



St Frideswide Middle School Marston Ferry Road Oxford

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeology

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Cover Plate: Plant stripping old playground.

SUMMARY

From July 2002 to May 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Frideswide Middle School, Marston Ferry Road, Oxford (NGR SP 514 088). The work was commissioned by Oxford County Council in advance of the construction of a classroom building and hard play area. The watching brief did not reveal any archaeological features or deposits.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 From July 2002 to May 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Frideswide Middle School, Marston Ferry Road, Oxford (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council in respect of a planning application for a new classroom building and hard play area.
- 1.1.2 A project brief was prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS March 2002).
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies over 2nd terrace gravel deposits with silty clays over sandy clays in places. The site is at 60 m OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2002) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 No archaeological sites or finds have been recorded from within the proposal area, although the general area has produced archaeological remains dating from the prehistoric period through to the post-medieval period. Neolithic artefacts were recovered from the opposite side of the Banbury Road (just to the west of this development site).
- 1.3.3 The Banbury Road itself is thought to lie on the route of a Roman road. Roman finds have been recovered during the original development of the suburb, to the south-west of the proposal area, particularly between St Margaret's Road and Frenchay Road.
- 1.3.4 A small number of Saxon finds are known from the adjacent *Gods Little Acre* site, and 200 m to the north of the bowls club, a Saxon spearhead was recovered in 1957, though it was not thought to have been *in-situ*.
- 1.3.5 A watching brief at the nearby Oxford City and County bowls club revealed no archaeological deposits (OA May 2002).

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The area of the site was first cleared and reduced by 0.45 m on the site of the new classroom and by 0.30 m in the area of the playground. This was carried out using a 360° machine with a ditching bucket. The area was then to be covered with hardcore and vibro-compaction foundations laid. A series of service trenches were then excavated around the building and connected to existing services (Fig. 2). Observations were made during these works.
- 2.2.2 A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Playground

- 3.1.1 The 0.15 – 0.20 m thick topsoil (2) and 0.10 m thick tarmac (1) from the old playground was removed, sealing a 0.35 m thick layer of modern ground make up (3) from the 1970s. This consisted of hard core, stone chippings, brick rubble patches of clay and cement. This had been laid over remnants of the original topsoil (4) of the site and the reddish brown clay natural (5) (Fig. 2).

Service Trenches

- 3.1.2 The service trenches cut through the same series of layers. The modern ground make up (3) varied in thickness from 0.35 m to 0.60 m and was laid onto the natural light reddish brown sandy clay (5). This suggests that areas of the site were stripped during the constructing of the school (Fig. 3).

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No environmental samples were taken during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 No archaeological features or deposits were exposed during the ground level reduction and excavation of service trenches for the new school building. This could suggest that the area has always been flood plain and used for pasture.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.10 m				
2	Layer	0.23 m				
3	Layer	0.35 - 0.60 m				
4	Layer	0.23 m			Old Topsoil	
5	Natural				Sily Clay Natural	

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 1992, *Fieldwork Manual* (1st Edition, August 1992)

OA 2000, *Marston Ferry Road/Banbury Road, Oxford. Archaeological Desk-based Assessment*

OA 2000, *OA Environmental Guidelines for sampling (first edition, July 2000)*

OA 2002, *Oxford City and County Bowls Club. Watching brief report*

OCAS 2002, *Frideswide Middle School, Marston Ferry Road, Oxford. Design Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

OA 2002, *Oxford City Bowls Club, Marston Ferry Road, Oxford Archaeological Watching Brief*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: St Frideswide Middle School, Marston Ferry Road, Oxford

Site code: OXFWMS 02

Grid reference: NGR SP 514 088

Type of watching brief: Ground work prior to construction of new classroom and hard play area.

Date and duration of project: A total of seven visits were carried out from the 22/7/2002 to 27/5/2003.

Area of site: 75 m x 30 m and 50 m x 35 m

Summary of results: The watching brief exposed modern surfaces and ground make up over truncated natural deposits.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: 2002.168

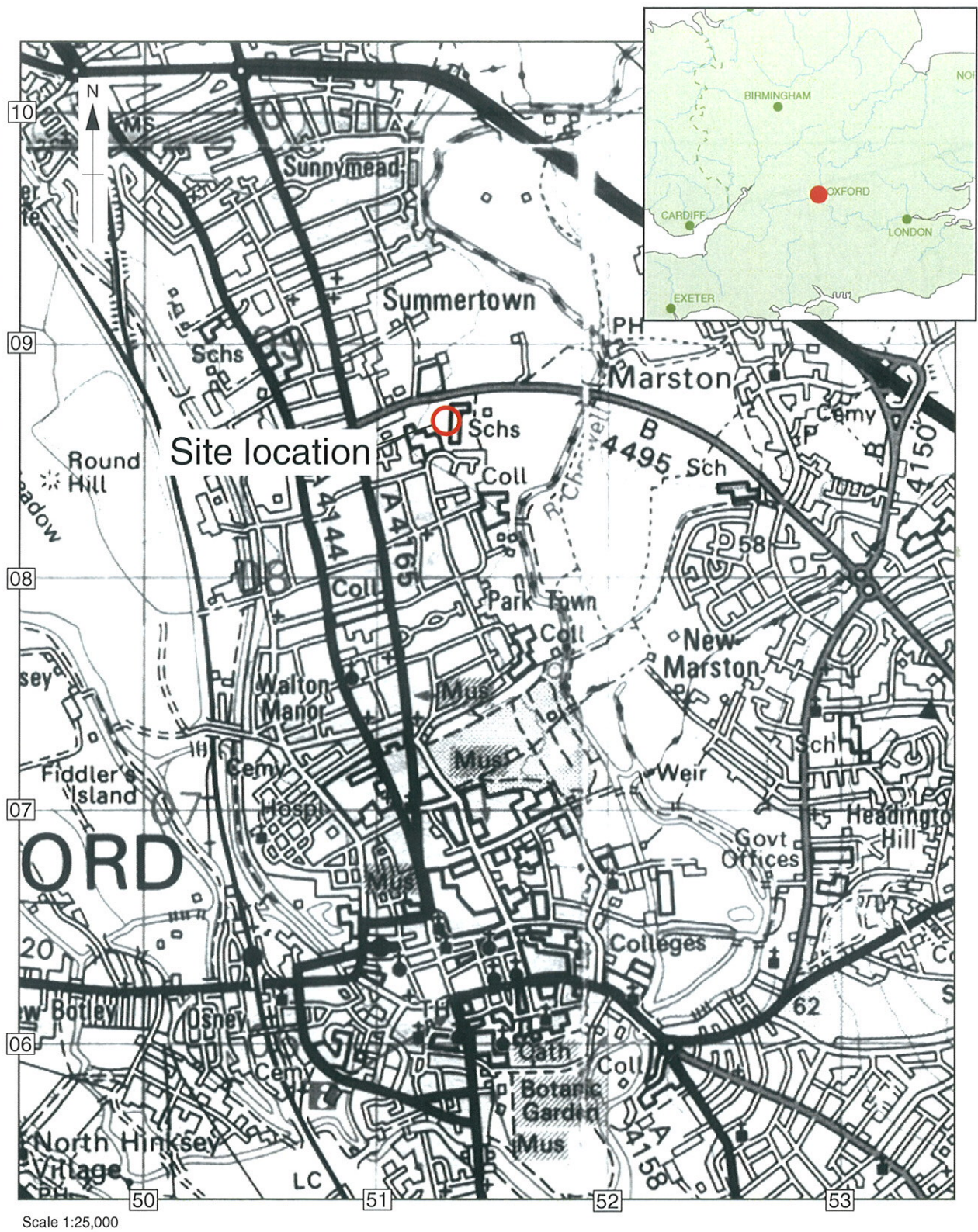


Figure 1: Site location

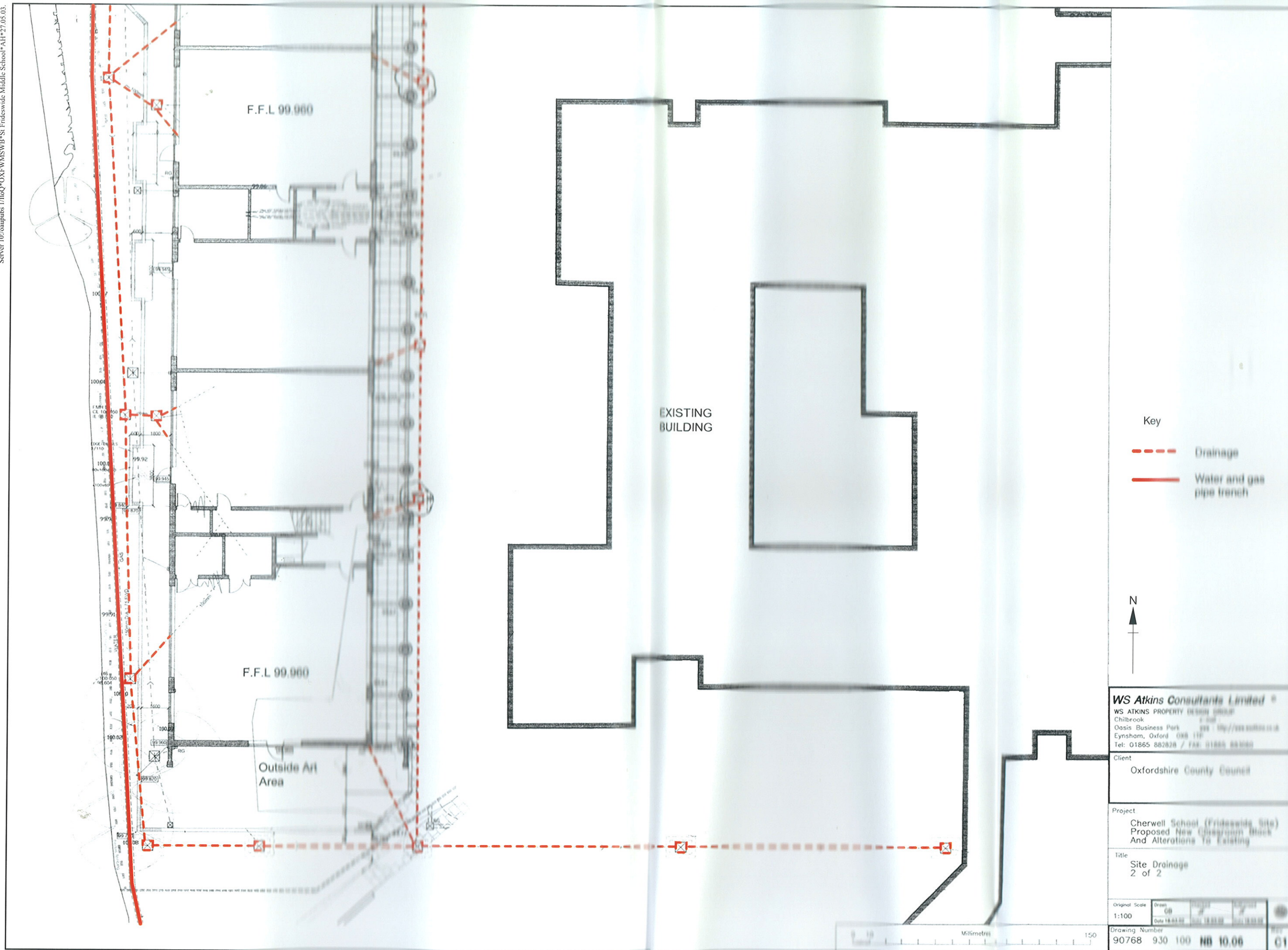


Figure 3: New and old building showing trenches



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