

BINSEY, ST MARGARET'S CHAPEL

WATCHING BRIEF 2-11-93

NGR SP 48575 08060

INTRODUCTION

On 2nd November 1993 the Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a watching brief during drainage construction work at Binsey Chapel.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

St. Margaret's Chapel, regarded as a holy site from the 12th-century, has been traditionally linked to Saint Frideswide.

The earliest features of the chapel being the south door and porch dated to c. 1180 - 1200.

In 1279 St. Frideswide Priory was said to have a hamlet called Binsey. The enclosed rectilinear enclosure immediately around the chapel possibly defining a monastic retreat.

A larger oval earthwork enclosure to the S of St. Margaret's Chapel was investigated in 1987 by two trenches dug by John Blair. The dating evidence was limited but it suggests the oval enclosure ditch was open in the early Saxon period.

Reference:- John Blair, 'Thornbury, Binsey: A Probable Defensive Enclosure Associated with Saint Frideswide.' *Oxoniensia* LIII (1988). pp.3-20.

RESULTS

The work of rebuilding the brick lined perimeter drainage channel, at the foot of the church walls, involved no ground disturbance.

The only below-ground work undertaken was a 4m long trench for a drainage pipe. It extended from the SE corner of the church in a south easterly direction, passing under the 19th-century boundary wall and ending in a new soakaway. The area E of the wall, once belonging to the graveyard.

The pipe trench was 0.40m in depth and 0.27m in width. The circular soakaway measured 1.20m in diameter at the surface but narrowed to 0.60m at the bottom. The soakaway was 1.12m in depth.

No archaeological deposits were identified within the pipe trench. Most (0.30m) of the pipe trench consisted of a well worked soil with gravel lenses and brick fragments.

The area within the soakaway was very limited, so interpretation is confined to a generalised impression of the stratigraphy. Under the topsoil four layers could be identified. Three of the layers were a gravelly mid-to-reddish brown sandy silt which would be consistent with deposits being reworked within a graveyard. The earliest layer consisted of a darker less gravelly sandy silt which gave the impression of a soil structure developed *in situ*. This layer was up to 0.20m in depth and contained no finds. It overlaid the natural gravel. This gravel was 1.12m below the present ground surface.

OAU
A. Parkinson
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