

THE OXON RECORDER

Issue 19

Summer 2004



Editorial reminder on contents of this issue, so you can come back later for more information

4th AGM report

Village Appraisals

A Curious Roof in Abingdon

Recent Recording inc. Princes' Manor Farm, Harwell

Members' Special Guided Tour (enclosure) Sat 17th July,

Chalgrove Church 11.00am, Chalgrove Manor 2.00pm

Recording Day Sat. 24th July (enclosure) Probably a farm building, venue t.b.c.

Heather Horner

2004 Annual General Meeting

A Report from David Clark

Despite a reputation for cold weather and winter snows, Chipping Norton could not have greeted us more warmly for our fourth annual general meeting on Saturday 15 May 2004. So brightly shone the sun that we scampered through the business in order to have the benefit of the fine weather for a town walk afterwards. We met in the neo-classical town hall, designed in 1842 by George Stanley Repton, youngest son of the landscape designer Humphrey Repton, and those members who entered via the Tuscan portico caught a glimpse of the impressive main hall before the start of the meeting.

We had an excellent turn-out of 20 members, who received and approved the accounts for 2003, presented by Jessica Brod, our treasurer. She reported that following receipts of £1251 and payments of £772, the OBR's funds on 31 December 2003 stood at £2802. There were 110 individual and one corporate member at the year end.

The Secretary then reported that in 2003 the main building recording activity had been the Burford project with the Victoria County History which had involved 25 members and friends. Most of the 274 buildings had been surveyed externally by OBR teams. 19 individual building investigations had been carried out. VCH were working on the documentary evidence for the properties. There had been two further recording days where teams tackled individual buildings with tuition for the less experienced; the barn at the Bishop's Manor in Harwell, and the farmhouse at Henwood near Abingdon. Individual members and local groups continued to work on their own, either on specific town or village projects or on 'emergency recording' of threatened buildings. Confidence was growing, and there were now a number of local groups at work.

Farm buildings were still a key task for OBR, and a small team had started work to identify the recording gaps so that these could be filled by volunteers in the future. The ultimate aim was a publication on the farm buildings of Oxfordshire.

Less progress had been made in creating an archive of building related material in the County Record Office. Pressures on space meant they were becoming more restrictive about the sort of material which they would accept. The situation had been dominated by the on-going saga of the SODC boxes of plans. Most of these had now been dealt with.

The Secretary thanked Heather Horner for taking on the newsletter. This was the main means of communication for members and its quality was invariably commended. He ended with a plea for members to keep on the lookout for buildings to record.

The meeting then elected the officers and committee for 2004/5, as follows:

Nominee	Post	Nominee	Post
John Steane	Chairman	Tim Cockerill	Safety Officer
David Clark	Secretary	Jessica Brod	Treasurer
David Hughes	Membership Secretary	Heather Horner	Newsletter Editor
David Birkett	Committee Member	Pat Harding	Committee Member
Grant Audley-Miller	Committee Member	Julia Elliott	Committee Member
Simon Townley	Committee Member	Tony Blay	Committee Member

Martin Greenwood was elected as auditor for a further year.

The Chairman recorded his thanks to retiring committee members Gillian Harrison and Bridget Rudge. Gillian was developing the work of the Abingdon group and he wished Bridget a speedy recovery from illness.



Squint window between chancel and chantry chapel in the church, Chipping Norton. The 'candle flame' shape is reminiscent of some recently spotted in barns around Burford

The meeting was followed by refreshments and a walk round Chipping Norton guided by Jan Cliffe and Pat Harding. We examined the impressively large market place with various stages of encroachment, and at the opposite end from the town hall, the former guildhall which still has a 15th century roof, although its original form is still somewhat of a puzzle. Pat was particularly knowledgeable on the hostelries of the town, and showed us where many of the former pubs and inns had been. Further down the hill we passed the fine Cotswold-style row of almshouses built by Henry Cornish in 1640. From the churchyard we could just make out the site of the Norman castle; the grouping of these earliest buildings amongst

the trees down beside the stream in complete contrast to the later medieval town up on the slope of the hill. This was an excellent 'taster' of the town, which is also full of real shops and has an excellent museum. Do visit it and be guided by the informative leaflets produced by the Chipping Norton Society.

