Bulletin

SOAG

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Medieval tile from North Weston drawn by C. Graham Kerr
From the SOAG archives

South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group

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Bulletin SOAG

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Molly Casey 1918 – 2006

Marian Fallowfield

Molly Casey joined SOAG in the early 1970s and always took a keen interest in the lectures and outings. She contributed a number of most interesting and varied articles to the *SOAG Bulletin*. She also wrote for the *Caversham Bridge* under her pseudonym 'The Watchdog'. She was renowned for her knowledge of the history of Caversham and Reading. She wrote a history of Hemdean House School and was invited to give talks about the Civil War and the Battle of Balmore Hill.

Molly belonged to a railway family, the railway being the GWR – God's Wonderful Railway. The family's favourite holiday destination was Cornwall. They would catch the night train and Molly and her siblings would soon be asleep, to be awakened by their father who would announce that they were crossing the Saltash Bridge, one of Isambard Kingdom Brunel's greatest achievements. Brunel was a great favourite and his picture hung on one of the walls of the family house.

As a child Molly lived in Reading and attended Kendrick School. When she was only 17 Molly attended a League of Nations Summer School. Her strong pacifist views developed in those pre-war years. Her first teaching job, after training at Brighton, was in Reading and it was there that she met her husband-to-be, Harold, also a conscientious objector. Molly was devoted to her family, bringing to motherhood the high ideals that typified her character. She was anti–TV; instead she believed in providing her children with a stimulating home environment which inspired them with a love of literature, history and the countryside, in particular the Oxfordshire countryside on her own doorstep. Molly also had a strong sense of personal duty. She looked after her father and aunt in their old age with the same dedication that she applied to all her activities.

Molly was a teacher, fond of literature and of Shakespeare in particular. Molly's family have received many testimonials from her ex-students at Hemdean House School. They fondly remember her as an inspiring teacher who made their lessons fun, instilled them with a love of literature, especially her beloved Shakespeare, and most important of all, and most typical of Molly, treated them as 'individuals'.

Molly's interests were varied. Among these were old buildings, which, when threatened, she campaigned to save. Reading Town Hall was one of these, under threat of demolition by the then Town Council. Molly was an early member of Reading Civic Society. She joined the committee in 1974, just in time to be part of the campaign to save the Town Hall. This

Molly Casey *Photo: the* Caversham Bridge *newspaper*

wasn't going to be Molly's last brush with Reading councillors but it may be considered, in retrospect, one of the most significant. She also campaigned for the preservation of the Mansion House in Prospect Park, and for the upkeep of Caversham Court. In recognition of her work Molly was presented to Prince Edward on the stage of the concert hall she had campaigned to save. She was a member of the Friends of Reading Museum and the Friends of Reading Abbey.

Not all Molly's campaigns ended in victory. She and others fought a long campaign to save Bugs Bottom from development. The argument was won; unfortunately the political system rode roughshod over the democratic wishes of the people. Yet even out of this political debacle Molly's campaigning spirit lived on. Planning permission had been granted, the cause was lost, the developers, Higgs and Hill, had marked out the site with pegs. When all is lost, attack! Molly and a group of protesters, torches and lanterns in hand, go to Bugs Bottom. They rip out the surveyors' pegs!

Pacifism for Molly certainly did not entail doing nothing. She was involved with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament from the start, was active in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and visited Greenham Common.

She was an eco-warrior. She championed a straightforward honest way of life. Her children recall her advocacy of wholemeal bread, long before it became the vogue. In her private life she loved nature and enjoyed it to the full. In her public life she fought for what she saw was right. If she didn't actually build Jerusalem in our land, then she certainly showed us its blueprint and where to find the building blocks.

Molly will be greatly missed by her family and by her many friends.

(We are indebted to the Caversham Bridge *for much additional material – Ed.)*

President's Report 2006

Cynthia Graham Kerr

This year brought us a large number of new SOAGs, many of whom joined us via the dig; a Roman building is always an attraction because you can *see* it. This was very well presented on our website by Steve Gibson, who has put so much work into its design and production. It is people like Steve who keep up our high standard. Don't be shy of trying your hand at writing a note about anything of interest to SOAG, for the *SOAG Messenger*, or the *SOAG Bulletin*.

We started the year on 15 January with news from Sue Sandford, in Woodcote, of an interesting field opposite her house. This field appeared very flat and was partly encircled by roads, suggesting a possible enclosure. SOAG investigated. [See article on p. 13.]

The Gatehampton dig was again our main work and we had 35 different diggers, some of whom came every Sunday to work all day. Some visited just once and worked out of interest, but mostly they came back and joined us. Increasing interest prompted us to spread our wings and a JCB was obtained to completely clear the field of the rubbish and spoil heaps. This enabled Geoff Deakin to survey it and find more ditches to the eastern side. [See article on p. 27.]

Activities included general meetings, and outings to the CBA AGM; Oxpast; a visit to Littlecote (we dug here many years ago); and Frilford Roman dig [see separate reports]. We also had our party and worked 29 days at the Gatehampton dig. Ian Clarke has roused the community of Brightwell Baldwin to work on a site near his home. A medieval structure has been discovered, and they have received a grant for tools.

The structure of SOAG is developing, with small groups working independently but linked with the main body – such as the archives group and the editorial team.

We find the pleasant and comfortable hall at Whitchurch Hill an attraction to come to meetings, which in themselves are very rarely boring! We treated the last meeting before Christmas as a party with mince pies and a glass of wine and it would be nice to know your views on this arrangement.

By and large it has been a good year with plenty of younger people joining in and carrying on SOAG's work and good reputation.

Carry on the good work and have a happy SOAG year in 2007.

Meetings and Visits

CBA South Midlands Spring Conference

David Nicholls

Four members of SOAG attended the Spring Conference, held at the interesting Milton Keynes Rural Life and Local Transport Museum, on Saturday 22 April 2006.

The theme of the meeting was 'What the Romans Did for Us'.

The conference was ably chaired by Ted Lake, who also gave an impromptu end of the day talk on the origins and recent history of the Stacey Farmhouse, Longville Estate, in the absence of the last scheduled speaker. It was enlightening to learn that in 1713 the Estate was purchased by Dr Radcliffe, physician to Queen Anne, who endowed both the Radcliffe Infirmary and the Observatory, and these institutions still benefit from the Radcliffe Trust.

The first talk was by Bob Zeepvat, from Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd, on the Bancroft Villa farming complex, located some 350 metres from the museum, and bordered by the Bradwell Brook to the north. Investigations commenced here in during 1973 when the first building was excavated. This revealed a simple aisled structure from the late 1st century AD, with a cold plunge bath-house with beautifully decorated plasterwork depicting marine scenes, as well as evidence of Bronze and late Iron Age activity. These investigations continued until 1978.

A second site was opened up in excavations from 1983-86, when a rare late 1st- early to 2nd-century mausoleum/temple structure was discovered and subsequently excavated by Bob Williams. The central 'cella' or chamber for the two sarcophagi (earlier removed) was some 2m below ground level. Good engineering ensured adequate drainage from this cella via a 'French' drainage system. The mausoleum was well constructed and exhibited good architectural features and must have been an impressive small building with either an open or closed portico.

Various occupations continued into the late 4th century, with alterations to the first building and a second small bath-house. A walled garden was also created with a stone lined rectangular fish pond 13m long by 3m wide. This was fed via the house supply (after bath-house use!), which was in turn supplied from a (presumed) spring source from high ground to the south. In the 3rd century the complex was running down, but occupation continued and another circular stone footed structure was built, as well as another small building with another small bath and heating for the main building. There was a revival in the late 3rd to early 4th century, with a new house on the north side, and a later extension to the south, which included a tiled hot plunge bath with lead pipes. Building material was re-used from earlier structures. High quality mosaic floors were provided, especially in the main room where it was of wealthy Corinium School quality, with the hypocaust below. The water system was well engineered and built. The plunge bath had a capacity of 3720 litres!

The site yielded 1300 coins, including a rare gold coin from Heraclia, of 4th-century date. In all, 11 structures were uncovered. This is an extremely interesting complex. The principal part of the foundations has been left open and conserved.

We walked a short distance to the site at lunch time, and Bob Zeepvat gave us a tour of the remains.

Laurie Colman, from Cotswold Archaeology, gave the second talk on discoveries at The Lea, Denham, during 2000-2006. This site is located in the Colne Valley near Uxbridge, and work was carried out ahead of gravel extraction. It is close to the M40. Geophysical survey was not possible, and a desk based assessment was followed by random trenching. This revealed late Bronze Age/early Iron Age occupation and some Roman activity. Mechanical stripping of the site followed the investigations after alluvial clay layers were removed. There was no evidence of Mesolithic occupation or working, but a surprising find was a mammoth tusk from *c.* 60,000-25,000 BC. An early trackway was discovered on part of the site, with later Iron Age linear features, possibly field systems. Another part of the site revealed a mid Bronze Age funerary circle with ring ditch, continuing into the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age. Other features within this large examined area were 1st- to 2nd-century enclosure ditches, possibly isolated from a central building yet to be found, and an early Roman watering hole. Rich Roman or late Iron Age burials were found and separate cremation sites. These yielded beautiful jet hairpins, in excellent condition;

a shale spindle whorl; a jet signet ring; and jet and electrum beads: all of superb workmanship. Peculiar 'butsum' burials were found on a separate site – this is the rite where fires were constructed over pits. At least 16 of these were excavated, and they yielded a large quantity of iron nails, suggesting the presence of constructed platforms. These 'butsum' burials are not unique, but appear to be more common in the Thames Valley although they also occur in other areas of the British Isles and may represent a Germanic tradition. A well yielded a good quantity of environmental material. Eight inhumation burials were also revealed. Work was continuing on the site during 2006.

A picnic lunch, in pleasant surroundings within the excellent museum, was followed by the first afternoon talk by David Fell from Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd, on 'Wakerley'. This unique ironstone extraction and smelting site is situated in the Welland Valley, near Laxton Wood. Activity commenced in the Iron Age and continued and was advanced in the Roman period, and this extended into the Saxon era. English Heritage are particularly interested in this site. About 100 hectares of ground were worked. Field walking commenced in the 1960s and continued into the 1970s, and recent investigations have been prompted by quarrying. Ironstone occurs in outcrops in the geology of the area. First, a geophysical assessment was undertaken, followed by trial trenching – about 100 trenches in all. This revealed late 3rd- to early 4th-century 'bloom' furnaces with tapping pits. These were apparently utilised five to six times before new furnaces were created. Possibly 100 furnaces in all cover the area. Samples for radiocarbon dating were taken from the pit debris.

Four linear pits found have been tentatively interpreted as ore roasting pits. A great quantity of iron slag was recovered. Nearby, corn drying ovens were also found, as well as evidence of Saxon and Medieval activity. Work was continuing on this exceptional site in 2006. The site is well worth a visit.

Paul Woodfield, accompanied by his wife Charmian, gave an enthusiastic and excellent presentation on his almost miraculous single-handed investigations and salvage work at Dalapre Park, on the southern outskirts of Northampton, where Medieval kiln sites associated with the beautiful Cistercian Dalapre Abbey were threatened by an extension of the local golf course. The site was heavily embanked during the mid 15th century, when the Battle of Northampton took place in 1460.

Six cylindrical pit kilns, about 1m deep, each yielded a very individual style pottery pattern. 'Portable furniture' was another feature of this kiln type. This remarkable project achieved a great deal in a very short space of time and has provided a good sample of local grey wares, which comprise thin walled types, platters and wide mouthed vessels, and a different type of ribby ware.

It was unfortunate that we were not to hear the scheduled presentation on the excavations at Frilford/Marcham, but the day was filled with interesting, wide-ranging subjects.

Oxfordshire Past 2006

John White

Courtyard Centre, Bicester. Left to right: Catherine Clarke, David Nicholls, Cynthia Graham Kerr, Colin Hogbin, Christine Hogbin

This year's Oxfordshire Past (OXPAST) meeting was held at the Courtyard Centre, Bicester, on Saturday 3 June 2006. It was hosted by the Bicester Local History Society to commemorate their 20th anniversary. Those present included the President and Chairman of SOAG and a number of ordinary members.

The meeting was opened by Bob Hessian, the Chairman of BLHS, who welcomed those attending. The meeting started with 'A Review of Recent Archaeology in the Shire' by Paul Smith, the County Archaeologist. Then, after a break for coffee and biscuits, Gary Lock described the latest developments from the fifth season of excavations at Frilford, inviting members of the audience to visit the site on the open day on 25 July.

The third item, by Christopher Lowe of the Otmoor Historical Society, described the Islip Millennium Project. Islip village is generally believed by historians to be the location of the birthplace, in 1005, of Edward the Confessor, so as a millennium project Time Team searched for any remains of buildings from that date. Nothing identifiable was found and a search for traces of the 'Confessor's Chapel', which had been sketched in the 18th century, was also unsuccessful. As a sequel, excavations at a moated manor site were carried out by a local group over three weekends in the summer. Again, results were meagre, so that the projects could only be described as 'educational'.

Next, under the title of 'The Anglo-Saxon Charter of Brightwell', SOAG's Chairman Ian Clarke described the start of the Brightwell Baldwin Community History and Archaeology Project (BBCHAP). [See article p. 33.] This was scheduled to be followed by 'News in Brief,' but due to the meeting now running late the break for lunch was taken and the audience emerged blinking into the sunshine to munch their sandwiches in the park across the road. After lunch we met back in the courtyard, enjoying the sunshine and trying to work out the reasons behind the shape of the building.

The main item of the meeting was a combined effort, by John Moore (of John Moore Heritage Services) and Paul Smith, entitled 'From Mesolithic to MOD: a Synthesis of the Current Evidence for the Evolution of Bicester'. The archaeology of the area was almost unknown 20 years ago because no systematic work had been undertaken. In 1988 the South Farm Roman Villa was found and destroyed by bulldozer, with coach-loads of metal detectorists carrying off masses of Roman finds during the construction of the Southwold housing estate. The legislation on archaeological sites in 1990 meant that sites were then recorded and what is now known about the area comes from the Birmingham University excavation at Slade Farm in 1996 and from surveys at sites of proposed development. Briefly, based on these results, the evolution of Bicester was given as:-

12000BC: Tundra.

8000-6000 BC: Mesolithic: birch and pine woodland with a seasonal (winter) camp for hunter-gatherer inhabitants, with several hundred worked flints being found.

4300-2100 BC: Neolithic: plenty of chance finds but no concentrated lots.

To 750 BC: Bronze Age: traces of ploughed-out barrows, including one now under housing, but no evidence of field systems.

AD 1-200: Farmstead in area investigated for hospital site, also finds at what is now Bicester Village.

AD 500-700: Saxon water management systems, in the past called weaving sheds.

AD 900-1100: Hall building (Bernecester) probably connected with the minster; beginnings of the town.

AD 1350: Causeway constructed through marshland which was still being reclaimed until c. AD1800.

AD 1940-2006: RAF Bicester: buildings now scheduled due to their retaining the classic features of a WWII aerodrome.

After tea and biscuits Brian Durham (Oxford City Council) reviewed 'Recent Archaeology in Oxford City'. He surveyed four items: the Thames flood plain; ducting installation at Christchurch College; the Castle Heritage Centre (which had just opened); and work of the partnership between the City and County. The meeting closed at about 1630 h and we SOAGs returned to South Oxfordshire.

The SOAG Summer Party

Cynthia Graham Kerr

On the evening of 24 June 2006 the summer party was again held at that delightful venue, the Goring Thames Sailing Club. It was a lovely summer evening and everyone took their glasses and platefuls outside and ate at the benches someone had kindly arranged by the river. The swans and their cygnets glided up to entertain us – in hopes of some supper?

The wine was arranged by David Nicholls and several people helped to wash up. Again thank you to the Fultons who made all the arrangements with the club for us. As the sun slowly set upriver we watched the colours flow and change and quietly turn the river to colour and shadow – better than any film! The scene was completed by a heron on the opposite side, flapping lazily along the bank.

It was a shame so many people were on holiday as we had barely twenty. If fewer than forty or so people attend, it is a lot of work for the few who do come, so next year we shall experiemnt with not having a party. Let us know what you think.

Meanwhile, a big thank you to the willing helpers who worked really hard to keep things going.

The Marcham/Frilford Romano-British Religious Complex: SOAG Visit 16 July, 2006

Susan Sandford

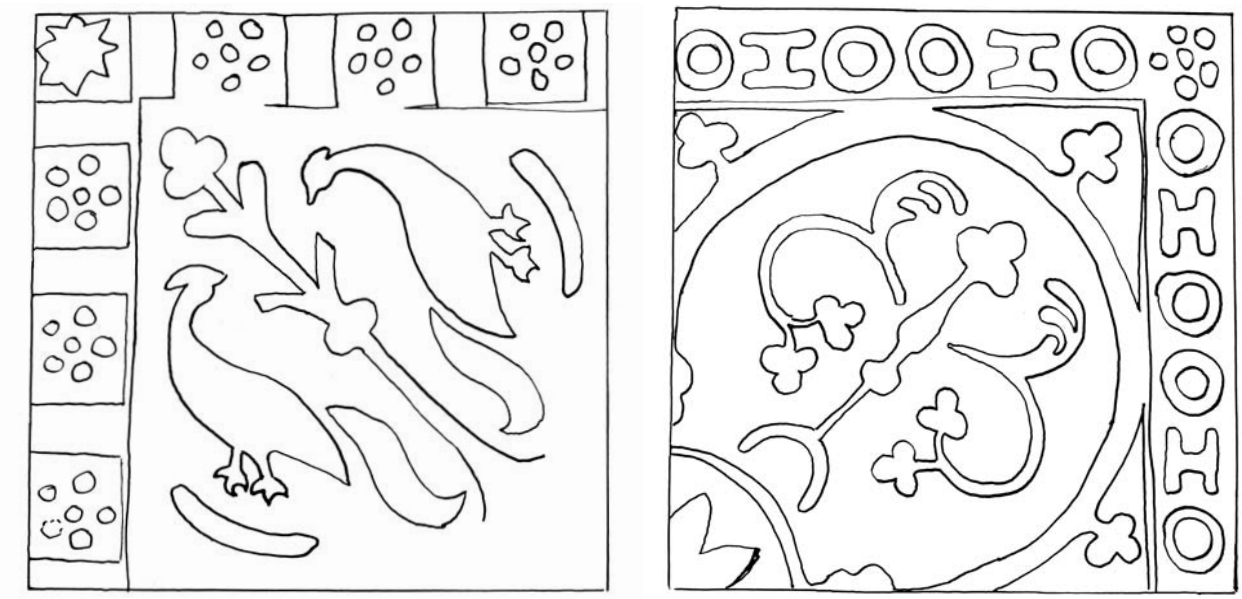
Sunday 16 July was very hot indeed, but, fortified by an excellent lunch at the Millets Farm Garden Centre at Frilford, twelve SOAG members met for a guided tour of the Romano-British site described in the *SOAG Messenger* for July 2006 and last visited by SOAG members in 2003.

The site, which has been studied for the last 140 years, covers several acres and includes remains from the middle Bronze Age to the Anglo-Saxon period, and thus is extraordinarily complex. Our guide was Gilbert Oteyo, a Kenyan who worked with the Leakeys in the early 1970s. Even he, with experience of working in the Great Rift Valley, seemed to be feeling the heat, but his expertise and enthusiasm – he had been working on The Vale and Ridgeway Project since it began in 2001 – enabled him to provide an excellent introduction to the physical layout of the area, to the theories concerning its many functions over the millennia, and to the remaining enigmas.

Marcham/Frilford is an Iron Age settlement which is overlain by a Romano-British temple complex. The remains include an Iron Age house; pits and other structures; a Romano-British temple; a large, unique and puzzling circular feature; a large building, possibly an accommodation block; and other smaller structures now thought to be workshops, some of which were industrial, perhaps producing votive and ritual objects, and some of which might have been food stores such as bakeries.

Investigation here goes back to 1865 with the discovery of the late Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon cemetery. A Romano-British temple and underlying Iron Age structures were excavated in the 1930s. This part of the site is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument and not currently available for excavation which, since 2001, has been directed by Gary Lock and Chris Gosden from Oxford University's Institute of Archaeology. A wide range of archaeological methods is used on this site, which provides an excellent training ground for students. However, volunteers also take part and a range of activities and events is organised for the Young Archaeologists' Club and the CBA National Archaeology Week. In 2005 the excavation featured on the *Time Team's* 'Big Roman Dig'. Also in 2005 an LHI grant was awarded to develop links with the local community: 'The Trendles Project: Exploring Marcham's Past' includes an independent trench for local volunteers, the neatness and clarity of which immediately impressed SOAG members. 'Trendles' is the name of the field in which the religious complex is located; it is surely no coincidence that *trendel* is Old English for circle or ring. The intriguing walled feature now being excavated was discovered in the hot summer of 1976, when a farmer flying over his parched land noticed a bright green circle. The circular walls now exposed would have retained water, and current thinking is that this structure was a ritual spring. This is another instance of old field names providing local knowledge otherwise lost.

Many thanks to Edward Golton for organising such a fascinating and enjoyable visit.



Medieval tiles from South Stoke drawn by C. Graham Kerr. From the SOAG archives

Reports and Articles

The SOAG Archives

Janet Sharpe

What are the SOAG archives?
SOAG is remarkably lucky not only in having an extremely active President, but one who is reluctant to throw away even the smallest snippet of information. It is also lucky in having a President with a tidy mind: over the years Cyn has squirrelled away all those scraps, enough to fill a filing cabinet and more, already arranged according to project. The problem was that there was no record of what those projects are and what information is available concerning them. Enter Sue Sandford and Janet Sharpe who, with Cyn's help, sorted through the President's files and attempted to arrange their contents into a logical sequence, in order to document and store them so that eventually they will be accessible to all SOAG members.

We came up with seven main categories of archival material (Table 1). **SOAG administration** is self-evident; it includes records of past committee meetings, outings, lectures, correspondence – everything to do with the actual running of the Group – and these will be organised and recorded should anyone in the future wish to write the history of SOAG, perhaps to commemorate its 50th anniversary in 2019.

The **Resources** category includes all those oddments of information that do not relate as yet to specific projects but could provide data for future ones: there is a mini SOAG SMR of site records on index cards; parish records; newspaper cuttings; methodologies; and miscellaneous publications and reports. Cyn's logbooks provide a day-to-day account of SOAG's activities.

The bulk of the archives consists of projects, which are many and varied. Some of these have been published in the *SOAG Bulletin* and *South Midlands Archaeology*; many have not and those that have would benefit from further study. They fall into two groups which we have labelled **Thematic**, dealing with specific types of artefacts, buildings and so on, and **Sites**. We feel that this is the really exciting part of the archives, as it contains a wealth of studies in various stages of completion; some projects simply need writing up, others could provide the seeds for further work. The project titles are listed in Table 1, in the hope that some SOAG members may feel inspired to take up one or more of these files and see them through to publication.

The three remaining archival categories are: **Other groups**, to hold correspondence and information on other organisations such as Butser Ancient Farm, and records of SOAG's monitoring work for the National Trust; **Maps and plans**, which includes a series of seven large 6" OS maps covering the heart of the SOAG area and others, such as a copy of the 1847 tithe map for Whitchurch; and last but not least **SOAG publications**. Despite its role as an ephemeral newsletter, we were delighted to find that Cyn holds a complete run of *SOAG Messengers*, from No. 1 issued in October 1979 to the present. We also have an almost complete run of *SOAG Bulletins*, starting with a single undated foolscap sheet but published we think in September 1969. We are missing only issues 2 and 7 from (probably) late 1969/early 1970 and September 1970, respectively, and we have only a hand-written draft for issue 4 for June 1970. If anyone could loan us copies of these early bulletins for photocopying, we would be most grateful. The first bulletins functioned as a news sheet like the *SOAG Messenger* does today, but the later ones contain a wealth of articles that are currently lost to view, and it is hoped at some stage to produce an index to these.

