

## STATEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST NO 9

### ST JOHN'S COLLEGE (FORMERLY ST BERNARD'S COLLEGE)

**Asset/Monument Type:** Monastic and later Academic College.

**Summary:** St Bernard's College was established in 1437 as a monastic college for the Cistercians. It was dissolved in the 1540s with the existing quadrangle incorporated in to St John's College founded in 1555. The early college was comprised of a single quadrangle fronting onto St Giles' with a substantial garden to the rear. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century the new secular college of St John's had expanded to three quadrangles and much more substantial garden extending as far as Middleton Hall.

**Location (NGR):** SP512066

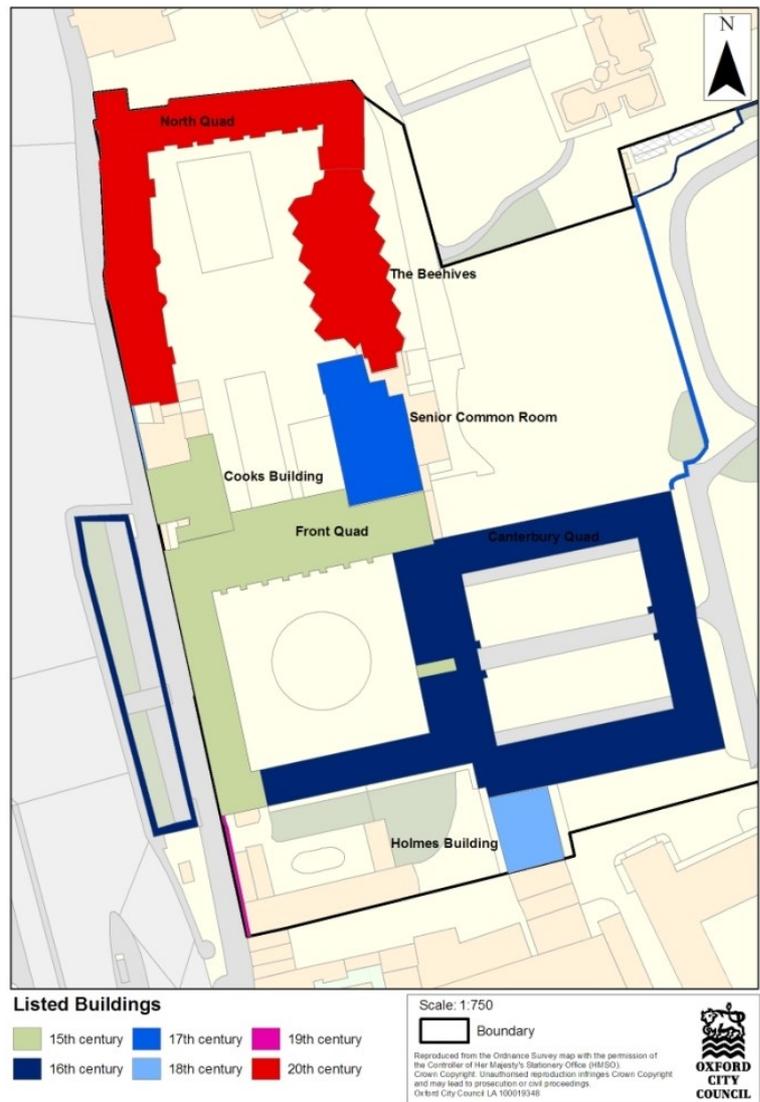
**Definition:** A college is an establishment housing a community of secular clergy sharing a degree of common life less strictly controlled than that within a monastic order. Colleges are normally identified through documentary evidence. Their buildings are usually associated with a parish church (not 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 bede-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.*

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



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**Assessment:** The college is characteristic of a period of monastic higher education in the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century and secular collegiate education from 16<sup>th</sup> 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:** At a national level the University of Oxford is an institution only directly comparable to the slightly later University of Cambridge. At a county level, 22 medieval academic and chantry colleges are recorded in the Oxfordshire OHER. St Bernard's is one of five medieval monastic colleges established at Oxford.