Village Appraisals and Maps

Earlier this year, the OBR committee invited me to find out whether Village Appraisals might contain any records of the built heritage that would be of use to our members.

The Village Appraisals scheme was started in the mid-1990's to assess the strengths and weaknesses of rural communities. The Appraisals are mostly Parish Council led, with encouragement, advice and some funding available from ORCC (Oxfordshire Rural Community Council). This body is funded by The Countryside Agency, which is in turn part of DEFRA (Department of Environmental, Food, and Rural Affairs). The Appraisals cover issues important to local residents, and include action plans that the community can implement themselves. Copies of these Appraisals are deposited with the ORCC.

The ORCC is based in Jerico Farm Barns, Worton, between Cassington and Yarnton. I don't know how much of the original fabric of the farm buildings remain, but none appeared visible in this modern 'barn conversion'. However, I was made most welcome by Community Development Worker, Anton Nath.

The documents vary widely in quality, quantity and content, ranging from 2 pages of information for new residents to a 200 page book edited by Kate Tiller (Benson). Most fall between these extremes and are of the ring-bound, home computer desk-top published type of document. A few are professionally produced, evidently using lottery funds to employ a compiler.

Few contain much village history, though there are exceptions, *e.g.* Fulbrook has 15 excellent pages including field names, enclosure map, oral history, *etc.* Some appraisals include photographs of buildings, always the front elevation, and those labelled 'farm' are always of the farmhouse only. All seem to contain a map of some sort.

There are hand lists of parishes that have deposited appraisals, listed alphabetically, by district, or by date, (a few date back to a WI initiative of the 1980's). So far between 60 and 70 parishes have been completed, that's less than a quarter of Oxfordshire parishes, and more are coming in.

In the same section of ORCC, a selection of Village Maps, mostly prepared for the recent Millennium celebrations, have been deposited. These do not appear to be catalogued, and are not the same cohort of villages that have completed appraisals.

All these documents are available for public inspection, but ORCC like you to make an appointment in order to ensure that you have space to spread out (tel 01865 883488).

In conclusion, I would comment that these Village Appraisals will become very important records for future social historians. They are of limited value to the building historian, though if you're looking for the wider perspective of a building in its context, it would be worth checking whether the relevant parish has been appraised. If nothing else, it is a source of contact names of people who know the area well.

Heather Horner

CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER



No 12 Ock Street is a small, gabled building in the centre of Abingdon, whose ground floor is presently a video shop. The first and second storeys have been converted into offices but no-one yet occupies them, which has enabled several members of the new Abingdon Buildings Record to clamber up to the attic and examine the inside of the roof.

One half of the attic has been made into a serviceable room, divided from the other half by a thin partition. Take a panel out of this wall and what you see in the gloom is the unconverted eastern half of the roofspace – and inside that, enclosed by the main ridge roof, is the

remains of a medieval timber roof. Even odder, the main ridge roof is parallel to the road and the older roof within runs at right angles to it.

We have come to the conclusion that the building was originally constructed as a double-pile or M-shaped house, at right angles to the line of the road, probably in the fifteenth century. When a couple of centuries later the inhabitants decided they wanted something bigger, they built a new house over the top (and probably inserted the staircase at the same time). It was this build that produced the main ridge roof which is part of the present structure and can be clearly seen for the eastern part of its run from inside the attic. This new roof covered the original roofs of the double-pile house, and the builders used the two old roofs to provide gables. When the western gable was later turned into a room, most of its medieval roof was destroyed. For some reason the eastern part was left as it was, unused, with the original timber roof still inside.



This was not the end of the oddity. A large section of the old timber roof in the unconverted eastern part of the attic, left in situ though apparently useless except to provide gables, had been at some stage covered with a thick layer of daub on the outside, smoothed as if to form a base for – well, what? There was no sign that it could ever have been covered with tiles, slates or thatch.

At this point we asked John Letts from Reading University to have a look at the problem. John's expertise is in paleobotany and thatch, and his experience of roofs is considerable. Despite the poor light and the uncertain carpentry, he climbed precariously onto one of the purlins of the medieval roof.

