

Bulletin

SOAG



SOAG Bulletin No. 66



South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group 2012



www.soagarch.org.uk

SOAG Committee 2011

President

Hazel Williams villa@soagarch.org.uk

Vice-President

Ian Clarke bbchap@soagarch.org.uk

Chairman

David Oliver chairman@soagarch.org.uk

Vice-Chairman

Nancy Nichols events@soagarch.org.uk

Honorary Secretary

Mike Vincent secretary@soagarch.org.uk

Honorary Treasurer

John Gibbs treasurer@soagarch.org.uk

Editorial Team

Janet Eastment janet.eastment@btinternet.com

John Hefferan bulletin@soagarch.org.uk

Any statements made or opinions expressed in the *SOAG Bulletin* are those of the authors alone for which the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Society does not accept responsibility. Any errors are those of the author alone.

Acknowledgements as stated in the articles.

ISSN 0953-2242

© The South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group and the authors 2012

Articles, accompanied by illustrations if appropriate, and book reviews are invited for publication in the next issue of the *SOAG Bulletin*. Authors are referred to the *Notes for Contributors* inside the back cover.

Published by the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group 2012

Printed in the United Kingdom by Lamport Gilbert Limited, 3 Darwin Close, Reading, Berkshire RG2 0TB

Cover illustration: *Coin of Allectus, AD 293-295. See article on p.26.*

Contents

Chairman's Report	<i>David Oliver</i>	2
Lectures and Events		
SOAG Lectures 2011-2012		4
SOAG Events 2011		4
Visit Reports 2011		
SOAG tour of Wallingford Castle	<i>David Cox</i>	5
SOAG summer visit – Marcham Frilford	<i>Nancy Nichols</i>	6
Reports and Articles		
<i>Brightwell Baldwin Community History and Archaeology Project (BBCHAP)</i>		
2011 Excavation in Brightwell Park	<i>Ian Clarke</i>	7
<i>Greys Mound</i>		
2011 Fieldwalking survey at Barrow Field	<i>Janet Eastment</i>	11
<i>Gatehampton Farm Roman Villa Excavation Interim Report 2011</i>	<i>Hazel Williams</i>	12
Barn owls and bones at Gatehampton	<i>Tom Walker</i>	17
Under the floor of the Gatehampton Central Room	<i>Dave Jobling</i>	22
Gatehampton coins in 2011	<i>Tom Walker</i>	26
Cruck houses in Mapledurham	<i>Pat Preece</i>	29
The Greeks had a word for it	<i>John White</i>	31

Chairman's Report

David Oliver

SOAG has had a very good year in 2011. Financially we have been made secure in the short term due to a generous bequest in the will of Cynthia Graham-Kerr. To receive this we had to achieve charity status and that required minor changes to SOAG's constitution to comply with HMRC rules. These were approved at a Special General Meeting held at Brightwell Baldwin in July, which enabled the attending members to visit the excavation in Brightwell Park making a bonus third SOAG visit of the summer.

Lectures and Visits

Two summer visits took place in 2011, to Wallingford Castle in June, and in July to the Oxford University training dig at Marcham Frilford (which set a record for attendance with a total of 37 SOAGs and guests). These visits are briefly described later in this *SOAG Bulletin*.

Extensive work and interpretation is required to present archaeology well, and we often receive the benefit of this in our winter lecture programme. As reported last year, the committee has been concerned by falling attendance figures at lectures, and thought that our isolated venue might be partly responsible. However, I am pleased to report that attendance for the 2011-12 lecture season was much higher and therefore we have decided to maintain the Whitchurch Hill hall as the lecture location for the 2012-13 programme. Attendance may well have been helped by the publicity gained by the work of Keith Lowndes who has produced and staffed displays at a number of events as well as widely distributing details of our programme.

The winter 2011-12 lecture programme was superb and for this we must thank Nancy Nichols, who organised the lecturers, and also Becky Morrison and David Cox for their tea and coffee making which rounds off every lecture.

I must thank all those members who have helped to turn this situation around. Support for the lectures is important as not only are they informative, but also talking to a small audience is disappointing to the speaker.

Publications

The 2011 edition of *SOAG Bulletin* was a bumper issue and was the last one to be edited by Sue Sandford who has held this demanding role for the last five years. Sue deserves our gratitude for all she has done. Her role will be carried on by new editor John Hefferan.

SOAG Messenger, although apparently shorter until you sum all the pages of the issues in a year, requires tremendous effort every month by Mike Green as editor. We are truly grateful for the time Mike spends gathering data, writing the editorial and many of the articles, and compiling and distributing the completed newsletter. This publication keeps all our members as up to date as possible with SOAG news. Most members now receive *SOAG Messenger* by e-mail, which is not only quicker, but is cost and handling free. I would urge any member who can switch from paper copies to electronic versions to please do this; but we will maintain the availability of the paper version for those members who are unable to change.

Field archaeology

Our two major field projects, at Gatehampton and Brightwell Park, have been excellent in 2011, and comprehensive reports on those two digs are included later in this Bulletin. Sadly, SOAG will be losing the services of Ian Clarke from Brightwell Park, as he has retired from active archaeology and has moved out of the area, although I am very glad to say he will still be working with SOAG and will continue as Vice President.

Grey's Mound

Major work at "The Mound" near Rotherfield Greys has been restricted due to David Nicholls limited availability. The good news is he has arranged with the landowner that the mound area be taken out of cultivation and it is now permanent fallow land; the most significant part of this site is thus currently protected.

Janet Eastment led a four-day field walking exercise in unseasonably warm weather at the end of September. Much flint was found and this was washed and examined in a polytunnel at Gatehampton in November by the original finders who (after a fine pub lunch and a presentation) were encouraged to sort their finds into artefacts and natural flints. An analysis of the finds is covered in a report by Janet Eastment later in this Bulletin.

Work by Reading University and SOAG over the last three years has given us a tremendous amount of geophysical data, which has allowed David to formulate outline plans for future work. More surveying of nearby fields is planned to gather more evidence of prehistoric activity in the wider area. This will provide more SOAGs with opportunities to learn the techniques of resistivity and magnetometry surveying. It is also hoped that we can at some stage open a couple of trenches to study the perimeter of the Mound itself.

Ewelme (South Oxfordshire Landscape Project)

SOAG are partners in the Victoria County History project at Ewelme. Directed by Stephen Miles of Oxford University, this is an innovative project designed to see how the inhabitants saw and interacted with their environment and landscape for over a one thousand year period

ending around 1650. At times, over half of the project volunteers have been SOAGs. The work this year has involved field walking, geophysics and digging ten test pits in various locations around the village. The test pits were supervised by professionals from Oxford Archaeology as well as Richard Oram (County Archaeologist for South Oxfordshire) who were a pleasure to work with and the finds gave an insight into the wide range of occupation that has occurred within in this small area. These finds include worked flints from prehistory and other artefacts from the Iron Age and Roman periods all the way up to modern times. The star find in test pit 10 (within the primary school garden between the school and the Alms Houses) was a medieval wall of what was possibly an unknown manor house. Stephen has many plans for the forthcoming year, but these will be subject to funding limitations. There will certainly be more geophysics and test pits and members will be informed when dates are known. There is also the tantalising possibility of excavation at Ewelme manor.

And finally ...

At the 2011 AGM, we unanimously voted for two of our long serving members to become Honorary Members. Pat Preece is a past Chairman and an acknowledged expert on local landscape archaeology and Margaret Westwood, who was one of the group whose work at Gatehampton led to the discovery of the Roman villa, was SOAG's secretary for 12 years. Both deserve this recognition, and tributes to them were included last year in *SOAG Bulletin 65*.

And finally, although we lost one committee member during the year, I am very pleased to welcome Janet Eastment who has stepped into the vacant position.

Lectures and Events

SOAG Lectures 2011-2012

2011

September 22

Dr Mary Lewis (University of Reading)

'Death of a traitor? The case of a hanged, drawn and quartered skeleton from Hulton Abbey, Staffordshire'

October 27

Dr Hella Eckardt (University of Reading)

'Foreigners in Roman Cities. A Long Way from Home: Diaspora Communities in Roman Britain'

November 24

Gary Marshall, (National Trust)

'Buildings, Gardens and Landscapes: Archaeology and Restoration in the National Trust'

2012

January 26

Dr Gill Hey, Oxford Archaeology

'Being Neolithic in the Upper Thames Valley: recent work and new perspectives'

February 23

Prof Helena Hamerow, (Oxford University, School of Archaeology)

'An Anglo-Saxon royal vill at Sutton Courtenay/Drayton'

March 22

Tim Allen, (Oxford Archaeology)

'A road through the Past: prehistoric, Roman and medieval discoveries on the A2 in North West Kent'

SOAG Events 2011

April 22

SOAG 43rd AGM followed by review of SOAG Archaeology 2011-12

June 25

SOAG tour of Wallingford Castle

Guide: Judy Dewey (Wallingford Museum)

July 15

SOAG summer visit – Marcham Frilford

Guide: Megan Price (Oxford Archaeology)

August 2

SGM and guided tour of SOAG excavation at Brightwell Park

Guide: Ian Clarke (SOAG)

November 12

One-day workshop on human remains from archaeological sites

Leaders: Louise Loe and Helen Webb (Oxford Archaeology)

Visit reports 2011

SOAG tour of Wallingford Castle

David Cox

On Saturday 25 June, SOAGs plus friends joined members of BARG in a tour of Wallingford Castle organized by SOAG David Cox and guided by Judy Dewey, the curator of the Wallingford Museum. The castle, which lies on the west bank of the river Thames close to the town's bridge, played a strategically important role in England's history from the medieval period to the end of the civil war. In its day, the castle could claim to be one of the largest in England and, although little is left of the building fabric, the scale and complexity of the three baileys and associated ditches is truly impressive.

Initially the castle was used by Alfred the Great, when it was a small fortification, and later expanded by William the Conqueror in the days after Hastings in order to secure the western approaches to London.

It then became an important fortification at the centre of the struggle between Stephen and Matilda: the latter being besieged there (unsuccessfully) for 12 weeks. In medieval times the castle continued to expand, enjoying many royal visits, particularly by Henry III, and Judy dazzled us with tales of regal comings and goings. During the mid 16th century the castle fell out of favour with the Tudors, only to be used in action again in the 17th century by the Royalists during the English civil war. In response, Cromwell ordered its total destruction. Eventually the grounds were sold by the Crown to be turned into gardens in the early Victorian period. What now remains is a beautiful and evocative site, protected from development and fully open to the public.



SOAG summer visit – Marcham Frilford

Nancy Nichols

The archaeological site at Marcham Frilford, a few miles west of Abingdon, was the venue for SOAG's summer visit, on Friday 15 July. In what must be one of the most well attended SOAG events ever, 25 SOAGs and friends met first for lunch at The Dog House hotel nearby, and then 37 gathered for a tour of the archaeology. Excavations on the site over the past ten years have revealed evidence of occupation from the later Bronze Age, through the Iron Age and the Romano-British periods. Megan Price from Oxford Archaeology led us around the many open trenches.

Recent fieldwork at the site has concentrated on two different areas: the area of a Roman religious complex and an area of predominantly Iron Age activity. In the first area, various Romano-British structures have been excavated and were open to view, including a temple and a semi-amphitheatre, the purpose of which is still a topic of speculation. The end of a drain leaving the semi-amphitheatre towards the river Ock, which bounds the site on the south, was uncovered during this year's work and found to contain an abundance of late Roman detritus, including large quantities of pottery and animal bone, 4th century coins, and a smaller number of other finds. Also open to view was a large waterlogged pit, from which a number of exceptional finds had been recovered. The digging had yielded a leather shoe, two pottery vessels, one with a hole punched into its side, and a wooden writing tablet, an unexpected find outside a Roman military

site, providing evidence for a literate clientele at the ritual complex.

The area of Iron Age activity, consisting of four large trenches, was also open to the SOAG visitors. Two sets of enclosures had been revealed, together with an area containing a large number of shallow pits and a few larger pits. Finds from these pits included quantities of well-preserved Iron Age pottery and animal bone and, in addition, two crucibles and large amounts of iron slag that gave evidence for metal working. The unusual character of the enclosures, which appear not to be domestic, together with ring-ditches to the east and a large barrel-shaped enclosure to the west, seem to have been important ritual markers, later replaced by the equally unusual Romano-British site. Each year the excavations have revealed more fascinating questions about the age and purpose of this Romano-British site. Interpretations of the site are still developing, but the current ten-year phase of digging has now ended in order to catch up with the backlog of finds processing and documentation.

(More information on this site can be found in interim reports published in *South Midlands Archaeology* and in the article "Continuity and Religious Practices in Roman Britain: The Case of the Rural Religious Complex at Marcham/Frilford, Oxfordshire", by Zena Kamash, Chris Gosden and Gary Lock, *Britannia* 41, 2010, 95-125. See <http://www.arch.ox.ac.uk/VRPI.html>.)



SOAGs and friends with guide Megan Price (kneeling). (Photo by SOAG Bernard Clucas)

Reports and Articles

Brightwell Baldwin Community History and Archaeology Project (BBCHAP)

2011 Excavation in Brightwell Park

Ian Clarke

Introduction

A resistivity survey in Brightwell Park in 2008/09 located the site of the old manor house that was burnt down in 1788, revealing an extensive complex of buildings with clear signs of surrounding formal gardens, in close proximity to the well-known Brightwell Park dovecote. (Clarke, 2009). Excavation of this site commenced in 2009 with a single large area trench (Trench 1) which was partly reopened and extended in 2010. The conclusion from 2009/10 was that we had located the probable main entrance to the late medieval manor house and it was postulated that there had been a gate (or possibly a gatehouse) leading into a courtyard in front of the main house. There appeared to have been significant remodelling of this area in the post-medieval. (Clarke, 2011a & 2011b).

