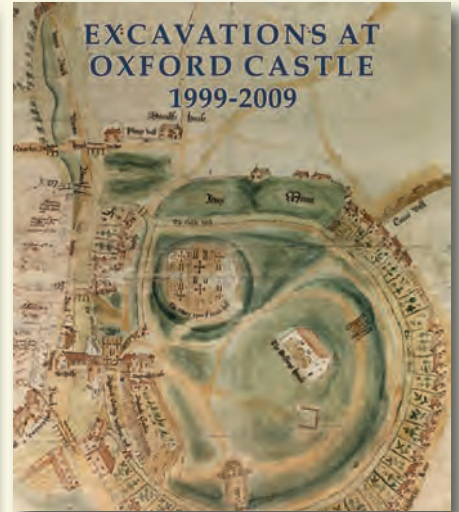


# IN TOUCH

## Review 2018/19





## In Touch from Gill *Gill Hey*

Five years ago, Oxford Archaeology embarked on a strategy with a '2020 Vision' to be 'at the forefront of advancing knowledge about the past and working in partnership with others for the public benefit'. As 2020 approaches, and we develop a new strategy for OA, we have been considering how far we have met the key aims we set ourselves at the end of 2014 (<https://oxfordarchaeology.com/articles/732-our-vision>). This edition of In Touch reflects on some of our major discoveries and how they have advanced our knowledge of the past of these islands. Through a set of thematic pieces, we describe extensive Mesolithic landscapes, practices and exchange networks that anticipated Neolithic strategies; new understandings of the organisation of Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement and field systems as revealed at a landscape level in the East of England, South Oxfordshire and Somerset; Roman-period industrial activity and evidence for the use of slaves in the late Roman farming economy; and the extent of immigration in the early medieval period, and health, diet and population movement (or not) in places as far apart as Ipswich, Oxford and Workington in Cumbria.

We also share with you the exciting results of the investment we have made in digital innovation. Following extensive trials of our new digital recording system, we are now launching the system for all our work.

The main section of In Touch picks out some of the key investigations we undertook last year in advance of housing, infrastructure and urban regeneration, which also contribute exciting results for our understanding of the past. They have demonstrated public benefit on behalf of



our clients, who are expected by the National Planning Policy Framework (2018) to deliver sustainability through economic, social and environment value.

OA staff have been tireless in their efforts to get these results known widely – holding open days and giving talks to local groups and at regional and national conferences. We have featured in numerous press, TV and radio coverage too. However, a special thank you must go to our post-excavation and publication teams who this year alone have published a stunning seven monographs, four popular publications and several journal articles. The public has been well served!

It is now time for us to think about the next five years and, having discussed the challenges we face with the Trustees and among our managers, we are in the process of consulting widely with staff about OA's future direction. What sort of organisation do we want to be in five years' time, and what objectives do we have to make sure we are successful in our ambitions? Our clients can rest assured that we will continue to deliver a highly professional service, and that the highest archaeological, business, ethical, safety and environmental standards are central to the plan. We will be launching the strategy early in 2020, so watch our website!





## **4 Fulfilling our vision**

Early Prehistory – Later Prehistory – The Roman Period –  
The Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Periods – The Archaeology  
of the Cold War

## **14 Spotlight on Digital Development**

A New Approach to Digital Recording

## **16 Housing and Mixed Development**

Duke Street, Norwich – Wharf Farm, Rugby – Worthy  
Down, Winchester – Harlow, Essex – Buckton Fields,  
Northampton – Wymondham, Norfolk – Old Place Yard,  
Bicester – Warth Park, Raunds, Northamptonshire –  
Buckden, Cambridgeshire – Innsworth, Gloucestershire

### **Geoarchaeology**

Oxford Paleolandscapes

## **22 Historic Buildings**

Gasholders – Bembridge Fort, Isle of Wight – Norwich  
Cathedral School, Norwich

### **Burials**

Bingham, Nottinghamshire

## **24 Infrastructure**

Eye Airfield, Yaxley – Caernarfon to Bontnewydd Bypass –  
Gateway Peterborough

## **26 Urban Regeneration**

Osney Power Station, Oxford – Paradise Street, Oxford – St  
Aldates, Oxford

### **Community**

Wimpole Hall, Cambridgeshire

## **28 Heritage Services**

Beeston Castle, Chester – Sutton Characterisation Project

## **29 Conferences and Talks & Media Roundup**

## **30 A Year of Community Archaeology**

## **32 OA in Print**

## **34 Who is Oxford Archaeology?**

## **36 Where we've been working in 2018-19**





# OUR VISION

OUR VISION IS TO BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF ADVANCING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE PAST AND WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHERS FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFIT.

## EARLY PREHISTORY

Fraser Brown

Oxford Archaeology has continued to build on its reputation for innovation and expertise in early prehistoric studies. This has been recognised by Historic England's commissions to produce updated guidelines for 'Managing Lithic Scatters and Sites' and to lead 'The Lost Landscapes of Palaeolithic Britain' project.

Cutting-edge research on several major excavations has produced nationally significant results for the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic periods. The in-house specialisms that OA possesses have made this possible, with new digital technologies facilitating close collaboration between teams.

It is impossible to mention them all, but notable examples include rare open-air Upper Palaeolithic settlements in Cambridgeshire, at Hinxton, and at Guildford, Surrey. On the Isle of Man, a 10,000-year-old Mesolithic house is the earliest archaeological site to be discovered there. At Langford, in Essex, a cremation burial was radiocarbon dated to the sixth millennium cal BC and is thus the first Mesolithic burial of this kind known from mainland Britain. Neolithic monuments include causewayed enclosures at Thame and Harlow and hengiform monuments at Newark and Raunds.

The Bexhill to Hastings Link Road stands out because of its sheer scale and amply illustrates the benefits to be derived from a collaborative approach. The potential of the site was demonstrated by a geoarchaeological evaluation. Subsequent excavation revealed an extensive landscape, containing over 200 individual lithic sites and scatters, with approximately half a million lithic finds being recovered. A fantastic set of radiocarbon dates has enabled typological



Left: Newark hengiform enclosure. Opposite page, from top left: A selection of polished flint from the Carlisle Northern Relief Road excavation; Ronaldsway Mesolithic house. Background: Bexhill to Hastings Link Road excavation.





changes to be sequenced. The results of the initial assessment are astounding, and the project will surely re-write the Mesolithic period for southern Britain. Methodologically, Bexhill demonstrates the value of excavating and accurately recording such huge assemblages.

A similar approach had previously been adopted at Stainton West on the Carlisle Northern Relief Road. The excavation of a long-lived and intensely occupied late Mesolithic settlement site produced 300,000 lithic finds (the largest excavated microlithic assemblage in northern Britain) associated with archaeological features and waterlogged organic remains. The analysis has demonstrated that despite the site being a palimpsest of hundreds of years of activity, dwellings and different activity areas can be distinguished. The wide range of lithic raw materials present, often from geographically remote sources, shows that Mesolithic communities of Northern Britain were well connected. Controversially, pieces of polished stone adzes/axes from Mesolithic contexts suggest that Langdale was already quarried for stone and that hunter-gatherers used these objects, before Neolithic farmers populated the region.

To retrieve the lithic finds, and for the first time in the UK, both projects utilised a sieving system adopted from the Netherlands and both archives have been recorded digitally onto web-based databases, which will make them accessible for others to study. Numerous public and academic presentations have also been given, to bring the results to the widest possible audience. On the basis of Stainton West, and in collaboration with the University of Central Lancashire, OA was successful in winning an Arts and Humanities Research Council award to fund two doctorates studying the Mesolithic/Neolithic transition in Cumbria.



# LATER PREHISTORY

Tom Phillips



Over the last five years Oxford Archaeology has continued to be at the forefront of later prehistoric studies, with a focus on settlement forms and patterns, dating and chronology, transitions between periods and changing burial practices.

As a result of developer-funded excavation, the range of middle Bronze Age settlement-types has expanded, with a few key sites highlighting the degree of variability. Two sites in the east of England – Bell Farm to the north of Norwich and Melbourn in Cambridgeshire – are notable for their extensive use of fence-lines or post-alignments as a means of dividing the land, combined with more traditional ditched enclosures and post-built roundhouses. Whilst other, contemporary sites display evidence for similar land divisions, Bell Farm and Melbourn show a higher level of complexity and are of national significance.

Another site which stands out is Bridgwater Gateway in Somerset, where, along the brow of a small escarpment, there was a set of large Bronze Age enclosures associated with at least two structures and a noteworthy assemblage of pottery. The enclosures were of unusual form for the period, being oval, polygonal and rectilinear in shape.

At a landscape level, a series of sites in south Oxfordshire, earmarked for housing, have revealed a picture of the Bronze Age and Iron Age which is new for the region. A middle Bronze Age field system was found at Grove, while a middle Bronze Age



From top: posthole alignment, Bell Farm; an Iron Age pit during excavation at Didcot; Iron Age burial during excavation from Thame. Opposite page: The 'Ronaldsway village'



field system and late Bronze Age settlement was recorded at Didcot. Evidence for the late Bronze Age to early Iron Age transition was also present at Didcot. Occupation there continued throughout the Iron Age, a sequence paralleled at Slade End Farm, Wallingford. Significantly, the south Oxfordshire sites have cast doubt on the absolute chronology of the Iron Age in the Thames Valley, with radiocarbon dating suggesting that the middle Iron Age did not begin until around 300-250 cal BC.

Contrasting with sites in southern England is a long-lived and unparalleled settlement at Ronaldsway, on the Isle of Man, occupied from the middle Bronze Age to the end of the Iron Age. A linear settlement included stone-kerbed roundhouses with sunken floors that were decommissioned in the Iron Age and sealed by cairns. One of the burials was of a man wearing an amulet, who probably died in battle. These findings contextualise the 'Ronaldsway Village' site first excavated in the 1930s and help situate the island in a wider Atlantic Seaboard tradition.

Several sites excavated in East Anglia – among them Fordham, Witchford and Blackborough End – have advanced our understanding of Bronze Age burial practices, with radiocarbon dating proving that cremation burial continued until the very end of the Bronze Age – much longer than previously thought. Burials excavated at Thame in Oxfordshire are contributing to a Europe-wide genetics study which aims to chart population movement or continuity over the Bronze Age and Iron Age transition.

A host of other sites deserve a brief mention, if only to highlight the diversity of discoveries made. These include an impressive series of burnt mounds with plank-lined troughs at Caernarfon in Wales, Iron Age square barrows at Beverley in East Yorkshire, and from Harlow in Essex a large and significant assemblage of early Iron Age pottery in association with unenclosed settlement.





# THE ROMAN PERIOD

*Edward Biddulph*

In recent years, Oxford Archaeology has made a significant contribution to our knowledge of Roman Britain, with exciting discoveries in the field and research undertaken by our renowned specialists back in the office and the laboratory. Local communities have played a part, as well, having been involved in some of our key sites.

Large infrastructure schemes have exposed a wealth of settlement, agricultural and industrial evidence as they cut across miles of changing landscape. A bloomery site, where raw iron ore was processed and smelted into iron ready to be shaped into a huge variety of objects, was found along the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road in East Sussex. Few Roman bloomery sites excavated within the Weald have been published in any comprehensive way. Analysis, which is ongoing, will therefore offer crucial insight into the organisation, the operational sequence and technology of the industry, and the people who lived and worked at the site.

