New Jericho Health Centre Building
University of Oxford
Radcliffe Observatory Quarter
Oxford

Archaeological Watching Brief

for
Longcross Construction Ltd

CA Project: 3450
CA Report: 12024

May 2012
New Jericho Health Centre Building
University of Oxford
Radcliffe Observatory Quarter
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CA Project: 3450
CA Report: 12024

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date 26 April 2012

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date 11 May 2012

approved by
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signed

date 24 May 2012

issue 01
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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with the construction of the New Jericho Health Centre building, University of Oxford Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, Oxford.

No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during groundworks, and although a single sherd of Roman pottery was recovered, this was from the subsoil, and it is residua within a later context.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 From June 2011 to March 2012 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief for Longcross Construction Ltd at the New Jericho Health Centre building, University of Oxford Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, Oxford (centred on NGR: SP 5078 0710; Fig. 1). The watching brief was undertaken to fulfil a condition attached to planning consent for the construction of the new health centre (Planning ref: 11/00513/FUL). The objective of the watching brief was to record all archaeological remains exposed during the development.

1.2 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2011) in consultation with Mr David Radford, Planning Archaeologist, Oxford City Council, as archaeological advisor to Oxford City Council. The fieldwork also followed the Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief (IfA 2008), the Management of Archaeological Projects 2 (English Heritage 1991), and the Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager’s Guide (EH 2006).

The site

1.3 The development area is approximately 0.5ha and comprises a square plot of land within the north-western corner of the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter (ROQ). The site had previously been cleared of former structures, apart from an 18th/19th-century boundary wall running along the north and west sides of the site and part of the Harkness and Gibson building which stands in the eastern part of the site (MOLA 2011). The site is bounded to the west by Walton Street, to the north by gardens adjoining residential properties on Observatory Street, to the east by Old Radcliffe Observatory and Green College grounds, and to the south by an area of cleared ground associated with the Humanities and Mathematics Department (Fig. 2). The site lies between 61 and 62m AOD.

1.4 The underlying solid geology of the area is mapped as Pleistocene Summertown-Radley (Second) Gravel Terrace deposits (BGS 2011). A natural silty clay deposit encountered during previous investigations immediately above the natural gravels has been interpreted as natural brick earth. Both substrates were recorded during the current works.
**Archaeological background**

1.5 The site lies in an area of high potential for prehistoric remains and also immediately beyond the historic core of Oxford. A preceding Historic Environment Assessment (HEA) noted that four phases of preliminary archaeological investigations have previously been undertaken within the site as part of the wider ROQ redevelopment. In addition, numerous investigations have been carried out within the general site vicinity, including archaeological trenching and test-pitting south-east of the site after demolition of former hospital buildings. Preceding investigations within the current site comprised the excavation of two evaluation trenches and six test pits in 2007, and three evaluation trenches and four test pits completed in 2009. The following chronological summary is derived from information within the HEA document (MOLA 2011).

1.6 No prehistoric features were encountered, and only a single sherd of Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age pottery recovered, within the current site during the preceding evaluation trenching. The HEA notes, however, that the site lies within a rich prehistoric landscape, with the possibility that previously unknown remains of this period might be encountered. Chance finds of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic date have been recorded approximately 3.5km north-east and 4km south-east of the city, and the gravel terrace on which the current site lies has been identified as having potential for Palaeolithic finds, faunal remains and palaeochannels (ibid.).

1.7 Neolithic activity in the site locality is attested from the discovery within the ROQ site of a sub-rectangular ditched enclosure, possibly indicative of a Neolithic funerary monument. Excavations in 2008, approximately 400m south-east of the site, revealed an 8m wide, 2.4m deep ditch interpreted as a henge over 150m in diameter. Contracted skeletons of possible Neolithic date were noted approximately 450m north-west of the site in 1882, and ditches and pits of possible Neolithic date were encountered in Walton Street approximately 340m south of the site (ibid.).

1.8 Although no firm evidence of Bronze Age settlement has been found in Oxford, an extensive linear barrow cemetery is known from the gravel terrace and floodplain. A cluster of four ring ditches and two cremation burials, identifying former barrows, were investigated during evaluation trenching in 2009 immediately south-east of the site within the ROQ site (ibid.).
1.9 No Iron Age remains are known from the site, although parchmarks approximately 350m to the east may represent field systems and enclosures of possible Iron Age or Roman date. No Roman structures or features are known from the site, although finds and burials of this date have been made from the wider locality. Small-scale Roman rural settlement has been identified approximately 400m south-east of the site (ibid.).

1.10 Evidence for Anglo-Saxon settlement remains, including a possible sunken-featured building together with associated pits, postholes and a well, have been identified within the southern part of the ROQ site. A second sunken featured building was recorded south of the site. The development area lay within the suburbs north of the Saxon burh within the manor (estate) of Walton, but the exact extent of the settlement remains uncertain (ibid.).

1.11 During the medieval period the site lay within a medieval enclosure, documented in 1160 as ‘croft of the three barrows’. Ditches encountered within the ROQ site suggest the current site was open agricultural fields during the medieval period, which may have retained a semi-rural character into the post-medieval period (ibid.).

1.12 The site lay north of the Civil War defences and the earliest cartographic source, the 1769 St Giles parish map, shows the development area then formed part of a plot called ‘Garden Piece’. Subsequent maps record the site as open ground and, by 1797, as lying within the Observatory Gardens. An 1850 map shows the site within an open grassed area, with a rectangular building north of the Observatory just extending into the eastern part of the site. Expansion of the Radcliffe Infirmary into the southern part of the site is depicted on the OS map of 1939, and the site was extensively built over by the time of the OS 1957/8 map edition. The site lies beyond the known extent of the burial ground of the Royal Infirmary (ibid.).

