

Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum Oxford City Report February- June 2016

National Planning Policy Framework related field work in Oxford

Westgate- Main phase of works

The extensive archaeological recording project by Oxford Archaeology at the Westgate Shopping Centre site continued between February and June. A watching brief was undertaken during the construction of new service routes and further areas of the friary cloister and church were investigated. Work within the cloister revealed an impressive medieval tiled floor of 13th-14th century 'Stabbed Wessex' tiles. The tiles have been carefully lifted and conserved. A small investigation within the friary church revealed the southern wall of the church and a small number of medieval burials. The burials were not investigated and have been carefully preserved in-situ.

3D models of the Westgate site and the recovered medieval tiled floor can now be accessed via the [OA website](#).

During this period further outreach work for the Westgate project was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology with [Northfield School](#). A five week project was completed with seven pupils, this involved classroom work and several site visits. The pupils produced PowerPoint presentations that will be hosted on the OA website.



Above: The 13th century tiled floor from the south -east angle of the cloister. Photograph by Oxford Archaeology. Left: pupils from Northfield School visiting Carfax Tower as part of the Westgate outreach programme. Photograph courtesy of Northfield School.

Another very successful pop-up museum exhibition 'Westgate- the story so far', with artefacts from the 2015-2016 dig, was hosted by the Museum of Oxford between March and April. Thanks are due to the army of volunteers who helped staff the exhibit and contributed greatly to its success. The exhibit was concluded with a public talk on the results of the excavation by project director Ben Ford in the Town Hall.

The success of the excavation has been recognised by the British Archaeological Awards Panel who have shortlisted Oxford Archaeology and the Westgate excavation (along with two other sites) for the prestigious [Best Archaeological Project](#) award. The winner of the award will be announced on July 11th:



The junction of Botley Road and Abbey Road, Osney Island

In March an archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Foundations Archaeology at the junction of Botley Road and Abbey Road during works to install a pressure reducing valve on the existing water mains. No significant archaeological remains were recorded.

The former Acland Nursing Hospital, Parks Road.

Between March and April a strip and record excavation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology on the site of a proposed new basement at the former Acland Hospital site, now part of Keble College. The work revealed a small number of prehistoric features and later medieval and post medieval pits. Building recording of the cellar of the late 19th century extension to Northgate House (formerly part of the Acland Nursing Home) was also undertaken. Further work is planned at this site.

New College, New Music Room, Saville House, Mansfield Road

In April a watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during site preparation work prior to the construction of a new Music Room for New College at Saville House close to the upstanding section of the Royalist Civil War defensive rampart. The New Music Room has been designed to allow a view along the rampart from Mansfield Road and therefore bring it back into the public realm. Further recording is to follow.

St Peter's College, New Inn Hall Street, Chavasse Quad

In April a test pit evaluation and archaeological bore hole survey were undertaken by Oxford Archaeology within the Chavasse Quad at St Peters College. The 2m square test pit exposed post-medieval layers and a cesspit or rubbish pit which extended to a depth of c 1.8m below current ground level. These features sealed a medieval soil horizon and a north-south aligned wall, possibly a tenement boundary. Hand augering within the base of the test pit revealed archaeological deposits to a depth in excess of 5.1m below ground level. Furthermore a west east orientated transect of four bore holes revealed a similar sequence of post-medieval and medieval soil horizons and features. Natural geology was identified in three of the boreholes at depths of between 4.3m and 4.6m below current ground level. Geology was not reached in the borehole adjacent to the test pit, perhaps indicating the presence of a sizable north-south aligned linear feature in the western part of the Quad.

The White Hart, Lower Wolvercote

In April an historic building assessment was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services on the White Hart, a 17th century inn in Lower Wolvercote. The survey produced an appraisal of the documentary evidence and historic fabric. As a result of

the appraisal the application was amended to retain two spiral stair cases that were identified as unusual survivals in such a structure.

Proposed route of Network Rail water culvert (Hinksey Culvert), former Dairy Crest site, Old Abingdon Road

In April an evaluation was undertaken by Museum of London Archaeology on the route of a proposed new culvert at the former Dairy Crest site, Old Abingdon Road. The evaluation revealed only alluvium over natural gravel and did not locate the projected course of a man made channel shown on 18th century maps as coming off of the Hinksey Stream near this location, suggesting that the channel is located further south. Further works are planned at this site.

