

Archaeological investigations at The Proposed Art House, Castle Street, Worcester



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Archaeological Investigations at the Proposed Art House, Castle Street, Worcester

Graham Arnold (project leader)

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological evaluation and a watching brief carried out on site investigation works was undertaken at the proposed Art House, Castle Street, Worcester (NGR 384631 255364). It was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting, for their client The University of Worcester, who intend to refurbish and extend a Grade II listed building and car park for which a planning application is in preparation.

The site lies to the north of the historic centre of Worcester on the northern side of Castle Street approximately 245m east of the River Severn. The Grade II listed former H A Saunders garage is located within the study site.

Previous excavations on the site of the Royal Infirmary to the south of the site and at the Police Station and Magistrates Court on Castle Street have demonstrated the survival of Roman remains and the potential for the survival of remains of this period within the site was identified in a desk-based assessment.

The assessment also identified the potential for the survival of remains related to the former County Gaol which stood on Castle Street between the early 19th and early 20th Centuries and the remains of houses which formerly stood on Easy Row, a street immediately west of the site.

Site investigation works were monitored and two evaluation trenches were excavated in a former car park to the west of the garage building. A layer of demolition material was recorded overlying natural ground at 0.40m below the ground surface in both evaluation trenches and site investigation works within the car park. Test pits and a sondage within one evaluation trench confirmed the presence of Mercia mudstone underlying the terrace deposits at a depth of 1m.

The evaluation established that the ground had been scarped into the terrace deposits prior to the construction of the car park. A brick wall within a test pit on the street frontage was interpreted as the remains of a backfilled cellar from one of the houses which formerly stood on Easy Row. A fragment of granite masonry was found within the cellar backfill that may have originated from the 19th Century gaol. Site investigation works within and adjacent to the former garage building revealed the foundations of the building but no significant archaeological remains were recorded.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation and monitoring of site investigation test pits was undertaken at the proposed Art House, Castle Street, Worcester (NGR 384631 255364). It was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting, for their client The University of Worcester, who intend to refurbish and extend the Grade II listed building and car park for which a planning application will be submitted.

Consultation by University of Worcester and by CgMs Consulting with Worcester City Council's Archaeology Officer established that a programme of archaeological evaluation trial-trenching would be required to determine a planning application.

A Written Scheme of Investigation setting out a methodology for this programme was produced by CgMs Consulting (CgMs 2016a) and a subsequent Written Scheme of Investigation specific to Worcestershire Archaeology was produced (WA 2016). Both were approved by Worcester City Council's Archaeology Officer prior to the commencement of works.

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014a); *Standard and guidance: Archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a), *Statement of standards and practices appropriate for archaeological fieldwork in Worcester* (Worcester City Council 1999).

The event reference for this project, given by the Historic Environment Record (HER) is WCM 102214 and 102215.

2 Aims

The aims of this programme of works were:

- to establish the presence/absence, extent and character of any archaeological evidence on the site and to consider the archaeological interest of these in a wider context.
- to generate an accessible and useable archive which will allow future research of the evidence to be undertaken if appropriate.
- to disseminate the results of the work in a format and manner proportionate to the significance of the findings.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Graham Arnold (BA (hons.), MSc), who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2009 and has been practicing archaeology since 2002, assisted by Tom Rogers (BA (hons.); MSc). The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers. Simon Woodiwiss (BA (hons.); MClfA) undertook the watching brief, monitoring site investigation test pits. Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MClfA), Laura Templeton (BA; PG Cert; MClfA).

3.2 Documentary research

An archaeological desk-based assessment and Impact Assessment (DBA) was undertaken on behalf of University of Worcester by CgMs Consulting prior to the works. The DBA concluded that there was a potential for Roman features of local interest to be present. The potential for the survival of remains of the 19th Century prison structural features and properties along Easy Row was also identified (CgMs 2016b).

