

Notes

THE DEVIL'S QUILTS, STANTON HARCOURT, OXON

Two-thirds of this Class II Henge Monument (SP/411047) was made available for excavation during 1972-73 in advance of its destruction by gravel extraction. One-third of the site is still inaccessible under runways and farm trackways. Shortly before the construction of the runways in 1940 Professor Grimes¹ conducted an excavation. At that time, there was only one stone standing within a ditched enclosure which only showed up

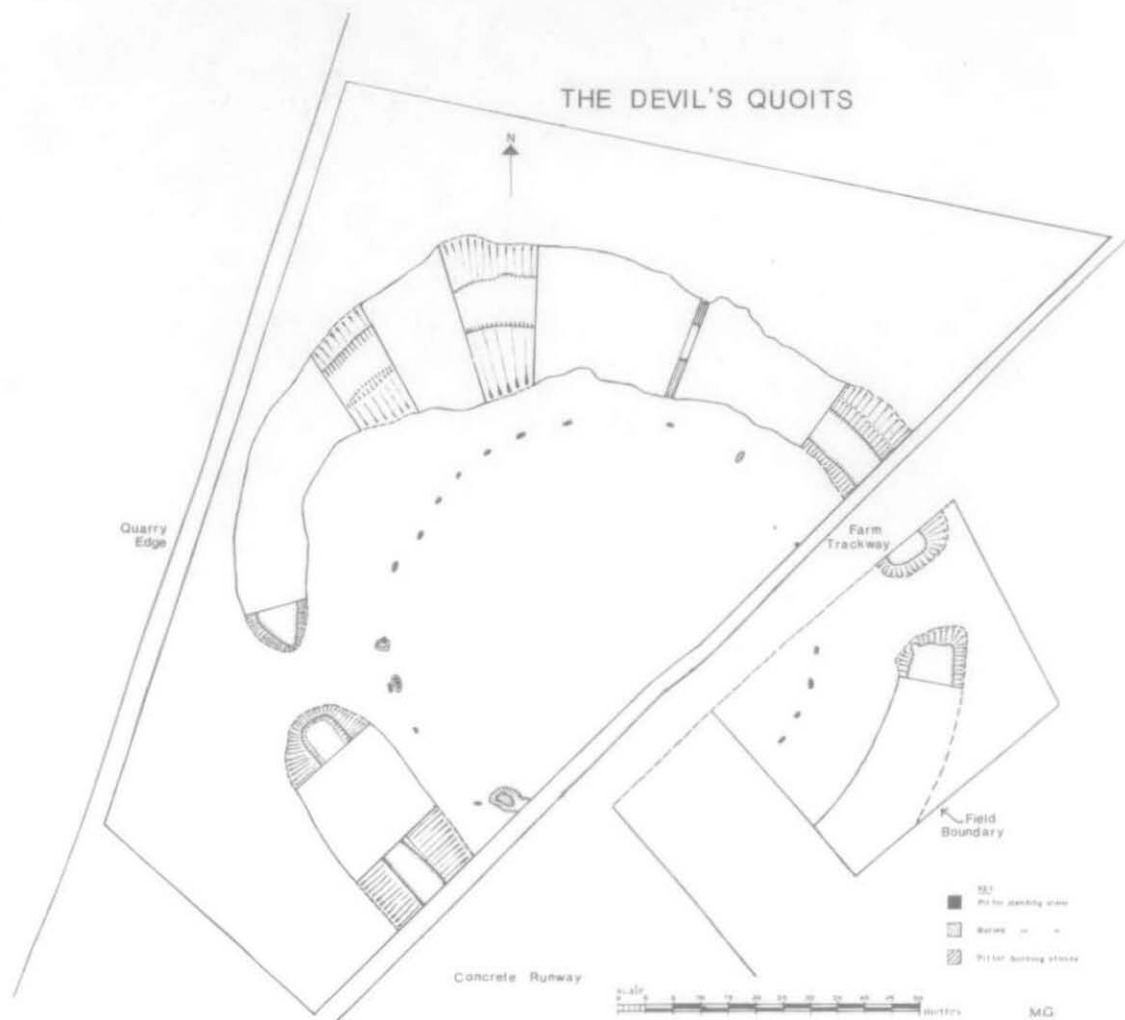


FIG. 1

¹ W. F. Grimes, *Excavations on Defence Sites 1939-1945. I. Mainly Neolithic-Bronze Age.* H.M.S.O. 1960.

on air photographs, and two stones standing outside it. There was a slight trace of a surrounding bank.

