

Roman Finds from the Radcliffe Science Library Extension, Oxford, 1970-71

By T. G. HASSALL

With Sections by C. J. YOUNG and R. J. G. CONCANNON
and Appendices by H. P. POWELL and J. T. MUNBY

SUMMARY. During the construction of an underground extension to the Radcliffe Science Library (SP 515069) a ditch system was uncovered. The ditches contained pottery of the first half of the 2nd century A.D., as well as inhumations of probably the same date. The geology of the site and previous Prehistoric and Roman finds from the immediate vicinity are discussed in the appendices.

INTRODUCTION

THE new extension to the Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, lies immediately to the north of the present Library in the University's Science Area (FIG. 1). In order not to obscure the façade of the University Museum, the extension has been designed to be entirely underground, thus totally destroying the archaeology of the site. Preliminary works were begun on the site in the Autumn of 1970 when services in the vicinity were re-routed. During this work various archaeological features in the form of ditches and depressions were observed.¹ These features contained no dating evidence, although in appearance the depressions closely resembled prehistoric ditches, while one of the other ditches was consistent with what is known of Oxford's Civil War earthworks. However, the whole Science Area has long been noted as one of the centres of Romano-British occupation which seem to have been scattered along the second Gravel Terrace between the Thames and the Cherwell (FIG. 1).² The archaeological evidence for the immediate vicinity of the Radcliffe Science Library Extension is listed in the Appendix below.

In view of the probability of further features coming to light during the main building contract, which started in 1971, a constant watch was kept on the site on behalf of the Oxford Archaeological Excavation Committee. Observation of the site was chiefly carried out by Messrs. B. G. Durham, M. Henig and J. T. Munby. Mr. D. R. Sheard drew the published plan. The University Surveyor, Mr. J. Lankester, kindly allowed the archaeological work to be carried out and the main contractors, Tarmac Construction and their sub-contractors for the bulk excavation, E. H. Crapper and Sons, were extremely co-operative at all times.

¹ Notes and News, *Oxoniensia*, xxvi (1971), 111. See also features 11, 12, 13a and c and 14a and b below.

² See below.

