NOTES

IRON AGE AND MEDIEVAL QUARRYING AT BARRACKS LANE, COWLEY, OXFORD

A field evaluation carried out by Oxford Archaeology at the Morris Motors Sports and Social Club, Barracks Lane, Oxford (NGR SP 547 048), revealed evidence for Iron Age and medieval quarrying (Fig. 1). The work was undertaken in April and September 2005 on behalf of H. N. Edwards and Partners Ltd in advance of housing development.

The site lies at about 85 m OD, on Upper Jurassic Wheatley limestone and Beckley sand. There was no previous knowledge of any archaeology in the immediate area. The site lies immediately to the south of Barracks Lane (formerly Mud Lane), and formed part of Bullingdon Green prior to the enclosure of Cowley parish in 1856, with the historic core of Temple Cowley village lying about 400 m to the south. Bullingdon Castle – part of Cowley Barracks – was built in 1874–5 within the north-west corner of the development area;[1] this had gone out of use by the time of the OS map of 1900, which shows a swimming pool on the site.

Of the six excavated trenches, four revealed only modern features and made ground (Trenches 1–3 and 6). In Trenches 4 and 5, however, archaeological features survived in the form of quarries dug into a thin layer of limestone capping the sand bedrock.

Two irregular quarry cuts were exposed in Trench 4, occupying most of the fifteen-metre-long trench. These appear to have been dug in a linear or ditch-like fashion, and were up to 1.2 m deep. They were filled by layers of silty clay, containing occasional large limestone fragments. These layers probably formed through natural processes of erosion and silting, suggesting that the quarries had been left open after use. The quarry fills contained thirty sherds (203 g) of Iron Age pottery and forty-six fragments (434 g) of animal bone. The animal remains included cattle, horse, and pig, and showed evidence of butchery. An environmental sample produced a small amount of cereal chaff and charcoal.

In Trench 5 four intercutting quarry cuts were exposed, extending across an area of at least 12 m. These were around 1 m deep and differed from the quarries in Trench 4 in being more pit-like in form. They contained layers of silty sand, containing abundant limestone fragments, probably representing deliberate backfills. Three sherds (31 g) of medieval pottery were recovered, including Cotswold-type ware (Oxford Fabric OXAC) and north-east Wiltshire ware (Oxford Fabric OXBF), suggesting an eleventh-century date for the backfilling of the quarries. Two residual sherds of Roman pottery and an unidentified fragment of animal bone were also found. An environmental sample produced a small amount of cereal grain and charcoal.

The finds from Trench 4 therefore suggest that an Iron Age settlement may lie in the vicinity, which, given the elevation, may have been at a break of slope commanding the Lye Valley. The significance of the medieval quarrying in Trench 5 is uncertain – the enclosure award and early OS maps show that quarries and limekilns existed in the Temple Cowley area during the mid-to-late ninetenth century, and it is possible that this activity had its origins in the medieval period.

[1] English Heritage NMR (Viewfinder database: http://viewfinder.english-heritage.org.uk), record no. CC51/00636

