

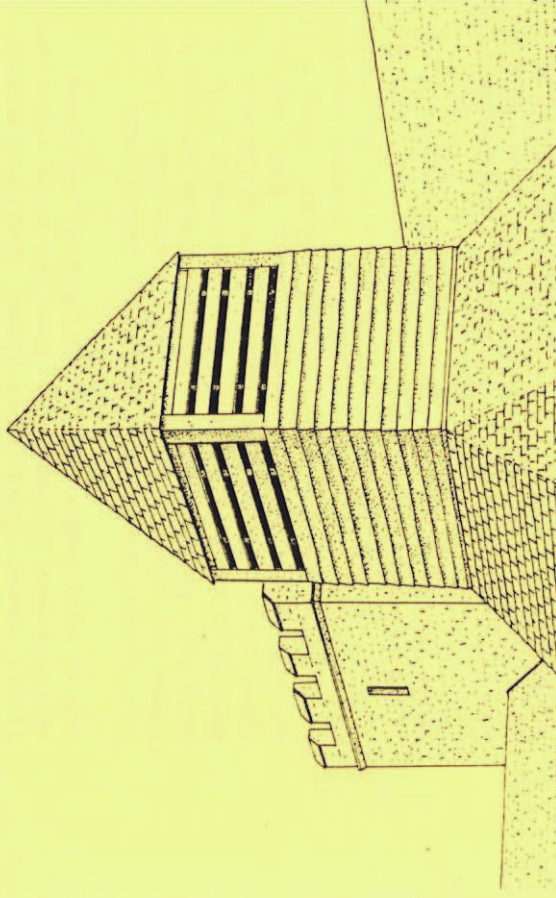
ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWS

The quarterly newsletter of the Oxford



Archaeological Unit

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SPOTLIGHT

ABINGDON:ROMAN BUILDINGS AND MONASTIC BELLTOWERS AT THE ABINGDON VINEYARD

After almost fourteen months work, the Abingdon Vineyard excavation is finally drawing to a close.

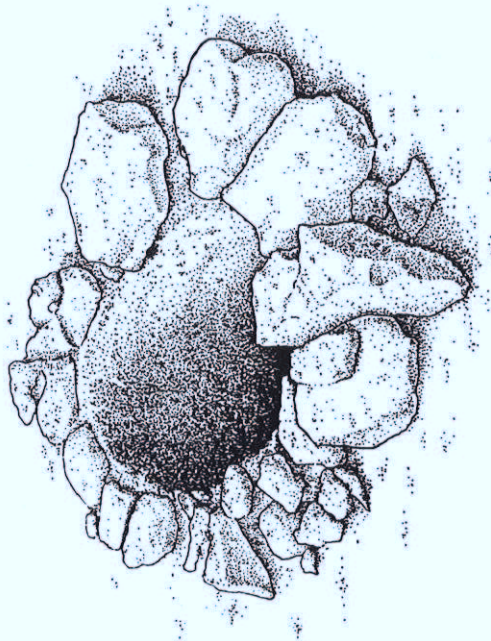
The last part of the project concentrated upon the medieval lay cemetery of Abingdon Abbey which is encroached upon by new council offices in two places. About 440 articulated skeletons were recovered from these two areas, plus at least half as many bodies again as disturbed charnel bones.

The eastern area was very densely packed with bodies. Below the later burials was found a criss-cross of sleeper walls for a timber bell-tower, which was later enclosed by a massive octagonal stone wall. The destruction of the bell-tower can be dated by two silver pennies of the early 14th century found in the robber trenches, and may have happened at the time of the Abingdon Riots. Some of the earliest burials were laid in stone cists, a practice which can be dated to the 12th century; these were not however the very first burials, and it is likely that the cemetery originated in the 11th century.

The western area seems to represent a late enlargement of the cemetery; relatively few layers of bodies were found, and these overlay the robbing of a large medieval building of 13th or 14th century date.

Below medieval levels in the eastern area were two Roman stone buildings, the first to be discovered in the town since the Victorian period. Both had sunken floors: one possibly a genuine cellar; the other, which the debris suggests originally had a tessellated floor and painted walls, was perhaps hypocausted. In between the two was a double-flued oven, and an area of clay floors, stone hearths and post-pads;

and hearths used for metal working. Just outside the building area was a square well, stone-lined to a depth of 2.8 m and with a wooden plank lining at the bottom. The well, and by implication the adjacent buildings, seem to have been built in the early 2nd century AD.



Wellhead, Abingdon

Probably connected to these high-status buildings was a small Roman cemetery of only four individuals found 50m to the north-west. Three of the four burials had been placed in lead coffins, the fourth in a wooden coffin. One lead coffin was decorated with a cable design, the others with parallel lines reminiscent of linen-fold decoration. The coffins have been lifted intact and the bodies will be excavated under laboratory conditions.

Evidence of dense Iron Age and Early Roman settlement was found below the Roman buildings, as elsewhere across the whole site. One Iron Age round house appeared to have had a cobbled floor, but only the edge of this lay within the excavation. The early Roman features have continued to

produce large quantities of decorated fine wares, emphasising the status of Abingdon at this period.

Anglo-Saxon features and finds are very rare, bearing out the documentary traditions that Hean's monastery lay further south. A second sixth century grubenhaus or sunken featured building was found adjacent to the lead coffin burials, and produced a decorated bone comb and several spindle-whorls. Such huts are often associated with textile manufacture.

The timber bridge across the monastic ditch reported upon in the September newsletter is to be preserved and put on display in the new council office complex. The timbers have now been lifted by Ahmed Shistawi of the County Museum and transported to Portsmouth, where they will be freeze dried and conserved at the Vale's expense. We are hoping to produce a popular booklet about Abingdon's archaeology to coincide with the opening of the new offices.

I would like to thank the many people who took part on site, and also the County Museum's conservation department, the Vale of White Horse District Council who have funded the work, and the OAU's finds department, whose involvement will continue for many months yet.

Tim Allen

BERKS

OLD WINDSOR: THE SEWAGE WORKS

The Thames Water Sewage treatment works at Old Windsor is about to be extended and improved, and the OAU was asked to conduct archaeological work in advance of the extension. The works are sited in Ham Fields and it was thought that Saxon material might be present on the site. Close by, a number of archaeological excavations have produced Roman and Medieval pottery and tile, and the location of the late Saxon-Norman royal estate buildings has

been investigated. Some aerial photographs show cropmarks W of the sewage farm, but thick flood deposits and modern levelling obscure any other sites.

A short assessment of the threatened area in July 1989 produced 2 flint flakes and short stretches of small ditches which could not be dated.

