

STATEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST NO 8

WORCESTER COLLEGE (FORMER GLOUCESTER COLLEGE)

Asset/Monument Type:

Monastic College and later Academic College

Summary: The Benedictine Gloucester College was founded in the late 13th century. In 1321 the site of the adjacent Carmelite Friary was added to the existing college holding. The institution became an academic hall after the Dissolution and was eventually re-founded in the 18th century as Worcester College. The college is located close to a poorly understood area of extra mural medieval settlement along Worcester Street (formerly Stockwell Street). The present college includes an extensive garden and artificial lake.

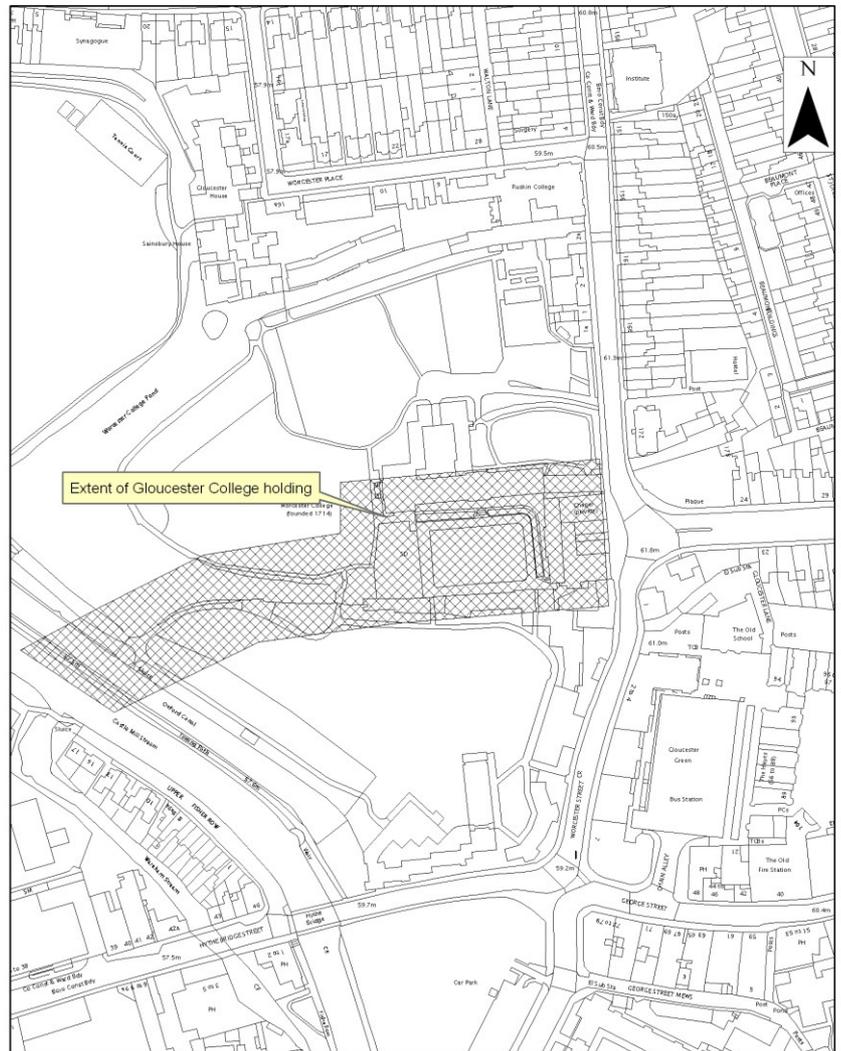
Location (NGR): SP50880655

Definition: A college is an establishment housing a community of secular clergy sharing a degree of common life less strictly controlled than that within a monastic order. Colleges are normally identified through documentary evidence. Their buildings are usually associated with a parish church (not necessarily of formal collegiate status) although some extra-parochial and academic colleges had their own chapel. Other morphological elements present may include one or more cloisters or quadrangles, ranges of lodgings (either communal or more commonly as separate apartments), a common hall or refectory, service buildings (kitchen, buttery etc.), a master or warden's lodging, a guest house, gate houses and sometimes an associated school or bed-house.

Version: 12/2/2012

Key characteristics

The following criteria (which are not in any order of ranking) are based on the Secretary of State's criteria for assessing Scheduled Monuments. They should not be regarded as definitive, but as an indicative provisional assessment.



Extent of Gloucester College holding in the late 13th century (Based on map produced by H E Salter).

Scale: 1:1,748

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1) Period: *Does the asset characterise a category or historic period?*

Assessment: The site is characteristic of a higher education institution from the 13th century to the present. Monastic and academic colleges are just two of many asset types which characterise the medieval and post-medieval period.