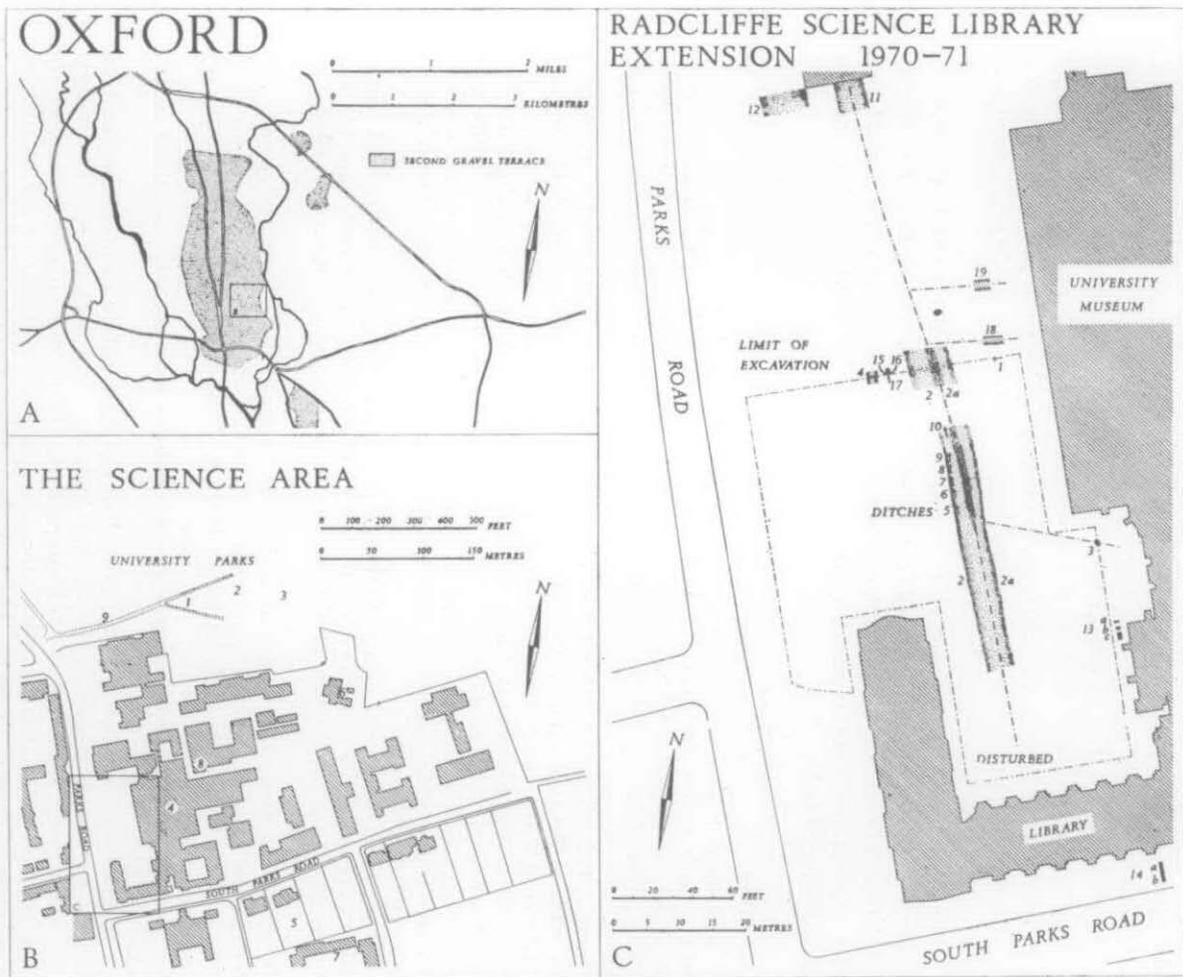


FIG. 1

Based on the Ordnance Survey Map with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.
 Crown Copyright reserved.

THE EXCAVATION

THE EXCAVATION

No excavation of the site was conducted before construction began; instead, features were hastily recorded and material was salvaged as and when it was exposed during building. The bulk excavation for the Extension fell into two parts. First a narrow guide trench was excavated around the perimeter of the site in order to allow the insertion of a 'diaphragm' foundation wall. At this stage a series of features were seen including a grave (feature 1) and several ditches (features, 2, 2a and 3). No archaeological excavation was allowed owing to the critical alignment of the 'diaphragm' wall and therefore no dating evidence was recovered.

Once the 'diaphragm' foundation wall had been completed, the interior of the site was removed in a bulk excavation which extended into the Oxford clay. During this operation the archaeological work on the site was extended and it was possible to excavate some of the features rapidly in order to salvage the material which is discussed below.

THE FEATURES

The features uncovered were as follows in numerical order:

1. Grave with intact skeleton. This grave had been cut into the natural gravel about 50 cm. and was back-filled with red-brown loam. The alignment of the grave was east-west and the burial was supine with its head to the west. Roman pottery, see below.
2. Ditch. This ditch was at least 2 m. deep below present ground level and it was up to 3 m. wide at the top. The profile of the ditch was generally U-shaped, but towards its southern end the ditch became narrower and straight-sided at its bottom. The fill of the ditch was mixed gravel and red-brown loam. The ditch was aligned north-south. It probably extended out of the site, but was obscured by modern disturbances at the southern end of the site. Ditch 2 is probably the same feature as 11, and had cut through feature 2a. Ditch 2 had six burials, features 5-10 (see below), in it. Roman pottery, see below.
- 2a. Ditch. This ditch was similar in depth, profile and fill to feature 2 which cut it. The exact point of intersection between ditches 2 and 2a could not be ascertained. This ditch extended northwards out of the present excavation site. Roman pottery, see below.
3. Ditch. This ditch was approximately 2 m. deep with a V-shaped profile; its alignment was east-west and it apparently intersected ditch 2 and 2a. This ditch must have been associated with either or both of these last ditches, since it did not extend westwards beyond ditch 2. No finds.
4. Small ditch or pit. Approximately 1 m. wide at its top and 1 m. deep with a V-shaped profile. No finds.
- 5-10. Inhumations in ditch 2. No individual graves could be distinguished and the bodies may have been placed in the ditch, which was then back-filled. The burials, like the ditch, were on a north-south alignment. Only two, nos. 7 and 9, of the skeletons were anything like complete; these had their elbow joints flexed, so that the wrists lay close to their shoulders. The skeletal remains are discussed below.
11. Ditch, probably the same as 2. This ditch was 4.5 m. across at the depth of natural gravel (76 cm.) and 3.25 m. at the depth of the drainage trench in which it was observed (1.5 m.). The fill was an even red-brown loam. No finds.
12. ?Ditch. This ditch was much disturbed by modern services, but it appeared to

be about 6 m. wide at the depth of the natural gravel. The great width of this possible ditch and the similarity between its section and a section through the Civil War defences seen in 1958, together make it seem possible that feature 12 is the Civil War defence.³ No finds.

13a, b & c. Three depressions in the natural gravel all running east-west, 13a was c. 15 cm. square; 13b was about 35 cm. across and 15-20 cm. deep with a rectangular section. 13c was c. 70 cm. across the top and cut 35 cm. into the natural gravel. It had a U-shaped profile. The natural gravel was c. 84 cm. below ground level at this point, capped by 15-20 cm. of red-brown loam, beneath a darkened brown loam plough soil. No finds.

14a. Ditch. This ditch was cut into the natural gravel. It was c. 1.35 m. across and c. 70 cm. deep and filled with red-brown loam. No finds.

14b. Ditch. This ditch was also cut into the natural gravel, it was about 1.30 m. across and about 30 cm. deep. No finds.

15 & 16. Post-holes. Each post was about 50 cm. deep and 10 cm. in diameter and filled with red-brown loam. No finds.

17. Gully. A shallow depression 40 cm. wide and 30 cm. deep, flanked by post-holes 15 and 16. No finds.

18 & 19. Ditches. V-shaped in profile and parallel to each other on east-west alignments. These ditches were visible in the ramp for lorries leading down into the site and they may have intersected with either ditches 2 and 2a, as in the case of ditch 3.

INTERPRETATION

Apart from the miscellaneous small ditches and postholes, the chief elements of the site were the two ditches, 2 and 2a. These ditches were of such a size that it seems probable that they were major boundary ditches; ditch 2 was possibly a re-cutting of 2a. Ditch 2a, the primary ditch, contained pottery which places it in the middle of the 2nd century A.D. Ditch 2 and the burials, features 5-10, and the single burial, feature 1, can probably be thought of as Roman as well.

The major ditch system was also certainly associated with the smaller ditch 3 and also probably ditches 18 and 19, all of which were at right angles to ditches 2a and 2.

The concentration of Roman small finds from the site of the University Museum (Site 10 below) immediately to the east of the Radcliffe Science Library Extension site would seem to indicate that it was in this area that the actual associated settlement lay.

THE FINDS

POTTERY By C. J. YOUNG

Abbreviations used in this section are as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| <i>Brixworth</i> , I | P. J. Woods, 'Brixworth Excavations', <i>Northampton Museums and Art Gallery Journal</i> , 8 (1972). |
| <i>Shakenoak</i> , I & II | A. C. C. Brodribb, A. R. Hands, and D. R. Walker, <i>Excavations at Shakenoak</i> , I (1968), & II (1971). |
| <i>Verulamium</i> , I | S. S. Frere, <i>Verulamium Excavations</i> , I (1972). |

³ Notes and News, *Oxoniensia*, xxiv (1959), 101.

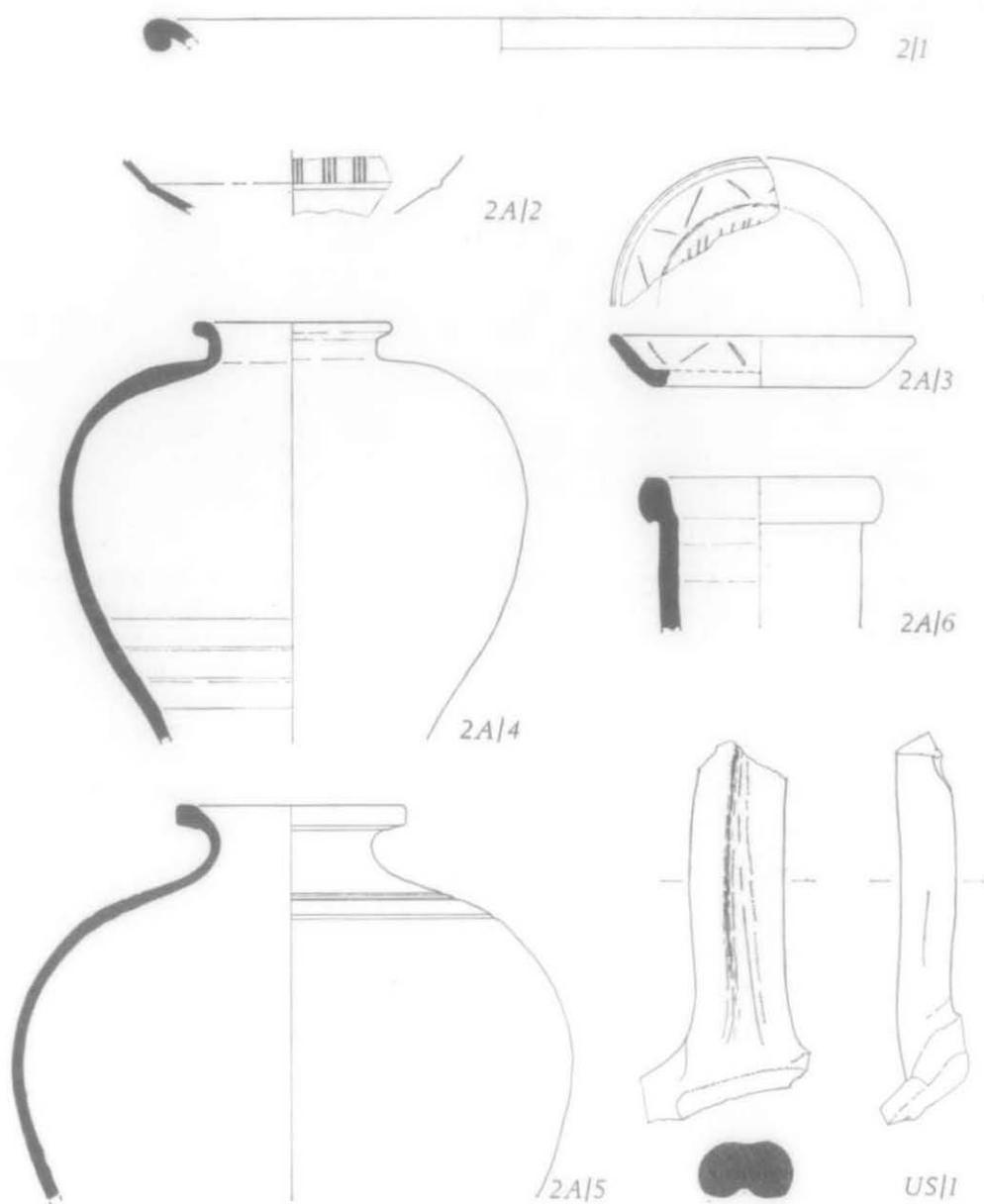


FIG. 2

Pottery from the Radcliffe Science Library Extension. Scale 1 : 4.

In this report the pottery is listed by features, the drawn pottery being described first and undrawn pottery mentioned second.

E. = exterior surface. I. = interior surface. bk. = The body of the fabric. The pottery in FIG. 2 was kindly drawn by Mrs. E. M. Beard.

FEATURE 1

One sherd of grey ware, one sherd of orange ware. Both Roman. Not illustrated.

FEATURE 2

2/1 Rim sherd of wide-mouthed jar ; hard sandy slightly micaceous fabric with small black inclusions. E. and I. grey ; bk. light grey. One base sherd of jar in grey ware. Not illustrated.

FEATURE 2A

2A/2 Body sherd of bowl ; hard sandy fabric containing small red specks ; E. and I. off-white with smoothed surface ; bk. light buff. Cordoned with vertical incised lines in groups of three above the cordon. Cf. *Verulamium*, I, fig. 114, 529, A.D. 105-130.

2A/3 Shallow bowl with plain rim ; hard coarse sandy fabric containing many small white inclusions. E. and I. black and micaceous ; bk. grey. Surfaces partially burnished with burnished lines on wall and base interiors. Cf. *Shakenoak*, I, fig. 17, 18 and 20, Period I (A.D. 120-180), II, fig. 30, 221, end of Period B2 (c. A.D. 160).

2A/4 Narrow-necked jar ; coarse sandy fabric containing very many small white inclusions. E. light grey ; I. light buff-grey ; bk. dark blue-grey. Similar pots were found in the loaded kiln at Overdale, Boars Hill, Oxford (unpublished), c. A.D. 75-125.

2A/5 Narrow-mouthed jar ; hard sandy micaceous fabric containing lumps of quartzite. E. and I. light grey ; bk. light-grey/off-white. Grooved on shoulder. Form similar to 2A/4.

2A/6 Rim fragment of amphora ; hard very sandy fabric containing specks of mica and of white opaque grit. E. light orange-buff ; I. and bk. pink-orange.

UNSTRATIFIED

u/s 1 Handle sherd of amphora. Fabric as 2A/6, possibly from the same vessel.

The sherds here discussed all fall into the 2nd century in so far as they are dateable at all. The range of date suggested by the parallels is wide but it would seem that the group as a whole from 2A would not be out of place in the first half of the 2nd century. It is not possible to suggest dates for 1 and 2 on the basis of the pottery found in them.

HUMAN SKELETAL MATERIAL

By R. J. G. CONCANNON

GRAVE 6

The remains consist of part of the right hip, and forearm, and the right heel. The sex was female judging by the hip and the age 16-19, judging by the state of development of all bones.

GRAVE 5

The remains consist of part of the skull, and right shoulder blade, and the complete left upper arm. The sex is unknown but the age roughly 20-30, judging from the state

of development of all bones. The height was at least 5 ft. 6 in. judging from the length of the upper arm, which was almost complete and which relates to the height. There was one small extra bone at the back of the skull.

GRAVE 10

The remains consist of the right lower jaw and its associated teeth. The sex was probably female judging by the size of the teeth and the age 17-25 judging by the degree of wear the teeth had suffered. The teeth were slightly crowded in the jaw and had some gum infection and tartar.

GRAVE 1

The remains consist of parts of all the arm and leg bones, many bones of the foot, a few of the hand, and fragments of the skull. The sex is unknown. The age was 40-50, or at least middle age (rather than old age) judging from the slight signs of osteoarthritis on the arm, leg and foot bones and the state of development of the skull bones. The height was 5 ft. 3 in. judging by the lengths of the left thigh and shin bones.

GRAVE 8

The remains consist of one toe bone and large portions of the face and top of the skull. The sex is unknown. The age was about 50, or at least old age, judging by the presence of slight osteoarthritis, the state of development of the skull bones, and the amount of wear and general state of health of the teeth. The state of health of the teeth could clearly be seen: three teeth in the upper jaw had been lost well before death and their sockets healed over; three had been lost shortly before death and their sockets unhealed—severe gum infection or abscesses had caused or resulted from loss of these three teeth; one surviving tooth had a severe abscess and four surviving teeth had caries cavities, one large. There were four extra bones, two large, at the back of the skull.

GRAVE 7

The remains consist of most of the skeleton from above the hips. Present are all vertebrae but the last three, most ribs (complete or fragmentary), the shoulder blades (although badly damaged), both collar bones and the arm bones, many of the hand bones, and the lower jaw and most of the skull except the base. The sex was male judging by the large size of the ends of all the arm bones and by various features in the skull. However, the shafts of the arm bones and all other bones are generally slender and not all the skull features that can indicate male sex do so; it is less easy anyway to determine the sex of teenagers than adults, so this is uncertain. The age was 17-19 judging by the state of development of the arm, shoulder and collar bones and the state of eruption and wear of the teeth. A precise statement of age is avoided here since, while most bones indicate an age of 18 or 19, two arm bones are not developed beyond an age of 16 or 17. So published data, which express average ages for stages of development, must be interpreted broadly. The height was 5 ft. 5 in. judging by the lengths of the upper arm bones. There are no signs of disease or injury anywhere in the skeleton, nor any decay in the teeth, which are well aligned and uncrowded. The right lateral incisor, which normally has a single root, has two; the top and back of the skull has six small additional bones, four on top and two, symmetrically placed, at the back.

GRAVE 9

The remains consist of the entire skeleton except for the feet and ankle bones, the left shinbone, both kneecaps, one backbone, five ribs, most of the wrist and finger bones, and the skull. The sex was female judging from the hips. The age was over 25 (and perhaps over 30) but not much over 35 judging from the complete state of development of

many bones for the lower limit, and the appearance of only slight osteoarthritic changes in the backbone for the upper limit—an older person could be expected to show severer changes. The height was 5 ft. 2 in. judging from the lengths of the leg bones. There are no signs of disease or injury except for small osteoarthritic bony outgrowths on two backbones. The breastbone has a hole low down in the centre from an unusual but not damaging way the bone formed.

DISCUSSION

This discussion is based on the above short description of the material. A fuller discussion, based on fuller reports, is lodged with the Oxford Archaeological Excavation Committee.

Of the seven individuals present, three are clearly female, one probably male and the sex of the remaining three is unknown. Despite the incompleteness of this data, it is probable that these burials are not a special group, like warriors, in which one sex is not represented. Three of the individuals were in their late teens, two were young adults, and two were in late middle age. The difficulties of excavation and the fragility of children's bones make it possible that had these been present they may not have been recovered. So it is probable these burials are not a special group, like retired soldiers and their wives, in which only one age-band is represented. Statistically valid correlation between sex and age cannot be sought in such a small group. The heights of four individuals are known: 5 ft. 2 in., 5 ft. 3 in., 5 ft. 5 in., and at least 5 ft. 6 in. The control of height has strong genetic elements but with so small a group the occurrence of three similar precisely known heights cannot be held as evidence the individuals were relatives in an inbreeding group. But it at least allows this possibility: dissimilar heights would have suggested not. The slight signs of osteoarthritis in two people in late middle age is to a large extent a consequence of ageing. Rather the fact that it was nowhere severe may be significant. Similarly, the massive loss of teeth, caries, gum infection and abscesses in a late middle aged person is not surprising: the two younger individuals whose dental health can be seen were fairly healthy. The occurrence of additional bones in the skull may suggest affinity: this genetically controlled feature is by no means rare and very many additional bones, or very large ones, may occur. But here a few, fairly small additional bones are present in three individuals: the similarity of the pattern may be significant, but it would be easy to overstate the case: such small series are not capable of yielding statistically significant information.

CONCLUSION

The nature of the evidence from the Radcliffe Science Library Extension is clearly very fragmentary and unsatisfactory. However, in spite of the limitations of the archaeological work on the site, the features that were observed and the material that was salvaged confirms the view that the modern Science Area marks the site of a comparatively intensive Romano-British occupation succeeding sporadic prehistoric activity. The new material can be added to that which was available to Dr. D. B. Harden in 1939 when he noted in his survey of Roman

remains from Oxford, 'a fairly thick group of finds in the neighbourhood of the University Museum and South Parks Road, which may represent a settlement area, for it includes a quern and a considerable amount of pottery'.⁴

On the basis of the currently available material it is not possible to draw firm conclusions about the nature of the settlement, but there is no evidence to indicate that the settlement was not that of a rural peasant community. Such a community can be contrasted with its eastern neighbours across the Cherwell, in modern east Oxford, whose life must have been semi-industrial to judge from the extent of kiln sites like that of the Churchill Hospital, also excavated in 1971.⁵

The Radcliffe Science Library Extension site is therefore another useful addition to the picture of Roman Oxford, which has been steadily emerging since J. H. Parker wrote the first modern account of the development of the City in 1884. At that time little evidence was available and Parker naturally came to the view that the site of the late Saxon town and its medieval suburbs could not demonstrate 'any traces of Roman occupation' and 'isolated as it was by the chief roads ascribed to the Romans' the town could not be said to 'carry its history back to Roman times'.⁶ E. T. Leeds took issue with this sweeping view in 1921.⁷ Although Leeds did not claim that Roman Oxford was of any significance, nevertheless, the gazetteer of finds that he published, based on Percy Manning's archaeological survey of Oxfordshire of 1896, demonstrated clearly that there was perfectly good evidence for continuous signs of small scattered settlements on the gravel terrace between the Thames and the Cherwell from the neolithic period onwards.⁸ The finds listed by Mannings and Leeds were later added to by Dr. D. B. Harden.⁹

The isolation of the site of Oxford during the Roman period has probably been exaggerated. While it is true that the site of the late Saxon town was not traversed by a major Roman road, nevertheless the Roman secondary road system included Oxford. Robert Plot in 1676 was the first to put forward the concept of a Roman road in Oxford when he described his mythical road from Marston to Binsey. This road, ironically, if a reality, would have passed close by the Radcliffe Science Library Extension side.¹⁰ However, it was H. E. Salter who showed in 1936 that an important route ran, not east to west as Plot had thought, but from north to south. Salter produced evidence to show that the original ford of Oxford was at North (Ferry) Hinksey and that this ford was part of a prehistoric route which extended from the Berkshire Downs to the Banbury region.¹¹ This route seems certain to have remained in use throughout the Roman

⁴ D. B. Harden, 'Settlement on the site of Oxford' in 'Romano-British Remains', *V.C.H. Oxon*, 1 (1939), 302-3.

