

# OXFORD URBAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE ASSESSMENT AND RESEARCH AGENDA INTRODUCTION

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Excavations at Rose Place, Oxford, 2011



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## INTRODUCTION

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## Summary

Between May and August 2010 a review of the available archaeological information for the Oxford Local Authority Area was undertaken by Oxford City Council Heritage and Specialist Services Team with funding from English Heritage. As a result a series of nine period based resource assessments were produced. Subsequently nine period based research agendas were developed to complement the assessment reports. The resource assessments are intended as point-in-time summaries that bring together information from a significant body of unpublished data and also provide a guide to a much larger published body of work on the archaeology of Oxford. The research agendas set out some of the questions that we believe the surviving archaeological remains in the city can help us answer. The assessments and agendas will help inform approaches to commercial, community and academic archaeological projects. They form part of a wider initiative by the Council and partnership organisations to improve the level of synthesised and accessible information on the historic environment of Oxford as part of a city wide Heritage Plan. This document provides a short introduction to the assessment and agenda documents which can be downloaded as pdf files from the council website<sup>1</sup>.

## Project background

The English Heritage Urban Archaeological Strategy (UAS) programme was established in the 1990s to improve the management of England's urban archaeological resource by supporting the creation of Urban Archaeological Strategies for over 30 historic towns and cities. The UAS process involved three stages: 1) reviewing previously un-synthesised data and creating an Urban Archaeological Database. 2) The production of a detailed Urban Archaeological Assessment, normally in the form of a monograph synthesising the available information on the known archaeological resource. 3) The creation of an Urban Archaeological Strategy to provide additional guidance to curatorial work and inform local planning agendas. Further background information on the UAS project is provided in the policy statement *Managing the Urban Archaeological Resource* (English Heritage 1992).

The first phase of the UAS process in Oxford was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology in 2002 with the creation of the Urban Archaeological Database (UAD). This covers an area of 750ha comprising a series of Ordnance Survey grid squares forming a box around the historic core of Oxford 2.5km by 3km. The database was created with a notional cut of date of 1714 reflecting the approach adopted by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Royal Commission for Historic Monuments Survey of Oxford (published in 1939) which took the death of Queen Anne as its cut off point. Subsequently some post-1714 information has been included on the UAD.

In 2009 a project design was submitted to English Heritage by the City Council for the completion of a resource assessment and agenda phase of the UAS initiative in tandem with a Historic Landscape Characterisation project for the city. A dedicated project officer was subsequently employed to undertake the assessment, agendas and characterisation mapping between May 2010 and May 2011, working with the City Council archaeologist. The assessment and agenda documents were subsequently sent out to period referees for comments and subject to a two month public consultation on the City Council's consultation website. The revised drafts were submitted to English Heritage in February 2012 and have subsequently be made available on the council's website as part of the evidence base for the Oxford Heritage Plan. The current intention is to undertake a review of the assessments and agendas in 2017. The third stage of the UAS process takes the form of a five year Archaeological Action Plan for service delivery, which will be made available on the council website in March 2013.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/HowHeritageHelpsYou.htm>

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## The resource assessment and research agendas

The nine period based resource assessments were compiled by using the thematic framework employed by the regional Thames Solent Research Framework<sup>2</sup> funded by English Heritage. The project involved the examination of information held in the Urban Archaeological Database, the County Historic Environment Record and unpublished grey literature or 'client' reports produced as a result of developer funded archaeology undertaken through the planning process. It also involved a review of information published in archaeological journals, books and monographs, notably the county journal of the Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society *Oxoniensia*<sup>3</sup>, the regional yearly Council for British Archaeology publication *South Midlands Archaeology* and the series of monographs on Oxford produced by Oxford Archaeology. Relevant national journals *Britannia*, *Medieval Archaeology* and *Post Medieval Archaeology* were also reviewed. The Victoria County History volumes<sup>4</sup> and the available historic maps were also examined and provided the basis for much of the assessment for the modern period (1800-1950) because the Urban Archaeological Database currently provides only limited coverage of this period. The period divisions used for the nine assessments are necessarily imperfect given the continuity of themes and heritage assets between historic periods (themselves the subject of academic debate), however they proved to be the most convenient way of dividing the available data for Oxford:

- Palaeolithic to Mesolithic Oxford (500,000 – 4,000 BC)
- Neolithic and Bronze Age Oxford (4000 – 800 BC)
- Iron Age Oxford (800 BC – 43 AD)
- Roman Oxford (43 – 410 AD)
- Saxon and Viking Oxford (Early Medieval) (410 – 1066)
- Norman Oxford (1066 – 1205)
- Medieval Oxford (1205 – 1540)
- Post-medieval Oxford (1540 – 1800)
- Modern Oxford (1800 – 1950)

The following core headings and topics were employed as a framework:

- Nature and scope of the evidence base
- Inheritance
- Landscape and land use
- Social and administrative organisation
- Settlement
- Built environment
- Ceremony, ritual and religion
- Warfare, defences and military installations
- Material culture
- Craft, trade and industries
- Transport and communication
- Legacy
- Period based maps showing historical topography
- Period bibliography

The time allocated for project officer to undertake the rapid resource assessment was as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> [http://thehumanjourney.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=553&Itemid=277](http://thehumanjourney.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=553&Itemid=277)

<sup>3</sup> <http://oxoniensia.org/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/counties/oxfordshire>

Period	Days allocated
Palaeolithic/ Mesolithic	5
Neolithic/ Bronze Age	5
Iron Age	5
Roman	5
Saxon/ Viking	5
Norman	5
Medieval	15
Post-medieval	15
Modern	10

### *The research agendas*

The formulation of research questions for the city drew on the results of the resource assessment, existing research frameworks at regional and national levels, thematic research frameworks and the advice of period and thematic specialists. Research zone maps using simplified geology zones and areas of known archaeological importance were produced to accompany the research questions.

### **The use of the period resource assessments and agendas and plans for future review**

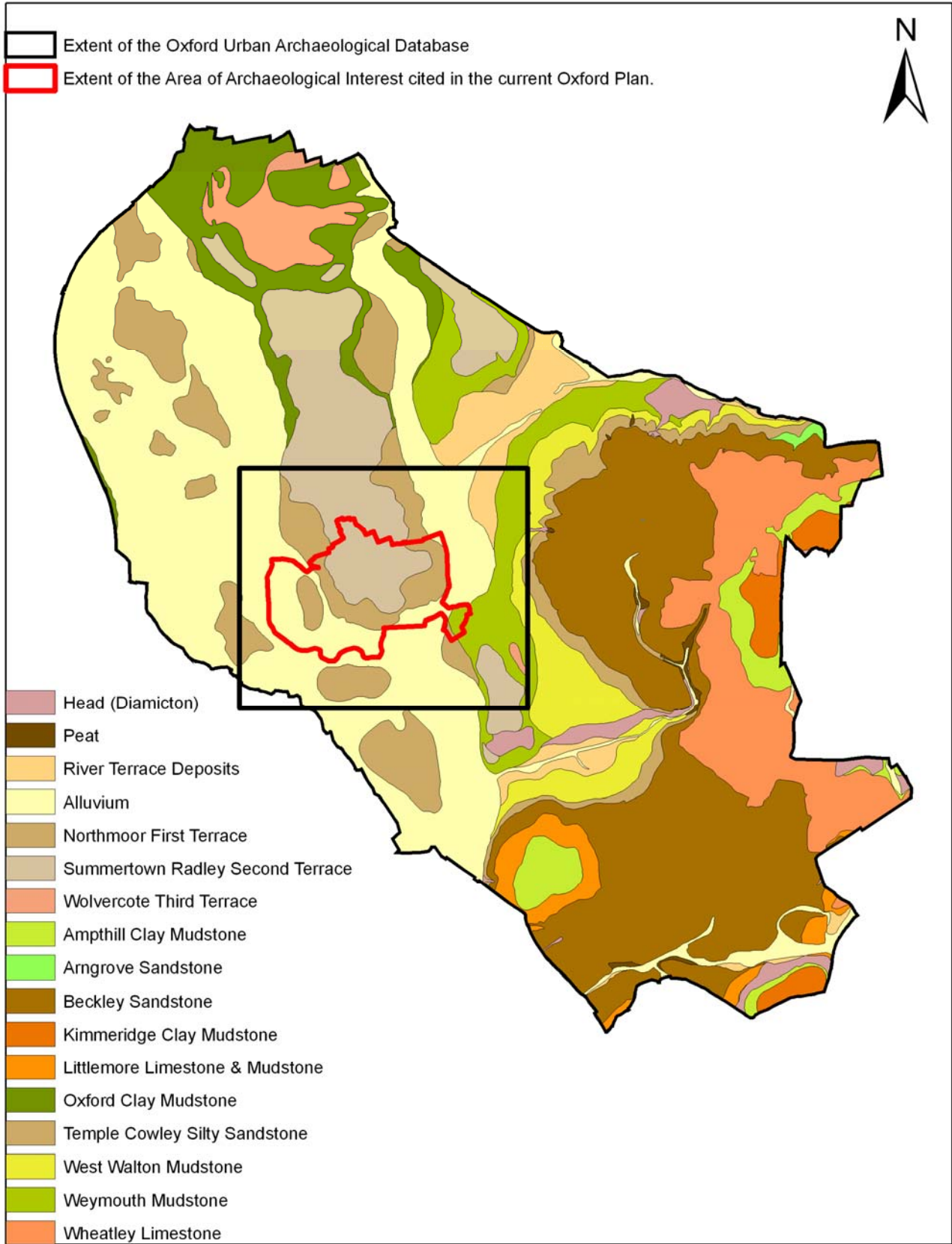
The research assessments represent an overview of an extensive published and unpublished body of data. Developers and contractors should note that the assessments are intended to aid access to this data but should not be used a substitute for appropriate consultation with the City Heritage and Specialist Services Team, the updated Historic Environment Record and the desk-based assessment of primary sources. Users of the assessments are encouraged to submit suggestions for improvements, corrections or the addition of new data which will be incorporated in subsequent versions. The current intention is to update the resource assessments and agendas after a five year period.