The cataloguing of the SOAG archives is still at an early stage. Eventually the contents of each file will be listed within the archives themselves, and the catalogue will be made available for browsing on the SOAG website.

Case studies: Newington and Moulsford
The archives contain notes on numerous sites in the SOAG area. Many of these are little more than scribbled observations on the backs of old envelopes or their equivalent, but some sites are represented by quite massive files of data. Gatehampton is an obvious example. Other sites for which there is a considerable body of data include Newington, Moulsford, Whitchurch Hill, Collins End, Mapledurham, North Stoke and Exlade Street. The latter was Cyn's personal project, which she wrote up as her dissertation for the Oxford University Certificate in Archaeology. The first two sites,

Ref.	Title	Published
1	**SOAG administration**	
2	**Resources**	
2.1	Site records on index cards filed according to locality	
2.2	Miscellaneous records and references (mostly parish records)	
2.3	Newspaper cuttings	
2.4	Information on miscellaneous places of interest	
2.5	Pottery notes	
2.6	Methodologies	
2.7	Dorchester planning proposals with large-scale plans	
2.8	Miscellaneous publications and reports	
2.9	Place names	
2.10	SOAG logbooks	
2.11	SOAG display material for meetings and conferences	
3	**Projects – thematic**	
3.1	Medieval church tiles	SMA 1976
3.2	Granaries	SMA 1996
3.3	Church door hinges	SMA 1982
3.4	Finger posts	
3.5	War memorials	
3.6	Horseshoes	
3.7	Dene holes	
3.8	Field gates	SMA 1988
3.9	Celtic heads in South Oxfordshire	SMA 1991
3.10	Handaxes and flintworking sites in South Oxfordshire	SMA 1988
3.11	Medieval masons' marks	SOAG Bull
3.12	Old farm implements	SMA 1991
3.13	Clay tobacco pipes	SOAG Bull
3.14	Building stones	
3.15	'The odd and the unusual in the SOAG area'	SMA 1984
3.16	Barn survey (organised by SPAB)	
3.17	Ice houses	
3.18	Hedgerows	
3.19	Graves of famous people	
4	**Projects – sites**	
4.1	List of SOAG excavations 1969-1993	
4.2	Gatehampton	SOAG Bull
4.3	Whitchurch Hill survey	
4.4	Bozedown	
4.5	Checkendon and Ipsden, including Berin's Well	
4.6	Collins End	
4.7	Newington	SMA 1985
4.8	Mapledurham parish survey	
4.9	North Stoke	
4.10	Exlade Street	Dissertation
4.11	Moulsford	SOAG Bull
4.12	Miscellaneous, including Huntercombe Golf Course, Wicks Farm	
5	**Other groups**	
5.1	Oxfordshire	
5.2	Other regions	
5.3	National Trust (site monitoring)	
5.4	Butser Ancient Farm	
6	**Maps and plans**	
7	**SOAG publications**	
7.1	*SOAG Messenger*	
7.2	*SOAG Bulletin*	

SMA = *South Midlands Archaeology*; SOAG Bull = *SOAG Bulletin*

Table 1. The SOAG archives: categories and projects

Newington and Moulsford, have also been written up to a certain extent but the archives contain further material which could be mined to produce a full site report or more specialist articles.

When I joined SOAG in 1983, **Newington** was the 'Gatehampton' of its day. We dug and fieldwalked at this Medieval site from 1983 to 1986. Newington is now a small village beside the River Thame, between Warborough and Stadhampton, and is dominated by the imposing edifice of Newington House. Back in the 1980s, the house was suffering from severe structural problems and had been bought by Chris Maltin, a former racing car designer for Porsche, and his wife Elizabeth with a view to restoration. The Maltins were keen to exploit the heritage aspect of the site and SOAG became involved when Park Field, between the house and the river, was loaned to the Sealed Knot to re-enact one of their Civil War battles. The Sealed Knot dug a replica defensive ditch across the field, which revealed some Medieval pottery. They also built a replica half-timbered pub, which for a while served as the SOAG site hut. Research suggested that Newington was the site of a Deserted Medieval Village (DMV), possibly Little Holcombe. Park Field showed traces of some low platforms, and two trenches were opened which yielded plenty of Medieval finds (including a magnificent key) but very little in the way of structural evidence. The excavations in Park Field were meticulously recorded by Cyn but have never been written up.

As an adjunct to the Park Field dig, an intensive field-walking exercise was carried out in Great Bowling Field on the east side of the A329 in 1984-85. A preliminary walk in 1983 had shown some healthy scatters of Medieval pot and subsequently a field-walking grid was established that resulted in no fewer than 667 bags of finds. By this time, Chris Maltin had given us the use of an empty room in Newington House to use as a 'pot room'. We put in a lot of work on the finds from Great Bowling Field and the archive includes 26 pages of tables of finds compiled by Cyn and myself. The pottery was examined by members of the then Oxford Archaeological Unit, and Cyn produced two detailed distribution maps of Early and Late Medieval pottery. [See also article on p. 47.] However, for some reason this work was never published and as the years passed the archive was filed away and the finds slowly gathered dust.

Subsequently some of the Great Bowling Field material was re-analysed and published in 2005 as part of an MSc thesis in Applied Landscape Archaeology by Karen Selway Richards, who used Newington as a case study. However, she does not appear to have had access to all the material, including some fragments of glazed Medieval floor tile. This suggests the existence of a substantial building and Great Bowling Field might just possibly be the site of the 'missing' Grange at Newington. The Newington archives comprise 15 separate files which include documentary evidence as well as fieldwork evidence, maps and photographs – and in addition there are many boxes of finds. The Newington archive deserves to be fully published.

The work at **Moulsford** was a complete contrast. This represented just a short period of work during July and August 1989, and this time the site was Roman. It was found during the construction of the Thames Water pipeline from Gatehampton to Didcot in 1988-89, the same pipeline that first revealed Roman activity at Gatehampton. A watching brief by SOAG members along the route of the pipeline showed an extensive scatter of Roman pottery in a large field immediately west of Moulsford. These days pipeline archaeology is the preserve of large professional units and the results of their work may take years to reach the public domain. Back in the late 1980s things were much more relaxed. Steve Ford of Thames Valley Archaeological Services (and a past member of SOAG) had been employed by Thames Water to prepare a report on the archaeological features exposed by the pipeline, but at the time of his survey the Roman pot scatter was covered with spoil which was subsequently moved to the other side of the pipeline spread. SOAG obtained permission from the landowner to investigate the site.

We established a 70 x 2.5m fieldwalking grid along the pipeline spread and opened a small trench in the square which yielded the greatest number of finds. The results indicated the presence of a series of rubbish-filled late Iron Age and Roman pits. The finds included some sherds of Roman fine ware and two coins. The best of these had been minted under Constantine I between AD 330-335 and showed a fine representation of the she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus on the reverse. The animal bones included typical small Iron Age cattle and part of what was probably the complete burial of a very large dog. My report on this site was published in the *SOAG Bulletin* in 1990.

The Moulsford area is rich in archaeological remains and two gold torcs have been found in the vicinity of the SOAG dig (but not in our trench, unfortunately). Moulsford is on the line of the Roman road from Silchester to Dorchester and pottery and coins have been found elsewhere in the village. Yet another pipeline has recently been cut through the area and it is rumoured that much evidence for Roman activity has been found, although this time local archaeologists did not get a look-in. The SOAG Moulsford archive is important because it forms one part of a much larger jigsaw and may throw some light on the overall archaeology of this area.

From the Archives: The Founding of SOAG

Janet Sharpe

SOAG's President and Founder, Cyn Graham Kerr, has kept a meticulously detailed logbook of the Group's activities ever since SOAG was founded on 22 May 1969. These logbooks have now been maintained by Cyn for nearly 40 years and they form an extremely valuable part of the SOAG archives: all of SOAG is recorded here.

To mark the beginning of the formal cataloguing of the SOAG archives, the first entries in the first of Cyn's logbooks are reproduced here, covering the very first month of SOAG's existence.

May 22nd 1969
A notice having been circulated, this meeting was held at The Thatched Cottage, Whitchurch Hill, Oxon, with Mrs C.A. Graham Kerr presiding. Eleven out of the thirty people interested attended, and apologies received. The following recommendations were made and approved:-

Purpose: To form an archaeological group which will not be too time-consuming, but enable us to pursue this interest together.

Meetings: Once every two months, and field-days as we so desire.

Name: The South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group.

Officials: President, Mrs Graham Kerr; Vice President, Mrs Sheridan; Keeper of Log, Mrs Graham Kerr

Log: To be started by Mrs Graham Kerr and later circulated. For activities and findings.

Press: A short report to the *Evening Post*.

Activities: Not only archaeology but anything of interest, and field recording for the Museum.

Subscription: We agreed to 2/6 per member for postage, etc.

Logbook: Prof. Bryce-Smith offered to donate a book.

Correspondence: There had been considerable correspondence with Reading Museum and the Oxford City and County Museum, and the Director Miss Cook has invited us over for a lecture.

Future Activities: Lecture at Woodstock at the Museum on June 7th at 3 pm.

Date of next Meeting: July 10th 1969.

A short Bulletin of this meeting to be circulated to those unable to attend.

(Signed C.A. Graham Kerr)

June 7th 1969
Twelve members visited Oxford City and County Museum, Woodstock, by invitation of the Director, Miss J. Cook, who gave us a lecture on Field Recording. She then conducted us to her office to see large-scale maps and examine the filing system of Records.

Permission was given to picnic for tea in the grounds of the Museum. We took 12 Record Cards to fill.

Members present: A. and C. Graham Kerr, E., F. and G. Sheridan, J. and M. Ford, Y. and G. O'Keefe, G. and R. Boyson, C. Mackechnie.

June 13th
Ten members turned up for an evening survey at Bozedown Iron Age Fort, Whitchurch Hill. It was our first attempt at a Field Recording, and with two borrowed survey poles, tape measures, form and notebooks we surveyed the gap in the fort (OS 6" sheet no. SU 67 NW, map ref. 6415 7845) and walked part of the perimeter.

Members present: C. Graham Kerr, O. Child, E., F. and G. Sheridan, M. and J. Ford, C. and M. Mackechnie, R. Boyson.

June 14th
Two members walked part of Grim's Ditch at Nuffield (OS 169 from 658872 to 666871). At the 1st map ref. it was remarked how the embankment was divided up into a number of ditches and rises (?by cattle) and along the road called Nuffield Hill at 665876 were some earth works ending in a depression, rubbish was noticed and it may be only a dump.

Members present: C. Graham Kerr, G. Sheridan.

June 15th
Four members set out to prove the Stoke Row legend that a Roman road runs through the village. Visits were paid to two houses, the owners of which kindly allowed us to survey the road, clearly visible under their lawns. We extended into a small field and found the legend that the hedge crossed the road and it joined the modern road to be correct [*sic*]. By careful digging under the hedge we came upon the embedded flints forming the road; we also felt the road all along with a peg; and left two pegs to mark its alignment in the field; and endeavoured to extend its route towards the wood by Sheridans. Further investigation will take place.

Members present: G. Sheridan, C. Graham Kerr, T. Sheridan, Y. O'Keefe.

June 25th
Seven members met at Stoke Row to continue surveying the Roman road. Quite a large portion has now been excavated by the hedge and we continued, by taking a bearing, into the garden of Pond House where we excavated a further patch. From here we continued through to Shepherds', and had some difficulty in locating the road in the field but going by Mr Shepherd's story hit upon a possible route off our present one. We then had to return as it was late.

Members present: G. Sheridan, F. Sheridan, C. Graham Kerr, M. Ford, J. Ford, R. Boyson, G. Boyson.

Mapledurham Playing Fields: Prehistory on the Doorstep

Cyril McCombe

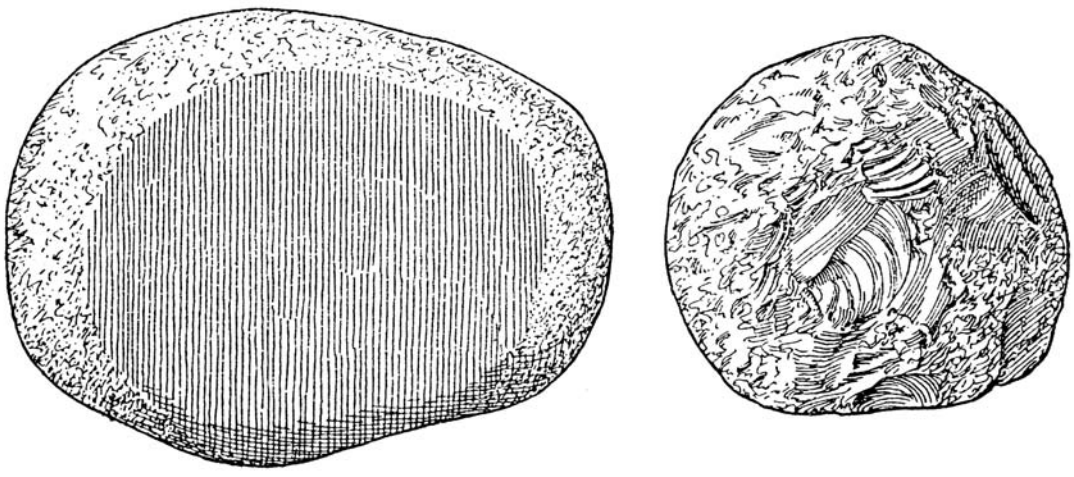
Enveloped, but only just, by the south-western suburbs of Caversham, are Mapledurham Playing Fields. Part of Oxfordshire until the boundary changes of the 1960s, this patch of green provides space for two football pitches, tennis courts and land to spare for an army of dog-walkers.

However, this relic of ancient pasture, situated on the escarpment above the River Thames, holds some intriguing secrets. The roughly rectangular area is bounded on the north by Upper Woodcote Road (A4074), on the east by St Peter's Avenue, on the south by Chazey Road, and on the west by Hewett Avenue. The fields slope gently from west to east, until they reach the bottom of a shallow chalk valley, before rising again on the other side. The steepening valley eventually intersects with the Thames.

At any time of the year, but especially when the sun is low in the western sky in winter, the eye can trace a succession of parallel ridge and furrow lines etched into the surface of the fields. Such corrugations are very uncharacteristic of this corner of South Oxfordshire and their presence leaves one seeking for explanation. However, a recent image of the fields portrayed on Google Earth, photographed during a period of summer drought, reveals a pattern of what seem to be Medieval fields. There are at least three series of parallel "strips" at different orientations, two of which are superimposed, one above the other.

The Playing Fields could possibly be the site of an even earlier linear earthwork which today marks the path of the ancient parish boundary between Mapledurham and Caversham. The baulk runs the length of the shallow valley and can be traced downwards to the banks of the Thames. Such enigmatic earthworks are not uncommon in the south of the Chiltern Hills. The boundary line is popularly rumoured in the district to be "Saxon", but could be much earlier.

If one could board a time machine and speed backwards for 350,000 years, then open a door onto the Playing Fields, an entirely different vista would present itself. The River Thames, very different in character from what it is today, would be seen to sweep in a broad meander across the landscape. Its gravelly banks would be churned by the feet of mammoths and rhinoceroses coming down to drink. And where there was game, then there were bands of prehistoric hunters, stalking their prey. This area of Caversham must have been a favourite hunting ground for many hundreds of thousands of years, because the ancient gravels which still remain bear witness to the fact. Palaeolithic artefacts, including flint hand axes, abandoned by these ancient peoples, are found throughout the neighbourhood. Perhaps the most spectacular finds were made many years ago in a gravel pit at Toots Farm, where Darell Road is today. More than 250 hand axes were retrieved from this famous site. Indeed, one authority estimated that about 600 implements had been discovered in a quarter of an acre. But the Playing Fields are ringed with discoveries. Finds of Palaeolithic material have been recorded in Richmond Road, Woodcote Road, Kidmore Road, Oakley Road, Highmoor Road, St Peter's Avenue and scores of other places in the immediate locality.



Hammer stones of quartzite and flint – Flints: an illustrated manual of the stone age for beginners *Reginald A. Smith (No scale given)*

At this point, the writer would like to relate something of his own discoveries which throw further light on the prehistory of the Playing Fields. He purchased a new house in Chazey Road in 1958. The plot, backing onto the Fields, is approximately 55ft by 225ft [16.8m by 68.6m] in extent. When it was bought, the garden was open meadow land, covered in turf.

An attempt was immediately made to cultivate the entire area in preparation for the garden which was to evolve over the years. This included rotavating the surface, preparatory to laying down the lawns, and double-digging the sections designated as flower borders and vegetable patches. In so doing, the author was astonished to discover that nearly every turn of the spade revealed prehistoric flints. Although most of the material was in the form of flakes, in the years and decades which followed an impressive collection of artefacts was amassed. These included scrapers in every shape and form, borers, retouched flakes, hammer-stones, cores and other items. Amongst the more spectacular finds was a finely-worked flint knife, in an ovate form resembling a laurel leaf, dating from the Bronze Age, and a fragment of a bronze sword.

The mass of material is judged to span a considerable period, including examples of Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age artefacts. However, in this section of Chazey Road, the ground, several feet down, consists of discrete layers of very pure gravel and of sand, overlying chalk. This, technically, is probably a section of the Boyn Hill gravels, one of the ancient terraces flanking the River Thames. Recovered from a trial pit were two Palaeolithic flakes.

The exceptional richness of the site poses several questions. For example, the Neolithic and Bronze Age material might be judged to be field scatter. But how far has it been carried and redistributed by the plough? The density of the flakes is far higher than that recovered from many archaeological sites. Secondly, the garden has yielded at least two hammer stones which show evidence of prolonged use. Indeed, these objects have been brought to a stage where they resemble perfectly spherical tennis balls, almost their entire surfaces being covered with percussion scars. So could there have been a 'working floor' in the vicinity, and what was its age?

There is also intriguing evidence that, during Palaeolithic times, artefacts were being fashioned from the much more intractable brown quartzite pebbles which are widely distributed throughout the surface of the local fields.

Sadly, in more recent years, the recovery of prehistoric material from the garden has tailed away to almost zero. The original field surface is estimated, in some areas, to be more than a metre deep as a result of intensive cultivation and composting.

Twelve Acre Field, Woodcote

Susan Sandford

Is Woodcote an Iron Age settlement site?

In 1973, a Mr Wigmore, digging in his new garden at 40 Wayside Green in Woodcote, found a carved stone head (Fig. 1). This head is large, about 50cm high. The carving is primitive – in style, rather than in execution; the expression, to a modern eye, is grim. This artefact was sold to Reading Museum, which described it as a 'grotesque stone head'. This was shown to an authority on Iron Age culture, Anne Ross of Southampton University, who considered it to be of Celtic origin.

Miranda Green, in *The Gods of the Celts* (Sutton Publishing, 1986, republished 2004) states that the tradition of head-hunting or head-collecting among the Celts is frequently mentioned in both Graeco-Roman and vernacular literature. 'The importance of head-ritual is unequivocal. Human sacrifices were made and the head preserved as being of the

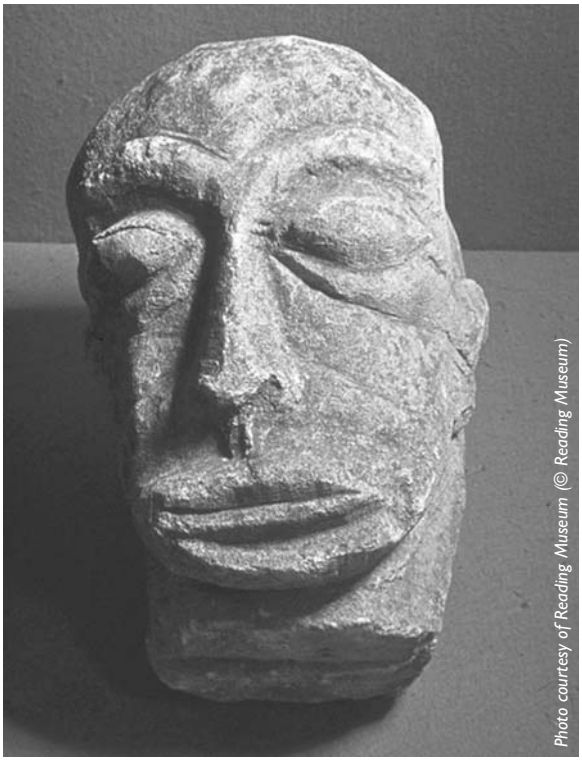


Fig. 1. The Woodcote Head

greatest cult-significance. In iconography the head is frequently exaggerated or it may be used by itself to symbolise the whole body.' (p. 31).

The Woodcote head is certainly larger than lifesize. The eyes, brows, nose and mouth are emphasised. It does not seem to be the head of a young man: there are deep lines across the cheeks. Is this the head of a feared but now defeated enemy war leader, his overthrow preserved for posterity by the sculptor? Is it an attempt to immortalise an important tribal leader, a Beowulf-like hero who has died in defence of his people? Is it a portrait at all, or simply symbolic? Are modern eyes mistaken in seeing the expression as grim? What this head meant to the people of the South Chilterns is at present unknowable, and perhaps always will be.

The garden where the head was found was in the then newly built Wayside Green housing estate on the western edge of Woodcote, close to the scarp edge of the southern Chilterns which faces north west. The greater part of the site where the estate was built is still undeveloped, and is used as summer grazing for cattle, though it has been arable at some periods in the past. I became interested in Twelve Acre Field because of its shape. Its western edge is rounded and looks out over the Thames Valley and, more distantly, the Vale of the White Horse. The ancient road coming up from South Stoke in the valley, until the 1950s part of the same parish as Woodcote, forks when it reaches this field, but the fork forms a U shape, rather than a Y shape, suggesting that the road was going round something: what?

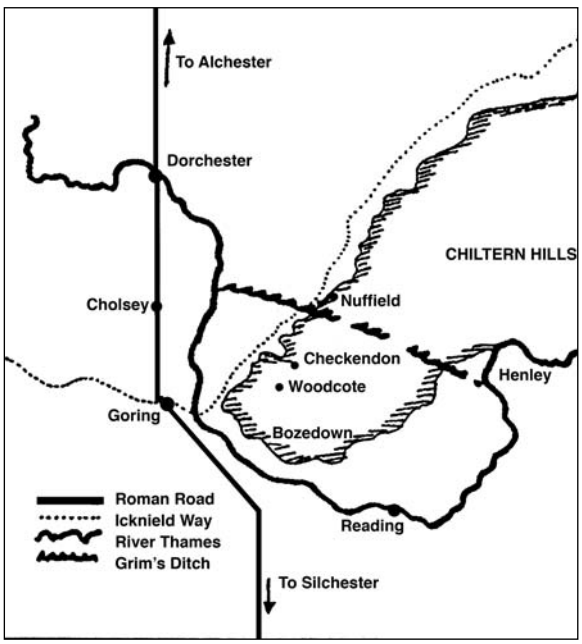


Fig. 2. Sketch map of the southern Chilterns, showing Woodcote in an area bounded by the Thames and by Grim's Ditch. From Woodcote, Portrait of a South Chiltern Village, *by Vicky Jordan*

The field is about 80cm to 1m above the surrounding land, and is conspicuously flat. Given its position in Woodcote, and Woodcote's position in South Oxfordshire (Fig. 2) – on a height, within the loop of the Thames that runs from Wallingford in the west to Henley in the east, a loop that seems in the past to have been closed by the ancient earthwork known as Grim's Ditch still to be seen running intermittently across the top of the loop from Mongewell to Henley – it seems just possible that this is the site of an Iron Age settlement.

Aerial photographs reveal almost nothing. One photograph of July 1955 shows the suggestion of a rectangular shape with rounded corners, centred between the two boundary roads and aligned to look out over the scarp. But these traces could simply be the marks left by haymaking. Intriguingly though, this rectangle coincides with the area, now developed, where the stone head was found, though it has to be conceded that the head was only partly buried, and partly concealed by vegetation, suggesting that it could well have been shifted from its original position during construction work. Could there have been a Roman site overlying an earlier Celtic one? In 1939 a hoard of 3rd-century Roman coins, a single denarius and 77 antoniniani, was found just outside the field.

Mark Bowden from English Heritage, in Woodcote to look at the Greenmoor Ponds and the nearby Friarhampstead enclosure, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, did not dismiss the possibility of an early settlement.

On 9 August 2005, with the permission of the landowner Joan Rumsey, Janet Sharpe and Sue Brown dowsed part of the field and the results suggested two circular structures with openings and another larger circular structure. A more systematic dowsing session took place on 15 January 2006, when there were no cattle in the field. Two datum lines were set up at 30m intervals. This session confirmed the two circular structures and picked up other features, among them a strong ridge and furrow pattern, not visible to the naked eye.

On advice from Susan Lisk, of the County Archaeological Service, I contacted Paula Levick, then studying for a PhD in Landscape Archaeology at Rewley House under Gary Lock and Chris Gosden. She came for a preliminary visit on 14 June 2005. On 28 January 2006, with her colleagues William Wintle and Karen Selway Richards, she carried out a magnetometry survey of six 30m x 30m grids over the area where features had been suggested by dowsing. This survey did not confirm the findings of the dowsers, but did show that the field was very 'noisy' in the geological sense. This was disappointing, but not, of course, conclusive.

Fig. 3. Twelve Acre Field during snow melt, showing a ridge and furrow pattern; February, 2007

Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

So what now? Since these investigations were carried out, the report of excavations undertaken during the construction of the Newbury Reinforcement Pipeline in 2000 and 2001 has been published (Jane Timby *et al*., 2006, *Oxoniensia LXX* (2005) 203-307). This pipeline runs for 23km from Ipsden in South Oxfordshire to Scotland, near Bucklebury, in West Berkshire. Along this route, two possible 'settlement foci' were investigated, one of which was Woodcote Road, South Stoke. This is of course the continuation of South Stoke Road, Woodcote, the ancient route leading up from the River Thames at South Stoke to the possible settlement site which is the subject of this article. The excavation was about two miles from Woodcote and below the scarp edge of the Chilterns.

Numerous pits were investigated, containing considerable evidence of occupation of the site from the Middle Iron Age through to the Late Iron Age and early Roman period. It would be very strange if these early people did not exploit the hilly, probably wooded uplands as well as the river valley. The Greenmoor Ponds, at the very highest point of the modern village, and the subject of an article by Karen Woolley in last year's *SOAG Bulletin*, are very ancient, and might have provided a water supply. Perhaps Twelve Acre Field, with its long views across the Thames Valley to the west, had some ritual significance.

Another piece of evidence about the site appeared in February 2007. The pattern of snow melt in the field showed clear parallel lines, picking out the ridge and furrow detected by the dowsers the previous year (Fig. 3). Although this tells us little about the ancient history of the field, it does confirm that dowsing can be a significant archaeological tool, sensitive to features that magnetometry does not record.

There is still a great deal to find out. It may be that a different survey method will be able to pick up features not revealed by magnetometry. The part of the site already surveyed is not the most suggestive: this now lies under housing, although the Parish Council owns an area of open ground among the houses which might be worth investigating. Further research into ancient stone heads; field name research; and comparison of this site with known local ancient settlement sites are also possible ways forward.

Reading Museum has chosen, from amongst all its possessions, eight images as pictorial icons for the inter-active buttons on its website. The Woodcote head is one of them, proof of the continuing power of, and a strange new life for, this unsettling and enigmatic ancient artefact.

The Romano-British Building at Bix, Henley-on-Thames

David Nicholls

Introduction and Acknowledgements

David Nicholls

This article concerns an excavation made over 50 years ago, but what was discovered then deserves to be more widely known. What follows is a general introduction to the excavation, followed by a series of reports by experts in their fields.

In November 1954, during a lecture in Henley by the late Dr W. O. Hassall of the Bodleian Library, it was brought to his attention that building material was being ploughed up in a field at Bix. Was this from the lost site of Bix Gibwin Church, east of Bix Common? I visited the site with Dr Hassall and his son Mark. We undertook brief test trenching with the approval and enthusiastic support of the Saunders family from Assendon, the tenant farmers and subsequently owners of the land. This revealed Romano-British structural material and small finds. Because of the lateness of the season we ceased work, but it was considered by all concerned that more extensive investigations should be undertaken the following year, and that I would direct the work, at the invitation of the Saunders family.

Fig. 1. Aerial view of the excavation from the south

There was a great deal of enthusiasm prevailing, and I quickly established that an adequate number of local people could be relied on to help with the excavation work. I was fortunate in having the wonderful support of a wide range of enthusiastic people from all walks of life, young and old, who remained with me throughout 1955 when the bulk of the task was undertaken. This was not an excavation undertaken by a society or any organisation; it was simply the wish of many local people, especially the Saunders family, to know about the building that had been found. Resources were very limited, but I believe a great deal was achieved in the circumstances then prevailing.

I was fortunate in receiving considerable advice and support from a number of experts throughout the period of the field and post-excavation work, and I am indebted to them for their kind help and encouragement. In particular, I would like to acknowledge advice from the late G. C. Boon, then of Reading Museum; Joan R. Kirk of the Ashmolean Museum; the late M. Aylwin Cotton OBE; the late C. W. Phillips of the Ordnance Survey; the late L. Biek of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments; the late Dr Lucille E. Hoyme of Oxford University Department of Human Anatomy; the late H. H. Coglan of Newbury Museum; the late Professor P. Allen of the Geology Department, Reading University; the late J. W. Brailsford of the British Museum; and, of course, to the late Alan Saunders and his father, and sister Dorothy, for their kindness, patience and extensive support.

I am indebted to Roger Kendall who persuaded me, in 1996, that something must be done, after over 40 years, to publish the results of the excavations I carried out in 1955-56. His interim report below, written in 1996, is based on the notes, drawings and records I made available and his assessment is as accurate as can be expected from a less than total excavation of the site. I believe, however, that some occupation commenced at least in the 2nd century, if not earlier.

Excavations Carried Out in 1955-56 by D. J. Nicholls on a Romano-British Building

Roger Kendall

This excavation was carried out between July 1955 and January 1956 by David Nicholls, with advice from the Ancient Monuments Inspectorate. Unfortunately he was called up for National Service before the excavation was fully evaluated and reported, and the demands of his subsequent career prevented him from completing this work. I am grateful to him, and to the landowner Mr A. Saunders, for now making the papers and finds from the excavation available so that some details of the site may be published. The passage of time has had its effect upon the records, and it is no longer possible to relate many of the finds to their specific places in the stratigraphy, but it is possible to gain a general picture of the site and its chronology. This note has the object of summarising the situation as apparent from the records as a starting point for resolving some of the problem areas before a fuller report is produced.

The Site

The site (grid reference SU 73258530) lies in a field beside Bix Common, on the edge of the escarpment overlooking the Stonor Valley, which runs away to the north. It is within 75m of the line of a possible Roman road running from Dorchester to Henley (Margary no. 160cc). It was notified to the Ordnance Survey at the time of the dig and appears on the OS map of Roman Britain, classified under 'Other Substantial Buildings'.

The following comments are based upon examination of the drawings produced by David Nicholls in 1955-56, and his site diary covering most of the period. Fig. 2 is a site plan showing the major features discovered in the excavation, whilst Fig. 3 gives sections of trenches A-A, B-B and C-C.

Iron Age

Two post holes were discovered at the bottom of the east end of trench B-B at a late stage in the excavation. Two pieces of pottery found in association with them were provisionally identified at the time as Iron Age. A burnt layer beneath Roman layers near the wall foundation may possibly be from the same date as the post holes, but it is equally possible that this feature could have arisen at a later date in the upheaval of a partition wall in the Roman building. The site was not excavated to this depth all over, and consequently not enough is known to be sure that there was a pre-Roman occupation that developed into the later Roman style building, but this certainly appears likely.

Roman

At some stage, a small Roman style corridor building with flint foundations was erected on the site. Pieces of a pink plaster were found in the excavation, some bearing the impression of the wood grain of the construction timber typical of a country farmstead. It is likely that a building of this type would have evolved from a simple rectangular structure into the small corridor house apparent in the ultimate ground plan. Only sparse foundations remain, so that evidence of phased construction is hard to find – the only clear alteration was the removal of a wall in the south corridor, and the erection of another further to the east in the same corridor. Further partitioning of the main part of the building would have been likely, but no further divisions appear to have been located in the excavation. The size of the ultimate building was

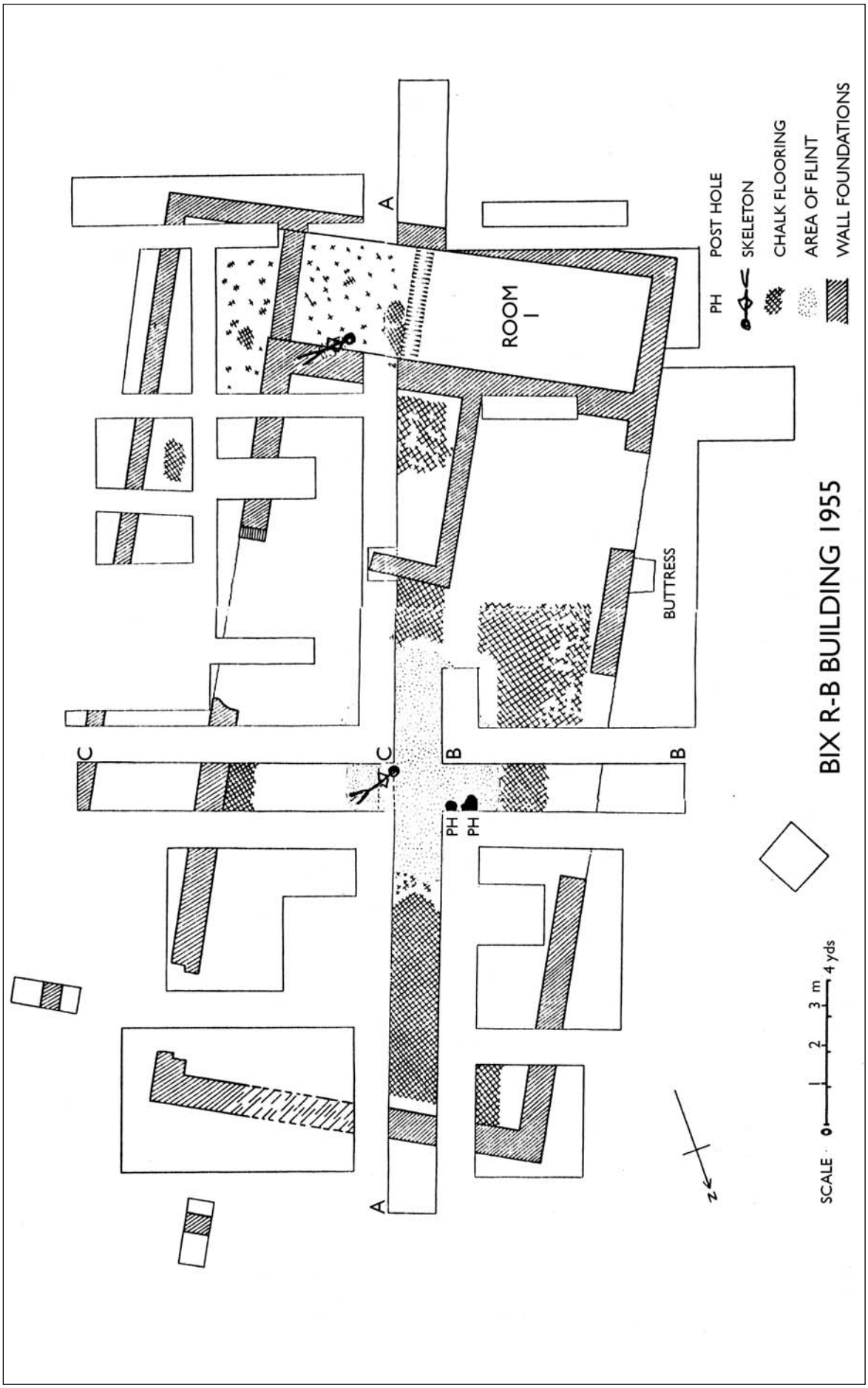


Fig. 2. Site plan showing the major features. Drawn by David Nicholls

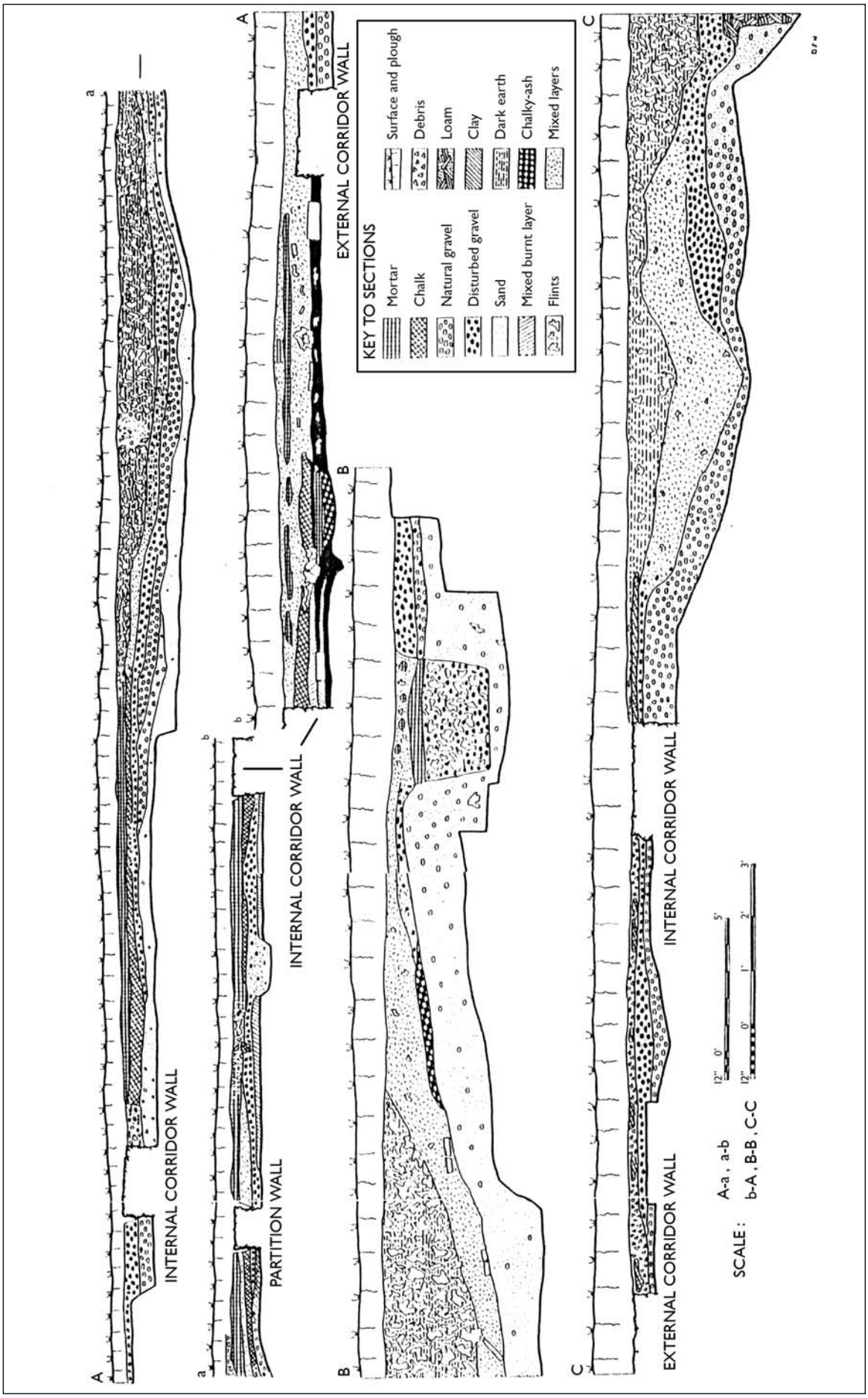


Fig. 3. Sections of trenches A-A, B-B and C-C (see Fig. 2) Drawn by David Nicholls

26m x 13m, including a 3m wide corridor along the east and north sides. Only one building has been identified on this site, and there is no evidence on the surface to suggest that any other structures lie near at hand. No evidence was found of any hypocaust system or bath house construction, and the absence of tesserae indicates that no mosaic floors were present at any stage. Traces of black and red colouring on a few pieces of wall plaster perhaps show that some wall decoration was present.

The sections do show evidence of different phases in the building's life. There appear to have been at least two different floor levels – an earlier one of chalk, and a later one of mortar, with perhaps tile laid upon it in some places. Dating of the floor levels is difficult, as pottery finds cannot now be related to specific levels, but, though very few coins were found, their find spots are known, and these do fit into a pattern in relation to the recognised floor levels. Third-century coins of Gallienus (AD 253-268), Postumus (AD 260-269) and Victorinus (AD 269-271) were found in, or just above, the lower floor level, and 4th-century coins of Constantine II (AD 337-340), Constantius II (AD 337-361), and a barbarous copy (probably dating from *c.* AD 370) of the 'Constantinopolis' coin of Constantine the Great came from the later floor level. There could have been an earlier earth/clay floor beneath the chalk floor, but firm evidence for this was not clearly established in the excavation. Some 2nd-century Samian pottery was found on the site, but its position in the stratification is no longer clear, and, since it is heavily abraded, it may have been very old when abandoned, and this cannot be taken as evidence of 2nd-century occupation of the building. On this basis, it can only be said with certainty that the building was in use in the 3rd and 4th centuries. A representative selection of pottery found on the site has been sent to Professor M. G. Fulford of Reading University, to gain some confirmation of this date range. During the earlier phase of its existence, part of the building was used for metal smithing: a burnt layer at the east end of 'Room 1' contained a layer of burnt ash with slag, charcoal, small pieces of iron and remains of bronze working. The building appears to have survived until at least the late 4th century, when it fell into decay. Roofing tiles were found in the south corridor, lying as if they had slipped from the roof.

Sub-Roman/Early Saxon

After the building had decayed for some time, the centre of the site (around the point where trench A-A crossed trench B-B/C-C) was dug out, and a roughly oval platform 5.5m x 3m made up of flints from the site was inserted (see Fig. 4). The date and purpose of this intrusion is uncertain as no artefacts were found in association with it. It can only be dated as coming after the decay of the building, probably in the late 4th to early 5th century, and before the 9th-century burial described below.

Saxon

After this platform had been abandoned for some time, black earth penetrated into the flint layer, on top of which a body was buried. Another body was buried on top of the wall foundation at the east end of 'Room 1', and the two burials are deemed to have taken place at the same time. Both skeletons were in an east-west orientation (possibly indicating a Christian burial), both were young and had remains of one or more new-born or still-born babies nearby. The skeletons had been considerably damaged by ploughing, but were examined by Dr Lucille E. Hoyme of the Oxford University Department of Anatomy in 1960 [see her report below]. There was insufficient evidence to determine the sex of the adult skeletons, and, because of the damage that had befallen the bones over time, it was also not possible to determine whether they had met a violent end.

The first skeleton was found with two silver pennies of Burgred of Mercia (AD 852-874) which lay amongst the finger bones in such a way that they must have been clutched in the hand of the corpse. It is not known in which hand they were found, but photographs of the skeletons were taken and may reveal the answer if they can be located. The coins were studied by Professor Michael Metcalf of the Ashmolean Museum [see his report below]. The corpses appear to have been buried in shallow graves, the depth being restricted by the flint platform and the wall foundations. No other burials were discovered in the excavation, so these may have been buried casually rather than in a cemetery. Some questions remain:-

- Were they buried hurriedly after being killed during Danish incursions into the area? (The 9th century was a period of great upheaval, and Burgred himself virtually ceded his kingdom to the Danes in 874, and spent the rest of his life in Rome.)
- Were they women who had died in childbirth and perhaps could not be buried in consecrated ground?
- Are they buried in or near the churchyard of the lost church of St Michael, the parish church of Bix Gibwin, a possible site for which may lie in the grounds of 'The Pightle' on the north side of the road to the south of the excavation some 75-100m distant?
- Is there any other example of bodies being buried clutching coins, at this time?

The finds from the site have been lodged in the Oxfordshire Museum Store.

The Roman Pottery

Paul M. Booth

A small sample (roughly 100 sherds) of the total pottery recovered from the site was examined to give a general impression of the character and chronology of the assemblage. The extent to which the material was truly representative of the assemblage as a whole cannot be assessed precisely, but it possessed a degree of coherence which suggests that it indicates many of the principal characteristics of the assemblage.

Sources and Vessel Types

Imported pottery consisted of Central Gaulish Samian ware, supplemented by 'Rhenish' fine wares, with both Central Gaul and Trier probably among the sources of this material, which included an indented beaker and other beaker forms. A single sherd of a South Spanish Dressel 20 olive oil amphora was also present.

British fine wares were dominated by Oxford colour-coated ware. The Oxford products included Young (1977) types C8, C45, C51 and C97 and a beaker. The most remarkable individual fragment was in Oxford colour-coated ware, from a small closed form (probably a beaker) with an applied vertical strip decorated with impressed dots and semicircles. A colour-coated flagon with white paint decoration in the form of Young C14, represented by several sherds, was from the Much Hadham (Herts) industry. A few other colour-coated sherds were not Oxford products; one was probably from the New Forest and one possibly from the Nene Valley, but the sources of the others are uncertain. Oxford white ware mortarium body sherds were also present, but there were no other white ware sherds in the sample examined.

Coarse wares consisted almost entirely of reduced wares of regional origin, two sherds of black-burnished ware and a few small fragments of late Roman shell-tempered ware being the only obvious extra-regional material. The probable source of the reduced coarse wares include the Oxford industry, but products of the Compton and Alice Holt kilns also appeared to be present. Other more local sources may have been represented, but this is not certain.

Little can be said about the range of forma represented. The coarse jars which would be expected to have dominated such an assemblage were largely absent, but this was presumably a function of the selection process. In the present sample, bowls also appear to be under-represented but dishes are common, perhaps because substantial portions of a few vessels are extant.

Chronology

There was no Iron Age pottery in the sample examined. The great majority of the pottery was datable from the late 2nd century onwards, the only clearly earlier piece being a body sherd of a poppy-head beaker, probably an Oxford product of Young type R34. The Samian ware appeared to be Central Gaulish and was probably Antonine in date, with the absence of decorated sherds relatively typical of the Samian which so often appear in later (3rd- to 4th-century) assemblages. The Samian sherds present were noticeably relatively small and some were quite worn. As far as can be judged, the remaining material is consistent with a 3rd- to 4th-century date, both in terms of fabrics and forms. This range cannot be refined further, however, as arguments from absence are not valid with such a collection.

