



OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER INCLUDING
OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

No. 1 - January 1979

Anyone wishing to send contributions to the Newsletter should send details to the above address before the last Tuesday of each month.

Subscriptions for the 1979 issues of the Newsletter are now due and if these have not already been paid we should be grateful to receive your cheque for £1.00 in due course.

ABINGDON

The archaeological material revealed following the demolition of adjoining properties in East and West St Helen's Streets is now being written up jointly with Roger Thomas who is tackling the Romano-British material.

ABINGDON, Box Hill

In November 1978 some human bones and Roman pottery were reported as having been unearthed in a trench in the garden of 47 Bowyer Road, a bungalow in the Box Hill region of Abingdon. These were investigated by Duncan Wilson and Chris Storey, and the original report, that the graves contained Roman pottery, was confirmed. One grave was found to contain at least 3 skeletons of which one was a young adult male and one a juvenile male still with milk teeth. To the south of this grave, the leg bones of four other skeletons had been disturbed. The skeletons were probably Roman, although the fact that their graves cut Roman occupation levels may lead to the conclusion that the Roman greyware they contained was residual. One skeleton was buried with a limestone slab over the chest, a fact which has been noted on other burials from the area (although these were probably medieval). All the skeletons were aligned on a north - south axis, the northernmost grave containing skeletons laid head to foot.

The Roman features cut by the graves comprised a gully and a post-hole. The former contained a late 4th century mortarian fragment (C J Young: The Oxfordshire Roman potteries Type M23), a colour coat base with illiterate maker's stamp, and a fragment of a 3rd century (?) denarius. The latter was packed with a tapered antler pick head, or handle for some such tool, with a square hole cut through it at its widest end, and grey - and colour coated - wares. It was hardly surprising considering the small area of the trench that neither of these features could be interpreted but as evidence for an undefined structure, indicating Roman occupation in an area of Abingdon where it previously could only have been inferred.

CAVERSHAM

Some markings in the gravel at Folly's gravel pit recorded on an aerial photograph by G Thomas of SOAG last year have been inspected

on the ground by R A Chambers who reports that one is that of an old stream channel whilst the other appears to be modern. A watch will be kept on this site as gravel extraction progresses.

CHINNOR

Mr Major of the Oakley Stores, Oakley has discovered stratified medieval levels beneath his garage floor whilst digging a vehicle inspection pit. The earliest pottery is 12th or 13th century and large portions of a baggy pitcher and an "M40 ware" cooking pot are present. There is also a range of later pottery from above this 12-13th century level. The finds came from the oldest part of Oakley, a group of 16th and 17th century houses near the 19th century Wheatsheaf public house. Although Oakley has been much expanded during the 20th century the settlement originated as a hamlet on the southern edge of Chinnor parish and is first mentioned in 1215.

LITTLE FARINGDON (Purton to Brize Norton Oil Pipe Line)

R A Chambers continues to write up the excavation of both the scheduled and the other crop mark sites revealed by the construction of this pipe line.

OXFORD, 65 St Aldates

The first sod was turned at about noon on 18th December, after seven years negotiation. However, the problems have not stopped yet. The trench was sited at the edge of the forecourt to cause minimal damage to the rest of the site, and according to the available evidence it should have gone across the middle of a tenement. However there is a stone wall right down the middle of the trench with at least two rebuilds and no less than four successive stone cross walls at the east end, all this before we have got below the fifteenth century. The answer must be that these are walls of the 'Wheatsheaf' with a yard to the south and a wing to the north. It looks as if the frontage was well out under the modern road and that the various components of the property were rebuilt indiscriminately.

It is hoped that within the next few days we can get rid of the remains of the inn structure, and get onto some honest domestic medieval levels. If the Saxon causeway exists here, it ought to be only two to three feet further down.

X40 (Oxford to Birmingham New Road)

All is quiet this month along the line of the preferred route. However the last of the four trial pit contracts is expected to begin in February and this will be watched for archaeological material.

CALENDAR

Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society

Thurs 8 March: 'Excavations in Oxfordshire, 1978', by Mr Tom Hassall FSA, Director, Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit.

Lectures in the Ashmolean Museum at 8.15 p.m.

Didcot & District Archaeological and Historical Society

7 Feb: The Roman Temple of Mercury at Uley, Gloc., Dr Ann Ellison

7 March: Members' Evening

Meetings held in All Saints' Parish Hall, Foxhall Road, Didcot at 8 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month.

Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society

21 February: Mr T Allen - Excavation of an Iron Age Settlement at Hardwick, Oxon.

Meetings held in the lecture theatre of the John Mason School, Wootton Road, Abingdon at 7.30 p.m.

Oxford University Department for External Studies

22 - 26 January: Planning for Small Industries in Rural Areas - In association with Oxford Polytechnic

3 - 4 February: Urban Archaeology - Weekend School

10 February: Local History Day School - Documents I - to be held at Easthampstead Park, Wokingham

24 February: Anglo-Saxon Pottery Day School - to be held at Bradwell Abbey Field Centre

5 - 9 March: Planning and Conservation (Area Management) - Part I Rural; Part II Urban - in association with Oxford Polytechnic

16 - 18 March: The Anglo-Saxon Landscape - in association with Extra-Mural Department, Manchester

Further details of all these courses are available from the Course Secretary, Oxford University Department for External Studies, Rewley House, 3-7 Wellington Square, Oxford, OX1 2JA.