



OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER INCLUDING
OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

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Anyone wishing to send contributions to the Newsletter should send details to the above address before Friday, 21st August.

OXFORDSHIRE

Charney Bassett, Cherbury Camp

Field work by Richard Hingley produced about 50 sherds including probable early and middle Iron Age pottery.

Checkendon, The Devil's Churchyard

Richard Chambers reports that the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group has begun a survey to provide topographical sections across the enclosure earthworks at selected points. The excavation of the final trench across the outer earthwork continues under the supervision of Mrs. Graham-Kerr.

Didcot, Link Road

Richard Chambers reports that topsoil stripping has now begun on the line of the Didcot Link Road. Dr. Alan Briggs and members of the Didcot & District Archaeological & Historical Society are keeping a watch for archaeological material.

Didcot, The Rectory

Dr. Alan Briggs has begun further small-scale excavations on this site to try and gain more information on the early-mid Iron Age occupation site discovered here last year and reported in the last Newsletter.

Dorchester, Bypass

Prior excavations of the cursus, associated prehistoric sites and the Romano-British cemetery has now drawn to a close. Construction work will begin on the by-pass early in July.

Four separate sites have been examined. Site one contained the terminal of the cursus. This comprised a shallow ditch with only one dateable artefact, an oblique flint arrow head in the upper fill. The arrow head suggests a late Neolithic date for this linear monument. The excavation of the circular feature thought to be a small henge-type enclosure sited off centre within the cursus terminal provided few finds. Fortunately an antler pick was discovered on top of the primary gravel

filling this feature from which it is hoped to obtain a radio-carbon date. The ditch forming this monument was allowed to silt up for a long time. Later the central mound became the focus for a small cremation cemetery. Although a burnt flint blade accompanied one of the cremations radio-carbon dating will be necessary to fix the date of this cremation cemetery with more certainty. The latest feature on site one was the Romano-British inhumation cemetery from which nearly eighty burials have been excavated and the outline of other graves planned. The bone comb reported in the last Newsletter remains the only dateable grave good discovered.

Sites two, three and four lay to the south-west of the Drayton Road. Site two comprised a pit cut by a later ditch which, from cropmark evidence appears to have once formed a rectangular enclosure. The pit provided several tooth crowns and some small pieces of bone and a flint scraper. The later ditch appears to have been Romano-British.

Site three provided much excitement. The cropmark showed a circle of large pits some 20m in diameter. Excavation disclosed that each pit had contained a wooden post, the whole site forming a Wood Henge type monument. Later each of the posts appears to have been burnt down. In three cases the burning continued down to the very bottom leaving a clear deposit of charcoal preserving the shape of the posts and demonstrating that in each case a whole oak tree trunk had been used. The charcoal will provide a series of radio-carbon dates.

Site four comprised an early Bronze Age ring-ditch, all that remained of a former barrow erected over a cremation burial in a shallow, centrally placed pit covered by an inverted 'collared urn'. Immediately after this primary barrow had been dug a circular annex was added. A single cremation was found within the annex although there may originally have been other cremations buried more shallowly and subsequently ploughed away.

Kingston Bagpuize, Camborough Pig Farm

Richard Hingley reports that aerial photographs in the National Monuments Record show the parish boundary as a crop mark ditch. Ground survey located the crop mark south of the Fyfield Wick to Lyford road.

Launton, The Rectory

Mrs. Pat Tucker reports that building work has commenced on this site. A large post-medieval brick drain has been discovered running through the rectory garden. As yet nothing earlier has been found. The site lies to the east of the medieval parish church. A large spread of medieval pottery was recorded during the insertion of land drains to the south of the church last year.

Mapledurham, Lilly Farm

Mrs. Graham-Kerr reports for the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group that the writing up of the moated site at Lilly Farm is progressing. This site, which turned out to be a small lodge on the estate belonging to Mapledurham House was excavated in the 1970's under the direction of the late Bill Fowler.

Oxford, Between Towns Road - Roman Kiln Site

The site is known from excavations and observations since 1936 as a production centre

for a wide range of Oxford wares from the second to fourth centuries. The foundations for a large office development promised to give running sections through large areas not accessible to previous excavations, and Brian Durham has been watching. The number of known Roman features has been increased from fourteen to thirty-one, though naturally most of the new ones were seen in section only.

In Oxoniensia Vol. 38 Chris Young considered the available evidence from the site, and suggested that it was a production centre in the late third century, but that all the earlier material was simply dumping from a site further north. The new work has shown a series of ditches on this side of the site perhaps a poorly defined boundary, and the bulk of the features are now seen to cluster against this. No new kilns were found, but two large pits full of ash and waster sherds may be stokeholes of kilns just outside the new trenches. The pit to the east (F24) was full of second century mortaria with potters' stamps (illiterate legends), and if this really is a stokehole, it is almost certainly of a second century kiln. This would mean that there was after all some early manufacture on the site, not just dumping as Young suggested.

The presumed kiln, soon to be sealed by the car park of the new offices, is unlikely to be that excavated by Atkinson in 1940 (his feature 8) which was confidently dated to third-fourth century. It may indeed be considerably more interesting, because the waster heaps in this area have in all three excavations produced mortaria stamped with VOSSULUS or VASSULUS, the only literate stamp known from an Oxford kiln, the suggested kiln may have been used by Vossulus for a period, and subsequently abandoned with the work of his illiterate successors.

