

Archaeological Work in Oxfordshire, 2017

Between April 2017 and March 2018 County Archaeological Services was consulted on approximately 1,900 planning applications. In addition, the service scanned in the region of 10,000 applications and appraised a further 515 applications from the weekly planning lists. The service also produced fifty-five design briefs for archaeological work including thirty-six for archaeological evaluation. Not all archaeological contractors request a design brief and many produce a written scheme of investigation directly and therefore the number of investigations is higher. In addition to development control work County Archaeology has responded to 188 countryside stewardship schemes within the county.

SELECTED PROJECTS

Little Martin's Field, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell

Archaeological evaluation ahead of development was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS) on this site to the west of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell. The evaluation recorded archaeological deposits dating to the middle Iron Age which are thought to relate to an area of settlement. Sparse evidence of Anglo-Saxon activity was also recorded on the site. A small quantity of Roman pottery was thought to be residual but indicates Roman activity in the area. A programme of excavation was subsequently undertaken by Oxford Archaeology (OA). Two areas have been excavated which revealed a series of prehistoric pits and a medieval trackway. The base of a Bronze-Age vessel was recovered from a shallow pit.

Hook Norton

OA undertook an excavation on a small Roman occupation site on the north side of Hook Norton. The stone foundations of a small building have been revealed alongside a trackway consisting of a series of intercutting ditches. A series of enclosures have also been recorded along with several burials set apart from the area of occupation. Several of the ditches formed part of a larger trackway across the site.

Mongewell

An excavation has been undertaken by JMHS on the site of the Old Rectory in Mongewell ahead of the construction of a single house. The excavation recorded the well-preserved remains of the former post medieval rectory house. The rectory house was recorded in eighteenth-century documents and was demolished to ground level. A number of floor surfaces and the cellar were found relatively intact. The proposed development involved a small amount of ground disturbance and the building was raised slightly to preserve much of the remains of the rectory in situ.

Slade End Farm, Wallingford

A large-scale excavation was undertaken by OA at Slade End Farm on the western side of Wallingford (Fig. 1). The excavation recorded a long-lived settlement site with occupation evidence from the Neolithic through to the Iron Age. A series of Neolithic pits have been recorded on the site and a Bronze-Age pit alignment consisting of a double line of pits over 400 metres in length. A crouched burial recorded from one of these pits was provisionally dated to the Bronze Age. A number of water holes were also been recorded in the vicinity of the pit alignment and part of a log ladder was recovered from one of these features. These were also provisionally dated the Bronze Age. The site also contains a number of trackways one



Fig. 1. Iron-Age roundhouses and Bronze-Age pit alignment at Slade End Farm. Copyright Oxford Archaeology.

of which has part of a metallised surface surviving. Several Iron-Age roundhouses have been recorded to the south of the site along with a number of enclosures.

Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme

OA undertook an archaeological evaluation along the line of the proposed Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme. The evaluation followed on from a geophysical survey. The evaluation was designed to assess both the archaeological interest of the proposed route as well as the paleo-environmental interest of the site. The evaluation recorded evidence of late Mesolithic activity on the western slope and the valley floor from a small number of artefact scatters within the colluvial deposits. An isolated Bronze-Age cremation was recorded as well as a timber post alignment. Early to middle Iron-Age occupation was recorded with a small number of possible roundhouses encountered along with a large square enclosure. In addition to these features the evaluation also recorded several causeways constructed between sporadic gravel islands along the valley floor.

Winterbrook, Wallingford

An archaeological excavation was undertaken by OA to the south of Wallingford ahead of a housing development, on behalf of CGMS. A middle Iron-Age settlement was recorded including a series of roundhouses, pits, postholes and enclosures. Bronze-Age field systems underlay the settlement and several Bronze-Age burials cut into a backfilled ditch.

Highlands Farm, Henley

Mitigation work on the Palaeolithic deposits at Highlands Farm was undertaken by CGMS and Cotswold Archaeology. The investigations consisted of a series of deep sections excavated across the site to record the stratigraphy of the gravels and to recover any artefacts. The sections showed the development of the gravel deposits, and a number of tools from the Palaeolithic were recovered, albeit not the quantity expected from Wymer's earlier excavation.

A strip map and recording action undertaken on the site of the former farmhouse and barn found that the area had been heavily truncated by previous development and no archaeological deposits related to the medieval farmstead were recorded.

Graven Hill, Bicester

The archaeological excavations for the first phase of the development at Graven Hill have now been completed. An area of Iron-Age settlement was recorded along with the remains of a previously unknown medieval farmstead. The stone remains of a number of medieval

houses alongside a trackway have also been encountered during a strip, map and recording exercise along the line of a new road. These remains consisted of approximately six stone foundations and a possible holloway. The excavations also recorded the line of the Roman road of Akeman Street, heading east from Alchester. The road had been truncated by the modern military use of the land but the line of the road could still be recorded and small patches of metallurgy still survived between the areas of truncation.

Crowell Road, Chinnor

Foundations Archaeology undertook an excavation at Chinnor, south of Crowell Road, ahead of residential development. The excavations recorded a large enclosure, identified on geophysical survey and evaluation, along with a number of pits and linear features. The features were tentatively dated to the Iron Age and Roman periods. A small number of possible cremation deposits and a burial have also been recorded. A small evaluation was undertaken on the northern side of Crowell Road which recorded further Iron-Age and Roman features along with a further burial.

