

# OAU NEWS

December 1991

## GREEK PIPELINE

For the first time the OAU has contributed to an Environmental Assessment abroad. A natural gas pipeline running from the USSR through Greece is proposed. As a result of a recent European Community Directive such major schemes now require environmental assessment, and this includes archaeology.

The pipeline corridor is about 800 km long from the Bulgarian border to the Bay of Salamis west of Athens, with a number of branch lines. The Greek Archaeological Service has already taken steps to ensure that the pipeline does not pass through known archaeological sites, particularly standing monuments. However, the historic landscape of Greece is relatively unexplored. Not many detailed surveys have been carried out, but in Boeotia Anthony Snodgrass and John Bintliff found up to 10 sites per km<sup>2</sup>. With this sort of density the pipeline is bound to impinge on archaeology.

Greek law on archaeology is draconian by British standards. Any development that uncovers archaeology can be stopped to allow excavation and the penalties for not reporting archaeological discoveries include imprisonment.

Although Greek archaeologists have authority, however, they lack resources. The country's archaeologists are regionalised into ephorias, which are largely autonomous. A linear project such as a pipeline passing through many ephorias presents problems of organisation.

The pipeline could provide a tremendous opportunity to sample relatively unknown tracts of historic landscape, but it is going to require considerable effort to reconcile the needs of archaeology with the efficient and cost-effective construction of a major engineering project.



The OAU formed part of a team organised by Ashdown Environmental Ltd and commissioned by DEPA (the Greek gas board). We are grateful to the Greek engineers, geologists and archaeologists and to Dr Liza French of the British School at Athens, Dr Anthony Snodgrass in Cambridge and Dr Paul Halstead of Sheffield University for their assistance.

David Miles

# THE DRAWING OFFICE

Should the Drawing Office be renamed? Does 'drawing' really convey the wide range of creative activities (official and unofficial) which take place on the first floor of the Hythe Bridge Street annexe?

In the past, most of the Unit's excavations were large-scale and funded by English Heritage. The work of the drawing office consisted mainly of producing black and white drawings for publication – plans of the different phases of the site, sections through the layers of stratigraphy and drawings of potsherds, flints and small finds.

Drawing for publication is still a big part of the drawing office's workload, but over the last three years the emphasis has changed. The principle that 'the polluter pays' has brought about a big increase in excavations funded by developers. Planning consent depends on the developer paying for the archaeological potential of a site to be assessed before development.

Over the last two years the Unit has produced over 150 developer-funded archaeological and environmental assessment reports – not counting 16 or more major reports on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link! To make the complicated archaeological plans and sections interesting and easy to understand by non-archaeologists the reports are illustrated with carefully-designed colour drawings. The work of the OAU drawing office has been held up by clients as a model for other environmental consultants.

As well as illustrating reports, the drawing office is increasingly involved in producing publicity material of all kinds: exhibitions, advertisements, the Annual report, this newsheet, a publicity brochure, Christmas cards, book covers, high-quality photographs, and a T-shirt. There are even rumours of a plan to produce an own-label OAU wine. Is there no end to the talents of the multi-faceted Messrs Hughes, Rey and Chew?



another rush job for the drawing office



## Going to Pot at Nuneham Courtenay

The OAU has been excavating a Roman kiln site at Lower Farm, Nuneham Courtenay. Roman pottery had been found in the next field to the east in the early 1960s, but not in any great quantity. The new Thames Water Didcot-Oxford pipeline crosses the site, and it was this which first alerted us to its importance. Our work has revealed a Roman kiln site which had been in use from the 2nd to 4th centuries AD.



Didcot - Oxford Pipeline: the Roman pottery producing site near Nuneham Courtenay

The north end of the site was where the potters and their families lived. Ditches, pits and postholes were excavated; the postholes seem to belong to two circular timber huts. Animal bones, pottery, and quernstones for grinding corn were found here. There were also five baby burials. Under Roman law, adults had to be buried in cemeteries away from settlements, but this law did not apply to infants.

