

OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER  
INCLUDING OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

No. 1 - January 1977

Anyone wishing to send contributions to the Newsletter should send copy to 46 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford, OX1 2EP (Tel. 43888) before the last Tuesday of each month.

Subscriptions for the 1977 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 in due course.

ABINGDON - Stert Street

With help from the Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society, laborious sorting of sieved soil samples from three features has been undertaken by Bob Wilson and has revealed a wealth of preserved rubbish. In the fifteenth to sixteenth century well, 180 gravel-like small bones, some with knife cuts, appear to be trimmings from at least 1 pig trotters. Only one of these bones was spotted before sieving. Fish bones outnumbered the identified bird and mammal remains but were scarcely visible in the soil. Caudal vertebrae of sheep were also relatively common. Five fused end to end were also picked up and the presence of long-tailed sheep breeds is indicated, hardly a novel discovery but also of interest in that local sheep do not appear to have had their tails docked as is common nowadays.

Examination of the pottery from this site has revealed several good groups of twelfth century pottery and a fifteenth to sixteenth century group. Many of the sherds are capable of being restored and it should be possible to draw more whole profiles than is usual from Abingdon sites.

BENSON

Maureen Mellor and Richard Chambers visited a property called 'The Kilns' in Benson where some development is to take place in the near future. In this srea a number of field names suggest the existence of former pottery kilns. However, the derivation of this particular place name probably lay in a small brick-built lime kiln which was discovered lurking in the corner of an old quarry!

BICESTER - 37-39 and 49-57 Sheep Street

Demolition of buildings in Sheep Street, Bicester, has allowed exploratory mechanical trenching under the supervision of Richard Chambers, to take place underneath numbers 37-39 and 49-57. On both sites there was little stratification beneath the buildings that had fronted onto Sheep Street and at the rear of these buildings garden soils were found. Apart from some shallow post-medieval pottery and a filled-in cellar, there was little to be recorded. No sign of medieval occupation was seen.

FARMOOR

The writing up of Farmoor by George Lambrick is now reaching its final stages, and should be finished within the next week or two.

OXFORD

Brian Durham reports that arrangements have been made with a University Department for detailed petrological analysis of the pottery fabric series, to support the visual identifications. The processing of pottery from The Hamel and Greyfriars is proceeding apace.

Maureen Mellor attended a conference on "Computer Applications in Archaeology" which she says was rather esoteric, but has motivated her to initiate a process of digital input of ceramic data for the purpose of electronic sorting and retrieval! Following the conference we had a visit from Dr. York, the newly appointed medieval pottery specialist of the York Archaeological Trust.

The Committee's 8 metre electric conveyor belt has been hired to the D.O.E. for excavations at Elton Palace, London, at a very reasonable rate!

#### PLOUGH SURVEY

The booklet on ploughing, written by George Lambrick, is due to be published in time for a national seminar on plough damage being held in Salisbury on 15th February 1977.

#### RADLEY - Barrow Hills

A first draft of the report has been completed by Michael Parrington and circulated for discussion.

#### SUTTON COURTNEY - Peep-O-Day Lane

Michael Parrington reports that salvage excavations in advance of gravel extraction have located a linear ditch which may be a continuation of the Drayton Cursus. A ring ditch which cuts the linear ditch has also been recorded.

#### TOWCESTER - Northamptonshire

Robin Symonds continues to work on the pottery from Towcester, and Peter Lock, one of the in-service trainees, has just completed the documentary research on the site and is now starting work on publication plans. The documentary evidence proved very disappointing adding nothing of much archaeological use, despite very full accounts of the charity which owned the site dating from the mid-fifteenth century to the early nineteenth century.

#### THAME HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The active members of this society spent much of last summer gear up for field work on the line of the Southern Feeder Gas Main but unfortunately difficulty of access to the pipeline frustrated such activities.

It was proposed in October that the long-term objective of the society should be the detailed examination of the growth of Thame, both by 'field work' and also using such documented evidence as has survived to the present.

An analysis of the various activities open to the society both as a whole and as subdivided study groups or individuals was also set before the members.

At the AGM of the Thame Historical Society, held on 25th January, 1977, the proposals set out by the Secretary, Mr. Southern, in October were discussed. The Chairman, Mr. Jessup summed up the reaction of members as being interested but hoped that the proposals would prove to be practical for a small society. The chief obstacle is that individuals fear themselves to be inadequate, but the Secretary tried to make a point that no effort is too small or insignificant. The Secretary asked members to take a small supply of the Parish Survey Reporting Slips and to return them to him with whatever snippet of knowledge came to hand. He then went on to discuss the location of locally made clocks, the recording of pottery sherds and any other material including oral information told to them concerning the town and its people.

A small Committee of five people was constituted to coordinate the various talents when the occasion might arise. This Committee included the Head of the Field Walking Group, a member of the Town Council and the Secretary.

It was suggested that the first requirement was a large-scale plan of the burgage plots, and the names of the present tenants and owners. Mr. Patchett, the Treasurer, agreed to try his hand at this task.

