

St. CROSS COLLEGE. OXFORD. OXSCC 92

The Oxford Archaeological Unit conducted a watching brief at St. Cross College, Pusey Lane, Oxford, during the main building programme in **October 1992**. Specifically this work entailed the machine excavation of three trenches, in order to lay drainage from the light-wells of the dining hall wing. These trenches would involve the disturbance of some of the area exposed in the OAU evaluation carried out on the 10th and 11th of June, 1991 (St Cross College, Oxford. Archaeological Investigations in Advance of Redevelopment. Oxford Archaeological Unit 1991).

Trench 2 of the 1991 evaluation identified the SE corner of the Friends Meeting House, known to have been built in 1687, and demolished early in the 20th century. An E-W property boundary wall, apparently forming the S wall of the Meeting House, was located, and two N-S walls, close to the E wall of the Meeting House, were also uncovered.

The context numbers used in the watching brief are, where appropriate, those used in the evaluation. New context numbers are a continuation of the sequence.

DESCRIPTION

Trench 1

Trench 1, oriented W-E, 4.0m x 1.5m and 3.0m deep, was excavated and partly shored up before being examined. However, wall 2/21 was identified, comprising mortared ashlar blocks, well-faced on the E side, and extending approximately 2.0m below the pre-1992 ground surface. A similarly constructed wall 2/27 was located 1.75m to the E, also oriented N-S and extending to a similar depth, and faced only on the W side. By probing between the shoring planks on the N side of the trench it was established that a cross wall existed between 2/21 and 2/27. The top W corner of this wall was subsequently revealed, (2/28).

Similar investigation on the S side of the trench revealed another W-E cross wall between 2/21 and 2/27. Enough of it was visible to establish that it was the continuation of wall 2/20 to the E.

The machine excavated fill was a loose dark brown silty clay with some gravel and stone inclusions.

At the W end of the trench, the top surviving course of wall 2/22 was revealed, 0.40m wide and roughly mortared.

Trench 2

Trench 2, oriented W-E, 3.5m x 1.5m x 2.5m deep, revealed the W face of wall 2/23 at its E end. The N-S foundations of this wall were 0.90m deep, resting on a 0.15m deep bedding layer of mortar, 2/33, which in turn overlay a 0.08m deep layer of small rubble, 2/34. The W-E part of wall 2/23 rested on the partly robbed foundation of 2/20, which in turn rested on natural gravel.

In the N side of the trench a thin layer of sandy mortar was revealed, 2/24. Also seen in this section underneath 2/24, were two large pits, 2/30 appearing to cut 2/31 to the W. Both pits were filled with a very similar dark brown silty clay, with inclusions of gravel, small stone and charcoal flecks.

Trench 3

Trench 3, oriented NE-SW, 3.5m x 1.5m x 2.5m deep, revealed the foundations of a lightly built stone wall running W-E. (2/32). The accidental exposure by the excavating machine of a mains electricity cable in this trench precluded any close examination or measurement of this wall, but it can be estimated at approximately 0.5m wide x 0.8m deep, and set into dark brown silty clay, 2/35, which is probably the fill of an earlier pit.

INTERPRETATION

The watching brief confirmed what the evaluation had suggested; that the wall 2/23 is indeed the SE corner of the Meeting House, with its S wall resting on the partly robbed boundary wall 2/20. Wall 2/32, seen in Trench 3, may be part of a foundation for the possible 'dais' within the E end of the building, as shown on the O.S. map of 1878, (Fig 3).