He was able to see immediately what we had been unable to – that the daub was also inside the rafters, and that this inside covering had been plastered and whitewashed. There must once have been a room inside the old roof. This still left us with the question of the thick layer of daub on the outside which we had first seen, but that was resolved by learning how the daub would have been applied in such circumstances. Two workmen, one inside the roof and one outside, simultaneously threw a handful of daub onto the laths that were already in place. The damp, malleable material thus not only covered the surfaces on both sides of the roof but also filled in the gaps between the laths. The smooth external surface seems an unnecessary refinement; perhaps the man daubing the outside of the roof was particularly pernickety about the finish of his work, whether it would be seen or not.

The ridge roof presents another anomaly, which is clearly visible from the street but difficult to see inside. At the eastern end of the ridge the first part of the roof is higher than the rest for a length of about five feet, abutting the adjoining building but not part of it. What is more, it is offset from the main ridge. From what can be seen inside it appears to have no ridge purlin, whereas the lower part of the same roof does. It serves no purpose that we can think of at all. We have toyed with ideas that later proved unconvincing – had there been a staircase there? Was it the site of a demolished chimney? Or were we simply looking at a mistake? The answer may be blindingly obvious to someone; would that someone please enlighten us!

Behind No 12 and at right angles to it there is a range which is now called Appledore Cottage and was built originally as a separate, detached structure. At some time after the high roof was added to No 12 the gap between that and Appledore Cottage was bridged with a new roof and rooms below, so that from the outside it all appears to be one T-shaped building. We were able to see into the roofspace of this bridging section and observed that it had plastered walls and had once been used as two lofty rooms, though the door to one had been sealed.

The domestic use of No 12 has varied in importance. It is now in commercial occupation but it has seen grander days. In the mid 17th century it was taken under the wing of a local charity, the public houses on each side of it also being charitably owned. Later a succession of pastors of various denominations, mostly Dissenters and some very influential in the town, lived there until the early 19th century. After that it was home to several generations of shoemakers and by the end of the century it was in multiple occupancy, with everyone from a coal-merchant to a confectioner to an organ-blower (sic) passing through and rearing families. Now, while Appledore Cottage is privately owned and occupied, No 12 Ock Street continues to play its part in the commercial life of the town as well as adorning the rather bland thoroughfare which Ock Street has now become.

With thanks to:

John Letts, John Steane, Jessica Brod,
Bridget Rudge, Elizabeth Drury, Michael Harrison,
Dr and Mrs Cox, Mr David Hodson

Map ref: SU 4997

References:

The Story of Abingdon by Mienneke Cox (passim)
Abingdon Trade Directories (passim)
Inns and Alehouses by Smith and Carter (1989)

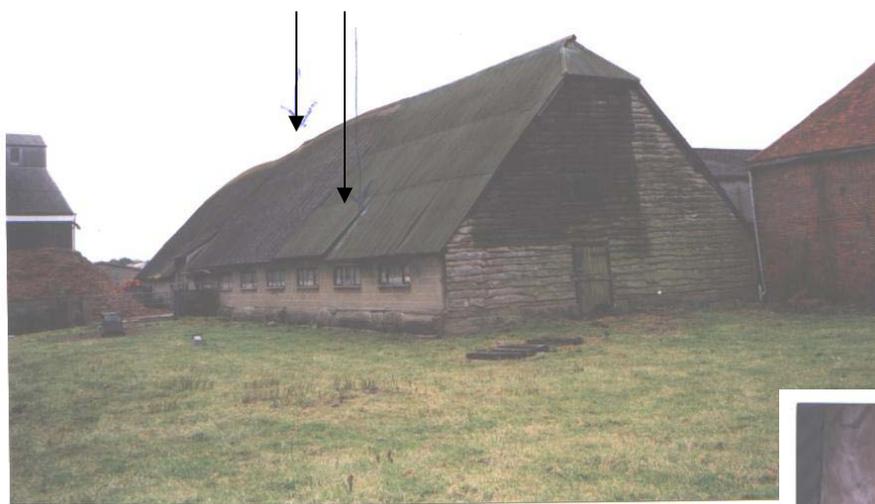
Gillian Harrison

Recent Recording

Here is a brief report of some of the exciting discoveries made recently by Oxfordshire Buildings Record members:-

