

Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum Oxford City Report September 2012

Previous pre-application fieldwork now in the public domain

Worcester College, Kitchen and Pump Quads

In January 2012 a pre-determination evaluation and a watching brief during geo-technical test pitting was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology at Worcester College. Trenches were excavated in the Kitchen Quad and Pump Quad. The works revealed at least two distinct phases of features cut into the natural gravel. The earliest of these was not securely dated, but the composition of the fills was similar to those from prehistoric and earlier medieval features excavated elsewhere in the city. The later phase of features appeared to comprise 15th-16th century pits of indeterminate function. In addition to these features a number of structural remains were also revealed. One of these was an east-west aligned wall which may correspond to a garden wall depicted on a 17th century engraving. The remaining structures are likely to correlate to outbuildings in the Kitchen courtyard which are shown on the 19th century OS 1st edition map.

The 14th century Malmesbury Chamber of the southern range of *Camerae* at Worcester College (chambers belonging to the former monastic Gloucester College, which were sponsored by individual Benedictine Monasteries) was also subject to a historic building appraisal by Glyn Coppack. Coppack notes that there is no evidence of original partitioning in the Malmesbury Chamber and suggests an alternate plan-form to that previously identified by Dr William Pantin in the 1950s. He suggests that the closest analogy to the earliest Worcester chambers is the two-storey cells built by the Carthusians for their hermit-monks, these adopted the plan of monastic cells at London as their standard from the 1370s. A revised fabric dating plan is suggested, amending the previous 1939 RCHM fabric assessment.

National Planning Policy Framework field work in Oxford between April –September 2012

Oxford Oratory Church, Woodstock Road

In April a watching brief was undertaken by Foundations Archaeology during the construction of an extension to the Oxford Oratory church on Woodstock Road. No significant remains were identified. The watching brief followed a trial trench that identified a possible prehistoric pit sealed by a buried soil

Christ Church, Tom Quad Staircase 9

In April a watching brief was undertaken by Graham Keevill during minor works to insert a hatch within Tom Quad staircase 9. The monitoring confirmed that the opening was in the position of a blocked door of 17th-18th century date.

No 10 Stephen Road, Headington

In April Oxford Archaeology undertook a radar survey on land at 10 Stephen Road following the demolition of blocks of former garages. The survey identified a number of potential archaeological anomalies. Subsequently trial trenching was undertaken to test the anomalies and blank areas. No significant remains were identified. A closely controlled watching brief was then undertaken by OA's burials team during the striping of the site for new house foundations. Towards the end of the watching brief part of an inhumation burial was encountered, seemingly previously truncated or disturbed. The burial is likely to be associated with the inhumation burial of 6th century date previously identified to the south in 2002. The distance between the two burials and the lack of other burials in the previously investigated trenches suggests

the presence of a dispersed 6th century cemetery located at the western end of Stephen Road.



Anglo-Saxon burial at Stephen Road, Headington

Keble College Sports Field, Machinery Store

Between March and May Oxford Archaeology conducted an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a new machinery store at Keble College Sports Ground, off Woodstock Road. The watching brief recorded evidence for post-medieval activity pre-dating the sports ground consisting of a brick pathway, and probable modern landscaping. No earlier archaeological remains were observed. The work was required because of aerial photographic evidence suggesting the presence of prehistoric ring ditches in the vicinity.

Nos 123-5 and 127 Walton Street and 32-32a Little Clarendon Street

Between April and June a watching brief was undertaken by John Moore Heritage services during ground works at 123-5 and 127 Walton Street and 32-32a Little Clarendon Street. No significant remains were identified. The work was required because the site is close to the projected line of the Civil War defences

Nos 20-24 St Michael's Street

In June a watching brief and historic building recording was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during internal works to the 17th and 18th century buildings at 20-25 St Michael's Street. The report is forthcoming.

St Aldates Thames Water Trench near Folly Bridge

In June John Moore Heritage Services carried out a watching brief at the south end of Folly Bridge, during the replacement of a water main to ensure that only modern material was impacted upon. The depth of impact was c. 1m, and therefore well above the medieval Grandpont. During the watching brief remains of a building which formerly fronted onto Folly Bridge were observed. Works in Folly Bridge Court were also monitored, these revealed modern made ground associated with the present development

Headington House, Old High Street, Headington, New Garage

In June a watching brief was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services during the construction of a garage at Headington House. No significant remains were noted. The works followed on from previous recording work undertaken at this site, requested because it lies within the historic core of Headington.

Nos 6-7 High Street

As previously noted in the last Oxford City Report the intended floor reduction in the basement of Nos 6-7 High Street was not undertaken due to the presence of well

preserved archaeology identified by archaeological test pits. The works were reduced to a single lift pit which was excavated by Oxford Archaeology in June. The small excavation recorded the edge of a likely Saxon Cellar pit, the fill and lining of which was recorded and sampled. The report is forthcoming.

