

Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre

**INTEGRATED DISABILITY CENTRE
NUFFIELD ORTHOPAEDIC CENTRE, OXFORD**

NGR SP 5475 0660

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Oxford Archaeological Unit

May 2001

Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre

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Prepared by: Robin Bashford

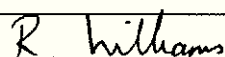
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Oxford Archaeological Unit

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Summary

In February and March 2001, Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook a watching brief at the Integrated Disability Centre, Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre, Headington Oxford (SP 5475 0660). A deposit of probable kiln waste with a sizeable assemblage of Roman pottery was recorded to the east of the site, adjacent to Windmill Road.

1 Introduction

Permission has been granted for the construction of a new Integrated Disability Centre with car parking and access within the grounds of the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre (Planning Ref: 00/00954/NF). However, the site lies in an area of archaeological potential. Therefore, a condition for the undertaking of an archaeological recording action was been attached to the permission, in line with PPG 16 and Oxford Local Plan Policies EN40/43.

The Integrated Disability Centre (IDC) will lie at the north-east corner of the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre (NOC) complex (NGR SP 5475 0660) (Fig. 1). The development site is bounded to the north by Mattock's Close, to the east by Windmill Road, and to the south and west by car parking and other buildings of the NOC. It lies at approximately 95 m above OD. The geology is Oxfordian Beckley Sand Member (British Geological Survey Sheet No. 237, 1994). This is a sand and calcareous limestone (OAU, 2000).

2 Background

The site lies within the vicinity of the East Oxford Roman pottery industry and there is considerable evidence of Roman activity close to the area of the development. The majority of this evidence is focused to the south of the NOC, within the grounds of the Churchill Hospital. A number of archaeological investigations have been carried out in this area during the late 19th and 20th centuries (Young, 1971-3). These revealed kilns, potters workshops, wells, pottery dryers and buildings, all dating to the Roman period. A 2nd-century field system was also recorded.

Investigations within the grounds of the NOC have had mixed results. In 1965, sherds of Roman pottery, indicating the site of a kiln, were recorded immediately to the east of the proposed development. Unfortunately no investigations took place to confirm this prior to the site being built upon. During the construction of Mary Marlborough Lodge in the 1970's, the architect observed a number of sherds of Roman pottery. An evaluation carried out by Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) in 1997, just to the south-west of the IDC site, revealed a series of plough soils which contained Roman and post-medieval pottery. (A geophysical survey of the site had indicated the possibility of a kiln, however, no evidence for this feature was encountered). A watching brief undertaken in 1998, by OAU, during the construction of the new ACE building immediately to the east of the IDC site, revealed a similar sequence of plough soils. However, subsequent building programmes are likely to have had a severe impact on any archaeological remains that may have previously survived on the site.

Therefore, where archaeological remains have not been destroyed by 20th-century development, there is good potential for activity relating to the Roman pottery industry on the proposal site. Where such activity is not present, plough soils possibly dating to the Roman period (or later) may be encountered.

3 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to identify any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works, and to record these to established OAU standards (Wilkinson 1992), in order to secure their preservation by record.

4 Methodology

The watching brief was undertaken by means of separate inspection visits; all digging was undertaken by machine.

Within the constraints imposed by health and safety considerations the deposits exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and monochrome print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets.

Soil description utilised standard charts for the approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits.

5 Results (Fig. 2 and 3)

The buildings which had previously occupied the site and were demolished prior to the construction of the new IDC are shown on figure 2. The foundations and associated construction debris from these buildings appear to have truncated any archaeological remains which may have been present, but two main areas remained relatively undisturbed by recent development and the watching brief was concentrated on these zones.

Area Adjacent to Windmill Road (Fig. 3)

During the construction of the buildings which previously occupied the development area, the site appears to have been reduced by approximately 1.3 m from the surface of Windmill Road. However, an area of original ground measuring c 15 m x 10 m has survived to the west of Windmill Road and, prior to the groundwork monitored during the watching brief, formed a bank sloping from east to west. It should also be noted that the bank was considerably higher in the extreme south-east corner of the site and formed a 'mound' at the southern limit of the surviving bank (the position of the 'mound' is shown on Fig. 3; the location of the bank is shown as it was after reduction).

During the groundwork, it was necessary to reduce the majority of the bank, although the 'mound' was left largely intact (some trees were removed but the roots did not appear to truncate any archaeological deposits). The reduction of the bank was carefully monitored and the results are presented below.

The stratigraphic sequence revealed by the reduction comprised natural sand (1) overlain by a mid-dark grey clayey silt (2) approximately 0.4 m thick which was in turn overlain by 0.3 m thick layer of mid orange brown sand (3). This was overlain by a 0.5 m thick layer of topsoil (4). Deposit 2 produced a large quantity of Roman pottery (see Finds).