### **Oxford and its landscape**

The modern city has an approximate population of 153,000 with 32,000 full time students enrolled in the city's two Universities in 2009/10. Oxford remains an international draw for visitors with an estimated 9.5 million people visiting each year. The Local Authority Area covers an area 17.6 square miles, encompassing parts of the historic counties of Oxfordshire and Berkshire. The historic city is located on the edge of a gravel terrace on the banks of the River Thames at its confluence with the River Cherwell. An extensive late Georgian, Victorian and modern suburb extends north of historic Oxford along the gravel terrace. To the south modern settlement extends along a historic crossing point over the Thames Floodplain and to the east and south-east of Oxford extensive modern suburban development, spurred by Oxford's industrial growth from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, has engulfed a number of former hinterland villages located on or below an area of high ground formed by Corralian ridge. To the west, outside the Local Authority Area, the Jurassic hills of Wytham and Boars Hill help form the setting for Oxford, a low lying city of spires nestled within gentle hills. Settlement remains sparse along the floodplains of the Cherwell and Thames and a large and important area of ancient grazing meadow survives to the north of the city, adjacent to the Thames, at Port Meadow.

### *Geology and topography*

The bedrock geology of the Local Authority Area comprises Middle Jurassic Oxford clay formation mudstone to the north from Botley to Wolvercote and around Park Town followed by a band of Upper Jurassic Weymouth member mudstone from Hinksey to Marston underlying the eastern part of the city with a spit along the higher ground at the confluence of the Woodstock and Banbury



The surface geology of the Oxford Local Authority Area

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Roads leading into St Giles. The base of the hills to the east of the city comprise narrow bands of West Walton mudstone and Temple Cowley silty sandstone followed by a substantial band of Beckley member sandstone underlying the main slopes of the hills. To the east around Temple Cowley to Barton there is Wheatley member limestone with some areas of Ampthill clay mudstone and Littlemore member limestone and mudstone at the higher points. The rise of Rose Hill to the south of the city is also comprised of two bands of Littlemore member and Ampthill Clay.

The superficial geology around the Rivers Thames and Cherwell comprise a series of gravel terraces laid down during the Pleistocene. These represent the process of aggradation during glacial and interglacial stages. Cold climate sands and gravels were deposited by glacial meltwater carrying large sediment loads. During periods of more temperate climate a proliferation of small stream channels deposited finer grained silts and evidence for increased biogenic activity (Bridgeland 1994). The gravel terraces are preserved in 'steps' in the landscape above the present floodplain. The Wolvercote Terrace, dating to the early Wolstonian glacial (Marine Isotope Stage (MIS)10-8) rises up to 16m above the present river bed of the Thames. The Wolvercote Terrace has been identified only at the higher points of the Local Authority Area primarily at Wolvercote with very small 'islands' of gravel at Cowley and South Hinksey. The Summertown-Radley Second Gravel Terrace (the Second terrace) rises to 8m above the present river bed, dating broadly to the Wolstonian/Ipswichian glacial-interglacial period (MIS6). The Summertown-Radley Terrace has mainly been identified within the city centre and north along St Giles with gravel islands located further to the east at Marston and Cowley. The most recent deposited terrace (first terrace) is the Northmoor Terrace (MIS 4-2) rising to 3m above the present Thames river bed. There are several 'islands' of the Northmoor Terrace within the alluvial floodplain with a narrow band of the terrace surrounding the city.

#### *Relief, drainage and soils*

The modern riverine landscape comprises the main river channels of the Thames and Cherwell and their tributaries. Archaeological investigation within the city has identified a number of palaeochannels throughout the floodplain and produced environmental evidence providing information on the local fluvial sequences. The importance of these palaeochannels in providing a sequence of alluviation in the Upper Thames Valley was first discussed by Robinson and Lambrick (1984) when it was suggested that human activity such as woodland clearance and agricultural activity was reflected in patterns of ancient flooding and alluviation starting in the late Mesolithic until the Iron Age. Environmental evidence from nine sites in the Upper Thames Valley, four of which came from Oxford itself, formed the initial basis of the study. The proposed model suggests that during the Late Devensian period the Thames and its tributaries formed a braided river system of shallow pools and slow moving water changing to a more meandering system with evidence from Farmoor indicating this occurred in around 10,000 BP (Robinson & Lambrick 1984: 6). This was followed by early changes to the river systems allowing for greater soil erosion during the early Holocene but with little alluvial accretion (ibid.: 7). At Port Meadow yellow-brown un-gleyed clays were recorded at the base of two of the Bronze Age barrows indicating drier conditions in the area during their construction, while at King's Weir (a short distance to the north) the evidence suggests wetter conditions during the later Bronze Age (ibid.: 3). By the Iron Age the Port Meadow site had become noticeably wetter with evidence of alluvial clay in the ditches of the Iron Age hut circles (ibid.: 4).

By the late Bronze Age to middle Iron Age a shallow lake had formed over much of the St Aldates area and evidence of common reed has been recorded from organic sediments on its bed. A radiocarbon date of 760-50 BC (HAR-8361; Sample OXTMS 85/3) was obtained (Robinson & Lambrick 1984: 5; Dodd 2003 (ed): 77). The area around Oxford may then have seen seasonal flooding over a substantial area leaving only small pockets of higher ground and led to the creation of proto-channels such as the Trill Mill Stream, the Blackfriars Mill Stream and the Shire Lake



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Channel (Robinson 2003: 74). By the Middle Iron Age the changes to the seasonal flood patterns around Oxford led to a shift in permanent settlement patterns to the higher ground east of Oxford although seasonal camps continued on the floodplains such as at Port Meadow. In the Roman period, deposition of alluvial clay continued along the banks of the shallow lake at St Aldates filling much of the down landscape (Booth *et al.* 2007: 19). By the Saxon period however, the St Aldates area was subject to a high water table. Wattle fencing dated to the 8<sup>th</sup> century overlain by alluvial clays has been recorded at the Blackfriars site and at numerous locations along St Aldates Street (Robinson and Lambrick 1984:5).

Soil types vary considerably across the Local Authority Area. To the east the mix of sandstone, limestone and clay has produced a range of soil types, such as brown earth (on the sandstone), gley (waterlogged soils) on the clay, and rendzina on the limestone. To the north at Port Meadow, on low-lying floodplain that floods annually, groundwater gley predominates due to the high water table. At Summertown and Wolvercote, on the Pleistocene fluvio-glacial sand and gravel there is evidence of podzolisation producing podzolised brown earth in places. Within the urban built-up area human impacts can be seen in the way that soils are typically lime-rich (from mortar, cement and rubble) or previously cultivated. Whilst buried soils may survive in places in significant parts of the historic core these have often been reworked or excavated to access the gravel below. Undisturbed areas of windblown loess of likely prehistoric origin is sometimes encountered lying directly over the gravel on the 2<sup>nd</sup> terrace.

### **The archaeology of Oxford: a short overview.**

Antiquarian interest in Oxford's historic environment dates back to the 17th century with much detailed information being recorded as Oxford has grown over the last 300 years. Stone axes and the remains of cold and warm climate animals from before the end of the last ice age have been recovered from important Lower Palaeolithic sites in Oxford at Magdalen Grove, The Wolvercote Channel and from Cornish's Pit, Iffley. As the climate changed following the last ice age hunter gatherer groups utilised the resources of the Thames and Cherwell river valleys. We have much to learn about the distribution of artefacts from this period (the Mesolithic) however some promising sites are known, for example a concentration of flints recorded near Fairacres Road.

As an Upper Thames gravel peninsular site Oxford later attracted a 'sacred landscape' of large earthwork monuments which were in use from the 4th through to the 2nd millennium BC. The Summertown-Radley gravel terrace, on which historic Oxford is located, preserves the remains of an extensive Middle Neolithic and Early Bronze Age ritual and funerary landscape including a large central henge monument and WSW-ENE linear barrow cemetery. To the north-west the expanse of Port Meadow preserves further contemporary monuments and is nationally important for its extant Iron Age roundhouse earthworks and for its documented history as a near continuously grazed meadow dating back to the Late Saxon period at least.

In the Iron Age and Roman periods Oxford's landscape remained essentially rural in character, although in the later Roman period a major regional pottery industry developed across eastern and southern parts of the Local Authority Area, comprising of work compounds and kilns. These were orientated on the north-south Roman Road that linked the former Roman towns of Alchester and Dorchester. The kilns and compounds of this zone form part of the nationally important Roman pottery industry which spreads northwards to Otmoor and south towards Abingdon.

The origins of Saxon Oxford are not yet fully understood. The appearance of a settlement by the river crossing at St Aldate's made it a site worth defending in the late-Saxon period. A trading settlement and early religious centre (or Minster) may have been established here by the late 7th or 8th century, associated with the foundation of St Frideswide's Monastery. The regular street plan of central Oxford was laid out in the late 9th or early 10th century when a fortified town (or 'burh') was established. This was surrounded by floodplain and other river crossings at Magdalen

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Bridge and Ferry Hinksey (another candidate for the original 'Ox-ford'). Beyond were a ring of Anglo-Saxon and medieval villages with their fields, pastures and woodlands, a royal vill at Headington and Royal Forest at Shotover.

The historic city preserves a wide range of important features. It encompasses a Middle Saxon river crossing and subsequent Norman monumental stone causeway across the Thames floodplain. Also the remains of Late Saxon and medieval defences, including the likely Late Saxon St George's Tower, the Late Saxon town wall, the Norman castle and the late 13<sup>th</sup> century town wall and bastions. There are important remains relating to Late Saxon urban development and Norman commercial growth. These periods are evidenced by the remains of shops, houses, churches, monastic sites and a 12<sup>th</sup> century royal palace. Evidence for distinctive cultural communities and traditions has also been preserved, for example Viking era burials and later evidence for the burial ground of the medieval Jewish community.

Oxford preserves information on the development of a tradition of scholarship and learning associated with the Norman foundation of the Collegiate Chapel of St George at the Castle and subsequently the monastic and mendicant institutions attracted to the town in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The later thirteenth formation of the University, its halls and subsequently its colleges makes Oxford important for the study of the archaeology of science and learning, the development of colleges as institutions and for monumental architecture from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The post-medieval period left its mark on the city in many ways, notably widespread rebuilding of townhouses in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the creation of siege earthworks around the city during the English Civil War, when Charles 1<sup>st</sup> adopted Oxford as his capital. In recent years the industrial and institutional structures of the post-medieval and early modern city have been recognised as being of increasing interest, these encompass a wide range of sites and structures from the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century Radcliffe Infirmary brew house and burial ground through to the remains of Victorian breweries and maltings.

