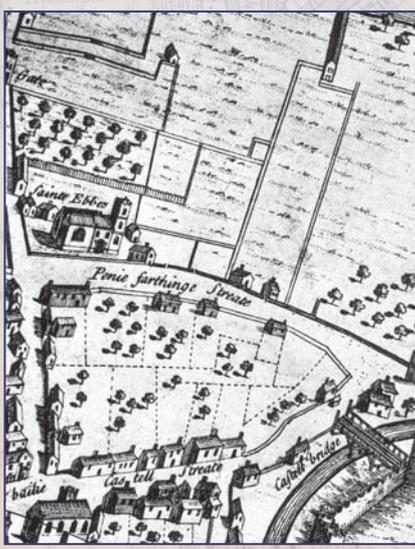


EXCAVATIONS ON THE SITE OF THE WESTGATE CENTRE, 1967-1976



St Ebbe's from a redrawn map of 1578 (south is at the top). The church is on the left and the main gate of the castle and the medieval Westgate on the right. Bonn Square now stands where the words 'Castell Streate' are written.

In the 1960s Oxford City Council began a major redevelopment of the city in the south western part of the town around the medieval church of St Ebbe's. The largest new building was the Westgate Centre, which had a large underground service basement, and had an associated multi-storey car-park.

The site of the Westgate extends southwards from inside the late Saxon and medieval town of Oxford, across the line of the historic town defences

towards the nearest branch of the Thames, the Trill Mill Stream. Archaeological excavations in advance of and during construction were conducted by a small team of professional archaeologists helped by large numbers of volunteer diggers.

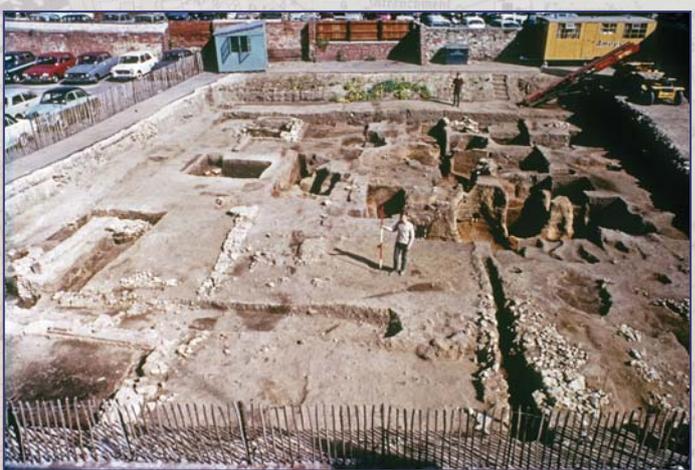


The site of Westgate after the site had been cleared. The excavation of the City Wall is on the left; medieval house plots centre right and the Greyfriars in the foreground



Trial excavations identified key sites and full-scale digs took place in five areas.

Excavation of the west side of the medieval Littlegate in St Ebbe's Street and the City Wall (foreground). The wall still survives along the north side of Brewer Street (back).



The excavation of late Saxon and medieval house plots, rubbish pits and wells in the former Church Street. The brick footing on the left belonged to the former City Technical School, now Oxford Brookes University in Headington.

Highlights of the results of these excavations include uncovering stretches of the southern line of the medieval defensive stone-built city wall, together with the western side of the Littlegate (a small gate which led to the Blackfriars Friary), a sequence of 19 late Saxon and medieval street surfaces beneath Bonn Square, remains of late Saxon and medieval domestic buildings, the site of the early medieval church of St Budoc which was destroyed in 1215 when an outer ditch or barbican was dug in front of the main gate to the castle, and finally almost the entire church and fragments of the cloisters of the Oxford Franciscan Friary or Greyfriars, which was built from 1224 onwards and pulled down at the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1538.



19 Late Saxon and medieval street surfaces beneath what is now Bonn Square.

The ditch of the castle barbican built in 1215 being uncovered in the bulk excavation. The standing water centre (centre left) is where the black mud filling the barbican ditch has been removed: behind the small blue roller the black soil marks the line of the ditch. The buildings in the background stand on the site of the Castle Moat.

