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Exeter City Defences: observations at Princesshay Memorial Fountain 1992

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**EXETER CITY DEFENCES:
OBSERVATIONS AT PRINCESSHAY
MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN, 1992**

by

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Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit

Report No. 94.41

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Plate 1 The wall looking west.

Plate 2 Top of wall looking south.

Plate 3 Site in relation to surviving bastion and wall.

Plate 4 General location relative to High Street.

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of archaeological work undertaken by Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit (EMAFU) during July 1992 in advance of the construction of the Exeter Memorial Fountain in Princesshay.

The excavation was on the projected line of the City Wall, and was undertaken to establish the precise alignment at this point and to assess the degree of survival if any.

THE SITE (SX 9228 9283; Fig. 1)

The site lies at approximately 45m OD at the north-eastern end of Princesshay, with the ground sloping away to the east down modern Paris Street, and to the north down modern Longbrook Street, with a flat ridge (Sidwell Street) between the two. The ground slopes gently to the south and west. The excavated area covered 25m², with only 0.35m of stratified deposits surviving over naturally-deposited clays overlying the volcanic trap bedrock.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The excavation revealed a short (5m) stretch of the city wall, which lay to the east of the site of the East Gate into the city at the end of the High Street. The excavations were close to the site of those undertaken between 1945 and 1947 by Lady Fox (Fox 1952) which located the wall, which had been truncated and narrowed and in some cases survived only as a foundation for a brick wall. A large section (20 feet long) was demolished in 1947.

The wall was heavily truncated, surviving to a maximum height of only 0.48m. The structure comprised footings, some corework and a few surviving external facing stones believed to be of Roman date. This identification was made from analysis of the mortar bonding the stones, which matched that found in excavations of primary wall material elsewhere on the circuit. There was not a sufficiently large exposure of facework to make any interpretation on that alone, although the type of stone used is that employed by Roman masons (and subsequently re-used) in other sections of the wall. The footings protruded beyond the face of the wall by some 0.24m and were composed of medium and large volcanic trap stones bonded with a coarse off-white pebbly mortar. Above these, the corework consisted of pitched angular volcanic trap which was bonded with clay. At most only two courses of the facework survived, and consisted of medium and large volcanic trap stones bonded with a coarse beige pebbly mortar. The facework was set in a mortar bedding over the footings. The internal facework did not survive, the wall being only 1.5m wide at maximum, but removed over most of its length behind the facework, reducing the width to only 0.60m. No traces of construction debris were found, though many of the naturally-deposited layers in front of the wall did contain substantial quantities of volcanic stone chips.

Two post-holes or small pits had been dug in front of the wall, both with very dirty mixed fills containing brick and slate fragments, though no certain function could be ascribed to them. Another cut was also located 1.3m away from the wall face, the fill of which contained small waterworn stones, mortar and volcanic trap chips, which may constitute

building debris or demolition material. The excavation established the exact line of the city wall at this point, and also that the Roman work still survived, at least at the level of the lowest course of external facework.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Site work was carried out by M.E.P. Hall with the assistance of N. Goodwin, P. Pearce and P.M. Stead. Work for this report was undertaken by J.B. Bedford in 1994. The text was typed by P. Wakeham; the illustrations were prepared by P. Bishop, and photographed for reduction by G. Young, all members of EMAFU.

SECTION 2

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Group 1

Four layers of naturally-deposited material, the lowest of which was bedrock, volcanic trap and clay. Above this were three layers of red-brown silty clay containing varying quantities of volcanic stone. The bedrock was at 43.6m OD and the top of the natural layers above it was at 44.6m OD. Contains contexts: 513-516.

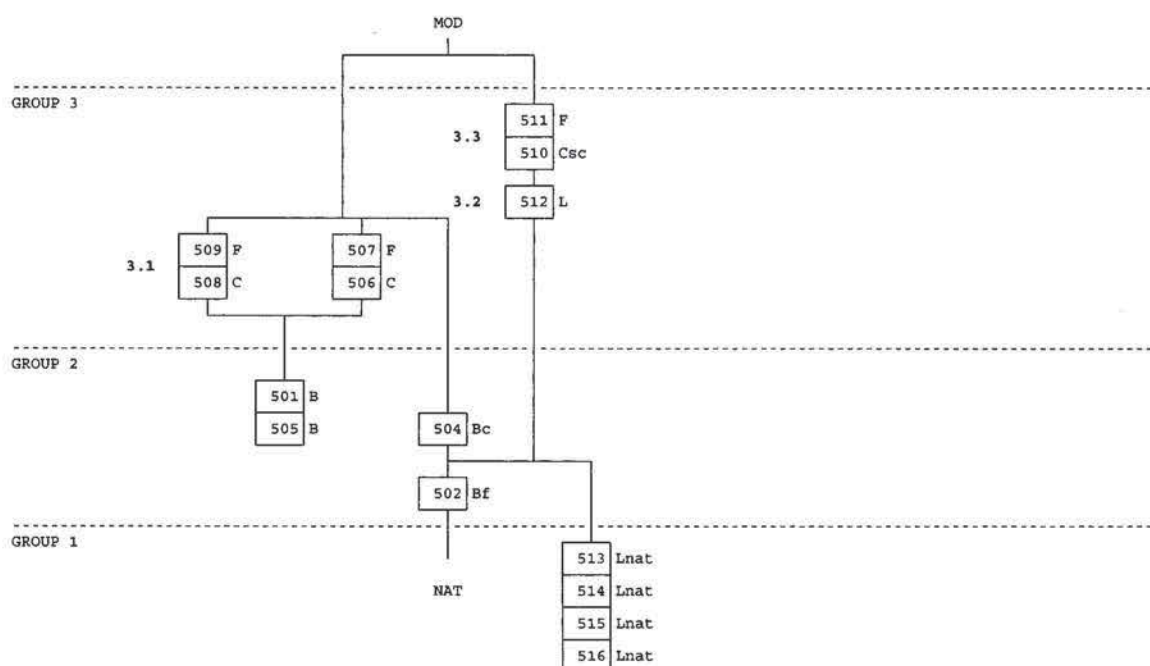
Group 2

The wall itself, the component parts of which were the footings, core and facework. The wall was heavily truncated, surviving to a height of 0.35m and with only 1.5m of the facework surviving. The facing stone was laid in a bed of mortar resting on the footings. Contains contexts: 501, 502, 504, 505.

Group 3

- 3.1 The small pits or post-holes running down the face of the wall. They were 0.60m and 0.68m deep, and cut through the footings. Determination of their purpose was not possible. Contains contexts: 506-509.
- 3.2 A layer of fairly clean clay sealing the wall foundations, and directly under the make-up for the modern concrete and paving. Apart from the contents of cut 510 (3.3) this layer was the only deposit over natural. Contains context: 512.
- 3.3 A cut and its fill. It was not clear whether this was a linear feature or simply a shallow pit, as the trench had been machine-excavated to some depth before the recording could be undertaken. The fill was dirty with many inclusions, including what seemed to be demolition or building rubble. Contains contexts: 510, 511.

MATRIX



CITY WALL: PRINCESSHAY FOUNTAIN SITE 1992

Context descriptions

- 501 Truncated remains of base of facing stones for Roman build of city wall. Medium and large rectangular volcanic trap stones bonded with coarse beige mortar containing freq small ww stones. Le = 1.50m (max); H = 0.20m - only one course surviving.
- 502 Truncated remains of footings for Roman build of city wall. Protrudes out from face 501 by 0.24m (max). Medium and large volcanic trap stones bonded with coarse off-white mortar containing freq small ww stones. H = 0.22m.
- 504 Corework for Roman build of city wall. Pitched angular volcanic trap stones bonded with brown/red fairly clean clay. Wth = 1.25m (max).
- 505 Mortar bed for facing stones of Roman build of city wall appeared to overlay footings 502. Some sandy clay content evident amongst coarse beige mortar with freq small ww stones.
- 506 Cut for small pit/post-hole of unknown function; recorded after truncation through machining. Cuts down face of wall 501, through footings 502. Similar to cut 508; contains context 507. Diam = 0.45m; D = 0.60m (max).
- 507 Fill of pit/post-hole 506. Mid brown, loam clay; fairly compact; occ shell, charcoal and small tile/brick frags.
- 508 Cut for small pit/post-hole of unknown function; recorded after truncation through machining. Cuts down face of wall 501, through footings 502, 0.12m. North of 506. Contains context 509. Diam = 0.45m; D = 0.68m (max).
- 509 Fill of pit/post-hole 508. Light/mid-brown; loam; friable; occ small frags shell, charcoal and slate, very mixed and dirty.
- 510 Cut of unknown function, cutting from directly below modern make-up for present paving slabs. Dimensions = 1.20m (max); D = 0.38m. Contains context 511.
- 511 Fill of cut 510. Dark red/brown; clay; compact; occ charcoal flecks, occ mortar; occ small ww stones and volcanic stone chippings, very mixed and dirty.
- 512 Layer of fairly clean clay sealing Roman build 502. Red brown; clay; compact; occ charcoal flecks. D = 0.32m.
- 513 Uppermost in a sequence of four layers of natural evident in deep dug section to the east of city wall. Red brown; silty clay; plastic - compact, freq medium volcanic stone frags.
- 514 Part of a sequence of natural deposits, see 513. Red brown; sandy clay; compact; freq small volcanic stone frags.
- 515 Part of a sequence of natural deposits, see 513, overlying bedrock. Red brown; gravelly clay superabundant shattered volcanic stone chunks.
- 516 Bedrock, volcanic trap stone, with a clay layer of degraded material on top of it, under 515.

EMAFU

PHOTOGRAPHIC REGISTER: TRANSP. (p2)

SITE NAME City Wall; Princesshay fountain

YEAR 1992

SITE NO. 103

Hanger Number 1 & 2

Slide No.	Context/description	View
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Hanger No. 1

- | | | |
|----|---|----|
| 1 | East facing section one, Roman facing stones 501 with footings 502 and corework 504. Also showing later post-holes 506, 508 | W |
| 2 | Similar to above, different view. Clearer shot of masonry | NW |
| 3 | Similar to above, different view showing Princesshay and Cathedral in background | W |
| 4 | As above; landscape | W |
| 5 | South facing section three, showing footings 502 and corework 504 | |
| 6 | East facing section one, similar to slide 1, with vertical ranging pole | |
| 7 | As above, different view | NW |
| 8 | View along line of city wall showing Roman facework 501 over protruding footings 502 with corework 504 to the rear | N |
| 9 | As above wider angled shot showing High St in background | N |
| 10 | As above, reverse view, showing top of city wall in Post Office St | S |
| 11 | As above, more detail | |
| 12 | As slide 10, with person | S |
| 13 | As above, more detail | |
| 14 | Recording city wall in plan with city wall in Post Office St in background | S |
| 15 | N facing section; detail facing stone 501 over footings 502 with corework 504 to the rear | S |
| 16 | As above, landscape | |
| 17 | As above, with ranging pole | S |
| 18 | Cleaning face of east section 1, showing partially dug excavation for construction of memorial fountain | N |
| 19 | As above, landscape | N |
| 20 | Cleaning facework 501 showing city wall in Post Office St in background | S |
| 21 | As above, more detail | S |
| 22 | Overall view of area of excavation taken from top of multi-storey car park in Post Office St | N |
| 23 | Similar to above, wider angle showing Princesshay in background | N |
| 24 | As above, landscape | N |

Hanger No. 2

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 25 | Overall view of site showing total depth of excavation for construction of memorial fountain | N |
| 26 | As above, portrait showing High St in background | N |
| 27 | Machine excavating through natural deposits to obtain specified level for construction of memorial fountain | W |
| 28 | Machine-excavated hole through natural showing present pavement level | N |
| 29 | View from above of machine-excavated area through natural | |
| 30 | South-facing section two showing layer 512 cut by 510 over natural deposits 513-516 | N |
| 31 | As above; landscape | N |

EMAFU

PHOTOGRAPHIC REGISTER: B/W P1

Site Name City Wall; Princesshay fountain

Year 1992

Site No 103

Contact Sheet: 3009

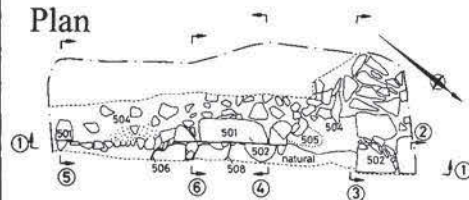
Negative	Context/Description	View
3,4	East facing section one. Roman facing stones 501 over footings 502 with pitched corework 504. Also showing later post-holes 506, 508	W
5,6	Similar to above, different view, clearer shot of masonry	NW
7,8	View along face of wall showing facing stones 501 over footings 502 with corework 504 to the rear	N
9-11	As above, wider angle, showing High Street in background	N
12,13	View along face of wall showing facing stones 501 over footings 502 with corework 504 to the rear. Also shows top of city wall in Post Office St in background	S
14,15	As above, detail with ranging pole	S
17,18	Recording city wall in plan with city wall in Post Office St in background	S
20,21	Cleaning face of east-facing section one. Showing facing stones 501 over footings 502 and corework 504. Also shows High St in background	N
22	Landscape view of negatives 20, 21 without High St	N
23	Cleaning face of east-facing section one showing facing stones 501 over footings 502 and corework 504	S
24,25	Wider angle shot of negative 23 showing city wall in Post Office St in background	S
26-28	Similar to negatives 3, 4. Wider angle with horizontal ranging pole	W
29,30	Similar to above; different view	NW
31,32	Detail of above	NW
33,34	Similar to above; wider angle showing top of Cathedral in background	W
35-37	Overall view of site taken from top of multi-storey car park in Post Office Street, with High Street in background	N

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX

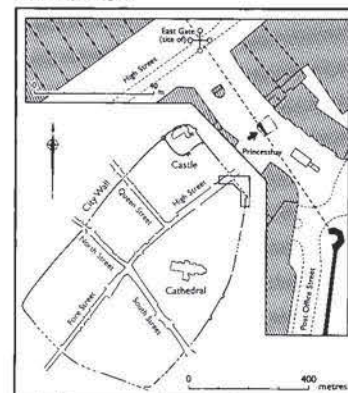
Context	B/W	Slide
501	3009/3-37	1-4; 6-26
502	3009/3-37	1-26
504	3009/3-37	1-26
506	3009/3-6	1-4; 6, 7
508	3009/3-6	1-4; 6, 7
510		30, 31
511		30, 31
512		30, 31
513		30, 31
514		30, 31
515		30, 31

EXETER: CITY WALL, PRINCESSHAY 1992

Plan



Location



Sections

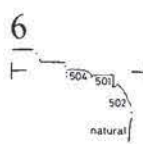
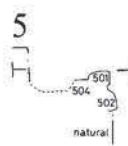
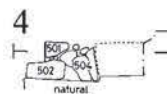
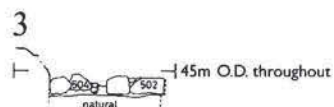
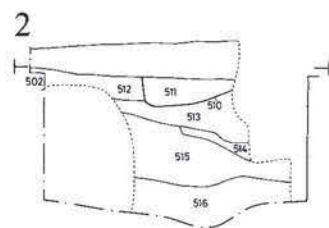
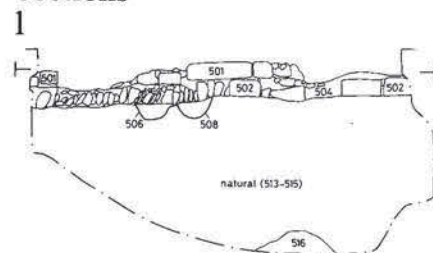


Fig. 1 Location, plan and sections of the site. Scales 1:100 (plans and sections) 1:2500, 1:25000 (location).

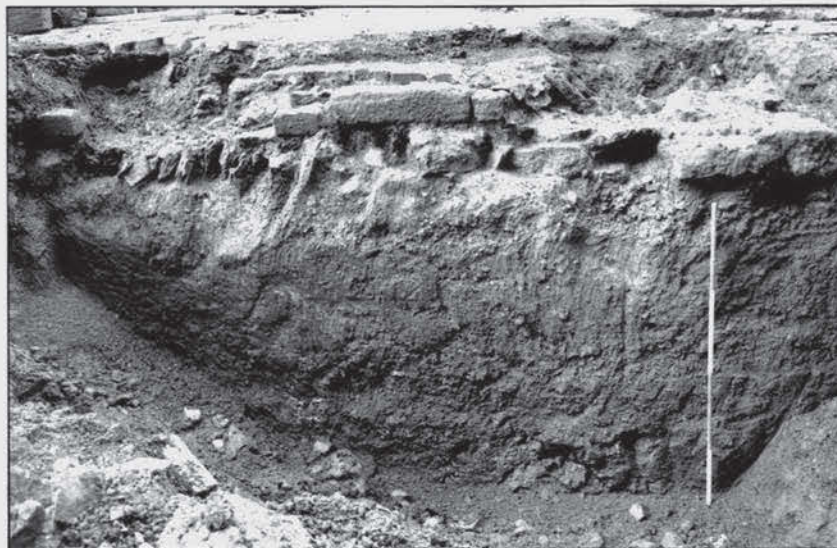


Plate 1 Section 1, looking west; facework 501 over footings 502, also showing corework 504. 2m scale.



Plate 2 View along top of wall, looking south, facework 501 with corework 504 behind. 1m scale.



Plate 3 Cleaning face of section 1, Bastion and wall in Post Office Street clearly visible in background. Human scale.



Plate 4 General shot showing location in relation to High St, site of East Gate, looking NE. Human scale.