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51a St Giles, Oxford

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

In February 2019, Oxford Archaeology were commissioned by Savills on behalf of St John's College, Oxford to undertake a trial trench evaluation within a groundfloor room at 51a St Giles, Oxford. An area was cleared of floorboards and joists, and a thin layer of soil was removed, within which a smaller 2m by 1m trench was excavated. In situ deposits and structural remains dating to the Late Medieval - Early Post Medieval were encountered at an uppermost height of 63.25m OD, which was 0.22m below the existing internal floor levels. Hand auger holes reached truncated natural gravel at 62.22mOD, no indication of an overlying in-situ loess was observed. A large north-south orientated limestone wall foundation was revealed, abutted by a smaller limestone wall foundation running to the east. A dark greyish-brown homogenous humic-rich deposit to the west of the wall (outside) probably represented mixed garden soils, whereas inside the structure less humic reddish-brown deposits indicated possible ground raising. No floor levels were associated with the structural remains. The internal and external deposits dated to the 16th century, with deposits overly the demolition of the structures dating to the 17-18th century, contemporary with the suggested construction dates for the current extant buildings at the site. Residual abraded sherds of medieval pottery, present in most of the deposits, attested to earlier activity at the site.

The height at which structural remains survived under the floor in the existing buildings (63.25 – 63.07mOD) is somewhat lower than the highest levels recorded in the garden by a previous evaluation, at 63.32 – 63.60mOD (TVAS, 2017). It is noticeable that the garden levels are higher than the level of the outside path (adjacent to the building) as well as the floors within the building, and suggests that the area of the path and extant building footprint were reduced and levelled, perhaps from those still present in the garden during construction. Therefore, there is potential for better archaeological preservation in the higher parts of the garden.

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The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Ben Ford MCIFA. The fieldwork was directed by Ben Attfield, who was supported by Chris Richardson. Digitizing was carried out by Charles Rousseaux and Matt Bradley. Thanks is also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the management of Leigh Allen and prepared the archive under the management of Nicola Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Savills on behalf of St John's College to undertake a trial trench evaluation within the ground floor of 51a St. Giles', Oxford (Figure 1) prior to the proposed redevelopment of the site. This work was supplemental to a previous two-trench evaluation in the garden of the same property (TVAS, 2017).
- 1.1.2 The fieldwork was carried out between 25th – 27th February, 2019, and was undertaken in relation to refused applications 17/02164/FUL and 17/02165/LBC which are subject to renewed pre-reapplication discussions with OCC.
- 1.1.3 17/02164/FUL relates to a proposed change in use of ground floor and first floor of No. 50 St Giles from Café (Use Class A3) to Hotel reception and accommodation (Use Class C1). Demolition of part of ground and first floor rear extensions. Erection of single storey rear extension to provide additional pub floorspace at ground level. Conversion of upper floors at No.49 – 51 St Giles to form 7 No. ensuite bedrooms for use as hotel accommodation (Use Class C). Formation of a new entrance through boundary wall to provide access off Wellington Place and rebuilding of existing south boundary wall. Installation of air conditioning units and extraction ducting to rear roof.
- 1.1.4 17/02165/LBC I relates to proposed demolition of part of ground and first floor rear extensions. Erection of single storey rear extension to provide additional pub floorspace at ground floor level, with installation of new air conditioning units and extraction ducting to roof. Internal alterations including removal and insertion of partition walls, insertion of new openings, removal of staircases, and introduction of necessary servicing in association with formation of new restaurant area and conversion of upper floors at No. 49 – 51 St Giles to form 7 No. ensuite bedrooms for use as hotel accommodation (Use Class C1). Formation of new entrance through boundary wall to provide access off Wellington Place and rebuilding of existing south boundary wall. Replacement of windows.
- 1.1.5 A brief for the evaluation was set by David Radford (OCC, 08/02/2019) detailing the Local Authority's requirements for the work necessary to inform the re-application planning process. No formal WSI was prepared, and instead the scope of the work was agreed between OA and David Radford via telephone conversations and e-mails dated 20th February 2019. This document outlines how OAs methodology and the results of the evaluation.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The proposed development site is located on the West side of St. Giles', at NGR: SP 5114 0675. It is bounded by a commercial property to the South, Wellington Place to the North, and Regent's Park College to the West. It lies within the Oxford Central Conservation Area.
- 1.2.2 50 – 51 St Giles' are 17th – 18th century Grade II listed buildings, listed as part of a group comprised of 49 – 56 St Giles'. The Eagle and Child public house to the North (No. 49)

is an 18th century building and is separately listed. The frontages of the three storey buildings (50 – 51) are currently shop units, and they share a 17th century two storey rear range (No. 51)

- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is mapped as the second (Summertown – Radley) gravel terrace, overlying Oxford Clay and Kellaway beds (Geology map sheet 236). The site lies between 63 – 64m OD, and is situated some 400m NNW of the site of the medieval North Gate and associated city wall.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The town of Oxford is believed to have its origins in the founding of St Frideswide's Minster on the site of what is now Christ Church College. Three 12th century accounts of the life of St Frideswide have been reviewed in detail (Blair 1988), and detail the founding of a monastery at Oxford by a Mercian sub-king whose pious daughter Frideswide established a community of nuns there in the early 8th century.
- 1.3.2 The city was certainly developed as a fortified *burh* around the time of the Reign of King Alfred, or his son Edward the Elder. By the 10th century a network of streets had been established and a defensive circuit constructed. Some evidence for a turf rampart has been found, as well as later stone facing, and wherever the early medieval rampart has been observed it has been on or close to the line of the later medieval wall.
- 1.3.3 Oxford continued to develop as a thriving town into the 12th and 13th-centuries although in national terms it declined economically in the 14th-century.
- 1.3.4 Salter's Survey of Oxford (1969) shows that tenements were constructed along both sides of St Giles, outside of the City walls during the later medieval period.
- 1.3.5 Documentary evidence for the tenements on the Western side of St Giles suggest that this area was expanded as early as the 13th century, if not the 12th century in an act of planned expansion.
- 1.3.6 The earliest available historical map to show the area of development is Agas's Map of Oxford, 1587. This shows buildings all along the St Giles frontage, with intermittent outbuildings and open land to the rear.
- 1.3.7 St Giles' has been subject to significant expansion since the 19th century, and unfortunately, many of the extant 17th century buildings have lost their relationships with their original historic curtilages.
- 1.3.8 Previous archaeological work had been carried out on the site by Thames Valley Archaeological Services in the back garden of the property (TVAS, 2017). Two trenches were excavated, and demonstrated limestone walls, a potential surface, and post holes of 17th century or earlier date. The report notes that the approximate level of 16th century deposits lies between 63.2 and 63.8m OD, and that medieval horizons may be present at 63.05m OD (TVAS 2017).

2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project objectives were as follows:

- i. To gather sufficient archaeological information to establish the character, nature and date of any surviving archaeological structures and deposits,
- ii. To present these results to inform the design of the proposed new floor and other works, such as service runs, with a view to minimising the impact of the new design upon any extant remains.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 After removal of floor coverings in the 'Dining Room' the area was scanned with a cable avoidance tool (CAT). Floor boards and their supporting joists were then removed from a wider L-shaped area and a thin covering of dirt was cleared away from this area.

2.2.2 The cleaning revealed structural archaeology in the southern part of the room but due to the presence of live services within this area the decision was made to amalgamate the two 1 x 1m Trial Pits into a single 2 x 1m Trench which was located running parallel to, and just inside the inside line of, the northern wall of the building.

2.2.3 The position of the area exposed by the floor removal and cleaning as well as the trench location were surveyed in relation to the internal walls of the 'Dining Room' (Figure 2).

2.2.4 The trench was excavated using hand tools to an approximate level of 1m below the existing floorboards, and followed OA's general approach to excavation and recording. All structural remains were left in situ.

2.2.5 Upon reaching a depth of 1.0m below current ground level (bgl), a hand auger was used to log the nature and depths of the underlying deposits.

2.2.6 After monitoring and agreement from David Radford (OCC), the trench was backfilled with the arisings from the excavation.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below and include a stratigraphic description of the archaeological remains. The full details of the trench with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates are tabulated in Appendix B, and environmental data in Appendix C.

3.2 Trench 1 (Figures 2, 3, and 4 Plates 1 & 2)

3.2.1 The trench was located in the northern half of the 'Dining Room' approximately 0.60m to the south of, and running parallel to the northern wall of the room.

3.2.2 A robust gravel deposit was encountered at the same level of 62.22m OD within two auger holes which were drilled through the archaeological deposits from 1m bgl at opposing ends of the trench. This is likely to represent natural gravel geology, rather than a gravel surface. No indication of any overlying original buried soil was present, suggesting this had been removed, and that the gravel may have been truncated also.

3.2.3 To the east of (later) wall foundation (4), see below, lay a friable, 0.82m thick, deposit of reddish-brown sandy silt (6), which probably represented a ground raising event prior to the construction of structure (4). As with deposit (5), this extended to a depth of 62.22m OD. This contained pottery with a date range of 1500-1625, and 13-16th century ceramic building material.

3.2.4 Wall foundation (4), probably trench built, i.e. with no visible construction cut on its' east side, was built using large roughly worked limestone faces with a small limestone rubble core, it was bonded with sandy silt (perhaps a degraded lime mortar), and measured 0.90 – c 1.0m wide. There were five visible surviving rough courses within the depth of excavation (although it probably extended down to, and probably into, the gravel natural below). The highest point of the wall seen within the trench was recorded as 63.07m OD.

3.2.5 To the south of the trench, and revealed by the clearing of the general wider area was a continuation of this wall. This survived to a maximum height of 63.25m OD (0.22m beneath existing floorboard surface levels). A narrower limestone wall foundation (7), measuring 0.4m wide, and orientated east-west. Although this abutted the east face of the southwards continuation of (4), the similarity in stone type suggests these walls are contemporary (see Figure 2).

3.2.6 An homogenous, 0.82m thick deposit of greyish-brown humic sandy silt (5), lay to the west and abutted wall foundation (4), and extended down to a depth of 62.22m OD. This contained 16th century pottery, 15th-17th century ceramic building materials, a post-medieval copper alloy lace-tag, burnt building stone, pieces of slag and burnt flint, as well as residual abraded sherds of medieval pottery. The mix of finds and the deposits appearance suggests this represents a disturbed and relatively long-lived (perhaps commencing in the medieval period and extending into the 17th century) garden soil (with an element of household waste content, perhaps derived from reworked rubbish pit fills).

- 3.2.7 Wall foundation (4) had been robbed to depths between 63.25 – and 62.95mOD by a north-south aligned robber cut (3), the fill of which (2) did not yield any artefacts.
- 3.2.8 The robber cut and backfill, and the internal and external deposits were overlain by a loose deposit of light greyish brown sandy silt (1), this appeared quite disturbed and extended underneath the existing floorboards beyond the limits of the trench. This contained 16-17th century pottery, a 16-17th century moulded stone spandrel or doorhead, as well as redeposited medieval pottery. It is likely that this represents a deposit resulting from the demolition of the stone building (structures 4 and 7), which was then used as a construction level for the current buildings on the site.
- 3.2.9 Small un-mortared red-brick stacks rested upon deposit (1) and supported the timber floor joists, the whole forming a void between floorboards and the ground of 0.14m. The floor boards were at 63.47m OD.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 Although only a relatively small area was subject to excavation, the nature and stratigraphy of these deposits is well understood, and the results can be considered reliable.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 The project has demonstrated that directly underlying the present ground surface, structural archaeology and undisturbed *in situ* deposits survive at a maximum height of 63.25m OD (220mm beneath the current floorboards). It is considered that this evaluation has fulfilled the needs of the brief set by David Radford (OCC).

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 It is highly likely that the deposits and structural remains found within this, and potentially the TVAS evaluation of 2017, relate to the buildings visible on Agas's 1587 Map of Oxford. This map shows a pattern of tenement development of pairs of buildings along the west side of St. Giles' comprised of a structure running longways and parallel to St. Giles' with a perpendicular building to the rear – forming an L-shape.

4.3.2 The large, north – south aligned wall revealed inside the current property, is, in all likelihood, the substantial back wall of a stone building(s) which fronted onto St Giles', perhaps the rear gable of the perpendicular element to the pairing mentioned above. The difference in the deposits immediately either side of this wall are suggestive of external deposits, potentially the upper fills of pits or probably a garden soil (5) to the west, and internal, backfilled or levelling deposits (6) to the east.

4.3.3 Evidence from the 2017 evaluation suggests an outbuilding and potential surface relating to this property of a similar date occur at 63.8m OD within the back garden of the current building. Suggesting that the levels of archaeological remains at the site rise slightly from within the extant building towards the rear of the property, perhaps indicating the existing floor of 51a has already terraced, and reduced the surviving height of existing archaeological remains at the site.

