



OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER INCLUDING
OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

No. 12 - December 1979

Anyone wishing to send contributions to the Newsletter should send details to the above address before the last Tuesday of each month.

OXFORDSHIRE

Chalgrove, Harding's Field Moated Site

The excavation at the above site has now drawn to a close in anticipation of the council's laying a protective layer of gravel over the field, which will be followed by several inches of topsoil. In this way the underlying archaeological layers will be protected when the area is put into use as a playing field. To mark the end of the excavation an Open Day was held on site and with the kind co-operation of the Chalgrove Primary School the OAU was able to stage an exhibition of finds and photographs. The weather was kinder than on previous Open Days and over 600 adults and innumerable children visited the site. The OAU would like to take this opportunity of thanking all those who helped make the Open Day a success.

Work has now begun on sifting through the site record in order to produce an archive from whence will come a published report.

Part of the exhibition on show at the Open Day is now set up at the Unit (46 Hythe Bridge Street). Visitors are welcome to call in and view the exhibition.

Gl: ton, Slape Copse

This is the site of a medieval farmstead built on land cleared in Wychwood Forest probably during the 13th century. The earthwork remains of these buildings lie on the western side of the Glyme Valley, on the brow of a north-facing slope next to the A34 main road.

Recently the part of the small wood which covered these remains was cleared and the ground tidied up by a machine which unfortunately repeatedly drove over some of the earthwork remains of the farmstead. In order to determine the surviving state of the remains of this site with a view to how they may best be preserved Richard Chambers undertook the excavation of a series of trial trenches. The trial excavation not only permitted the measurement of the degree of machine damage inflicted on the archaeology of the site and fortunately the damage was mainly superficial, but also provided an opportunity to produce a comprehensive earthworks plan, to define the true extent of the site and to indicate archaeologically the period of occupation as the present documentary evidence is unclear on this point.

That the farmstead was built on land cut out of Wychwood Forest probably during the 13th century is backed up by pottery recovered from the excavation. Slape is first mentioned in 1220 when Ralph de Clinton

granted two virgates of land in Slape near Wootton to Lady Letitia de Savey, owner of Kiddington, the next manor, on the payment of twenty marks to himself and three to his wife. The house of a John de Slape is first mentioned in 1227. In 1300 the Perambulation of Wychwood Forest mentions "the house of John de Slape in Wudestok Way". The land continued to be occupied by the Slape family for approximately five hundred years. When the site was finally deserted is unclear at present. The only original evidence to come to light indicates that the site was deserted and under pasture in 1809 and this is backed up by the lack of any quantity of post-medieval pottery on the site. Research into the documentary evidence is continuing.

Oxford, 21 Longwall Street (former garage of William Morris)

A small trench is being dug in the city ditch as part of the STEP programme. The site is to be redeveloped for student accommodation, and early demolition of the workshop buildings by the owners, New College, has made it possible to expose part of the face of the outer city wall, which formed an outer defensive line to the medieval town. So far we have emptied a large eighteenth century drain against the wall, and are proceeding to remove layers of ditch silt. These are still post-medieval, but hopefully will give the beginnings of a useful sequence of domestic pottery to reinforce the evidence of the St Ebbes pits dug in 1968-71, and currently being worked on at the Unit. (BGD)

Radley, Tuckwells Pit

The site was located from aerial photographs and has been mechanically stripped prior to gravel extraction by Tuckwells Ltd. The Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society wish to thank them and particularly Mr David Grose, Site Manager, for his active help and co-operation. An area 20 m x 40 m was cleared in alternate meter strips without result and the feature eventually found under the parked car of R A Chambers of the OAU. Further mechanical stripping of the topsoil revealed a circular feature some 10 m diameter with a wider area to the south (subsequently assumed to be natural).

The whole site was cleared and planned to 1:100 scale. A central feature was found and on trowelling, incised potsherds were revealed. It was realised that this could be a burial and the Abingdon Society wish to thank Bob Wilson of the OAU who spent the next two days exposing what turned out to be a substantial complete beaker with incised patterns. The potsherds were photographed and drawn in situ and then raised by A. Shistawi of Woodstock County Museum for conservation and re-assembly.

Work continued on cutting four sections, recording them and trowelling the whole central area which revealed one and possibly three other postholes. A flint arrowhead was recovered from the ditch fill in one section. Our metal detector team scanned the whole feature with negative result. About 1/3 of the ring ditch was cleared in quadrants in case there was a secondary burial but nothing was found. Work has ceased as the site is to be destroyed and specialist reports are now awaited. (G Jones & J Wallis of the Abingdon Society).

Stanton Harcourt, SP413048

The Oxford University Archaeological Society under the auspices of the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit has been engaged in its customary weekend excavations on what at present appears to be a late Neolithic

ring ditch of a ploughed-out 'barrow'. Its closest parallel seems to be the plan of site V: Dorchester on Thames (Atkinson, Piggott and Sanders, Excavations at Dorchester, Oxon. 1951, p 45). Excavations began on 27 October and shall terminate during the week ending 8 December. Report forthcoming. (John W Taylor MA).

Thrupp Site C

G Jones and J Wallis of the Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society report that work has continued over an area 30 m x 100 m on the Radley/Summertown Terrace on what is now apparent as a small, late Iron Age settlement on the bank of the Thames.

FO5. Ring Ditch - recently exposed with a central feature. No dating evidence but regarded as contemporary with the other Iron Age features. 10 m dia.

FO3. Gully - with a crouched child burial. The inhumation was recorded and raised - pelvis, femur, part of rib cage, 4 vertebrae, ilium radius and phalanges. No skull. No grave goods.

