



Oxford Archaeological Action Plan 2013–2018

Building a world-class city for everyone



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This report highlights the exciting recent discoveries and conservation challenges resulting from development driven archaeological investigation in Oxford. It sets out a 'framework of encouragement' for institutional landowners and major developers and identifies a number of strategic considerations for the effective long term management of Oxford's exceptional above and below ground archaeology.

The document includes an action plan for archaeological development control service delivery with the aim of facilitating the provision of rapid and effective heritage advice within the planning system. The plan focuses on the need to enhance public access to information about the historic environment and to improve the quality and scope of this information.

The report also provides a short historical overview of the city's evolution. Links are provided to an online information resource developed by the council's Heritage and Specialist Services Team, comprising summaries of recent archaeological work, research questions for future investigation and historic landscape and urban character studies. This information forms part of a wider evidence base for the historic environment being developed as part of the Oxford Heritage Plan.

Oxford Archaeological Action Plan 2013–2018

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Councillor Colin Cook
Board Member City Development

Oxford is a city where the seemingly timeless continuity of the historic core and an underlying dynamic of change and renewal combine to create an internationally recognisable urban environment. The city continues to attract increasing numbers of residents and visitors, in turn driving demand for affordable housing, improved infrastructure, sustainable economic growth, green energy provision, the renewal and rationalisation of existing facilities and for green space and leisure facilities.

At the same time there is an expectation that Oxford should retain and conserve a historic environment of the highest quality. This expectation has been true of the world-famous historic core since it was popularised by writers and artists of the Enlightenment. However, interest and appreciation of the rich historic environment to be found across the modern city is developing rapidly. This interest has been demonstrated by the level of community involvement in the development of a Local Heritage Asset Register¹ and the large numbers of people attracted to participate in the East Oxford Community Archaeology Project.²

Oxford's historic environment is a resource that enables us to advance our understanding of the past. It is also an asset that we need to steward and conserve for future generations if we are to achieve the desired outcome of sustainable development. Achieving an appropriate balance between conservation and investigation (and therefore removal of historic remains) is difficult and requires accessible, high-quality information about the historic environment and a clear vision of what is important.

With this objective in mind this document represents an important point-in-time review of Oxford's archaeological heritage and provides a framework for archaeological heritage management in the planning process over the next six years.

Archaeology and the government's vision for sustainable development.

The National Planning Policy Framework³ states that the purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development. Sustainable means ensuring that better lives for ourselves don't mean worse lives for future generations. It is about change for the better, and not only in our built environment. Sustainable development is about positive growth: making economic, environmental and social progress.

The presence of the physical remains of the past around us and beneath our feet is an essential element of a thriving spirit of place. The ministerial foreword to the National Planning Policy Framework states that our historic environment: buildings, landscapes, towns and villages can better be cherished if their spirit of place thrives, rather than withers.

Above and below ground archaeology can provide inspiration for design and enhance our sense of connection with the past. The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning must be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which we live.

¹ www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/HeritageAssetRegister.htm

² www.archeox.net/

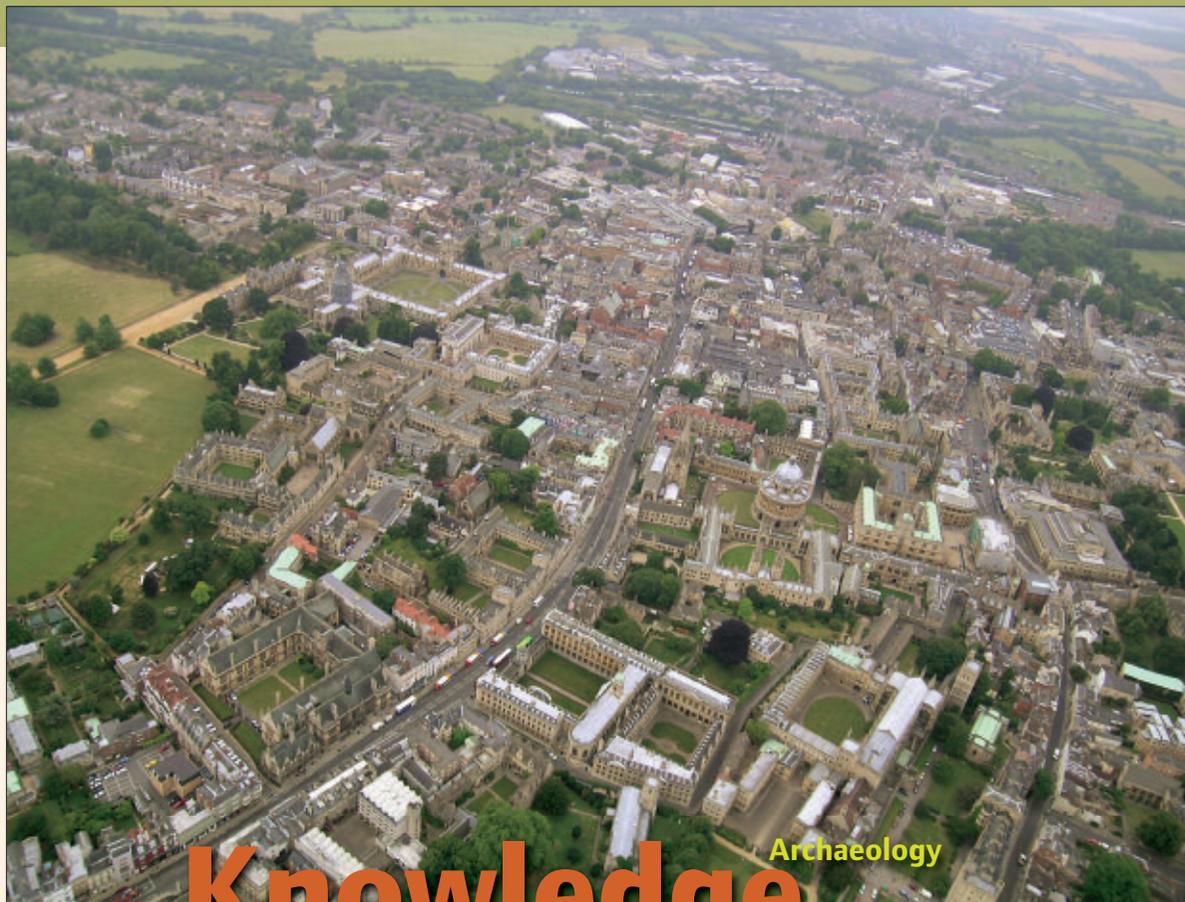
³ www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework-2

Oxford is a world-famous university city well known for its historic buildings and landscapes. The city also preserves a rich archaeological heritage. Buried and standing archaeological remains are a source of new knowledge, an educational resource and a tangible link to the past for both visitors and residents. These remains also have the potential to make a positive contribution to the evolution of a dynamic modern city by generating public interest, inspiring and informing creative design and enhancing the quality of experience described by the government as 'spirit of place'.

Archaeological remains can be seen as finite and non-renewable 'assets' that have evidential, aesthetic, historic, communal and economic value. Defining these values at any given time presents a considerable challenge. Oxford's archaeological remains are extensive and complex. If they are to be effectively managed and an appropriate balance struck between investigation and conservation, then an ongoing process of information gathering and review is required. There is a recognised need to bring together the growing body of information that is being collected about the local historic environment and make this accessible to a wide range of users, from interested residents and visitors through to architects, developers and heritage managers.