In early 2011 we learned that Brightwell Park was to be sold. With no guarantee that excavations would be possible in future years, we decided to open a sequence of relatively small trial trenches – ‘keyhole’ style – over the supposed site of the main house and its assumed terrace overlooking the formal gardens to the east. The research aims outlined were: to explore the extent of the buildings believed to be represented by the large, roughly rectangular geophysical anomalies to the south of the dovecote and east of Trench 1 (T1); to determine whether these do indeed represent a large, high status dwelling (i.e. the manor house); to probe earlier contexts to determine whether the site does date back to the medieval; and to look for evidence of destructive fire within the main buildings. Excavation took place from 23 July to 7 August, 2011.

This report is closely based on an interim report to be published in 2012 in *South Midlands Archaeology* No. 42.

Location of trenches

Possible locations for a maximum of twelve trenches were selected in advance, to be changed or extended in the light of discoveries in the field. In the final count eight were opened, numbered T2 – T8 and T12. Only four were opened at first: T2, T3, T4 and T6 were located over what was assumed to be the lines of west walls of the main house. However, it

became clear in the first week that these trenches had revealed what was probably a much larger terrace and it was necessary in the second week to extend the trenches westwards to discover what is in fact an east facing wall of the house, not a west wall. This placed the building between this wall and a parallel wall found on the east side of Trench 1 and (rather unexpectedly) precisely in the area previously thought to be a courtyard. Trenches T5 and T7 were added thereafter to explore links with walls found previously in T1. T8 and T12 explored outlying features of the terrace. The principal discoveries were as follows.

Trench 2 revealed the core of a substantial chalk and lime mortar wall running NNW-SSE and another at right-angles running ENE from it, forming a tee shape. The eastern facing of the north-south wall had been robbed out but the other wall appeared to be of full width at the base. The area in the south-east corner was made up with rubble in a soil matrix to the full depth of the walls, but that in the north-east corner largely by soil with some rubble. An area of soil to the west of the north-south wall was excavated only to a shallow depth but did not appear to contain significant rubble. The geophysics suggests the north-south wall continues to a point close to the dovecote but this was not proven.

Trench 3 also revealed the core of a wall running NNW-SSE of similar construction to and in-line with that in T2. An external cobbled surface on the east side had been cut through to rob out the external facing. A second wall appeared to run WSW at right angles to this, although this was not fully excavated. Any possible floor surface in the internal (north-west) corner of these walls had been robbed out.

Trench 4 revealed a chalk and lime mortar core of a wall running NNW-SSE, parallel to but offset west from that in T2/3 by about 3m. Again there was an external surface to the east side of it, this time of levelled and compacted sandy-gravel and edged by an inset line of weathered chalkstone slabs laid parallel to the wall and about 2.5m from it. A second wall ran WSW at right-angles to the first, this time aligned with a similar wall in T1 found in 2010. Significantly



Fig. 1. Trenches 4 & 7: in T4 the later east wall of the house (sectioned) was built across a medieval tiled hearth. It continues beyond through T7 with a part cobbled surface to the east

these walls overlay earlier features, notably a large, late-medieval, tiled hearth edged with a line of dressed limestone slabs set into a clay floor. A fragment of 14/15th century Tudor greenware was found on the hearth surface, lodged between the tiles. The hearth backed onto an earlier wall running WSW-ENE and

both this wall and the hearth tiles were fire blackened. The hearth was built over by the later wall, which ran at right angles to the hearth and its backing wall. The later wall was sectioned to reveal the hearth (Fig. 1). Floors associated with the later walls had been robbed out but the earlier clay floor had survived.

Trench 6 again revealed a NNW-SSE chalk and lime mortar wall core, similar to and in line with that in T4 but less well preserved. Outside it on the east side was an identical gravel surface with single line of inset chalkstone slabs, in line with that found in T4. The wall core here ran parallel to two more closely-spaced walls on its west side, both of rough dressed chalkstone slabs, one with a lime mortar and one with a sandy-clay mortar bond. This is suggestive of successive remodelling of the façade of the building here.

Trench 5 was placed adjacent to the north-east corner of Trench 1 to explore a possible west-east wall link with T3. Although the emerging archaeology was suggestive of such a link (perhaps a robbed out wall) there was insufficient time to complete the excavation to be certain.

Trench 7 was opened between T3 and T4 to further explore the wall links between features in these two trenches and with T1. Again the core of the main NNW-SSE wall was revealed, together with an expected wall at right-angles aligned with one found in T1 in 2010. Just as in T4, the main north-south wall had been built over late medieval features that followed the VSW-ENE alignment. Outside this wall on its east side was a cobbled surface, similar to that found in T2. (See Fig. 1).

Trench 8 explored a geophysical anomaly towards the south and angled at 45° to the main features. This turned out to be a deep and compacted gravel surface with soil to one side, perhaps part of an ornamental terrace path and garden. However, excavation below this revealed a quite unexpected and substantial wall, again running NNW-SSE but not aligned with any found in the other trenches. The wall was beautifully built of large, rough-hewn chalkstone slabs with a sandy-clay bond (Fig. 2). On each side were signs of a clay floor reinforced with chalkstone slabs, largely robbed out.

Trench 12 explored the eastern edge of the terrace. Here we were looking for indications of a terrace wall, or possibly evidence of steps leading to the gardens beyond. Neither of these were found, but digging through the layers of (assumed) terrace make-up rubble, revealed two drains running at an angle out of the terrace on a roughly S-N alignment (Fig. 3). The earlier



Fig. 2. Trench 8: a clay bonded medieval wall



Fig. 3. Trench 12: the medieval drains

one was a shallow, open surface drain constructed entirely of rough-hewn chalkstone and associated with a partly robbed out paved surface made from very large, rough-hewn chalkstones. These features were laid directly on the natural soil. This drain had, at a later date, been replaced by one on almost the same line but at a slightly higher level, this time constructed from mixed chalkstone and brick with a floor of roof-tiles. It was not clear whether this also was an open drain or whether it had once been covered, but given its untidy mixed construction the latter seems more likely. Any associated paving and cover slabs had been robbed out. These drains went out of use when the terrace was raised.

Conclusions

A full report and closer dating will have to await the outcome of more detailed analysis of the data and finds from the 2011 excavations, but it is already clear that conclusions reached in 2009/10 must be substantially reconsidered. Some broad and tentative conclusions can be offered at this stage.

We can now be confident that there was a substantial post-medieval house here, with a large ornamental terrace, and that house overlies an earlier one from the late medieval. The evidence in T4, T6 and T7 suggests there was extensive remodelling of the original manor house, involving significant demolition and rebuilding. This is likely to have taken place in the late 16th and early 17th centuries and may reasonably be associated with the building of the extant stone-built dovecote. The principal buildings of the later house appear to be aligned with the dovecote on a principal NNW-SSE axis – which interestingly enough was our original hypothesis in 2008/09 (Clarke, 2009) – but their full extent and ground plan still remains unclear.

Based on the evidence of the large hearth in T4 and earlier features in T7, the medieval house may have had in part a WSW-ENE alignment, occupying part of the later terrace. We cannot at this stage rule out that it had a courtyard, as suggested in 2009/10, although the location of this must now be uncertain. The paving and surface drains beneath the east side of the later terrace are clearly associated with this earlier house.

The enigmatic clay-bonded wall in T8, buried under the later terrace, is part of a substantial medieval building, separate and removed some distance from the site of the manor house, although still conforming to a general NNW-SSE alignment. The fine construction of this wall suggests a building of some status, but whether chapel, barn, or another house is unclear.

Regarding the destructive fire of 1788, the comprehensive post-demolition stripping of the site means that in any case much evidence has been removed. All the central trenches contained varying evidence of burning, although often this was associated with localised and earlier fires. However, the wide spread of charcoal fragments in the upper levels and the frequent occurrence of fire damaged window glass and melted lead comes, together with fragments of decorative iron hinges and lock plates, would appear to provide sufficient evidence for the 1788 event.

Lastly, we found no evidence of post-demolition reuse of the site. Unwanted rubble was spread over the stripped buildings but the later, formal terrace appears to be well preserved beneath the thin top soil.

Acknowledgments

This has been my last time leading a SOAG and BBCHAP team in the field, so I would like to give a very big thank you to all the SOAG members and other volunteers for their skill and hard work, not least to Site Supervisors Peter Shackleton and Janet Eastment, Site Manager Mike Vincent (Fig. 4) and Finds Officer (and my lovely wife) Catherine. And lastly, on behalf of myself, the field team and SOAG, a very special thank you to landowners Tessa and Nigel Mogg, who sadly have now moved from their beloved Brightwell Park. We wish them well in their new home, nearby in Watlington.



Fig. 4. Trench 4 – photographing the emerging medieval hearth (Peter Shackleton balanced on the ladder; Janet Eastment holding it and Mike Vincent offering suitable advice, no doubt egged on by Kaz Greenham kneeling in Trench 7)

References

- Clarke, I. (2009) 2008 geophysical survey in Brightwell Park: the discovery of a lost manor house. *SOAG Bulletin* No. 63, South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group.
- Clarke, I. (2011a) Brightwell Baldwin Community History and Archaeology Project: Brightwell Park 2011 Interim Report. *South Midlands Archaeology* No. 41, CBA South Midlands Group.
- Clarke, I. (2011b) Brightwell Baldwin Community History and Archaeology Project: 2010 excavation in Brightwell Park. *SOAG Bulletin* No. 65, South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group.

Greys Mound

2011 Fieldwalking survey at Barrow Field

Janet Eastment

At the beginning of 2011 the whole of Barrow Field was designated for cultivation with just the immediate area around the mound being left fallow. This presented an opportunity for a fieldwalking survey of the entire field and permission was granted from the landowners for this to take place in the autumn. Previously just a portion of the field had been ploughed and this had been fieldwalked in May 2010 (see *SOAG Bulletin* 65 for the full report).

The survey was carried out by a group of 14 SOAG members over a four-day period at the end of September. The area was walked in 25m transects with the collection bags being changed at 25m intervals, in total 81 bags were collected from the area surveyed. A finds processing day took place in the Polytunnel at Gatehampton during November (Fig 1), when everyone had the opportunity to wash and examine the flints they had collected and to learn how to analyse their attributes.



Fig. 1. Finds processing and analysis in the Polytunnel

The results of the survey show a fairly even distribution of finds from all over the field (Fig. 2) with around 50 items of worked flint being recovered. Initial analysis of the assemblage shows the majority of finds date to the Later Bronze Age period. However, there are a few flints in the collection that represent the Late Neolithic/ Early Bronze Age lithic industries, in particular a small worked out core of good quality black flint (Fig. 3).

Acknowledgements

May I express my grateful thanks to Sue and Sam Samuels for their continued support and for permission to work on their land. Also to all the SOAG members who participated in the fieldwalking survey.

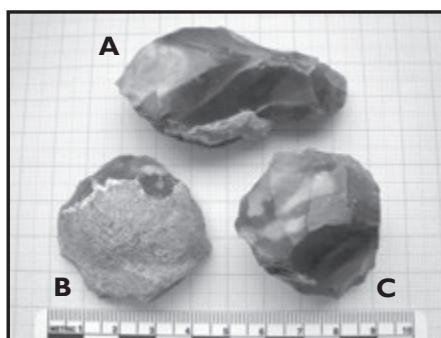


Fig. 3. Some of the worked flint collected during the 2011 survey. A and B: scrapers; C: core.

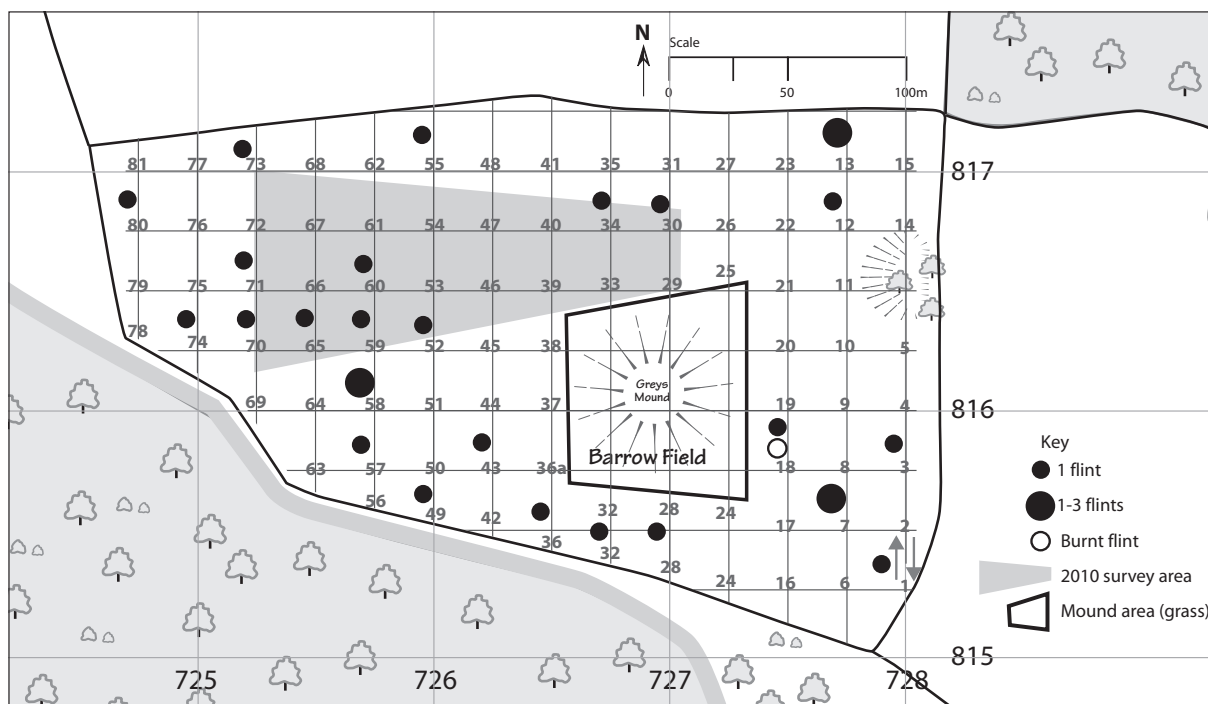


Fig. 2. Distribution of the worked flint collected during the survey

Gatehampton Farm Roman Villa Excavation

Interim Report 2011

Hazel Williams

Introduction

The excavation continues to be one of SOAG's major projects, open every Sunday from June to October, designed to make archaeology an accessible and enjoyable experience for both experienced diggers and those new to excavation. More than 50 people worked at the site during 2011 and this included families and young children, as well as students.

A geophysical survey of the eastern side of the site field was completed and the opportunity taken to include some onsite training for diggers. Plans were made to extend this further into the adjacent car park area in 2012 to discover the full extent of the villa building and enclosure to the east. Investigations beneath the floor of the central room have provided insights into earlier phases of the building and indications of the use of this part of the building as a working area, very different to the later phases excavated during 2010. This investigation is fully reported in a separate article by Dave Jobling.

A larger trench was opened between Trench 7 and the former Trench 3, backfilled in 2000; wall footings and surface features have been found linking the parts of the building found in the two trenches. A pit feature was sectioned in the north corridor. A number of coins, from both the central room area and the new area between Trench 7 and Trench 3 are reported and discussed in a separate article by Tom Walker.

High level photos of the site

The last elevated photos of the site were taken in 2006 when the western end of the building, the bathhouse area, was still open (Fig. 1). This year, using a camera on a pole, it was possible to take another set of high-level photos of the current trenches (Fig. 2). It is hoped that it might be possible to combine these photos at some stage. The high-resolution images are a valuable record of the layout and structure and also show in detail walls, features and the relationships between them very clearly.

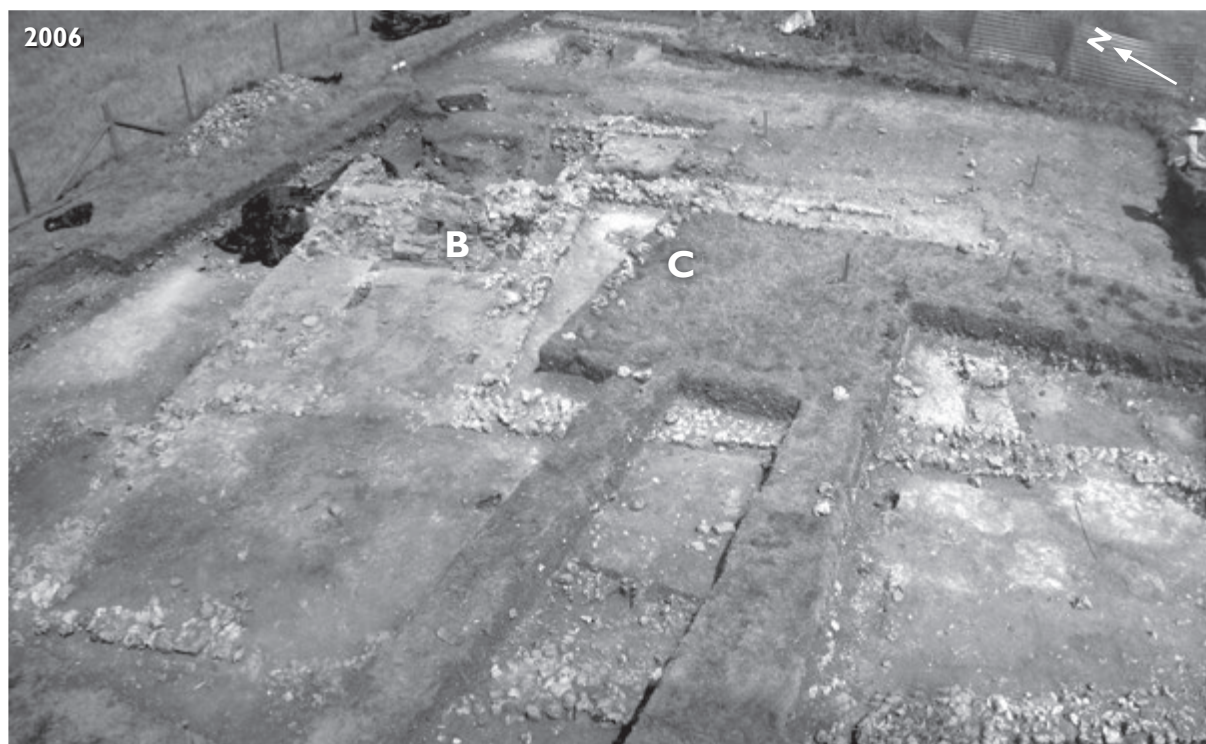


Fig. 1. Elevated photograph taken in 2006 showing the bath house (B) (now backfilled) and the central room (C)

The photograph shown as Fig. 2 was taken in July 2011. A small slot can be seen in the floor of the central room and work in progress on the hearth area on the northern side of the room. In the north corridor a half-sectioned pit is visible. Part of a room with two hearths and a furnace lies on the eastern side of the trench. In the north east corner is the newly opened area between Trench 7 and Trench 3, with newly excavated walls shown in white.

Geophysical Survey

A large area of the landscape west of the villa, including the villa enclosure ditch, has been surveyed in the past, but only small areas of the site field had been surveyed, usually ahead of excavation. Little is also known about the extent of the building, or its enclosure, to the east. A small exploratory trench dug in the mid 1990s seemed to confirm the continuation

of the exterior north wall through the hedge line, and a quick resistivity survey either side of the hedge also appeared to confirm this but may have picked up areas of gravel hard standing in the car park area. So a more comprehensive survey of both the site field and adjacent car park area was planned and the first part of this completed in 2011.

Fig. 3 shows the geophysical survey in relation to the trenches. An area 20 metres by 40 metres, in 10 metre grid squares, was surveyed using SOAG's RM 15 Resistance Meter. Two of the grid squares on the eastern side were omitted, in part due to proximity to the hedge but also because a 2 metre wide section north to south across this area and the enclosure ditch had already been excavated as part of Trench 3. The enclosure ditch (a) is shown continuing eastward with a darker area of backfill close to Trench 3.

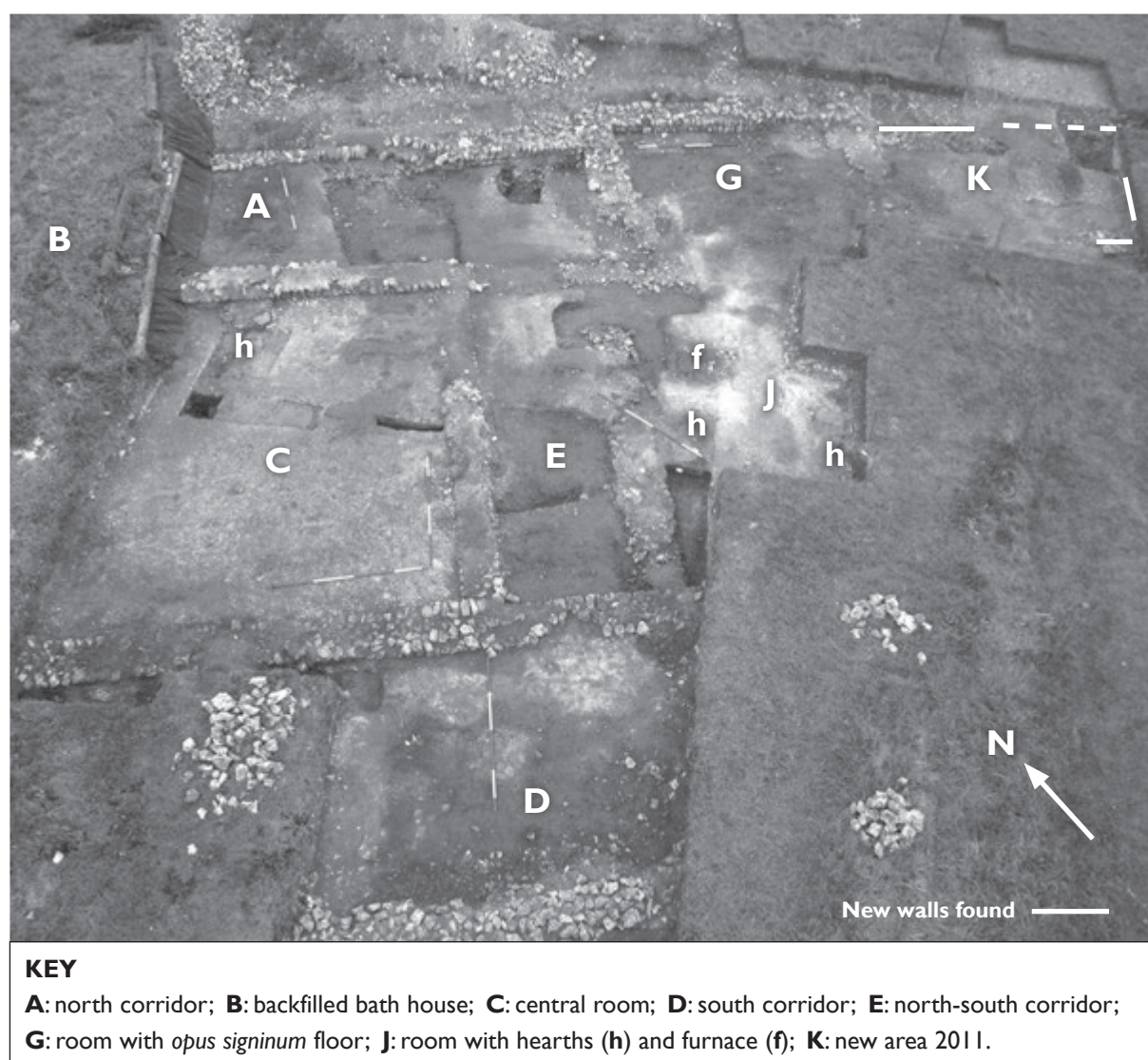


Fig. 2. Elevated photo of the site in July 2011

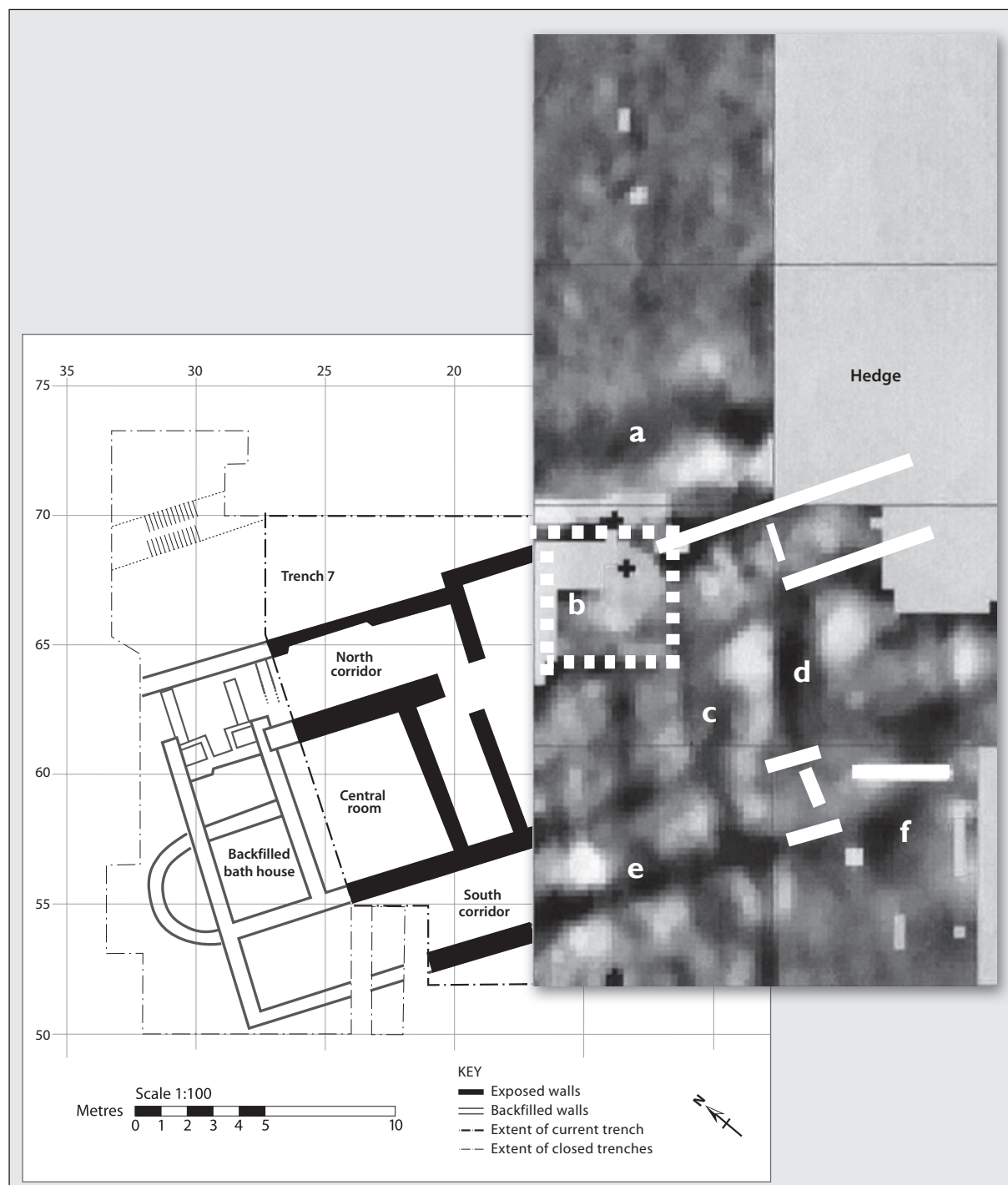


Fig. 3. Site plan with geophysical survey

Area (b) is the new trench area between Trench 7 and Trench 3, the focus of excavation in 2011. A possible wall (c) north to south across the building is close to the eastern edge of the new trench area (b); a wall was found during excavation in that area in 2011 and is discussed below. Another possible wall west of (c) seems plausible as the gap between the wall shown in Trench 7 and (c) is nearly ten metres and it is likely there is another division of the space. The walls previously excavated in Trench 3 are shown in

white and the dark area (d) is in fact the backfill of the long narrow southern part of Trench 3, less than 3 metres wide. It appears that the south wall of the building continues east (e) and the inner wall on that side too. Area (f) is less clear due to the proximity to the old farm shop and other obstacles. It is difficult to determine whether the exterior south wall continues or turns inward at this point. The plan is to extend this survey into the car park area in 2012 and this may answer some of these questions.