Excavations in advance of a programme of improvements to the railway between Bicester and Oxford investigated part of the south-eastern extramural settlement of the Roman fortress and town at Alchester. An insight into the diverse lives of the inhabitants is provided by finds that included part of a priestly headdress, two pairs of slave shackles and a group of roof tiles bearing the footprints of a young child.

More recently, an exceptionally well-preserved 125m length of Roman road that led to the fort and vicus of Segontium was revealed by excavations along the Caernarfon to Bontnewydd bypass.

Discoveries made ahead of housing or other developments have been no less important. One of the most interesting features at Maylands Gateway in Hemel Hempstead was a lime kiln located at the edge of a large chalk quarry. The structure survived to a height of over 2m and originally produced lime used in the construction of a nearby temple.



*A lime kiln under excavation at Maylands Gateway, Hemel Hempstead. Opposite page, from top: A furnace from the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road bloomery site; footprint from a young child or toddler on a roof tile found on the Bicester to Oxford Rail Link; community excavation at Maryport*





Wider acknowledgment of the kiln's significance came when an image of the structure was chosen for the cover of a volume of *Britannia*, a prestigious national journal devoted to the subject of Roman Britain.

Our work is also contributing to a better understanding of the Roman rural landscape. In Newark-on-Trent, for example, OA's field team uncovered several well-preserved pottery kilns. Few kilns were known in the region before the excavation.

Some of our discoveries could not have been made without the involvement and support of the public. Our two season excavation in the extramural settlement north-east of the Roman fort at Maryport on the Cumbrian coast was largely carried out by volunteers. The highly anticipated publication was launched at the Hadrian's Wall Pilgrimage with the great and the good of Roman archaeology in attendance and is testament to the quality of the fieldwork.

At Wimpole Hall in Cambridgeshire, a team of volunteer metal detectorists retrieved some 300 objects, among them a figurine thought to represent the Gaulish deity 'Cernunnos'. The find is unique in Roman Britain and has gained a lot of attention in the national and international press.

In the world of Roman archaeology, our vision of being at the forefront of advancing knowledge about the past and working in partnership with others for the public benefit is certainly a reality.





# THE ANGLO-SAXON AND MEDIEVAL PERIODS

Liz Popescu

Recent years have seen major advances in our understanding of the transition from Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England. Many OA sites are contributing to developing theories about the chronology and character of activity in the 5th century, while the 6th century is the subject of scientific research in relation to the potential impact of the Justinianic plague (an outbreak of plague similar in its impact to that of the 'Black Death' of the 14th century).

Key to these issues are cemetery studies, demonstrating the gradual process of conversion to Christianity and contributing to themes such as foreign identity. Scientific research by the Wellcome Trust, based on our excavations in East Anglia, shows that an estimated 38% of the local population owes its ancestry to Anglo-Saxon migrations. Excavations at Hatherdene Close, Cherry Hinton, contained an exceptionally well stratified late 5th- to mid 7th-century cemetery which succeeded a Roman cemetery; its analysis is adopting new approaches to seriation and dating, linked to the recently published corpus, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods of the 6th and 7th Centuries AD: A Chronological Framework*. The cemetery at St Michael's, Workington proved to be one of the earliest Christian burial sites in Northern England (originating in the first half of the 7th century), while a site near Dacre, also in Cumbria, was almost certainly the monastery mentioned by Bede in AD 731 in his *Ecclesiastical History*. Two other notable cemeteries of the 7th to early 8th century, at Gipeswic (Ipswich, Stoke Quay) and Woolwich (an early settlement related to the wool trade), belong to emerging trading settlements. Equally significant is emerging evidence for varying types of rural settlement. Excavation at Conington near Cambridge by COPA (a consortium of Cotswold Archaeology, Oxford Archaeology and Pre-Construct Archaeology) as part of the A14 project revealed an open settlement of the 5th to 7th century which was superseded by a defended royal enclosure of 7th- to 8th-century date (Conington is thought to mean 'the King's enclosure' or 'estate'), positioned close to the boundary between the Mercian and East Anglian kingdoms. Additionally, a possible Anglo-Saxon agrarian estate centre is currently being excavated at Buckden in western Cambridgeshire, which is again producing nationally significant results.

Later Anglo-Saxon research has focused on the origins and economies of various historic towns including Wallingford, Ipswich and Norwich. Ipswich is amongst England's oldest urban centres and one of the few 8th century settlements with urban

Excavation of the Norwich Castle Keep. Opposite page from top: A burial from Workington; a tripod pitcher from St Aldates, Oxford; Excavation at St Aldates, Oxford; the Saxon cemetery at Cherry Hinton





characteristics. The forthcoming publication of the Stoke Quay excavation contains crucial new information about this emporium and the site is contributing to the FeedSax project, re-evaluating the origins of open field farming (AD 600-1300).

Viking-period sites include the cemetery at Cumwhitton, Cumbria, of probable early 10th-century date. Very few such burials (particularly those of females) have been found in Western Europe and we contributed to a highly popular display for the Tullie House Museum in Carlisle in 2016. The second phase of burial at St Michael's, Workington, is remarkably tightly dated to the first half of the 11th century, with stable isotope analysis indicating individuals born locally.

New technologies have provided stunning evidence for the medieval use of Oxford's river valleys (the Thames and the Cherwell) and associated flood-plains. Close to the River Orwell in Ipswich, analysis of the late Saxon to medieval cemetery of St Augustine revealed nationally significant information about this port population, with critical new findings on issues such as health, diet and population

movement. At St Aldates in Oxford, excavations at the medieval Jewry yielded evidence consistent with Jewish dietary law (the *kashrut*), both from the faunal remains and organic residue analysis. This is the first time that such a zooarchaeological signature has been recorded in Britain.

Opportunities to excavate at major castle sites are exceptionally rare. We have therefore been fortunate to undertake research investigations beneath Norwich Castle Keep as part of the Gateway to Medieval England project for Norwich Castle Museum; the work is using geotechnical data to produce the first detailed analysis of the construction of England's largest Norman motte. This year has also seen publication of the major monograph on Oxford Castle, which combines historical, documentary and pictorial evidence with archaeological excavations and historic building recording. Building on our reputation for such work, in the past few years, we have contributed to the Conservation Management Plans for Stokesay Castle, Shropshire and Beeston Castle, Cheshire.





# THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE COLD WAR

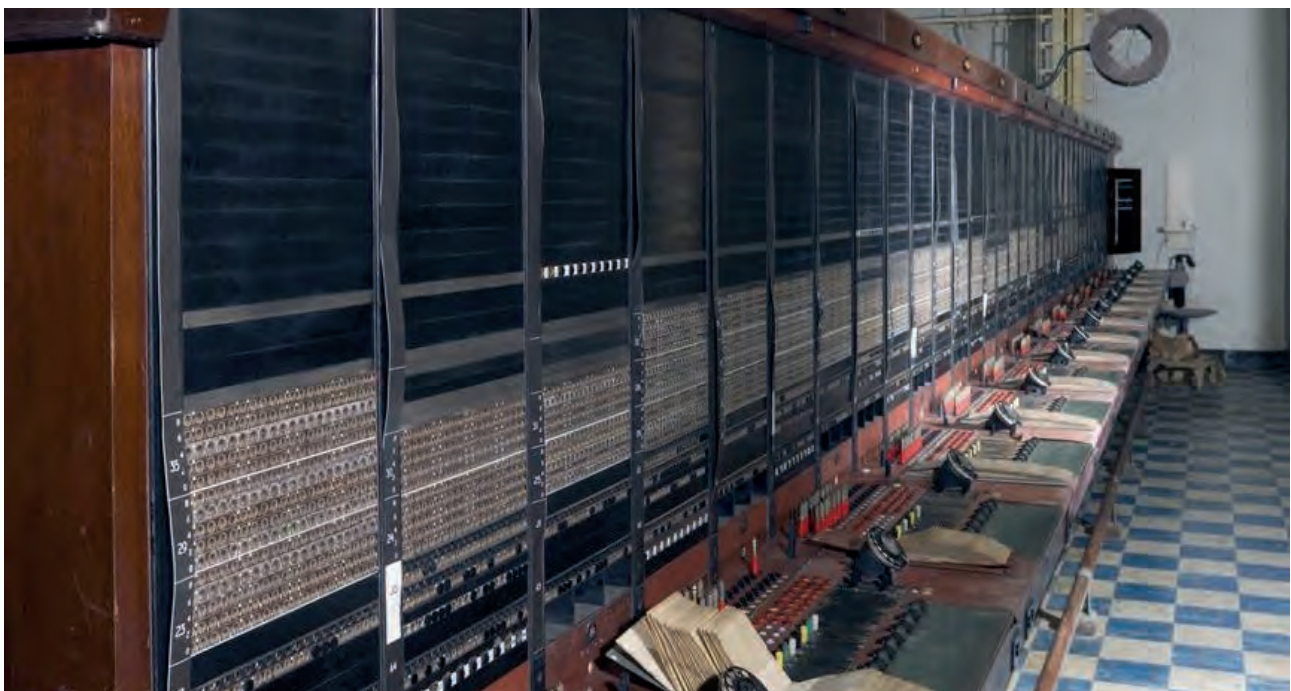
*Jane Phimester*

Oxford's Historic Buildings team has in recent years broken new ground in recording modern military archaeology. Our work has resulted in the scheduling of 1980/90s' concrete structures alongside the development of innovative recording techniques. Communication with heritage professionals, developers and the public has underpinned our work and we have seen a shift in the public's appreciation of the remains.

We have worked on a range of sites from the two World Wars, but our Cold War projects have had a particular impact on knowledge and the public imagination. The structures and landscapes visually lack the architectural allure of other periods, but their functional, austere and often bleak character reflects a pivotal point in our history when the policy of 'mutually assured destruction' was tested to its limits.

A project for Historic England on the Secret Government War Headquarters in Corsham (Wiltshire), is a key example. This was constructed in a stone mine to accommodate 4000 staff, including the prime minister and central government, for three months in the event of nuclear fallout. The complex has canteens, hospitals, offices, and immense areas of communication equipment. The fortunate fact that fallout did not occur created a time capsule of 1960s' Britain.

Our work included the first characterisation study of a modern military complex, during which we worked closely with communication experts to understand the significance of the equipment. A study to





understand the social impact of the site and the myths associated with it and an evaluation of its significance through a comparative analysis with international examples followed. This led to the scheduling of areas and a programme of outreach, including oral history and an website (<http://corsham.thehumanjourney.net/>).

We also completed conservation plans of Cold War complexes, including one of the Secret Wartime Tunnels at Dover Castle, to help guide their future protection. This included a similar, but smaller bunker, a regional seat of government to that at Corsham, which provides evidence of the evolution of policy to one of dispersal of government. We produced the first conservation plan of a modern military site – former RAF Upper Heyford – which remains an exemplar of its kind. During the Cold War, when the United States Airforce occupied the airbase, it was the largest airbase in Europe.

Our work resulted in the protection of buildings and areas and led to a shift in the historical negative public attitude to the airfield.

We recently finished recording the largest collection of war art in Britain, which was left by the servicemen on the airbase and provided an interesting cultural legacy. At another airbase, Alconbury, a large area of concrete with war art was removed and incorporated within a heritage centre.

Public access to many Cold War sites is problematic, which enhances the value of our work by allowing remote access. The common factor which inspires us, and has over the years kindled the public imagination, is the human context. Recent history allows us to relate readily to the archaeology, and provides links to those we may know who lived and worked within them. The symbolism of these places, and the different history that might have played out, further ignites the imagination.



