



Bulletin

SOAG



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SOAG Committee 2012

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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.

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Cover illustration: silver half groat of Edward IV. See article on p.17.

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Chairman's Report

David Oliver

This report summarises the activities of SOAG for another successful year in the 2012/13 season, and includes contributions from other members of the Committee.

Finances

In this time of financial difficulty, our membership numbers have held up; we had hoped that our new charity status would enable us actually to increase income by Gift Aid repayments from the Inland Revenue in respect of tax paying members. Inland Revenue however has informed us that our submissions have been rejected due to the benefits gained by free admission to our lectures. Therefore, we propose to make guest admission "by voluntary donation" in the future, to see if that will satisfy the Revenue. Nevertheless, we have been able to maintain the cost of membership at the same level, even though some of our basic costs have risen. Our finances, have for a considerable time, been under the control of John Gibbs as our Treasurer. However, due to significant health problems John felt he had to resign from this role - and we shall miss him. His resignation meant we needed a replacement, and we are lucky that a SOAG member with Charity Treasurer experience agreed to be co-opted into the role. This is Kaz Greenham: she was approved at the AGM, and she has taken over SOAG finances with effect from then.

Printing our annual *SOAG Bulletin* publication, now under John Hefferan's excellent editorship, represents one of our most expensive items, closely followed by the cost of its distribution especially after the recent huge hike in postal charges. While, with its quality, this still represents

good value for money, John and the committee are looking into ways of reducing this cost. One possibility could be to have distribution partly by electronic means, as it is mainly with *SOAG Messenger*, but with paper copies still available for members who prefer this. The committee will welcome considerations and comment on this matter and will keep the membership up to date with any proposals.

Our very informative monthly newsletter *SOAG Messenger* continues to be mainly written, as well as 100% edited, by a very hard working Mike Green: in a year the total pages he produces easily exceeds the average size of an issue of *SOAG Bulletin*. If these issues were distributed in paper form, by mail, the cost would equal the annual membership fee. Mike does get article contributions from many members and we are particularly grateful for all of these, especially the ones covering lectures during the winter programme.

We have acquired more equipment. The new items include a portable toilet for use at digs, and two heavy-duty gazebos, one of which we hope can be used at any events we attend, while the other will provide shelter at digs. Since the dedicated site store at Gatehampton cannot take any extra items, we are particularly thankful that we have been given some storage space in Pat Preece's garage.

Events

The lecture programme is brilliantly organised by Nancy Nichols and we have had a series of outstanding talks, which have been very well

attended. The pre-Christmas one was followed by a copious spread of wine and snacks organised by Becky Morrison, which was much appreciated by the attendees. The lectures have covered a wide range of archaeological subjects at a high level and any of these could easily have been included in a professional archaeological conference. Nancy also coordinates any summer visits and organised the July visit to Dorchester on Thames.

This visit, by 32 SOAGs, came in two parts with the morning spent looking at the dig of the Roman remains within the allotment area and, after a pub lunch, a guided tour of the Abbey. A full report on that day is included on page 6.

Arising through our continuing close contacts with other local history and archaeology groups, we this year, in cooperation with Berkshire Archaeological Research Group, included a workshop on Medieval Pottery, conducted by Lorraine Mephram of Wessex Archaeology.

Fieldwork programme

The active digging programme saw significant changes this year. Ian Clarke has retired from active direction and is busy writing up the fantastic results from his BBCHAP work. This meant that there was no dig at Brightwell Baldwin in 2012, but plans are being made for further work. Mike Vincent, in addition to his roles as Secretary and Membership Secretary, is seeking permission from the new landowner for a further excavation.

More test pits were dug at Ewelme for Stephen Miles' South Oxfordshire (Pilot) Project, run jointly by the Victoria County History of Oxfordshire and the University of Oxford, with Roelie Reed acting as the SOAG team leader. Policy and funding difficulties put a sudden brake on this work but it is hoped to restart fieldwork later in 2013 or after as a purely University of Oxford initiative. A report by Roelie is included on page 25.

In 2012 the village of Blewbury, which has long had an active History Society, initiated a community-based archaeology programme, under the leadership of Dave Carless. The main activity in the first season was a test pitting programme, mainly in private gardens, which was designed primarily to test support and enthusiasm in the village for field archaeology. Several neighbouring

societies offered technical and material support, which in SOAG's case included the loan of much field equipment. Progress on the project was advertised regularly in *SOAG Messenger*, and several SOAG members took part directly in the field work. By the end of the season, 16 test pits had been completed, and in the close season, finds were washed and processed. This first year was deemed a success, both in participation rates, and in the nature of the finds, the most interesting of which provide direct evidence of the Saxon origins of the village. A wider range of activities is being planned for 2013 and SOAG will continue to be a close partner. A report by Dave on this first season is included on page 17.

Gatehampton, under the direction of our President Hazel Williams, is SOAG's longest running project, and continues to attract high numbers of SOAG members and those new to the group or to archaeology. During 2012, excavation was concentrated in three areas. The first is a large room on the east side of the trench that, like the central room investigated the previous year, may in one phase have been a working area as it has a small furnace. The south side of the trench was extended for a wider look at the surface of the enclosure outside the building and, as expected, large quantities of pottery were found associated with what are likely to be domestic hearth areas. More work was also done in the area between the current trench and the earlier Trench 3 to establish the layout of the building and bring together the evidence found in that trench with that from our current work. A report by Hazel is included on page 9.

The highlight of this year at Gatehampton was the very successful Open Day in September that attracted nearly 100 visitors, mainly from local archaeological societies. It was an opportunity to exchange views and discuss the site with fellow archaeologists. An exhibition, finds display and also tea and cake, were enjoyed by everyone. With excavation in progress, younger visitors in particular were encouraged to join in. Congratulations to the Gatehampton team for organising an event that has no doubt raised SOAG's profile and enhanced the group's reputation as an active and welcoming

organisation. We are particularly grateful to the site owners for their valuable support for both the project and the Open Day. Hazel has provided a fuller report on the Open Day on page 6.

Highlands Farm

Under my direction, we had a standalone project at Highlands Farm near Henley where SOAG, helped by members of HAHG, dug an unusually large test pit over four days in March (and enjoyed some of the best digging weather of the year). Highlands Farm is the most prolific site in the country for Acheulean period tools, but is under threat of development. The object of the test pit was to investigate if geological conditions were similar to the Scheduled Ancient Monument some 80 metres away and, if this was the case, were 450,000 year old tools present. We proved the geology was indeed similar being convoluted gravels laid down by a braided river, but for safety reasons we could not get down to the layers close to the top of the chalk that, from the work done in the 1960s, contain most tools. The best find was a large core from which tools had been struck. The other finds were professionally examined and it appears three of the flints from the finds trays were worked, including an early form of handaxe. A full report on this project is included on page 21.

Greys Mound

Work at Greys Mound has changed course this year. Over the previous five years, under the leadership of David Nicholls, we have learned as much as we can from Barrow Field short of conducting an excavation of the barrow itself. Such a project would require considerable resources and is unlikely to take place in the immediate future, although a test pit is a possibility. Committee member Janet Eastment is now undertaking a PhD centred on the lithics of the wider area. Accordingly, 2012 saw a number of joint activities. SOAG embarked on a comprehensive geophysical survey of an adjacent field, Greys 3, which suggests interesting features in aerial surveys – field work that is enabled by a very supportive landowner. This geographical survey is incomplete and has so far been inconclusive, but it is hoped to continue in the new season.

Janet meanwhile has led several fieldwalking surveys in pursuit of her research, one being a new fieldwalking survey of Row Croft, (adjacent to Barrow Field) in August 2012. This survey was of the whole field, which was walked in 25m transects; analysis of the collected flints is ongoing.

Janet has also undertaken other fieldwalking surveys at other locations in the local area.

Possible future new sites

We are looking at doing some resistivity surveying at Ascott Park to expand the area already examined as part of the hunt for the house built there in the 17th century, but burned down before it was occupied.

We have also been asked, by the Common Management Committee, to help record the archaeology on Kingswood Common close to Sonning Common; this is mainly a World War II US army camp.

Lectures and Events

SOAG Lectures 2012-13

2012

27 September

Professor Martin Bell (University of Reading)

Footsteps in the past: prehistoric intertidal archaeology in the Severn Estuary

25 October

Helen Winton (English Heritage)

A bird's eye view: archaeological aerial survey

22 November

Dr Katie Meheux (University College London)

Saxon Reading: new discoveries and interpretations

2013

24 January

Professor Roger Matthews and Dr Wendy Matthews (University of Reading)

Excavating the First Farmers in the Zagros Mountains of Iran and Iraq

28 February

Judy Dewey (curator of Wallingford Museum)

Wallingford: from burh to borough

28 March

John Poulter

The Planning of Roman Roads in Britain

SOAG Events 2012-13

2012

13 July

SOAG Summer visit to Dorchester

(tour of the Oxford University excavations, visit to the Abbey Museum and a guided tour of the Abbey)

16 September

Afternoon tea at the villa

Open day at Gatehampton

29 September

Workshop on Medieval Pottery

Lorraine Mephram of Wessex Archaeology

(a bonus from liaison with Berkshire Archaeological Research Group)

2013

21 April

SOAG 44th AGM

followed by a review of SOAG Archaeology 2012-13

Events Reports 2012

SOAG Summer visit to Dorchester

Mike Green

The outing to Dorchester-on-Thames on Friday July 13th was another well attended SOAG event. In the morning, thirty two members, family and friends attended the tour of the current Oxford University excavations in the allotments near the Abbey, almost all of whom then took part in a very sociable lunch at the White Hart, followed in the afternoon by a visit to the Abbey Museum and a guided tour of the Abbey. A dozen or so finished the day at the tearooms.

The current excavations in Dorchester are run primarily by Oxford University as a training dig for students on the university's anthropology and archaeology course, but Oxford Archaeology has assigned Paul Booth to provide technical leadership, and after we were 'collected' by Wendy Morrison, course tutor at the University, it was Paul who led our tour. Dorchester is well known for the continuity of occupation from prehistoric times (the Iron Age dykes between the town and the river are worth a visit), through Roman, early Anglo-Saxon, and on through the medieval period. The allotments are known to be the site of the early Roman township. Excavations in the 1930s, the 1960s (Frere), and in 1972 established evidence of military activity in the early 60s AD, i.e. immediately post-Boudicca, but Frere was convinced there must be an earlier Roman fort.

The site of the current dig was constrained to be the only sizeable piece of land available in the allotments,



Paul Booth, in the white hat, explaining the site to SOAGs

about an acre in size. The intention of the intensive 4-week dig is to seek evidence of the transition from Romano-British to early Saxon, and eventually to find evidence of the earliest Roman occupation – the fort? At the time of our visit, the levels visible seemed mainly to be late 3rd century. By chance, the site had turned out to be an area that contained no buildings, with the exception of a single visible wall foundation on one side of the site, and on the other the main north-south Roman road. What was visible therefore was mainly ditches and pits in various stages of interpretation. However, being between buildings and the road, the site was probably a busy thoroughfare and as such has been quite rich in finds. 40,000 pottery sherds were mentioned, and over 250 Roman coins from 288–402 AD alone: the SOAG Gatehampton regulars present spent a great deal of time studying the finds trays!

After lunch, and a wander round the excellent Abbey Museum, we were met by our guide Sue Dixon, who first explained the long and intriguing history of the Abbey and its predecessor buildings on the site and then guided us round, adding fascinating details not available when visiting with only the guide book in hand.

The special role of Dorchester in early Anglo-Saxon times is well known, but worth restating. Birinus was dispatched by the Pope in the 635 to Christianise heathen areas in Britain, only 35 or so years after St Augustine's mission to Kent. Birinus used Dorchester as a base for converting most of Mercia, up to Lincoln, and Wessex, beyond the early Christian enclave at



Sue Dixon introducing the history of the Abbey

Winchester. With the arrival of the Normans, the abbey lost its cathedral status and in the 12th century it became an Augustinian abbey. During the early 14th century, the chancel was extended and includes some of the largest and most beautiful windows of this period to be found anywhere in England. The buildings mainly survived the Reformation and, later on, Cromwell's depredations, but by the mid-20th century they were not in a very good state. Dorchester was too small a town to afford by itself the maintenance costs of such a considerable building.

However, in the last half century, various campaigns have seen progressive restoration of the Abbey to the excellent condition we perceive today. It even has a bishop again.

Thanks are due to our events organiser, Nancy Nichols, who arranged the whole day.

Afternoon tea at the villa: Open Day at Gatehampton

Hazel Williams

One of the highlights of 2012 at Gatehampton was the very successful Open Day held on 16 September. By September 2012, the excavation of a large area of Trench 7 had been completed and was scheduled for backfilling in the autumn. So it was the right moment to invite others to see the result of several years of work by SOAG archaeologists. Originally planned as a low-key event to show the site to the friends and relatives of our site owners, the invitation was eventually extended to members of our neighbouring archaeology societies.



The tea ladies, Meg Haynes Latham, Becky Morrison and Brenda Austin with Kim Haddock (right) on a break from welcoming visitors at the gate

The event was advertised as 'Afternoon tea at the villa' and visitors enjoyed the opportunity to have some refreshments and enjoy the view. We were fortunate that in a year with a very wet summer, the day chosen turned out to be warm and dry making it possible to open the whole site for visitors to see.

We were very pleased to have over 100 people on site on the day. As well as SOAG members and families, a further 70 or so of our visitors were from local societies: The Wallingford Archaeological and Historical Society (TWHAS), Berkshire Archaeological Research Group (BARG), Henley Archaeological & Historical Society (HAHG), Archaeology In Marlow (AIM), and the new Blewbury group. The excavation as it was seen by visitors on the day was of course the result of several years work by the Gatehampton diggers; it was a good opportunity to explain the site to a group of people knowledgeable about local history and archaeology. As well as being a pleasurable day for all involved, the event will have considerably enhanced SOAG's visibility and reputation with the amateur archaeology community in the Thames Valley.

Left and below: Open Day 2012





Top left and above: The guided tours led by Mike Green and Dave Jobling

Visitors were given guided tours of the site and an explanation of the progress of excavation. Excavated features in the 25 metre by 15 metre open trench included Room 1 (North corridor), Room 2 (Central room), Room 3 (South corridor) and Room 4 (north to south corridor). There was also work in progress in a new trench area opened between Trench 7 and the old Trench 3, providing space for visitors to participate; several young people tried their hand at trowelling.

There was an exhibition of finds that included examples of the pottery and small finds but also the remarkable complete box tiles from the hypocaust, the collection of nails with mineralised wood attached and samples of the small mammal bones from the study of owl pellets from the central room.

There was also a display illustrating the progress of the excavation over the years and plans for the future. A display by Daisytown Ltd. part owners of the site, illustrated their plans for preserving both the local ecology and the historic environment.

All the Gatehampton team worked very hard to prepare for the event and its success is a tribute to their dedication to the site. The site looked pristine

*Top right: John Hefferan displaying the CBM
Centre right: The exhibition of finds and site information
Bottom right: Finds washing with David Cox*

on the day, thanks to their efforts on the Sundays before the event and their enthusiasm on the day, my sincere thanks to them all. Particular thanks also to landowners Sarah and Roger Edmunds for encouraging us to have an Open Day and for their practical help in providing facilities on the day. Thanks also to Daisytown Ltd. and to Robin Cloke who were, as usual, very supportive, not least in ensuring our many visitors had plenty of parking spaces. We were also delighted to see long standing SOAG member Barbara East, who had travelled all the way from Bristol to join us for the afternoon, bringing photos and memories of good times digging Trench 3 and the bath house.

Reports and Articles

Gatehampton Farm Roman Villa Excavation

Interim Report 2012-13

Hazel Williams

Introduction

2012 was a year when the weather was often wet and this shows in the site photos, in a lack of bright pictures of the site and of the diggers. But the villa building lies on gravel and is a very well drained site. The large, lozenge shaped field, of which the site field is only the eastern part, is known as Gravelly Piece, perhaps one of the reasons for the location of the villa building. Fortunately therefore, the weather had very little effect on the enthusiasm of the volunteers or the excavation at Gatehampton. Good progress has been made on the excavation, and the weather stayed fine for a successful Open Day in September; this is reported separately.

At the start of 2012, Trench 7 was still open over the central room, north corridor, south corridor and north-to-south corridor to the east, but this area was largely completed and plans for backfilling at the end of the season were in place. Before the area was

backfilled the opportunity was taken to extend the trench on the south side to look at a small area of the enclosure outside the building.

The next phase of the excavation, linking trench 7 and Trench 3, which was the first major trench in the site field, is designed to bring together what is known about the building from both recent and early trenches to create a comprehensive picture of the layout and character of the building. A start had been made in 2011 with a survey of the unexcavated area between the two trenches, using the SOAG RM 15 Resistance Meter, and with the excavation of Room 7: see the new site plan in Fig 1.

In 2012, Trench 7 was extended southwards; a new trench area of seven metres by twelve metres. Part of this was excavated in 2012 and work continues in 2013. Participation was very good in 2012, with 50 volunteers on site, about twenty new to archaeology

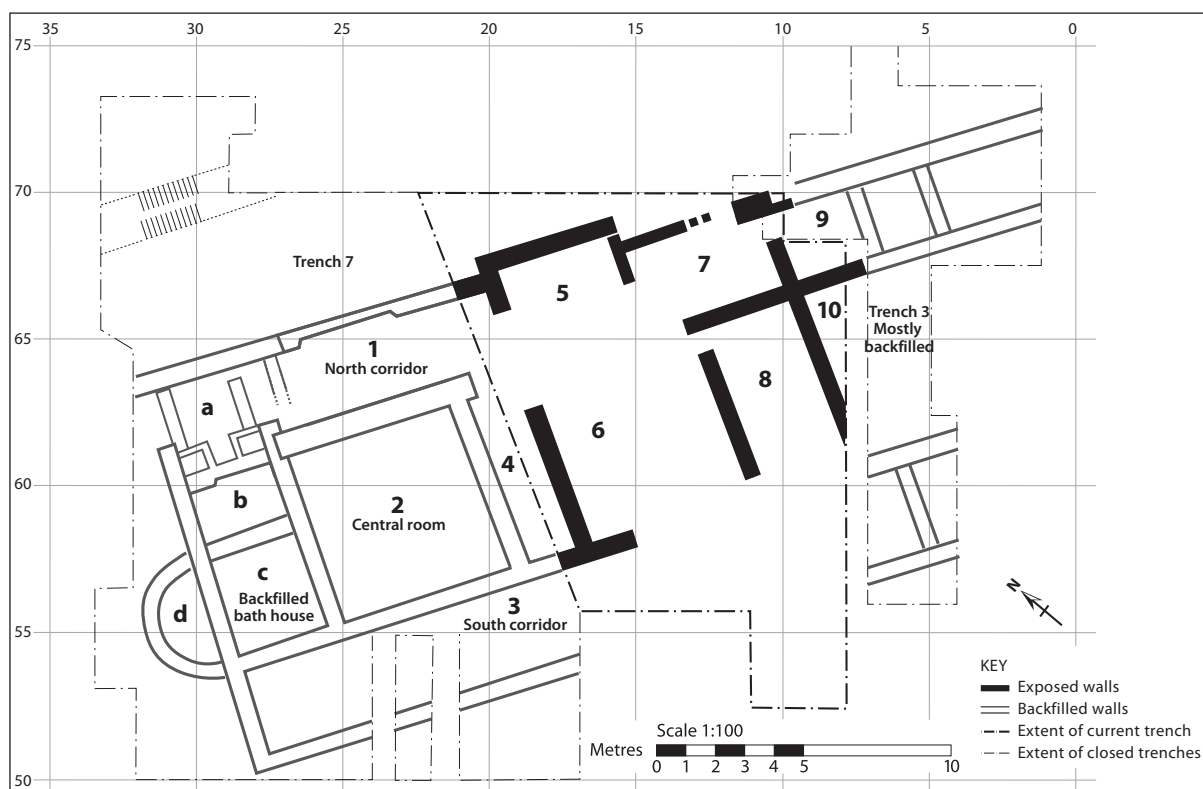


Fig. 1. Site Plan

or to SOAG. In 2013, the site continues to be popular with both experienced SOAG diggers and newcomers. We have seen an increase in the number of young diggers, both students and family groups, fulfilling our aim of providing accessible archaeology for all.

New site plan with numbered rooms

The site plan (Fig. 1) shows the new numbering system for the rooms of the villa building, introduced at the beginning of 2013. This will enable much clearer identification of the many rooms – now more than ten – that have been excavated so far. It will also provide a consistent method of identifying any new areas as they are discovered. The building has been numbered from west to east, following approximately the progress of excavation except for the narrow section of the building excavated in Trench 3. However, alphabetical labels, a to d, have been used to distinguish the bath house from the rest of the building.

Excavation

Extension of Trench 7 into the villa enclosure south of the building

Trench 7 was extended on the south side by a four metre by two metre area shown in Fig. 2. The south wall under the cover (to the right in Fig. 2) and Room 3 (south corridor) were excavated in 2003 (see Bulletin 59, 2004). However, at the time only a very small area outside the south wall was excavated (lower area to right in Fig. 2) and for this reason the opportunity was taken to extend the trench further out into the enclosure in 2012, before the area was backfilled.

