

Archaeology in Oxford

Oxford City report to the Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum

National Planning Policy Framework related field work between June and October 2025

Nos 76 & 78 Banbury Road, Oxford

Between February and August John Moore Heritage Services carried out an initial stage of archaeological monitoring and recording at 76 & 78 Banbury Road, during the excavation of a new extension and the installation of electrical junction boxes and cables. A single undated pit was observed, alongside later post-Medieval remains. The work was required because of the potential for prehistoric activity in this area.

Hertford College Library

Between June and October Oxford Archaeology have continued to excavate within the main Quadrangle of Hertford College as the contractor has progressively lowered the new basement walls and inserted needle beams below the 18th century college chapel. The site has continued to produce evidence for stone walls, stone lined waste pits, relieving arches and waste pits belonging to properties fronting Catte Street associated with medieval book production and to the medieval academic halls (Black Hall and Hart Hall) fronting onto New College Lane.

Although now below the level of natural gravel the cut features have yet to be bottomed and a further phase of works is planned. The medieval and later features cut into the gravel have proved to be rich in finds, including well preserved pottery, moulded masonry from a medieval century building of some quality and a set of six wooden 'balls' provisionally identified as a possible post medieval bowling ball set.



Image above top: A Tudor (?) pottery money box.

Image above bottom: One of a set of six wooden post-medieval bowling balls from a waste pit.

A very successful open day was held in September with the college laying on refreshments in the dining hall and examples and displaying some of their rare and old book collections from the archive that will be stored in the new basement.



Images above: Scenes from the archaeological open day at Hertford College in September.

Trinity College, Kettell Hall

Between June and July historic building recording was undertaken by Thames Valley Archaeological Services at Kettell Hall, Trinity College, during minor interior building works. The recording only surveyed the fabrics on the ground floor of the building that were to be subject to minor alterations.

Examination of historical documents and floorplans suggests that the rear outbuilding of Baner Hall was included in the initial construction of Kettell Hall as part of the rear wing. Kettell Hall's initial 1617-1620 layout was likely of a T-shaped cross-passage house with a central passage hall. Between c.1675-1715, Kettell Hall underwent substantial alterations resulting in the construction of second and third storeys to the rear, the central porch gable on the south elevation, alterations to the north elevation gables of the main block, and the construction of a staircase tower on the east elevation of the rear wing. During the 18th to early 19th century, the whole of Kettell Hall was sub-let as a private residence. It is within this period that the layout of the ground floor was altered to that shown in a c.1886 floor plan.



Image above View of late 17th century morticed post, looking south-east, Kettell Hall, Oxford. (Image courtesy of TVAS).

Manor House, Sandford Road, Littlemore

Between June and July an archaeological watching brief was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services during building work for a rear extension at Manor House, Sandford Road, Littlemore. The only evidence in relation to the post-Medieval building was a stoneware bottle that was found in the topsoil. No other archaeological features or deposits were uncovered.

Trinity College, Kettell Hall Ramp

In July a watching brief was undertaken by Thames Valley Archaeological Services during groundworks for a new access ramp to Kettell Hall, Trinity College. No significant archaeological remains were recorded.

No 5 Crick Road

In July a watching brief was undertaken by Thames Valley Archaeological Services during building work at No 5 Crick Road. A single undated pit was recorded. The work was requested because of the proximity of recorded Iron Age remains.

Magdalen College Longwall Street

In July a watching brief was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology during the excavation of new service ducting across the line of the medieval town ditch on Longwall Street. No significant archaeology was recorded.

The Ruskin School of Art, High Street

In July 2025 Oxford Archaeology undertook a watching brief on the excavation of three test pits in the basement of the Ruskin School of Art, 74 High Street. The three test pits all revealed a similar sequence comprising two levelling layers beneath the current floor surface. No significant remains were recorded.

Christ Church Deanery

In August some localised recording works to examine a drain run observed by the Cathedral Archaeologist Graham Keevill revealed parts of the base of an octagonal tower east of the Deanery at Christ Church. The tower had previously been identified internally following recent works to the roof and interior and the discovery of the outer wall confirmed its location and extent. The tower dates from the initial period of construction commissioned by Cardinal Wolsey in the 16th century.

