

**Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum**  
**Oxford City Report April-September 2013**

*National Planning Policy Framework related field work in Oxford*

**St Cross College, West Quadrangle**

In April Oxford Archaeology carried out a field evaluation within the West Quadrangle of St Cross College. Surprisingly the evaluation revealed very little evidence for the kind of activity that might be anticipated within a former medieval tenement plot fronting onto St Giles. However, a series of inter-cutting ditches on a NNW/SSE alignment were recorded adjacent to the western boundary wall. The earliest ditch contained an undated fill had been clearly derived from the post-glacial loessic subsoil, suggesting a date not later than early medieval. Given its position, the ditch may have demarcated the eastern boundary of the lands of the royal palace of Beaumont (a site later occupied by the Carmelite Friars). The later recuts of this ditch yielded medieval and post-medieval pottery. Other evidence for post-medieval activity included a stoned-lined well, rubbish pits and the corner of a mid-late 19th century subterranean structure. The site also contains an upstanding wall marking the parish boundary between St Giles and St Mary Magdalen. An excavated parallel wall foundation was probably a property boundary shown on 19th century maps. Oxford Archaeology also produced a detailed assessment of the listed stone wall along the western boundary of the college.

**Cantay House, Park End Street**

In May Oxford Archaeology carried out a watching brief during work at Cantay House on Park End Street. A cobbled surface was observed.

**Magdalen College, All Weather Sports Pitch**

In May Oxford Archaeology undertook a watching brief during ground works for a sports pitch at Magdalen College Sports Ground on Marston Road. No significant finds or features were recorded. The work was requested because of the potential for Civil War remains in this location.

**No 191 Godstow Road, Lower Wolvercote**

In May John Moore Heritage Services undertook a watching brief during ground works for an extension at No 191 Godstow Road. A palaeo-channel was observed. The work was required because of the proximity to the extensive prehistoric landscape at Port Meadow.

**The Queen's College, Fellows Garden Toilet Block**

In May and June Oxford Archaeology undertook building recording of the old toilet block/ garden store building in the Fellow's Garden at The Queen's College prior to demolition. Subsequently two test pits were excavated within the footprint of the building. The report is forthcoming.

**The Radcliffe Infirmary Burial Ground, Walton Road  
(Blavatnik School of Government Site, Radcliffe Observatory Quarter)**

In June and July an excavation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology on the site of the former 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century Radcliffe Infirmary burial ground. The excavation recovered approximately 400 well preserved, well-spaced, burials. A number of burials revealed evidence for amputation and craniotomy however evidence for anatomisation has yet to be confirmed. Additional soil sampling work was undertaken by the University's Archaeological Research Laboratory in anticipation that a research project may follow on from the excavation. An assessment report is forthcoming.



*Excavations at the Radcliffe Infirmary Burial Ground June-July 2013*

#### **Christ Church Cathedral Flower Store**

In June and July Graham Keevill, the Cathedral Archaeologist, undertook a watching brief during ground works for the construction of new extension and alterations to an internal courtyard at Christ Church Cathedral. Moulded stone fragments, evidently removed from the structure during Victorian restoration work, were found in the rubble floor make-up. The report is forthcoming.

#### **All Souls College, Garden Court**

In July Thames Valley Archaeological Services undertook a watching brief during the construction of an electricity cable trench through the Garden Court at All Souls College. The trench revealed a post-medieval buried soil and small quantities of medieval and post-medieval pottery, animal bone and tile.

#### **No 46 Hythe Bridge Street**

In July John Moore Heritage Services undertook a watching brief at No 46 Hythe Bridge Street during construction work. Further work is due to take place.

#### **Lawn Upton House, Littlemore**

In July John Moore Heritage Services carried out recording of the 20th century buildings attached to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Lawn Upton House prior to their demolition. The timber framed additions were built for use by the Clewer Community of Nuns who ran a school for delinquent girls here in the 1950s.

#### **No 28 Abberbury Road, Iffley**

In August Thames Valley Archaeological Services undertook an archaeological evaluation at Abberbury Road. No significant remains were recorded. The work was requested because of the proximity of an early Saxon find spot suggesting the possible presence of a burial or burials.

#### **New College Kitchen**

In August Oxford Archaeology undertook recording work at New College prior to the construction of a new kitchen extension for the college. The excavation of a lift pit base provided a chance to investigate a section of the late Saxon rampart to the rear of the later town wall. The report is forthcoming.