#### PARISH SURVEY NEWS

The second parish survey progress meeting was held at the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit on Sunday 16th January. Unfortunately attendance was very low especially as it was hoped to circulate to all group representatives copies of the new parish survey check list, a copy of which is enclosed with this newsletter. If groups require further copies of the check list will they please write to Mr. R. A. Chambers at the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit. There are several events and day schools currently being organised for people working in local history and the parish survey.

The film "Twenty-Four Square Miles" is to be shown in the basement lecture theatre at the University of Oxford Department of External Studies, Rewley House, Wellington Square, Oxford, on Wednesday 23rd February at 8.00 p.m. This film is a documentary on the results of a government survey of the state of rural Britain at the end of the Second World War. The survey required a rural area which was as representative as possible of the British countryside in general and the area chosen, 24 square miles between Banbury and Chipping Norton, was intensively studied. This film portrays the results in a documentary which also shows the excellent standards that film makers were achieving at this time. Now, thirty years later, this film is an important visual, historical document of village and farming conditions that have now disappeared.

A day school on Oral Recording of local history and traditions will be held at the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit on Saturday 12th March, from 10 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. In the morning speakers will cover the intentions of the oral history recordist, basic training in oral history techniques. The role of the museum archive will be covered by John Rhodes, Keeper of Antiquities at Woodstock Museum, and during the afternoon there will be practical training sessions. Hugh Philips and a colleague from Radio Oxford will advise on the use of the tape recorder and interviewing techniques. The number of students is limited to 12 for practical reasons. At present 7 places remain vacant, and anyone interested, again please write to Mr. R. A. Chambers.

A day school on 'Boundaries and Place Names' will be conducted by Margaret Gelling on Saturday, 21st May, 1977 at the Department for External Studies, Wellington Square, Oxford. Applications to Mr. Chambers.

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#### Thoughts in the Bath

\* What is it that prompts archaeologists to write doggerel?  
It's not as if it's even bad enough to be as good as McGonagall.  
Perhaps, bein' as it's in Oxfordshire, they're giving themselves Ayres,  
But Aow! they lack the final comic twist that she dayres,  
So what is it that prompts archaeologists to write doggerel?

C.L.

\* I owe this line to Henry Cleere who uttered it on reading a file of OAU Newsletters.

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## ANY OTHER ITEMS

A competition for the best contribution to rescue archaeology by independent archaeologists is being organised by Rescue and Current Archaeology. The first competition will be held on Saturday 7th May, 1977. The award, which is being provided by the BBC will be presented in September 1977. Further details may be obtained from the Secretary of the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit.

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CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY AND MARCH

- 4-6 Feb University of Southampton. Non-residential Conference on Rural Settlements in S. Britain.
- 7 Feb OUAS. Philip Rahtz. 'The Anglo-Saxon Watermill at Tamworth and its counterparts in present-day Crete'. Ashmolean Museum, 8.15 pm.
- 12 Feb OUDES with Oxon. Dept. Museum Services. Day Seminar on the Investigation of Workers' Housing. Rewley House, 10.00 am.
- 14 Feb CUAS. Dr. J.P. Northover. 'Prehistoric Bronze Working in Wales'. Ashmolean Museum, 8.15 pm.
- 16 Feb Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society. Mr. F. Dumbleton. 'The Preservation of Great Western Railway History' John Mason School, Abingdon. 7.30 pm.
- 19-20 Feb OUDES. Weekend course on Roman Gemstones and Finger Rings; their archaeology and art. Course lecturer - Martin Henig.
- 21 Feb OUAS. John Evans. 'Land Snails and Archaeology - recent results'. Ashmolean Museum, 8.15 pm.
- 23 Feb 'Twenty-four Square Miles' - film to be shown in the basement lecture theatre, Rewley House, Oxford. 8.00 p.m.
- 28 Feb OUAS. Alan Carter. 'The Norwich Survey, 1971 to 1976'. Ashmolean Museum, 8.15 pm.
- 5 March Historical Documents, Topography and the Archaeology of Towns. Saturday School at the University Centre, Northampton.
- 7 March OUAS. Duncan Wilson. 'Prehistoric to Medieval Ploughs, and their Development'. Ashmolean Museum, 8.15 pm.
- 8 March OUAS. Professor Glyn Daniel. 'Changing Perspectives in Prehistory'. Ashmolean Museum, 8.15 pm.
- 10 March OAS. Tom Hassall. 'Excavations in Oxfordshire, 1976'. Ashmolean Museum 8.15 pm.
- 11-13 March Department for Adult Education, Leicester University. Residential course on 'Leather for Archaeologists and Conservators'. Knuston Hall.
- 26-27 March OUDES. CBA Group 9 Annual Report Conference 1977. Rewley House, Wellington Square, Oxford.
- 28-31 March OUDES. Seminar on Settlement of the Early Iron Age in Britain and Northern France. Rewley House, Wellington Square, Oxford.