

OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER
INCLUDING OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

No. 5 - May 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.

ABINGDON - Ashville Archives

All the original excavation plans and working drawings from this site have been microfilmed by the National Monuments Record so that a copy will be available in case of accident. Eventually it is proposed to microfilm all the site archives material.

ABINGDON - St. Helen's Church Centre

Local Society excavations under the supervision of Bob Wilson continue in need of volunteer help but have progressed to uncover a series of postholes and robbed out wall foundations below the nineteenth century features. They appear to represent two phases of building of sixteenth to eighteenth century duration, and evidently including stone and clay tiles and wall plaster in their construction. Changes in building alignments suggest eighteenth century property changes perhaps associated with the extension (as yet unresearched) of the adjacent graveyard. Scattered human bones occur in a post-medieval pit of around this date.

ABINGDON - Market Place

Phil Page, an in-service trainee with the Unit, is currently writing up the excavation at the Market Place, the majority of which consists of twelfth to thirteenth century rubbish pits, and one dubious Roman ditch. He has also been drawing the plans for publication, and drawing the pottery.

ABINGDON AND SOUTH HINKSEY

Since the last Newsletter, Mike Parrington reports a spate of skeletons in the Abingdon and South Hinksey areas. The Abingdon skeleton was found by a man digging a hole to bury rubbish (these old medieval habits still continue in Abingdon) in the garden of a house near to the Abingdon Saxon cemetery excavated in the 1930's. The burial is probably an outlier from the cemetery but unfortunately had no grave goods with it.

The other burial from South Hinksey was found during excavations for a garden wall and after the best brains of the Oxford C.I.D. had been baffled by the mystery they passed it on to the archaeologists. One of the locals at the scene propounded the theory that the burial was that of a Saxon fleeing from Cromwell (sic) but it seems more likely to be Roman.

BERINSFIELD - Mount Farm

Stripping on the part of the site allocated for archaeological excavation has now started and salvage work is being carried out on the site.

OXFORD - Paradise Street

The University Archaeological Society, under the supervision of Jane Fox, has dug a trial hole on the south frontage of Paradise Street immediately south of the castle. At a depth of c. 1.5 metres they have found a horizon with thirteenth century pottery, and a stone footing. Work continues on this and another small trench beside the castle mill stream on the same site, intended to look for previous water-fronts.

SOUTH HINKSEY - see above

WALLINGFORD - Market Place

The Wallingford Society, under the general direction of Richard Chambers, has begun a trial excavation in the garden at the rear of no. 5 Market Place, prior to the redevelopment of the site. The site is one of prime importance being in the centre of the Saxon/medieval town.

The weekend's digging has finally uncovered a medieval ground surface almost 2 metres below the present ground surface. Several cess pits cut through this medieval surface and await excavation. This trench should provide important information on the archaeological stratification in the town centre.

WIDFORD

The Reverend T. Mine, Mr. and Mrs. Scarffe and Burford School have recently joined forces to survey the deserted medieval village earthworks surrounding the church at Widford. Anyone who is interested in helping is welcome.

WILCOTE

Members of the Finstock Local History Society have begun recording a previously unsuspected nineteenth-century pottery kiln and surrounding workshops at Fawler, West Oxfordshire. This kiln, presumably operated by the Boultons who were well known at the turn of the century for their brick products from Fawler, lies within an earlier farmstead which was modified into a factory probably for the production of coarse hollow wares such as land drains and roof furniture.

PARISH SURVEY INFORMATION

The fresh supply of gravestone recording forms has prompted several enquiries on graveyard recording in general. Graveyards are an important source of information about population history, artistic fashion and religious ideas. The techniques used to record them are to be found in a booklet entitled 'How to Record Graveyards' by Jeremy Jones, priced 75p, from the Council for British Archaeology, 7 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5HA, or from the Museum bookstall, Oxfordshire County Museum, Woodstock.

However, two common problems have recently been brought to the notice of Richard Chambers.

Firstly, groups who have had little or no surveying experience often find difficulty in drawing up a plan of their graveyard. It is a task that becomes easier with practise and they should not hesitate to call on either John Steane at the Oxfordshire County Museum, or Richard Chambers at the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit for assistance.

A second problem is posed by photography, how much and where? We are all aware of the colossal price of photography at the present time and if Jeremy Jones' recommendations are to be carried out in full (i.e. a photographic record of each individual monument) the cost per churchyard will be considerable. Some groups may be able to afford this but I doubt very many. If a complete and carefully compiled written record of the memorials has been committed to the recording forms, then the essential need is to photograph selected examples from each main type of monument present. Thus, a minimum photographic record need only show -

- a) a selected example of each type of memorial
- b) all important memorials of an individual character - these may include some from a) which bare unusual decoration
- c) two or three general views of the graveyard to serve as a visual record of the layout and state of the cemetery at the time of recording. If it is a churchyard rather than a non-conformist chapelyard that is being recorded, a view from the top of the bell tower is extremely useful (although remember to ask permission first).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRAINING WEEKEND FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUPS IN OXFORDSHIRE

Following many requests from local groups, the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit is to hold an archaeological training weekend school at Abingdon on the 25th-26th June, 1977, designed specifically for representatives of local archaeological and historical societies. Please bring this notice to the attention of your Society.

The school will be concerned with the partial excavation of two circular cropmarks at Corporation Farm, Wilsham Road, Abingdon; these have been tentatively interpreted as Bronze Age barrows. This is the kind of rescue site which could be well within the capabilities of a local group to excavate. During the weekend excavation of this site, which is to be destroyed by a new housing estate, representatives from local societies will receive training in basic excavation and archaeological recording techniques, including planning, drawing, levelling, photography and finds processing.

The tutors on this course will be Mike Parrington and Richard Chambers, both Field Officers for the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit.

The course will commence on site at 9.00 a.m. on the Saturday morning and finish at 6.00 p.m. on the Sunday afternoon. Participants should be prepared for some hard work (digging) and should bring wet weather clothing (just in case), a 3" pointing trowel with a welded tang, and a pencil and notebook. Participants should also bring their own refreshments.

The school is limited to 12 students. (Please see attached application form)

STOP PRESS:

The Abingdon Society's June meeting will be in the Abbey Buildings, Abingdon, on June 11th, and not at the John Mason School on June 15th as stated in the last Newsletter.

CALENDAR FOR JUNE AND JULY

- 4 June Minster Lovell Mill Study Centre - Local History Exhibition. 2.00 p.m.
- 5-12 June A week of history and archaeology at Abingdon Abbey.
- 8 June OUAS. Philip Dixon, Esq. 'Hall Houses and Tower Houses in Medieval Border Scotland' - Ashmolean Museum 8.15 p.m.
- 11 June Abingdon Archaeological and Historical Society. Members evening. Abbey Buildings, 7.30 p.m.
- 13 June OUAS. The President (Michael Parker). 'Early Renaissance Art and Architecture' - Ashmolean Museum 8.15 p.m.
- 25-26 June Archaeological training weekend for archaeological groups in Oxfordshire (see attached)
- 28 June O.A.U. Staff meeting
- 16-23 July OUDES. One-week seminar in Summer School for Adult Students. 'The Medieval Buildings of Oxford' - Tom Hassall.

PRESS RELEASE

RESCUE EXCAVATIONS IN OXFORDSHIRE
TO BE IMMEDIATELY CUT BACK

Archaeological sites in Oxfordshire will be destroyed by development with an inadequate record following the decision forced upon the Oxfordshire Archaeological Committee at a meeting on Wednesday, 18th May, to cut back on rescue excavations carried out by its Archaeological Unit, to make two archaeologists immediately redundant and not to replace two more who are leaving through natural wastage.

The main archaeological casualty will be a 20-acre site in the south of the county, near Dorchester-on-Thames, which will be lost over the next 12 months. The site, partially excavated before the last war, is one of the most famous in the archaeologically rich Upper Thames Valley and is known to contain Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman remains. However, rescue excavations on a number of other smaller prehistoric, Roman and Saxon sites will also have to be scaled down. The full time staff of the Unit will be reduced from 14 to 10 with the possibility of further redundancies next year.

The Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit is recognised as one of the most efficient and successful rescue archaeological organisations of its kind in the country. The Unit was established in 1973 by the Oxfordshire Archaeological Committee with the active support of the Department of the Environment (DOE) as a possible proto-type for a national network of archaeological units. The income of the Committee, which is a registered charity, is derived through grants which have largely not been inflation proofed. In order to maintain the current level of excavations and to stave off the cut-back, £13,000 is required. The Committee is actively pursuing ways of raising additional funds. However, 65% of the Committee's income is derived from the DOE whose grant for excavations in Oxfordshire has remained virtually static since the Unit came into being. At its meeting the Committee was informed by a DOE representative that no significant increase in funding to meet the deficit would be available in this financial year and that subsequent grants to the Unit can only be made on an annual basis as at present. It was also made clear at the meeting that while the problems of the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit were far from unique, the DOE had not at present an intelligible plan as to how its funds were to be expended on rescue excavation in the coming decade, either in Oxfordshire or the country as a whole.

Further information can be obtained from Tom Hassall, Director of the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit.

5th - 12th June 1977

JUBILEE EXHIBITION

Abbey Buildings and Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon

DEMONSTRATIONS - DISPLAYS - LECTURES - THEATRE

by

The Archaeological & Historical Society,

The Friends of Abingdon and

The Oxford Archaeological Unit

- * Mock Excavation and Demonstration of Bone Analysis
- * Displays of Trupp, Ashville, Barton Court, Wilsham Road, Stert Street Sites
- * History and Conservation
- * Milling at Abingdon
- * Old maps, documents, photographs
- * Victoriana
- * Primary School Art

R E F R E S H M E N T S

Admission:- Adults 20p ... Children 5p

Sun 5th)	Thurs 9th)
Mon 6th) 10 am - 9.30 pm	Fri 10th) 2 pm - 9.30 pm
Tues 7th)	Sat 11th 10 am - 9.30 pm
Wed 8th 2 pm - 6 pm	Sun 12th 10 am - 6 pm

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Please return this slip by 20th June, 1977, to the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit, 46 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford, OX1 2EP.

Name(Mr./Mrs./Miss)
Address
.....
.....
Tel. No.

The completion of this slip does not indicate that you have been accepted to the course. Places will be shared out amongst the local groups in as fair a way as possible.