

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES FROM BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY MUSEUM

These notes include archaeological discoveries reported during 1989 and a few earlier finds not previously noted. Discoveries by the Milton Keynes Archaeology Unit (MKAU) are included by courtesy of Mr D. C. Mynard, and fuller accounts of these sites appear in *South Midlands Archaeology* abbreviated as SMA. The assistance of any informants is gratefully acknowledged; other discoveries are by Museum staff. The compilers would be pleased to learn of any errors or omissions. Findspots are recorded under civil parish.

Some selection of material has been

necessary; single struck flakes for instance have not normally been included, nor field scatters of medieval pottery unless of sufficient quantity to indicate settlement, nor single Roman coin finds. Abbreviated grid references have unfortunately to be given for a number of sites to prevent looting.

Numbers in parentheses are accession numbers of material at the County Museum. The initials BCM indicate the material is in the Museum, but that no accession number has yet been allotted. The County Museum Archaeological Group is abbreviated CMAG.

M.E.F. and A.R.P.

## PREHISTORIC

*Aylesbury* SP 8390 1251  
A mesolithic flint blade, with possible secondary retouch/damage along edge, was found by Mrs Parkhurst in her garden at Bedgrove.

*Aylesbury* See Saxon and Medieval.

*Chepping Wycombe/*  
*High Wycombe* SU 8992  
Further fieldwalking by Mr and Mrs S. Cauvain in an area of previous discoveries located a quantity of flint flakes, Romano-British sherds and roof tile, medieval glazed sherds and part of a decorated Penn tile.

*Chesham* SP 9598 0147  
An excavation was carried out by Mark Collard for BCM between April and June 1989 in advance of redevelopment at East Street. Previous work by the Chess Valley Archaeological Society adjacent to the site (published in this issue of *Records*) had demonstrated the exist-

ence of substantial quantities of Mesolithic flints in association with animal bone in apparently well stratified deposits. The development offered an opportunity to examine a larger area in detail.

The archaeological deposits were sealed beneath c.0.5m of modern overburden. They had been cut in places by shallow post-medieval features but proved to have survived to a depth of 0.3m over most of the site. These were excavated under a closely controlled recording system.

The stratigraphic sequence was simple and is described in the order of deposition. The earliest deposit was a periglacial water-borne silt. This had degraded to a sticky clay loam before being cut by a large amorphous subsoil feature which has been preliminarily identified as a tree pit. Its lower fill contained burnt soil and charcoal. This feature had filled and its surface weathered before the formation of the next soil on site. This was a dark brown, almost black soil which divided into three horizons

distinguished by the amount of flint in the basic soil matrix. The lowest part of the deposit contained quantities of artefactual flint debris, burnt flint and animal bone, the latter in distinct lenses but not articulated. Among the flint were typical Mesolithic microlithic pieces but small sherds of (?Neolithic/?Bronze Age) pottery were also recovered from this layer. The central band was marked by a concentration of large amounts of patinated angular flints which were not identifiable as 'normal' debitage from flint working. Above this was a further deposit of the dark soil, again with quantities of artefacts and bone. This was sealed by a pale calcareous soil which may be identified as a hillwash deposit from the steep chalk slope adjacent to the site. This was the latest soil on the site before the post-medieval features were cut.

The 1989 excavation has complicated the evidence from the earlier investigations. Although interpretation of the soil formation processes and the origins of the artefactual assemblages cannot be made without the analysis of the samples taken during the excavation (soil and molluscan) and of the artefactual material, in conjunction with dating obtained from the bone, a tentative hypothesis would place the formation of the dark soil in the Neolithic or Bronze Age. The presence of a considerable amount of Mesolithic material may be explained by re-use of an attractive settlement location (BCM).

*Dorney* SU 9453 7781  
Mesolithic flints including 2 blades and a core; also a concentration of burnt flint and a late Iron Age sherd were found by Mr N. J. Marples in a silty clay deposit at Boveney Lock (31.1989).

*Ellesborough* SP 856062 and SP 846068  
Work by the National Trust at Coombe Hill and Low Scrubs led to the recording of a number of enclosures and banks and ditches including a cross dyke, provisionally dated to the Bronze Age/Iron Age.

*Milton Keynes* SP 882 387  
Evaluation of a large part—some 30 hectares—of the Oakgrove grid-square, between Milton Keynes Villages and the River Ouzel, was carried out by R. J. Zeepvat for MKAU

between August and October. The area concerned consisted of extensive gravel terraces on the east bank of the river, on which aerial photography had revealed a number of possible ring-ditches and enclosures. In addition, since excavations in 1970–72 by Stephen Green, in advance of gravel extraction immediately to the south of the evaluation area, had revealed a complex of features which aerial photography had not shown, it was decided that a large-scale programme of machine trial trenching was required (MK19 and MK223).

A pattern of trenches at 20m centres was used. On the whole the result was disappointing, as much of the area, particularly the lower slopes nearer the river, proved to be devoid of features, and all of the features indicated by aerial photography were shown to be of geological origin. The features that were located were concentrated in an area to the north and north-east of Stephen Green's excavation, overlooking the river valley.

Whilst the features to the north of the 1970s excavation appeared to be contemporary with the earlier phases of that site, those to the north-east proved to be of late Iron Age date, suggesting a hitherto unsuspected continuation of occupation, as well as a shift in the focus of settlement. This confirms the results of a small trial excavation carried out for the Unit by Roy Adkins in 1975, following a geophysical survey of the area now being trenched (MK318).

Of particular interest among the features located was a well of late Iron Age date. This consisted of a pit 3.2m in diameter and 1.2m deep, cut into the gravel subsoil. Access to this had been by a wooden ladder 600mm wide, of which parts of the sides, as well as two rungs, remained *in situ*. Little pottery was recovered from the fill of the well, suggesting that it remained in use throughout the occupation of the site, though it is hoped that analysis of sediments taken from its fill may provide useful environmental information.

On completion of the evaluation, the site was backfilled. No further work is envisaged until the construction of city grid road H10, Great Brickhill Street, across part of the site in 1990, when a programme of salvage excavation is planned following topsoil stripping.

*Walton*  
Wavendon Gate: see Romano-British.

*West Wycombe Rural* SU 803 949  
The cutting edge only of a late Bronze Age axe with trace of a rectangular socket, was found in

1988 by Mr J. Shepherd with a metal detector (16.1990).

*Whaddon* SP 812 332  
A Neolithic polished flint axe in grey flint with yellow mottling was found by Mr P. Conway (MKAU).

## ROMANO-BRITISH

*Boarstall* SP 6160 1412  
The telescoped programme of construction of the M40 provided little opportunity for leisurely research; however evaluations were carried out on three areas in Boarstall parish, the work being funded by English Heritage. The principal discoveries were of a Romano-British pit which had been partially backfilled and then had a hearth constructed in its fill and a substantial, as yet undated, ditch lying nearby. An extensive scatter of tegulae was found c.500m further south by CMAG members, and fortunately will not be destroyed by motorway construction. No trace was encountered of burials discovered in 1850 at Arngrove Firs, and reported by Sheahan.

*Buckland* SP 8912  
A fieldwalk by CMAG located a concentration of Romano-British pottery along with a few pieces of tile and two fragments of quernstone.

*Chalfont St Peter* SU 9890  
Following discovery of numerous Roman coins in an arable field by Mr C. Conway, three vessels containing coins were located. Two of these were lifted and Museum staff were able to lift the third. With the agreement of both landowner and finder the Museum arranged for a small excavation, under the direction of Andrew Hunn, to clarify the circumstances of the find. During the excavation part of a badly damaged fourth vessel was located, some distance from the previous find, which also contained coins. The total number of coins eventually recovered was in excess of 6,000: one of the larger British hoards and unusual in that it clearly represented more than one phase of deposition. The coins await further study at the

British Museum and are likely to be the subject of an Inquest. The coins were probably deposited in the 270s AD. No evidence was found of associated structures or of features that might explain the choice of site.

