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ANNUAL REPORT  
1983**

**Reprinted from:**

**SOUTH MIDLANDS ARCHAEOLOGY,**

**C.B.A. 9 Newsletter 14 (1984), 93-123**

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT, 1983

Gloucestershire

FAIRFORD/LECHLADE: Claydon Pike - David Miles and Simon Palmer

The 1983 excavations at Claydon Pike began in April and continued until mid October. A trench of about 1.2 ha was opened in the nucleus of the Romano-British settlement using a JCB IIIC, loading shovels and lorries provided by the Coln Gravel Ltd. Smaller trenches were placed around the periphery of the site to test features visible on aerial photographs. Finally an area of c. 6ha was stripped with a box scraper prior to gravel extraction.

In the early spring the labour force was provided by the Manpower Services Commission's Community Enterprise Programme and in the summer by a volunteer programme funded by DOE and the Amey Roadstone Corporation. We are grateful to all those who worked on the site and to the supervisors: Phil Carstairs, Tim Copeland, Pete Rooke, Judith Russen, Jonathan Sharpe, Valerie Tomlin and Gerry Waite. Geoff Mees continued the programme of phosphate analysis.

Environmental sampling was carried out by Anne Perry (carbonised plants), Mark Robinson (waterlogged samples) and Bob Wilson (animal bones and shells). Mark Maillard organised metal detecting, Phil Page the computing and Marylee Parrott of Corinium Museum the conservation of finds. Cleaning and identification of coins were carried out in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

The development of this area of Claydon Pike can be divided into three major phases dating between the first and fifth centuries AD. The topography of the area was important to the layout of all three phases of settlement. Three gravel platforms were separated by a linear hollow. In all phases a trackway followed this hollow (through the centre of the excavation). To the east of the hollow was the largest and most pronounced of the platforms, on which stood the main buildings at all phases.

PHASE 1: LATE IRON AGE (Fig. 1)

A dense group of ditched oval enclosures clustered on the eastern platform. Concentrations of postholes and occupation debris in the central and northern part of this complex suggest limited areas of occupation, possibly bounded by a rectilinear ditched enclosure. The other enclosures are of two types:

- 1) Oval enclosures 10-20m in diameter with recut ditches about 1m deep and with little associated domestic debris.
- 2) Small oval enclosures 2-7m in diameter bounded by narrow, shallow gullies.

Both of this type of gully may be associated with the storage of animal fodder and the penning of animals. A Dobunnic Class M coin was found unstratified in this area.

The eastern platform was bounded by a trackway whose side ditches were visible only where they were not destroyed by the later Roman road.

Beyond the main excavation area, to the south, linear ditches formed a series of rectangular paddocks.

## PHASE 2: EARLY ROMANO-BRITISH (Fig. 2)

In the late first century (more precise dating awaits the analysis of stratified pottery groups) the native settlement and the surrounding area were replanned on a major scale. A new road, metalled where it crossed marshy areas was laid out, linking a number of settlements on the gravel terrace. At the same time ditched fields were established over at least 15 ha, covering the Middle Iron Age settlements and fields excavated in 1979-81.

The road formed the main axis of the Phase 2 settlements. The principal occupation area was on the eastern platform, also the nucleus of the Phase 1 settlement. A rectangular ditched enclosure (75 x 60m) stood on this platform. Inside it were three buildings. Building 1 was an aisled structure (18m x 11m) with fourteen post-holes (stone packed when not robbed) up to 1.5m deep. A short length of stone footing on the west side was the only surviving fragment of the wall base.

Building 1 stood just inside the southern boundary ditch of the platform, close by an entrance through the ditch, off a partly metalled side street.

Building 2 lay at right angles to Building 1, to the west. This was a two-roomed structure 6m wide and at least 8.5m long. The squared-flat-bottomed foundation slots suggest that the building had a sleeper beam construction. It is uncertain whether Building 2 stood independently or was an annexe of Building 1. Building 2 lay over a large elongated pit producing pottery of c. AD 100.

Building 3 stood on the eastern side of the platform and was excavated in 1981-82. This aisled building (17m x 10m) had eight stone-packed postholes on a central entrance on the southern side.

Other structures on this platform included circular gullies c. 7m in diameter thought to indicate stacking areas for animal fodder. A stone lined wall and a water hole were also found.

There was an entrance into the eastern platform on the south side, close by Building 1. This led into a side street which had a succession of metalled surfaces where it crossed Iron Age ditches. In the later 2nd century the eastern end of this street went out of use: the end was blocked first by a ditch and then by a fence line. At the western end of this side street was a complex gateway providing access into the main open space at the nucleus of the settlement. The gateway had several phases including large stone packed post-holes and stone foundations for curtain walls running north and east.

To the west and north of the main street was a second, low platform. Amid a complicated series of linear drainage gullies stood a rectangular building (Building 4) (7m x 3m) delineated by parallel slots and a setting of stone slabs over which was a black occupation layer and domestic debris.

Parallel slots, south-east of Building 4 probably indicated another building 5 and possibly another (Building 6) lay south-west of Building 5, of which only two short lengths of rectilinear gully survived.

In the western part of this platform were several small circular enclosures (3-5m diameter) of the kind seen on the eastern platform and thought to indicate fodder stacks. The parallel drainage ditches which form the western boundary of this platform are probably demarcated on earthen bank and hedge rather than a trackway.

In the centre of the settlement the cross-roads forms a central open-space. South of this, and fronting onto it, stood a double-ditched rectangular enclosure which in plan resembles a Romano-Celtic shrine.

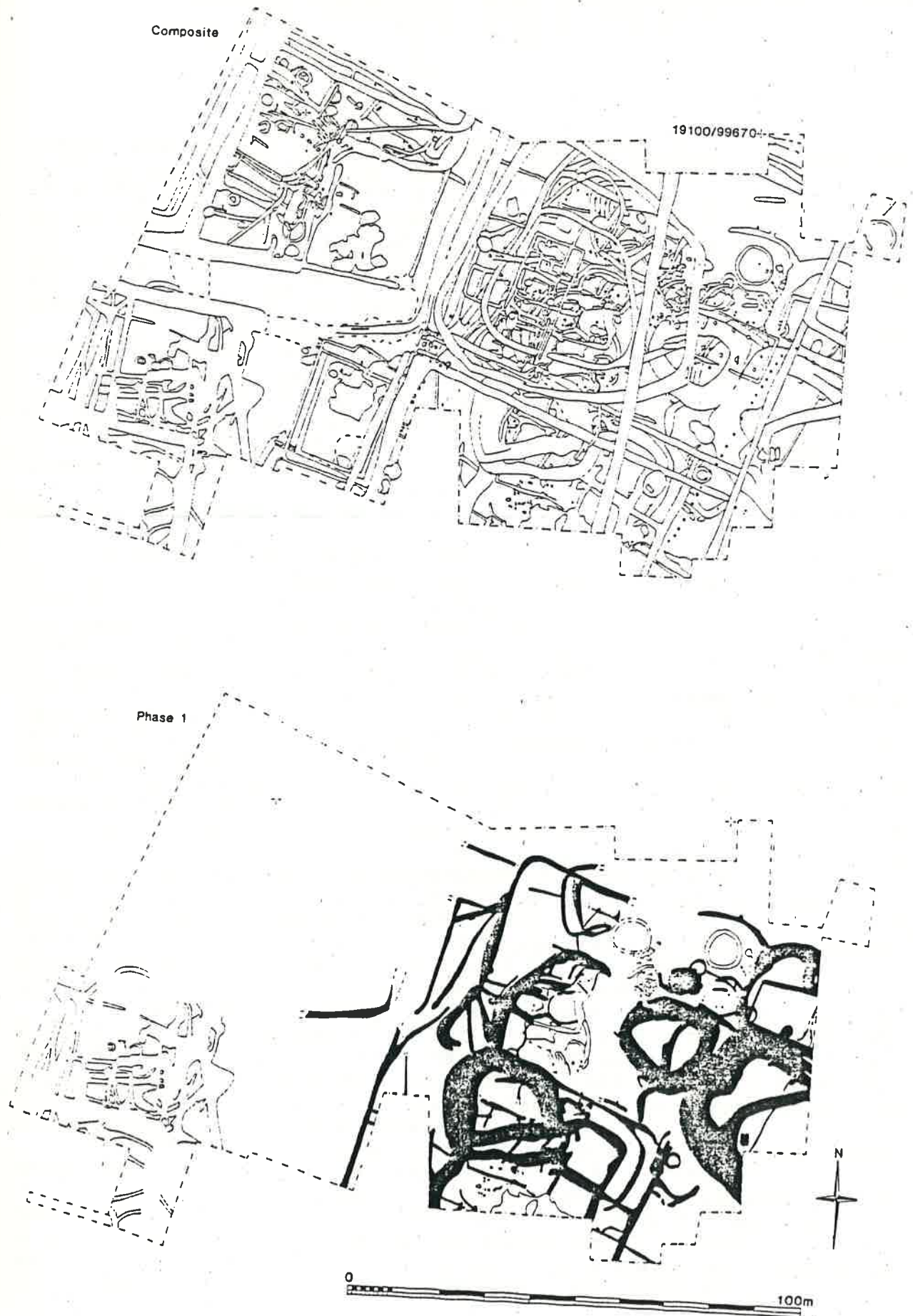


Fig. 1 Claydon Pike, Phase 1 - Late Iron Age

Immediately outside, to the north was a cobbled surface, laid over the infilled Iron Age road ditch. The rectangular 'shrine' area itself was bounded by shallow gullies with a very clean fill. A rectangular cobbled surface was found in the south-east corner and in the centre was a series of shallow flat-bottomed pits containing charcoal and coal, dating to the third century AD. From pits around the perimeter of this feature were dumps of stone including 4 fragments of limestone column, two column bases and a large block of carefully dressed ashlar stone.

Linear Iron Age ditches seem to define this area suggesting that it was reserved in some way before the construction of the early Roman structure.

In this early Roman phase of occupation there seems to have been a military presence on the site. Six bronze military items have now been found and also two intaglios which might have had military owners one depicting an eagle with an orb and thunderbolt, the other with clasped right hands, cornucopiae and an altar.

### PHASE 3 - LATER ROMANO-BRITISH

In the 3rd and 4th centuries the settlement changed its character; the settlement appears to have contracted. The focal point became a series of stone-based buildings overlaying Buildings 1 and 2 (Fig. 2). The earliest of these was a small square structure Building 7 (c. 10m x 10m) of which only robber trenches survived. This was replaced by a larger structure, Building 8, which itself showed a sequence of development. At its maximum extent Building 8 consisted of a block of eight rooms and two sunken chambers which were dug up to 1m below the water table. A similar chamber outside the building to the north produced basketry, vegetation deposits, including box leaves, and large quantities of animal bone.

Two curtain walls projected to the north and south of Building 8 separated the yards in front and behind the building.

South of Building 8 was another structure, Building 9, which was in part contemporary but went out of use at an earlier stage. This had three rooms forming an L shape, the westernmost of which had a hypocaust system. Building 9 was attached at the south-east corner to a small gatehouse which had an internal, triangular shaped buttress. This guarded the access into the main yard area. The platform at this stage was encircled by a double-ditched enclosure. A low dry-stone wall ran just inside the outer ditch. This went on in use when the inner one had been infilled.

The metal detector survey located a concentration of coins about 35m east of the late Romano-British enclosure. These proved to have been deposited inside a circular stone based shrine (8m in diameter) which was masked by deposits of alluvium. The shrine was constructed in a marshy area and used throughout the 4th century. A stone and gravel causeway ran from the west side of the shrine northwards towards the Roman road.

