Memorial Garden
Rothermere Library
South Parks Road
Oxford

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

January 2006

Client: Anthony Stiff Associates

Issue No: 1
OA Job No: 2830
NGR: SP 516 067
### Document Information

**Client Name:** Anthony Stiff Associates  
**Client Ref No:**  
**Document Title:** Memorial Garden, Rothermere Library, South Parks Road, Oxford  
**Document Type:** Watching Brief  
**Issue Number:** 1  
**National Grid Reference:** SP 516 067  
**Planning Reference:**  
**OA Job Number:** 2830  
**Site Code:** OXMEMG 05  
**Invoice Code:** OXMEMGWB  
**Receiving Museum:** Oxfordshire County Museums Service  
**Museum Accession No:** OXCMS:2005.90  
**Prepared by:** Mike Sims  
**Position:** SWD Project Supervisor  
**Date:** 21st December 2005  
**Checked by:** Dan Dodds  
**Position:** Head of Small Works  
**Date:** 4th January 2006  
**Approved by:** Nick Shepherd  
**Position:** Head of Fieldwork  
**Date:** 8th January 2006  

**Document File Location:** H:\PROJECTS\Oxfordshire OX\Oxford City OC\6155  
**Graphics File Location:** Servergo:oaupubs2_thruq*OXMEMG05*OXMEMGWB  
**Illustrated by:** Hannah Brown

---

**Disclaimer:** This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and prior written authority of Oxford Archaeology being obtained. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this document being used for a purpose other than the purposes for which it was commissioned. Any person/party using or relying on the document for such other purposes agrees, and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Oxford Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any person/party other than the person/party by whom it was commissioned.

---

**Oxford Archaeology**  
© Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd 2006  
Janus House  
Osney Mead  
Oxford OX2 0ED  
t: (0044) 01865 263800  
f: (0044) 01865 793496  
c: info@oxfordarch.co.uk  
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited is a Registered Charity No: 285027
Memorial Garden,
Rothermere Library, South Parks Road, Oxford

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

CONTENTS

Summary ................................................................. 1
1 Introduction ............................................................. 1
  1.1 Scope of work ....................................................... 1
  1.2 Location, geology and topography ...................... 1
  1.3 Archaeological and historical background .......... 1
2 Project Aims and Methodology ................................. 2
  2.1 Aims ................................................................. 2
  2.2 Methodology ....................................................... 2
3 Results ................................................................. 2
  3.1 Description of deposits ...................................... 2
  3.2 Finds ................................................................. 3
  3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains ............................ 3
4 Discussion and Conclusions ................................... 3
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory ............... 4
Appendix 2 Bibliography and References .................... 4
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details ............................ 3

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1 Site location
Fig. 2 Site plan
Fig. 3 Section 1

© Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd. January 2006
SUMMARY

Between 2nd and 11th August 2005, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the site of the Memorial Garden, Rothermere Library, South Parks Road, Oxford (NGR: SP 516 067). The work was commissioned by Anthony Stiff Associates in advance of developments to the extension of the Rothermere Library. The watching brief revealed the presence of a Romano-British boundary ditch and the continuation of the English Civil War defensive ditch.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Between 2nd and 11th August 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the site of the Memorial Garden, Rothermere Library, South Parks Road, Oxford (NGR: SP 516 067). The work was commissioned by Anthony Stiff Associates in respect of a development at the extension of the Rothermere Library.

1.1.2 Brian Durham, the Oxford City Archaeologist, requested that OA sample and record any hitherto unknown archaeological remains, and OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet these requests (OA, 2005).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The site is situated close to the centre of the City of Oxford (Fig. 1). The development area lies on level ground to the south of the Rothermere Library and to the east of Love Lane. The site occupies an area of 320 m² at a height of 63.4 m above OD. The underlying geology is 1st Terrace River Gravel (Geological Survey of Great Britain sheet no. 236).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA, 2005) and is reproduced below.

1.3.2 Excavations carried out on the site in 1998 and 1999 by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) revealed a single Neolithic pit, dated by flintwork, part of a Roman settlement and a section of a component ditch of the civil war defences of Oxford. The Roman settlement was of rural character and based on ditched enclosures. It was of two main phases, late 1st- to mid 2nd century date and late 3rd- to 4th century date respectively. Despite fairly clear evidence of chronological discontinuity there were close similarities of feature alignment between the two phases. Within the settlement a small late Roman timber structure was associated with deposits of domestic rubbish including significant charred plant remains.
1.3.3 The component ditch of civil war date was exposed at the western side of the site, running parallel with Love Lane.

