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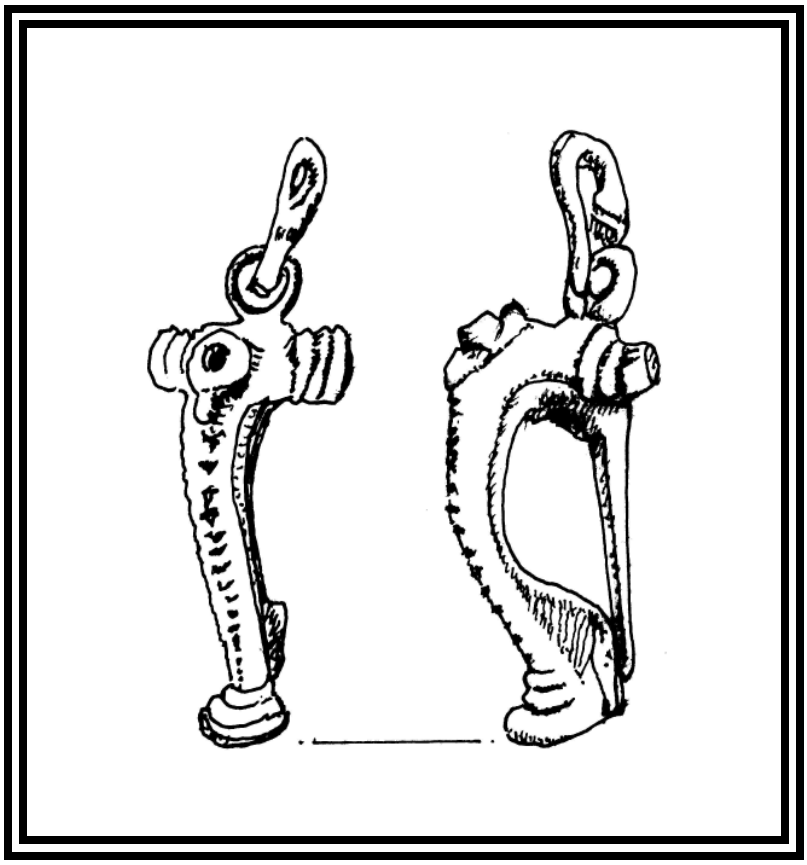

South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group

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the Roman brooch from Gatehampton Farm
(see article by Hazel Williams on page 9)
Drawing: Cynthia Graham Kerr

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2005

Cynthia Graham Kerr

This has been a year of change thanks to the Computer, which so affects us all and has led to SOAG obtaining its own website with Steve Gibson acting as webmaster. Steve has made a great success of the website and it has already brought us a number of new members, from as far away as London, and we would like to thank him for giving it so much of his time and attention. We also continue to gain new members locally, who are attracted by the dig and by our new meetings venue at the Goring Heath Parish Hall, Whitchurch Hill, which has encouraged more members to come and attend the SOAG talks held during 2005.

The Dig and Other Fieldwork

The dig, as usual, took up almost every Sunday between Easter and October, and we were very fortunate with the weather this year – with the exception of our Open Day on 24 July when it really rained hard and did not clear up until the afternoon! We were very thankful for Robin Cloke's kindness in allowing us to use the large greenhouse as a 'hall' and we had a good display therein, much enjoyed by the 60 or so visitors and SOAG members who were not deterred by the rain. The dig has made good progress this season (see Hazel Williams' report in this issue) and has grown considerably. It is now probably one of the more important excavations being carried out in South Oxfordshire and seems to be non-stop!

Photo: Hazel Williams

We dug on 15 Sundays, with any number of workers between two and 20. At the end of the season we held our now traditional 'Diggers' Dinner' at the John Barleycorn pub in Goring. Ten diggers were present, including Barbara East, who was presented with some framed photographs of the dig and a card signed by all of us as a special 'thank-you', as she has since moved away.

We do have other irons in the fire, such as taking part in the proposed Brightwell Baldwin landscape archaeology project and maintaining a watching brief at Woodcote, where work is being carried out to conserve the ancient Greenmoor Ponds and may throw some light on their history (see the relevant reports in this issue). SOAG has also been invited to assist with other archaeological investigations in the Woodcote area. The dig will have to close some time, so we must keep an eye open for other opportunities.

Summer Celebrations

As I had now run SOAG for 36 years and had been elected an Honorary Member at the 2005 AGM (and perhaps also because I had an 85th birthday coming up), the Committee decided to make the Summer Party a special celebratory occasion this year. I was presented with a most beautiful (and comfortable) garden bench which fits onto my terrace perfectly, and also a large 'SOAG' pot and a sheaf of blue flowers (SOAG colours). There was a splendid cake to mark the occasion and a superb feast. It was a wonderful surprise – I suspected that something was being planned but had no idea that it would be anything like this! So thank you all for your lovely presents and for making this such a special event.

Meetings and Visits

Once again Edward Golton prepared an interesting programme of SOAG events for 2005. We had some excellent speakers for our monthly meetings and attracted a record audience of 40 or so to hear Ken Dark talk about 'The End of Roman Britain' on 27 October. We vary the talks in order to offer something of interest to everybody, and we also aim to provide the opportunity for members to meet and get to know one another – this is an important aspect of SOAG.

The outings too are a good way for families to meet and for children – and perhaps also husbands and wives – to be given an interesting and different day out. As an official group we can sometimes arrange a special visit to places not normally open to the public, such as we did this year to the Medieval manor house at Chalgrove.

The Future

As I write these lines, we are looking forward to the spring when we shall be able to get out and get fieldwalking again – and who knows what that will bring? Thank you all once again for your support, and long may we continue to help each other and thus keep SOAG running smoothly and happily through 2006.

CYNTHIA GRAHAM KERR: SOAG HONORARY MEMBER

The AGM Announcement

The award of Honorary Membership is an all too rare event in SOAG's history, but it has come as a surprise to some, including I may say one or two members of the Committee, to learn that our President, Cynthia Graham Kerr, is not already an Honorary Member. No doubt it is precisely because Cyn has always been at the centre of running SOAG that this has been overlooked. It would be quite impossible for me in a couple of minutes to do justice to everything that Cyn has done for SOAG – suffice it to say that she has given 36 years of her life to it, with her extraordinary leadership and character, combining as it does her own special blend of boundless energy, dogged determination, remarkable resilience, irrepressible sense of fun, and bossiness! As Hazel Williams said to me the other day: it is all too easy for people to forget the enormous contribution Cyn has made and remember only the friendly nagging! As President she provides the continuity that any group such as ours must have. But above all, of course, without Cyn there would have been no SOAG in the first place and we would not be here today.

As most of you will know, at the 2004 AGM Cyn announced her intention to hand over the remaining day-to-day administration of SOAG to the Committee. This was a very hard decision for her to take and even more painful for her to carry it through in the last year, but she has done it and come out smiling at the end, and we applaud her for it. It is therefore only right and proper that in 2005 we should recognise her new, non-executive role and her unique contribution to SOAG over 36 years. I have the honour on behalf of the Committee to recommend to the members that Cynthia Graham Kerr, Founder and President, be elected an Honorary Member of the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group.

Ian Clarke

The SOAG Celebration Summer Party

The SOAG Summer Party was held on Saturday 18 June 2005 in honour of our Founder and President Cynthia Graham-Kerr at the beautiful riverside setting of the Goring Thames Sailing Club in the company of members and guests, which included among the celebrities Paul Smith (Oxfordshire County Archaeologist). This year the party was specially presented to celebrate Cyn's unique contribution to the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group, which she founded on 22 May 1969 with her late husband Adam, and her dedication to archaeology over the past 36 years.

We were blessed with a balmy summer evening and a sumptuous table of cold meats, quiches and salads – the latter laid out in such mouth-watering style that it caught the attention as soon as one came through the door. The appetite had to be held in check for several important events, however. The first, before one was allowed entry, was the successful negotiation of what has generally become known as the Tithe (a not unworthy tax for partaking in the celebration). Of far greater importance, after we were refreshed with a glass of wine, were the speeches made by Janet Sharpe (see tribute below) and Hazel Williams, each giving praise and reminiscences of their involvement with Cyn over the recent and not so recent past. Quite apart from the happy memories these evoked, and there were many, a brief mention of a certain lady digger's shorts crept into the conversation.

It was then the turn of our Chairman, Mike Fulton, and our Honorary Secretary, Ian Clarke, to draw our attention to a mysterious square of canvas, labelled 'Sailing Club – Do Not Touch'. This was removed to reveal a splendid mahogany garden seat, suitably decorated with a brass plate celebrating the award of Honorary Membership of SOAG to Cyn at the 2005 AGM; a long overdue recognition, as Ian pointed out, of Cyn's hard work on behalf of the Group. This gift, subscribed to by members, was duly presented to Cyn together with a large earthenware pot, which looked somewhat like the SOAG logo.

Photo: Bernard Clucas

After the presentation the festivities were really underway and the sumptuous table was offered to the host. There was also a magnificent presentation cake which was cut by the President. We all reminisced afresh and enjoyed the pleasant atmosphere of the clubhouse and the attendant company, along with the riverside and its wildfowl, and in the closing stages watched a glorious setting sun.

Our thanks must go to Ian and Mike for organising the celebration. The clubhouse once again proved to be an excellent venue (I believe there is an interesting tale to tell about the formation of this Sailing Club in 1943 by a group of pilots convalescing at an RAF hospital in Goring). Our thanks are also due to Freda and John Mottram for arranging the food and drinks, not forgetting Catherine Clarke and Maria-Rosa Fulton for all their hard work behind the scenes. Thank you all for a splendid and memorable evening.

Photo: Bernard Clucas

Colin Hogbin

A Tribute to the SOAG President

We've come together this evening for a special celebration in recognition of Cyn's amazing contribution by not only founding SOAG but keeping it alive and kicking almost single-handedly for over 35 years. This truly is a remarkable achievement, Cyn, and I hope this evening will go some way at least to showing you how very much we appreciate your efforts.

I can think of other societies that are best described as stuffy, unfriendly or downright cliquey. SOAG has been none of these things. Cyn has worked hard to promote a relaxed, friendly atmosphere by actively encouraging members to talk to one another – perhaps at the time we have not always appreciated this, but you have to admit that it worked! Another reason for SOAG's success is that Cyn is always on the look-out for potential new members, a sort of one-woman press-gang who can be difficult to refuse. I can't remember now how she inveigled me into the fold but I am eternally grateful that she did. I was at home with a 6-month-old baby (now aged 22) and the coffee morning circuit just wasn't my thing. Then it all changed – I was whisked off to dig at Newington and my daughter acquired a whole new range of proxy uncles and aunts.

We had such fun in those days. Perhaps it is a fallacy that the past always seems rosier, but looking back all I can see is the sunshine: those summer outings and picnics, the fieldwalking – and above all the companionship.

However, it is a fact of life that everything changes. Many archaeological groups have come and gone since Cyn founded SOAG, and in order to survive in a changing world SOAG itself needs to change. Gone are the days when I typed out the *SOAG Bulletin* on my old typewriter and Cyn did the drawings. We spent days with scissors and paste getting everything just right for the printer. Now it is all done on the computer and from my point of view at least the fun has gone out of it – but instead we now have a product that I hope you'll agree is setting us on track for the 21st century. So, Cyn, we are all indebted to you for putting us on the right road to begin with and I'm sure SOAG will carry your spirit forward as it matures, losing some of its youthful gaiety perhaps, but becoming a force to be reckoned with. Thank you for founding SOAG, and thank you for being its life and soul for so long.

Janet Sharpe

PAT PREECE RETIRES AS SOAG CHAIRMAN

The following tribute was given by the Honorary Secretary at the AGM.

We could not let the 2005 AGM go by without proposing a vote of thanks to another very special SOAG lady, our retiring Chairman Pat Preece. Pat has served on the Committee of SOAG over a period of almost 30 years, not just the last five as Chairman. Never a quitter, she has stuck with SOAG through good times and difficult times to help bring it safely to where it is today. She is always reliable, determined, ready with sound advice, and able quickly to cut through nonsense – a characteristic sometimes much needed on committees! During the last few years she has overseen the introduction of many changes that we hope will lay a firm foundation and ensure a long and successful future for SOAG – most importantly she has seen Cyn through this last difficult year of transition with firmness, kindness and humour, and we give our warmest thanks to her for that. Stepping down as Chairman and from the Committee this year will be a strange experience for her, with a sense of loss shared by all those who have served with her over many years.

It is not only by serving on the Committee that Pat has had an impact on SOAG, but also in her archaeological research. Her lectures and her many articles in the *SOAG Bulletin* and other journals, including *Oxoniensia*, represent only a tiny fraction of the documentary and field research that she – along with her stalwart and talented colleagues

Mary Kift and Marian Fallowfield – has undertaken over so many years. Her determination to show that archaeology is not just about digging artefacts out of holes in the ground, but is about people, the way they lived and the way they shaped the landscape around them, has been an inspiration to us all. Landscape archaeology is the modern archaeology and Pat was in at the start of this pioneering movement.

It has given us great pleasure to acknowledge SOAG's debt to Pat, albeit in a small way, with the photograph on the front cover of the 2005 issue of the *SOAG Bulletin*, which illustrates her article on osiers. It gives me great pleasure to thank Pat, on behalf of the President, the Committee and the Members, for her hard work on the Committee over so many years and for her dedication to establishing landscape archaeology as an essential and integral part of field research in the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group.

Ian Clarke

MEETINGS AND VISITS

Oxfordshire Past 2005

One thousand years ago, in the reign of the king all schoolboys know as Ethelred the Unready, monks founded an abbey in the Saxon community of Eynsham. Eleven years ago the first Oxfordshire Past archaeological symposium was held. This year the events were linked when Oxfordshire Past 2005 was held on 7 May in Eynsham Village Hall on a typical spring day, with the sun shining brightly during the lectures and with showers in the lunch break. Fortunately the hidden controls for the hall's blinds were eventually found, and pubs and teashops were close at hand, so neither caused too big a problem for the ten members of SOAG who attended.

At 10 o'clock Brian Atkins (President of Eynsham History Group) bid us welcome and introduced the first speaker, Paul Smith (Oxfordshire County Archaeologist), who presented 'A Review of Recent Archaeology in the Shire'. Work at three sites was described. At the first, in Bicester, the very wet weather actually helped to show up the archaeology. Two wells were found, and in one there was part of a Roman wooden writing tablet just below 2nd-century pottery. This, we were told, was a very rare find. The other investigations were at Hill Farm, Little Wittenham and St John's School, Wallingford. Paul ended by announcing that funds had been obtained for an enormous project, a 26-month survey of the archaeology of 29 historic towns of Oxfordshire, in which local societies would be asked to take part.

After coffee and biscuits there were two talks on abbeys. In 'Ælfric's Abbey' Anne Dodd (Oxford Archaeology) described the results of the 1990-92 and 1993 excavations at Eynsham which found remains from the Bronze Age to the Medieval periods. Sixth-century Eynsham appears to have consisted of just a few sunken huts, much more modest than implied in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The first written evidence of a church is dated 821 and the excavations indicate that this was a post-built hall with plastered walls. The new minster built by Ælfric was very different, being built of stone, with communal accommodation and cloisters. The excavation found the bases of two mortar mixers used in its construction. There was also evidence of ivory carving and other crafts being carried out. The Norman invasion brought about the decline of the abbey but there is no evidence of destruction as occurred at some other places, only of hearths and waste pits with the remains of high status food. The abbey was refounded by Henry I with a charter of 1109 and then completely rebuilt in the form which, with additions, lasted until the Dissolution.

