

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWS

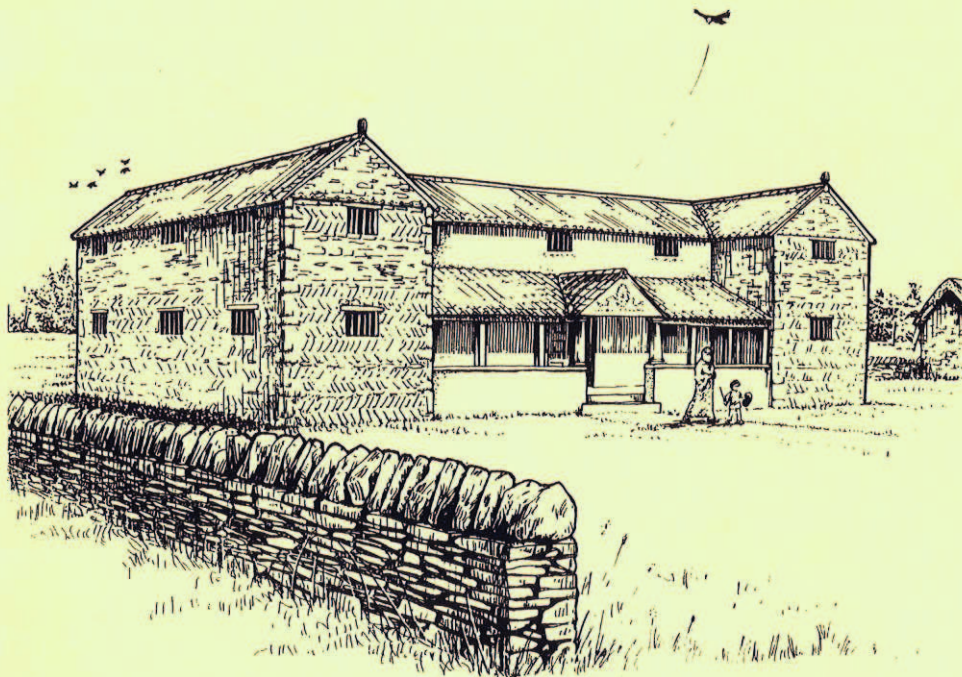
The quarterly newsletter of the Oxford



Archaeological Unit



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SPOTLIGHT

REDLANDS FARM, STANWICK -

THE FIRST YUPPY BARN

CONVERSION

Since April, work on the Romano-British villa complex at Stanwick in Northamptonshire has produced spectacular results, including the entire gable wall of the villa's E wing, lying just as it had been left after its demolition almost sixteen centuries ago. Preservation is so good that the site is of more than local importance, and it is hoped that it will ultimately be possible to display it to the public and perhaps even to build a replica of the villa.

The villa sits on the edge of the floodplain of the river Nene (Figure 1). The simple rectangular mill-house of the first phase, probably dating to the 2nd century, was built on a low island of sand overlying natural gravel, with a retaining wall at the base of the slope on the N and E sides (Figure 2, Phase IIa). The E end of the main building was celled, and the south side of the room thus created was occupied by a barn door.

The building was served by two substantial aqueducts, one approaching from the W, the other, more extensive, from the S. This second channel must have been dammed, and was

or in a wheel-house on the eastern retaining wall, in which case the cellar could have been used for grain storage. The rest of the building was probably used as living quarters for the miller, and the first aqueduct may have served either a second wheel or a small bath suite.

It is not yet known when the mill went out of use, but what happened to it next is not in doubt; the original mill-cum-barn became the core of a desirable winged corridor villa - the first yuppy barn conversion in Britain (Figure 2, Phase IIb). The barn door was blocked and the cellar was converted into a room with a hypocaust, the Roman version of central heating; the remainder was divided in two and floored with handsome tessellated and mosaic pavements. A single long room was added to the N, and wings were built on to the E and W. The new villa faced S, the wings projecting beyond the columned S facade.

At a slightly later date a corridor or verandah was built between the projecting wings. A second storey was also added to the E wing, with access by a staircase at the E end of the corridor (Figure 2, Phase IIc). The villa plan went on being modified, with the wings being divided into two rooms on two separate occasions and a major rearrangement of the hypocaust room. This in turn was radically overhauled and the hypocaust room was provided with a new stoke hole and completely refaced.

The villa's decline and fall probably began in the late 4th century; the luxurious Roman lifestyle was abandoned and parts of the building fell into disuse and were destroyed (Figure 2, Phase IIId). The hypocaust gradually disintegrated, perhaps over more than a decade; afterwards, a crude pavement was laid over the collapsed masonry. The mosaic and tessellated pavements in the central and western rooms

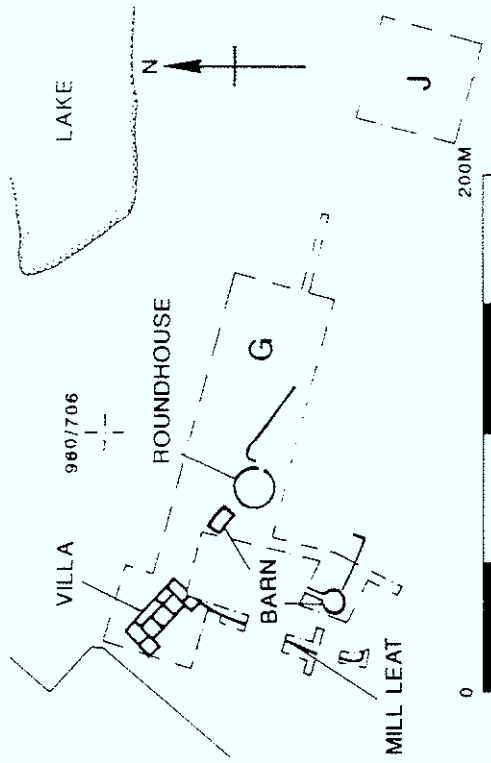


Figure 1: Stanwick Roman villa complex: location plan

probably completely diverted through the aqueduct. The aqueduct ran along the E side of the sand island, its W wall serving as the base of the main building's retaining wall. The aqueduct dropped through 0.25 m in its final 20 m, and probably narrowed at the same time, from a maximum of 1.8 m to about 1.0 m. This must have produced a substantial head of water, and there can be little doubt that this was in fact a mill feat, with a wheel housed either in the cellar room

were broken up and finally, the back room, which had contained the furnace for the hypocaust, housed several hearths or ovens. The W wing was not only abandoned but demolished. Several courses of its gable wall were found where they had been pulled out, and the base of the wall was completely robbed out - the only point in the villa to suffer this fate.

