Old Indian Institute Building, Broad Street Oxford

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Old Indian Institute, Oxford

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by Nick Taylor and Vix Hughes

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Summary

An archaeological watching maintained during the excavation of a lift pit shaft (and preliminary inspection pit) in the basement of the Old Indian Institute Building in Holywell Street revealed three re-cuts of the town ditch dating to the 17th century, likely to relate to re-fortification during the Civil War royalist occupation of the town.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) were appointed by BGS Architects on behalf of University of Oxford Estates to carry out a watching brief during works at the Old Indian Institute Building, 34 Broad Street Oxford.

1.1.2 The University of Oxford has applied for and been granted planning permission (ref: 12/03000/FUL and Listed Building Consent (ref:1200/03001/LBC) in relation to the proposed erection of a staircase extension, internal and external alterations to improve access, remodelling of the front entrance and steps, installation of a lift, the removal of doors and screens, alterations to the gallery and subdivision of the former library at the site.

1.1.3 A condition addressing the potential presence of archaeological remains on the site was attached to the planning permission. It stated that:

No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, have secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the planning authority.

1.1.4 A Written Scheme of Investigation or WSI (OA, Feb. 2011) was produced outlining how OA would implement those requirements, and approved by David Radford.

1.1.5 This report details the findings of the watching brief.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The Old Indian Institute at 34 Broad Street (also known as 1 Catte Street) is located on the corner of Broad Street, Catte Street and Holywell Road at NGR SP 515 065 (Figure 1). The floor level of the room was provided by the client and was 60.65m OD.

1.2.2 The geology of the area is Summertown-Radley river gravels overlying Oxfordshire Clay and West Walton Formation (Mudstone).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The Old Indian Institute is a Grade II listed building (list entry: 13693550). It was built in 1883-96 by Basil Champneys in the Jacobean style.

1.3.2 The area in which the building is located has general potential for prehistoric, Roman and early Saxon activity, however the building is basemented and therefore shallow archaeological features will have been removed during construction.

1.3.3 The building is located along the approximate line of the north eastern Saxon/medieval town defences. The city wall has been revealed in excavations in the Clarendon Quadrangle in 1899 (Dodd 2003, p173) where it was shown to be orientated southwest – northeast, joining a bastion at St Mary's Chapel (now within Hertford College) immediately to the south of the site. The walled defences continue eastward, where there are substantial structures extant in the grounds of New College.

1.3.4 An excavation carried out at Hertford College in 1980 (Durham, 1983, p28) 30m to the south east of the intended lift pit location revealed an outer city wall built into an undated ditch c10m out from the main wall. In addition the city ditch was recorded sloping north and down ward away from this outer wall (it was recorded at 5m below ground surface (to a depth of 56.85 m OD). Ceramic dating from the base of the city ditch varied between the 13th and 17th centuries showing re-use of the medieval ditch during the civil war period.

2 Project Aims and Methodology

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The specific aims and objectives of the archaeological works are:

(i) To identify and record any significant archaeological remains revealed by the ground works, paying particular regard to the potential for the edges and fill of the town ditch and related features.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The watching brief was undertaken on a number of occasions during different phases of the works. The initial phase constituted the excavation of a test pit within the proposed lift pit location. The test pit was situated on the north side of the building against the exterior wall and east of an internal partition wall. The test pit was monitored in order to assess the presence/absence of archaeological remains.

2.2.2 The test pit established the presence of archaeological remains which, after discussion with David Radford, required further mitigation of the lift pit impact area. The second phase of works saw the test pit expanded to the full extent of the lift pit. This occurred after the partition wall had been dismantled.

2.2.3 In both instances the work was undertaken manually, under constant supervision by a competent archaeologist.

2.2.4 Monitoring was also proposed for staircase support piling works to the southeast of the however these were effected using driven piles rather than the initially proposed augered piles. The driven piles give no visibility of sub surface strata unless associated with obstruction clearance works and in this instance no obstructions were encountered. The change in methodology was communicated to the Archaeological Planning Advisor.

