



Long Room WCs, New College, Queen's Lane, Oxford

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Long Room WCs, New College, Queen's Lane, Oxford

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by Robin Bashford

illustrations by tbc

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Summary

In November 2018, Oxford Archaeology (OA) undertook a watching brief during alterations to the ground floor WCs within the Long Room to the north of Queen's Lane.

Due to the limited impact of the works, no archaeological horizons were encountered during the watching brief.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) were commissioned by Oliver Architecture Ltd on behalf of New College to undertake an archaeological Watching Brief during alterations to the ground floor WCs within the Long Room north of Queen's Lane.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as one of the conditions of Listed Building Consent (ref 16/02098) which was granted on 17th October 2016. Informal advice was supplied by David Radford, City Archaeologist, OCC detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) was produced which outlined how OA would implement those requirements (OA 2017).
- 1.1.3 The proposed groundworks included two new access ramps and new paving to the north of the Long Room, and the excavation of several service trenches inside the building (Fig. 3). However, following on-site investigations of the existing drainage, the scheme was amended so that the new toilets utilised an above ground system. The interior plaster of the Long Room was not affected by the works and only modern fixtures and fittings were removed.
- 1.1.4 All work was undertaken in accordance with all relevant local and national planning policies.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site lies on the south side of New College to the north of Queen's Lane and south of the Garden Quadrangle at NGR 451802, 206388 (Figs 1 and 2). It consists of the Grade I Listed Long Room (or Longhouse) which was constructed in the late 14th century as a latrine block (List Entry No. 1369667).
- 1.2.2 The site is located towards the eastern side of the historic city of Oxford, which is located on a N-S low promontory. The site is located 370m west of the River Cherwell and 970m east of the Castle Mill Stream (a channel of the River Thames). The underlying natural geology of the area is terrace gravel on the boundary between the Summertown-Radley sand and gravel and the Northmoor sand and gravel (British Geological Survey 2017). The existing ground is relatively level at c 62.80mOD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site is outlined below. The following section is predominantly reproduced from the report of the results from an evaluation undertaken by OA to the rear of the properties fronting Longwall Street in 2015 (OA 2015b).
- 1.3.2 Heritage Gateway was also checked for archaeological and historical background from the Oxford UAD and National Heritage List within 100m of the site (Heritage Gateway 2017).

1.4 Potential

Prehistoric to Roman Periods

- 1.4.1 No archaeological sites or finds dating to the prehistoric period have been located within the area of proposed development. Within the wider study area, Neolithic flints were found in 1968 during excavations under south nave of the Church of St Peter-in-the-East (now St Edmund Hall Library) located c40m south-east of the site.
- 1.4.2 The presence of prehistoric settlement, field systems and burial monuments in the area of the University Parks has been long established. Crop-marks of ring ditches were known as early as the 17th century. As archaeological work has been carried out during the 20th and early 21st centuries, the extent and range of these sites has increased, finding evidence for all periods from the Neolithic onwards. However, as yet very little evidence has been found to suggest that this activity extended as far south as New College. Any evidence will have been substantially damaged or removed by later activity. Excavations around and within the University Science Area and to the north of the University Parks in the 20th and early 21st centuries have uncovered evidence for occupation during this period. The evidence for farming activity during the Romano-British period within the Study Area and further north is extensive, but, as with the prehistoric period, there is no evidence for it extending southwards to New College.

Anglo-Saxon and medieval

- 1.4.3 No archaeological evidence dating from the Early or Middle Saxon periods has been found in the immediate vicinity of the present site. Evidence from this period in Oxford mainly relates to the establishment and maintenance of the crossing of the Thames in St Aldates, settlement activity directly associated with the crossing, and evidence for the existence of St Frideswide's priory (Dodd 2003).
- 1.4.4 There is documentary and archaeological evidence that Oxford was laid out as a planned burh in the late Saxon period. The extent of the burh is not certain, although it has long been considered that the area east of line of the near-parallel Schools Street/Catte Street and Oriel Street/Magpie Lane and up to the later medieval Eastgate represents an extension of the original burh, and perhaps dates to early in the 11th century or even the 10th century (Dodd 2003).
- 1.4.5 The construction of the earliest defences of Oxford is not documented, although it is generally assumed that the late Saxon burh at the time of the Burghal Hidage must have been fortified. Writers including Salter (1912) and Jope (1956) suggested that the boundary of the burh was most likely on the line later followed by the medieval city wall (Dodd 2003). A ditch excavated in 1949 on the north side of the inner town wall at New College, adjacent to the NE corner (Bastion 14) of the town defences and just 120m north-east of the site (Hunter and Jope 1951, figs 12 & 13), may have been part of the Saxon defences (Durham et al. 1983, 26 & fig. 4). This suggests that the line of the Saxon defences may have been c50m north of the site.
- 1.4.6 Some pottery dating from the late Saxon period was found in New College Garden in 1949 (Hunter and Jope 1951, 35). The level of occupation and activity within that part

of the town is uncertain. No evidence has been found to suggest that there was activity on or close to the site before that date, although truncation caused by medieval and post-medieval activity may have removed any evidence of earlier date.

