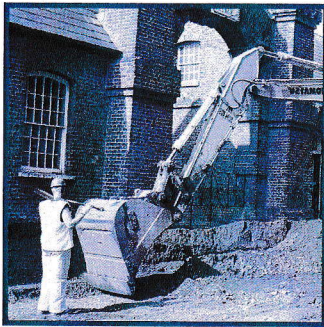


Island House 21 Botley Road Oxford



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



August 2007

Client: Mr. K. Sternberg

Issue N^o: 1

OA Job N^o: 3720

Planning Ref N^o: 07/00301/FUL

NGR: SP 501 061

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Client Name: Mr K. Sternberg

Client Ref No:

Document Title: Island House, 21 Botley Road, Oxford

Document Type: Watching Brief

Issue Number: 1

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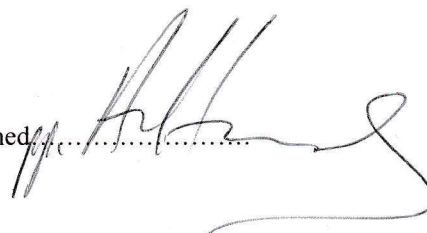
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Date: 28th August 2007

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Illustrated by Markus Dylewski

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**Island House,
21 Botley Road, Oxford**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

On August 20th 2007, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Island House, 21 Botley Road, Oxford (NGR: SP 501 061). The work was commissioned by Mr K. Sternberg in advance of the construction of an extension on the rear of the house. The watching brief revealed layers of made ground overlying a buried soil horizon and the foundations of an earlier extension, post-medieval in date. No significant archaeology was observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 On August 20th 2007, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Island House, 21 Botley Road, Oxford (NGR: SP 501 061). The work was commissioned by Mr K. Sternberg in respect of a planning application for a new extension and basement to the rear of the house (Planning Application No. 07/00301/FUL)
- 1.1.2 A project brief was agreed with Brian Durham, the Oxford City Archaeologist, which required that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken during the period of groundworks.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA, 2007).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on the western edge of the city of Oxford (Fig. 1) at a height of 57 m above OD. The site is situated on level ground in the angle between two river channels (Osney Ditch and a side channel of the River Thames) immediately south of Botley Road. Island House is sited behind St Frideswide's Church and occupies an area of 300 m². The underlying geology is alluvium over 1st Terrace River Gravel (Geological Survey of Great Britain sheet no. 236).

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, 2007) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 St Frideswide's Church was constructed in 1870-2 by SS Teulon and is described by Pevsner as "*the one violently High Victorian church*" in Oxford (Pevsner, 1974). The associated vicarage (now Island House) is by H.G.W Drinkwater.
- 1.3.3 The site itself is outside the western edge of the medieval city of Oxford, although the medieval Abbey at Osney is sited approximately 500m to the south.

- 1.3.4 There is no record of significant archaeological finds on the site, although this may be indicative of a significant import of material as seen at other nearby sites (Mill Street and Osney Mead (OCC, 2007)).
- 1.3.5 If this is the case, it is possible that any imported material will overlies alluvial deposits at the margins of one or both of the extant streams, or flood plain gravel capped with a layer of loess soil, through which the channels would be cut.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits that may be disturbed or destroyed during the course of the groundworks.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The trench for the foundations was dug by a tracked excavator fitted with a 0.3 m wide toothless bucket. Excavation proceeded in spits until the required depth of excavation was achieved. The sides and base of the trench were closely examined for archaeological evidence and the spoil was examined for dating evidence. Because of the width of the trench and the unstable nature of the ground, all recording was done from the top of the trench.
- 2.2.2 A plan showing the extent of the excavations was maintained at a scale of 1:100 and any recorded sections drawn at scales of 1:20 (Fig. 2). All excavations and sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The underlying natural, a yellow brown silt clay alluvium (7), was encountered at a depth of 0.8 m below the current ground level (Fig. 2, Sections 1 and 2). This was overlaid by a 0.3 m deep layer of very dark grey silt loam (6). This deposit produced numerous fragments of 19th-century domestic pottery suggesting that it was a layer of cultivated soil, possibly the original topsoil.
- 3.1.2 This layer was cut by a 4.6 m long by 0.4 m deep vertically sided feature (5). Built within the cut was a 0.3 m deep platform using fragments of limestone and occasional brick bonded with a lime mortar (4). This construction appears to align

with the existing walls of Island House and is a probable foundation for an earlier phase of building butting up to the south end of Island House, now demolished.

