EXCAVATIONS IN OXFORDSHIRE 1975

His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh receiving from Mr Robert Weir, Chairman of Oxfordshire County Council, a copy of *Historic Towns in Oxfordshire*, edited by Kirsty Rodwell, published by the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit in 1975, to commemorate European Architectural Heritage Year.

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Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit

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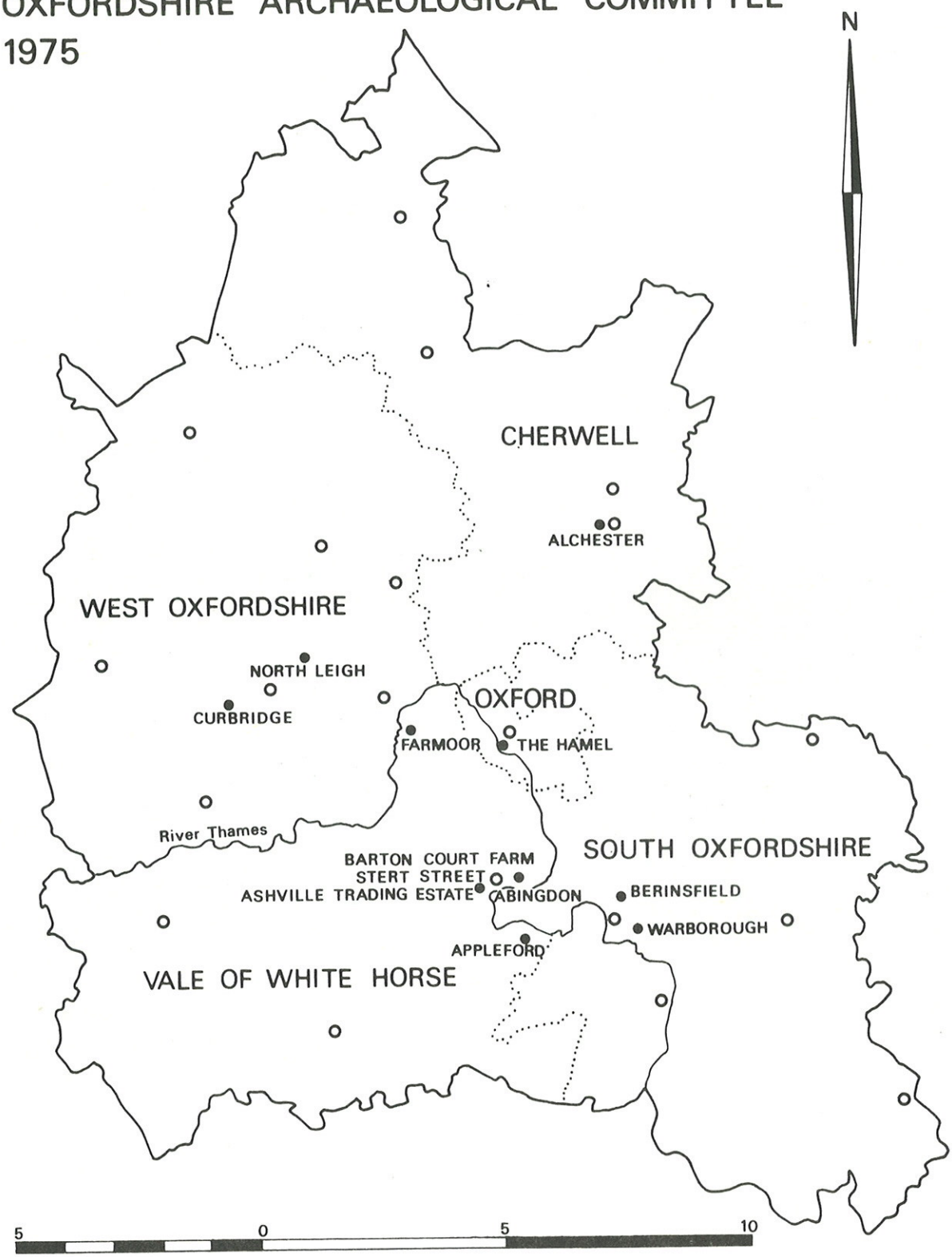

OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMITTEE
1975
N
CHERWELL
ALCHESTER
WEST OXFORDSHIRE
NORTH LEIGH
CURBRIDGE
OXFORD
FARMOOR
THE HAMEL
River Thames
SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE
BARTON COURT FARM
STERT STREET
ASHVILLE TRADING ESTATE
ABINGDON
BERINSFIELD
WARBOROUGH
APPLEFORD
VALE OF WHITE HORSE
5 0 5 10
● Oxfordshire Archaeological Committee- on going Projects
O Historic Town Survey
....District Boundries

Fig. 18

THE OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMITTEE IN 1975

1975 has been a year of consolidation and retrenchment for the Oxfordshire Archaeological Committee and its executive arm, the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit. The effects of the national economic situation inevitably have had their local archaeological repercussions. The number of archaeological emergencies caused by housing schemes and commercial redevelopment has dropped dramatically and the county appears to be indulging only in a temporary boom in road building. This cut-back, coupled with the effects of inflation on salaries and other costs, has meant that by the end of the calendar year the Unit had not been able to replace two field officers. The one benefit to be felt was that work on the publication of sites excavated in 1974 has been able to proceed rapidly.

The county-wide series of surveys has continued. Don Benson and David Miles The Upper Thames Valley: an archaeological survey of the river gravels has now been followed by Kirsty Rodwell's Historic Towns in Oxfordshire: a survey of the new county. This Survey the Unit's contribution to European Architectural Heritage Year was officially launched by Robert Weir, the Chairman of Oxfordshire County Council, in October. The Survey covers the 20 historic towns in the county and it discusses the state of archaeological, historical and architectural information in each town. The information is presented in a uniform way with an explanatory text and four maps for each town (with the exception of the extinct Roman town of Alchester). The maps show the location of each town; archaeology and topography; age of buildings and statutory protection and past excavations. For each town an oblique air photograph was taken for the Survey by Brian Durham and these have been published together with a key. An important feature of the Survey is Kirsty Rodwell's introduction discussing town plans and buildings. The survey shows every prospect of following its predecessor as a model of its kind.

While the Historic Towns Survey was published in 1975 George Lambrick began the difficult task of compiling material for the proposed third survey which is concerned with the relationship between archaeology and agriculture as a destructive agency. In January and February the Unit was commissioned by the Department of the Environment to prepare a report on the feasibility of conducting such a survey. The work so far is described in detail below.

The threats to archaeological sites posed by agriculture are difficult to define and to locate since they do not appear through the planning processes. Those threats which do appear through planning applications have continued to be monitored by the Unit, assisted by regular fortnightly meetings between the Director and the Field Department of the Oxfordshire Department of Museum Services (previously the Oxford City and County Museum). The transfer of information from the Department's Sites and Monuments Record to development Control maps has nearly been completed. Once complete the maps will be deposited in the relevant planning office and should assist the early warning system.

It remains clear that the preservation of sites in the county can often be best achieved by using the planning process rather than by relying on the scheduling of sites. In this respect 1975 has been the year of Wallingford Castle. The Committee was actively involved in the various events which finally led to the calling in by the Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment of the current planning application which affects the outer bailey of the Castle. The enquiry will be held next year and the Unit will be giving evidence. The appeal relating to Alchester referred to in last year's report has been withdrawn, although a second revised application may follow; a further outstanding appeal relates to the cropmark complex at Northfield Farm, Long Wittenham. These three sites are interesting cases in an emerging policy for the conservation of the county's archaeology.