The recent excavation by the Upper Thames Archaeological Committee showed that the bank had been levelled by airfield construction, but it was possible to record the true dimensions of the monument (See plan, Fig. 1). Five sections of the ditch and the four ditch terminals were completely emptied, and a great deal of environmental data was obtained, including a quantity of animal bone. Pottery had not survived well; the only sherds obtained were small fragments from a hearth near one of the ditch terminals. Constant erosion of the sand and gravel sides of the ditch had, during the use of the monument, necessitated frequent clearing out, and this had considerably altered the original shape of the ditch, making it variable in width and depth. The ditch terminals, which may originally have been square ended, had become very irregular in shape. In the S.W. terminal, which had suffered less from erosion and cleaning out, there was evidence for two large marking posts, beneath one of which was found an antler pick.

The excavation of the interior was complicated by many geological features, but seventeen stone-holes were found. When no stone-holes were found in the expected positions it was observed that in these areas there was always a hard impenetrable conglomerate bedrock. It is possible that had stones stood on this bedrock it would not have been possible to dig so deep a hole as on the surrounding sands and gravels. Also the weight of the stones and the action of the weather would enlarge the holes on the latter and not on the former, and therefore the holes would have been considerably shallower and lost through subsequent ploughing. Including the presumed holes, the total number of stones standing within the excavated area could have been twenty-four. There may have been at least thirty standing within the whole monument. Both within the interior and outside the ditches the bedrock showed signs of quarrying and it is possible that the stones were obtained locally.

Most of the destruction of the monument had taken place in medieval times either from iconoclasm or to clear the land for agriculture, and the site was overlain with furrow marks of medieval cultivation. The smaller stones had been lifted out of the ground and removed from the site or thrown into the considerably silted up ditches. When the stones were too large for this operation, they were either chipped off at ground level or, as in the case of three of the stones, were levered over into a pit close to their original position. Some of the stones had been broken up in a pit by the fire and water method.

MARGARET GRAY

A GOLD RING FOUND NEAR OXFORD

Amongst the material in the Franks Bequest to the British Museum in 1897, is a gold ring (diameter 2.1 cms.) of late third-century type.² Although the provenance is given as 'found near Oxford', there seems to have been no mention made of the piece in any local journal.³ The lower part of the hoop is plain, but the triangular shoulders have 'incised volute decoration'.⁴ The bezel, which is octagonal, is incised around the edge. Similar rings have been found at Sully Moor near Cardiff, Canterbury, Kent and Chesterholm, Northumberland.⁵

The ring is set with a nicolo intaglio,⁶ oval in shape (13.5 × 12 mm.) with a flat upper surface (9.5 × 7.5 mm.) and bevelled edge. The device is Minerva, wearing a belted

² Dept. of Prehistoric and Romano-British Antiquities AF 420.

³ Like the bronze figurines published in *Oxoniensia*, xxxviii (1973), it is probable that the ring was plundered from the Romano-Celtic temple site at Woodeaton.

⁴ F. H. Marshall, *Catalogue of the Finger Rings, Greek, Etruscan and Roman in the departments of Antiquities, British Museum* (1907), 92, no. 540, Pl. xv.

⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 544 (Sully Moor), *Archaeologia*, xliii (1871), 162 and Pl. xxiii, 5 (Canterbury), Information Robin Birley (Chesterholm).