Over 300 coins were found inside the shrine as well as a small votive bronze axe, a votive bronze leaf and a complete colour-coated beaker.

Trial trenching 30m west of the main trench located a small later Romano-British cemetery. The earliest burial orientated east-west lay inside a small square ditched enclosure. The second burial, also within a square enclosure was placed to the west. A group of burials were then placed around these, the later ones orientated north-south, one a decapitated burial with the head by the feet.

A second small group of burials, about 6 in number, post-dated Building 8. These were inserted into the demolished and partially robbed foundations of the buildings. Post-Roman activity on the site included a small quarry

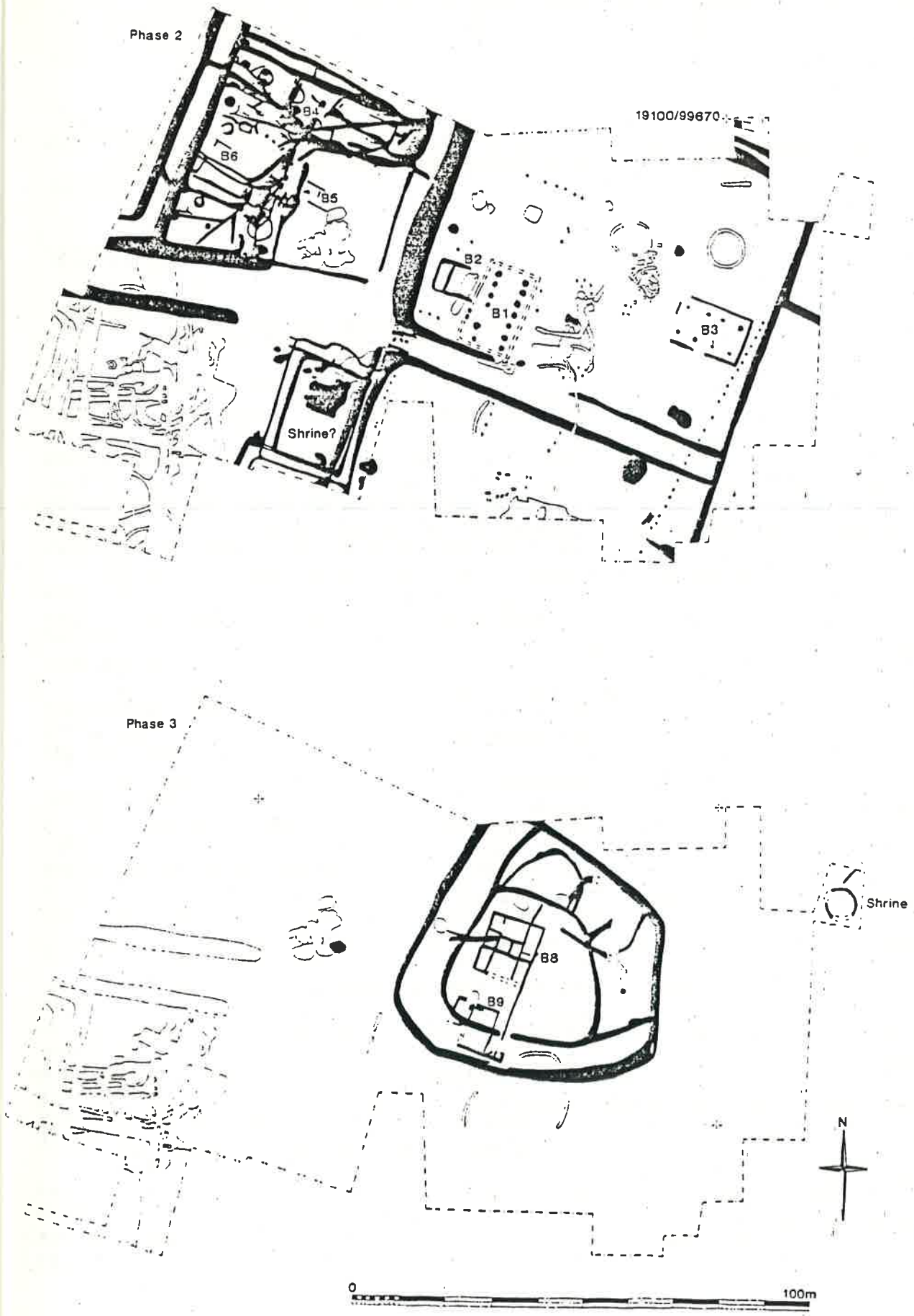


Fig. 2 Claydon Pike, Phase 2 - Early Romano-British  
Phase 3 - Later Romano-British

dug through Building 8 with two late Saxon coins, and a 15th century well.

Post-Roman flooding deposited alluvium over all but the higher parts of the settlement area.

### Oxfordshire

ABINGDON: Former MG Car Factory - Claire Halpin  
(PRN 13,016-7; SU 484973)

Excavations and watching briefs in advance of the redevelopment of the former MG car factory have been conducted since 1981. The primary objective of this work is to augment the archaeological material derived from excavations in the mid 70's at the site of the Ashville Trading Estate, which adjoins the current project. Early and middle Iron Age occupation material, and lengths of Late Iron Age and Roman enclosure ditches were recorded at Ashville. On the south side of the MG factory eleven Roman inhumations were excavated in advance of building work which took place in the mid 1970s.

The aims of the current work is to record the extent of archaeological material. In 1981 a narrow trench immediately south of Ashville permitted some assessment of the early and middle Iron Age features, and in the following year an excavation in advance of a new road (Blacklands Furlong) took place.

Two large areas (94m x 135m, and 43m x 84m) lying south of the newly constructed road (Blacklands Furlong) are to be affected by tarmac and soil stripping. 13 archaeological trial trenches (1m x 20m) were excavated during the last week of January 1983.

Contrary to expectations little archaeological material was revealed. Though within 10m of the road corridor no continuation of the dense scatters of Iron Age and Roman features (predominantly pits), located within the corridor, were seen. It appears that these features were bounded by enclosure ditches and hence they did not extend southwards. Similarly, though within 4m of the 11 Roman inhumations recorded on the south side of the site, only a single child burial was revealed. Further lengths of enclosure ditches dating to the late Iron Age or Roman period were recorded. Two 1m sections were excavated but these produced very few finds.

The trial trenches demonstrated that the proposed site stripping in advance of warehouse construction will expose the upper surface of the natural gravel, and therefore archaeological features. No useful area which warranted excavation was defined and therefore future work within this phase will be confined to a selected watching brief (estimated to occur in late April). Due to extensive modern disturbance around the area of the Roman Cemetery the information from the watching brief is likely to be confined to infilling the pattern of enclosure ditches.

Finally this year's work indicated the importance of the area to the north of Blacklands Furlong. It is across this area that archaeological material recorded within the road corridor extends. In addition the south-eastern boundaries of the early and middle Iron Age settlements sites recorded at Ashville are located here.

BICESTER: Bicester House, Queens Avenue - R A Chambers  
(PRN 11,876; SP 58202252)

An earthwork survey and two trial trenches to investigate the nature and extent of medieval settlement to the north of Bicester House were completed in 1983.

The site (Fig. 3) is bounded to the south-west by the present grounds of Bicester House, to the south-east by Lower Home Close, to the north-west by Queens Avenue and to the north-east by the River Bure which is now little more than a stream. There is a narrow flood-plain which extends up to 60m from the present river channel providing a band of wetter, willow covered ground along the north-east edge of the site. Several former river channels G are traceable within the flood plain.

Although much of the site was tree covered and well-sheltered it was possible to complete an earthworks survey during September after the undergrowth had been mown.

The survey showed that the earthwork remains were more extensive than previously thought. A series of platforms and low mounds indicated former buildings. On several platforms surface spreads of limestone suggested building rubble. Two trial trenches excavated in the early summer showed that many of these mounds and platforms may have been due to building rubble overlying floors and foundations. However the outlines of two single-cell buildings A and B were clearly visible as earthworks and not obscured by rubble. These two buildings may only have possessed low stone cill walls with timber superstructures.

Traces of ridge and furrow ran down to the river and the building remains appeared to represent an expansion of the medieval settlement over arable land.

A hollow way D which ran down towards the river along the north-west edge of the site suggested a former river crossing point. A causeway F of unknown date cut across the hollow way.

To the east a modern causeway C led off the site to the embankment carrying Mansfield Road. Beneath the road the River Bure is piped. The land for some 60m to the north-east and south-east of Bicester House Cottage was seen to be heavily cultivated post-medieval garden soil.

In May two trial trenches were excavated by hand with assistance from Jeff Perry, an in-service trainee. The first trench was located some 70m north-west of Lower Home Close where extensive medieval settlement remains were uncovered by building contractors in 1980.

Trench 1 crossed a low platform some 18m wide and revealed medieval building foundations covered with rubble. Part of one foundation was cleared of rubble. The 0.7m wide foundation comprised unmortared coursed limestone rubble which survived several courses high. A second wall or bench foundation 0.5m wide had been built against the wall. The foundations cut obliquely across the existing earthwork platform suggesting the present platform shape was the result of stone robbing. A quantity of medieval pottery and domestic refuse was recovered.

The second trial trench lay further to the north-west, some 150m from Lower Home Close. This trench also revealed medieval occupation levels resting directly on the natural limestone bedrock. A substantial north-south medieval boundary ditch 1m deep contained limestone rubble in its upper filling. This may have been building rubble and was associated with medieval pottery.

There is a local tradition that the present Bicester House marks the site of the medieval manor house owned until the Reformation by the Nuns of



Markyates in Bedfordshire. The foundations uncovered in Trench 1 were similar in build to those of the 12th century manor house at Chesterton. It is possible that the first trial trench has revealed a part of the Nuns of Markyates manor house or an associated structure.

CHARLBURY: The North Oxon Grim's Ditch - Tim Copeland  
(Area centred SP 3900 2000)

Research using documentary and aerial photographic evidence, and intensive fieldwork has identified several new stretches of the Grim's Ditch (Figs. 4 & 5). South of the Evenlode evidence indicates the earthwork west of Walcot, nr. Charlbury running south-westerly into Wychwood, and from Cornbury Park Lakes south to Mount Skippett, Ramsden. It has also been possible to identify elements of its course from North Leigh, through Freeland to Long Hanborough where it again meets the Evenlode.

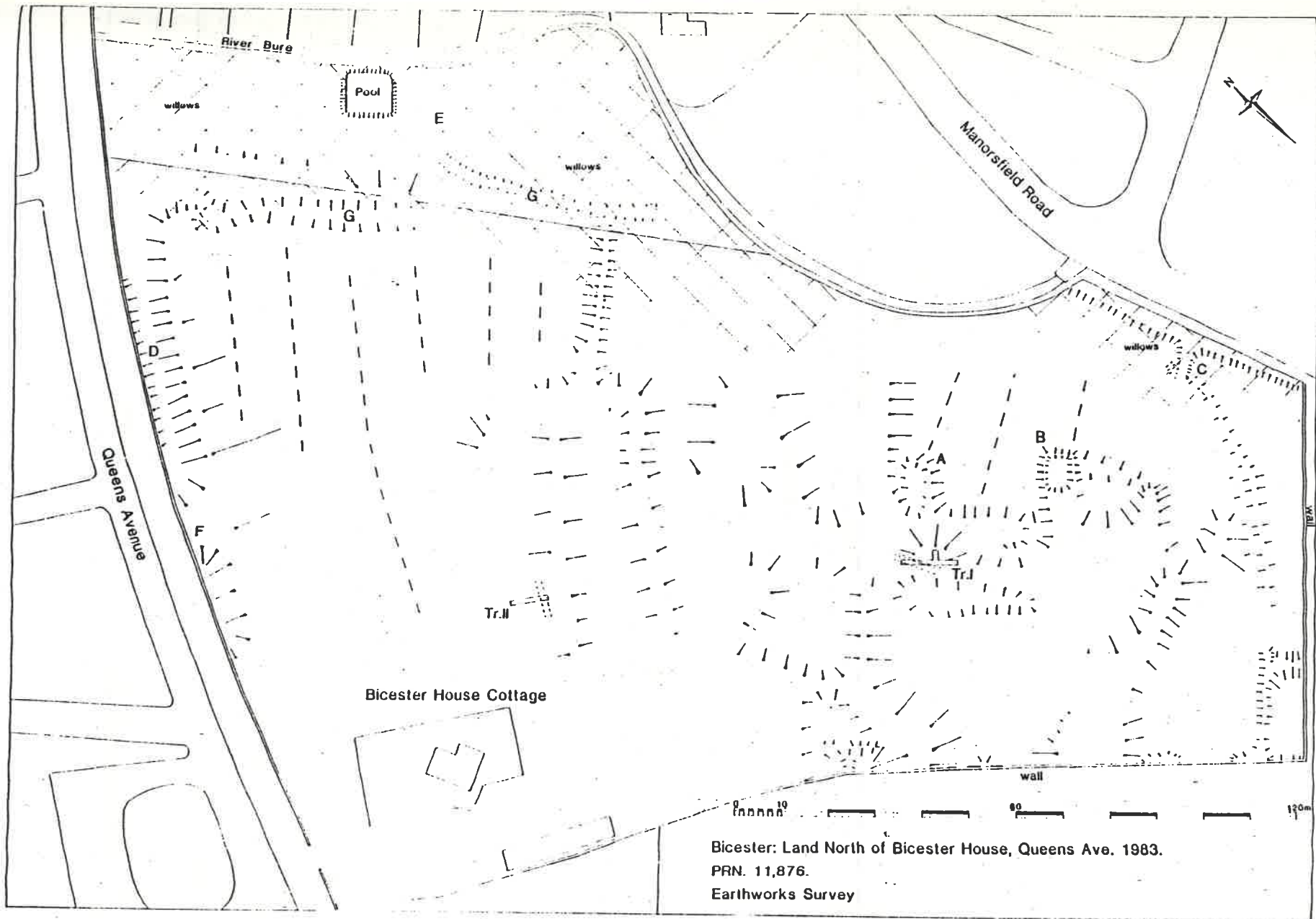
North of the Evenlode the situation is more complex. 1) Evidence for the earliest phase of the monument has been seen in section near Charlbury Quarry and aerial photographs suggest this line continues westwards into Bottom Wood and Rushey Bottom, Ditchley. 2) The next phase of the system has been seen to be virtually continuous, except for small access points, from Charlbury, through Ditchley House to Grim's Dyke Farm, Kiddington. It then turned south and a completely ploughed out element ran down to Pool Bottom just west of Glympton Assarts Farm. The line crosses the tributary stream of the Glyme and continues as Thomas' Dyke C. (*Oxoniensia* 1957). West of Kingswood it runs north of Callow Farm and Hill Barn Farm, Stonesfield, to Baywell, Charlbury, via Lee's Rest. This phase appears to delimit the highground of the catchment area of the tributary of the Glyme south of Ditchley House. Probably part of this phase also is Thomas' Dyke B at Callow Hill, and a newly discovered earthwork on the northern side of the valley, but further westward than Callow Hill, running uphill from Kingswood Brake to the western edge of Outwood. 3) The phase from Stratford Bridge on the Glyme, is upstanding in Blenheim Park and continues to Outwood, Kiddington, cuts (2) just east of Outwood. This phase may be contemporary with the known "outlier" at Shilcott Wood, Spelsbury, that has now been seen to extend to a tributary of the Coldron Brook just south of Taston, where parallel banks have been identified, and which in turn may be contemporary with the sweep south of the Evenlode. The excavated evidence for Phase Two, (Thomas at Callow Hill, and Harden at Model Farm and Kiddington, *Oxoniensia* 1937) indicated that the Ditch was backfilled shortly after construction, possibly due to the extension of the system by (3). A late Iron Age date is probable at least for (2).

Three new sites have also been located within the area defined by the Grim's Ditch: a "banjo" enclosure complex east of Shilcott Wood at SP 383220, and Roman sites at Norman's Grove, Spelsbury (SP 37662118) and 300m north-east of Ditchley Villa (centred on SP 40252015).

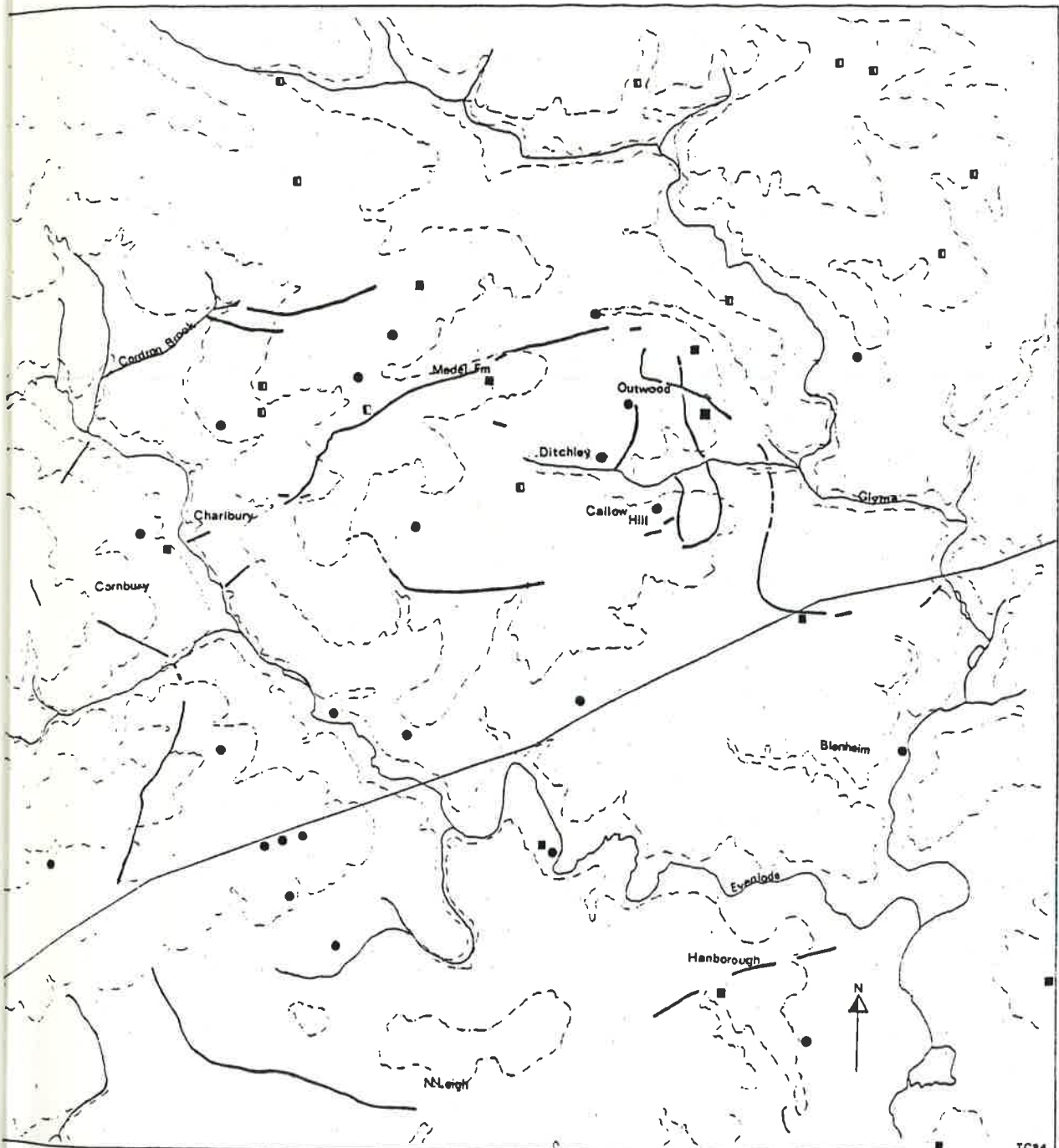
CHALGROVE: Manor Farm - Phillip Page  
(PRN 1115; SU 6306 9703)

During the year a watching brief was carried out at the late 15th century manor house, at Mill Lane, Chalgrove. The hall has been opened up to its original ground plan by the removal of a victorian corridor on its west side. The remains of the original timber screen separating the hall from the

Fig. 3



Bicester: Land North of Bicester House, Queens Ave. 1983.  
PRN. 11,876.  
Earthworks Survey



TC84

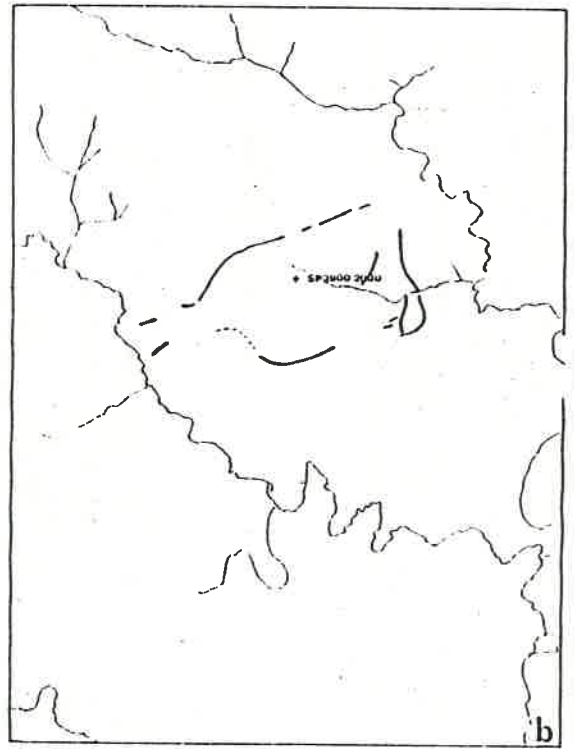
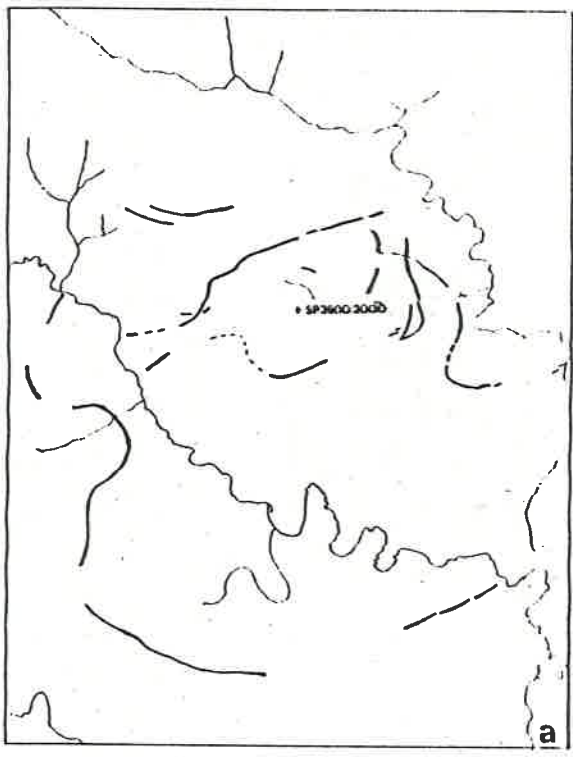
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE GRIMS DITCH

- IA sites ■
- poss. IA sites □
- RB sites ●

Contours at 15m intervals



THE NORTH OXFORDSHIRE GRIM'S DITCH: Conjectured phasing



screen's passage has been revealed beneath later plaster. There was originally one doorway into the hall at the western end of the screen's passage.

