

Archaeology in Oxford

Oxford City report to the Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum

National Planning Policy Framework related field work between October 2023 – February 2024

Frewin Hall GSHP

Between September and October a watching brief and test pit monitoring were undertaken by Oxford Archaeology prior to the installation of ground source heat pumps east of Frewin Hall. The investigations recorded a series of garden soils and other rubble and mortar deposits most likely associated with the demolition of St Mary's College and the subsequent construction of Frewin Hall in 1582. Beneath the external courtyard, the watching brief revealed the brick foundations for an adjacent structure of probable 17th century date and a probable garden wall.

Trinity House, Oxford Business Park

In November Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation at the Trinity House site. The trial trenching was undertaken because of the general potential for Roman archaeology in the vicinity with the trench locations targeted away from the footprint of the former 20th century Cowley Car Plant building located here. No significant archaeology was identified.

Lanham Way Trial Trenching

In November an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Lanham Way by ADAS. The trenching was requested because Roman remains were previously recorded in the vicinity. No significant remains were recorded.

BMW plant New Lorry Park and pond creation

In December archaeological trial trenching was undertaken by KDK Archaeology at the BMW Lorry Park site. The trial trenching was requested because of the proximity of the Alchester to Dorchester Roman Road and previously recorded remains to the north, east and south. No significant archaeology was recorded.

Ruin, Osney Marina

In December the Oxfordshire Building Record undertook a survey of the stone-built ruin located on the waterside at Osney Marina. The building was investigated in the 1970s when it was suggested that the lower courses of the riverside frontage (west side) may be medieval in date and perhaps the remnants of a utilitarian structure associated with Osney Abbey.

The other three sides have been heavily rebuilt in modern times and the presence of an iron link chain affixed to the north wall may suggest that the building may have been used as an animal pound or shed. The structure is of additional interest because of the extensive use of water washed limestone cobbles rather than quarried stone. Consolidation and repair work to make the structure safe is scheduled for the spring.



Above: Building recording at Osney Marina in December.

Parcel B2 Park Hospital and Old Road Campus, Headington,

In January an evaluation was undertaken at Old Road Campus by Wessex Archaeology. The trenching was required because of the general potential for Roman archaeology. No significant remains were recorded.

Nos 21 to 24 Pembroke Street, Staircases Nos 12 to 15, Pembroke College

In January a watching brief was undertaken during internal building works to Nos 21 to 24 Pembroke Street. Strips were cut in the slab of No 12 revealing clear rectangular and amorphous features of Late Saxon or medieval date cut into the gravel below. The work is ongoing.



Right: Features revealed below the floor slab of No 12 Pembroke Street.

Former Dominion Oils site, Railway Lane, Littlemore

In January trial trenching was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services at the former Dominion Oils Site in Littlemore. The site is terraced and partly contaminated. Nevertheless, trenching revealed a single sub rectangular feature containing coarse pottery and animal bone and provisionally identified as early Saxon in date. Further work is to follow.



Above: Feature at the Dominion Oils site, Littlemore.

Nos 17 & 19 Norham Gardens, St Edmund's Hall Student Accommodation

Between January and February a phased small-scale excavation was undertaken by Pre Construct Archaeology at Norham Gardens. The site has revealed a sequence of Roman enclosure ditches that share similar alignments to features identified by aerial photography and geophysics in University Parks, located just to the south. The project is ongoing.



Above left: Pre-Construct Archaeology excavate Roman enclosure ditches at Norham Gardens. Right: A Roman bow brooch from the site.

Other news

Lucy Faithfull House, Speedwell Street

Building work has been completed at the Lucy Faithfull House site which is located over part of the west cloister and church of the Oxford Blackfriars. The shape of the priory church has been marked out in the landscaping of the garden. With thanks to OX PLACE and Willmott Dixon.



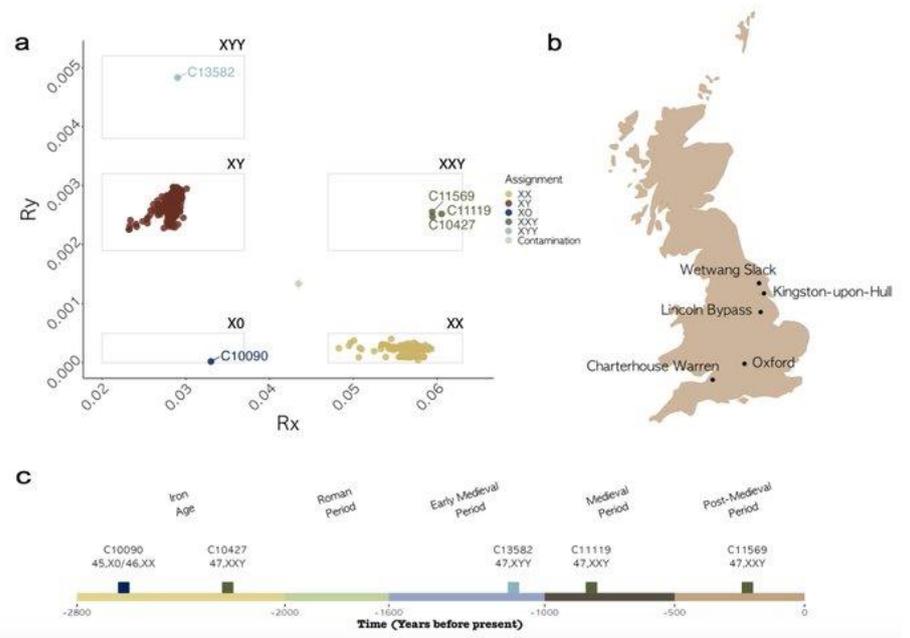
Right: A plaque and the outline of the Blackfriars church at Lucy Faithfull House.

DNA study, St John's Hospital burial ground, Longwall Quad, Magdalen College

A major new study includes information from a skeleton with Klinefelter syndrome from the medieval cemetery at Longwall Quad, Magdalen College. Klinefelter syndrome (sometimes called Klinefelter's, KS or XXY) is where boys and men are born with an extra X chromosome. The study reconstructed the profiles of 6 individuals with aneuploidy (additional or missing chromosomes in their karyotype) from Britain.

The individual found under Longwall Quad, Magdalen College (C11119, Skeleton ID: Sk4205) possessed sexually dimorphic features, which were consistently male; nearly all of them strongly male and two, probably male. With an estimated stature of 176 cm (+/-3.27 cm), the individual was tall compared with the rest of the burial assemblage. You can read the paper here:

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s42003-023-05642-z>



Right: The locations of the six burials in the aDNA study.

The Clarendon Centre, Queen Street

The archaeology and history of Oxford’s commercial core is currently featured on the hoardings for the phase 1 Clarendon Centre redevelopment on Queen Street. No start date has currently been set for the phase 1 archaeological recording which is due to be undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology.



Above: Archaeological and historical information on the Queen Street hoardings.

Top Ten Oxford digs tweets

The annual top ten Oxford digs and archaeological stories in 2023 as subjectively chosen by the City Council Archaeologist can be viewed on twitter (5,701 impressions):

https://twitter.com/hashtag/Top10OxfordDigs2023?src=hashtag_click

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