The Tinbergen Building, South Parks Road

Between April and June a phased strip and record excavation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology within the footprint of the proposed basement extension to the Tinbergen Building on South Parks Road.



Image above: Large steep sided pits of 17th century date at the Tinbergen Building, Parks Road

The excavation revealed the truncated ditch of the Royalist Civil War defences and a series of six parallel large steep sided pits containing limited 17th century pottery, pipe stems and a horse skeleton. These parallel features appear to be 'man traps' or 'pitfalls' protecting sensitive parts of the defensive line. One of the pits also yielded a rose farthing of Charles I (1625-1649). Further work is planned at the site.

Magpie Lane, the Old Bank Hotel, 'The Old Barn'

In May an evaluation was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services within and adjacent to the stone built stables belonging to the Old Bank Hotel on Magpie Lane. Two test pits were excavated within the structure and one outside in the car park to the east. The test pits inside the structure revealed the foundations of the 17th-18th century east wall of the stables (which cut earlier 17th century remains), a 19th

century brick floor below the modern floor, and evidence for a possible late medieval floor or surface below that produced 15th-16th century pottery. The third external trial pit revealed three walls beneath the car park surface, likely to relate to a building shown on the 1876 1st Edition OS map.

Christ Church Thatched Barn, Christ Church Meadow

In May trial trenching was undertaken by the Graham Keevill Consultancy in Christ Church Meadow near the Thatched Barn, prior to the construction of a new visitor centre. One trench investigated the line of a proposed new gas main and revealed an sizable area of hard standing and the mortared floor of an associated building that appear to be related to the Royalist defensive system.



Image above: Evaluation trenching near the Thatched Barn at Christ Church).

A second trench examined the footprint of an 18th century coach house shown on historic maps to the north of the Thatched Barn. This area proved to have been extensively disturbed, possibly by gravel extraction. The report is forthcoming.

Nos 114–119 St Aldate's

In April a targeted excavation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology on the site of a proposed lift pit at 114–119 St Aldate's (the former Blacks Outdoor Clothing Store). This site offered a rare opportunity to investigate land close to the central crossroads of the late Saxon burh, and located within medieval market frontage and within properties associated with Oxford's 12th-13th century Jewish Community. The excavation recorded a medieval stone lined cess pit and a nearby medieval building and drain. Below these features was a compacted surface on top of the natural gravel cut by features of late Saxon or early Norman date. A site visit was undertaken with members of the Oxford Jewish Heritage Committee and staff from Oxford Preservation Trust. Further outreach work, including a museum handling session with objects from the site, is planned. A successful window display in the

former Blacks Outdoor Clothing Store is to be updated with the results of the first phase of excavation. Further work site excavation is planned.



Above: excavations to the rear of 114-119 St Aldates.

St Johns College Access Strip

In May Oxford Archaeology undertook a watching brief during the excavation of a temporary access track across the Great Lawn at St John's College. The track was constructed to facilitate the construction of a new Library extension. A number of post-medieval garden features and finds were recorded. The report is forthcoming.

Other news

City of Oxford Urban Historic Environment Record (COUHER)

Due to changes in the ICT provision between the City and County Council's the City Council has now purchased its own copy of the industry standard HBSMR software in order to maintain the Urban Archaeological Database and the Historic Environment Record for Oxford. The City Council will now maintain the City wide COUHER database independently of the County Council.

Rear wing of No 84 St Aldates

Conservation work is ongoing on the reconstructed roof of the 17th century rear wing of No 84 St Aldates by Dr Dan Miles. The building was at one time occupied by a family associated with the court of Charles I when he occupied Christ Church. The intention is to reconstruct the frame on-site in St Aldates as part of a new rear wing design.



Image above: The reconstructed rear wing of No 84 St Aldates at Maple Durham this spring.

Work not previously reported

Magdalen College, SCR smoking room

In May 2015 a dendrochronological survey was undertaken by Dr Dan Miles within the SCR smoking room at Magdalen College. College records indicate that this area was used as the President's Lodgings when first constructed from around 1476 - 78, and this use, for the First floor rooms at least, may have continued until alterations in 1955 to create the existing space for the Senior Common Room (referred to as the Smoking Room). The work has confirmed that the principle elements of the roof structure are largely primary fabric, dating to circa 1477, however, many also date to a period of much later repairs from 1758 to 1762.