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OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER INCLUDING
OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

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Contributions to the next Newsletter should be sent to the above address not later than Tuesday, 28 August 1984.

Gloucestershire

FAIRFORD: Claydon Pike, (SU191996) - David Miles and Simon Palmer

The third and outstanding platform was excavated in a short but profitable period during March by a joint MSC and volunteer team.

This platform is situated in the angle of the main crossroads opposite the rectangular "temple" to the east and platform 2 to the north (OAU Newsletter Vol X, No 4 December 1983). It has more in common with platform 2, with its traces of "peasant-style" buildings, than with platform 1, with its imposing and stone-founded aisled buildings.

The area itself roughly 40m x 30m had clearly defined boundaries to the north, east and west. At the highest point overlooking the main road were the fragmentary remains of perhaps two timber slotted buildings which barely survived the field's recent arable history.

The rear of this area was punctuated by a series of wells and the small circular gullies which have been interpreted as fodder stacks on the adjoining platforms.

Situated close to the timber structures was a small square stone-founded building (3m. sq.) which can be interpreted as a bakehouse. It consisted of two parallel stone walls and post holes on the blank sides suggesting a part timber construction. Protruding out from one of the walls was the remains of an oven floor with its stoke-hole running inside the building.

Behind the platform a fourth well was excavated and produced some of the sites best preserved organic material, amongst which was a large pine cone in excellent condition. This has been identified as a Stone Pine (Pinus pinea).

Stone Pines are in fact native to the Western Mediterranean, although they do grow in England when introduced. In the archaeological record they have been found on temple sites on Hadrian's Wall, Verulamium and several sites in London. Sir Ian Richmond suggested they may have been used as altar fuel. This is yet another hint of the sites religious associations.

The date of this area is again similar to platform 2, being early Roman, and there is very little evidence here for activity contemporary with either the late Iron Age phase or the late Roman villa on platform 1.

Although this is the end of the large scale excavation it is certainly not the end of Claydon Pike. Watching briefs will be kept as the final parts of the field are stripped and the task of evaluating the mass of data is now underway. However, it is likely that any firm conclusions about the role of Claydon Pike in the Roman landscape will only be resolved by the investigation of the surrounding settlements.
Bix.

Oxfordshire

BAMBURY: East-West Link Road (SP455418 - SP467417) - Tim Allen

In advance of road construction 3 JCB trenches were cut across the line of the road where it crosses the slight elevation on which sits Grimsbury House. The surrounding fields all show signs of ridge and furrow, but the area in which the trenches were dug was in the landscaped garden of the house. A north-S ditch was found in the central trench, and a small area was opened up to investigate this. Both prehistoric and Medieval ditches were found.

When the roadway was stripped salvage recording was carried out. Further prehistoric ditches were found, including two small penannular enclosures and a pair of parallel ditches, possibly for a trackway. A number of Medieval ditches, apparently enclosure and field boundaries, were also recorded. The area of occupation both in the prehistoric and Medieval periods seems to have been limited on the east to the top of the elevation, as no features were seen towards the east end of the road cut. Features continued both north and S beyond the limits of the site.

On the west several ditches were recorded in construction trenches. These lay beneath ridge and furrow in the field west of Grimsbury Green road. Construction trenches further west beyond the railway line were also watched as occasion arose, but revealed nothing of interest.

The prehistoric occupation produced very few finds, and no diagnostic pottery. The flint assemblage suggests use of the local very poor quality pebble flint, with the exception of a few well-made tools. A Bronze Age date seems likely.

The Medieval pottery was predominantly of 12th century date, though late 12th/early 13th century features were also common, and there were some 14th century and 15th century sherds from Pottersbury and elsewhere. A very small assemblage from the ditches beneath the ridge and furrow west of the Grimsbury Green road included St. Neots ware and a few late Saxon fabrics, suggesting that this may have been part of the late Saxon settlement at Grimberie mentioned in Domesday.

The settlement presumably shifted east during the earlier Medieval period, and probably moved again during the 13th century away from the area examined, possibly to the area of Manor Farm some 200m south-east.

