

Excavation of the bell-casting pit. The dark grey outer ring is the remains of the bell mould, while the central hole contained the remains of the post upon which the strickle (the revolving template for forming the profiles of the inner and outer moulds) would have pivoted.



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### ■ Bell-casting

Located five metres from the precinct boundary on the King Street frontage was a pit containing the circular pedestal of a bell-mould. The internal diameter of the mouth of the bell would have been 0.9 metres. Charcoal found inside a centrally placed hole in the base of the pit represented the remains of the post on which the strickle (a revolving template used to form the inner and outer profiles of the bell) would have been pivoted. Archaeomagnetic dating indicated that the bell-pit was used some time between 1490 and 1525. Metallurgical waste recovered from the pit supports a picture of a versatile founder who was chiefly producing household and personal items but also occasionally commissioned to cast bells. The absence of bell metal waste may reflect the care taken to conserve this expensive alloy and the relative infrequency of bell casting.

### ■ Conclusions

Archaeologically, the growth in the status and wealth of the friary in the second half of the 13th century was most conspicuously expressed in the dramatic enlargement of the precinct and in the new buildings that arose from the extensive programme of construction work. Following the Dissolution, many

key walls were retained as property boundaries, and the post-medieval landscape, described by a succession of maps between the late 17th and late 19th centuries, inherited much of the friary's internal arrangement of boundaries.

Having discharged its archaeological obligations, the NFU Mutual and Avon Insurance Group has built its new head office only metres from the site of the Franciscan church. Seven hundred years have elapsed, but perceptions about the desirability of this northerly section of King Street do not seem to have changed. The only difference is that insurance of the soul, offered by the friars in exchange for gifts, bequests and elaborate requests for burial and anniversary masses, has been replaced by policies of a more earthly nature.

### *Acknowledgement*

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