

Archaeological Watching Brief at Unit C5 and Chapel Walk, Crowngate Shopping Centre, Worcester



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James Wilkins

With contributions by Rob Hedge (pers comm)

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Unit C5 and Chapel Walk, Crowngate Shopping Centre, Worcester (NGR SO 8494 5485). It was commissioned by Tuffin Ferraby Taylor LLP on behalf of The Crown Estate, in advance of the excavation of a new gas supply trench, for which Scheduled Monument Consent has been granted by Historic England (letter dated 8 February 2016).

A single trench of c24.50m in length was excavated to a depth of 0.44m-0.58m below ground surface. No significant archaeological features or deposits were observed. Two modern, rubble filled layers containing residual pottery and tile were observed, considered likely to relate to the construction of the Crowngate shopping centre in the late 1980s. No remains associated with the Roman, medieval, and post-medieval settlement activity revealed during the Site 1 Deansway excavations adjacent were identified; neither was a 19th century soil horizon, identified during adjacent investigations in 2014.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Unit C5 and Chapel Walk, Crowngate Shopping Centre, Worcester (NGR SO 8494 5485). It was commissioned by Tuffin Ferraby Taylor LLP, on behalf of The Crown Estate, in advance of the excavation of a new gas supply trench, for which Scheduled Monument Consent has been granted by Historic England (letter dated 8 February 2016).

The site lies within the Scheduled Monument and is considered to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, the significance of which may be affected by the application (WCM 100801, Scheduled Monument No: SM WT 343 A-E, HA 1005277).

No specific brief has been prepared by the curator but this project conforms to the generality of briefs which have previously been issued, and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2016).

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014), and to the *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 102152.

2 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible within the constraints of the development's groundworks.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Jamie Wilkins (BA (hons.)); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2015. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan (BA (hons.); MA; ACIfA). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA). Robert Hedge (MA Cantab) analysed the finds.

3.2 Documentary research

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

3.3 List of sources consulted

Documentary sources

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

3.4 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2016).

Site monitoring was undertaken between 28 February and 3 March 2016. Excavations were restricted to the hours between 10.00pm and 8.00am so as to cause the least amount of disruption to the shopping centre and neighbouring restaurants.

Interventions consisted of a single gas supply trench, amounting to just over c12.25m² in area and c24.5m in length. It was excavated by hand after the paving slabs had been lifted, and the modern concrete broken out. The location of the trench is indicated in Figure 2. The requirements of the site meant that only a small stretch of the trench could be excavated at a time. This was to provide

sufficient time for the excavated area to be backfilled and the paving slabs to be reinstated for 8.00am each morning.

Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). The site reference number and site code is WCM 102152.

3.5 Artefact methodology

3.5.1 Artefact recovery policy

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012; appendix 2).

3.6 Environmental archaeology methodology

3.6.1 Sampling policy

Sampling was as per standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no deposits were observed which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

3.7 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The underlying geology of the site is mapped as Sidmouth Mudstone Formation overlain by superficial sand and gravel deposits of the Worcester Member (BGS 2014) and was located at a depth of 20.00m AOD in the previous excavations in 1988-89.

The site lies within a Scheduled Monument (ref SM WT 343 A-E; HA 1005277). Deansway Site 1 lay to the immediate north-west of the present groundworks. It was excavated prior to the current shopping centre development in the late 1980s and extensive Roman, medieval and post-medieval settlement activity was found. It is unclear at what depth from the modern ground surface these remains were identified (Dalwood and Edwards 2004). Groundworks for the insertion of trees in Bell Square were monitored by Worcestershire Archaeology in 2010. These reached a maximum depth of 1.10-1.20m below the current ground level (i.e. c 20.45-20.55m AOD) and did not expose any archaeological remains of significance (Arnold and Curran 2010).

More recently, a watching brief was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology in 2014 which monitored alterations to existing street furniture and service trenches. This project exposed a 19th century soil horizon at 1.02m below ground surface, and a red sandstone ashlar block which was undated but may provide evidence for the survival of structural remains within the vicinity (Arnold and Vaughan 2014).

4.2 Current land-use

The site is currently an open area within the Crowngate shopping centre complex. It is covered by paving slabs and is used as a pedestrian walkway. The Countess of Huntingdon Hall lies to the west and Carluccio's restaurant lies immediately to the east.

