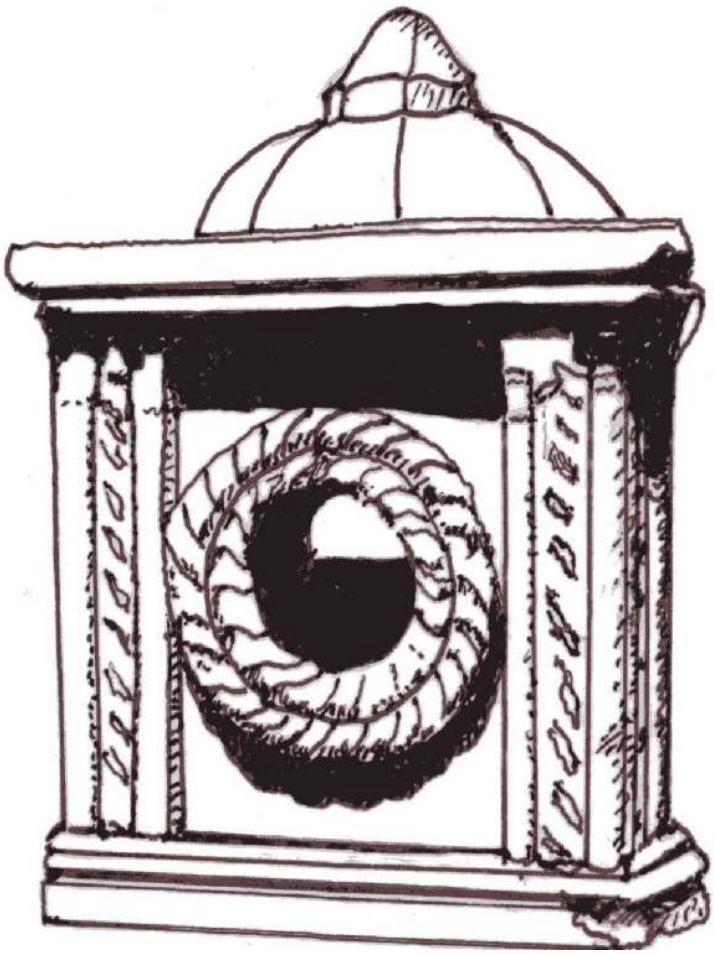
SOAG BULLETIN



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Articles, book reviews and news items, accompanied by illustrations if appropriate, are invited for publication in the 2004 issue of *SOAG Bulletin*. Preference will be given to items relevant to South Oxfordshire, although others may be considered. Contributions, preferably in Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format (RTF), should be submitted to the Editor at the earliest opportunity by email or on disk or, alternatively, cleanly typed or, as a very minimum, clearly handwritten. The Editor reserves the right to edit material prior to publication.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2003

Cynthia Graham-Kerr

This year has been busier than ever as we have not only extended our own dig at Gatehampton but some of us also worked at the Little Wittenham, Castle Hill dig, directed by Tim Allen from Oxford Archaeology (also a SOAG member) who invited us to come as often as we could (see below). The modernisation of the Committee and general running of the group continues with improvements in our publications and recording through use of computers and digital photography. We were very sorry to lose the Vorsters who are now in South Africa, but remain in touch with SOAG by email. The attendance at most general meetings has been good but we could do with more of you - it is a kindness to the speaker to muster a large audience and makes it worth while for him or her to turn out, often with a long journey.

I would like to thank my lively Committee for their hard work, often travelling long distances to committee meetings in bad weather, and this year we have subcommittees for the *SOAG Bulletin* and Programme - more travel and time.

We have had a steady flow of new members (many diggers): 15 for certain and a number of others seriously interested.

Meetings

We made a good start on 15 January with 24 members present to hear our Secretary, Ian Clarke, tell us about 'Two Men in Iraq', a story of his father's time in Iraq in the 1930s and connections with Leonard Woolley's excavations at 'Ur of the Chaldees'. In February, at our Members' Evening, Edward Golton showed us a number of beautiful slides of the Classical sites in south west Turkey, George Henwood gave an interesting talk on Roman cavalry and their special saddles, and John Westwood talked about the Romans' 'written word' on tablets. This is the one meeting when anyone can give a short talk and it encourages new speakers. Also in February, we discussed the new look *SOAG Messenger* and the idea of using the back page for members' jottings, now firmly established as *the tailings*…, and another appeal was made for a Treasurer to take over from Pieter Vorster, which resulted in John White offering to help. Hazel Williams, our Site Supervisor, gave an excellent and very well attended 'Dig Update' talk in May, encouraging us to work at the dig again. We were then meeting out of doors until September when Tim Allen gave us an overview of the 'Excavations at Castle Hill' (Little Wittenham), where some of us had worked in August - this event was very well attended, including a number of visitors. Paul Booth, from Oxford Archaeology, came in October with a most useful talk on 'Roman Pottery' - we certainly had plenty of examples to show him. November brought John Wilson from the Cogges Farm Museum to talk on 'Old and Historic Gardening Tools', bringing with him a vast display of old implements and tools for gardening, photographs and books, and reminding us to search our sheds and attics. December produced a talk on the 'Jubilee River' excavations by Phil Catherall, an archaeologist with the Environmental Agency.

The Dig

The dig made unexpected progress. We opened more of Trench VII southwards as planned, but we had more diggers than we had anticipated and were looking for jobs for them; we therefore had the manpower towards the end of the season to open a new Trench VIII to trace the walls that we believed would link the buildings in Trench VII with those recorded in Trench III. In spite of a very hot summer for digging, our workers turned up in good numbers - we rarely had less than 6 and reached 17 one Sunday. Altogether we have had 33 people to dig at different times - people cannot always come due to other commitments but are welcome to dig whenever they can.

We also provided training for several students who needed practical experience of digging contexts, levelling and geophysics (a special thank you to Geoff Deakin who has done our surveys and helps so much with his geological knowledge). The dig now covers 70-80 square metres, all planned by the indefatigable Hazel who works so hard behind the scenes to keep our recording straight - we are hoping to give her more help this coming year. Her full report on the dig will be found later in this *SOAG Bulletin*. The dig reopened on 13 April and closed on 31 October.

We had a special Diggers' Lunch at the John Barleycorn pub in Goring on 2 November to which we invited our landowner, Robin Cloke, as a thank you for all his kindness and help with the dig over many years, perhaps more years than he cares to remember! We presented him with the recently published book *Roman Oxfordshire*, signed by the

coauthors Paul Booth and Martin Henig, and also by Tim Allen, together with some wine vouchers. There were 16 diggers present and we had an excellent lunch in a room laid for us upstairs.

Party and Outings

The SOAG Summer Party had a new venue at the Goring Thames Sailing Club, arranged by Mike Fulton and it was most pleasing being beside the river - a modern and very attractive club house. It was so good. We might be going there again, so do make a note of the date when it comes in the programme as there is plenty of space and it needs plenty of people to fill it. The competition was arranged by Gareth Thomas and Ben Morling took charge of the raffle.

Our outings included visits to Dorchester-on-Thames, the Marcham-Frilford excavations and Combe Mill Beam Engine. These are reported separately in the *SOAG Bulletin*.

Little Wittenham, Castle Hill Excavations

This dig had much publicity and was run by Oxford Archaeology with Tim Allen directing. Several of us worked various days of the week throughout August, including Cyn, Hazel, Chrissy Morling and grandson Ben, Colin Davies, Mike Fulton, David Nicholls, and David Hutton. We had ITV Channel 4's Time Team in the lower field, but they did not find much. The weather was exceedingly hot and we wilted over our work but enjoyed it as it was most interesting.

This year has also given us some fieldwalking in connection with this project, when in response to Tim's request for help we went to the old farm at Little Wittenham to walk the big field, of which we did half last year. We joined up with other locals and some from Oxford Archaeology and worked in pairs across the field. It was interesting to see how some areas had a fair quantity of pot (largely Roman) whilst others were quite barren. This work has also resulted in several SOAG members joining in pot washing and marking at Oxford, and helping with geophysical surveys. We may even gain one or two new members out of all this.

We are most grateful for all the generous support given to us by our friends at Oxford Archaeology and for the opportunities they provide for our members to work with them and learn from them on their many local projects.

National Trust Monitoring

Once again this year we carried out the monitoring of Greys Court near Henley and both Basildon Park and Pangbourne Meadow, and the notes have all been sent back to Hughenden Manor, the National Trust's local headquarters. Three of us also enjoyed a very pleasant day there at the NT Monitoring Group AGM, with Gary Marshall showing slides and taking us round Bradenham House after an excellent lunch at Hughenden Manor. The AGM is held at a different venue each year and is always worth attending.

We would like to get more members involved in all these varied projects so do please come along. Invite your friends to come too and meet us, try digging for themselves and experience the thrill of discovering new things in the landscape around them. So on this note of hope we look forward to SOAG continuing to grow in knowledge, experience and numbers - it's all up to you.

2003 AGM GUEST LECTURE
DAVID WILKINSON: THE ORACLE EXCAVATIONS
Report by Ian Clarke

We were very pleased to welcome David Wilkinson from Oxford Archaeology to deliver the guest lecture for the SOAG Annual General Meeting held on 23 March 2003, this being an excellent illustrated talk on the Oracle excavations. The Oracle is well known now as the name given to the recent major shopping, entertainment and office development in the centre of Reading, but it takes its name from the Oracle Workhouse that occupied part of the site in the 17th and 18th centuries.

This was a large development site, occupying virtually the whole of the area south of Minster Street down to the River Kennet, bounded on the west by Bride Street and on the east by Duke Street, and including a small part south of the river on the east side. From 1996-98 a team of up to 50 archaeologists worked on the site. David guided us logically through the archaeology with a sequence of excellent colour slides and frequent, helpful referral to the invaluable John Speed map of Reading, dated 1610. The Holy Brook runs west to east through the northern part of the site and the old arch work that covered this was examined during the excavation; some of it incorporates stone from Reading Abbey and a brick arch had carried the west range of the workhouse across the stream.

Evaluation trenches showed some 800 years of accumulated archaeology to a depth of 4 metres. Six major area excavations were carried out, most importantly covering the Oracle Workhouse, the Yield Hall and the St Giles Mill sites.

Built in 1628, the Oracle Workhouse was one of the earliest workhouses in the country and was used for the production of cloth. It was pulled down in 1850. Below the remains of the Workhouse were found rows of clay lined pits from a 16th century tannery. Deeper still were the wall foundations of a large medieval stone building, probably comprising accommodation and a workshop for dyeing or brewing. One wall of this building had been founded on oak piles that gave a dendrochronology date of AD 1267.

The old Yield Hall was a 17th century house that survived until 1937. It also was found to have incorporated stone from Reading Abbey in its construction. Inside the foundations of the Yield Hall were the foundations of an earlier, 16th century building used for metalworking.

The St Giles Mill occupied the site on the south bank of the River Kennet from at least the time of the Domesday Book, 1086. Oak timbers from a later structure gave a dendrochronology date of AD 1300. A much larger mill on the site dating from about AD 1600 survived until 1903, when it was pulled down to make way for the Reading Tram Depot, now itself swept away by recent development. One of the most remarkable discoveries was the rim of a large gear wheel made from four pieces of oak. This is a pit wheel, which is the driving gear in the gear train, mounting directly on the water wheel shaft. The pit wheel dates probably from the 13th century and is the only one of its kind in existence.

In all, some 9000 different elements (layers, walls, pits, postholes, timbers, etc) were meticulously recorded and the collection of over 65,000 finds was generously donated by the developer, Hammerson plc, to the Reading Museum Service. The complete site archive will be held by the Museum of Reading for future reference and display.

David Wilkinson is a Senior Project Manager with Oxford Archaeology. He is currently engaged in the analysis and publication of the Oracle project. His responsibilities at Oxford Archaeology include the contracts with Historic Royal Palaces for Archaeology at Hampton Court and the Tower of London, and with the Royal Household for archaeology at Buckingham and Kensington Palaces.

A VISIT TO DORCHESTER-ON-THAMES

Janet Sharpe

On 14 June 2003, sixteen members of SOAG met Mary Tame of the Dorchester-on-Thames Historical Society for a guided tour of the village. Mary took us first to the Dorchester Museum, housed in the Abbey Guest House adjacent to the Abbey itself, where she gave us an outline of the history of the village. The archaeology dates back at least to the Neolithic: a henge and cursus were dug away during gravel extraction and Dorchester is now almost an island among a sea of gravel diggings. A geophysical survey by English Heritage in 2002 revealed a possible Bronze Age precursor to the Iron Age hillfort on Castle Hill across the river and during the late Iron Age the focus of settlement shifted to the Dyke Hills site at Dorchester itself. This *oppidum* or market town was defined on two sides by the Thames, on the third by the Thame and on the fourth by a massive double rampart and ditch.

Dorchester appears to have been a Roman town of some importance, although its Roman name has not survived. The site was probably chosen by the Romans because it would have formed an important overnight stop on the road between Silchester and Alchester, there was a nearby crossing of the Thames, and there was an efficient Iron Age farming economy already in place. Lack of local building stone meant that the first Roman defences were earthen banks and most of the buildings were of timber. Any imported stone, including that used for the later town walls, was robbed out and recycled long ago, so very little remains of Roman Dorchester today.

Thanks to the well-established presence of early Saxon *foederati* or Roman mercenaries, who formed the vanguard of Anglo-Saxon settlement, the town survived the demise of Roman Britain. In AD 635 an important event took place in the town when St Birinus baptised Cynegils, King of Wessex, and was granted land in Dorchester for the establishment of his episcopal see and cathedral church. This northernmost part of Wessex was later conquered by Offa and became part of Mercia, and by AD 800 the see of Dorchester was the largest in the country. Being inconveniently placed at the southern boundary of this vast see, the bishopric was at one point transferred to Leicester, but was transferred back to Dorchester in the 870s in order to escape Viking raids. At this time Dorchester was the cathedral centre of a diocese which extended throughout the Midlands from the Thames in the south to the Humber in the north. This situation continued for another 200 years until the bishopric was moved to Lincoln sometime between 1072 and 1086. Although permission was granted for an Abbey to be built, Dorchester then entered a long period of decline from which it has never recovered. In 1728 it was described as 'a poor town without any manner of trade nor likely much to improve'.

Our tour of Dorchester began with the magnificent Abbey church. Some excavations were carried out in 2001 when a new heating system was being installed, and the foundations of the Saxon cathedral were found beneath the existing church. Once an important pilgrimage centre, the shrine area of the church was destroyed during the Dissolution and now provides a spacious setting for the shrine of St Birinus, which was reconstructed in 1964 incorporating parts of the original stonework dating from 1320. Other points of particular interest are the Jesse Window (described by Mary as 'the best in Europe') and a remarkable recumbent stone effigy of an unknown knight dated c.1280, depicted in the act of unsheathing his sword. A new pentice or lean-to has been constructed outside against the north wall of the church to house the new boiler room and to serve as a museum for the decorated stonework found during the excavations. Finds from the cloister area north of the church were dominated by Romano-British pottery, and I found several sherds in the rose beds alongside the present path on the south side of the church.

Leaving the Abbey, we crossed the road by the toll cottage (which is marked with the height of flood water in 1828 and 1894) and walked south along Bridge End towards Dyke Hills. Piped water was late coming to Dorchester and well water was used until the 1950s. All washing was done in the hovel at the back of the house and there were no cesspits, only the garden. The back wall of a terrace of 13 one-up-one-down cottages (Albert Terrace) survives at right angles to the lane and each one of these tiny cottages, according to Mary, would have housed six to eight people. Further down the lane, a modern wall in the garden of 'Hi-Ways' marks the site of the Roman wall. The village green at the end of Bridge End is where the road came in from the old pre-1815 bridge over the Thame. The houses on the opposite side of the green date from the 1400s and smoke-blackened beams suggest that a smoke hole in the roof served before the chimneys were inserted. The

end of the lane gives a good view of Dyke Hills with Castle Hill beyond, and the nearby allotments mark the centre of the Roman and Saxon town. This site became a hemp croft in Elizabethan times, supplying fibre for the canvas sails of the British navy.

The centre of Dorchester today contains many ancient buildings of exceptional architectural interest. Opposite the Abbey is a row of cruck cottages and the Post Office dates from the 1600s. The 1874 Missionary College was built on the site of an old cottage at the corner of Queen Street. The jettied cottages opposite are dated c.1600. The George Hotel was a coaching inn, parts of which date back to the late 15th/early 16th century. The steps in the courtyard lead up to an open gallery giving access to accommodation on the first floor: the function of this building has remained unchanged for centuries. The White Hart was another coaching inn. It was restored in 1691, the date written in brickwork on the front, but it is much older than that. North Gate House has a double jetty and dates to the 1600s, and Abbey Cottage opposite is another Tudor timber-framed house. The central hall-type cottages opposite Hallidays Antiques were probably Medieval shops, The cottage next door to Hallidays was the headquarters of the ARP (Air Raid Precautions) during the last War. Mary recalled that the alarm would sound first in Wallingford and then in Dorchester, and if you took your time the all-clear would have sounded before you were in post in Dorchester.

Our thanks are due to Mary Tame for taking the time to show us around her village and for sharing her wealth of knowledge with us.

COMBE MILL BEAM ENGINE
Cynthia Graham Kerr

Ten SOAG members met at 2 pm by the entrance to the Combe Mill beam engine exhibition, Woodstock, on Sunday 17 August to see it in action. We had heard that this was to be its last working day and the exhibition was then to be closed. This will be a great loss as there was not only this unique beam engine to see, but several other smaller engines and a mass of old tools and implements in a long barn, and various other industrial objects on display. The exhibition is run by the Mill Restoration Group who were there in smart green overalls with their pet engines, to explain and answer our questions. We moved from the beam engine into the next room with more busy engines, all fascinating to watch, and a great many other things to see, before we went upstairs to a long gallery which had a canteen with cakes and drinks at one end. Some of us sampled these, taking them down to eat by the trees and river in the sun. We then looked at a forge and some other small engines (one went 'pop' suddenly) and walked over a small bridge leading to woods, then back to the gallery, which was full of household, farm, horse and gamekeepers' tools and equipment, and tried to remember them for future identification.

Some of us then went to Bladen churchyard and to see the various monuments to the Churchills, and then walked down a steep village road to a small teashop where we had a delicious cream tea, which made a satisfactory finish to a most interesting day. Others went to the bus museum at Long Hanborough, which was fascinating.

THE SOAG PARTY 2003
Cynthia Graham Kerr

This year Joy Whitehead could not host the party at her house owing to building work being carried out, so Mike Fulton very kindly arranged for us to hold it at Goring Thames Sailing Club on Saturday 12 July. Freda and John Mottram arranged the wine supply, and we all brought our usual platefuls of eats. We tried the new time of 6 to 10 pm, but most people arrived at 8 pm as usual.

Gareth arranged an original competition which was won by Christine Hogbin - so she will arrange the competition next year - and Ben Morling, our newest junior archaeologist (13), ran the Raffle.

Everyone agreed it was a splendid venue, and the weather was kind - although a bit too hot. There were about 30 of us, and it was nice to see that a good number stayed to help clear up. The food was

excellent and we thanked the Fultons for their help in arranging the venue. There was plenty of space and we could easily accommodate more next year, so make a note of the date when you get your programme before arranging your holidays.

OXFORDSHIRE PAST 2003

Janet Sharpe

This year's Oxpast Conference was hosted by The Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society (TWHAS) on 10 May and was very well attended by over 100 delegates, including 10 members of SOAG. Stuart Dewey's welcoming address was followed by a talk by Paul Smith, County Archaeologist, about local archaeological discoveries along the Transco pipeline. This was a departure from Paul's usual annual round-up of archaeology in the county but his topic was of particular interest to all who have seen the scars across the countryside associated with the laying of this 25-km pipeline from Chalgrove to East Ilsley. The main features included a linear multiperiod (Middle Bronze Age to Late Roman) site east of Warborough, Roman drainage ditches southwest of Brightwell, a possible early Christian Saxon burial southeast of Blewbury, and a section through a much-eroded Grims Ditch on the Berkshire Downs.

The next two talks were about Wallingford: Judy Dewey (TWHAS) presented an excellent summary of the history of Wallingford Castle, and Neil Christie (Leicester University) gave a progress report of the ongoing Wallingford Burh to Borough Research Project. He described how the project team was trying to piece together bits of the jigsaw by studying documentary evidence, reassessing previous studies and conducting their own survey work. Preliminary geophysical and topographical work in the Bullcroft last summer hinted at a possible location for the Holy Trinity Priory north of the bowling green, possible late Saxon buildings in the northwest corner and a substantial structure and possible fish pond to the west and south. The Saxon ramparts were accurately surveyed for the first time and shown to remain up to 7 m high, the best preserved in the country. Similar work in the Castle Meadows across the triple ramparts has so far given complex and inconclusive results. Much remains to be done on these sites and elsewhere.

The morning session finished with a brief presentation by Susan Lisk (Oxford County Council) who described the work of the Portable Antiquities Scheme in Oxfordshire and reminded everyone that the 1996 Treasure Act has now been extended to include base metals.

The castle theme continued after lunch with Paul Booth (Oxford Archaeology) describing recent excavations at the Oxford Castle site. Eberhard Sauer (Keble College) then gave an account of the latest discoveries at Alchester Roman fort. Having established that the west gate of an annex was constructed in autumn AD 44, it is just possible that the main fortress was built in the year of the Roman Invasion in AD 43. Two enormous buildings with timber foundations were discovered: a possible HQ building in the annex and a possible granary. The street from the annex into the main fort, which later became part of the civilian town, appears to have been lined with walls that could have supported colonnades, suggesting that the early town was very grand indeed. The afternoon session closed with a round-up of recent archaeology in the City of Oxford by Brian Durham (Oxford City Council) who described a miscellany of sites including an early paved ford (the original Oxenford?) at Osney Mead, an invisible Roman settlement in Blackbird Leys that yielded to excavation but not to geophysics, a Medieval sluice house and a Victorian brewery in the Paradise Street site, the Rewley Road swing bridge built in 1851, a 19th century graveyard in Bonn Square, and possibly the earliest surviving examples of prison reform at the Oxford Castle site.

COUNCIL FOR BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY, SOUTH MIDLANDS GROUP AGM 2003

Margaret Westwood

The CBA South Midlands Group held its AGM at Rectory Cottages, Bletchley, this year and I attended to represent SOAG. A different venue is selected each year, and some of us attend to enjoy a visit to historical places or features in the area, conducted by members of the local amateur archaeological group. The Mottrams, who kindly gave me a lift, visited Bletchley Park (SOAGs will remember a visit there to see the innovatory wartime codecracking computer some years ago).

While the Mottrams visited Bletchley Park I went into the community centre nearby, comprising the 1475 Rectory Cottages which were restored and reopened in 1973. There is a large hammer-beam roofed hall together with a kitchen, other facilities, and smaller rooms. The white walls show up the massive woodwork with four surviving grotesque carved heads on the ends of vast oak beams paralleled only among similar secular halls by the Pilgrims' Hall at Winchester.

The minutes of the AGM meeting will be available later, but the abiding memory is of the usual few stalwarts who continue to support this group, whom we meet each year, Barry Horne who edits the comprehensively-indexed journal (*South Midlands Archaeology*) of all the digs and investigations made in the area and compiled during the year.

The illustrated talk which followed was by Alan Hardy of Oxford Archaeology on the Higham Ferrers dig in Oxfordshire, which has features that parallel our own Roman dig and includes the remains of a shrine rich with votive offerings, such as we visited near Marcham this summer.

The journals of the CBA South Midlands Group for this and previous years are available from the SOAG library, together with a detailed description of the Rectory Cottages.

MONITORING PANGBOURNE MEADOW FOR THE NATIONAL TRUST

Jane Griffith-Williams

The most worrying thing is, as usual, the erosion of the river (Thames) bank, mainly due to the mooring of boats that cut into it with their prows. Time will tell whether the posts recently installed will entirely stop people hammering in mooring-stakes, but these should improve the situation considerably.

The ditch on the downstream side of the meadow is absolutely dry at the moment (3 October) and the footpath now goes straight across it but, no doubt, we shall soon be using the kissing gate again.

The unmown area along the boundary on the side away from the river is reverting to scrubland fairly quickly. The middle damp area (recently mown) is currently very desiccated but in good condition, with plenty of wild flowers earlier in the year. Altogether the grass in the different areas of mowing patterns seems to have recovered from the drought very well, which suggests that the more delicate flowers will have a good chance of survival.

GATEHAMPTON FARM EXCAVATION INTERIM REPORT 2003

Hazel Williams

This has been a particularly good year for excavation at Gatehampton Farm. There was a substantial increase in the number of people involved on a regular basis. The hot dry weather during the summer and autumn made digging very hard, but did not diminish the enthusiasm of the diggers. It gave an extra boost to the end of the season when we were able to open a new trench, the

long-awaited Trench VIII. This is positioned between the two earlier trenches and provides evidence confirming that the villa building or series of connected buildings extends for up to 40 m across the site.

Work continued in Trench VII, on the range of heated rooms added to the western end of the building, to attempt to answer some of the questions raised by the previous year's work. We have also taken a wider view of the site, with an extensive geophysical survey to link the villa building with other Roman features in the landscape.

Due to a lot of effort in the trenches and with the help of the geophysical survey, we have progressed much further in our understanding of the villa at Gatehampton Farm. This report is intended to cover briefly the main highlights of this year's dig.

The geophysical survey

One of the most important developments this year has been the completion of the geophysical survey of the areas immediately around Trench VII and in the adjacent field. This survey has built on earlier work aimed at bringing together all the information we have to identify both the extent of the villa buildings and its wider context: the courtyards, ditches, boundaries and other archaeological features in the surrounding landscape. It has also been a great help in planning our trenches; the first stage of the survey was completed before the dig opened in April and enabled us to identify much more accurately the areas we needed to investigate.

Fig. 1 shows the results of the initial survey, using resistivity, of Area A around Trenches VII and VIII and Area B in the adjacent field. The position of Trenches VII and VIII are shown as well as that of Trench III, which is now backfilled.

The survey of Area A (20 x 20 m) clearly shows the extent of the walls and rubble south of Trench VII. At the end of 2002 we thought that the range of rooms in Trench VII might continue southwards but the survey has been very helpful in showing that in fact the archaeological features extended only another 3 or 4 m beyond the southern edge of the trench. It is also clear that an area of high resistivity extends eastwards, back towards Trench III. An area of low resistivity is just visible on the northern side of the survey area between Trenches VII and III. Trench VIII was positioned to investigate this and part of the rubble spread.

The survey of the adjacent field, Area B (100 x 60 m), shows clearly the line of the ditch going NNE then turning at a right angle to run along the northern side of the villa building. This ditch was the first feature to be excavated when Trench III was opened and the fill was Roman. Although in Trench III the ditch was only about 3 m wide, it looks much wider in places in the survey. This is probably due to the gradual shifting of the position of the ditch as it was repaired and re-cut over time.

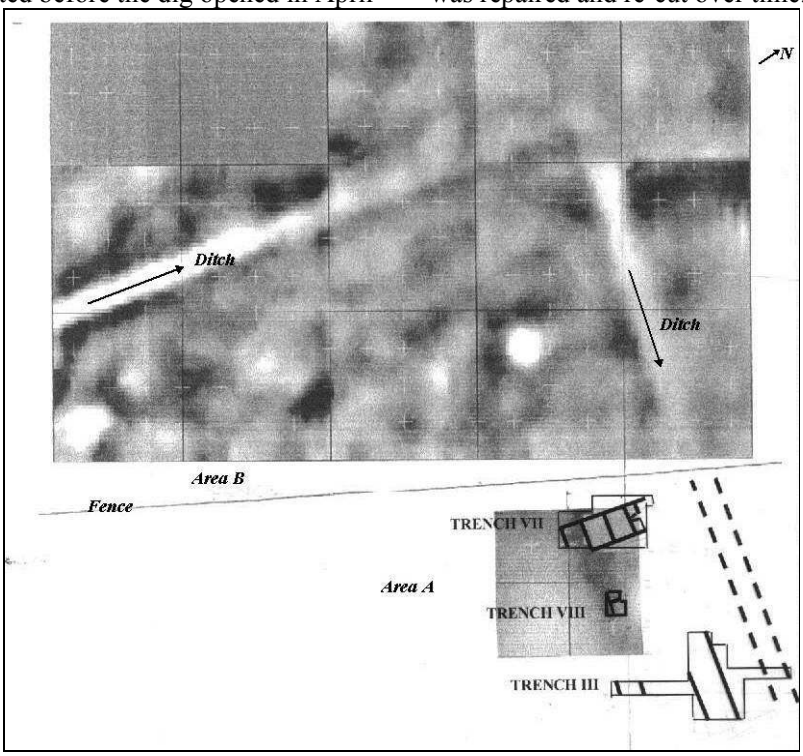

Fig. 1: The geophysical survey.

The area enclosed by the ditch has some interesting anomalies that we hope to investigate further with additional surveys to find out if this is a courtyard area or whether there is evidence of more structures. Areas of high resistivity (darker) may be compacted soil or rubble. Of particular interest are the two circular areas of low resistivity (white), which are each approximately 7 m in diameter and may be large pits.

The ditch is part of a series of linear cropmarks that appear in aerial surveys of the area. During the preparation of this report new data from a magnetometer survey of the adjacent field by Geoff Deakin has produced exciting results: a complex, multi-layered landscape of ditches and tracks with several interesting semicircular features. Some correspond with known cropmarks from the aerial survey, but many are new and are being resurveyed, and we look forward to seeing the results of this in the spring. It is hoped to link this information with that from earlier excavations to the south by Oxford Archaeology that included several Roman features: a corn drier, cobbled surfaces, tracks and ditches.

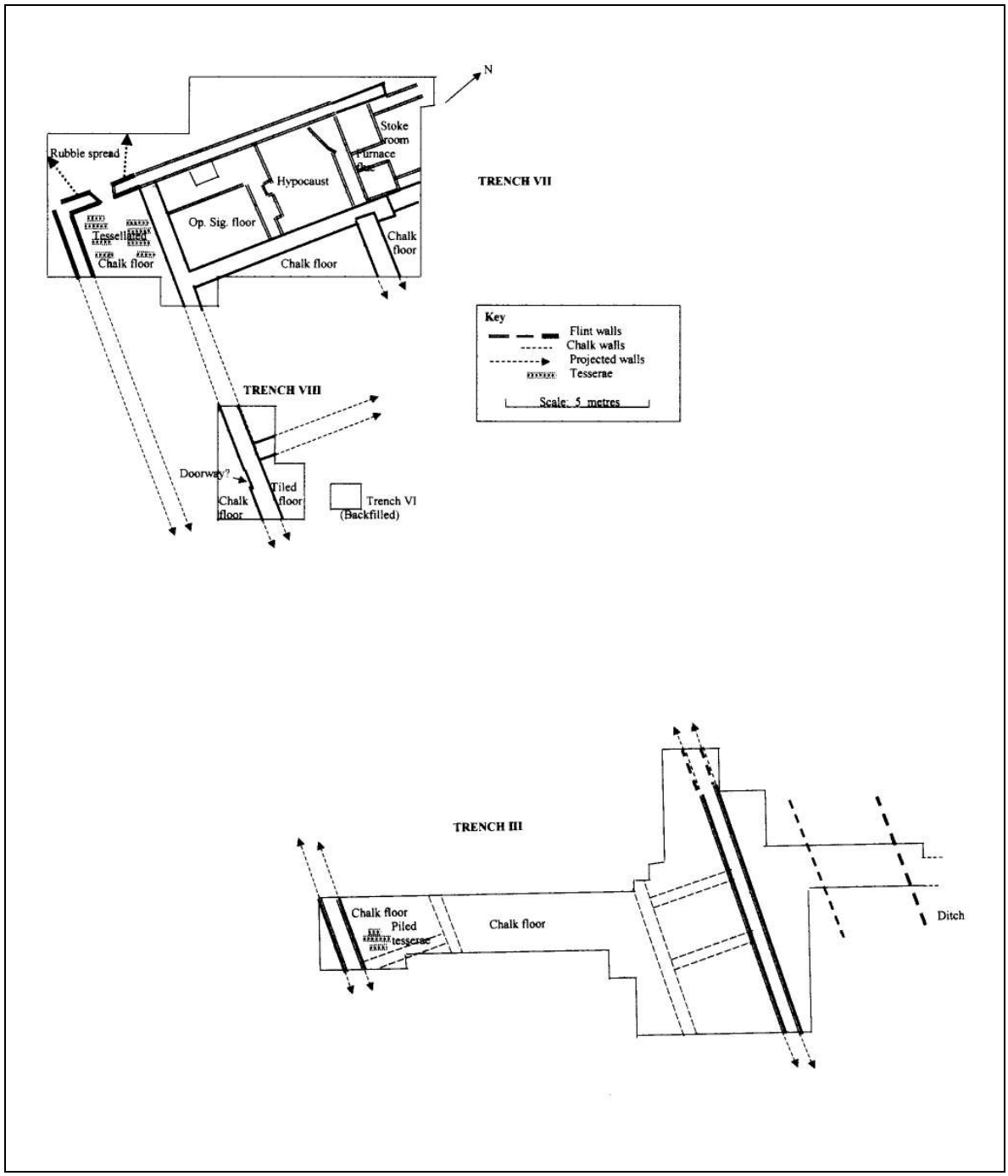

Fig. 2: Plan of the site.

Trench VII

Most of the work this year has been in Trench VII, our main trench, to complete the investigation of a range of rooms added to the western end of the building (Fig. 2). At the end of 2002, part of a stoke room had been revealed on the north side, with a furnace flue leading into a room with a hypocaust which was filled with rubble. A second, partially heated, room with an *opus signinum* concrete floor was uncovered next to this. Finally, a partly excavated area on the south side contained a patch of tessellated pavement. The intention this year was to find out how far the building extended to the south.

Thanks to the accuracy of the geophysical data, we only had to extend the trench southwards by another 4 m to define the extent of the building. As expected, the southwest corner of the building was revealed with parallel flint walls, 3 m apart, enclosing a tessellated pavement and a chalk floor. This forms one end of a wide corridor or series of rooms that may run along the entire length of the south side of the villa.

The tessellated pavement

Part of this pavement was found last year, so the priority this year was to find out if there was any more. A second patch was found almost immediately, within 30 cm of the first; both are irregular in shape and approximately 1.5 x 2 m in extent (Fig. 3). The tessellated surface is cut in places by plough marks but as it is only 30-40 cm below the turf, it is remarkable that as much as this survives. Many more loose tesserae (over 700) were found in the soil above the floor surface and in the rubble spread outside the walls. A few of these had been made from limestone tiles and are pale grey, but none of these were found *in situ*. There are about 300 terracotta tesserae to each square metre, although this varies as the tesserae are irregular in size and were made by cutting up old roof tiles roughly into 2.5 cm cubes. Allowing for gaps, there could have been at least a 3 m square area of this floor, with a narrow border of chalk along the walls. It would have provided a hardwearing and waterproof surface but, as far as we can tell at the moment, the floor was enclosed by a wall on the south side and was a room or corridor rather than an open veranda.

Fig. 3: The tessellated pavement and chalk floor.

There are signs of changes in use of this part of the building over time. Work in 2002 showed that the hypocaust had gone out of use and had been deliberately filled with rubble. The tesserae and adjacent chalk floor also show signs of deterioration; some gaps in the tessellated pavement appear to have been filled with chalk and the chalk floor is uneven and patched. Several hearths have eroded the floor surface and one showed evidence of metalworking. There are a number of holes in the floor but none can be categorised as postholes. It appears to have become a working area, or perhaps an area used by squatters after other parts of the building were abandoned.

The rubble spread

The extreme southwest corner of the building has been destroyed, probably by modern ploughing: there are lines of shattered flints in an east-west direction. There is very little rubble in the small area excavated to the south, but a substantial spread outside the building to the west. At first sight simply a spread of large flints, mortar and fragments of roof tile, this area of rubble was full of surprises. It included a lot of material that must have come from the interior of the building: terracotta tesserae, wall plaster and *opus signinum* cement, as well as quantities of pottery, many nails, animal bone and part of a bone pin. The pottery included fine ware, fragments of Samian and some fragments of Nene Valley ware (2^{nd}-4^{th} century), including part of the shoulder of a colour-coated Castor box-shaped vessel (Paul Booth, pers. comm.). Most significant was the discovery of some small black and white tesserae, eight of each, about 1 cm square, as well as some small terracotta tesserae of a similar size (Fig. 4). These are used for mosaic floors so the question is: where is the mosaic?

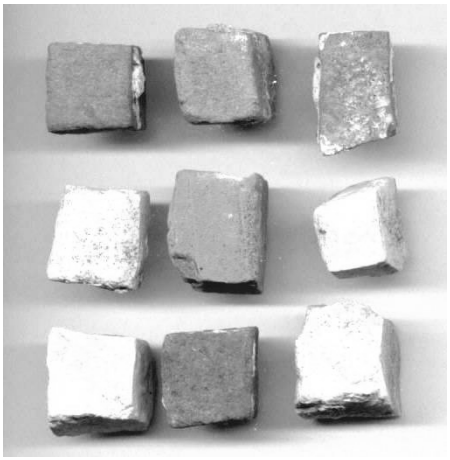

Fig. 4: The mosaic tesserae.

In the denser area of rubble, among the larger flints, were some bones which at first were thought to be from a small animal. After careful excavation, it appeared that these might represent the skeleton of a human infant. The skeleton was largely intact, except for the skull and feet. Some fragments of a small skull found nearby are probably associated with it. These bones are currently under investigation by specialists. From the position of the skeleton in the rubble it may be that part of the wall had been deliberately tumbled to provide stones for a cairn as there is a gap in the nearby wall. Alternatively, an existing fall of rubble could have provided a suitable burial place. It appears to be too far from the wall to have been a foundation burial. Pieces of a small grey pot were found close by and also the skull of a larger animal, not yet identified.

Trench VIII

Due to the exceptionally good weather in September and October and an increase in the number of regular diggers, we were able to open another trench. We knew that the structures in Trenches III and VII were probably part of the same long rectangular building or series of connected buildings extending up to 40 m across the site. Despite clear indications from earlier resistivity surveys, dowsing and observations of wall alignments, no material evidence had been found so far to make the connection. Exploratory trenches (Trenches IV and VI) had been inconclusive. However, with the new resistivity results we were able to position Trench VIII to investigate both the line of the building and a potentially interesting area of low resistivity.

The result was even better than expected (Fig. 5). A substantial, well-built wall with expertly dressed flint runs eastwards, on the same alignment as that in Trench VII, confirming that the building line continues. There is an indented section of the wall about 1 m wide on the south side that may mark the position of a doorway. In the loose rubble beside it a flint shaped like a keystone for an arch was found.

On the south side of the wall in Trench VIII is a chalk floor and many loose terracotta tesserae were found in the layer above. Only a small section of the floor was excavated and as yet there are no signs of hearths or of laid tesserae. This may be a continuation of the corridor in Trench VII and it also provides a link with the southern end of Trench III

where nearly 1000 tesserae were found, not laid as a pavement but piled in a heap and scattered over the chalk floor. There may therefore have been a corridor with a tessellated floor running along the south side of the building.

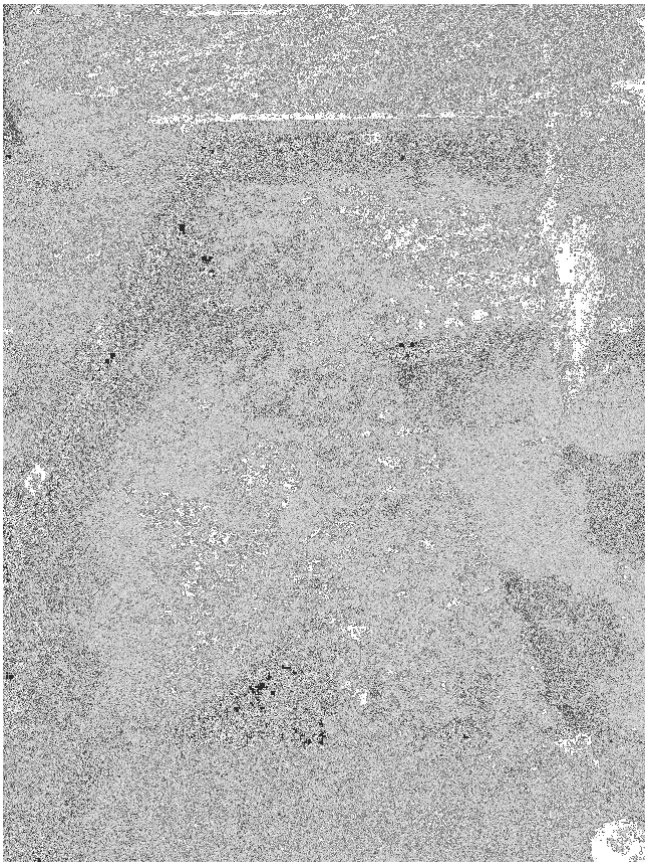

Fig. 5: Trench VIII view east.

Along the north side of the wall in Trench VIII there was a substantial spread of painted wall plaster, several layers deep. Similar plaster was found in Trench VII; it is much finer than the plaster found in the rubble within the hypocaust, thinner, only about 2 cm thick, and with more subtle colours such as olive green, dark red, pink and black, with patterns of thin lines, dots and curls. A second wall in the trench, at a right angle to the first and running northwards, shows the extent of a large room about 6 m square, first found in Trench VII (Fig. 2). To the east of this, in the area which showed low resistivity, there was much less rubble and traces of a thin concrete floor laid with large terracotta tiles. This may be part of another room or a central paved courtyard.

The phases of the villa building

The villa at Gatehampton is a multi-phase, multi-period building up to 40 m in length and about 10 m wide. Excavation this year in Trenches VII and VIII, and earlier in Trench III, has provided evidence linking the different parts of the building. We are also closer to establishing the different phases of the site but work on dating continues and there are still many questions to be answered.

We now know much more about the south side of the villa, with similar evidence in all three trenches pointing to a paved corridor which may have been added to a pre-existing building. Parallel walls 3 m apart enclose chalk floors with terracotta tesserae either laid as a pavement, loose in the layer over the floor or piled up on the floor. Behind this, in all three trenches, there is a central space 6 m wide enclosed in Trenches VII and VIII by well-constructed walls. It is noticeable that the walls of the heated rooms added at the western end are narrower and less well built; they may only have been one storey high and added on to a taller building. On the north side wall plaster and a patch of chalk floor suggest a corridor or series of small rooms there too.

The walls in Trench III are in alignment with those in the other trenches and show a similar division of space, but there are differences that show it may be part of a different phase. Only the exterior walls here are of flint; chalk walls divide the interior and there are indications from the resistivity data of a north-south wall running between Trench III and Trench VIII. This suggests that it may have been part of an earlier phase or was added to the eastern end of the villa.

The evidence from the geophysical survey shows that the villa building is enclosed by a rectangular boundary ditch: this is clearly seen on the north side where it runs very close to the building, and a section was excavated in Trench III. On the west and south sides it appears to be over 40 m away from the building, to form a courtyard area where there may be pits and other features or more buildings.

The people

The increase in the number of regular diggers this year has made a difference to the amount of work we have been able to complete. The working conditions have at times been very difficult, and I must pay tribute to all their hard work and enthusiasm. It was only afterwards that we realised we had opened Trench VIII on the hottest day of the year/decade (Fig. 6), and of course it was positioned over our former wheelbarrow run, so the ground was like iron.

Fig. 6: Opening Trench VIII.

We are grateful to Geoff Deakin and Ernie Evans for their continuing work on the geophysical survey, much of which was carried out during the cold winter weather. Geoff's excellent work has transformed our planning, having identified the position of several walls with pin-point accuracy; we are very grateful for the amount of time he is prepared to spend continuing this important project. We are as always grateful for the help and advice we receive, particularly from Tim Allen (Oxford Archaeology) and Paul Smith (County Archaeologist). We endeavour to maintain the best standards of independent archaeology and their guidance is much appreciated.

Fig. 7: Robin Cloke (second left) and the diggers at the end of 2003.

Finally, it was a particular pleasure this year to end the season with a Diggers' Lunch at the John Barleycorn pub – a change from sitting in the field on an up-turned bucket – and to invite Robin Cloke, the owner of the site, as guest of honour (Fig. 7). We were able to thank him properly for allowing us to dig for another year and presented him with a gift to show our appreciation. We are very grateful for his continued support and keen interest in our excavation.

THE HISTORY OF BRIGHTWELL BALDWIN: THE HUNDRED ROLLS

Ian Clarke

'The (Norman) History of Brightwell Baldwin' (Fraser and Clarke (ed.) 2001, 15-19) included Tony Fraser's translations of the entries in the Hundred Rolls for the principal holders of the four manors of Brightwell: Parcs, Huscarles, Barentine-Bracy, and Cadwell (*RH* 1812-18); but there was insufficient space to include the entries for their multitudinous tenants. The full *History of Brightwell Baldwin* (Fraser 1988) lists all the entries but these take up nine full pages of typescript, so for this concluding article on the medieval history of the parish I have chosen to reproduce, as a representative example, the entries for Huscarles Manor only. Huscarles Manor was the second largest in Brightwell and was probably centred on present day Upperton Brightwell Baldwin. But just what are the Hundred Rolls and why were they compiled? [Note: for the definition of a 'hundred' see Glossary below.]

The weak leadership of Henry III and his dependence on the barons to support him in the endless wars with the Welsh princes, allowed much abuse and usurpation of royal rights by the increasingly powerful barons, but in addition there were many financial and judicial abuses carried out by royal officials. The growth of a 'reform movement' of barons wishing to control the king and limit his power, led by Simon de Montfort, ultimately led to civil war. Although Simon de Montfort was defeated and killed at the Battle of Evesham in 1265 this did not put an end to baronial territorial ambitions and usurpation of crown rights. Henry III died on 16 November 1272, at which time Edward I was in Sicily on his way back from the crusade, and it was not until 2 August 1274 that Edward set foot back in England (Powicke 1962; Prestwich 1988).

Edward had clearly concluded, or at least concurred, that there was an urgent need for an inquiry into the state of the realm before appropriate measures could be taken to reform abuses. 'Edward's reign was notable for the scale and frequency of the investigations into the way in which the country was governed. The greatest inquest was that of 1274-75 which produced the Hundred Rolls…' (Prestwich

1988, 92). This was not the first such inquiry: it is interesting that the baronial opposition to the crown had in 1255 instigated investigations into the rights of the crown and 'the question of whether they had been alienated or usurped, as well as into the conduct of royal officials'; and again in 1258 there were appointments to examine 'excesses, trespasses and acts of injustice, particularly by royal officials, and the special eyre [itinerant court] set up in 1259 provided for the investigation of officials and of the alienation of royal rights' (Prestwich 1988, 92-3). But these inquiries did not at the time reflect royal policy and certainly Henry made little effort to pursue the reported injustices. The pattern for the 1274-75 inquiry, however, was clearly set by these earlier investigations as the nature of the questions asked was similar, but the speed and scale of the inquiry was in a different league. 'On 11 October pairs of commissioners were appointed to put forty or more articles to local juries, each pair dealing with a group of counties. The operation of taking the inquests was remarkably quick. … Over the whole country, the process lasted between November 1274 and March 1275' (Prestwich 1988, 93-4). The sheer quantity of data collected was immense. Each session with a jury was recorded on a separate roll with every juror's seal attached, the huge number of seals almost certainly leading to these being dubbed at the time the Ragman Rolls. In time extract rolls were compiled to make the material more manageable and in the heading to the extract rolls the purpose of the inquest is clearly laid out: 'to investigate rights and liberties taken from the king, the excesses of sheriffs and other royal officials, and the misdeeds of private bailiffs' (Prestwich 1988, 94).

The success and accuracy of the inquiry were clearly very dependent on the cooperation of the local magnates and officials and there is evidence that some did not take kindly to being questioned. 'Gilbert de Clifton, the Earl of Lincoln's bailiff at Staincliffe in Yorkshire, threatened one of the commissioners with the loss of his lands should he proceed with the hearings', and 'Hugh de Dignineton, constable of Orford castle, was accused of imprisoning a royal official for three days, and forcing him to swear to leave the place' (Prestwich 1988, 95-6). Nevertheless the surviving rolls contain long lists of official wrong-doings and provide clear evidence of the need for new legislation and for judicial proceedings. Copies of the extract rolls were sent out to the shires and from 1287 it was laid down that the returns were to be used by a new general eyre and provide the basis for judicial investigations throughout the realm. But there are many examples to show that officials charged in the Hundred Rolls were rarely prosecuted. (Prestwich 1988, 96-7). 'Historians have made much of the Hundred Rolls; contemporary chroniclers on the other hand, laid no stress on the great inquiry, the Dunstable annalist remarking that no good came of it. Certainly there was no immediate and successful drive against corruption' (Prestwich 1988, 98). But by completing such a major inquiry so swiftly and so early in his reign Edward had demonstrated his determination to control the realm.

The entries in the Hundred Rolls of most interest and amusement to local historians are the detailed listings of the land holders and their tenants, with all their feudal obligations and services owing to their lord laid down. Here now are those for just the one small manor, Huscarles Manor in Brightwell, which serve to demonstrate the extraordinary achievement of Edward's commissioners and the complexity and interweaving of the feudal structure that had developed by the late 13th century.

The translation is from *The History of Brightwell Baldwin* (Fraser 1988), with minor corrections. Unfortunately we have no record of who carried out the translation, but the evidence suggests that Tony Fraser completed a draft himself and then obtained scholarly help to correct and complete it.

HUNDRED ROLLS

Lord Thomas Huscarl holds in the town of BRICTEWELL from the Earl of Cornwall a carucate of land with its appurtenances which is in the honour of WALLINGEFORD for homage and half a knight's fee, as much land as belongs to Johanna, who was the wife of Lord William Huscarl, as her dower.

And he has tenants in villanage, Hugh le Canu who holds a virgate for 6/1½d p.a. and two quarters of grain which are paid for the release of carrying service, and at Christmas he shall give the lord one white loaf, worth 3d, three gallons of ale and one cock and two hens; at Saint John the Baptist's day he shall weed the lord's corn until the weeding is finished; he shall perform one reaping service with one man who shall be given bread and cheese without ale with the lord, and he shall find four men for the lord's great boonwork in the autumn and he shall be put in charge of them to see that they work well and he

shall have breakfast and at noon Hugh and his wife and any of his workers whom he chooses shall eat with the lord and have supper at vespers; at noon they shall have a loaf, a dish of provisions and cheese, and at vespers cheese, and the aforesaid wife may take away milk if he has any for making a milk pudding, and at the lesser harvest two men shall have two meals daily. Item, the same Hugh shall reap for as many weeks as are necessary to reap one and a half acres and shall carry the corn if the lord wishes and if he carries, for each whole day he shall have three meals of the lord and at the last cartload one sheaf of corn must be allowed to him. He shall harvest half an acre of hay, one man carrying hay to his yard the lord providing food and the same Hugh must produce one cartload of firewood before Christmas, the lord providing food and if a son or daughter wish to marry away from the lord's land he shall pay a fine.

Robert Baly holds one virgate for the same services.

William son of William and Robert son of John hold one virgate of land for the same services and giving one hen more than Hugh Canum.

Alice widow of Fowel and Henry de Anglo hold one virgate for the same services rendered by William and Robert, John's son.

Peter Pcehay, John Fouel and Thomas de Cruce hold one and a half virgates for the same services.

William Fouel holds a messuage and ten acres with the customary services owing also he shall perform ploughing service if the lord wishes and the same William shall have the use of the lord's plough every third Saturday, and if he does not perform ploughing service he shall start to work on Saint Michael's day for two days a week to the feast of John the Baptist's day, and from Saint John's day he shall also work every day to the feast of Saint Michael, the lord providing food, one man with bread and cheese and at the main harvest two men and William and his wife will go to his tables as villans and at the last harvest one man shall go, the lord providing two meals daily. He shall give at the feast of Saint Martin two cocks and two hens to the lord and if a pig shall reach the age of one year he shall give 1d for pannage and if more he will give 1d for each. Item, if he shall brew ale for sale he shall give the lord 1d or 1d worth of ale and he shall pay a fine if his children leave the manor like the other villeins and the same William at the time when the lord shall begin to reap the corn shall have three sheaves a week from the lord.

John of the Green holds a messuage and ten acres for his services as William Fouel does and the same John also holds a messuage for 12d p.a.

Robert Carectar holds a cottage for 10d p.a. and provides one man for a day in the autumn whom the lord feeds.

Walter Faber [the blacksmith] holds a messuage and ten acres by homage and for shoeing each year the front feet of two farm horses or oxen and making the iron work of the lord's plough with the lord's iron and steel at his own cost.

Walter Faber holds four acres of land with appurtenances from Lord Thomas Huscarl freely paying 12d p.a. suit of court twice a year for as much of the land as they pertain to, and regalities.

William Jordan, William Crok and Isabel his wife, Richard de Fraxino and William son of Walter Carectar who is in wardship hold from Lord Alexander de Hamdene two virgates for thirty-two shillings, each paying eight shillings and they owe regalities and Lord Alexander is between them and Lord Thomas Huscarl.

Lord Thomas de Parco holds from William son of Walter Carectar a

messuage by homage and 1d p.a. for all services.

Walter Faber also holds from William son of Walter Carectar a rood for homage and ½d p.a.

Thomas de Dorset holds from Lord Thomas Huscarl a messuage and fourteen acres of arable land and a rood of meadow for homage, half a silver mark and the regalities for that quantity of land.

Richard Binwale holds freely from Lord Thomas Huscarl a messuage and a virgate of land with appurtenances for homage, 6d p.a. or one pair of gilded spurs of the price of 6d.

And the same Richard Binwale has free tenants, namely Lord Geoffrey de Langele who holds six acres and a half for 1d each Easter and a rose on John the Baptist's day and he owes the regalities for the quantity of such land, and Thomas de Dorset who holds a messuage, four acres and a rood with appurtenances for his homage, 6d p.a. and regalities for as much land as they pertain to, also Agnes, widow of Cadew, who holds three acres paying 15¾d p.a. and she owes regalities, also Germane de Cadwell who holds two and a half acres for 13d and he owes regalities, also William son of Thomas who holds an acre for 5¾d and he owes regalities, also Nicholas Tuce who holds an acre for 5¾d and he owes regalities, also Matilda de Berton and Isabell her sister who hold half an acre for 2½d p.a. and they owe the regalities, also Amicia Bethel who holds an acre for 5¼d p.a. and she owes the regalities, also Henry de Pickering who holds two acres for 3d p.a. and he owes regalities, and Nicholas Cute holds the aforesaid two acres from Henry de Pickering as mesne tenant between him and Richard Binwale, paying 1d p.a. to Henry.

Walter Faber holds from William de Estley freely one and a half acres for his homage, 2d p.a. and due regalities and William is mesne tenant between Walter and Thomas de Dorset.

Thomas de Dorset holds a messuage from Henry Pickering for 1d p.a. for all services and the same Henry is mesne tenant between Walter and Thomas de Dorset.

Richard de Roteland, chaplain, holds six acres from Henry Pickering paying 6d p.a. and due regalities.

Nicholas Cute holds one acre from Henry de Pickering for 3d p.a. and due regalities.

Geoffrey Crok holds one and a half acres from Henry Pickering paying 3d p.a. and due regalities.

Thomas Crok holds one acre from Henry Pickering for 1d p.a. and due regalities for his services.

William son of Thomas holds one acre from Henry Pickering for 1d p.a. and due regalities.
And Henry de Pickering is mesne tenant between his tenants and Lord Thomas Huscarl of ten and a half acres which they hold, paying Lord Thomas Huscarl 12d p.a., he owes homage and regalities.

Henry de Pickering also holds from Lord Thomas Huscarl a croft for 1d p.a. and due regalities and Gandive de Clare and Lady Joanna his wife hold this croft from Henry de Pickering for 1d p.a.

Also the aforesaid Henry de Pickering holds from Gandive de Clare and Lady Joanna his wife for the term of his life and that of his wife Isabell for a rose every year and after their deaths, their children freely begotten of their bodies hold the aforesaid messuage freely for 2/s p.a. for all services.

Lord Geoffrey de Langele owes yearly to Lord Thomas Huscarl 3/s for the new mill and 12d to Walter de Parco.

The Hundred Rolls provide a rich source for the historian of late feudal England and well repay close study, and no doubt many scholars have earned their doctorates from just that. Here I offer just a few thoughts on the above that, together with the glossary, may perhaps prompt others to make a start.

Descriptive tags to distinguish between individuals with the same name are common in the middle ages (in many cases leading ultimately to modern English surnames). For example, Hugh le Canu, first tenant listed for Lord Thomas Huscarl: *Canus* literally means whitish grey, especially of hair, but by metonymy means old, so he was perhaps known simply as 'Old Hugh'.

Walter Faber we can see from the context is a blacksmith. A *faber* is a craftsman of any hard material (metal, stone, wood), viz. *faber ferrarius* - a worker in iron, a blacksmith, *faber lignarius* - a worker in wood, a carpenter. *Fabre* means skilfully and *fabrica* is the work of a *faber*, i.e. working or making skilfully, from which of course we get our word fabricate. And from *ferrarius* (iron) we ultimately get farrier, via the Old French *ferrier*, an iron worker. So we are safe here in rendering Walter Faber as 'Walter the blacksmith', as indeed Tony Fraser does (Fraser 1988).

There is also a Nicholas Cute. Now Latin *cutis* is from the Greek *κύτος* (skin) and is used to refer to hide or leather. So we might render Nicholas Cute as 'Nicholas the leather worker', or perhaps in the English vernacular as Nicholas Hide, from the Anglo-Saxon *hyd*. But was he known in the village as Nicholas Cute, or Nicholas Hide, or Nicholas the saddler (Anglo-Saxon *sadol*), or what? Or does Cute have nothing to do with hides? There are many pitfalls in the study of names.

We also learn that: 'Walter Faber holds a messuage and ten acres by homage and for shoeing each year the front feet of two farm horses or oxen and making the iron work of the lord's plough with the lord's iron and steel at his own cost'. Why only the front feet? Well, it is a fact that front shoes wear out much quicker than back ones, because the animal carries much more weight on the front due to the head and neck - horses and oxen are not well balanced. So it was usual in the past to shoe the front feet at least once before a complete shoeing of all four feet was needed. It was also quite common for soft ground working not to shoe the rear feet at all, but the fronts were always shod. Walter has agreed to do a front foot shoeing with no charge for labour, but there is an implied charge for materials as the lord is to provide this. Both iron and steel are mentioned. The steel is needed for the share and coulter of the plough, and Walter would harden and temper the steel to make it tough but hard wearing.

The word messuage is used frequently. The messuage was originally the portion of land set aside for the building of a dwelling, but continued in use to refer to the plot and dwelling once this had been built. We can probably safely assume that whenever a messuage is mentioned in the Hundred Rolls this includes a dwelling.

We are told that Lord Geoffrey de Langele, a tenant of Richard Binwale: 'holds six acres and a half for 1d each Easter and a rose on John the Baptist's day…'. This is an example of acquittal of some service, whereby Richard commutes the service required of Geoffrey for the symbolic payment of a rose. The symbolic token was vitally important in the feudal system of England because it upheld the principal that no land could ever be truly the freehold of a tenant, since all land was ultimately owned by the king. This applied even when the land was given to the church, as Frank Barlow (1999, 89) states: '…when even a symbolical render, such as a rose, was not required, there remained the characteristic duty of prayer and intercession for the soul of the benefactor'.

Glossary

Hundred - an administrative division of the shire that originated in about the 10th century. It was originally a grouping of 100 hides, but with significant variations later of 20-150 hides (Stenton 1971, 298-301).
1 Carucate (or hide) is approx. 100 acres [41 ha].
1 Virgate (or yardland) is one-third of a carucate or approx. 30 acres [12 ha] and was the typical family holding.
1 Acre is 40 x 4 rods (Latin *virga* = rod). The modern acre is equivalent to 0.4 hectares, but in medieval times there were significant regional variations in the acre (dependent on soil conditions) reflected in the rod for land measurement varying between 15 and 21 feet (1 ft = 0.305 m) (Barlow 1999, 13-14)
1 Rood is one-quarter of an acre and is 40 x 1 rods = the medieval field strip.
Quarter - as a measure of capacity for grain = 8 bushels, or the fifth part of a load (i.e. the fifth part of a cart load as a unit of dry goods measure). 1

bushel contains 8 gallons (1 gall. = 4.54 litres), but at this time there were local variations.
½ Silver mark = 6s. 8d = 33p.
Boonwork - unpaid work of the freemen for the lord.
Pannage - woodland pasturage for swine, also payment for the same.

Acknowledgement

I am most grateful to David Bakewell of the Norfolk Shire Horse Centre and West Runton Stables, for providing expert advice on the shoeing of farm horses and oxen.

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HAWKRIDGE, BUCKLEBURY

Pat Preece

When I was studying the woods at Bucklebury I found that Hawkridge had a Saxon charter. This charter is dated 956 but was copied into the Abingdon Cartulary at the end of 1200; it is considered to be genuine. In it King Eadwig grants Abbot Aetholwold of Abingdon Abbey the wood with its fields. The Abbey was obviously being built at this time or extended because the wood was granted so that it would have timber. The dimensions are given as 60 jugera. This is an unknown measurement, though a jugera may be the equivalent of 0.4 ha. The snag is that acres in antiquity differed in size. The mediaeval woodland perch was 5.5 m.

The boundaries are given in Old English and we have tried to trace them. Margaret Gelling says that it is impossible to find the limits as laid out, apart from the River Pang. A rough translation follows:-

'Beginning at the Panganburnam (River Pang) thence along the ditch to the hayed (hedge, fence or bank) and an enclosure, then to the crucifix on a tree or post (crystal maelbeam), then along the haye to the stone way and from the stone way to the foot of the hill to the flax field and along the foot of the hill to mase mere (Titmouse pond) from the mere to the side of Gothulf's cottages then to the Pang then up the middle of the stream.'[1]

We went by the road to see if there was a bank but with nothing definite. On reaching the northern boundary of the wood there was a ditch and bank that also was, partly, the boundary between Hawkridge and Frilsham. We then came to a small field that could have been the enclosure. On the map we came to Thorncuts - thorny wood or clearing? From there we followed a track that was very stony and was almost a causeway with boggy woodland on both sides. There is a small stream marked on the map - could this have been the brid ford? We then dropped down the hill and in the vicinity there is a track on the edge of a wood (wortwalan)[2] and a field (Flax acres?). Hawkridge Farm seems a possibility for being built on the site of Gothulf's cottages. From these it is a half-mile to the river. Just pure guesswork but, who knows, we might be right.

Humphries thinks that there may be a minor manor at Hawkridge[3]. There are several manors in Bucklebury Hundred and one of them is listed in Domesday as being part of the Royal Forest. This is a possibility as some of the wood banks have the ditch on the inside, this being indicative of a hunting park.

The woodland is very different to our local woods, being very wet in places and having a mixed selection of trees. It was obviously largely coppiced in the past. The name copse is indicative. Sadly, some of it has been given over to conifer plantations.

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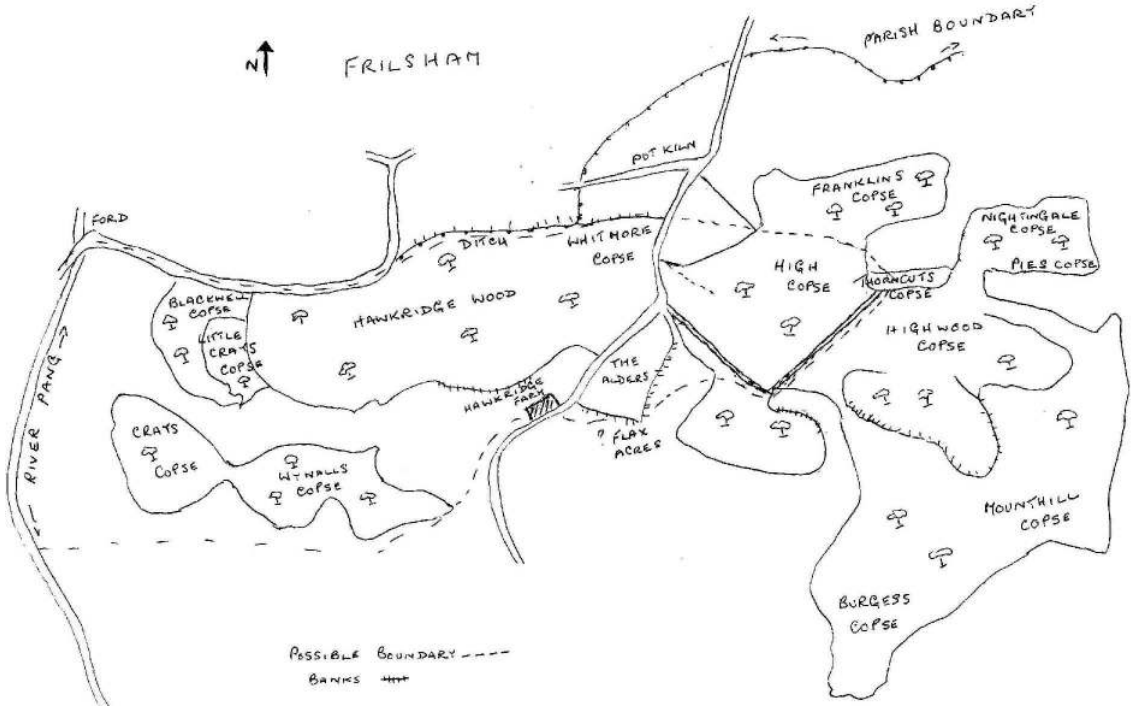


Fig. 1 Hawkridge Map

A GHOST IN THE WALL

Colin Davies

Fig. 1: Front

Fig. 2: Back

This rather odd piece of beautifully-carved stonework was found by a relative of the author in her garden at Bradenstoke, Lyneham, near Kemble, in Wiltshire (Fig. 1). It was discovered about one metre below ground, or below the level of an adjacent 19th century (perhaps earlier) rubbish pit, when footings for a house extension were being built.

It seemed to have been placed there intentionally as it was carefully laid in its present position below a wall of old, dressed stonework which had been there for many years. We do not know exactly when this wall was built, but owing to the fact that it had become unstable it had to be moved, and the stone was revealed at the bottom. There was also a larger piece of carved stone with an edging of dogs' tooth design nearby which looked as though it might have come from the same source. The stones for the wall may well have been obtained from the now ruined Bradenstoke Priory (medieval?) about 1 km away. The Priory is shown on the map at Grid Ref. ST795995, with a 'well' marked nearby and also a mound called 'Clock Mount' - all part of an interesting area which includes Lyneham airfield to the southeast. The remains of the great barn and guest house of the ruined Priory were removed in 1930 to St Donat's Castle in Glamorgan. Are these stones from Bradenstoke also from the Priory - robbed out for a wall?

They were shown to Julian Munby (the vernacular buildings specialist) and he pronounced the dogs' tooth piece Roman, but was very intrigued with the carved piece and suggested that it might be from a 17th century carved mantelpiece. He has offered to make further inquiries - we are delighted at the interest he is taking and the time he is giving, as he is a very busy man, and we are eagerly anticipating the final verdict.

MAPLEDURHAM CHURCH SCHOOL

Pat Preece

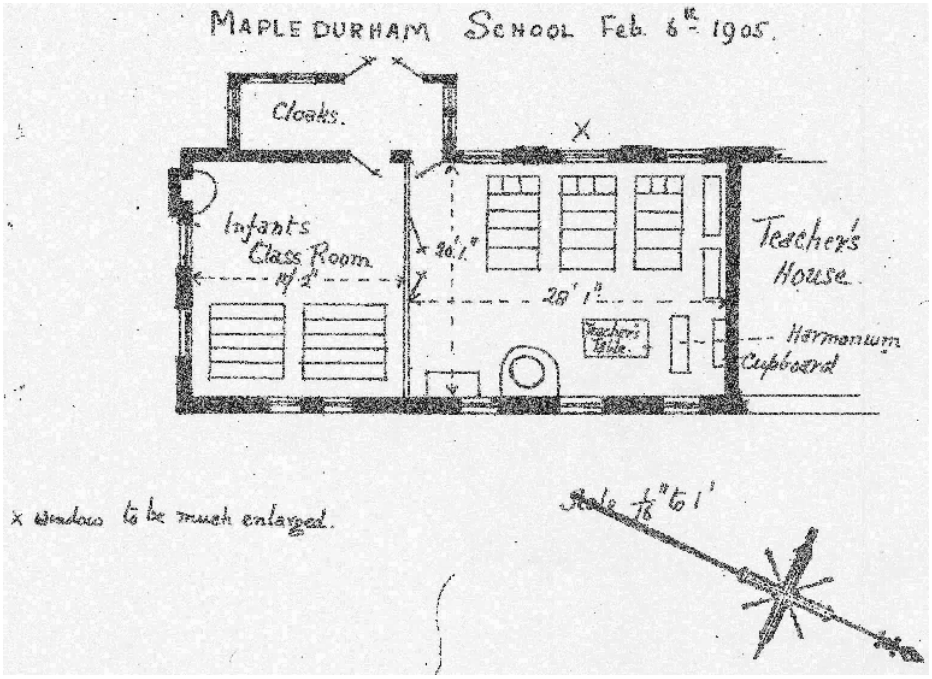
The first school in Mapledurham was one maintained at the end of the 18th century by the vicar John Norbury, who was a master at Eton College. He probably had a curate who looked after the parish for him. Eton College had the advowson of the church at Mapledurham and so had links with the village. After Norbury died in 1800 the school was continued by the next vicar but was soon joined by a Dame School and a Roman Catholic School organised and financed by Mrs Blount, the wife of the squire. This latter was made possible by the relaxation of 1791 which permitted Roman Catholics to worship publicly and to teach without fear of prosecution - provided they took the oath of allegiance.

In 1808, in response to a request by the Archbishop of Canterbury, queries relating to parochial education were sent to every clergyman. The Mapledurham curate, replying to the Bishop of Oxford, said there were three schools in the village. In the one maintained by the vicar the children were 'taught to spell and read in the Psalms, Bible and Testament and learn the Collects and Church Catechism, while the girls were also taught needlework'. Mrs. Blount's RC school had 8 or 9 pupils and the children were taught to read and were 'instructed according to Roman Catholic tenets'. The largest school was the Dame School run by an 'infirm parishioner' with an attendance of about 20 but there was no information as to the instruction provided there. Dame schools seem to have been places where the children were looked after while the parents may have been working in the fields. There is no mention of pupils learning to write or any arithmetic in any of the schools.

The Anglican School was the only one by 1818 and in 1819 it was united with the National Society. At this period there were 43 children attending the vicar's school as well as 57 at the Sunday School. The Sunday School probably taught reading as well as religious instruction and may have been well patronised as the children worked in the field during the week. There was, however, still no purpose-built school and for many years it is likely that the pupils had been either taught in the vicarage or the church.

Lord Augustus Fitzclarence became vicar of Mapledurham in 1829. He was the illegitimate son of William IV and Mrs Jordan, the actress. He was described by the Bishop of Oxford as 'very liberal and kind'. He was obviously worried by the lack of a school building and in 1830 got permission for the construction of a school on glebe land. The total cost of £371 for the building was met by £143 from Lord Augustus, £100 from the King, £75 from the National Society, £25 from the 'farmers of the parish' and the rest of the money was raised in small sums from parishioners. There are few country schools built with a contribution from the King. Lord Augustus provided a school uniform which consisted of green tunics with black buttons, corduroy trousers and peaked caps for the boys, and green dresses and white straw poke bonnets trimmed with green ribbons tied in a bow under the chin for the girls.

Most of the children of the village attended and at the 1851 census return, out of a total of 70 children in the village aged between 5 and 10 years, 24 boys and 26 girls attended school. The teacher was earning £36 annually in the mid 1840s and how trained she was is unknown. Whether any payment was required from the parents is also unknown. It was not unusual for there to be a small contribution at this period - my grandmother spoke of 6d a week in a Hampshire school. It is difficult to know about the early school as no records survive but in 1858 the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education gave the school 'A' - its highest grade - and in 1871 the HMI made no unfavourable comments about the education provided. At any rate the pupils were probably taught the three Rs.



School (scale 1:192)

Fig. 1: Plan of Mapledurham Church School dated 6 February 1905.

The illustration shows a plan of the school building at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1907 there was a report about the buildings with the comment that it was an old brick building, low and ill-lit with the infants' classroom separated by a wood and glass partition. The cloakroom had been the donkey shed and had an earth floor - in 1917 it was 1.8 x 0.9 m for 79 pupils. There is a comment in 1910 that the earth closets (outside the building) were emptied three times weekly and the water supply was from tanks supplied from the gutters with no drinking water. The schoolrooms were lit by lamps (probably paraffin). It was remarked in 1917 that the main classroom's condition was bad and the infant's fair; the desks were stated to be not hygienic. The school had a playground and a large garden area. A cottage was provided for the teacher and the only record of its size is from Mary Kift, a SOAG member, who taught there for a period. In the 1960s there was a tiny bedroom approximately 2.4 x 1.8 m and a dining room 2.4 x 2.4 m approximately, which had originally been the only sitting room. The kitchen was small with a Calor gas cooker and a sink with a cold tap. There was a Calor gas boiler and a bath, the hot water for which had to be ladled from the boiler. When Mary was there, an extra sitting room of 3.6 x 3.6 m had been added in 1914. The teacher had to use the toilet provided in the school. Water was supplied from the estate by a pipe which was several times chewed by pigs. The only electricity was obtained if the hall next door was being used, when she could get some for lighting, etc, as they had a generator, but it was switched off at 10 pm. Apparently the teacher's task in cold weather was to light one large and one small Tortoise stoves in the two classrooms before the children arrived. The age range in Mary Kift's time was 5 to 9 years but earlier, for some of the time, the age limit had been 14 years.

Earlier references to the school start in 1882 when a bottle of ink was provided for school use. Does this mean that prior to this only slates and chalk were used? The next year the stable, which became the cloakroom, was thatched and this was for Miss Butler's donkey. Miss Butler apparently taught at the school for 44 years until 1914 and was much respected: when she retired she was presented with a velvet pouch containing 44 sovereigns. Her salary for most of the time was £90 15s per annum as a certified teacher and there were two uncertified teachers; one had £40 per annum and the other, who was in charge of the infants, had £35 per annum. The monitor (usually a senior pupil about 14 years old) was paid £9 12s per annum. The average attendance at this period was 72 children. At this time the Mapledurham estate pumped water from the river and there was a pump near the school for which £l 10s a year was paid.

The school was, until recently, remote and the children had to travel quite long distances. If, for

example, they came from Nuney Green, it was a walk of around 3 km along rough trackways - there was no school bus or mother's car in those days. The pupils brought their lunch with them and there is a comment in 1895 that a subscription had been raised to provide 'playthings' for the children to use in their dinner hour, such as a cricket set, football, battledore and skipping ropes. In 1899 the children were taken to Reading Museum in a conveyance provided by Mr Hill of Lilley Farm - probably a horse-drawn wagon. The journey may have given more pleasure to the children than the visit.

As it was an agricultural area the pupils probably came from poor families and there are several comments about the children not being able to come to school due to 'bad feet' and broken chilblains. In 1896 New Year gifts were given away after school - dresses, cloaks and shirts, all indicative of the poverty prevalent in the countryside at that time. Presumably as some of the men and lads of the village had not attended school properly in the past, in 1889 an evening class, probably for the 3 Rs, was set up with the aid of the vicar's daughter.

A sad comment later in a Board of Education report in 1926 said that the school contained rather a large number of children 'who are backward for reasons outside the teacher's control'. In the same report it said that the pupils were coached in knowledge of the countryside. It was suggested that more practical teaching was employed, boys to carpentry and girls to housewifery. Against this in 1929 it states that several bright children obtained scholarships.

So the Victorian and early 20th century picture emerges of a rather primitive country school where the children had to cover quite long distances, but with nevertheless a happy atmosphere, with dedicated teachers making the best of the facilities provided. However, by the 1950s the Oxfordshire Education Authority was renowned in the country, especially in the Primary Department, and this little Church of England school, with almost 40 pupils, was one of the few infant schools in South Oxfordshire mentioned for excellence in the Plowden Report of the late 1960s. The catchment area now included professional families as Mapledurham parish expanded. Sadly the school closed in July 1973 after serving the village for such a long period and the buildings are now a house.

Acknowledgement

My thanks are due to Mary Kift for all the help and information she gave me.

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LEAD WINDOW MAKING - AN OLD CRAFT REVIVED

Cynthia Graham-Kerr

It was not until the 13th century that glass began to be used for windows in Medieval England, and then it was largely in churches. By Tudor times leaded windows were the fashion for all the larger houses and this old craft is still carried on here and there.

About the only workshop in Oxfordshire is run by David Carnell and his friend Martin Cleaver at Thame. Here in an old stable, with a fine door made of two huge planks of elm with ironwork fittings, they have a vast table covered with soft black felt on which to lay the sheets of glass for cutting. A gadget with three suction pads is used to hold the large sheets of glass for polishing and stacking.

Each customer's window-pattern is drawn out separately - there are seldom two alike - laid on the bench and slats are tacked along the edges. 1.2 cm wide straight lengths of lead make up the sides and the pieces of glass fit into shaped lengths of 1 cm wide lead, cut to length with a lead-cutter; the glass is slipped in after the slot has been opened with a latherling - a small wooden handmade tool. Martin works quickly and accurately, judging the angles by eye. The next job is to solder every joint with lead solder using a small soldering iron with a round copper bit. It must not be too hot nor held too long or the window lead will melt. Copper bands are soldered on one side to tie round the frame crossbars. Then, after a quick polish with a soft brush, the edges are closed and it is finished.

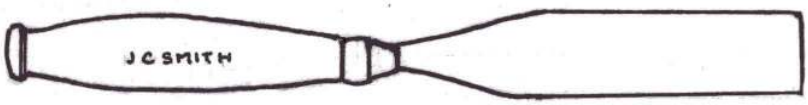
I was shown an old Swedish blowgun that David brought home from South Africa which has various

nozzles. A gas gun is used now but otherwise the craft has scarcely changed since it began.

To mount the leaded light in the frame it is laid in a bed of metal casement-putty mixed with Zebrite to blacken it. The crossbars are mounted through holes in the sides of the frame and the copper band ties are bent round and neatly soldered on the reverse. The putty is finally faced, or the wood beading fitted, and the job is done.

A CRAFTSMAN IN WOOD

Cynthia Graham Kerr



Stonemason's Chisel (length 28.5cm)

I watched quietly as the tool slid across a beautiful piece of oak. 'There!' said John, with some satisfaction.

'That's an unusual chisel', I remarked.

'Yes,' said John, 'that chisel has quite a history'.

'Tell me more', I urged, knowing that his family has lived in the locality for generations.

'This chisel belonged to Great-Uncle Frank, it's a stone-mason's chisel.'

'I thought it looked a different shape.'

'Yes, the shoulder is slanted, whereas a wood-chisel has a squarer shoulder. The handle is boxwood, and has that special rounded shape.'

Grandfather George was apprenticed as a bricklayer to Thomas Winkworth, the builder at Goring Heath. I wish I knew exactly where his yard was. (Do any readers know?) That was in 1883 and John's father was born in 1903.

Grandfather George told John's father to look through his box of tools and take anything that might be useful to him, and he chose the chisel. This, in turn, was passed down to John. He reckons he has worn it down about 1 cm and it is a beautiful tool to use.

John still has his Grandfather's Apprentice Papers and it is encouraging to see, not only an older man, but a good number of young men learning the craft and producing wonderful work such as staircases and library furniture for some of our most prestigious buildings. They work with wood and hand-tools like their ancestors did, using power saws and planes to assist them before the hand-finishing touches with which no machine can compete.

FIREWOOD FROM THE OXFORDSHIRE CHILTERNS

Pat Preece

Today's energy is derived from many sources - oil, coal and gas (fossil fuels), nuclear fission, water and, to a lesser extent, from the wind and sun. Until the canals provided a cheap source of transport from the mines to the factories in the late 18th century, the main raw material as a source of energy was wood. Woodlands supplied firewood for domestic heating and cooking, and wood was the basic source of power for industrial processes as diverse as smelting, and glass and tile making.

Until the advent of furniture manufacture at the end of the 18th century, the woods of the Oxfordshire Chilterns were coppice with oak and beech standards (Fig. 1). The leases of Abbots Wood, then belonging to Christ Church, have an obligation on the tenant to 'leave 40 standells or stores (timber trees) upon each acre felled and not to cut any beech of less than 9 years growth'[1]. There the beech was being coppiced for poles and firewood and a selection of standards retained. Robert Plot in 1677 records of Oxfordshire coppice: 'they draw them as they call it every year

some, according as the wood comes to be of fit scantling…for billet'[2]. To fuel the tile kilns of Nettlebed and Russell's Water the beech coppice had to be grown for 15 years. The beech coppice for these kilns can still be seen at the Bix Nature Reserve.

Fig. 1: Beech stool coppiced.

There are many words used to describe firewood: billet, bavins, many forms of faggots, blocks, stackwood, cordwood and roots. Bavins are faggots of a specific size, i.e. 3 feet long and 24 inches in circumference as laid down in a Statute of 1542[3]. Seven hundred bavins were taken from Chalkwood in 1808: 'paid Tappern for cutting and making 1200 bavins at 4s. 6d per 100'[4].

Faggot seems to have been applied to any size of bundle of twiggy wood, for example:

1850: sold 1350 scraging (sic) faggots at £1 per 100, £13.10s;
1871: making 600 felling faggots at 4s per 100, £1.16.8d;
1841: paid for making 90 hedge faggots[5], 4s. 6d;
1827: 2350 gleaning faggots, £11. l5s.

The last item probably represents the waste after felling.

Making faggots was time consuming and, even in the days of cheap labour, expensive as can be seen from the prices charged between 1850 and 1880:

Shragging faggots cost 6s per 100 to make;
Felling faggots cost 4s per 100 to make;
Hedge faggots cost 4s per 100 to make.

To which the price of withs to bind had to be added at 1s. 3d per 100, while the woodman took a selling commission of 1s in the £.

In *Kelly's Directory* for 1843 four faggot dealers were listed, one at Cane End, one at Gallowstree Common and two at Beechwood Checkendon.

Faggots of various sizes were used for firing kilns and were described sometimes as kiln or large faggots. So we have Mrs Hedges[6], who owned the brick kiln in Pot Kiln Lane, buying 2800 kiln bavins in 1729, and Payne the glazier of Caversham purchasing 50 faggots from the Cane End estate in 1760. An unusual customer for faggots was 'Lewis the bargeman' who bought 150 from the same estate.

Billets were coppice poles or branches measuring 3 feet 4 inches with a circumference of 10 inches - pieces that would fit on the fire andirons or dogs, which were usually 3 feet apart. (Andirons in many different spellings are to be found in the inventories of 17th and 18th century wills and must therefore have been highly prized pieces of domestic equipment.) Beech billets were usually formed from beech coppice grown for 10 to 15 years. Many of our local woods were mostly beech coppice up to the beginning of the 19th century and supplied London with firewood.

The accounts of Thomas West of Wallingford, part owner of a barge and one of several owners who took wood fuel to London from the Oxfordshire Chilterns, refer to carrying '10 loads of billet and 20 loades of talle wood' from Mapledurham to Cranes Wharf, London, for the 'Quenes House', in the 16th century[7]. It is said that Queen Elizabeth I disliked

coal as fuel, preferring beech firewood. In the 17th century Pepys investigated the price of beech firewood for the navy and found that its cost from Henley varied between £14-16 per 100 loads, one load containing 500 billets, with the price of 'carriage by water' quoted between 15d and 18d per load[8]. Incidentally, when researching the Pepys' account, I actually saw his writing in the Bodleian.

Later accounts contain entries of stackwood (Fig. 2) and cordwood, stacks and cords being definite measures (see Glossary). An entry in the inventory of Thomas Goswell of Neals Farm, Checkendon in 1635 states 'Items in the woods, timber, cut roodes (coppice rods) faggots, balins (bavins), stackwood and whoops (hoops)'.

Fig. 2: Stackwood.

The earliest use of 'logs' in the Chilterns was in 1811. Blocks were split logs - a description used around Stoke Row and Whitchurch where a 1919 entry on a wood account records 'faggot tying and cutting blocks £4.10s'[9]. On the same estate a steam sawmill installed in 1914 was used to cut blocks for sale.

Another form of firewood was roots of trees and Mrs Hedges also purchased them for her brick works: 'Brick kiln - roots £2.4s'.

Historically firewood was a valuable commodity until coal became more readily available. Every scrap of wood was used from coppicing and felling operations. These same woodlands still produce wayside 'Logs for sale' notices for the passing motorist.

Glossary

Cord - a stack of wood 4 x 4 x 8 ft long.
Cubic foot of timber - 1/4 x girth^2 x length = the Hoppus foot.
Rods - coppice poles.
Shragging, scraging or shredding - the cutting off of side shoots to minimise knot formation.
Stack - 6 ft wide x 3 ft deep x 2 ft high.
Withs - a split length of thin coppice rod, either willow or hazel, that is 'wound' by twisting and is used for binding faggots and besoms, etc.

Metric conversion
1 ft = 0.305 m

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ABBEY STONES AND BRIDESTONES

Molly Casey

As is my custom, I spent some time during the past summer in the Whitby area. The Abbey site in this ancient town is under consideration for a World Heritage Site, not because of the beauty of its setting but because it was the site of the Synod of Whitby in AD 603 at which the English Church confirmed its links with the Church of Rome by accepting its dating for Easter. Commemorating this informative plaques have been set up, the grass is mown and the intrusive car park has been moved approximately 1 km along the road. Of course you can still make your way up there by the 199 steps from the harbour side. It has all been well done, even if a lingering desire remains for the days when cattle grazed there and the ground got rather muddy in wet weather because that was how it had naturally evolved. The TV mast rather intrudes but it was what the people of Whitby wanted.

The church of St Mary up there, with its boxed pews and weather-eroded gravestones, is worth a visit. For centuries it was Whitby's only church and, as with others in the area, it was a true test of devotion to get there in pre-car days, particularly in the bleak winter weather that assaults the northeast coast.

For centuries also Whitby remained somewhat isolated from the rest of the country with the sea on one side and on the other the extensive moors, themselves now part of the North Yorkshire National Park. There are delightful villages, Goathland of TV's 'Heartbeat' fame being the best known, though whether this is a blessing or a nuisance remains a matter of debate for local residents. There are many stretches of the high moors where, apart from the road, there is no sign of human habitation. The views are extensive and the moorland sheep wander freely, their lambs being susceptible to speeding traffic in the spring and early summer.

It is here that we came upon the Lower Bridestones; the higher ones are better known. There is nothing there to throw light on them. Some of them are standing, others are fallen. They are more or less in a circle. You need your eyes skinned to find them. The OS map shows them at NZ 847047. You need to scramble over rough ground and tufts of heather to reach them as they are just off the road.

What are they? How old are they? [Ed: see note below.] If you haven't seen them, well here's an idea for your next holiday. Make sure your car is in good nick as there are plenty of 1 in 3 gradients (33%). Of course you can always approach them properly by walking or cycling.

While you are in the area you might care to visit the villages of Runswick Bay and Robin Hoods Bay, clinging to the cliffs, and Staithes at the foot of its steep hill where, until very recently, and possibly still, the women of the village wear bonnets. Ravenscar, with extensive views along the coast and gorse pods popping, is also worth a visit.

I have not mentioned Captain Cook and the house where he lived for some time, to be found in Whitby itself and full of informative interest, as is the nearby museum. Captain Cook's statue stands on the cliff top below the jaw bones of a whale, for Whitby was a famous whaling port (yes, I know it's a bloody affair). The replica of his ship H.M.S. *Endeavour* was there for some time but has now been sailed to Australia in as near a state to the original as sea-going law will allow.

Finally, gastronomically-speaking, Nobles' kipper houses, their rising oak smoke being characteristic of Whitby, produce kippers for breakfast that have no equal.

Editor's Note

It is thought that Molly is referring to the two monuments known collectively in the literature as High Bridestones. In his gazetteer for Bronze Age North Yorkshire, Nicholas Thomas (1976) states: 'There are the remains of 2 circles, both originally 30-40 ft. [ca. 9-12 m] in diameter. Each circle has only 3 of its stones standing, with a few survivors fallen. The tallest stone is 7 ft [ca. 2.1 m] high. There are single standing stones outside these circles, 1 to the south and 3 to the north. Date, c. 2200-1400 BC'.

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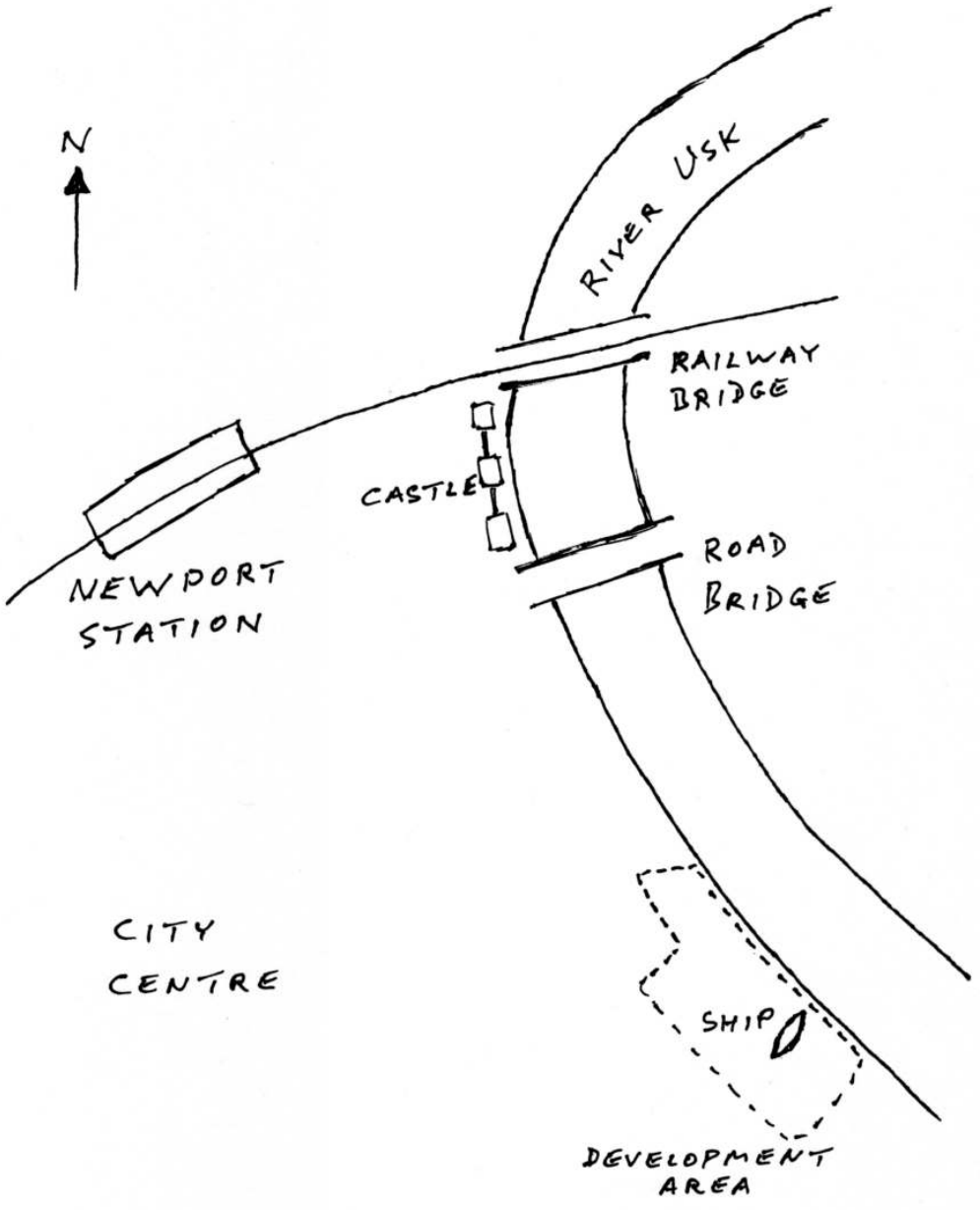
S.O.S.: SAVING THE NEWPORT SHIP

John White

Following a brief report on the radio of the discovery of a medieval ship during building work in Newport, Gwent. A further news item announced a second open day for the public to view the excavation of the ship. The report also said that local archaeologists considered that the ship was of world-ranking importance and so should be recovered, conserved and eventually put on display. Newport Council, which was redeveloping the site as an arts centre, was reported as only wanting minimal recording of the finds within deadlines so that completion of their project was not delayed.

I decided to try to see it. The Newport Information Office knew about the previous open days but did not know if any more were planned. They suggested that I should telephone the curator of Newport Museum. The curator was of course out, but I was given an address to write to. I wrote to ask if there would be any more open days, but weeks went by and I heard nothing. Then, to my surprise, an email arrived announcing the last open day on the coming 8 September 2002.



Map 1: Site location

From Didcot it was about an hour's journey on the fast train to Newport. Just before we arrived the train crossed a bridge over the River Usk and I could see the remains of the castle on the river bank and the transporter bridge in the distance. As it was Sunday the town centre was almost deserted, so I walked towards the castle and the river. The ship was on the river bank just past the castle (Fig. 1) and the road bridge (see map). After a few minutes walk I could see the white-painted shuttering round a building site with a banner on it proclaiming 'S.O.S. Save Our Ship', and I joined the queue (Fig. 2). The queue wound round three sides of the building site but was too far from the displayed engine and truck from Newport Docks and Railway company for them to be examined while we waited. At this time I knew little of the history of the area other than being able to see that the industrial landscape was rapidly changing, so since this first visit I have done some research.

Fig. 1: Newport Castle.

Fig. 2: The development site.

Remains of several boats found in the area indicate that Newport has probably been a port at the mouth of the River Usk since before the Roman occupation of Britain. However little is known of the history until the Normans arrived and the first castle was built as a wooden structure in 1126. The castle was rebuilt in stone during the 13th century and town walls with north, east and west gates were built. The 15th century was a turbulent time in British and European history. The Hundred Years War was still being fought and in 1405 the French landed in Wales but were defeated in 1406. In 1400 Owain Glyndwr led a Welsh revolt against the English, attacking and destroying the castle, bridge and town of Newport in 1402. Although he controlled most of Wales by 1404 and summoned a Welsh Parliament in 1405, he was then defeated and ended his life in hiding. After the English success at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415 the Hundred Years War ended in 1453 with defeat at Castillon and the loss of all France except Calais. The Wars of the Roses then started. In 1460 the Earl of Warwick, later known as 'the Kingmaker' for restoring Henry VI to the throne, was granted custody of the Lordship of Newport. War is costly and it is believed that Warwick engaged in piracy to support the royalist cause, with the capture of numbers of Spanish, Portuguese and French ships. Warwick died in the Battle of Barnet in 1471 and the War of the Roses ended when Henry VII was crowned in 1485. In 1469 Isabella I, Queen of Castille, married Ferdinand of Aragon, leading to the unification of Spain. As Queen of Spain she became the patron of Christopher Columbus, whose ships may have been of similar design to that found at Newport. Newport received its Royal Charter in 1623 and has developed as an industrial town exporting coal, with the building of the docks starting in the 18th century where the Rivers Ebbw and Usk meet. The docks reached their zenith in the 20th century, including engineering features such as swing, roller and transporter bridges, of which only the last now remains. Newport castle suffered the same fate as most other castles in the Civil War. Then instead of being robbed for building materials the remains were taken over for industrial use, as a tannery, a warehouse, a nail factory and, as shown in an 1893 photograph, as the Searle-Herrings Brewery.

The initial impressions were of the great size of the ship and its fine state of preservation. The timbers were so solid that they were walked on while being recorded by the archaeologists (Figs. 3, 4). Their weakness compared with modern materials was also clearly shown. To create a dry area for the building work steel shuttering had been driven into the soil so that the water could be pumped out. Because the ship was much longer than the width of the proposed building this shuttering had sliced off the stem and stern of the ship which therefore remained outside the excavated area. The ship's timbers were also pierced by numerous concrete piles which had been the foundations of the previous building on the site. There had in fact been an archaeological survey before that building had been constructed but it certainly did not go down as deep as the building operations that followed it. I took a number of photographs of the ship, the site and the archaeologists working, but it was difficult to capture the impression of size obtained by actually being there.

Figs. 3 and 4: The archaeological team at work.

It was reported that 40 000 people visited the ship over the three open days. On my way I collected information leaflets about the Friends of the Newport Ship, the group that had been set up to campaign for the recovery, preservation and display of the ship. I then went along the river bank, looking at the steam engine and truck on the way. The transporter bridge was still in the distance, about 3 km away, but I decided to leave looking at that for another day.

It had been an interesting day so I sent off my application to join the Friends of the Newport Ship to enable me to hear how the project progressed. Reports came, in the newsletter or by e-mail, of the recovery of the timbers from inside the steel shuttering and the start of the conservation in water tanks at the Corus steelworks, and of the recovery of the stem timbers by Oxford Archaeology in 2003. Then came the bad news. Newport Council, wanting to complete its new arts centre, refused to allow the stern to be recovered and so instead the stern was covered with tonnes of concrete. Also, Corus closed the steelworks so new accommodation had to be found.

The story of the ship in this century has been one of the argument between Newport Council who own the site and archaeologists and other enthusiasts who wanted the ship recovered and displayed. It is possible to see the Council's point of view as with the loss of coalmining and steelmaking and the reduction of traffic through the port their income must have greatly decreased so they would not want further expenses. My visit to see the ship *in situ* showed that it was far too large to be displayed in a basement of the arts centre (the Council's original suggestion), giving an obvious reason why they did not want any more parts recovered. However, the importance of the ship to the study of the history of ship design and construction, being older and more complete than the Mary Rose, was such that money was forthcoming. The parts were moved to a new warehouse which was set up as the Conservation Centre and the eventual foundation of a maritime museum to display this and other exhibits currently in store is in prospect.

In early November 2003 I received a note which invited the Friends of the Newport Ship to visit the new Conservation Centre to view the ship's timbers and hear about the arrangements for conservation. So on 22 November 2003 I arrived at the Conservation Centre in Unit 22 (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5: The Conservation Centre (exterior view).

Fig. 6: The Conservation Centre (interior view).

Inside the building about 14 large water tanks had been constructed using waterproof fabric fitted onto a framework of scaffold poles, making a total water area of over 0.4 ha (Fig. 6). The timbers first recovered are stored dry (Fig. 7) as they had been allowed to dry out before their age and importance had been determined. The other timbers are being stored in the tanks to prevent shrinkage while all the measurements are recorded and then the tanks will be used for the conservation treatments. Conditions were not good for photography because the building was lit by a vast array of fluorescent lights which all reflected off the top of the water in each tank. The photographs I include here show some of the frames (Fig. 8), some of the planking (Fig. 9) and part of the massive wooden plate into which the mast fitted (Fig. 10). I was also able to talk to Ron McCormick, the Vice-chairman of the Friends of the Newport Ship, and Kate Hunter, Newport Museum's Keeper of Conservation.

Fig. 7: The first timbers recovered.

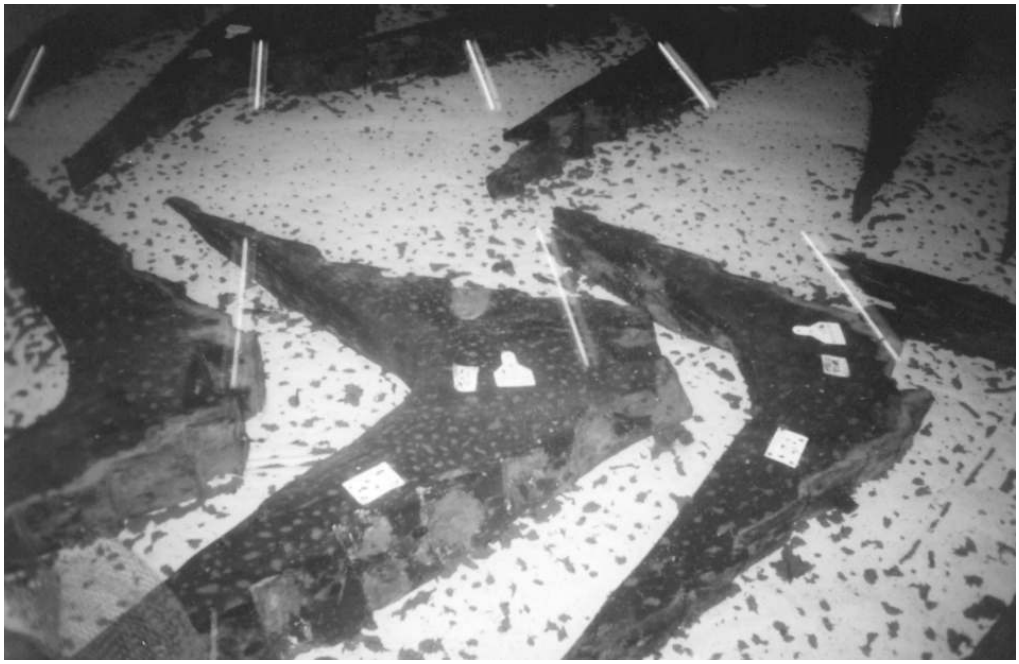


Fig. 8: Some of the frames.

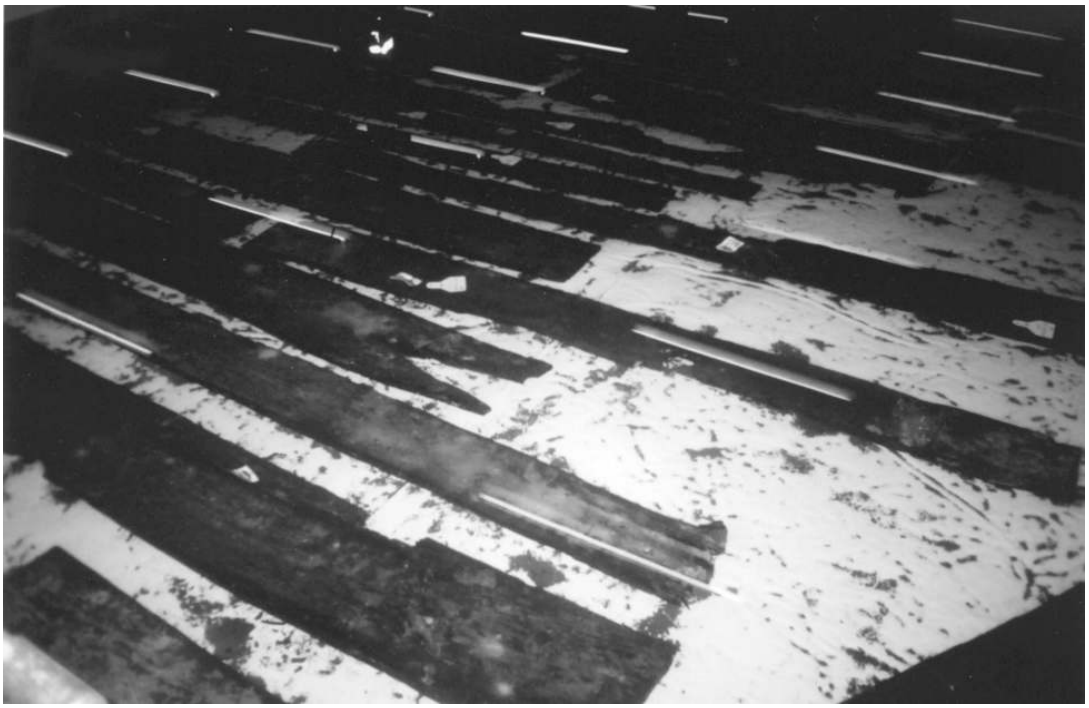


Fig. 9: Some of the planking.

Fig. 10: The mast support plate.

At about 3 pm Kate Hunter gave a short talk on the latest discoveries about the ship. The length is estimated as 26 m with the maximum width 8 m, a truly enormous size for its date. The hull is clinker built, that is built up from overlapping timbers (termed strakes) which run the whole length of the ship. This is the traditional northern European technique. (Carvel built ships originated in southern Europe where the technique of saw cutting timber necessary for butt joints was developed.) The shape of the ship was maintained by fitting 64 frames inside the hull along its length (Figs. 3 and 4). At the widest point the frames were built up from seven pieces of timber. On the inside of the frames a second layer of butt-joined timber was fitted, to be a floor on which the cargo could rest and to protect the hull from damage from shifting cargo. This double skin helped to keep the cargo dry with evidence

being found of three pumps to remove the water from the gap. The gap was of course a trap for small objects, items from coins to cannon balls being found when the ship was dismantled. Although the ship had been on timber supports it had fallen over onto its starboard side before being buried. The result was that all 34 strakes remained on the starboard side but only 16 on the port side, with indications that those remaining above ground had been cut off, possibly to remove obstacles from the river bank or perhaps just for firewood. The main mast had been removed but was estimated to have been about 20 m high. There is no evidence so far whether there was just the one mast (Fig. 11) or if there had been two additional masts fore and aft to assist manoeuvring.

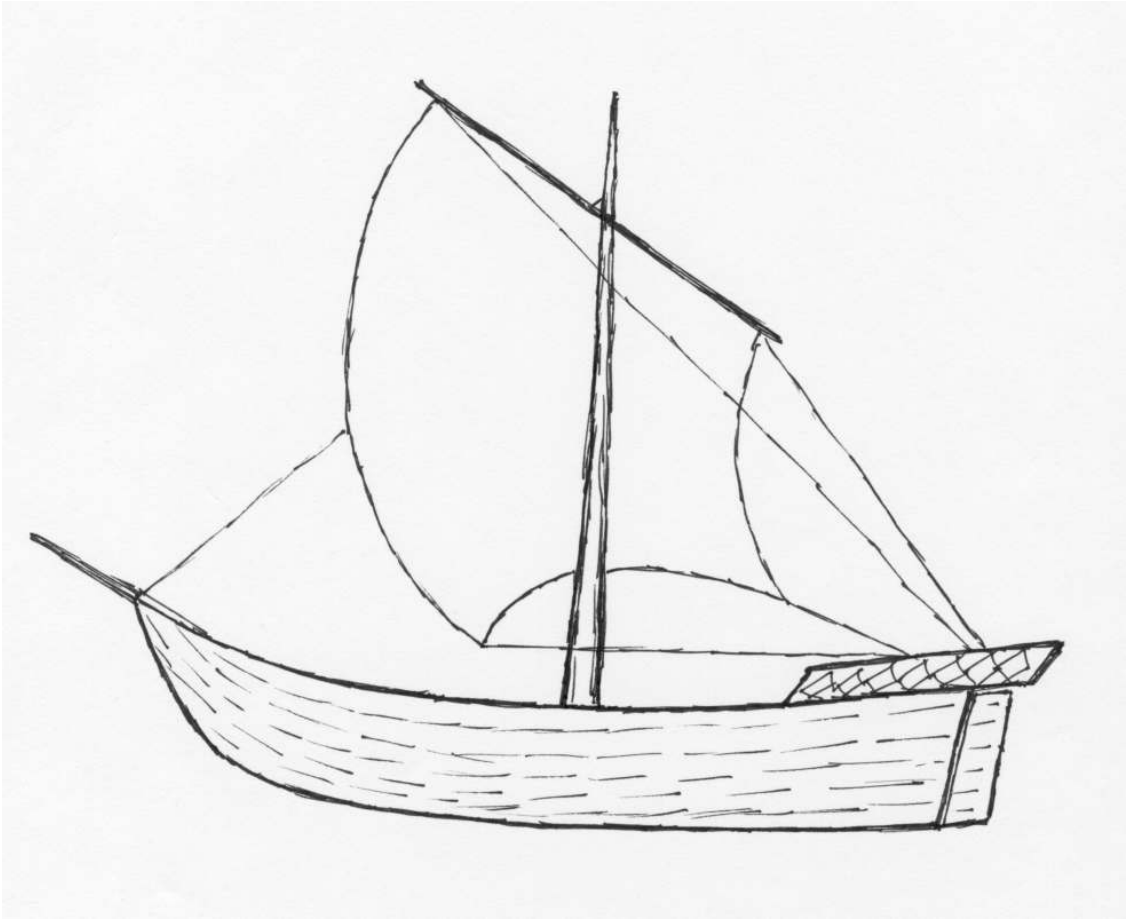


Fig. 11: The vessel.

Many questions remain about the ship. The identity is still unknown, and so is the age. Dendrochronology gave a date of 1465 for the first recovered timbers but these have now been found to be timber used in repairs. No match has been found to date the original timbers of the ship. The conclusion from this is that the ship was built in Europe where the different climate would give a different pattern of tree rings. This makes it possible that the ship was one of those captured by the Earl of Warwick. Clinker built ships were caulked, that is the gaps between the planks were packed and then tarred to prevent leaks. Most of the tar used on European ships came from Germany so this would not identify the origin of the ship. However the material used for caulking was normally wool, which allows the possibility of DNA tests to identify its source and hence the place where the ship was built. It would then be possible to determine the original date of the ship and maybe even its name as the construction of a ship of this size is likely to have been recorded somewhere. Even with these unknowns the ship is considered by many experts to be more important than the Mary Rose.

Kate Hunter then led a tour around the tanks talking about the timbers in them and answering questions. The reason for the vessel being abandoned was discussed. The ship had been in dock for repairs and one possible reason was that it been part of the Earl of Warwick's fleet and so work stopped when he was killed in battle in 1471. However recent examination of the timbers has indicated a more likely reason: the massive timber plate into which

the mast fitted (Fig. 10) had cracked. Because of the size and location of this timber it would have been impossible to repair without completely dismantling the ship. The state of its aged timber would then make it nearly impossible to reassemble in a seaworthy condition.

I asked what was known about the method of steering as the stern of the ship had not been recovered. Her answer was that the shape of the timbers that they did have showed that the strakes were going to meet at an upright where the rudder would be positioned. The earlier form of steering paddle or board at the side of the ship, as used by the Viking vessels, would not have been effective on a ship of that size. (The vulnerability of this steering mechanism meant that ships with it had to tie up in dock on the other side, leading to the terms port side and steering board (starboard) side.)

Future plans for the project are to complete the recording of the timbers (which in the meantime will be kept under water to prevent shrinkage), chemical treatment to conserve the timber and then to reassemble the ship for display, hopefully in a purpose-built maritime museum. The conservation will be undertaken by the Mary Rose Archaeological Services. The major difficulty for the conservation is likely to be the surprisingly good condition of the timbers. Normally wood of that age has decayed to some extent and this allows the chemicals used in conservation to penetrate. Because the timbers of the ship are so solid it is probable that the process will have to be extended to fifteen or more years. Hopefully this timespan will allow the stern timbers to be retrieved and to join the process in time for the final re-assembly. Further details of the project together with news of the latest discoveries and theories can be found on the web site www.thenewportship.com.

Footnote

I must apologise to all the sailors I have upset by referring to the ship as ‘it’. This gender was used for two reasons. Firstly in its present form the ship appears more like a dead object being examined than a feminine creature. Secondly it is not known what was the common practice at the time when the ship was in use. The large number of ships with male names such as ‘Matthew’ may indicate that the use of the female gender for ships was not then the norm. Once the ship is reassembled, complete and displayed in her glory then ‘she’ would be appropriate.

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Contributions are invited for the next issue of the *SOAG Bulletin*. Articles should preferably describe original field or documentary research undertaken by the author and priority will be given to items relevant to South Oxfordshire. Short reports of SOAG visits and other meetings and conferences are also invited.

Authors are reminded that copies of the *SOAG Bulletin* are sent to the six legal deposit libraries in the United Kingdom, to local libraries, Oxford Archaeology, the Institute of Archaeology (Oxford) and the Oxfordshire Museums Service. The reputation of SOAG therefore rests largely on the quality of the *SOAG Bulletin*.

In order to ease the burden on the editorial and production team, it would be appreciated if potential authors would also bear the following points in mind:

- Articles are accepted at the discretion of the Editor, who reserves the right to edit material prior to publication.
- Contributions should ideally be between 500 and 2000 words in length. With the agreement of the author, shorter articles may be published in the *Messenger*. Longer items will be accepted depending on the availability of space.
- Articles should not have been previously published elsewhere.
- Articles should be submitted in Microsoft Word format, preferably by email. However, cleanly-typed and/or clearly-handwritten articles will be accepted. When sending copy by email, please ensure that the subject line begins 'SOAG Bulletin' and include a few lines of text in the message: unidentified attachments will not be opened.
- Please be as concise as possible, omit non-relevant material and avoid needless repetition.
- Illustrations are welcomed, if appropriate. Drawings are also invited for consideration for the front cover. Maps, drawings and photographs may be submitted in paper or electronic format as separate attachments. Photographs and original artwork will be returned to authors after publication if requested upfront.
- The text should be single-spaced; the title and author name(s) should be centred in bold; main headings should be placed left in bold; subheadings should be placed left in italics. Numbered figure captions should be provided and placed in the text to indicate the approximate position of illustrations. Pages should be numbered consecutively.
- Metric units must be used where feasible. When imperial measurements are used, as in documentary studies, the metric equivalents should be added in square brackets if appropriate. When giving measurements, insert a single space between the number and the dimension, e.g. 5.3 m.
- Pounds, shillings and pence must not be converted into pounds and new pence.
- Numbers in the text (unless given as actual units of measurement) should be spelt out as words up to and including ten and given in numerals if more than ten.
- The Harvard System should be used for references whenever possible but the author's principles will be followed when items do not lend themselves to this system, subject to discussion.
  e.g. Articles from journals and magazines:
  Margary, I. D. (1943) Roman roads with small side ditches. *Antiquaries Journal*, 23: 7-8.
  e.g. Books:
  Henig, M. and Booth, P. (2000) *Roman Oxfordshire*. Stroud, Sutton.
  e.g. Chapters from edited books:
  Karali, L. (1996) Marine invertebrates and Minoan art. *In*: Reese, D. S. (ed.) *Pleistocene and Holocene fauna of Crete*. Wisconsin, Prehistory Press. pp.413-419.
- The use of footnotes is discouraged.
- Do not include any double spaces in your copy (including after punctuation marks), nor any spaces before punctuation such as full stops, commas, close brackets, etc.
- Please send all contributions to the Editor (see outside back cover) before 30 November for publication in the following year.

Patron: Dr Malcolm Airs

SOAG was established in 1969 and now has about 130 members. The aims of the Group are to promote an active interest in archaeology and its allied disciplines, particularly in South Oxfordshire. It works in close cooperation with the County Archaeologist and Oxford Archaeology, and is a member of the Council for British Archaeology and the Council for Independent Archaeology.

- **Monthly meetings are held from September to May at the Free Church Hall, Goring, when lectures by professional speakers are given in an informal atmosphere**
- **There are opportunities for members to take part in excavations, fieldwalking, surveys and postexcavation work. Visits are made to places of interest - sometimes to sites not open to the public - and there is an annual Summer Party**
- **Members receive the annual *SOAG Bulletin*, which contains reports of the Group's activities and original articles focused on South Oxfordshire, and the monthly *SOAG Messenger*, which carries details of forthcoming events and brief news items**
- **Experts and complete beginners of all ages are warmly welcomed as new members**

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