

STATEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST NO 39

FRIARS OF THE SACK

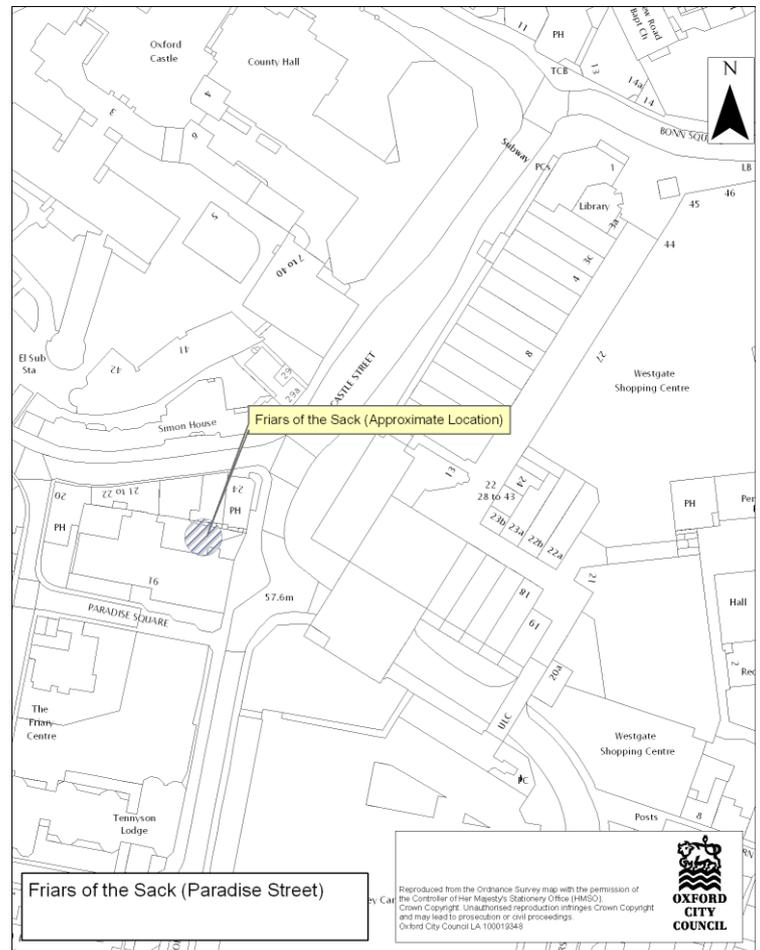
Asset/Monument Type: Friary

Summary: The friary was established in 1261 in St Ebbe's however the order was suppressed by 1319 and their lands passed to the King. It is thought the small precinct of the Friars of the Sack was established at the first site of St Budoc's Church in Paradise Square although its extent is uncertain.

Location (NGR): SP51030602

Definition: A friary is a settlement housing a community of male mendicants. It is normally composed of a discrete group of buildings and open spaces bounded by a precinct wall. In contrast to monasteries of the 12th century reformed orders, the friars' main concerns were preaching, evangelism and learning. Strict enclosure or segregation from the secular world was not, therefore, a factor in planning their sites. Their orders prohibited private property, so that their subsistence was achieved through the alms and gifts of benefactors. The distribution and morphology of their houses reflect these aims.

Version: 12/2/2012



Key characteristics

The following criteria (which are not in any order of ranking) are based on the Secretary of State's criteria for assessing Scheduled Monuments. They should not be regarded as definitive, but as an indicative provisional assessment.

1. **Period:** Does the asset characterise a category or historic period?

Assessment: The friary was occupied for just under 60 years. Friaries are just one of many asset types which characterise the medieval period.

Score: Low

2. **Rarity:** What is the rarity of the asset in terms of regional and national context?

Assessment: Friaries are relatively rare within the corpus of medieval ecclesiastical monuments in England. Although the number of medieval friaries can be estimated fairly accurately from surviving documentation (189). Only 15 of the original 189 friaries have left substantial extant remains. In addition to the major orders of friars there were 17 Friars of the Sack (Knowles and Hadcock 1953; Butler 1984). A house belonging to one of the more

rare orders may be considered important (Crutched Friars, Friars of the Sack, Pied Friars, Trinitarians and Observants)(EH Monument Class Descriptions).

Score: High

3. **Documentation:** *To what extent is the significance of the asset enhanced by existing documentation or lack thereof?*

Assessment: Few records from the friary itself survive and our knowledge is primarily gained from references from other sources such as the Osney Abbey archives

Score: Low

4. **Group Value:** *is the value of the asset enhanced by its association with related contemporary monuments or with monuments of different periods?*

Assessment: No surviving above ground features

Score: Low

5. **Survival/Condition:** *What is the estimated level of above and below ground survival?*

Assessment: No surviving above ground features, significant amount of later disturbance by the Greyfriars.

