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# Bridewell House and Samuel House Friar Street, Reading

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Planning Ref: 12/00998/FUL  
Ref: 85521.01  
March 2014



**Bridewell House and Samuel House  
Friar Street, Reading**

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

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## Quality Assurance

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# Bridewell House and Samuel House, Friar Street, Reading

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Figure 1: Site location plan

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Plate 1: West facing representative section of Trench



# **Bridewell House and Samuel House Friar House, Reading**

## **Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

### **Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Bennett Construction Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the development of a new university halls of residence at Friar Street, Reading, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 471280 173595. The fieldwork was carried out on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

The original position of the trench had been relocated to the vehicular access point between the two existing buildings. No archaeological finds or features were observed within the test pit. All deposits within the sequence were modern made-ground and the area appeared heavily truncated. It is highly likely that the construction of Bridewell house and Samuel House had destroyed any potential archaeological deposits.



# **Bridewell House and Samuel House Friar Street, Reading**

## **Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

### **Acknowledgements**

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Bennett Construction Ltd for commissioning this work. Wessex would also like to thank Dennis McAuliffe for his assistance on site during the course of the works. Thanks are also due to Paul Falcini of Berkshire Archaeology, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, for his advice during the course of the works.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Simon Flaherty, who also compiled this report. The report illustrations were prepared by Liz James and Rob Goller. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Andy King.



# Bridewell House and Samuel House Friar Street, Reading

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Bennett Construction Ltd (the Client), to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks at Bridewell House and Samuel House, Friar Street, Reading centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 471280 173595 (hereafter 'the Site') (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 Planning permission (12/00998/FUL) was granted by Reading Borough Council for the demolition of Samuel House and the refurbishment and extension of Bridewell House to create a student hall of residence, with the retention of the ground floor of Bridewell House for retail use. A Planning Condition (Condition 16) for a programme of archaeological work was issued for this Site.
- 1.1.3 An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) (WA 2012) was initially undertaken to establish the archaeological potential of the Site. This confirmed the Site would probably have been part of the Franciscan Friary's landholding from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and concluded that there was potential for associated features. It also considered that the construction of basemented modern buildings on the Site in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century would have removed most, if not all, previous archaeological deposits within their footprints.
- 1.1.4 Following structural testing, it was confirmed the existing concrete slab foundation associated with Bridewell House would be retained for the new building and therefore the existing foundations would not be removed. As a result, only a small area of 'new build' would extend beyond both the existing slab and existing basement in the south-east corner of Bridewell House. The Archaeological Advisor to Reading Borough Council (RBC) recommended an archaeological watching brief was to be maintained during construction in this area of the Site to record any archaeological features within the development area.
- 1.1.5 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the archaeological watching brief (WA 2013) was prepared by Wessex Archaeology and submitted to, and approved by the Archaeological Advisor to RBC and subsequently the Local Planning Authority (LPA), prior to the start of fieldwork.
- 1.1.6 The watching brief was undertaken on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 2014.

#### 1.2 The Site

- 1.2.1 The Site comprises a rectangular plot of land measuring approximately 900m<sup>2</sup>, located in the centre of Reading. The Site lies on the north-eastern corner of the junction between Friar Street and Greyfriars Street, and is currently occupied by Samuel House and Bridewell House, two adjoining modern retail/office buildings (**Figure 1**). Bridewell House,



which fronts onto Friar Street, is occupied on the ground floor by retail units. Samuel House, which occupies the north of the Site, comprises an office block fronting onto Greyfriars Street. A small courtyard, accessed from Greyfriars Street, occupies part of the centre of the Site and is utilised for parking. The Site is bounded to the east and north by additional retail and office buildings, to the south by Friar Street and to the west by Greyfriars Road.

- 1.2.2 The Site itself is flat, and lies at an elevation of approximately 50m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), however this may partially be a result of previous terracing during construction of the existing buildings. The land slopes away to the north, along Greyfriars Road.
- 1.2.3 The geology of the Site is mapped as Valley Gravels (Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 268). These river gravels were laid down by a former course of the River Thames in the latter part of the Pleistocene, c. 300,000 – 200,000 BC.

## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 A detailed archaeological and historical background for the Site has been compiled and presented previously (WA 2012), and as such will not be repeated here.
- 2.1.2 In summary, a number of historically significant buildings are located within close proximity of the Site. The Site of Reading Abbey (List Entry 1007932) and its Grade II Registered Park and Garden (List Entry 100586) is located 400m East of the Site. Grade I Listed Greyfriars Church, located 45m west of the site, represents the remains of a late 13<sup>th</sup>/early 14<sup>th</sup> century Franciscan Friary.
- 2.1.3 The quadrant walls and railing to the former Greyfriars Vicarage, located just 20m west of Site, are Grade II Listed. Two buildings on West Street are also Grade II Listed. 'The Mitre', now Thai Corner, was constructed in c. 1800 and lies 55m south-west of the Site. The WI Palmer Memorial Hall lies 75m south-west of Site.
- 2.1.4 The first major documented event within the immediate vicinity of the Site was the founding of the Franciscan Friary less than 20m to the west. The Friars were originally granted lands near Caversham Bridge, but the land was prone to flooding (Ditchfield and Page 1907). Following petitions to Reading Abbey, in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century the Grey Friars or Franciscans were granted leave to build on the site of the later Greyfriars Church, on Friar Street then known as New Street (Phillips 1980). Previous archaeological investigations have identified evidence of medieval monastic life and death, including undated burials, a cobbled surface, possible occupation layers and working surfaces and medieval pottery sherds.
- 2.1.5 The dissolution of the monasteries came to Reading in stages, but brought about huge changes within the vicinity of the Site and the wider town. In 1538, in accordance with royal orders to dissolve the lesser religious houses, the Friary was disbanded and the monks evicted to lead secular lives.
- 2.1.6 Reading town's Civil War defensive earthworks, as shown on a 1643 siege map, run east to west through the Study Area before turning south along the line of Greyfriars Street, passing within 10m of the Site, before turning to run east to west again.





- 2.1.7 A trial trench evaluation followed by an excavation was undertaken at 99-105 Friar Street, 20m south of the Site on the opposite side of Friar Street. The investigations found extensive evidence of medieval and post-medieval occupation.
- 2.1.8 The mapping evidence suggests the site has been developed since the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. Roques map of 1761 depicts the Site as containing one or two buildings and later mapping evidence shows there have been buildings located on the Site ever since., including a Masonic Hall.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Aims and objectives

- 3.1.1 Prior to the commencement of works the WSI (WA 2013) set out the agreed aims of the archaeological watching brief and the methods by which these aims would be achieved.
- 3.1.2 The general aim of the watching brief was to provide further information concerning the presence/absence, date, nature and extent of any buried archaeological remains and to investigate and record these within the constraints of the proposed watching brief. Further aims of the works were to:
- *to determine or confirm the approximate extent of any remains;*
  - *to determine the condition and state of preservation of the remains;*
  - *to determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present; and*
  - *to prepare a report on the results of the watching brief.*

#### 3.2 Fieldwork methodology

- 3.2.1 All fieldwork was carried out in accordance with the methodology set out within the WSI (WA 2013). All fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the guidance and standards outlined in the Institute for Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (IfA 2008)
- 3.2.2 The fieldwork consisted of the monitoring of groundworks on land at Bridewell and Samuel House, Friar Street, Reading which comprised a single trench measuring 4.70m by 3.45m. The trench location (**Figure 1**) was relocated to the west of the Site from its original specification designated within the WSI (WA 2013), due to the contractor's decision on-site.
- 3.2.3 Recording was undertaken using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* record sheets. Representative soil profile sections of the excavations were drawn. Digital images were taken of ground work operations during the watching brief.

### 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

- 4.1.1 No archaeological features or deposits were observed during the course of the watching brief.