Emmer Green, Reading

An evaluation was undertaken by OA immediately north of Reading on the southern boundary of the County. A geophysical survey had already been undertaken on the site which did not suggest any possible archaeological features. A small number of prehistoric features were recorded across the site along with evidence of a small Roman farmstead on the higher ground. The farmstead consisted of enclosure ditches, pits, two ovens or hearths and a possible cremation burial. A single possible wall was also recorded.

Celsea Place, Cholsey

An archaeological excavation was undertaken by Foundations Archaeology ahead of development around the site of a Roman villa identified during evaluation on the south-eastern side of Cholsey. The villa remains will be preserved within the development. The excavations adjacent to the villa have recorded a considerable number of archaeological features related to the villa including six stone built corn driers, including once with a double flue. A well and water hole have also been recorded along with a cremation burial. A programme of community involvement was built into the excavation programme including updated site information boards, open days and the opportunity for the local society to help on site for a day.

Wretchwick Green, Bicester

An archaeological evaluation has been undertaken by OA on a large site south-east of Bicester. This site is adjacent to the scheduled monument of Wretchwick Farm. The evaluation recorded an area of Roman activity and a post-medieval brick clamp probably associated with the brickworks south east of the site. The evaluation also investigated an unscheduled area of earthworks related to the scheduled monument which recorded a series of stone house foundations and surfaces.

South Oxfordshire Garden City

A geophysical survey was undertaken by Headland Archaeology on the site of the proposed southern extension to Oxford, The Garden City, south of Grenoble Road. This survey, over a 200 hectare site, recorded a number of areas of possible archaeology including a fairly dense area of archaeological features within a field on the edge of the higher ground. The area is to the south and east of two areas of Roman pottery production however no obvious possible kiln sites were identified by the magnetometry survey.

An archaeological evaluation was subsequently undertaken across the site by Cotswold Archaeology which confirmed that the geophysical survey was reasonably accurate and the

anomalies encountered by the survey do correspond with archaeological features identified by the trenching. In particular, an area of Roman activity was recorded within the field on the edge of the higher ground. A considerable amount of pottery was recovered from a series of linear features, enclosures and pits. A number of these features contain quantities of charcoal and burnt clay which may indicate industrial activity and possible pottery production although no burnt or misfired pottery has been found to date.

Milton Heights

Archaeological mitigation has been undertaken by MOLA (London). This revealed an extensive later Iron-Age and Romano-British settlement with five well preserved roundhouses, enclosures and pits. There was an abundance of dating evidence and artefacts. The focus of settlement was on the crest of the hill with enclosures and field systems extending southwards towards Harwell. A number of burials and cremations were recorded and a number of the former show evidence of trauma. A number of wells have also been revealed. The presence of wall plaster and hypocaust tile suggest that higher-status buildings may have been present but no physical evidence of such structures were revealed. Post-excavation analysis is ongoing.

Williams F1, Grove

Archaeological mitigation was undertaken by OA on behalf of CGMS directly south of Williams F1. This revealed a cluster of roundhouses that all date to the Romano-British period. Two corn driers were also recorded. The settlement appears to have been abandoned and was replaced by a series of field systems.

Bridge Farm Quarry Extension, Sutton Courtenay

Two areas were targeted in excavations by OA. Area one contained a ring-ditch with an entrance on the west side. A three-sided Iron-Age enclosure respected the ring-ditch. In association with the enclosure were a number of storage or refuse pits one of which contained a bone textile comb. Also within the area was an Anglo-Saxon sunken feature building with two external post holes. Associated with this were a number of pits containing domestic waste. Area two contained a series of linear features relating to medieval and post-medieval agricultural activities. A single segmented ditch appears to be Bronze Age and appears to be a continuation of a features revealed and excavated in previous phases. Two inhumation burials were also present. Both burials were in a crouched position, one near complete and the other heavily disturbed. No finds were recovered from either burial, although they are suspected to be of a Bronze-Age or Iron-Age origin.

Coxwell Road, Faringdon

Archaeological excavation undertaken by Oxford Archaeology revealed later prehistoric and Romano-British settlement. Evidence of prehistoric activity was sparse but the Romano-British features include a well, a corn drier, enclosures, and areas of rubble infilling. The area has suffered from truncation as a result of ploughing. The evidence suggests that the settlement fell into disuse in the second century.

Land off Lancott Lane, Brighthampton

CGMS have commissioned predetermination geophysical survey and archaeological field evaluation off Lancott Lane in Brighthampton where there has been a planning application to erect forty-six dwellings. The geophysical survey by Stratascan revealed a series of pits, ditches and a circular enclosure. Subsequently OA undertook an evaluation that confirmed a uniform spread of features across the site that includes linear features, post holes and pits. The pottery from the features suggests that activity was mainly between 1250 and 1400 AD. A small amount of late Anglo-Saxon pottery suggests some activity during that period.

Manor Farm, Drayton

A geophysical survey and subsequent archaeological field evaluation and excavation by TVAS revealed archaeological features across the application area. These appear to fall within two very distinct and separate phases: Iron Age and eleventh century AD. The features include linear features, pits and postholes. Whilst some appear to relate to enclosures others may form part of settlement. The Bronze-Age deposits consisted of a series of small pits and ditches which represent occupation and the medieval deposits represent land division and boundaries.

HUGH CODDINGTON and RICHARD ORAM,
COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES