

IN TOUCH

Review 2021/22



EDITORIAL *Ken Welsh*

This annual review edition of In Touch gives us the opportunity to pause for a moment, look back over the previous year and take stock of what has been achieved. And, I hope you'll agree, that an awful lot has been achieved. We have been able to investigate a huge range of fascinating sites, whether it's a Roman salt making site in Cheshire, an Anglo-Saxon cemetery in Suffolk or a 'lost' college in Oxford. These sites, and the many others featured in this edition, have provided some amazing insights into the development of human society over the millennia and demonstrate that there is always more to learn about our shared past.

But the past, and indeed the present, is not just about people, it is also about the environment in which we live and this year has seen the launch of 'Rewilding' later prehistory. This major new collaborative project, led by Oxford Archaeology but involving a range of universities and other organisations, will look at wildlife in the Bronze Age and Iron Age, a period during which much of Britain was transformed from a wild landscape to a farmed one. At a time when wildlife is coming under ever increasing pressures, exploring archaeological wildlife and its relevance to modern nature conservation and the rewilding movement could not be more timely. This transformation of Britain's landscape was also reflected in a recent, and hugely successful, exhibition at the British Museum, The world of Stonehenge. The exhibition featured a range of finds from Oxford Archaeology's excavations and, amongst an incredible display of prehistoric artefacts, one of the most impactful of these was a single elm leaf, a 6000-year-old survivor from Britain's lost wild forests.

The year has again seen Oxford Archaeology working closely with our clients and partners to engage with the public in range of different ways. In an uncertain and often stressful



world, archaeology can have a really positive and beneficial impact on people's lives and can be achieved in many different ways, from social media and blogs to open days and site tours. As the restrictions associated with the Covid pandemic have been removed, hands-on participation has also become possible again, and we have been able to offer opportunities to arrange of different groups, including those who might not normally get involved in archaeology - this included working with a group of young people with social, emotional, and mental health needs, and running STEM sessions, with the Children's University, for primary school pupils in Hull.

Finally, while it might be a bit of a cliché to say that our staff are our greatest strength, it remains, nonetheless, true. Our highly successful early career training schemes, collectively known as the Graduate Trainee to Supervisor Career Pathway, have deservedly been approved by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. We also continue to run a wide variety of staff placements, providing specialist training in areas such as heritage management services, geoarchaeology, geomatics and post-excavation analysis (to name but a few). You will be able to hear from some of the staff who have benefitted from these placements in this edition.



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TRAINING AT OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY

We seek to maintain a leading role in the heritage sector, and to be a safe and exciting place to work, providing rewarding careers for our staff, and delivering professional services that meet or exceed our clients' needs and expectations in accordance with our quality management system. We recognise that a key element of meeting these aims is developing a skilled workforce through effective training programmes and career development opportunities that encourage all employees to achieve their full potential at work and contribute to the success of Oxford Archaeology as a whole. Training is organised and delivered under the guidance of the Senior Management Training Team (SMTT), and in accordance with our training policy and procedures document.

Training needs and priorities are identified by the SMTT, considering Oxford Archaeology's strategic and operational priorities, including any annual objectives that have been set, the results of the annual appraisals programme, and the views of project managers and team leaders. An annual training plan is then put in place. All training is designed to achieve the learning objectives set out in our skills and training matrix.

An obvious priority is health, safety and environment (H, S and E) training. We provide an extensive programme of H, S and E training for staff at all levels, in accordance with our comprehensive H, S and E training matrix.

The Graduate Trainee to Supervisor Career Pathway (or GT2SUP Pathway) provides structured training and progression for all graduate trainees, archaeologists and assistant supervisors – currently around 200 of our 370 or so employees. The pathway is managed by the GT2SUP training

team, and is made up of three individual training programmes, all of which are approved by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists: the Graduate Trainee Programme, the Archaeologist to Assistant Supervisor Programme and the Assistant Supervisor Programme. The pathway is a mixture of classroom-based learning, site-based learning under the guidance of mentors, external H and S training, and guidance in seeking out and recording additional training. Our next priority is to extend this pathway by developing an equivalent learning programme for all supervisors.

While the large majority of staff on the GT2SUP Pathway are field-based, there are also many opportunities for placements in our other teams, for example archives, burials, community archaeology, contracts, environmental, finds, geoarchaeology, geomatics, heritage management services, post-excavation, and project management. These placements usually involve additional structured learning alongside the main GT2SUP programmes, and often lead on to permanent positions in a new role.

We also have an IT e-learning platform, which provides a wide range of modules in its course library, giving both introductory training as well as more detailed instruction on applications such as Outlook, Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Access, Windows 10 and 11, and the Edge internet browser. The e-learning platform is available to all staff.

All staff are encouraged to record training as part of their continuous professional development record, using the Oxford Archaeology CPD log.

Dan Poore, Chief Operating Officer

PLACEMENTS

NARITA BANKS – ENVIRONMENTAL

I applied for the environmental placement after spending some time in that department earlier in the year processing samples in the shed. I wanted to learn about what kind of information is gathered from the samples we take on site so that I could become a better archaeologist in the field and generally have a better understanding of environmental archaeology.

I have processed different sample types, including bulk charred and waterlogged plant remains, snails, skeletons and cremations, and recovered a range of artefacts by sorting residues. I have also gained experience with writing reports of charred plant remains for evaluations looking at flots through a microscope and identifying different grains, seeds and other charred plant remains, pulling all the information together and using local research frameworks to comment on any significant finds in the flots.

This placement has been (and still is) invaluable to my personal and professional development as an archaeologist and it has been amazing to work with such knowledgeable and passionate members of the department. I can't thank them enough for the opportunity and wholly recommend the environmental placement to everyone at Oxford Archaeology. As a side note, the biannual shed clean requires the use of the power-washer – which is both immensely satisfying and great fun!



ELIZABETH DURU – COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY

With an academic background in museum studies and public engagement, the community archaeologist placement was an ideal bridge between my passion for archaeology and my interest in the social value of archaeology to bring communities together. My main aim with this placement is to get a practical experience in delivering the wide range of outreach activities that help connect our diverse communities with their cultural heritage – school visits, community excavations, digital engagement and public talks.

Through this placement, I hope to get a better understanding of the different stakeholders that Oxford Archaeology works alongside and how that shapes our engagement projects. I'm really enjoying the multi-tasking nature of the role, with numerous projects on the go; each day brings different tasks. It's also been really rewarding to work alongside Community Archaeology Manager Clemency Cooper, who has taught me so much about the varied role of community engagement within archaeology and has given me the opportunity to assist with the wide range of projects that Oxford Archaeology is working on.

LIZ KENNARD – POST-EXCAVATION

For as long as I can remember I have always been fascinated by worked flint, and I count myself incredibly lucky to have had the Bexhill-Hastings Link Road as my first commercial job in archaeology when I started in 2014. Since the end of the excavation, I have continued working on the predominantly Mesolithic assemblage on and off, initially sorting sample residues, followed by an official placement in 2016 cataloguing the flint. This year I was offered a further placement in post-excavation, which was kicked off with flint refitting for selected Bexhill scatters to help us gain insight into key issues such as the social, technological, and spatial dynamics that might not otherwise be seen without this type of analysis, and I will be writing site reports later in the placement. I have just now started working on a flint assemblage from the Dorset Visual Impact Provision project, which consists of flint recovered from Neolithic pits, Bronze age barrows, cremations and field ditches, all spread across an impressive prehistoric landscape. I am currently sorting the sample residues which will be followed by the initial cataloguing, and I am thoroughly looking forward to seeing what amazing finds this assemblage yields!



ROSIE FLETCHER – POST-EXCAVATION

I consider myself incredibly lucky to have been given the chance to work in the Oxford Archaeology South post-excavation department on a three month placement. Although I had experience with academic writing, I wasn't sure how similar commercial report writing would be. There is plenty of cross over, but I've also been working with new resources like WebMap and the Digital Recording System, where a huge catalogue of information exists at your fingertips, making report writing a really enjoyable experience. In the past few weeks, I've helped with the report for test-pitting at Roman Verulamium (St Albans) which, as a prehistorian, I found absolutely fascinating. I'm currently assisting with the report for Hale Road, Benson, an incredible multi-phase site with particularly intriguing evidence from the Neolithic and Bronze Age that has kept me on my toes. I'd encourage any staff member to apply for an Oxford Archaeology placement; it's a great way to expand your knowledge and experience as part of a supportive expert team.

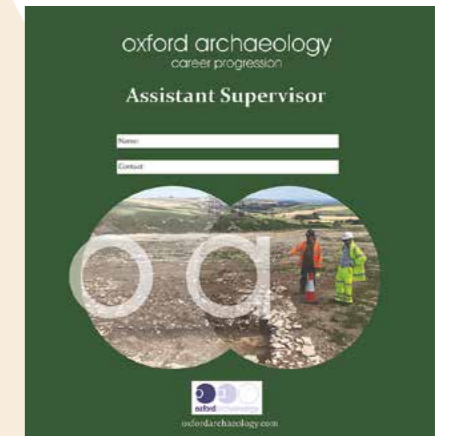
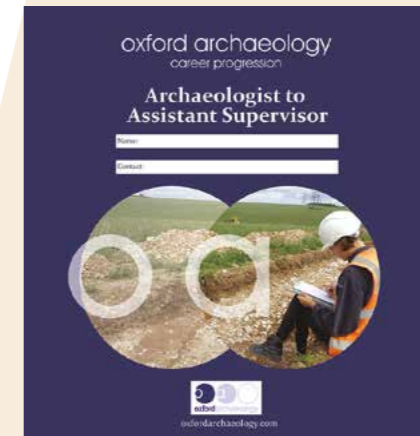
THE GT2SUP CAREER PATHWAY

Oxford Archaeology recruited the company's first Graduate Trainee (GT) in 2014 and since then OA has welcomed over 400 GTs into the fold, many of whom are now in supervisory positions or have opted to take up roles in non-fieldwork departments. Over a six-month period, our GTs are taught basic fieldwork techniques – how to identify a feature, how to excavate record and take samples, how to process the finds etc. – all underpinned with a strong understanding of OA's site health and safety procedures. Every GT's progress is recorded in their personal training pack, with learning goals scored every six weeks, so that their office's training manager can keep a close eye on their progress and intercede with additional help if needed.

The OA Training Team was inaugurated in summer 2018, leading about a year later to the introduction of the Archaeologist to Assistant Supervisor (A2AS) programme. Unlike the GT scheme, which is very much focused on 'on the job' fieldwork training, the A2AS programme includes four training days per year, during which staff are taken out of the field into the classroom and coached in allied skills such as site survey and stratigraphy and the work of our other departments, as well as soft skills such as mentoring.



FOCUS ON TRAINING



Throughout the programme, a strong emphasis is placed on individual proactivity. The training days have proved a very popular and useful part of the programme, which encourages our staff to record and reflect upon their various deployments and experiences and keep a log of any related reading that they undertake, in addition to actively seeking out and recording CPD opportunities. Our Archaeologists record their progress through the programme, their experiences and attendance at training sessions in their A2AS personal training pack.

Summer 2021 saw the introduction of the next stage in our ongoing fieldwork training, with the launch of the Assistant Supervisor training programme. Like the A2AS programme, our Assistant Supervisors are asked to record their fieldwork and reading experiences, but they also receive external training appropriate to their level of experience, starting with cable avoidance tool use and safe working around plant, and progressing to undertaking the Site Supervisor's Safety Training Scheme (SSSTS) qualification and First Aid at Work certification.

As with the preceding A2AS programme, there are training days, and in spring 2022 the first day covered health and safety, struck flint and prehistoric pottery identification. A subsequent training day included Roman pottery, worked stone and a session on commercial archaeology in the planning process, as well as safe techniques for manual handling. Our Assistant Supervisors use the programme as a route to progress in their careers. Once they have both the experience and training required, they can apply for vacant fieldwork Supervisor positions.

Given what we hope is a seamless progression from one programme to the next, and to make early career archaeology a more attractive prospect to new starters, the three programmes have been linked together to form the ClifA-approved GT2SUP Career Pathway. This pathway provides a comprehensive and structured route to both enter and progress within the industry, of a type that I would certainly have welcomed when I first started digging holes for a living!

Gerry Thacker, Training Manager, Oxford Archaeology South



FOCUS ON TRAINING

ARCHAEOLOGY ON THE ISLE OF MAN

Richard Gregory



Excavating one of the Ronaldsway Jars

PREHISTORIC

Over the years Oxford Archaeology North has excavated several fantastic sites on the Isle of Man, which have shed light on the prehistoric communities who lived at the heart of the Irish Sea. Our excavations for Isle of Man Airport Division at Ronaldsway Airport at the southern end of the island, for example, radically changed our view of prehistory in the north-western Britain and brought into sharp focus the inter-connectedness of early communities on the island and beyond. That project, due to be published shortly, uncovered nationally significant evidence for a rare Mesolithic (pre-farming hunter gatherers) dwelling, a 'pit-house' dating to the latter centuries of the ninth millennium BC.

Subsequent analysis has also focused on the later Bronze Age roundhouses and other structures, which had a range of functions, including domestic dwellings, a kitchen and several workshops associated with the casting of copper-alloy tools and weapons. Together, the evidence formed a small element of a much larger village-sized settlement. Another interesting element was that the roundhouses had been abandoned in a highly structured and systematic way, involving deliberate burning and backfilling, along with the creation of stone cairns and feasting deposits, indicating that this process involved a degree of ceremony and commemoration.

Last year we were delighted to be asked by Colas (IOM) Limited to carry out an excavation at the

nearby Billown Quarry, a Neolithic site that we first investigated some 30 years ago. Our recent excavations uncovered significant evidence for the ceremonial use of the site, including a large, segmented ditch, which was packed with quartz pebbles and Neolithic kite-shaped arrowheads. This certainly has the appearance of an earlier Neolithic causewayed enclosure, whose circuit may be incomplete, suggesting it represents an unfinished monument.

If it is a causewayed-style monument, then it represents an exceedingly rare discovery for the North-West and seems to anchor the area firmly to the Neolithic cultural environment of the southern parts of the British Isles. Just outside the enclosure was a rectangular timber structure, which has close parallels with earlier Neolithic timber monuments known from south-west Scotland, a mere 30km sailing distance north of the island, suggesting additional, and closer, Neolithic links with this Irish Sea area. Our site also contained two large ring-ditches and was peppered with complete later Neolithic 'Ronaldsway Jars', that had been intentionally placed in pits. This style of pottery and form of deposition seems to be peculiar to the Isle of Man.

We are now embarking on the post-excavation work and look forward to further unpicking the evidence and getting to the heart of it. ■



The Mesolithic dwelling at Ronaldsway Airport

PREHISTORIC

WINDY HARBOUR TO SKIPPOOL ROAD IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

Katie Sanderson

A team of archaeologists from Oxford Archaeology North returned to the nationally significant site of Windy Harbour as part of the A585 improvement scheme for National Highways and Kier. The main excavations were carried out between 2020 and 2021, but in 2022 the team returned to excavate an additional hectare of land.

During the latest phase of work, our first discovery was a ring-ditch, which measured 15m across and was possibly a small barrow or hengiform monument. This lay on the crest of the slope, a focal point within the landscape, overlooking a previously discovered Beaker pyre or grave probably dating to 2500-2400 BC, cremation burials and a burnt mound adjacent to a watercourse in the valley bottom. The monument had been damaged by later ploughing and only a shallow ring-ditch remained. The enclosed space within the monument seems to have been devoid of activity, but its proximity to cremation burials and the pyre suggests that it might also have been associated with funerary rites.

The practice of enclosing areas associated with the dead is certainly evidenced, on a smaller scale, to the west of the large ring monument, where there were several smaller arcing ditches. One of these enclosed two cremation burials, which both contained pieces of burnt flint. These were also associated with post-built structures, like those

found previously to the south. Rather than being domestic dwellings, these might also have been 'cultic' or mortuary structures.

Concluding our time at Windy Harbour with cremations and ring monuments has been a fitting way to end our excavations. We are leaving with a story that began in the Mesolithic period, spanned the transition to the Neolithic and continued into the Bronze Age. ■



The ring-ditch; above: A Beaker pyre



The Neolithic causewayed enclosure during excavation

GILDEN WAY, HARLOW

Tom Phillips

During the year, the Oxford Archaeology East post-excavation team has been recording, describing and analysing the results from an excavation at Gilden Way in Harlow. The fieldwork, carried out in 2017 and 2018 for a consortium of Taylor Wimpey, Barratt Homes and Persimmon Homes, revealed an unusually long sequence of land use, including a Neolithic causewayed enclosure, Bronze Age boundaries and pits, Iron Age settlement, Roman field systems and cremation cemeteries, and a medieval moated enclosure that can be linked historically to Ralph de Harlow.

A focus of the post-excavation work has been the early Neolithic causewayed enclosure: a single circuit monument that overlooks a tributary of the River Stort. Causewayed enclosures first appeared around 3700 BC in the Thames estuary and eastern England, before spreading across the rest of southern England and south Wales during the next few generations. The Gilden Way causewayed enclosure sits within an area where some of the earliest examples were constructed, but to more precisely date the monument, we have submitted charred hazelnuts and other seeds for radiocarbon dating. The plant remains were recovered from the base of the segmented ditch and had been deposited when the enclosure was being used.

Some 40kg of early Neolithic pottery was found, and this has been catalogued. Predominantly flint tempered, the assemblage includes decorated rim sherds typical of the Decorated Bowl tradition, although the proportion of sherds with decoration is low. The charred plant remains include considerable quantities of charcoal alongside hazelnut shell,

cereal grains (mostly wheat), fragments of apple, elderberry and a sloe stone. Other items of interest include seeds of celandine (a plant that produces a yellow dye) and a burnt food crust that could potentially have broken off a vessel. The one thing missing – large assemblages of animal bone – is entirely a result of the acidic soil; faunal remains were absent across every period represented at the site.

Causewayed enclosures are often associated with feasting, and the deposits from the Harlow enclosure certainly support the idea of ceremonies involving feasting taking place.

Post-excavation work continues, and the results will in due course be published in the East Anglian Archaeology monograph series. ■

Analysing the large Neolithic assemblage; below: Decorated Neolithic bowl



PREHISTORIC

PREHISTORIC



BURWELL, NEAR CAMBRIDGE

Kat Blackburn

Partial horse skeletons within a storage pit

For much of 2021, a team from Oxford Archaeology East were excavating for This Land a chalkland site along Newmarket Road in Burwell, near Cambridge, where an evaluation in 2014 had revealed postholes and pits dating to the late Bronze Age. However, this had not quite prepared us for what turned out to be one of the best-preserved late Bronze Age settlements in Cambridgeshire. Post-excavation analysis undertaken this year has revealed more of the story.

One of the site's many surprises was the discovery of a funerary monument, radiocarbon dated to the early Neolithic period (4000 to 2200 BC). The surviving ring-ditch had a south-facing entranceway, and the central grave contained the skeleton of a male aged over 40 years old, seemingly located next to a large posthole that may have acted as a grave marker.

Most of the remaining features relate to an extensive late Bronze Age (1200 to 700 BC) settlement, including an exceptional number of postholes forming a variety of structures, among them roundhouses, four-post buildings (raised grain stores), and rectangular buildings of unknown function. In

Disarticulated human remains from one of the pits



addition, over 30 large storage pits were scattered across the site. These were up to 2m deep, with some producing incredibly rich finds assemblages.

The pottery assemblage largely comprises locally made flint-tempered coarse wares, though some finer vessels with shiny, burnished surfaces were present. A range of faunal remains was also recovered, with the most notable find being two partial horse skeletons, both missing their hind legs but clearly deliberately placed in the base of a large storage pit.

Small finds were abundant across the site, including several well-preserved bronze pins. The worked bone assemblage not only contains tools such as awls and spatulas, but also includes personal items in the form of a bead and a pierced animal tooth. It is thought that sword and axe production took place at the site, as indicated by the recovery of one of the largest assemblages of late Bronze Age mould fragments in Cambridgeshire.

Two further graves are believed to date to the late Bronze Age. One burial was rather unusual: a young adult woman with three skulls placed upon her (a young adult male, a teenager and a child). Disarticulated human remains were also recovered from several of the large pits, mostly whole skulls or skull fragments, although some long bones were also noted. In the case of some of the skulls, it is possible to tell that the remains had decomposed elsewhere before becoming incorporated into the pits.

Even in the early stages of post-excavation analysis, it is clear that Burwell is of regional significance in terms of understanding late Bronze Age settlement form and development. ■

HORDES OF BRONZE AGE HOARDS

Anni Byard and Edward Biddulph

At the end of 2021, archaeologists from Oxford Archaeology East were called to professionally excavate the site of two Bronze Age hoards found by metal detectorists. The first of the hoards was found by a 13-year old girl from Suffolk in the field near Royston on the Hertfordshire/Cambridgeshire border. Other detectorists located the second hoard nearby. The finds were reported to county council archaeologists who worked with Oxford Archaeology East to ensure full and proper recovery of the hoards. There were over 200 items including a variety of incomplete artefacts such as socketed axe heads, winged axe heads, cake ingots and blade fragments, all of which are made of copper-alloy.



Then, in June, a hoard of palstave axeheads, also dating to the Bronze Age, was found during a Jubilee weekend event in Buckinghamshire organised by the Metal Detectives Group. Three palstave axeheads were found by detectorists across a small area before the main hoard deposit was located. The Metal Detectives Group called our small finds specialist, who advised the detectorists to fill in the hole and secure the site. The following week, and in consultation with the local finds liaison officer, a small team from Oxford Archaeology returned to carry out a rescue excavation to record the discovery and lift the objects.

In total, six axeheads were exposed, recorded and lifted, making nine in total. The objects had been placed in a small, hastily backfilled pit on the southeast-facing slope of a hill. The palstave axeheads date from around 1300-1100 BC and may include Continental types. Some had been used, while others were fresh from the mould.

