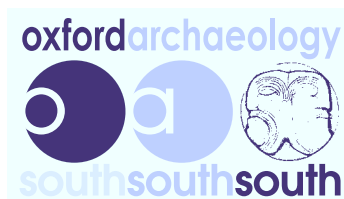


President's Lodgings Wall Magdalen College Oxford



**Archaeological
Watching Brief and
Building Recording**



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Prepared by: Deirdre Forde
Position: Historic Buildings Archaeologist

Checked by: Jon Gill
Position: Senior Project Manager (Historic Buildings)

Approved by: Julian Munby Signed.....
Position: Head of Buildings Archaeology
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Oxford Archaeology

Janus House

Osney Mead

Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800

e: oasouth@oxfordarch.co.uk

f: (0044) 01865 793496

w: www.thehumanjourney.net

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President's Lodgings Wall, Magdalen College, Oxford

Historic Building Investigation and Watching Brief

Written by Deirdre Forde

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President's Lodgings Wall, Magdalen College, Oxford

Summary

Oxford Archaeology was commissioned to carry out an archaeological watching brief and building recording at Magdalen College, High Street, Oxford. The work was part of a condition attached to the granting of a Listed Building Application for the demolition and reconstruction of a 16m length of the President's Lodging Garden Wall.

Over many years, the wall has begun to lean forward and bulge visibly towards the north. Measures such as iron supports and cement repair had been implemented over time but recently it had become evident that a more long term solution was required. Magdalen College proposed to dismantle the wall and rebuild it with the original stone, using materials such as lime mortar to bond, which is compatible with the historic fabric. The wall was photographed and recorded by Oxford Archaeology prior to demolition and an archaeological watching brief was maintained during the period of below ground disturbance.

A later phase of construction was identified at the top of the wall however, due to weathering, repointing and the general poor condition of the face of the wall on both sides, no more phases were identified. The below ground watching brief revealed evidence of the wall's foundations but no earlier archaeological features.





1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by Magdalen College to undertake a watching brief and historic building survey of an historic wall at Magdalen College, High Street, Oxford. The work was part of a condition attached to the granting of Listed Building Consent for the demolition and reconstruction of a 16m length of the President's Lodging Garden Wall.

1.2 Aims and objectives

1.2.1 The main aim of the watching brief element of the project was to record the presence or absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological features within the area affected by the demolition and rebuild.

1.2.2 To produce a photographic record of the wall prior to its demolition.

1.2.3 To make available the results of the investigation.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 A watching brief was maintained during the period of ground works that may have affected or revealed unknown archaeological features.

1.3.2 Prior to the demolition and reconstruction of the wall a record of the existing wall was produced. The main element of this recording was a series of black and white photographs which were each printed to archive standard at 10" x 8". These were supplied to the contractor to assist in the rebuilding of the wall and to ensure that the rebuilt wall retained the same general character as the previous structure. A copy of these 10" x 8" photographs will also be deposited with the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies.

1.3.3 In addition outline annotations were made to an existing architectural survey of the wall to interpret the phasing within the wall. This was intended to increase understanding of the development of the wall and shows the main constructional phases. A textual description of the wall was produced to detail its character and the main features within it.

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The following is a summary of a history of the college grounds taken from John Steane's article: 'The Grounds of Magdalen College Oxford, 1571-1603', in *Oxoniensia* Vol. LXIII (1998).

2.1.2 The ground now known as the Grove had belonged in the late 12th century to Hugh de Malaunay, who granted it together with the meadow formerly known as Cowlake or Great Mead to the Hospital of St. John the Baptist. The hospital originally stood on the western edge of this land facing the city wall and the



- graveyard of St. Peter's in the East. Henry III acquired the land in 1231 and gave it and half of the Garden of the Jews to the refounded hospital, which was then rebuilt near the Cherwell bridge (Pettypont) in the south-eastern corner of the college site. Bishop Waynflete acquired the decayed hospital to found his college but did not replace the buildings in the first 10 years.
- 2.1.3 As part of the process to define and defend the college which lay outside the city walls, the construction of the Long Wall was begun in 1467. This wall still bounds the college grounds to the west and north. The college did not, however, extend as far as the corner of Longwall Street, and there was a row of properties facing the High Street with their back wall facing onto the college Grove. The end of this row nearest the college was occupied by the Magdalen Grammar School, and the adjacent Magdalen Hall, and there was a gap between them and the west wall of the college..
- 2.1.4 By the time of Agas' map of Oxford in 1578 (Fig. 3) the college quadrangle had been built with the President's Lodging extending to the west wall, and beyond that the Grammar School and row of houses to the west, with their gardens running northwards towards the grove. The line of the deer park to the north of the garden has already been established and the current outline of the President's lodgings wall is probably identical with the east half of the wall enclosing these gardens at the north end.
- 2.1.5 During the English Civil War Charles I had occupied Oxford and after the battle of Edgehill 'the ordinance and great guns were driven into Magdalen College Grove, about 26 or 27 pieces with all their carriages'. Between 1642 to 1645 the Grove was the headquarters of the royal Ordnance with engineers setting up workshops, forges and foundries. Several areas of the long wall have fire reddened areas of limestone possibly due to this activity.
- 2.1.6 On David Loggan's map of 1675, no evidence for the civil war defences are shown in this area. The buildings of Magdalen Hall and Grammar School to the west of the college (including the site of the current President's Garden) had expanded and the gardens are shown as enclosed by high walls, together with evidence of formal landscaping. The eastern side of the grove was occupied by formal gardens including ponds and a bowling green.
- 2.1.7 It is possible to plot with reasonable confidence the footprint of the current wall on Loggan's map (Figure 4). The map appears to show that in 1675 there was no wall along the eastern quarter of the modern footprint of the wall. At this date this point formed the northern edge of the through-passage between the college and Magdalen Hall/Grammar School. Immediately to the west of this point Loggan's map shows the northern gable end of a north/south orientated range, and this appears to have been aligned with the central section of the modern wall in this study. Loggan's map shows that a boundary wall adjoined the west side of the gable, and this would have aligned with the western section of the modern wall.
- 2.1.8 In the 1720s the first mentions of deer start to appear in the college accounts including '£1 4s. 0d for hay for feeding the deer' and 'a basket for the use of the



- deer, 1s. 4d.' By the late 18th-century there are regular payments to individuals for looking after and culling the deer.
- 2.1.9 On Isaac Taylor's map of Oxford in 1750 the New Buildings had been built north of the quadrangle and the formal gardens established in the grove have shrunk in size and number. The row of buildings, their courtyards and gardens facing High Street survive almost unchanged. In 1825 the college ordered that the grove be separated from the New Buildings by a sunk fence instead of an iron railing.
- 2.1.10 By the time the 1:500 OS map of Oxford was drawn in 1876, the row of buildings facing High Street had been mostly demolished and the current President's Lodging had been built. Although the majority of the garden walls associated with these buildings have disappeared the wall running along the southern edge of the grove has survived. The President's lodgings garden is marked on the map but appears to be more than twice the size it is today, stretching all the way over to the Magdalen College stables to the west, which were located at the west side of today's St. Swithun's Quad. The wall that exists today is most likely the wall that appears on this map.

3 PRESIDENT'S LODGINGS WALL DESCRIPTION

3.1 Introduction and general description

- 3.1.1 The wall in the current study is the rear garden wall of the President's Lodgings within Magdalen College. The President's Lodging is located on the north-western edge of the college. The garden is situated to the north of the Lodging and forms a rectangular area enclosed by stone walls. As shown above, the wall was in part a survival of the historic garden wall of Magdalen Hall and Grammar School. The site of the proposed building work forms part of the northern wall of the garden and is bounded to the north by the deer path running around the southern edge of Magdalen Grove (the deer park) and to the south, west and east by gardens.
- 3.1.2 It is of dry-stone construction and for the purpose of the survey prior to archaeological investigation, it was divided into four sections. Section 1 is the west boundary wall of the garden and 2 and 3 are the north boundary wall, 2 being the west side and 3, the east. Section 4 is an extension to the west of the north wall, past St. Swithun's Quad.
- 3.1.3 Section 2, the subject of this report, which is to be demolished and rebuilt, is 14.4m in length and 3.62m in height on the north (outer) side before reducing by 0.86m where it meets section 3 on the west side (Plate 1). It is approximately 0.4m wide and 2.28m in height on the south (inner) elevation as it retains approximately 1.34m of raised ground inside the garden.
- 3.1.4 Over the past 130 years, section 2 has begun to lean forward and bulge visibly towards the north. It may have deflected by up to 255mm. The wall was subject to some repairs 6 years ago but since then, the wall has moved up to 15mm. The bulge in the middle of the wall appears to be caused by outward pressure, or inadequate bearing capacity of the foundations.