**Score:** High

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

**Assessment:** The college maintain its own archives containing a wealth of information on the history and structures of the college and its land holdings. The level of archaeological documentation of the medieval and post-medieval college is poor.

**Score:** High

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

**Assessment:** The college is strongly associated by function and architectural form with contemporary monastic and secular colleges. It also has extensive land holdings in the city.

**Score:** High

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

**Assessment:** The College still retains much of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Cistercian quadrangle as well as the later Canterbury Quad considered to be one of the finest buildings in Oxford at the time. The character, extent and survival of below ground deposits is poorly understood.

**Score:** High

6. **Fragility/Vulnerability:** *susceptibility to change*

**Assessment:** The asset is vulnerable to small scale works and permitted development

**Score:** Medium

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

**Assessment:** St John's College comprises two classical quadrangles and two irregular quadrangles, a Hall, Buttery, Chapel, President's Lodgings and a registered Garden

**Score:** High

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

**Assessment:** The site is located within the possible extent of the prehistoric barrow cemetery at Oxford and recent discoveries in the area have shown that below-ground survival is good for prehistoric and later features. The unexpected discovery of the Neolithic henge and Saxon cemetery at the new Kendrew Quad has highlighted the potential for further archaeological evidence of national importance beyond the historic core of the college. The historic core of the college has potential to preserve information regarding the character of Norman and later domestic settlement within tenements along St Giles and evidence for structures, material culture and diet relating to the monastic and secular college.

**Score:** High

Overall score (22/24)

## **HERITAGE ASSET DESCRIPTION**

### **Prehistoric background**

The College site is located within an extensive landscape of Neolithic to Early Bronze Age ritual and funerary monuments. In 2008 excavations undertaken prior to the development of Elizabeth House (The Kendrew Quadrangle) of St John's College (located to the north of the historic college) identified the presence of part of a large late Neolithic henge monument, with associated red deer antler picks, Grooved Ware and later Beaker pottery. The partially in-filled ditch of the henge was used for the location of a mass grave in the Late Saxon period, possibly of Scandinavian residents of the town killed during the St Brice's Day massacre of 1002 (Wallis 2010). In the Norman to medieval period, settlement was already in existence along St Giles as far as the church at least and the neighbouring Black Hall was a farm under the ownership of Rewley Abbey until it was purchased by the newly founded St Johns College in 1573 (*ibid.*).

### **The college**

Settlement along St Giles was established in the Norman period and the college site would have consisted of domestic tenements until the foundation of St Bernard's College in 1437. St Bernard's was established as a Cistercian college for Archbishop Chichele. Its construction was slow however and the college was still being built in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century when it was dissolved under the Dissolution (Sherwood and Pevsner 1974: 194). In 1557 the site of St Bernard's was re-founded as St John's College by Sir Thomas White and was to support 50 scholars (VCH ii: 86; VCH iii: 251). The original college may have been a temporary timber (Colvin 1959: 39). By the time of the Dissolution the monastic college had established a large quadrangle encompassing a hall in the north-west corner, a large kitchen and a Chapel in the north range and an incomplete east range intended for a library, a south range made up of chambers and a long western façade to the street with a central gate tower of c1490. The existing quadrangle was incorporated into the new foundation of St John's College. The plan of the college was recorded by the RCHME in 1939 and corresponds closely to the regular Oxford plan-form (Colvin 1959: 37). In the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century North Quad replaced a number of earlier college and domestic buildings along the High Street. Archaeological investigation during this process was limited to emergency recording. Quantities of pottery recorded from a well at the site indicated occupation at the tenement plot as far back as the early 12<sup>th</sup> century (Jope and Jope 1950: 46). In the 1950s more investigation in advance of the construction of the Beehive Building recorded the foundations of the college stables and other 16<sup>th</sup> century College outbuildings (Case and Sturdy 1959: 101).

Archaeological investigations in 2003 recorded evidence of post-medieval quarrying at the College, in-filled in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century to provide a construction layer, possibly for Baylie Chapel built in 1662. The investigation also recorded several phases of foundations for a free-standing kitchen block and associated stone-lined kitchen drain first built in 1643 with several later extensions in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and continued in use until its demolition in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Lawrence 2005: 325). The Canterbury Quad at St John's has been subject to a detailed architectural analysis (Colvin 1959).

Agas' map of 1578 records a single quadrangle (Front Quad) with orchards and a grove to the rear. By 1675 Loggan's map of the city shows that the college had acquired adjacent property and Canterbury Quad had been built to the rear of Front Quad. The gardens are much more formal in design and extend further north than before. Loggan's detail of the college also shows a number of low ranges that were probably part of the industrial quarters of the

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college. William Williams' illustration of the college viewed from the west illustrates the formal gardens in more detail.

The current St John's College comprises four quadrangles primarily fronting on to St Giles (Sherwood and Pevsner 1974: 195). The West and North ranges of the Front Quad are 15<sup>th</sup> century in date while the East and South ranges were 16<sup>th</sup> century (LB Ref 5/525D). To the rear of the Front Quad, Canterbury Quad is a 16<sup>th</sup> century addition which opens on to the College Gardens on Parks Road (LB Ref 5/525E). St John's College also retains a number of walls bordering the garden and enclosing a space in front of the college dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The North Quad includes the 15<sup>th</sup> century Cooks Building (LB Ref 5/525B), the 17<sup>th</sup> century Senior Common Room (LB Ref 5/525C) and the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century West, North and East ranges (LB Ref 5/525A; 612/5/10025).

### **Architects:**

Cooks Building. 1642-3

Holmes Building. 1794

West Range, North Quad. Sir George Gilbert Scott Jnr. 1881

North Range, North Quad. E P Warren. 1899-1900

Rawlinson Building, North Quad. N W Harrison. 1909

Dolphin Quad. Sir Edward Maufe. 1948

The Beehives. Michael Powers. 1958-60

### **Academic statements**

MPP Class Description

Tyack notes that from an architectural point of view St Bernard's 'must have been the most impressive of all the monastic colleges' (Tyack 1998: 57).

'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 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> 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).

'The first completely new library to be constructed according to the new principles was at St John's, in 1593. Here wooden cases replaced chained books on desks, dormer windows were added to let in light' (Tyack 1998: 87).

'Canterbury Quadrangle built 1631-6 was 'a successful synthesis of traditional motifs with newer ideas derived ultimately from Renaissance Italy and early 17<sup>th</sup> century Flanders and France', (Tyack 1998: 109).

'Use of monolithic Tuscan columns 'the first structural use of classical columns in an Oxford building' (Tyack 1998: 110).

'Nowhere in England is there a more vivid reminder of the union of the Church and Crown' (Tyack 1998: 111).

'The first uncompromising modernist college building was the 'Beehive' block in the north quadrangle built 1958-60' (Tyack 1998)

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## Research agenda

### Pre-College research agenda

- Good potential for prehistoric and Late Saxon evidence noted.
- What was the date and character of medieval extra-mural settlement in this area?

### College research agenda

- The desirability of an integrated Conservation management plan is noted.
- How does the material culture, diet, status of the college vary through time and contrast with contemporary monastic and non monastic colleges?

## Associated Monuments

UAD Monument 121: St Johns College. Post medieval foundation

UAD Monument 255: The Lamb and Flag Inn. 17<sup>th</sup> century

UAD Monument 256: The Judge's Lodging, St Giles. 18<sup>th</sup> century

UAD Monument 257: Black Hall. Building is 17<sup>th</sup> century. Hall first referenced 14<sup>th</sup> century

UAD Monument 258: 22-23 St Giles. 17<sup>th</sup> century

UAD Monument 573: Department of Rural Economy

UAD Monument 609: Historic buildings, St Giles. East side

UAD Monument 678: St Johns College Gardens

UAD Monument 760: Barrow Cemetery. Prehistoric

UAD Monument 764: Romano-British settlement, University Science Area

UAD Monument 784: Medieval Settlement, Salter North 1

UAD Monument 785: Medieval Settlement, Salter North 2

UAD Monument 786: Medieval Settlement, Salter North 3

UAD Monument 959: St Bernard's College. Medieval

## Associated Events

- *Find c1872 (UAD 1139):* Copper disc, an Almanac for 1798.
- *Finds in 1910 (UAD 731):* A 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century green glazed lamp was found. Clay pipe were also recovered.
- *Excavations in 1943-4 (UAD 137):* A ditch was uncovered, which was dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> century or earlier from the presence of 18<sup>th</sup> century rubbish and Stonesfield slates, possibly discarded when the chapel was reslated. The ditch may be part of the Civil War defences, but does not fit any known locations.
- *Excavations in 1947 (UAD 140):* Medieval pits and a late 12<sup>th</sup> century well were found. A variety of pottery and wooden vessels were found. These included lamps and fragments of a face-mask drinking vessel. There was also evidence for post medieval occupation, with 17<sup>th</sup> century rubbish pits and earth closets overlying earlier disturbed layers behind the well.
- *Excavations in 1954 (UAD 1326):* A late medieval jug was found.
- *Excavations in 1959 (UAD 175):* A large sub-rectangular 12<sup>th</sup> century pit was found along with five pits or wells from the 13<sup>th</sup>- 14<sup>th</sup> century. Foundations from 16<sup>th</sup> century buildings were also seen.
- *Finds c1964 (UAD 698):* A late medieval jug, parallels with pieces from Shipton-under-Wychwood .
- *Excavations in 1975 (UAD 626):* Early 10<sup>th</sup> century deposits were found below the floor. An 18<sup>th</sup> century wall painting was uncovered and post medieval finds recovered.

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- *Salvage recording in 1988 (UAD 761)*: The building was originally a 16<sup>th</sup> century bay, but a four-bay cross wing was added in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and a rubble extension put onto the original piece in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
  - *Excavations in 1992 (UAD 361)*: Many 17<sup>th</sup> century deposits were found, resulting from previously unknown quarrying. This could have been associated with the construction of Canterbury Quad in the 1630s or perhaps Civil War defences. No signs of defences were found.
  - *Field evaluation, 2003 (UAD 1626)*: Medieval or post medieval gravel quarrying at the north end of the area. Across the whole site were levelling deposits dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> centuries which probably relate to the original construction of the college and the laying out and landscaping of the Presidents Garden. A wall was discovered next to the current carport interpreted as the north wall of the kitchen building shown on Loggan's print of 1675.
  - *Excavation, 2003 (UAD 1638)*: The excavation identified a late medieval soil horizon and pits post medieval quarrying predating the Baylie Chapel and the foundations of the free standing kitchen block built in 1643. Structural elements and internal features of the 19<sup>th</sup> century replacement kitchen were also recorded.
  - *Evaluation, Kendrew Quad, 2006 (UAD 1691)*: Evaluation for new quad to the north of the college recorded evidence of medieval to modern activity including an assemblage of post medieval cattle horn cores that may indicate a butchery or tannery.
  - *Watching brief, 2008 (UAD 1713)*: Foundation pits revealed six brick built vaults containing human remains, probably of late 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century date.
  - *Excavations, Kendrew Quad, 2008 (UAD 1778)*: Excavations revealed substantial evidence from the Neolithic to the present including a large ditch thought to be part of a Neolithic henge, a Saxon cemetery comprising at least 33 inhumations. Settlement evidence from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards is also noted.

### Abbreviations

- VCH ii            The Victoria History of the County of Oxford Volume 2 (ed. W. Page), 1907, The Victoria History of the Counties of England.
- VCH iii            The Victoria History of the County of Oxford Volume 3: The University of Oxford (eds H. E. Salter and M. D. Lobel), 1954, The Victoria History of the Counties of England.

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