



Gate Wall at Wolvesey Castle, Winchester

Watching Brief Report



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County Hampshire

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by English Heritage Trust to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the remedial work to the area to the north of the site known as the Treasury Arch at Wolvesey Castle, Winchester.

The works were undertaken in accordance with Scheduled Monument Consent (ref. S00246511) and comprised a single hand-excavated trench within which the footings of the west wall pier of the Treasury Arch were exposed. The works confirmed this foundation structure was of the same construction as the extant wall – mortared flint cobbles. Underlying a deposit of made ground, the foundation appears to continue beyond the limit of excavation, towards the eastern pier, suggesting that the original wall construction did not contain a gateway and that the Treasury Arch was a later alteration.

No dating evidence or additional features were encountered during the watching brief which was undertaken on the 12th November 2024.

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank English Heritage Trust for commissioning the archaeological watching brief, in particular Tamsin Withers. Wessex Archaeology is also grateful for the advice of the Properties Curator, who monitored the project for Historic England, and to Pinnacle Stone Masons for their cooperation and help on site.



Gate Wall at Wolvesey Castle, Winchester

Archaeological Watching Brief

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by English Heritage Trust to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the remedial work to the area to the north of the site known as the Treasury Arch, Wolvesey Castle, Winchester, SO23 9NB. The monitored works centred on NGR 448458 129080 (Fig. 1).

1.1.2 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) which detailed the aims, methodologies and standards to be employed (English Heritage 2024). The works were carried out in compliance with Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC; ref. S00246511).

1.1.3 The watching brief was undertaken 12th November 2024.

1.2 Scope of the report

1.2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the results of the watching brief, to interpret the results within their local or regional context (or otherwise), and to assess their potential to address the aims outlined in the WSI, thereby making available information about the archaeological resource (a preservation by record).

1.3 Location, topography and geology

1.3.1 The watching brief was located in south-east of Winchester, in Wolvesey Castle at the area to the north of the site known as the Treasury Arch.

1.3.2 Existing ground levels have been recorded at 35.0 m above Ordinance Datum.

1.3.3 The bedrock geology is chalk of the Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation, a sedimentary bedrock formed between 100.5 and 89.8 million years ago during the Cretaceous period. An overlying superficial deposit of alluvial silt, sand and gravel is mapped across the site area - a sedimentary deposit formed between 11.8 thousand years ago and the present during the Quaternary period (British Geological Survey 2024).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 A summary of archaeological and historical background to the site is provided below reproduced from the WSI (English Heritage 2024).

2.2 Archaeological and historical context

2.2.1 Located in the south-east of Winchester, Wolvesey Palace was one of the principal residences of the medieval bishops of Winchester. The diocese was the richest in England, and one of the richest in Western Europe, and stretched from Surrey to the Isle of Wight. It



derived its wealth from its extensive estates, granted when the bishops of Winchester were closely identified with the monarchs of the Kingdom of Wessex, and later Anglo-Saxon kings of England, whose capital was at Winchester. Beneath the multi-phased ruins of the bishops' palace there lies extensive evidence of settlement associated with the Roman civitas capital of Venta Belgarum.

