



Anyone wishing to contribute to the Newsletter should send details before the last Tuesday of each month.

### BENSON

Gordon Elsey reports that the Benson Divers Sub-Aqua Club searched the area above the Benson Weir last week. This followed a report that the Thames Conservancy had recovered pottery whilst dredging this area. But the divers found that the river bed had been scoured to gravel.

The presence of pottery was of particular interest to us as there is documentary evidence for kilns within the Manor or Bensington during the 13th to 15th centuries, the products of which may have been traded by river.

### BRIZE NORTON

Geoff Williams has been keeping a watching brief on a small building development to the South of Brize Norton church in an area which was previously an orchard. Building excavations revealed a large ditch (6m x 1m) running N-S parallel to the road and under the village school where the boundary wall and playground show signs of slight subsidence. The ditch itself was devoid of dateable material and it has since been established that it was dug in the 19th Century to drain the slurry from a farm which has since disappeared.

A scatter of medieval pottery found in the topsoil has been dated to the late 12th Century and is presumably associated with the settlement area discovered in 1969 during the construction of the D'Aubney Mead housing estate. (Cf. Ascott D'Oilly Ant. J 1959 and Logic Land Oxoniensia 1951/2).

### CHALGROVE

The highlight of last months excavations at Chalgrove was the presence of two gentlemen from an Oxford firm who were demonstrating the abilities of their camera-flying kites, to take low altitude aerial photographs of the site. Despite the lack of a good constant breeze a large number of shots of the entire site were taken. We await the results with interest.

Excavation has returned from the farm buildings, to the manor and earlier structures. A large rectangular building with a smaller circular structure at its Eastern end is certainly earlier than the main building. We hope to obtain some firm dating evidence for this. Meanwhile the search is on for possible entrances across the moats. A causeway across the moat in the far south-east of the site has been found to be post-medieval, although it could be on the line of an earlier crossing point. More promising is a small rectangular stone platform which may have formed an abutment for a timber bridge across the northern-most moat.

Readers are reminded that there will be an Open Day at the site on Sunday 19 November.

### CUMNOR

H C Mytum reports that the OUAS weekend excavation on Tilbury Farm, Cumnor, located an early Iron Age ditch running east-west across a site discovered by the field

section last year. The ditch is about 5 metres across and has been excavated so far to a depth of 1 metre. Pottery forms include T-shaped and thumb-impressed rims and body sherds with decoration on the carination. The field section has gridded the site in 10 metre squares and collected material from 24 of these. This shows a concentration of material to the south and downhill of the excavated ditch. Augering is in progress tracing the line of the ditch, which seems to be curving southwards and may enclose the area of densest pottery scatter.

#### KINGSTON BAGPUIZE

Ron Cowell, an In-Service Trainee, is undertaking for the Unit a survey of the Parish of Kingston Bagpuize in connection with the Demonstration Farm Project run by the Countryside Commission. At Kingstonhill Farm the farmer has recently dug a pipe-trench for a new cow-shed, in the area where a Romano-British settlement was located in 1976. This has revealed a mortar surface believed to be Roman. Work is also going on within an extension to the pipe-trench, in an attempt to understand irregular stone arrangements from which areas large amounts of Roman pottery are being found. In the area of the barn about 30 m to the west of the pipe-trench, a new track put down for the cows produced some sherds of Roman grey-ware. In the near future about 30 m to the north of the pipe-trench a lagoon for slurry about 30 m by 20 m is being dug and will be monitored and recorded as necessary.

#### LITTLE FARINGDON

The Ministry of Defence oil pipe line which necessitated the excavation and recording of a part of a scheduled cropmark site, has now been laid and backfilled. The excavation of the scheduled site was completed just in time in advance of the contractors trenching operations. Much Romano-British and some Iron Age material was recovered.

Several other features were recorded along the route of the pipe line, mainly extensions of known cropmark sites. R A Chambers is now engaged in writing up the excavation.

#### A ROMAN OCCUPATION SITE NEAR AVES DITCH, MIDDLETON STONEY

Elizabeth Leggatt reports that nearly 3 kilograms of Roman pottery has been recovered from a field on the east side of Aves Ditch (also known as Ash Bank or Wattle Bank), near the Lower Heyford road at Middleton Stoney. Most of it came from a relatively small area on the western side of the field bordering the plantation known as 'New Nursery'. It was picked up by Mr G Rawnsley, the farmer, on two occasions following heavy rain after ploughing. It comprised 0.2 Kg of white ware, including a mortarium rimsherd and quartzite-gritted body sherd, both probably from Oxford kilns; a very small quantity of Nene Valley colour-coated ware (0.103 Kg); 5 fragments of Samian, including a piece of base or bowl and 1 imitation Samian wall-sided mortarium sherd, Oxford red colour-coated (0.101 Kg); calcite-gritted ware (0.11 Kg); black or black-coated ware (1 pie-dish or dog-bowl rim, 1 flanged bowl rim) (0.1 Kg); 1.08 Kg of local greyware, and 1.47 Kg of miscellaneous pink and red sherds, mainly locally-made oxidised or colour-coated ware.

