

In Search of the Port-way: Excavations in the Area of the Moated Site North of St. Mary's Church in Kidlington

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SUMMARY

Fieldwork north of St. Mary's church in Kidlington by the Oxford University Archaeological Society has cast doubt on the long-held theory that there was a direct Roman road leading over the ford at Hampton Poyle to Kirtlington. A concentration of late Roman coins in the floodplain near the ford, however, is evidence for the regional importance of this crossing over the River Cherwell, and of unpaved tracks leading towards it. The area where the coins were discovered was probably unsuitable for permanent settlement, but seasonal gatherings at this local traffic junction on the occasions of traditional feasts or markets could be one possible explanation for this accumulation of coins.

In 1996 the Oxford University Archaeological Society continued its research project in Kidlington (Fig. 1). Its aim was to establish whether the port-way, as a paved Roman road, took the direct route from Kidlington northwards to Kirtlington as some have postulated. The name 'port-way' is used here for just one amongst several routes of the same name. The word 'port' refers to the destination, the market, which in this case was at the Anglo-Saxon town of Oxford.¹ To avoid complication I will not refer to the road as 'port-street', though this is the correct historic term (used in the Anglo-Saxon charters) for the sections paved in the Roman period. It is widely accepted that Banbury Road in Oxford and Oxford Road, its northward continuation to Kidlington, follow the port-way. What is disputed is how this section of the minor road linked up with Akeman Street, the main E.-W. traffic axis in Roman times. There are two theories, which will be discussed in detail below: firstly, that the road continued along Banbury Road and reached Akeman Street at Sturdy's Castle, SW. of Tackley, keeping on the western side of the River Cherwell; alternatively it has been suggested that it continued in a straight line northwards, over the Cherwell between St. Mary's church in Kidlington and the village of Hampton Poyle, crossing Akeman Street at Kirtlington and continuing further north. The latter hypothesis, which has found more support, implies that the church, the centre of medieval Kidlington, as well as the moated site to its N., was situated on this road.

Based on the observation that the N. end of Church Street in Kidlington and the northern access of the moat over a gap in the ditch and in the inner bank are on a similar alignment (Fig. 1), it was originally suggested that this could be the route of the port-way. Excavations directed by Michael Richards² did indeed lead to the discovery of paving on this alignment, the surface of which was exposed (trench B). When I took over the project early

¹ J. Blair, *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire* (1994), 121.

² M. Richards, 'Oxford University Archaeological Society', *S. Midlands Archaeol.* xxvi (1996), 68.

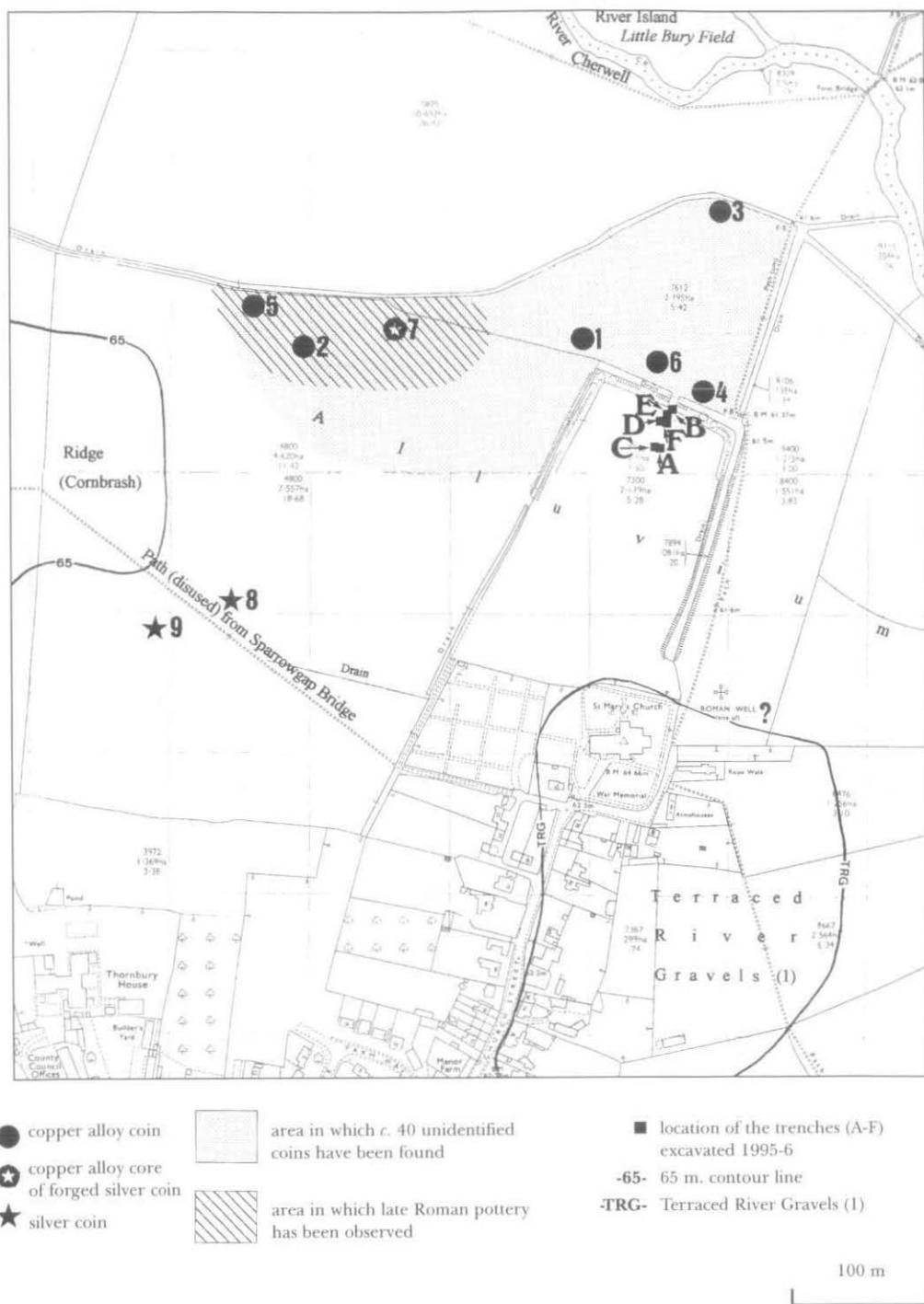


Fig. 1. Excavations N. of St. Mary's church, Kidlington. Scale 1:5000. (Map based on Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map, © Crown copyright.)

in 1996, the high watertable in the moat prevented us from further investigation of this stretch of paving. Drilling allowed us to establish its approximate extent in the low-lying area S. of the inner northern bank of the moated site, and we tried unsuccessfully to find out whether there was a continuation on higher ground. Only in Spring were we able to uncover the surface of the paving (61.49 m. above sea-level) and to section it. The middle of the c. 3 m.-wide paving, SP 4976 1504, was (at the southern border of trench E) 15 m. SSW. of the central point of the gap in the northern ditch of the moat, and 4.5 m. SSW. of the stretch uncovered in 1995. The paving does not extend beyond the low-lying ground. Modern pottery (dated by Paul Smith to the 19th century) and other contemporary objects were embedded in and also beneath the stone paving which was only 10 cm. thick. No structure could be observed beneath this paving or indeed in any of the other trenches. The finds were all modern with the probable exception of a small quantity of metal slag from 20 m. SSW. of the central point in the gap (trench D). With trial trenches and systematic drilling down to 1 m. below the present surface, we were able to prove that there had never been a paved road or track on the assumed alignment. The very small quantity of stones and the virtual absence of even modern objects in trench F, just 5.5 m. S. of the sectioned stretch of modern paving (trench E), excludes the possibility that a pavement (even an insubstantial one) ever existed there before being destroyed by stone robbing or ploughing. The finds, the exact plans and other documentation have been given to the Oxfordshire County Museum Services.

