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W S Atkins - Oxford

Rewley Road Fire Station, Oxford

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

NGR SP 5072 0637

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

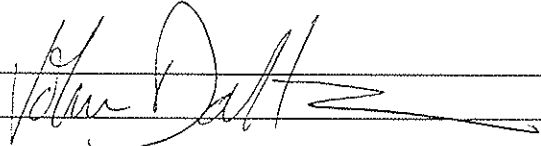
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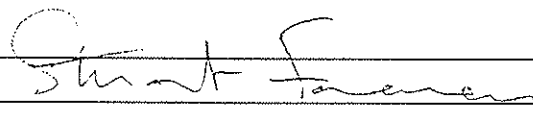
Rewley Road Fire Station, Oxford

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

NGR SP 5072 0637

Prepared by: 

Date: 17/2/98

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Date: 24/2/98.

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Date: 25/2/1998

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Summary

In January 1998 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at Rewley Road Fire Station (NGR SP 5072 0637). The watching brief identified a substantial platform of reinforced concrete. No other features were seen and no finds were retrieved.

1 Introduction

The development proposal comprised minor external installations to the rear of the fire station in the form of three supergas LPG tanks, supplying a real fire training simulator within the existing smoke house. The LPG's required drainage and gas supply trenches to connect them to the smoke house, the excavation of which was subject an archaeological watching brief.

The watching brief was commissioned by W S Atkins (Oxford), on behalf of the Oxfordshire Fire Service, in response to a planning condition imposed by Oxford City Council, following advice from Oxford Archaeological Advisory Service and in accordance with PPG 16. The watching brief was considered necessary to record any archaeological remains associated with the Rewley Abbey Scheduled Ancient Monument (Oxfordshire No. 80) that might be uncovered during excavation of the pipe trench. The pipe trench lies adjacent to the scheduled area (Fig. 1).

This watching brief is further to an archaeological field evaluation undertaken by the OAU in Rewley Road in 1993, a watching brief undertaken on the proposed site of the Said Business School immediately to the west in November 1997 and to a watching brief presently being undertaken on the Persimmon Homes housing development immediately to the north.

2 Background

Rewley Abbey was founded in 1280 as a Cistercian place of study, and the Cistercian order insisted that the foundation be a proper abbey. Documentation for Rewley in the medieval period is both scattered and obscure, but one key text shows the Crown granting the buildings of the *studium* to the Abbey in 1381, after the *studium* itself had failed. This fact has led to the suggestion that the Abbey and *studium* could have existed as separate sets of buildings (Munby, 1984). In this scenario the group of buildings known to have existed to the north of the Abbey church could represent the *studium*, while the Abbey buildings themselves are thought to lie south of the church, which is the typical Cistercian monastic layout. Evaluation work on the Rewley Road

site in 1993 (OAU, 1993) found no conclusive evidence to support this theory. The Cistercians remained at Rewley until the Dissolution in 1536.

Immediately prior to the construction of the railway much of the site was occupied by gardens. Once the tracks had been laid, activity associated with the railway spread rapidly to the east until checked by Castle Mill Stream. This activity involved the raising of ground levels by 1 - 1.5 m using fill material, presumably imported by train. It was at this point that the Abbey moats were filled in, leaving only Castle Mill Stream and Wareham Stream open. Both of these waterways were subsequently used by coal barges, which were loaded and unloaded by crane.

3 Aims

To record any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the proposed works to established standards (Wilkinson, 1992), to secure the preservation by record of any archaeology, the presence and nature of which could not be established in advance.

4 Methodology

Four inspection visits were made to the site by OAU staff during the course of the works. Excavations were carried out using a JCB and, where necessary to remove reinforced concrete, a pneumatic drill and oxy-acetylene cutting equipment. Natural deposits were not exposed in any of the excavations. The deposits exposed in plan and section were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and black and white print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets.

5 Results

The excavated trench measured 80 m in length and was 0.40 m wide by 0.60 m in depth at its deepest point. Two deposits were exposed, (1) and (2), as shown in Figure 2.

(1) comprised reinforced concrete which was removed to a depth of 0.60m exposing (2) in plan. (2) was also seen in section in those portions of the trench which did not contain (1).

(2) was a very mixed deposit of gray/black clinker with 20% coarse subangular gravel, containing lenses of yellow/white fine-medium sand and medium-coarse gravel with 2% medium-coarse subrounded stone pieces (*estimated* percentages based on the use of standard charts for approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits). It also contained infrequent fragments of modern house brick.

6 Discussion

It is thought likely that both (1) and (2) are part of the post-1850 build-up of the site in advance of the railway.

Nothing was found to date the reinforced concrete (1), however it is possible that it represents the foundation of a waterside crane. There were several on the site during its use as a rail yard and coal yard.

The provenance of (2) is unknown; it is likely that this deposit represents imported fill material, being very mixed and dirty and containing pieces of modern house brick.

John Dalton
OAU
February 1998.

