

David Rayner



**Abingdon Area
Archaeological and Historical Society
NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2002**

LECTURE PROGRAMME 2002-2003

2002

- 19 Sept AGM: Landscapes and placenames in and around the Chilterns. *Ann Cole*
17 Oct How Oxford got its railway. *Robert Sephton*
21 Nov Lambrick Memorial Lecture: The parsonage in the local community. *Kate Tiller*
12 Dec Megalithic temples of Malta: Christmas social. *Jenny de Bono*

2003

- 16 Jan Kelmscott. *Simon Townley*
20 Feb 100 years of change at UKAEA Harwell. *Nick Hance*
20 March Alcester. *Eberhard Sauer*
17 April The life and times of Sennacherib. *Stephanie Dalley*
15 May The Archaeology of the Channel Tunnel. *Stuart Fordham*
19 June Members' Evening: Presentations and displays of members' work
18 Sept AGM

NEWS IN BRIEF

The National Monuments Record Centre at Swindon are having a Research Day for Local History on 18 September. This consists of a tour of the search rooms, case studies and a practical session. It lasts all day and costs £20 without lunch and £24 with. Their telephone number is 01793 414735. The Centre has excellent coverage of Abingdon, e.g. several box-files of photographs of churches, streets, the Abbey, Christ's Hospital, archaeology, Fitzharris Manor (some 50 photos!).

The Society's web site is at www.aaahs.org.uk Whilst this is currently just about adequate it is not very up-to-date, and could do with some improvement. We should be grateful if there is anyone who could volunteer to take charge of it

Northcourt Centre Bazaar. There will be the annual fund raising event at Northcourt Centre on Saturday October 19th. We have not yet decided whether the Society will have its own stall there but even if we don't we should be grateful if members could support this event by gifts and purchases as we need to do our bit to ensure the financial stability of the centre.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

It has been a very mixed year. The death of John Carter had an effect on us all and we wanted to find some way of remembering his contribution to both the digging and historical work of the Society. There are various proposals being considered, but nothing definite has yet been decided. Some of these - for example, seeing whether we can have an Abingdon based edition of Oxoniensia - are not within our control.

The talks continue to be well attended and we all have our favourites. I particularly liked the talk on Droving by Nigel Hammond. The historians have now got together with the diggers and are carrying out a research project on Thrupp. The task here will be finding a way of bringing the work to a publication standard; and we also need to develop expertise in identifying medieval pottery. The Members' Evening showed the type of work being undertaken and I would be the first to admit that I should have been more robust in limiting the length of some of the talks. The problem was that the level of enthusiasm was such that it would have been a bit mean to have done so.

The outings appear to be well supported for the shorter evening ones but less well for the longer day trips. This is difficult to judge, as we should be enabling people to see places of interest but at the same time it would be silly if we went to places that people were so uninterested in that they did not join us. I suspect that we will need to have just one whole-day outing per year and to recognise that this may make a loss. It is however up to the membership and the committee to decide what they want. We are looking for people to join the Committee. Please phone me on Ab 529720 if you wish to know more - no-one can be on for more than 3 years without a break so it is not a lifelong commitment.

Whilst I am the person who stands up and introduces the speakers, this is only a very small part of the work which is carried out. Not only do we have the committee which organises the speakers, outings, digging and the Society generally, but we also have other people who help, such as Diana Carne who attends the Northcourt Centre Committee, enabling us to use the premises at a reduced rate. This Newsletter was produced by Dick Barnes, again, someone who is not on the committee but without whom we would all have to do a lot more running around. The best example I can give of the assistance given by members generally was the speed with which over 100 cups of tea were produced for the 'Oxfordshire Past' conference. Society members who were around stepped in and helped, and this enabled the queue to be got through in 10 minutes. So I would like end by thanking everyone who has helped with the Society this year.

Roger Ainslie

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

The Local History Group now has about twenty members. The meeting in May featured, exceptionally, an outside speaker: Grant Audley-Miller, who leads the Oxfordshire Building Record project on the old police station on Bridge Street. He described the 19th century building and the way it functioned: the business section and the cells on the ground floor, with the policemen and their families living 'above the shop'; the policemen scattering each day to their beats in the Vale villages and checked on by the inspector making the rounds on his horse. A Victorian policeman might keep the same beat throughout his career and would develop an intimate knowledge of his area and its inhabitants.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, 22 October, when Margaret Gosling will present her work on the Hyde family of Northcourt and its branches. Meetings after that will be on the first Tuesdays in February and May 2003.

Manfred Brod

JOHN CARTER (1931-2001)

An Appreciation

To more recent members of this Society John Carter is probably best remembered for his close questioning of reports at the Annual General Meeting, when the majority of those present would undoubtedly have preferred to move swiftly on to the evening's speaker. Many will be unaware of his major contribution to the development of the Society. John was a founder member, one of an elite but rapidly dwindling band of people who responded to Lucy Hale's advertisement in the North Berks Herald suggesting the formation of an archaeological Society in Abingdon. He attended the inaugural meeting in May 1968 and at the first Annual General Meeting in the following September he was elected on to the committee of the Abingdon and District Archaeological Society as it was then known.

In the first ten years of the Society's history John occupied most of the major offices on the committee: Chairman, Secretary, and Digging Secretary. It was during this period that his influence was probably at its height. He was committed to bringing the Society's activities to the attention of the general public and used his great skills of organisation and persuasion to mount exhibitions in shop windows, at school fetes and excavations, and in the Abbey buildings. In 1974 he co-ordinated the first major open day at an excavation in Abingdon on the Ashville Trading Estate when over 3,000 people visited the displays of the Iron Age site presented in the Society's small caravan. A second one-day exhibition, "A day of archaeology at Abingdon Abbey" followed in 1975. Background planning and preparation often took place in his office while John pursued his day-to-day life as a shopkeeper. Indeed in the early days it could be said that John's toyshop in Stert Street was the informal headquarters of the Society.

It was, however, the week long Silver Jubilee Exhibition in 1977, which demonstrated fully his vision of the twin disciplines of history and archaeology and his skill as a director and co-ordinator. Seventy feet of displays, involving thirty screens and ten cases, had to be thought out, labels created and typed, photographs mounted, and records kept of artefacts borrowed from other museums and private individuals.

There were lectures in the afternoon, music and plays in the evening and guided tours of the town. The event was a major tour de force resulting in increased membership and the financial stability to venture into the publication of "Abingdon in Camera".

Although he had scaled down his involvement in the Society's management, John continued to be a committed member of the digging team but drew the line at potwashing! He had been an enthusiastic advocate of changing the name of the Society and now devoted more time to historical research, publishing jointly two books and a research paper in addition to writing articles for the Market Place magazine and sketches for the town's Millennium Drama. He was a member of the team researching the Society's Millennium Time Line and supported the establishment of the local history group within the Society. After retirement he was appointed Honorary Archivist to Christ's Hospital where he used his newly-acquired computer skills to transfer their card index system to disk.

John set and demanded high standards from all those who worked with him. His main concern was to promote the archaeology and history of Abingdon. His achievements speak for themselves.

OUTING TO SEE THE COPY OF THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY

At Reading Museum, April 28th 2002

If you haven't seen the copy of the Bayeux Tapestry in Reading Museum you must! Twelve of us met there on Sunday afternoon April 28th to see it, with our own speaker (a young archaeologist appropriately named Delphi) and were amazed at how the thirty-five members of the Leek Embroidery Society back in 1885-6 were able to reproduce such a large piece of work in so short a time and to do it as such a faithful copy of the original, housed in Bayeux.

The Embroidery Society's leader, Elizabeth Wardle, had seen the original tapestry and decided it would be a wonderful project to copy it. Photographs of it from the South Kensington Museum (now the V & A) were traced and transferred onto linen, and the workers started, taking great care over every possible detail, even having the woollen yarns specially dyed to match the original colours.

Briefly, the story depicted on both "tapestries" (they are really embroideries) starts with King Edward the Confessor (who had no children of his own) sending Harold Godwin to France to tell William of Normandy that he can have the throne of England when Edward dies. When he does die Harold takes the crown, prompting William to invade England in order to take that which was promised to him, and we all know how he succeeded and that Harold died in the battle!

The story is enhanced all along by lots of detail which tells us about everyday life in 1066. For instance, we don't just see Harold stepping into a boat to cross the channel; we see him in conference with Edward, getting his instructions, then setting out on horseback, being led down the road by his hounds and carrying a falcon. He then decides, as it's a long journey, that he should pop into Bosham Church to pray before having a last meal on land, and then wading stockingless out to the boat already being pulled out by the tide.

Similarly we are given a lot of details about how William set out to conquer England. It took a while to build enough boats, so we see all the trees being cut down for timber, then carpenters and workmen building the boats. They are launched and then stocked with weapons, armour, food and wine, and finally set sail across the Channel; we can see not only men on board but they have brought their horses as well.

All this makes the Bayeux Tapestry and its copy a very human document, not just of wars and battles but how human beings lived and worked, the way they dressed and ate and much else. The copy in Reading Museum is displayed beautifully, well lit and in its own airy gallery; and if you missed the AAHS visit I can recommend that you pay a visit to the museum to see it.

Suzette Woodhead

Enjoy a free guided tour of the famous full-size replica of the Bayeux Tapestry every Saturday, 2.30 - 3.00 p.m - no need to book Open for self-guided visits at other times.

And now you can enjoy this excellent display of the Tapestry online at www.bayeuxtapestry.org.uk.

Also, there is a fascinating book in the Society's library which, for example, looks at the back of the original tapestry to reveal evidence of design changes.

HIGHLIGHTS OF A VISIT TO COVENTRY

On 26th May, fourteen members travelled by coach to Coventry. Once there we were free to explore on our own. We were dropped off at the Information Centre where most of us picked up either a walking tour leaflet or an audio guide of the city, which could be stopped at any point in order to visit some of the interesting places en route.

Our first visit was to a 14th century cellar beneath the Information Centre. It had been the basement of a fine house whose early owners had been connected with the wool and cloth trade in England and would have been used for storage. It was very extensive and very high, had groined ribs and was made of local red sandstone.

We were very fortunate to be able to get into St. Mary's Guildhall which was open to the public on the day of our visit. Coventry was an important mediaeval city and one of the largest in England in the 14th and 15th centuries. Its prosperity was founded on cloth production. The Hall was first built in the 1340's for the merchant Guild of St. Mary, which later merged with others to form the Trinity Guild. We saw the Great Hall with its Tournai tapestry commissioned for the visit of Henry VII and Queen Elizabeth in 1500 for their ceremonial admission to the Trinity Guild. We also saw the Old Council Chamber and the Prince's Chamber [Coventry has an association with the Black Prince]. Other rooms in this impressive building include a treasury, an armoury and a small room where Mary Queen of Scots is believed to have been imprisoned.

Another important visit was to the Priory Visitor Centre. This was built alongside an area that was excavated for the millennium and has now been made into a garden. Earl Leofric and his wife Lady Godiva founded a monastery here about 1000 A.D for an abbot and twenty-four Benedictine monks. About 1100 A.D. the Bishop of Chester moved his seat to Coventry and the Priory church became a cathedral. A great cathedral was built over this site and remained there until 1539, when Henry VIII ordered the cathedral to be demolished. [Coventry did not have another cathedral until St. Michael's was made into a parish church cathedral in 1924.] Inside the Visitor Centre, built of Hollington sandstone as a deliberate link with the new cathedral, are some finds from the excavation. There is a glass portrait of a woman with long golden hair, once part of the west window of the mediaeval cathedral. Some people think it might be the face of the Priory's benefactress, Lady Godiva. There is also an exquisitely painted fragment from the wall of the Chapter House. It is of St. John's Apocalypse and is thought to be French in style.

No visit to Coventry would be complete without a visit to the new cathedral, which is a little to the south of the mediaeval one. It is thirty years since I last visited but it still had the same impact. Entrance to the splendour of the new cathedral is from the peaceful ruins of the bombed St. Michael's Cathedral. Inside the new cathedral the organ was thundering and the building was filled with light and colour from the windows of the baptistry and nave. There are many works of art from the 20th century. It is good to know that we are leaving something very much of our time for future generations to enjoy.

Finally to the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, where we only had time to visit the exhibition on the ground floor. This depicts the history of Coventry from the foundation of the Benedictine monastery and the development of the wool trade, the prosperity of the town, the foundation of three later monasteries, the fine ribbon industry, the Lady Godiva parades, the manufacture of bikes, motor bikes, cars, watches and aero engines, to the blitz and the present day. We learned that the Lady Godiva parades were formed to bring in trade. Early Lady Godiva's were played by boys. Later parades became a bit boisterous. One female Lady Godiva fell off her horse, drunk. We also discovered the origin of the expression "sent to Coventry." Coventry was a Puritan stronghold during the Civil War and Puritan jailors refused to speak to their Royalist prisoners.

Coventry provided us with plenty to see. It is good that there is so much to display after the war time devastation. The weather improved as the day went on. Occasionally the audio machine had a mind of its own. It also had tough competition at times from the church bells but we had a good day out.

Elna Mayor.

MARLOW TOWN WALK: 27 JUNE 2002

On a fine summer evening 22 members met three guides from the Marlow Society at the Leisure Centre. Our group set off to the rear of the Centre, and here we encountered Sir Steve Redgrave in bronze, looking out across the Thames and the Rowing Club, and recently unveiled by the Queen. A short walk along the river brought us to the jewel of the town, the wrought-iron suspension bridge built in 1832 to the design of Tierney Clark, who also designed the chain bridge in Budapest. From the bridge we had fine views of the Compleat Angler Hotel, the cascading weir, the lock, and the river with the beautiful beech trees of Quarry Wood in the background.

Returning from the bridge we entered All Saints Church rebuilt in 1835. It contains many interesting memorials and hatchments, including a monument to William Horsepole (1624) who was related to George Washington.

A path at the side of the churchyard leads to St Peter's Street, which runs down to the point where all previous bridges crossed the river. Walking along this street we passed the Roman Catholic Church designed by Pugin in 1846, and the Old Parsonage with parts dating back to the 14th century. Marlow Place faced the end of this street, a fine listed Georgian mansion (c 1720).

Returning to the broad High Street we discovered that it was full of unspoilt buildings from the 16th to the 18th centuries, and noted that some facades were refacing older properties. At the top of the High Street stood the Crown Hotel built in 1807 as the town's Market House, replacing a former wooden building. We were informed it has a fine Assembly Room on the first floor.

The walk continued along West Street, where our guide pointed out commemorative plaques to T S Elliot the poet, Thomas Peacock the author, and to the poet Shelley and his wife Mary, who completed her novel 'Frankenstein' while they were here. Next we came to Sir William Borlase's Grammar School, founded in 1624 to teach 24 poor boys to 'read and write and cast accounts' and 24 poor girls to 'knit, spin and make bone lace'. It is now a mixed grammar school with a sympathetic modern extension. Opposite was Remnantz, an 18th century house, where the junior section of the Royal Military College was housed for about ten years before moving to Sandhurst in 1812.

The return walk brought us to Court Garden built in the mid-18th century by a Dr Battie, who specialised in nervous diseases. He designed it himself and is said to have forgotten at first to put in a staircase.

Marlow still permits cars to park in its High Street and with various eating places and hostelrys open it had a busy and lively atmosphere

Bryan Cozens

MARTHA WASHINGTON'S "HOME IN ABINGDON PARRISH"

A coach tour in Virginia (VA) last year took us to the attractive little town of Abingdon in Washington County, in the far south-west of the state. Its name was specified by the document which authorised the settlement in 1778. We were intrigued by the statement on the official web-site that "the town's name was derived from Martha Washington's English Home in Abingdon Parrish". Could it be that George Washington's wife had connections with our Abingdon in England?

The Historical Society of Washington County VA provided a helpful newspaper article, and there are web-sites with genealogical data and biographies. Although there are several glaring inconsistencies in this data, we can immediately rule out the interpretation that Martha had actually lived in a home in England. Her father, Col John Dandridge, emigrated from England to Virginia c.1714, when he was 13 or 14, and Martha was born at Chestnut Grove in eastern Virginia in 1731. Another interpretation is that Martha's English ancestors may have had a home in our Abingdon (or perhaps a nearby village) – this cannot be ruled out, because Dandridge was (and still is) a local name. Perhaps "English Home" means no more than a home in English style, and we should look for some other link between Martha and the name "Abingdon"

The newspaper article points out the existence of a cluster of Abingdon place names in the east of Virginia, not far from the colonial capital of Williamsburg. It claims that Martha was born, grew up, and lived in Abingdon Parish, worshipped in Abingdon church, and owned Abingdon Plantation. The Abingdon Census District on the road map of Gloucester County VA may well be related to "Abingdon Parish", and "Abingdon Church" features in the Gloucester County web-site as the largest Colonial church in Virginia. "Abingdon Plantation" was one of the properties of Martha's first husband, Daniel Custis, who died after only seven years of marriage, leaving Martha as a wealthy young widow who would soon marry George Washington. That still leaves the question how these Abingdons got their name!

In passing; we noticed that the US Census web-site lists only four Abingdons which are currently census districts. These are: the town we visited in Washington County VA; the district in Gloucester County VA mentioned above; a town between Washington DC and Baltimore; and a small town in Illinois which was mentioned in the Society's Christmas lecture on mouse traps.

Dick Barnes

Oxoniensia. This year's edition is now out. It contains several items of local interest. The principal one is the note on the Lower Palaeolithic artefacts from Culham by Bob Eeles, Rachel Everett and Jeff Wallis. There are also book reviews of 'The Charters of Abingdon Abbey' by S. E. Kelly and 'Enclosure in Berkshire 1485-1885' by Ross Wordie.