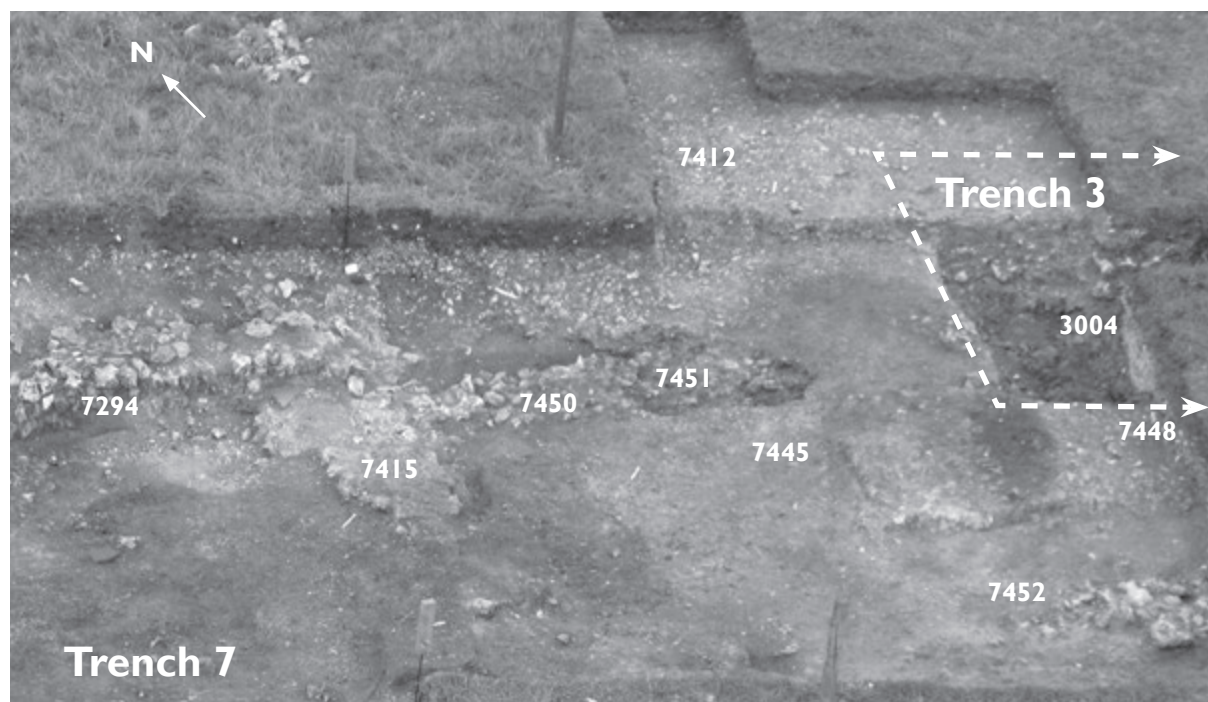


Fig. 4. Linking Trench 7 and Trench 3

Linking Trench 7 and Trench 3

The north east corner of Trench 7 was extended (Fig. 4) to include part of the former Trench 3 resulting in an open area of trench just over 6 metres by 5 metres. A small part of this trench area was excavated in 2010; features already exposed included the end of the exterior north wall in Trench 7 (7294), part of a flint and mortar surface (7415) and a hearth area over patches of *opus signinum* floor in the room to the west. In the re-opened section of Trench 3 the irregular broken end of the exterior wall (3004) could be seen, both the upper courses of large flint cobbles and the lower foundation level of smaller flint stones ending abruptly. Within 0.5 metres of the wall line outside the building is an area of fine flint gravel (7412) overlying heavier gravel.

The overlying soil and rubble layer (7365) had fewer flint stones and cobbles than usually seen close to a wall on this site. This contrasts with what was found to the west in Trench 7 where the north wall was at first difficult to distinguish within a large spread, up to 1-5 metres wide in places, of flint stones. An even greater quantity of collapsed flint wall rubble was found in Trench 3, extending more than two metres on the south side of the wall line. This could suggest there was no wall across the gap between but the evidence emerging during 2011 supports the theory that there was a wall and that it was robbed out.

Fig. 4 shows the area in July 2011 when most of the overlying deposit had been removed. The flint and mortar feature (7415) extends south 1.5 metres

from the end of the wall (7294) and it is from this in-turn of the north wall in Trench 7 that a one metre section of wall (7450) extends towards the 'robbed' gap and is in direct alignment with the wall (3004) in Trench 3. East of (7450) for almost 3 metres is a 0.5 metre wide band of loose flint stones with no mortar between, although some of the loose material has mortar adhering and the soil immediately above has a yellowish hue and is a little more sandy. There is then a gap of just under a metre before the end of the substantial flint wall in Trench 3. At present neither (7450) nor (7415) appear to be as solid and well constructed as the north wall (7294) in Trench 7 or the similar wall (3004) in Trench 3. There may be more solid foundations beneath the loose section of flint stones but there was no time to look at this before the end of the season and this will be done in 2012. It is likely this section of wall was robbed out leaving the loose material with mortar attached. The northern edge of the concrete floor (7445) does conform to this wall line, as do the gravel deposits outside the building.

One of the most interesting features found was the wall (7448) extending southward at an angle of approximately 30 degrees to the eastern edge of the trench, continuing under the baulk. This may be the north to south wall (c) that was picked up on the geophysical survey. A one metre long section is visible, approximately 40cm across at its widest point. It may be quite substantial and does appear well built; a line of large angular dressed flint cobbles, with flint packing

within the wall as far as can be seen and a solid foundation layer of mortar and small flint stones. It is very likely that this formed a T junction with the north wall close to the end of (3004). It is unfortunate that this possible junction coincides with a section robbed (and probably excavated) down to the natural gravel on which the buildings wall foundations are usually set. The other possibility is that it joined (3004) at a right angle and if so may be part of a different phase of the building to the east. However, a further flint wall (7452) encloses this room on the south side and is in alignment with the inner walls of the rooms to the west and similar walls found in Trench 3. We hope to have a better understanding of this by the end of 2012.

Several coins were found in this area and are reported separately by Tom Walker. The north-south wall was discovered on the last day of excavation and close by, a rim fragment of a green glass bottle, shown in Fig. 5.

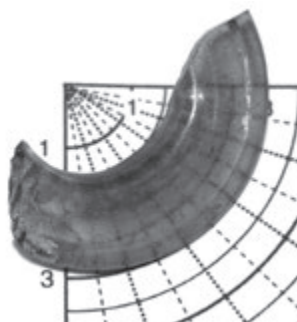


Fig. 5. Rim fragment from a green glass bottle

Pit in north corridor

At the eastern end of the north corridor, a hearth area with charcoal and burnt deposits lay over the flint and mortar sub floor; in the angle of the north and end wall. Some of this sub floor had already been removed and the remaining layer was finally cleared in 2011. This revealing the outline of a pit that appeared to be cut into the reddish silty levelling layer under the sub floor and the natural gravel layer beneath; several tile fragments rested at an angle around the edge of the pit. The pit is 1.5 by 1 metre, sub rectangular with a U shaped profile with a sharp slope and flat base 0.46m deep. The fill consisted of building rubble; sandy silt, mortar and chalk mixed with large and small flints, limestone and terracotta tile fragments. Pottery found within the fill included two pieces of Samian ware. The impression is that this is building rubble from elsewhere in the villa. The original purpose of the pit is unclear; there is no evidence to suggest what it might have been used for but the deep gravel would have provided a cool place for food storage, for example. It may have been used during a construction phase when the silty levelling layer was already in place but more solid floors were still to be laid.

Summary

In 2011, much of the excavation done was aimed at a better understanding of the early development of this part of the villa building. Although the layout of the building with the bathhouse at the western end has been established, it was clear that this represented only the later phases of the villa; when the bathhouse and associated higher status rooms were in use, and the eventual abandonment and collapse of the structure. Work is still to be done to get a full understanding of the earlier configuration and use of the building but evidence so far is beginning to suggest that this began as a working area, possibly even an open barn that was eventually enclosed and turned into a higher status room, and that later phase may have coincided with the addition of the bath house. We have made good progress on this and have made a good start on bringing together the evidence found in the two major trenches of the site; Trench 7 and the earlier, pre 2000, Trench 3. Geophysical survey and excavation in 2011 have provided a more coherent picture of the villa building within the current site field. It is hoped that it will be possible to establish the full extent and character of the villa further east.

Acknowledgements

First, I must express our gratitude to Sarah and Roger Edmunds for their continued support of the project and for allowing us to maintain large trenches on their land. I would also like to express our appreciation to everyone else associated with the site, including Robin Cloke, for the help and practical support that they provide.

Also very important to this project is the skill and enthusiasm of the diggers, most of them SOAG members who have worked on the site regularly for several years; their knowledge and experience is of great benefit to the project. The project also relies on a small team who ensure that everything runs smoothly; my particular thanks to Steve Gibson, our hard working Deputy Director, to John Hefferan for his dedication to recording all our CBM and to David Cox, our Finds Officer on site. Thanks also to Dave Jobling and Tom Walker for their work and further research on the central room and the associated finds.



Fig. 6 Making a start, June 2011

Barn owls and bones at Gatehampton

Tom Walker

Previous reports in the Bulletin have described small animal bones found in the collapse debris of the large square room in the centre of Gatehampton Roman villa (Sharpe 2007; 2009). The bones were initially noted during excavations in 2002 when a total of 182 animals were identified. A further 173 individuals were identified in material from a small excavation in the adjacent area in 2008. The assemblages were considered to be from barn owl pellets, from owls roosting in the building before collapse of the roof after abandonment by the human occupants.

At the time of these discoveries only half of the room had been excavated. The remainder of the collapse debris was excavated in 2010 down to the chalk floor overlying geology. The opportunity was taken to recover more bones from the new excavation to establish the area over which the owl pellets had been dropped, and to estimate how long the abandoned building may have been occupied by owls.

Methods

The central room containing the bones measures 5.7m x 5.2m, an area of nearly 30m². Excavations before 2010 left about 16m² (Fig. 1 shading), where the collection of debris with bones could be conducted in a systematic manner. This was divided into 1m squares using the grid markers to define sample squares. The layer containing the bones varied in thickness but on average was about 25cm, and was made up of a mixture of chalk, mortar and plaster, together with numerous *tegulae* and *imbrices* from the collapsed roof (Williams 2011). During excavation a large number of nails was found, presumably from roof timbers (Jobling 2011), confirming this deposit as building collapse.

The limit of previous excavations is shown with a dashed line. The shading shows the area excavated in 2010, with the darker shading indicating the area from

which the bones were analysed, with the individual squares numbered. The area where the bones were found in 2002 is marked *. The 2008 bones were from the left half of square 3.

After removal of large fragments of ceramic building material and stones, the excavated material was sieved on site through a sieve with a 1cm mesh, and the residue (about 800kg) passing through the sieve was placed in labelled rubble bags. This was later wet sieved through a 2mm mesh sieve; tests with the additional use of a 1mm sieve showed that an insignificant number of the maxillae and mandibles (those bones used for identification of small mammal species) were lost, and the additional time needed for the finer sieving was not considered justified. The residue after wet sieving was air dried, and all maxillae, mandibles, and loose incisor teeth removed, as well as larger bones. No attempt was made to extract every bone.

Initially sub-samples were processed from the entire 16m² excavated area but it quickly became apparent that bones were confined almost entirely to a strip 1m wide by 4.5m in length (Fig. 1 dark shading) with only very few in the adjacent strip to the south east; material further still to the south east did not contain any bones. In view of the quantity of material that would require processing if the whole room was to be analysed, it was decided only to investigate in detail the 1m strip with substantial numbers of bones. This included the small area where the bones were collected in 2008 (the north west half of square 3), and they were added to those found during the present excavation.

The bones were extracted from the sievings using a low power stereo microscope. Identification of the facial elements was made to species level using standard reference texts (Lawrence & Brown 1967;

Thomas 2008; Yalden 2009). Loose incisor teeth from voles and mice were not identified to species. Frog/toad numbers were obtained by the number of conjoined limb bones; bird numbers were counted by the number of beaks.

Although it is unlikely that this quantity of bones would be intrusive it was considered important to date the

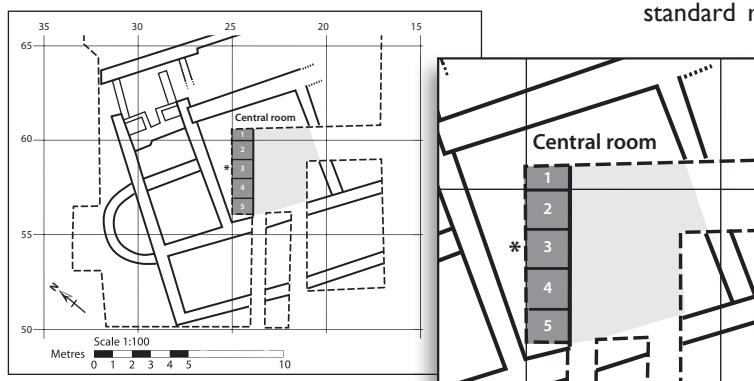


Fig. 1. The west end of Gatehampton villa,

deposit objectively. A radiocarbon date was therefore obtained on larger limb bones (either rat or water vole) from the lower part of square 1, two bones being used to obtain sufficient material for carbon dating, performed by Beta Analytic (Miami).