5 Structural analysis

The plan of Trench 1 is shown in Figure 2. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Modern

All deposits observed were modern, belonging to either the 20th or 21st century.

Of the deposits excavated, a significant quantity consisted of the hardcore associated with the surface paving, which in some areas reached a depth of 0.36m below ground surface.

Across the trench, various services were observed. These ranged from a depth of 0.15m to 0.45m below ground surface. These services are detailed in Figure 2, and include gas, electric and a storm drain. The service trenches were seen to cut through the lower (but still modern) deposits (102) and (103).

Below the hardcore for the paving slabs, two distinct rubble-filled layers were observed (Plates 5 and 6). The upper deposit (102) consisted of an orangey brown mix of silty sand and contained frequent rubble inclusions. Beneath this layer a much darker blackish brown silty sand deposit (103) was observed. Both deposits contained a mix of residual post-medieval ceramics and modern waste. The lower deposit (103) also contained a roof tile fragment which possibly dates to the 15th or 16th centuries, and is an indicator of the medieval settlement within this vicinity. It is likely that both these layers are of a similar modern date and relate to the construction of the shopping centre in the late 1980s.

5.2 Artefact analysis, by Rob Hedge

A small sample of artefactual material from deposits (102) and (103) was retained. Both of these deposits comprised modern made ground containing 20th century construction debris alongside small quantities of earlier material. From (102), a 27g body sherd of 18th century redware (fabric 78), a fragment of thin post-medieval (16th to 18th century) brick, possibly a paving brick, and a piece of late 19th to 20th century roof tile were retained.

Deposit (103) contained a fragment of 19th or early 20th century engineering brick and 101g piece of (fabric 2c) roof tile: this is considered to have been manufactured in the earlier part of the range for this fabric and is thus likely to be late 15th or 16th century in date.

6 Conclusion

No significant archaeological features or deposits were observed within the trench. Two distinct layers of rubble made ground were observed at the north end of the trench; however, both layers contained modern material. These deposits also contained some earlier (15th to 18th century) residual tile and pottery, which are indicators of the medieval and post-medieval settlement activity within this vicinity. However, considering that these artefacts were recovered from modern deposits, it is possible that they have been brought in from other locations, as part of a rubble deposit required to level the ground immediately prior to construction of the Crowngate shopping centre in the late 1980s.

A 19th century soil horizon which was previously identified c10m to the north-west was not observed, however, this is unsurprising as it was located 1.02m below ground surface (Arnold and Vaughan 2014). The previous settlement activity identified during the Deansway excavations (Dalwood and Edwards 2004) was neither observed nor affected.

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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A single trench of c 24.50m in length was excavated to a depth of 0.44m-0.58m below ground surface. No significant archaeological features or deposits were observed. Two modern, rubble filled layers containing residual pottery and tile were observed, considered likely to relate to the construction of the Crowngate shopping centre in the late 1980s. No remains associated with the Roman, medieval, and post-medieval settlement activity revealed during the Site 1 Deansway excavations adjacent were identified; neither was a 19th century soil horizon, identified during adjacent investigations in 2014.

8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Mark Rossiter (MDG Rossiter), Jonathan Williams (Tuffin Ferraby Taylor LLP), Ian George (Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Historic England), and James Dinn (Archaeological Officer, Worcester City Council).

