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| Institution: University of Oxford | | |
| Unit of Assessment: 15 - Archaeology | | |
| Title of case study: <i>Archeox</i> : Developing archaeological understanding and heritage capacity in the East Oxford community | | |
| Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2010- 31 Dec 2020 | | |
| Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit: | | |
| Name(s): | Role(s) (e.g. job title): | Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: |
| Dr David Griffiths Dr Jane Harrison Dr Olaf Bayer | Reader in Archaeology; Project Officer; Project Officer. | 1999 – present 2010-15 2012-15 |
| Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013 – August 2020 | | |
| Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N | | |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) <i>Archeox</i> is a co-produced university/community archaeology and history project that worked within the community of East Oxford, the part of the city encompassing some of Oxford's educationally least-advantaged areas. It has built new heritage capacity by involving and training over 600 active participants in steering and delivering all aspects of the project. <i>Archeox</i> has led to change in 3 main areas: 1) on participants, including increased knowledge and skills, educational aspirations, careers, changed perceptions, awareness and inter-connections within the community; 2) creating a legacy of several hundred trained volunteers that continue to support local heritage through involvement in other archaeology and heritage projects and 3) on local planning and management strategies.</p> | | |
| <p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) <i>Archeox</i> was initiated by David Griffiths, a landscape archaeologist with an established interest in urban peripheries [R1], who is a resident of East Oxford and sits on Oxfordshire City and County Archaeological Forum, as well as the Director of Studies for Archaeology at the University of Oxford's Department for Continuing Education. It arose because of interest in the untapped archaeological research potential of the landscape of suburban East Oxford, coupled with a need to improve university engagement in research, education and learning across Oxford's eastern districts, and providing a platform for delivering an urban archaeological research project within a community setting.</p> <p><i>Archeox</i> has developed an innovative form of "active citizen science" suburban landscape archaeology by enabling volunteer participation and facilitating the development of research areas through open community engagement. The project methodology and structure is outlined in R2. The research and impact were co-produced with around 650 individual community-based volunteers, who undertook research training within the project, in addition to engaging 7 local schools in the 11-18 year age category, plus homeless and mental health groups. A basis of the project has been to establish a learning and training programme, to enable trained volunteers to lead and train others, passing on the skills acquired over the course of the project. 11 volunteers including residents, councillors and representatives of local historical societies sat on a project steering group [R2, p.40], along with heritage professionals from the City Council and Oxford Archaeology, and were involved in all aspects of the project's strategy and direction. This inclusive management structure was key to the Heritage Lottery Fund's agreement to fund the project, but also to the success of the research.</p> <p>The landscape of East Oxford is a part of the Upper Thames Valley, which is recognized as a corridor for the settlement and acculturation of societies from early prehistory to the present. It has historically seen low levels of developer-funded archaeological research, yet extensive gardens, parks, allotments, playing-fields and meadows preserve important archaeological remains. The wide community reach of <i>Archeox</i>, with volunteers active in allotment associations, charities, churches, parks and community groups, provided an unprecedented level of access permissions to public and private areas, including private gardens, which would not otherwise have been open to archaeological activity. The project has generated a substantial research archive (a project monograph [R2], summary article [R3] and online database [R4]) consisting of:</p> | | |

- A significant new body of information covering long-term landscape development in the East Oxford study area (hitherto under-researched), through an extensive test-pitting programme, geophysics, palaeoenvironmental research, and targeted excavation. The new data include the distribution of prehistoric settlement, environmental history, and the development of settlements in the Roman to Medieval periods.
- Collections research – new investigations and interpretation of archived artefacts and documentary sources important to the prehistory and history of Oxford.
- Excavation of a rare medieval leper hospital of national importance, producing important structural, biological, stable isotopic, and palaeopathological data.
- Excavation of parts of the cloister and outbuildings of a rare medieval nunnery of national importance, giving new information about diet, economy and industry.
- Collections research and a geophysical survey led to the discovery of a new Neolithic site on the Thames gravels at Donnington Recreation Ground (excavated in late 2013).

