



OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER INCLUDING
OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

Vol VII, No. 1 - January 1980

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

In order to keep Newsletter subscription rates as low as possible, the Newsletter will now be coming out bi-monthly. This is a result of increases in postage and printing during the past year. The Calendar of dates for your diary will, however, be kept up to date.

If any subscribers have not yet paid their subscriptions would they please send their cheques for £1.50 made payable to the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit, to the Secretary at the above address.

H A P P Y N E W Y E A R

OXFORDSHIRE

Checkendon, the Devil's Churchyard

R A Chambers reports that SOAG have now finished excavation on this site for the winter although some recording remains to be completed. Iron Age domestic debris has now come from all of the excavated sections. The finds await processing.

Fencott, Ivy Farm

R A Chambers reports that dredging to enlarge the channel of the River Ray on Otmoor has revealed wooden piles for a bridge on the line of the Roman main road that runs north-south between the two Oxfordshire Roman towns of Alchester and Dorchester-on-Thames. Two piles were withdrawn almost intact by the dredging bucket and were hefty timbers each sawn approximately 0.4 m (1 ft. 4 ins.) square and each with a carefully painted end originally 1.3 m long.

Apparently three more piles remain submerged in the river bed marking the position of the bridge which lies exactly on the line of the Roman road as recorded by the Rev. Hussey nearly a century ago when the road could be traced more easily across Otmoor. The Reverend includes a description of a stoney ford over a small brook near Merton which probably refers to road metalling that originally surfaced the bridge and which had ended up in the river as the bridge decayed with age. There is a local tradition that much of

this stone was taken to build a wall by the pub at Merton nearby.

North of this bridge the Roman road appears to follow a slight agger and to the south the road passes over a slight rise called "Street Hill", a name which may stem from the presence of the road in the Anglo-Saxon period.

At present the two piles are secured to stakes to prevent them from being washed away by flood water but it is hoped that it will soon be possible to take dendrochronological samples to confirm a date for the bridge and also to provide further data for establishing a dendrochronological sequence for this area.

I would like to acknowledge Mr Cooper of Ivy Farm for reporting this find and for all his subsequent help.

Goring on Thames, Parish Church of St Thomas of Canterbury

The Goring Local History Society under the direction of Mr French has now completed a record of the memorials in the post 1941 graveyard.

Launton, Manor Farm

The Launton Local History Society has watched land drainage trenches being laid across pasture close to the west and south of the medieval parish church. All of the land is covered with well pronounced ridge and furrow from the pre-enclosure open field system. No trace of the Anglo-Saxon or of the medieval village site has so far been found. A full analysis of finds from the very extensive land-drainage programme will be undertaken later.

Launton, Graveyard Survey

The Launton Society has now finished recording the graveyard memorials in the Parish Churchyard. Mrs P Tucker has pointed out that by constant reference to the burials register the number of errors which the group found in the memorial inscriptions was suprisingly high. The group is now busy indexing this information before embarking on further village documentary research.

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

Beneath the post medieval ditch silts described in the last newsletter, the main trench came down to vestiges of medieval silt layers which had esczped re-cutting against the outer city wall. Ultimately the whole depth of the wall was exposed and this could be seen alongside the curved outline of a bastion in the south east corner of the site, exposed by Nick Palmer and the OUMS. Unfortunately it was not possible to show whether the bastion was of the same build as the wall, because of a concrete stanchion of the recent garage, but there is little doubt that it was medieval and this is a significant advance in understanding this outer defence.

The new excavation failed to help in dating the construction of the outer wall itself, and the results must be seen in conjunction with previous excavations on this line at St Helen's Passage (Nick Palmer, Oxoniensia 1976, 148-160) and New College (R G Hunter and E M Jope, Oxoniensia 1951, 28-41). With Trench II of the New College excavation

we now have a discontinuous drawn section over 17 m long from the main city wall. When the pottery and soil samples have been processed it may be possible to show that the outer wall was built actually in the early medieval ditch, and infilled behind to create a stone-faced terrace, presumably topped with a crenelated wall. BGD

Upper Thames Survey

Work on the survey has revealed a number of new sites. Several sites of interest have been examined.