The second talk on abbeys was 'The Abbey Church of St Peter and St Paul, Dorchester-on-Thames' by Graham Keevill (Keevill Heritage Consultancy), who had previously given a talk to SOAG on this topic.

After the break for lunch there were two talks about the Wallingford area. The first, 'St Martin's Church, Wallingford' by Iain Soden (Northamptonshire Archaeology), described the excavation undertaken for Waitrose when preliminary work on their new store found human remains, as it was obviously thought that having bodies under the cold meat counter would be bad for business. The work was complicated by having to be started within the existing building, the foundations of which were a mass of concrete beams which were to be left as part of the new structure although they cut through the graves. The initial report was of 16 bodies in an area of 4 square metres, but the final total was 219 burials at depths of up to 2.5 metres, dating from the 10th to 15th centuries. St Martin's Church was 'lost' in the 16th century when there were only about 45 houses still occupied in Wallingford, the materials being used to repair St Mary's Church. A mortar mixer for the construction of St Martin's Church and a lead crucifix were found but the Saxon archaeology under the burials was not investigated.

The second talk was 'Investigations at Preston Crowmarsh' by Colin Clarke (Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society) who described work done at the request of the owner to find out why parts of the site, which borders the Thames, were uneven. Some mortared stones and a 15th century pot were found on top of a peat bank, but no conclusion was reached about the purpose of the construction.

After tea, biscuits and a final chance to browse the stalls of the local groups set up next to the main hall, the last talk was 'A Review of Recent Archaeology in Oxford City' by Brian Durham (Oxford City Council). This review covered a number of mainly professional investigations within the

city of Oxford ranging from Roman pottery kilns at the Churchill Hospital to a large punt-like boat at Port Meadow, where the investigation indicated that part of the river had a silt deposition rate of 33 cm per century. The only item described as being of great importance was the Civil War gate at the Castle.

As the meeting was then running a little late it was quickly drawn to a close. I packed up my notes and hurried through the showers to the Bartholomew Room in the Square to see the exhibition of artefacts from Eynsham Abbey. Unfortunately my impressions of the exhibition were ones of disillusionment as all the artefacts were in reality so much smaller than they had appeared in the hi-tech slides projected onto the big screen at the meeting.

John White

The Royal Society of Chemistry visits the British Museum

On 9 May 2005 I set off up to London, on a visit to the British Museum organised by the Royal Society of Chemistry. I walked from Tottenham Court Road Underground Station and soon the familiar columned frontage came into sight. I walked past that to Montague Street, then up that road past the buildings of the museum until the doorways started to have numbers. Number 9 was a dull, dark green door with a brass plate on the wall next to it proclaiming 'Documentation, Conservation and Science'. I pressed the door-bell and after a few seconds the door was opened and I was ushered in. Inside was a warren of little rooms, offices, a library with books from floor to ceiling on all the walls, and doors everywhere, of all shapes and sizes. It was like being with Alice in Wonderland or on a film set: the little rooms at the back of the museum really do exist!

After signing in we were taken upstairs to a larger room with seating for about 20 to hear an introductory talk. We were told how in the 1920s the museum had employed a scientist on a three-year contract to determine how all the exhibits should be conserved, and now they have a staff of about ten, mainly chemists, still tackling this problem (and many others). We were then divided into two groups of about nine each, small enough to squeeze into the various laboratories; to reach these laboratories we were taken down the stairs, out of the door, down the road, and into Number 39 Russell Square.

The laboratories were on several floors and some housed several projects. We spent the next two and a half hours hearing about ten projects, going up and down the stairs to look into different rooms and see 'wonderful things'.

Some forms of analysis are 'destructive'. Samples of rock from all the quarries along the Nile have been analysed by plasma atomic spectroscopy, and the results processed to produce unique parameters in order to correlate any sample with its original location. A minute sample is now all that is required to identify the source of any Egyptian limestone stele. Carbon-14 tests are also destructive but all this type of work is now contracted out to laboratories that specialise in such work.

For most work on antiquities the curators will only allow non-destructive methods to be used. In one room we were shown a small X-ray machine, used for the analysis of metals. A routine use of this was to determine whether finds should be classed as 'treasure'. An example in the 'in-tray' was a 40-mm long gold figure which formed the knob on the end of a pointer used by monks when reading their manuscripts. Metals, however, are often not uniform in composition. Modern copper coins have iron cores, and silver plate and silver gilt are well known. We were also told about Inca gold: the Incas used alloys of copper, silver and gold to reduce the melting point of the metal so that they could more easily make finely detailed castings. They then treated these to remove the baser metals from the surface layers to obtain a pure gold veneer, much to the disgust of the Spaniards when they melted these castings down.

Light shining on an object interacts with the surface so that some wavelengths are absorbed and the rest are reflected to give the object its colour. The same thing happens with infra-red radiation, when the reflected rays carry information about the molecular structure of the surface. By this means non-destructive molecular analysis can be carried out. This, however, is not the end of the problem since the spectrometer can only give information on the present state of, for example, 300-year-old resin used to hold together an artefact. The problem then is to decide which fresh resin sample will have that structure after 300 years of ageing.

We also saw how a large X-ray machine could produce images of objects, such as a corroded metal urn, which were then digitised and processed with image-enhancing routines to make visible details, such as the inscription. In the example we were shown, it was a dedication to a hitherto unknown Roman goddess (or just an expression of lust for the woman in the villa next door?).

Probably the most important work undertaken is the development of conservation techniques, to enable the objects now in store to be viewed by future generations. For the future there is the question of what form storage should take, for example, a three-dimensional digital image or the actual object. At present the actual objects are stored, so the question is just how to preserve them. Traditional materials, such as wood, metal or stone, were chosen for their durability. Plastics, however, were chosen for their ease of manufacture, not their resistance to degradation. For example, a Japanese tradition is to bring back souvenirs and gifts from places visited, and for an area famed for producing apples, originally apples would have been brought back for friends and relations. To improve product durability, the souvenir shops started to sell iced cakes made as life-sized models of the apples. Now it has been taken a stage further: the shops now sell plastic models of the cake models of the apples. The question now is – how to conserve these plastic models? The obvious answer is in a controlled environment, and such cases are in use, sealed

against the entry of moisture and oxygen. Work is continuing, as autocatalysis is a common problem in which the products of degradation then catalyse further reactions.

The conservation of paper is one of the most important tasks facing the museum. Currently papers are stored in plastic envelopes sealed with tape. This doubles the problem as the paper could be at risk from its own decomposition products and from those of the sealing tape as well. With modern, highly sensitive analytical instruments the build-up of these products can be monitored. For me, this section provided the high point of our visit. On the table, as an illustration of the papers the museum needs to conserve, was lying an ink-on-paper sketch for a sculpture. I had seen reproductions of it but there are not adequate superlatives to describe the quality, depth and body of the original, even when examined through its plastic envelope. The museum label just said 'MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI'.

John White

Chalgrove Manor

On a brilliantly sunny and very hot day on 17 July 2005, the SOAG party assembled at Chalgrove Manor. The old house looked splendid in the bright sunshine. It has belonged to Paul and Rachel Jacques since November 1977 and since then they have been working on the repair and restoration of the house.

Photo: John White

Paul Jacques took us round the outside of the house, which is a timber-framed structure with a hall and two cross wings. It stands on the site of a moated manor probably built during the 13th century. Part of the back of the house is Victorian with red and blue brickwork. It has a well, 16 feet [4.88 metres] deep, which might have served the earlier house on the site. It is one of the few wells which did not dry up during the drought of 1921.

From the back of the house we went round the side of the north wing to see the remains of the Medieval garderobe outlet, which would have been for night-time or emergency use. It must have discharged either into the earlier moat or a pit with a soak-away into the moat.

Photo: John White

Tree-ring dating of the timbers has shown that the north wing was built first, from trees felled between 1444 and 1468. The roof of the central hall was built next, from trees felled during 1488, and the south range from trees felled between 1503 and 1505. Building would have taken place within a few years of the felling of the timber.

In the hall Paul Jacques explained that a great many interesting discoveries were made during repairs and replacements of rotted timbers. Among these was a screen in the hall on the left inside the front door, which has been dated to 1240. Mortices in the posts above and to the left of the front door showed that there must have been a two-storey porch in that position at one time. Before the 16th century the hall was open to the roof, then remodelling took place when a first floor was inserted and a chimney added. The removal of the 19th-century render on part of the house revealed rotted timbers, which meant that the windows had to be replaced.

In the hall we were divided into 'crawlers' and 'non-crawlers', and then we went upstairs to examine the roof. The crawlers used the crawl-way to the left of the chimney which enabled them to see the high quality workmanship of the arch-braced collar roof.

We all reassembled in the large sitting-room in the south wing where we were able to see the extraordinary wall paintings which were uncovered in 1985. These date from about 1680 and were described by P.J. Keevil, Conservator for England, as 'rich walnut in colour, vigorous in design rather than attempting to imitate true wood grain'. The paintings were probably done with a feather.

While we ate an excellent tea provided by the Chalgrove Local History Group we were given a most interesting talk about the wall paintings in Chalgrove Church, which we would have gone to see if it had not been so hot.

Thus ended a most enjoyable and enlightening visit to a lovely historic house.

Marian Fallowfield

WOODCOTE: THE GREENMOOR PONDS

Karen Woolley

A plan to restore the Lower Greenmoor Pond at Woodcote has been agreed and SOAG has been asked to undertake a watching brief on any excavation work that may be carried out at this fascinating site. English Heritage has offered to act in an advisory capacity and will provide consultative support during each phase of the work.

Historical background

The two ponds at Greenmoor, Woodcote (SU646812) cover an area of 1.635 acres [0.662 ha]. They are on registered common land and are situated at the second highest point of the South Oxfordshire Chilterns. The contrasting nature of the two ponds – the relatively shallow and very well vegetated Upper Pond and the much deeper, relatively sparsely vegetated Lower Pond, which is more heavily shaded by trees – adds to the value of the site both in terms of its visual appeal and ecological interest.

The name Greenmoor (also spelt Greenmore) is derived from Greenmere, meaning a green pond or pool, and is first mentioned in a document of 1109 when Henry I confirmed the possessions of Eynsham Abbey. The ponds are shown on a map of 1818 and were identified as public watering places in the Enclosure Award of 1853, and on an early (undated) map were named as 'Sheep Wash Ponds'. The ponds were situated on the edge of Woodcote Common and people from outlying settlements would water their livestock at the ponds before entering the common through a gate at that end.

There is a mapped earthwork enclosure in nearby Friarhampstead Wood, less than 1 km away from the ponds. Representatives from English Heritage have recently visited this site and suggested that it may be Romano-British in date. As there are no other sources of water in the vicinity, it is considered that the Greenmoor Ponds may well have been used as a water source at that time.

The larger (lower) pond was still used as the main source of water for local people until the mid-1920s and the old well head can still be seen at the north-west end of the pond. English Heritage considers the Greenmoor Ponds to be of significant historical importance and accordingly has stated its intention to designate them a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Ecological background

Both the Parish Council and local people have always valued the Greenmoor Ponds for their wildlife, and in 1990 and 2000 Pond Action undertook a survey of the ponds and judged them to be ecologically important. The survey (undertaken by Jeremy Biggs of Pond Action) indicated that 'both ponds have a very high conservation value' and a rich fauna, including nine nationally scarce species. Some of the species recorded include water beetles, frogs, toads, and smooth, palmate and great crested newts (the latter were not recorded in the 2000 survey) and a wide range of plants. The site was considered to be within the top 15% of ponds identified by the National Pond Survey in terms of species richness.

As a result of the 2000 Woodcote Village Appraisal, the Woodcote Conservation Group (WCG) was established – mainly to manage the Greenmoor Ponds – and initiated discussions with Thames Water (which owns adjacent woodland) to manage the whole site as a wildlife area. The WCG (in association with the Parish Council) also commissioned a full ecological survey of the site and has since compiled a three-year management plan, to which it is now working.

Thames Water has not yet made a decision about the future of its area of woodland, but if it agrees to these proposals English Nature and Oxfordshire County Council have agreed that the whole site should be designated a Local Nature Reserve, due to its diversity of habitat. The Greenmoor Ponds are therefore not only of historical importance but also have considerable ecological importance.

Hydrology background

The hydrology of the Greenmoor site is not simple. The two ponds are physically close together but exist in a hydrological sense as two more or less separate entities. Any permanent changes in land use on site or within the catchment of either pond, or disturbances such as one-off excavation works or similar, could have an impact on water movements into, out of or through the site.

There have been no major changes in the condition of the Upper Pond (which has a separate and independent water catchment to the Lower Pond) but unfortunately over the past four years the level of water in the Lower Pond has been dropping steadily and is now some two metres lower than its original level. There will always be seasonal cyclic changes caused by variations in precipitation, with lower water levels to be expected after dry summers or winters, but the dramatic drop in level of the Lower Pond cannot be the result of any such seasonal changes.

The Lower Pond receives water from several sources. There is a series of springs at the western end of the pond, which were possibly the source of water for the well (now capped). The pond also receives direct precipitation and some run-off from the surrounding land, although this is limited because the catchment area is small. Evidence also suggests that there is sub-surface flow into the eastern end of the pond from the north. This flow enters the pond by seepage through either the upper part of the bank and/or at a lower level. The precise route of this water is not known. While these sources continued undiminished the pond remained full, with only a relatively small drop in water

level during the summer months. However, the loss or reduction of one or more of these sources would probably cause the water level to drop. Damage to the pond lining could also cause the level to drop, if the rate of water flow into the pond were not sufficient to compensate for the rate of out flow.

The start of the drop in water level coincided with ground works close to the pond to bury electricity cables formerly located above and along the length of the pond, but this work has now been ruled out as the cause of any possible alteration to water flow into the pond. Recent and careful excavation work around the cables has indicated that the surrounding area – down to a level of approximately two metres – is completely dry.

Over the last year, under the auspices of Woodcote Parish Council and Ponds for People Oxfordshire, investigations have been carried out in an attempt to identify the actual cause(s) of the dropping water level in the Lower Pond. This information has been used to develop and implement a plan to reverse this loss of water and restore, and, where opportunity allows, improve the Lower Pond for people and wildlife. If restoration work had gone ahead without this survey, there would have been the risk that large amounts of public resources could have been expended without the underlying problem being resolved, and further potential problems created.

GATEHAMPTON FARM: INTERIM REPORT 2005

Hazel Williams

This has been another good year for SOAG at Gatehampton Farm. We were pleased that the Open Day in July proved popular despite the bad weather. With this event and some new diggers, over 100 people have spent time at the site this year to dig, wash finds, watch the work in progress, or just enjoy the view.

New developments have included the use of a mechanical digger to clear large areas of the site, mostly of the substantial spoil heaps that we have produced over the last few years. We also used the machine to take the surface off new trench areas, a move that was popular with the diggers, saving them the hard work of mattocking off the turf. More of the geophysical survey of the landscape around the villa has been completed, and the cleared area of the site field has been surveyed too. It is planned to link all these surveys together.

Our main focus this year has been on extending Trench 7. We were particularly interested in confirming the position of the north wall at this end of the building, which we thought at one time may have been largely robbed out. As indicated by the resistivity survey, it is on the same alignment and of similar construction to the first section of wall ever found by SOAG at Gatehampton, about 15 m to the east in Trench 3.

The highlight of the year, of course, has to be the discovery of the 2nd-century Head-stud type bow brooch, which is illustrated on the cover of this issue of the *SOAG Bulletin*.