Area Adjacent to Mary Marlborough Building (Fig. 3)

The area immediately to the north of the Mary Marlborough Building was also relatively undisturbed by the demolition / construction debris from the demolished buildings. A c 25 m service trench running west-east was excavated through the area but revealed no archaeological deposits or features other than a number of service trenches which were associated with either the demolished buildings to the north or the Mary Marlborough Building to the south.

Area of Demolition Debris (Fig. 3)

The remainder of the site had been leveled prior to the construction of the demolished buildings (see above) and , although the groundwork was intermittently monitored in this area, no archaeological features or deposits were observed.

6 Finds

Roman Pottery by Paul Booth

Roman pottery was recovered from a single context (context 2) during the watching brief. The material, mostly if not all of later Roman date, was recorded using the OAU Roman pottery system and (wherever possible) vessel type codes established for the Oxford industry by Young (1977/2000). The pottery was quantified by sherd count, weight and RE. The pottery was in reasonable condition, though both preservation of surfaces and sherd size and condition (degree of abrasion) were variable. Occasional sherds were moderately well worn.

The fabrics present were:

	sherds	weight	RE
F51 (Oxford colour-coated ware)	6	93	0.27
M22 (Oxford white motarium fabric)	31	887	1.08
W11 (Oxford parchment ware)	3	62	0.03
O10 (Oxford 'fine' oxidised ware)	4	37	0.04
R10 (Oxford fine reduced ware)	12	124	0.29
R21 (Oxford sandy reduced coarse ware)	1	18	-
R30 (Oxford medium reduced coarse ware)	18	171	0.34
Total	75	1392	2.05

All the pottery was certainly or very probably derived from local kilns. The fabrics, particularly fabric M22, exhibited a variety of surface condition consistent with derivation from production waste. Characteristically, however, there were no

'wasters' as such, though several sherds (including three in fabric R30) were very heavily fired.

The range of vessel types present was also consistent with local production. Mortaria were most numerous, with 13 different vessels represented by rim sherds. Eleven of these were of Young (1977/2000) type M22 and two were of type M17. One of the M22s had a markedly hooked flange, forming an extreme example of Young's M22.1. Other Oxford types present were colour-coated ware bowls C45 and C47 and parchment ware bowl type P24. A possible bowl form (unspecified) occurred in fabric O10 and jars/bowls of unspecified types occurred in fabrics R10 and R30 (two and three respectively). A flanged bowl, probably of type R48, occurred in fabric R10 and there were three examples of the simple dish type R53 and R30.

The fabrics and particularly the range of vessel types present are consistent with a later Roman date. While R48 is only broadly dated to the 3rd-4th centuries the other specifically identified types are all dated after AD 240. M22, the most common type here, was manufactured in the later 3rd century alongside types such as M17 (present here) and M18 but it became the dominant Oxford mortarium type in the 4th century and was produced in very large quantities at sites such as the Churchill Hospital. Its presence in large numbers here (given the small overall size of the group) might suggest that the present assemblage is primarily of 4th century date. The two examples of M17 (dated AD 240-300), do indicate a late 3rd century component, however.

Conclusion

The pottery assemblage is consistent with production in the Oxford kilns and contains no non-local components. Although the group contains no obvious wasters this is characteristic of material from other kiln sites in the industry and the range of forms, in particular the very high representation of mortaria, make it clear that this is not a domestic assemblage. Moreover the pottery is associated with fired clay fragments which derive from kiln structures. It is almost certainly derived from adjacent pottery production of late Roman date. On present evidence, however, the exact location of associated kilns is not known. Such features could have lain within a few metres of the deposit from which the pottery was recovered, though this not need necessarily have been the case. If the material was not redeposited in the late-Roman period, however, it is unlikely to have been carried more than c 100 m, at most, from its probable source of origin.

7 Environmental results

While due consideration was given to various environmental sampling strategies, no suitable deposits were observed during the watching brief.

8 Discussion

The high concentration of pottery and the presence of fired clay within deposit 2 suggests that it represents kiln waste and that there was probably a kiln in the immediate vicinity. It is feasible that the 'mound' observed in the south-west corner of the site may be the site of the kiln, although this area was eventually unaffected by

the groundwork (this was originally scheduled for reduction but was later set aside as a 'garden' area). The overlying deposit (3) was almost certainly re-deposited natural sand as it was very sterile and similar in composition to the sand. It is likely that this was deliberately deposited to cover the layer of kiln waste after the kiln went out of use.

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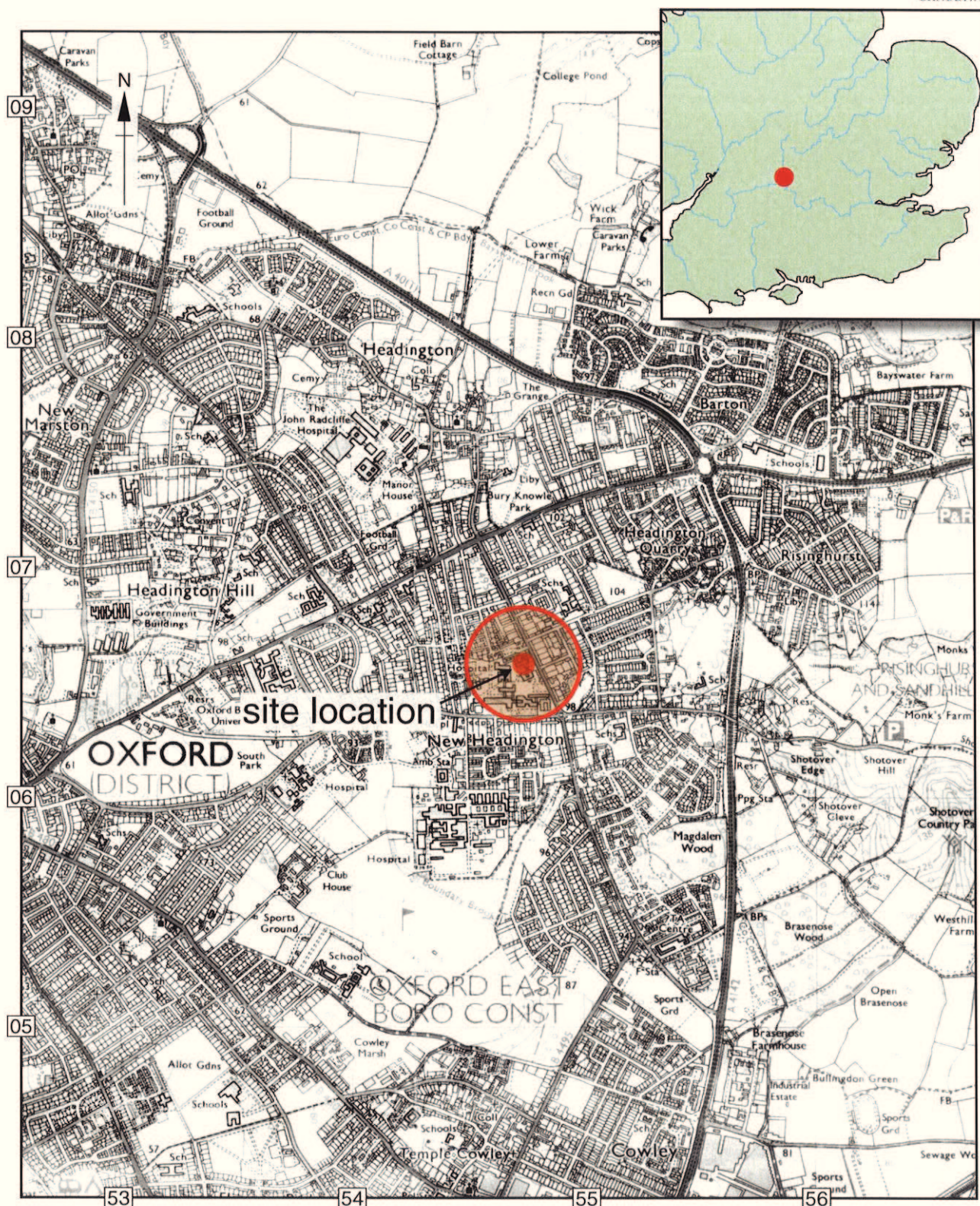
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Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Plan of Nuffield site area, showing location of demolished buildings

