Depth: 0.13m

Orientation: n/a

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
101	Modern Surface	Square cobbles 0.13m ³ , made of mid blueish grey silt-based geology.	0-0.13m
102	Bedding	Light greyish yellow sand and concrete crush mix. Bedding layer for 101.	0.13m+
103	Make up	Very compact dark greyish brown sandy silt.	0.2m

Trench 2

Site area: North Entrance

Maximum dimensions: Length: 3m Width: 0.45m Depth: 0.9m

Orientation: N-S and E-W

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Modern Surface	Tarmac	0-0.08m
201	Concrete	Bedding for tarmac 200	0.08-0.2m
202	Made ground	Mid greyish brown silty sand with freq brick rubble and stone. Made ground associated with the construction of the train station.	0.2m-0.7m
203	Structure	Brick chamber/wall at N end of trench. Brick dims 270mm L x 70mm D. Likely to be same as 302.	
204	Make up	Mid brownish grey sandy silt with freq ash and charcoal. Below 203. Probably variant in make up material.	

Trench 3

Site area: North Entrance

Maximum dimensions: Length: 16.6m Width: 0.45m Depth: 0.5m

Orientation: A = NNW-SSE, B = NW-SE, C = NE-SW, D = NE-SW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Modern Surface	Tarmac	0-0.08m
301	Made ground	Mixed greyish brown silty sand rubble	0.08-0.5m
302	Structure	7 course high brick ?butress. Brick dims 250mm L x 100mm W x 50mm D. Structure dims 0.8m W x o.42m H.	0.1m-0.5m
303	Structure	Brick structure, poorly laid. 3 courses high. Seen in section only.	
304	Make up	Soft mid reddish brown silty sand, sits below str 303. Bedding material?	
305	Structure	Brick slab observed in trenches A and B. Vaulted cellar? Unlikely.	0.5m bgs

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM 101970)

The archive consists of:

- 6 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 36 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 2 Scale drawings
- 3 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcester City Museum and Art Gallery
Museums Worcestershire
Foregate Street
Worcester
WR1 2PW

Tel. Worcester (01905) 25371
