



OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER INCLUDING
OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

Vol VII, No. 2 - March 1980

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.

OXFORDSHIRE

Fencott, Ivy Farm

Since the discovery of the presence of a timber bridge was reported in the last Newsletter the River Ray has dropped considerably with the dry weather to reveal the stumps of several more bridge timbers in situ. A complete line of four vertical timbers which supported the main part of the bridge have been exposed in the south bank of the river indicating a bridge width of 4.0 - 4.5m. Also the point of a main supporting timber has been retrieved from the river bed, unfortunately not in its original position, bringing the total number of massive, main timber supports, including the two described in the January Newsletter, to seven. Although two lines of smaller timbers have also now been recorded, one on the north bank and one on the south bank, possibly torevet the low ramps that probably led up to each end of the bridge. Too little remains to indicate whether the surviving line of main supporting timbers was originally one of two or three lines.

Black silts around the base of the bridge which survived the recent widening of the river bed contain many wood chippings and off-cuts suggesting that if these came from the construction of the bridge then this part of the river, which was then slightly narrower than at present, was also heavily overgrown, the weed preventing the wood from floating away downstream.

N.B. Those of you who were surprised to read in the last Newsletter that the ends of the timbers were 'painted' please note that they were really only 'pointed'!

Launton

The Launton Local History Society who watched land drainage trenches for any pottery that may have been exposed in the up-cast have now identified the results of their field work. The assemblages included evidence for both later Medieval and also for a previously unknown Romano-British settlement.

Oxford, Blackfriars

Recent excavations on the site of the Dominican Priory in Oxford, following on from trenches dug last autumn have shown that there was reredorter added to the south-west corner of the main cloister, which incorporated a drain leading into a large culvert which ran southwards alongside a range of domestic buildings to the river. Evidence was also found of a little cloister added to the south range of the great cloister. This began as a simple quadrangle with a path round the inside before having a proper cloister walk added in two stages. The reredorter went out of use in the 14th century, but the sequence of subsequent floors and the nature of the later building awaits more detailed study of the results of the excavation, though large quantities of fish bones, including sturgeon, are potentially most interesting. Biological material from the drains will also be studied. Finds included a curious wooden disc (possibly for twisting rope?) from the waterlogged culvert, and good groups of pottery from beneath the reredorter, sealed by a silver penny of c. 1247 or earlier. This must represent the earliest occupation material of the Priory since building did not commence until 1236 and the Friars did not formally move into their new home until 1245.

Oxford, Bulwarks Lane

Ian Williams of the University Archaeological Society has been excavating on the site of recent cottages prior to redevelopment by St. Peters College. This is an area of waste owned by the town since the 13th century which Jope assumed was the site of an earthen rampart used after the castle had been set out (D.B. Harden (ed) Dark Age Britain (1956) 243). It could even have been the line of a Saxon rampart respecting the ditch found at the former Boys High School to the north in 1978. This turned out to be wishful thinking however, with 12th-13th century floors and pits overlying 11th century fill on the natural ground surface, suggesting that if there was a defence here it was further to the west.

Oxford, Salvage Sites (Catte Street; Clarks Row; 1-7 New Inn Hall Street; Paradise Street; Thames Street; Trinity Cottage)

In the past two months useful observations have been made on six contractors sites in the City. The Engineers Department has had three new manholes constructed in Catte Street, one of which showed a 12th century cellar partly under the road. A second showed primary road metalling on the old topsoil, similar to that seen in the High Street and Castle Street. This raises the possibility that Catte Street was laid out with the axial roads of the late Saxon burh, although it has long been assumed that this was outside the original defences and it is difficult to see why it should have been so carefully metalled.

On a less elevated plane, it was reported that a culvert 20 metres long had been found under Clarks House (Clarks Row, off St. Aldates) on the line of the Blackfriars Mill Stream. It was 2.5 metres wide with a very flat vault, with the three-storey wall of the house bearing on the centre of the vault! This would not have been so surprising if it was a forgotten culvert of the medieval Priory, but George Lambrick agrees (reluctantly) that the whole thing is 19th century. Clarks House must originally have had two small stone bridges for access, after which the rest of the stream was culverted, and by 1850 the house had extended halfway over it.

The redevelopment of 1-7 New Inn Hall Street and the Baptists Chapel has so far produced only the tops of post medieval pits to the rear, though the sewer connection promises to give a useful section into Saxon levels.

A length of new drain along Paradise Street showed a cobbled road surface at a depth of 1.35m, probably 12th century and not necessarily the earliest surface on a road which was presumably erected after the building of the castle.

The new traffic circulation system at Thames Street exposed the watercourse which on Agas' map divides the meadow south of the Trill Mill Stream, and which formed the line of the former Friars Street. The pottery suggested it was infilled in the 17th century.

Lastly, the exposing of Durham Quad at Trinity College showed a spread of mortar just above the original topsoil, 0.35m below ground level, which may be tenuous evidence of the cloister of the Benedictine monastic Durham College which was suppressed in 1544.

Ramsden, Brize Lodge

The site of a Roman villa has been discovered in Ramsden parish. Survey work is currently being undertaken by Basil Turton, R.A. Chambers and Robert White, an in-service trainee, to assess the status, extent and degree of plough damage on the site. Several enclosures centred approximately half a mile to the north, presumably of a late Iron Age or Roman date, have been noted from aerial photographs taken by the Unit in 1976.

Wallingford - Brewery Site, Goldsmiths Lane

More deep holes dug by the contractors have provided another opportunity to observe the surviving stratification on the site. Examination showed that the material in section was a continuation of levels already noted on previous occasions with the exception of two deep (2m plus) later post-Medieval rubbish pits. Again no Medieval pottery was found.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Fairford/Lechlade, Claydon Pike

Excavations on the Iron Age features have continued since the New Year under Simon Palmer. The subrectangular enclosure 28m x 24m (mentioned in the December issue) contained a single large hut, evidenced by a penannular drainage gully (14m in diameter) two large entrance posts and three hearths. The main enclosure also contained two arcs of gully with several associated postholes loosely interpreted as workshops or work areas.

Outside and postdating the enclosure the second hut site has now been excavated. Preliminary interpretation suggests an initial phase of drainage gully and posthole circle which were partially overlaid by the second phase floor of disturbed stone cobbles. This floor also delimited the actual wall line over several metres c. 30cm inside the later drainage gully.

The third hut complex, again outside the enclosure, consisted of a penannular drainage gully (10m in diameter) inset entrance posts and a semicircular

annex attached by a short length of gully to the south.

Two more enclosures have now been stripped c. 100m to the west. Both are c. 20m in diameter and have entrance causeways to the east. Signs of occupation are only apparent in one but the cropmarks suggest further areas of settlement in the near vicinity. It is hoped that a full geophysical survey will define these features.

An area of Roman trackway at its junction with an old stream bed has also been stripped. Here there are signs that the trackway surface and ditches lie sealed under later alluvial deposits.

Although work now has temporarily drawn to a halt the excavation of these new areas will start in the near future - volunteers who have their own transport are particularly welcome.

UNIT NEWS

Sarah Richardson, the Unit's Secretary, has recently left to take up a new post with Ind Coope. She has been replaced by Lindsay Donaghy.

CALENDAR

23rd March	CBA Group 9 Annual Report Meeting
29th March	The Romans in the S.E. Midlands - to be held at Aylesbury
18th-20th April	Recent Work on Wills and Inventories
2nd-4th May	The Environment of Man - to be held in association with the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit
10th May	Archaeology of Berkshire - to be held at Bulmershe College, Reading
19th-22nd May	Rural Land Management - in association with Oxford Polytechnic

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



Your Ref.

My Ref.

March 1980

To be circulated to Local History & Archaeological Societies.

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Unit, in association with the Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society, will be organising a meeting at which the Unit, archaeological groups and societies, and individuals can report on local archaeology particularly, but not exclusively, rescue archaeology. It is intended that this meeting should complement the Council for British Archaeology Group IX meetings and the proposed new Oxfordshire Local History Association.

The meeting will take place on Saturday, 31st May 1980 at the Gulbenkian Lecture Theatre, St. Cross Building, St. Cross Road, Oxford between 2.0 and 6.0 p.m. I would be grateful if you could complete the attached sheet and return it to me as soon as possible even if the answers are 'No'. If you have any comments or queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

T.G. Hassall
Director

Please return to : Mr. T.G. Hassall, 46 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford
as soon as possible and certainly not later than 12th April 1980.

Name of Society or Individual : _____

I/We would be interested in attending the
Reports Meeting on 31st May 1980 YES/NO

I/We have been involved in the following archaeological projects
during the year :

I/We would like to :

(a) Present a short talk. YES/NO
If 'YES' please give name of Speaker
and Title of Talk :

(b) Have table space for a display. YES/NO
If 'YES' please give approximate
space required :

I/We would be available on 31st May 1980 YES/NO

If you are a Society and the answer is 'YES' approximately how many
members of your group might wish to attend :

Other Comments (e.g. Themes for General Discussion) :