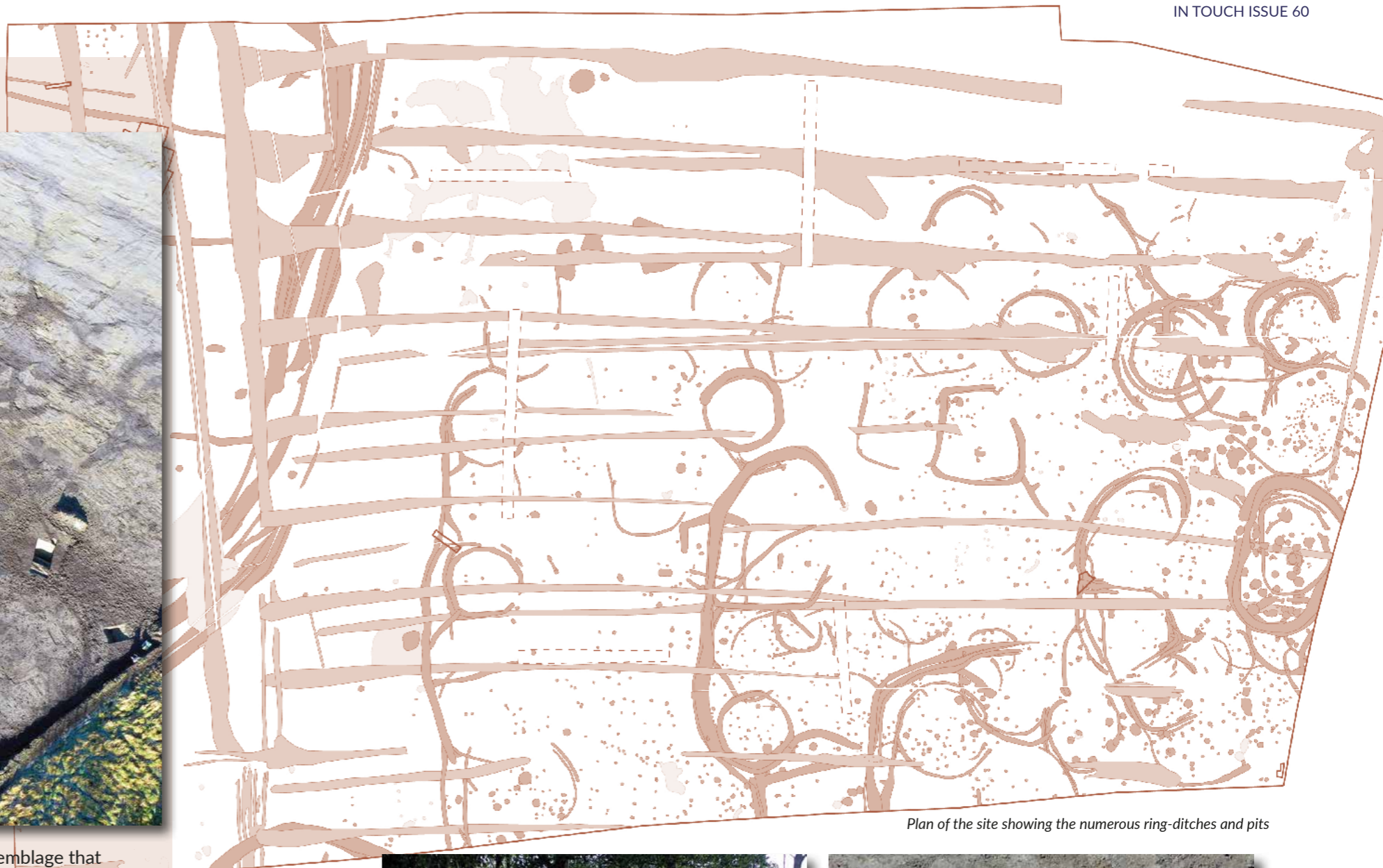
The objects from the hoards have been processed in accordance with the Treasure Act. ■



CRAB HILL, WANTAGE *Gerry Thacker*



Aerial view of the site



Plan of the site showing the numerous ring-ditches and pits

Late last year, a team from Oxford Archaeology South returned to Crab Hill, having previously investigated the site in 2019. The new excavation, carried out for St Modwen Developments, focused on two additional areas, one to the south and the other to the east of the 2019 site.

The area to the south was complex, containing around 20 roundhouse gullies, a multitude of enclosure ditches, and nearly 1000 pits and postholes. When the remains had been chronologically grouped, it was evident that there was a division between an Iron Age settlement in one part of the site and a curving set of Roman boundary ditches in another, with very little overlap between them. The Iron Age (800 BC - 43 AD) settlement had been in use for some considerable time; every roundhouse had been replaced at least once, with one having been replaced on five separate occasions.

The Roman boundary ditches also showed longevity, some having been periodically cleaned out and the sides recut. The boundaries enclosed narrow fields, one of which contained a stone-built well, along with pits and postholes.

Finds were plentiful, with an assemblage that included a couple of brooches, a bone awl, and hundreds of pottery sherds and animal bones.

The archaeology was a little different in character at the eastern site. The team investigated a double-ditched enclosure that had been revealed by cropmarks and found that inner circuit probably defined a late Bronze Age hilltop enclosure, set on a low spur, with good views in all directions. A palisade, defined by a row of postholes, ran parallel and inside the inner enclosure ditch, and a later burial had been interred into one of the infilled enclosure ditches. This individual had also been buried with an iron knife, which was positioned at the waist, suggesting that this blade once hung on a belt. The outer ditch of the enclosure did not fall within the excavation area, but this could well be Iron Age in date, as is the case with other local examples at Wallingford and Taplow.

Overall, the fieldwork added a lot of detail to the archaeological story of the area, and in particular has shed much light on the development of Crab Hill and its environs. ■



A late Bronze Age ditch



A burial in one of the late Bronze Age ditches

PREHISTORIC

PREHISTORIC

A beautiful example of samian tableware



MIDDLEWICH, CHESHIRE *Paul Dunn*

Middlewich represents one of the North West's most important Roman settlements. It was situated on the line of the Roman road of King Street at the point at which the road crossed the River Dane, and was first occupied in the AD 70s, when the Roman army initially advanced into the area. There is some evidence for a fort at Middlewich that may have formed the initial focus for the settlement. Salt, however, probably formed the main reason for its establishment, as the area is peppered with brine springs, and this probably also explains the possible attribution of the name Salinae to the area. Previous excavations have indicated that between the late 1st and mid-2nd centuries Middlewich was a thriving industrial settlement, specialising in salt making. So, when a team from Oxford Archaeology North began work at the Gasworks Yard site in 2021 for is C2V+ on behalf of United Utilities, there was a very good chance of finding some additional

evidence for Roman settlement and in particular Roman salt making. What emerged were the remains of several back-plots, defined by ditched boundaries. These lay behind the Roman buildings that once fronted King Street, with the rear wall for one of these structures lying firmly in our excavation trench. Spectacularly, within these back lands we also discovered two finely preserved Roman wells. These had been lined with timber, which was repurposed oak, with clear evidence of redundant joints and peg holes. Both wells had presumably been used to draw up Middlewich's briny water, which could then be used to make salt. What is more, one of the plots contained two clay-lined pits that were probably settling tanks, used to store this briny solution. After settling, the salty water would then have been boiled and, following evaporation, the valuable salt crystals would be left behind, ready for use.

The plots also contained numerous pits that had been backfilled with domestic rubbish, generated by the Roman inhabitants on King Street. This rubbish included pottery, with types of bowls, cups, and dishes present that were commonly used by the Roman army. The assemblage also comprised locally produced and imported wares, such as high-quality samian tableware, which seems to confirm that the Roman army was indeed involved, directly or indirectly, with salt production at the site. Although few personal objects were found, perhaps reflecting the site's industrial character, two impressive copper-alloy brooches and a rather nice gold pendant were recovered. Interestingly, these formed a small group in one of the settling tanks, and it seems possible that they were deliberately placed there, perhaps as a votive offering to mark

its abandonment, rather than being items that had been accidentally lost. As is the norm with waterlogged sites, a rich palaeoenvironmental assemblage was recovered. The plant remains were particularly interesting, indicating that the Roman inhabitants on King Street had a varied diet, and ate a selection of cereals (wheat, barley, and possibly rye and oats), along with peas, apples and pears, hazelnuts, and possibly leaks or garlic. Grape pips, poppy seeds, and possibly coriander were also found, all adding to the list of culinary ingredients. These plant remains, along with all the other fantastic remains from the site, make a rich archaeological feast, providing some excellent food for thought! ■



Some of the high quality finds from the site: a complete 'rusticated' greyware jar from the pit above, a gold pendant and a large copper-alloy brooch; right: A timber-lined well



GRANGE PADDOCKS, BISHOP'S STORTFORD *Andy Greef*

Earlier in 2022, a team from Oxford Archaeology East made a return visit to the site of a new leisure centre in Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire. During the initial investigation of the site in 2019, the team uncovered the remains of a Roman settlement. It soon became clear in the subsequent work, commissioned by RPS Group on behalf of East Herts District Council, that the site contained the exceptionally well-preserved remains of a Roman roadside settlement, dating from the 1st-4th centuries. The settlement lined the Roman road of Stane Street at the point at which it crossed the River Stort.

Given its location, the settlement almost certainly acted as a strategic hub, with both the road and river being utilised for trade and transport, which added to prosperity of the settlement. Indeed, this prosperity, and access to trade routes, was reflected in the extremely large finds assemblage that was recovered, including masses of metalwork and pottery. Some of the objects are also particularly informative, as they include several steelyards, suggesting the settlement had a commercial focus, and items (such as spear heads, military dress fittings, a hipposandal, and a caltrop) that provide good evidence for some form of military presence.

One other interesting aspect of this site is the predominance of sunken-featured buildings. This style of structure is generally interpreted as a timber-lined cellar, and they now seem to be present within several other Roman settlements. At our site, one of these buildings also produced large amounts of hammerscale and metalworking debris (relating to the working of both copper and iron) and clearly functioned as a smithy.



Right: Early Christian burial; below: Aerial view of the excavation



The team also uncovered part of a cemetery, which has produced over 90 inhumation burials. Without exception, all of the graves were aligned east-west, and lacked grave goods (apart from the odd coffin nail), and some also had potential grave markers, formed of reused tiles or quern stones located at the end of the grave. These may form part of an early Christian cemetery located on the fringe of the settlement, close to the river.

In addition, the excavation trench partially clipped the side of a building that we knew from cropmark evidence had a square plan, and we therefore suspected that it functioned as a Roman shrine or temple. Most of the coins and brooches from the site were recovered from the area next to this building, and these add further weight to the suggestion that it had a religious or cult function, as the objects had perhaps been used for votive activity. Within the enclosure, the team uncovered a series of ovens, and one suggestion is that these were for baking bread that was then used to feed any hungry visitors to the shrine or temple.

