

Summary

The name of the city of Oxford is virtually synonymous throughout the world with that of Oxford University. At the time of its emergence in the historical record, however, the university had taken root in what was already a thriving medieval town. The broad, shallow floodplain of the river Thames had encouraged the development of a major river crossing at Oxford, probably from as early as the 7th century AD, and this crossing provided both a focus for a permanent settlement, and the name of Oxford by which the settlement came to be known. The strategic importance of the site is reflected in the probable establishment of St Frideswide's Minster by the end of the 7th century, and the subsequent development of Oxford as a *burh*, or centre of defence against the Vikings, by 911–12. The late Saxon *burh* was provided with a defensive rampart and ditch, and the interior was divided up into a grid of metalled streets. By the early 11th century Oxford had become a prosperous urban centre, with intensively developed street frontages, numerous churches, and a mint. Following the Norman Conquest of 1066, a motte and bailey castle was constructed over the western part of the Saxon town. There seems to have been a significant short-lived decline in Oxford's fortunes after the Conquest, but recovery was underway by the end of the 11th century when a major stone causeway, the Grandpont, was built across the floodplain. Numerous churches and monastic houses were founded at Oxford during the 12th century, and Henry I built a

palace outside the northern walls. Subsequently the town was a major strategic centre during the Anarchy of 1135–54. By the end of the 12th century, when the existence of a fledgling university is first apparent, Oxford was prospering once again. There was rapid expansion into northern, southern, eastern and western suburbs, and the citizens acquired a municipal seal (the oldest known in Britain) by 1191. The seal depicts a walled city with the figure of an ox superimposed on it, expressing as succinctly as any modern advertising logo both the city's origins and its corporate pride in its success.

This volume presents a comprehensive account of archaeological research into the origins and development of Oxford during this period. It includes reports on some 18 previously unpublished archaeological sites, accompanied by chapters on their finds, animal bone and environmental assemblages. These are treated thematically, and cover the Thames Crossing, the defences, and the developing town with its streets, properties, houses and churches. The detailed site reports are preceded by a synthesis and discussion of the evidence, which traces the development of theories about the Anglo-Saxon town and reviews the many problems and uncertainties that still exist. This discussion is supported by a gazetteer of relevant archaeological observations in the historic core of the city. The reports on the Thames Crossing sites are preceded by a detailed review of the development of the river Thames and its floodplain at Oxford.

Zusammenfassung

Der Name der Stadt Oxford wird praktisch in der gesamten Welt mit der Universität von Oxford gleichgesetzt. Allerdings war Oxford bereits eine blühende mittelalterliche Stadt, als die Universität erstmals urkundlich erwähnt wurde. Die breiten, flachen Themseauen hatten wahrscheinlich schon im 7. Jahrhundert n. Chr. die Einrichtung einer bedeutsamen Furt begünstigt, die sowohl den Grundstein für eine dauerhafte Siedlung legte als auch den Namen Oxford (Ochsenfurt) begründete, unter dem der Ort bekannt wurde. Die strategische Bedeutung des Ortes zeigt sich auch daran, dass die Heilige Frideswide wohl noch vor Ende des 7. Jahrhunderts hier eine Klosterkirche gründete und Oxford sich bis 911/12 zu einem *burh*, einem Zentrum der Verteidigung gegen die Wikinger, entwickelte. Der aus der

Spätzeit der Angelsachsen stammende *burh* war nach außen durch einen Befestigungswall und Graben gesichert und im Innern von einem Netz an Schotterwegen durchzogen. Zu Beginn des 11. Jahrhunderts war aus Oxford ein wohlhabendes urbanes Zentrum mit gut entwickelten Straßenfronten, zahlreichen Kirchen und einer eigenen Münzanstalt geworden. Nach der Eroberung durch die Normannen im Jahr 1066 wurde über dem Westteil der angelsächsischen Stadt eine Motte errichtet. Offenbar erlitt der Ort im Anschluss an die normannische Eroberung einen deutlichen, wenn auch nur kurzzeitigen Niedergang, von dem er sich noch vor Ablauf des 11. Jahrhunderts wieder erholte, als ein großer Steindamm, der "Grandpont", über die Flussauen hinweg gebaut wurde. Während des 12.

Jahrhunderts entstanden zahlreiche Kirchen und monastische Gebäude in Oxford, dazu ließ Heinrich I. außerhalb der Nordmauern einen Palast errichten. Während der Zeit der Anarchie (1135–54) war die Stadt ein wichtiges strategisches Zentrum, und noch vor Ablauf des 12. Jahrhunderts, als erstmals von der Existenz einer aufstrebenden Universität zu hören ist, war Oxford zu seiner vormaligen Blüte zurückgekehrt. Die Stadt dehnte sich schnell in alle Himmelsrichtungen aus und erhielt 1191 ein Stadtsiegel (das älteste für Großbritannien belegte). Das Siegel zeigt eine ummauerte Stadt und einen Ochsen, was genauso prägnant wie jedes moderne Werbologo sowohl die Ursprünge der Stadt als auch ihren Stolz auf ihre Errungenschaften verdeutlicht.

Der vorliegende Band stellt die archäologischen Untersuchungen über die Ursprünge und die Entwicklung Oxfords in dieser Zeit ausführlich dar. Er

enthält Berichte zu 18 bisher unveröffentlichten archäologischen Stätten mit Kapiteln zu den jeweiligen Funden, Tierknochen sowie dem ökologischen Milieu. Die nach Themen geordneten Berichte behandeln das Gebiet an der Themsefurt, die Verteidigungsanlagen und die Straßen, Grundstücke, Häuser und Kirchen der sich entwickelnden Stadt. Vor den Detailberichten zu den Fundorten steht eine Übersicht und Erörterung der Belege, die die Entwicklung der Theorien über die angelsächsische Stadt aufrollt und viele der auch weiterhin bestehenden Schwierigkeiten und Unsicherheiten diskutiert. Diese Erörterung ist durch ein Verzeichnis der relevanten archäologischen Beobachtungen im historischen Kern der Stadt ergänzt. Den Berichten über die Fundstätten an der Themsefurt ist eine Betrachtung zur Entwicklung der Themse und ihrer Flussauen bei Oxford vorangestellt.

Résumé

Le nom de la cité d'Oxford est, de par le monde, quasiment synonyme de celui de l'Université d'Oxford. Toutefois, au moment de son apparition dans les sources historiques, l'Université a pris racine dans ce qui constituait déjà une ville médiévale florissante. La large et peu profonde plaine inondable de la Tamise encouragea le développement d'un lieu de passage important du fleuve à Oxford, probablement dès le début du VII^{ème} siècle après JC. Ce passage fournit à la fois un centre pour un site d'habitation permanent et le nom d' "Oxford" sous lequel ce foyer vint à se faire connaître. L'importance stratégique du site se reflète à travers la fondation vraisemblable de l'église abbatiale de St Frideswide, vers la fin du VII^{ème} siècle, et le développement consécutif d'Oxford en tant que "burh", ou centre de défense contre les Vikings, à partir de 911–912. Le "burh" de la fin de l'époque saxonne comprenait un rempart défensif accompagné d'un fossé et son enclos était divisé par un réseau de rues empierrées. Dès le début du XI^{ème} siècle Oxford était devenu un centre urbain prospère, aux façades de rues intensément développées, de nombreuses églises ainsi qu'un atelier monétaire. A la suite de la Conquête Normande de 1066, une motte et un château avec cour intérieure furent construits sur la partie ouest de la ville saxonne. Il semble que le sort d'Oxford ait connu un déclin significatif de courte durée après la Conquête, mais le redressement était en cours dès la fin du XI^{ème} siècle, au moment de la construction d'une large chaussée de pierres, le "Grandpont", à travers le lit majeur du fleuve. De nombreuses églises et bâtiments monastiques furent fondés à Oxford au cours du XII^{ème} siècle et Henri I construisit un palais à l'extérieur des murs Nord.

Par la suite, la ville constitua un centre stratégique de première importance au cours de l'Anarchie de 1135–54. Dès la fin du XII^{ème} siècle, au moment où l'existence d'une jeune Université est pour la première fois perceptible, Oxford était une fois de plus florissante. Les banlieues nord, sud, est et ouest connurent une rapide expansion et les citoyens acquirent, dès 1191, un sceau municipal, le plus ancien connu en Grande Bretagne. Le sceau représente une cité emmurée avec la silhouette d'un boeuf en surimpression, exprimant, aussi succinctement que n'importe quel logo publicitaire moderne, à la fois les origines de la cité et sa fierté collective suscitée par son succès.

Cet ouvrage présente un compte-rendu détaillé des recherches archéologiques relatives aux origines et développement d'Oxford au cours de cette période. Il inclut des exposés concernant 18 sites archéologiques, non publiés auparavant, accompagnés de chapitres relatifs au mobilier, ossements animaux et assemblages environnementaux. Ceux-ci sont traités de manière thématique et comprennent le passage de la Tamise, les défences et la ville en voie de développement avec ses rues, ses propriétés, ses maisons et ses églises. Les compte-rendus détaillés de sites sont précédés par une synthèse et discussion des preuves qui retracent le développement des théories relatives à la ville anglo-saxonne et examine les nombreuses questions et incertitudes encore en suspens. Cette discussion est appuyée par un répertoire géographique d'observations archéologiques pertinentes, au coeur du foyer historiques de la cité. Les exposés des lieux de passage de la Tamise sont précédés par un examen attentif du développement du fleuve et de sa plaine inondable à Oxford.