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 deposits or features that may be disturbed or removed during the development work.

2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as a series of site visits during works likely to disturb archaeological deposits.

2.2.2 A mechanical excavator (mini-digger) fitted with a toothless grading bucket was used for these excavations which included ground, reduction landscaping and excavation of foundations.

2.2.3 A plan of these works and any archaeological features encountered was maintained at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2), while any sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavated features and sections 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 Description of deposits

3.1.1 The underlying natural gravel (107) was encountered at a depth of 0.55 m below the original ground level, sloping down slightly to the east (Fig. 3). This was overlaid by a 0.4 m thick layer of red-brown clay silt (104), representing a layer of subsoil. Cut into the surface of this layer was a 1.5 m wide by 0.6 m deep linear feature (100), running south-east to north-west. The primary fill of this cut was a pale orange-brown sandy clay (101) of up to 0.2 m in depth and which contained fragments of Romano-British pottery. The remainder of the cut was filled by a grey-brown silt clay (102) which also contained fragments of Romano-British pottery.

3.1.2 Also cut into layer 104, and encroaching approximately 2.5 m in from the western edge of the development area, was a linear feature (105), which ran parallel to Love Lane. This feature was filled by a dark grey clay silt (106), which was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.75 m but was not bottomed. Both these features were sealed by
a 0.2 m thick layer of dark brown silty loam (108), a landscaping layer comprising the modern topsoil and turf.

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 Examples of 18th and 19th century pottery were recovered from Layer 108 and examples of Romano-British pottery from fills 101 and 102. No dating evidence was recovered from fill 106 of the English Civil War ditch 105, however this had been comprehensively dated from previous excavations. All artefacts have been retained.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

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

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The north-west by south-east aligned feature (100) is a probable Romano-British boundary ditch, a possible continuation of ditch 366 exposed during the 1998/9 excavations (Booth and Hayden 2000). It appears to belong to an early phase of alignment, possibly denoting plot boundaries.

4.1.2 Feature 105 is the eastern edge of the English Civil War defence ditch known to have run along the same alignment as Love Lane. It could be seen to be a continuation of ditch 554 exposed during the 1998/9 excavations.

4.1.3 The area appears to possibly have been truncated, probably when the footprints of the standing buildings were excavated. The deposition of the landscaping layer of topsoil appears to date to the 19th century.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1  ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Width</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Finds</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>0.6 m</td>
<td>1.6 m</td>
<td>Romano-British boundary ditch</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>C2nd - C4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>Fill</td>
<td>0.2 m</td>
<td>1.3 m</td>
<td>Primary fill of ditch</td>
<td>Pottery</td>
<td>C2nd - C4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>Fill</td>
<td>0.4 m</td>
<td>1.6 m</td>
<td>Secondary fill of ditch</td>
<td>Pottery</td>
<td>C2nd - C4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>0.8 m</td>
<td>0.9 m</td>
<td>Tree throw hole</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>Layer</td>
<td>0.3 m</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Subsoil</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>Fill</td>
<td>&gt; 0.75 m</td>
<td>&gt; 2.5 m</td>
<td>Backfill of Civil War ditch</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>C17th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>&gt; 0.75 m</td>
<td>&gt; 2.5 m</td>
<td>English Civil War defence ditch</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>C17th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>Layer</td>
<td>&gt; 0.3 m</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Natural gravel</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>Layer</td>
<td>0.2 m</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Topsoil and turf, landscaping layer</td>
<td>Pottery</td>
<td>C18th - C19th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX 2  BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES


IFA, 2001  Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs

OA, 2000  Environmental Sampling Guidelines

OA, 2005  Memorial Garden, Rothermere Library, South Parks Road, Oxford: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief

OAU, 1992  Field Manual (ed D Wilkinson)
APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Memorial Garden, Rothermere Library, South Parks Road, Oxford
Site code: OXMEMG 05
Grid reference: SP 516 067
Type of watching brief: Machine ground reduction and foundation excavation
Date and duration of project: 2nd to 11th August 2005, 10 days
Area of site: 320 m²
Summary of results: Presence of a Romano-British boundary ditch and the continuation of the Civil War defence ditch
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:2005.90
Figure 2: Site plan