- 2.2.2 Although situated away from the town centre of Venta Belgarum, the area of the monument was densely developed by the 2nd century. Limited excavation of Roman strata has provided evidence of several centuries of settlement, and Roman activity until at least the early fifth century. At least one street has been located towards the centre of the site (partly within the later medieval courtyard.) On a north-south axis, the street had buildings of timber and stone to the east and west. Many of the buildings were multi-phased and some have been interpreted as shops or workshops.
- 2.2.3 In the 8th and 9th centuries a system of ditches was cut and recut following the alignment of the Roman streets, suggesting that the land was used as a meadow or for agricultural purposes. Later evidence of ploughing suggests that this use continued until the land was acquired by Aethelwold (Bishop of Winchester 963-84.) Aethelwold constructed a wall to act as a western boundary to an enclosure which would form the precinct of the new bishop's palace. The Roman city wall formed the southern and eastern sides of the enclosure whilst to the north the boundary followed the southern limits of the monastery of Nunnaminster.
- 2.2.4 The Anglo-Saxon palace was located to the north of the Norman palace and is thought to have included a hall, the bishop's sleeping chamber and possibly a prison by c.1000. These buildings are likely to have remained when William Giffard (bishop 1107-29) built a large residence to the south-west. Giffard's construction included a large building of flint and Quarr stone ashlar that measured c. 50 metres from north to south and 24.4 metres from east to west, making it the largest-known non-monastic domestic structure of its date in England apart from Westminster Hall. This building is now known as the West Hall.
- 2.2.5 Following Giffard's death, Henry of Blois was consecrated as Bishop of Winchester. Located in the city that remained the centre of royal administration, Wolvesey was Bishop Henry's principal seat and, as one of the richest individuals in the realm during his brother Stephen's reign, he ruled the see for 42 years. His investment at Wolvesey transformed the palace into its greatest extent and almost its final form.
- 2.2.6 From c.1135 – 1154, there was considerable building activity on the site. In c.1135 – 58, Henry constructed a very large stone structure to the east of Giffard's building, separated by an area c. 30 metres wide. Henry's building, now known as the East Hall, contained a great hall, an integral two-storey chamber block and a gallery to the west overlooking the newly created courtyard. The new hall was elaborately decorated with carved stone that is thought to have shared stylistic influences with the church of Saint-Denis, France. This was followed in c.1138-41 by the construction of the Chapel was built to the south-west of the East Hall.
- 2.2.7 Wolvesey Palace was fortified during the 12th-century civil war. The East and West Halls were joined by curtain walls and a moat was dug around the palace c.1138-41. The addition of further curtain walls to the south and east perimeters – combined with the Chapel – created the enclosed courtyard space we see today to the south of the East Hall. During his lifetime, Henry continued to extend and improve the palace and made changes including the encasement of the garderobe turret (now known as Wymond's Tower), the construction of a gatehouse to the south and addition of a storey to the East Hall. A second phase of



building, from c.1158 to Henry's death in 1171, included the extension of the curtain wall and the development of the northern gatehouse, known later as Woodman's Gate.

- 2.2.8 The surviving physical remains, and the Pipe Rolls indicate that few major alterations were made to the palace in the five centuries after Henry's death, although minor adaptations and repairs maintained the palace as a residence suitable for royal visits. During the episcopate of Peter des Roches (bishop 1205-38) minor additions included the addition of a passage across the south side of the courtyard. Knowledge of works at Wolvesey declines after the death of William Waynflete (bishop 1447-86) as the Pipe Rolls for the later 15th century are lost and very little was recorded during the episcopate of Richard Fox (bishop 1501-28).
- 2.2.9 The arrival of George Morley (bishop 1662-84) brought an increase in occupation and regular maintenance to Wolvesey. The increased associated costs of the now dilapidated palace resulted in Morley's decision to build a new residence, to the south of the old, in the baroque style. The new palace was designed to occupy three sides of a courtyard; its principal front facing the outer court and the east and west wings stretching across the infilled moat. The principal range was completed during Morley's lifetime and the west wing was completed soon afterwards. Morley left money in his will for the east wing's construction, and this was completed 1707-15. Despite the investment at Wolvesey, successive bishops did not use the palace and in 1786, Bishop Brownlow North demolished all but the west wing of the baroque residence.
- 2.2.10 By the later 18th century, the ruins of the medieval palace were largely as exists today. The earliest investigation and consolidation of the ruins was carried out by the architect N.C.H. Nisbett in 1895-6 and in 1915 the ruins of the medieval palace were scheduled. From 1921 to 1932 the architect W.D. Caroe was commissioned to consolidate the ruins; work which is now distinguishable by the use of red brick and tile. Some of the work was more discreet; this included concealed interventions to arched openings in the south and west walls of the Great Kitchen (also known, erroneously, as the Keep) with the addition of new load-bearing stone arches which were then clad in rubblework. As part of Caroe's work, a more prominent brick arch and columns were inserted into the south Great Kitchen wall.
- 2.2.11 In 1962 the site was taken into guardianship and extensive excavations were carried out by the Winchester Excavation Committee under the direction of Martin Biddle in 1963-71 and 1974, followed by consolidation works in 1984. Major structural works carried out in around 1967 included the removal of the previous brick arch and columns in the Great Kitchen, which were replaced by concrete lintels. Concrete lintels were also introduced into the west wall. Particular focus was given to undoing key areas of Caroe's works which were felt by the Ministry of Works to have been 'in the worst SPAB manner' and prioritised for removal.
- 2.2.12 Cement mortars were used across the site as part of Caroe's work and also those carried out by the Ministry of Works. A campaign of repairs elsewhere around the site in 2000 saw the use of lime mortars with varying degrees of success.

