



OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER INCLUDING  
OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

Vol VIII, No. 1 - January 1981

Anyone wishing to send contributions to the Newsletter should send details to the above address before Friday, 20th February.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

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OXFORDSHIRE

Asthall

More human remains have recently been discovered whilst excavating for a soak-away in a cottage garden at Asthall. Remains of two adults were found although one of these could not be clearly observed in the section. The second burial was laid supine in a grave 1m deep with the head to the north. Although several sherds of Romano-British pottery were found in the surrounding soil there was no dating evidence clearly associated with either burial. Fifteen burials found in 1917 some 90m to the east of the present find spot probably belong to the large Romano-British settlement that existed at Asthall. The present two burials probably have a similar origin.

Aston Tirrold

Richard Chambers has reported that several worked flints of indeterminate age have been found by Mrs. D. Biggs in a hole at the rear of the United Reformed Church chapel.

Banbury, 33-34 High Street

This site lies within the area occupied by the medieval town. A watching brief kept over building work to extend the rear of the premises should have provided some material from medieval levels. However Richard Chambers has reported that after the contractors had cleared the site of modern rubbish it was apparent that little or nothing of the medieval stratigraphy remained. The land at the rear of the premises along this side of the High Street gradually rises. The garden at the rear of nos. 33-34 had been terraced into the hillside at an unknown date removing all medieval levels. Mechanically dug foundation trenches at the rear of the former shop, no. 34, revealed undisturbed natural subsoil immediately below the surface.

Bicester Priory

Humphrey Woods has reported that a gas pipe has been laid in the area occupied by the medieval Augustinian Priory in Bicester. The trenches were shallow and no medieval material was observed.

established that the wall was earlier than one which had fallen into disuse before the early 19th century. It is possible that by the early 19th century the ashlar topped wall formed the edge of a wheel pit. At a date probably in the 1820's this pit was no longer required in this position and in the area of the excavation it was filled in and sealed by a brick floor. At some later date a second brick floor was laid down, by which time the existing mill machinery was in place.

### Launton, Manor Farm

The Launton Local History Society assisted by Richard Chambers has now analysed the results of their field walking of the land drainage trenches at Manor Farm.

A plot of the finds from the upcast of the drain trenches suggested two distinct areas of Romano-British occupation. Surprisingly there was very little earlier medieval pottery and the four sherds that were recovered lay to the south and south-west of the church. Later pottery also occurred in distinct groups. 14th-15th century wares occurred south-west of Manor Farm. The field north of the church between the railway and the road contained only early post-medieval wares. 17th century and later pottery came from two areas, one south of the railway and the second south and south-east of the church.

The area field walked was covered by ridge and furrow. The pottery distribution which may be taken as indicating areas of former settlement, showed that much of the ridge and furrow was no older than late medieval or early post-medieval. The pottery has shown that in the middle ages, at least some of the settlement in Launton lay close to the parish church although today the village lies on former agricultural land 2/3km to the east.

It is worth pointing out that the Launton Society have seized the only opportunity in recent years to discover previously settlements. This has added considerably to our basic knowledge of the development of the landscape in this locality.

### Launton, The Rectory

Richard Chambers reports that a watching brief is being maintained over housing development on land attached to the Rectory. The Rectory lies next to the medieval parish church. An area of medieval settlement has recently been discovered to the south-west of the church (see Launton, Manor Farm).

### Little Rollright - Rollright stones, see Warwickshire, Long Compton

### Oxford, Abingdon Road and Folly Bridge

Observations by Brian Durham of manhole trenches showed that the ragstone causeway seen at 33 St. Aldates in 1978 continues south almost as far as White House Road, and resumes again by Hinksey Park. This suggests that the intervening area may be a natural 'island' above flood level, and explains the cropmarks photographed in 1976 on the Oxford City football ground. The partial collapse of the south causeway of Folly Bridge in November promised to expose more of the medieval structure. However all that had happened was that the facing wall of 18th-19th century bridge-widening had fallen away, exposing a mass of clay fill, with the old bridge still safely under the middle of the road.

### Oxford, Christ Church Meadows

An open trench connected with the Sandford Trunk Sewer was watched by Brian Durham and showed that there is a medieval river channel sealed beneath the east end of the Broad Walk. It is however not clear if this was a meander of the Cherwell or the channel which Agas shows running east from the Trill Mill stream.

### Thame, 87 High Street

This building is a three bay, cruck built house of the 14th century and appears to belong to the westward expansion of the new town. Recent renovation work has involved excavating several internal foundation trenches, one of which has revealed that the central bay formerly contained a cellar. Richard Chambers has reported that the cellar, walled with mortared limestone rubble, may have reached beneath the whole of the floor area of the central bay. However there was no evidence that the cellar was an original feature of the house. The cellar was filled-in possibly during the second quarter of the 20th century and sealed with a two-layer concrete floor incorporating a damp-proof paper membrane.

### Whitchurch

Following the appearance of a swallow hole at Goring Heath (OAU Newsletter 4, 1980) the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group has reported the appearance of a similar swallow hole at Whitchurch.

### Witney, Newlands Mill housing development

Geoff Williams continues to maintain a watch for archaeological features as development continues on this housing estate. Three pieces of mid-medieval pottery have been retrieved from features exposed in foundation trenches.

