



OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER INCLUDING
OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

Vol VII, No. 5 - September 1980

Anyone wishing to send contributions to the Newsletter should send details to the above address before Friday, 17th October 1980, for inclusion in the next issue.

OXFORDSHIRE

Deddington, Ilbury deserted medieval village

During July, whilst bulldozing a hedge into its accompanying broad ditch to amalgamate two small enclosures, one known as Ilbury Close, the farmer Mr. Pauling noticed an unusual amount of rubble and some pottery. Mr. Pauling contacted Richard Chambers who identified both the pottery and the site as Medieval and probably as that of the lost village of Ilbury.

A thorough survey of the site revealed a scatter of medieval pottery extending 100m along the bulldozed hedge line and also northwards for 100m. The broad ditch into which the hedgerow was bulldozed turned out to be a medieval access road serving some of the buildings from which the pottery came. Although the Ordnance Survey map gives no indication of this former road it is shown on the Inclosure Award map of 1808. On this map the enclosure on the northern side is named in the Award as "Ilbury Close" and both it and another enclosure on the southern side are described as "Old Inclosures".

The first record of Ilbury is found in the Domesday book. After 1306 the village was not large enough to be taxed separately and so was taxed with Duns Tew as in 1327 or Nether-Worton as in 1334. There is mention of six houses and open field land in 1316. By the early 15th century the manor was held by a wool merchant and the final depopulation of the village undoubtedly resulted from a change over from arable to sheep farming. By the 16th century the only building remaining appears to have been the mill and in the middle of the following century there is a reference to "Ilbury Pastures".

The present Ilbury Farm lies half a mile to the north-west of the site and belongs to the 20th century. It replaced an earlier farm of which something still remains on a piece of rough land called "Ilbury Common" which lies some 300 yards south-east of the present farm.

Enstone - Over and Nether Chalfords deserted medieval settlements

Richard Chambers reports that during a field trip to this site by members of the Kidlington archaeology day class, Roman period pottery was discovered in disturbed ground by a gateway some 100m east of Old Chalford farm.

Great Coxwell

In the parish church of St. Giles the reflooring of the nave has recently provided an opportunity for a limited archaeological investigation of the Norman church and also to search for any previous church structure.

The south-east quadrant of the nave was excavated by parishoners under the guidance of Richard Chambers. The south-west quarter of the nave had been excavated one month previously by Mr. M. Stone.

The results of the excavation of the south-east quarter can be divided up into several phases. The removal of the Victorian floor boards showed the floor joists to have been laid in the joist impressions of an earlier wooden floor itself laid to facilitate the installation of box pews in the 18th century.

Prior to the laying of the wooden floor, a layer of soil had been spread over the nave floor probably to level up the uneven surface below. A grave had been dug through this layer proving that at least a short time had elapsed between the spreading of the soil and the introduction of the box pews.

Beneath the soil spread lay the well trodden floor of the Norman church. This floor which survived throughout much, if not all of the medieval period, comprised merely the soil of the pre-church ground surface well compressed, worn and uneven through use. Thin layers of decomposed sandy mortar and small chips of building stone from building work still covered this floor, the stone partly trodden into the surface. On this floor in front of the position now occupied by the organ a heat-reddened area was uncovered which marked the site of a small furnace. Both the furnace and a patch of lime indicating the spot where some plaster or mortar was mixed were both remains of Norman or medieval building activity. Five large post holes equally spaced and each close to the inside edge of the nave wall appeared to belong to the wooden scaffolding for the building of the original Norman church.

It has been assumed throughout this work that the foundations upon which the largely rebuilt nave walls stand are Norman by association with surviving 12th century architectural features. However it has not been possible to date the earliest floor level or these foundations directly by archaeological techniques. However, archaeologically it is clear that the nave foundations upon which the present walls are built represent the earliest stone building on this site.

Kidlington, Moat Cottage

A third season of excavation has begun on this site which lies at the edge of the former cow common, one mile from the parish church and medieval village. It is hoped that this year trenches dug under the supervision of Ian Meadows will provide further information about the medieval buildings.

Kirtlington

Following notification from the Southern Electricity Board a watching brief was maintained near the allotments close to Castle Lane whilst trenches were dug for new electric cables. No archaeological material was observed.

