

## STATEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST NO 30

### HOSPITAL OF ST JOHN

**Asset/Monument Type:** Hospital

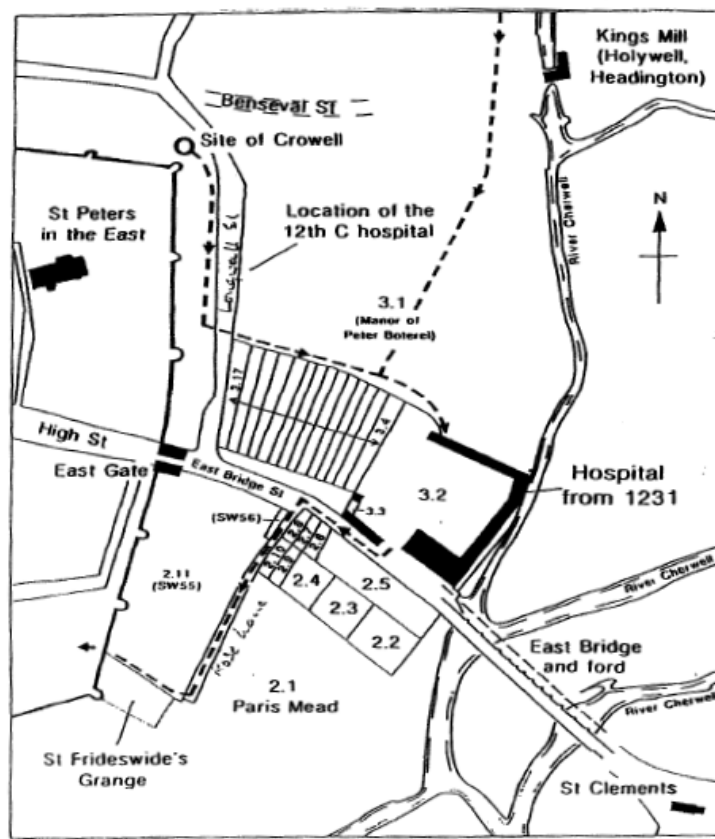
**Summary:** Founded on Longwall Street in the 12<sup>th</sup> century the hospital was later re-founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century outside the east end of the town on the site of the former Jewish Burial Ground between the Eastgate and the River Cherwell. The hospital survived until the 15<sup>th</sup> century when it was suppressed by William Waynfleet who subsequently founded the college there.

**Location (NGR):** SP52220624

**Definition:** A medieval hospital is a group of buildings which housed a religious or secular institution which provided spiritual and (limited) medical care.

#### 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.*



The eastern suburbs - 15th century. The aqueduct from Crowell existed by 1270. The later aqueduct from above Holywell Mill replaced it in 1287.

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

**Assessment:** The tradition of hospital building and use extended over a period of 300 years, normally founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century they began to peter out in the late medieval and the few that survived were later dissolved.

**Score:** Medium

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

**Assessment:** There are somewhere between 800 and 1100 known hospitals in England, although few have been precisely recorded or excavated. In Oxford there are records of at least four hospitals although Bartlemas and St John's were the principal ones.

**Score:** Medium

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

**Assessment:** There is a reasonable amount of documentation of the hospital, particularly within the archives of Magdalen College while archaeological investigation has provided substantial evidence of the layout of the hospital precinct

**Score:** High

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

**Assessment:** Lying immediately beyond the City Wall, the hospital occupied a substantial area of the eastern suburb overlying part of the Jewish cemetery. The 15<sup>th</sup> century saw its conversion into a college and many of the hospital buildings appear to have been removed

**Score:** Medium

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

**Assessment:** Archaeological investigation has recorded a reasonable below ground survival of medieval features although dating evidence for inhumations have proved problematic. Much of the surviving above ground structures have been incorporated into the present college

**Score:** Medium

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

**Assessment:** Vulnerable to small scale works, permitted development and pressure to improve on site facilities.

**Score:** Medium

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

**Assessment:** There is great diversity of features attributed to hospitals although the preservation of evidence below the college is uncertain

**Score:** Medium-High

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

**Assessment:** Although there is a good potential for evidence relating to hospitals in general it is uncertain to what extent features may survive below the present college. Limited archaeological investigation has recorded a reasonable below ground preservation.

**Score:** Medium

Overall score (17.5/24)

## **Overall Assessment of Archaeological Interest: High**

### **HERITAGE ASSET DESCRIPTION**

On its foundation in 1180 the Hospital of St John the Baptist was granted the land now occupied by Magdalen College including the meadows to the east by Hugh de Malaunay in the medieval eastern suburb. The original buildings stood against the eastern line of the City Wall near Longwall Street facing the church of St Peter in the East (Steane, 1998, 92). The Hospital was re-founded in 1231 when Henry III acquired the land, granting it to the Hospital along with of half of the Garden of the Jews. The Hospital was subsequently rebuilt on a larger scale in the south east part of the site near the Cherwell Bridge (*ibid*). The king remained a key benefactor of the hospital granting it several liberties in the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century. In 1294 it was granted permission to enclose an area of vacant land on the south side of the road near their churchyard for the purposes of a cemetery. It is thought that this referred to the ancient Jewish burial ground. The hospital continued until around 1457 when it was granted to William Waynfleet for the foundation of a new college (Page, 1907, 159).

