

OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER

INCLUDING OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

No.11 - November 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 - Barton Court Farm

The paging up of the pottery reports is now complete and a file of pottery record sheets approximately 20cm thick is being reduced to Level 4. The Roman glass was posted to Jenny Price in Cardiff and returned with a report one week later - is this a record?

Mark Robinson continues to work on samples from Barton Court and has incorporated the amendments to the Farmoor Report suggested by Dr. Thomas.

BERINSFIELD - Mount Farm

The excavation has been progressing steadily on the Unit's Job Creation Scheme at Mount Farm. Work has recently been concentrated on an Iron Age ?House gully with an unusual west facing entrance. Samples have been seived from this to try to determine the deposition of rubbish along the gully to see if there are any marked concentrations. In the area of the contractors work a possibly neolithic pit has been found and also a large Saxon pit or irregular Grubenhaus - the first features of these dates to be found on the site. The evidence of Saxon occupation is particularly interesting in the light of the Saxon cemetery near Berinsfield which was about half a mile away and was excavated by the Unit in 1974. The extraction of carbonized plant remains from the soil samples taken from most of the features is largely up-to-date, but it will be some time before any results emerge. There has been some delay in the contractors' topsoil stripping and the main area of interest has not been uncovered yet. The areas uncovered by hand (c.500 sq. mtrs.) have shown the value of this operation since there are several areas of buried occupation or ploughsoil and some very shallow features, including a crouched burial, immediately beneath the modern ploughsoil. Modern ploughing (dated to post 1940 by a live 303 bullet in the bottom of a furrow!) has cut into the tops of many features and in places must have removed some of the buried soils. The JCP labour force has proved a useful cheerful and interested group of diggers.

BICESTER - Kings End Farm

This site is still providing material from a Romano-British settlement discovered recently during the construction of part of a new housing estate on the western side of Bicester. The site is being continuously recorded by a local group.

CHALGROVE -

Excavation of this moated site has now been closed down for the winter. The last few weekends have been spent examining and recording the nature and extent of buildings in the southern half of the larger island. The majority of these buildings were built on stone cill walls which has eased the problems of excavation considerably.

OXFORD - Church Street

Maureen Mellor continues to work on the pottery from Church Street. It has been possible to reconstruct many more profiles than from previous sites and some new forms of local wares are emerging. Crucibles occur in almost all the eleventh-century contexts including some Stamford types. It would seem that Church Street began to be occupied at about the time of building of Oxford Castle, 10th century. Who were these new settlers, could they have been the previous inhabitants of the castle site or?

OXFORD - City Wall Bastion 1 (George Street)

Jane Fox writes: During an October weekend the wall of the august city of Oxford was courageously attacked by a small but determined force from the OUAS. Under sporadic fire from the inhabitants of St Peters College, the society dug on gallantly through two metres of eighteenth and nineteenth century crockery and gin bottles, no doubt dumped there as a deliberate deterrent. At last, in the Sunday twilight, the base of the wall was reached sitting on natural gravel, but with protruding stonework which suggests that there may have been an earlier bastion alongside the existing one.

SALFORD, near Chipping Norton

Topsoil stripping in preparation for laying a farm road to Greathouse Barn and which passes between the parish church and the remains of the Tudor or Jacobean terraced garden earthworks (CBA Group 9 Newsletter No.4, (1974) p.18) has revealed enclosure walls, building debris and a cobbled yard surface accompanied by 16th to 18th century pottery and glass.

WITNEY -

For the past three months Geoff Williams has been keeping a watching brief on the WODC housing development at Cogges. In September the contractors cut through a ditch and a limited excavation revealed Iron Age pottery, burnt daub, and a drilled carnivore tooth. The ditch underlies the ridge and furrow associated with the Cogges Manor complex and does not show on aerial photographs of the area. Augering is now in progress to try to establish whether or not the ditch formed part of an enclosure. A full report will be available shortly.

OTHER NEWS AND INFORMATION

Metal Detectors

The September edition of Treasure Hunting carried an article entitled 'Archaeology v Treasure Hunting - the beginning of the end of the war?'. This article features 'Archaeological Finds: some suggestions about the use of metal detectors, a pamphlet issued jointly by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit and the Norfolk Museum Service. Several Oxfordshire archaeological groups have now been approached by Treasure Hunters armed with olive branches as well as metal detectors. These groups have now asked for guidance from the Unit on the Unit's attitude towards metal detector users.