BIX - see Nuffield

CHALGROVE (SU63609650) - R A Chambers

The field immediately to the south of the Medieval parish church was visited whilst land drains were being laid. The field was the subject of a measured earthworks survey several years ago. To the south the field is bounded by a stream. In 1977 early Saxon grass tempered pottery was recovered from a site immediately south of the stream.

The immediate backfilling of the land drain trenches allowed little opportunity for inspection. No archaeologically significant material was discovered.

DIDCOT: Vaux Hall (SU52109090) - R A Chambers

The Didcot and District Historical and Archaeological Society have begun excavating two trial trenches in an attempt to locate the site of Vaux Hall, a building possibly of Medieval origin, known to have been in use during the 17th century but which had disappeared well before 1840. Before work began the site was inspected by Mrs Joyce Hall and Bob North accompanied by Richard Chambers of the OAU.

The earliest building now standing on the site was found to be a timber framed barn on red-brick sill walls. The barn contained much reused timber some of which have traces of black paint similar to that used elsewhere in the 16th-17th centuries for interior decoration.

The building complex which presumably included Vaux Hall is depicted on a late 18th century map. This appears to have been demolished and a new farm complex built to a new plan which is shown on the Enclosure Award map of 1840. The architectural evidence suggests that the present barn belongs to this early 19th century rebuilding. The presence of reused painted timber framing suggests the barn may have been built partly using materials from the demolition of Vaux Hall. Ridge and furrow indicates that part of the site, possibly including the site of Vaux Hall, was put under the plough during the first part of the 19th century.

NUFFIELD: Ascott-Nuffield Gas Pipeline - D R Start

During the spring and summer of 1983 a major gas transmission pipeline was laid from near Nuffield in Oxfordshire to Winkfield in Berkshire. The pipeline, which links existing transmission lines, runs for a total of 36km, 10.5km of which pass through Oxfordshire, starting at Brixton Hill, just to the north of Grim's Ditch, and leaving the county 1/2km to the east of the village of Middle Assendon.

The pre-construction survey for the Oxfordshire section of the pipeline identified 38 known sites within the 2km wide corridor, comprising 2 prehistoric, 2 Roman or Iron Age, 10 Medieval, 17 post-medieval and 3 of unknown date. The pipe route passed very close to the undated rectangular

earthwork at Digberry, near to Park Corner, Swyncombe. The south western side of the earthwork is now ploughed out, and it was not known whether there were any features lying outside the ditch and bank in the path of the pipe route. The proposed route was moved as far as possible away from the site, but due to engineering constraints it was still only some 70m away from the edge of the earthwork. An extensive magnetometer survey, covering over 4 hectares, was carried out around the site in an attempt to locate any buried archaeological features, and any suspect areas were carefully monitored during construction. In the event, the various magnetic anomalies that were identified in the survey, proved to be due to natural pockets of sand within the clay with flints subsoil, and no archaeological features were located. Whilst achieving our aim of avoiding disturbance to the earthwork, no further clues to its origin have been obtained, and its function and date remain a mystery.

As the pipe route crosses the Bix valley, it passes within 50m of the medieval church of St. James, abandoned in 1875, and now in a ruinous state. It has been generally assumed that the medieval village of Bix Brand lay in the vicinity of the church, but the precise location of the village is not known. Fieldwalking revealed no earthworks and no concentrations of pottery and a magnetometer survey covering 1.8 hectares to the north-west, east, south and west of the church proved inconclusive. Quantities of tile and brick were found but these probably derive from the church. In consultation with the Oxford Archaeological Unit, it was decided to pass the church on the north side as this seemed the least likely area for the site of the village. The trench sections were carefully checked during pipeline construction, but no archaeological features were identified. Either this was not the site of Bix Brand, as backed up by the lack of pottery, or the settlement had left no discernable evidence of its existence.

