



St Edith's Well Restoration Castle Park, Bristol

Archaeological Watching Brief



Bristol Museum Accession Code: BRSMG tbc
Ref: 114610.01
October 2016



St Edith's Well Restoration, Castle Park, Bristol

Archaeological Watching Brief

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**WA ref: 114610.01
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Quality Assurance

Project Code	114610	Accession Code	BRSMG tbc	Client Ref.	-
Planning Application Ref.		Ordnance Survey (OS) national grid reference (NGR)	359080 173094		

Version	Status*	Prepared by	Checked and Approved By	Approver's Signature	Date
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St Edith's Well Restoration, Castle Park, Bristol

Archaeological Watching Brief

Summary

Wessex Archaeology (WA) has been commissioned by the Parks Projects Team of Bristol City Council (hereafter 'the Client') to carry out an archaeological watching brief during restoration works following subsidence at the site of St Edith's Well, Castle Park, Bristol, BS1 3XB (hereafter referred to as 'The Site'). The watching brief revealed the well structure to be in a good state of preservation having been covered by timber railway sleepers after its last exposure in 1992. Analysis of the structure indicated a late 18th-century date for the visible upper courses of the well, with 19th-century repairs and alteration at the top.

The watching brief fieldwork took place on 24th October 2016.



St Edith's Well Restoration, Castle Park, Bristol

Archaeological Watching Brief

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Richard Fletcher of Bristol City Council Parks Projects Team. The fieldwork was undertaken by Tracey Smith, who also compiled this report, with illustrations by Nancy Dixon. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Andy King.



St Edith's Well Restoration, Castle Park, Bristol

Archaeological Watching Brief

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) has been commissioned by the Parks Projects Team of Bristol City Council (hereafter 'the Client') to carry out an archaeological watching brief during restoration works at the site of St Edith's Well, Castle Park, Bristol.

1.1.2 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) has previously been submitted, for approval by Peter Insole, Archaeological Officer advising Bristol City Council (WA 2016).

1.2 The Site

1.2.1 The Site is located within Castle Park, in the centre of Bristol. The well is approximately 25m to the west of St Peter's Church and c.35m to the south-east of the junction of Union Street, Wine Street and Newgate, centred on NGR 359080 173094 (**Figure 1**). The River Avon runs c.70m to the south of the Site. The Site is level at 20m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The British Geological Survey (2016) records the underlying geology as Redcliffe Sandstone.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The following is partly summarised from the submitted WSI (WA 2016).

2.2 Summary

2.2.1 The Site was probably located within the late Saxon settlement of *Brigstowe*. The settlement later became the centre of the medieval town of Bristol. The Site itself is located at what was known until the 1970's as the junction between Dolphin street and Peter Street. The surrounding streets were continually occupied from the medieval period, until heavy bombing on the 24th of November 1940 during the second world war, resulted in the destruction of all the buildings within the vicinity. Dolphin Street remained in use to traffic until the early 1970's when the area was landscaped to form Castle Park.

2.2.2 An entry within the Bristol Historic Environment Record (BHER 39M) states the well was known as *St Peter's Pump* or *St. Edith's well* with the earliest documentary reference to it being 1391, however the name St Edith's Well suggests it may have originally been Saxon in date. A cross was added to the top of the well's superstructure in the Mid-15th century and this was renovated in the Summer of 1633. The Trustees of Bristol Bridge decided the structure should be removed on July 7th 1766. Henry Hoare approached them and purchased the superstructure, which was placed in the gardens of his estate at

Stourhead, Wiltshire, where it still resides. In its place a new shaft and superstructure was erected.