As part of this process the City Council's Heritage and Specialist Services Team has produced a series of documents aimed at synthesising and summarising information on the historic environment of Oxford:

- An archaeological resource assessment. This summarises the archaeological investigations in the city to-date.
- An archaeological research agenda. This sets out the questions that might be answered by investigating the city's remaining archaeology.
- A Historic Landscape and Urban Characterisation study. These map the built environment from the Victorian period to the present by looking at changes in land-use and built-form.



Knowledge Education
Leisure and tourism
Health and well-being Community
Design excellence
Sense of place

The production of an archaeological resource assessment, research agenda and the completion of historic landscape characterisation mapping for the Oxford Local Authority Area are the results of two long-running national English Heritage projects.

- The Urban Archaeological Strategy (UAS) project was initiated because of a recognition that the historic towns in England preserve complex archaeological remains and that the collation and synthesis of the information accumulated about these assets was necessary to ensure effective future management.
- The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) project, which uses digital maps to pick out broad spatial patterns in the landscape and built environment, evolved out of a recognition by archaeologists that the historic environment needs to be understood in a holistic way rather than as a series of individual sites, buildings or monuments.

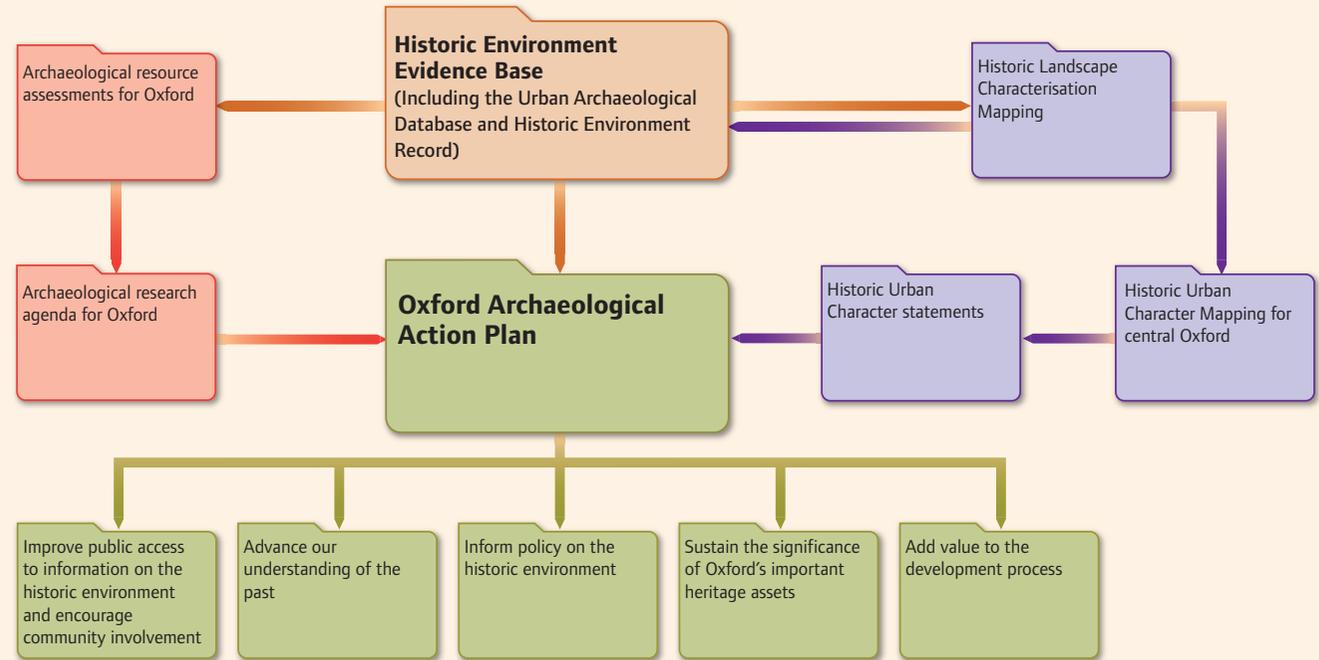


Fig. 1 Flow chart showing the components of the Oxford Archaeological Action Plan.

1990	2002	2010	2011	2011	2012	2013
The government introduced Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 which made archaeological remains a material consideration in the planning process. The result was a significant increase in the production of archaeological information.	English Heritage fund and the creation of an Urban Archaeological Database for Oxford.	A review of archaeological reports, journals and database evidence was undertaken to produce a summary of archaeological knowledge by period (archaeological resource assessments).	An archaeological research agenda for the city was produced.	Historic landscape and urban characterisation mapping was completed.	Period of sector and public consultation.	Production of Archaeological Action Plan.

Fig. 2 The process of data collection and review leading up to the production of the plan.

The heritage management sector has developed a range of methodologies for capturing information about the natural and built environment which complement the approaches of urban archaeological assessment and historic landscape characterisation. These approaches can be combined to allow us to build up an evidence base of synthesised information that more closely reflects the complexity of the historic environment in all its dimensions (see Fig. 3).

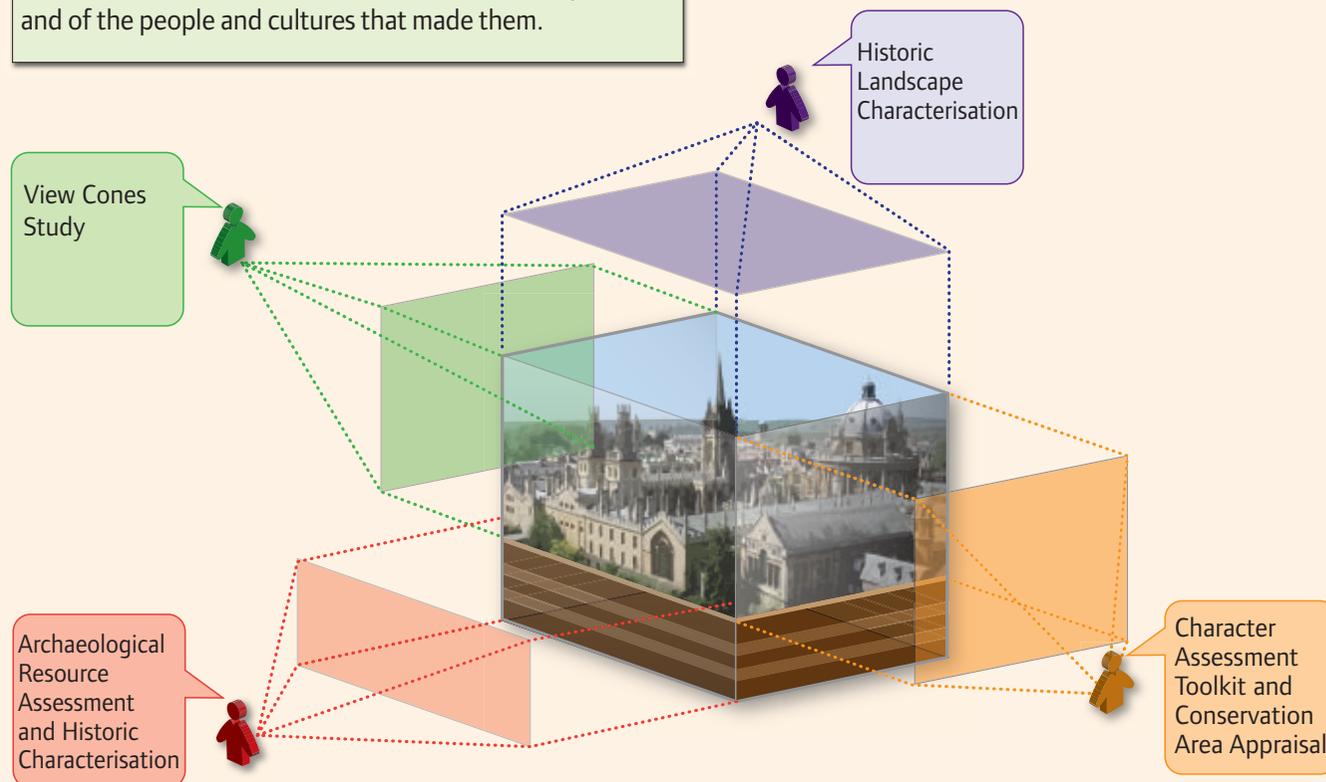
The use of this document

This document provides a short introduction to the city's rich history and archaeology and signposts the information about Oxford's heritage that can now be accessed online (see page 32). The document also sets out a 'framework of encouragement' for institutional landowners and major developers which is mindful of the current challenging economic climate and seeks ways to add value to the development process. An action plan is provided (page 31) setting out a pro-active agenda for improved service delivery and promoting greater public access and engagement with Oxford's outstanding heritage.

Fig. 3 A number of studies have been produced or are ongoing that provide information about the historic environment for property and heritage managers, developers, architects, urban designers, and interested members of the public. The diagram right illustrates the holistic approach being developed.

What is a heritage asset?

The National Planning Policy Framework Heritage describes a heritage asset as a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.



Oxford Heritage Plan relationship diagram

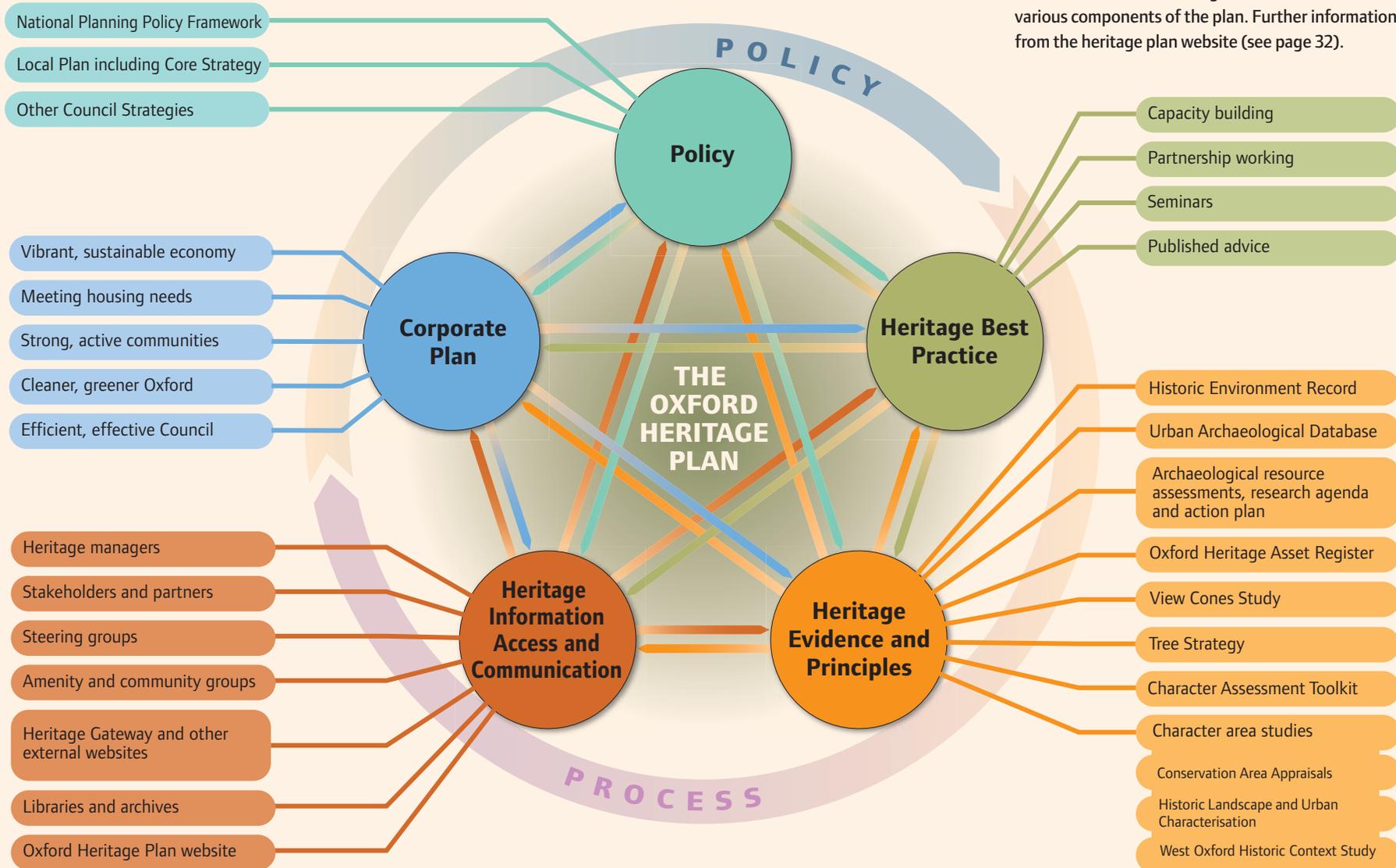


Fig. 4 The studies undertaken in order to produce the archaeological action plan form part of the evidence base for a broader heritage plan for the city. This is being developed by the City Council and Oxford Preservation Trust. This diagram sets out the relationship between various components of the plan. Further information can be obtained from the heritage plan website (see page 32).

What makes Oxford special?

Antiquarian interest in Oxford's historic environment dates back to the 17th century, with much detailed information being recovered as the town has grown, especially over the last 200 years. Early Oxford archaeologists pioneered the study of medieval (and post-medieval) urban archaeology in relation to both below ground remains and standing buildings. More than a century of excavations and exploration have uncovered structures, artefacts, and environmental remains that have provided evidence for the changing patterns of human life and death in the town. This process continues with some remarkable recent finds demonstrating there is much of interest that remains to be uncovered. This page provides a short summary of Oxford's evolution and its rich archaeological heritage.

Stone axes and the remains of cold and warm climate animals from before the end of the last Ice Age have been recovered from important Lower Palaeolithic sites in Oxford at Magdalen Grove, The Wolvercote Channel and from Cornish's Pit in Iffley. As the climate changed after the last Ice Age hunter gatherer groups utilised the resources of the Thames and Cherwell river valleys. As an Upper Thames gravel peninsular site, Oxford later attracted a 'sacred landscape' of large earthwork monuments which were in use from the 4th through to the 2nd millennium BC. In the Iron Age and Roman periods the landscape remained rural in character, although a major regional pottery industry comprising work compounds and kilns spread across eastern and southern parts of the modern city.

The origins of Saxon Oxford are not yet fully understood. The appearance of a settlement by the river crossing at St Aldate's (perhaps the original Ox-ford) made it a site worth defending in the late-Saxon period. A trading settlement and early religious centre (or minster) may have been established here by the late 7th or 8th century. The regular street plan of central Oxford was laid out in the late 9th or early 10th century when a fortified town (or 'burh')



Fig. 5 Pottery from the 18th century Radcliffe Infirmary, excavated by Museum of London Archaeology in 2008.

was established. The town was bounded by the floodplain and served by other river crossings at Magdalen Bridge and Ferry Hinksey (another candidate for the original 'Ox-ford'). Beyond were a ring of Anglo-Saxon and medieval villages with their fields, pastures and woodlands, a royal vill at Headington and Royal Forest at Shotover.

The subsequent growth of the town, and the appearance of shops, houses, castle, numerous churches, monastic sites, hospitals, a royal palace and then the University with its halls and colleges, has added to the rich diversity of the archaeological record. The impact of institutional land-ownership has contributed to Oxford's unusual urban morphology, and has had the effect of preserving much of the archaeology of the medieval town under college quadrangles and gardens. Oxford is also exceptional for the quality of its medieval documentary archives, which were kept by the colleges and other significant landowners.

The rapid pace of development in recent decades has been matched by a vigorous archaeological response to recover information about Oxford's early history, with increasing interest now being shown in the city's later industrial heritage as we progress into the 21st century.

The archaeology of Oxford's historic core is recorded in detail on the City Council's Urban Archaeological Database (UAD) while the County Council's Historic Environment Record (HER) holds information and resources on the surrounding area of Oxford City. The Local Authority Area includes twelve Scheduled Ancient Monuments, including Port Meadow. Oxford's archaeological remains are protected by national and local planning policy (See Appendices 1-3).

Over a thousand years of urban change

Patterns of change: a selective history of development trends

Prehistoric

- Monumental earthworks influence later routeways.
- Farmsteads and field systems are established.

Roman

- Roman roads and pottery manufacturing compounds.

Saxon

- Religious and trading centre established by a crossing point over the Thames.
- Oxford established as a planned defended settlement (or burh) with an orthogonal street grid centred on Carfax.

Norman

- 1066. The Norman invasion leads to the construction of a motte and bailey castle over the western part of the town.
- The 1086 Domesday Survey records large areas of waste ground within the town.
- Subsequent growth leads to the division of existing tenements, the creation of new streets and big infrastructure projects like the Grandpont causeway over the floodplain, new religious buildings and hospitals.
- Oxford enjoys Royal patronage with the construction of the Royal Beaumont Palace north of the town.

Medieval

- Monastic houses and friaries are attracted to Oxford and establish precincts outside the walled town, some on land reclaimed from the floodplain.
- The town wall is rebuilt in the 13th century with bastions and unusual double (concentric) line along the north-east part of the circuit.
- Oxford's economy falters in the 14th century with increasing areas of the town recorded as waste.
- The 13th and 14th centuries see the growth of academic halls and colleges associated with the University.

Post-medieval

- The Dissolution of the Monasteries leads to the closure of the friaries and abbeys leaving the west and south-western suburbs of Oxford economically disadvantaged.
- Oxford becomes a city with a Cathedral established first at the former Osney Abbey church then at Christ Church.
- During the Civil War Oxford is chosen by Charles I as his temporary capital and consequently defensive and siege earthworks are built around the town, clearing part of St Clement's.
- In 1644 a major fire destroys many properties between George Street and Queen Street.
- The 17th century sees the expansion and rebuilding of the town, with land inside the town wall and the in-filled town ditch newly developed.
- The canal reaches Oxford in 1790.
- A major clearance of obstructions was undertaken by the 1771 Paving Commission including the demolition of remaining gates. New drains were laid and an indoor market replaced the historic street market.

Modern

- The railway arrives in Oxford in 1844.
- The 19th century sees the reform and expansion of the University and its colleges and the rapid expansion of the suburbs to cater for wealthy trades people, academics and those in domestic service.
- In the early 20th century the development of the Morris Motors and Pressed Steel plants transformed east Oxford.
- After the first world war the city authorities reluctantly engage in slum clearance and a programme of council house building which continued until the 1980s.
- Between 1938–1966 the outer ring road is completed. Major plans for inner ring road and city redevelopment were subsequently abandoned.
- Between 1957–1974 a major project was undertaken to replace decayed stonework on historic buildings.
- In the 1960s and early 1970s the 19th century suburb in St Ebbe's was demolished and the Westgate Shopping Centre was constructed.

21st century

- The late 20th–early 21st century has seen the expansion and renewal of college and University facilities.
- There is pressure to redevelop and infill urban space in order to meet housing needs.

Oxford's exceptional heritage is not just confined to its historic core. To the north of Oxford the Wolvercote Channel has produced nationally important Lower Palaeolithic remains. The expanse of grazing land at Port Meadow protects extensive prehistoric and later remains including extant Bronze Age and Iron Age earthworks. The site is also an exceptional example of an Upper Thames grazing meadow that has been in near continuous use since at least the Late Saxon period.

The river floodplains either side of Oxford have demonstrated the potential to preserve the remains of early human activity under later alluvium and on gravel islands between former channels. Peat deposits survive along the stream valleys and river floodplains with the potential to preserve earlier structures and organic remains. Furthermore the gravel terrace north of Oxford preserves an extensive monumental landscape of Middle Neolithic to Early Bronze Age date, the full extent of which has yet to be established.

Oxford also contains a range of prehistoric, Roman and Saxon settlement and burial areas. Of particular note are the remains of a nationally important Roman pottery manufacturing industry, with kiln sites located across the eastern and southern parts of the local authority area.

Several historic villages of Late Saxon origin are located within the city boundary (Upper and Lower Wolvercote, Binsey, Walton, Marston, Barton, Headington, Temple Cowley, Church Cowley, Littlemore, Iffley and the deserted village of Seacourt). Also the sites of medieval Rewley and Osney abbeys, Godstow and Littlemore Nunneries, St Bartholomew's Leper Hospital and a Templar preceptory at Temple Cowley. The remains of Oxford's distinctive industrial past and later medical, civic, educational and religious buildings are also of notable interest.

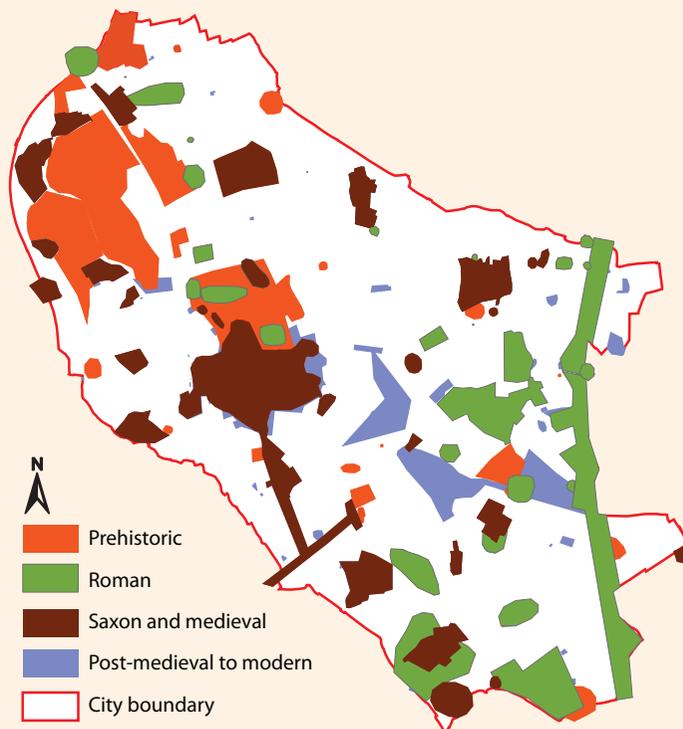


Fig. 6 Zones of known archaeological interest by period.



