



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 Monday, 28 February 1983.

ABINGDON: 6 Lombard Street - Godfrey Jones

The site is in the centre of Abingdon, close to the market square and was a standing building, a late medieval timber framed structure, with a series of adjoining cellars and later buildings extending at right angles to the street with open areas to the side.

The work by the Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society has started with a detailed structural survey and plan of the standing buildings with a detailed record of one complete frame in section showing its relationship with the cellar and an earlier medieval stone wall which serves as a substantial support for the timber frame on one side. Into this wall has been set a fine tudor fireplace with a chimney on the outside wall. The recording has been completed and should enable any other dwelling on the site to be related to the standing buildings. In particular it is hoped to establish a complete floor plan of a late-medieval building if the adjoining cellars (not yet excavated) are contemporary.

The cellar floor is currently being excavated to establish the depth of archaeological layers likely to be encountered in the main trench some 4m west. This area is very disturbed with the only identification so far of pits in use after the cellar was dug. Finds of imported glassware, possibly of c.15 date, indicate that the cellar and sidewall may be earlier than previously thought. The interpretation of the cellar floor area is uncertain but finds of Iron Age and Roman material indicate that lower layers have been cut through by these pits. This work has been started first in advance of redevelopment of the site.

The main excavation trench (9m x 2m) occupies the centre of the site some 4m west of the medieval house. The whole area was covered by demolition debris to a depth of 1m, under which several walls have been exposed. One substantial wall is abutted by a well-laid stone yard or alley way leading past another structure, less substantial, possibly an outbuilding or workshop.

It is hoped to continue to undisturbed deposits of the Roman and Iron Age with the aim of establishing any continuity of occupation from the late Iron Age to Roman periods that is indicated in previous excavations in this area. Trial boreholes by the developers have indicated a depth to natural gravel of 3m. Work continues.

BICESTER: The Priory - R A Chambers

Building work to provide an extension for an Old People's Home on the site of the medieval Augustinian priory (Centred SP 5841 2217, PRN1593) has revealed the west wall of the south transept of the priory church. The wall consisted of a mortared limestone rubble foundation c.1.3m wide and 1m deep. It rested

on the limestone bedrock, which formed the former flood plain of the river Bure.

The new foundations form a rectangle of trenches which cut across the north-east corner of the cloister and into the south transept and south aisle of the priory church. No flooring survived in either place. The position of the west wall of the south transept accords with the plans drawn by Dunkin in 1819 and the records made by David Watts in 1968 (D A Hinton, "Bicester Priory", *Oxonienia* XXXIII (1968), 28-9, Figs. 8 & 9).

Much of the ground was deeply disturbed during the building of the Old People's Home in 1968-9. The current building work did not reveal the south wall of the church although a stone foundation trench was recorded a few metres to the west in 1968.

The present building foundation trench revealed a uniform stratigraphy. At the bottom lay the flood plain of the river Bure which was clearly visible as a c.0.1m thick humic layer over brashy limestone bedrock. The flood plain was sealed by c.0.1m of mottled clay and upwards of 0.3m of dark soil that may represent foundation material dumped to raise the church floor above winter flood levels. The priory was dissolved in 1536 and the church appears to have been demolished soon after this date. (Ibid, 26). A band of yellow sandy mortar which sealed the dark soil was probably deposited during the course of the demolition. The demolition debris were sealed by 0.3 -0.4m of heavily disturbed garden soil.

No dating evidence was recovered from any level. A human burial was discovered lying beneath the foundation of the Old People's Home within the south aisle of the priory church. The burial appeared to have been disturbed by the insertion of a timber beam. This piece of timber may have been deposited at the same time as the disturbances which removed all trace of the church wall foundations. Several fragments of wooden board close to the skull suggested the remains of a coffin. The orientation of this burial which was only partly exposed, could not be positively established.

CASSINGTON - Tom Hassall

Mr J Sergeant of Stanton St John has drawn attention to earthworks on both sides of the A40 south of Cassington Church. These seem to be connected with the known moat and fishpond complex at Reynolds Farm (PRN 3763) and show that the system was even more extensive than has been thought.