A new causewayed enclosure has been discovered in Burford, Upton and Signet. Surface examination has yielded some worked flint. A possible long barrow has been spotted on aerial photographs about 500m east of the causeway enclosure and has been observed in the field as a low mound.

A large moated site has been discovered from aerial photographs in Bruern parish. The site has a large ditch and apparent bank. It bears close resemblance to Knowlbury - a supposed Iron Age hill fort in north Oxfordshire. The site was examined as a potential hill fort and quite an amount of early medieval pottery was observed. Its situation, half way down a steep hill, and the size and nature of its defences are peculiar. The site is under intensive cultivation and should be surveyed before it becomes more denuded. (R Hingley)

CALENDAR

16 January: Mr Humphrey Case - 'The Earliest Agricultural Settlement in the Oxford Area' (Abingdon Archaeological & Historical Society, John Mason School, Wootton Road, Abingdon at 7.30 pm).

19 January: Christopher Stanley - 'A building material for seven thousand years - the history of concrete' (2.45 pm in Lecture Theatre No. 3, London Road, Reading University - Berkshire Archaeological Society).

19-20 January: Certificate Weekend II - Aerial Photography

21-25 January: Planning and Conservation in Rural Areas - in association with Oxford Polytechnic.

25-27 January: Hillforts in Britain and Europe - in association with the Institute of Archaeology

(Further details of the above 3 courses are available from the Course Secretary, Rewley House, 3-7 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA).

1 February: John Steane: 'The Historical Development of the Landscape during the Middle Ages in the Chilterns' (Chinnor Historical & Archaeological Society, 8 pm - venue not yet finalised. Please contact Mr J M Bell, 71 Oakley Road, Chinnor (Tel: Kingston Blount 52459) for details).

2-3 February: Art and Religion in Roman Britain (further details from Rewley House, 3-7 Wellington Square, Oxford).

- 6 February: Dr Derek Keene, 'Reconstructing Medieval Cities' - public meeting at 5.30 pm in Ashmolean Museum (OAHM).
- 15-17 February: The Study of Farm Buildings (further details from Rewley House, 3-7 Wellington Square, Oxford).
- 19 February: Mr John Mays on 'History of Chair-making in Bucks' (Henley Archaeological & Historical Group, 7.45 pm in The Chantry House, Henley).
- 20 February: Dr Ann Kendall, 'The Cusichaca Project, Peru (Abingdon Area Archaeological & Historical Society, 7.30 pm at John Mason School, Wootton Road, Abingdon).
- 4 March: Kennet and Avon Canal (Henley Archaeological & Historical Group, 7.45 pm in The Chantry House, Henley).
- 8-9 March: Certificate Weekend III - Documents.
- 10-14 March: Planning and Conservation in Urban Areas - in association with Oxford Polytechnic.
- 14-16 March: 3rd Century Problems.
- 15 March: Current Work in the History and Archaeology of the Banbury Region - to be held at Banbury.
- (For further details of the above 4 courses, please contact the Course Secretary, Dept for External Studies, Rewley House, 3-7 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA).
- 19 March: Mr M Aston, 'Landscape Archaeology' (Abingdon Area Archaeological & Historical Society, 7.30 pm at John Mason School, Wootton Road, Abingdon).

EXTENSION LECTURES

- | OXFORD | The Archaeology of Oxfordshire |
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| Gulbenkian Lecture Theatre
St Cross Building, Manor Road. | 7.30 - 9.30 pm |
| 15 January: | Paleolithic Oxfordshire by D Roe |
| 22 January: | Neolithic Oxfordshire by H Case |
| 29 January: | Bronze Age Oxfordshire by R Bradley |
| 5 February: | Iron Age Oxfordshire by D Miles |
| 12 February: | Roman Oxfordshire by C Young |
| 19 February: | Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire (to be arranged) |
| 26 February: | Medieval Oxford by T G Hassall |
| 4 March: | Rural Archaeology of Medieval Oxfordshire by R T Rowley |

(For further details of the above lectures please contact the Course Secretary, Dept for External Studies, Rewley House, 3-7 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA).