

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION:
LINACRE COLLEGE
OXFORD**

on behalf of Croke Limited



By J.R Hunn BA PhD MIFA & C. Rouse BA PIFA

February 2007

ASC: 878/OLC/2

Letchworth House
Chesney Wold, Bleak Hall,
Milton Keynes MK6 1NE
Tel: 01908 608989 Fax: 01908 605700
Email: office@archaeological-services.co.uk
Website: www.archaeological-services.co.uk



Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	OLC	<i>ASC Project no:</i>	878
<i>Event No:</i>		<i>Accession No:</i>	
<i>County:</i>	Oxfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Oxford		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	SP 5187 0702		
<i>Present use:</i>	Educational establishment		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Extension to existing buildings		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	06/01912/FUL		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Oxford City Council		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	23/01/2007		
<i>Client:</i>	Croke Limited 31 High Street Haddenham Buckinghamshire HP17 8ES		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Mr John Croke		
<i>Telephone</i>	07713 485910	<i>Fax:</i>	-

Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Rouse & Hunn	<i>Date:</i>	
<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	

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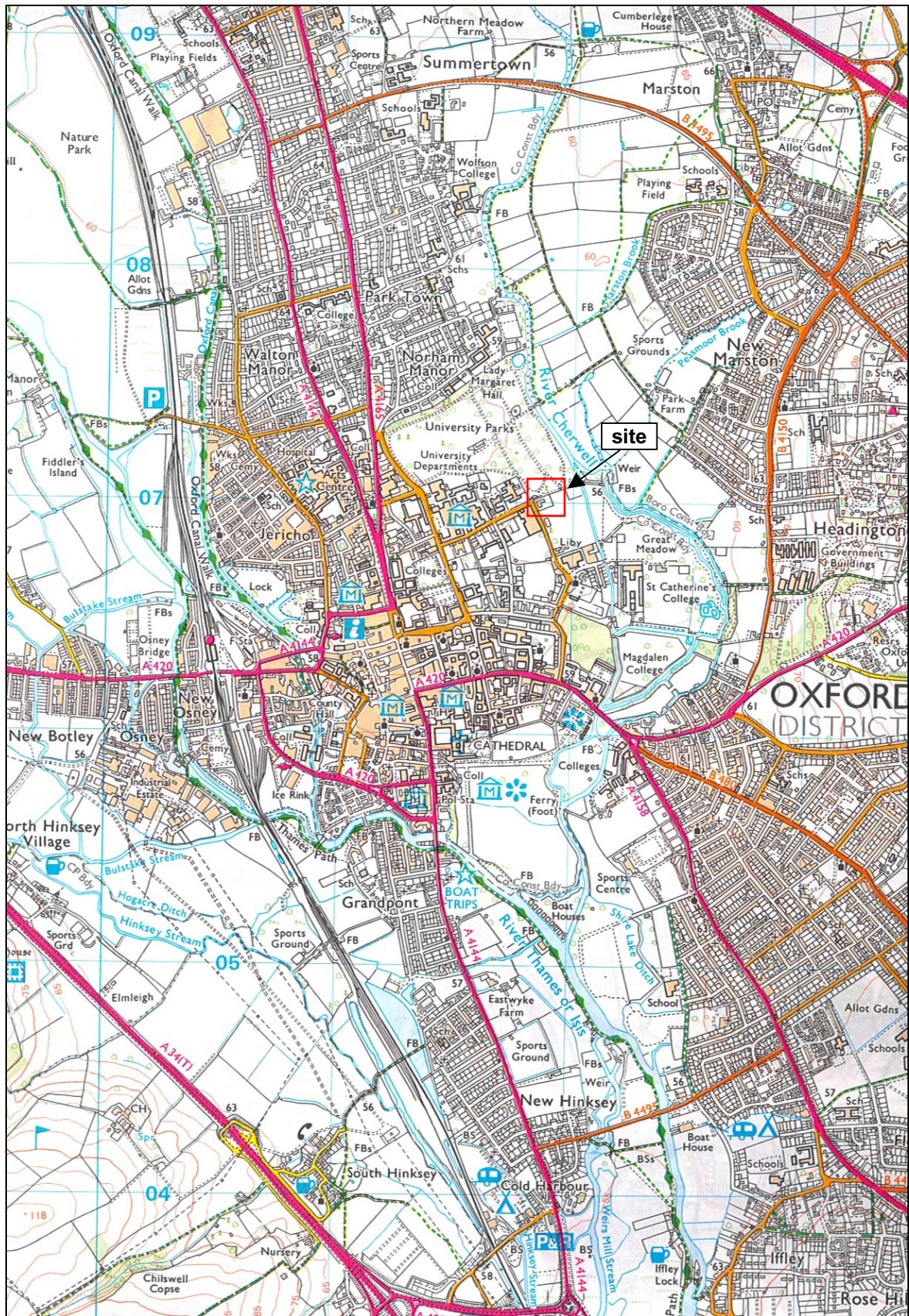