Treasury Arch

- 2.2.13 The area referred to as the Treasury Arch within this statement is dated to around 1138-41 by Biddle, who interprets what is now the south wall of the Woodman's Gate as an additional northern defensive wall stretching between Giffard's West Hall and Henry of Blois' East Hall, constructed during local tensions at the time. Biddle's conclusions suggest that there was no opening originally other than the central arch which was later aligned with the principal northern entry point of the Woodman's Gate when this was constructed about twenty years later. Biddle's view, summarised within the 2004 Conservation Statement, was that room 9



(as numbered by Biddle and shown below, was accessible only from room 8 which was itself only accessible via the central entrance corridor from Woodman's Gate through to the central courtyard. There is no specific reference to room 10, which possibly did not therefore exist at the time but was created with the later construction of the servery & wine storage at the rear of East Hall (room 12 as shown in fig.3 below) after the later 14th century. Indeed, the wall between rooms 8 and 9 appears to be largely external (with the exception of the protrusion forming room 9) with 'squint' angled window openings that are suggestive of defensive openings within an external wall.

- 2.2.14 Alterations to the Woodman's Gate in 1372-73 as recorded in the pipe rolls suggest that the walls forming room 9 were removed at this date and it is possible the Treasury & Exchequer were moved from their previous location in the great tower south of Giffard's West Hall at this point and into the newly opened-up space between rooms 8 and 12. It is impossible to say whether or not at this point an additional opening was created to form the present Treasury Arch. There is a lack of any dressed stone surviving which would indicate no formal intentional opening; however, this may have been stolen and used elsewhere during the site's long history as a ruin. The earliest image of the opening appears to be by John Hadley. It is difficult to precisely compare with the modern ruins as it is evident that there have been extensive losses of historic fabric in the period since the drawing was made – plus allowances must be made for what is sketch image rather than a measured drawing – but the image does appear to show an opening in approximately the same location as the present arch. Interestingly, however, it appears that there is a blocked opening, with an ashlar masonry surround immediately to the right of it (where the return of the external west aisle wall is known to have been originally).
- 2.2.15 The first photographic evidence of the arch is around 1900, when it appears in a postcard. By the 1920s, it had been subject to restoration under the direction of Caroe. Caroe's work was deplored by the Ministry of Works who considered it 'in the worst SPAB manner,' with particular venom reserved for the works undertaken on the arch. Caroe's work included the creation of conjectural masonry door jamb constructed of ashlar quoins and incorporating earlier fragments of decorative masonry and may also have included the removal of some elements of rubble core work and other loose masonry – a practice that Caroe was not averse to, although it was strongly opposed by the then Inspector of Ancient Monuments. It is highly likely however that – even whilst the style and extent of Caroe's work in this area was disagreeable to the Inspector of Ancient Monuments (both at the time and later when guardianship was being more seriously discussed in the 1950s), it was probably necessary in terms of the structural function it performed in securing the arch at the time it was inserted.
- 2.2.16 Caroe's work on the archway was amongst the first of the areas to be addressed when the Ministry began to carry out repairs and consolidation from 1967 to 1975. The conjectural stonework was dismantled, and a more rugged masonry section was constructed to take the load of the top of the archway. The masonry along the top appears to have been reduced, probably to remove further elements of Caroe's rebuilding. The lower courses of the wall, exposed through the extensive excavation undertaken by the Biddle and the Winchester Excavation Committee which required further consolidation of the lower c.75 metre of the masonry, and in the case of the archway this also included the building up of masonry to carry out the structural role of the lower courses needed once the supporting bank of earth (and Caroe's supporting masonry) had been removed.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Aims

- 3.1.1 The aims of the watching brief, as stated in the WSI (English Heritage 2024), were 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 the development or other works;
- provide an opportunity, if needed, to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the allocated resources are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard; and
- guide, not replace, any requirement for contingent excavation or preservation of possible deposits.

