

# OXONIENSIA

*Oxoniensia* is issued to members of the Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society for a subscription price of £12. Copies of some back numbers are available and *Oxoniensia* is also accessible in digital format. Please refer to the journal website for further information ([www.oxoniensia.org](http://www.oxoniensia.org)).

Intending contributors to *Oxoniensia* are asked to submit an electronic copy of their work to the editor, Dr Stephen Miles, no later than 1 December each year ([editor@oahs.org.uk](mailto:editor@oahs.org.uk)). The editor will be pleased to advise on preliminary drafts. 'Notes for Contributors' are available on the website.

## EDITORIAL NOTICE

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## OXFORDSHIRE ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Society, formed in 1972 by the amalgamation of the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society (founded in 1839) and the Oxfordshire Archaeological Society (founded in 1852), exists to further the study of the archaeology, topography, architecture, and history of Oxford and Oxfordshire. In addition to publishing *Oxoniensia*, it provides a programme of winter lectures in Oxford and organizes excursions to places of architectural, historical, and archaeological interest. Through its Listed Buildings Committee and associated Victorian Group, the Society makes representations to public bodies, both on its own behalf and for the Council for British Archaeology, to safeguard historical buildings and monuments. The Society also convenes the Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum, which fosters liaison to discuss and advise on issues concerning archaeology and museums, monitor cases and on occasion make representations on matters of concern.

The Society's website can be found at [www.oahs.org.uk](http://www.oahs.org.uk). In 2010 OAHs launched two new initiatives to promote digital access to studying Oxfordshire's past: past volumes of *Oxoniensia* are now available online (the last five years only to members) at <http://oxoniensia.org> and the OAHs online guide to resources and societies for studying Oxfordshire's past is to be found at <http://oxfordshirehistory.modhist.ox.ac.uk>.

Subscriptions (£12 individual, £17 family membership) should be sent to the Membership Secretary, 15 Harding Way, Marcham, Abingdon, OX13 6FJ, who will be pleased to supply further information about the Society.

## THE GREENING LAMBORN TRUST

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The Oxfordshire Record Society publish transcripts, abstracts and lists of the primary sources for the history of Oxfordshire and work to stimulate interest in archives relating to the county. The annual subscription, currently only £12, supports the Society's work and

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*An Historical Atlas of Oxfordshire*, ed. K. Tiller and G. Darkes;  
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*The Life and Times of a Charlbury Quaker*, ed. Hannah Jones.

Applications for membership should be sent to Paul Gaskell, 28 Bulan Road, Headington, Oxford, OX3 7HT ([oxfordshirerecordsociety@gmail.com](mailto:oxfordshirerecordsociety@gmail.com)). New members receive a volume of their choice from those still in print. Further information can be obtained on the Society's website: [www.oxfordshire-record-society.org.uk](http://www.oxfordshire-record-society.org.uk)

## OXFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Founded in 1884, the Society publishes editions of historical records relating to the City, University, and Colleges of Oxford. To date over 140 volumes have been issued, of which almost 100 are still in print (available to non-subscribers from Boydell & Brewer Ltd: <http://www.boydellandbrewer.com>). Works published by the Society include Cordeaux and Merry's bibliographies of the City of Oxford (1976), Oxfordshire (1950), and a supplementary volume on Oxfordshire (1981). The Society's latest publication is *Early Records of University College*, edited by R.H. Darwall-Smith. Enquiries about subscription to the Society's publications should be addressed to: Dr E.M.P. Wells, 24 Tree Lane, Iffley, Oxford, OX4 4EY ([elizabeth.wells@bodleian.ox.ac.uk](mailto:elizabeth.wells@bodleian.ox.ac.uk)). Subscribers may purchase previous publications at reduced prices.

## OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

The Association was founded in 1980 to further the study of local history in the County, and in particular to promote links between amateur local historians and academic and professional bodies involved in local history. The Association organizes twice-yearly study days and publishes a regular newsletter and a journal, *Oxfordshire Local History*. Further details at: [www.olha.org.uk](http://www.olha.org.uk)

Enquiries about the Association should be addressed to the Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Liz Woolley, 138 Marlborough Road, Oxford, OX1 4LS ([membership@olha.org.uk](mailto:membership@olha.org.uk)).

## BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Society publishes volumes of records relating to Banbury and its neighbourhood, including parts of Northamptonshire and Warwickshire as well as Oxfordshire. Thirty volumes have been published to date. These include all pre-General Registration Banbury Parish Registers, 1558—1838, now mostly out of print, but available on microfiche from Oxfordshire Family History Society, c/o Oxfordshire Studies, Central Library, Westgate, Oxford OX1 1DJ.

Recent volumes, available from Banbury Museum, include:

*An Alphabetical Digest of Rusher's 'Banbury Trades and Occupations Directory', 1832-1906*, ed. J. Gibson;  
*Victorian Squaron: The Diaries of William Cotton Risley, of Deddington, 1, 1835-1848, 2, 1849-1869*, ed. G. Smedley-Stevenson; *Banbury Past through Artists' Eyes*, S. Townsend and J. Gibson

In preparation:

*Life (and Death) in Georgian Banbury*.

The Society's magazine, *Cake and Cockhorse*, is issued to members three times a year. Those from 1959 to 2003 are available to buy on a CD-ROM or free online at [www.banburyhistory.org](http://www.banburyhistory.org).

Subscriptions (£13) are payable to the Hon. Secretary, c/o Banbury Museum, Spiceball Park Road, Banbury, OX16 2PQ.

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# Contents

Officers and Committee of the Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society	vii
List of Abbreviations	viii
List of Contributors	x
ARTICLES	
Historic Routes in Cherwell District, North Oxfordshire PHILIP MASTERS and SALLY STRADLING	1
An Early Anglo-Saxon Great Hall at Benson? An Alternative Interpretation of the Excavated Evidence ADAM MCBRIDE	19
Common Carriers in Medieval England: Evidence from Oxford Archives RICHARD SHARPE	27
William Butterfield's Patrons and Clients in Oxford JENNIFER HARRISON	63
The Camel that Escaped the Nazis: Paul Jacobsthal and a Tang Camel at the Ashmolean KATHARINA ULMSCHNEIDER and SALLY CRAWFORD	87
REPORTS	
Farmoor to Blunsdon Water Main: Excavations along the Pipeline Route, 2001 to 2004 JONATHAN HART	99
The Excavation of Mesolithic Flint and an Early Medieval Enclosure at Rushey Weir, near Bampton STEVEN TEAGUE and BEN M. FORD	153
Medieval and Later Activity at Worcester College, Worcester Street, Oxford STEVEN TEAGUE and BEN M. FORD	179
NOTES	
Archaeological Work in Oxford, 2015 DAVID RADFORD	227
Archaeological Work in Oxfordshire, 2015 HUGH CODDINGTON, RICHARD ORAM and SUSAN LISK	233
The Portable Antiquities Scheme in Oxfordshire, 2015 ANNI BYARD	239
Building Recording and Test Pits at Brasenose College, Oxford ALISON KELLY, CHRIS RICHARDSON, MIKE SIMS and ROBIN BASHFORD	247
REVIEWS	
Duncan W. Wright, <i>'Middle Saxon' Settlement and Society</i> ; George Molyneaux, <i>The Formation of the English Kingdom in the Tenth Century</i> STUART BROOKES	253
Emilie Amt (ed.), <i>The Latin Cartulary of Godstow Abbey</i> MARK PAGE	254

Alan Bott, <i>Merton College: A Longer History of the Buildings and Furnishings</i> GEOFFREY TYACK	256
Sue Simpson, <i>Sir Henry Lee (1533–1611): Elizabethan Courtier</i> R.B. PEBERDY	257
Antony Buxton, <i>Domestic Culture in Early Modern England</i> STEPHEN MILESON	259
Raymond Moody, <i>Burford's Churches and Churchmen</i> COLIN HAYDON	260
Jeremy Catto (ed.), <i>Oriel College: A History</i> MARTIN MURPHY	261
Nina Morgan and Philip Powell, <i>The Geology of Oxford Gravestones</i> R.B. PEBERDY	263
David Bebbington, <i>Mister Brownrigg's Boys: Magdalen College School and the Great War</i> ; Chris Farman, Valery Rose and Liz Woolley, <i>No Other Way: Oxfordshire and the Spanish Civil War 1936–39</i> MEIRIAN JUMP	264
R.W. Johnson, <i>Look Back in Laughter: Oxford's Postwar Golden Age</i> A.J. HEGARTY	266
INDEX	269