The planning application was considerably altered for non-archaeological reasons and the OAU was asked to return to the site and excavate two larger areas. One area, closest to the foulest smelling tanks, was found (with great relief) to be entirely barren of archaeological features. The larger area was covered by large quantities of modern debris and earlier alluvium, but produced a small group of gullies, ditches and a few pits.

Activity on the site dated from the Neolithic period with a scatter of flint including knives and a core scraper. Small fragments of Late Bronze Age pottery were scattered throughout the earliest plough soil over the natural gravel. By the late Iron Age or Roman period, two enclosures had been laid out with a small space between, but one seems to have fallen from use and the other was slightly repositioned. This later Roman enclosure was covered by thick alluvium and the ditch had not been re-excavated.

The site was ploughed again by about the 14th century, but served as pasture during the post-medieval period. The land was then ploughed again until 1970's development of the site. From 9th - 11th century a water mill positioned on the Thames nearby may have affected local flooding. Closer work on the dating may clarify this as the cause of one of the phases of alluviation.

Thanks are due to Thames Water, and all who worked on the assessment and excavation under sometimes noisome conditions!

Geoff Tann

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

FAIRFORD: THORNHILL FARM

The tenth and final year of excavations on the Claydon Pike-Thornhill project got underway in September. With the aim of completing the investigation of the settlement nucleus of this Late Iron Age ranch.

Cropmarks indicate that the site extends over forty hectares and is divided into zones: a small domestic nucleus surrounded by an area of large enclosures, and an area of small pens located on the periphery.

The domestic heart of the ranch covers a hectare in extent but with few houses. A classic Middle Iron Age round-house was excavated last year and this appears centrally placed with pens and storage areas ringing it.

This year's work is concentrating on the western side of this area where small pens, rectangular enclosures and "stack-rings" (small gullies of 2.3 metre diameter) lie adjacent to the round house.

The only surprise so far has been the discovery of two of the "cowboys" themselves. Two small pits or graves have been excavated which contained articulated skeletons. Whether this forms part of a small cemetery or is an isolated occurrence remains to be seen.

The later plough soil, which was found last year to be sealing the settlement, appears to be Late Roman from the finds sealed within it. An alluvial filled ditch to the north of the site forms the northern side of this Roman arable field.

The archaeological and environmental evidence from this project has now defined and documented at least five separate phases of land-use for the area from the Iron Age to the present day with alternating pasture, hay meadow and arable usage.

Salvage work has also been continuing as ARC strip areas for extraction. A further round house c200 metres from the settlement nucleus has been recorded. This did not show as a cropmark although adjacent enclosures that were more deeply cut were clearly visible.

A superb aerial photograph of the excavation has been published in the December issue of *Country Life*. It is hoped that field work will be complete by the New Year.

Simon Palmer & Gill Hey

KENT

DOVER: THE HERITAGE CENTRE

Construction of Dover's new Heritage Centre and museum (The White Cliffs Experience) is now forging ahead. Much of the archaeology (two Roman forts, Saxon and Medieval levels; see newsletters xvi.4, xvii.1,3) is now safely sealed below newly laid floors and the OAU's watching brief was completed in early October. The next phase of work will involve excavation of known Roman buildings - part of the 2nd Century *Classis Britannica* fort. These have been incorporated into the undercroft of the Heritage Centre's theatre, and will form a permanent display when the centre opens in 1991.

Plans are already in hand for further work: a bastion of the Saxon Shore fort and the underlying gatehouse of the *Classis Britannica* fort are to be uncovered and displayed in late 1990 or early 1991. Visitors to the centre will look onto this area through a specially designed glass viewing crescent and will be able to watch "live" diggers at work on the site.

Also in Dover, the Unit has recently completed an Archaeological Implications Survey of the town, commissioned by Dover District Council. The document aims to help archaeologists and town planners alike, and outlines a

programme of archaeological research which can be practically pursued as development continues.

David Wilkinson

NORTHANTS

STANWICK: REDLANDS FARM

The excavation of the neolithic long barrow, funded by ARC in advance of gravel extraction, finished in mid November. The surprise discovery of the long barrow caused some excitement, but true to form it did not behave as expected.

The stone cist at the western end and the central burial pit did not contain any bodies, as it appeared to have been emptied (at some point in the Bronze Age?). In fact the backfill of the central pit contained limestone blocks suggesting deliberate destruction of this feature. The large quarry ditches, however, because of the high water table contained a very thick series of peaty neolithic layers containing much environmental evidence. They also contained some dozen neolithic planks and in excess of 100 twigs and branches presumably from dressing the timbers form the construction of the barrow! The palisade trench which constrained the barrow was rather small, except at the eastern where a 1m wide and 1m deep ditch must have contained substantial timbers for a facade. Our inability to identify individual post positions and the filling sequence of the facade trench suggests a deliberate act of removal of the timbers.

The old ground surface on which the barrow was placed was uneven and showed traces of having been ploughed before the barrow was built, with some tree throw holes indicating signs of Neolithic land clearance.

The slip off the mound, caused by Roman ploughing, had almost completely flattened the barrow. It contained much

pottery, bone and several hundred flints (mostly flakes) at the eastern end indicating that activity was concentrated at this end of the barrow.

When ARC stripped the topsoil in the area to the NE of the barrow, two joining round barrows were located. However, ARC chose to preserve these rather than extract the gravel beneath them, so the barrows have been safely reburied. No dating evidence was obtained from these structures though one was possibly a neolithic mound and ditch covering at least one apparent mortuary structure. The other barrow may have been a later Bronze Age feature built onto the side of the original mound similar to the sequence at nearby West Cotton.

A palaeo-channel was located just N of the barrow during the watching brief on topsoil and overburden stripping. The watching brief on the field systems in the area continues.

John Moore & Mark Roberts

OXFORDSHIRE

BANBURY: SPICEBALL SPORTS CENTRE

A watching brief was carried out on a gas pipe trench dug to a depth of c.4 m, by the Spiceball Sports Centre in Banbury. The trench cut through 1 m of made-up ground containing Victorian and later rubbish layers. Below 1 m there were no visible features cutting into the natural and no earlier residual archaeological material.

Naomi Hutchings

BICESTER: NEW POLICE HEADQUARTERS

This green field development to the west of Bicester covers several hectares of Cornbrash bounded by the railway to the

north and Howes Lane to the east. Although Mr Peter Briebrack discovered several sherds of Romano-British pottery during the top-soil stripping of one part of the site, further visits by members of the Bicester archaeology evening class did not reveal any further settlement evidence. A watch continues to be maintained over these developments which will not be completed until the mid 1990's.

