

STATEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST NO 16

EXETER COLLEGE

Asset/Monument Type: Academic College

Summary: Exeter College was founded in the early 14th century, originally based at the present site of Hertford College it moved to its current location after a year. The college is located on a small site adjacent to the Bodleian Library. For much of the medieval period it remained a single quadrangle abutting the city wall but in the 17th century it was allowed to expand across the former wall and ditch, acquiring a frontage on Broad Street. The medieval college has been extensively re-built and only the former 15th century medieval gatehouse from this period remains extant.

Location (NGR): SP51480639

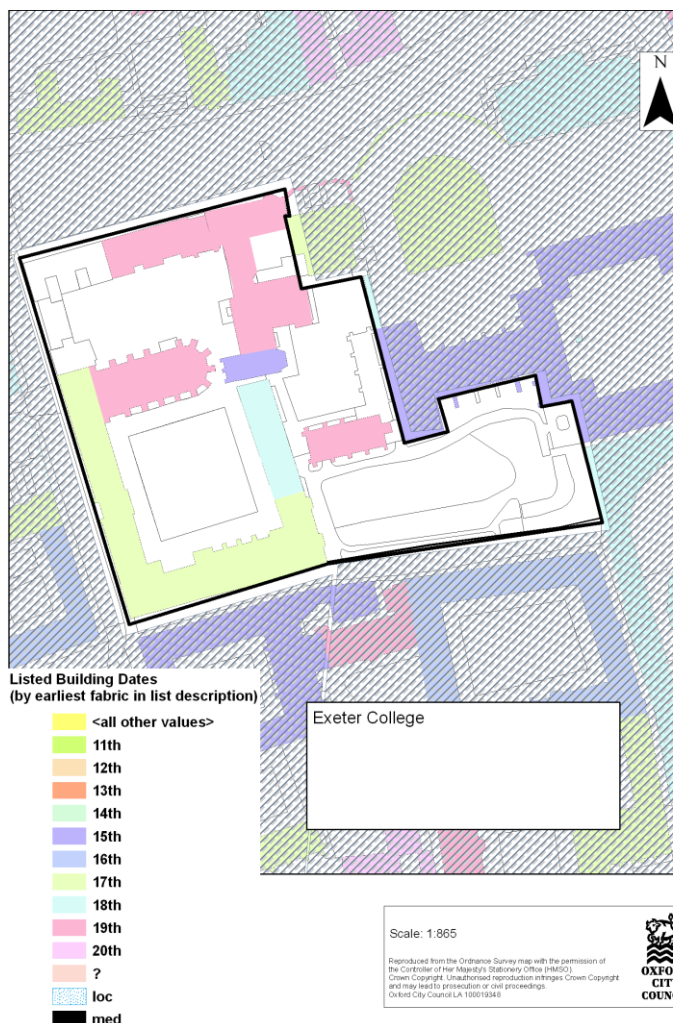
Definition: A college is an establishment housing a community of secular clergy sharing a degree of common life less strictly controlled than that within a monastic order. Colleges are normally identified through documentary evidence. Their buildings are usually associated with a parish church (not necessarily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

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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 14th century to the present. Academic colleges are just are 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. At a county level, 22 medieval academic and chantry colleges are recorded in the Oxfordshire OHER. Exeter College is one of the 7 Oxford colleges established by the end of the 14th century and one of 18 colleges established by the end of the 16th century

Score: High

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

Assessment: The colleges maintain their own archives containing a wealth of information on the history and structure of the college and its possessions. The level of archaeological documentation is poor. No comprehensive survey of the college has been carried out since the 1939 RCHME survey which only took into account the Front Quad.