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In late January 2007 Archaeological Services & Consultancy undertook an archaeological evaluation at Linacre College, Oxford. The site lies within the floodplain of the river Cherwell, on alluvium about 1m thick overlying fluvio-glacial gravels. The only sign of human intervention on the site was the presence an alluvium filled ditch-like feature on the edge of a dark organic layer. This was located in two of the trenches but was inexplicably missing from a middle trench, suggesting its irregularity was more due to natural factors than human agency. From the fill of one 'ditch segment' came an oyster shell and a small fragment of possible roof tile. No other features or artefacts were noted from the site.

1 Introduction

1.1 In January 2007 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out an evaluation at Linacre College, Oxford (NGR SP 5187 0702: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by *Croke Limited*, and was carried out according to a project design prepared by ASC (Barclay & Fell 2007) following consultation with the Archaeological Advisor (AA) of *Oxford City Council*. The relevant planning application reference is 06/01912/FUL.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This evaluation was required under the terms of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16), in response to proposals for extensions to the existing buildings.

1.3 *Location*

The site is situated in Oxford and is centred on NGR SP 5187 0702 (Fig. 1). It lies to the north of the city centre, adjacent to the University Parks and close to the west side of the River Cherwell. The new building will be constructed in the college garden, adjacent to the existing buildings and close to the east boundary of the college (Fig. 3)

1.4 *Description*

The site of the proposed extension lies on what was once a tennis court but now is part of the landscaped college grounds. This consists of a central lawn around which a gravel path runs, with adjoining flower beds on the south and west sides of the area.

1.5 *Geology & Topography*

The site is situated between the rivers Thames and Cherwell and is on level ground at an elevation of c.58m OD. The natural soils comprise the *Fladbury 2 Association*, namely stoneless clayey soils, over river alluvium (Soil Survey 1983, 813b).

