College of Arms

COLLEGE OF ARMS, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET, LONDON EC4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

NGR TQ 3250 8960 Registered Plan No: 00-3080U

Oxford Archaeological Unit November 2000

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Oxford Archaeological Unit November 2000

COLLEGE OF ARMS, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET

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SUMMARY

On the 27th September 2000 Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a Watching Brief at The College of Arms, Queen Victoria Street, London for Donald Insall Associates acting on behalf of The College of Arms. A small trench was hand excavated for the footings of two fence/gate posts. No archaeological deposits or remains were present within the trench. The deposits revealed were related to the present pavement construction and modern disturbances. The lowest layer revealed had the characteristics of a modern demolition layer, but may be the in-fill of a service or feature whose limits are outside the confines of the investigated area. These layers were recorded and tied into Ordnance Datum in order to maintain a record of modern impact levels and thereby aid future investigations in the area.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 On the 27th September 2000 Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a Watching Brief at The College of Arms, Queen Victoria Street (Fig.1) on behalf of The College of Arms.
- 1.1.2 Conditional Listed Building Consent had been granted for the excavation of postholes during the erection of new railings and gate to the east of The College of Arms at Queen Victoria Street. In order to ensure an opportunity was provided for the archaeology of the site to be investigated Kathryn Stubbs as Archaeological curator for the Corporation of London advised that an archaeological condition be attached to the Listed Building Consent. The condition states that:
 - No development shall take place until arrangements have been made for an archaeological 'watching brief' to monitor development ground-works and to record any archaeological evidence revealed. Details of these arrangements and a method statement shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the common council prior to commencement of the work.
- 1.1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing the methodology of a Watching Brief on the intrusive works of the development was prepared by OAU and submited to Kathryn Stubbs.

1.2 Site location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on the eastern flank of the College of Arms. It is situated approximately 140m to the north of the present line of the River Thames, on the brickearth capped sands and gravels that constitute its northern bank (NGR TQ 325896). The site is bounded on the east by the post-war line of St Peter's Hill and on the south by Queen

Victoria Street. The site lies in Castle Baynard Ward, within the Roman and Medieval city, approximately 250 m. east of the western city wall.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The majority of our archaeological knowledge of this area has been provided by the excavation of isolated walls or deep-cut features, such as pits and ditches; ground surfaces and above ground structures have been encountered in only a few places.

This provides only a very broad picture and a great deal remains to be discovered; the chronological development of buildings, topography, and use of this area, during all periods, requires considerable clarification.

The Prehistoric period

1.3.2 No conclusive evidence for a human presence within the City during the Palaeolithic has yet been found. Evidence for later Prehistoric activity has been recovered from at least 34 sites within the City and is supported by 97 isolated finds (including 2 hoards). Isolated Mesolithic and Iron Age finds have been found within 40m of the College of Arms. However, conclusive evidence for any substantial pre-Roman settlement in this area remains elusive.

The Roman period

- 1.3.3 The Roman town of Londinium was founded sometime between the invasion of Britain in AD 43 and AD 60, when the town was first documented. Initially it centred on the area to the north of the newly constructed bridge (close to the site of the present London Bridge) and, as well as minor roads, included two main east/west roads, along which the most important buildings, constructed in timber, were built. The layout of the town appears to have been planned, but whether this was under military or civil authority remains unclear. The town's economic and topographic development was arrested by the devastating Boudiccan revolt of AD 60 but once recovery was under way, replanning and rebuilding took place on a grand scale. Earlier timber buildings were replaced with stone, and by the early 2nd century Londinium, which had become the centre of the province, boasted many grand public buildings, monuments, baths, temples, a governor's palace, a fort, an amphitheatre and an international port.
- 1.3.4 Expansion peaked during the first half of the 2nd century, with the town spreading west to cover an area of approximately one square mile and, around AD 200, the whole was enclosed by a massive city wall. From the mid 4th century Londinium's stability appears to have weakened, largely as a result of political unrest within the Roman Empire and the intensifying threat of barbarian aggression. It was at this time that a riverside wall was constructed, and the landward defences strengthened. During early 5th century increased barbarian attacks and internal political divisions led to the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, resulting in the end of Roman rule in Britain. London's administration and urban economy collapsed completely,

