

OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER

INCLUDING OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

No 12 - December 1978

Anyone wishing to send contributions to the Newsletter should send details to 46 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford OX1 2EP (Tel. Oxford 43888) before the last Tuesday of each month.

ABINGDON

Following the demolition of nos 37-41 St Helen's Street and 40-46 West St Helen's Street, formerly occupied by a garage, extensive areas of the site were stripped to a depth of approximately 1 m by the contractors for foundation work. This enabled R A Chambers assisted by the Abingdon Society to make a hurried examination of the archaeology underlying the site.

Beneath accumulations of Post-Medieval debris many medieval and post-medieval cess/rubbish pits were seen, especially on the site of the former properties facing onto East St Helen's Street indicating that this part at least was open ground for much of the Medieval and early Post-Medieval period. The property boundary between the former properties facing onto East and West St Helen's Streets was still clearly visible as a soil change forming a boundary between an area of intense medieval soil disturbance and a less disturbed area. It was quite clear that this boundary line had existed from at the latest, the early medieval period.

Many of the RomanopBritish settlement features which were expected to show on this site had clearly been destroyed by later soil disturbance and almost all of the Roman period pottery came from Medieval and later levels. The only probable late Anglo-Saxon material to come from the site comprised a couple of sherds of coarse pottery unfortunately from unstratified levels.

ABINGDON

Some bone oddments from medieval sites have been identified by Mr Don Bramwell and include new species records of starling, snipe, raven, and red kite. At present raven and red kite tend to be restricted to upland areas of Britain and indeed red kite scarcely survives as a breeding bird in Wales. Both species however were likely to have been common scavengers around medieval towns.

ALL SAINTS, OXFORD

Domestic fowl bones predominate in this sample whereas The Hamel is yielding greater proportions of goose. Mr Bramwell records barnacle goose, golden plover and woodcock for the All Saints site.

CHALGROVE

During November at Chalgrove work has concentrated in bringing the recording up to date in preparation for our departure from the site. On 19 November an Open Day was held on the site and despite torrential rain over 600 people turned out to see the site and associated exhibition. The OAU would like to thank Mr Bell, the headmaster of Chalgrove County Primary School and

the caretaker, Mr Cassidy, for their help and the use of the school hall. We would also like to thank the members of the Chalgrove Archaeological Society for their help with the Open Day.

LAUNTON

The Launton Local History Group have now completed the recording of the memorials in the parish churchyard. They have also now begun a field-walking programme over the arable land in the parish. This programme commenced with a preliminary search of two fields in the north of the parish where, quite by chance, an extensive Medieval and Post-Medieval pottery scatter was found. The scatter supported the site of a small hamlet later deserted and the settlement site put under cultivation as attested at the present day by the remains of ridge and furrow that can still be clearly seen. Further field-work in this area is anticipated.

LITTLE FARINGDON (Purton to Brize Norton Oil Pipe Line)

Richard Chambers is now engaged in writing up the excavation of this site which he reported on in the last issue of the Newsletter.

OXFORD - see All Saints above

STANTON HARCOURT

The OUAS have begun a short series of weekend rescue excavations to recover a plan and hopefully to phase the boundary ditches from several periods of Roman and pre-Roman enclosure on an area of gravel now stripped of top-soil ready for gravel extraction at Dix Pit, Stanton Harcourt.

X40 (Oxford to Birmingham New Road)

Richard Chambers reports that the third of the four trial pitting contracts which will enable the engineers to assess geological problems along this preferred route has now come to an end. Little archaeological material has come from there so far. The fourth and last contract will not now commence until February of next year. However, a brief but close stereoscopic examination of some of the aerial photographs covering the proposed route and adjacent land has already revealed more previously unknown archaeological sites and it will be necessary to work through all the stereo air cover in the near future.

OTHER NEWS - See report on Iron Age Pottery below

CALENDAR

Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society

Lectures in the Ashmolean Museum at 8.15 p.m.

Wed 31 January

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

Oxford University Department for External Studies

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

- 6 - 7 January 1979: An Introduction to Greek Art - weekend school
13 January 1979: Post Medieval Landscapes - Day School
15 - 19 January 1979: The Oxford Region - conference to celebrate
the centenary of the Department
22 - 26 January 1979: Planning for Small Industries in Rural
Areas - In association with Oxford Polytechnic

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

Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society

Lectures are held in the lecture theatre of the John Mason School, Wootton Road, Abingdon at 7.30 p.m.

- 17 January 1979: Building materials in the Vale & Downs by
Dr R Squires

Didcot & District Archaeological and Historical Society

- 3 January 1979: The Art of Bronze Age Crete by Mr S Hood

OTHER NEWS

Iron Age Pottery

George Lambrick with the assistance of Frances Rankine, one of the JCP's, and Valerie De Hoog, an inservice trainee, has been creating a recording system and classification for Iron Age pottery from the region. The recording system is similar to that developed for Medieval pottery by Maureen Mellor and is compatible with the same computer programme. The Classification of Fabrics, Forms and Decoration has been created using the catalogue of published pottery from the area compiled by Dee de Roche, and drawing on previous work on Appleford, Ashville and Farmoor, and on Dee de Roches research on selected groups of pottery from various other sites. The recording of pottery from Mount Farm by George Lambrick and Frances Rankine, and from Hardwick by Duncan Wilson of the OUAS, is now well under way using the new system. Hardwick is interesting because the pottery is different from most other groups, being extremely coarse and crudely made, with virtually no fine wares and a very high proportion made from materials available on the site. Mount Farm displays a greater variety of types with more fine wares. It is hoped that this site will provide another good sequence for the whole of the Iron Age. Initial work has shown that there may be some problems in defining a watertight stratigraphic sequence, but at the same time it is hoped that the possible presence of much residual material (a potential source of much confusion) will be minimised by the relatively low density of features compared with Ashville. Recent work by the OUAS on an early Iron Age site on Wytham Hill near Oxford has produced a useful group of pottery which will be examined in due course. George Lambrick would be interested to see any other groups of Iron Age pottery collected or excavated recently in the area.

THE OAU WISHES A MERRY XMAS & A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS