

THE OXON RECORDER

Issue 23

Summer 2005



Reminder of the contents of this issue, so you can come back later for more information

Recording day at Abbey Farm, Eynsham, Sunday 17th July 2005. Flyer enclosed

Grant award for OBR travelling exhibition

Burford VCH project News of funding and OBR's contribution, with an invitation to join in

Recent Investigations :- Caswell Manor 'granary'

Oxfordshire Past A report on this year's meeting

Reports on this year's AGM and tour of buildings in Henley with names of your new committee

Burford Days:- Photography training Sunday 31st July. Flyer enclosed

Buildings investigations Saturday 24th September. Flyer enclosed

Heather Horner, newsletter editor

Oxfordshire Buildings Record wins second Awards for All Grant



It was announced on 10th May that Oxfordshire Buildings Record has won their second grant from community-based lottery funds provider, *Awards for All*. The award of £5000 will be used to create a travelling exhibition, 'Discovering Oxfordshire's Buildings' which will bring the work of the OBR to museums and libraries and other public places throughout the County. We aim to show something of the excitement of discovering past ways of life of builders and occupants by careful study of the buildings, and that recording buildings can be fun, something people of all ages and backgrounds can get involved in. There will be panels showing the diversity of building materials in Oxfordshire – Cotswold stone in the west, ironstone in the north, coral rag and witchert in the plain, with timber framing along with chalk, brick and flint in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse. People will also be included – the craftsmen who worked with these materials, the farmers who stored their crops in the great barns of the countryside and the townspeople whose lives were lived in the shops, workshops and houses of the city and market towns.. We shall also look at threats and changes to buildings to show why recording is important, and how to date buildings and their features. The project we are involved in with the Victoria County History on the buildings of Burford will also be given prominence. This is a very exciting venture for the Oxfordshire Buildings Record and a great opportunity to bring our work to a wider audience. The target date for the exhibition is January 2006.

HELP WANTED: If you have any photographs of people recording buildings, or of craftsmen working on them, please contact David Clark (details page 8).

David Clark, Secretary.

Green Light for the VCH Burford Project : Sign up NOW!

Back in 2002–3 an OBR volunteer group spent several Saturdays recording and measuring street frontages in Burford, in connection with a proposed VCH research project to be pursued with Heritage Lottery Fund support. In February came the long-awaited news that the HLF has finally given permission for projects to start, following a long hiatus while the bid – which formed part of a highly complex application involving several VCH counties – was being negotiated. This is wonderful news, and means that the VCH and OBR can now embark upon further recording programmes to feed into the project.

The context is a 2-year VCH project focussing on Burford's buildings, which will result in a popular paperback to go to press early in 2007, and to be also published on the web. This in turn will feed into the eventual full VCH account, to be published in the main VCH series at some future date. The HLF – which will not fund traditional VCH research and publication – is particularly keen that all its VCH projects (under the collective title of 'England's Past for Everyone') should be community-based, involving extensive work with volunteers, and educational spin-offs. The OBR's involvement fits this requirement perfectly, as well as allowing the VCH to look at aspects of Burford's built environment in far more detail than would normally be the case. It also gives OBR members an opportunity to participate in a long-term project with a clear research agenda, and to contribute to the final publication – in which full acknowledgement will, of course, be made.

*Burford hiring fair c. 1890
(Oxfordshire County Council
Photographic Archive, Centre for
Oxfordshire Studies; reproduced
by permission)*



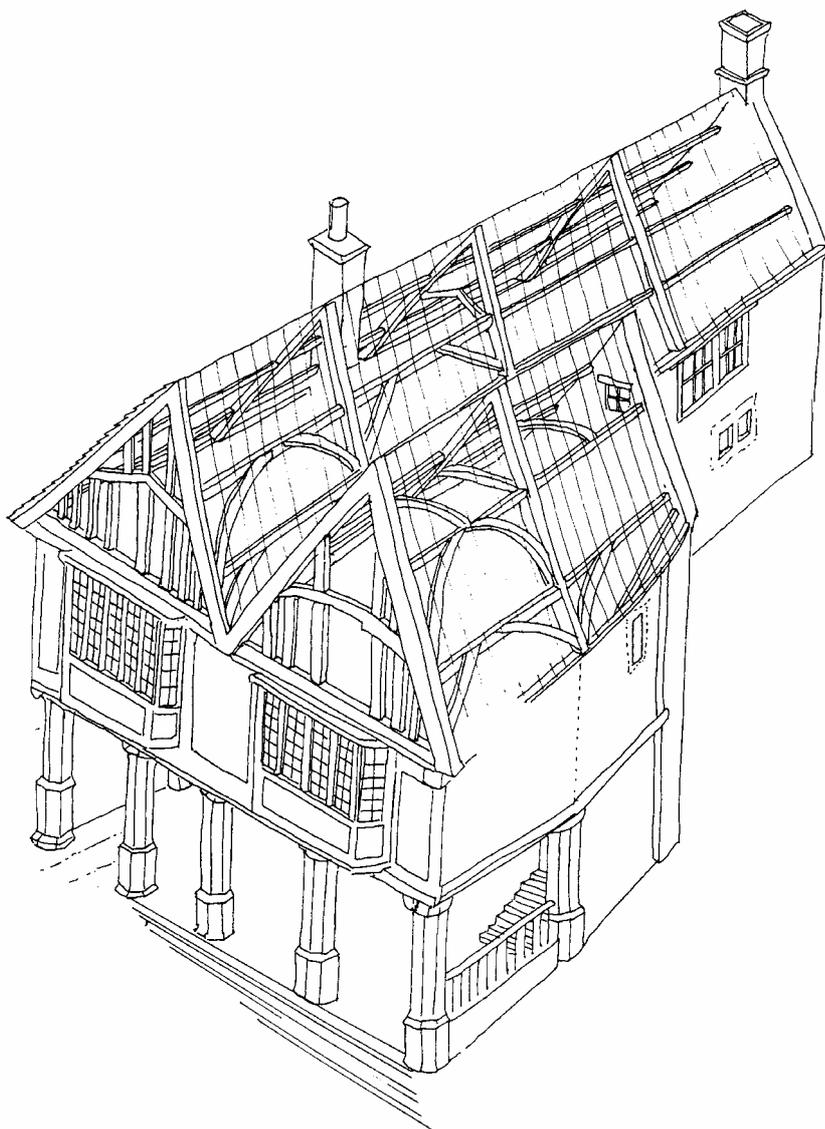
The core of the paperback will be a detailed 'tenement survey' being compiled by Robert Peberdy of the Oxfordshire VCH, which will summarise the ownership and occupancy of all the buildings along the main streets from c. 1800 and, where possible, from much earlier. To this will be added summary descriptions and analyses of the buildings by the OBR secretary David Clark, drawing in part on the data collected by OBR members. Wearing his 'professional' hat, David will also be contributing a short interpretative essay on Burford's architecture, while Robert and a part-time colleague, to be appointed using HLF funds, will add short sections on the town's general history, tied in so far as is possible with the buildings evidence. Other volunteer work will add further to the picture: a small group coordinated by Heather Horner (*Oxon Recorder* Editor wearing a different hat) under the expert tutelage of Mary Hodges, is looking at Burford wills and probate inventories, which should add greatly to our understanding of the town's buildings, and of many other aspects of its history.

So, what can OBR volunteers expect? Various plans are under discussion. One is to ask OBR members to help in the compilation of a detailed photographic record of every street frontage to accompany the tenement survey, for which it is planned to have an initial training day involving a professional buildings photographer (31st July, see flyer enclosed). Funding for an OBR digital camera to help with this should be available from project funds. Another plan is to revisit some of the buildings recorded in 2002–3 in the light of Robert Peberdy's subsequent documentary research, looking for and recording evidence of changing usage over the past 200 years. Thereafter there will be individual buildings to look at and investigate in more detail, both on the ground and in the archives. (Starting 24th September, see flyer enclosed)

Now that the starting gun has finally been fired time is, however, of the essence, and the first task is to try to recapture some of the momentum and enthusiasm built up during 2002–3. If you are unable to come on 31st July or 24th September but are still interested in getting involved, then please do let David Clark or me know, and we shall keep you informed and consult over future events. If you would like to volunteer time in any other way – for instance in the documentary work – then again, please let us know – the more 'volunteer hours' we can clock up the better, and the faster the work will progress. HLF funding will help meet expenses and any other reasonable costs.

