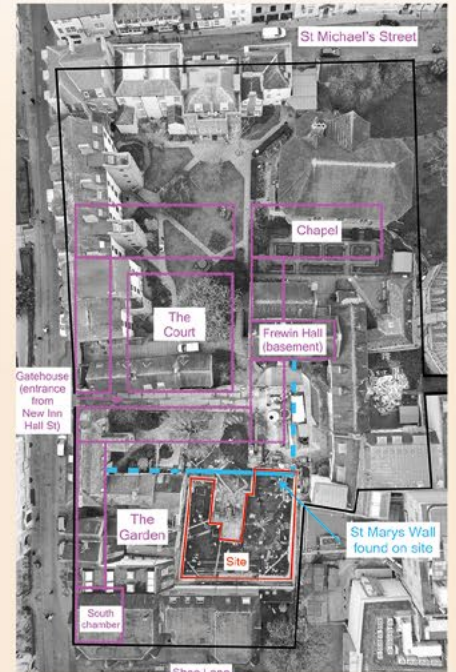
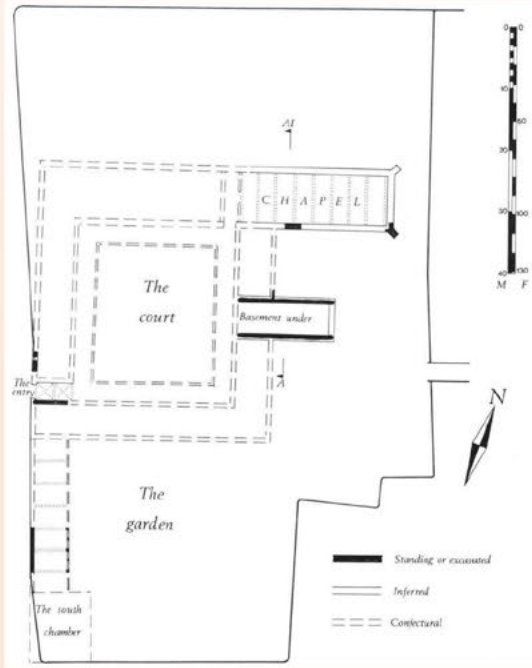


ST MARYS COLLEGE FOR AUSTIN CANONS/ AUGUSTINIAN FRIARS



In 1435, Frewin Hall, one of Oxford's largest private property holdings was granted to the Augustinians of Osney Abbey (one of England's greatest Augustinian houses) by a wealthy, pious and sonless couple - Thomas and Mary Holden. For just over 100 years the property became the site for their teaching establishment - St. Mary's College for Austin Canons.

A new Chapel with a Library above were probably built quite soon, however records indicate that further construction work was probably slow with grants of money not spent, building campaigns abandoned, and just a small number of students attending the college. In fact, it is not until 80 years later in 1518 that building work really accelerated under the patronage and encouragement of Cardinal Wolsey (one of the most powerful men in the country). It is likely this building phase was intense and short-lived, perhaps even undertaken by royal craftsmen to construct buildings on a grand scale...however, the future for the College was cut short when only 20 or so years later it had no role after Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries (including Osney Abbey).



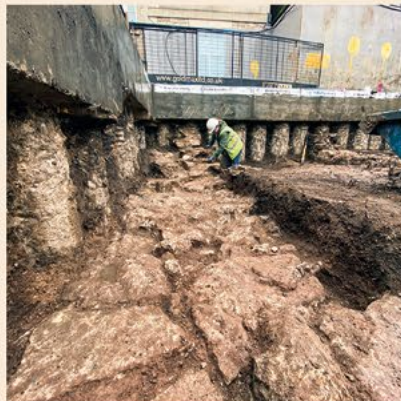
Left: John Blair's reconstruction of St Mary's from archaeological excavation, documentary and historic building evidence (Blair, J. et. al in Oxoniensia 1978); **Right:** Drone view of site showing John Blair's reconstruction and the newly discovered wall overlain on a drone image

In the 1970's Professor John Blair (now of Queens College, Oxford) undertook some small-scale excavations, a full review of the documentary records and a study of the standing buildings and drew up a plan of what the college layout may have been. Brasenose College commissioned artist Robert Eyles to imagine what the St Mary's College would have looked like in its early 16th century hey-day.

During these excavations we have found one large wall foundation from the Wolsey phase of construction. The size of the stones and width of the foundations confirms that significant money was being spent and that the wall above was high and substantially thick. This may be the southern wall of the buildings forming the south range of the cloister. However, its position is 5m to the south of John Blair's reconstruction, which either means that the south range is further to the south and that

the cloister was much bigger, or the remains are a boundary wall at the southern limit of the main buildings to the north.

So far we have only identified limited evidence of discarded artefacts from the hey-day of St Mary's College, but these have included fragments of imported ceramics and fine glass drinking vessels reflecting expensive tastes.



Left: Artists impression of St Mary's College (Watercolour by Robert Eyles). One of Cloisters from ground level and one aerial view from the south-west; **Right:** St Mary's College southern wall in the current excavation