*Opposite page, from top: Water tower at Upper Heyford; a telephone exchange from the Secret Government War Headquarters in Corsham. Top: War art from Upper Heyford Airbase. Bottom: Avionics Maintenance building from at Upper Heyford*





# A NEW APPROACH TO DIGITAL RECORDING

*Ken Welsh*

Over the last few months, we have been trialling a new digital system for site recording and the feedback of information to assist project teams with archaeological interpretation and decision-making. These trials, in all three offices, have been extremely successful and we are now ready to launch the system formally.

Rather than focus on entirely paper-free recording, we have concentrated on developing a system which promotes the creation of useful archaeological information on a timescale which makes it available to staff when it really matters – while still carrying out the excavation.

In other words, the system is designed to facilitate a truly iterative approach to excavation. Of course, this is not a new concept. Indeed, many would argue that the best excavations have always been done this way. This may be true to an extent, but everyone knows that modern archaeologists operate within a high-pressure environment and, with the best will in the world, it has not always been possible to avoid a mechanistic approach to excavation – digging by numbers, if you like. The





new system ensures that the iterative approach is achievable on every site, whatever the pressures, so allowing our dedicated and expert staff to make the right decisions based on real information.

The system consists of three parts, designed to make the best use of our existing systems in a way which does not require extensive on-site facilities:

**Survey** – most interventions through archaeological features are now captured using GPS rather than by drawing them by hand. More complex features can be recorded using photogrammetry or by hand-planning, but the use of GPS allows the plan of features to be updated rapidly.

**Digital Recording App (OADRS)** – used to capture site index data to ensure that the physical stuff we dig up (finds, soil samples etc) can be accurately linked to the plan of archaeological features. The data is entered via a web-based app, using a laptop, tablet or even a phone, and is uploaded instantly to secure OA servers.

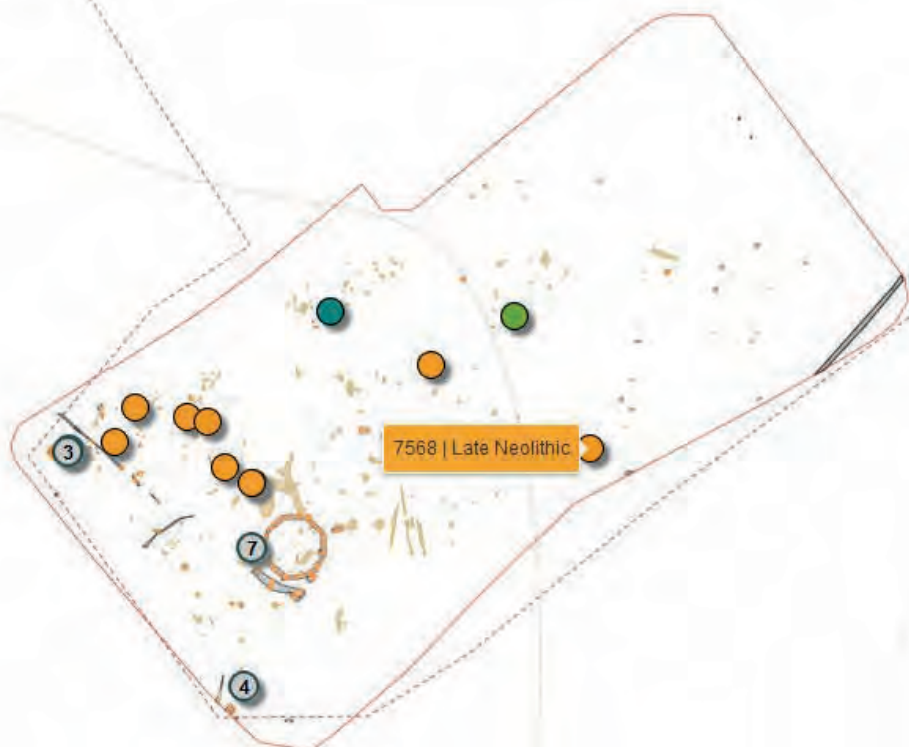
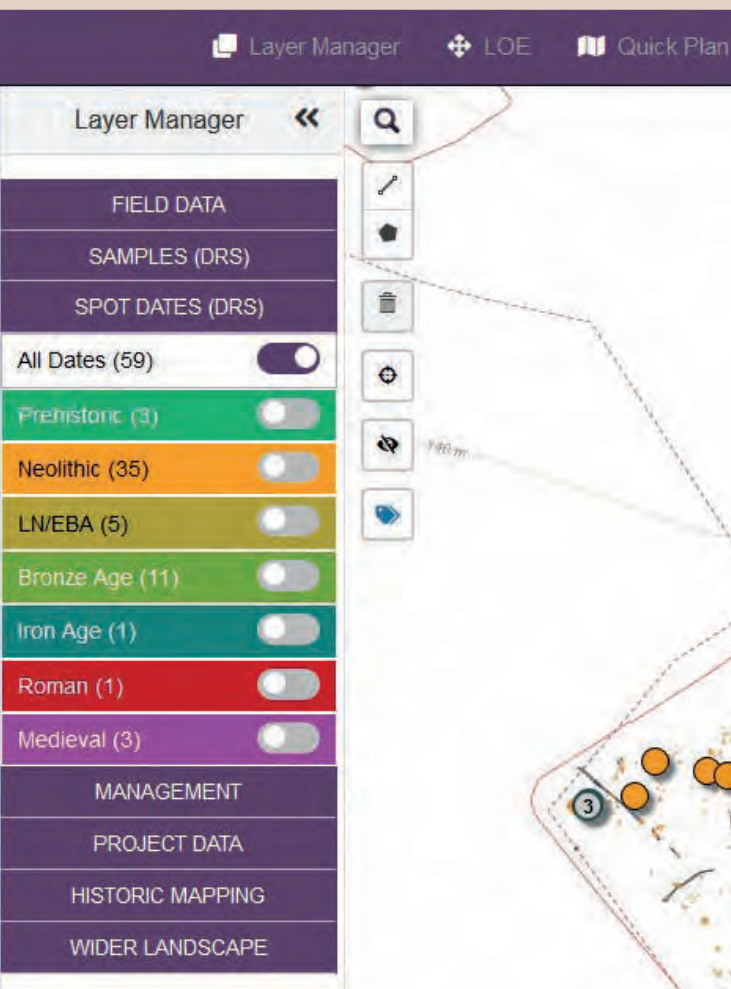
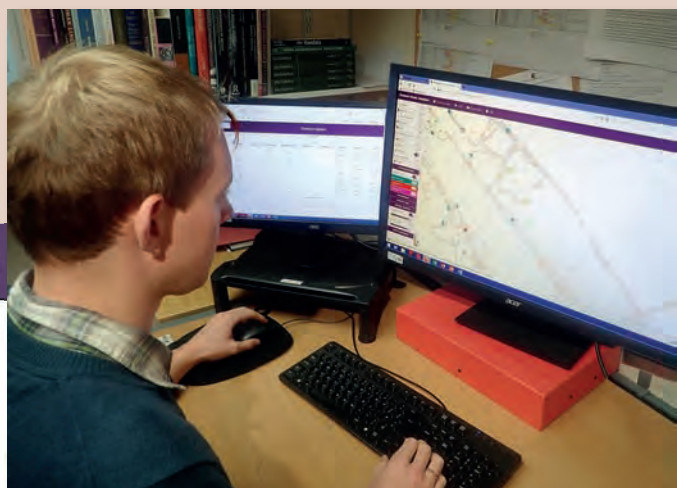
**OA WebMap** – a web-based app which brings together digital survey and context data with

information about finds and samples and displays it in an easy-to-use GIS viewer. It also gives access to a wide range of external data, including modern and historic mapping, satellite imagery, LiDAR data and much more.

The advantages the system brings extend beyond the fieldwork phase. It allows all members of the project team to engage with the developing investigation, smoothing the transition between site and office and providing new tools for post-excavation analysis. We can also provide WebMap access to our clients, their consultants and to the curatorial archaeologists involved in their projects. Without exception, this has been received extremely positively by all concerned. It can also form the basis for web-based outreach programmes, allowing the wider public to gain an insight into the archaeology of the areas they live in.

Looking forward, there is still much more that can be done and further development of the system will form an important part of our future digital strategy.

Opposite page, from top: OADRS in use during the recording of a burial; Surveyor mapping features; Using WebMap on site. Right: Using WebMap during post-excavation process. Bottom: Screen shot of the WebMap showing spot dates.





## BUCKTON FIELDS, NORTHAMPTON *Steve Lawrence*

During the summer, a team from OA South excavated a multi-period site on the northern edge of Northampton on behalf of Bloor Homes. Mesolithic flint artefacts in fresh condition were found within a silt deposit at the very base of the dry valley in which the site lay. Neolithic worked flints were recovered elsewhere in the silt, along with a few sherds of Peterborough Ware. Other early activity included a burnt mound deposit near a spring head. Middle to late Iron Age activity was defined by a group of pits and ditched enclosures, spread over the higher ground on the northern half of the site.

The Roman period was well represented and included a group of Roman structures at the spring head. These comprised three flue-like structures, each rounded at one end. Each structure displayed evidence of heating, but the heat did not appear to have been too intense. A more typical late Roman corn-dryer was present to the south of these flues. An enclosed inhumation cemetery was encountered on the northern slope. The types of burials recorded included prone and decapitated burials and are typical of the late Roman and early post-Roman periods.

Fourteen early Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured buildings were uncovered, mostly across the higher ground on the southern side of the valley. Three of the buildings contained antler, some with saw and cut marks denoting antler working.



Excavating stone lined grave

## WYMONDHAM, NORFOLK *Graeme Clarke*

Late in 2018, a team from OA East carried out an excavation on the southern fringes of Wymondham on behalf of Lovell Partnerships Ltd. Two Bronze Age ring-ditch monuments were exposed. The larger monument was some 20m in diameter, while the smaller monument was 16m in diameter. No evidence for a central inhumation burial was seen within either.

Significantly, two deposits of charcoal and cremated human bone were found within the upper fill of the ditch of the larger monument. This material may have originated from a nearby pyre site, its presence within the ditch indicating the continued importance of the ritual landscape after the monument's initial phase of use. The possibility of a nearby pyre site was supported by the discovery of a small group of eight cremations, located between the two monuments.

Both the monuments and cremation cemetery were encroached upon by the remains of settlement dating to the late Bronze Age. These remains consisted of several pits scattered across the site, along with multiple post-built structures. Fragments of clay thatch weights were recovered from pit deposits and two possible clay-lined hearths were recorded. Most importantly, perhaps, a fragment of what appears to be a ceramic mould was recovered from one of the pits, providing rare evidence for metal casting in Norfolk at the end of the Bronze Age.

Unexpectedly, these remains were also succeeded by Roman enclosures, constructed alongside a trackway. There was one final surprise: a Roman pottery kiln, which produced a significant quantity of grey ware pottery.



Top: pottery kiln under excavation. Right: late Bronze Age ceramic metal mould



## OLD PLACE YARD, BICESTER *Lee Broderick*

Post-excavation analysis in 2019 of the animal bones, recovered from an excavation and watching brief by OA South at Old Place Yard in Bicester in 2016 and 2017 for Cherwell District Council, offered insight into the diet of the medieval inhabitants and the local fauna.

The fieldwork focused on a medieval priory and on Saxon features associated with the earlier minster. Two large cess pits associated with the minster contained a large number of animal bones. Initial research looked at whether a discernible monastic diet – one with, for example, high proportions of wild animals and fish – could be identified. The evidence for this signature was equivocal and little could be read into the low proportions recovered here, although it was noted that the diversity of wild animals was high.