### Wroxton St. Mary, Barn Lodge

The reduction of the ground surface surrounding the former barn has now been completed. No further burials from the Romano-British cemetery were found.

## GLOUCESTERSHIRE

### Fairford/Lechlade, Claydon Pike

The last two months have seen at least a 1/4 hectare stripped by JCB exposing most of one of the settlement platforms within the main Romano-British settlement.

Initial interpretation suggests the main domestic structures are positioned at the edge of the platform overlooking the junction of the several trackways. The structures here have rubble foundations up to 3/4m in width but only one or two courses thick.

Within the ditch enclosed area of the platform there appears to be an agricultural complex with yard surfaces, a well (excavated in the summer) and so far a large non-domestic building. This is an aisled structure 20m x 10m with rubble founded walls, dated broadly to 3rd/early 4th century.

10th March            LEWIS CARROLL'S OXFORD - Mavis Batey  
17th March            RIOT AND CELEBRATION IN VICTORIAN OXFORD - David Vaisey

ABINGDON AREA ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Lecture Programme 1981

12th February        Professor S.S. Frere - Roman Dorchester  
12th March            Mr. David Miles - The Lechlade Project  
9th April             Mr. James Bond - Abingdon Abbey Estates  
14th May             Mr. George Speake - Anglo-Saxon Jewellery  
11th June             Open Evening

CHINNOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, Programme for the 1981 Session  
(Meetings are usually held on the first Friday of each month at the Adult Education Room, Chinnor Library, Station Road, Chinnor at 8.0 p.m.)

6th February        John Bell- Symon Howlett, Yeoman of Emmington  
6th March            ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING followed by Reports from the Work Parties and the film '24 Square Miles'  
3rd April            John Blair - Some Recent Work on Medieval Buildings in Oxfordshire  
1st May             John Davis - The Australian Connection  
5th June            Reports from the Work Parties and General Society Business  
3rd July            Open Air Meeting, details to be confirmed later

For details of Membership, please contact the Hon. Secretary : John Bell,  
71 Oakley Road, Chinnor (Tel. K. Blount 52459)

WEEKEND AND DAY SCHOOLS, Organised by Oxford University Department for External Studies, Rewley House, Wellington Square

31st January        Local History Linked Day School III  
7th February        Publishing Local Studies - day school  
14th-15th February Archaeology Certificate Weekend II  
14th-15th February Ancient Gemstones  
28th Feb-1st March Local History Certificate Weekend II  
13th-15th March    Archaeology of Mycenae  
21st March         CBA Group 9 Annual Report Meeting - day school

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A 4th century enclosure ditch truncates the end of this building which itself shows signs of backfilling. Areas outside the building have revealed scattered concentrations of rubble, but any structural reconstruction from this is so far equivocal.

Predating the aisled structure are complexes of pits and an increasing number of circular gullies some definitely relating to buildings. The date of these range from the 1st century AD (and possibly pre-conquest) onwards.

Excavations will probably break for a month in February.

## WARWICKSHIRE

### Long Compton, The King's Stone (part of the Rollright Stones complex)

A small excavation has been carried out by George Lambrick at the request of the DoE in a hollow adjacent to the King's Stone to establish whether topsoil clearance and dumping by Warwickshire County Council has done any damage to the site. It was suspected, though not certain, that the hollow was a post-medieval quarry, but it seemed possible that prehistoric features might have survived at the edge of it. In fact no archaeological features were found, and little damage had been done anyway, but there is some suggestion that the hollow was partly natural although it was enlarged by quarrying.

## UNIT NEWS

Gwynne Oakley and Maureen Mellor have been working very hard preparing a display called 'Pungent Pipes & Potent Potions'. This display is of glass wine bottles, drinking vessels and clay tobacco pipes from excavations under the Westgate Shopping Centre. Both Gwynne and Maureen would be very interested in looking at any glass bottle seals or decorated clay tobacco pipes that have been found locally. Pungent Pipes & Potent Potions is the first of a series of displays which will reflect some of the 'behind the scenes' post-excavation analysis and research which will be published in the near future. For times of opening please see the enclosed poster.

1981 Newsletter subscriptions. There will be no increase in the Newsletter subscription this year. Please send £1.50 to the Secretary, Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit, 46 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford OX1 2EP. Please would anyone wishing to cancel their subscription inform the Secretary as soon as possible.

We are delighted to announce, some might say at long last, the engagement of Brian Durham and Maureen Mellor. We are sure that our readers will join with us in congratulating them.

## CALENDAR

MUSEUM LECTURE SERIES, Oxford Town Hall, Tuesdays, 7.30 p.m.

17th February	SAXON OXFORD - Tom Hassall
24th February	LIFE AND SUDDEN DEATH IN MEDIEVAL OXFORD - Julian Munby
3rd March	CITY GOVERNMENT IN TUDOR AND STUART OXFORD - Alan Crossley

28th March	Local History Linked Day School IV
3rd-5th April	Medieval Water Management
24th-26th April	Industrial Archaeology
27th-30th April	Planning and the Historic Environment
15th-17th May	Urban Archaeology - in association with Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit

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.