- 1.4.7 Within the city wall the land now occupied by New College had been divided into several plots by the 13th century, in mixed ownership, but with substantial areas held by Osney Abbey and the hospital of St John (Salter 1960, 156-62). William of Wykeham acquired the land in 1379 for the foundation of New College. The foundations were laid in 1380 and New College was the first example in Oxford to use a planned quadrangle with buildings set around it. The chapel and the hall were located on the north side of the quadrangle and the kitchens and latrines (the Long Room) were constructed to the east of the main quadrangle (VCH 3, 144-162).
- 1.4.8 New College was located within the parish of St Peter-in-the-East and this church is located 40m south-east of the site. This church was constructed between 1130-1160 with alterations during the 13th-14th century (St Edmund Hall 2017).
- 1.4.9 The 2013-14 excavations within the 14th century New College kitchen revealed extensive in-situ beaten earth and plaster floors, interleaved with charcoal-rich occupation deposits and rubbish pits. The deposits have not yet been analysed in detail but pre-college deposits were found containing 11th-13th century pottery (OA forthcoming).

Post-Medieval

- 1.4.10 At the end of the medieval period the defences were neglected and the city ditch (c50 north of the site) was allowed to fill in for much of its length. Agas's Map of 1587 shows New College extending to the inner city wall, and a line that appears to represent the town ditch as an open watercourse outside the wall to the east. No sign of the outer wall or ditch is shown on either the northern or eastern side of the city on this map, although the outer wall is shown on the north side of the city on the Holywell Terrier from 1660, and on Loggan's Map of 1675 (OA 2010, Fig. 4).
- 1.4.11 During the Civil War the medieval defences were repaired and sections of the ditch recut as part of the protection of a major strategic base. The importance of Oxford during the Civil War arose in large part from its association with Charles I. While he was in dispute with parliament the king used Oxford as his base, making it in effect a temporary capital. The Longwall Street excavations of 1979-80 found substantial depths of fill dating from the 17th century.
- 1.4.12 The land between Longwall Street and All Souls (120m south-west of the site) fell within the historic parish of St Peter-in-the-East. The city ditch (or a remnant of it) is marked as an open watercourse on Loggan's map of 1675, either directly adjacent to buildings on the Longwall Street frontage, or possibly underneath them in a culvert for some of its length. All of the houses and cottages built on the west side of Longwall Street in the 17th and 18th centuries were city properties, separated from the gardens of New College by the inner city wall.

2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The archaeological Watching Brief aimed to gather sufficient information to record any archaeological remains which were found during the groundworks.
- 2.1.2 The project took account of pertinent elements of the city and regional resource assessments including the Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment Resource Assessments and Research Agendas (Hey and Hind 2014) and the Oxford Archaeological Resource Assessment (Oxford City Council 2017).

2.2 Specific aims and objectives

- 2.2.1 The specific aims and objectives of the Watching Brief are to:
- Record any archaeological remains (if present) that ground works may remove or damage within the area of the site, including any prehistoric, Roman, late Saxon, medieval or post-medieval remains. Any such remains will be interpreted with reference to the known archaeology and historic development of the Summertown-Radley gravel terrace, New College and the parish of St Peter-in-the-East;
 - Determine the nature, extent, condition, date, character, quality, significance and state of preservation of any archaeological features and deposits affected by the proposed works;
 - Assess the ecofactual and palaeo-environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features within the site;
 - Record the main kinds of artefactual evidence (including pottery, brick, tile, stone, bone etc) and collect representative samples;
 - Make available the results of the investigation, by reporting, publication and finally archive deposition.

2.3 Methodology

- 2.3.1 A summary of OA's general approach to excavation and recording can be found in Appendix A. Standard methodologies for Geomatics and Survey, Environmental evidence, Artefactual evidence and Burials can also be found below (Appendices B, C, D and E respectively).