- buildings were deserted, and dark earth, thought to indicate agricultural activity, built up all over the city.
- 1.3.5 The College of Arms lies in the south-western part of the city of which, compared to the eastern area, little is known. Excavation in the area has largely consisted of small scale excavations or brief observations during construction work although more extensive excavations at St Peter's Hill and Sunlight Wharf to the south in the 1960's and 1980's produced evidence of extensive terracing and of the existence of at least two phases of large, possibly monumental buildings. These will be discussed further below.
- 1.3.6 The excavations in the area suggest that, during the early Roman period, this area formed part of a suburb to the west of the early settlement. The remains of some timber buildings are recorded from the area and evidence of 1st and 2nd century brickearth and gravel quarrying and industrial activity suggests that the area provided building materials for the construction of roads and buildings, pottery for domestic use and a place of burial for the early occupants of the town: a cemetery was excavated beneath St. Paul's Cathedral, and by Roman law this would have to have been located outside the town. Settlement at this time appears to have consisted primarily of mixed residential and commercial buildings arranged along the main street leading from the town through Newgate, now broadly represented by the line of modern Fenchurch Street in the east and Cheapside/Newgate Street in the west. To the south of this lay Watling Street, the second principal east-west road which ran west from the city to Ludgate, following the line of Eastcheap and the modern Watling Street before passing through the present site of St Pauls Cathedral.
- 1.3.7 By the end of the first century, urban expansion had spread into the area to the west of the Walbrook. It has been argued that the new settlement was systematically laid out with a planned street system radiating from the two main east-west streets, a substantial waterfront quay development and the construction of large public buildings such as the Huggin Hill Bath complex, construction of which may have begun as early as AD 70.
- 1.3.8 This period probably also saw the construction of a large complex of buildings on the waterfront to the south of the College of Arms. These buildings appear to comprise the remains of a number of monumental structures and may represent the remains of a complex of religious or high quality residential buildings. The possibility that they represent the remains of public or religious buildings is increased by the presence of large quantities of re-used building material, including a dump of very high quality marble veneers (of a type and quality usually associated with public buildings), painted plaster and mosaic pieces incorporated into the footings of the late 3rd century buildings and the presence, in the large riverside wall constructed to the south of the site in the 4th century of pieces of re-used carved stonework, including fragments of a Monumental Arch, two altars pieces of a frieze depicting four 'Mother Goddesses' and pieces of what has been interpreted as a Screen of the Gods, a monument carved with depictions of various gods of a type, often freestanding and

- sited within a courtyard. The northern extent of these buildings is unclear although Williams (*The Archaeology of Roman London Volume 3 Public Buildings in the South-West Quarter of Roman London*. CBA Research Report 88.1993) has argued that they probably occupied the relatively level ground at the base of the hillside and are therefore unlikely to have extended as far north as the site of the proposed development.
- The western extent of the late 1st century settlement is unclear although it has been 1.3.9 argued that the settlement was demarcated by some form of boundary, possibly consisting of a defensive ditch and bank running south from the site of the later Cripplegate fort and passing just to the east of the modern site of St Pauls Cathedral. The existence and position of this boundary, which is based upon the discovery of 1st and 2nd century burials in the St Pauls and Newgate Street area and changes in orientation of the two main east-west roads at this point. This would place the College of Arms just outside the western extent of the planned late 1st century settlement. The nature of the activity in this western area during this time is less well understood although it appears that ribbon development continued to grow along the east-west roads. Away from the street frontages the area may have been only sparsely occupied: excavations in the area around St Pauls and the Old Bailey have produced evidence of pottery kilns and other industrial activity interspersed with small cemeteries and further brickearth and gravel quarries. This general picture is reinforced by a number of excavations in the area around the College of Arms: observation of building works by the Guildhall Museum in 1961 immediately to the north of the site discovered the remains of a 1st century gravel pit and a refuse pit containing 1st century pottery. Both these features had been cut by a later Roman wall. Excavations by the Oxford Archaeological Unit at Faraday Buildings revealed two features interpreted as 1st century gravel quarry pits. However the area has also produced evidence of possible 1st or 2nd century buildings of some pretension: a trench dug by the OAU slightly to the south of the gravel pits, and on the line of the modern Knightrider Street revealed the remains of a Roman building. Dating evidence for this structure is limited: only three sherds of 1st to early 2nd century pottery were recovered, although these finds do suggest that the building may have been constructed during these years. The building, which was represented by the remains of three or possibly four mortar floors, also produced pieces of roof tile and painted wall plaster suggesting that the building was of some consequence. The date of its abandonment or destruction is unclear.
 - 1.3.10 The western limit of the Roman town was extended again when a landward town wall was constructed in the early 3rd century. Although this new wall brought the development site for the first time within the official boundaries of the Roman city there is no evidence that this produced an immediate change in the layout of the area and the area away from the main roads appears to have remained sparsely occupied.
 - 1.3.11 The late 3rd century saw a dramatic re-organisation of the riverfront building complex. The late 1st or 2nd century buildings were levelled to make way for

another, larger, public building complex constructed on two massive chalk platforms terraced into the hillside. The Period II complex appears to have been short-lived and may in fact never have been completed. By the mid-late 4th century at least part of the site was occupied by a domestic building, constructed of timber and of no more than moderate status which had been constructed over part of the complex and reused some of its foundations. This suggests that by this time at least, it had ceased to serve any public function.

The 'Knightrider Street Walls'

- 1.3.12 Several stretches of massive Roman walling have been recorded in the area to the north and east of the College of Arms. Two lengths of this wall have been recorded as crossing St Peter's Hill. One of these walls is reported as crossing the northern end of St Peter's Hill at its junction with Knightrider Street. This wall was first observed in 1863 when excavation for a sewer uncovered a section of east-west walling standing c.3m high. This wall consisted of a rubble foundation, which stood in undisturbed sand and gravel, topped by a further 1.17m high section constructed of courses of Roman brick. The uppermost section of the wall was constructed of rubble and the top of the wall was located 1.78m below the Victorian ground surface. Further, possibly intermittent, observation of the sewer excavations were carried out and a further section of walling on the same alignment was uncovered a week later on the northern side of Knightrider Street, indicating that the wall deviated slightly from the line of Knightrider Street. No description of this wall survives suggesting that the construction of the wall was sufficiently similar to make this unnecessary. The location of this section of wall seems to correspond with an earlier observation of a section of rag walling pierced by a tile culvert observed in Knightrider Street, 'in front of No 15 Little Knightrider St' during sewer excavations in 1844.
 - 1.3.13 Excavations during construction work in 1961 to the west of these observations uncovered a further length of wall on what would appear to be the same alignment. This wall stood 1.67 m high and overlay an artificial hollow filled with clay and gravel, possibly an infilled gravel quarry pit. The foundations cut through a large refuse pit containing pottery of the late 1st century. Further sections of similar walling on the same alignment were discovered to the east.
 - 1.3.14 A further length of similarly aligned Roman wall is recorded in St Peter's Hill to the south. An east-west wall is marked on the City Sewer Plan (Plan 373) as having been discovered on the western side of St Peter's Hill in 1844 or 1845, although no description of this feature survives. Excavation on the eastern side of St Peter's Hill in 1961 uncovered a further section of wall on the same alignment. This wall was reported as consisting of a ragstone foundation, 1.31m wide which had been set into undisturbed gravel. A single course of squared ragstone blocks and a course of red bonding tiles remained above the foundation. The fragmentary remains of similar walls on the same alignment are recorded to the east.

- 1.3.15 The function and date of construction of these walls is unclear, although a date after the end of the 1st century would seem likely as they cut gravel quarries and one of the walls cuts a refuse pit containing material dating to the end of the 1st century. It has been suggested that they constitute two near parallel walls running east west and forming a single structure, possibly a circus. However, recent studies suggest that only the northern walls form a continuous structure, probably a precinct wall bounding a building complex to the south, and that the southern walls may belong to several separate buildings within this enclosure. Williams (ibid 26) has suggested that the similarity in alignment between the buildings of the Phase II riverfront complex and the Long Northern wall may suggest that this wall formed the northern boundary of this complex, possibly demarcating a relatively undeveloped area to the north from the built-up area of the complex to the south.
- 1.3.16 It is possible that Knightrider Street, which closely followed the line of these walls, originated during the Roman period. Several walls and surfaces have also been observed to the north of Knightrider Street indicating the presence of buildings to the north of the walled complex although the scale and number of the buildings remains unclear.