Oxford, Lincoln College Rectory garden, vaulted cellar

An area of the rector's garden subsided in May, and revealed a stone vault with a span of at least 2.60m. It was largely filled with earth so its full extent could not be assessed, but it had partition walls to north and south. Presumably it was related to the seventeenth-century building shown by Loggan extending back from All Saints churchyard.

Oxford, 21 Longwall Street, the City Ditch

A series of six foundation trenches were observed along the back of the former garage building. Together they provide a discontinuous oblique section across the outer part of the ditch, which can be projected onto the section published in the recent annual report. The main fill was almost devoid of finds, but it seems probably that this was still the civil war recut seen previously. The northern two bases however showed two footings of a stone building founded on at least 2.50m of medieval fill which had not been cleared out in the seventeenth century. So the civil war recut, though very deep, may have been modest in width by comparison with the medieval ditch.

Oxford, 31-34 St. Clements

This site, to be redeveloped for shops and flats, has laid open for some time, and the opportunity was taken to remove a cellar wall to look at the stratification. A ditch running on a SW-NE line produced post-medieval pottery and may be part of the civil war star-work shown in this area on de Gomme's map. In the admittedly limited area there was no evidence of medieval building on this suburban site close to the London road. This is much the same picture as seen previously on the other side of the road beside the Old Black Horse, and prompts the thought that there may have been some revision of the road layout here, possibly just after the Civil War.

Oxford, St. Helens Passage, outer town wall

Salvage work by Nick Palmer and Brian Durham on the site of Hertford College's new quadrangle has provided a 14m long section across the outer wall and into the later ditch. At last there is some dating evidence, two sherds, which put the building of the outer wall into the second half of the thirteenth century, later than the presumed date of the main wall. These sherds tilt the balance in favour of the outer wall being a later addition to the main stone defences, and hence the likelihood that this was indeed a curtain wall, rather than a defended terrace in other words, Palmer one : Durham nil!

Radley - Peripheral Road

The construction of a peripheral road round the new Barton Court Farm Estate has now begun. At the time of writing it appears that the route will not affect any of the unexcavated barrow burials on Barrow Hills even though the road will pass within inches of one barrow. The construction of this road will provide an opportunity to examine in more detail a part of the landscape surrounding the

Barton Court Roman villa. Members of the Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society will maintain a watch over the topsoil stripping which is expected to expose further Romano-British settlement features.

Stanton Harcourt, Dix Pit

More of the early Romano-British and possibly late Iron Age site described in the last newsletter has been uncovered by topsoil clearance. Part of a trackway bordered by roadside ditches and a short length of ditch filled with burnt daub have been recorded by Geoff Williams and Richard Chambers.

Thrupp

Excavation and recording has been completed on the large penannular feature. An enclosed area abutting to this is now under excavation (feature 28). The gully is 0.40m at its widest point and nowhere deeper than 0.25m with an irregular base showing indications of root/post holes. In plan the enclosure is oval, 13m across the NW axis, with apparent openings at the NW and NE. The interior area so far stripped has revealed a series of irregular hollows of orange/red loam fill and a pit 1.25m dia. containing Mid Iron Age pottery and burnt cobbles. Feature 28 is interpreted as a cattle enclosure/storage compound surrounded by wattle fence or hedge.

J. Wallis and G. Jones - Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society.

Uffington, White Horse Hill

In recent months the National Trust has continued its conservation work at White Horse Hill. The Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments has also been repairing erosion on the White Horse itself. In doing this some of the edges of the figure are being made solid and turfed. It was felt that a detailed survey should be carried out to record the minor variations in the ground level in case any of these should be lost during the restoration work.

The date and previous shape of the Horse has been the subject of much argument. In spite of Diana Woolner's authoritative article (The White Horse, Uffington Transactions of the Newbury and District Field Club XI, No. 3, 1975, 27-44) the shape of the horse - beaked and segmented is still used as an argument in favour of an Iron Age date. It was felt that a detailed survey was not only needed for the record and to aid conservation, but also to provide detailed evidence for the evolution of this most contentious of equine shapes.

Three concurrent surveys were carried out on the weekend of 2nd August. A resistivity survey was done by Basil Turton over approximately half the horse; Alan Hardy, Peter Rooke and Richard Hingley contour surveyed the same area, Nick Griffiths produced a hachured interpretation plan of the whole horse. It is hoped to complete the survey later in the autumn. The provisional results seem to indicate that considerable changes have taken place to the shape of the White Horse, in particular around the head. The beak is the most suspicious aspect of the beast, part of it is cut over a redeposited mound of soil. A hollowed area possibly indicates a larger original head. The body may also have been much wider, but further work on the resistivity data is needed before this can be confirmed or denied.

Wallingford, St. Martin's Street, Regal Forecourt

The site is being dug by TWHAS with assistance from Brian Durham of the Unit. Trial trenching had shown that there was the chance of Saxon stratigraphy, but not surprisingly in an area behind the main frontage there turned out to be a lot of post-medieval disturbance. The seventeenth-century horizon was quite interesting with a shallow ?cellar, a cess pit with an intermediate floor supported by an arch of tiles, and a large area of tile-on-edge paving, assumed to be a large hearth. A certain amount of medieval stratigraphy survived, taking the sequence back to the eleventh century, with more to go. Lastly, there is a square Saxon pit with a thick lining of clay-with-flints, leaving a circular central shaft, which promises to be very interesting provided it can be excavated safely.

Wroxton St. Mary, Barn Lodge

In August 1979 a collection of human bones was discovered reburied beneath the earth floor of a barn the undergoing redevelopment for domestic occupation (O.A.U. Newsletter no. 8, August 1979). At that time the original source of the bones was not apparent. However it has recently been discovered that the barn was built over part of a late Romano-British cemetery. It is probable that the bones from the floor of the barn belonged to burials disturbed during the construction of the building.

During the last two months reduction of the ground surface to the south and west of the barn has exposed several burials. Two of these had been buried still wearing their jewellery of bronze and shale bracelets. One of these two, an adult, had been decapitated with the head placed between the legs. This unusual practice has been found in other excavated Romano-British cemeteries in southern and central England, locally at Bloxham dug in 1936. One suggestion frequently offered to explain this type of grave is that decapitation may have resulted from a belief that the spirit of the deceased could be prevented from haunting the living. It has also been argued that some beheaded burials may have resulted from the belief that by ritual killing the life force of one person could be transferred to another individual. Roman religion and native cult beliefs were complex and more well-preserved examples need to be excavated for a better understanding of this practice.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Fairford/Lechlade, Claydon Pike

The excavation of the second 'island' of Middle Iron Age occupation was completed with the help of the STEP scheme. About a dozen round houses were located on the gravel island which was partly bounded by an iron age drainage ditch.

A Unit training excavation took place in the adjacent field to the west, in Fairford parish, on the site of the Romano-British settlement. The students included members of the Dept. of External Studies' Certificate course and Young Rescue. A trench was opened up on the edge of one of the building platforms. It contained a spread of cobbling and building material occupied into the fourth century. At that time a large oval enclosure ditch was cut through it. Beneath the cobbling a number of early Romano-British pits were found and also a late Iron Age or early Romano-British circular structure. The area also produced a stone lined well, 2m deep containing large quantities of bone and some waterlogged

biological material. Pottery suggested a fourth century date. The excavation has temporarily ceased but it is hoped to continue with a Project Based Work Experience Scheme which is currently being considered by the Manpower Services Commission. In the meantime processing of the previous year's work has begun. The most interesting discovery, by Elaine Morris of Southampton University, has been of a number of fragments of mid Iron Age briquetage from the salt production centre at Droitwich. There are also a few sherds of Malvern wares. This must be one of the most distant find spots for these ceramics and the first evidence that the medieval salt route to Lechlade has such early origins.

UNIT NEWS

George Lambrick, one of the Unit's Field Officers, has recently got married and we would like to wish him and his wife every happiness for the future.

CALENDAR

The Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology's Autumn Conference and AGM will be held at Trinity College, Oxford 26th-28th September. Non-members of the society are welcome to attend the conference on payment of the appropriate fee to John Ashdown, 53 Bainton Road, Oxford OX2 7AG, telephone Oxford 55133 (evenings). The Conference includes various visits and the following talks :

Friday, 26th September 1980

8.00 p.m. The Archaeology of Oxford and its Region; T.G. Hassall

Saturday, 27th September 1980

9.15 a.m. Post-medieval Oxford : the Historical Background; Alan Crossley
10.15 a.m. Oxfordshire Museums' Brick and Pottery Project; John Rhodes
10.45 a.m. Post-medieval Ceramics at Brill, Buckinghamshire; Michael Farley
11.15 a.m. Post-medieval Ceramics Found in Oxford; Maureen Mellor
11.30 a.m. Visit on foot to the Ashmolean Museum to see special display and to the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit to see ceramic groups.

Sunday, 28th September 1980

9.30 a.m. The Buildings of Post-medieval Oxfordshire; Malcolm Airs
10.30 a.m. Post-medieval Brickwork in Oxfordshire; Sarah Gosling
11.10 a.m. Post-medieval Houses in Oxford and their Decorative Features; Julian Mumby
11.50 a.m. The Historic Buildings of Oxford; John Ashdown.

Details of courses in Archaeology and Local History 1980-1 run by the Department for External Studies. The full programme can be obtained from the Course Secretary, OUDES, Rewley House, 3-7 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA. Courses starting in Oxford include Certificate Courses in British Archaeology and

Local History, Field Archaeology, Landscape History, Vernacular Architecture and the Archaeological Workshop. The latter course is designed to allow advanced students to pursue their own research topics under the guidance of the Director and staff of the Unit. Those interested in attending should apply to the Unit.

Weekend and Day schools organised by OUDES are as follows :

10th-12th October 1980	Archaeology and Structural Reconstruction
18th October 1980	Archaeology and History of Otmoor - day school to be held at Kidlington
1st-2nd November 1980	Local History Certificate Weekend I
8th November 1980	Church and Chapel Records for Local Historians - first of 4 linked day schools
14th-16th November 1980	Medieval Forests, Parks and Woodlands
21st-23rd November 1980	History, Custom and Folklore
29th November 1980	Small Finds and the Archaeologist - day school to be held at the Department of Nuclear Physics
5th-7th December 1980	Buckinghamshire 1600-1900 - to be held at Missenden Abbey
6th December 1980	Local History Linked Day School II
12th-14th December 1980	Historic Rural Landscape Management - to be held at New College in association with Historic Landscapes Steering Group
9th-11th January 1981	Rural Settlement in Roman Britain - to be held at New College in association with the CBA
10th January 1981	Church and Society in the Middle Ages - day school to be held at Bulmershe College
10th-11th January 1981	The Study of Placenames
17th-18th January 1981	Archaeology Certificate Weekend I
23rd-25th January 1981	Archaeology of Brittany
31st January 1981	Local History Linked Day School III
7th February 1981	Publishing Local Studies - day school
14th-15th February 1981	Ancient Gemstones
28th February-1st March 1981	Local History Certificate Weekend II
13th-15th March 1981	Archaeology of Mycenae
21st March 1981	CBA Group 9 Annual Report Meeting - day school
28th March 1981	Local History Linked Day School IV
3rd-5th April 1981	Medieval Water Management
24th-26th April 1981	Industrial Archaeology
27th-30th April 1981	Planning and the Historic Environment
15th-17th May 1981	Urban Archaeology - in association with Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit.

Chinnor Historical and Archaeological Society - Programme for 1980/81

Meetings are usually held on the first Friday of each month at the Adult Education Room, Chinnor Library Block, Station Road, Chinnor at 8.0 p.m.

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| 5th September 1980 | Evelyn Gibbs : Oral History in Chinnor |
| 3rd October 1980 | Richard Chambers : After the Romans - a Dark Age Landscape? |
| 7th November 1980 | Eric Harmsworth : Chinnor in the Past |
| 5th December 1980 | Reports from the Work Parties and General Society Business |
| 9th January 1981 | Malcolm Graham : The Local History Department of the County Library |
| 6th February 1981 | John Bell : Symon Howlett, Yeoman of Emmington |
| 6th March 1981 | ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING followed by Reports from the Work Parties and the film '24 Square Miles' |
| 3rd April 1981 | John Blair : Some Recent Work on Medieval Buildings in Oxfordshire |
| 1st May 1981 | John Davis : The Australian Connection |
| 5th June 1981 | Reports from the Work Parties and General Society Business |
| 3rd July 1981 | Open Air Meeting, details to be confirmed later |

For details of membership, please contact the Hon. Secretary

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