

# **OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AGENDAS 2011**

## **9) MODERN (1800-1950)**

**Version: 28/1/2012**

## **9 Early Modern Research Agenda**

*This document sets out an archaeological research agenda for Oxford covering the Modern period (1800-1950 AD). The document should be read in conjunction with the period resource assessment for the City (Oxford City Council forthcoming) and the Thames Solent Regional Research Agenda (2010).*

### **9.1 Overview**

The Early Modern period is a rapidly developing area of archaeological interest, presenting opportunities to examine the impact of globalisation, mass production, standardisation and industry on the lives of the people of Oxford. Oxford is notable for its location on important Thames Valley transportation routes and for its relatively late industrial development. The university and colleges remain important for their role in educating elites instrumental to processes of empire, government, industry and the church. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Oxford developed a nationally important car industry, owned by William Morris, which transformed the hinterland of Oxford from a series of semi-rural villages providing labour for domestic and college service, and market gardening, to a suburban industrial landscape in east Oxford around the large Pressed Steel and Cowley works.

### **9.2 Further assessment of grey literature and photographic evidence**

1. Considerable information on modern structures is contained within archived planning submissions (Heritage Statements, Conservation Statements, Design and Access Statements, Plans, photographic recording requested by Conservation Officers via planning condition etc.). The assessment and cataloguing of this data is a high priority. An appropriately funded image digitisation and cataloguing project would be of great value.
2. Further information on Modern era civic structures is held in the Town Hall comprising of 'the strong room plans', the City Engineer's deposited building plans from 1875 and extensive property deeds for the suburban area and city centre. These have been partially catalogued but further assessment and cataloguing is required.
3. Further works assessing a cataloguing of college estate holding documentation (e.g. St Thomas's (Christ Church) and Holywell (Merton)) would be productive.
4. The background notes for the compilation of previous Local List structures may also warrant further investigation.

### **9.3 Landscape and land-use**

1. Further work is required to assess and catalogue farm buildings from this period. Archaeological investigations may produce further information regarding the impact of modern farming practices and drainage on the landscape and land-use within the Local Authority Area (LAA).
2. Field investigation and documentary research may be used to enhance our understanding of the extent of large and small scale quarrying and gravel extraction in the LAA. The plotting of evidence for localised quarrying across the 2<sup>nd</sup> gravel terrace would make a useful contribution to our ability to map the likely survival of archaeological deposits in this area.
3. The evolution of water management and drainage infrastructure related to improvements to the Thames Channel and the canal would benefit from closer attention, both to examine the potential for related archaeological remains and to establish the impact on earlier archaeological remains.
4. How did the arrival of the mass produced motorcar impact on the urban landscape?

### 9.3 Parks and gardens

1. There is considerable scope for the further detailed study of parks and gardens within the LAA. The most significant or complete examples of modern garden design may warrant assessment for designation. Registered parks and gardens would strongly benefit from the production of Integrated Conservation Plans.

### 9.4 Settlement and the built environment

1. The opportunity to examine coherent blocks of Victorian domestic housing and their wider infrastructure (drains, yards, wells etc.) archaeologically would be of interest in order to establish the character and quality of the built environment and contrast the physical evidence with surviving records.
2. There is considerable scope for the survey and cataloguing of Early Modern civic and private street furniture and infrastructure; e.g. fire insurance plaques, miscellaneous building decoration and ornamentation, date stones, inscriptions, pumps, post boxes and other locally manufactured iron work (manhole covers, railings etc.).
3. The extension of Historic Urban Characterisation beyond the historic city to include the remainder of the LAA would be highly desirable, as would the population of fields in the Historic Landscape Characterisation database that allow for the recording of building materials (this would require a programme of field survey).
4. Can we further map and characterise the development of housing and social status amongst communities affected by the 19<sup>th</sup> century reforms of the university and the process of industrialisation?
5. Further work to identify and catalogue examples of the early use of building materials, construction techniques or innovative design may be fruitful. How did the increased availability of building materials affect local building techniques and styles?
6. Baltic pine was imported along canal to Baltic wharf; how extensive was the use of the standardised and imported timber in Oxford? Can Baltic timber marks be identified? Can the process of the internationalisation and standardisation be identified in other building materials?
7. Further examination of historic photographs, maps and other illustrations combined with documentary research and landscape archaeology survey is likely to be productive in understanding and characterising the Early Modern expansion of Oxford's hinterland villages.
8. Can we further plot and characterise the development of lower status domestic houses in the LAA; how did such structures change from labourers' and squatters' cottages to terraced houses and semi-detached properties for industrial workers? This might include a particular focus on internal arrangements, decoration, and stylistic details.
9. How have changes in the social landscape and domestic economies affected the design of the modern domestic house in the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Nucleation of the modern family, loss of servants quarters in townhouses, increase in multiple occupancy dwellings: how has this affected the wider townscape?
10. Can we locate and quantify further examples of Modern era domestic housing particularly pre-1945 local authority housing examples, and identify exemplars that might warrant recording in the event of development? Where do they survive and how have they fared in the modern townscape?

11. There is considerable scope for the further cataloguing and recording of public, commercial, leisure and utility buildings from this period (e.g. bakeries, laundries, butchers, brewing and malting structures, market gardening buildings, schools, courtrooms, prisons, police stations, fire stations, warehouses, factories, hospital structures, sports facilities and entertainment structures).
12. Collegiate architecture: Despite the volume of literature on the architecture of the colleges there is considerable scope for previously undocumented features to be uncovered during development work (fixtures, fittings, wallpapers, paintings, doors, cellars, panelling etc.). Further work is required to catalogue and assess the full extent of Early Modern architectural features across the colleges in order to establish their significance both to the college and wider townscape.
13. Further work is required to catalogue and map the location and condition of stone built tenement and boundary walls across the LAA. Whilst these are often difficult to closely date, they may be assessed by reference to other sources of information (photographs, historic maps etc.).
14. The importance of oral histories for understanding buildings should be noted and taken into account where feasible.

### **9.5 Industrial structures**

1. Opportunities to secure information regarding the buried remains of demolished and unrecorded structures related to significant early modern industries (e.g. the car industry, printing, paper manufacturing) would merit careful consideration.
2. Further work is required to catalogue and map the extent of surviving industrial structures and related walls, fixtures and fittings (e.g. maltings, breweries, wharfs, brickworks, quarry workings).
3. Sites related to specialised local production may warrant targeted recording (e.g. printing, brewing, tanneries, paper and card board production, boat making).
4. The development and diversity of rural industry (agricultural engineering, brick making) needs further study, as does the role of energy creation within the landscape and the built environment (pumping-stations, gasworks etc.).
5. Can we further understand the character and extent of railway infrastructure from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century?

### **9.6 Religious structures**

1. Oxford was an important centre for the development of Methodism and the Oxford Movement within the Church of England. The further recording and study of structures (and in the case of Methodism burial grounds of over 100 years in age) may add to our understanding of these movements.
2. The identification and assessment of surviving and converted Non-Conformist chapels in the LAA would be productive.
3. More work to identify, list, record and study war memorials as a category of monument would be productive (Rhodes 2006).
4. Further recording of selected churchyards and cemeteries would be valuable (Rhodes 2006).
5. Continuation of the recording of church interior decoration and furnishings would be desirable, with selection led to a degree by impending internal re-arrangement or the possibility of redundancy (Rhodes 2006)

6. Rhodes (2006) notes that a specialist study of church monuments in the region (form, design, commissioning and attribution) would be a valuable subject for an academic research project.
7. Can structures adapted for worship by immigrant communities be identified and recorded?

### **9.7 Warfare**

1. Further work is required to catalogue and assess structures associated with military activity in the LAA (e.g. field checking of military structures referenced in the period assessment).
2. There is considerable scope for the further field survey and cataloguing of remnant WWII structures (e.g. hard standings and tank traps at Shotover Park, the air raid shelter at Lewis Nature Reserve, miscellaneous private air raid shelters etc., remnant infrastructure from the military use of the colleges during the war, e.g. the RAF at Magdalen College).

### **9.8 Material culture**

1. Assemblages from this period have a great deal to tell us about patterns of wealth, importation and cultural preference, for example assemblages linked to college officials and servants, specially commissioned items, specialist shops etc.
2. The identification of further Early Modern pottery, glassware, tokens and clay pipe assemblages may much to add to our understanding of local trade and consumption patterns, especially where related to specialist activities or distinct communities.
3. Can we identify patterns of local production (e.g. clay pipes made in back yards) and changing cultural tastes in domestic assemblages (e.g. fish paste jars from the 1840s)?
4. Is there evidence for the documented importation of drinking tea into Britain in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century being reflected in actual domestic assemblages at this time?
5. How does the material culture of Oxford vary from comparable urban centres in the Thames Valley given its service-based university town economy?

**Compiled by Ruth Beckley and David Radford**

**For full acknowledgements please see the online Oxford Archaeological Plan Introduction document.**

### **Bibliography**

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