In **R2**, Richard Bradley called the project results ‘a *revelation*’ and notes the unique success of the community-based, co-produced methodology: ‘*it is this combination of methods, along with the skills of the participants, that really breaks new ground*’.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R1. Griffiths, D. (2011) ‘Towns and their Hinterlands’, in Crick, J. & Van Houts, L. (eds) *A Social History of England* (Cambridge University Press), 152-78.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511976056> [output type: C]

R2. Griffiths, D. & Harrison, J. with Bayer, O, Hambrook, K. and Mellor, L. (2020) [+47 contributors] *The Archaeology of East Oxford, Archeox, the Story of a Community*. Thames Valley Landscape Monograph 43, Oxford. <https://doi.org/10.5284/1081257> [output type: A]

R3. Example of an interim article (short accessible summary): Griffiths, D, Harrison, J and Bayer O (2014) ‘Oxford Looks East’ *British Archaeology* 136, May/June 2014, 24-29. Available from: [Oxford Looks East - ORA - Oxford University Research Archive](#) [output type: D]

R4 Dataset, Oxford Research Archive - Contains all digital research data from the project: reports, databases, tables and images. <https://doi.org/10.5287/bodleian:Am275j5p6> [output type: S]

Funded by: Heritage Lottery Fund and Oxford University Fell Fund, total budget GBP505,000; Council for British Archaeology Community Archaeology Bursary (2012-13).

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Archeox has led to change in 3 primary areas for the Oxford city community:

- **on participants**, including increased knowledge and skills through citizen science training, changed perceptions and awareness, and benefits to educational & career development, health & wellbeing.
- **on local heritage initiatives** that continue to benefit from the training of participants
- **on heritage management practice** in Oxford and Oxfordshire.

The project has been recognised by the Lottery Fund as an exemplar in public engagement with research [E1].

Increasing public understanding, learning and participation in Oxford’s archaeology

During the funded phase from 2010-2015, there were over 650 active volunteer registrations across the project period, most of which continued to be active between Aug 2013 and Aug 2015; **2400** of the total 6,000+ volunteer-days which were recorded took place after Aug 2013. Volunteers were self-selected from the local Oxford community, came from a range of socio-economic backgrounds ranging from deprived to relatively advantaged, and ranged in age from older children of 10+ to pensioners of 70-80. **From Aug 2013 onwards** they were integrally involved in the following activities:

- **1** of the **3 main site excavations** (Donnington Recreation Ground).
- **25** test pit excavations.
- **3** National Archaeology festivals, estimated attendance of c.**600 visitors overall**.
- **4 open days/exhibitions** - Bartlemas Chapel (excavation site), indoor exhibition, August 2013; Donnington Bridge excavation open days (September 2013); Pitt-Rivers Museum temporary exhibition (October 2013).

- **an estimated 100 outreach and offsite activities** including lectures and workshops (33), processing sessions (20), field surveys, research group meetings, social events, and practical training days.

Training was a core component of the project in order to **increase the archaeological understanding** of the volunteers. The research team, led by Griffiths, alongside professional archaeologists from Oxford Archaeology, gave *Archeox* volunteers detailed training on key excavation skills such as learning how to record context sheets, create detailed drawings (plans and sections), measure and record small finds, identify and lift bones, prepare soil samples and process using flotation [R2]. Volunteers were also enabled to deliver training themselves as they gained skills, knowledge, and teaching ability to share these skills and knowledge with others. There were **19 training sessions for around 25 people each time, many led by volunteers** between Aug 2013-Aug 2015, plus public lectures and workshops for volunteers.

Participation in the project by the volunteers has been shown to have had a significant impact in terms of **increased knowledge and skills and perceptions of community**. A commissioned independent HLF-funded evaluation from 2015 [E2] produced a 140-page report which described the benefits of the project to volunteers and the local organisations involved in *Archeox*, including a survey of **101 Archeox** volunteers. In the survey, **97% of the respondents indicated their awareness of heritage and archaeology had increased** as a result of the project, and **89% agreed their enthusiasm for learning more had increased**. Comments from the survey also show examples of how volunteers were able to share their new knowledge with others, and have often had secondary benefits as a result:

- *“I have learnt many practical skills, which I have passed on to others in a new archaeology group, based in Cherwell area.”*
- *‘This is my first venture into the world of archaeology, which has been a very enjoyable experience. I left school at the age of 15, 55 years ago, with no formal qualifications. This project has motivated me to investigate the early history of my own community, and to write up my findings.’*
- *Even though I have lived in East Oxford for over 50 years, East Oxford was a complete blank in my mind before the Archeox Project. My concept of Oxford was entirely dominated by the University and the elite power structures associated with it. It has been a revelation to learn about the social and economic aspects of ‘the other Oxford’.*

The project was also successful in **reaching and connecting a wide range of participants** within East Oxford across the community: over 85% of E2 respondents replied that they met people from a range of ages and backgrounds during the project, and 66% felt the project reflected the social and **economic diversity of East Oxford**. Respondents also reported that their **perception of the community** was improved as a result of the project: *‘This was my first hands-on experience of archaeology... It helped me feel more a part of the community, and of the continuum of history in East Oxford’* [E2, appendix].

Benefits to personal development, health and wellbeing

Archeox also played a significant role in **raising the educational aspirations of some volunteers**, and supporting **career development**. The project supported 9 senior school / FE college (16-18 y/o) student work placements continuing from Aug 2013- Aug 2015, and provided opportunities for **27 volunteers pursuing qualifications** to gain practical experience through *Archeox*. There are also at least 4 instances of *Archeox* experience resulting in **jobs or career development for volunteers**. According to one survey respondent: *“The main difference [made by the project] was actually for my son who undertook work experience with Archeox and ended up enjoying it so much he contributed to two further projects. It cemented his interest in mediaeval history and archaeology which he went on to study at university.”* [E2, p.35]. Another said it had **directly led to employment** for them, after a long period of being out of work: *‘It has given me a lot more confidence. I have been able to do more than I expected and meeting people enabled me to get a job as I had been unemployed for some time’*. [E2, p. 38]. Another obtained a job in professional archaeology on the basis of their experience with the project [E2, p.36].

Archeox volunteers were also involved in outreach activities with specific community groups, aiming to reach groups who might not normally have access to archaeology. They worked with **5 local charities and youth groups**, holding 30 sessions on test-pitting (some of which took

place on charity-owned land), recording and interpreting finds, including local **mental health** charity Restore, Julian Housing for homeless individuals, and The Clockhouse, a group in Blackbird Leys for over-60s. The volunteers were supported to ensure that they could adapt to the needs of these groups. For example, many of the participants from the Clockhouse group were less physically able to participate in site excavations, so the project instead brought the excavation to them by holding finds washing sessions and teaching the members how to process the finds. One of the service-users of a mental health charity who had suffered agoraphobia and social anxiety commented on how *Archeox* provided an opportunity for her to gain volunteering experience in a safe and encouraging environment: **[E2, p45]**. *Archeox* also had a significant **benefit to the mental health and wellbeing** of some of the volunteers, with one reflecting: *“I had a break in my career due to anxiety and depression...I was finding it difficult to relate to people at the time, because of my anxiety. [Archeox] helped me a lot, got me out of the house and got me doing something physical and practical and involving. And on the social side, [I was] meeting people who I wouldn’t have met any other way.”* **[R2, p.51]**.

Empowering the community – building capacity for impact on heritage

By creating a network of skilled volunteers, *Archeox* has **increased the capacity for heritage understanding and skills** in the Oxfordshire area. *Archeox*-trained volunteers continue to work together and with the University of Oxford on legacy projects; examples include but are not limited to the following:

- **Westgate Redevelopment Outreach Project.** As part of a GBP500,000,000 redevelopment project in Oxford in 2015-16, 30 *Archeox* volunteers (forming 90% of the Westgate project’s community participants) were a crucial part of the excavation’s outreach programme, led by (commercial practice) Oxford Archaeology **[E3]**. Volunteers staffed pop-up museums and walking trails, applying the skills and knowledge they had gained through *Archeox*. According to a leading Oxford City Archaeologist *“Archeox volunteers were central to the success of the [...] pop-up museums in the Westgate and Town Hall as part of the Westgate redevelopment archaeological outreach project which significantly contributed towards the level of public engagement and contributed towards the award of 2016 BAA Best Archaeological Project to Oxford Archaeology and the Westgate Alliance.”* The Community Officer for Oxford Archaeology echoes this: *“The Pop Up in total attracted over 5,500 visitors in total and [...] Archeox volunteers had around 1,500 visitors. The volunteers were vital to its success”* **[E4]**
- **Long Wittenham and the Sylva Trust.** Trained *Archeox* volunteers participated in 2 excavations in Long Wittenham, Oxfordshire, including a rare Anglo-Saxon hall (2015-16). **Archeox volunteers were named in the bid that helped the Sylva Trust to secure 98,300in funding from HLF** in 2019 for the ‘House of Wessex’ Project which has reconstructed the hall using traditional craft techniques. The CEO of the Sylva Trust writes: *“Because of the experience of its volunteers in excavating and researching medieval sites in Oxfordshire, and the impetus and training continuing from Archeox, it proved possible to have a really effective and informative excavation of the Anglo-Saxon Hall.”* **[E5]**
- **The Appleton Area Archaeology Research Project (AAARP)** Formed in 2015 by *Archeox* volunteers with support of Dr Jane Harrison, the project applies the methodologies developed through *Archeox*: training members of the community in order to research local heritage that would otherwise have remained undocumented. The group now has a contact list of over 100 people, they have published an article in a local journal and have completed: 46 test pits, 2 week-long excavations, archive research, talks, and 9 surveys totalling over 1200 volunteer days. Trustees attribute their success to *Archeox*: *“Without Archeox [...] AAARP could not and would not exist.”* **[E6]**
- **The Littlemore History Society** First formed in 1967, and reformed by *Archeox* volunteers in 2011, the society has grown to 30 paid members with a mailing list reaching 100+ locals in 2019. The *Archeox* team have continued to support LLHS from 2013 to present through skills sharing and training events. The LLHS group has contributed significantly to understanding of local heritage: in 2018 LLHS completed 4 years of reports to the *Journal South Midlands Archaeology* (based on 3 test pit sites in the village) and are working with Oxfordshire Building Record (OBR) to assess the standing buildings **[E7]**.
- **The Cherwell Archaeology Group in Kidlington.** Formed in 2014, the group comprises 22 volunteers. They have initiated a project to map and report the history of the workers along the