*R A Chambers
Members of the Bicester
Archaeology Evening class*

BICESTER: SOUTHERN BY PASS

The construction of this bypass which will also serve as a part of the ring-road around Bicester is well advanced. During the initial topsoil stripping part of a blade from a Bronze Age sword was discovered about 100 m east of the present A421 Oxford - Bicester road. It is thought that this was a part of a hoard or store of scrap bronze but the site was covered by road foundation before further work could be undertaken.

R A Chambers

DUCKLINGTON: GILL MILL

An assessment of the archaeology within a field south-west of Gill Mill for Smith's of Bletchington provided, as predicted, the edge of a Romano-British settlement bounded to the west by ditched enclosures. Waterlogged remains are present, including carpentered wooden objects.

*R A Chambers
Greg Cambell*

EYNHAM: EYNHAM ABBEY

Although Eynsham Abbey is known to have lain to the south of the village, nothing is actually known about the position of the buildings. In 1657, Anthony Wood produced an annotated sketch of the ruinous west end of the abbey church in which he indicated that the cloister was on the unconventional, north side with unidentified buildings to the south. The remains of the Benedictine Abbey which Wood recorded was that of a top ranking monastic establishment. Although it had never rivalled the other Benedictine house at Abingdon, it still became the third richest abbey in the county.

Eynsham Abbey was founded in 1005 probably as a reformation of the existing Saxon minster which John Blair has shown to have been in existence by 864 AD. However, soon after the Norman Conquest, the abbey moved to Stow only to return to Eynsham in 1094.

The ruinous west end of the abbey church sketched by Wood shows the Norman style, rounded windows and doorways of the rebuilding which began in 1094 probably on the site of the late Anglo-Saxon abbey church of 1005.

The principal abbey buildings probably lie beneath the Anglican and Catholic churchyards and a week long assessment of an extension to St. Leonard's churchyard has just been completed. This assessment has been funded from the Oxfordshire County Council annual grant. The 68m long trench was excavated along the length of Anglican churchyard extension. It revealed considerable spreads of rubble sealing substantial robber trenches from major abbey buildings with a sequence of associated occupation surfaces. Less substantial stone founded buildings lay towards the southern end of this trench with traces of domestic structures, possibly a kitchen range. A massive boundary ditch lay at the very southern end of this trench along the edge of the gravel terrace. Remains of the late Saxon abbey and preceding Saxon Minster were not recognised but this was only an assessment trench and four features were excavated.

The Abbey remains sealed early-mid Saxon occupation which adds an important dimension to the archaeology of this site. Eynsham appears to have been one of four towns captured in 571 after the battle of Becanford and was at that time likely to have been the regional centre of the whole Upper Thames region. The 6-8th century occupation revealed in the assessment trench and the 8-10th century pits found in 1971 80m to the north-east make this site of key importance to the archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon period.

Excavation will only be possible during the next few months before the churchyard extension comes into use. English Heritage are now considering funding further work.

R A Chambers

GREAT CHESTERTON: ST MARY'S PARISH CHURCH

Replacement of the floor boards beneath the pews in this church is now in progress. The original intention of replacing the floor with concrete was abandoned in favour of reboarding the floors following a policy change by HBMC twelve months ago.

This church was re-constructed in the 13th century after a rebuilding which retained the Transitional Norman north arcade of 3 bays from the earlier building. The rotten floor boards beneath the pews in the north aisle are being replaced first. Beneath this Victorian floor is a 0.5m air space. Estimating from the height of the Norman arcade column bases, the Victorian restorers probably removed all of the medieval floor levels at this point. As the new floor is to be a direct board for board replacement of the Victorian floor, the 19th century cill walls, joist supports and a mortar spread (Victorian) will not be removed. However, any remaining archaeology will remain undisturbed. Replacement of the central aisle floor should provide an opportunity to investigate

the presence of any earlier church whose foundations lie beneath the Transitional arcade or within the present nave.

R A Chambers

HAMPTON POYLE: ST. MARY THE VIRGIN

The church of St. Mary the Virgin at Hampton Poyle comprises a thirteenth century chancel and nave with fourteenth century north and south aisles. The doorway in the south aisle and the window to the east of this are Victorian, as are the buttresses on either side of the church, against the north and south aisles.

A new drainage trench dug along the north side of the church, revealed the foundations of the north aisle and north side of the chancel. In both cases the foundations continued below the bottom of the drainage trench which was approximately 0.5 m deep. At the north-east corner of the chancel the foundations had been strengthened by the incorporation of large, rough, stone blocks.

The foundations of the north aisle consisted of a free-built plinth projecting approximately 25 cms from the church wall. Stonework in the bottom of the drainage trench at the north-east corner of the north aisle appeared to be the top of the trench built foundations. The presumably Victorian buttress against the north wall of the north aisle stood on the foundations of an earlier buttress. A layer of clay and mortar revealed in the side of the trench, was presumably debris filling the pit dug for the construction of this earlier buttress.

Naomi Hutchings

HENLEY: 20 MARKET PLACE

Number 20 is a comfortable Georgian house with a carriage entry which has been used as a baker's shop and an antique

shop, and which is now to be converted to a small shopping arcade. It has been surveyed by Ruth Gibson of the Henley Archaeological Group, and the purpose of the excavation was to look for earlier phases of the structure.

One trench to the rear served to show that by the 18th century domestic pits etc has extended almost to the limit of the medieval burghage plot. The more interesting area was, however, in the yard just behind the main house where there were two phases of structure predating the Georgian brickwork.

It looks as if this house could have had a yard on the line of the present carriage entry from its earliest beginnings. A narrow sleeper wall of chalk and flint had clay floors to the east and a cobbled yard with an eaves drip to the west. It suggests that the buildings had a roof pitch running away from the market place, which may have been a generous service wing adjoining a hall range on the market front. The dating awaits careful analysis of the finds but is likely to be medieval, perhaps not quite as early as the 13th century floors from No 12, Market Place, a few doors to the east.

The medieval building was replaced by a chalk and flint footing of which one corner was seen, encroaching further onto the yard. The yard was then enlarged again to its present extent, with a much narrower range extending back along the plot. It proves that valuable evidence for the history of a town house can come from comparatively small amounts of excavation, when it can be related to a thorough building survey.

Brian Durham

WENDLEBURY TO BICESTER: M40

Contracts 1, 2, 3 and 4 are now well on the way to completion and have long since passed the point where archaeological surveillance would have any further value.

During the summer foundation trenches for the Chesterton Lane overbridge revealed layers of metalling from the Roman road 0.5 - 1 m below the present road surface. Good fortune provided a sherd of pottery from between the layers of metalling. Unfortunately the coarse ware sherd was not closely datable. The section was recorded by the writer and Martyn Mander.

The contentious 12 mile 'M40 link' between Wendlebury and Waterstock began in July with unprecedented speed as a joint venture between McAlpine Construction Ltd and Fairclough. With part of the route beyond the Oxfordshire county boundary the archaeology has also been managed as a joint venture between Mike Farley of the Buckinghamshire County Museum and the Oxford Archaeological Unit. Prior to construction, five known archaeological sites were evaluated for English Heritage, three in Buckinghamshire and two in Oxfordshire. In Oxfordshire, the edge of the gravel terrace at Waterstock revealed scattered Iron Age occupation debris while the medieval clayland deserted village of Ledall in Waterperry provided ditches and pits with later medieval domestic debris. Although Ledall and one Buckinghamshire site would have merited selective short term archaeological intervention (further excavation!) the speed of motorway construction made further detailed archaeological work impossible. A watching brief was maintained during the initial stages of earthmoving but little else was detected apart from an extensive Romano-British settlement north of the Merton-Islip road. It is worth noting that the dry weather made the deserted medieval village of Ledall almost impossible to detect after topsoil stripping and ditching by the contractors.

Several borrow pits have been opened along the length of the motorway to provide stone for the road foundation. One such pit, opened without prior consultation or planning consent, is at Merton and has annihilated the line of the Roman road (Margery 160b) at that point. Two Bronze Age ring ditches spotted by Keith Ray of the Oxon County Museum Service will be excavated before they too are quarried away.

McAlpines are currently negotiating a planning agreement with the County Council. This agreement will include full provision for archaeological investigation.

R A Chambers & Naomi Hutchings

NORTHMOOR: CHURCH FARM

Construction of essential farm buildings on a part of the Scheduled cropmark complex at Northmoor has so far revealed little archaeology. Earthworks in a permanent pasture field next to a brook appear to represent small rectangular enclosures against a slightly raised trackway, similar to those surviving to the south of Pinnocks Farm house. This trackway at Church Farm will be sectioned by a service trench in the near future which will provide an opportunity to confirm the likely early Romano-British period date for these earthworks.

R A Chambers

NORTHMOOR: PINNOCKS FARM

A hachured earthwork survey and a detailed contour survey of earthworks to the south of Pinnocks Farm house have revealed traces of a Romano-British trackway. This trackway shows up as part of a cropmark complex to the south of the Northmoor-Brighthampton road where the land is under cereals. The contour survey was undertaken in conjunction with and funded by ARC using their latest computer assisted surveying system.

*R A Chambers
Naomi Hutchings*

ORIEL COLLEGE: FORMER REAL TENNIS COURT

We reported some assessment trenches in the Tennis Court in a recent issue, and the college asked for a survey of the roof of this very interesting building.

The existing roof is of pine, and an unusual design with two ridges and a central valley. It is dated by Julian Munby as no earlier than the late 18th century, with many of the joints held in iron straps. The surprising thing is that the wall framing, including the wall-plate is all of oak, and the logical conclusion is that this is a new pine roof on old wall framing. This would make sense because the tennis court is already shown with a single-pitched roof in 1675. But somehow an 18th century carpenter has been able to fit a new roof using the same joints and leaving no trace that there had been a predecessor. Or is our dating wrong? Tree ring dating on the oak framing will show if it is 18th century, and that seems the more likely solution. If the pine roof is 17th century then it is very exceptional, and it is most unlikely that it would have gone unrecognised for so long.

This survey has, therefore, highlighted problems rather than solved them, and the answers will have to wait for further investigations when the building is dismantled.

Brian Durham

SHIFFORD: OLD SHIFFORD FARM

Work has been undertaken at Old Shifford Farm, a site that is being extracted for gravel by Standlake Sands and Gravels Ltd.. The site was assessed by Tim Allen in May 1988 (as reported in the June 1988 newsletter) and an extensive Roman field system was discovered with occupation areas to

the S and to the NW of the field. An agreement between the developer and the landowner, Mrs Carter, who funded the work, enabled us to undertake some limited excavation in April and September this year.

An area 80m square was stripped in the S of the field to expose the early Roman occupation area located in the assessment. The plan of a small farmstead with associated animal enclosures and other farmyard features was uncovered. The remains of a small circular wooden structure survived in the NE of the site and other possible eavesdrip gullies suggest further buildings were present. Initially, the domestic area was associated with a few penannular enclosures but these were superseded by a more regular layout of sub-rectangular enclosures. Other gullies, pits and a possible hay-rick were also found. Many of these features contained occupation debris, including fired clay from hearths.

The finds were consistent with a small rural site of the first and early second century AD. Some Samian sherds were recovered, along with a few coins and brooches.

The domestic centre seems to have shifted to the N in the later Roman period but there appears to be a discontinuity between the two occupations. The stripped area, 120m x 60m, in the NW revealed a less complete occupation layout. Gullies, pits and a few post holes survived, containing dark soils filled with domestic debris, but they had been badly damaged by ploughing and no structures were discerned. Several large pits, up to 2m deep, containing some waterlogged material, were contemporary. The occupation seemed to extend into the fifth century AD.

The occupation features cut into an earlier Roman field system. Ditches enclosed sub-rectangular fields, the size of which is not yet known, but which were more than 1 hectare. The enclosure ditches cut an alluvial deposit which sealed earlier gullies. Time did not permit exploration of these features and we hope to return in January to examine them

more carefully. Observation of stripping by the gravel company will also take place in order to recover the Roman field boundaries.

Gill Hey

SHRIVENHAM: WATCHFIELD CEMETERY

Trenches were placed to the north and south of the A420 Shrivenham By-Pass, where early Anglo-Saxon burials and prehistoric settlement traces were discovered during road construction in 1983, to define the extent of the cemetery and the character of prehistoric activity, and to assess the preservation and potential of the site. After trial excavation by hand, a total of 1900 sq m was machine-stripped to the base of the ploughsoil, then cleaned to reveal the archaeology and planned. Selective excavation of features followed.

Early Anglo-Saxon inhumations were identified both north and south of the road, and fifteen were excavated. These included two superimposed burials and the double burial of a woman and very young infant. Some graves had been severely damaged by the deep furrows of a levelled ridge-and-furrow system, but most were intact. Grave goods suggest late 5th or 6th century dates for the excavated burials.