⁵ See p. 10.

⁶ J. H. Parker, 'The site of Oxford during the British and Roman Settlement', *The Early History of Oxford, 727-1100*, O.H.S. III (1884-5), 79.

⁷ Percy Manning and E. Thurlow Leeds, 'An Archaeological Survey of Oxfordshire', *Archaeologia*, LXXI (1920-1), 230.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 252-3.

⁹ See footnote 4.

¹⁰ J. H. Parker, *op. cit.*, 66-9.

¹¹ H. E. Salter, *Medieval Oxford*, O.H.S., c (1936), 1-2.

period and eventually developed into the modern Banbury Road.¹² The evidence for this assertion is contained in a Saxon charter of 1004 relating to Cutteslowe.¹³ The authenticity of this charter was convincingly argued by F. M. Stenton.¹⁴ In this charter the present Banbury Road is described as a *portstrete*, i.e. a paved and, therefore, Roman Road.¹⁵

In the context of Saxon charter evidence relating to Roman Oxford it can also be demonstrated that the nearest villa to Oxford was probably at Water Eaton on or near the boundary with Cutteslowe. In 904 King Edward recorded a grant by Hungith to Wigfrith of five hides at *Eatun*.¹⁶ G. B. Grundy in his discussion of this charter identified *Eatun* with Wood Eaton on the grounds that the mention of a *faga flora*, 'tessellated pavement', could be identified with the Roman site in that parish.¹⁷ However, O. G. S. Crawford pointed out that on the basis of field name evidence the *Eatun* of the charter must relate to Water Eaton on the opposite, western bank of the Cherwell.¹⁸ Crawford's re-identification was confirmed by Mrs. M. E. Gelling.¹⁹ This confirmation of Crawford's re-identification is obviously extremely important for the archaeologist since it follows that the charter approximately locates the nearest villa to the site of the late Saxon town. The position of this villa must be somewhere in the region of Water Eaton copse, on an easterly slope overlooking the Cherwell and conveniently situated near the Roman road discussed above.²⁰

Southwards from this villa, at Water Eaton, along the gravel terrace which separates the Thames and the Cherwell and on either side of the north-south road, Harden's summing up of the situation in the Roman period still holds good: 'we must picture the region in Roman days not as a barren waste, but as sparsely occupied by settled communities of native Britons'.²¹ The recent finds from the Radcliffe Science Library confirm this view.

APPENDIX A

A note on the geology of the excavation for the extension to the Radcliffe Science Library

By H. P. POWELL

The main geological features of the site are essentially similar to those of the Bodleian extension site described by W. J. Arkell.¹ Therefore only a brief account of the Radcliffe hole is given here.

The excavation was 24 ft. deep. It exposed rocks which comprise two different

¹² G. B. Grundy, *Saxon Oxfordshire*, O.R.S., xv (1933), 25, 95 ff.

¹³ *Cartulary of the monastery of St. Frideswide at Oxford*, ed. S. R. Wigram, O.H.S., xxvii (1894), 2-9.

¹⁴ F. M. Stenton, 'St. Frideswide and her times', *Oxoniensia*, I (1936), 103-12.

¹⁵ Topographical evidence relating to this Roman road has recently been discussed by G. H. Hargreaves and R. P. F. Parker in 'Kirtlington Port way Roman road', *Council for British Archaeology Group IX Newsletter*, No. 2 (1972), 15.

¹⁶ *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ed. W. de G. Birch, II, no. 607.

¹⁷ G. B. Grundy, *Saxon Oxfordshire*, O.R.S., xv (1933), 85-9.

¹⁸ *Antiquity*, IX (1935), 97-8.

¹⁹ *The Place Names of Oxfordshire*, ed. M. E. Gelling, E.P.N.S., xxiv, II, 216.

²⁰ Cf. *V.C.H. Oxon*, I (1939), Topographical Index of Romano-British Remains, 344.

²¹ D. B. Harden, 'Settlement on the site of Oxford' in 'Romano-British Remains', *V.C.H. Oxon*, I (1939), 303. The distribution of Roman sites and finds from the City of Oxford up to 1966 is shown in D. Benson and J. M. Cook, *City of Oxford Redevelopment, Archaeological Implications* (1966), Fig. 3.

¹ W. J. Arkell, 'The Geology of the Bodleian Extension', *Oxoniensia*, III (1938), 1-6.

lithological types belonging to two different Periods of time. There is gravel above and clay below.