Acknowledgements

The present volume has been many years in preparation, and incorporates the contributions of a large number of different individuals and institutions over a long period of time. Most of the excavations and observations reported in this volume precede the introduction of PPG-16 and developer funding, and were financed by grants, from both public and private sources. It is impossible to acknowledge individually the generosity of all those who supported our excavations in the 1970s and 1980s, and to name only some would be invidious. We would therefore like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all the many institutions and individuals who provided support, both financial and in kind, and to those who allowed us access to their sites and facilitated our archaeological work. The extraordinary amount that is now known about the remote past of their city and university would have been unrecoverable without their enlightened support. Thanks are also due to the many site staff and volunteers whose individual contributions are unrecorded, many of whom toiled in cramped, wet or freezing conditions, against urgent deadlines, to record the information that is presented here. During the 1970s and 1980s, archaeological research in Oxford benefited particularly from the knowledge and dedication of a few individuals, chief among them Tom Hassall, then Director of OAU, George Lambrick and Mark Robinson, who pioneered archaeological study of the Thames floodplain at Oxford, Brian Durham, who undertook and directed a great deal of the fieldwork, Maureen Mellor, who developed the study of Oxford's medieval pottery so significantly, and John Blair, who has always provided most generous help in understanding the medieval historical context of our work. Thanks are also due to the former Conservation Officer of Oxford City Council, John Ashdown, whose interest and support have been of fundamental importance.

We would like to thank all contributors to the present volume, many of whom have waited far too long to see their work in print. During the final stages of preparation of this volume, over the winter of 2001-2, we were able to contact a large number of specialist contributors to give them the opportunity to review and revise their contributions, and we would like to thank them all for their ready assistance with this work. Unfortunately a few contributors could not be traced, and their reports have had to be incorporated as a product of their time, without the benefit of recent revision. Anne Dodd would particularly like to thank Rachel Tyson for her invaluable and dedicated assistance with the final preparation of Chapters 3-7 and the accompanying bibliographic references, Jill Hind for her assistance with checking information in the gazetteer, Angela Boyle for the preparation of Figure 2.1, Alistair Barclay, Tim Allen

and Paul Booth for their assistance with (respectively) the earlier prehistoric, Iron Age and Roman sections of Chapter 2, and John Blair, Julian Munby, Rachel Newman and Mark Robinson for reading Chapter 2 in draft and for making many valuable comments. Thanks are also due to Martin Carver and Humphrey Woods for reading earlier versions of the text (excluding Chapter 2), for their help and encouragement, and for their many valuable comments, which have greatly improved this volume. Unfortunately, constraints of time and budget have meant that it was not always possible to follow all their recommendations, and any remaining errors or shortcomings are entirely the responsibility of the present editor.

Paul Hughes, formerly Head of Graphics at OAU, managed the substantial drawing programme for this volume during the 1990s, and produced many of the illustrations. He was assisted by Lesley Collett, Erica Hemming, Karen Nichols and Sam Whitby. More recently Peter Lorimer and Rosalyn Smith have produced the artist's impressions of the early Thames Crossing, and Steven Cheshire and Sarah Lucas have provided invaluable support in revising many old figures and drawing new ones.

Thanks are also due to Alex Bayliss and Peter Marshall, of English Heritage Archaeometry Division, for their assistance with the recalibration, interpretation and presentation of the radiocarbon dates, and to Dan Miles and Jennifer Hillam for their work on the dendrochronological dating.

The French summary was translated by Valérie Diez, and the German summary by Gerlinde Krug.

This ambitious publication project was initiated by Ellen McAdam, formerly Head of Post-Excavation at OAU, and carried forward by her successor David Jennings, and by David Miles, formerly Director of the OAU; the authors would like to record their gratitude to all three for their indispensable behind-the-scenes contributions. The whole post-excavation and publication programme has been supported financially by English Heritage, to whom a considerable debt of gratitude is owed; the authors would like to express their particular thanks to Steve Trow, Inspector of Ancient Monuments during the early years of this project, and Helen Keeley, English Heritage Project Officer, whose encouragement has been fundamental to the project's ultimate achievement.

Thanks are due to the following for permission to reproduce copyright material: the Bodleian Library for Plate 1.2; Brasenose College, Oxford for Figure 3.2; Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society for Figures 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8 and 2.10 (all previously published in *Oxoniensia*) and Figures 4.22-4.24 and Plates 4.8-4.11 (from the Society's archives); Oxfordshire County Council Photographic Archive for Plates 1.1 and 4.7; Stewart Lyon for Plate 6.1; and David Sturdy for Plate 4.15. Plates 2.2, 2.6, 3.14, 4.4, 4.5, 4.12, 4.13 and 4.14 are from a series of views of

Oxford Before the University

Oxford commissioned by Oxford Archaeological Unit from Mike Hallam.

Location of the project archives

The archive for excavations carried out on the line of the City Wall at New College (1993) is deposited

with the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. The archives of the remaining excavations discussed in this monograph will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museums Service at Standlake, Oxfordshire. A copy of these archives will also be deposited with the National Monuments Record Centre, Swindon.