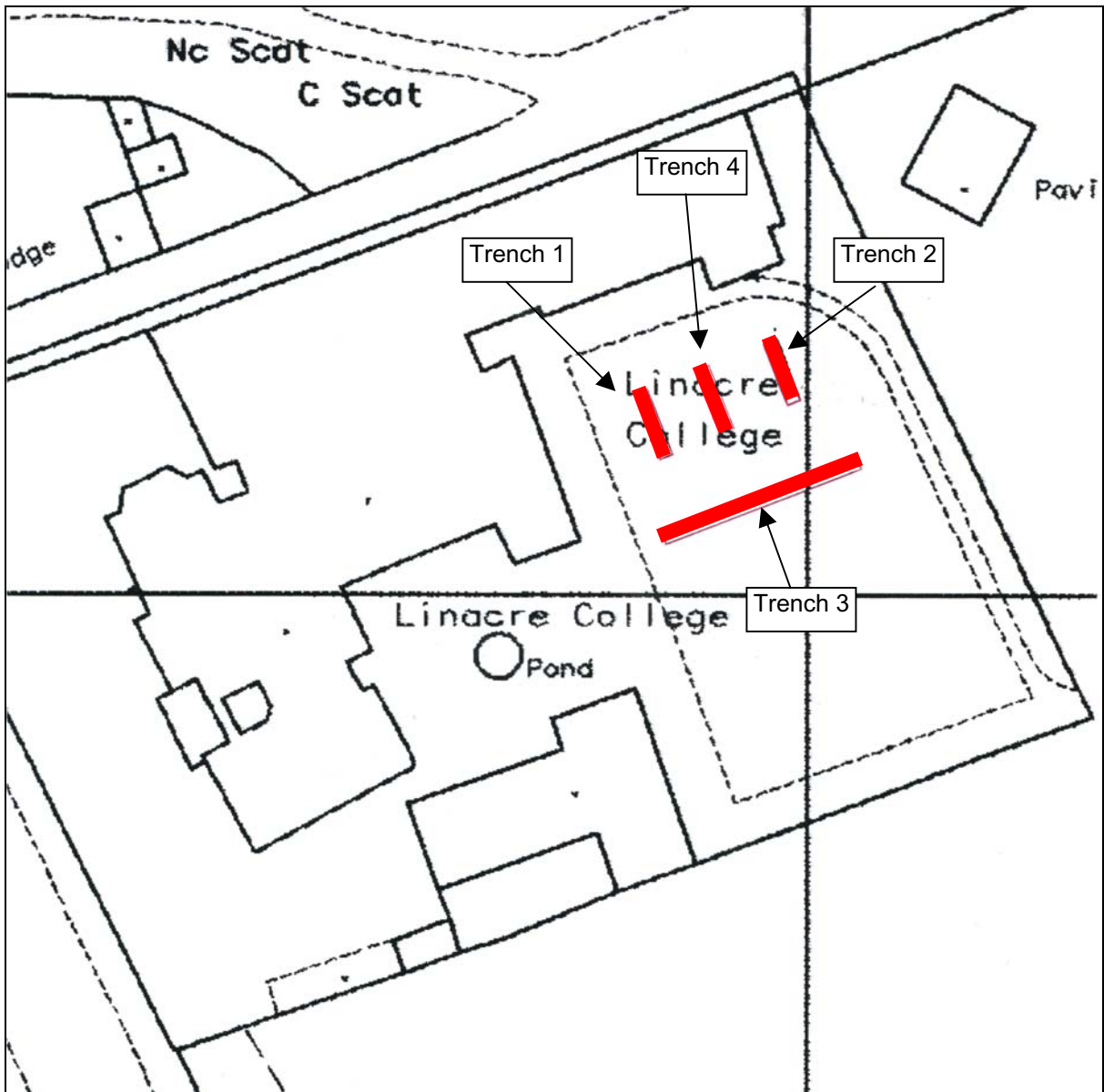


Figure 2: Site plan (scale 1:500)

2 Aims and Methods

2.1 Aims

The aims of the evaluation were:

- To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development, in accordance with the sampling strategy outlined below
- To provide a comprehensive assessment of the regional context within which the archaeological evidence rests, highlighting any research priorities relevant to any further investigation of the site (making particular reference to the appropriate regional research agendas).

2.2 Standards

The work conformed to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

2.3 Methods

The methods adopted for this project were:

- The excavation of four trenches (three measuring 5m x 1m and one 15m x 1m located as shown in Figure 3.
- There was provision for extra trenches but in the event these were not required.

2.4 Constraints

No constraints were encountered during the course of the execution of this project.

3 Archaeological & Historical Background

3.1 Prehistoric – Iron Age (before 600BC - AD43)

The Thames Valley in general is an area of considerable importance, and a number of archaeological cropmarks have been identified in the area (Benson and Miles 1974), including examples close to the site, in the University Parks (eg Dodd 2003, fig. 2.2). Excavations to the west of the college, at the New Chemistry Laboratory have recently revealed a range of Neolithic and Bronze Age pits and ditches (CBA 2002, 56). The present college buildings were not constructed until 1936 and any archaeological remains which may exist in the college gardens may survive in good condition.

3.2 Roman (AD43-c.450)

Little is known in detail of Oxford city during the Roman period, but a major pottery industry existed in the area, centred in the present suburb of Headington. An important Roman road, linking the small town at Dorchester, with Alchester, ran c.3km east of the site.

3.3 Saxon (c.450-1066)

The City of Oxford probably originated during the Saxon period (Dodd 2003). The earliest reference to Oxford is in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* in the year 911-12 and it is also included in the *Burghal Hidage* during the reign of Edward the Elder. The site is situated north of the Saxon defences, which probably followed the approximate line of the present Ship Street and Holywell Street.

3.4 Medieval (1066-1500)

Oxford developed considerably during the later medieval period but contemporary maps (eg Agas 1578) show that the site is situated on the periphery of the medieval and early post-medieval town.

3.5 Post-Medieval (1500-1900)

The city was an important centre during the Civil War in the mid 17th century and part of the outer ditch of the Civil War defences was found during the excavations on the New Chemistry Laboratory site.

3.6 Modern (1900-present)

The 1900 edition Ordnance Survey map illustrates that this area of the city was still largely undeveloped, but the site of the college was occupied by a square building. Later editions indicate record this building as a 'convent'.

The present college buildings were built in 1936, to a design by Sir Hubert Worthing (Sherwood & Pevsner 1975; 232). An extension to the north west side of the building was constructed during the 1990s (*pers comm.* D Fell).