4.4 Significance

4.4.1 The results of the evaluation demonstrate that *in situ* deposits and structural remains relating to the Late Medieval - Early Post Medieval period are encountered at a height of 63.25m OD, approximately 220mm below the existing internal floor levels of the property.

4.4.2 These deposits and structural remains, in all likelihood, relate to the buildings shown on Agas's 1587 Map of Oxford, and were probably built in the early Tudor period. These buildings were demolished and the foundations partially robbed when the current structures were built during redevelopment of the site in the 17th century.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Natural Gravel overlain by garden soils and other deposits separated by a limestone wall foundation (1m wide). Robber trench, and overlying demolition deposits.					Length (m)	2.0m
					Width (m)	1.0m
					Avg. depth (m)	1.0m
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Findings	Date
1	Layer	1.0m+	0.12m	Loose, light greyish brown sandy silt w/ 5% gravel	Pottery; Architectural Stone Fragment	c1550-1700
2	Fill	0.94m	0.14m	Fill of cut 3, loose yellowish brown sandy mortar	-	-
3	Cut	0.94	0.14	N – S aligned robber cut, robbing wall 4	-	-
4	Wall	0.94m	0.58m+	N – S aligned wall built from large limestone blocks (0.40 x 0.40m maximum). 5 courses visible, roughly faced on both E & W sides and bonded with brown sandy silt.	-	-
5	Layer	1.0m+	0.87m	Firm, brown sandy silt, 10% gravel w/ occasional small limestone fragments	Pottery; CBM; copper alloy lace tag; Burnt building stone; slag; burnt natural flint	c1500-1625
6	Layer	1.0m+	0.87m	Friable, greyish brown, sandy silt, 5% gravel inclusions.	Pottery;	c1550-1650?

APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Post-Roman Pottery

By John Cotter

Introduction and methodology

- B.1.1 A total of 38 sherds (256g) of pottery were recovered from three contexts. A range of medieval wares (up to c 1480) and post-medieval wares (c 1480+) are represented.
- B.1.2 All the pottery was scanned during the present assessment and spot-dates were provided for each context. Each context group was quantified by sherd count and weight and recorded on a spot-dating spreadsheet. The pottery is mainly fragmentary but some fairly large fresh sherds are present.
- B.1.3 The context spot-date is the date-bracket during which the latest pottery types or fabrics are estimated to have been produced or were in general circulation. Comments on the range of fabrics were recorded, usually with mention of vessel form (jugs, bowls etc.) and any other attributes worthy of note (eg. decoration etc.). Fabric codes referred to for the medieval wares are those of the Oxfordshire type series (Mellor 1994) whereas post-medieval fabric codes are those of the Museum of London (MoLA 2014). The range of pottery is described in some detail in the spreadsheet (Table 1) and is therefore only summarised below.

Description

Context	Spot-date	Sherds	Weight	Comments
1	c1550-1700	12	133	8x joining sherds (106g) from a vertical sided bowl (or porringer) in green-glazed Border ware (BORDG) incl 3 plain vertical rim sherds (diam 180mm), glazed all over int, weathered & unglazed ext. 3x worn jug bodysherds (bos) Brill/Boarstall ware (OXAM) incl 2 from strip jugs c 1225-1450? 1x rim from small Medieval Oxford ware cook pot (OXY, c 1075-1300)
5	c1500-1625	16	101	4x late medieval Brill/Boarstall ware (OXB, c1400-1625) including fresh unglazed plain jar/jug rim (16/E17C?) & fairly coarse everted jar/cistern rim with thumbled horizontal strip on neck (or a damaged jug handle with a strip down the back?) - covered ext with a rough unsintered lichen-green glaze = probably L15/16C? 11x OXAM sherds (13-15C?) - mostly worn jug bos incl 1-2 strip jugs & an unglazed thick bo probably from a bottle, also incl 1x OXAM rim from a ?dish/bowl. 2x worn bos Kennet Valley B ware (OXAQ, c 1150-1350)

Context	Spot-date	Sherds	Weight	Comments
5	c1380-1550	7	12	Sieved Sample <1>. Small scraps. Incl 1x Brill Tudor Green ware copy (OXBC, c1380-1550). Bos OXAM, OXAQ, OXY
6	c1550-1650?	3	10	Bo in fine redware with reduced greenish-brown glossy glaze allover int & ext - probably Brill Cistercian-type (CSTN, 1480-1700) or early post-medieval redware (PMR c1550/80+), the form here suggests a conical mug/tyg (with handle scar) or a cylindrical jug neck/rim. 1x OXAM strip jug (13-15C). 1x OXY
TOTAL		38	256	

Table 1. Description of post-Roman pottery by context

Discussion

B.1.4 The pottery mostly comprises ordinary domestic pottery typical of the Oxford area. There is a strong early post-medieval presence here (16th to early 17th century). The earlier (medieval) wares occurs as small worn sherds and are almost certainly residual here. These include a couple of sherds of Medieval Oxford ware (c 1075-1300), the earliest type present here.

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material

B.1.5 The pottery here has the potential to inform research through re-analysis - particularly when reviewed alongside further assemblages from any future excavations in the area of the present evaluation. It is therefore recommended that the pottery be retained.

B.2 Post-Roman ceramic building material (CBM)

By John Cotter

Introduction and methodology

B.2.1 The site produced a total of eight pieces of post-Roman CBM weighing 1183g from two contexts. This is a mixture of medieval (up to c 1480) and post-medieval material (c 1480+). The assemblage is in a fragmentary condition and of little interest aside from its use for dating purposes.

B.2.2 All the CBM was scanned during the present assessment, in a similar way to the pottery, and spot-dates were provided for each context. Each context group was quantified by fragment count and weight and recorded on a spot-dating spreadsheet. The material is described in some detail in the spreadsheet (Table 1) and is therefore only summarised below.

Context	Spot-date	Frag	Weight	Comments
5	15-E17C?	6	1156	1x edge frag ?Tudor quarry (floor) tile or hearth brick/tile in buff-brown fabric with reduced light grey core, Max 44mm thick (upper surface just missing), the surviving edge vertical and neatly finished. 1x thin Tudor brick corner in fine sandy buff-brown fabric, 44mm thick, one side is sooted - possibly from use in fireplace/hearth? 3x very worn frags medieval flat roof tile in pinkish F7B fabric (1 glazed) & 1 in F7BB. 1x fairly fresh lower edge frag from a ridge tile in oolitic limestone-tempered F1B (c 1175-1350?) with traces of glaze higher up
5	15-E17C?	1	2	Sieved Sample <1>. Shapeless scrap brick/tile - possibly from one of the brick/tiles above in (5)?
6	13-16C?	1	25	Very worn edge frag flat roof tile in fine sandy brown-buff fabric. F7B? Or early post-medieval?
TOTAL		8	1183	

Table 1. Description of post-Roman CBM by context

Discussion

B.2.3 The CBM includes part of a Tudor-style brick (Late 15th to 16th century?) and part of a thick quarry (floor) tile of similar date (up to the early 17th century in this instance?). The unusual thickness of the latter suggests it may be a specialised paving tile/brick used for hearths. The Tudor brick also shows sooting along one side suggesting it might also have been used in a hearth or brick-built fire-place? A few pieces of worn medieval roof tile and a single piece of medieval ridge tile are residual in their contexts.

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material

B.2.4 The CBM assemblage here has little or no potential for further research and could be discarded if so desired.

B.3 Metalwork

By Leigh Allen

B.3.1 A single copper alloy lace tag and 9 fragments of iron were recovered from context 5 (sample 1). The lace tag tapers along its length (30mm) and has edges that turn inwards to secure the tag to the end of the lace. Lace tags are commonly found in large numbers in late Medieval and Post Medieval contexts. The iron fragments are very corroded and are probably nails/nail shank fragments.

B.3.2 The assemblage is of low potential and no further work is recommended. The iron fragments can be discarded.

B.4 Stone

By Ruth Shaffrey

Introduction

B.4.1 A single piece of burnt Jurassic limestone (182g) was recovered from context 5. It is a naturally flat piece of stone but is on the thick side for roofing and was probably utilised structurally in a wall or foundations. It does not need to be retained.

B.4.2 A moulded piece of shelly oolitic limestone was recovered from context 1. This is not artefactual and should be retained for further analysis by an architectural stone specialist.

