Notes

A MOLLUSCAN ANALYSIS FROM A LATE IRON AGE LINEAR DITCH AT MOULSFORD, SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE

In 1989 Thames Valley Archaeological Services conducted a watching brief and excavation on the line of the Cleeve–Didcot pipeline.¹ One of the occupation sites, discovered at Moulsford North Road (SU587836), was of Late Iron Age and Roman date. Adjacent to this site was a V-shaped ditch, 1.6 m. deep, aligned north-east/south-west (F19).² Pottery finds from the lower fill suggested a Late Iron Age origin for the ditch with some recutting in Roman times. It was suggested that this ditch was not part of an enclosure but was a linear earthwork similar to the Mongewell Grims ditch and Streatley Grims ditch.³

During the excavation, samples were taken for molluscan analysis from a column through the fills at 0.05 m. intervals. For various reasons it was not possible to process these samples at the time and this note reports on the analysis that has now taken place.

Analysis

Many more snails were recovered from samples above 0.60 m. than from below, and there was also a change in the species composition at 0.65 m. These discontinuities correspond to a break in the stratigraphy of the ditch, suggesting the presence of a recut or land-use change.

Below the break at 0.65–0.95 m. Vallonia costata, V. excentrica and Helicella itala were dominant. Above the break at 0.35–0.65 m. the numbers of these species were lower, while Discus rotundatus, Carychium tridentatum and Vitrea contracta became abundant and the proportion of Nesovitrea/Aegopinella spp. also increased. Such changes indicate moister, more shaded conditions. Possibly these conditions extended to the more general environment. Kerney, for example, has interpreted a similar pattern as evidence of Neolithic woodland regeneration at Waylands Smithy.⁴ However, we do not wish to make such a claim on the basis of just one snail assemblage. While Discus is typical of woodland, it is also found in other damp habitats, and we have in addition recovered high numbers of Carychium and Vitrea from a bank covered in long grass, well away from any woodland elsewhere on the Downs. It is possible that a change in land use from arable to pasture produced this difference.

¹ S. Ford, 'The Archaeology of the Cleeve–Didcot Pipeline, South Oxfordshire', Oxoniensia, lv (1990), 1–40.
² Ibid. 29, fig. 12.

³ J. Hinchcliffe, 'Excavations of Grims Ditch, Mongewell, 1975', Oxoniensia, xl (1975), 122–35; S. Ford, 'Linear Earthworks on the Berkshire Downs', Berkshire Archaeol. Jnl. 1xxi (1982), 1–20.

⁴ M. Kerney in A. Whittle, 'Waylands Smithy, Oxfordshire: Excavations at the Neolithic tomb in 1962-63 by R.J.C. Atkinson and S. Piggott', Proc. Prehist. Soc. Ivii (1991), pt. 2, 61-101.





The uppermost fills of the recut (topsoil-stripped surface to 0.35 m.) are dominated by Vallonia spp. together with Helicella itala and Pupilla muscorum. These snails are typical of short-turved, dry calcareous grassland. A similar assemblage was found between depths of 0.95 m. and 1.30 m. indicating the same conditions as when the ditch was first dug out. The decline in numbers of Pupilla muscorum at 0.95 m. probably reflects either a change in the way the ditch was maintained or a change in use of the surrounding landscape, though it was not clearly paralleled by changes in the abundance of the other species. However, Nesovitrea/Aegopinella, Discus, and Vitrea were all present in moderate numbers at 0.85-0.90 m., indicating that conditions had become damper. The sporadic appearance of these species at all depths below the recut may have been caused by the ditch being periodically cleaned out. Relatively higher numbers of Pomatias elegans, found in loose soil, also point to this conclusion.