With the removal of the timber floor in the hall it was hoped that some remains of the original central hearth might have been discovered. Unfortunately in order to lay the timber floor up to 25cms of the underlying stratigraphy had been removed. The stratigraphy had remained intact within the confines of the corridor in the hall, and a trench here revealed a sequence similar to that which was found in the buttery to the north. It provided further evidence for a late 15th century date for the construction of the house. Within the debris in the hall one piece of decorated floor tile has been found. This rather tantalising fragment could be of comparable date with the initial construction, it certainly was not earlier, and was nothing like the decorated medieval floor tiles from the excavated site at Hardings Field, Chalgrove.

Several trenches for drains were dug in the grounds of the late 15th century moated manor house and were part of the restoration of both the house and the gardens that is currently being carried out by the present owners. It was hoped that these trenches might have revealed some evidence of the medieval buildings which preceded the present structure and were mentioned in a survey of 1336. No evidence of medieval occupation was revealed, only post-medieval occupation debris was recovered and there was no evidence of the earlier buildings.

CLANFIELD: Burroway - George Lambrick  
(PRN 2426; SP 308004)

As part of the Floodplain Survey, in August, two small sample trenches were excavated on the site of the Iron Age fort at Burroway Brook. The fort survives as a low broad bank standing to a maximum of c. 1m with a possible hornwork entrance on its north east side. Auguring along a transect across the bank and ditch and a little way into the interior revealed some of the stratigraphy and showed the ditch to be over 1.5m deep. Waterlogged material was not encountered in auguring, but this may be because the deepest part of the ditch was not examined.

One trench on the crest of the bank showed it to consist largely of burnt clay and gravelly soil, in places with signs of burnt clay *in situ*, though no definite traces of an internal timber framework were found. A pit had been cut into the bank at the point excavated. At the base of the bank resting on the old ground surface was a series of charred planks or logs laid across the line of the bank. As the old ground surface was not burnt the charring of the planks must have been caused by the burning of the material above, probably again implying a rampart consisting of a timber framework infilled with soil.

The trench in the interior located an occupation layer about 10 to 15cm thick sealing a post hole which produced Iron Age pottery. Over these was a further 15 to 20cm of clay alluvium effectively acting as a buffer between these well preserved deposits and the modern ploughsoil above. Both beneath the occupation layer and beneath the bank the old ground surface was a non-calcareous silty clay whereas the alluvium above contained a few aquatic mollusc shells. This is consistent with evidence elsewhere that the pre-Iron Age floodplain was drier, with much of the alluviation occurring only from

the later part of the Iron Age onwards.

This well preserved and obviously important site is not scheduled as an ancient monument and is under arable. As it happened it was about to be subsoiled for the first time. This was predicted by the Unit two and a half years ago when it was suggested that the site should be scheduled to protect it from such damage. Fortunately the excavation was done just in time to stir the DOE into action and there is now a good chance thanks to the owner's cooperation that the site will not suffer the worst effects of modern cultivation.

HENLEY: Henley Rectory - Brian Durham  
(PRN 13,494-7; SU 763 826)

The rectory occupies two-thirds of an acre of riverside just upstream of Henley Bridge, with a frontage on the main street (Hart Street) opposite the church. The Oxford Diocesan Parsonages Board are building a new house for the rector in the garden of the existing 18th century building, and the Unit has joined with the Henley Archaeological and Historical Group to investigate this focal area in the medieval town.

A plan of c. 1830 shows the layout of the complex, indicating the newly demolished rectory and a large tithe barn. Given the need to avoid damage to the many protected trees, a series of trenches was planned to investigate both buildings. The barn may be dismissed briefly; no more than an area of stone-metalling could be traced and it must be assumed that it was of timber with no substantial foundations. The site of the old rectory was much more productive, with stone and flint walls and an outside cess pit, but an absence of internal floors. By following the building plan to the west, away from the river, part of a medieval building of two phases was located, and the structural succession suggests that this was a continuously occupied range being extended progressively towards the river.

Henley is first mentioned in 1179, when Henry II bought land to make houses. By 1199 it was a 'town' in a grant of John. There is at present no way of dating the earliest levels of the rectory site, but it is possible that when the pottery has been studied it may prove to be within the first 50 years of Henley's existence. The earliest structure was a shallow burnt pit, possibly within a building but none could be defined. It was built over by a strong foundation of flint and clunch which was subsequently realigned. The 5m south frontage of this building makes it rather smaller than the 15th century Old Rectory at Winford, Somerset, which was the smallest such building identified by Pantin 'Medieval Priests' Houses', *Medieval Archaeology* i (1957), Fig. 26. It might in fact be the gable end of a house aligned north-south, or it may have been the stone-founded portion of a larger timber dwelling. To the east was a large shallow depression which drained through a ditch towards the river, and it was over this area that the house was to extend, probably in the later medieval period.

The rectory which survived to the 1820's is illustrated in a pencil drawing in the manner of J C Buckler. The medieval end had by then disappeared, leaving a twin roofed rear wing behind the hall wing facing the river. Extensive foundations of the rear wing were exposed, showing it to have a 6.5m span with a 2m span added in the 18th century. This is rather different from Buckler's depiction of two fairly equal roofs, and it must be assumed that some internal reorganisation had taken place.

The third objective of the excavation was to look at the Hart Street frontage, which should have been commercially valuable on the approach to

the bridge. No buildings were found, only a 'roadside' ditch. Perhaps the rectory was so well endowed that it did not need to rent this frontage, but alternatively there may have been buildings further forward, ousted when the road was moved to allow the church to enlarge. The latter would explain the presence of a pit producing 14th-15th century pottery. Amongst other finds from this feature were ten amber beads of two sizes, perhaps from a rosary, and a gold charm brooch inscribed IESUS NAZARENUS. Such talismanic brooches are not uncommon in bronze and silver, but John Cherry writes that he knows of only one other English example in gold with this inscription. Subject to treasure trove inquest, it is hoped it will be deposited with the Oxfordshire Department of Museum Services.

MERTON: West End Farm - R A Chambers and Jeff Perry  
(PRN 13,195); SP 577180)

At Merton a set of fishponds centred 250m to the north of the parish church have been surveyed during the course of their destruction. Although the destruction of these well preserved ponds is to be regretted the work did provide some useful information on the pond construction and management. In its final form the fishery appears to have comprised five ponds on marshy ground between a spring line and a stream. Three ponds were arranged in line parallel to the stream. A further two linear ponds, one to the east and one to the west of the three centre ponds were both arranged at right angles to the stream and hill slope.

Mechanically cut sections through the dams separating the centre ponds followed by the bulldozing of the banks showed that all except the westernmost pond were filled with spring water. In the case of the centre three ponds, spring water was derived from the pond bottoms. None of the ponds were connected by deep sluice channels although shallow spilt-ways to accommodate overflow must have been present originally.

The ponds lay on land which formerly belonged to Manor Farm. The present farm house still retains parts of the Elizabethan building. A detailed estate map drawn sometime after 1763 only illustrates the easternmost of the five ponds, suggesting that the fishery began as a single pond with further ponds added during the next century. The 1st edition 25 inches to the mile Ordnance Survey map of 1881 shows all five ponds in existence. Earthworks suggest the eastern of the three central ponds had been extended twice, the final extension possibly being made after 1881 as it is not included on the O.S. map.

This fishery appears to have continued to grow in size for about one hundred years. It is not known when the ponds fell into disuse.

NORTHMOOR: Watkins Farm - Tim Allen  
(PRN 13,360, 13,361; SP 426036)

Gravel stripping at the ARC pit at Northmoor uncovered a new Middle Iron Age and Romano-British settlement. This had not shown on aerial photographs because it is situated on the first gravel terrace close to the floodplain, and the watertable is permanently high. The south and east parts of the site were salvaged in July, and a further strip across the north-east of the settlement was stripped by JCB under archaeological supervision and excavated in September and October (see dotted outline Fig. 6). The area north of this was salvaged in January 1984. Stripping by ARC had removed the

WATKINS FARM, NORTHMOOR

1983-4

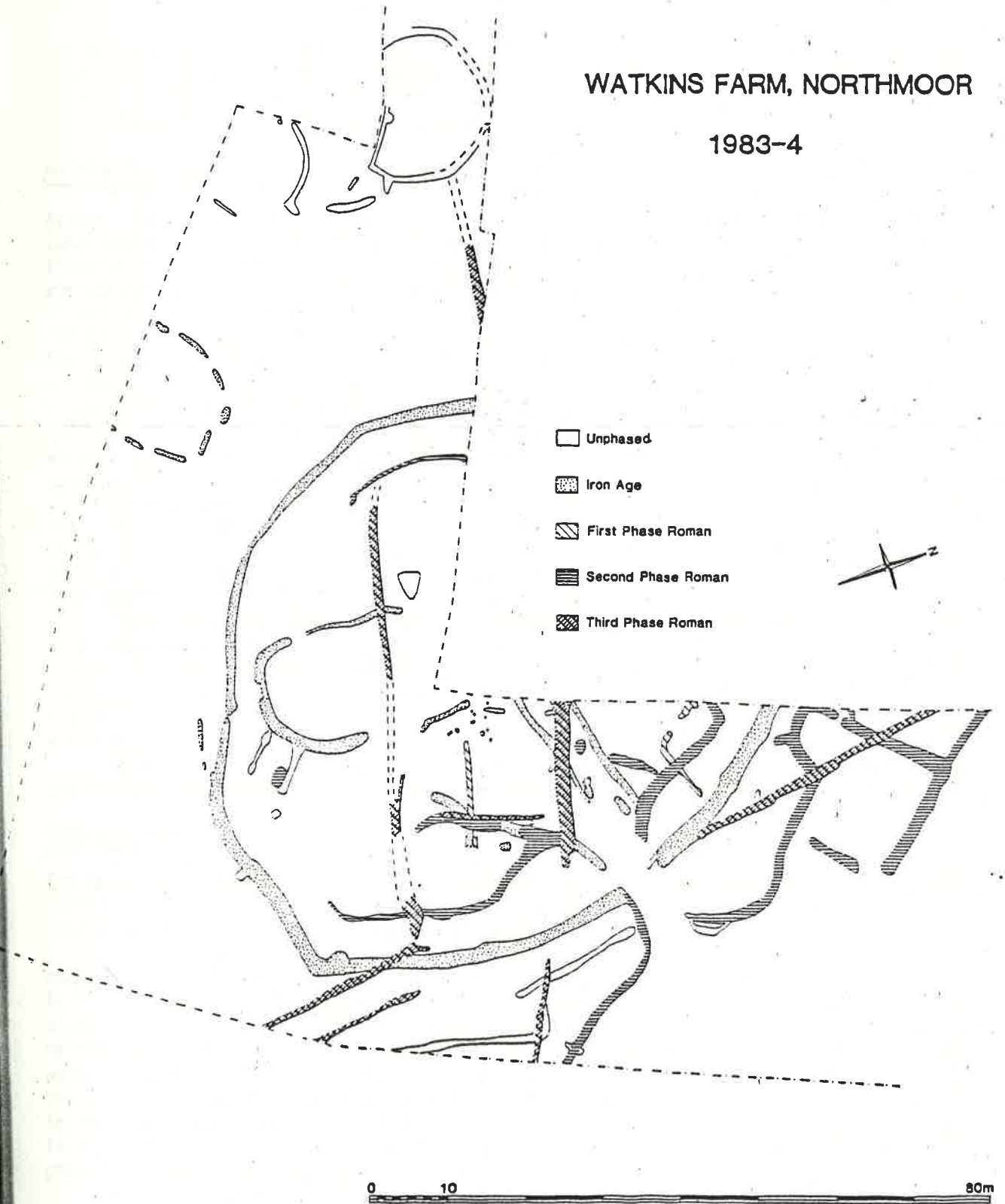


Fig. 6



top 0.3-0.35m of the gravel, so only the deeper features survived over this area, and there were no postholes. Postholes and other slight features did survive in the JCB stripped area.

