

August 1976

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 - Ashville Trading Estate

The Ashville report is now substantially complete and it is hoped to send it to the C.B.A. fairly soon.

ABINGDON - Stert Street

Work continues on the Stert Street site and should be completed soon. Two medieval pits excavated recently there have both produced complete vessels, one a large pitcher with an intricate combed design, the other a cooking pot.

ABINGDON - Barton Court Farm

The excavations at Barton Court have now been completed. About two acres of ground were cleared in the area to the south and south west of the late Romano-British farmstead. Two irregular enclosures which had been added to the late Roman gridded layout in the late fourth or fifth century were completely excavated. They seemed to have functioned as animal paddocks but in the fifth century were occupied by Saxon settlers. Six sunken huts and traces of timber structures were found inside the Romano-British paddocks, with the same alignment as the Romano-British ditches. Most of the sunken huts contained evidence of textile manufacture such as spindle whorls, bone pins and loom weights. One hut had fourteen lead loom weights lying on the gravel floor and also a fine buckelurnen. A wicker lined Saxon well was cut into the base of one of the Romano-British ditches. It seems likely that in the past excavators may have interpreted such wells as storage pits.

A number of earlier prehistoric features were located, notably a Neolithic pit containing a bowl with cord impressed decoration.

The excavation continued well onto the clay slopes beyond the gravel terrace. Although drainage ditches were found, settlement was confined to the gravel.. The early Saxon settlers appear to have been squeezed into the narrow strip of dry land between the clay slope and the Romano-British farmstead.

EAST HAGBOURNE - A34

Most of the earth-moving on the route of the A34 Abingdon By-pass is now complete and one site has been located consisting of two ditches of unknown date near Hagbourne Hill and several indeterminate features.

OXFORD - The Hamel

Most of the final session was in unravelling a complex of eleventh century ditches perhaps part of a field system. The predicted Bronze Age horizon turned out to be no more than a single child-Burial, but the number of flint fragments from the backfill of this grave suggested that there must have been a settlement here; the Bronze Age surface may have been removed in later turf-stripping. This year's 'goody find' was a gold strip with decorative grooves, perhaps a mutilated Bronze Age bracelet.

Maureen Mellor has been investigating a system of computing at least 328 recognisable characteristics of the pottery finds, in the hope of spotting trends in decoration which may help with dating. She sends this message - "Would anyone be interested in helping to sort and catalogue medieval pottery from Oxford sites on Monday and Friday mornings? An organised mind is the only requirement!" (One person only initially.)

OXFORD - St. Aldates

After a lengthy pause, there has been new progress with the publication work. There is now evidence that in the fifteenth century someone had a modest trade in the stringing of psalteries and harps on the site, adding a further dimension to the well-documented 11th Structural Phase, as displayed in the exhibition 'The Buried Past Today' (see calendar).

SOUTHERN GAS FEEDER PIPELINE

Richard Chambers has spent August seconded to British Gas Pipelines Division at Basingstoke as an assistant archaeological liaison officer to Phil Catherall. He reports that the pipeline is going ahead as scheduled and that it will be clear of Oxfordshire this year. Much of his recording work so far has been on the Downs from Beeden in Berkshire to North Stoke in Oxfordshire. Many sites, including field systems, late Bronze Age settlement and round barrows, Romano-British settlements, and a good D.M.V. have been recorded and the South Oxfordshire Grim's Ditch has been shown to branch into two separate sections. On a second contract, the existence of a large Romano-British settlement has been discovered north east of the village of Chalgrove. This may well be the second such settlement discovered here this year as several crop markings have already been recorded at the western end of the village whilst flying in July.

TOWCESTER, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

At the request of the Department of the Environment with the Northamptonshire County Council the Unit has mounted a six-week rescue excavation under the direction of George Lambrick at Towcester. The decision to agree to excavate outside the County was taken by an Extraordinary Executive Committee meeting on 30th July.

Half of the six-week dig is complete. So far post-medieval cottages have been found and a number of late medieval hearths and ovens at the rear of presumed earlier houses of which no trace survived. Many medieval and post-medieval pits have disturbed earlier levels, except for a street, possibly of Roman origin, running across the site. Only small areas of Roman stratigraphy have survived, but the robber trenches and footings of fairly large Roman buildings are now emerging. Among a number of Roman pits is one which has produced a good group of largely complete c. second century pots, including Samian bowls.

CALENDAR FOR SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER

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| 4 Sep - 2 Nov | Exhibition of Oxfordshire Archaeology in Action - 'The Buried Past Today', at the Museum of Oxford, St. Aldates, Oxford. |
| 12 Sep | Meeting of members of the Oxfordshire Parish Survey; 2.15 p.m. at 46 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford. |
| 25 Sep | Local History Annual Conference - The Town Hall, Wallingford. 1.45 p.m. |
| 28 Sep | Unit staff meeting. |
| 12 Oct | OUDES - Lecture by R. J. Bradley. 'Introduction: Sites and site territories' 8.15 p.m. Helwys Hall, Regents Park College, Pusey Street, Oxford. |
| 19 Oct | OUDES - Lecture by R. J. Bradley. 'Artefacts and Activities' - 8.15 p.m. Helwys Hall, Regents Park College. |
| 26 Oct | OUDES - Lecture by R. J. Bradley. 'The Stability of Settlement' - 8.15 p.m. Helwys Hall, Regents Park College. |
| 26 Oct | Unit staff meeting. |
| 27 Oct | CBA with OUDES - Professor Charles Thomas, "After Rescue - what next?" - 8.15 p.m. Regents Park College, Pusey Street. |