The topsoil layer of the four metre by two metre area was noticeably much deeper than encountered elsewhere on the site but this was due to an extra layer of soil deposited within the last ten years from the excavation of the foundations for a nearby greenhouse. In fact it was possible to see the original turf line due to pieces of plastic and other debris. The lower layer of topsoil was remarkable for the high number of fragments of grogware pottery found scattered within it. Exact numbers are not yet available but must be at least 200 sherds, most measuring at least 5cms by 5cms. This is consistent with what was found previously; over 150 late Roman Grogware fragments including four pieces of the rim of one or maybe two large jars.

Beneath the topsoil, mortar and demolition rubble from the south wall was found outside the building, but was confined to a 1.5 metre by 1 metre area at the extreme western end of the trench. Only occasional scattered flint stones and cobbles were seen in the rest of the topsoil and this is confirmed by the vertical section of the east side of the trench in which no demolition rubble can be seen.

Beneath the demolition rubble was a layer of smaller flint stones, not sufficiently uniform or concentrated enough to be a surface. A very similar deposit was seen when a small area was dug outside the building at the western end of the south corridor. A layer of scattered chalk extended over the rest of the new trench area, again not really a surface, but quite dense

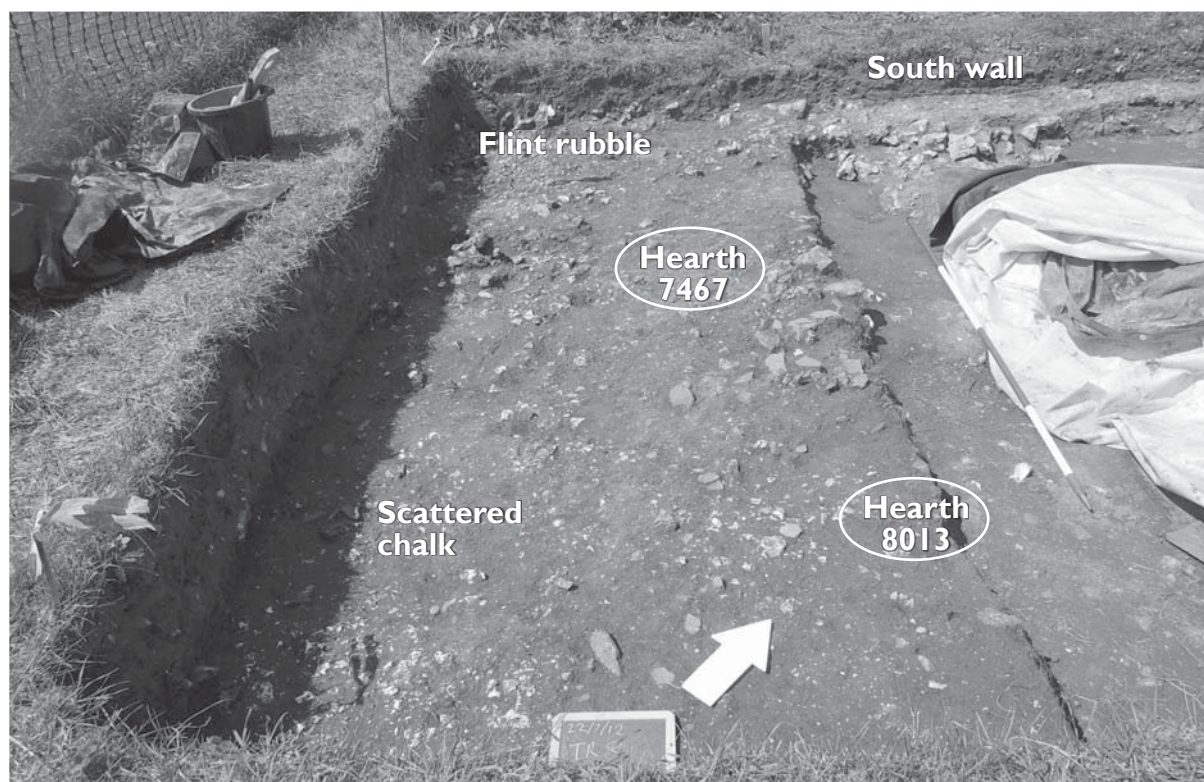


Fig. 2. View north west of trench 7 extension south



Fig. 3. Excavating the hearths

in patches. The chalk scatter extended up to and around two hearth areas, 8013 and 7647, and was approximately 15-20cms deep. No post holes or stake holes were seen in this deposit or on the underlying surface of the enclosure.

The beaten earth surface of the enclosure, consisting of reddish silty soil with occasional small to medium flint stones, had been found previously and was readily identified this time beneath a layer of pea gravel under hearth 7647 and elsewhere in a noticeable change to a much firmer surface and more reddish soil.

Most of hearth 8013 had been excavated in 2003; it was roughly oval in shape, about 0.75 metres by 1 metre. It consisted of layers of reddish brown to black burnt soil with deposits of charcoal and some orange-yellow hard clay patches outside and spread beyond the hearth to the east. In 2012, a large piece of charcoal, approximately 10cms by 5cms by 4cms, was found close to the hearth. Two pieces of a Grogware jar rim had been found within the hearth previously, and this time a concentrated deposit of Grogware fragments was found when the remaining part of the hearth was excavated.

Hearth 7647 was excavated in 2012 and appears to be slightly larger than 8013; a roughly circular area about one metre in diameter and this seems to have some structural elements. There was an outer ring of shattered flint stones, some reddish, heat shattered, flint and hard burnt orange-yellow clay. There were three or four large pieces of tile on the side closest to hearth 8013 and several more in the small gap of less than half a metre between the two hearths. Beneath the clay and flints, and mostly concentrated in the centre, was a black burnt deposit with burnt animal bone.

In 2003, a large quantity of pottery had been found in this area outside the building, and even more was found in 2012; both Grogware and other fabrics. An exact count has yet to be done, but in addition to about two hundred more pieces of Grogware there are several hundred fragments of other fabrics. These were concentrated in the area close to the building and the hearths, with fewer found in the chalky area further out. A typical sample has about one third small (less than 4cms across) fragments, one third larger (less than 6cms) and the rest consisting of larger fragments. Although there are many small pieces, they do not appear to have been worn or abraded. The range of fabrics is typical of the site and includes fragments of Black Burnished coarse ware jars with burnished decoration and some plain dishes, Alice Holt Farnham greyware jars, Oxfordshire wares including fragments of white mortaria and some Samian ware. There are high numbers of rim and base fragments and quite often several pieces of the same pot. There is also a wide range of types and sizes, from small pots with bases less than 5cm in diameter to the very large Grogware jars that have a rim diameter of nearly 40cms. (See Figs. 4 and 6).



Fig. 4. A typical pottery sample showing many rim and fabric types

Discussion

When this part of the Room 3 south corridor was excavated in 2003, the similarity of the material found both immediately within and outside the building was noted, as was the presence of an external hearth. This suggested open access to the outside, perhaps a veranda; quite a practical arrangement on the sheltered south side of the building and facing the length of the enclosure. Added to this was the lack of any substantial floor surface on the side nearest to the open air, perhaps due to weathering. The relatively small quantity of wall rubble within the building indicated that this might be a dwarf wall. It is built with flint stones, few of them dressed and none particularly large in size. This all contrasts with the western end of the same corridor where there are quite substantial dressed flint walls and a complete chalk floor surface with patches of large terracotta tesserae.

The only wall rubble in the 2012/2013 excavation is at the western end of the new trench area, perhaps marking the end of the solid wall and the start of the open veranda. The veranda area also seems to coincide with the chalky deposit outside the building, beyond the hearths. It is also interesting that there are two hearths, close to each other, within the corridor and these have some similarities with the outdoor ones; the use of flint stones around the hearth area, the presence of lots of pottery and a dark burnt occupation layer around them and extending towards the open veranda area.

The area just within and outside this section of the south corridor has the largest concentration of pottery found so far on the site. Plenty of pottery was found in the fill of the stoker room (Room a), apparently discarded after the room went out of use. However the pottery assemblage from the south corridor is much larger and does not appear to be the result of dumping of broken pots or of a later clear out of the building for example. Despite the small size of many of the sherds, they are not worn and seem to have been broken and laid within the area that they were found in, illustrated by the frequency of several parts of the same pot. The range of different sizes and types is also interesting, from large storage jars to many small pots and beakers. There are many pot bases and rims and, in 2003, fragments of a strainer and the handle of a jug were also found. The association with a hearth area outside the building where burnt animal bone was found suggests this part of the building was used for food preparation and storage. The impression is of a working area abandoned, with pots – many of them still intact – left and eventually broken with little displacement of the material, except through the processes of weathering and the collapse

of the building, and with later ploughing of the topsoil that scattered the larger grogware fragments. Also interesting is that as many as ten shoe cleats were found in this area, almost as if the inhabitants, like typical country dwellers, entered the house through the back door and kicked off their shoes in the kitchen!

Linking Trench 7 to Trench 3

During 2012 and 2013, the excavation has progressed southward across the remaining area between the old Trench 3 and Trench 7, focusing on features indicated in the 2011 Resistance survey (SOAG Bulletin No.66. p14). In 2012, a seven metre by two metre area was excavated across the inner wall line of Rooms 5, 7 and 9, and just into Rooms 6, 8 and 10. In addition, a small area in the south west corner of Room 6 was opened and this is reported separately by Dave Jobling.

Fig. 5 is a view east across the walls dividing Rooms 7 and 9 (left) and Rooms 8 and 10 (right). Some flint stones can be seen above floor level but the junction of these walls is identified largely by the presence of the hard mortar bonding layer dividing the rooms at floor level. It is not clear which of these walls butt against another and this will be looked at later in 2013. Wall 7448 has one course of dressed flint stones still in place that appear to end neatly before a gap of over a metre to the three remaining flint stones on wall 7491. In the foreground, wall 7450 extends just over two metres west from this junction; only a few of the flint stones in the course above floor level remain.

Wall 7495 is the least clearly defined as less than a metre of it has been exposed. It consists of a mortar surface which in fact has a burnt deposit extending partially across it from Room 10. Above this, and showing in Fig. 5, was a layer of demolition rubble (mostly chalk blocks but with some flints) over Room 9. Wall 7495 may have been constructed of chalk and is on the same alignment as a chalk wall less than one metre to the east in Trench 3. In addition, the corner of Room 10 has a chalk floor surface that is likely to be the same floor as one found across the baulk in Trench 3. If so, this room is at least four metres wide.

