

STATEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST NO 13

BRASENOSE COLLEGE

Asset/Monument Type: Academic College.

Summary: Brasenose College was founded in the early 16th century. It incorporates a 15th century kitchen belonging to a previous academic hall on the site.

Location (NGR): SP51540630

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.

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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?

Assessment: The college is characteristic of a period of secular collegiate education from 16th century to the present. Academic colleges are just one 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. Brasenose College is one of 18 Oxford Colleges established by the 16th century.

Score: High

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

Assessment: Brasenose College archives are held in the main library and include financial records, estate documents and information on members, clubs and societies and the college buildings. The archive also contains records of college life, particularly from the 18th century. Attempts to catalogue the archives have been made at the turn of the 20th century and again in the 1960s. Archaeological documentation has been improved by the recent recording work at the college which has demonstrated a good level of preservation of below ground remains.

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 Old Quad at Brasenose dates to the early 16th century with alterations in the 17th century both internally and externally. The kitchen wing is 15th century in origin and is one of a notable group of medieval kitchens that survive in Oxford. The college is strongly associated by function and architectural form with contemporary secular colleges.

Score: High

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

Assessment: The kitchen wing has been heavily renovated and the extent of original fabric is poorly understood. Well preserved 16th and later structures remain, Recent work has demonstrated the presence of well preserved below ground remains and previously unrecorded extant building fabric.

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: Brasenose College contains three Quads, a Sundial, a Hall, Library and Chapel. It is built over the remains of a number of academic halls and earlier tenements.

Score: High

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

Assessment: Recent work has demonstrated the presence of well preserved below ground remains and previously unrecorded extant building fabric. The site has the potential to preserve important medieval and post-medieval archaeological remains relating to the development of the High Street and Brasenose Lane and the medieval halls and post-medieval college.

Score: Medium

Overall score (21/24)

Overall Assessment of Archaeological Interest: High

HERITAGE ASSET DESCRIPTION

The site of Brasenose College is located within the Saxon and medieval walled town. The Rev H.E. Salter's survey of Oxford documents recorded at least eight former halls, many of which

may have been academic halls including Brasenose Hall from which the college took its name as well as several inns.

A quarry at Headington was leased in 1509 for the construction of the new college and a foundation charter was formally issued in 1511. The college was founded by William Smyth, Bishop of Lincoln, and Richard Sutton steward of the nunnery of Syon originally for a Principal and six fellows with a further six who could lodge at their own expense (Salter & Lobel 1954: 207). By the start of the 17th century this number had risen to 28 fellows and 87 undergraduates. The new college took over the buildings of existing halls on the site and retained a 15th century kitchen from one of these. It took its name from one of the halls, Brasenose, had been an academic hall since the 13th century. The college was built in the now established quadrangular fashion, with gate towers on the street frontage containing the lodgings of the head of house.

There are currently two quadrangles at Brasenose. The Old Quad on Brasenose Lane was built in around 1509-19 (LB Ref 9/319A; B; C; D) and New Quad to the south fronting on to the High Street that includes the possibly 15th century kitchen wing that may predate the college (LB Ref 9/319F) and the 17th century chapel (LB Ref 9/319H) and Principal's Lodgings (LB Ref 9/319K). More recent additions include the 19th and 20th century East Range (LB Ref 9/319J), South West Angle (LB Ref 9/319L), the West Range (LB Ref 9/319E) and the 19th century Library (LB Ref 9/319G). To the west of New Quad the 20th century Staircases 16, 17 and 18 (LB Ref 612/9/10026) and a house to the rear of 19 High Street are also listed (LB Ref 9/319M). The 15th century chapel roof originally came from St Mary's College in New Inn Hall Street, it was transferred in 1656 (Tyack 1998: 56).

Only one archaeological investigation has been carried out at Brasenose in the later 20th century; the majority of archaeological events are isolated finds from 19th century recorded observations. Limited excavations carried out in 1959 in advance of redevelopment recorded evidence of Late Saxon to post-medieval activity including several cellar pits and pottery evidence (Case and Sturdy 1960: 134). In the 21st century an evaluation at the college identified medieval walling adjacent to the Ekersley Room which appeared to predate the college south range of the Old Quad and miscellaneous structures including a the edge of a stone vault. A section of wall in the Ekersley Room was found to preserved painted panelling of late 17th or 18th century date and original fabric (Oxford Archaeology forthcoming).

A detached portion of Brasenose is located at Frewin Hall, the site of the former St Mary's College (see St Mary's College SAI). Frewin Hall (LB Ref 8/278) was built in the late 16th century of the site of the former Augustinian college while three additional buildings were added in the 19th century and are used for the Oxford Union Society.

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).

Tyack notes that the college retains an intimate, domestic character 'typical of the smaller late medieval colleges' (Tyack 1998: 72).

Only one major building project was undertaken in Oxford between fall of Charles I and return of Charles II in 1660. The New Library and Chapel at Brasenose built 1656-1663 to designs of John Jackson, gothic and classical motifs coexist 'combined in a novel manner hard to parallel in English architecture of the time' (Tyack 1998: 114).

Research agenda

Pre-College Research Agenda:

- What is the potential for archaeological evidence at the college for settlement prior to its foundation?

The College Research Agenda:

- The desirability of integrated Conservation management plan including truncation and deposit potential map is noted.
- A formal garden was present in the 16th century, does anything now survive?
- Establish the character and extent of surviving college era remains. What can they tell us about changing patterns of status, wealth, material culture and diet at the college.

Associated Monuments

UAD Monument 107: Brasenose College

UAD Monument 128: Medieval tenements (site of)

UAD Monument 615: Medieval tenements (site of)

UAD Monument 790: Medieval settlement, Salter North East 2.

UAD Monument 822: Brasenose Hall (site of). Former medieval academic hall.

UAD Monument 825: Broadgates Hall. Medieval academic hall, now part of the college.

UAD Monument 843: Glasen Hall (site of). Former medieval academic hall.

UAD Monument 848: Haberdasher Hall (site of). Former medieval academic hall.

UAD Monument 884: St Edmunds Hall. Medieval academic hall, now part of the college.

UAD Monument 893: St Mary's Entry. Medieval academic hall, now part of the college.

UAD Monument 898: St Thomas Hall (site of). Former academic hall.

UAD Monument 900: Salessury Hall. Medieval academic hall, now part of the college.

UAD Monument 908: University Hall (site of) Former academic hall.

UAD Monument 942: Medieval tenements (site of).

Associated Events

- *Find from Swan Court in 1873 (UAD 1145)*: A lead medal supporting Lord Wenman in the 1754 election was found in an old house.
- *Salvage recording, 1883 (UAD 1183)*: Post-medieval pottery, a long knife or short sword and a medieval jar may have come from the same excavation. The earliest discovery was a bronze key thought to be Roman.
- *Finds in 1887-8 (UAD 681)*: Numerous finds including Roman coins, a spindle whorl and medieval and later pottery and metalwork.
- *Salvage recording, 1892 (UAD 1227)*: A Roman coin of Valens and a 17th- 18th century pitcher were found.
- *Salvage recording, St Mary's Entry in 1894-5 (UAD 160)*: Finds recorded including Late Saxon or medieval ceramic lamp, 12th century enamel roundel, two skeletons, a small brass of Antonius Pius, decayed oyster shell and a pot and sherds. Worked stone was also recovered.

- *Salvage recording, 1907-9 (UAD 1237)*: When the new buildings at the W end of the High Street front were constructed medieval and post-medieval pottery was found, including a skillet. Encaustic tile and bottles were also found.
- *Excavations 19-23 High Street, 1959-60 (UAD 179)*: Cellar pits containing 11th century and later pottery recorded. Clay pipe was also found.
- *Building recording 2010 (Oxford Archaeology forthcoming.)*: 17th or early 18th century wall painting recorded during renovation in the south range, historic fabric from 16th century structure and miscellaneous walls and vaults noted during groundworks.

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Architects:

- John Jackson: Chapel & Library 1655
- Jackson. Built New Quad in 1886-89
- Powell & Moya. Built Staircases and New Block in 1959.

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