General Remarks

The sample of pottery from this site contains material which is characteristic for assemblages in the region, with few surprises in terms of source of supply. One possible exception to this is the occurrence of Much Hadham fine ware, but this material is quite widely, if thinly, distributed west of its core area. Whilst the character of the sample does not allow interpretations which would necessarily be based on quantified data, it nevertheless permits some simple observations about status. The sample contains material which would be seen only in tiny quantities, if at all, in low status rural assemblages in the region. Specific fabrics to which this applies are the South Spanish amphora fabric and the Central Gaulish and Trier 'Rhenish' wares. These appear to be very distinct pointers to variations in settlement assemblages and their occurrence here (presumably in greater quantities than just those in the sample) is consistent with the structural evidence for the villa.

The Human Bones

Dr Lucille E. Hoyme

The skeletal material excavated in 1955 from the Romano-British site near Bix dated to the 3rd to 4th century AD is intrusive: Lot 1 may be dated approximately from the accompanying two 9th-century silver coins, and, whilst Lot 2 must remain undated, its position in a comparable layer in the site stratification probably means that it is contemporary with Lot 1.

When the bones were submitted for examination during 1959, they were in very poor condition. They showed both old and fresh breaks, many parts were

missing, and a few animal bones were mixed in with the human ones. After sorting and mending, it appeared that parts of at least three adults and seven infants were present. Only two measurable adult bones were obtained (see Table 1). In the circumstances, all that is possible is a brief description of each group of bones, listing the parts present, and the limited information that may be inferred from the morphology.

Lot 1: cranial and skeletal parts of at least two adults and one infant.

Adults

One adult skull is represented only by parts of the frontal and adjacent parts of the parietal. Thickness of the bone at the right frontal boss is 4mm. The frontal sinuses are slightly enlarged, giving a median brow ridge somewhat greater than would normally be found in a woman, but rather smaller than would be typically masculine. The second adult skull is more complete, with most of the vault bones represented, but the points of contact which would result in a measurable specimen are too uncertain to give reliable results. The forehead is rather steep, with prominent frontal bosses, the brow ridges and mastoids are quite small, suggesting the female sex. There is no evidence of pathology. Parts of a maxilla and two mandibles are present. Both of the mandibles show narrow pointed chins; one, slightly larger than the other, probably goes with the second of the skulls. This one shows an irregularity of the left side of the molar region, suggesting an old healed fracture with resulting malocclusion and irregular wear of the teeth (one of the upper molars is badly decayed). A few molars had been lost earlier, but, except for this, there seems to be no evidence of dental pathology in either jaw. Only a little tartar is present. The roots of the molars show moderate formation of secondary cementum.

The post-cranial bones consist of a nearly complete pair of rather slender humeri, with the upper portion of a somewhat larger bone (R humerus), parts of two R and one L ulnae, parts of a R and a L radius, parts of at least two scapulae (a pair), parts of a pair and one L clavicle, a patella, parts of ribs and vertebrae and finger bones. Only one joint, the R elbow, was present. The articular surfaces of the radius, ulna and humerus showed no remaining traces of epiphyseal closure, and no signs of arthritis. The bones are probably those of young to middle-aged adults, but age at death cannot be stated more precisely.

Infant

With this collection of skeletal remains was the skeleton of an infant or late foetus. Only a few of the paper-thin cranial bones were present, but all of the major long bones were complete. Also present were the scapulae, the R ilium, a few neural arches and 15 or more ribs. For the measurements see Table 1. Death took place, estimated from the femur length, in the eighth to ninth foetal month.

Lot 2: cranial and skeletal parts of one adult and four to six infants.

Adult

The adult skull is represented by the occiput and posterior parts of the R temporal and parietal, a portion of the L supraorbital area, parts of the maxilla, and the R half of the mandible. The chin, mastoid and brow ridge – the only sex indicators present – are intermediate, and could equally well be male or female. Wear of teeth is moderate, there is no decay or other dental pathology, and only a little tartar is present. The roots of the teeth are still sharp and deposition of cementum is only beginning. This suggests that the individual was a fairly young adult. Of the post-cranial skeleton only two complete bones were present: a R humerus (maximum length 346mm) and a R clavicle (maximum length 143mm), which would correspond with a height of 68.5 to 69.5 inches [1740-1765mm]. Also present were the proximal parts of a R radius, together with both ulnae, parts of both scapulae, sternum, ilium, a fibula, ribs, cervical and thoracic vertebrae, hands and, possibly, feet. Other small pieces may represent parts of the tibiae and femora. The bones of the R arm seemed normal in texture, and presented no anomalies or pathology. Although they were fairly long, the muscular attachments were not particularly rugged. Traces of epiphyseal union had been obliterated, and arthritic changes had not yet appeared, either in the long bones or in the vertebral bodies present. Although the estimated height would suggest the male sex in a shorter population, the Saxons seem to have been a fairly tall people. As with the skull, the few sex characteristics present are intermediate and, since there were no associated grave goods to give further guidance, sex cannot be firmly stated.

Infants

Associated with this skeleton were four lots of bones representing four to six infants. From the long bone measurements given in Table 1, three of these appear to have been about the same age at death (No. 1: 9-10 foetal months, No. 2: 9-11 foetal months, and No. 4: 10-11 foetal months or new-born), and a little older than the infant with Lot 1. In addition to long bones listed in Table 1, the following parts were also present: Infant No. 1: ilia, five phalanges; Infant No. 2: parts of skull and lower jaw, crown of an incisor, ribs, vertebrae; Infant No. 3: skull fragments, part of a scapula, a few unidentifiable long bone shafts; Infant No. 4: skull fragments, part of lower jaw, left scapula, ilia, ribs and vertebrae. Infant No. 4 was the largest and best developed of the infants, the sockets for the teeth were well developed and the long bones quite hard and well formed.

Bone	Lot 1			Lot 2						
R=right L=left	Adult 1	Adult 2	Infant 1	Adult 1	Infant 1	Infant 2	Infant 2A	Infant 3	Infant 3A	Infant 4
Skull	parts	parts	parts	parts	—	parts	—	parts	—	parts
Mandible	part	part	—	part	—	part	—	—	—	part
Humerus R Humerus L	(part (part	part —	(56.5 (57.0	346.0 —	— —	(67.0 (65.0	— —	— —	— —	— 70.0
Radius R Radius L	part part	— —	(47.5 (47.0	part —	— —	53.0 part?	— —	— —	— —	55.0 —
Ulna R Ulna L	part part	part —	(53.0 (53.0	part part	— —	part part	— —	— —	— —	66+ —
Clavicle R Clavicle L	(part (part	— part	— 38.0	143.0 —	— —	part 46.0	— 45.0	— —	— —	— 46.0
Scapula R Scapula L	(part (part	— —	(whole (whole	part part	— —	— —	— —	part —	— —	— whole
Femur R Femur L	— —	— —	(64.0 (65.0	? ?	(77.0 (77.5	— 76.0	— part	— —	— —	part 81.0
Tibia R Tibia L	— —	— —	(56.0 (56.0	? ?	(67.0 (67.0	— —	— —	((65.0) ((65.0)	((72.0) ((72.0)	—
Fibula R Fibula L	— —	— —	(53.0 (53.0	part? —	62.5 —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —
Pelvis R Pelvis L	— —	— —	ilium —	part —	(ilium (ilium	— —	— —	— —	— —	(ilium (ilium
Ribs	parts	parts	15+	parts	—	parts	—	—	—	parts
Vertebrae	parts	parts	parts	cervical thoracic	—	parts	—	—	—	parts
Other	[patella]	[patella]	—	sternum phalanges	phalanges	—	—	—	—	—
Age (foetal months)	—	—	8-9	—	9-10	9-10	—	—	—	Newborn or 10-11

Table 1. The skeletal remains from Bix. The patella from Lot 1 could have come from Adult 1 or 2. Measurements are in mm, estimated measurements in (mm); right and left pairs are indicated by half-brackets

The Saxon Coins

Professor D. M. Metcalf

Two coins of Burgred, AD 852-74, were found with a skeleton, and both were said to have been close to (clutched in?) the hand. It is intriguing that both coins are by the same moneyer, Heahwulf, since the chances of two coins drawn from Burgred's currency at random being by the same moneyer are small. The coins belong to the middle phase of Burgred's '*lunettes*' issue, and are to be dated after *c.* 865.

It is possible to compile a list of more than 20 specimens by this moneyer, most of which have an obverse bust in the so-called 'vertical' style. One of the Bix coins, weighing 1.27g, corresponds. The other is closer to the 'horizontal' style, and weighs 1.06g. It is closely matched by, for example, *SCBI Midlands* 90.

For other specimens by Heahwulf, see *BMC* 311-20, *SCBI Fitzwilliam* 416-17, *Hunterian* 369-70, *Ashmolean* 30-1, *Midlands* 90, *Mack* 617, *West Country* 381, *American Collections* 205-6, *Berlin* 80, etc., with very few instances of die duplication.

Final Notes

David Nicholls

It is to be hoped that, in due course, further investigations will be made of the site and of the finds which have been deposited in the County Museum Store at Standlake, by kind permission of the owners, with the exception of the two Saxon coins, presently on loan to the River and Rowing Museum, Henley-on-Thames.

Small finds were relatively few (Figs. 5 and 6). J. W. Brailsford confirmed my identification of the single brooch found, as of Hod Hill type, Camulodunum 'A' pattern, tinned or silvered (Fig. 6). This find has a bearing on the dating of the site, as it is from the late 1st century. This brooch was from a sealed mortar floor layer.

Professor P. Allen, of the Geology Department at Reading University, agreed to examine various samples of quern stone fragment uncovered in various contexts. Slides were prepared ready for microscopic examination, but, in later changes within the department, these were lost. Most had appeared to be various grit stones, but one sample was from the Eiger lava region in Germany. Similarly, samples of bronze working from the earliest layers in grid one, comprising part of a small crucible, slag and bronze offcuts, which were sent to H. H. Coglan of Newbury Museum who was carrying out research on metal working at the time, have also been also lost. H. H. Coglan discussed details of this with me via brief correspondence, when he confirmed that a crucible was being used. This was not an extensive activity, and the amount of bronze material recovered was small. A much larger amount of iron slag was found, indicating fairly extensive activity.

The anomaly of the large flint mass (Fig. 4) must be re-examined in due course to provide a clearer understanding of the later use of the building.

Fig. 4. The flint platform at the intersection of trenches A-A, B-B and C-C (see Fig. 2)

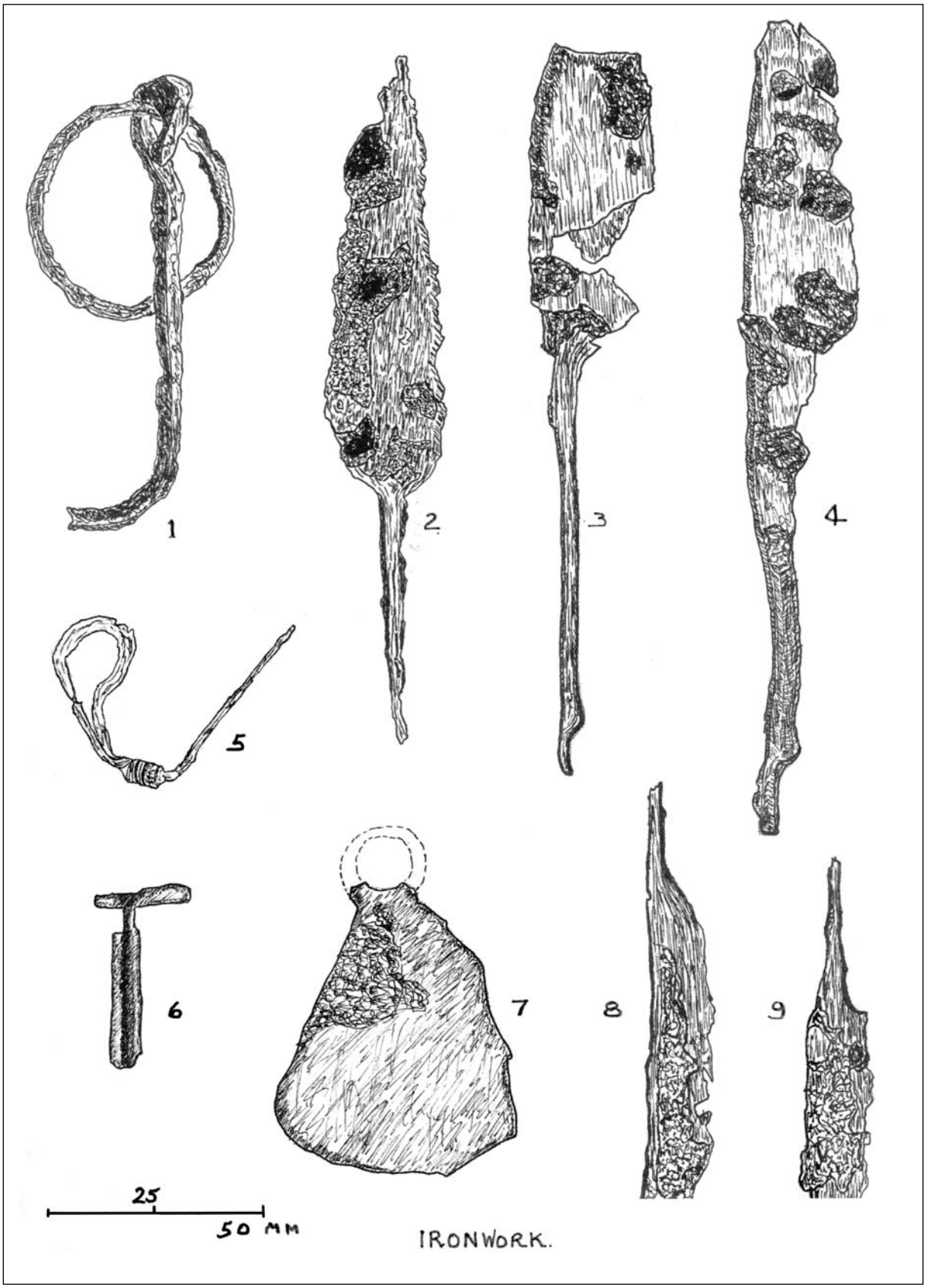


Fig. 5. Small finds: ironwork. Drawn by David Nicholls

1. *Bridle bit*
2. *Pointed knife blade, or light spear head*
3. *Shear blade*
4. *Shear blade*
5. *Unknown, twisted shank*
6. *Unknown*
7. *Unknown*
8. *Small knife blade*
9. *Small knife blade*

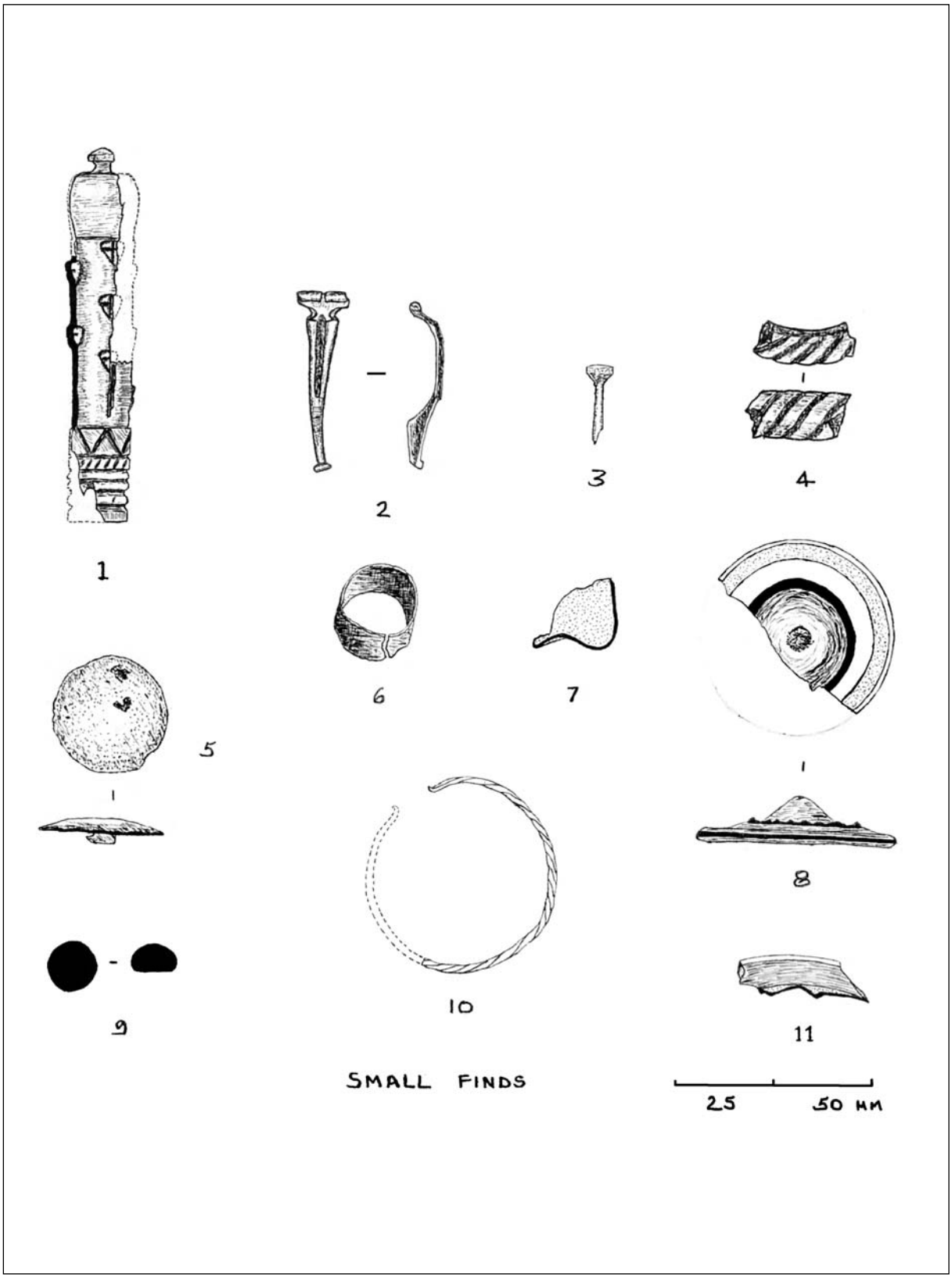


Fig. 6. Small finds: miscellaneous. Drawn by David Nicholls

1. *Carved bone with blade groove*
2. *Bronze brooch – Hod Hill type*
3. *Part of bone pin*
4. *Part of Kimmeridge clay bracelet*
5. *Bronze stud*
6. *Bronze ring or ferrule*
7. *Fragment of glass bottle base*
8. *Glass vessel base*
9. *Jet counter*
10. *Bronze bracelet*
11. *Fragment of glass rim*

Gatehampton Farm Roman Villa Excavation: Interim Report 2006

Hazel Williams

Introduction

This has been another successful year of excavation for SOAG at Gatehampton, with a marked increase in participation both by experienced diggers and those completely new to archaeology. Nearly 60 people dug at Gatehampton in 2006, and we were pleased that these included several family groups and students. New information leaflets provided guidance to improve the digging experience.

Overhead photographs of the site were taken in July providing an excellent overview of the current trenches and of the whole western section of the villa building.

A large new area of trench was cleared by mechanical digger on the north side of the building and work concentrated there in 2006. A further trench over a ditch 20m north of the building was also opened ready for excavation in 2007.

The 2006 season

Trench 7 was extended on the northern side by an area of 80 sq. m, using a mechanical digger to remove modern disturbance, rubble and some topsoil. A small area on the north side of the stokeroom was also opened up together with a small area to the north of the enclosure ditch. Whilst the digger was on site a further trench was opened 20m to the north of the building over a linear cropmark that was assumed to be another ditch. The accurate positioning of these new areas was made possible by earlier resistivity surveys of the site field by Geoff Deakin. Depending on the number of volunteers, this was expected to provide work for 2006 and 2007. Work in 2006 concentrated on a 6m section of the corridor on the north side, the stokeroom and the small area north of the ditch.

The layout and composition of the western end of the villa building can be seen clearly (Fig. 1). Taken from the south, this photograph shows a trench area of 15m by 20m; the large partly excavated room at top right is 6m square. The parallel flint and chalk walls of the corridor on the south side of the villa are clearly visible. This has a chalk floor with several hearths and

Fig. 1. View from the south of the current trenches showing the western end of the villa building

two areas of terracotta tessellated pavement (left foreground). To the west of the central room is the stokeroom, main hypocaust and to the south a further partially heated room with an opus signinum floor and two box tiles visible in the east wall. In the background the pale line of a gravel deposit lies between the north wall of the villa and the villa enclosure ditch in the north-west corner of the trench. A new area of the trench (top right) was opened in 2006 over the corridor on the north side. A small section of this corridor is visible in the picture.

The stokeroom area

The north-west corner of the stokeroom was excavated. The footings of the narrow west wall of the stokeroom were overlaid with charcoal, spread from the deposit of soot and charcoal up to 40cm deep within the stokeroom. Over this is a large deposit of domestic rubbish containing many large bone and pottery fragments that suggest the stokeroom area was used to dump refuse after it went out of use. Part of a cow or ox skull, complete with one horn, and a long bone were found in this deposit, as well as some bones that may be those of a goose.

It is not certain whether the northern wall line of the building continues westward beyond the stokeroom. Access is difficult because this area butts against the field fence line and is over a metre deep. A small area of concreted surface was found previously to the west of the stokeroom wall. This is on the same floor level as the stokeroom, possibly a working area providing access to the stokeroom. The stokeroom, heated rooms and south corridor form the western end of the main villa building and the geophysical surveys support this. However, it does appear that there may be at least some continuation of the structure a few metres to the west, perhaps a working area on the north side and one small extra room on the south side.

The north corridor

After the removal of the remaining topsoil in the new trench area, it was possible to see, in parallel lines across the trench, the deposits and features between the enclosure ditch and the building to the south. The line of the ditch runs across the north side of the trench; the fill is pale and mortary. South of this is a metre of the natural reddish silty soil with flints that the ditch was cut into. Next is a gravel deposit less than a metre wide that may have been a path running alongside the north wall of the building. A similar feature was noticed when part of the building was excavated in Trench 3, 15m to the east. Close to the north wall, particularly by the stokeroom, is a linear deposit up to 40cm wide of broken tile and this extends in a thinner spread along the wall line eastwards.

During 2006 the north corridor was excavated for a length of 6m eastward with no dividing walls found. A small section of a thin mortary floor is exposed under the layer of demolition rubble. Wall footings survive with one or two courses of flint above floor level and with painted plaster still attached in places. Most of this area was covered in a layer of soil and demolition rubble from the walls. On the south side, close to the inner wall of the corridor, was a substantial deposit of mortar with many small fragments of painted wall plaster. Pottery found included a large piece of a 3rd- to 4th-century Oxfordshire pottery shallow bowl with red and white slip decoration (Fig. 2) and two fragments of Oxfordshire red-slipped ware bowls with moulded decoration depicting hunting scenes.

Fig. 2. 3rd- to 4th-century Oxfordshire bowl with red and white slip decoration

The tessellated pavement

The north-east corner of the central room was also excavated in the new trench area. A small area of terracotta tessellated pavement about 75cm by 40cm was found unexpectedly in this corner (Fig. 3), with two long terracotta tiles forming a possible doorway to the next room to the east. This was a surprise as the other three corners and the west side of the room have been excavated and found to have a floor made with crushed chalk, up to 25cm thick. As often happens, this discovery came at the end of the

Fig. 3. New area of tessellated floor

excavation during wet weather and the area immediately began to fill with water, so it was reluctantly backfilled to preserve it and we look forward to finding the extent of the tesserae next year. The centre of this room remains unexcavated (see Fig. 1). The tessellated surface seen so far, consisting of large terracotta tesserae roughly cut into approx. 3cm cubes, is particularly well preserved as it lies beneath a compact layer of tiles and mortar. The patches of tessellated pavement in the south corridor were covered with a mixed deposit of soil and demolition rubble and were not quite as well protected. It may be possible to see more clearly what material was used as a base when the tesserae were laid.

The substantial deposit of tiles and mortar above the tessellated pavement extends for about 2m x 1m in area (Fig. 4). The good preservation of the tiles and the large number of complete or nearly complete examples suggest a roof collapse, although there are some fragments of floor tiles and bricks. This is unusual for the site. There are several complete ridge tiles, imbrices and tegulae (including one impressed with both paw prints and a hobnail pattern). Whether a roof fall or the result of the scavenging of building material from the villa, the tiles have formed a protective cover over the tessellated pavement.

Fig. 4. Tiles over the tessellated floor

The remains of Roman owl pellets were previously found on the chalk floor surface on the west side of this room. [See following article.] It is interesting that owls occupied this part of the building after it was abandoned but while the roof still provided some protection.

The ditch

A section of the enclosure ditch was excavated in 2005 and this trench was extended northwards to investigate a chalk surface up to 1m wide overlying a shallow feature in the baulk of the ditch trench that looked like a channel running into the ditch. This proved to be one of two roughly circular, shallow depressions, 30-40cm across and about 30cm deep, filled with chalk and some flint stones. These features and the chalk surface do not appear to respect the line of the ditch and may relate to a later phase when the ditch had gone out of use. The close proximity of this ditch to the north wall of the villa suggests that it may have been constructed at the same time as an earlier smaller phase of the building. A ditch feature 20m to the north could be part of a later larger enclosure system. At this stage we do not have supporting dating evidence to confirm this; the second ditch will be excavated in 2007.

Open days, visits and talks

The site was open for visitors for two Sundays during the CBA National Archaeology Week in July. This attracted visitors and groups to the site to see the work in progress and for a guided tour of this substantial part of the villa building with its heated rooms and other interesting features. Several family groups joined the dig and for many this was their first experience of excavation. The new trench provided a good area for new diggers to practise their skills on the topsoil and demolition rubble and to discover and handle Roman artefacts: pottery, hobnails, painted plaster and lots of bone. An 11-year-old first time digger found one of the best pieces of pottery, the large piece of Oxfordshire pottery with red and white slip (Fig. 2). Two weekday visits were also arranged. A party of 13-year-old boys from the Oratory School came for a day and brought with them a delicious Roman picnic lunch that we all shared. They were enthusiastic diggers and finds included several oyster shells, evidence of earlier lunches at Gatehampton. A group of American summer school students studying archaeology and classics joined us for a morning for a guided tour of the site and a look at some of the more interesting finds. The archaeology students then excavated a section of the new trench (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5. Students at the open day

Preparing the site and planning this event meant a lot of hard work for the Gatehampton team, particularly as the weather was extremely hot. Janet Eastment designed and produced some excellent leaflets: a general guide to the site; a training leaflet for new diggers; and a guide to site recording. These proved

very useful for on-site instruction and for diggers to look at later.

Hazel Williams took a collection of finds and photos for a talk on Gatehampton to a meeting of the businesswomen's group, Soroptimists International, at Bourne End and several members later visited the dig. A talk and workshop session, with tiles, tesserae, pottery, flint, bone and other finds to handle, was organised by Hazel for a group run by the Stroke Association. This was an opportunity for those who do not have easy access to archaeology to have a close look at these artefacts, and to talk about how we dig and what we have found.

Acknowledgements
Particular thanks are due to the landowner, Robin Cloke, for his continued help and interest in this excavation. Thanks to Tim Allen of Oxford Archaeology and to Paul Smith, Oxfordshire County Archaeologist for their help and advice and thanks also to all the dedicated and hardworking volunteers who participated in 2006. Special thanks are also due this year to the driver of the lorry with the overhead cradle who made possible the excellent overview photos of the site.

Roman Owls at Gatehampton

Janet Sharpe

Introduction
Back in the summer of 2002, a large deposit of small mammal bones was uncovered on the chalk floor of the large square room that abuts the hypocaust to the west and the tessellated corridor to the south at Gatehampton Roman villa. A first thought, perhaps, was that here was a grain storage area that was heavily infested with mice, but a closer look at the remains revealed the presence of voles and shrews in addition to mice. What the bones represented, in fact, were the typical components of barn owl pellets. This was not a domestic assemblage.

The bones were excavated in the centre of a triangular area that was exposed on the east side of Trench 7 that comprised the entire western edge and northwest corner of this 6m x 6m room (Fig. 1). Most of the bones were found immediately above the surface of the chalk floor, at the lowest level of the overlying deposit (context 7147) which consisted of a compact mixture of mortar and chalk and heavier building rubble including chalk blocks, flints and tile. As the bones began to be uncovered, they were at first carefully placed in small plastic bags, but there were so many of them that eventually they were simply tipped into a bucket.

Sample analysis
The sample received for analysis consisted of a mixture of tiny bones in a loose dry matrix that completely filled a 2-litre capacity ice-cream container. Fragments of mortar and painted wall plaster in the matrix confirmed the Roman association of the context.

The bones were removed from the matrix by sieving in two stages. A 4mm mesh removed all the mandibles, crania and other identifiable skull fragments, the larger long bones, scapulae and pelves. Any concretions were soaked in water for wet sieving later. The residue was sieved again using a 1mm mesh,

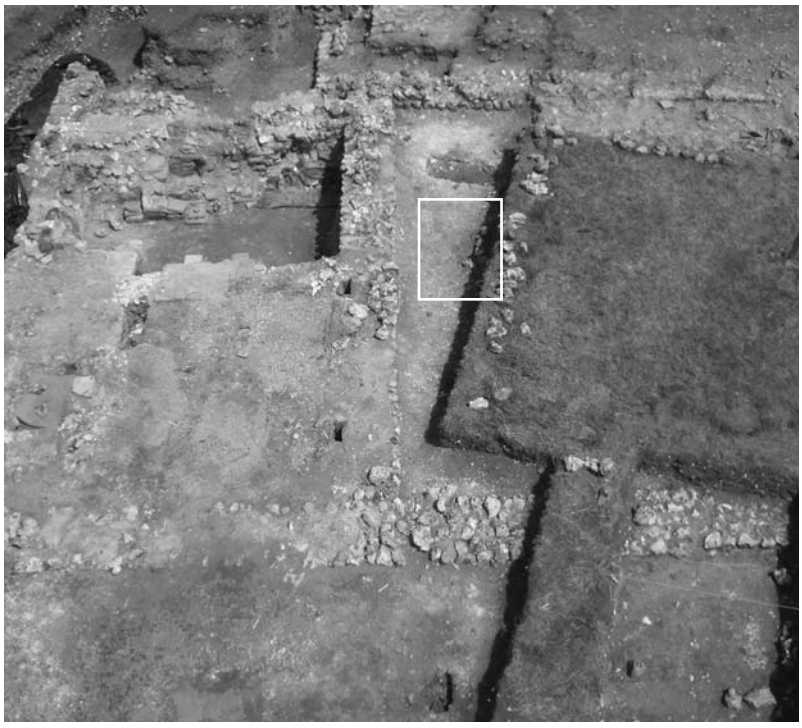


Fig. 1. The large square room at Gatehampton Roman villa; the owl pellets were found in the central part of the western (left) side of this room, on the triangular area of exposed chalk floor

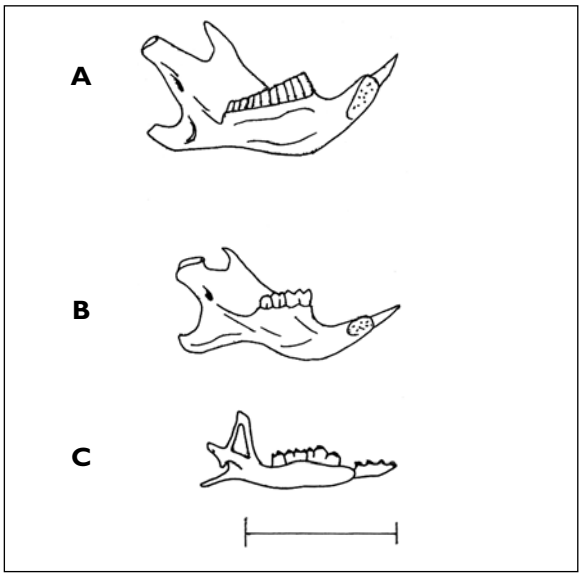


Fig. 2. Small mammal mandibles: a) field vole, with large ridged molars; b) wood mouse, with multicusped molars; c) common shrew, with red-tipped teeth. All left side; scale = 10mm

which removed individual teeth, vertebrae, the smaller long bones, toe bones, calcanei (heel bones), unfused epiphyses and small fragments. The residue from this sieving contained ribs and tiny fragments that could not be identified and these were discarded.

After separation from the matrix, the bones were sorted into categories. The mandibles and skulls of small mammals allow the most precise identification (Fig. 2) and these were picked out and counted to provide the Minimum Number of Individuals (MNI) of each species represented. Although most of the other bones were not used for identification, they were carefully examined for the presence of non-mammalian bones, which were removed and identified.

Results

The total weight of the extracted bones was 90g. Most of the assemblage consisted of long and other bones and fragments. Small mammal skull fragments and mandibles accounted for just 16g of the total, and bird bones accounted for 6g.

The results are shown in Table 1. Eight species of small mammals were identified from their mandibles, including three species of shrews, two species of mice, two species of voles and a rat. There was a large number of unfused epiphyses from the ends of small mammal long bones, suggesting that a significant proportion of the animals represented were immature. There were also a few fragments of rabbit bones (one vertebra and three rib fragments) and one sheep- or dog-sized rib fragment, all of which are considered to be intrusive.

In addition to the mammal bones, there was a single left femur of a large frog and an assortment of bird bones. These comprised a variety of skeletal elements, of which the best preserved and most numerous was the humerus: 17 of these were recovered (seven left and ten right) ranging in size from that of a small finch to that of a starling. The single mandible was starling-sized and the single premaxilla (upper beak) was that of a seed-eating bird about the size of a sparrow.

Discussion

The species listed in Table 1 and their relative proportions are typical prey of the barn owl (*Tyto alba*), with voles strongly represented and shrews frequent, a small but definite presence of birds and the occasional amphibian. Other owls rarely include shrews in their diet to any extent.

A closer look at the species represented in these owl pellets and a comparison with what might be expected in barn owl pellets from the same area today offers some tantalising hints about the environment at Gatehampton when the pellets were deposited. Voles predominate in modern barn owl pellets and usually account for about 60% of all prey items; mice are generally less frequently taken and represent about 25% of the assemblage, often less (Lawrence and Brown, 1967). Two species of small voles are usually present, the field vole and the bank vole (*Clethrionomys glareolus*), but the latter was not represented at Gatehampton. As their names suggest, the field vole prefers open fields, mainly rough ungrazed grassland, whereas the bank vole inhabits hedges, woodland and scrubby areas. However, these are the habitats favoured by wood mice, which were strongly represented at Gatehampton, so perhaps the bank vole was simply uncommon in the area at the time. Field voles and wood mice are present in similar proportions in the Gatehampton pellets (35.2 and 35.7%, respectively). This relative paucity of field voles in the barn owl diet could possibly represent overgrazing of the fields around the villa (Yalden, 1977).

Owls are rather sedentary and have limited feeding ranges (Corbet, 1975), so the species represented at Gatehampton will all have come from the vicinity of the villa. Although the water shrew accounts for only 3.3% of the assemblage, this is considerably more than might be expected in modern pellets, and suggests the presence of weedy and unpolluted backwaters connected with the Thames in Roman times. Today the harvest mouse is a rare component of owl pellets and its presence at Gatehampton suggests that it was more common there in the past. This tiny rodent inhabits tall dense vegetation including reed beds and may be another indicator of the state of the Thames at the time (Corbet and Southern, 1977).

The house mouse (*Mus musculus*) was absent at Gatehampton: this non-native species was probably introduced into Britain during the Iron Age, but the earliest evidence so far for its presence in

Oxfordshire dates to the Saxon period. The presence of two rat jaws in the owl pellet assemblage is problematical. For many years it was thought that the black rat (*Rattus rattus*), another non-native species originating in Asia, was introduced into this country by returning Crusaders in the Middle Ages; it is now known to have been here in Roman times but so far it has only been recorded from Roman York, Wroxeter and London (Yalden, 1999). The earliest record of the black rat in Oxfordshire is from the Early Medieval period. It is possible, although perhaps unlikely, that the Gatehampton owl pellet assemblage had been contaminated by later deposits. There are other rat-sized bones in the assemblage, but these could have come from water voles. The context appears to be secure, so either the owl pellets as a whole were deposited after the Roman period or the rat had spread up the Thames from London, possibly, to reach Oxfordshire much earlier than is generally thought to have been the case. The owl pellet deposit may continue beneath the unexcavated area in the centre of the room in which it was found (Fig. 1). Further investigation of this area may show whether rats were present in the assemblage *in situ*.

From the point of view of elucidating developments at the Roman villa, the owl pellets are important because they show that this room at least remained standing and roofed after the building had been abandoned by its occupants. The concentration of the pellet deposit in the middle of the western side of this room strongly suggests that a major roof beam crossed the centre of the room in an east-west direction. The presence of fragments of mortar and wall plaster in the matrix surrounding the bones indicates that the building was in an active state of decay while the owls were in residence, and the fact that the owl pellets were sealed beneath a layer of rubble suggests that the building then collapsed or was demolished.

Hazel Williams (2004) has described evidence for change of use in this part of the building over time: the adjacent hypocaust was deliberately in-filled and the presence of hearths in the corridor suggests that this part of the villa became a working area or was perhaps used by squatters after other parts of the building were abandoned. Owls will not take up residence in a building where there is a constant human presence, so how long did the building remain standing after it was abandoned for the last time?

Species	Left mandible	Right mandible	Other	MNI	%
Water shrew (*Neomys fodiens*)	6	3		6	3.3
Common shrew (*Sorex araneus*)	22	19		22	12.1
Pygmy shrew (*Sorex minutus*)	5	3		5	2.7
Wood mouse (*Apodemus* spp.)	56	65		65	35.7
Harvest mouse (*Micromys minutus*)	0	4		4	2.2
Field vole (*Microtus agrestis*)	60	64		64	35.2
Water vole (*Arvicola terrestris*)	2	1 + juvenile		3	1.6
Rat (*Rattus* sp.)	0	2		2	1.1
Birds (various species)			53	10	5.5
Frog (*Rana temporaria*)			1	1	0.5

Table 1. Identified bones from the owl pellet assemblage in the square room adjacent to the hypocaust at Gatehampton Roman villa (MNI = Minimum Number of Individuals)

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Brightwell Baldwin Community History and Archaeology Project (Part 1): An Introduction

Ian Clarke

Brightwell Baldwin in South Oxfordshire is a spring-line settlement near the base of the Chiltern escarpment, about two miles west of Watlington. The Brightwell Baldwin Community History and Archaeology Project (BBCHAP) is a community based project being run in association with the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group (SOAG). It is a long term research project, centred on the parish of Brightwell Baldwin but extending into the surrounding parishes. The broad aim is to research the development of this area from earliest occupation to the present day. The long term objective is to make a thorough record of the parish's past, interpreting what is found within the context of other Chiltern spring-line settlements and that of Oxfordshire/Buckinghamshire as a whole.

The project will utilise the skills and knowledge of local volunteers from Brightwell Baldwin and the surrounding parishes, working alongside and receiving essential training in archaeological and other research techniques from SOAG and from professional archaeologists and other specialist advisors as necessary. The project is open to all, whether experienced or not.

The parish occupies an elevated position on a shelf of the Lower Chalk and Upper Greensand. In the south the Lower Chalk is capped by the Wallingford Fan Gravels. In the north the Upper Greensand drops away gently to the Gault Clay vale around Chalgrove.

The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS, 2004) identified the landscape type as Estate Farmland: a rolling agricultural landscape characterised by country houses set in ornamental parkland, regularly shaped medium to large hedged fields, small estate villages and dispersed farmsteads. Brightwell Baldwin is a typical example of the type.

The parish comprises twin settlements: the small village of Brightwell Baldwin, with its largely 14th-century parish church of St Bartholomew and late 18th-century manor house of Brightwell Park; and the hamlet of Brightwell Upperton. In addition to the home and glebe farms of Brightwell and Upperton there are three outlying farms: Cadwell, Whitehouse and Brightwell Grove. The parish is part of the half-hundred of Ewelme. The name Baldwin relates to Baldwin de Bereford who held manors in Chalgrove, Cadwell and Brightwell in the 14th century. Before that the settlement was simply known as Brightwell, which means clear spring in Old English.

The earliest historical evidence for settlement is the Anglo-Saxon charter of 887 (S 217), in which Æthelred of Mercia grants 6 hides at Brightwell, together with outlying woods and meadows. Earlier work (Clarke, 2006) has identified the certain location of the outlying meadows and probable location for the woods, and these confirm that the Anglo-Saxon estate was smaller than the modern parish, with the northern boundary being further south in the 9th century. The Deserted Medieval Village (DMV) of Cadwell (Allison *et al*., 1965; Bond, 1975), in the north of the parish, remained a separate manor into the 1700s. The research collated archaeological indicators in and around the parish which suggest Romano-British settlement prior to the Anglo-Saxon, certainly at Cadwell and probably also at Brightwell, where the Roman Lower Icknield Way has been shown to pass on an east-west line through the centre of the village (Morris *et al*., 1968; Sharpe and Carter, 2006).

Evidence for continuous occupation from Roman through to modern times was earlier amassed by A.C. Fraser (1988) but it is likely that the springs and rich soils at the base of the Chiltern escarpment attracted settlement here well before the Roman era, certainly in the Iron Age and perhaps earlier in the Bronze Age.

The research carried out by SOAG members Ian Clarke, Janet Sharpe and Phil Carter (2006) was presented to an open meeting in Brightwell Baldwin in April 2006, when parishioners were invited to join in further research. The response was an enthusiastic vote to set up a community project to build on both the recent research and the earlier historical researches of Brightwell historian A.C. Fraser and Brightwell archivist Peter Kent. Forty-five people signed up for the project, including five SOAG members, with about a third wanting to take part in some fieldwork.

Early survey work will concentrate on two areas of particular interest to the community: Cadwell, in the north of the parish, where we have evidence for Roman occupation and the DMV; and the southern

area of Brightwell Park where extensive earthworks suggest deserted medieval settlement and we have the proposed line of the Lower (Roman) Icknield Way.

This is SOAG's first venture into the challenging world of community archaeology and as such it is experimental. But if we are successful it can provide a model for any number of similar projects in the future.

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Brightwell Baldwin Community History and Archaeology Project (Part 2): Report on the 2006 Training Excavation in Blooms Field

Ian Clarke

This report is dedicated to the memory of our friend and colleague Don Church of Brightwell Upperton. Don worked for just one season on the Brightwell community project. He was a natural, with tremendous enthusiasm and talent. He quickly became my right hand man and I valued his opinion – we all did. He died unexpectedly in January 2007 and is much missed by his family and friends. He was a great character and would have become a fine archaeologist.

This report outlines the results of a training excavation held over two weeks in July and August 2006. It is an abridged version of an interim report to be published in *South Midlands Archaeology,* No. 37 (2007).

In any community archaeology project an essential ingredient is ownership by the community. If we start with the premise that it is their history and archaeology we are researching it is clear that they should have an equal say in the direction the project takes. Given the impact that TV programmes like Channel 4's *Time Team* have had, it comes as little surprise that what people want to take part in, or see happening in their own village, is a dig. For the mass of the population archaeology is synonymous with excavation. Just so at Brightwell, where there was an overwhelming vote to hold a training excavation in the first season, as a 'curtain-raiser' to the new project. The only problem was: where to dig?

In choosing a site for a community training excavation consideration should be given to selecting one that is appropriate in scale, where the archaeology is close to the surface, and the stratigraphy is likely to be relatively straightforward. Ideally the type site should be familiar and relevant to the community. Fortunately we already knew of such a site in Brightwell: a deserted farm in an old enclosure known as Blooms Field. The owners had joined the project and so, thanks to their generosity and curiosity, we would be digging up their field.

Blooms Field – an ancient enclosure

Blooms Field lies between the two settlements of Brightwell Baldwin and Upperton, but somewhat closer to the former, on the west side of the road linking the two (Fig. 1). The field is listed as Blooms (5 acres) in estate surveys of 1847 and 1859 (Fraser, 1988) when it was part of Brightwell Farm. It was well known in the parish that there had once been a farmhouse in this field. The earliest map showing the farm building and its enclosure is Richard Davis' map of Oxfordshire of 1797 (Fig. 2). The map accompanying the Brightwell Baldwin Enclosure Award of 1802 (ORO E43a) also shows the enclosure, as plot 62, containing a farmhouse and four outbuildings.

The same enclosure award tells us that the farmhouse was occupied by a 'Widow Quatremaine'. The parish register and wills confirm that this was Mary, widow of Thomas Quatremaine (1729-1798) and that she died in December 1816. It seems likely that Mary was the last occupant and that the farm was pulled down soon after her death. Certainly it does not show on the earliest Ordnance Survey map published in 1830 and there is no later record of it.

Fig. 1. Location of excavation site

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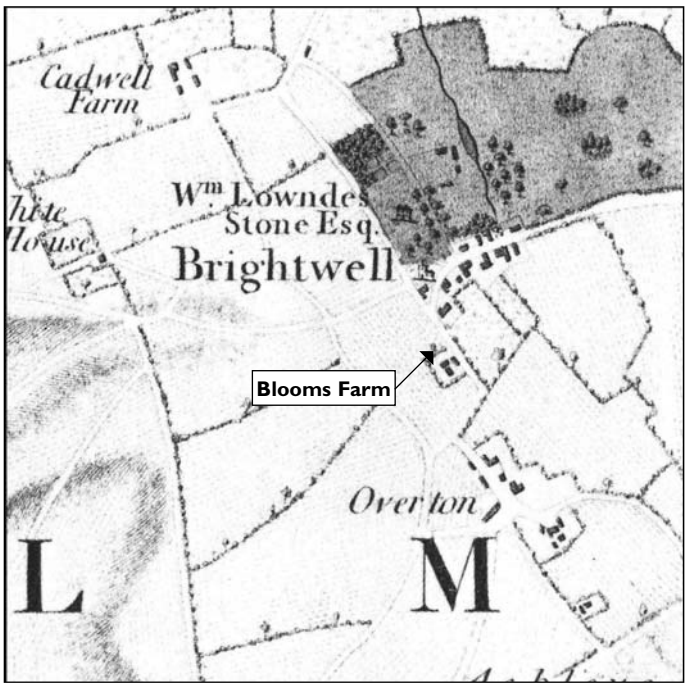

Fig. 2. Richard Davis' map of Oxfordshire of 1797 (part of Sheet XI, enlarged)

We know Blooms Field is an ancient enclosure, but how old is it? The earliest reference in the Brightwell estate papers is in an assignment of lease of 1588 (ORO E43b) where it is referred to as a 'close called Blomes'. A Geoffrey Blome is listed in the lay subsidy of 1306 as the second wealthiest person in Brightwell, between the Abbot of Dorchester and William de Bereford. There is no mention of any Blome at Brightwell in the Hundred Rolls survey of *c.*1275, so it is likely that Blomes/ Blooms was enclosed by Geoffery Blome, or a descendent of his, in the late 13th or early 14th century. An *inquisition post mortem* held at Oxford in 1358 (*C. Edw. III*) to enquire into the lands held by John Blome, who died in 1349, includes 5½ acres of land and ½ acre of meadow at Brightwell held of Baldwin de Bereford, the lord who gave his name to Brightwell Baldwin. The 5½ acres is almost certainly the field still known as Blooms. John Blome's heir was a daughter and a minor and Blomes close reverted to Baldwin de Bereford. [Note: 1 acre = 0.4ha.]