Intriguingly, there was evidence for hippophagy – the consumption of horse meat. Hippophagy was condemned by the Christian Church from the 8th century AD onwards – the origins of the taboo that exists in Britain today. It might be fair to suggest that the inhabitants were not too strict about their religious diet!

Another window into the Saxon site was opened by the bird bones present in the assemblage. These

included common buzzard, red kite and white-tailed eagle. All three are scavenging species and so were ill-suited for use in falconry. This meant that interpretations had to be ecological rather than economic. In this case, it is possible the birds represent no more than incidental killing of unwelcome pests.



Above: Juvenile white-tailed eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*. Photo Andreas Weith; Background: Illustration of a white-tailed eagle by Ralph Beilby in Thomas Bewick's *A History of British Birds*, volume 2 (1804)

## WARTH PARK, RAUNDS, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

*Louise Moan*

Post-excavation analysis carried out on a wooden arm, found in 2018 in a Roman-period well during excavations at Warth Park in Raunds for Roxhill Developments, has shed further light on this very unusual object.

Wood specialist Michael Bamforth of the University of York examined the arm and found that it had been finely carved from a single branch, which allowed the woodworker to make use of a natural curve to form the elbow. The piece was very well made, as no tool marks are visible on its surface. The hand is relatively slender and gracile and so, if it was intended as a life-sized piece, the arm represents that of a small adult or adolescent.

Intriguingly, the upper end of the object has no trace of jointing or other methods that could be used to attach the arm to a larger sculpture. The piece is therefore complete and made to represent a specific element of the body, rather than being a broken-off part of a larger figure. It is a strong possibility that the arm had been thrown into the well as a votive offering.

A fragment of the arm was radiocarbon-dated to cal AD 86-240, dating deposition to the early or mid-Roman period. Although carved wooden body parts deposited as votive offerings are known from

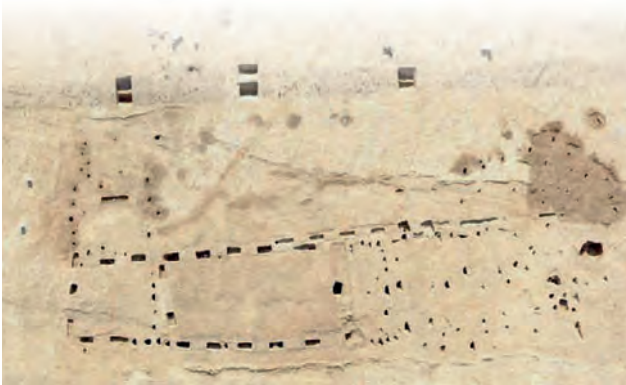
the Continent, none of the examples date from the same period as that from Warth Park. Our wooden arm clearly represents an incredibly rare artefact with national, if not international, significance.



The wooden arm. Scale: 10cm. Photo by Michael Bamforth



## BUCKDEN, CAMBRIDGESHIRE *Aileen Connor*



**B**uckden is today a large village on the western edge of Cambridgeshire, located a short distance west of the River Great Ouse and roughly mid-way between St Neots and Huntingdon. In the medieval period, the Bishop of Lincoln had a palace there. OA East has been excavating, ahead of the village's southern expansion, for RPS Consulting Services Ltd.

While evaluation had highlighted the likelihood of Anglo-Saxon settlement remains, it didn't prepare us for the complexity uncovered. As well as several small post-built structures, there is a very large 'hall' and other smaller halls or barns. Sunken-featured buildings (SFBs), including a very large one that may turn out to be associated with malting, were recorded alongside ovens and wells.

Finds include a large amount of animal bone, charred plant deposits, and combs, spindle whorls, pin-beaters and loomweights associated with spinning and weaving. Food production is also well represented and includes an iron plough coulter. The object is important as it represents a change in farming technology, allowing heavier land to be cultivated using eight oxen and the heavy plough. An iron flesh-hook is also very interesting, as few seem to have been found outside major centres.

Evidence for spatial organisation is also apparent, beginning with a possible Roman sub-rectangular enclosure and trackway, which seem to have influenced the positioning of the SFBs, with subsequent re-organisation based on a loosely north-south ditch that curves in a way reminiscent of typical 'ridge and furrow' cultivation strips.



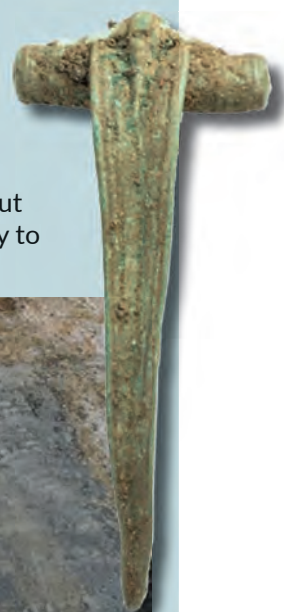
## INNSWORTH, GLOUCESTERSHIRE *Gerry Thacker*

**T**hrough much of 2019, a large team from OA South excavated the remains of an Iron Age and Roman settlement north-east of Gloucester for Robert Hitchins Ltd. This type of site is not uncommon within the Thames Valley, but it is less typical in Gloucestershire and so our work represented an excellent opportunity to improve our understanding of early settlement in the county.

The northern side of the site contained features associated with a small farmstead of probable Iron Age date. These included a rectangular ditched enclosure and a square enclosure, which contained a roundhouse, to the east. An area of dense archaeology was uncovered in the southern part of the site. A series of sub-rectangular enclosures of early to later Roman date, accessed by trackways defined by parallel double ditches, was recorded. Wells and waterholes were found, often very large size, which contained preserved timbers, including the remains of a barrel lining of a well. With the watertable sitting just below the surface, excavating these features has been challenging!

Given the large quantity of finds from this area, including personal items, such as brooches, and many large, fresh-looking pottery sherds, it is probable that these enclosures were associated with domestic settlement. However, as is often the case on this type of site, no trace of any building survives, perhaps because they were constructed from materials that leave little or no archaeological evidence.

Excavation has now come to an end, but post-excavation analysis, which is likely to reveal more secrets, has begun.





## DUKE STREET, NORWICH

Andrew Greef

During 2018, OA East carried out an archaeological investigation at Duke Street in Norwich on behalf of John Youngs Ltd. Earlier evaluation of the site revealed deep stratigraphy, with remains dating from the Anglo-Saxon period to the late Victorian period. Subsequently, the development was redesigned to preserve some of the remains in situ. The focus of the project consequently shifted to the post-medieval use of the site, especially the iron foundry depicted on early Ordnance Survey mapping, and Barkers Yard within the northern part of the site.

Historical research revealed further information about the foundry, which manufactured ranges and stoves. A fire insurance mark issued by the Sun Insurance Company in the late 18th century was found within the demolition rubble from one of the buildings in Barkers Yard.

A combination of documentary research, census records and newspaper archives allowed discoveries to be linked to named individuals. We traced, for example, the fortunes of the Reeve family, former residents of Barkers Yard, who

went on to build the adjacent foundry and become financially prosperous by selling kitchen ranges. The owner, Edward Galloway Reeve, later renovated the site to incorporate a showroom for his products and a new residence.

The most surprising discovery was an intact vaulted cellar, which appears to date to the Tudor period. Access to this structure was limited as it lay beneath the scope of works and could only be observed through a small hole in its roof. Despite this inaccessibility, we were able to extract soil from the base of the structure using a range of equipment and create a digital 3D model using photogrammetry.



Excavation underway. Left: Insurance mark



## WHARF FARM, RUGBY

Adam Tinsley

In January, a team from OA North completed a six-month excavation of a prehistoric site at Wharf Farm in Hillmorton for RPS Consulting Services Ltd.

The Iron Age settlement was enclosed by a substantial boundary ditch with an entrance on the western side and, possibly, an entrance on the eastern side that was later removed. Inside the enclosure, there were several storage pits, some containing scored-ware pottery of 4th to 1st century BC date, as well as a few fragments from saddle and beehive querns. In one of the pits, pottery, a quernstone and a quantity of burnt material seem to have been intentionally placed, perhaps as a 'structured deposit'.

The team also discovered several oven bases, one of which contained evidence for the use of bellows, and four roundhouses, defined by ring-gullies and internal pits, postholes, and hearths. These lay near the centre of the enclosure and its north-western quarter.

The archaeology was well-preserved, thanks in large part to a layer of colluvium or hillwash that had sealed and protected the remains. However, the story did not end there, as excavation brought to light an earlier phase of settlement, dating to the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age, that lay

beneath and had itself been sealed by colluvium. This earlier colluvium contained several Neolithic blades. More flint tools, including a leaf-shaped arrowhead, were recovered from tree-throws outside the enclosure.



Recording an oven



## WORTHY DOWN, WINCHESTER *Edward Biddulph*

Sometime in the later Bronze Age, people gathered at a site at Worthy Down, which, thousands of years later, would be developed into an accommodation block by Skanska UK for the Ministry of Defence. The prehistoric people celebrated or commemorated their gathering with a feast, the remains of which were thrown on a midden. Later, the weathered detritus of the feast was deposited into a pit, possibly to formally mark the end of a seasonal activity.

Well, that is one theory. To help with the interpretation of the pit, pottery samples were submitted to Bristol University for organic residue analysis. This technique is used to detect fats, waxes

and resins absorbed by and preserved within pottery fabrics during use, offering insights into what food was cooked or how the vessels were otherwise used.

The results came in and were exciting. Lipids or fats were well-preserved in all the Bronze Age samples and showed that the vessels were used for cooking, mostly dairy products. One of the vessels, a Barrel Urn, was used to process pig products. Quite what the vessel was used for is uncertain. While the vessel clearly had a specialised function, it may have been used for rendering lard, rather than cooking pork or bacon.



## HARLOW, ESSEX *Robin Webb*

The existence of a villa at Harlow was first suggested in 1819, following the discovery of Roman masonry. Aerial photography, fieldwalking and geophysical survey had helped to define the villa, though trial trenching suggested that most of the structural remains had been removed by ploughing.

OA East's excavations for Taylor Wimpey, Barratt Developments and Persimmon Homes were located south and west of the villa site, and so it was anticipated that evidence relating to the wider estate might be uncovered. Initial results indicated that the area to the south formed agricultural land, comprising a rectilinear field system. We also encountered other characteristic signs of agricultural activity here, including possible granaries, a corn-dryer, an oven or kiln, and animal pens.



*Left: Looking down the trackway towards Harlow from the south-east. Above: cremation pit*

A trackway that crossed the field system seems to represent the main approach to the villa. It obviously formed a significant landscape feature during the Roman period, as it acted as a focus for two groups of cremations. The larger group comprised 14 cremation graves, 13 of which contained cremation vessels. The other group was south of the trackway and contained ten cremation pits, nine with vessels. At the time of excavation, the remains appeared to relate to a small-scale, low-status Roman rural settlement which over time incorporated richer elements and gradually shifted north-west along the river terrace.



## DIDCOT, OXFORDSHIRE

*Ian Scott, Paul Murray and Kate Brady*

A complete iron slave shackle, was found in a late Roman ditch during a recent evaluation at Didcot in Oxfordshire. An elongated link, possibly used to connect the shackle to a chain, was also found.

The slave shackle is substantial, being larger and heavier than some examples, but its form is distinctive, and its Roman date is not in doubt. Joachim Henning, who has researched slave shackles of Roman and post-Roman date, has drawn attention to the number of shackles found on rural settlements. He has also noted that numerous examples come from later Roman rural contexts and argues that this indicates that the use of servile labour was not limited to the earlier Roman Empire but continued into the late Roman period.

