

## STATEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST NO 17

### HERTFORD COLLEGE (HART HALL)

**Asset/Monument Type:** Academic College

**Summary:** Hertford college originated as a 13<sup>th</sup> century academic hall. A college charter was obtained in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the college was re-founded after a merger with Magdalen Hall in 1874. The present site of Hertford College is located on Catte Street on the site of the medieval Hert Hall. An additional plot of land was added to the north and is accessed by the Bridge of Sighs over New College Lane

**Location (NGR):** SP51620642

**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?

**Assessment:** The academic hall is characteristic of a period of higher education in the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the college of higher education from 16<sup>th</sup> century from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present. Academic halls 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?



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**Assessment:** Hart Hall was one of over 100 academic halls in Oxford.

**Score:** Low

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

**Assessment:** The extent of college archives is not known. There is little archaeological documentation relating to the medieval hall.

**Score:** Low

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 Late Saxon eastern suburb or burh extension, the Late Saxon and medieval defences and the Smithgate, also with medieval intramural settlement; at least five former academic halls including Hart Hall.

**Score:** Medium

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

**Assessment:** Hertford College is largely post-medieval to modern in fabric although medieval fabric is preserved in the north range. The extent of below ground deposits relating to early tenements or academic halls is poorly understood.

**Score:** Medium

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:** Hertford College contains two Quads, two chapels and a Library, the Bridge of Sighs connects the two quadrangles.

**Score:** Medium

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

**Assessment:** The archaeological potential for the college is relatively high, previous excavations have recorded evidence of the outer City Wall, a unique defensive structure in medieval England. The North Quad also incorporates the former Smithgate. The Main Quad is located in an area known for its medieval book trade as well as intensive use for academic halls.

**Score:** High

Overall score (15/24)

### Overall Assessment of Significance: Medium

## HERITAGE ASSET DESCRIPTION

Hertford College is located in the Saxon eastern extension to the burh just to the east of the original line of the burh defences. The College is divided into two areas, the main site being south of New College Lane with a new Quad to the north. Before the college's foundation in 1301 a number of former academic halls occupied the site of the main quadrangle while a series of historic tenements fronted onto Catte Street. In the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, traders dependent on the colleges congregated in the eastern end of the town and the book trade was centred around the site of the later college. On Catte Street, four bookbinders, four parchment makers, four limners, a copyist and a scrivener were recorded (Crossley 1979: 28). The north quadrangle is located on the site of the former Smithgate, marked by the surviving 16<sup>th</sup> century chapel of our Lady. Smithgate was one of the minor gates into the medieval

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intramural settlement while the City Wall passed through the lower part of the site on an east-west alignment.

Hertford College is derived from two separate academic halls; its location is based at Hart Hall which started before 1282 and sat between the university's Black Hall and Shield Hall belonging to the Prioress and convent of Studley (VCH iii: 309). Hart hall itself was used as a temporary base for Exeter College in 1314 until the college moved to their present site on Turl Street and remained the property of the college, in use as a residential and teaching annexe until the 1360s (Saul 1989: 333). It was also used temporarily in 1378 by William de Wykeham, founder of New College, until their college was built (VCH iii: 310). Hart Hall originally consisted of an L shaped complex of rubble-stone buildings with a Hall of c1572 and another range dating to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the buildings now form part of Hertford College. A charter to establish Hertford College from Hart Hall was obtained in 1740 but the college struggled for funds.

Magdalen Hall was an independent university hall originally located adjacent to Magdalen College on site that had operated since at least the start of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The site of Hart Hall and some adjacent newer buildings including an 18<sup>th</sup> century chapel (now the college library) were sold to Magdalen Hall in 1820 after Magdalen Hall had been badly damaged by fire. The comparatively late date for the bulk of the existing college buildings in the college is due to the collapse of the medieval street frontage in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century which resulted in the re-founding of Hertford College in 1874 (Sherwood and Pevsner 1974: 138).

Hertford College comprises two quadrangles on either side of New College Lane fronting on to Catte Street, linked by an overhead walkway built in Venetian style known locally as 'the Bridge of Sighs' over New College Lane. The surviving part of Hart Hall is the 16<sup>th</sup> century North Range of the First Quad with a later 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century upper floor (LB Ref 9/259D; C) (Note that Pevsner dates part of the North Range to the 15<sup>th</sup> century). The East Range is 17<sup>th</sup> century (LB Ref 9/259E; F) and part of the South Range is 18<sup>th</sup> century (LB Ref 9/259H) but the remainder of the Quad is more recent in date. The West Range fronting Catte Street is the 19<sup>th</sup> century replacement of the medieval college (LB Ref 9/259L; J) and the 20<sup>th</sup> century chapel on the South Range (LB Ref 9/259G). The North Quad incorporates the 19<sup>th</sup> century Old Indian Institute, not part of the College, in the north-west angle (LB Ref 6/145). The 16<sup>th</sup> century Chapel of St Mary at Smith Gate is all that remains of the Gate (LB Ref 9/259B). The remainder of the Quad is 20<sup>th</sup> century in date (LB Ref 9/259A; K).

Previous archaeological investigation has concentrated on the northern quadrangle of the college following the path of the medieval defensive network. Excavations in St Helen's Passage in 1974 (UAD 274) and 1980 (UAD 285) recorded the first archaeological evidence for the outer City Wall previously only known from documentary sources (Palmer 1976: 148). The excavations in the area also revealed evidence for a substantial ditch of some 3.75 metres in depth and almost 10 metres in width (Durham *et al.* 1983: 27).

## **Architects:**

Bridge of Sighs. Sir Thomas Jackson. 1914

## **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

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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)

### **Research agenda**

Pre College research agenda:

- Did the octagonal chapel of Our Lady located on the plot acquired by Hertford in 1898 NE of Smith Gate form part of the Smithgate? Observations in the 19th century would suggest not. Is there any evidence for earlier foundations within the chapel?
- Is there any further evidence for the outer City Wall?
- Is it possible to trace the Saxon eastern extension through this area? Evidence for the Ditch and Rampart?
- Evidence of the former academic halls, were they completely demolished? Does anything survive in the built structure of the college? Is there evidence for their foundation below the ground or have they been completely removed from the archaeological record?
- Is there evidence of medieval trade in the area? Book making was an important industry in the Catte Street area.

The hall/college:

- What can the known material culture tell us about life in the medieval hall?
- Is there any evidence for the former tennis court at Smithgate?
- Hertford remained a Hall until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, what comparisons can be drawn between the evidence for daily life in the medieval hall with the medieval colleges?
- Desirability of integrated Conservation management plan including truncation and deposit potential map noted.
- A detailed building survey of existing fabric may be productive.
- Can we establish the character and extent of surviving remains of the medieval hall. What can these tell us about changing patterns of status, wealth, material culture and diet and the evolution of the buildings on the site?

### **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 111: Hertford College

UAD Monument 391: Chapel of our Lady at Smithgate

UAD Monument 553: Tennis Court, Smithgate

UAD Monument 612: Historic buildings, Holywell Street

UAD Monument 613: Historic buildings, Catte Street

UAD Monument 720: New College Lane

UAD Monument 791: Medieval Settlement, Salter North East 3

UAD Monument 804: Late Saxon settlement, Eastern suburb

UAD Monument 816: Great Black Hall. Former Academic Hall

UAD Monument 828: Cat Hall. Former Academic Hall

UAD Monument 853: Hart Hall. Former Academic Hall

UAD Monument 903: Sheld Hall. Former Academic Hall

UAD Monument 963: Magdalen Hall. Former Academic Hall

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## Associated Events

- *Observations in 1887, West Range (UAD 1208)*: Medieval and later pottery recorded, one possible Late Saxon example.
- *Observations in 1888 (UAD 1346)*: Two fragments of stone were recovered. Hurst drew a voissoir which is now lost.
- *Recording work at St Mary's Chapel, 1890s (UAD 1376)*: The octagonal building had two storeys at the time and was owned by the City and leased as a dwelling. Hurst made a plan of the site and recorded some details. The chapel is now part of Hertford College. He did not think that the chapel had been part of the city wall as he found no signs of walls running up to the foundations.
- *Observations at 32 Broad Street in 1892 (UAD 1224)*: Pots and a 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century ivory figurine of an angel were found.
- *Observations in New College Lane in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (UAD 1400)*: Hurst records that when excavation was carried out north of the east part of Hertford College an old road surface was found c0.4 m below the surface. He believes it could not be earlier than late 14<sup>th</sup> century.
- *Observations in 1901-2 (UAD 1543)*: The Hore Collection, in Worcester City Museum, contains photographs of the work at the chapel and construction of foundations by St Helen's Passage. The latter apparently show the line of the City Wall running E-W.
- *Observations in 1907 (UAD 1240)*: Large numbers of medieval and post-medieval material was found, including tile, pottery, bottles, a bronze spur, swivel and purse rim, a brass thimble and an iron duelling sword blade.
- *Observations in 1916 (UAD 1255)*: A number of mainly post-medieval finds were made, including pottery, clay pipes, knives, spoons and spurs. Two squares of stained glass were also recovered.
- *Observations in 1937 (UAD 1270)*: Work continued on the development of college buildings on the N side of New College Lane during the 1930s, including restoration of the chapel of Our Lady at Smith Gate. Post-medieval Rhenish jugs were found.
- *Archaeological in St Helen's Passage 1974-5 (UAD 274)*: Probable path of the City Wall recorded, some of the lower layers sloped down to the north towards the City Ditch, backfilled in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and overlain by foundations of outbuildings. The boundary wall of St Helen's Passage was set on an earlier wider wall, the outer City Wall. A doorway had been cut through this early wall, for a postern gate. The path to the gate was found and evidence that it was reached by a stairway whose sides were revetted by retaining walls. The ditch was said to have been filled with water and the postern may have allowed access for fishing. Some 13<sup>th</sup> century pottery was found.
- *Archaeological in St Helen's Passage in 1980 (UAD 285)*: Evidence of a substantial ditch, although undated. The outer City Wall was recorded at the base of the ditch. Silt below the wall contained 13<sup>th</sup> century pottery. Within St Helen's Passage a pit containing 15<sup>th</sup> century pottery cut into the natural gravel. Above this were the remains of 18<sup>th</sup> century cottages. The ditch beyond the outer wall had been maintained until the 17<sup>th</sup> century when it was rapidly infilled. A later ditch up against the wall was presumably for drainage.

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