


Front Quad
St. Edmund Hall
Queen's Lane
Oxford



Archaeological
Watching Brief Report

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St. Edmund Hall, Front Quad, Queen's Lane, Oxford.

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by Becky Peacock and illustrated by Becky Peacock, Conan Parsons and Hannah Kennedy

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Summary

In July and August 2015, Oxford Archaeology carried out an intermittent watching brief on cable renewal and the replacement of the path surfaces in the Front Quad at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford. The work was undertaken for Montgomery Architects Ltd on behalf of St Edmund Hall. A geophysical survey undertaken to identify buried services also revealed possible structural remains, but these were not impacted on by the works. The removal of the existing slab pathway revealed brick service ducts and a garden soil layer. A limestone rubble deposit, possibly a robbed out wall or drain, was encountered on the north side of the quad, although the depth of impact of the works precluded further investigation.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Montgomery Architects Ltd on behalf of St Edmund Hall, to carry out a watching brief and recording exercise on the installation of new services and the replacement of current paving which borders the Front Quad.
- 1.1.2 The watching brief was carried out on four separate visits between 28th July and 19th August 2015.
- 1.1.3 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref: 14/03007/FUL). Although the Local Planning Authority did not set a brief for the work, discussions with David Radford the Oxford City Archaeologist established the scope of work required and a Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2015) was produced. All work was carried out as set out in the WSI.
- 1.1.4 All work was undertaken in accordance with all local and national planning policies.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site was centred on NGR SP 51805 06356 (Fig. 1).
- 1.2.2 The area of development consisted of the paved surrounds to two sub rectangular areas of grassed quadrangle (Fig. 2 and 3).
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is mapped as sands and gravels of the Northmoor Sand and Gravel Member (BGS).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 St Edmund Hall was one of the early university academic halls, which provided undergraduates with accommodation and tuition before the colleges began to do so (Hibbert ed 1988). It was not incorporated as a college into the University until 1957, so no date of foundation is recorded, although it was known to have been in existence by 1314. The surviving post-medieval hall stands on the east side of Queen's Lane on the site of an earlier house occupied by Edmund of Abingdon from 1234-60, and who was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1234-40. Edmund's house was believed to have occupied the western end of the current quadrangle (ibid 388).
- 1.3.2 In the 13th century the front quad was owned by John de Bermingham, Rector of Iffley, whose relatives sold part of it to Thomas of Malmesbury, Perpetual Vicar of Cowley, in



1261-2. It seems likely that the Berminghams and Malmesbury used the property as a student hall during this period. In 1271-72 Thomas granted part of the site to Oseney Abbey which owned it until the dissolution in 1539 (ibid 389).

- 1.3.3 The front quad reached its present size when the Abbey purchased additional lands from Magdalen College. By 1531 Queens College had obtained the lease from the Abbey, but this did not prevent the sale, under the dissolution, of the lands into private hands in 1546, when the site was purchased by William Burnell, formally of Queens College (ibid 389).
- 1.3.4 The present buildings date to the late 16th-18th centuries and are built of local rubble and ashlar with roofs of slates and tiles (Beckley and Radford 2011). Sherwood and Pevsner (1974) describe St Edmund Hall as comprising two quadrangles and the 12th century Church of St Peter in the East, which is now the college library. Of the buildings surrounding the quadrangle these are dated to c. 1596 for the eastern part of the north range, which contains a fireplace of 15th century date. The southern part of the north range is dated to c. 1741 (Sherwood and Pevsner 1974, 192). The southern part of the west range is dated to c 1635, and the northern part to 1958. The southern range is described as early 19th century (ibid 192). The well shaft lining within the quad, but not the well head, is described as being of medieval date (Hibbert ed, 1988, 391).
- 1.3.5 A geophysical survey of the quad was undertaken in January 2015 (Sumo 2015). The survey was primarily designed to map existing buried services, but also identified possible stone drains, buried surfaces and structural remains. Several of these anomalies were within the grassed quad areas, and not subject to disturbance by the current proposal.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The general aims of the watching brief were:

- To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may have survived. To ensure the preservation by record to the highest possible standard of any remains that were found.
- To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains
- To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.
- To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.
- To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.
- To determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity.
- To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.