Results

A total of 1910 individual maxillary and mandibular bones were present, together with an additional 1326 loose incisor teeth that had become detached from their relevant bone. Table 1 shows the minimum

number of individuals (MNI) for each species within each square. 'Excess incisors' is a number of the loose teeth that could not be accounted for by the number of jaw bones.

The Total column differs from the sums of the squares for individual species, as it allows for the fact that different bones from the same animal may be in different squares; for example the left mandible of a wood mouse may be in square 2 but its right mandible in square 3.

Table 1. The numbers of each species found in each square

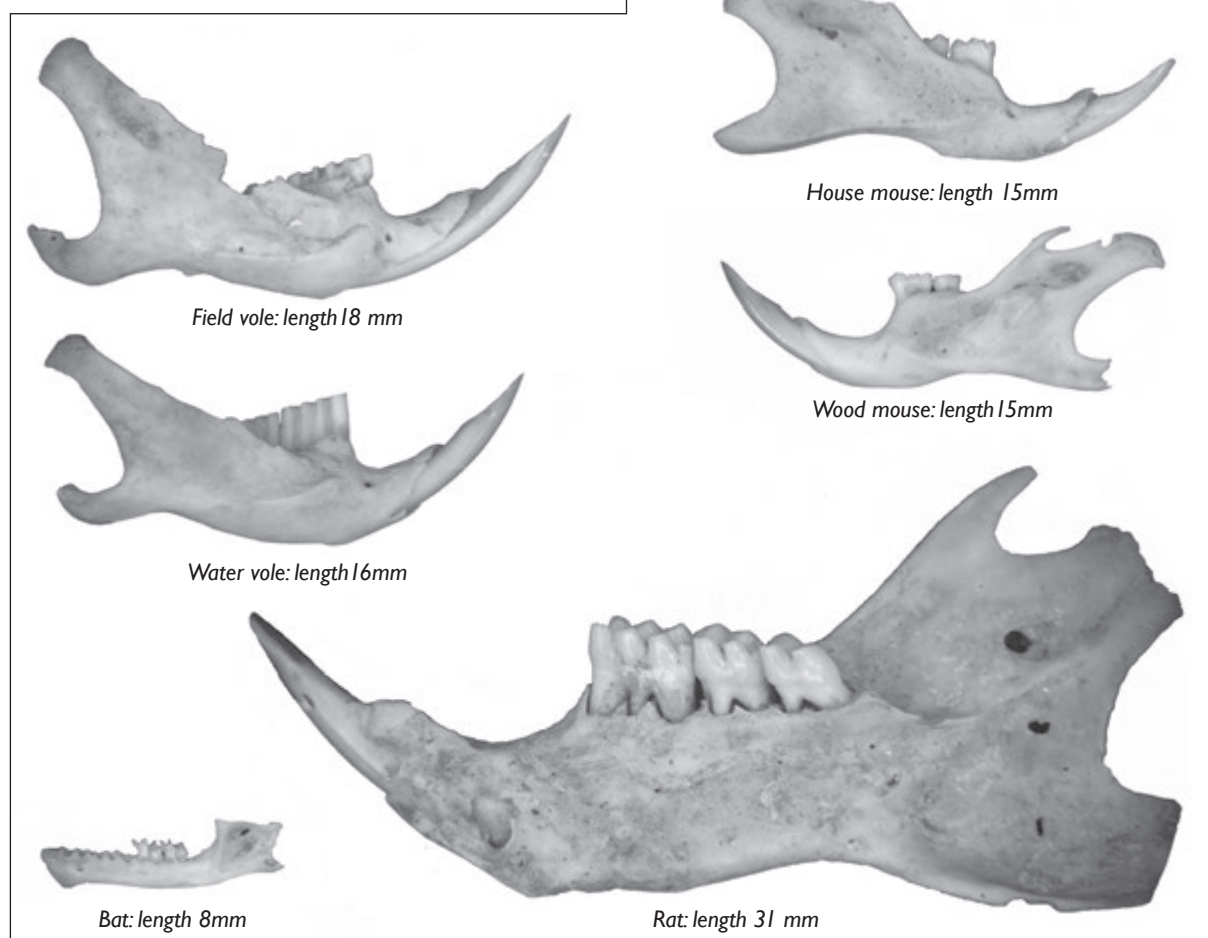
Square	1	2	3	4	5	Total	%	Mandible profile
Area (m ²)	0.57	0.95	0.93	0.88	0.74	4.07		
Pygmy shrew <i>Sorex minutus</i>	7	5	8	8	4	27	3.6	
Water shrew <i>Neomys fodiens</i>	3	3	3	6	3	15	2.0	
Common shrew <i>Sorex araneus</i>	19	15	39	38	15	133	17.6	
Wood mouse <i>Apodemus</i> sp.	78	24	67	81	28	270	35.7	
Harvest mouse <i>Micromys minutus</i>	7	3	5	10	2	25	3.3	
House mouse <i>Mus musculus</i>	3	3	4	4	—	12	1.6	
Black rat <i>Rattus rattus</i>	4	2	7	2	1	12	1.6	
Field vole <i>Microtus agrestis</i>	48	14	40	42	17	155	20.5	
Bank vole <i>Myodes glareolus</i>	5	1	2	6	1	13	1.7	
Water vole <i>Arvicola amphibius</i>	2	1	4	4	1	11	1.5	
Excess incisors from mice and voles	3	—	15	29	21	67		
Mole <i>Talpa europea</i>	—	—	1	—	—	1	0.1	
Frog/Toad	9	4	1	3	2	10	1.3	
Bird	1	1	1	3	2	4	0.5	
Bat	—	—	—	1	—	1	0.1	
Total MNI	189	76	197	237	99	756		
MNI / m²	332	80	212	269	134	186		

The numbers in the Total column do not equate to the sum of the numbers for each square, as it takes into account the fact that different bones from same animal may be in different squares.

Twelve species of small mammals were present: three shrews, three mice, a rat, three voles, a bat (Fig. 2) and a mole as well as a few bones from birds (not identified to species) and frogs/toads. The rat bones are assumed to be from the black rat, as the brown rat did not arrive in Britain until the 18th century (O'Connor & Sykes 2010: 136). All these species had been identified during the previous collections, no new taxa being found.

By far the most common rodent was the wood mouse, with 270 individuals, followed by field vole (155) and common shrew (133). Other species were present in much lower numbers. Both rat and house mouse are well represented (12 each). Some 'squares' did not measure exactly 1m on each side (for instance square 1 measured 0.95m x 0.60m) and the final row in Table 1 shows the MNI per square metre. The distribution of numbers was not even in each square, with square 1 having the largest number of individuals (333 per m²), followed by squares 4 and 3 and squares 2 and 5 having considerably fewer. It is of interest that the square with the highest number is adjacent to that with the lowest number.

Fig. 2. Some of the mandibles from the assemblage.



The radiocarbon date on the limb bones is $1760 \pm 30\text{BP}$ (Beta-311171), which gives calibrated dates of AD 220-350cal and AD 370-380cal (at 95% probability); the two separate dates are due to the shape of the calibration curve at the relevant time.

Discussion

Small mammal bones are regularly found during excavation of Roman sites (e.g. O'Connor 1986: 245; O'Connor 1991: 254; West 1993), although the quantity found in the present assemblage is unusual. The proportions are very similar to those in previous reports (Yalden 1999: 117), except that the wood mouse at 35.7% is somewhat higher than previously described.

Why is this large assemblage of bones present at Gatehampton? Their concentration and distribution towards the west wall of the central room with none towards the east wall makes it very unlikely that this is a natural death assemblage of animals living in the vicinity after the building collapsed. The presence of a large number of field voles and also the few water voles (the villa is 300m from the River Thames) are also against a natural assemblage. The most likely origin is from pellets dropped by barn owls (*Tyto alba*). Barn owls roost in old buildings, cave entrances and hollow trees (Yalden 2009), but generally avoid buildings where there is a regular human presence. The owls would most likely have been present in the interval between abandonment and collapse.

It is not known when the Gatehampton villa ceased to be occupied. A coin dated AD 330-334 was found under the tessellated floor of the central room during 2011, so the collapse must have been after this, especially as that floor seems to have had time to decay and be replaced by chalk in many areas before abandonment. Unstratified coins found elsewhere in the villa are from a few years later. The radiocarbon date of the bones gives a latest date of AD 380 (95% probability) and it is probable that the building was unoccupied some years before the owl commenced roosting. The likely interval when owls were present is therefore between about AD 340 and AD 380.

The food of modern barn owls has been extensively studied (e.g. Glue 1974; Love *et al* 2000), and the range of prey animals found in the present assemblage seems typical. Wood mice account for just over one third of all prey at Gatehampton, which is somewhat higher than in modern pellets, while field voles, at 20%, are slightly lower.

The question of whether these bones could be intrusive was discussed by Sharpe (2009) who concluded that it was very unlikely. The bones are well stratified in the demolition debris, many underneath fallen *tegulae*, and are spread over a limited area. There was no evidence of disturbance by rabbits or other burrowing animals. The radiocarbon date now provides solid evidence that the bones date from the fourth century at latest. Reports of rats in Roman Britain are few (Reilly 2010), although they are known to have reached Silchester, a few miles to the south of Gatehampton, by the late Roman period (Robinson 2006). The house mouse was probably introduced during the Iron Age and, like the rat, has often been found on Roman sites (O'Connor 2010); it was present in good numbers in the Gatehampton area. The harvest mouse has been recorded in only a few Roman sites (Yalden 1999: 127). The present assemblage clearly establishes the presence of these rodents in south Oxfordshire during the Roman period. All the other species present are known in Britain from the last Ice Age (Yalden 1999: 18).

It is possible to give an estimation of how long the owl roost was in use. It would seem from the distribution of the bones in the present Gatehampton assemblage that there were two drop points – square 1 and square 3, with a distinct reduction in bone numbers in square 2. This implies two separate roosts, and therefore probably more than one year of occupation. Another method to assess this question is to add up the quantity of prey represented. Prey animals vary considerably in size, and the concept of 'prey units' is used to allow for this. For example, large animals (rat, water vole, mole) are rated as 5 units, medium sized animals (wood and house mice, bank and field vole) as 1 unit, and small animals (shrews, harvest mouse) at between 0.2 and 0.75 units (Glue 1974; Bunn *et al* 1982; Yalden 2009). Using these formulae, the animals at Gatehampton provide 738 prey units. Studies of modern barn owls show that each owl consumes around 750 prey units per year. It therefore seems that the present assemblage accounts for at least one year's presence. Another factor to consider is that the present assemblage clearly under-represents the whole, as indicated by the bones found during 2002 to the west of the present excavation. The distribution and the number of bones indicate that the roost was occupied for at least one year, and probably for several years.

Conclusions

The excavation of the collapse debris of the central room at Gatehampton allowed a detailed study of the small mammal assemblage that had initially been discovered some years previously. The species composition and the large number of animals make it virtually certain that barn owls (Fig. 3) were responsible for their presence and that the roost was occupied for at least one year and probably more. Rats and house mice were clearly well established in the area at the time the owls were present, and these records are among the earliest in southern Britain. The time when the building was abandoned by humans and the owls moved in is probably between about AD 340 and AD 380.

Acknowledgements

My thanks are due to Hazel Williams and all the diggers at Gatehampton who so painstakingly placed the sediments into the correct bags. Also thanks to Janet Sharpe for initiating the study of the Gatehampton bones in 2007 and for encouraging me to continue the research.

References

- Bunn, D. S., Warburton, A. B. & Wilson, R. D. S. 1982. *The Barn Owl*. Calton: Poyser.
- Glue, D. E. 1974. Food of the Barn Owl in Britain and Ireland. *Bird Study* 21, 200-210.
- Jobling, D. 2011. Roman nails at Gatehampton. *SOAG Bulletin* 65, 43-46.
- Lawrence, M. J. & Brown, R. W. 1967. *Mammals of Britain; their tracks, trails and signs*. Poole: Blandford.
- Love, R. A., Webbon, C., Glue, D. E. & Harris, S. 2000. Changes in the food of British Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*) between 1974 and 1997. *Mammal Review* 30, 107-129.
- O'Connor, T. & Sykes, N. 2010. *Extinctions and invasions: a social history of British fauna*. Oxford: Windgather.
- O'Connor, T. P. 1986. The animal bones. In: J. D. Zienkiewicz (ed.) *The legionary fortress baths at Caerleon; vol. II: the finds*. Cardiff: CADW. pp. 225-228.
- O'Connor, T. P. 1991. Bones from 46-53 Fishergate. *The Archaeology of York; vol. 15, fascicle 4*. York: York Archaeological Trust.
- O'Connor, T. P. 2010. The house mouse. In: T. P. O'Connor & N. Sykes (eds) *Extinctions and invasions: a social history of British fauna*. Oxford: Windgather. pp. 127-133.
- Reilly, K. 2010. The black rat. In: T. P. O'Connor & N. Sykes (eds) *Extinctions and invasions: a social history of British fauna*. Oxford: Windgather. pp. 134-145.
- Robinson, M. 2006. The macroscopic plant remains. In: M. Fulford, A. Clarke & H. Eckardt (eds) *Life and labour in late Roman Silchester; excavations in Insula IX since 1997*. London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies. Britannia Monograph Series No. 22. pp. 206-218.
- Sharpe, J. 2007. Roman owls at Gatehampton. *SOAG Bulletin* 61, 30-32.
- Sharpe, J. 2009. Roman rats at Gatehampton? *SOAG Bulletin* 63, 20-22.
- Thomas, L. 2008. *Guide to British owls and owl pellets*. Shrewsbury: Field Studies Council.
- West, B. 1993. Owls on the basilica. *British Archaeological News; new series* 6, 11.
- Williams, H. 2011. Gatehampton Farm Roman villa excavation. *SOAG Bulletin* 65, 38-42.
- Yalden, D. 1999. *The history of British mammals*. London: Poyser.
- Yalden, D. W. 2009. *The analysis of owl pellets*. Southampton: The Mammal Society.