Excavations have continued during the year but on a much reduced scale from 1974. (see Fig.18). It was hoped that the major excavation this year would have been the continuation of the I.A. site at the Ashville Trading Estate at Abingdon. In the event no further work was possible. However, four of the excavations described in last year's report were continued: Abingdon/Radley, Barton Court Farm; Berinsfield; Farmoor and Oxford Blackfriars. New sites this year included: medieval tenements at Stert Street, Abingdon; medieval tenements at the Hamel, Oxford. Various rather limited excavations and observations were made throughout the county and these are listed below.

The post-excavation programme is progressing satisfactorily and some of the details are listed below. A publication policy has been decided - in future interim reports and short notices will appear in CBA Group IX Newsletter: medium sized reports and the Oxford excavations will be published in Oxoniensia. It is hoped that major reports will be published in the new monograph series proposed by the CBA.

1974-5 has been the first full year worked by the three environmental specialists. M. Jones has been working on carbonised cereal and weed seeds, R. Wilson on domestic animal bones and M. Robinson on Mollusca, waterlogged seeds and insect remains. Mary Harman has been carrying out specialist work on a part time basis on skeletal remains from various sites.

What has emerged is the importance of being able to work on site alongside the archaeologists so that good samples can be taken as soon as suitable deposits appear and the direction of excavation influenced towards the best recovery of the environmental evidence. It has also been found more worthwhile to carry out research projects examining one site or group of related sites in great detail rather than doing a limited amount of work on every site.

The main environmental archaeology project is on the Thames gravels. The closeness of the water table to the surface on the first terrace means that waterlogged remains are to be found in the bottom of many archaeological features.

This year has seen the completion of work by Mark Robinson and the examination of most of the I.A. and Roman Samples from Farmoor and the excavation of a Roman Well at Barton Court Farm, Abingdon/Radley to provide comparative material.

As a result of the success of the past year's work it is hoped that environmental archaeology in Oxfordshire will be put on a more permanent footing with better facilities and funds.

There have been various staff changes during the year. Kirsty Rodwell has now left the unit and followed her husband to Bristol. For the time being her post is not being filled. Veronica Ashcroft, the Unit's secretary and administrative assistant, has left to join the Civil Service in London. Amongst the specialists who prepare reports for the Unit, Maureen Mellor has continued the work of Regina Haldon on medieval pottery from Oxford. From October Mike Wilcox began the in-service training scheme organised by the Oxford University Department for External Studies and the Department of the Environment, while staff from other Units have been seconded to Oxford.

The work of the Unit depends not only on the Unit staff but also on the volunteers and specialists involved with the excavation and survey. In particular the Unit relies on the assistance of the members of many local groups and societies, in particular, the Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society, the Oxford University Archaeological Society, South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group, the Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society and the Witney Archaeological Group. While it is invidious to single out individuals we would particularly like to thank John Blair, John Carter, Pat Granados, Clive Hart, Julian Munby, Nicholas Palmer and Geoff Williams who have assisted the Unit throughout the year.

The Committee has also provided backing for the Unit's staff. Professor Barry Cunliffe retired as Chairman and his place was taken by Trevor Rowley, formerly the Hon Secretary. David Brown became the Hon Secretary. The County Treasurer and his staff, in particular Alec Ritchie, Brian Causby and Lloyd Adams, have continued to provide financial servicing at no cost to the Unit. Constance Preston continued to serve as Hon Assistant Secretary to the Oxford Archaeological Excavation Committee. The Unit's professional colleagues also continued to provide help and advice. The Unit is particularly grateful to Brian Davison, Peter White, Tony Fleming and Jeff West of the Department of the Environment and to the Ashmolean Museum and the Department of Museum Services.

The Committee itself could not survive without the continued support of its donors, notably the Department of the Environment, the County Council, the Oxford City Council, the Vale of White Horse District Council, the S Oxfordshire District Council, the W Oxfordshire District Council, also the Amey Roadstone Corporation and the British Academy.

CONTINUING PROJECTS

ABINGDON, Ashville Trading Estate, Marcham Lane, Michael Parrington *et al.*

During 1975 work has been continuing towards the publication of the 'Ashville Site'.

