



OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER INCLUDING
OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS
No 6 June 1979

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

OXFORDSHIRE

Abingdon, 30 East St Helen's Street

Recent collapse of the 'modern' river front wall at 30 East St Helens Street revealed 2 m of deposition and a previous retaining wall. Backfilling behind the earlier wall indicates that it dates from around the 16th century. At that stage ground level was 1 m above the Thames and at risk to flooding - not a problem at the present property level. The c 16th century backfilling also contained numerous sheep metapodials as found adjacent in the Old Gaol excavations: further evidence of the post-medieval slaughterhouse(s) in the area.

Benson

Gordon Miles for the Bensington Society has sent in a thick pile of Parish Survey forms detailing the results of several years field-walking in Benson Parish. It is very gratifying to see results like this and much credit must go to Gordon Miles for all the effort that he and the Society have put into treating and plotting the extensive, previously little known settlement was within the parish.

Checkendon

Excavation of several sections across the earthworks of the Devil's Churchyard has now commenced. The work is being undertaken by the South Oxon Archaeological Group assisted by Richard Chambers.

Dorchester By-pass

With the change in Government, the Ministerial go-ahead for the Dorchester by-pass is now expected next month and work is expected to begin in the autumn.

Faringdon

Mrs Church reports that the graveyard memorial recording project is continuing with vigour.

Kingham, Manor Farm

The moated site newly discovered at the back of Manor Farm by Mr Ralph Mann has now been recommended for scheduling. The earthworks will be surveyed in the near future.

Radley Parish Survey

J P Wallis of the Abingdon Archaeological Society reports that the survey of Radley commenced in September 1978 with a group of six members of the Society fieldwalking at weekends. With permission from Dick Frearson of Lower Farm, Radley four fields on the bank of the River Thames were sampled. The Sites and Monuments record cards PRN 2464 and 2465, area centred SP53230023, report the find of an RB urn in 1916 and a long barrow near Thames Conservancy gate 99. We have come to the conclusion that this is not a barrow. The mound is in fact a long island of gravel falling away to the Thames on the east and giving way to a low lying area of peat and a stream to the west. This patch of gravel follows the curve of the Thames from near Sandford weir stream to Lower Radley and is approx. 250 yds. wide at maximum. The island was productive, 12 cores, numerous blades, 6 scrapers and flakes with secondary working, all contained in a spread across three fields. Of particular note was a struck blade in a material resembling black Basalt. A concentration of Roman 2nd cent. sherds were located at the site of the urn discovery. These have been disturbed by mole drain operations, the scatter spreading from the edge of the gravel into the peat bed.

In late October ploughed fields at Gooseacre Farm were walked with permission from Mr Badcock the tenant farmer. The Roman complex was covered the only notable find being a sherd of Terra Nigra. Flint flakes and scrapers hitherto unknown from the area of the Roman occupation are thought to be of Bronze Age date. A very rolled and stained almond shaped Palaeolith was found by Bill Skellington in ploughsoil at SU52389829.

No other fieldwalking has been done as fields became unavailable due to preparation for sowing winter wheat. The fieldwalkers have since been deployed at the Thrupp excavation.

Thame by-pass

Although the start date was the 14 May, so far there has been no earthmoving. The Thame Historical Society will be keeping a watching brief as soon as topsoil stripping commences.

Thrupp House Farm Site 'B' - G Jones and J Wallis

Location - The site is situated in a small gravel quarry belonging to and worked by J Curtis & Son of Radley. The area is bounded by the River Thames, Oxford/Didcot railway line and the Abingdon/Radley branch line. Ordnance Survey grid reference SU 522970.

Discovery - The site was extensively covered by fieldwalking in June 1977 by G Jones and J Wallis as topsoil was removed. Consent was obtained for further work and, subsequently, two parallel ditches were exposed, together with a pig carcass. Field-walking produced several small sherds, a thin scatter of flint blades and flakes, probably from a dense concentration in an adjacent field (site C), and bones (one showing signs of use as a tool).

The NMR air photograph SU 5297/2/109 shows three distinct cropmarks. A rectangular enclosure, the long axis aligned E-W with a gap in the NE corner. A second feature runs from the gap parallel to the N enclosure ditch forming a trackway and then turns through 90° and runs N as a single ditch for approx. 100 yds and fades out.

third feature consists of what appears as a trackway running due N and traceable for some distance across the pit. The track runs very near the enclosure and bisects the second feature.

Features - As the ploughsoil was removed, several features were exposed. These were cleared and drawn on a plan (1-100), subsequently sectioned where possible and as time allowed.

