

IN TOUCH

REVIEW 2023/24

SPOTLIGHT ON
SUSTAINABILITY

A person wearing a brown beanie, a dark jacket, and an orange and white high-visibility vest is standing in a field of tall grass and reeds. They are holding a camera up to their eye, taking a photograph of a vast, rolling landscape under a blue sky with scattered clouds. The landscape consists of brown and green hills and fields.

From the CEO

Ken Welsh

Welcome to this, the annual review edition of In Touch, where we look back at some of the remarkable archaeological discoveries and groundbreaking research that have shaped the past year at Oxford Archaeology. From the restoration of the iconic Uffington White Horse to the unearthing of a rare Anglo-Saxon settlement in Bury St Edmunds, our teams have been hard at work, meticulously excavating sites across the country and shedding new light on the rich history beneath our feet

In this issue, we shine a spotlight on sustainability, exploring the intricate relationships between human activity and the environment, both past and present. We explore the groundbreaking work of our 'Rewilding' Later Prehistory project, which is transforming how we interpret and use paleoenvironmental data. By reconstructing past environments and examining human interactions with wildlife, we can gain valuable insights that can inform contemporary conservation efforts and inspire a greater appreciation for the natural world. We also look at the connection between tree roots and archaeological preservation, highlighting the delicate balance between preserving our heritage and promoting sustainable forestry practices.

We have recently embarked on a significant project to explore the relationship between the historic environment and biodiversity net gain (BNG), now a legal requirement for developments in England. While BNG holds immense promise for nature recovery, the project seeks to address the lack of legal obligation for off-site developments to consider the historic environment. The project's aims to identify ways to maximize the inclusion



of the historic environment in future BNG projects; not only to protect heritage assets, but also to ensure historic environment assets positively contribute to nature recovery schemes.

Also looking to the future health of the planet, back in March we were proud to announce our public commitment to achieving Net Zero Carbon by 2050, along with the launch of an ambitious carbon reduction plan. The plan focuses on key areas such as improving energy efficiency, supporting active travel, and working with partners to reduce emissions throughout the supply chain.

Engaging with the public is also a key part of our work and, through our online Knowledge Hub, our publications, public talks, and other means, we continue to make our research accessible to a range of audiences. We actively engage with local communities and volunteers, and over the past 12 months, we have worked with school students, special interest groups, volunteers, and members of the public to explore our shared past. We believe that archaeology is not just about the past; it's about understanding our shared humanity and using that understanding to help shape a better future. ■

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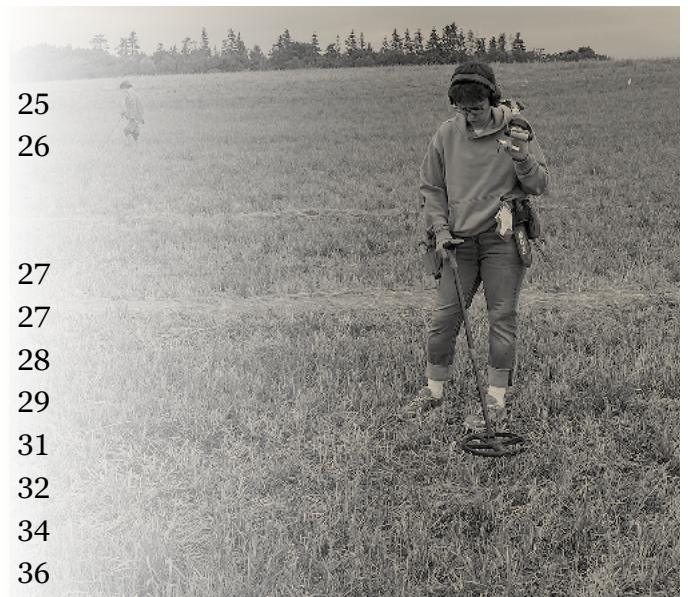
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The White Horse of Uffington

Simon Palmer & David Miles



The White Horse under restoration

In 2023, OA was commissioned by the National Trust to conduct a drone survey of the White Horse of Uffington, the oldest known chalk figure in the UK, having been dated to the Bronze Age (2400–700 BC). There had been some concern in recent years that the horse had not only been changing shape over the years but was getting smaller. Comparing our drone data with previous surveys demonstrated that this was indeed the case: the horse was gradually becoming leaner.

The results informed the National Trust's strategy for the ongoing monitoring and preservation of the monument, and this led to further fieldwork. In July 2024, OA returned to Uffington with volunteers and National Trust staff to restore the horse to its size and shape of about 40 years ago.

The restoration focused on widening the head and neck of the horse. This involved removing the turf to a pre-set outline (based on what we revealed in 2023), recording the archaeology beneath the topsoil, then infilling the space with new chalk. The

process was akin to picture restoration: what has been newly added can be easily reversed.

Many visitors to the site have also mentioned the diminishing visibility of the horse from below in the vale. It seems the best view now is above from a drone. Centuries of soil erosion or hill-wash, has changed the profile of the hillside, effectively flattening the slope that the horse gallops across.

We obviously cannot now change the slope, but we can reduce the erosion, slowing the build-up, and steepen the angle of the chalk infill of the body. This can be achieved by reducing the height of the chalk body so that it is lower than the turf line and creating a clear edge along the horse's belly (which was originally present there) to slow the run-off of eroded chalk on to the slope below.

Study of the survey results also show that there has been a shortening of some legs and the tail. These will be lengthened to ensure that the horse maintains its traditional extent. This will again be achieved by removing the turf and infilling the area with chalk. ■



The White Horse post-restoration, by Hedley Thorne
www.hedleythorne.com

Abbot's Vale, Bury St Edmunds

Louise Moan

Since January 2024, a team from the Cambridge Office has been working on an 8.4ha excavation on the outskirts of Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, on behalf of RPS Consulting and Hopkins Homes. While previous phases of evaluation had established the presence of Bronze Age and early Saxon archaeology, the character and density of remains uncovered by the excavation was astounding.

The dominating feature, situated on a plateau of higher ground, was an impressive monument that appears to have comprised a Neolithic henge repurposed as a barrow, 30m in diameter, during the Bronze Age. A pit cluster adjacent to this monument produced a stone tool (possibly a repurposed Langdale axe) alongside sherds of an early Bronze Age collared urn. A second barrow, 20m in diameter and simpler in design, was also present some 75m to the north. Further to the north-west was a cursus (a Neolithic ceremonial monument), orientated towards the substantial henge/barrow. The interior of the cursus was the focus of Neolithic activity, indicated by a double ring ditch, just 7m in diameter, with a central cremation burial and pit clusters containing large quantities of Neolithic pottery.

No evidence of Iron Age activity was found on site and the only Roman remains comprised a set of enclosure ditches and an oven, together with residual finds in later features. It appears that the site was not intensely occupied until the early medieval period, when the site was used for

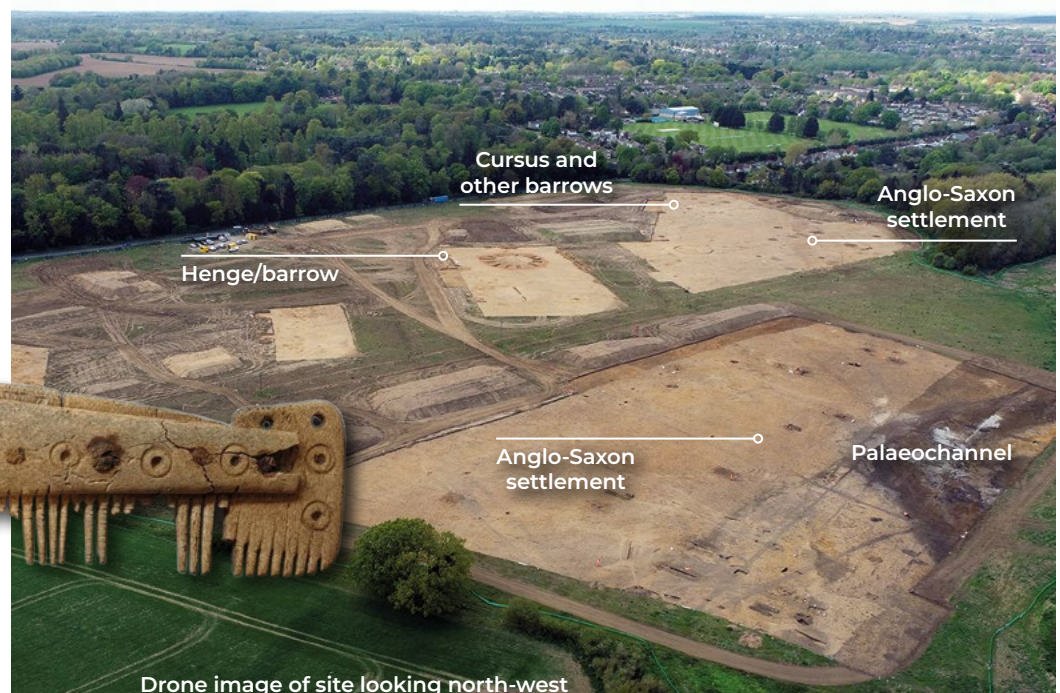
Anglo-Saxon settlement. Occupation was focused on an area of sheltered lowland and floodplain on the banks of the River Lark. The settlement flanked the shoreline of a tributary of the river and geoarchaeological investigations will aim to determine whether this now-silted channel was active all year round or on a seasonal basis.

The settlement remains were dominated by sunken-featured buildings, with about 50 identified in total. The original function of these features requires further analysis as the fills and finds recovered from them were probably deposited after the buildings went out of use. That said, large quantities of animal bone (many with clear signs of butchery) and early Saxon (5th- to 7th-century) pottery were collected, together with an array of small finds, such as bone combs, needles and pins, knives, rings, loops, and brooches to name a few. Numerous postholes were also present on site, many with no apparent spatial patterning, though in some cases they clearly formed the remains of rectangular structures.

In addition, three rather unusual features were uncovered on site and have been interpreted as Anglo-Saxon cooking pits. These rectangular features contained an huge amount of burnt flint. In one case, an impressive wooden structure, constructed from beams and roundwood, was revealed beneath the burnt flint. The sheer size of these pits (the largest being 2.7m long and 1.8m wide) would indicate that these were not for everyday use but rather for feasting events.

We have now begun the mammoth task of post-excavation and look forward to understanding more about the character, function, and significance of the archaeological remains uncovered at this important site. ■

Bone comb, similar to examples found nearby at West Stow



Drone image of site looking north-west

Sudbury, Suffolk

Rachel Fosberry

A team from the Cambridge office carried out excavations between 2021 and 2023 at the Chilton Woods development site in Sudbury, Suffolk, for RPS Group on behalf of Taylor Wimpey East, and a post-excavation assessment of the results were completed this year. The investigations revealed extensive evidence of Bronze Age settlement, as well as remains of Iron Age, Roman-period, and medieval activity. One area produced a dense cluster of archaeological features containing finds dated to the middle Bronze Age. This area appears to have been the focus of a settlement, with at least three phases of activity identified, suggesting long-term occupation. In addition to extensive enclosure ditches, other Bronze Age features recorded across the site included a multitude of post-built structures, including at least three roundhouse structures, a trackway, two cremation burials, two inhumation burials, a well, and numerous pits.

Some 600 environmental samples have been processed, with results revealing good preservation of a range of charred plant remains from the Bronze Age to the medieval period. Of particular

interest is a sample collected from a small circular feature that was possibly a pit or a posthole of a poorly preserved roundhouse structure. The sample produced an unusual assemblage of charred plant remains that includes small grains of broomcorn millet (*Panicum miliaceum*). We suspect the feature was late Bronze Age in date, which makes this the second discovery of Bronze Age millet in Britain; the Cambridge office uncovered the first in 2018 at a site in Old Catton, Norfolk, with the results published in *Antiquity* in 2022.

Millet is a cereal that was domesticated in East Asia and its spread across Eurasia is considered to have been associated with pastoralism. It arrived in Europe in the Bronze Age at a time of migration and socio-economic change and it was rapidly adopted as a cultivated crop. Until recently, millet has only been found in Britain as sporadic grains from later periods. Historic England has confirmed the identification of the Sudbury millet and the next step will be to submit some of the precious grains for radiocarbon dating. ■



Millet grains photographed by Ruth Pelling (Historic England) using AHRC-funded Keyence VHX7000 3-D digital microscope

Gill Mill, West Oxfordshire

Steve Lawrence & Andy Simmonds

Gill Mill Quarry, south of Witney, is possibly OA's longest-running excavation, with fieldwork having started back in 1988. Excavations at the original gravel quarry were completed in 2014, with the results published in an OA monograph in 2018. We have since been excavating at the site of a new extension to its north-west end and along the north side of the floodplain on behalf of Smith and Sons (Bletchingdon) Ltd, and we have also recently undertaken evaluation trenching for another extension further to the west.

The original quarry excavations yielded few remains pre-dating the middle Iron Age, when a series of farmsteads occupied the valley. One was particularly long-lived, with occupation continuing into the early Roman period. A group of early samian ware vessels, unusual in a rural context, were interpreted as the belongings of a retired soldier that had settled there.