Princes Manor Farm, Harwell

The two barns in this manorial complex hard by the (mainly) 14th century church have been investigated by John Steane and James Ayres. Barn One, of 10 bays, is the more northerly of the two, and originally lined one side of an outer courtyard now represented by a grassy field with a hollow way. The western six bays are formed from a late medieval or early post medieval **court hall** of impressively good carpentry. The western gable end wall is made of the **best** part of one floor of a medieval house up-ended, complete with moulded beams, tenon slots for joists, and a doorhead. It is suggested that such a radical reuse of good quality materials could be the result of a cataclysmic event such as the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Dendrochronology is needed here, and the building is a candidate for the OAHS dating scheme which was reported in Issue 18 of *Oxon Recorder* (Spring 2004). The 6-bayed element is well preserved, with the rest of the timbers coeval with the west end. The roof has 2 ranges of purlins, curved wind braces, and solid common rafters, while the trusses are composed of **moulded tie beams** (an exceptional feature suggesting a high status function), queen posts and principal rafters. The building was extended to a 10-bay barn in the 17th century.



Exterior of Barn One from west. Note change in roof level at end of bay six (left arrow). Also note evidence of former entrance on north side(right arrow).

Jowled principal post of Barn One with arched brace. Notch is to aid shoring while raising the truss.

Barn Two is a well preserved agricultural building of the 17th century. It may be the 'lesser barn' mentioned in the Jacobean farmer Ralph Loder's accounts 1610-20 (published by G. Fussell in *The Camden Society*, 3rd series, Vol.LIII, 1936). Thanks to Mr and Mrs Lay for discussing the site with our investigators.

[It is hoped that a fuller account of this discovery will appear in *Oxoniensia*]



Baldon House, Oxon, has been investigated by John Steane and James Ayres, who recorded a well preserved post medieval 4-bay **stable block** to the north of the early 17th century Baldon House (Pevsner and Sherwood p699). The whole stands in an earthworked enceinte, possibly the bank of an early Norman ringwork. (*cf* Cogges 'castle' at the River Windrush crossing). Thanks to Mr and Mrs Sandiland for their keen interest and help.

Note: grid references have deliberately been omitted as both sites are under development and the owners would not wish to cope with visitors at present.

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 3rd July: The Self-Contained Village? The Social History of English Rural Communities, 1250-1890. Seven distinguished speakers at a one-day conference to be held in the Marc Fitch Historical Institute, 1 Salisbury Road (Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester). More information www.le.ac.uk/elh/ or email al34@le.ac.uk

Exploring Burford's Past 1550-1700. A 10-week course on researching the probate inventories of Burford, starting in September. The tutor is Mary Hodges, whose knowledge and experience will help guide participants through the intricacies of the documentary side of building research. This will be of interest to OBR members who have worked on the buildings themselves. The group will meet on Thursday mornings from 10-12 and the results will feed in to the VCH work on Burford, as will ours. The meeting place has yet to be confirmed, but will probably be in Burford. More information from weekly class enrolments office, Ewert House, Ewert Place, Oxford OX2 7DD, 01865 280893/280895.

Certificate in Vernacular Architecture The next 2-year part-time OUDCE course starts in October, based at Rewley House, Oxford. Details from David Clark (contact details at end) or from Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA. Tel 01865 270308

29th - 31st October : Vernacular Buildings and the Hearth Tax. The annual Oxford meeting of the Vernacular Architecture Group, this year in association with the Centre for Hearth Tax Studies, Roehampton. More information from ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk **Note : filling up fast – all residential places already full.**

Saturday 16th April 2005 : The Making of the English Landscape. A one-day conference celebrating 50 years since the publication of Hoskin's book, and his influence on subsequent landscape studies. Speakers include several distinguished OBR members. To be held at Christ Church, Oxford, 10am – 4pm. Contact www.academic-study.com or Academic Study and Travel, 3 Whites Forge, Appleton, Oxon OX13 5LG

Copy date and contacts

Copy date for Issue 20 is 1st September 2004. Please send articles, information, letters, reviews, etc. to me, Heather Horner, at Windrush Cottage, Station Road, South Leigh, Oxon. OX29 6XN, telephone 01993 773819, or e-mail hahwindrush@aol.com

The Secretary is David Clark, 21 Walton Street, Oxford OX1 2HQ, e-mail david.clark3@which.net

Do have a look at our expanding website at www.obr.org.uk. Comments and contributions welcome.

The OBR are extremely grateful to the *Oxfordshire Preservation Trust* for their generosity in supporting the production of *The Oxon Recorder* and to *Awards for All* in supporting our work to record the built heritage of Oxfordshire