



New Canal Salisbury, Wiltshire

Archaeological Excavation

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INTRODUCTION

Excavations were carried out during December and January 1989/90 in advance of a development at the rear of New Canal Street, New Street Chequer (SU 1447 2986). The property lay behind the British Gas and Southern Electricity showrooms was under the ownership of Marks and Spencers and was being developed as an extension to their adjacent store.

The total development enclosed an area of some 1189m², but time and resources only allowed part of this to be excavated in a detailed manner. The location of the excavation trenches was determined by the requirements of the developers and by the fact that demolition work on the buildings on the site was still taking place. For these reasons it was decided to open up a main trench (trench A) in the south west corner of the site, and then at a later date to open a second trench (trench B) slightly to the north. These two trenches combined made up approximately 23% of the development area. The rest of the site was examined by watching brief during site clearance and the excavation of piles.

Methods

The site was generally level with a slight dip in its middle to allow drainage of the yard/car park and a step within the building previously overlying trench A. This meant that the southern end of trench A lay at 46.84m A.O.D. whilst its northern end lay at 46.63m A.O.D. as did trench B. The area of the trenches was covered in large concrete slabs, with some tarmac on the extreme eastern side of the area and this, along with the underlying hardcore and modern sewage/drainage pipes, was removed by machine to a depth of 0.65-0.70m(46.05m A.O.D.).

In trench A all further excavation was carried out by hand and as far as possible layers and features were examined stratigraphically. Unfortunately this policy proved impossible to adhere to in the northern part of the trench. In this area the lack of time, poor weather, the delicacy of the sections and the need to move rapidly through the later deposits on the site, to determine the presence or absence of medieval activity, meant that excavation in this area took the form of three sondages of various sizes. Although as far as possible these were excavated taking account of their stratigraphy their main function was to preserve for detailed inspection sections through the deposits. A further sondage was excavated on the extreme western edge of the trench to ascertain details of the nature and depth of deposits prior to scaffolding being erected in this area. All the sondages were excavated to natural gravel (44.90m A.O.D.). At the southern end of the trench detailed excavation was carried out to natural (45.05m A.O.D.) and this area also provided a major section through the archaeological deposits.

Trench B was also excavated by machine to a depth of approximately 0.70m (45.80m A.O.D.) and all layer /deposits seen in section or plan at this stage were recorded. However before any

further archaeological work was carried out this trench became an access route and a storage area for the contractors and no attempt was made to carry out a more detailed examination of this area.

The Excavated Sequence

Extended descriptions of the excavated sequence, a full site matrix, plans and sections are held in archive and only brief descriptions of the excavated archaeology are included here.

Phase 1: A layer of greyish brown soil with large amounts of gravel, (229)=(258)=(352)=(399)=(402), overlay natural across the entire trench to a depth of 0.30m to 0.45m. This layer's sharp boundary with natural suggests that this represents dumping and not an organic soil growth. At the southern end of the trench was a chalk and mortar wall, (169)=(170), of substantial proportions, 1.00m wide and 0.50m thick. This was a square U-shape in plan but the extensive disturbance precludes any interpretation.

Phase 2: Several related layers and walls comprise to form a footpath/road running north-south along the eastern side of the trench. This is made up of three possible surfaces, the first of which lies directly over the phase 1 dumped layer, separated from each other by silty soil layers. The first two surfaces, (393) and (227)=(389), were pale brown silty gravel, whilst the final one was a more substantial highly compacted layer of broken tile and mortar, (221)=(284)=(395). These surfaces were bounded by low flint and tile walls, on the western side (370) and (298) and on the eastern side (333), which gave the path an overall width of 1.80m. Associated with these were two further walls of almost identical nature, (182) running away from (298) to the west and (332) running away from (333) to the east.

Phase 3: Cutting the path and its associated layers were a number of pits and post-holes. The first of these, [272], [408], [436], [442] and [339], were of various shapes and sizes from the post-hole [339] with a 0.46m diameter, to the truncated shallow pit of [436] with a minimum width of 1.50m and the vertically sided gully of [272]. Following these were more small pits and post-holes, [422], [337], [406], [439], and several larger pits, especially at the northern end of the trench. The first of these large pits, [430], was almost totally obliterated by its larger successor, [174]=[225]=[387], which was 3.60m wide, 1.35m deep and ran for 7.00m before reaching the northern section of the trench. Following the filling/silting of this pit, with at least some evidence for the dumping of demolition material within it, (428) and (266)=(242)=(235)=(178), further small and large pits were cut into it. The largest of these [440] was 3.00m across and 1.50m deep. The similarity between the primary fills of this pit, (305) and (306), and those of [174] etc, (441) and (442), highly organic and waterlogged may suggest a similar usage. At the southern end of the trench pit [382] and the cluster of stake-holes [217], [219] and [222] also belong to this phase.

Phase 4: A wall comprised of irregular chalk blocks and occasional brick set in mortar, (036), runs north-south up the middle of the trench and running beyond it to the south and north. It is faced with brick at its southern end where it is associated with wall (168), a single course of bricks running westwards for 2.40m before turning south to run out of the trench, forming a small structure. Just to the north of this was another chalk and mortar wall, (113), 0.80m wide

and curving to form a semi-circle 3.00m across. It seems likely that this wall was attached to (036) although it was of more solid construction and its outer face had been worked giving the chalk blocks a smooth curved appearance. On the north-western side of the trench a cobbled area, (022) and a mortar and chalk surface, (023) also belong to this phase.

Phase 5a: A series of Small pits [034], [120], [122], [126], [132], [133], [149] and [164], post-holes, [078], [117], [146], [147], [255] and [257] and gullies, [034], [159], [198] and [244]=[299], belong to this early to phase of activity following the destruction of the phase 4 structures.

Phase 5b: Layers of demolition material, (028) and (029), containing large amounts of broken tile, chalk and mortar belong to this phase. Other layers which probably represent similar demolition activity, (031), (032), (067) and (069), also belong here.

Phase 5c: This phase is represented by a series of large pits [043], [051], [112] and [114], which occur in the southern part of the trench. [114] was of some interest as it was lined with chalk blocks and was square in plan, although due to its location and depth it could not be fully excavated.



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