

OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER

INCLUDING OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

No.4 - April 1978

Anyone wishing to send contributions to the Newsletter should send to 46 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford OX1 2EP (Tel: Oxford 43888) before the last Tuesday of each month.

ABINGDON, Ashville Trading Estate

Soil stripping for a new warehouse on the heavier clay soil has left an informative section through a prominent E-W ridge in the old orchard 100m from the Ashville IA settlement. The ridge may be a ploughing headland, part of ridge and furrow not known to have been surveyed and therefore probably irretrievably destroyed. Three ditches, a low bank and a layer of stones are cross sectioned underneath the field ridge. The layer of stones is about 2 metres across and with one ditch seem to extend 50m across the field and under the 'ridge'. One rim sherd indicates that two small ditches and part of the low bank one are IA in date. The contents of the long ditch later added to the bank but is undated and also uncertainly related to the stone 'trackway'. The latter lies above the IA ditches and a few sherds suggest it is Romano-British. It points toward Marcham and to a little south of the 1974-6 Ashville excavation. The clay over burden is at least partly medieval or later. Overall the section indicates that land use had a similar axis from IA to medieval times. The Abingdon Archaeological and Historical Society are investigating this site further.

BERINSFIELD, Mount Farm

Progress has been greatly slowed up for the latter part of the month by the transfer of most of the JCP labour to the Stanton Harcourt cemetery site. Recent work has been concentrated on finishing the complicated southern area of the site where there is a mass of intersecting ditches, waterholes etc. A further waterlogged deposit this time a second century AD waterhole has been partly excavated. Peter Fisher of Reading University has taken block soil samples for soil structure analysis which should provide very useful information about the processes by which the soils in different deposits have accumulated.

STANTON HARCOURT

A Roman cemetery and trackway were excavated using JCP labour under the direction of Neil McGavin, an OUCAS in-service trainee, in March and April 1978 in the ARC quarry, next to the Cricket Pitch at Stanton Harcourt - under the wary eye of local cricket enthusiasts.

The ditched trackway ran north-south and the burials, also oriented north-south, were clustered at its east side. The thirty-four graves excavated, probably represent the bulk of the cemetery, although some had been lost to the bulldozer, and others ran under the limits of the stripped area. A woman was buried with a baby at her side, and three skeletons had had their heads cut off and placed near their feet. Groups of coins were found in three graves, and the Ashmolean has provisionally identified one of these groups as late Roman. In some graves iron nails and silhouettes of rotted wood indicated the presence of coffins.

The Oxford Star, dubbing it a "Secret Site" sent staff out in a fleet of chartered taxis, but luckily public interest did not lead to vandalism of the site. Work proceeded with the help of Phil Page and a crew mostly pirated from George Lambrick's excavation at Mount Farm, Berinsfield. The work done by local volunteers was also very much appreciated.

Other News

Maureen Mellor attended the Medieval Pottery Research Group AGM in Durham. It was announced that the "Guidelines" for the publication of medieval pottery will be delayed for a further six months.

Oxford University Department for External Studies Archaeological In-service Training Scheme

Applications are invited from candidates who wish to enter the above scheme for 1978/79. The closing date for applications to OUDES, Rewley House, 3-5 Wellington Square, Oxford is 31st May, 1978. For further details please telephone Oxford 52901.

Calendar April/May 1978

15th to 16th April

Roman Provincial Art - A weekend School
details from OUDES, Tel: Oxford 52901

19th April

Abingdon Area Archaeological and
Historical Society present Dr J Ray
who will be lecturing on 'Egypt'
details from Judy Thomas Tel:
Abingdon 20238.

5th to 7th May

'Life and Death in the Medieval Town'
Details attached.