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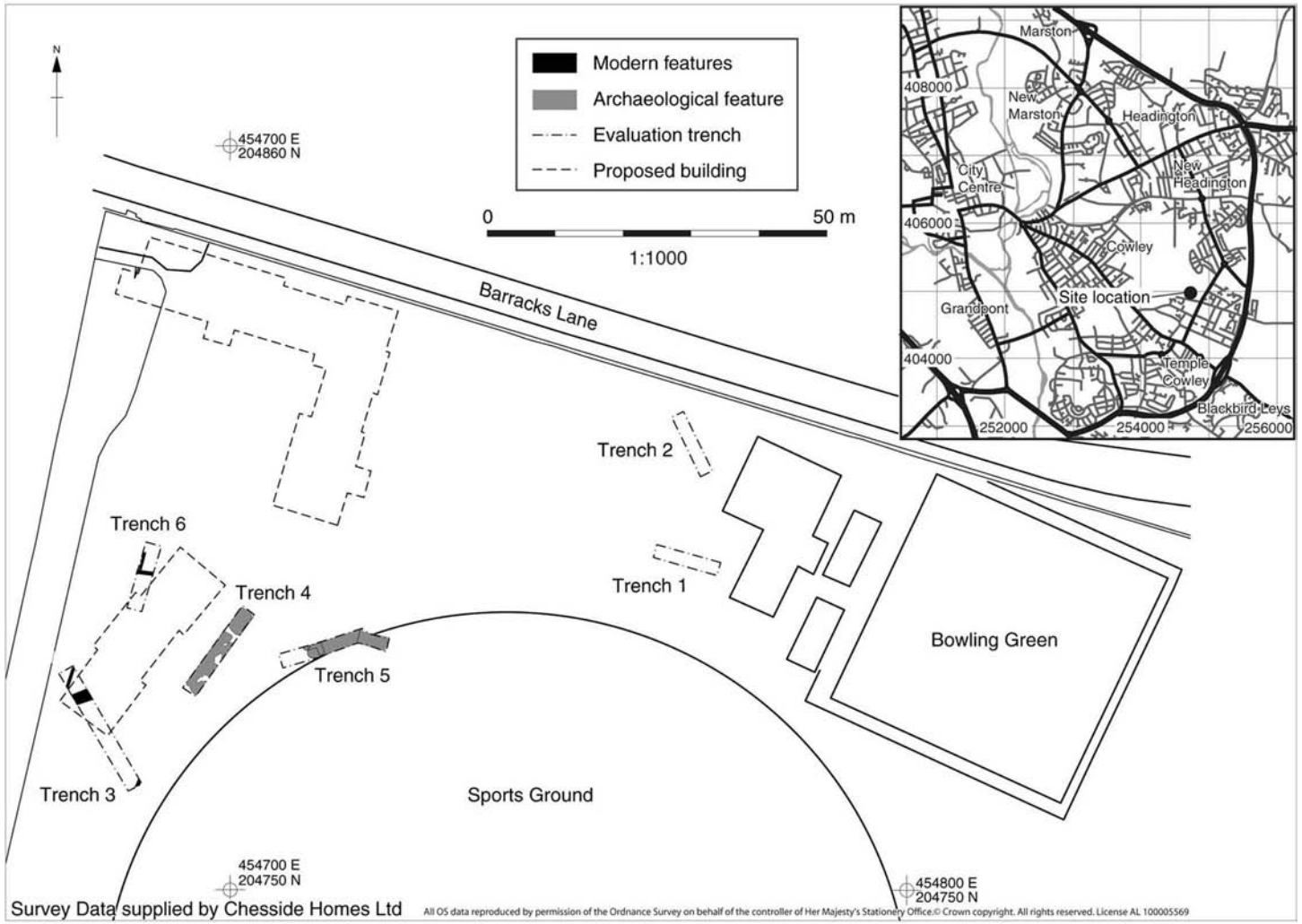

Fig. 1. Site location and plan

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THE RESTORED TOMB OF JOHN TOWNESEND AT ST GILES'S CHURCH, OXFORD

(Based on a talk given in St Giles's Church to commemorate the restoration of the monument on 9 December 2007.)

Just to the south of the Church of St Giles, Oxford, there is a large table tomb surmounted by an urn (see Plate 26). It marks the burial place of John Townesend (1648–1728), founder of Oxford's most famous dynasty of master masons. It has recently been expertly restored, following many years of neglect, by Rory Young, and we are now better able to appreciate it, not only as one of the most impressive of Oxford's churchyard monuments, but also for the light it throws on Oxford's architectural history.

