



OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER INCLUDING  
OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

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Anyone wishing to send contributions to the Newsletter should send details to the above address before Friday, 3rd December.

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**OXFORDSHIRE**

Eynsham By-pass

This new road passes east of Eynsham village over gravel terraces well known for archaeological remains. Much of the earthmoving and trenching to prepare the ground for road construction has now taken place. A watching brief maintained by Richard Chambers has revealed a previously unknown area of Romano-British settlement to the north-east of Eynsham. A spread of features has been recorded over a distance of some 100 metres.

Kidlington, Moat Cottage

Drains and roadways have now been laid across this medieval moated site. The running sections provided by the sewer-pipe trenches provided little further information. However these trenches have skirted the area shown by excavation in 1967 to contain a medieval building complex. Richard Chambers will continue to watch the groundwork on this site.

Stanton Harcourt - Blackditch By-pass

Earlier in the Summer a watching brief was carried out on the construction of the new Blackditch by-pass. The one major feature located was a 250m length of Iron Age ditch running along the line of the new road. It turned east at its north end and butt ended at its southern end where a well preserved water logged deposit was sampled. Only one sherd and a few bones were found, but the lack of more occupation debris is an indication that the ditch was not immediately next to a settlement site and the environmental data when analysed will thus be particularly valuable in providing a picture of the Iron Age environment away from a settlement and on the second gravel terrace, an area previously not represented by any well preserved waterlogged remains for this period. The result will also be valuable in the light of previous excavations nearby at Beard Mill and Vicarage Pit in the 1950's and the Unit's excavation at Mingies Ditch (both less than a mile away) and in relation to Gravelly Guy, another major Iron Age site, even closer to hand where it is hoped excavation will begin next year.

Rollright

Excavations by the OAU and OUAS have now been completed. The first half was spent investigating geophysical anomalies in the Whispering Knights field, which had suggested a possible field system, trackway, ring ditch and pits. Apart from one ditch and the trackway (both late prehistoric) which converged on the ridgeway track near an Iron Age settlement (see below), the features were geological. The "trackways" ditches were not exactly similar,

suggesting that it may have been a double ditched boundary rather than a track, in either case it is interesting as it coincides with the parish boundary further on perhaps suggesting a much earlier origin for this land division.

In the area next to the King Stone across the road (in Warwickshire) the second half of the excavation was spent on a neolithic cairn discovered on the long mound by the King Stone, a bronze age round barrow just to the west and the Iron Age settlement in the next field to the east. The cairn is well preserved and was built of quarried stone with drystone wall revetments. Evidence of cremations on the old ground surface just outside the cairn on its NW and SW sides suggest with other evidence that it may be a late neolithic round barrow rather than an earlier long cairn but this needs to be confirmed by further excavation. Later bronze age cremations were inserted in the top of it and these may be the explanation of the King Stone if it was erected to mark their existence.

The neolithic cairn was built on a well structured clay loam, but under the bronze age barrow the soil had been transformed by leaching, probably as a result of clearance and the establishment of grassland at the time of the cairn's construction and the roughly contemporary stone circle. Also under the bronze age barrow there was evidence of mesolithic activity in the form of a tight cluster of flint bladelets. The barrow itself survived only as a single layer of flat stones. Five cremations were also excavated but they did not produce any dating evidence.

In the next door field the Iron Age enclosure mentioned above was sampled. Its ditch was cut 1.5m into rock and with a wall formed by the excavated stone would have formed a defensible barrier. Pits, including some probably for grain storage, were found both inside and outside the enclosure, and part of a probable house circle ditch was located. Pottery and the stratigraphy suggest a fairly long period of occupation in the early to mid Iron Age.

One of the most notable finds from the project was a neolithic greenstone axe fragment, possibly from Cornwall or Wales, found on the surface of the field not far from the Stone Circle.

#### GLoucestershire

Fairford/Lechlade, Claydon Pike

Excavations at Claydon Pike continued until September 26 when an open day was held. In spite of stormy weather about one thousand people visited the site. A large marquee courtesy of Amey Roadstone Corporation provided a shelter for the exhibition and a refuge when site tours were rained off - thanks to ARC and also to everyone who turned out to help. The site was open on the following three days to schools when there was a constant stream of children from as far apart as Cirencester and Abingdon. Maggie Cunliffe and Tim Copeland handled the flow admirably.