- 3.1.3 Overlying feature 4 and filling the remainder of 5 was a grey-brown silt loam (3), between 0.15m and 0.25 m in depth. This appears to be a backfill associated with the demolition and removal of the structure relating to feature 4. Both layers 3 and 6 were overlaid by a 0.35 m deep layer of dark yellow-brown silt clay (2). This deposit was very clean and represents a layer of made ground, possibly material dredged from the adjoining water courses. Sealing 2 was a 0.25 m deep layer of dark grey-brown silt loam (1), a modern landscaping layer of topsoil and turf.

3.2 **Finds**

- 3.2.1 All finds recovered were of a late post-medieval date (19th and early 20th centuries) and included pottery, brick, bottle glass and galvanised nails. The presence of these artefacts was recorded but they were not retained.

3.3 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1.1 The watching brief showed that there was no significant archaeology present on the site and that the stratigraphy is composed of post-medieval deposits overlying alluvium.
- 4.1.2 The presence of imported material (probably used to raise the ground level of the area) is similar to that recorded on other sites in the area and may be indicative of the general raising of the ground level in the area, probably during the westwards expansion of the city in the 19th-century.
- 4.1.3 The decision to abandon the excavation of the basement in light of the recent flooding meant that the excavations were not deep enough to offer an examination of the alluvial sequence of this part of the island.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.25 m	-	Landscaping layer, imported topsoil	Brick, pottery	C19th /20th
2	Layer	0.35 m	-	Made ground	-	C19th /20th
3	Fill	0.15 m	> 3.6 m	Backfill of foundation cut	Brick	C19th /20th
4	Structure	0.25 m	> 3.6 m	Raft foundation	Brick	C19th
5	Cut	0.4 m	> 3.6 m	Foundation cut	-	C19th
6	Layer	0.3 m	-	Buried soil horizon	Brick, pottery, bottle glass	C19th
7	Layer	> 0.3m	-	Alluvial deposit	-	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- OCC, 2007 *Brief for Archaeological Fieldwork*
- IFA, 2001 *Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological watching Briefs*
- OA, 1992 *Fieldwork Manual, (Ed. D Wilkinson, first ed, August 1992)*
- OA, 2007 *Island House, 21 Botley Road, Oxford: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological watching Brief*
- Pevsner, N 1974 *The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Island House, 21 Botley Road, Oxford