B.5 Slag and burnt unworked flint

By Geraldine Crann

Context	Description
5	Slag: 5 pieces, including 4 small pieces from environmental sample <5>. 19g
5	Burnt unworked flint: 1 piece from environmental sample <5>, 8g

B.6 Architectural stone

By Julian Munby

Context	Description
1	A piece of oolitic shelly limestone (max length 160 mm) which is most likely a fragment of a spandrel from a door head (or fireplace), and probably from the St John's College era (C16-17) rather than St Bernard's College (C15-16).

APPENDIX C ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

C.1 Animal Bone

By Rebeca Nicholson

Introduction

- C.1.1 A small collection of animal bone weighing a total of 130g was recovered by hand and from the residues of soil samples sieved to 0.5mm. The assemblage was recorded in a Microsoft Access database with the aid of the Oxford Archaeology skeletal reference collection and standard identification guides, using a diagnostic zone system (Serjeantson 1996).
- C.1.2 The bone derived from two contexts, both likely to be late or post-medieval (Table 1). Context 5, a deposit of sandy silt which may be either garden soil or a pit fill located to the west of wall (4) included the majority of the bone; only three fragments of large mammal bone came from context 6, a friable deposit of sandy silt to the east of wall (4).

Description and Statement of Potential

- C.1.3 The bone is in fair to good condition but heavily fragmented. Several fragments of large mammal long bone shaft from contexts 5 and 6 exhibit spiral fractures indicating breakage while still fresh, but no definitive butchery marks were observed.
- C.1.4 The occurrence of bones from the common domesticates, cattle, caprine and pig is typical for a medieval or later urban assemblage containing domestic or butchery waste, but a small (thrush-sized) tarsometatarsus may be an accidental inclusion from a natural death, particularly as the bone is in good condition. A single flatfish vertebra is again typical for late medieval or post-medieval domestic waste, indicating the availability of salted or perhaps even fresh fish in the urban market.

	Hand collected	Sieved	Total
Cattle	1		1
Sheep/goat	1	1	2
Pig		2	2
Large mammal	7		7
Medium mammal	1	1	2
Micro-mammal		2	2
mammal	4	28	32
Passeriforme bird		1	1
Flatfish		1	1
Grand Total	11	36	47

Table 1: Number of Identified Specimens (NISP) from contexts 5 and 6

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material

- C.1.5 The small size of the assemblage precludes detailed interpretation, but demonstrates the survival of bone in fairly good condition at the site. The assemblage has been fully recorded and has little additional research value so does not merit retention in the archive.

APPENDIX D BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX E SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

Site name:	51a St Giles, Oxford
Site code:	OXSJSG19
Grid Reference	SP 5114 0675
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	25 th – 27 th February 2019
Area of Site	tbc
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS:2019.41

Summary of Results: In February 2019, Oxford Archaeology were commissioned by Savills on behalf of St John's College, Oxford to undertake a trial trench evaluation within a groundfloor room at 51a St Giles, Oxford. An area was cleared of floorboards and joists, and a thin layer of soil was removed, within which a smaller 2m by 1m trench was excavated. In situ deposits and structural remains dating to the Late Medieval / Early Post Medieval were encountered at an uppermost height of 63.25m OD, which was 0.22m below the existing internal floor levels. Hand auger holes reached truncated natural gravel at 62.22mOD, no indication of an overlying in-situ loess was observed. A large north-south orientated limestone wall foundation was revealed, abutted by a smaller limestone wall foundation running to the east. A dark greyish-brown homogenous humic-rich deposit to the west of the wall (outside) probably represented mixed garden soils, whereas inside the structure less humic reddish-brown deposits indicated possible ground raising. No floor levels were associated with the structural remains. The internal and external deposits dated to the 16th century, with deposits overlying the demolition of the structures dating to the 17-18th century, contemporary with the suggested construction dates for the current extant buildings at the site. Residual abraded sherds of medieval pottery, present in most of the deposits, attested to earlier activity at the site.

The height at which structural remains survived under the floor in the existing buildings (63.25 – 63.07mOD) is somewhat lower than the highest levels recorded in the garden by a previous evaluation, at 63.32 – 63.60mOD (TVAS, 2017). It is noticeable that the garden levels are higher than the level of the outside path (adjacent to the building) as well as the floors within the building, and suggests that the area of the path and extant building footprint were reduced and levelled, perhaps from those still present in the garden during construction. Therefore, there is potential for better archaeological preservation in the higher parts of the garden.



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