

Oxford City Council Design, Heritage and Trees

Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief

Project: Corpus Christi College, Oxford

Description: Re-excavation of existing and excavation of new electrical trenching through the college precinct.

Brief issued: 8/7/2016

Prepared by: David Radford

1. SUMMARY

This brief sets out the requirement for an archaeological watching brief during significant ground works at this site. The work is required to record any significant archaeological deposits revealed by excavation works bearing in mind the potential for medieval and post-medieval remains.

2. DEFINITION

The definition of an Archaeological Watching Brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land ...or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive. (IFA, 1999)

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

The works are taking place within the precinct of Corpus Christ College, involving the re-cutting of existing cable routes through Merton Grove and Front Quad and new routes through Cloister Quad, Small Quadrangle and Front Quad.

4. PLANNING BACKGROUND

- a. In this instance the college has requested an archaeological brief and intends to undertake the work as permitted development. The college has been referred to the Conservation Officer and Planning Department for further advice on this matter.
- b. Watching briefs should undertaken in accordance with a "written scheme of investigation" which has been agreed in writing by the City Council Archaeologist prior to commencing fieldwork. The "written scheme of investigation" should comprise this brief combined with the archaeological contractor's project design (see below). The project will be completed only when all fieldwork and post-excavation work has been undertaken, the archive has been deposited and any required publication secured.

5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- a. This site is of interest because it is located within the extent of the late Saxon burh, the medieval walled town and the precinct of Corpus Christi College. The college was founded in the early 16th century and was extended over the site of a

number of early 14th century academic halls that fronted onto Oriel Street and Merton Street, including Urban Hall and St Christopher Hall. The college is located in the eastern sector of the city against the former line of the town wall and on the line of the hypothesised primary late Saxon burh defences. It originally comprised a single quadrangle on the Merton Street frontage later expanded to the south.

- b. Founded circa 1517 by Bishop Fox the college was originally conceived as a monastic college it was eventually founded as a secular college for 40 fellows (Salter & Lobel: 1954, 219). The earliest building is the 15th century Kitchen of the South-East Hall. The Front Quad is primarily early 16th century in date with a 17th century East Range and south range comprising the library and college chapel. The College also maintains a section of the medieval town wall and one of its bastions.
- c. Archaeological investigations have recorded remnants of the 14th century Canterbury College boundary wall along with the remains of an earlier road and medieval tenements on the western side of the college (Sturdy 1961-62: 32). Possible evidence of the late Saxon defensive primary burh ditch has also been recorded to the rear of the college (Hassall 1973: 274). The town wall has also been examined (Durham 1982: 156).
- d. Archaeological investigations in 2000 at the Emily Thomas Building recorded several rubbish pits and a well containing fragments of 11th-13th century pottery and may relate to the former academic hall known to have existed on the site (Holmes, 2000,1). The presence of animal bone of both cattle and sheep along with environmental evidence from the well indicate the excavations were centred in a former farmyard or kitchen area (*ibid*: 3). At the Emily Thomas Building the 11th-13th century was recorded at a depth of 0.4 to 0.5m on the eastern side of the college.
- e. An excavation by Oxford Archaeology in 2008 on the site of the new college auditorium identified a phase of Late Saxon burials related to the nearby precinct of St Frideswide, a large ditch possibly defensive in character and evidence for industrial activity in the medieval period (tanning), also pit digging likely to be related to the foundation of the college and also elements of the 16th century garden layout (Bashford 2009).
- f. In 2013 archaeological observations during the excavation of an electric cable trench at Merton Grove in the Grove Garden of Merton College, recorded an apparent midden deposit comprising a large quantity of oyster shells, and Brill/Boarstall Ware pottery from the late 14th to 16th century. The midden pit was recorded at a depth of 180mm below ground level. Unstratified material associated with high-status medieval buildings in the form of glazed ridge and floor tiles was also recovered (Jessop Consultancy 2013)
- g. Geophysical survey and bore hole investigations by Oxford Archaeology and limited trial trench excavation by Museum of London Archaeology were undertaken in 2015 in Garden Quadrangle. The field work established a sequence of dumped layers of soil and mortar which were clearly mixed given the residual

pottery in the lowest deposits. The earliest layers appeared to date from the medieval period, perhaps the 13th century, though earlier ceramics mixed in suggest early medieval activity elsewhere. The sequence of deposits continues through to the 16th or 17th century and confirmed the sequence identified in the auger holes by Oxford Archaeology. The single feature found was probably an 18th century path (MOLA 2015). The results of this work suggest that if the primary burh ditch is located under Corpus Christ College then it is likely to be located further east.

6. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Identify and record any significant archaeological remains revealed by the ground works, paying particular regard to the potential for medieval and post-medieval remains. Any such remains should be interpreted with reference to the known archaeology of the college and the halls that preceded it
- If applicable the report should refer to the city, county and regional period based resource assessments and research agendas available on the web:
http://thehumanjourney.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=553&Itemid=277
<http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/OxfordArchaeologicalPlan.htm>

7. PROCEDURE AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Archaeological Watching Briefs must be undertaken in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs* published by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA, 1999). Each watching brief must be governed by a project design which has been agreed in writing by the City Council Archaeologist. The project design should be based on a thorough study of all relevant background information. It should conform to the requirements set out in paragraph 3.2.12 of the IFA guidelines and should in particular include:

- The project's objectives.
- A description of the proposed works and an assessment of their archaeological impact with an accompanying plan.
- Details of the methodology for implementing the watching brief indicating those works which are to be observed, the frequency of observation (permanent/daily visits etc) and any archaeological control over the developer's operating procedures.
- An assessment of the potential for, and possible nature of, any "unexpected discoveries"¹ with details of contingency arrangements for salvage recording.

¹ The term "unexpected discovery" covers features whose existence and/or significance was unknown at the outset of the watching brief but subsequently prove to be potentially of county or national importance.

- Procedures for project management (to follow the principles set out in the Historic England Guidance [Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment](#) (Morphe 2015)).
- The expertise of the project team. The project manager should be a named Member of the Chartered Institute of Field Archaeologists (MCIfA) who is adequately qualified to manage the required archaeological work in line with the guidance set out in the CIfA code of conduct. The composition and experience of the project team should be described. Specialists should be identified where required (e.g. for finds and environmental work). In some cases it will also be necessary to identify academic advisors. CVs should be supplied outlining the relevant qualifications and experience of key personnel - where relevant this should include specific reference to knowledge of particular periods and local/ regional traditions. *Note: Specialists should be able to demonstrate a relevant qualification and track record of at least 3 years continuous relevant work (or equivalent) and appropriate publication. In appropriate circumstances, less experienced staff may conduct work under the supervision of well-established and widely recognised specialists.*
- An outline of the proposed timetable and staff resources - this must be non-binding and presented "for information only"
- Reporting and Archiving arrangements.

8. FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

a. Procedure

Watching briefs require that the archaeologist(s) are present on site during works in the following circumstances: comprehensive/detailed (present during all works which may affect archaeological remains); intensive (present during specified sensitive works); intermittent (viewing immediately after each specified phase of works).

In this case an intermittent watching brief should be undertaken to inspect the sections of re-cut trench through The Grove and Front Quadrangle and a detailed watching brief should be undertaken during the excavation of new trenches through the Front Quadrangle and the Cloister Quadrangle.

The requirements for detailed watching brief can be reviewed with the City Council Archaeologist on site if required.

The presence/absence of archaeological features should be noted. If features are identified then sufficient work should be done to date, characterise and record the remains in accordance with the project objectives. An adequate contingency should be provided to cover the eventuality that features exposed in the section of the trench can be adequately recorded.

If an "unexpected discovery" is made then the City Council Archaeologist should be informed as soon as possible. Initially consideration should be given to preservation

in-situ but if this is not practical then such discoveries may give rise to a salvage excavation funded from the contingency (see below).

b. Recording

In principle, recording standards should be the same as for formal excavations but the particular practical difficulties and constraints of watching brief recording are acknowledged. Features should be recorded in plan at an appropriate scale and accurately located in relation to the National Grid. Each context should be recorded on pro-forma records which should include the following minimum details: character; contextual relationships; detailed description (dimensions and shape; soil components, colour, texture and consistency); associated finds; interpretation and phasing as well as cross-references to the drawn, photographic and finds registers. Normally each context should be recorded on an individual record. Sections should be drawn through all significant cut features and levelled to ordnance datum.

A black and white photographic record should be maintained including photos of all significant features and overall photos of each watching brief area. Selected colour transparencies should also be taken.

c. Artefact and Ecofact collection and recording

All stratified finds should be collected by context or, where appropriate, individually recorded in 3 dimensions. Unstratified finds should only be collected where they contribute significantly to the project objectives or are of particular intrinsic interest. Finds of "treasure" must be reported to the Coroner in accordance with the Treasure Act procedures.