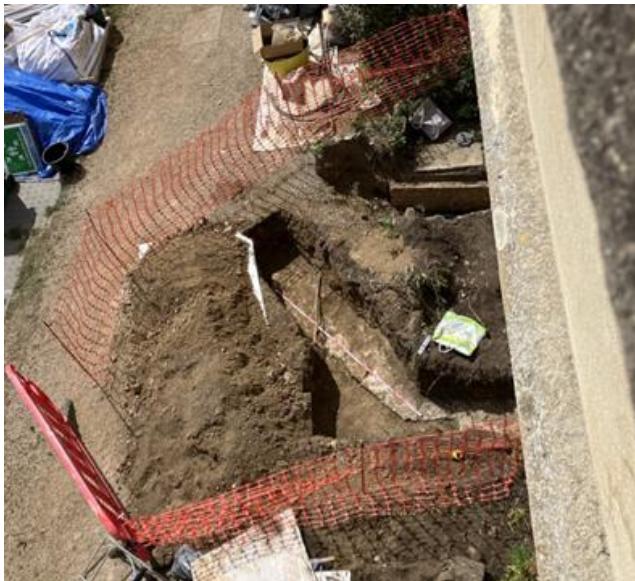


Image above: The base of a 16th century octagonal tower exposed east of the Deanery, Christ Church.

Magdalen College Waynfleet Building

In September phased trial trenching was begun at the Waynfleet Building development site on St Clements by Pre-Construct Archaeology. An initial trench to the rear of the Sainsburys Store recorded a shallow occupation layer of deep alluvium, the layer produced pottery provisionally dated as Saxo-Norman. Further work is to follow.

The Pastry School, St Peter's College

In September Historic building recording was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology on a building at the college known as the Pastry School. The non-designated heritage asset was built in 1900 as the cookery building of the Central Girls' School. The ground floor was originally open on two sides to form a covered playground. It was probably infilled in the late 20th century and is now the Middle Common Room of St Peter's College.

University Faculty of Music, St Aldate's

In September evaluation trenching was undertaken by the Keevill Heritage Consultancy at the site of the University School of Music on St Aldates. The trenching recorded medieval and post-medieval layers and finds, also brick and stone structures and surfaces relating to former 19th century tenements on Floyd's Row. The report is forthcoming.





Images above: Left: Fragment of a Bellarmine Jug. Right: Opened trench at the Faculty of Music.

Grenoble Road Electricity Trench

Between September and October an intermittent watching brief has been undertaken by ADAS during the excavation of cable trenching along Watlington and Grenoble Road. The work has been requested because the trench crosses the line of the Dorchester-Alchester Roman road and through areas of potential roadside activity. The work is ongoing.

Other news

Oxford Open Doors- Slade Camp

The annual Oxford Preservation Trust Open Doors event this September included a well-attended and very successful (despite the rain) tours around Slade Camp on the edge of Wood Farm and Shotover Woods. The camp comprises tracks, hard standings and infrastructure belonging to the 1930's military training facility on land donated by Lord Nuffield, and it saw its last military use as a demobilisation centre. After the war Oxford City Council turned it over to civilian use as temporary accommodation and many families would go on to live there until it was closed in 1971. The event included displays of finds and catering and was organised by Oxford Preservation Trust and the Slade Camp Volunteer Group.





Images above: The Open Door's event at Slade Camp. Top: Members of the public on a guided tour. Below: Objects recovered from surface clearance of some of the concrete hard standings.

Carl Champness 1976-2025



I was very shocked and saddened to hear of the death of Oxford Archaeology Senior Project Manager Carl Champness at the very young age of 49. Carl was a huge asset to Oxford Archaeology, a talented geoarchaeologist and an extremely likable project manager, who worked on numerous projects in the city and who made a massive contribution to our understanding of the archaeology of Oxford and numerous other parts of the country. The Urban Design and Heritage Team and I extend my heartfelt condolences to his family and everybody at OA for this very sad loss.

David Radford
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