The geophysical survey

The programme of geophysical survey has continued with the aim of plotting and identifying archaeological features in the area around Gatehampton Farm in order to increase our understanding of the wider landscape around the villa. The building is part of a Roman farmstead and a large area to the north-west has already been surveyed, revealing the enclosures, track ways and other features of the Roman period as well as part of a Bronze Age barrow cemetery. Two new areas were surveyed this year. The survey of a field immediately to the east of the railway line is described in a separate report by the SOAG geophysics expert, Geoff Deakin (see this issue).

The second survey, also by Geoff Deakin, is of part of the current site field, covering part of the villa building and an area to the north-east. Access to this area had been limited by old spoil heaps and rubble until we used the mechanical digger to clear the whole area. The survey was carried out using RM 15 resistivity equipment for the detection of walls and buried rubble rather than pits or ditches. Two areas of approximately 20 x 40 m close to the current trenches were surveyed (Fig. 1), on a north-north-east to south-south-west alignment. In the survey of the area around Trench 8, the high resistivity of the walls and rubble spreads of the villa building can be seen.

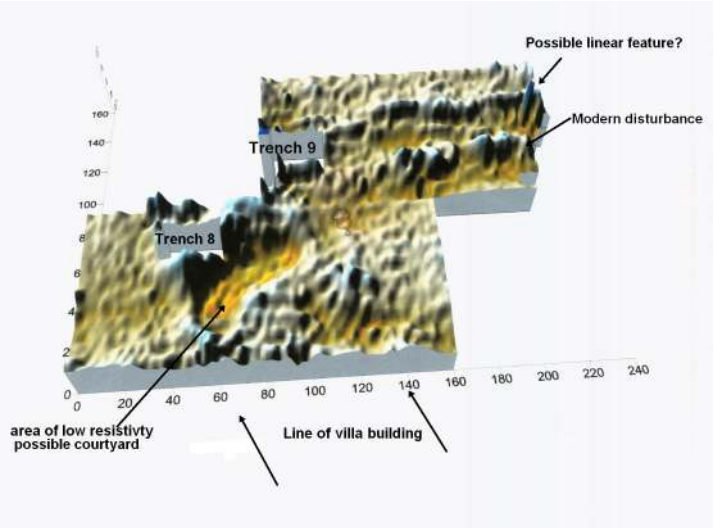

Fig.1. Geophysical survey of the central villa area
(for Trench 9 read Trench 10)

The most striking feature, however, is the large area of low resistivity, about 12 x 4 m in extent, in the centre of the plot that may be a floor or open courtyard area. A small portion of this was excavated in the corner of Trench 8, revealing a concrete surface less than 5 cm thick. A small exploratory trench (Trench 10) was dug over two parallel lines of high resistivity running northwards from the building. However, these turned out to be shallow deposits of modern rubble left after the clearing of the site. The completion of this part of the geophysical survey has allowed us to plan new trenches for next year over the north and central areas of the villa building.

Trench 7

This trench over the heated rooms at the western end of the villa was extended on three sides. The extension on the north-east side has given us a better look at the stoke room and part of an adjacent corridor or room. The substantial north wall of the building is constructed of flint and mortar and is 0.5 m wide. The corridor or room is just less than 3 m wide, the same width as the corridor on the south side of the building. We have found patches of chalk and mortar that may be part of the floor surface, but we do know that the walls were covered in a thin layer of plaster, dark pink decorated with black and white spots. The end wall of this area has a feature that could be interpreted as a step or doorway to the stoke room (Fig. 2). However, the main access to the stoke room for bringing in wood fuel for the furnace is more likely to have been on the other side.

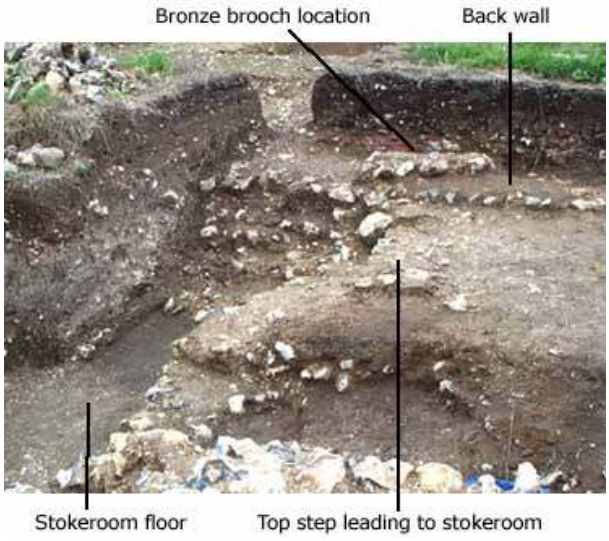

Fig. 2. The stoke room

The stoke room floor is almost a metre below that of the corridor and the main villa building, being on the same level as the under-floor hypocaust system. The villa is set into a slight rise of the field so it is not surprising that the rear wall of the stoke room has a wide footing to buttress it against the slope. The floor has a thick layer of charcoal and soot up to 30 cm deep. Above this the fill consists mostly of soil layers with some rubble and includes large quantities of pottery and bone, often in much bigger fragments than we have found elsewhere on the site. This area may have filled gradually with domestic refuse when the hypocaust was no longer in use. This contrasts with the fill of the hypocaust and the ditch, which both appear to have been deliberately back-filled with rubble.

Fig. 3. The bow brooch

The brooch was found just outside the wall of the villa (Fig. 3). It is a 2nd-century Head-stud type bow brooch used to secure clothing, and it would probably have been one of a pair with a chain between. The preservation is remarkable, with the pin still intact and one link of the chain still attached. It is thought that these objects were kept as heirlooms, which would explain why a brooch of this early date was found in a building dating to mid-3rd to late 4th centuries.

Also found close to the wall was a 6 x 4 cm fragment of lead approximately 1 mm thick, a small late 3rd-century bronze coin and the base of a Nene Valley ware beaker. The south-western side of Trench 7 was extended to look further at the area outside the building. The spread of flint rubble from the nearby wall was separated from a deposit of wall plaster and mortar by a shallow gully. All three contexts contained many finds. These included three more small late 3rd-century bronze coins, some delicate fragments of copper alloy jewellery, two S-shaped nail hooks, another fragment of lead and several black and white tesserae. Under the mortar layer, a chalk surface with a semicircular raised concrete edge was revealed (Fig. 4). This may represent another room on the end of the building and this area will be extended further next year to establish whether it is enclosed by a wall.

The area between Trenches 7 and 8 was opened up and this confirmed that the corridor on the south side of the building extends for over 16 m. The floor of this new section is consistent with what we have already seen: the chalk floor surface is evident only on the northern side and most of the floor area is covered in a burnt occupation layer with at least two hearths. No laid tesserae were found, but there were many loose ones including some small mosaic tesserae.

Fig. 4. Chalk surface in Trench 7

Trench 9

Further investigation of the ditch (Fig. 5) that runs close to and parallel with the north wall has shown that, beneath two layers of rubble fill, the ditch is lined with a layer of soil and beneath this there is a flinty layer that may have been used to stabilise the sides. It was in the lining of the ditch that a collection of 23 shoe studs was found in a small area measuring 10 x 10 cm. It was possible to see the outline of the complete shoe, even though all traces of the leather sole had gone The studs in the centre were straight, hammered in vertically; those at the edges had been bent over. Thirteen more loose studs were found. A fragment of glass, probably the rim of a small vessel, was also found.

The Open Day

This event was organised as part of the Council for British Archaeology's National Archaeology Week in July, when Gatehampton Farm was one of only four sites open in Oxfordshire. After weeks of hot dry weather we were unlucky to have heavy rain all morning, making it very difficult to prepare the site. Robin Cloke, as always a very welcoming host to both diggers and visitors, quickly cleared us space under cover to transfer the planned activities indoors. Fortunately many visitors still turned up, pleased that unlike other events that day we had not cancelled, and several returned in the afternoon when the weather improved. Visitors were able to look at the display of photos and finds and have tea and coffee while sheltering from the rain.

An important aspect of the day was to encourage young people to take part in archaeology; several enjoyed laying a tessellated pavement using real Roman tesserae. In the afternoon we were able to open up the trenches so that visitors could try trowelling and see more of the site. As many as 70 people were on site that day, including diggers, SOAG members and visitors, and it is an event that we hope to repeat next year.

Fig. 5. Excavating the ditch

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Tim Allen who continues to give us advice and encouragement and even helped to explain the site to visitors on Open Day. Of course the landowner, Robin Cloke, is the person who makes the most significant contribution to this project; it is thanks to his generosity in allowing SOAG to excavate the site that so many people are able to take an active part in archaeology in South Oxfordshire.

GATEHAMPTON FARM: GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY 2004 – 2005

Geoff Deakin

This survey was carried out in Robin Cloke's field immediately to the east of the railway line and above the level of the Thames floodplain. Both resistivity and magnetometry were used. The whole of the survey was completed using the FM 18 magnetometer and selected areas were investigated with RM 15 resistivity equipment.

The survey consisted of some 50 x 20 m grids oriented almost due north-south with a line spacing of 1 m and a sample interval of 0.5 m. The results of this survey were largely disappointing, with the majority of the field exhibiting no major buried features other than two domestic water pipes. Hints existed here and there of ditches but these were intermittent. At the very north end of the field, however, two linear parallel ditches were apparent which quite plainly connected to the ditches previously surveyed in the adjoining field.

The survey was started approximately 20 m east of the fence bounding the railway line in order to avoid the swamping effects of the buried water pipe and the ditches were presumed to run beneath the railway embankment to emerge on the other side. A magnetometer survey carried out previously on behalf of the Oxford Archaeological Unit (now Oxford Archaeology) on land to the west of the railway showed no evidence of this, however. Given the level of activity in the surrounding fields, it seems rather strange that so little evidence exists for similar endeavour in the survey area. No explanation can be given for this, other than that the site conditions may not have been ideal. Excavation alongside the railway in the 1980s did indeed show that subsurface features exist. Resistivity was employed, particularly in the area of the cobbled yard feature, but no meaningful results were obtained.

The next part of the landscape survey programme will include a resurvey of the land to the west of the railway line. All three surveys will then be combined on a suitably scaled Ordnance Survey map of the area. A natural extension of that would be to cross the river and survey the Lower Basildon villa on the far side.

THE LOWER ICKNIELD WAY: FROM DORCHESTER TO CUXHAM

Janet Sharpe and Phil Carter

Introduction

The Roman road known as the Lower Icknield Way was traced by Margary (1973) from where it branches off from Akeman Street near Aston Clinton in Buckinghamshire as far as the parish of Pyrton to the northeast of Brightwell Baldwin. There he lost the trail but speculated that the road continued on through Cuxham and Brightwell Baldwin towards Wallingford. His work (which was originally published in 1955 and not updated in the third edition of his book) was continued by Morris *et al*. (1968) who followed the Lower Icknield Way in some detail, mostly from the alignment of existing tracks and hedgerows, through Cuxham, Brightwell Baldwin and Berrick Prior to Warborough, where once again the trail was lost and the road was assumed to continue into Dorchester. Malpas (1987) added a few more details to the Dorchester end of the Lower Icknield Way and referred to the agger (the central part of the road) as being clearly visible where it crosses Green Lane immediately to the west of Warborough. He considered that the road then presumably continued across the fields towards Dorchester.

The course of the road through Cuxham is described by Morris *et al*. (1968) as 'obscure' but it was thought to follow the line of the modern road into Brightwell Baldwin. Here the authors cite a Saxon charter of AD 887 which refers to the mead land between 'egsaforda' (Egsa's Ford) and 'strætforda' (Street Ford). The former ford has been identified where the road running north from Cuxham village crosses a stream near the parish boundary. Morris *et al.* (1968) speculated that the Street Ford was to the south of this and that the name indicated a Roman (paved) ford crossing the stream flowing north through Brightwell Park, where it now forms a narrow lake, and that the contours suggest that this ford lay 'immediately on the south side of the [modern] road close to the Rectory', despite the fact that their map clearly shows the Roman road running parallel to and just north of the modern road.

Other evidence of Roman activity was discovered in Brightwell Baldwin in the north of the parish during the 18th century (Clarke, 2001). A possible burial containing urns and a square glass jug (now lost) was described in 1705 from the south bank of the stream that now forms the north boundary of the parish near Cadwell Farm. A Roman coin hoard was found close by in 1759. More recently, 11 Roman coins were included among 'garden finds' from Cadwell Farm (Ian Clarke, pers. comm.). It is interesting to note that in this same area two fields adjoining the parish boundary on the Chalgrove side are named 'Stratford Meadow' and 'Stratford Furrowlong', suggesting that the 'strætforda' referred to in the Saxon charter may have been near here, rather than further south.

So where did the Roman road run through Brightwell Baldwin, and was there perhaps more than one road? As part of the proposed Brightwell Baldwin landscape

archaeology project, we tried to find out.

Methodology

We had previously used dowsing to trace the route of the 'dogleg' formed as the Roman road from Silchester crossed the Sinodun ridge and there abruptly changed course to cross the Thames downstream of its confluence with the Thame and link up with the Roman road approaching Dorchester from the Henley direction (Sharpe and Carter, 2003). This study showed us that whereas surviving trackways and hedgerows can indicate the approximate line of a Roman road, they do not show the exact alignment as both paths and hedgerows tend to wander over time.

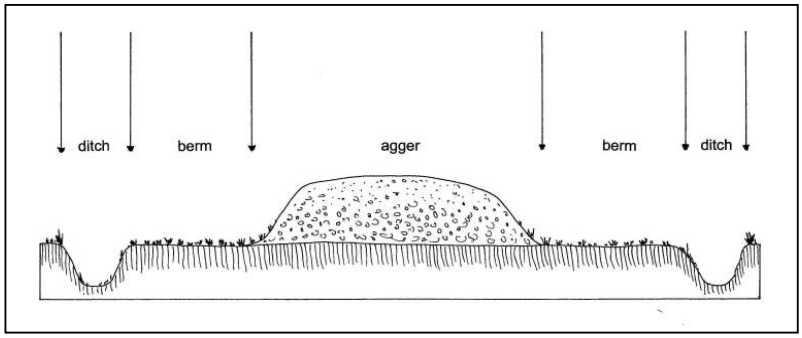

Fig. 1. Roman road profile (after Rackham, 1994). The arrows indicate the position of the dowsing responses

Dowsing, the same technique that is used by water diviners and some water board employees for detecting underground water, can indicate the interfaces between wetter and dryer features in the soil. The exact position of this perceived interface will depend on the water content of the soil and the individual response of the dowser, but working together as a team we find that our independent measurements are seldom more than 0.5 m apart (our margin of error) and we are usually able to corroborate each other's results.

The classic profile of a Roman road shows a central raised agger flanked by parallel ditches, usually one but sometimes two on each side, and usually separated from the agger by a flat 'berm' (Fig. 1). Walking a transect across a Roman road will provoke a dowsing response at the points shown by the arrows. By flagging the points where the dowsing rods cross and uncross, the road profile or 'signature' can be plotted on the ground and measured.