First, it is clear that whatever rapprochement may come about, between archaeologists and treasure hunters the basic dichotomy between the two interests still exists. Archaeologists in Oxfordshire are recovering objects to extend our common knowledge and the Treasure Hunters are acquiring objects for personal gain.

Second, excavations in the county are now almost exclusively on threatened sites except where there is a clear cut research programme such as at Middleton Stoney. Thus the Unit and local groups are only investigating below ground when there is an overriding need to do so, otherwise all other fieldwork is non-destructive and is confined to the removal of finds from the surface. These finds are fully recorded and are housed in the appropriate museum.

One school of thought amongst fieldwalkers is that objects should actually be replaced on the surface once they have been identified and therefore not removed from the site at all. By contrast the premise of the Norfolk document is that the removal of objects from the plough-
il will not damage archaeological sites. It is perfectly true that any stratified layers will not be damaged. However, a recent experiment in Wiltshire has shown that at least 90% of material from a ploughed site may be recovered from the plough soil. The objects found in the plough soil and their distribution may be much more significant than we have thought. Experiments are currently taking place at Berinsfield on these lines.

In present circumstances while it is clear that metal detectors are here to stay, it is in the Unit's view too premature to actually encourage the users of metal detectors to dig in the plough-soil when we would certainly not expect Oxfordshire field walkers to do the same. The Unit would therefore, ask local groups to issue the following code of practise to all users of metal detectors who may approach them:

1. Before using a metal detector on a given location a treasure hunter should check with the Field Department, Oxfordshire Department of Museum Services, whether or not there is a site there. If there is a site whether a Scheduled Ancient Monument or not, that location should be abandoned.
2. In no circumstances should metal detectors be used on known archaeological sites.
3. If a location has no known site then the user of the detector must ask permission of the landowner to enter on to his land. All land is owned by someone including public open spaces and commons.
4. The user must explain to the landowner that he is looking for objects of metal which may have a monetary value and that any objects so found will belong to the landowner. The user may wish to ask the landowner if he can retain the object, but he has no rights to acquire objects from somebody else's land.
5. Metal detectors should only be used to locate surface objects. On no account should holes be dug in turf and as pointed out above, objects found in plough soil may well be of significance as well.

6. The finds and positions of any objects found should be recorded. The objects should be identified by the museum or a competent archaeologist who can ensure that the location of objects is entered upon the County Sites and Monument Record.
7. If the user has any reason to believe that he has located a site he should stop removing objects from the site and immediately report his find.

Parish Survey Information - Meeting on 27th November 1977

There will be an afternoon meeting of field-workers engaged or wishing to become involved in field surveys for the parish survey. The meeting will be at the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit, 46 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford on Sunday 27th November at 2.30 p.m. The main subject on the agenda will be to discuss the progress of the survey so far and its future directions. There will also be a discussion on how to use the results of field-walking.

CALENDAR FOR NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 11 November | 'The Green Belt' - Lecture by
M Breakell, BA. Details from OUDES,
Rewley House, 3/7 Wellington Sq, Oxford
Tel: 52901 |
| 12 November | 'Woods in the Landscape' - A Parish Survey
Day School. Details from OUDES (as above) |
| 14-16 November 1977 | 'Village Conservation - Organised in
association with Oxford Polytechnic.
Details from OUDES (as above) |
| 14 November | 'Briar Hill' - Lecture by Dr H Bamford
to OUAS |
| 14 November | 'The Indo-Greeks and their coin hoards'
Lectur by Dr C M Kraay at 5.00 p.m.
in Taylor Institution. |
| 18 November | 'Living with the Motor Car' - Lecture
given by Sir Colin Buchanan. Details
from OUDES |
| 18-20 November | 'Archaeology of Crete' - A weekend School.
Details from OUDES. |
| 21 November | 'Sutton Hoo' - Lectur by Dr R L S Bruce-
Mitford at 5.00 p.m. in Taylor Institution. |
| 25 November | 'The New City - Living and Working'-
Lecture by I Scargill, Ma, PhD. Details
from OUDES |

27 November

Parish Survey meeting 2.30 p.m.
46 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford.

28 November

'The Water Newton Roman silver: from
Paganism to Christianity.' - Lecture
by Dr K Painter at 5.00 p.m. at
Taylor Institution.

2-4 December

'Medieval Buildings - Approaches to
recording techniques'. Weekend School
at Missenden Abbey. Details from OUDES.