1. Linear Feature B35 Identified as a boundary ditch some two metres wide and approx. one metre deep. Sectioned in three places the evidence suggests that it was not recut and was filled again rapidly. A few unidentifiable sherds found during clearing were of fabric which was consistent with material from the pits.
2. Circular Feature B32 A very shallow gully 0.2 m deep into the gravel and 13 m diameter. The central area B35 was cleared carefully to expose any post holes - none were discovered. One pit was located within the circular area but was sterile when cleared. A possible paved area was observed but recorded as a natural feature. Two sherds found when the gully was emptied are similar to other pottery on the site. This feature, not showing on the air photo, is thought to be a round-house.
3. Pits 14 pits circular in plan were cleaned, planned, sectioned in quadrants and cleared. As expected these were the most productive as regards finds and dating. Not all the pits were contained within the enclosure.
4. Hearth B22 Identified as such by charcoal pieces (approx. 1 cc in volume) a large number of quartzite and sandstone pebbles (fire-stained) and a scatter of animal bones, including several complete lower jaws. The bones show no sign of fire blacking. The hearth was situated well outside the enclosure and has not been positively associated with the rest of the site. A complete plan of the hearth was unobtainable as half of it had been removed by scraper during topsoil removal.
5. Linear Ditch B35 Identified as a ditch intersecting with the enclosure B35, but in a dog-leg configuration. The air photo identification of an enclosure was only partially verified. The eastern boundary appears to be a continuation of B36. No gap is visible, the enclosure ditch continues in a straight line eventually bisecting the trackway. No dating evidence was found during examination of the intersections and it was impossible to decide which cutting was made first.
6. Trackway B37 & B39 These were regarded as independent of the enclosure. No evidence of date was obtained from the filling of the ditches. The orientation was towards the Roman complex at Gooseacre Farm, Radley. Mr W Skellington informed us that the ditches aligned with a Neolithic burial reported by him (the finds are deposited in the Ashmolean Museum). Slight indication of features at right angles were observed and photographed at the narrow extremity of the ditches in 1977.

Finds - The most productive of the features excavated were pits B2 and B11. These contained pottery of 2nd century B.C., the most notable and complete of which was a Barrel jar and shallow bead-rim bowl in a thin fine temper burnished ware. The only metal object found on site was a lead fish-net weight 2.5 cms. diameter. This was the only find in pit B25. The only indication of weaving

craft was part of a clay triangular loom-weight and a bone pin from the hearth.

Conclusions

1. The site has been tentatively dated as around 200 B.C. from the pottery found in the pits.
2. The site was a single settlement, occupied for a short period. There was no evidence of recutting of the enclosure ditch or evidence of continuous occupation.
3. The site was 100 m east of the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit's excavation in 1976/7, and could be associated.

Thrupp Site C

Work is now in progress on an adjacent field site C. Field walking on this area has produced a dense scatter of Neolithic flint blades, scrapers, arrows and cores. Topsoil has been removed from half the field preparatory to gravel extraction. So far, four ring-ditches of Iron Age date have been revealed and a series of regularly spaced ditches stretching across the field, some cutting the rings. These may well prove to be Medieval. One section so far has been cleaned, planed and a small bronze buckle and sherds of Medieval type recorded. So far no Neolithic features linked with the topsoil scatters have been found.

Some of this site is in danger of being destroyed unrecorded, dug to gravel being dug ahead of schedule. Volunteer help would be valued. Further details ring G Jones on Abingdon 20688 or Jeffrey Wallis on Oxford 47856.

Wallingford, 5-7 Castle Street

Richard Chambers reports that following the demolition of nos. 5-7 situated on the west side of Castle Street, the Wallingford Society have excavated a small trial trench to examine the quality and depth of archaeological stratification from the Medieval and late Saxon town. Unfortunately most of the ground lately occupied by nos. 5-7 had been deeply disturbed during the Post-Medieval period to a depth of 1 - 1.6 m although two foundation trenches both dug to a depth of 1.2 m along the present frontage revealed deep and relatively undisturbed stratification extending beneath the pavement at a depth of about 1 m. Two sherds of a sandy fabric, (Wallingford F34) are from a glazed jug and one a cooking pot rim sherd, suggest 12-13th century dates for the uppermost levels. This would, if correct, fit in with the diversion of the road running northwards out of Wallingford to its present position along Castle Street. The western side of the Lamb Hotel may maintain the line of the original eastern edge of the diverted road but it is probable that the western edge of Castle Street was moved back to widen the street sometime before or during the 18th century. The trial trench dug by the society proved disappointing, and provided disturbed ground down to the water table at 1.6 m below which it was not possible to excavate.

Wallingford, Lamb Hotel, High Street

Two wells have been found during rebuilding operations at the Lamb Hotel. One well remains capped but a second which will be

kept as a feature of the redeveloped hotel appears to be Post-Medieval. This second well was certainly supplying water to the hotel via a lead pipe and pump in more recent times.

Wallingford, Market Place

The laying of new sewerage pipes and extensive re-surfacing work in the Market Place has exposed two wells, one only 2.5 m deep and a second some 4 m deep. The former well, now filled in, appeared to be Post-Medieval, the latter, pumped out and inspected, appeared to be no earlier than the 18th century.

Observation of the sewerage trench in St Mary's Street, revealed a build-up of Post-Medieval street surfaces to an average depth of 1 m. These surfaces were laid upon a deep accumulation of soil much resembling the contents of the average Medieval rubbish pit with the exception that only 3 pieces of Medieval pottery were recovered. The depth of this accumulation of street debris remains unknown as the sewerage trench was only 1.5 m deep at its deepest point.

X40 (Oxford to Birmingham New Route)

The trial-pitting along the preferred route of the X40 continues but should be finished by mid June. So far nothing of an archaeological nature has been seen in any of the pits excavated although several new cropmark sites, including that of a possible Romano-Celtic temple have now been recognised in the Middleton Stoncy - Ardley area.

CALENDAR

Monday 4 June: Prof C F C Hawkes - 'Julius Caesar's Belgic Britons', held in the Ashmolean Museum at 8.15 p.m. (OUAS)

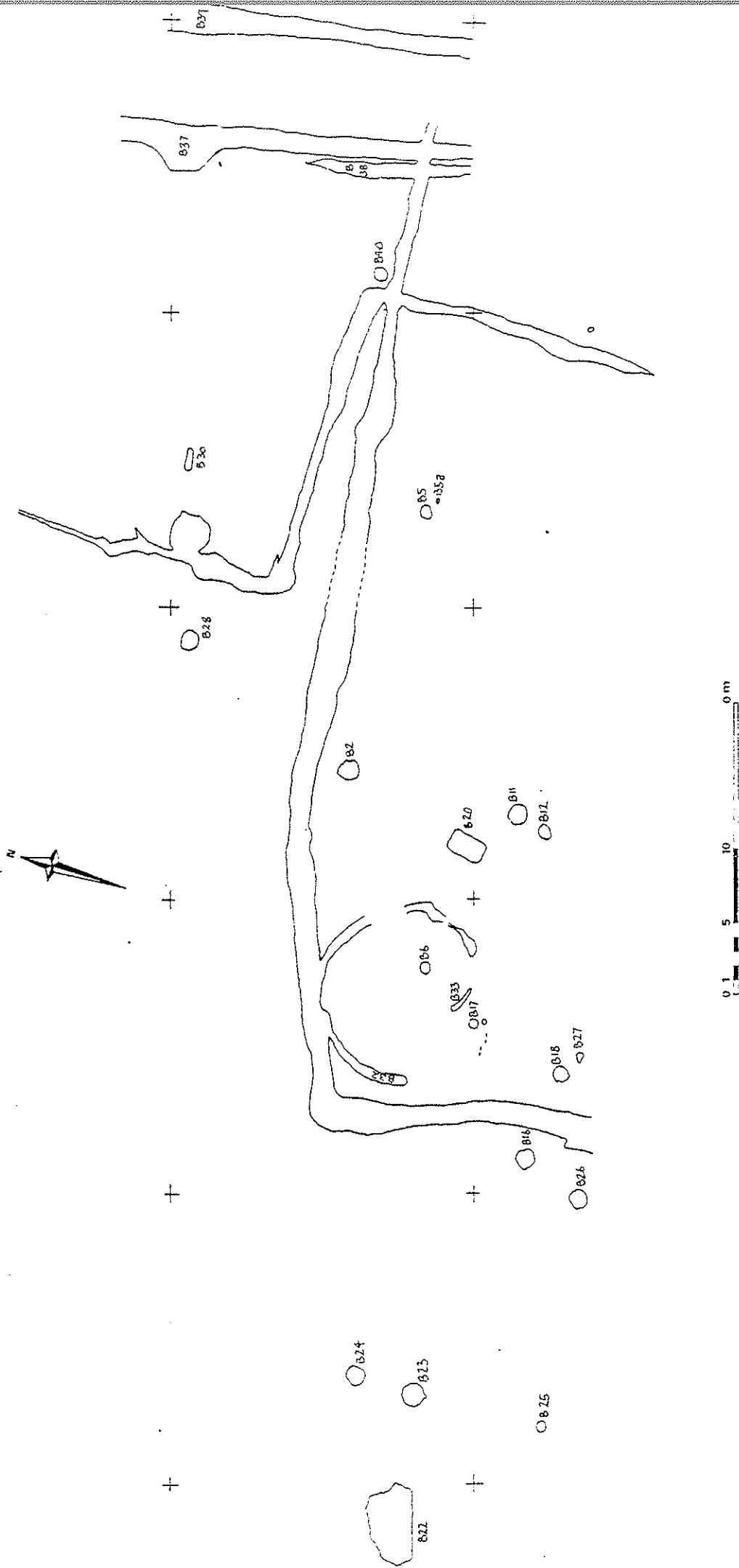
Thursday 7 June: Evening Outing to Blewbury or Pendon Museum (Didcot and District Archaeological and Historical Society - contact Mrs Joyce Hall Tel 812516).

Monday 11 June: Dr Reynold Higgins - Greek and Roman Jewellery, Ashmolean Museum at 8.15 p.m. (OUAS)

Saturday 16 June: High Wycombe History Society visits Thame for a walkabout starting in St. Mary's Church, 2.30. Contact Mr G Southern, .5 Oxford Road, Thame for details.

Wednesday 27 June: A one day class on the techniques of surveying earthworks for Lord William's School and the Thame Historical Society.

VOLUNTEERS urgently needed to help record Thrupp Site C. For further details ring G Jones on Abingdon 20688 or Jeffrey Wallis on Oxford 47856.



excavation plan, site B, Thrupp House farm pit.