Fig. 7 A simplified geology map. This shows broad zones of potential where different types of site may be present. For example, prehistoric monuments may be present on the gravels, prehistoric occupation sites may be located beneath the floodplain alluvium, prehistoric and Roman occupation sites (including Roman kilns) may be present on the limestone, sand and nearby clays.



Fig. 8 A small Roman kiln (with collapsed stoke hole visible on the right hand side). Recorded at Rose Hill in 2010.

A large complex of monumental earthworks was constructed at Oxford on the gravel terrace between the Thames and Cherwell rivers between the Middle Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age (approximately between 3600–1800BC). The complex comprised of alignments of enclosures and mounds (and probably trackways and post built structures although the evidence for these have yet to be found). The earthworks appear to have been used as ceremonial meeting places and for selected burials. A debate continues as to whether the builders of these earthworks were semi-nomadic herders or more established agriculturalists. These earthworks required a considerable investment in time and labour to build and form part of a distinctive pattern of complexes located at intervals along the Upper Thames.

Exciting new evidence for the scale and layout of Oxford's prehistoric monument complex was discovered at St John's College in 2008 when part of a Neolithic henge was excavated. Subsequently excavations at the former Radcliffe Infirmary site on Woodstock Road in 2009 revealed a sub-rectangular enclosure that may have been used for laying out the dead for natural decomposition (excarnation). A radio-carbon date from a bone recovered from the enclosure ditch suggests that this earthwork is Middle-Neolithic in date, the earliest yet found in the complex. The Infirmary site also revealed cremation burials and four Late Neolithic–Early Bronze Age burial mounds. Three of these formed part of a linear barrow cemetery known to extend eastwards under the University Parks.

Limited evidence for Neolithic and Bronze Age domestic activity has been recovered from central Oxford, which tends to respect the 'sacred landscape'. By the Middle Iron Age (c.400–100BC) rural settlement is recorded on the fringes of the monument complex and by the 2nd century AD fields had been extended over parts of it. Roman roads are likely to have converged on crossing points over the Thames at Oxford although archaeological evidence for these has not yet been recovered.



Fig. 9 An aerial photograph of north Oxford showing known Late Neolithic–Early Bronze Age monuments (in blue). The B represents a burial, more of which are recorded further north. These may yet prove to be related to further barrows or simpler flat graves. The shaded area represents a known concentration of Roman farmsteads, fields, enclosures and burials.



Fig. 10 A Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age barrow being excavated at the Radcliffe Infirmary site in 2009.



Fig. 11 A Middle Neolithic enclosure, perhaps a funerary enclosure for laying out the dead. Discovered at the Radcliffe Infirmary site.



Fig. 12 A Neolithic henge discovered at the St John's College Kendrew Quad in 2008.

The Saxon and Viking town

In the post-Roman period Saxon migrants established new settlements along the Thames Valley. Evidence for short-lived rural settlement of late 5th–6th century date has been recorded from east and north Oxford. A more substantial settlement may have existed at Thornbury, near Binsey on the floodplain to the west, where the remains of a contemporary enclosure have been identified.

The precise origins of Oxford itself remain unclear. A settlement emerged in the middle Saxon period, strategically located next to a crossing point over the Thames floodplain. The name 'Oxnaforda', recorded in the 10th century Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, denotes its role as a fording point for cattle which can be contrasted to other specialised crossing points along the Thames, like Swinford (swine-ford) and Shifford (sheep-ford) upstream.

A 7th century radio-carbon date from a burial at Christ Church is a rare clue to the town's early origins. Oxford may have been established as a trading centre and or a minster (religious centre) by the 8th century, with the minster located on the site of the later St Frideswide's Priory, now the site of Christ Church Cathedral.

The town passed between Mercian and Wessex overlords and by the late 9th or early 10th century a defended settlement (called a burh) had been established with a street grid orientated on the crossroads at Carfax.

In the 10th and 11th centuries the town attracted Danish settlers and experienced short periods of Viking rule. Settlers of Scandinavian origin mixed with Anglo-Saxon residents and in 1002 a massacre of Danish residents is documented on St Brice's Day. A remarkable and gruesome mass grave excavated at St John's College in 2008 may be evidence of this massacre.



Fig. 13 A mass grave discovered in 2008 at St John's College on St Giles' may be related to the St Brice's Day massacre of the local Danish community in 1002.



Fig. 14 A sherd of 6th century pottery from an early Saxon rural settlement at the former Radcliffe Infirmary site on Walton Street.



Fig. 15 The excavation of a lift pit at Jesus College in 2008 shows the depth of archaeological deposits in the city centre. The dark amorphous shape at its base is a rubbish pit cut into the natural gravel. To the right are a line of stake holes representing the remains of a Late Saxon building fronting onto Market Street.

The Norman town

Although Oxford was not directly involved in the military campaigns of the Norman Conquest the Domesday Survey records an unusually high level of waste property here by 1086. The reason for this remains unclear. In 1071 the Norman overlord Robert d'Oilly constructed a motte and bailey castle over part of the western street grid, clearly intending to dominate and intimidate the Saxon townspeople. D'Oilly also undertook another great building project in the form of a stone causeway across the Thames floodplain known as the Grandpont (The Great Bridge). His son and namesake, along with fellow noble Robert d'Ivry, were subsequently responsible for establishing the oldest recorded institution for higher education in Oxford, the Collegiate Chapel of St George at the Castle, in the late 1090s. In the early 12th century the collegiate chapel attracted notable scholars like Geoffrey of Monmouth to teach. At this point Oxford was one of several towns in England developing a tradition of local teaching, and it later emerged as one of the most successful of these centres.

The 12th century was notable for the expansion of civic and religious institutions in the town, for example the important religious houses of Osney Abbey and St Frideswide's were founded and re-founded respectively. New hospitals were established, notably the Leper Hospital of St Bartlemas at Cowley Marsh and the town's principal hospital of St John the Baptist, located next to the River Cherwell on the current site of Magdalen College. The Norman period also saw several principal streets re-aligned, new streets laid out and the emergence of a central stone lined street drain known as 'The Kennel'.