Site code: OXBOT 07

Grid reference: SP 501 061

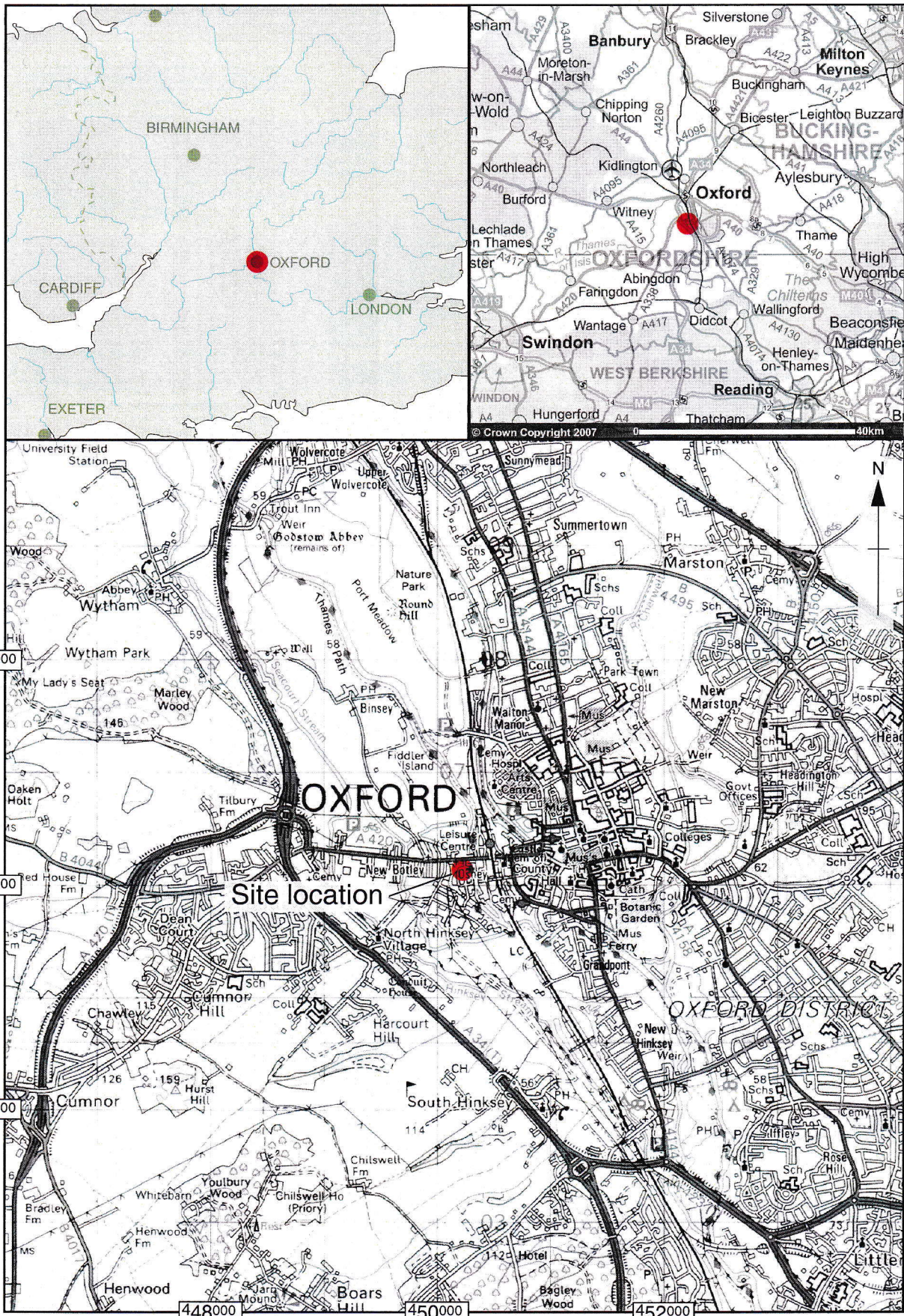
Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of building foundations for new extension

