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ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD UNIT

REPORT TO ADVISORY COMMITTEE

As with all previous years it was impossible to gauge correctly in advance the programme required of the Field Unit. Once again a series of additional excavations were required and mainly at short notice. The work load was as a result heavy and the pressure continuous. Despite this, the excavation programme was maintained, new work absorbed, and the results more than justified the effort required.

The year had only one bad moment and that was the backfilling of the Mary Major site. This single site had absorbed vast amounts of time and effort by many people and almost become the symbol of the Field Unit. Fortunately its demise, which produced more publicity than its birth, did not reflect a similar waning of the fortunes of the Field Unit. In fact the opposite was true, for in October 1974 the City Council established the Field Unit as a permanent section. Regrettably this action by the Local Authority, so often the butt for others' ill humour and complaint, did not receive the applause it deserved, especially from the archaeological world. I hope this will be remedied at the Committee meeting.

The reports of the year's excavations and the progress towards publishing the results are included below and have been written by Christopher Henderson and Paul Bidwell. I would like to take this opportunity to record my thanks to them for their unflagging zeal for their work. Though the work load has often been excessive they have continued to put 100% of their effort into it.

The year has also been extremely encouraging for the increased cooperation from private developers. This has been made possible largely through the good working relationship with the Planning Department. They have introduced a number of developers to the archaeological implications of their work at the earliest planning stages. This has made discussions much easier and so far no developer has refused to assist.

Much has been written by members of the archaeological profession on the difficulties, if not impossibility, of carrying out proper archaeological investigation as part of a local authority system. I would like to stress that it would not be possible to achieve the results in Exeter unless the archaeology was part of the "system". At all levels, from officers to elected members, there has been cooperation, assistance, and, very important, encouragement. It would be untrue to say that there had been no problems but these have been quickly and satisfactorily resolved. Inter-departmental cooperation has made this possible. In Exeter it can be truly said that the progress achieved in establishing an efficient and comprehensive archaeological coverage is due to that necessary provision being built into the system.

The forthcoming year seems likely to be as full again as this and three main excavations are programmed:-

1. Shilhay (Riverside): April - June
2. St. Katherine's Priory (Polsloe): June - October
3. Acorn Corner (Holloway Street): October - March.

It seems likely that these will be augmented by others.

M. GRIFFITHS

Director

EXCAVATIONS CARRIED OUT IN THE LAST YEAR (C.HENDERSON AND P.BIDWELL)

## ROMAN PERIOD

**RACK STREET:** Two ditches, about 3 m wide and 2 m apart, cross the site on an E-W alignment and may belong to the defences of the legionary fortress. A series of timber buildings, of second century date, were replaced in the third by a stone building which eventually comprised two or more wings ranged around a large terraced courtyard. Demolition rubble over the courtyard was sealed by a fine black layer indicating a period of abandonment before the mediaeval resettlement of the area.

**SOUTHERNHAY GARDENS:** Two timber buildings and a well, of pre-Flavian date, seem to indicate civilian settlement on this site during the military period.

**OBSERVATION WORK:** A military post-trench was seen to the N of PAUL STREET, but no building plan was obtainable.

A section next to WATERBEER STREET at the rear of Woolworths revealed the side wall of the ?principia bounded to the E by a N-S road 8 - 9 m wide which continued in use throughout the Roman period fronted by timber and ultimately stone buildings. This road aligns with the civil road discovered by Lady Fox at Bear Street in 1953, thus indicating symmetrical planning of the streets to either side of the forum.

At MARY ARCHES STREET observation of contractors trenches showed that three phases of military buildings were succeeded in the civil period by a sequence of timber and stone buildings either side of an E-W road which aligned with that found in 1972 just N of Waterbeer Street.

Sections in the front cellar of 229 HIGH STREET (Boots) showed that a series of superimposed buildings fronted the Roman road under High Street. The first two timber phases were of military style post-trench construction.

**HOLLOWAY STREET:** The site lay immediately to the east of the road leading from the South Gate to Topsham. The earliest occupation was represented by three rectangular timber buildings (each approx. 10 m x 5 m) grouped around a courtyard. After undergoing several alterations the buildings, which must have occupied an annexe of the legionary fortress, were demolished. A "terminus ante quem" was provided by two early Flavian cremation burials. In the early second century a system of ditches divided the area into small rectangular plots, and in the later second century a track, heavily rutted, and several times remade, ran across the filled ditches at right angles to the Topsham road. An unlined well, unbottomed at 6 m produced a large quantity of late second century pottery. A fourth century ditch, 1.25 m in depth, 2 m wide and of Punic profile, crossed the site parallel to and c.80m distant from the city wall. Several inhumations of this date in wooden coffins were also found.

