

STATEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST NO 40

TRINITARIAN FRIARY

Asset/Monument Type: Friary

Summary: A Trinitarian friary was established at Oxford in 1293 and survived until 1447. The friary was based first on a site outside the Eastgate between the town wall and Rose Lane. The site is only known from documentary references and the form and extent of buildings is not known, although a chapel is mentioned in documentary references.

Location (NGR): SP51930617

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.

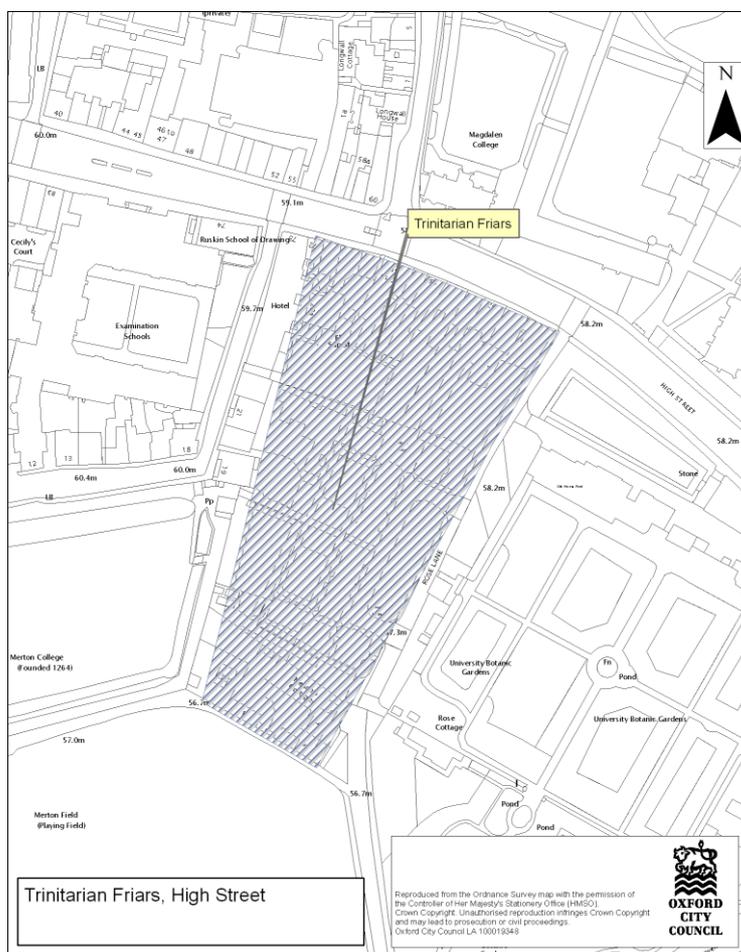
1. **Period:** Does the asset characterise a category or historic period?

Assessment: The Friary site was occupied for over 150 years. Friaries are just one of many asset types which characterise the medieval period.

Score: Medium

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

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), the variation in their form has not yet been charted. Because of their urban location, the standing structures and buried deposits associated with friaries



have been subject to destruction through post-medieval urban activity. 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

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: The precinct may be associated with the town defences and was one of a number of contemporary institutions.

Score: Medium

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

Assessment: No known structures from the friary survive

Score: Low

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

Assessment: Small scale development.

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: The potential is for below ground archaeology is uncertain although evidence for medieval tenements has been excavated just outside the Eastgate.

Score: Medium

Overall score (13/24)

Overall Assessment of Archaeological Interest: Low- uncertain

HERITAGE ASSET DESCRIPTION

The House of Trinitarian Friars was established as a school by 1286 and in 1293 they were granted land from the East Gate to the gate of St Frideswide's and between the wall and Rose Lane. They subsequently built a chapel of the Holy Trinity within the Eastgate on land between the intramural street and the wall. By the mid 14th century they had obtained permission to move into the chapel, abandoning their domestic lodgings outside the city wall (Page 1907: 151). The friary remained small with only a minister and five brethren sent to train here. The Black Death appears to have significantly contributed to the decline of this friary, in 1351 just one brethren remained and by 1447 their holdings had passed into secular hands (Page1907: 151).

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 site of the Friars be identified in the archaeological record? If they were unable to build a chapel on their site is it possible that they could not build other structural features and if so does the site have little distinctive evidence relating to the friars?
- 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?
- 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 398: Trinitarian Friary. 13th century

UAD Monument 426: City Wall Bastion 17

UAD Monument 427: City Wall Bastion 18

UAD Monument 428: City Wall Bastion 19

UAD Monument 547: Market Garden, Merton Street

UAD Monument 570: 71-72 High Street 18th century

UAD Monument 728: Rose Lane

Associated Events

- *Evaluation in 1997 (UAD 392)*: No evidence for a medieval link to the Trinitarian Fathers was found. Post medieval garden features were uncovered, including walls and pits.
- *Watching Brief in 1991 (UAD 598)*: When the basement slab was removed laminated early floors were found in one area, to a depth of 0.15 m. The top layer was probably the former cellar floor. To the north west mortar overlaid loam.
- *Building Survey in 1982 (UAD 792)*: The Grade II Listed Building was built as a house in the 18th century, but is now shops. The timber framed front has modern plaster. There are four storeys and cellars.

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