WWII We have been contacted by Mr Ron Darby who asked if anyone has any information about a German bomber which crashed on Blewburton Hill in the late autumn of 1940. He observed the plane coming down whilst staying with relatives at the Barley Mow in Clifton Hampden. His telephone number is 01959 522869.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Society's finances are in a healthy state. At the end of our financial year, which is 31 August, we can expect a surplus of £350 or £400, in line with previous years. Routine incomes and expenditures have been (for once) reasonably stable. Outings and excursions had to be subsidised to a small extent, and there were two non-routine items: the extensive Baker archive of Abingdon historical photographs, which has been given to the Society, has been organised and scanned at a cost of £310; and hosting the successful Oxpast conference gave us a surplus of £220. Membership is marginally down from its peak of last year, but the trend towards full rather than concessionary subscriptions has been maintained, indicating, as has been noticeable in meetings, that the Society is getting steadily younger.

The satisfactory state of financial affairs would not be possible without the personal contribution of our vice-president, Mrs Judy Thomas. It was Judy who presented to the Society the rights in her book *Abingdon in Camera*; she assumes the considerable work load involved in marketing the book; and she also runs guided tours in Abingdon and donates the proceeds to the Society. Judy single-handedly provides between a quarter and a third of the Society's income, and I believe that members ought to be suitably appreciative of this.

The final audited accounts will be presented at the AGM on 19 September, and this will be my last act as treasurer before I hand the job over to my successor. The message with which I would like to finish my term of office is the same as the one I gave last year: the Society is perhaps too comfortable financially. A few thousand pounds of reserves are certainly needed, especially as *Abingdon in Camera* has to be reprinted from time to time; but the £8000-plus which we have is arguably too high. I would encourage any members or groups of members who have pet projects within the Society's range of interests to apply to the committee for support.

Manfred Brod

THRUPP RESEARCH GROUP

A number of members of the Local History Group have joined the archaeologists to help work out the history of Thrupp (down Barton Lane for those who don't know!) from documentary sources.

It turns out that there is a mass of sources going back to the medieval period, with only the eighteenth century being relatively thinly covered. We are still at a very early stage of skimming what is available, but already it looks likely that we will be able to trace the fortunes of Thrupp families - both landowners and tenants - and their holdings through several centuries.

It seems that Thrupp was a larger village before the Black Death than it has ever been afterwards. After the dissolution of Abingdon Abbey, it was always held as part of the manor of Radley, so was not an economic unit in its own right. Thrupp Water, now no more than a drainage channel, was a broad side-channel of the Thames and an important fishery with fixed equipment that represented considerable capital. It was an object of discord between Abingdon entrepreneurs and Radley tenants that led to occasional violence and numerous law-suits in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

This is a project that promises to continue for a very long time. Anyone who wishes to become actively involved should contact Rachel Everett or Manfred Brod.

OXFORDSHIRE PAST CONFERENCE

We were the host to the Conference this year. It is held under the auspices of the Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society, and enables people interested in current work to get together once a year.

The main items of the day were the talks by Paul Smith, the County archaeologist and by Brian Durham, the City Council's archaeologist. These gave details of the current work in their respective areas, with Paul Smith's talk concentrating on monastic excavations. Brian Durham talked on Oxford Castle and on more general sites from the City, ranging from Bronze Age material from the Science Area to the future of the railway turntable north of the station.

Another talk, by Dan Miles an expert on dendrochronology, showed that the Preservation Trust building in East St Helen street once had timbers which came from the Baltic. Eberhard Sauer gave a talk on Alchester where he is excavating a Roman fortress. The main point of interest here is that his dendrochronology dates of 44 AD for an extension to the fort indicates that the Romans got to Bicester very quickly, and then stopped before going further north. This theme was taken up during the lecture by Martin Henig, who has revived the theory that the Romans did not invade Britain via Kent, but were initially invited in.

Local work was covered by Manfred's talk on Religious Strife in 17th century Abingdon, and Rachel and Sue gave a talk on the excavation work at Thrupp. The South Oxfordshire Archaeological group gave a talk on a villa which they are excavating. Overall we had about a hundred people there who appear to have had a worthwhile time.



**Abingdon Area
Archaeological and Historical Society
NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2001**

**Members please note
these urgent items in the Newsletter**

AAAHS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Precedes the talk on Thursday 20th September
Nominations/volunteers needed to replace three committee members

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2001/2002

Due at/from the AGM – see renewal slip in this Newsletter

VISIT TO DORCHESTER

Saturday 29th September, application slip in this Newsletter

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This is my last Chairman's report after a total of six years in office, and I want to take the opportunity to thank all those Committee members who have been so supportive, especially during my periods of ill health. There is no way I could have coped without their help, and I am truly grateful.

Committee members come and go, but if the Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society is to continue we need volunteers to carry on the work of running the Society. Our membership is greater than ever but, without people prepared to organise, the whole edifice would collapse, which would be a pity.

There are plenty of activities going on, as our Members' Evening so aptly demonstrated. The various displays were greatly admired, especially the "stop press" photos of the latest dig, and the three speakers gave a wide view of differing areas of research.

Once again, our thanks to Dr Sam Buckley for his sterling work in maintaining and servicing the projector and the sound equipment, as well as working as projectionist.

My best wishes to the new Committee. I wish them, and the Society, every success in the future.

Gill Jacobi

SUGGESTIONS FOR BLUE PLAQUES IN ABINGDON

The Abingdon Joint Environmental Trust is considering the possibility of introducing a scheme to commemorate notable persons and sites of historical interest. It would conform to the conditions set by the Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Board of the Oxford Civic Society. The Trust has proposed that the first plaque should commemorate John Alder, and others would follow at intervals. Some options are shown below in a list prepared by Jackie Smith, Hon Archivist to the Town Council

John Alder, "The Fortunate Cooper", landlord of the Mitre public house in Stert Street, won £20,000 in the State Lottery in 1767. Location: Mason's shop in Stert Street.

Sir John Mason, Tudor diplomat, often credited with acquiring charters for Christ's Hospital (1553) and the Borough (1556). Location: John Mason School?

Richard Mayott, first mayor of the Borough, 1556-57, lived in a "capital messuage" in the High Street. Location: Modern Music in the High Street.

Joseph Norris (1650-1726) "of London, Amsterdam and Abingdon", famous 17th century clockmaker. Made first long-case clock in England. Leased property from Borough and Christ's Hospital. Location: 52 Ock Street, next to Leach's.

Rev John Lempriere DD, Head Master of Royse's School 1792-1809, famous for his "Classical Dictionary", first edition published in 1788. Location: outside Royse Room?

William Watkins Waite, 19th century Abingdon artist, water-colour painter. Most well-known painting is of St Helen's Wharf. Location: East St Helen Street, number not yet traced.

Robert Howes, plumber, glazier and artist. Succeeded to the business in Ock Street in 1818. Best known local view is of Market Place looking towards St Nicolas and Abbey Gateway, painted c1835. Location: 77 Ock Street.

Warland Andrew, well-known photographer. 19/20thc. Original premises at 1 Stert Street, later moved to Bridge Street. Location?

Edwin Dolby, lived in Park Crescent. Local architect who designed many houses and buildings in the Park area including Abingdon School. Location: 14 Park Crescent.

Dorothy Richardson, (1873-1957 Born in Abingdon in 1873.), famous as early modernist novelist. Spent childhood in large house in Park Crescent, later the home of A E Preston. Location: 18 Park Crescent, currently owned by Abingdon School.

Arthur E Preston, lived at "Whitefield", Park Crescent. 19/20th c. Abingdonian by birth, Mayor, Alderman, Freeman of Abingdon, antiquarian and local historian. Location: Whitefield: 18 Park Cres.

James Townsend, lived at Glenburn, Park Crescent. 19/20thc. Schoolmaster and local historian. Location: "Glenburn" Park Crescent?

John Creemer Clarke, Wesleyan Methodist, wholesale clothier. 19thc philanthropist, funded building of Trinity Church and the Cottage Hospital. Lived at "Waste Court", Bath Street. Last Borough MP, presented badge of office on Mayor's gold chain, 1869. Died 1895. Location: Waste Court, Bath Street.

Agnes C Baker, local historian, 20thc. Location: 26, East St Helen Street.

Mrs E C Reynolds, died May 1932, First woman Borough Councillor, 1919, and philanthropist, renowned for her war work. Lady Almoner of the old Cottage Hospital. Location: The Gables, Bath St.

Edwin J Trendell, 19thc mayor and alderman. Town and church benefactor, Presented statue of Queen Victoria. Purchased the Abbey House in 1853 and laid out the gardens, allowing public access on special occasions. Location: Abbey House

Mrs Agnes Leonora Challenor, elected to Abingdon Borough Council in November 1941. On 24th May 1950 she became the first woman Mayor. Member of Public Library and Museum Committee and of Communal Feeding Committee. Location ? to be traced.

Some of the above might not satisfy the strict criteria set by the organisers. They have all been dead for more than 20 years, but at least one did not live in Abingdon for 5 years, and several have no known 5-year connection with premises where the plaque could be displayed. So there is scope for more suggestions. There is also the possibility of nominating buildings of especial significance (again, conditions apply).

If you have suggestions please contact Elizabeth Drury, 33 East St Helen Street, Phone 553636

LECTURE PROGRAMME FOR 2001 / 2002

2001

September 20th	The Romans of Southern Britain <i>Was Central Southern Britain a protectorate?</i>	Dr Martin Henig
October 18th	Alice and Oxford <i>Alice Liddell's Wonderland?</i>	Dr Charles Mould
November 15th	John Betjeman's Oxfordshire	John H. Ashdown MBE
December 13th	Droving in the 18th & 19th Century <i>Herds of cattle and sheep in motion</i>	Nigel Hammond

2002

January 17th	Excavation at the former Morlands Brewery <i>Medieval & later occupation; and industrial (tanning?)</i>	Steve Ford/Kate Taylor
February 21st	Gabrielle Lambrick and Abingdon Abbey <i>The Inaugural Gabrielle Lambrick Memorial Lecture</i>	Mrs Mienieke Cox
March 21st	The Baptist Church in Oxford - the Abingdon Connections	Revd Michael Hambleton
April 18th	Religious conflict in Abingdon, 1624 - 1656 <i>The English Civil War</i>	Manfred Brod
May 16th	The rediscovery of Taplow Hill-fort	Tim Allen
June 20th	Members Evening <i>Presentations and displays of members' work</i>	

Meetings are held at Northcourt Centre, Northcourt Road, Abingdon, generally on the third Thursday in the month, starting at 7.30pm. Visitors are welcome

Charles Wrench
Speakers Secretary

THE GABRIELLE LAMBRICK LECTURE

A series of annual lectures to commemorate this eminent local historian was announced in the Spring 2001 Newsletter. Your committee decided that the first lecture should be given at one of the monthly meetings in the 2001-2 session. Mrs Meineke Cox has kindly agreed to talk on "Gabrielle Lambrick and Abingdon Abbey" at the meeting on 21st February 2002.

DID ABINGDON LEAD THE WAY IN BUILDING ROMAN TYPE ROADS?

The Abingdon Archaeological & Historical Society) is reaping the benefits of having a team of active digging members. Unlike some other Societies, AAAHS has continued to run its own excavations and has been rewarded with significant finds in the gravel pits around Abingdon. In the past they have uncovered a neolithic cursus near to Drayton, and Iron Age houses were excavated near to Radley.

The current excitement is the discovery of a second Iron Age trackway in the gravel pits at Barton Lane, Abingdon. This was discovered as gravel excavation proceeded, and will soon be destroyed by the gravel company. The latest trackway is approximately 25 yards long, 5 yards wide and runs in a NE/SW direction centred on grid reference SU 51181 97166.

The causeway may originally have had a bed of small timbers or sticks but these have rotted away. Above this the remaining bed of the trackway is formed from limestone rubble containing large kerb-sized stones in one place. On top of the limestone is an intermittent layer of burnt quartzite cobbles, these being centrally placed on the causeway giving it a road-like camber - they may have been discarded pot boilers from a nearby settlement. The dating evidence is provided by two shards of pottery - these are not distinctive enough to be diagnostic but could be from the early to middle Iron Age (circa 500 BC.) Otherwise there are a few flints but these are not a good enough indication; one piece of smithing slag was found amongst the cobbles but this has yet to be analysed. Quartzite cobbles are generally associated with the Iron Age and current feelings are that this is an Iron Age rather than Bronze Age site. Radiocarbon dating evidence is required to resolve this matter.

As for purpose, it could have been to prevent cattle getting bogged down in thick alluvial clay as the southern end of the causeway dips down into an old watercourse rather than going over, or across it.

Roger Ainslie

(Adapted from version posted on the Society's web-site)

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

The Local History Group meeting on 3 May was by far the best-attended yet. Twenty-five people (on a rough count) heard Gillian Harrison describe her work on local water conduits of the early modern period and their surviving installations. It was a warning to all of us not to pass by odd old structures until we know their function. Mienieke Cox spoke of the local eccentric Miss Pickering, and her foundation of the spiritual centre of St Ethelwold House in East St Helen Street. Since the meeting took place at St Ethelwold's, there was a much appreciated opportunity to examine the house - a great mixture of architectural periods and styles - and its grounds.

For the next meeting, we will be back at the Baptist Church Hall in Ock Street, and it will be on Thursday 4 October at 7.30 p.m. Speakers are still to be named (don't worry, there are enough volunteers; it is only a matter of making a choice). Anyone who is actively engaged in local historical work of any sort and is not yet a member of the group - please turn up, and/or contact me (manfred.brod@hmc.ox.ac.uk or on 01865 391507).

Manfred Brod

ABINGDON'S REVOLUTIONARY CHRISTIANS.

Many of the first Baptists in Abingdon were ex-servicemen of the Civil War and several of them had served together in the regiment originally formed by John Hampden. This became known as one of the most radical of the formations of the time, sometimes fighting for the Parliamentary side but as often in revolt against it. Captains Francis Allen and Consolation Fox led a mutiny at Oxford in 1647. Allen represented the officers of his regiment at an important conference with the top brass, at which he exchanged angry words with Cromwell, who was too moderate for his liking.

Later, he was in charge of security when parliamentary officials entered Oxford to purge the university. They were in real danger, and in gratitude for his services he was awarded an MA degree. He took part in the military coup of December 1648 and was a member of the officers' junta that decided on the king's execution. When the Berkshire magistrates were purged in their turn in 1653 and replaced with radicals, Allen, by then a major, became a J.P.

By 1655, he was a commissioner under the military governor, Major-General Goffe, and an active and aggressive politician. Promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, he led Captain Fox and at least two other local dissenters back to the colours in 1659, part of a last ditch effort to save the Revolution. His regiment split, and the men refused to fight. Most of the radicals settled down more or less peacefully under Charles II, but Allen disappears from the record. Wood states that he died in poverty, but gives no date or place.

Manfred Brod

PHOTOGRAPHERS WANTED FOR IMAGES OF ENGLAND PROJECT

Adapted from a report by Robert Wilkinson, in *The Courier*

The Images of England project, run by the National Monuments Record Centre, is creating one of the world's largest free online picture libraries.

Dr David Mazey, a 72-year-old retired physicist [*and a member of AAAHS*] who lives in Abingdon, is just one of many Oxfordshire photographers, both amateur and professional, helping out. So far he has taken about 200 images of various listed buildings and objects. David, who is a member of the Royal Photographic Society, said: "Two of the strangest objects I took a picture of were a milestone near Drayton and a red phone box".

Victoria Fenner, project manager for Images Of England, said: "Since the survey began we have had a terrific response from photographers. They are creating a unique millennial photographic record of England's heritage for the future".

The work of volunteers is highly skilled and they are allowed to take only one picture of each object. Each volunteer then keeps a print of the photograph and the negative is processed at the Images Of England headquarters in Swindon. By the end of next year the organisation hopes to make all the country's 370,000 listed buildings and objects accessible via the internet.

Anyone who wishes to volunteer can contact Images Of England on 01793 414752 or visit its website on www.imagesofengland.org.uk

GUIDE FRIDAY BUS TOUR OF OXFORD

Fourteen members and friends gathered at Oxford Railway Station on the evening of 28 June for a city tour on the open-top double-decker bus. We were on the last tour of the day and joined the other tourists on the bus. Our guide expressed surprise at the large gathering on the top deck, as he normally has only a few passengers for the last trip.

The weather was perfect - fine and warm but not too hot and very little wind. We set off up Park End Street to Nuffield College where we were shown the steering wheels carved in the stonework something few of us had noticed before. We travelled up New Road past the castle mound and through Westgate to St Aldates. Alice's shop was pointed out and then we stopped outside Christ Church for a general history of the college. We went down the High Street looking at colleges left and right, past Magdalen and then back up Longwall St. We were shown the old city wall which can easily be seen from the top of the bus. We travelled on up to Parks Road and gazed over walls and into gardens not normally seen at street level. From there we went down to Broad Street where we viewed the exterior of the Bodleian etc. Our tour then turned back up to Parks Road and Banbury Road and into Woodstock Road via Canterbury Road. We came down St Giles past the Martyrs Memorial and into Beaumont St, where we were told about the Ashmolean Museum. A quick mention of Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton and the Playhouse and we were then en route for the Railway Station.

This was agreed to be a most successful tour and a new view of Oxford. Our thanks to Suzette for organising the visit.

Jill Lewis

SOME INTERNET WEB SITES WHICH YOU MAY LIKE TO EXPLORE

www.aaahs.org.uk The prototype of the Society's web-site. Your comments, and offers of help to enhance and maintain it would be welcome.

www.workhouses.org.uk The current state of Peter Higginbotham's major survey of UK workhouses. The website includes a detailed history and illustrated description of Abingdon workhouse.

www.users.waitrose.com/~mjfh/index.html The current state of Mike Harrison's new Bibliography of Abingdon History.

www.imagesofengland.org.uk. The prototype of the National Monuments Record Centre project to make photos and descriptions of listed buildings available on the Internet. This was unveiled with the first 15,000 of some 370,000 buildings, including photos taken by members of this Society. I searched for "Oxfordshire, industrial" and found details of four mill buildings, three of them photographed by David Mazey. More volunteer photographers are needed for this project!

