



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**BUILDING RECORDING**

**ON**

**WALL IN THE PARK AND GARDEN OF**

**WORCESTER COLLEGE**

**OXFORD**

**NGR SP 5075 0667**

*On behalf of*

***WORCESTER COLLEGE***

**APRIL 2015**

**REPORT FOR** Worcester College  
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**FIELD WORK** 6<sup>th</sup> January 2015

**REPORT ISSUED** 30<sup>th</sup> April 2015

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**JMHS Project No:** 3116  
**Site Code** OXWC 14

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# **Boundary Wall at Worcester College**

## **Oxford**

### ***Building Assessment***

#### ***SUMMARY***

*John Moore Heritage Services were commissioned by Worcester College to produce an English Heritage Level 2 building survey of the wall to be partly removed. This involved the recording of significant structural features, and the investigation of the chronology, construction, materials used and development of the structure. The development area is located within the grounds (grade II Registered Parks and Gardens) of Worcester College, Oxford. The recording took place on the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2015.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Origins of the report**

The report was requested by David Jobbins on behalf of Worcester College in response to planning criteria laid down by the city archaeologist David Radford of the Oxford City Council heritage team. The planning application is 14/00392/FUL with archaeological condition 7.

### **1.2 Location**

The site, a wall, is located on the edge of Worcester College Gardens, Oxford (NGR SP 50776 06665). Worcester College was located in St Paul's parish, a relatively modern parish that was created in 1837 (VCH 1979, 369-412). This parish was created from parts of the historic parishes of St Giles's and St Thomas's. Areas along Hythe Bridge Street are noted as being located in the parish of St Thomas. Historically this was in the Liberty of Oxford and is now located in Oxford City.

The wall concerned is the northeast boundary wall of the garden. On the southwest side is Worcester College Garden, while on the northeast side are the Earl Building and Gloucester House. These buildings have access onto Worcester Place.

