

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES

### *An early Roman Habitation-site at Dorchester, Oxon. (FIGS. 51-52)*

Mr. L. Green, the occupier of No. 10 Tenpenny, in the new housing estate to the south of the south side of the ramparts of Roman and medieval Dorchester, reported in April 1954 that in digging his vegetable garden he found a Roman rubbish dump at a level of 2-3 feet below the surface (FIG. 52, Site A). From some sherds of pottery which he produced it seemed clear that the dump was the remnant of some first-century habitation and a visit paid to the site confirmed this.

The following objects from the site are now in the Ashmolean Museum, by kind gift from Mr. Green :

1. Fragment of daub showing distinct traces of wattle running horizontally and perpendicularly with a portion of white plaster adhering to one flat surface.
2. Fragment of daub not showing wattle-marks, but with a smoothish exterior surface on one side.
3. Part of base of a Samian bowl, form Dragendorff 18, with portion of a stamp 'OFFE . . .' This may be restored as OFFELIX (the stamp of Felix) a potter of the Claudius-Vespasian period who worked at Montans and La Graufesenque, according to F. Oswald, *Index of Potters' stamps on Terra Sigillata* (1931), p. 120, and concentrated on forms like Dr. 15, 18, 24, 27.
4. Fragment of rim and side of bowl of white ware with linear incisions on the side in groups of four, incised before firing (FIG. 51, a).
5. Fragment of side of bowl of grey ware with raised barbotine dot design (FIG. 51, b).
6. Three fragments of grey ware dishes of various forms (FIG. 51, c-e).
7. Portion of a butt-beaker with rouletted decoration.
8. Handle, ending in a point, of a bronze spoon, only the butt of the bowl being extant, L. 3 in. (FIG. 51, f).

The pottery, particularly the Samian fragment by Felix, makes it clear that this dump of material came from a dwelling-site of the later first century A.D. which must have been close to where the dump was found, if not actually in the very same place. It was not possible to make further investigations in Mr. Green's garden to see how far the dump or the site extended, but the material found was of such interest that it has been felt worthwhile to write this note on it. Coming so soon after the discovery (see p. 223 f. and FIGS. 44 and 52, 'Site B') of a site nearby to the west, which yielded pottery of late Iron Age and Romano-British date, it makes it clear that first-century habitation on the site of Dorchester extended outside as well as inside the Roman 'town' defences and may even indicate that the Roman 'town' was a military, or at least a para-military, foundation, and that the civil settlement was outside it during its earliest years.

D. B. HARDEN.

### *The so-called 'Wallingford' Sword*

The late ninth-century Saxon sword-hilt in the Ashmolean Museum with silver mounts inlaid with niello (A.M. 1890.14) has long been known to archaeologists as