3.2 General objectives

3.2.1 In order to achieve the above aims, the general objectives of the watching brief, also defined in the WSI (English Heritage 2024), were to:

- determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, deposits, structures, artefacts or ecofacts within the specified works area;
- record and establish, within the constraints of the works, the extent, character, date, condition and quality of any surviving archaeological remains (a preservation by record);
- place any identified archaeological remains within a wider historical and archaeological context in order to assess their significance; and
- make available information about the archaeological resource on the site by preparing a report on the results.

4 METHODS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the detailed methodology set out within the WSI (English Heritage 2024) and in compliance with SMC (ref. S00246511). The works were also undertaken in general compliance with ClfA standards and guidance (ClfA 2023a–b). The methods employed are summarised below.

4.2 Fieldwork methods

General

4.2.1 The attending archaeologist monitored all hand excavations within the specified area. The works comprised the hand-excavation of a single 'L'-shaped trench at the base of the western pier of the Treasury Arch (Trench 1). The exposed foundation structure was cleaned by hand in order to aid visual definition.

4.2.2 Spoil from hand-excavated archaeological deposits was visually scanned for the purposes of finds retrieval, though no artefactual evidence was observed.

Recording

4.2.3 All exposed archaeological deposits and features were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's pro forma recording system. A complete record of excavated features and deposits was made, including plans and sections drawn to appropriate scales (generally



1:20 or 1:50 for plans and 1:10 for sections) and tied to the Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid.

- 4.2.4 A full photographic record was made using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. Digital images have been subject to managed quality control and curation processes, which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and will ensure long term accessibility of the image set.

4.3 Finds and environmental strategies

- 4.3.1 Strategies for the recovery, processing and assessment of finds and environmental samples were in line with those detailed in the WSI (English Heritage 2024). The treatment of artefacts and environmental remains was in general accordance with: *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014a), *Environmental Archaeology. A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation* (English Heritage 2011) and ClfA's (n.d. a) *Toolkit for Specialist Reporting* (Type 1: Description).

4.4 Monitoring

- 4.4.1 The Properties Curator monitored the watching brief on behalf of English Heritage. Any variations to the WSI, if required to better address the project aims, were agreed in advance with the client and the Properties Curator.

5 STRATIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 One 'L'-shaped trench was hand excavated around the foot of the west wall pier, measuring 1.20 x 1.30 x 0.08/0.15 m. Hand digging was stopped as soon as the original footings were exposed and deemed strong enough for the required repair works (Figs 1, 2 and 3).

5.2 Medieval

- 5.2.1 A very shallow layer of modern made ground (101) directly overlay a foundation structure (102; Figs 2 and 3). The structure was constructed following the identical building method as the existing wall – mortared flint cobbles (Fig. 4). The level of preservation and condition of the exposed structure was very good and hence dismantling it was deemed unnecessary.
- 5.2.2 The flint structure appeared to continue beyond the limits of excavation towards the east wall (Fig. 3 and 5), suggesting the original structure may have comprised a continuing wall, and that the Treasury Arch comprised a later alteration.

6 FINDS EVIDENCE

- 6.1.1 No finds were encountered during the watching brief.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

- 7.1.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered.



8 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Summary

- 8.1.1 The hand excavated trench around the west wall exposed the original wall footing constructed using the same method as the extant wall. Furthermore, the footing appeared to continue beyond the trench towards the eastern pier, suggesting the structure was originally constructed as a wall rather than a gateway. The opening for the current Treasury Arch may, therefore, be a later insertion within the original wall. No dating evidence for the wall or the later opening was recovered during the excavations.

9 ARCHIVE STORAGE AND CURATION

9.1 Security copy

- 9.1.1 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.

