

The Worcestershire Historic Towns Survey

The story of Alvechurch



There is no evidence for occupation at Alvechurch in the prehistoric or Roman periods. The first historical references are in legal documents describing land ownership in the 8th and 10th centuries. There seems to have been a village with a church by 1086 when the Domesday survey was carried out. By the 13th century the Bishop of Worcester had built himself a manor house at Alvechurch, known as the Bishop's Palace.

Alvechurch became a town in the 13th century. A weekly market and annual fair were held from 1239. The bishops of Worcester founded and developed both Alvechurch and Stratford-upon-Avon, but Alvechurch was much less successful than Stratford.

Alvechurch was probably no longer a town by the end of the 17th century. By 1701 parts of the Bishop's Palace grounds were used as orchards and the deer park had been divided into farms. By the end of the 18th century the market no longer took place, and the town had shrunk in size.



The medieval town of Alvechurch

The evidence from archaeological investigations, from maps and from documentary sources has allowed archaeologists to interpret the components which made up the medieval town of Alvechurch. The map shows the outlines of these areas.

Medieval Alvechurch consisted of twelve components: the bishop's palace, the churchyard, the market place, the street system, seven areas of housing, and a mill. These are labelled on the map.

Bishop's palace (WSM 17709). The bishop's palace was an important part of medieval Alvechurch. It included the bishop's manor house and other buildings, dovecot and fishponds. The bishop's deer park was next to the palace (deer park is not on the map).

Churchyard (WSM 17715). This includes St Lawrence's church, and also the stump of a stone churchyard cross.

Market place (WSM 17719). The medieval market place was the triangular area formed by The Square and Red Lion Street.

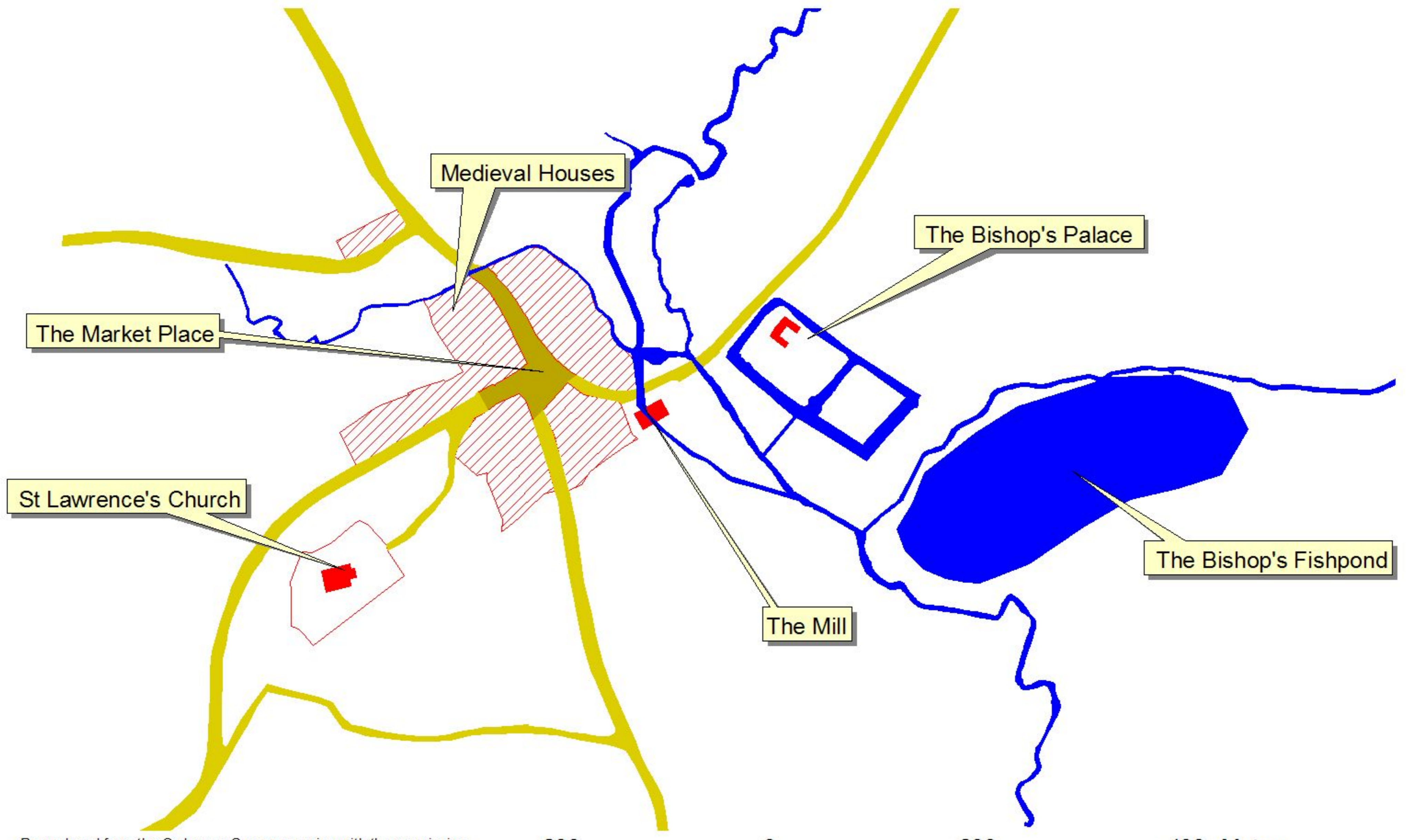
Street system (WSM 17718)

Areas of medieval houses (WSM 17711, WSM 17712, WSM 17713, WSM 17714, WSM 17716, WSM 17717, WSM 17723)

Mill (WSM 17710) The current mill is post-medieval, but it is assumed that the medieval mill would have been on the same site, and drawn as such on the map. We don't know this for sure and it might have been further up or down the River Arrow.

WSM numbers refer to records held by the Historic Environment Record (HER) of Worcestershire County Council. These used to have the prefix HWCM, but the numbers have stayed the same. Contact the HER for further information.

The Medieval Town of Alvechurch



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The post-medieval town of Alvechurch

The evidence from archaeological investigations, from maps and from documentary sources has allowed archaeologists to interpret the components which made up the post-medieval town of Alvechurch. The map shows the outlines of these areas. This account of post-medieval Alvechurch covers the period from 1540 to 1800.

Post-medieval Alvechurch consisted of sixteen components: the bishop's palace, the churchyard, the market place, the street system, eleven tenement plots, and a mill.

Bishop's palace (WSM 17709). The medieval bishop's palace continued to be used in the post-medieval period. Some of the agricultural buildings were rebuilt in the 16th and 17th centuries and the moat was probably cleaned out in the 17th century. The palace itself was rebuilt in the 16th century, and demolished in 1780.

Churchyard (WSM 17715). The St Lawrence's church and churchyard continued to be used in the post-medieval period.

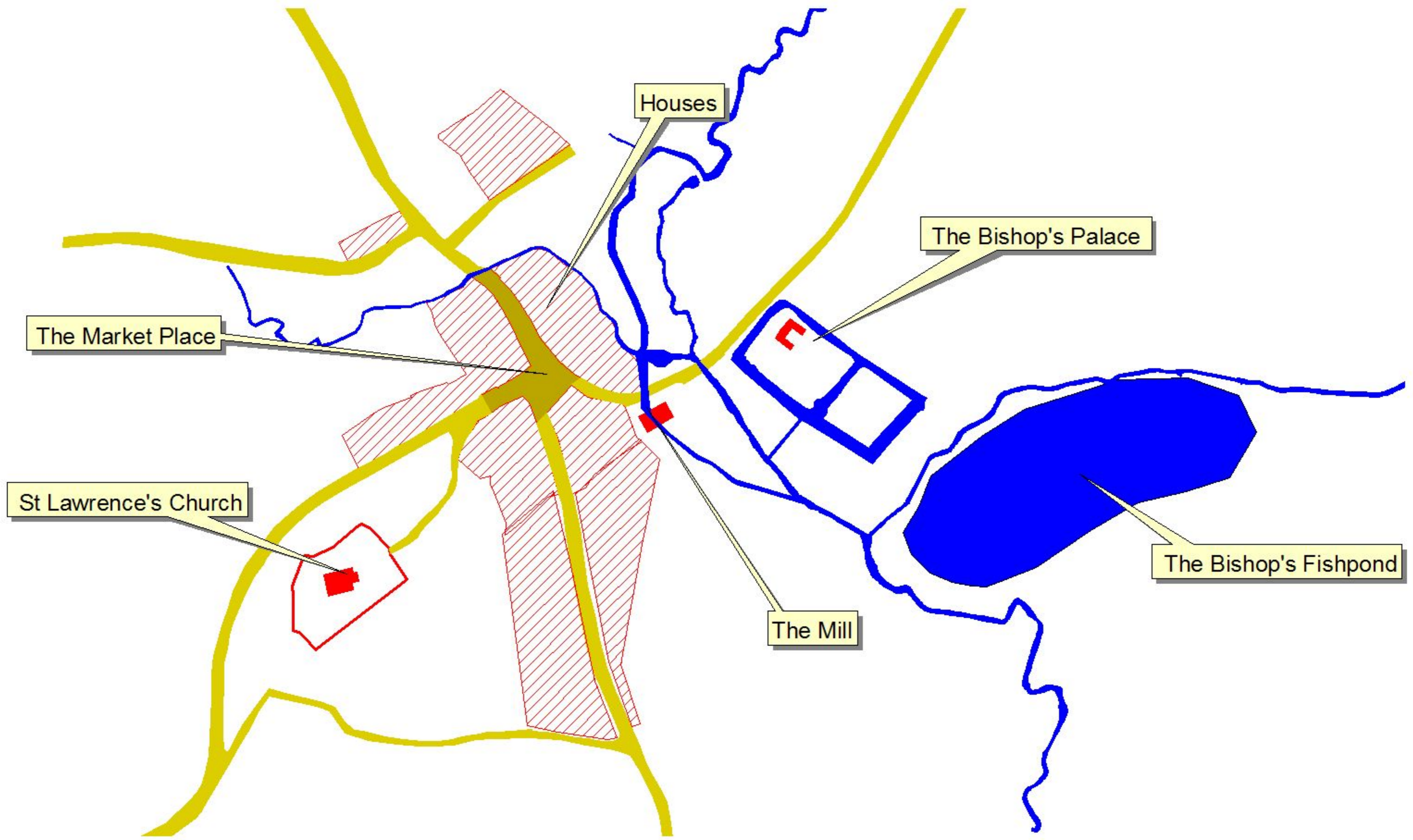
Market place (WSM 17719). The medieval market place continued in use until the late 18th century.

Street system (WSM 17718).

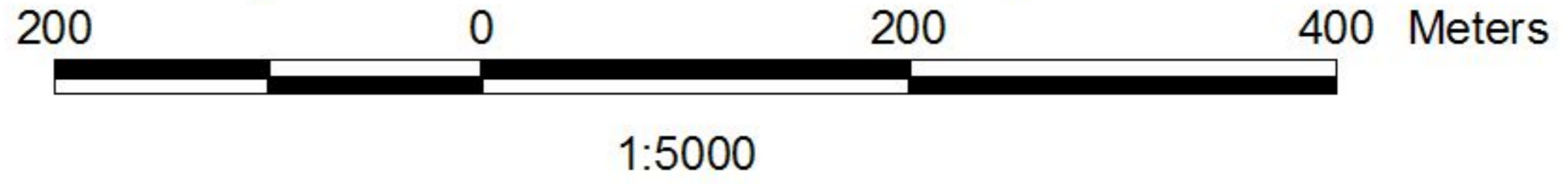
Areas of medieval and post-medieval houses (WSM 17711, WSM 17712, WSM 17713, WSM 17714, WSM 17716, WSM 17717, WSM 17720, WSM 17722, WSM 17723, WSM 21475, WSM 21476). The town expanded a little during the post-medieval period, and new areas were occupied. Houses on small plots infilled part of the market place by the end of the 18th century.

Mill (WSM 17710). The mill site on the River Arrow was the 'town mill' first recorded in 1647.

The Post Medieval Town of Alvechurch



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Historic Buildings in Alvechurch



There are still some historic buildings in the centre of Alvechurch. Most are built of brick, but there are also some timber-framed buildings.

There are several 15th century timber framed buildings on Bear Hill and Red Lion Street. At the bottom of Bear Hill there are some 16th century buildings which were built to replace temporary stalls in the former market place.

There are almost no 17th century buildings in Alvechurch. Quite a number of 18th century brick buildings survive. There are also a number of examples of brick fronts added to earlier timber-framed buildings to make them look less old-fashioned.



Archaeological fieldwork in Alvechurch

Little archaeological fieldwork has been undertaken in Alvechurch despite its importance. The following is a list of the reports on work within the historic core of the town up to July 2009. The reports can be read at www.worcestershire.gov.uk/archaeology/library or at the HER offices.

Arnold A. and Howard R. 1999. Church of St Laurence, Alvechurch: Tree-ring analysis of timbers from the belfry floor. English Heritage 45-2009 (WSM41773).

Aston, M A, 1970-2, Earthworks at the Bishop's Palace, Alvechurch, Worcestershire, *Trans Worcestershire Archaeol Soc*, **3** ser 3, 55-9 (WSM01829)

Bond, J, 1970 Alvechurch, Bishop's Palace, Worcestershire, *West Midlands Archaeology*, **13**, 51 (WSM01829)

Coates, G, 1999 An Archaeological Watching Brief at Land Adjacent to 2 Tanyard Lane, Alvechurch, Worcestershire, *BUFAU Internal Report*, **599** (WSM30038)

Cook, M, and Dalwood, H, 1997 Watching brief at 5 Red Lion Street, Alvechurch, *Worcestershire County Council Archaeological Service Report* **569** (WSM24602)

Early, R, 1994 Red Lion Street, Alvechurch, Hereford and Worcester - Archaeological Field Evaluation, Oxford Archaeological Unit (WSM21267)

Griffin, S, 1999 Archaeological Desk Based Assessment at St Lawrence's Church, Alvechurch, *Worcestershire County Council Archaeological Service Internal Report*, **756** (WSM30060)

Miller, D, and Jones, L, 2004 Archaeological evaluation at St Laurence's Church, Alvechurch, Worcestershire, *Worcestershire County Council Archaeological Service Internal Report*, **908** (WSM30531)

Miller, D. 2005. Archaeological Evaluation of Land to the East of Birmingham Road, Alvechurch. *Worcestershire County Council Archaeological Service Internal Report*, **1312** (WSM33991)

Miller, D. 2005. Archaeological Work at Mill Farm, Radford Road, Alvechurch *Worcs. County Council Archaeological Service Internal Rep* **1373** (WSM34490)

Oswald, A, 1954 Excavation at Alvechurch, Worcestershire, *Transactions of the Birmingham Archaeological Society*, **72** (WSM01933).

Oxford Archaeological Unit, 1996 Archaeological Watching Brief at Red Lion Street, Alvechurch (WSM30061)

Williams, P, 2001 Archaeological evaluation at St Laurence's Church, Alvechurch (Stage 2), Worcestershire, *Worcestershire County Council Archaeological Service Internal Report* **938** (WSM 30937)



Further Reading - Alvechurch

The following books and sources are about Alvechurch only. There are other relevant books about aspects of historic towns, or about towns in Worcestershire including Alvechurch and these are listed in the general reading in the introductory PDF.

Dalwood, H, 1995 *Archaeological assessment of Alvechurch, Hereford and Worcester*, WCAS internal report **295**

Fish, J, 1701 *Map of the lands of James Booth* (WRO 4437 S899:53)
Godson and Godson 1792 *Plan of the borough and parish of Alvechurch* (WRO BA 1042 f989: 9.110)

Guyatt, D, 1994 *Carpenters Bishop John of Worcester: leases and other items, mostly Henry VII and Henry VIII*, Hereford and Worcester County Archaeological Service internal report **118**

Slater, T R, 1987 Ideal and reality in English episcopal medieval town planning, *Trans Institute Brit Geogr* ns **12**, 191-203

If you live in Worcestershire, you can look up books that are in the library on the online catalogue <http://opac.worcestershire.gov.uk/TalisPrism/index.html>

Original Documents

This is a list of the main documents for Alvechurch. These are held in the Worcestershire Record Office (WRO). For more information contact the Record Office providing the reference number e.g WRO BA 2636

Documentary Sources	Detail
WRO BA 2636	Compotus rolls 1524-5; Court books and papers 1559-1664, 1740-1816; presentments, tenants lists, and correspondence 1663-1858; rentals 1689 and later
WRO BA 9509	Court book 1707-90
WRO BA 5279	Manorial customs, court papers, 18th century
WRO BA 8427	Account of chief rents 1790
WRO BA 2636	17th century and later volumes, surveys, deeds, and related documents relating to the management of property
WRO BA 5498	Parish records: registers from 1545; apprenticeship papers; poor law papers etc, 1689

	onwards
WRO BA 8427	Parish records including churchwardens' accounts, vestry minutes, 1603 and later
WRO BA 2586	Map of Alvechurch park, 1739
WRO BA 1042	Map of Alvechurch Borough, 1791
WRO BA 9546	Book of reference to 1791 map
WRO BA 1572	Tithe map and apportionment