John Townesend was the son of a labourer and was apprenticed in 1664 to the mason Barthomew Peisley (1620–92).[1] In 1672 he married Elizabeth Morrell in St Giles's Church, and two years later, in 1674, he became a freeman of the city, describing himself as a stonemason. By then classical architecture was beginning to transform the medieval face of Oxford. The Sheldonian Theatre had gone up in 1664–9, to be followed by the Old Ashmolean and, in the early eighteenth century, by the Clarendon Building, the High Street front of the Queen's College, Christ Church Library, the Radcliffe Camera, and other buildings that we now see as essential parts of the city's architectural identity. Masons were needed to realize the visions of the men who designed these buildings, but they soon showed themselves capable of designing buildings in the classical idiom themselves. Bartholomew Peisley, with whom John Townesend may have been in partnership as a young man, designed and built the senior common room at St John's College in 1673–8, and by the 1690s Townesend was acting as a mason-architect in his own right: in the gate tower and master's lodgings at Pembroke College (1691–4, altered in the nineteenth century) and, quite possibly, in the new library at the Queen's College (1693–5), based on Sir Christopher Wren's new library at Trinity College, Cambridge, which Townesend visited in 1692. He also carved the stone hood over the doorway to the principal's lodgings at Jesus College (1698), and he later rebuilt the gate tower and part of the Turl Street front of Exeter College (1701–4, remodelled in the nineteenth century). In 1705 he was awarded the contract for building the kitchen court at Blenheim Palace, and he was probably involved in the building of the colonnaded, and long-demolished, butter market at Carfax (*c.*1710).

An important part of any master mason's stock-in-trade was the supply of stone. For Townesend this meant limestone from the quarries at Headington which they shared with the Peisley family: not only rough, durable 'hardstone', but also the easily carved though friable ashlar that could be used for facing and delicate classical detailing. Nicholas Hawksmoor said of John Townesend's son William that he had 'all the best quarrys of stone in his owne hands',[2] many of them no doubt acquired by his father. A mason also had to have a yard, and this was presumably close to the house, just outside the northern city wall, near the site of Boswell's store, acquired by John Townesend in 1699. The year 1699 was the one in which Townesend was elected to the City Council, and in 1720–1 he served as mayor – the culmination of a Dick Whittington-like rags-to-riches story. Like many self-made men, he was not universally liked, at least if we are to believe the dyspeptic Thomas Hearne, who wrote that he was 'commonly called Old Pincher, from his

[1] The main sources of information about the lives and works of John Townesend and his descendants are H. M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840*, 4th edn (New Haven, CT, and London, 2008), pp. 1045–51, and H. M. Colvin,'The Townesends of Oxford', *The Georgian Group Journal*, 10 (2000), pp. 43–60. See also D. Sturdy, *A History of Knowles & Son* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 1–9.

[2] Bodl. MS All Souls, c.255, 8b, no. 9.

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pinching his workmen'[3] (that is, by charging the client more than was disbursed to the workers in day-work contracts). Perhaps, though, we should also heed the inscription on his tomb, composed by his son, which says, in translation, that he was 'a faithful friend to all, a consistent and merciful colleague in the administration of justice, in domestic [matters] an indulgent and far-sighted father' and 'a most skilled master of architecture, who carried out many buildings both for the advancement of knowledge and the adornment of this University'.

The monument was designed by John Townesend's son, William (1676–1739), the most successful member of the dynasty of mason-architects that he founded. Hearne wrote that William Townesend 'hath a hand in all the buildings in Oxford, & gets a vast deal of Money that way',[4] and he was certainly involved in the construction, and in some cases the design, of many of the city's most important early eighteenth-century buildings. He was described as 'architect' at Queen's, sharing with George Clarke, Fellow of All Souls, the credit for the buildings around the front quadrangle, one of Oxford's most impressive classical ensembles. Elsewhere he was contractor for buildings designed by others: Peckwater Quad at Christ Church (Henry Aldrich), the Clarendon Building (Hawksmoor), All Souls (Hawksmoor), Worcester College (Clarke and Hawksmoor), and the Radcliffe Camera (James Gibbs). He also worked outside Oxford as one of the contractors at Blenheim Palace and as contractor and probably designer at, inter alia, Radley Hall (1721–4), Adderbury House (1723–4), and Cirencester Park (1725–7). A garden temple of 1738–9 at Rousham, that most magical of early Georgian landscapes, bears his name. And, like many master masons, he also designed church monuments, including at least one in the University Church (to David Gregory, d.1708) and two in Christ Church Cathedral (to James Narborough, d.1707, and Lord Charles Somerset, d.1713).