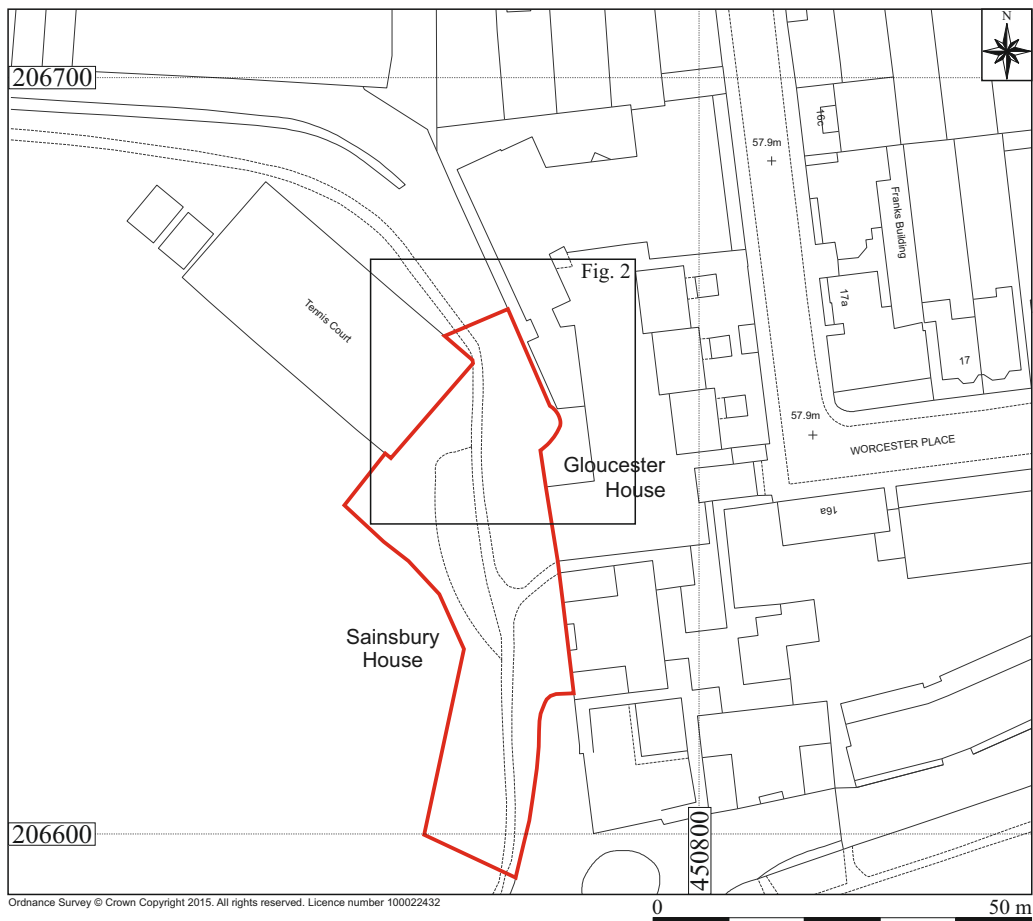
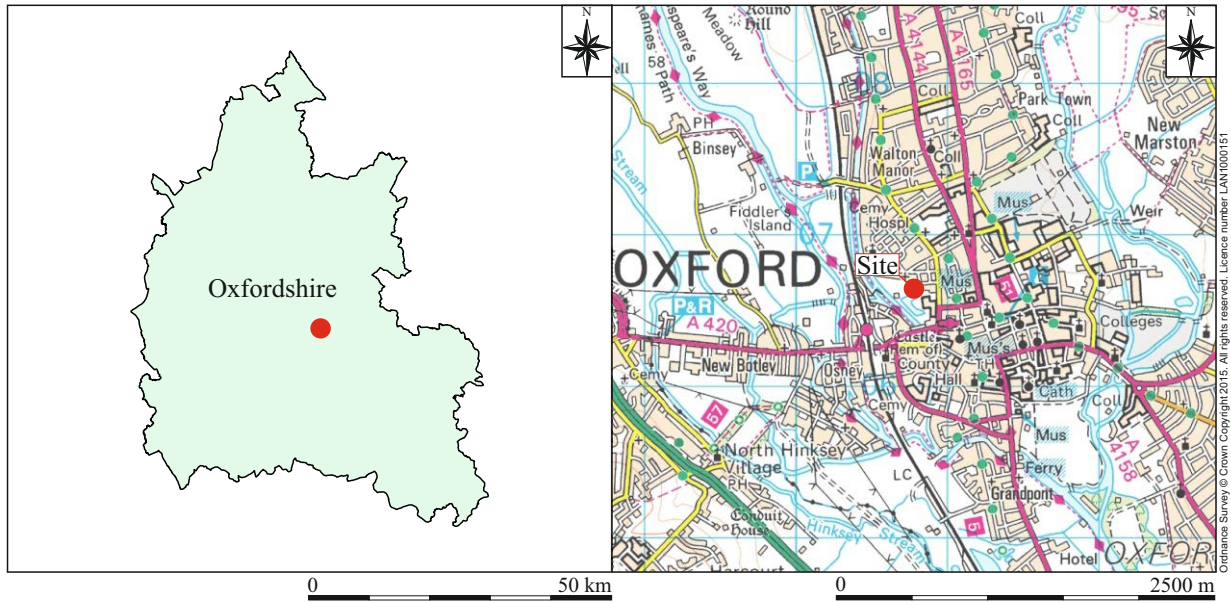
Worcester College is located on the edge of a river terrace, while the gardens extend into the Thames flood plain. The Ordnance Datum in the location of wall being recorded was approximately 58m.

The underlying geology is Oxford Clay Formation and West Walton Formation ([mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html](http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html)) which are bands of undifferentiated sedimentary mudstones that were laid down 156 to 165 million years ago. At this location the bedrock is capped by a superficial deposit the Northmoor Sand and Gravel Member, comprised of sand and gravel and laid down 3 million years ago in the Quaternary.

### **1.3 Aims of Investigation**

Archaeological activity was requested on the site because of the possibility of the existence of palaeo-channels relating to earlier Quaternary deposits and also the potential for Civil War defences. This archaeological work, not included in this report, was to be preceded by a photographic record of the curtilage wall, which was to be prepared for archive purposes.

The aim of this report is to thus catalogue a English Heritage level II survey (English Heritage 2006) of the curtilage wall of Worcester College Garden and the boundary of the Victorian Timber Yard.



Key  Site boundary

Figure 1: Site location

## 2 BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Designation

The wall lies in the grounds of Worcester College, an educational facility that contains a total of nine listed structures; five of which are designated as grade I listings: Worcester College South Range with Pump Quadrangle and Old Kitchen (LEN 1046604, UID 245206, SP 50920 06474), Worcester College North Range (LEN 1046605, UID 245208, SP 50905 06525), Worcester College Gateway on Walton Street to the North of the North Range (LEN 1046608, UID 245213, SP 50950 06533), Worcester College Main Block (LEN 1184311, UID 245207, SP 50940 06489), and Worcester College Entrance Screen and Gates on Beaumont Street (LEN 1184324, 245209, SP 50952 06504). The remaining four listed structures are of a grade II status and include: Worcester College Gateway in the College Garden to the South of the Pool (LEN 1046606, UID 245210, SP 50753 06460), Worcester College walls in the College Garden (LEN 1046607, UID 245211, SP 50874 06502), Worcester College Boundary Wall on Walton Street (LEN 1184331, UID 245212, SP 50948 06569), and Worcester College Boundary Wall on Worcester Street stretching 60 yards south from the entrance block of the New Gateway (LEN 1184349, UID 245214, SP 50947 06439).

The final designation is the Worcester College grade II\* listing for the College Gardens (LEN 1000465, UID 1424, SP 50723 06584). This listing starts with a brief history of the College, which is subsequently followed by a description of the gardens, which is quoted here.

*GARDENS The Fellows' Garden lies adjacent to the north side of North Range, laid largely to lawn with a curved perimeter path and informal planting against the walls. Access is gained from a door in North Range, or off Walton Street through the medieval gateway in the boundary wall, or through a further gateway in the north west corner.*

*The main part of the college gardens, laid out in the early C19 as picturesque pleasure grounds, consists of three informal sections of open lawn, each area with its own wooded perimeter path, all connected by the central lake. The south lawn, entered from Main Quad, is overlooked to the north by the C15 south range, given picturesque detailing on this face in the C19 to imitate a row of rural cottages. Along the east and south boundaries of the lawn stand several C20 buildings in varying styles. The perimeter path, encircling the lawn, runs in front of the buildings, overlooking the lawn planted with mature specimen trees including a very large plane tree. Some of the mature trees on the lawn remain from early C19 shrub bed planting, when they were meant to be seen as spires in the beds and then removed. They were never removed and the canopy killed the floriferous underplanting (M Batey pers comm, February 1999). Along the north side of the lawn the path passes the bottom of the steep stone steps giving access to the west end of the small 'hanging garden'. Adjacent to the bottom of these steps stands a stone gateway (listed grade II) giving access from the south lawn to the Provost's Garden to the north, past the end of the south arm of the lake. At this point the path around the south lawn reaches the south arm of the lake, continuing along the lake side to a stone gateway (C16, listed grade II), an arch re-sited in the early C19 from the remains of the medieval college*



*buildings. Here the south-west arm of the perimeter path joins the path around the south lawn. The south-west path is largely screened from the south lawn by shrubs, with various breaks allowing views across the lawn to the picturesque camerae.*

*The path continues north-west along the west edge of the lake, past three stone benches sited at various points overlooking the lake, breaking into two at the western tip of the lake to encircle the cricket ground (created out of marshy meadow c 1900). This forms the second perimeter walk, with an informal path and adjacent drainage ditch running north-west through a wooded belt (present by the mid C19, Hoggart, 1850), overlooking the Canal to the south-west, continuing along the north and east sides of the cricket ground and running along the lake's north edge back to the southern tip of the cricket ground, where the early C20 cricket pavilion stands. Views extend east from the west side of the lake, towards the upper floor of the elevated Main Block in Main Quad, and the west end of the Provost's Lodgings, and north towards the 1981 Sainsbury Building. The north arm of the lake was extended to the edge of this building so that it sits on the edge of the water.*

*The third section of the gardens consists largely of the Provost's Garden, mostly laid to lawn and surrounded by a perimeter walk, the west side of which runs through shrubs and trees alongside the east side of the lake, providing views west across the lake and cricket ground. Further informal lawns lie to the north-east. The Provost's Garden is dominated by the four-storey main, west facade of the Provost's Lodgings (Henry Keene 1773-6, listed grade I). The Lodgings, which are attached to the west end of North Range, have a Palladian front and a garden door at first-floor level from which the garden is reached by a stone double staircase. A small, formal garden lies in the south-east corner of the Provost's Garden, the subject of a formal Arts and Crafts design by Alfred Parsons for Provost Daniel (1903). It apparently contained a central sundial surrounded by beds of roses, pinks and snapdragons; delphiniums, tiger lilies, peonies, sweet peas and other herbaceous plants grew in the shelter of the stone wall (Cobham 1991) dividing it from Main Quad. The lawns to the north of the Provost's Garden and North Range are informally arranged, with a box-edged border running along the north boundary with Ruskin Lane, and garden service buildings in the north-east corner. An orchard is situated on the west half of this area. Prior to the construction of the Sainsbury Building, Ruskin Lane provided access to the cricket ground, screened from Ruskin College to the north by a line of mature ilex trees (*Quercus ilex*) planted by Provost Lys c 1913.*

*In the later C16 (Agas, 1578) the gardens of 'Glocester Haule' extended north as groves or orchards of trees, with a small enclosed grove adjacent to the west wall of Main Quad, where the Provost's rose garden now lies. The open area to the north-west, adjacent to the river, where the lake and pleasure grounds encircling the cricket pitch to the north now lie, was known as 'Glocester Haule Meadowes'. This area was crossed by several small streams draining into the river. By the later C17 (Loggan, 1675) the gardens had been extended, particularly to the south where they reached as far as Hythe Bridge Street, covering what is now the south lawn, and the meadows were encroached upon for the expanded gardening activity. At the end of the C18 (Davis, 1797) a nursery garden occupied the site of the south lawn, owned by the Tagg family who subsequently supplied plants for the C19 landscaping works, once the college had bought the ground from them; a small, formal garden, on the site of the Provost's Garden, lay west of, and on an axis with Main Quad; meadows extended*

*west, as far as the new Canal, and north, with the drainage ditches crossing the area flanked by lines of trees. By the mid C19 (Hoggar, 1850; OS 1876) the dramatic landscaping around the college had been accomplished, with the creation of the lake, bounded to the east and south by lawns with island shrub beds and specimen trees. The lake was enclosed by perimeter walks, and enjoyed views to and from the buildings surrounding Main Quad. As Mavis Batey puts it in Regency Gardens 'The Fellows of Worcester College, in 1817, having skilfully contrived a would-be cottage orné with curly barge boards and trellis on the upper end of a monastic range of buildings, created a lake and a forest lawn with a perimeter Regency ornamental shrubbery in the college grounds'. There appear to have been open views between the Provost's Lodgings and its adjacent lawns and the lake, and likewise between the raised east terrace of Main Quad and the lake. These views are now largely obscured by later tree growth on the east side of the lake. The depiction of the grounds by Hoggar and the OS appears to be a good representation of the newly created landscape. An early to mid C19 view (in Batey 1982) looking east across the lake shows an open prospect of the Provost's Lodgings ( looking like a Palladian country house ( fronted by open lawn running down to the water's edge, with adjacent glimpses of the centre of the east range of Main Quad and the gabled west end of the south range with a rustic bridge below.*

To a large extent this description covers much of the history and development of the gardens. As such the boundary wall concerned does not appear to be precisely listed, however, it lies within the curtilage of a property that has nine listed structures and as such it can be claimed that it is protected by the listing of the main College building or perhaps included under the listing of the garden walls.

The Buildings of England Series describes the buildings of Worcester College (Sherwood and Pevsner 1974, 218-223), but does not comment on the extent and nature of the accompanying gardens.

Worcester College Gardens are located in the Central (University and City) Conservation Area, which was designated on the 5 April 1971, and subsequently extended on the 28 May 1974, 23 February 1981, 29 April 1985 and 9 Dec 1998. The boundary wall at various places around Worcester College Gardens marks the edge of the conservation area.

## **2.2 History of Development**

The history of the College starts with the granting of land to Gloucester Abbey by John Giffard in 1283 (VCH 1954, 298-309), which was followed by the granting of the same land in Stockwell Street to the Benedictine Order. There was a further grant of land in Stockwell Street from the Bishop of Norwich in 1231. This led to the establishment of Gloucester Hall that was located under the current college buildings. The hall was dissolved in c. 1542 as part of the Dissolution of the Monasteries. The last students at Gloucester Hall finished in 1541.

Briefly Gloucester Hall or College became the residence of the Bishop of Oxford when the cathedral was located at Osney (VCH 1954, 298-309).

There was a survey of the College in 1559 and the chapel was removed in 1542-7 (VCH 1954, 298-309). In 1560 Gloucester Hall and buildings were transferred to St John's College with just over 5 acres of land. The buildings at this time were in decay. At this time 100 scholars were taken on. In 1698 the current buildings fronting onto Beaumont Street were erected. Gloucester hall received a bequest of £15,000 from the lately deceased Thomas Cookes of Worcestershire in 1712. In 1714 Worcester College was established and the members of the hall became the new members of the College. Of the new buildings the hall was finished in 1784 and the chapel in 1791.

Purchases were made in 1741 and 1744-5, some of the land from St John's College, of garden and meadowland (VCH 1954, 298-309). The gardens were laid out in 1817.

Agas's map of 1578 shows the area as water meadow with feeder streams linking into the Thames. A map of 1605 (Fig. 2) shows the site covered with braided streams of the Thames, but with the area having a scatter of trees across the site.