Collection policies for structural remains and industrial residues have been set out by the Society of Museum Archaeologists (SMA, 1993). The presence of such materials within a context should always be recorded and, where they are considered to be of importance, the watching brief should aim to quantify their occurrence, even where comprehensive retention is not considered appropriate.

d. Contingency and salvage excavation

Contingency arrangements must be specified in the project design and should take account of the nature of possible "unexpected discoveries" and the likely impact of the development upon them. Arrangements should include the demarcation of the area for excavation, the period of temporary cessation of development works within this area and the resources (expressed in person-days, specialist input etc.) available to undertake the excavation.

In the event of discovery of any human remains the archaeological contractor should inform the client, the City Council Archaeologist, the Coroner, the Police and the Ministry of Justice via the submission of an application form for the 'Archaeological/Accidental/Site Investigation Licence regarding the disturbance of human remains'. The Human remains should be left in-situ, covered and protected. Where a licence for their excavation is issued by the Ministry of Justice, the requirements of that licence should be followed. Where the Ministry of Justice is

unable to issue a licence and it is reasonably determined that the remains are likely to be subject to further unavoidable disturbance or deterioration the archaeological contractor should inform the client and Ministry of Justice of their intention to excavate the remains with due decency and in accordance with the general conditions formerly attached to licences issued for excavation of human remains under similar circumstances.

The only exception is where excavations are being undertaken in a churchyard under a faculty issued by the Chancellor of Oxford Diocese (in such cases the faculty requirements should be followed). Human remains should be treated in accordance with IFA guidelines (IFA, 2004) and the advice set out in *Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England* (English Heritage, 2005).

Provision should be made within the contingency for: conservation (lifting and treatment) of fragile objects and the collection and analysis of environmental and scientific (including dating) samples. Sampling is to be carried out in accordance with a strategy which is related to the project objectives and has been agreed with English Heritage's Regional Adviser in Archaeological Science.

9. POST-EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

- a. For most watching briefs it will be sufficient to complete an archive report for the UAD, publish a summary note and deposit the archive (see below).
- b. For projects which have produced results of significant county, regional or national importance, an illustrated interim report together with a post-excavation assessment and updated project design (MAP Stage 3) should be submitted by the archaeological contractor and approved by the City Council Archaeologist within 6 months of the completion of fieldwork. Post-excavation analysis and report preparation should proceed in accordance with the agreed updated project design unless subsequent variations are agreed by the City Council Archaeologist.

10. PUBLICATION

- a. For all projects, a summary report (including illustrations where appropriate) should be sent to the editors of *South Midlands Archaeology* not later than three months after the end of the calendar year in which the work is undertaken.
- b. For projects which have produced results of significant county, regional or national importance, an illustrated final report which meets the guidelines set out in MAP Appendix 7 and is suitable for publication in an approved archaeological journal should be provided to the City Council Archaeologist within one year of the completion of fieldwork (unless a longer time period has been agreed in the updated project design). The overall content of the report should be agreed with the City Council Archaeologist. The report should be clearly referenced in all respects to all work on the site. It should place the site in its local archaeological, historical and topographical context and include a clear location map. Each plan included should clearly relate to some other included plan of an appropriate scale and should normally include national grid references.

- c. Two bound offprints of the final publication and a digital copy of the text, in PDF format, must be supplied to the City UAD and one to the HER. A copy of any specialist papers relating to the site should also be supplied. A further offprint should accompany the archive.
- d. A publication grant should be provided to the publishers of the report in accordance with their requirements.

11. OASIS

Once the final report has been accepted contractors should complete an OASIS fieldwork summary form and submit it to the Archaeology Data Service. The form and guidance for its completion can be found at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/first.html>.

12. ARCHIVING

- a. The archaeological contractor should endeavour to ensure that the site archive (including any artefacts recovered) are deposited in an acceptable condition with a museum which is registered with the Arts Council and approved for the storage of archaeological archives. The preferred archive for Oxfordshire is the County Museum (N.B. certain University of Oxford sites fall within the Ashmolean Museum collection area, if in doubt please contact the City Council Archaeologist). The procedures and requirements which must be followed for the deposit of archaeological archives with Oxfordshire County Museum are available from the Collections and Information Manager (Oxfordshire County Museums 2014). A storage grant should be provided to the museum in accordance with their requirements.
- b. The archaeological contractor should arrange for the archive to be copied on microfiche to the standard required by the Historic England Archive and copy should be deposited with the HEA.

