

Archaeology in Oxford

Oxford City report to the Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum

October 2021-February 2022

National Planning Policy Framework related field work in Oxford

Christ Church, Old Library

Between November and December further historic building recording was undertaken at the Old Library at Christ Church by the Cathedral Archaeologist Graham Keevill during upgrading works. The building once formed part of the south range of the Augustinian priory cloister and recent internal works have revealed in-situ 13th century and later fabric. In December another unexpected discovery was made when a well preserved medieval door was revealed.



Right: Medieval door fabric revealed within the Old Library, Christ Church (Image courtesy of Graham Keevill)

No 12 Crick Road

Further to the previously reported work at this site which exposed Iron Age remains an additional soakaway was constructed in November and monitored by John Moore Heritage Services. No significant archaeology was recorded.

Land at Northfield Hostel, Littlemore

In November an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology on land at Northfield Hostel, Littlemore. The trenching revealed evidence for a previously unrecorded area of Roman settlement activity. This comprised of a number of ditches and post holes associated with large sherds of domestic Roman pottery. The evidence suggests a mid-2nd to the 4th century date range for the site. No evidence for industrial activity was recovered. The molluscan evidence suggested an open landscape in the immediate vicinity of the ditches. The charred plant material included a very small number of cereal grain fragments, including those tentatively identified as free-threshing wheat (*Triticum turgidum/aestivum* type) alongside a single charred hazelnut (*Corylus avellana*) fragment.



Image right: One of the Roman ditches being excavated at Northfield Hostel.

Nos 10-28 Marshall Road, Cowley

In November an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by the Archaeology Unit of Southampton City Council on land to the rear of 10-28 Marshall Road. Aside from a possible field boundary (undated) no significant archaeological features were recorded

St Pauls House, Walton Street

In November trial trenching was undertaken at St Pauls House on Walton Street by Oxford Archaeology. A feature containing 17th-18th century pottery was recorded. A subsequent watching brief during the excavation of foundation trenches (the frontage of the building is being retained) did not produce any significant archaeological results. The report is forthcoming

Exeter College Library

In December a number of small exploratory geotechnical test pits located in and around the library of Exeter College were monitored by Oxford Archaeology. No significant remains were identified.

University of Oxford Tinbergen building (Life and Mind Building), South Parks Road

Between December and February Oxford Archaeology have been undertaking a controlled strip of the basement extension being excavated for the new Life and Mind building (replacing the old Tinbergen Building). The work was required because evaluation trenching identified un-truncated natural gravel in this location and the site lies of the edge of a multi-period landscape of prehistoric, Roman and Civil War activity. A number of minor boundaries and pits were recorded but to-date no significant archaeological remains have been exposed. The report is forthcoming

Lucy Faithfull House

Between December and February a watching brief was maintained by Museum of London Archaeology during the excavation of pile caps, service routes and targeted pile arrisings at Lucy Faithfull House, located on the site of the medieval Blackfriars. No significant archaeology has been reported to date.

Corpus Christi College, New Archive Building

In January a watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology at Corpus Christi College during the excavation of foundations for scaffold supports prior to work next the adjacent Christ Church precinct wall. No significant observations have been reported.

No 4 Bladdon Close, Upper Wolvercote

In January a watching brief was maintained during building work to the rear of No 4 Bladdon Close. The work was required because of the proximity of recorded Iron Age settlement archaeology on an adjacent site. No significant discoveries have been reported. The report is forthcoming.

No 39 Pembroke Street

In January historic building recording was undertaken by Keevill Heritage Consultants during renovation works at No 39 Pembroke Street. The works to the kitchen and first floor revealed building detail of the 17th century structure. The report is forthcoming.

No 13 Mill Lane, Alan Court, Old Marston

Between January and February a watching brief was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services at Alan Court, Old Marston during the excavation of new utility lines to the rear of the 17th century property. The report is forthcoming.

No 2 St Peters Road, Upper Wolvercote

In January Thames Valley Archaeological Services undertook a trial trench evaluation and subsequent watching brief during the grubbing out of foundations at No 2 St Peter's Road. The investigations revealed a two phases of ditch, a gully and a post hole. The ditch and gully contained crude shell tempered pottery of Early to Middle Iron Age date (800-400BC). Further work is programmed.



Right: An Early Iron Age ditch and shell tempered pottery from No 2 St Peter's Road.

Frewin Hall, New Inn Hall Street

Between January and February excavations by Oxford Archaeology have been underway in the courtyard/garden of Frewin Hall. This major excavation has revealed the likely footings of the southern cloister (?) of the college of St Mary's (founded in the 15th century, rebuilt under the supervision of Cardinal Wolsey and pulled down in the later 16th century-hence its description as Oxford's lost college). The excavation has also recorded extensive medieval building foundations, boundary walls, stone lined pits and other features (including a kitchen floor area) as well as rich medieval and post medieval finds assemblages. A flavour of the work is provided by the short video clip linked below.



Right: BBC report

<https://twitter.com/BBCOxford/status/1488574049018159118>

More coverage: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-60214083>



Above left: Professor John Blair (who excavated part of the site in the 1970s) with OA project manager Ben Ford standing by a massive Tudor period wall, likely the southern wall of the St Mary's College quadrangle, Middle: a medieval stone lined pit (garderobe), Right: medieval kitchen deposits.

Right: A public open day is planned for the Frewin Hall site, 10am-3pm on Saturday 19th February.



Castle Hill House, New Road

In January archaeological trial trenching was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology on the site of the demolished Castle Hill House on New Road, located on the edge of the Castle Bailey ditch. The investigations revealed that a large earlier ditch had been truncated by the Norman Castle Bailey ditch. The earlier feature produced quantities of Cotswold ware pottery, animal bone and burnt daub. Further recording work is planned in this area.

Not previously reported

St Peter's College, Linton House, New Inn Hall Street

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology in August 2021 during re-modelling works in the basement of Linton House. The watching brief during floor reduction work revealed a series of probable pits dating from between 11th and 14th centuries. The pits are likely to have been located in the rear plots of tenements fronting onto New Inn Hall Street (formerly Little Bailey). Medieval pottery and tile or fired clay was recovered, also a worked bone gouge or corer and unworked animal bone. A modern well was also noted.

Outreach

In December the annual 'Oxford top 10 archaeological digs of the year' tweet series was expanded this year and reached a record audience with 78,408 organic impressions and 5,217 engagements. https://twitter.com/davidradford_ox

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