

## Impact case study (REF3b)

<p><b>Institution:</b> University of Oxford</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 17A - Geography, Environmental Studies and Archaeology: Archaeology</p>
<p><b>Title of case study:</b> Inspiring and Educating Communities through Archaeological Fieldwork in South Oxfordshire</p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Through a series of excavations, members of the School of Archaeology have enabled large numbers of the general public to become directly involved in investigating the histories of their localities, overturning the perception that archaeological research is inaccessible. This case study demonstrates a sustained, long-term commitment to working closely with, and involving local communities in a series of projects:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Hillforts of the Ridgeway (1995 -2000)</li> <li>ii. Iron Age and Roman Marcham (2000-2011)</li> <li>iii. Discovering Dorchester-on-Thames (2003 – present)</li> <li>iv. The Archaeology of East Oxford (Archeox) (2009 – present)</li> </ol> <p>Through these, our research has had an impact on an extensive network of members of the public whose direct involvement with our fieldwork has altered and enhanced their perception and understanding of the history and landscape of their region.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p><u>Researchers involved in the research:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof Chris Gosden, co-Director, Marcham and Dorchester Projects, 2000- present</li> <li>• Prof Helena Hamerow, co-Director, Dorchester Project, 2003- present</li> <li>• Prof. Gary Lock, co-Director, Marcham Project, 2000-2011</li> <li>• Dr. Janet Delaine, Lecturer in Roman Archaeology, organizes and supervises community finds-processing sessions at Dorchester, 2003-present</li> <li>• Dr. David Griffiths, Reader, Director, ArchEOx project, 2009-present.</li> </ul> <p>The School of Archaeology has a long-established track record of research in the Upper Thames Valley with particular emphasis on ancient landscapes and periods of transition, notably from the Iron Age to Roman, and Roman to Anglo-Saxon periods. The goal of understanding human actions within their landscape contexts, broadly between the Iron Age and the Anglo-Saxon period, was set in 1995 by the leaders of the <u>Hillforts &amp; Ridgeway project</u> (Gosden and Lock). This focused on the history of the Iron Age and Romano-British landscapes on the Berkshire Downs through the excavation of three hillforts: White Horse Hill, Segsbury and Alfred's Castle [R1, R4].</p> <p>The Romano-British amphitheatre, temple and Iron Age remains at <u>Marcham</u> then saw a major, 11-year campaign of excavation, starting in 2000, as a result of an approach from the landowners to Gosden and Lock, leading them to explore the role of this major religious site within its local landscape over nearly two millennia [R2].</p> <p>This interest in transitional landscapes led Gosden, Hamerow and Delaine in 2003 to begin a project at <u>Dorchester-on-Thames</u> conducted in partnership with the local community, a joint endeavour funded by an HLF grant. The aim of the research is to understand the rich archaeological landscape of this stretch of the Thames that, uniquely, in British archaeology, contains a major Neolithic ritual complex as well as an iron age 'oppidum' succeeded by a Roman small town. This in turn was replaced by an Anglo-Saxon town that became a seat of West Saxon authority [R3].</p> <p>The <u>Archaeology of East Oxford Project</u> (Archeox) arose from an initiative by people living in East Oxford, amongst them a member of the School (Griffiths), to look at the long-term history of a generally neglected part of Oxford from earlier prehistory through to the present, with a particular</p>

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focus on a medieval priory and leper hospital [HLF grant (2013-14)].

Key research outcomes arising from these four projects include:

- i. a new sense of the importance and scale of the Neolithic and Bronze Age remains in Oxfordshire;
- ii. the recognition that habitation of various parts of the landscape took different forms, i.e. the Berkshire Downs had a more mobile population and episodic occupation compared with the Vale of the White Horse and the Thames Valley [R1, R4];
- iii. an appreciation of the varying degrees to which Roman material culture and practices were adopted by different communities, ranging from town dwellers to farmers [R1, R2, R4];
- iv. empirical backing for the idea that there was greater continuity from the Roman into the post-Roman world than is generally recognized [R3];
- v. increased understanding of the ebbs and flows of urbanization that led Oxford to emerge in the early medieval period as the region's major centre;
- vi. recognition of an industrial landscape ranging from Roman pottery industries to the Morris car works, bringing into focus the role of (Roman) slave and working class communities not normally featured in histories of Oxfordshire.

