

New 6th Form House Shiplake College Shiplake Henley-on-Thames Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief



Oxford Archaeology

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Illustrated by Anne Dunkley

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**CONTENTS**

Summary	1
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Location and scope of work.....	1
1.2 Geology and topography.....	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background	1
2 Project Aims and Methodology	2
2.1 Aims.....	2
2.2 Methodology.....	2
3 Results.....	2
3.1 Description of deposits	2
3.2 Finds	2
3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains.....	2
4 Discussion and Conclusions	3
Appendix 1 Bibliography and references	4
Appendix 2 Summary of Site Details	4

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 OS Site location map
Fig. 2 Site plan of area of watching brief

SUMMARY

In November and December 2001 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Shiplake College, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon (NGR SU 7675 7834). The work was commissioned by Nicholas Brown Webber Architects and Landscape Planners in advance of the construction of a new 6th Form House at the College. A former college building was demolished in the course of the works while the watching brief revealed natural clay and subsoil levels below the topsoil. No archaeological deposits or features were observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In November and December 2001 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Shiplake College, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1).
- 1.1.2 The work was commissioned by Nicholas Brown Webber Architects and Landscape Planners in respect of a planning application for a new 6th Form House on the site (Planning Application No. P01/S0341/S0795) to be built over the site of a former college building that was demolished in the course of the work.
- 1.1.3 A project brief was set by Paul Smith, Oxfordshire's County Archaeological Officer and OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The underlying geology of the development site is the River Thames floodplain alluvium over gravels.
- 1.2.2 The site is situated on the west bank of the Thames and lies at 59.5 m OD, comprising an area of 910 m².

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, 2001) and is summarised below.
- 1.3.2 The proposal site lies east of the medieval Church of Saints Peter and Paul. There was therefore potential for medieval vernacular remains to survive below ground in the vicinity of the new development.
- 1.3.3 During refurbishment works at the church in 1910, Roman bricks were noted in the south wall of the church and in the floor of the tower, suggesting the possible presence of a Roman building in the vicinity of the College.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 A small building was demolished to foundation level at the outset of the works. The area of the new college building (Fig. 2) was then stripped down to formation level by 360° Hymac machine in three separate stages. Each stage of stripping was monitored prior to the excavation of foundation trenches.
- 2.2.2 A general photographic record of the work was made and all recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992). Details of the site visits are held in the archive.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The earliest deposit within all the foundation trenches was the natural geology that consisted of red-brown silty clay with patches of flint gravel and nodules, with outcrops of chalk and flint.
- 3.1.2 The natural was sealed by a natural subsoil of dark red-brown silty sand with flint nodules, flint gravel and flecks of chalk that was 0.3 m - 0.5 m thick. A number of patches of root disturbance were observed in the subsoil, which appeared otherwise to be undisturbed.
- 3.1.3 The topsoil, a dark brown sandy loam with flint gravel and chalk specks, sealed the subsoil. The topsoil varied from a depth of 0.7 m to 0.2 m, sloping from west to east across site.
- 3.1.4 A number of modern services for the College including telephone cables were observed cutting through the topsoil and subsoil. These were concentrated towards the road leading to the car park and along the back of the south west edge of site.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No finds were recovered from the site.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No environmental samples were taken from the site.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The results from the watching brief show that no archaeological activity had occurred on the site until the college buildings were constructed.
- 4.1.2 No evidence was forthcoming from these investigations for a Roman building suggested by the bricks in the nearby church.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

D Wilkinson, Ed 1992, *OAU Fieldwork Manual*.

OA, 2001, *New 6th Form House, Shiplake College, Shiplake, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, Written Scheme of Investigation*.

APPENDIX 2 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Shiplake College, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

Site code: HENSL 01

Grid reference: NGR SU 7675 7834

Type of watching brief: Excavation of foundation for New 6th Form building footprint.

Date and duration of project: Four site visits from 23/11/01 to 10/12/01.

Area of site: 910m²

Summary of results: No archaeological deposits or features were discovered; the topsoil overlay natural deposits.

