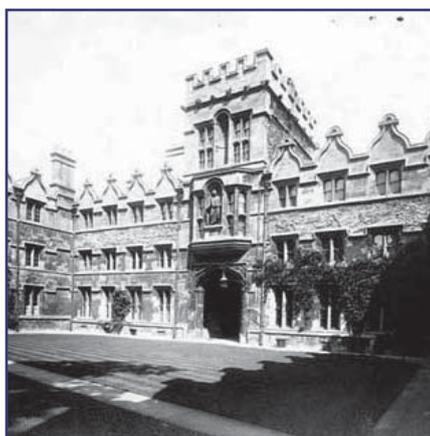


DPM Trench
Radcliffe Quad
University College
Oxford



**Archaeological
Watching Brief Report**

oxfordarchaeology

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DPM Trench, Radcliffe Quad, University College, Oxford

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by Robin Bashford

and illustrated by Julia Collins

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Summary

In July 2014, Oxford Archaeology (OA) undertook an archaeological watching brief during the installation of a new damp proof membrane along the west range of the Radcliffe Quadrangle at University College, Oxford. The work did not require planning consent and therefore no brief was issued by Oxford City Council (OCC) and no written scheme of investigation (WSI) was prepared. The work was commissioned by Dr Roland Harris, the archaeological consultant for University College, and was undertaken in accordance with standard OA watching brief methodology. The watching brief revealed the construction cut for the east wall of the cellar of the west range of the quad, which was constructed between 1675 and 1676. Additionally, a series of imported garden soils and landscaping deposits were revealed.

1 LOCATION AND SCOPE OF WORK

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA), were commissioned by Dr Roland Harris on behalf of University College to undertake a watching brief in the Radcliffe Quadrangle, University College, Oxford during the installation of damp proofing against the southern half of the east elevation of the west range of the quad. Although the Radcliffe Quad itself was created in the 18th century, the west range is formed by the eastern range of the Main Quad which was constructed in 1675-1676.
- 1.1.2 As planning permission was not required for the work, no brief was set by David Radford (OCC) and the work was undertaken in accordance with standard OA watching brief methodology.
- 1.1.3 The site is situated on the eastern side, and c 100m north, of the edge of a gravel promontory consisting of Quaternary River Gravels of the 2nd (Summertown-Radley) Terrace Deposits (British Geological Survey sheet 236). The promontory extends between the River Isis c 1 km to the west and the River Cherwell c 400m to the east. The gravels on this terrace are typically overlain by a 0.3m depth of red brown loessic loam. It is centred on SP 5176 0623.
- 1.1.4 The trench was approximately 15m long and measured between 0.8m and 1.1m wide. The trench was excavated to 0.7m below ground level (bgl) across its entire width, and deepened to 1.1m c 0.5m from the eastern face of the wall, which roughly corresponded with the western edge of the trench for a live foul water pipe.

2 PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

- 2.1.1 A number of archaeological discoveries and excavations have occurred within and in the area of University College both in antiquity and in recent times. The following background information is reproduced from the written scheme of investigation prepared by OA in advance of the excavation of two engineering test pits on the site of the Goodhart Building to the east of the site (OA 2013).
- 2.1.2 **University College kitchens** – excavations (presumably during building works) in 1892 produced finds comprising medieval pottery, including jugs.
- 2.1.3 **University College Radcliffe Quadrangle** – subsidence in 1940 revealed a stone-built chamber under the north-east corner of the southern half of the lawn, probably an 18th-century sump pit.
- 2.1.4 **Logic Lane** – excavations were undertaken on the east side of the lane in 1960 in advance of building by University College. The excavations revealed parts of what

appear to be two ring ditches, possibly representing ploughed out Bronze Age barrows (an interpretation supported by the find of a sherd of a collared urn in one of the ditches). Mesolithic/Neolithic flints were found in residual contexts, as were several sherds of Romano-British pottery. The site produced several 11th-century rubbish pits, and a beam-slot and posthole (possibly of a boundary fence). Later medieval evidence comprised further pits, the surfaces of Kybald Street (set out c 1130) and four sections of 13th-century walling.

- 2.1.5 **University College new Common Room** (south of 17th-century kitchen) – during construction of this building in 1969, a large stone-lined chamber with a brick vault (probably a cess pit) was discovered lying across the line of Kybald Street. Evidently this must post-date the 17th-century partial closure of this part of Kybald Street. Post-medieval pottery was found.
- 2.1.6 **92-3 High Street** – medieval rubbish pits (producing a substantial pottery group) exposed during construction of a new strong room for the bank in 1969.
- 2.1.7 **University College hall, kitchen and buttery** – a brief assessment of the historic fabric was undertaken in 1998.
- 2.1.8 **Postmaster's Hall Yard, Merton College, Merton Street** (north side) – excavations took place prior to building works in 2000-3, to the rear of 4a Merton Street (Merton stables – a stone townhouse of c 1200). This revealed 11th-century (or later) pits, an undercroft adjacent to 4a Merton Street (probably supporting a chamber rather than a hall), a second building to the north (on the Kybald Street frontage) and later medieval pits.
- 2.1.9 **University College kitchens** - In 2006 OA carried out an archaeological evaluation at University College. The works showed that intact and deeply stratified archaeological levels survive pertaining to a possible 13th-century structure (overlying an earlier and undated cut feature) and a pit associated with properties that once fronted Kybald Street or High Street. A second possible structure may have served as a mason's workshop during the re-construction of the University College between 1634-1668, prior to the construction of the kitchen. Good correlation was found with the archaeological evidence for the construction of the Kitchen during 1668-69.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1.1 All fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the OA Field Manual (ed. D Wilkinson 1992), and the revised OA fieldwork manual (publication forthcoming).
- 3.1.2 Further guidance is provided to all excavators in the form of the OA 'Fieldwork Crib Sheets - a companion guide to the Fieldwork Manual'. These have been issued ahead of formal publication of the revised Fieldwork Manual.

4 DESCRIPTION OF DEPOSITS

- 4.1.1 The archaeologically arbitrary base of the deepened part of the trench (at approximately 1m below existing ground level) roughly corresponded with what appeared to be the first significant archaeological horizon. A north-south aligned linear cut was observed (2) which is likely to represent the 1675-6 construction cut for the west range of the quad. The exposed element of the foundation comprised well dressed and evenly coursed ashlar blocks in limestone. The fill of the probable construction cut comprised a reddish brown silty sand with mortar throughout (3), and was overlain by a c 0.25m thick layer of fine, humic loam (4) which was in turn overlain by a more mixed

rubbly deposit (5). Deposit 5 was approximately 0.15m thick and was overlain by the existing 0.5m of topsoil (6).

5 FINDS

5.1.1 Pottery

Identified by John Cotter

compiled by Geraldine Crann

Context	Description	Date
3	2 sherds black glazed ware (PMBL); 1 sherd London stoneware (LONS), 38g	Late 17 th -18 th century
5	1 jar rim sherd post medieval redware (PMR), glaze badly decayed likely to be chemical damage, 23g	17 th -18 th century

Discussion and recommendations.

5.1.2 The assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.

5.1.3 Clay pipe

Identified by John Cotter

compiled by Geraldine Crann

Context	Description	Date
5	1 near complete bowl with short, stubby spur, in fresh condition, 19g	1670 -1700.

Discussion and recommendations.

5.1.4 The assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1.1 The deposit through which the linear feature was cut is likely to represent a buried soil horizon contemporary with the construction of the west range of the quad in 1675-6. The composition of this deposit was not fully characterised, and consequently it was unclear whether this deposit represented a buried topsoil, or if there had been any removal of topsoil prior to the 17th-century works.

6.1.2 Although not seen in the location of Section 1 (Fig. 3), there was an indication of a c 0.1m offset to the foundation at the base of the trench to the north of the section (see Plate 1). This was c 0.1m - 0.2m below the level at which the construction cut was visible and it is possible that the later build up of deposits (4, 5 and 6) over this horizon is contemporary with the creation of the Radcliffe Quad in the 18th century, rather than the original construction of the west range as part of the Main Quad in 1675-6. This would also go some way to explaining the lower level of the internal floor surfaces in comparison to the level of the existing surface in the quad, which is the source of the damp problem currently being addressed.

6.1.3 The linear feature itself was almost certainly the construction cut for the west range – although it was not observed along the entire length of the DPM trench. This was due to