Wherever possible, dowsing was conducted where a public right of way shown on the Ordnance Survey map crossed the assumed road line more or less at right angles. The maps used in this study were the OS 1:25,000 Explorer series, No. 3 (1994), Chiltern Hills South, and No. 170 (1999), Abingdon, Wantage and Vale of White Horse. To survey the Lower Icknield Way between Dorchester and Cuxham, we located and usually measured transects across the road at 20 points along its route: its junction with the Dorchester Roman road network west of Warborough (1); Green Lane at Warborough (2); Warborough High Street track, which is marked as a bridleway, now has a sharp (3); The Green at Warborough (4); the footpath to Ladybrook Copse (5); the west side of Ladybrook Copse (6); the second field boundary west of Berrick Salome (7); the road between Berrick Salome and Berrick Prior (8); the north curve of the Hollandtide Bottom track just to the east of Berrick Prior (9); the north flank of Hollandtide Bottom along a north-south bridleway (10) and again on the road leading to Lonesome Farm (11); the bridleway crossroads at Whitehouse Farm (12); the road to Cadwell Farm at Brightwell Baldwin (13); the drive in Brightwell Park (14); the lane immediately east of Brightwell churchyard (15); the Rectory garden at Brightwell Baldwin (16); Turner's Green Lane (17); the east side of the adjacent field to the east of this track (18); Cuxham churchyard (19); and the field northwest of Chestnut Farm at Cuxham (20). Each transect was tied into the OS map by measuring its distance from a marked feature (usually the crossing point of the right of way with another footpath or road), and the central point of the road at each transect was plotted on the map. The grid references of these locations are given in Table 1.

Results: the route

Fig. 2 shows the route of the Lower Icknield Way between Dorchester and Cuxham as dowsed. We have previously determined the position of a Roman crossroads in the field northeast of the Dorchester bypass at its junction with the old Henley road leading into the village (SU58969350) (Sharpe and Carter, 2003). A re-examination of this area (1) suggests that a road coming from the direction of Warborough does indeed join this crossroads, at or just north of the crossing point of the roads coming from Henley and Silchester.

Warborough to Berrick Salome (points 2-8)

We almost fell over the Roman road where it crosses Green Lane west of Warborough (2) as here the agger forms a distinct hump across this (presumably) ancient right of way. Malpas (1987) referred to this hump and it is still clearly visible nearly 20 years later, although it appears to have been ploughed out completely in the adjacent fields. We located the road again where it crossed the main street in Warborough opposite the church (3). A quick transect at the other (east) end of the church confirmed that the agger ran directly beneath it. We picked up the road again at a measured transect in the northeast corner of The Green in Warborough (4), where the tarmac of the modern road overlaps with the agger which lies both beneath and immediately to the south of it. The modern road and the first part of the track to Berrick Salome which forms its continuation appear to approximate the line of the Roman road.

A glance at the OS map (Explorer 170) shows that this bend to the right at about the midway point between The

Green and Ladybrook Copse. The road signature was very clear at this point (5), where the road appeared to be heading off across the field in the direction of Ladybrook Copse. The road was measured here where it crosses the footpath that follows the west edge of this copse (6); the south edge of the south ditch of the road was 6.0 m north of the existing bridlepath to Berrick Salome.

Malpas (1987) stated that the agger is visible where it crosses the modern road between Berrick Salome and Berrick Prior. Assuming this to be the case, and assuming that the Roman road is on a direct alignment, we expected to pick it up where it crossed the second field boundary to the east of the central crossroads at Berrick Salome. Working from a photocopy of the OS map, we initially confused a parish boundary with the footpath and dowsed unsuccessfully for the (non-existent) road at the east corner of this field boundary. We eventually found the road almost midway between this parish boundary and the modern bridlepath into Berrick Salome (7). The agger is indeed quite pronounced in the road between the two Berricks (8), and was especially noticeable when cars drove over it. The exceptional perceived width of the agger at this point (23.65 m) suggests that it may have been distorted by the construction of the modern road across it.

track running north at right angles from the existing bridlepath, we were able to confirm this by locating the road quite high up on the side of the hill (10). We attempted to confirm the route again on the 'minor' road leading to Lonesome Farm (11): we thought we had found it but when we plotted the results on the map (Fig. 2) they showed a noticeable southward dip in the road alignment at this point and we think that this recording was anomalous. Instead of the quiet country lane we expected to find, this road appears to have become a popular short cut for traffic to Chalgrove, and having to jump into the hedge every few minutes is not conducive to accurate dowsing! This finding needs to be confirmed and we suspect that in our haste we may have recorded an old farm track instead.

The next clear location that we found was at the crossroads where two bridlepaths cross at right angles just south of Whitehouse Farm (12). Here the agger more or less coincides with the bridlepath leading to Brightwell Baldwin and again heads off across the fields on a direct route, whereas the modern path curves south to the east of this point. A double ditch was recorded on the north side of the Roman road here.

Morris *et al.* (10968) plotted the Roman road as passing just to the north of Brightwell church but we found that, as

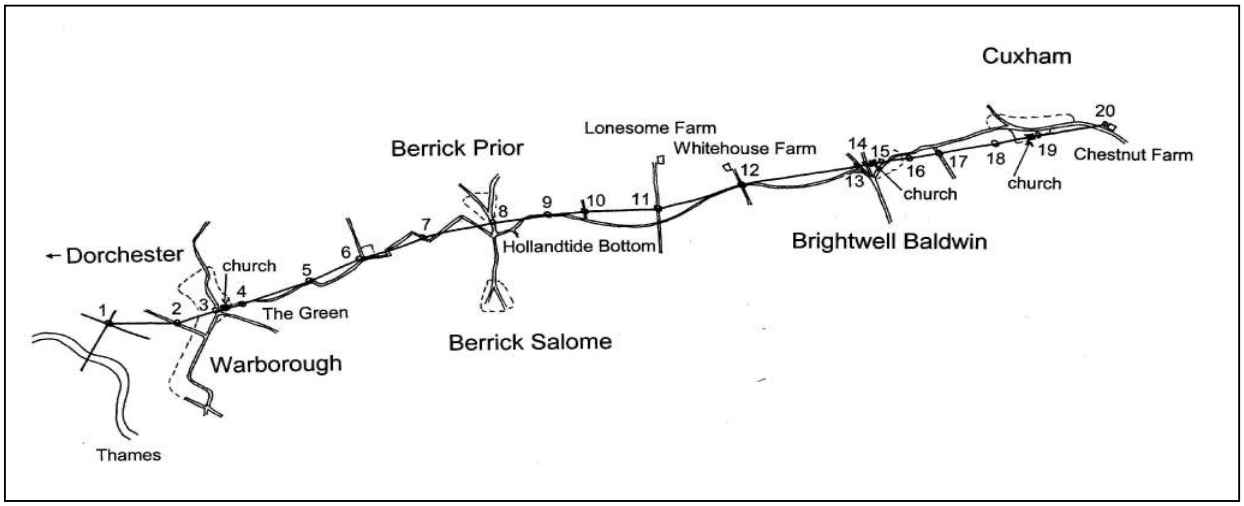

Fig. 2. The route of the Lower Icknield Way from Dorchester to Cuxham.
The numbers refer to measured transects (see text)

Berrick Salome to Brightwell Baldwin (points 9-16)

According to Morris *et al.* (1968), the Roman road coincides with the bridlepath leading to Hollandtide Bottom for a distance of 'about a furlong' [approx. 200 m] to the east of Berrick Prior. We were able to verify this by dowsing (9) and showed that the agger leaves the bridlepath to head off across the fields on course to Brightwell Baldwin at the point where there is a small copse on the north side of the bridlepath. Morris *et al.* (1968) also considered that the Roman road crossed the north flank of Hollandtide Bottom, on the strength of a scatter of 'metalling' in the ploughsoil. By walking along an overgrown footpath, shown on the OS map as a farm

at Warborough, the agger passes beneath the church itself. To confirm the position of the road, we dowsed a transect along the lane following the west boundary of Brightwell Park leading to Cadwell Farm (13) and, at a later date and with the permission of the landowner, along the drive within Brightwell Park itself (14) (Fig.3). The double north ditch was clearly defined in the Cadwell Farm lane; we didn't dowse for it in the drive. We also traced the road along the walled footpath that runs along the east side of the churchyard (15) and a double north ditch was recorded here as well. These three locations (13-15) show that the route of the Roman road approaches the modern road through Brightwell Baldwin at an angle, whereas Morris *et*

al. (1968) assumed that the Roman road ran parallel to it immediately to the north. Instead, by dowsing along the modern road, we found that the north side of the agger crosses the road at an oblique angle opposite Glebe Farm, which is the last house in Brightwell Baldwin before the Rectory on the right side heading east, immediately opposite the start of the footpath to Chalgrove. If the 'strætforda' does represent the place where the Roman road forded the stream running north into what is now Brightwell Park, then this ford must have been to the south of the modern road and not to the north.

The owner of the Rectory kindly allowed us to dowse in her back garden and we found the north ditch, which appears to be single here, at a distance of 17.95 m from the south-facing wall of the Rectory building (16). The agger itself straddled a ha-ha which separates the formal garden from a pasture.

Brightwell Baldwin to Cuxham (points 17-20)

The alignment of the road suggests that it crosses Turner's Green Lane just south of where this leaves the modern road along the parish boundary on the east side of Brightwell Baldwin. We found the north edge of the north ditch 39.8 m from the south side of the tarmac of the modern road (17).

At this point the road seemed to be heading across the fields straight for Cuxham church, and once again we found that the agger ran beneath the nave of the church, slightly towards the south side, and that the squat tower sat directly over it (19). Morris *et al.* (1968) considered that the Roman road probably coincided with the modern road between Brightwell Baldwin and Cuxham in order to avoid a presumed marshy area which is marked as Medieval fish ponds on the OS map on the west side of Manor Farm. Our results suggest instead that the road runs right through this area and to confirm this we examined the east side of the field immediately to the east of Turner's Green Lane on the south side of the modern road (18). A deep ditch which may have held open water (hidden by vegetation) ran along this edge of the field, and this made the dowsing difficult by causing the rods to deflect. We picked up signals at regular intervals all along this field margin, which we interpreted as field drains draining into the ditch, and these responses were superimposed on the road signature. However, we did locate the road along this edge of the field and the centre of the agger ran 135.25 m south along the field boundary from the south side of the modern road, exactly on line between our findings at Turner's Green Lane and Cuxham church.

Our final location in this survey of the Lower Icknield Way was found just to the northeast of Chestnut Farm on the east side of Cuxham (20). Margary (1973) traced the line of this road along existing trackways and old hedgerows to the northeast of Aston Rowant (where it is clearly marked as 'Lower Icknield Way (Track)' on the OS map) and Lewknor, which today lie either side of the M40, and following the same general alignment on to Pyrton, where it is marked as the 'Oxfordshire Way' on the east side of the modern road through the village. Morris *et al.* (1968) picked up the thread at this point and assumed that the line of the road follows the footpath from Pyrton to Chestnut Farm, although they considered that its 'course through Cuxham is obscure'. We looked for the road for a short distance along this footpath where it heads northeast from Chestnut Farm, but found no evidence for it. We then walked along the hedge boundary which runs to the rear of Chestnut Farm Cottages and continues to the northwest, and we picked up the road here at an oblique angle. A fragment of Roman (?) oyster shell was found here on the line of the north ditch. This suggests that, rather than the abrupt change of direction postulated by Morris *et al.* (1968) at Chestnut Farm, the Roman road curves almost imperceptibly to the north as it leaves Cuxham, presumably to join the existing footpath some distance to the northeast of Chestnut Farm.

Results: the road dimensions

The maximum road width, which was taken as the distance between the north edge of the north ditch (the inner ditch where this was double) and the south edge of the south ditch, and the agger width were recorded at most of the location points (Table 1). The mean road width was 30.83 m (range 26.25-38.20 m) and the mean agger width was 13.64 m (range 9.85-18.90 m).

Discussion

The Lower Icknield Way as surveyed by dowsing in general follows the route determined by previous authors (Morris *et al*., 1968; Malpas, 1987) from the alignment of existing footpaths and hedgerows, substantiated here and there by a raised stretch of agger and/or exposed road metalling. This demonstrates that both methods are valid techniques for establishing the routes of Roman roads and complement each other, the extra precision offered by dowsing enabling some of the bends and corners produced by the meandering of footpaths over the last 2000 years to be straightened out and also providing information within present-day settlements, such as Brightwell Baldwin, where surveying the road by means of footpaths and hedgerows is not a viable option.

Morris *et al.* (1968) substantiated their work by describing two sections of the road excavated on the west side of the drive in Brightwell Park (SU65239500), which was very close and immediately to the west of our location point 14 (SU65279500), and on the Hollandtide Bottom track east of Berrick Prior (SU62609452), which was just to the west of our location point 9 (SU62509452). Both these sections of Roman road which were proven by excavation lie precisely on the line of the road as determined by dowsing.

The same authors also referred to 'faint traces' of the road to the west of Ladybrook Copse at SU611941; this corresponds to our location point 6 (SU61089410) although no surface signs of the road can be seen today.

Malpas (1987) claimed that the line of the road 'near Brightwell Baldwin was confirmed in 1976, when a British Gas pipeline construction sectioned the road 600 m WSW of Brightwell church' (SU64689479). He admitted that this location lies some distance south of the direct alignment and suggested that 'this demonstrates how these minor roads tend to deviate from the direct alignment'. However, Malpas was wrong: this pipeline section is now believed to have cut through a modern farm track and the record has been deleted from the Oxfordshire SMR (Ian Clarke, pers. comm.). The Roman road does not deviate from its course at this point.

Location point (see text)	**Grid reference (SU)**	**Total width** (1) **(m)**	**Agger width (m)**
1	58969350	28.05	13.15
2	59459350	28.16	12.60
3	59819362	32.12	13.60
4	59999365	32.05	12.90
5	60609388	26.25	09.85
6	61089410	28.70	11.65
7	61579430	38.20	17.00
8	62129444	43.30 (2)	23.65 (2)
9	62509452	--	--
10	62949451	29.95	14.00
11	63509454	37.05 (2)	16.95 (2)
12	64229480	34.30	18.90
13	65199497	36.15	18.90
14	65279500	28.80	10.15
15	65359502	28.85	15.00
16	65599503	31.20	14.10
17	65889505	29.00	11.55
18	66329513	30.60	11.30
19	66689520	--	--
20	67209532	--	--
Mean		**30.83**	**13.64**

(1) Excluding second (outer) north ditch where present.
(2) Omitted from calculation of mean as possibly anomalous.

Table 1. The location amd dimensions of the Lower Icknield Way

Nevertheless, apparent deviations can occur. We obtained permission to dowse in the field to the southwest of Whitehouse Farm, where we picked up the Roman road signature on the east side of this field just above the hedge line in the southeast corner which bounds a dense thicket about 50 m wide abutting onto the Hollandtide Bottom track below. We had previously found that the Roman road coincides with the bridlepath at this point, so why did there appear to be a second road running parallel to the first and about 50 m to the north of it? We tried to trace this feature out into the field but lost it: it may have changed direction at this point, in which case it may have corresponded to a later farm track which is recorded on a map dated 1791 (Ian Clarke, pers. comm.). Alternatively, it could have been a later stretch of Roman road built at a higher level to replace the original which at this point runs along the bottom of the continuation of Hollandtide Bottom and might conceivably have become muddy and badly rutted. We found the 'original' road again in the southwest corner of this field where we would have expected to find it, assuming that our previous recording at the crossroads was accurate.

A glance at Fig. 2 will show that the Lower Icknield Way is not dead straight. It follows a gentle curve between Warborough and Berrick Salome and then with some minor deviations it follows a more or less straight course to Cuxham, where it begins to curve gently to the north to continue the line of the road as it follows the edge of the Chilterns up to Aston Rowant and beyond.