Meanwhile, sincere thanks to David Clark, John Steane, and the OBR generally for unfailing patience and enthusiasm while the interminable HLF negotiations were progressing. See you in Burford!

Simon Townley
Editor, VCH Oxfordshire



The Tolsey, Burford, drawn by OBR Chairman John Steane (1999); for his accompanying account, see Oxon Recorder No.2 (February 2000)

Recording the 'granary' at Caswell, Curbridge near Witney

A team of nine members descended on the remote farmstead of Caswell on 16 April 2005 to try to work out the date and development history of this interesting building. We divided into three teams, one doing all the external measurements, another working inside the left-hand portion, and the third inside the other part of the building. The site is moated, in the shape of an open pentagon with the farmhouse sitting across the open end. The granary lies just to the north, and one end of it is actually in the moat. As is often the case with rubble limestone buildings with stone slate roofs, there was no external evidence of a division between the two parts, but there was a significant difference in floor levels within. The southern part had a massive fireplace and chimney-stack taking up most of one wall, and had chamfered beams possibly from the 17th century. The upper part had been a granary, with corn bins largely intact. The northern part had no fabric earlier than 1800 and had been fitted out as a coach-house/stable. The roof structures with purlins fitted in to the principal rafters with free tenons are common in West Oxfordshire over a long period of time, so did not help us reach a conclusion as to date, but we conjectured that the northern part was a later addition to the southern, which may have started life as a detached kitchen for the medieval house of Sir Richard Wenham (d.1534). It had continued to be used for baking and laundry or brewing into the 19th century as a copper and (blocked) oven survived.

The granary complements a group of agricultural buildings to the south and east. The farmhouse itself has been described in *Witney & Its Townships* (VCH Volume XIV, ed. S. Townley, 2004 pp.205-6), but more detailed examination might cast further light on the complex of buildings and their development.

David Clark



The granary building from the north-east. The stable/coach-house is to the right, the granary up the steps above the kitchen to the left. The only way in to the loft over the stables is via the granary, and up some more stairs - one of the reasons for thinking the stables an after-thought. The area above the stable is a mystery: it has a 'domestic' dormer in the rear roof, but there are tie-beams across the room making movement very difficult. The only evidence of use as a hay store is a doorway in the gable wall - above the moat! Inside, there is no evidence of former use.

Recording a building for the first time : the stable building, Caswell

I would have been very, very unhappy to miss this experience. After the initial introduction to the complex of buildings and safety briefing, we divided into groups each with a specific project. The group I was in had two first-time recorders, myself and Ann Routledge, led by David Hughes who had background experience with horses, which was fortunate as we were allocated the coach house and stables. Once we had cleared the floor of items that had been stored there, the plan of the stable became apparent from the layout of the paved and cobbled floor. The first bay opposite the entrance had flat paving between the cobbles, to act a guide when a horse-drawn vehicle was pulled in - it was too narrow for a farm cart. We thought we might find an opening in the ceiling, to allow hay and other feed to be lowered from the loft above. However, as there was no indication of a trapdoor, neither in the ceiling nor in the floor of the loft above, we concluded that feed was carried down the stone steps on the outside wall. We also looked for places where the horse's tack might have been hung, but could find nothing, other than a few small hooks in a cupboard, which had been formed by blocking a passage into the other ground floor room. These hooks might have been used for reins, or as coat hooks for the men working with the horses. Initially, we were disappointed that we found no marks on the walls above the stalls to indicate the presence of mangers. However, later in the day when our eyes were not permanently cast down on the floor paving, the cobbles, and the tape measure, we made out semicircular marks on the wall above each stall, presumably left by hay baskets. For me, this was the most evocative find. As a child, I spent many wet days in the summer holidays, in the back of small parish churches, playing draughts with my sister, while my father painstakingly removed flakes of whitewash that covered medieval wall paintings. The marks of the hay baskets made it easy to imagine the horses nosing at their hay to pull out the best bits, and this, like the paintings, enabled one to visualize the stable as it had been in earlier times. It is good to know that this building will be preserved, probably as a house, and that details of its former existence as a stable have been put on record.

Mary Castell

Oxfordshire Past 2005

A report on the meeting of 7th May held at Eynsham Village Hall to mark the millennium of the earliest records of Eynsham Abbey.