⁶ H. B. Walters, *Catalogue of the Engraved Gems and Cameos . . . in the British Museum* (1926), 153, no. 1395. Nicolo is an onyx with an upper blue surface on a dark ground.

peplos and crested helmet, standing to the front and facing left.⁷ In her right hand is a spear and with her left hand she supports a shield on the ground (PL. VIII, B). Gems cut with the same figure are recorded from Canterbury (in an Anglo-Saxon gold pendant), Cologne and Aquileia amongst other places.⁸ The type is presumably a free adaptation of the *Athena Parthenos*.

MARTIN HENIG

A BRONZE CLASP FROM WATER EATON

In 1972, during a punting expedition, members of the Oxford University Archaeological Society found a bronze clasp (FIG. 2) at Water Eaton, Oxon (SP/485165). It has a plant design cast in relief on the surface of the plate, so that stems form the lobed top and the sinuous sides. At the apex is a rivet-hole, and there are two further rivet-holes at the straight end. Two small lugs project from this at the sides, and the centre section is folded back as a flange. Against this on the otherwise plain reverse is a corrosion deposit, probably of iron.

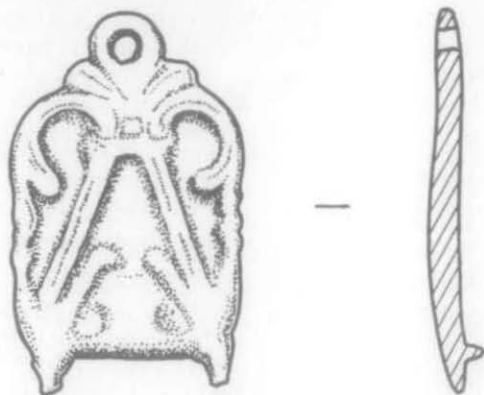


FIG. 2

The long, drawn-out leaves suggest a stylized acanthus plant, of the late 10th or 11th century. Such clasps are often thought to be book mounts or belt strap-ends, but the deposit would here perhaps indicate attachment to an iron box, except that this would provide no security. The deposit may therefore be an accidental accumulation. There is a similar object in the Northampton Museum, found on the Castle site in 1879.

DAVID A. HINTON

A MEDIEVAL SEALING IN EXETER COLLEGE ARCHIVES*

Amongst the muniments of Exeter College is a deed of 10 May 1301 in which Elyas de Hertford Senior quitclaims *Herthalle* to his son.⁹ From it is suspended a wax sealing,

⁷ I describe the impression, rather than the actual gem, for the primary function of most intagli was as sealstones.

⁸ *Archaeometry*, ix (1966), 104-105 and Fig. 1, no. L9 (Canterbury); F. Henkel, *Die Römischen Fingerringe der Rheinlande* (1913), no. 1208. G. Sena Chiesa, *Gemme del Museo Nazionale di Aquileia* (1966), nos. 124, 131-133.

Also cf. a gem in a medieval setting from Barham Down, Kent. C. Roach Smith, *Collectanea Antiqua*, IV, 73 and Pl. xviii, 2.

⁹ C. W. Boase, *Register of Exeter College, Oxford*, O.H.S. 1894, 285 no. 5 (29 Ed I). Also cf. H. E. Salter, *Survey of Oxford I*, O.H.S. 1960, 48 NE. (198), and *V.C.H. Oxon.* III (1954), 309 f. Elyas had been given the hall in 1283 but little is known of him from other sources.

