

Notes and News

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES

Barford St. Michael, Oxon. Sherds of Romano-British coarse wares were reported by Mr. A. E. Charles.¹ (1) First-second century grey ware, and fire-marked stones, found when ploughing at Iron Down. (National Grid: 42/413316 or nearabouts.)

(2) Second century and later wares, possibly made near Cowley and Sandford, including mortaria, found when ditching near Ilbury farm, west of the minor road between Barford St. Michael and Nether Worton. Rubble, possibly from a hard-standing, was also found. (National Grid: 42/432315.)

Cassington, Oxon. Finds continued from John H. Brown's gravel-pit at Purwell farm, in an area about 100 yards north-west of that previously excavated by Mr. F. H. G. Montagu-Puckle.²

(1) A shallow pit which had been largely quarried away was excavated by Mr. E. M. Jope. It contained a slate wrist-guard of Beaker-culture type and a square button of shale (FIG. 19), and was probably the remains of a grave. The wrist-guard is only the second to have been found in the Oxford region. The other came from a rich grave with a B-beaker at Dorchester.³ We do not know of a parallel for the button. Shale or jet, in Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age contexts, has been previously found in an inhumation-grave with a B-beaker at Cassington,⁴ in an inhumation-grave primary to another with a B-beaker at Stanton Harcourt,⁵ and in association with a cremation-burial and typical Wessex-culture finds, also at Stanton Harcourt.⁶ The wrist-guard is in the teaching-collection of the Department of Archaeology, Queen's University, Belfast and the button is in the Ashmolean Museum (1958.76).

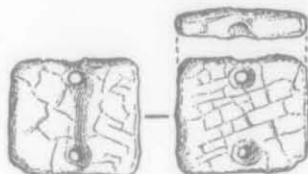


FIG. 19
Shale Button from Cassington. Scale: $\frac{1}{2}$.

(2) A few sherds of undecorated Anglo-Saxon pottery and a sherd of a foot-stand in imitation Samian ware, were found in spoil-heaps by Mr. M. J. Cope.

Coln Rogers, Glos. Struck flints including leaf-shaped arrowheads, were reported by Professor L. W. Grensted from a ploughed field in the south angle between the

¹ *Victoria County History, Oxfordshire*, 1 (1939), 331-2 for other finds nearby.

² *Oxoniensia*, xxiii (1958) Notes and News.

³ *Inventaria Archaeologica*, G. B. 1.

⁴ *Oxoniensia*, iii (1938), 27, *Oxon*, 2; *Antiquaries Journal*, xiv (1934), pl. xxxi, no. 1, f.p. 267.

⁵ *Oxoniensia*, viii/ix (1943-4), 36-9.

⁶ *Id.*, x (1945), 29.

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Cirencester to Stow-on-the-Wold road (A.429) and the minor road between Bibury and Foss Cross. (National Grid: 43/071090 or nearabouts.)

Crowmarsh Gifford, Oxon. A section was dug across the south Oxfordshire Grim's Ditch by the Southern Gas Board, about 350 yards east of the Reading-Crowmarsh road (B.479). The bank had spread over 30 ft. and yielded no traces of revetment or other structures; it was seen to be very degraded, consisting of chalk-rubble in blocks not more than 5 in. long disturbed throughout by tree-roots. Not more than 2 ft. 6 in. of this material overlay the former topsoil, which was not more than 1 ft. 3 in. thick and overlay chalk. The topsoil showed no turf-line and was full of fragments of chalk about 1-2 in. long, both indications that it has been cultivated prior to the building of the bank. A ditch 24 ft. wide was seen to lie to the south of the bank. The section did not go below its upper filling which consisted of light brown stoneless loam. (National Grid: 41/620878.)

Dorchester, Oxon. (1) Excavation of the ditches begun by Miss M. A. Smith was continued by Miss J. Close-Brooks and Mr. J. May, and members of the Oxford University Archaeological Society.⁷ Pits were also discovered. Late Romano-British pottery was found.