The east corner of Room 8 also has a floor made with crushed chalk, 10cms to 15cms thick, and this is found in further patches over the northern part of the room. Beneath this is a yellowish sandy levelling layer, along with a patch of greyish gravel that is as yet unexplained as it is unlike any deposit found so far on the site. A section of a flint and mortar wall, 7490, dividing Room 6 from Room 8 was found late in 2012, and the remainder of the demolition deposit overlying the room was removed in 2013, exposing the full length of the wall and floor surfaces. The picture emerging is of a room three metres wide and

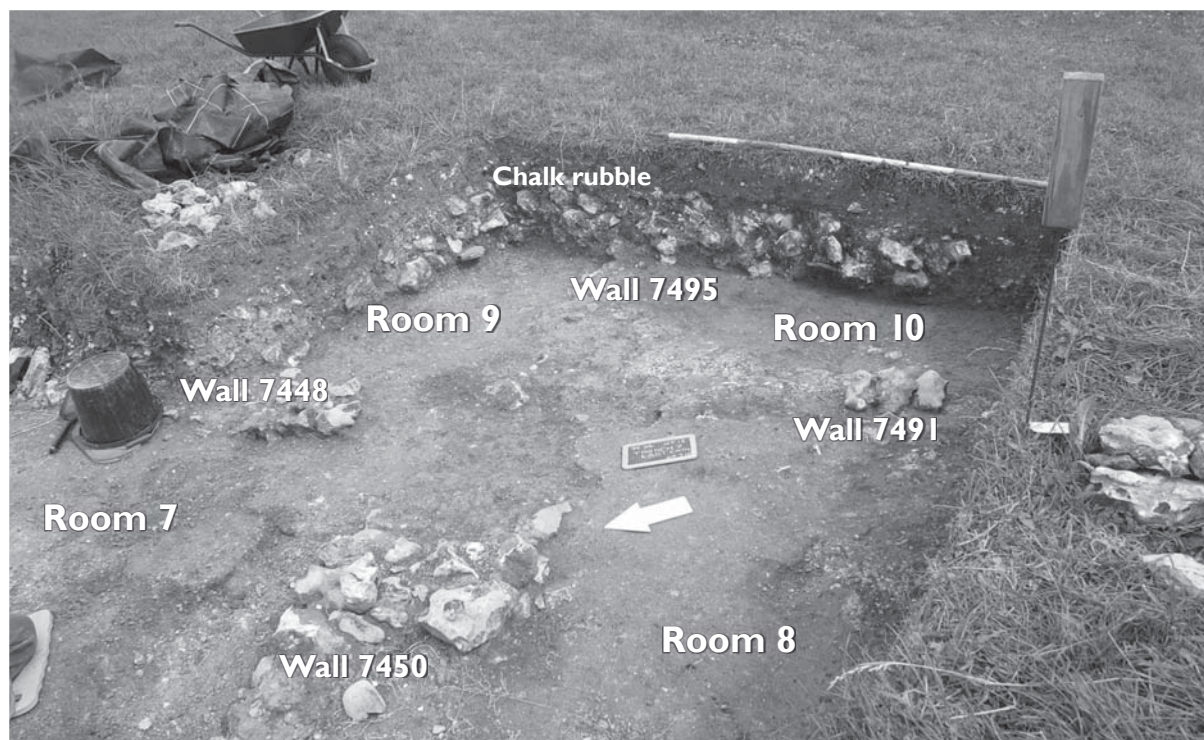


Fig. 5. View east showing crossing point of four walls.

approximately six metres long, with patches of a hard smooth blackened floor surface, that has tesserae embedded, also appearing on the south side.

Discussion

Excavation in 2012 and continuing work in 2013 has revealed more of the layout and character of the villa building and has enabled the closer integration of the evidence from Trench 3 with what has been found in Trench 7. It is now known that in this substantial building there are three further rooms to the east of Room 2 (central room) and Room 4 (north-south corridor) and that Rooms 6 and 8 repeat approximately the same pattern of one square and one narrow room. Room 10 may also be another large room. These new rooms are not yet fully excavated but early indications are that they may have had more than one phase and it will be interesting to see if this matches the pattern of the central room, for example where a change from working area to higher status room was identified. This type of transition had been noted in some of the rooms excavated in Trench 3.

When the north to south wall 7448 between Rooms 7 and 9 was first discovered in 2011, it looked well built, substantial and from the geophysical survey appeared to extend across the width of the building. This even raised the possibility that it was the end wall of an earlier part of the villa building to the east. Subsequent excavation in 2012 and 2013 has shown that the same wall line 7491 does extend south at least a further five metres dividing Rooms 8 and 10.

The full extent of the wall will not be known until the excavation progresses further south. Little of the structure remains above floor level, so at the moment it is difficult to assess exactly how substantial is the wall and its foundations.

The chalk rubble in Room 9 is interesting because it suggests that wall 7495 may have been constructed with chalk blocks; further work is needed to confirm this and most importantly to find out if it butts a continuous north to south wall represented by walls 7448/7491. All the walls of the building west of this wall line, both internal and external, are constructed using flints, with some use of chalk for packing. In contrast, most of the interior walls of the section of the building found immediately to the east in the old Trench 3 were entirely of chalk. This suggests a different type of construction, even a different phase of building, to the east and it will be interesting to see if other evidence can be found to support this theory.

Conclusion

2012 was another very successful year for the Gatehampton Project and good progress has been made integrating the evidence found in Trench 3 with that of the more recent trenches, providing a more coherent picture of the building excavated so far. It has also prompted more questions about the relationship between what has already been excavated and the rest of the building to the east. There is still a lot more to do as our understanding of the character and extent of the building eastward is not complete. Some of the

features found in 2012 and emerging in 2013 highlight the difference in the methods of construction used, at least in the interior of the building and raises the question of whether this villa to the east was in fact a separate build.

The excavation so far has produced much information about the western side of the villa, the villa enclosure and the elements of the probable farmstead ditches and enclosures further west in Gravelly Piece. Situated in an open field, these building and landscape features were relatively accessible for both the survey and excavation. The challenge now is to look eastward and this is not as easy as there are modern buildings and tarmac. A survey of the car park area beyond the hedge on the eastern side of the site field is planned for 2013 and a small exploratory trench has been opened in the car park.



Fig.6. Samian ware fragment from Trench 7 south extension depicting Venus (left) and Apollo (right)



Fig. 7. Work in progress October 2012 (with historic last glimpse of Didcot volcano in background)

Acknowledgements

2012 was the wettest summer in many years, it is much harder to maintain enthusiasm for digging in dull and wet conditions and it is a tribute to the dedicated team of Gatehampton diggers that we made such good progress and were also able to prepare for a major Open Day event. My sincere thanks to everyone for all their hard work, particularly the SOAG members who have dug at the site for several years and who provide the expertise that makes the project so successful and creates the setting for us to provide basic training and support on site for newcomers to archaeology. My thanks also to Steve Gibson, Deputy Director who always ensures that the site runs smoothly, to John Hefferan and David Cox for their work on the CBM and finds processing and to Dave Jobling for

extending his interest in iron nails to include, this year, iron hinges. Our thanks also to Robin Cloke who has supported this project for many years and continues to take an interest in our activities. The most important people involved in the project are of course the landowners, Sarah and Rogers Edmunds, and the folks at Daisytown Ltd, we are very grateful for all their help, enthusiasm and encouragement.

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Roman hinges at Gatehampton

Dave Jobling

In June 2011, a corroded iron hinge was found beneath the chalk demolition layer at the southern end of Trench 7 at Gatehampton. At the end of the 2012 season, two more hinges were found in the same area. A plot (see Fig. 1) shows them to be equally spaced, in almost exactly a straight line (there is a 1cm deviation) measuring 1.3m in length. There is a 2.5cm vertical difference in the spot heights taken for the three finds. This distribution suggests a doorway, out of which the door fell during the building's collapse. Wall context 8003 does show evidence of a doorway, with a low-lying, flattened surface lying to the east of the corner with wall 7393. Within the room to the north of wall 8003 is context 7256, made up entirely of face-down wall plaster. The fact that no such plaster is found between 7256 and 8003 suggests that it fell from the area above a door lintel.

The 1.3m spacing between the upper- and lower-most hinges compares with the 1.5m spacing on many modern domestic doors.

The hinges all have the same structure, consisting of three parts (see Fig. 2). A right-hand leaf with two outer knuckles fits around the single inner knuckle of the left-hand leaf, the two held together by a pin. Both leaves taper along their total length, the left-hand leaf also cut into a neck at the point where it must accommodate the interlocking knuckles of the right-hand leaf.

The hinges were nailed into place, there being only a single nail through each leaf. All three hinges preserve some part of the nails, SF455 and SF456 very clearly. Where the heads are still present, they protrude about 1cm above the leaves of the hinge. The tip of the nail in SF455 is bent over at 90 degrees, perhaps hammered over at 1cm to prevent a protruding point causing injury. All three

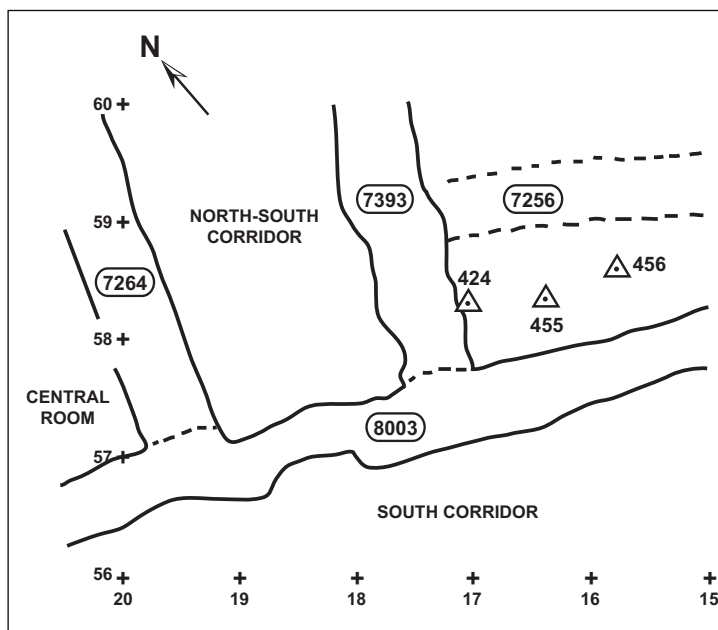


Fig. 1. Location of the hinges found to the east of the North-South corridor, 2011-2012