3 Results

3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 The initial test pit was 1.35m by 1m, and dug to a maximum depth of 1.2m bgl (below ground level). The subsequent lift pit excavation was 2.6m by 2.2m, and dug to a maximum depth of 1.3m bgl.

3.1.2 The earliest deposits seen within the excavated area were the sterile natural sands and gravels. These were identified as pale yellowish brown to orange coarse sand and gravel overlain by a pale yellow soft sand. The boundary between the two horizons was diffuse.

3.1.3 Truncating the natural deposits were two features 21 and 36. Neither feature was fully revealed within the excavation area.

3.1.4 Feature 21 was an east-west aligned linear feature seen on the northern side of the area. The feature extended in this direction beneath the present building wall. It was probably the southern part of a ditch feature. Feature 21 had a sequence of fills 17-20 and 39. The fills alternated between thin darker greyish-hued sandy silts with gravel inclusions (20 and 39) and thicker pale brown sandy gravel bands (17, 18 and 19). The origin of the sediments remained unclear but the browner gravels may represent re-deposition of natural gravels from the surrounding area. The grey bands may indicate periods of stability and possible humic content. There was no discernible organic content to the material but the darker hue may indicate discolouration form decayed organic matter. Pottery dated to the 17th century was retrieved from layer 17.

3.1.5 Feature 36 was similarly aligned east-west and was seen on the southern side of the area. The feature extended in this direction beneath the present floor. It was probably the northern part of a ditch feature. There were three fills visible, though more are likely to exist and the full stratigraphic sequence could not been seen. The lowest fill, 35, was a mid brown sandy silt with a small number of small stone fragments. Above this was a mid brownish grey sandy silt with a moderate frequency of small stone fragments and mortar lumps. The uppermost, visible, fill was a mid yellowish brown silty sand. Within this was a high proportion of sub-angular pale stone fragments, up to 0.2m in diameter. The stone fragments may have resulted from discarding building debris. No finds were retrieved from feature 36

3.1.6 Overlying the ditch fills were a number of layers, seen only on the southern side of the excavation. The lowest three 31, 30 and 29 all appeared to tip gently downwards from the north-west to the south-east. Both 29 and 31 were of a darker greyer hue and had a higher silt component. These two thin bands may have been derived from humic material, whether from in situ vegetative growth or from discarded rubbish. The overlying layers 33 and 28 were gravel rich and were likely to be rapid depositions of material for levelling and ground makeup purposes. This was probably also the case for layer 17 to the north. Above layer 17 was a mid grey deposit, 38, with noticeable mortar flecking, that may have originated from general debris and a small amount of building rubble.

3.1.7 Overlying these deposits, (28 and 38) was a thin, black layer of silt, with a high soot content. This deposit was probably the re-deposition of fuel waste that may have come from nearby domestic fires. There was no evidence of in situ burning or heat affect to the surrounding deposits.

3.1.8 This layer was truncated by a later east-west aligned feature, 27. This was a ditch 0.7m wide and 0.85m deep, with a U-shaped profile. It was visible in both the eastern and western excavation sections, and extended over 1.5m in length. The feature would appear to be a deep, narrow ditch that may have re-cut either of the earlier features 21 or 36. It may have been a drainage or boundary feature. There were two fills; the lower 26, was a loose mid greyish brown silty sand with a significant gravel proportion. Above this was a pale yellowish brown sandy gravel with CBM and stone inclusions. This layer had a moderately sized assemblage of artefacts including 17th century pottery and

claypipe. The deposit would appear consistent with a combination of accumulated re-deposited gravels and discarded domestic (or possibly tavern) rubbish.

3.1.9 Overlying this ditch was a layer (context 15; not illustrated) which was firm and had a high concentration of CBM fragments. This layer was extensive and was the makeup material for raising the ground level for the mortar floor 7 which abutted a brick structure (37). The brick structure 37, was only visible within the western section of the excavation and it was unclear whether these were the remains of a wall or a floor. The brick structure / deposit 2, seen on the eastern side may have been related to this activity or the bricks may have been re-used for wall 12 footings. The mortar floor 7 was thin but easily distinguished. It pre-dated the existing floor and may have been part of the original late 19th century construction.