2.2 Specific aims and objectives

2.2.1 The specific aims and objectives of the watching brief were:

- To pay specific attention to the areas of anomalies identified by the geophysical survey.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 Four visits were carried out between 28th July and 19th August 2015. On the first visit a photogrammetric record was made of the Front Quad, before any excavation was carried out. Black and white and colour digital photographs were taken of above ground features.

2.3.2 On the following visits, four areas below the paved pathways were observed. The lifting of the concrete slabs was not observed.

2.3.3 A location plan, written description and photographic record was made of each area.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 No archaeologically significant deposits were seen on the south and west side of the quad. The removal of the concrete paving revealed a 1.2m wide and 0.6m deep brick lined cable duct, 1 (Fig. 3; Plates 3 and 4). The bricks were modern and machine made. There was no need for the replacement of the duct during the current works, and as such no earlier deposits were revealed.

3.1.2 On the northern side of the quad, the slabs were removed and revealed a mixed garden soil deposit 2 (Fig. 3; Plates 5 and 6). This comprised a loose mixed yellowish brown to dark brown sandy clay containing mixed concrete rubble and frequent limestone gravel inclusions.

3.1.3 A trench, 0.5m wide, was excavated through the garden soil to a maximum depth of 0.3m. At the base of this trench a 0.6m wide mixed limestone and mortar deposit, (3), was uncovered (Fig. 3; Plate 5). The deposit may represent the remains of a north-south aligned wall or drain. This was not further investigated as it was not going to be impacted on by the works.

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 No finds were recovered from the watching brief areas.

3.3 Environmental remains

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were uncovered during the course of the project.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The watching brief encountered one possible feature, (3), on the north side of the quad. However, the maximum level of impact in this area did not allow further investigation. The feature may have been a wall or drain, possibly robbed out. It is likely that it continues further to the south beneath the grassed area of the quad.

4.1.2 The geophysical survey did not show a feature in this location so it may be a localised deposit and the area of the watching brief did not allow for a wider investigation.



- 4.1.3 The brick lined cable duct precluded any observation of deposits along the south, west and the southern end of the east side of the quad.
- 4.1.4 The cable trenching did not continue around the eastern end of the quad so this area remained undisturbed.



APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Length	Comments	Finds	Date
1	Structure	0.6m	1.2m	43m	Brick lined cable duct	No	20th century
2	Layer	0.3m	1.2m	19.9m	Mixed garden soils and rubble make up layer for concrete slabs	No	20th century
3	Deposit	-	0.6m	0.5m	Limestone and mortar deposit, wall collapse, robbed out wall or top of a wall	No	Unknown



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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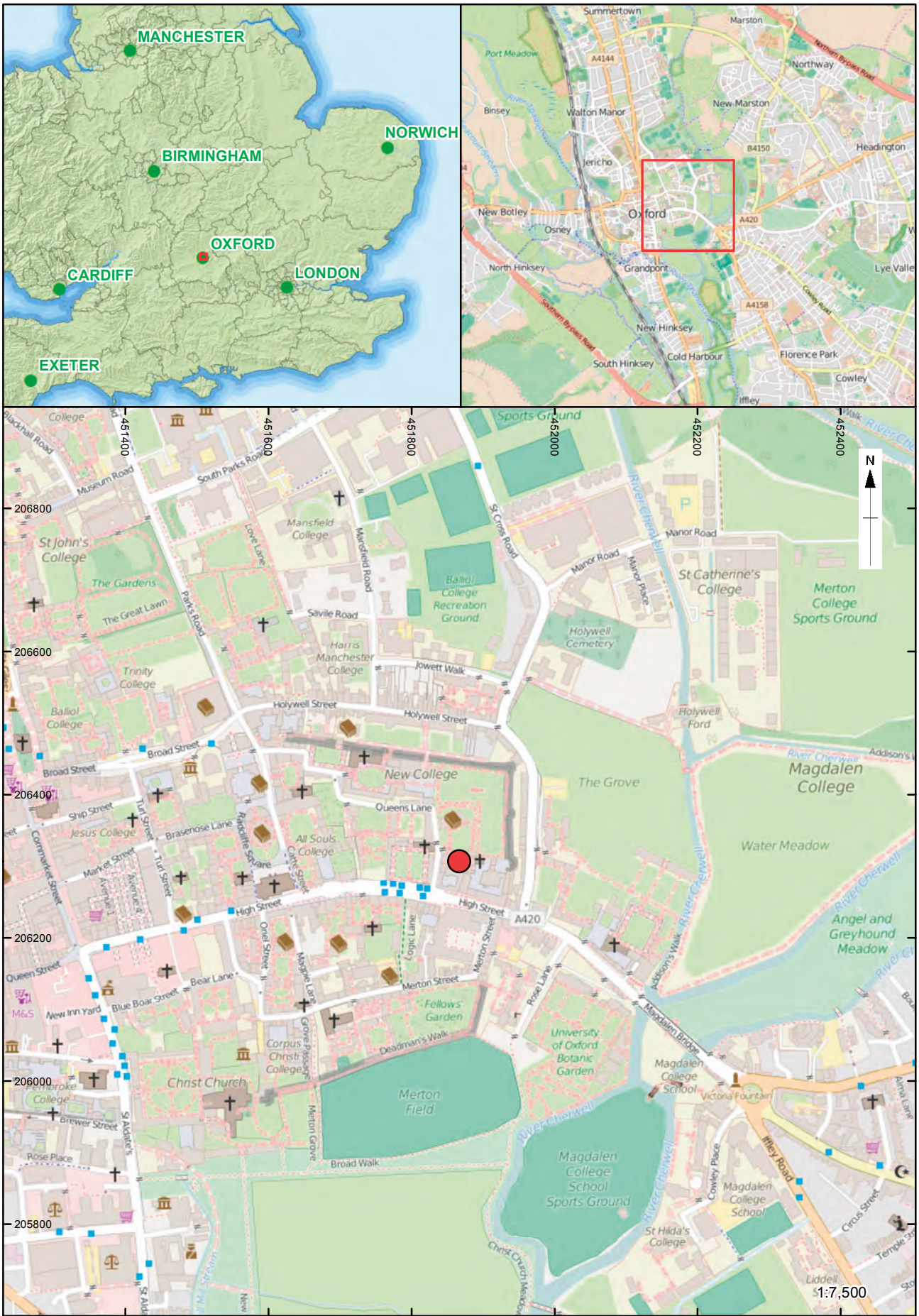
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Sherwood, J, and Pevsner, N, 1974. *The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire*. London: Yale University Press.



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	St. Edmund Hall, Front Quad, Queen's Lane, Oxford.
Site code:	OXEDMD15
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR NGR SP 51805 06356
Type of watching brief:	Intermittent
Date and duration of project:	28th July-19th August 2015
Area of site:	c.0.1ha
Summary of results:	<p>In July and August 2015, Oxford Archaeology carried out an intermittent watching brief on cable renewal and the replacement of the path surfaces in the Front Quad at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford. The work was undertaken for Montgomery Architects Ltd on behalf of St Edmund Hall. A geophysical survey undertaken to identify buried services also revealed possible structural remains, but these were not impacted on by the works. The removal of the existing slab pathway revealed brick service ducts and a garden soil layer. A limestone rubble deposit, possibly a robbed out wall or drain, was encountered on the north side of the quad, although the depth of impact of the works precluded further investigation.</p>
Location of archive:	<p>The archive is currently stored at Janus House, Osney Mead Oxford, and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course under the accession code OXCMS : 2015.151</p>



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Figure 1: Site location



451850
206295

451850
206295

451885
206315

451885
206295



Key
OS Base map

Survey Data supplied by :
Conan Parsons

0 5 m
Scale at A3 1:100

Figure 2. St Edmund Hall, photogrammetry plot.



© Crown copyright and database rights 2015 Ordnance Survey 0100331673
Survey Data supplied by :
Conan Parsons

0 5 m
Scale at A3 1:100

Figure 3. St Edmund Hall. Areas observed during watching brief.

Key

- OS Base map
- Watching brief areas
- Archaeological feature

451885
206315

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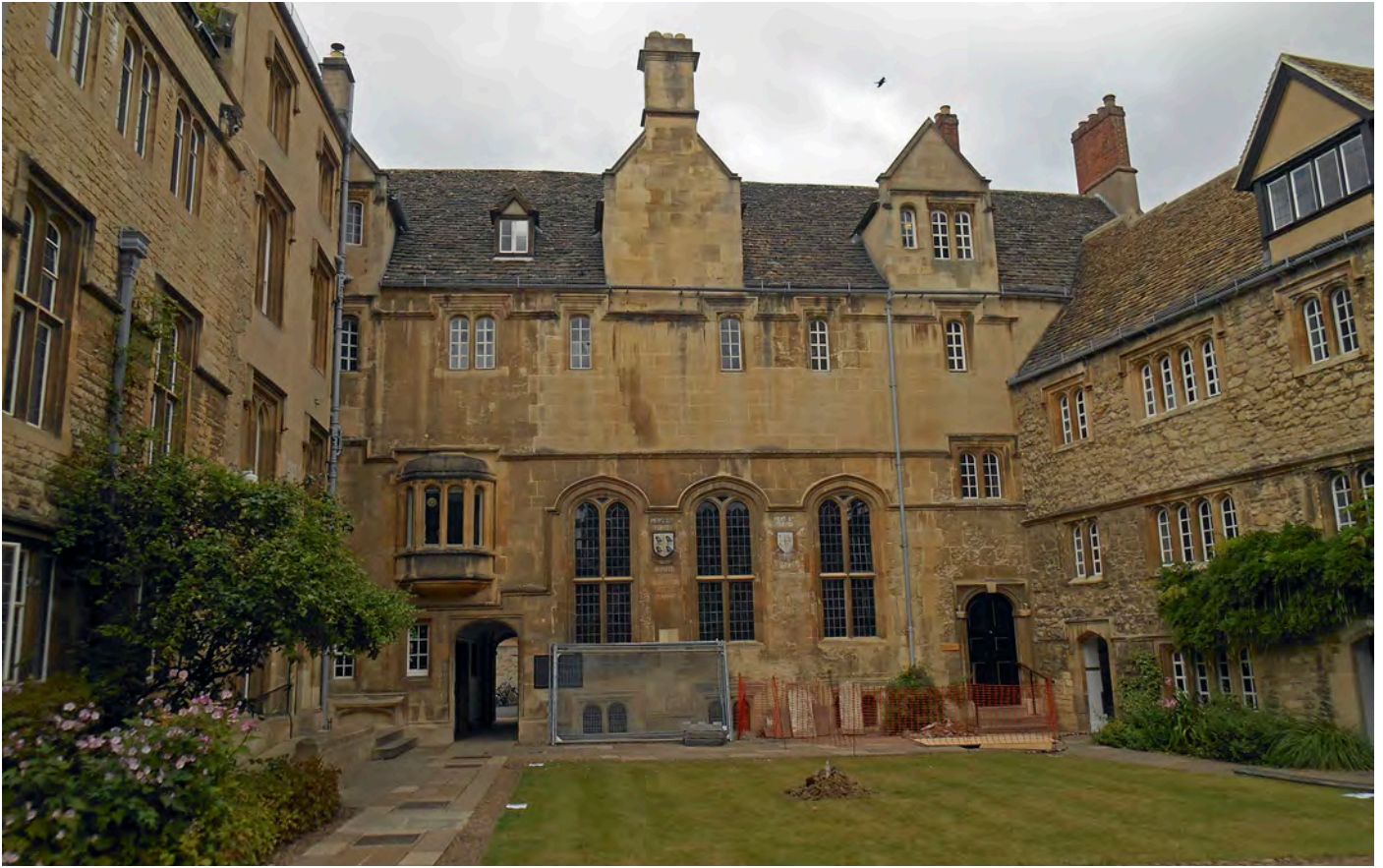


Plate 1: General area shot of Front Quad



Plate 2: The well in the centre of the Front Quad



Plate 3: Area on the south side of the Quad, showing the brick lined cable duct



Plate 4: Area on the west side of the Quad, showing the brick lined cable duct



Plate 5: Area on the north side of the Quad, west end showing the mixed garden soil deposits with deposit 3 seen as a lighter band in trench



Plate 6: Area on the north side of the Quad, east end, showing the mixed garden soil deposits



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