

ARCHAEOLOGY IN OXFORD

*Oxford City Report to the Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum
June - September 2018*

National Planning Policy Framework related field work in Oxford

Wolvercote Paper Mill, Lower Wolvercote

In June and September phased trial trenching was undertaken at the Wolvercote Paper Mill site by Thames Valley Archaeological Services. The phased trenching was undertaken to test areas not previously investigated by extensive pre-determination trenching. A gully containing a sherd of late prehistoric pottery was identified along with a small number of undated features on the higher gravel in the eastern part of the site. A trench on the Mill Street frontage revealed that a stone building, of presumed pre 19th century date, had occupied the same footprint as the demolished 20th century paper factory office building. A single ditch containing an 11th-13th century sherd of pottery was identified at right angles to Mill Street. Further archaeological work is planned although this is likely to be heavily constrained by contamination issues.

No 10 Walton Street

In June and July a watching brief and building recording was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during renovation and extension works to No 10 Walton Street, a Grade II listed 19th century Town House.

Staircases 1 & 2 and precinct wall, Worcester College

In June and July a watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during the rebuilding of part of the historic precinct wall at Worcester College and minor works to Staircase 1 and 2 which form part of the medieval core of the college. The wall works were undertaken because of the critical instability of a high section of wall that had evidently been raised in the 19th century to create part of a Fives Court. A returning wall belonging to the side wall of the court was exposed in the foundation trench for a new dwarf wall. The report is forthcoming.

Proposed Garden Building, Trinity College

Between July and September a staged evaluation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology to investigate the proposed footprint of a new building within the Wilderness at Trinity College. The trenching array, though significantly constrained by tree cover, demonstrated the presence of residual medieval pottery and a boundary ditch indicating limited activity from the late 12th century. The site was then extensively quarried from the late medieval period through the early post-medieval period and subsequently landscaped in the early 18th century as the college gardens were first formalized. Traces of these earliest formal pathways were revealed.

Right: trenching of post medieval gravel extraction pits in Trinity College gardens.

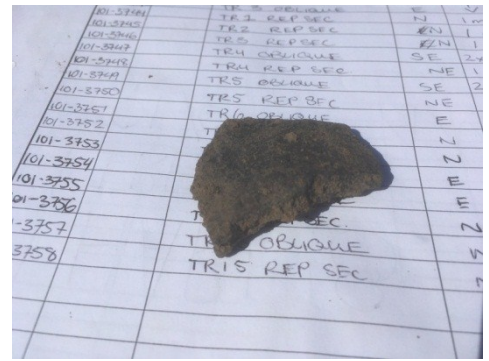


The Harlow Centre (proposed Swan School site), New Marston

In August evaluation trenching was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology at the site of the proposed new Swan School in New Marston. The trenching identified evidence for previously unrecorded Iron Age and Roman rural settlement. A series of ditches, ditch terminals and pits containing Middle Iron Age, Late Iron Age and 2nd-4th century Roman pottery and bone indicate the presence of long term rural settlement activity of perhaps intermittent character in this area.

The results suggest that the parch marks recently recognised in the Cherwell Valley to the north-west (see the previous OCCAF report) represent a continuation of this landscape. The Late Iron Age and Roman features contained pottery with evidence for sooting and burnt food residues and it was notable that regional and imported fabrics make up only a small part of the Roman assemblage, suggesting that the features are the remains of low status settlement and/or associated stock enclosures, droveways and fields.

*Above right: An Iron Age sherd recovered during the evaluation.
Right: A ditch shows up in the near end of the trench.*



New College School, Savile Road

In July a watching brief was undertaken at the Savile House and New College School sites by Museum of London Archaeology during construction works for a temporary classroom. The recording was required because of the multi-period archaeology known in the near vicinity. The works were minor and no significant archaeological remains were recorded.

The Bear Inn, Blue Boar Street

In July Cotswolds Archaeology undertook a salvage record following the recovery of human remains in a sump pit dug in the cellar of the Bear Inn on Blue Boar Street. The human remains are thought to relate to the burial ground of the church of St Edward (dated to the 12th-14th century) which is no longer extant. The remains were of at least three separate individuals, determined by the recovery of three different tibiae.



Right: The new sump hole excavated in the Bear Inn Cellar

No 22 Charlbury Road

In July a watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during the excavation of a new basement to the rear of No 22 Charlbury Road. The work was requested because of the potential for prehistoric and Roman activity on this part of the Summertown-Radley gravel terrace. No significant archaeological remains were recorded.

Oxford Story Museum, Pembroke Street

In August a series of trial pits were excavated in the yard of the story museum by Oxford Archaeology in advance of the construction of new service trenches and a lift pit. The evaluation identified a sequence of deposits dating from the early 13th-mid-16th century sealed by 18th-19th material. The earliest remains comprised a section of wall that may be from a semi-basement or stone lined pit and was overlain by 13th 14th century pits and dumps of material that included cessy waste. Such pits would have been found



immediately to the rear of street frontage properties. Amber/brown or olive-green roof tiles from the 13th -14th century building that must have fronted Pennyfarthing Street (Pembroke Street) to the south were recovered, along with fragments of decorated 'Stabbed Wessex' floor tile suggesting a building of some status, perhaps belonging to a property that is associated with Merton College. The bones of fish, cattle, sheep, pig and a goose give an indication of the diet enjoyed by the occupants and the examined environmental samples are consistent with kitchen waste. Located over the 13th early 14th deposits were the remains of a possible mortared floor, gravel surface and drain along with tip layers containing late 14th early 16th century waste. Further archaeological work is to follow.

Above right: A likely medieval wall at the Oxford Story Museum yard, top left.

Littlemore Mental Health Centre

In September an evaluation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology at Littlemore Mental Health Centre. The trenching revealed only extensive modern disturbance. The work was required because of the close proximity of a Roman kiln.

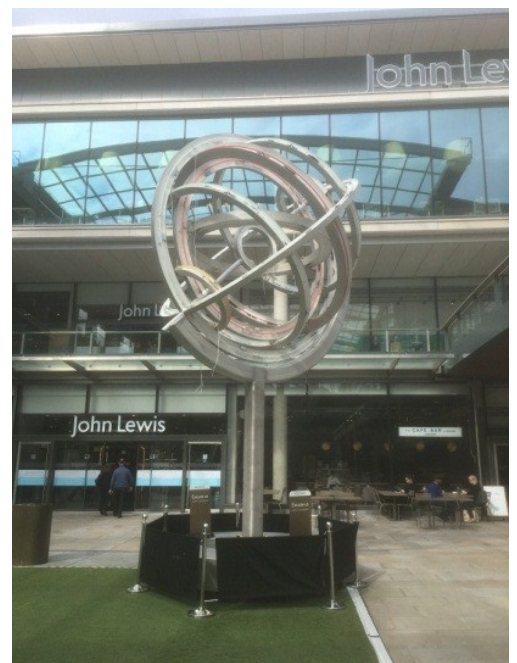
St Edwards School, Summertown

In September trial trenching was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services at St. Edward's School in advance of a new building work. No significant remains were recovered. The trenching was requested because of the proximity of prehistoric and Roman remains.

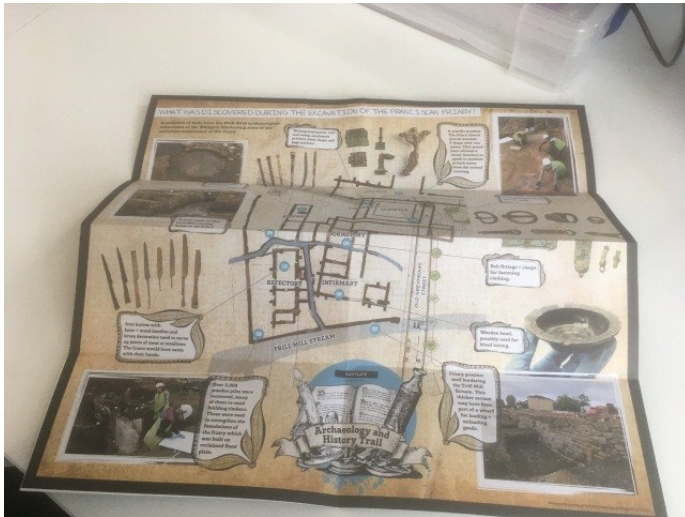
Other news

Westgate Shopping Centre Archaeological Trail

An archaeological trail leaflet is now available from the Westgate Centre information desk providing information about the 2015-2016 excavation at the Franciscan Friary located partially under the centre. The final elements on the on-site interpretation are due to be installed later this year and a short animation *Fun with medieval science* will be available online shortly. The neon armillary sphere by artist David Batchelor, inspired by the statue of Roger Bacon in the Natural History Museum, has also now been installed.



Right: 'Homage to Doctor Mirabilis' by artist David Batchelor



Above: The Westgate Archaeology and History Trail leaflet now available from the Westgate information desk.

Oxford Central Conservation Area Appraisal Consultation

A draft conservation area appraisal for the large central conservation area is now open. For more details go to: <https://consultation.oxford.gov.uk/consult.ti/CCAA/consultationHome>.

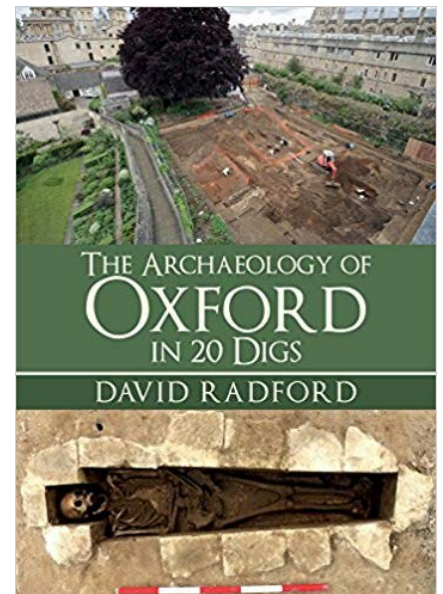
Oxford Annual Archaeological Monitoring Statement for 2017

The Oxford Annual Archaeological Monitoring Statement for 2017 has been prepared and should be made available shortly here:

https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/download/483/archaeological_annual_monitoring_statement

The Archaeology of Oxford in 20 Digs

As some readers of this report will be aware I have a short book out through Amberley publishing [The Archaeology of Oxford in 20 digs](#) with the aim of raising public awareness of Oxford's exceptional archaeology and the pace of ongoing discoveries. A review in the Oxford Times can be viewed [here](#). My sincere thanks to everybody who helped me with this.



*David Radford, Archaeologist
Oxford City Council*