The E wing was also demolished. The entire gable wall was found (Figure 3), an area of masonry 6.6 m x 4.5 m, covering the junction of the two water courses. The lower half of the wall consisted of counter-pitched courses, creating a herringbone effect. Above this the construction changed to horizontally-coursed ashlar. The break between the two techniques showed both that the E wing had had an upper floor, and that this was an extension; the building had originally been single-storeyed. The reason for demolition is obvious; the wing had been built over the mill leat, on ground which sloped eastwards away from the sand island which supported the mill. There may have been structural cracking from the first. By the late 4th or early 5th century both wings had become surplus to requirements, and they could be destroyed.

A major aim of the excavation has been to study the economy and organisation of the whole estate, complementing the work of English Heritage only a mile to the NE, rather than simply recovering building plans in isolation. To the S and E of the villa is a series of courtyards and associated buildings, of which the largest is a limestone-built round house with opposed entrances on the E and W sides. The interior was occupied by both humans and animals, and a succession of hearths and ovens lay in the centre of the floor. The building was 15 m in diameter, making it one of the largest examples in the local tradition of stone round houses. Between the round house

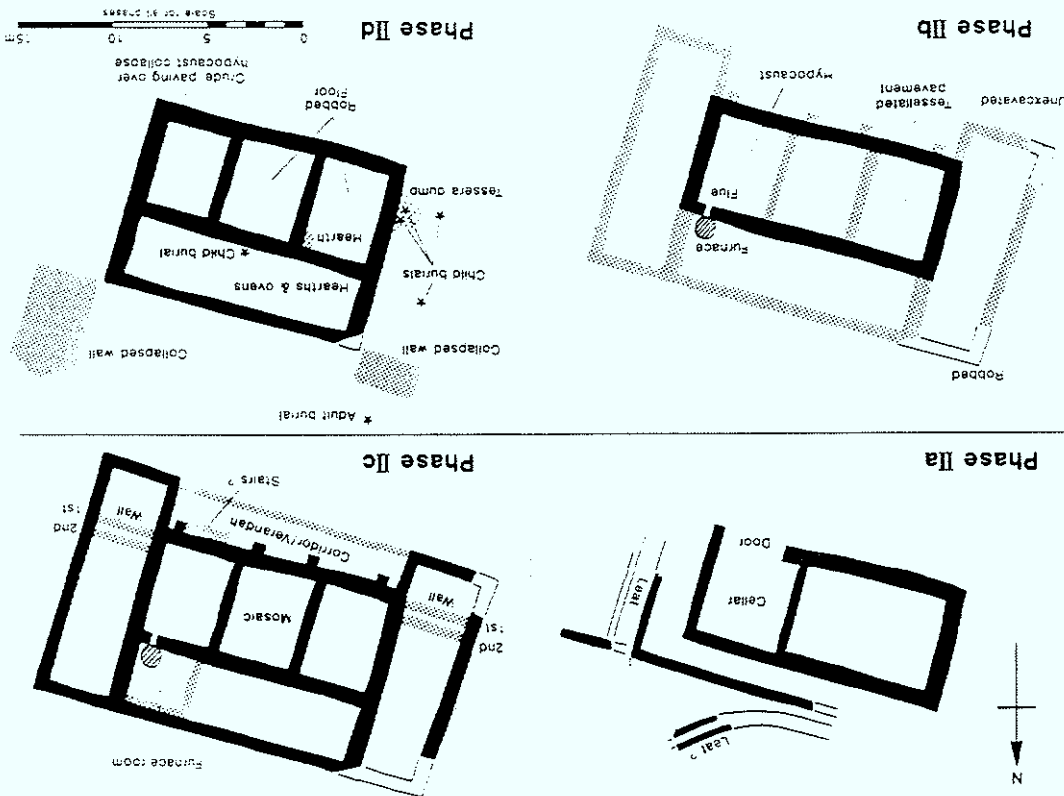


Figure 2: Stanwick villa, phase plans

round house and the villa was a rectangular barn, also built of limestone, with an entrance in the E wall facing the round house.

A second focus of activity in the farm lay some 60 m to the S, where a track entered from the E; another stone-built round house had been inserted into the corner of a courtyard. This structure, which was 9.5 m in diameter, was constructed in an unusual way. A hollow had been dug for it, with pitched stone foundations around the circumference which were bonded in with a well built ramp running away to the N. The remaining internal space was filled in with pitched limestone slabs surrounding a central posthole. No traces of domestic or animal activity are present and the structure has been interpreted as a threshing barn.

To the E of the farm were fields marked by boundaries and enclosure ditches. The field systems are prehistoric in origin, probably dating from the Bronze Age, and appear to develop throughout the Iron Age; at least one post-built structure probably dates to this period. The Romano-British inhabitants retained broadly the same pattern of fields, defining them not only with ditches but with stone walls radiating from the farmyard.

The work at Stanwick was carried out for and funded by Amey Roadstone Corporation in advance of gravel extraction. In view of the importance of this site ARC has generously agreed to take the area of the villa out of their plans, and it will therefore be preserved for future generations.