Occupation was of several periods:

#### Middle Iron Age

A large oval enclosure c. 70m across was dug on a slightly raised gravel island with entrance to the east. There was probably also a subsidiary entrance on the south west, with a small ditch running off west from this just outside. Inside the enclosure at this point was a smaller enclosure open on the north side and with a small gap on the south for access to the main enclosure entrance adjacent. The south-west entrance and the corresponding gap in the small enclosure were both subsequently dug through. The smaller enclosure ditch had large quantities of occupation debris in its north-east terminal, and may well have surrounded a house; such accumulations of rubbish are common in the right hand terminal of house gullies in the Upper Thames. North and north-east of this small enclosure were a series of short lengths of ditch and a number of pits. Another possible house gully lay on the very edge of the JCB stripped area, but its interior had unfortunately been stripped previously much deeper. A few of the surviving postholes contained Middle Iron Age pottery, but no pattern could be recognised among these. However, the concentration of occupation debris in the ditches at the very west edge of the posthole area suggests that there may be a building just outside the excavated area.

There may have been a division between a southern domestic and northern open area within the enclosure, divided by the east-west ditches which run across to the entrance. No Middle Iron Age features have yet been found north of these. South of the main enclosure was a smaller one bounded by a discontinuous ditch. This produced a very little Middle Iron Age pottery, and was possibly contemporary.

Most of the Iron Age features were completely excavated, and preliminary assessment of the pottery suggest a 3rd - 1st century BC date.

#### Romano-British

There were several phases of occupation in the 1st to 3rd centuries AD. The main enclosure ditch was still largely open and two gullies seem to have formed a small enclosure inside it on the north. An east-west gully in the south-east of the enclosure may also belong to this phase.

In the second phase the small enclosure was cut by an inner ditch concentric to the main enclosure on the north side of the entrance. This was late 1st century AD. South of the entrance there was also an inner ditch along the east side of the main enclosure, and another opposite on the west. Neither of these had Romano-British pottery in their primary fills but they were probably contemporary, parts of a new ditch circuit perhaps respecting a hedge inside the main enclosure ditch. There was possibly a small enclosure in the south-east of the interior and a number of deep pits probably belong to this phase. These were possibly dug for water. It is not clear to which phase the postholes belonged.

Outside the main entrance were 'antennae' ditches. The northern one of these was found to have been the south side of a small enclosure, and a second linked enclosure disappears north-west under the crop. The ditches of these enclosures had no finds in the primary fill, but they contained no Iron Age pottery at all, and a dupondius of Trajan, dated 116-117AD, came from the top of the 'antenna', so they may belong with this late 1st century AD ditch circuit, not with the Iron Age occupation.

The use of an oval enclosure with adjacent subsidiary ones was completely superseded in phase 3 by a system of long linear ditches. These consisted of a south-north trackway and several long narrow fields running west-north-west on the west side. The trackway cut into the top of the original main enclosure ditch which had completely filled up by this stage, and the field ditches ran across pits and ditches of the previous phase. The most northerly of these is probably the ditch that appears west of the main enclosure, which may run up to a series of linked small enclosures further west. However these produced very few finds and may be earlier.

It is possible that domestic occupation continued on the same site, as the ditches of this period had very dark charcoally fills with large quantities of finds within the former enclosure area, and this is not all likely to be residual. A brief inspection suggested that there was not any later Roman pottery, and occupation therefore probably ended by the early 3rd century AD.

Some 250m north-east of the main site a series of Romano-British ditches and several large deep pits were uncovered by topsoil stripping, and were salvaged in September. A number of north-west - south-east linear boundary ditches were overlaid by the north-west end of a large sub-rectangular enclosure. Within this enclosure were 3 deep pits probably dug as wells. Their relationship to the linear ditches and the enclosure will hopefully be elucidated by the pottery. Large quantities of pottery found in one ditch within the enclosure suggests that it had had domestic occupation though no postholes or other traces of structures were found. Occupation seems to be 2nd century AD and this settlement may be contemporary with the regular ditch system on the main site.

Both sites produced a number of waterlogged samples. From the salvaged Romano-British site came also a pair of waterlogged leather shoes and part of a wooden bowl, and a well on the main site produced 0.5m of a dressed plank.

OXFORD: Blackfriars - George Lambrick  
(PRN 6002; SP 512 058)

Excavations prior to redevelopment by the British Legion Housing Association have revealed part of the Nave of the church and the north walk of the cloister and the cloister garth. The position of the walls is as expected from previous excavations, but the excavation has revealed details of construction, such as divisions between sections of footings which would have been necessary in overcoming problems of groundwater. Numerous burials were found in the South Aisle, fewer in the body of the Nave and the cloister walk. The cloister garth is free of burials. A step from the cloister walk gave access to a path obliquely crossing the cloister to the east, perhaps heading for the Chapter House in the east range. North of the church a single trench located no trace of the suspected 'North Nave', but revealed part of the graveyard with densely packed burials. When the priory was built (1236-1261) the ground level was raised, by dumping the clay dug out of the foundation trenches, and soil containing domestic rubbish.

Further observations were made during the contractors' excavations. A complex mass of masonry attached to the North Aisle had been intended to shore up the building which from this and previous observations was clearly suffering severe subsidence round the west end and north side of the Nave. As in the preceding trial excavation no sign of a 'North Nave' (or transept) was seen. Other walls of the Nave, South Aisle and cloister were recorded. No more detail of the path across the cloister garth or its entrance to the

cloister walk was seen but a possible buttress just east of this was noted.

Only scanty remains of pre-priory activity, a horizon of rough stones embedded in the upper layers of alluvium, have been found. The alluvial deposits themselves are being examined as part of the sequence of alluvial deposits on the Thames Floodplain in connection with the Floodplain Survey.

There is little evidence of the later history of the priory other than the many burials: floor layers and the upper parts of walls were thoroughly destroyed and disturbed after the Dissolution. From the sequence of post Dissolution deposits it is apparent that after initial gutting the buildings or at least the church was left as a standing ruin for some time while the land was turned over to gardens divided up by drainage gullies. The walls were not finally removed until after these gullies had become backfilled, but this may have been by the end of the 16th century, and gardening certainly continued in the 18th century until the area was developed for housing in the 1840's.

OXFORD: 52 Cornmarket Street, former Woolworths - Brian Durham  
(PRN 6198; SP 513 663)

The former Woolworths shop has been remodelled as the first stage in an operation which will end up with a new arcade through to Queen Street. The site was excavated by Jope, Pantin *et al* in the mid 1950's when the Clarendon Hotel was demolished, with immensely important results from the Late Saxon levels (see *Oxoniensia* 1958). David Sturdy was involved as an undergraduate at that time, and the Unit is very grateful for his help in identifying particular objectives in a hastily organised investigation.

The most important new trenches lay between C1 and C2. The former cut through the 12th century vault previously surveyed in 1955, and a good section was recorded showing its relationship to the surrounding layers. There were some major differences from the previous observations. There was no sign of any stonework of the smaller early vault found by Jope, but the construction trench suggested that the wall was built in two phases, the earlier perhaps before 1100, with the existing vault added around 12th - 13th century. In the intervening period the ground level outside had risen 1.60m with layer upon layer of floors of the adjoining building. This is perhaps therefore an example of the type of half-sunken vault which in time becomes a fully-sunken cellar with the rise in ground level, but here the speed of accumulation was dramatic. If it reflects the general situation in Cornmarket Street, it means that two-thirds of the build-up happened in the 12th and 13th centuries, with levels rising only 0.65m since then. The situation was exemplified in Jope's Figure 23, which showed gravel metalling of a 'forecourt' abutting medieval laminated floors. The second new trench this year, called C1a, showed what must have been the rear continuation of these floors but, as with Jope's experience, it proved impossible to recover any pottery with which to establish a chronology.

It has been a reminder that good stratigraphy can survive in the frontage areas, and also an opportunity to see the complexity which confronted the excavators 28 years ago, and to confirm the general findings with respect to the Clarendon Hotel vault.

OXFORD: Oseney Abbey - Brian Durham  
(PRN 3569; SP 505058)

The 1982 investigation of the south edge of the abbey precinct has been followed by salvage recording of two building contracts. The north-east end of a crescent of flats being built by Cherwell Housing Association came close to the waterfront exposed last year, and showed stone footings more massive than any seen in our excavations. Their alignment suggests a building 15m long extending back 13m from the declining 13th century river channel. As this channel became blocked the building was presumably dismantled so that its footings survived the Dissolution stone robbing.

The second area of observation this year was further upstream on the same declining riverfront. There were large foundations here also, in this case aligned on the cloister and therefore oblique to the channel. A small area of tile pavement included several alphabet tiles which had not been used to create words, but simply laid in their unbroken quadrants. The pottery confirms the 13th century infilling at the edge of the channel, but the levels further out were still being topped-up after the mid 13th century. By this time a small drain had been cut through the infill, perhaps a water supply for buildings isolated by the blocking.

There is likely now to be a break in the series of redevelopments of the abbey area. Our limited fieldwork and Jonathan Sharpe's post-excavation work have shown that the south side of the abbey had shrunk by the Reformation. There seems every reason to connect this with a westward expansion which resulted in the blocking of an original river channel and the establishment of a new waterfront on the modern mill stream.

RADLEY: Barrow Hills  
(PRN 8380-99, 8721, 8402, 8403, 2903  
SU 515 983)

### Introduction

This site lies one mile north-east of Abingdon, Oxfordshire (centred SU 5135 9815, PRN 13,400). The excavations are being undertaken in advance of a new housing scheme.

The site lies immediately south of the Abingdon Neolithic causewayed enclosure and at the south-east end of a Bronze Age cemetery from which the name Barrow Hills was derived in antiquity. Four periods are represented on this famous cropmark site with Neolithic monuments, Bronze Age Barrows, a Romano-British cemetery and an extensive early Anglo-Saxon settlement.

The excavation is being conducted by the Oxford Archaeological Unit with labour provided by the Manpower Services Commission. In addition to this, the Abingdon and Area Archaeological and Historical Society working under the direction of Claire Halpin has undertaken to excavate the Bronze Age monuments. In September three presumed Neolithic monuments were excavated by students from Reading University Department of Archaeology under the direction of Richard Bradley. Excavation on the present site will continue for another year during which it is also hoped to begin excavations in a field immediately to the north that has also been allocated for house building.

The Oxford Archaeological Unit would like to thank the owner, Mr W P Docker-Drysdale for permission to excavate and for his help and that of his

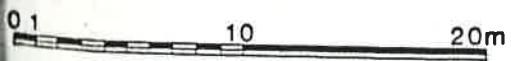
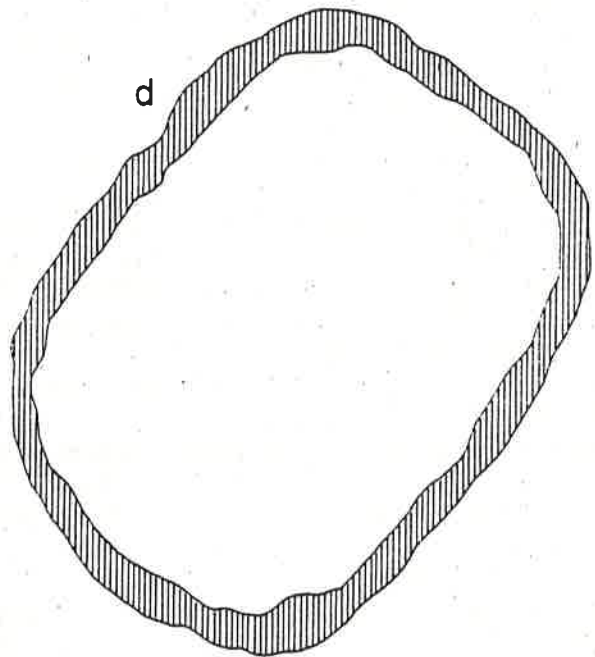
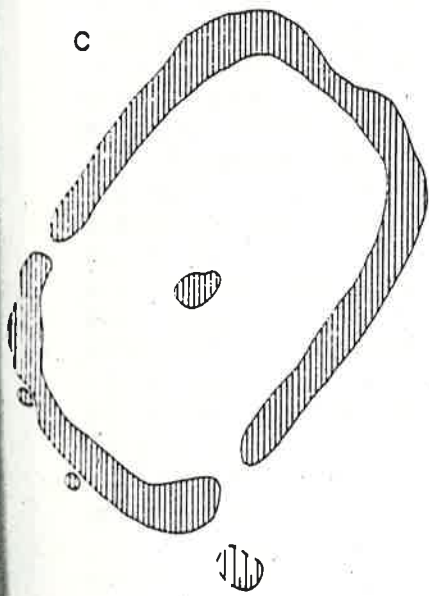
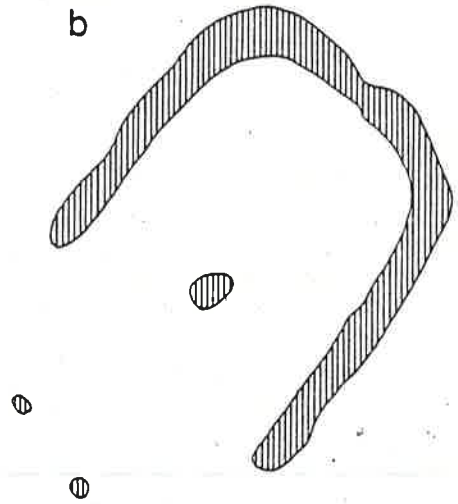
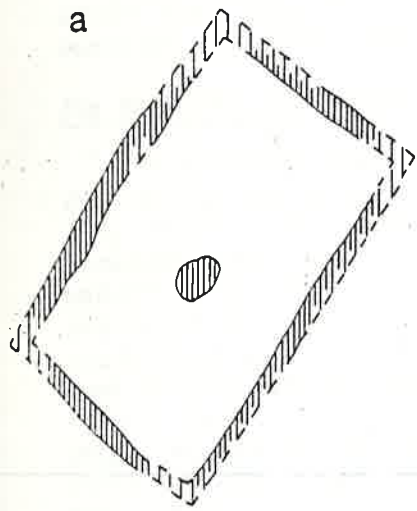


Fig. 7 Radley, Barrow Hills - The Long Barrow

wife, particularly in providing a camp site and much hospitality. The Unit would also like to thank Mr B Ford, the tenant, for his assistance on numerous occasions over the past year.

### The Neolithic Monuments - Richard Bradley

Excavation took place on three components of the Barrow Hills cropmark complex during September and October 1983: a small long barrow, a segmented ring ditch and a complex pit circle previously interpreted as a henge monument. Work was carried out under the general direction of the writer on behalf of the Oxford Archaeological Unit, with additional resources made available by the Department of Archaeology, Reading University. The excavation was undertaken mainly by students from the Reading Department. Work on the long barrow was supervised by Mark Edmunds and Barry Mead, and Martin Cook supervised the excavation of the ring ditch. Barry Mead undertook the excavation of the pit circle. Julian Thomas was in charge of recording the human remains and Helen Robinson organised the processing of the finds.

#### The Long Barrow

This component of the Barrow Hills complex is situated close to the edge of the shallow valley which separates the site from the Abingdon causewayed enclosure, and because of this link it has long been thought that the two monuments might have been in use at the same time. Before excavation the long barrow showed as a rectangular cropmark enclosure, made up of two parallel ditches separated by an interval of about a metre. Towards the centre there were signs of a large pit. This monument was excavated completely, the majority of the ploughsoil being removed mechanically after surface finds had been collected in field walking by the Abingdon Society. A single baulk running along the main axis of the monument was excavated by hand and proved to cover the burial deposit.

It seems likely that this monument was built in four stages, although the lack of deep stratigraphy means that the position of the grave in this scheme can be established only approximately (Fig. 7). In its first phase this site consisted of a narrow flat-bottomed trench enclosing a rectangular area 16m long and almost 10m wide. Although large parts of this feature had been removed in later phases, there was no sign of an entrance. It is difficult to interpret this feature with complete confidence, but at present it is regarded as a fenced enclosure, the posts of which were later removed. It is not known whether this feature had revetted any mound, although the slight proportions of the trench itself mean that any barrow would most probably have been constructed of turf. It is uncertain whether the one grave belonged to this phase.

In the second phase the original enclosure was replaced by a ditch which cut it away on three sides. This ditch was of rather greater proportions than the original trench and enclosed an area about 17m long and 11m wide, which was left open at the south-west end, where there were two large post holes, one of which may have held a split log or tree trunk. Analogy with sites in other parts of the country suggests that this ditch was most probably the quarry for building a gravel mound. It seems likely that the grave belonged to this phase. Alternatively, the plan of the monument was dictated by the position of an existing group of burials. The grave was situated close to the south-west end of the enclosed area, in between the terminals of the quarry ditch. The two large post holes 8m to the south-west seem to flank the approach to the burial area.

The grave itself was extremely shallow and had been cut by a Saxon grubenhaus - the one internal feature to show from the air. The grave contained two crouched burials laid out along the main axis of the site. The heads were at opposite ends of the grave, whilst the legs of the two skeletons were laid across one another. It is hard to envisage any interval between these two deposits. The end of the grave had been disturbed, but the missing parts of one skull were found in the filling of the grubenhaus. Preliminary examination of the bones by Julian Thomas suggests that both individuals were adult males. One body had been accompanied by a bifacially polished flint blade, whilst an unusually small jet or shale bolt slider was found at the hip of the other skeleton. Part of a large leaf shaped arrowhead, found in the grubenhaus, had probably accompanied the same individual.

In its third phase, the open end of the monument was closed off by a further length of ditch, which skirted one of the large posts mentioned earlier. This ditch respected the terminals of the existing quarry ditch and the builders had left two narrow causeways, towards the corners of the enclosed area and roughly opposite the burials. Otherwise this extension of the monument seems to have closed off all access to the mound, although the irregular line of the quarry ditch at its north-east end might suggest that another causeway had once existed there. It is possible that a large oval pit was dug just outside the surviving causeway at the southern corner of the mound. The barrow ditch filled up fairly rapidly with runs of gravel from the interior.

The final phase of construction seems to be represented by the outer ditch, which was probably intended as a replacement for the inner quarry ditch, now silted up. The outer ditch cut through the filling of the pit mentioned earlier and took no account of the positions of the two causeways in the inner ditch. It had been dug in a series of segments between 2m and 5m long and enclosed an oval area measuring 25m by 15.5m. This ditch had filled up naturally, but like the inner ditch it did contain a number of deliberate deposits.

These deposits were found in both ditches, where they had sharply confined distributions focussed on the position of one of the two causeways. Deposits of pottery and flint scrapers were concentrated towards the causeway at the southern end of the mound but hardly overlapped one another. Pottery also occurred in the pit cut by the outer ditch, whilst there was a flint implement in the filling of both the large post holes at the south-east end of the monument. The opposite causeway was the focus for four deliberate deposits of antler, three unused and the fourth an antler pick. At either end of these deposits there were fragments of human skull. The distribution of flint debitage shows less structure, whilst the animal bones from the ditches are probably a mixture of Neolithic material and intrusive Saxon finds. The stratification of these deposits is of some interest. The four groups of antler occurred at different levels in either ditch, suggesting that they were deposited at intervals throughout the use of the site, even though they were confined to one small area. The finds of pottery and flint scrapers were nearly all in the upper filling of the two ditches, where they sometimes occurred together with Saxon pottery. This suggests that these items were originally placed in the 'forecourt' of the long barrow and entered the ditch only later, perhaps as residual material.

In the Saxon period the area around the long barrow was reused. The central area was cut by a grubenhaus and the surviving hollow left by the Neolithic outer ditch was used as a midden, particularly towards the northern end of the monument. A few post holes in this area may also belong to the

Saxon period.

Three features of the Neolithic monument are worth emphasising in this preliminary account. First, there can be little doubt that this had been a mound in most, if not all of its phases of building. There is no reason to describe the site as a 'mortuary enclosure'. Sieving of the ploughsoil across the long axis of the monument revealed a steady increase in the density of gravel towards the interior of the site, interrupted only over the position of the grubenhause. This may suggest that the ploughsoil retained the soil mark of a low mound, or preserved traces of a protected surface where the mound had been. This question needs further investigation, but work in Wessex has already shown the remarkable persistence of soil marks on sites where subsoil features have disappeared entirely. This interpretation is strengthened when the grubenhause is considered. Unlike the other examples excavated at Barrow Hills, this was a remarkably insubstantial feature and preliminary analysis indicates that it was 40 or 50cm shallower than other examples of the same floor area. This may give an idea of the height of the Barrow in the Saxon period. A very similar barrow at Maxey in the Welland Valley had been built out of turf, and part of the mound had been preserved in situ beneath a medieval headland.

Secondly, there can be little doubt that this monument had been in use at the same time as the Abingdon causewayed enclosure, which has radiocarbon dates spanning the first half of the third millennium bc. Apart from one sherd of Mortlake Ware from a high level in the barrow ditch, all the identifiable prehistoric pottery consists of Abingdon Ware. Like the leaf shaped arrowhead, this might suggest a date earlier than about 2500 bc. At the same time the polished blade and the belt slider are types better known in northern England where a date of 2500 bc or later might be expected. Economy of hypothesis therefore favours a date for the Barrow Hills mound around the middle of the third millenium bc. This would correspond to the later use of the causewayed enclosure. The same impression is given by the burial rite which has a transitional aspect. Despite the fairly traditional form of the mound, the burial of articulate males with grave goods marks a new departure which continues into the later third millennium bc. Such burials so far seem to postdate c. 2750 bc.

Lastly, the identification of this rather unusual cropmark enclosure as a late long barrow may have implications for our understanding of the Neolithic burial rite in other parts of the country. There are two aspects to this question. First, the Barrow Hills sequence closely resembles that at Wor Barrow in Cranborne Chase, just as the U ditched mound with its two large post holes is very similar to the Thickthorn long barrow in the same area. This evidence emphasises that the distinctive 'Cranborne Chase' type of long barrow may not be limited to that area. Secondly, the recognition that oval crop mark enclosures may sometimes have been late long barrows may help to fill a gap in the distribution of Neolithic burial monuments on the river gravels and in other lowland areas. There is similar evidence coming to light in other regions.

#### The Ring Ditch

This crop mark showed as four segments of a circular enclosure 9m in internal diameter, impinging on another feature interpreted as a frost crack. Analogy with similar crop marks at Dorchester-on-Thames suggested the possibility of a Late Neolithic date, thus allowing us to follow the sequence of burial monuments from the long barrow into the following period.

Again the site was excavated completely, a north-south baulk from the ditch to the centre being removed by hand, whilst the remaining ploughsoil



was cleared mechanically. During the latter process a chisel ended transverse arrowhead was found inside the enclosure. Subsequently, the ditch was completely excavated.

The four ditch segments varied considerably in their proportions and filling. The two shallowest lengths were to the west of the site, towards the position of the frost crack. The latter feature was filled with conglomerate and the builders of the ring ditch had abandoned their efforts when the south-west length of the earthwork encountered this material. By contrast, the two eastern lengths of ditch - those farthest removed from the position of the frost crack - were appreciably deeper and these were the only parts of the monument where there was evidence for the collapse of an internal bank or mound. The ring ditch had a wide causeway on the south-east - a feature known on other Neolithic and later sites - whilst the wide gap to the west was perhaps left because the builders were so reluctant to dig into the harder filling of the frost wedge.

Three additional features were found on this site. Just inside the ring ditch was a shallow pit, containing no archaeological material. The extremely shallow terminal of the southern ditch contained a few infant bones against the south-east entrance, but these were not well stratified, whilst a small pit just outside the same entrance contained an unaccompanied cremation. The longest ditch segment revealed a discontinuous layer of charcoal overlying its primary filling. This should provide material for radio-carbon dating. The same segment produced a number of flint scrapers and a sherd of Late Beaker pottery in its highest levels, and these provide a terminus ante quem for the construction of this monument.

Analogy with other sites still favours a Later Neolithic date for this monument, but little more can be said until the radiocarbon samples have been analysed. On the other hand, this excavation already sheds light on the form of some monuments of this type. Normally, they are interpreted as embanked enclosures, ancestral to henge monuments and possibly used as cremation cemeteries. Barrow Hills provides some evidence for a different reconstruction. First, sieving of the ploughsoil over this monument showed a steady increase in the proportion of gravel to topsoil from the exterior of the ring ditch to its centre. However this is explained, it seems to be consistent with the presence of a round barrow rather than an embanked enclosure. The same is suggested by the unusual layout of this site. Clearly the builders avoided digging into the conglomerate and preferred to compensate by digging a deeper ditch on the opposite side of the monument. This hardly suggests that they intended to achieve a uniform distribution of spoil around the edge of the site. Rather, the evidence for collapsed gravel in the two deeper segments of the ditch implies that the centre of gravity of the excavated material was offset in order to facilitate construction. Again this implies the existence of an internal mound, rather than a continuous enclosure. Analogy with the few undamaged Neolithic round barrows in southern England suggests that any central burial might have been at ground level. If so, it would have been removed by the plough, and only those secondary burials set in pits or dug into the ditch filling could be expected to survive. This may be what happened on some of the excavated sites at Dorchester-on-Thames.

#### The Pit Circle

This feature showed as a ring of pits about 15m in diameter enclosing an array of similar features with a less obvious ground plan. This site was stripped mechanically, apart from an east west baulk crossing the diameter of the pit circle, which was excavated by hand. The site has normally been

interpreted on the basis of air photographs as either a pit circle comparable to the early henges at Dorchester-on-Thames or as a multiple post circle rather like Woodhenge.

Despite the presence of Later Neolithic flintwork in the ploughsoil and even on the surface of these features, only one pit is certainly of prehistoric date. This contained a flint scraper, an unpolished flint axe, flint debitage, animal bones, a large fragment of antler and sherds of Abingdon Ware. It had been cut by a Saxon grubenhau. Several other pits in this area contained much smaller quantities of prehistoric material, but could be of later date.

The pit circle itself dates from the late 19th century and was dug through the filling of the grubenhau. The pits were shallow and flat bottomed and contained a rather ashy filling distinct from the overlying ploughsoil. This is interpreted as plant bedding and contained pieces of brick, tile, slate and wire, as well as pottery dating from the 1880's or 1890's. It is known that a large number of trees were planted near to Wick Hall in about 1890 and several circular plantations still exist in the surrounding area today. The simplest interpretation is that these features were also the result of late Victorian landscaping and that either the trees failed to take or this particular plantation was abandoned at an early stage. Whilst this excavation does not advance our understanding of the Neolithic sequence in the Thames valley, it may still have wider implications for our interpretation of air photographs.

#### The Bronze Age Barrows - Claire Halpin

In 1983 a long season (from April to December) of week-end digging was undertaken by Jeff Wallis and members of the Abingdon Archaeological Society, assisted by local volunteers. A prominent feature of the Barrow Hills cropmark complex is the Bronze Age barrow cemetery which consists of 17 barrows (now levelled) aligned in two rows, plus outliers. Three barrows (Nos. 1, 12 and 13) and adjacent small ring ditches are to be affected by the new housing scheme and the first season of excavation was concentrated on these monuments.

No trace of the original mounds or Bronze Age ground surface have survived due to ploughing and the plough soil itself is remarkably shallow (c. 30cm). Topsoil clearance over the centres of the barrows has produced a sparse scatter of worked flint, including three barbed and tanged arrowheads over the area of Barrow 1, which may have originally been deposited in the mound (ie. comparable to those found in the mound of Barrow 4a, Oxoniensia, xii (1948, 6).

The central grave of Barrow 1 contained cremated bones and wood ash, the two clearly separated. Three items accompanied the cremation: a much corroded bronze knife dagger, a bone pin and bone tweezers. Fragments of leather with punched and geometric design may indicate a bag in which the grave goods were placed. From the south-east quadrant of the ditch of Barrow 1 c. 20 sherds of decorated Saxon pottery of 5th/early 6th century date and fragments of cremated bone were found, and may represent a Saxon secondary burial. Despite extensive ditch digging no finds were made within the primary fill.

Pre-dating the small ring-ditch adjacent to Barrow 1 a flat grave was discovered. It consisted of a fragmentary burial (two leg bones) accompanied by an all-over-corded beaker. The central burial of this small ring-ditch was remarkably fine. It contained a crouched burial, an adult male. Close

by the head was a long necked beaker with lozenge decoration. Against the right pelvis lay a flint scraper, a bone leather working tool and antler spatula. These items were probably held in a pouch which hung from the waist. Also against the waist was a lump of iron pyrites, probably used as a strike-a-light. Against the right foot were five, finely flaked barbed and tanged arrowheads, the remains of a quiver of arrows. Beyond the lower leg bones was a scatter of c. 10 flint flakes and a bronze awl. Traces of wood have been found adhering to the latter. On lifting the skeleton a barbed and tanged arrowhead was found lying against the spine. This example was distinct from those described above, being short, squat, and with broken barbs and an impact fracture. It fits the case well for being the cause of death or injury.

Limited excavation within Barrow 12 has already revealed seven burials. It is a double-ditched barrow, comparable with others in the cemetery, and of two phases of construction. Four burials were recovered from the centre and they are described in order of deposition. The primary burial consisted of an adult crouched burial with a bronze awl lying against the left foot. It is likely to be contemporary with that from the centre of the small ring-ditch adjacent to Barrow 1. An unaccompanied cremation and a fragmentary inhumation were found in a pit overlying the central burial. The latter consisted of the articulated upper half of a child. The bones were laid with care and a biconical urn accompanied this burial. Overlying these graves was an unaccompanied cremation. About two metres south-east of these central burials an unaccompanied infant inhumation in the crouched position was excavated. The pit was shallow (c. 20cm) and the lower leg bones and skull were plough damaged. Further evidence of plough damage was seen in the discovery of a pot base in situ in the south-east quadrant of this barrow. It is likely that the pot originally contained a cremation. On the east side of the outer ditch, above the primary silts, a small collared urn containing cremated bone was excavated. A miniature pot lay inverted over this deposit.

The central burial of Barrow 13 appears to have been lost to the plough, however, the crop marks suggest the possibility of secondary burials. Further work on Barrows 12 and 13 is anticipated to take place in early 1984.

The excavation of the prehistoric features at Barrow Hills have a significance beyond the recovery of 'splendid' burials. Eleven barrows of the cemetery were excavated in the 1930's and 40's in advance of gravel extraction. The present excavations will bring this total to fourteen making this one of the most complete Bronze Age cemetery excavations. Large scale mechanical stripping at this western end of the cemetery enables us to recover satellite burials and secondary features. Limited excavation to date has revealed a line of five cremations, one with a collared urn, to the north of Barrow 12. Further there is the evidence of the flat grave pre-dating the small ring-ditch adjacent to Barrow 1.

Pits containing occupation debris have been excavated adjacent to the Neolithic long barrow and close by the causewayed ring ditch a pit containing c. 100 fragments of animal bone, many flint flakes and c. 30 sherds of grooved ware pottery was recorded. Fieldwalking on an intensive and extensive scale by members of the Abingdon Archaeological Society and Robin Holgate of the Institute of Archaeology, Oxford, augment the prehistoric studies. Finally appropriate excavated material will be submitted for radiocarbon dating, and possibly integrated with the British Museum's Research Laboratory work on Bronze Age chronologies.

## The Roman Cemetery - R A Chambers

The presence of a cemetery on this site had been known for some time through crop mark evidence. Prior to excavation it was believed that the cemetery belonged to the surrounding extensive Anglo-Saxon settlement.

Excavation revealed the cemetery to date to the Roman period and to contain both inhumations and cremations. Burial may have been begun in the 1st century AD with a series of cremations, an unknown number of which have been partially or completely ploughed out during the medieval period or later. The earliest cremation which can be confidently dated is a greyware urn containing a small 2nd century AD Oxford product greyware beaker. This cremation appears to have been the only burial to receive its own, private small enclosure. Several late Roman period cremations were also discovered, some accompanied by an Oxford product colour coat pottery beaker. The earliest colour coat beaker may have been manufactured in the late 3rd century although the majority of the beakers belonged to the 4th century and all were well worn. Each of the later cremations had been buried in plain domestic pots, some of which were made in a coarsely gritten shelly fabric dateable to the 4th and early 5th centuries AD. None of the intact cremations appear to have had retaining lids. All of the vessels were buried in an upright position (mouth upwards). Several cremation burial pits did not penetrate the gravel. The survival of such shallow features was due almost entirely to the protection they were afforded by the ridges of the medieval open field system.

The cemetery also contained 47 inhumation graves each grave containing a single skeleton. Thirty six of the inhumation graves were arranged in a broad north-south line. These graves may have been aligned on a major topographical feature such as a trackway or hedgerow for which no other archaeological evidence has survived. In each of the thirty six north-south graves the body had been laid head northwards. These graves reflected many of the customs prevalent at the time including decapitation and prone burial. Several graves contained evidence of coffins and several graves each contained a 4th century Oxford product colour coated pottery beaker. A child's grave included hobnail boots, bracelets and glass beads.