Comment

One aspect of ditches dug on the chalkland is that, unless levelled by cultivation, they never quite become fully infilled and can continue to accumulate evidence of past environments up to the present day. In contrast ditches on the river gravels, for example, usually become





completely infilled within a relatively short time of going out of use. Chalkland ditches dug in prehistory, such as linear earthworks or around burial mounds, can therefore often provide a lengthy environmental sequence. However, molluscs, which are frequently the only environmental indicator recovered from the chalk, do not provide the same level of evidence about general environmental conditions as do pollen diagrams for example. Molluscs recovered from ditches in particular may well reflect a very localised set of conditions, the vegetation and moisture in the ditch allowing species to flourish that are not at all representative of those in the surrounding areas. Furthermore the ditch fills may only accumulate after the ditches have lost their purpose, putting another obstacle in the way of interpreting their environmental evidence.

Nevertheless the molluscan analysis from the site fits well into the general picture provided by a number of analyses from sites across the Berkshire Downs ranging in date from Neolithic to Roman times. These indicate generally open conditions from very early on. Thus the Early Neolithic monuments at Lambourn long barrow and Waylands Smithy were sited in grassland. Woodland regeneration occurred at the latter site, but was subsequently cleared in the later Bronze Age.⁵ Open conditions were recorded at the sites of Early Bronze Age barrows at Farncombe Down and Hodcott as well as for various Late Bronze Age linear earthworks.⁶ A more complicated sequence occurred in the Bronze Age at Rams Hill prior to construction of the hillfort. Here woodland was cleared and replaced by grassland on more than one occasion.⁷ At a later time the 'Celtic' fields, which are widespread particularly in the western part of the Downs, were again laid out in an open environment.⁸

The snail assemblages from the lower part of the ditch at Moulsford also indicate open conditions. Indeed they are similar to those of modern short-turved grassland except for small numbers of *Discus, Pomatias* and *Zonitidae* which might be expected in the looser, moister conditions of a ditch. This resemblance is all the more striking because the ditch was over a metre deep. The wetter episode after the ditch had been recut could indicate woodland regeneration similar to that observed at Waylands Smithy and Rams Hill as we have already said.⁹ However, pottery finds date the recut to Roman times when the Downs were predominantly open, and indeed widely cultivated.¹⁰ Against this background it seems as likely that the snail fauna in the lower part of the recut ditch indicated purely local conditions when the vegetation was not cut or grazed, and litter was left to accumulate without the ditch being cleared.

Acknowledgement

We are grateful to Mark Robinson for his comments on an earlier draft of this note.

GEOFF MEES and STEVE FORD

⁵ J. Wymer, 'Excavation of the Lambourne Long Barrow', *Berkshire Archaeol. Jnl.* 1xii (1966), 1–16; Kerney, op. cit. note 4.

⁶ M.J. Kerney in P. Rahtz, 'Farncombe Down Barrow, Berkshire', *Berkshire Archaeol. Jnl.* lx (1962), 1–24; J. Shackleton in J. Richards, 'Death and the Past Environment', *Berkshire Archaeol. Jnl.* lxxiii (1986–90), 1–42; A. Pritchard in S. Ford, op. cit. note 3; M. Bowden in S. Ford, 'Fieldwork and Excavation on the Berkshire Grims Ditch', *Oxoniensia*, xlvii, 13–36.

7 J.G. Evans in R. Bradley and A. Ellison, Rams Hill, BAR 19 (1975).

⁸ G. Mees in M. Bowden, S. Ford, and G. Mees, 'The Date of the Ancient Fields on the Berkshire Downs' (forthcoming).

9 Kerney, op. cit. note 4; Evans, op. cit. note 7.

10 Op. cit. note 8.

A NOTE ON THE EXCAVATION OF SOME PARISH BOUNDARIES IN THE VALE OF THE WHITE HORSE, OXFORDSHIRE

During evaluation of the Kingston Bagpuize bypass (A420) in February 1992, several parish boundaries through which the new route would cut were investigated by the Oxford Archaeological Unit. The bypass is only 4 km long (from NGR SU3805–9757 to SU4185–9855) but in that distance bisects four parish boundaries (Fig. 1). Starting in the west and proceeding eastwards the following parishes were crossed: Hinton Waldrist, Longworth, Draycott Moor (also called Southmoor), Kingston Bagpuize, and Fyfield. The excavations will be described in turn from east to west, and the boundaries discussed.