The southern, western and eastern boundaries of the cemetery were located, and the northern margin defined sufficiently precisely to show that the cemetery covers an area of c. 4000 sq. m. The observed density of burials suggests that there were originally in the order of 350 graves, of which up to c. 130 may have been destroyed without trace in 1983. A plough-damaged cremation and an intact burial, both presumed to be Anglo-Saxon, were excavated to the east of the main cemetery. No evidence survived to indicate that they belonged to a more extensive focus of burials, but it is possible that other cremations or shallow inhumations may have been destroyed by ploughing. Two unaccompanied

inhumations to the south of the Anglo-Saxon burials suggest an adjacent cemetery; bone from these will be submitted for radiocarbon dating. Settlement features containing early Iron Age pottery were encountered in all areas investigated. Intercutting ditches suggest a settlement of at least two phases.

The burials and Iron Age settlement features were cut into a buried soil, truncated by medieval and later ploughing, which survived to depths of up to 20cm over the natural and which masked other, presumably earlier, prehistoric features. These included a V-sectioned ditch, 1.8 m wide and over 1.5 m deep from the modern ground surface; a thermoluminescence date is awaited for the few fragments of friable pottery recovered from this feature. Worked flint from the buried soil and the modern ploughsoil suggests a late Mesolithic encampment and a late Neolithic or early Bronze Age settlement on the site.

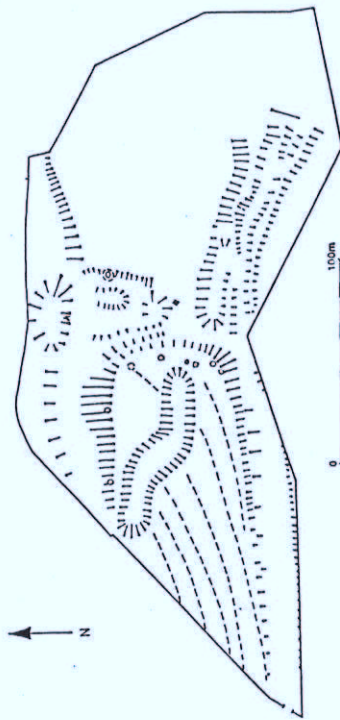
Flotation samples from prehistoric contexts are being processed at Durham University; human skeletal material, grave goods and soil samples from the excavated burials are being analysed at the Universities of Durham and Bradford as part of complementary programmes of research into human burial taphonomy. All finds will eventually be housed at Oxfordshire County Museum, Woodstock.

Permission to excavate was granted by the landowner, Mr. Adam Twine, whose help and cooperation were invaluable. The project is funded by Durham University, The Royal Archaeological Institute, The W.A. Pantin Trust, The Greening Lamborn Trust and J. Phillips Associates, whose support is gratefully acknowledged.

Christopher Scull
Dept. of Archaeology
University of Durham

SOULDERN: SOULDERN MANOR

The village of Souldern lies in the north of the parish, near to the boundary with Aynho. The name Souldern means "thorn bush in a gully" and suggests that the original settlement was centred around the church and the original manor house, on the north-east side of the modern village. The medieval manor house became a ruin at an early date, and the present manor house, formerly called Souldern House and built in the latter half of the seventeenth century, is at the western end of the village. Within the grounds of Souldern Manor, to the west of the house, is an area of earthworks, including ridge and furrow, holloways and house platforms, part of the now shrunken medieval village.



Earthworks at Souldern

Following the recording of several medieval and later features by Brian Durham in August, a watching brief has been maintained over the garden landscaping throughout the autumn. Two ornamental ponds have been dug, the larger at the top of a rise in front (west) of the present house.

Immediately west of the larger lake the topsoil was stripped for a new ha-ha, revealing more stone and rubble associated with medieval pottery. Three stone wall foundations, which lay immediately beneath the topsoil, were each associated with post-medieval pottery and clay tobacco pipe. These walls presumably belonged to former out-buildings for Souldern House. The eastern side of the lower pond cut into a large, V-shaped pit or ditch, measuring approximately 3m wide by 1m deep, and contained medieval pottery. The earthworks to the west of the house have been surveyed before further landscaping takes place. The watching brief will continue.

Naomi Hutchings

STANFORD IN THE VALE: BOWLING GREEN FARM

The destruction of the next two hectares of this well preserved Romano-British settlement is progressing rapidly in the sand quarry. The company, Halls of Swindon, have changed the overburden clearance programme to provide as much time as possible for the broad phasing of this area of the Roman settlement to be established. It had been hoped that the company's voluntary funding of the excavation of this exceptionally well preserved settlement in 1986 would have been matched by funding from other agencies.

The rescue archaeology undertaken this autumn by Brian Cavill for the OAU will hopefully provide a broad picture of the land use over the prehistoric and Roman periods; However, it will not provide an insight into the character and morphology of the Roman settlement.

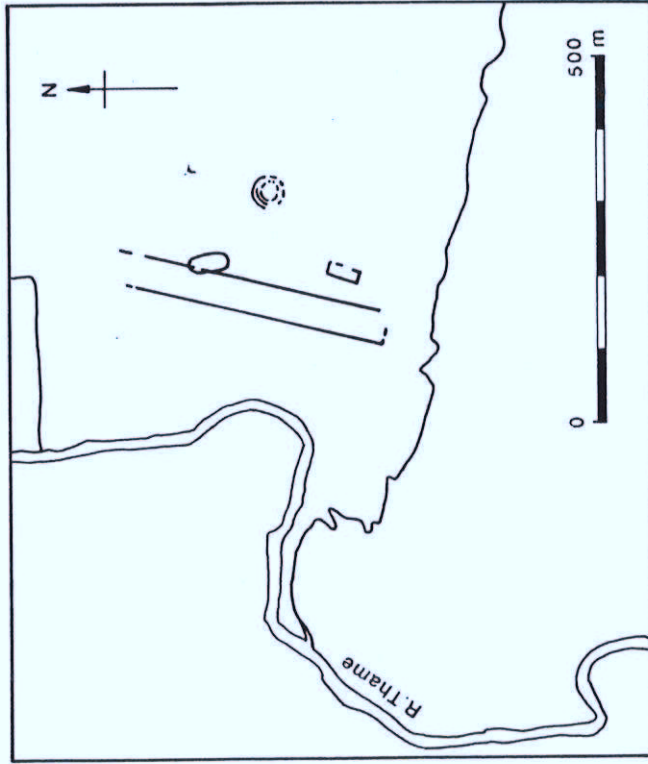
Several more Roman wells have been recorded as sand extraction continues. The wells range from the later 1st-2nd century to the 4th century. So far none of the wells have contained waterlogged remains.

In a time saving move, the site was photographed from the air following topsoil removal to provide an instant plan of the principal features.