Our results definitely disprove the theory that there was a paved road between Church Street and the gap in the moat. It is clear that the hypothesis put forward by G.H. Hargreaves and R.P.F. Parker³ is equally mistaken. They believed that there was a Roman N.-S. road whose 'alignments show a military precision'. It was assumed that this road changed its direction at Kidlington church (SP 497 148) between a straight section from Bletchington (SP 502 177) and the continuation to Cutteslowe (SP 503 115). In the Cherwell flood-plain they observed 'a massive stone causeway 21 ft. wide'. On the map showing the suggested route of the road, an arrow indicates a 'Roman causeway' about midway between the church and the Cherwell. There are three features in the area which could conceivably be interpreted as causeways and whose width is about right (neglecting irregularities and erosion). There is a narrow footpath, following the drainage ditch from the NE. corner of the moat north-north-eastwards on a shallow earth bank on its W. side. In places some stones are on the surface, but it is easy to drill with a metal bar deep into the bank, and there is no reason to assume that it consists of anything other than the material extracted from the drainage ditch. It certainly is not 'a massive stone causeway'. It is in any case unlikely that the medieval moat-builders would have wished to undertake the laborious task of digging the ditch through massive stone paving (and thus to destroy useful infrastructure) just to extend the moat for about 10 m. to the E., while there were no obstacles to the W.: the causeway ends today just W. of the NE. corner of the moat. During the floods of January 1998 (Figs. 2-4) most of this bank was still above the watertable, but this was equally true for the strip of land on the other side of the drainage ditch. Similarly one cannot consider the W. bank of the moat, nowadays overgrown by scrubs and trees, to be a reused Roman road: it is possible to drill into it, and it does not extend beyond the moat northwards.

The third option is the paved way over the northern gap in the moat. If Hargreaves and Parker assumed that the causeway had been buried under sediments, they might have thought that this was the only visible part (the arrow on their map is approximately in the

³ G.H. Hargreaves and R.P.F. Parker, 'Kidlington Port Way Roman Road', *S. Midlands Archaeol.* ii (1972), 15; cf. K.E. Jermy, 'Kidlington', *S. Midlands Archaeol.* iv (1974), 12.



Fig. 2. The meadows between Hampton Poyle and Kidlington, an area avoided by medieval and modern settlement, during winter floods (8 January 1998). The footbridge over the River Cherwell is on the left, St. Mary's church in the background.



Fig. 3. Much of the area between the Cherwell and the moated site, whose W. and N. sides are marked by the line of trees visible in the background, is submerged (8 January 1998).

right position). If one accepts that it is unlikely that the northern ditch of the moat cuts a road, then there is hardly any other option for the course of a road in the suggested direction (even considering that the grid references are only approximate). Given the postulated straightness of the road and the suggested orientation towards SP 502 177, they must then have assumed that St. Mary's church was built directly over the ancient road. According to Hargreaves and Parker's map, the road was thought to leave Kidlington W. of the northeasternmost point of the modern settlement (and not on the E. side of the church) and to cross the Cherwell in the vicinity of the E. end of the island in the Cherwell (Little Bury Field), which is on the axis of the line between the church and the gap in the moat. Our excavation, however, proved that there had never been a paved road on this alignment, and the absence of medieval finds from the vicinity of the gap calls into question whether this is an original feature at all. (One would have expected to find objects lost by people passing such a low-lying muddy entrance.) The paving of the way over the gap, at least, is likely to be contemporary with the adjacent 19th-century section.

If one plots on the map the section between Cutteslowe and Bletchington of this postulated Roman road, one finds hardly any modern roads, paths or property boundaries which follow its alleged course, in contrast to many known roads of this period. Neither is there a convincing concentration of settlement sites or isolated finds along the hypothetical straight sections of the route, nor has any part of it ever been exposed. The Roman road between Kidlington and Kirtlington, which still figures prominently on several recently published maps of Roman and Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire, never existed. There was probably a track, but there is nothing to suggest that such a track kept to the straight alignment postulated by Hargreaves and Parker.

Their theory is based on earlier research. Beesley⁴ and Williams⁵ claim that the port-way passed Kidlington church; Williams explicitly refers to traces of the road near the church. B. Stapleton⁶ also postulates that there was a Roman road (the port-way) between the ford at Hampton Poyle and 'the present high road', i.e. the modern Oxford Road, passing through the old village of Kidlington and the Crofts, south of it. The description is not precise enough to be sure whether the road was thought to be in the area of the moat or E. of it, along the modern footpath. The latter option remains a possibility, if one thinks of an unpaved track. No conspicuous feature is visible on the ground and attempts to find paving in the area by drilling failed. One might speculate whether property boundaries E. of Church Street (which may have been re-aligned after the erection of the church) and old land divisions and paths leading to Oxford Road (at the Bicester Road junction) preserve its continuation. It is more logical to assume that the church and the moat were constructed at the side of an ancient line of communication rather than that they blocked it. Whether there was a track on this alignment, and if so, when it came into being, remains to be answered.