Hinton Waldrist/Longworth boundary

An east/west trench 19 m \times 1.6 m was dug just to the north of the Lamb and Flag public house (NGR SU3829–9861) (Fig. 2) across an ancient parish boundary dividing Hinton Waldrist from Longworth. The earliest identifiable feature was ditch 19/8 whose bank could have been obliterated by ploughing. The ditch fill consisted of four sandy loams which had all been disturbed by root action. At what date the ditch became filled



Fig. 1. Parish boundaries in relation to the modern topography.







Fig. 3. Section and profile across Aelfrith's ditch (dyke).

is not known. Later a pit (19/5) was cut 6 m to the east of ditch 19/8. This contained modern refuse no more than 10–15 years old. This in turn was cut by another ditch (19/6) whose spoil (19/7 and 19/4) appears to have been disturbed on either side of its margins. The fill was a mixture of modern refuse. The excavator believed that the original ditch had been recut. There was no dating evidence as to when this boundary was originally dug. In its present form the ditch sides are too steep to have remained open for very long and therefore may have been deliberately dug either for the disposal of rubbish from the pub or for some purpose connected with the 'landscaping' of the car park.

Longworth / Draycott Moor alias Southmoor

An east/west 10 m \times 1.6 m trench was cut across the boundary at NGR SU3961–9841. The boundary was represented by a simple post and barbed wire fence. There were no visible earthworks nor was the existence of a former physical boundary detected. There were a few 13th-century fragments of pottery in the soil horizons, but most fragments were of post-medieval date.

Draycott Moor/Kingston Bagpuize

The present boundary consists of a flat and untended line of hedgerow shrubs about 4 m. wide. This was not trenched.

Kingston Bagpuize / Fyfield

An east/west trench 10.6 m \times 1.6 m was excavated at NGR SU4117–9852 across a boundary that was known as Aelfrith's ditch (Fig. 3). Two ditches were located, the earliest of which was 26/8. It was 1.7 m wide and 0.57 m deep and filled by a pale sandy loam. This was sealed by a greyish brown loam (26/3). The second ditch cut the layer 26/3 that sealed the first ditch (26/8). This was 2.9 m wide and just over 0.5 m deep. The primary fill was a 'hard compact yellowy brown silty sand'. Sealing it was a modern layer (26/6) possibly derived from the deliberate levelling of the bank. It was impossible to distinguish the upcast from the ditches, although there was a pronounced rise in ground level on the eastern side. Further to the south Aelfrith's ditch becomes more of a bank or 'dyke'. At 180 m south of trench 26 (NGR SU4116–9843) the bank is about 8 m wide and almost 0.8 m high (Fig. 3).

The earliest description of this feature was written in 1930 by Crawford.¹ In 1941 a section of the earthwork was excavated to the south of Kingston Bagpuize² (at NGR SU4104–9788) but this revealed no evidence for a ditch and provided no date. The note in *Oxoniensia*³ states that where best preserved its overall width was 80 ft and its height no more than 4 ft, but this measurement is difficult to reconcile with that observed in the field and its width is perhaps more likely to be 8 yds than 80 ft.

¹ O.G.S. Crawford, Archaeology in the Field (1953), 240.

² J.S.P. Bradford and J.M. Morris, 'A Note on the Excavation', Oxoniensia, vi (1941), 88 (no. 9).

³ Ibid.