Graham Keevil

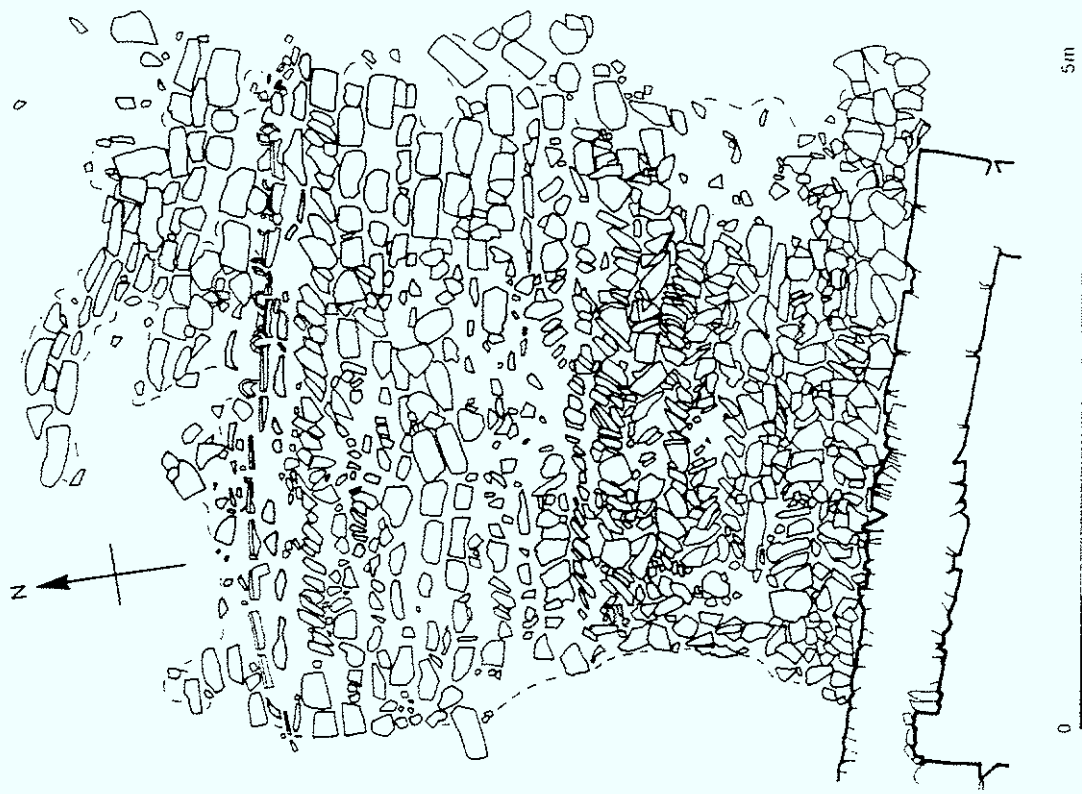


Figure 3. Stanwick villa, collapsed wall of E wing

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

MEDMENHAM: DANESFIELD CAMP

In early August the Unit had the opportunity to investigate the hillfort at Danesfield Camp, Medmenham, Bucks., which sits on a chalk terrace on the N bank of the Thames between Henley and Marlow. Danesfield Ltd plan to convert the late Victorian house into a hotel by extending the House to the E (onto the area which has Scheduled Monument protection) and constructing an underground car park.

The site is unusual in that the portion of ditch and bank which has survived the landscaping of the Victorians and the construction work done by the RAF during the Second World War encloses a stream which has cut a gentle gradient from the top of the chalk terrace down to the Thames. Enclosing a stream within the hillfort defences (and possibly exploiting it as a natural entranceway from the river) has few, if any, parallels in Britain. The hillfort has not previously produced any datable finds.

We were frustrated to discover no archaeological deposits in the assessment of the Scheduled Monument, but two very large pits in the proposed underground car park were discovered. These pits both produced pottery sherds provisionally dated to the middle Iron Age (400-250 BC). One contained a large amount of burnt soil and many large pieces of carefully shaped and hard-fired daub walling, suggesting it may be the collapsed remains of an oven. The accumulated layers produced by the occupiers of the fort have survived later ploughing in some parts of the site.

Now that we have begun to understand the puzzle of this ancient monument, we are eagerly awaiting the chance of further investigation presented by this development.

Greg Campbell

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

LECHLADE: ROUGH GROUND FARM

Margaret Jones excavated a large Roman villa on this site for the Ministry of Works between 1957 and 1965, and the OAU has been preparing a publication report on this as background to its own excavations in the area at Claydon Pike and Thornhill Farm, Fairford, and at Butler's Field, Lechlade. No sooner was the report completed and approved in June this year, than we discovered that the last part of the villa was being developed for housing.

The site had already been granted planning permission, and the houses were going up, but when the developers Ventmore Homes heard of the archaeological importance of the site, they very generously allowed the Unit one month to excavate and donated £5000 towards the cost of excavation. English Heritage also responded very swiftly to our plea for help, providing another £5000 towards the excavation and underwriting the cost of a supplement to the report.

The excavation revealed a large kitchen building of four phases flanked by a succession of boundary ditches and also uncovered the S end of the late Roman house excavated by Margaret Jones, which had a suite of hypocausted rooms with mosaic and Opus Signinum floors and painted walls. The

kitchen building consisted of a rectangular block with a succession of mortar floors containing numerous hearths and ovens, and with an apse-ended room at the W end. The apse was first extended (Phase 2) but was later cut across by two more square rooms (Phase 3), with a villa boundary wall added on the S side. The building was subsequently cut across by another boundary wall, and the villa complex was then surrounded by a ditch 3.0 m deep. Traces of another building were found E of the main villa, together with an early Iron Age boundary ditch which lines up with one excavated at Butler's Field further S.

The excavation was very ably supervised by Mick Parsons, assisted by John Hillier. I would like to thank all of the team for their hard work in very hot conditions.

Tim Allen

KENT

DOVER: THE WHITE CLIFFS EXPERIENCE

The White Cliffs Experience, Dover's new heritage centre and museum complex, now forms a distinctive part of the Dover skyline (Figure 4). The centre is being built for Dover District Council, who have funded all the archaeological work. With so much of the activity now being above ground, the OAU's involvement as archaeological consultants has been more limited this year, but the tempo quickened again in June as our attention turned to the first archaeological display area.

