

Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum Oxford City Report October February - June 2018

National Planning Policy Framework related field work in Oxford

No 18 Hawkswell Gardens

Between February and March an evaluation was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services on land to the rear of No 18 Hawkswell Gardens. No significant archaeology was recovered. The evaluation revealed a single undated linear ditch. The work was requested because of the general potential for prehistoric archaeology in this poorly investigated part of the Summertown Radley terrace close to the river Cherwell.

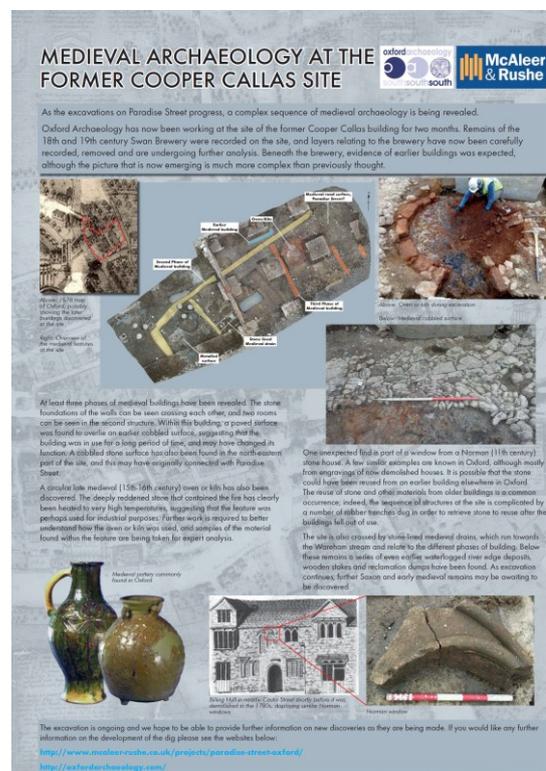
The Royal Oak, Walton Street

In March a photographic record was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology on the post-medieval boundary wall to the rear of the Royal Oak public house on Woodstock Road prior to its dismantling and re-construction. The rubble stone wall is depicted on the 1769 field map of St Giles indicating it is at least 18th century in origin, though it had been subject to extensive repairs and localised rebuilding.

Cooper Callas Warehouse site, Paradise Street

Between March and May an archaeological excavation was undertaken at the former Cooper Callas Warehouse site on Paradise Street by Oxford Archaeology. The excavation recorded the remains of part of the 19th century Swan Brewery including the remains of walls, yards and a curving brick wall that defined the edge of a cartway. The brewery had been demolished in the 1960s to make way for the Cooper Callas Builder's Merchant warehouse. Below the brewery remains targeted excavation was undertaken where deeper groundworks were required for lift pits, crane base and areas of dense pile clusters. The excavation encountered a sequence of medieval structures and cobbled yard or street surfaces below that had been established on top of 12th-13th century reclamation deposits. Notable finds included part a redeposited Norman stone window arch.

An archaeological borehole survey was undertaken in order to establish whether there was any evidence for reclamation and potentially channel redirection of the castle mill stream in the late Saxon period. The scientific dates from this work are still forthcoming however the initial borehole results suggest that a Holocene channel in this location was subject to dumping and land reclamation in the post-Conquest period.



Above right: One of the publicity posters for the Cooper Callas site by Oxford Archaeology.

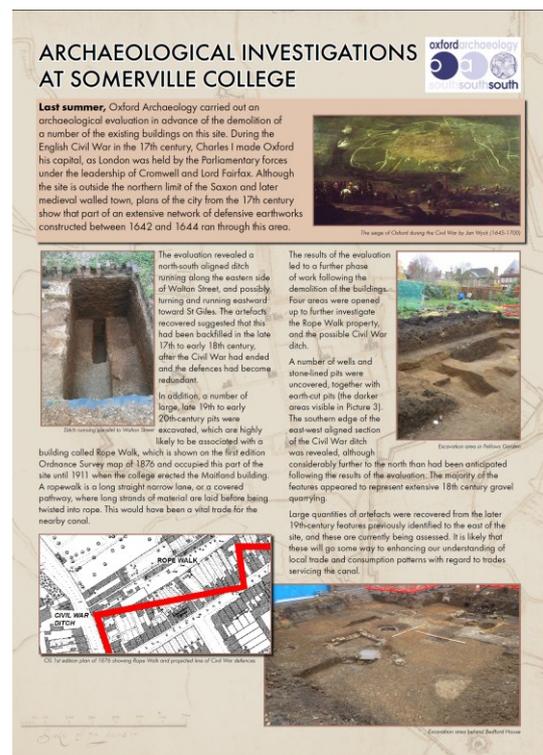


Images from the Cooper Callas dig, right: The excavation of the 19th century Swan Brewery in the shadow of St George's Tower and left: A late medieval oven or kiln (images courtesy of Oxford Archaeology).

Somerville College, Catherine Hughes Building, Phase 1, Walton Street and Little Clarendon Street

Between April and May a watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during the concluding ground works for phase 1 of this development. Further post-medieval and early-modern pits relating to settlement along Walton Street and Little Clarendon Street were recorded and sampled.

Right: The publicity poster for the Somerville site by Oxford Archaeology.



Brasenose Farmhouse

Between April and May historic building recording and a watching brief was undertaken by Foundations Archaeology on the 17th century and later Brasenose Farmhouse complex prior to and during development works. The report is forthcoming.

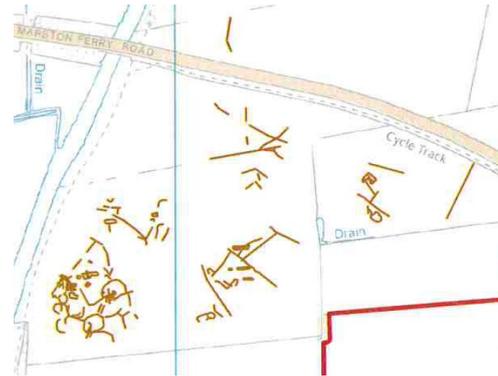
No 12 Norham Gardens

In May a watching brief was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services during the excavation of a basement extension at No 12 Norham Gardens. The work is ongoing.

New parch marks east of the river Cherwell

In May a Heritage Statement submitted by RPS Consultants includes a transcription of newly identified parch marks in the fields of the Cherwell flood plain between Summertown and Marston. The identified marks may be partly geological however they also appear to capture the remains of a sub rectilinear field system of unknown date. The parch marks were identified from Google Earth images.

Right: Image showing parch marks in the Cherwell floodplain. *Reproduced from the RPS Heritage Statement for the Harlow Centre (2018) (© Crown Copyright and database right 2018 Ordnance Survey 100019348)*



Wadham College, Goddard Building

In May historic building recording was undertaken by Asset Heritage Consulting on the 1951-4 Goddard Building at Wadham College prior to its demolition. A basic photographic record was completed annotated to floor plans, sections and historic plans.

Not previously reported

New College School and No 2 Saville House

A phased evaluation has been undertaken at Saville House on Mansfield Road and the adjacent New College School site prior to the submission of a major new development application by New College. Phase 1 was carried out in December 2016 and involved Museum of London Archaeology monitoring seven geotechnical test pits, three soakaway trial pits and four boreholes that revealed the depth of natural gravel across the site. A second phase of evaluation in April 2017 involved the excavation of four archaeological trial trenches and a further small test pit. The only significant archaeological feature encountered was a stone lined well that was potentially post-medieval in date. An adjacent 19th century rubbish/ dump pit was also recorded.

A third phase of works in October 2017 involved two further test pit and was required to examine the spread of redeposited loam that had been previously identified under the Royalist Civil War bank that is located on the boundary of the New College holding and Mansfield College to the north. The loam bank had been identified during works for a new Music Room on Mansfield Road and had been tentatively dated by Optically Stimulated Luminescence to the late-Saxon period. It also appeared to be sealing numerous undated features.



Above right: Stone lined well at New College School.

Right: one of the test pits revealing redeposited loam.

The two test pits recorded a series of earthen dumps above the natural gravel with reddish loamy deposits also present. In one pit the 'red loam' sealed natural gravel

and produced a prehistoric flint scraper dated to the Mesolithic/Neolithic period, Roman pottery and animal bone. The loam layer was sealed by dumps producing medieval pottery dating to the 12th-14th centuries with the top of the sequence dated to the 18th/19th century. In the other test pit the “red loam” was sterile, but overlay a dump producing a single post-Conquest sherd of pottery (12th-14th century). The profiles and colour of the loam in the these two pits were not identical to the profile recorded to the west during the works for the new Music Room leaving open the possibility of that these deposits were subject to a different formation sequence. The work did however suggest that the loam projected to survive under the current New College School building was redeposited post-Conquest.

Oriel College Kitchen

A series of investigations have taken place at Oriel College to inform an application for a new kitchen project which are now in the public domain. In March 2015 Oxford Archaeology excavated two small trenches on the site of the proposed kitchen extension adjacent to Magpie Lane. One trench revealed the top of the natural gravel truncated by features probably dating to the 12th-14th century. These were cut by the remains of structures that relate to a building fronting Merton Street, possibly part of St Martins Hall which preceded 17th century rebuilding of the college.

The second trench revealed a deep feature, possibly a ditch that was augered to 2.7m below ground level. This was filled with redeposited clay and a sequence of fills the uppermost of which produced pottery dated to AD1175-1400. A further small test pit near the wall at Magpie Lane revealed an undated structure revealed running parallel to the eastern boundary wall of the college along Magpie Lane.

In August 2017 Oxford Archaeology coordinated a geophysical survey (Ground Penetrating Radar and Earth Resistance) of all three college quadrangles, together with an east-west aligned borehole transect located in the central quadrangle. The GPR did not penetrate to depths below c 1.0m B.G.L and therefore did not give any useful information about the archaeological remains within all three quads. The ERT technique was hampered by interference in the northern quad, but more successful within the central and southern quads, and an eastwards dipping horizon to the natural gravel topography was identified in the southern quad.



Right: Plan showing the locations of the geophysical survey areas and the east-west borehole transect (Image by Oxford Archaeology).

The borehole transect in the central quad revealed a complex, sequence of occupation deposits dating to the medieval period. Samples from occupation deposits directly overlying the gravel in two boreholes, produced dates spanning the 12th to 13th centuries at 1165-1265 cal AD and 1225-1300 cal AD. The medieval sequences measured between 1 – 2.2m thick. The purpose of the survey work in the quads was to test the theory that the defensive line of the postulated primary late-Saxon burh crossed through this area. However no large north-south feature (ditch, roadway or bank) was encountered.

In January 2018 Oxford Archaeology conducted a watching brief on two small geotechnical pits located to examine the foundations of standing buildings at the site revealing only limited information about their foundations. This was followed in March by a watching brief during the excavation of two small test pits within the existing cellar to the rear of Staircase 8. Terrace gravel was encountered in both test pits at approximately the same elevation as the top of the gravel observed during the borehole transect.

Although keyhole in nature, in combination the multiple interventions that comprise the evaluation works did not reveal conclusive evidence for the type of features/deposits that would corroborate theories of an 'initial phase' of late Saxon defensive ditch, belonging to a primary burh, in this location. Such a defensive line, orientated north – south, through the footprint of Oriel College, has been previously extrapolated from the line of the putative late Saxon wall recorded in 1899 in the Clarendon Quadrangle. However should the western defences be more lozenge shape in character a returning ditch might still be found in this area.

Other news

Wolvercote WW1 Aerodrome Memorial community project

On the 23rd May a memorial stone and information board were unveiled by the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire at Port Meadow to remember seventeen airmen who died here in crashes and accidents during World War One. Port Meadow was primarily used for training in World War One and a number of squadrons were based there between 1916 and 1919.

The event was attended by local school children and included a replica World War One biplane. The memorial and information board are the result of the work of the [Wolvercote WW1 Aerodrome Memorial community project](#). Further related work is planned including a geophysical survey of Port Meadow.

*Above right: Oxford City Council Heritage Champion Cllr Colin Cook opening the ceremony.
Right: Replica Bristol Scout biplane.*

*David Radford, Archaeologist
Oxford City Council*