<http://library.ox.ac.uk> The Oxford Libraries Information System, giving on-line access to a catalogue of five million items in the Bodleian and college libraries.

www.getmapping.com A commercial site selling colour enlargements from a millennium aerial survey of the whole country in approx. half mile squares. Perhaps useful to show the area of a research project or just to decorate your wall. We have the square covering Fitzharrys Manor Estate, which I am researching – the detail is good enough to show individual trees, parked cars, and the parch mark of a long-lost gravel footpath.

Collected by Dick Barnes



Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2001

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

It's nice to be able to start my report with two items of good news. Firstly, we have received generous sponsorship from George Lambrick for an annual lecture in memory of his mother, the late Mrs Gabrielle Lambrick. Further details in this Newsletter. Secondly, the Northcourt Centre has offered us additional cupboard accommodation, which means that our Library and heavy equipment can be stored at a reasonable level, without danger to life and limb. The Centre is looking much smarter now that the refurbishment has been carried out. Our congratulations to all concerned, and particularly to the W.I. for their work on the curtains.

Our new committee is working very well, and for the first time in history we get 100% attendance at most meetings. Jobs have been allocated as follows:

Dick Barnes	Secretary
Manfred Brod	Treasurer
Bob Eeles	Digging Secretary
Miriam James	Christmas Party
Trevor Ogden	Publicity
Sarah Steele	Library & Posters
Suzette Woodhead	Outings
Charles Wrench	Speakers Secretary

Dick Barnes, Sarah Steele and I will be reaching the end of our three-year stint in September 2001, so it will be necessary to find replacements. Please think about this and let us know if you would be prepared to serve on the Committee in any capacity.

Gill Jacobi, Chairman

THE GABRIELLE LAMBRICK LECTURE

We are grateful to George Lambrick for proposing that the Society should have an annual lecture in memory of his mother. He mentioned the idea when he lectured to us in January 1999, and has recently followed this up by offering to set up an annual payment towards the lecturer's fees and expenses. Mrs Gabrielle Lambrick was a prominent local historian, with a particular interest in Abingdon Abbey. In keeping with her interests, George has suggested that the lecture should be on:

"an Archaeological or historical subject of any period or theme, but distinctly local to the Abingdon area and surroundings – perhaps in effect old North Berks (ie the Vale) and spreading into nearby parts of old Oxfordshire, but also taking in wider connections of Abingdon (especially the Abbey)".

Your committee has welcomed the proposal with enthusiasm, and is considering how best to launch a series of annual lectures. On the one hand, it would do justice to the memory of Gabrielle Lambrick if the lectures were separate from our usual meetings – e.g. with a particularly prestigious lecturer, a special venue, and wide publicity. On the other hand, the series might be launched more quickly if one of the monthly lectures in 2001/2 (with suitable topic and speaker) were to be nominated as the first Gabrielle Lambrick lecture. These possibilities will be examined further as our lecture programme is prepared in the next few months.

DIGGING NEWS

1) From Bob Eeles, Digging Secretary

Due to the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, we have been unable to excavate anywhere except Thrupp gravel pits.

Boars Hill. A quick evaluation was made of a Roman kiln site in a field of chickens next to Oxford Preservation Trust land. Enormous quantities of pottery were located in a tiny hole plus what may be the remains of the kiln itself. The whole area is riddled with such items and we believe this one has not been evaluated before. We shall be returning to make a more thorough investigation when things calm down a bit.

Culham Hill. We have not been able to follow up our trial excavations on this site but have until September to do so.

Thrupp. This quarry is flooded for much of the winter. Therefore, we have concentrated on the upper peat deposits that contain preserved worked wood (possibly Roman or Iron Age), an area of burned cobbles (date uncertain at present) and a small quantity of worked flint tools and flakes which are Neolithic and Bronze Age. This is a very complicated site with flints apparently in the same stratigraphic horizon as later pottery. We hope to receive a grant from the Leakey Foundation to make a more thorough examination of the 90,000 year old river channel at the very base of the pit. This work will be supervised by Dr Kate Scott who is an expert on such channels. She specialises in bones and has added bear to the species list which previously only contained reindeer, bison, Arctic fox, an unidentified bird and an unidentified rodent. (Sutton Courtenay is 35,000 years old, and has a richer fauna containing also woolly mammoth, woolly rhinoceros, horse, hyena and red deer).

Sutton Courtenay. No work has been possible in this quarry due to flooding. The large late-glacial channel has been revealed in another quarry but it has been seriously damaged by machinery.

2) From Paul Russell, Radley College

In the early 1970s pupils from Radley College under the direction of Dr John Moore, Head of Classics, undertook a dig on what is now the triangle of grass at the Peachcroft end of Radley Road; at that time it was part of the farmland which later became the Peachcroft Estate. It had started as an emergency dig but was taken over by the College as it was on College land.

Aerial photographs had suggested that there was an interesting pattern of ditches to be investigated, and given that it was located just across the road from Barrow Hills and a Roman cemetery there was a chance of something interesting.

There seem to be three phases of occupation: several Iron Age hut circles and associated ditches dating back to ca. 200 BC; a Roman building occupied between the first and third centuries AD, possibly a farm of some sort though any stone walls seem to have been robbed out; and finally there were indications of Saxon occupation probably associated with the nearby village.

Most of the finds came from the middle, Roman, period of occupation with plenty of pottery fragments and a couple of coins dating to the 3rd century AD. All the evidence points to a fairly humble farmhouse with fields extending out from it.

At some stage in the future it is hoped that further excavation may take place with the support of the Abingdon Archaeological and Historical Society.

PROVISIONAL LECTURE PROGRAMME FOR 2001/02

September	Martin Henig	The Romans in Southern England
October	Charles Mould	Alice and Oxford
November	John Ashdown	John Betjeman's Oxfordshire
December	Nigel Hammond	Droving
January	Kate Taylor?	Morlands Brewery site and 75 Ock Street
February		
March	Michael Hambleton	The Baptist Church in Oxford- the Abingdon connections?

Charles Wrench

VISIT TO THE NATIONAL MONUMENTS RECORD CENTRE,

Our group of twelve gathered at NMRC in Great Western Village, Swindon, on Saturday 17th March, in The Gallery. This has a shop and the current exhibition 'Photos of the Future 2'. We were met by Jane Golding who gave an introduction to the work and collections of the NMR illustrated with slides. Jane explained that the NMRC is the public archive of English Heritage and provides information on the architecture and archaeology of England. It is home to about ten million items which include material deposited by many individuals and organisations as well as the work of English Heritage's own survey staff and photographers.

Among the collections Jane described were:

- * Air photographs of England taken by the RAF and the Ordnance Survey between 1940 and the early 1980s. We saw examples of crop marks, and photos taken vertically for ground plans and those taken obliquely to reveal shapes and ground features, such as Iron Age forts. There is a current project to photograph all the country's archaeology to a scale of 1 to 10,000.
- * Photographs of all parts of England dating from the 1860s to the present time including some by Henry Taunt. English Heritage have recently surveyed the Birmingham historic industrial Jewellery Quarter and their photos include the buildings and inside the workshops. We were shown examples of architectural details and stained glass from their collections.
- * The archaeological records of England by the Ordnance Survey.
- * The computerised database containing information of all the listed buildings in England.
- * A collection of measured drawings of buildings and monuments, which includes the results of field surveys by their own staff.

The talk was followed by looking at examples from the collections and we had a special interest in six Red Boxes from the open-access browsable collection containing photographs, drawings, articles etc. for Abingdon. We were fascinated by the photos we had not seen before and I noted that some had annotations by Mr A E Preston on the reverse.

Next, we visited the new state of the art archive where temperature and humidity are regulated to prevent deterioration. Returning to the old GWR building, we climbed the cast iron steps of the main staircase to reach two large rooms holding the Red Box Collections and the reference library. There was a large number of Red Boxes, even so due to shortage of space little has been added since the mid 1980s. The Boxes contain about 25% of their total items, the remainder is in the archive file.

You can visit the public search rooms to browse through the Red Boxes or use the remote enquiry service by sending an enquiry form requesting them to carry out a search on a topic. Our visit was most informative, and a return visit to the search room is a must for some.

N.B. There are free monthly walking tours of the NMRC, usually on the 3rd Saturday, starting at 2-15 pm from the The Gallery. The next three are on: 21 April, 19 May, 16 June 2001. It might be a good idea to check with Jane Golding on 01793 414735 before setting out.

Bryan Cozens.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ABINGDON HISTORY

Arising from a suggestion in the Local History Group, I have developed a bibliography aimed at covering Abingdon's history. This uses a core bibliography comprising some 700 references downloaded from the Bodleian's database. The first release of the bibliography is now on the Web as a private (non-commercial) project at

www.users.waitrose.com/~mjfh/index.html

The intention is to gradually add items from the local library and other sources, and to transfer ownership to the Society if it so wishes.

I am grateful to Peter Higginbotham and Richard Bewley for the considerable help they have given towards overcoming the many technical problems which have arisen.

Michael Harrison

THE WORKHOUSE

In the past couple of years I have become increasingly immersed in the study of workhouses. It's a subject which cuts across a wide range of local, social, economic, medical and architectural history, and one that I find quite engrossing. My interest had its origins in the discovery that one of my forebears died in the Birmingham Union workhouse in the 1880s. It was further stimulated after moving to Abingdon and seeing the remarkable outline of the Abingdon Union workhouse on the Victorian OS maps - a huge hexagon dwarfing every other building in the area. I was surprised to find that, unlike the abbey, churches and almshouses, precious little seemed to be recorded about this great edifice which stood at the west side of the Oxford Road (opposite the convent) between 1835 and 1931.

Although parish workhouses go back to at least the seventeenth century, the Abingdon Union workhouse was one of over 600 built following the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act which introduced a nation-wide system of poor relief based on the new administrative area of the Poor Law Union. This scheme was later extended to Ireland. Scotland had a rather more piecemeal scheme although a number of parochial unions were set up with a communal workhouse.

After the official abolition of the workhouse system in 1930, many former workhouses became hospitals or elderly persons' homes. Some, like Abingdon, were demolished to make way for housing. Surprisingly perhaps, many former workhouse buildings survive to this day. However, with the trend towards hospital rationalisation, many have been demolished in the past twenty years and others are under threat. (Ironically, some former workhouses, for example Windsor, have been refurbished as extremely up-market houses and apartments.) I am trying to see as many surviving workhouse sites as possible while they still exist, and last year visited over 200 across the British Isles from Essex to the west coast of Ireland.

Several years ago, the National Trust took over the former Southwell Union workhouse in Nottinghamshire. Planned to open in 2002, it is being restored to exactly how it was in the 1840s to let modern visitors experience the grim interior of such places (well, I expect they'll also provide a tea-shop!) I have recently been assisting the NT in a very small way with their researches into such matters as precisely what sort of bedsteads the inmates would have had, so that exact replicas can be made.

Somewhere in all this, my original researches into the local Abingdon and Berkshire workhouses seem to have become submerged. However, much of the material I have compiled is available on my internet web site at www.workhouses.org.uk - it includes information on many individual workhouses and eventually I hope to cover every single one in the British Isles. If anyone reading this has any information, recollections, pictures etc. relating to workhouses, I should be very pleased to hear from them.

Peter Higginbotham, 7 Kysbie Close, Abingdon, OX14 1XZ.
Tel: 01235-534305 Email: Peter.Higginbotham@oucs.ox.ac.uk

SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 12 May | Oxfordshire Architectural & Historical Society with The Bensington Society
"OXON PAST 2001". Benson Village Hall. <i>For details see poster</i> |
| 17 May | AAAHHS Lecture - The High Kings of Celtic Ireland
Professor Thomas Charles-Edwards, Jesus College, Oxford |
| 19 May | Berkshire Family History Society (Vale of the White Horse)
OPEN DAY 2001, 10am - 4pm, Larkmead School. <i>For details see leaflets</i> |
| 21 June | AAAHHS Members' Evening - Presentations and displays of members' work
<i>Please let the Chairman know if you would like to present a display or short talk</i> |
| 28 June | AAAHHS Visit - Sightseeing bus tour of Oxford.
<i>For details see notice and booking form in this Newsletter</i> |
| 20 Sept | AAAHHS A.G.M. - followed by a talk. <i>Please let the Chairman or Secretary know if you would like to make nominations (or suggestions) to fill vacancies for officers or ordinary members of the committee, or if you wish to bring up any special business.</i> |

THE SOCIETY'S WEB SITE

<http://www.aaahs.org.uk>

Please visit our web site, and encourage others to do so. News and other material will be very welcome. People are more likely to revisit if they feel the content is dynamic. If you could offer to take over, or share, the maintenance and enhancement of this site we would be glad to hear from you. Items for the web site should be passed to Sarah Steele (s.j.steele@rl.ac.uk)

Guidelines:-

- Max length – one side of A4.
- Input should be on a floppy disk, or as an e-mail attachment.
- Format should be MS-WORD or Text file.
- One image per page.
- Text that has to be retyped will take longer to present.
- Editorial control remains with the AAAHS Committee

BEATING THE BOUNDS

On New Year's Day 2001 about 35 of us joined the Mayor, Councillor Lesley Legge, and the Town Clerk, Mr Nigel Warner, for a "perambulation by the Mayor and Corporation of the Borough Limits". This was described as "an ancient custom" by Francis Little in 1603 and has probably been carried out, if somewhat sporadically, ever since Abingdon's Charter of Incorporation in 1556.

Following the original boundaries as far as possible, with minor variations to avoid swimming across the Thames, we walked from St Helen's Wharf to Drayton Road via the Ock river walk, up Spring Road and thence through Albert Park to the boundary stone by John Mason School on the Wootton Road. From there we made our way via Boxhill Walk and several alleyways to Oxford Road, taking a short cut through a very attractive garden en route (our thanks to the owners for allowing so many pairs of muddy feet - and a few sets of paws - to tramp through their property). We then went up Radley Road (although not quite as far as the other known boundary stone opposite St John's Road) then via more alleyways past the ruins of Barton Court, across Audlett Drive and into the park then across the Abbey Lock and down the south bank of the Thames to Bridge Street.

Enjoyable as this was it, does not sound as exiting as the perambulation described in August 1880 when packets of tea, buns and beer were distributed along the way, some children were "bumped" against the boundary stones and rewarded with coins and several members of the party were tipped into the river!

Thankfully the rain more or less held off and I for one felt much better for a bit of fresh air and exercise after the excesses of the festive season. Our thanks must go to Councillor Legge and Mr Warner for a most enjoyable and informative afternoon.

More details concerning the Charter Boundaries and Perambulations were given in an excellent leaflet, written by the Hon Archivist Mrs Jackie Smith (a member of this Society), which was reproduced in our Summer 2000 Newsletter.

Sally Ainslie

A WOOLLY OPENING TO 2001

Ewart Hemmings, who received the Town's highest accolade in being given the Honorary Freedom of Abingdon last year, exercised the privilege, which goes with this honour, of driving sheep over Abingdon Bridge without paying a toll. This duly took place on 1 January 2001 to celebrate this ancient right at the start of the new Millennium. It had not been enacted for over 100 years previously. He was joined by fellow Freemen John Jones and Michael Matthews. David Barrett, as Master of Christ's Hospital, represented the corporate body. The sheep were purchased from Mr & Mrs Duffield and sold back to them afterwards.

A NEW MUSEUM IN THE OLD GAOL?

The Abingdon Town Centre Forum provides a meeting ground between representatives of local government (the County, District and Town Councils) and various organisations concerned with town centre activities and facilities. It has been considering, among other things, possible uses for the Old Gaol when it is no longer needed as a leisure centre. The Society appointed two representatives to the Forum as soon as it emerged that a new museum was being proposed as one use for the Old Gaol. At that time it appeared that this might be a museum of local Archaeology and History, supplementing the County Hall museum which is now largely devoted to special exhibitions. It was soon clear that many other organisations have a strong interest in the Old Gaol – music, theatre and opera (under the umbrella of the Abingdon Performing Arts group), Abingdon Artists, etc. A further development was a proposal by the County and Town councils to move the museum from the County Hall, which is elegant but unsuitable in many ways, and set up a museum of enlarged size and scope in the Old Gaol. There is even a suggestion that the public library could move to the Old Gaol from its overcrowded premises in the Charter.

So, the picture is building up of a multi-use cultural centre, in which the various users might share an area for occasional exhibitions and also share common services such as reception, foyer, and a café or coffee bar. Another important factor was a clear warning from District councillors that the centre could not expect a subsidy for its running costs, although there might be lottery grants, for example, towards setting-up costs. Hence, some space would need to be allocated for commercial activities in order to generate revenue. This interesting project has now reached the stage where the District Council has earmarked significant funding for a professional feasibility study.

The Society was closely involved with the museum in its original form, but stood somewhat aloof while the museum has been dominated by special exhibitions – even to the extent of not being formally represented on the Abingdon Museum Friends. It seems inevitable that we would want to become much more involved in any new museum which has a major display of local material.

Dick Barnes & Judy Thomas

OUTINGS

A guided evening trip round Oxford on one of the Guide Friday buses has been arranged for Thursday 28th June. Rendezvous at 6.45 pm at Oxford Railway Station (X3 bus from Abingdon goes to the station, or park at the station). In order to avail ourselves of discount fares we need a minimum of 10 people on the trip, when the fares will be £7.00 per person (instead of the usual £8.50) or concessions at £5.00 (instead of £7.00). To book your place(s) please fill in the form below, and return it with your payment.

A guided walk round Dorchester and the Abbey is in the pipeline for the Autumn, details in the next Newsletter.

Cut here.....

GUIDE FRIDAY TOUR OF OXFORD, THURSDAY 28th JUNE at 6.45 pm

I/we would like to come on this outing, and enclose payment for:

No. of ordinary fares @ £7.00
No. of concessionary fares @ £5.00

Name

Address

Phone No.

Please return to Mrs Suzette Woodhead at a meeting,
or post to: 11 Mattock Way ABINGDON, OX14 2PD



Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society

NEWSLETTER - SUMMER 2000

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT SUMMER 2000

After all the months of hard work, and not a little frustration, the Millennium Time Line was finally unveiled on the evening of June 29th. These panels, which are our Society's contribution to the Millennium celebrations in Abingdon, are intended to be a permanent outline history of our town and are displayed in the foyer of the Old Gaol.

