

**Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum**  
**Oxford City Report September 2012 – January 2013**

*Updates on previous field work*

**Nos 6-7 High Street**

Further to the last City Report a radio-carbon date has been obtained from a grain of barley recovered from a Late Saxon feature recorded in the side of a lift pit excavated in the basement of 6-7 High Street (currently the Jack Wills clothes shop). The feature had a degraded wooden lining (or floor) and contained grains of wheat, oat, barley, vetch or pea and a possible single grain of rye. A radio-carbon date was obtained from a grain of barley giving a broad late 8<sup>th</sup> - 9th century date for the material (1186 +/- 27 BP (SUERC-43616); cal AD 771- 898 (91.2% probability) or cal AD 809-884 (61.7% probability). In addition a small but identifiable sherd of Late Saxon Oxford Shelley Ware (c775-1050) was retrieved from the sample residue. This is the earliest radio-carbon date yet obtained for material from the central area of the Late Saxon town.



*Excavation of a new lift pit at 6-7 High Street. A Late Saxon feature was exposed at the base of the northern section (far right).*

**New College kitchen, hall and buttery**

A detailed fabric assessment and documentary overview of the 14<sup>th</sup> century hall, buttery, kitchen and adjacent buildings at New College has been produced by Dr Roland Harris. The assessment includes the results of a watching brief undertaken during opening up works and the excavation of several small geotechnical test pits. The work was undertaken in April 2012 to support pre-application discussions regarding the refurbishment and extension of kitchen facilities at the college.

*National Planning Policy Framework field work in Oxford between September 2012-January 2013*

**Worcester College, Malmesbury Chamber**

In late September limited opening up work was undertaken on a partition wall within the medieval Malmesbury Chamber at Worcester College. The wall had previously been assessed as 19<sup>th</sup> century in date. A subsequent assessment of the exposed fabric by historic building consultant Glyn Coppack further supported this view.

**Wolvercote Service Station, Woodstock Road**

Between September and October an archaeological watching brief was carried by Francis Wenban-Smith during construction of a new underground fuel tank storage pit at the BP Garage, Woodstock Road. Because of the proximity to the old Wolvercote brick pit Palaeolithic site, there was potential for important Pleistocene deposits and Palaeolithic remains to be present. However, no Pleistocene deposits were observed. The underlying natural sediment was Oxford Clay. The report

concluded that, in variance to the current geological map of the area, no Wolvercote Channel or Wolvercote Terrace deposits are likely to be present west of the railway cutting, but that they are likely to be found to east of it.

### **The Clarendon Centre, Shoe Lane**

Between September and November Pre-Construct Archaeology undertook a watching brief during the excavation of service trenches and pile caps at the former Dixon's Unit in the Clarendon Centre. No significant remains were encountered.

### **Magdalen College, Longwall Quad**

In October Oxford Archaeology commenced an excavation in Longwall Quad prior to the construction of a library extension. The works involved the underpinning of the college precinct wall and an excavation on the footprint of the new library. The excavation has to-date investigated over 30 burials belonging to the burial ground of the medieval hospital of St John the Baptist, also post-medieval tenement buildings fronting onto the former Gravel Walk (located parallel to Bridge Street, now High Street). Notable finds include a large collection of 18<sup>th</sup> century wig curlers that can be linked to a named wig maker who occupied one of the tenement fronting Gravel Walk. A number of site tours have been conducted for the college and one for OCCAF members. The excavation continues into the New Year and provision has been made for a public open day in due course.



*The excavation in Longwall Quadrangle. To the left neatly spaced burials belonging the burial ground of the medieval hospital of St John the Baptist. On the right the remains of post-medieval tenement buildings that once fronted onto Gravel Walk to the north.*

### **No 71 Hilltop Road**

In October Foundations Archaeology excavated a trial trench on land at 71 Hill Top Road. No significant archaeological features were recorded. The work was requested because of the potential for prehistoric and Roman remains in this location.