Discussion

The parish of Longworth formerly included Draycott Moor, Kingston Bagpuize and Charney Basset, which appear to have formed separate estates in the 10th century. In 958 Longworth, apparently including Draycott, was granted to Eadric, a thegn of King Eadwig.⁴ It was then assessed, apparently, at 30 hides but by the time of the Domesday Survey Longworth was held by the abbey of Abingdon and was assessed at 8 hides. The abbey acquired an additional 5 hides in Longworth in the early 12th century;⁵ it is not known how Longworth was sub-divided between these 8-hide and 5-hide areas though it is possible the division was later the origin of the distinction between East and West Longworth. Both Draycott Moor and Charney (Bassett) were also held by Abingdon abbey at the time of the Domesday Survey, but despite supposed 10th-century grants the abbey held no land in Kingston Bagpuize,⁶ which in 1086 was divided into two lay-owned estates, one in the north and one in the south. The later manor of Fyfield was acquired by Abingdon abbey in the 10th century as two estates (north and south), which together corresponded to the later parish.⁷

There is normally a correlation between hundred and parish boundaries. Longworth is an exception as it appears to have been bisected by the boundary of the hundred of Ganfield and Ock at least by the late Anglo-Saxon period.⁸ This raises the question as to what the hundred boundary was based on. It is unlikely that the hundred boundary subdivided such a basic fiscal unit as an estate holding. It is more likely that the hundred boundary followed the line dividing two estate units, in this case between Longworth and Draycott Moor, despite their apparently being conveyed as a single estate in 958–9. Draycott Moor was referred to as 'villa de Draycote et la More' in the Feudal Aids of 1316,⁹ but did not become a separate parish until 1866 and was merged with Kingston Bagpuize in 1971.¹⁰

Although the parish of Longworth may have crystallized at an early date and corresponds in part with late Anglo-Saxon estate boundaries it does not necessarily follow that a physical boundary in the form of a bank and ditch was constructed in the Saxon period. The Hinton Waldrist/Longworth boundary exhibits all the characteristics of one that was laid out in an open landscape in an area which was probably being cultivated. The staggered line of the boundary may reflect former field or land parcel boundaries that became fossilized in the landscape. The boundary of these units could have been represented by a 'headland', marker posts, or even isolated trees and/or hedgerows. The hedge-species count in the vicinity of the excavation was quite low although that does not mean that other areas would be similarly botanically poor. Further investigation of the surviving flora might prove worthwhile.

The eastern boundary of Kingston Bagpuize was partially demarcated by Aelfrith's ditch, mentioned in 10th-century descriptions of estates at Kingston Bagpuize and at Fyfield.¹¹ This later marked the boundary between the two ancient parishes of Longworth and Fyfield and was also the eastern boundary of the township (*villa*) of

- 9 Gelling, Place-Names of Berkshire, ii, 404; iii, 706-8.
- ¹⁰ Youngs, Guide to Local Administrative Units, 20.

11 Gelling, Place-Names of Berkshire, iii, 708-10.

⁴ V.C.H. Berks. iv. 467; M. Gelling, Early Charters of the Thames Valley, no. 88.

⁵ V.C.H. Berks. iv, 467; for hidage, M. Gelling, Place-Names of Berkshire (1974), iii. 698 ff., 703.

⁶ V.C.H. Berks. iv, 349; Gelling, Early Charters, nos. 113, 115-16, 143.

⁷ V.C.H. Berks. iv, 345; Gelling, Early Charters, nos. 78, 106.

⁸ F.A. Youngs, Guide to the Local Administrative Units of England (1979), 21.

Kingston Bagpuize. The boundary is comparatively less irregular than the other parish boundaries of Kingston Bagpuize, Draycott Moor, Longworth and Hinton Waldrist. South of the present A415 (the Frilford to Kingston Bagpuize road) the modern parish projects eastward across a continuation of Aelfrith's ditch to the River Ock, called the 'Short dyke' (*scortandic*) in the charters of 956 and 977. Neither mention any deviation to the east of either the '*scortandic*' or of Aelfrith's ditch, so that the estate boundary described in the mid to late 10th century does not correspond with that of the later parish boundary. Nevertheless, it is clear that Aelfrith's ditch formed an integral part of the landscape when the charters were written in the late Anglo-Saxon period, and that its line was at least partly preserved in the later parish and township boundaries.

Conclusion

There is good charter evidence to suggest that the parishes and townships of Fyfield, Kingston Bagpuize, Draycott Moor, Longworth and Hinton Waldrist were based either in part or in whole on late Anglo-Saxon estate boundaries. The inhabitants of these units were mentioned in several late Anglo-Saxon charters as the people of Hinton (*Heatunninga*) and Kingston (*Kingtuninge*).¹² The references imply that they occupied distinct unitary estates. It is noticeable that some parish/township units are more rectilinear in their configuration than others. Those of Longworth, Draycott Moor and Kingston Bagpuize are examples of this phenomenon. Without knowing more about the composition of individual parochial units and their topography and soils it is not possible to be certain about their formation in the Vale of the White Horse, but it is clear that the later parish of Longworth was based on four Anglo-Saxon estates (Kingston Bagpuize, Draycott Moor, Charney Basset and Longworth) which were in existence before the mid 10th century. The historical basis for these units is beyond the scope of the present enquiry.

JONATHAN HUNN

12 Gelling, Place-Names of Berkshire, ii, 392; iii, 707.

THE PARISH CHURCH OF SAINT GILES, GREAT COXWELL, OXFORDSHIRE

Introduction

In 1980 it was decided to replace the Victorian wooden flooring in the nave of the parish church of St Giles, Great Coxwell with a concerete floor, involving the removal of floor levels below the wooden decking and affording a final opportunity to examine the development of the church and demonstrate if it had a late Saxon origin before the archaeological evidence was destroyed. The church itself does not contain any features which appear to be earlier in date than the Norman period.

The archive from the site will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museum Service.

Background to the Church

The church of St Giles stands near the presumed centre of the medieval village of Great Coxwell (SU 2698 9344).¹ In AD 1086 the church was endowed with half a hide of land and in 1204 the church and advowson passed with the manor to the Cistercian Abbey of Beaulieu, Hants. The church was still in the hands of the abbey in 1291, but by 1330 it had come into the possession of the Bishops of Salisbury. Their patronage was retained until 1836 when it was transferred to the Bishop of Oxford.²

The nave of the present church is early 13th-century and the S and E walls of the chancel were rebuilt around AD 1290. The E window is late 13th-century and closely resembles the window in the tower, which is probably the window from the original W wall of the nave before the tower was added in the 15th century. At the E end of the N wall of the nave there are two original lancets and a further two found set in the N wall of the chancel. The porch is 14th-century and the present N door is likely to be a later addition; the original doorway on the S side is now blocked. The windows in the S wall of the nave are 14th- and 15th-century additions.³

The Excavations

The nave is divided into four quadrants by a central aisle and a short cross walk running between the blocked S door and the N door across the centre of the nave. The Victorian floorboards had already been replaced in the northern half of the nave before any archaeological recording could take place. Only the southern half remained to be investigated (Fig. 1).

In 1980 the SW quadrant was excavated by Michael Stone of Swindon Museum with the help of volunteers from the Swindon Archaeological Society. Further work was carried out in 1981 under the supervision of R.A. Chambers of the Oxford Archaeological Unit with help from local volunteers in the SE quadrant and in the area in front of the blocked S door between the southern quadrants to confirm the correlation of stratigraphy between the two (Fig. 1). Both trenches revealed the remains of floor levels, construction activity and the pre-church ground.