* I would like to thank Mr. Julian Munby for bringing the sealing to my attention and for much subsequent help, and Dr. J. Maddicott for permission to photograph and publish.

containing the impress of a signet which consisted of a surround with the legend *Secretum Elyas de Herte* and a central motif, evidently an engraved gemstone of Roman imperial date.¹⁰ The subject of the sealing is a satyr walking towards the left, holding a *lagobolon* (hunting-stick) in his left hand and with a *nebris* (animal skin) draped over his left arm. He appears to be holding a short sword in his right hand, instead of the usual bunch of grapes (PL. VIII, c). It is possible that this was a modification made by the medieval owner, although it is very hard to decide this from an impression.¹¹ Similar portrayals of Satyrs are depicted on numerous intagli from Britain and elsewhere.¹²

Other sealings which employ Antique gemstones are preserved in Oxford archives. One, in the Cartulary of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist, from the early thirteenth century 'secretum' of Henry Simeon is described by Salter as 'two naked figures, apparently an ancient gem'. It appears to be a rare portrayal of Venus and Adonis which is paralleled by one of the finest surviving intagli of the first century B.C.¹³ It is to be hoped that in future an attempt will be made to photograph and record all such sealings with one eye on what they tell us about the arts in the ancient world and the other on their place in the middle ages.

The use of Graeco-Roman intagli was widespread in the medieval period, being attested both by the survival of engraved gems in Sacred metalwork and (as here) in personal signets, and by the great popularity of lapidaries.¹⁴ There was even a major revival in the art of glyptics in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹⁵ Gemstones are clearly a factor to be taken into account in any consideration of classical influences in medieval art and thought, but until much more material of the type that I have been describing is made available to scholars, it will be difficult to evaluate its full significance.

MARTIN HENIG

BICESTER PRIORY

During the first half of 1973, a watching brief was maintained for the Department of the Environment on the re-development of the T.A. Centre, site of the East end of Bicester Priory Church (SP/588225). The original re-building scheme would have caused minimal disturbance to the medieval layers, so that the cost of a full-scale excavation could not be justified, despite the known potential of the site.¹⁶ Such is the lack of adequate protection in this country for even the most important sites, that when a different re-building scheme had to be adopted which involved cutting deep slit trenches through the medieval walls and floors of the church, no time was given for excavation, nor was I told of the change. Some cleaning-up was possible in the evenings, but no coherent plan of the walls could be obtained.

¹⁰ The piece of wax has a diameter of c. 27 mm. ; The signet was oval (20 × 18 mm.) as was the gem in the centre (13 × 10 mm.).

¹¹ I have taken into consideration and later ruled out the possibility that the figure is Mars Gradivus ; cf. G. Sena Chiesi, *Gemme del Museo Nazionale di Aquileia* (1966), nos. 221-233.

¹² *Ibid.*, nos. 384-398. H. B. Walters, *Catalogue of the Engraved Gems and Cameos Greek, Etruscan and Roman, in the British Museum* (1926), no. 2243 (Slay Hill Saltings, Kent) ; no. 2789 (Wittering, Northamptonshire) ; J. P. Bushe-Fox, *Wroxeter I*, Society of Antiquaries (1913), 29 and Fig. 10, no. 18 (Wroxeter, Shropshire) ; *Annals of Archaeology*, XXII (1935), 16 f., Fig. 2 (Chester) ; also set in a medieval silver seal from North Walsham, Norfolk, C. Roach Smith, *Collectanea Antiqua* IV, (1857), 78 and Plate xx, 3.

¹³ H. E. Salter, *The Cartulary of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist*, O.H.S. 1914-1917, I, 276 f., no. 275 ; III, Plate opp. 434, no. 7. c. A.D. 1210. For the late-hellenistic parallel, M. L. Vollenweider, *Die Steinschneidekunst und Ihre Künstler in Spätrepublikanischer und Augusteischer Zeit* (1966), 41 and Plate xxxiv, 1 and 2 (in The Hague).

¹⁴ Roach Smith, *op. cit.*, 65-79, Plates xviii-xx. G. Demay, *Des Pierres Gravées Employées dans les Sceaux du Moyen Age* (1877). T. Wright, 'On Antiquarian Excavations and Researches in the Middle Ages', *Archaeologia*, xxx (1844), 438-448. J. Evans and M. S. Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries* (1933).

¹⁵ H. Wentzel, 'Portraits "à l'Antique" on French Mediaeval Gems and Seals', *Journ. Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, xvi (1953), 342-350.