- 2.2.3 An early 20th-century drawing of St Peter's Pump by Samuel Loxton (Historic collection reference: HC1820) and a Braikenridge water colour drawing, by M.H. Holmes in 1822 (Historic collection reference: HC655) depict this later superstructure.
- 2.2.4 The Plumley and Ashmead map of 1828 shows a pump as being at the corner of Dolphin Street and St Peter's Street. Subsequent Ashmead maps do not depict the pump, however the 1880's published edition Ordnance Survey plan shows the corner of Dolphin Street and Peter Street as the site of St Peter's Pump. It is not depicted on later maps but an aerial photo from 1946 shows the superstructure was either destroyed during the Luftwaffe bombing on the 24th of November 1940 or cleared away shortly afterwards.
- 2.2.5 The site of the wellhead had been sealed beneath a flagstone surface in recent decades which had begun to subside, probably due to movement of vehicles during occasional events held in this part of Castle Park.

2.3 Aims and objectives

- 2.3.1 With due regard to the ClfA *Standard and guidance: archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014b), the principle aim is to record the archaeological resource during development within a specified area using appropriate methods and practices, and in compliance with the *Code of conduct* and other relevant by-laws of ClfA.
- 2.3.2 In furtherance of the project aim, the following objectives were defined:
- *to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works; including*
 - *To ensure their preservation by record to the highest possible standard;*
 - *To confirm the approximate date or date range of the remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence;*
 - *To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any remains;*
 - *To determine the condition and state of preservation of the remains; and*
 - *To determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present.*
 - *to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard; and*
 - *To prepare a report on the results of the watching brief.*

2.4 Fieldwork methodology

- 2.4.1 A detailed description of the watching brief methodology is set out in the WSI (WA 2014).



- 2.4.2 The fieldwork consisted of the monitoring by an experienced archaeologist of the initial groundworks involving lifting of paving slabs and exposure of the well. The mechanical excavation was undertaken using a toothless ditching bucket and under constant supervision by WA. Machine excavation proceeded to the top of archaeological levels. Where practicable and without causing unreasonable delay to the construction programme, groundwork was temporarily halted whilst investigations were carried out by WA staff.
- 2.4.3 A full photographic record was maintained using a digital camera, and archaeological features were surveyed by hand using tapes and related to Ordnance Survey.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

- 3.1.1 The groundworks revealed the internal structure of St Edith's Well and part of the well wall but not its entirety.
- 3.1.2 Excavation of the area beneath the subsiding paving stones (101) revealed a 2.30m square opening bounded by concrete edging, which probably extended further, forming a levelling layer over which the surrounding modern paving slabs were set. Excavation within this square involved removing sand and sharp stone bedding deposits (102) (**Plate 1**), which revealed the top of the timber well-capping (103), 0.42m from the surface of the paving slabs. The timber capping consisted of railway sleepers laid north – south across the square opening, with scaffold planks having been laid above these orientated east – west (**Plate 2**). The sleepers had rotted through in the middle, causing subsidence in the ground above.
- 3.1.3 Once the sleepers were removed by the machine bucket, the well shaft was immediately evident at a depth of 0.54m from top of the modern paving, with the area around the well shaft then being cleared of timber and fallen stone chippings (**Plate 3**). As it was decided to limit excavation to within the 2.30m square, previously occupied by the timbers, the full extent of the well structure was not exposed and recording concentrated on the inner wall face and the shaft of the well (104).
- 3.1.4 The well was found to have a diameter of 1.70m at the upper courses. A 30m tape with a plumb bob attached was lowered into the shaft and top of water was recorded at 12.80m from the upper course of stones. Lowering the tape further extended the drop to 13.40 into water before the tape was halted, possibly due to debris rather than the base of the well having been reached.
- 3.1.5 The structure itself appeared sound, with no sign of collapse in the upper courses. The walls were solidly constructed from roughly quarried stone and rendered with a pale grey lime mortar, which was evident for the full depth of the stone construction (**Plate 4**). An iron crossbar spanned the diameter of the shaft at approximately 8m depth, probably acting as a support for the large iron pipe which still remained in the shaft from when a pump had been attached (**Plate 5**). The stone structure of the well shaft appeared to end just below the iron bar at approximately 10m depth, below which the shaft continued, cutting through what is likely to be the natural bedrock, with the upper edge overlain by the stone shaft. Unfortunately, light levels were too low to enable a definitive answer and a remote operated camera would need to be sent into the shaft to be able to confirm this.
- 3.1.6 Within the shaft a number of small openings in the inner face of the wall were evident, presumably to enable the use of the pumping mechanism of which only the large pipe remains intact. These openings did not extend through the wall completely, but only through the inner wall face, stopping at the rubble inner core (**Plate 6**).