At least three substantial fires are known to have devastated the town in this period; two during the period of unrest known as The Anarchy (1135–1154) during which Oxford Castle was besieged and one at St Frideswide's in 1190. Despite these events the town appears to have economically prospered in the 12th century, successfully trading in



Fig. 16 A mitred arch belonging to the Norman Grandpont Causeway exposed in Abingdon Road in 2004.

commodities such as wool, cloth and leather. A merchant guild was in existence at Oxford by 1100 and the first known Royal Charter was granted in c.1155 confirming existing privileges. Oxford obtained the oldest known municipal seal in Britain in 1191 and the town was formally granted to its citizens by King John in 1199. Oxford became favoured by the Royal family as a stopping-off point between Windsor and the Royal Hunting Lodge at Woodstock and a Royal Palace (known as the Royal Beaumont Palace or The King's Houses) was constructed outside the Northgate by 1132.

Oxford gradually established itself as a minor centre for teaching in the later 12th century and it became an important clerical centre and favoured as a venue for ecclesiastical courts. Established European centres of learning like Paris remained the preferred destinations for scholars wishing to study Roman and Canon law until war with France in the 1190s made access to such universities difficult. This proved a stimulus to the development of a local scholastic tradition which eventually sought to protect its interests and the livelihoods of those involved, by forming a kind of guild, the University of Oxford.



Fig. 17 Repair works to the Norman motte in 2008.

The 13th century town

By the early 13th century Oxford was well established as a commercial centre with an emerging University. The economic focus of the town remained the regular street market held on the roads leading off the central crossroads at Carfax. These principal streets attracted the highest property values and represented the commercial heart of the town, encouraging the creation of subdivided properties with shops in cellars and booths fronting the street and with workshops and living quarters behind and above.

In the western suburb Osney Abbey was joined by Rewley Abbey in 1281 and a number of the mendicant religious orders established precincts on the edges of the town in the 13th century (e.g. the Dominicans, Franciscans, Crutched Friars, Austin Friars, Carmelite Friars, Friars of the Sack and Trinitarian Friars) adding additional impetus to the development of learned study and teaching. The arrival of the friaries led to the further reclamation of land from the floodplain south and west of the town and was accompanied by an extension of settlement on reclaimed land southwards along St Aldate's. This later area in particular has proved rich in archaeological material because of the survival of waterlogged conditions that preserve organic remains.

The town was also home to a sizable Jewish community that was concentrated along the 'Great Jury Street' (now St Aldate's) and Jury Lane located near to the Synagogue (located roughly under the north tower of Christ Church). In the late 12th century a burial ground or 'Garden of the Jews' was established outside the east gate. This was later displaced by Henry III who granted the site to the Hospital of St John the Baptist. The burial ground then moved to the south of Bridge Street (now High Street). In 1290 the Jewish community was expelled from England by Royal decree. In Oxford many Jewish properties came into the hands of the emerging colleges.



Fig. 18 Map showing zones of activity in Oxford in the 13th century.



- | | |
|--|--|
|  Bridge |  Jewish burial ground |
|  Castle |  Market |
|  Colleges |  Open/wasteground |
|  Defences |  Religious precinct |
|  Hospital |  Suburb |
|  Jewish quarter |  Urban settlement |

A symbol of the town's identity and wealth at this time was the town wall. A series of murage grants recorded in the 1230s provide evidence for the wholesale rebuilding of the wall with the subsequent addition of bastions and an unusual second (concentric) line of defence along the north eastern part of the circuit in the later 13th century.

By the end of the Norman period the original large Late Saxon plot divisions had been subdivided and rationalised to create a pattern of tenement boundaries fronting on to the main streets and side streets. Using the detailed documentary survey of 13th century and later records undertaken by the Rev. H. E. Salter in the 1930s, it is possible to map the broad survival of these historic boundaries. Figure 20 to the right is an assessment of survival as part of the current townscape.

The expansion of the colleges since the 14th century, especially in the east end of the town, has had a dramatic impact on this pattern by amalgamating and removing boundaries. This is a process that has continued into the 21st century.



Fig. 19 Part of H. E. Salter's plan showing the division of the market frontage into small shops around Carfax.

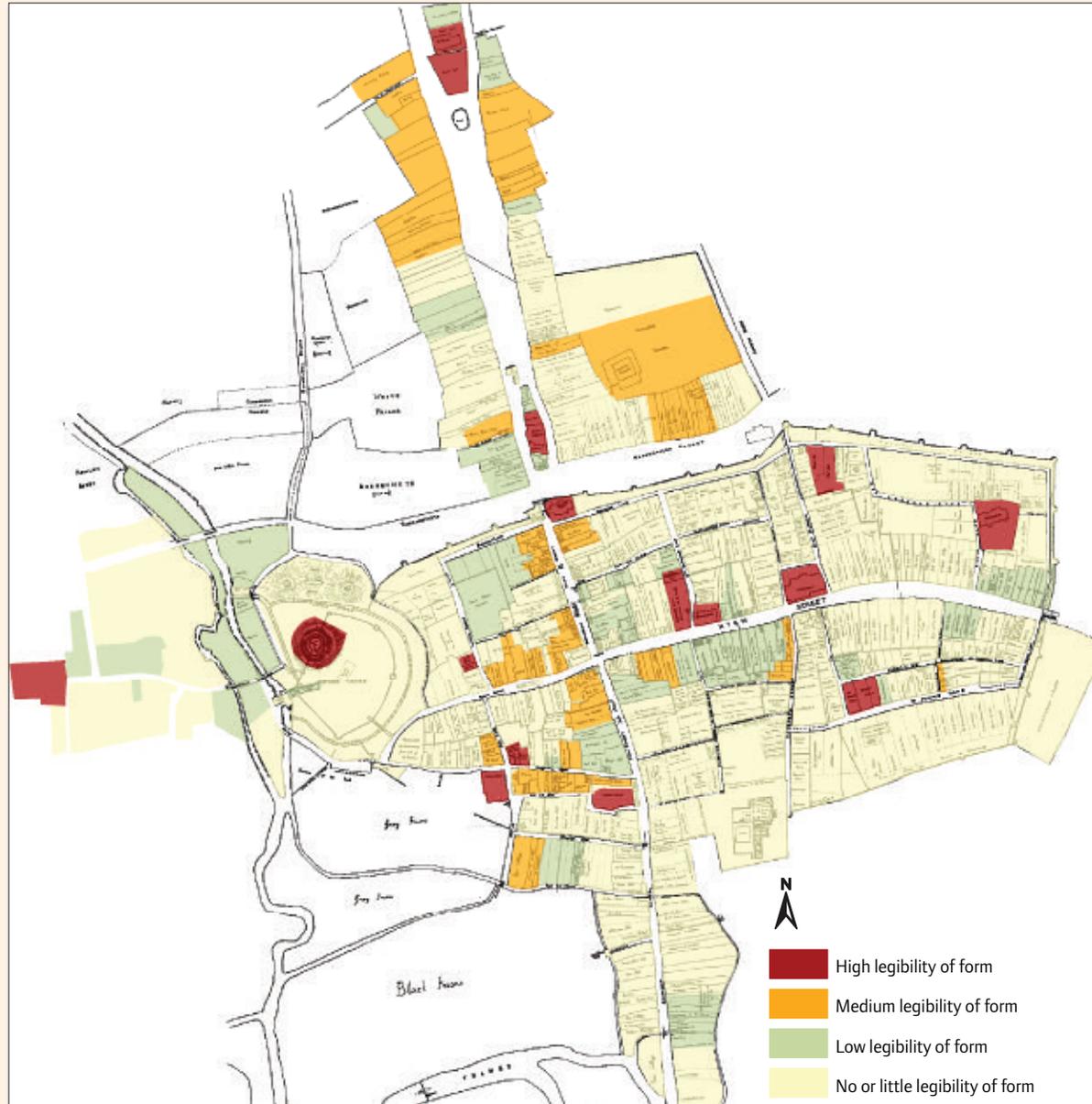


Fig. 20 Map showing areas of tenement boundary survival.