A striking feature of the new building is the tall brick and concrete tower whose architectural origins lie in the 19th-century Martello towers which once dotted sections of the

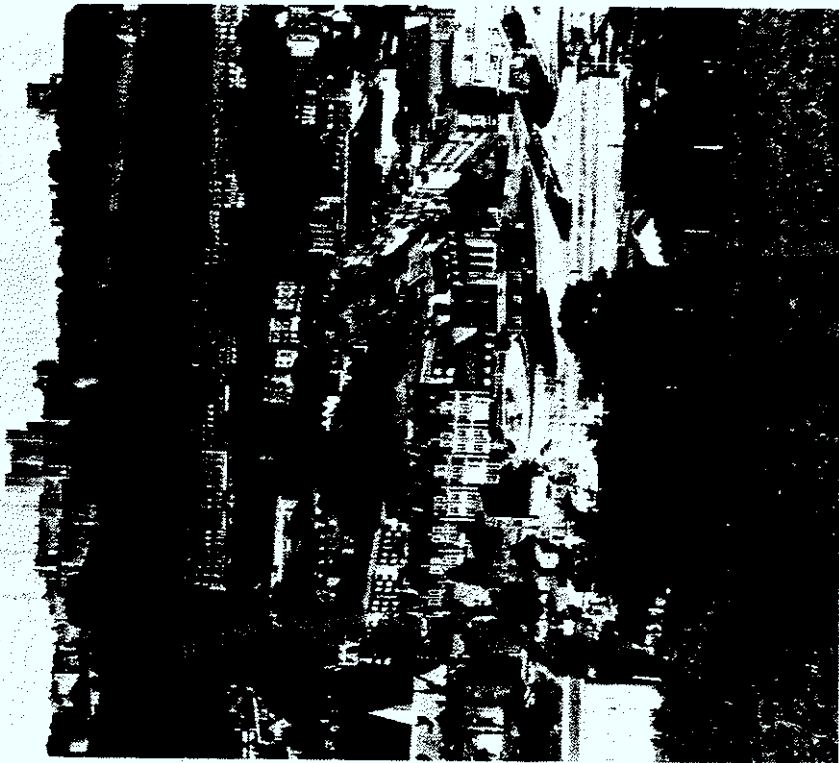


Figure 4: Dover looking NE; Dover Castle in the background. In the foreground is the White Cliffs Experience. Round tower contains Time and Tide theatre.

British coast. The tower will house the Time and Tide Theatre, a unique animatronic show telling Dover's history, and the OAU began work in June in the unusual surroundings of the undercroft below the theatre.

Trial work by the OAU in 1988-9, coupled with the 1970s excavations by the Kent Archaeological Rescue Unit, enabled the undercroft to be constructed over and around part of the 2nd-century fort of the Classis Britannica, the Roman fleet in Britain. The OAU's task, backed up by some very efficient local labour, was to clear away the heavy overburden and expose the remains for display. Over 200 tons of soil and rubble were loaded by hand onto conveyor belts and carried into waiting skips. The job was not a pleasant one, but Figures 5 and 6 show the dramatic transformation of the site as part of the defensive outer wall of the fort and the remains of a barrack block were exposed.

The approach which was adopted at Dover, that of constructing the building around and over the archaeology, could usefully be copied elsewhere, particularly when there is pressure to develop a site quickly. The advantages are that the archaeology is preserved and can either be sealed, or excavated within a suitable timescale. Hurried rescue excavations, causing delay to the developer and often damage to the archaeology, can thus be avoided.

I would like to thank Richard Ellis Project Management and Bovis Construction Limited for their help and understanding during this project.

David Wilkinson



Figure 5: Excavation in the undercroft below the Time and Tide theatre - before...

Figure 6: ...and after. The defensive wall of the Roman fort runs behind the standing figure; to the left are remains of a barrack-block.

LONDON

MITCHAM: TAMWORTH PARK

An assessment on behalf of Trident Group PLC was carried out by the OAU in July. The site consisted of abandoned allotments and lies on the N edge of Mitcham Common; there was no earlier archaeological data for the site. A series of trenches revealed scattered ditches cut into the natural gravel, with little dating evidence - they were at least post-medieval, though some may have been medieval or even Roman. All the features found can be plausibly interpreted as field-boundary ditches, indicating, as might have been expected, that the site lay outside the main areas of occupation.

Sites like Tamworth Park are unexciting to excavate, to write about, and (probably) to read about! Nevertheless, they form part of an ongoing debate as to whether a site which is apparently 'blank', but lies on a subsoil (gravel) noted for frequent earlier occupation, should be assessed before development. In the case of Tamworth Park, some might argue that this time the game was hardly worth the candle. Had a major new settlement been discovered, the picture would be very different. Given that we are unlikely to be able to assess every development site on gravel, a question is thus posed to which there are no easy answers.

David Wilkinson

OXFORDSHIRE

ABINGDON VINEYARD: AREA 6

This site fronts onto the Vineyard road E of the new office block on the corner where the Vineyard meets Stert Street. Excavation in advance of a private office development began on 2nd July. Two N-S trenches, running back from the Vineyard frontage, contained walls and pits belonging to the medieval and post-medieval tenements that formerly lined the street. In the back yard of one of these was a large and well preserved oven, set into the ground, with stone walls and flue. On either side of the entrance to the oven chamber, narrowing the opening, were limestone slabs.

The medieval features overlay Roman ones dating to the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. A large area of cobbled yard was uncovered alongside a possible trackway, and this overlay earlier Roman ditches and pits. Sherds of early Iron Age pottery in the Roman features hint that prehistoric features may be awaiting us, but the excavation has had to be halted for the present until the contract between the Vale and the developers, London Wessex, has been finalised.

Tim Allen

ABINGDON VINEYARD: CIVIL WAR CEMETERY

Construction of the new road linking the Vineyard to Abbey Close has involved disturbing a further area of the Civil War Cemetery. Another 35 skeletons have been recovered, all

buried N-S either in coffins or wrapped in shrouds. As in the rest of the cemetery, there is only one layer of burials, laid out in rows respecting one another, which implies that the graves were marked above ground. These additional skeletons bring the total excavated to c 285, and it is hoped that the Vale will provide funds to study these along with those discovered in 1989, which are now being examined at Sheffield University by Dr Helen Bush. The results already show that children suffered from rickets, among other diseases.