Figure 2: Map of 1605



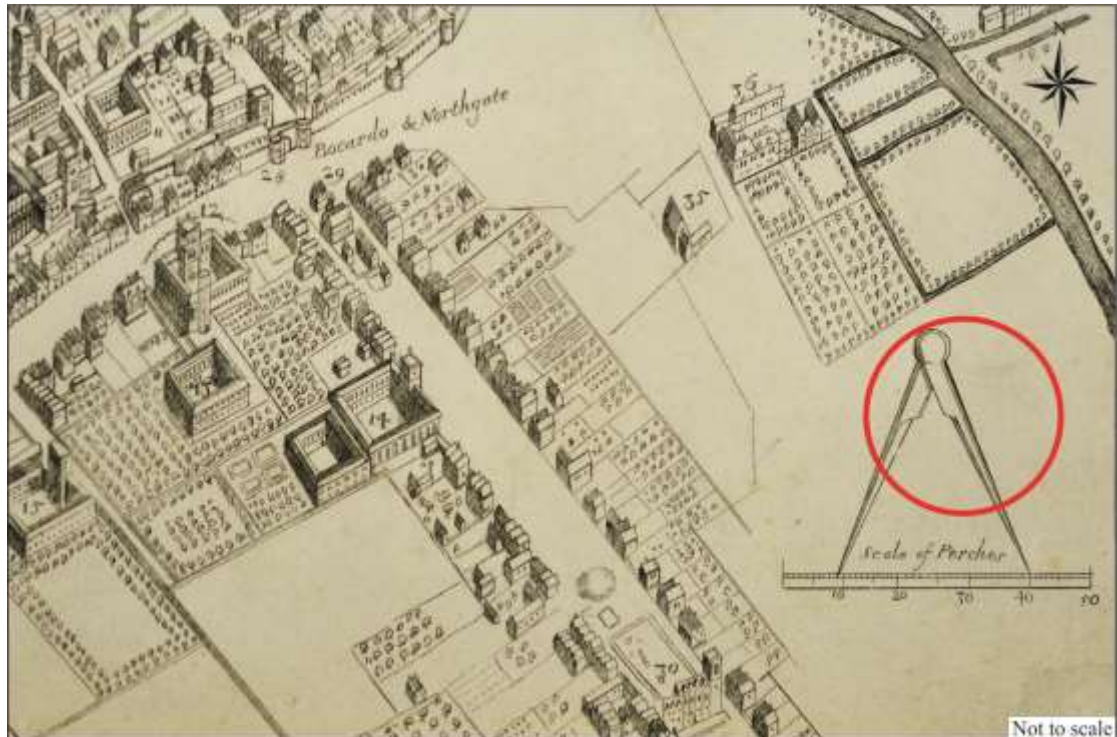


Figure 3: Logan's map of 1675

Logan's map of 1675 (Fig. 3) shows the area as still containing feeder streams to the Thames, but is indicative of formal planting occurring along the edges of these streams.

