

**Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum
Oxford City Report May-October 2015**

National Planning Policy Framework related field work in Oxford

Westgate- Main phase of works



Westgate Area 7: showing buildings belonging to the Franciscan Friary (Picture by Oxford Archaeology).

One of the biggest archaeological projects in the city's history is currently taking place on the site of the Westgate Shopping Centre's former surface and multi-storey car parks. The investigations began in January 2015 and are due to continue into early 2016. The work is taking place prior to the construction of a new extended shopping centre and underground car park.



Over the summer the southern precinct of the town's medieval Franciscan friary and *Studium Generale* (Franciscan college) has been investigated by Oxford Archaeology (OA) on the site of the former multi-storey car park. The excavation has revealed an extensive arrangement of largely robbed-out stone walls, channels, rubbish pits and isolated floor surfaces. Notable

discoveries include the well preserved friary kitchen and the stone conduit system that provided the site with running water. Further significant discoveries are anticipated as the excavation progresses southwards towards the Trill Mill Stream where previous evaluation trenching identified a possible mill structure.

Above: Cheney School students undertaking a resistivity survey in the garden of Oxford Preservation Trust under the guidance of Sally and Roger Ainslie. Part of the Westgate outreach project. (Picture by Oxford Archaeology)

The project has also involved recording work prior to the construction of a double basement in the southern part of the development site. This has included the excavation of four 1820s tenements located within the former Victorian suburb of St Ebbe's, the excavation of sections across the Royalist Civil War defences and a section across the Trill Mill Stream. Discoveries from the later include an Ox skeleton embedded in a medieval channel and an enigmatic compacted gravel surface of Bronze Age date or earlier. The project has also involved an extensive outreach programme involving projects with local schools, public talks, pop-up museum, viewing platform and public open days.

Further information on the excavation is available on the Oxford Archaeology website: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com/community/westgate-excavations>

No 7 Norham Gardens

Between August 2013 and July 2015 historic building recording and an archaeological watching brief were undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services during works to renovate and extend No 7 Norham Gardens. The building is a Victorian town house built in 1862 and one of the earliest villas built on the Norham Gardens estate. Recording identified six major building phases and the report provides a phase plan and photographic record. The watching brief identified the remains of two wells, probably dating to between 1862-1885, and a Victorian wall.

Nos 114-119 St. Aldate's and 4-5 Queen Street

In July Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation as part of preliminary ground works associated with the redevelopment of Nos 114-119 St Aldate's and Nos 4-5 Queen Street. The site is of particular interest because of its central location fronting onto the medieval market and because of its documented association with notably members of Oxford's 13th century Jewish community. Three test pits were excavated within the basement of the existing buildings. These identified late Saxon and medieval horizons located directly underneath the current basement slab. Domestic waste pits, demolition material, walls and a compacted gravel surface were noted. Late Saxon and 13th -14th century pottery was identified. Notable finds included a likely crucible fragment that may suggest small-scale processing of bronze or other precious metals nearby, also food waste and a leather shoe from a likely cess pit. The foundation design has now been amended in the light of these discoveries to minimise the impact on archaeological remains. Further targeted archaeological excavation is to follow.

Front Quadrangle, St Edmund's Hall, Queen's Lane

In July a photographic record and watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during the replacement of existing paving and cobble surrounds in the Front Quad at St Edmund's Hall. The report is forthcoming

Land to the rear of No 17 Between Towns Road

In August an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services on land to the rear of 17 Between Towns Road. The 15m trial trench recovered two residual sherds of Oxford colour coated ware of 1st-3rd century AD date and a modern goat burial. The work was required because of the known proximity of Roman remains.

No 16 Crick Road

In August a watching brief was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services during the excavation of a basement at 16 Crick Road. The extension footprint was stripped to natural revealing one small post-med pit (undated but cut from high up). The work was required because of the potential for prehistoric remains in the locality. The report is forthcoming.

Headington School, Library Extension

In August a watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during works to extend the library facilities at Headington School. The majority of the new extension footprint had been truncated by a modern tank. No significant archaeological remains were located. The work was requested because Roman remains have previously been recorded in the vicinity.