The monument to John Townesend is of the table or chest type, whose origins can be traced back to the Middle Ages. But it is conceived in classical terms, with classical mouldings and, at the top, a flaming urn – that enigmatic classical symbol of mortality.[5] In his buildings Townesend absorbed the architectural language of the Baroque, and the swelling surfaces of the tomb-chest – strangely reminiscent of eighteenth-century French furniture – express something of that love of curved lines and apparent movement that characterizes Baroque architecture and sculpture. It is this quality that makes it stand out among the other monuments in the churchyard and gives it a more than local and antiquarian interest.

The legacy of John and William Townesend has lived on into modern times. William had two brothers who went into the building trade: George, who practised in Bristol and died before his father, and John, who moved to London and died in 1746. William's son John took over from him as contractor at the Radcliffe Camera and also died in 1746, when the business was taken over by another John, probably a nephew, who lived in a house, which still exists, at the corner of the High Street and Longwall Street. He built, inter alia, the bridges at Maidenhead (1772–7, designed by Sir Robert Taylor) and Henley-on-Thames (1782–6, designed by William Hayward). His son, Stephen, who succeeded him in 1784, rebuilt the tower at Woodstock church to his own designs in 1785; he also established a new yard at 79 Longwall Street, on the site of the present New College library. He retired to Court Place, Iffley, and sold the business in 1797 to his foreman Thomas Knowles, in the hands of whose descendants it still happily survives.

GEOFFREY TYACK

3 *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, OHS, 48 (1906), p. 171.

4 Ibid.

5 For the use of urns in churchyard memorials, see F. Burgess, *English Churchyard Memorials* (London, 1979), pp. 175–6.

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Plate 26. The tomb of John Townesend in the churchyard of St Giles's Church, Oxford. (*Photograph by author.*) [Tyack, pp. 198, 199.]

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TREE-RING DATING SUPPORTED BY OAHS

Seven buildings were sampled under the scheme in the two years since the last report in 2006.[1] Six were examined as contributions to the *VCH England's Past for Everyone* projects – one in Burford and five in Henley-on-Thames. These results will be reported in the relevant publications. The other is described briefly below.

WHEATLEY, RECTORY FARMHOUSE (SU 922989)

Felling date: Spring 1630

The two-and-a-half storey Rectory Farmhouse is built of coursed squared local Wheatley stone, with a plain clay-tiled roof and two brick chimney stacks with diagonal flues. The main range runs east to west, with a three-storey stair tower centrally placed on the north side. These appear to have been built at the same time and have ovolo stone mullion windows, with label mouldings, and gable copings, with obelisk finials on kneelers. Adjoining the stair tower to the north is a two-storey kitchen extension built around 1680 of random rubble stone, with a single plain chimney stack. The south elevation has been rebuilt, probably in the late nineteenth century, in coursed squared limestone, with brick detailing around the timber cruciform casement windows and doorways.

The entrance to the house is to the west of the stair tower and opens into what appears to be a cross passage, formed as a tunnel through the base of the chimney stack, with the rear door opposite. A two-storey dog-leg staircase, with lantern finials and splat balusters rises to the second floor (see Plate 27), and a small winder spiral staircase continues up into the roof space. A fine moulded and carved twin archway allows access from the stairway to the first-floor passage, which itself is decorated with plaster scroll-work and a vine frieze.

Evidence of a former cruciform roof can be seen in the stair-tower roof structure. The main range roof consists of arch braced principal trusses, forming four unequal bays, with an intermediate lower truss to the east of the stair tower. The common rafters are tenoned into two sets of butt purlins.

The house was probably owned by the Symes family. John Symes mentions his new dwelling house several times in his will of 1638.[2] He possibly rebuilt an earlier house on the site, and the family may have retained the previous kitchen for fifty years. The builder may have been local, as there are stylistic similarities with Mulberry Court next door and the Manor House remodellings of the early seventeenth century.

DAVID CLARK, DAN MILES, and MARTIN WHITWORTH

[1] David Clark, Dan Miles, and John Steane, 'Tree-ring dating supported by OAHS', *Oxoniensia,* 71 (2006), pp. 501–4.

[2] ORO W.1 60/4/28.

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Plate 27. The Staircase in Rectory Farmhouse, Wheatley. (*Photograph by David Clark.)*
[Clark, Miles, and Whitworth, p. 200.]

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