FO3. Circular Gully - 10 m dia. One posthole?

FO2. Ring Ditch - 7 m dia. Deeper than FO5, FO4 and FO3, but with FO1 linear feature cutting through the centre, destroying possible internal features. One posthole.

F22. Penannular Ditch - By far the largest feature on site. Apparent on aerial photographs and with at least three recuts and some gravel back-filling.

Finds include:

Flint waste flakes (unpatinated).

Animal bone fragments.

A bronze coin of Tasciouanus - 15 BC/5AD, struck at Camulodunum Mint.

The pottery is ill-fired and sand temper-ware (bead-rim bowls). The only decorated one so far had a slashed rim.

Palaeolithic hand axe (probably mid-Achaean).

A white patinate flint scraper (probably Neolithic).

Two postholes found at entrance and one large one in the terminal ditch.

The most interesting find has been the handle end of an iron knife with rivet intact.

F23. Linear Feature. One of several regularly-spaced, shallow ditches crossing the field. Roman or medieval but of unknown function.

Interpretation

The picture so far is that the gullies on site C represent a small settlement probably occupied intermittently perhaps in the summer months only. At the start of the season water from the Thames came very close to the site indicating that flooding could well have been a risk in this area. Nothing is known yet about the area between site B and C except that large flint scatters are concentrated on this area of the field. It could produce more hut sites. Site B is probably contemporary or slightly earlier than site C. The penannular ring-ditch is the most

substantial feature on site C and represents the latest phase of occupation. All structures are in a line W-E and it is thought that the huts occupied the river bank at this period. Further excavation on the rest of area C may well provide clues to the relationship with site B and could strongly argue the case against the immediate area being occupied in the Neolithic. So far no Neolithic pottery or features have been uncovered as was hoped for. Flint scatters in topsoil have all been directly over Iron Age structures.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Fairford/Lechlade, Claydon Pike

Excavations began at Claydon Pike, Fairford/Lechlade on 12 November. Following geophysical survey, random top soil and phosphate sampling a trench 35 m x 45 m was opened with a JCB VIIC.

An oval enclosure c. 23 m across, of probably middle Iron Age date with a south-eastern entrance has been found. Inside is a large round-house of almost 14 m diameter, also with a south-eastern entrance, two hearths and possible pits.

There seem to be two and possibly three further round houses. The clearest at this stage is outside the main enclosure entrance and probably cut by its ditch. This hut is 12 m in diameter with an area of limestone cobbles on the north side.

The area has now been photographed using the Unit kite and excavation will continue up to Christmas. Visitors and/or volunteers are welcome. Contact David Miles, site director, on Woodstock 811772 in the evenings for details.

CALENDAR

- 14-16 December 1979: The Evolution of Marshland Landscapes (further details obtainable from the Course Secretary, Dept for External Studies, Rewley House, 3-7 Wellington Square, Oxford).
- 15 December 1979: Leslie Cram: "China and Europe - Past and Present" (lecture will be held in Lecture Theatre No.3, London Road, Reading University, at 2.45 pm - Berkshire Archaeological Society).
- 5-6 January 1980: The Roman at Work (details from Course Secretary, Dept for External Studies, Rewley House, 3-7 Wellington Square, Oxford).
- 8 January 1980: Mr J Clark on "The May Rose Project" (details from Mrs Jill Allen (Tel Henley 4433) - Henley Archaeological and Historical Group).
- 11 January 1980: Max Davies at the Church Hall, High Street, Chinnor on "Notley Abbey" at 8 pm (Chinnor Historical & Archaeological Society).
- 19 January 1980: Christopher Stanley: "A building material for seven thousand years - the history of concrete". (lecture held in Lecture Theatre No. 3, London

Road, Reading University, at 2.45 pm - Berkshire Archaeological Society).

- 11-13 January 1980: The Archaeology of Santorini - to be held at New College.
- 19-20 January 1980: Certificate Weekend II - Aerial Photography.
- 21-25 January 1980: Planning and Conservation in Rural Areas - in association with Oxford Polytechnic.
- 25-27 January 1980: Hillforts in Britain and Europe - in association with the Institute of Archaeology.

Details of all the above courses (ie. from 11 January onwards) can be obtained from the Course Secretary, Dept for External Studies, Rewley House, 3-7 Wellington Square, Oxford.

CHALGROVE EXHIBITION

Part of the exhibition of the moated manor site at Harding's Field, Chalgrove, Oxon is now on show at 46 Hythe Bridge Street. Visitors are welcome from 9.00 - 5.30 Mondays to Fridays. This is the same exhibition that was used at the Chalgrove Open Day.

MEMBERS OF THE OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT WOULD LIKE TO WISH ALL OUR NEWSLETTER READERS A VERY MERRY XMAS & A HAPPY NEW YEAR FOR 1980.

REMINDER

Please send your annual subscription of £1.50 to the Secretary, 46 Hythe Bri Street, Oxford OX1 2EP if you have not yet done so. Thank you.

FARMOOR REPORT - SPECIAL OFFER

George Lambrick and Mark Robinson's report, "Iron Age and Roman riverside settlements at Farmoor, Oxfordshire" has now been published as the second in the Unit's monograph series of major excavation reports. It provides the first thorough archaeological and biological analysis of the Iron Age and Roman riverside landscape and farming pattern. An early Iron Age settlement on dry ground was succeeded around 120 BC by short-lived seasonal farmsteads on the floodplain practising specialized pastoral agriculture. In the Roman period a more permanent field system and small farmyard were established in which pastoral agriculture was still the principle concern.

152 pp; 41 Figs; 14 pls.

Price £18

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