*Excavation of the Late Saxon rampart at New College, August 2013*

### **Lincoln College Garden Building**

In August Oxford Archaeology undertook a second phase of archaeological excavation at Lincoln College within the footprint of the basement of the new Music Room and on adjacent crane base pits. Medieval pits and walls were recorded. The report is forthcoming.

### *Post-Excavation Progress*

### **Clarendon Centre, former Curry's Unit off Shoe Lane**

A post-excavation assessment has been submitted for this site by Pre-Construct Archaeology (the site was excavated in 2012). The report is notable because it demonstrates the kind of information can be obtained from a relatively small archaeological intervention within the historic core. Whilst the character of the features recorded was not exceptional (pits, walls, a fire pit), the finds recovered tell a distinctive story. For example animal bone was recovered dating from the Late Saxon period through to the post-medieval period. The Norman animal bone assemblage indicates the presence of a butchers' establishment nearby and produced evidence for tawing (converting animal skin into white leather by mineral tanning) and bone working. The 13<sup>th</sup> century animal bone assemblage was large and provides further information on patterns of consumption for this period involving the dominance of cattle over sheep and goat and an increase in pig and poultry rearing. The assemblage also produced evidence for conspicuous consumption, notably the bones of a porpoise, very much an expensive delicacy at this time. The animal bone assemblage for the 16th century was notable as it appears to indicate the increasing importance of dairy farming and the introduction of longhorn cattle at this time.

The finds from the site suggest that bone and antler working was carried out nearby throughout the medieval period. There was also evidence for medieval leather working in the form of two lunette knives possibly associated with the making of vellum (parchment made from calf skin). Further evidence of craft production included pottery sherds with external sooting and an internal purple dye residue that may be an indication of dyeing or dye making in the vicinity. Lumps of slag including smithing bottoms and copper alloy working debris are evidence for nearby metal working and the medieval pottery assemblage included ceramic lamps often associated with the material culture of the halls and colleges at Oxford. Other finds

that may also be related to academic learning including a goose quill and a lump of red ochre. There was also some evidence for medieval craft industries continuing into the early post-medieval period including evidence for tawing and musical instrument construction.

PCA will now be undertaking further work on the finds from this site before producing a final written report.

### **Pembroke College, Brewer Street Quad**

A post-excavation assessment has been submitted for this site by Oxford Archaeology (the site was excavated in 2010-11). The excavation and watching brief covered a substantial area south of Brewer Street and revealed a great deal about the evolution of this part of town. A short overview is provided below.

A borehole transect revealed a sequence of deeply stratified organic rich alluvial deposits which appear to represent fills of the prehistoric and historical paths of the Trill Mill Stream. A series of wooden revetments and stone culverts were recorded associated with the medieval canalisation of the stream and reclamation of the floodplain in the 13th century. To the north of the channel a possible backwater embayment was noted at the edge of the floodplain and the second gravel terrace. Two Neolithic radiocarbon dates were obtained from silts at the base of the embayment sequence.

Evidence for human activity at the site begins in the late Saxon period when a number of drainage ditches, pits and possible structures appear. From the late 11th to the mid-13th century the ground level was raised by dumping of waste and soil. This was followed by the construction of a building on the Brewer Street frontage, with pits and ovens in the yard areas behind. The presence of madder-stained pottery in this phase suggests that dyeing of yarn was carried out here. From the mid-13th century, a sequence of substantial industrial-type structures can be followed behind the Brewer Street frontage right through to the 18th century. The remains comprise sequences of related drains, pits, tanks, ovens, hearths and wells. These are some of the most extensively preserved medieval and early post-medieval industrial-type remains yet excavated in Oxford and may be associated with dyeing, tanning, brewing or other industrial activities.

A building fronting onto Littlegate Street is first evident from the mid-13th century which also contained multiple ovens in its earliest phase, and may also have had an industrial function. Fireplaces were inserted into the structure after the middle of the 16th century perhaps signalling a more domestic phase of use.

Oxford Archaeology will now be undertaking further work on the finds from this site before producing a final written report.

*Other news*

### **Feedback on the Oxford Archaeological Plan 2013-18**

*'Many thanks for sending me the copy of the Oxford Archaeological Action Plan 2013-2018. This is a really interesting and helpful document and I look forward to the improvements in archaeological and public access which it should bring. I have been particularly impressed by the work of the Oxford archaeological community project run through the Oxford University Archaeological and External Studies department, which I hope can be a model for continuing work of this kind in the future.'*

**Andrew Smith MP**