Although we dowsed the road from west to east, Margary (1973) traced the road in the reverse direction from its origin at Akeman Street near Tring and subsequent writers have followed this direction. That this was indeed the direction in which the road was constructed is suggested by the contours on the OS map, which indicate possible sighting points that the engineers could have used. The line of any Roman road can usually be divided up into a series of straight stretches of various lengths, each of which is aligned on a different sighting point.

The Lower Icknield Way heading southwest from Lewknor appears to be aligned on the 123 m summit of an unnamed hill at SU664935. When projected, this alignment crosses the Thames just south of Wallingford, which perhaps prompted Margary (1973) to think that the road may have run to Wallingford. However, at Pyrton the alignment changes and the new sighting point may be Scald Hill at SU641934. The alignment changes again at Cuxham and from there the road maintains a more or less straight course as far as Berrick Salome: this stretch appears to be aligned with the right-angled bend of the Thames at Little Wittenham. From Ladybrook Copse to Warborough the sighting point was the summit of Castle Hill and the presumed ford where the Roman road from Silchester crossed the Thames was on the same alignment.

Morris *et al.* (1968) thought that the Roman road coincides with the modern road along the north side of The Green at Warborough and that this corresponds to a 'streteforlong' mentioned in early documents. This may be so, but the Roman road does not make 'a turn of a few degrees to the south' at this point as they suggest, and it remains aligned on the Roman river crossing. At Green Lane to the west of Warborough the alignment changes abruptly by 23 degrees north to join the Roman crossroads at the approach to Dorchester. Morris *et al.* (1968) also envisaged a change of alignment, in this case to follow 'an obviously ancient track' opposite the church that heads across the fields in the direction of Dorchester. This track may be ancient but it does not represent the Roman road,

which continues on the Castle Hill alignment until it reaches Green Lane.

Fig. 3. Phil Carter and Janet Sharpe recording in Brightwell Park. Photo: Peter Kent

Judging from its width, the Lower Icknield Way was quite a major road, with a mean agger width of 13.64 m (Table 1). This compares with the figure of 50 feet [15.24 m] quoted by Margary (1973) for major roads. It has been suggested that the Romans constructed the Lower Icknield Way as a parallel alternative route to the prehistoric Upper Icknield Way which runs along the scarp of the Chilterns. Ultimately this road connected with Watling Street and beyond, and it may have carried a considerable amount of traffic.

It is interesting to note that the Roman road runs directly beneath the churches in three of the four villages surveyed: Warborough, Brightwell Baldwin and Cuxham. It appears that Medieval architects appreciated a solid Roman agger to support the foundations of their churches; we have previously shown that Moulsford church is sited over the agger of the Silchester-Dorchester road (Sharpe and Carter, unpublished). The churches at Warborough, Brightwell Baldwin and Cuxham form a (more or less) straight line on the map. Could this be a vindication for Alfred Watkins (1974) who reckoned that alignments of sacred sites indicated ley lines? If so, perhaps we could reinterpret at least some ley lines as Roman roads: perhaps aligned Medieval churches could indicate the routes of previously undiscovered Roman roads.

To return to the Brightwell Baldwin 'strætforda', we have established that this either lay to the south of the modern road through the village at approximately SU65559503 – or it still remains to be discovered somewhere in the north of the parish near Cadwell Farm. Perhaps that will be our next project.

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THE ANGLO-SAXON CHARTER OF BRIGHTWELL: THE LAND OUTSIDE THE BOUNDS

Ian Clarke

Introduction

The earliest historical evidence we have for a settlement at Brightwell Baldwin (hereafter Brightwell) in South Oxfordshire is the Anglo-Saxon (A-S) charter of Æthelred, Lord of the Mercians, in which he granted to the bishopric of Worcester six hides at Brightwell and eight at Watlington, to pertain to the church at Readanora (later Pyrton). The charter is in Latin with Old English bounds, the latter defining a closed area of land together with certain woodland and meadow that lay outside the bounds.

G.B. Grundy (1933) offered an interpretation for the bounds of the charter but was unable to locate the outlying woods and meadows. Here the work of Grundy and that of some subsequent researchers is reviewed in relation to the outlying land of the charter, and those parts of the charter text which relate to the grant of this outlying land are re-examined to provide a preferred translation of both the Latin and the Old English (OE). This translation is then combined with a topographical reassessment and other documentary and archaeological evidence, to reveal the probable location of the outlying woods and meadows of the 9th-century A-S estate. The work forms part of an ongoing historical and archaeological project for Brightwell.

Text and translations

The charter probably dates from 887 and is unlikely to be earlier (Stenton, 1971; Blair, 1974). Authenticity is not thought to be in doubt (Gelling, 1979). The full text of the charter can be found in Sawyer (1968) as S 217 and this is

the text used for this study.

There are published translations of the OE of the charter by Thorpe (1865) and by Grundy (1933). Fraser (1988; Clarke, 2001) quoted Grundy's translation verbatim and added a useful sketch map to illustrate Grundy's interpretation of the bounds. Susan Wright (1977) offered a translation of the OE that differed only in minor detail from that of Grundy (1933) and an incomplete and somewhat inadequate translation of the Latin of the charter; Fraser (1988) gives the same partial translation verbatim.

Review of earlier work

The most important secondary source is G.B. Grundy (1933) who was a pioneer in the translation and interpretation of charter boundaries and has been quoted by all subsequent researchers. However, Grundy's work has been criticised (Hoskins, 1967; Emery, 1974) and his interpretations sometimes need correction. This is certainly the case for S 217.

Grundy (1933) interpreted the A-S bounds as following the ecclesiastical parish boundary of Brightwell, where the modern civil parish boundary appears to closely match the older (pre-19th-century) ecclesiastical parish. Parish boundaries are amongst the oldest, most permanent features of the historic landscape but their connection with the church is misleading; in origin they were the agreed and marked out boundaries around the agricultural land of each settlement (or group of settlements) and many of these estates were established by the early A-S period, if not before (Taylor, 1974). The origin of the parish can often be traced to the division of larger land units in gifts to the church and over time a large parish would be sub-divided by the church to create smaller parishes with 'lesser churches' (Stenton, 1971). In Oxfordshire and generally in the south, they are often associated with the spread of small manors, mainly between the 10th and 12th centuries (Blair; 1994; Winchester, 1990). Some parishes may have gained (or lost) areas of land over time, notably by the accretion of decayed settlements in the later Medieval period (Taylor, 1974). The problem with identifying the bounds of the Brightwell charter is that a number of the A-S landmarks are referenced to the personal names of surrounding landowners rather than to topographical features. Margaret Gelling (1979) noted that they coincide 'with the modern parish on the west side', but that on the east side 'there is no justification for Grundy's emendation of *east leah* to *aesc leah* in order to equate it with Ashley's Wood' and 'the east boundary cannot be precisely located'. However, it will be argued later that Grundy is probably right about the part of the east boundary with Cuxham that follows an ancient road.

We should note here two related matters that will have a bearing on any re-interpretation of the bounds. Firstly, Grundy (1933) and Gelling (1979) appear to think that the bounded land did not include the eight hides from Watlington. Secondly, there is reference in the bounds to the lost settlement of Ingham, which must lie somewhere between Brightwell and Watlington, and a significant clause of the charter referring to this settlement (*thæt swa ondlong incghæma gemæra*) is missing from Grundy (1933) and also from Thorpe (1865), which suggests that Grundy was using Thorpe as a source but did not notice the error.

Grundy's (1933) translation of the OE, whilst substantially correct, does contain some critical errors which when combined with his interpretation of the bounds as following the modern parish boundary contributed to his failure to locate the woodland and meadow that lay outside the bounds. His difficulties were compounded by limited knowledge regarding the line of the Lower (Roman) Icknield Way. In the charter the meadows are said to lie *betweonum egsaforda* 7 [=and] *strætforda*, i.e. between two named fords. Grundy located *egsaforda* (Egsa's Ford) from a reference in the Cuxham charter S 1379 (Sawyer, 1968) attributed to 995, to where the road running north from Cuxham crossed the Chalgrove Brook just west of Cutt Mill. This location is not in dispute. He noted that *strætforda* (Street Ford or Stratford) 'almost invariably implies a ford where a definitely Roman road crossed a stream' and thought it might relate to the Icknield Way. However, he identified the 'Romanised' Icknield Way with the Upper Icknield Way (now locally part of the Ridgeway) which here runs along the Chiltern escarpment above the spring line, some distance south-east of Brightwell. Noting that 'no ford is in the least likely to have been upon the Icknield Way because it was … above the heads of perennial streams', he suggested that the reference may perhaps be to 'another detached piece of mead on the Roman road somewhere near Dorchester'. He also suggested that the *campis* of the charter might have been 'open pasture land' that 'may have been on the Chilterns', and for the detached woodland in the charter called *schylfhricg* (Shelf Ridge) he conjectures this was 'probably one of two projecting promontories of the Chilterns, Watlington Down or Swyncombe Down'. There is no known evidence that supports Brightwell ever having had detached land on the Chilterns and Gelling (1979) noted that the meadow and woodland 'have not been located on the modern map'.

The conjecture (which Grundy rejected) that *strætforda* might be related to the Romanised Icknield Way has persisted. I.D. Margary (1973) identified the Lower Icknield Way as a true Roman road and described the line as far as Pyrton. Morris *et al*. (1968) proposed that this road continued on a line through the centre of Brightwell village, roughly aligned on the modern road and cutting through the south-west corner of Brightwell Park just to the north of the parish church. They used the *strætforda* of the Brightwell charter in support of this proposal and identified the ford with a depression 'immediately on the south side of the road close to the Old Rectory'.

Janet Sharpe and Phil Carter (2006) traced the line of the Lower (Roman) Icknield Way eastwards from Warborough, through Berrick Salome, Brightwell and

Cuxham, using dowsing. Their survey confirmed and corrected in detail the line of Morris *et al.* (1968). Their line in Brightwell lies a little to the south of that proposed by Morris *et al.* (1968), and passes under the church, across the High Street and just to the south of the Old Rectory. If this line is correct then the Roman ford (if there was one here) does not coincide with the depression just south of the road (and so north of the Old Rectory). Whilst dowsing as a technique in archaeology remains controversial, Sharpe and Carter (2003) have demonstrated considerable success in its application in tracing Roman roads around Dorchester and their work significantly increases our confidence in the line of the Lower Icknield Way through the centre of Brightwell.

Susan Wright (1977) accepted the line of Morris *et al*. (1968) for the Lower Icknield Way and the proposed location of the ford. Aware that this places *strætforda* at the centre of Grundy's bounds, she proposed that 'the northern boundary of the parish may have been further south than it is today' and that 'the line this might have taken was that of the established Roman road and across the Streetford'. She then attempted, somewhat unconvincingly, to locate the meadows between 'Egsaford' to the north (on Chalgrove Brook near Cutt Mill) and 'Streetford' on the Lower Icknield Way, suggesting that 'this would be a logical location as this would be near a watercourse and on the low lying part of the parish'. The topography, however, does not fully support this argument as two water courses are involved, forming an L-shape and enclosing a large area of land, much of which is not low lying.

With regard to the woodland, Wright (1977) noted that 'the now obsolete parish of Britwell Prior occupied the land south from the Watlington road' and suggested that 'the "Shelfridge" might then have been the road from Rumbold's Copse to the southern limit of the boundary'. Although far from clear, her proposal seems to be that the southern limit of the bounds roughly followed the line of the modern road along the higher ground and that the woodland was perhaps to the south of this. In her interpretation the meadow and woodland are close to, but at opposite ends of, the main estate.

Wright (1977) made an important contribution by suggesting that the A-S bounds did not follow the modern parish boundary and may have enclosed a smaller area of land. She should also take credit for a determined attempt to locate the woodland and meadow close to the bounds, rather than accepting Grundy's (1933) proposition that they were at some distance. There is historical support for her proposal that the northern boundary may have been further south as both Domesday (*DB*) and the Hundred Rolls (*RH*) treat Cadwell, in the north of the modern parish of Brightwell, as a separate settlement. Cadwell is listed as a Deserted Medieval Village (Allison *et al*., 1965), although an attempt to trace this met with little success (Bond, 1975).

A cursory examination of the topography of the modern parish shows it is most unlikely that the A-S bounds followed the line of the parish boundary in the north. The eastern part of the northern parish boundary follows the north bank of a brook which encloses on its south side rich flood plain meadows (now arable); if the A-S bounds had also enclosed this area, there would have been no need to make a separate gift of meadows in the charter. Neither Grundy (1933) nor Wright (1977) made this basic observation, which is sufficient to reject, at least in part, Grundy's interpretation.

A new approach

In both the Latin and the OE of S 217 the description of the bounded estate is followed by that of the outlying woodland and meadow. If this order is followed in research and the bounds are incorrectly interpreted, the outlying land may inadvertently be enclosed within them. Such problems are most likely to occur with bounds that contain relatively few topographical clues, as does S 217 for Brightwell; by contrast, the description of the outlying land in S 217 is rich in topographical detail. Therefore, in this new approach the process is reversed to locate the outlying land first. The only assumption needed at this stage is that the estate lies in the general area of the modern village of Brightwell, bounded by Rumbolds Lane in the west and probably in part by another ancient road, Turners Green Lane, in the east, but with the bounds otherwise undefined.

The following logical premises are accepted:

(i) *strætforda* cannot be far from *egsaforda* and is most likely to be on the same brook;

(ii) given the generally accepted location of *egsaforda* the outlying meadow will not be far from the bounded estate and may lie within the modern parish of Brightwell.

The Latin describes the gift

The Latin of the charter describes the gift of land outside the bounds as:

> *cum omnibus pertinentibus ad rura eadem in silvis et in campis sicut exterius finibus certis dinota consistunt*

The phrases *cum omnibus pertinentibus ad rura eadem* may be rendered as 'together with all the appurtenances towards/near these same lands'. The additional land is described as *in silvis et in campis*. The meaning of *silva* (wood) is indisputable, but Grundy (1933) had problems with *campis* noting that 'The instances of its use are too rare to admit of any conclusive induction of its meaning.' The word *campus* has been used to describe any area of flat ground and in particular a flood plain. The charter is gifting agricultural land and the only type of prime agricultural land that necessarily is flat is water meadow, i.e. meadow along a river which is subject to regular, seasonal flooding; for all other usages of A-S land, flatness was not a requirement. We can therefore be precise and render the phrase *in silvis et in campis* as 'in woods and [water] meadows'.

The remainder tells us that the woods and meadows are located 'outside the fixed boundaries' (*exterius finibus certis*) that 'having been distinguished' (*dinota*) now 'endure' (*consistunt*). This is a statement of the intended permanence of the boundaries that have been agreed to and, by implication, set down in the charter.

A suitable complete rendering of the Latin is then:

> together with all the appurtenances towards/near these same lands in woods and [water] meadows as are outside the fixed and enduring boundaries that have been laid down

Thus, from an analysis of the Latin and before even examining the OE, we know that we are looking for woodland and (specifically) water meadows and that these are probably close to the main estate.

The Old English locates the gift

The charter records:

> *7 þæt mæð lond be betweonum egsaforda 7 strætforda be norðan broce*
> *7 thone wudu þærto þe scylfhrycg is haten*

The charter actually states *mæð lond* (math land) rather than *mæd lond* (mead land) as rendered by Grundy (1933) but the difference is not significant. *Mæð* (math) is the mowing or product of the mowing, i.e. hay, so *mæð lond* literally means 'land for math', which is meadow. This invariably meant meadow on a flood plain in A-S times, which provided a valuable and much sought after natural source of winter fodder. The location of the meadows is described by two prepositional phrases (the division is artificial):

> *be betweonum egsaforda 7 strætforda | be norðan broce*

The words *be betweonum* can be rendered as 'in between' or 'along between' and govern the dative singulars *egsaforda* and *strætforda*. The first prepositional phrase is then simply 'in/along between Egsa's Ford and Stratford'. The personal name *Egsa* is thought to relate to the nearby settlement of Easington (Gelling, 1953).