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# Abbreviations

Abbreviated titles are used in each article after the first full citation. In addition, the following are used throughout the volume or in particular articles:

BAR	British Archaeological Reports (Oxford, 1974–)
BAR BS	British Archaeological Reports, British Series
BAR IS	British Archaeological Reports, International Series
BCA	Balliol College Archive
BL	British Library, London
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
BRO	Berkshire Record Office
CBM	ceramic building material
ECA	Exeter College Archive
EPNS	English Place-Name Society
EVE	estimated vessel equivalent
Fig./Figs.	figure/figures
f./ff.	folio/folios
FLO	Finds Liaison Officer
HER	Historic Environment Record
IoAO	Institute of Archaeology, Oxford
JMHS	John Moore Heritage Services
KC(A)	Keble College (Archive)
MCA	Merton College Archive
MCR	Merton College Register
<i>MedArch</i>	<i>Medieval Archaeology</i> (London, 1958–)
MOLA	Museum of London Archaeology
MS	manuscript
n.	note
NCA	New College Archive
n.d.	no date
ns	new series
OA	Oxford Archaeology
OBR	Oxfordshire Buildings Record
OD	Ordnance Datum
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> (Oxford, 2004)
OHC	Oxfordshire History Centre
OHS	Oxford Historical Society
ORS	Oxfordshire Record Society
OS	Ordnance Survey
os	old/original series
OUDE	Oxford University Department for Continuing Education
OUSA	Oxford Union Society Archive
OXCMS	Oxfordshire County Museum Service
PHA	Pusey House Archive
QCA	Queen's College Archive
r.	recto
<i>SMidA</i>	<i>South Midlands Archaeology</i> (Oxford, 1983–) [formerly CBA Group 9 Newsletter]
TNA: PRO	The National Archives, Public Record Office, Kew



TS	typescript
TVAS	Thames Valley Archaeological Services
v.	verso
VCH	<i>Victoria History of the Counties of England</i> (London, 1900–) [ <i>Victoria County History</i> ]
vol.	volume

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# NOTES

## Archaeological Work in Oxford, 2015

This year saw the return of archaeologists to the Westgate Shopping Centre and its car parks thirty-nine years after the Oxford Archaeological Excavation Committee concluded its ground-breaking excavation at the site.<sup>1</sup> Recording of one kind or another took place at the four-hectare Westgate development site throughout the year, alongside an extensive public outreach programme (Fig. 1). Elsewhere in the city significant archaeological excavations were undertaken at Magdalen and Queen's colleges, continuing the recent pattern of significant development within historic college precincts. The initial results of these and other selected sites are summarized below.

### *The Westgate Development – Enabling Works*

Between January and February OA excavated the plots of four early nineteenth-century houses from the now demolished suburb of St Ebbes. The two plots located on former Bull Street both revealed similar good-quality limestone house foundations and an outhouse structure backing onto the Trill Mill stream. The two plots excavated on former Friar Street were found to be of lower-quality construction with perhaps different builders responsible for each plot. Evidence for backyard dumping was recovered in the form of shallow pits and a well containing pottery and other refuse. Elsewhere other site works included a targeted borehole survey of previously recorded palaeo-channels and a watching brief during the installation of new service routes. In April the ground reduction for the Trill Mill stream diversion along Abbey Place exposed a stone-lined channel that would have carried water to the nearby Franciscan friary.

### *The Westgate Development – Main Phase of Work*

Over the summer the southern precinct of the town's medieval Franciscan friary was investigated by OA revealing an extensive arrangement of largely robbed-out stone walls, channels, localized rubbish pits and isolated floor surfaces. Notable discoveries include the well-preserved friary kitchen or bakehouse with intact floor levels and the stone built conduit that provided the site with running water. To the south of the friary, sections were excavated through the Royalist seventeenth-century Civil War defences and a section was excavated across the Trill Mill stream. Discoveries from the latter site included an ox skeleton embedded in a medieval channel and an enigmatic compacted gravel surface of likely anthropogenic origin. Scientific dating of the alluvium above this surface has produced a middle Bronze-Age date.