During the 2nd century AD, the area was reorganised for the construction of a small, village-sized settlement focused on the junction of two roads. The low-lying and often wet location, the excessive provision of ditched enclosures, and the predominance of cattle bone suggest that the settlement served some specialised function related to cattle farming, perhaps as a centre where animals from a wider area were assembled for transport to market.

The recent excavations of the quarry extension have uncovered a second, almost identical farmstead of middle Iron Age origins. Occupation here similarly continued into the early Roman period, with further early samian and some striking fragments of glass tableware recovered. Parallels for the glass



Fragments of glass tableware



A Bronze Age ring-ditch

vessels mostly come from high-status sites such as oppida, prompting questions as to what such exotic objects were doing in rural Oxfordshire; in fact, one piece is from a bowl that would have been rare outside Italy!

The extension excavations have also filled in some of the missing pieces from the original investigations. These include the largest late Mesolithic flint scatter recorded in the county, early Bronze Age funerary remains, surviving as ring ditches of former round barrows, and a late Bronze Age/early Iron Age settlement composed of several well-defined post-built roundhouses and four-post structures.

Several isolated cremation burials have been recorded to the north-west of the ring ditches, but the most impressive discovery of the 2023/4 season has been that of a flat-grave inhumation cemetery, comprising nine individuals buried within seven separate graves. Dating evidence is scarce, although a couple of barbed-and-tanged arrowheads recovered from one grave strongly suggest that these were contemporary with the early Bronze Age barrow cemetery. This grave was also the most interesting, with at least three individuals buried in two discrete 'bundles' in a single large grave, suggestive of ancestral burial practices. ■

Hinxton, South Cambridgeshire

Tim Lewis



Middle Bronze Age ring ditch looking west towards Hinxton and the river Cam; above: middle Bronze Age glass bead

The Hinxton Genome Campus is a site with which the Cambridge office has had a long association. Archaeological investigations have been carried out there over many years, resulting in the publication of a monograph, with a second volume on the way. The most recent phase of fieldwork was carried out for Urban & Civic Plc ahead of development of a campus expansion that extends the site up to the A11, and followed an environmental impact assessment, geophysical survey, and trial-trench evaluation commissioned by the Wellcome Trust. As with the previous investigations across the campus, the new areas revealed traces of human activity spanning the prehistoric to modern periods.

Highlights include a possible late Neolithic post-built structure and an early-middle Bronze Age ring-ditch (a former round barrow). Associated with this, both within the interior and cut into the ditch fills, were several inhumation and two cremation burials. The earliest in a group of intercutting inhumation burials was that of a middle adult (36-45 years) male buried with several items including a blue glass bead. Evidence of later Bronze Age activity comprised traces of an open settlement on the flat land at the base of the slope, in an area dense with tree-throws holes, hinting at an intense period of clearance, possibly to supply the timber required to construct the settlement.

Very few early-middle Iron Age remains were evident across the site, with the late Iron Age to Roman period witnessing a peak in activity. This began with an east-west alignment of postholes and an accompanying ditch, which line up with a trackway from the earlier Genome Campus site that formed a braid of the Icknield Way southern route. Crossing this was an informal, although

heavily used, Roman trackway, which yielded several coins spanning the Roman period.

Initial test pitting and subsequent excavation of a hollow on the edge of the Roman track revealed five inhumation burials. Two oddly aligned skeletons have been radiocarbon dated to the later part of the early Saxon period, while a group of three burials (a male, a female, and a neonate) neatly aligned east-west date to the early part of the middle Saxon period.

Post-excavation analysis is now well underway, and further exciting discoveries, following specialist work on the finds, burials, and environmental material, are anticipated. ■



Anglo-Saxon burial under excavation

A417 Missing Link, Gloucestershire

Gerry Thacker

Since February 2023, a large team of Oxford-Cotswold Archaeology (OCA) staff has been working on the A417 Missing Link road project, which is being delivered by Kier for National Highways. Excavation has been carried out across some 25 sites set in the glorious landscape east of Gloucester.

Focusing on the OA-led areas, we started at the north-western end of the scheme, to the south of Birdlip Hill. Areas 1–3 revealed a probable early Bronze Age round barrow, an Iron Age enclosure, and a sequence of Roman boundary ditches, as well as an undated inhumation burial.

Area 26 sat in the stream-fed valley that runs adjacent to Birdlip Hill. This was formerly the site of the Bell Inn and other post-medieval buildings, and we undertook a topographic survey with a drone to identify their former locations.

Located on a hilltop bounded to the south by Shab Hill Valley, Area 11 revealed a large boundary ditch. It was oddly positioned parallel with, and some 30m from, the steep valley sides, enclosing probable grain storage pits of late prehistoric date. To the north, a smaller ditch may have been associated with two currently undated cremation burials. Area 25 contained a small square enclosure with a central cremation burial dating to the 1st century AD. Two further cremation burials were associated with this feature.

Later prehistoric evidence was encountered on the opposing side of Shab Hill Valley in Area 12. Excavation revealed a large pit containing a crouched burial that was accompanied by fragments of Beaker pottery, several flint tools, and a bead of jet or shale.



The extensive Roman trackway surface in Area 13; left: burial under excavation in Area 12

Towards the southern end of the scheme at Stockwell, Area 13 revealed Roman ditches associated with an adjacent settlement, as well as remnants of a Roman metalled trackway. Just to the south, Areas 14 and 15 contained further Roman ditches. Two clusters of pits containing early Neolithic pottery and flints were also found in Area 15.

Further to the south, Areas 20 and 21 contained potential coombe deposits and charcoal-rich soils that may have been associated with prehistoric land clearance. Elsewhere in Area 21, two unurned cremation burials were found on the valley slope. Area 24, the southernmost site on the scheme, revealed a single Roman ditch and areas of quarrying that may have been related to a nearby Roman settlement.

Our joint-venture partners, Cotswold Archaeology, led the excavation of Area 23 but the field team has had a strong OA presence. The site has revealed the remains of a fairly large Roman building with substantial stone wall foundations and an internal stone floor. The function of the building is currently unclear, but it may have formed part of a mansio. The Roman road of Ermine Street passes the site to the east, and the site is roughly halfway between the Roman towns of Gloucester and Cirencester, which the road connected. The settlement would have been a useful rest spot after negotiating the steep Cotswold Scarp. This was an area with which we were already familiar; OA carried out excavations immediately to the east of Area 23 (at Birdlip Quarry) ahead of the construction of the A417/A419 between 1996 and 1997. ■

A66, Cumbria

Aidan Parker & Katie Sanderson

Between October 2023 and April 2024, teams from Oxford-Cotswold Archaeology (OCA) were engaged in a substantial trial-trench evaluation in Cumbria. The work preceded National Highways' improvements to the A66, the main road linking Cumbria and County Durham across the Pennines. Commissioned and facilitated by Keltbray with Jacobs, Balfour Beatty-Atkins, and Kier with RPS, the work involved the excavation of some 1160 trenches between Penrith and Brough, which revealed evidence of thousands of years of activity across the diverse Cumbrian landscape.

Prehistoric findings were widespread, and frequently comprised concentrations of pits, postholes, and gullies focused on watercourses descending from the fells to the north. The earliest was identified just to the west of Brough and consisted of a pit containing four Upper Palaeolithic points, suggesting an extremely rare survival of *in situ* material. Trenching to the east of Warcop, where Broom Rigg overlooks the valley of the Lowgill Beck, revealed an extensive prehistoric landscape dating from the Mesolithic period to the Bronze Age. Many of the sites saw multi-period use, such as the remains of a small Mesolithic encampment south of Brough Hill, which was seemingly revisited during the Neolithic period.

At Sandford, to the west, we evaluated two round barrows and found good evidence of the mound and buried land surface, as well as surrounding features. Further west, between Temple Sowerby and Kirkby Thore, numerous prehistoric pits and postholes were encountered on an extensive gentle slope overlooking the River Eden. Some of the features were associated with prehistoric pottery and worked lithics, including a microlith, while another produced slag characteristic of Iron Age smelting. The findings demonstrate that this was an attractive area that hosted settlement across several periods and many generations.

The prehistoric routeway through the hills of Cumbria was consolidated by a Roman road that largely lies beneath the current A66. However, at Warcop the modern and Roman routes diverge significantly. Trenching by OCA and previous work by Wardell Armstrong around Cringle Beck and Hayber Beck revealed well-preserved road remains, including metalled surfaces, kerbs, and roadside ditches. Traces of settlement were identified at several points near the road, with more extensive remains located on the outskirts of Brougham, where a concentration of features almost certainly related to the vicus (civilian settlement) associated with the Roman fort of *Brocauvm*. Evidence for multi-phase activity included a circular gully at the base of the stratigraphic sequence, with ditches, stone surfaces, and a robbed-out wall footing indicating several phases of construction, amidst which a buried deposit contained a well-preserved fibula brooch, sherds of samian ware and amphorae, and a copper-alloy fitting (possibly a scabbard mount).

Towards the centre of the scheme, trenching uncovered the remains of an early medieval hub of activity to the north-west of Kirkby Thore. They comprised various postholes, including an alignment of large examples likely to represent a substantial building, several gullies, and elements of a field system. Three radiocarbon dates place the activity between the mid-7th and late 10th centuries. This evidence may help to understand the nature of settlement within and around what was to become the nucleated village of Kirkby Thore.

Our dedicated teams have revealed some incredible first glimpses into the rare and significant archaeology we will uncover when we return in 2025! ■



Upper Palaeolithic point;
background: general
view of the site



Bampton, Oxfordshire

Carl Champness



Beam Paddock Farm

It is not every day that OA is asked to attend a police investigation to assess whether four skeletons found during groundworks for a new conservatory extension at Beam Cottage in the Oxfordshire village of Bampton are archaeological in nature, especially when the skeletons were revealed under a patio within a relatively new housing estate in the western part of the village away from its historical core. As is often the case, though, not all was as it seemed, with the unexpected discovery of human remains being associated with the lost medieval chapel of St Andrew, which had largely been forgotten and subsumed within the modern development of the village.

The original stone-built Beam Cottage that still survives at the site, partially obscured under various phases of extensions and rebuilds, dates from

the medieval period and can be traced back on historical maps. The earliest phase of the cottage superstructure contains a stone spiral staircase and fireplace incorporating the remains of a Roman column. The cottage is believed to be the remains of the medieval chapel of St Andrew, which is known only from historical sources dating between the 11th and 13th centuries. However, the chapel's dedication, its location near an area of suspected early settlement, and the name 'Beam' (which pre-dates 'Bampton' and implies an important local landmark, possibly a crossroads) suggest an early medieval religious site, perhaps with a large cemetery.

A shift away from the site occurred, presumably with the establishment of the royal tun or settlement to the west and the construction of the late Saxon minster (later the parish church of St Mary), where the relics of St Beornwald were venerated, between the 7th and mid-10th centuries. Why and when the chapel fell out of use is not entirely clear, but we know it became an isolated structure known as Beam Cottage in the post-medieval period and was more recently incorporated within the expansion of the village to the east.

Archaeological monitoring and on-site osteological analysis were subsequently carried out on behalf of the cottage's owners under the recommendation of Oxford County Council's planning archaeologist during the remaining groundworks for the new foundations. A total of eight individuals were recorded and analysed, all of whom were buried east-west within the rows of the possible graveyard. No grave goods were present and the remains appear to have been early Christian in nature. Previous observations by Professor John Blair identified other burials at the site, one of which was dated to the late Saxon period. ■



One of the burials found on site

Castle Hill House, Oxford

Gerry Thacker

Archaeological work at Castle Hill House, between Bulwarks Lane and New Road, opposite Oxford Castle, has been ongoing since 2018, when neighbouring St Peter's College acquired the plot for the construction of new student accommodation. It once sat at the end of the Coventry–Oxford Canal, and Canal House, a Doric-style building with an impressive columned portico, is located just to the north-west; St Peter's College has used Canal House as the Master's Lodge since 1949. Castle Hill House abuts Canal House and a programme of building recording was undertaken prior to its demolition. Another smaller canal office, Wharf House, also stood within the grounds. The site was later home to the West Oxford Conservative Club.