Score: Medium

2) Rarity: *What is the rarity of the asset in terms of regional and national context?*

Assessment: Gloucester College is one of only two monastic colleges founded in Oxford during the 13th century (along with Gloucester College), three other non monastic colleges were also established in the 13th century (Balliol, Merton and University College). The land holding dating from this time is therefore of particular interest for understanding the development of the medieval college system. At a national level, The University of Oxford University is an institution only directly comparable to the slightly later University of Cambridge.

Score: High

3) Documentation: *To what extent is the significance of the asset enhanced by existing documentation or lack thereof?*

Assessment: Further work needs to be done on the scope for college archives to inform archaeological assessment. Worcester College has not been subject to significant archaeological investigation, with the exception of evidence for 13th century domestic tenements along the Hythe Bridge Street frontage excavated in 1987-89.

Score: Medium

4) Group Value: *is the value of the asset enhanced by its association with related contemporary monuments or with monuments of different periods?*

Assessment: Gloucester College is one of only two 13th century Monastic Colleges, and one of a slightly larger group of later medieval monastic colleges. The college retains an impressive collection of 15th century structures, the remainder of the college being largely 18th-20th century in date. The College lies within an extensive prehistoric monumental landscape but has not produced evidence from this period to date. The modern extent of Worcester College is partly located over the remains of a Carmelite Friary and is likely to partly lie over earlier medieval tenements fronting onto Worcester Street and Walton Street. Worcester College is one of a group of 18 academic colleges established by the 16th century. The medieval and post medieval colleges of Oxford should be considered of a high group value. Gloucester was originally founded in the medieval period although it ceased to function for a short period immediately after the Dissolution.

Score: High

5) Survival/Condition: *What is the estimated level of above and below ground survival?*

Assessment: The architecture of Worcester College is impressive, containing surviving structures of the 15th century monastic college as well as later additions in the 18th century. The character and extent of archaeological remains within the college is poorly understood, however there is significant potential for important archaeological remains.

Score: Medium

6) Fragility/Vulnerability: *susceptibility to change*

Assessment: Oxford Colleges are under pressure to improve and replace facilities in order to compete for students and conferences. The extent of activity undertaken as permitted development is unknown.

Score: Medium

7) Diversity: *Does the asset possess a combination of high quality features?*

Assessment: Worcester College comprised two irregular Quads, a Hall, a Chapel, a Provosts Lodgings, several medieval walls and an extensive Garden.

Score: High

8) Potential: *Is there a likelihood that currently unrecorded evidence can be anticipated?*

Assessment: The site was occupied by an academic hall of St Johns College, a monastic college, a friary and possibly also an early 13th century hospital or cell. Domestic settlement along the main roads have been recorded in the 13th and 14th century There is considerable potential for significant unrecorded evidence to be present.

Score: High

Overall score (20/24)

Overall Assessment of Archaeological Interest: High

HERITAGE ASSET DESCRIPTION

Worcester College is located to the northwest of the Saxon and medieval town. The present college incorporates the first site of the White Friars in Oxford (see White Friars 1st Site SAI for more details). Granted to the White Friars by Nicholas de Meules in 1253 it was located near the hospital on Stockwell Street (presumably that owned by the Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem). The records of the White Friars indicate that there were already houses on the edge of the site near the road by the 13th century when the obtained permission to build an oratory followed by a church and a number of houses (Page 1907: 137). The friary existed alongside the college until 1321 when it moved to its new site.

The Benedictine Gloucester College was founded in 1283 by John Giffard of Brimpsfield on a site previously owned by the Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem and was presented to the General Chapter of the English Black Monks of the Canterbury Province and was to support thirteen monks (Pantin 1946-47: 65). At the Dissolution the site was surrendered to the king who nominated the site for the private residence of the bishop of Osney Cathedral. When the cathedral was moved to Christ Church in 1547 the college ceased to be the bishop's residence. Gloucester Hall was eventually re-founded in around 1559 by Sir Thomas White and appeared to support eight masters of arts, 13 bachelor of arts and 43 undergraduates. Gloucester Hall was elevated to a college in 1714 under the name of Worcester College following a generous grant from Sir Thomas Cooke and provided for a Provost, six fellows and eight scholars (Salter & Lobel 1954: 306).

The college is comprised of a single large quadrangle. Unlike the other colleges, Gloucester College served a number of Benedictine monasteries and as it held no endowments each monastery was required to build and maintain their own tenement and the quad has the appearance of a row of independent cottages several of which still bear the seal of their founding monastery. Many of these houses (or *camarae*) survive in the modern college in the south range (LB Ref 7/132D) and to a lesser extent in the north range (LB Ref 4/132A) of the college. In the 18th century the Main Block of the college was rebuilt (LB Ref 4/132C) and the chapel, hall, library and rooms at the front were largely demolished.