In contrast to various recent publications, I largely agree with G.B. Grundy⁷ and D.B. Harden⁸ who argue, on the basis of early 11th-century charters, that it is more probable that the main way along the Cherwell in the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods followed the Oxford and Banbury Road up to Akeman Street and only continued on the eastern side of

⁴ A. Beesley, *The History of Banbury* (1841), 38.

⁵ Capt. Williams, 'A communication... on the Portway of Oxfordshire', *Proc. Ashmolean Soc.* 34 (1856), 107.

⁶ B. Stapleton, *Three Oxfordshire Parishes: A History of Kidlington, Yarnton and Begbroke* (Oxf. Hist. Soc. xxiv), p. xvi.

⁷ G.B. Grundy, *Saxon Oxfordshire* (O.R.S. xv), 25, 56, 62, 95, 109 and refs.

⁸ *V.C.H. Oxon.* i, 275-6, 280 and cf. 272.



Fig. 4. The moated site between the church and the row of trees (centre right), and most of the footpath (left) to the footbridge over the Cherwell, are just above water level. (Photo taken on 9 January 1998 when the floods were no longer at their peak.)



Fig. 5. The moated site during exceptionally severe floods on 11 April 1998, when large areas of the site (the 'enclosed garden') were under water, as well as the entire area between the Cherwell and the moat. The church is still well above flood-level.

the river N. of it.⁹ The charters refer to a street or port-street (a term describing a road with paving, which shows that it was already used and improved in the Roman period) in Cutteslowe, Shipton-on-Cherwell and south of Akeman Street near Tackley, but not E. of the River Cherwell in this area. All fords over the Cherwell S. of Akeman Street, the one between Kidlington and Hampton Poyle included, had the disadvantage that access to them led over a wide floodplain. This would have necessitated the construction of a very long *agger*, and it would have caused problems with regard to the maintenance of such a paved causeway and its use in wet winters. This is not to deny that the crossing over the Cherwell at Hampton Poyle and the continuation of this way northwards (and quite possibly eastwards) were already used in Roman (and presumably prehistoric) times, but they were probably never more than dirt tracks. Admittedly, in theory a timber road is also possible,¹⁰ though unlikely.

Our excavation did not yield dating evidence for the construction of the moat; earlier pottery finds unsurprisingly point to activity in medieval and post-medieval times N. of the church.¹¹ Documentary evidence strongly suggests that the moat already existed in the late 12th century and that it served as an extensive drained garden for the monks living here.¹² The 'enclosed garden', *purprestura gardini*,¹³ cannot refer to the other moat in Kidlington (1.4 km. SW. of the church), since it did not yet exist; it presumably came into being only in the 13th century,¹⁴ a time when the habit of constructing moats was at its peak.¹⁵ As both Kidlington church and the 'enclosed garden' belonged to Oseney Abbey, it is anyway very likely that the reference is to the moat next to the church.

It is tempting to assume that the location of the church as the centre of medieval Kidlington was at a junction of pre-existing tracks. It is possible that there was an old path (but not a paved Roman road) to the north, E. of the church. The distribution of the nine Roman coins discovered by Vic Strange might indicate a second, and potentially more important, line of communication. The late Roman copper alloy coins were widely scattered in the low-lying parts of the two fields N. and W. of the moated site (Fig. 1). Six amongst the 7 base metal coins are datable to AD 295-335. The only exception is an unofficial copy of a silver *siliqua* of AD 360-1 in copper alloy, which is presumably the core of a plated silver coin.¹⁶ That use of this area merely as pasture could have led to the loss of this number of coins (7 identifiable and c. 40 unidentified specimens) is impossible. If their wide distribution indicates a large settlement (c. 400 m. from E. to W.) in an area which has frequently been flooded down to the present day (Figs. 2-5), and was to an even greater degree exposed to flooding before modern interference in the natural water balance,¹⁷ then its unfavourable position in the floodplain is likely to be explained by an important position in the regional trade network. The Roman period was characterized by an ever increasing risk of flooding in the Thames valley and in other British river valleys, correlated with the

⁹ Cf. I.D. Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain* (3rd edn. 1973), 168, no. 161A; Blair, *op. cit.* note 1, pp. 84, 87-8, 121.