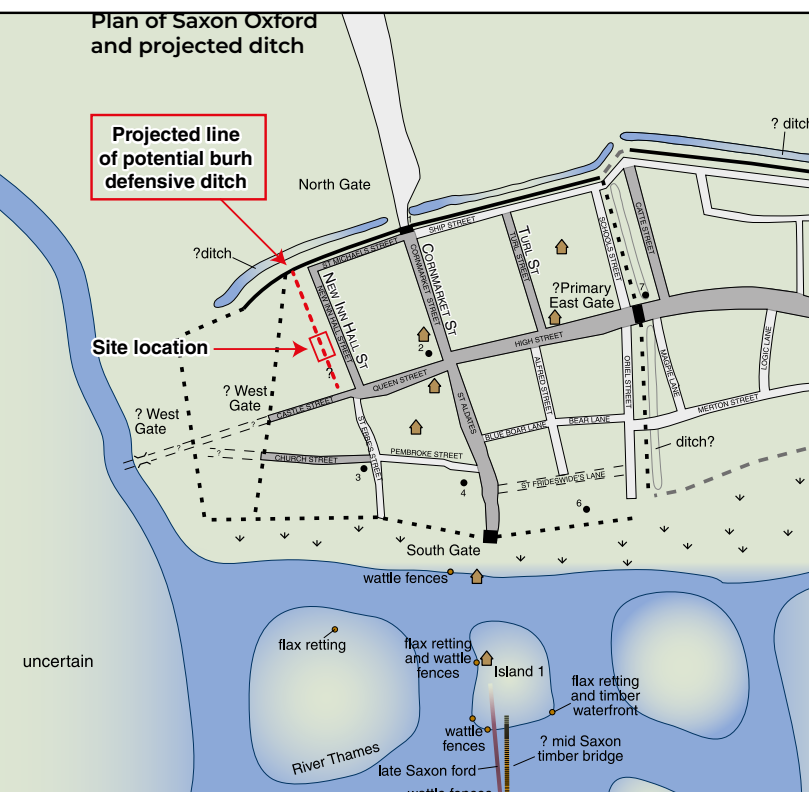
The main archaeological interest of the site stems from the presence of the castle ditch, which runs beneath the site. After the monitoring of initial geotechnical works, a borehole transect was investigated through the ditch deposits. The borehole data shows that the ditch was around 6.5m deep. Radiocarbon dating places the formation of the ditch's basal deposits in the period AD 1030–1180, around the time of the castle's construction in the late 11th century. The majority of the upper fill sequence was of post-medieval date.

Mitigation work, on behalf of St Peter's College Design and Build Ltd, was initially focused on construction impacts, especially pile caps and the crane base, and we anticipated that these would be excavated through the upper ditch fills. Early in

the mitigation programme, it became clear that the northernmost pile cap locations contained material that appeared to be far earlier in date than expected. Consequently, it was agreed with the college and developer that this part of the site would be stripped to the archaeological layer to gain a better idea of the sequence.

Excavation showed that the castle ditch had been recut, probably during the Civil War, and a thick clay lining added to the ditch side. The Civil War-era ditch cut an earlier ditch that followed the orientation of the Anglo-Saxon street plan, suggesting that we may have uncovered part of the Saxon burh defensive circuit. Pottery from the earlier ditch fills dates between either AD 900–1250 or 1050–1250, but crucially there was no pottery present that definitively post-dated the Norman Conquest. The ditch appears to have been rapidly infilled, potentially around the time of the castle's construction. Several pits were present nearby and a further ditch on a similar alignment was noted beneath the foundations of the Bulwarks Lane retaining wall.

Interestingly, there has long been a rumour regarding a former tenant of Castle Hill House who owned property on either side of Bulwarks Lane in the late 18th or early 19th century. It is said that he constructed a tunnel beneath the lane, so that he could move freely between the buildings without having to engage with the Oxford citizenry. The rumour turned out to be true, its entrance revealed in the Bulwarks Lane retaining wall. ■



uncertain

uncertain

Bletchley, Milton Keynes

Carl Champness

Teams from both the Oxford and Cambridge offices revealed a rich landscape of Iron Age and Roman rural settlement at Newton Longville, that formed part of the hinterland of the nearby Roman small town of *Magiovinium* (near Fenny Stratford). The work was carried out for RPS Heritage on behalf of Taylor Wimpey ahead of development of the South West Milton Keynes Project.

The excavations revealed in different parts of the site two middle to late Iron Age enclosed farmsteads, two rural settlements that spanned the late Iron Age and early Roman period, and, finally, two mid-late Roman settlement areas.

Middle to late Iron Age farmsteads

The middle to late Iron Age evidence comprised partially enclosed farmsteads with associated roundhouses, livestock enclosures, grain storage huts, and outlying fields. One of the most exciting and rarest finds is an Iron Age silver coin of Andoco (c 20-21BC) of the North Thames region within the territory of the Catuvellauni tribe. The obverse shows a bearded head facing left. The reverse shows mythical Pegasus (winged horse) wearing a neck torc.



The Iron Age silver coin of Andoco (c 20-21BC) of the North Thames region (Catuvellauni)

Late Iron Age to Roman sites

Two sites in other parts of the excavation area show a transition from largely self-supporting populations to communities producing agricultural surpluses for a wider Roman market. Large clay extraction pits and associated features were also identified on these sites, indicating that the area became part of the local pottery industry. The remains of a small settlement, which may have housed the workers or even slaves who would have extracted and worked the clay, were also uncovered. The discoveries highlight various aspects of rural Roman life: a small oven and corndryer point to domestic or industrial activity and grain processing. Finds included structural nails, boot hobnails, coins, an iron clamp, a polished conical-headed bone hair pin, and a slender copper alloy armlet, probably for a child. The animal bone

assemblage indicated that sheep or goats, cattle, dogs and cats were present. Of note, a cat humerus had butchery marks, indicating that, unusually, it had been skinned and possibly consumed.

The settlement was adjacent to a small cemetery containing 31 urned cremations and one inhumation. Early assessment of the skeleton suggests the individual was decapitated and received repeated blows to the lower face, perhaps indicating the head was removed while the individual was still alive.

Mid to late Roman settlements

Two areas of settlement dating to the middle to late Roman periods comprised a series of Roman enclosures that overlooked a small stream valley. Only the very northern edge of the settlement area could be excavated, but a fragment of a pewter plate suggests a slightly higher status compared with the earlier phase of settlement.

One of the later Roman settlements may have originated in the late Iron Age but was later developed and expanded during the middle to late Roman period. The original settlement comprised at least two roundhouses, which were replaced by a series of coaxial enclosures with internal subdivisions. The settlement was located on a slightly raised plateau within the field, which provided a good vantage point over the surrounding landscape.

Over 100 hundred coins were recovered from the other settlement area, although most were very poorly preserved and of low denomination. The most notable one was from the House of Constantine, being a coin of Helena (AD 324-30).

Naming streets

OA has been working with Taylor Wimpey, RPS Heritage, Newton Longville Parish Council, and master planners Isaac Mercer to name the new roads at the Salden Place development. The names are inspired by the fascinating finds and remains found on the site, thereby linking new streets to the rich heritage of the site. The proposed names include Andoco Way, Pegasus Approach, and Potters Lane. ■



An early Roman cremation burial

OA commits to Net Zero Carbon

Pat Moan

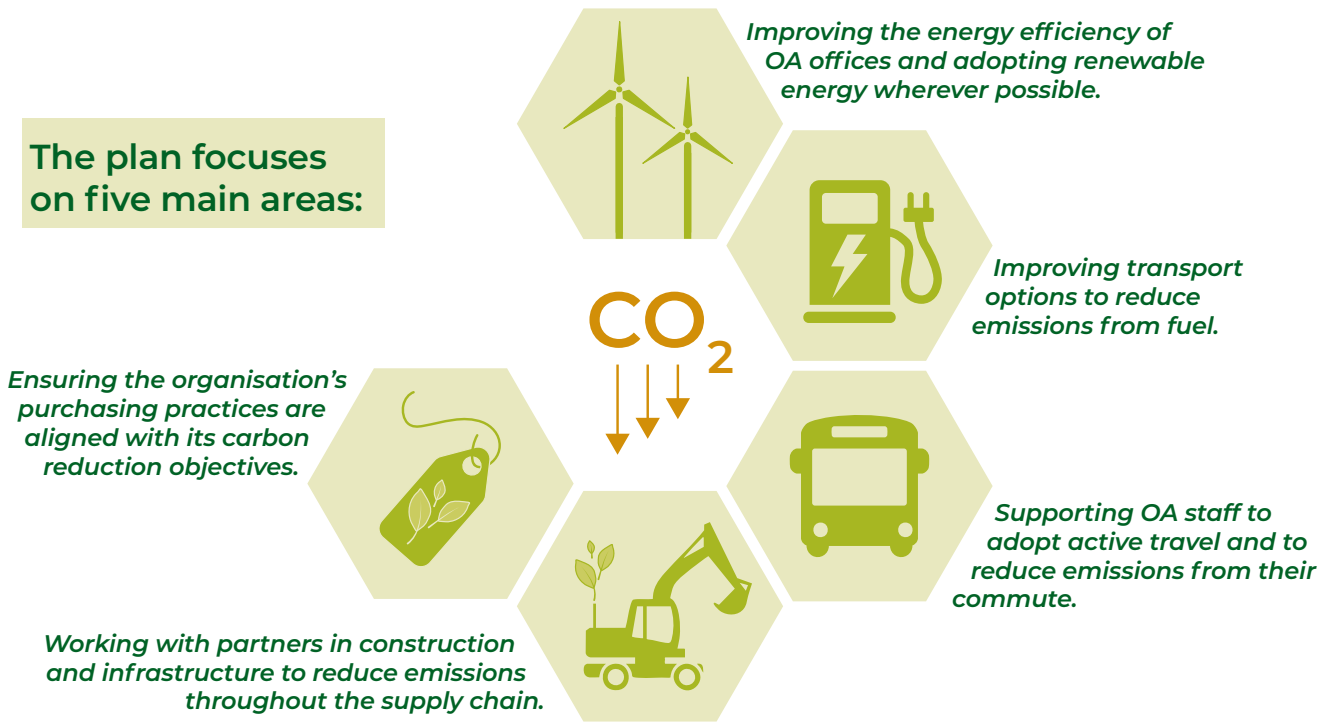


One of the new electric vehicle charging points installed at the Oxford office

SUSTAINABILITY

CO₂

Climate change affects everyone, and we all have a responsibility to do what we can to help to tackle the crisis. As a result, in March 2024, OA made a public commitment to achieve net zero carbon by 2050. Along with this commitment, we adopted a carbon reduction plan (CRP), developed in collaboration with our consultants Spring Environmental and covering the period from 2024 to 2027. The plan is designed to deliver an ambitious 25% reduction in our carbon footprint over that period. Of course, this is only the first step towards net zero carbon by 2050 and there will be plenty more to do over the coming years. Nevertheless, the carbon reduction plan is an important part of OA's commitment to making a positive contribution to society at a time when climate change is a global challenge that requires collective action.



Following the release of OA's CRP, a Carbon Reduction Steering Group was set up, and has met regularly to discuss our current strategy and progress. The plan has a variety of actions OA needs to undertake over the next three years to reduce our carbon footprint.

We are making good progress with the targets of our initial three-year implementation plan, with some of the identified changes being completed already. The key change in office spaces has been the move to instal LED lights, which is nearing completion in Cambridge and Lancaster. In Lancaster, new controls have been installed to make the boiler operate more efficiently, and similar measures are planned for Oxford.

Electric vehicle charging points have been installed at Oxford. Charging points will be installed at Cambridge by the end of November, and at Lancaster we are awaiting planning permission for the installation. Once all are installed, changing some of the fleet to electric will become possible and, in the meantime, the chargers will be available for use by staff with private electric vehicles. Other opportunities are currently being looked at, including improvements to drying room facilities at the three offices, and as our electricity contracts come up for renewal, we are replacing them with zero carbon tariffs.

OA continues to engage with Spring Environmental, who are providing

consultancy advice on how to implement some of the more challenging areas of the CRP. Together, we are having conversations with our supply chain to review how the carbon footprint of our site work can be reduced, such as using fully solar welfare units and biofuel plant. Use of plant is a key issue to tackle with OA's work, as it makes up 46% of our carbon footprint.

Spring Environmental is also providing support in our aim to obtain PAS2080 accreditation, the leading standard for carbon management solutions in infrastructure development. This accreditation is important to obtain, as the Department for Transport has set 2025 as the deadline for arm's length bodies to be accredited and National Highways has set this requirement for its entire supply chain.

Finally, installation of telematics equipment is nearing completion in the Oxford and Cambridge fleets. The Lancaster short-term hire vehicles will have plug-in telematics installed soon. The data being produced is already coming in very useful, with accurate mileage and fuel use data being available for review.

Meeting our net zero commitment is a large task that will take ideas and effort from all staff and stakeholders. So, if you have any questions, or ideas to help OA meet its net zero targets, please do get in touch with the team by emailing Carbonreductiongroup@oxfordarchaeology.com. ■

Better biodiversity net gain for the past, present and future

Nick Overton, Anwen Cooper, Graeme Clarke & Leo Webley



Excavation of an Iron Age and Roman salt-making site at Stanford Wharf Nature Reserve, a habitat creation scheme for DP World in the Thames Estuary

Oxford Archaeology has just begun a new project funded by Historic England to explore the relationship between the historic environment and biodiversity net gain-related developments. Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is something that has the potential to impact everyone; in February 2024 it became a legal requirement of developers in England to deliver a 10% increase in biodiversity as part of the development. If this cannot be achieved within the 'on-site' limits of the development, habitat creation can instead be undertaken at 'off-site' locations.

BNG is undoubtedly a positive move for habitat and biodiversity recovery, and will have widespread positive results for plant, animal and human communities. However, off-site BNG developments are not legally required to consider the historic environment in the way other developments must, and it is unclear how the historic environment is currently being

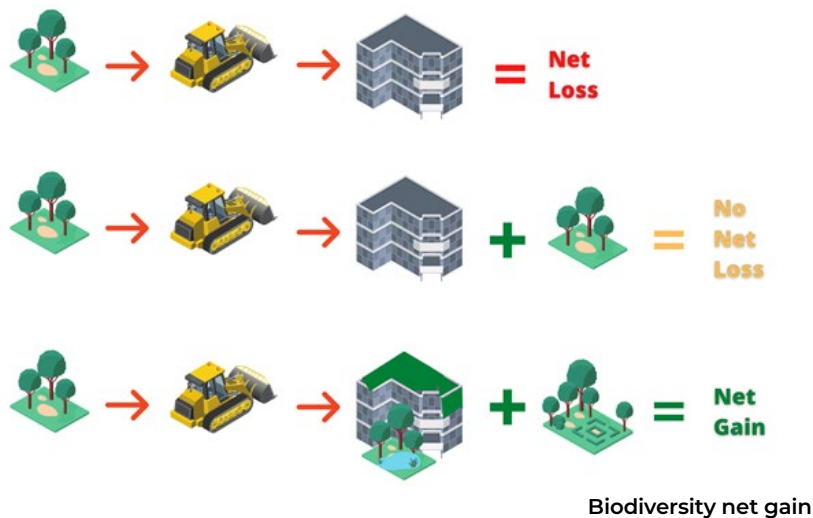
incorporated into the planning, execution and presentation of offsite BNG projects.

The project team has therefore started exploring the possible positive and negative ways that habitat creation in offsite BNG developments and the historic environment may impact each other. What evidence do we have that

the creation of woodlands, meadows or wetlands could have a negative impact on archaeological remains? Can archaeological sites provide conditions especially beneficial for the restoration of certain habitats and species? Might the onset of BNG schemes that end regular agricultural practices such as deep ploughing offer a beneficial outcome for buried archaeology?

The team is also going to examine how knowledge of the historic environment and nature recovery is spread across different stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of BNG projects. This includes ecologists, landowners and managers with varied backgrounds, farmers and landscape architects. Is the historic environment being considered in current BNG projects at the planning stage? Are non-specialists aware of the relevant issues relating to the historic environment in BNG projects? Have we as archaeologists and historic environment specialists provided enough resources for non-specialists to understand the issues, and plan BNG offsite schemes with these in mind?

The project is led by OA's Anwen Cooper, Nick Overton, Graeme Clarke and Leo Webley, with a panel of specialist advisors from Historic England, Natural England, the National Trust, Buckinghamshire Council, the Peak District National Park and Bioscan UK. Through questionnaires, interviews and webinars with BNG stakeholders including local planning authorities, natural and historic



environment professionals, developers and landowners, this project will establish the current landscape of knowledge and practice, and identify key challenges and knowledge gaps.

The aim is to identify ways to maximize the inclusion of the historic environment in future BNG projects; not only to protect heritage assets, but also to ensure historic environment assets positively contribute to nature recovery schemes. In the future, archaeology's ability to vividly reconstruct past environments spanning millennia, and the myriad ways that humans lived within them, could help identify lost elements of environments that might be desirable to be brought back in BNG projects. It could also identify prominent species in past climate change events that could be important for the management of habitats in future changes to the climate. Archaeology can also show different ways humans related to the world around them. At a time of pressing environmental concerns, opportunities to present accounts of the past which demonstrate that our current destructive attitudes to the world around us are an aberration, not a rule, could be the key in changing contemporary attitudes to our environment.

Although autumn is upon us, the team are hoping that these green shoots and buds will burst forth into wonderful blooms, becoming a project that works toward making our collective past an integral part of creating new futures. ■

Evaluation on the Cooling Marshes on the Kent side of the Thames estuary ahead of development by DP World London Gateway of a wildlife habitat



Evenlode Landscape Recovery Project

Kirsty Smith, Ianto Wain, Anwen Cooper & Jonathan Last (Historic England)



The Evenlode at Ascott-under-Wychwood

LANDSCAPE

The Evenlode Landscape Recovery project is a DEFRA-funded initiative led by the North East Cotswold Farming Cluster in partnership with, among others, the Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery. It seeks to develop a sustainable landscape that combines farmland with restored natural landscapes and wild habitats. Oxford Archaeology is playing key roles in this project. Anwen Cooper, a research fellow and project manager at OA, is part of the Leverhulme Centre team, and OA is also working with its partners to improve the management of the historic environment and develop strategies to mitigate the impact of the recovery programme on archaeological remains.

As an initial part of that work, OA was commissioned by the North East Cotswold Farming Cluster to prepare an archaeological desk-based assessment for the Evenlode Valley Landscape Recovery area. The area, which encompasses the valley of the River Evenlode, a tributary of the River Thames, in the heart of

the Cotswolds, is rich in archaeological remains. Notable prehistoric monuments include the Neolithic Rollright Stones, several Bronze Age round barrows, the Iron Age hillfort of Knollbury Camp, and sections of later prehistoric linear earthworks collectively known as Grim's Ditch. A number of villa sites and camps

indicate that the landscape was a significant one during the Roman period, and part of the project area lies within the former medieval royal forest of Wychwood.

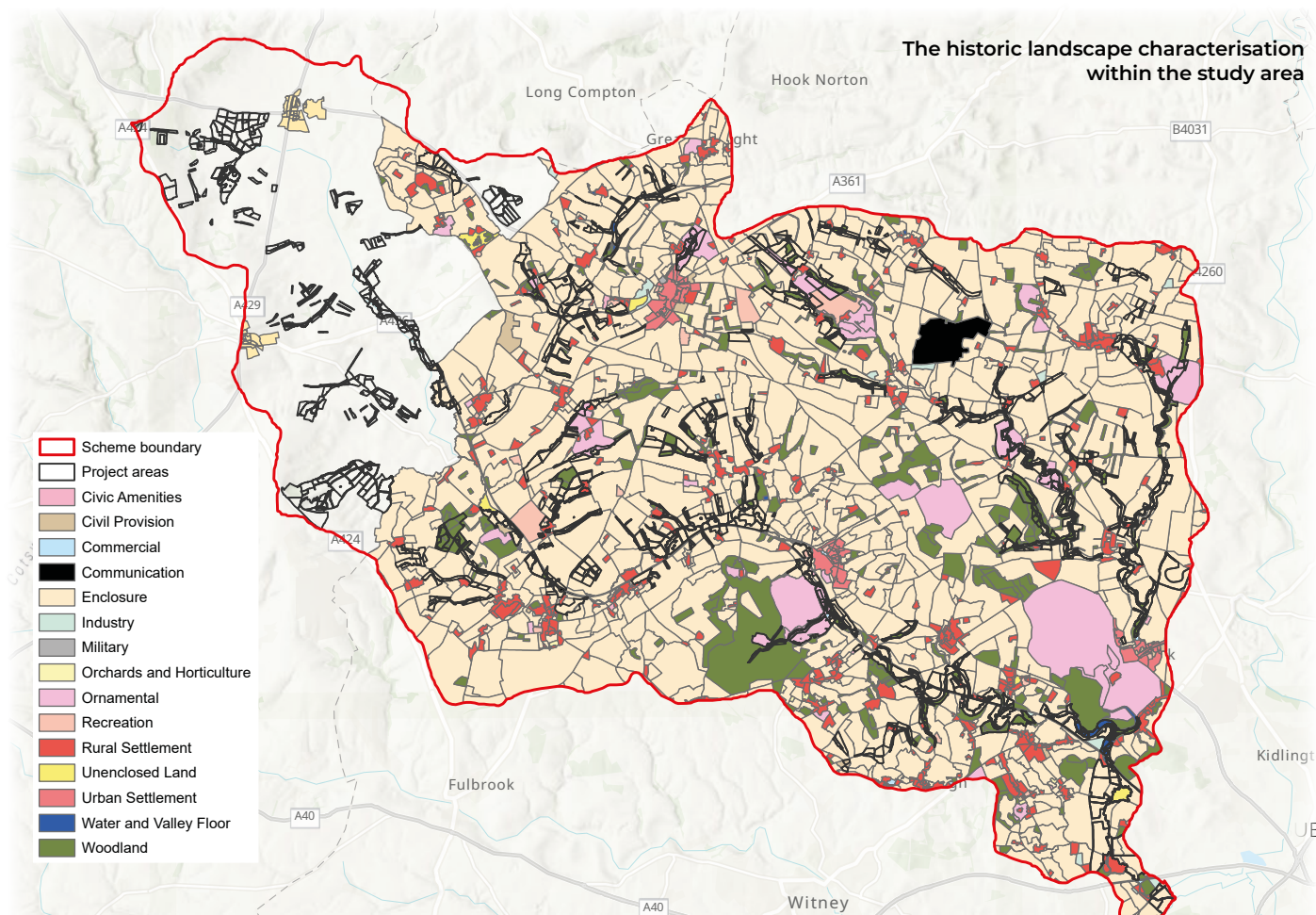
OA's study brought together the findings of previous archaeological investigations in the area, known sites of archaeological and historical significance, listed buildings and other designated (and nationally protected) sites, and information from historic landscape characterisation to build a baseline of archaeological and historical data and provide an overview of the nature of the archaeological resource within the project areas and the wider Evenlode Valley setting.

Together, the collected survey data and accompanying report serves as a signposting resource for the identification of further, more targeted, site surveys and research projects. These are likely to include detailed desk-based assessments for specific sites, geophysical surveys, liaison with farmers and landowners to identify additional sites and areas of particular local interest, consultation with local heritage groups and other heritage experts and researchers operating in the Evenlode landscape recovery area, and the development of opportunities for integrated ecological and heritage management.

All in all, a very exciting prospect! ■



The Rollright Stones (above) and Knollbury Hillfort camp are amongst the many heritage site within the study area



‘Rewilding’ later prehistory: From data collection to interpretation and nature recovery

Anwen Cooper & Tina Roushannafas



Taking a break from coring to admire the view at Boddle Moss, Hepple, Northumberland

Now in its third year, the ‘Rewilding’ later prehistory project is moving from collecting evidence about later prehistoric wildlife and improving the flow of palaeoenvironmental information more widely, to interpreting this evidence and using it as a platform for connecting to nature recovery. It’s an exciting point in the project – a time to reflect on all that researchers at OA have collectively achieved over the last two years, and to look forward to action-packed times to come!

One key project aim was to gather, for the first time, a substantial database of plant and animal remains evidence of all kinds from 2500 BC to AD 50. Spearheaded by OA’s Tina Roushannafas, with deft assistance from digital experts at the Archaeology Data Service (ADS), and from palaeoenvironmental specialists across England and Wales, we are close to drawing a line under this phase of work. The database now includes close

to 100,000 plant and animal taxa records from just under 1000 excavated sites in our five project case study areas, representing the work of over 200 palaeoenvironmental specialists – a significant achievement. Once the database is available on the ADS website in 2027, it will operate as a fantastic resource for specialists and wider researchers alike. We are already learning a lot from these data at all kinds of scales. For instance, Bronze

and Iron Age pendants were made almost exclusively from what we would understand as 'wild' animal remains – deer teeth and antler, pine marten and fox mandibles, boar tusks and sea eagle or from horse or dog remains. While oak was the structural wood of choice, a wide range of plant materials was used to make portable objects, from stitched lime bark containers to honeysuckle rope and alder ladders, buckets and bowls. Even the most everyday objects would have carried personal associations with those plants or animals, including knowledge of their properties, uses and habitat.

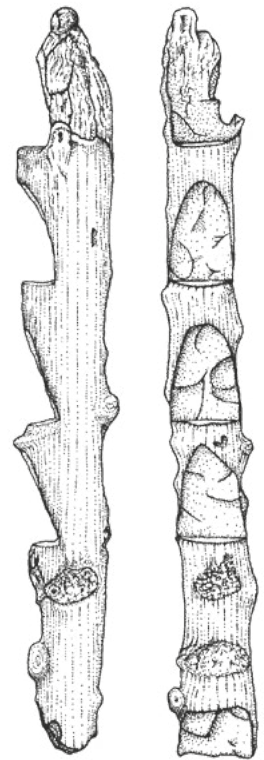
As part of this work, OA's environmental team in Oxford has both helped with data gathering and analysis and undertaken valuable training in digital skills that can feed into their day-to-day work. We can now use the evidence we have gathered to tell new stories about wildlife in prehistoric Britain, to question the relevance of categories like 'wild' and 'domestic' now and in the past, and to reconfigure traditional accounts of later prehistory which have focused mainly on narratives of human 'progress' and environmental decline.