3.1.10 The floor was beneath a layer of rubble material 14, and post-dating this layer were the foundations for the internal partition wall 12, and associated deposits.

3.1.11 The external wall, 8, and its foundations (3-6) truncated deposit 38 but the foundations themselves obscured any close examination of the exact stratigraphical sequence.

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 Pottery, claypipe, ceramic building material and animal bone was retrieved from the deposits. These are sufficient to date and characterise the features. Reports are included in the appendices below.

3.3 Environmental remains

3.3.1 No environmental samples were taken

4 Discussion and conclusions

4.1.1 The location of the recorded linear features corresponds with the projected alignment of the town ditch in this part of Oxford. The east-west aligned features seen in the central part of the excavation would appear to be Civil war re-cutting and cleaning of the ditch.

4.1.2 Finds from the ditch cuts were exclusively 17th century in date with one layer suggestive of dense domestic or tavern refuse dumping.

4.1.3 Above these features were further levelling and make-up deposits which were sealed by an extensive mortar floor. The floor abutted a red brick structure seen only in the western section. The bricks were consistent with 19th century construction and may belong to an earlier element of the building prior to alterations.

4.1.4 The uppermost deposits and floor layer were of probable twentieth century date. The demolition of the partition wall revealed a small area of late 19th century brick which included an apparent arched section. Whether this was a blocked window was unclear.

5 Archaeological Context Inventory

Context	Type	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Comments	Finds	Date
1	Floor	0.04	-	Wooden MDF painted tile floor of basement.	-	modern
2	Structure	0.07	0.24		-	
3	Fill	0.3	-	Concrete footing (upper)- wall 8	-	
4	Fill	1.2	-	Backfill of foundation cut 6	-	
5	Fill	0.86	-	Concrete footing (lower)- wall 8	-	
6	Cut	1.2	-	Foundation cut of wall 8	-	
7	Layer	0.02	-	Mortar floor	-	
8	Structure	-	-	External wall of building	-	
9	Fill	0.26	-	Concrete footing of wall 12	-	
10	Fill	0.5	-	Backfill of foundation cut 11	-	
11	Cut	0.86	-	Foundation cut for wall 12	-	
12	Structure	-	-	Internal wall of basement	-	
13	Layer	0.26	-	Levelling layer for floor 1	Iron, cbm	
14	Layer	0.08	-	Levelling layer for floor 1	Bone, clay pipe	
15	Layer	0.08	-	Levelling layer for floor 1	Pot, iron	
16	Layer	0.02	-	Occupation / debris layer	Metal, pot, clay pipe, bone, shell	
17	Fill	0.2	-	Fill of 21	Yes	
18	Fill	0.18	-	Fill of 21	-	
19	Fill	0.14	-	Fill of 21	-	
20	Fill	0.07	-	Fill of 21	-	
21	Cut	1.07	-	Cut of unknown feature	-	
22	Deposit	-	-	Natural gravels	-	
23	Fill	0.01	-	Mortar of brick course 2	-	
24	Fill	0.03	-	Concrete uppermost footing layer of wall 12	-	
25	Fill	0.3	0.6	Fill of linear cut 27	Metal, pot, clay pipe, bone, shell	
26	Fill	0.55	0.7	Fill of linear cut 27	Metal, pot, clay pipe, bone, shell	
27	Cut	0.85	0.7	Linear feature, possible ditch; E-W aligned	-	
28	Deposit	0.05	-	Makeup / levelling material	-	
29	Deposit	0.03	0.15	Occupation / debris layer	-	
30	Deposit	0.08	0.15	Make-up / levelling material	-	
31	Deposit	0.03	0.15	Occupation / debris layer	-	
32	Fill	0.1	0.1	Fill of ditch 36	-	
33	Deposit	0.16	0.15	Make-up / levelling material	-	
34	Fill	0.28	0.15	Fill of ditch 36	-	
35	Fill	0.45	0.1	Fill of ditch 36	-	
36	Cut	1	>0.15	Ditch E-W aligned	-	
37	Structure	0.065	-	Brick wall or floor	-	19th century
38	Deposit	0.12	0.5	Occupation / debris layer	-	
39	Fill	0.03	0.4	Fill of 21	-	

6 Bibliography and references

Durham B, Halpin C, Palmer N	1983	Oxford's Northern Defences: Archaeological Studies 1971-1982. Oxoniensia XLVIII. The Oxfordshire Architectural & Historical Society, Ashmolean Museum
Dodd A (Ed)	2003	Oxford before the University. The late Saxon and Norman archaeology of the Thames Crossing , the defences and the town. Oxford Archaeological Unit.
Oswald, A	1984	lay Pipes in Hassall, T G, Halpin, C E and Mellor, M, Excavations in St. Ebbe's, Oxford, 1967-1976: Part II: Post-medieval domestic tenements and the post-Dissolution site of the Greyfriars, *Oxoniensia* **49**, 251-262.

7 Finds Reports

7.1 Pottery

By John Cotter

Introduction and methodology

7.1.1 A total of 71 sherds of pottery weighing 1014g. was recovered from five contexts. This is all of post-medieval date. All the pottery was examined and spot-dated during the present assessment stage. For each context the total pottery sherd count and weight were recorded on an Excel spreadsheet, followed by the context spot-date which is the date-bracket during which the latest pottery types in the context are estimated to have been produced or were in general circulation. Comments on the presence of datable types were also recorded, usually with mention of vessel form (jugs, bowls etc.) and any other attributes worthy of note (eg. decoration etc.). Types present are summarised below and detailed in the spreadsheet.

Date and nature of the assemblage

7.1.2 Nearly all the pottery is in a fresh though fragmentary condition. The breaks on many sherds (particularly Context (25)) are very fresh and appear to be recent (during recovery as the material was collected during groundworks excavation rather than archaeological excavation). The assemblage appears to be a homogeneous collection of mid to later 17th-century date, or broadly c 1640/50-1700. Several cross-joins observed between pottery from the three largest contexts ((16), (25) and (26)) also support the impression that the whole assemblage is broadly contemporary. The clay pipe dates however (see below) suggest a slightly later date in the 17th century than the pottery does - but they are both in broad agreement. Notable features of the assemblage include a high proportion of German Frechen stoneware 'Bellarmine' jugs - around ten individual vessels. These were common imports of the period and include an almost complete (reconstructable) vessel profile from (25) with a characteristic grimacing human face and a typically mid 17th-century applied medallion with a radial 'wheatear' design. A sherd from a much smaller thicker-walled Frechen jug is also present (26). Smallish sherds from at least four vessels in English tin-glazed earthenware are also present including two probably hemispherical bowls or cups with blue Chinese-style decoration and the base of a cylindrical tankard with a purple-speckled external glaze. Fragments from a number of jars and possibly a costrel (small flask) in local post-medieval red earthenware are also present as well as the base of a black-glazed tankard or 'tyg'. The earliest pieces in the assemblage are two small sherds of late medieval/early post-medieval Brill/Boarstall ware (OXBX, c 1400-1625).

7.1.3 Along with the fairly high number of clay pipes, the unusually high number of 'Bellarmine' jugs present and the presence of several other drinking vessels (cups and tankards), the assemblage has the character of material dumped from a tavern or drinking establishment of some description. The date of the material (particularly the clay pipes) appears to be slightly later than a much larger assemblage of pottery (examined by myself) from the backfill of a Civil War ditch underneath the Clarendon Building - just across the road from the Old Indian Institute.