With such exciting findings and a very public location, the site enjoyed a great deal of attention from the media and the locals of Bishop's Stortford. An open day held towards the end of the excavation saw over 700 people attend various tours delivered by the site team, and hundreds of other visitors also popped by to have a look at the finds on display. ■



Left: Roman pottery assemblage; above: Lion-headed dress fitting



ROMAN

ROMAN

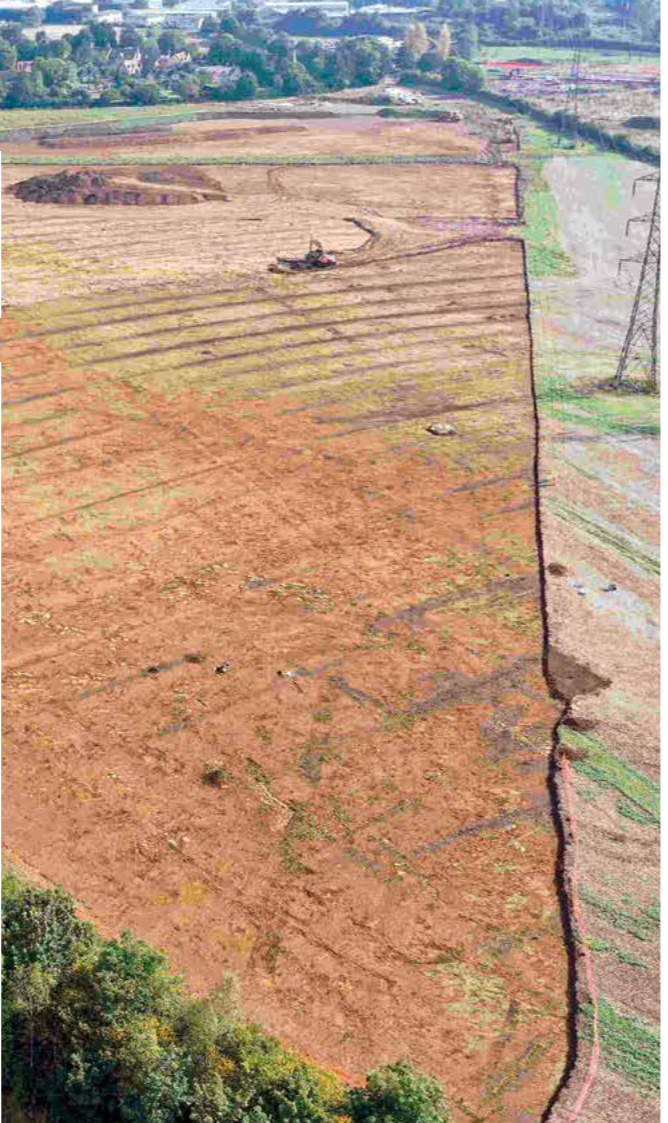
THE STEADINGS, CIRENCESTER

John Boothroyd

Cirencester or Corinium Dobunorum was a major Roman town, its walls enclosing the second largest city area in Roman Britain. It comes as no surprise, then, that the surrounding hinterland is busy with Roman sites. Oxford Archaeology South has carried out a number of excavations in this area over the years. The latest of these is the c 9ha excavation at The Steadings, a new neighbourhood development at the Bathurst Estate, some 1.5km to the south-west of the Roman city centre.

The excavation focused on two main areas of interest: one located on a gentle rise in the north-east of the site and associated with a ditched trackway, the second to the west, where a complex sequence of enclosures was revealed.

Although the first area was quite plough-damaged, traces of settlement survived to the east of the trackway where several small enclosures, field boundaries, hollows to aid drainage, and the remains of a possible roundhouse were found. A small burial ground comprising one inhumation and 12 cremation burials was recorded at the southern end of one of the enclosure ditches. One of the inhumation burials was a young adult female,



who had been placed face down (prone). The partial remains of a probable in-utero foetus were associated with the burial. None of the cremation deposits were urned, although several contained iron nails.

The second focus of activity, where the level of preservation was considerably greater, was characterised by enclosure ditches. Four probable phases of enclosure were identified, the earliest being broadly rectangular in plan and measuring at least 35m by 45m. This was subsequently enlarged on two occasions, with its latest incarnation being the most unexpected. The enclosure was re-purposed as another cemetery and a stone revetment was added, which survived as a course of stones within the upper ditch fills.



Of the 18 inhumations forming the cemetery, all but one of the graves were aligned broadly east-west, with roughly half buried in a prone position and the rest in a supine (face up) position. Several burials had been interred in coffins with others being placed within stone-lined graves. Grave goods were few and far between, although fragments of a glass vessel were found in one of the graves.

Post-excavation work is ongoing, and it is hoped that we will uncover more of the extensive agricultural hinterland during future phases of this multi-stage programme of archaeological investigations. ■

From top: Aerial view of the site; Roman burial; Re-purposed ditch with stone revetment added

ROMAN



Aerial view during excavation; right: Shield mount

EYE AIRFIELD, SUFFOLK

Louise Moan

In February, a team from Oxford Archaeology East returned to Eye airfield in Suffolk for RPS Group on behalf of Persimmon Homes, having last visited in 2015 for an evaluation, during which an Anglo-Saxon cemetery was discovered. While the redevelopment plans for the site were revised to preserve the area containing the cemetery, the returning team soon spotted the tip of something metal poking out of the ground, a clues that the cemetery was more extensive than first thought.

This fleck of metal, which was rather unassuming at first glance, quickly revealed itself as a shield boss. With further excavation, the team discovered that it lay in a shallow grave, along with another miscellaneous piece of iron (possibly a knife), a highly decorated large bead or small spindlewhorl, a pot, and, to complete the set, a sword!

Spotting additional graves was difficult, as grave cuts were almost impossible to see in the natural sand and gravels. The team therefore decided to use metal-detecting signals as a guide to where potential burials might be. This strategy worked, and soon 98 burials were located.

The natural geology also meant that very little in the way of human bone survived, apart from the odd tooth here and there. Following discussion with Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service, groups of finds were block-lifted and excavated back in the office so any preserved mineralised organics or textiles attached to the metalwork could be recovered.

The blocks have been excavated over the course of the year, with initial indications pointing to a stunning assemblage of metalwork, amber and glass, along with some preserved organic materials. ■



A grave with in situ blocks waiting to be lifted



Beads and metal in a block before wrapping

ANGLO-SAXON



FREWIN HALL, BRASENOSE COLLEGE, OXFORD

Ben Ford

ANGLO-SAXON / MEDIEVAL

Earlier this year, a team from Oxford Archaeology South completed a complex excavation in central Oxford. The site, a basement for new student accommodation, built by Oxford firm Beards for Brasenose College, who funded the dig, uncovered more than a few surprises.

At the base of the deep urban sequence, areas of intact buried soil survived. This soil showed no evidence of agriculture but yielded a few isolated worked flints, including a fine denticulated small blade that indicates human activity from the early Neolithic (4000 to 3300 BC).

Overlying the largest area of original buried soil was a Bronze Age barrow or burial mound. Remarkably, part of the internal earthen mound survived, as did the surrounding circular ditch. Most of the barrow's projected 30m-diameter extent lay to the north of the excavation limits. The barrow appears to have had a lasting influence over the position of later buildings constructed at the site.

Part of another smaller Bronze Age barrow was previously discovered in St Michael's Street some

120m to the north. This pair, combined with evidence of another pair under the Sackler Library in Beaumont Street and other barrows at the Radcliffe Infirmary, now suggest an alignment of round barrows situated along the western edge of the Oxford promontory. When viewed from the valley floor or River Thames to the west, these would have sat along the horizon, a prominent aspect that was surely deliberate and part of a wider Bronze Age funerary or ritual landscape.

No Bronze Age grave were identified, but human bones (of at least two individuals, the most complete being a 25-40-year-old male) were recovered from two later medieval pits that cut the mound. Initially interpreted as a contemporary prehistoric inhumation, radiocarbon dating told a different story. The result suggests one individual was buried in the century before Oxford came into being in c 900 AD. This is the westernmost burial from the mid/late Saxon era so far discovered in Oxford. Previously excavated Christian inhumations were centred in or around St Aldates and Christ Church and are used as evidence for the location

of St Frideswide's Minster. Our Frewin Hall bones were not found in their original place of burial, but their location on, in or near an extant Bronze Age barrow perhaps speaks of isolated burials drawing on contemporary but more 'pagan' traditions.

The next phase of activity comes from the late Anglo-Saxon period after the defended town or burh of Oxford was created. The site sits within the north-west corner of the town. A single cellar pit was identified. This had been positioned in the centre of the southern edge of the then still upstanding barrow mound. A few nearby contemporary pits contained fragments of ceramic cooking pots and loomweights suggesting domestic activity. However, the cellar pit's earliest fills were thick with charcoal overlying at least two zones of intense scorching – suggesting that the timber-framed superstructure had burnt down, either deliberately or by accident.

It was not until after the Norman Conquest that the site took on the dense and complex stratigraphic puzzle of intercutting features that we expect from medieval urban Oxford. Work by Professor John Blair has shown the site sat within a much larger Norman elite urban landholding. An impressive, vaulted stone undercroft is a survival from this time and thought to be the oldest surviving domestic structure in Oxford. This building lies under Frewin Hall to the north of the site and was positioned immediately north of the then extant barrow mound. Contemporary evidence from the site includes probable lime-slaking pits, a stone courtyard with a circular stone well and many waste pits. Expensive tableware and oil lamps indicate the relatively high status of the site, but artisan antler working also seems to have taken place.

Later in the 13th/14th centuries, a stone boundary wall divided off the southern part of the landholding

to allow tenements to be developed fronting a street to the south. To the south of this wall, a dense cluster of pits show usual back-plot use, but a stone building containing a large corner hearth indicates artisan production or a kitchen. Within the site a deep stone cellared building was constructed with another probable kitchen added to its western end. This building was associated with a stoned-lined cesspit and a stone-lined well.

St Mary's College was founded in 1435 when the large landholding was gifted to the Augustinian Osney Abbey to build a new college. However, documentary evidence notes that despite grants of money, construction was delayed until Cardinal Wolsey intervened in the 1520s. A massive limestone wall foundation within the site dates to this construction phase and probably supported the outer wall of the south range of the college's new main cloister. Soon after, the Dissolution saw the college fall into a state of disrepair. Some of the older extant buildings around the site clearly use repurposed limestone ashlar blocks that would have been part of the short-lived heyday of St Mary's – the lost college. ■