- 3.1.7 Where visible, the well structure was bonded by a mid-grey lime mortar with coal inclusions. This was visible mainly at the top of the well as the surface of the stone shaft was largely rendered with pale grey mortar and subsequent limestone deposits. The stone shaft did however appear to be of one construction phase.
- 3.1.8 The construction of the stone well that survives to the present day is likely to be that dating from the later 18th century, after the earlier well superstructure was removed in 1766. No evidence of an earlier well was exposed. Possible later 19th-century alterations were evident in the small openings within the stone shaft and the upper course of stone that remained after the Site was levelled off following the World War II bombing.
- 3.1.9 The well shaft has been re-capped using reinforced concrete lintels.

4 STORAGE AND CURATION

4.1 Museum

- 4.1.1 The Site archive will be prepared for long-term storage in accordance with current guidelines (e.g. Walker 1990; MGC 1994 *etc.*). It is proposed in principle that, subject to the wishes of the landowner, the entire archive will be donated to and deposited with Bristol Museum and Art Gallery as the designated repository. Provision has been made for the cost of long term storage in the post-fieldwork costs.

4.2 Preparation of Archive

- 4.2.1 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 by Bristol Museum of excavated archaeological material by Bristol Museum and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; Brown 2011; ADS 2013; ClfA 2014c).
- 4.2.2 All archive elements will be marked with the unique Wessex Archaeology Site code 114610, the Museum accession code and a full index will be prepared. The archive comprises the following:
- 1 document case of paper records & A4 graphics
 - 20 jpeg digital photographic images
- 4.2.3 Until final deposition with the museum the archive will be stored at the offices of WA West in Bristol.
- 4.2.4 A copy of the fieldwork report and ArcGIS Shapefiles of the watching brief area will be submitted to the Bristol Historic Environment Record. The existing OASIS form (OASIS ID **wessexar1-264965**) will be completed and a pdf copy of the report will also be uploaded.

4.3 Discard policy

- 4.3.1 WA follows the guidelines set out in *Selection, Retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections* (SMA 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and ecofact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis. Any discard of artefacts will be fully documented in the project archive.
- 4.3.2 The discard of environmental remains and samples follows nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1993 and 1995; HE (formerly EH) 2011).

4.4 Copyright

- 4.4.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the site will be retained by WA Ltd under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved. The Museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profitmaking, and conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003*.

4.5 Security Copy

- 4.5.1 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.

5 REFERENCES

5.1 Bibliography

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*Wessex Archaeology (WA), 2016, Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological
Watching Brief on St Edith's Well Restoration, Castle Park, Bristol.*



6 APPENDICES

6.1 Appendix 1: Context list

Context	Category	Description	Depth (bgl)
101	Layer	Late 20 th century paving slabs	0-0.07m
102	Layer	Made ground: Mid yellow brown sand over orange – red sharp stone chippings. Bedding layer	0.07-0.42m
103	Layer	Timber railway sleeper and scaffold planks; capping for the well	0.42-0.54m
104	Structure	Stone well structure, roughly quarried rubble stone bonded by a mid-grey mortar with coal inclusions where visible, light grey render on inside face of well shaft.	0.54-m



