



OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER INCLUDING  
OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

No. 10 - October 1979

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

OXFORDSHIRE

Bicester, Lower Home Close

R A Chambers reports that groundwork for a small housing estate in the centre of Bicester, occupying a field which extends from 90 m to 230 m north of the Church, has exposed extensive medieval occupation. The northern end of the site has many quarry holes which were backfilled in the later medieval period when buildings were erected over them.

Bicester developed from two separate manors, King's End and Market End, which always shared the parish church of St. Edburga. However, although a small amount of village settlement was suspected to have grown up around the church before the gradual development of the market place and expansion of the town along Sheep Street, it is clear from this site that there was a fairly large agricultural village element surviving by the church on the western side of the River Bure until the beginning of the post-medieval period. Just how large this element was remains unclear. Adjacent land may soon be developed and this will provide an opportunity to explore the extent of this occupation.

Meanwhile a watching brief continues on this site.

Checkendon, The Devil's Churchyard

The excavation of the Iron Age ditched enclosure continues with a third section across the outer earthwork to the north-east.

Didcot, Blagrave Farm

Joyce Hall for the Didcot Society reports that during October 1978 development work on the site was started and an almost daily watch was kept on the site initially, during the cutting of foundations. Later visits were made every one or two weeks. The site had suffered considerable disturbance during the twentieth century. In the relatively undisturbed area at the eastern end of the site several pieces of Romano-British pottery were found in the side of one of the trenches. Other pottery fragments found were Medieval or later. Several small 18th or 19th century pots were found by the workmen and handed in during the course of the work.

The remains of a well was found whilst digging sewer trenches at a depth of 10-12 feet below considerable modern disturbance; one brick from the well was retained but it was too dangerous to attempt any

excavation of the well. Development of the site is nearing completion but the foundations for a boundary wall on the western boundary should be dug shortly and may yield further information.

### Drayton

Topsoil stripping continues on this site for forthcoming gravel extraction and a watching brief continues to be kept. So far nothing of importance has been noted.

### Kidlington, Moat Cottage

This summer saw a further three week excavation at Moat Cottage. The site lies at the edge of the former cow common, one mile from the parish church and medieval village centre. The site was first examined in 1976 when nineteen trial trenches of various sizes were dug in an attempt to identify and assess the archaeological potential of these remains. Only the last of the trial trenches briefly revealed the site of medieval domestic buildings which lay a little to the east of the present Moat Cottage. The objectives of the 1979 excavations were aimed at obtaining a general understanding of the entire site and to assess the extent, nature and date range of the medieval buildings. To this end some twenty trenches and trial pits were hand dug by local volunteers in the garden on the eastern side of the present Moat Cottage. Many of the trial holes revealed a limestone rubble spread across the eastern half of the garden, but this gave way towards the cottage to a much deeper stratification which at about four feet revealed two medieval coursed rubble wall foundations and associated gravelly clay floors which provided only mid-medieval pottery. It is now clear that it is beneath the western half of the garden east of Moat Cottage that substantial medieval buildings lie, sealed by dumped soil.

To the east of the present cottage the moat was clearly reshaped during the laying out of the 18th century walled garden. A large, seven foot deep trench inside the northern garden wall showed a substantial heavily silted water course, water-logged at the bottom. The silts did not produce domestic pottery any earlier than the early post-medieval period. Sections showed that the water-course presently beneath the garden has been purposely filled-in.

Several problems remain to be solved. It is now clear that the whole shape of the present landscape is the result of 18th century re-planning. Whether the medieval manor house was moated remains unanswered. There certainly was a moat by the late 16th or early 17th century and this may have been a cleaned out medieval moat. Whatever its date it was not originally dug to the present rectangular plan. The original shape of the moat remains to be discovered and to see whether it connects with the fish-ponds to the south, fishponds which may be dated in the light of our present limited knowledge to the end of the medieval period or early post-medieval period.

Although much work clearly remains to be done at Moat Cottage to assess the nature and extent of what, from the material evidence must have been a medieval manor house, the nature of further work depends on whether the housing development will provide sufficient opportunity to observe the archaeology. If necessary, some further excavation may be required,

especially to examine an area to the north of the walled garden where the presence of a completely buried north-south ditch suggests perhaps an outer moated enclosure to the north of the medieval manor-house.

### Kingston Bagpuize, Demonstration Farms Project

Ron Cowell, an In-Service trainee who has now been appointed as a Field Officer for the Trent Valley Research Committee, recently completed a survey of Kingston Bagpuize parish as part of the background work for the Countryside Commission's Demonstration Farm project at Kingstonhill Farm. The parish is one with particularly good 10th century Saxon charters. Fieldwalking has produced scatters of material ranging from Mesolithic to medieval in date. Most notably it has been found that each available area of Corallian Sand in the parish is the site of Romano-British and possibly earlier settlement. The only sandy patch so far not to produce Romano-British settlement is the one occupied by the present village and park of Kingston Bagpuize. If any of our local readers have dug up pottery along with the potatoes in their garden we would like to hear about it. Kingston Bagpuize, because of its present land use is not a parish which produced cropmarks so these results are very satisfying as they tie in with the current Upper Thames Survey (see below). They emphasise the value of foot slogging where there is no positive air-cover.

### Radley

The Abingdon society have now commenced a brief rescue excavation to record a ring ditch in Tuckwell's gravel pit in advance of gravel extraction. The pit management have helped greatly by stripping the topsoil from the area in question.

### Thame By-pass

The Thame Historical & Archaeological Society has reported that their watching brief has not revealed any archaeological material along the line of the Thame by-pass.

### Thrupp

Work has been interrupted on this site for a couple of weeks due to rescue excavation in advance of gravel extraction on another site nearby.

### Wallingford, 9-10 St Martin's Street

There seems to be a real possibility that part of this site will be redeveloped within the next year or so, on a main frontage in the largest of the late Saxon planned towns of Wessex. The frontage area was consequently trenched to establish for certain whether a major excavation was needed. It turns out that there had been modern cellars along the frontage beneath a row of presumably 19th century cottages, and their sheer depth (over 2.6 m) means that no Saxon structure could be expected to survive beneath them. The cellarage at the north end of the site extends back nearly 10 metres from the frontage. At the south end it extends only 5.5 m, but behind it there was no real evidence of floor or structure. One interesting thing did emerge: at a depth of 1.60 m (OD 47.90 m) was a layer crammed with late 13th-14th century glazed pottery comparable with that of period 2 at the New Road site (J Weare, Oxoniensia 42 (1977) Fig 8). At 2 metres depth

a sample of earlier 12th century pottery was recovered, at 2.20 metres some late 11th century pottery, and all this material seemed to be subsiding into an 11th century pit below this level. This I am told is the first substantial source of late Saxon pottery to be found in the town. Only small samples were recovered, and to investigate it properly at this depth would require a large hole which can only be done when the council has finished using the area as a car park. Perhaps this will be possible when the future of the site has been decided. The reason the deposits are so deep may be that they were subsiding into an old pit; ultimately, it may be that on the street frontage we should be expecting to find medieval Wallingford at a depth of five feet, and Saxon Wallingford at over seven feet! B.G.D.

#### Witney, 27 Market Square

Following the proposal to demolish the Crown Hotel (No. 27 Market Square) to make way for a new road, Richard Chambers undertook two exploratory trenches to assess the archaeological potential of the site. The first trench was placed inside the main entrance and exposed the remains of floor surfaces, the lowest of which was associated with a hearth and two fragments of medieval coarse pottery. A second trench was dug at the rear of the premises and encountered recently disturbed ground down to the natural limestone.

From the first trial pit and investigation beneath floor boards inside the hotel the medieval stratigraphy appears to be well preserved by accumulations of building debris and soil and has subsequently been sealed by a further deposit of building rubble used to level up the site for the building of the Crown Hotel in the 18th century

#### GLOUCESTERSHIRE

##### Claydon Pike, Fairford/Lechlade

In recent weeks as the gravel quarry approached the periphery of the cropmark complex Basil Turton has carried out extensive geophysical survey while Messrs Jones and Miles hacked phosphate samples out of a machine-compacted so-called soil. Meetings have been held at Fairford and Lechlade with local groups who it is hoped will become involved with fieldwork in the area as well as excavation.

Full-scale excavation will begin at the site on 12 November when it has been arranged that the weather will be sunny and still, with light showers in the evenings. Work will initially concentrate on an early Iron Age enclosure ditch which sits alongside a relict water-course. Anyone wishing to help and/or visit the site should contact David Miles on Oxford 43888.

##### Upper Thames Survey

The Unit has received a British Academy grant to investigate Iron Age settlement in the Upper Thames region using the evidence available from our photographs and fieldwalking. Initially Richard Hingley, a recent graduate of Durham University, has been collating the information on the photographs which have appeared in the main archives (Cambridge and the National Monuments Record) since the completion of the Benson and Miles Survey in 1973. In this time we have had the two prolific dry summers of 1975 and 1976. As a result the areas of known cropmarks in the Benson and Miles Survey area have been increased by almost 30%.

The recent cropmarks do not, for the most part, represent major new settlements but rather the infilling of detail around and between known settlements. The floodplain has also produced a flush of sites as was expected in the dry conditions of 1975-6. The current survey is also covering the limestone hills which fringe the Thames Valley. Settlement concentrations as dense as any on the gravels have been plotted, particularly on the Corallian ridge around Frilford and Cherbury.

#### Health and Safety at Work, Etc. Act (1974)

The Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit has now brought out its own version of the Health and Safety At Work Etc Act as applied to volunteers working on excavations. Anyone engaging in archaeological excavation work in association with or under the supervision of the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit should be conversant with these regulations, copies of which may be obtained from the Unit Secretary.

#### CALENDAR

- 12-14 October: Churches and Local History (For details contact the Course Secretary, Oxford University Department for External Studies, Rewley House, 3-7 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA).
- 20-21 October: Certificate Weekend I - Pottery (For details see above).
- 23 October: Architecture and Conservation Group (8 pm, Middle Farm, Brightwell).
- 26-28 October: The Archaeology of the Berkshire Downs - to be held at Easthampstead Park, Wokingham (For details contact the Course Secretary, OUDES, Rewley House, 3-7 Wellington Square, Oxford).
- 27-28 October: Emmington Exhibition at St Nicholas' Church, Emmington from 2 - 4.30 pm. Topics on display will be, among others, maps of the village from 1697 onwards, field names, the church and the churchyard survey, village buildings, hedge dating records, wills and the "People Index", the "Australian Connection" - a Poor Law sponsored emigration to Sydney in the 1840s. Admission free.
- 30 October: Documents Group (8 pm, Bucklands, Reading Road, Wallingford). T.W.A.S.
- 2 November: Miss S Barnes - "Village & Family Records" at 71 Oakley Road, Chinnor.
- 5-8 November: Planning, the Press and Public Relations - in association with Oxford Polytechnic.
- 6-8 November: Urban Conservation - in association with Oxford Poly. (For details of the above two weekend schools contact The Course Secretary, OUDES, Rewley House, Wellington Square, Oxford).
- 9 November: Museum Meeting on Textiles, Woodstock. Details from

Judy Dewey, 38 Papist Way, Cholsey.

24 October: John Rhodes - "Birch & Pottery Making in Oxfordshire".  
The first of the "new style" meetings of the  
Oxfordshire Architectural & Historical Society at the  
new time of 5.30 pm in the usual place, Ashmolean  
Lecture Theatre, but for this year open to all visitors  
and the general public.

#### CHALGROVE OPEN DAY

The Open Day to end all open days will be held at Harding's Field,  
Medieval moated manor house, Chalgrove on 18 November from 11 am  
to 4.30 pm.

There will be exhibitions and guided tours. Admission will be  
20p for adults and 10p for children.

#### VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED

Excavations will be starting on 12 November at Claydon Pike,  
Fairford/Lechlade, Gloucestershire. Volunteers welcome. Contact  
David Miles on Oxford 43888 for details.

Volunteers are still required to record Thrupp Site C. Please  
contact either Godfrey Jones on Abingdon 20688 or Jeffrey Wallis  
on Oxford 47856 for details.

#### STOP PRESS !!!

#### Chalgrove, Harding's Field

Since the last issue of the Newsletter a number of problems have been  
resolved. It now seems certain that the crosswing was rebuilt, using  
the earlier foundations, although the first structure was without  
the luxury of a garderobe at its northern end. It is beginning to  
look as if the buildings to the north of the hall, which consist of a  
large rectangular structure and dovecote are earlier than the hall.  
These form part of the pre-moat complex and so far we have had  
tantalising glimpses of other buildings that may be contemporary. The  
final north-west corner of the moated island has been machine stripped  
to reveal nothing much to our relief. We now have a definite  
completion date for the excavation which is 9 November and to mark  
the end of the dig there will be an Open Day on 18 November (see above  
for details).

OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

CHRISTMAS CARDS

Wendy Page has designed exclusively for the Unit two cards appropriate for Christmas but suitable for all occasions. One design, which is red on cream, is based on a small figure of a horse and rider found at Dorchester. The other design, deep lilac on grey, is based on a saintly pilgrim's badge found at Chalgrove. The cards (including envelopes) cost 10p each or 90p for a pack of ten cards. Mixed packs are also available.

To obtain your cards, fill in the form below and return it to:

The Secretary, Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit, 46 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford OX1 2EP.

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Name .....  
(Block Capitals)

Address .....  
.....

Number of Cards/Packs\* ..... (red/purple\* type required).

I would like mixed design/single design\* packs.

I enclose my cheque, made payable to Oxfordshire Archaeological

Unit for £ ..... (please enclose 13½p worth of stamps for orders of less than 20 cards for postage).

\*Delete as applicable.