

New Electrical Ducting, Jesus College, Oxford

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

In July 2006 Oxford Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief in the Second and Third Quads at Jesus College, Oxford, in advance of the excavation of new cable duct trenches. The watching brief in the Second Quad revealed a layer of undisturbed buried soil possibly predating the college construction. This was sealed by made ground that produced 17th century clay pipe fragments and may relate to the construction of the quad.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 In July 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Jesus College, Oxford (centred at NGR: SP 5139 0635). The work was commissioned by ADP Architects in respect of the first phase of the proposed excavation of new cable ducting trenches.

1.1.2 A project brief was set by Brian Durham, the Oxford City Archaeologist (OCC 2006). OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2006).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 Jesus College lies within the centre of Oxford and is bounded by Cornmarket Street, Market Street, Ship Street and Turl Street (Fig. 1). The new cable ducting trenches were excavated in the Second and Third Quads of the college.

1.2.2 The underlying geology is 1st Terrace River Gravel (BGS Sheet 236).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared by Brian Durham in his brief and is reproduced below.

1.3.2 Jesus College dates from the 16th century, and on Agas' map of 1578 the south-east angle of the Outer (First) Quadrangle is in place. Both quadrangles are in place by 1675 (Loggan's map). The pre-college layout was reconstructed from documentary sources by H E Salter and is presented in his *Survey of Oxford* (1960). The implications of this is that the proposed extensive trenching operation may confirm the line of town properties predating the college, including back boundaries of properties on Market Street, Ship Street and Cornmarket Street. There is also a low but not discountable risk of an early property in the centre of the block, as with Frewin Hall sitting behind the opposing Cornmarket Street frontage.

1.3.3 Because of the potential for this work to have an unknown or damaging effect on known or suspected elements of the historic environment, including a tenement of

Godstow Abbey under the porter's lodge and other deposits predating the foundation of Jesus College, a brief for archaeological mitigation, including an archaeological watching brief, has been produced by Brian Durham, the Oxford City Archaeologist (OCC 2006).

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits that may be disturbed or destroyed during the course of the groundworks.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The excavation was accomplished using a mixture of hand digging and machine excavation where appropriate. The watching brief was conducted as a series of site visits during works likely to impinge upon potential archaeological deposits.
- 2.2.2 A plan showing the extent of the excavations and the location of any archaeological features was drawn at a scale of 1:100 and where recorded their sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Second Quad

- 3.1.1 A layer of dark brown silt loam (4) was encountered at a depth of 0.5 m below the current ground level. The composition of this layer suggests that it may be an earlier turf line or buried soil. At the western extent of the trench this was overlain by a light yellow-brown clay silt (5), which contained a high percentage of fine sand and small stone fragments and may represent a demolition layer (Fig. 3, Section 2).
- 3.1.2 At the eastern extent of the trench Layer 4 was overlain by a layer of grey-brown clay silt (3), which tapered off to the west, overlying Layer 5. This layer contained occasional gravels and was a possible made-ground deposit. Layer 3 contained two clay tobacco pipe fragments of 17th century date, and four pieces of animal bone. Sealing both layer 3 and 5 was a 0.25m-deep layer of yellow-brown clay silt (2) (Fig. 3, Section 1). This contained large quantities of small gravel and probably represents a layer of made ground.

3.1.3 Cutting through layers 2, 3 and 4 was a vertical-faced, parallel-sided feature (7) (Fig. 3, Section 3). This measured 4.5m wide, with its full length not exposed, though a shallow depression could be observed in the turf to the north of the trench suggesting it was at least 8m long. The cut could be observed within the full depth of the section showing it to be in excess of 0.5m deep. It was filled with a dark brown silt loam (6) which produced fragments of machine-made brick suggesting a 20th century date. The trench was sealed by a 0.2m-deep layer of dark brown silt loam (1), the present day topsoil. This contained a variety of post-medieval finds, including a residual fragment of a stemmed drinking glass of probable 17th-century date.

3.2 Third Quad

3.2.1 In the Third Quad, the trench was excavated to a depth of *c* 0.45m below ground level. Only modern building debris was observed.

3.3 Finds

3.3.1 Layer 3 produced two clay tobacco pipe fragments (a bowl and a stem fragment) dating to the 17th century, and four pieces of animal bone, including a cattle vertebra and sheep/goat scapula that had both been butchered. Modern contexts 1 and 6 between them produced a range of post-medieval and modern finds, including pottery, ceramic building material, vessel glass, a piece of modern window glass, animal bone and oyster shell.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.4.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 Layer 4 appears to be a buried soil horizon and may represent an undisturbed deposit predating the construction of the college. Its survival suggests a potential for earlier archaeology to survive below.

4.1.2 Layers 2, 3 and 5 appear to be made ground and may relate to the construction of the Second Quad in the 17th century. Feature 7 may be the remnants of an WWII air raid shelter, similar to that encountered during an evaluation in the Provost's Garden, Queens College (OA 1997).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.2 m	> 0.7 m	Modern topsoil and turf	Pottery, brick, glass, clay pipe, bone, oyster shell	C20th
2	Layer	0.16 m	> 0.7 m	Made ground	-	-
3	Layer	0.18 m	> 0.7 m	Made ground	Clay pipe, animal bone	C17th
4	Layer	> 0.2 m	> 0.7 m	Earlier turf line, buried soil horizon	-	-
5	Layer	> 0.2 m	> 0.7 m	Made ground ? demolition debris ?	-	-
6	Fill	> 0.5 m	4.5 m	Backfill of cut 7	Pottery, brick, bone, oyster shell	C20th
7	Cut	> 0.5 m	4.5 m	Cut for WWII air raid shelter	-	C20th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY

OA, 1992 *Field Manual* (ed D Wilkinson)

OA, 1997 *New Library Block, Provost's Garden, Queens College, Oxford, Evaluation report*

OCC, 2006 *Brief for Archaeological Fieldwork, 2: Mitigation including Watching Brief*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Electrical Ducts, Jesus College, Oxford

Site code: OXJELE 06

Grid reference: SP 5139 0635

Type of watching brief: Machine and hand dug service trenches

Date and duration of project: July 2006

Summary of results: The watching brief observed a buried soil horizon which may predate the construction of the college. This was sealed by made ground probably relating to the construction of the second quadrangle.

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: OXCMS:2006.107.

