

OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER
INCLUDING OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

No. 3 - March 1977

Anyone wishing to send contributions to the Newsletter should send copy to 46 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford, OX1 2EP (Tel. 43888) before the last Tuesday of each month.

ABINGDON - Stert Street

Under the direction of Michael Farrington, Alison Allden, an in-service trainee with the Unit, has been introduced to the principles of pottery analysis working on the material from this site. This involved dividing about 3000 sherds into their fabric types, according to the descriptions in Oxoniensia XV (1975) from the Broad Street Abingdon report. The fabric groups in each of the 19 contexts were counted and recorded. The sherds from one major context were weighed, for a comparative dimension. Within each context the medieval fabric groups were worked out as a percentage of the total number of sherds from that context - omitting the Romano-British pot - to allow for a comparative analysis. Alison has also been drawing pot, including handles from medieval contexts in Abingdon.

BERINSFIELD - Mount Farm

Michael Farrington reports that Amey Roadstone Corporation have commenced stripping this site before its destruction by gravel extraction. The recent bad weather however has made removal of the overburden from the site very difficult and it will be some time before any formal excavation takes place there.

DORCHESTER - Beech House Hotel site

During the past month Lisa Brown, an in-service trainee has been working on the Roman and medieval pottery from this site, excavated by Trevor Rowley in 1973. This pottery report and the site report will eventually be integrated with Richard Bradley's report of his excavation in Dorchester of the same year.

FARINGDON - Market Place

Foundation trenches for a building extension at the rear of No. 4 Market Place, has enabled Richard Chambers to examine the stratigraphy in the centre of this medieval market town. As with many of the towns in West Oxfordshire, Faringdon in the Vale is found on limestone which lies close enough to the surface for buildings to be founded directly upon it and this surface, as in other towns, was too valuable an asset for the medieval home-builder to lose it beneath debris from the structure. In such circumstances there tends to be little stratigraphy underneath building frontages. At Faringdon however, to the rear of the burgage plot there was an accumulation of post-medieval debris and several medieval cess-pits.

FARMOOR

The Farmoor report is now largely complete except for a few small specialist reports and a few alterations to the drawings. George Lambrick will send off the report to be vetted at the beginning of May.

OXFORD - The Hamel

The recording of the pottery by Maureen Mellor from the largest site yet processed in Oxford will be completed by the end of April.

Maureen Mellor attended the Annual Meeting of the MPRG at Exeter at the end of March. The lectures were primarily concerned with medieval ceramics excavated in the south-west. The guidelines for medieval pottery are now in final draft and should be circulated to members of MPRG by the end of the summer but will also be available from the Department of the Environment. The first bulletin of Medieval Ceramics will also be available by late summer. The aim of the bulletin is to include some articles on quantitative analysis, notes updating published works, contributions from the continent, etc. The first issue promises to be very good value for £1.50 and can be obtained from Miss M. Wood, 69 Devonshire Road, Palmers Green, London N13 4QW.

WESTCOTE BARTON

The insertion of a new concrete floor in the nave and south aisle of the parish church of St. Edward the Confessor, Westcote Barton, enabled Richard Chambers to excavate down to the foundations of an earlier, possibly late Saxon church. The west end of the earlier church was extended once and possibly twice forming the plan of the present building. The whole church was rebuilt from ground level in the early twelfth century with the Norman south arcade resting on the foundations of the earlier south wall.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE - Towcester

The work on writing up the final report on Towcester has now begun. The main phases are in the process of being worked out, but this is problematic because of the very disturbed nature of the stratigraphy. Almost all of the Roman material features seem to be second century in date, but the absence of later material may be the result of the site having been levelled. There is some residual late Roman pottery in the medieval pits.

Robin Symonds has completed a preliminary catalogue of the pottery from this site and is currently comparing it with the pottery of similar dates from surrounding sites, particularly those along the major and minor transport routes which cross at Towcester.

PARISH SURVEY NEWS

As stated in February's Newsletter, more copies of the new checklist are now available from the Archaeological Unit.

The new graveyard recording forms are also being copied and these will be available within a month.

The Day School on Oral History Recording held on 12th March was entirely successful and if enough requests are received another day school can be arranged for later in the year.

The programme for the Day School on 21st May in which Dr. Margaret

Gelling will talk on Place Names and Charter Boundaries has been finalised and an application form for the school has been enclosed.

OTHER NEWS ITEMS

Tania Dickinson's thesis on 'The Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites of the Upper Thames Region, and their bearing on the History of Wessex, c. A.D. 400-700' will soon be freely available in Bodley.

George Lambrick's Plough Survey booklet is still available at £1 from the Archaeological Unit (plus 15p postage and packing).

BONE REFERENCE COLLECTION

Recently John Rose offered the Unit, via Bob Wilson, carcasses of male, female and castrate goats. After much steam and bad odour at Broad Street, the skeletons are in pristine condition. As yet we do not have whole and adult skeletons of pine marten, polecat, weasel, ferret, wild cat, yellow necked mouse, harvest mouse, black rat, water vole and red and fallow deer. Some species of course are only likely to be obtained on Highland and Welsh travels, but specimens of any of the above would be very much appreciated, legally of course. For the smaller species it is only a matter of taking a large plastic bag with you on walks should you espy a road or canal-side carcass.

CALENDAR FOR APRIL AND MAY

- 15-16 April OUCES. Weekend school at the Teachers Centre, Banbury. 'The Development of Banbury in the Nineteenth Century.'
- 15-17 April OUCES. Weekend conference at Rewley House. 'The Archaeology of Mercian Towns.'
- 20 April Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society. Mr. L. Brooks. 'Local National Trust Country Houses.' John Mason School, Abingdon. 7.30 p.m.
- 21 April Oxford Geology Group. Mr. M. J. Bradshaw. 'North Oxfordshire Geology and Building Stone', Department of Geology, Parks Road, Oxford. 6.30 p.m.
- 23-24 April Seminar on 'Kilns of the Potteries'. Gladstone Pottery Museum, Stoke on Trent. Fee £7.
- 23 April South Northamptonshire Archaeological Society. Exhibition of the Archaeology of Towcester. The Sponne School, Towcester, 11.00-6.00 - admission 10p.
- 2-5 May Department of Adult Education, University of Leicester. Weekend Conference - 'Local History in a Rural Setting'.
- 6-8 May OUCES. Weekend conference. 'Coins and Archaeology.'
- 13-15 May Weekend conference on 'First Aid and Treatment for Archaeological Finds' - Knuston Hall.

- 14-15 May OUDES. Weekend conference on New Approaches to the Archaeology of Cemeteries. Rewley House.
- 18 May Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society. Mr. D. G. Vaisey. 'Shops in Victorian Oxford.' John Mason School, Abingdon. 7.30 p.m.
- 19 May Oxford Geology Group. Dr. F. B. Atkins. Short talk on minerals followed by demonstrations in the Museum. Department of Geology, Parks Road, Oxford. 6.30 p.m.
- 21 May OUDES with Parish Survey. Dr. Margaret Gelling. 'Place Names and Charter Boundaries.' Rewley House, 10.00 a.m.