The Anglo-Saxon period

- 1.3.17 Very little is known of the city during the period of Germanic settlement in the post-Roman period. What little evidence there is suggests that the area within the walls was more or less deserted. Recent excavations have demonstrated that by the 8th century AD London's commercial centre, then known as *Lundonwic*, had migrated to the area around the Strand, to the west of the Roman town.
- 1.3.18 It has been suggested that the area around St. Paul's Cathedral formed an administrative and ecclesiastical centre, containing a royal palace, possibly to the north of St. Pauls Cathedral, the Cathedral itself, founded in 604, and the enclosed residences of high status citizens. Archaeological excavation has, so far, added little to our knowledge of this area during the early to mid-Saxon period although some Saxon structures and evidence of occupation, along with some sherds of grass-tempered pottery, were identified during the excavations at St Peter's Hill in 1981. The area excavated was unfortunately too small for any firm conclusions about the nature of the activity to be made.
- 1.3.19 During the 9th and 10th centuries London's commercial centre was again relocated within the city walls, probably as a defensive measure against raids by the Vikings, who succeeded in occupying London between 872 and 886 before being ousted by King Alfred and his forces. Evidence for timber buildings and waterfront structures dating to this late-Saxon period have been found on several sites within the city. Research has demonstrated that several towns, of which Winchester is the best known example, were laid out in a planned grid pattern of streets and properties during this period. Such a pattern can be discerned in the area to the southwest of St. Paul's Cathedral, but its limits and chronological development remain unknown.

1.3.20 Pits and other features (including mortar mixers) belonging to the late-Saxon period have been excavated in Knightrider Street approximately 30 m to the north-west of the College and excavations to the east in 1955 uncovered the remains of two Saxon sunken-floored buildings which appeared to have continued in use into the early 11th century.

Knightrider Street

1.3.21 The College of Arms lies only 30m to the south of Knightrider Street, which formed part of a major east/west thoroughfare, first documented in a charter of AD 888-9. The line of this road can be traced in the modern street plan; following a fairly straight course along Knightrider Street east of Godliman street (now obscured by recent development) and joining Roman Watling Street near Cannon Street Station. It is not known whether the similarity between the line of this Anglo-Saxon street and the Roman 'northern long wall' is merely coincidental or due to the wall's survival, either as a standing structure or as a length of collapsed walling, into this period.

The later Medieval period

- 1.3.22 By the 13th century the walled city had again become fully established as a major international trading centre; it was densely populated and much of the modern street plan had crystallized. Benets Hill and Peters Hill, the streets forming two sides of the block within which the College is situated are both first mentioned in the 13th century whilst Knightrider Street may, as we have seen, date back to the 9th century. Until the construction of Queen Victoria Street in 1871 the College of Arms lay at the northern end of a block of buildings which extended south to Upper Thames St. It is therefore likely that the site of the College was developed from at least the 13th century onwards although the origin and nature of the buildings on the site is unknown. The first recorded house on the site, Derby Place, dates from the 15th century. Stow tells us that the house was built by Thomas Stanley, who married Margaret the mother of Henry VII in 1482 and was created Earl of Derby in 1485. The house was passed to the crown in 1553 and granted to the College of Arms by Queen Mary in 1555. Derby House was destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666 (Survey of London 1966 2-4).
- 1.3.23 The layout and location of Derby House can be fairly accurately traced from a number of historic plans and documents. The earliest plans of the City (Braun and Hogenberg 1555, Agas 1559) date from before the Great Fire and show St Peter's Hill on its post-Fire alignment. Both show buildings covering the College site although neither gives any recognisable details of Derby House. Further evidence that the medieval St Peter's Hill followed the slightly north-east/south-west alignment of its post-Fire replacement is provided by plans appended to a 1611 survey of Smith's Almshouses (reproduced in Schofield 1987, figs 8 and 38) which lay immediately to the south of Derby House. Both plans (dated 1611 and 1628) show St Peter's Hill running on its post-Fire axis: the area to the north is marked 'The Herroldes office called Darby Place' although no details of the building are given. More information is provided by an (undated) sketch-plan of the pre-Fire College (labelled 'Scheme of