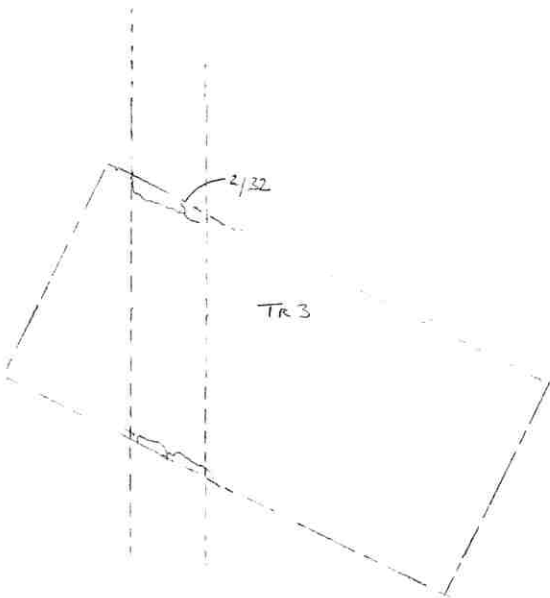
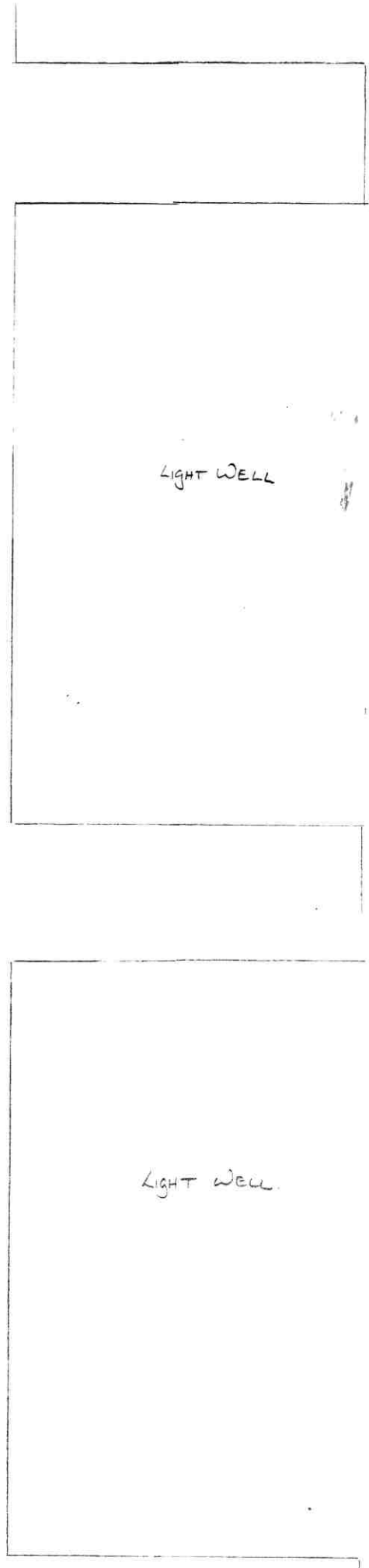
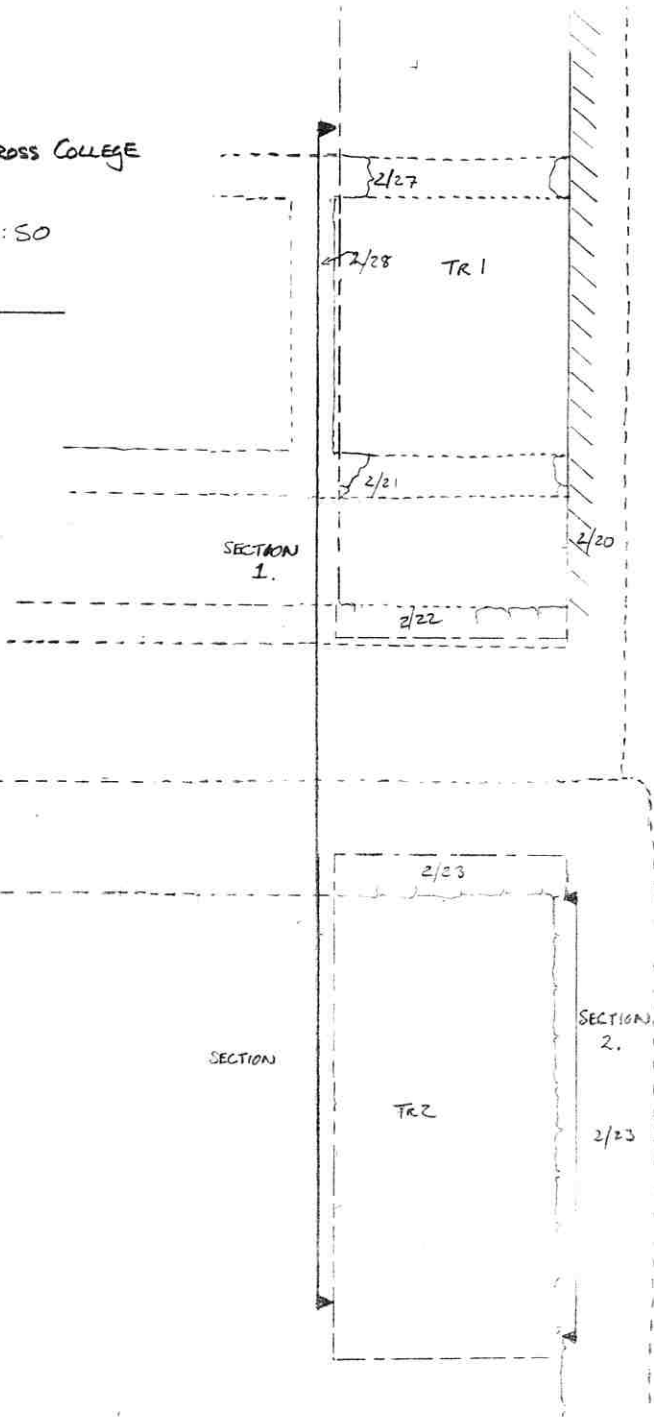
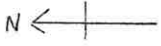
The O.S. map also indicates a narrow structure, oriented N-S, close to the E end of the Meeting House. Wall 2/22 would appear to be the W wall of this building, which contained at least one large, stone-lined cess-pit, formed by 2/21, 2/27, 2/28, and, at that point, 2/20. This building would presumably have served the requirements of the Meeting House congregation.