Methodology

1.13 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2011). An archaeologist was present during excavations associated with the new development (Fig. 2).
1.14 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual* (2007).

1.15 The archive from the evaluation is currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

2. RESULTS (FIG. 2)

2.1 A broadly analogous stratigraphic sequence was observed throughout the observed groundworks. Natural geological substrate 104, consisting orange-yellow sandy gravels and clay, was overlain by mid orangey brown silty clay, 103, to an average depth of 0.5m below present ground level. The later deposit, although not recorded on the national geological map (BGS 2011) had previously been encountered during earlier archaeological investigations where it varied between 0.2m and 1.25m in thickness. Throughout the majority of the site this deposit was overlain by re-deposited sand and silt containing brick and concrete fragments, 106, typically measuring 0.5m in thickness. This was in turn sealed by a crushed brick and concrete deposit, 105, derived from the demolition of the previous buildings at the site, which varied between 0.12 and 0.7m in thickness.

2.2 Variations to this stratigraphic sequence were observed along the south-eastern edge of the site, where deposit 109, which measured 1.7m in depth, is interpreted as modern infill within a former cellar/basement. Along the south-western edge of the site, natural gravel substrate 103 was overlain by subsoil 102, typically 0.2m in depth, which in turn was sealed by 0.3m of topsoil, 101. Along the north-western limit of the site, subsoil 102 was overlain by levelling deposits for the modern tarmacadam surface (deposits 108 and 107 respectively). The presence of the top and subsoil’s indicates that the western limit of the site had not been truncated during the later post-medieval/modern periods. A modern service trench (111) was observed running north-east/south-west across the site.
Finds

2.3 The recovered finds assemblage consisted of a single sherd of Roman pottery and five pieces of animal bone, which were retrieved from subsoil deposit 102 (see Appendix B). The pottery sherd was from a bowl with a dropped flange, which occurred in a fine greyware fabric with organic inclusions. Its form is characteristic of the later 3rd to 4th centuries AD. The animal bones were from reproducing domesticates and included cow, sheep/ goat and pig.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 Despite the archaeological potential of the application area (see archaeological background above), the watching brief identified no archaeological remains within the area of observed groundworks, and only a small number of finds from the subsoil. The absence of archaeological deposits may indicate that prehistoric and Anglo-Saxon remains previously identified immediately to the east of the current site do not extend as far as, or were not exposed by the development, or that they may have been removed during the 20th century development of the site.

4. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Donald, Jeremy Mordue, Rebecca Riley and Kelly Saunders. The report was written by Kelly Saunders. The illustrations were prepared by Jon Bennett. The archive has been compiled by Kelly Saunders, and prepared for deposition by James Johnson. The project was managed for CA by Cliff Bateman

5. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2011 Geology of Britain Viewer
  http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_google/googleviewer.html

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2011 New Jericho Health Centre Building, University of Oxford Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, Oxford: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief
### APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Type</th>
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<td>Topsoil</td>
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<td>103</td>
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<td>Deposit</td>
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<td>111</td>
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### APPENDIX B: THE FINDS

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<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>Roman pottery: miscellaneous fine organic-tempered greyware</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>C3-C4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Animal bone: Cow, pig, sheep/goat</td>
<td>5</td>
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## APPENDIX C: OASIS REPORT FORM

### PROJECT DETAILS

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<th>Project Name</th>
<th>New Jericho Health Centre building, University of Oxford Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, Oxford</th>
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<tr>
<td>Short description (250 words maximum)</td>
<td>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with the construction of the New Jericho Health Centre building, University of Oxford Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, Oxford. No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during groundworks, and although a single sherd of Roman pottery was recovered, this was from the subsoil, and is potentially residual.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project dates</td>
<td>2 June 2011- 5 March 2012</td>
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<td>Project type (e.g. desk-based, field evaluation etc)</td>
<td>Watching Brief</td>
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<td>Previous work (reference to organisation or SMR numbers etc)</td>
<td>MOLA 2011 University of Oxford Radcliffe Observatory Quarter. New Jericho Health Centre Building, Historic Environment Assessment.</td>
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<td>Future work</td>
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### PROJECT LOCATION

| Site Location | New Jericho Health Centre building, University of Oxford Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, Oxford |
| Study area (M²/ha) | 0.5ha |
| Site co-ordinates (8 Fig Grid Reference) | SP 5078 0710 |

### PROJECT CREATORS

| Name of organisation | Cotswold Archaeology |
| Project Brief originator | Oxford City Council |
| Project Design (WSI) originator | Cotswold Archaeology |
| Project Manager | Cliff Bateman |
| Project Supervisor | Andy Donald, Jeremy Mordue, Rebecca Riley, Kelly Saunders |

### MONUMENT TYPE

None

### SIGNIFICANT FINDS

None

### PROJECT ARCHIVES

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<td>Oxfordshire Museums</td>
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<td>Digital</td>
<td>Oxfordshire Museums</td>
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### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Site location plan

Reproduced from the 1990 Ordnance Survey Explorer map with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright Cotswold Archaeological Trust 100002109

New Jericho Health Centre Building University of Oxford, Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, Oxford

PROJECT TITLE
FIGURE TITLE
FIGURE NO.
DATE
REVISION
SCALE@A4
APPROVED BY

Cotswold Archaeology
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Milton Keynes 01908 218320
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e enquiries@cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk

PROJECT NO.
DRAWN BY
REVISED
SCALE@A4

01

1:25,000
3 The site, showing groundworks

4 View of representative section during groundworks (scale 1m)