Towards the end of the year the main friary excavation moved southwards revealing thirteenth-century floodplain reclamation deposits, further robbed out friary buildings and the well-built precinct wall. A large waterlogged linear pit (or channel?) was found to be associated with a long narrow building and provisionally identified as the earliest structures associated with post-reclamation activity in the thirteenth century. The waterlogged pit proved to be rich in finds including numerous wooden and leather artefacts.

Targeted interventions below the dumped reclamation deposit revealed localized prehistoric, late Anglo-Saxon and Norman activity. The excavation also revealed how a

<sup>1</sup> T.G. Hassall et al., 'Excavations in St. Ebbes, Oxford, 1967-1976: Part 1: Late Saxon and Medieval Domestic Occupation and Tenements, and the Medieval Greyfriars', *Oxoniensia*, 54 (1989), pp. 71-278.



*Fig. 1. Aerial view of Westgate excavation. Photograph by Oxford Archaeology.*

variety of approaches were adopted by thirteenth-century builders in order to provide stable foundations for the friary buildings located on the reclaimed floodplain. These included the use of compacted gravel foundations, stone relieving arches and clusters of wooden piles. Over 2,000 wooden piles were recovered from the site. Remarkably, perhaps 35 per cent of these proved to be re-used medieval building timbers. These were carefully assessed and recorded, with exemplary pieces submitted for freeze drying and retention by the Oxfordshire Museum Service.

South of the Trill Mill stream a series of north–south channels were recorded. Some of these preserved stone and timber structures belonging to medieval and post-medieval water management systems. As the year drew to a close a second large section across the Trill Mill stream was excavated in order to develop an understanding of the evolution of the channel from its early Holocene origins. Work then began extending this section southwards to allow the completion of a detailed transect of the wider floodplain. Elsewhere a watching brief was maintained during basement reduction. Further recording, including additional targeted excavation, was to follow in 2016.

The project also involved an extensive outreach programme comprising projects with local schools, guided walks, pop-up museum displays, a site blog, a viewing platform, two public open days (which attracted over 3,500 visitors), and extensive media coverage. A series of public talks covering the history, context and results of the Westgate excavation are available on YouTube.<sup>2</sup>

#### *The Former Ruskin College Site, Walton Street*

Between April 2014 and February 2015 OA undertook an archaeological watching brief during building work at the former Ruskin Building on Walton Street. A c.4.5-m wide ditch aligned roughly east–west was recorded which corresponds with a section of the seventeenth-century Civil War defences depicted by Bernard de Gomme on his contemporary map of the fortifications around the city.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xUXl74GEvc>.

*The New Library, Magdalen College*

Beginning in October 2014 and concluding in April 2015 OA undertook a complex excavation within the New Library at Magdalen College, where the basement was being lowered and extended. Because of structural concerns for the nineteenth-century library, the excavation was undertaken in a series of separated strips, each of which was in-filled by the main contractor before the next was begun. The results from each strip then had to be fitted together and interpreted. Evidence for floors, walls and hearths belonging to medieval properties fronting onto High Street (formerly Bridge Street) were recorded, including a thick-walled stone-built industrial building on the corner of Longwall Street that is likely to have been a forge. A large east-west ditch and finds including burnt daub were recorded below the medieval structures and may relate to late Anglo-Saxon extra-mural activity along what was probably the main road between the *burh* to the west and the Cherwell crossing point to the east.

*The Old Cloister, Brasenose College*

In January a small-scale excavation by OA continued from 2014 inside The Old Cloister at Brasenose College. Archaeologists were tasked with ensuring a planned floor reduction did not impact on burials within the cloister and investigating surviving strata between the burial cuts. A sequence of compacted floor make-ups and occasional patches of stone flooring were observed. Three jetons were recovered from beneath the floors which narrow the likely date range for the structure or structures represented to c.1586–1650.

*St Cross College, St Giles*

Between February and March OA undertook recording of a number of stone-built boundary walls followed by an area excavation in the rear garden of St Cross College prior to the construction of a new accommodation, lecture theatre and library block. A boundary ditch that may be associated with the twelfth-century royal Beaumont Palace and later Carmelite friary was examined and a number of eighteenth- to nineteenth-century walls and waste pits were recorded. A surprise discovery was the inhumation burial of a young woman. Two seventeenth-century coins were recovered which may have been placed over her eyes or mouth, including a silver half groat of Charles I.

