



The Gigant Street Car Park Salisbury, Wiltshire

Archaeological Excavation

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INTRODUCTION

Gigant Street car park (SU 1467 2980) covers an irregular area of approximately 2300m² between Gigant Street and Brown Street, Trinity Chequer, and was, at the time of excavation, in the ownership of Salisbury District Council. The frontages include properties previously 43-67 Brown Street and 70-86 Gigant Street. In addition to the car park, the area also includes c300m² of presently derelict land immediately to the east of the gardens attached to Trinity Hospital.

Excavations designed to evaluate the whole area in advance of a series of anticipated planning applications for redevelopment took place in four weeks of March 1986. Four trenches totalling some 68m² were dug, approximately 3% of the development area. Trenches were located to examine areas of both frontages and to assess the backland area within the chequer. Constraints in trench location were imposed by the need to maintain the free flow of traffic to the car park and to occupy no more than 30 parking spaces. The need to respect existing buildings and the highway frontage made it impossible to excavate to the front building line.

Excavation Design and Method

The car park lies on not quite level ground; from the centre of the chequer (c46.60m OD) the ground falls away towards both frontages, 45.45m OD at Brown Street and 45.60m OD at Gigant Street. The tarmac surface and compacted hoggin and rubble make-up up to 0.35m deep was removed from the trenches by mechanical excavator. Limitations of time and other resources meant that it was not possible to excavate all trenches with equal rigour, and it was decided therefore to concentrate efforts on one trench (trench B) and accept the inevitability of a lesser response elsewhere.

In trench A the post 18th-century levels were rapidly recorded and removed by hand, below them a large pipe trench [1526] and an undated chalk-lined well [1568] effectively bisected the trench along its east-west axis. Too few structural elements from pre- 18th century levels were present to be able to determine fully the nature, extent and relationship of the surviving floor levels and their associated buildings. Consequently it was decided that efforts should be concentrated on the evidently better preserved sequences in trench B, and within trench A only 6m² (33%) was excavated by hand primarily to ascertain the depth of stratigraphy and the likely date range.

The post-18th-century levels of trench B were recorded and hand- excavated. The brick footings for the 19th-century building [507] rested on but had not disturbed the underlying medieval walls and their associated floor levels, apart from a single brick-lined pit [535], 2.2m X 1.4m. The earliest (pre-building) deposits were only excavated by trenching, but all structural phases were excavated as extensively as the restriction of overall trench size would

allow. Two running east-west sections were maintained and recorded throughout the excavation (archive drawings 9 and 10), and mortar samples have been retained from all walls.

Trench C was located in the area of derelict land adjacent to the Trinity Hospital gardens, and all excavation was undertaken by hand. The southern part of the trench was extensively disturbed and abandoned, and full excavation to natural underlying deposits was limited to 1.5m² (c10%).

Trench D on the Gigant Street frontage was carried out entirely by machine with the limited objective of recording the depth of stratigraphy. A massive concrete plinth, the relic of the recently demolished flyover, occupied approximately one third of the trench, although it was possible to observe the existence of stratigraphy likely to represent floor levels down to the underlying gravel at 44.01m OD, a depth of 1.59 below the tarmac surface.

The Excavated Sequence

Extended descriptions of the excavated sequence, stratigraphic matrixes, plans and sections are held in archive. Only abbreviated phase descriptions are included here. Phase numbers are assigned by trench, and it should not be assumed that (eg) phase 2 in trench A is the equivalent of phase 2 in trench B. Summaries of the pottery dating evidence are presented in tables 1 and 2; the dating implications are incorporated in the phase descriptions and follow the justifications set out in the pottery report below.

Trench A

Phase 1: A series of charcoal, clays and gravelly silts overlay natural gravel located at 44.48m OD. A shallow (c0.35m deep) U- profiled gully running north-south within these deposits of unknown function. No structural elements were present, and it is not certain that these deposits represent internal floor levels. Very small quantities of associated pottery suggest a 14th- or 15th-century date.

Phase 2: A north-south wall of chalk blocks and tile in mortar without any construction trench but overlying the phase 1 deposits is interpreted as the eastern external wall of a building fronting Brown Street. A series of discontinuous spreads of sand or silt-clay deposits incorporated two recognisable floor levels, one of compacted sand and one of compacted chalk, and contained pottery suggesting a 16th-century or later date.

Phase 3 (fig. 6): A north-south wall [1524] parallel to and constructed at a level above the phase 2 wall was built of flint with occasional limestone blocks in mortar. Two squared sandstone blocks at the rear of the building may have been the remains of a doorway, and a slighter north-south tile and flint wall [1519] is interpreted as an internal division. An unexcavated well [1568] to the rear of the building, its upper levels at least lined with chalk blocks, is likely to be associated with this phase. Pottery from floor levels and contemporary levels outside the building suggest a 17th- or 18th- century date.

Phase 4: An 18th- or 19th-century brick building with an alleyway to the north.

Trench B

Phase 1: A single context [599] belonged to this phase. Consisting of a dark grey-brown, clay-silt, it represents the ground surface prior to the construction of the phase 2 wall [598]. Context [599] was exposed during the excavation of a 0.5m² sondage through the floor levels associated with [598], and therefore the thirteen sherds of 13th century pottery recovered from it are more likely to have been associated with the phase 2 building.

Phase 2 (fig. 7a): A single north-south flint and mortar wall [598] belonged to this phase, at an angle to the present street frontage line. Although no other walls could be identified, the back line of the building may underlie the phase 3a walls [573 and 585] with the east-west external walls lying beyond the limits of the excavation. As outlined above, it is probable that pottery from the associated floor levels has been recorded as from a phase 1 context, and a mid-13th century date is likely for this episode.

Phase 3 (fig. 7b and c): Flint and mortar walls [585, apparently quickly replaced by 573] formed the eastern external wall to a building stratigraphically later than phase 2. Wall [586] is interpreted as a partition. Phase 3 is divisible into two parts (3a and 3b), an internal division in 3a being made by wall [594], replaced in 3b by wall [587]. Pottery from associated floor levels suggests a date range of 14th to 15th century for the whole phase.

Phase 4 (fig. 8a and b): Phase 4 sees the complete reconstruction of the building albeit on essentially the same alignment as before. Alterations in internal dividing walls (including for the first time indications of the sub-division of the area north of the internal wall [586/556/566]) define sub-phases 4a and 4b. A heavily worn silver penny of Richard II (1377-99) from the matrix of wall [566] and associated pottery suggests a 15th- to 16th-century date for the whole phase.

Phase 5: Phase 5 comprises a series of deposits not readily related to either the phase 4 or phase 6 building.

Phase 6 (fig. 8c): Phase 6 is a complete rebuilding in brick.

Trench C

This backland area in the middle of Trinity Chequer contained an east-west flint and mortar wall likely to relate to Trinity Hospital (founded 1379) or buildings belonging to it. Soil deposits pre-dating its construction contained pottery suggesting a late 13th- or 14th-century date, and those relating to its demolition contained 16th-century material.

Trench D

Machine excavation provided a single sherd of ?13th-century pottery from the immediately pre-urban deposits overlain by a series of lenses including compacted chalk floors and an east-west flint and mortar wall at right angles to the frontage.



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