ARC also provided a JCB for a week and a half which enabled a new area of the site to be stripped. In the south-central part of the Roman settlement fronting onto the crossroads, a rectangular enclosure was uncovered. The enclosure is double-ditched on three sides, about 25m long and 15m wide. The front of the enclosure consists of a single ditch or wall foundation. In the

front part of the enclosure is a large rectangular pit with considerable quantities of burnt material in it. The rear, south-eastern corner of the enclosure is cobbled. There are large quantities of finds around the outside of the enclosure notably pottery and glass, but also three rolls of lead or lead alloy. These resemble the defixiones or curses recently found at Bath and Uley.

The finds, the plan and position of the enclosure and the discovery close by of a limestone column and its base (Newsletter August 1982) suggest that we may have a shrine. Excavation of this will continue in 1983.

The single most interesting find in recent weeks has been an ostrakon or amphora sherd carefully inscribed on the inside LEG II A (Second Legion Augusta). Together with the other military material found at Claydon Pike this provides room for considerable speculation about the nature of the settlement in the later first century AD - an imperial estate, legionary prata, perhaps breeding horses, a retired veteran's farmstead?

The extensive late Iron Age settlement continued to be occupied after the Conquest but was systematically demolished about AD70. At that time a new settlement with roads, streets and fields was established. The Second Legion Augusta was at this time based in Gloucester, but about 74 moved to Caerleon. Although the later first century settlement covers about 4ha, the area of domestic housing is limited to one gravel platform near the centre of the site. The rest seems to have been mainly devoted to stock pens, yards and storage facilities. See below 'By the tooth of the Hairy Elephant'.

#### Lechlade, Leaze Farm

Recently Mark Maillard who has been regularly helping at Claydon Pike drew our attention to a site south-east of Lechlade (centred SU 233984). Slight earthworks and hollow-ways indicate a Romano-British settlement surviving in pasture on the north bank of the Thames. Finds from the site show certain similarities to Claydon Pike. There are for example two trumpet brooches, several pieces of horse harness including an enamelled brass and a martingale with a small modelled horse head centre piece. A dozen lead rolls resemble those from Claydon Pike but are slightly smaller. A possible alternative to their interpretation as defixiones is that they are fishing weights. Only unrolling them will clarify this issue.

About fifty coins have been found on the site ranging in date from mid first to late fourth century.

#### BY THE TOOTH OF THE HAIRY ELEPHANT - Bob Wilson and Gwynne Oakley

Visitors to the recent Open Day at Claydon Pike site near Lechlade may be interested to learn the identity of the mystery object found in the nearby gravel pit. It is, or was, the tooth of a woolly mammoth, a type of elephant accustomed to a cold climate which was hunted by early man from what is now France to Russia. The mammoth with his long hairy coat was depicted in cave paintings and carved on bone.

The tooth is recognisable from its large size and distinctive structure:

closely packed vertical layers (lamellae) of dentine surrounded by enamel form along the top a tough grinding surface allowing the mammoth to cope with a very tough, gritty diet of grasses, herbs and stunted conifers which grew in Ice Age Europe. Teeth from the upper jaw (maxilla) acquired a convex wear surface while those of the lower jaw (mandible) became concave (like the one found at Claydon Pike).

The permanent dentition of the mammoth was two tusks or incisors (which grew continuously) in the upper jaw and three molars on each side of the upper and lower jaws. These were preceded by two deciduous or milk teeth. The teeth of elephants are said not to be replaced from underneath as in humans and other animals but to erupt, come into wear, and (milk teeth) are discarded in succession. To be provocative, however, this interpretation depends on how teeth are classified. In humans teeth erupt in succession as well as from underneath. Thus, in elephants there is nothing special about teeth which erupt from below. Presumably they have become unnecessary because it is the large molars which are most useful to elephants and not the small permanent (pre-molar) teeth at the front after the worn out milk teeth have been lost. The food is gathered and conveyed to the mouth of the elephant's (or mammoth's) trunk and front teeth are not required to bite as in other animals.

Tusks, molar teeth and bones of the woolly mammoth and of other animals which lived during the Ice Ages and have long been extinct are often found at the bottom of the Thames Valley gravels now being exploited to build today's roads.

#### BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE OAU

After the dig was over ..... although most of our field officers get their excavated finds washed and marked on site before retreating indoors for a period to write the report, there are times when this cannot be done for lack of manpower or facilities. Then the gallant volunteers who put in a regular morning or afternoon each week at the Unit come into their own. Inevitably there is a back-log waiting to be dealt with and this seems to be perpetual, so that new volunteers are always welcome to help wash, mark, sort and catalogue the finds so that they can be identified and examined to yield valuable evidence essential to the interpretation of every archaeological site.