R A Chambers

STADHAMPTON: STADHAMPTON CURSUS

As part of the post-excavation programmes on the Lechlade and Drayton cursuses the aerial photographic evidence for such monuments in the Thames Valley has been examined. Attention is drawn here to a recent noteworthy addition.



Stadhampton Cursus

A complex of Neolithic features comprising a cursus, a triple ditched hengiform enclosure, an ovate ditch and a small oblong enclosure was discovered on July 23 1986 by the RCHM(E) Aerial photography unit. The known section of the cursus is about 400m long and 45m wide, although only one terminal of the cursus can be seen on the available aerial photographs. This terminal, which is precisely squared, would appear to be within Loveday's Bi classification. Aligned NNE-SSW, the feature is approximately parallel to the River Thame which is about 200m to the west. A stream passes within 50m of the south terminal and there is another stream 100m to the north of the monument.

Interesting parallels exist for combination of rectangular, ovate and hengiform monuments which lie just to the east of the cursus. In particular the ovate enclosure which intersects the cursus ditch at the location of the only visible causeway is similar to Atkinson's Site VIII at Dorchester which is some 4km south east of the Stadhampton complex. The small oblong ditch is on a similar alignment to the cursus, as is the long rectangular enclosure which lies to the east of the northern section of the Drayton/Sutton Cortenay cursus.

The national grid references of the two ends of the cursus are SU598986-SU599991, and the monument is at a height of 52mOD. The cursus and associated monuments are shown plotted at 1:10000.

Simon Brereton

TOWERSEY: ICHI-BAN LTD

An area approximately 100 sq m, was stripped of topsoil for digging fishponds by the side of the Cuttle Brook at Towersey (NGR SP745052). Two rectangular ponds already dug showed the topsoil above undisturbed natural. The only finds

consisted of some field drain material and the occasional sherd of post-medieval pottery.

Naomi Hutchings

WALLINGFORD CASTLE: CASTLE LANE HOUSE

The owners of Castle Lane House, Mr and Mrs Harper, want to replace a greenhouse with a garage on part of the Scheduled area of Wallingford Castle. English Heritage paid for a brief excavation to look at the underlying deposits, in case the south east curtain wall ran through the area.

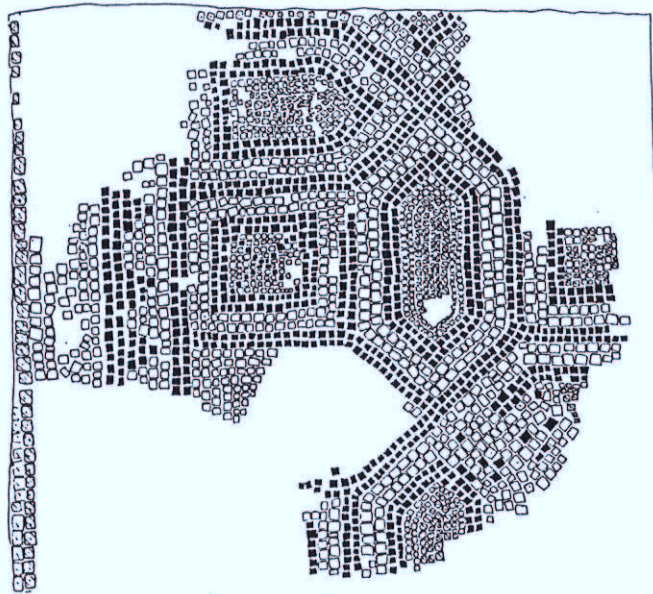
Beneath the green house footings was a deposit of loam with medieval pottery to a depth of 1.5m. It was fairly uniform and only at the deepest level was there any horizontal layering. At the south-east extremity of the trench the deposit was cut away obliquely by what may have been the side of the Castle Ditch. The cut was lined with clay with a stepped interface, which may have helped to keep the lining in place, a device seen in the lining of Oxford castle ditch. This probably means that the curtain was at a higher level built on the crown of this dumped material, and a thick layer of greenish-white silt in the ditch fill was probably the weathering products from the poor quality chalky limestone or "clunch" of which the castle walls are made.

This is useful new information on the extent of the later medieval defences, at Wallingford, one of the strongest castles in this part of the Thames Valley

Brian Durham

WIDFORD: ST OSWALD'S CHURCH AND ROMAN REMAINS

The isolated church of St. Oswald, Manor Farm and a couple of attached cottages are all that remain of the former village of Widford, near Burford.



Widford Mosaic

Since the restoration of the parish church in 1904, St. Oswald's has become well known for the later Roman mosaic pavement which has remained partly exposed beneath the chancel floor. Over the years, much of the mosaic and the tessellated floor partly exposed in the opposite corner of the

WITNEY: BISHOPS PALACE

There have been important developments in the story of this site, the first Unit excavation to be put on permanent display. A three week dig in April this year was designed to complete the story of the north range of the 12th century manor house of the bishops of Winchester, and meanwhile the six-way negotiations on the future of the site are sounding very positive.

The recent excavations were designed to confirm the results of the work in 1984. The last of the floor layers of the north range were removed, exposing some massive post-holes which look as if they may have been supporting a timber wall-walk. There was more detail on the line of the curtain wall, but no northwest corner tower as illustrated in 1730. Access to the wall was confirmed as being by way of a stair beside the supposed gatehouse, while the identification of the gatehouse itself remains only an assumption since it proved impossible to extend the trench as far as the inner gateway as hoped. A short section of the west range was seen disappearing under the spoil-heap.

Careful examination of the ground surface beneath the north range tended to confirm the notion that the palace was set up on a green field site. Since it forms such a natural shape with the church and the 'green' it is beginning to look as if we have the bishops laying out a formal settlement at a date perhaps a century earlier than most of the planned towns in England. At Witney most of the evidence will be there to see on the ground, to add substance to the message of the displays.

There have always been sceptics who questioned the reasons for taking this site out of redevelopment. Responsibilities are falling into place now, and English Heritage has come up with a design for a protective Teflon tent which is well matched to the local scene and obtained planning permission at the first attempt. West Oxfordshire District Council has agreed to cover the cost of annual

chancel has been taken by 'passing pilgrims' travelling this popular walk along the Windrush valley to Swinbrook. To preserve the surviving fragments, the Roman pavement has now been recorded and the chancel floor replaced. A fragment of the mosaic is illustrated with this article. This autumn, the church building restoration programme also included the recutting of a damp-proofing trench around the outside of the building, and a new soakway. This confirmed the almost complete destruction within the churchyard of the Roman building to which the mosaic belonged. However, one small patch of tessellated pavement did survive, protruding from beneath the south chancel wall.