4 Results

This section provides a summary of the results of the fieldwork. Tabulated record tables with full descriptions are provided in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Fig. 2: Plates 1)

Location: This was situated 5.7m from the edge of the paving to the east and 7.6m from the edge of the current building to the north

Dimensions: 5m × 1m

Description: Trench 1 was a linear trench dug on an approximate N-S alignment. The topsoil within this trench was c.0.3m deep, below which was c.0.25m of a dark yellowish brown silty clay. At the northern end of the trench, a feature containing dark grey alluvium was exposed below the dark yellowish brown silty clay. The feature was at least c.0.6m deep, but the bottom was not reached.

Trench 2 (Fig. 2: Plate 2)

Location: This was situated 15.7m from the edge of the paving to the east and 4.9m from the edge of the current building to the north

Dimensions: 5m × 1m

Description: Trench 2 was the easternmost trench excavated during the evaluation. No archaeological finds or features were noted within the trench, which contained c.0.3m of topsoil over natural yellowish brown silty clay (possibly alluvium) over natural gravels at a depth of c.1m.

Trench 3 (Fig. 2: Plates 3 & 4)

Location: This was situated 1.9m from the edge of the paving to the east and 14.6m from the edge of the current building to the north

Dimensions: 15.2m × 1m

Description: Trench 3 was excavated at c.90° to and to the south of the other three trenches that comprised the evaluation. The topsoil in this trench was 0.26m thick, below which was 0.98m of yellowish brown silty clay. Natural gravels were reached at 1.28m below ground level. No significant archaeological finds or features were observed within the trench. However, a row of concrete fill post-holes was observed running slightly obliquely to the axis of the trench. These were almost certainly of modern date and are believed to indicate a former sub-division of the college grounds, possibly during WW II.

Trench 4 (Fig.2: Plates 5 & 6)

Location: This was situated 10.4m from the edge of the paving to the east and 4.6m from the edge of the current building to the north

Dimensions: 5m × 1m

Description: Trench 4 contained c.0.3m of topsoil. Located at the northern end was a 2.3m wide alluvium filled feature, which contained c.0.3m of a leached variant of topsoil. Below this was c.0.15m of a dark yellowish brown clay. This was interpreted as redeposited natural, and contained occasional animal bone fragments. Underneath this was a c.0.45m pocket of dark grey silty alluvium, which contained an oyster shell and a coarse tile or pottery fragment. This layer

was cut into a deposit of dark grey alluvium that was noted to contain organic material. The natural comprised a brownish yellow silty clay.