At the Dissolution the site was surrendered to the king who nominated the site for the private residence of the bishop of Osney Cathedral. When the cathedral was moved to Christ Church in 1547 the college ceased to be the bishop's residence. During this short period documentary sources suggest the church and hall were demolished (Salter & Lobel 1954: 299). The site was conveyed to St Johns College in 1559 through money granted by Sir Thomas White.

Gloucester Hall was eventually re-founded in around 1559 by White and appeared to support eight masters of arts, 13 bachelor of arts and 43 undergraduates. Agas' map of 1578 illustrates Gloucester Hall as being of two ranges extending back from the street frontage with a gate and narrow range of buildings along the street. The hall had a series of orchards to the north and meadows to the west. The area between the hall and the castle to the south

appears to have been open land undeveloped until the mid 17th century. Loggan's map of 1675 records a similar built layout but with much more extensive formal gardens surrounding it. The open area to the south was now been occupied with a series of formal gardens. The detailed illustration of the college from the west indicates a series of buildings unlike the grandeur of the other colleges of the time.

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Only one investigation on the site of Worcester College has recorded archaeological evidence dating to the medieval period. Excavations in advance of building work in 1987-89 on the corner of Worcester Street and Hythe Bridge Street recorded evidence of 13th century domestic tenements along the Hythe Bridge Street frontage. The investigations also recorded evidence of early 13th century land reclamation along the river frontage as well as the edge of the Summertown Radley Gravel Terrace (Durham 1990: 84).

The park and gardens of the college are Grade II*; originally laid out in the 18th century Richard Burswell with a more formal garden design, they were re-designed to their present layout in 1820.

Associated Architects:

Main Block. William Townsend. (mason). 18th century

North Range extension. Sir G Clarke. 1753-8

Provosts Lodgings. Henry Keene. 1773-6

Chapel. James Wyatt. 1791

Nuffield Block. W G Newton. 1939

New Building. Sir Hugh Casson. 1961

Academic statements

MPP Class Description

'A sample of nationally important sites should include examples of early medieval establishments of secular priests (if a well-preserved site can be identified), a prebendal or portional college of the 12th or 13th century, later medieval chantry foundations of both high and low status in both urban and rural situations, and possibly several major academic colleges. This last type is of special importance in demonstrating the post-medieval continuity of a tradition restricted to a narrow social and economic context' (English Heritage 1989).

Henry Keen architect 'his finest surviving building in Oxford is the Provosts Lodgings at Worcester College (Tyack 1998: 182).

The finest of Oxford's Chapel restorations took place at Worcester college in 1863-4...the result is one of the finest 19th century interiors in Oxford (Tyack 1998: 226)

Research agenda

Pre-College research agenda

- Potential for prehistoric evidence relating to the late Neolithic-Early Bronze Age barrow cemetery.
- There is potential for evidence relating to the first site of the White Friars, in particular reference to the early structures known to have existed at the friary.

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- What was the character and extent of domestic settlement along the main road as referenced in documents for the friary? What can these remains tell us about the evolution and character of the northern west suburb?

College Research Agenda:

- The desirability of an integrated Conservation management plan is noted.
- The college had a management plan in 1991, has this been updated what is its current status and what did the plan consider were the archaeological implications of the site?
- Building survey of current structures may produce new evidence.
- What can the study of the 13th century Monastic colleges (Durham, Gloucester) and later college foundations tell us about the evolution of the college system?
- How does the material culture, diet, status of the college vary through time and contrast with contemporary monastic and non monastic colleges?
- Potential for geophysical survey in the garden to identify evidence for formal garden design.

Associated Monuments

UAD Monument 40: Oxford Canal. 18th century

UAD Monument 125: Worcester College. University College

UAD Monument 542: Plato's Well, Worcester Street. 16th century

UAD Monument 548: Market Garden, Walton Street. 18th century

UAD Monument 591: Historic buildings, Hythe Bridge Street. 17th century

UAD Monument 681: Worcester College Park & Garden. 16th century

UAD Monument 737: Worcester Street. Formerly Stockwell Street.

UAD Monument 788: Medieval settlement, Salter North 5

UAD Monument 960: Gloucester College. Monastic College

UAD Monument 961: Gloucester Hall. 16th century

Associated Events

- *Observations in 1824 (UAD 1275):* A stone figurine of St Michael and the dragon was found, probably medieval.
- *Finds in the 19th century (UAD 734):* A coin came from Gloucester Hall, Walton Street, It was an undated example from Smyrna.
- *RCHME 26. Worcester College (UAD 848):* Walls of local Oxfordshire stone and slate-covered roofs. Gloucester College was established on the site in 1298 for the Benedictines.
- *Excavations in 1987-9 (UAD 350):* The edge of the gravel terrace where it shelved into the river was identified. Layers of peat had built up, but no dating evidence was found. An early medieval land reclamation platform in the river was exposed and on it were remains of a 13th century building, its location recorded during work in 1945.

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