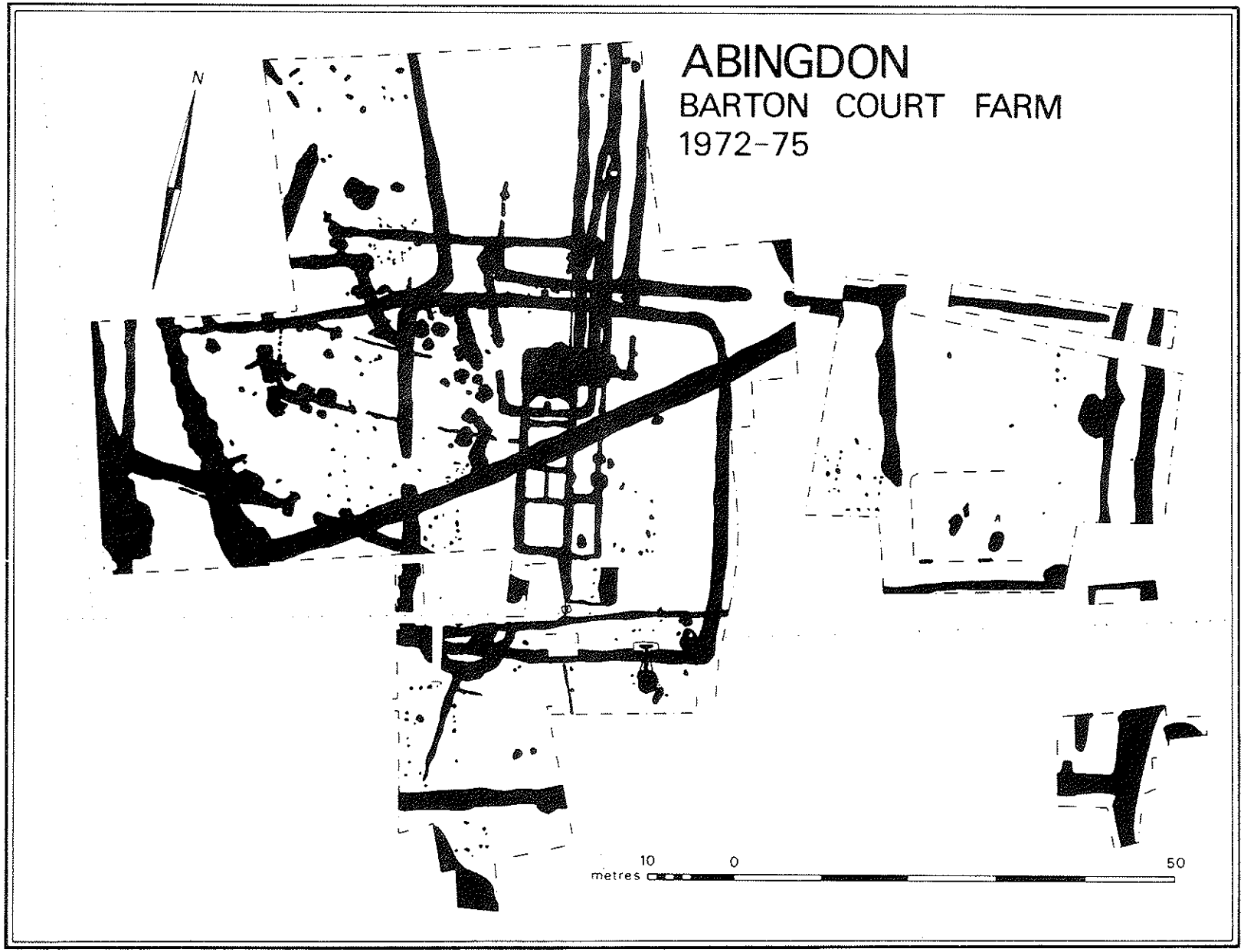


Fig. 19

The text of the excavation is at an advanced state of preparation and many of the drawings, by Mrs. Robin Spey, are in hand. Dee de Roche has produced a type series for pottery fabrics and forms and a quantitative record of the recovered pottery has been made by weight and number of sherds. The chronological groups are being compared and a pottery report is in progress.

The bones from the site make up the first large sample of I.A. animal bone to be excavated in Oxfordshire and will provide useful data on the size variation of domestic animals. Commencement on the sample indicates a similar pattern of animal husbandry elsewhere on the Thames river gravels. The bones are well preserved and have often been clearly marked by butchery.

One of the important aspects of the post-excavation programme on this site has been the analysis of carbonised seeds by Martin Jones. These seeds were found to occur in every stratified deposit, and were finely distributed through the soil.

As little research has been done into the problems associated with interpreting carbonized seeds, it was considered worthwhile to thoroughly examine the material from this site not only to add to aid interpretation, but also to serve as a methodological study, to help determine how to maximize the amount of reliable information that can be gained from such a site, given a limited amount of specialist time.

After having studied over seventy samples from this site, conclusions are beginning to emerge on a number of points: about what kinds of qualitative and quantitative information can emerge at what stage; about which features appear to be chiefly responsible for the variation between different samples; and about what kinds of bias might be expected to arise with different techniques of sampling.

A fairly complete species list similar to the list from Barton Court Farm emerged quite quickly. The recovery of numerous fragments of cereal chaff and rhachis from the samples has allowed some observations to be made on the genetic makeup of the prehistoric cereals concerned.

The quantitative data is to be analysed with the use of a computer, in order to detect relationships that might not be obvious by simply scanning over the large body of data by eye.

ABINGDON/RADLEY, Barton Court Farm (Fig19)

David Miles *et al*

Excavation of the late R.B. 'smithy' building uncovered in 1974, was completed. To the E of this building a square stone-lined well was located. Although the well shaft was only 50cm square it was found to be 7m deep. The well was made of large blocks of Corallian Ragstone built-up inside a clay lined construction shaft. Each course of ragstone was bedded into a thick layer of moss laid on top of the underlying course. At the base of the well the stone shaft was erected on top of a square wooden box of logs (oak?) two courses thick. The well was permanently waterlogged from 2m below the surface providing vast quantities of environmental material. Six leather shoes were found in the well, also a large quantity of pottery with many vessels almost complete. These suggest a late C4th date for the well. Near the bottom of the well was a considerable quantity of iron work in very good condition including latch-lifters, a spearhead, the well-hook and iron bucket binding.

Four small trenches were opened to the E and S of the main excavation in order to clarify the plan and sequence of the late R.B. paddocks.

Work is progressing on the analysis of the stratification of the site and many of the drawings by Wendy Lee are in hand.

Bob Wilson has been examining the bones (about eight thousand) and shell fragments from the site. The results are still being analysed from late I.A. to late R.B. features. Half of the bone and shell remains are from the late R.B. period of the main villa building and its destruction.

Problems associated with fragmentation and bone dispersal over the features are being investigated and may qualify the estimates of animal abundance. Sheep appear more abundant than cattle, while pigs and horses were less common. The proportions of these animal bones indicate little change in the domestic animal economy except that sheep bones are less numerous in the only R.B. sample. Age data tends to confirm the findings for the Appleford site. Pathological bones are moderately common.

The R.B. dogs show a wide range of size which may be associated with the occurrence of hunted animals such as red and roe deer and hares but wild animal bones are relative-

ly rare. Oyster shell is common so far inland and indicates moderately rapid transport from seaports, and perhaps, some prosperity during late R.B. times. The bird bones and Saxon freshwater fish bones are being examined elsewhere.

The remains of twenty-five babies, some new born, some possibly a few weeks old, were in an excellent state of preservation. Many were represented by virtually complete skeletons, some by parts of skeletons disturbed in antiquity, and there was a further scatter of infant bones on the site from various features, presumably derived from disturbed burials. Infants appear to have been buried throughout the occupation of the site, but there were also some adult burials; two crouched burials probably of I.A. date, one male and one female, the former having a very rare dental anomaly: the existence of two small supernumerary teeth behind the upper wisdom tooth; one female, probably late Roman; and from the Saxon period, four people, one male, three females, two of these having newly born babies buried with them, suggesting both mother and child may have died during the birth.

During the 1974 and 1975 seasons of excavations, a large number of the stratified deposits at Barton Court Farm were screened for carbonized seeds. Material from these deposits, and from a few other soil samples stored from excavation in previous years, were examined in the early part of this year and a report prepared for publication. The samples ranged from B.A. to late Roman in date.

Archaeological records of the crops in the Upper Thames Valley have hitherto been extremely fragmentary and the Barton Court Farm samples have provided some useful original information in this field; I.A. deposits produced hulled six-row barley and three species of wheat: spelt, emmer and bread or club wheat; and Roman deposits produced the same species of barley, spelt wheat, club wheat, flax, celtic bean and vetch. A grain of barley was recovered from a B.A. sample.

Seeds from over fifty species of weeds and wild plants were also recovered yielding information on the environment in which the crops were grown. Eleven of those species, most of which occur in only the Roman samples, show an ecological preference for damp conditions, and one of those species prefers sticky clay soils. A hypothesis was proposed explaining the species lists in terms of an increased pressure on land in the Roman period, forcing the arable farmer onto damper ground.

Various other possible lines of research have emerged from studying these samples, as well as certain unanswered problems, such as why there is a considerable range in the proportion of weed seeds in grain samples. It was considered that further conclusions will have to await the study of grain samples from other sites.

ABINGDON, Stert Street - Michael Parrington and Bob Wilson

While most of the Abingdon urban sites have been sent off for publication the only conventional excavation to take place has been on Stert Street where members of the Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society have been excavating under Unit supervision.

The excavations on this site have revealed a complex series of building phases despite the small area under investigation and post-medieval disturbances. Three successive stone building phases have been recorded and an earlier timber cill beam structure. A number of medieval pits have been excavated, two of which contained coins (as yet undated) and two stone-lined post-medieval pits. A small amount of residual Roman pottery has been recovered which may be indicative of Roman features at a lower level.

During this excavation samples have been sieved to ascertain the efficiency of bone collection from the soil. The short list of animal species for medieval Abingdon has been considerably increased, particularly for fish. This sampling should also allow some reinterpretation of previously excavated material.