¹⁰ Cf. R. Van de Noort and M. Lillie, 'Scaftworth: a Timber and Turf Roman Road', *Current Archaeology*, 151 (1997), 272-3.

¹¹ R. Chambers, 'Kidlington, Churchyard Extension', *S. Midlands Archaeol.* x (1980), 177.

¹² H. Freeborn, *The Parish Church of St. Mary Kidlington* (1947), 4-5; cf. Stapleton, *op. cit.* note 6, pp. 2-3.

¹³ W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 6.1 (2nd edn. 1846), 252.

¹⁴ R. Chambers and I. Meadows, 'Kidlington: Moat Cottage', *S. Midlands Archaeol.* xi (1981), 127; M. Mellor, 'A Synthesis of Middle and Late Saxon, Medieval and Early Post-medieval Pottery in the Oxford Region', *Oxoniensia*, lix (1994), 83, 117.

¹⁵ D. Wilson, *Moated Sites* (1985), 28.

¹⁶ Dr. Cathy King, *pers. comm.*

¹⁷ J. Amor and G. Gracey-Cox, *Kidlington In Camera* (1992), 36; V. Offord, *A History of Kidlington* (1973), 7.

intensity of agriculture in their catchment basins.¹⁸ Roman settlement normally avoided the floodplain,¹⁹ and the wide regular scatter of the coins would imply the existence of a large village, not just an isolated building. No cropmarks are known from the area to date (March 1997).²⁰

Alternative interpretations are therefore worth considering, though they also involve many uncertainties. One might wonder whether the coins could represent losses on muddy or wet ground by people heading for the river crossing either in an E.-W. direction or northwards, sometimes having to wade through standing water, without keeping to a single fixed route. The concentration of finds along drainage ditches, where finds from lower layers may have been brought to the surface, may indicate that many more remain in undisturbed layers in the ground. The frequency of coins, however, would be unusually high, if they indeed represented losses on open land. It might also be worth bearing in mind that people on longer journeys carried a high proportion of gold or silver coins rather than the equivalent amount of money in heavy base metal coins (see Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 7.4, and Constantius, *Vita S. Germani* 33, which refers to Gaulish clerics having with them three gold coins on their journey through northern Italy in the 5th century; admittedly, this is a possibly simplified miracle story in a period when *aes* coinage was becoming rare). Given the small number of identified coins and the general predominance of late Roman coinage amongst site finds in southern Britain, a statistical evaluation of the coin series is dangerous. The absence of coins of the Gallic Empire (AD 260-74) and of the later 4th century could be coincidence. If future discoveries, however, are equally concentrated in this short time-span, then we may trace traffic between nearby local settlements, flourishing or participating in the monetary economy in this period. Coincidental losses alone, however, are unlikely to account for this accumulation of coins. It is tempting to assume that there may have been a seasonal market or other form of gathering at this regional traffic junction, involving the sale of goods, rather than a village on the spot, exposed to frequent flooding.²¹

It might be argued that the coin scatter indicates settlement rather than anything else and that the market idea seems implausible in this particular setting. It has to be conceded that the findspots of the majority of the coins were just above the water level of the floods of January 1998 (Figs. 2-4), but there have been much more severe floods in the past. Furthermore, only the plough and the excavation of drainage ditches have brought archaeological finds to the surface. Thus most of the area which is most exposed to flooding is unexplored, and finds from there (such as no. 3) may well be underrepresented. The theory of seasonal activities involving commercial transactions is by no means proven, but short of a parallel for a contemporary large settlement in the floodplain, I would not consider this to be a less daring interpretation, especially if one considers that there is land which is far less exposed to the risk of flooding in the immediate vicinity. We know very little

¹⁸ G. Hey, 'Yarnton Floodplain', *S. Midlands Archaeol.* xxvi (1996), 67; M.A. Robinson and G.H. Lambrick, 'Holocene Alluviation and Hydrology in the Upper Thames Basin', *Nature*, 308 (1984), 809-14; A.G. Brown, *Alluvial Geoarchaeology: Floodplain Archaeology and Environmental Change* (1997), 222-3, 225-6, and cf. 269.