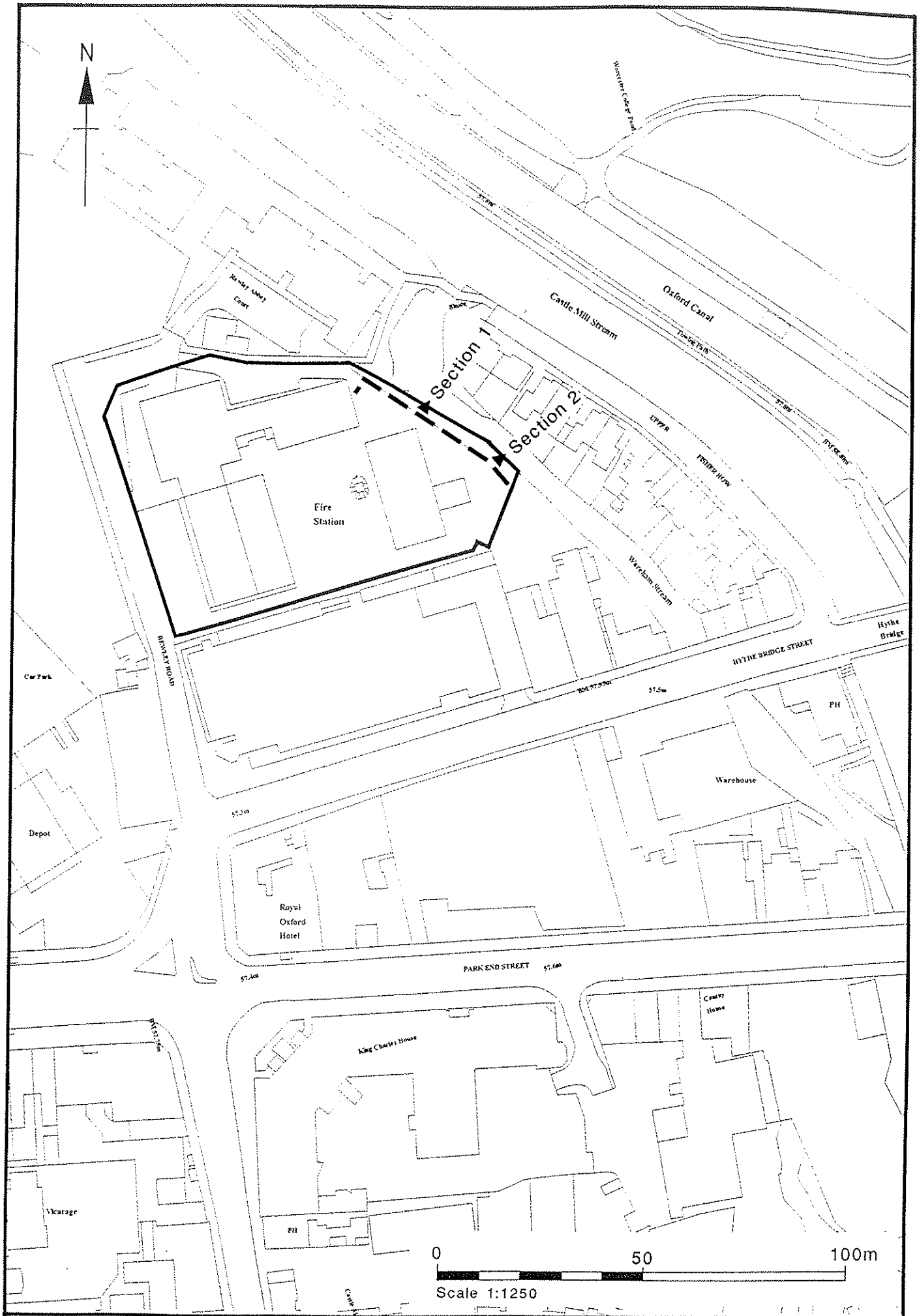
References

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OAU 1993 *Rewley Road, Oxford: archaeological evaluation, October/November 1993.*

OAU 1998 *Saïd Business School, Oxford: archaeological watching brief report.*

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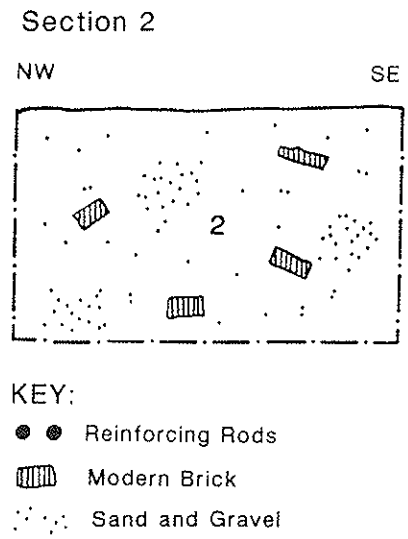
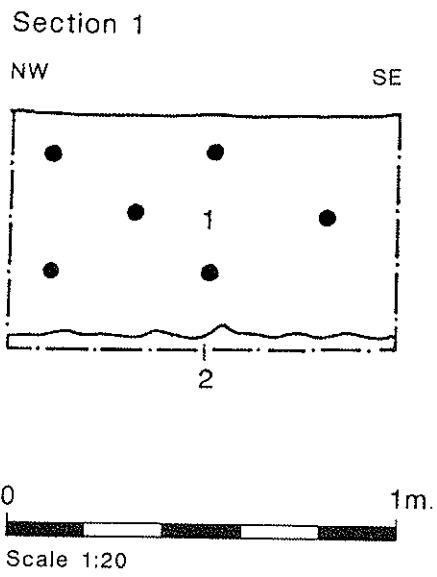


Figure 2 Sections