### **The history of archaeological investigation in Oxford**

There are documentary references to medieval and early post-medieval investigations into buried remains in Oxford that were clearly seeking to accumulate evidence about the past rather than identify material for re-use. For example the monks of St Frideswide's Priory are recorded as having carried out excavations at the shrine of St Frideswide at the Priory Church (now Christ Church Cathedral) in order to establish whether the saint's remains had been removed. Another intervention recorded in 1583 involved an excavation at Merton College to establish the line of the medieval city wall, following a dispute over ownership between the town and the college. Such investigations were not, however, intended to develop an understanding of past lives and of the evolution of the medieval town.

Where medieval historians did attempt such a project their accounts tended to be erratic and heavily reliant on mythological associations. It was not until the 17<sup>th</sup> century that the extensive medieval documentary archive accumulated by the city and its institutions was given more careful consideration. This combined with more careful topographic consideration allowed early antiquaries such as Brian Twyne (c1579-1644) and the diarist Anthony Wood (1632-95) to flesh out a more accurate historic framework, providing a basis for informed archaeological investigation (Gerrard 2003: 14; Dodd 2003: 1; Gibson 1940: 94-114). This work was decisively advanced by the publication of *Early History of Oxford* by James Parker in 1885, by the topographical and documentary research of Rev H E Salter (1863-1951), by the publication of the *Victoria County History* series on the city and its hinterland and the monumental *History of the University of Oxford* series produced by the University of Oxford.

At a national level it was in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries that scholars began to see the landscape as something more than a passive environment which people moved through and manipulated. This

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development in thinking regarding our approach to the physical world has a number of associations with Oxford. John Leland (1503-1552) who received his education in many places including London, Oxford and Cambridge, was primarily interested in historical documentation and genealogy but made a contribution to the discipline of archaeology through the idea of recording non literary evidence as part of wider research. In the 1540s Leland spent time studying the Roman evidence from nearby Dorchester ((Greene 1983: 19; Henig & Booth 2000: 202-21). The Oxford diarist and antiquary John Aubrey (1626-97) also helped foster a new approach to the study of the past, supported by the naturalist and first Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum Dr Robert Plot, by bringing a scientific outlook to the subject through the use of classification and comparison (Greene 1983: 20).

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries antiquarian interest in ruins developed further with Oxford diarist and antiquary Anthony Wood travelling the county visiting the ruins of monastic sites such as Dorchester and Godstow and providing detailed accounts of their state, including measured sketches. Wood also made some of the earliest notes of finds and features recorded during digging such as the recovery of a number of lead coffins at the Blackfriars site in around 1618 (Gerrard 2003: 15). Another keen recorder was Thomas Hearne the Assistant Keeper at the Bodleian Library (1678-1735) who documented a number of medieval halls and churches in Oxfordshire and who left diaries and notebooks recording university life and local antiquities (*ibid.*18; Dodd 2003: 1).

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century archaeology was becoming a more scientific discipline leaving behind the field of antiquarian research. Two strands of interest were being developed. Firstly standing monuments were increasingly viewed as multi-phase structures and topographic studies began to view the interaction between discrete monuments over a wider area. Secondly the study of below ground evidence was achieving new methodological standards (Hassall 1987: 3). This more rigorous approach to the investigation of the past was reflected locally with the foundation in 1839 of the Oxford Society for the Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture, subsequently to become the Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society (Pantin 1939). The OAHS subsequently operated in parallel with the Oxfordshire Archaeological Society (founded in 1852), the Oxford Historical Society (founded in 1884) and the Oxfordshire Record Society (founded in 1919). Antiquarian journals, publishing the results of local work and chance finds in the area include the *Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archaeological Journal* published between 1895 and 1930, *Archaeologia Oxoniensis* (1892-1895), *Archaeologia* at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and finally *Oxoniensia*, the journal of the Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society (1936-present).

