

Archaeology in Oxford

Oxford City report to the Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum

National Planning Policy Framework related field work in Oxford June - October 2022

St Edmund Hall, Norham Gardens

In May an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology at St Edmund Hall, Norham Gardens. Five trenches were targeted within the footprint of a proposed development. The earliest activity on the site was represented by three residual pieces of struck flint recovered from one trench broadly identified as Neolithic to Bronze Age in date. The evaluation identified several ditches apparently forming part of a rectilinear enclosure system along with a small quantity of early to mid-Roman pottery. The NE-SW and NW-SE alignments of these ditches fit well with the cropmark features recorded in University Parks to the south and they are likely to be related.



Above: A small Roman ditch (Image courtesy of OA)

Trinity College Kitchen and Plant Room

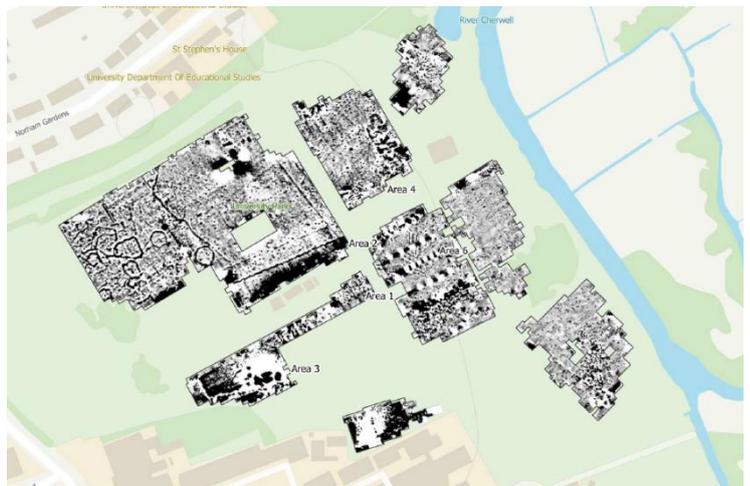
Between July and September intermittent historic building recording and a watching brief on test pits within the backfill of a Victorian cellar were undertaken by Thames valley Archaeological Services at Trinity College. The works were located in the vicinity of the Kitchen and plant room attached to the west range of Durham Quad. Targeted excavation work is to follow.

Court Place Gardens, Iffley

In August John Moore Heritage Services carried out an evaluation at Land at Court Place Gardens. No features of archaeological significance were revealed, though a large quantity of 1970s house foundations and modern services were observed, which truncated much of the site.

University Parks Geophysical Survey

In August a magnetometer survey was completed by Magnitude Surveys across c10.3 ha of land University Parks as part of the process of producing a management plan for the parks. The survey targeted areas of the park that had not previously been surveyed. Eight separate areas were examined. The survey identified a range of likely archaeological features relating to the extensive prehistoric and Roman landscapes known to be present in this part of the Oxford gravel terrace.



Right: University Parks magnetometer survey (Image courtesy of Magnitude Surveys)

BMW practice track, Oxford Road

Between August-September a small strip and record excavation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology prior to the creation of a practice track at the BMW plant, Cowley. A small number of features of likely Roman date were recorded. The work was required because of the proximity of Roman features previously recorded to the east. The report is forthcoming.



Right: BMW practice track site

Humanities Building, Radcliffe Observatory Quarter

In September a strip and record monitoring exercise was undertaken by Museum of London Archaeology prior to the construction of the new humanities building and concert venue at the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter. The site was substantively excavated in 2009, however a small area of the new development footprint had not been investigated. The area proved to have been significantly impacted by former 20th century activity and no significant archaeology was identified. Further interpretive installations are planned for the site.

The Queen's College, Porter's Lodge and Front range

Between September-October an initial phase of targeted excavation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during the lowering of a basement floor in the front range of Front Quad. The investigation recorded demolition layers belonging to buildings predating the 18th century rebuilding of the college, a square cut post-medieval pit and an undated linear cut parallel to the street frontage, containing brick earth/loess fill, potentially a beam slot. A further phase of work is planned.

Exeter College Library

Between September-October a watching brief and targeted recording has been undertaken by Oxford Archaeology at Exeter College Library during the creation of a lift pit and the excavation of the floor slab. A likely medieval well was recorded, along with two post-medieval pits and a stone structure of likely post-medieval date. The work is ongoing.

Other news

Oxford Historic Environment Record Paper Archive

The City Council has decided to rapidly relocate its staff to the Town Hall and rent out St Aldates Chambers. The Historic Environment Record archive (mostly grey literature reports with a small amount of primary documents and out of print books) has been boxed up and moved to the Town Hall basement. Discussions have taken place with the Oxford History Centre regarding the future storage of these items.

Museum of Oxford and contracting archaeological units

Over the summer members of staff from Pre-Construct Archaeology and Oxford Archaeology have been given introductory tours of the newly reopened Museum of Oxford with a view to improving outreach outcomes relating to development control related archaeology in the city.

Public Talks

The city council archaeologist gave talks at the OPT Festival of Archaeology and OXPAST events over the summer about recent archaeological discoveries in the town.

David Radford, Oxford City Council Archaeologist