

**Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum
Oxford City Report October 2014 - January 2015**

National Planning Policy Framework related field work in Oxford

Canterbury Quadrangle, North Range, Room C4., St John's College

A watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology in September during opening up works within the former living room and bedroom of C4.1 in the 17th century north range of the Canterbury Quadrangle. The watching brief noted that the 1630s floor contained no carpentered joints or features of particular note. The floorboards were fixed with cut nails. The joists varied in width between 90-130mm and the partially exposed joists were around 110mm in depth (*Picture right by Oxford Archaeology*). The timber floor was laid directly onto the uneven, fairly solid earth. Each joist contained drilled holes at varying intervals. The oval shape suggesting that they were drilled prior to seasoning. Ordinarily similar holes would suggest that the timber has previously been used as a pegged rafter or similar, however, the joists did not display any other signs of reuse such as nail holes, other than those obviously associated with the floorboards, and may therefore be related to previous timber treatment.



No 9 Fyfield Road

A watching brief was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services in September at No 9 Fyfield Road in North Oxford during the construction of a new basement extension. The work was required because of the proximity of known prehistoric remains on this part of the Summertown-Radley gravel terrace. The watching brief identified a possible palaeo-channel and also a ditch and pit of possible prehistoric date (based on the character of the fills).

The New Library, Magdalen College

Beginning in October and continuing into the New Year Oxford Archaeology have been undertaking a complex excavation within the New Library at Magdalen College where the basement is being lowered and extended. Because of structural concerns for the 19th century library the excavation is being undertaken in a series of separated strips which then have to be in-filled by the main contractor. The results from each strip with then have to be fitted together and interpreted post-excavation. As anticipated from previous evaluation results the 19th century floor of the library was formed over a complex sequence of floors, walls, hearths, ovens, and stone lined channels relating to several properties that fronted onto the former East Bridge Street (Now High Street) from the 12th-18th century.



Above: panoramic shot of the New Library interior and Ben Ford from Oxford Archaeology handling some of the finds recovered from medieval floor layers (a mould and a piece of metal working slag).

The Goodheart Building, University College

A small excavation and a watching brief was undertaken between November and December by Oxford Archaeology during the extension of the Goodheart Building at University College, High Street. The works took place close to previous investigations at Logic Lane which revealed significant prehistoric and Late Saxon remains. The 2015 work observed walls and cellars of likely post-medieval and early modern date but no significant prehistoric or Late Saxon archaeology. The report is forthcoming.

The Priory Hotel Site, Minchery Farm, Littlemore

A second phase of recording works was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services between November-December at the site of Littlemore Priory, a Benedictine Nunnery located close to the Kassam Stadium. Following the agreement of a detailed pile design for a new hotel at the site a small number of medieval graves were excavated in addition to those previously recorded. Terram and a layer of sand was placed over unexcavated graves and in-situ medieval foundations. A large modern foundation on the south side of the church was carefully removed and was found not to have truncated any burials further to the south, thus demonstrating that there were no graves immediately to the south of the church choir. The work identified a further north-south medieval wall associated with the complex. Further limited ground reduction for car parking and landscaping is planned in 2015.

Kitchen Yard cellar link, New College

In December an archaeological excavation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology within the Kitchen Yard at New College prior to the creation of an underground link between two wine cellars. The excavation revealed 19th century drain overlying intercutting pits of medieval to post-medieval date containing kitchen waste. The assemblages from these waste pits, which included larger animal bones, are likely to complement the assemblage of smaller animal bones recovered during the recent excavation of the nearby 14th century kitchen floor. The cellar link also identified possible quarry pits, however disappointingly no clear indications of pre- late 14th century use were recovered. The report is forthcoming.

The Old Cloister, Brasenose College,

In late December Oxford Archaeology began work on excavating the internal floor of the 17th century Old Cloister at Brasenose College prior to the refurbishment of the structure. The work involves recording the fragmentary remains of 16th century layers which survive as islands of stratigraphy truncated by later grave cuts for students who were buried in the Old Cloister in the late 17th and 18th century. The burials themselves are not being disturbed. The work will continue in the New Year.

Non planning related work

Botanic Garden well, High Street

In August 2014 Oxford Archaeology undertook a small project to record a well which had been exposed towards the southern corner of the walled garden. The well was revealed by contractors working to clear the felled branches of an important old Black Pine tree which had partially collapsed (known as Tolkien's Tree). The stone-lined well has a diameter of 85 cm, was at least 2.8m deep below ground level and was largely filled with water. There appears to be no documentary record for a well in this location. It appears to have been a relatively early feature within the 17th century garden (the report suggests an 18th-century date) and was apparently already capped (perhaps by a tree) by the time of the 1876 1:500 Ordnance Survey Map. The report observes that it is perhaps surprising that this utilitarian structure from where gardeners would have taken water to feed the plants, would have been located in the main walled garden when it could have been sited immediately outside the wall just a short distance away. This may be an indication of how the gardens were principally a scientific institution, albeit one that did allow visitors, rather than a formal garden and aesthetics were not an over-riding concern. The water logged character of the well raises the possibility that waterlogged environmental remains related to the gardens early use may be preserved at its base.

Other news

Assessing and Mapping Significant Heritage Assets in a Medieval University City

As mentioned in the last OCCAF report Oxford Archaeology and the Oxford City Council Planning Archaeologist have been working jointly on an English

Heritage funded project looking at the assessment of non-designated but potentially nationally significant archaeological assets and providing a series of case studies. The draft project report was submitted to English Heritage before Christmas and subsequent revisions are likely in the New Year before the report is made more widely available.