Plate 1: Trench 1 looking north



Plate 2: Trench 2 looking north



Plate 3: Trench 3 looking east



Plate 4: Test pit at end of Trench 3



Plate 5: Detail of Trench 4 looking east



Plate 6: Trench 4 looking north

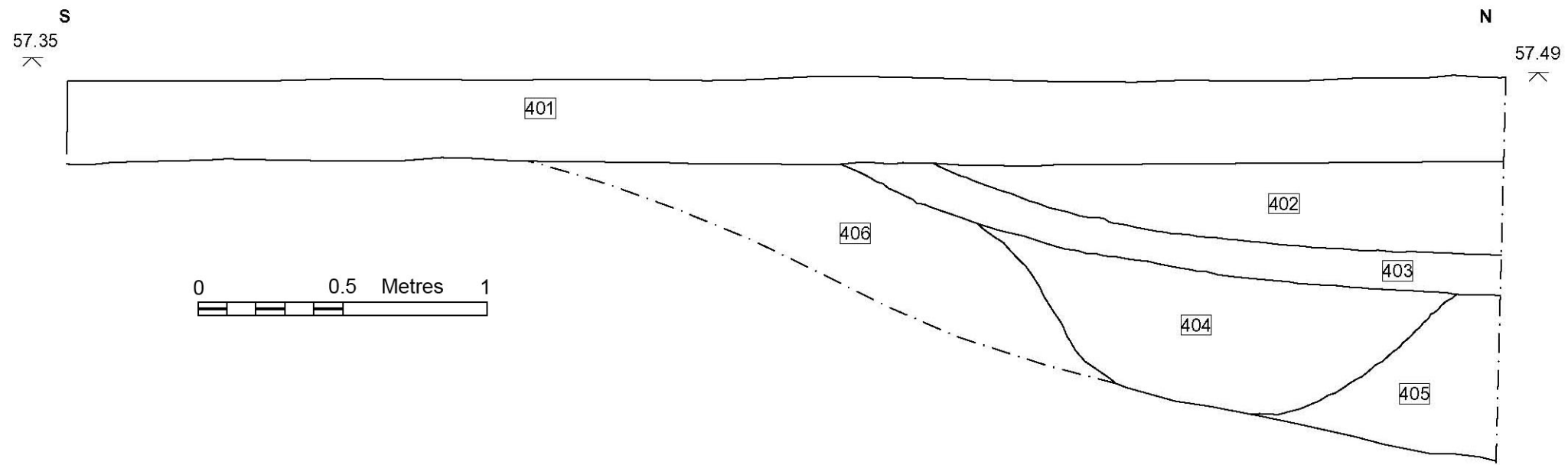


Figure 3: West facing section, Trench 4 (scale 1:20)

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The trial trenches have been able to confirm the character of the underlying deposits on the site. Most significantly there is about *c.* 1m of a yellowish brown silty loam or alluvium overlying a gravel and sand horizon. The silty loam is often described as ‘brickearth’ and has been described as being due to ‘*the original overbank mud of the river, laid down during floods*’ (Sumbler 1996, 115) . The gravel deposit is related to the climatic cycles of the Quaternary which resulted in several glacial phases which had a dynamic effect on valley sediments (*ibid.*).
- 5.2 Test pits in Trenches 2 and 3 revealed that the alluvium was approximately a metre thick below the present topsoil horizon. The date of the alluvium or ‘brickearth’ falls within the Holocene period (within the last 10,000 years BP). No obvious banding or sub-layers could be distinguished within this layer though this was partly due to the high level of ground water and consequent lack of manual examination.
- 5.3 The alluvium filled feature revealed in Trench 4 (Fig. 4) appears to look like a ditch of some kind. However, although it was located in trench 1 it was not identified in Trench 2. This suggests that this feature continues eastwards but does not project across the floodplain. It contained waterlogged deposits in the form of wood and small branches and was devoid of easily identifiable objects. The only diagnostic material was an oyster shell and fragment of tile (Plate 7).
- 5.4 The flood plain location and character of the finds suggests a post-medieval context for what may have been a man-made drainage channel.



Plate 7: Objects from Context 4 (Fig. 4)

6. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to John Croke for commissioning this project and to Brian Durham of Oxford City Council for his advice. The author also wishes to thank Patrick Heffernan, the bursar and Andy Creasey, maintenance manager for their hospitality during the course of the field work. Finally, thanks are due to my colleagues, Chris Swain for his assistance in the field and to Bob Zeepvat for editing this report.

7. Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Clients site plans
4. Site records
5. Finds
6. Site record drawings
7. List of photographs
8. B/W prints & negatives
9. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service.

8. References

Standards & Specifications

EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition. English Heritage (London).

IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.

IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds)*.

Secondary Sources

Benson D & Miles D 1974 *The Upper Thames Valley. An Archaeological Survey of the River Gravels*. Oxford Archaeological Unit Survey 2 Oxford Archaeological Unit

CBA 2002 *South Midlands Archaeology* Council for British Archaeology

Dodd A (ed) 2003 *Oxford Before the University. The late Saxon and Norman archaeology of the Thames Crossing, the defences and the town. Thames Valley Landscapes 17* Oxford Archaeology

RCHM 1939 *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of Oxford*. Royal Commission on Historical Monuments England


Salter H E & Lobel M D (eds) 1994 *The Victoria County History of the County of Oxford 3*. Dawsons of Pall Mall


Sherwood J & Pevsner N 1975 *The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire* Penguin London


Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpندن).


Sumbler, M.G. 1996: *London and the Thames valley*. British Regional Geology. British Geological Survey. HMSO (London).

Appendix 1: Trench Summary Tables

Trench 1						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	5	Width	1	Depth	1.13 (max)
	Levels					
	Trench base north		56.33m OD			
	Trench top north		57.46m OD			
	Trench base south		57.04m OD			
	Trench top south		57.38m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	N	SP 51797 07018		S	SP 51799 07014	
	Orientation		N-S			
Reason for Trench		Required in advance of extensions to existing buildings				
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
101	Layer	Dark greyish brown clayey silt & turf. Topsoil	-	300	-	
103	Layer	Dark grey silty clay. Alluvium	-	600+	300	
102	Layer	Dark yellowish brown silty clay. Subsoil	-	250	300	

