



WARG

1972-2012

Before WARG

Archaeology in Winchester

1949-1972

Winchester is probably one of the most archaeologically explored and recorded towns in Europe. While archaeology has been carried out in the City since the nineteenth century, the high-water mark was the 1960s, when the Winchester Excavations Committee, under Martin Biddle, carried out huge excavations in the centre of the City.

1949-1960

In 1949 Winchester appointed Frank Cottrill as the full time curator of the City Museum. As well as recording all archaeological evidence from trenches for services, foundations for new buildings and other activities, he also began a programme of scientific archaeology, inviting young archaeologists to carry out excavations in advance of development. Between 1949 and 1960 this included the site of the County Council's Queen Elizabeth Court and the neighbouring Tower Street Car Park, the widening of St George's Street, and the development of Staple Gardens, as well as a host of smaller digs. Many of today's major archaeological figures, including Barry Cunliffe and John Collis, were involved with or lead these digs.

In 1961 a site near the Cathedral was to be developed as a hotel (now the Wessex) and Martin Biddle was invited to lead an excavation. The site was so rich that Martin persuaded the City that it should support a programme of funded excavations, and in 1962 the Winchester Excavations Committee was founded.

Ten years of archaeology

The Winchester Excavations Committee oversaw the work, which was conducted by the Winchester Research Unit with a core of full time staff and, during excavations, an army of volunteers from around the world, including American students from Duke University and the University of North Carolina. Over the ten years, in a mix of rescue archaeology, digging in advance of development, and research archaeology, a large number of sites were dug. The long term project was the Cathedral Green, the site of Roman buildings and the Old and New Minsters. Alongside this, major digs were carried out at the Castle (on the site for the Court buildings and the Castle yard), Lower Brook Street and Wolvesey Palace. Smaller excavations were at Oram's Arbour, Colebrook Street, Jewry Street, City Road, the South Gate and Winnall Lane. For much of the period Lankhills Roman cemetery, to the east of the Andover Road, was being excavated by the Winchester College Archaeological Society.

Publications

The results of the Winchester Excavations Committee work are being published as Winchester Studies. These are large volumes, and the plan is to have eleven volumes in seventeen parts. So far seven volumes in nine parts have been published:

- WS 1, *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages*
- WS 2, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*
- WS 3.ii, *The Roman Cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester*
- WS 4.ii, *The Cult of St Swithun*
- WS 4.iii, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester*
- WS 7.ii, *Object and Economy in Medieval Winchester*
- WS 8, *The Winchester Mint*



General view of Lower Brook Street, showing post medieval and Victorian features (1966)

Photo - Winchester Excavations Committee



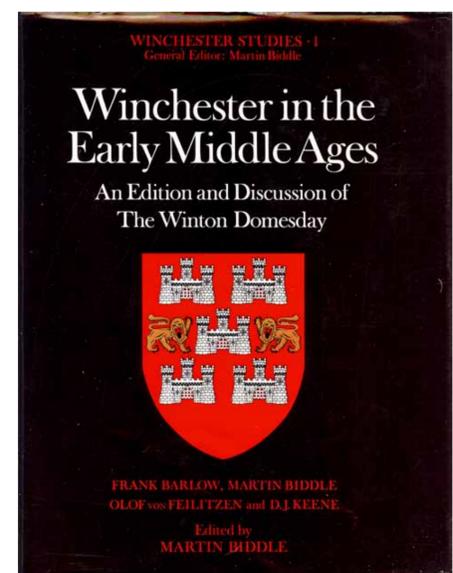
Old Minster - looking north across the atrium (1967)

Photo - Winchester Excavations Committee/Richard Anderson



The Roman cemetery at Lankhills, 1971

Photo - Winchester Excavations Committee



The volumes in preparation are:

- WS 4, *The Anglo-Saxon Minsters of Winchester*
- WS 6, *Winchester Castle*
- WS7i, *Ceramics*
- WS 9i, *The People of Early Winchester*
- WS 9ii, *The Animals*
- WS 11, *The Historic Towns Atlas*

Also published are

- King Arthur's Round Table: an archaeological investigation* and
- Historical Map of Winchester, about 1800.*

For more information on the publications, please visit the Winchester Excavations Committees

web site: www.winchesterstudies.org