9.2 OASIS

- 9.2.1 Given the very limited results of the fieldwork, it is considered that the site conforms to the definition of a 'sterile project' (i.e., one that produces nothing of evidential value), according to the ClfA (n.d. a) *Toolkit for Selecting Archaeological Archives* (archaeological archives from sterile projects). It is therefore recommended that only selected digital data are deposited with the ADS, an approach commensurate with the scale and significance of the project. Deposition will involve uploading of the site report via OASIS only.
- 9.2.2 An OASIS (online access to the index of archaeological investigations) record (<http://oasis.ac.uk>) has been initiated, with key fields completed (Appendix 2). A.pdf version of the final report will be submitted following approval by the Properties Curator on behalf of the English Heritage. Subject to any contractual requirements on confidentiality, copies of the OASIS record will be integrated into the relevant local and national records and published through the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) ArchSearch catalogue.

10 COPYRIGHT

10.1 Archive and report copyright

- 10.1.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative/digital archive relating to the project will be retained by Wessex Archaeology under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved. The client will be licenced to use each report for the purposes that it was produced in relation to the project as described in the specification. 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 conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003*.
- 10.1.2 Information relating to the project will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER), where it can be freely copied without reference to Wessex Archaeology for the purposes of archaeological research or development control within the planning process.

10.2 Third party data copyright

- 10.2.1 This document and the project archive 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 Wessex Archaeology are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for



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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Trench Table

Trench No 1		Length 1.30 m		Width 1.20 m		Depth 0.15 m	
Easting			Northing			m OD	
Context Number	Fill Of/Filled With	Interpretative Category	Description			Depth BGL	
1001		Made ground	Coarse light yellow brown sand with frequent sub-rounded gravel <20mm. fairly tightly compacted, homogeneous. surface of current ground.			0.0– 0.08/0.15	
1002		Foundation	Flint cobbles mortared, very similar to existing wall. sturdy. is more like a wall foundation rather than foundation of a gate. only surface revealed.			0.08/0.5+	



Appendix 2 OASIS summary

OASIS Summary for wessexar1-529579

OASIS ID (UID)	wessexar1-529579
Project Name	Watching Brief at Wolvesey Palace, Winchester
Sitename	Wolvesey Palace, Winchester
Sitecode	
Project Identifier(s)	296641
Activity type	Watching Brief
Planning Id	
Reason For Investigation	Scheduled monument consent
Organisation Responsible for work	Wessex Archaeology
Project Dates	12-Nov-2024 - 12-Nov-2024
Location	Wolvesey Palace, Winchester NGR : SU 48437 29108 LL : 51.059276, -1.310224 12 Fig : 448437,129108
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Hampshire Local Authority District : Winchester Parish : Winchester, unparished area
Project Methodology	The attending archaeologist monitored all hand excavations within the specified area. The works comprised the hand-excavation of a single 'L'-shaped trench at the base of the western pier of the Treasury Arch (Trench 1). The exposed foundation structure was cleaned by hand in order to aid visual definition. Spoil from hand-excavated archaeological deposits was visually scanned for the purposes of finds retrieval, though no artefactual evidence was observed.
Project Results	The hand excavated trench around the west wall exposed an original footing constructed using the same method as the existing wall. Furthermore, the footing appeared to continue beyond the trench towards east, suggesting the extant archway (Treasury Arch) was a later alteration to an earlier wall.
Keywords	
Funder	English Heritage Trust
HER	Scheduled Monument Casework - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	John Davey
HER Identifiers	HER Monument No - 1005535
Archives	



Site Area
 Trench 1



Coordinate system: OSGB 1936 British National Grid
 Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2024.
 Base plan © Biddle 1966, supplied by the Client.
 This material is for client report only © Wessex Archaeology. No unauthorised reproduction.

Date: 03/12/2024 Created by: LTF

Scale: 1:100 at A3 Revision: 0



Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Pre-excitation shot of Trench 1 location, view from NE



Figure 3: Plan shot of Trench 1, view from NE



Figure 4: Detail shot of footing 102 in Trench 1, view from E



Figure 5: Detail shot of footing 102 in Trench 1, view from NE



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