

Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum Oxford City Report February - June 2017

National Planning Policy Framework related field work in Oxford

No 28 St Thomas Street, John Coombe House,

Between February and March an archaeological evaluation was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services in the garden of John Coombe House, a distinctive 17th century building located to the east of the church of St Thomas the Martyr. Four trial pits were hand excavated to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains including any burials that might be associated with the church. The investigation yielded a relatively deep soil sequence which comprised post-medieval to modern made containing domestic material. Parts of a disused 19th century drainage systems was also recorded. No evidence of former burial activity was recorded.

Christ Church Meadow Thatched Barn

In March a watching brief was undertaken by the Graham Keevill Consultancy during an initial phase of a project to develop a new visitor centre incorporating the 19th century thatched barn in Christ Church. Previous works in the vicinity of the barn have revealed Civil War remains and have sought to identify the location of an 18th century coach house shown on historic maps to the north of the barn. The initial phase 1 works in the compound to the south of the barn revealed only made ground comprising rubble containing 19th-century pottery.



Left: The area of ground reduction looking north towards Christ Church

Christ Church, Tom Quad Steps

Between March and June an intermittent watching brief has been maintained by the Graham Keevill Consultancy during works to repair the steps to the walkway in Tom Quad. A sequence of earlier step arrangements have been observed. The work is ongoing.

Oxford Academy, Littlemore, New Sports Pitch

In April a controlled strip and record exercise was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during the construction of a new sports pitch at Oxford Academy. Previously early Saxon sunken featured buildings had been recorded to the east and south of the site. The controlled strip did not recover any further features of archaeological interest.

Northern Gateway Phase 1, Wolvercote

In April evaluation trenching was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology on the phase 1 site of the Northern Gateway development at Wolvercote. This extensive site was evaluated because of the size of the proposed development and the presence of prehistoric and Roman activity in the wider area however no significant archaeological remains were recorded in the trench sample.

No 54 St Johns Street

Between April and May a watching brief was undertaken by the Graham Keevill Consultancy to the rear of No 54 St John's Street. A buried soil was recorded and late medieval pottery was recovered. The site is located within the projected extent of the walled precinct associated with the Royal Beaumont Palace and later Carmelite Friary. The report is forthcoming.

No 28 Norham Road

In May a watching brief was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services during building works at 28 Norham Garden. The work was requested because of the proximity of the site to known prehistoric, Roman and later remains. The report is forthcoming.

Oxford Road Sports Ground

Between May and June an archaeological excavation has been underway at Oxford Road (towards Horspath) by the University Of Salford prior to the construction of sports pitches and ponds. A late Iron Age and Roman settlement and related enclosures and field boundaries have been recorded.



Left: Rectangular field boundaries of Roman date. Right: The lid from a Roman pot.

Other news

No 107 St Aldates

I'm pleased to report that after years of patient work No 107 St Aldate's has been designated as a grade II listed building. Previously Historic England were reluctant to

list the structure because of the lack of data on the historic fabric however subsequent detailed archaeological recording by Oxford Archaeology, the Oxfordshire Building Record and others combined with the work done voluntarily by the current owner to sensitively expose the historic features of the building have taken it over the bar. The building retains significant historic fabric that is thought to date from the end of the C16 with features of interest including two fine carved stone fireplaces and carpenters' marks in the roof structure.



Left: Design, Heritage and Trees staff visiting the building after its relaunch as a hotel.

Oxford Urban Archaeological Database (UAD) and Historic Environment Record (HER)

As noted in the last report a small project has been undertaken by the Design, Heritage and Trees team to scan historic 'grey literature' archaeological reports held by the City Council. The project has also involved the creation of polygons for suitable event records for parts of the city that were historically covered by the County Council Historic Environment Record (the data for Oxford is now held a single HBSMR database maintained by the City Council) in order to match mapping for the central area covered by the Urban Archaeological Database. This project is now 95% complete.

Outreach

There has been only limited opportunity for outreach work during this period, however I have given talks on recent archaeological discoveries to the Wootton and Dry Sandford History Society and at the annual OAHS Oxpast event in June.

The Westgate tiled pavement and other related issues

A verbal update will be provided on this matter at the OCCAF meeting.

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