Training and research aims

The principal aims agreed with the BBCHAP group were:

- To provide an introduction to and training in basic excavation and recording
- To locate the Blooms Field farmhouse and determine the ground plan, construction and date
- To follow up with training in basic post-excavation techniques

Training was based on the well tested methodology developed by the Sedgeford Historical and Archaeological Research Project (SHARP). Copies of their field manual (SHARP and Cox, 2003) were purchased for each volunteer and the SHARP team kindly gave permission for all their recording sheets to be reproduced under the BBCHAP header. Volunteers attended a classroom session the evening before first going on site, where they were introduced to the basic principles of excavation and essential terminology. All subsequent training was hands on, on site.

Equipment and funding

Providing basic equipment for a dig is not hugely expensive but does cost a few hundred pounds. Volunteers purchased their own hand trowels and field handbooks, and provided heavy digging tools and wheelbarrows from their garden

sheds. A survey level, tripod and staff were purchased with a grant of £250 to Brightwell Baldwin Parish from the Chilterns Conservation Board, 40th Anniversary Fund; fortunately there was enough left over from this to purchase buckets and hand shovels as well. The Chilterns Conservation Board have been most supportive of the project and are maintaining a keen interest. All equipment suppliers provided generous discounts and we are very grateful to them for this support.

Geophysical survey

Using an enlargement of the 1802 map as a guide, a twin-probe resistance survey of part of the field was carried out in May 2006 to locate the farm buildings. This was done with the generous assistance of Gerard Latham of The Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society (TWHAS), using his own TR/CIA resistance meter. The survey suggested two possible sites for the farmhouse and firmly located two of the outbuildings. The other two outbuildings were missed as they are now under the hedge and verge alongside the road. The survey confirmed that the archaeology was close to the surface.

Trenches and methodology

With two possible locations for the farmhouse two trenches were planned. The dig was carried out over two weeks in the hottest summer temperatures recorded for many years. The ground surface had been baked hard by the long dry spell so machine stripping of the turf was essential.

Trench 1 was a disappointment. The grating, rending noise made by the mechanical shovel was not because we were scraping across a building, it spelt trouble. Immediately below the turf was a dense concentration of medium sized flint, in a firm, silty-clay matrix. The machine put in a trial cut across the trench, 1m wide x 0.6m deep, but the layer was barren of the bulk finds one would expect to find from building demolition or from a farmyard site. There was absolutely no building archaeology and no artefacts either. What we had opened up appeared to be a recent (i.e. post-farm-demolition) fill of a hollow. The most likely hypothesis was that this might have been a pond in the farmyard. But whatever it was, it was completely unsuitable for a training dig, so it was quickly recorded and filled in again. Just one find was recovered from the turf of Trench 1: a large horseshoe. One horseshoe does not a farm make … but at least it was a start!

Trench 2 was totally different and an immediate success. This time the bucket cut softly below the turf and as it lifted the soil away finds were falling out of it. The whole of the stripped area was littered with late or Post Medieval artefacts: iron nails, fragments of hand-made roof tile, broken pottery and glass. The trench was opened to 16m x 6m and included an area just beyond that covered by the geophysics. The trench edges were cleaned up by hand but the surface was left untouched for the volunteers to view and recover the remarkable spread of finds in the first cleanup.

Despite machine stripping, much heavy digging would still be required to remove the overburden of top soil. With the very high summer temperatures we decided to come on site early and dig only in the mornings. Although this reduced the available man-hours it proved a wise decision in the circumstances. The top soil was removed selectively following the emerging shape of the building (Fig. 3), in the end leaving 40% of Trench 2 unexcavated. A proportion of the top soil was sieved and surveyed with metal detectors. The bulk of the top soil was excavated with the mattock; the lower layers were excavated with the trowel down to the top surface of the building archaeology, which was left in situ.

Fig. 3. Diggers hard at work in Trench 2, with the shape of the farmhouse beginning to emerge

A farmhouse revealed

We set out to find an 'L' shaped farmhouse – but found a 'T' shaped one!

Our working copy of the 1802 Enclosure Award map (dated 1900) showed an 'L' shaped building and the geophysics seemed to confirm this. The theory was that we might have a Medieval long-house (represented by the long part of the 'L') facing east towards the road, with a small lean-to 'outshut' at the back. But as the walls and floors were slowly uncovered it proved more and more difficult to reconcile the archaeology with this theory. A new theory was put forward by Don Church: that the main part of the house in fact faced north, not east. He argued that this solved the difficulties we had in interpreting the archaeology and made better social sense – anyone building a substantial new farmhouse on enclosed land close to Brightwell main village, would want to present his best side towards his benefactor, focusing the front of his house towards Brightwell Park. His new theory certainly made sense of the emerging archaeology.

Confirmation and a breakthrough came from examination of the copy of the 1802 map in the Brightwell

Estate papers (ORO E43a). This map is on parchment and is dated 1858, so it takes precedence over the 1900 paper copy we had been using. It clearly shows the farmhouse as a 'T' shape, with the larger, main part of the house on the north side forming the cross arm of the 'T' and a small 'annexe' on the south side forming the stem.

Ground-plan

The ground plan that eventually emerged was indeed 'T' shaped and facing north (Fig. 4).

The main part of the house was rectangular. The width of the frontage is unknown as the east wall was under the baulk, but is at least equal to the recorded depth of 6.5m (21ft or 7yd) and may well be more. A re-examination of the geophysics results suggests a probable frontage of 10m (33ft or 11yd), giving a width:depth ratio of 3:2. An 'annexe' was built out at a right-angle to the back of the house and this was quite narrow, at about 3.75m (12ft or 4yd) wide and perhaps 6.5m (21ft or 7yd) long, although again the length could not be determined for certain as the end wall was under the baulk. It was not centrally placed, the west wall of the annexe being about 2m (6ft or 2yd) from the south-west corner of the main part of the house. I have purposely given the English conversions here because buildings were typically laid out in multiples of these old units.

Fronting the house on the north side was a courtyard paved with irregular chalk slabs. About 5m east from the north-west corner of the house, the courtyard was paved with larger chalk slabs which may represent the main threshold. If the frontage is 10m wide then the front entrance was symmetrically placed.

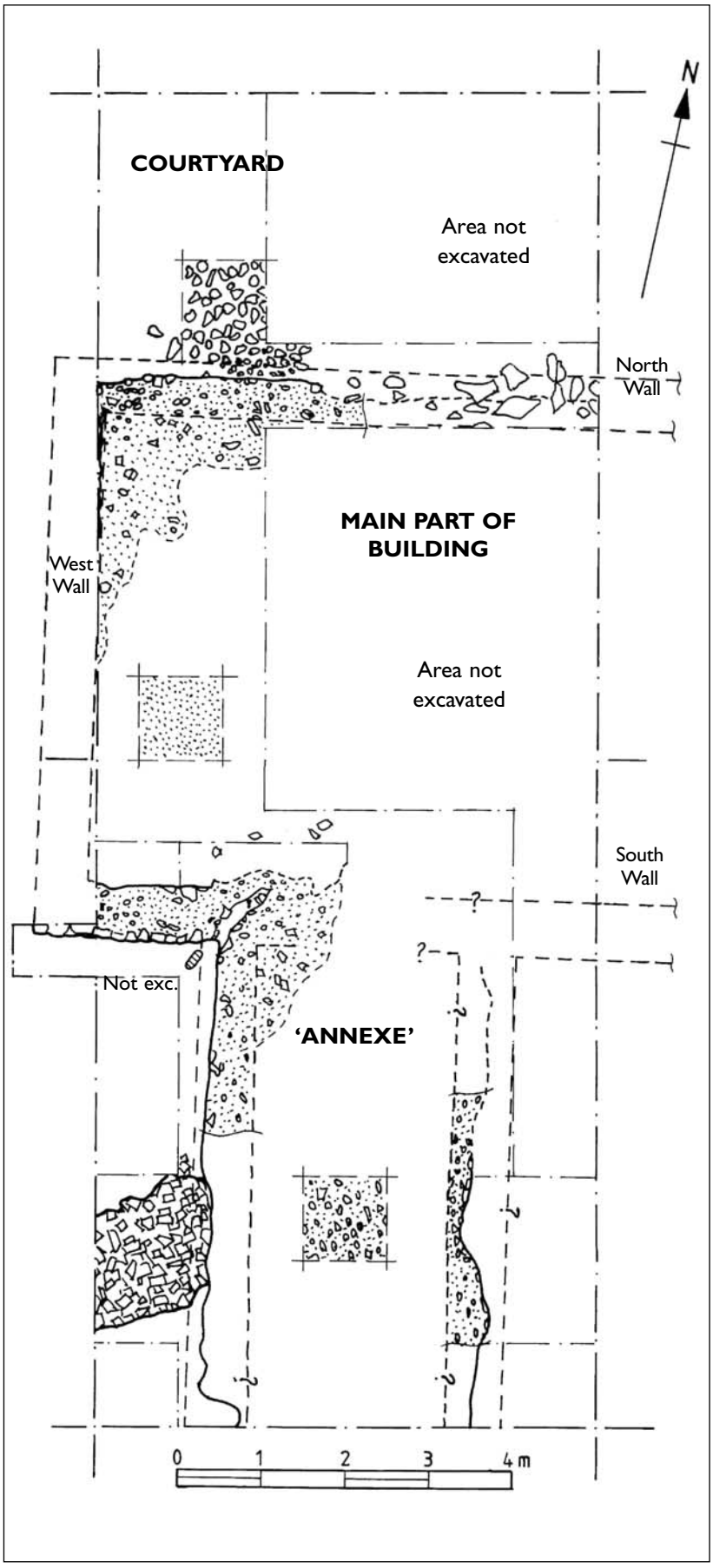

Fig. 4. A schematic plan of Trench 2, with an outline of the western part of the farmhouse superimposed

Walls
The ground slopes gently from west to east in Blooms Field. Beneath the plough soil is a sub-soil of clay at an average depth of 0.2m but with a slightly shallower slope (1 in 21) over the width of Trench 2. The foundations for the outer walls of the farmhouse were cut into this clay layer, very shallow on the east side and deeper on the west side to level the foundation.

The walls were faced with rough hewn, randomly-coursed, local chalk (clunch or Totternhoe Stone) bedded in lime mortar, with a chalk rubble and mortar core incorporating a few fragments of brick. The south-west wall of the main house (Fig. 5) had survived well and was 0.6m (2ft) thick. Elsewhere the walls had been largely robbed out but the thickness appears to have been the same throughout. The chalk facing-stones were of a small size for constructional stone, with a very wide variation in shape and size. No special treatment was given to the quoins.

The annexe appeared to have been built at the same time as the main house; certainly there was no discontinuity in the construction of the walls. A gap at 45° across the south-west internal corner (see Fig. 4) was a stress-induced crack resulting from subsidence in the annexe, of which more later. About halfway along the west side of the annexe, a deposit of broken roof tiles had been laid outside the building to form a path, leading away at an angle from a shallow depression in the wall foundations where there may have been a doorway.

Floors
The floor in the main part of the house survived over a large area as a thin layer of mortar. This had been laid on the natural slope of the clay, so although the main structure of the house was levelled the floors were not. A spread of rubble in the north-west corner and faint plough marks cutting through the mortar showed that the field had been shallow ploughed at some time after demolition.

Fig. 5. Dorothy Kent and Don Church excavating the south-west wall

The mortar had clearly been the bedding for a brick floor although no bricks were found in situ. Fragments of brick recovered show they were hand-made using moulds, typically 32-38mm (1¼-1½in) thick and 108-114mm (4¼-4½in) wide, the length being unknown. All show extensive wear from foot traffic on one face and some have slight traces of mortar on the opposite face. Whilst brick flooring could be a later addition there was no evidence of earlier flooring, unless this was the virgin clay. The wear on the floor bricks suggests they had been down a long time.

The floor in the annexe was also brick as there was no discontinuity between the floor levels in the two areas. However, the mortar layer was much thicker over the central area of the annexe where there had been more than one attempt to build up the floor to deal with subsidence. Subsidence in the annexe was severe and clearly an ongoing problem during the life of the house.

Windows
One fragment of H-section, lead glazing bar and significant quantities of thin, clear glass recovered showed that the house had leaded lights.

Roof
Many fragments of hand made roof tile were recovered but none was complete. The width was 178mm (7in) and thickness 16mm (⅝in) but the length could not be determined. The few fragments of valley tile recovered were too small to measure the angle precisely but do suggest the roof had a steep angle. Whilst not an infallible clue this might suggest the roof was thatched originally.

Fireplace
This was not located but we can be certain there was one. Our revised, 'T' shaped, ground plan meant that the house was much wider than our trench. If the building was 10m wide the fireplace could be centrally placed and under an unexcavated part of the trench; alternatively it may be on one of the three end walls that remained under the baulk. The fireplace is an important dating feature that remains to be located at a future date.

Discussion
What was the constructional style of this farmhouse and when was it built?

The site had been robbed of reusable building materials and only fragments were recovered. Most of the bricks were identifiable as floor bricks. The almost complete absence of constructional brick and the relative rarity of chalk-stones and fragments suggest that brick and stone were not the main constructional materials. Whilst 0.6m (2ft) thick walls could have been built to single or two storey height, the evidence suggests rather that they were dwarf walls, built to support a timber-frame clear of the

ground. The small sized and irregular chalk-stone facing and the lack of any special treatment for the quoins would support this. There was no sign of internal walls so any internal divisions are likely to have been of timber, although we should caution that not all of the trench was excavated. If this was a timber-framed building, then the absence of post holes means it was built on a sill or sole plate.

The presence of rare brick fragments incorporated in the wall rubble fills and the apparently original brick floors show that the house was built after brick became available in this area. The earliest brick buildings in the locality are the school and alms houses at Ewelme, dating from 1442. Brick then came into more general use over the next century, becoming very fashionable in the Tudor period but still rare in this area. The Ewelme bricks would probably have been made on site and this is only 2½ miles [4km] away, so it is possible that 'our' bricks came from Ewelme and that the farmhouse dates from c.1442. A comparative analysis of the bricks might confirm this.

Clear-glass, leaded windows are very unusual in ordinary houses before the mid 15th century. Whilst they could be a later addition/enhancement, they too point to a possible Tudor period construction.

The constructional evidence suggests the house was built sometime between *c.*1450 and c.1600. If we are right about the frontage, the symmetrical arrangement would point to a late date, perhaps Elizabethan rather than early Tudor. Whilst we cannot entirely rule out a stone-built construction, the details do favour a typical 'Tudor' style, timber box-framed building. The roof could have been tiled originally, although two other houses in the village from roughly this date or slightly later (Glebe Farm and Shepherds Cottage) are thatched. A later date would suggest a two-storey house with gabled upper windows, rather than a hall house. Sadly, the assignment of lease of 1588 (ORO E43b), which contains our earliest reference to Blomes close, makes no mention of a tenement, but this cannot be taken as proof that the building is later than this.

Do the small finds and pottery support the dating?

The small finds included the window lead mentioned above. There was also a small, steel eating fork with two straight prongs. It is recorded that these were first brought to England from Italy by Thomas Coryate in 1608. At first ridiculed, they were slowly adopted by the rich and by the mid 1600s were considered fashionable among the wealthy. These finds, although not closely dateable, at least give us *termini post quem* in the Tudor and early Jacobean periods.

An unusual 'button' (Fig. 6) in cast copper alloy, possibly silvered, may provide another date but at present is baffling the experts. The British Button Society has not seen anything like it before, so research is continuing.

Fig. 6. An unusual 'button' in a cast copper-alloy, possibly silvered, with iron through fixing. 3cm diameter

The majority of pottery recovered was locally produced earthenware for the kitchen and dairy, in a red fabric with a brown or olive glaze. Only a few items are dateable earlier than the mid 15th or later than the early 19th centuries. The earliest closely dateable pottery for which we have significant quantities is from the late 15th to 16th century (Cistercian ware) and we have even more from the 17th century (Midland Black and Staffordshire slipware). The significant quantity of fine wares recovered are generally dateable to the late 18th to early 19th century. These include fragments of porcelain and fine classical black basalt ware, perhaps Wedgwood. These are status items and were no doubt valued possessions.

In general, the pottery supports occupation between perhaps the late 15th but certainly the 16th century and the demolition date of *c.*1820.

The death of a farm

Why was the farmhouse pulled down early in the 19th century? We can only speculate.

Thomas and Mary Quatremaine would seem to have led a reasonably comfortable and prosperous existence at Blooms, but after Thomas died in 1798, the next 18 years for Mary would inevitably have been more difficult. Mary died in December 1816 at Whitehouse Farm, at that time being tenanted by her grandson James Quatremain, otherwise known as James Coates, born out of wedlock to her daughter Elizabeth. Elizabeth married William Coates 20 months after James was born but we do not know if he was James' father. James was sole executor of Mary's will and inherited the residue of her estate after significant disbursements to her daughters Elizabeth and Anne. Mary's two sons had died earlier, so, with James tenanting the much larger Whitehouse Farm, it seems there was no Quatremaine to take over the tenancy at Blooms.

Certainly the Quatremaines disappear from the parish records after Mary's death.

The small farm may well have been in decay by this time and its buildings in need of significant repairs. We may recall the subsidence in the annexe of the farmhouse, which could have contributed to structural problems. What was the cause of this subsidence? One theory concerns the water supply that must have been there to make it worthwhile putting a farm on this site in the first place. Springs used to emerge in Upperton from the Lower Chalk where it meets the underlying, harder Totternhoe Stone and this line runs through Blooms Field; so there may possibly have been a spring in the field that fed a pond, perhaps in the area briefly explored by Trench 1 some 20m to the south-east of the annexe. It is possible that the annexe was inadvertently built over the line of this spring and sub-surface erosion caused the subsidence. Eventually the spring would run deeper underground and dry up.

More importantly perhaps, the enclosure of the open fields at Brightwell brought about the grouping of the land into larger units centred on the main farms. The small farm at Blooms would have been an anachronism in this new regime. With no obvious tenant, expensive repairs needed, and a failing water supply, the farm had reached the end of its useful life. The Lord of the Manor, William Lowndes-Stone (d.1830), seized the opportunity, demolished the buildings and reused or sold all the useful building materials. A thin layer of topsoil from the field was pulled over the site and the old pond was filled in with sub-soil and flints from one of the gravel pits in the parish. The field was shallow ploughed at some time, perhaps when covering over the site, but in the main from then on it was given over to Brightwell Farm and used as pasture.

And pasture it remains to this day. A peaceful enclosure at the heart of Brightwell with history under the grass.

Acknowledgements

The dig was a success in bringing together the community volunteers and training them in a short time to carry out an excavation. The training regime worked well, natural talents emerged, and a disciplined and motivated team was quickly formed. By the second week some fine work was being carried out with both mattock and trowel. Despite the high temperatures and the discovery that field archaeology involves hard work, the enthusiasm and interest of the volunteers never wavered. Most importantly, we had a great deal of fun doing it. Post-excavation involvement was less successful and a revised approach will be needed in the future.

The average number of volunteers on site over the two weeks was 12 with a maximum of 16, including four regulars from the surrounding parishes of Cuxham, Chalgrove and Benson. Four SOAG members took part. Many more parishioners and their friends came to visit the site and there was an organised visit by SOAG.

This report has benefited from the observations and insights of a number of people, but most notably the late Don Church. The brief historical notes are based on research into the local Quatremaines and the Blomes by Foy Treloar and Joan Barker of Cuxham, and David Viall of Chalgrove. Their work is ongoing and will be reported more fully at a later date.

Success in the field depended on the efforts of everyone involved and I record my thanks to them all. To single out individuals always seems unfair, but I must in particular thank: Jane and Phil Hughes for letting us make a mess of their field; Peter (parish archivist) and Dorothy Kent who have done so much to promote and facilitate the project; Terry Stone and the parish committee for their support; Nigel and Tessa Mogg for their much valued encouragement; the Chilterns Conservation Board; and lastly my wife Catherine for her supervision of the on-site finds processing and for putting up with my obsession.

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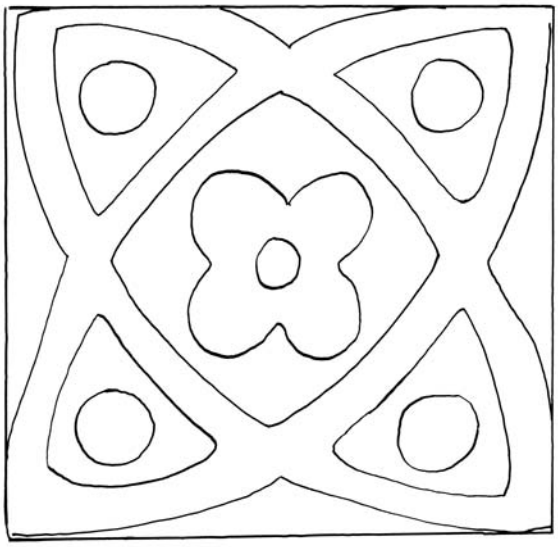

Medieval tile from Brightwell Baldwin drawn by C. Graham Kerr. From the SOAG archives

Garsons Farm, Ipsden

Pat Preece

Garsons Farm is part of the Reade estate and is tenanted by the Jacksons. Like so many farms of the area, it has a long history.

The earliest references to Garsons date from the 13th century. John Garstone, also called John de la Garstone or John atte Garstone, was a witness in various land transfers! The first actual mention of the farm comes in 1383 when 'property in Ippeden and Stoke Basset' (North Stoke) was demised by William Basset to 'Walter Garston and Elen [sic] his wife for their life at a rent of ten marks [£3.33] per annum as well as housbote and heibote in Heycroftes Wode'.[2] 'Bote' was the right to take wood for various purposes; 'hous' is obvious but 'heibote' was the right to take wood for fences. 'Haga' or 'hay' is the Old English for either fence or hedge; the hayward on the manor was the man responsible for their maintenance. The Garstons were also to have the right to 'great and small timber' in the 60 acre Heycroft Wood (not now shown on the OS map; see Fig. 1). In the same document Walter Garston was granting 'Hawmannysgrove' to John Hawman. In 1406 Elen is listed as having 8 acres of land.[3] After this point there is no further information about the Garston family.