A further eleven inhumations grouped at the southern end of the cemetery were orientated west-east. None of these graves produced any grave goods.

This small cemetery displayed several important features which suggest that it is of a different character to the usual small rural Roman period cemetery of the Upper Thames Valley. The cremation and inhumation graves all respected each other, none cut each other. This is unusual in small cemeteries spanning the whole or major part of the Roman period and indicates that the graves had been carefully marked, including at least some of the cremations. The dated 2nd century cremation, several of the adult north-south inhumations and the late Roman period cremations all had a common feature, a small pottery beaker suggesting a continuous local burial tradition spanning the 2nd to 4th or early 5th centuries AD.

Other features of the cemetery were that almost all of the inhumations faced east, and that three of the four decapitations displayed similar but unusual postures for this ritual.

Until the specialist reports have been completed no detailed analysis of this cemetery is possible. However the burial customs exhibited in this small discrete cemetery suggest a burial ground serving a small, closed social group with strong, long lived traditions, possibly a locally important

land owning family.

There is no direct evidence to link this cemetery with the villa excavated in the 1970's close by at Barton Court. The whole area is known to have been heavily occupied during the Roman period. A second, small discrete inhumation cemetery excavated 30 years ago some 200m to the north-east displayed similar qualities to the Barrow Hills cemetery.

### The Anglo-Saxon Settlement - Christopher Scull

Sunken-featured buildings (grubenhauser) and very large numbers of post and stake holes, some representing post built timber structures, were revealed by topsoil stripping during the summer.

The majority of the grubenhauser exposed in July had been excavated by September. They varied in size from features 1m deep and 4.5m square to a shallow 3m x 2.5m scraping. All had a central gable-post at either end, and several had internal post and stake holes. In some cases the two principal posts appear to have been replaced during the life of the building, indicating that these structures were well maintained and may have been in use for a considerable time. No working or occupation surfaces have been found associated with any of the sunken features, and no erosion of the sides and bases of the features has been observed. These factors suggest that all of the grubenhauser so far excavated had boarded floors above the sunken area. Items of domestic refuse, including burnt limestone, animal bones, broken bone combs, pins and pottery fragments, some bearing incised or stamped decoration, have been recovered from all the sunken features, and some partly worked animal bones and sawn-off horn cores provide evidence of bone working on the site. However, nearly all such material has come from residual contexts within what may be deliberate backfill of the pit of each abandoned and dismantled grubenhauser. There is no evidence to suggest that debris from occupation or craftwork accumulated in the pit of any grubenhauser while the building was in use.

The post-built timber structures were rectangular and approximately 7m long x 3.5m wide. The relative depths of the post-holes indicate that the walls, rather than the gable-ends, bore the weight of the roof. Other complexes of post and stake holes may represent flimsier timber structures and fence lines.

Anglo-Saxon settlement on the site was established during the first half of the 5th century. How long it lasted has not yet been determined, but there is evidence to suggest that the site was not occupied after the end of the 6th century. However, further finds may force a revision of this preliminary assessment.

The summer excavation has shown that topsoil stripping must continue on a large scale if the relationships between post-built structures and grubenhauser are to be established. It is not possible to identify living units from the cropmark evidence.

ROLLRIGHT: The Rollright Stones - George Lambrick  
(PRN 2249, 2252, 2253, 2257, 5025, 5026, 8854, 8860, 12251,  
12252, 12253, 12772; SP 295 310)

This year's excavations continued the assessment of the Rollright complex of monuments commissioned by the DOE. Three areas were examined, the

barrow with megalithic remains known from antiquarian sources to have stood in the field west of the King Stone; the Whispering Knights; and the stone cairn discovered last year immediately next to the King Stone.

The barrow with large stones west of the King Stone field was well illustrated at the end of the 18th century, and a plan of it in relationship to the Stones themselves which is preserved in the Bodleian is clearly very accurate as it gives the correct dimensions between the three main monuments. The excavation could thus be accurately sited and it demonstrated that no trace of a barrow or of a buried ground surface survives. There was no trace of a burial at the centre of the mound as shown on the plan, but since it is unclear whether it was a long barrow or a round one, and there is no need for burials to be cut into bedrock, this is not significant. No sign of quarries was found, but again without evidence for the shape of the mound their position was not predictable. The barrow may well have been removed soon after it was illustrated (perhaps in the process of quarrying for enclosure walls and road metalling) as it was described then as "a fallen stone on a mound undermined".

Trenches round the Whispering Knights designed to locate traces of a mound and/or quarries associated with a possible long barrow also showed that no substantial features remain. Immediately next to the railings of the Whispering Knights beyond the extent of ploughing the undisturbed soil beneath the monument was covered by a thin layer of small rubble. Larger stones over this may be stones placed round the railings to prevent the path getting too muddy. Except on the east side no trace of the original soil survived: steam ploughing earlier this century had cut into the top of bedrock well below the modern level of ploughing. On the east side the undisturbed soil contained Neolithic, Iron Age and Roman sherds. The occurrence of the latter very close to the Whispering Knights suggests that if there ever was much of a mound it may have been removed by the end of the prehistoric period. The west side of the trackway leading to the Iron Age settlement on the other side of the road to the north, which was examined last year, was found again.

The small scale trial work on the site of the cairn found last year by the King Stone, was intended simply to define its shape, examine the central area for signs of a chamber and further assess its preservations. Only the topsoil and other disturbances were excavated. The cairn is circular and has what appears to be an intact chamber or cist though its form was unclear without further removal of superficial cairn material. Some disturbance had occurred on the east side as a result of the construction of the Royal Observer Corps bunker, but this does not seem to be too serious.

Examination of carbonised material from last year's work has just begun. One of the cremations by the cairn includes tubers of onion couch, familiar from Bronze Age cremations at the Ashville Trading Estate, Abingdon and Mount Farm, Berinsfield. The Iron Age sample includes spelt wheat and a variety of weed seeds. One sample from a pit includes fragments of degraded bone, a coprolite and some small pebble-like objects which may be tapeworm cists. These suggest that the pit may have been used as a cess pit when it was being back filled.

SHRIVENHAM BY-PASS - See Watchfield

STANTON HARCOURT: Gravelly Guy - George Lambrick  
(PRN 8281 8286; SP 403 054)

Excavations on this extensive Iron Age and Roman site were carried out from mid-September until Christmas 1983. The layout of the Iron Age settlement is particularly clear cut. A dense linear spread of pits is delimited by notably straight rectilinear edges on one side and it clearly respects two areas enclosed by roughly penannular gullies or ditches on the other. The pits range from early to mid Iron Age, though most have rather little domestic refuse, and the latest ones encroach on the penannular gullies, though not on the areas they surround. One of these areas contains numerous post holes possibly, though not clearly, representing a house. Two other houses, evident from circles of post holes lie adjacent to the main pit cluster, and seem to have been encroached upon by the pits after demolition. Three or four post structures (?granaries) form a row adjacent to a gap or path through the pit cluster. One of these structures is clearly cut by the pits, another was cut by one of the post built houses. The pits vary in size, some are large classic storage pits, others are much smaller. The density of the pits and the absence of much intercutting, particularly between the large storage pits, suggests that they were dug fairly systematically. Some were left open long enough for their sides to start slumping in, others were back-filled before this could occur.

The Iron Age settlement is bounded by a shallow heavily recut ditch, the latest parts of which seem to be early Roman. The boundary marks a remarkably clear-cut division between the south-east side of the site where only Iron Age material has been found and the north-west side which is almost exclusively Roman. The main features here are some very large holes, one very deep one surrounded by heavily recut ditches (which respect the main boundary) was a well c. 3.5m deep. This had a ramp with shallow steps leading down to it. A very shallow wide pit with a ditch round the bottom and a slight ramp from a gap in the ditch may be the beginnings of a gravel pit. A third large pit of similar form but deeper was cut through a concentric complex of recut ditches whose outline at least at one stage was hexagonal. The function of this feature remains a mystery at present. A large rectangular enclosure laid out from the line of the main boundary across the site is also Roman, but its north-west side may have originated as an Iron Age boundary. A number of irregular scoops adjacent to this are interpreted as casual gravel digging. There was also a Roman cremation in this area.

A few earlier prehistoric features are suspected but not excavated as yet, though one possible tree clearance pit has produced ?Beaker pottery. There is a general scatter of worked flint on the site, including a few pieces of Mesolithic date, but otherwise mainly late Neolithic and Bronze Age.

WATCHFIELD: Shrivenham By-pass - R A Chambers and Christopher Scull  
(PRN 13,455; SU 2325/8925)

Much material of archaeological importance has been discovered during the initial stages of the construction of the Shrivenham by-pass.

Mr J. Simpson, assisted by other members of the Shrivenham Local History Society, has recorded extensive remains of a Roman period settlement west of the Highworth Road. Pits, ditches, cobbled areas and areas of dark soil have all yielded much pottery. An extensive spread of large limestone

rubble indicated the presence of a substantial stone building on, or just beyond the edge of, the by-pass. Several Roman coins have been recovered for the OAU by members of the Wyvern Metal Detector Club.

An important 5th-6th century Anglo-Saxon cemetery has been discovered at the northern end of the by-pass in Watchfield parish (NGR centred SU2490/9075 PRN 13,196). The site has also provided a collection of Neolithic-Bronze Age flintwork and early Iron Age settlement features.

The cemetery was discovered when the mechanical excavation of a roadside drainage ditch revealed the remains of four human skeletons. The excavation team working at Barrow Hills, Radley was transferred to the by-pass for six days to excavate and record the remains within the area affected by the by-pass. The County Council and the contractors kindly made this time available.

The conditions under which the graves were excavated were far from ideal. Previous to the discovery of the cemetery heavy machinery had removed the top soil. The immense weight of the machinery had cracked and crushed the underlying skeletal material although metal objects survived remarkably intact.

The existence of Iron Age and possibly earlier features in the subsoil made the identification of graves in the heavy and clayey loam a difficult and time-consuming task.

A total of twenty-seven inhumations of early Anglo-Saxon date, aligned west-east and north-south, were excavated. Unstratified finds indicate that this was not the original number of burials in the area, and it is possible that a considerable number of graves were destroyed before the nature of the site was recognised.

The earliest burial excavated may date from the first half of the 5th century AD, but most are of the later 5th or 6th century. These include the grave of a woman buried with a pair of gilt-bronze saucer brooches, and iron cloak-pin, a pair of bronze tweezers and a string of amber beads, and that of a warrior buried with his sword, spear, shield, knife and a bronze cauldron which may have been made in the Rhineland. Another male burial contained an iron knife and iron shield-boss, an elaborate bronze belt buckle and fittings, and a balance inside the remains of a leather and bronze case which also contained weights and Roman coins.

Other finds include a wooden bucket with bronze and iron bindings and an iron handle, and a second bronze cauldron. The quality and quantity of the grave goods appear to indicate that this was the burying ground of a wealthy and important community. Unfortunately, we do not know what proportion of the original cemetery is represented by the excavated burials, and this places severe constraints upon the interpretation of the site.

The OAU would like to thank Oxfordshire County Council, the engineers and contractors for allowing excavation to take place and for providing machinery.

The OAU would also like to thank the local volunteers who helped with the excavation and those who maintained a watch over the site whilst the road cutting was machined. The OAU is also grateful to Guy Grainger and to Kevin Harvey, Sally Jones and Gwen Pedder of the Unit's Manpower Services Scheme for working until after dark to complete the excavation.