**HOLLOWAY STREET/WESTERN WAY:** The site opposite that described above was divided from it by the projected course of the military ditch found in 1965 (Proc. Devon Arch. Soc. 26 (1968) pp. 1 - 20). The recovery of post-trenches and floor-levels, undoubtedly military and beyond the line of the ditch, suggests that the annexe was expanded or contracted at some stage. Three distinct structural phases were noted. Two Flavian cremation burials again offered a "terminus ante quem". In the second century pits and a well were dug, and the position of two consecutive roadside ditches was found to reflect a shift in the line of the road at the South Gate, observed in 1965. The southern lip of a fourth century ditch was found c.20 m distant from the city wall, at least 2 m deep, and in excess of 3 m wide.



**WEST STREET:** Following the partial collapse of a 40 m length of the city wall, observation of trenches dug to conserve the adjoining stretch of the wall and controlled excavation established the following sequence. First century levelling had back-filled a natural hollow, probably a small coombe. An occupation level overlaid late first/early second century levelling. In the late second century a bank, at least 1.50 m high and 5 m wide, was thrown up across the very steep slope. The tail of the bank was cut through by a line of mortar-mixing pits, which were infilled by material used to heighten the bank. These were almost certainly associated with the insertion of a stone wall along the front of the bank. The wall had been completely rebuilt in the fifteenth century except at a point where the bank itself had been completely removed. Here later disturbance allowed a section through about half the width of the wall to be inspected; the foundations lay 2.40 m deeper than the surface of natural behind the wall, and attained a maximum width of 3.20 m.

**BARTHOLOMEW STREET:** A kiln producing flagons and mortaria stamped VITANVS was the earliest feature on the site. In the late second century the site was terraced to accommodate a timber building. Domestic occupation on the site had ceased by the late third century when a large drainage and/or boundary ditch was dug across the site.

**TOPSHAM:** Two sandstone wall-footings, a ditch and a pit containing a group of pre-Flavian pottery were recorded during the digging of a pipe-trench.

#### MEDIAEVAL PERIOD

**RACK STREET:** Two tenements were occupied from at least the thirteenth to the eighteenth century before being replaced in the nineteenth century by a row of cottages. The house floors were terraced into the steeply sloping hill-sides.

**HOLLOWAY STREET/WESTERN WAY:** The site formed part of the precinct of a Franciscan friary established outside the South Gate c. 1292. No buildings occupied the excavated area, which appeared to have been used as a lay cemetery. About 20 burials aligned roughly north-south had survived the very severe post-mediaeval disturbance.

**BARTHOLOMEW STREET:** A system of stone drains replaced at least once, a stone-lined well, and rubbish pits, all dating to the late thirteenth century, were presumably associated with a Franciscan friary established in the area c. 1240, and moved to a site outside the South Gate c. 1292 (see above). A possible twelfth century pit was also excavated. No late mediaeval activity was recorded.

**WEST STREET:** Following the partial collapse of a 40 m length of the city wall, observation of trenches dug to consolidate the adjoining stretch of wall and a more controlled excavation showed that the length of wall running from the site to the Watergate to the point where it is crossed by the Western Way is largely mediaeval. To the west, a length of Roman wall had been almost entirely refaced with trap; to the east, the Roman wall had been completely replaced by a wall 2 m in width, faced with trap and with much chert used in its core. Its back was roughly faced and without any off-sets. Its 2 m wide foundation trench, cutting into the rampart behind, was filled with debris, unmistakably from an ecclesiastical building. The wall may have been built of stone robbed from the priory of St. James de Marisco, suppressed in the mid fifteenth century. Externally, the wall was built with buttresses, which were also cut into the refaced wall to the west.

HOLLOWAY STREET: A small pit containing late eleventh century pottery, and a fragment of a post-built structure formed the evidence for the earliest post-Roman occupation on the site. Five large square pits, a boundary ditch at right angles to Holloway Street, an oven and a cobbled surface related to thirteenth-fourteenth century tenements completely obliterated by truncation along the street frontage. A fifteenth century kiln was found at the rear of the site. It had two flues, and produced large green-glazed tiles, impressed with circles and dots arranged in geometrical patterns.

#### POST MEDIAEVAL

HOLLOWAY STREET: The frontage was built up at an early date, but only fragmentary foundations were recovered. The rear of the site remained open until the nineteenth century. Many pits had been dug through the 2 m depth accumulation of garden soil, and finds included a Cookworthy Plymouth porcelain sauce-boat. The south edge of the large mid seventeenth century ditch described below appeared on the extreme north edge of the site.

HOLLOWAY STREET/WESTERN WAY: In the mid sixteenth century, tenements were constructed along the road frontage of the site which had formed part of the lay cemetery of a friary in the mediaeval period. The tenements were demolished c.1648, and a flat-bottomed ditch 10 m wide and 2.50 m deep was dug across the site parallel to the city wall. A small V-shaped ditch about 1 m deep and 1.50m wide was found running parallel to the large ditch and about 4 m distant to the south. The ditches remained open until the late seventeenth-early eighteenth century, when they were backfilled and built over. Early maps show that the whole site was built over by the mid eighteenth century.

BARTHOLOMEW STREET: The site was divided into two plots by a wall built in the late seventeenth century, but possibly with one or more predecessors. Large quantities of clay-pipe fragments and kiln furniture were spread all over the southern plot, indicating the presence of a nearby late seventeenth century pipe-kiln, possibly operated by the Burges family; the pipes were not stamped. The site was built over in the early 18th century.



PUBLICATION PROGRESS REPORT (C. HENDERSON AND P. BIDWELL)

## GUILDHALL

The stratigraphic analysis for the Roman period is virtually complete, and the plans are ready for drawing up as soon as the page margin size is obtained from the printers. About half of the coarse pottery has been drawn, but none of the small finds. Mr. G.B. Dannell has reported on most of the Samian, and Mr. M. Maltby is preparing a report on the food bones. It is hoped to have the final draft ready for editing by the end of the year.

Parts of 14 military buildings and 3 roads are now known from the Guildhall area. Positively identified are 6 barrack blocks, a granary, and the fabrica. If our understanding of the overall fortress layout is correct, we may also have located one corner of the principia together with the front wall of the praetorium.

By the mid second century the road 1 street frontage was fairly closely built up with small timber-framed buildings occupying plots of land about 50 Roman feet wide. In the third century large stone houses were erected, each one probably taking up 2 - 3 of the original plots. However, one timber framed house continued well into the third century with stone additions. In the fourth century two stone houses had agricultural yards added to them, with evidence for both corn production and stock raising.

The mediaeval and post-mediaeval pottery is being studied by Mr. J. Allan in preparation for a second volume, covering the post-Roman periods, scheduled to go to press 1 year after the first.

Of particular interest is the recent identification of a local Saxo-Norman pottery industry producing wheel-thrown glazed wares at the Bedford Street kiln site excavated by Lady Fox after the war. The products from this kiln were previously believed to be of much later date.

## ST. MARY MAJOR

Work on the report is quite far advanced. A full draft should be ready by the end of 1975. Plans and sections are in the penultimate stage of preparation, and several preliminary drafts of an account of the stratification and interpretation have been written. Comparison of the bath-house with other contemporary examples has elucidated many features whose function was not fully understood at the time of excavation. The heating system of the caldarium is now well worked out. Tegulae mammatae were used instead of box-tiles, apparently a unique instance in this country of a widespread practice elsewhere in the mid first century. One type of antefix used to decorate the building appears to be identical to first century examples from Caerleon, providing the only certain material link with the Second Legion Augusta. The plan of the bath-house compares closely with the early Flavian baths at Aurenches (civil) and conforms to the simple lay-out of first century and early second century legionary bath-houses at Vindonissa, Neuss and Mainz.

Small finds, large quantities of wall-plaster and architectural fragments have still to be drawn. The Samian has been examined by Mr. G.B. Dannell and suggests a date of c.60 A.D. for the construction of the bath-house, and c.90 A.D. for the basilica and forum complex. The coarse pottery has been drawn and examined in close detail. It is obvious that from the earliest period, the main source of supply was the BB industry of Dorset; in the military period, some pottery was made in the immediate vicinity of

the fortress, probably the tile-making area now known to have existed immediately to the east. Nene Valley products reached Exeter well before the end of the C2., and New Forest and Oxford wares are also represented at Exeter in moderate quantities.

Dating of the later levels of the site is hampered by lack of finds, especially coins. All the stratified coins found in the civil levels were residual. Nevertheless examination of large comparatively well dated groups of pottery from other sites in the city may make possible closer dating of the small groups of late coarse pottery on the site.

Detailed analysis of the Saxon and Mediaeval features on the site awaits completion of the work on the Roman material.



**BARTHOLOMEW ST. SX 91519239**

Occupation commencing in the 2nd century was represented by a terracing of the sloping site, presumably to accommodate a timber building which must have lain outside the area excavated. Scatters of flagon and mortaria sherds including three stamps of "Vitana" suggested a kiln may have existed in the vicinity. The only evidence of later Roman occupation was a drainage ditch of the late 3rd century. A stone-lined well, 3 m. deep, a complex of stone drains and a concentration of pits all dated to the 13th century and were probably associated with a friary located nearby, which was transferred to a site outside the south gate in 1291 (see below). Stone-lined latrine pits and tenement walls of the early 18th century cut through a later debris from a pipe kiln (not located) known to have been functioning in Bartholomew Street c. 1670-1700.

**MARY MAJOR SX 92009255**

Excavation prior to the back-filling of the well-preserved remains of the legionary bath-house (c. A. D. 60) showed that two wooden water-pipes used as drains from the Caldarium were diverted during the early Flavian alterations to flow into an open wood lined drain emptying into a roadside ditch.

**HOLLOWAY STREET / VALIANT SOLDIER SX 92339240**

Three early separate Roman rectangular buildings of timber (post-trench) construction measuring roughly 9.50m. by 4.50m. in width, were found set around three sides of a courtyard. They are likely to represent some of the buildings within an annexe or fort separate from but co-existing with the legionary fortress. Few datable finds were associated with them, but a 'Terminus Ante Quem' for their demolition was provided by an early Flavian cremation and a rubbish pit of similar date. In the system a wide track with wheel-ruts passed over the back-filled ditches during the late 2nd century running parallel to the line of the town ramparts. The track was cut through by a ditch of punie profile, the fill of which contained 4th century pottery. The ditch is parallel to the town wall and must have had a defensive role.

Four 13th century cess-pits were the only signs of occupation during the early Mediaeval period. A small double-flue kiln producing green-glazed tiles decorated with small impressed crosses and circles was probably supplying the nearby friary. The site was built over during the 17th and 18th century by outhouses and a stable.

**HOLLOWAY STREET / QUAY LANE SX 92339240**

Excavations in advance of road-works are at present recovering a complex of early Roman timber buildings cut by cremations of the late 1st and 2nd centuries and probably related to the military buildings mentioned above. Late Roman ditches traverse the site parallel to the Roman road to Topsham. Twenty burials of Mediaeval date may have formed part of a lay-folks cemetery attached to a friary, moved to the site from Bartholomew Street in 1291. A post-Mediaeval ditch and attached yard were destroyed by a ditch 8 m. wide by 3m. deep dug during the civil war to help defend the south gate.



#### **SOUTHERNHAY GARDENS SX 92979248**

The site, which was excavated in 1974 prior to the erection of an office block, is situated to the east of the Roman walled town about 140 m from the defences. Traces of two timber buildings were found, one with a corridor external to a range of rooms, together with some pits, a gulley and a wattle-lined well. The associated pottery dated to c. 50-70 A.D. The occupation is thought more likely to be civil than military. Since the buildings appear to be isolated it is possible that they belonged to a small farmstead outside the legionary fortress.

#### **197 HIGH ST. SX 91949267**

The post-Roman levels in this tenement were excavated in 1973. Fortunately it proved possible to return to the site to excavate most of the Roman levels during construction work in 1974. A large military granary of 4 to 5 phases was overlain by 6 phases of timber buildings, dating from the late 1st century to the early 3rd century, which fronted the Roman road under the modern High St. These were superseded in the third century by a stone-built town house represented by a corridor with a tessellated floor. This appears to be identical to a floor found in 1777 under the pavement outside no. 197. The corridor walls were systematically demolished prior to the accumulation of a fine black deposit during a period of abandonment which ended in the 10th century when pits were dug on the site.

#### **PANCRAS LANE SX 91939268**

Excavation under the road during construction work produced a sequence very similar to that described above for 197 High St. In the 1st century military period the site was occupied by a barrack block.

#### **WEST ST. SX 91839222**

Following the collapse of a 40 m. length of the city wall, five trenches were dug by machine behind the wall to determine the reasons for its instability. The collapse of the wall was shown to be due to inadequate underpinning of the structure following reduction of the ground level in the 18th century and also post-Mediaeval disturbance of levels behind the wall. The sections revealed by this work showed that a small bank with a maximum height of 1.50m. had been constructed over occupation and dump levels ranging from the 1st century to late second century. A series of mortar mixing pits had been dug through the tail of the bank and had been immediately back-filled by material used to heighten the bank, presumably when the wall was added. Part of the Roman wall core, refaced in the Mediaeval period, survived where the Roman bank still existed, however the earlier wall had been entirely replaced by a wall dating to the mid 15th century.