the College before the Fire of London') preserved amongst the papers of John Anstis (B.M MS. Add.9020.fo.34b) in the British Museum Library. Unfortunately this plan provides us with little more than a basic ground-plan of Derby House demonstrating that it formed three sides of a quadrangle with entrances onto Benets Hill to the west and St Peter's Hill to the east. The east and west ranges of the College flank a garden which opens to the north. Little detail is shown of the eastern flank: the south-eastern corner forms one end of an area marked as 'Lodgings' while to the north of this runs the passage into St Peter's Hill. The area to the north of the passage is marked but not described and it would appear that the buildings fronted straight on to St Peter's Hill.

The Post-Medieval period

- 1.3.24 Derby House was destroyed by the Great Fire of London in September 1666. Plans for the reconstruction of the College began to circulate as early as February 1668 although work on the site did not begin until 1671. (A full description of the rebuilding, and of the architecture of the new building is given in the Survey of London volume on the College of Arms (Survey of London 1966) and the following section, which will only discuss those sections of the College abutting the site of the proposed Library extension, is primarily gleaned from this volume). The eastern range appears to have been amongst the last parts of the new College to be constructed and was built in two sections. The first part to be constructed was the north-eastern section (adjoining the east side of the office and hall and reaching St Peter's Hill) which was built 'by 1675' by the Thomas Lee, the Chester Herald. This comprised five rooms, which were to be shared between the Chester and Richmond Heralds.
- 1.3.25 Plans for the completion of the east range were drawn up in 1687 and work began in 1688. Details of the contemplated work are laid down in a document of 1687 (Appendix 3 in Survey of London 1966). The east range was to mirror the west wing in most particulars and to be built from the existing north-east corner of the Quadrangle as far as the Almshouses (which would therefore appear to have been rebuilt speedily after the Great Fire) 'with a return of 14 foot on the South Side, answerable to Return at Sir John Dugdales apartment [the south-west corner of the quadrangle] and an entrance to St Peters Hill in the middle. Although owned by the College the buildings of the east side were not originally used as part of the College buildings: a document of 3rd May 1688 outlines '3 distinct leases for the 3 tenements now erecting at the East Side and South-east corner of the College of Arms, receiving 6s 8d yearly rent upon each tenement'. These houses were continually leased until 1866 when the curtailment of the south part of the College for the construction of Queen Victoria St made it necessary for them to be brought into use as part of the College.
- 1.3.26 Until 1842 the north-eastern corner of the current College of Arms site lay outside the holdings of the College. In the early 18th century this site was occupied by an tavern but in the early 1740's this building was removed to be replaced by a Sugar House, eight storeys high (Survey of London 1966 20). This is probably the building

marked on Horwoods 1799 map of London (the first map of London which was sufficiently detailed to attempt to map each individual building) lying to the north of the College and extending as far east as Peters Hill. The risk of fire from this building, which was presumably in active use as a sugar refinery, led to strenuous efforts by the College to re-locate to larger, and presumably safer, premises in the West End although none of these plans ever came to fruition. This alarm reached new heights in 1815 when the 'recent erection and use of a steam engine of considerable force in the said Sugar House' was reported to the Public Record commissioners by the board of the College who were further stirred by the contemplation of the 'awful and instantaneous calamity which had [recently] occurred in Goodmans Fields during the application of such an apparatus for purposes precisely similar in a Sugar House'. These anxieties were therefore much relieved in 1818 when the owner of the site decided to sell his property and the College was able to buy the site. The buildings of the Sugar House had disappeared by 1844 when (part of) the site became the site of the new Records Room for the College.