1. The Gravel is classified by geologists as part of the Summertown Terrace. It represents deposits of the River Thames during the latter part of the Ice Age, probably some 50,000 years ago. The surface of the flood plain at that time was not perfectly level so that the thickness of the deposit at the site varies from about 16 ft. to 20 ft. The gravel as a whole was rather sandy but a scatter of big boulders occurred at the very bottom, lying on the clay. These were mainly quartzite, one 10 in. long, but some were sandstone and limestone. No indigenous fossils were seen in the gravel.

2. The underlying clay is a part of the Oxford Clay formation which is 300 ft. or so thick under Oxford. It was deposited in a fairly deep sea which covered the site about 150 million years ago, during the Upper Jurassic Period.

The top of the clay varied in height from about 187 ft. to 190 ft. O.D. At the contact with the gravel, which was rather irregular, there was a thin layer of soft yellowish clay, then another 8 in. to 1 ft. of weathered clay above the main mass of stiff, blue, silty Oxford Clay.

The fossils have not yet been thoroughly examined but the following list shows that the general character of the fauna is similar to that of the Bodleian Site.

- Driftwood
- Foraminifera
- Serpulid worms } attached to oyster shells
- Bryozoa
- '*Rhynchonella*' (brachiopod)
- 'Lobster' fragments
- Fish vertebra
- Echinoids
- Mollusca.
- Dicroloma* (gastropod)
- Nucula* species
- Grammatodon* sp.
- Oxytoma expansa*
- Chlamys* (scallops)
- Gryphaea lituola* (oysters)
- Pinna* (common)
- Astarte* (common)
- Other Bivalves.
- Hibolites hastatus* (belemnite) (common)

Ammonites were moderately common, consisting of nuclei preserved in iron pyrites. They include perisphinctids, *Hecticoceras*, and *Distichoceras* but the commonest are various forms of *Kosmoceras spinosum*. Only three specimens of *Quenstedtoceras* have been found (by Mr. Richard Sykes, Department of Geology). Thus the ammonite fauna has a different aspect from that of the Bodleian site where Arkell recorded 100 *Quenstedtoceras* and 82 *K. spinosum*. Nevertheless, the occurrence of both these forms at the Radcliffe site indicates that the clay probably belongs to the particular part of the Oxford Clay known as Lamberti Zone.

APPENDIX B

An Inventory of sites and finds from the Science Area, Oxford
By J. T. MUNBY

Abbreviations used in this section are as follows:

- A.M. Ashmolean Museum accession numbers in Registers.
- A.M. (1836-68) *A List of Donations to the Antiquarian and Ethnological Collections in the Ashmolean Museum, 1836-68.* G. A. Rowell (1870).

- A.O.* *Archaeologia Oxoniensis* (1892-5). The numbers refer to the 'Index of British and Romano-British Finds in Oxford' on pp. 49-50, 111 and 296.
- M. & L.* Manning and Leeds, 'An Archaeological Survey of Oxfordshire', in *Archaeologia*, LXXI (1921).
- O.M.C.* *Oxford Millennium Exhibition Catalogue* (1912).
- O.A.H.S. Proc.* *Oxford Architectural and Historical Society Proceedings*.
- Parker* *Early History of Oxford*. O.H.S., III (1885).

Throughout reference is given to the Oxford City and County Museum Field Department's 'Primary Record Numbers' (P. R. N.). The Primary Record Cards together with the numbered Record Files contain full bibliography and illustrations.

Despite the persistent misconception about the Roman settlement of Oxford¹ it has been quite apparent for at least eighty years that the Oxford gravel terrace supported a small local community during the Roman period. Since the known finds were first brought together in 1892 (in *A.O.*) they have been twice supplemented² but have little changed the original distribution map (*A.O.*, 5), and 'North Oxford' is somewhat facetiously shown on the Ordnance Survey map of Roman Britain. Several concentrations of finds are apparent, with the Science Area (continually being rebuilt and extended) not surprisingly producing most material. Other occupation areas in the regions round Park Town, Bevington Road and St. Margaret's Church have not been so extensively disturbed. The Science Area lies in Holywell Manor, at the south end of the University Parks and previously bounded by Parks Road and South Parks Road, though it now spreads down towards the centre as the houses in South Parks Road are demolished. The encroachment upon the Parks began in 1855 with the building of University Museum and Laboratories and has continued since then at a steady pace.³ Previous to its acquisition by the University the Parks was pasture or arable land for the Manor of Holywell, and some ridge-and-furrow is still to be seen down by the river. Stray sherds of medieval and other pottery have also been dug up from time to time in the Parks,⁴ and a medieval key and seal.⁵ Gibbet irons dating from a later period are also recorded⁶ and a single undateable skeleton.⁷ It was across the Parks that Plot led his mythological road from Marston to Binsey⁸ and he could have made use of the place name 'Rome' that is connected with the junction of the Banbury and Parks Roads.⁹ To the 17th century also belong the Civil War earthworks constructed during the Royalist occupation which have been the subject of much study.¹⁰ As well as the published observations of earthworks above or below ground¹¹ there are several which have not been noted before;¹² these discoveries are all problematic, since they have rarely been dateable and it is impossible to assign them to the prehistoric, Roman or post-medieval period. It is sufficient to observe that the Science Area is well scattered with 'ditches' running in all directions.

