

**REPORT OF A WATCHING BRIEF AT THE GATEHOUSE, ABINGDON ABBEY, OXON****Introduction**

The Oxford Archaeological Unit was asked to observe groundworks relating to the blocking of the road leading to the Abbey Gatehouse in Abingdon. Graham Keevill visited the site on 29.11.1991 to undertake this work. The results are described below.

**Observations**

The tarmac road surface had been removed in two small areas to facilitate the insertion of a new kerb across the road. The areas measured 0.86 x 0.68 m and approximately 1.5 x 1 m and were separated by a gap of 0.2 m. Archaeological levels were revealed immediately below the tarmac; the same levels were noted in each area. The groundworks had not intruded into the archaeological deposits, and so no underlying stratigraphy could be examined.

A layer of cobbles set in sandy mortar (1) 0.41 - 0.49 m wide was laid against an east-west kerb (2) of stones, typically 0.11 m square. To the south of this was a layer of rammed sand and gravel (3) 0.19 m wide. The surface was very hard, but could be loosened with a trowel; it was bedded on a very compact layer of gravel. The layers were cut by a service trench to the west, while the cobbled surface was also cut by a drain head to the north. The underside of the tarmac was pitted with impressions of the cobbles.

**Interpretation**

The stone kerb (2) was aligned on the inner edge of the north pier for the central arch of the abbey gatehouse. It is likely, therefore, that the sand and gravel surface (3) was a road leading through the arch, while the cobbling (1) was a footpath to the north arch. No dating evidence was available, but the surfaces are likely to be of relatively modern date, as the tarmac was laid directly on to them. A Victorian or later date seems likely.

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