From the archaeological point of view, the fieldwalking programme for the pipeline was disappointing, only one site of any importance being located. This was a spread of medieval potsherds covering an area some 30m in diameter, found near Soundness Farm, just north of Crocker End. The limited number of vessel types, the overfired condition of many of the sherds and the presence of three possible clay pits in the area all pointed to the existence of a pottery kiln. A magnetometer survey carried out over the site located the position of the kiln, and a limited soil resistivity survey suggested the likelihood of structures associated with it. This is the first medieval pottery kiln to be discovered in Oxfordshire and one of only two in the region. The pottery is 15th century in date.

Since the kiln lay directly on the route of the pipeline, it was decided to re-route the pipe slightly to avoid any damage to the site. The new route passed some 70m to the south and, during construction, three small features were encountered (2 hearths and a posthole(?): NA523) which are possibly associated with the kiln site, but the pipe trench did not impinge on any structures related to the site.

Construction of the Oxfordshire section of the Nuffield-Ascot pipeline located 11 previously unknown archaeological features or sites.

By period these comprise:

3	Iron Age or Roman
4	Medieval
2	Post medieval

A brief description of the sites follows. Full locational information and descriptions of the features and finds are now available from the county sites and monuments record.

Iron Age and Roman Sites:

(Site Codes: NA542; NA543; NA544)

Roman settlement has been recorded in the past in the vicinity of Bix village and during field walking several Roman potsherds were collected on the east side of the Bix valley. When the pipe trench was cut through this area it crossed a small ditch (NA542), which contained some potsherds and animal bone. The pottery was late Iron Age, of similar form to Roman types, but of a local fabric. 100m to the north of this ditch a series of features (NA543) was located, comprising three shallow pits and a ditch. Two of the pits contained pot sherds, the smaller of the two (feature 1) yielding mainly early Roman grog tempered sherds (from a large storage jar) with a few sherds of greyware, whilst the other (feature 4) contained chalk tempered sherds which are probably late Iron Age.

At Gangsdown Hill, near to Nuffield, the pipe trench cut a pit which contained a quantity of potsherds whose fabrics and forms are typically Late Iron Age. The vessels are cooking pots and storage jars. The site, which is possibly indicative of settlement nearby, lies only 1km to the north of Grim's Ditch.

Medieval Sites:

(Site Codes: NA532; NA548; NA549; NA551)

The features located along the pipe route diversion around the kiln site at Soundess (NA523: 2 hearths and a posthole) were presumed to be associated with the kiln, and hence medieval. The only dateable material within them, several flint flakes, may or may not be residual.

The pre-construction survey had noted documentary evidence for a medieval hamlet at Ewelme, believed to lie on the site of the Borstal at Huntercombe End. The pipe route was clear of the supposed site of the DMV but did cut some medieval features to the north-west of Huntercombe Borstal. The first of these features (NA548) is a ditch, with close to it an infilled cut levelling the slight slope of the ground, which is probably a remnant of an infilled lynchet. Both parts of the feature had medieval pottery incorporated within their fills. A very similar feature (NA549) - a ditch and an infilled lynchet associated with medieval potsherds, was located 200m to the west. The pottery from both sites was mostly of the same fabric (similar to types known from Catslip) and can be broadly dated to the 12th or 13th centuries. The features probably relate to field systems associated with the nearby medieval settlement.

A scatter of medieval potsherds was noted in the stripped topsoil to the south of Gangsdown Hill. These sherds are generally similar in fabric to those from the features described above, although there are also some later Surrey Wares in the collection. The potsherds are abraded and probably the result of manuring activities from a nearby medieval settlement - possibly Ewelme or Gangsdown.

Post medieval Sites:

TSite Codes: NA545; NA546

Half a kilometre to the east of Digberry earthwork, the pipe trench cut a large, relatively modern, backfilled chalk pit. A row of such backfilled pits along the hillside is visible on aerial photographs.

Near to Soundess House, a large, flint filled ditch was encountered which appears to be a drain running from a nearby pit. The pit is probably one of many clay pits in the area, serving the once extensive potteries of Nettiebed and Crocker End which were in use from the 15th to the early 20th centuries.