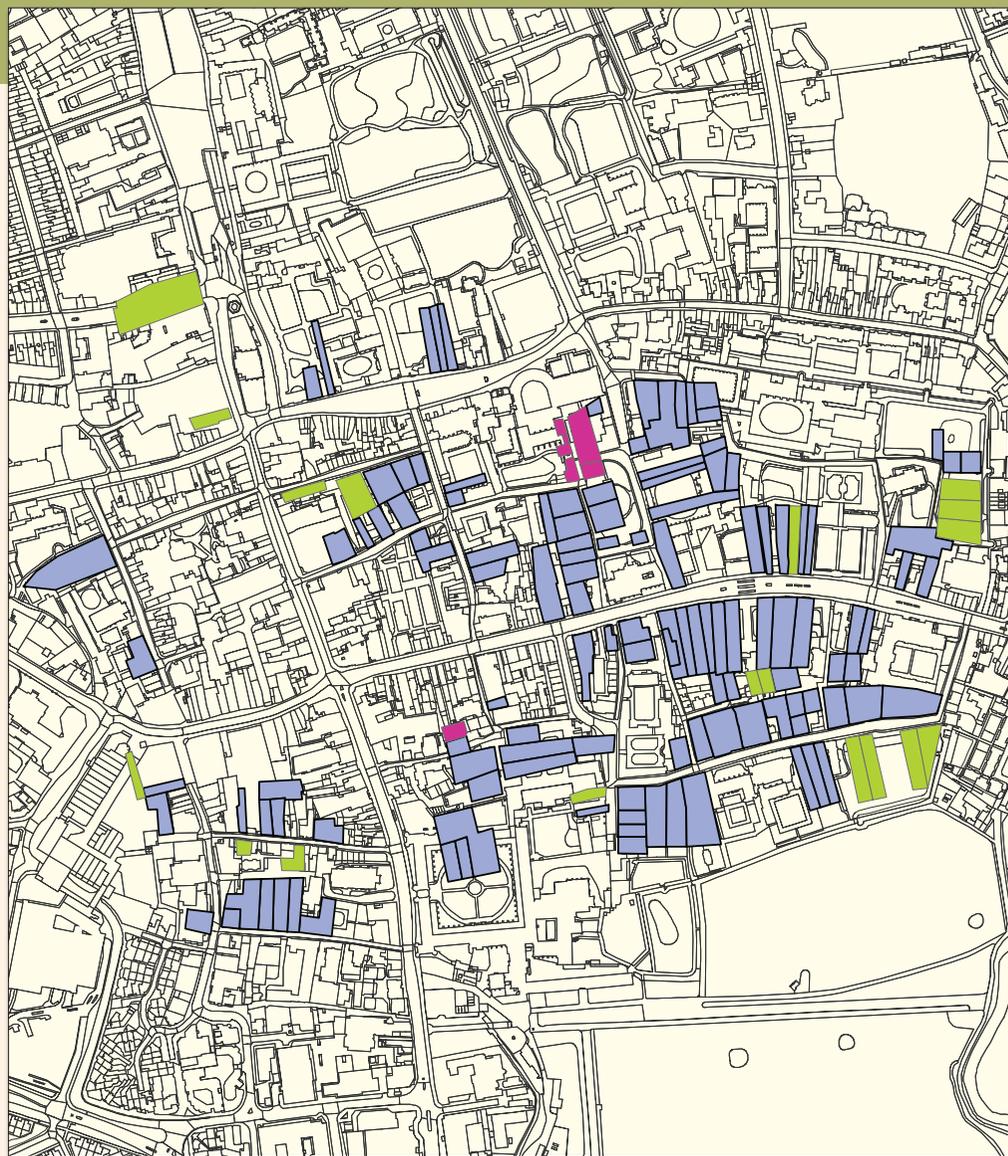
The medieval town: the University of Oxford and its academic halls

The medieval University emerged from a tradition of local schooling associated with the development of Oxford as an ecclesiastical centre attracting legal work in the 12th century. When conflict with France closed down the option of foreign study, Oxford benefited and emerged as a scholastic centre with formal institutions emerging in the early 13th century.

Teaching was concentrated around a series of University 'schools', the main focus being in School Street, now part of Radcliffe Square. In the 14th century the first purpose-built University structure, a Convocation House and first floor library, was built against the north side of St Mary's Church.

In the earliest period of the University students lived in private houses. By the middle of the 13th century, set against the backdrop of sporadic violence between students and townsfolk, they began to congregate in academic halls, often town houses owned by the local monasteries. Hall rooms could either be rented directly by students themselves or let from a Master of Arts who would take on the overall rent as a 'Principal' for the Hall and who made a profit from letting rooms and providing meals. Their purpose was primarily as a place of residence although instruction was often included. Eventually all the halls became licensed by the University.

At the high-point of the academic halls in the 14th century there were over a hundred such establishments. Numbers declined as student numbers dropped in the later 14th century, but around seventy survived through the 15th century. Throughout the greater part of the medieval period, the academic halls, rather than the colleges, housed the bulk of students. The 16th century saw their rapid decline with only eight remaining in 1537. The reason for this rapid decline remains to be adequately explained.



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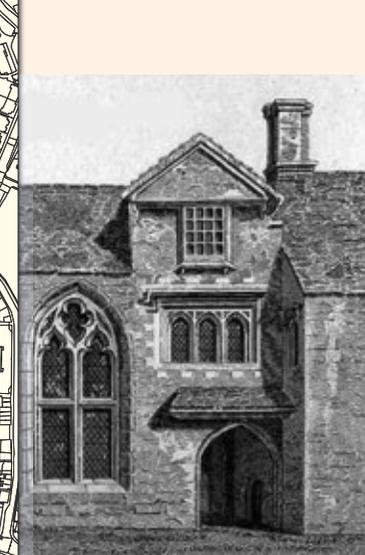


Fig. 21 Tackley's Inn, 107 High Street, built in 1320. One of the very few surviving examples of a medieval academic hall, it was re-fronted in the eighteenth or nineteenth century.

- N
- Medieval academic halls (based on H. E. Salter survey)
 - Medieval academic halls (Catto additions)
 - Medieval schools (based on H. E. Salter survey)

Fig. 22 Plan showing the location of recorded academic halls.

Only fragmentary remains of academic halls now survive above ground, the notable exception being the 14th century former Tackley's Inn at 107 High Street. There is considerable potential for the further study of the material culture of these institutions through archaeological investigation.

The colleges

Enclosed arrangements of specialised buildings designed for communal student living emerged in the later 13th century. These new institutions were distinct from academic halls in that they were established with an endowment that gave them greater economic stability and ultimately, longevity.

