

FREWIN HALL, OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) at Frewin Hall, Oxford, on behalf of Brasenose College, in respect of proposed student accommodation. Four trial pits were excavated along the southern and eastern boundary walls in order to study their condition. The full depth of the boundary wall and several archaeological deposits were revealed in trial pits 1, 2 and 4.

1 *Archaeological background*

- 1.2 The site has already been the subject of both a desktop study (Miles D, 1993, OAU) and a field evaluation (Roberts M, 1993, OAU) the archaeological background can be found in the relevant reports. This report should be read in conjunction with these and regarded as an addition to the evaluation report.

2 *Methodology*

- 2.1 Four trial pits were dug under archaeological supervision in the car park at the south of Frewin Hall against the southern boundary wall. The pits were excavated by a mini excavator using an 18 inch toothed bucket. All the pits were dug to a width of 0.46 m wide and to a length of 1.30 m.
- 2.2 All deposits and structures were recorded fully and were described in accordance to OAU standards. A full photographic record was also made. Finds were recovered (pottery, clay pipe and bone) and the pottery was identified by Cathy Underwood-Keevill (see 3.5).
- 2.3 The four test pits generally revealed the same or very similar deposits. These were given separate contexts in each test pit. The following section describes these deposits and the structures exposed starting with the oldest and finishing with the most recent.

3 *Results*

3.1 Trial pit 1

- 3.1.1 Trial pit 1 was located at the south west corner of the site against the north face of the old boundary wall and was excavated to a depth of 1.20 m.

- 3.1.2 A dark slightly greeny brown silty loam with gravel and occasional flecks of charcoal (1/5) was encountered at the bottom of the pit. On this sat seven courses of the old boundary wall (1/4) which were visible under the present ground level. The wall was constructed of roughly dressed

limestone blocks (0.2 m x 0.1 m average) in a soft lime based mortar. The base course protruded from the rest of the wall by 0.05 m and was constructed of slightly larger blocks (0.3 m x 0.2 m). The wall was aligned east-west.

3.1.3 A friable dark greenish brown silty loam (1/3) with limestone fragments and mortar sat over 1/5 and butted wall 1/4. This was covered by the make-up layer (1/2) and tarmac (1/1) for the car park.

3.2 Trial pit 2 was located at the south end of the site against the north south running part of the old boundary wall. It was excavated to a depth of 1.10 m.

3.2.1 A wall (2/4) running north south and of the same construction as 1/4 was revealed at the east end of the trial pit. The protruding base course was not visible.

3.2.2 A friable dark greenish brown silty loam (2/3) with limestone fragments and mortar (the same as 1/3) was visible at the base of the butted 2/4. This was also overlain by car park make-up and tarmac layers (2/2 and 2/1).

3.3 Trial pit 3 was located towards the south eastern end of the site against the east-west aligned modern brick wall. The pit was excavated to a depth of 0.25 m.

3.3.1 A friable dark greeny brown silty loam (3/4) similar to 1/3 and 2/3 was seen at the base of this shallow test pit. It butted the cement foundation for wall 3/3 which was constructed out of modern yellow bricks. Car park make-up and tarmac layers (3/2 and 3/1) were again present.

3.4 Trial pit 4 was located at the south-east edge of the site against the north-south running modern brick wall and was 1.25 m in depth.

3.4.1 A friable mid yellow brown silty sand deposit (4/6) was visible at the base of the pit. This layer was overlain by a friable dark greeny brown silty loam (4/5) similar to 1/3 and 2/3. A redeposited version of 4/5 (4/4) which additionally contained bricks and brick fragments overlay 4/5 and butted wall 4/3. Wall 4/3 was a north-south modern brick wall (the same as 3/3). The same car park layers seen elsewhere also appeared in this pit (4/2 and 4/1.)

3.5 *Pottery*

3.5.1 Kathy Underwood-Keevill identified three sherds of 17th-century earthen ware which were recovered from the garden soil (1/3) in trial pit 1.

4 *Discussion*

4.1 The walls in trial pits 1 and 2 belong to the old town boundary wall which is probably of Saxon origin. The silty loam deposits (1/3, 1/5, 2/3 and 4/5) are all garden soils. Layers 3/4 and 4/4 represent redeposited garden soil, probably disturbed during the construction of the modern brick walls (3/3 and 4/3).

5 *Conclusion*

5.1 The Saxon town boundary wall has been revealed to its full depth. The deposits are probably the same garden soils as seen during the evaluation in trench 2 (context 22). No other archaeological features were found.

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