Tim Allen

BICESTER: LITTLEBURY HOTEL

A substantial extension to the rear of this hotel will be built in the autumn on a large piece of land between the parish church and the Oxford-Bicester road. This is the part of Bicester called Kings End and is traditionally held to be the site of the original Anglo-Saxon settlement destroyed by the Danes. The position of King's End, between the later medieval settlement and a main Roman road, indicates that there was a settlement growing up beside a continuing cross-country route similar to pre-Danebury Merton to the south. An evening class fieldwork group, based in Bicester, has begun to excavate a sequence of trial trenches across a part of the property. Although no structural evidence for Anglo-Saxon settlement is expected to survive, pottery should be present beneath the post-Norman medieval settlement soils. Work continues.

R A Chambers

BRIZE NORTON: ROMAN ROAD OR NEOLITHIC CURSUS?

What has struck me most about the public and archaeology this year is the unprecedented number of farmers who have suddenly taken an interest in cropmarks, a useful by-product of the media coverage of non-archaeological crop circles this summer. In July the RAF began to take an interest in inexplicable marks near their Brize Norton aerodrome - could spaceships have made crop circles here, undetected by Brize radar? Yes, quite probably, but these circles were the remnants of Bronze Age burial monuments to the W and S of a long corridor of land defined by two parallel cropmarks. This suggested either a Roman road or perhaps a cursus. Either way the OAU is grateful to RAF Brize Norton for pointing out this and several other previously unknown features.

R A Chambers

A SMALL COGGE

Wadard (last seen starring in the Bayeux tapestry) would have been proud. Imagine an excavation 6.0 m by 8.0 m, in a very public place, ennobled by the pink knees of the County Archaeologist and illuminated by the suntan of the Deputy Director of Oxford's External Department. A quality field, you could say!

For the past five years the Unit has been running training excavations at Cogges Manor Farm Museum, Witney, looking at the layout of the medieval manor house and castle. Each year there has been some trumped-up justification for

disturbing the serenity of the ancient monument, such as the expectation of tree-planting, pipe-laying and so on. This year it has been pure research, and appropriately enough the results have been of research quality. Similarly the staff. While this was a 'rescue' project the Unit had the field to itself, but now it is 'research' we can attract the big names - John Steane of the noble knees, Trevor 'the Trowel' Rowley - each ably supported by his henchperson, David Dawson and Melanie Steiner. Put that talent into an area the size of a decent living room, with a dozen Advanced Certificate students from Rewley House's Summer School, and you can see the history fairly oozing out of the ground.

Seriously, however, this is an excavation aimed at finding the N range of the manor house, which was hinted at in last year's excavations. The shape of the building is now clear, with two doorways, one into the courtyard on the S side and one through a gable or crosswall to the W. The interior of the building is very instructive in its 18th-century form, with a stove base and a large corner oven. Just outside in the yard a small pit was stacked with 18th-century wine bottles, perhaps the result of a binge just before the building was pulled down. It would make sense as a utility wing for the short-lived boarding school of Mr Morland between 1753 and 1766, pulled down when Lord Harcourt reorganised the estate around 1778.

This certainly puts a new complexion on the shape of the house at this stage, but it doesn't necessarily make the N range medieval. Further work in the next two years will concentrate on the area to the W, and there are hints of a large stone building here. The summer school shows no sign of waning in popularity, and even if the Unit retires to the level of a consultant there can be little doubt that the momentum has been established for some very significant

discoveries.

Brian Durham

CUMNOR: PINKHILL MEADOW

At Farmoor Reservoir a watching brief was carried out on behalf of Thames Water during the enhancement programme for Pinkhill Meadow, to check for finds and features. Pinkhill Meadow is approximately one kilometre to the NE of a previously identified Iron Age and Roman settlement site.

Three lakes were dug: a large central one with two smaller, shallower lakes to the NE and to the S, revealing alluvium to a depth of approximately 1.0 m above the natural gravel. The only obvious archaeological feature was an E-W linear ditch showing in the E side of the central lake, 1.0 m wide and approximately 1.0 m deep, containing a few sherds of Iron Age pottery. The ditch could be followed for a length of 14 m. On the S side of the central lake a shallow scoop was identified, containing burnt material but with no associated finds. Part of a quartz hammerstone was also picked up. These finds would seem to indicate some occupation, probably seasonal, of the Thames floodplain in this area during the Iron Age.

Naomi Hutchings

DUCKLINGTON: GILL MILL

Work by the Unit in advance of gravel extraction at Gill Mill has resulted in the discovery of important prehistoric and

Romano-British sites in this part of the floodplain of the Windrush valley.

A part of a major Roman settlement, lying some 800 m SE of the Iron Age site excavated earlier in the year (Newsletter, June 1990), was examined by excavation and salvage recording in June and July 1990. This settlement, identified in assessment trenching in 1988 and 1989, is in parts very well preserved, and some features contain waterlogged deposits. The importance of these deposits has been recognised by the gravel company, Smiths, who have agreed not to extract the main part of the Roman occupation area. This is to be protected from water loss during quarrying by the construction of clay bunds against the sides of the adjacent gravel pits as they are excavated.

The Roman settlement is a linear one, laid out on both sides of a road running NNE/SSW across the Windrush Valley. The 1990 work examined parts of the rear of a series of plots laid out along the western side of the road. The westerly extent of these plots was defined by a sequence of boundary ditches. Within the main excavated area (c 40 m x 50 m) the alignment of these ditches veered away from being parallel to the road to a N-S orientation. In this area the earliest version of the boundary ditch was the most westerly, about 4.0 m wide. Later ditches to the E perpetuated this alignment through at least two further phases and were related to more ditches at right-angles, the latter presumably separating different properties. Three large pits were probably contemporary with the later ditches; they contained waterlogged organic material, including wooden and leather objects, and tesserae were found in one of them.