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 associated with the Saxon intramural and extramural settlement; medieval settlement, a former academic Hall, several Saxon streets and the Saxon and medieval defences. Exeter College is one of the 7 Oxford colleges established by the end of the 14th century and one of 18 Oxford Colleges established by the end of the 16th century

Score: High

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

Assessment: Architecturally the buildings of Exeter College maintain the characteristic Oxford style of college architecture with a mixture of 17th century Neo-Classical and 19th century Victorian Gothic styles. Only the gatehouse from the medieval college remains extant. The survival and condition of below ground deposits is not well understood.

Score: Medium

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

Assessment: Vulnerable to small scale works and permitted development.

Score: Medium

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

Assessment: Exeter College contains two Quads, a Library, a Tower, a Chapel and a Rectors House and Garden.

Score: High

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

Assessment: Archaeological investigations within the college indicate a relatively good level of preservation of parts of the town defences. The historic core of the college has potential to preserve information regarding the character of Norman and later domestic settlement within tenements along Turl Street and evidence for structures, material culture and diet relating to the medieval and Post-medieval college.

Score: High

Overall score (21/24)

HERITAGE ASSET DESCRIPTION

Exeter College is located in the northern part of the Late Saxon and Medieval walled town. The City Wall passed through the college on an east-west alignment north of the chapel with the City Ditch located to the north of the Wall. Archaeological investigations have previously uncovered evidence for the ditch and possibly also an earlier Saxon bank, however no evidence for the medieval wall has yet been noted. Only one former academic hall is known on the Exeter College site, the medieval St Peters Hall is recorded on Rev H.E. Salter's documentary map of Oxford. A further eight halls are recorded by Salter however it is uncertain whether they were used for academic purposes. Agas' map of 1578 depicts a college significantly different to the present with a substantial north range and tower fronting onto Broad Street and a second range extending south from the tower, a smaller range of buildings are also illustrated on the corner of Brasenose Lane and Turl Street. Much of the college was rebuilt in the 17th and 18th century.

Exeter College was founded in 1314 by Bishop Stapledon of Exeter, originally based at Hart Hall (now part of Hertford College) and Arthur Hall. It was moved to its present site in 1315. It later became Exeter Hall in 1404 and finally Exeter College in 1566. Its original charter made provision for eight scholars from archdeaconries at Exeter, Totnes and Barnstaple, four from the archdeaconry of Cornwall, one priest and a further 12 sophists (VCH iii: 107). Exeter was the smallest and least well endowed of the medieval Oxford colleges. The early 14th century buildings were arranged piecemeal around open spaces which gradually coalesced in quadrangles. The medieval buildings have largely been replaced (Tyack 1998: 52).

The current college has two quadrangles; the Main or Front Quad on Brasenose Lane and Margery Quad on Broad Street. The earliest building survives in the North East Range of the Front Quad which incorporates the former gate tower of 1432 (known as Palmer's Tower) located in the north-east corner of the Front Quadrangle (LB Ref 8/150E). The building lost its original function when a new entrance to the college was created on Turl Street in the 17th century. The remainder of the quad comprises the 18th century East Range (LB Ref 8/150/H), the 17th century South-East Range (LB Ref 8/150/K), South Range (LB Ref 8/150/L), West Range (LB Ref 8/150/G) and the 19th century chapel (LB Ref 8/150/D).

In the 19th and early 20th century investigations recorded the edge of an earthen rampart possibly part of the Saxon defences (Manning 1914, 24) as well as the City Ditch (Hurst, 1889, 133) and a Bastion in the north quadrangle (ibid.: 141). On Turl Street in 1962 excavations revealed evidence of the City Ditch as well as a loamy layer that may have come from the late Saxon bank (Durham & Halpin 1983). The Ditch was again located in 1984 during a watching brief in 'Dustbin Quad' containing 17th century infill (UAD 484). Excavations between 1983 and 1986 recorded the remains of several arches thought to belong to the dungeon of the public privies known to have existed outside the City Wall in 1631 (UAD 477).

Previous small scale investigations have recorded parts of the standing and below ground remains of the college and its holding. Between 1962-3 excavations in Broad Street for new buildings for Exeter College recorded that the in-filled city ditch was cut by a rubbish pit containing late 17th or early 18th century pottery and glass (Case and Sturdy 1963). An evaluation in Staircase 4 in 1999 recorded a sequence of deposits including beaten earth floors that suggested that the original 1618 building had contained a cellar (Oxford Archaeological Unit 2000). A watching brief in 2001 carried out when a new opening was made in the screens passage between the 17th century Hall and the Servery recorded early layers of wall plaster. The only wall painting exposed during these works was a sheet of black (Oxford Archaeological Unit 2001). In April 2005 Oxford Archaeology carried out an

archaeological watching brief during the reduction of floor levels and the insertion of two lift shafts in the college kitchen basement. The excavations revealed 11th-13th century walls, subsequent phases of rebuilding, a stone built well and the remains of a brick archway (Oxford Archaeology 2005). In 2010 a geophysical survey undertaken in the Rector's Garden identified the likely footprint of an earlier structure (Ainslie, Ainslie and Oatley 2010).

Architects:

Northeast Range: William Palmer 1432-35

Hall & Servedry. Sir John Acland 1618

Chapel: Sir George Gilbert Scott 1856-59

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).

'The spread of classicism in the late 17th century did not completely obliterate the older manner of building. Some colleges – University, Jesus, Pembroke, and Exeter- completed projects started before the Civil War with very few concessions to modern taste, save for the carving of classical detailing on the new gate towers at Pembroke and Exeter' (Tyack 1998: 141).

George Gilbert Scott use of the early gothic French style 'his finest Oxford building in this style is the Chapel at Exeter College built 1854-6'. The 'tall, generous proportions of the new building were unparalleled in any Oxford college chapels since those of All Souls and Magdalen in the 15th century' (Tyack 1998: 223).

'In 1618 [The college built] a magnificent new Hall – one of the most impressive in Oxford' (Tyack 1998: 103).

Research agenda

Pre College research agenda

- Can further evidence for the Late Saxon and medieval defences be identified and there date and sequence clarified?
- Can we further identify the character and extent of domestic and commercial activities in this area prior to the construction of the college?

College research agenda

- Desirability of integrated Conservation management plan including truncation and deposit potential map noted.
- A formal garden was present in the 16th century, does anything now survive?
- A detailed building survey of existing fabric may be productive. While some building surveys have been carried out on parts of the college, no comprehensive building survey has been carried out since the 1939 RCHME survey.

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- 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. What can buried structural remains tell us about the evolution of the college.

Associated Monuments

UAD Monument 2: Saxon defences (site of). Probable line of former burh defences
 UAD Monument 4: City Wall (site of). Former line of City Wall through Corpus Christi
 UAD Monument 110: Exeter College. University College
 UAD Monument 409: City Wall Bastion 6
 UAD Monument 410: City Wall Bastion 7
 UAD Monument 698: Brasenose Lane
 UAD Monument 700: Broad Street
 UAD Monument 736: Turl Street
 UAD Monument 790: Medieval Settlement Salter North East
 UAD Monument 801: Late Saxon Settlement North East Sector
 UAD Monument 897: St Peters Hall

Associated Events

- *Find in 1618 (UAD 730)*: A stone cist containing many small silver coins was found NE of the Hall. They are thought to have been Saxon.
- *Observations in 1679 (UAD 490)*: Work was done to construct foundations for the building down into the fill of the City Ditch. The excavations broke through into Exeter College, breaching the walls of the 'privy dungeon'.
- *Observations in 1853 (UAD 1556)*: During work on the new buildings a bastion on the City Wall was uncovered in the north quadrangle.
- *Building work in 1857 (UAD 1528)*: When foundations were dug for the new Rector's Lodgings a ditch was found within the line of the City Wall. At the bottom was black mud and pieces of wood, especially osiers. Parker suggested that this was used to fill in the ditch when a wall to the south was demolished and replaced by one on the north.
- *Observations in 1887 (UAD 1205)*: When a drain was constructed for the Master's House an iron horseshoe was found. It was in a mixture of dark earth and clay, possible on the edge of the fill of the City Ditch.
- *Observations c1890 (UAD 1450)*: Hurst records that a square catch pit was found between Bishop Heber's tree and the Bodleian library.
- *Observations in 1890s (UAD 1381)*: Hurst recorded parts of the Prideux Building, formerly Alderman Wright's house.
- *Find (UAD 1557)*: Hurst records that a grave was found in the south east corner of the cellar wall. It contained a few silver coins and a stone carving of a king's head, now fixed into the wall at the place of finding. He believes this is evidence that St Mildred's churchyard to the south encroached onto college land.
- *Observations in garden c1896 (UAD 1262)*: A medieval jug was found under Bishop Heber's tree.
- *Observations in 1896 (UAD 1419)*: When a sewer was installed from the Ashmolean corner of the college to Turl Street Hurst records that pond mud was found. He believed that the City Ditch along Broad Street had used previously existing ponds, and deep expanses of black mud have been found in various locations.

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- *Observations in garden in the 19th century (UAD 1413)*: Hurst records that a strong foundation was found running parallel to the south wall of the garden, but 10 m to the north.
 - *Observations at 27 Broad Street in 1913 (UAD 1301)*: Work was carried out on a cellar between those premises and 21 Turl Street. During the rebuilding a section was recorded which appears to show an earthen rampart. A wine bottle of c1690 was found.
 - *Excavations in 1962-3 (UAD 199)*: Work was carried out at the NE corner of Turl Street for new buildings for Exeter College. Late 16th century fill of the City Ditch was recovered. This fill had been cut by a rubbish pit containing late 17th or early 18th century pottery and glass. No City Wall was found, but to the south a loamy layer might have come from a late Saxon bank.
 - *Watching Brief in 1983 (UAD 477)*: The wall part of revetting around the Old Ashmolean building from c 1670. The wall, running NS, was dug down to the bottom of the ditch fill and backed with brown clay. The ditch would have been partly filled at that date. Further work was carried out in 1986. Walls were found within the ditch and stone vaults were reported as removed. Victorian pottery was found within that area. The vaults are probably the remains of the arches from the dungeon of the public privies which stood outside the City Wall in 1631. These were rebuilt in 1706.
 - *Watching Brief in 1984 (UAD 484)*: Work was carried out when a new sewer was installed for student accommodation in 'Dustbin Quad'(?). Black fill from a deep ditch was found, containing 17th century pottery. This was probably the Civil War Ditch, and the location raised questions about its relationship to Horsemonger Street and the houses in the Horse market. The spout of a mid 13th century man-shaped pitcher was also found.
 - *Watching Brief, 1997 (UAD 446)*: Work was carried out when a new opening was made in the screens passage between the Hall and the Servedy. The buildings are originally 17th century. Early layers of wall plaster were uncovered, but the only wall painting was a sheet of black. 19th century changes to the Jacobean roof were also seen.
 - *Archaeological evaluation, Staircase 4, 1999 (UAD 424)*: A sequence of deposits associated with the existing building were found. Beaten earth floors within these suggested that the original 1618 building had contained a cellar. The ground floor had been rearranged subsequently.
 - *(UAD 868)*: Two bastions, Nos 6 and 7, on the ground now occupied by Exeter College and the Old Ashmolean Building have been destroyed.
 - *Kitchen basement, 2005 (UAD 1656)*: A watching brief during a general reduction of the basement floors and the excavation of two lift shafts recorded 11th-13th century walls and subsequent phases of rebuilding within one of the lift shafts and the other revealed the top of a stone built well. The remains of a brick archway and disturbed floor levels were also found.
 - *(UAD 1788)* A geophysical survey undertaken in the Rector's Garden in 2010 identified the likely footprint of an earlier structure (Ainslie, Ainslie and Oatley 2010).

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