This remarkable object is a significant discovery, contributing to the evidence for human labour and its place in the management of the rural economy.



## OXFORD PALAEO LANDSCAPES *Elizabeth Stafford*

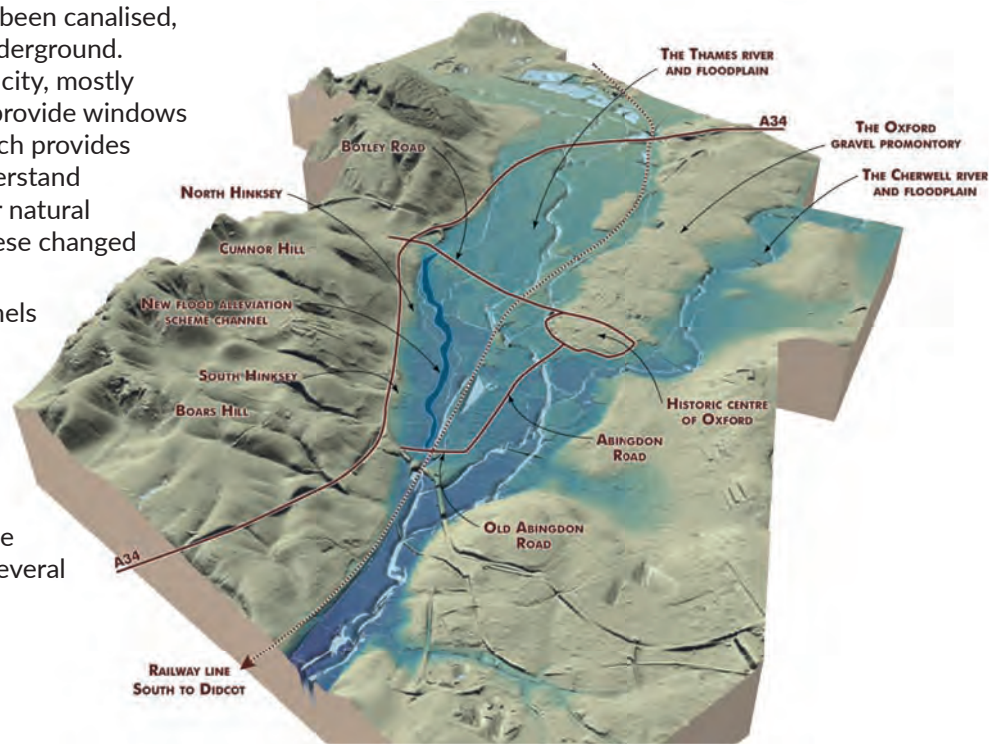
The old medieval city of Oxford is located on a gravel promontory at the confluence of the Rivers Thames and Cherwell and is surrounded on three sides by water. Beyond the immediate urban expanse lie floodplain meadows and a complex network of meandering streams, canals and backwater channels.

Within the modern city, the once prominent topography is muted beneath metres of urban make-up that extends onto the fringes of the low-lying floodplain; watercourses have been canalised, diverted, and in places culverted underground. Archaeological investigations in the city, mostly related to developer-funded work, provide windows into Oxford's hidden landscapes. Each provides a piece of the jigsaw that helps understand the relationships between the wider natural and cultural landscapes and how these changed through time.

Mapping deeply buried palaeochannels and floodplain islands, tracing mill channels, potential routeways and crossing points are some of the key aims of geoarchaeological investigations that have been carried out across the city and its hinterland in order to understand the changing landscape through time. Several

recent large projects have added significantly to our knowledge, through the drilling of boreholes, deposit modelling, geophysical survey, LiDAR and GIS analysis, evaluation and excavation, radiocarbon dating and palaeoenvironmental analysis.

A poster that gives more information about recent geoarchaeological work in and around Oxford is available to download from Oxford Archaeology's website: [https://oxfordarchaeology.com/images/pdfs/Oxford\\_Palaeolandscapes.pdf](https://oxfordarchaeology.com/images/pdfs/Oxford_Palaeolandscapes.pdf)





## GASHOLDERS *Jon Gill*

Gasholders were once vital to the functioning of most urban settlements, acting as containers for either natural gas or town gas (generated by burning coal), which was first used for lighting and subsequently for heating and cooking. Technological change at the end of the 20th century has meant, however, that all these structures are now defunct. This prompted National Grid to embark on a programme to dismantle the gasholders, other than those that are listed or must be retained for other purposes.

Various archaeological companies have been commissioned to record the gasholders at different sites and OA (both OA North and OA South) has undertaken work at c 30 different sites up and down the country, among them Morecambe, Scunthorpe, St Helens, Norwich, Lincoln, Skegness, Ipswich, Bedford, Leyton, Chelmsford, and Kensal Green. The team also looked at a good chronological spread of sites, with the oldest gasholders, at Kensal Green, Norwich and Leyton, dating from the late Victorian period and the remainder being 20th-century structures.

At each site, the recording has included an initial phase of historical research and recording, followed by a second phase of recording, during dismantling,

when the internal structure of the gasholder is visible. One noticeable aspect is that almost no two holders are alike. In fact, although to the untrained eye many look superficially similar, closer examination reveals numerous differences particularly relating to the internal structures.

Further survey is anticipated, and so in time we should know far more about these very distinctive, iconic structures.



Inside Leyton gasholder

## BEMBRIDGE FORT, ISLE OF WIGHT *Jane Phimester*

OA South's Historic Building team has, over the years, developed a specialism in Palmerston forts. These 19th-century fortifications, which developed from the perceived threat of French invasion under Napoleon III, are some of the most distinctive monuments along our coastlines. In 2018, a team spent a week on the Isle of Wight

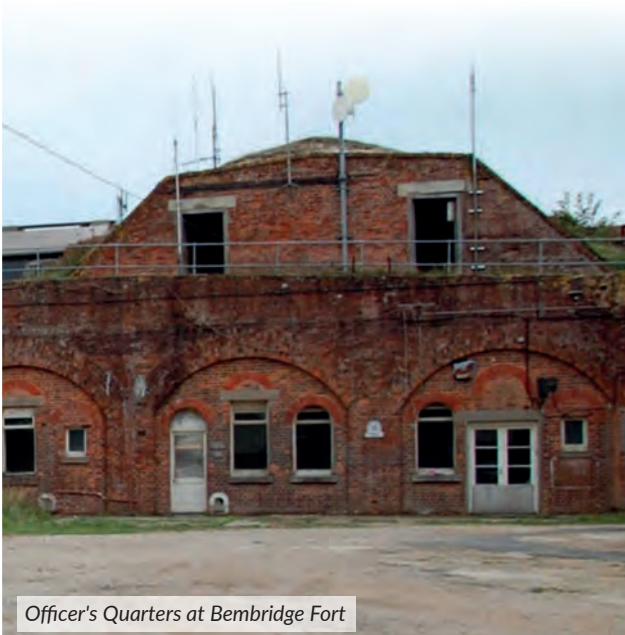
recording one such fort, Bembridge Fort for the National Trust.

Bembridge Fort was constructed between 1862 and 1867. A largely intact brick-built polygonal land fort, it occupies the highest point of Bembridge Down on the east coast of the island. Our work was to record the eight-bay elevation of the 19th-century officers' quarters and the Second World War archaeology on the fort's terraplein (the level area behind a rampart where a battery of guns is mounted).

As well as producing a 3D photogrammetric model of the elevation, the project sought to understand the construction and phasing of the sash windows to inform repair work to the joinery.

During the Second World War, Bembridge Fort acted as a radar station. Three buildings relating to the use of radar were recorded. Several previously unknown features were also identified, including two spigot mortar emplacements, three Motley Stalk emplacements, a rifle trench and an open machine gun position.

There remains considerable potential for further work at Bembridge Fort. Architecturally and topographically the site is a striking example of its type, which dominates its setting, overlooking the eastern Solent and the English Channel.



Officer's Quarters at Bembridge Fort



## NORWICH CATHEDRAL SCHOOL, NORWICH

James Fairbairn

Plans to expand Norwich Cathedral School gave a team from OA East an opportunity to combine building recording and trenching in a small investigation in the grounds of the former Bishop's Palace adjacent to the cathedral.

Building of the cathedral and the palace began in c 1100 under Bishop Lonsigna. In the early 14th century, Bishop John Salmon extended the garden and commissioned a new precinct wall.

The archaeological work, commissioned by the school, revealed pits that produced late Saxon pottery, hinting at earlier settlement. Thick garden soils overlying them produced early post-medieval pottery and brick, likely to have been associated with the formal gardens. Thick layers of flint rubble sealing these were probably used to form a

turning circle for carriages. Among the rubble was a small piece of architectural stone inscribed with a mason's mark.

The four-metre high precinct wall was recorded using photogrammetry, although the internal face proved to be a challenge, as the wall was overgrown with ivy and sheds had been built close to it. The wall had clearly been subject to many changes, the most interesting one being a blocked doorway, ironically in the same location as the proposed new access.

With the help of local knowledge, we solved the mystery of a large pit we had recorded in one of our trenches. A member of the school staff found a mid-19th century photograph that showed a very large tree standing on the exact site of the pit. We realised we had located a backfilled tree throw.



## BINGHAM, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Carl Champness  
and Lauren McIntyre

Post-excavation analysis of one of the burials from a late Roman cemetery recorded by OA South at Bingham, near the Roman town of Margidunum, for Barratt David Wilson Homes, produced some remarkable results.

Most of the burials were typical of the late Roman period, but there was one exception: an outlying

inhumation burial of an adolescent that had been placed in the top of a disused Roman disused well. That we were dealing with something unusual was reinforced during the post-excavation assessment when fragments from an early Saxon pottery vessel, recovered from the samples taken from around the body, suggested that the burial was post-Roman. This was confirmed by radiocarbon dating, which indicated that the burial dated between the 5th and mid-6th centuries.

What is more, detailed analysis of the skeletal remains indicated that the individual had suffered from a serious infectious disease. Lesions in the individual's facial region was consistent with a case of leprosy. And it wasn't just the face of this unlucky individual that was affected, as we discovered additional evidence of bone infection in the legs.

The results are especially significant, as the individual represents the earliest case of leprosy so far been recorded in the British Isles. It may have been the case that once infected, the individual was feared and shunned, which may explain the burial location in an earlier and seemingly defunct burial ground. However, the inclusion of a potential grave good, in the form of a complete Saxon pot, appears to indicate that the individual was not buried entirely without ceremony.



The Saxon burial on top of a disused Roman well and a Saxon pot



## CAERNARFON TO BONTNEWYDD BYPASS *Fraser Brown*

Over a period of six months, a team from all three offices investigated archaeological sites along the 10km route of the Caernarfon to Bontnewydd Bypass for Balfour Beatty Jones Bros JV.

At Caerlan Tibot, adjacent to a tributary of the River Cadnant, the team excavated a monumental burnt mound. The dome-shaped mound survived to a height of 1m and had been constructed over three troughs to mark the end of their use. The troughs comprised two oval plank-lined pits and a larger elongated pit. The larger pit contained a large oak bough that seems to have been hollowed out to form a tank or even a dugout canoe. The mound was enclosed by two arcs of ditch, the opposing terminals of which were of massive proportions. A suspected henge monument lay several hundred metres away.

Nearby, at Cibyn, a 125m-length of Roman road cut across the bypass route. This led to the Roman fort and vicus of Segontium. There were no roadside ditches, but the abundant locally occurring glacial erratic boulders had been gathered up to form a kerbed agger, topped with a finer dressing of smaller stones.