3.3 Fieldwork strategy

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

Fieldwork was undertaken between 3rd and 10th October 2016. The site reference number and site code is WCM 102214 and 102215.

The watching brief element comprised the monitoring of six trial-pits, two window sample boreholes and three cable percussion boreholes excavated as site investigation works associated with the development. The test pits were excavated within the building, adjacent to the building's frontage and in a former car park to the west (Figure 2).

In the subsequent evaluation, two trenches, amounting to just over 23m² in area, were excavated within the car park. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. In the event no artefacts were identified, and no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

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.

3.5 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 site has been subject to a desk-based assessment and the topographic and historical background presented in that report is summarised below:

The solid geology of the study site is Mudstone of the Sidmouth Mudstone Formation. Superficial deposits of Worcester Member Sand and Gravel are recorded on the study site (British Geological Survey Map 199, 1993). The study site itself comprises an irregular shaped parcel of land on elevated ground located to the east of the River Severn floodplain. It is occupied by the Grade II listed Former H A Saunders Garage.

Current evidence shows that the study site is located within the extent of the Roman small town at Worcester. Extensive evidence for Roman occupation has been recorded in the vicinity, at the Police Station and Magistrates Court (WCM 100398, WCM 100540, Edwards et al 2002), Former County Education Offices 20m southeast of the site (WCM 100191), Worcester Royal Infirmary, 20m south of the site (WCM 101625 Sworn et. al. 2014), Farrier Street, 145m south east of the site ((WCM 98659) and the Butts, 200m south of the site (WCM 101653, Bradley 2015).

Current evidence shows that the study site comprised agricultural land until the early 19th century when the city Gaol was built. Cartographic evidence demonstrates that the gaol was redeveloped and altered a number of times before its demolition in the early 20th century. A brick-built garage with an impressive clock tower was then built on the site.

A tunnel is known to have existed linking the gaol within the study site to a basement in the former Worcester Royal Infirmary, located approximately 20m to the south. The tunnel is believed to have been used to securely transport inmates in need of medical attention to the hospital. It may also have been used to provide the hospital with cadavers for medical research. The northern entrance is known to be present in the basement of the building currently present on the study site, and the southern entrance to the tunnel was identified in a boiler room in the north-western part of the Infirmary as part of a historic building recording.

Residential properties on Easy Row were developed in the western part of the study site before the mid-1840s. Archaeological monitoring of groundworks on Easy Row to the north of the study site indicated that the area had been heavily cellared and that any earlier deposits had been removed (Lockett 2001).

4.2 Current land-use

The site comprises the brick built former garage, latterly a furnishings shop, with associated car parking to the south and west. The evaluation and some site investigation works, were undertaken in the car park of the former furnishings shop to the west.

5 Results

5.1 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

The natural strata of river terrace sands and gravels (102, 202, 304, 703) were recorded at a depth of 0.40m below ground level in both evaluation trenches and in Test Pits 3, 7 and 8. Weathered Sidmouth Mudstone was recorded at 1.00m below ground level in a *sondage* at the western end of Trench 2 (Plate 5) and also within Test Pits 3 and 4 (203, 306, 405).

5.1.2 Phase 2: 19th Century deposits

A brick wall (404), interpreted as the remains of a cellar was present in Test Pit 4 (Plate 1) at the street frontage of the car park. It was recorded at a maximum depth of 1.05m beneath the present ground surface. A fragment of granite masonry (Plate 2) was present within the cellar backfill (403) that may have originated from the 19th Century gaol.

5.1.3 Phase 3: Modern deposits

The natural river terrace sands and gravels were overlaid with a brick hardcore within a dark blackish grey clay matrix (101, 201). Both evaluation trenches and test pits within the car park were overlain by a thin layer of tarmac (101,201, 301, 401, 801), whereas those closer to the former garage building were sealed by a surface of light grey concrete (601,6001, 701).

Concrete and brick foundations of the garage were recorded in Test Pits 3, 6a and 6b.

6 Synthesis

No archaeologically significant features were uncovered in the watching brief carried out on the site investigation works or in the two trenches opened in the evaluation. The upper layers of the evaluation trenches comprised sand mixed with some demolition material, largely bricks, which were presumably the remains of the fabric of the former Easy Row terraced houses, but no structural elements remained and it is clear that level of the western part of the site was reduced when the houses were demolished or when the car park was constructed.

The 1st edition 1:500 Ordnance Survey of the site (Figure 3) shows that the houses along Easy Row were reached by a set of steps from the street level and on the Castle Street side and that furthermore another set of steps led to the front door. This would imply that the ground level on

which house and gardens stood was higher than present and that the site was later scarped into the terrace to create level ground accessible from Castle Street. This tallies with the results of a watching brief carried out on Easy Row to the north of the site. Brick walls within Test Pit 4 on the street frontage were the remains of a backfilled cellar probably that of the southernmost house facing onto Easy Row and granite masonry within the backfill may represent the only remains of the County Gaol recorded during these investigations.

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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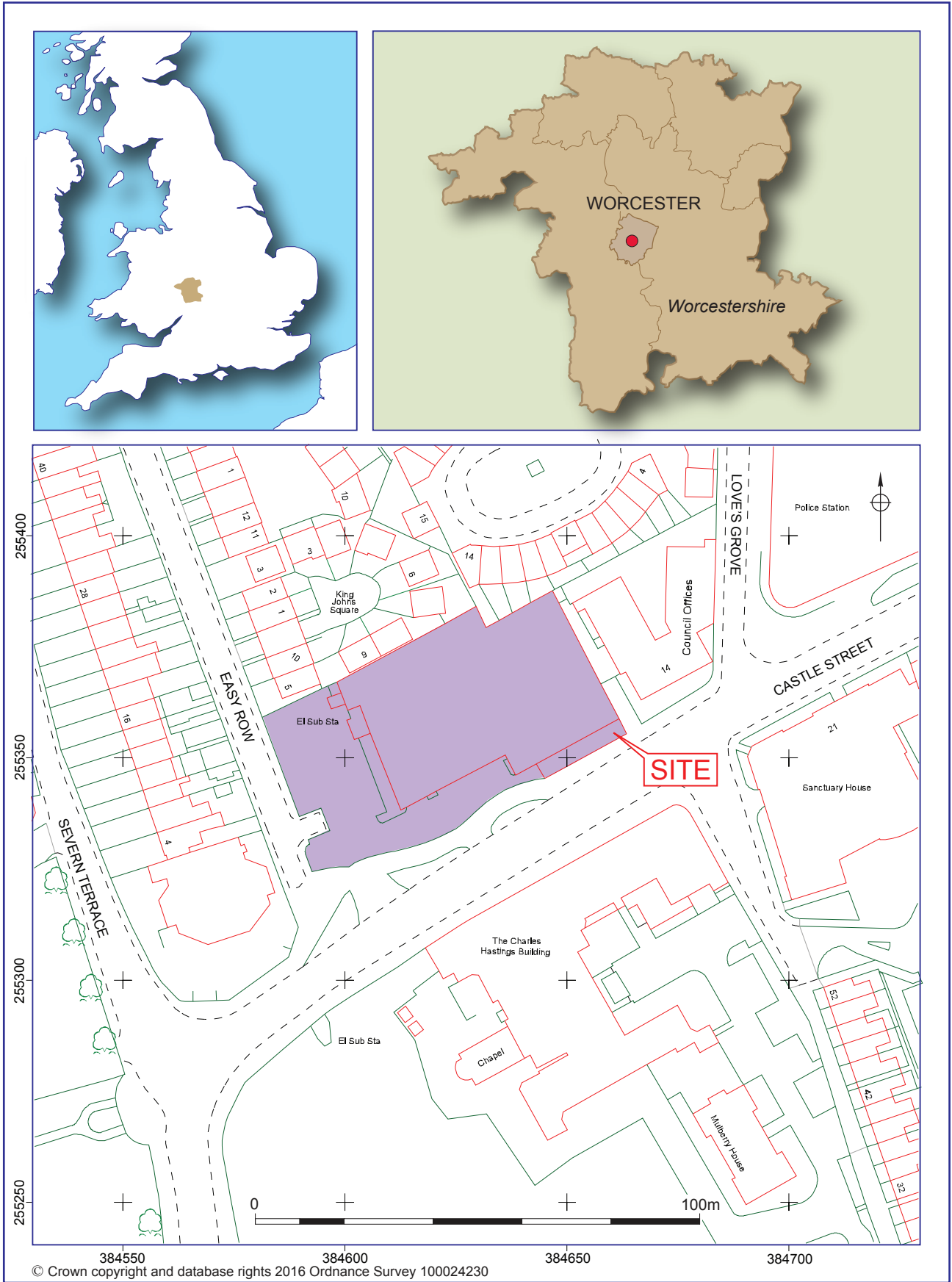
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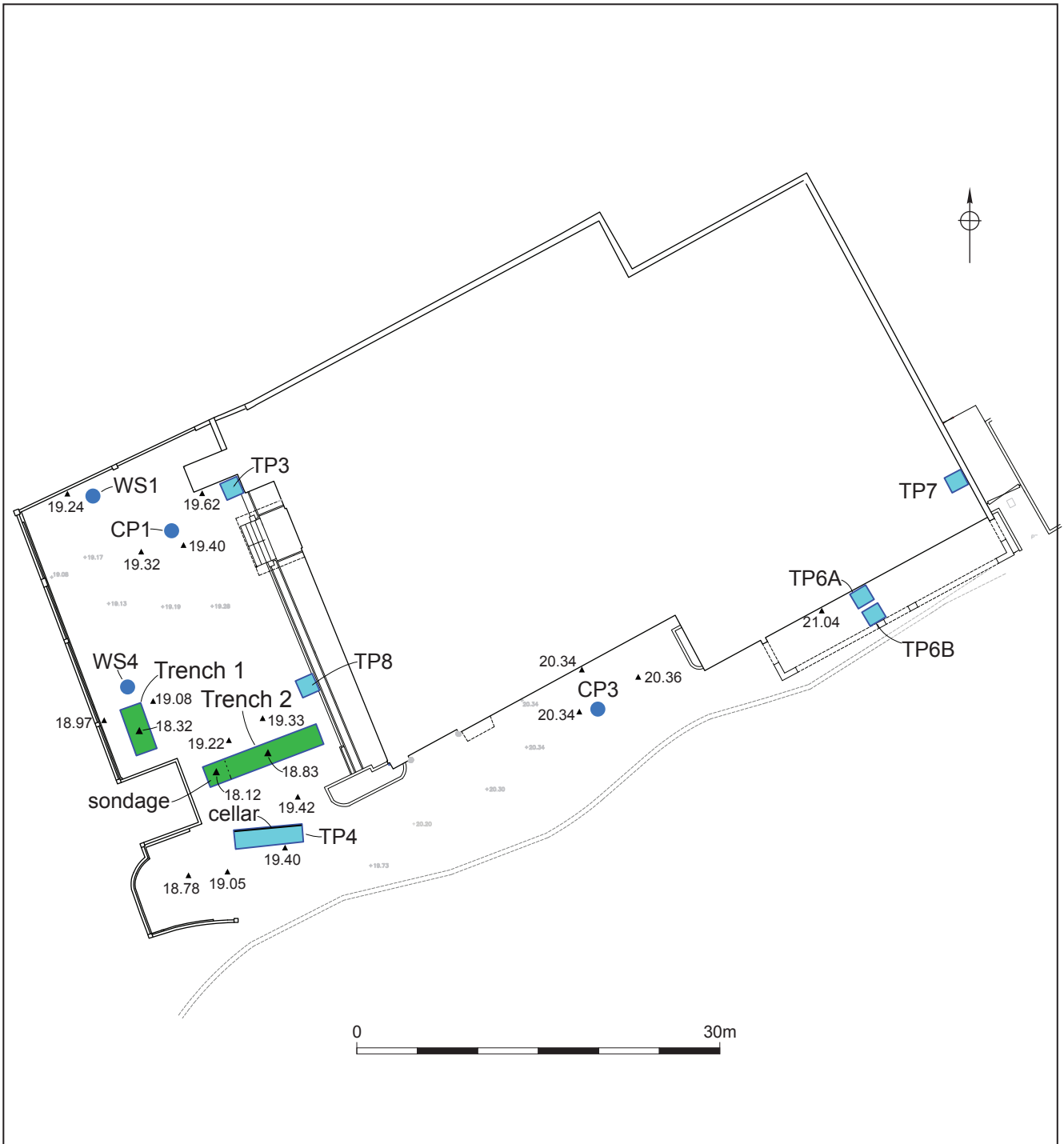
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Figures

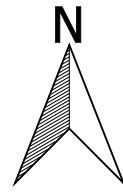


Location of the site

Figure 1



Location of evaluation trenches and monitored site investigations (based upon CgMs Figure 3) Figure 2



1:500 1st Edition OS Map

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1 Brick wall of cellar in Test Pit 4



Plate 2 Granite masonry found in backfill of cellar in Test Pit 4



Plate 3 Trench 1 looking south after excavation



Plate 4 South facing section of trench 1 showing modern car park deposits overlying natural sand



Plate 5 North facing section of trench 1 showing modern deposits overlying natural sands



Plate 6 East facing section of Trench 2 sondage onto Sidmouth Mudstone, overlain by sands and modern deposits.



Plate 7 Trench 2 looking east showing sondage at west end of trench and natural gravel bands



Plate 8 Location of Trench 2 and Test Pit 4 looking northeast after backfilling trenches

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 4.00m Width: 1.60m Depth: 0.65m

Orientation: North - South

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Car park Surface	Black tarmac car park surface	0.00-0.05m
101	Car park Hardcore	Modern brick hardcore in a firm dark blackish grey clay matrix	0.05 – 0.40m
102	Natural	Soft reddish orange sand with occasional gravels, mottling, and bands of yellow sands. Worcester Member Sands and gravels	0.40 – 0.65m

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 10.00m Width: 1.60m Depth: 0.50m + 1.10m sondage

Orientation: East - West

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Car park Surface	Black tarmac car park surface	0.00-0.05m
101	Car park Hardcore	Modern brick hardcore in a firm dark blackish grey clay matrix	0.05 – 0.25m
102	Natural	Soft reddish orange sand with occasional gravels, mottling, and bands of yellow sands. Worcester Member Sands and gravels	0.25 – 1.00m
103	Natural	Solid Sidmouth Mudstone	1.00m +

Site Investigation Test Pits, Window Samples and Cable Percussion Boreholes

Test Pits

TP3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 0.50m Width: 0.28m Depth: 1.10m

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
301	Tarmac	Black tarmac car park surface	0.00-0.30m
302	Surface Foundation	Concrete fragments and brick rubble	0.30 – 0.45m
303	Layer	Mid brown sand with frequent brick fragments, charcoal and pebbles	0.45 – 0.57m
304	Natural	Light orangey brown sand with occasional pebbles	0.57 - 1.10m
305	Wall footing	Brick wall	0 – 1.10m
306	Natural	Weathered Solid Sidmouth Mudstone	1.10 – 2.50m

TP4

Maximum dimensions: Length: 1.90m Width: 0.85m Depth: 3.00m

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
401	Tarmac	Black tarmac car park surface	0.00-0.09m
402	Hardcore underlay	Light grey type 1 road stone chippings	0.09 – 0.23m
403	Backfill of cellar	Loose rubble with bricks, concrete and occasional granite masonry in brown sand matrix.	0.23 - 1.05m
404	Wall	Brick wall of cellar	0.50 – 1.05m
405	Natural	Weathered Solid Sidmouth Mudstone	1.10 – 2.50m

TP6a

Maximum dimensions: Length: 0.60m Width: 0.28m Depth: 0.91m

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
601	Surface	Light grey concrete	0.00-0.16m
602	Layer	Loose mid brown sand with moderate pebbles and brick fragments	0.16 – 0.80m
603	Foundation	Concrete foundation for brick wall 604	0.80 - 0.91m
604	Wall	Brick wall of building	0.00 – 0.80m

TP6b

Maximum dimensions: Length: 0.40m Width: 0.30m Depth: 1.06m

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
6001	Surface	Light grey concrete	0.00-0.10m
6002	Layer	Loose mid brown sand with moderate pebbles and brick fragments	0.10 – 0.84m
6003	Column	Red brick column of building	0.00 – 0.84m
6004	Wall	Concrete foundation for column of building	0.84 – 1.06m

TP7

Maximum dimensions: Length: 0.50m Width: 0.28m Depth: 1.00m

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
701	Surface	Light grey concrete	0.00-0.10m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
702	Layer	Loose mid brown sand with moderate pebbles and brick fragments	0.10 – 0.20m
703	Natural	Medium brown sand with occasional drain fragments in top and pebbles. Cleaner towards the base. Natural ground cut by drainage.	0.20 – 1.00m

TP8

Maximum dimensions: Length: 0.70m Width: 0.30m Depth: 0.60m

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
801	Surface	Black tarmac car park surface	0.00-0.04m
802	Surface foundation	Light grey type 1 road stone chippings	0.04 – 0.12m
803	Natural	Loose mid brownish orange sand	0.21 – 0.60m
804	Wall	Modern red brick wall of building	0.00 – 0.21m
805	Wall foundation	Light grey concrete wall foundation	0.21 – 0.32m

Window Samples

WS1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 0.30m Width: 0.30m Depth: c. 4.00m

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
1001	Surface	Black tarmac car park surface	0.00-0.04m
1002	Surface foundation	Light grey type 1 road stone chippings	0.04 – 0.17m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
1003	Layer – made ground	Brick rubble fragments in sand	0.21 – 0.37m
1004	Natural	Light orangey brown sand with occasional pebbles	0.37m +

WS4

Maximum dimensions: Length: 0.30m Width: 0.30m Depth: c. 4.00m

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
4001	Surface	Black tarmac car park surface	0.00-0.02m
4002	Surface foundation	Light grey type 1 road stone chippings	0.02 – 0.10m
4003	Layer – made ground	Brick rubble fragments in sand	0.10 – 0.37m
4004	Natural	Light orangey brown sand with occasional pebbles	0.37m +

Cable Percussion Boreholes**CP01**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 0.30m Width: 0.30m Depth: 1.20m + 5.00m

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
10001	Surface	Black tarmac car park surface	0.00-0.02m
10002	Surface foundation	Light grey type 1 road stone chippings	0.02 – 0.08m
10003	Hardcore	Brick rubble	0.08 – 0.25m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
10004	Natural	Light orangey brown sand with occasional pebbles getting darker and firmer with depth	0.25 – 2.30m +
10005	Natural	Dark red clay – Solid Sidmouth Mudstone	2.30m

CP03

Maximum dimensions: Length: 0.30m Width: 0.30m Depth: 1.00m - aborted due to manhole

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
10001	Surface	Black tarmac car park surface	0.00-0.05m
10002	Surface foundation	Concrete	0.05 – 0.25m
10003	Natural	Light orangey brown sand with occasional pebbles	0.25 – 1.00m

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code: WCM 102214+102215)

The archive consists of:

- 4 Field progress reports AS2
- 2 Photographic records AS3
- 38 Digital photographs
- 10 Auger-hole Record Sheets AS26
- 3 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Museums Worcestershire
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416