Gwynne Oakley who is finds administrator at the Unit, 46 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford would like to thank all past and present voluntary helpers - the latest recruits include three boys from Magdalen College school - and encourage new volunteers to telephone Oxford 243888 (note new number!)

Currently we have more than 30 cremations to clean and sort out so that they can be examined by the peripatetic skeleton specialist!

#### **CALENDAR**

WEEKEND AND DAY SCHOOLS, Organised by Oxford University Department for External Studies, Rewley House, Wellington Square.

Saturday 30th October

Industry and Trade in Oxfordshire in The Roman Period (day school to be held at The Methodist Church Hall, Marlborough Road, Banbury)

12-14 November 1982

Archaeology and Evolution. A Darwinian Centenary Celebration.

19-21 November 1982

Roman Trade and Industry

Saturday 27th November

Brewing and Drink (day school to be held at Rewley House)

8-9 January 1983

The Great Rebuilding

Saturday 29th January 1983

The English Country Parson (day school to be held at Rewley House)

University Extension Lectures 'The Origins of English Towns' by Professor Martin Biddle (Director of the Winchester Research Unit) to be held at The Lecture Theatre, St. Cross Building, Manor Road, Oxford 7.30 - 9.30 p.m.).

Friday 22nd October

Romano-British Towns in Late Antiquity

Friday 5th November

Continuity in Romano-British Towns: Myth or Reality?

Friday 12th November

Trading Places on Coast and River: the first Anglo-Saxon Towns

Friday 19th November

The Fortified Town: Mercia and the Burhs of Wessex

Friday 26th November

Viking Towns or Viking Settlement in Towns?

Friday 3rd December

The Re-Conquest of the Dane Law: the expansion of the Burghal System

Friday 10th December

Towns in Late Anglo-Saxon England

Friday 17th December

Anglo-Saxon Towns: Explanation and Prospect

Further details of all these courses are available from the Course Secretary, Oxford University Department for External Studies, Rewley House, 3-7 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA (Oxford 52901).

Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society Winter Programme 1982-3.  
Applications to Jocelyn Morris (Tel: Oxford 513625) by dates given below.  
Excursions

Saturday 13 November 10.30 a.m.

To celebrate the tercentenary of the completion of Christopher Wren's Tom Tower, following her lecture, Mrs Mavis Batey will take a party to Christ Church. Meet at 10.30 a.m. under Tom Tower. Applications by 4 November. Cost 50p.

Saturday 19 March 11.00 a.m. -  
4.30 p.m.

Visit to Burford, led by our member Rev.R.A. Moody, to study the town's plan and historic buildings. Meet at 11.00 a.m. at the Oxford 'bus stop in High Street, Burford, outside the Falkland Hall. Applications by 5 March. Further details and Oxford/Witney 'bus times to those who apply. Cost 60p.

Saturday 9 April 1.30 p.m.

James Bond had kindly offered to follow his lecture with a walk in Blenheim Park (distance 4-5 miles). Meet at 1.30 p.m. outside Oxfordshire County Museum, Woodstock.

Applications by 23 March. Further details and Oxford/Woodstock 'bus times to those who apply. Cost 70p.

#### Lectures

Wednesday 27 October  
Mrs Mavis Batey

The Beautifying of Thomas his Quadrangle - to celebrate the tercentenary of Wren's Tom Tower. At the Museum of Oxford, St Aldates 5.30 p.m.

Wednesday 17 November  
Dr Janet Cooper

The Northern Part of Wootton Hundred - Aspects of the history of an area of north Oxfordshire. At the Museum of Oxford, St Aldates 5.30 p.m.

Wednesday 26 January  
Mr David Sturdy

Early Oxford Gardens - The formal and medieval gardens of Elizabethan and Stuart Oxford. At the Ashmolean Lecture Room 5.30 p.m.

Wednesday 2 February  
Dr Mary Prior

Women and Trade in Oxford, 1500-1800 - Some neglected aspects of the City's history. At the Ashmolean Lecture Room 5.30 p.m.

Wednesday 16 February  
Mr James Bond

Blenheim Park and its Landscape - A look at the earliest features, the medieval

park and palace, and the later formal landscaping. At the Ashmolean Lecture Room 5.30 p.m.

Thursday 10 March  
Mr Tom Hassall

The Work of the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit in 1982. At the Ashmolean Lecture Room 5.30 p.m.

Wednesday 23 March  
Mr Arthur Macgregor

The Reliques of Old Tradescant - the pre-history and dark ages of the Ashmolean Museum. At the Ashmolean Lecture Room 5.30 p.m.