*Cheddington* SP 9116  
A quantity of Romano-British sherds including storage jar rim and base and some pieces of roof tile were found by Mrs V. Kempster (49.1989).

*Chepping Wycombe/High Wycombe* See Pre-historic.

*Dinton-with-Ford and Upton* See Saxon and Medieval.

*Ickford* SP 6509  
A dense scatter of Romano-British pottery including samian and Nene Valley wares, together with fragmented limestone, was found by Mr R. Hilton and may indicate the existence of a small Roman building (241.1988).

*Olney* SP 8952  
A Roman bronze armlet with a multiple motif decoration was found by Mr P. Essen and Mr G. Allen in river dredging. Reported by R. J. Williams.

*Shenley Brook End* SP 8385 3445  
North Emerson Valley: The site was located as the result of an organised metal detector search by Ron and Miriam Hammond. This produced an assemblage of Roman coins, spanning the period AD 150-350, as well as a small quantity of mainly third-century pottery, from an area of less than two hectares in a field then under cultivation. The presence of this material,

coupled with the results of further fieldwalking, suggested the presence of a small Romano-British native occupation site.

Accordingly, the site was evaluated by R. J. Zeepvat for MKAU by machine trial-trenching carried out in June/July 1989. This revealed a number of shallow ditches and gullies, which produced a small quantity of Roman pottery. No definite structural evidence was found; on experience gained from other similar sites in the city, this is not an unusual phenomenon. At Little Woolstone, excavated by R. J. Zeepvat in 1980 (*CBA Newsletter* 12, 1982, 70-73), trial trenching followed by limited area excavation revealed a similar pattern of pits and ditches containing much occupation material, but no structural evidence. On this basis, there was not seen to be sufficient justification for further excavation. On completion of the evaluation, the site was returned to agriculture, as development is not imminent, though a watching brief will be undertaken when construction begins in the area.

#### *Waddesdon*

SP 7217

A quantity of Roman-British sherds including grey-ware rims and bases were found during fieldwalking by Mr H. Granger (4.1989; 12.1989).

#### *Walton*

SP 904 369 (area)

Wavendon Gate: The discovery and evaluation of this site at Wavendon Gate was noted last year. A full excavation took place in 1989 under the direction of R. J. Williams with P. J. Hart for MKAU. An area of almost 35,000m<sup>2</sup> was stripped of topsoil to reveal three distinct sub sites: a late Iron Age settlement to the north of the new Walton Road, an early-mid Roman enclosure with subsequent Saxon evidence to the south of the road, and finally a sequence of early-mid Roman ditches to the south of the old Walton road. This latter sequence eventually proved to be part of the large Roman settlement to the north.

The full extent of Iron Age occupation covered an area 180×70m and included at least four major enclosures and seven definite round houses. There were clear phases. Phase 1 was an oval enclosure, apparently empty, but probably associated with two parallel ditches, interpreted

as a droveway. A sequence of three round houses each cutting its predecessor apparently belonged to this phase. Phase 2 gave way to a rectangular enclosure 30×75m with a ditch up to 1m deep and over 2 metres wide. The enclosure was subdivided by a ditch and there were at least two roundhouses as well as a series of pits in the northern half. Phase 2, a large rectangular enclosure 45m wide and at least 65 (but not more than 90)m long contained at least two round houses.

As well as the main enclosures there were smaller enclosures, further penannular gullies and an iron working area consisting of a smelting hearth and an area of dumped slag. The focus of settlement appears to have moved slowly eastwards over time.

Although many features produced Belgic pottery, evidence for structures from this period was characteristically vague and must await more detailed analysis of the pottery.