7.2 Clay tobacco pipes

by John Cotter

7.2.1 A total of 98 pieces of clay pipe weighing 370g. was recovered from five contexts. These have been catalogued and recorded on an Excel spreadsheet. The catalogue records, per context, the spot-date, the quantity of stem, bowl and mouth fragments, the overall sherd count, weight, and comments on condition and any makers' marks or decoration present. Most of the pipes come from Contexts (25) and (26). The assemblage is fragmentary but mostly in a fairly fresh to very fresh condition although a few pieces are clearly more abraded and some are covered with a lime or mortary deposit. Eleven pipes bowls are present - about half of which are nearly complete - and two mouth pieces. Apart from milling on the rims of a few examples all the pieces are plain and unmarked. The pipe bowls and the size of the stem bores are all consistently 17th-century in date - like the pottery. The larger assemblage of eight bowls from Context (25) includes a few examples of the local St Ebbe's Type B bowl shaped with a stubby spur or narrow circular heel (Oswald 1984, fig.51B). These are normally dated c 1650-1690 but the examples here are slightly larger and more developed so could be dated a little later, perhaps to c 1660-1700. Most of the assemblage probably dates to the second half of the 17th-century. A few residual earlier bowl types of c 1630-1650 and c 1620-1640 demonstrate that some earlier material is present. The quantity of pipe fragments recovered is quite high for such a small excavation and, like the pottery, is suggestive of tavern refuse.

7.3 Ceramic building material (CBM)

by John Cotter

7.3.1 Two pieces of CBM weighing 139g. were recovered from a single context (13). These have not been separately catalogued but are described below.

7.3.2 Context (13) Spot-date: c1820-1900+

7.3.3 Description: Two joining pieces from a brown salt-glazed stoneware drainpipe. The interior and the breaks are covered with a thick lime white deposit.

Context	Spot-date	No.	Weight	Comments
15	c1640-1700	3	12	Bodysherd tin-glazed ware (TGW) from lower wall (just above ?footring base) prob of smallish bowl or jug. Blue painted dec ext incl horiz blue lines & dark & light blue tones - poss Chinese-style? Fairly good quality. Fresh. 2x bos Frechen stoneware (FREC), fresh
16	c1640-1700	15	317	2x TGW bos = poss same vessel, smallish bowl with Chinese-style dec & slight blue tint to glaze - v similar to (15) but separate vess. 1 of the TGW sherds is burnt. 3x FREC incl Bellarmine rim (JOINS 25) & bo with typical mid 17C applied medallion with radial 'wheatear' dec - JOINS (25), (min 2 vess). 10x post-med redware (PMR), min 3 vess, incl ?storage jar rim, jar base with dark brown int glaze, all fairly fresh - prob JOINS (25)
17	c1640-1700	3	48	Prob 2 vess. Joining handle frags & separate bodysherd from 2x Frechen stoneware (FREC) jugs - probably 'Bellarmine' jugs. Brown salt-glaze ext. Fresh

Context	Spot-date	No.	Weight	Comments
25	c1640-1700	40	569	33 x Frechen stoneware prob from min 6 Bellarmine jugs incl near-profile with flat base & grimmacing hourglass mouth with frontal radial wheatear medallion (JOINS 16). NB many fresh breaks - machine damaged? 1 FREC rim with handle (JOINS 16). 4x PMR = 3 vess incl black-glazed tankard or 'tyg' base & over-fired bo from a small ?costrel with shiny brown ext glaze. 1x small plain white TGW bo. 1x small unglazed late Brill (OXBX) bo - prob residual
26	c1640-1700	10	68	7x smallish FREC bos from 4-5 vess incl bo JOINS (16). FREC incl 1 sherd from small jug with thick tightly curved walls. 2x TGW incl plain white glazed bo from neck of bottle/jug, & pad base/lower wall of cylindrical tankard with ext manganese purple-speckled glaze & int white glaze, fairly fresh. 1x small unglazed bo late Brill (OXBX)
TOTAL		71	1014	

Context	Spot-date	Stem	Bowl	Mouth	Tot sherds	Tot Wt	Comments
14	c1660-1680	3	1	0	4	24	1x fresh frag bowl rim c1660-80. 17C stems up to 90mm long. 2 coated in brownish mortary deposit
16	17C	4	0	1	5	13	Fairly fresh to slightly worn. Under 60mm. Stem bores (SB) c3mm
17	17C	5	0	0	5	23	Four very fresh, 1 worn. All c40mm long
25	c1660-1700	49	8	1	58	229	Stems fresh & worn, up to 75mm, mostly 20-40mm, 4-5 coated in lime deposit, some quite crushed/scrappy. 8x bowls incl 6 near-complete. Incl 3x St Ebbe's Type B (Fig. 51B) c1650-1690 but poss more developed to c 1700? Incl 2 similar to George Street kiln dump with good burnish & half-milled around back, stubby spurs or narrow circ heels. Other earlier incl 1630-50 & c1620-40
26	c1660-1680	24	2	0	26	81	1x near complete bowl rim c1660-80 & heel/spur of another - both of stubby spurred type. 17C stems 10-70mm long, fresh & a few worn
TOTAL		85	11	2	98	370	