### **Bury Knowle Park Depot, North Place, Old Headington**

In October an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Thames Valley Archaeological Services at the Bury Knowle Park Depot. No significant archaeological remains were recorded. The work was required because the site lies within the historic core of Headington.

### **Hinksey Weir Fish-pass**

In October trial pits were excavated and a watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology prior to and during the construction of an Environment Agency fish-pass channel near Hinksey Weir on the River Thames. Peat deposits were recorded and

single radio-carbon date was obtained suggesting that the peat had formed in the Saxon period. The report is forthcoming.

### **Lincoln College Garden Building**

In October an archaeological excavation was commenced by Oxford Archaeology at Lincoln College on the site of the now demolished Garden Building Lecture Room. The excavation has recorded well preserved post-medieval structural remains and rubbish pits and medieval pits. Recorded features have included a paved yard surface, floors, a well, basements, and a hearth or furnace. Work is to continue into the New Year. To-date no significant Late Saxon remains have been encountered despite the excavation reaching levels below the natural gravel, this is likely to be because of the level of later truncation.



*The excavations at Lincoln College on the site of the former Garden Building. Right: a sherd of decorated medieval Brill/Boarstall ware from the excavation.*

### **No 107 St Aldates**

A heritage statement has been produced for this site by Ben Stephenson Associates noting that this unlisted building contains late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century elements, including a fire place and moulded windows, as well as features associated with its 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century use as a photographer's shop. The statement was produced as a result of applications for change of use of the ground floor to a betting shop and for residential conversions on the upper floors. Between November and December a level II building record has been produced prior to the removal of a 20<sup>th</sup> century dark room, 19<sup>th</sup> century wrought iron spiral staircase and the relocation of a 19<sup>th</sup> century stained glass panel within the shop. Recording was also undertaken by Foundations Archaeology and BSA during geo-technical investigations and further opening up works following Asbestos removal. The Heritage and Specialist Services Team would like to thank Ladbrookes PLC for their co-operation with this site. The report on the opening up works is forthcoming.

### **Oxford Spires Hotel, Abingdon Road**

In November a desk based assessment and walkover earthwork survey produced for the Oxford Spires Hotel site by John Moore Heritage Services. The report provides a useful survey map of the earthworks in the vicinity of nearby Eastwyke Farm and the hotel. These have been previously associated with the Royalist defence of Oxford during the Civil War. The report concludes that the evidence does not support the suggestion from the contemporary de Gomme map that a star shaped redoubt surrounded the farm and speculates that the visible earthworks are likely to predate the Civil War but may have been re-used by the Royalist defenders.

### **Green Templeton College, Walton Building**

In November a watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of three geotechnical trial holes against the footings of the Walton Building at Green Templeton College Oxford by Oliver Jessop. No features of archaeological significance were identified. The work was required because of the presence of extensive prehistoric remains in the near vicinity recorded at the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter site. Further work is to follow.

### **Templar Retail Park, Between Towns Road and Rymers Lane, Cowley**

In November Oxford Archaeology carried out archaeological trial trenching and building recording at Unit 1, Templars' Retail Park. The remains of buildings associated with the Oxford Steam Ploughing Company, probably constructed after the factory was acquired by John Allen and Sons Ltd in 1897, were found in the former garden centre area. No archaeological features pre-dating the late 19th century were present. A gable, which formed part of the factory buildings and which had been re-located to its current location following the closure of the factory, was recorded. A rag stone boundary wall was also partially recorded, this probably dates to the foundation of the Oxford Steam Ploughing Company in the late 19th century but an earlier date cannot be ruled out.

### **Lady Margaret Hall, 19 Norham Gardens**

In November a small scale excavation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology prior to construction work at 19 Norham Gardens. An undated gully of prehistoric character that had been identified in an earlier evaluation was further exposed. However no further dating evidence was recovered. The report is forthcoming.

### **Park Hospital, Headington**

In November a geophysical survey was undertaken by Wessex Archaeology in the grounds of Park Hospital and adjacent car park sites. A number of minor anomalies of possible archaeological interest were identified.

### **St Hughes College, Dixon Poon Building**

In December Oxford Archaeology undertook a watching brief during the construction of the Dickson Poon Building at St Hughes College. The reduction of the central courtyard revealed a group of post-medieval, 19th-20th century pits, and traces of ridge-and-furrow cultivation. During the processing of the bones recovered from the pits a single human radius fragment was identified. The Oxford coroner was informed. The report is forthcoming.

### **St Mary's Church, High Street**

In December a watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during ground works in the churchyard undertaken as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund refurbishment of the building. No significant features were observed.

### **No 12A Friars Entry**

In December a watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during the excavation of geotechnical pits at 12A Friars Entry. No significant remains were recovered, although a child's doll with nails hammered into it was recovered from the foundation trench of the current building. The report is forthcoming.

### **Merton College Chapel Cable Trench**

In December a watching brief was undertaken by Oliver Jessop following the construction of a new power cable trench to the college chapel. Residual medieval pottery, tile and at least one pit and wall base were recorded. The report is forthcoming.

### **The former Coach and Houses, St Clements Street**

In December a building record was created for this building by John Moore Heritage Services. This involved the collation of available plans, photographs, a previous building assessment and the completion of a photographic record of the current building. The structure was constructed about c. 1820-1840. Elements of the structure that were highlighted as of note included the façade, a barrel vault and features in the chimneybreasts.

### **The Oxford Heritage Plan**

The Oxford Heritage Plan website is now on line. This provides links to a wide range of information on the historic environment of Oxford. The site can be accessed by following the link below:

<http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/OxfordHeritagePlan.htm>

### **The Oxford Archaeological Plan**

The Oxford Archaeological Plan website is now on line. This provides links to period based archaeological resource assessments and research agendas for the city. The site can be accessed by following the link below:

<http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/OxfordArchaeologicalPlan.htm>

### **Revised archaeological pages on the City Council website**

The City Council web site archaeological pages have been revised and now contain edited pdf versions of the OCCAF City Reports. The pages can be accessed by following the link below:

[http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/Archaeology\\_occw.htm](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/Archaeology_occw.htm)

### **Oxford Archaeological Action Plan**

A draft Archaeological Action Plan, incorporating a summary of the historic landscape and urban characterisation mapping project, has been produced which is currently subject to a closed consultation. OCCAF members have previously been sent an invitation to join this consultation which closes on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

### **The East Oxford Community Archaeology Project**

Between October and November the Archeox project conducted a very successful community excavation at the site of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Littlemore Priory, Michery Farm, Littlemore. A wide range of local volunteers were involved and a number of well attended open days were held. The latest results from the project can be viewed on their website: <https://www.archeox.net/>.



*Left: Aerial photograph of the Minchery Farm excavation (© 2012 Adam Stanford/Aerial Cam ([www.aerial-cam.co.uk](http://www.aerial-cam.co.uk))). Centre: University of Oxford Vice Chancellor Professor Andrew Hamilton (left) visiting the Minchery Farm excavation with Dr David Griffiths, the Archeox project co-organiser. Right: The community dig in progress.*

Archeox volunteers are also currently helping the City Council Heritage and Specialist Services Team with a small scale UAD enhancement project. At present the volunteers are focusing on imputing the details recently produced University of Oxford Conservation Plans onto the Urban Archaeological Database as event and source records. The plans are also available on line:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/estates/conservation/conservationmanagementplans/>

**Medieval culverts, Old Abingdon Road, Oxford - Awarded Scheduled Monument Status**

Further to the discussion at the previous OCCAF meeting we have received confirmation from English Heritage that the Norman and medieval fabric within the culverts along the Old Abingdon Road has now been scheduled.