Date and duration of project: 20th August 2007, 1 day

Area of site: 300 m²

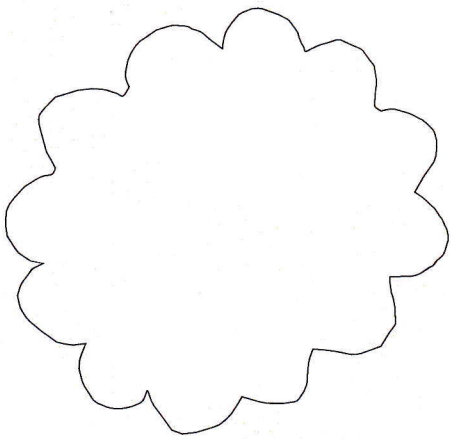
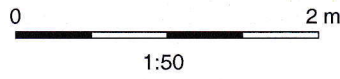
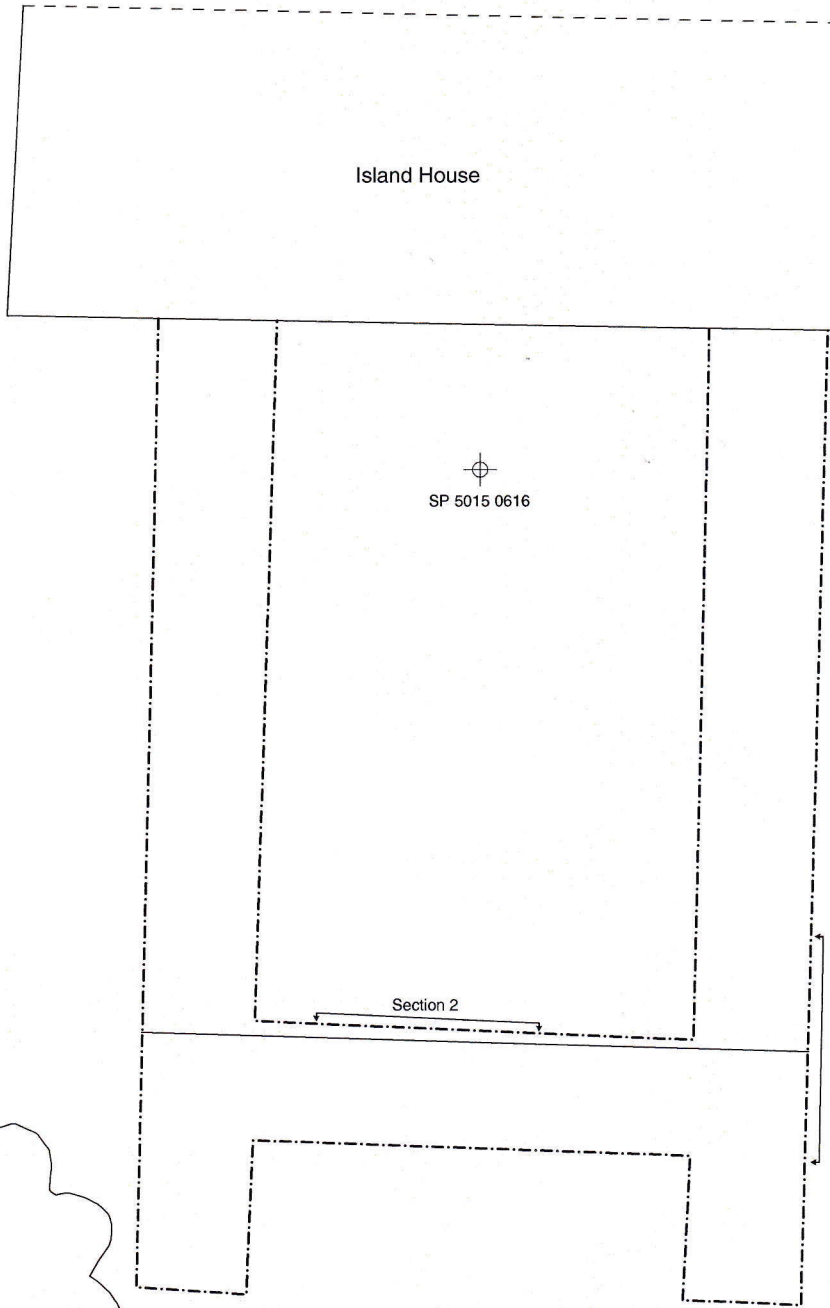
Summary of results: The watching brief revealed layers of made ground overlying a buried soil horizon and a post-medieval building foundation.

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:2007.87



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Figure 1: Site location



Section 1

Section 2

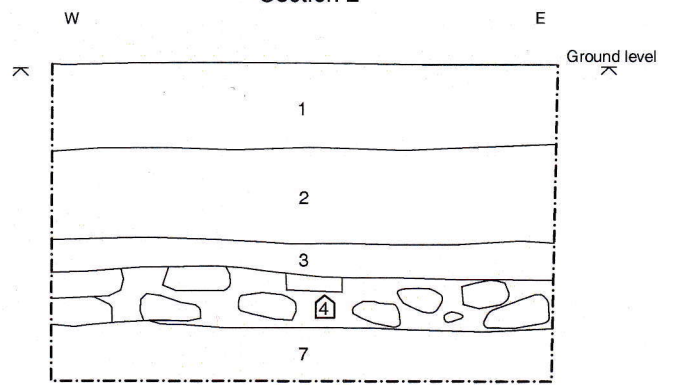
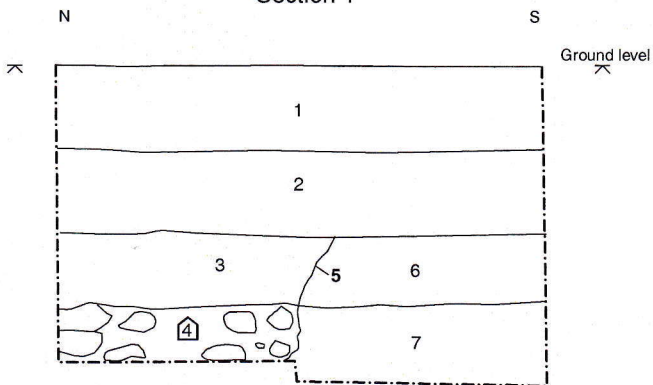


Figure 2: Plan and sections



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