

Oxford University Surveyors Office

**HIGH VOLTAGE CABLE MOVES
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PHYSIOLOGY DEPARTMENT**

NGR SP 5170 0705

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Planning Ref. 98/1771/NH

Oxford Archaeological Unit
July 2001

Oxford University Surveyors Office

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Summary

In July 2001, Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook a watching brief at Oxford University Physiology Department, South Parks Road, Oxford (SP 5170 0750). No significant archaeological features or deposits were observed during the watching brief.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Planning permission has been granted to Oxford University Surveyors Office for the installation of new high voltage cables and the replacement of existing cables at the Physiology Department off South Parks Road, Oxford (Fig. 1).
- 1.2 The site lies near the edge of the second (Summertown-Radley) gravel terrace a short distance west of the first (flood plain type) terrace, overlying Oxford clay and Kellaway beds (Geology map sheet 236), between the rivers Cherwell and Thames. The site is relatively flat and lies at approximately 62-63m OD.

2 Background

- 2.1 The site is located on the north edge of the historic core of Oxford, and in the vicinity of Oxford's Civil War defences. It is bounded to the north by the University Park, to the south by South Parks Road and to the west by Parks Road, and is located at the northern extent of the University Parks Science Area.
- 2.2 A recent evaluation report of the site of the proposed Gene Function Building contains a detailed summary of known archaeological sites in the vicinity of the Physiology Department. The following is a précis of the same:
- 2.3 Prehistoric features are known from the area, including Bronze Age ring-ditches to the south-east (Parkinson, Barclay & McKeague, 1996, p41-64).
- 2.4 Evidence of Romano-British occupation has also been recovered (Booth & Hayden, forthcoming).
- 2.5 The recent excavations at Mansfield College, to the south of the development site, revealed a 7 m wide, east-west aligned Civil War defensive ditch (see also Ashdown and Hassall, 1975, p141).

- 2.6 There appears to have been no significant post-medieval building in the vicinity of the development site. The first OS mapping of the area in 1876 reveals that the site was park-land.

3 Aims

- 3.1 The aims of the watching brief were to identify any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works, and to record these to established OAU standards (Wilkinson 1992), in order to secure their preservation by record.

4 Methodology

- 4.1 The watching brief was undertaken by means of separate inspection visits; all digging was undertaken by mechanical excavator.
- 4.2 Within the constraints imposed by health and safety considerations the deposits exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and monochrome print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets.

5 Results (Figs 2 and 3)

- 5.1 The majority of the cabling trenches - particularly those to the south of the entrance to the parks - were excavated through existing service trenches. Where the gravel was visible it appeared to have been heavily truncated by the various services, although a mid reddish brown silt clay deposit (2) was observed overlying the gravel in places, and probably represented undisturbed patches of the subsoil which was observed to the north (see below). No archaeological features were observed cutting the gravel and it is likely that any archaeological remains which were extant have been truncated by the services which were observed within the cabling trenches.
- 5.2 The trenches excavated within the parks provided a clearer picture of the stratigraphical sequence which was so disturbed to the south. The natural gravel (1) was overlain by a *c* 0.30 m thick deposit of mid reddish brown silt (2) which was in turn overlain by *c* 0.40 m of garden soil and topsoil (3 and 5 respectively). A lense of re-deposited gravel (4) was observed within the garden soil. No archaeological features were observed.

6 Finds

- 6.1 Although 20th century building material and a small quantity of post-medieval pottery were observed within the fills of the service trenches, no finds were retained during the watching brief.

7 Environmental results

- 7.1 None of the archaeological deposits revealed were considered to have potential for environmental analysis.

8 Discussion

- 8.1 Although much of the ground through which the trenches were excavated has been disturbed by earlier service installation, the trenches excavated through the park revealed a stratigraphic sequence familiar in this part of Oxford. The gravel appears to be overlain by a deposit which has previously been identified as a pre-historic subsoil. This is in turn overlain by garden soil and topsoil associated with the utilisation of the area as parkland. Whilst no archaeological features were observed during the watching brief, the potential for archaeological remains being well preserved within the parks is high, given the lack of truncation by later development.

References

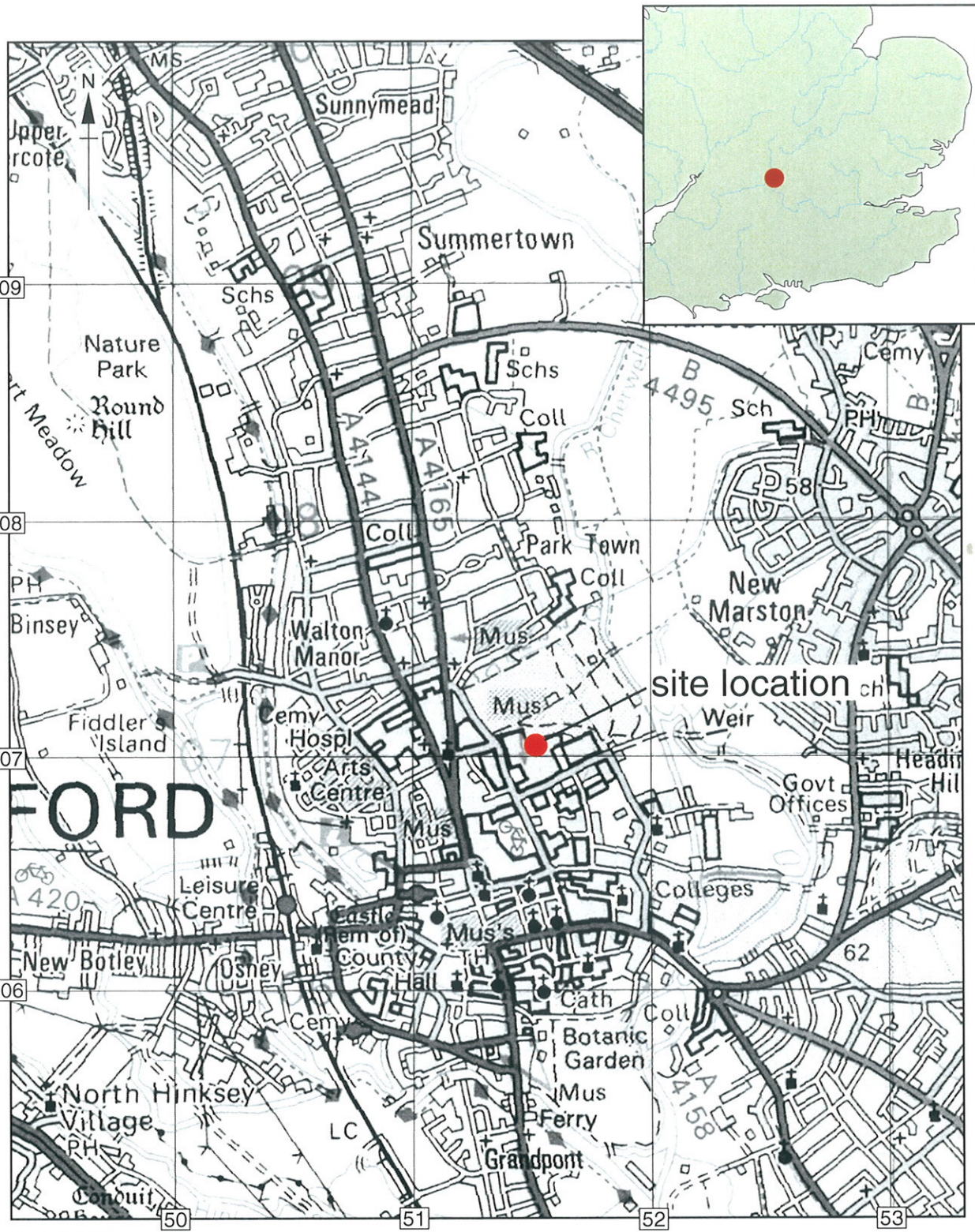
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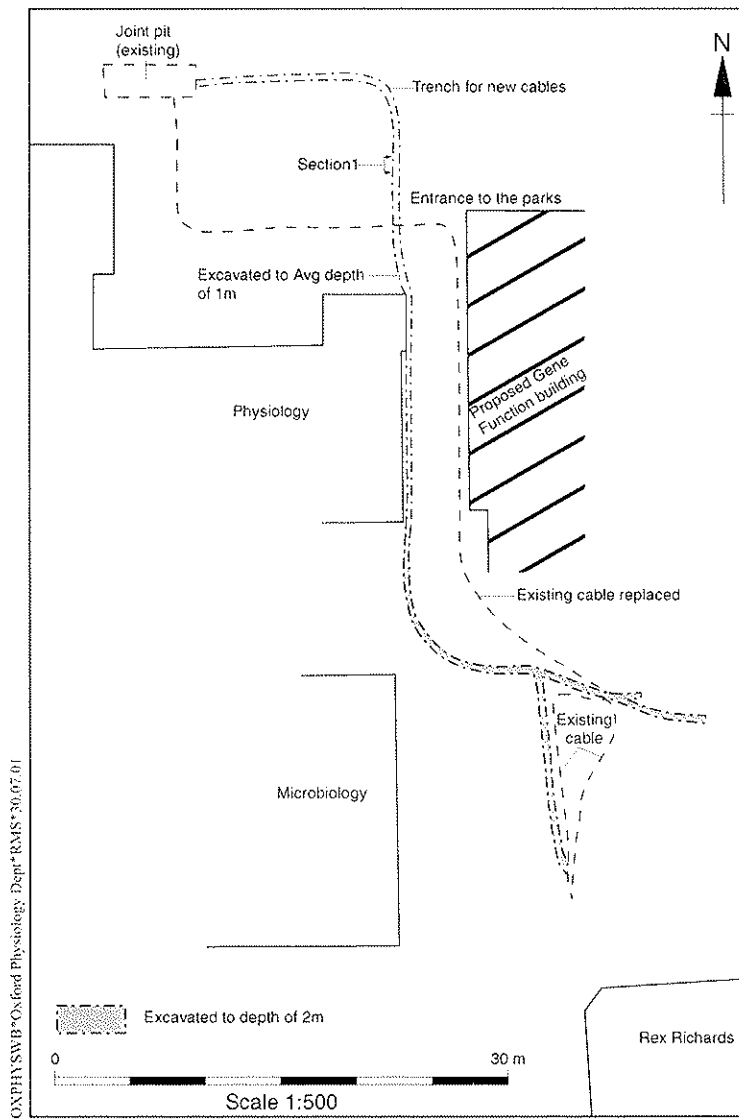
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Figure 1: Site location.



OXPHYSWB\Cx\ford Physiology Dept\ RMS\ 30.07.01

Fig 2 : Site Plan

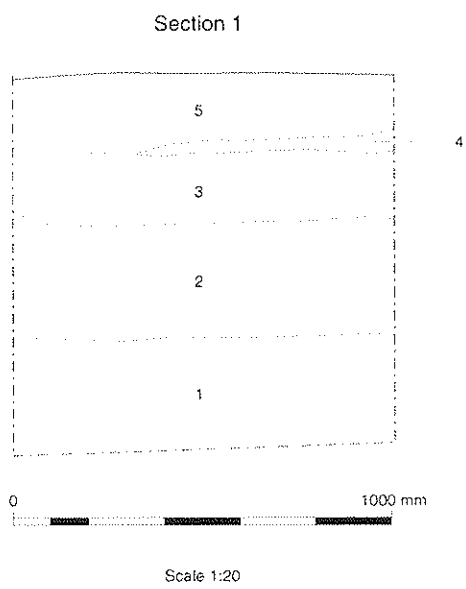


Figure 3 : Sample section.



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