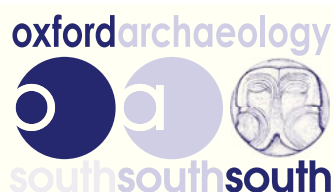


Keble College Sports Ground Oxford



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



June 2012

Client: Keble College


Issue No: 1

OA Job No: 5308

NGR: Centred on SP 5055 0876



Client Name: Keble College
Client Ref No:
Document Title: Keble College Sports Ground, Oxford
Document Type: Archaeological Watching Brief Report
Issue/Version Number: 1
Grid Reference: Centred on SP 5055 0876
Planning Reference: 11/02407/FUL
Invoice Code: OXKEBCWB
OA Job Number: 5308
Site Code: OXKEBC 12
Receiving Museum: Oxfordshire County Museum Service
Museum Accession No.: OXCMS:2012.51
Event No.:

Issue	Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by	Signature
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Document File Location: Smallworks on Server1\PROJECTS\Oxfordshire OX\Oxford City OC\13966
Keble College Sportsground, New Pavilion\Report\OXKEBCWB Report.odt
Graphics File Location: Server go:/oaupubs 1_ltoQ*OXKEBC12*OXKEBDWB*Keble College Sports
Ground, Oxford*GS*29.05.12
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Keble College Sports Ground, Oxford

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by Mike Sims

and illustrated by Georgina Slater

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Summary

Between March and May 2012 Oxford Archaeology (OA) conducted an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a new machinery store at Keble College Sports Ground, off Woodstock Road, Oxford (centred at SP 5055 0876). The watching brief recorded evidence for post-medieval activity pre-dating the sports ground and consisting of a brick pathway, and probable modern landscaping. No earlier archaeological remains were observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA), was commissioned by Keble College to undertake an archaeological watching brief during alterations to the sports pavilion and construction of a new machinery store.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of planning permission (planning ref: 11/02407/FUL). A brief was issued by David Radford, the City Archaeologist, detailing the local authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition (OCC 2011). In response to the brief, OA prepared a written scheme of investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2012).
- 1.1.3 All work will be undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on level ground at approximately 64 m above Ordnance Datum in the north-west quadrant of the city. The site is bounded to the east by the B4144 Woodstock Road, to the south by Elizabeth Jennings Road and to the west and north by open ground (Fig. 1).
- 1.2.2 The area of proposed development is situated in the south-east corner of the existing sports ground. The pavilion and the site of the proposed machinery store were situated on a raised platform approximately 0.3m higher than the rest of the sports ground.
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is 1st Terrace flood plain gravel (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet no, 236).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site was included within the brief and is reproduced below.

Aerial photographic evidence from the National Mapping Programme located two circular cropmarks within the Keble Sports Ground (County HER No. 3576). These potentially indicate the presence of ring ditches, forming part of the extensive Late Neolithic-Early Bronze Age landscape located on the Summer-Town Radley terrace north of Oxford. A third larger ring ditch and a series of linear boundaries are recorded just to the north of the Keble Sports Field. Evidence for a Roman occupation site has previously been recorded, 150m north of the application site, at St Edwards School (County HER No 3814).



Potential

- 1.3.2 Aerial photographs and evidence from archaeological excavations have demonstrated the presence of an extensive prehistoric ritual and agricultural landscape across the Summertown-Radley gravel terrace between the Thames and Cherwell Rivers, involving Neolithic/Bronze Age ritual and funerary monuments and subsequent Iron Age /Roman agricultural field systems and settlement. The full character and extent of these monuments in the vicinity of Keble Sports field is not well understood and this work provided an opportunity to expand our knowledge of this area.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the watching brief were to:

- (i) preserve by record any archaeological deposits, structures or features encountered during the course of any ground intrusions;
- (ii) seek to establish the extent, nature and date of any archaeological deposits, structures or features encountered within the scope of the ground intrusion;
- (iii) secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site;
- (iv) disseminate results through the production of a unpublished client (grey literature) report.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The remit of the watching brief was to observe all works that may disturb or destroy below ground archaeological remains. These works included topsoil stripping, excavation of foundation and service trenching, access roads and landscaping. The watching brief was conducted as a site presence during the undertaking of any of the above works.
- 2.2.2 All spoil generated by the machine excavations was examined for the presence of archaeological artefacts.
- 2.2.3 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with established OA practices. Bulk finds were collected by context. Black-and-white negative photographs and a digital photographic record was taken of all excavations, general settings and archaeological sections.
- 2.2.4 A site plan showing the location of any excavations and any recorded sections was maintained (Fig. 2). Section drawings of features and sample sections of trenches were drawn at a scale of 1:20.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The underlying natural was only exposed within the deepest part of the excavations, the soak-a-way pit. At the base of the pit a layer of fine light yellow-brown sand (5) was exposed (Fig. 3, Section 3). This was overlain by a 1.1m deep layer of terrace gravel (4).



- 3.1.2 Directly overlying the terrace gravel was a deep layer of reddish brown clayey silt (2) (Fig. 3, Sections 1, 2 and 3). This deposit varied in depth throughout the site, measuring over 0.5m in depth at the eastern end of the site, tapering down to 0.18m in depth at the western end of the site. The deposit contained variations in colour scattered throughout its length suggesting that it may have been cultivated or possibly deliberately deposited.
- 3.1.3 Let into the surface of layer 2 was a short length of brick paving (3). This had been constructed using machine made bricks measuring 0.225m x 0.112m x 0.072m butted together without mortar.
- 3.1.4 Sealing path 3 and overlying layer 2 elsewhere was a layer of grey-brown silty loam (1), the present day topsoil and turf.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Examples of 19th/20th century pottery, bottle glass and brick was recovered from contexts 1, 2 and 3. The presence of this material was recorded but it was not retained. No earlier dating evidence was recovered.

3.3 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 terrace gravel, 4 and the natural sand, 5, exposed within the stripping for the access road and during the excavation of the soak-a-way pit represent the underlying natural deposits for the area. No features were seen to cut into these deposits within the development area.
- 4.1.2 Layer 2 is a deep layer of cultivated soil, displaying evidence of disturbance throughout its depth. There was no intervening layer of subsoil or undisturbed material between this layer and the natural deposits. The dating evidence recovered from this deposit suggests that it originated during the late 19th/early 20th century period. The brick pathway, 3, is typical of a garden or allotment path of the period and is probably also contemporary with layer 2. It is possible that these deposits may indicate that there was occupation on the site fronting Woodstock Road prior to the construction of the playing fields.
- 4.1.3 Layer 1 is a present day landscaping deposit of topsoil and turf.
- 4.1.4 The rise in ground level surrounding the pavilion consists wholly of differing depths within layer 2 (> 0.5m in Section 2, dropping to 0.22m in depth in Section 3), rather than from any underlying feature, either natural or man-made, and may have been formed when the playing fields were levelled during their construction.
- 4.1.5 No evidence of any activity pre-dating the 19th century either in the form of archaeological features or residual finds was observed during the course of the watching brief.



APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Comments	Finds	Date
1	Layer	0.18m	Present day topsoil and silt, landscaping deposit	Pottery, brick	C19th/ C20th
2	Layer	0.2m to 0.3m	Subsoil, probable earlier worked soil	Pottery, brick, glass bottles	C19th/ C20th
3	Surface	0.1m	Brick pathway	Brick	C19th/ C20th
4	Layer	1.1m	Terrace gravel	-	-
5	Layer	> 0.4m	Natural sand	-	-



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- OCC, 2011 *Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief: Keble College Sports Ground, Woodstock Road, Oxford*
- OA, 2012 *Keble College, Oxford: Sports Pavilion Alterations and New Machinery Store: Written Scheme of Investigation*



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Keble College Sports Ground, Oxford
Site code:	OXKEBC 12
Grid reference:	Centred on SP 5055 0876
Type of watching brief:	Machine excavation of building footprint and foundations, ground reduction, stripping for an access road and excavation of a soak-a-way pit
Date and duration of project:	March and May 2012, 3 site visits
Area of site:	Approximately 1200m ²
Summary of results:	The watching brief recorded evidence for post-medieval activity pre-dating the sports ground and probable modern landscaping. No earlier archaeology was observed.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at Janus House and will be transferred to the Oxfordshire County Museum Service under the accession number OXCMS:2012.51



