

# Archaeology in Oxford

## Oxford City report to the Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum

October 2020-February 2021

### The impact of Covid 19 on archaeological work in the city

The Urban Design and Heritage Team has continued to work remotely from home since the October OCCAF update with normal service levels being maintained.

### National Planning Policy Framework related field work in Oxford

**Note:** *The fieldwork listed in this summary reflects schemes that are subject to planning applications or consented schemes. This period covered by this report has been notably anomalous because of the impact of Covid 19 and the volume of pre-application work that has taken place. The results of this fieldwork is not currently in the public domain however I can report that five geophysical surveys and five field evaluations were undertaken in this period, revealing one previously unrecorded Roman site and producing further information about a previously recorded friary.*

### Somerville College Kitchen

Between October and December a watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during groundworks associated with the renovation of the kitchen and dining hall at Somerville College. The work was required because of the proximity of the extensive monumental middle Neolithic-early Bronze Age landscape previously recorded at the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter. The watching brief demonstrated the presence of undisturbed natural gravel but no significant features were revealed.

### No 4 Beaumont Buildings

Between November and December a watching brief was undertaken by Keevill Heritage Ltd during the construction of an extension at No 4 Beaumont Buildings. The garden wall was also recorded as it contains a row of quoins that may relate to a Post-medieval building in this location. The work was required because the site is located within the precinct of the medieval Royal Beaumont Palace however no remains from this period were identified. The report is forthcoming.

### Land at No 20 Blenheim Drive

In December an evaluation was undertaken at land at No. 20 Blenheim Drive by John Moore Heritage Services. The work was undertaken because of the general potential for prehistoric activity on this part of the Summertown-Radley gravel terrace. No significant archaeology was recorded.

### Rhodes House, South Parks Road

Between December and January a series of test pits were excavated by Museum of London Archaeology adjacent to the line of the extant Civil War rampart in the garden of Rhodes House and a watching brief was undertaken during the demolition of the frontage lodge buildings. The works were undertaken to establish whether truncated remains of the Royalist Civil War rampart survived in these areas. No significant remains were identified although some potentially earlier features were sampled. Further excavation work is to follow.

### Land to the rear of George Inn, No 5 Sandford Road, Littlemore

In December an evaluation was undertaken at land to the rear of the George Inn, Littlemore by John Moore Heritage Services. The work was undertaken because of the potential for Roman activity here based on the

results of nearby fieldwork and also for medieval activity within the historic village envelope. The site proved to be extensively disturbed by previous land use and no significant archaeology was recorded.

#### No 12 Crick Road

In January a watching brief was undertaken during extension work at No 12 Crick Road by John Moore Heritage Services. An Iron Age pit and a post-medieval pit were identified in a soakaway in the garden along with other undated features. The report is forthcoming.



*Right: Iron Age and later pits at No. 12 Crick Road (Image courtesy of John Moore Heritage Services)*

#### Christ Church Brew House (Archives building)

In January Keevill Heritage Ltd undertook historic building recording and a watching brief during works to upgrade the Christ Church Archives building which is located in a former stone built brewhouse of likely 16<sup>th</sup> century date. The site is of further interest as the approximate location of the first site of the Oxford Blackfriars. A few small geotechnical test pits were excavated either side of the existing main passage way revealing high-quality ashlar blocks that are significantly different in character to the rubble build of the upstanding fabric. Furthermore a buried wall was recorded running across the passage, near the entrance, which continued under the face of the passage's side wall. It was observed that the north wall of the brewhouse is notably thick and that the identified cross-wall could be a broad offset footing for it or it could relate to an earlier building. Further recording work is planned.