ALCHESTER - Mark Robinson

During the year environmental samples were examined from the old ground surface beneath the site, the early Roman ditches under the defences and the late Roman town ditch (see CBA Group 9 Newsletter 5, 1975).

The Mollusca indicate that the town was built on what once has been a marsh. The snails and seeds show the early Roman ditches did not contain permanent water and were probably set in rather damp grassland with such plants as meadow rue (Thalictrum flavum) and yellow rattle (Rhinanthus cf minor). 'Spike rush' (Eleocharis sp) indicates that the plants of the ditches were subjected to mowing or grazing because it requires open vegetation. The most numerous group of

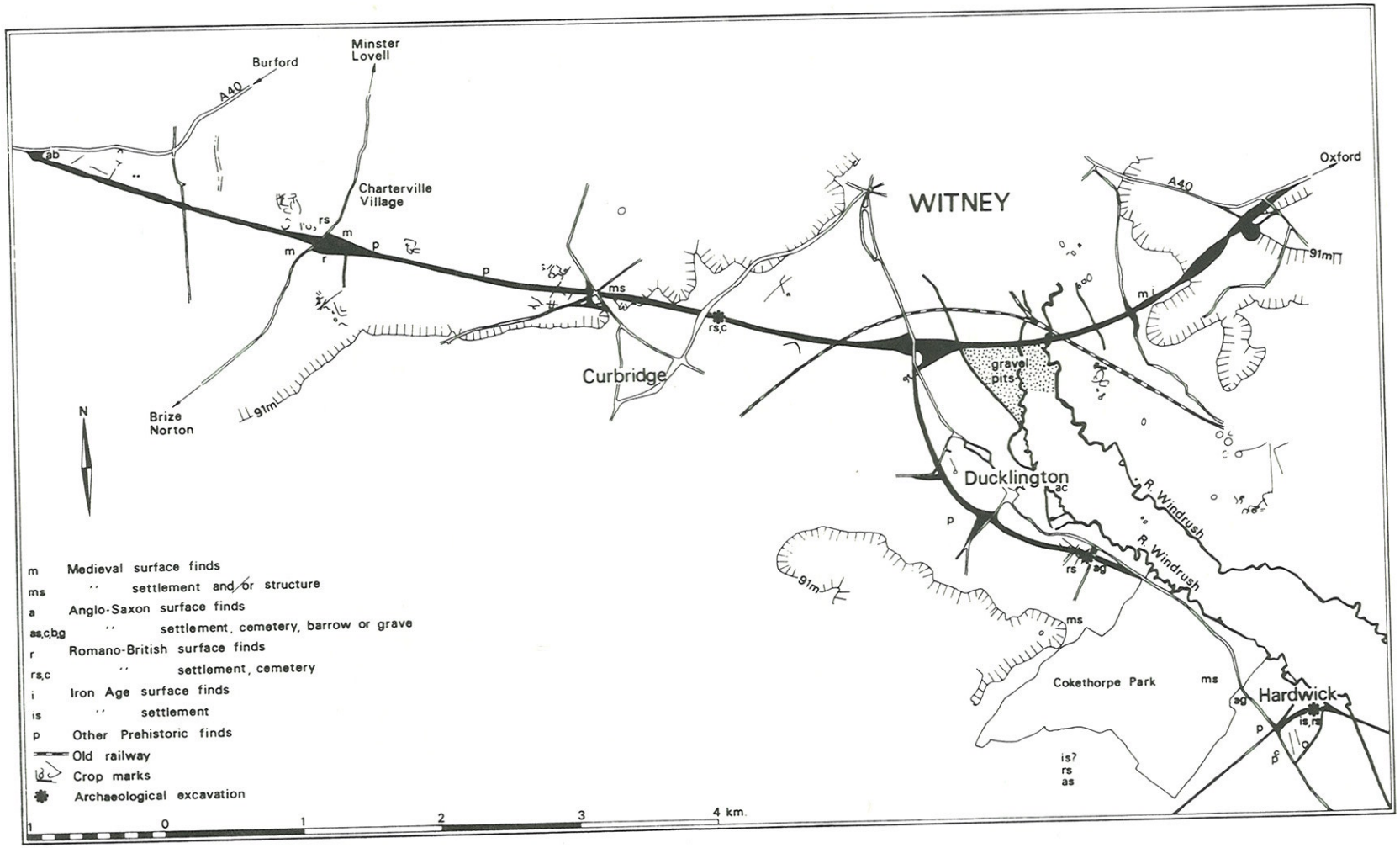

Burford
Minster Lovell
A40
Charterville Village
WITNEY
Oxford
A40
91m
Curbridge
Brize Norton
91m
gravel pits
Ducklington
R. Windrush
R. Windrush
91m
Cokethorpe Park
Hardwick
N
m Medieval surface finds
ms " settlement and/or structure
a Anglo-Saxon surface finds
as,c,bg " settlement, cemetery, barrow or grave
r Romano-British surface finds
rs,c " settlement, cemetery
i Iron Age surface finds
is " settlement
p Other Prehistoric finds
Old railway
Crop marks
Archaeological excavation
1 0 1 2 3 4 km.

Fig. 20

beetles from them are dung beetles and were probably associated with domestic mammals on the grassland.

The molluscs, seeds and insects show that the late Roman town ditch was very different from the earlier ones for it contained clean flowing water and a good growth of aquatic vegetation including water crowfoot (Ranunculus S. Batrachium) and pondweed (Potamogeton spp). The vegetation of the ditch was not grazed or cropped because it contained bur-reed (Sparganium erectum). Whilst the grassland element in the fauna and flora was not present, it seemed to have replaced by scrub including hazel (Corylus avellana) and white bryony (Bryonia dioica). Weeds of disturbed ground from both this ditch and the earlier ones could be from building sites and gardens in the town or arable agriculture.

A seed of coriander (Coriandrum sativum), from one of the early ditches, was of particular interest; this was a plant much valued by the Romans for its flavouring. Fragments of both adult and lava of the great silver beetle (Hydrophilus piceus) indicate that this rare beetle, now extinct in Oxfordshire, bred in the ditch.

APPLEFORD - Bob Wilson

The analysis of waterlogged samples and bones from John Hinchliffe's excavation of 1973 is nearing completion. Nearly 2,000 bones and shells were collected from 50 I.A. and R.B. features.

The numbers of bones in the hoof, hock joint and vertebrae of sheep are markedly lower than the numbers of the equivalent bones in cattle, while the estimates of their minimum numbers indicate they had populations of about equal size. It is shown that with decreasing size of bones there is a decreasing chance of being collected and the lesser quantities of sheep bone in 'the sample' is largely attributed to such bias. Interpretation of the results is further complicated by a substantial difference between the proportion of sheep bones in the pits and that in the ditches.

Cattle, sheep, horse, pig and dog are the most common animals. No goat bones were distinguished from the 'sheep'. Two red deer bones and three shed antlers of red deer, an I.A. hedgehog and R.B. oyster shell were also present.

Most horses appear to have been kept to maturity and the modern age equivalent of one mandible suggests up to 21 years of age. Cattle and sheep were slaughtered at earlier developmental stages and pigs earliest of all. Butchery marks indicate that horse was occasionally eaten at least. A dog's skull was found which appears to have been chopped off the spine and its muzzle shows knife marks, perhaps as a result of skinning.