The Roman settlement was contained within a substantial enclosure whose ditch ranged between 3 and 4m wide and was up to 2m deep. The precise dimensions of the enclosure are unclear. The most intriguing feature was a large pit 7m in diameter and up to 3m deep whose lower level was waterlogged. As well as large quantities of wood and other organic remains, including a number of leather shoes and a wax-filled writing tablet, this pit produced a very well preserved carved oak object representing a wheel symbol. This particular symbol has been associated with the god Taranis. In the base of the pit was a substantial section of elm trunk and running down from the south-west corner of the pit were crude stone steps. Adjacent to this pit was what appeared to be the deliberate burial of a cockerel. The whole suggests a votive deposit. Two early first-century pottery kilns were located. Four first-century cremations in two groups of two were located but not forming part of the cemetery recorded previously.

Further slight evidence for Saxon activity at the site was uncovered, consisting largely of early Saxon pottery from upper levels of ditches.

#### *Wolverton*

SP 7939

The silver terminal to a Roman torc or armlet was found with a metal detector by Mr A. Smith

at Claverton. Entwined around the terminal is a serpent with bulbous eyes and scales. Such

armlets may represent genii. Reported by R. J. Williams.

## SAXON AND MEDIEVAL

- Aylesbury* SP 8174 1382  
Burials, presumed to belong to the minster/parish-church cemetery, were exposed during the digging of footing trenches for old people's accommodation at 8-10 Church Street. Resources did not permit detailed recording. A few sherds of flint gritted Iron Age pottery were also collected.
- Brill* SP 6558 1427  
An extensive scatter of medieval sherds noted in molehills, including at least one probable waster, may indicate the existence of further kilns (5.1989).
- Brill* SP 65644 14170  
A quantity of medieval pottery was found by Mr H. Granger on a building site. A possible kiln was noted in a section; burnt clay was also present. Most of the sherds were typical fourteenth and fifteenth-century Brill products. Two eighteenth-century (?) features were also noted, one the face of a brick boundary wall (8.1989).
- Chepping Wycombe/High Wycombe* See Pre-historic.
- Dinton-with-Ford and Upton* SP 7605 0840  
A quantity of Romano-British, Saxon (including grass-tempered and quartz-gritted) and medieval (including Brill-Boarstall) sherds were found by Mr and Mrs N. Doggett, Mrs P. Cole and Mrs S. Gill between 1985 and 1988 (245.1988).
- Dorney* SU 9400 7768  
Fieldwalking by Mr N. J. Marples in the vicinity of Boveney Church located a quantity of medieval pottery including Surrey-type white wares and sherds of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and also much roof tile. Medieval settlement is indicated.
- Hanslope* SP 8046  
A medieval pilgrim badge, possibly depicting St Peter, 2 seals, 4 silver pennies of Edward I and a medieval buckle were found with a metal detector by Mr K. Davis.
- High Wycombe* SU 8393  
A late Saxon silver garment hook of Trewiddle style, decorated with stylized animal motifs, was found with a metal detector by Mr W. Parkin (64.1989).
- High Wycombe* SU 8662 9318  
Investigations in the footings trenches of a new development behind the Methodist Church in Priory Road by Mr and Mrs S. Cauvain revealed medieval occupation. Published in this issue of *Records*.
- Mousloe* SP 014 422  
On a visit to an area of village shrinkage it was found that most of the earthworks, extant in 1946, had been plough. Some medieval and post-medieval sherds and a decorated bone handle were picked up from the site (3.1989).
- Penn* SU 9242 9443  
A circular mound of about 30m diameter and 2.4m high, with a surrounding ditch was discovered by Mr R. Horn and surveyed by Mr and Mrs S. Cauvain. Local field names suggest it was a windmill site. A fuller report appears elsewhere in this issue of *Records*.
- Shenley Brook End* SP 8265 3435  
Westbury: In the early summer of 1990 construction work will begin on the westward extension of Childs Way (H6), and by the end of the summer the greater part of the DMV at Westbury will have been entirely removed. The rest of the settlement will be obliterated shortly after. Only the two moated sites located at either end of the village will survive (see *SMA*

19, 1989, 16).