(2) Romano-British coarse pottery and sherds of Samian ware including decorated examples, animal bones, fragments of limestone marked by fire and iron slag were reported by Mr. R. P. F. Godfrey found in an excavation for Post Office telephones outside the White Hart Hotel. (National Grid: 44/577922.)

The Samian ware was seen by Miss M. G. Simpson who kindly identified the following: Form 30, Flavian, first century A.D., South Gaul; Form 18/31, probably mid-second century, Central Gaul; Form 36, Antonine, Central Gaul; Form 37, Ovolo, Antonine, Central Gaul; Form 33, base with stamp S., Antonine; Form 37, cock and heavy festoons, by Mercator or Paullus, second half of the second century, Central Gaul; Form 37, probably Cinnamus, Antonine, Central Gaul; Form 37, Antonine, Central Gaul. Fine plain sherds of the Antonine period, one with a rivet hole, were also identified. All the second century pottery was badly burned. (National Grid: 41/577944.)

Eynsham, Oxon. Excavation of a third ring-ditch, immediately north-east of the two previously reported in John H. Brown's gravel-pit at City farm,⁸ was carried out by Mr. N. P. Bayne, Miss J. Close-Brooks, Mr. A. Selkirk and members of the Oxford University Archaeological Society. The ditch was found to be concentric to an inner penannular ditch, in the upper filling of which were sherds of B-beaker pottery. About 100 yards to the west, pits similar to those previously reported were found by Miss A. C. Cruikshank and Miss S. Turner. One contained a Bronze Age collared urn (Ashmolean Museum: 1958.73). To the north other pits containing Iron Age pottery and animal bones were found by Miss Turner.

Frilford, Berks. A flaked and polished axehead of flint was found by Mr. P. J. Westwood on the footpath between Manor or Cradle farm and Garford. It may have come from one of the cultivated fields on either side. Ashmolean Museum: 1958.71. (National Grid: 41/434966.)

Fyfield, Berks. A polished axehead of fine-grained rock was acquired by the Ashmolean Museum, having been found by Mr. J. Spiers in the winter of 1925-6 in

⁷ *Id.*, xxiii (1958), Notes and News.

⁸ *Ibid.*

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'Rising Ground', a ploughed field south of the Oxford-Faringdon road. Ashmolean Museum: 1958.72. (National Grid: 41/425976.)

Hailey, Oxon. A few sherds of thirteenth century pottery were found during alterations to the Old Manor House, Poffley End, in made-ground underlying the present-day floor. As it stands, the structure probably dates from the sixteenth century. (National Grid: 42/358125.)

Harwell, Berks. Mrs. M. Chitty reported local information that a barrow existed about 70 years ago north of the minor road from Milton Hill to Harwell near its intersection with the Wantage-Didcot road (A.4130), close to the angle between the minor road and a track running north-west, formerly called 'The Barrow'. (National Grid: 41/492895.)

Hatford, Berks. Sherds of Early Iron Age AB coarse ware were reported by Mr. R. Henry from marks which appear to indicate the tops of ancient storage-pits in ploughed areas east and north-west of the sand-pit which lies west of the minor road from Hatford to Hatforddown Cottages. A bone needle of Early Iron Age type was found in a spoil-heap from the sand-pit.⁹ (National Grid: 41/335952.)

Holton, Oxon. Mr. E. V. Roberts reported some sites and finds discovered in previous years.

(1) Romano-British sherds from the east slope of Red Hill just inside the parish boundary. (National Grid: 42/589071.)

(2) Animal bones and the bottom stone of a rotary quern in a cutting through the east side of the moat around Church farm. (National Grid: 42/606063.)

(3) Stone-footings and medieval sherds in the north bank of the Thame at Holton Mill. (National Grid: 42/613056.)

(4) Stone footings with medieval sherds, quarry-pits probably of medieval date, and a ditch with sherds of second century Romano-British coarse wares in 'Barn Piece', a field south of the minor road between Wheatley and Worminghall. (National Grid: 42/607059.)

Leafield, Oxon. Romano-British sherds of second century type including a rim of Samian ware (cf. *Drag.* Form 33) and fragments of fire-marked limestone were reported by Mrs. V. W. Steed from an approximately circular scoop, known locally as 'The Roman Well', about 20 ft. in diameter and 3 ft. deep in the slope at Slatepits Copse. (National Grid: 42/165325 or nearabouts.)

Lechlade, Glos. Excavations for the Ministry of Works by Mrs. M. U. Jones continued in Messrs. Amey's gravel-pit near Little Lemhill farm.¹⁰ Romano-British enclosure-ditches and defensive ditches were found with pottery of second-fourth century date. Native Belgic wares of the Early Iron Age were also found in ditches and pits.

Lew, Oxon. Sub-rectangular crop-marks in the south-west angle between the railway and the Bampton-Witney road (A.4095) were reported by Mr. D. Sturdy as showing in aerial photographs in the collection of the Air Ministry. (National Grid: 42/324070.)

Lewknor, Oxon. Ditches and pits of an Early Iron Age settlement and a few inhumation graves of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery were discovered during the construction of a reservoir on The Knapp, and were excavated by Mr. M. Hassall and

⁹ Cf. Bulleid and Gray, *The Glastonbury Lake Village*, II (1917), 410, type B.

¹⁰ *Oxoniensis*, XXIII (1958), Notes and News.

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Mr. D. Nicholls. Early Iron Age pottery was found comparable to that from Chinnor nearby.¹¹ (National Grid: 41/716971.)

Northleigh, Oxon. A few more Early Iron Age sherds of Belgic ware were reported by Mrs. H. E. O'Neil found in a shallow ditch in the quarry of the Witney Stone Co. Ltd.¹² (National Grid: 42/387142 or thereabouts.)

Oxford, Christ Church. A cutting was made by Mr. D. Sturdy against the foundations which occupy part of the central area of the cloisters of the Priory of St. Frideswide. They were found to extend to 4 ft. 8 in. below the surface lying in the filling of a pit over 6 ft. deep which had been dug through the graves of at least 11 individuals. Undisturbed gravel lay at 2 ft. 6 in. below the surface.

The foundations contained fragments of the masonry of windows cusped in fifteenth-sixteenth century style, and may possibly be connected with the plans of Cardinal College for which the greater part of Tom Quad. was built in 1525-30.¹³ Alternatively, they may represent an abortive scheme of 1669 for rebuilding following damage to the east range of cloisters by fire.

Oxford, Pusey Lane. Pits with pottery dated from the thirteenth to nineteenth centuries were observed by Mr. R. E. Linington and Mr. D. Sturdy in excavations for the new Cast Gallery of the Ashmolean Museum. Probably until recently the area consisted of yards and waste land behind the housing frontage of St. Giles.

Oxford, Queen's College. Excavations for the new Provost's Lodge were watched by Mr. R. E. Linington, and showed that seventeenth century and later disturbances had removed most of the earlier occupation-layers. To the east, Mr. D. Sturdy found a large pit containing sherds of lamps and cooking pots of the mid-thirteenth century (see above, p. 22).

Oxford, St. John's College. A large sub-rectangular pit of the twelfth century and five smaller pits or wells of the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries were found in excavations for the new building in the east range of the north quadrangle. Foundations of the stables and other College outbuildings of the sixteenth century were also seen.

Oxford, University Science Area, South Parks Road. A ditch belonging to the Civil War defences was seen running west-south-west to east-north-east in the excavation for the extension to the Department of Human Anatomy.¹⁴ As originally dug through Summertown-Radley terrace gravel, the ditch was more than 27 ft. wide. It was between 10 and 11 ft. deep below the modern surface. The north slope was about 50° and the steepest part of the south slope 40°. Slightly less than 2 ft. of gravel-silting had accumulated at the foot of the north slope, when the ditch was filled in with gravel and top soil, probably in one operation. The bowl of a clay-pipe of Oswald's type 5a, dated 1640-1660,¹⁵ was found by Mr. J. May at the base of the infilling on the bottom of the ditch. Ashmolean Museum: 1958.78.

Radcot, Oxon. A sixteenth century spur was reported by the Rev. A. Ogle from the west side of the island at Radcot Bridge. (National Grid: 42/995286.)

Russell's Water, Oxon. A partly polished flint axehead was found by Mrs. H. O. D. Cake in a ploughed field north-west of the village and north-east of the

¹¹ *Antiquaries Journal*, xxxi (1951), 132 ff.

¹² *Oxoniensia*, xxiii (1958), Notes and News.

¹³ *Id.*, viii/ix (1943-4), 152.

¹⁴ *Id.*, i (1936), 171; iii (1938), 177.

¹⁵ *Archaeological News Letter*, iii (1951), 156.

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minor road between Cookley Green and Stonor.¹⁶ (National Grid: 41/708901.)

Swalcliffe, Oxon. Excavations at the Early Iron Age hill-fort on Madmarston Hill were continued by Mr. P. J. Fowler and members of the Oxford University Archaeological Society.¹⁷ Further cuttings were made through the defences, and pits were discovered in the interior. Early Iron Age pottery and a hoard of iron currency bars were found. (National Grid: 42/387388.) The footings of a medieval house were discovered at the bottom of the hill. (National Grid: 42/388385.)

Watereaton, Oxon. Circular crop marks were reported by Mrs. H. O. King as regularly appearing in pasture at Fries farm, north of the railway and between the Woodstock and Banbury roads (A.34, A.423). (National Grid: 42/494113 or nearabouts.)

Witney, Oxon. Sections dug by the Southern Electricity Board south-west of the town between the Bampton and Standlake roads (A.4095, A.415), across the 'Line of Saxon Rampart' marked on the Ordnance Survey 25 in. map (Oxfordshire Sheet XXXI, no. 8), showed no trace of a rampart or ditch. Mr. D. Sturdy surveyed the remaining area and saw no signs of an earthwork except for a low mound along the south edge of the churchyard. The defences may thus be discounted. (National Grid: 42/352094.)

'Emma's Dike', also marked on Ordnance Survey maps, was seen to be a stream running in an abandoned meander of the Windrush. A Late Bronze Age sword was recently found in what must have been the base of the channel of this meander.¹⁸

Wootton, Oxon. A series of circular crop-marks were reported by Mrs. V. W. Steed showing in aerial photographs in the collection of the Air Ministry, running west-north-west to east-south-east across fields north of Upper Dornford farm between the parish boundary and the river. (National Grid: around 42/457217.)

HUMPHREY CASE.

DAVID STURDY.

A GREENSTONE AXE FROM DEAN, NEAR CHARLBURY, OXFORDSHIRE

While working in Mr. L. J. Farnworth's Gravel Pit at Dean in August 1958 (National Grid: 42/341213), Mr. S. Gibson, of Stow-on-the-Wold, recovered the axe in a load of gravel. The gravels of the River Evenlode valley in this area are of varying types, layers of glacial drift with Bunter pebbles being present with those of the local oolite. The exact location of the site of the find was not noted. The butt end of the axe was missing but there are indications that it could have had a pointed end. The axe measures $3\frac{3}{8}$ ins. in length and is $2\frac{1}{2}$ ins. wide (FIG. 20).

The axe has been examined by the South Western Group for the identification of stone axes and is stated to be a greenstone, perhaps originating from a quarry in Devon or Cornwall.

The axe is now in the possession of the Ashmolean Museum (1959.224).

HELEN E. O'NEIL.

¹⁶ References to other finds, *Oxoniensia*, xxiii (1958), Notes and News.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Id.*, xxii (1957), 106.

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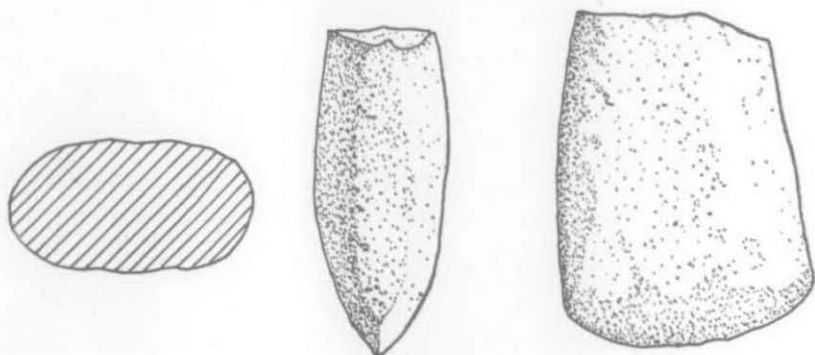


FIG. 20

Greenstone Axe from near Charlbury, Oxfordshire. Scale: $\frac{1}{2}$.

THE ROMAN ROAD FROM ALCHESTER TO DORCHESTER

The construction during 1958 of the by-pass east of Oxford from Headington to Rose Hill involved the probable destruction of a considerable length of this well-known Roman road.¹⁹ Preliminary field work and later examination of the numerous trenches dug in connection with the by-pass, showed that substantial remains of the road only occurred *in situ* in Open Magdalen Wood.²⁰ Elsewhere the stone has been completely removed, as recorded by Hussey and others.²¹

Members of the Oxford University Archaeological Society made preliminary investigations during March 1958. Surface indications of the road were seen at various points, but no further work was possible owing to an extremely high water table. But in June 1958, the construction of a new drainage culvert improved the drainage and a section of the road was obtained (FIG. 21).

The section showed a well-built early road²² which had been re-surfaced and had a branch road alongside; the relationship of the two roads was obtained, and the re-surfacing dated to the fourth century. Cuttings 1 and 2 to the south confirmed the evidence from the trench for the culvert, although much of the road-material was found to have been robbed. Trial trenches at the presumed position of the junction showed that the road-material had been robbed almost completely.

The early road had been constructed by first removing topsoil and weathered yellow clay down to the firm unweathered Oxford clay. An edge of the depression so formed was seen to the east of the road, in the section of the trench for the culvert (FIG. 21). The Roman road-builders then filled the depression with a rammed mass of stones and clay to make a road about 15 feet wide. At the west side of the road a small stone-lined ditch was constructed. After a considerable period of use, during which a large quantity of brown clayey soil was deposited on the western part

¹⁹ Fully described by the Rev. R. Hussey in *An account of the Roman road from Alchester to Dorchester* (1841).

²⁰ National Grid: 42/55630581.

²¹ Hussey, *op. cit.*, 13.

²² Found 20 to 30 feet west of the line shown in the O.S. map, 25 in. edition, Sheet SU5505.

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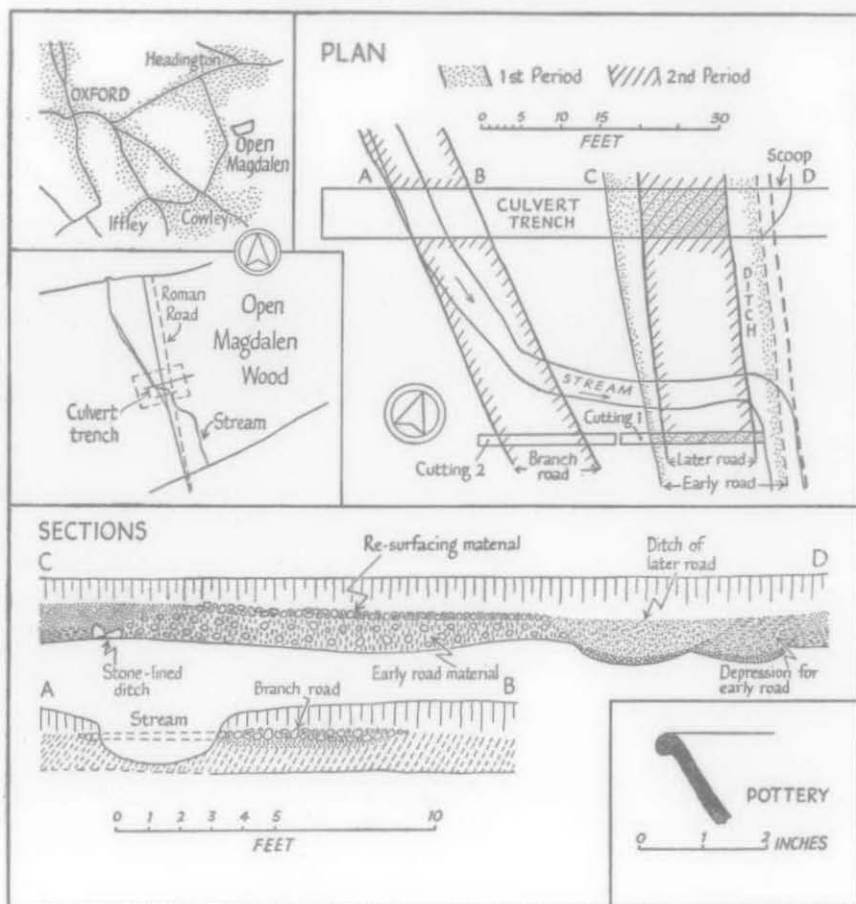


FIG. 21

of the road, extensive re-surfacing occurred. A layer of rough stones was laid and the width of the road reduced to about 11 feet. At the same time a ditch was dug along the eastern side of the road; in the filling of this ditch was found a rim-sherd of fourth-century red colour-coated ware.²³ The branch road of rough stone was presumably constructed at the same time; a few scraps of late Roman pottery were found in its make-up. As shown on FIG. 21 the western side of this road had been destroyed by a stream; but, judging from exposures in the banks, the road appears to have been originally about 9 feet wide.

²³ This potsherd is quite typical of the pottery from kiln-sites near Oxford, for instance, from Sandford-on-Thames. Cf. *Archaeologia*, LXXII (1922), 228, fig. 1, no. 6.

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The discovery of this branch road is of particular interest in view of the number of such minor roads that have been postulated.²⁴ Since 1939 two fourth century kiln-sites have been discovered in an area which could have been served by this road.²⁵ Thus it is possible that it was a purely local road associated with the pottery industry. Further discussion will have to be left until more evidence is obtained. However, it is worth stressing that negative evidence for the course of the minor road is by no means conclusive, since the construction of the by-pass showed that extensive robbing has removed almost all traces of the main road for most of its course west of Oxford.²⁶

R. E. LININGTON.

JOHN SKINNER'S OXFORD VERSES, 1790-3

When John Skinner (1772-1839), known to a limited public as the writer of the *Journal* which was published in 1930, was at Trinity College, Oxford, he wrote several verses which contain passages of academical interest. The book in which these verses are written is like all his other note-books, one hundred and one in all, in the British Museum (MS Add.33634). Of his Oxford verses the only one ever to be published is entitled 'Description of a Day spent in College during the Winter of 1792', which is printed as an appendix to the 'Journal of a Somerset Rector', edited by H. Coombs and A. N. Bax and referred to above, and also in 'Reminiscences of Oxford, by Oxford Men, 1559-1850', edited by L. M. Quiller-Couch (O.H.S., 1892). A few lines of another poem in the same collection are quoted by A. D. Godley in his 'Oxford in the Eighteenth Century' (1908).

Skinner matriculated at Trinity in November 1790, took his B.A. in 1794 and his M.A. in 1797. He was ordained in the latter year, and became Rector of Camerton in North Somerset in 1800.