Further S the situation was even more complex, with perhaps as many as four phases of ditch running parallel to the road,

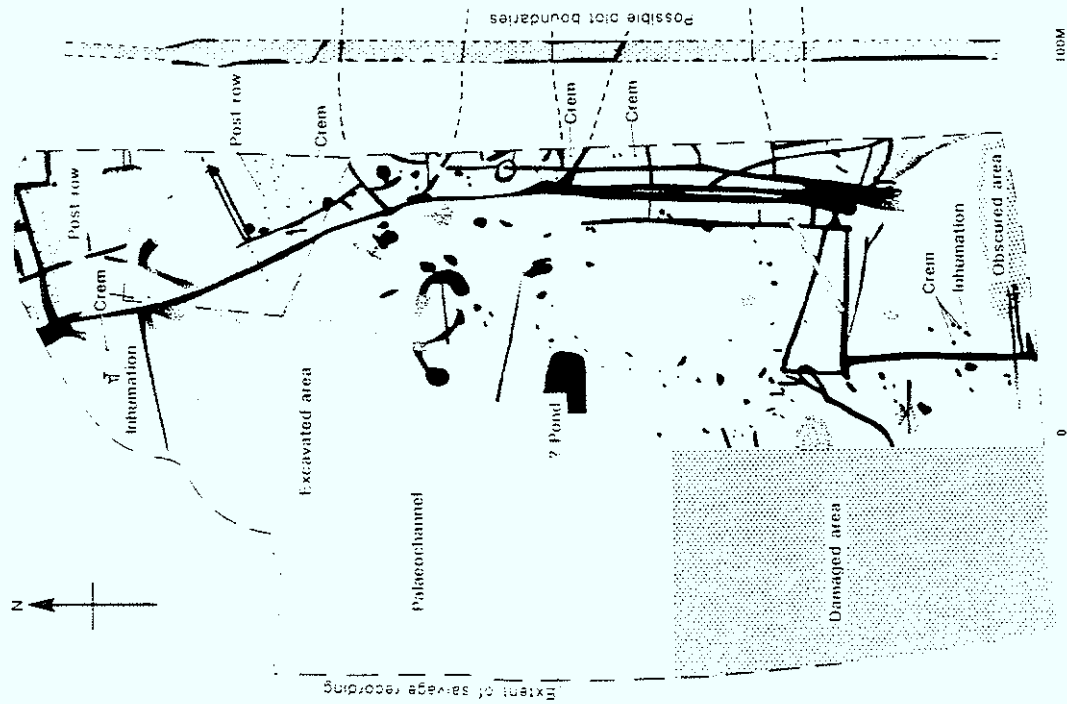


Figure 7: Gill Mill site plan

though it is possible that some of the ditches were in contemporary use. Unfortunately the proximity of the eastern edge of the area examined made it impossible to identify with certainty the number of plots defined by ditches at right-angles to the main alignment, but there may have been at least four such plots, varying in width from c 25-35 m, in addition to those lying within the area of excavation to the N. Behind the roadside plots, to the W, further ditches may have defined small fields or paddocks. These contained a number of features of uncertain function, some of which may have been tree holes, and one which is tentatively interpreted as a pond.

Nine cremation and three inhumation burials were found. Most of these were located within the area defined by the principal ditch alignment, but usually close to it. One group of three cremations and an inhumation occurred within a small rectilinear enclosure at the southern edge of the area examined. This well defined space may have been intended specifically for burials, though the small number of burials located may argue against this suggestion.

There was no conclusive evidence for structures within the areas examined, but part of the floor of a possible timber building was located in a trench at the northern end of the site. The presence of tesserae, some with mortar adhering to them, in a pit presumably indicates the existence of at least one substantial stone building within the settlement.

Four rows of post settings, some containing waterlogged timber, were found in the excavated area. The similarity of alignment of one of these rows to the E-W ditches in the excavated area was probably coincidental, however, and it seems likely that these rows represented post-medieval fence lines, despite the fact that some of the settings appeared to be sealed by alluvium. Many of the Roman features lay beneath

alluvial deposits which made the site invisible from the air. The most obvious features visible on aerial photographs are former watercourses; several probable examples were located within the salvage recorded area. Some, at least, must have predated the Roman settlement.

The finds have yet to be examined in detail, but suggest a date range of 2nd to 4th centuries, with early Roman material poorly represented. A large number of 3rd- to 4th-century coins have been recovered from the general area. The outstanding small object from the recent work was part of a limestone shrine or altar, two pieces of which were found at the northern end of the site. This object and the very large numbers of coins might imply the existence of a temple which could perhaps have formed a focus for the settlement, the presence of which in such a low-lying location is not easily explained.

Further salvage work to the NW of the area described above produced evidence for a second Roman road running across the Windrush Valley. The alignment of this road, like that of the one forming the axis of the Roman settlement, coincides with the position of a known ford across the river, the two crossing places being some 650 m apart. It is uncertain why two crossings were required so close together, and they may not have been in use at the same time. Nevertheless, their survival up to the present day is interesting.

An archaeological display concentrating on the work at Gill Mill was provided for the official opening of the gravel pit in early June 1990.

Paul Booth

EYNESHAM: EYNESHAM ABBEY

The excavation of the southern end of St. Leonard's churchyard extension is now complete except for the mechanical excavation of the prehistoric ditch. The area to the NW of the present site will be stripped of soil at the beginning of September and work will continue until the end of the financial year.

The results of the excavation of the northern half of the churchyard extension were described in the June newsletter. The southern half has provided its own surprises, not in the quantity and quality of the Anglo-Saxon deposits this time but in the form of a complex of drains and cesspits, the remnants of a sequence of lavatory blocks serving a building thought to be the abbot's lodging.

The abbot's lodging lay immediately S of the garden excavated last spring and began life as a Norman hall. The uneven bare soil floor of its larger medieval replacement suggests that in its final form the abbot's lodging comprised a hall built over a ground level undercroft. The medieval builders had not taken sufficient account of the patches of soft ground created by the pits and ditches of earlier occupation and part of the W wall of the later hall had been subjected to extensive underpinning. The sequence of lavatory blocks, each with a cesspit and a drain for the washing facilities, appears to have improved in structural quality as each successive block was built progressively nearer to the hall.