Following on from last year's evaluations MKAU began an excavation programme under the direction of R. J. Ivens which will eventually examine the vast majority of the surviving archaeological remains. Work began in April 1989 and continued until September 1990.

Traditionally Westbury has been identified as one of the two Domesday manors of the name in Buckinghamshire, both of which were held by Roger D'Ivri. The other Westbury is on the borders of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, not far from Brackley. The association of Westbury by Shenley with one of the D'Ivri manors has always been somewhat tenuous and it is just as likely that both the Domesday entries refer to Westbury by Brackley. A large area of Westbury by Shenley has now been excavated and remarkably little material which can be dated to the Late Saxon or Early Norman periods has been recovered. This tends to support the view that neither of the Domesday Westburys is Westbury by Shenley; more likely the settlement (if it existed at that time) is concealed amongst the several entries relating to Shenley.

The trial excavations indicated that an area of Iron Age–Roman activity was situated beneath the western end of the medieval village, and this proved to be the case. An extensive and complex series of first-century AD boundary ditches has been excavated. These appear to be a small part of several phases of Iron Age field systems and although large quantities of pottery and other artefacts have been recovered no real evidence for a habitation site has been found. One suspects that it cannot be far away. Two casual Iron Age inhumations have also been discovered.

There is a little evidence indicating that at least some of these boundary ditches survived as topographical features until medieval times, and generally little seems to have been happening at Westbury through Roman and Saxon times. Even in the early Middle Ages when there is evidence of settlement it is only slight.

The medieval village seems to have flourished from the twelfth to the sixteenth century after which it was almost completely deserted except for a couple of small houses. In fact Westbury can hardly be called a village at all.

Rather it should be thought of as a collection of small and distinct farmsteads built piecemeal around a cross-roads and along the converging roadways: a classic piece of ribbon-development. Nor was Westbury a continuously thriving community for it suffered several phases of desertion, or at least contraction, and corresponding periods of expansion and refurbishment. Evidence for this can be seen in the way in which platforms were sometimes divided and sometimes amalgamated into single large units. Evidence was also found for periods of ploughing between building phases.

The best preserved structural remains were buildings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These were almost identical in form to those described by Petchey (SMA 15, 1985, 45–50: 16, 1986, 54–8: 17, 1987, 47) (though better preserved). Indeed some of the structures excavated in 1989 must have formed continuous and contemporary ranges of buildings with those excavated in 1985; these can now all be shown to belong to the late middle ages.

The site has yielded vast quantities of finds of both Iron Age and medieval data. As usual pottery forms the bulk of these and includes a particularly fine collection of late medieval Potterspury products. A wide range of iron and copper alloy artefacts has also been recovered which includes an inordinately large number of barrel-padlocks and a large collection of buckles of varying degrees of sophistication, as well as the more usual tools and nails.

A programme of environmental sampling and analysis is under way and already has yielded some surprising results. Large deposits of marine oyster, cockle and mussel shells have been found and a surprising incidence of horse, mule and donkey bones occur in the medieval deposits.

#### *Shenley Church End*

SP 828 363

A small late medieval tile-kiln was exposed during grading work for a new section of Fulmer Street (V3), one of Milton Keynes's N–S arterial roads. The kiln was first noted by Mr G. Heritage and reported to Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit. Published in this issue of *Records*.

*Shenley Church End (Shenley Wood)* SP 8336  
A silver penny of Cuthred, King of Kent, AD 798–807, was found by Gerald Wayman. The obverse reads CUTHRED REX CANT, the reverse HEREMOD MONETA. It was probably minted at Canterbury. It has been purchased by the Abbey National Building Society and will be displayed in the Society's Computer Centre, to be built on the site of the findspot.