¹ Arising out of an over-statement of the case that the town had no Roman origins. See *Parker*, cap III.

² In *M. & L.* and *V.C.H. Oxon*, I (1939), 301-3 and pl. xviii.

³ Acland and Ruskin in *The Oxford Museum* (1893), and A. F. Martin and R. W. Steel (eds.), *The Oxford Region* (1954), cap 21, and the relevant section of the current *Oxford University Handbook*.

⁴ P.R.N. 6051 and 6054.

⁵ P.R.N. 3672 and 6052.

⁶ P.R.N. 6053.

⁷ P.R.N. 6071.

⁸ *Parker*, 67-9.

⁹ M. Gelling, *Place names of Oxfordshire* (1953), 25, n. 1.

¹⁰ R. T. Lattey, J. Parsons, and I. Philip, *Oxoniensia*, I (1936), 161 ff.

¹¹ P.R.N. 6055, 6056, 6058, 6062, 6068, 6069, and 6072.

¹² P.R.N. 6057, 6059, 6061 and 6075.

INVENTORY OF SITES (FIG. 1)

1. *The Parks* ; P.R.N. 6070 : One of Riley's aerial photographs in the Ashmolean Museum shows a ring ditch in the Parks, north of the Physiology Laboratory.
A.M. Riley Coll. : neg. ix/33 and 34.
2. *18th Century* ; *The Parks* ; P.R.N. 6050 : Hearne in discussing the possibility of Oxford having been 'a place of note' in Roman times, writes 'I have however been told of Coyns that have been found in New-Parks, across w^{ch} one branch of the Roman Ikenild way pass'd . . .'.
Hearne, O.H.S., vii (1886), vol. II, 282.
3. *19th Century* ; *The Parks* ; P.R.N. 3682 : A post-Medieval spur and 'ring-fibula' (possibly a buckle) which were originally thought to be Roman.
A.M., 1886. 583 (spur), *A.M.*, 1886. 584 (ring-fibula).
O.M.C., No. 31. *M. & L.*, p. 252. Not in *A.O.*
4. *1855-60* ; *University Museum* ; P.R.N. 3498 : Several artefacts were recovered from the foundations by Professor Phillips.
Bronze coin of Faustina the Younger ; *A.O.*, 17 ; *M. & L.*, p. 252.
Fragments of urn ; *A.M.*, 1885. 39 ; *A.O.*, 19 ; *M. & L.*, p. 252.
Bronze Fibula ; Langton Down type (pre-Flavian) ; No. 31 in Wheeler, *Lydney, Soc. Ant.* (1932), 71-3. *A.M.*, 1885. 136. *A.O.*, 19. *M. & L.*, p. 252.
Two Bronze coins ; *A.O.*, 20 ; *M. & L.*, p. 252.
Bronze coin of Valens ; *A.O.*, 20.*
'Four Roman Coins' from the foundations of the Museum, presumably the above. *A.M.* (1836-68), 12.
5. *1871* ; *2 South Parks Road* ; P.R.N. 3492 : 'Romano-British quern and pot' from Professor Rolleston's garden.
A.O., 21 ; *O.A.H.S. Proc.*, iii, 5 ; *M. & L.*, p. 252 ; *A.M.* 1886. 1651 ; 'Part of mortarium, found 5 ft. down, 6.3 in. diameter. Drab ware.'
6. *1876* ; *University Observatory* ; P.R.N. 3560 : Mr. Burgess, Clerk of Works, gave the Ashmolean part of a Romano-British vase, found in digging the foundations of the Observatory.
A.O., 60, p. 111 ; *M. & L.*, p. 252.
7. *1887* ; *Mansfield College* ; P.R.N. 3513 : Two Roman pots found in the foundations of the College. Described and illustrated, *A.O.*, p. 109-10.
A.O., 22-3 ; *O.M.C.*, 35-6 ; *M. & L.*, p. 252 ; *A.M.*, 1887. 2803-4 ; *V.C.H. Oxon.*, 1 (1939), pl. XVIII.
8. *1949* ; P.R.N. 3499 : Romano-British sherds were found with bones in a hole in the road between the Physiology and (old) Zoology Laboratories.
Oxoniensia, xiv (1949), 76 ; *A.M.*, 1949. 730.
9. *1956* ; *Clarendon Laboratory* ; P.R.N. 6060 : Sherds of Belgic ware were found with animal bones (probably from an ancient ditch or pit) 6 ft. below the floor of the Laboratory. (Apparently Lindeman Laboratory.)
Oxoniensia, xxi (1956), 82 ; *A.M.*, 1956. 286.
10. *1963-4* ; *Parks Road—Parks* ; P.R.N. 6063 : Extensive operations for a storm sewer in Parks Road and into the Parks north of the Lindeman Laboratory produced Romano-British pottery, a skeleton and ditches.
Oxoniensia, xxviii (1963), 92.

The Society thanks the Department of the Environment for a publication grant for this article.