Prehistoric, Medieval and Post-medieval finds were also made. The prehistoric finds included a scatter of struck flints representing periods from the Mesolithic to the Roman Iron Age. The medieval pottery consisted of very few sherds, but included 1 green-glazed strap-handle sherd with slashed decoration of c.13-14 date, and one glazed rim of similar date, possibly from Brill. The other medieval finds were of bronze and consisted of small fragments of belt fittings, a rivet head and 2 Jew's Harps. These last were small instruments 4.8 cm and 5.7 cm respectively. Each was of similar shape, with a penannular head and extended prongs, the bronze being cast in a diamond shape in section. Both had a depression at the head of the frame, which was stained on the larger model, which represented the attachment of the tongue or stang, unfortunately missing in both cases. Comparison of the first one to be found with Jew's Harps in the Pitt Rivers Collection showed it be almost certainly medieval in origin. Further comparison with published examples suggests that these objects are not so uncommon as

formerly thought. Post-medieval finds included approximately 1 Kg of pottery, 0.43 Kg of agricultural ironmongery, 2 Kg of glass and 5 fragments of clay pipe stems.

These finds are of great interest in view of the proximity of the excavated site at the castle one mile away, and also in relation to crop marks in the field. Mr Rawnsley also noticed that in the drought of 1976, when the turnip crop failed a weed called Fat Hen flourished in a semi-circular shape near Aves Ditch. This pattern appears to correspond directly with the irregular circles which show up on either side of the Bank in aerial photos. Some Romano-British pottery was also found on this site in 1977. On the site of the main pottery scatter described above, A.P.s show linear crop marks suggesting trackways or enclosures.

The lack of medieval pottery reflects the cartographical and documentary evidence, which suggests that before enclosure at the end of C.17 the area on the west side of Middleton Stoney parish was moor and heath. A map of 1710, after enclosure, records the names of the small closes on the east side of Ash Bank as Moore Closes, the field next to 'New Nursery' as Assmoore Hill, and the rest of the area as the Moore.

These finds are recorded in the Sites and Monument Record, OCC Department of Museum Services at Woodstock. The PRNs are: The Jew's Harps 11436; the medieval finds 11549; the Roman pottery 11548; the Post-medieval finds 11550; the Prehistoric flints 11552, 11569 and 11568; and the crop marks 11553 and 11551.

#### OXFORD, All Saints

As expected the 10-12th century bones are almost all of domestic animals with noticeably less horse and dog debris than on prehistoric or Romano-British sites. Compared to Oxford sites there seems marginally more species variety, greater proportions of major meat carcass bones and perhaps a greater proportion of younger sheep represented. Thus the occupants may have had a somewhat better diet than most Oxford people during this period.

#### OXFORD, New Social Sciences Library, George Street (City Wall)

Four members of the University Society helped Brian Durham to look for an edge to 'huge' pre-city-wall disturbances found last summer (Newsletter No 6, June 1978). The work had to be done in one weekend, and the proximity of services, the city ditch, and the standing wall meant that it had to be a narrow hand-dug trench. Nevertheless a neatly cut edge was found running north-south 20 m west of Bastion I, backfilled with similar material to that seen previously, and presumably the same feature. It would have been at least 10 m wide, and on an alignment which makes it almost certainly the western boundary of the twelfth century town, and probably the long-sought limit of the Saxon town.

#### SYDENHAM

Mrs June Cray has recorded a trackway which wound through a large open field in the north-west of the parish. This track, made up of a series of straight lines and sharp turns, appears in part to be observing the furlong boundaries of the medieval open field system. Although the ridge and furrow has long since been ploughed flat some of the headlands (larger ridges which often developed at either end of each furlong) can still be recognised as respecting the trackway. The trackway may soon be ploughed out following a reorganisation of the farm.

Mrs Cray has also reported a barn and other out-buildings which appear to contain medieval timbers. It is hoped that the Chinnor Society may be able to record these. These buildings are also likely to disappear in the near future.

Field walking in the parish has recently produced a sherd of Romano-British red colour coat ware (4th century) and several fragments of early-mid medieval pottery as well as post-medieval wares.

## WALLINGFORD

Foundation trenches on the site of recently demolished buildings at the junction of Church Lane and Goldsmith's Lane, Wallingford have, so far, not revealed any medieval stratifications. The trenches which on average are only 2 ft deep, have cut through post-medieval soil containing some pottery and animal bone. No residual medieval pottery has been found. The Wallingford Archaeological and Historical Society are keeping a watching brief for the Unit.

## OXFORD TO BIRMINGHAM NEW ROAD (M40 EXTENSION)

The second of the trial pit contracts (No 4) between Waterstock and Merton, is now completed and the third contract (No 2) which began on 12 October will enable the Eastern Road Construction Unit to examine the geology of the land between Kings Sutton and Souldern. None of the trial pits have yet revealed any archaeological features although two pits have provided medieval pottery and worked flints from the plough soil.

## GLOUCESTERSHIRE

### The Claydon site, Lechlade

The Claydon cropmark complex between Lechlade and Fairford in Gloucestershire will be extracted for gravel over the next ten years. Approximately 75 hectares of archaeological features are visible on very good quality aerial photographs. (Leech 1977, Pap 4, 1999, 1999).

The OAU has been asked by the DOE to carry out a detailed survey of the area, including some trial trenching, to assess the value of the site for future excavation.

The complex falls into two distinct areas. To the east is a settlement made up of regular, rectangular ditched enclosures. At the centre of this is a platform of gravel of about 2 hectares projecting into a stream meander. Initial fieldwalking has shown that this platform is covered with a dense spread of stone, including a curved block of limestone, probably a pillar base, tile and Romano-British pottery. Surrounding this probable building are paddocks, on both sides of the stream, and trackways radiate in all directions.

The western complex is of a different character to the eastern; irregular, cellular enclosures of a native-type settlement. A major trackway curves north-south through the cellular settlement and may link it with the rectilinear one. Fieldwalking here has so far produced no material in the topsoil. Relict stream courses surround the settlement which provide distinct topographical features, still very wet in winter.

The Claydon site provides an opportunity to examine two settlements, possibly a linked villa and village or sites showing chronological evolution.

The topography of the area is exceptionally interesting. The sites lie on the first gravel terrace with the flood plain of the Colne immediately to the south and a belt of clay rising onto the Cotswold slopes to the north. The terrace itself is divided into a number of discreet areas by present-day streams and ancient ones which influenced the settlement pattern. The water-table is high, features of any depth appear to be waterlogged and a nearby Romano-British ditch has produced a wooden writing tablet.

Systematic fieldwalking will begin on Sunday 12 November at 10 am and volunteers will be welcome. (Meet at the ARC/Colne Valley Gravel Co's Claydon Pit on the south side of the Lechlade-Fairford road). Excavation is planned to start early in the new year. For further details contact David Miles at the Unit on evenings on Woodstock 811772.

## CALENDAR

### Oxford University Archaeological Society Meetings

All meetings are held in the Ashmolean Museum at 8.15 pm on Monday evenings. Admission by Card only. Membership cards are obtainable through G Lambrick at the Unit.

13 November: Dr Tim Champion - The Origins of Iron-Working in Prehistoric Europe

20 November: Dr Roger Ling - Wall-painting in Roman Britain

27 November: Prof A M Snodgrass - The Heroic Age - birth of an idea

4 December: The President - Sybaris - from fiction to faction

### Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society

Lectures in the Ashmolean Museum at 8.15 pm.

Wed 6 December

'The Tradescants and the Ashmolean Museum', by Mr Martin Welch, MA, the British Museum

Wed 31 January

'After Pitt-Rivers', by Mr Richard Bradley MA, Department of Archaeology, University of Reading.

### Oxford University Department for External Studies

Weekend and Day Schools

15-17 December: Medieval Industry - to be held at New College in association with CBA

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

## OTHER NEWS

### Publications

G Lambrick: Iron Age Settlements in the Upper Thames Valley in Cunliffe and Rowley - Lowland Iron Age Communities in Europe, p 103-121.

### Xmas Cards

Wendy Lee-Page has designed exclusively for the Unit two cards suitable for Xmas but appropriate for all occasions. The designs are based on the Medieval floor tiles found at the moated manor site at Chalgrove, currently being excavated. The cards will be on sale at the Chalgrove Open Day on 19 November, or available at the Unit at 10p per card or 90p for a pack of ten. Mixed packs are available and envelopes are included.