

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.

BICESTER

John Steane with the help of a class of students of the Oxford University Department of External Studies has begun a Vernacular Building record of the historic core of Bicester. They have approached the survey from two angles.

(1) A physical survey of surviving buildings

Photographs of whole street frontages have been taken as reference tools. These enable the researchers to identify houses while discussing the next stage of the survey in weekly classes. They then contact the owners and proceed to record the external elevations, front and back using an amended version of the Brunskill recording scheme. Richard Foster, Director, Department of Museum Services, has explained the Brunskill scheme to the class members. Already observers have noticed in a number of houses at Kings End, Bicester, interesting features, evidence of much earlier buildings lying behind revamped facades. Farm buildings and outhouses betray the agricultural economy of former townspeople in this area of the town. It is hoped that as more and more buildings are looked at, some appreciation of the regional styles of vernacular building in this area will begin to be recognised.

(2) The documentary approach

Using photographs from the Taunt collection (negatives held at National Monuments Record, London) it is possible to reconstruct Bicester in the Edwardian era. The Oxfordshire Record Office has produced the Pre-Enclosure Maps of 1753 which show the extent of the two manors of Bicester (King's End and Market End). The historic core of buildings of Old Bicester two hundred and twenty years ago is thus highlighted. The class is looking at the property deeds held in the Bodleian Library (acknowledgements to the help of David Vaisey and Molly Barrett). The parish records of Bicester are also accessible in the Bodleian Library but no one has yet made use of them. The class has been provided with a microfilm of the 1841 and 1851 censuses of Bicester which the History Faculty Library has processed for them so that it can be read in Bicester. A grant from the Oxford Department of External Studies towards the expenses of the project is gratefully acknowledged.

CHALGROVE

Richard Chambers, assisted by the Chalgrove Local History Society and other individuals, has conducted a brief trial excavation on the site of the moated enclosures discovered from the air during the summer. Three trenches were machine dug by a local farmer, Mr. Adrian Nixey. One sectioned a pond and evidence from another suggested that the rectangular moat was of an early post-Medieval date and formed an earth-work which showed little

use. The third trench, on slightly higher ground, revealed well stratified medieval occupation and substantial limestone walls from a major building which appeared to have been demolished probably towards the end of the sixteenth century. This building was roofed both with peg tiles and limestone slates, similar to an elaborate medieval farmstead excavated in 1972 not many miles to the east at Sadler's Wood, Lewknor. An interesting find during the excavation was a silver medieval coin which is currently being identified.

OXFORD - The Hamel

About half the pottery has now been processed. At this 'half-way' stage, the thirteenth century pottery from the northern part of the site (Bretels) suggests a less affluent life style than the pottery from St. Aldates. Could this be an artisan quarter as opposed to a trade/merchant quarter?

OXFORD - The Littlegate

Derek Gadd, an in-service trainee, has completed a report on the medieval pottery from this Town Wall site, and his work has drawn attention to the problem of dating this section of the wall. The site notebook suggested that it had been cut through layers which Derek has shown to contain typical early fourteenth century assemblages. This would, however, have meant that this defensive alignment was pioneered by the Greyfriars during their tenure of the site, and its apparent junction with their church at an arbitrary point on the east end wall makes this most unlikely. The next earlier groups of pottery, including that positively sealed by the wall, would give a date c. 1200 and mean that this section of the wall was built at about the same time as the rest of the circuit, before the Friars moved in. There remain the two problems of why the wall was not found underneath the church itself and why on the Littlegate site a fourteenth century furnace was built so close to the wall as to risk undermining it, but both may reflect the relatively low strategic importance of the defences on the river side of the town.

OXFORD - St. Aldates

Having come to a reasoned conclusion on the positions of the documented tenements, an attempt is being made to tie up the structural changes with the tenancies. The Hundred Roll of 1279 unfortunately falls at about the date of a re-building, and as this is the only comprehensive survey it is important to decide which structure was being assessed by the jurors. The only independent dating evidence comes from the eight medieval coins, and four of these seem to be residual, assuming a circulation of not more than ten years after writing. If taken literally the evidence from the two local domestic sites, this and The Hamel, would suggest that small denomination medieval coins were in circulation for up to 100 years (!) if this were not impossible from the historical evidence of regular comprehensive recoinages and from the normal process of wear which would make coins unrecognisable after such a period.

RADLEY - Barrow Hills

The publication drawings for this Bronze Age site have now been completed by Alison Allden, an in-service trainee, and a first draft of the excavation report is now substantially complete.

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PARISH SURVEY NEWS

The film "Twenty-Four Square Miles" is to be shown in the basement lecture theatre at the University of Oxford Department of External Studies, Rewley House, Wellington Square, Oxford, on Wednesday 23rd February at 8.00 p.m. This film is a documentary on the results of a government survey of the state of rural Britain at the end of the Second World War. The survey required a rural area which was as representative as possible of the British countryside in general and the area chosen, 24 square miles between Banbury and Chipping Norton, was intensively studied. This film portrays the results in a documentary which also shows the excellent standards that film makers were achieving at this time. Now, thirty years later, this film is an important visual, historical document of village and farming conditions that have now disappeared.

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CALENDAR FOR JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 1977

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| 7 January | Closing date for entries to Museum Holiday Exhibition (for children), Museum Education Department, Oxfordshire County Museum, Woodstock. |
| 10 January | OUDES. 10-week course begins on Local Historical Documents: Beginners. Rewley House, Wellington Square, Oxford. 7.30 p.m. |
| 16 January | Parish Survey Progress Meeting at 46 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford. 2.15 p.m. |
| 17 January | OUDES. 8-week course begins on Local Historical Documents: Advanced. Rewley House, Wellington Square, Oxford. 7.30 p.m. |
| 19 January | OUDES. 5-week course begins - An Introduction to Planning. The Old Library, Nuclear Physics Department, Keble Road, Oxford. 7.30 p.m. |
| 19 January | Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society. Mr. G. Beresford 'Excavations at the Deserted Medieval Village at Goltho, Lincs.'. John Mason School, Wootton Road, Abingdon. 7.30 p.m. |
| 24 January | OUAS. Dr. D. W. Harding 'Hillforts - current problems and future prospects'. Ashmolean Museum, 8.15 p.m. |

- 25 January Unit Staff meeting
- 27 January Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society. Miss. C. Bloxham 'Oxfordshire Customs and Folklore'. Ashmolean Museum, 8.15 p.m.
- 31 January OUAS. Brian Hobley, Esq. 'Recent Archaeological Excavations in the City of London.' Ashmolean Museum, 8.15 p.m.
- 4-6 February University of Southampton. Non-residential Conference on Rural Settlements in S. Britain.
- 7 February OUAS. Philip Rahtz, Esq. 'The Anglo-Saxon Watermill at Tamworth and its counterparts in present-day Crete'. Ashmolean Museum, 8.15 p.m.
- 14 February OUAS. Dr. J. P. Northover 'Prehistoric Bronze Working in Wales'. Ashmolean Museum, 8.15 p.m.
- 16 February Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society. Mr. F. Dumbleton 'The Preservation of Great Western Railway History'. John Mason School, Abingdon. 7.30 p.m.
- 19-20 February OUDES. A weekend course on Roman Gemstones and Finger Rings; their archaeology and art. Course lecturer - Martin Henig.
- 21 February OUAS. John Evans Esq. 'Land Snails and Archaeology - recent results'. Ashmolean Museum, 8.15 p.m.
- 23 February 'Twenty-Four Square Miles' - film to be shown in the basement lecture theatre, Rewley House, Wellington Square, Oxford. 8.00 p.m.
- 28 February OUAS. Alan Carter Esq. 'The Norwich Survey, 1971 to 1976'. Ashmolean Museum, 8.15 p.m.