

Student Services  
Building  
Brookes University  
**Oxford**



**Archaeological Watching  
Brief Report**



June 2011

**Client: Oxford Brookes University**

Issue N<sup>o</sup>: 1  
OA Job N<sup>o</sup>: 4990  
NGR: SP 5359 0652



Client Name: Brookes University  
Client Ref No: OFC\05  
Document Title: Brookes University, Oxford, Student Services Building  
Document Type: Archaeological Watching Brief Report  
Issue/Version Number: 1  
Grid Reference: SP 5359 0652  
Planning Reference: 09/02764/FUL  
Invoice Code: OXBROKWB  
OA Job Number: 4990  
Site Code: OXBROK11  
Receiving Museum: Oxfordshire County Museum Service  
Museum Accession No: OXCMS:2010.80  
Event No:

Issue	Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by	Signature
1	Jennifer Thurstan Assistant Supervisor	Richard Brown Senior Project Manager	Richard Brown Senior Project Manager	

Document File Location: X:\OXBROKWB\_Brookes University Student Services Building\Report  
Graphics File Location: \\Server8\invoice codes i thru q\O\_invoice codes\OXBROKWB  
Illustrated by: Julia Collins

**Disclaimer:**

*This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and prior written authority of Oxford Archaeology being obtained. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this document being used for a purpose other than the purposes for which it was commissioned. Any person/party using or relying on the document for such other purposes agrees, and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Oxford Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting there-from. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the person/party by whom it was commissioned.*

© Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd 2011

Janus House

Osney Mead

Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263800

e: oasouth@thehumanjourney.net

f: +44 (0) 1865 793496

w: oasouth.thehumanjourney.net

Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited is a Registered Charity No: 285627



## Brookes University, Oxford, Student Services Building

### *Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

*Written by Jennifer Thurstan and illustrated by Julia Collins*

### Table of Contents

<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 Scope of work.....	2
1.2 Location, geology and topography.....	2
1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....	2
<b>2 Project Aims and Methodology.....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 General Aims.....	3
2.2 Specific aims and objectives.....	3
2.3 Methodology.....	3
<b>3 Results.....</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1 Description of deposits.....	4
3.2 Finds.....	4
3.3 Environmental remains.....	4
<b>4 Discussion and conclusions.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Appendix A. Archaeological Context Inventory.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Appendix B. Bibliography and references.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Bibliographic Sources.....	7
Cartographic Sources.....	7
<b>Appendix C. Summary of Site Details.....</b>	<b>8</b>

### List of Figures

Fig. 1 Site location

Fig. 2 Plan of Monitoring Locations

Fig. 3 Plates



## Summary

*Between February and June 2011, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Brookes University's Headington Campus at Gipsy Lane, Oxford. The work was commissioned by Brookes University and comprised the monitoring of ground reduction and excavations for foundations: ground beams and pile-caps in advance of construction of the a new library and teaching building at the Headington Campus. The work revealed undisturbed Brackley sands at the base of the holocene sequence, overlain by an undated subsoil and topsoil with later disturbance resulting from 20<sup>th</sup> century construction work. No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were revealed.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between February and June 2011, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Brookes University's Headington Campus at Gipsy Lane, Oxford. The work was commissioned by Brookes University and comprised the monitoring of ground reduction and excavations for foundations; ground beams and pile-caps in advance of construction of the a new library and teaching building at the Headington Campus.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of the Planning Permission (planning ref: 09/02764/FUL). A brief was set by David Radford, the Oxford City Archaeologist, detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition. The brief described a possible two staged approach, comprising trench evaluation followed by appropriate mitigation based on the results of the investigation.
- 1.1.3 The evaluation was omitted during construction set up and following discussions between Brookes University , Oxford Archaeology and David Radford, the Oxford City Archaeologist, a watching brief was proposed.
- 1.1.4 OA produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI - OA 2011) detailing how it would meet the Local Authority's requirements for work. This was approved by David Radford.
- 1.1.5 This report documents the results of the watching brief.

### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on on the north-eastern edge of Oxford. Brookes University is situated on a south-west facing slope running from 78 m to 94 m AOD. The development site is bounded to the north and west by Headington Road, to the east by Gipsy Lane and to the south by Cheney lane.
- 1.2.2 Prior to development the area of proposed development consisted of lawned areas, paths and campus buildings dating from the 1960s.
- 1.2.3 The underlying geology of the area consists of Brackley Sand Member (sand and calcareous sandstone)(British Geological Survey, sheet no 237).



### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site has been described in detail in a Desk Based Assessment (DBA) produced by OA in 2007 "Oxford Brookes Masterplan", and will not be reproduced here.
- 1.3.2 The site was identified as having potential for prehistoric, Roman or Civil War remains. The DBA for this site produced by Oxford Archaeology (2007) specifically noted that this site was of interest due to its proximity to the likely line of the Parliamentarian siege works established in 1644 on Headington Hill. The Gipsy Lane campus may straddle the northern defences of the Parliamentarian encampment on the top of the hill (OA, 2007, 10.3.1).

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Specific aims and objectives

- 2.1.1 The specific aims and objectives of watching brief were:
- 2.1.2 (i) Establish the date of the subsoil overlying the natural sand.
- 2.1.3 (ii) Establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains with particular regard to any prehistoric, Roman or Civil War activity.
- 2.1.4 (iii) Should any remains be encountered, to rapidly signal to all parties involved the presence of remains and the necessity to mitigate the presence of remains within the construction process.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief took place at intervals over the course of five months during ground reduction works. It was carried out by an OA Watching Brief Supervisor under the management of Senior Project Manager Richard Brown.
- 2.2.2 During monitoring, ground mapping and soil profiles were maintained to record the extent of the upper horizon of the undated subsoil and natural sand that were exposed in order to give a confident understanding of the presence or absence of archaeological remains.
- 2.2.3 All site wide soil deposits were allocated unique context numbers and recorded following procedures laid down in the OAU Fieldwork Manual (OA, 1992) and WSI (OA, 2011).
- 2.2.4 A plan recording areas of ground reduction at a scale of 1:500 was maintained during the watching brief. Representative sections of the soil profile were drawn at a scale of 1:20 during ground reduction and excavation for pile-cap construction.
- 2.2.5 A digital photographic record was maintained to document the areas of ground reduction and show representative sections of the strata across the area of development.

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 Across the majority of site undisturbed Brackley sands (Context 5) were encountered at a depth of between 0.46 m and 0.65 m below exiting ground level although at two



points in the far north of site in the area of Building C the top of natural was encountered at approximately 1 m depth.

- 3.1.2 Overlying Brackley sand (5) across the majority of site was a layer of sub-soil, context (4), which consisted of a soft dark orange-brown sandy silt. The thickness of this deposit varied between 0.12 m and 0.42 m but was commonly c.0.3 m thick in areas where truncation by recent building works had not taken place.
- 3.1.3 Subsoil 4 was overlain throughout the site (other than where truncated) by ploughsoil/modern topsoil 3. Context (3) was a soft very dark brown sandy silt which remained at a thickness of between 0.04 m and 0.18 m in locations across site.
- 3.1.4 A single discrete anomalous soil deposit was observed during the watching brief. This was, c. 0.5 m diameter and 0.12 m deep with shallow concave sides and base and a single soft dark brown silty sand fill ('Cut' 6 - see plan Fig.2, filled with deposit 7). This feature showed disturbance characteristic of root activity and is likely to be related to small tree planting or removal.

## 3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No finds were noted or retrieved during the watching brief.

## 3.3 Environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were noted during the watching brief.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The sequence of deposits across site is of natural Brackley sands overlain by an undated subsoil derived from the natural possibly through localised colluvial processes. This in turn is overlain by a thin, more organic soil that appears to be a topsoil which has possibly been subjected to limited ploughing (ridge and furrow is visible in South Park to the south west of the site) and/or cultivation.
- 4.1.2 No artefacts were found within the soils. A single anomalous discrete soil deposit was recorded at the horizon of the Brackley sands. Due to its irregular western side this was attributed to modern root disturbance. This is supported by the previous land use shown on the 1880 first edition O.S map of the area, which shows a series of regularly formal gardens with tree lined paths, associated with 'Victoria Villas'.
- 4.1.3 The extent of exposed natural sands and subsoil reduction (and profiles) observed and the complete absence of anthropogenic evidence is regarded as a reliable indication of the absence of any such remains within the development footprint.



## APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Length	Comments	Finds	Date
1	Layer	<0.44m	-	-	Modern Piling Mat	-	-
2	Layer	<0.08m	-	-	Modern Disturbance	-	-
3	Layer	<0.18m	-	-	Plough soil	-	-
4	Layer	0.12 – 0.42m	-	-	Subsoil	-	-
5	Layer	-	-	-	Brackley Sands – Natural Geology	-	-
6	Cut	0.12m	0.48m	0.5m	Root Hole	-	-
7	Fill	0.12m	0.48m	0.5m	Fill of [6]	-	-
8	Layer	0.48m	-	-	C20 <sup>th</sup> Levelling	-	-
9	Layer	>0.6m	-	-	Modern Rubble	-	-
10	Layer	0.1m	-	8.5m	Modern Piling Mat	-	-
11	Layer	0.7m	3.1m	10m	Recent Demolition Rubble	-	-



## APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

### **Bibliographic Sources**

IFA, 2008, Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs

OAU; 1992; Field Manual (ed. D. Wilkinson)

OA, 2007 Oxford Brookes Masterplan. Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

OA, 2011 Oxford Brookes University, Gipsy Lane, Oxford Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation

### **Cartographic Sources**

British Geological Survey 1994, Sheet 237, Thame, Solid and Drift, 1:50,000 series





## APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Brookes University, Oxford, Student Services Building
Site code:	OXBROK11
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR SP 5359 0652
Type of watching brief:	Foundation trenches and excavations for Pile Caps.
Date and duration of project:	February to June 2011
Area of site:	2.2 ha
Summary of results:	The works revealed a sequence consisting of natural Brackley sands overlain by an undated subsoil. No finds or archaeological remains were recovered during the course of the watching brief.
Location of archive:	Oxfordshire County Museum Service

## Plates



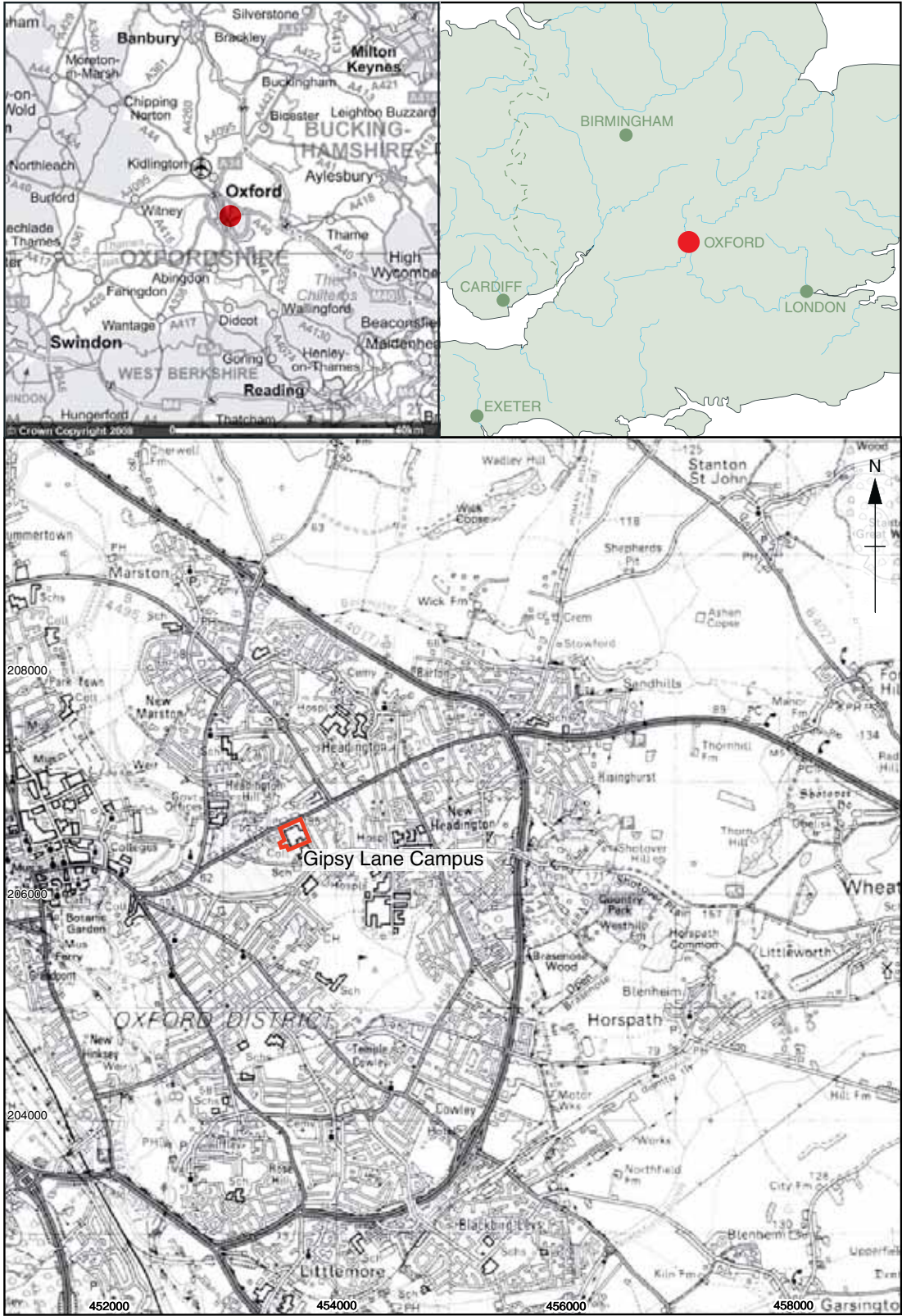
Brackley Sands being exposed



Building C: subsoil being mechanically reduced – natural sands exposed in ground beam and pile cap excavations, as well as profiles of both natural and subsoil being revealed



'Soil anomaly' context 6 and 7.



Reproduced from the Landranger 1:50,000 scale by permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright 1997. All rights reserved. Licence No. AL 10000569

Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Plan of Monitoring Location