

**Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum
Oxford City Report October 2015- February 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 October and February. The project has moved southwards across the Franciscan friary precinct revealing further robbed out friary buildings and the well-built precinct wall. Within the precinct only localised areas of flooring survived, however these included the friary kitchen or bake house which revealed a series of stone built ovens and associated deposits. Elsewhere a large waterlogged linear pit (or channel?) that was first encountered in the Trill Mill Stream diversion trench was found to be associated with a long narrow building. These were the earliest structures associated with post-reclamation activity in the 13th century. The waterlogged pit proved to be rich in finds (including waterlogged wood and leather).



The friary excavation has revealed how a variety of approaches were adopted by 13th century builders in order to provide stable foundations for the friary buildings located on the reclaimed floodplain. These included the use of compacted gravel foundations, stone relieving arches and massed wooden piles. Over 2,000 wooden piles have been recovered from the site. Remarkably, perhaps 35% of these have proved to be re-used medieval building timbers. These timbers have been carefully assessed and recorded, with exemplary pieces considered for freeze drying and retention by the Oxfordshire Museums Service.



Above: Beginning of the transect across the Trill Mill Stream

Below: Re-used medieval building frame used torevet the Trill Mill Channel.

A second transect across the historic Trill Mill Stream was also completed revealing a large high velocity channel of medieval date partly underlying later reclamation deposits with sequences of earlier channels further south. The section across the Trill Mill has been gradually extended southwards across the floodplain to allow a detailed understanding of how the floodplain developed.



South of the Trill Mill Stream a series of north south channels have been excavated. Some of these preserved stone and timber structures that may belong to water management system for a mill or fish ponds. Oxford Archaeology have been sampling and drawing the re-used building timbers, roundwood and planks used to revet these channels.



Above: Ovens revealed within the friary kitchen or bakery. Below: Timber frame for a timber sluice that was later replaced by a stone sluice on the same footprint, running south off the Trill Mill Stream.

Elsewhere on the site a watching brief was maintained during basement reduction work and recorded previously identified and recorded linear features crossing the floodplain.

The outreach work attached to the project has continued with a number of public talks taking place (see podcasts links below) and a web blog by an OA digger (thanks to Emma Powell for this). A further outreach project with Northfield School is being developed for 2016.

The Westgate Archaeological Talks Series- the talks are now available on You Tube:

- Talk No 1- St Ebbe's: Oxford's Lost 19th century suburb by Malcolm Graham
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=26pzVvbPF4k>
- Talk No 2 "Previous excavations on the site of the Westgate Centre." by Tom Hassall OBE
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S44m1254fIU>
- *Talk No 3* "The Blackfriars and their neighbours in Medieval Oxford." by George Lambrick
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFKZHnz-H3c>
- Talk No 4- *Uncovering medieval science: An interdisciplinary exploration of the work of Robert Grosseteste.* by Dr. Giles Casper, Durham University and Prof. Hannah Smithson, Oxford University. (Ordered Universe Project).
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Cik8CnSq9A&feature=youtu.be>
- Talk No 5 *Friars and Towns* by Deidre O'Sullivan (Leicester University)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWlxfBfpPLA&feature=youtu.be>
- Talk No 6 *The Archaeology of the Westgate Excavations 2015* by Ben Ford, Senior Project Manager, Oxford Archaeology
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xUXI74GEvc>

'Westgate Oxford- The story so far' Museum Exhibition in March-April

Oxford Archaeology, in collaboration with the Museum of Oxford and the Westgate Oxford Alliance, will be facilitating a new exhibition showcasing the discoveries from the recent Westgate excavations. The exhibition will be in the Museum Gallery in Oxford Town Hall and run from 4th March until the 23rd April 2016.

Nos 62-64 Banbury Road, Kellogg College,

Between August and September an archaeological evaluation and a watching brief (during the excavation of geo-technical test pits) was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services at 62-64 Banbury Road. Previously in 2005 part of a Bronze Age beaker burial had been recovered here during the excavation of a geotechnical test pit, perhaps indicating the presence of a barrow or flat grave. The 2015 evaluation found no evidence of a grave. A feature containing the fragmentary remains of a small mammal could potentially be contemporary. Two narrow, shallow features possibly plough scars, were also recorded.

No 30 Plantation Road

Between August and October John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at 30 Plantation Road. Footings trenches and a

soakaway trench were observed. A linear ditch of Iron Age date and two post-medieval features were recorded.

Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme Phase 2.

Between September and October Oxford Archaeology carried out a watching brief during geotechnical test pitting within the Thames floodplain in association with the proposed Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme. The report is forthcoming

The Great Lawn, St John's College,

In September a detailed geophysical survey (magnetometer and earth resistance) was undertaken the Bartlett-Clark Consultancy across the Great Lawn of St John's College. The resistance survey identified linear features that may indicate traces of paths or garden beds relating mainly to the 18th century garden landscape, with possible traces of earlier features. The magnetometer survey produced only limited findings suggesting the presence of tree holes or other minor infilled hollows.