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Figure 1: Site location

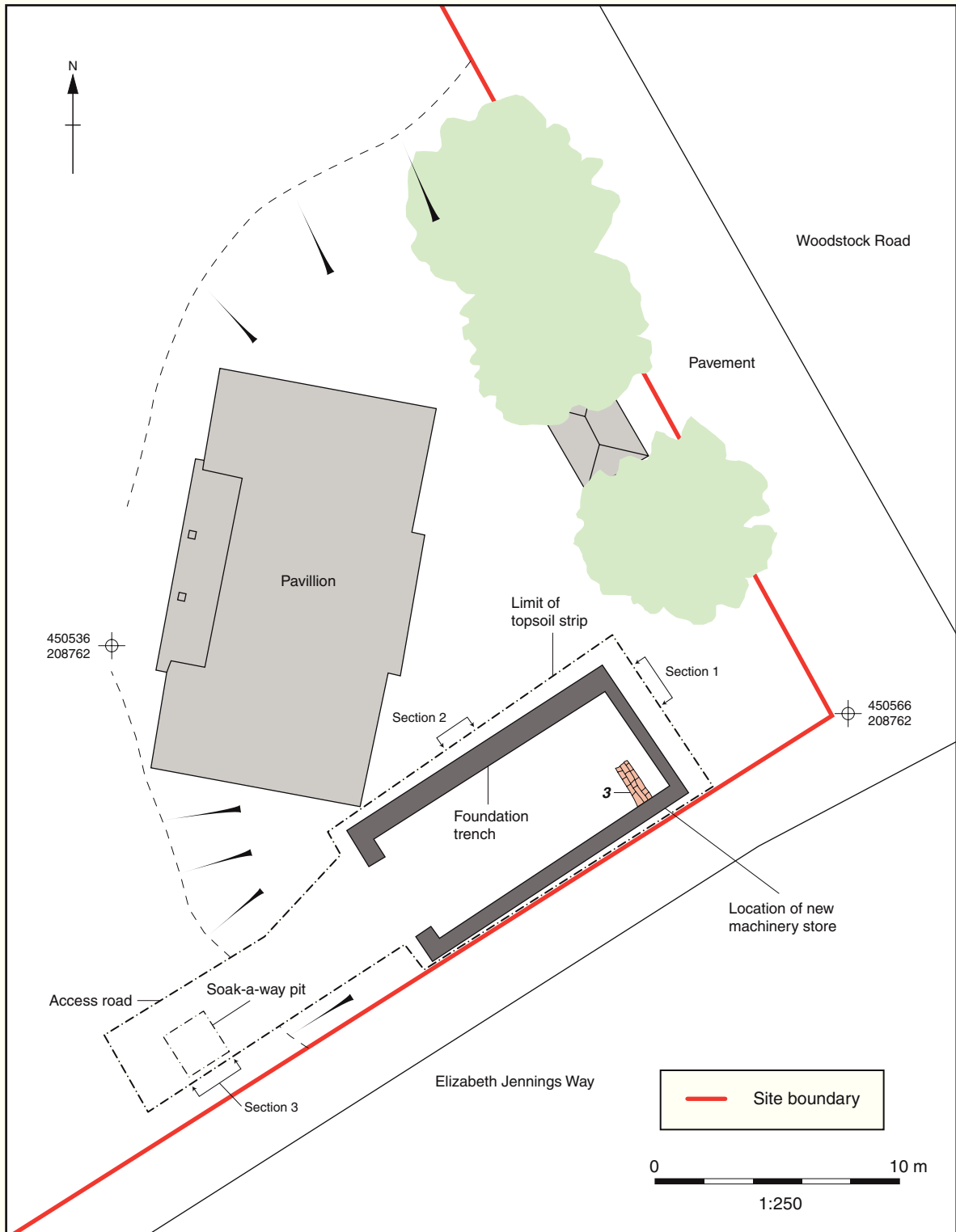