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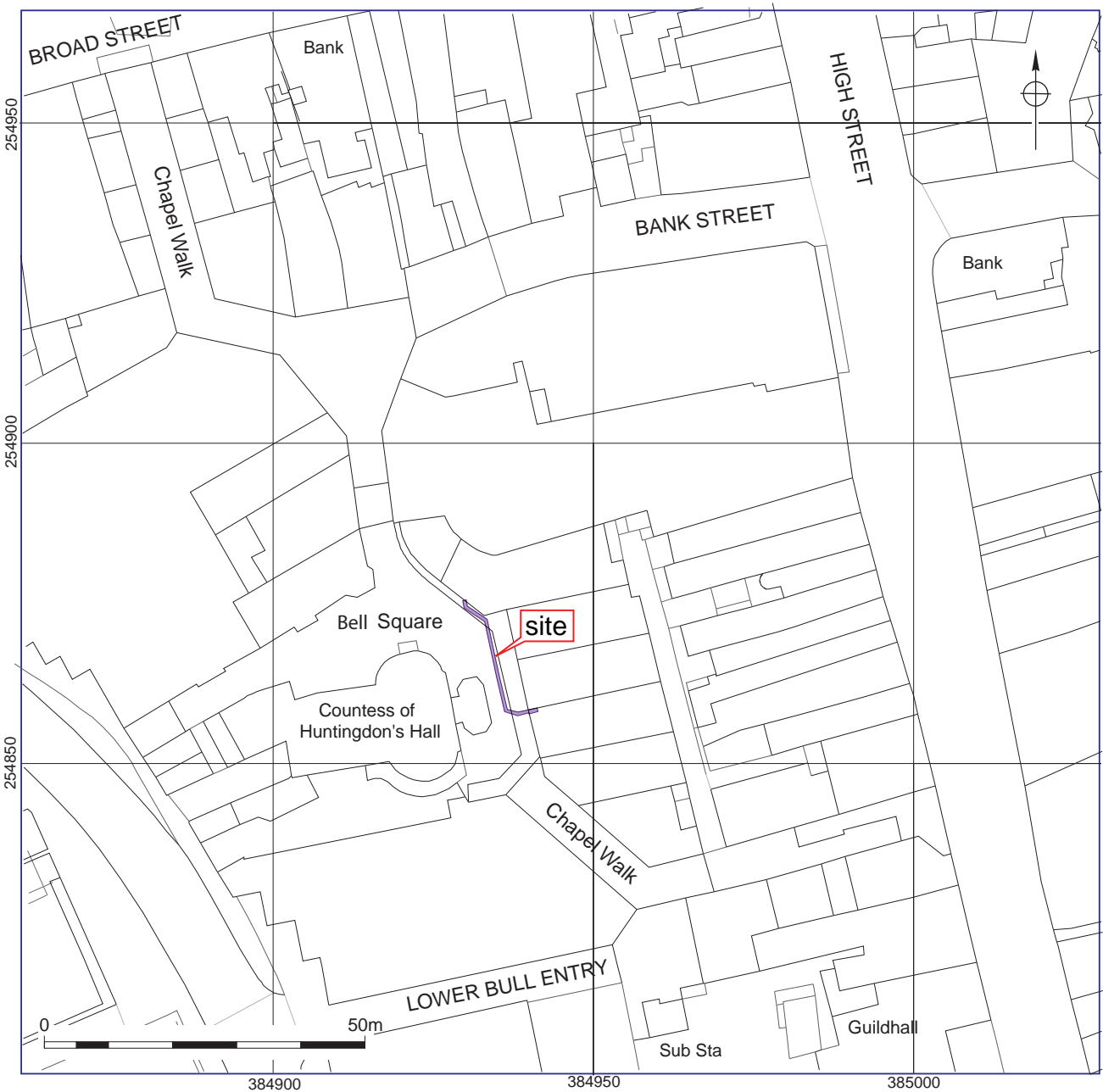