The Old Cloister, The Stoker Room and Second Quad, Brasenose College

Between October and February a watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during further renovation works to the Old Cloister at Brasenose College. A number of previously unrecorded post-medieval wall paintings were exposed in the Stoker Room (in the south-east corner of the Old Quadrangle). Recording and assessment has been undertaken in advance of the consolidation and conservation of the painting with initial results suggesting an early 17th century date. A watching brief within the Second Quadrangle revealed a stone lined well that may be contemporary with the nearby medieval kitchen and stone built drain. The works are on-going.



Photograph of exposed wall painting in the Stoker Room by T. Lee

The Barton Park Development

Between October and February a strip and record excavation, watching brief and metal detecting survey have undertaken by Oxford Archaeology at Barton Park.

Background

Further to a desk based assessment produced by John Moore Heritage Services in 2009 a geophysical survey (magnetic susceptibility) was undertaken across the 41.5ha site by Stratascan Ltd in 2011. A further 12.5ha of the site was then targeted for detailed gradiometer survey. The geophysical survey report concluded that apart from the ridge and furrow no clearly archaeological anomalies (i.e. features) had been identified but that 'a number of amorphous positive linear and area anomalies' were evident. Subsequently in 2012 some 2.9 km of trial trenching was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology targeted at geophysical anomalies and potential parch marks identified from the aerial photography. The trenching identified a series of shallow ditches that produced small amounts of Roman and medieval pottery. The results suggested the presence of relatively artefact poor, shallow, narrow ditches belonging to a medieval field or enclosure system, with perhaps some Roman field boundaries present.

The 2015 work

The 2015 investigations therefore sought to strip and record two areas, one 110m x110m and one 100m x 90m, targeting the densest concentrations of boundaries identified in the evaluation with the aim of recovering further morphological and sequencing detail and any evidence for related short lived field/enclosure edge activity. The earliest features identified were a series of parallel drainage ditches potentially of Late Iron Age or early Roman date. An early copper alloy AS coin of Nero (AD 65-68) and local grey ware pottery were recovered from these ditches. The early Roman phase appears to have been replaced in the 2nd-4th century by a more extensive and organized agricultural landscape of rectangular fields, 'D' shaped enclosure and droveways.



One of the excavated areas above and the Saxon spearhead (right). Photographs by Oxford Archaeology.

A small quantity of Roman pottery was recovered from these field boundaries. It is possible that the expansion of the agricultural landscape to this peripheral area, might have coincided with a period of slightly drier conditions recorded elsewhere on the Oxford floodplains. Also the re-organization of the landscape might be associated with the establishment of the Headington Wick Villa to the north during 3rd-4th century, with this site forming part of the wider villa estate. Two likely field edge cremations with associated pyre pits of likely Roman date were also recorded.

Furthermore from across the excavated areas a spearhead, knife, horseshoe and horseshoe nail, were recovered. None were located within cut features. All four items were of pre-Conquest date (and potentially all 7th century). The recovery of these finds appeared to point to a concentration of material beyond what might be expected from casual loss and could indicate the location of nearby burials or a skirmish site. A metal detecting survey was therefore subsequently undertaken across adjacent fields however no further metalwork of Saxon date was recovered.

Medieval pottery was also recovered from the remnant ridge and furrow, potentially suggesting a 12-14th century date for the field system. Further archaeological recording is to follow.

The City Wall, Merton College

In October repointing work was undertaken on the City Wall at Merton College. Recording work has been requested by Historic England.

St Peter's College Service Works, New Inn Hall Street

In October a watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during the excavation of service routes along the New Inn Hall Street frontage of St Peter's College. A post-medieval stone built vault or drain was encountered, recorded and backfilled with pea shingle. The report is forthcoming.

No 48 Plantation Road

In October a watching brief was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services at No 48 Plantation Road during the construction of an extension. Two post-medieval pits and a post-medieval ditch (former property boundary?) were recorded. The report is forthcoming.

Nos 6-8 Park Town

In October building recording was undertaken at Nos 6-8 Park Town by Thames Valley Archaeological Services. The report provides plans, section and an annotated photographic record of this building which was built by Thomas Jones and Gardner in the 1860s in the picturesque Tudor style.

Clinical Biomanufacturing Facility, Churchill Hospital

In October an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology at the Churchill Hospital, immediately west of recorded Roman pottery kilns excavated in the early 1970s. No features or deposits of archaeological interest were present and only a single sherd of Roman pottery was recovered.

The President's Garden Wall and Parks Road Wall, St John's College

In October historic building recording was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology on sections of wall within the President's Garden and a section of wall that borders Parks Road at St. John's College. Both walls appear to have been built in the 17th century although they have been subject to periodically rebuilding.