Oxford Canal. Applying the skills learned through the *Archeox* project – such as test pitting, stonework recording, and historical research – the project has raised awareness of local heritage and created a new focus and appreciation for a derelict area. The group received CBA membership in 2019 [E8].

Influence on Oxford City heritage records, planning & engagement

An Archaeologist at Oxford City Council stated: “*Archeox: The Archaeology of East Oxford Project added valuable new research data to the city, and it has changed the way in which we view the potential of archaeology in the community, as reflected in the Oxford Archaeological Action Plan and subsequent excavation projects*” [E9a]. *Archeox* has amassed a substantial amount of new data for Historic Environment Records (HERs) for Oxford. The same archaeologist emphasises that this dataset has increased awareness and knowledge of local heritage and has also directly impacted the process for decision-making on planning permissions, particularly at Bartlemas Chapel and Littlemore Priory, where recognition of their broader landscape context and social value as a result of *Archeox*’s work has been applied to ongoing building works [E9b]. Furthermore, the success of the *Archeox* approach has influenced the creation of **a strong community-based theme in the current revisions of Oxford City Council’s Heritage and Archaeological Action Plans**. One of the stated objectives of Oxford’s Archaeological Action Plan 2013-18 is to ‘*Encourage community participation, enjoyment and appreciation of Oxford’s Heritage*’, and the Council Board Member for City Development mentioned *Archeox* as the key causative component and exemplar in this aspect of the Historic Environment in Oxford in his Foreword to the Action Plan: “*Interest and appreciation of the rich historic environment to be found across the modern city is developing rapidly. This [...] has been demonstrated by the large numbers of people attracted to participate in the East Oxford Community Archaeology Project*” [E10]. The project has also led to changes among Oxfordshire County Council staff in how they approach public engagement in local archaeology: one staff member, who went on to work for the County HER, commented, “*what I like is how it has changed my attitude of how I work in each role... I am trying to do more in outreach and engagement in county council... Now I know there is so much enthusiasm and people just don’t know how to access [the data]... I’m always trying to think now how could we reach people.*” [E2, p60].

The exemplary nature of the project is summarised by the MP for Oxford East from 1987 to 2017: “*It was wonderful to see the scholarship of Oxford University allied so closely with the enthusiasm of local people of all ages keen to learn about what community archaeology could reveal about the past, and the lives of those who at different times also shared this space. This really was an initiative which brought town and gown together... It was great that the diversity of East Oxford was reflected in those who took part in the work. The success of the project has valuable lessons not only for the enormous potential for similar projects here and elsewhere, but more generally in how Continuing Education really can reach and engage the community*” [R2, p. xvii].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- E1.** Email from Website and Digital Editor, The National Lottery Heritage Fund confirming HLF had used *Archeox* as an exemplar of evaluation excellence in guidance, March 2019.
- E2.** PDF: *Archeox* Impact Evaluation Report: Funded by HLF, by Isis Enterprise, 2015.
- E3.** Journal Article by (commercial unit) Oxford Archaeology citing the role of *Archeox* volunteers in the Westgate outreach programme: *Advances in Archaeological Practice* 6 (3), 2018, pp. 248–258. Society for American Archaeology DOI:10.1017/aap.2018.17
- E4.** Email testimonial: Community Officer, Oxford Archaeology, Feb 2019. (Corroborator 1)
- E5.** Letter testimonial: CEO, Sylva Trust/House of Wessex, March 2019.
- E6.** Impact testimonial: Trustees, Appleton Project (AAARP), March 2019.(Corroborator 2)
- E7.** E-mail testimonial: Littlemore Historical Society, Feb 2019.
- E8.** E-mail testimonial: Cherwell Archaeology Group, Feb 2019.
- E9.** Email testimonials: Oxford City Council Archaeologist, a)Oct 2020 & b)Feb 2018.
- E10.** Oxford City Council’s Archaeological Action Plan 2013-18, Part 1 & 2.