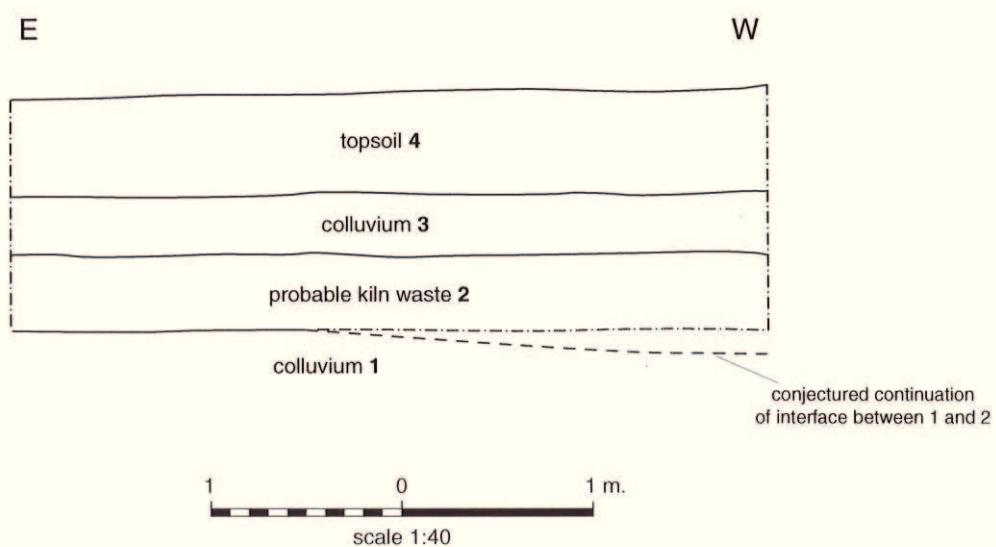
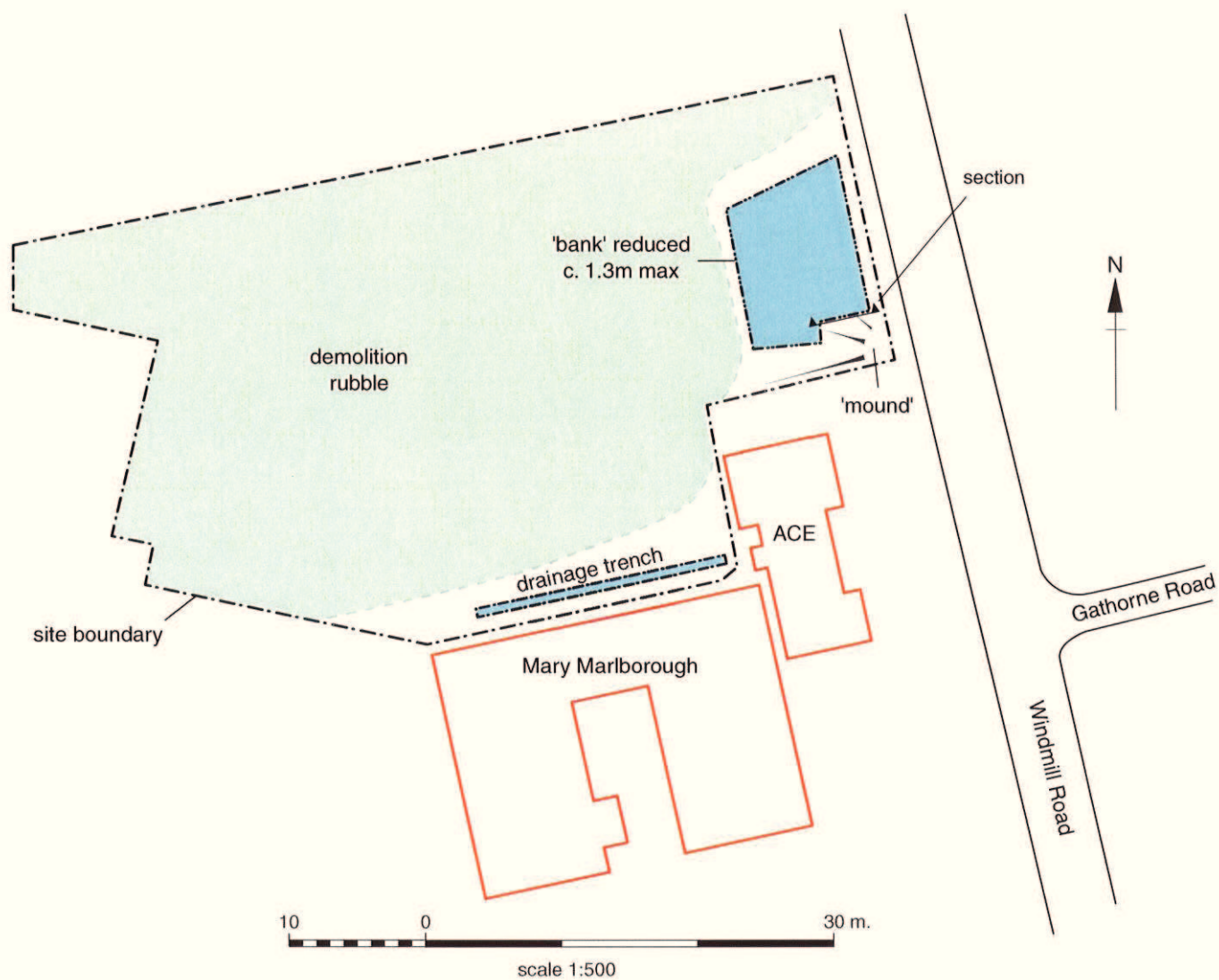


Figure 3: Site plan and section



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