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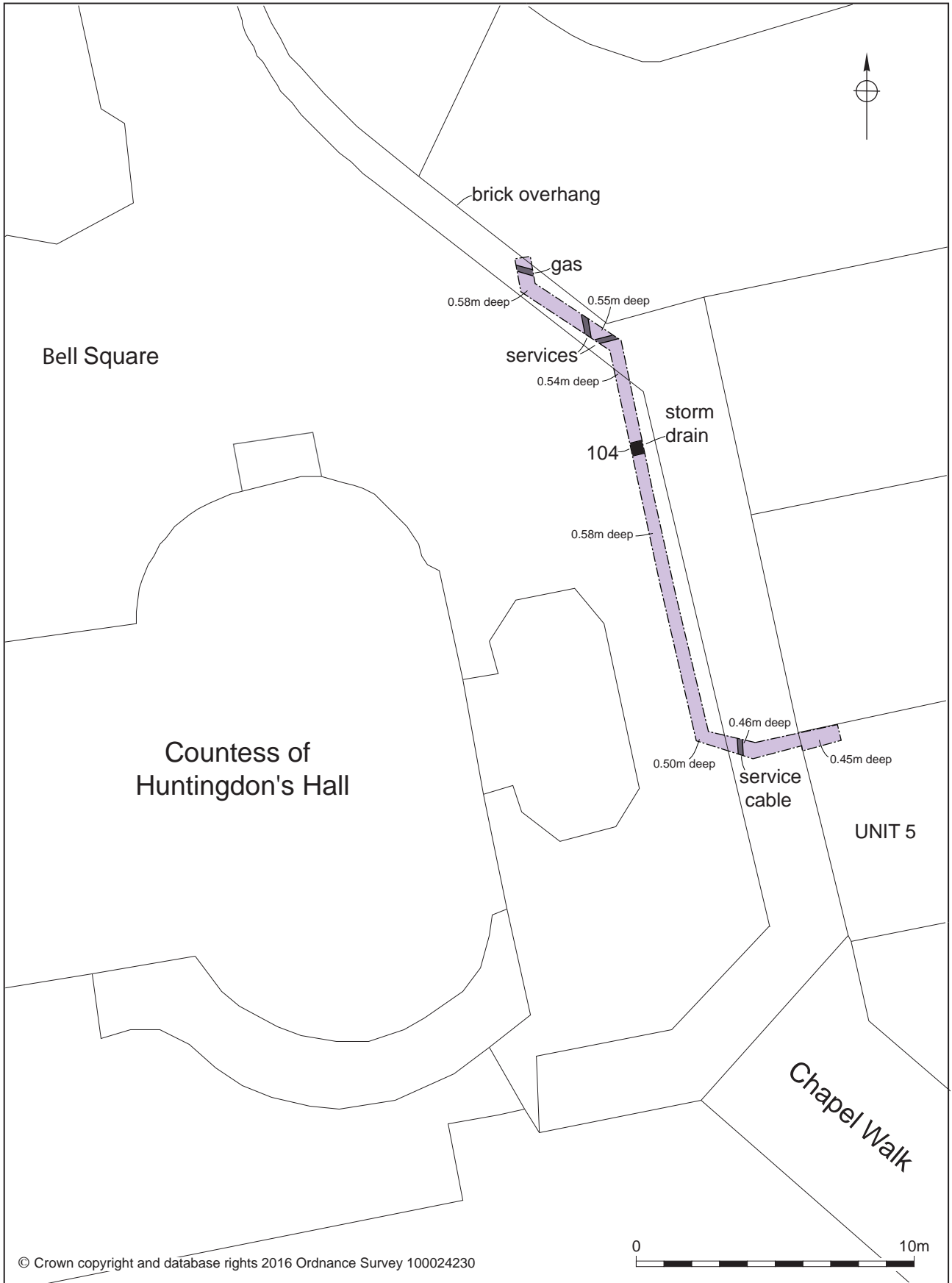
Figures



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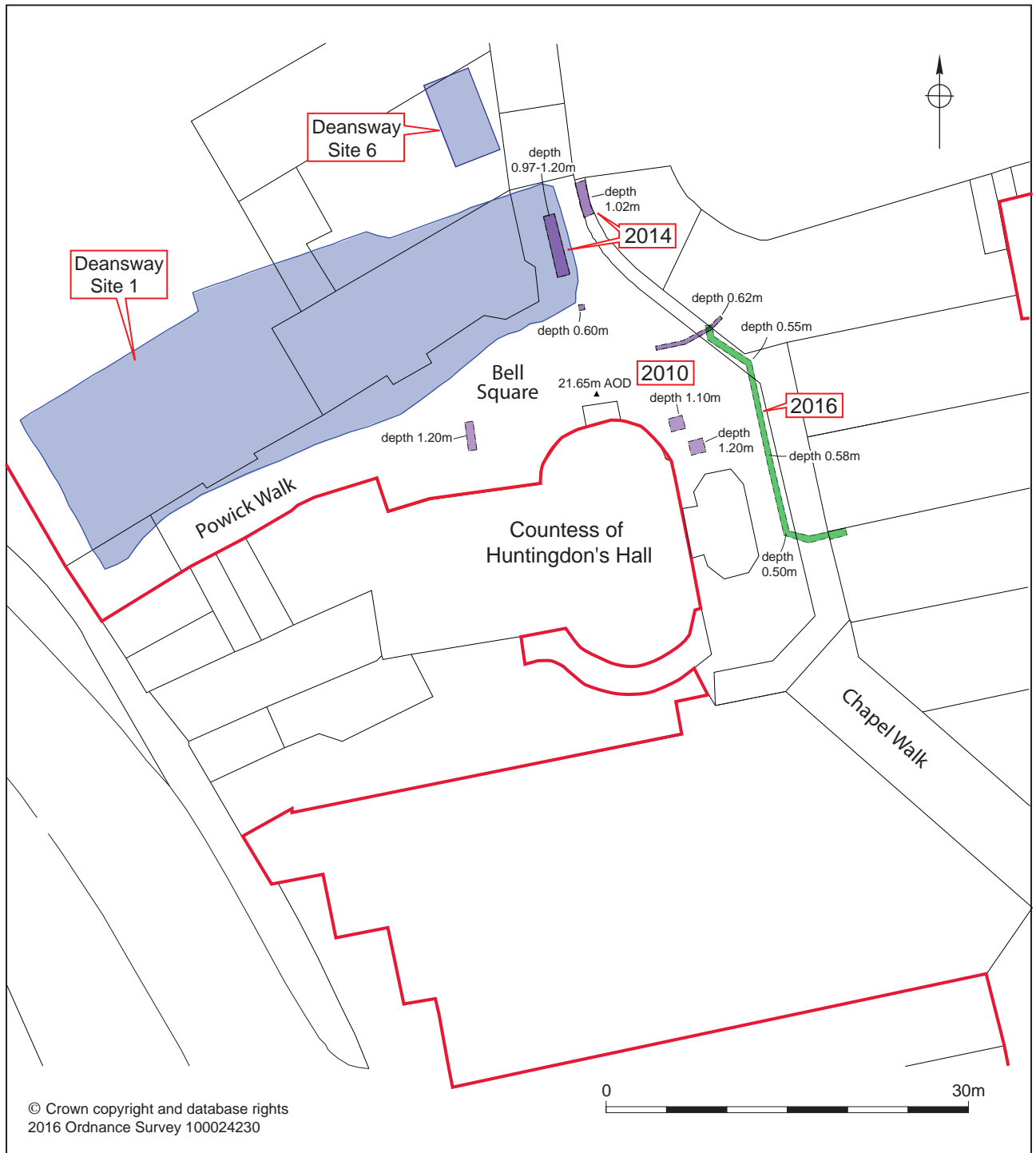
Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench location plan