The Eynsham History Group, this year's hosts of the annual review of archaeology in the county of Oxfordshire, should be very pleased with themselves with the outcome of the mini conference; and deservedly so. The venue was perfect, being within easy walking distance of the village centre, having ample free car-parking, a separate hall for local group displays and a well organised refreshments service. The very useful map included within the handouts indicating suitable places for lunch was a nice touch that showed that some thought went into ensuring that the attendees' needs were satisfied.

It's a shame that this consideration did not extend to the presenters. The content was diverse but within the time allocated the presentations were reduced to a whistle stop tour of the recent (and not so recent) archaeological discoveries. At the end one was left somewhat exhausted, with the feeling that something very interesting was being illustrated but not remembering what it was. It would be an improvement if the various presenters provided handout sheets for us lesser mortals to digest at our own pace. Notwithstanding that the conference provides the only public platform for the review of Oxfordshire archaeology, OxPast will undoubtedly remain well supported in the future, despite the disappointing quality of some of the presentations and their content on this occasion.

Tony Blay

5th Annual General Meeting of Oxfordshire Buildings Record

held at The Chantry House, Henley on Thames on 21st May 2005

A Report by the Secretary

Some 30 members and guests gathered on a wet May morning at Henley's magnificent timber-framed 'Chantry House' for our fifth annual general meeting. Chairman John Steane gave a special welcome to members of the Henley Archaeological and Historical Group and thanked Ruth Gibson for setting up the day's events.

Copies of the audited accounts for 2004 were distributed. The OBR's funds on 31st December 2004 stood at £3354 and we had a surplus over the year of £552. The income of £1248 was mostly made up of subscriptions (£520), members' donations (£229), joining fees (£120) and our gift aid refund (£163). The main expenses were for insurance, the newsletter and administration. The treasurer recorded her thanks to Martin Greenwood, the retiring auditor, for his helpful and efficient audit of the OBR accounts during the past five years. Brian Tonkin was elected as auditor for 2005.

The Secretary reported that there had been much recording activity in 2004. Two recording days had been held at Signet farmhouse near Burford and the barn at Peachcroft near Abingdon. Individual members and local groups continued to work on their own, on specific town or village projects or on 'emergency recording'. The Abingdon group was now functioning well under the guidance of Gillian Harrison, and the Radley History Group carried out their first venture in building recording at the Old Vicarage. He hoped all groups would deposit their findings in the County Record Office or publish them in some form. The farm buildings team had identified the recording gaps and some work was in hand to fill these. The ultimate aim was a publication on the farm buildings of Oxfordshire.

Agreement had been reached with ORO about the management of OBR deposits. Original reports were the main requirement, and these should be sent in via the secretary, who will ensure they are accessed in the agreed way.

Chalgrove had been the focus of our summer excursion: Bob Heath-Whyte showed us the wonderful series of wall-paintings in the church, and Paul and Rachel Jacques guided us round the delights of their medieval Manor.

Thanks to Heather Horner, the newsletter went from strength to strength. He thanked also the Oxfordshire Preservation Trust who allowed us to use their photocopier which was greatly appreciated.

The following elections of officers and committee were made:

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

And a report from member Keith Randall

The fifth Annual General Meeting of our society was held on Saturday 21st May 2005 in the Chantry House, Henley-on-Thames. A late medieval timber-framed three storied building on the eastern boundary of St. Mary's churchyard, the recently refurbished structure provided an attractive and interesting venue on a wet, blustery day. The business of the meeting was soon dispatched, all the nominated officers being elected and the accounts accepted, then three members of the Henley Archaeological and Historical Group addressed us about their researches into the building's history.

Ann Cottingham dealt primarily with the documentary evidence for a building on the site since the beginning of 15th century, starting with a house, yard and granary, but by the following century the building was known as the Schoolhouse, though part of it continued as a storehouse. By the 19th century the school had moved out and the premises were used by the neighbouring Red Lion, which still leases the ground floor for staff and storage. It wasn't until the 20th century, after its acquisition by the parish church, that it was called the Chantry House. It is now linked to the church by a small block containing a vestibule and toilets, and incorporates part of an ancient through route from the market place to the dockside on the Thames. Roger Kendell pursued the question of the ecclesiastical name and the original purpose of the building, suggesting that the long row of windows facing the river might indicate that it had been a merchant's house and business premises prior to becoming a school, though there was no evidence that there was ever any form of heating. Jane Bowden took up the story, describing the small finds from under floorboards found during the recent restoration. Perhaps disappointingly, these had only confirmed the building's long use as a school.