13. MONITORING

- a. Monitoring is carried out by the City Council Archaeologist to ensure that projects are being carried out in accordance with the brief and approved project design, to enable the need for modifications to the project to be independently considered and validated and to control and validate the use of available contingencies.
- b. A programme of monitoring should be agreed with the City Council Archaeologist prior to the commencement of fieldwork. The archaeological contractor should keep the CCA regularly informed of the project's progress and facilitate the monitoring of the project at each stage, including post-excavation. In particular, there should be no substantial modification of the approved brief and project design without the prior consent of the CCA and no fieldwork should be carried out without the service's knowledge and approval.

- c. All monitoring visits will be documented by the CCA and the archaeological contractor will be informed of any perceived deficiencies.
- d. The CCA should be informed at the earliest opportunity of any unexpected discoveries, especially where there may be a need to vary the project design. The archaeological contractor should carry out such reasonable contingency works as requested by the CCA within the resources defined in the project design.

14. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health and Safety must take priority over archaeological requirements. It is essential that all projects are carried out in accordance with safe working practices and under a defined Health and Safety Policy. **Risk Assessments must be carried out for every field project.** If the risk assessment indicates it is necessary, the requirements of the brief can be varied in the interests of health and safety (the City Council Archaeologist must be consulted and the proposed changes agreed in such cases). The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM) will apply to archaeological work undertaken on many construction (and demolition) projects.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- | | |
|--|---|
| Bashford, R, 2007 | <i>Music Room Extension, Corpus Christi College, Oxford.</i> Archaeological Evaluation Report. Unpublished report |
| Communities and Local Government, 2012 | <i>National Planning Policy Framework</i> |
| Durham, B, 1982b | Oxford: Corpus Christi College. <i>South Midlands Archaeology</i> CBA Group 9 Newsletter 12 157-9 |
| English Heritage, 1996. | <i>Waterlogged wood. Guidelines on the Recording, Sampling, Conservation and Curation of Waterlogged Wood.</i> |
| English Heritage, 2005 | <i>Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England,</i> English Heritage and Church of England |
| English Heritage, 2011, | <i>Environmental Archaeology :A guide to the theory and practice of methods from sampling and recovery to post excavation</i> (second edition) |
| Hassall, T,G 1973 | Excavations at Oxford 1972, Fifth Interim report. <i>Oxoniensia</i> , 38 274-5 |
| Historic England 2015 | <i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment</i> |

- Holmes, A, 2000 *Emily Thomas Building, Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Archaeological Investigation. Oxford Archaeological Unit. Unpublished report*
- Hurst, H, 1899 *Oxford Topography. Oxford Historical Society: 39: 161*
- IFA, 1999 *Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching brief.*
- IFA, 2004 *Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains.*
- Jessop Consultancy 2013 *Grove Garden Electrical Supply Merton College, Oxford. Watching brief*
- Milne, J, 1937 *The muniments of Corpus Christi College. Oxoniensia 2: 129-133 Oxford Archaeological Unit. 2000.*
- MOLA 2015 *Corpus Christ College Merton Street, Oxford County of Oxfordshire Pre-determination evaluation report November 2015*
- Oxfordshire County 2014 *Requirements for Transferring Archaeological Archives*
Museum Service
- RCHME. 1939 *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of Oxford. London: HMSO*
- SMA, 1993. *Selection, Retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections.*
- Steane, J, 1982 *Oxford Corpus Christi College. Kitchen. CBA Group 9. South Midlands Archaeology Vol 12: 91-3*
- Sturdy, D, 1961-1962 *Recent excavations in Christ Church and nearby. In Oxoniensia 26-27: 19-38*

CONTACTS

Council For British Archaeology South Midlands Group (South Midlands Archaeology)

Mr Barry Horne, Hon.Editor, "Beaumont", Church End, Edlesborough, Dunstable, Beds, LU6 2EP.

Historic England Regional Science Advisor (South East)

Jane Corcoran , Historic England,, Regional Office, Eastgate Court, 195-205 High Street, Guildford, Surrey GU1 3EH , 01483 252072 Mobile phone: 07879 809294 (preferred) e-mail: Jane.Corcoran@HistoricEngland.org.uk.