The purpose and meaning of the second phrase *be norðan broce* is more problematic. Grundy (1933) translates it as 'to the north of the brook' and Thorpe (1865) as simply 'by Northbrook'. However, Grundy's translation does not in any way locate the brook or distinguish it from others in the area, and there is more than one brook in and around Brightwell. By contrast, Thorpe's proper noun 'Northbrook' could be an indicator of where the brook is in relation to the estate. The translation should perhaps be 'by/along the brook to the north', with the context implying that this is to the north of the bounded estate. This translation and Thorpe's have the same meaning, give the same location for the brook, and would effectively distinguish it from other brooks in the area.

The preferred translation of the OE is:

> and that [water] meadow [that is] in between Egsa's Ford and Stratford by/along [the] brook to the north

The context means that 'north' is in relation to the enclosed bounds and the clear indication is that both fords are on the same brook.

Where were the meadows?

Egsaford (Egsa's ford) was convincingly located by Grundy (1933), with reference to the Cuxham charter S 1379 attributed to 995 (Sawyer, 1968), to where the road that runs north from Cuxham crosses Chalgrove Brook, just west of Cutt Mill. This firm location of Egsa's Ford in the north-west corner of the Cuxham estate, at or near the modern bridge carrying the B480 road running north from Cuxham village, provides a starting point in the search for the meadows and *strætford* (Stratford) of the Brightwell charter.

There are three areas of water meadow that radiate out from Egsa's Ford. These are shown clearly on Sheets XI and XII of the Richard Davis map of Oxfordshire of 1797. The first is along a brook that flows westwards between the estates of Cuxham and Easington, and the second is along another brook that flows northwards from Cuxham village; both these meadows are historically associated with Cuxham (Harvey, 1965) and are therefore unlikely contenders. Morris *et al.* (1968) proposed a line for the Lower Icknield Way through Cuxham that would cross the brook just west of Cuxham village, in which case there

Fig. 1. View west along the meadows from close to the site of Egsa's Ford. The trees on the right mark the line of the Chalgrove Brook

may have been a *strætford* in Cuxham. However, any credible interpretation of *be norðan broce* will not fit meadow that is alongside a stream that flows northwards and is to the east of Brightwell; it is also most unlikely that Brightwell would have been given meadows that lead into the heartland of Cuxham. In any case, the line of the Lower Icknield Way as determined by Sharpe and Carter (2006) runs further south and does not cross this brook.

The two brooks in Cuxham merge near the location of Egsa's Ford. From here the resulting brook, known as Chalgrove Brook, flows westwards and its north bank forms part of the northern boundary of the parish of Brightwell. The third area of meadow lies to the west of Egsa's Ford (Fig. 1) along the south bank of this brook and it is this meadow, which lies directly north of Brightwell village and Brightwell Park, that it is argued is the *mæð lond* of the charter.

The Chalgrove Brook flows westwards from Egsa's Ford to a confluence with another brook that flows northwards through Brightwell Park. A few metres

Fig. 2. Cadwell Lane / Cow Lane – a possible minor Roman road

downstream of the confluence and just at the point where the brook bends north-west towards Chalgrove, there was a ford until recent times known as Chalgrove Ford (Fraser, 1988). An old track runs north-north-west from Brightwell, called Cow Lane in the 1802 Enclosure Award but now called Cadwell Lane (Fig. 2). At the point where Cadwell Lane now turns sharp left towards Cadwell Farm, the old track originally made a sharp turn to the right and ran straight to Chalgrove Ford. This was part sunken lane and

Fig. 3. View along the line of the old road towards Chalgrove Ford. The ploughed out causeway shows as a lighter smudge in the ploughsoil

part causeway within living memory (Bond, 1975) but is now filled in and ploughed over (Fig. 3); the line still shows clearly in aerial photographs which also show that some way beyond the ford in the field now called Top of the Town (formerly part of the great Chalgrove Field) the track appears to make another sharp turn to resume a line north-north-west. This track and ford provided the most direct link between Brightwell and Chalgrove in earlier times. It has the appearance of being a minor Roman road, perhaps linking a farm at Cadwell with others at Chalgrove and Brightwell, and with the Lower Icknield Way. If this is so, then Chalgrove Ford is perhaps of Roman origin and may be the *strætford* (Stratford) of the charter.

Confirmation that Chalgrove Ford was once called Stratford comes from a number of sources, most notably field names. The meadow in Chalgrove parish just downstream of the ford and west of the brook is called Stratford Meadow in the perambulations of the Brightwell parish bounds in 1797 and 1830, and retains that name today. The furlong in Chalgrove Field opposite Stratford Meadow was known prior to the enclosures as Stratford Furrowlong. Further evidence of a Roman link comes from Robert Plot (1705) who described and illustrated a glass vessel and 12 urns, clearly Roman and probably a burial deposit, 'found in a place called Bushy-Leas, betwixt Brightwell and Chal-grave'; Bushey Leas is a field on the south bank of Chalgrove Brook adjacent to Chalgrove Ford. *Jackson's Oxford Journal* for 23 June 1759 reports

Fig. 4. View east along the meadows from Bushey Leas close to the site of Chalgrove Ford. (Stratford). The trees on the left mark the line of the Chalgrove Brook. This meadow was formerly called Town Mead

that '…about Three weeks ago, in the Common Field in the Parish of Brightwell' an urn was found 'containing near 1500 Roman coins…belonging to near twenty different Emperors and Empresses'. The common field lies close to Bushey Leas where the glass jug and urns were found (Fraser, 1988). Finally, among metal detector 'garden finds' recovered recently by the owners of Cadwell Farm, there are 11 Roman coins dating from the late 2nd to late 4th centuries, including a clipped silver siliqua of the Emperor Julian.

All of the land between Egsa's Ford and Chalgrove Ford (Stratford) along the south bank of the meandering Chalgrove Brook is noticeably flat; indeed, it is uniquely flat within the topography of the parish and is the only

piece of land for which *campus* is an appropriate epithet. The western part opens out into a large field called Town Mead (now Whitehouse Bottom) in 19th-century estate records and on the 1802 Enclosure Award map, which clearly recorded its status as the common meadow for the 'town' of Brightwell (Figs 4 and 5). The preferred translation of the OE (see above) perfectly describes the meadows in the north of the modern parish if we identify Stratford as the old Chalgrove Ford and the 'north brook' as Chalgrove Brook. The two fords are then on the same brook, just over 1 km apart. For this brook and its meadows to be described as 'to the north' of and outside the bounds of the A-S estate, the northern boundary of Brightwell must have been further south in the 9th century.

Fig. 5 View noth-east from Cadwell lane. Town Mead is in the middle distance just beyond the first line of trees. The clump of trees on the skyline marks Easington, the settlement of *Egsa*

Where were the woods?

The OE locates the woodland thus:

7 thone wudu þærto þe scylfhrycg is haten

Grundy (1933) translates *þærto* as 'furthermore', in the sense of being woods 'in addition to' meadows. It would seem more likely that 'thereto' should be interpreted as simply 'towards that place' or 'nearby', meaning that the woods were close to the meadows.

The name of the woods is a descriptive compound of *scylf(e)* and *hrycg*. Gelling (1984) noted that 'the place-name evidence…demonstrates that in the speech of the countryside a *scelf* was broad, level and more likely to occur at a low altitude than at a high one', but that the largest group of place-names incorporating *scelf* or *scylfe* refer to a 'broad area which is level or very gently sloping'. The gently sloping meaning has been retained in the words 'shelve' and 'shelving'. With regard to *hrycg*, Gelling (1984) thought that 'anything which a modern observer would call a ridge was probably eligible'.

From Whitehouse Bottom (Town Mead), Chalgrove Ford (Stratford) and Cadwell Farm the dominant feature in the landscape is a broad, gently sloping, open field that climbs to a partly wooded skyline towards Brightwell. The modern field names graphically describe this largely featureless expanse as: Whitehouse Bank, Left Bank and Right Bank, all indicating land on a slope (Field, 1993). The rise is only a little over 15 m in about 330 m but forms a significant feature when viewed from the north. This broad 'shelving' land and its wooded skyline, close to (*þærto*) the meadows, is most likely to be the *scylfhrycg* of the charter, which is here translated as 'Shelve-ridge' (Fig. 6). There would have been much more woodland in the 9th century, certainly towards the ridge on the higher slopes, although the lower slopes had probably been cleared around Cadwell where there is likely to have been a settlement centred on an earlier Romano-British farm.

In summary the preferred translation of the OE is:

'and that wood thereto that is called Shelve-ridge'

The most likely location for the wood is close to the meadows and on the north facing slope of the shelving ridge above Cadwell. As with the meadows, this location for the wood confirms that the boundary of the estate must have been further south in the 9th century.

Conclusions

The preferred translations of the relevant sections of the Brightwell charter derived from a detailed analysis of the text, when synthesised with topographical, archaeological and other documentary evidence, support locations for the outlying woods and meadow close together and within the northern boundary of the modern parish (Fig. 7). The

Fig. 6 The gently sloping ground and ridge to the south of Cadwell – the possible site of Shelve-ridge wood

location of the meadows is almost certainly correct, with a considerable weight of evidence in favour and no other likely contenders in the area. The location of the woods close to the meadows is more probable than the more remote location proposed by Wright (1977), and shows the importance of reading the landscape at a detailed and local level from the viewpoint of people living in or passing through the area. It is only from Cadwell and 'Stratford', approaching Brightwell from the north, that the topographical significance of the 'shelve-ridge' can be appreciated.

The outlying land clearly retained its association with Brightwell through the Medieval period and at some time

became enclosed within an enlarged ecclesiastical parish. It is speculated that this was at the same time that the hamlet of Cadwell was incorporated. Wright (1977) presented evidence to suggest that Cadwell was 'deserted' some time between 1450 and 1700, but it may have come under the pastoral care of the church at Brightwell at an earlier date, perhaps in the late 13th to early 14th century when the substantial stone church was built. Certainly it might be expected that the enlarged parish was established at the latest by the latter half of the 14th century under Baldwin

errors remaining are entirely mine. I give special thanks to Peter Kent for providing unlimited access to the Brightwell Baldwin archives, for sharing his encyclopaedic knowledge of the parish and for facilitating introductions to Brightwell landowners. I thank all those landowners for their enthusiastic support and for allowing archaeologists to tramp over their private land, but especially Richard and Kellie Davey of Cadwell Farm. To Richard and Kellie I promise not to pop up in the middle of any more pheasant shoots.

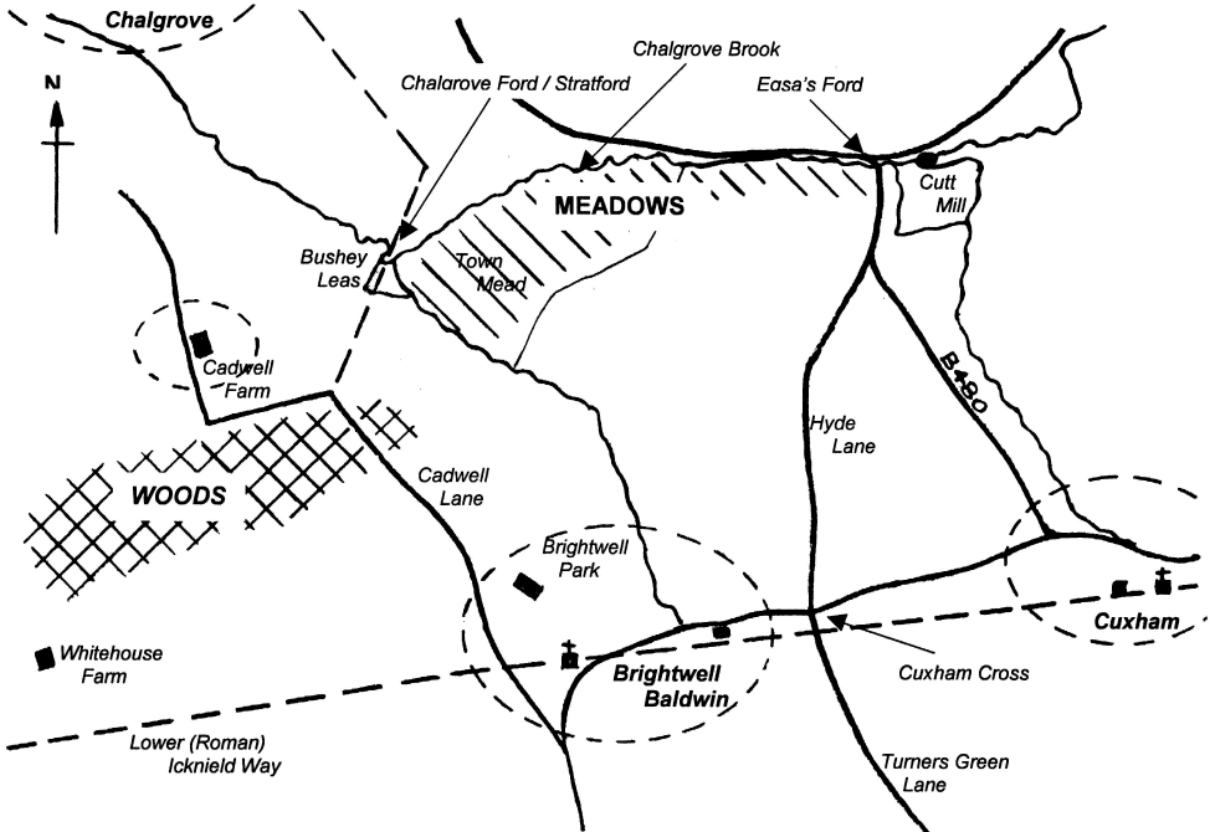

Fig. 7. The proposed locations of the woods and meadows of the Brightwell charter

de Bereford who held manors in Chalgrove, Cadwell and Brightwell, the latter being thereafter known as Baldwin Brightwell.

Although the case cannot be proven beyond all doubt, the balance of probability is in favour of the proposed locations for the outlying land being correct and if they are, then the northern boundary of the A-S estate was further south than the modern parish boundary, just as Wright (1977) proposed.

In a future paper we will consider evidence to try to relocate the 9th-century bounded estate.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to my daughter Emma C. Clarke for her invaluable assistance with the Latin, for her patient appraisal of the earlier drafts of this paper and for gently restraining the worst excesses of my style; any grammatical

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THE MEDIEVAL MANOR OF WYFOLD

Pat Preece

Wyfold was a Medieval manor, the name of which is perpetuated by the name of Wyfold Grange, Wyfold Lane and Wyfold Wood to the south-east of Checkendon. The former mental institution called Borocourt was originally a Victorian mansion built by Hermon Hodge and called by him Wyfold Court. I have a photocopy relating to the Wyfold lands when the estate was up for sale at the beginning of the 20th century and this shows all the woodlands in detail.

Wyfold Grange is probably a direct descendant of the original grange belonging to Thame Abbey and is now a Victorian house surrounded by a major earthwork. The earthwork may be Iron Age in date, or it could possibly represent later defensive works. The former seems more likely.

The manor of Checkendon, to which Wyfold originally belonged, was owned by Wulred, a Saxon, before the Norman Conquest. At the time of Domesday Alfred, the nephew of Wigod (a Saxon who managed to hold on to his lands including Mapledurham), held Checkendon and presumably also Wyfold (1). The next mention is found in the Thame Cartulary when Geoffrey de Iveto, presumably a Norman, holding the manor from the king, had rented all the land of Wyfold and Ruchmareshegge, described as part of Bensington (Benson), to Nigel Chyre for 23s 3d. Bensington was a huge royal manor and there was the Honour of Bensington. An honour was a grouping of several manors under the administration of a lord – in this case under the king – and the honorial courts.

In 1153 Geoffrey de Iveto granted Wyfold and Ruchmareshegge to Thame Abbey. Henry II confirmed the possessions of the abbey, among them Wyfold and Ruchmareshegge, which were still rented by Nigel Chyre. Possibly the abbey was paying 60s 4d for the leasehold to the king, as in 1189 King Richard remitted the payment that the abbey had been paying to his father. The holding was said to be 'all the land of Wifold and Ruchmareshegge'. What 'Ruchmareshegge' comprised is unknown, although nowadays there is a wood called Rumerhedge. Possibly there were also some arable fields and perhaps a small hamlet. We will never know for certain. David Roden says that around 1200 most of Wyfold was still covered by heath and woodland with only small patches of cultivated land (2).

Thame Abbey acquired some more land when William Marmion, lord of part of the manor of Checkendon and Little Stoke, granted half a wood to the abbey – '40 acres called Hainge'. It seems probable that this wood is now called Hained in Wood and is part of Basset Wood (3). This name is interesting as it seems to suggest that the land was fenced off: 'hai' in Old English or 'hay' in Middle English refer to fences or hedges. In 1263 there was a law case when several people conceded all rights to 50 acres of a wood called Hawge (fenced or hedged) Basset, which must have been part of what is now called Basset Wood. This seems to have been as well as the 300 acres which the abbey had next to 'their grainge at Wyfaud'. The abbot and his men at Wyfaud were to have common of pasture in the woods and 'maste' or beech nuts, presumably for their pigs. In the charter of 1263 the abbot was to enclose the woods with ditches and hedges (4). There are some very old-looking banks round the woods nowadays but no hedges.

Interestingly, the entry for 'Wifaude' in the Hundred Rolls is different from any other local entry. There were ten tenants who paid rents varying between 3s and 20s for what are described as crofts and groves:

'Peter Cok 2 virgates and 2 groves 20s
John Muncy 4 crofts and 1 grove 8s
Peter Hok 3 crofts and 1 grove 4s
Agnes Wythod 3 crofts and 1 grove 6s
Symon Cock 7 crofts and 2 groves ?
Nicholas Cock 7 crofts 6s 6d

Alice de Marler 3 crofts and 1 cottage and 1 grove 5s 6d
Rad de Wycume 3 crofts 7s
Robert Serle 5 crofts and 1 grove 10s
Gilbert Carter 3 crofts 3s' (5)

Possibly the crofts mentioned are assarts or pieces of land cleared from the woodland. The groves may be shaws bordering the assarts or coppices that the tenants were renting to cut. My feeling is that here we have freemen who were woodmen. Another possibility is that Peter Cok with his two virgates may have been leasing Pinnocks Field. In a charter of 1230 states that 'Pinnokes Feld' belonged to 'the Abbot and Convent pertaining to the grange of Wifalde' (6). In the Tithe Award of 1841 there is a Pinnocks Hither Field of 32 acres and a Pinnocks Further Field of 33 acres, both arable. Now, allowing for variation in the size of acres, it may be that those two virgates were Pinnocks Field. This field still exists with a bank and hedge dividing it into two parts. There is a pond between the field and the woods, marked on the Ordnance Survey map as Sheepwash Pond – could this have relevance to the agreement about the right of common in the Thame Cartulary?

The Hundred Rolls lists only two tenants who gave services for the tenancy of their cottages; two others paid rents of 6d and 12d for their cottages. Where did this small population live? Was there a small hamlet or were they scattered, some of them living on their crofts?

The woods in the Medieval period would have been coppices with standards. This is confirmed by an indenture of 1355 about Notepotegrove, which may be the wood now called Nippers Grove. In the charter, the abbey sold 'the crop of the wood' for money, not specified, to William de Hilton, John Wyndou and John James, apart from all the trees and undergrowth growing in the ditches and 'foreign growths' of those ditches and in the hedges around the wood. This seems a bit strange but perhaps the abbey did not want the ditches and hedges damaged. The purchasers had to agree to fell the wood in reasonable pieces (probably meaning separate coppices) but were allowed to fell the 'great trees' (standards), when they pleased up to the end of a ten-year period,when it was to be left so that the abbey could enclose the cleared parts of the wood – presumably to stop the entry of animals until the coppice had grown up (7). The abbey also requested that the wood carts did not do any damage, and we have seen some of that!

The land is described in 1227 as being from the wood of Caverack (Caversham) to the wood of Khakindon (Checkendon) and this is the period when the abbey was still paying rent, in this case 60s (8). Rumerhedge Grove, also of the Wyfold holdings, was a coppice with standards. In 1210 the abbey granted common of pasture to nine people 'and others in Rumerhagge as they and their ancestors had in the time of King Richard' (9). The area is described and one point of interest is that it was to go as far as the 'grove that was Henry Coks' – was he the son of Peter Cok who had the two groves according to the Hundred Rolls? The name Rumerhagge means 'hedged rough boundary'. The right of common was on condition that the nine men were to remit the common of pasture in 'Pinnokesfeld' to the abbey. These men probably had strips in the field. After harvest, the men of Thame Abbey could put their animals to graze there.

It is thought that at the Dissolution Wyfold was sold off in pieces – some to the Blackall family and some to Pollington, lord of the manor of Checkendon in the 16th century. There is mention about this time of a cottage at the grange of Wyfold (10). Certainly in the 18th century it was called Wyfield Farm and was owned by a family called Ketes or Keats.

The manor mainly consisted of woodland. Today, these are mainly high beech with some oaks. The banks surrounding the woods look Medieval in date as they are wide and spreading. There is a haphazard network of woodways in the woods which also indicates an old wood. Nowadays the woods are unspoilt and are lovely to walk in, particularly in the autumn when the beeches are beautifully coloured.

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LADY PERIAM SCHOOL, HENLEY, AND ITS WOODLAND

Pat Preece

Some years ago my attention was drawn to some woodland accounts for a school in Henley. The wood, the 17th-century accounts of which were mentioned, has ceased to exist. Joan Dils has written a history of the school and it is from her article that I have drawn the description of the school (1).

Lady Periam lived at Greenlands when she was widowed, which house may be familiar to some of you as once belonging to Lord Hambledon of the W.H. Smith shops. In *Three men in a boat*, the narrator refers to passing

the 'rather uninteresting looking river residence of my newsagent' (2). It is doubtful that the house looked the same in Lady Periam's day.

Dame Elizabeth Periam used her fortune to endow a school which was founded in February 1610. The school used the lower floor of the Medieval chantry house at Henley church; a free school used the upper floor. During her lifetime Lady Periam managed the affairs of the school and was 'alone governess of the school', but on her death in 1621 the first accounts appear. The appointed governors were the feoffees of the lands given by Lady Periam, together with the warden of the borough (Henley's equivalent of mayor) and the rector of Henley parish. The rector and warden were responsible for the administration, including collecting the rents of the properties and selling the wood from the woodland that provided the income.

The school was unusual in that Lady Periam specified that no Latin should be taught. The intake was the same as for a grammar school – from nine to a possible 16 or 17 years of age. The aim was to equip the boys for apprenticeships and so they were taught writing, cyphering (calculation) and casting accounts. As was usual then, there was emphasis on religion and compulsory attendance at morning and evening services at the parish church on Sundays and holidays. The pupils had to learn by heart the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Creed, the last of which they recited morning and evening in school, and they had lessons in the Catechism every Saturday afternoon.

The schooling seems to have been free and the pupils were supposed to be 'poor scholars', although whether this was altogether true is unknown. Some of the boys went as apprentices to their fathers, and so could not have been genuinely 'poor'. There was a schoolmaster who had to be a bachelor or widower without children; his salary was £20 a year: probably generous at that time. The headmaster at Reading School at the same period was paid £10 annually (3). The master was to teach six days a week and had 30 days holiday a year.

The pupils were provided with a new uniform every Easter, comprising a black cap, blue cloth doublet and breeches lined with canvas (sounds uncomfortable!), a pair of shoes and stockings, and two shirts with bands. They had to keep the new uniform 'for best' for the first year, wearing it on Sundays, Thursdays, holidays and the anniversary of Lady Periam's funeral.

The boys were apparently much sought after as apprentices, going to various towns including Reading and Wallingford but above all to London. During the 1650s, two-thirds of the pupils went to London and at this time almost every master craftsman who took an apprentice from the school was described as a citizen of London.

The school seems to have been partly supported by its woodland. The school owned 24 acres [9.72 ha] called 'School Wood' which was situated in Nettlebed. Despite an intensive map search, the location of 'School Wood' has not been found. The accounts cover the period 1623 to 1628 in detail and after that the woods were let annually for around £10 until 1745 when there is no further mention. Two men, Augustus Springall and Abraham Man, appear to have been making the accounts. A peculiarity of these accounts is that the numerals are mostly Roman and this at a period when Arabic or modern numerals were being used. It is also strange as Latin was not taught at the school! As happened in Medieval times when Roman numerals were used, the arithmetic in the accounts is faulty.

The wood seems to have consisted of some beech and hazel coppice, originally with oak standards. There are many entries about billet which consists of logs, 3 feet 4 inches [1.02 m] long with a 10 inch [25.40 cm] circumference, usually of beech and used as firewood: 'paide to Thomas Naylor makinge LXX loades of billete at 5d the lode XXIXs 11d'. Quantities of faggots were also being made for firewood, presumably from the tops of the coppice beech and the lop and top of the oaks: 'pd to hym for binding XXIII of stack faggottes and bondes XXIIIIs'. The 'bondes' would have been hazel withies which are thin flexible strips.

There are other interesting entries: 'pd to mr Allen the purveyor for wood charged owte of the same wood being X loade for the Kings Male XXXs'. What was the male/mail doing with loads of wood? We will never know. Another entry cites 'item for wood for the poore schollers annually XXs'. Strange that it was for poor scholars – does this mean the whole school, or some children who were poor? Presumably it referred to firewood for heating. There are several mentions of felling oaks: 'item for felling XX oakes VIs XIIId'; 'received of Mr Goodinge of London for 18 oaks cutt down', although no money is mentioned (4).

The school employed a woodman called Page at a wage of 10s annually for the first five years, and there is an item of him 'hidging and makinge' the wood for which he was paid IIIli XVs (£3.15s). The wood ceased to be mentioned in the 18th century and was probably sold, and the school itself apparently went into a decline at the same time. In 1778 it was joined by Act of Parliament with the free school to form the United Charity Schools of Henley (5).

It seems possible that the woods were badly managed and particularly that the oaks were drastically felled. This can be the only explanation for the letting of the wood for only £8 to £10 per annum from 1632 onwards, when coppices were fetching £5 to £10 per acre [0.4 ha] annually at that period.

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GEORGE SMITH: CAVERSHAM ANTIQUARIAN

Mary Kift

Look at some of the older Ordnance Survey maps of Caversham and you will see numerous references on them to Palaeolithic finds. Indeed, within several hundred metres of my home there are three such sites and the house itself is built on a fourth. Local people quite often dig up handaxes, many of them in excellent condition such as the one from Chazey Road found some 25 years ago. Caversham is one place 'where evidence of the earliest antiquity of man can be found', and as such it was mentioned in *The Guinness book of records* for 1968.

Perhaps the most avid collector of these artefacts was George Smith, a bank manager living in Caversham during the latter part of the 19th century when the district was beginning to be developed and was expanding rapidly. At this time many pits were being dug for stones to mend the roads which were increasingly in need of repair. The construction of new housing also caused a great deal of soil disturbance.

Mr Smith kept notes of his discoveries. He filled three exercise books with them, cataloguing his finds which consisted of 'worked flints, animal bones, pottery and other evidence of the presence of man'. These books can be seen in Reading Museum. His first entry reads: 'Palaeolithic implement, the first I have ever found. I noticed it as I was returning from a cricket match one evening in the summer of 1884'.

This find set George Smith off on the hobby of a lifetime. He collected any object of interest and more than once found something to add to his collection while he was out rabbiting. He often paid local workmen for what they dug up and so ensured that they kept their eyes open for anything unusual when they were disturbing the soil. It was certainly worth their while in those days to earn a much-needed extra shilling in this way.

When he died Mr Smith left a fine collection, consisting of many hundreds of worked flints, to the British, Ashmolean and Reading Museums. Many years ago now a group of SOAG members saw some of these Caversham finds in the Ashmolean Museum, where I was delighted to see minute, delicate and beautifully fashioned tools from two sites in Darell Road, where I live.

Some 35 years ago John Wymer of Reading Museum, who was an authority on Palaeolithic flints, spent an Easter weekend at a dig in the garden next to ours but found little of interest. He also walked around our garden and again drew a blank. So much for Mr Smith!

Like most gardens in Caversham Heights, ours is a mass of stones. No matter how you collect them and deposit them in a corner they still seem to be as numerous as ever. Small wonder that towards the end of the 19th century a Mr Talbot decided to dig out pits in Darell Road, then only a farm track, to provide stones for road maintenance. Here in Talbot's or Toots Farm pits, as they were sometimes called, Mr Smith must have had a field day. If he had been around now, I am sure that he would have been a member of SOAG!

This article is reprinted, with some amendments, from SOAG Bulletin *No. 46 (1990).*

A Horse's Furlong

This piece comes from *The Ipsden Country* by J.H. Baker (1958), now out of print. In it he talks to Jack Hatt, a member of an old local farming family who died this year. This is what Jack said to him sometime in the nineteen fifties, and I quote:

"I wonder how many of you know what a furlong is? … Well, I'll tell you. If you were to plough with two horses on a single furrow plough you would find that they would go for a furlong and that is FOR that LONG only, and that is how the word arose. Horses will go for about ten chains, 220 yards, without stopping, and then they must have a rest of some sort. They would get that when they stop, turn round, stop and straighten up, and away they go for another furlong." Jack also talked about the old horse who went round and round on the old gearing of early elevators: "occasionally it would stop for a breather – it must have been his circular furlong!"

J.H. Baker must have been one of the earliest amateur local history writers, a subject which interested him deeply. He was headmaster of Highmoor School (1907) at Witheridge Hill and eventually retired to Rifleman's Cottage, Shurvell Hill, Goring Heath, almost next door to Jack Hatt. A footnote in *The Ipsden Country* reads: "An encouraging and practical guidebook for amateur historians has recently been published entitled 'Local History in England' by the author Mr W.G. Hoskins, Reader in English Local History at University College, Leicester.

Mary Kift

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EARLY MAN IN SPAIN

Phillippa Wray

During the last two weeks in September 2005, I participated in an archaeological/palaeontological project called 'Early Man in Spain', organised through the Earthwatch Organisation and led by Professor Josep Gibert and his son Lluis. Earthwatch has been supporting their work since 2001.

We had originally been told that we would be staying and working at a site near the small town of Orce in Andalusia, where evidence of human occupation dating from approximately 1.2 million years ago had been discovered ('Orce Man'), and staying in cave houses which continue to be a traditional form of dwelling in the Andalusian region. However, due to some bureaucratic problems regarding permits to carry out further investigations, we were notified shortly before departure that we would have to work at another location, the site of Cueva Victoria near the small town of La Unión, also in Andalusia, close to the Mar Menor (perhaps more familiar to some people in terms of the La Manga golfing resorts). Our accommodation was to be at a farm, rather than the more exotic-sounding cave dwellings, but despite my initial disappointment the project turned out to be a fantastic two-week experience.

Our work during the project had three main areas of focus:

- palaeontological excavation at a cave site called Cueva Victoria;
- archaeological excavation at an open air site called La Madalena;
- a search for microfossils back at our 'home' base.

Cueva Victoria

This is a cave with an interesting geological, palaeontological and mining history. Study has indicated that it was formed during the late Pliocene 2-3 million years ago. The site is important because of the large quantity of fossilised faunal remains discovered since 1987, representing 54 species, and the presence of human remains dated approximately 1.2 million years old by means of palaeomagnetism. Among the fauna are species of African origin, and this link is a key feature of the on-going investigations both at Cueva Victoria and other sites in the region regarding the migration of early man into Europe.

Our group was split into two teams and we spent alternate days working in the cave and at the open air site. The work was quite arduous and consisted of using small picks to chip away sediments from the cave wall and shovelling this 'dirt' into sacks, which were then carried over to an area where others were responsible for sieving. This latter process was carried out using large wooden screens suspended from chains, which were shaken back and forth to remove the dirt and retain bone material. Some of the bone was immediately recognisable, such as a sabre-tooth cat fang, essentially intact, which was deemed by our group leader Lluis to be '*muy bonito',* of museum quality, although not quite on the scale of one of the project's earlier finds (Fig.1).

Fig. 1. Skull of sabre-tooth cat from Cueva Victoria. Photo: Greg Erickson

I was thrilled to be the one who next yelled, 'Stop, I think something was in that shovelful of dirt!' I was right: it was the right half of the lower jaw of a lynx, probably *Lynx spelea* like other examples in the Cartagena Archaeological Museum. It was especially gratifying to see that 'our' jawbone was more complete than the one shown in the museum's handbook, even though it lacks the canine tooth of that example.

The majority of the rest of the bone was less immediately identifiable; to avoid losing anything we used the traditional archaeological approach of 'if in doubt – keep it' (although when we came to washing the finds later in the week, there was also the usual rueful muttering along the lines of 'Why did we keep all this stuff?'). Fig. 2 shows just a small sample of the hundreds of bone fragments that we collected during our hard work of digging and sieving. Among the bones were also some finds that on first washing we thought were stones, only to be informed, with some amusement, that these were actually fossilised hyena coprolites (hyena poo!). Coprolites are actually very useful, as chemical analysis can identify some of their constituents and hence elements of the diet – although we had a pretty good idea of that from the sorts of bones that we found.

All the bone material excavated was recorded and will find its way to the archives in the Cartagena Archaeological Museum, where all the material from Professor Gibert's work in the area (other than from Orce itself, which has its own museum) is either displayed (Fig. 3) or stored in the archive, where we were given a behind-the-scenes tour. Animals found at the site include lynx, rhinoceros, elephant and horse.

Fig. 2. Sample of faunal remains from Cueva Victoria

Our time in the cave also included a tour of the cavern complex for those interested. This was certainly not for the faint-hearted, as it involved lots of scrambling up and down and making our way through tight places, with only a few torches and helmet lamps to guide us. Thank goodness for hard hats!

La Madalena

The other site that we worked on was outside, enabling us to enjoy the lovely late summer weather. It is located a very short drive away from Cueva Victoria overlooking the Mar Menor, across which we could see the string of hotels that is springing up along the spit of land separating the Mar Menor from the Mediterranean. La Madalena is a Palaeolithic site, which was found during a survey associated with the new highway that runs nearby and first excavated by a team from Cartagena Archaeological Museum. The precise age of the site is still unknown but the kinds of lithic tools found indicate the Middle-Upper Palaeolithic. At this stage it is also not known whether the site was used by *Homo sapiens* or by Neanderthals, with the latter a possibility as there is a known Neanderthal site not far away.

Our work at this site followed a more traditional archaeological approach, with team members working within a grid of one-metre squares. We carefully trowelled our areas, putting any small pieces of flint or quartz into a small numbered bag for each square. Each bucket of dirt was then taken over to the spoil heap where it was sieved to make sure that no small flakes were being missed. Any small items that seemed particularly interesting were bagged separately and then recorded using a 'total station' system, which makes measuring of levels much simpler. In 'my' square, of particular interest were a small scraper, a piece of burnt wood and two tiny patches of red ochre. The person in the square next to me found a small patch of yellow ochre. Although tiny, these small finds of pigment are quite important as we know that Palaeolithic man used ochre for body adornment and for cave painting – although there is no evidence of the latter nearby.

At the end of our two weeks, between us we had found some quartz flakes (not local to the area), flint flakes and probable tools, and some animal bone fragments. One colleague was lucky enough to find a flint core and some of its associated debitage. At the end of the dig, an area that looked as though it might provide evidence of burning was located close to the edge of the trench and appeared to continue into the section. Inevitably this was on the last day and we will have to wait until the next season before the trench can be extended and further investigation undertaken.

Hunting for microfossils

In typically Spanish fashion, all the excavation work took place in the morning with teams returning home for a desperately needed shower, lunch and siesta. But that wasn't the end of the day's work. Most of our late afternoons and early evenings were spent searching for microfossils. This activity consisted of sieving sediments collected from Cueva Victoria and elsewhere in the area and then separating out the small bones and teeth of micromammals.

Fig. 3. Display of finds from Cueva Victoria in Cartagena Archaeological Museum

To actually find these tiny fossilised bones, the sediment was sieved through increasingly fine meshes until we ended up with bowls/buckets of what looked like small gravy granules. A small amount of granules was then tipped into a small bowl and we searched with our fingertips and used magnifying glasses to find the tiny molars, incisors, mandibles and bones of animals such as mice, voles and even lizards. You may ask why we went to such trouble. It was explained to us that the teeth of tiny mammals evolve at a relatively rapid rate, and extensive studies have already been undertaken from which a detailed chronology of these mammals over hundreds of thousands of years has been developed. By comparing the teeth from

our sites with this detailed chronology, it is possible to provide broad dating for the sediments in which they were found and hence any other associated finds.

Orce sites

Although we were not digging near Orce, we visited some of the more than 50 palaeontological sites that have been identified in this area of Spain during the last 25 years. Some of these sites are exceptional because they contain not only mammal remains, but also lithic artifacts, and two of the sites have also yielded fragmentary human remains.

Barranca León dates from about 800,000 to 1.2 million years ago. The Giberts had been surveying the ravine and this site had been selected for excavation. The most impressive finds consisted of a complete hippo jaw together with other hippo bones and flint tools. Details of the finds were presented at a regional conference along with dating evidence which indicated an early site, with similarities to African hippo kill sites.

Fig. 4. An Andalusian cave dwelling

Venta Micena is a site on the shore of an ancient lake approximately 3000 square kilometres in extent, which had been connected to the sea 6 million years ago. The site was discovered by Josep during an archaeological survey in 1976, and excavations since then have produced over 15,000 bones from 30+ different species, plus three fragmentary human bones including the fragment of cranium dubbed 'Orce Man'.

Our accommodation

Like me, I would guess that most of you are not familiar with the cave houses of Andalusia. Professor Gibert's house is one of these cave dwellings (Fig. 4), in which we had a very pleasant lunch. Although the ground may look snow-covered, it is in fact just very light, dry earth: the whole area is very arid, and the only plants that seemed able to survive were scrubby bushes, and almond and olive trees. It was pleasing to note that the houses in which we originally were to have stayed were pretty comfortable, with good bathroom facilities and often decorated with charming local artefacts and fabrics.

Despite the change in our accommodation we were well looked after by our hosts José and Toni, especially on the food front. If it wasn't for the physical effort of our daily activities, I'm sure we would all have returned home carrying 'excess baggage'.

Overall I thoroughly enjoyed the project, which combined a fantastic learning experience (my first real introduction to palaeontology) with good food and drink, interesting companions and also time to 'chill-out' from the normal daily routine. At the end of two very enjoyable weeks, it was strange to think that I would be heading back home to work on a positively modern Roman site!

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my colleagues Greg for sharing his photos and Helen for sharing her journal, which helped to jog my memory on a few points for this article.

Find out more

Information about all the projects that Earthwatch support, not just archaeological ones, can be found at www.earthwatch.org. You can find out more about the projects at Cueva Victoria and Orce at www.cincominutos.com.

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BOOK REVIEW

God's Clockmaker: Richard of Wallingford and the Invention of Time

by John North
London, Hambledon and London, 2005
432 pp., £25. ISBN 1852864510

In 1965, John North sat at a desk in the Bodleian Library to study a manuscript; 'an unusually chubby book, small and thick and containing over 200 parchment leaves bound within leather-covered wooden boards'. Richard of Wallingford, Abbot of St Albans, had died of leprosy in 1336. Probably within 15 years, the papers he left behind were copied by a St Albans scribe, the work eventually becoming the property of Elias Ashmole. MS Ashmole 1976 was the volume on North's desk.

The parchments were jumbled and fragmentary and

were of course written in Latin. Some of the material was repeated in slightly different form. At some point the MS had been split up and rebound in the wrong order. It remains in the wrong order today. These features made the MS difficult to understand, but not so very difficult for a competent historian. The main reason this MS had been disregarded for centuries lay elsewhere.

MS Ashmole 1976 was a series of astronomical and astrological texts, the importance of which lay in the mathematical skill and understanding shown by the writer. The reader needed to be familiar with Medieval cosmology, and able to follow and understand the mathematics – written, remember, not in the economical and fluent algebraic notation we use today, which would not be adopted for centuries, but in Latin prose. A single simple equation might require a paragraph of prose. This complex and difficult text had had to wait centuries for the right reader: John North, historian and mathematician.

Richard was born probably in 1292, the son of William, a Wallingford blacksmith, and Isabella. As a child, Richard would have watched his father, and perhaps his mother too, at work in the smithy, and though not physically strong enough to carry out the heavier tasks, would have come to understand a great deal about working with iron. John North believes the iron would have come from bloomeries in North Oxfordshire and the fuel for the smithy would have been local charcoal. Power from a water mill he thinks unlikely; hand bellows would have provided the draught for the fire.

In 1302 Richard's father died. This might have been the beginning of a life of poverty, but there was in Wallingford, probably on the site of what is now the Bullcroft, a Benedictine Priory, a cell of the Abbey of St Albans. Its prior, William of Kirkeby, adopted Richard as his son, because of his 'loneliness and aptitude and great promise'. Perhaps Richard had been educated by the Black Monks in his father's lifetime; he was almost certainly educated by them between the ages of 12 and 16. After this he went to Oxford to study, and spent most of his life there until 1326, when he joined the St Albans community, becoming abbot in 1327.

As abbot, Richard was conscientious, devout, and an effective if authoritarian manager. He championed the rights of the abbey against those of the town, repaired the abbey buildings and built a school. He also, despite the leprosy from which he began to suffer almost as soon as he became abbot, continued his studies.

These studies included astronomy, astrology (the Medievals clearly differentiated the two) and mathematics. Churchmen had long needed to understand the heavens in order to calculate the dates of great religious festivals, but Richard lived in a time when the first mechanical clocks had just been invented, and when there was an opportunity to produce timepieces of much greater precision. Richard took that opportunity. His is the first astronomical clock of which the details are known.

Richard needed to understand not only how the heavenly bodies appeared to move about the sky, but how to represent this by means of discs and wheels, cogs and ratios. And he invented an entirely new escapement in order to keep his device in motion. His mechanical clock represented the motions of the sun and the moon against the background of stars – allowing for the fact that the annual passage of the sun through the sky is uneven (hence 'mean' time, which is notional, not actual). It showed the phases of the moon and lunar and solar eclipses. It possibly calculated the positions of the planets, the 'wandering stars'. For good measure it showed the state of the tide at London Bridge and included a 'wheel of fortune'. It is this machine that is known as the St Albans clock, a mundane word for what, in fact, is a 'machina mundi', a cosmic machine, an analogue computer of the heavens.

Richard combined the skills of the academic astronomer and mathematician and those of the practical mechanic to produce, writes North, a 'truly extraordinary' machine with 'gearwork of outstanding theoretical accuracy and mechanical ingenuity'. North follows Richard's thinking through the drafts of his design to arrive at this assessment. This was not Richard's only invention: his 'Rectangulus' was an early mechanical computer; his 'Albion' (perhaps a triple pun on Albion, St Albans and 'all-by-one', a reference to its complexity) was an ingenious device for plotting the positions of the planets. His other inventions and his writings show an understanding of astrology and mathematics far in advance of his contemporaries.

North has written about Richard of Wallingford before, rescuing him from near oblivion and claiming that he was 'the most talented English astronomer before the 17th century', one of the giants on whose shoulders Newton stood. In this new book he has put Richard into his context. Thus the book deals in detail with the history of the measurement of time, and with cosmology from classical times. North also wants to rehabilitate the notion of Medieval science and counter the idea that real science did not begin until after the Renaissance. The dominance of religion did not negate, he claims, the possibility of disinterested study of 'natural philosophy', of real intellectual endeavour. Ideas travelled and mutated through time and space from Ptolemy and Aristotle to the Islamic Caliphates of Andalusia, the Jewish ghettoes, the Christian monasteries of Europe and the universities of the great cities. Fourteenth-century Oxford, he states, has a significant place in the history of science.

John North tells the story of a uniquely talented individual, a brilliant academic who grew up in a Wallingford smithy. But North himself has a possibly unique set of abilities and is both clever and scholarly. He followed an Oxford degree in PPE with a London degree in mathematics, physics and astronomy. Like Richard, whose combination of scholarship and practical skill enabled him to construct innovative machines, North is comfortable in two intellectual traditions. As well as persuading the reader of Richard's greatness by showing, in detail and at length, the mathematics at the heart of Richard's writing, and

constructing working models of some of Richard's inventions, he is an expert on the intellectual world of the Middle Ages and of the history of science. His long bibliography cites books written in Latin, German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, French and Catalan.

God's Clockmaker is a reminder that the study of the local and particular often leads out to the universal, in this case quite literally so. It reminds us that historians and archaeologists need as many resources as possible when studying documents and artefacts. Without some understanding of their social and intellectual context, objects and records mean nothing. Richard's clock no longer exists, though parts of it may be present in the town clock in St Albans; his successors did not understand his legacy. Not until 1965, in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, did the happy conjunction of two brilliant minds take place, which has led to this dense, challenging, fascinating and stimulating book.

Sue Sandford

There will be an exhibition featuring Richard of Wallingford at Wallingford Museum from 1 March 2006. The exhibition will include models of his innovative escapement, and of his astronomical clock.

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, book reviews and correspondence 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 *SOAG 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 you include 'SOAG Bulletin' in the email title 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 and photographs 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.
- 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 bold italics. Numbered figure captions should be provided and placed in the text to indicate the approximate position of illustrations.
- 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. For measurements, insert a single space between the number and the dimension, e.g. 5.3 m.
- Pounds, shillings and pence need not be converted into pounds and new pence.
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- 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.

Please send all contributions to the SOAG Editor (postal address inside front cover; email address: Janet_Sharpe@beeb.net) before 31 December for publication in the following year.

Patron: Prof. 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, is a member of the Council for Independent Archaeology and is affiliated to the Council for British Archaeology South Midlands Group.

- Monthly meetings are held from September to April when lectures by professional speakers and members are given in an informal atmosphere
- There are opportunities for members to take part in excavations, fieldwalking, surveys and post-excavation work. Visits are made to places of interest in the summer – 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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