Our curiosity thus aroused, members took the opportunity to scrutinize the building, some even seeking and finding apotropaic signs in the window frames, before descending to the middle floor where a splendid lunch of fresh baps, tomatoes, savouries, fruit, wine and soft drinks had been arranged by David Birkett and David Clark.

Right: the first-floor Long Gallery of the White Hart Inn, formerly open-sided.

Below the gallery from the inside, showing the framing for doorways and room partitions, with the external gallery passage beyond.

Photos David Clark



As if to order, after lunch the rain stopped in time for us to be conducted in two groups, led respectively by Ann Cottingham and Roger Kendel, to visit the town. The focus was on two inns that had recently been vacated and sold off by Brakspears. The early 17th century timber-framed barn at the rear of The Kings Arms had evolved into stables for brewers' drays. The Henley Group had excavated sections of the ground

floor, which now houses the local Tourist Information Bureau. The upper floor had an intriguing mix of scarf joints, and wattle-and-daub infill above some of the collar beams. Down the road, what had been The White Hart since the early 15th century is now a restaurant and wine bar, where we were allowed to inspect a 16th century gallery with remains of lodging rooms. This runs down one side of the long narrow site, but which it was thought had originally run round three sides of the courtyard. Both sites were typical of the very long narrow burgage plots that are a feature of Henley. It had been a fascinating and sociable day – there's nothing boring about an OBR AGM!

Keith Randall

Forthcoming Events

17th July 2005 **OBR Recording Day at Abbey Farm, Eynsham** see flyer enclosed

16th – 24th July 2005 **National Archaeology Week**, local events:- **Archaeology Roadshow** at Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock 10.30 – 4.30 on 16th, 2.0 – 4.30 on 17th. **Anglo-Saxon Discovery** at Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 2.0 – 4.0 on 23rd. **Open Day at Roman Settlement**, Manor Farm, Marcham, nr Frilford, on A338 behind the former Noah's Ark pub., 10.0 – 4.0 on 24th. **Open Day at Gatehampton Roman Villa Excavation**, 12.0 – 4.0 on 24th, nr Goring

Tuesday 16th August 2005 **Hampshire Excursion**. In conjunction with OAHS. Visit to a working brickworks, King John's House and Romsey Abbey. **Already fully booked**

Sunday 31st July 2005 **OBR Photographic Training Day at Burford**. See flyer enclosed

Saturday 24th September 2005 **OBR Burford Recording Day**. See flyer enclosed

Tuesday 18th October 2005 **Ann Cole - Salford, Chalford, Claydon & Cassington: Placenames and the natural resources of Oxfordshire** [Highly recommended – understanding the placename puts a whole new perspective on buildings in the landscape - Ed] OAHS public lectures 5.30pm Rewley House, Wellington Street, Oxford.

Friday 28th – Sunday 30th October 2005 **Diffusion and Invention: Vernacular Building in England and the New World**. The buildings of the early settlers in the New World, built by émigré craftsmen gaining access to almost limitless resources, can shed new light on contemporaneous buildings in the Old World. The Oxford meeting in conjunction with Vernacular Architecture Group at OUDCE, Rewley House, Wellington Street. Contact ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk

Tuesday 15th November 2005 **Nicholas Worledge – Managing Change in an Historic Environment - A Conservation Officer's Perspective** OAHS public lectures 5.30pm Rewley House, Wellington Street, Oxford.

Tuesday 29th November 2005 **Robert Peberdy – The Victoria County History/Oxfordshire Building Record Burford Project** OAHS public lectures 5.30pm Rewley House, Wellington Street, Oxford.

Tuesday 17th January 2006 **John Letts - The History of Thatching and the Conservation of Historic Thatch** OAHS public lectures 5.30pm Rewley House, Wellington Street, Oxford.

Copy date and contacts

Copy date for Issue 24 is 1st September 2005. 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, telephone 01865 516414 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