The cuts of the probable rubbish pits 2/30 and 2/31 appear to respect the line of the boundary wall 2/20, and are probably contemporary in use. The fills of these pits are sealed by layers associated with the Meeting House, implying that the pits are of a late medieval date, as perhaps is the W-E property boundary.

Alan Hardy
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Jan. 1993.

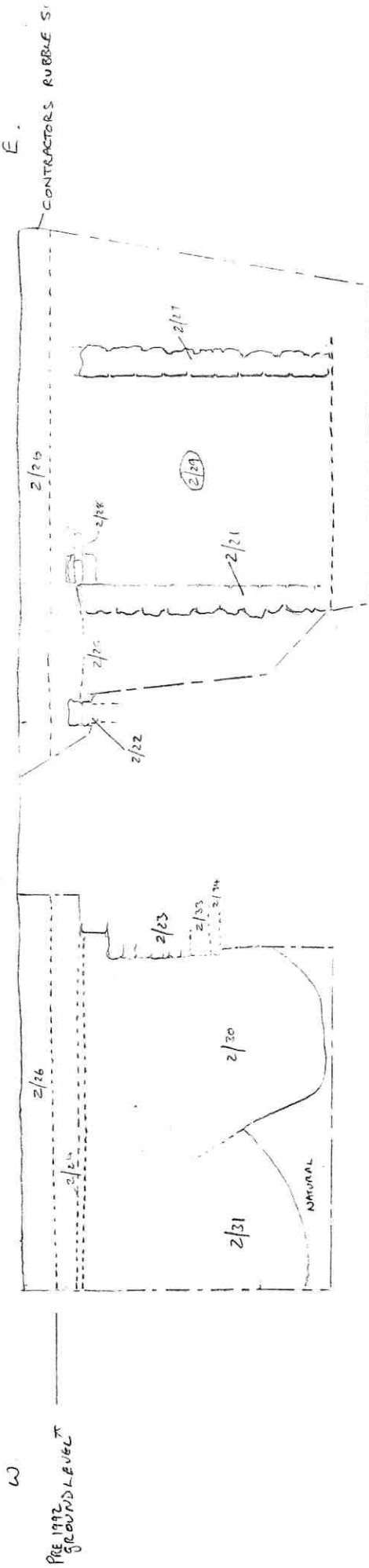
OXFORD ST. CROSS COLLEGE
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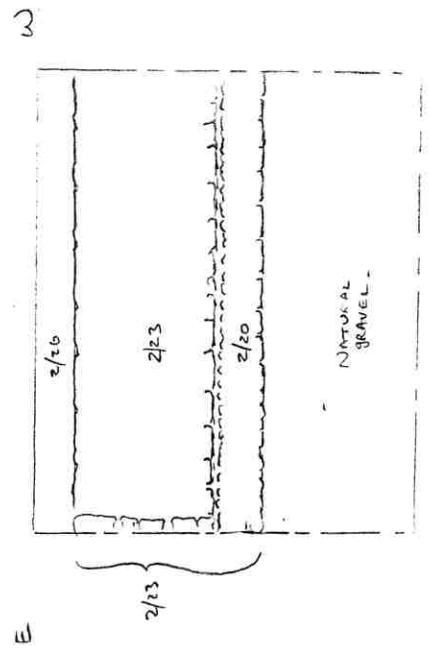