Our warmest congratulations to Judy Thomas and her team of John Carter, Liz Drury, Jackie Smith and Anne Smithson, and to all the other people who worked so hard in researching and illustrating the project. If you have not already been to see the Time Line I think you will be surprised by the amount of information it contains.

This is the time of year when once again I have to appeal for volunteers to serve on the Committee. There are four vacancies to be filled in September, three from members whose term of office is finished, and one retirement because of work. If you would be prepared to serve please send any proposals (with seconders) to Dick Barnes as soon as possible.

We are grateful to those who have completed their three year stint, especially to Brian Bray for his excellent lecture programmes, to Liz Drury who has been responsible for publicity and the photographic records, as well as catering for the Christmas parties and the Time Line celebrations, and to Rachel Everett who has coped manfully with the job of Digging Secretary despite the arrival of the twins and moving house. And a big thank you to the rest of the Committee who will be continuing for another year or so.

There are various other activities in the pipeline. Manfred Brod's local history group continues to thrive. Mienneke Cox is busy with the documents from Miss Pickering's house, and Bob Eeles is dealing with the archaeological artefacts. Various outings are proposed, and the possibility of a book of the Time Line is being considered. My thanks to all concerned.

Gill Jacobi

SELECTED ABINGDON WEA CLASSES

Industrial Archaeology of London and South East England. Philip Morris
Industries and sites in Essex, Kent, Herts, Surrey; and S & E London. With field excursions. Monday, 20 weeks from 22nd September, 7.15-9.15 Fitzharrys School.

Abingdon through the Ages. Jill Eyers

Overview of geological and archaeological history of the Abingdon area. Tuesday, 10 weeks from 9th January. 10.00 - 12 noon, St Helens Church Hall.

Local History in the Vale of White Horse. Nigel Hammond

Six field visits. Thursdays 10.15-12.15 from 31st May (revised date).

"CHANGES" ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Changes project aims to tell something of the story of Abingdon in the 20th century through the eyes of its people. It will involve a range of different people from the town, young and old, both long established residents and more recent incomers.

The story will be told using the words of real people. We will gather the words using oral history recording. This involves interviewing people and recording their memories on tape. The people interviewed will represent a balance of those born through each decade of the 20th century, from 9 to 99. They will be asked broad questions about their life and their memories of the town. It is hoped that these will produce information based around certain uniform themes but with a personal touch.

The finished tapes will be used to produce an exhibition, to take place in Abingdon Museum in 2001, and possibly also a booklet. It is hoped that the words of interviewees will be supplemented with local photographs to show the life of Abingdon people through the 20th century.

We have a small group of local people working on the project but would be pleased to welcome new members. There is much to do and any help would be appreciated. At present, the group are just about to embark on their first interviews but there are many more subjects for new interviewers! Aside from interviewing there will also be work transcribing tapes and pulling material together.

We are very keen to make the project a success and hope that this information will enthuse some of your members! If anyone is interested in getting involved, they should contact me at the museum for further details.

For further information please contact:

*Jill Draper Abingdon Museum, The County Hall, Market Place, Abingdon OX14 3HG
Tel: 01235 523703 Fax: 01235 536814*

ABINGDON BEFORE THE ABBEY EXHIBITION

The exhibition, "Abingdon Before the Abbey: the Origins of Britain's Oldest Town" will be displayed at Abingdon Museum from September 2000 to January 2001. It is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund's Millennium Festival.

The museum have invited a **group of up to 30** of our members to our own private view of the exhibition. The view is entirely free (although donations are welcome!) and is intended to enable us to see the exhibition during the evening when the museum would usually be closed. The private view will take place from 7.30pm - 9pm on Thursday 26th October, and will include a welcome to the museum and the exhibition, a chance to browse around displays and to share a glass of wine.

Please let Suzette Woodhead (523211) know if you would like to come. The list will close after our meeting on 21st October, but we would recommend early booking, as the limited number of places may go quickly.

LECTURE PROGRAMME FOR 2000 – 2001

2000

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|--|
| 21 September | Recording Oxfordshire's Buildings
Preceded by the A.G.M. | John Steane |
| 19 October | Britain and the American Revolution | Dr Malcolm Morrison
Dept of History, U of Reading |
| 16 November | The British in Venice in the 19th Century | Dr D.Laven
Dept of History, U of Reading |
| 21 December | Christmas Past
Followed by the Christmas Social | Dr Malcolm Graham
Centre for Oxfordshire Studies |

2001

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|---|
| 18 January | Oxford's Paper House -
The story of a Victorian Paper Building | Rob Kinchin-Smith
Oxford Archaeological Unit |
| 15 February | Recent Research on Late Neanderthal and
Early Modern Human Societies in Europe | Dr Paul Pettitt
Research Lab for
Archaeology, Oxford |
| 15 March | The Romans in Scotland | Roger Goodburn |
| 19 April | The Decline and Fall of Merrie England -
The Reformation in Berkshire | Joan Dils |
| 17 May | The High Kings of Celtic Ireland | Prof Thomas Charles-Edwards
Jesus College, Oxford |
| 21 June | Members' Evening -
Presentations and displays of members' work | |
| 20 September | A.G.M. | |

Meetings are held at the Northcourt Centre, Northcourt Road, Abingdon on the third Thursday in the month, starting at 7.30pm. Visitors are welcome.

ABINGDON INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STUDY

The final public consultation on this important topic will take place in the autumn. If you live in or near Abingdon, you should receive a copy of the proposals and questionnaire by 26th September (if not, Royal Mail may have failed again, and you can get a copy from the Town or Vale Council). There will be an exhibition at the end of September, and your comments need to be returned before the beginning of November. If you care about the effect of traffic on the quality of life in Abingdon, this is your chance to exert an influence.

Source: Town Centre Forum meeting, at which the Society was represented

UNVEILING THE TIME LINE

Eventually the necessary funding had been obtained, the designer appointed, the drawings and pictures assembled and all seemed ready for the grand unveiling of the Time Line. Battens had been fixed to the walls of the Old Gaol for the hanging of the panels, refreshments were organised and the Mayor had graciously agreed to perform the ceremony. But that was the problem! How do you unveil a series of seven panels 900mm deep and 1200mm wide?

There was only one person to ask - my son Alan Jacobi. With his business called "Unusual Rigging", he had been responsible for unveiling umpteen new models of cars, to say nothing of the rose window in St Albans Cathedral, the Queen Mother's gates in Hyde Park and the Albert Memorial. Alan gave one look at the site in the Old Gaol and just said "That's OK". Nothing further was heard until my daughter in law Peta came a few days before the ceremony to take measurements, and murmured something about gauze curtains. She and Alan arrived in the afternoon of June 29th, (the panels having been hung the day before) and proceeded to fix wires to the pillars and to hang up several hundred feet of beautifully ironed white gauze, topped with loops of gold cord and tassels.

The effect was magic: At the appointed moment, the Mayor pulled a cord and three banks of curtains swept back simultaneously. Press photos were taken, speeches made, flowers presented and Abingdon's Time Line had been successfully unveiled - a thoroughly professional job.

Gill Jacobi

MORE ON THE ABINGDON PROPHETESS, ELIZABETH POOLE.

In 1649, Elizabeth Poole went to London and argued before the officers' junta that had taken power that King Charles should not lose his head. A search for the origins of her prophecy leads to the village of Bradfield, between Reading and Newbury.

Poole was one of a group of mystically-inclined people who frequented the rectory there, where Dr John Pordage headed a sort of learned commune which researched into alchemy, demonology, and related magical arts. A few years later, Pordage would be subjected to a travesty of judicial process by a commission of local worthies, and ejected as a heretic. A number of Abingdon members of the commission were especially prominent, some by their violent prejudice against Pordage, others by their pointed absence from the sessions.

Poole's main contact at Bradfield would seem to have been one of Pordage's collaborators, Mary Pocock from Ashamstead. She had published a commentary on the king's fate, portraying him in esoteric terms as an important link between heaven and earth, the removal of which would have unpredictable consequences. Although Poole's discourse appears less mystical, she uses much of the same phraseology as Pocock, as well as verbal pointers that would have alerted adepts to the basic nature of her arguments.

Manfred Brod

REPORTS ON RECENT VISITS

Afternoon visit to Thame, Sunday May 21st

A mix of long-term and newer members met outside the Tourist Office in Thame for a guided tour led by Maurice Kirtland, a member of Thame History Society. We started by walking down to the church. On the way, Maurice pointed out many old houses, chapels and inns – all very attractive and many with a story attached. The church was begun in 1240, and is the oldest existing building in Thame. The interior was re-ordered in 1991. The oldest part of Thame is around the church, with the nearby Prebendal being the second oldest building. The town gradually spread from this area. We then retraced our steps to the other end of the long main street. On the way we looked at the original building of the grammar school founded by Lord Williams (whose tomb we had already seen in the church), the almshouses nearby, Hampden House, once the Greyhound Inn where John Hampden died of wounds received at the Battle of Chalgrove, and through the wide Market Place. We didn't walk any great distance, but time passed because we stopped at so many places that had some sort of history attached to them. One of the characteristics of Thame is that buildings in the main street run in a continuous line, not all of the same vintage but without intrusive modern in-filling (except for a super-market which is clearly a sore-point). Thame is a very pleasant place to be on a sunny Sunday afternoon.

Suzette Woodhead

Two reports on evening visit to Old Headington, Thursday 22nd June

By Joan Palmer

Thursday 22nd June was a very wet day, and grey skies in the evening suggested that yet more rain was to come. Nevertheless, eighteen of us gathered in a car park in Old Headington, umbrellas at the ready, to meet our guide for a walk around the area. For nearly two hours, with only the odd spot of rain we were led from one delight to the next. Our only disappointment was that we were unable to go inside the Norman parish church, where a Corpus Christi Day service was in progress.

It was a great surprise for some of us to discover that beyond the busy London Road there is a maze of tranquil, narrow, attractive streets, a world apart from the rest of Oxford. Years ago it was a favourite haunt of university students, who could enjoy the enjoy the pleasures of its many alehouses without falling foul of the Proctors or Bulldogs. There are some large, gracious houses, a number of which were built by wealthy tradesmen in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We admired one of these, Bury Knowle House, which is now Headington Library. There were fat white sheep in the grounds, prevented by a ha-ha from getting too close to the building. In the grounds of the John Radcliffe Hospital we saw the Manor House.

There was a former Baptist Chapel, now a house, where the old tombstones had been cleverly incorporated in the garden wall. There were rows of stone cottages, often former stables or workers' dwellings, now beautiful homes commanding astronomical prices when they come on the market. We saw the bakery and shop of the well-known Berry family which was selling bread there until the 1980s, the Old Priory, once home to an enclosed order but now used by Dominican sisters. Finally, there was the rather sinister Coffin Walk, a long narrow alley with high stone walls on either side and trees

meeting overhead, along which coffins would be carried to the churches of Old Headington.

Our walk was most interesting and enjoyable, often enlivened by the repartee of the guide and one of our members. Old Headington is definitely a place to return to.

By Brian and Sibylle Rushbridge

The start, from a supermarket car park, was soon transformed for the eight visitors, once the walk around Old Headington was underway. Led by 'rambler' Pat Whitehouse, we were immediately - with a house beside the car park exit - enjoying a large range of 17th and 18th Century buildings of all sizes and stature, constructed from the local stone. Particularly impressive was the amount of stone walling around properties and along boundaries, some perhaps 4 metres high.

Headington's elevated location indicated why this old settlement had been well chosen, being away from the smells, and above the damp and muddy flats of old Oxford. Many of the stone buildings remain, showing the extent of the wealth of the village, and its latter attraction for 'respectable' people moving out of the City in the 17th and 18th Century.

We heard about the famous (and not so famous) inhabitants of the buildings we visited - from the early 19th Century neo-classical house in Bury Knowle Park (now the public library) for Sir Joseph Lock, to the rivalry between owners of some local bawdy houses. The late Palladian Manor House (and its adjacent delightful stables), with its remaining estate was purchased in 1917 by the Radcliffe Infirmary, and has been developed ever since into the present John Radcliffe Hospital.

On our tour, we saw many other buildings and features, including Montague Wootten's White Lodge, cottages in Larkin Lane, the Priory (still used), the Coach House and brick-walled (with traditional blue headers) grooms' houses for Headington House, and the line of the old route for coffins on their way for burial at St Andrews Church ... and more!

As 'first-time' visitors, our lasting impression was of stone buildings in a quiet village. How could this be so near the centre of busy Oxford?

NORTHCOURT CENTRE AUTUMN FAIR

2-4 pm Saturday 7th October

The society is a member of this self-financing independent centre and, as such, is able to hire the hall at a discounted rate. It is therefore in our interest to support the centre and ensure its viability.

Please support the Fair, by attending and/or by contributing items for the plant stall, cake stall, bric-a-brac stall, tombola, raffle etc. Your gifts will be gratefully received, either on the Friday evening or on the Saturday morning from 9 am.

Offers of help for the Fair will be very welcome - please speak to the Committee Secretary, Mrs Dora Johnson, 523376

TREASURER'S REPORT

This year has been a most unusual one in the high levels of both income and expenses. Although the expenses exceeded income by a significant amount, the Society's finances are fundamentally sound.

As in any year, routine income from subscriptions and donations has approximately balanced routine expenditure on meetings, archaeological activities, and general administration. However, the Society also benefits from sales of the book 'Abingdon in Camera', and these sales, after a drop in the late 1990s, have rebounded markedly in the last two years. This extra income allows the Society to take initiatives within its spheres of interest.

In 1999-2000, the Society budgeted £500 towards the costs of the 'Timeline', which were mainly met through grants from the Heritage Fund and the Joint Environmental Trust. This project is not yet complete, but will probably finish within budget. In addition, we made a contribution of £250 to the production costs of the local archaeological and historical journal Oxoniensia, in recognition of its services in publishing our members' work in a suitably academic format. These expenditures were more than covered by income from 'Abingdon in Camera'.

The deficit for the year arises from the cost of a new printing of 'Abingdon in Camera' which will ensure a continuing income from this source.

The following figures are provisional. Full accounts will be presented at the AGM.

<u>Income</u>		£
Regular	Subs, Donations, Interest	1317
	Book sales	850
Non-recurring	Timeline grants	4277
TOTAL		6444

<u>Expenditure</u>		
Regular	Meetings, events, speakers, misc.	960
	Archaeological activities (inc statutory insurance)	333
Non-recurring	Timeline (to date)	4485
	Oxoniensia grant	250
	'Abingdon in Camera' reprinting	1789
TOTAL		7824

Excess of expenditure over income: £1380

Manfred Brod

DOMES DISCOUNT Because the society's Time Line exhibit was funded in part by the Millennium Festival organisation, we are entitled to discount rates if we make a group visit to the Dome. If you would be interested in a group visit (or better still, if you would be prepared to organise a visit) please speak to Dick Barnes, who has more details.

THE 140th ANNIVERSARY OF OUR LADY'S CONVENT, ABINGDON

The foundress of Our Lady's Convent, Mother Clare Moore, was an enterprising woman. At the age of 25, in 1839, she established a convent in Bermondsey, one of the poorest areas of London, well known to Charles Dickens. In her 40's, she led a group of sisters to help Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War (1854-6). Clare Moore was one of the first members of the Sisters of Mercy, founded in Dublin in 1831 by Mother Catherine McCanley to help people according to their needs, irrespective of class or creed.

In November 1859, Mother Clare came from Bermondsey to see if a cottage in Northcourt would provide a suitable convent for the Sisters to begin their work for children and the sick and poor in Abingdon. A dedicated priest, Dr John Paul O'Toole, and a generous landowner, Sir George Bowyer, had recently built a Catholic church where the Radley and Oxford roads meet, and wanted to establish a school in the parish. Mother Clare's preliminary visit aroused much interest in the town, and some hostility. With typical decisiveness, she returned on January 10 1860 to establish three young nuns to live at Joymount Cottage and to teach in the little school in St Edmund's sacristy. Her parting advice to them was "Do the best you can", a homely form of the present Senior School's motto "Age quod agis".

Those first Sisters of 1860 certainly did well whatever they had to do. Mid-Victorian England was very enterprising and prosperous, but there were great social problems, too. In 1860, only a minority of men, and no women, could vote in parliamentary elections, so it was often left to private individuals and charities to address the situations of poverty, sickness and illiteracy which were widespread. In Abingdon, the Sisters visited the poor in the Workhouse in the Oxford Road, cared for the sick in their homes, and helped to educate generations of children. As well as the parish school, a much-needed boarding school was set up for the children of military families serving abroad, and expanded to include other boarders and day pupils

140 years on, St Edmund's Primary School still exists, but is housed today along the Radley Road in modern buildings with pleasant grounds. The Senior and Junior day schools of the convent are flourishing, although the boarding departments have gone. The Junior School, under Sister Jane Frances, educates boys and girls from 4-11, and the Senior School girls from 11-18. The Sisters are still interested and involved in education, in the parish and the wider community. They have recently moved to Lismore Lodge in St John's Road, a smaller house contemporary with the old convent, which is currently being adapted for use by the schools.

At the Millennium Reunion held on May 20, a large and happy gathering of Sisters, past and present convent staff, and pupils met at the school and held a thanksgiving service in the chapel. Very early that morning, one of the 'old girls' present had delivered baby Leo Blair in Westminster. I wonder what the Prime Minister of 1860, Viscount Palmerston, and those foundation Sisters of Abingdon Convent would have made of that. The latter, I think, would have taken it in their stride!

A book called "Children of Mercy", by Penny Roker, tells the story of Our Lady's Convent, Abingdon, and is now on sale, price £8.50.