Undated Features:

(Site Codes: NA547; NA550)

A pit (NA547) containing the bones of a large old dog was found near to the Huntercombe Borstal and a ditch (NA550) was located 220m to the west of this pit (near to the medieval features at NA548). Neither feature contained any datable material.

From an engineering viewpoint, archaeological survey and field work on the pipeline succeeded in its aim - no major sites were encountered and engineering work was not delayed. However, from an archaeological point of view it may seem that little has been achieved but whilst it is always satisfying to locate important sites, a pipeline construction easement is a most unsatisfactory place to find them, since the nature of construction work and the limited time available can make adequate investigation of such sites difficult. Although very little new information has been gained for the county, unnecessary damage to the archaeological record has been avoided and this is our primary aim.

The archaeological work for the pipeline was carried out by archaeologists employed by the British Gas Corporation with the kind co-operation of the pipeline project manager and his staff. Acknowledgements for much invaluable aid and advice are due to: The Oxford Archaeological Unit; Oxfordshire City and County Museums Service; The Henley Historical and Archaeological Society; M. Tingle; M. Corney; R. Wilson and Dr. H Case.

OXFORD: High Street, All Souls College (SP516063) - Brian Durham

In October last year, All Souls College was refacing the north side of the chapel when a large number of painted fragments of medieval masonry came tumbling out of a cavity. It transpired that this was an old doorway which had been reopened during internal restorations by Sir George Gilbert Scott in 1872. The painted fragments were all attributable to the medieval reredos which had just been rediscovered at that time, and which Scott was restoring. They provide a useful check on the accuracy of the new carving, and show clearly that all the painted stonework now visible on the reredos is original 15th century work, and the unpainted work and the figures are replacements. Precisely why such a collection of fragments came to be walled up is not clear, but the inclusion of a fragment of 14th century stone cross-head suggests that the builders regarded these as special fragments which should not simply be dumped.

The cross-head fragment includes the lower body of the crucified Christ on one side, and drapery of perhaps the Virgin on the other. The history of this fragment is remarkable. Philip Lancaster of the Council for the Care of Churches prepared a report on it, and found that the identical fragment had been illustrated by J C Buckler in the 19th century. It had apparently then been found built into the east wall of North Hinksey Church 2 miles west of Oxford, and Buckler had drawn it with fragments of a gabled top and the existing cross-base and shaft. The top is no longer tracable, but the remainder will appear as a reconstruction in the 1984 volume of *Oxonienis* in an article by Nicholas Doggett discussing all aspects of these discoveries. The remaining mystery is how the crucifixion fragment got to All Souls, and how it came to be built into a wall for the second time. This perhaps will never be known.

OXFORD: Churchill Hospital (SP546057) - Brian Durham

A large area of Nissen Huts have been cleared to the west of the kiln site excavated by Chris Young in 1971-74. Brian Durham found four new kilns to add to the nine already known, and the western limit of the production area was established as roughly the line of the main hospital north-south access road.

Sarah Green has dated the new kilns to the 4th century (Phase 4b). Three of them possibly relate to the known workshop complex D, and the fourth was interesting in that it was the only Churchill kiln to be relined. Peter McKeague has prepared a report on this year's excavation.

OXFORD: Abingdon Road, Bridge Surveys (SP514055, 517037) - Brian Durham

The dry spring has meant relatively low river levels, and these gave an opportunity to survey the old bridge arches south of Folly Bridge. Peter McKeague has prepared a drawing from these measurements, which shows how the modern roadway has developed in three stages from an original causeway about 4m (13ft) wide. It will be suggested in the next volume of *Oxonienis* (XLVIX, 1984) that this original bridge was the one built by Robert D'Oilly c.1080-90 and is therefore the earliest recognisable medieval stone bridge in Britain. The Red Bridge section has smaller arches (arcs of 2m, 3m and 3m in diameter, against an average 4m at Folly Bridge) and a narrower causeway width (c.3.1m, against about 4m). This suggests that it was not built at the same time, but it is very interesting that there is a unit of measurement in both bridges which is more closely related to the modern metre than to the modern foot or yard.