Two medieval tomb stones were also revealed within the drainage gully. One was merely a fragment of the original and bore no decoration or inscription. This has been reset to pave the entrance in front of the south door. The second grave slab, from a child's grave, had been reused in the foundation of the south-east corner of the chancel and must be 13th century or earlier.

A 2m square soakaway dug 2m deep in the south-east corner of the graveyard revealed a deep deposit of stratified medieval domestic rubbish and building debris including glazed ridge tile. Rather than assume that this all derived from a medieval refurbishment of the church, the deep domestic rubbish deposits suggest the demolition of an adjacent manor house or rectory well before the building of the 16-17th century Manor Farm which still stands 400m to the north-west.

A large quantity of tesserae and mosaic pieces collected from the churchyard by the Reverend Cannon Timothy Hine have been buried with the pavement in the chancel.

R A Chambers & Naomi Hutchings

maintenance, and the Tourist Board as owners are landscaping the areas of trenches as they are finished, and getting themselves used to the idea of a tourist attraction in their own back-yard. There are even rumours that something more substantial in the way of a Museum of Witney might be set up close by. In fact it looks as if Witney Palace could become a feature of the Oxfordshire tourist scene for some time to come.

Brian Durham

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Several flights were made during July paying particular attention to the Corallian ridge which was notably unproductive. The summer dryness suppressed the cropmarks of several well known sites such as the Woodstock villa but enhanced previously unrecorded cropmarks such as an enclosure to the north of Woodstock and settlement to the east of Hatfield Quarry on the Corallian ridge. Cropmarks on the Thames Valley gravels around Bampton showed up particularly well. The Independent claimed that a Roman Temple had been discovered at Dorchester-upon-Thames. This remains to be confirmed. However, RCHM flyers have found what appears to be a Neolithic bank barrow near Clanfield.

R A Chambers

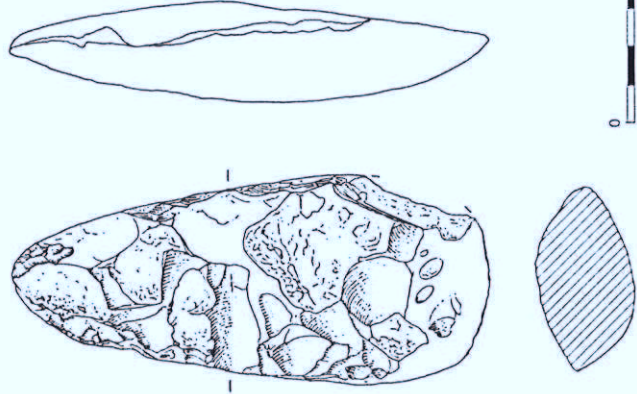
ASSESSMENTS

This and the last edition of the newsletter are noticeable by the lack of items on assessments carried out by the OAU. This is not a reflection of the Unit's workload. On the contrary the number of projects of this nature has increased dramatically. The Unit organised 13 assessments in 1987 and 16 in 1988. By the end of this year in excess of 30 will have been completed.

As some of the assessments are undertaken in advance of planning applications being submitted or for appeals against refusal, developers ask that the information is kept confidential. This will mean that in a lot of cases items in the Newsletter on these assessments will be several months late. Hopefully sites will not be forgotten and the Newsletter will remain as a complete record of the Unit's work.

John Moore

A Neolithic polished flint handaxe, found on the edge of a horticultural holding south-east of Bampton, Oxon.



THE LAST WORD 1989

1989 has been a satisfyingly busy year, in which the Unit has been able to take advantage of its flexible organisation and the experience of its staff to expand and diversify its activities.

The trend towards developer-funded projects has continued to grow and with it the demand for the Unit to work further afield than its traditional Upper Thames stamping grounds. Newsletter readers will have noticed that this year we have ranged across southern England from Somerset to Kent and as far north and east as Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire. Nevertheless the Unit does not take up every project it is offered. We continue to build coherent research themes within the context of conservation-based archaeology.

There is increasing demand for environmental impact assessments generally and archaeological assessments specifically as a result of European legislation in 1989 and local authorities toughening up their structure and local plans.

This has caused enormous changes within archaeological units and also in the role of local authority archaeologists. Competitive tendering between Units has become commonplace; fortunately the OAU finds it has a growing list of regular clients among developers and planning consultants.

The emergence of more commercially based archaeology has not been without its birth pangs; rivalry and competitiveness have been created which previously did not exist. However, the main concern for archaeology in the future is to ensure that standards do not fall as has happened in North America in recent years.

For the Unit these changes have led to an increase not only in the amount but also the pressure of work. In response major reorganisation has been implemented. A working party

has recommended streamlining our committee structure. Within the Unit, new posts have been created: George Lambrick has been appointed Deputy Director; Simon Palmer has become the first Unit Manager, and John Moore has been promoted to another new post of Contracts Officer. Gill Hey and David Wilkinson have taken up posts as Senior Archaeologists and Martin Hicks will join us in the new year from Canterbury. Simon Chew has also recently joined the drawing office team from the Trust for Wessex Archaeology and Georgina Griffiths who baled us out in the office (while Samantha Hatzis was on maternity leave producing Timotheos) has stayed on now that Samantha has returned.

Needless to say the Unit is rapidly becoming overcrowded. This may explain the tendency for the staff to marry each other. Congratulations to Leigh Turner and Tim Allen, the latest pairing. We hope to put a stop to this by expanding into new premises early in 1990.

In order to deal efficiently with the growing workload and to improve the quality of presentation, the Unit has increased its level of investment in capital equipment, particularly vehicles, computers and a desk-top publishing system.

1989 saw the completion of several major projects, such as Barrow Hills, Radley and the continuation of others. The Claydon Pike/Thornhill Farm excavations between Lechlade and Fairford enter their tenth year. At the present time the last major trench of about 1 hectare is being excavated through an area of Iron Age cattle enclosures and Romano-British arable fields. This has been one of the largest landscape projects in Britain. The report will eventually appear as four volumes published with the Oxford University Archaeological Committee, and we hope a more popular book sponsored by English Heritage.

Other landscape projects have continued in the Stanton Harcourt area. The excavation of the Devil's Quoits henge was completed and arrangements made to reconstruct the henge with the co-operation of ARC Ltd, Oxfordshire County

Council, English Heritage and All Soul's College. This is an exciting scheme which should mean that in the 1990's, the Thames Valley's only surviving henge should re-emerge as a major site.