Ann Goodwill

THE ABBEY BREWERY

The Long Gallery and Checker buildings, remnants of Abingdon Abbey, were used as a brewery for some three centuries. The Abbey Brewery was taken over in 1866 by the Morland family, and brewing ceased in 1895. The buildings had been leased to the brewery by the Borough, which then appears to have carried out perfunctory maintenance until the purchase by the Friends of Abingdon in the 1940's.

The fabric of the buildings bears many scars from the alterations made by successive brewers, but we know very little about the actual disposition of the equipment and outbuildings. There are some clues in photographs taken in the late 19th century, in particular a set of photographs by Harry Redfern taken in 1896 when the Borough had cleaned up the site after the departure of the brewery. The report by Julian Munby and Kate Newell in 1998 draws attention to many changes that have occurred since 1896. A set of photographs by Mr Hyde-Parker shows something of the outbuildings which still remained in the brewery yard in 1944.

Several years ago, the archivist at Morlands thought that he had seen some papers relating to the Abbey Brewery but was then unable to locate them again. The closure of Morlands presented a last chance of finding archive material. Elizabeth Drury and I made a quick search of the dusty jumble of papers, photographs and furniture in the attics of Ocklea, but found nothing pertaining to the Abbey Brewery. Before our search, the same material had been turned over by Carl Boardman (County Archivist), Jill Draper (Abingdon Museum), and Jackie Smith (Town Council Archivist), and they do not recall seeing anything relevant.

Now, an interesting piece of evidence has turned up in the Friends of Abingdon archives. This is a rather amateur tracing by A W Woodruff of an 1867 plan of the brewery. The tracing, on disintegrating paper, may date from the mid-20th century. It shows all the outbuildings, and labels them as Stable, Store, Office etc, but unfortunately does not name the brewing processes in the Long Gallery and Checker. Buildings beyond the east end of the Long Gallery, which were shown on the 1876 OS map, formed a substantial extension of the brewery site which has since become part of the Coseners House property. Gates across the lower end of the lane alongside October House provided the sole access to the brewery yard. If you are more interested in domestic history, the cottages and gardens in Checker Walk (called Bridle Lane) and Abbey Close (called Abbey Road) are shown, right down to the number of seats in each privy!

Dick Barnes

OUDE COURSES AT SWINDON

An introduction to the National Monuments Record. Jane Golding et al. 10 weekly meetings, Thursdays 10am-12 noon, from 28th September. £50. At National Monuments Record Centre, Great Western Village, Kemble Drive, Swindon.

Also

Understanding Past Landscapes: Workshop. 16 weekly meetings and 4 field trips to Lydiard Tregoze & Lydiard Millicent. £90. From 18 January 2001.

Details from Dick Barnes or OUDCE, 1 Wellington Square, Oxford.



Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society

NEWSLETTER - SPRING 2000

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The year 2000 has already seen much activity on the part of our Society. The new information leaflet produced by Dick Barnes is a great success, and a further batch has had to be printed. We welcome the Local History Group formed from Society members working on local history projects. They will be meeting once a quarter to discuss their various activities and, in due course, to produce an annual publication. We wish this new venture every success. If you would care to participate, please contact Manfred Brod (see separate notice), who has put much hard work into setting this up.

Another important project is the Time Line, which is a series of panels portraying an outline chronological history of Abingdon. The unveiling is scheduled to take place in the entrance of the Old Gaol on the evening of 29th June. The work has been made possible by a generous grant from the Millennium Festival Awards for All scheme. There are more details in the article by Judy Thomas in this newsletter.

It is hoped that the ancient tradition of beating the bounds of the borough can be re-enacted in this millennium year. Please see the historical article by Jackie Smith, and the appeal by Lesley Legge on behalf of the Town Council for a volunteer organiser. If you could offer help that falls short of overall organisation, I'm sure this would be welcome.

The usual activities of the Society are going on well. Attendance at lectures continues at a high level, but we would be grateful for more help in setting out chairs beforehand and stacking them away afterwards.

On the archaeological side, there are rumours of interesting digging in house gardens in Sutton Courtenay! Work also continues on prehistoric sites in the Drayton area. The report on the excavations at Thrupp is at long last being published in Oxoniensia. Congratulations to all concerned.

*Gill Jacobi
Chairman*

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP OF THE SOCIETY

A new group has been formed within the Society to cater for those members actively working in any of the various fields of local history. An initial meeting was attended by members specialising in the 17th, 19th, and 20th centuries, in the history of villages around Abingdon, in the history of buildings, streets and townscapes, in genealogies and family history (but medievalists, where are you?) Future meetings will take place four times a year, and the main concern will be to provide opportunities for members to present and discuss their current findings. It is also planned to publish a specialised journal, possibly on an annual basis.

The next meeting will take place at 7.30 p.m. on Thursday, 4th May, at 35 Ock Street (the Baptist Church Centre). All active local historians will be welcome, whatever their specialities. For further information, please contact the convener, Manfred Brod, on manfred.brod@hmc.ox.ac.uk or on 01865 391507.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT

SUTTON COURTENAY

Work continues in the quarry faces here although the end of the main part of the project is, at last, in sight. We are currently recording an extensive section containing the area in which a large palaeo-channel alters course from west to east to south-west to north-east. This probably late-glacial channel (it cuts into Devensian gravel deposits, c. 34,000 years old) has produced many animal remains including molluscs and the teeth and bones of large mammals such as bison and woolly rhinoceros. It is an extremely complicated section requiring more than one team to draw it.

The quarries themselves still produce the bones and teeth of large mammals, often in near mint condition. Sadly many are still being lost to the fossil trade so we will never have a complete record for the site. However, the bone and tooth count is now extensive (over a thousand pieces!). Dr Kate Scott of the Stanton Harcourt mammoth project is collaborating with their identification. Numerous other researchers are assisting with other aspects of the project such as geological interpretations as well as helping with the identification of rodents, wood and molluscs etc. Several superb conditioned bones have been found which were derived from a substantial earlier palaeo-channel (situated below the Devensian gravels) at the base of the pit. Organic remains from this channel as well as the more recent one, mentioned above, are to be radio-carbon dated.

There have been a few more finds of Early-Upper Palaeolithic flints including a fine blade found by Sandy Wallis. This appears to be manufactured on the same high quality flint as the leafpoint and other significant pieces. We have produced our part of the publication on the earlier finds, such as the leafpoint, and are awaiting the contribution of the co-author Dr Paul Pettitt. We may publish in *Oxoniensia*. We now have the radiocarbon dates obtained on woolly mammoth bones found near the leafpoint. The two dates are $34,000 \pm 750$ years BP (before present) for the tusk and $36,150 \pm 950$ years BP for the pelvis. These dates are close to those predicted by us (33,000 years BP, see last newsletter) and by Dr Paul Pettitt. In fact they are statistically identical. They fit in nicely with the expected age of leafpoints in continental Europe. Ours is the only British example of its type. They are more typical of southern German and Polish transitional Neanderthal/anatomically modern human sites. We seem to have a transitional culture at Sutton Courtenay that utilised a tool kit containing elements typical of both anatomically modern humans (i.e. flint blades) as well as those of the Neanderthals (i.e. leafpoints and levallois flakes). In the last newsletter I mentioned that the tool working techniques used by the Sutton Courtenay Neanderthals were derived from southern Europe but it now seems we should have been looking to the east!

THRUPP

This site is also producing many excellent conditioned bones (we now have two handaxes) from a Palaeo-channel that may be older than those at Sutton Courtenay. The species list is dominated by bison and reindeer indicating a post Oxygen Isotope Stage (OIS) 5 date (120,000 years BP), probably OIS 4 (c. 70,000 years BP) although we cannot be certain. We have donated a bison cannon bone for dating at the Oxford University Radiocarbon Laboratory. Although the age of the bone is likely to be beyond the range of radiocarbon dating the measurements from collagen contained within it will be used to increase the accuracy of such a dating procedure at the extreme range of its reliability. The sediments also contain the richest mollusc (mostly cold adapted species) and plant (unidentified) remains I have seen (even better than Site 2, Sutton Courtenay!). Unfortunately this site is also being visited by collectors. Several bones put aside for us by the digger driver have mysteriously disappeared. They would be of no use to anyone else and will rapidly disintegrate if they are not treated properly.

The upper deposits at Thrupp are still being cleared prior to gravel extraction. Several nice characteristically bronze age flint implements, the odd sherd of Iron Age pottery and the bones, teeth and shed antlers of red deer, cattle, horse and sheep have been found in recent months. The large number of bones thrown into one area in particular (of what was a waterlogged marshy zone) may indicate ritual deposition there. The bones of numerous wild species have also been found including badger, roe deer and an unidentified species of duck.

THRUPP IRON AGE

As promised in an earlier newsletter the publication backlog is slowly being dealt with. Members will remember the work undertaken by the society in the 1970's and 1980's on the extensive Iron Age remains at Thrupp. This work is to be finally published in the next issue of Oxoniensia (hopefully April or May). Many past and present members helped with this work. Attempts are now being made to complete the write up of excavations in the grounds of St Ethelwold's House. The finds from this site will shortly be passed on to the County Museum Stores at Standlake.

CULHAM ESTATE

We hope to continue work on this important hill overlooking Abingdon sometime this year. It has great archaeological potential but has received little attention. I walked over the site with Tim Allen recently. He indicated some areas that may repay investigation such as some ditches within the woodland at the top of the hill. We hope to discover more of the prehistoric history of the site (the ploughsoil is covered in worked flints and pottery).

Bob Eeles and Rachel Everett

THE MID-VICTORIAN BUILDING OR SUBSTANTIAL REBUILDING OF ANGLICAN CHURCHES IN VILLAGES CLOSE TO ABINGDON.

There are thirty-seven Anglican village churches within six miles of the centre of Abingdon. Thirteen were either first built or substantially rebuilt during the nineteenth century and a further six were significantly modified. Ten of the thirteen new churches date from between 1820 and 1860.

I have looked into the circumstances surrounding the building of these ten new churches. The study illustrates at a very local level many of the aspects of Victorian church building that are usually discussed in a wider context. These include: the extraordinary increase in building over a short period; the change in architectural style under the influence of the Tractarian and ecclesiological movements; the fund-raising efforts at all levels, for individual projects, within the diocese, and nationally; the concern with providing free sittings for the poor; and the roles of the national and local church building societies.

Budgets and methods of finance varied for the ten churches. Two were financed by a prominent local family, the others by a combination of subscriptions, grants and, in one case, a loan against a special church rate. Details of fundraising, where these have been found, illustrate local networks in action. The sizes and costs of the churches varied widely, not always as a function of the local population. Some were built to a minimum budget; others were more elaborately decorated and finished. Thus, very local factors were evidently important. In addition, nearness to Oxford and the influence of the Oxford movement probably also had an influence in encouraging the early adoption of the Gothic revival in the Abingdon area.

Jessica Brod

WALKING THE OLD BOUNDARIES OF ABINGDON

Abingdon Town's ancient, but lapsed, custom of 'Beating the Bounds' is an event the Town Council would like to incorporate in the Town's Mid Summer Millennium Festival. Jackie Smith, the Town's Archivist has been looking back in the Town's Records to find descriptions of the event, the route taken and the form it took. It was a real day out in times past with the Town Chamberlain obliged to swim across the River Thames at the appropriate crossing points of the old Town Boundary! The Millennium Committee are looking for a person or a group who would be interested in organising a walk on Sunday 25th June 2000, around these old boundaries, using the Lock and the bridge for River crossing (no swimming involved!).

Contact point: Town Council Offices, Stratton Lodge, 52 Bath Street, Abingdon or Tel: 522642

[Jackie Smith has kindly allowed us to reproduce her article "Charter Boundaries and Perambulations" in this newsletter]

CHARTER BOUNDARIES AND PERAMBULATIONS

The limits of the Borough as set out in the Charter of Incorporation (1556) may be summarised thus: from the Abbey locks in the east to the Ock Bridge on the west, from Abingdon Bridge on the south to a point beyond Boar (Bath) Street in the north and diagonally from the old stone bridge which once stood at the end of St Helen's wharf to the top of the Vineyard at the junction of the present Oxford and Radley Roads. There was an onus on the Mayor and Corporation "for the time being, and for their successors to make perambulation or perambulations thereof for the true and better knowledge thereof", although there was no specified frequency for the ceremony. By 1603, when Francis Little was appointed one of the viewers of mounds and bounds within the Borough, it was already described as "an ancient custom here used".

Most of the references in the records refer to the practice in the 19th century when it was customary for the Chamberlain to provide cakes and ale (400 cakes and 2 or 3 kilderkins of ale) to be distributed to the populace en route. Afterwards the Mayor and Corporation would sit down to dinner. There was a proposed minor change to the parliamentary boundaries in 1831 but there is no reference to it in the Borough Minutes. In the 1838 perambulations the Mayor and Corporation met in the Council Chamber at 10am and proceeded to the top of Bath Street with 400 cakes and 2 kilderkins of ale for distribution "at the usual places". The ceremony was completed with a dinner at 3.30pm, with wine taken from the Corporation cellar!

In 1880 a committee was formed to examine closely the Borough boundaries and compare the limits set out in the charter of 1556 with the new ordnance survey maps. Their report to the Council refers to several meer or boundary stones:

1. at the junction of Faringdon Road and Wootton Road,
2. opposite the Boxhill footpath (now Boxhill Walk, opposite John Mason School),
3. under a hedge along this footpath,
4. in the triangular enclosure at the junction of Oxford and Radley roads,
5. at the gate at the north-west corner of the ferryboat field,
6. by the side of the towing path,
7. in the west wall of the iron bridge
8. at the south west corner of Spring Road.

It was ordered that these boundaries should be beaten on the 13th August 1880. A full report of the proceedings, which had not taken place for some twenty-seven years, appeared subsequently in the local press. In addition to the Mayor and members of the Council, the party included the Town Clerk bearing the Borough flag, the sergeants-at-mace, representatives of the local constabulary, a drum and fife band, and the "Wandbearer" a Mr F Harris "chosen on account of his swimming abilities". Presumably, it was his duty to beat the actual boundary markers. The procession started at the Council Chamber and proceeded via High Street to the south west corner of Spring Road. Here the report describes how a small boy was "bumped" against the stone by the Town Clerk, buns and coins were thrown.

The next stop was at the corner of Faringdon road and Wootton Road where two-ounce packets of tea, buns and a barrel of beer were distributed. At the old pound south of the Boxhill footpath several children were "bumped" and rewarded with a scramble for coins. When the Boxhill ditch was reached the party discovered that the bridge had been removed and the Town Clerk made a valiant but unsuccessful leap across, landing knee-deep in the muddy ditch! At this juncture, a short detour was taken to Fitzharris House, the home of Councillor Heber Clarke, where luncheon was taken, while the band played on the lawn.

After lunch the party continued via the Workhouse, down the Oxford Road towards the next boundary stone at the railed enclosure at the junction of the Oxford and Radley Roads where a barrel of beer and buns were distributed to the crowd. The next section of the route was via Radley Road, Barton Lane, across the railway towards the abbey mill stream where punts were waiting to convey the party upstream towards the meer stone near the north west gate of the ferry-boat meadow above the lock. There was a good deal of horseplay, boats colliding, and duckings in the river.

The journey back downstream continued past the new bathing place towards Abingdon Bridge and The Rookery where Mr A E Preston and Mr Winship, the Borough Surveyor, were both tipped into the river. A halt was made opposite Mr Steven's boathouse while the Wandbearer and the Borough Surveyor swam across the river, over the course of the boundary line. The next stop was St Helen's Wharf where the official party set off for the final part of the proceedings, a boat trip up the river Ock. There were further duckings of Councillors and the local police superintendent! Eventually the party reached the point at the foot of Ock Street from which the ceremony had started. The climax to the proceedings was the throwing of buns, money and packets of tea from the top of the County Hall! In the evening a banquet was held for the Mayor (Alderman Ballard), Corporation and invited guests at the Crown and Thistle. This is undoubtedly the most detailed record of a perambulation that I have managed to trace and is reminiscent of It's A Knockout in places!

Ten years later there was a proposal to enlarge the limits of the Borough which in the main would incorporate the hamlet of Northcourt and use the line of the Wilts and Berks Canal to determine the southern limit of the Borough. Six-inch editions of the Ordnance Survey up to the provisional 1938 map, sheet XLV NW, show various stones and boundary stones. In the 20th century there was a major review of the town map in 1951.

Jackie Smith
16.2.2000

FANATIC - AND SCANDALOUS - ABINGDON

We have always known that 17th century Abingdon was famous for religious extremism, but the basis for this has not been very obvious. I have now identified Thomasine Pendarves, wife of the vicar of St Helens in the later 1640s, as the 'Mrs T.P.' whose steamy correspondence with Abiezer Coppe was published by him in 1649. Coppe was a wandering mystical preacher and writer, leader of a sect called the 'Ranters', who by 1650 would be in jail with many of his followers. He had an apparently well-deserved reputation as a sexual libertine, and was quite the wrong sort of person for a respectable vicar's wife to be in contact with. The correspondence makes it clear that Coppe was teaching Thomasine Pendarves the techniques of visionary prophecy.

Thomasine Pendarves is known to have patronised Elizabeth Poole, the 'Abingdon prophetess', who used much the same prophetic language which she also probably learned from Coppe. When Poole appeared before the Council of Officers in January 1649 to plead for the life of King Charles, the religious arguments she used closely paralleled those being published by other Ranters at the time. This puts her exploit into context, proving that she was not a demented female acting alone but a semi-official spokeswoman for a particular section of religion opinion. When Thomasine threatened to tear the nascent Abingdon Baptist congregation apart in support of Poole, she was indicating considerable support in Abingdon for the mystical beliefs of the Ranters, which her husband, at least outwardly, opposed.

Other known centres of Ranter beliefs were in London, Warwick, western Wiltshire, and at Bradfield near Pangbourne. Abingdon will have been a convenient staging post for travellers between them.

