

## Webmaster's Diary 2013 (Most recent days first)

### Day 9 31<sup>st</sup> August

"Cosy" was the description of much of today. We had just 13 people on site, but it all fitted together well, as we continued to record Trench 2 and prepared to take out part of the trench baulk.

In Trench 1 (below) we exposed the internal face of the western wall where the presumed door blocking had taken place (see yesterday). With four people in that part of the trench it was "cosy". It looks like the wall lies on a mortar base which in turn sits on a chalk raft – don't fret, it's just a few inches, we're not talking the same proportions as St. Elizabeth's College last year.



At lunchtime the baulk in Trench 2 came out in a flurry of turf and spades. This would hopefully reveal the full extent of the front doorway, and possibly a matching western door jamb to go with some interesting structures found just inside the "front door" which may be a blocked door or window recess.

In Trench 2, now it's recorded, we've also started to lift the rubble "levelling" layer which lies inside the north-west corner of the building, the aim being to get an idea of the occupation surface in this area. Is or was it tiled? Was the demolition done over a period of time which could have eradicated any dating evidence? We'll see, but first, the public can come and see what we've been up to during our Open Day. The site is open from 10am till 4pm at the Itchen River walk entrance (not through St. Cross), so hopefully we'll be able to spread the word and enhance interest in Winchester's history. With a large number of people expected on site, it'll be very cosy indeed.

Which reminds me, this diary document has got a bit big for folk to download, so tomorrow I'll start the Diary Part 2, the Second Week.

## Day 8 30<sup>th</sup> August

Goodness me! Day eight and effectively halfway through our allotted time. On Monday schools go back, our Open day will be over and we begin to panic about whether the site will produce enough data for us to provide St. Cross, and Winchester, with a new facet of its history.

Such grand aspirations are of course derived from a bringing together of many small elements of knowledge, interpretation, and testing of hypotheses. The WARG dig is fortunate in having a veritable army of academics and local scholarship behind it and in its own ranks. People who provide their own slant on our on-the-ground interpretations.

So it was that our star find today – and perhaps the whole excavation – was revealed. A pilgrim's ampulla, a small bottle of oil which would be carried to or from pilgrimage sites. This is a beautiful artefact (see the pretty ropey picture below), with a crest, probably made of lead with two lugs from a strap to go around the neck and was found on top of the wall in Trench 1, about four inches below the surface, so it is not very diagnostic (we haven't dated it's design yet) but it starts to characterise some of the people who may have been wandering around the grounds of St. Cross. The Wayfarer's Dole is renowned, and traditionally taken by people doing homage through pilgrimage.



Perhaps, having taken the Dole, a pilgrim on a journey, “The hooly blisful martir for to seke...”, lost their ampulla at the first hurdle or, by its curious folded over form, was an act of closure after a pilgrimage to St. Cross.

Such suppositions will never have an answer, but the archaeology speaks for itself if you know how to listen. Today, Dr. John Hare visited, having given the Dig Committee a briefing some weeks ago on the potential for the building we may find. Being shown the dressed stone blocks at rest within the western wall in Trench 1, he unhesitatingly announced it to be a door jamb (the other being under the baulk between T1 and T2) with the doorway blocked up and probably built on – close examination of the mortar either side of the interface is required to confirm this.

Our dig is starting to be characterised by “eye of faith” and “acts of faith”. Most appropriate.

## Day 7 29<sup>th</sup> August

Today was initially characterised by a crisis in the finds tent, to wit, we didn't have enough finds to process, but lots of people queuing up to process them. Now this can be looked at in two ways. Either there is a paucity of archaeological artefact at this particular locality, and we are just not able to fill the finds trays with what people want to see, or, and I think this is more likely, our finds team under the watchful and efficient eye of Dee Smith have done all the work required of them and more. Dee delighted us all by bringing in an enormous chocolate cake in celebration of her birthday – it would not be gentlemanly to note which one in this diary – so she seems pleased with our progress!

In Trench 1 our walls have started to fizz out, more to the point there seems to be more and more robbing the further south we dig. While this is a shame it's still important to location what remaining walls there are, and their corresponding mortar bases, so much of the work today concentrated on that task. Here Robin, Briony, Stuart and James extend the 1 metre sondage into something a bit meatier.



As the hot afternoon wore on, we received a visit from Dr. John Crook, Archaeological Advisor to St. Cross and a renowned expert on Winchester and its Medieval architecture. Now this happened to closely follow what must have been one of the most significant finds of the whole dig. There has been a baulk between the two sections of Trench 2, retained to allow access for spoil removal, and apparently covering a "sterile" area where "new" archaeology might not be found.



Luckily just outside this baulk one of the Winchester College students came across two rather special dressed blocks. One of them, as you can see, had a chamfered face and it looks like we've found the front door, which looks as though it may have been very grand indeed. The downside is that in order to reach the other door jamb, we are going to have to get rid of the baulk. The mattock team is less than ecstatic. John Crook is a tad more than ecstatic.

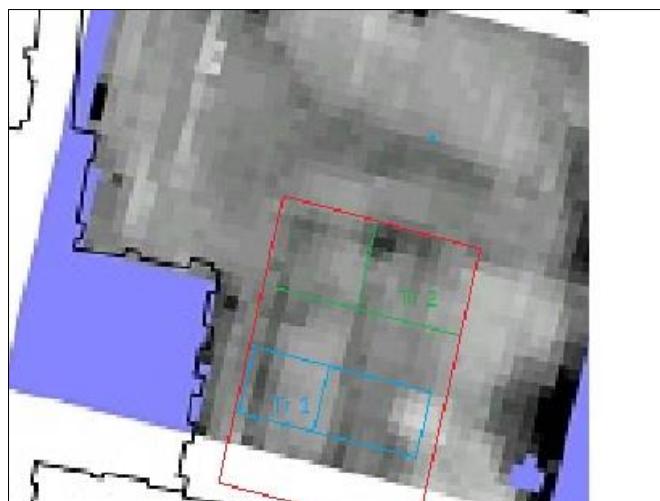
## Day 6 28<sup>th</sup> August

Another hot day which might have meant reduced progress as it can sap a volunteer's energy. Not so with WARG. Hard mattocking in Trench 2 followed by hard trowelling began to reveal the expected wall and by the end of the day, the north-west corner or our building had been confirmed. Here you can see the dressed stone which defines the inside and outside corners of the north-west of our building.



Work continued in Trench 1 to establish the eastern side wall of the building with mixed results, an end-of-day confab suggested a plan of action for Thursday morning.

Now I did promise I'd try and clear up any possible confusion about trenches, what with shared trench numbers and various cardinal points, so below you can see the trench plan overlaid on the geophysics. This might help me (when I read my diary many years in the future) identify the places referred to by my ramblings. The building outline is St. Cross Parish Church, the red line the extent we *could* dig, the blue lines show Trench 1 and the green Trench 2.



Again today we had a full complement of about 30 people, and everybody had a job – this really is a good size dig for WARG – one or two members even turned up on spec (how *can* you be at a loose end knowing that your fellow members are digging down the road?).

The site hasn't yet come up with particular features bar two, a wall which cuts through the eastern wall in Trench 2 and requires recording before we lift it to try and decide why and when it was placed over the building remains, and secondly a curious hole which was originally thought to be a robbed out area of the wall, but simply went down and down, as

Mike Brace found out when the metre-wide feature was assigned to him. Performing the classic half-section he eventually bottomed it out and the head-scratching started. At the bottom of the feature appears to be a mortar/sandy layer. The sides are flint and vertical, and it is not a simple robber trench to reuse flints from the wall in some other location. Mike seems satisfied enough with it though!



Amongst those who visited the site, or just “dropped in” today were Julia and Dick, who always seem to turn up at tea/coffee breaks, bringing a photographer friend of theirs. Clambering up into the clerestory of the church to get a bird’s-eye view of proceedings, Dick got both a good view of the trenches, and some of the groundlings beavering away in the trench (below right being yours truly and Techer, of course). Also shows what happens if you’ve got a good camera and a good point to shoot from.



Mental note that WARG has invested wisely in excavation equipment over the years, which is why we can run such professional events, a visit from a couple of people from Wessex Archaeology confirmed this feeling – perhaps they just turned up to see how it can be done!

## Day 4 27<sup>th</sup> August

“I might be too tired to write the Webmaster’s Diary tonight,” says your Webmaster. “Nonsense,” says Steve Taylor, MA in Archaeology at Winchester University and one of the

stalwart trench supervisors along with yours truly, Techer, Giles and Don Bryan, who seem to be on site for the whole of the dig, bar shopping duties. “Just tell ‘em about the fact that we have characterised the nature of the wall in the eastern part of Trench 2.” Well, with such erudite confidence, how can I fail to rise to the occasion?

Indeed, the eastern part of Trench 2 (right) is now awash with walls, demolition layers, levelling layers and putative walls and paths, cutting through what remains of partially robbed-out walls from the original building(s). Before we go any further with this trench, we are going to have to record what is going on. So this means interim photography and planning – out come the drawing boards.



Meanwhile we spent a lot of time today opening up Trench 2 (west) over the north-west corner of our building – we’re doing this because our two trenches represent a swathe across the end of our building (Trench 2) and the middle of the building (Trench 1). Trench 1 is proving to be an elusive target. Early on a clear wall is no longer clear but a parallel structure is – whether a wall or path – with a superb dressed stone section (Eleanor, Val and Briony to thank for revealing that).



The size of the (southern) Trench 1 means that the “reveal” is taking some time and so we’ve decided to put in a “long sondage” against its northern edge, but not before our youngest diggers this week, George and Alex, extended Trench 1 to the east to try and pick up the extension from Trench 2 (east). You getting confused? Perhaps (your Webmaster asides) I should draw a small diagram tomorrow!

## Day 3 26<sup>th</sup> August

Your webmaster had the good fortune to be invited up to the top of Beaufort's Tower via the Brethren's Hall to take some photographs of our dig. Of course the view was spectacular as you can see, and I spent as much time looking at the surrounding landmarks as well as the excavation site. You get a pretty good idea of the extent of the site, especially how compact our dig village is, shared with the scaffolding works around the Church.



We have made good progress today, consolidating the work where we exposed 2009's trench (now called Trench 2) and looking to extend it to the west to hopefully get the north-west corner of the building range. In Trench 1, we are having difficulty (getting frustrated) in finding the structures which the resistivity tells us are there and have started a number of 1m sondages to help us locate good areas to dig, a complete area dig being out of the question in a fortnight.

Today also saw the most volunteers we have had so far, nearly thirty, but there was plenty of work to be done. Dick Selwood and Dick Whinney gave everyone a pre-dig talk about what the site was all about and Dick Whinney pointed out the importance of WARG's growing contribution to the story of Winchester's past.

## Day 2 25<sup>th</sup> August



Well, Giles had us working like the proverbial Trojans today. An initial heavy shower saw an early coffee break, but no time was lost – just a ban on using the plank for depositing spoil atop the heap, in case we damaged the plank when we slipped off it. The trench from 2009 which was uncovered yesterday was extended to establish some more extent to the walls of the building, as well as being cleaned and photo graphed. It looks likely that this trench will extend both west and south to chase the results of the geophysics which you can see [here](#).



The putative wall in the south-west trench has been joined by a parallel partner – perhaps we have a corridor. As more diggers join us on Bank Holiday Monday, much more will be revealed.

Star find of the day (if you don't include the webmaster's coin found in the top context) was a superb find unearthed by Linda *on her first afternoon's digging ever*. Ho hum.

## Day 1 24<sup>th</sup> August

Our first official digging session on site, and people set to work with gusto. The rumour going round the camp was that we had placed our first two trenches in such a manner as to pick up the 2009 test trench, but had singularly failed to do so, or get anywhere near. This was confirmed by Cathy, who “runs” St. Cross, who pointed out the obvious grass discolouration and slight depression caused by our old Trench 11.

Burying our pride we opened our third trench (still within the area gridded out to be potentially dug, so that's alright then) and struggled yet again with the motorised turf-cutter to lift the sods. Well the sods wouldn't lift so we reverted to good old manual methods. In no time we had de-turfed the “north-east” trench – we haven't actually numbered them yet! And the plastic membrane we had placed in trench 11 before it was backfilled in 2009 was revealed.

The rest of the day was spent emptying this old context, and cleaning the rest of the trenches so we could see what we actually had. Here Don and Dave tidy up the trench with the building foundations from our 2009 dig very evident.



As usual, everyone has been mucking in and getting involved in whatever has to be done and inexperience or age are irrelevant. The commonality is the love of archaeology or simply the curiosity of finding out about part of your local world. Plenty of coffee and tea breaks help, of course.

## Day -1 23<sup>nd</sup> August

"Gosh it's warm work", says Techer. Day -1 turns out to be hot and muggy – just the day for some heavy lifting.



Mother and daughter Suzanne and Alice Ceiriog-Hughes already sorting finds coming up after removal of the turf.

Don Bryan and Briony Lalor have stacked turf immaculately. WARG's reputation for a professional approach comes to the fore.



## Day -2 22<sup>nd</sup> August

And we're off. Volunteers have been busy down at our new site at St Cross, on the bowling green. Early tasks have been to set up the tents for shelter (hot and cold), the storage for all our equipment, loos etc. As you can see, after a hard day's toil, everyone can manage a smile. We have some new faces and some old hands, and a surprisingly good time was had by all.



As work took place to set up the total station and lay out the site next to the chapel, we were honoured by a visit from some of the brothers, and it was the Master's privilege to cut that first turf.



We have put in a five metre wide trench east/west through the centre of the site. There appear to be early signs of a wall at the west end of the trench exactly where the resistivity said it should be. But it is early days and there is plenty of work to be done yet. The camp is almost completed and on two rather hot and sticky days, the team have all worked extremely hard but in good spirit boosted by Janet's cake at tea time.

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