Aerial view of the site at Frewin Hall



Hearth or oven floor under excavation



Remains of prehistoric ditch behind 14th century cellar wall

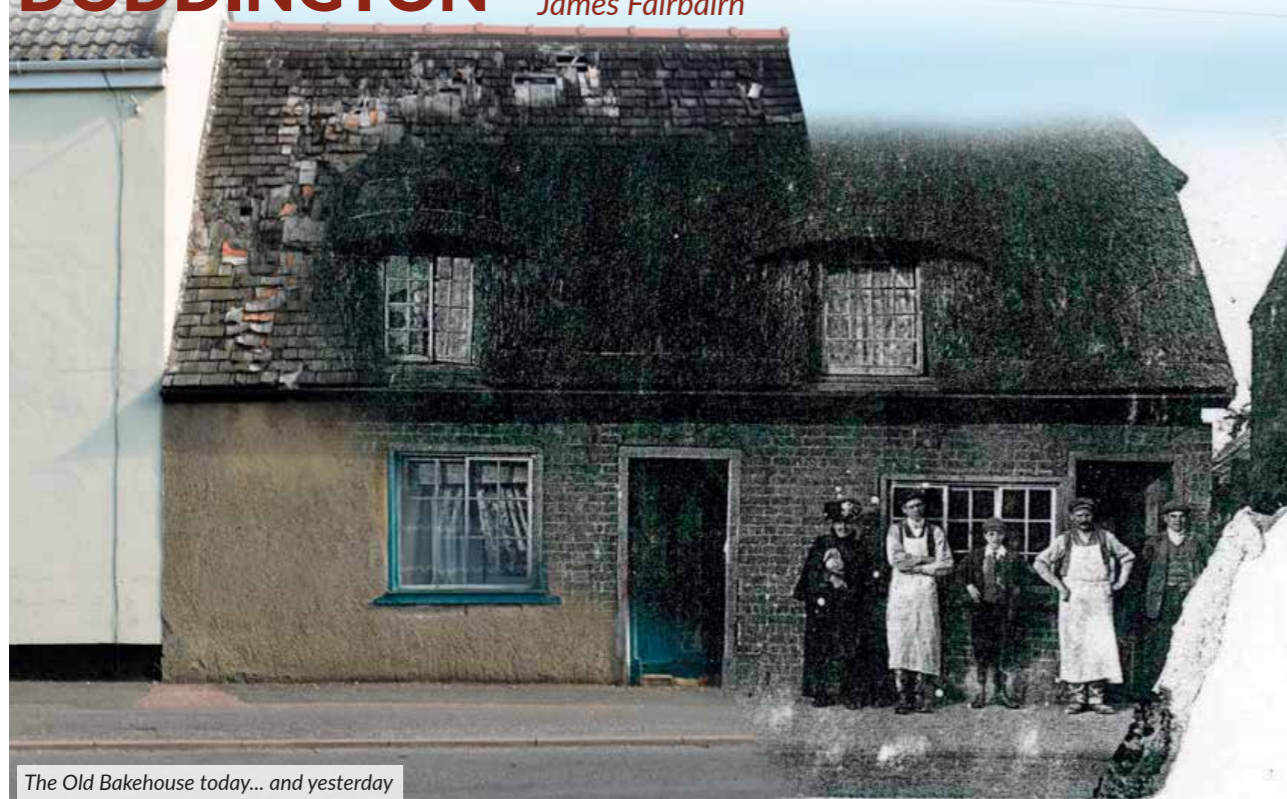


10th century cellared building

ANGLO-SAXON / MEDIEVAL

THE OLD BAKEHOUSE, DODDINGTON

James Fairbairn



The Old Bakehouse today... and yesterday

In the latter part of 2021, Oxford Archaeology East was asked by the property owner to record a historical property on the high street of Doddington, a fenland town north of Cambridge. This diminutive building was probably first erected in the 17th century as a detached timber framed dwelling, but at some point during the 18th or early 19th century it was converted to a bakehouse, being situated

close to the town's windmill. Investigation of census records and other documents identified different bakers and their families living at the property – including one aptly named Matthew Grain – during the mid- to late 19th century, but the last mention of it as a bakery seems to be around 1920.

Most of the internal features of the building had been removed by the time we arrived and partial renovations were underway. Fortunately, this gave us an opportunity to look at the early timber framed wall and roof structures. An unusual feature was the roof covering, comprising split oak shingles that had been added during the early 20th century, many of which remained in place. Prior to this the roof had been thatched; some of the reeds were still visible under the more recent covering.

Another interesting piece of social history was that newspaper from the 1920s and '30s had been used as a wallpaper lining in some of the rooms. One conundrum was the fireplace, which seemed far too large for such a tiny cottage. It was quickly realised that half the building had been demolished during the first half of the 20th century, leaving the small property seen today. Remarkably, an old black and white photograph was discovered showing a group of people standing outside the property when it was still thatched (showing dormer windows) and before the 'working' half of the Old Bakehouse had been demolished.



Newspaper used as wallpaper in the 1920s and '30s

POST-MEDIEVAL

WEELEY, ESSEX

Louise Moan

In 2021, following an evaluation earlier in the year, a team from Oxford Archaeology East returned to Weeley in Essex to excavate the site of Napoleonic-era military barracks for RPS Group on behalf of Rose Builders and answer questions about the layout of the barracks, the function of the buildings, and the people who were stationed there. Documentary evidence indicated that the barracks were in use between 1803 and 1815 and was rented by the military for the princely sum of £491 per annum. At its height, the barracks held 4100 troops and 220 horses. Once the barracks were decommissioned, all the fixtures, fittings and building materials were sold at auction. When the land was handed back, it was in such a terrible state that the landowner took the military to court for damages, asking for £7900 in compensation! (In the event, he was only paid a portion of this, some £2500.)

The team spent much of the five months on site revealing building foundations, the remains of walls, floor surfaces, and some fabulous information. The remnants of at least 16 buildings, laid out in two neat rows around three sides of a parade ground, were identified. The best-preserved building was situated at the southern end of the site, with brick foundations surviving to almost 0.5m in some places. This was probably a store, with a suspended wooden floor.

At the opposite end of the site, two very large adjacent brick-built buildings were recorded. These may have been the officers' quarters. These contained features that seemed to set them apart from the other buildings, including well-built stone fireplaces. Both buildings had four of these fireplaces, which may indicate that each had four ground-floor



Large pottery sherd and a Staffordshire dog figurine

rooms, probably occupied by one officer apiece. In contrast, other buildings across the site only had one fireplace, which is more in keeping with communal sleeping or living quarters for lower-ranked soldiers.

Outside the buildings, the team found evidence for a drainage systems and cobbled surfaces. It seems, though, that these were ineffective; a letter dating to 1803 revealed that the site was so muddy that an officer's wife had to be carried to her accommodation so as not to get her dress dirty!

Apart from bricks and mortar, the team recovered some really lovely finds, which give an idea of who lived in the barracks. These included part of a shako plate, a seal stamp, and the ubiquitous clay tobacco pipe. The ceramics also included part of a Staffordshire dog figurine, and a stunning shoe buckle, with the name J T Miller scratched into it. Overall, this site was certainly unusual and one to remember.



One of the brick buildings during an open day; above: an engraved shoe buckle

POST-MEDIEVAL

Bishop's Stortford open day



GROWING OUR PUBLIC IMPACT

NEWS & ROUNDUPS

Issues of social inequality, mental wellbeing, environmental sustainability, and financial value dominate the headlines and public policy decisions. Now, more than ever, we need to understand and demonstrate the public benefits of archaeological practice, research, and engagement. The core charitable objective of Oxford Archaeology is to 'advance education in the subject of archaeology for the public benefit'. This means not only creating and disseminating new knowledge about people in the past but delivering positive and lasting outcomes to people's lives today.

In the last year, we've worked closely with clients and partners to connect our public audiences with stories, ideas, and activities which foster greater appreciation of archaeology and help to make it more meaningful to them. Our new blog platform, in combination with targeted social media engagement, has been very effective in engaging and growing local interest, particularly for projects in small communities such as Weeley in Essex and Aston and Sibford Ferris in Oxfordshire, providing insights and feedback for residents from project inception to completion.

While the scope of our digital engagement has increased in recent years, our in-person events have also never been more popular. Oxford Archaeology South's open day at Frewin Hall at Brasenose College in Oxford, was attended by over 500 people. It won the Temporary Projects Award 2022 given

by the Oxford Preservation Trust in recognition of the quality and reach of engagement. Another very successful open day was held at Grange Paddocks, Bishop's Stortford in Hertfordshire by Oxford Archaeology East on behalf of East Herts District Council at the end of April. Over 700 people dropped by for a guided tour and to see the finds on display. Every visitor who completed a feedback form gave the event the highest rating: 'Excellent'.

As well as open public events, we also try to work with organisations to target underserved audiences, particularly those working with young people, who might not usually benefit from archaeology. During Oxford Archaeology East's excavations at Waterbeach Barracks in the spring, a group of students from a school for young people with social, emotional, and mental health needs had a tour of the excavation and washed finds from the site. During the summer, Oxford Archaeology East ran a hands-on activity session for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds attending a summer school at Cambourne Village College, Cambridgeshire. Working with the Children's University, a charity that works with children growing up in disadvantaged areas, Oxford Archaeology North ran STEM sessions for primary school pupils in Hull related to our work on National Highways' A63 road scheme. Oxford Archaeology North also collaborated with 'The Bay: A Blueprint for Recovery', a social prescription project funded by the People's Postcode



Hull STEM event with the Children's University



School visit to Waterbeach Barracks



Wicken Fen test pitting at Oily Hall

Lottery and hosted by Lancashire Wildlife Trust. This autumn, we have held a drop-in event for visitors to Fleetwood Museum and offered a guided walk and accompanying creative workshop at Earnse Bay.

We recognise the importance of working in partnership with other organisations to reach new audiences and maintain relationships with them. In the East of England, we continue to work with the National Trust on community projects, at Wicken Fen in Cambridgeshire and at Oxburgh Hall in Norfolk, helping to expand their volunteer base and their skills, both in the field and in processing and analysing finds. In partnership with the Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership, the second Little Asby community excavation took place in September, involving nearly 40 volunteers as well as pupils at Kirkby Stephen Grammar School, in learning new skills, making new social connections and deepening their sense of place in an ancient landscape.

We're always looking to improve and innovate our engagement offer and, earlier this year, Oxford Archaeology was awarded funding from National Highways' Designated Funds to undertake market research and public consultation to determine the demand and scope for a new digital resource package to connect young people with archaeological discoveries found during future road schemes.

As we grow the impact of our work with the public, so we are expanding our team delivering it. Two staff members are undertaking specialist training placements in community archaeology and a new training module will be offered to all aspiring Supervisors as part of the OA Graduate Trainee to Supervisor Career Pathway. It is thanks to the passion, energy, and curiosity of our staff that we can fulfil our charitable remit and meet the needs and expectations of the public.

Clemency Cooper

Students from Kirkby Stephen Grammar School joining the team of volunteers at Little Asby Community Dig