Manfred Brod

ABINGDON'S CHRISTIAN STORY

This millennium historical exhibition in Abingdon Museum opened on April 1st and will close on Sunday June 4th. It will be open during normal museum hours, 11 am to 5 pm, daily except Mondays. Admission is free. The exhibition has been prepared by a working group of the Church in Abingdon, a fellowship of 13 Christian churches of various denominations. The historical content was overseen by a sub-group consisting of five members of this society.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Listed below are the speakers booked for the latter part of this year. The full programme for the season 2000-2001 will appear in the next newsletter

21 September	A G M Recording Oxfordshire's Buildings	John Steane
11 October Morrison	Britain and the American Revolution	Dr Malcolm
16 November	The British in Venice in the 19 th century	Dr D Laven
21 December	Christmas Past The Christmas Social will follow the talk	Dr Malcolm Graham

All our meetings are held on the third Thursday in the month at the Northcourt Centre, Abingdon, at 7.20 pm for a 7.30 start. Visitors are welcome.

Brian Bray
Speaker's Secretary

PROGRESS ON THE MILLENNIUM TIME LINE

The undertaking of any large project inevitably involves some ups and downs - periods of optimism alternating with frustration and despair - and the Time Line is no exception!

Our failure to secure a local Millennium grant last summer delayed progress, but was redeemed by a grant of £4,077 from the "Millennium Festival for All" small grants fund in December 1999. This has enabled us to commission a professional designer, Linda Francis, to do the design and artwork for the project. However, the process of applying for such grants is extremely time-consuming. Particularly frustrating was the three-month delay between submission of our application in early September and notification of the award in December. No-one wanted to do more work on a scheme which might not be viable.



Now we have an overall design and are working hard to provide Linda with illustrations to bring it to life, and finalising the layout and the text. This is an interactive process requiring much discussion and some compromises, given the limited scope of the project and the vast resources of Abingdon's history.

The illustrations consist of prints, photographs, maps and drawings, the latter currently being undertaken by local artist Muriel Halliday. Our present aim is to have a 'test' panel completed by the end of March and the rest of the material collected by the end of April. This will give Linda two months to complete the production and construction of the panels.

The Time Line will be on display in the entrance foyer of the Old Gaol for six months, from July to December 2000.

A Reception and unveiling ceremony will be held on the evening of Thursday 29 June 2000 from 7 to 8 pm. Admission will be free but it will be **by ticket only**, as numbers are limited. Members are invited to apply for tickets - please contact:
Elizabeth Drury, 33 East St Helen St, Abingdon OX14 5EE. Please enclose an SAE

OUTINGS

Two outings have been arranged for the early part of the Summer, both using own transport.

On Sunday 21st May we are to be shown around **THAME**, meeting at 2.30 pm.

On Thursday 22nd June we are to be shown around **OLD HEADINGTON**, starting at 7.30 pm.

To book your place(s) please either phone me, Suzette, on Abingdon 523211, or fill in the appropriate form below. Please let me know if you need, or can offer, a lift. There will be a small charge of £2.00 per person per visit, collected on the day.

You will be notified later of the full details of the meeting points.

Book early - numbers are limited

OLD HEADINGTON - THURSDAY 22nd JUNE 2000, at 7.30 pm

I/we would like to come on this outing (No of persons.....)

I/we would like a lift or can offer.....seats.

NAME.....PHONE

ADDRESS.....POST CODE

Please return to: Mrs S Woodhead
11 Mattock Way
Abingdon
OX14 2PD

THAME - SUNDAY 21st MAY 2000, at 2.30 pm

I/we would like to come on this outing (No of persons.....)

I/we would like a lift or can offer.....seats.

NAME.....PHONE

ADDRESS.....POST CODE

Please return to: Mrs S Woodhead
11 Mattock Way
Abingdon
OX14 2PD



Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society

SUMMER 1999 NEWSLETTER

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Again, I have to start by appealing for volunteers to fill vacancies on our Committee. This year we are losing the Secretary (due to pressure of work), our Treasurer who has completed his three year stint, and a couple of others. We have a good and active membership in the Society, but unless more of you are prepared to help to run it, the entire organisation will collapse and we will have to close down. It is your Society, so this is up to you!

Our congratulations to David Miles, formerly Director of the Oxford Archaeological Unit, on his appointment as Chief Archaeologist at English Heritage. He has been a good friend of the Society since the beginning, and we wish him every success in his new venture.

The work of the Society goes on apace. The sorting of materials at the house of the late Miss Dorothea Pickering in East St Helen Street has involved both archaeology and history. There are vast boxes of artefacts to be sorted and assessed. If anyone has any information covering earlier digs at the site, please let us know urgently. Mienieke Cox has taken as her new project the reading and collating of the documents and correspondence, some going back almost 200 years. Eventually this will become a fascinating record of the Pickering family history, and doubtless be the basis of a most interesting lecture at some future date.

I have received an invitation from Abingdon School to attend an illustrated talk about the archaeological work carried out at Waste Court and Lacies Court by York University. I do not know yet whether it is a general invitation to us all, but will try to get details in time for the AGM.

The annual "Autumn Fayre" at Northcourt Centre is on October 2nd this year. As we benefit by favourable rental costs as members of the centre, it is up to us to support this fund raising effort. Gifts for the tombola and the raffle would be appreciated, and can be brought to me or delivered to the Centre on the morning of Saturday 2nd October.

We regret that, owing to ever rising costs, it has been found necessary to increase our membership subscriptions. From September 1999 they will be:

Family members	£12
Individual members	£8
O A Ps	£5.50
Distant members	£3

Finally, my sincere thanks to our hard-working and very supportive Committee. The lecture programme, the outings, the library, to say nothing of the finances and all the other tasks, are the result of much willing effort, and I thank them all.

Gill Jacobi

DIGGING & OTHER NEWS

SUTTON COURTENAY

We are still awaiting the radiocarbon dates from Woolly Mammoth bones found close to the Mousterian 'leaf point'. We were hoping to provide these dates in this Newsletter. They should be in the next one, however. The collection of flints is most interesting because it contains elements of both Mousterian culture (ie Neanderthal) and upper Paleolithic (ie anatomically modern humans). We are confident that the leaf point and some hard hammer-struck Levallois flakes are indeed Mousterian. Other artefacts such as long blacks and a 'Kostienki' knife are normally considered to belong to later cultures. The period in which our flints were produced (which we believe should be around 33,000 years old) was when Mousterian cultures died out; to be replaced by upper Palaeolithic folk. This important transition is of great interest to the academic community - hence their enthusiasm for our work. It appears that around 33,000 years ago Neanderthals adopted certain tool working techniques from modern people migrating from southern to northern Europe. Shortly after this, the Neanderthals disappeared. Nobody seems to be sure why this happened but it was almost certainly as a result of direct and indirect competition, exacerbated by glacial re-advancement and a reduction in the types and quantities of game animals. The Neanderthals may have been behaviourally and technologically less able to accommodate these changes. A small reduction in population density and/or number of births per unit of population have been sufficient to explain their demise over quite a short period - even only a few generations. They appear to have lingered longer in Spain, where radiocarbon dates indicate their presence around 26,000 years ago.

We have been fortunate in obtaining a grant of £460 to pay for the illustration of the more important flint artefacts from Sutton Courtenay. This grant was given by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) as part of their 'Challenge Fund' for amateur projects. We are most grateful to them. Jeff Wallis (one of our members) will be doing the illustrations. He is considered to be amongst the finest illustrators in Britain. We hope to be able to reproduce his work in a future Newsletter.

The recording of geological sections is continuing on site. This is quite a time-consuming process due to the scale and complexity of the deposits. There appear to be upper and lower deposits of both silts/clays and gravels, although in places certain units are missing. The upper and lower silts/clays seeming represent two periods of climatic amelioration during the last ice age. The lower unit contains abundant organic remains such as molluscs, so an environmental reconstruction should be possible. The whole area is dissected by ice-wedge castes cutting through all units. These date from about 18,000 years ago, during the coldest phase of the last glaciation. The presence of permafrost is attested to by cryoturbated upper levels from about the same period.

As mentioned at the recent members' evening, the geology is far more complex than originally believed. What at first sight appeared to be a late-glacial river channel may represent river action over a much longer period. The presence of mint-condition bones and teeth within the lower levels give scope for dating the deposits (They are in mint condition, and hence were not reworked from earlier deposits). To give the reader an impression of just how difficult it is to interpret and date accurately the gravels at Sutton Courtenay we list some of the finds seemingly within the same deposits - hand-axes dating from between 350,000 and 50,000 years ago; warm-adapted mammal remains such as straight-tusked elephant and hippopotamus from 120,000 years ago; cold-adapted species such as woolly rhinoceros and woolly mammoth from between 40,000 and 13,500 years ago; and the black-series flints from approximately 33,000 years ago.

We have been asked to present a talk on our work at Sutton Courtenay on 25th September in the Charles Maud room at Abingdon School.

ST ETHELWOLD'S HOUSE, EAST ST HELEN STREET

The committee has agreed to purchase storage boxes for the finds currently in the cellar of this house. They have also agreed to pay a consultancy fee to Maureen Mellor, who is an expert on medieval pottery. When this work is completed, we shall be in a position to submit a report on this site for publication.

THRUPP

Finds are still turning up at this site. Numerous bones and antlers have been found, together with cut wooden stakes. A considerable area is still to be quarried, so the archaeological potential is good. Below the gravels in this area is another Paleo-channel of similar date to Sutton Courtenay. This channel is rich in organic remains including mint-condition bison bones and a diverse assemblage of snails. Only a single human artefact has been found so far - a hand-axe from the gravels above the channel. With so many sites being investigated at the moment, members will appreciate that the digging team is spread very thinly. Anyone interested in helping in our research should contact Jeff Wallis (Abingdon 533649) or a committee member.

Bob Eeles and Rachel Everett

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS & SPEAKERS FOR 1999 - 2000

1999

16 Sep.	A.G.M. Life in the Ridgeway in Prehistoric Times	Dr Gary Lock
21 Oct	Current Excavations at Roman Silchester	Prof. Mike Fulford
18 Nov	Recent Prehistory Discoveries in the Pacific	Dr Chris Gosden
16 Dec	Christmas Social Mouse Traps: A Quick Scamper through their Long History	David Drummond

2000

20 Jan	Why did the Anglo-Saxons not become British?	Brian Ward-Perkins
17 Feb	The Origins of the Coach	Julian Munby
16 Mar	Alfred the Great: Eleven Hundred Years of Controversy	Prof Edward James
20 Apr	The Origins of the Incas	Jill Hay
18 May	Fathering Medicine: Who was Hippocrates?	Dr Helen King
15 June	Members' Evening	
21 Sep.	A.G.M.,	

Now regularly on the third Thursday in the month at the Northcourt Centre

Brian Bray

A PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF ABINGDON TODAY

We would like to add to the Society's archives by making a collection of photographs of Abingdon at the turn of this century.

The photographs can be of any aspect of Abingdon life - the work place, leisure activities, events, or scenes, particularly things that may change or disappear (look in "Abingdon in Camera" for ideas). Photographs can be black & white or colour with no size restriction, or slides.

So please get your cameras out in the next few months and start snapping. We look forward to seeing your results.

Photographs can be passed to a committee member at meetings or please send to me at 33 East Saint Helen St, Abingdon, OX14 5EE

Elizabeth Drury (553636).

SELECTED WEA COURSES

*Enrolment: John Williams, 10 Appleford Drive, Abingdon OX14 2DA
Cheques to be made out to "WEA Abingdon Branch"*

Day/Time	Venue	Course Title	No. of Mtgs	Fees
Monday 7.15-9.15	FS	Aspects of the Industrial Archaeology of London Starts 27 September. <i>Phillip Morris</i>	20	£62.50
Tuesday 2.00-4.00	ASMC	❖ From Tunics to T Shirts - a Social History of Dress Starts 18 January 2000. <i>Phyllis Nye</i>	10	£47.00
Wednesday 7.15-9.15	FS	❖ Romano-British Archaeology Starts 6 October. <i>Ian Scott</i>	20	£81.00
Thursday 10.15-12.15	SHCH	A History of Ironbridge Starts 23 September. <i>Theresa Wilson</i>	9	£28.50
Thursday 10.15-12.15	SHCH	Aspects of the Social History of S. Oxfordshire Starts 14 January 2000. <i>Christine Bloxham</i>	10	£32.00
Thursday 10.15-12.15	-	Local History - Village Visits Starts 18 May 2000. <i>Nigel Hammond</i>	6	£18.30

❖ Organised jointly with
University of Oxford Department for Continuing Education.

ASMC - All Saints Methodist Church
FS - Fitzharrys School
SHCH - St Helen's Church Hall

VISITS

East Hagbourne Village. We had a very pleasant visit on a lovely summer evening. Mrs Monica Lawson, the Chairman of the Parish Council, showed us her interesting old house and barn, and gave us tea and biscuits on the lawn. She also took us to the church, where the bell-ringers interrupted their practice to show us the bells in action at close quarters, and the organist talked about the church. A tour of Main Street to look at some of the best houses in the village finished at the C of E Junior school, a flourishing school which has been visited by royalty. A village visit in quite a different style, which was much appreciated.

Silchester Roman Town. Twenty members navigated successfully through the leafy lanes on the Berks/Hants borders on a scorching hot Sunday to see the current work by Reading University on this site. Silchester is unusual because hardly any of the large area inside the circuit of Roman walls is obscured by later building. We were given a guided tour by Professor Mike Fulford, who will be talking to the Society on October 21st. A turn-of-the-century excavation had established the late-Roman plan of the whole town. The present long-term project is investigating in more detail an area away from the town centre, with no public buildings. It includes a building at an angle to the Roman street grid, aligned with the streets of the earlier Iron Age oppidum. It is not clear why the Roman town was abandoned, as it was a trading centre with good communications and water supply. It was most impressive to see the site swarming with diggers and surrounded by Portakabins, Portaloos, the diggers' tents, a raised walkway for visitors, and a shop. Hear more about this fascinating Roman town in October, and visit again in 2020 to see the underlying Iron Age oppidum!

Dick Barnes

THE FRIENDS OF ABINGDON

This society and the Friends share many members and an interest in Abingdon. The Friends originated in 1944, when many older buildings in the town were derelict, demolished, or scheduled for demolition. Their aims were, and are, to encourage people to take an interest in the town, to try to halt the destruction of worthwhile buildings, and to encourage sympathetic redevelopment. There was some talk of a rolling programme of restoration by buying derelict buildings, restoring them, and selling them for practical use. This did not progress beyond a pilot exercise on one building, but it dominated the future course of the Friends.

Cont'd

Derelict cottages in Thames Street were bought and found to be part of the Abbey, and this led to the purchase of the adjoining dilapidated Checker and Long Gallery. Over the next thirty years, the meagre resources of the Friends were used on emergency repairs and the creation of the Unicorn Theatre in the shell of the cottages. Theatre users began to mount crafts shows and by the 1970s this had developed into the large annual crafts festival which is the Friends' major source of funds.

Against this background of running the Abbey buildings and Unicorn Theatre there has always been the less obvious activity as a civic society. Examples range from early actions such as saving the Carswell conduit head and trying to save Fitzharris Manor House through to present day issues such as the cinema and traffic problems. There are generally one or two social events and lectures a year, the topics for the latter typically related to the abbey or to development schemes in the town, so that they are complementary to the lecture programme of this society.

The buildings are usually open to the public in the afternoon, from April to September, Tuesday to Sunday, and at other times by request. The Friends have a large collection of photographs, prints and paintings relating to Abingdon, and their stall at the crafts festival in October often has a display of interest to members of this society.

Dick Barnes

NEXT MEETING

**Thursday 16th September
7.30 pm at Northcourt Centre**

**Talk by Dr Gary Lock:
Life on the Ridgeway in Prehistoric Times**

**and
Annual General Meeting**

ABINGDON AREA ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Request from the Treasurer: In order to avoid queues at the AGM, it would be helpful if members either send their subscriptions to me before the 16th September, or hand in their slips with cheques or the correct money in a sealed envelope at the AGM. The membership card prepared for the October meeting will be the receipt.

A reminder will be sent at the end of the year to any members who have not paid their subscriptions, and will then expect payment at the January meeting. After that date the membership will be considered lapsed.

Your help in this matter would be appreciated.

Keith Dove

New subscription rates with effect from 1st September 1999:

Family	£12.00
Individual	£ 8.00
Student, OAP, & Non-employed	£ 5.50
Distant	£ 3.00

Please return the form below together with the appropriate remittance to the Treasurer.

To: Keith Dove
8 Peachcroft Road
Abingdon
Oxon. OX14 2NA

Name..... Title.....

Address.....

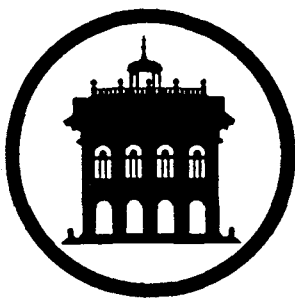
..... Post Code.....

Telephone.....

I wish to continue/apply for my membership (ring type)

Family (£12); Individual (£8.00); Student/OAP/Non-Employed (£5.50); Distant (£3.00).

I enclose cheque/cash for £.....



Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society

SPRING 1999 NEWSLETTER

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

James Candy, one of our Vice Presidents died recently aged 96. He was a wonderful character, a fascinating writer and a good friend and benefactor of our Society. His autobiography 'A Tapestry of Life' is in our library and well worth reading. As a child James was adopted by Sir Arthur Evans (the archaeologist famous for his work at Knossos) and was brought up by him at Youldbury on Boars Hill.

Our new committee is working well. Sarah Steele has taken over the library and Dick Barnes is outings organiser. Andrew Speyer has had to resign as he is working away from Abingdon but other jobs are continuing as last year.

Tim Allen of the Oxford Archaeological Unit has become our Archaeological Advisor in place of Bob Wilson. We are grateful to Bob for many years of faithful service and hope we will continue to meet him at lectures and at digs.

This has been an exciting year for the digging team. Full details about the 'leafpoint' and other finds are given elsewhere in this letter.

Mieneke Cox's new book '*Abingdon, an Eighteenth Century Town*' was launched on March 3rd. We wish it every success.