Over time a distinctive arrangement of residential and study areas developed, usually encompassing a gatehouse, dining hall, kitchen, library and chapel, with support structures used for the management of food, drink and fuel. Colleges developed arrangements of staircases accessed from a quadrangle with residential rooms leading off. Of the new colleges Merton College was the first to develop a quadrangular form as a result of piecemeal additions to an initial more ad hoc arrangement of structures. In the 14th century New College became the first purpose-built college arranged around a quadrangle. This then became the standard arrangement adopted by later colleges and a defining characteristic of Oxford's urban layout. Magdalen College (founded in 1474) represented a further stage of development in collegiate architecture, retaining the basic quadrangle format but also incorporating a cloister.

16 The colleges are notable for preserving both early college remains and earlier medieval structures beneath their extensive precincts. This rare survival of earlier medieval streets and buildings below later quads and college buildings is of even greater interest because of the exceptional level of documentary information that survives about the town from the medieval period.

Fig. 25 (right) An early 14th century pottery assemblage from a stone lined garderobe associated with Vine Hall (now under Christ Church Peckwater Quad). The garderobe assemblage included heated bottles, furnace fragments and glass distilling equipment that may have been used for chemical/alchemical experiments.



Fig. 23 (left) The distinctive pattern of college quadrangles in the eastern part of the town.



Fig. 24 (above) A 14th or 15th century copper-alloy book clasp from Christ Church (front and back).



Fig. 26 (above) 14th–15th century drinking jugs found in Oxford and made at Brill of Boarstall in Buckinghamshire. College pottery assemblages demonstrate that above-average alcohol consumption was taking place in these institutions, reflecting both the affluence of the scholars and students but also the presence of builders and artisans involved in construction work. © Copyright University of Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 2001, AN1935.636 and AN1891.7.

The 16th and 17th century town

The Dissolution of Rewley and Osney Abbeys in the 1530s had a long-term effect on the western suburb. Having lost the patronage of the abbeys it became poorer and remained less developed until it later became a focus for industrial and communication infrastructure. The abbey church at Osney briefly became a cathedral as Oxford was elevated to the status of city in 1542. In 1546 Henry VIII transferred this role to the former priory church at Christ Church. The Dissolution of the friaries, notably the Black and Grey Friars, had a similar impact on the south-western part of the town. Their precincts became a source of building stone and then areas used for small-scale gravel quarrying and as urban gardens.

Between the late 16th and the middle 18th century central Oxford was transformed by an intensive period of redevelopment and rebuilding. This was largely driven by the increasing affluence of the University and a revival in river trade. Previously open land within the medieval walls was further subdivided and developed and the former town ditch was in-filled and built on. Much of the medieval town vanished, to be replaced by three- and four-storey town houses and the monumental architecture of the University and colleges. Tenements became more crowded with the addition of jettied frontages, the insertion of chimneys, and the extension of building ranges further backward along plots. The colleges took on their modern form, expanding sometimes outwards but mostly upwards with the insertion of attics and cock-lofts to house more students.

In the 1640s Oxford was adopted by King Charles I as his temporary capital during the English Civil War. Lines of Royalist defences earthworks and Parliamentary siege works were constructed around the city. Parts of St Clement's were cleared to facilitate the defence of Oxford but in general the town did not suffer extensive damage during the war. Greater destruction was caused by a fire that spread from George Street to Queen Street in 1644 with perhaps 200 houses damaged.

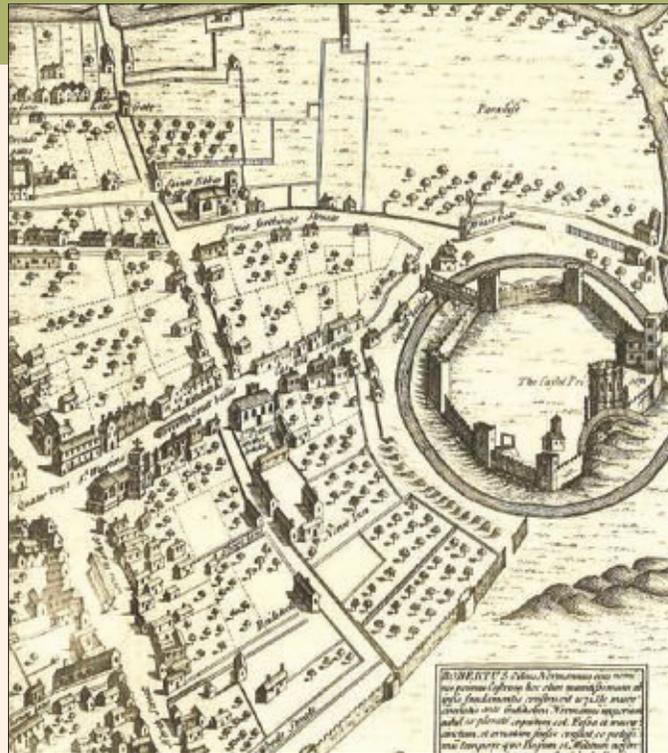


Fig. 27 Part of Agas's 1578 map of Oxford looking from the north, showing the extent of open space at this time.



Fig. 29 Loggan's map of Oxford from 1675 showing the density of development by this time. The map is drawn viewed from the north.



Fig. 28 A vaulted cellar and entrance chamber discovered in 2009 during building works at The Queen's College. Dated to the 17th century but perhaps containing fabric of earlier origin.



Fig. 30 Painted panelling and a door from a previously unknown 17th or early 18th century student study exposed at Brasenose College during building work in 2010.

The creation of a Paving Commission in 1771 radically transformed the city, leading to the removal of the street market to an indoor location, the demolition of the surviving medieval gates and the removal of other street impediments. The Commission oversaw the wholesale removal of overhanging signs, stalls, pumps, porches and other projections along the main roads. The medieval central street drain or 'kennel' was superseded by cambered cobble streets and stone lined drains. The sewage system was improved again in 1873.

At the start of the 19th century Oxford had grown little from its medieval boundaries, with the exception of the construction of the Radcliffe Infirmary and Radcliffe Observatory to the north of the city in the 1770s. The 19th century, however, saw rapid suburban growth and in-filling. St Ebbe's, St Thomas', St Clement's and St Giles' parishes expanded to provide housing for small tradesmen, craftsmen and college servants. More spacious suburbs were created along the gravel terrace north of Oxford to house wealthier citizens and scholars. The University also began to expand its infrastructure of laboratories, libraries and centralised teaching facilities, particularly because of the growth of science-based disciplines.

In the 18th and 19th centuries Oxford's industrial base remained quite small-scale, with tanneries, breweries and maltings located south, east and west of the historic town. The arrival of the canal in 1790 led to a surge of waterborne trade but the resistance of the University to the construction of a rail link delayed its arrival until 1844.



Fig. 31 An excavation at Brewer Street in 2011. Here excavators from Oxford Archaeology are examining the remains of walls, ovens and stone channels belonging to a building recorded on the 19th century Ordnance Survey map as a malthouse.



Fig. 32 The Salters Steamers Boatyard at Donnington Bridge, built in the 1930s and still in use as a boatyard.

Oxford remained a predominantly service industry economy until the early 20th century with domestic service the biggest source of employment. The Oxford University Press was the biggest single employer. This situation changed rapidly and decisively with the establishment of Morris Motors in 1914. The subsequent growth of the car industry in Oxford led to rapid population growth and suburban expansion east and south of the historic town in the 1920s and 1930s.