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OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT NEWSLETTER INCLUDING  
OXFORDSHIRE PARISH SURVEY NEWS

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Gloucestershire

LECHLADE: Butlers Field - David Miles and Simon Palmer

Thanks to a further grant from the Cotswold District Council the excavation of the Lechlade Anglo-Saxon cemetery was completed in July. A total of 212 inhumations and 32 cremations was recorded. A line of Bronze Age post holes and secondary cremations was found at right angles to the ring ditches reported in the June Newsletter.

The cemetery dated from the early sixth century though there may be a small number of earlier graves. The sixth century cemetery was segregated into zones for women and children, men and cremations. Men were unrepresented in the excavated sample and more probably remain in the western part of the cemetery which lies under the adjacent field.

The Lechlade cemetery is unique in the Thames Valley in also containing mid seventh century burials. These were orientated east-west and were particularly rich burials with many imported grave goods: four cowrie shells from the Red Sea (the largest number from an Anglo-Saxon cemetery), garnets and amethysts.

Four male graves contained seaxes - short, broad-bladed swords, one with a long whetstone in an iron bound box. In one of these male weapon graves there was also the skeleton of a young girl wearing a necklace of silver pendants, amethyst beads and a cabochon garnet mounted in gold.

Three female burials of the mid seventh century had gold medallions, decorated with garnet studs in two cases and a blue glass centre stud in a third.

One female burial was of particular interest: it lay inside a small circular ring ditch; the body was placed in a coffin and with it was an iron weaving sword (the second from the site), a necklace of silver hoops and a silver cross. The cross, similar in shape to that from Ixworth, is probably of Christian significance.

In total, over 1200 objects were found with the inhumations. Conservation has been progressing rapidly at Corinium Museum, with the help of two conservation in-service students from the London University, Institute of Archaeology, and at the Oxford University Institute of Archaeology.

Neutron radiography has been carried out by AERE, Harwell on the sealed bronze 'needle-case', which showed clearly the image of internal organic material. The 'needle-case' was then opened in the Ashmolean Museum laboratory by Gwyn Miles and found to contain fragments of textile, unfortunately much abused by the deprecations of millipedes (identified by Mark Robinson) whose sclerites or hard protective cases were found in large numbers in pellets of textile and silt.

The coroner at Cirencester has decided not to hold an inquest on the gold and silver objects in view of the context of the discoveries. Two lectures on the Saxon cemetery by David Miles in June at the Lechlade village hall, organised by the Lechlade Parish Council, played to full houses.

LECHLADE: Hambridge Lane - John Moore  
SU 212004

The Lechlade cursus is visible on APs running for about 250m NW-SE on the second gravel terrace just NW of Lechlade and disappearing under the suburbs of the town. A 10m wide strip was cleared across the line of the cursus in advance of a new road for a housing development. The trench lay about 200m N of the Butlers Field excavation.

The cursus is c. 50m wide with shallow ditches; the eastern ditch 0.63 to 0.73m deep, the western one 0.44 to 0.53m deep. The eastern ditch was 2.70m wide while the western one varied from 2.00 to 2.50m in width. The filling of the ditches suggests banks along the inside edge of the cursus. The eastern ditch had been recut but there was no evidence to suggest a redigging of the other ditch. About a third of the way down in the fill of the eastern ditch a number of grooved ware sherds were recovered. These should reassemble to form a complete or near-complete vessel.

A circular post-built house was located. The finds coming from the two doorpost pits indicate that this building belongs to the early Iron Age and is probably contemporary with the field boundary located at Butlers Field which cuts across the cursus to the SE of this excavation. There were two 4-post structures associated with the house.

WHELDFORD: Bowmoor - Alistair Marshall  
SU 1720 9665

Proposed extraction of gravel at Bowmoor near Whelford, Glos. provided an opportunity to examine a Roman settlement covering c. 4 hectares. The site was only recently discovered from surface finds; unfortunately it does not show as cropmarks.

The importance of the site lies in its proximity to the Claydon Pike complex less than 2 km away. The Bowmoor site itself lies on an island of gravel within the floodplain of the Coln, thus having the potential of waterlogged material, and further stratigraphic and dating evidence for alluviation in the Upper Thames.

Trial trenching was followed by small scale excavations with the MSC labour force. It is hoped that salvage work can be undertaken when the site is

commercially stripped.