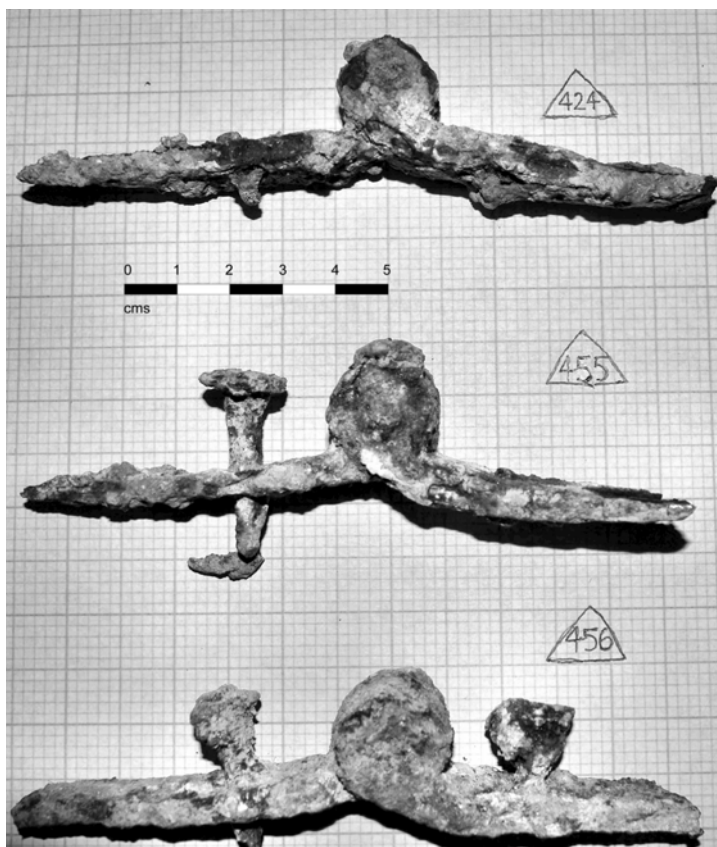
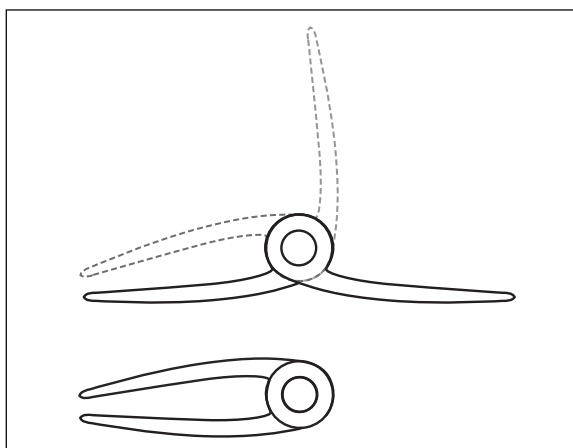


Fig. 2. The three Gatehampton hinges (Photo Michael Jobling)

hinges are fully open, implying that the door to which they were affixed was closed when it collapsed out of its frame. The closing action for the hinge (while the door opened) would be for the right-hand leaf (as seen in Fig. 2) to swing upwards and to the left, lying, when fully closed, above and parallel to the left-hand leaf (see diagram below).



The modern equivalent of these finds would be the “strap hinge”, usually made from heavier gauge steel, and used for supporting larger doors and gates. The more massive the leaves, the greater the weight that can be supported by the hinge. There are, however, two major differences between modern strap hinges and the Gatehampton finds. The first is that modern hinges typically have one long leaf (carrying the weight of the door) and one short (affixed to the door frame). The second is that in modern hinges, more than one screw (nail) would be used. A single point of attachment would have reduced the weight of timber capable of being supported.

The three finds are remarkably alike in their dimensions, as shown in Fig. 2. The similarity makes it likely that they were the product of a semi-industrialised manufacturing process, though whether this was local to the site is not known. Numerous furnace-like structures have been found at Gatehampton, however.

All three hinges show traces of the mineralised wood found on many of the Central Room’s iron nails (see my article ‘Roman Nails at Gatehampton’ in *SOAG Bulletin* 65 2011), confirming that the conditions that have promoted this rare form of preservation are more widespread at Gatehampton than had been thought. In all three cases, the “wood” is located as expected, attached to the hinge leaves.

However, a prominent trace of mineralised wood attached to find SF455 (Fig. 3, seen from above, with the prominent nail head to the left) is noteworthy because of its placement on top of the knuckle assembly. This makes no structural sense, and cannot be original. It is unique to this one find. It seems likely that, after collapse, this hinge lay on top of an originally separate piece of timber, and mineralisation fused the “wood” to the hinge from that source rather than from the door or frame to which the hinge was originally attached.

While hinges are not rare finds at Roman sites, the spacing of these three is of interest because it seems likely they were affixed to a door whose position can be determined even though the timber has decayed. The mineralised wood found on these finds adds to that found on the nails of the Central Room. More than 20 wood samples have now been identified, in two separate rooms.



Fig. 3. Hinge (small find SF455) showing oddly placed mineralised wood (Photo Michael Jobling)

Blewbury Local History and Archaeology Groups

Blewbury Big Dig – 2012 Test Pit Programme

Dave Carless

Introduction

With the aim of promoting community archaeology in Blewbury and helping to establish an understanding of the history of settlement in the village, a programme of garden test pits was started in 2012. The project is run as a partnership between SOAG and Blewbury Local History and Archaeology Groups in which both parties provide equipment and members of both can take part.

We began the season with a demonstration weekend in which we dug three pits on public land to gain community interest and train participants in the methodology. This was followed by the “Big Dig” weekend in June in which 9 pits were dug including one in the village primary school. A further four pits over subsequent weekends brought the total for the year up to 16, well spread throughout the village.

BLEWBURY BIG DIG



Methodology

A standard methodology was developed based on those used by similar programmes at Wallingford and Ewelme, with which many SOAG members will be familiar. Each pit was assigned a “Pit Leader” – an experienced test pit digger responsible for managing the safe and enjoyable excavation process, and recording the dig. 1.5m x 1.0m pits (Fig. 1) were excavated in artificial spits of 100mm (or less if there

was evidence of context change) until the water table or “natural” was reached – normally confirmed by sondage or auger. 100% of excavated material was sieved through 10mm sieves (except where sticky clay-like alluvium made this impossible and then hand sifting was used) to extract finds. Sections and plans of pits were drawn before backfilling, and field reports were filed. Post excavation processing of finds was generally done off-site later in the year (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Finds processing

Finds

Unless of particular interest, stone and CBM was returned to the pit during back filling. All other material was taken off-site for subsequent washing, sorting, counting and weighing. All data was retained by context (pit and spit number) to allow subsequent analysis. Material was categorised as:

- Pottery
- Clay pipe
- Bone/teeth
- Flint/stone
- Glass
- Metal
- CBM
- Wood/charcoal
- Other

As the primary aim is to gather dating evidence, all coins and pot sherds were retained and stored for later analysis and dating. Other materials were only retained if of particular interest or as representative examples.



Fig. 1. Test pit digging

Coins

By good fortune our very first pit produced a Charles I “rose farthing” (1636-44) (Fig. 3) and an Edward IV half groat (1464-65) (Fig.4) but apart from these no coins older than Victorian were found in any pits.

Analysis of Pottery Finds

In total 1304 potsherds, mostly small single pieces, were recovered from the 16 pits (Fig. 5). Where possible these were assigned date ranges:

- Prehistoric (to 43AD)
- Roman (43 to 410AD)
- Early/Mid Saxon (410 to 900AD) (Fig. 6)
- Late Saxon (900 to 1066AD)
- Saxo-Norman (1066 to 1150AD)
- Medieval (1150 to 1450AD)
- Post Medieval (1450 to 1750AD)
- Modern (1750AD to present)

Although there is an Iron Age hillfort on the boundary of the Parish, and Roman coins have been found at a number of locations, there were no Roman or Prehistoric finds from the test pits. The temporal distribution across all pits is shown in Fig. 7.

The spatial distribution of pottery finds in each date range has been plotted in a GIS environment and is shown in Fig. 8 a to f.



Fig. 3. Post Medieval Rose Farthing of Charles I



Fig. 4. Medieval silver half groat of Edward IV

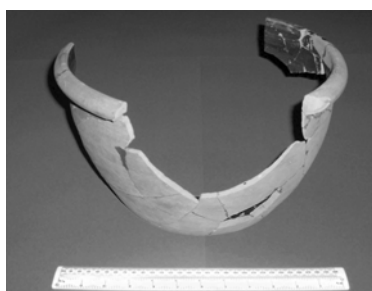
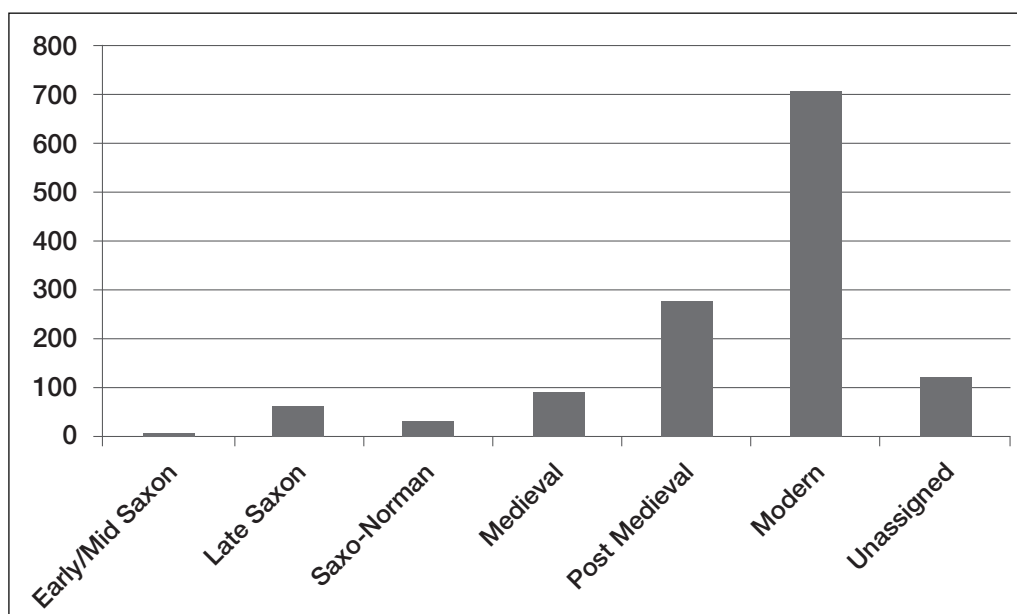