*The Provost's Garden, The Queen's College*

Between March and May OA undertook an excavation in the Provost's Garden at The Queen's College prior to the construction of an underground library (Fig. 2). The excavation exposed late Anglo-Saxon metalled surfaces, associated cellar pits and postholes, all on a different orientation to the rectilinear arrangement of the primary streets of the *burh* recorded to the west. The site was an orchard and garden through much of the post-medieval period but also appears to have been used for gravel extraction and dumping at this time. A successful open day was held on 18th April which was attended by over 750 visitors.

*Former Shidyerd Street and Garden Quad, Corpus Christi College*

In April OA undertook a radar survey, resistivity survey and borehole transect in Garden Quad and evaluation trenching along the line of the former Shidyerd Street. The radar survey and borehole survey failed to find any evidence for the primary *burh* defences. The resistivity survey identified a numbers of possible garden landscaping features. The Shidyerd Street trenches revealed a series of clay silt deposits and limestone rubble surfaces dating from the pre- and post-Conquest periods. Charred material, wood and seeds, animal bones recovered from these features may represent trample and/or domestic refuse deposited by the occupiers of structures fronting on to the street in the late Anglo-Saxon to early Norman period. The uppermost surface may have been fourteenth century in date, and perhaps contemporary with the acquisition of the lower end of Shidyerd Street by Merton College in 1321. The



*Fig. 2. The Provost's Garden, The Queen's College, showing the excavation at the end of April 2015. Photograph by Oxford Archaeology.*

deposits overlying this were identified as sixteenth century in date and may relate to the early use of the site following the foundation of Corpus Christi in 1517. In August a second phase of evaluation was undertaken in Garden Quad of Corpus Christi college by Museum of London Archaeology. A sequence of tip layers containing mixed soil, mortar, tile and pottery of medieval and post-medieval date were recorded along with a ditch containing eighteenth-century material.

#### *New Physics Building, University Science Area, Parks Road*

Between May and July Cotswold Archaeology excavated the footprint of a new Physics Building on Parks Road prior to construction. The excavation recorded sections through the seventeenth-century Royalist Civil War defences. A tunnelled service trench under Parks Road encountered a large feature that may be the eastern ditch of the St John's College henge.

#### *Nos. 114–119 St. Aldate's and Nos. 4–5 Queen Street*

In July OA undertook an archaeological evaluation at Nos. 114–119 St Aldate's and Nos. 4–5 Queen Street. Three test pits were excavated within the basements of 114–119 St Aldate's. Medieval horizons were identified comprising domestic waste pits, demolition material, walls and a compacted gravel surface. Late Anglo-Saxon and thirteenth- to fourteenth-century pottery was recovered. Notable finds included a likely crucible fragment that may suggest small-scale processing of bronze nearby, food waste and a leather shoe from a probable cess pit.

#### *The Barton Park Development*

Between October and December a targeted excavation was undertaken by OA prior to the construction of an extensive new housing development at Barton Park. The earliest features identified were a series of parallel drainage ditches potentially of late Iron-Age or early

Roman date. An early copper alloy AS coin of Nero (AD 65–68) and local grey ware pottery were recovered from these ditches. The early Roman phase appears to have been replaced in the second to fourth century by a more extensive and organised agricultural landscape of rectangular fields, a 'D'-shaped enclosure and droveways. A field-edge cremation and associated pyre pit of likely Roman date were also recorded. In addition, a spearhead, knife, horseshoe and horseshoe nail were recovered from across the excavated areas. All four items were of pre-Conquest date.

#### *Building Recording*

Over the year historic building recording projects were undertaken by a variety of contractors on a range of structures, including: The East Cloister range, Christ Church; the Fell tower, Christ Church; No. 98 St Aldate's; the President's Garden wall and Parks Road wall, St John's College; the Canterbury Quad, rooms C4.1, C4.2 and C4.3, St John's College; the hall including the kitchen, buttery bar and pantries, Balliol College; and No. 1 Abbey Road, Osney, the former Kingerlee's building yard.

DAVID RADFORD, CITY ARCHAEOLOGIST