Results of the Excavations

The pre-church ground (8) was a dark cultivated soil with plough horizons observed by Mr. Stone. A test pit in the SW quadrant (Fig. 2) showed it to be approximately 1 m deep and overlying natural weathered clay and limestone subsoil above the solid Oolitic Limestone bedrock. Finds consisted of small abraded sherds of medieval pottery, one worn fragment of Romano-British pottery and numerous fragments of animal bones. These were close to the surface of the pre-church ground which was compacted and showed signs of being well trodden. It was unclear whether this trodden level was formed before the stone church was built, during its construction or during later rebuilding.

² V.C.H. Berks. ix, 488.

3 V.C.H. Berks. ix, 488.

¹ Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments record PRN 7105.







Fig. 2. A plan of the major features found in the SW and SE quadrants including the area in front of the blocked S door.

In the SW quadrant there was a ditch-like feature (21) filled with rubble. This ran out from underneath the S pier of the 15th-century tower (26), ran along the S wall of the nave for about 3.5 m and then turned N to disappear under the central aisle. A small abraded sherd of medieval pottery was recorded from the surface of this feature but it was too small to date accurately and was probably residual. Beneath the rubble fill on the S side of the cut was a dark humic layer which suggests that the feature had been open for a short period of time before it was filled in. This feature appears to be the earliest on the site, cutting the prechurch ground and pre-dating the surviving stone phases of the church. It runs beneath the wall footing (16) (Fig. 2). Its size suggests that it is probably the remains of a robbed-out foundation trench.

Beneath the S pier of the tower part of an earlier wall (17) was found. It is likely that this is the remains of the W wall of the church before the tower was added.

To the E of the pre-church feature there was a line of stones (35) which were too narrow to be part of a wall and may have been the capping stones for a drain. The line of stones was along the western edge of a spread of mortar (36). It is unclear whether these features relate to the early robbed-out foundation trench or the foundations of the present church.

It is assumed from its association with surviving 12th-century architectural features that the wall footing (16) that survives beneath the largely rebuilt S wall of the nave in the SW quadrant was the Norman foundation for the nave. This wall footing sat in a foundation trench cut into the pre-church ground and ran beneath the S pier of the tower. When the S wall of the church was rebuilt it was done so on a slightly different alignment (Fig. 2).

Five postholes (16, 117, 118, 121 and 122) were uncovered in the SE quadrant, evenly spaced along the inside of the S wall of the nave (Fig. 2). It is very likely that these holes were made by scaffolding poles. They are one of a number of features relating to the construction of the church found in the SE quadrant, including patches where lime mortar (113) had apparently been mixed and areas of scorched earth (120) where furnaces had stood by the S wall of the nave, to the E and in the area in front of the now blocked S door. Butting the wall footing was a layer of stone chippings which would have formed during the raising of the S wall. The present S wall of the nave is generally accepted to be early 13th-century and probably constructed around AD 1200.⁴ The excavations showed that the present S wall of the nave sits on top of an earlier foundation. It was not possible to ascertain whether the construction features related to the building of the original nave walls of which only the footings survive or the later rebuilding.

Overlying the pre-church ground and construction features in both quadrants there was a patchy floor surface made up of construction debris, chips of stone, plaster and mortar patches, presumably from the mixing of lime mortar. From this layer two pieces of chalk incised with a geometric pattern and a small piece of moulded limestone were recovered. This floor surface would have been formed either during the construction of the church or more probably during the rebuilding of the S wall. The surface of the floor was well trodden and was probably in use throughout the medieval period.

The floor surface was cut by later features in both quadrants including two graves (123 and 125) and a pit of unknown function (not illustrated). There was evidence of lead working within the church. This is quite common in medieval churches, as lead casting had to be undertaken indoors to prevent the melt from cooling too quickly, resulting in cracking.⁵ A smelting pit (not illustrated) had been cut into the floor, through the fill of the robbed-out foundation trench (21) in the SW quadrant and a spill of lead on the surface had formed a

⁺ V.C.H. Berks. ix, 488; N. Pevsner, Berkshire, The Buildings of England (1966), 147.