Figure 2



All areas of archaeological intervention undertaken to date

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1 Location of Trench 1 within Chapel Walk, view south-east

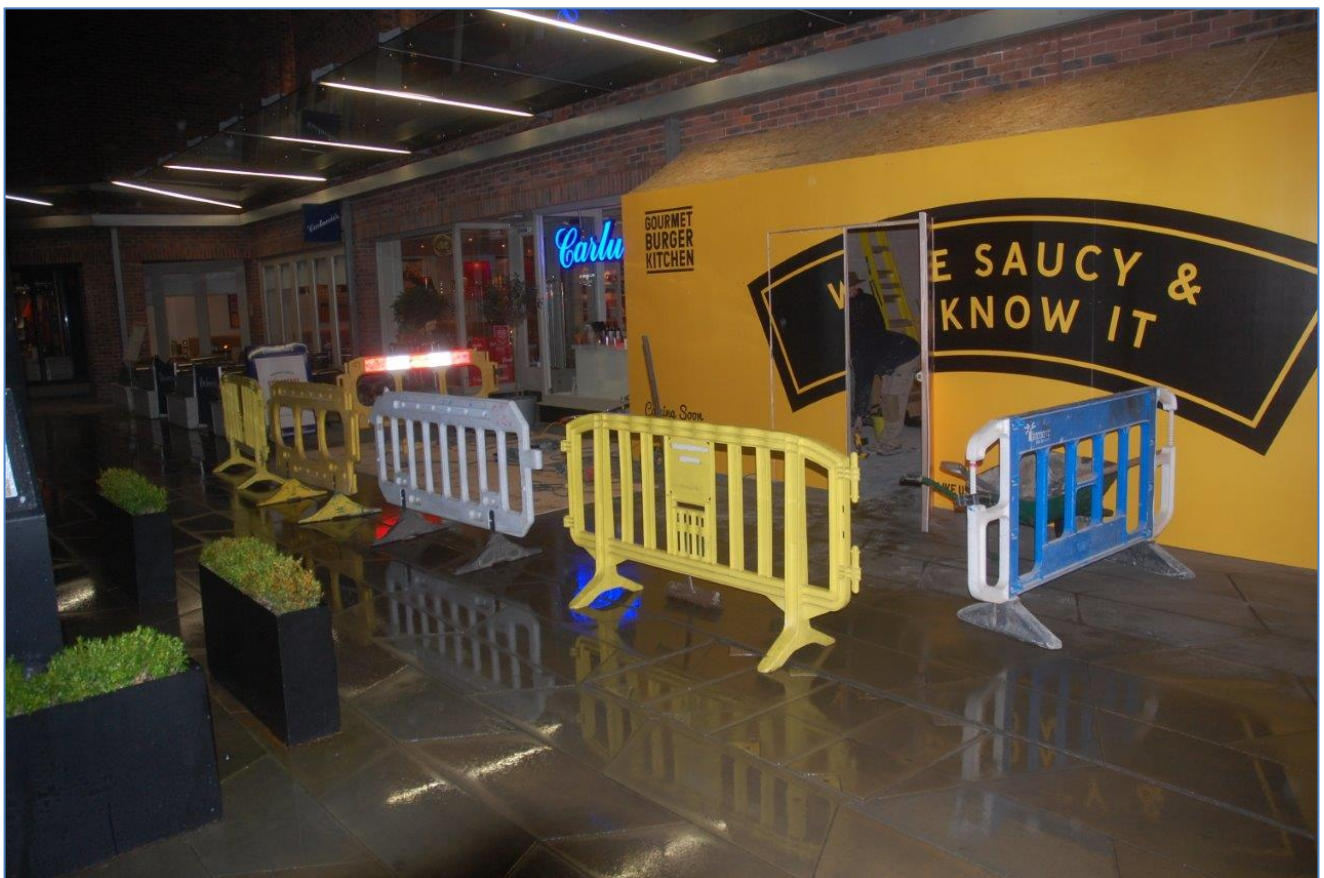


Plate 2 Location of Trench 1 and Unit C5, view north-east



Plate 3 northern c7m stretch of Trench 1, scale 1m, view north



Plate 4 southern c7m stretch of Trench 1, scale 1m, view north



Plate 5 rubble deposits 102 and 103 below hard-core 101, scale 1m, view west



Plate 6 rubble deposits 102 and 103 below hard-core 101, scale 0.5m, view west



Plate 7 rubble deposit / made-ground 102 at south end of Trench 1, scale 0.5m, view west



Plate 8 rubble deposit / made-ground 102 at south end of Trench 1, scale 1m, view west



Plate 9 NW-SE stretch at northern end of Trench 1, scale 1m, view east



Plate 10 northern end of Trench 1 and area of new gas connection, scale 1m, view west

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: c24.5m Width: 0.4m-0.6m Depth: 0.44m-0.58m

Orientation: N-S, E-W, NW-SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Paving	Grey paving slabs for the pedestrian walkway.	0.07m
101	Hard-core	Firm, mid-orangey brown, sub-rounded pebbles and rubble in a sandy matrix. This is a hard-core layer laid down for the support of the paving.	0.07m-0.36m
102	Made-ground	Loose, dark/mid-orangey brown, silty sand containing frequent rubble, CBM, pottery, charcoal flecks and modern waste including plastic and steel. A rubble / made-ground layer that likely dates to the construction of the shopping centre.	0.36m-0.58m
103	Made-ground	Loose, dark blackish brown, silty sand containing frequent rubble, CBM and glass. Located at the northern end of trench 1. Likely a localised dump of material similar to (102).	0.31m-0.58m
104	Services	Arbitrary number assigned to various modern services across site – electric, gas, and storm drains.	c0.15m-0.40m+
105	Cut for Services	Arbitrary number assigned to the cuts for the various modern services. Can be seen to cut the made-ground (102) and (103).	c0.15m-0.40m+

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code: WCM 102152)

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 52 Digital photographs
- 1 Scale drawings
- 1 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 Art Gallery and Museum
Museums Worcestershire
Foregate Street
Worcester
WR1 2PW

Tel. Worcester (01905) 25371