- 4.1.2 The trench (**Figure 1**) was located within an area of made ground that appeared to have been subject to disturbance from previous buildings and services located within the Site. Natural geology was not encountered during the works.
- 4.1.3 The stratigraphic sequence encountered within the trench (**Plate 1**) can be characterised as follows:
- The current ground level consisted of two layers of concrete (**001** and **002**), **001** formed the current ground surface and **002** formed the supporting level that contained steel supports. This extended to a depth of 0.67m below ground level (bgl);
  - This overlay a made ground deposit of a mid-greyish-brown, sandy gravel layer (**003**, 0.67m-1.37m) which in turn overlay a third thin layer of concrete (**004**, 1.33m-1.48m);
  - Beneath this was a second made ground layer that comprised of mid yellow brown sand with gravels (**005**) that appeared to be the result of modern building activity within the area. The layer was visible between 1.48m and 2.16m;
  - This overlay a layer of made ground that appeared to be a very mixed mid grey black silty sandy clay (**006**, 1.62m – 2.90m) and appeared to be heavily disturbed it contained a number of bricks within the layer;
  - The final layer (**007**, 2.60m-2.90m) within the base of the trench consisted of more concrete that may have been related to services.

## 5 ARTEFACTS

- 5.1.1 No archaeological artefacts were found during the watching brief.

## 6 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

- 6.1.1 No archaeological features or deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the course of the work.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1.1 The watching brief did not identify any archaeological features or deposits. The trench showed that the area under observation was largely comprised of modern made-ground deposits and disturbance, likely to be associated with the construction of Bridewell House, Samuel House and associated services. The natural Valley Gravels were not witnessed during the watching brief.



## 8 STORAGE AND CURATION

### 8.1 Museum

- 8.1.1 It is recommended that the project archive resulting from the excavation be deposited with Reading Museum. The Museum has agreed in principle to accept the archive on completion of the project, under the WA site code **85521**.

### 8.2 Archive

- 8.2.1 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by Reading Museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; IfA 2009; Brown 2011; ADS 2013). Details of the watching brief will also be entered into the online "Oasis" database maintained by the Archaeological Data Service (ADS). A copy of the OASIS entry has been included in this report (**Appendix 1**).
- 8.2.2 All archive elements will be marked with the site code **85521**, and a full index will be prepared. The physical archive comprises the following:

- *1 file/document cases of paper records & A3/A4 graphics*

### 8.3 Copyright

- 8.3.1 This report may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (e.g. Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown Copyright), or the intellectual property of third parties, which we are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferrable by Wessex Archaeology. You are reminded that you remain bound by the conditions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of the report.

### 8.4 Security Copy

- 8.4.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

## 9 REFERENCES

- ADS 2013. *Caring for Digital Data in Archaeology: a guide to good practice*, Archaeology Data Service & Digital Antiquity Guides to Good Practice
- Brown, D.H., 2011. *Archaeological archives; a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation*, Archaeological Archives Forum (revised edition)
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- SMA 1995. *Towards an Accessible Archaeological Archive*, Society of Museum Archaeologists
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## 10 APPENDIX 1 - OASIS REPORT

### OASIS ID: wessexar1-175856

#### Project details

Project name	Bridewell House and Samuel House, Friar Street, Reading
Short description of the project	Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Bennett Construction Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the development of a new university halls of residence at Friar Street, Reading, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 471280 173595. The fieldwork was carried out on 13th March 2014. No archaeological finds or features were observed within the test pit. All deposits within the sequence were modern made-ground deposits and the area appeared heavily truncated. It is highly likely that the construction of Bridewell house and Samuel House had destroyed any potential archaeological deposits.
Project dates	Start: 13-03-2014 End: 13-03-2014
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	85521 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition



### Project location

Country	England
Site location	BERKSHIRE READING READING Bridewell House and Samuel House, Friar Street, Reading
Postcode	RG1 1EH
Study area	0 Hectares
Site coordinates	SU 471283 173585 50.9531816636 -1.32897333846 50 57 11 N 001 19 44 W Point
Lat/Long Datum	WGS 84 Datum

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Wessex Archaeology
Project brief originator	Bennett Construction Ltd
Project design originator	Wessex Archaeology
Project director/manager	Andy King
Project supervisor	Simon Flaherty
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Bennett Construction Ltd

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Reading Museum
Digital Archive ID	79080
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Reading Museum



Paper Archive ID 79080  
Paper Contents "none"  
Paper Media available "Diary","Drawing","Plan","Report"

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**Project  
bibliography 1**

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)  
Title Bridewell House and Samuel House, Friar Street, Reading  
Author(s)/Editor(s) Flaherty, S  
Date 2014  
Issuer or publisher Wessex Archaeology  
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Site location

Figure 1



Plate 1: West facing representative section (scale 1 m)

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