



8-10 St. Ann's Street Salisbury, Wiltshire

Archaeological Excavation

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Trust for Wessex Archaeology Site W116: 8-10 ST. ANN'S STREET

By J.W. Hawkes and M.J. Heaton

The redevelopment of a small site in St Ann's Street provided an opportunity for the investigation of a peripheral area of the medieval city immediately to the north of the site of Greyfriars. The area is of considerable topographical importance; the eccentric alignment of St Ann's Street immediately to the east of the site is generally regarded as being due to the constraints imposed by the existing pre-urban landscape, in particular the early settlement in the vicinity of St Martin's church (RCHM 1980, xxxiv). In addition to information on the origins of the city it was anticipated that the site would help to establish the overall depth and complexity of stratigraphy, and enable some quantification of the damage caused by post-medieval rebuilding.

The Excavation

Two trenches were excavated (fig. 4), trench A 10m X 4m and trench B 5m X 3m max., being the closest approximation possible to a continuous trench from street frontage to the southernmost extent of the development area. The position and sizes of the trenches were determined by two sets of sewage waste pipes and associated junction boxes that had served the previous buildings, by the need to respect the unsupported frontage wall retained from the previous building, and by the practical considerations of spoil storage and access on a small site. The total area excavated was some 30% of the development site.

Trench A

Although badly damaged by contractor's survey operations, this trench otherwise exhibited a better state of preservation and higher density of archaeological deposits than trench B. Across most of the trench, however, there was little vertical stratigraphy, natural alluvial gravels being visible directly below the machine-cleared demolition rubble [1]. Only in a hand-dug extension in the north of the trench close to the street frontage did discernable stratigraphy survive.

The majority of features were small post-holes with few meaningful stratigraphic relationships. Some [contexts 39, 44, 51, 55, 56] contained either modern rubble presumably deriving from the demolition or the brick bases of girder supports for the demolished 19th-century stable block recorded by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (1980, 128-29). Other contexts [34, 48, 67, 69, 71, 73, 84] are likely to have served a similar function, some intercutting (for matrix see archive file 5/1990.1) suggesting a building of more than one phase.

These features were cut through an ash spread [46] which linked the main area of the trench with the northern extension. In this extension area, [46] sealed two areas of tile flooring [49 and 54], which in turn rested on chalk make-up layers [62 and 64]. These two series of

deposits are identical but were separated by a pipe trench [61]. The original extent of the floor may be represented by the southern extension of chalk spreads [35 and 85]. A series of stake-holes cutting the chalk spreads but sealed by the ash layer [46] were recorded.

The earliest levels, layers of ash [88 and 89], underlay the chalk spreads and rested on natural gravel.

Trench B

Initial machine clearance of an area 3m X 3m was extended by hand to the southern limit of the development site. Immediately beneath the machine cleared debris [1] were the surviving elements of a modern sunken garden border. Inset to the depth of 1m with digging a further 0.5m below that, this border also overlay a brick-lined pit [22] and drain [6]. Little intact stratigraphy survived, therefore, although 12 sherds of probable 14th century pottery were recovered, apparently *in situ*, from a developed soil [31], which overlay undated chalky spreads [8 and 9] and other soil deposits [11 and 13] filling a shallow depression [30] below the levels of disturbance.

Interpretation

Medieval

The earliest interpretable deposits comprised remnants of a post hole and chalk floored building consisting of postholes [34] and [84] and chalk spreads [35] and [85] to the south west, and chalk surfaces [62],[76] and [64] at the northern street frontage, resting upon fragmentary ash and tile rubble spreads. The full dimensions of this structure could not be extrapolated from the available evidence, but a minimum length of 10m back from the street frontage is probable (Fig 4). Chalk surfaces were restricted to the west of the surviving post hole alignment and to within 4m of the present street frontage. The form of this structure is hinted at by the presence of a large depression [82], 5.00m long and 3.00m wide with a straight and sharply defined east edge - possibly respecting a structural feature which no longer survives -, situated to the east of the post hole alignment, and by the restriction of the surviving chalk surfaces to the east of this post hole alignment and adjacent to the street frontage. Together these factors suggest that the excavated area encompasses an enclosed, though apparently unsurfaced, courtyard or alley between two buildings, 3m wide, with one side defined by the post hole alignment of [34] and [84] and the other by the straight east edge of feature [82].