Fig. 3. Barn Owl

(Photo: Shutterstock)

Under the floor of the Gatehampton Central Room

Dave Jobling

Introduction

The 2010 season at Gatehampton excavated the remaining half of the so-called Central Room (see Fig. 1), exposing a fine chalk floor still bearing irregular patches of tessellation. This mix of chalk and tesserae raised some intriguing questions: does the chalk pre-date or post-date the tessellated areas? What was the original extent of the tesserae? How was the floor constructed?

During the 2011 season, some of these questions were answered and a few more have been answered in the first few weeks of the 2012 season. The work is not yet complete but this paper summarises the results of that investigation so far, and outlines some of the answers to be sought during the rest of 2012. For a snapshot of findings as of the end of 2011, without the benefit of the early 2012 work, see *SOAG Messenger*, May 2012.

Excavating the floor

A 100 x 20 cm slot was dug through the chalk by Tom Walker (visible centre right in Fig. 1; note the location of the room's enclosing walls). Apart from almost miraculously revealing a coin (see *SOAG Messenger*, August 2011, and the article on Gatehampton coins in this *Bulletin*), the slot exposed what appeared to be a cobbled surface at the bottom of a sequence of contexts consisting of the chalk floor, its mortar bedding layer, and a thick silt layer. To test the hypothesis that this part of the room had been a floored, outdoor surface prior to extension of the Central Room, a 50 x 50 cm sondage was dug down to the natural (A-B-C-D in Fig. 2) to the north-west of the original slot. This sondage disproved the cobbles theory but did expose a mortar layer and a pink-tinged mortar plug under the chalk, similar to other Gatehampton features identified as furnaces.



Fig. 1. The Central Room – at the end of 2011

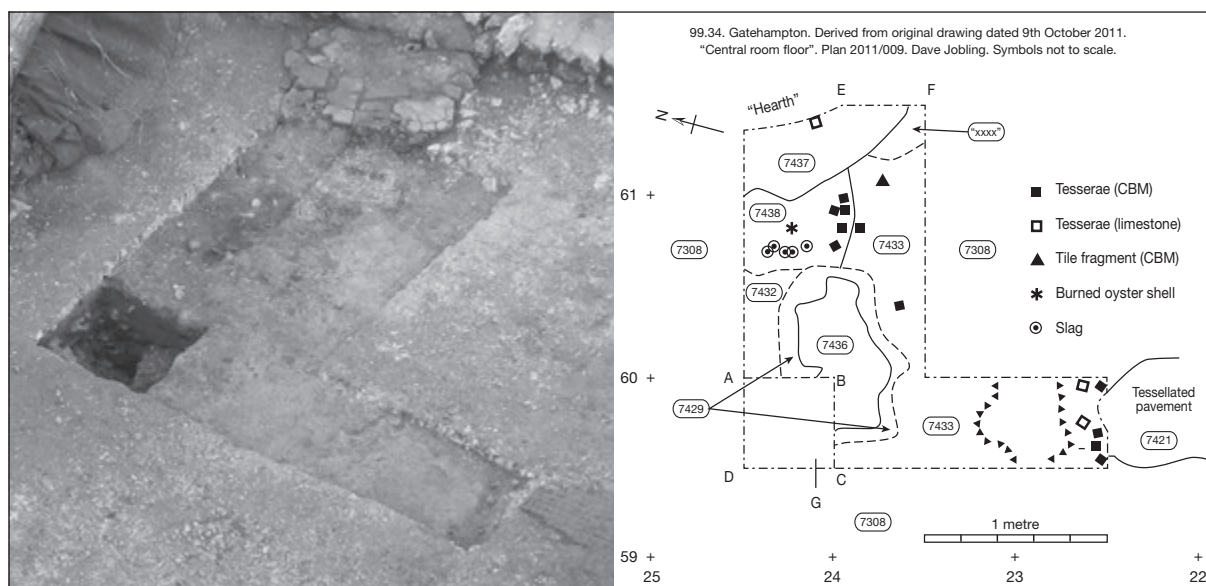


Fig. 2. 'Through the floor' contexts – at the end of 2011

This finding was sufficiently intriguing to justify removal of the packed chalk to the east and south of the sondage. In turn, this exposed a whole series of sub-floor contexts that show a transition in the building practice associated with the floor itself. Some of these contexts show clear evidence of combustion, currently interpreted as proof of metalworking.

Competing interpretations of the contexts revealed in this area unfortunately cover many possibilities. It can be argued that the metalworking dates from:

1. Before, and independent of, the westward construction of the Central Room
2. During, and associated with, its construction
3. After the initial construction, and during the replacement of the tesserae with packed chalk

However, it is possible to explain the relationship between the tessellated and chalk pavement surfaces.

The patches of tesserae are enclosed by the packed chalk (context 7308 in Fig. 2), and some isolated tesserae have been found under or within it, making it certain that pre-existing tessellation was replaced (for whatever reason) by the chalk. Chalk does not underlie the surviving tiled areas, but mortar does.

What was known at the end of 2011 was that half of the area cleared of chalk lies on mortar (7433), in some cases poorly finished (pronounced ridges have been left unsmoothed just to the north and west of the tessellated area, as shown in Fig. 2). A mortar plug and its pink-tinged surface (7429 and 7436 respectively) cut into the leading edge of this area. The other half of the chalk was laid down directly on silt (7432) containing abundant pebbles and, lower down,

often large flints. This apparent mortar-silt boundary suggests a different phase of the building work, or at least a change in the building methods applied as work progressed. As will be seen below, work done at the start of 2012 does more to confirm that this boundary is a real one.

Between the silt and the overlying chalk floor, contexts have been found that yield abundant evidence of industrial work. Context 7438 (see Fig. 2) is silt containing very abundant charcoal, burned flint coated in what appears to be chemical deposits, honeycombed globules that are likely to be metalworking slag (they are lightly magnetic), and a single burned oyster shell. It is these combustion inclusions that distinguish it from 7432, which it otherwise resembles.

Overlying it to the east, context 7437 is composed entirely of soot, still in powdered form and concealing a single limestone tessera lying at an angle against the front edge of the Central Room's "hearth". The soot seems associated with the furnace, and not the "hearth" (about which, more below).

All the tesserae found so far in the 2010-2012 excavation of the Central Room are underlain by mortar. The one exception is the group found lying on (not embedded in) the southernmost boundary of 7438. It seems likely that these have slumped off the edge of the 7433 mortar layer during the chalk floor's construction.

During the first weeks of the 2012 season, investigation has been extended to the room's eastern wall and to the "hearth" (see Fig. 2). This has inevitably raised some additional questions, but has answered others. There is no longer any justification for considering context "xxxx" (see Fig. 2) to be a separate deposit.

It is a northward extension of 7433 (see Fig. 3). There is also no longer any evidence for a lower chalk floor layer in the E-F wall of Fig. 2, and the real structure of that area is now much better understood.

It is now clear that 7432 and 7438 are fundamentally the same natural silt deposit, the structure of 7432 indicating a fluvial flood event. There are fragments of charcoal and pottery present in at least its upper levels, presumably resulting from churn and mixing of materials as the sediment was deposited before the floors were constructed. Context 7438 is made up of accumulations of combustion products (described above) that distinguish the two contexts. Running around the “hearth” is the soot layer of context 7437. This soot layer extends all the way up to the room’s east wall, directly under the chalk floor.

With 7437 removed, the last week of 2011 exposed traces of a pink-tinged *opus signinum* surface, context 7447 (see Fig. 3), lying in front of the “hearth” (see Fig. 4).

Though similar in colouration, context 7447 is different from 7436 in being coarser grained, containing fragments of CBM 1-5 mm across, and being less strongly cemented. With the complete removal of the overlying soot layer that concealed this boundary, it is clear that 7447 overlies the edge of 7433, which slopes down to the underlying silt at this point. A 25 x 50 cm slot dug through 7447 reveals the *opus signinum* to be between 4 and 7 cm in thickness, lying directly on silt containing tiny charcoal fragments, and therefore an extension of 7432.

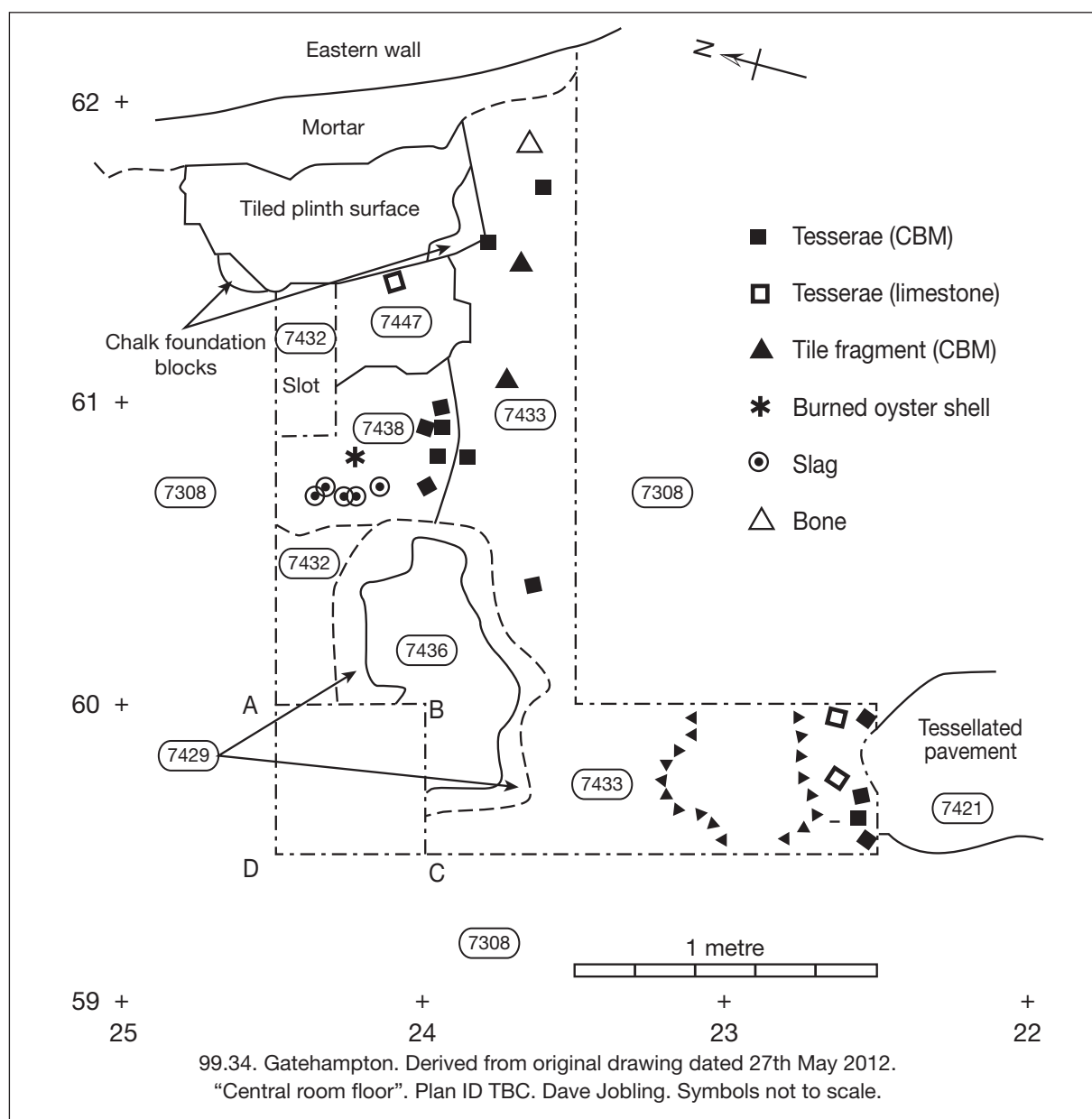


Fig. 3. Through the floor' contexts – into 2012



Fig. 4. The hearth or plinth

Context 7447 is likely to be a disposal of spare *opus signinum*. It has been smeared up the central third of the vertical front surface of the chalk foundation of the “hearth”, showing categorically that it post-dates at least part of that feature’s construction.

As it approaches the east wall, the mortar (7433) slopes downwards along the front of the “hearth”. Large tile fragments and several newly discovered tesserae in this area are deeply embedded in the mortar. This suggests a different (either earlier or recycled from elsewhere) batch of tesserae from those still forming coherent pavement areas, or those clearly discarded during their replacement by the chalk. This raises interesting possibilities for the sequencing of the room, but needs confirmation. Also found on the mortar surface in this area are fragments of animal bone.

At the point that 7433 reaches the wall, there is a poorly understood and steeply sloping boundary between it and an apparent easterly extension of the thick mortar layer separating the “hearth” from the wall.

The “plinth”

The tiled feature does not, to this writer, now appear to be a hearth (see Fig. 4). The soot, charcoal and other deposits seem more closely associated with the “furnace” to the south, and no traces of soot or charcoal have been found in the feature itself. It also seems unlikely that a domestic hearth would leave signs of metalworking. It is here proposed therefore that this feature was a load-bearing and decorative structure although its precise function remains obscure (suggestions range from the base of a lararium to a step up into a doorway – not proven – in the east wall).

The 2012 excavation has revealed the detailed structure of this feature (see Fig. 3). Its surface is of ceramic tile. There are hints of rounded front corners. Underlying the tile are two equally-sized, closely spaced blocks of chalk together forming a frontage

of 90 cm, and each about 10 cm in thickness. These in turn are bedded into a layer of mortar, whose relationship with 7433 is not yet understood. The chalk/tile construction extends backwards towards the east wall, separated from the flint core of the wall by a thick layer of mortar/plaster.

To the right of the plinth, the chalk floor is elevated, blocky and poorly packed along the line of the wall, suggesting poor access for the builders during tamping down, or an absence of daily traffic to compress it during normal usage. In front of, and to the left of, the plinth, the elevation and texture of the chalk are much closer to those of the rest of the room.

A tentative sequencing

Tom Walker’s slot shows the tessellated floor to be underlain by mortar (his context 7422). This is the same as 7433, which extends half way across the excavated floor area. It is arguable that this underlies all of the originally tessellated floor area. The plinth seems most clearly associated with this phase of the room’s construction.

Some motivation seems then to have been found to re-floor the room with chalk. Damaged flooring and loose tesserae were incompletely cleared away. It is possible that the industrial activity evidenced by the traces of metalworking then occurred, taking advantage of the cleared floor.

The smearing of 7447 *opus signinum* up the front of the plinth’s chalk foundation blocks suggests repair work to the floor before the packing in of the chalk surface across the room; in some cases, on top of tesserae left lying around. This packing was clearly the last act in the drama: nothing overlays the chalk, while tesserae, *opus signinum* plugs, CBM fragments, industrial waste, animal/lunch remains and mortar all underlie it.

What cannot be explained at this stage is what the edge of the mortar represented during the phase of tessellation in use. Is it a sign of jerry building on the part of contractors or cost cutting on the part of an ambitious but cash-strapped owner? Was the Central Room as big then as it is now? Or was there always a hybrid surface, tesserae to the south and east, something else to the north and west? Is the location of the plinth at this transitional point meaningful?

The Constantius coin found in Tom Walker’s slot tells us the tessellated area of floor cannot pre-date AD 330-334 while other coins from 2011 suggest subsequent building work (perhaps the chalk phase) after AD 347-348. Hopefully the rest of the 2012 season will answer some of the known questions as well as, inevitably, posing others.

Gatehampton coins in 2011

Tom Walker

The 2011 season at Gatehampton proved good in a monetary sense. Three Roman coins were discovered in two consecutive weeks, all dating to AD 330-348, and showing the bust of either Constantine II or Constans. All are made of copper alloy, and are *folles*, the lowest value coins at the time. A fourth coin was found some weeks later and showed a different Emperor, that of Allectus; it is also a low value coin, being an *antononianus*. The coins have been carefully cleaned using a stereo microscope in order to reveal the inscriptions and then photographed using oblique lighting.

The first coin (Fig. 1) was found in a well-stratified layer in the large central room. A small slot was cut into one area of remaining tessera in order to determine the make-up of the floor of the room. The tesserae had been laid on a sand levelling base, which in turn was deposited on a mortar layer. The coin was found about a third of the way down the 6cm sand layer, well sealed in the sand and below the tesserae. The obverse shows the bust of Constantine II laureate (with a laurel wreath) and cuirassed (wearing a piece of armour designed to protect the chest); the inscription reads **CONSTANTINVS IVN NOB C** (in full: **CONSTANTINUS JUN (Junior) NOBILISSIMUS (Most Noble) CAESAR**) indicating the son of Constantine I, who was a Caesar at this time, prior to his elevation to Emperor. The reverse reads **GLORIA EXERCITVS** (To the glory of the army) and shows two soldiers facing one another, each holding reversed spears and resting hands on shields; between them are two standards. The mint mark is not completely clear (the poor striking of the coin does not help), but it was minted in Lyons or Trier and is dated to AD 330-334. It corresponds to RIC 249 or 254 (Bruun 1966: 138).

The second (Fig. 2) and third (Fig. 3) coins were found at the southeast corner of trench 7 during clearing of the topsoil in the new area opened this year. The first to turn up shows the Emperor Constans, indicated by the obverse text **CONSTAN - S PF AVG** (in full: **CONSTANS PIUS FELIX AUGUSTUS** (Dutiful, Wise, Emperor)). The reverse shows two Victories holding wreaths with a palm branch between them; the text is too corroded to read but would have been **VICTORIAE DD AVGG Q NN** (in full: **VICTORIAE DOMINORUM AUGUSTORUM QUE NOSTRUM**: (Victory to our Lords and



Fig. 1. The Constantine II coin, found in the levelling layer under the tesserae in the central room, dated AD 330-334



Fig. 2. The second coin found in the topsoil, showing Constans, dated AD 347-348

Emperors)). The design indicates that this coin was minted in Trier and is dated to AD 347-348 (Kent 1981; probably RIC 209).

The third coin was also found in the topsoil, very close to the second one. Unfortunately, it is very worn and corroded, and it is not possible to read any of the text. The bust is that of either Constantine II or Constans, and the reverse shows two soldiers with a single standard topped with a banner. The bust and reverse patterns date this coin to AD 335-340, and it is likely to have been minted in Lyons, Arles or Rome.

Constantine II (Junior) was the son of Constantine I (the Emperor who introduced Christianity to the Roman world). He was a Caesar from AD 317-337, being appointed when he was only seven years old. A Caesar was a junior partner in the imperial ruling elite. On the death of his father in 337 AD Constantine

II was elevated to Emperor, and took control of Gaul, Britain and Spain; his emperorship was short lived as he was assassinated in an ambush in AD 340. Constans was one of his younger brothers who was appointed joint emperor in AD 337 with responsibility for Italy, Africa and Greece. He inherited his brother's territories in AD 340 when Constantine II was killed. He remained emperor until AD 350 when he was forced out of office after losing the support of the army, and he was murdered soon afterwards.

Unfortunately only the coin under the tessera in the central room is stratified. This provides a *terminus post quem* for the laying of the tessellated floor of the central room. This means that the floor cannot have been laid before the coin was minted, indicating that the tessera must have been put in place after AD 330-334; how long after cannot be determined, as the coin could have been in circulation for many years before it was dropped. The lack of stratification of the second and third coins means that they cannot be used to date any particular structure. However, the fact that the first three coins date within a few years of each other implies that they may well all have been lost around the same time.

The floor surface of the central room at the time of excavation is composed mainly of chalk, with only three patches of tesserae remaining. A small slot cut into the floor (100 x 20 cm.) allowed us to ponder about the construction of this room. As mentioned above, the tesserae were laid on sand on mortar; below the mortar is a layer of silt that contains river worn cobbles in a layer just above the natural. Slots elsewhere in the central room (see Jobling, this issue) show that these cobbles are not a floor surface, but are more likely to derive from a flooding episode that brought in both the silt and the stones. Whether the area we call the central room was part of the original house or was added later cannot be known with certainty, but it is clear from the coin that the tessellated floor was not laid until after AD 330-334. The coins in the topsoil date to a few years later, but when they were lost cannot be known.

It is interesting to speculate as to why the floor as we find it in the 21st century is mainly chalk. Generally the chalk butts against the remaining tesserae, but in one area some of the chalk overlies the remaining tesserae. Perhaps late in the life of the villa the tesserae started becoming loose and there were no facilities for proper repairs; loose tesserae were simply swept away and the floor surface made level again with chalk – a much more readily available material than more tesserae, and certainly cheaper to lay. Interesting speculation, but who knows?



Fig. 3. The third coin, with either Constantine II or Constans, dated probably AD 335-340

The fourth coin (Fig. 4) found in 2011 is much earlier in date. It was discovered in the northeast corner of Trench 7, lying vertically against the edge of the mortar floor abutting the remains of the robbed-out wall. The obverse inscription reads **IMP C ALLECTUS PF AVG** (in full: **IMPERATOR** (Leader of the Army) **ALLECTUS PIUS FELIX** (Dutiful, Patriotic) **AUGUSTUS** (Emperor)). The obverse reads **LAETICIA AVG**. Laetitia was a Roman goddess of joy and happiness; she holds a wreath in her right hand, a symbol of celebration, and an anchor in her left hand representing stability. The mint marks, S A over ML, indicate that it was minted in London between AD 293 and 295. It is therefore much earlier than the other coins. It matches RIC 22 (Robertson 1978: 282), but does have minor differences compared to designs described in other reference works, and so may be a fairly unusual coin (Bland 1984; Carson 1959).



Fig. 4. The Allectus coin found in Trench 7, dated AD 293-295

Allectus assumed power in Britannia and northern Gaul after he murdered Carausius in AD 293, but never became Emperor of the whole Roman Empire. He left little mark on history apart from profuse minting of coins in London and Colchester; perhaps his love of coinage was because he had been finance minister to Carausius. He was eventually defeated and killed in battle by the Caesar of the West, Constantius I, in AD 296; it is possible this battle took place at Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester). This defeat ended a ten-year period when Britain was a quasi-independent part of the Roman Empire.

The Allectus coin was minted some 50 years earlier than the other coins, so what was it doing in the floor of the Trench 7 room? It was lying vertically so must have been placed in a crack between the floor and the wall during construction when the floor was laid, or was dropped into a small crack that had opened against the wall following some shrinkage of the mortar floor. However it was deposited, it does suggest that this room had its floor laid some time before the floor of the central room, especially as the clarity of the inscriptions suggests it may have been lost soon after minting. It is of interest that a coin of Maximianus dated AD 296-297 (Sutherland 1967: 181; RIC 188b) was found in the same area in 2010; Maximianus was Emperor of the West AD 285-c.310 (Williams 2011).

References

- Bland, R. 1984. A hoard of Carausius and Allectus from Burton Latimer. *The British Numismatic Journal* 54: 41-50
- Bruun, P.M. 1966. *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. VII: *Constantine and Licinus, AD 313-337*. London: Spink.
- Carson, R.A.G. 1959. The mints and coinage of Carausius and Allectus. *Journal of the British Archaeological Association Third series* 22: 34-40.
- Kent, J.P.C. 1981. *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. VIII: *The Family of Constantine I, AD 337-364*. London: Spink.
- Robertson, A.S. 1978. *Roman imperial coins in the Hunter coin cabinet, University of Glasgow*, vol. IV: *Valerian I to Allectus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sutherland, C.H.V. 1967. *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol VI: *From Diocletian's reform (A.D. 294) to the death of Maximinus (A.D. 313)*. London: Spink.
- Williams, H. 2011. Gatehampton Farm Roman villa excavation; interim report 2010. *SOAG Bulletin* No. 65, 38-42.

For further details of the emperors look at their entries on *Wikipedia* or other web pages, which give good summaries of their lives, and from which the few biographical notes above have been taken.

Cruck houses in Mapledurham

Pat Preece

Introduction

This article recalls some of the cruck houses that some fellow SOAG members and I spotted in our many rambles investigating the history and landscape of South Oxford.

It seems possible that the *cruck* was one of the earliest roof support structures, and may have existed before the Saxons arrived. Several crucks, joined by a ridgepole, support the roof of a *cruck house*. Although there seem to be no surviving cruck houses earlier than the 14th century there may have been earlier ones (Wood 1965; 300). Strangely R. A. Cordingley says that the “cruck form of timber structure is almost if not completely absent from the Lowland zone” (Cordingley 1961; 74) – this zone according to the map includes our own South Oxford, so he obviously had not been in our area! However, a later and much more detailed book (Alcock, 1981) shows many crucks in the south of England and a great many in Oxfordshire and Berkshire.

Cruck house design

A cruck in its simplest form is a tree trunk, preferably curved, split in two and then set on the ground, sometimes directly on the soil but more often on stones or sill beams, and then joined to form an A shape secured by a horizontal tie beam (Fig. 1). The timbers, called **blades**, cross at the apex of the triangle to form a fork in which a ridgepole can be placed. The rafters and purlins are fixed to these crucks, which therefore bear the whole weight of the roof. The walls are therefore of secondary structural importance and bear no constructional relationship to the roof. Many cruck houses have wattle and daub walls, which could not support a heavy roof. Many of the roofs locally are thatched. Incidentally, the definition of a purlin is a horizontal beam along the length of the roof supporting the rafters.

Each cruck was usually constructed on the ground and then lifted into position. Most buildings would have at least three crucks. The wood was usually oak, used green, but occasionally elm was used. The term cruck comes from the early English Crook, which meant hook, presumably from the shape of the timbers. The snag of the simplest form of cruck is that it is really not possible to have an upper storey, but with an **upper cruck** an upper storey is possible. An upper or raised cruck refers to the blades of the cruck starting

some way up a wall or even set on the beams at the top of the wall (Alcock 1981; 4).

The existence of several early mediaeval crucks locally makes one wonder why they survived when cottages with other structures did not – this could be because cruck trusses have only one joint, and that is at the top where the blades meet, so all the attached timbers can be removed and replaced as necessary. Early cruck cottages are probably more common than early box-frame cottages.

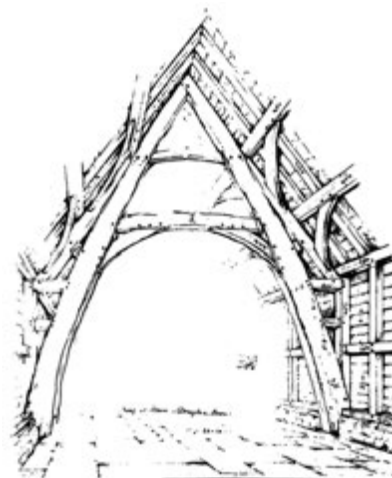


Fig. 1. A cruck in a barn (from an Alcock illustration)

Local crucks

The earliest known cruck house locally is Mill Farm in Mapledurham, dated by dendrochronology by Dan Miles to 1335. Mill Farm has three crucks, with one of the blades being elm and the rest traditional oak, and was probably constructed by the estate carpenters from trees felled from the surrounding woodlands. I can remember seeing Mill Farm probably thirty years ago, before Dan lived there, and how excited we were by the construction generally; we knew it was probably a hall house but we did not know how old it was. The house has a large chimneystack in the centre of the building and we saw the blade of the cruck passing by it. The chimneystack was inserted sometime in the 15th or 16th centuries and, before this was built, the fire would have been on the floor of the hall. The remains of a smoke louvre has been found in the roof, and the wood in the roof bears traces of soot. Alongside the house is a barn, probably superseding an earlier one; the present one dates from 1743 and has some elm weatherboarding visible in a cart shed by the side of it.

Mill Farm can be imagined as being held on the estate in those days, or by a yeoman or high status villein with his strips in the open fields. The house overlooked fields called Oxcroft and Powscroft. Pow means pouch-shaped, which it is possible to imagine from the shape on the Tithe map. Behind the house is Blackwater Copse, and when we went there originally the old tenant was bringing some branches from it for the fire – the copse was probably a source of fuel for many centuries.