CUMNOR: Dean Court Farm, - Tim Allen

After a gap of 6 years the OAU have resumed work at Dean Court Farm, Cumnor. (SP 47420615; PRN 10796). The site is owned by Oxford University and has been zoned for housing in the draft local plan. Greg Woolf has opened a trench in the field immediately west of the farm, right up against the by-pass, in the hope of finding more of the ditch and building partly excavated on the route of the by-pass (OAU Newsletter No. 3, March 1976). Stone spreads have been found, and pottery of the late 12th/early 13th centuries, some of it from the same jug as was found in 1976. Problems with ground water have made work difficult, and it is not yet clear whether the building has been located. Work will continue in Hilary term 1983.

M40: Oxford to Birmingham Extension - R A Chambers

A supplementary series of engineers test pits along the preferred route of the proposed M40 extension are being watched for archaeological material. One test pit south of Wendlebury revealed an undated shallow ditch below the medieval - post medieval open field system.

NETLEBED: Soundess Field, - Maureen Mellor

Dave Start and Phil Catherall, archaeologists for the British Gas Corporation, have located the first medieval kiln in Oxfordshire. The site is in an area where kilns have been expected. The kiln and possible workshop was located by a magnetometer survey being carried out along the line of a proposed pipeline.

The pottery suggests a late fourteenth-fifteenth century date. Two types of clay were apparently used, one iron rich, giving a dark colour when fired, the other an iron-free clay giving a white or pale pink hue to the pottery. The quartz and quartzite inclusions in both types of clay are identical and probably originate from the Reading beds, which lie closed to the site.

These same fabrics and forms were recovered from the manor at Harding's Field, Chalgrove where independent dating evidence is available.

The forms include jars or possible cooking vessels with bifid rims, bowls or pans with external flanged rims, jugs with squared or thickened rims. Bases were nearly always depressed (only 1 splayed base was found). Decoration was sparse, glaze was apparent on a few vessels, only plain lead glazes or dull mottled green glazes were noted.

The strap handles were very broad. Some of them along with the bungholes from large bulbous bunghole jars are reminiscent of a pitcher recovered at Abingdon (M Parrington, Medieval Pottery in D Miles, 'Excavations at West St Helen Street, Abingdon 1972' *Oxonienia* XL (1975) Fig 65 No 33, p.94), which originated from the Farnborough Hill kilns in Surrey. The knob of a lid and a tripod foot were also recovered.

A sample of this pottery is now being processed at the Unit but much remains to be done in the field.

NORTH STOKE - S Ford

The excavation of a scheduled ring ditch eroding into a quarry was undertaken during August, in order to produce artefactual and environmental evidence as a part of a wider fieldwalking project by Steve Ford in the parish of North Stoke.

An area of 106 square metres was excavated. This revealed a complete E-W section across the monument, the single ring ditch in two places and a single external posthole. No direct evidence of a funerary function was revealed except perhaps for a prehistoric sherd with 'urn' fabric from the secondary ditch silt. 21 percent of the interior of the ring ditch and 7 percent of the ditch contents were examined. The trenches were located to examine a possible recut or outer ditch observed in the quarry face. This feature failed to appear in the excavated areas and was at a later date shown to be a

Large pit or ditch terminal.

About 20 sherds of pottery were recovered. From the ring ditch in addition to the above mentioned sherd, a second undiagnostic prehistoric specimen was recovered from the primary ditch silts. Three sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from the higher ditch silts which gives a TPQ for the various ploughing episodes recorded in the ditch section. Finally, about 15 sherds of Beaker pottery were recovered from the top of the large pit seen in the quarry face.

Struck flint was fairly abundant from all layers of the site with approximately 400 from the primary silts. On first impressions these flakes and cores are the residue of quarrying activity utilising good flint produced by construction of the ring ditch. Similar quarries may also occur at Micheldever, Itford Hill and Amesbury G71. A sample of about 50 flakes have been bagged individually unwashed in order that their potential for microwear study can be evaluated.

OXFORD: Blackfriars - George Lambrick

A watching brief has been carried out during the building of houses and flats just east of Thames Street (SP 511057). No priority buildings were uncovered and little new information has emerged, though there were traces of a possible north-south stream channel just west of the main priority buildings, which may well have supplied water to the reedorter block. Further excavations to check this, together with examination of the nave of the church and the possible north nave, and also trial trenches of the suspected waterfront south of the main priority buildings are due to take place in the new year.