We were very grateful for the help of John Steane with the County Museum's dinghy which gave us access to the three eastern arches at Redbridge. There are a further four medieval arches to the west of the railway bridge which are land-locked and which would need another trip with a more portable boat to survey them properly. It is a job which should be done, because any redevelopment in this area is likely to obliterate them, and they may hold the key to explain how and when Oxford's Thames crossing was completed in stone.

OXFORD: 9-10 Queen Street Brian Durham

The south frontage of Queen Street is being slowly redeveloped in a piecemeal way (see Claire Halpin's report in the new *Oxoniensia* XLVIII). The latest site followed the familiar pattern of demolition, breaking the basement slab, filling with fly ash to ground level and putting a piled foundation through this. In the brief space between demolition and infilling it was possible to dig a hole in the north-west corner of the basement against the street, which exposed fill to a depth of 3.1m. The lower part was homogeneous and evidently of a cellar or pit of c.12th century date, rather than street surfaces.

For the future, it seems that nearly 1m of early deposits are preserved beneath the new building. This reinforces the need to get a reasonable pause for archaeology of at least one of these sites. The Area of Archaeological Importance shortly to be implemented in Oxford should give the necessary machinery.

OXFORD: 39-41 Queen Street, The Clarendon Centre SP5J2061 Brian Durham

After the spectacular stratigraphy exposed on the Cornmarket Street frontage of the new shopping arcade (Newsletter March 1983) the watching brief on the remainder of the site proved disappointing. The engineers revised their design and decided to reroute all drains to the north, away from the Queen Street frontage. This meant that the hoped-for trench into the late Saxon levels never materialised, and the archaeology was confined to deep exploratory trenches to test the foundations of the buildings to the rear. These showed no surviving natural gravel, let alone the original ground surface. This suggested extensive domestic pit-digging as has been seen in a similar zone behind other medieval frontages. Otherwise the watch confirmed the existence of modern cellars on the western side of the Queen Street frontage. It was not possible to differentiate a cellar to the east, so there are probably early deposits preserved here.

RADLEY: Barrow Hills

The Bronze Age features Claire Halpin

The weekend excavations by the Abingdon Archaeological Society and local volunteers are currently focussed on two adjacent Bronze Age barrows (Nos 12 and 13), which lie at the western end of the cemetery. No central burial was found within Barrow 13, indeed, only nondescript hollows were present. Conversely seven burials have been excavated from within Barrow 12.

Barrow 12 is a double-ditched barrow, comparable with others in the cemetery, and of two phases of construction. Four burials were recovered from the centre. The primary burial consisted of an adult crouched burial with a bronze awl lying against the left foot. It may be contemporary with that from the centre of the small ring-ditch adjacent to Barrow 1. An unaccompanied cremation and a fragmentary inhumation were found in a pit cutting the central burial. The fragmentary burial consisted of the articulated upper half of a child, laid with care and accompanied by a biconical urn. Overlying these graves was a cremation. About 2m south-east of these central burials an infant inhumation in the crouched position was

excavated. The burial pit was shallow (c.0.20m) and the lower leg bones and skull were plough damaged. Further evidence of plough damage was seen in the discovery of a pot base in situ in the south-east quadrant of this barrow. It is likely that the pot originally contained a cremation. On the east side of the ditch, above the primary silts, a small collared urn containing cremated bone was excavated. A miniature pot lay inverted over this deposit. A satellite burial consisting of a plough damaged cremation was excavated on the north-east side of Barrow 12.

An unusual large well or water hole (8m in diameter at the top), pre-dating the outer ditch of Barrow 12 and lying on its western side, is being dug. Slumped in the top of this feature is the only surviving bank material on the site and preserved Bronze Age surface. A sparse scatter of prehistoric sherds, flint flakes, animal bone and charcoal have so far been recovered. A hollow-base triangular arrowhead was found in the adjacent lower ditch fill.