At the southern end of the route, at Morogoro, an earlier evaluation had detected evidence for early medieval metalworking. The excavation did indeed detect several kilns and spreads of material, but, strangely, no slag. This was probably a smithing site and when the surrounding road footprint was stripped, the watching brief detected a small enclosed site nearby, which may be a contemporary farmstead. Further to the south was a complex stone-built Roman domestic building associated with a short length of wall and various drainage features. A small cluster of middle Neolithic pits



*The Roman road to Segontium*

containing cord-impressed ware and a partial axe reduction sequence were also identified. Widely along the scheme, the watching brief revealed numerous discrete features, which probably indicate prehistoric and post-Roman farming and settlement. Dating these features has been difficult because North Wales is largely aceramic, to the extent that a single large sherd of medieval green glazed pottery caused palpable excitement!

Most of our major sites included burnt mounds – around 15 large ones, as well as spreads of burnt mound activity. Several of these were unusual, including a complex of three mounds sealing earlier clearance cairns, at a site north of Morogoro. A site at Bethel Road, at a confluence on the Cadnant, had evidently been an important landscape focus for many years. Neolithic settlement was followed by extensive funerary activity in the Bronze Age. A stone bank was then constructed along the riverbank. Associated with this were several large burnt mounds, pits and plank-lined troughs. A stone causeway or bridge forded the river, and this was the focus for the deposition of smashed quern stones and deposits of pottery in the Roman period.

With excavations completed, we are now gearing up for what looks to be an exciting post-excavation programme.



*Lifting the tank/canoe*



## GATEWAY PETERBOROUGH *Andy Greef*

Excavation by staff from all three offices at the Gateway Peterborough development site, on the outskirts of Peterborough, for Roxhill Developments Ltd, uncovered the remains of a middle to late Iron Age settlement.

The settlement comprised a pair of enclosures situated either side of a trackway, each enclosure containing multiple ring gullies and other structural remains. The smaller enclosure on the west side of the trackway contained features representing just one phase of occupation, while the eastern enclosure featured a far higher density of activity and appeared to have been reorganised on several occasions, with a series of internal divisions and multiple iterations of roundhouses.

The trackway running between the enclosures holds extra significance as a possible prehistoric precursor to Roman Ermine Street, which lies directly to the west of the site. The post-excavation team will examine the evidence closely to see how the trackway relates to the rest of the known Iron Age landscape.

We will most likely be returning to the site to evaluate the area directly to the north. This will be an opportunity to determine whether we have any more evidence of settlement activity. The geophysical

survey, which has so far proved exceptionally accurate, shows only sparse activity beyond the continuation of the trackway.

Post-excavation analysis for this project is in its early stages. The high level of domestic material recovered and the overall completeness of the settlement will provide an interesting study of Iron Age activity in this landscape.



## EYE AIRFIELD, YAXLEY *Matt Brudenell*

In 2018, a team from OA East undertook the final phase of a five-year long programme of archaeological investigations at Eye Airfield as part of the Progress Power National Infrastructure Project on behalf of Drax Generation Development Ltd.

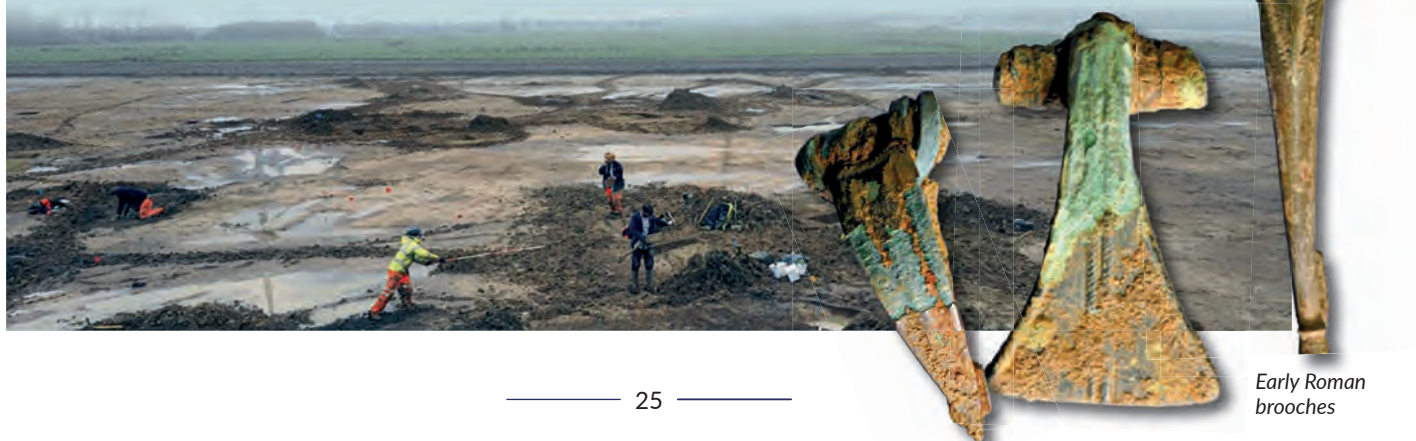
The earliest activity relates to early Bronze Age utilisation of a pond in the east of the site. The feature was associated with the remnants of a burnt mound to the north, truncated by Roman ditches and postholes. Tiny fragments of burnt flint were found in the fills of the pond, the lower fills of which have an associated radiocarbon date of 2201-2033 BC cal BC.

Settlement at the site was established in the mid-1st century AD with the construction of several roundhouses, an enclosure and possible trackway,

*Matt Brudenell*

with associated finds including several brooches. Occupation peaked during the 2nd century AD when a series of rectilinear enclosures and ditched compounds were constructed. The smaller ditched enclosures may have surrounded structures and were located in the same areas as the 1st century roundhouses. Beam slots and scattered postholes also indicated the location of buildings.

Evidence for settlement ceased at the end of the 2nd century, and between the 3rd and early 4th centuries a new set of boundary ditches were constructed, which formed a large enclosure. These probably form part of a wider system of ditched fields and paddocks, with the later history of the land being one of agricultural use up until the construction of the airfield in 1943.



Early Roman brooches



## OSNEY POWER STATION, OXFORD

Jon Gill

Osney Power Station is one of Oxford's most prominent and attractive historic industrial structures. OA South's historic buildings team was commissioned by the University of Oxford to record the building prior to its proposed conversion by the university into an education centre.

The building faces onto the River Thames and the carefully detailed polychromatic brick elevation would have been intended as an eye-catching advertisement for the new Oxford Electric Company when it was first built in the 1890s. The plant used steam-driven turbines fuelled by coal, and the site pioneered a novel system for transporting energy through the network, which became known as the 'Oxford System'. The new station even inspired a poem by Hilaire Belloc, an Anglo-French writer and historian and noted president of the Oxford Union.

The building was extended on its north side in 1904, using the same brick detailing as the original structure, and it was further enlarged in the 1920s. Another building was built on its west side after it was taken over by the municipal corporation in the 1930s. The power station ceased generating electricity in 1968 but the building was reused by Oxford University for science experiments.

Most of the historic generating plant was removed

long ago but various cranes or hoists survived as well as other evidence relating to the building's former use and this has been documented in the recording. Though the building is unlisted, the proposed conversion works will retain the most prominent parts of the structure.

*Descend, O Muse, from thy divine abode,  
To Osney, on the Seven Bridges Road;  
For under Osney's solitary shade  
The bulk of the Electric Light is made.  
Here are the works; from hence the current flows  
Which (so the company's prospectus goes)  
Can furnish to subscribers hour by hour  
No less than sixteen thousand candle power...*



## PARADISE STREET, OXFORD

Carl Champness and Ben Attfield

Excavations in last year along Paradise Street for McAleer and Rushe ahead of the construction of a hotel development revealed a complex sequence of alluvial deposits, reclamation layers, medieval structures and later commercial buildings.



Among the earliest evidence was a group of wooden stakes recovered from a thick layer of peat that sealed the alluvial deposits. The stakes pointed to exploitation of the wetland environment during the late Saxon or Norman period. The medieval structures were defined by stone wall foundations. One of the rooms within the structures had a paved floor surface, which overlay an earlier cobbled surface, suggesting that the building was in use for a period of time.

One unexpected find, retrieved from the structure's demolition deposits, was a fragment of carved stone, which formed part of a Norman window dating to the 11th century. Too grand to have originated from any of the buildings on site, the fragment pre-dates development of the area.

Remains of the 18th and 19th century Swan Brewery were also recorded on the site. Brewing and malting were important industries in Oxford before their decline in the 20th century, with this area being home to the two largest operations. The Swan Brewery was located along Paradise Street, while the Lion Brewery (Morrell's) was on St Thomas Street. The excavation revealed the brewery floor and bases of the Victorian walls. The curving western wall was designed to allow horses and carts around the building to pick up beer ready for delivery around the city.



## ST ALDATES, OXFORD

Edward Biddulph

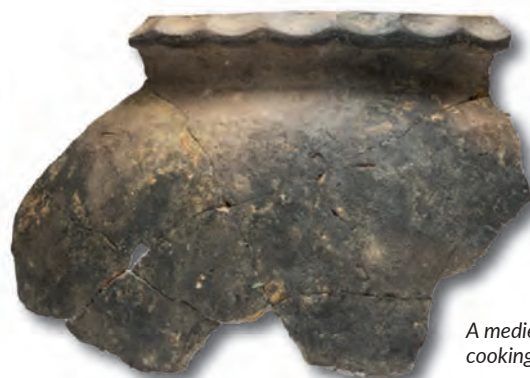
Excavations near the junction of St Aldates and Queen Street in the historic heart of Oxford for Gilbert-Ash Ltd shed light on the city's origins and development. Post-excavation analysis of the finds revealed rare evidence for the medieval city's Jewish inhabitants – just one of several remarkable discoveries at the site.

From historical evidence, we knew that the site encompassed part of two properties known to have been in Jewish ownership in the 11th and 12th centuries. Would the investigation yield any archaeological evidence for these properties or for the Jewry more generally?

During the time that the Jewry existed, the site was an open area or yard scattered with pits that had received household waste presumably from nearby properties. One of the features was a stone-built latrine. A large animal bone assemblage was recovered from the feature, and what was fascinating about it was that pig specimens were completely absent, while domestic fowl dominated the group, being even more common than cattle bones. Fish bones from the feature included herring, but no eel, and of the 89 fragments of marine shell recovered from late 11th/12th-century deposits,

just one came from the latrine. The assemblage stands in sharp contrast to those of the preceding or subsequent phases.

The results appeared to accord with Jewish dietary law or kashrut and represented the first time that a Jewish 'signature' had been recognised in British zooarchaeology. The findings were supported by organic residue analysis of pottery, which showed that non-ruminant (that is, porcine) fats were absent from all samples contemporary with the Jewry. Meat and dairy products also seem to have been kept separate.



A medieval cooking pot

## WIMPOLE HALL, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Paddy Lambert

Through the hot summer, a team from OA East were at the National Trust's Wimpole Hall Estate in Cambridgeshire for a two-hectare excavation on the site of a new car park and visitors centre.

Building on the results of an evaluation in 2016 and a training excavation earlier in 2018, the large excavation revealed remains of a late Iron Age to mid-Roman pastoral settlement. Features included a metallised surface, roundhouses and ditches forming large stock enclosures, as well as pits and postholes. Additionally, at least one human burial was found interred in the top of a shallow ditch. At some point in the early 2nd century AD the function of the site shifted from settlement to fields and enclosures, with the possibility of a later Roman core to the east of the site.

Some 300-odd metal finds were recovered by a team of volunteer metal detectorists. One object was especially noteworthy: a small figurine holding a torc and dating to the early 2nd century AD. This is a decorative piece forming the handle of a tool, possibly a stylus for a wax tablet. The figure is believed to represent the Gaulish deity

'Cernunnos', who was associated with fertility and wild things. The find is unique in Roman Britain and generated much interest in the national media.

The excavation had a very strong outreach element, with two tours of the site per day and a hugely successful open weekend. In addition, the site played host to over 60 volunteers throughout the project, who gained hands-on experience of field archaeology.



Aerial view of the site; Left: Tool handle possibly representing the gaulish god 'Cernunnos'



## BEESTON CASTLE, CHESTER

*Helen Evans*

This year, a combined team from the Lancaster, Cambridge and Oxford offices prepared a Conservation Management Plan for Beeston Castle, one of Cheshire's more imposing landmarks, for English Heritage.

Beeston Castle was built in the 1220s by Ranulph, sixth Earl of Chester. He selected a dramatic location: a large lump of sandstone that towers above the low-lying Cheshire Plain. The inner ward of the castle is positioned at the summit of this sandstone lump and is formed of an imposing gatehouse and three towers, connected by a curtain wall. Further downslope is a second curtain wall.

After falling into ruin in the 15th century, Beeston was repaired and garrisoned during the Civil War. Afterwards, the castle was partly demolished, rendering it indefensible. It then became a tourist attraction and in its new guise as a romantic picturesque ruin was the subject of many engravings and watercolours.

The site fell under Ministry of Work guardianship in 1959 and in the 1970s and 80s was subjected to archaeological excavation. This revealed that the outer ward curtain wall sits on the ramparts of an Iron Age hillfort, and that the area between the curtain walls contained Bronze Age and Iron Age roundhouses.

Unsurprisingly, Beeston Castle is a popular tourist destination today. Our Management Plan highlighted issues relating to the tricky relationship between the day-to-day running of a busy tourist destination and conserving and presenting the medieval castle and its surroundings. It sought to establish the archaeological, historical and architectural significance of the site and suggest ways to manage, conserve and interpret it.



Entrance to Beeston Castle

## SUTTON CHARACTERISATION PROJECT

*Charlotte Malone*

Last year, OA's Heritage Management Services team completed a characterisation project, commissioned by Historic England, for the town of Sutton in Greater London. Through desk-based research and walk-over surveys, the study sought to increase understanding of the town's early development and help preserve its historic character.

Sutton was shaped largely in the mid-19th century, when it grew rapidly following the coming of the railway. Much of the early architecture of the town dates to the Victorian period. Less, however, was known about the development of the town in the preceding periods.

This area was considered to have significance dating back to prehistory, with many finds being found along its length. Indeed, its waters and the fertile soils here may have been key factors in the development

of early Sutton. Two other areas of archaeological potential included the possible site of an early medieval church in the area of St Nicholas Church, and the area of the medieval town, which we established through analysis of the historic town plan.

All three areas were identified as having potential to contain significant archaeological remains and as a result have been proposed for inclusion as new archaeological priority areas. The results were presented at a public event held in Sutton last October and the final project report is available online as part of the Historic England Research Series.

Further Info:

<https://research.historicengland.org.uk/Report.aspx?i=16041&ru=%2fResults.aspx-%3fp%3d1%26n%3d10%26a%3d5114%26ns%3d1>



Research Report Series no. 38/2018

Volume 1



## TALKING ABOUT OA

Throughout the year, OA's staff have presented papers at many conferences or spoken to a wide range of societies, organisations and groups.

The results of recent fieldwork in Cambridgeshire were described at the Cambridge Antiquarian Society conference at the end of last year. At this year's Current Archaeology Live event, OA South's Ben Ford spoke about our long-term work at Hampton Court Palace. The theme of the third annual Public Archaeology Twitter Conference was 'Archaeology as storytelling'. Clemency Cooper, OA's Community Archaeology Manager contributed a paper about OA East's cross-curriculum archaeology project at a school in Cambridge. She also spoke at the Cifa conference in April about OA East's National Lottery Heritage-funded project with Cambourne Village College.

A series of lectures was organised as part of the Redcliff Quarter investigations in Bristol undertaken jointly by Oxford Archaeology and Cotswold Archaeology. Attendees at this year's Oxfordshire Past conference heard a talk about excavations by OA South in Faringdon.

Martyn Allen, Senior Project Manager at OAS, spoke at the CBA South Midlands conference in October at Winslow in Buckinghamshire. The meeting focused on Roman villa landscapes in the region. Martyn opened the conference with a paper that put villas in their geographical and economic context.

The Kent Archaeological Society, Oxford University, the Lancaster University Archaeology Forum, the Hadrian's Wall Pilgrimage, and the Cambridge Archaeology Field Group are just some of the many other groups and societies that have heard talks by OA staff.



## OA IN THE NEWS

Throughout the year, Oxford Archaeology's work has attracted media interest and captured the public imagination. In late 2018, the Oxford Mail delved into its archive to find photographs of past excavations in Oxfordshire, among them images of Oxford Archaeological Unit excavations at the Westgate, Rewley Abbey and Bicester.

Early in 2019, North Norfolk News published a short piece about an evaluation by OA East at Roughton, near Cromer. The Clitheroe Advertiser and Times reported on work by OA North at a site close to Whalley Abbey in Lancashire, while the Oxford Times reported on an excavation of a medieval site at Wallingford police station by OA South.

Items about Oxford Archaeology's work continued to appear in the news during the year. Prehistoric discoveries along the Caernarfon-Bontnewydd bypass featured on the BBC news website. The discovery of a wooden arm of Roman date at Warth Park in Raunds featured within the pages of the Sun and on the BBC News, Ancient Origins and Current Archaeology websites. An Iron Age, Roman and Saxon settlement at Farrier's Way in Warboys hit the headlines on the BBC News website and in Peterborough Today, The Times, Cambridgeshire Live, Current Archaeology and even 'The MiceTimes of Asia'. Biggin Hill in Ramsey and Wintringham Park in St Neots also made the news.

The discovery that made the biggest splash was the Roman 'Cernunnos' figurine recovered by OA East during excavation at Wimpole Hall in

Cambridgeshire. Articles about the find appeared in the Mirror, the Daily Mail and the Telegraph. The story also appeared in the February issue of Current Archaeology. In addition, OA East's Deputy Regional Manager, Stephen Macaulay, spoke to BBC Radio Cambridgeshire and BBC Look East evening news interview about the find and the project.



The 'Cernunnos' figurine; Background: Oxford Mail spread of past excavation in Oxfordshire



# A YEAR OF COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY

Clemency Cooper

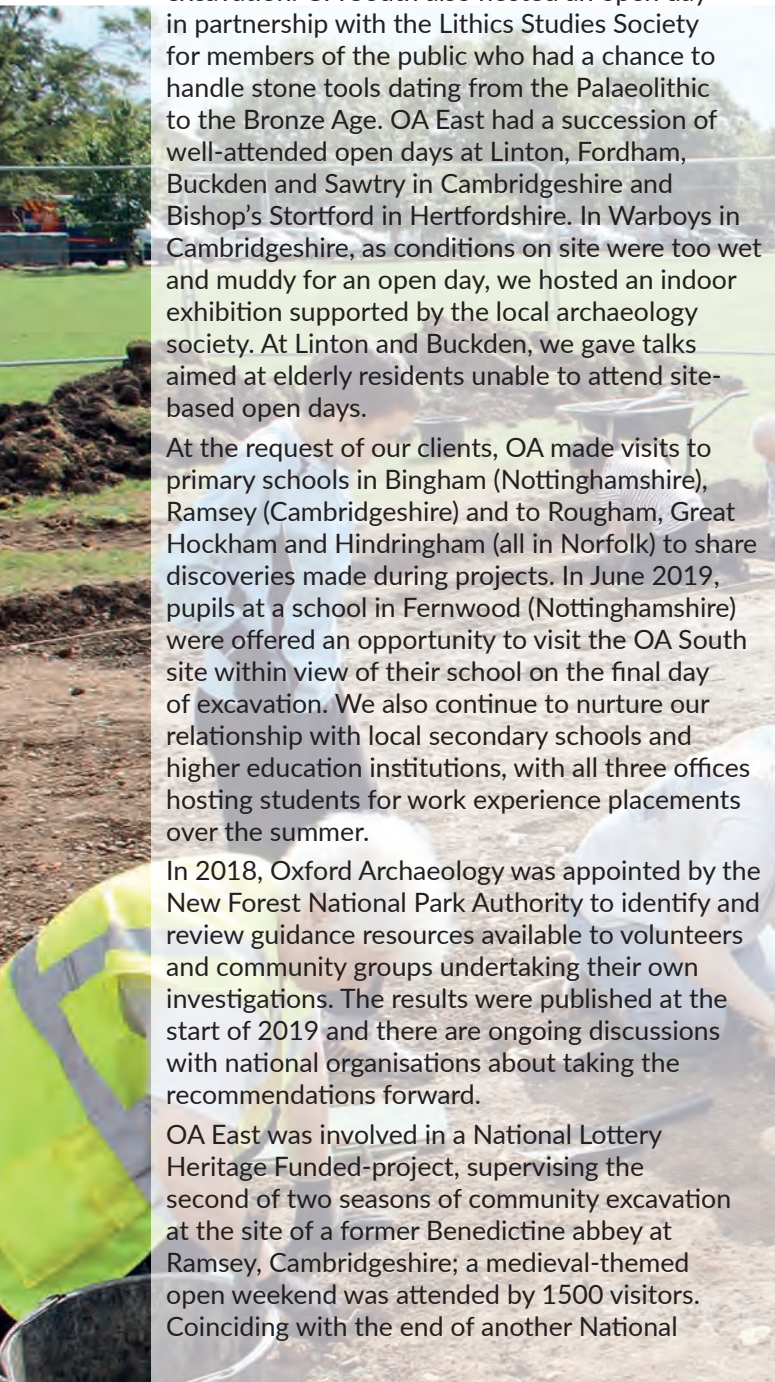
In what has been an uncertain year in the wider world, one reassuring constant has been the public's interest in OA's work and its appetite to be actively involved and engaged in the process of making new discoveries. A better understanding of what happened hundreds and thousands of years ago can bring a different perspective on seemingly contemporary issues, such as climate change, immigration and the volatile nature of politics.

Our site-based public engagement kicked off last autumn with staff at OA South joining our partners at Cotswold Archaeology in Bristol for an open day and exhibition to showcase the Redcliff Quarter excavation. OA South also hosted an open day in partnership with the Lithics Studies Society for members of the public who had a chance to handle stone tools dating from the Palaeolithic to the Bronze Age. OA East had a succession of well-attended open days at Linton, Fordham, Buckden and Sawtry in Cambridgeshire and Bishop's Stortford in Hertfordshire. In Warboys in Cambridgeshire, as conditions on site were too wet and muddy for an open day, we hosted an indoor exhibition supported by the local archaeology society. At Linton and Buckden, we gave talks aimed at elderly residents unable to attend site-based open days.

At the request of our clients, OA made visits to primary schools in Bingham (Nottinghamshire), Ramsey (Cambridgeshire) and to Rougham, Great Hockham and Hindringham (all in Norfolk) to share discoveries made during projects. In June 2019, pupils at a school in Fernwood (Nottinghamshire) were offered an opportunity to visit the OA South site within view of their school on the final day of excavation. We also continue to nurture our relationship with local secondary schools and higher education institutions, with all three offices hosting students for work experience placements over the summer.

In 2018, Oxford Archaeology was appointed by the New Forest National Park Authority to identify and review guidance resources available to volunteers and community groups undertaking their own investigations. The results were published at the start of 2019 and there are ongoing discussions with national organisations about taking the recommendations forward.

OA East was involved in a National Lottery Heritage Funded-project, supervising the second of two seasons of community excavation at the site of a former Benedictine abbey at Ramsey, Cambridgeshire; a medieval-themed open weekend was attended by 1500 visitors. Coinciding with the end of another National







Top: Warboys; Ramsey; Volunteers at Fordham.  
Background: Ramsey excavation

Lottery grant-funded project, undertaken in partnership with Cambourne Village College, OA launched the 'Unearthing the Past' website, which includes an online interactive map of finds and features of interest. The resource has enabled us to share archaeological discoveries, collated from interventions years apart, with local residents.

We have also been developing our partnership with Defence Archaeology Group, who took part in the Fen Spitfire excavation, and have several projects in the pipeline aimed at serving military personnel with the aim of recuperation and skills development.

Volunteers in Lancaster and Cambridge have made great in-roads in digitising historic reports and photographic slides to upload to OA's digital library (<https://library.thehumanjourney.net/>). As well as our usual office-based opportunities, volunteers have worked alongside site-based staff at a number of OA East's excavations in Cambridgeshire, including Warboys, Fordham and Buckden.

We are only able to deliver such inspiring community engagement, participation and outreach opportunities thanks to the dedication and enthusiasm of our staff, volunteers and partners, who bring their time, expertise and a warm welcome to thousands of people in muddy fields, village halls, school classrooms and through various virtual platforms. As we look to the future and our aspirations for the next five years at Oxford Archaeology, it's an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which our work not only informs the wider public about the lives of people in the past but also influences their wellbeing and sense of place in today's rapidly changing world.

In the coming years, we will be seeking more ambitious and innovative opportunities to embed the principle of generating greater social value in our developer-led work, working with our clients and their consultants to reach out and ensure that our discoveries remain relevant, relatable and inspiring to members of the public.



# OA IN PRINT *Edward Biddulph and Rachel Newman*

It's been a bumper year at Oxford Archaeology for publications, with seven monographs, four popular publications and several journal articles published!

Three monographs in the Lancaster Imprints series were published in rapid succession in the summer, two – on the **Roman levels in the north-east of Carlisle city centre** and the **early medieval cemetery at St Michael's Church, Workington** – being post-excitation of excavations undertaken by the former Carlisle Archaeological Unit, and the third, on the **Maryport Roman Settlement Project**, being launched at the Fourteenth Hadrian's Wall Pilgrimage. A fourth monograph, about the **excavation of part of the Franciscan friary at Preston**, will be out before the end of the financial year.

**Excavations at Oxford Castle** is the latest volume in the Thames Valley Landscapes series. The book presents and discusses the results of the

excavations, building recording, documentary research, and the specialist finds and environmental analyses, and was launched to coincide with Oxford's annual Heritage Open Doors event

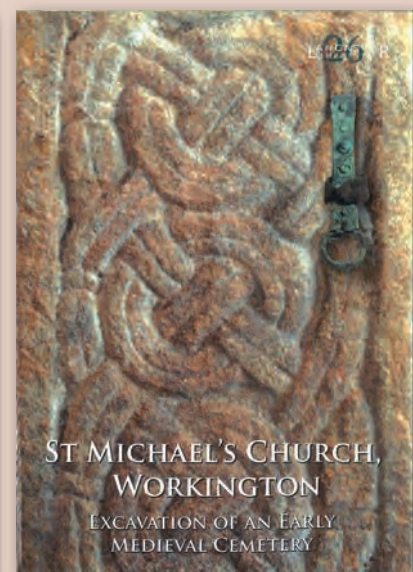
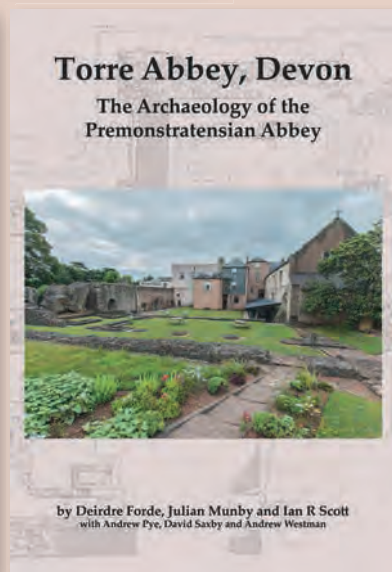
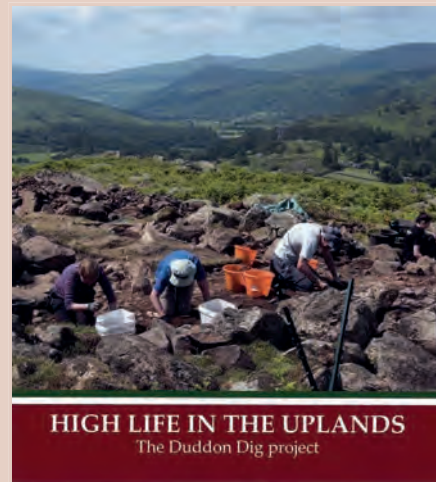
Some 30 years in the making, the monograph presenting the results of investigations at **Torre Abbey** in Devon was published. The volume provides an account of fieldwork carried out for Torbay Council by the Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit, Museum of London Archaeology, and finally by Oxford Archaeology.

A new monograph in the **Thameslink series**, produced by the joint venture of Oxford Archaeology and Pre-Construct Archaeology, was also published this year. The volume describes the excavation of a bathhouse and settlement and industrial evidence on Roman Southwark's north island between Blackfriars station and London Bridge station.



*Launch of The Maryport Roman Settlement Project publication*





The **Thames through Time** series offers a detailed account of how the environment of the Thames Valley has shaped human history in this region and beyond. Three volumes, covering early prehistory, late prehistory, and the early historical period, have already been published. The fourth and final volume, medieval and post-medieval, is now available as a free online resource (<https://oxfordarchaeology.com/research-publication/thames-through-time/thames-through-time-4>).

In addition, four popular publications have been produced. Two are in the **Greater Manchester's Past Revealed** series and looks at contrasting post-medieval landscapes on the site of the Kingsway Business Park. These will be the subject of the next monograph in the Imprints series in 2020. The third, **Bridging Time's Deep River**, describes work on the **Carlisle Northern Development Route**, with its internationally important Mesolithic/Neolithic site at Stainton West, and the fourth, **High Life in the Uplands**, is on the community survey and excavation in the **Duddon Valley**.

The year has also seen the publication of several excavation reports in archaeological journals. A report on excavations of an entrenchment ditch in Chichester appeared in *Sussex Archaeological Collections*. A Roman enclosure and Saxon iron smelting site at Eckington are described in the *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, and a report on a multi-period site at Shoterly was published in *Transactions of the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society*. Glass was the theme of two journal articles, with reports in *Post-medieval Archaeology* and *Archaeologia Aeliana* on glassworks in Bristol and Sunderland respectively. To add variety to the mix, an article will appear before the end of the year in the *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society* on an Iron Age to Roman site in the Wirral, and several more articles are with other journals so should be out during 2020, which is shaping up to be another productive year!



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Over the past year, Oxford Archaeology has employed some 350 staff across its three offices. The success of the company depends on every member of staff, and we would like to thank them for their hard work and dedication.

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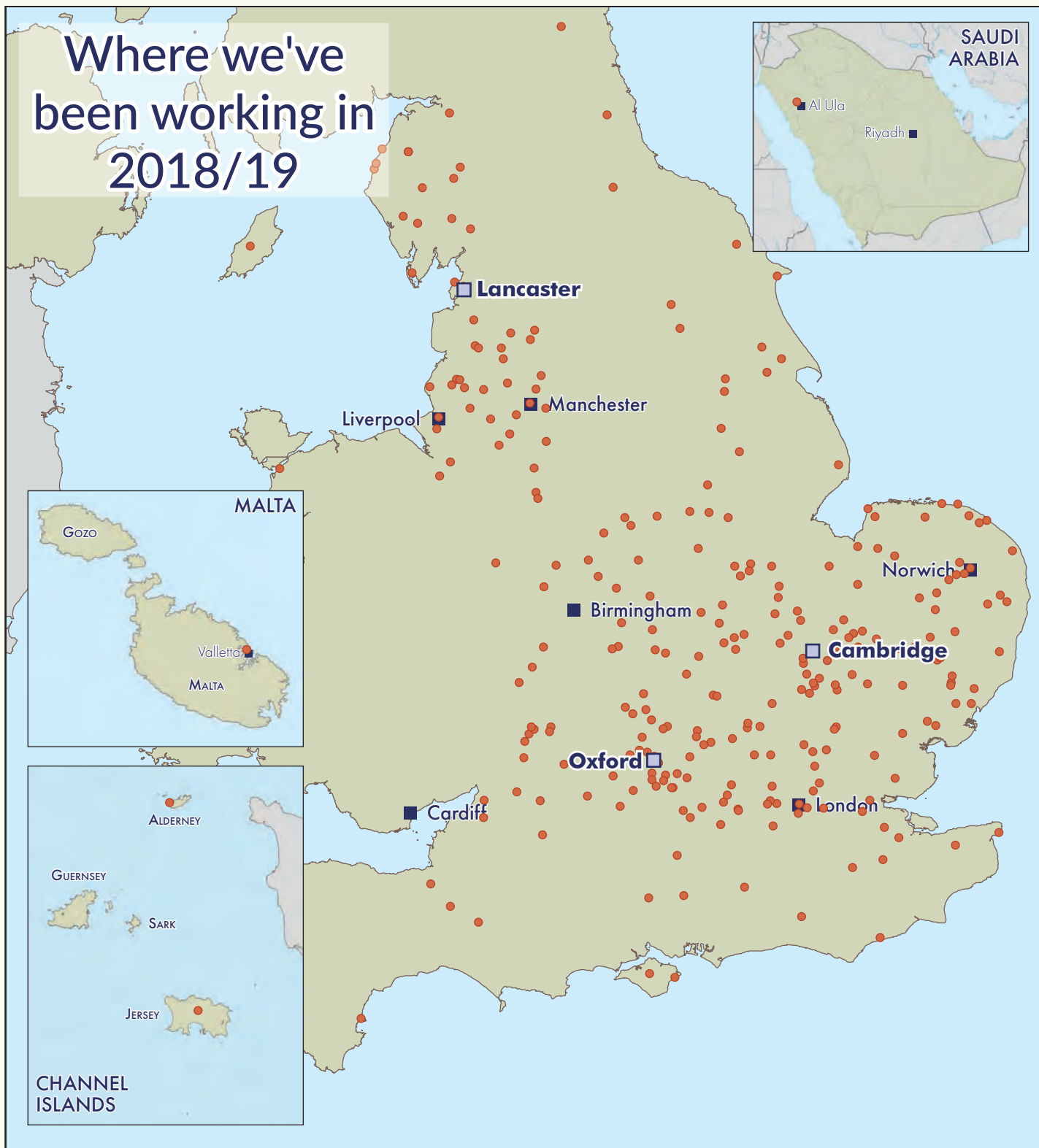
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# Where we've been working in 2018/19



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