Figure 2: Site plan

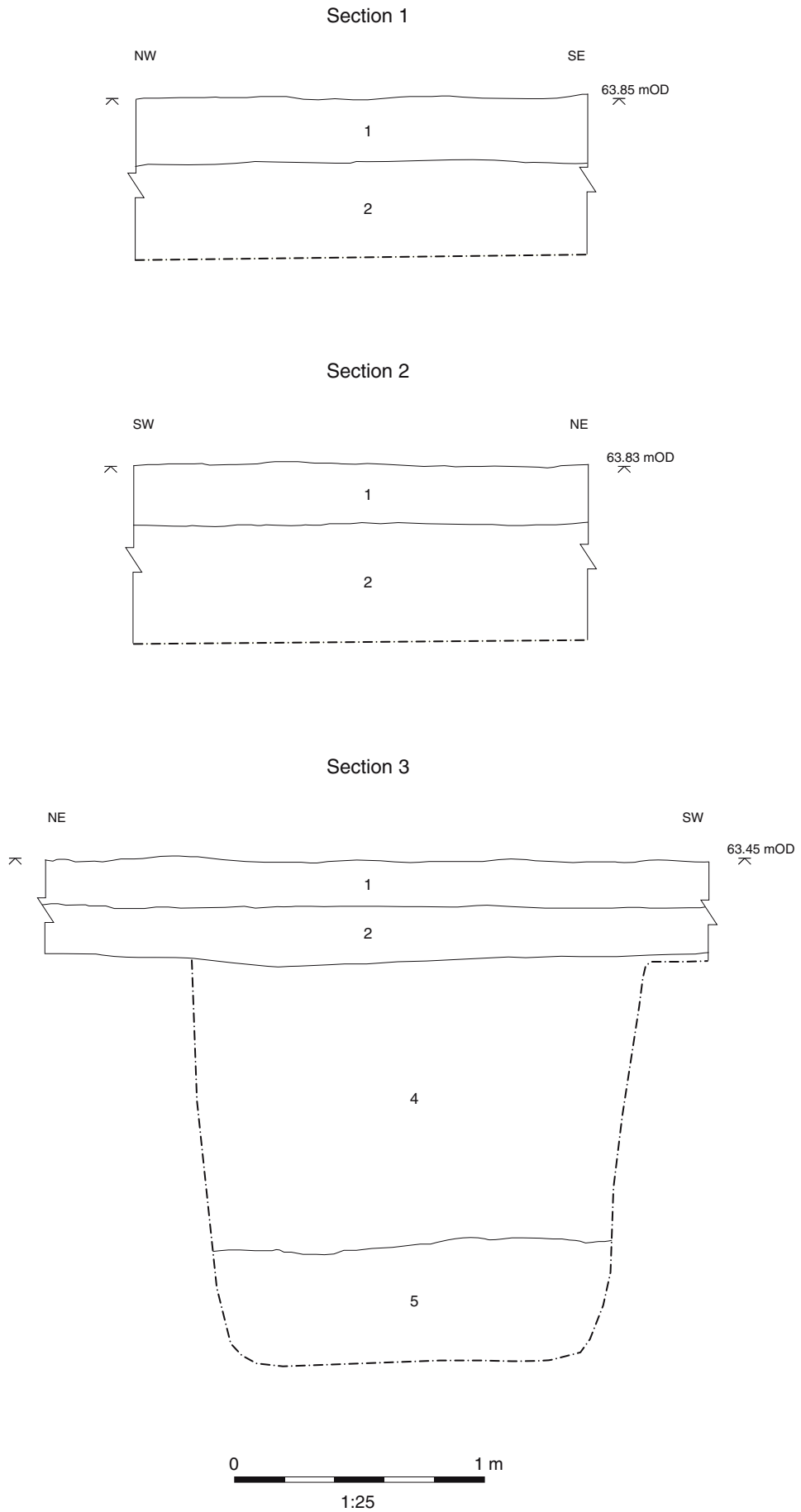


Figure 3: Sections



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