In conjunction with the excavation of Barrows 12 and 13 the monuments are being reconstructed, the aim is primarily to demonstrate to visitors their original form - this is in anticipation of our Open Day in September.

We welcome new volunteers and anyone interested should contact the Unit for details.

The Anglo-Saxon Settlement features - R A Chambers

Excavation and recording of the Anglo-Saxon settlement features is planned to continue until the end of August and then to recommence in December after a 3-month break.

Machine stripping of the plough soil continued at Barrow Hills until the beginning of April. This brought the total area stripped to approximately 5 acres (2.5ha). By the 4th week in April all of the newly stripped area had been cleared for a second time and planned prior to the excavation of individual features.

The areas stripped in 1984 all appear to contain further prehistoric features and Anglo-Saxon settlement remains.

The Anglo-Saxon settlement continues to yield material consistent with a settlement that spanned the later 5th to early 8th centuries. The remains are almost entirely of buildings. The excavation of the upper filling of two of the Bronze Age barrow ditches have yielded much domestic settlement debris including pottery, animal bone and some finer objects including pin and comb fragments and a small bronze disc brooch.

Several more Sunken Featured Buildings (SFBs) have been excavated in their entirety and none have contained any floor levels contemporary with their primary use. One SFB which cut into the filling of a barrow ditch did contain the remains of a small hearth above the primary infilling of the building. This suggested a cooking hearth with the hollow affording some protection from the wind. This SFB and one other close by yielded several small fragments of a baked clay loomweight. However in total the fragments would only represent the equivalent of one third of a loomweight. The presence of these fragments in the backfilling of the two SFBs cannot be taken as evidence that they were used primarily for weaving.

distance of 8.5m from the existing churchyard boundary, and the length excavated was precisely parallel to it. It seems not to have been the boundary of a larger graveyard, since there was no sign of grave cuts, human bone, or graveyard build-up on the church side. It may therefore have defined a lane outside the churchyard, which perhaps at this date led to an original vicarage. The building demolished in the 1840's could well have had medieval origins as shown by a pencil drawing in Wantage Museum. It is not available for excavation since its site was planted with an avenue of lime trees which are to be preserved in the new development.

Further work would be possible in advance of the proposed rebuilding. The most promising would be to dig some trenches in the presumed area of the old vicarage south of the avenue of limes. This is the only place where early stratigraphy could have survived, protected by the floors of a medieval building. For the remainder of the site, it will be worth watching the contractor's excavations for a new drain down the slope towards the brook, on the chance that there may be pits or further ditches.

WALLINGFORD: High Street, new Sewage Pumping Station (SU609 895) -
Brian Durham

Big holes in the road are always of interest, and the revision of the High Street sewers in Wallingford looked very promising. A deep shaft had been dug previously in the lane which continues the line of Thames Street towards the castle. This was unfortunately not watched, owing to a misunderstanding with South Oxfordshire District Council about the levels in which we were particularly interested. On the 11th January a manhole was started, connecting the existing sewers to this shaft. In the course of the morning a detailed story unfolded.

The earliest road surfaces were at a depth of 1.5m, successive layers of gravel sloping towards the middle of the street. This does not necessarily imply a gravel road however: on this slope up from the bridge the constant wear of carts and pack-horses would have required some metalling, but every time the surface was remade the surviving stones would be reused, leaving just their gravel bedding. There was no pottery, but a piece of clay tile probably implies a medieval date. Any Saxon surfaces must have already been eroded.

After the accumulation of 0.4m of gravel layers, a broad ditch was cut down the middle of the street. The was the 'kennel' or mid-road drain. The sole of a welled and heeled leather shoe shows that it was filled in after the mid 16th but probably before the mid 17th centuries. Again there was no pottery (why is Wallingford so awkward?) but there was a very interesting group of metal-work. There were enough nails to shoe the back end of a horse, all unused, together with the ends of the rods from which the smith had been making them. They are unlikely to have been washed far along the kennel, so they suggest a smithy at this point in the High Street. He may also have been a farrier, since there was a horse-shoe in the kennel.

