



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, 28th May.

OXFORDSHIRE

Abingdon, 20 Bath Street

Acting on information from John Carter that a skeleton had been discovered in the garden of one of the shops in Bath Street during building work, Phil Page went along to investigate. The remains had been removed by the police when he arrived but the level from which it was excavated was pointed out by the builders.

It had lain in made up ground which contained much building debris bone and a range of pottery from the late 15th-early 16th to 18th-19th centuries. This was a rather suspicious context for a burial of that date range since there are no nearby graveyards which it could be associated with and foul play was suspected. However when the 'skeleton' was recovered from the police and examined the only human remains turned out to be part of a skull. The rest of the bones were the remains of an articulated dog skeleton. As it seems unlikely that we have here an ancestor from which the Barbara Woodhouse species is derived the skull which was of an adolescent is presumed to be residual.

Banbury Castle, Marks & Spencer Development Site

The excavation of the sleeper beam trenches to provide foundations for the new stone has not revealed any further finds of archaeological significance. The Unit is extremely grateful to Mr Jakeman who has maintained a continuous watching brief over the groundwork.

Dorchester, 9 Rotten Row

Several skeletons were discovered during groundwork for an extension to the rear of No.9, Rotten Row. The burials were all inhumations orientated, where observed, west-east. No grave goods or evidence of coffins was seen. This appears to be part of a large inhumation cemetery of which glimpses are seen from time time during building operations in the area.

Oxford, George Street, the City Ditch

Passers-by in New Inn Hall Street will have been appalled by the depth of foundations which have been put into this shop and office development. The

culprit is that old faithful, the city ditch, but even though we knew it was there, and told the developer so, we could never have predicted its five metre depth. In retrospect it is perhaps a blessing that the developer's programme left no opportunity for excavation, because although we might have managed the necessary engineering, we would certainly have been disappointed in the results.

The finds from a large amount of salvage work include one medieval sherd, four seventeenth century sherds and a 2½" thick house-brick! The general impression is that the ditch was totally cleared out for the Royalist defence of Oxford in the 1640s as has been suggested recently at New Inn Hall Street. It has always been a source of regret that we haven't been able to confirm the main defences by excavation. Perhaps the recent works is illustrating the meaning of references such as 'colleges against every part of the second line', but it is still possible that the medieval defences in fact consisted a 'third' line.

Radley, Tuckwell's Pit

The remains of a timber lined well extending just over 2m into gravel was sectioned by drag line during quarrying operations in February. Richard Chambers reports that only the bottom 0.8m of the well remained intact. Above this a cone of collapsed soil and gravel reached a diameter of 3m at the surface.

The well had been lined with a carefully hollowed out oak tree 0.6m diameter internally by 0.7m diameter externally. The lining lacked holes which would have assisted the flow of water into the well. The lining had rotted and the shaft fallen in above the water table.

No dating evidence was found either in the well filling or in the silting surrounding the lining (PRN 13,025).

The OAU is indebted to the pit manager Mr David Gross for reporting his find.

Witney, 27 Market Square

Richard Chambers reports that excavation by the Witney Society has now revealed the large, roughly circular, pitched stone hearth referred to in the February Newsletter. Work continues.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Fairford/Lechlade, Claydon Pike

The end of the MSC scheme has at present curtailed major excavations on the site. It is hoped that small scale work will continue until a large push in the summer months of July and August.

Volunteers are always desperately required but particularly in the summer months, anyone interested should contact the Unit.

Oxford University Department for External Studies

ARCHAEOLOGY IN OXFORDSHIRE

A day school will be held on Saturday 1 May 1982, 10.00am - 5.00pm at the Gulbenkian Lecture Theatre, St.Cross Building (Law and English Faculty Library), Manor Road (off Longwall), Oxford. Tickets £2.00 obtainable in advance from Miss Shirley Hermon, OUDES, Wellington Square, Oxford or at the door. Coffee and tea but not lunch are provided.

PROGRAMME

- 10.00 Louise Armstrong, DoE Field Monuments Warden - Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Oxfordshire.
- 10.30 George Lambrick, Oxford Archaeological Unit - The Upper Thames Floodplain Survey.
- 11.00 Coffee
- 11.30 Tim Copeland, Charlbury - Fieldwork in the Charlbury Area.
- 12.00 Richard Hingley, Southampton University - Fieldwork in Oxfordshire with particular reference to the discovery of the amphitheatre at Frilford.
- 12.30 Roger Ainsley, Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society - Excavations on the Drayton Cursus.
- 12.45 Lunch - not provided.
- 2.00 Richard Chambers, OAU - Excavations on the Dorchester by-pass.
- 2.30 David Miles, OAU - Excavations at Claydon Pike, Gloucestershire.
- 3.00 Brian Durham, OAU - Recent excavations in Oxford.
- 3.30 Tea
- 4.00 John Steane, Oxfordshire Department of Museum Services - Medieval Kitchens in Oxfordshire.
- 4.30 Stewart Dewey, The Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society - The Wallingford Museum.