### 3. References to the research

#### Publications:

**R1]** Gosden, C. and G. Lock 2013. Alfred's Castle: An Iron Age Hillfort and Roman Villa on the Berkshire Downs. Oxford School of Archaeology Monograph.

**R2]** Kamash Z., Gosden C. and Lock, G. 2010. Continuity and Religious Practices in Roman Britain: The Case of the Rural Religious Complex at Marcham/Frillford, Oxfordshire. *Britannia* 41: 95-125.

**R3]** Booth, P., C. Gosden, H. Hamerow 2010. 'Dark earths in the Dorchester allotments', *Medieval Archaeology* 54: 414-6.

**R4]** Gosden, C and G. Lock 2007. Space, place and aesthetics on the Berkshire Downs, in C. Haselgrove, A. Gwilt and R. Pope (eds) *The early Iron Age in Britain and Europe: 279-292*: Oxford: Oxbow Books.

#### Project Websites:

a. The Vale and Ridgeway Project : <http://www.arch.ox.ac.uk/VRP1.html>. Project website, with video of 2011 excavations and information on how volunteers can get involved.

b. Archaeox (The East Oxford Archaeology and History Project). <https://www.archeox.net/home>. Project website with list of upcoming events and details of how to become involved in the project.

c. The Dorchester Project - <http://www.arch.ox.ac.uk/DOT1.html>. Project website with information for volunteers; Blog with daily reports on the excavation while it is in progress:

<http://www.discoveringdorchester.blogspot.co.uk/> (twitterfeed: <https://twitter.com/DorchesterDig>).

**Grants:** This research has been supported by two major HLF SE region grants -- £330,700 (2013-2014) for East Oxford Project, and £96,000 (2012-2015) for the Marcham Community post-excavation 'Trendles' project – as well as a number of small grants from local and learned societies, totalling approximately £20k.

### 4. Details of the impact

The School of Archaeology has moved beyond merely talking to the public about its work ('dissemination') to involving the public in data gathering and analysis ('citizen science') and, further, to developing collaborations in which research goals, methods of data gathering, analysis and publication are established in discussion with communities ('knowledge exchange'). In addition, our research has enhanced public understanding of the past through broadcast and web-

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based media and through public events connected to the research.

Fieldwork, organized around a series of excavations offering training and mentoring to volunteers, has been key to this impact. Gosden and Lock set up the Hillforts of the Ridgeway project in 1995 as a series of research and training excavations for Oxford undergraduates and students in Continuing Education. A group of volunteers was key to organizing the fieldwork, processing finds and analysing excavation records, and has now been working together for 20 years. Inspired by their involvement, some members have gone on to assume leadership roles within our projects, conduct their own research, or even undertake a career change and become professional archaeologists (see reference to Levick below).

The Marcham project grew out of Hillforts of the Ridgeway at the instigation of the landowners, whose interest in Gosden and Lock's research, encountered via the Department of Continuing Education, led them to support the excavation of Iron Age and Roman remains on their land by setting up a family trust [C1]. This in turn led, in 2012, to a pioneering, HLF-funded, community archaeology project to analyse the finds and records from Marcham under the supervision of members of the School (the 'Trendles' Project).

Griffiths was involved in supervising the excavations at Marcham. His experience of leading the 'Community Trench', staffed entirely by over 100 members of the public between 2008 and 2011, supported by a Local Heritage Initiative grant [C2], led him to set up Archeox in 2010. Archeox is pioneering in the extent to which it is community-led; the local MP for East Oxford has written: 'I have been particularly impressed by the work of the Oxford archaeological community project...which I hope can be a model for continuing work of this kind in the future.' [C3] It involves groups who have traditionally had few links with the University in a part of the city with below-average social, educational and economic indicators. Archeox currently has 580 registered volunteers who have contributed over 162,000 hours to the project [C4].

