

## Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum Oxford City Report June-October 2017

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

#### *Somerville College Phase 1, Walton Street and Little Clarendon Street*

In June trial trenching was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology on land to the rear of Walton Street and Little Clarendon Street prior to the construction of a Somerville College accommodation block. A number of 19<sup>th</sup> century structures were subject to building recording prior to demolition. The trial trenching revealed multi-period remains including medieval or earlier pits, parts of the Civil War Royalist defensive ditch and early 19<sup>th</sup> century waste pits containing domestic refuse. Archaeologists will return to the site for further work shortly.

#### *New College, Holywell Street, Former Morris Garage*

Between June and October an excavation and photographic recording was undertaken at the site of the former William Morris Garage at New College by Oxford Archaeology. The brick foundations of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Morris Garage (which gave its name to the MG car mark and where Morris designed his first car in 1914) were uncovered along with two concrete and brick car pits. Detailed recording was undertaken of the remains which will be partially preserved below a new accommodation building. The report is forthcoming.

*Right: car pit at the former Morris Garage site.*



#### *Temporary Zoology buildings, Land to the rear of the University Club, Mansfield Road*

In July a programme of geophysics, evaluation trenching and watching brief were undertaken by Oxford Archaeology east of the University Club prior to the construction of two temporary Zoology Department buildings. The work was undertaken because of the close proximity of prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and Civil War remains however no significant archaeology was recorded during these works.

#### *Eagle and Child Pub and Green's Café, Nos 50 and 51 St Giles*

In July evaluation trenches were excavated by Thames Valley Archaeological Services to the rear of Green's Café on St Giles. The investigation revealed medieval walls and post medieval post holes and pit.

#### *No 1 Fisher Row*

In July test pits were excavated within No 1 Fisher Row by John Moore Heritage Services. The grade II listed building is of 18<sup>th</sup> century date and encompasses a

ground floor vaulted storage area that may predate the three-storey red brick town house. The test pits demonstrated that earlier floors survive below the current stone flag floor which itself may be 19<sup>th</sup> century in date. An earlier clay floor was recorded and below this the remains of a brick floor was encountered and also the remains of a hearth. Charcoal recovered from above and below the brick floor may indicate a continuation of similar use for the room after the brick floor was laid. The scheme was subsequently amended to preserve the brick floor and hearth in-situ.

### *No 12 Crick Road*

In August an evaluation was undertaken to the rear of No 12 Crick Road by John Moore Heritage Services. The trenching revealed a large pit, the excavated sample of which contained 19 sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery.

### *Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme Evaluation trenching*

Between August and October archaeological trenching was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology along the route of the proposed Oxford Flood Alleviation Channel as part of a comprehensive programme of evaluation. The project also provided the University of Oxford Science Research Laboratory a chance to test a new refined approach to OSL dating on ridge and furrow earthworks. Thanks are due to the Environment Agency and Oxford Archaeology for facilitating this experimental work. The evaluation trenching is ongoing.



*Above: Section through a ridge before sampling by Oxford University Research Laboratory for Archaeology.*

### *Oxford Road Sports Centre, Phase 2 Excavation*

Between September and October a second phase of excavation was undertaken by Salford Archaeology at Oxford Road Sports Centre site. The excavation has revealed further features from an Iron Age and early Roman settlement site including a single crouched inhumation. The bulk of the settlement has been preserved below the new sports pitches.



*Above: pottery from the settlement: Bottom right: A crouched inhumation. Bottom left: The access road excavation.*



#### *Former BT Depot, James Wolfe Road*

In September an evaluation was undertaken at the former Military Barracks and BT depot site on James Wolfe Road by John Moore Heritage Services. The site is located within the former site of the medieval and post-medieval common at Bullingdon Green. The works revealed only a gully, a ditch and a single sherd of medieval pottery.

#### *BMW Plant Cowley, Re-surfacing for new lorry park*

In September a watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during works adjacent to the Dorchester-Alchester Roman road in relation to the creation of a new lorry parking area. No significant features were revealed. The report is forthcoming.

#### *Student Castle, Osney Lane*

In September trial trenching was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology at the proposed 'Student Castle' development on the site of the former business units at *Osney Lane*. The site is adjacent to the railway and the site of the (now demolished) railway goods shed. Medieval remains were recorded at considerable depth, sealed by modern made ground, these are likely to be associated with the precinct of Osney Abbey. The report is forthcoming.

#### *Folly Bridge*

In September building recording and a watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during repair works to the Old Cut bridge segment, at the Folly Bridge crossing over the river Thames. The stonework of the Grade II listed bridge, built in 1821, was recorded and the removal of part of the bridge fill was observed in order to facilitate urgent repair works. This work revealed two parallel stone walls which appeared to be related to the early 20th century tram tracks. During the works scrub clearance adjacent to the south western stanchion uncovered the western end of a flood arch (presumably a later widening of the arch known as BNC1 (Brasenose College 1) from the 16<sup>th</sup> century Brasenose College map of the Grandpont medieval causeway) which was recorded for inclusion in the site report.

#### **Other news**

##### *New College Late Saxon Rampart*

Surprising scientific dates have been recovered from OSL and radio-carbon samples taken from two separate interventions into the late-Saxon rampart at New College. The four scientific dates collectively suggest an 8<sup>th</sup> century date for at least parts of the now buried rampart. Both sites are currently being worked up for publication by Oxford Archaeology and more information will follow.

##### *Merton College, Patey's Quad*

The publication draft for the small scale excavation at Patey's Quad, Merton College by Oxford Archaeology in 2016 suggests that one of the recorded pits may tentatively be identified as a late-Saxon cellar pit, this feature produced pottery that suggests it was back-filled in the last quarter of the eleventh century. The site also produced evidence for medieval horn working in the vicinity. The ceramic tile assemblage also provided some subtle insights into life in the medieval town, the flat glazed medieval roof tiles from the site occurred in a variety of colours: pale green, dark green, olive green, amber or brown. Some tiles had impressions including the

imprint of a small hoof, probably a deer and others had finger marks from handling during manufacture including three small contiguous fingertips which from their size are likely to be those of a child.

*Outreach*

Oxford Preservation Trust kindly invited me to talk on 'Looking for Alfred- Recent archaeological discoveries in Oxford' for the Festival of Archaeology in August.

A number of articles on archaeology have appeared in the Oxford Mail over the last few months [1](#), [2](#), [3](#).

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