An example of an early field investigation undertaken nearby Oxford was the work published in 1846 in the *Archaeological Journal* by Rev. J Wilson. Wilson excavated a deserted medieval settlement at Woodperry and the published account indicates that he identified the existence of Roman occupation underlying medieval evidence comprising a church and cemetery (Gerrard 2003, 49). Further mid-19<sup>th</sup> century field work was undertaken by Stephen Stone who is credited with carrying out excavations at Standlake in Oxfordshire in 1858. The excavation is significant for being one of the first open plan excavations in the country, recording both prehistoric and Saxon features in plan and with models (Brown 1973).

In the city the study of the historic environment was pioneered by Oxford draughtsmen and architects John Buckler (1770-1851) and J C Buckler (1793-1894) who undertook recording of buildings during their demolition (Munby 1978). Further sketches of Old Oxford were accumulated by Herbert Hurst of the Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society. Further notable contributions were made by Henry Minn (1870-1961) who built up a collection of annotated photographs of streets and buildings now held in the Bodleian and Percy Manning (1870-1917) who marked archaeological finds onto a set of Ordnance Survey Street Maps now held by the Ashmolean Museum.

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A milestone in the recording of the urban archaeology took place in 1876 when Henry Hurst, a leading member of OAHS, undertook observations and building recording during the demolition of the Angel Inn on the High Street prior to the construction of the University Examination Schools. The interpretation of the evidence was hotly disputed at the time with several proponents suggesting the numerous pits identified at the site indicated Iron Age or Roman settlement. Others suggested they were evidence of gravel extraction (anon 1892-5: 8). It was not until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when similar pits were recorded by General Pitt-Rivers at Lewes that the idea of an ancient settlement at the Angel Inn site was abandoned. It was not until the excavations at the New Bodleian Library site in 1937 that the pits were re-assessed as evidence of Late Saxon or medieval activity (Hassall 1987). Other notable investigations by OAHS include the excavations at the Clarendon Quadrangle and in Radcliffe Square in 1899, 1909 and 1912 revealing important information about the medieval defences and producing significant quantities of Saxon pottery (Munby 2003: 172-82; Bruce Mitford and Jope 1940; Jope 1952/3:101-6)

In 1937 the development for the New Bodleian Library in Broad Street saw the pioneering recording of the medieval and later domestic urban buildings by Dr William Pantin prior to their demolition. The excavation of the New Bodleian also recovered large amounts of pottery from pits and wells and the excavator Rupert Bruce-Mitford was able to use the assemblage to establish a sequence of medieval pottery for Oxford. The result was the first datable sequence of medieval pottery for England and eventually the creation of a National Reference database at the British Museum (Hassall 1987: 4; Gerrard 2003: 70). As well as fostering developments in urban archaeology in Oxford its associated excavators made a contribution to the development of the study of rural sites. Until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the focus of medieval archaeology had largely been limited to the examination of monumental structures, often extant ones. Important local excavations demonstrated the potential of investigating below the ground evidence for rural domestic settlement. Bruce-Mitford investigated the deserted medieval village of Seacourt, which lies across the modern Oxford Local Authority boundary (then in Berkshire), in 1938-9. The excavation was notable for revealing the first indications of the complexities of rural domestic settlement (Gerrard 2003: 71). Subsequent excavations at Seacourt in 1958-9 by Martin Biddle provided further advances in the methodology of recording such sites (1961).

The 1937 excavations at the New Bodleian mentioned above established a pattern for 'rescue archaeology' in the town. During the Second World War Oxford escaped bombing by the Luftwaffe (with documentation held by the Bodleian Library indicating that Adolf Hitler had the intention of using Oxford for his capital should Germany win the conflict). Therefore unlike many English towns there was not an extensive need to repair and replace bombed out buildings. However despite Oxford's good fortune the pre-war growth of the Cowley Car Plant and consequently of the town's population put pressure on the City Council to discuss various plans for extensive demolition and rebuilding work in the commercial centre in the 1950s.