The Clarendon Centre, Shoe Lane

Between July and September Pre-Construct Archaeology undertook an excavation within the former Dixon's unit in the Clarendon Centre on Shoe Lane. The excavation revealed evidence for post-medieval buildings, gardens and yards and for the remains of rubbish and gravel extraction pits belonging to medieval properties fronting onto Shoe Lane. Finds and features included a kiln or oven, well preserved Brill/Boarstal ware pottery, a parchment pricker, a candle stick, moulded stone fragments, a decorated floor tile and other miscellaneous objects. The excavation provided an excellent opportunity for public engagement being on a main shopping thoroughfare and within a secure shopping unit. A very successful open day was held on 4th July with finds table, information posters and the opportunity for members of the public to view the most accessible excavation area. Hundreds of people visited during the day and there was TV, radio and newspaper coverage. The press release also led to an opportunity for the City Council Archaeologist to discuss the site and the role of planning archaeologists on a Radio Oxford lunchtime slot.



Emeritus Professor Martin Biddle identifies a parchment pricker during a site visit with staff of the Oxford Preservation Trust at the Clarendon Centre Excavation.

No 1 Park Town

In August John Moore Heritage Services undertook a conditioned trial trench after the demolition of an outbuilding at No 1 Park Town, prior to the construction of a new basement. The trench encountered an island of undisturbed stratigraphy within an area of Victorian disturbance. The surface of this area produced finds of slag and pottery provisionally identified as Iron Age in date. This area was just outside the footprint of the basement and therefore covered with terram and backfilled, with the developer agreeing to a methodology to avoid any further disturbance during development. Subsequently in September the remaining area of the basement footprint was archaeologically excavated. The area proved to be heavily disturbed in the Victorian period, however a small number of features of interest were recorded. One pit produced finds of broken pottery, animal bone and re-deposited layer of stones. John Moore has identified this pit as a 'special deposit' of Iron Age date, similar in character to features excavated at Gravelly Guy, Stanton Harcourt. The report is forthcoming.



Photograph of the excavation at No 1 Park Town, with the 'special deposit' pit closest to the house.

84 St Aldates

Between May and July detailed building recording was undertaken by the Oxfordshire Buildings Record during the dismantling of the rear of No 84 St Aldates. The provisional results indicate that the rear frame was primary, dating to a single building campaign in 1635 by Thomas Seymour (c1601-1669). Subsequent improvements appear to have been made during the Civil War when the building was a residence of family associated with the Royal Court. Further alterations were made in the 18th and 19th centuries. The building may have been used for domestic and functional uses including brewing/malting related activities. The report is forthcoming.



A 17th century moulded window frame at 84 St Aldates (Picture reproduced from an Oxfordshire Building Record presentation)

Magdalen College, New Library

In September Oxford Archaeology undertook further test pitting within Magdalen College New Library after the temporary removal of the lower bookstacks. The test pits revealed the well preserved remains of a Late-medieval or early post-medieval building, also a tip of well preserved pottery and at least one sherd of residual St Neots ware. The report is forthcoming.

31 Church Lane, Old Marston

In September Thames Valley Archaeological Services undertook an evaluation on land at 31 Church Lane, Old Marston. The site is located directly to the north of the recently excavated site at the Bricklayers Arms. The evaluation recorded a single large medieval pit that contained a typical domestic pottery assemblage of mid 14th century date. One sherd worthy of note is a complete base-pad of an OXAM jug which is, unusually, heavily burnt and blackened on the outside, and has a thick deposit of lime-scale on the inner surface, indicating that it had been used for boiling water, probably repeatedly. The pottery report by Paul Blinkhorn notes that glazed medieval jugs rarely show evidence of having been in contact with fire.

Oxford Spires Academy, Glanville Road, Oxford

In September Stratascan undertook a magnetometer survey within the grounds of Oxford Spires Academy. A small number of potential archaeological anomalies were identified. Roman remains have previously been recovered from the school grounds.

Miscellaneous

BBC 2 Vikings programme

The 10th or 11th century mass grave recorded at St John's College in 2008 was featured in episode three of the BBC 2 TV series 'Vikings' on 30th September. If the episode is still on i-player when you read this then the Oxford section can be viewed 40 minutes in.

East Oxford Community Archaeology Project

The latest results from the ongoing Archeox project can be viewed on their website: <https://www.archeox.net/>. The council has agreed to facilitate a targeted excavation by the project at Minchery Farm Paddock to investigate the layout of the 12th century Littlemore Priory, Roman settlement remains and nearby peat deposits. The excavation begins on the 1st October.