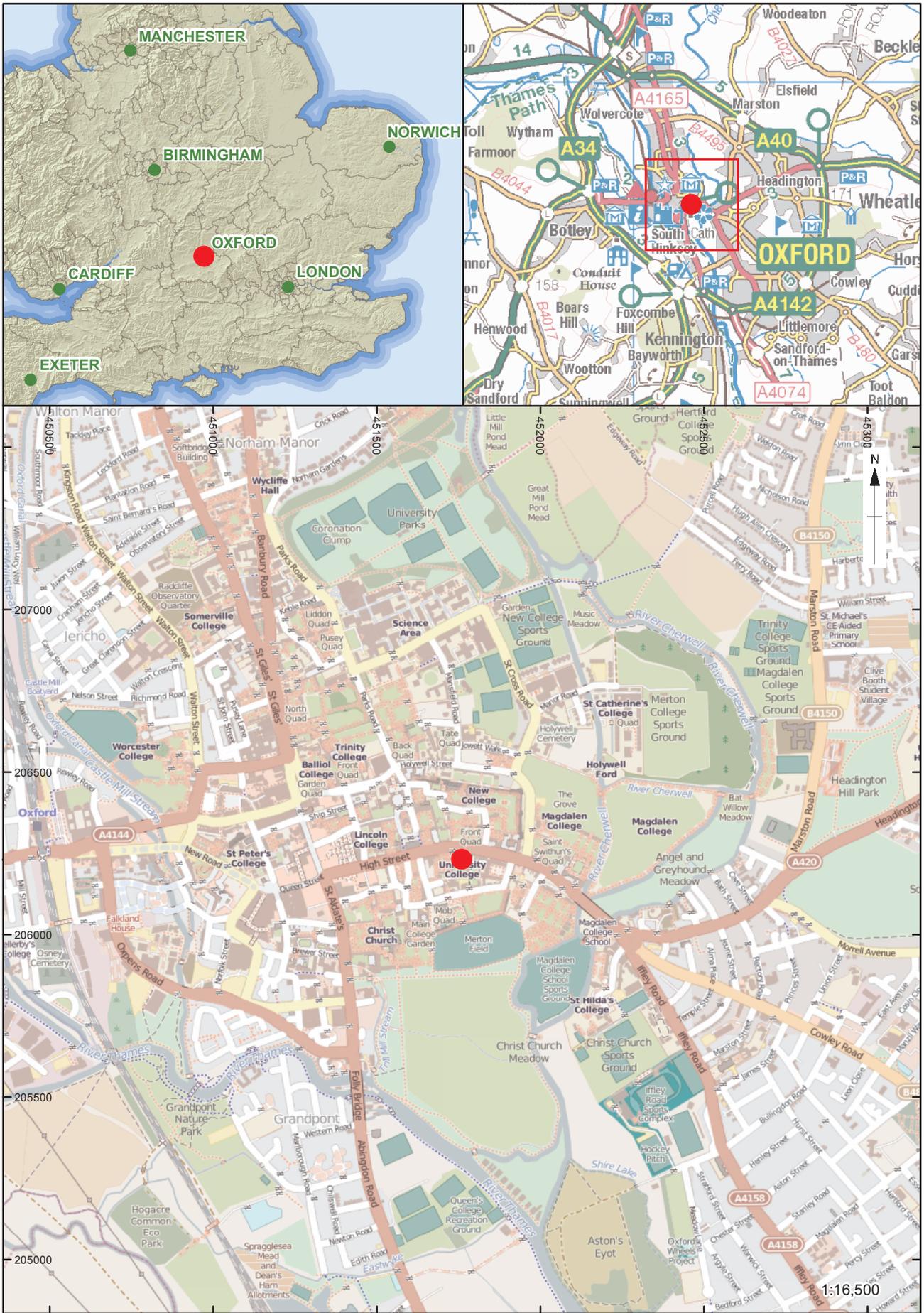


the fact that the edge of the deepened section of trench roughly corresponded with the eastern edge of the linear feature, so that in places the edge of the feature was beyond the edge of the deeper trench.

- 6.1.4 The deposits overlying the fill of the construction trench and the deposit through which it was cut are likely to represent landscaping deposits and imported topsoil. The date of the deposition of these layers is unclear, although the artefactual material recovered from Deposit 5 may suggest that this phase of landscaping is contemporary with the construction of the west range (see above).

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- OA 2013 *University College, Oxford. Goodhart Building - engineering test pits*
Written Scheme of Investigation



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Figure 1: Site location

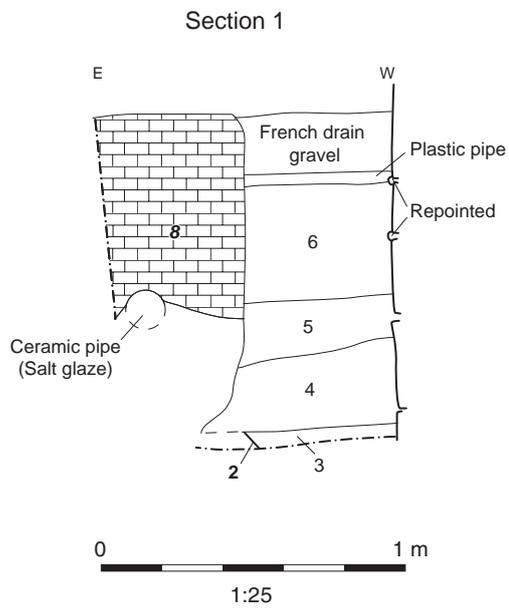


Figure 3: Sample section



Plate 1: 1675-6 footing showing possible offset in base of trench



Plate 2: east facing elevation of 1675-6 footing



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