Fig. 5. Linda's big pot



Fig. 6. Early/Mid Saxon sherd

Fig. 7. Temporal distribution of pottery finds from all pits



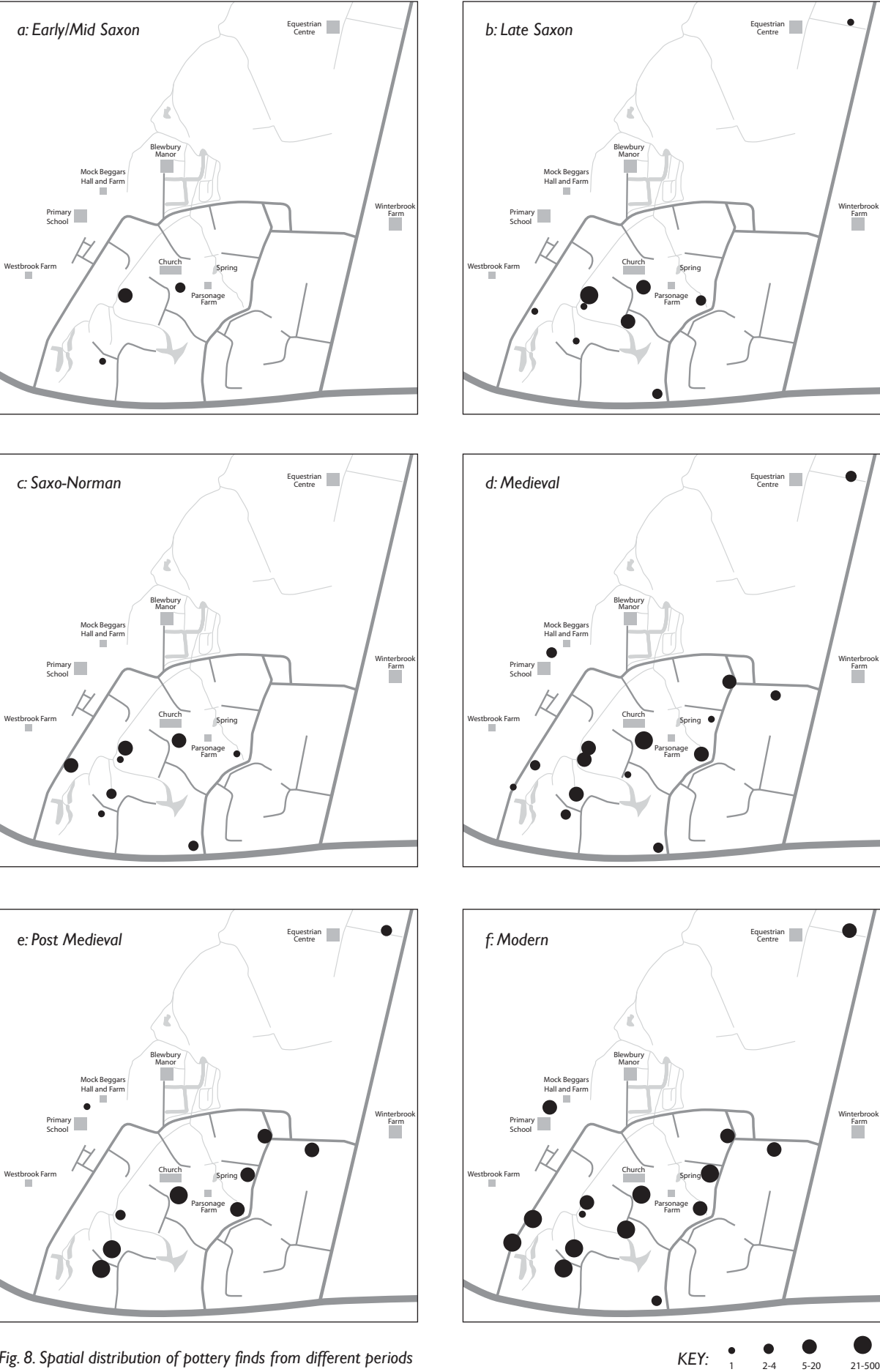


Fig. 8. Spatial distribution of pottery finds from different periods

Discussion

As a community archaeology project the Blewbury Big Dig has proved a great success with countless participants ranging in age from under 8 to over 80. The partnership between SOAG and Blewbury groups has worked extremely well and we have had a great time together. As well as the school involvement we have had enthusiastic participation of local garden owners and willing diggers from within the village and the surrounding area, including members of other local archaeology groups. Our pot-washing sessions have also proved popular, with regular diggers taking advantage of a warm room on a wet day and also some who are beyond their digging days finding a gentler way to join in.

As for the analysis of the results, we remain cautious until more data has been gathered from the on-going campaign but it seems that some settlement patterns are beginning to emerge:

- No evidence was found of prehistoric or Roman settlement within the present village curtilage
- There is evidence of early/mid Saxon (dated 5th to 8th century) occupation. This is the earliest occupation evidence yet found in the village and may have connections with the pagan burials on Blewburton Hill (late 6th or early 7th century) and elsewhere within the Parish.
- There is evidence of continuous occupation from Saxon to modern times
- No evidence was found of settlement outside the areas of occupation shown on the 1805 enclosure map implying that there has been no contraction of the village prior to its modern expansion, nor relocation of the village since Saxon times (Fig.9).



Fig. 9. Enclosure map of 1805

The Forward Programme

It is planned to dig a similar number of test pits in 2013 and the locations will be chosen to focus on a number of specific research questions:

- What evidence is there of early occupation in the Nottingham Fee Manor (a small manor dating back to the Domesday Book, entirely surrounded by the Great Manor of Blewbury)?
- What are the early Saxon origins of Blewbury? Is there evidence of a possible minster church?
- Where were the historic boundaries between village and fields?

Acknowledgements

We are immensely grateful to all the people who have offered their gardens and given up their time to survey, dig, sieve, wash, sort, count, weigh, photograph and report.

The programme has been undertaken with the kind support of TWHAS (The Wallingford History and Archaeological Society) who loaned us equipment and, in the guise of Gerard Latham, provided much needed support and guidance to get us going. We are greatly indebted to June Strong for help in dating the pottery. We are also most grateful for generous financial support from Sustainable Blewbury.

Highlands Farm – Report on a test pit

Dave Oliver

Introduction

Highlands Farm has been known as a source of Palaeolithic flint tools since the late 19th century. In the mid-20th century, there was significant gravel extraction causing the creation of a large pit. Work by Wymer in the 1950s and 1960s (Wymer 1968) along various faces of this pit showed that there was a very high density of Lower Palaeolithic tools within the gravels. This location was ranked with three other sites as being the most important of their type within the country. A strip of land along the northern edge of the pit, plus a short adjoining strip on the eastern side, was designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 254). The same area was also made a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) on geological grounds as being the site of a rare braided river.

There is a proposal that the Highlands Farm complex be redeveloped, and SOAG became involved in helping to assess possible impacts of a development.

Site Location

The SAM site is on private land to the east of Henley, just off Greys Road (see Fig. 1). It is bounded to the east by land owned by Henley Council. The area of what was the gravel pit is now some three metres below the surrounding surface level, and appears to be used currently for waste recycling. The SAM/SSSI area is on the north side of the old pit; it is fenced off and tree covered. To the north of the protected area there is an open field (Eleven Acre Field) used for agriculture. To the west, there are the original farm buildings and other more modern buildings used for light industrial purposes. To the south, there are open fields.

According to the UK Geological Survey drift map of the area, the boundary between the Chalk and the gravel passes approximately diagonally across the area covered by the Highlands Farm complex, with Highlands Farm House being on the Upper Chalk, and the western edge of the gravel pit marks the approximate edge of the gravel deposit.

Geological and topographic background

Approaching Highlands Farm from Greys Road, one travels approximately north to south along Highlands Lane. The land to either side is more or less flat and, according to the BGS drift map of the area, Highlands Lane and the land on either side of it is a gravel-topped plateau with an elevation of around 77m-78m



Fig. 1. The site location © Crown copyright Ordnance Survey. All rights reserved

AOD. The gravel is of the Black Park type as originally identified to the north of Slough. Here this gravel overlays Upper Chalk.

Carrying on to the south, the gravel covering over the chalk ceases in a line running approximately north-west to south-east. This line passes through the Highlands Farm buildings. Further to the south, the land surface drops away by about 25m into a significant dry valley, which was originally the “Caversham Channel” of the Thames (see Fig. 2). This is believed to be a result of the Anglian glaciation during which the then tundra was cut by vast braided rivers (Hardaker 2007, 3.3). The southern side of this valley does also have isolated deposits of the same Black Park gravel deposit.

While the existence of Acheulian hand axes at this site was reported in the late 19th century the most significant work was carried out by John Wymer in the 1950s and 60s (Wymer 1968, 191). Wymer's report describes the finding of Clactonian, Early Acheulian and Middle Acheulian worked flints including many hand-axes. Many of the larger flints were found at the screening plant, which was set to retain larger items.

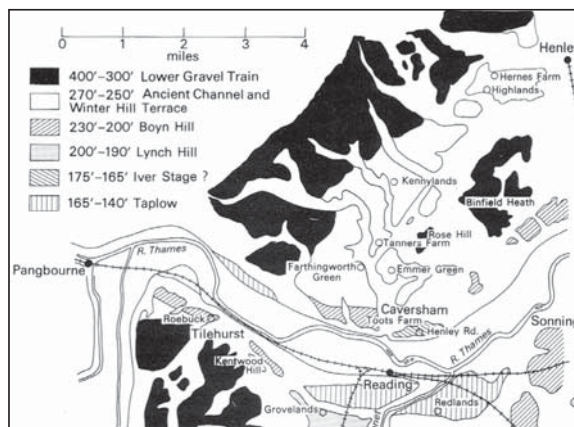


Fig. 2. River terraces in the Reading area (From Roe 1981)

It would appear that the most tool prolific layer of shingly/sandy material was immediately above the chalk, and varied between 15cm and 60cm thick. This layer produced tools at an average rate of 70 per cubic metre with a total found at this site running into thousands.

Reason for the Test Pit

While the exact nature of any development to the Highlands Farm complex is still to be agreed, assuming planning permission is granted it seems that this redevelopment would mainly affect the area covered by the Highlands Farm complex and the area of the old gravel pit.

There is, however, a possibility that the Eleven Acre Field may also become involved. That might have an impact on the archaeological heritage. From the archaeological point of view, two uncertainties need to be resolved in order to assess that impact:

1. While it is certain that the gravel from the pit has been found to contain artefacts, it is unknown if this content occurs throughout the gravel over a wide area or is just limited to a section cut by the gravel pit (Roe 1981, 147).
2. It is also uncertain if the boundary between the chalk and the gravel is exactly represented by the drift map, or is an interpolation of points sampled by the Geological Survey.

Therefore, it was agreed that a test pit should be dug to see if these uncertainties could be resolved.

Aims of the fieldwork

1. It was intended to dig a test pit so that the depth to the gravel can be determined, and then to go as deep as possible to see if any worked flints can be found within the gravel. If any were found, this would extend the known extent of the site some 80m or so beyond the SAM
2. The depth to the chalk within the test pit will also be determined by augering

Field Methodology

While a 1.5 x 1.5 metre test pit was originally planned to be dug at the rear of the garden of 11 Highlands Lane, this size was extended to 2 x 2 metres. This was because of the required depth of the trench: while some worked flints might be found in higher layers of the gravel, the significant deposits found by Wymer were quite deep (3-4m+) with respect to the land surface. (Access to this depth during his investigation was easy from the gravel pit; but he still had difficulty in reaching the chalk, see Fig. 3). Due to safety requirements, a maximum depth of 1.4m was intended to be the digging limit. Hence, it was planned that having reached 1.4m over a four square metre

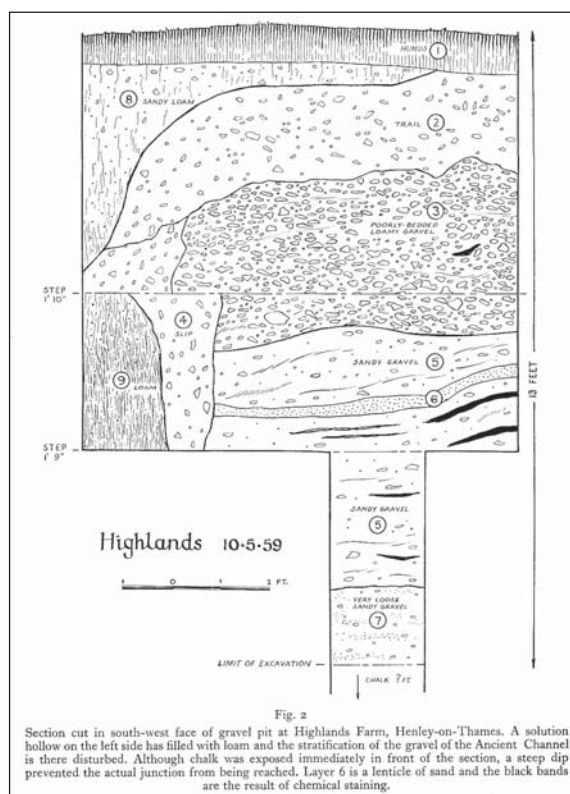


Fig. 3. South-west face of the gravel pit (From Wymer 1961)

trench, a small central sondage could be excavated to a deeper level and even within that sampling to a greater depth would be carried out using a simple tool like a post hole maker.

After removal of the turf the whole area was excavated in increments of 10cm until the gravel was reached and the top of that layer was cleaned and recorded. After recording, the gravel was also removed in 10cm increments with environmental samples taken once every 10cm layer. All soil and gravel removed was sieved, and any flints were examined for evidence of their being worked. This was done on site as material was being excavated.

At the request of Richard Oram (Oxfordshire County archaeologist), if significant number of worked flints had been found further excavation would have ceased, as it would if chalk had been reached. As expected the gravel contained some quite large stones and these were obviously not sieved.

The Test Pit

The test pit dig was begun and completed in March 2012. The exact location of the pit was fixed by the landowner (plus or minus a metre or two). The area to be excavated was marked out with the sides orientated north-south and east-west. Determined by GPS, the north-east corner was at easting 474210.3 and northing 181493.1 and its elevation was 77.14 metres AOD.

Prior to excavation, an auger hole was bored near the centre of the marked out area; this gave the depth to the chalk as approximately 3.8m below surface (73.3m AOD); this depth meant it was very unlikely we would reach the chalk during excavation.

The topsoil was removed in spits until the top of the gravel was reached; this was on average 0.71m below the surface (76.48m AOD) and was remarkably horizontal, varying only 7cm from lowest to highest points.

Excavation into the gravels immediately showed a large part of the test pit area consisted of a red clay like material. This covered the southern side of the pit and was interpreted as the infill of an ancient solution collapse within the chalk; a similar feature had been seen and drawn by Wymer (see Fig. 3) which he interpreted as being filled with red loam. A second auger hole was bored towards what appeared to be the centre of the red mass. This was only some 60cm from the first augered hole, but here the chalk was found to be 1.2 metres deeper.

As it was believed any tools would be found only within the gravels, it was decided to concentrate excavation in the north-east corner of the test pit and excavation continued here to a depth of 2.2 metres, at which for safety and practical reasons a halt was called (see Fig. 4). The gravel stability was checked during digging and it remained stable until the test pit was backfilled after drawings of the north and east faces were made (see Figs. 5 & 6).

Ten environmental samples were taken, one at each 10cm depth increment within the gravels. These samples were examined at Oxford Archaeology, but absolutely nothing significant was found within them.

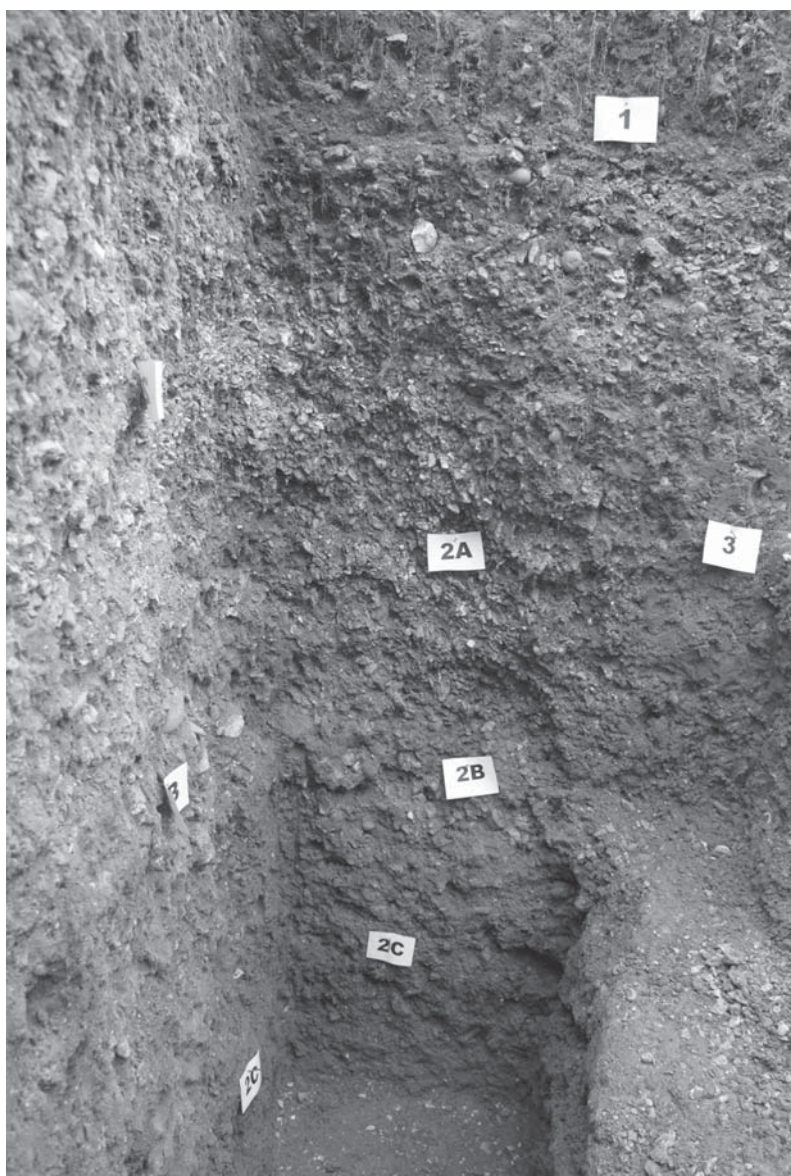


Fig. 4. North-east corner of test pit (Photo D. Oliver)

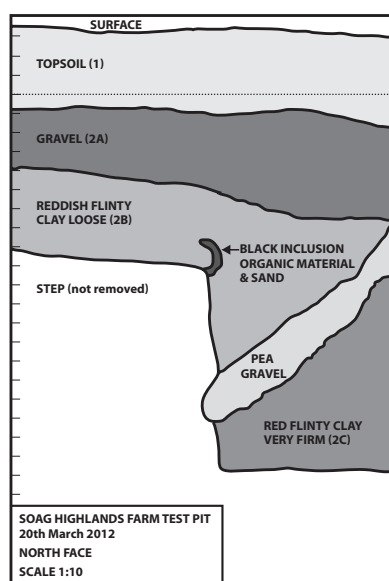


Fig. 5. North face of test pit

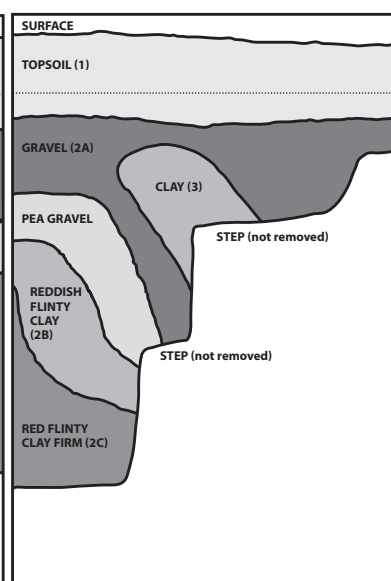


Fig. 6. South face of test pit
(Recorded by Derek Greenwood)

Geological Interpretation

The test pit was sited partly on an infilled solution hole within the chalk; the fill was probably originally a loam that had overlain the gravels, but has now otherwise disappeared. It is worthy of note that a similar solution hole appeared in the front garden of the house two doors away from No 11 a couple of months before the excavation; this was still visible at the time of the dig. The owner of No 11 said that she had had a hole in her front garden some years ago, and there has also been one in the garden of the house opposite. It was therefore unfortunate we had not located our pit a couple of metres further north.

The gravels were not homogeneous and represent the stratification of the ancient channel that is described as a braided river, which would have constantly changed its course. A layer of pea gravel curved down towards the solution hole and may be a result of the collapse.

The Finds

Some worked flints were found within the topsoil (context 1) including a small neolithic core (identified on site by Terry Hardacker).

The small number of possible worked flints were examined by Rob Hosfield post excavation. Apart from a core found in context 2C (see Fig. 7) while he was on site, he identified three items as probably being worked. There was one flake found in context 2B and two items from context 2C. Of these two items one is very similar in appearance to items shown in Wymer 1961 (his Fig. 8), which he identified as small, crude, pointed handaxes and possibly transition tools between the Clactonian and Middle Acheulian periods.

Conclusions

As expected, the gravels at the test pit location are similar to those within which Wymer found many Palaeolithic tools.

Some worked flints and a substantial core were found within the gravels. These have extended the known tool bearing area at Highlands Farm by around 90 metres to the north of the Scheduled Ancient Monument. See Figs. 7 and 8.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, thank you to Val Munday, the occupier of 11 Highlands Lane, who allowed us to dig at the rear of her garden.

Thanks also to:

All members of SOAG and HAAHG who spent many hours at Highlands Farm.

Richard Oram for his encouragement, advice and active participation as well as arranging for examination of the environmental samples at Oxford Archaeology.



Fig. 7. Flint core from context 2C (Photo D. Oliver)



Fig. 8. Probable early hand axe from context 2C (Photo D. Oliver)

Terry Hardacker for the time spent on site showing tool examples from the Highlands pit and his identification of some of our finds.

Dr Rob Hosfield who came to site a number of times and looked at our finds at Reading University after the dig was complete.