Two phases of enclosure ditches on different alignment were discovered. The earliest phase enclosed rectilinear (c. 20 x 12m) and curvilinear enclosures situated on a low-lying part of the site. Little occupation material was recovered from these. They are best interpreted as paddocks or plots peripheral to the main occupation nucleus.

The second phase of enclosures, stratigraphically later, was much more regular in its layout, but smaller in size. Again little occupation material was recovered.

Tentative dating of both phases would put them in the late 1st and 2nd centuries AD, broadly contemporary with the formal replanning and expansion at Claydon Pike.

The highest point on the site produced the only evidence of domestic occupation. A small area approximately 10m sq. contained stone spreads and possible signs of stone footings. This, however, lay close to the surface and was extensively disturbed by ploughing. It overlies the phase 2 enclosure ditches.

Occupation debris was prolific including pottery, metalwork and coins. The dating of this spans the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. Pottery was predominantly local coarse wares although relatively large quantities of Samian were also recovered.

Midden-type deposits of a similar date were recovered in other areas of the site particularly in low-lying natural hollows. One of these 'ponded areas' was associated with a sluice arrangement formed by dry stone walling, channelling water into a ditch. A Roman date for this feature is most likely.

No later Roman material was recovered indicating the site was abandoned by the 4th century. Many of the Roman features were then sealed by alluvium, perhaps as at Claydon Pike of early Medieval date.

CHARLBURY: Charlbury Quarry - John Lange and Anne Foster  
SP3705 2020 PRN 8912

During the first week of April, rescue excavations were carried out on an exposed stretch of the North Oxfordshire Grims Ditch, NE of Charlbury, prior to limestone quarrying by Curtis & Sons Ltd. Excavation was confined to examining the relationship of two intersecting ditches from which a relative chronology was derived. Although findings provided no datable evidence for the construction of the ditches an approximate 'terminus ante quem' for both was established during the late 1st century BC and late 1st century AD from the pottery in the ditch fill.

The full excavation report will be published in a future edition of Oxoniensia.

DORCHESTER: The Manor House - Tom Hassall

An extensive drain has been found running in a NW-SE direction under the northern side of the house. The sides of the drain are lined with ashlar blocks and it is roofed with medieval window mouldings presumably removed from the claustral buildings of the abbey. The drain had been reused in modern times. It is hoped to provide permanent access to it via a manhole. The date of the roof of the drain is probably post-Reformation but it is possible that the drain itself relates to the abbey.

GORING: Gatehampton Farm - George Lambrick

Trial trenching prior to the construction of a Thames Water pipeline was carried out on the floodplain of the river just south of Goring, next to a Bronze Age barrow cemetery on the first gravel terrace. One barrow extends onto the edge of the floodplain. This proved to be quite well preserved, with a clay core, possibly derived from an old river channel, forming the central part of the mound. This had been covered with gravel and soil from the substantial ditch and from a flat "berm" area between it and the mound from which the topsoil had been stripped.

Apart from a certain amount of late Neolithic or Bronze Age flintwork (almost entirely waste flakes) no dating evidence was recovered. No burials were found, but the centre of the barrow lies under the modern field boundary.

Trenches excavated out onto the floodplain revealed the odd scatter of waste flint flakes, and a few other finds, including a sherd of late Bronze Age pottery beneath the alluvium. There was also evidence of Roman ploughsoils extending underneath the alluvium. No waterlogged deposits were found even in the deep barrow ditch 2m below the present ground surface. That is not to say that water was not found - like everywhere else this summer we had more than enough.

KIDLINGTON: Moat Cottage - R.A. Chambers

Moat Cottage is the surviving part of a large country house almost completely demolished in the 19th century. This house had replaced a medieval manor house and both establishments appear to have been moated. Moat Cottage is now surrounded by a housing estate. Extensions have been built on to both the east and west sides of the cottage. A substantial rubble stone footing has been uncovered in what is now the front garden on the north side of the cottage. The style of construction and the materials used suggest the footing to a causeway across the post-medieval moat. A gateway existed across the presumed line of the moat during the present century providing access to the then rear of the cottage from the field to the north. This access may have been a survival of the earlier access.

It is hoped that further details of the construction of the post-medieval house will be revealed when the ground floor of Moat Cottage is stripped of wall plaster and the later floor is removed. The edge of a worn stone flag floor and the corner of a hearth are already visible.

Part of the post-medieval house may have been built of stone reused from the previous medieval structures. Excavation showed that one medieval structure was robbed of flagstones some of which may have provided the original floor of the present cottage. An undated, moulded ashlar block was included in the quoin work of the south-west corner of the chimney stack, some 1.7m above the present ground level.

NORTHMOOR: Watkins Farm - Tim Allen

Further stripping at Northmoor, Watkins Farm has uncovered further ditches and wells of the Roman settlement on Site B. One oval enclosure with a narrow gated entrance contained large quantities of pottery, and was probably domestic. A further trackway has been uncovered, running roughly parallel to the Roman one on Site A.

One or two of the ditches recorded last year appear to belong to a Medieval enclosure of 11th or 12th century date. Two wells have already proved to be Medieval, and it appears that this area was used for pasture at this time.

Ridge and furrow covers most of the area, showing that a change to arable occurred later in the Medieval period.

OXFORD: Christ Church, Cathedral Cloister - Christopher Scull

Peter McKeague's trial trench (Newsletter XII, 2) has been followed by more extensive excavation to examine in more detail the stone footing and early medieval burials.

The footing is partly concealed beneath the paved western area of the cloister garth, hence its apparent 'cross of Lorraine' shape. It was not possible to recover the entire plan, but lifting flagstones in two areas revealed a north-south return wall and confirmed a western buttress at the north-west corner. These indicate that the footing is rectangular, with eight corner buttresses. Its internal dimensions are c. 5.8m x c. 4.6m, and it encloses a sunken earth floor.

The footing appears to have been constructed during the second quarter of the 16th century, and the structure which it supported seems to have gone out of use, and was presumably dismantled, at some time during the second half of the century, when the sunken interior was filled in with building debris and demolition rubble. Nothing was found which might give further clues to its function.

On the east side of the cloister garth eighteen early medieval burials survived more or less intact, three of them in mortared stone cists and two in graves lined with charcoal. Many more had been destroyed by later medieval or post-medieval disturbances. The quantity of disarticulated human skeletal material from these later contexts indicates that the cloister garth was once part of an extensive burial ground.

This is almost certainly the cemetery of the Saxon minster church, and seems to have been abandoned when the minster was converted to a priory of Augustinian canons in the first half of the 12th century. The extent to

which the surviving burials cut each other argues that the cemetery was in use for a considerable time, but apart from a large gravel pit which appears to have been dug into the cemetery in the later 11th century, and which subsequently had graves cut into its backfill, there is nothing to show how long this might have been. It is hoped that C14 dates from a series of stratigraphically related burials will elucidate this point.

OXFORD: Tower of St. Michael at the Northgate - Brian Durham

Tim Morgan has just completed 3 weeks drawing the inside stonework of the 3rd and 4th storeys of the tower. It is Oxford's oldest building, c. AD 1050, and there has been prolonged discussion as to whether in its original form it was a church tower, a defensive tower, or both. The church propose to refurbish the lower two rooms as a library and treasury/museum, and provide a stair to the roof for a public viewing platform. There will be minimal disturbance to the late Saxon masonry, but the project is a good opportunity to make a thorough reassessment of this fascinating structure.

The survey immediately showed that there have been extensive repairs. Several of the bell openings have been given new arched heads and the whole of the upper east wall has been replaced. Furthermore, the bell-frame and internal bracing added circa 1875 and circa 1900 seems to have required the chasing in of long lacing stones to strengthen the fabric.

Having identified the main rebuilds, it seems that three-quarters of the internal stone survives. It is very rough, largely Corollian ragstone set in a very tough gravely mortar which in most areas partly conceals the shape of the stones. It became clear that raking out the joints would be very destructive, so Tim Morgan had to learn to interpret the shape of the stones without fully exposing them. The only new features so far are two possible 'port-hole' windows in the belfry.

The historical picture is still unresolved. The bell openings seem to be original. Their hollow-chamfered imposts are consistent throughout the tower, and also match those of the ground and second floor doorways. Furthermore, the arched heads of all the doors and windows, and also the unrestored bell-openings, have a distinctive construction. The arches are formed mostly of stones sloping at 45 degrees, as if the builder was more used to forming triangular headed windows. The round shape, therefore, does not result directly from the voussoir but from mortar shaped over the centring. A visual survey of the external elevation suggests that this construction occurs in at least six of the eleven unrestored openings of all types, reinforcing the impression from the imposts that the whole thing is of one build. This is also supported by the evidence of the north-west corner where the 'long and short' quoin stones are continuous all the way up.