3 RESULTS

- 3.1.1 Following on-site investigations of the existing drainage, the scheme was amended so that the new toilets utilised an above ground system, thus avoiding the need for any excavation within the Long Room buildings. Consequently, no archaeological deposits or features were observed during the works.
- 3.1.2 Similarly, the ground preparation for the new access ramps and paving required minimal below ground excavation prior to the raising of the paving level, and consequently no archaeological deposits or features were impacted.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1.1 Due to the limited impact of the works, no archaeological horizons were encountered during the watching brief.

APPENDIX A BIBLIOGRAPHY

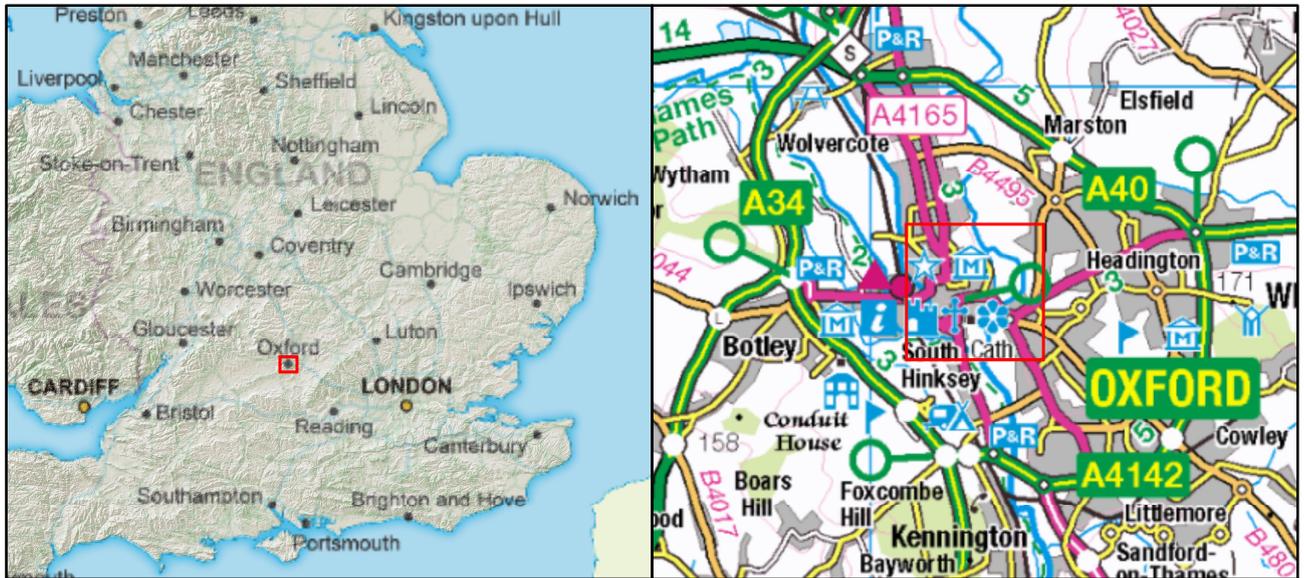
OA, 2017 Long Room WCs, New College, Queen's Lane, Oxford. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief

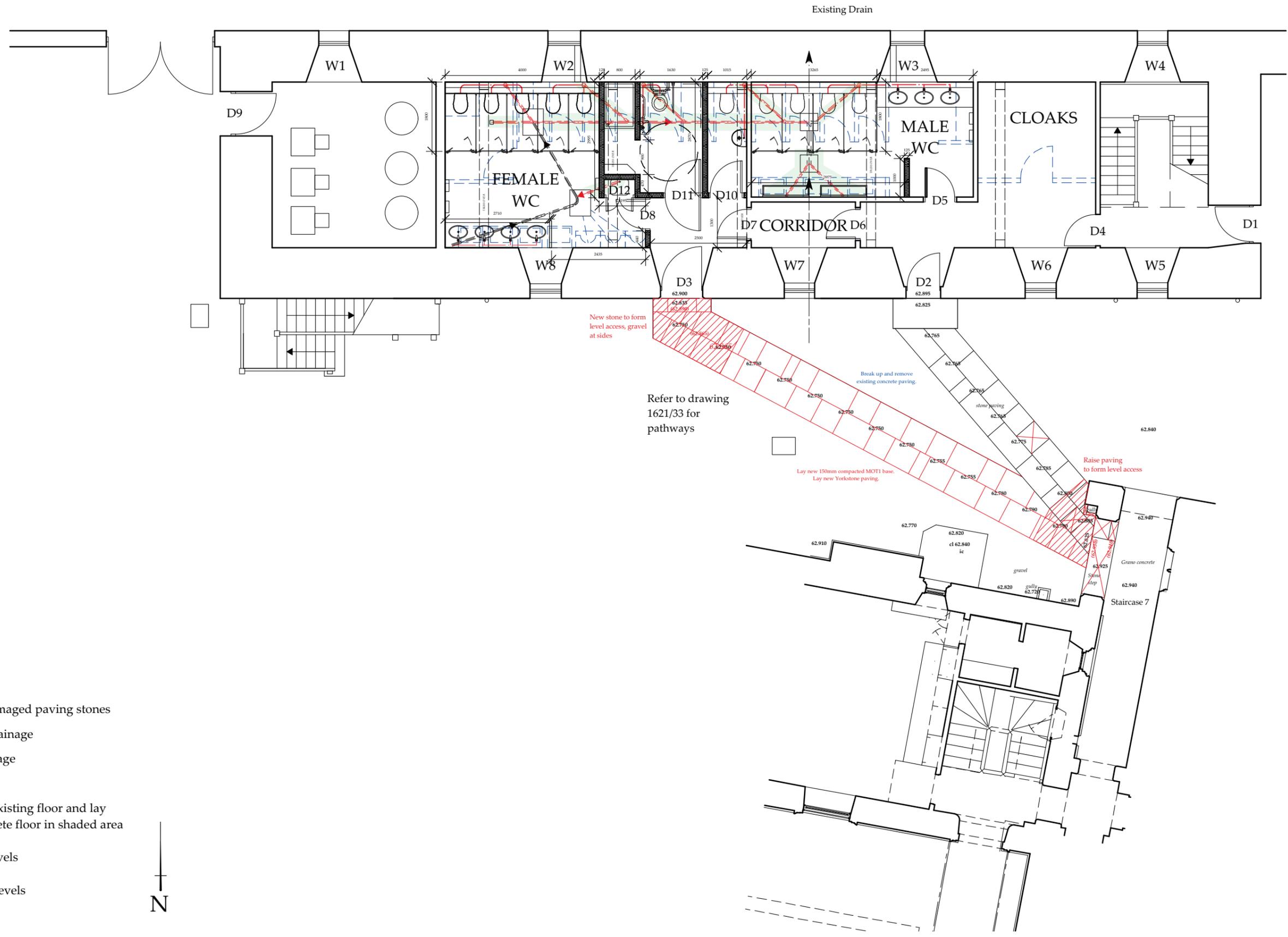
APPENDIX B SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

Site name: Long Room WCs, New College, Queen's Lane, Oxford
Site code: OXNLRR17
Grid Reference SP 5180 0640
Type: Watching Brief

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: OXCMS: 2017.128

Summary of Results: In November 2018, Oxford Archaeology (OA) undertook a watching brief during alterations to the ground floor WCs within the Long Room to the north of Queen's Lane. Due to the limited impact of the works, no archaeological horizons were encountered during the watching brief.



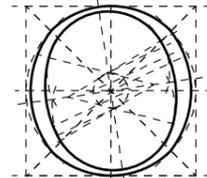


- KEY:**
- New ramps
 - Replace damaged paving stones
 - Existing Drainage
 - New Drainage
 - Demolition
 - Break out existing floor and lay new limecrete floor in shaded area
 - 62.900 Existing Levels
 - 62.865 Proposed Levels



This drawing is the copyright of Oliver Architecture Ltd.
 All dimensions are to be checked on site prior to commencing work.
 Scaled dimensions should not be taken from this drawing unless stated.
 Dimensions of new work are to be adjusted to suit the existing building as necessary.
 The contractor must not assume that the existing building is plumb, square or level.
 Prior to commencing work, all discrepancies are to be reported to the Architect.

Revisions:
 A 12.06.17 Accessible WC revised following design team meeting



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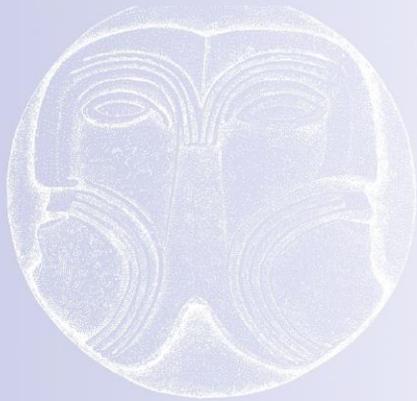
Project	New College, Oxford Long Room WC's		Scale 1:100 @ A3	Job No. 1621
	Drawing	Proposed Floor Plan	Date Mar 2017	Drng. No. 30
		Working Drawing	Drawn pw	Rev. A



Plate 1: Paving prior to alterations



Plate 2: Paving following alterations



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