6.2 Appendix 2: Oasis

OASIS ID: wessexar1-264965

Project details

Project name	St Edith's Well, Castle Park, Bristol
Short description of the project	Watching brief on ground works associated with consolidation of ground after subsidence
Project dates	24/10/16
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	114610 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Other 15 - Other
Monument type	WELL Post Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Brief from Bristol City Council Senior Archaeologist

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CITY OF BRISTOL CITY OF BRISTOL BRISTOL Castle Park, Bristol
Postcode	BS1 3XB
Study area	5.29 Square metres
Site coordinates	ST 359080 173094 51.455435, -2.590325 51° 27' 19.566" N 2° 35' 25.17" W

pont

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Wessex Archaeology
Project brief originator	Mr Peter insole
Project design originator	Bristol City Council
Project director/manager	Andy King
Project supervisor	Tracey Smith
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Bristol City Council

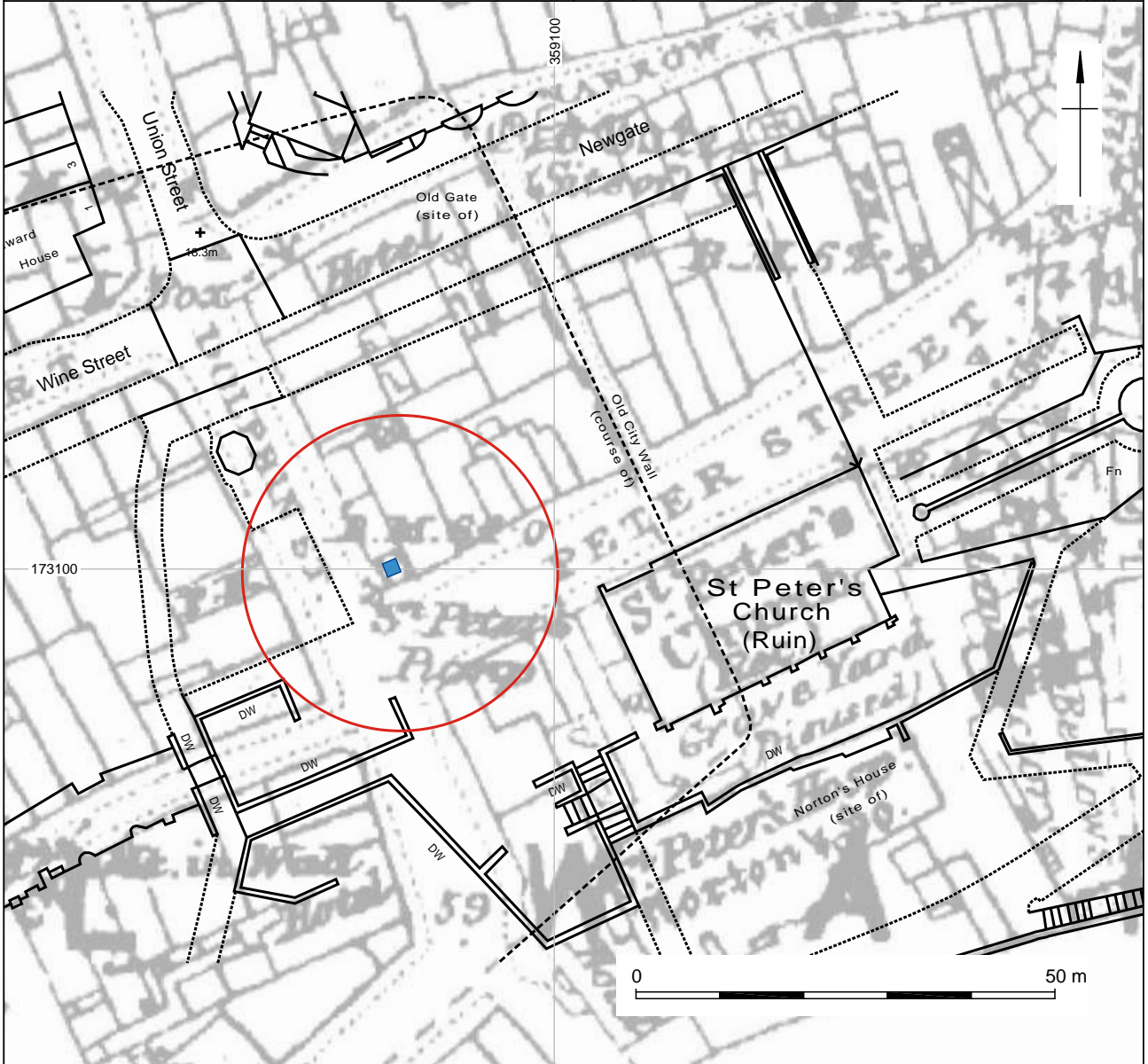
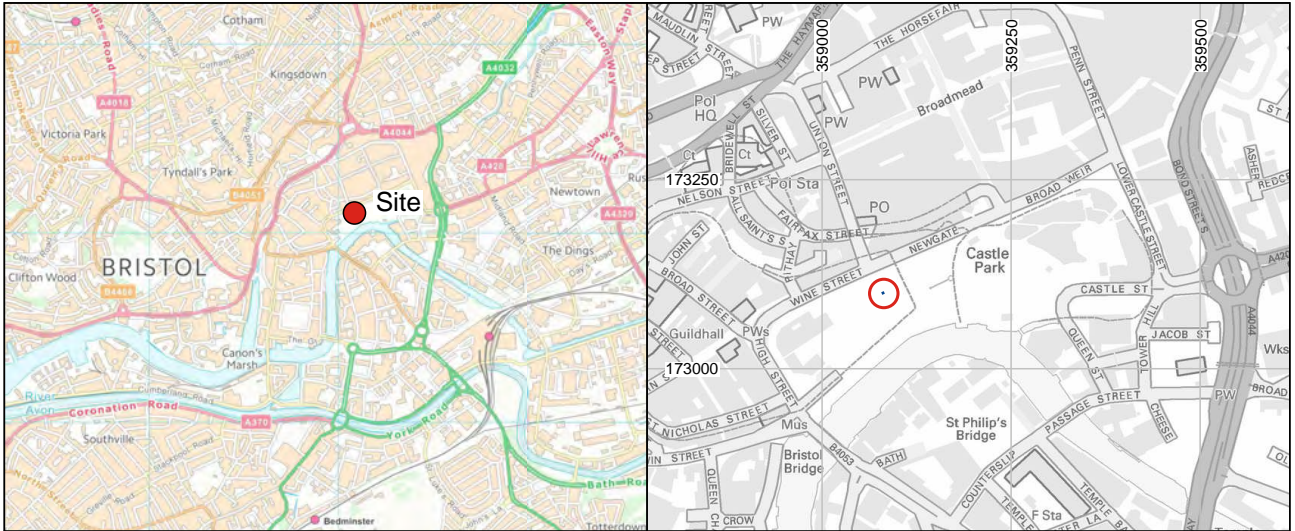
Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	no
Digital Archive recipient	Bristol Museum and Art Gallery
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Survey", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Bristol Museum and Art Gallery
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Report", "Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	St Edith's Well Restoration, Castle Park, Bristol. Archaeological Watching Brief
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Smith, T
Other bibliographic details	114610.01
Date	2016
Issuer or publisher	Wessex Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	Bristol

-



- Site (approx.)
- St. Edith's Well



Coordinate system:
OSGB36
(OSTN15/OSGM15)

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Site location plan

Figure 1



Plate 1: Removing the paving slabs above the area of subsidence, from north-west



Plate 2: Lifting the timber sleepers covering the well shaft, from north-west


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Plate 3: Exposed top of the well, from north



Plate 4: The inner face of the well shaft, from north



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Plate 5: St Edith's well shaft; showing pump pipework, from north



Plate 6: Small openings in the shaft wall, north-east side, from south-west

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