*Wavendon Gate* See Romano-British.

*Wolverton* SP 8041  
A bronze seal matrix was found by Mr Tony Smith and is of exceptional interest, being the seal of nearby Bradwell Abbey. Vesica shaped, it measures 68×43mm. The flanged handle has been pierced for suspension. The seal depicts the Virgin Mary in a canopy, wearing a crown and carrying a sceptre in her left hand and the baby Jesus in her right. The inscription reads SIGILLU COIE DOMUS BAE MARIE DE BRADWELL (Seal of the Community of the

House of the Blessed Mary of Bradwell). Purchased by MKAU.

*Wolverton* SP 8040  
A small gold finger ring was found, by Mr Tony Smith. An antelope is engraved on the circular bezel. The outer band is decorated; on the inside is an inscription in lombardic script but in medieval French, reading EN BON HORE (in good Time). It has been dated to the late fifteenth century (BCM).

*Wolverton* SP 8041  
A number of objects of Saxon date were found near Manor Farm including two sceattas (one Mercian, AD 730–60, the other of 'Series J', AD 710–30), two late Saxon bronze strap ends and two bronze pins (one of 'ring-and-dot' type, the other of 'swollen shaft' type). All were found by Mr Alan Stewart. An iron knife with angled blade was found by Mr Gordon Heritage. Acquired by MKAU.

## POST-MEDIEVAL AND UNDATED

*Brill* See Saxon and Medieval.

*Chesham* SP 9621 0224  
A preliminary excavation by Stanley and Pauline Cauvain followed by examination of contractor's footings trenches provided further information on a pottery production area first recorded in 1972 at Emmanuel Church.

Parts of two kilns were revealed, of which kiln 2 was the better preserved. Roughly circular and made of brick, kiln 2 had an internal diameter a little over a metre. There was firm evidence for one flue only. A cobbled yard lay to the north on which rested a substantial dump of pottery. A date for production in the seventeenth century is thought likely. A fuller account appears in SMA 20, 1990.

*Latimer* SP 9896 0192  
Sherds, including wasters of dishes, bowls, jars, a jug and a costrel, were found near the 'Crown' Inn and in adjacent properties by Mrs J. Chaffey and Mrs M. Wells in the same area

described in *Records* 30, 1988, 179, and presumed to be products of the Ley Hill kilns.

*Oakley* SP 6272 1204  
The remains of a square enclosure which formerly contained the seventeenth-century Oakley Wood Farm were noted by Ms N. Hutchings. The feature is visible on 1946 aerial photographs.

*Olney* SP 8898 5118  
At Olney, Thames Valley CID requested the Museum's assistance in investigating human remains discovered on a development site during May. It became apparent that a disarticulated skeleton had been placed in the backfill of a sewer pipe trench. The sewer was apparently laid in c.1913. Although no other directly relevant information came to light it was noted that a number of other skeletons had in the past been discovered on land to the east of the parish church but outside its boundary. These discoveries were traditionally regarded

as the aftermath of a skirmish at Olney Bridge; however the existence of a more extensive early churchyard is another possibility.

*Penn* SU 908 948 approx  
An enclosure, of unknown date and function, with slight external bank and shallow internal ditch, measuring approximately 70×50m, was located by Ms R. Robinson in The Larches Wood.

*Stone* SP 7806 1205  
At St John's Hospital an evaluation carried out

by Andrew Hunn for BCM, surprisingly produced only twentieth-century material including a pit containing a heater, buckets and numerous bottles! During construction of the hospital in the nineteenth century extensive Romano-British occupation was reported including a deep shaft included by A. Ross in her list of 'ritual shafts'. An Anglo-Saxon cemetery also lies in the vicinity. Further work at the site will undoubtedly be necessary as an extensive development of the area is planned (BCM).