By the late 14th to early 15th century the lavatory block was built onto the W end of the hall with a stone-lined cesspit of truly palatial proportions. This cesspit, cleaned out and partially rebuilt after the dissolution of the abbey in 1538,

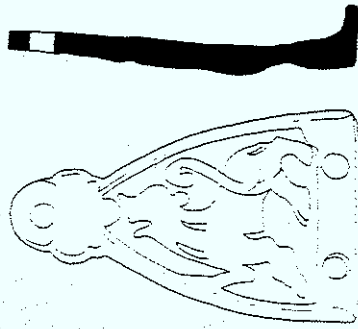


Figure 8. Eynsham Abbey horse decoration

continued in use into the 17th century, suggesting that this was the part of the abbey retained for a while as a private manor house. The layers of grey soil representing the Anglo-Saxon occupation have proved to be a continuation of the sequence recorded in the northern half of the trench. The soils were all laden with domestic refuse. Occasional post pits and an area of burning suggested the former presence of lightly founded buildings, but the slight nature of these buildings and the destructive activities of later generations on this continuously occupied site have left us no clear plans.

A full account will appear in the next newsletter.

R A Chambers

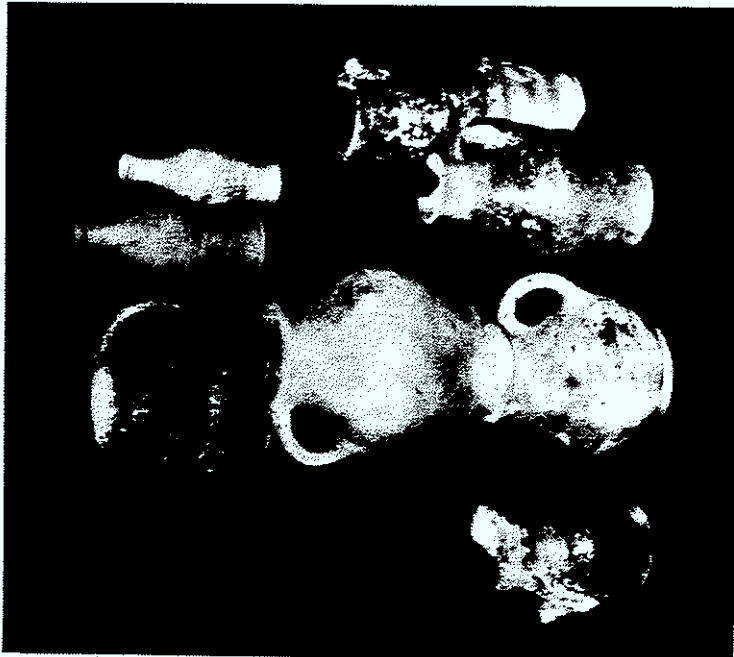


Figure 9: Eynsham Abbey, mid to late 14th-century pots from cesspit, including sauce bottles

LITTLE MILTON: BETTS FARM

Whilst landscaping the area beside a stone barn in the village of Little Milton, the owner recognised human bones coming from the side of his excavation, and they seem to be from an unusually large grave pit of prehistoric date. Brian Durham visited the site to record the deposit, but the rest of the feature

runs into the adjoining property and no further excavation will be possible.

This grave must have been on a slight ridge, not the highest ground in the village, but higher than the church. There is no sign that it was marked by a barrow, but the grave cut was certainly large, about 1.8 m wide, and flat-bottomed. Most of the bones were dug out of the bank by the owner and his assistants, and they show that the body lay on its back with the head roughly N, and as far as could be seen it was parallel to the side of the grave cut. There was some ash in the lower fill, but otherwise no evidence of ritual and no grave goods.

The owner, Mr Ian Caldwell, is hoping to get some of the bones dated by radiocarbon, and it is hoped that before this happens an estimate can be made of the age and sex of the individual.

This is the first prehistoric find in the village, which lies between the Ditch End Roman villa site and the suspiciously straight alignment of the A329 coming from the direction of Dorchester on Thames. The Unit is very grateful to Mr Caldwell for drawing our attention to the new find.

Brian Durham

OXFORD: 34 ST MICHAEL'S STREET

This is the site of the former Bevers restaurant on the corner of New Inn Hall Street, backing onto the City Wall. The recent rebuilding work was designed not to intrude into the below-ground deposits, and interest was therefore centred on the surviving structure of the defences as they became visible.

The City Wall extends down more than 2.0 m here, but it is only an outer skin, the rest having been robbed in the construction of the existing building. One interesting feature was a narrow opening through the wall, clearly the access to a cellar, but looking suspiciously like a postern gate. The threshold of this gate had recent-looking fill beneath it, but under that there was what looked like an older freestone jamb, which may mean that the cellar access was reusing the line of an original postern opening.

Anthony Wood refers to a postern in this area, which suggests that it existed in the 1660s. As he describes it, it would be at the then N end of New Inn Hall Street, i.e. W of our site, but he also describes it as being close to the 'turrel' made into a dwelling house, which ought to be the bastion behind No. 32, very close to the newly found opening (Wood's City, I, 254).

Apart from the stonework, the builders put together an impressive collection of 18th- and 19th-century pottery from pits dug just outside the wall line, and a little further back was a stone-lined well of a 'bottle' shape, rather than the familiar cylindrical shaft which is common in Oxford. There was no sign of bucket wear on the narrow work of the well, and it is assumed that it was operated from a pump.

Brian Durham

***** **THAME: THE SPREAD EAGLE HOTEL**

The Spread Eagle occupies a long burghage plot on the S side of the market place at Thame and it has recently built an extension to the rear of the bank on its E side.

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On behalf of the County Council we watched the foundation work, which confirmed that there is a relatively undisturbed soil profile at a distance of 40 m from the street frontage. This would argue that medieval settlement never extended this far back and the rear of the plots was used for agriculture or horticulture. It was not possible to say whether it was an amalgamation of more than one plot, but there is no doubt that a site like this would repay careful study of a cross-section to establish whether it had been ploughed, and how wide the strips were.

Brian Durham

***** **WANTAGE: ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY**

In January, 1990, a metal detector user located a new Anglo-Saxon cemetery E of Wantage. The finds unearthed by the metal detector probably derive from at least six graves and include: a pair of cruciform brooches with cast side knobs; four applied brooches, decorated with Style I repousse foils; one small-long brooch with square head and lozenge foot; a pair of cast saucer brooches with five-spiral decoration and a disc brooch with punched decoration.