7.4 Metal

By Ian R Scott

7.4.1 A small quantity of metal finds was recovered from the site. There are 11 pieces of metal from 3 contexts:

Context 13 – (i) **Iron wedge**, with battered head. L: 160mm. W of head: 54mm; W of edge: 36mm. A wedge for use the quarrying of stone or in rough splitting blocks.
(ii) **Drawn wire nail**, encrusted.L: 80mm. Appears to be a modern wire nail.
(iii) **Strip,** thin with at least one nail hole, and traces of galvanise. Probably modern. L: 110mm; W: 22mm.
(iv) **Nail**. large nail of rectangular section with small head, heavily encrusted and possibly incomplete. L: 153mm.
None of the objects are closely datable, but the wire nail and galvanised strip are modern, ie. late 19th-century or later in date.

Context 15 - (v) Length of **iron rod**, encrusted. Possibly slightly tapered. L: 168mm.
(vi) **Nail stem** fragment, encrusted. Probably hand-made. Not measured.
Neither object closely datable.

Context 25 – (vii) **Nail** with small head, or nail stem, encrusted (L extant: 90mm).
(viii) **Nail** very heavily encrusted, almost complete. L: 95mm.
(ix) **Small nail** with slightly domed circular head. L: 35mm
(x) **Nail stem** fragment, possibly from small nail, Not measured.
(xi) Possible **knife blade** fragment, with whittle tang with traces of mineral preserved wood. The blade is incomplete and its form is uncertain. L extant: 76mm.

None of the objects is closely datable.

7.5 Animal bone

Identified by Lena Strid

Context	Description
14	3 medium mammal rib fragments, 1 large mammal rib fragment, 1 pig pelvis fragment, 44g. 2 medium mammal ribs and 1 large mammal rib, probably cattle, sawn off transversely into 22mm thick slice, 27g.
15	1 fowl sized skull fragment, 1 medium mammal vertebra fragment, 1 cattle tooth, 24g.
16	10 medium mammal rib fragments, 4 large mammal juvenile ribs, 1 large mammal vertebra, 1 large mammal juvenile vertebra split longitudinally, 1 medium mammal long bone, 2 large bird juvenile ulnas, 1 bird long bone, 1 bird long bone medullary bone inside, 1 fowl femur, 1 duck carpal/metacarpus, 3 medium mammal vertebrae 2 split transversely and 1 spilt both transversely and longitudinally, 1 cattle skull fragment, 4 indeterminate fragments, 93g.
17	1 fowl-sized tibia tarsus, 1 mammal rib fragment, 10g.
25	1 large mammal long bone, 1 large mammal juvenile rib with cut marks, 1 cattle distal metacarpal 56.2mmwide, 148g.
26	2 large mammal ribs, 1 large mammal vertebra, 2 large mammal juvenile ribs, 3 medium mammal ribs, 1 sheep first phalanx, 1 sheep humerus, 1 medium mammal long bone, 1 sheep distal femur fusing, 4 indeterminate fragments, 159g.

7.6 Shell

identified by Geraldine Crann

Context	Description
16	2 oyster shells, 31g
25	3 complete oyster shell valves, 4 fragments, 42g

7.7 Coal

Identified by Geraldine Crann

Context	Description
13	3 fragments coal, 4g

8 Summary of Site Details

Site name:	Old Indian Institute, Oxford
Site code:	OXOII 13
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR SP515 065
Type of Project	Watching Brief
Date and duration of project:	24-25th January 2013; 6-7th March 2013
Area of site:	2.6m x 2.6m
Summary of results:	
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museum in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS : 2013.29