¹⁹ G.H. Lambrick and M.A. Robinson, *Iron Age and Roman Riverside Settlements at Farmoor, Oxfordshire* (Oxf. Archaeol. Unit, Rep. 2/ CBA Res. Rep. 32, 1979), 3, 4 Fig. 1, 6, 118, 126, 134-40.

²⁰ Information kindly supplied by Simon Crutchley and Roger Featherstone (both of RCHME).

²¹ I would like to thank Dr. Cathy King for a stimulating discussion on the interpretation of the coin scatter.

about seasonal gatherings for economic, social and religious purposes in Roman Britain,²² but it is worth bearing in mind how frequent were such gatherings at all sorts of places in many well documented popular cultures. In other parts of the Roman Empire there is literary evidence for rural fairs, often held on open land, sometimes not more than a few kilometres from the next town.²³ The fact that such activities are, by their very nature, traceable by archaeology only in exceptional circumstances, must not lead us to the conclusion that they were indeed exceptional. The only places in open country where one is likely to find recognizable traces of seasonal gatherings are those associated with prominent surviving ancient monuments. It would be wrong to assume, however, that proximity to such monuments is a characteristic of all such meeting places, rather than being a characteristic which renders a certain category of them detectable. The theory that the meadows, probably situated in the vicinity of a settlement, may have been used occasionally in the dry months for markets or festivities remains in my view one possible explanation of the coin scatter and not the least likely one.

Two silver *siliquae* of the 2nd half of the 4th century come from the immediate vicinity of an old (partially disused) footpath which leads from the cemetery W. of St. Mary's church to Banbury Road, over modern Sparrowgap Bridge, following a natural ridge (Fig. 1). The distinctive difference between silver and copper alloy coins in date range and findspots cannot be coincidence. A possible explanation is that the silver pieces are part of a scattered hoard: there may be a tradition relating to the discovery in the 19th century of a hoard of 13-16(?) *siliquae* in this field, scattered by the plough.²⁴ Whether this is a reliable oral tradition or possibly a confusion with a hoard of 16 *siliquae* and 87 base metal coins from Kiddington (deposited after AD 393)²⁵ is hard to tell. The absence of other Roman coins or finds from the immediate surroundings supports this interpretation, and is an argument against taking them as evidence for an unknown Roman building. In this context references to the discovery of an ancient well and of coins, probably at some distance somewhere NW. of the church,²⁶ are of interest. It seems likely that they belonged to a *villa rustica* on the raised ground (where incidentally building stone could be quarried in places) but probably further to the W. and not at the findspots of the silver coins. It is also conceivable that they were lost by travellers. Nonetheless, the explanation of the *siliquae* as part of a hoard seems to be more likely. Vic Strange suggests that the way over the ridge was the port-way. His theory is attractive, since this ridge provides a convenient link between the centre of the medieval village (which is on terrain slightly higher and less liable to flooding than most of the surrounding area) and the route on higher ground which is followed by Banbury Road northwards. There is no certainty, of course, whether the main axis of traffic in this area followed the ridge or just a minor branch. If it is assumed that the findspots of the copper alloy coins represent losses by participants in gatherings (or by the inhabitants of an

²² L. De Ligt, *Fairs and Markets in the Roman Empire: Economic and Social Aspects of Periodic Trade in a Pre-Industrial Society* (1993), 62, 252-3; R.G. Collingwood, 'Roman Britain', in T. Frank (ed.), *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, iii (1937), 115-17; L.V. Grinsell, *The Archaeology of Wessex* (1958), 149, 169, 174, 305-6; D. Miles and S. Palmer, 'White Horse Hill', *Current Archaeology*, 142 (1995), 372-8, esp. 377; G. Lock and C. Gosden, 'Hillforts of the Ridgeway Project: Excavations on White Horse Hill 1995', *S. Midlands Archaeol.* xxvii (1997), 64-9; M. Henig, *Religion in Roman Britain* (1984), 39.

²³ De Ligt, *op. cit.* note 22, *passim*; J. M. Frayn, *Markets and Fairs in Roman Italy* (1993), 133-44.

²⁴ Information kindly supplied by Vic Strange about this tradition, which may be based on a publication.

²⁵ C. E. King, 'Late Roman Silver Hoards in Britain and the Problem of Clipped Siliquae', *Brit. Numismatic Jnl.* 51 (1981), 5, 12 no. 3, 16 no. 27, 18-19, 22, 24 no. 27.