In June/July 1990, a small excavation revealed three SW-NE aligned inhumation burials: one adolescent ?female, one adult male and a rare infant burial. The presence of a small number of pottery sherds in the ploughsoil suggests that cremations are also present. Only one of the inhumations produced finds: an iron spearhead and ferrule, shield boss with associated rivets, and knife. In addition, a circular pit with a central clay pad which appears to have supported a post, one

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posthole and a ditch were excavated, none of which contained datable finds. No finds datable to any other period of occupation were recovered. The density of features suggests that this is the core area of the cemetery.

The cemetery is one of the few known from this area to come into use in the first half of the 5th century, as suggested by the applied five-spiral saucer brooch recovered by the metal detector. Later finds suggest that the cemetery remained in use at least until the mid-6th century. The site lies in an area of dense Anglo-Saxon occupation from which a number of cemeteries and settlements are known, for example at Lockinge, Arn Hill, Betterton House and Harwell. It lies S of the major settlement complex of Sutton Courtenay/Drayton/Milton and has important analogies with the cemeteries at Frilford and Abingdon, where burial also started in the very early 5th century. This new site probably represents a relatively small family cemetery, probably with an associated settlement in the immediate vicinity.

Helena Hamerow

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

August brought two harvests, one of winter wheat and one of archaeology, with farmers phoning in to report cropmarks in their cereals and drought-stricken pastures. From the vantage point of a combine harvester cropmarks begin to reveal something of their true patterns and no longer look like the result of an extra dollop of last years' manure in the middle of the crop.

With the wheat already disappearing in front of the combines,

two evening flights on the 3rd and 16th of August concentrated on growth marks in pasture on the gravel terraces of the Thames between Oxford and Faringdon. The drought stress is much greater this year than in 1976, and soil-filled archaeological features were showing as lines of green growth against brown, parched pasture. In consequence areas of permanent grazing revealed underlying archaeology for the first time, in particular Roman roads, settlements and field systems NE of Faringdon.

R A Chambers

SURREY

KINGSTON UPON THAMES: VILLIERS ROAD

A three-week assessment was carried out in the historic town of Kingston. Many Saxon kings were crowned there, including Aethelstan in AD 925 and Edward the Martyr in AD 975. The town originally formed around a crossing point of the Thames and quickly developed into an important trading centre. It gained its first recorded charter in AD 1200.

The archaeological assessment trenches were located to the E of the town centre, in an old bottling works. Eight trenches were dug in the hope of finds including a possible of a medieval mill, positioned along the line of the river Hogsmill.

Unfortunately, the stratigraphy proved to be relatively uninteresting. The original line of the Hogsmill was located in one of the trenches, while the remainder produced Victorian features and a layer of loam completely devoid of any artefacts or features. The loam is probably an indication of open meadow land, possibly dating to the medieval period.

My thanks go to the team from the OAU who helped make a rather dull excavation enjoyable.

Martin J Hicks

ENDNOTES

THE YOUNG ARCHAEOLOGISTS NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS' DAY SATURDAY AUGUST 18TH 1990

The 18th August was 'National Archaeologists' Day'. Organised by the Young Archaeologists Club, ten sites throughout the country held open days offering '... a host of exciting archaeological activities...'. As part of the event the Oxford Archaeological Unit's Eynsham Abbey excavations welcomed about 50 children and 300 adult visitors. Among the archaeological activities on offer to the younger visitors were pot and bone washing, trowelling, planning, sieving, archaeological competitions, site tours and tours of the town, while the adults, being less energetic, were given site tours. An exhibition on the history of the abbey and town of Eynsham was on show in a marquee on site which also housed an information and souvenir stand and some of the activities. All in all, the day was a great success and everyone, including the helpers, enjoyed themselves.

A big thank you must go to all the helpers without whom the

day could not have taken place. We are particularly grateful to Father Tolkien for his very generous donation towards the event, and to Carol Anderson of the County Museum's Educational Service for her powers of organisation throughout the day.

Robert Bourn



Figure 10: Eynsham open day: Tim Allen and friends

THE UFFINGTON SHOW

In the 19th century Thomas Hughes described the fair which accompanied the Scouring of the White Horse, with its cheese-rolling races and tobacco-smoking competitions (for ladies). Today's Uffington Show is more sedate. It takes place near the village and sky divers compete with burnished and beribboned dray horses. The crowds still come in thousands.

The OAU display about the White Horse Hill project attracted a lot of interest, though not quite so much as the begonia and hot-dog sellers opposite us. But next year we'll show 'em! Thanks to Paul Hughes (no relation) and Cecily Cropper for setting the whole thing up and to the show organisers for a free pitch.

David Miles and Simon Palmer

ARRIVALS

Congratulations firstly to Paul Booth (who joined OAU as Field Officer/Pot specialist from Warwickshire Museum at the end of May) and his wife Susan Lisk, on the arrival of their first baby, Andrew, on 12 August...

...and secondly to Principal Archaeologist John Moore and his wife Decca, on the birth of their fourth daughter, Stella Frances, on 6 September.

We would also like to record an arrival of a slightly different nature - that of Julian Munby, who started work with the

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OAU in June. Julian has 20 years' experience as an architectural historian and his expertise also extends into landscape and garden history.

YARNTON BROOCH

Figure 11 shows a recently conserved early Roman bow and fantail brooch from Yarnton. The brooch is copper alloy and is constructed from two plates. The decoration shows possibly Celtic influences.

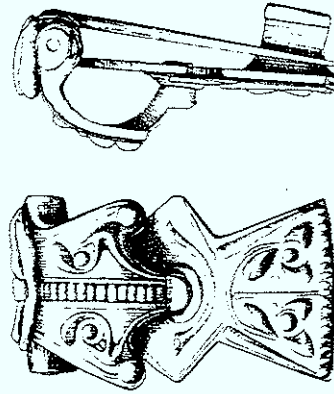


Figure 11: Romano-British brooch from Yarnton
(actual size)

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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 - wishes 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.

Front cover: Reconstruction drawing of Stanwick Roman villa, Phase IIc, seen from the south

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