- 1.3.27 Further changes occurred in 1867 when the construction of Queen Victoria Street immediately to the south led to the demolition of the south-east and south-west wings of the College.
- 1.3.28 The heavy bombing suffered by the City of London in 1940 and 1941, although it left the College of Arms relatively unscathed, led to significant changes in the environs of the site. The College itself narrowly escaped destruction during a fire bomb raid on the night of 10th and 11th May 1941 when all the buildings to the east of it on the north side of Queen Victoria Street, as far as the tower of St Mildred's Bread Street and including the church of St Nicholas Cole Abbey were destroyed by fire and the College itself was only saved by a fortuitous change in the wind. The scale of destruction in the area is further underlined by the 1948 London County Council Bomb Damage plan which shows the total destruction of all the buildings on the north, south and east sides of the College. The most significant of the post-war changes to the area was the re-routing of St Peters Hill to run north-south, thereby opening up the sliver of land to the east of the College.
- 1.3.29 A Watching brief carried out by OAU in October 1997 recorded infilled cellars (possibly relating to Sugar House) adjacent and to the west of St Peters Hill as well as an undated/ possibly 18th 19th Century wall to the north-east corner of the College of Arms.

Watching brief aims 1.4

General

The general aim of the watching brief was to ensure that an opportunity was 1.4.1 provided for any archaeological remains or deposits that may have been revealed by the intrusive work to be investigated and recorded.

Specific

The specific aim of the watching brief was to establish the depth to which modern 1.4.2 activity has impacted and to record the level at which archaeological deposits or potential archaeological horizons might survive in order to add to the existing understanding of the area and aid future investigations and planning decisions.

WATCHING BRIEF METHODOLOGY

2.1 Scope of fieldwork

The watching brief comprised the monitoring of hand excavation of a single slot 2.1.1 measuring 0.95 m x 0.35 m x 0.58 m (depth) for the insertion of two fence posts.

RESULTS: DESCRIPTION

(See Fig.2)

The earliest deposit revealed during the programme of work was a grey-brown silt 3.1.1 (208) with many red brick fragment inclusions. This deposit was 0.35 m thick and partially removed to the east by a vertical sided, 0.25 m deep cut (207) which was filled by silt with a high percentage of yellow sandy-mortar and red brick fragments (206). Layer 206 was sealed by deposit 205 - a grey brown-silt containing cement and mortar, which in turn was cut to the east of the trench by feature (cut) 204 which was filled by modern concrete (203). Deposit 203 was overlaid by the preparation layer and York Stone slabs of the existing pavement (contexts 202 and 201 respectively).

Finds 3.2

No finds were recovered or retained for deposition. The red brick fragments in 3.2.1 deposits 208 and 206 were too small to be measured or to be inspected for frogs and stamps, but were hard fired and appeared to be of industrial rather than hand-made construction.

13 November, 2000

4 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1.1 The Watching Brief revealed deposits that relate largely to the modern road/pavement formation and 20th Century disturbance. Deposits 208 and 206 may be earlier (perhaps 18th -19th Century) and may be either demolition and levelling deposits and/or infills of features whose limits are outside of the investigated area.

