

OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER  
INCLUDING OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

No. 7 - August 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

During his last month with the Unit, Mike Parrington has been finishing off various outstanding excavation reports, notably Stert Street, Wilsham Road, and Peop-O-Day Lane, Sutton Courtney. These are all now complete and the Ashville site proofs have been returned to the Council for British Archaeology for printing.

ABINGDON - Faringdon Road

Bob Wilson reports that a graveyard has been revealed by the trenching of foundations for a house. Eleven graves are now known and appear to have been laid out in two rough rows, all graves being aligned east-west. A modern rubbish pit cuts one of the graves but firm dating evidence is lacking. It has been suggested that the graves are Roman but it is possible that they are later than this for Townsend (1910) supposed that the land was the site of a Trinity Chapel which is mentioned in the Abbey Accounts. However, the Abbey guarded its mortuary rights vigorously as the dispute with St. Helens showed.

ABINGDON - Market Place

Investigations by Bob Wilson have revealed that this site has a typical collection of twelfth to thirteenth century bones including those of cats and a kitten 4-6 months old. He has found these worth examining since one cat skull has cut marks indicating that occasionally poor old moggy was skinned for his fur: and worse for animal lovers, at least two cats appear to have been disjointed at their hip and knee joints and probably ended up in the cooking pot!

ABINGDON - West St. Helen Street

Under the supervision of Bob Wilson, the Abingdon Society are digging the upper levels of the clothing factory and have found links with the MG car works. The lowest levels of Trench I contained a scatter of medieval and Roman debris above the natural which was river alluvium rather than pure gravel of the first terrace. These levels were cut by a ditch which was filled in about the sixteenth to seventeenth century. This ditch may have been a western boundary of tenements held by the Church and formerly by the Abbey and at present used as the graveyard fronting West St. Helen Street. Southwards, the ditch could pass between the earliest alms houses and the Church and perhaps was one of those referred to as 'stinking' in the sixteenth century. An early seventeenth century rubbish pit preceded the earliest building on site which lasted at least into the eighteenth and as late as the early nineteenth century buildings.

CHALGROVE

Work is proceeding on the moated site in the centre of Chalgrove under the direction of Richard Chambers. A trench some 35 m. x 5 m. has revealed a manor house tentatively dated to be late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. Further dating material is being sought. This manor house appears to have undergone an extensive series of alterations in the late fourteenth century or early fifteenth century,

prior to its abandonment at the end of the medieval period, when several agricultural buildings appear to have been erected on the site.

Time is now running out for this site before it is stripped of its soil to make way for a new playing field. Richard implores anyone who could spare time to help with the excavation to come along at weekends during the day or on Wednesdays 9.30 - 5.30 and 7.00 p.m. to dusk. If anyone can spare time during the rest of the week please 'phone Richard at the Unit, Oxford 43888 (day) or Oxford 511216 (evenings).

#### FARMOOR

George Lambrick and Mark Robinson have now completed the Farmoor report and it has been sent for comments to Professor Cunliffe and others, prior to being sent to the printers.

The new reservoir is to be opened officially at the end of September by Denis Howell, Minister of State, Department of the Environment. The Unit will be providing a display of the results of the excavations.

#### HARDWICK

Excavations over the past five weeks by the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit with the Oxford University Archaeological Society, have shown that the Iron Age enclosure at Mingies Ditch, Hardwick, has two contemporary concentric ditches with internal gravel banks surviving in some places. A gravel roadway with small flanking roadside ditches runs through its southern entrance. This entrance had been temporarily blocked and at one time a second entrance had been opened up on its northern side by dumping gravel in its two ditches. There are several phases of 'antennae ditch' at the southern entrance, the latest of them with a roadway alongside it and perhaps surrounding a field to the west of the enclosure.

Within the enclosure three huts have been found, two with substantial central hearths. The post holes of one of the huts are linked in a circle by a narrow line which in places has been resolved into a row of small stake holes, presumably the wattle wall of the hut.

There has been much organic material preserved in the big ditches but unfortunately no artifacts. Large samples of peat have been taken and winged seeds of field maple have been noticed in it.

#### OXFORD

The third and most promising approach to the GPO's property agent for a trial excavation at 'Morris Garages', on the suspected Thames causeway in St. Aldates, has foundered due to our contact having resigned. There is still a chance however that a very small hole may be dug this year to answer a few fundamental questions, without any firm commitment about a larger excavation.

Publication work has been proceeding on the Greyfriars and Littlegate report. The past two weeks have also seen great developments in the computerisation of medieval pottery from The Hamel, and useful results should start coming out in the next month.