The Malt Barn, Church Street, Iffley

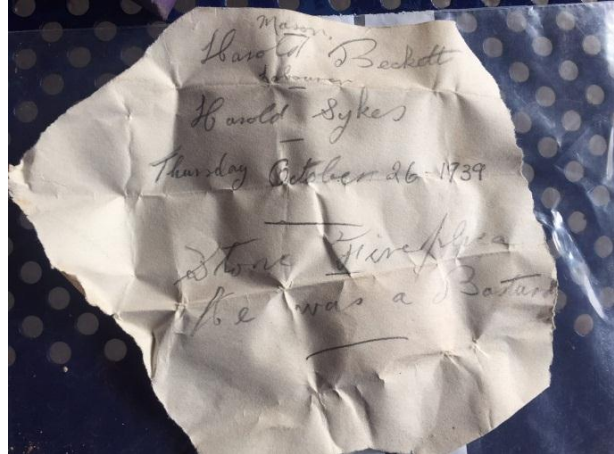
In August a watching brief was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services during building renovation works to the 16th-17th century Grade II listed Malt Barn at Iffley. A stone wall was exposed in the kitchen area on the lower ground floor. Design, Heritage and Specialist Services officers intervened to ensure this was preserved in situ in line with the approved plans.



Wall exposed within the 16th-17th century Malt Barn, Church Way, Iffley

The Fell Tower, Christ Church,

In September a watching brief was undertaken by the Keevill Heritage Consultancy during works to provide an emergency egress route from the Fell Tower to the North Canonry in Tom Quad, Christ Church. The works exposed a fireplace blocked in the 1970s on the Canonry side. The fireplace was apparently cut into the stone wall (of likely early/mid 16th or mid-17th-century date) in 1939 as it contained a matchbox with a note from the builder (pictures below). Original quoins of the original wall were exposed on the Fell side, along with the brickwork behind the extant fireplace abutting it. The report is forthcoming.



The exposed quoins on the Fell Tower side and the note and matchbox left within the fireplace inserted in 1939 (pictures by Graham Keevill)

Peckwater Quad Staircases 6-8, Christ Church,

In September the Keevill Heritage Consultancy undertook a photographic record prior to internal works at Staircases 6-8, Peckwater Quad, Christchurch. The report is forthcoming.

No 98 St Aldate's

In September a watching brief and photographic record was undertaken by Graham Keevill during internal works at 98 St Aldate's. Lath and plaster coverings of a stud partition were removed and the braced frame of a partition wall recorded. It was suggested that the partition was either built as a continuous feature or had a doorway roughly in its centre, later widened out to make the present arch.

The Hall including the Kitchen, Buttery Bar and pantries, Balliol College,

Between August 2013 and October 2014 an intermittent watching brief was undertaken by the Keevill Heritage Consultancy during miscellaneous ground works internal and external to the 19th century hall at Balliol College. The works were undertaken to improve access and improve facilities in kitchens, Buttery Bar and pantries. The watching brief identified a number of features associated with the 1882 plan of the building. No earlier archaeological remains of significance were observed.

Sites either not previously in the public domain or not previously reported

Biochemistry Building, Dorothy Hodgkin Road, University Science Area

Between October 2014 and January 2015 a watching brief was carried out by Oxford Archaeology during the demolition and ground preparation work on the site of the Phase 2 New Biochemistry Building, Dorothy Hodgkin Road. The watching brief observed that most of the site had been previously truncated. Within a narrow band along the north and north-east edges of the site the 'supranatural' (loess) sub-soils overlying the natural gravels of the 2nd terrace had partially survived and the truncated base of an east-west aligned early post-medieval ditch was recorded. No other significant archaeology was encountered.

Land adjacent to No 14 Turl Street

In March salvage recording and a watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology on behalf of Thames Water on emergency works being carried out to repair a broken sewage pipe leading into the property at 14 Turl Street. The work was undertaken after finds were noted in the spoil heap by members of OCCAF. A possible gravel road surface was observed and a pit like feature was found to be sealed below the gravel layer. It is possible this is a feature pre-dates the laying out of late Saxon Turl St, however the limited area of the shuttered excavations prevented a secure stratigraphic sequence of deposits to be established. A small amount of late medieval or early post-medieval pottery, clay pipe, cattle horn cores, pieces of fired clay, oyster shell and animal bone were recovered from the spoil heap. The assemblage comprised a mix of material of various dates and may represent material from several locations, disturbed by previous service and building works.