The Wallingford kennel was shallower and wider than the High Street kennel in Oxford, which was seen in similar circumstances in 1981. The shallowness is perhaps partly explained by the slope, because there would have been a tendency for the road level to be worn away rather than building up. This

Several entirely post-built structures have also been discovered in an area thought to be barren until detailed excavation was undertaken. As with previous post-built structures very few artifacts have been found. Because of the nature of the site there are no stratigraphic links with SFBs.

Labour for the site continues to be financed by the Manpower Services Commission. The introduction of a new scheme at the beginning of May was for a smaller number of people than the previous scheme. In consequence excavation at Radley is now handicapped by a severely reduced labour force.

SOMERTON: The Rectory (SP2875 4967) - R A Chambers

The Victorian rectory building lies immediately east of earthworks which mark the site of a deserted area of the medieval village. A watch kept over service trenches during the conversion of the rectory into flats did not provide much medieval material. Apart from one medieval pit or ditch and several sherds of pottery the ground proved to have been heavily made-up during the construction of the Victorian terraced lawns and gardens.

SWYNCOMBE - see Nuffield

WANTAGE: The Vicarage (SU396 879) - Brian Durham

It has been the policy of the Unit to look closely at the focal points of the many lesser towns of Oxfordshire, and particularly those with ancient beginnings. Wantage Vicarage occupies the area west of the churchyard with a steep slope down to the Letcombe Brook. It seemed likely that this large area would include evidence of any early settlement in the neighbourhood of the church. A series of four trial trenches were dug in an effort to substantiate this.

The trenches were placed to investigate the south and east frontages of the site, on the premise that these were the most promising areas for early settlement adjoining the churchyard. The vicarage pulled down in the 1840's was in this area, with an access near the corner of the church. Other trenches investigated the terraced site of the proposed replacement vicarage and the north extremity of the lawn west of the existing vicarage. There was evidence of cultivation in all the trenches. In most places this extended down to the surface of the natural Greensand, leaving no early stratigraphy. The only place where a distinctive deposit survived was in the northernmost trench IV. A layer of very smooth dark grey silty loam produced one sandy sherd and one grass-tempered sherd, which suggested an early deposit. Enlargement of this trench failed to produce any more of this material however, and ran into an area of 17th century disturbance. It is possible that the layer was intact in other areas, but would certainly be patchy and there seems little prospect of recovering the sort of sealed deposit which would add anything new to our knowledge of early Wantage.

With this degree of cultivation or other disturbance it can be anticipated that only features dug into the subsoil would be found, and Trench II produced a good ditch of the late 12th-early 13th century. It ran NE-SW at a

ear was apparently made good after the abandonment of the kennel, when 0.4m of the local chalky stone was dumped to make a new road-bed.

WALLINGFORD: 68-70 Wood Street (SU608 893) - Brian Durham

Roger Bettess and TWHAS have dug a small trench to check whether there was early occupation on this back street, which runs parallel to the Market Place and about 35m to the east on the riverward side. The result was about as positive as could be hoped in a trench 1m x 4.5m, with a large pit producing the earliest Late Saxon assemblage known from Wallingford. Provisionally dated by Maureen Mellor to the 10th-early 11th century, the pottery is of the type which was predominant in Oxford in the 9th-10th centuries, and was appearing as far downstream as London in the 10th century. It is proposed to extend the trench to recover more material, and to get more of the shape of the pit. There are however serious constraints in terms of depth and avoiding the contractor's proposed building lines.

The significance of this find is twofold: it suggests early activity on Wood Street which may therefore have been laid out in the foundation of the town by Alfred: it focusses attention on the many sites of potential redevelopment on this side of the town, which may produce the late Saxon evidence which is inaccessible on the main frontages.

OBITUARY

Newsletter readers will be saddened to hear of the death of Gerald Southern. "Lofty", as he was known to all of us, was Chairman of the Thame Historical Society. He was a constant attender at External Studies courses, he worked as a volunteer on excavations and acted as Chairman of the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Advisory Committee. Lofty will be greatly missed by all his friends at the Archaeological Unit.