SPELSBURY - Further documents relating to enclosures in the North Oxfordshire Grim's Ditch group of parishes - B. Dobie

#### Two Articles for the Inclosing of Spelsbury

These demonstrate the piecemeal process of enclosure prior to the final award. The first article was executed on March 23rd 1704/5. It was between the Earl of Litchfield, acting through his agent, and a half dozen of his Spelsbury tenants. Some forty acres 'held promiscuously' by the named tenants in the area between Brodstone Hill and

Combe Way (the Chipping Norton Road). Land equal in quantity was offered in the 'Severall furlongs' of Spelsbury Farm. A reduction of two cow, horse and sheep commons for every acre of statute measure enclosed was also offered.

The second agreement made in 1709 was again between the Earl of Litchfield and twenty five of his tenants in Spelsbury, Taston and Fulwell. The land to be enclosed was in several parcels to the north of Shilcott Wood. Similar provisions to the first agreement were made. Two men were, for unrecorded reasons, to have the land which 'they like best'.

#### Account of all the furlongs and all the balklands lyeth (Spelsbury)

This document describes every furlong in the open fields. The furlongs were divided into land units termed acres. These were of differing sizes, many very small. They are all named, several names being descriptive, e.g. White Oke Furlong.

#### 1802 Bill of Enclosure of Spelsbury

This is the actual act upon which the award was based. No details of allotments, road routes and so on were contained in it. They were left to the Commissioners.\* The duties of the Commissioners such as their directing the course of agriculture prior to allotment are laid down as is the place where notice of extinction of common rights is to be posted and where the completed award is to be housed. Viscount Dillon, a chief proprietor, could raise mortgages to defray his enclosure costs. This privilege was extended only to him.

#### 1814 North Leigh Inclosure Act

This second act, not included in the Oxfordshire Handbook of Inclosure Awards, is held at Blenheim Palace. It is a normal parliamentary award covering some 142 acres, 3 roods, 11 perches in the Osney Hill area of the parish. It states in addition to the usual road and allotment provisions that trees on parcels of land are to belong to the proprietor of that parcel. Proprietors had to furnish the Commissioners with written descriptions of their holdings. Fencing requirements are clearly stated. Forty acres on the Ducking Stool Pond area were set aside for the cottagers' 'enjoyment'. This award is accompanied by a small map.

\* The name of one Spelsbury Commissioner was John Burr of Ditchley not John Burn as previously written.

Although no inclosure award has appeared for Combe it is now apparent that the village was open until the very end of the eighteenth century at least.

#### THAME

Richard Chambers has visited the site of a late Iron Age or Romano-British settlement reported by the Thame Historical Society. The finds came from a service trench at the British Oxygen Company's works. Several pits or ditches were recorded.

#### TOWCESTER

George Lambrick and Robin Symonds' draft reports on the structural sequence and the pottery from the Park Street excavation are now nearing completion. Finalisation of the reports will await the results of specialist work on the small finds, coins and Samian.

## OTHER NEWS ITEMS

It is with deep regret that we record the death of Mr. C. J. Peers. Mr. Peers was Vice-Chairman of the Oxford Archaeological Excavation Committee. Throughout the time he was connected with the Committee he showed a lively interest in the archaeology of the City and was a staunch supporter of the Committee's activities.

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A vacancy for a Secretary/Administrative Assistant will occur in the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit at the end of August 1977. For further details please contact the Unit Secretary.

Mike Parrington has left the Unit to work in the U.S.A. and we all wish him well. Mike will be missed both at the Unit and at Abingdon which was his particular area of activities. Owing to the Unit's financial problems it will not be possible to appoint a field officer to replace Mike.

## CALENDAR FOR AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER

30 August            Provisional date for next staff meeting.

## YOUNG RESCUE

The Oxfordshire branch of Young Rescue held its first meeting on 30th April at the Museum of Oxford. The response was very good and requests for membership forms are still flowing in. The club is for children aged 9-16 years with an interest in archaeology. The national organisation sends out quarterly newsletters to the members and supplies them with badges; it also runs Young Rescue holidays. The local branch is organised by the Oxfordshire Department of Museum Services, Education Section, with enthusiastic help from volunteers. The activities so far have included a demonstration of flint knapping, given by Peter Jones, and a trip to Cirencester and the Long Barrow of Belas Knap. The branch meetings are held monthly, usually in the Museum of Oxford, St. Aldates. Further information about Young Rescue may be obtained from Miss Margaret Herdman, Department of Museum Services, Fletcher's House, Woodstock, Oxford.

The date of the next meeting is 24th September, 2.30 p.m. in the Museum of Oxford.