Hassall characterises three phases of redevelopment as a result of this process (1987). Firstly piecemeal development along Cornmarket Street and Queen Street which began in 1954 and involved the demolition of the Clarendon Hotel and the construction of Woolworth's (now the Clarendon Centre). This resulted in investigations coordinated by the Oxford Excavations Committee (1959-65) formed within the University, involving the Ashmolean Museum and Dr Pantin, Professor Martyn Jope and David Sturdy. This latterly employed a full time field officer and handed over its fieldwork responsibilities to the newly formed Oxford City and County Museum in 1965. A second phase of development began in 1964 when the council decided to clear and redevelop the parish of St Ebbes and establish the Westgate Shopping Centre. Such was the scale of this project that it was decided that the previous arrangement of the Ashmolean Museum and ad hoc excavations committee was insufficiently resourced to deal with the project (Hassall 1987: 7). The scale of the challenge was outlined in a report *City of Oxford, Archaeological Implications* (Benson and Cook 1966) and this led to the formation of team of full time archaeologists in 1973, the Oxford Archaeological Excavations Committee directed by Tom

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Hassall. Furthermore in 1973 an independent educational charity, the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit (later known as Oxford Archaeological Unit) was established, with Brian Durham appointed as field officer responsible for excavations in the city (Hassall 1986, 1987; Cunliffe *et al.* 1974; Miles 1998). The small team of permanent excavators were supplemented by the Oxford University Archaeological Society and other volunteers and carried out a wide range of recording projects in the city. Following the completion of the Westgate Centre in 1975 a third phase of post-war development can be identified relating to the refurbishment of old buildings and the small scale redevelopment of urban plots for commercial and college use.

This last phase has continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A notable trend within this process can be identified from the 1990s with the expansion of student numbers in Higher Education and the pressure on University and Colleges to upgrade and improve facilities. The increasing awareness of the sensitivities of setting and protecting the character of Oxford's extensive stock of Grade I buildings and distinctive skyline can be seen in the trend for basement construction within the historic college precincts. Oxford Universities desire to keep pace with the requirements of its departments and staff has also led to a new phase of large scale building projects, notably from 2009 onwards, located just beyond the historic core of Oxford with the redevelopment of the large Radcliffe Infirmary site and a series of new structures proposed for the University Science Area. Brookes University has also expanded as has the provision of dedicated student accommodation.

With the introduction of developer funded archaeology and Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 in 1990 the role of providing archaeological planning advice was initially undertaken by the Oxford Archaeological Advisory Service, staffed by Oxford Archaeological Unit employees. At the turn of the century this role transferred to the City Council Planning Department. During this period Oxford Archaeological Unit, which has adopted the trading name Oxford Archaeology, has continued to expand its activities to encompass work across the British Isles and abroad and is currently one of the largest non-governmental archaeological organisations in Europe with over 400 employees.

Summaries and overviews of the archaeology of Oxford and Oxfordshire published from the 1970s onwards include Benson & Miles (1974) Rodwell (ed. 1974), Brigg's *et al* (1986) Hassall (1987), Steane (1996), Dodd (ed. 2003), Sturdy (2004) and Tiller and Darkes (2010). Regular period overviews have been produced via the Tom Hassall Lecture series which are published in *Oxoniensia*. More recently a series of County period resource assessments have been produced as part of the ongoing Solent-Thames Research Frameworks project (2005-present).

#### *The development of archaeological databases*

The first attempt to establish a record covering all aspects of the historic and archaeological environment was begun in Oxfordshire in the late 1960s by Don Benson, the then County Archaeologist (Lang 1992: 171). The Sites and Monuments Record, now renamed the Historic Environment Record, continues to be maintained by the County Council in digital form. Information on the database can be obtained from the Heritage Gateway<sup>5</sup> and Heritage Search<sup>6</sup>. As noted above in 2002 a more detailed Urban Archaeological Database was created for Oxford City Council covering a 2.5 x 3km area (750ha) encompassing the historic core of Oxford, to aid the City Council with archaeological development control. A version of the UAD can also be accessed via Heritage Gateway. Other databases that contain information on artefacts from the city include the Ashmolean, Pitt Rivers and County Museum MODES accession databases. Further information is held on the National Monuments Record and Portable Antiquity Scheme Databases. The East Oxford Community Archaeology Project is also in the process of compiling a database of recent investigations in the east of the city.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://publicapps.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/portal/publicapps/applications/heritage>

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