Post excavation work on the Wharf House site excavated in 1979-80 has proceeded as far as an analysis of the stratigraphy and phasing, and the preparation of draft reports on the pottery and tiles by Maureen Mellor has been completed. The building of the reedorter block, its modification and the construction of the little cloister with a covered alley all seem to have occurred in the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. There is little evidence for the later medieval use of the buildings, but one of the early silting layers in the reedorter drain, was dated probably the fifteenth century. A puzzling wooden disc, with various holes through it from this layer now seems likely to be part of a sandglass or hourglass, but this remains to be confirmed by specialist advice and detailed comparisons.

OXFORD: St Cross Road, new squash courts - B G Durham

A new squash court built for Keble College in September 1981 gave an opportunity to look at the prominent break of slope at the north edge of Balliol College sports field. It seems to follow the line of an earthwork depicted by Loggan in 1675, and it has always been thought of as the inner line of Civil War defences, possibly built in 1642. The squash court was expected to show a ditch in front of the bank, but the topsoil was unbroken. In addition the bank was composed of nineteenth century industrial rubbish! The one consolation is that the natural ground sloped down gradually towards the bank, suggesting the possibility of a ditch a few metres to the south, but this would mean that the existing fence line was preserving the outer edge of the ditch, rather than the crown of the rampart as has always been

assumed.

STANTON HARCOURT: Gravelly Guy - George Lambrick

Salvage excavations following stripping for gravel extraction have begun at the southern end of this last large coherent site, the great Stanton Harcourt cropmark complex (SP 401 051; PRN 8281-6). The main settlement is some way further north and consists of presumed Iron Age pits, enclosures and probably ponds, but there are also the remains of a few bronze age ring ditches. The salvage work has revealed another small ring ditch, only 4m internal diameter, yet defined by a massive trench-like ditch over 3m wide at the top and 2m deep. No dating evidence or trace of any funerary deposit was recovered. Apart from this between 20 and 30 Iron Age pits have been located and are currently under excavation. So far most seem to be large and deep enough to have been for grain storage, and the pottery so far has suggested that all are middle Iron Age in date.

Stripping of alluvium on the Windrush floodplain immediately adjacent to these features on the edge of the 2nd gravel terrace, has so far not revealed any archaeological remains except one probably modern ditch. There are however several lenses of peat overlying the gravel and sealed by clay alluvium, which from other occurrences is probably late Iron Age to early Saxon in date. These deposits are being examined by Mark Robinson. Root disturbance may be a problem but one sample from a well preserved deposit has so far been taken.

THAMES FLOODPLAIN SURVEY - George Lambrick

This year's work (still in progress) has included the analysis of finds from fieldwalking (the pottery by Sarah Green and Maureen Mellor), an analysis of the recovery of information from the fieldwalking, the computerisation of the Survey's gazetteer of sites. Another aspect has been the drafting of a detailed account of the sequence of floodplain deposits and their hydrological explanation in relation to human activity in the catchment area. This has proved most interesting casting new light on the interpretation of settlement pattern and the impact of post human activity in the region. Fieldwork has been confined to one sample excavation of an Iron Age house enclosure on Port Meadows, which duly provided both dating evidence and waterlogged deposits as expected. Similar excavations on other sites on the Meadow have not been carried out yet due to other commitments and/or unsuitable groundwater conditions. Other sites examined include Osney Abbey, the Drayton curcus and Wallingford, where Mark Robinson sampled the deposits in the river bank above, below and including a late Bronze occupation deposit. The snails showed that an old river channel had gradually become filled in, and by the late Bronze Age was dry ground; it was subsequently covered by riverside levee deposits again becoming much damper, and prone to flooding. All these observations have tended to confirm the chronology of floodplain deposits, outlined in last year's annual report.

WALLINGFORD: John Wilder's, Goldsmith's Lane - Claire Halpin

Redevelopment of the Wilder's Iron Foundry site allowed archaeological coverage of a medieval urban site on a scale unknown in Wallingford for several years (SU 6060815; PRNs 9775 and 7805). Furthermore the archaeological material present was both extensive and well-preserved.