Another thatched cruck house in Mapledurham is Three Chimneys in Jacksons Lane. The Southern cruck blades can be seen clearly as you pass by. The house is dated by dendrochronology to 1457-8 and the blades are of oak. It is called Three Chimneys as chimneys were inserted around the 17th to 18th centuries, but before that the fire must have been on the floor as there are traces of two smoke louvres as well as the remains of a smoke hood and some soot. Originally there was a large hall extending to the roof and a separate chamber separated by a wattle and daub wall. During the 17th century, an upper story was created and a chimney in the hall, and a bread oven was built – at some point after this, two additional chimneys were added, at the ends of the house.

Three Chimneys is also interesting because it was a farm, and there were farm buildings originally that have since been removed. It is thought that the farm might have been tenanted by a family called Page as it is surrounded by fields with Page in their names and a strip of woodland called Page Shaw. Page as a name in Mapledurham dates from the 13th century when a William Page was granted a virgate of land for a rent of thirteen shillings and four pence (a mark) annually. We worked out that all the fields with Page in their name came to thirty acres or a virgate! (Cooke 1925)

Other cruck houses in Mapledurham are Pithouse, which is similar to Three Chimneys and Dan thinks was probably made by the same carpenter, and there is an upper cruck in Chazey Farm. This was originally in a separate manor, Mapledurham Chausey, owned by a Norman family called De Chausey and was amalgamated with Mapledurham Gurney in 1581 to form Mapledurham (Cooke 1925; 80)

We are lucky as far as Mapledurham is concerned that Dan Miles has dendrodated the houses as well as surveyed them, so we have accurate dates – so many cruck houses are cottages and, without dendrodating it is very difficult to date them as very little history is available. John Fletcher writing in 1968 says “Cruck buildings are relatively difficult to date” (Fletcher, 1968:78). Incidentally, the only crucks he lists in

our area are one in Exlade Street, which is Carters Cottage, and another in Chazey Heath, which is not mentioned by Alcock, but I think is probably Yewtree Cottage, which we looked at when it was a ruin and has now been rebuilt. I have pictures of this as a ruin but there is no sign of a cruck!

Mapledurham has quite a remarkable number of cruck houses and I think is possibly because the Blounts who owned the estate since the 16th century were recusants. A recusant is a Roman Catholic who, from the beginning of the 17th century, was restricted in many ways and had to pay a large fine if his children were baptised into that faith. In the 18th century, the Blounts were often in financial difficulties, and the net result of all this was that the housing on the estate was not “improved” and so some of the old cruck houses remained.

I have included, in Fig. 2, a very clear picture of a cruck house that I photographed many years ago but I have forgotten where it was! (If you recognise it, please contact us with details!)



Fig. 2. A cruck house, taken some years ago (Photo Pat Preece)

Whenever you are wandering the countryside, look out for crucks – even in barns. Try to find out their age and if possible, with the owner's consent, see of what timber they are constructed and whether any chimneys or upper storeys have been added later.

References

- Alcock, N.W. 1981 *Cruck Construction*. The Council for British Archaeology
- Cooke, A. H. 1925 *The Early History of Mapledurham*. Oxford University Press, Oxford
- Cordingly, R.A. 1961 'British Historical Roof Types and Their Members: A Classification', *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society*, Volume 9
- Fletcher, J. 1968 'Crucks in the West Berkshire and Oxford Region', *Oxoniensia*, Vol XXXIII
- Wood, M. 1965 *The English Mediaeval House*. Ferndale Editions, London

The Greeks had a word for it

John White

The Oxford English Dictionary defines Archaeology as 'The study of human history and prehistory through the examination of sites and the analysis of artefacts and other physical remains'. As a scientist, I am interested in the development of technology and the thinking behind it. Fortunately, 'political correctness' is a recent invention so there is much to be learned from the derivation of words. As usual, some will regard my conclusions as heretical but I hope others will find them amusing.

'The Greeks had a word for it' was a saying my father often quoted. However he taught chemistry not languages, so on reflection I have come to think that this is probably a misinterpretation. The Greeks were indeed philosophers and although the word 'archaeology' comes from the Greek 'arkhaiologia' via the late Latin 'archaeologia', most Greek-derived words in science and technology are more modern inventions. Mediaeval scholars would have learned Greek in order for them to study the ancient books on mathematics and science so it would be logical for them to use Greek word stems to construct new technical terms when needed. As time progressed, Latin became the lingua franca in Europe, with services of the Roman Catholic Church being in Latin, and it is said that Elizabeth I could converse in Latin. Even when I was at college the official business at Oxford University was conducted in Latin, so although the first item on any agenda was always a request to speak in English, the sensible ones took with them a Latin text in case this request was refused. The number of Latin speakers in the world is decreasing but my Finnish friends tell me that Helsinki Radio still broadcasts a weekly news bulletin in Latin (on the basis that more people understand Latin than speak Finnish).

A recent television 'QI' programme claimed the ancient Greeks had no word for 'blue'. More correctly, this statement should have been that no adjective for 'blue' had been found in pre-Homeric literature. The Greeks did however use the noun 'kyanos' (which gives us 'cyan') to denote a blue substance, probably ground lapis lazuli, and in later writings they used adjectives derived from this noun. There is however always a problem inherent in studying ancient languages, namely that we cannot study the spoken word. A modern example is the use on French tombstones of the words 'Ci git' which means 'Here lies' but this is the only part of the verb that exists. Latin dictionaries describe

many words as being 'poetic' as this is their main use. Greek is an even older language, used in spoken form before Linear B and then the Greek alphabet were developed. I therefore think it is probably more accurate to say that we have not found any early use of a Greek adjective for 'blue' rather than to say that the Greeks did not have a word for it. In view of the celebrated colour of Mediterranean skies it is possible that there could have been an unwritten religious rule that the colour of the heavens should not be named, in a similar manner as the Greeks used the euphemism (another good Greek derived word) 'the Eumenides' (literally the Kindly Ones) for 'the Furies'. However I believe that a more likely explanation is that at that time no true blue dyes or pigments had been discovered so there was just no need for a word to describe the colour produced.

The Greeks had such a high regard for their own language that they considered all sounds made by foreigners to be just a 'bar-bar-bar-bar' noise. They therefore used the adjective 'barbarismos' to mean 'foreign', from which we get our word 'barbarian'. However this lack of political correctness was not just one way – the Romans did, as we do today (and as Shakespeare did in the play 'Julius Caesar' for Cassius's comments on Cicero's speech) use the phrase 'All Greek to me' to describe any utterance that they could not understand.

Some Greek words can be understood, for example archaeologia and etumologia (etymology, the study of the derivation of words), as the English words are almost just a transliteration of the Greek ones. Others are recognisable, such as 'kaktos' which means 'thistle'. However, I think that what my father had in mind was the use of Greek stems to form new names in science and technology. Typical examples are 'microphone' and 'telescope', and the chemical elements 'hydrogen' and 'helium'. Initially the meanings were clear: hydrogen is the element that 'produces water' and a telescope is a device for 'seeing distant objects'. However, technological developments have often given new meanings to words that could not be deduced from the initial definition. Thus, 'telescopic' now generally describes an apparatus that can be adjusted in length by sliding some parts inside other parts in the manner originally developed for focusing a telescope.

These technological words cause a great deal of grief to etymologists as the need for new names has led to the coining of 'bastard' words based on

mixed Greek and Latin stems. It has been claimed that 'television' was the start of this problem but it is possible that 'terminology' is also an example but this word was so familiar that the derivation was not recognised. Another 'bastard' word in common use is claustrophobia, from the Latin stem 'claustr-' meaning 'closed' and the Greek for 'fear'. Interestingly there is a Greek stem meaning 'closed', 'cleistro-', but this is mainly used in (Latin) plant names to convey the description 'setting seed without the flowers opening'. Except for 'television', it is probable that many of these mixed origin words arose in earlier centuries when scientists like Newton wrote their treatises in Latin so as to be generally understood. The result is that some, like Linnaeus who devised the biological classification system, and the astronomer Copernicus, are still known by the Latinised form of their names although the technical terms they coined have been Anglicised.

As the practice of medicine can be traced back to Hippocrates of Kos in about 400BC, it is not surprising that Greek forms the basis of many medical terms. The Greek for pain gives us the stem '-algia', used in neuralgia (nerve pain) and also in nostalgia (literally, the pain of returning).

Phobia (from the Greek for fear) is used to describe an irrational fear, although this fear can range from feeling mildly unlucky to being absolutely terrified. Although of course ladders supporting workmen with pots of paint should be treated with care, it is luckier to walk under a ladder than to step into the road and be run over. In spite of the instruction "Fear God and ye shall have nothing else to fear" many phobias (except ladders and spiders) have a religious basis. Although some practices, such as the prohibition of certain foods at a time when the causes of infection were not understood, were for the public good under the conditions then existing, others were evolved to give power or fortune to the priests. For example, the bringing of plants (or anything with the colour green) into the house was said to be unlucky, because the priests were afraid it was associated with pagan practices. It was for the same reason that bad luck was associated with failure to remove Christmas decorations after Twelfth Night. In the centuries gone by, the poor had to abide by the rules while the rich by the Sale of Indulgences could do what they could afford and the priests could rewrite the rules for their own benefit. Thus a religious fast was commuted to not eating meat, and as fish was not meat they could dine splendidly on fish on fast days. Their knowledge of natural history was wonderfully incorrect, for example robins and wrens were believed to be the males and females of the one species, resulting in today's appellations Cock Robin and Jenny Wren. They were also ignorant about bird

migration, and so believed that when the migrant Barnacle Goose disappeared back to the Arctic each year it had transformed into a marine crustacean with feathery tentacles. This was wonderful, not because of the transformation itself but because this bird must therefore be fish and so could be eaten on fast days. Eventually Pope Innocent III cried "foul!" (or rather "fowl!") and issued an edict in 1215 to stop this practice. Dictionaries still do not agree whether the bird was named after the crustacean or vice versa. But I digress...

As the practice of psychology developed, new phobias were discovered (or invented). The Oxford English Dictionary reports that in the 1920s a new pure ancient Greek word had entered the English language. This was 'triskaidekaphobia' the fear of ten and three. This soon became a very popular phobia. All over the country, houses were numbered 12A. Agatha Christie wrote a story involving 13 guests at dinner. And it is the reason I was not born on my birthday. My mother told me that when I was born the midwife on duty was very kind, very Irish and very superstitious. After my birth the midwife came with the forms to record my details but then declared that my birth would not be complete until my mother had been given 'a nice cup of tea', and disappeared off to make one. Then, a few minutes later, the midwife returned to record my birth as just after midnight on Saturday the fourteenth of May. I however regard the number 13 as lucky, and for evidence of this I would point to Apollo 13 where it was their good luck that got the astronauts safely home.

Whereas the logic of most phobias such as the fear of spiders or of black cats or other pagan symbols can readily be seen, it took thousands of years for the fear of Number 13 to be invented, so it seems to me that people must have been desperate to find something to be afraid of when 13 was chosen. I know that it is blamed on Judas Iscariot being the thirteenth disciple, but I believe the logic for that is all wrong. In the ancient world several numbers were regarded as propitious, namely 3, 7, 12 and 40. The most universal of these was 7, which gave the days of the week in several traditions. The loss of 1 was believed to convert a propitious number into a bad one, so that 6 indicates evil and in Revelations the symbol 666 is used for Satan. Jesus had 12 disciples, and so His group numbered 13, which therefore cannot be a 'bad' number. After the Crucifixion and the suicide of Judas, the number remaining was then 11, one below the 'good' number 12, so a replacement was selected. However at no time were there ever 13 disciples. So I believe the whole idea behind triskaidekaphobia is based on a mistake. And that is what I call unlucky!

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.
- Any quoted material should be inside quotation marks and sources, including material freely available on the internet, should be given. If your information comes from a website you must cite the full www address and the date you consulted it.
- Articles should be submitted in Microsoft Word format, preferably by email. However, cleanly typed and/or clearly handwritten articles will be accepted. When sending copy by email, please ensure that you include 'SOAG Bulletin' in the email title and include a few lines of text in the message: unidentified attachments will not be opened.
- Please be as concise as possible, omit non-relevant material and avoid needless repetition.
- Illustrations are welcomed, if appropriate. Drawings and photographs are also invited for consideration for the front cover. Maps, drawings and photographs may be submitted in paper or electronic format as separate attachments. Photographs and original artwork will be returned to authors after publication if requested.

- The use of footnotes is discouraged.
- The text should be single-spaced; the title and author name(s) should be included at the beginning of the article. Numbered figure captions should be placed in the text to indicate the approximate position of illustrations, and the source of the illustration included where appropriate.
- 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.
- 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.

- To assist Oxford County Archaeological Services HER database collection, and with landowners approval where appropriate, please include a National Grid Reference (NGR) with any site information.

Contributions before 28 February for publication in that year to the *SOAG Bulletin* Editor John Hefferan, 41 College Road, Reading, Berks. RG6 1QE. Email: bulletin@soagarch.org.uk.



Patron: Prof. Malcolm Airs

SOAG was established in 1969 and now has over 150 members. The aims of the Group are to promote an active interest in archaeology and its allied disciplines, particularly in South Oxfordshire. It works in close cooperation with the County Archaeologist and Oxford Archaeology, is a member of the Council for Independent Archaeology and is affiliated to the Council for British Archaeology South Midlands Group.

- Monthly meetings are held from September to April when lectures by professional speakers and members are given in an informal atmosphere
- There are opportunities for members to take part in excavations, fieldwalking, surveys and post-excavation work. Visits are made to places of interest in the summer – sometimes to sites not open to the public
- 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.

Contact Details

SOAG Honorary Secretary, Lockerley, Brightwell Baldwin, Watlington OX49 5NP
Tel: 07974 445142 Email: secretary@soagarch.org.uk