The Oxford poems consist of three letters, one eclogue, and one satirical ballad. In the First Letter (1790) he describes his matriculation, and gives a sketch of the most popular Fellow of Trinity, Henry Kett, known as 'Horse' Kett, a print of whom appears in Deighton's prints of well-known characters. Unfortunately, Skinner remarks, he had come up just too late to know that famous Fellow of his College, Thomas Warton, 'Friend to good fellowship and cheer', who had died in the summer of 1790, but his poetry is still there to be enjoyed and will always be.

He has much to say of academical dress, making facetious remarks about trencher caps and the 'leading strings' on commoners' gowns, while the pomp of Proctors and Doctors as seen by an undergraduate is generally awe-inspiring, though sometimes slightly amusing. He is serious, however, in questioning the right of having visible signs of class distinction such as a particular kind of dress for Noblemen and Gentlemen-Commoners. In this he was a child of his age; this doubt would hardly have entered the mind of an undergraduate twenty years before.

Radcliffe Square seems particularly to have taken his fancy. He disliked the Camera, calling it 'pondrous', but liked All Souls with its 'Gothic symetry'. He thus accepted the taste of the period, a compromise between two extremes of archi-

²⁴ A full list was given by Miss M. V. Taylor in *V.C.H. Oxon.*, I (1939), 278-9. *Diverticulum* (b) may represent our branch road.

²⁵ In the grounds of the Churchill Hospital, Headington. *Oxoniensia*, xvii/xviii (1952-3), 224-6; xx (1955), 90-1.

²⁶ As noticed farther north. *Id.*, xi/xii (1946-7), 165.

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ture, formally gothic or informally classical. Several prints of the Square have been pasted in about this part of the book.

In writing of Brasenose, the College which he maintains is patron of the richest livings, he is somewhat sarcastic, so is he when he glances at the neglected Schools, and the Heads of Houses with their 'saucer eyes, and teapot noses'.

The Third Letter (1792), though of great interest, has already been published and needs no description here. The Fourth, entitled 'Spring, 1793', proves that by his third year Skinner was growing tired of formal academical exercises. He observes that there are many senior members of the University who go up Headington Hill for their constitutional every day without once noticing the beauties of nature. The romantic breaks out for a moment in a short passage worth quoting:

'But ask those slow pac'd Sires who climb
The steps of Heddington, what time
They felt such inward thrill?—Alas!
Trackless by them bright seasons pass
Like sunbeams on the wall . . .'

The dustiness of much formal learning disgusts him, and with such a sentiment this Letter ends.

We now pass to the Eclogues. The Second Eclogue (1793), the scene of which is given as 'near the Hall Door of Trinity College', is an amusing account of an undergraduate's decision not to dine in Hall, 'I run to take my name From Kitchen books . . .' Whether or not he intends to dine at Woodstock his friend, who likes the College fare, cannot tell, and the Manciple, proud of his gifts as a caterer, politely tries to tempt him to stay and have his dinner if not in Hall then in his own rooms—but in vain. The wonderful list of dishes which can be prepared at short notice leave one spellbound, but all that friend and Manciple can say is lost upon Labienus. Where he eventually does dine we shall never know.

Only once does Skinner touch on contemporary politics, and when he does in 'The Honest Tailor' we realize how great an advance the ideas of the French Revolution had made upon public opinion by 1792, even in quiet, provincial Oxford. If the academical authorities in their fear were becoming more and more authoritarian, the workmen of Oxford were no less influenced in another direction, and that year the journeymen-tailors refused to work until their wages were increased. They had become defiant, and argued that 'Tutors and Proctors, and eke all shabby fellows In fact are no better than us hungry Tailors'. What could be more alarming than this for the Establishment? It is impossible to tell what were Skinner's views, but we know that the revolutionary spirit of such an undergraduate as Landor, who refused to have his hair powdered for Hall as a whiggish gesture, resulted in his expulsion from the University a few years later.

W. N. HARGREAVES-MAWDSLEY.

BLOCKS

Blocks used in former volumes are now in the Bodleian Library and are available on application to the Editor.