Thame, St. Marys Church

The church is adding a small kitchen and toilet extension to the north aisle, and ironically it seems to be on the same spot as a previous porch, against the north door. Brian Durham reports that the contractors' excavations showed two well-built angle buttresses just below ground level. The porch may have been removed in 1838 when the north aisle wall was rebuilt, but it was probably not a counterpart to the surviving Dec. south porch because there was part of a red brick built into it. Possibly it was a circa seventeenth century replacement of a medieval porch, a few stones of which survived beyond the north-east buttress footing.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Fairford/Lechlade, Claydon Pike

This season's 'offensive' at Claydon Pike has started both dramatically and with true military force. The third 'island' of Iron Age activity, stripped last month, is currently being excavated by the Alamein Platoon of the Junior Soldiers Company of the Light Infantry Depot.

Seven more round houses have been revealed bringing the total number from the site to at least two dozen. Clay lined pits and double entrance posts are again recurrent features of these structures, several also have associated linear boundaries and large annexes.

An unusual wealth of stratigraphic relationships indicate a series of buildings rather than a single-phase settlement. The now all too familiar horrid fabrics and forms of the pottery indicate a rough contemporaneity with the previous mid Iron Age settlements

As with the other 'islands', during the Roman period, field ditches enclosed the area, adding to the already extensive field system lying adjacent to the Roman settlement. The drama came with the discovery of a hoard of bronze bowls during machining on this settlement. Topsoil removal has now virtually uncovered all of one of the platforms and the aim is to excavate it extensively this summer. Limited work so far by the army confirms the presence of late Iron Age and early Roman activity predating the trackway and enclosure system.

Lengths of wall and disturbed mortar floors, as yet unexamined, on the front of the platform indicate reasonable preservation of the later Roman structures here.

CALENDAR

Combe Mill Society demonstrate the unique working STEAM BEAM ENGINE, built in 1852, at Combe Mill, Near Woodstock. Steaming Dates for 1981 : August Bank Holiday (30th & 31st August); Sunday, 18th October - 10a.m. - 6p.m.

THE NORTH SEA PROVINCE - to be held at New College on Friday, 8th - Sunday, 10th January 1982. Oxford University Department for External Studies in association with Oxford University Institute of Archaeology are proposing to hold a weekend conference on the North Sea Province. The aim of the weekend will be to examine the North Sea as a linking phenomenon between Eastern Britain and the Low Countries, in order to bring out the similarities of social and economic development from the Neolithic to the end of the Migration period.

THE MEDIEVAL VILLAGE - 22nd - 24th January 1982 - Oxford University Department for External Studies. The aim of this course is to examine the nature of the medieval village from the viewpoint of the geographer, historian and archaeologist. The weekend has been designed to give equal weight to the analysis of the social organisation of the village and of its physical structure.

THE ROMAN ARMY IN BRITAIN - 20th-22nd November 1981 - Oxford University Department for External Studies. Research into the Roman Army remains one of the most productive areas of archaeological investigation in this country. It is the aim of this weekend course to examine recent developments in research in order to determine the direction in which Roman military studies are developing, with particular emphasis on the early phases of the invasion and the structure of the Roman army in Britain.

LATE SAXON SETTLEMENT - 13th-15th November 1981 - Oxford University Department for External Studies. Work on early Saxon settlement in the 1950s and 60s demonstrated that the development of the medieval settlement pattern is far more complicated than hitherto had been suspected. Excavation and documentary research on both town and village during the last decade has helped clarify the situation and it is the aim of this conference to see how much we are now able to understand and agree on the nature of settlement in the late Saxon period.

MEDIEVAL EXCHANGE SYSTEMS - 9th-11th October 1981 - Oxford University Department for External Studies. Archaeologists often refer to the medieval systems of exchange as a model to be applied to earlier periods, yet how much agreement is there between the scholars of various disciplines about the way in which this operated. The aim of this conference is to bring together speakers from a wide variety of viewpoints. It is anticipated that the weekend will provide an interesting and stimulating event.

WYCHWOOD: its archaeology and history - A Day School to be held at The Community Centre, New Road, Woodstock on Saturday, 17th October 1981. This large, ancient

area of forest has long had a reputation for its distinctive and separate character, not only legally as a royal hunting forest, but in its landscape, in its people and their occupation and settlements. This Day School will examine the main physical features of Wychwood and its distinctive archaeology and history.

If you would like to attend any of the above courses and conferences please contact The Course Secretary, Oxford University Department for External Studies, Rewley House, 3-7 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA.

The Evolution of Marshland Landscapes Edited by R.T. Rowley. The majority of the papers in this volume were presented to a conference on Marshland Landscapes held in Oxford in 1980. The general theme is of marshland drainage and water management in a variety of geographical contexts. It is believed that the papers will provide a valuable addition to the literature on the process of drainage and the making of the landscape. Cost - £5.00 including postage and packing (or £4.00 if collected from the Department. If you would like to receive a copy of this volume when it is available later in the year please contact The Course Secretary, Oxford University Department for External Studies, Rewley House, 3-7 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA.