



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

12 ST JOHN STREET,

OXFORD OX1 2LQ

NGR SP 51071 06613

MAY 2021

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FIELDWORK DATE 28th and 29th April 2021

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Digitised copies of the primary records are
available on OASIS



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SUMMARY

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at 12 St John Street, Oxford (NGR SP 51071 06613) during the construction of a rear extension. A former cultivation soil, likely to pre-date the construction of 12 St John Street, was the most significant finding. This deposit was overlain by a thick garden soil, presumably associated with the construction and occupation of the current building.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located on the east side of St John Street, north of Pusey Place (NGR SP 51071 06613).

The site lies at approximately 64m aOD and the underlying geology is Oxford Clay Formation and West Walton Formation, overlain by superficial deposits of Summertown-Radley sand and gravel.

1.2 Planning Background

Oxford City Council granted planning permission for **Erection of a single storey rear extension**. (20/01199/FUL). Due to the potential damage to the historic environment a condition was attached:

4 No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has 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. All works shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: Because the development may have a damaging effect on known or suspected elements of the historic environment of the people of Oxford and their visitors, including Late Saxon, medieval and post-medieval remains (DH4 Oxford Local Plan 2036).

1.3 Archaeological Background

A search of the City of Oxford Urban Historic Environment Record (COUHER) was made with a radius of 200m from the site boundary; the results of this search are discussed below in chronological order.

Prehistoric

The site is located within an extensive yet poorly defined landscape of prehistoric funerary and ritual monuments, extending between the Rivers Cherwell and Thames and north towards University Parks (MOX26293: Centred SP 5 0).

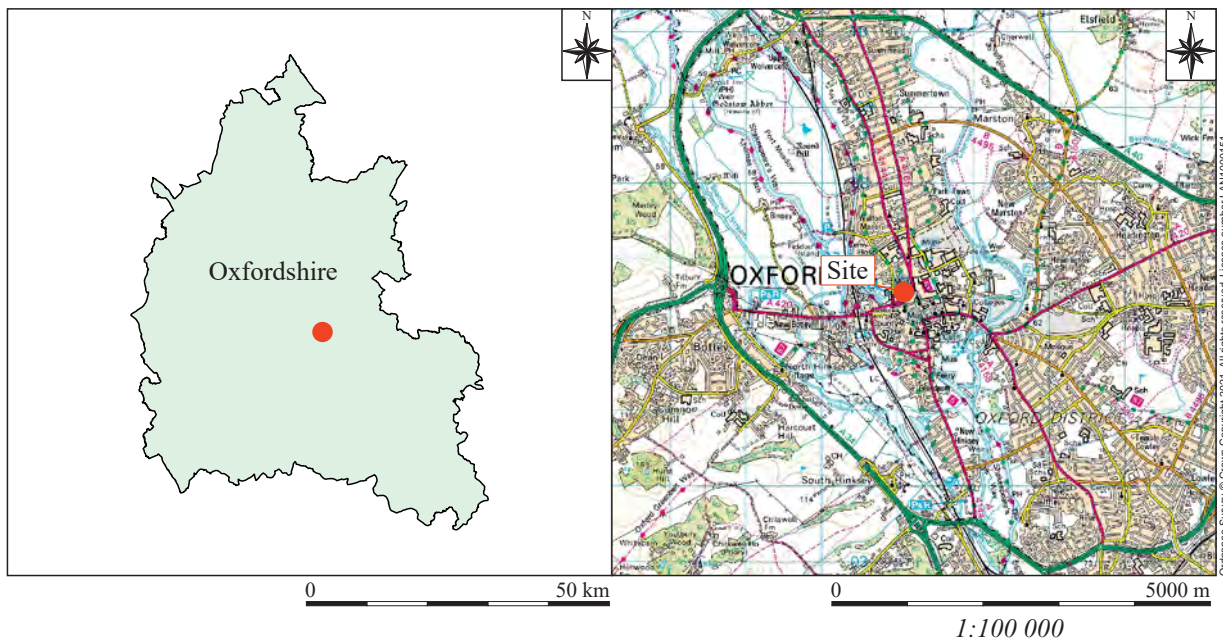


Figure 1: Site location

Archaeological investigation undertaken at numbers 7-11 St John Street recorded an undated feature of possible prehistoric origins (MOC26961, EOX5728: SP 5107 0660). The feature, which was only partially revealed, had steep sides and was filled with re-deposited loess, a common element of prehistoric and late Saxon features excavated elsewhere within the city. Further south two possible Bronze Age barrows were recorded during excavations at the Sackler Library, 30m south east of the site (MOX26288: centred SP 5108 0654); these were seen intermittently as two curvilinear U-shaped ditches.

Roman

The only evidence for Roman activity within the area of the site comes from occasional chance finds made during construction. A Romano-British quern stone was found in the area of St John Street in the early 20th century (MOX11463: SP 5105 0660), while 200m south east a gold coin was found (MOX11440: SP 5124 0651).

Early Medieval and Medieval

During the early medieval period the site was located on the peripheral edge of Oxford, approximately 250m north of the town's defences. Excavations at the Sackler Library recorded artefacts dating to the period, however no associated features were identified (MOX25968, EOX4812: centred SP 5105 0657). An early street surface of possible early medieval date was found at St Giles (MOX26261: centred SP 5118 0677). The area of St Giles, located approximately 140m east, is situated along the main north-south route through Oxford and as such was likely the location of extra-mural settlement. A silver penny dating to the 8th century was found in the St Giles area when digging the foundations for the Martyrs Memorial in the 19th century (MOX11656: SP 5124 0652).

During the medieval period the area of St John Street and Beaumont Street was the location of Beaumont Palace, a royal palace built by Henry I in the 12th century (MOX25968, EOX4812: centred SP 5105 0657). In the early 14th century the buildings were granted to the Carmelite Friars, and elements of the buildings survived until the 19th century when Beaumont Street was laid out. Excavation at the Sackler Library, approximately 50m south, recorded substantially built limestone foundation walls. These were found in association with painted window glass, roof and floor tiles, in addition to a grid of tree planting pits. A section of stone walling located to the rear of Walton Street may have medieval components associated with the palace (MOC26963: SP 5099 0669).

Archaeological investigations within the wider area have recorded a range of evidence for medieval activity, including: rubbish pits containing 13th century pottery (MOX11670: SP 5110 0660); a medieval well (MOX11683: SP 510 066) and fragments of medieval boundary walls (MOX15024: SP 51086 06661) in the area of Pusey Lane, immediately east of the site. In the area of the Ashmolean Museum excavation in the 1990s produced evidence for a continuous sequence of extra-mural occupation from the 12th century onwards (MOX11814: SP 5114 0657). A stone foundation wall and a pit containing late 13th and early 14th century pottery was found in Beaumont Street (MOX11602: SP 5112 0651). Along St Giles, 100m east, excavation to the rear of 66 and 67 recorded five 11th to 13th century pits, a cultivation soil dating to the same period, a well and a soakaway (MOX14996: SP 51177 06613).

Post-medieval

The conjectural line of Oxford's Civil War defences crosses the area, approximately 100m north of the site (MOX25952, 25954: centred SP 514 063). Archaeological evidence of these defences has been recorded during archaeological investigation throughout Oxford, however their exact route remains uncertain.

Excavation undertaken at the West Quad of St Cross College, approximately 60m north-north east of the site, recorded an inhumation burial of 17th century date (MOC26951: SP 5108 0667). The burial was notable due to the fact that it was not located within a graveyard and as such may represent the body of a Catholic recusant.

St John Street was laid out between 1825 and 1835 in the area of the former Beaumont Palace (MOX25971: centred SP 5104 0665). The northern end of the street appears to have remained undeveloped until the later post-medieval period, as it is depicted as fields on Loggan's map of 1673. Beaumont Street, adjoining the southern end of St John Street, was laid out in the late 1820s (MOX25969: centred SP 5107 0651).

A watching brief undertaken during building works to the rear of 7-11 St John Street recorded a stone lined square pit which contained a large quantity of 19th century artefactual material (MOC26961, EOX5728: SP 5107 0660). This was interpreted as a stone lined cess pit, backfilled in the late 19th century after the introduction of mains sewerage to Oxford.

Negative Investigations

A number of archaeological investigations have been undertaken throughout the area, some of which have resulted in no significant findings; only those of direct bearing to the site are included here.

A watching brief undertaken at 57 St John Street recorded a cultivation soil and features associated with the construction of the building, though no further archaeological remains were encountered (EOX2725: SP 5105 0659). A watching brief undertaken at 54 St John Street recorded a similar sequence of development (EOC6401: SP 5103 0660), as did a watching brief at 58 St John Street (EOC6402: SP 5104 0658).

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To identify and record any significant archaeological remains bearing in mind the proximity of prehistoric, early medieval and medieval remains within the immediate area.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the Oxford City Archaeological Officer, the archaeological advisor to Oxford City Council.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2020).

3.2 Methodology

Monitored work comprised the hand excavation of a single footing's trench 0.5m in width and up to 1.1m in depth. In total the trench measured 6.5m in length, by 4m in width.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was also produced.

The resultant spoil from the works was visually scanned, especially for finds relating to medieval Oxford.

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. pit cuts, numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material, while numbers in bold indicate structural features.

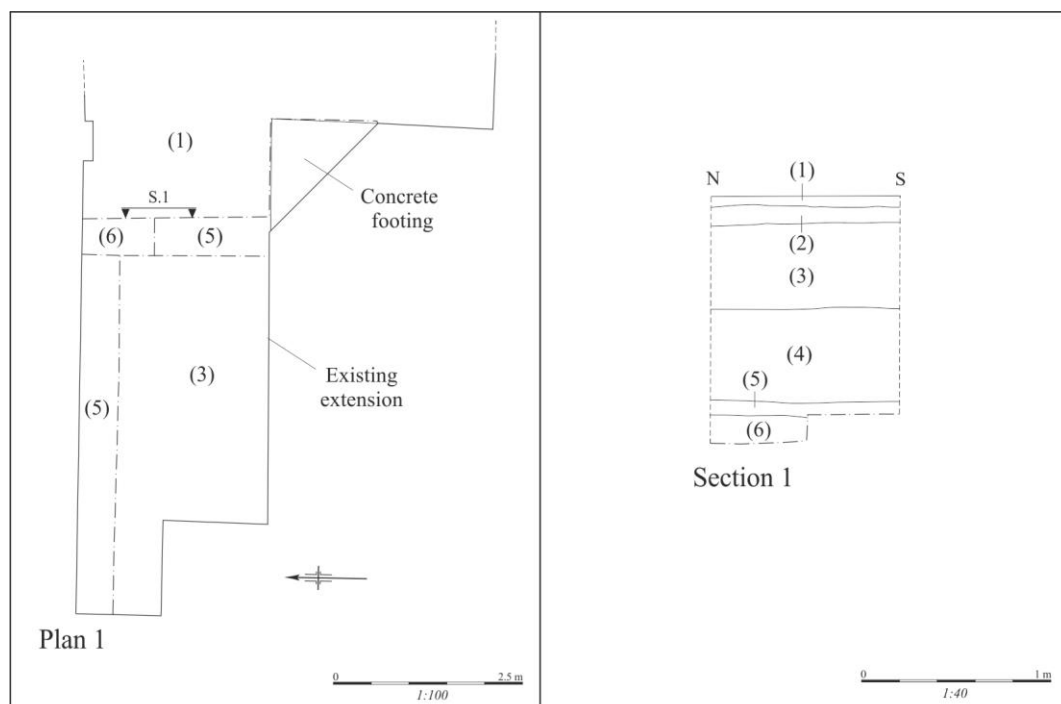


Figure 2: Plan of footings trench and section 1.

The lowest deposit encountered was Summertown-Radley gravel (6), appearing as a compact light brownish yellow sandy gravel (Figure 2: Section 1); the deposit was at least 0.18m in depth, extending below the limit of excavation (l.o.e.). This was overlain by a deposit of firm mid reddish brown silty clay (5), 90mm in depth; this was interpreted as loess supranatural. Overlying this deposit was overlain by a friable dark brown silty clay 0.5m in thickness (4). This deposit had the appearance of a former cultivation soil, formed prior to the construction of 12 St John Street. Former cultivation soil (4) was overlain by a deposit of made ground or garden soil 0.5m in thickness (3), likely to be associated with the construction and occupation of 12 St John Street. This was overlain by a modern patio (1) and associated bedding layer (2), with a combined thickness of 0.15m.



Plate 1: Section 1, within footings trench. Looking north east

Reliability of Results

The watching brief was undertaken in good weather with excellent cooperation from site staff; as such the results are considered to be reliable.

5 FINDS

No artefactual evidence was recovered during the course of the investigation.

6 DISCUSSION

No significant archaeological remains were encountered during the watching brief. A former cultivation soil, likely to pre-date the construction of 12 St John Street, being the most significant finding. Archaeological investigation at 54, 57 and 58 St John Street recorded a similar sequence of deposits. This deposit was overlain by a thick garden soil, presumably associated with the construction and occupation of the current building.

7 ARCHIVE

A digital archive is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services (ID 4374) and will be made available upon request (to admin@jmheritageservices.co.uk). Digitised copies of all the primary records will be made publicly available as appendix to the final report submitted to OASIS (johnmoor1-420815).

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2020 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

John Moore Heritage Services 2020 20/01199/FUL-12 *St John Street, Oxford OX1 2LQ, Archaeological Watching Brief*. Unpublished document

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| Grid Squares | Area/Trench <i>FOOTING TRENCH</i> | Context Type <i>LAYER</i> | Site Code <i>OX555 20</i> | Context <i>(1)</i> |
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| DEPOSIT 1 Compaction 2 Colour 3 Composition 4 Inclusions 5 Horizon clarity 6 Comments 7 Method & Conditions | Description <i>1. MODERN PAVING SLABS</i> <i>& BLOODING LAYER</i> |
| CUT 1 Shape in plan 2 Corners 3 Break of slope-top 4 Sides 5 Break of slope-base 6 Base 7 Orientation 8 Inclination of axis 9 Truncation 10 Fill Nos. 11 Other comments | |
| Dimensions | Length: <i>2 TRENCH</i> Thickness/Depth: <i>SOMA</i> Width: <i>2 TRENCH</i> |

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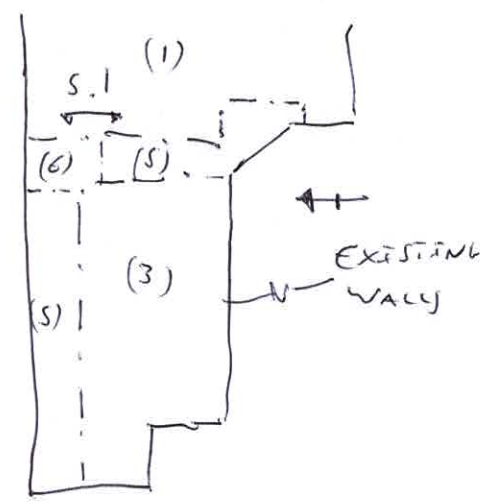
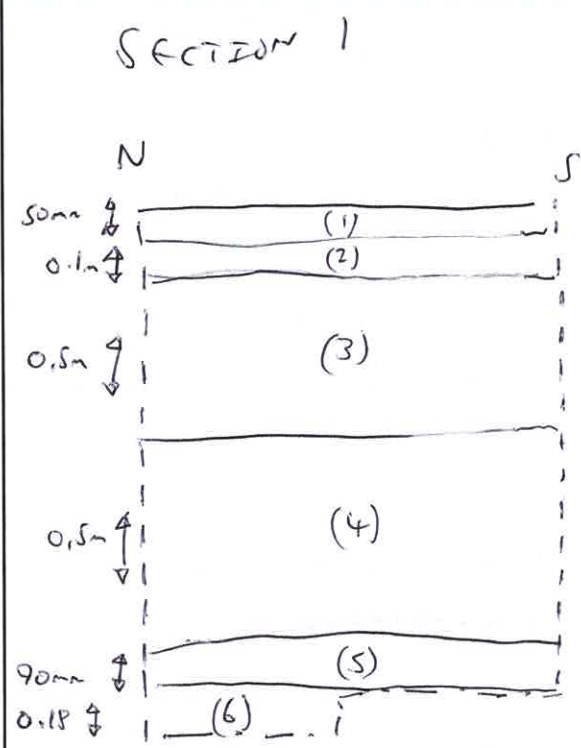
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MODERN PAVING SLABS FORMING PATIO

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PLAN 1

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| DEPOSIT 1 Compaction 2 Colour 3 Composition 4 Inclusions 5 Horizon clarity 6 Comments 7 Method & Conditions | Description <i>1. COMPACT 2. MUD</i> <i>GRAY 3. GRAVEL</i> <i>4. /</i> <i>5. CLEAN</i> <i>6. /</i> <i>7. HAND DIG. AUGMENT</i> |
| CUT 1 Shape in plan 2 Corners 3 Break of slope-top 4 Sides 5 Break of slope-base 6 Base 7 Orientation 8 Inclination of axis 9 Truncation 10 Fill Nos. 11 Other comments | |
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Interpretation & Discussion: Internal External Structural Other (specify)

MADE GROUND / GARDEN SOIL, PERHAPS ASSOCIATED
 W. CONSTRUCTION OF 12 ST JOHN STREET

MODERN PLANT POT -
NOT RETAINED

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| CUT 1 Shape in plan 2 Corners 3 Break of slope-top 4 Sides 5 Break of slope-base 6 Base 7 Orientation 8 Inclination of axis 9 Truncation 10 Fill Nos. 11 Other comments | |
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Interpretation & Discussion: Internal External Structural Other (specify)

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SUBSOIL or TRUNCATED BY PLOUGHING

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| DEPOSIT 1 Compaction 2 Colour 3 Composition 4 Inclusions 5 Horizon clarity 6 Comments 7 Method & Conditions | Description 1. COMPACT 2. TO LIGHT BROWNISH YELLOW 3. SANDY GRAVEL 4. / 5. CLEAR 6. / 7. HAND TOOLS, GRASSY DAMP. OVERCAST |
| CUT 1 Shape in plan 2 Corners 3 Break of slope-top 4 Sides 5 Break of slope-base 6 Base 7 Orientation 8 Inclination of axis 9 Truncation 10 Fill Nos. 11 Other comments | |
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| Stratigraphic matrix | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> (5) <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | Physical Relationship |
| | This context is: <input type="checkbox"/> (6) | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> CO-C <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| | BELOW Under: Filled by: Cut by: | |
| | CONTEMPORARY Group No.: Same as: | |
| | ABOVE Over: Fill of: Cuts: | |

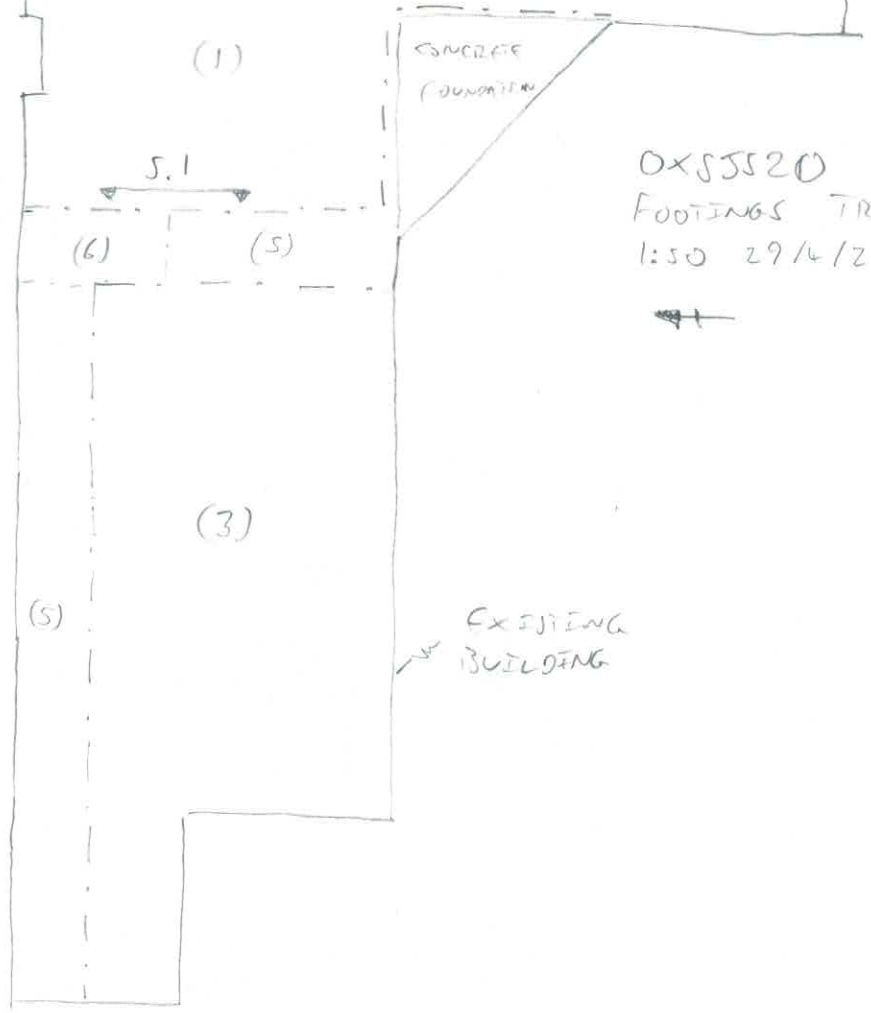
| | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|------------|-----------------|
| Interpretation & Discussion: | Internal | External | Structural | Other (specify) |
| NATURAL GRAVELY | | | | |
| | | | | |
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| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Environmental Samples Nos: | FINDS none pot CBM fauna flora flint glass metal burntmat. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Small Finds: | |
| Other finds (specify): | |