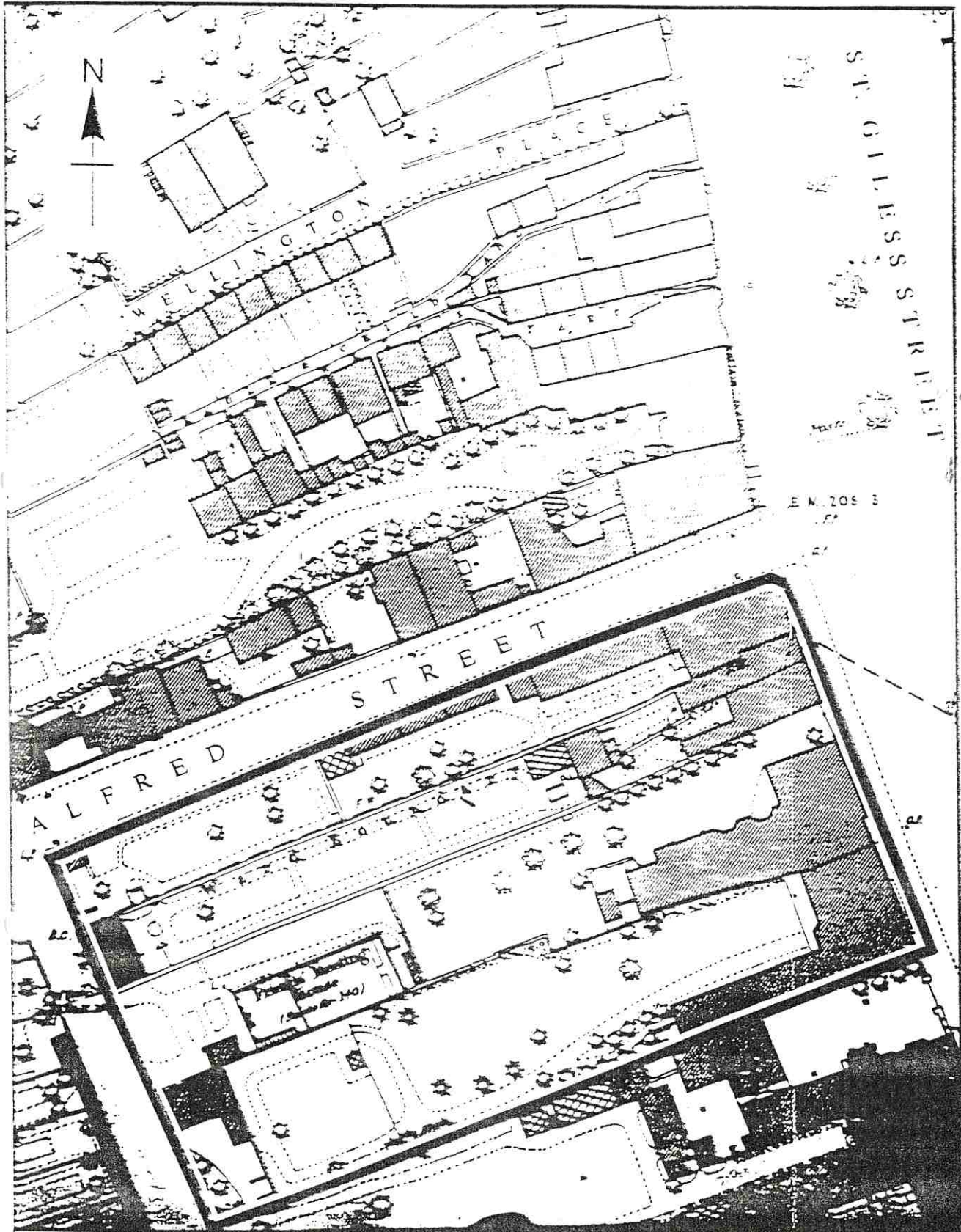
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 SECTION 1
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SECTION 1



SECTION 2





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Figure 3