³ W. Rodwell, Church Archaeology (1989), 126.

sheet and droplets of lead. The lead was probably being smelted either for lead sheeting to cover the roof or to make repairs to an existing lead covered roof or leaded windows. If the evidence of lead smelting is from roofing or roof repairs it is unlikely to be associated with the original construction of the nave or the later rebuilding of the nave wall. Early churches usually had roofs with pitches too steep for the use of lead coverings and it was common occurrence in the 15th-century for steeply pitched church roofs to be replaced with lead covered shallower ones.

Covering the well trodden floor surface of construction debris was a layer of soil. This presumably had been put there to even up the floor surface, possibly to facilitate the installation of box pews in the 18th century.⁶ Several graves (7 and 108) cut through this layer, indicating that some time elapsed between the levelling up of the floor and the introduction of the pews. All that remained of the box pews were the impressions of where the joists had lain to support the wooden flooring. The wooden floor and pews were replaced in the Victorian period and the joists of the Victorian floor were found to be lying in the impressions left by the earlier (Georgian?) joists. A thick layer of dust had also accumulated below the floorboards, containing unstratified finds that had fallen through them. These included fragments of leather, clay pipe, coloured and painted window glass, pottery and tile. The head of a bone pin, a coin from the reign of Charles II dated to 1672 and a jetton, possibly German of unknown date, were also found.

Discussion

It was not possible to date the floor levels, construction features or the foundations directly by archaeological techniques. If it is accepted that the present S nave wall was largely rebuilt in the early 13th century it is likely that the earlier foundation on which it is built is the remains of an early Norman nave. The well trodden pre-church ground is probably the floor surface of the early Norman church. The construction features and floor surface of trodden building debris are probably left over from the rebuilding work that appears to have been carried out on the nave in the early 13th century. After 1204 the church was in the hands of the abbey at Beaulieu, Hants. The abbey would have almost certainly been responsible for the rebuilding work carried out in the 13th century while the church was in its care. There still remains the problem of the lack of evidence for the church that existed prior to the Norman Conquest and is mentioned in the Domesday Book.⁷ The lack of any pre-Norman stonework suggests that the nave could be a Norman addition, rebuilt in the early 13th century, to an Anglo-Saxon church. This would imply that the chancel has a Saxon origin. Only an investigation of the chancel would illustrate whether this is the case.

It is possible that the robbed-out foundation trench represents the former site of the late Saxon church, and it is not implausible to suggest that the Saxon church was pulled down to make way for a new one and the stone is likely to have been reused. This would explain why the foundation trench (21) was backfilled with rubble, the position of the new church partially overlapping the site of the old one. It would have been necessary to fill the robbed-out trench of the earlier building with rubble to even up the ground.

7 V.C.H. Berks. ix, 488.

⁶ Pers. comm. G. Wright, from the Churchwardens' accounts.

Conclusion

It was not possible to demonstrate whether the present church of St. Giles actually stood on the site of an earlier Saxon church, also dedicated to St. Giles. Due to the incomplete nature of the evidence it is only possible to make tentative suggestions about the early development of the church.

The excavations highlight some of the many problems of church archaeology, especially of limited excavations in the interiors of churches still in use, which only provide a partial insight into the history of a church. As so often in church archaeology there was no secure dating evidence in the form of pottery and other datable artefacts, an absence which was particularly unfortunate given the survival of floor surfaces and construction features, evidence which in many church interiors is usually obliterated by post-medieval burials. Even at St. Giles post-medieval burials had removed all traces of former activity down to the bedrock in some places. The relatively good survival of the archaeological deposits is attributable to the rural location of the church which resulted in a low number of burials inside the church. There is no doubt that full-scale archaeological investigation of the church interior, fabric and churchyard would reveal a very different story and it is most unfortunate that the archaeology of the northern half of the nave was destroyed before it could be recorded.

S. FLETCHER