The years went by and in the Ipsden Court Rolls of 1587 there is a statement that 'Henry Knapp had Garstones freely'. In other words, he did not have to give any services, and the farm was probably copyhold, as it is copied into the Court Rolls. Henry Knapp was reported by the hayward to the court, which instructed him in 1563 to repair his fences and boundaries. In 1581 Henry had neglected to fence round a certain part of his stretch of wood called 'Heycroftes wode' and was fined three shillings and fourpence. Richard Knapp, probably his son, was listed in the Court Rolls as a free tenant with one messuage and 20 acres of land.[4]

The farm was changing hands, as in the same Court Rolls a Robert Hunt is shown as having Garsons with a messuage and two virgates in both 1694 and 1729. A virgate varied in size according to district and circumstances but was around 30 acres. Incidentally the change in name was probably due to slipshod pronunciation as happened to many names. The farm changed tenants again in 1749, as in the Poor Rate for the year Aron Allen was paying ten pence halfpenny for 10 acres at Garsons.[5]

Apparently the farm was 'annexed to Reade' in 1742 according to a history written by Anderton Reade in 1869. (He was the Reade who got the Maharajah's Well for Stoke Row.) Aron Allen must have been a Reade tenant at that time.

The 1848 Tithe Award has a John Barton living in the farmhouse and having Little Pightle of 2 acres and Stony Close and Harberrys with 38 acres of arable. He also held part of Covert Wood, 29 acres in extent; John Reade was his landlord. The field name 'Harberrys' is interesting and a suggestion is that 'har' can mean 'boundary' in Old English[6] and the old border between Ipsden and North Stoke runs along the north of the field. The 'berry' part of the name is

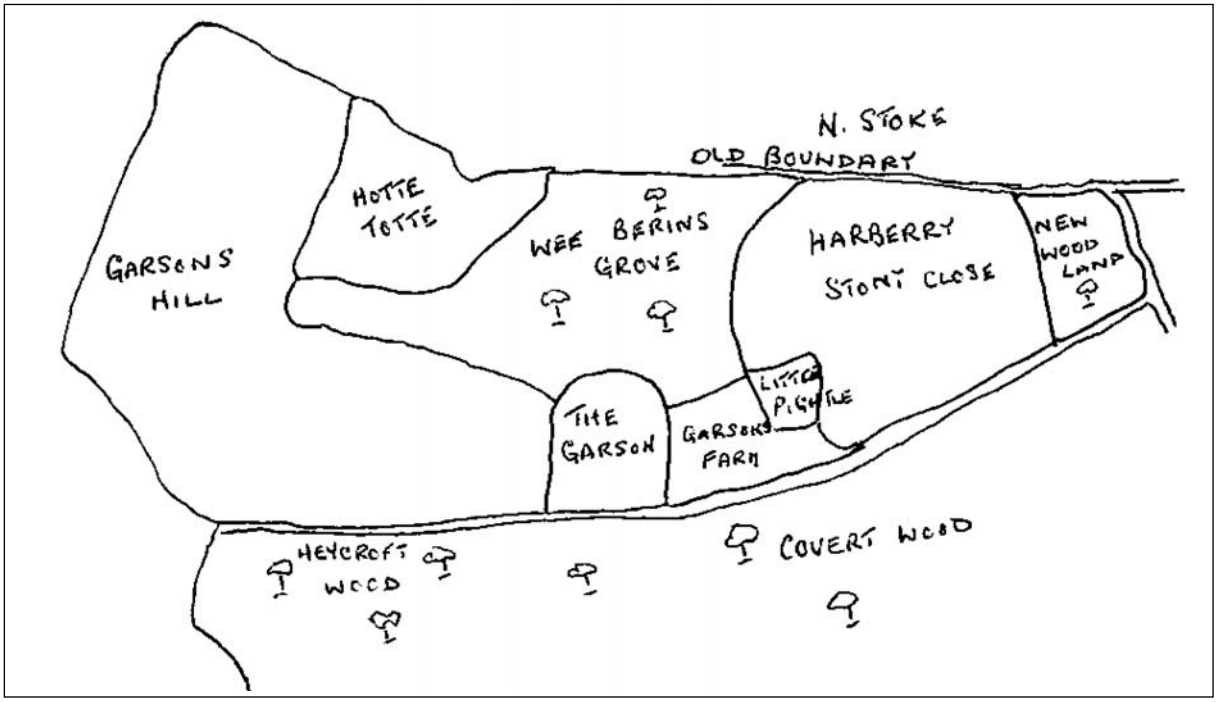

Fig. 1. The fields around Garsons Farm

more difficult but according to Margaret Gelling and Ann Cole it can mean a small wood from Old English *bearu*[7]– there is a wood above Garsons – or could it be a corruption of 'Berins'?

The name 'Garston' according to Margaret Gelling[8] means 'grassy enclosure', but as we have seen the name in medieval times was 'Garstone'. The Jacksons say that there is a large stone in the field behind the farm and it may be possible that the name is 'gear', meaning 'olden' stone.[9]

Mrs Jackson showed us part of the farmhouse which really needs knowledgeable architects to examine it, as it is very complicated. The oldest part has a substantial cruck blade and many very old beams and might have dated from the 14th or 15th century. The middle part of the house has a huge open fireplace and a beamed ceiling and may have dated from the 17th century. The third part is probably early Victorian. According to Mrs Jackson, around the end of the 19th century the farmhouse was divided into three houses – not uncommon at that time. The farmyard was mostly Victorian with no surviving barn; there was a cart shed which had an interesting roof truss, very similar to those in barns locally, and framing of oak, possibly dating from the 18th century.

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(Editor's note: As I was working on this article SOAG received an email query from Melbourne, Australia, concerning the Knapp family of Garsons. Pat Preece was able to provide information.)

The Ipsden Stones

Mary Kift

How many SOAGs know the area around Ipsden village? It is an interesting and beautiful piece of countryside. The old village lies in the Thames Valley below Woodcote, but there is a later community on the high ground known as Ipsden Newtown. It is a place of steep, dry chalk valleys running from the Chiltern Hills, a land of sheep; sit outside the little King William IV pub at Hailey, a hamlet of Ipsden, on a fine day and the steep slopes are full of them.

The landowners for many centuries have been the Reades. Their home lies on the hillside above Ipsden Farm. One of the family was Edward Anderton Reade who went to India in his youth and for years kept a diary. Looking through J. H. Baker's book, *The Ipsden Country*, I found an interesting quotation from it. Mr Baker had obviously been able to read the diarist's account of a return from India to Ipsden on sick leave at the age of 20 in 1827. This is part of it:

I had for some time formed a project of building a sort of Druids' Temple with large useless stones that are in the neighbourhood. This morning with the assistance of Compton [his brother; MK] *several stones were conveyed to their destination before breakfast.*

13 Oct: Hard at work all day on the Druids' Temple.

15 Oct: We performed a most signal work on moving the Hailey Stone this day, one of immense size and intended to be the 'king' of the others. By dint of large levers we got in on a sledge contrived for the

Two of the Ipsden Stones, now overgrown
Photo: Susan Sandford

purpose, and Farmer Wear, our good-natured tenant, brought nine horses, all of which had enough to do to get this monstrous stone to its destination. When arrived at the place the sledge broke all to pieces, happily not before.

20 Oct: We concluded our task of bringing the stones, amounting in number to 27.

14 Nov: I hired four men to work for me today and we set hard to work at the Druids' Temple, and at the close of the day we finished it, and it has received general approbation.

Twice in our exploration of Ipsden parish Pat, Marian and I have been to see these stones. If you park your car by Ipsden School and walk across the edge of the cricket field to the trees you will find a path leading down to the old village below. There, a few yards down the track, you will find them.

I became interested in these sarsens, especially the biggest, known as the Hailey Stone, and even more interested when looking at a map in Baker's book I saw Stone Farm marked at Hailey. Surely the Hailey Stone came from there. Now a private house near the King William IV, it still has the name on the garden wall and is reputed to be the oldest house in the village.

However, there is more. On our explorations we had looked at nearby Garsons Farm up Garsons Lane, a long winding track which eventually becomes Garsons Hill and a lonely road. There at the top you find this remote ancient farm. The tenant farmer kindly showed us round and we were fascinated by this ancient dwelling, especially as we knew from old documents who had lived there in medieval times. Then in the 1200s a John Garstone was a witness to several land transactions. At various times he was known as 'John atte Garstone' (at the garstone) or 'John de la Garstone' (of the garstone). Then in 1383 we find the first mention of the actual property when 'property at Ippeden… was demised by William Basset to Walter Garstone and Elen his wife'.

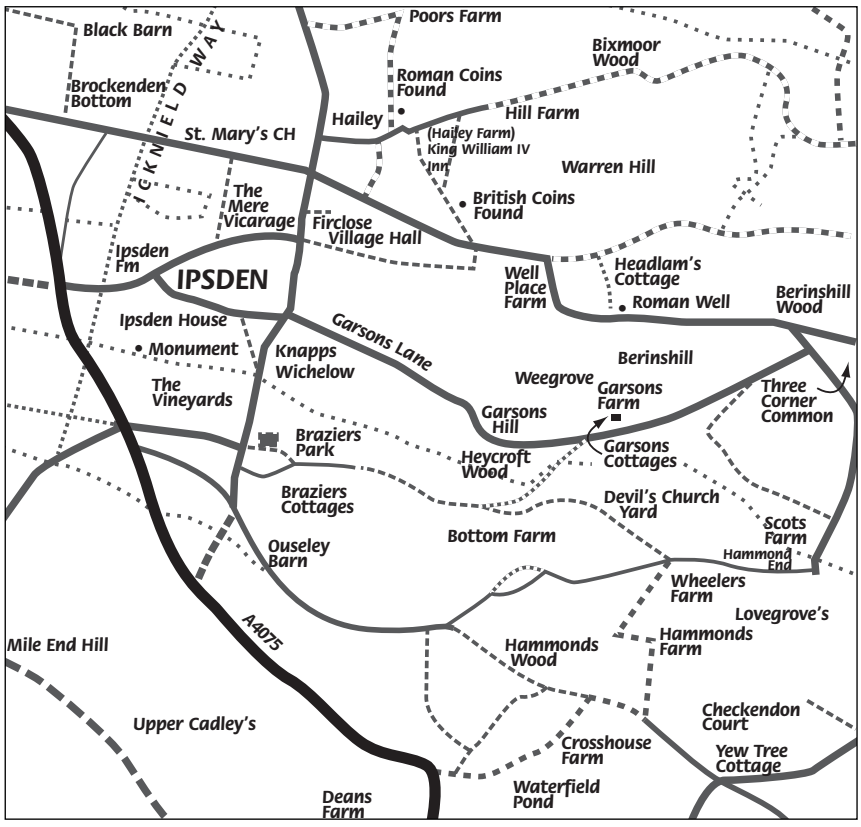
During one of our visits we were told of a huge stone in one of the fields on the farm which was always ruining any machines that went over it as it lay just beneath the surface. It was so large, according to the farmer, that even a 16 ton loading shovel would not move it. It was as big as a car. Some stone! How much more was under the ground?

Looking at the 1848 Tithe Award map we found that part of a field near the farm was called Stony Close and part was called the Harberrys. It was here that the stone lay.

Although Margaret Gelling in her book on field names in this area thinks Garston means 'grassy enclosure', I feel it may have another meaning, for such a huge stone as this is likely to have been of special note much as the one at Hailey. Why was John also thought of as John at the Garstone and also John of the Garstone?

Determined to find out more, I looked in Adrian Room's excellent book, *The Penguin Dictionary of British Place Names*. There I found the name Garston, a district of Liverpool, and read '… (place by the) great stone. OE great – great + stan – stone. The name may refer to a boundary marker or to some natural feature on the Merseyside coast here'. I also looked at another book on place-names and found exactly the same description.

By the way, 'har' means 'boundary' in OE as Pat Preece writes in her piece about Garsons Farm. The field lies adjacent to the southern boundary of the ancient Ipsden parish with Checkendon.



Map of Ipsden
Drawn by Janet Eastment

The Fludgers and Fludgers Wood, Ipsden

Pat Preece

On the hill north-east of Wellplace Farm is Fludgers Wood. It is just across a field from Homer Farm and there are various delightful walks in the neighbourhood. Names in the landscape ending in 's' are usually those of people, sometimes dating back many centuries. So who was Fludger? The first reference to the family was in 1727 when a Henry Fludger was Mayor of Wallingford. He was a tanner, and in 1727 and onwards was buying bark from the Allnutt charity in Goring Heath.[1]

Bark from oaks was used in the process of tanning leather as it contains tannin. Sometimes it was stripped off saplings; locally it was most often removed from felled mature oaks.

Henry Fludger must have been a prosperous and eminent citizen of Wallingford to have been selected as mayor. He was mayor again in 1741, 1748 and 1759; William Fludger, who may have been his son, was mayor in 1768. One of the Fludgers was also a timber merchant as 'Mr Fludger' was buying oak from the charity in 1759.[2]

In 1743 a William Fludger, also described as a tanner, took part in a transference of land in Checkendon.[3] Whether the family originated in Brightwell is not known, but a Thomas Fludger of that village, in his will of 1759, left money and land to his son William and grandson Henry.[4] Without going into the ramifications of the family, it becomes obvious that Henry and William were family names, and therefore it can be confusing. In this will it also seems that the Fludgers were related by marriage to the Blackalls of Braziers Farm in Checkendon. Henry Fludger was one of the trustees of Ann Blackall of Braziers in 1769.[5] It is made clear in a 1817 will of Henry Fludger that he is also related to the Massingberds who held Little Stoke Manor; one of the witnesses to the will was John Hedges, who owned Wallingford Castle. The Fludgers had achieved the title of 'gentleman' by this time. Henry left £100,000 and was a millionaire by modern standards. He left a great deal of property, including some in St John's and St Leonard's parishes in Wallingford.[6] Unfortunately there is no clue to the situation of the tannery.

Tanners and timber merchants prospered in the 18th and beginning of the 19th century, when there was an increase in road traffic and a demand for timber for ship building, particularly for the Navy. More leather was needed for the saddlery for the horse drawn vehicles on the roads and the Napoleonic Wars meant that leather was required for belts and other accoutrements. The prices of both oak timber and bark reached their highest levels around 1800. The Fludgers probably profited from these demands.

Having established who the Fludgers were, we can try to trace their connection with the wood. Unfortunately no trace can be found of their acquisition of the wood, but in 1765 a 'Mr Fludger' was paying £1. 14s for tithes for 'his woods' in Hailey.[7] It seems possible therefore that the wood may have been acquired in the first half of the 18th century when the tanning and timber business was developing. In 1802 the Fludgers sold the wood; the following is a note from the Hedges' estate papers:

> *1802 land and wood ground with timber thereon near Birons hill in Ipsden. Estimated 20 acres, great part was wood and residue arable, formerly called Leydons wood, Long close and Highfields and bought of Henry Fludger £425. In the use of John Allnatt in fee.*[8]

There seems little doubt that this is our wood because the Leydons abuts the wood and the size is approximately the same. Measurements of woods could vary at this period according to whether the customary, the statutory or the woodland perch was used, these all being different. Unfortunately no field names similar to Long Close or Highfields can be found, but if they were incorporated into the wood, all would be explained. Another interesting point: who was John Allnatt and was he related to Henry Allnutt of the Goring charity?

In the Tithe Award of 1848[9] 'Fletchers shaw' of 21 acres is listed as belonging to Allnutt and Wells Co Ltd. The next reference is in a wood account in the Hedges papers dated 1850 and headed 'The Wallingford Bank Account'.[10] The wood was being managed by a William Sarney who might have been a timber merchant. A William Sarney, described as a gentleman and of 'Hymer Hall' (Highmoor Hall?) was a trustee with William Fludger,[11] so it may be that they were related. It seems likely that Sarney started managing the wood in 1850 because one of the items in the account is the purchase of a book for 1s, presumably to begin keeping the accounts or records of the wood. The account shows that there was a fir plantation:

Sold 130ft of fir @ 6d per ft	*£3.5s*
Sold the fir faggots	*6s*
For cutting 130ft of timber and making fir faggots	*5s*
For selling the fir timber and faggots at 1s in the £1	*3s 6d*
For measuring the fir	*1s*

The fir would have been measured by a woodman by 'eye' and would have been in 'Hoppus feet'. An interesting item is the amount charged by the woodman for selling the timber, traditionally always a shilling in the pound.

Other than fir there was beech and oak and he was selling 'sraging' [*sic*] faggots. These are shoots that are trimmed or 'shragged' off the trunks of tall timber. The latter are trees that are grown closely together so as to draw them up to the light to produce long lengths of timber, as is seen in most of today's beech-woods. Shragging was practised in the Oxfordshire Chilterns up to the 1950s.

Sarney and a companion (a woodman?) went to Wallingford to deliver the account and sell the timber:

Wm Sarney share of journey to Wallingford and expenses 3s 6d.

This note is found at the bottom of every annual account. Another expense noted is:

For looking after the wood £2.

In all the accounts there were references to beech. For example in 1846:

Paid for cutting 91 loads 20ft of beach [sic] *in Fludgers Shaw at 7d per load.*

This was a great quantity of beech, which had 25 cubic feet to the load, unlike other timber which had 50 cubic feet. It is probable that in this period of the 19th century the beech was sold to the furniture industry.

The heading of the first account is interesting. Did Wallingford Bank own the wood? Was the bank partly owned by Allnatt and Wells? *The History of Wallingford*[12] states that Wallingford had its own bank from the early 19th century until it was taken over in the 1920s. It is said to have been owned by a consortium of local traders and prominent townsmen.

The annual accounts make it clear that the wood was being meticulously managed with banking and ditching, ivy cutting and the repair of a wood gate:

3 oak spars 11ft 6ins x 4x1 inches

1 head 4ft x 3½ x2½ inches

4 oak pins

37 gate nails.

This is a very large gate. The repair was done by John Willis of Nettlebed, described as a carpenter, joiner and wheelwright; it cost 9 shillings. Other items mentioned were a 'shragging ladder' and one shilling for killing squirrels – that sounds modern!

In 1853 the wood was called 'Fletchers Shaw', as it is in the Tithe Award. Any person who has an unusual surname will have come across this phenomenon. Amongst the account documents is a letter from Sarney dated 1850 to an unknown, stating '*if the oak is ripe for culling advantage should be taken of the present high prices as no one can say how long the rise in prices may last*'.

In 1856 J. K. Hedges of Wallingford Castle bought Fludgers Shaw for £368.8s.7d. He had two valuations done, the first by George Hope:

21 acres 1 rood 17 perches at £10.13s.6d an acre;

the next in 1858 by Edward Franklin of 'Ascott':

Fludgers Shaw commonly known as The Bank wood

Beechwood 21 acres 1 rood 17 perches

Fir plantation

Land and timber worth £645.

If the second estimate was correct J. K. Hedges must have considered he had a bargain.

Dodd of Homer Farm offered to buy the wood in 1858 but did not offer enough. Dodd farmed a great deal of land in Checkendon and has an impressive tomb in Ipsden churchyard. In 1889 Hedges was considering selling the wood and Ramsbotham of Wellplace was offering to buy it for £800 as he said it would complete his land holding. Sarney, in a letter to Hedges in the same year, said he thought:

that the light dry chalky soil was the cause of trees dying in Fludgers Shaw and it is because birch died that larch was planted.

The wood was not sold, because in April 1900 a letter from Hedges stated that the oak from Fludgers Shaw should be sold as quickly as possible as the prices were high and the season well advanced.[13] After this date there is no more about the wood, so it may have been sold.

Mary Kift, Marian Fallowfield and myself thoroughly explored Fludgers Wood. As can be seen from the maps (Fig. 1), we considered the southern part to be the oldest and probably the original Leydons Wood. Here many ancient woodland indicators were present, including bluebells in profusion; the banks were also wider and more rounded. The banks surrounding the northern part were narrower and more pointed, and although there was dogs mercury, often an ancient woodland indicator, there were no bluebells, suggesting that this might have been the area that was originally arable. Despite the references to fir, which may have been larch, very little was found and these areas consisted mainly of tall beech with a few oaks interspersed. Some whitebeam and cherry were found and some new mixed planting had taken place. The projecting part of the older part had some quite old hazel stools which may have provided some of the faggots sold. The wood had been extended, possibly recently: the north-western

extension was very new and consisted of young conifers; the south-western extension had been planted with beech and this may have coincided with the tent peg makers who were using beech during the 1939-45 war. Two sawpits were detected but there was a great deal of bramble which may have hidden others. The sawpits could have been used by the peggers as they did not have a great deal of debris in them; if they had been used by the chair leg turners, they would have had more leaf mould, and so forth, in them.

The wood with its several names finally perpetuated that of the Fludgers. They will go down to posterity both as mayors of Wallingford and as the name of a piece of the English landscape.

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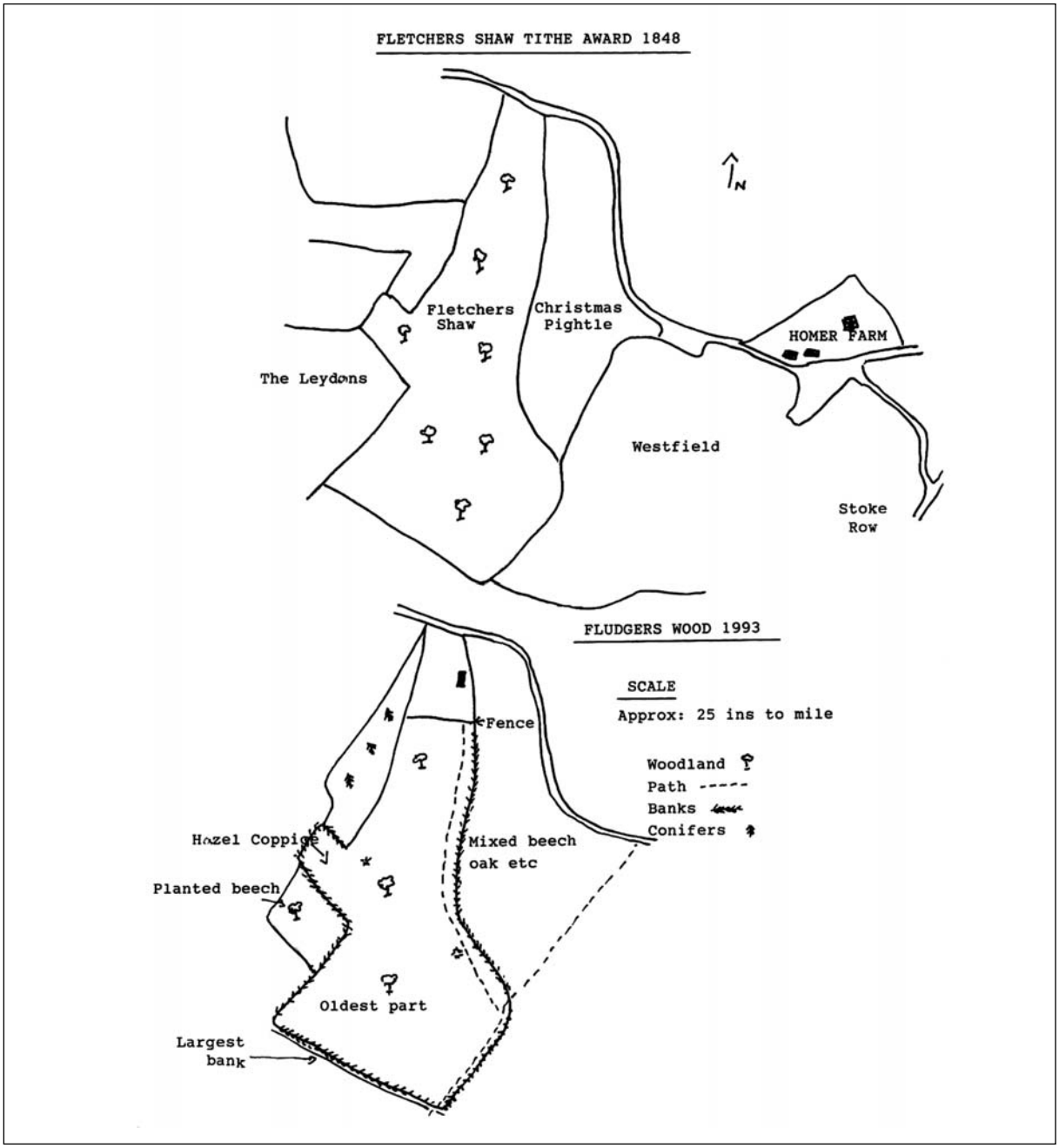


Fig. 1. Fludgers Wood in 1848 and in 1993

The Medieval and Later Ceramic Material from Great Bowling Field, Newington: A Key To Identification

Janet Sharpe

In 1984-85, SOAG members carried out an intensive fieldwalking programme in Great Bowling Field (SU 60959640), as part of an investigation into the Medieval settlement of Newington. A large quantity of ceramic material was recovered, and this was washed and carefully recorded. The material was very kindly examined by Charlie Chambers and Maureen Mellor of the then Oxford Archaeological Unit, and on the strength of what we learned from this exercise I later prepared a dichotomous key as an aid to the identification of the pottery and ceramic building material that was found.