Attendance at lectures continues to be very good but surprisingly membership is down.

Regretfully it has been decided to discontinue the serving of coffee after the lectures. If anyone feels we should start this service or has any ideas on the subject, please let me know.

Gill Jacobi - Chairman

MEMBERSHIP

Those members who attended the February lecture will recall that our chairman Gill Jacobi commented on the fact that the Society's membership was down on last year and that we needed to recruit more members. I thought it would be interesting to look back at the membership figures over the last few years and see how they compare with this year. Including the breakdown of membership types, this is how it looks:

Year	Total	Family	Individual	Concession	Distant	<u>Change from previous year</u>	
						Members gained	Members lost
1998/99	122	28	76	16	2	8	21
1997/98	134	32	78	22	2	10	10
1996/97	134	31	72	29	2	18	18
1995/96	134	33	72	26	3	17	19
1994/95	136	30	63	41	2	11	13
1993/94	140	40	66	31	3	23	6
1992/93	123	31	52	36	4	23	11
1991/92	111	29	43	38	1	Not known	Not known

It can be seen that the largest increase in the membership came during the year of our Silver Jubilee lecture programme in the Guildhall in 1993, the interest being sustained into the following year. The numbers of members lost each year emphasises the need not only to recruit more members but also to retain those that we already have. Although we may be able to attract a few more members during the remainder of this year we will still fall considerably short of the numbers over the last few years.

Keith Dove - Treasurer

MILLENNIUM TIMELINE PROJECT

Two setbacks have occurred since Christmas - first, the decision by the College of Further Education's Art Department to withdraw from the project and second, the news that our application failed to attract a grant.

However, the good news is that our choice of the Old Goal foyer as the most suitable venue for the timeline has been enthusiastically received by officials from the District Council's Leisure Department and the management of the Old Goal.

In view of these developments, we carefully reviewed the viability of the project. We have come to the conclusion that the timeline should be reduced in scope but that it is still an achievable and very worthwhile undertaking.

Our next steps will be to take advice on the best way of mounting the component panels and to estimate the total cost. If there is anyone in the Society who has expertise in these areas, we would love to hear from you!

Meanwhile we have made further progress on the historical content and the overall design. And we are actively seeking an artist to contribute to the illustrations. We have a list of possible names but any suggestions will be gratefully received. Please get in touch with Judy Thomas or Anne Smithson if you would like to help with realising this project.

MEMBER'S EVENING 17th JUNE

For nine months of the year we book historians and archaeologists to speak at our meetings. Most are professional speakers. But in June we have a member's evening. This is convened to

give members of our Society a chance to talk, for about 15 minutes, on any suitable topic of their choosing. If you would like to talk about your particular project then please contact me on (01235) 531191 with details.

Listed below are some of the speakers booked for the 1999-2000 season. The full programme will appear in the next newsletter.

16th September (AGM.)

Life in the Ridgeway in Prehistoric Times

Dr Gary Lock

21st October

Current Excavations at Roman Silchester

Prof. Mike Fulford

18th November

Recent Pre-history discoveries in the Pacific

Chris Gosden

16th December (Christmas Social.)

Mouse-traps: A quick scamper through their long history!

David Drummond

All meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month, starting at 7.30 pm.

Brian Bray - Speaker's Secretary

VISITS IN 1999

The visit to the Oxfordshire Museums Store at Standlake on April 22nd was rapidly oversubscribed. Further visits are being considered and possibilities include a trip to Roman Silchester to see the current work (linked with the talk next autumn) and an evening visit to a local village. After the popular talk on the GWR we will enquire about a guided tour of the Didcot Railway Centre.

Dick Barnes - Visits Secretary

ARCHAEOLOGY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

In October I turned my attention to the next generation of Society members by running an Archaeology Workshop at St Edmund's Primary School, Radley Road, Abingdon.

The two Year 4/5 classes (nine and ten year olds) were given a taste of the good things archaeology has to offer in an afternoon of practical activities with something for everyone.

The classroom quickly became cluttered with air photos, potsherds, mattocks and ranging poles as I explained how archaeologists locate sites, dig, study and publish the evidence they find. Then children, teachers and classroom assistants were let loose on six tasks designed to give a flavour of what archaeologists do.

Most popular was the 'pottery reconstruction' activity, involving quantities of masking tape and a selection of carefully smashed flowerpots! (No-one seemed to mind that the material they were handling was only Ancient Tesco Garden Centre Ware.) The children were also enthusiastic about

the classification activity, sorting (real) finds into groups of pot, flint or bone and weighing the different quantities. Teachers involved in cooking practicals later in the week were probably less keen on having the school's collection of kitchen scales pressed into action.

I drew a large 'section through a ditch' on the board and other groups of children had a try at drawing it at 1:10 scale, struggling with tape-measures and pencils to achieve the most accurate drawing. George from Class R struggled more than most as he managed to unravel all of a 3m hand-tape and get tangled up in it.

Meanwhile the school microscope and hand-lenses were pressed into service as the children were asked to look at ancient seed and snail remains and consider what archaeologists could learn from them about how the landscape looked in the past and about what kinds of foods people were growing.

More able children were asked to work out a 'Stratigraphy Puzzle' or get their teeth into plotting finds to identify site location and settlement shift over time in the 'Fieldwalking Challenge'. (It's not certain if they noticed that this activity was sneakily devised to fit in with the work on co-ordinates they'd recently been doing in maths).

Everyone had a great afternoon which made a change from normal lessons and gave the children lots of new things to think about. Several decided that they'd like to become archaeologists when they grew up - let's hope the Society will still have plenty of practical projects for them to cut their teeth on when they reach their teenage years. Meanwhile I've included the 'Fieldwalking Challenge' for those of you who'd like to try it. Can you explain why the settlement shifts over time, or how all those 'odd' finds got there?

PS: It seems that the urge to take archaeology into primary schools was contagious during Autumn Term. Quite independently Tim Allen was also in the classroom explaining the work of archaeologists to children at St Nicholas' Primary School. Examples of the work the pupils undertook are included at the end of the newsletter.

Rachel Everett - Digging Secretary

DIGGING AND OTHER NEWS

DIGGERS DINNER

Due to an oversight the annual post-Christmas diggers dinner was held again at the Tandem, Kennington. As usual it was well attended. The quality of the food and service left much to be desired, in common with the previous year, but the company was good.

64 BATH STREET

This winter has been pretty miserable for digging. The wet soil conditions meant that more harm than good would have been done to the site if we had dug every Sunday. This resulted in some diggers helping on a site in Oxford Road, Cowley whilst others washed and marked the Bath Street finds. We did, however, manage to finish our latest work at this site and located a continuation of a ditch we had first seen three years ago and found another cremation burial. Unfortunately the bones had been crushed so it is not possible to give the sex or precise age of the individual although the remains are those of an adult. This reinforces the view that there was a

Roman cemetery in this location as, whilst children's remains can be found in various locations adults normally ended up in cemeteries. No structural remains were found despite there being large quantities of Roman ceramics and a 4th century coin. A long narrow trench requires digging in this garden which should reveal further Roman, Medieval and Post-Medieval remains.

On a wider front the societies excavations at Enoch's coalyard in Ock Street has led to a professional excavation being required before that area is developed.

If time permits we will be helping the Oxford University Archaeological Society excavate a suspected Iron Age hill fort at Graven Hill, near Bicester. They may also find evidence of part of a Roman invasion army that may have occupied it. If you wish to join in this dig or any other activity please telephone Jeff Wallis on Abingdon 533649.

Roger Ainslie

SUTTON COURTENAY LEAFPOINT

The 'leafpoint', although resembling a spearhead, is in fact a type of knife used by late Mousterian (Neanderthal) people in the period c. 36-30,000 years ago. There are no other examples known from Britain. Half of a similar object was dredged from the Thames at Osney at the turn of the century but it is heavily rolled and is not from a secure archaeological context so may not be contemporary. Comparable artefacts, which are more likely to be speartips, are known from Ipswich. These are typologically ascribed to the same period as our 'leafpoint' although dating evidence is also lacking. The flint from which the 'leafpoint' was manufactured may be East Anglian. This has been suggested by Professors Derek Roe, Paul Mellars and Roger Jacobi. We have written to Professor Roe asking if he has knowledge of anyone who can accurately provenance the flint. If it was indeed brought into our area from so far away this would be another first for us. Professor Roe suggests that the people who made the 'leafpoint' may have had cultural 'contacts' with northern European Mousterian groups. Such 'contacts', and the potentially greatly significant evidence of long distance trade/migration would open a whole new window on this important period in our prehistory.

Dr Paul Pettitt is now in possession of material (mammoth bones) which are being carbon dated. He anticipates that dates will be available in late April, i.e. three months from the time the samples were submitted. He has visited the site and seemed to be impressed with its potential. Afterwards he examined other artefacts from the same site and identified some which he considers also to be Mousterian. Currently we have increased the number of known Mousterian artefacts from our county by a factor of five. Quite an achievement! We hear on the grapevine that analyses undertaken by John Mitchell found no traces of microwear, the small scratches left on flint after it has been used with particular wear patterns associated with specific activities. We are awaiting his findings on the other implements.

PROPOSED PUBLICATION ON NON-FLINT PALAEOLITHIC ARTEFACTS

Members of the AAAHS have been asked to contribute data and perhaps illustrations for a new publication dealing with quartzite 'handaxes/choppers'. Jeff Wallis and Bob Eeles have found many such examples in local gravel pits dating between c. 350,000-35,000 years before present. Because there are no local sources of flint, the nearest being the Berkshire Downs and the Chilterns, our prehistoric 'ancestors' utilised the abundant quartzite cobbles and other similar stone for making their tools. In fact we believe that our area has the highest proportion of non-flint implements in this part of Britain. We are prepared to contribute a chapter to this proposed

publication but at this stage are not willing to allow our data to be used by the prospective authors because this would ultimately compromise our other researches (see above) at Sutton Courtenay and other gravel pits in and around Abingdon. We intend to publish this information ourselves.

SAINT ETHELWOLD'S HOUSE, 30 EAST ST. HELEN STREET

This site was dug during the 1980's by the society and by various other persons prior to this. Although extensive work has been done on the site little information has made its way into the journals. The garden and cellar were dug and evidence of extensive exploitation was found beginning in the early Iron Age and continuing almost unbroken to the present. The famous fragment of 14th century parchment came from one excavation and other finds include many thousands of Iron Age, Roman, Medieval and Post-Medieval pottery sherds. The diggers were recently contacted by the people who have taken over the running of the house after Miss Pickerings death. They were in a quandary as to what to do with the finds which fill a large part of the cellar. It was even suggested (seriously!) that they should be thrown down the garden well. Bob Eeles has examined the finds and certain ones are now in the Abingdon museum. It is anticipated that the finds will eventually be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museums Service (OCMS) at Standlake after being properly examined by society members. We are currently preparing a report incorporating our previous efforts plus a more detailed analysis of the pottery. We hope this will appear in print in the near future.

THRUPP

This site was dug by the society in the 1970's and 1980's and represents more of the substantial backlog of unpublished material resulting from our previous efforts. Most of the information obtained has never found its way into print. This is now being remedied. Rachel Everett, with the assistance of Bob Eeles, has produced a very professional report on the Iron Age and Roman features and finds which should appear in the next volume of *Oxoniensia*. Many artefacts recovered during these excavations remain unaccounted for. They naturally belong with the site archive material which is held partly by Abingdon Museum and partly by the OCMS. Other items are held by society members. Perhaps society members know of the whereabouts of misplaced items. If so could they please contact a committee member. A further publication is being prepared on the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age finds from Thrupp and surrounding areas and we shall be seeking large grants (several thousand pounds) to pay for illustrations and publication costs. Again a substantial quantity of finds are missing. The quality of any future publications would be enhanced if missing materials were examined by the authors. If you know of their whereabouts please let us know.

TUCKWELL'S TRACKWAY

There is little additional information concerning the trackway. Analyses are still being undertaken and the report should be begun in the near future. We have been given permission by John Curtis to attempt to find an old round barrow ring ditch that we hope is preserved beneath a restored hedgeline close to the trackway. The fields to the north were quarried in the 1960's with the loss of at least one barrow, seen on an aerial photograph, and most if not all of a second. This barrow may be partly preserved or completely destroyed, hence our interest in finding out. Members will appreciate that quarry records were not of modern standards all those years ago and nobody is quite sure what we will find. We shall keep you informed.

CULHAM HILL PART ONE

On Sundays March 14th and 21st the society field-walked the area known as Culham Hill, situated 1 km. south east of Abingdon. The area is poorly known archaeologically. It would have been an important site in the past because it is the highest part of our area and overlooks the major road and river routes onto our town. Preliminary findings indicate extensive exploitation throughout prehistory (see below). It was previously fieldwalked by Robin Holgate who found much prehistoric flint work although his survey used a low resolution. His results have not been verified by our recent efforts or during extensive fieldwalking by Bob Eeles over ten or more years, i.e. the distributions and densities of the flint scatters differ. Discussions with metal detectorists indicate the area is strewn with musket balls, Civil War coinage and earlier Roman coins and brooches. Needless to say these persons are not particularly forthcoming with exact find locations because they usually do not have permission to visit the site and they do not wish to lose possible future finds to others. Because they often visit the sites at night they do not actually know precisely where finds came from.

Rachel Everett and Bob Eeles

CULHAM HILL PART TWO

A prime reason for altering the Society's name from *Archaeological* to *Archaeological and Historical* was the insistence, in the early days, of a small number of committee members who felt that in an urban context the two studies should not be divorced. During the past years supposed historical fact has either been supported or discounted by archaeological evidence - the position of St Edmund's Chapel being a case in point. Culham Hill could well be a further example of this type of interaction between history and archaeology.

Thanks to the landowner we now have the opportunity to field walk Culham Hill, an area which was previously "off limits" to the society. Preliminary evidence suggests a prehistoric presence but for us the site offers the chance to pin point the exact position of the Civil War laager camp constructed by Royalist forces in 1643 whilst they held Abingdon.

The following information has been extracted from the journal of Parliamentarian Sir Samuel Luke, Scoutmaster general to the Earl of Essex. Luke employed spies - although he called them scouts - who were almost certainly local men able to travel at will through Royalist territory without suspicion, probably carriers, pedlars and merchants.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| May 4 th 1643 | <i>Ralph Norton saith that he was at Culham Hill near Abbington and that the King's forces are making tents of boards and hurdles and have fetched all beds out of the country.</i> |
| May 12 th 1643 | <i>Ralph Norton The Prince Robert and Prince Maurice are also at Abbington and Prince Maurice is returned with 500 horse and foot to Culham Hill where they are building diverse houses with turf timber and boards and are daily enlarging their works and making their trenches deeper, and have built it like a town and given several names to the streets, and that one of the streets called London Street was lately burnt by accident.</i> |
| May 12 th 1643 | <i>Humfrey Haynes...That most of the King's forces are drawn out of Oxford to Abbington.</i> |

- May 13th 1643 *Hugh Kettle...at Culham Hill where he saw Prince Robert and Prince Maurice and there are about 5,000 foot...*
- May 1643 *Robert Atkins...there are 20,000 of the King's forces which lie at Culham Hill and have pitched 500 tents...and have made 700 caves or hollows in the wheat field this side of the hill.*
- May 1643 *Samuel Brayne...the King's forces which lie in the huts upon Culham Hill...have entrenched themselves around 13 colours...*

Undoubtedly some of the figures should be taken with a pinch of salt. There is little chance of finding the tent post holes but the fire may have left traces and certainly even half that number of men will have left some debris. We shall walk in hope!

John Carter and Jacqueline Smith

POVERTY AND EDUCATION IN THE 17th CENTURY

No study of poverty in the 17th century would be complete without reference to the education or improvement of the lot of poor children. Lists of apprentices have already been extracted from the records of Christ's Hospital and in the course of examining relief payments our attention was drawn to the financial help given to poor scholars. This appeared to be a potential area for further investigation.

In the middle of the 16th century it had been the intention of John Roysse to establish "a free grammar school" in the Borough and to this end he left the sum of £50 to the Corporation to build or provide a convenient schoolhouse in the town to receive sixty-three pupils. Despite his intention that preference should be given to the children of "fatherless widows and poor men's children" entry was inevitably determined by social position since the Mayor and Burgesses were not to refuse entry to any "honest man, gentleman or rich man's son".

In his will of 1608 William Bennett, a nephew of Thomas Tesdale, left a bequest to his uncle of 115 acres of farmland at Broad Blunsdon, near Swindon, to provide a free education for six of the poorest children in Abingdon. These children were to be selected by the Master and Governors of Christ's Hospital with the advice of the schoolmaster, and were enrolled for a maximum of six years at Roysse's school. Other benefits included clothing and funding for apprenticeships. A provision of the bequest was that three of the scholars should be "poor kindred" of William Bennett's on his mothers side, born in Abingdon, if there were any.

The study is currently recording the first hundred years of the "Bennett Boys", i.e. 1609-1709. The data being recorded includes information on the individual child - age at entry, subsequent education or apprenticeship - as well as an attempt to reconstruct his family background. To date some 150 boys have been listed, of whom approximately 16% went on to one of the Oxford Colleges, mainly Pembroke, but also Trinity, Wadham and Balliol. A remarkable number.

Several of the early recipients of this charity were in fact related to the Tesdale of Bennett family, bearing the surname Tesdale or Dring. Other well known Abingdon Surnames include Coxiter, Mayott, Bostock and Tomkins.