The Dorchester excavations are run in collaboration with Oxford Archaeology (OA), a professional archaeological practice, and the Friends of Dorchester Abbey, who obtained an HLF grant to support community involvement in our work and coordinated publication of a popular booklet on the dig co-authored by members of the School and senior members of OA [C5]. Former Marcham volunteers took part in the Dorchester project, and the Dorchester community initiated its own test-pitting programme in 2012 as a result of this work [C6]. Volunteers have their own finds processing days supervised by Delaine, who lives locally. The project has a blog providing a daily excavation 'diary', as well as a Twitter-feed and Facebook page. The website receives c 700 hits p.a., over 50% of which come from 11 countries outside the UK; while 46% of readers of the blog come from 8 countries outside the UK.

Our fieldwork has provided a springboard for some volunteers to become researchers in their own right. Two doctoral students supervised by Gosden and Lock began as Marcham volunteers and have since carried out large-scale landscape surveys in the region. One, Paula Levick, has made a career change into archaeology, and, since 2012, has helped to run the 'Trendles' Project. Twelve volunteers have taken archaeology degrees as a result of working with us.

Educational work has been integral to these projects and has included visits from hundreds of children from some 20 schools, Work Experience students, and 'loan boxes' of archaeological finds that teachers can borrow [C7, C8]. The Headteacher of one local primary school wrote that 'the annual excavation...at Marcham has been an integral part of our Local Studies and Roman Britain work in school for years...Many of our children take their families on open days and at least one of our ex-pupils now works on the site and has gained a degree in archaeology'. Another has established a school test pit, having been 'inspired by how much the project influences the local community' at Dorchester [C8]. We estimate that during 11 years at Marcham over 8000 people attended Open Days, dozens of whom subsequently took part in the excavations. Gosden, Griffiths, Hamerow and Lock have given over 100 lectures to local groups, reaching thousands in the process. The projects have received considerable media coverage, ranging from Channel 4's 'Time Team' and BBC's 'Digging for Britain' (2012) to local radio, television and newspapers.

The School of Archaeology's fieldwork has thus provided thousands of members of the public across South Oxfordshire with first-hand archaeological experience and enhanced their understanding of their local heritage [C9, C10]. Locals who visited Marcham often commented that they 'had no idea there was something here' and one volunteer observed: 'I didn't know that people like us could get involved in archaeology'. Lives have been enriched in this way. For example, one long-term participant in the Marcham project, a former officer in the American air force, asked to be buried in his excavation clothes, reflecting the positive role that archaeology had come to play in his life.

This case study stresses the human dimension of the research's 'impact': a close-knit group of amateurs and professionals has grown out of our research, which has inspired individuals, enhanced a sense of community and added to the public understanding of the region's past.

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

**C1]** Landowner who supported the Marcham project. Contact details available

**C2]** Heritage Lottery Fund Press release: <http://www.hlf.org.uk/news/Pages/EastOxford.aspx>

**C3]** E-mail from the current East Oxford MP re Archeox

**C4]** To corroborate the large number of volunteer hours devoted to the Archeox project, time sheets provided to the HLF for 2013 can be provided.

**C5]** Booth, P. C. Gosden, H. Hamerow, J. Metcalfe *et al.* 2012. 'The Discovering Dorchester-On-Thames Project. A report on the excavations, 2007-2011.

**C6]** Dorchester resident who had a test pit in her garden. Contact details available.

**C7]** Visitors' book from the Marcham excavations and scans of letters from schoolchildren commenting on how their experience of visiting the site affected them.

**C8]** Letter from teacher at Guildford Grove Primary School, explaining how digging at Dorchester inspired him to incorporate what he learned into the History curriculum at his school, located in a socially deprived area, where students now have a 'school test pit'.

**C9]** Letter from Chairman of Dorchester Abbey Museum & member of the Parochial Church Council on the impact of the Dorchester project on the Museum and village (held on file).

**C10]** Results of postcard survey for excavation visitors (Dorchester) indicating how their visit affected their understanding of the past (held on file)