

OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER

INCLUDING OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

No.6 - June 1978

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

ABINGDON, Barton Court Farm

Work on the bones continues. A high proportion of mature sheep are represented in the Romano-British sample of mandibles. No simple economic model explains the range of results from British sites at different periods but it seems likely that the villa either raised sheep mainly for wool and/or marketed a considerable proportion of younger animals elsewhere. Iron Age and Saxon settlements at the site seem to have consumed a greater proportion of the sheep that they reared. This simplistic explanation however, ignores such considerations as pasture availability and flock size from period to period.

BERINSFIELD, Mount Farm

The excavation has now been completed on the site. George Lambrick has gone on holiday to recover prior to the start of the main post-excavation work. However, Martin Jones has begun the processing of the carbonized seed remains.

BICESTER, Kings End Farm

R A Chambers reports that the local volunteers who are keeping a watching brief on this site have recorded more Roman material this month.

CHALGROVE

Excavation of the Harding's Field Moated site has begun again. This year it is hoped to fully excavate the remainder of the site and to this end the unit has made Chalgrove their major summer excavation. At present excavation is only taking place on weekdays from 8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. and any volunteers who would like to help at these times will be most welcome. We would prefer that volunteers did not come for less than half a day. They should contact Philip Page on Abingdon 27856 before coming on site.

FARINGDON BY-PASS

A watch on soil stripping operations is being maintained by a group of local people. So far nothing of archaeological interest has emerged from the 3 mile long by-pass.

OXFORD, New Social Services Library, George Street (City Wall)

The University Archaeological Society under Tony Dixon have found a huge 'disturbance over 11ft deep under the line of the city wall 30m west of Bastion 1. It has yielded mainly late 12th-early 13th century pottery, suggesting that it was open until just prior to the construction of the stone defences of the town as we know them.

The present hand-dug trench is too small to establish whether it was a ditch or quarry, but in this position it must have been a de facto north-west limit to the defended town at this time. Ten years of excavation have failed to show a convincing western defensive limit to the Saxon burh. If it had a rectilinear plan, then it is possible that the western ditch came down the line of the castle moat, and the new discovery could therefore be the only surviving relic of it. It is hoped that landscaping of the area may make it possible to confirm this.

STANFORD-IN-THE-VALE

Building renovation work at the Rectory, Stanford-in-the-Vale has revealed several fragments of medieval pottery.

STANTON HARCOURT

An exhibition of the Stanton Harcourt cemetery was organised at very short notice by Neil McGavin (an in-service trainee) as part of the displays for ARC for the presentation of a SAGA award to ARC for the Lynch Hill Fishery.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Aylesbury, St Mary's Church

Brian Durham has continued salvage recording in the church during internal alterations. There is now evidence of an aisle-less nave predating the existing mid-thirteenth century plan, and earlier than that a slightly narrower nave with pitched-stone footings. The picture is however, complicated by cross-walls which may relate to a western tower. It is hoped that one of the builder's trenches can be dug 'archaeologically' and may perhaps yield some dating evidence for these early structures.

Parish Survey Information

The Parish Survey meeting and half-day school on the Recognition of Post-Medieval Pottery proved very successful.

Two more local groups have begun graveyard surveys, the newly formed Watlington group are to undertake a survey of memorials in their parish church and the Lewknor Hundred Historical Society are to undertake a survey of the churchyard at South Weston.

OTHER NEWS

Pub-Licity

Finally- some might say at long last - the book of Abingdon's public houses is finished, (Inns and Alehouses of Abingdon 1550-1978). Hopefully it will be in the shops by the beginning of June at the giveaway price of £1.95. As many will know this has been a private project and it is being financed and published as such. Anyone who has worked on a self-publishing enterprise will be aware that one of the major problems is that of finance, consequently although we should like to offer special terms to Unit personnel and local societies it is, unfortunately, an economic impossibility.

As readers will understand it is a difficult task for two such modest and unassuming members of the Abingdon Society to praise their own work; nevertheless we shall make the attempt. It is true to say that this is the best book available on the subject, more especially since at present it appears to be the only one. It is also true to say that during the course of five years research we have found some 150 different pub names and quite untrue to say that we have sampled all their wares. The book has been written in a style reminiscent of W. Shakespeare, C. Dickens, W. McGonagall, and S. Milligan in the hope that it will appeal to all tastes. (Mild and Bitter).

On a more serious note the book attempts to study, in as light-hearted and informative way as possible, a subject of vast importance to the local historian. Inns, Taverns and Alehouses were by their very nature well-documented buildings and this presents the researcher with at least two major lines of enquiry. Firstly, since the pub was the focal point of much of the social and political life of the town, it provides a new look at events and feelings away from the atmosphere of the Council table. Secondly the House becomes a physical landmark possibly through several centuries and in this way it can be used as a framework around which other properties can be placed.

The story of the pub is one of infinite variety, from large to small, from river pubs to Charity pubs, from cockfighting to coaching.

We hope you buy it - we hope you enjoy it.

Jacqueline Smith

John Carter

Ashville Report

The Council for British Archaeology and the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit are pleased to announce the publication of CBA Research Report 28/Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit Report 1:

The Excavation of an Iron Age Settlement, Bronze Age Ring-ditches and Roman features at Ashville Trading Estate, Abingdon, (Oxfordshire) 1974-76 by Michael Parrington ISBN 0 900312 50 5 152pp

As Professor Barry Cunliffe says in his Preface to the Report: 'The publication of this report on the rescue excavation carried out at Ashville in 1974-76 marks the beginning of a new era in the archaeology of the Oxford region....Although the site cannot claim to have exercised the beauty or allure of many rural excavations... the picture to emerge from this highly skilful piece of excavation, analysis, and synthesis is of unusual fascination both for students of later pre-history and for those interested in archaeological methodology.'

The Unit is able to offer a special price of £5.20 per copy, if collected from Hythe Bridge Street and £5.70 if sent (The CBA's price is £8.00 per copy; £6.00 to Basic and Consolidated subscribers) For order form see overleaf...

CALENDAR JUNE/JULY 1978

12th June 1978

The OUAS's President will give a talk on "Neolithic Flint Mines" at 8.15 p.m. at the Ashmolean Museum.

8th July 1978

Oxford Architectural and Historical Society will visit Chalgrove, the site being excavated by the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit during the summer. The cost of the trip is £1.75, inclusive of tea. The coach will leave the Ashmolean Museum at 2.00 p.m. For further details contact Mary Vickers Tel: Oxford 63282

ORDER FORM FOR ASHVILLE REPORT by Michael Parrington

To: Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit, 46 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford.

Please send me copy/copies of the Ashville Trading Estate Report at £5.70 per copy.

I enclose £.....

Name:

Address:

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