3.2 Description of North side; section 2

- 3.2.1 The wall bulges outward considerably in the centre of the north facing side (Plate 2). Where it meets section 1, it has moved forward and out of line by approximately 80mm. Cement repair has been applied here at the interface between section 1 and section 2, but as it has bulged forward, this thick layer of cement has cracked and is coming away from the east wall, showing that the wall has moved since the repair was made (Plate 3). Underneath this cement repair is the evidence of similar incompatible repair work over the years.
- 3.2.2 There are two steel supports built against the wall towards the west side. These may have been put in place to support the wall (Plate 4).
- 3.2.3 The face of section 2 is obscured by pollution and lichen but most stones appear to be large rectangular dressed stones (Plate 5). Some courses are narrower than others but this seems to be part of the construction rather than an indication of different phasing. However, phasing can be identified in some parts, most notably the latest phase, which is approximately 1m thick along the top (Plate 6). This makes up 5 courses underneath the coping stones and although the stones are smaller they appear to be the same stone as the rest of the wall. It is largely pointed with a modern cement ribbon pointing but is in better condition than the lower masonry. Where cement repointing has fallen off, a distinctive yellow, sandy mortar pointing can be seen.
- 3.2.4 The faces of the stones throughout the rest of the wall are in very poor condition. They are in slightly better condition where it appears that vegetation was removed in recent years and where there is no cement pointing, a sandy orange mortar can be seen. Originally, there would have been no pointing. Over the years, the wall has been pointed with various incompatible materials such as cement mortar. In places, this appears to have damaged the face of the stones but it would not have affected the structural stability of the stone.

3.3 Description of South side; section 2

- 3.3.1 On the south side is a raised garden paved with York stone slabs. The width of this terrace is approximately 5m with a sloping embankment to the north. The wall stands at a height approximately 2.28m above this. It is not immediately noticeable from this side that the wall is bulging but on closer inspection it would appear that it is the load of the raised garden that is causing the wall to move outwards.
- 3.3.2 On this side of the wall is a low stone seating which was presumably built against it. There is now a gap of up to 10cm between the wall and the seat (Plate 7). Where the wall meets the west wall, the concrete repairs have cracked off and the wall has moved away from them (Plate 8).
- 3.3.3 Mortar and cement pointing appears to be failing in parts of the wall visible through vegetation. Other areas have been painted with cement. Towards the bottom where the wall meets the garden flower bed, the stone is in very poor condition (Plate 9).



3.3.4 Visibility of historic phasing is obscured by vegetation but the masonry on this side is clearly more irregular and constructed using smaller and more rounded stones. Towards the east side of the wall, the change in construction phases can be seen. On this side, the later phase under the capstones is made up of 5 courses. Here, a thick layer of a yellowish, sandy lime mortar is visible between phases. On this side, as on the north side, the stones which make up this phase of construction are consistently smaller than those of the rest of the wall.

4 WATCHING BRIEF

- 4.1.1 After the wall had been dismantled, the foundations became visible. On the east side, approximately 0.4m below ground level, the foundation seem to be a smooth level surface of packed yellowish mortar and large stones (Plate 10). Towards the west side of the trench, this foundation has been removed. Although the masonry in section 3 differed to that of section 2, because it is a different phase of construction, there was no clear break and where section 2 has been removed, the edge of section 3 is quite jagged and broken.
- 4.1.2 There is a retaining wall on the south side of section 3 below ground level of the garden (Plate 11). Three courses of large squared stones are visible beneath the York stone paving. This section shows a clear break in masonry where it would have come into line with the interface between section 2 and section 3.
- 4.1.3 The raised garden contains some very large roots which likely contributed to the movement of the wall (Plate 12).
- 4.1.4 A watching brief was maintained during the intrusive works but no earlier structural remains or features of archaeological interest were detected.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1.1 From the map regression, it would appear that the wall that currently occupies the site (section 2) is the old wall built behind Magdalen hall and Grammar School, and was reused for the garden wall when the president's lodgings was relocated here. Section 1 is likely to be later and is probably contemporary with the President's lodgings as it exists today. Although section 3 is also likely to be an old enclosing wall built behind Magdalen Hall and Grammar School, it is a separate wall to section 2 and was perhaps built at a different time or rebuilt at some point.
- 5.1.2 In conclusion, the wall is a minor element of the college but it is an attractive structure which adds to the visual and historic character of the Central Conservation Area in which it stands. Due to persistent problems with its stability it has been necessary to reform its foundations but the fact that the wall has been rebuilt reusing the same stones, and using pre-works photographs as a guide, should ensure that the new structure retains the general character of the previous wall. It is in character with surrounding structures of the historic park and gardens



of Magdalen College. The different phases and masonry in the wall regardless of weathering and damage caused by repointing, are a part of the wall's historical interest and therefore part of the College's history.

- 5.1.3 The below-ground watching brief revealed evidence of the walls foundations but no earlier archaeological features.

Deirdre Forde

January 2010



APPENDIX A. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Published Sources

Oxoniensia Vol. LXIII.

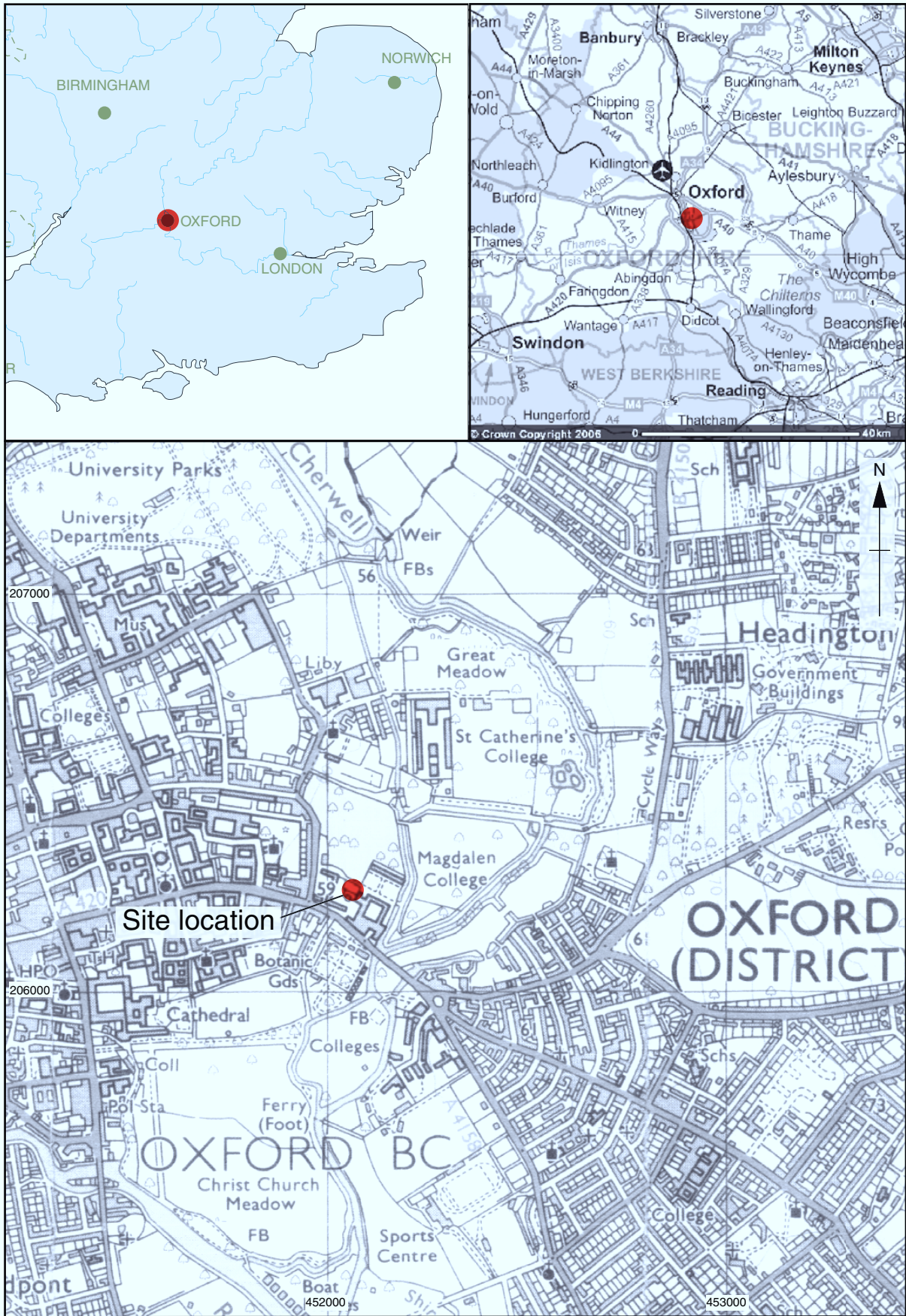
Maps

Agas map 1578

Loggan map 1675

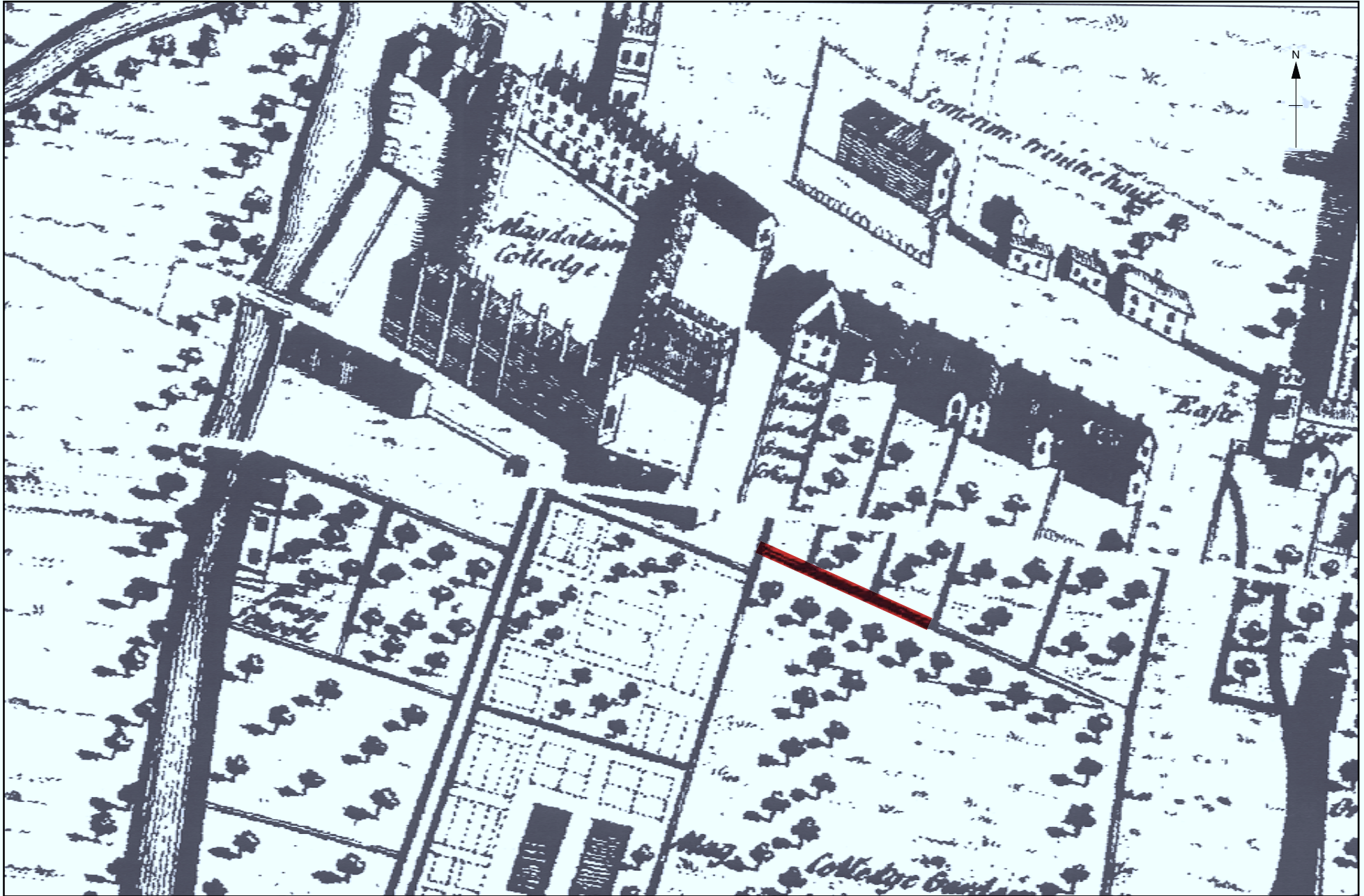
Taylor's map of Oxford 1750

OS map of Oxford 1876



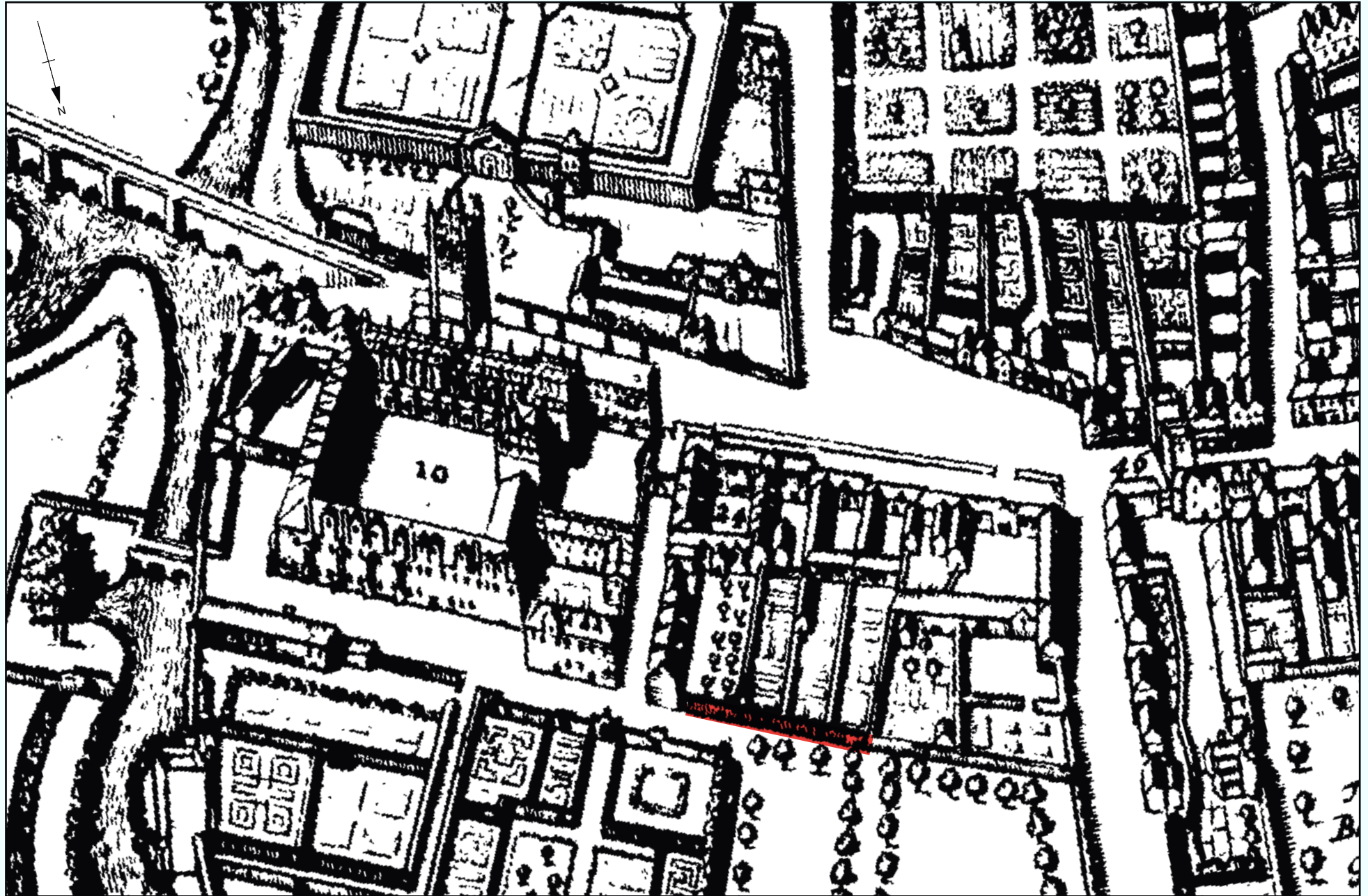
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Figure 1: Site location



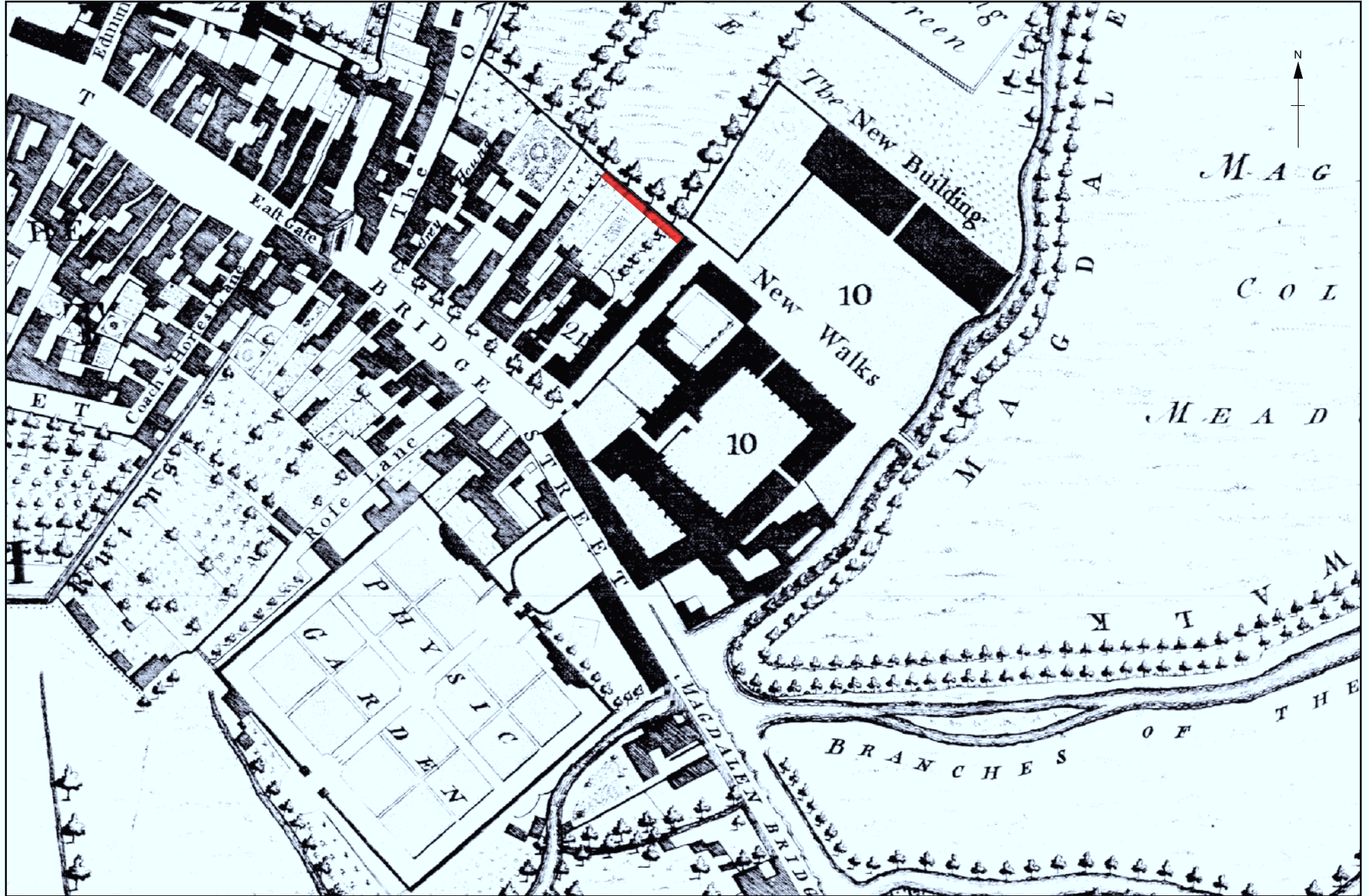
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Figure 3: Agas map 1578, Magdalen College; red line indicates probable location of President's Lodging Wall.



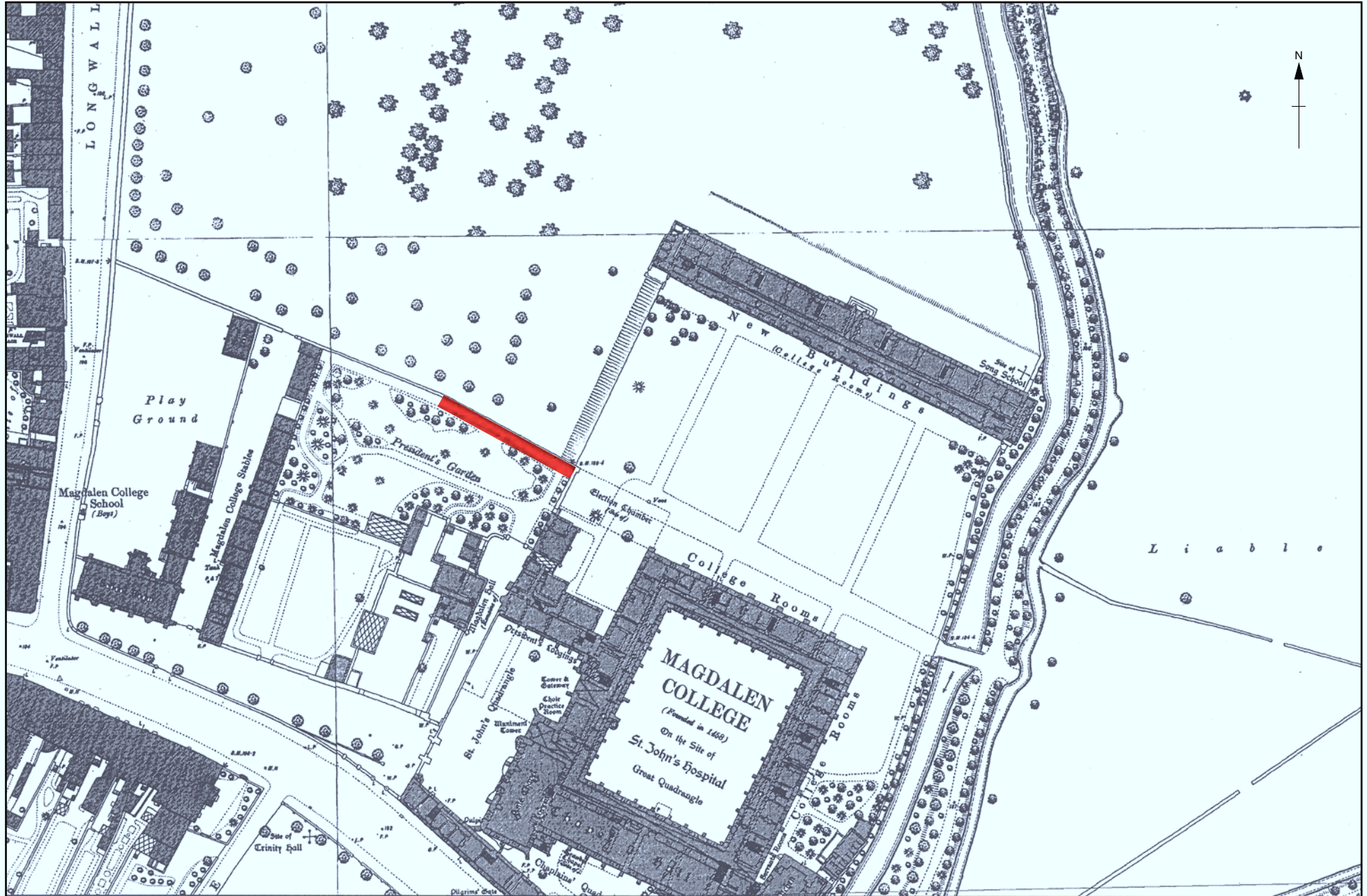
Not to scale

Figure 4: Loggan map 1675, Magdalen College; red line indicates probable location of President's Lodging Wall.



Not to scale

Figure 5: Taylor's map of Oxford 1750, showing Magdalen College; red line indicates location of President's Lodging Wall



Not to scale

Figure 6: OS map of Oxford 1876



Plate 1: President's Lodgings Wall, Magdalen College: View of north face, looking south east



Plate 2: President's Lodgings Wall, Magdalen College: Bulge in north face, looking west



Plate 3: President's Lodgings Wall, Magdalen College: Crack in north face, looking south west



Plate 4: President's Lodgings Wall, Magdalen College: Steel supports on north face, looking south



Plate 5: President's Lodgings Wall, Magdalen College: Coursing on north face, looking south



Plate 6: President's Lodgings Wall, Magdalen College: Coursing on north face, looking south west



Plate 7: President's Lodgings Wall, Magdalen College: Cement repairs on south face, looking north east



Plate 8: President's Lodgings Wall, Magdalen College: Evidence of movement on south face



Plate 9: President's Lodgings Wall, Magdalen College: Foot of wall at south side, looking northwards



Plate 10: President's Lodgings Wall, Magdalen College: Section of wall after dismantling, looking west



Plate 11 : President's Lodgings Wall, Magdalen College: area of wall after dismantling, looking south



OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500
f: +44 (0) 1223 850599
e: oaeast@thehumanjourney.net
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane Mills
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1GF

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: oanorth@thehumanjourney.net
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

OA South

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

OA Grand Ouest

7 Rue des Monderaines
ZI - Ouest
14650 Carpiquet
France

t: +33 (0) 2 49 88 01 01
f: +33 (0) 2 49 88 01 02
e: info@oago.fr
w: <http://oago.fr>

OA Méditerranée

115 Rue Merlot
ZAC La Louvade
34 130 Maugeio
France

t: +33 (0) 4.67.57.86.92
f: +33 (0) 4.67.42.65.93
e: oamed@thehumanjourney.net
w: <http://oamed.fr/>

Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA



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Head Office: Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800*