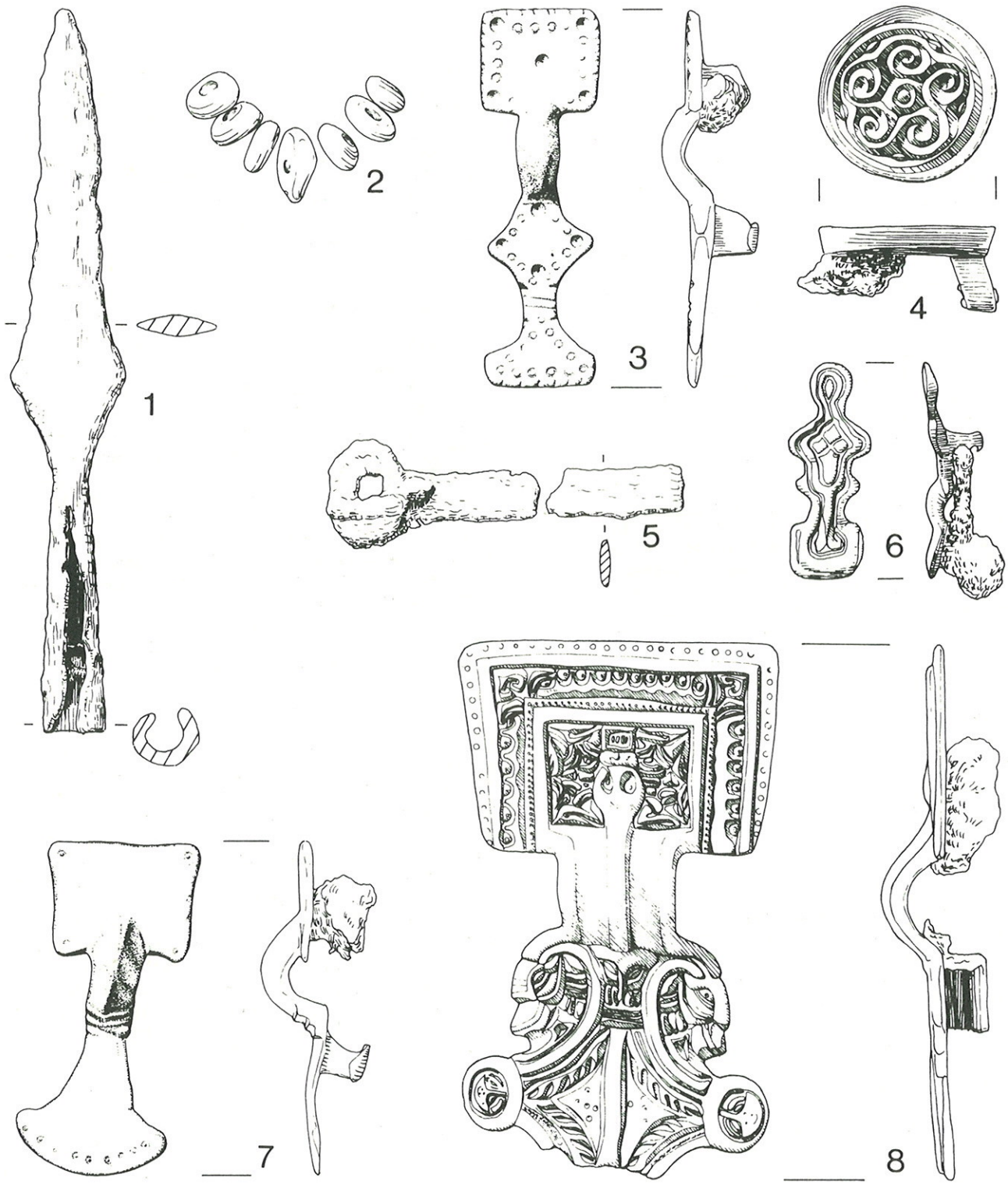
BERINSFIELD - David Miles and Mary Harman

Excavations continued on the Amey Roadstone Corporation's site at Wally Corner. The area to the W and N of the 1974 excavation was trial trenched prior to extensive topsoil removal by ARC. No archaeological features were found and the limits of the Saxon cemetery seem to have been reached on the N, W and E sides. Further trenches were excavated to the S, between the gravel pit and the road to Berinsfield. A series of R.B. ditches (1st to C4th AD) were found and between them were a further three Saxon inhumations. One had been buried with a spear and knife, the other two were without grave goods. All were aligned between E-W and S E-N W. A total of 103 inhumations has now been found.

The examination of the skeletal remains excavated in 1974 has been completed by Mary Harman. The remains of 99 individuals were mostly in good condition, though preservation depended on local soil variations. Of these, 28 were male, 29 female, 10 adults of undetermined sex, and 32 children. Only one newly born infant was found although there was a high child mortality, probably indicating that babies were buried elsewhere, possibly at the settlement. On the whole the women died earlier than the men, and few people survived beyond forty years. Dental health was good, heights average, and there are no startling abnormalities. It is expected that this group and the late R.B. Queenford Farm group to be seen later in the year will provide interesting comparisons.

CURBRIDGE (Fig 20) - Richard Chambers

A small, provisionally late R.B. period cemetery and R.B. settlement site has been revealed at Burbridge during the construction of the Witney by-pass by the A.R.C. An excavation recorded approximately 30 shallow inhumation burials of differing orientations. In three burials the head had been cut off and placed between the legs. Sets of hobnails were also recovered from several graves.



A selection of objects from the Anglo Saxon cemetery at Berinsfield: 1974 excavations. 1. Spearhead, grave 26; 2. Amber and glass beads, grave 49; 3. Small-long brooch, one of a dissimilar pair, grave 104; 4. One of a pair of saucer brooches, grave 73; 5. Iron buckle, grave 32; 6. Miniature gilt bronze brooch, found at the waist, grave 77; 7. One of a pair of small-long brooches, grave 91; 8. A broken great square-headed brooch, paired with a saucer brooch, grave 107. Scales: spearhead and buckle 1 : 2; remainder 1 : 1.

The graves cut into underlying pits and ditches from the R.B. settlement which appears to have existed from the 1st - C4th AD. Several of the pits, ditches and post holes were sectioned and several flimsy rubble footings belonging to timber buildings within the settlement were found.

FARMOOR (Fig 21) - George Lambrick and Mark Robinson

Salvage work continued intermittently on the new reservoir site at Farmoor following last year's excavation. The initial interpretation has been largely confirmed by the discovery of new features. The most important of these was another complex of I.A. enclosures. These consisted of a series of interlinked polygonal and sub-circular enclosures with a later, more typical, penanular gully dug into them. Opposite the entrance one of the earlier ditches was filled with stone and in the ends of the penanular gully were found the upper and lower halves of a horse skull. The complex was dated to the late pre-Belgic I.A.

Stratigraphical and environmental evidence have proved that this and the other I.A. complex in the flood plain found last year were both subject to flooding and were only occupied (presumably seasonally) for between three to five years.

Little more R.B. settlement evidence has been discovered, however the droveway which crossed the site probably turned and ran along the line of an old river bed marking the edge of the alluvial plain rather than simply giving access to the meadows on the flood plain.

The site is providing valuable evidence for the respective I.A. and R.B. settlement patterns on the first gravel terrace and flood plain of the Thames and environmental work is also providing important evidence to support this and to build up a picture of the respective economies.

Over 200 species of insect and 90 species of plants have been identified from Farmoor to date. The most recent hut circle gully to be excavated contained seeds of several species of aquatic plant including water crowfoot (Ranunculus S Batrachium). It is therefore difficult to interpret it as the wall trench for a Little Woodbury type hut.

The environmental work is also indicating the type of settlement at Farmoor at different dates. Those of the I.A. are temporary and set in an expanse of grassland, whilst in the Roman period there were more permanent laid out fields with hedges. Both R.B. and I.A. settlements seem to have suffered from limited flooding.

NORTH LEIGH, North Oxfordshire, GRIM'S DITCH - David Fine

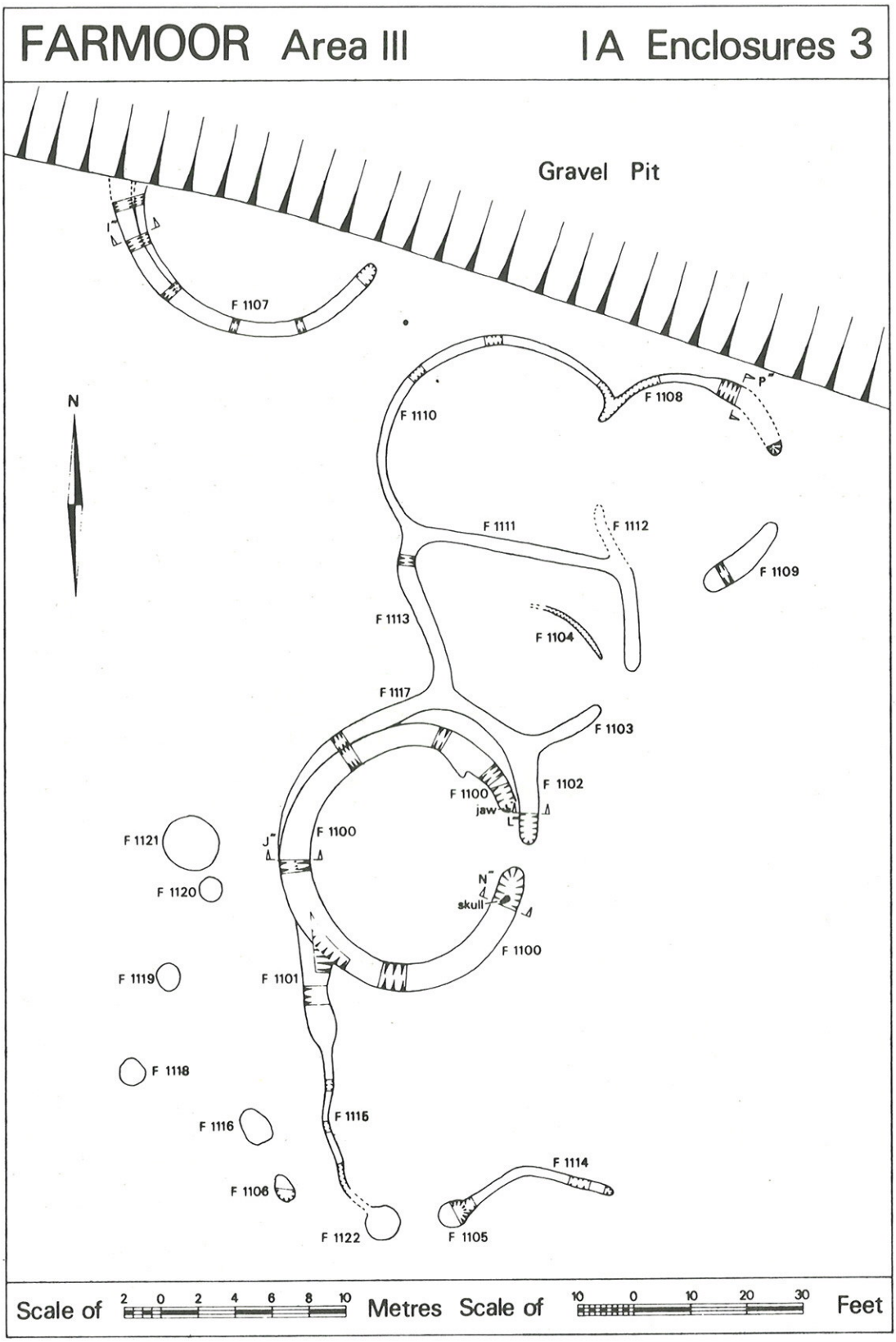
An excavation of the Grim's Ditch in advance of a water-main was carried out. The Ditch is a discontinuous earthwork which encompasses twenty two square miles. Previous excavations (Haverfield, Proceedings of the Society of Antiquities, London 1899, Vol. XVII; Harden Oxoniensia II 1937; Thomas Oxoniensia XXII 1957) have concentrated upon the N sector where the Ditch is on cornbrash and was postulated as being late I.A.

The 1975 excavation was on Oxford clay and two phases of ditch and associated bank have been found, and these possibly are analogous with the previous excavations to the N. However no attempt can be made to date more closely the Ditch as no artefacts have been recovered at all. This sparsity of occupation debris is similar to the previous excavations and may indicate a boundary rather than mound defence function for the Ditch. The bank has been eroded by medieval ploughing which has also been eroded by post medieval levelling which included the insertion of a field stream in the ditch.

OXFORD, THE HAMEL - N. Palmer

An excavation lasting a total of twelve weeks, in advance of redevelopment by Christ Church College, was carried out on medieval tenements and abandoned street frontage on the corner of the Hamel with St. Thomas's High Street. At the S end of the site, part of the tenement known in the medieval documents as the Hall of St. Helen was found to have three main building phases (Fig. 22 II, III & IV) from the mid-13th to the mid-C19th, of which the earliest was very substantial (walls 1.20m wide). The tenement to the N, known as Bretel's, had two main phases (II & IV) from the mid-13th to the mid-C19th.

The earliest buildings on the site (I), dating from the late C12th, consisted of a row of houses separated from an area of pits and ditches by a narrow path at right angles to the High Street. At some time in the mid-


FARMOOR Area III
IA Enclosures 3
Gravel Pit
N
F 1107
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F 1117
F 1103
F 1102
F 1100
jaw
F 1121
F 1120
skull
F 1119
F 1101
F 1118
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Scale of 2 0 2 4 6 8 10 Metres Scale of 10 0 10 20 30 Feet