The past year has seen some major strides in Neolithic studies. New ceremonial complexes have recently been discovered in the Thames valley by the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments (England). At the Drayton Coursus, south of Abingdon, a series of C14 dates indicate that this is the earliest monument of its kind so far known in Britain. Another remarkable discovery was the partially waterlogged Neolithic long barrow at Stanwick, Northamptonshire, found beneath the deep alluvial silts of the Nene Valley.

This has been a fruitful year for urban archaeology. In Oxford, Brian Durham's well targeted excavations in the St Aldates area, continue to shed light on the original Oxenford and the Norman Grandpont.



Abingdon has seen its largest ever excavation at the Vineyard where Tim Allen and his team have uncovered a remarkable series of Roman, Medieval and Civil War cemeteries. This is one of the most prolific sites the Unit has ever excavated with an Iron Age settlement, rich Romano-British buildings,

and a pagan Saxon settlement all underlying the Medieval abbey. Remarkably a late medieval timber bridge was found in the only section dug across the monastic moat. We hope that this will be conserved and deployed in the vale of the White Horse's District Councils new headquarters on the site.

In Dover the Unit has been employed to co-ordinate the archaeological response on the new White Cliffs Heritage Centre and Museum site. The aim here is to tailor the new buildings to minimise their impact on the archaeological deposits.

Dover District Council also commissioned the Unit to produce a Historic Town Survey, which has been written by David Wilkinson.

Also, mainly in Kent, the implications study for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link was commissioned by British Rail and carried out by George Lambrick assisted by Claire Bland; Julian Munby was responsible for the buildings survey. In spite of the very public vicissitudes of the CTRL, the environmental impact assessments have been a model of how such things should be carried out. In contrast, the M40 in Oxfordshire has been an archaeological disaster for which provision was only forthcoming from English Heritage (not the Department of Transport) in its final stages in late 1989.

The emphasis in archaeology is shifting away from a simple rescue excavation response to one in which conservation and monument management are playing a more important role. As consultants the Unit has advised several developers such as the Co-operative Society in Gloucester where following site assessment work (carried out by the Gloucester City Unit) the excavation programme has been tailored to mitigate the impact of the proposed building. As a result, more archaeological deposits should stay where they belong: in the ground.

The Unit has also worked with the National Trust and English Heritage on White Horse Hill. The strategy here is to improve the management of the site while discovering

more about this enigmatic landscape in ways which have a minimal impact - geophysical and contour surveys, aerial photography, environmental sampling and small, targeted excavations. This year's work revealed the character of the hillfort defences. Next year we tackle the big question: the date of the horse.

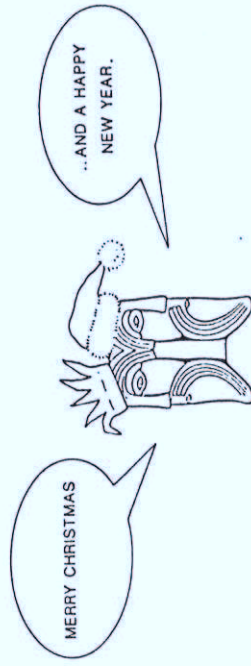
The Unit has always encouraged its staff to support local and National bodies. At the present time the Director is a member of the Oxford Diocesan Advisory Board for the care of Churches and has recently been asked to join the National Trust's new Archaeological Advisory Committee. He is a member of the Oxford Historical and Archaeological Society Committee, and the Berkshire and Gloucestershire Archaeological Committees and was this year elected as Vice President of the Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society. George Lambrick has resigned after six years as Honorary Secretary of the Council for British Archaeology Countryside Committee and from the CBA's Executive Board but remains on the CBA's Structure and Policy Review Working Party. George is also a member of the Prehistoric Society's Council and Executive, and has been joint Chairman of the Later Prehistoric Ceramic Research Group. Tim Allen is Chairman of CBA9.

Congratulations to Brian Durham and George Lambrick who this year were elected Fellows of the Society of Antiquaries.

Finally as the 80's draw to a close I would like to thank those who have helped to put the Unit in good shape to face the 90's - the members of the Oxford Archaeological committee, particularly our past and present Chairmen Professor S.S. Frere and Professor Peter Salway and our Honorary Secretary Louise Armstrong; also the many local amateur archaeologists in Oxfordshire and other counties who have supported our work. The Unit's funding comes from numerous sources notably English Heritage, Oxfordshire County Council and District Councils in Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire. We are grateful for their support and increasingly to the many developers who now finance surveys

and excavation. I would also like to thank those other institutions without which the Unit could not function so effectively: the Oxfordshire County Museum Service (now renamed as The Department of Leisure and Arts: Museum and Archive Services) the Ashmolean Museum and Library, Oxford University's Institute of Archaeology and Department of External Studies, and the Local Authority archaeologists who have adapted successfully to this interesting decade. With Janus Patulcius (he's the one on the right) we look forward to the next millennium.

David Miles



Cover Illustration: artist's impression of the Medieval bell-tower discovered in the Vineyard excavation.

EVENTS

Oxford's Department for External Studies has its usual full programme of history and archaeology courses this autumn.

Landscapes and Documents: a day school - Saturday 13th January 1990, at Rewley House Oxford.

Middle Saxon England: a weekend school - Friday 19-21 January 1990 at Rewley House.

Amphitheatres, Theatres and Circuses of Roman Britain: a day school - Saturday 3rd February 1990, at Rewley House.

Forest Woodland, Settlement and Society: a weekend school - Friday 9-11 February 1990, at Rewley House.

Aerial Photography: a weekend school - Saturday 17-18 March 1990, at Rewley House.

Prehistory in Southern Britain: a series of day schools - Friday 16, 17, 21 March 1990, at Rewley House.

Arab Influence in Medieval Europe: a day school - Friday 6th April 1990, at Rewley House.

Archaeology - Britain 1990: The Fourth Annual Conference of the Institute of Field Archaeologists will take place in Birmingham on 23-25 April 1990.

Details of courses from Oxford University Department for External Studies, Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square, Oxford. OX1 2JA.

VOLUNTEERS

We are always looking for volunteers to help wash and mark finds - either on site or here in the Unit. If you have a spare day or even just an afternoon and would like to lend a hand you are most welcome. Please contact Leigh Turner at the Unit (tel Ox. 243888).

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The OAU Newsletter is issued quarterly. The subscription is £3.00 per annum. Please make cheques payable to The Oxford Archaeological Unit.

If anyone outside the Unit - local societies, archaeological enthusiasts, or other professional groups working in Oxfordshire wish to make use of these information columns they are most welcome.

Please send contributions for the next newsletter to Samantha Hatzis at the Oxford Archaeological Unit, 46, Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford OX1 2EP.