The provisional sequence is therefore uncomplicated, but this makes it all the more difficult to explain the second floor door above two windows in the north wall. Perhaps it led onto a parapet along the north wall of the church functioning as the town wall. But the lower windows in the north face of the tower would be totally exposed. Perhaps, therefore, the tower was not built until after the town wall had been diverted, and if the date is really c. 1050, the town wall diversion must have been at least fifty years earlier than we suspected (Durham, *Oxoniensia* 48, 17, 33). The tower would then have

faced onto a graveyard within the walls, and the lower windows would be secure. The upper door would perhaps have led onto the diverted defences, but it is still very strange that there is no sign of where the tower and town wall joined.

We are, therefore, moving towards an acceptance of the tower as part of a church, rather than a free-standing defensive tower as illustrated previously (*Oxoniensia* 48, 34). The remaining recording may substantiate this.

OXFORD: 26 Cornmarket St., former 'Zacharias' - Brian Durham

The premises known formerly as 'Zacharias' have recently been shown by Julian Munby to be one corner of a late 14th-century courtyard inn. The jettied north range was recorded by J.C. Buckler in the 19th century, and Julian has recognised an added west gallery with a crown-post roof. Jesus College was persuaded to consult F.W.B. Charles, who has produced a scheme for the complete reconstruction of the timber frame. The Unit was asked by HBMC to survey the stone structure to complement the timber survey, and this has been largely completed by Frances Peters and Peter Beard.

A wealth of new structural detail has come from the survey, but the most interesting is that it has exposed the entry to the courtyard, coming in from Ship Street beneath the jettied north range. The entry was clearly relocated at an early stage, possibly when the gallery was built. It has been possible to record sections through below-ground deposits in both the range and the entry, and a trench by Peter McKeague in the courtyard produced pottery which generally supported the late 14th-century construction date.

The two 15th-century timber-framed shops which form the Cornmarket Street frontage of the premises are built on stone cellars, and have a two storey stone wall against the courtyard to the rear. The wall is leaning heavily towards the street owing to the insertion of fireplace and chimneys on all floors on this side. Its face to the courtyard survives, however, with beautifully coursed stonework with horizontally lined pointing, and its relationship to the inn buildings suggests that it predates them. There is a blocked first-floor doorway from the gallery to one of the 15th-century shops, or to a building which predated them. There are indeed indications that one jamb of the doorway is original to the wall, which would be the only surviving detail of what must have been a major Cornmarket Street building of the 14th century.

The Unit has been asked to provide a watching brief during the redevelopment.

OXFORD: St. Aldates (Trill Mill Stream) - Brian Durham

We reported in the June Newsletter (Vol. XII No. 2) that the middle of the Trill Mill channel seemed to be a late Saxon reed-bed like its north edge. Further excavation changed this markedly. The 'Roman' level beneath the reed-bed was intact at the north end of the trench, but to the south it was dug away to a depth of c. 1.10m. This seems to be a broad ditch more than 5m wide, which is Saxon rather than Roman on the evidence of thoughted turnshoes in its fill.

A ditch of this width in this position is likely to have functioned partly as a town defence, and there are two likely dates. The safest is the creation of the Saxon burh in 911, but there is an alternative. Much of the material dug out would have been blue buttery clay, very similar to that used in the clay causeway excavated further down St. Aldates in the early 1970's. A late 8th-century date was argued for this, and it would make good sense if this was the material dug from the mill stream, creating a head of water for St. Frideswides mill. So subject to confirmation by pottery and radiocarbon dating, it looks as if the mill stream started as a Mercian ditch of the reign of Offa.

The second trench, on the St. Aldates frontage, produced a good sequence of domestic floors beneath the recently demolished 17th-century building. There was a screens - passage within the 15th-century house, the stone foundations of which seemed to have been in use since the 13th century. Beneath it were at least two phases of buildings on stubby timber piles with a wattle-lined ditch between them and the road. This seems to have been the earliest occupation on the site, and most of the deeper layers were dumped to create a platform. The deepest were revetted by large stones parallel to the road, and this was of a period when the rest of the site was a marsh. It seems likely therefore, that as at 79-80 St. Aldates the houses were built along a causeway, in this case crossing the channel of the mill stream.

The 1985 trenches have, therefore, provided a convincing explanation of the Trill Mill Stream. It was a possibly Middle Saxon artificial ditch for which the water level was progressively raised in the 10th century until it spread over its banks and created a huge marsh. The south road crossed it on a causeway, but when the stone bridge was built (perhaps late 11th century) the causeway made a convenient building platform. The frontage was probably continuously occupied until the modern day, although it is not impossible that the recently demolished building was a replacement of a building cleared away in the Civil War <sup>c.</sup> 1645.

OXFORD: Oriol St. Tunnel - Gerry Wait

In late June and early July Peter McKeaque and the writer kept a watching brief on construction in Oriol Street. The insertion of a tunnel by Oriol College provided a section across the street from east to west, including a 5m long section inside the College to the east. Stratigraphy in the western half of the trench was limited by a post-medieval cellar and an unusually deep sewer main. The eastern half of the trench showed clear stratigraphy, including a series of gravel layers over .50m thick probably representing medieval road surfaces. Below these was observed a thick, red, silty loam (the original topsoil) through which was cut a series of postholes running north to south under the pavement along the east side of Oriol Street. Unfortunately, any early stratigraphy under Oriol College to the east of the street had been destroyed by a series of deep cellars including at least two vaulted cellars, and, therefore, the possible presence of an Anglo-Saxon rampart along the line of Oriol Street still awaits confirmation.

RAMSDEN: Brize's Lodge - R A Chambers

This farm was created in the 19th century when much of the remaining woodland of Wychwood Forest was enclosed and cleared. The last few years have revealed intensive occupation in this area from the Bronze Age onwards. A burial mound survives as an earthwork and cropmarks suggest an Iron Age to Romano-British period settlement adjacent to Cornbury Park. The extensive remains of a villa lie close to the present farm house and spreads of black soil with Romano-British pottery fragments have been revealed by ploughing between the lane and the Ramsden - Leafield road.

Recently a new water supply was installed and by courtesy of the farmer, Mr. Cashman, the opportunity was taken to view the trench sections. A deep ditch with two sherds of probably 1st century ad pottery was discovered to the north-east of the farm house. Several shallow features with Romano-British wares were revealed by the pipe trench between the house and the Ramsden - Leafield road. The trench also revealed the ditch to a possible second prehistoric burial mound.

SHIPTON-UNDER-WYCHWOOD: St. Mary's Parish Church - Tom Hassall

The parish has renewed the floor of this church in the north-east quadrant of the nave and the north and south aisles. The floor was examined for underlying levels, but the Victorian floor with an extensive air space beneath it together with burials appears to have removed any earlier floor levels. The new concrete floor slab will not disturb stratification if it does survive.

STANTON HARCOURT: Gravelly Guy - George Lambrick

Excavations on this major Iron Age and Roman site have begun again. The area opened in 1984 has largely been finished and the third and last major area has been stripped of topsoil. In the Roman half of the site further examples of the very large pits examined in 1983 are being dug. One seems to be another well at least 2.5m deep and with a ramp with hollowed out earth steps leading into it. The others are much shallower with flat bottoms except for recut ditches or gullies round the outside. One at least has a pair of ramps leading into it with post holes either side of one entrance and a compact, trampled surface in the bottom. So far no other similar examples elsewhere have come to light and the purpose of these 'ramped hollows' remain obscure. A dog burial and two dismembered goats in a very small pit have been found nearby.

In the new area a rather more elaborate system of small enclosures or paddocks than was expected from the air photographs has been uncovered in the Roman half of the site. In the Iron Age area another house has been excavated and numerous post-holes suggest the possibility of more. The dense scatter of pits continues across the field but are somewhat less concentrated and complicated than in last year's area. A series of intercutting ditches and pits promises a reasonable stratigraphic sequence which will help with establishing a pottery chronology for the settlement. Also in the new area is a scatter of small earlier prehistoric (?Neolithic) pits. Most intriguing is a ring of large post-holes c. 1.7m across with a gap to the east. Wherever

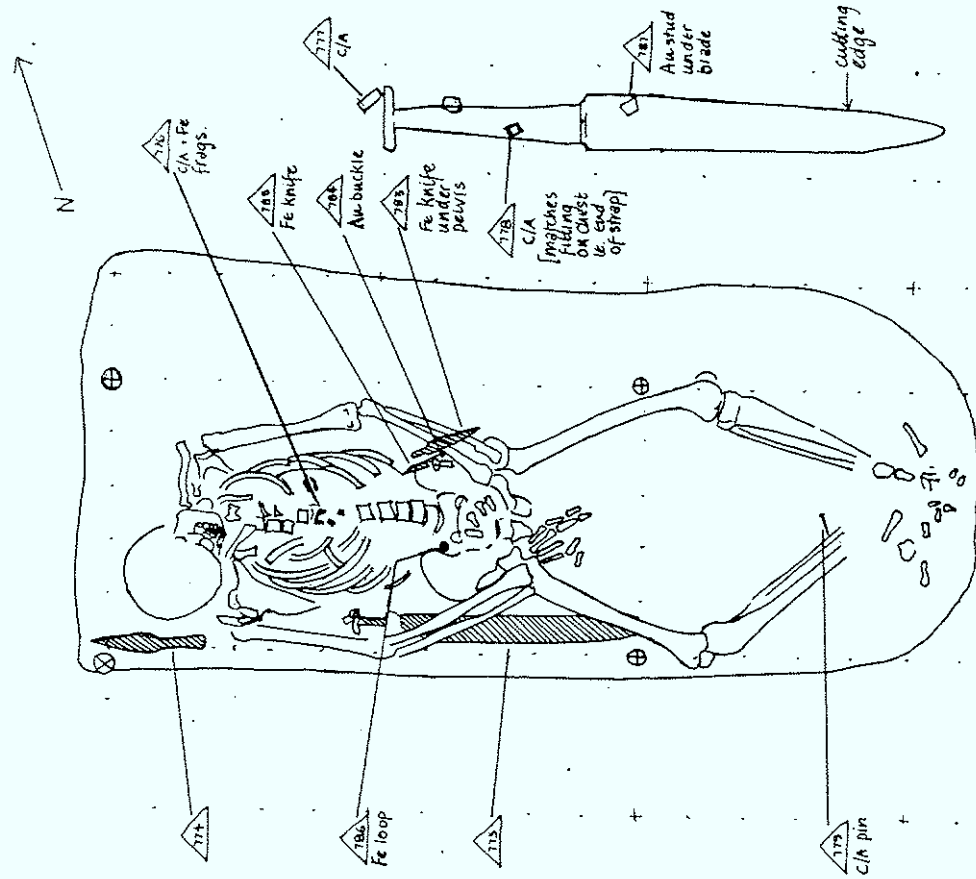
relationships occur these post-holes are earlier than Iron Age and Roman features - a mini Wood Henge perhaps? We will see in the next few months.

WALLINGFORD - George Lambrick

Trial trenches were excavated to establish the extent and character of a late Bronze Age occupation layer visible in the bank of the Thames about half a mile below Wallingford Bridge. The site lies exactly on the line of the southern route of the proposed Wallingford by-pass. The excavation showed that the Bronze Age material extends c. 17m back from the river bank before merging with the upper silting of a major river channel no longer visible but running parallel to the modern river. The layer seems to have been eroded as the channel filled up (hence the pottery etc. in the upper silts). Originally the late Bronze Age activity was probably on an island as the layer dips down into the modern river channel as well. North - south it extends about 120m, so it appears that the island was a long, thin eyot between two channels of the river.

The silted channel on the landward side of the site is c. 3m deep and two oak plies were located suggesting some sort of waterfront or other structure. Much charred and cut wood was also found in the early channel silts together with animal bones, carbonized grain, and a sherd of possibly later Iron Age pottery. These waterlogged deposits were sampled and should provide much valuable environmental evidence from the preserved seeds, beetles etc.

It is hoped that it will be possible to carry out further work next year to assess more fully the character of the timber structures and clarify in more detail the extent of the site and its relationship to the river channels. At present it seems to be a relatively high status site (past excavations have produced a certain amount of metalwork as well as much pottery and bone etc., and this work produced a bronze ring and a (?glass bead). It is probably similar to a major late Bronze Age waterfront site excavated at Runymede. There a major settlement has also been found on the drier ground back from the river. This could also be the case here and a further task is to try to locate such a site.



A 7th century Saxon, buried with his weaponry, found on the excavations at Butler's Field, Lechlade.