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Ewelme Test Pit Programme – 2012 season

Roelie Reed

Introduction

SOAG volunteers made a significant contribution in 2011 as part of the South Oxfordshire Project, an interdisciplinary historical/archaeological investigation of inhabitants' perceptions of landscape over the period 500-1650, including fieldwalking, geophysics and excavating 10 test pits. During the first half of 2012, volunteers from SOAG and from the village of Ewelme continued the test pit programme, with guidance from Stephen Miles (Oxford University History Faculty) and Richard Oram (Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service).

A further eight test pits were excavated in the village during April, May and June. All test pits measured 1.50m x 1.00m; they were excavated by hand and all soil was sieved. Excavation was by archaeological context, with topsoil removed in spits of 0.10m. Records were made on standard Oxford Archaeology record sheets and section drawings were produced where appropriate. *Detailed identification of the finds will be finalised during 2013 thus providing more information for the final interpretation.*

April 2012

Test pits 11, 12 and 13, excavated in April, were grouped in the area south of The Mount. Test pits 11 and 13 were in the back gardens of new houses in Chaucer Court, built in the 1970s. Test pit 11 only disclosed a layer of re-deposited landscape gardening soil; Test pit 13 had a layer of topsoil below which the natural was reached at a depth of 0.35m without divulging any datable finds. Test pit 12 was in the garden of a converted barn in what was previously the home farmyard of Wace Court. It revealed several very disturbed layers with mixed inclusions from the very modern to mid 19th-century materials. At a depth of 0.60m a sondage was started at the southern end of the test pit, where a solidly compacted layer of chalk was found which was reinforced with chicken wire with a total thickness of 0.10m, which could be interpreted as a solid floor layer, see Fig. 1. Underneath this layer a levelling layer of sandy silt was found with the natural clay and flint below. As chicken wire was not invented until the mid 19th century, the layers above cannot be older.



Fig. 1. Close up of chalk floor, showing clearly the chicken wire

May 2102

For the May test pits, we went back to the stream valley near the church. Test pit 14, in the rear garden of 2 Burrows Hill, was dug to a depth of approximately 0.70m with a sondage to 0.90m in the south end of the pit. Silt overlay sticky clay; natural subsoil was not reached. The garden is located towards the lower part of a hill slope next to an old lane which runs past the church; the ground is likely to be composed of hill run-off and deep overburden. There was much disturbance in the layers caused by tree roots and worm holes. No features were found, but a number of sherds of early looking pottery were found in the sondage and are awaiting analysis. Test pit 15, at 1 Cottage, revealed a similar compacted flint layer at a depth of approximately 0.50m which had also been found in Test pit 5 (Day's Cottage). This finding could possibly be construed as a former road leading to Ewelme Manor.

June 2012

Two of the three June Test pits (17 and 18) were in the large garden of Mead House, formerly an orchard. Test pit 17 was located close to the road north of the garden, approximately 1.5m inside the garden boundary. Considerable quantities of brick and tile were found and, right on the horizon with the natural chalk, a clay pipe cup (see Fig. 2). Test pit 18, south of the house at the top of a slope above King's Pool, had no features but around ten sherds of unstratified medieval pottery were found in topsoil

and subsoil layers, including green-glazed ware. Test pit 16 was located in waste ground at the top of Burrows Lane. This area of land was probably last used as a kitchen garden attached to The Cottage. The excavation suggests a very disturbed context with soil deposits in fairly recent history. It revealed thick deposits of different soils with no features and a profusion of largely modern or undateable finds.

Conclusions

Although we are still analysing the pottery finds, the oldest piece of pottery identified in the field was found in Test pit 17 (context 1702), near the roadside in the garden of Mead house. It is a handmade sherd tempered with chalk and flint and manufactured between the 7th and 11th century. Unfortunately it came from a disturbed layer – the complete clay tobacco pipe, which is dated 1660 to 1680, was found at the horizon with the natural chalk in context 1703.

Most medieval pottery sherds were badly degraded and from disturbed layers as well as mixed with post medieval pottery and other objects. Large quantities of post-medieval building material were recovered from all test pits except Test pit 13.

At the end of the June excavations it was decided to stop the test pit programme due to changed priorities and increased work commitments. Further fieldwork is likely to be small-scale and focused on landscape work, including the reconstruction of the sound sheds of village church bells.



Fig. 2. Test pit 17 – clay pipe head on horizon with natural chalk

Local Ferries on the Thames

Pat Preece

Until relatively recently there were few bridges across the Thames between Wallingford and Reading. The river was much wider and shallower in early times, and could be forded in some places then – there was certainly a ford at Gatehampton from Basildon. However, ferries were a very important way of crossing the river, and such ferries possibly existed from Anglo Saxon times, although there are no records that far back.

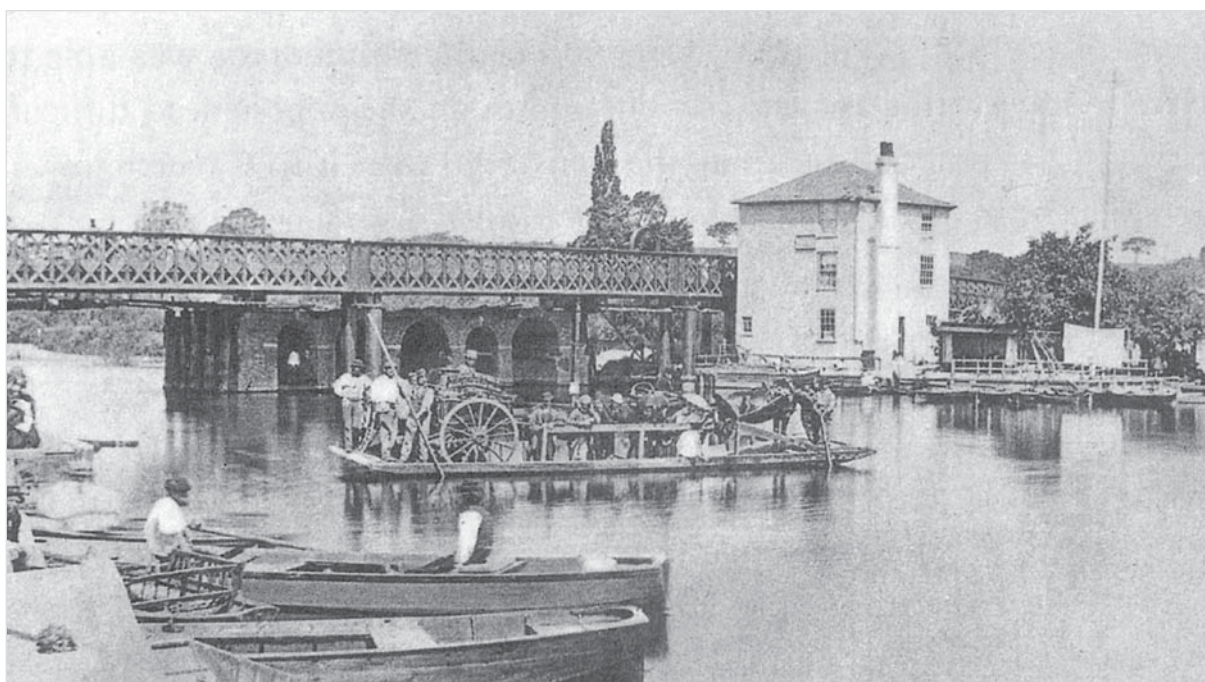
Until the arrival of steam traction, horses pulled barges along the river. Mainly because some landowners were unwilling to allow the passage of heavy towing horses over their land, the river's towpath was not continuous. Therefore, as well as transporting people and goods, ferries were also used to carry barge horses from one side to the other.

The ferryboats' methods of propulsion varied according to local conditions and requirements. They were rowed, punted or, in one or two cases, pulled across on overhead rope (as at Bablockhythe near Oxford until as recently as the floods of 2007). The photograph below of the Caversham ferry was taken before the iron bridge was completed in 1869;

it seems as if it is being poled across. Note how crowded it is and the carts and horses on board.

The ferry at Caversham probably started at a very early date: the first reference found being in 1231, when an oak was granted by the King from Windsor Forest to build a boat to ferry poor people over Caversham water. The next mention of the Caversham ferry was in 1238 when the Canons of Notley Abbey, who owned part of Caversham, got several oaks for a ferryboat for pilgrims who wanted to cross presumably to Reading Abbey, which had all sorts of relics to attract them. In 1479, the ferry was granted to James Hide. Later, in 1510, a Richard Smythe and a Richard Justice were appointed Keepers of the manor including the ferry (Thacker 1914). The abbey of Notley, along with many others, was shut down by Henry VIII and in 1542 Edward VI gave Francis Knolle the manor and park of Caversham and also the "ferry barge of Caversham".

Caversham ferry continued and was important particularly from the 17th to the early 19th century by which time Caversham Bridge was in bad repair. In the early 19th century the Thames Commissioners



The ferry at Caversham, crossing to the Caversham bank (from Kift 2004)

stated that “the ferry at Caversham and some others are kept locked and it is frequently necessary to go two miles to get the key while the boat and horses are kept waiting” – this is puzzling because where were they going? However, the Commissioners replied that the ferryboat was only a quarter mile from the ferryman’s house, and it was kept locked to prevent anglers from borrowing it and leaving it on the wrong side of the river.

The next ferry up the river was The Roebuck at Tilehurst. The first mention found is in 1798 when a boat was installed near the pub and was in charge of A. M. Storer at a monthly fee of 32 shillings and he was followed by George Reynolds who left in 1811 having “misbehaved” in some way! He was followed by a succession of men and in 1866 an Alfred Warwick was employed at £2 monthly but unfortunately in 1869 he was declared insane and a C. Clutterbuck was employed in his place. There was a ferry house, which in 1876 was condemned by the Berkshire Health Authority, being only a wooden shack. A new one, which was supposed to cost £50, was ordered but there is no mention of it being built.

The next ferry was at Gatehampton and the ferryman had a wooden hut on the bank there. However, the land there is subject to flooding and in 1891 the ferryman had a little cottage built further up the bank which was completed in 1893 and later had a bathroom.

In about 1950, my cousin and I rowed up the river and had tea at that cottage. I seem to remember we had bread and butter and watercress sandwiches followed by homemade lardy cake! Apparently, there was a letter in The Times in 1955 bemoaning the loss of the ferry so it must have been about this time that it ceased.

I wonder if there are still some walkers wishing to follow the river who would love for some of the ferries to be reinstated?

References

Most of the information in these notes is from the following books:

Kift, Mary. (2004) *Life in Old Caversham*. Caversham Bookshop

Thacker, Fred S. (1914) *The Thames Highway*. London

Tucker, Joan. (2012) *Ferries of the Upper Thames*. Amberley

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 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 may 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.

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