Fig. 21

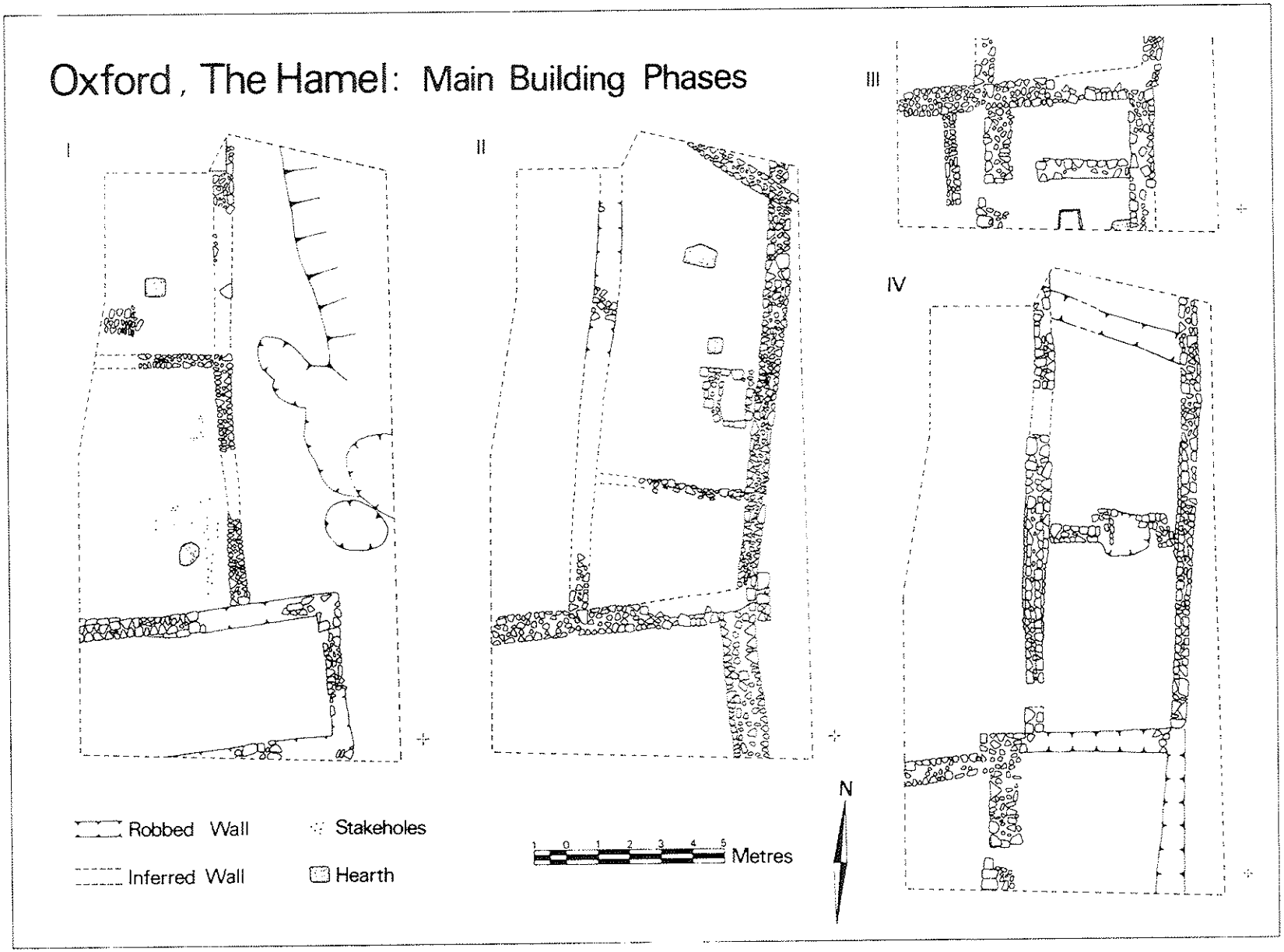
Oxford, The Hamel: Main Building Phases
I
II
III
IV
Robbed Wall
Inferred Wall
Stakeholes
Hearth
1 0 1 2 3 4 5
Metres
N

Fig. 22

C13th the pits and ditches seem to have been infilled, so that the Hamel, the road to Oseney Abbey, could be laid out on top of them; simultaneously the frontage of the houses was moved forward to the line it occupied until the C19th. Another trench, currently in progress on the High Street frontage to the E of the main site, has produced similar evidence of C13th building over infilled ditches.

A further, more extensive, system of ditches, some of them lined with wattles, predates the buildings discovered and may represent the remains of an earlier C12th field system. The latter features contain waterlogged deposits which have produced an interesting group of C12th leather shoes and other artefacts. Underlying the medieval features some of B.A. date were encountered, and it is hoped that these together with the rest of the C12th system can be further investigated.

WARBOROUGH - George Lambrick & Mary Harman

A trial excavation was conducted at a known cemetery site at Warborough after a lead coffin had been discovered during subsoiling. Two trenches were dug to determine the damage caused by the work, and to recover dating evidence. The subsoiling had disturbed one other burial in the same area as the coffin and another in an area with deeper soil where the burials were generally deeper. The lines of disturbed soil 18" to 20" deep with a V-shaped profile were easily recognizable, as was the hard-packed soil 'pan' which the operation was intended to break up. The cemetery's main enclosure ditch provided a group of largely C4th Roman pottery. This feature also produced residual I.A. and early Roman material. The possibility that the site is early Christian (suggested by the E-W alignment of the graves, the lack of grave goods and the field name 'Church Piece') has not been disproved.

PLOUGH SURVEY - George Lambrick

The Unit was commissioned by the DoE to prepare a report on the feasibility of conducting a survey of the effect of agriculture, especially ploughing, on archaeological sites. This report was presented to S Midlands Archaeological Working party in March. It recommended that a survey should be carried out on the basis of sampling areas for study on different geological deposits in the region. It was suggested that the examination should be on a county basis because of the existing agricultural and archaeological organization, but that separate work in the different counties (Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire) should be integrated to provide up a regional picture. The sources of information for a survey were assessed and it was clear that the work would have to be based almost entirely on field observation and discussion with the farmers concerned. Such a survey will differ from Gravel and Town Surveys in that threats are extremely difficult to define or locate since they do not appear during the planning processes. Agricultural threats consist of four main elements: 1. the ploughing up of permanent grassland; 2. the use of more damaging techniques on existing arable; 3. the encouragement of erosion by normal ploughing; 4. other activities such as forestry, hedge removal, drainage, levelling, etc. These affect both earthwork and non-earthwork sites, and the report recommended that the survey should not be confined to earthworks as they would constitute an unrepresentative sample of sites, and of the conditions under which damage may take place. Although a detailed sampling survey was the chief recommendation it was also suggested that more detailed consideration of the agricultural treatment of the land should be encouraged amongst field workers. The work for the report also revealed the ignorance of most archaeologists about technical aspects of cultivation and, as an immediate result of the study, a booklet explaining modern cultivation methods is being prepared for publication in 1976.

OTHER SITES RECORDED DURING 1975

ABINGDON, ABBEY HOUSE CAR PARK

A number of human burials were recovered here during the construction of an office building. The burials were on an E-W alignment and are presumably associated with the lay-cemetery of Abingdon Abbey which is known to be in the area. A small quantity of Roman pottery was also recovered.

CUMNOR BY-PASS

Field work by the Oxford University Archaeological Society on the route of the new Cumnor Hill By Pass revealed no major sites. One deserted farmstead, Busby's Farm, was identified, part of which was used until the 1940's and was still standing to a height of

over 1m. Other buildings and a garden at the rear were identified and a holloway was found to run from Wytham Hill, past this farmstead across the valley to the hamlet of Chawley, now almost engulfed by suburban development. A small trial excavation at Busby's Farm revealed evidence suggesting a medieval origin. The farm is situated on the spring line below Wytham Hill at the junction of Corallian beds with the Oxford clay beneath. This conforms to the pattern in the area, there being several settlements in a corresponding position below Wytham Hill.

DORCHESTER, 7 Rotten Row

Foundation trenches at the rear of No. 7 Rotten Row, Dorchester, uncovered a shallow, supine E-W adult burial and the scattered remains of at least three other inhumations. The single, undisturbed burial, with its head to the W, may have been buried in a coffin as an iron nail was found against the lower spine.

Burials had already been uncovered under nos. 5-6 Rotten Row and also beneath a previous extension to no. 7. These burials appear to represent part of a cemetery which lies within the Roman walled town, and a short distance S-W of the abbey. This may indicate the position of one of the three parish churches recorded by Leyland in 1542 all of which lay close to the abbey and have since disppeared.

EYNSHAM, High Street

Mechanical excavation for a 9.5m x 4.5m swimming pool at the rear of 'The Shrubbery', High Street, Eynsham, revealed late R.B. and A.S. pottery. The swimming pool cut into the underlying gravel to a depth of approximately 1m and many post and stake holes were revealed cutting into the gravel in the sides of the trench. The E end of the trench revealed a buried turf line at 0.5m, which sealed a layer of occupational debris. Animal bone, late R.B. coarse wares, two fragments of grass-tempered pottery and a doughnut-shaped loom weight were found in spoil excavated from this layer. This site is approximately 55m N of excavations carried out within the precints of Eynsham Abbey by Margaret Gray in 1971 when Prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and Saxon-Norman pottery was recovered (CBA Newsletter no. 2,). A small group of bones representing at least two adults was seen.

EYNSHAM, Tanners Lane, Off Queen Street

Excavation for the foundations of a new house in the garden of Hythe Croft, adjacent to the former Tannery, produced substantial pieces of C4th R.B. grey wares and three large sherds of grass tempered pottery of A.S. type. There was also a hone. Various features could be seen cut into the natural gravel but their functions were uncertain with the exception of a tan pit. Roman finds have frequently been made in the area including a Follis of Constantine.

FARMOOR-SWINFORD PIPE LINE

A water pipeline from Farmoor Reservoir to the treatment works of Swinford necessitated the stripping of a 15m wide corridor between the two terminals. A scatter of R.B. and medieval pottery was found along the N half of the pipe-line S of Swinford Farm. A complex of Roman features with associated late R.B. pottery was found cut into the gravel.

GREAT MILTON, Views Farm

A small cemetery was located in the course of excavating the foundations of a new bungalow at Views Farm. The site was visited as a result of a report appearing in the Oxford Mail; unfortunately the skeletal material had been removed by the police and incinerated on the orders of the coroner. Approximately six graves could be seen in the sections of the foundation trenches aligned N-S and pottery in the graves, including a small beaker, indicates a R.B. date for the cemetery.

KINGSTON BAGPUIZE, Kingston Hill Farm

Roman pottery, masonry and a mortar floor were recorded in a pipe trench on this site. A trial excavation in the vicinity of the pipe trench revealed the extent of the floor and more pottery and large numbers of cow horns were recovered.

KINGSTON BLOUNT

Two late I.A. cremation vessels were discovered in a pit by the side of 'Elizabeth Villa', Kingston Blount, by Mr. Collett whilst digging a sewer pipe trench.

Each vessel contained a cremation; the larger vessel contained that of an adult and the smaller bead rim bowl contained the remains of a child. The larger vessel, a jar, was of a general late Belgic shape and, in common with a necked bowl from the nearby late Belgic cremation burial at Watlington (Oxoniensia XXIII 1958, 139-41), exhibited a false cordon at the base of the neck, lightly incised grooves below the shoulder and a low foot ring. The Kingston Blount cremations appear to provide more evidence for a late spread of Belgic burial practise into the Upper Thames Region.

OXFORD, Austin Friars

Two small excavations were carried out to establish the origins of a small stone building against the E boundary wall of the college. The conclusion was that it had been adapted from a Friary building, but that the visible stone mouldings were reused and had been inserted since the Dissolution.

OXFORD, Blackfriars

Two small trenches were dug at the W end of the church to facilitate the interpretation of the site. The excavation established the probability that the N Aisle of the Nave belonged to the first phase of construction, and the possible porch, was shown to have been added at a later date. The existence of a probable Galilee found in 1974 outside the extended W End of the church was confirmed. Work on the final report of the excavations 1961-1975 should be ready for publication in 1976.

OXFORD, CHRIST CHURCH

The reflooring of basements in the E range of Peckwater Quadrangle exposed a large area of unstable fill which must represent the cellars of the C17th quadrangle. In the S range of the cathedral cloister, builders dug up two unused late medieval printed floor tiles, again from the fill of an old cellar.

OXFORD, Greyfriars

Excavations on the N and S of Turn Again Lane have exposed walls and robber trenches of the S and E ranges of the Great Cloister. Associated floor surfaces were encountered including an area of 16 inlaid tiles in situ in the alley of the E range. Stoneware found in the robber trenches suggests a C17th date for the robbing of the footings. Further excavation is planned.

OXFORD, Osney Abbey

Widening of the Mill Stream exposed a massive rubble footing and a parallel stone drain, probably associated with one of the Abbey's waterfront buildings.

OXFORD, 51-55 Holywell Street

Two small trenches were dug to establish the line of the outer medieval town wall (a defensive feature, apparently unique in England). The trench coincided with a blocked postern gate, approached by a stair on the town side, the threshold being 3m below modern ground level and probably very close to the medieval water level. Subsequent salvage work exposed more of this wall, which must have formed the S bank of the town ditch until the C17th. The N bank was also recorded beneath the Holywell Street houses.

OXFORD, 14-15 St. Ebbe's Street

Numerous medieval pits were observed during the contractor's excavation, and a small section was recorded through the earliest road surfaces of Beef Lane.

OXFORD, St. John's College

Staircases 9 and 10, Canterbury Quad, were observed and recorded. A sequence of decorations was noted and early C10th deposits recovered from beneath the floors.

WALLINGFORD CASTLE, ABS Site

In November the Architects Benevolent Society excavated a trench 6m x 1m to a depth of 1m 50cms in the Outer Bailey of the Castle in order to keep its planning permission valid on the site. The stratigraphy of the tip layers containing 12th and C13th pottery was similar to that recovered in the 1972 excavation.

WALLINGFORD, Milbrook Development Site

Trial excavations were carried out on this site by R. Thomas and the Wallingford Society. Two Victorian pits and a ditch of I.A. date were the only features located.

WANTAGE, Belmont Park

A series of trial trenches was dug at the above site in order to learn something of the nature of Roman occupation in the area which has produced material in some quantity. No evidence was found of Roman occupation and the only feature located was an undateable round-bottomed ditch.

WEST HAGBOURNE, Hagbourne Hill

A proton-magnetometer survey was carried out along the line of the A34 extension in this area by the Oxford Research Laboratory for Archaeology and some of the in-service training students, with negative results.

WILCOTE

A measured survey of the earthworks of the shrunken settlement of Wilcote was made in the face of a threat to plough the previously unploughed site. A small amount of excavation revealed the outline of a stone building and a patterned pitched stone cobbled yard of two phases. No dating evidence was found. On seeing this stonework the farmer decided that it would be of no advantage to complete the work. A minimum of disturbances had been caused to the previously unploughed part of the site.

OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

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