Trench 2						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	5	Width	1	Depth	0.3
	Levels					
	Trench base north		56.32m OD			
	Trench top north		57.44m OD			
	Trench base south		57.04m OD			
	Trench top south		57.33m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	N	SP 51788 07015		S	SP 51789 07010	
	Orientation		N-S			
Reason for Trench		Required in advance of extensions to existing buildings				
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
201	Layer	Dark greyish brown clayey silt & turf. Topsoil	-	300	-	
202	Layer	Yellowish brown silty clay. Subsoil	-	700	300	
203	Layer	Gravel	-	-	1000	

Trench 3							
	Max Dimensions (m)						
	Length	15.2	Width	1	Depth	0.26	
	Levels						
	Trench base northeast			55.94m OD			
	Trench top northeast			57.32m OD			
	Trench base southwest			57.16m OD			
	Trench top southwest			57.42m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates						
	NE	SP 51804 07010		SW	SP 51789 07040		
	Orientation			SW-NE			
Reason for Trench			Required in advance of extensions to existing buildings				
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation			Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)
301	Layer	Dark greyish brown clayey silt & turf, disturbed by concrete posts. Topsoil			-	260	-
302	Layer	Yellowish brown silty clay. Subsoil			-	980	260
303	Layer	Yellowish brown gravel. Natural river gravels			-	-	c.1.25m

Trench 4							
	Max Dimensions (m)						
	Length	5	Width	1	Depth	1.33(max.)	
	Levels						
	Trench base north			56.16m OD			
	Trench top north			57.49m OD			
	Trench base south			57.07m OD			
	Trench top south			57.35m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates						
	N	SP 51792 07017		S	SP 51794 07012		
	Orientation			N-S			
Reason for Trench			Required in advance of extensions to existing buildings				
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation			Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)
401	Layer	Dark greyish brown clayey silt & turf. Topsoil			-	300	-
402	Layer	Dark greyish brown clayey silt Leached variant of topsoil			-	300	300
403	Layer	Dark yellowish brown clay. Redeposited natural strata			-	150	300
404	Layer	Dark grey silt. Alluvium			-	450	c.500
405	Layer	V. dk grey silt with organic content. Alluvium			-	550+	c.750
406	Layer	Natural brownish yellow silty clay. Natural strata			-	400+	300

Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: Linacre College, Oxford				SITE NO/CODE: 878/OLC
Shot	B&W	Slide	Digital	Subject
1			✓	23/01/07 Start of evaluation work, view NNE
2			✓	Working shot, view E
3			✓	Working shot, view W
4	✓		✓	General view of Trench 1, view N
5	✓		✓	General view of Trench 2, View N
6	✓		✓	General view of Trench 3, View E
7			✓	View of site, looking W
8			✓	Overall view of the 3 N-S trenches, looking W
9			✓	Detail of Trench 4, looking E
10	✓		✓	Trench 4, view N
11			✓	Detail of northern end of Trench 4
12			✓	Oblique view of northern end of Trench 4
13			✓	Oblique view of Trench 1, view SE
14			✓	N-S section in Trench 1, looking E
15	✓		✓	Trench 1, looking N
16			✓	Test pit at western end of Trench 3
17			✓	Oblique view of test pit at western end of Trench 3
18	✓			General view of the site looking north

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	Linacre College		
Short Description:	<i>The site lies within the floodplain of the river Cherwell, on alluvium about 1m thick overlying fluvio-glacial gravels. The only sign of human intervention on the site was the presence an alluvium filled ditch like feature on the edge of a dark organic layer. This was located in two of the trenches but was inexplicably missing from a middle trench suggesting its irregularity was more due to natural factors than human agency. From the fill of one 'ditch segment' came an oyster shell and a small fragment of possible roof tile.</i>		
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	Trenching		
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	none	Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	none
Current land use:	Lawn/garden	Future work: (yes / no / unknown)	unknown
Monument type:	N/a	Monument period:	N/a
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	none		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Oxfordshire	OS reference: (8 figs min)	SP 5187 0702
Site address: (with postcode if known)	Linacre College, Oxford		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	20m x 20m	Height OD: (metres)	58m AOD
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	Brian Durham	Project design originator:	ASC Ltd
Project Manager:	D. Fell	Director/Supervisor:	J.R. Hunn
Sponsor / funding body:	Croke Ltd		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	23/1/07	End date:	23/1/07
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	Oxford Museum	yes	
Paper:	Yes		
Digital:	yes		
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:			
Author(s):			
Page nos		Date:	