Former Shidyerd Street and Garden Quad, Corpus Christi College

In April a geophysical survey and borehole transect in Garden Quad and evaluation trenching along the line of the former Shidyerd Street (located between Corpus Christ and Christ Church) were undertaken by Oxford Archaeology. Subsequently in August a second phase of evaluation was undertaken in Garden Quad by Museum of London Archaeology.

This site is of particular interest because it is located within the late Saxon burh and medieval walled town close to the projected extent of the hypothesised primary 9th century burh and on an important north-south axial route that may be prehistoric in origin and was later known as Shidyerd Street. In the medieval period the area of Garden Quad was occupied by a number of documented medieval academic halls (Beke's Inn, Nevilles's Inn and St Christopher Hall).

The evaluation trenches in former Shidyerd Street revealed a series of clay silt deposits, some of which contained waterlogged material (charred material, wood and seeds, animal bones recovered by sieving), which may have represented trample and/or domestic refuse possibly associated with an un-metalled right of way pre-dating the late Saxon Shidyerd Street. These were overlain by a layer of limestone rubble which may have represented the first in a series of rudimentary surfaces interspersed with thick layers of silty material which produced a considerable quantity of animal bone, presumably deposited by the occupiers of structures fronting on to the street. The majority of datable artefacts recovered from these

layers suggest that they were deposited between the 11th and 12th centuries, with the predominance of St Neot's ware probably suggesting a pre-conquest date for the majority of the sequence. The latest of the surfaces appear to date from the 12th–14th century.

The uppermost of the sequence of surfaces was well-metalled and was predominantly constructed from large limestone cobbles. The dating evidence suggested that this may have been laid as early as the 14th century, and is perhaps contemporary with the acquisition of the lower end of Shidyerd Street by Merton College in 1321. The deposits overlying this are likely to be 16th-century in date and may relate to the early use of the site following the foundation of Corpus Christi in 1517.

In Garden Quad a radar survey and borehole survey undertaken in the accessible parts of the quad failed to find any evidence for the primary burh defences. The resistivity survey identified a number of features that were subsequently tested by a hand dug evaluation trench. A possible 'garden feature' identified by the resistivity survey was demonstrated to be a ditch containing 18th century material. A sequence of tip layers containing mixed soil, mortar, tile and pottery of medieval and post medieval date were also recorded.

The New Library, St Anne's College, Woodstock Road

Further to the short note provided in the May OCCAF report further information is now available about this site. Between 13 November 2014 and 7 April 2015 Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief prior to the construction of a Library and Academic Centre at St Anne's College. No features datable prior to the 15th to 16th century were found, however pottery and ceramic building material of medieval date and a single sherd of Roman mortarium found in later deposits may suggest activity from these periods in the vicinity. Several pits containing late medieval/early post medieval pottery and other material were found with mixed-in residual medieval material from relatively high status buildings. The majority of the pits originally appear to have been dug as quarries before being backfilled with largely sterile deposits with only an occasional dump of waste material. Two intercutting field boundary ditches of late medieval-early post medieval period were also recorded.

Other news

Assessing and Mapping Significant Heritage Assets in a Medieval University City

As mentioned in the last few OCCAF reports Oxford Archaeology and the Oxford City Council Heritage Team have produced a report for Historic England looking at the assessment of non-designated but potentially nationally significant archaeological assets and providing a series of case studies. The report is now available online: <http://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/assessing-mapping-significant-heritage-assets-medieval-university-city-oxford/>

Annual Monitoring Statement for Archaeological Assets

The annual monitoring statement for archaeological assets produced by the Heritage Team will be online by the end of October:

http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/Archaeology_occw.htm

40 Objects, Oxford City Museum

An exhibition of forty objects selected by the local community to tell the story of their city is currently open at the Town Hall to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Museum of Oxford. The objects include a 14th century skillet from Peckwater Quad and the Civil War Halberd recovered from the Westgate Centre site.

<http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decM/Museum40Anniversary.htm>