Score: Low

6. **Fragility/Vulnerability:** *susceptibility to change*

Assessment: No specific issues.

Score: Low

7. **Diversity:** *Does the asset possess a combination of high quality features?*

Assessment: The form and size of standing and excavated examples of friaries suggests a great variation in building format, constructional technique, size and cloister orientation. However in this case there is no evidence for extent and character of features present.

Score: Low

8. **Potential:** *Is there a likelihood that currently unrecorded evidence can be anticipated?*

Assessment: No surviving above ground features, significant amount of later disturbance by the Greyfriars and by subsequent modern development. A possible burial relating to the friary has been recorded however

Score: Medium

Overall score (11/24)

Overall Assessment of Archaeological Interest: Low

HERITAGE ASSET DESCRIPTION

The house of the Friars of the Sack was established in around 1261, probably on lands in the parish of St Budoc at Paradise Square which, remained with them until 1274 at least. The king later granted them the ruined church and cemetery which adjoined their site. The friary surrendered their lands to the king in 1319 following their suppression and eventually became part of the Greyfriars site (Page 1907: 150). Little documentation survives but the college may have been located in either Broadgates Hall or Plomer Hall (*ibid*, 148).

Archaeological investigations at Paradise Square in 1994 (UAD 315) recorded a series of shallow gullies on a north-east to south west alignment running across the site, datable based on pottery evidence from the late 12th to 13th centuries (Hardy 1997). The report concluded that these gullies were likely to have been cultivation beds (*ibid*: 160). A burial of likely medieval date was also recorded in Paradise Square. The distance from the Greyfriars main cemetery (over 150m) led the excavator to suggest that the burial may have been associated with the Friars of the Sack (Hardy 1997).

Academic statements

MPP Class Description

In selecting examples of national importance an attempt should be made to identify a variety of site types and situations, examples with differing proportions of standing remains and sites prioritised by reference to their historical descriptors. For example, a house belonging to one of the more rare orders may be considered important (Crutched Friars, Friars of the Sack, Pied Friars, Trinitarians and Observants). The diversity of types that characterises friaries requires both common and unusual types to be selected. Examples of the major orders with good survival, potential and documentation should be represented, in addition to any sites attributable to the minor orders (English Heritage, 1989)

Research agenda

- Can the layout of the friary be further defined?
- The archaeology of medieval Oxford has exceptional potential to provide further insights into patterns of urban change and the evolving relationship, and disparities of wealth and lifestyle, between 'town and gown', between college institutions and religious institutions.
- Can we learn more about the daily life within religious institutions – the diet and health, daily routine?
- There were several failed friaries in Oxford; can these be identified in the archaeological record?
- There is good potential for the sites of religious houses located on reclaimed land in the floodplain to preserve environmental evidence for diet, land-use and water and fish management.
- Do the early ecclesiastical sites preserve any material culture or structural elements that can be associated with the development of learning (styli, book clasps, lamps, libraries etc)? Such features and objects would be of particular interest.
- Can the material culture and architecture of the friaries and abbeys tell us more about the relative wealth and functions of rival orders?

Associated Monuments

UAD Monument 2: Saxon defences (site of). Probable line of former burh defences

UAD Monument 4: City Wall (site of). Former line of City Wall

UAD Monument 52: Oxford Friars of the Sack

UAD Monument 53: Precinct of the Greyfriars

UAD Monument 55: Paradise Gardens, Greyfriars.

UAD Monument 236: Greyfriars

UAD Monument 437: Oxford City Westgate

UAD Monument 623: Historic buildings, Paradise Street

UAD Monument 702: Castle Street

UAD Monument 723: Paradise Street

Associated Events

- *Evaluation in 1994-5 (UAD 315)*: Drainage for raised 12th-13th century cultivation beds recorded. A single human burial was found, possibly connected to the Friars of the Sack

who held the land for a short period in the 13th century. Subsequent layers showed that the area had been used as gardens until well into the post-medieval period.

Bibliography

- Butler, L , 1984 'The Houses of the Mendicant Orders in Britain: Recent Archaeological Work'. In P V, Addyman, and V E, Black (eds.) *Archaeological Papers from York presented to M W Barley*. York. York Archaeological Trust. 123-136
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- Knowles, D, & Hadcock, R N, 1953 *The Religious Houses of England*. London. Longman
- Morris, R J, (1971). The Friars and Paradise: An Essay in the Building History of Oxford, 1801-1861. *Oxoniensia*, 36 72-98