This key, which appears to have been first written in 1993, has recently come to light in the SOAG Newington archive. It is presented here in the hope that it may prove useful to others for the identification of Medieval and later ceramic material found during fieldwalking in South Oxfordshire.

A key to the ceramic material from Great Bowling Field

1	Building material (brick, roof and floor tiles)	2
	Vessels, domestic ware	6
2	Brick	3
	Tile	4
3	Fragments of building brick, no glaze – undatable	
	Vitrified or 'glazed' brick – Post Medieval, mostly 17th-18th century	
4	Handmade roofing tile with or without a peg hole, laid on sand to dry – 13th-20th century, not closely datable but glazed roofing tile is probably Medieval	
	Floor tile	5
5	Impressed 'encaustic' pattern – Medieval, before late 14th century	
	Printed 'encaustic' pattern – Late Medieval, post Black Death, late 14th-15th century	
6	Very coarse fabric, chalk + flint temper with the chalk weathered out to form voids, black on one side and red on the other – Medieval cooking pot, 12th-13th century	
	Not as above	7
7	Hard, pale 'vitrified' fabric – stoneware or china	8
	Earthenware (NB feet from tripod pitchers, Oxford region – 12th century)	9
8	Grey salt-glazed stoneware with relief decoration, usually jugs with a mask on the neck (Bellarmine jugs), Rhenish import – 1600s-early 1700s	
	White 'china', usually blue and white transfer decorations – 18th-20th century	
9	Not glazed on the inside	10
	Glazed on inside – Post Medieval	13
10	Slashed decoration	11
	Externally applied glaze or slip	12
11	Slashed handles, strap-handled jugs – 13th-14th century	
	Slashed rims on cooking pots – mainly 11th-12th century	
12	Highly decorated with external glaze and/or slip – 13th century jugs, etc	
	Slip added to soapy, sandy ware to give a smooth surface – 14th-15th century	
13	White fabric with green glaze on the inside	14
	Fabric creamy to dark-brown in colour	15
14	Evenly applied mid-green glaze, 'Tudor green' or Surrey ware – 16th-early 17th century	
	Pale green glaze – Late Medieval-Early Post Medieval, 15th-16th century	
15	Tin glazed (bright and hard and usually finely crazed) – 18th century onwards	
	Not tin glazed	
16	Light creamy softish fabric, 'Brill type' – Post Medieval, 16th century	
	Fabric red or brown	17
17	Dark over-fired pot with bubbly glaze – Post Medieval	
	Red earthenware	18
18	Decorated with pipeclay, slip and lead (brown or yellow) and/or copper (green) glaze – 18th century	
	Brick red fabric with green glaze, 'Nettlebed ware' – 18th-19th century	

What's In A Name? The Ramblings of an Armchair Archaeologist

John White

History is defined as the study of past events and the name 'archaeology' is normally given to the study of an era from the artefacts of that time. As below the surface of my back garden there only appears to be builders' rubble, I prefer a broader definition of 'archaeology', with words, names and similar traces of the past included in the basis for any study. That way I feel I can justify calling my projects and investigations 'archaeology'.

Names abound in industrial archaeology. Care had to be taken in devising names, or else they would reflect, not the clever thoughts of their originators, but on how little they did think! Consider for example the citizens of South Wales, who set up what was known, initially, as the Swansea Harbour Improvement Trust. There is even a story that Rolls Royce nearly dropped themselves into a similar predicament when seeking a name for the car to follow on from their 'Silver Cloud'. According to this myth they were about to select 'Silver Mist' when someone told them that 'mist' had an unfortunate meaning in German. Another story but with a happy ending is that of the manufacturer of Plaster of Paris who wanted a trade name for their building products. They realised that 'Parisite' would not be good for advertising; in fact, quite the reverse. So they quite reversed it and 'Sirapite' became a very successful product.

The origin of some names is a source of argument. One such is 'Jason', the name by which Amy Johnson's aircraft was known. Although parallels could be drawn between her pioneering flights and the epics of Greek myths, it would seem that the name was 'acquired' as it appears that the aircraft was never officially named. My industrial experience makes me think that the answer is obvious. The aircraft was built to order. When an engineering project is done to order the parts are labelled so that they can be tracked through the factory. These labels would be either the order number or the name of the purchaser, normally abbreviated. Photographs I have seen of the plane under construction have the parts labelled with the abbreviation 'J/son'. And that I say is the source of the name.

Not only were ships and aircraft given names, so were the first railway engines, before they became so numerous that most were only numbered rather than named. I was looking through a book of drawings of Great Western Railway broad gauge engines and was surprised to see how wide was the range of names used. There were towns, such as Bath and Bristol; rivers, such as Amazon and Severn; birds and animals, such as Peacock and Ostrich, Antelope and Lion; famous people, such as Brunel, Stephenson (and Fulton!); and also many with a classical connection, such as Ovid and Virgil, Perseus and Prometheus, Euripides and Hades. However one name stood out, as it looked so different from the rest. It was 'Lalla Rookh'.

In railway books 'Lalla Rookh' was listed as the first of a class of ten engines built for the Great Western Railway by Robert Stephenson and Company Limited in 1855, the only class of 4-4-0 tender engines to run on the broad gauge. The manufacturer's number was 967, and the others in the 'Waverley' Class were:-

968 Robin Hood
969 Ivanhoe
970 Waverley
971 Pirate
972 Rob Roy
973 Coeur de Lion
974 Red Gauntlet
975 Abbot
976 Antiquary

This list was so mixed that it did not suggest anything to me about the origin of the name 'Lalla Rookh', other than that it may have been the name of a great battle somewhere in the east of the British Empire. A search of atlas indices yielded nothing, so, as in the rhyme about the Accond of Swot, I was left wondering who or where or why or what.

As a last resort I thought I would try an internet search. Of course my first attempt was nearly thwarted by computer problems with the internet connection but it did produce two hits. The first was an advertisement for bed and breakfast at a guest house in Devon. The second said: '*Lalla Rookh* – an oriental romance which became very popular after publication in England in 1817'. This tied in with the other book titles used as names in that group of engines, but the 'oriental romance' description conjured up a vision of God's Wonderful Railway naming an engine after the *Kama Sutra*.

As it was stated that the book had been published in England I planned to check it out in the Bodleian

Library. But first I would try the internet again after the standard cure for computer problems. I shut it down, switched off and did something else. When I tried the internet again a few days later there were no problems, except that now the search produced about 1430 references. Seven of the first ten were still for that guest house in Devon, but others answered my question: *Lalla Rookh* was an epic poem written by the Irish poet Thomas Moore in 1817. The poem could be downloaded from one of the hits, saving me the journey to Oxford. The poem was of truly epic proportions, in ten chapters and stretching to 133 pages.

The first thing I learned from this research was how ephemeral some things are. This poem was the most translated of any of its era. It had been printed in many editions, some of which were highly illustrated: for example, the Longman edition of 1861 contained 69 designs by Tenniel. However, a 100 years later, when I did the GCE English Literature course, it did not get a mention: *sic transit gloria*. This has now been corrected on the internet, where not only is there a full version of the poem, but also biographies of the author.

The life of Thomas Moore himself was as colourful as any novel. He was born in Dublin in 1779, the son of a grocer. He was educated at Trinity College and the Middle Temple. His first poetry was composed in 1793. His music and poetry made him welcome in the mansions of the English aristocracy and helped meet the debts of his high living, the Prince of Wales being his patron. In 1803 he was appointed registrar of the Admiralty Prize Court at Bermuda, but became bored and returned to England. Here his work on poems and writing words to traditional tunes, his 'Irish Melodies', was highly successful. In 1811 he married the actress Bessie Dyke. In 1817 *Lalla Rookh*, for which Longman's had paid him in advance, was published and his career was at its peak. Then his deputy, whom he had left in charge in Bermuda, defaulted, leaving Moore liable to a debt of £6000, in those days a fortune. He fled to the continent, but returned to England in 1822 when his debt to the Admiralty, which had been reduced to £1000, was paid with the help of Lord Lansdowne.

Moore had been a close friend of Lord Byron, who left him his memoirs, which described Byron's sexual exploits, shocking 19th-century society. Moore sold these memoirs to the publisher John Murray and was present when they were later burned. He then produced his own *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron* in 1830.

All Moore's children died before him. His daughters died in infancy, his younger son while a cadet of the East India Company and his elder son in Algeria as an officer of the French Foreign Legion. It is said that this loss caused his dementia several years before he died in 1852. Like Lord Byron, he left memoirs, in which he wrote about the political and other leading figures of the day. After Moore's death his friend Lord John Russell (who was twice British Prime Minister) edited a highly expurgated eight-volume version for the publisher Longmans.

With all the information obtained from the internet my 'Lalla Rookh project' had become like a Russian doll, with layers within layers. The poem *Lalla Rookh* was about the journey of the beautiful Indian princess, Lalla Rookh, to her wedding. It was this epic after which the other things, such as engines, race horses, ships, guest houses, varieties of flowers, types of ice cream and (of course) a dating agency, were named, and some of these had their own derived stories. For example, in Worthing the Lalla Rookh Project of 2004 commemorates the 11 fishermen who drowned while going to the aid of the ship 'Lalla Rookh' on 25 November 1850. That ship survived, but it was not the only one with that name. The National Maritime Museum, London, has a picture of a 'Lalla Rookh' that was built in 1876 in Liverpool. These ships travelled to exotic places and gave their names to discoveries made, such as coral reefs in the Pacific or islands in Samoa. In Australia the places are less exotic: for example, the Lalla Rookh Vineyard, or the holiday villas at the Lalla Rookh Mining Centre.

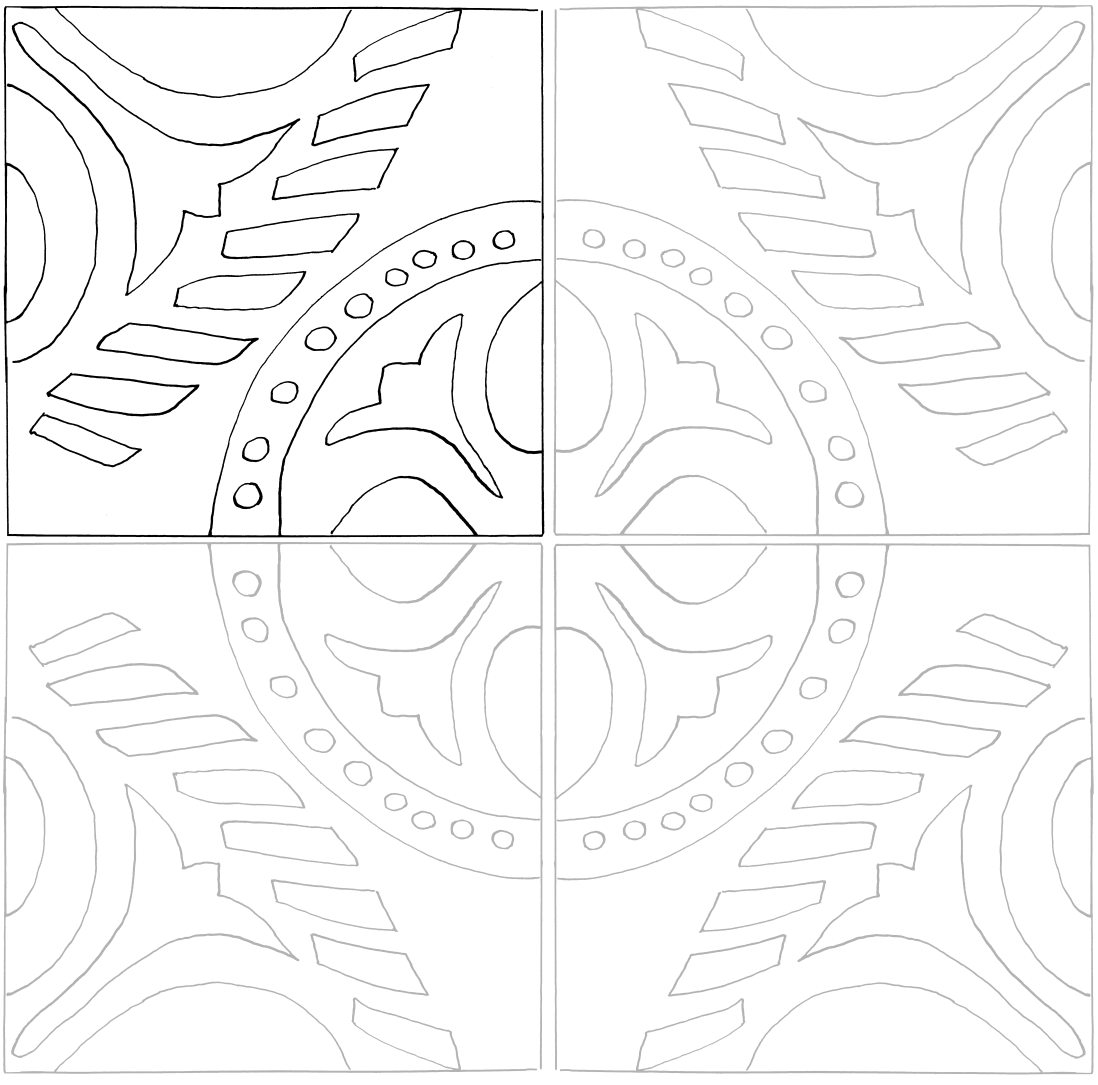
The internet also provided further information on the railway engines. All I had found in books said that the broad gauge engine 'Lalla Rookh', together with 'Rob Roy', was withdrawn from use in 1872, while the others in the class worked until 1876. A listing of later named engines showed nothing. However, from the internet I learned that the name 'Lalla Rookh', as were those of many other 'Waverley' class engines, was used in the 'Saint' class. Number 2982 started as an unnamed 4-4-2 engine numbered 182 built in June 1905, and ended as an apparently unnamed 4-6-0 engine withdrawn in June 1946. This engine was named 'Lalla Rookh' in 1906 and became what must have been one of the most frequently modified engines on the Great Western Railway. Not only was the wheel arrangement changed in 1912, but the shape of the boiler was altered eight times, almost each time the engine was serviced. Later lists do not mention the name, so I have not found out how it was lost, possibly by being too foreign sounding for use during World War II. The internet does however have

pictures of the engine in catalogues of items for sale. A picture of the 4-6-0 form is shown heading a train passing Little Bedwyn Lock, and the 4-4-2 illustration is that of a model auctioned in 2002.

One interesting part of an internet search is the way connections are thrown up with other parts of one's life. As a student I had studied the work of the British physicist William Thomson, 1824-1907, who became the first Baron Kelvin. I knew he established the temperature scale which bears his name, and also that he supervised the laying of a cable across the Atlantic in 1866. What I had not until now learned was that when he went abroad he travelled in his own boat, variously described as a steam yacht or a 126 ton schooner. The name of this boat was 'Lalla Rookh'.

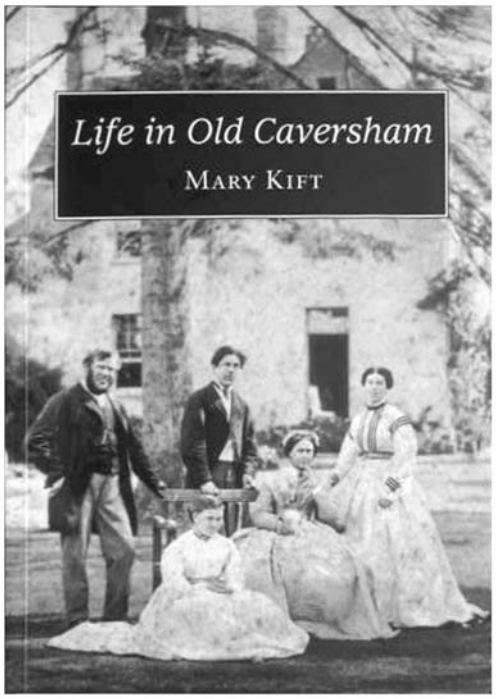
The connection which most leaps from the page is the name of the place where one lives, in my case Goring. In the catalogue of pictures in which the engine 'Lalla Rookh' was listed there it was, but for a different picture. This one showed other engines picking up water at the Goring water troughs. Another reference also mentioned Goring. It came from an extract from *The Argus* newspaper of 7 July 2000 and was about the discovery of an enormous 10-ft anchor partly buried in the sand at the low water mark of the beach. It was of course the 'other' Goring, Goring-by-Sea, and the anchor was believed to have been uncovered by the storms that battered Worthing the previous winter. No identifying marks were found on the anchor beneath the rust and barnacles but it was believed to have come from the East Indiaman 'Lalla Rookh' 150 years earlier, when the 11 fishermen lost their lives going to its aid.

As with most projects, the results of 'virtual archaeology' are only limited by the amount of time available. The biggest problem is to decide when to stop.



Medieval tile from Ipsden drawn by C. Graham Kerr. From the SOAG archives. Illustration of how a group of four may have looked

Book Review



Life in Old Caversham

by Mary Kift

Published in collaboration with John and Lindsey Mullaney of the Caversham Book Shop, 2004
119 pp., £7.99 from 'Word Play', Prospect Street, Caversham

Written by a long-standing member of SOAG, this is the second edition of a book first published in 1980 that has now been revised and updated. According to the 'blurb' on the back cover, the first edition was based on a series of articles that Mary Kift originally wrote for the *Caversham Bridge* newspaper. This is demonstrated by the fact that the book is not a stolid chronological history of Caversham, but rather a collection of lively historical vignettes that have been gathered together under thematic chapter headings and through which the author's interest in, and love for, her subject shine through.

Mary is a fount of knowledge on every aspect of Caversham life in the past. The introductory chapter, 'Earliest Times', takes the reader through the Pleistocene gravels of the Thames with their handaxes and mammoth tusks, and moves rapidly on through prehistory with particular reference to the crudely-carved stone 'Celtic head' that was dug up in a garden on Priest Hill and is now in Reading Museum. Apart from a few Roman potsherds and coins, and the exciting discovery during gravel extraction at Lower Caversham of a Christian baptismal tank dating to the Roman period, there is no evidence for a settlement

at Caversham before Saxon 'Cavesha' is recorded in the Domesday Book.

'The Thames and the Village' looks at the ways that the river has influenced life at Caversham, with its millers, boat builders, ferrymen, bargemasters and basket makers. The Saxon settlement, based around the manor of Swein whose name appears in Domesday, is thought to have been somewhere near Dean's Farm in Lower Caversham, where there may have been a ford. Boat building has been an important industry in Caversham for many centuries, and the heavy Thames barges used to ship goods up-river from London to Reading were still being built there around 1920. Steam launches, so popular with the Victorians, were also built at Caversham, which became a well-known centre for boating activities. The river also provided power for mills, and supplied the locals with fish, particularly eels, which were caught in large wicker traps or 'bucks' supported on massive wooden frames linking islands with the river bank.

The first Caversham Bridge had been built in stone by 1231, on the same site as the second and present bridges, where there were several islands in the Thames to support the foundations. The positioning of the bridge, away from the Saxon settlement, led to the development of a secondary settlement close to where St Peter's Church now stands. This first bridge spanned the river for well over 600 years before it was demolished in 1868, by which time it was in a perilous state and had been the scene of many accidental drownings.

Churches, chapels and holy wells are described under 'Holy Places'. The main west doorway and a small window re-set into the west wall of St Peter's Church date from Norman times, as does the font. The church and a considerable amount of land were given to Notley Abbey in Long Crendon by the Earl of Buckingham in 1162, and the parish of Caversham was served by Notley monks until the Dissolution. During the Middle Ages, Caversham was an important centre for pilgrims visiting the shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary Our Lady of Caversham. So thoroughly was this shrine destroyed at the Dissolution that its actual whereabouts is unknown, but it was probably close to the original manor at Lower Caversham. Contemporary accounts describe the richness of the shrine, with the silver-plated Virgin crowned with gold and jewels. Numerous holy relics were on display, including a small piece of iron which was purported to be 'part of the spear which pierced Our Lord's side', brought back from the Holy Land during the First Crusade. The shrine was also hung with wax models representing those parts of the body that the Virgin had miraculously cured for visiting pilgrims.

Other 'Holy Places' include 'The Little Chapel on the Great Bridge' and St Anne's Well. The waters of this well and a 'chalybeate spring' discovered at Emmer Green in 1803 were well known for their healing properties, and a 19th-century article in the *Medical and Physical Journal* even refers to 'Caversham Spa'.

A subsequent chapter describes 'Happenings', which range from a trial by combat between two of Henry II's greatest knights, Henry de Essex and Robert de Montfort, on 8 April 1163 (Essex was defeated and thought to be mortally wounded but was discovered to be alive when monks prepared him for burial; he was nursed back to health but perhaps wisely remained in Reading Abbey for the rest of his life), to Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1887. 'Some People and Properties' looks at some of the famous and well-to-do people who have lived in Caversham, and some of the splendid old houses that they built there, most of them now sadly demolished. 'Nearer Times' considers the schools and shops and tradesmen of Caversham during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

This book is a little gem, an excellent bedtime read, and is strongly recommended to anyone with even just a passing interest in the history of Old Caversham.

Janet Sharpe

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.
- 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.
- Pounds, shillings and pence need not be converted into pounds and new pence.
- Numbers in the text (unless given as actual units of measurement) should be spelt out as words up to and including ten and given in numerals if more than ten.
- The Harvard System should be used for references whenever possible but the author's principles will be followed when items do not lend themselves to this system, subject to discussion.

  e.g. Articles from journals and magazines:

  Margary, I. D. (1943) Roman roads with small side ditches. *Antiquaries Journal*, 23: 7-8.

  e.g. Books:

  Henig, M. and Booth, P. (2000) *Roman Oxfordshire*. Stroud, Sutton.

  e.g. Chapters from edited books:

  Karali, L. (1996) Marine invertebrates and Minoan art. *In*: Reese, D. S. (ed.) *Pleistocene and Holocene fauna of Crete*. Wisconsin, Prehistory Press. pp.413-419.
- The use of footnotes is discouraged.

Please send all contributions to the SOAG Editor Susan Sandford (postal address inside front cover; email address: suesandford@hotmail.com) before the end of February for publication in the same 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.

- 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
- 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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