Construction work near Magdalen College Lodge in 1958 (UAD 170) recorded several burials in the south part of the road, the burials were dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and thought to have belonged to either the Jewish cemetery or the hospital cemetery (Case & Kirk, 1958, 136). Archaeological investigations at the former kitchen (UAD 301) of Magdalen College (LB Ref 10/419N & M) indicated that the stone building was contemporary with the hospital, although the structure appears to have been re-roofed in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century by the college

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(Durham, 1991, 39). Initial archaeological evaluation in the kitchen yard area revealed evidence of several steps leading into a water culvert as well as medieval floors levels however the exact purpose of this feature is uncertain (*ibid*, 28), this was followed by more large scale excavations across the eastern part of the yard, recording further evidence of the culvert as well as the foundation walls of the hospital itself (*ibid*). A watching brief carried out across the entire yard at the same time recorded several column bases suggesting a twin halled structure on the street frontage and may have been the eastern part of the infirmary (*ibid*, 34). Later excavations carried out in 1995 on Longwall Quad (UAD 321) recorded evidence of medieval tenements fronting onto the High Street as well as a substantial ditch running parallel to Longwall Street and the probable remains of a further building fronting onto Longwall Street (Roberts, 1999, 275).

Small scale archaeological investigation at Magdalen College has also revealed evidence of 13<sup>th</sup> century stonework around Chaplain Quad in 1976 (UAD 329) and evidence of a managed pond in 1991 (UAD 356) thought to have supplied the hospitals aqueduct.

### Academic statements

*MPP Class Description, English Heritage, 1989:*

In selecting a sample of nationally important sites, examples of general infirmaries, isolation hospitals and almshouses should be represented in each region. Little is known of leper hospitals, so that any unencumbered site may be noteworthy. Special attention should be paid to extant examples innovative craftsmanship, two-storey hospitals, those with detached chapels, and the apparently unique sites of the cruciform (the site of the Savoy Hospital, London) and narrow courtyard type (Ford's, Coventry).

### Research agenda

- What is the potential for evidence for activity on the site prior to the foundation of the abbey? What might reasonably be expected at this site? Agricultural activity is a reasonable assumption however evidence for earlier activity may also be present
- Potential for evidence that might contribute to the modelling of the river channels in the prehistoric period
- Is it possible to map the destruction of the abbey in the post-medieval period, can contemporary pictorial or cartographic sources contribute to this?

### Associated Monuments

UAD Monument 45: Post-medieval Bowling Green, Magdalen College Grove (site of)

UAD Monument 114: Magdalen College

UAD Monument 364: Medieval Hospital of St John the Baptist (site of)

UAD Monument 471: Magdalen Bridge

UAD Monument 500: Post-medieval Greyhound Inn, High Street (site of)

UAD Monument 589: Holywell Mill Stream

UAD Monument 675: Magdalen College, Registered Garden

UAD Monument 710: High Street

UAD Monument 716: Longwall Street

UAD Monument 741: Benseval Street

### Associated Events

- *Excavations near Magdalen College Lodge, 1958 (UAD 170):* Three graves recorded in south part of the road, possibly part of the Jewish cemetery or later Hospital of St John.

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- *Excavations at Magdalen College, 1986 (UAD 301)*: The medieval stone kitchen, one of the last surviving structures from the hospital was recorded while excavations at the new kitchen site were also carried out recording the eastern part of the infirmary lying at right angles to the southern end of riverside range containing a hall. The south east corner of the hospital was found to lie on an artificial embankment. A culverted water supply at the chapel end of the infirmary was also noted. Silts below the hospital suggested a fast flowing channel during the 13<sup>th</sup> century.
  - *Excavations at Holywell Ford, 1993 (UAD 312)*: Evidence of the medieval house and mill were recorded including walls from a series of buildings, thought to be associated with the mill, were uncovered, the earliest dating to the 15<sup>th</sup> century with a stone lining on part of the wall, possibly a water channel, for the mill or St John's Hospital.
  - *Excavations at Longwall Quadrangle, 1995 (UAD 321)*: Structural evidence possibly part of the hospital or domestic activity. 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century cultivation activity recorded to the south.
  - *Building work, Chaplain Quad, 1976 (UAD 329)*: Several burials and some 13<sup>th</sup> century stonework recorded during renovation.
  - *Excavations at Magdalen College, 1991 (UASD 356)*: The ploughed floor of a managed pond was found close to the assumed line of the aqueduct supplying the medieval Hospital of St John.
  - *Watching brief at Magdalen College kitchen, 1983 (UAD 479)*: Several floor layers and possible fragments of an oven were recorded.
  - *Building Survey, Magdalen College Kitchen, 1988 (UAD 501)*: The hall was probably originally longer. The mortar in the walls was typical of the medieval hospital. Shaped of ashlar window jambs were recorded, one with the full arch. This was two-centred of common 13<sup>th</sup> century style. A doorway was discovered the capitals of which extended 0.5 m above the modern ground level.
  - *Building Survey, Magdalen College Kitchen, 1988 (UAD 645)*: The kitchen range lies to the east of the Hall and contains traces of 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century work. In the north façade there are three possible lancet windows. After a 16<sup>th</sup> century refurbishment open fireplaces and chimney stacks were fitted at either end.
  - *Observations, Magdalen College, 1890s (UAD 1373)*: A view of Perrot's House was recorded from the gravel walk. It had oriel windows and an overhanging porch. The house now forms the SW corner of St Swithin's Quad.
  - *Observations at Magdalen College in 1888-90 (UAD 1386)*: Hurst recorded various features including the elevation of the President's House, showing blocked openings from medieval doors and windows. These were later covered with plaster.

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