The chalk surfaces at the street frontage were sealed by small areas of flat tiled flooring [49] and [65] and cut by the insertion of a range of smaller post holes [92], [78], [71] and [73], suggesting rebuilding or maintenance of the original building at the street frontage.

Post-medieval

All the deposits relating to the first phase of building were sealed by a 30cm thick layer of ash

[46], [42], [53] with interleaving lenses of chalk and fine rubble particles [50]. This deposit suggests a period of abandonment if not actual destruction. Two small fragments of undiagnostic clay pipe from ash lens [53] place this episode in the post-medieval period, though these could be intrusive. A further episode of abandonment is attested by the development of soil horizons [40], [41], [20] and [27] to depths of 10cm across the south of trench A and all of trench B, away from the street frontage. These soils contained the wide range of materials; oyster shell, glass, building rubble, animal bone, to be expected from garden soils, in addition to a small though coherent assemblage of medieval pottery (Hawkes next section).

The garden soils and ash layers were cut by the insertion of a range of brick lined pier bases, [55], [56], [51], [39] and [44] which outlined a larger and presumably more sturdy building on the same alignment as the medieval structure and apparently of the same size. There are no traces of any floor deposits within the pier base alignments. A brick lined cess pit [22] served by a round based brick drain [6], situated in trench B was possibly contemporary with this latest phase of building. The cesspit was only partially situated within trench B so its full dimensions can be only guessed at, but it was at least 2.00m square - if symmetrical - and was served from the west by the brick lined drain. The position of this feature between the pier base alignments of the main building in trench A, reinforces the probability of the post-medieval building incorporating an open courtyard, with the cess pit positioned at the rear of it and with brick lined drains running into the cess pit from buildings to east and west. As such, this building would have mirrored the arrangement of its medieval predecessor.

Modern deposits

The deposits at the street frontage were sealed by a 50cm thick layer of brick and flint rubble with modern service cuts, but no further structural remains were encountered. The main body of trench A and all of trench B was sealed by deep deposits of garden soils delimited by concrete wall footings and steps, which presumably lead down into a sunken garden. These deposits lay directly beneath machine clearance.

Finds Summary

by John Hawkes

The best pottery group was from contexts 40/41 which, together with context 18 from trench B, is assumed to provide a stratigraphic link between the two trenches, being the base of developing garden soil. Numerous sherds of undiagnostic scratch-marked coarse 'cooking pots' were accompanied by high medieval glazed and decorated jug sherds including a baluster base and a 'Tudor Green' handle. A date from the mid-15th century into the early 16th century for this group seems likely, and the fragment of early brick from the layer need not be considered intrusive. Stratigraphically above this level all but the smallest assemblages contained evidently post-medieval pottery (not yet considered), with the exception of context 31, trench B whose position in this group was not well defined. It is equally probable that this isolated deposit is stratigraphically below layers 40/41. The mixture of medieval material from context 31 includes a high proportion of glazed wares but no obvious late sherds which might

otherwise suggest a post-14th century date. It is comparable in date with the groups from trench A under contexts 40/41.

Summary

Although no walls were recovered, the series of ash and chalk spreads and post holes indicate the presence of a building in the 14th century; the occurrence of roof tile fragments in these early levels as apparently casual inclusions suggest earlier nearby structures. Likely contemporary deposits some way back from the frontage in trench B imply medieval activity to be extensive across the site, although poor survival makes any reconstruction impossible, and a domestic function for any building on the site cannot automatically be assumed.

Indications of later 16th- or 17th-century deposits, whether structural or artefactual, are entirely absent. Speed's map of 1611 shows the site vacant, but Naish's admittedly schematic map of 1716 indicates that the plot was then occupied by buildings. The present building occupying the adjacent property, no. 6 St Ann's Street, apparently originates in the 17th century (RCHM 1980, 128), its stable block occupying the site of nos. 8 - 10 in the 19th century.



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