

Archaeological Dig round Fraternity Update

Archaeologists from Oxford Archaeology North have undertaken a series of archaeological investigations around the Fraternity building in order to identify archaeological remains associated with the cloister and Undercroft which originally surrounded the Fraternity building. Four trenches have been excavated; two on the north side of the Fraternity and two along the eastern wall, and these have provided evidence for the original levels of the cloister walk and the demolition activity generated as a result of the Civil War which took place in the mid 17th century.

The trenches indicate that the level of the cathedral grounds, particularly the area around the north side of the Fraternity, were once much lower with paved surfaces identified at a depth of 0.9m below the present ground surface. The layers which covered the floor of the cloister walk comprised thick bands of crushed sandstone and fragments of ornamental masonry, probably from the demolition of the Chapter House (the building which once stood to the east of the Fraternity). The long history of the cathedral coupled with the disturbance wrought upon the cathedral precinct during the Civil War mean that Roman and Medieval Finds have been retrieved from within the 17th century deposits. Artefacts retrieved during the excavation include green glazed medieval floor tiles, medieval pottery, Samian Pottery (a type of high status Roman pottery), carved stonework from the chapter house and large numbers of butchered animal bones (sheep and cattle as well as some bird bones).

Trench 5

Further to the initial programme of archaeological investigation by Oxford Archaeology North, a fifth trench has been excavated within the front garden of 4, The Abbey. This trench exposed the remains of three stone walls and a floor surface associated with the 17th century building which previously occupied the site. Little is known about this structure aside from the fact that it was built to provide accommodation for the clergy and demolished to make way for the current building known as 4 The Abbey. A mixed group of finds were retrieved including Roman, Medieval and Post Medieval pottery.