Testing the OASIS+ module design at a workshop for palaeoenvironment specialists in December 2023

Alongside building the database, we have made great strides, with collaborators at Historic England and the ADS, in our work to co-design and build, with specialists across the sector, a new system for logging information about plant and animal remains reports and data on the ADS's OASIS platform as part of routine archiving processes. Our workshops with over 60 palaeoenvironmental specialists, archivists, and wider data curators and digital experts, and our online discussions with a core working group have been lively and hugely productive. The 'OASIS+' modules will be ready for testing in early November. You can read more about our study of why specialists and researchers more broadly

Log ladder recovered from an early-middle Bronze Age waterhole during OA's excavations at Yarnton, Oxfordshire



need this initiative here: doi.org/10.11141/ia.67.7

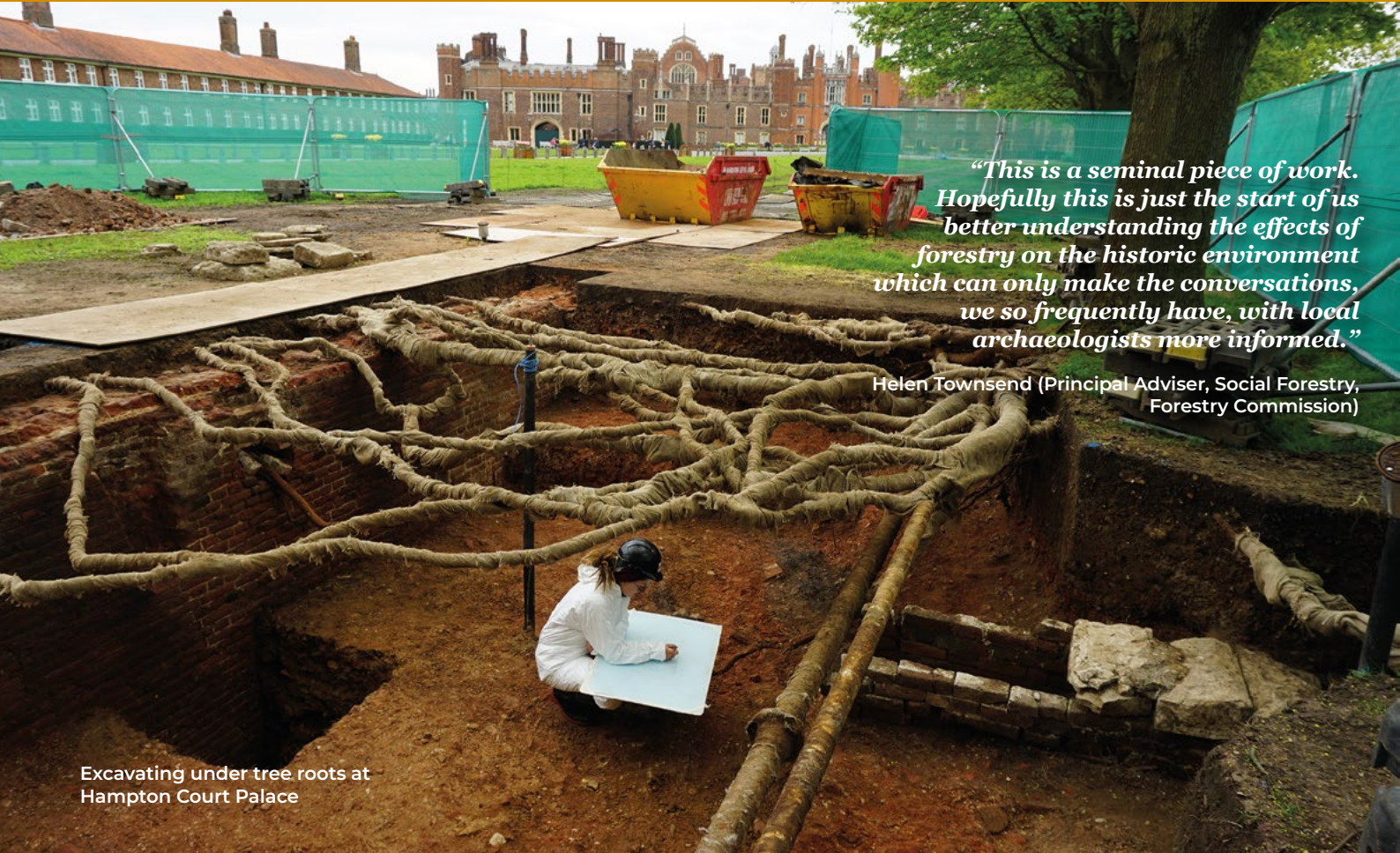
In the lead-up to our main phase of work with nature recovery partners starting in September 2024, we have been learning more about how and why archaeology has and has not been part of recent efforts to address Britain's status as one of the world's most nature depleted countries. We were lucky enough to camp under the aurora borealis on our planning trip to Knepp Castle Estate in May 2024. The suite of interventions and outputs we are developing with Knepp's owners, conservation and ecotourism managers, includes an investigation of the effects of wilding on soil structure, a 'pop-up' archaeology in wilding safari, artworks that reveal what lies beyond the landscape we see today at Knepp – from mycorrhizal fungi to the iron workers that fuelled the Weald's post-medieval armaments industry – and a booklet showcasing archaeology in wilding at Knepp.

We have also been creating links with new nature recovery partners, Hepple Wilds in Northumberland. OA's geoarchaeology and palynology teams, together with researchers from the School of Archaeology at the University of Oxford, recently took a paleoenvironmental core through Hepple's 9m-deep peat to help develop better stories of landscape change for wilding project visitors. In months to come, we will be creating a short film about stories of people and place (past and present) in this landscape for Hepple's new interpretative centre. Creativity and communication are key to this work; we are lucky to be collaborating with artists Rose Ferraby and Miranda Creswell, OA's expert public engagement team, and Historic England landscape specialists.

With investigations into prehistoric hedges and wild spaces well underway, exciting results emerging from scientific analysis and dating on prehistoric horse remains, studies stemming from the 'Rewilding' database unfolding, and work with our nature recovery partners in the offing, look out for future project updates on OA and 'Rewilding' social media channels. ■

Tree roots and archaeology

Carl Champness, Maria Bellissimo, David Kay & Ianto Wain



“This is a seminal piece of work. Hopefully this is just the start of us better understanding the effects of forestry on the historic environment which can only make the conversations, we so frequently have, with local archaeologists more informed.”

Helen Townsend (Principal Adviser, Social Forestry, Forestry Commission)

Excavating under tree roots at Hampton Court Palace

TREE ROOTS

The summer saw the launch of a landmark report by OA that offers guidance for tree planting and its impact on archaeology. Commissioned by the Forestry Commission, with funding from the Nature for Climate Fund, the study sought to investigate heritage and forestry professionals’ preconceptions and practical experiences of the relationship between tree roots and archaeological remains. The report was eagerly awaited. As the UK strives to increase its tree cover to mitigate the effects of climate change and address the loss of biodiversity, the results of the study will ensure that future guidelines are based on up-to-date and comprehensive evidence.

The project begins

When we embarked on this project, we recognized that tree roots were often viewed with caution when it came to archaeology. The prevailing narrative, shaped by decades of anecdotal evidence and worst-case scenarios, suggested that tree roots were a persistent threat to heritage assets. These concerns were

especially pronounced in areas with unknown archaeological features or where traditional woodland management practices, like the use of heavy machinery, exacerbated the problem.

Our aim was to dig deeper into these assumptions and to bring a more balanced perspective to the table. We

wanted to understand not just the risks but also the potential benefits that trees and their roots could offer to archaeological sites.

After a comprehensive review of existing literature on the subject, we reached out to archaeology, heritage and forestry professionals through a questionnaire to collect their views and experiences. We then interviewed those professionals to explore the interactions between tree roots, management practices and archaeology in more depth.

The results of our research and stakeholder engagement are an illustrated report with recommendations for further research and field investigations. The report confirms that there are many different aspects that determine the impact of tree roots on archaeology (soil, tree species, type of archaeological features and finds etc.), but also that there's room for a more nuanced understanding.

Key recommendations

Urgent need for further research: While tree roots have been shown to have both positive and negative impacts on heritage assets, there is an urgent need for more field-based research. The current approaches to tree planting in archaeologically sensitive areas are often based on anecdotal evidence, particularly from cases where tree roots have caused significant damage. This has led to a fragmented understanding, which makes it difficult to develop consistent policies.

Reassess historical perceptions: Many heritage professionals' negative perceptions of tree roots are rooted in historical concerns, often related to unknown archaeology or secondary impacts of woodland management. These views have persisted partly due to a lack of detailed empirical research. Our findings suggest that it's time to reassess these perceptions in light of new evidence.

Strategic tree planting: Our research shows that with the right combination of deep- and shallow-rooted species, tree planting can actually benefit archaeological sites. Strategic planting can help stabilize slopes, prevent soil erosion, and even curb more damaging land use activities, like deep ploughing. In several instances, woodland cover has acted as a long-term protector of archaeological monuments. The principle of 'the right tree in the right place for the right reasons' applies to the interaction with archaeology and heritage sites as well.

Enhance visitor experiences: Woodland settings can greatly enhance the public's experience of archaeological sites. Incorporating known

archaeological sites within planting schemes can improve public access and engagement, making these sites more accessible and enjoyable for visitors.

Protect the unknown: While planting and woodland management can protect known archaeological remains, they are less effective in safeguarding areas with un-surveyed archaeology. This highlights the need for continued survey and research efforts before implementing new planting schemes.

Improve collaboration: The project underscored the need for better collaboration between heritage and forestry professionals. Improved communication, greater consultation, and shared management practices will be crucial in addressing concerns and ensuring that both heritage and forestry interests are adequately represented.

Adopt new methods: Finally, the report notes that approaches to tree planting in archaeologically sensitive areas are already evolving. New 'sensitivity mapping' methods are being developed, which will help practitioners identify archaeological features and assess their significance. Choosing the right sites and the right tree species will be key to making progress in this area.

Looking forward

The conclusion of this project marks significant progress in our understanding of the impact of tree roots on archaeology. While there is still much to learn, the insights gained from this study lay a strong foundation for future work. We are grateful to the Forestry Commission and the Nature for Climate Fund for making this important research possible. We are also very grateful for the opportunity, through this project, to gain a better understanding how professional archaeology can support the forestry sector with its efforts to deliver afforestation and nature recovery that benefit the whole of society.

We hope that the report's findings will not only influence policy and practice but also encourage more research and collaboration in this vital area. As we look to the future, it is clear that a balanced approach – one that recognizes both the risks and the benefits of trees in archaeological contexts – will be essential. We are excited about the possibilities that lie ahead and look forward to continuing this important work in collaboration with our partners across the heritage and forestry sectors.

The 'Assessing the Impact of Tree Roots' report is available for download on the OA's Knowledge Hub: knowledge.oxfordarchaeology.com/library/12564

Glencoyne Park, Ullswater

Helen Evans

In April 2024, surveyors from the Lancaster office undertook a landscape survey of Glencoyne Park, on the banks of Ullswater in the Lake District, Cumbria. Glencoyne Park was once part of a hunting estate, which, in the 18th century, was converted into a pleasure ground surrounding the spectacular waterfall of Aira Force. The survey was commissioned by the National Trust ahead of a countryside stewardship application seeking to increase grassland and upland scrub species diversity and facilitate restoration and re-planting of the parkland's historic wood pasture. The project was undertaken in order to identify archaeological landscape features as recommended by a heritage impact assessment so that damage to the historic environment could be avoided.



The former parkland landscape slopes steeply to the lake shore, with the park wall (or pale) separating fields of rough grazing and wood pasture from the unenclosed fellside above. The slopes support one of the Lake District's best examples of wood pasture, with nearly 300 ancient and veteran trees providing a diverse and ecologically rich habitat for plants and animals. It is thought that Glencoyne has been a wood pasture for over 800 years, since the 12th/13th century, when it was emparked.

Many of the upstanding features at Glencoyne Park were identified in the 1990s, but it was deemed necessary to re-record them, so tree-planting could be planned around them. Based on GIS, and including requirements for detailed TST (Total Station Theodolite) survey, DGPS (differential GPS), and hand-held GPS, the project also acted as a training exercise for OA staff.

The area is dissected by many becks (brooks) flowing down off the high fells. On the higher (drier) points, there were two prehistoric kerbed cairns, over 100 clearance cairns, and numerous linear embankments and stone-built enclosures, some containing visible hut circles. The emparked landscape, retained into the 18th and 19th centuries as a pleasure

ground, had ensured that these features survived. Most of the nearly 200 features identified appear to date to the prehistoric and medieval periods, although there are some post-medieval features including three bank barns or cow houses.

Of particular interest are two stone-built enclosures, which were subject to detailed TST survey. One, an oval embankment containing two or three visible hut circles, had been partially excavated in the 1990s, revealing at least six phases of activity between the later Bronze Age and earlier Roman period.

The second enclosure, although interpreted as a prehistoric settlement, has a different morphology. It is roughly square, on the downslope part of a rocky outcrop, and is defined on one side by a steep-sided beck bank. Divided into two areas and crossed by a watercourse, the feature is probably a stock enclosure. As well as being within a medieval deer park, there are many examples in Lake District where upland areas were used as vaccaries (cattle ranches) in the 14th and 15th centuries. There are several extant barns on the same contour as the enclosure, also associated with watercourses, and it seems likely that some of the extant stone-built boundaries within Glencoyne Park date from the same period. ■

Anglesey Abbey, Cambridgeshire

Stuart Ladd



Earlier this year, OA was commissioned by the National Trust to undertake a small investigation at Anglesey Abbey, in the village of Lode just outside Cambridge, where we have carried out several phases of work over the years. Although the property may have acquired its name in the 19th century, the house was built in a Jacobean style on the site of an Augustinian priory, founded in the 13th century. Much of the priory's building material was taken away following its dissolution, but elements were incorporated into the later house, including the dining room, which comprises an original medieval undercroft.

Back in 2010, we undertook a small test-pit excavation inside the dining room, exposing the foundations of a pillar that would have supported the vaulted ceiling. Then, in 2020, we were due to undertake a larger excavation with volunteers from the National Trust and Operation Nightingale to understand the priory church foundations, as seen on an earlier GPR survey. However, the COVID-19 pandemic restricted the investigations to the excavation of only the highest surviving foundation levels, barely 0.2m below the lawn, though fragments of painted medieval glass were retrieved from the demolition and modern build-up.

Fast-forward four years and the Trust was looking to make changes to the rose beds. In a combination of research dig, volunteer engagement, and mini-evaluation, test pits were

opened with the help of Anglesey Abbey's regular volunteers and students from Cambridge Regional College. The first few test pits hit nothing but natural sandy silts. A third revealed chalk lumps – were these rough foundations or natural chalk? Once we had seen more of the natural deposits, it became clear that the chalky material represented a mixture of *in situ* foundations and demolished wall, albeit of uncertain date.

With the help of the volunteers, we then investigated a 3x1m transect across the projected line of the cloister wall. We uncovered a demolition layer that sealed clunch blocks solidly mortared together across the whole trench. These were substantial foundations, completely unrelated to the small chalk wall found in the earlier test pit. The trench was widened to capture the extent of the wall footing, but it was aligned north-south, perpendicular to the hoped-for cloister wall. This raised more questions than answers: with no sign of the east-west cloister wall, what was this substantial structure?

A final test pit, further to the south-west in the centre of the Rose Garden, uncovered modern deposits containing residual medieval material and underlying demolition layers, though the latter were not excavated. Whilst this area has not yet been the subject of geophysical survey, there is certainly good potential for the preservation of medieval priory remains. ■

The Ringway Centre, Birmingham

Deirdre Forde

O A's Buildings Department was commissioned by MGAC to undertake a programme of historic building recording at the Ringway Centre in Birmingham prior to its proposed demolition. The Ringway Centre is an archetypal example of Birmingham Brutalism that dominates Smallbrook Queensway adjacent to the city centre. It is part of the mid-century development that transformed the city of Birmingham and saw the appearance of some of its most iconic Brutalist buildings.

The Ringway Centre was designed by architect James Roberts during the development of the Inner Ring Road Scheme in the 1950s and it was completed in 1961. Architecturally, the Ringway Centre represents a dynamic period of change in Birmingham and is a part of a legacy created by City Engineer and Surveyor, Herbert Manzoni. At this time, the city was transformed visually as part of a national movement to make Britain's cities more open to car traffic, during which various forms of Modernist architecture proliferated. Works in Birmingham were preceded by similar inner ring road projects in Liverpool and Stevenage, and most notably, Coventry, which was largely rebuilt after heavy bombing during the Second World War.

With its distinctive curve and central underpass the Ringway Centre was designed to fit into this new style of post-war urban landscape, evoking the sense of movement of its surroundings. It was progressive and optimistic for its time and characteristic of the emerging Birmingham that earned the reputation as being a 'car city'. Indeed, buildings like the Ringway Centre were often referred to as 'carchitecture'.

The designs by Roberts and the architectural detailing by John Laing and Co. concrete specialists, including the concrete relief spandrels and uprighters, create an interesting and attractive repetition along the gentle curve of the north elevation, avoiding monotony in its huge form. Architecturally, the building responds well to the topography of the site and the curvature of the road, appropriating a large swathe of the streetscape economically for different types of spaces. Its 230m length features commercial units on the ground floor and office space in the upper floors, accommodating many types of businesses within the city centre. Its lower levels provided

**The Ringway Centre's
distinctive curved design**

Iconic visitors: Clint Eastwood and
then wife Maggie Johnson, 1967



three floors of parking for workers' cars, keeping true to the ethos of facilitating car transport into the city. Due to its proximity to New Street railway station, the office floors have historically attracted railway companies, as well as higher education and student services for the nearby university. The open plan design of the upper floors would have been a new concept when it was built and the expansive office spaces were filled with natural daylight through the extensively glazed elevations.

In the decades since the Ringway Centre was built, it has been a busy hub for bars and restaurants, with nightclubs occupying the venue on the east corner of the underpass over the years.

The recording work involved an extensive photographic survey of all levels of the building, from dank basements to pigeon-infested plant rooms on the roof, as well as the cataloguing of mid-century fixtures and fittings of interest. Care was taken to capture the distinctive character of the building both inside and within its context, and any evidence of its evolving use as Birmingham changed around it. ■



Research seminars

Liz Popescu & Edward Biddulph

Launched in 2021, Oxford Archaeology's research seminar series showcases our work across all periods over wide geographical areas. The seminars reflect our strategy to use a research-led approach to our work and to engage creatively with a wide range of audiences: the academic world, curators, consultants, and the public.

To date, seven seminars have been presented. The first focused on Windy Harbour, near Blackpool in Lancashire, exploring the transition from hunter gathering to farming from the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age. The second seminar examined a key period of settlement pattern change across southern Britain during the middle Bronze Age. The third dealt with perceptions of Iron Age farmsteads in East Anglia, Essex and the Upper Thames Valley, while the fourth compared rural settlement in northern and southern Roman Britain.

The following seminar focused on early medieval cemeteries in south-eastern and north-western England, which in turn was followed by a discussion on the provisioning of medieval towns across England. The most recent seminar explored aspects of life and death during the industrial era, examining the archaeological and osteological findings from two major early modern burial grounds: the Radcliffe Infirmary burial ground in Oxford and Trinity burial ground in Hull.

The eighth seminar in the series will focus on historic building recording and address the theme of the 'Development of the Factory' from the 1780s to the 20th century. More details can be found on our website: oxfordarchaeology.com/research-our-seminars ■



Knowledge Hub

Liz Popescu & Edward Biddulph

Since its launch last year, Knowledge Hub, the online portal to our publications, unpublished ('grey literature') reports, research, and archaeological highlights continues to grow, with new items regularly being added. The resource now contains almost 8000 records related to our sites and projects across the UK.

There are several ways to explore the hub. You can browse our library for grey literature reports, digital versions of our published

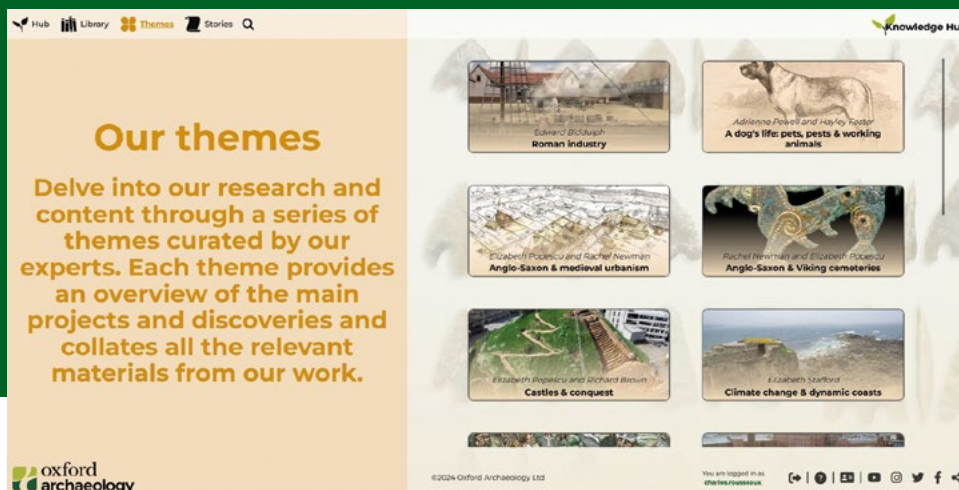
monographs, or links to journal articles. Enter a key word or place name in the search bar and scroll through the results. Use the filter to refine the search by archaeological period, record type, or office responsible. Or click onto the map, zoom in, and see what items relate to your area.

Another section, 'Themes', allows visitors to explore our research and content through a series of themes curated by our experts. Each theme provides an overview of the main projects and discoveries and collates all the relevant materials from our work. Recent themes include Roman industry, pets, pests and working animals, Anglo-Saxon and Viking cemeteries, and

climate change and dynamic coasts.

The third element to the hub, 'Stories', focuses on some of our outstanding projects, presenting the story of our sites through the discoveries made, interpretation of the evidence, and first-hand accounts from the archaeologists involved. In this section, you can read about the archaeology of the D-Day landings, Napoleonic barracks on the Essex coast, the Tower of London, and Iron Age ironworks and Roman tile production in Corby.

Content is being made available all the time, so do come back to see what's new. Happy exploring! ■



Explore the hub at knowledge.oxfordarchaeology.com

OA in the news

Maria Bellissimo

The last twelve months have seen great coverage of OA's fantastic work in the local and national press.

In November and December, our work with our amazing partners at Urban & Civic in Newark was featured in regional and national news: with over 70 Roman kilns, impressive Neolithic and Bronze Age finds, and early medieval activity, this site offered new, fascinating insights into the history of the area.

In January, the latest series of *Digging for Britain* showed the very exciting finds from Alconbury (another Urban & Civic project) where we uncovered evidence of daily life at the very end of Roman Britain and the transition period to the early medieval world. Current Archaeology marked OA's 50th birthday with a beautiful cover and a special journey through our long history narrated by the first director, Tom Hassall, and the current CEO, Ken Welsh. In February, we revisited the 1700-year-old Berryfields egg, which sparked



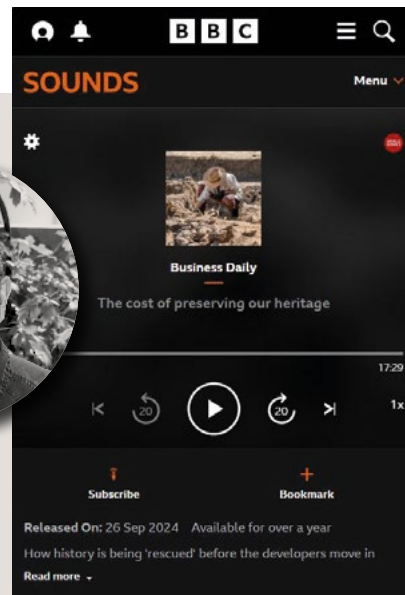
Current Archaeology issue 407 celebrating 50 year of Oxford Archaeology



Digging for Britain at Alconbury



Stephen Macaulay on BBC Sounds



a global press frenzy when it was revealed to still contain (unspecified) liquid; our only regret was that we couldn't use up all our store of egg puns in the various interviews.

In March, our streak of global coverage continued with a showcase of the finds from OCA's A66 Northern Trans-Pennine project: the evidence from the Mesolithic to the post-medieval periods shows that Cumbria is about much more than just Hadrian's Wall!

Between April and June, some other great projects attracted press interest: the A417 Roman and Iron Age discoveries in the west, Abbot's Vale's prehistoric and early medieval site in Suffolk, and a very well-preserved Roman wooden well at the new Rolls Royce site in Sussex. In July, we launched a blog about our work with the National Trust and English Heritage at the Uffington White Horse; this iconic monument gained excellent national and international press coverage, while the blog, kindly produced by David Miles and Simon Palmer, attracted a dedicated following of over 1000 readers.

But it isn't only fieldwork that helps us attract media attention. Thanks to our Knowledge Hub Themes, in August the BBC invited us to revisit the Roman industrial sites we have excavated over the years. And in September, Stephen Macaulay was interviewed for Business Daily on BBC Sounds about how archaeology is funded in the UK and abroad.

In October, we were finally able to share some exciting Oxford news with the national press: while working at Oriel College, we uncovered the hitherto elusive eastern defences of the Anglo-Saxon burh.

We have a few more nice bits of archaeological news that we will be sharing with the press over the next few weeks, so watch this space, as well as our social media and website for the latest archaeological discoveries! ■

Oxford Archaeology in print

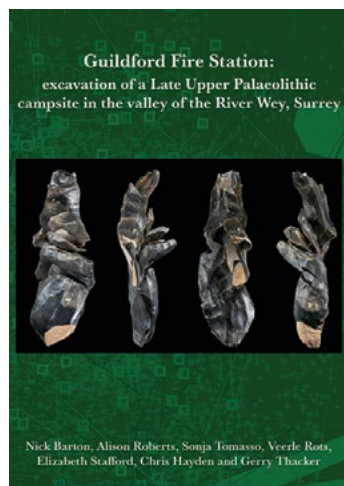
Edward Biddulph

At OA, we are committed to disseminating the results of our fieldwork and research as widely as possible. Publication is an important part of that aim and each year sees the release of several monographs. This year is no exception, but in addition to publications from our three offices, our volumes include the first publication resulting from our joint venture with Cotswold Archaeology and a collaboration with the Cambridge Archaeological Unit.

Guildford Fire Station: excavation of a Late Upper Palaeolithic campsite in the valley of the River Wey, Surrey, reports on excavations that revealed a well preserved, Late Upper Palaeolithic flint scatter.

Typological analysis of the flint and OSL dates suggest that the scatter itself dates from the first half of the Late Glacial (Windermere) interstadial (c 14,000-15,000 years before present). The lithic assemblage is homogeneous and, apart from initial extraction and nodule testing, all stages of flint manufacture are represented. Two main concentrations of knapping are represented, the main focus of which being the production of blade blanks. Functional analysis of the tools suggests relatively short occupation during which hunting, small-scale craft activities linked with the retooling of hunting weapons and the manufacture of hide items, and limited processing of animal and plant materials took place.

Comparison with Continental examples suggests that the assemblage share affinities with the Older Azilian or equivalents in north-west France and Germany and implies strong post-Magdalenian influences in the Late Upper Palaeolithic of Britain.



Slade End Farm and Winterbrook: prehistoric landscapes around Wallingford, South Oxfordshire, presents the results of two excavations carried out on the outskirts of Wallingford, at Slade End Farm and Winterbrook. The sites shed significant new light on the prehistory of the south Oxfordshire Thames Valley.

Slade End Farm was repeatedly visited for settlement in the early Neolithic. Numerous clusters of pits were found that contained

pottery, flintwork and other finds. Sparser settlement subsequently occurred at the two sites during the middle and late Neolithic and the Beaker period. Landscape organisation dramatically changed

in the middle Bronze Age, when ditched field systems or enclosure complexes were laid out at both sites; a waterhole containing a log ladder was one of several notable discoveries. Both sites were reoccupied for settlement during the early and middle Iron Age. Roundhouses were built, and a series of boundaries and enclosures laid out. A double pit alignment dug in the early Iron Age at Slade End Farm separated the occupied area from the lower, wetter ground to the south.

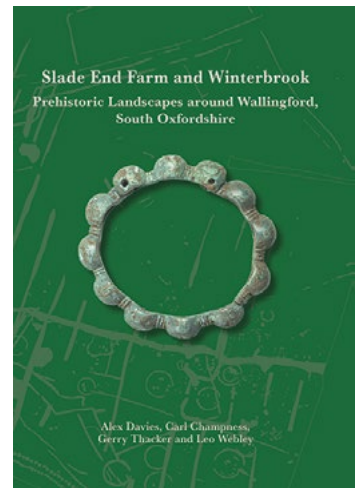
At Winterbrook, part of a settlement dating to the 11th to 12th centuries was also uncovered, providing the first good archaeological evidence for a rural community in the immediate hinterland of the medieval town of Wallingford.

Cotton 'Henge' to Craft: Neolithic to Anglo-Saxon remains at Warth Park, Raunds, Northamptonshire, describes the results of investigations on the western edge of Raunds which revealed evidence for human activity spanning the early Neolithic to middle Saxon periods.

Key to the development of the site was a monumental early Neolithic ditched enclosure, known as Cotton 'Henge'. Its excavation provided important new evidence for its date and influence on the surrounding landscape. Nearby lay middle and late Neolithic pits containing pottery and struck flint. Positioned at the centre of the 'henge' was an early Bronze Age barrow, which was subsequently incorporated into a middle Bronze Age field system.

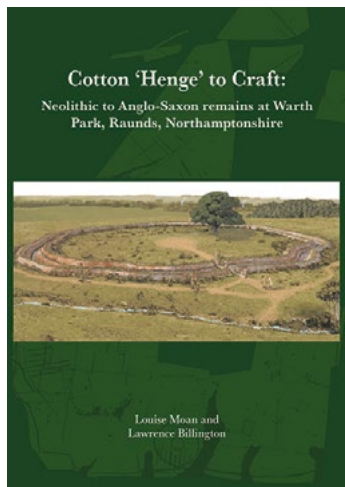
Dense settlement remains dating to the early to middle Iron Age transition, including structures, storage pits or silos, cobbled trackways and a pit alignment, extended across much of the site. Large assemblages of pottery, animal bone and other finds came from these features, alongside rich environmental remains.

Romano-period activity was significant, with non-settlement, craft and agrarian-related remains extending across the area. Features included a pottery kiln and corn dryer, various burials and



UPDATES & ROUNDUPS

six stone-lined wells. The most impressive item recovered from the waterlogged fills in one of the wells was a near life-sized carved wooden arm, believed to be a votive offering. This is perhaps the only item of its type from Roman Britain.

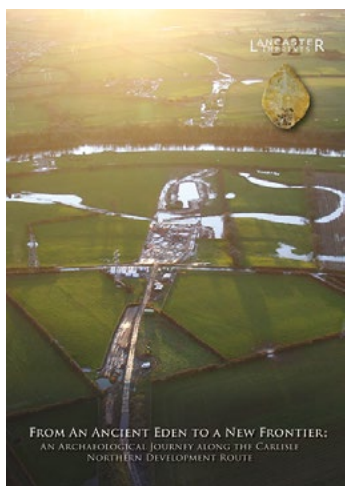


Anglo-Saxon settlement took the form of numerous sunken-featured buildings. By the post-medieval period, the development site lay beneath strip fields associated with the village of Raunds to the east; by this time, the adjacent medieval village of Mallows Cotton (located to the immediate west) had been abandoned.

From an ancient Eden to a new frontier: an archaeological journey along the Carlisle Northern Development Route presents the results of an extensive programme of archaeological investigation carried out along the route of a major road around the western side of Carlisle. The results provide a glimpse into the rich history of the Carlisle area, shedding important light on prehistoric hunter-gatherers and farmers, the Roman frontier, and early historic communities in the wider Solway area.

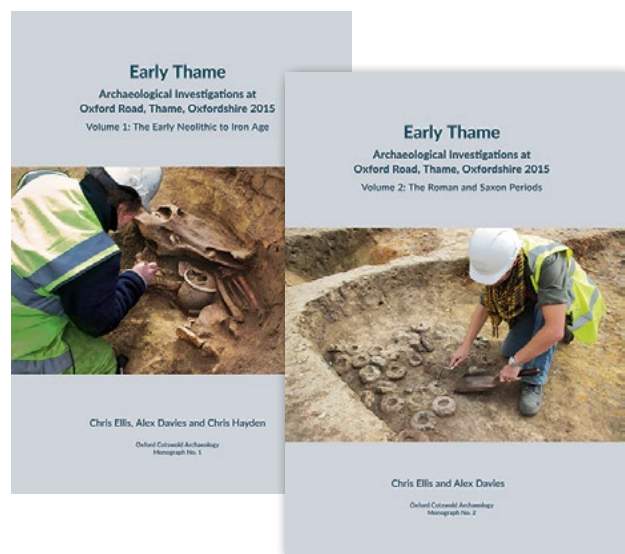
The work revealed highly significant remains at Stainton West, on the floodplain north of the River Eden. These related to a Mesolithic seasonal aggregation encampment, dating to c 6000-4300 cal BC, on an island between two palaeochannels. Neolithic activity began in c 3800-3700 cal BC, comprising tree felling and the construction of a wooden platform in the palaeochannel, associated with the intentional deposition of tree-felling debris, coarse-stone tools, flaked lithics, pottery, and wooden artefacts, including a paddle and two 'tridents'. Evidence for Chalcolithic and Bronze Age activity included burnt mounds at Stainton West, and elsewhere, evidence for settlement and agriculture was revealed.

The Hadrian's Wall frontier was also examined by a transect at Knockupworth in Wall Mile 67, including the Turf Wall and Vallum, their subsequent slighting, and the Stone Wall, constructed around AD 158-60, when



the Hadrianic frontier was reconstituted. Early medieval activity comprised five apparently near-contemporary rectangular posthole buildings near the Cargo road, which probably related to a small agricultural settlement. Other remains related to the agricultural landscape from the later medieval and post-medieval periods.

Early Thame: Archaeological Investigations at Oxford Road, Thame, Oxfordshire 2015, is the first publication produced by the Oxford Cotswold Archaeology joint venture (OCA). This report comprises two volumes, the first dealing with the Early Neolithic and Iron Age, the second with the Roman and Saxon periods.



The early Neolithic period saw the creation of a complex of monuments dominated by a causewayed enclosure. This comprised three segmented circuits that may have covered an area of around 11 hectares, making it one of the largest known in Britain. The inner circuit appears to have first been used during the 37th century cal BC and lasted for up to 100 years or so. Some of the causeways were adjacent to pit segments, and within the inner circuit there was a sub-oval ditched monument about 20m across. A sub-oval ring ditch lay to the north of this penannular monument.

Subsequent activity in the Late Neolithic was slight, with a pit containing Grooved Ware being identified. A cremation burial dated to the end of the middle Bronze Age or the beginning of the late Bronze Age contained the remains of two adults and two children. Extensive settlement then occurred during the later part of the early Iron Age across most of the site. This appears to have been abandoned in the 3rd century cal BC.

From the late Iron Age and throughout the Roman period, the area was developed as an agricultural landscape. An enclosure system, laid out in the late Iron Age, was replaced, in a clear re-orientation,

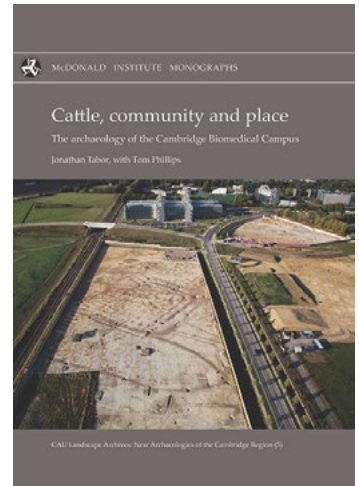
by a single settlement enclosure around the time of the Roman conquest. The level of activity greatly reduced during the middle Roman period, although the enclosures remained visible as some were recut in the late Roman period.

A settlement of 13 sunken-featured buildings was established during the 6th–7th centuries. Several of the pits of these buildings contained evidence of weaving equipment. After what appears to have been a hiatus in settlement, a sequence of ovens was established in the 9th–10th centuries, suggesting that the area was again used for agricultural processing.

Cattle, community and place: the archaeology of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, published by the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, is a collaboration between OA and the Cambridge Archaeological Unit, based on a series of eight neighbouring excavations carried out by the two organisations on the south side of Cambridge. The volume builds upon the work of previous large-scale projects within an area that now represents one of the most intensively investigated archaeological landscapes in Britain.

The excavations exposed three major sites, which are detailed chronologically in the monograph:

an impressive middle Bronze Age enclosure complex with a focus on livestock management, a late Iron Age–early Roman farmstead with associated ring-ditch cemetery, and a 1st- to 4th-century AD Roman farmstead. OA's excavations for the New Papworth Trust Hospital revealed elements of the middle Bronze Age field system that accompanied the enclosure complex, and the same area encompassed the early-mid Roman settlement. The archaeological evidence and analyses of the sites' substantial artefact assemblages and economic data are presented alongside detailed consideration of the palaeoenvironment and Bayesian modelling of radiocarbon dates relating to the middle Bronze Age enclosure sequence. Combined, the results provide new and important insight into the region's prehistoric and late Iron Age–Roman settlement, their respective economies and the communities that inhabited them. ■



Talking about OA Edward Biddulph

Over the past 12 months, staff have been travelling across the country to talk about our work to community groups and archaeological societies. Here are just some of the places we have visited and topics we have been talking about.

Staff from the Lancaster office delivered a talk to Tarleton Library on Viking-Age archaeology in north-west England and spoke at the Lancaster Regional Heritage Centre's archaeology day on DNA, prehistoric migration and what it means for the Mesolithic/ Neolithic of the North West. In addition, the Lancaster office had a stand at the Lake District National Park archaeology conference and gave talks to the Bolton-le-Sands library, the Garstang Historical Society, and the U3A at Lytham St Anne.

Staff from the Oxford office delivered lectures on the prehistoric and Roman discoveries on the Hinkley Point C Connection project Somerset in to the Clevedon and District Archaeology Society and on the Iron Age and Roman landscape at Innsworth and Twigworth near Gloucester to the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society. In the summer, OA had a stand at Oxfordshire Past, which gave the public the opportunity to browse Knowledge Hub and see what archaeology existed in their area.

Several staff members represented OA at regional and national conferences. Staff from our Cambridge office gave talks on Lucks Lane, Buckden, and Alconbury Weald to the Cambridge Antiquarian Society autumn conference, and, contributed to the CBA East community archaeology conference. The annual conference of the British Association for

Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology, held at Keele University, heard from a member of Heritage Burial Services, who spoke about unusual Middle Bronze Age skeletons from Winterbrook in Wallingford, Oxfordshire.

At the annual conference of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) in Chester, which this year focused on the legacy and future of archaeology, delegates heard about several of OA's projects. In a joint paper, a team from OA, Cheshire West and Chester Council revealed the approach taken to protect the archaeology in that historic city, with reference to the Chester Northgate redevelopment. Staff also presented an overview of the archaeology of the A66 Northern Trans-Pennine road scheme project, and gave a talk on the latest research from our 'Rewilding Prehistory' project, which is gathering evidence for wild plants and animals in prehistoric Britain. ■

Community engagement and social value

Ayesha Purcell

Working with communities to uncover archaeology, share our discoveries, and inspire the next generation of archaeologists is some of the most exciting and enjoyable work we do at OA. Over the last twelve months, we have worked with school students, special interest groups, volunteers, and members of the public to explore our shared past. You'll find some of our highlights from the last year below.

Thank you to all our colleagues in OA and our communities and partner organisations. Without you, none of these projects would have been possible!

Oxford Team: Open Doors 2024

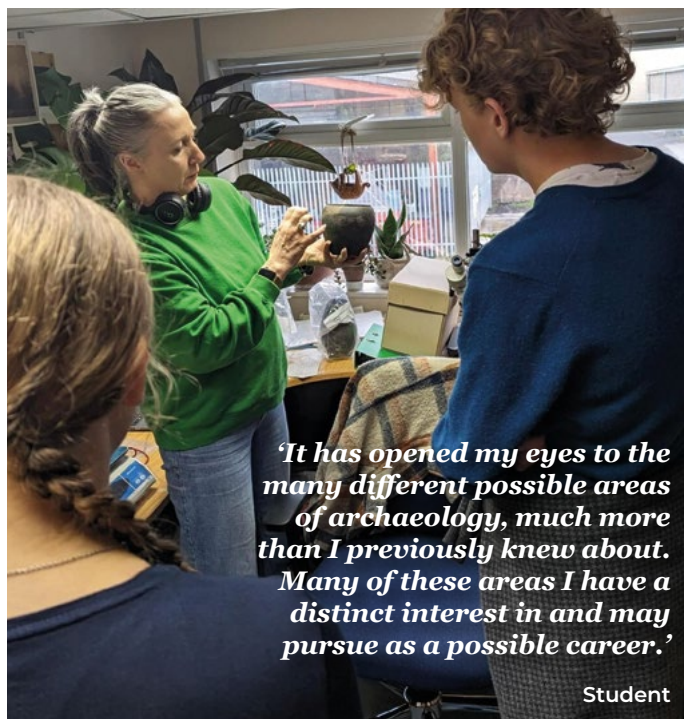
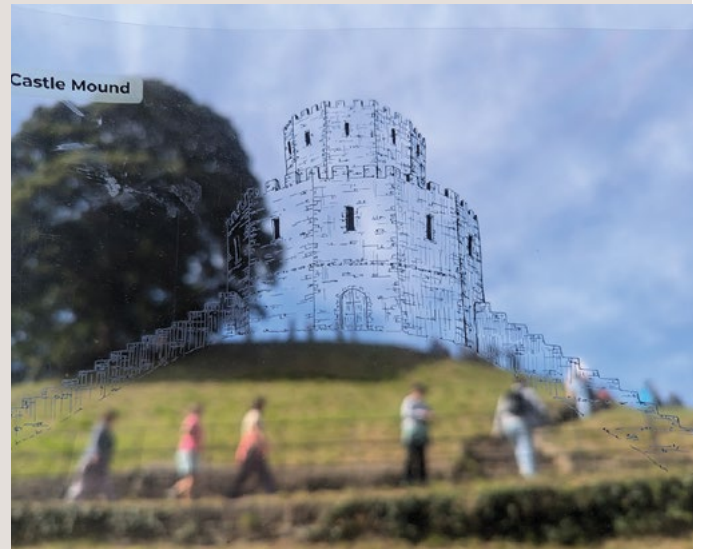
Henry Ray Fredrickson and Ayesha Purcell

In September, our team in Oxford once again worked with Oxford Open Doors festival to share Oxford's archaeology and heritage with local residents and visitors. From a base in Oxford's County Hall, OA staff shared discoveries from sites across Oxfordshire and showcased local finds to approximately 550 members of the public.

In a special talk, our staff explored Oxford's history through 10 key archaeological sites, including a possible Bronze Age barrow at Brasenose College, Saxons at St Aldates in the city centre, Oxford Castle during the medieval period, and Civil War burials at St Cross College.

In addition, Henry Ray Fredrickson led walking tours that highlighted some of our amazing former sites, among them the Castle Mound, Castle Hill House, Paradise Street Brewery, and the supposed 'secret tunnel' that runs under Bulwarks

Lane. Henry and our colleagues in graphics also worked together to create transparent acetate sheets with illustrations reconstructing historic Oxford, helping visitors to step back in time and visualise how the city has changed through time.



'It has opened my eyes to the many different possible areas of archaeology, much more than I previously knew about. Many of these areas I have a distinct interest in and may pursue as a possible career.'

Student

Group Team: Archaeological Career Experience

Jessica Ellera

In 2023, a team from across OA's three offices began work on an innovative new approach to work experience: the Archaeological Career Experience (ACE). ACE is a hybrid two-day opportunity for Year 12 students to explore careers in archaeology, with an online introduction to archaeology on day one, and hands on workshops and office tours in person on day two.

ACE was a huge success! The pilot achieved its learning goals for the students, helping them to develop relevant skills, understand how their studies connect to their career goals and know how to further support their career aspirations. Student feedback was overwhelmingly positive, we have already had requests for the programme to run again, and it was even featured in students' university references!

Lancaster Team: Community Metal Detecting Survey at Whaley Solar Farm, Derbyshire

Paul Dunn and Ayesha Purcell

In the summer, OA's Lancaster team began work on the Whaley Solar Farm project. The first phase of work was a metal detecting survey to identify any 'hot spots' of metal finds and potentially target those as part of the programme of evaluation trenching.

To complete the survey, OA worked with 16 volunteers from the Derby Artefacts Recovery Metal Detecting Club for two very sunny weeks. The team recovered 166 finds, with the majority relating to the industrial or modern era and most likely relating to night soiling, as there were no concentrations of finds.

The Metal Detecting Club were a great group of people and enjoyed their time on site. When asked how they would rate their experience, we received 100% positive feedback and multiple respondents said they would be keen to take part in another similar event in the future.



Cambridge Team: South Weald Community Excavation

James Fairbairn and Jessica Ellery

For two weeks in the summer, a team of twenty-four amazing volunteers worked with staff from our Cambridge office to uncover foundations relating to four phases of construction at Weald Hall, near Brentwood in Essex, the earliest dating all the way back to the Tudors. The team made the significant discovery of a rare, Georgian sunken stone bath, complete with toothbrush! Site tours were conducted daily, and volunteers undertook training in a variety of archaeological

skills, including GPS and drone survey, finds washing and identification.

Feedback on the project from the volunteers and wider public has been excellent, with many people asking if there would be any future excavation on the site. We would like to thank Place Services of Essex County Council and the Lower Thames Crossing Community Fund for making this opportunity possible, as well as our stellar team of volunteers – your enthusiasm made this a very exciting and rewarding project to be part of!



A Emily Abrehart, Daria Adamson, Rebecca Aitken, Ashleigh Alexander, Leigh Allen, Martyr Allen, Rebecca Allen, Tim Allen, Lily Andrews, Mary Andrews, Jessica Andrews, Katrina Anker, Stephen Arrow, Gemma Asbury, Ana Ashby, Ben Attfield **B** Edward Baker, William Baker, Narita Banks, Alexandra Baranowski, Karen Barker, Richard Barker, Freya Bates, Maryne Baylet, Heather Beckitt, James Bell, Maria Bellissimo, Oliver Bennett, Severine Bezie, Jesse Bharwaney, Edward Biddulph, Lawrence Billington, Charlotte Bishop, Kathryn Blackburn, Jody Bloom, Anne-Laure Bollen, Christopher Booth, Rona Booth, John Boothroyd, Brandon Bottomley, Daisy Bradburn-Sims, Jacob Brader, Matt Bradley, Kate Brady, Jeremy Briscoombe, Rose Britton, Benjamin Brown, David Brown, Ellie Brown, Fraser Brown, Richard Brown, David Browne, Tom Bruce, Jamie Buckley, Levi Bullivant, Hannah Bullmore, Adam Butcher, Ruan Buzzi, Anni Byard **C** Lauryn Cahill, John Carne, Lauren Carpenter, Hannah Cavers, Edyta Cehak, Carl Champness, Robin Chu, Matthew Claridge, Christopher Clark, Graeme Clarke, Jake Clarke, Rachel Clarke, Stephen Clarke, Edmund, Florence Clifton Cole, Bethany Coleman, Tae Conlon, Elizabeth Connelly, Sharon Cook, Rebecca Coombes, Anwen Cooper, Clem Cooper, Samuel Corke, Emma Corker, Miles Corkhill, Vitor Costa, John Cotter, Charlotte Cox, Nicholas Cox, Joseph Coyles, Martha Craven, Nicola Crawford, James Cross, Erik Crnkovich, Mark Curtis **D** Sarah Dalton, Megan Daniels, Alex Davies, Tom Davis, Rosalind Davison, Alexanne Dawson, Brian Dean, Peter Dearlove, Aleksandra Deegan, Alessandro Dell'anno, James Dewhirst, Antony Dickson, Emily Dinger Cantu, Alice Dobinson, Mark Dodd, Natasha Dodwell, Ciara Donnelly, Michael Donnelly, Aiden Dooley, Matthew Doyle, Denise Druce, Mateusz Drzewiecki, Paul Dunn **E** Jack Easen, Vedika Eastwood, Matthew Edwards, Jessica Elleray, Lewis Ernest, Katya Essam, Daniel Evans, Gary Evans, Helen Evans **F** Dylan Fabian, James Fairbairn, Fruzsina Farkas, Harry Farmer, Aiden Farnan, Adam Fellingham, Joseph Ferrier, Daniel Firth, James Fish, Emma Fishwick, Carole Fletcher, Rosie Fletcher, Ben Ford, Deirdre Forde, Stuart Foreman, Elizabeth Forss, Rachel Fosberry, Abigail Foster, Hayley Foster, James Fox, Yera Francisco Benet, Tom Freeman **G** Leo Gage, Samuel Gaiteri, Kendall Gammon, Lucy Gane,

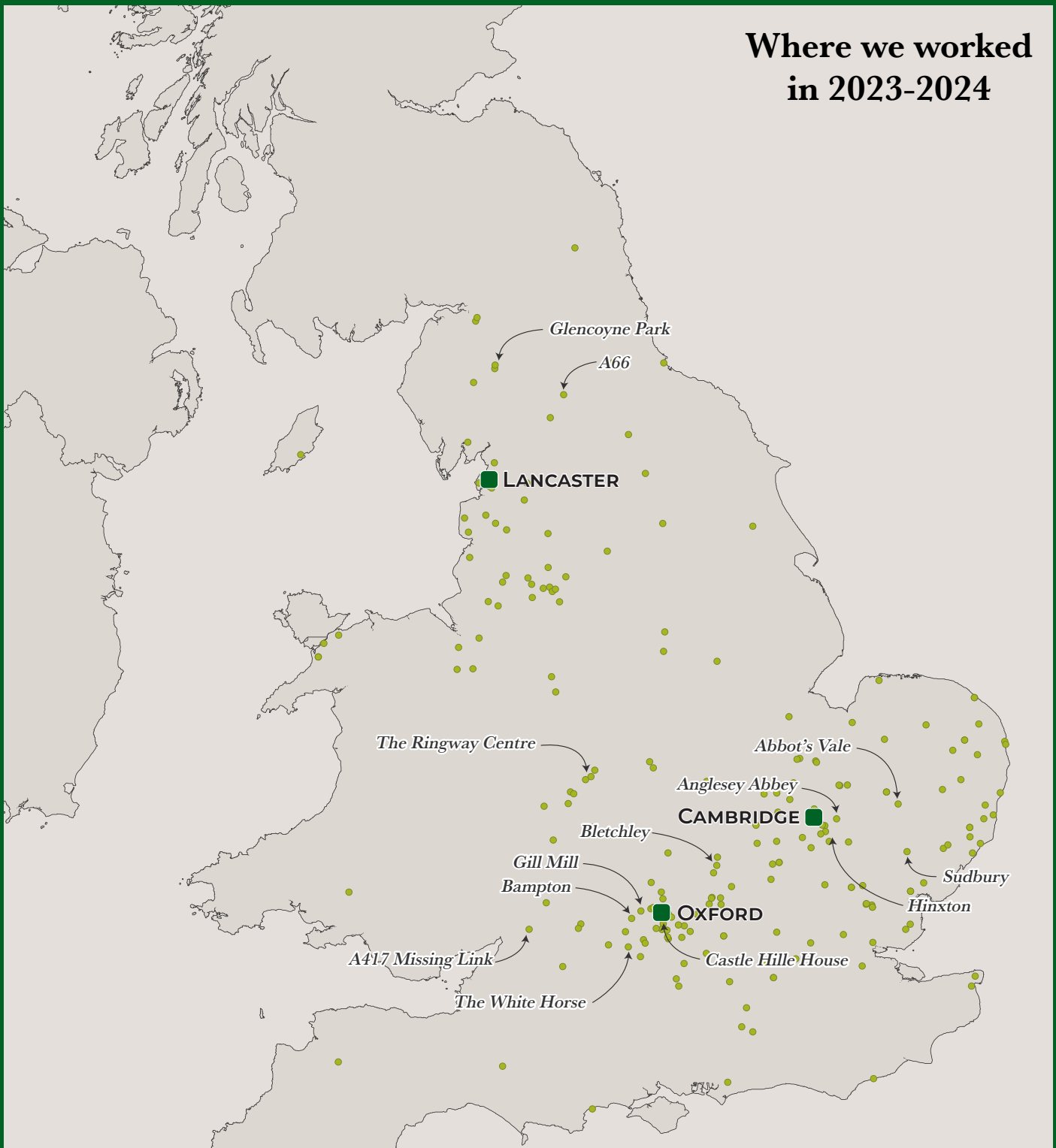
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WHO IS OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY?
The success of Oxford Archaeology depends on every member of our staff. We would like to thank them all for their hard work and dedication.

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Where we worked in 2023-2024



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