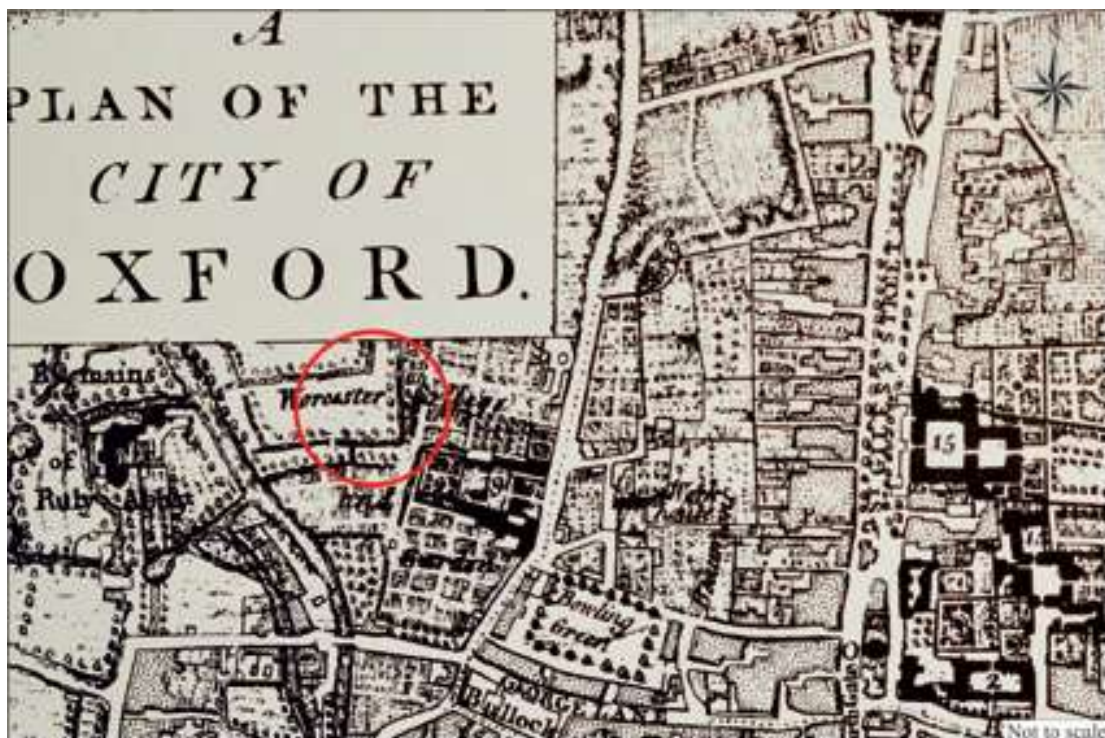


Figure 4: Rocque's map of 1761

Rocque's map of 1761 (Fig. 4) shows the area with braided streams with areas of possible formal planting alongside the streams. Jefferys' map of 1768 (Fig. 5) shows

no real detail in the area but does indicate that it lies on the edge of braided feeder streams.



Figure 5: Jefferys' map of 1768

Davis of Lewknor's map of 1797 (Fig. 6) shows the area as meadow land with various rows of trees.



Figure 6: Davis of Lewknor's map 1797



The earliest Ordnance Survey map of the area dates to about 1830 (Fig. 7), but here there is not much detail provided of the park or walls of the park, which was known to have been established in 1817. Hoggar's map of 1850 (Fig. 8) shows the line of the boundary in and in some places near its current location.



Figure 7: Ordnance Survey map of 1830

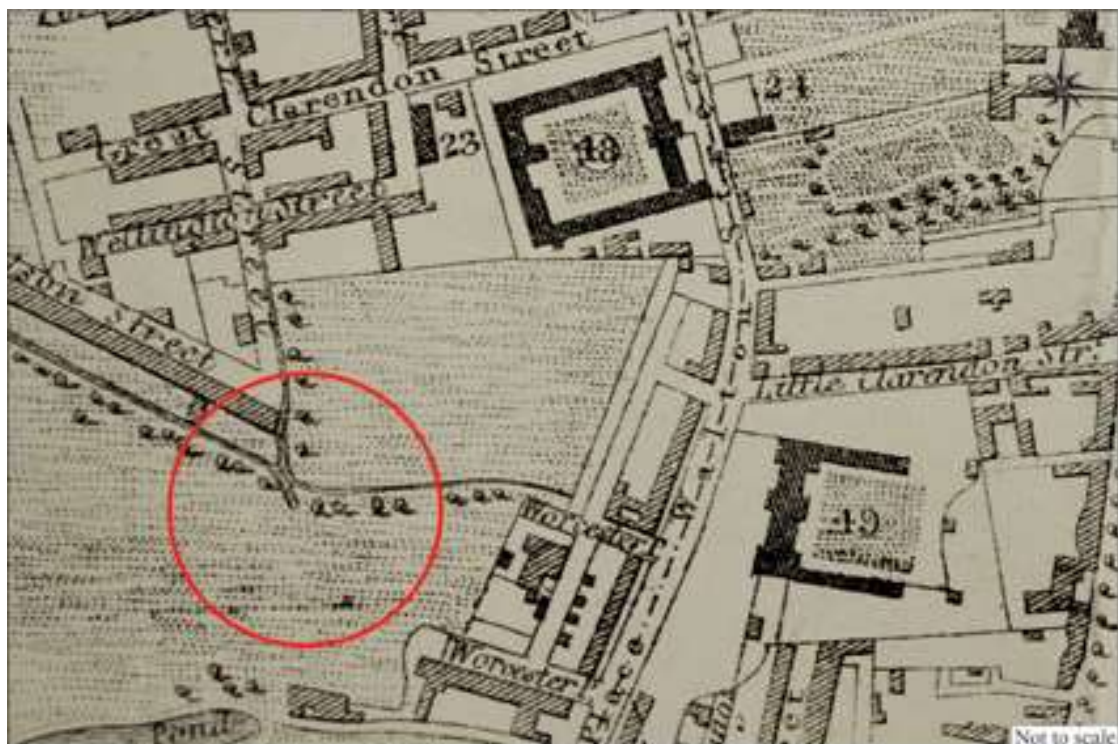


Figure 8: Hoggar's map of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century

A similar situation is evident on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1876 (Oxon 33.15), when Worcester Place is shown as being created for the first time (Fig. 9). Here the boundary wall is shown existing as a straight line, with the plot missing the deviation shown on the ground.



Figure 9: Ordnance Survey map of 1876



Figure 10: Ordnance Survey map of 1900

The boundary wall is in the same location on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1900 (Oxon 33.15), where the Timber Yard is noted for the first time on the opposite side of the wall (Fig. 10). The wall appears to be straight in the Ordnance Survey map of 1921 (Oxon 33.15) (Fig. 11), and also in the map of 1939 (Oxon 33.15) (Fig. 12).



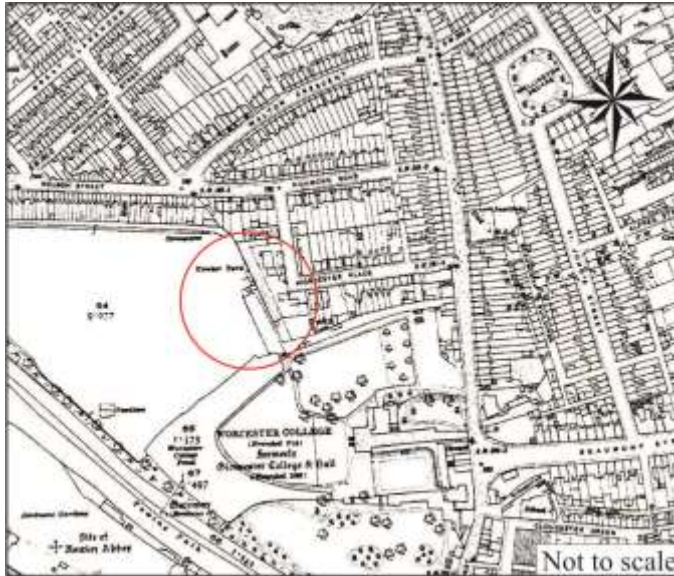


Figure 11: Ordnance Survey map of 1921

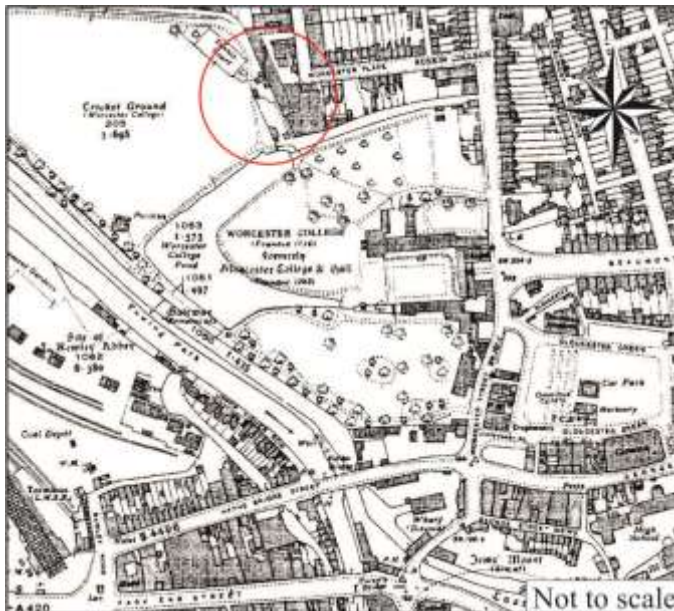


Figure 12: Ordnance Survey map of 1939

### 3 DESCRIPTION OF WORCESTER COLLEGE BOUNDARY WALL

#### 3.1 Introduction and General Description *(by Steve Leech)*

The wall 1000 was orientated northwest to southeast (plate 1) before curving (plate 3) and continuing on a north to south orientation. This structure measured about 1.9m high above ground level, and had a foundation that extended below ground level for a further 1.2m. This gave a general height of the construction from the base of the foundation of 3.1m. The base of the wall was revealed by a test pit (Fig. 13, plate 2).

The wall was built of limestone blocks that were roughly hewn and partially dressed, predominantly of a rectangular shape measuring 0.2m in length by 0.1m thick. It was



apparent that the limestone blocks were originally bonded with a lime mortar, which extended on average 12 courses above ground level.

In places it was apparent that parts of the wall had been re-pointed using a cement mortar and that some places had been filled by bricks. The wall had been capped with concrete to stabilise it.