#### No 74 Walton Street

In January a watching brief and trial trench excavation were undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services to the rear of No 74 Walton Street. A number of undated features were observed. The work was required because the immediate area has previously produced evidence of medieval activity relating to the poorly understood medieval settlement of Walton. The report is forthcoming

#### University of Oxford Old Road Campus (Site B1)

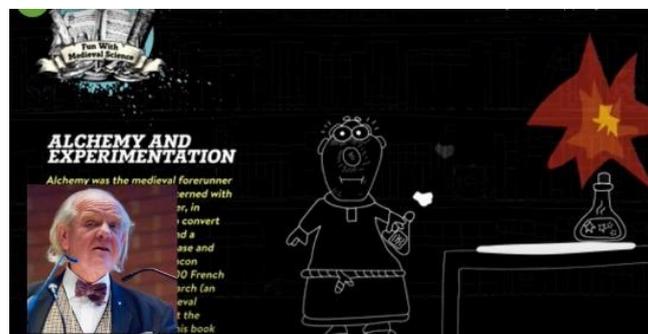
In February trial trenching was undertaken at Old Road Campus in advance of the construction of new University buildings. The work was required because of the general potential for Roman activity in this location, however none of the phases of work across the campus to date have produced significant archaeological remains. The report is forthcoming.

#### Other news

##### Fun with medieval science!

The 'Fun with medieval science' film which explores the scientific interests of the Franciscan friars who occupied the site of the current Westgate Shopping Centre site in the 13<sup>th</sup> century has been updated with an enthusiastic voiceover by Dr Allan Chapman.

Running time 3min 54 seconds: [Link to You Tube film.](#)



Geophysical survey of the First World War airfield at Port Meadow featured in Current Archaeology  
The geophysical survey of the WWI airfield at Port Meadow by Abingdon Archaeological Geophysics is featured in the January edition of Current Archaeology.

Further information on the survey is available on the [Facebook page of the Wolvercote Memorial group.](#)

## Trinity College Excavation- video diary

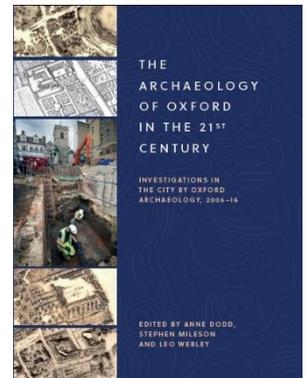
A video diary of the 2019 excavations at Trinity College is available online. The film has picked up over 5,000 views to-date across various social media platforms ([Link to video diary on Twitter](#), [Link to video diary on Facebook](#)).



## The Archaeology of Oxford in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

A new monograph has been published by Oxford Architectural and Historical Society combining the results of eleven excavations undertaken by Oxford Archaeology between 2006 and 2016 and a series of overview chapters. The book is available from the [Link to OAHS website](#).

[Link to sample text from the volume](#)

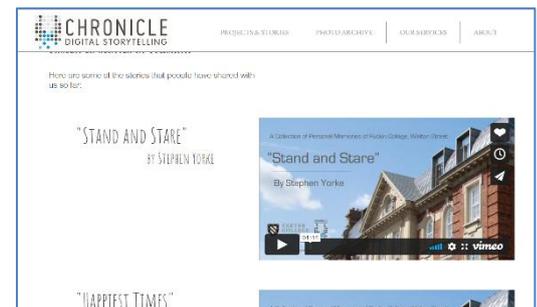


## The 2009 Radcliffe Infirmary excavation by Museum of London Archaeology

I am pleased to report that the 2009 Radcliffe Infirmary excavation by Museum of London Archaeology has been published in the latest volume of *Oxoniesia*.

## Ruskin College

An oral history project, required when the Ruskin College Walton Street building was converted/rebuilt for use by Exeter College, is now online. The project captures personal memories of people connected to the college to record the important role it played in people's lives: [Link to Chronicle Storytelling Ruskin page](#).



## Urban Archaeology in the UK

As secretary of the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers Urban Committee I help produce occasional newsletters on urban archaeology in the U.K. The autumn edition is available online with an article on outreach work in Oxford: Link to [ALGAO urban newsletter](#).

David Radford

Oxford City Council Archaeologist