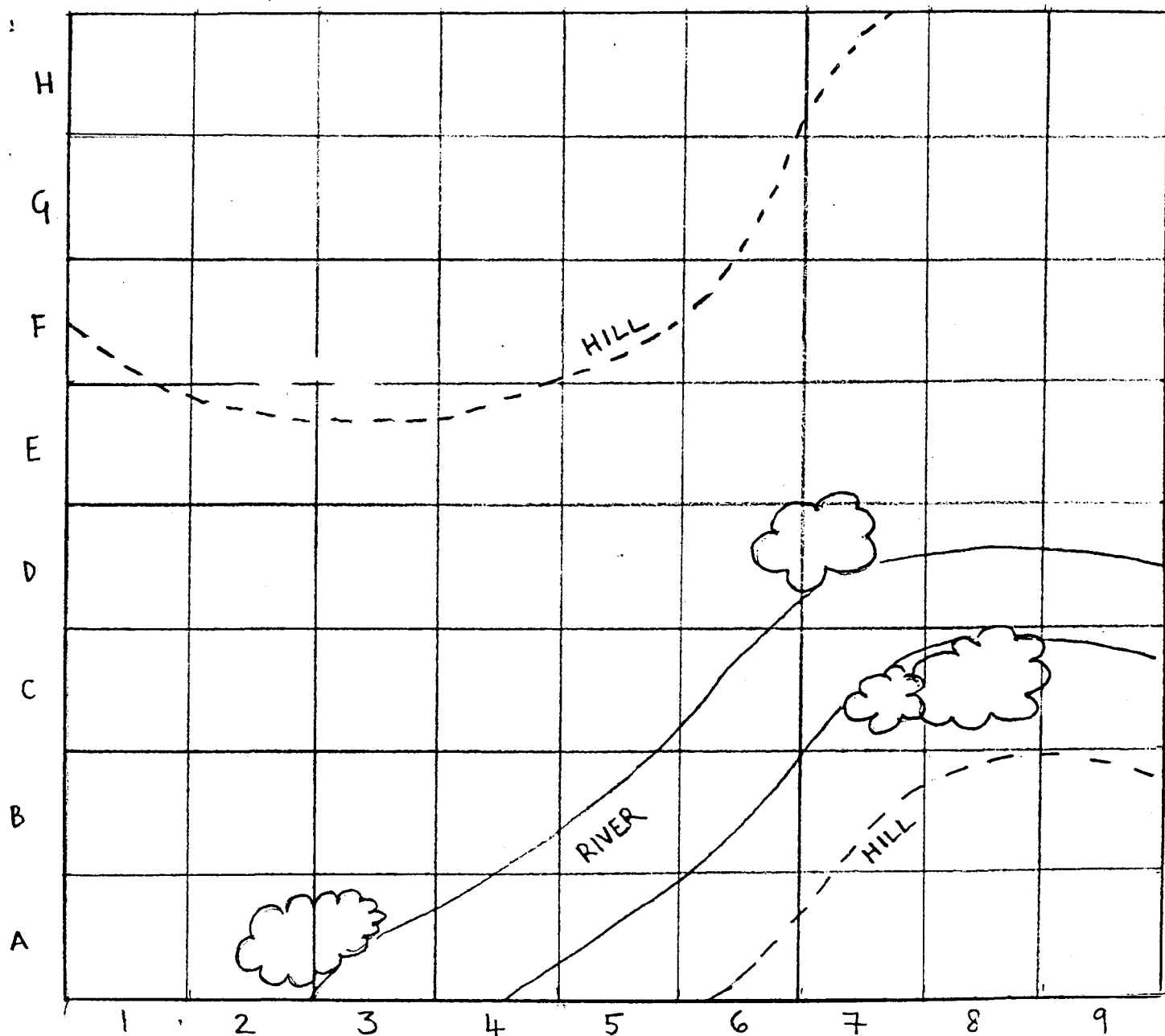
Their experiences were as varied as their fortunes. John Crabtree, elected a Bennett Boy in 1617, was the unfortunate Balliol scholar who was stabbed to death. Richard Billingsley ran away after three years and Charles Etty, apprenticed to a carpenter in Oxford, became a freeman of that city.

This information is based in the main on research in the archives of Christ's Hospital and printed sources available at the centre for Oxfordshire studies.

Jacqueline Smith and John Carter

The producers of this newsletter would be pleased to hear from any other society members who are engaged in archaeological or historical research, in any capacity. Information can be passed on to Rachel Everett or through another committee member. We would like to incorporate your results in future newsletters.

FIELDWALKING CHALLENGE



ALISON SAYS: "Can you plot the finds our team have gathered and tell me where people lived thousands of years ago?"

ALISON THE ARCHAEOLOGIST

Activity 3: Fieldwalking Challenge.

Plot the finds our team have gathered and find where people lived thousands of years ago.

Finds are from the **Bronze Age (3000 years ago).**

Iron Age (2000 years ago).

Middle Ages (600 years ago).

Work with a friend. Use a different colour/symbol for each type of find.

A2:1 Bronze Age flint

A6:1 Medieval sherd

A7:1 Iron Age sherd

A8:3 Iron Age sherds

A9:1 Iron Age sherd

B4:1 Bronze Age flint

B7:1 Iron Age sherd

B8:2 Iron Age sherds

B9:2 Iron Age sherds

C2:1 Iron Age sherd and 1 Bronze Age flint

C3:2 Bronze Age sherds and 2 Bronze Age flints

C4:1 Bronze Age sherd and 1 Bronze Age flint

D1:1 Medieval sherd

D3:3 Bronze Age sherds and 2 Bronze Age flints

D6:1 Bronze Age flint

E1:1 Bronze Age flint

E3:1 Medieval sherd

E5:1 Iron Age sherd

E6:1 Medieval sherd

F2:1 Iron Age sherd

F3:1 Medieval sherd

F4:1 Bronze Age flint and 1 Medieval sherd

F6:1 Medieval sherd

G1:1 Medieval sherd

G3:2 Medieval sherds

G4:5 Medieval sherds

G7:1 Bronze Age flint

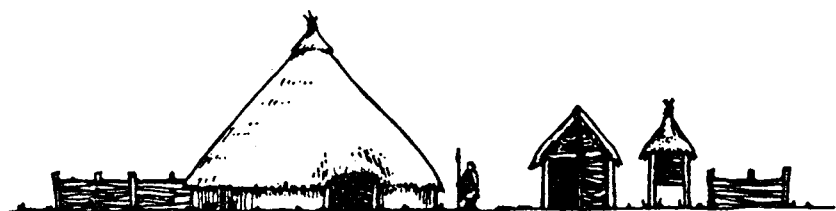
H3:3 Medieval sherds

H4:3 Medieval sherds

H5:1 Iron Age sherd and 1 Medieval sherd

H7:1 Medieval sherd

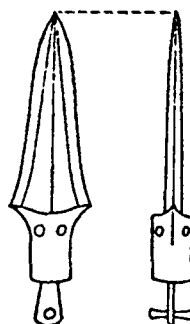
H9:1 Iron Age sherd



BRONZE AGE VILLAGE



BRONZE AGE
FLINT SCRAPER



Wessex
(socket cast
separately)

BRONZE AGE DAGGER



bead-rim jar

IRON AGE POT

MEDIEVAL VILLAGE





Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society

SUMMER 1998

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Our last meeting of the 1997 - 98 season finished on a high note with the members' evening, with talks from Judy Thomas on the early years of the Society, Trevor Ogden on his surname research and Manfred Brod on the mysterious Prophetess of Abingdon, with an additional display and video by Colin Read of his collection of archery material. The proceedings were followed by cake and wine to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Society, with the ceremonial cake cutting by Judy Thomas and Mienieke Cox. Many thanks are due to Elizabeth Drury for organising the cake and to the speakers and exhibitors for their sterling efforts.

As ever, the demand for committee members exceeds supply, so if you are tired of hiding your light under a bushel and feel that you can spare the time for one meeting per month, please don't be backward about coming forward.

An ex-officio post that also comes up is that of The-Person-Who-Puts-Up-The-PA-System. All it involves is having someone arriving to Thursday talks in time to hang up the speakers (the electronic ones!), connect them to the amplifier and sort out the microphone (and its attendant batteries). The only snag is unravelling the speaker cables, which no matter how they are stored, always manage to tie themselves in knots in the cupboard. Volunteers are welcomed.

The new committee will be made apparent when it is elected, confirmed, persuaded at gunpoint or whatever it takes, and may I pass on my best to them all. I will not be able to attend the AGM, but I wish everyone an enjoyable start to our new season.

DIGGING REPORT

As our digging Secretary is in Spain excavating Iron Age and Bronze Age remains it falls to me to describe what has been happening.

Work continued at the causeway site off Audlett drive where we were delayed by severe flooding earlier in the year. The gravel company then decided to extract the area of causeway and we were fortunate in being able to persuade the digger driver to clear down to the causeway on Saturday before leaving it for us to excavate on the Sunday and on Monday evening. The following Tuesday it had all been destroyed. The interesting thing we found was that it was virtually identical to the causeway which the Oxford Unit have uncovered at Yarnton. That is that it comprised a trackway of limestone pieces with a central path of gravel and sand approx. 1 yard wide. In our case we appear to have two of these gravel paths which joined before the trackway crossed the boggy area. At the junction was a post hole approximately one foot in diameter and three feet deep. Unfortunately this did not contain any finds. Little additional pottery was found and that which was recovered indicates an early Iron Age date.

We have since returned to digging at Bath Street where we have attracted some new diggers who appear to be enthusiastic. At least in Bath Street you can always guarantee lots of Roman pottery. Work is currently at an early stage in our extension of previous work although we are already finding pieces of burnt bone indicating that cremations may not be far away. The main limiting factor is now spoil removal as Abingdon School have erected a height barrier which prevents the skip being delivered to remove our spoil.

New diggers are always welcome and it is probably best to phone Rachel Everett on Oxford 739946 or Jeff Wallis on Abingdon 533649 to see where we are currently working.

Roger Ainslie

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ADVISOR

After ten years as Archaeological advisor to the Society attending most of the committee meetings, Bob Wilson is hanging up his metaphorical trowel and leaving the post. He is replaced by Tim Allen. Many thanks are due to Bob, and of course Tim needs no introduction to the members of the Society. Best wishes and best wishes, outgoing and incoming.

OUTINGS

Evening Visit to Wallingford

On Thursday June 4th we had a most enjoyable visit to Wallingford. We met Judy Davey our guide outside Wallingford Museum and took off for the ramparts, the primitive fortifications built in King Alfred's time which still skirt the modern town and were used in turn by the Normans and succeeding generations.

We stopped off at various places with the guide giving fascinating stories of Wallingford's history, some visible and some now invisible. One of the most memorable buildings was down towards the old wharf which still had its original roof and windows. Interspersed with the history we were given little stories of the people and characters of Wallingford which made the evening so memorable.

We took in the main square with its very impressive town hall and finally returned to the museum, taking in an area that once housed a brewery (to rival Morlands?). The museum was a most interesting building, a medieval hall house. Coffee and biscuits were most welcome, and we were all given audio tapes to enter the excellent exhibition of the story of Wallingford which put everything in place, having visited the sites where it had happened. This was much enjoyed by all, we felt wouldn't it be wonderful to have one at Abingdon, particularly with Abingdon's illustrious history - maybe even a project for the Millennium?

Contributed by Jenny Goode

EVENING VISIT TO PORT MEADOW

A fine May evening provided the backdrop for our visit to Port Meadow, guided by George Lambrick of the Oxford Archaeological Unit. Port Meadow is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and carries extensive common rights to graze cattle, horses and geese. The citizens of Oxford enjoy legal rights of access over its 440 acres. Because it has never been under the plough, the archaeology of the area is largely undisturbed (although there are some limited areas of gravel-extraction) and is visible from ground level, a situation all too rare in this day and age.

A healthy turnout of about 22 people was taken on a circular route around the northern end of the Meadow, starting from the Wolvercote car park. George very kindly provided maps which showed the marks of human activity from the earliest (the Bronze age/Iron Age hut marks), through

the eighteenth century racecourse, to the shed used as a practice target for flour bombs by the Royal Flying Corps during World War 1. I later read an account of one Captain Edwin Thomson who was killed while taking off from Port Meadow in his Sopwith Camel in May 1918, but such events have been rare enough to leave no traces on the Meadow.

Many of the traces of settlement are visible all year round, representing the boundary or drainage ditches of the huts, while others are more apparent during drier times, when the ditches allow the plant roots to penetrate more deeply and show up greener than the surrounding grass. We were there in a transitional time, with a good growth of spring grass and flowers, but the physical remains were easy to distinguish as shallow ditches or low relief. There was a profusion of buttercups while we were there (leaving everyone with feet, socks and shoes stained a very fetching shade of yellow), and the different types of buttercup can be used as a guide to the ground conditions (I only caught the end of this explanation, so don't quote me!). The hut marks were well spread out, suggesting that they might have been seasonal dwellings, some with animal paddocks adjacent. One source of confusion was what appeared to be a typical barrow mound, which was in fact a spoil heap from a dig in the 1920's! Another was the pits in the ground made by the animals' hooves for reasons unknown - maybe digging down to look for a salt-lick ?

Our guide was most eloquent and enthusiastic about his subject and wasn't put off his stride when nuzzled from the back by a horse who was either enjoying the talk or assessing the possibility of the assembled crowd carrying any tasty snacks about them, and many thanks are due to him (George Lambrick that is) for an enjoyable and informative evening.

Simon Owen

SEB EXHIBITION

Sat/Sun July 4th/5th

The Society planned this exhibition to show some of the material from recent digging activities and other interesting finds from the area. The space available in the former SEB showroom in West St. Helen Street was ideal for our purposes and after a frantic Friday night (including overnight typing for Sally, Roger and Bob) setting things up, we got a steady stream of visitors over the Saturday and the Sunday. The displays included reconstructed pottery from 64 Bath Street, finds from Enock's Yard, Thrupp farm and the most recent dig at the Thrupp gravel pit site, as well as poster boards from previous digs. Vast copies of the nineteenth century tithe maps generated lots of interest, as did the Friends of Abingdon stand about Fitzharry's Manor and its history. The contribution of Dr. Bob Eeles, in the form of part of his collection of stone and flint

tools, and animal remains from local sites was considerable, particularly the appearance of the famous spear point (see the last newsletter). Many thanks are due to all concerned, but most of all to Sally Ainslie, Roger Ainslie, Bob Eeles and Elizabeth Drury for their efforts in getting everything ready in time. Thanks too to Rachel Everett, Alison Gledhill, Terry and Laura Stops and Jeff Wallis for taking the time to be on hand to look after things and answer questions (and provide a live display of potmarking!), and for taking the displays down (in a much shorter time than they took to put up). In the absence of a permanent base for the society at which we can keep the world at large informed of our activities, such exhibitions do a great deal to raise our profile and provide a shop window for prospective members to see what is available.

If anyone has any ideas for a premises in which to base ourselves, as in the Museum basement in days gone by, then let us know.

EVENING CLASS IN ABINGDON

Mrs. Jacobi has sent details of a WEA course in Abingdon titled "Ancient Greece in the Bronze Age", to be given by David John Davis. It covers the period made famous by Homer some 400 years after its demise, and elaborates on what he wrote and what has subsequently been discovered. It starts on the 30th of September at Fitzharry's school and lasts from 7.15 to 9.15pm over 20 weeks. The cost is £76. For further details phone 01865 270360/270391/270308.

FUTURE OUTINGS

Oxford University Press Museum, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford.

Provisional date Thursday November 19th - ENTRY FREE.

This small museum preserves and displays the historic books, documents and printing equipment of the Oxford University Press. Graphic panels tell the story of "the Oxford Book" from the fifteenth century to the CD-ROM.

The guided tour takes about 45 minutes and can only accommodate groups of ten to fifteen people at one time. Also available is a film from the 1920's about the Press and its work. If the number of people wishing to come exceeds fifteen, then half the party can watch the film while the rest see the museum, then swap over after tea and biscuits.

The Press needs a list of names and numbers of people in order to issue security badges, so this will have to be booked in advance. A booking form is attached on the last page.

Oxfordshire Museums Store, Witney Road, Standlake.

This venue is available for evening visits, during which there will be a guided talk on the collections, which comprise the reserves for the county's museums. Documentation, conservation and exhibition preparation are based here.

It is necessary for us to pay a flat fee of £35 to cover staff costs for this evening, so the more people who are interested, the cheaper the visit will be. No dates are fixed for this yet, but will probably be in March.

We may even be able to see some of the things that we have contributed from our digs!

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS - SEPTEMBER 12 - 13

There are a few events in and around Abingdon to choose from on these days, and I've summarized a few:-

Abingdon Abbey Buildings:

Open access and guided tours of the long gallery and associated buildings.

Sat/Sun: 10.00 - 16.00 Tours: 11.00 and 14.00

Abingdon Museum:

Roof open Sat/Sun 11.00 - 17.00

Buried Past of Abingdon:

One-and-a-half mile guided tour by Tim Allen looking at Abingdon's town centre, taking in the archaeological study at Abbey Gardens.

Sun: 11.00 - meet at County Hall

Historic Town of Abingdon:

One-and-a-half mile walking tour led by Grant Audley-Miller (Conservation Officer) showing how Abingdon has evolved and how new development fits in with the old.

Sat: 14.00 - meet at County Hall

Historic Town of Abingdon:

Same tour as above, led by Tony Ives (retired Chief Planning Officer).

Sun: 14.00 - meet at County Hall

Walk through Abingdon's History:

Judy Thomas will be leading this one-and-a-half mile walk around the town, taking in County Hall, East St. Helen Street, Christ's Hospital and other significant sites.

Sat: 11.00 - meet at County Hall

Venn Mill

Slightly further afield, Venn Mill at Garford (on the A338 Oxford to Wantage road) is open 10.00 - 17.00 on Sunday. It is a Grade II working water-powered mill c.1800. Flour milled on site will be for sale. The Society did a dig there in the early 1980's and the owner has been doing some further digging by himself. Last time I saw it, there was a small display of finds from the site.

BOOKING FORM FOR OUTINGS

Please note that the dates for these are not yet fixed - these are just to gauge the numbers expected.

Return forms to Sally Ainslie, 25 St Amand Drive, Abingdon OX14 5RG
Tel.Ab 525904

Oxford Museum store.

Number of people:

Names:

Contact name, address and phone no.

Lift needed/available

Oxford University Press Museum

Number of people

Names

Contact name, address and phone no.

Lift needed/available