South of the settlement was the pottery workshop. The pots would have been wheel-thrown and decorated here, and then left to dry before being fired in the kiln. Associated features included stone-lined chests where the clay was stored, stone drying-racks, drains for water supply, and a deep well. Many

complete wasters had been thrown into the well. These were 'seconds', pots which had been distorted or broken in the kiln.

Immediately to the south of the workshop was a dump where more wasters had been thrown away. This dump was massive, c 100 m north-south, at least 15 m east-west and up to 1.2 m in depth. Vast amounts of pottery had been discarded here.



Part of the large Roman pottery dump near Nuneham Courtenay

The site is extremely important. The features are very well preserved, unlike other kiln sites in the area which have been damaged by later development. The scale of the dump, in particular, shows that production was on an extremely large scale. Analysis of the pottery from the excavation will enable us to determine what types of pottery were being produced, for how long, and where it was being sold.

# Stratford, Langthorne Abbey

For those based in the Oxford area, the name Stratford has pleasant, Shakespearean connotations, but the Stratford referred to here is in the East End of London. The area currently being evaluated by the OAU is a bleak, urban pastiche of wasteland, run-down factories and scrapyards; there are no clues above-ground that this was once the site of Langthorne (sometimes called West Ham) Abbey, founded for the monastic order of Savigny in 1134 and passed on to the Cistercians in 1147.

The site has been purchased by London Underground Limited who intend to develop it as a depot for the new Jubilee Line Extension. They have commissioned the OAU to evaluate the site and discover how much of the Abbey still remains below the surface.

Results so far have been instructive, if not spectacular. In 1983 excavation by the Passmore Edwards Museum, just east of the present site, revealed what may be the east end of the Abbey church. This information, coupled with the sparse documentary evidence, gives hypothetical positions for some of the Abbey buildings.

Trenches so far have exposed what may be the robbed structure of a small, secondary church. A cemetery found close by is presumably related to this building. In the area where the main claustral buildings are to be expected substantial walls have already come to light. It is hoped to expand the evaluation of this area in the next few weeks.

Since the initial purchase and the identification of the archaeological potential of the site, the depot layout has been redesigned to minimise the impact on the Abbey buildings.

The proposed depot also includes a large area north of the Abbey precinct. This was evidently put to agricultural use in the medieval period, but one OAU trench contained a Roman ditch. The quantity of material recovered suggests that there is a settlement nearby, and is an unexpected addition to the pre-Abbey history of the site. Further work in this area is under way.



Cistercian monk

David Wilkinson



## Recent work by the OAU

Since September, excavations have continued on the A421 at Alchester and at Eynsham Abbey. The OAU has also carried out fieldwork in Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Somerset, London, Dorset, Kent and Northamptonshire.

The consultancy department has also been involved in projects in Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, London, Dorset, Kent and Northamptonshire, as well as in Buckinghamshire, Staffordshire/W Midlands and Surrey/Sussex.

Meanwhile, the post-excavation department has been involved in intensive but fruitful discussions with English Heritage. Work has now started on the post-excavation phase of the Shire Lake project, and two volumes in the Thames Valley Landscapes series are currently with the publisher.

## White Cliffs Experience

The White Cliffs Experience in Dover, for which the OAU organised the archaeology programme, has won the UK's top tourism award for 1991. It was awarded by the English Tourist Board for the best visitor attraction.

## Forthcoming events

February 29th 1992  
'Oxenburger to Beefburger' - Brian Durham at the University of Oxford Archaeological Society One-Day Conference entitled 'Townscape : 2000 years of towns in South Britain'. (Contact: Andrew Millard on 0865-515211)

## White Horse Exhibition

A Unit exhibition on the scientific techniques used on the recent White Horse Hill project will tour local libraries and museums from January 1991.

Faringdon Library	9-30 January
Banbury Library	6-27 February
Museum of Oxford	5-27 March
County Museum, Woodstock	27 March onward

The exhibition is funded by the Royal Society.

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Oxford Archaeological Unit, 46 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford OX1 2EP.