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: 2001.185.

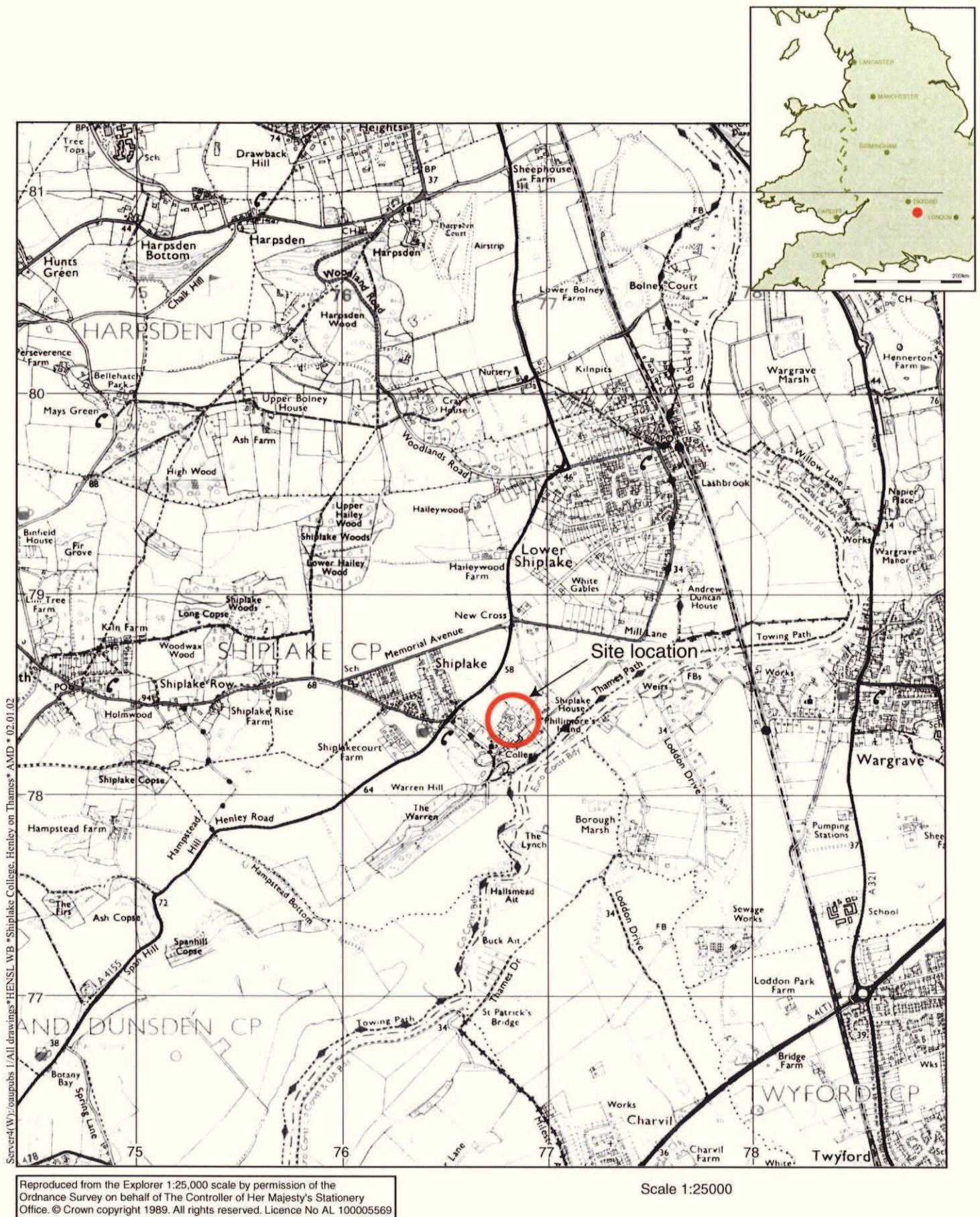
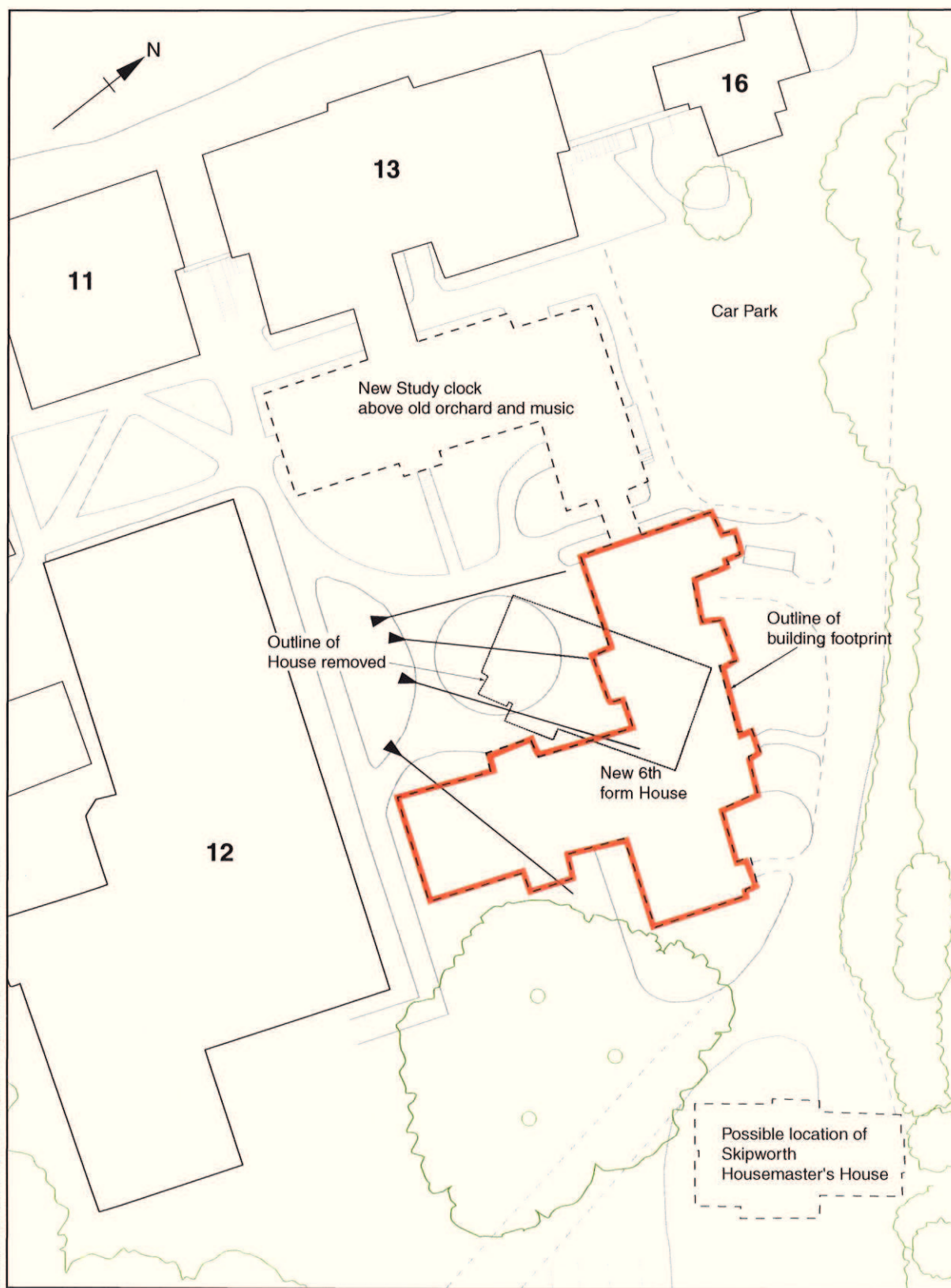


Figure 1: Site location



Scale 1:1250

Figure 2: Site location showing Building footprint and slope of topsoil

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