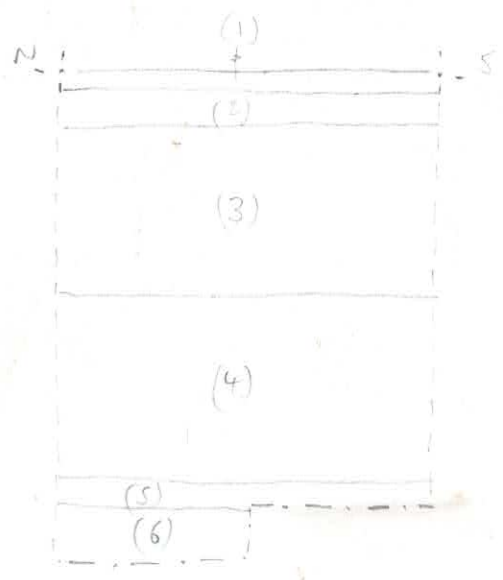
| | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Provisional Date: | Checked by (on site): | Date: |
| Completed by: TJS Date: 29/4/21 | Checked by (office): | Date: |

| | | |
|---------------------|---|--------------------|
| Sketch Profile/Plan | Context: (6) | |
| <p>Set (1)</p> | | |
| LEVELS | | |
| On Plan: | On Section: | Drawing Sheet Nos: |
| PHOTOS | | |
| Digital Nos: | B&W (Please use the following conventions: F= film no. & No.=frame no.) | |
| <p>7-9</p> | | |

OXSSS20 | SW#1



OXSSS20 P.1
FOOTINGS TRENCH
1:50 29/4/21 TRJ



OXSSS20 S.1
TRENCH SEC
1:20 29/4/21 TRJ

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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Printable version

OASIS ID: johnmoor1-420815

Project details

| | |
|--|--|
| Project name | 12 ST JOHN STREET, OXFORD |
| Short description of the project | An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at 12 St John Street, Oxford, during the construction of a rear extension. No significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered. A former cultivation soil, likely to pre-date the construction of 12 St John Street, was the most significant finding. This deposit was overlain by a thick garden soil, presumably associated with the construction and occupation of the current building. |
| Project dates | Start: 28-04-2021 End: 29-04-2021 |
| Previous/future work | No / Not known |
| Any associated project reference codes | 4374 - Contracting Unit No. |
| Any associated project reference codes | OXSJS 20 - Sitecode |
| Any associated project reference codes | 20/01199/FUL - Planning Application No. |
| Any associated project reference codes | johnmoor1-420815 - OASIS form ID |
| Type of project | Recording project |
| Site status | Listed Building |
| Current Land use | Other 5 - Garden |
| Monument type | BURIED SOIL HORIZON Post Medieval |
| Significant Finds | NONE None |
| Investigation type | ""Watching Brief"" |
| Prompt | National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF |

Project location

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Country | England |
| Site location | OXFORDSHIRE OXFORD OXFORD 12 St John Street, Oxford |
| Postcode | OX12LQ |

Study area 26 Square metres
 Site coordinates SP 51071 06613 51.75542147051 -1.26002248772 51 45 19 N 001 15 36 W Point
 Height OD / Depth Min: 1.16m Max: 1.26m

Project creators

Name of Organisation John Moore Heritage Services
 Project brief originator Oxford City Council
 Project design originator JMHS
 Project director/manager John Moore
 Project supervisor Tom Rose-Jones
 Type of sponsor/funding body client

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No
 Digital Archive recipient John Moore Heritage Services
 Digital Archive ID 4373
 Digital Contents "Stratigraphic","other"
 Digital Media available "GIS","Images raster / digital photography","Images vector","Text"
 Digital Archive notes Digital files related to the project are maintained by John Moore Heritage Services (ID 4373) and will be made available upon request (to admin@jmheritageservices.co.uk).
 Paper Archive Exists? No

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
 Title AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT 12 ST JOHN STREET, OXFORD
 Author(s)/Editor(s) Rose-Jones, T.
 Author(s)/Editor(s) Moore, J.
 Other bibliographic details 4374
 Date 2021
 Issuer or publisher John Moore Heritage Services
 Place of issue or publication Wheatley
 Description 30 A4 pages PDF including primary records

Entered by Simona Denis (admin@jmheritageservices.co.uk)
Entered on 11 June 2021

OASIS:

Please e-mail [Historic England](#) for OASIS help and advice

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