¹⁶ David A. Hinton, 'Bicester Priory', *Oxonienia*, xxxiii (1968), 22-52 ; *Ibid.*, xxxiv (1969), 21-8.

The southern face, but not the complete width, of an east-west wall was revealed, and was probably the continuation eastwards of the east-west wall identified in 1969 as the external wall of the north transept. A 1.6 m. wide north-south wall was bonded into this, so was probably the east wall of the north transept. It was 3.2 m. long on its eastern, external face. At its south end, a second east-west wall abutted it, 1.5 m. wide. There was a further stone foundation some 3.5 m. to the south.

Although the site was watched during the day that the contractors cut trenches to the east of the wall complex, no further foundations were seen. The extent of the chancel of the church therefore remains unknown, except that it did not extend as far as a drainage ditch dug some 20 m. east of the north-south wall. A skeleton was found in the side of this ditch.

Apart from the stone and mortar rubble from the walls and floors, three tiny fragments of floor tile and various human bones were the only finds.

DAVID A. HINTON

THAME, OXON.

An abortive excavation was undertaken on Good Friday, 1973, at 6b High Street, Thame, one of the Bishop of Lincoln's 12th-century 'new town' burgrave plots. Below an 18th-century brick foundation were amorphous layers of rubble containing a few sherds of late medieval hard red-speckled buff sherds, with glossy olive and green glazes, and below these was the natural sand. Messrs. F. W. Woolworth and Co. kindly allowed the work to take place.

DAVID A. HINTON

A WATERFORD HALFPENNY OF EDWARD I FOUND AT DORCHESTER

When Graham Cooper and his father were digging the foundations for their cottage at 54 Watling Lane, Dorchester, Oxon., they came upon a small coin. When their find was brought to the Ashmolean Museum it was identified as an Irish halfpenny of Edward I from the mint at Waterford, which coined pennies and halfpence of this type between 1280 and 1282. This coinage has been divided into three groups,¹⁷ and the Dorchester find may be assigned to the 'late grouping'. It weighs 0.60 grammes.

It is probable that the products of the Irish mints were intended primarily for circulation in England,¹⁸ so the find of an Irish coin in Dorchester is not surprising. Nevertheless, there are only about 1,000 Irish coins of Edward I known today,¹⁹ whereas the English coins of the same series are among the commonest of medieval coins. More important is the fact that the coin is a halfpenny. Since the smaller denominations were always under-represented in the hoards of the time, our knowledge of the circulation of halfpence and farthings could be extended by the publication of more stray finds. The hoard evidence shows that while Dublin coins are about 2½ times as common as those of Waterford,²⁰ the halfpennies of Waterford are more common than those of Dublin.²¹ However, only 19 halfpennies have been recorded in the hoards, and 11 of these occurred in one hoard, so it would be interesting to know how far the pattern emerging from stray finds confirms the hoard evidence. An inadequate supply of small change at a time when beer cost a penny a gallon may have caused very real problems, and it is probably time more attention was paid to petty coinage.

N. J. MAYHEW

¹⁷ M. Dolley and W. Seaby, *Sylloge of coins of the British Isles: Ulster Museum, Belfast Part I*, (1968).

¹⁸ M. Dolley, 'The Irish Mints of Edward I in the Light of the Coin-Hoards from Ireland and Great Britain', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 66, Section C, no. 3, 291.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 236.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 236.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 279.

SCARF-JOINTS

Fig. 3, no. 9 (ii), in C. R. J. Currie, 'Scarf-Joints in the North Berkshire and Oxford Area', *Oxoniensia*, xxxvii (1972), 182, should have shown over-squinted, not under-squinted, bridle-butts.



A. Joel Gascoyne's method of illustrating settlements, common-arable FIELDS, furlongs and strips. *Ph.: W.R.*

AN EARLY EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CARTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF AN OXFORDSHIRE MANOR



B

B. Gold ring from near Oxford. 2·5/1.



C

C. Seal in Muniment Room, Exeter College. 2/1.
Ph.: M.H.