²⁶ *V.C.H. Oxon.* xii, 183 n. 87; cf. Stapleton, *op. cit.* note 6, p. xvii; Chambers, *op. cit.* note 11, p. 177; J. Parker, *The Early History of Oxford* (Oxf. Hist. Soc. iii), 76.

extensive village or by travellers?) along an ancient track, then the significant westward extension of the scatter may indicate that there was not only a route lying in a N.-S. direction, but that some travellers may have chosen the convenient direct way from the ridge to the Cherwell crossing. If there was indeed such a distinctive curve in the port-way in the area of St. Mary's church, this route would have been longer than the modern NW.-SE. route through Kidlington along Banbury and Oxford Road, but it would have passed through the area which formed the old centre of the settlement, certainly from the Norman period, but probably already much earlier. It may be significant that recent excavations by the Oxford Archaeological Unit have uncovered various ditches and a few pits besides 4 pieces of late Iron Age to early Roman pottery at SP 4960 1475, c. 50 m. SE. from the eastern end of the footpath from Sparrowgap Bridge.²⁷

It is clear, of course, that the main Roman N.-S. road from the end of the 1st century at the latest crossed Otmoor, and that there was a network of other minor ancient roads and tracks between this road and the port-way.²⁸ However, another O.U.A.S. excavation at Merton, to be published in due course, has yielded evidence which strongly suggests that the immediate predecessor of the Alchester-Dorchester road bypassed Otmoor to the E.

The ford between Kidlington and Hampton Poyle continued to be used in the Middle Ages. This is not only indicated by the geographical position of the two villages, but also by the discovery of a Viking spearhead (Petersen type M.)²⁹ in the River Cherwell at the modern foot bridge, i.e. in the area of the ancient ford. The weapon with 'fine pattern-welding on the blade and socket' was presumably used as a thrust spear³⁰ and dates to the late 10th or 11th century,³¹ a time of devastating Danish invasions, during which the spear may have been brought to England. Traces of the wooden shaft were observed. This may indicate that the spearhead broke off accidentally or during a fight: if lost with the whole shaft, its end would have floated on the water, allowing recovery. But even the salvage of a 40 cm.-long iron object from a ford does not seem to be an impossible task, and this may suggest that in fact the whole weapon was deposited quite deliberately at the river crossing, for ritual reasons, perhaps weighted down with stones.³² The discovery of a second spearhead (c. 4th- to 10th-century) from Kidlington, also from the Cherwell but at Gosford Bridge, may offer support for this hypothesis.³³

²⁷ D. Poore, 'Kidlington, Land to the Rear of Church Street (SP 4960 1475)', *S. Midlands Archaeol.* xxvii (1997), 59; Offord, op. cit. note 17, p. 8; cf. Freeborn, op. cit. note 12, p. 4.

²⁸ Cf. C.J. Cheetham, 'Some Roman and Pre-Roman Settlements and Roads by the Confluence of the Cherwell and the Ray near Otmoor', *Oxoniensia*, lx (1995), 419-26.

²⁹ R.J.C. Atkinson and J.R. Kirk, 'Archaeological Notes, 1949.7. Kidlington, Oxon.' *Oxoniensia*, xiv (1949), 76, pl. XIA; J. Petersen, *De Norske Vikingesverd. En Typologisk-kronologisk Studie over Vikingetidens Vaaben* (1919), 34 Fig. 25, 35.

³⁰ Cf. H. Steuer, 'Historische Phasen der Bewaffnung nach Aussagen der archäologischen Quellen Mittel- und Nordeuropas im ersten Jahrtausend n. Chr.', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 4 (1970), 370.

³¹ S.H. Fuglesang, *Some Aspects of the Ringerike Style: A Phase of 11th-century Scandinavian Art* (1980), 31-3, pl. 14.

³² On the significance of Viking weapons in English rivers, see R. Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic* (1987), 107-8, 111-12, 114-15; W. Torbrügge, 'Vor- und frühgeschichtliche Flußfunde. Zur Ordnung und Bestimmung einer Denkmälergruppe', *Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission*, 51-2 (1970-1), 111-14, pl. 20.2-22.1; see also W.A. Seaby, 'Late Dark Age Finds from the Cherwell and Ray, 1876-86', *Oxoniensia*, xv (1950), 29-43.