APPENDICES

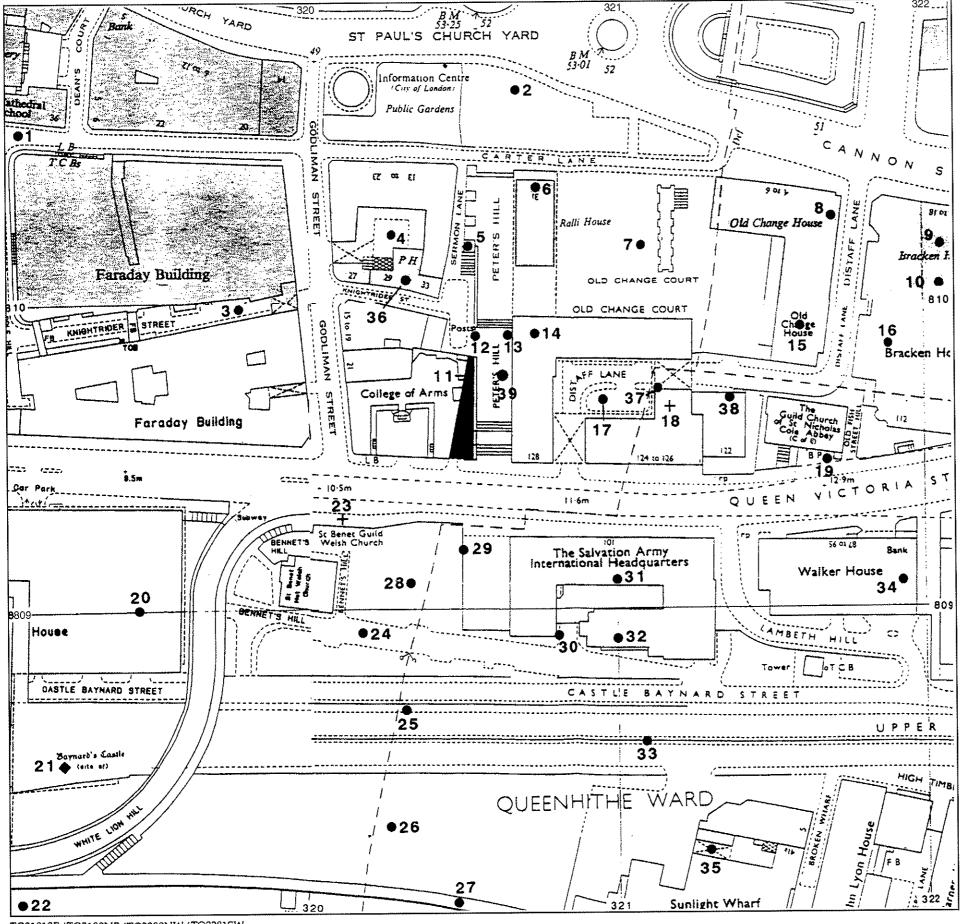
APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Ctxt No	Туре	Comment
201	Deposit	Existing York Stone paving slabs
202	Deposit	Make-up layer for ctxt 1
203	Deposit	Concrete Infill material of cut 204
204	Cut	Modern service cut?
205	Deposit	Levelling layer prior to ctxs 202,201
206	Deposit	Infill of cut 207
207	Cut	Cut / unknown function
208	Deposit	Demolition/infill/ dump layer?

5 **B**IBLIOGRAPHY

OAU 96 College of Arms, Queen Victoria Street, Proposed Library Extension Archaeological Desktop Report

OAU 97 College of Arms, Queen Victoria Street, Report of an Archaeological Watching Brief



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Figure 1: Site Location plan

KEY

Archaeological site

Location Fig. 2

For details of archaeological sites

College of Arms

Queen Victoria Street

Proposed Library Extension

Archaeological Desk-top Report

refer to:

Archaeological findspot

320.5 809.9 9VC 97

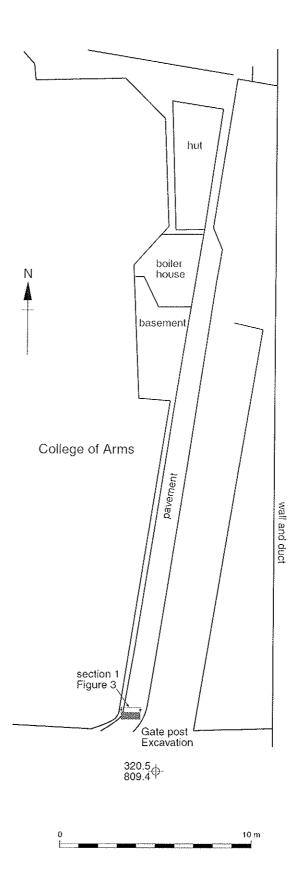


Figure 2: Area of Watching Brief

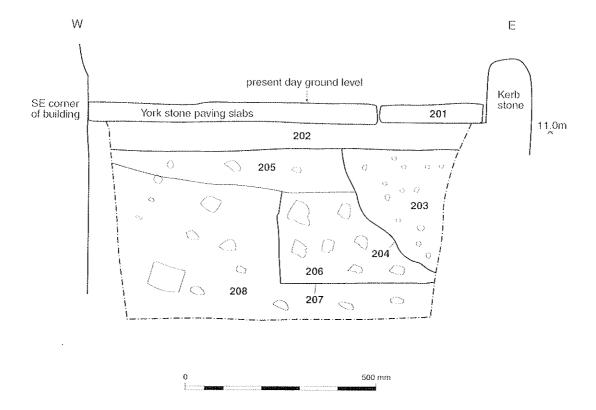


Figure 3: section.



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