

Archaeology in Oxford

Oxford City report to the Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum

National Planning Policy Framework related field work in June – October 2023

Pusey Lane

In June Oxford Archaeology conducted an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of thirteen small geotechnical test pits in the garages and behind the buildings along the west side of Pusey Lane and in the basements of 19 and 20 St Johns Road. A number of 'early features' filled with characteristically reddish redeposited loess were tentatively identified, which would indicate features of an Anglo-Saxon or earlier (perhaps prehistoric) date. The site lies close to previously identified late Neolithic to early Bronze Age barrows and within the projected extent of the precinct of Beaumont Palace, a 12th century Royal Palace that was taken over by the Carmelite Friars in the 13th century.

St Hilda's College, Access ramp and landscaping

In June trial trenching was undertaken by Thames Valley Archaeological Services at St Hilda's College prior to the construction of a new access ramp. No significant archaeological remains were recorded.

No 131 High Street

Between November 2022 and August 2023 historic building recording was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during the exposure and repair of the timber frame of No 131 High Street. The building dates from the mid-1830s. The previous medieval building on the site, along with No 132 and the Chequers public house, likely formed one property. No 131 has an irregular plan but the exposure of the timber frame showed it to be of a single constructional phase, including its brick east elevation and three roofs. The building is a good example of late timber framing and was well-built, with joists integrated into the structure and primary iron ties reinforcing the corners and roof trusses. Tall and narrow softwood was used and numerous Baltic timber marks were observed, with this type of imported timber being commonplace by the 19th century. The most significant internal features were older moulded timber in cupboards of the northern first floor room that trespasses into No. 132 and appear to be remnants of the previous earlier building on the site.

University Parks Badger fencing

In August a watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during the construction of badger fencing and a new path subbase in University Parks. A number of pits, ditches and post holes were identified along with finds of Iron Age date.

Former Conservative Club, No 19 Between Towns Road, Cowley

An excavation was undertaken in August at the former Conservative Club at Between Towns Road, Cowley, by Southampton Archaeology. The site is located just to the east of the likely focus of a Roman pottery manufacturing compound at St Luke's Road, where kilns, stone built drying ovens and clay lined pits have previously been recorded. A named 2nd century potter called Vossullus is known to have worked nearby. No further pots with his stamp have been found at the former Conservative club site however recorded features include enclosure ditches, pits, a clay dump and burnt features of 4th century date. Significant amounts of pottery were recovered from waste pits on the western edge of the site, one of the recovered pottery sherds has an illiterate stamp.



Above left: A painted Roman sherd. Below left: An illiterate potter's stamp. Above right: Features containing significant quantities Roman pottery towards the west of the site.

Oxford Railway Station

Between August and October Oxford Archaeology have been undertaking an intermittent watching brief during the works to upgrade Oxford Railway station. The works have revealed an unforeseen inverted brick arch under the Botley Road rail bridge, a stone lined conduit near Oseney Lane, original GWR spearhead shaped railings at Becket Street car park and a 19th century Broad Gauge Barlow rail re-used as gate post at the Botley Rd and Beckett St car park junction. The railings are to be reused. The work is ongoing.

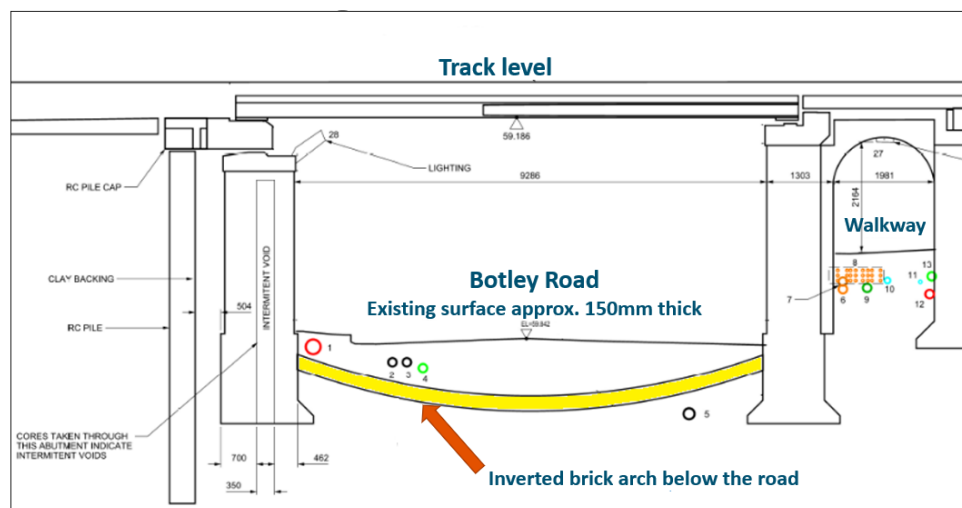


Image above left: Network railing illustration of the inverted brick arch. Image right: Part of the unusual inverted brick arch at Botley Road (Images courtesy of Network Rail).

Trinity College Gardens

Between late August and early September an evaluation was undertaken at Trinity College gardens by Thames Valley Archaeological Services prior to the determination of an application for a new grid of ground source heat pumps in the gardens. The evaluation uncovered a range of deposits that relate to 17th and 18th century garden schemes including parts of a central path, levelling deposits, a possible statue base and gravel surfaces. A substantial number of pits and ditches likely related to medieval activity on the Parks Road frontage were also identified.

Nuffield College,

In September a watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during minor building works at Nuffield College. The intermittent work is ongoing.

Other news

The HIAS project (Heritage Information Access Simplified)

The Urban Design and Heritage Team has commenced a project to accession records from the old National Monuments Record (renamed the National Monuments Record (NRHE)) onto the Oxford Historic Environment Record. So far, the process has largely involved the accessioning of duplicate records however there have been a few surprises, for example a geophysical survey from 2005 at Magdalen College Cloister that identified a large rectangular structure within the quadrangle on an east-west alignment. The report can be viewed on the [ADS website](#).

New College School, Civil War Rampart, New outreach leaflet

An outreach leaflet has been produced by Museum of London Archaeology detailing the results of the excavations at New College School in 2020. The leaflets have been distributed to the school, New College and the Museum of Oxford.



Right: The New College School leaflet

Rhodes House

The redevelopment of Rhodes House is now complete and the Royalist Civil War rampart (forming part of the inner line of the northern defences) is now more prominent in the public realm and discretely celebrated with a plaque at Rhodes House, South Parks Road, Oxford.



Image left: The relandscaped grounds of Rhodes House with the Civil War rampart to the right. Image right: The rampart and plaque viewed from South Parks Road.

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