No 10a Mayfield Road, Summertown

In November archaeological trial trenching was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services at 10a Mayfield Road prior to the erection of three new houses. No significant archaeological features were identified. A fire waste pit and a planting hole of late 19th-early 20th century were recorded. The work was requested because of the proximity of poorly recorded Saxon burials in the vicinity of Summer Fields School.

The Tinbergen Building, South Parks Road

In November an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology to the rear of the Tinbergen Building on South Parks Road. One trench revealed a large linear feature apparently containing re-deposited clay, which was cut by a pit containing a 17th century clay pipe. The features may be associated with the Royalist Civil War earthworks known to be located nearby. Further archaeological recording work is to take place at this site in 2016.

Northern Gateway Phase 2 Evaluation

In December an evaluation was undertaken by Museum of London Archaeology on land at Northern Gateway to establish the extent of the Wolvercote Gravel Terrace west of the railway and confirm the presence or absence of any westward continuation of a previously recorded Palaeolithic channel. A series of trenches were excavated parallel to the railway and demonstrated that the gravel did not extend into this area. The report is forthcoming.

Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, New Inn Hall Street

In December a small excavation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology prior to the construction of an extension to the Methodist Church in New Inn Hall Street. The extension footprint was located just within the line of the medieval city wall. A spread of compacted gravel was identified that varied in height to the north and may have been the remains of the top of the late Saxon burh rampart. Sampling was undertaken in the hope that a scientific date might be obtained. The report is forthcoming.

No 1 Abbey Road, Osney, The former Kinglerlee's Building Yard

In December a photographic record and building analysis was undertaken by Richard K Morriss & Associates on the former timber yard at No 1 Abbey Road, prior to demolition. The timber yard was established at the end of the 19th century and formerly belonged to Thomas H Kinglerlee & Sons, a prominent local building firm. The complex appears to have been built in one main phase when the yard was built circa 1890. It consisted of buildings on three sides of a large yard, with a walled boundary to the newly laid out Abbey Road on the fourth.

The largest of the buildings was the Long Warehouse with associated north and south ranges. Both were presumably used for storage purposes though it is possible

that some processing of the timber, such as sawing, could have taken place in one or the other. A tall chimney stack shown on an 1897 photograph suggests that the most likely position for the steam engine was at the northern end. The warehouse was extended in 1899. The extension led to changes in the original warehouse, including the removal of the brick piers on the ground floor and their replacement in the various cast-iron and steel columns to improve the connections between the two structures.

No 46 Hythe Bridge Street

Between December and February a watching brief was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services at 46 Hythe Bridge Street during foundation works and the lowering of the cellar. The report is forthcoming.

No 333 Banbury Road

In January a trial trench was excavated by John Moore Heritage Services at 333 Banbury Road. A further watching brief was undertaken during the grubbing out of existing foundations in February. No significant archaeology was recorded.

Mansfield College, new student accommodation block,

In January an excavation was undertaken at Mansfield College by Oxford Archaeology prior to the construction of new student accommodation block. The Royalist Civil War defences were investigated and a number of Roman pits and ditches were recorded.

Older work not previously reported

New Physics Building, University Science Area, Parks Road

Between May and July Cotswold Archaeology excavated the footprint of a new Physics Building on Parks Road. The excavation recorded sections through the Royalist Civil War defences and a tunnelled service trench encountered a large feature under Parks Road that may be the eastern edge of the St John's College henge ditch.

The Chef's Changing Area, the kitchens, Christ Church

Between July and August an archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Keevill Heritage Ltd during the refurbishment of male changing rooms in the kitchens at Christ Church. A photographic record of the existing facilities was made. The excavations did not penetrate beneath modern made ground, representing the bedding for the concrete floors. No significant archaeological features were recorded.

Canterbury Quad, Rooms C4.1, C4.2 and C4.3, St John's College,

Between August and October building recording and a watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during works to the 17th century eastern range of Canterbury Quad. During the works the partition between the living room and bedroom of C4.2 was stripped revealing the two doorways in the partition to be original features. Fragments of numerous layers of 19th-century wallpaper were revealed during this work. The recording also revealed that much of the material used in alterations throughout the lifespan of the rooms was reused, some materials showed signs of being reused several times.

The doorway between the Laudian Library and Room C4.3 was also re-opened, revealing the significant difference in the floor levels between the two rooms. Dendrochronological analysis was undertaken by Dr Dan Miles on the lengths of joists removed from the floor of Room C4.3. These retained bark edges and the dating work revealed that felling had taken place in the spring of 1631 (the construction of Canterbury Quad began in the summer of 1631). No visible alterations were observed to the joists confirming that the configuration of the structure and the difference in the height of this floor compared to that of the library relate to the original build. A similar confirmation of the timbers of the ground floor of C4.1 was attempted; they were badly rotted and showed evidence of reuse and so the analysis did not proceed, however bands of very narrow rings suggested pollarding. The report is forthcoming.