³³ M.J. Swanton, *A Corpus of Pagan Anglo-Saxon Spear-Types* (BAR vii, 1974), 10, 59; for the dating of this type (C2), see M.J. Swanton, *The Spearheads of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (1973), 50-5 with further references; for the exact findspot (Gosford Bridge), see Ashmolean Museum no. 1938.879 (access to the unpubl. entry in the inventory list kindly provided by Mr. Arthur MacGregor).

ROMAN COINS FOUND WEST AND NORTH OF THE MOAT IN KIDLINGTON
by VIC STRANGE and EBERHARD SAUER³⁴

Numbers correspond to those on Fig. 1, indicating very approximate findspots.

- 1*. An-Q (diam.: 19-20 mm.), Allectus, AD 295-6,³⁵ Cam, RIC V.2. 569 no. 128, QC.
2. Fol. Constantine I, AD 307-19, mint?, obv.: IMP CONSTANTINVS P F AVG; rev.: SOLI INVICTO COMITI, Sol stg. l., holding globe, mint-mark starting with P[---] or R[---].
- 3*. Fol (diam.: 22-3 mm.), Maximinus Daia, AD 310-11, Nic, RIC VI 564 no. 66a, SMNF.
- 4*. Fol (diam.: 18 mm.), Constantine II as Caesar, AD 320-1, Lon, RIC VII 109 no. 190, PLON.
5. Fol, Constantine I, AD 330-4, Tre, RIC VII 214 no. 518 - 218 no. 555, TRS.
6. Fol, Constantine I: Urbs Roma, AD 330-5, Lug, RIC VII 138 no. 242 - 140 no. 275, PLG.
- 7*. Æ3/ type: Sil (diam.: 17-18 mm.), Julian, AD 360-1 (prototype), Arl (mint of prototype), RIC VIII 227 no. 295 var.: copper alloy coin (but reduced *siliqua*-type): core of an ancient forgery; unofficial cast(?) coin: well preserved, but contours not very sharp, TCON.
8. Sil, Constantius II, AD 353-61, Arl, RIC VIII 218 no. 207, 223 no. 253 or 226 no. 291, SCON.
- 9*. Sil (clipped, diam.: 12-14 mm.), Valentinian II, Theodosius I, Arcadius or Honorius (obv. legend not preserved), AD 388-95, Tre or Med, RIC IX 31 no. 94, 33 no. 106 or 83 no. 32,³⁶ mint-mark not preserved.

All coins are metal-detecting finds by Vic Strange. Those marked with an asterisk (*) have been seen by both of us, and the identification of the others is based on a detailed written description.

The 9 listed pieces are in a good state of preservation. About 40 more *aes* coins were found during the last 4 years (up to early 1997) in the same area as nos. 1-7, but none in the area of nos. 8 and 9 (Fig. 1). They were very corroded and had the appearance of late Roman coins. They are no longer available for examination. In the two fields (extending in the W. to the field boundary from SP 489 148 northwards) W. of the field yielding the two *siliquae*, not a single Roman coin was discovered. The same is true for the meadows between the main E.-W. drainage ditch and the River Cherwell. They have not been ploughed in recent years and the deeper layers containing ancient finds are presumably largely undisturbed. These meadows, and the grassland E. of the strip of land where a Roman well was allegedly discovered in 1840,³⁷ which did not yield Roman coins either, have been less intensively explored than the agricultural land to the W. and the field immediately N. of the moat. The moated site itself and the adjacent land on its eastern side (with the alleged well) have not been searched. No other Roman metal objects and no Celtic or medieval coins were encountered in the entire area. The earliest post-medieval coins were one each of Elizabeth I and of Charles I. Vic Strange observed a very low concentration of late Roman Oxfordshire ware and some medieval pottery in the area of coins nos. 2, 5 and 7.

³⁴ Coins discovered and first described and determined by Vic Strange; further determination (RIC etc.) by Eberhard Sauer.

³⁵ P.J. Casey, *Carausius and Allectus: The British Usurpers* (1994), 88.

³⁶ H. Cohen, *Description historique des monnaies frappées sous l'Empire Romain*, viii (2nd edn. 1892), 187 no. 59.

³⁷ See above, note 26.

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³⁸ Richards, *op. cit.* note 2, p. 68.