Plate 1: Boundary wall 1000 looking northwest



Plate 2: Boundary wall 1000

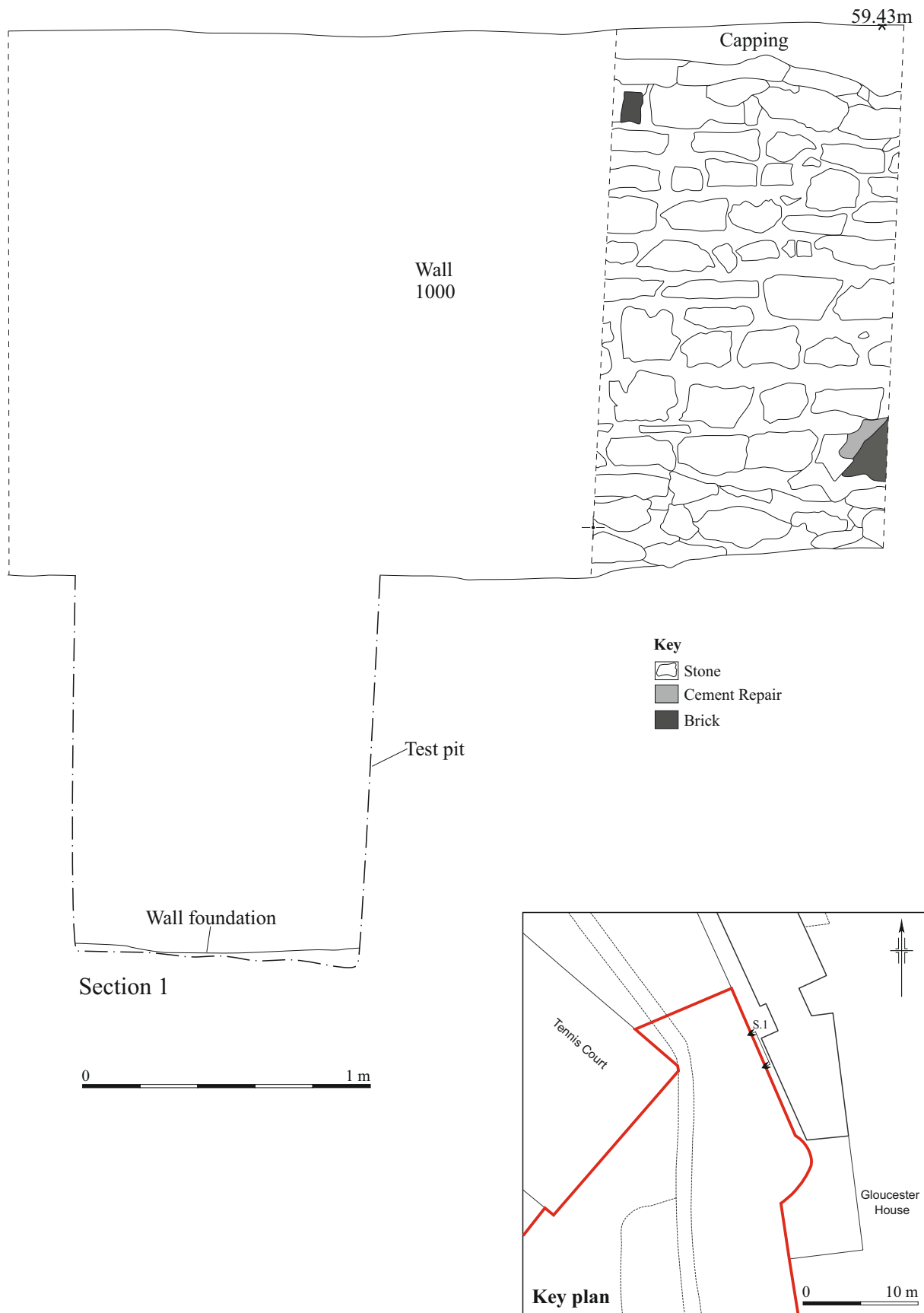


Figure 13: Southwest facing section of wall 1000



Plate 3: Boundary wall 1000, showing part of area dismantled

## **4 ASSESSMENT**

### **4.1 Phases**

The wall is undoubtedly of two phases. The earliest part of the wall is of a 19<sup>th</sup> century date and was constructed *c.* 1817 when the gardens were laid out. Phase 2 of the design concerns 20<sup>th</sup> century rebuilds. It is apparent from map evidence that the curving part of the wall that was demolished is part of a 20<sup>th</sup> century re-build as this bend is not shown on the Fourth Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1939.

### **4.2 Listed Status**

Some nine structures are listed at Worcester College, one of which includes the garden boundary walls. The garden is also listed as a grade II\* garden or park.

### **4.3 Historic and Architectural Assessment**

The structure was considered to be part of a feature that was of national importance.

## **5 THE CURRENT PROPOSAL**

The current proposal is to demolish part of the boundary wall as part of the construction of the auditorium and lake extension.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

John Moore Heritage Services carried out a photographic record and report on part of a listed boundary wall that was to be demolished at Worcester College.

Map regression and historical sources indicate that part of the structure was initially constructed in 1817 as Phase 1. There are indications that post 1939 the course of the boundary was altered and the curve in the wall inserted, interpreted here as Phase 2. This later build is the part under present demolition.

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