Figure 54. Well-lining cask staves, JR2718AA, in situ

in from above. The fill could have originated behind a wooden frame that may have lined the cellar; it would have collapsed into the pit when the wooden frame was salvaged. It is more likely, however, that most of the builder's trench fill originated from packing fill in the pit around the cask. Subsoil that slumped in from erosion was also likely responsible for some of the make-up of these soil layers.

Over a dozen cobbles were found in layer JR2718X on the western side of the large circular pit's perimeter. Why these cobbles were there is unclear, unless they were once part of a ground-level cobble foundation that eroded into the well pit. Another possibility is that they may have helped hold back silt during the construction of the well. These cobbles were found at 10' below the undisturbed subsoil level, which was about 1'6" above the level of the surviving cask. A probe was used in an attempt to detect additional cobbles, but none were found.

An oak cask was used to line the water reservoir of the well, and wood from the cask's staves, JR2718AA, began to appear at a depth of 11'6". The cask may have been initially as tall as 4', but the top half of the cask had long since decomposed. The diameter of the cask was 2'6" at the depth where the wood was first encountered and consisted of seventeen staves, averaging about 2' in length. The staves were 3/8" thick, and their widths varied from 5¾" to 7". Originally, the well consisted of one cask, the top of which would have been several inches above the floor level of the lower cellar to prevent anything from falling in from the chamber's floor.

Pumps were used to manage water levels as each stave was removed from the mud. A 3 mm (.12") wide croze line was found inside of each stave, 2½" from the bottom. The croze line is a small linear groove into which the head planks are inserted to seal the cask. The head planks had been removed to hollow out the cask in preparation for its use as the well lining. Two adjacent staves had four 1/3"-diameter holes augured through them to secure a wooden batten to reinforce the cask's head with pegs or iron nails.[27] A possible bung hole measuring 16.14 mm (.64") in diameter was found on one of the staves 21½" from the bottom. In addition, the staves contain ten small pegged holes. These were either sampling holes to test for spoilage, or were indications of pilfering. Also of note are two staves with carving on the exterior. One mark is a circle with a possible number within it, and the other is a circle with a line through it and a line beneath.

Wrapped around the bottom exterior of the cask were three wooden hoops used to hold the staves in alignment. The hoops vary in size: two 1" wide and one 1¾" wide. While species analysis is still pending, the hoops are likely hickory, oak, or ash. Several hoop sections were recovered with thin vine or reed strapping used to secure the form of the hoop. A majority of the wooden hoop fragments were recovered.

Figure 55. Cask marks