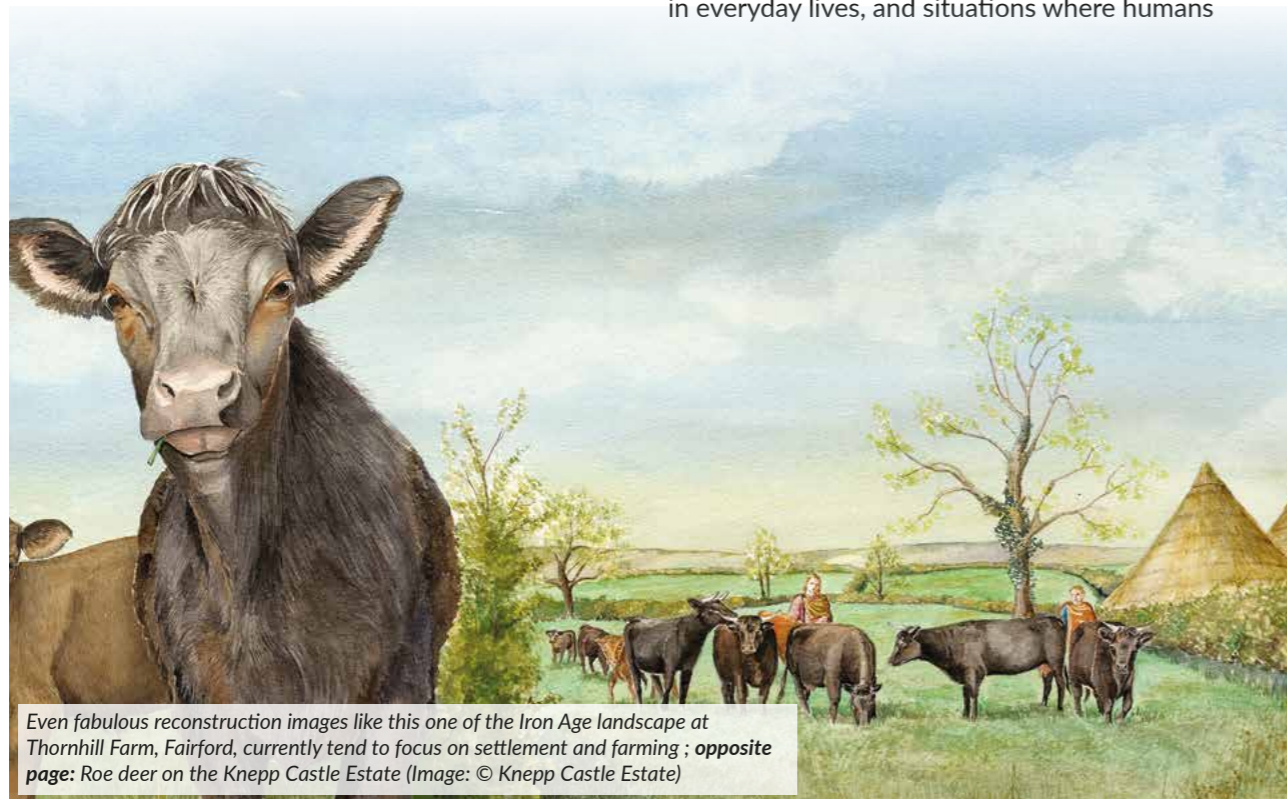
'REWILDING' – AN AMBITIOUS STUDY OF ANCIENT WILDLIFE

Oxford Archaeology is well-known for its outstanding research. Its publication record is exemplary, and its staff are leading experts in multiple disciplinary areas. Research – including fostering intellectual engagement within Oxford Archaeology and building bridges with academia – is embedded in Oxford Archaeology's strategy.

The new UKRI (UK Research and Innovation)-funded 'Rewilding' later prehistory project harnesses and builds on Oxford Archaeology's existing research strengths, tapping into a promising shift in the UK funding landscape towards industry-led projects that have concrete benefits for the contemporary world. Based in Oxford but bringing together a research team of environmental archaeologists from across Oxford Archaeology's offices and an international network of archaeological scientists, digital specialists and rewilding experts, the initial project runs for four years from September 2022. 'Rewilding' later prehistory will develop an archaeological take on the globally significant topic of wildlife. Rewilding is one of various moves across the world to address the current nature crisis. Nature conservation rewilding initiatives, like Knepp Castle Estate, restore wildlife areas in modern landscapes, reinstate species – like beavers – that have become locally extinct, let natural processes – like scrub regeneration and flooding – take over, and encourage the general public to (re)connect with nature.

Like these nature conservation rewilding initiatives, Oxford Archaeology's take on rewilding will bring to the fore, to use George Monbiot's words, the 'wonder and enchantment' of wildlife. Unlike modern rewilding, however, archaeological 'rewilding' will connect archaeologists with the wilder side of excavated assemblages, and ask what wildlife was in past landscapes, what wildlife meant to people in the past, and why an archaeological perspective on wildlife matters in the modern world.

One key aim of the 'Rewilding' project is to create a novel holistic account of Bronze and Iron Age ecologies – from 2500 BC to AD 43 – in the Thames Valley, the East Anglian Fens and Northumberland. The Bronze and Iron Ages are a key tipping point in the transition from wild to farmed landscapes in Britain – extensive field systems emerged and vast tracts of woodland were cleared. Even so, a cross-regional synthesis of a full spectrum of plants and animals from this period has never previously been produced. Traditional accounts of Bronze and Iron Age landscapes focus almost entirely on stories of human progress – on farming revolution, technological achievement, increasing sedentism, and urbanisation – and on stories of environmental loss – woodland decline, animal extinction, and so on. Because of this emphasis, alternative narratives – episodes of woodland regeneration, phases and regions of heightened human mobility, farming setbacks, the essential role of wild plant and animals in everyday lives, and situations where humans



Even fabulous reconstruction images like this one of the Iron Age landscape at Thornhill Farm, Fairford, currently tend to focus on settlement and farming; opposite page: Roe deer on the Knepp Castle Estate (Image: © Knepp Castle Estate)

clearly did not have the upper hand – have thus far been sidelined.

Evidence for prehistoric wildlife can be hard to reach. However, extraordinarily well-preserved sites like the late Bronze Age pile-dwelling settlement at Must Farm, Cambridgeshire, incidences of lynx, bear, wolf, beaver, badger, wild cattle (aurochs), honey bees, and wild herbaceous and woodland species on archaeological sites, and rare depictions of wild species on artefacts, can give us fresh insight into how wildlife shaped prehistoric peoples' lives, and how wild (or not) areas of 'wilderness' like woodlands actually were. The Oxford Archaeology team will work with environmental archaeologists and digital experts at Historic England and the Archaeology Data Service to improve access for researchers and the general public to digital information about past environments, in particular plant and vertebrate animal remains. We will also link up with scientists at the universities of Oxford and Exeter, and the Centre for Ancient Genomics, Toulouse, to develop a cutting-edge toolkit for investigating archaeological wildlife, using aDNA and emerging methods in isotope analysis to explore themes like horse 'ferality', the vegetational makeup of 'blank spaces' – where repeated investigations have produced no archaeological trace – and whether or not it is possible to identify and characterise prehistoric hedgerows archaeologically.

Many of these research ideas have been shaped by the interests of leading nature conservation rewilding experts, and project collaborators, Knepp Castle Estate. Work on the 'Rewilding' project will give a context for current nature conservation concerns and interests – for instance whether or not current species oscillations are part of longer-term cycles or relate directly to recent climate change, or if certain species being considered for introduction to rewilded areas have historical precedents in Britain. 'Rewilding' researchers will also work closely with nature conservation practitioners to question how past



'Wild' occurrences from recent excavations by Oxford Archaeology (flea, badger skull, wolf tooth, elm leaf)

perspectives on wildlife can inform current perceptions and to build captivating multi-media interpretations for visitors to rewilded landscapes, the income from whom, importantly, funds further nature conservation work.

Overall, by leading an ambitious interdisciplinary research project, the 'Rewilding' team aims to augment Oxford Archaeology's existing research capacity, to create fresh opportunities for fully funded-research at Oxford Archaeology, and to foster a more diverse archaeological research landscape more widely in future, with Oxford Archaeology in particular and developer-funded archaeology in general at the heart of it.

Anwen Cooper

For more information, and if you would like to be involved, please follow us on Twitter, check out our dedicated website or contact Anwen.

UK Research and Innovation

Facts about the nature in crisis from the UN

Discover Knepp Castle Estate

AWARD WINNING ARCHAEOLOGY

In February, Oxford Archaeology East's excavation of a Romano-Celtic temple-mausoleum near Corby won Current Archaeology's prestigious Rescue Project of the Year award for 2022.

The field team uncovered a densely populated late Romano-period industrial landscape within a Roman villa estate outside Corby, Northamptonshire. The works, commissioned by Urban&Civic plc, were undertaken as part of a wider scheme of archaeological investigation ahead of the Priors Hall Park development, and revealed that this area was far more significant than previous excavations had suggested.

Shedding dramatic light on the site's Roman roots, the discoveries have been nothing short of spectacular: a panoply of features providing rare insights into the construction and economic life of a Roman villa, the evolution of industry on the site – and the key discovery was a square limestone building interpreted as a mausoleum, thought to date to the late 2nd to 3rd century. This tomb was later transformed into a tilery in a dramatic change of purpose.

Voted for by subscribers and members of the public, Current Archaeology's awards recognise the outstanding contributions to our understanding of the past made by the people, projects, and

Read the Current Archaeology article



Explore the 3D model

publications featured in the pages of Current Archaeology over the previous 12 months.

The villa itself has now been designated an Archaeological Preservation Area (APA) and, as a significant heritage asset, will be left in situ, kept as a green space that will help to facilitate a shared sense of identity for the modern community who will come to call the site home.

Paddy Lambert and Clemency Cooper

EARLIEST EVIDENCE FOR MILLET IN BRITAIN

Evidence for the earliest use of broomcorn millet in Britain, found by Oxford Archaeology East, was published in August in the journal *Antiquity*.

A single pit containing a mixed assemblage of charred plant remains, including broomcorn millet, was discovered during an excavation commissioned by RPS on behalf of Taylor Wimpey East Anglia of a middle-late Bronze Age settlement at Old Catton on the outskirts of Norwich.

Cultivation of millet, a fast-growing, drought-tolerant crop that originated in China, has

previously been confirmed for late Bronze Age continental Europe, but until now the earliest occurrence in Britain has been in Roman-period military or urban contexts, where grains have been interpreted as food imports. Radiocarbon dating of the Old Catton assemblage returned a date of 910–800 cal BC for the millet itself, pushing use of the crop in Britain back by a millennium and is the first proper archaeological evidence for its cultivation here.

Edward Biddulph



Charred broomcorn millet (*Panicum miliaceum*) grains (photograph: C Kneale, University of Cambridge)

Read the Antiquity article

RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES

Launching in 2021 with the late Mesolithic to Bronze Age landscape of Windy Harbour near Blackpool, followed by sessions on the middle Bronze Age revolution and Iron Age farmsteads, Oxford Archaeology's online research seminar series continued in 2022 with two further sessions.

The fourth research seminar explored the settlements and landscapes of Roman Britain. It highlighted work by Oxford Archaeology on Roman rural settlements in both northern and southern England and investigated themes of organisation, economy, regionality, change and continuity, and interconnectedness, among others.

This was followed by a seminar focusing on early medieval cemeteries in south-eastern and north-western England. Using evidence from Oxford Archaeology's excavations in Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Cumbria spanning the late 5th to the 11th centuries AD, the seminar explored themes across sites of varying character, ranging from the pre-Christian period to the early monastic and Anglo-Scandinavian era. It took the opportunity to put forward some new questions relating to a range of issues, including community, ethnicity, burial expression, chronology and transition.

There will be just enough time towards the end of the year for the sixth research seminar, which will look at medieval urban provisioning and resourcing.

Liz Popescu and Edward Biddulph

Catch up on our previous seminars

Windy Harbour

The middle Bronze Age revolution?

Iron Age - Beyond the isolated farmstead

Bridging the Divide: Rural settlements in northern and southern Roman Britain

Identity, kinship & community: early medieval death & burial in southeastern & northwestern England

IN THE NEWS

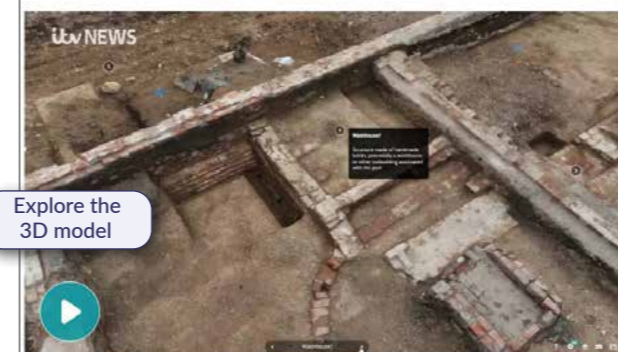
The work of Oxford Archaeology attracted local, national and international media attention throughout the year, with press releases playing a key part in spreading the word about our work.

Towards the end of 2021, a 3D interactive model of Trinity Burial Ground Foundry and Gaol in Hull, produced as part of Oxford Archaeology North's work on the National Highways' A63 road improvement scheme in Hull, caught the attention of national and local media, being covered by ITV News and the Hull Daily Mail, among other organisations.

In December, the discovery by a Suffolk teenager of two Bronze Age hoards in Cambridgeshire, which were then excavated by Oxford Archaeology East, was widely publicised in the press.

Interactive 3D model reveals what lies beneath historic archaeological dig in Hull

CALENDAR | HULL | Sunday 19 September 2021 at 10:03am



Explore the 3D model

In February, two projects attracted an enormous amount of national and international media interest. One was HS2 Fleet Marston, just outside Aylesbury in Bucks, where excavation for Fusion on behalf of HS2 by COPA (a joint venture of Oxford Archaeology, Cotswold Archaeology and Pre-Construct Archaeology) uncovered the remains of a Roman nucleated settlement or 'small town' that developed along a major Roman road. A press release following the completion of fieldwork was issued by HS2, the resulting articles around the world perhaps inevitably focusing on decapitation burials from the site's extensive late Roman cemetery.

The other project was the excavation by Oxford Archaeology South at Frewin Hall, Oxford, for Brasenose College. A press release was issued and hit its mark; the press understandably being excited by the discovery of the 'lost' college of St Mary's and then, as the fieldwork progressed, a Bronze Age burial mound.

BBC Online was given exclusive use of Oxford Archaeology East's press release about the Napoleonic-era military barracks excavated in Weeley, Essex. After winning 'Rescue Project of the Year' for Oxford Archaeology East's excavation at Priors Hall in Corby, the client, Urban&Civic, contacted local press outlets to cover the story. Press releases about Oxford Archaeology East's open days at Waterbeach Barracks and Bishop's Stortford were issued to local media after the events. A press release to promote the publication of the Radcliffe Infirmary monograph was issued to the local media, with an item consequently being published by the Oxford Mail.

Edward Biddulph

BELEAF IT OR NOT... OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY AT STONEHENGE EXHIBITION

It's time for a confession. I am a nerd. For as long as I can remember, I've always been a nerd. I'm nerdy about archaeology and history, more particularly, prehistory, and various arcane topics within this field (lithics, wetlands, hunter-gatherers, the inception of farming etc). Ever since I was little, I was fascinated by the strange stone rings and standing stones that littered Dartmoor – the mysterious, often misty, moorland that started at the end of my suburban 1960s' street. I'm not ashamed of my nerdism, but I don't expect others to share my passion. I understand why other

archaeologists, and the general public, might instead be seduced by the more-tangible heritage bling of a pyramid, a Roman mosaic, or even a hunter-gatherer site like Göbekli Tepe.

If there is one prehistoric site in the UK that captures the world's imagination, though, it is Stonehenge. So, it's not surprising that the British Museum should feature it in a major exhibition, held during this past summer. What was brave, visionary and, for me, truly exciting about this, however, was that the British Museum chose to focus on the world of Stonehenge rather than the

monument itself. So often, the stones have been used as the lens through which to view and try to understand Neolithic life. Instead, the curators used the materiality of life at large to tell the story of, and establish the social, religious and cultural context for, the construction and architectural evolution of the famous monument. As Jenifer Wexler and Neil Wilkin, the exhibition's curators, put it, 'Who were the people of Stonehenge?'

My dialogue with the curators started during lockdown, when they spotted a National Highways' press release regarding our forthcoming excavations of the Windy Harbour site, near to Blackpool. This featured an image, which I'd snapped with my phone, of a 6000-year-old elm leaf. The curators were taken with this and wanted to juxtapose the leaf (a remarkable survivor of the devastation of the indigenous elm forests) with a wall of stone axes – these being a metaphor for the arrival of the first farmers and the irreversible


changes they enacted on the insular ecology and environment.


During our conversations, I proffered various ideas that had occurred during our research on recent excavations and mentioned some of the objects that we had discovered on our digs. Subsequently, I was delighted when the British Museum approached us (and Tullie House Museum in Carlisle) about including some of these in the exhibition. Oxford Archaeology's Cumbrian axehead, microliths, oaken 'tridents', bear-clawed and beaver gnawed tree trunks, and the Windy Harbour leaf, were to have their day within what must be the most captivating assemblage of British and continental European Mesolithic to Bronze Age artefacts ever to have been displayed.

Some of the headliners included antler frontlets from Star Carr, shamanic adornments buried with the Bad Dürrenberg woman, hafted axeheads, carved wooden votive figurines, the Amesbury Archer, the Knowth macehead and Towie stone ball, the Folkton drums, golden capes, lunulae, ear spools, cups, and 'wizard hats' (I'm not kidding!) and the Shropshire Sun Pendant, an amber 'sun catcher', part of the Sweet Track, Sea Henge, and, top of the bill, the 3600-year-old Nebra Sky Disk. This amazing discovery, a copper-alloy disc, 320mm in diameter, found in 1999 by nighthawkers as part of a hoard in Saxony-Anhalt, Germany (and retrieved by forensic archaeological sleuthing), depicts in Cornish gold a cosmological representation of the heavenly bodies. It is a 'portable monument' that materialises a calendrical rule synchronising the lunar and solar cycles (the leap year), which allows the key points of the annual agricultural cycle to be marked – all without the need for writing!

I visited the exhibition three times and was gratified to hear at its opening Grayson Perry namecheck the Windy Harbour leaf in his keynote speech. Truly, I was in nerd heaven. Just as impressive to me, though, was the enthusiasm and intense sense of engagement that was evident in the hordes of visitors crammed into the massive exhibition space. This was incredibly affirming and a welcome vindication of the small role that nerds like me can play in bringing meaning to the world and making the past relevant.

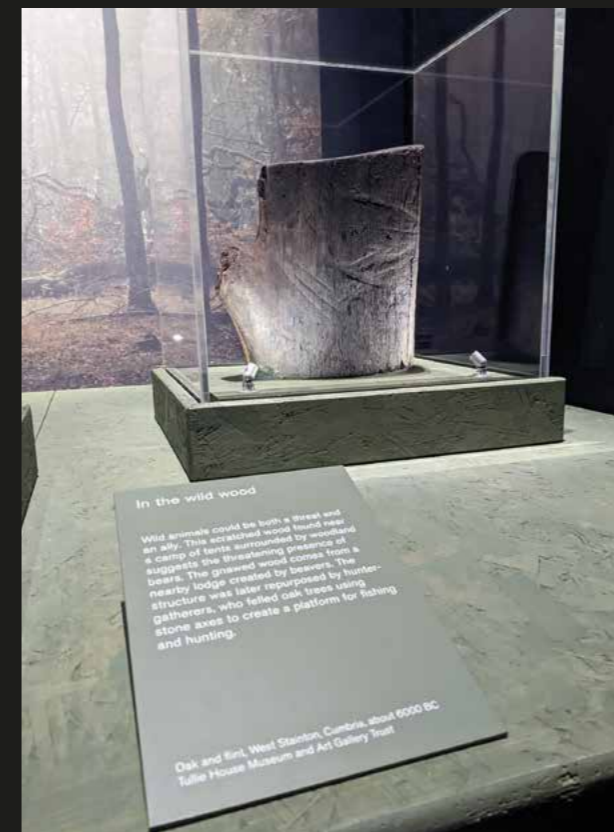
Fraser Brown

Learn more about the exhibition 

Watch the presentation by curators Jenifer Wexler and Neil Wilkin 



Oxford Archaeology's contribution to the exhibition included the 6000-year-old elm leaf from Windy Harbour, the Mesolithic bear-scratched oak tree and the Neolithic trident from Stainton West





TALKING ABOUT OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY

Over the year, Oxford Archaeology staff have given talks to local archaeological societies, academic conferences, and community groups. With the lifting of coronavirus-related restrictions, many talks were given in person, although online events continued to be held, and some societies and groups adopted a hybrid approach, online attendance at an in-person event remaining an option. Here is a flavour of this year's events.

Staff at Oxford Archaeology East gave talks to several Cambridgeshire community archaeology groups, including a talk on Roman Britain to FenArch and an online talk on the Anglo-Saxon excavations at Buckden, Cambs, to the Fen Edge Archaeology Group. A talk about the Roman-period villa estate outside Corby was given to the Priors Hall Park Neighbourhood Association, and the Welwyn Archaeological Society heard about Oxford Archaeology East's 2017 excavation of Verulamium's basilica and portico walls.

Oxford Archaeology North returned to in-person talks with one on Dacre given to the Kendal Archaeological and History Society and another on the North West Research Framework to the Great Eccleston History Group. An online talk was given to the Lancaster and District Archaeological and Historical Society on the medieval lanes of Carlisle, and a lecture on the 2013-14

Roman Maryport Settlement project was delivered in person twice in one month - to the Senhouse Roman Museum 30th anniversary conference and then to the Ingelton Archaeology Group

Oxford Archaeology South presented the results of its Hinkley C Connection excavation in person to Somerset Archaeological Society, and a lecture on Radcliffe Infirmary burial ground was delivered to the Cardiff Archaeology Society. This year's Tom Hassall lecture, organised by the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society, was presented by two Oxford Archaeology South staff members, the subject being Roman Oxfordshire. Representing COPA, staff presented papers to two HS2 archaeology conferences organised by the Buckinghamshire Archaeology Society. One event was online, the other in-person.

At the 2022 ClfA conference in Bath, Oxford Archaeology's Community Archaeology Manager gave a joint paper with Cotswold Archaeology's Outreach Officer about COPA's HS2 school workshops. Another paper, on using digital recording tools in fieldwork, was delivered at the conference by Oxford Archaeology.

However the events have been arranged, Oxford Archaeology staff have been there to spread the word about their exciting work!

Edward Biddulph



TV TIMES

This year saw the appearance on the BBC's flagship archaeology programme, Digging for Britain, of two of Oxford Archaeology's sites.

One of the sites was our excavation, with Humber Field Archaeology, of the nationally significant post-medieval cemetery on National Highways' A63 improvement scheme in Hull. Trinity Burial Ground was in use in the late 18th and early 19th centuries when the city flourished in a golden age of whaling and shipping. The remains of around 9500 burials were carefully and respectfully excavated by our archaeological team and analysed on site before being reburied. Digging for Britain's presenter, Professor Alice Roberts, visited Trinity Burial Ground to meet the team and go behind the scenes at our on-site laboratories to find out more.



Another episode featured our excavation of the Hinkley C Connection project in Somerset for National Grid and Balfour Beatty. Over the last two years, Oxford Archaeology completed one of the most intensively excavated slices through a Roman roadside settlement undertaken in the UK. The site was exceptionally well preserved: layer upon layer of settlement remains were meticulously excavated and recorded using cutting edge photogrammetry methods. The Digging for Britain team was on hand to capture the archaeological work, the resulting film being broadcast in January.

Filming has also been taking place at various sites, including Frewin Hall, for next year's series. Stay tuned to the Oxford Archaeology website for more information.

Edward Biddulph and Clemency Cooper

Watch the Trinity Burial Ground episode here

Watch the Hinkley C Connection episode here

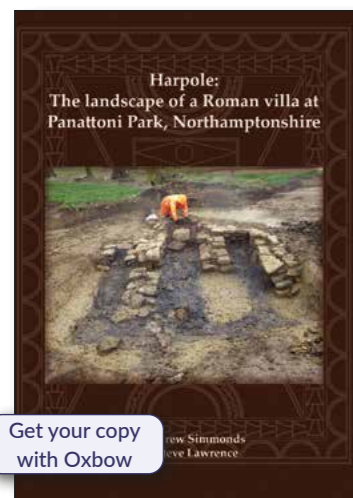
More about Digging for Britain on BBC

OA IN PRINT

This year has produced a bumper crop of publications, dealing with archaeological sites of a wide chronological range, from prehistory to the modern era.

The results of excavations at Panattoni Park, near Northampton, where prehistoric evidence and part of a Roman villa were found, were published in an Oxford Archaeology South monograph, **Harpole: The landscape of a Roman villa at Panattoni Park, Northamptonshire.**

The earliest evidence was a cluster of flint knapping debris dating from the Mesolithic period. A pit alignment was established during the early Iron Age or at the start of the middle Iron Age, and east of this lay a middle Iron Age settlement of at least seven roundhouses. An enclosure complex was constructed against the pit alignment during the late Iron Age and occupied until about AD 50/70, after which a hiatus of about a century passed before the establishment of the villa during the mid-2nd century AD.

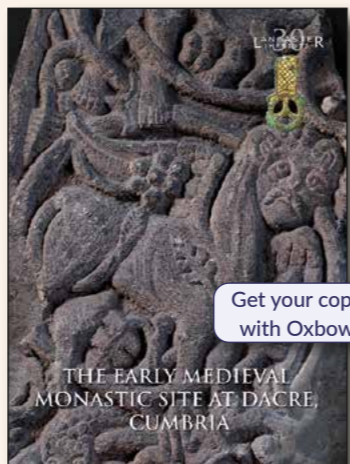


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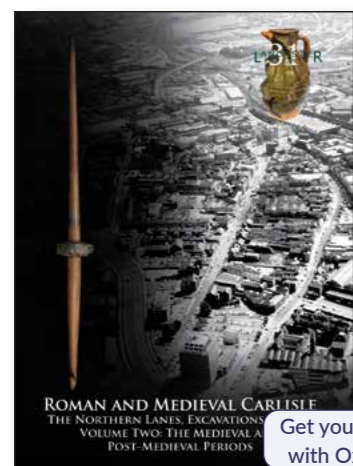
The villa was first discovered in the 1840s when a mosaic was uncovered accidentally, and it was believed to have been largely destroyed during widening of the adjacent A4500 road in 1966. However, the new excavation has shown that part of the main building complex survived, including a substantial aisled building that may have formed the southern range.

An extensive area of the villa's surrounding landscape was investigated, including a malting area, a stockyard, and a possible temple-mausoleum beside a spring channel. Pollen from the channel indicated the presence of a walnut grove and this may be the earliest definite evidence for cultivation of walnut trees in Britain.

Two volumes were published in Oxford Archaeology North's Lancaster Imprints series. **The early medieval monastic site at Dacre, Cumbria** presents the results of the excavations undertaken in 1982-5 at a very important early medieval site, having been mentioned by the Venerable Bede in 731 and thought to be where King Æthelstan of Wessex met the northern and western lords in 927. The site now contains a later medieval parish church and graveyard and had previously produced some high-quality early sculptural fragments. The excavations therefore provided some well-needed information on the origins and evolution of this significant religious site, particularly since they recorded a substantial early medieval cemetery, containing more than 200 graves, along with evidence for early buildings. A substantial assemblage of fine metalwork, loomweights, vessel and window glass, and several Northumbrian coins, are also presented within the volume.



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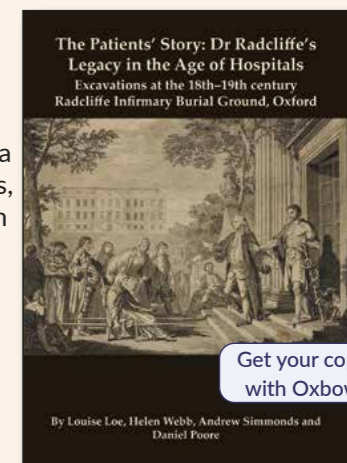
Roman and medieval Carlisle: The Northern Lanes, excavations 1978-82. Volume 2: The medieval and post-medieval periods focuses on an important collection of remains located in a densely built-up part of Carlisle. The remains included below-ground archaeology and upstanding buildings, all of which lay in the footprint of the Lanes shopping centre. The volume sets out the evidence for initial post-Roman (5th century) abandonment of the Roman settlement, which is followed by a discussion of the later medieval archaeology recorded across the area. These remains relate to narrow burgage plots that were created after the re-establishment of Carlisle by William II, and which yielded a wealth of evidence for the everyday lives of the town's medieval and later inhabitants.

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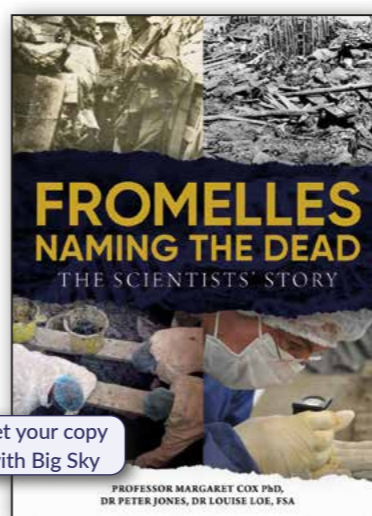
Moving to more recent times, **The Patients' Story: Dr Radcliffe's Legacy in the Age of Hospitals: Excavations at the 18th-19th century Radcliffe Infirmary Burial Ground, Oxford**, describes the results of archaeological investigations at the site of the old Radcliffe Infirmary burial ground, undertaken between 2013 and 2014.

The Infirmary was founded in 1770 with funds from the estate of the royal physician, landowner and MP, Dr John Radcliffe. Like other English urban hospitals established at this time, the Radcliffe was a voluntary hospital and a teaching hospital, opened to treat the sick poor. Run by a board of governors, it is among a limited number of voluntary hospitals to be set out with its own formal burial ground, used between 1770 and 1855, to bury those dying in the hospital who were unclaimed by their families or whose families could not afford to transport them back to their home parish for burial.

OA's excavation presented a unique opportunity to examine 18th/19th hospital practice as reflected in the physical remains of the patients themselves and to consider the findings in the context of the hospital's extensive archives.



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(l to r) Lambis Englezos, who led the campaign to investigate and excavate the graves, with book authors Peter Jones, Margaret Cox and Louise Loe

Finally, **Fromelles: Naming the Dead, the Scientists' Story**, published by Big Sky Publishing, tells the story of the excavation and identification of Australian soldiers who were killed in the First World War during the Battle of Fromelles in northern France in 1916.

In 2009, a team of archaeologists and forensic anthropologists led by Oxford Archaeology excavated six mass graves adjacent to Pheasant Wood near the village of Fromelles. A total of 250 soldiers were recovered and, using a combination of anthropological and DNA evidence, 166 of them were identified. All the soldiers were reburied in a new Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery in the village.

The book was written by the principal scientists involved in the project, Margaret Cox, Peter Jones, and Oxford Archaeology's Louise Loe. In addition to telling the story of the excavation and identification of the soldiers, the book explores the lives of some of those identified and the wider context of their families. The book follows the technical report, **Remember Me to All**, which was published by Oxford Archaeology in 2014.

On the 106th anniversary of the battle, the authors returned to the site for a launch event hosted by the Museum of the Battle of Fromelles to talk about the excavation and subsequent analysis and identification work, and to sign copies of the book.

More books from Oxford Archaeology are available to buy from Oxbow Books at <https://www.oxbowbooks.com/oxbow/>

NEWS & ROUNDUPS

NEWS & ROUNDUPS



WHO IS O.A.?

WHO IS OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY?
 As ever, the success of Oxford Archaeology depends on every member of staff. We would like to thank them for their hard work and dedication.

A Emily Abrehart, Rebecca Aitken, Chloe Akhurst, Sara Alberigi, Ashleigh Alexander, Leigh Allen, Martyn Allen, Rebecca Allen, Tim Allen, Russell Almond, Victor Alonso, Lily Andrews, Mary Andrews, Katrina Anker, Bryan Antoni, Stephen Arrow, Ben Attfield **B** Robert Backhouse, William Baker, Narita Banks, Alexandra Baranowski, Mariah Barclay, Karen Barker, Richard Barker, Lauren Basnett, Freya Bates, Nicholas Beddoe, Yera Benet, Daniel Bennett, Liberty Bennett, Marianne Bergeron, Melanie Betts, Severine Bezie, Edward Biddulph, Lawrence Billington, Oliver Bircham, Charlotte Bishop, Tom Black, Kathryn Blackbourn, Jody Bloom, Anne-Laure Bollen, Christopher Booth, Rona Booth, John Boothroyd, Graeme Botham, Matt Bradley, Kate Brady, Jeremy Briscoe, Rose Britton, Daniel Broadbent, Benjamin Brown, Christopher Brown, David Brown, Ellie Brown, Fraser Brown, Richard Brown, Sophie Brown, David Browne, Tom Bruce, Hannah Bullmore, Ansel Burn, Anni Byard **C** Vanessa Cadman, Benjamin Camp, John Carne, Lauren Carpenter, Carl Champness, Matthew Claridge, Christopher Clark, Graeme Clarke, Rachel Clarke, Stephen Clarke, Athene Clifford, Miles Clifford, Edmund Cole, Sarah Collett, Olivia Collier, Mark Collins, Elizabeth Connelly, Aileen Connor, Laurie Cook, Sharon Cook, Anne Cooper, Anwen Cooper, Clemency Cooper, Faye Corbett, Samuel Corke, John Cotter, Jake Cowan, Luke Cowan, Charlotte Cox, Nicholas Cox, Geraldine Crann, Martha Craven, Nicola Crawford, James Cross, Alexander Cruse, Mark Curtis **D** Sarah Dalton, Megan Daniels, Alex Davies, Rosalind Davison, Alexanne Dawson, Lauren Day, Selina Dean, Brian Dean, Peter Dearlove, Antony Dickson, Emily Dingler Cantu, Anne Dodd, Mark Dodd, Natasha Dodwell, Jessica Domiczew, Michael Donnelly, Jack Douglass, Denise Druce, Paul Dunn, Elizabeth Duru **E** Jack Easen, David East, Vedika Eastwood, Matthew Edwards, Jessica Elleray, Charles Elliman, Lewis Ernest, Gary Evans, Helen Evans, Matthew Evans, Jack Everett, Thomas Evershed **F** James Fairbairn, Cassandra Fallowfield, Aiden Farnan, Stacey Farrell, Amy Farrer, Adam Fellingham, Joseph Ferrier, Daniel Firth, James Fish, Emma Fishwick,

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*Includes all staff employed between November 2021 and October 22

WHO IS O.A.?

Where we've been working in 2021/22...



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