The site lies immediately within the extant southern Saxon ramparts, and east of the Kine Croft. The foundry building is to be retained; elsewhere on the site, housing units plus associated roads and services are planned for late 1982 - early 1983. A two-week excavation followed by selected watching briefs were conducted in late October and November, 1982, and were made possible by a grant from South Oxfordshire District Council. The Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society provided volunteer assistance. Nick Doggett (an In-Service student) and Jonathan Sharpe were responsible for the documentary research.

Along the eastern perimeter of the site a long narrow trench (43m x 1m) was excavated in the hope of finding tenements fronting on to Mill Lane. Within virtually the entire length of this trench there was evidence of extensive and deep pit digging. Preliminary pottery dates range from the mid-eleventh to the thirteenth century. These pits are too far forward to be associated with the present line of Mill Lane and may be associated with a frontage to the east of Mill Lane.

An extension to the north of Trench I, c.7m x 8m and located on the junction of Mill Lane and Goldsmith's Lane, produced a very high number of undisturbed east/west burials (c. 40-60). It is believed that these burials relate to the possibly Saxon, certainly early medieval, church of St Rumbold's. Thanks to a series of watching briefs on this site and on the north side of Goldsmith's Lane it has been possible to define the limits of the cemetery. On the eastern boundary of the cemetery, which was recorded in Trench I, skeletons were found to variously overlie or be cut by twelfth to thirteenth century pits.

St Rumbold's church itself was possibly seen during trenching within the iron foundry which is to be retained. A square end of stone walling with an internal dimension of 5m was recorded during trenching within the foundry. The final documentary reference to the church is dated to 1352. However a lack of fourteenth century material from across this site suggests that some contraction occurred before this date.

Burials recorded on either side of the eastern project of Goldsmith's Lane, coupled with the fact that no early road surfaces were seen in the appropriate pipe trenches, indicate that this section of the lane is late - or post-medieval.

Within the eastern end of the road corridor, north of Beansheaf Terrace, possible medieval stone walling was recorded. Though no road surfaces were found, the above stonework may be coupled with the evidence of hearths and floor layers recorded in the southern end of Trench I, and be used to suggest the existence of an intramural street.

A second isolated stone building, showing two phases of construction was recorded at the west end of the road corridor. Though recorded as part of a watching brief, a ground plan was obtained and associated finds included much tile and also twelfth to thirteenth century pottery. The east/west alignment of this building suggests that originally Goldsmith's Lane continued southwards, perhaps linking with the projected intramural street.

Future work in this site will continue in the form of limited, selected

watching briefs.

An Open Day, held on 7 November attracted over 1000 visitors.

WALLINGFORD: 12-13 St Mary's Street - Claire Halpin
NGR SU607893
PRN 13, 191

The foundation trenches (partially dug) for a rear extension were observed in November. Within these trenches, which were 1-2m deep, a thick nineteenth century overburden was present. Below, archaeological features probably caused by pit digging were visible. Two pre-1250 sherds were recovered from the section, and natural soil occurred at a depth of c.2m. No further archaeological work is envisaged.

WALLINGFORD; The Mill, St Mary's Street - Brian Durham

The site lies across the alignment of the defences, just beside the existing south entrance to the town and therefore probably close to the gate of the Late Saxon burh (SU 607890 PRN 797). Rex Dixon of the Wallingford Archaeological and Historical Society has put a section across the pronounced break-of-slope, in the hope of exposing the face of the medieval rampart. At the maximum permissible depth of 1.5m, however, the section show only a seventeenth-century bank covered with garden soil. The natural gravel has been shown by angering to be only 0.3m deeper, so the rampart must be further back. By implication therefore St Leonards Lane must be running along the top of the rampart, if it is medieval at all, and Wallingford's only example of a 'Late Saxon intramural street' is clearly not what it seemed. Considering the problems of demonstrating an intramural street on the Wilder's site just to the west, the last two months have been very significant for Wallingford's topography.

The existing trench extends as close as safety allows to the wall on St Leonards Lane, but in the course of construction of the proposed houses it is still possible that the rampart face will be seen.

