



Winchester Street and Rollestone Street Salisbury, Wiltshire

Archaeological Investigations

Online archive report scanned from paper copy



Ref: W246
Date: 1988



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INTRODUCTION

Excavations were carried out from March to June 1988 on a roughly L shaped area lying between Winchester Street and Rollestone Street, within Three Swans Chequer. These were carried out in advance of commercial re-development of the properties on the south-east corner of this chequer. At the time of the excavations the site was under the ownership of Stonechester D M Limited and Macdonalds Hamburgers Limited.

A total area of approximately 2275m² was taken in by the development within which trenches with an area of 412m², 18% of the total area, were laid out for archaeological investigation. Only minor limitations were placed by the developers on the placing of the archaeological trenches and it was possible to place a trench which ran almost continuously from Winchester street to Rollestone street.

Methods

The trenches were sub-divided into five blocks for the purposes of the site recording. Of these trenches A and E were placed on the street frontages of Winchester street and Rollestone street respectively. The other trenches were placed in the backlands of the properties and formed a belt which joined A to E. Trenches A, D and E lay on the sites of demolished modern buildings whilst the others were on the sites of demolished outbuildings and yards. All the trenches were cleared primarily by machine followed by vigorous hand cleaning. The trenches were then excavated by hand down to the underlying natural deposits. All the archaeological deposits were recorded using the Trust for Wessex Archaeology's recording system.

Results

At this stage it has only been possible to recognise broad phase groups and for this reason the results will be discussed here in terms of medieval, post-medieval and modern activity in trench order. Analysis of the pottery from the site has shown that the earliest excavated contexts are of a late medieval/early post- medieval date although large quantities of earlier medieval pottery was found suggesting at least some earlier activity.

Trench A

Medieval/Post-Medieval

Trench A lay on the Winchester street frontage and the earliest activity here is represented by the dumping of gravel and clay levelling layers, (301) and (304), laid to a depth of 0.50m and 0.20m respectively. Evidence of early structures in this area were walls (017), and (033). The former of these, of flint and mortar construction with some chalk rubble and a single sandstone block, was 2.86m long and 0.70m wide, and the latter of flint and mortar, 1.53m long and

0,53m wide. Both these walls were aligned east-west and both ran into a central wall, unexcavated due to its lying beneath a modern concrete wall, which ran north-south through the trench forming a possible early property boundary. One other element of these early structures was observed, this was a narrow, 0.30m, wall foundation (080), which ran for 4.50m north-south joining (017) at the northern end of the trench. This may represent some kind of internal partition of the early structure. The front walls of these building were not found and these probably lie further south closer to the modern road alignment. The only floors which can be definitely related to this structure were (021)/(068), (028) and (302), these were comprised of compacted chalk up to 0.20m in depth. In the northern part of this trench a small outbuilding of early date was observed. This was comprised of walls (046), (305) and (312) and floor (085). Walls (046) and (305) were constructed of flint and mortar, they were 3.00m and 8.00m long and were both 0.40m wide. Wall (312) was constructed of ashlar chalk blocks with flint and mortar above and was heavily disturbed by later activity and (085) was a compacted chalk floor 0.10m in depth. A chalk lined well [002] was excavated at the rear of the structures, this was 1.10m in diameter and of an unknown depth and was almost certainly of medieval date and was still in use in the post-medieval period when the chalk lining was topped up with brick. Outside the outbuilding the area would appear to have been used as a yard with compacted surfaces of demolition material, (039) and (098). There would appear to have been little change in the structural layout of this area through the medieval period the only developments coming through the gradual raising of the floor levels, (071)-(074) and (018)-(020) within the street front buildings and (081), (083) and (084) in the outbuilding.

Post-Medieval

The post-medieval period in trench A is characterised at least in its early stages by a complete lack of any significant activity. It is possible that the medieval buildings were still standing at the start of this period and that the later floor layers listed above are actually post-medieval in date. The first definite post-medieval activity comes with the digging of a well, [022], through the floors of one of the buildings on the street front. This well was 0.89m in diameter of unknown depth and was brick lined. During this same period the other well, [002], was still in use and being modernised by its top being re-built in brick. A pit [029] from this period lay 1.00m to the east of well [022], this was 0.35m deep and ran out of the trench. The presence of these features within the front rooms of former buildings would suggest that there was no actual habitation in this area at this time.

Modern

It would seem that either early in the modern period or very late in the post-medieval period that the buildings which lasted through to the present day were constructed. Other deposits of modern date included the sewage drainage trenches and pipes, floor layers, a series of small square brick features and a pit.

Trench B

Medieval/Post-Medieval

Trench B lay in the backlands behind the street frontage and it is therefore not surprising that little structural evidence was found here. The earliest evidence of activity comes in the form of compact chalk surfaces, (144), (146) and (151) and a compact clay and gravel surface, (145),

which are overlain by levelling layers (152) and (149). These surfaces are probably the remnants of yards related to the building in trench A.

Post-medieval

This period in trench B is characterised by its continuation as a yard area from the medieval. Surfaces (140), (141), (142), (143), and (150) illustrate how this yard was continually repaired and re-built throughout this period. In the south-west corner of the trench a brick lined well, [125], was dug at this time, this was 1.00m in diameter and 2.00m deep and it had been capped with a concrete slab suggesting that it had been in use into the modern period. Two pits, [108] and [125], of unknown function were also dug at this time.

Modern

Most of the modern deposits from this period were comprised of demolition material, but included two drainage trenches and a concrete lined inspection pit.

Trench C

Medieval/Post-Medieval

The earliest activity in trench C would appear to have involved disturbing the natural subsoil, right across this trench the subsoil produced archaeological components within its matrix. This suggests that this area was being used as some kind of garden, a use which would seem to have continued intermittently throughout the medieval period. The garden activity is broken by the deposition of demolition material, (257), and the dumping of levelling layers, (263), (262), (268), (267), and (266). These levelling layers may also have acted as rough surfaces at a period when the street frontages were being developed.

Post-Medieval

The first evidence of structural activity in this trench comes from this period. A wall of chalk blocks, tile and mortar, (201), ran north-south across the trench and may have formed a property boundary. The remnants of a flint and mortar wall, (204)=(230), lay 1.50m to the east of (201) also running north-south. This wall appeared more structural but any walls relating to it would appear to have been removed by later disturbance. However several floor and levelling layers do appear to be contemporary with it. Across the eastern end of the trench the deposits relate to either yard or structural activity, floors of compact chalk or clay and gravel include (234), (241), (248), (249), (252) and (270), levelling layers usually comprised of demolition material include, (206), (233), (258) and (269). Also from this phase of activity was a tile hearth, [212], which was oval in plan, 1.68m long and 1.50m wide and made up of tiles placed diagonally into floor (238). Relating to this activity but at an apparently later date were walls (240) and (243). These were both comprised of flint and mortar with chalk foundations and ran north-south parallel to each other, 0.50m apart, and were related to floor layer (232) and hearth, [246], which was comprised of horizontally set floor tiles and was 0.52m in length and 0.24m in width. To the west of wall (201) the deposits would suggest that this area was used for garden activity throughout this period.

Modern

The major modern feature of note in this trench was a cellar, which also ran into trench D,

which was comprised of a flint, chalk and mortar wall faced with bricks.

Trench D

Medieval/Post-Medieval

The earliest activity in this trench was the construction of four walls. The first of these were (445), (442) and (436) these were of flint and mortar construction and the first two ran north-south whilst the latter ran east-west. These were not substantial enough to be load bearing and were probably boundary walls. Wall (450) was also a flint and mortar construction and also ran north-south, but was of more substantial proportions and may have been structural. Associated with walls were layers of build up and demolition rubble, (402), (412), (437), (440), (443) and (448) and a single, 0.25m diameter, 0.10m deep, post-hole, [411].

Post-Medieval

Following this early activity on this trench the area seems to go through a period of inactivity during which time the layer (451) accumulated. The major element of the post-medieval activity in this trench is the construction of a major north-south wall, (406). This flint and mortar wall ran for 7.64m across the site and was probably the back wall of a building. At its southern end this wall was faced with bricks on its western edge and formed one wall of the cellar structure as seen in trench C. To the east of this wall were recorded several features/layers which would appear to relate to it. These include three narrow slots, [416] was 1.40m long, 0.16m wide and 0.04m deep, [420] was 0.50m long and 0.07m wide, 0.03m deep and [439] was 0.70m long and 0.50m wide and all were aligned north-south. Two of these, [416] and [420], ran up to a rectangular patch of roof tiles, (418), 1.10m long and 0.36m wide. This arrangement gave the impression of internal partitions running up to a doorway. Other layers related to this building include compact chalk floors, (415), (419), (424), (454) and (455), and levelling layers, (408), (413), (423) and (451).

Modern

Modern features in this trench include the cellar previously observed in trench C, another cellar in the north-east corner of the trench and a large post-hole which held a telegraph pole.

Trench E

Medieval/Post-Medieval

The earliest activity in this trench is seen at the extreme eastern edge, here was seen a layer of crushed chalk and silty clay, (534), this ran across the whole width of the trench, 4.60m, was present for 2.40m before running out to the east and was 0.15m deep. It is assumed that this is an early road surface of Rolleston street. At the northern edge of the trench and lying 1.00m back from the edge of this surface was a foundation/robber trench, [553]. This ran for 0.70m into the trench, was 0.40m wide and 0.20m deep and joined another trench for a robbed out wall [546]. This wall, aligned east-west, ran away from the street front for 2.80m, out of the trench, and was also 0.40m wide and 0.20m deep.

Post-Medieval

Following the destruction of the walls and the removal of the wall components the area fell into disuse and a layer 0.20-0.30m deep of silty clay garden soils were allowed to accumulate, (533), (537) and (538). By the time that renewed activity is recorded in this trench the road had moved eastwards to its modern alignment and no trace was visible in the excavation. This movement of the street is reflected in the way in which the front walls of the new buildings in this area occur to the east of the trench edge. The first structure of this phase was comprised of a north-south wall, (514) which ran on the same alignment as wall cut [553] but crossed the entire width of the trench, 3.60m. This wall was composed of flint and mortar with some sandstone, was 0.45m wide and 0.15m high. Associated with this wall was a narrow, 0.30m, wall, (555), which ran east-west for 3.60m before running out of the eastern edge of the trench. This wall was comprised of diagonally laid tiles and some flint and probably represents an internal partition within this building. Other components of this building were a tile hearth, (540), built against wall (514) and floors, (542), (544) and (548), all of firm silty clay. The next phase of activity involved the taking out of use the internal partition (555), the hearth (540), the associated floor layers and the northern end of wall (514). From the point where this wall now ended a new wall, (511), was built running westwards out of the trench. It was 3.00m long, 0.60m wide, stood to a height of 0.15m and was constructed of flint and mortar. On the interior of this building was a rammed chalk floor, (504). Other floors and surfaces are associated with this phase, these include, (509), (522), (531) and (561), mainly of silty clay with occupation debris and burning associated with them.

Modern

The final phase of activity in this trench came with the building of a new wall, (515), which ran parallel to, 0.80m away from, wall (514) which was still standing along with wall (511). (515) was constructed of flint, tile, sandstone and brick.



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