

# BEFORE AND EARLY ST MARY'S COLLEGE – BEFORE AD 1520 AND POSSIBLY BEFORE 1435

No documentary records tell us exactly what was on the land that was granted to the Augustinians (Austin Friars) in 1435, however an examination of surviving rental records, wills and other records suggest that much of the area belonged to a single large property with evidence that to the north a row of tenements fronted onto St Michaels Street, and in the south-east corner were properties that orientated onto Shoe Lane.

These excavations have revealed buildings that were not only on the land of the main property (Buildings 1 and 3) but another stone building (Building 2) that potentially relates to properties on Shoe Lane.

**Building 1** – This is a stone-walled basement – demolished and heavily robbed. This may have been built in the 13th or 14th century and there would have had a first-floor room above the basement. Building 1 may have joined onto Building 3 (on the other side of the excavation).

**Building 2** – this stone building did not have a basement and the ground floor was surfaced in gravel with a circular hearth or oven set into the north-west corner. This building may have been a kitchen, or a bakehouse – but equally a brewhouse or an artisans workshop for cloth dying or metal-working. Only further analysis will tell. The north wall foundation had a series of 3 relieving arches in it – this helped to stabilise construction on soft ground. It is on the same alignment as a boundary wall that runs parallel with Shoe Lane.

To the west of Building 2 is a well-preserved stone-lined cess pit (toilets before 'the flush' was invented). Small holes (putlogs) in the stone wall would have



Pre-St Mary's plan reconstruction

provided recesses for scaffold to assist the builders bring the walls up. This is a later medieval toilet and would have had a timber building containing a simple wooden seat above it. It is set at the rear of a property on Shoe Lane probably to minimise the smell.

To the north of Building 2 is a large square stone-lined well. This may have been used by occupants of Buildings 1 and 3 as it is on the north side of the boundary alignment.

**Building 3** was stone-built with no basement. Inside were gravel floor surfaces covered in charcoal that had come from a large area of stone hearths set against its southern wall. The earliest phase of hearth had an upturned ceramic cooking pot smashed in its centre – this looked like a deliberate act

perhaps marking a rebuilding episode. The charcoal spreads, cooking pot, and finds of jugs from nearby suggest this building was a kitchen. It is likely to be 14th century and may have been a later addition onto the west side of Building 1.



Left: Building 2 hearth or oven; Right: Building 3 Kitchen hearth with upturned broken ceramic cooking pot

perhaps marking a rebuilding episode. The charcoal spreads, cooking pot, and finds of jugs from nearby suggest this building was a kitchen. It is likely to be 14th century and may have been a later addition onto the west side of Building 1.

To the north of Building 3 was a small area of flat stones forming an outside yard or perhaps a path or lane leading to New Inn Hall Street.



Left: Building 1 basement under excavation; Top right: The stone-lined cess pit with putlog holes; Bottom right: Building 2 relieving arches in north wall