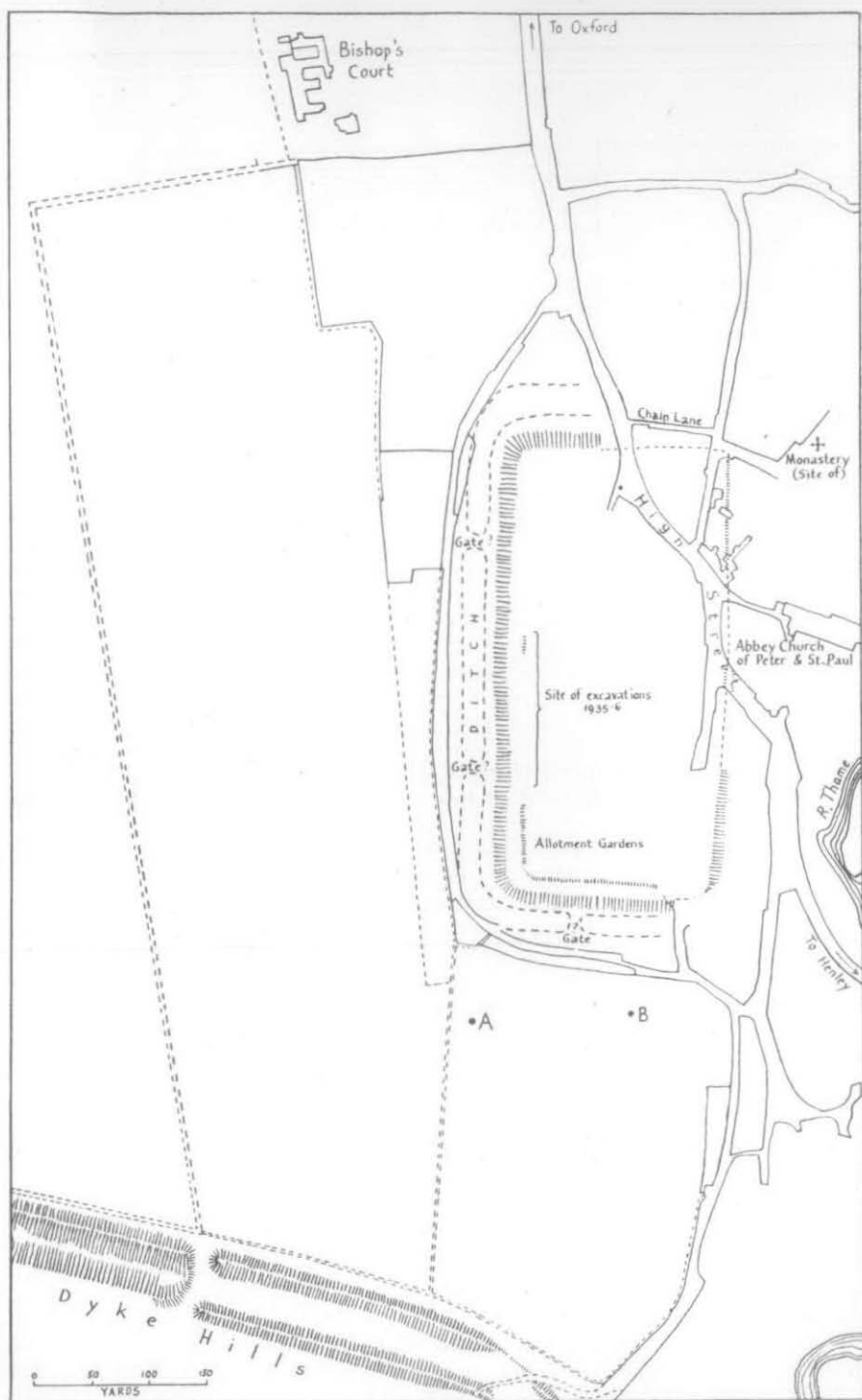


FIG. 52

DORCHESTER, OXON.

Map showing position of two first-century habitation-sites S. of the Roman town : A. Site in Mr. Green's garden, no. 10, Tenpenny (p. 261) ; B. Site in Mr. Welch's garden, S. end of Watling Lane (p. 223 f.)

Based on the 25-in. O.S. map with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office

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the 'Wallingford' sword, because Sir John Evans, who published it in 1887, stated that it had been found at or near Wallingford.<sup>2</sup> At that time the sword was in Sir John Evans's collection, but he gave it shortly afterwards to the Ashmolean, where his son, A. J. (later Sir Arthur) Evans was then the Keeper.

Recently, in searching for something else, I accidentally came upon the following note in the *Proceedings of the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society*, n.s. III (1874), 171, in the report of the proceedings of the first meeting of the Society in Hilary Term, 1874 (24 February):

'Mr. A. J. Evans of Brasenose College then exhibited and described a portion of a very fine Anglo-Danish sword, with ornamental silver hilt, probably of the date of about A.D. 1000, found at Bogs Mill, near Abingdon . . .'

A. J. Evans was at that time in his last year as an undergraduate at Brasenose.

This 1874 account is so factual and precise that it seems unlikely that the Abingdon provenience which it gives should be discarded in favour of Sir John's 'Wallingford' of thirteen years later. Had Sir John or his son discovered in the interval that Abingdon was wrong and Wallingford right, it seems most improbable that Sir John would not have mentioned the previous erroneous attribution. As he passes over the earlier reference in silence, we must, I think, assume that both he and his son had forgotten the real provenience, just as they had forgotten the exact date of its discovery. If the forgetfulness had been only on Sir John's side, we might have expected Arthur to have corrected the attribution when the sword reached the Ashmolean. But he allowed 'Wallingford' to stand.

On no reasonable reckoning can it be claimed that Bogs Mill, Abingdon, is near Wallingford, being about nine miles away as the crow flies. It is, in fact (as Miss A. C. Baker kindly suggested to me in 1951 when I applied to her for help in this matter), almost certainly to be identified with Buggs Mill, which lies on the River Ock, about one mile above the centre of the town, and which is now called New Cut Mill. In view of Miss Baker's suggestion the tenant of New Cut Mill house, Mr. K. G. Rook, very readily undertook to make enquiries to see whether any recollection of the finding of the sword still existed in the locality, but without avail. He informed me, however, that firm local tradition ascribes the name Buggs Mill to a former miller, Mr. Bugg. A. J. Evans's 'Bogs Mill' of 1874 could be a pardonable mishearing of that name.

We may, I think, henceforth accept this fine piece as the Abingdon, and not the Wallingford, sword.

D. B. HARDEN.

### *A Wall-painting in Ambrosden Church, Oxon.*

According to John Dunkin<sup>3</sup> a gallery was erected in 1764 at the west end of the nave of the church of St. Mary Virgin in Ambrosden for the use of a choir. The arch of the west tower was filled in and an oil painting of the Resurrection at the Last Day was painted on the plaster of the partition. The painting measured 20 ft. by 12 ft.

<sup>2</sup> *Archaeologia*, L (1887), 534 ff. Sir John's relevant words are: 'The fragment of a sword . . . was found some ten or twelve years ago at or near Wallingford, and was added to my collection by my son, Mr. Arthur J. Evans . . .'

<sup>3</sup> J. Dunkin, *History and Antiquities of the Hundreds of Bullington and Ploughley* (1823), II, p. 6 and engraving opposite.

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A faculty was granted on 3 July 1950 by the Chancellor, and presumably on the advice of the Diocesan Advisory Committee, for the destruction of this painting on the grounds (as put forward by the Parochial Church Council) that the bells could not be rung without bringing plaster down within the church and also that the cost involved in its preservation and treatment were not justified, the painting being considered unsightly.

The following record is therefore worth making, it being based on a report made by one of us (E.C.R.) at the request of the Diocesan Advisory Committee in February 1950.

At the top of the painting (PL. XXII) was the Hebrew symbol of Jehovah in rayed clouds. Arches on the spectator's left may have represented the Heavenly Jerusalem. On each side in the upper area of the painting were angels blowing trumpets, with open books in their other hands, on which were inscribed respectively the words *AWAKE YE THAT SLEEP : AND COME TO JUDGMENT*. The detail on the extreme flanks of the painting and part of the sides was indistinct, but the whole of the lower centre was filled with a representation of the General Resurrection, with figures of young and old, men and women, some in shrouds, rising from tombs and graves with another angel among them.

The style of the painting leads to a dating of about the middle of the eighteenth century and doubtless it was executed, as stated by Dunkin, in about 1764. The work, while not of a high order, was extremely competent and argues a craftsman or artist well above the average local standard. In view of other parallels (e.g. at Lowick and Drayton House, Northants.) it seems likely that the work was commissioned by Sir Edward Turner, owner of the manor house close by, and carried out by a painter from Oxford or London who was also engaged on the decoration of the house at the same time.

In February 1950 most of the painting was in fair condition but there were places where the main coat was free from the backing ; some small areas of plaster had fallen ; the whole was very dirty, dusty and obscured by opaque decayed varnish. It would have been perfectly feasible to clean and secure the greater part of the painting without excessive cost, if a proper appeal had been launched.

The painting was a great rarity. Parish church mural decoration of the eighteenth century on a large scale, such as this, is almost unknown, and the portrayal of such a subject as the Last Judgment, with the General Resurrection, at this period must have been unique. Its destruction with a faculty from the Chancellor in 1950, is much to be deplored, and it is with much restraint of our feelings of indignation in this matter that the above lines have been written.

E. CLIVE ROUSE ; P. S. SPOKES.



AMBROSDEN, OXON.

Eighteenth-century wall-painting (now destroyed), depicting the Last Judgment, with the General Resurrection (p. 263 f.)

*Ph.: P. S. Spokes*