

THE OXON RECORDER

Issue 18

Spring 2004/1



Editorial reminder on contents of this issue, so you can come back later for more information

Dovecotes in Oxfordshire

OAHs Dendrochronology funding (with enclosure)

Abingdon Buildings Record

VAG Memorial Essay Prize

Current research interests of committee members

Recording Day (enclosure) Sat 1st May Signet farmhouse, S of Burford A461 to Lechlade

AGM date (enclosure) Sat 15th May 2004 Town Hall, Chipping Norton, + town walk

Heather Horner

Below is a brief outline of the state of Alison Mitchell's epic project to record the Dovecotes of Oxfordshire. Alison tells me that copies of the *West Oxfordshire Gazetteer* are available for reference in several libraries, including these at Rewley House, Woodstock Museum, Centre for Oxfordshire Studies, and OBR, and will shortly be joined by the *South Oxfordshire Gazetteer*. Overleaf we reproduce a sample entry, for Grange Farm, Brize Norton.

Cherwell District Dovecotes

Having enjoyed making a limited edition *Gazetteer* of the dove cotes/lofts and nestholes in West Oxfordshire District, and finalising a similar edition for South Oxfordshire District, I am now feeling that the preparation of a *Gazetteer* for Cherwell District should be taken on by someone more energetic. I examined 45 buildings in West Oxfordshire, and 39 in South Oxfordshire and in almost every case made measured drawings and descriptions. (Among all those, I was refused admission only once – as a rule the owners seemed delighted to show off their dovecotes.) A preliminary sweep of Cherwell District has produced a list of 28 and is still growing, with half the Listed Buildings inventory still to be examined.

Of course another volunteer might choose a format different to mine, and computer graphics and photography would be an improvement. More time could also be spent in the Oxfordshire Record Office and college archives as the history of individual dovecotes is notoriously vague. I would be quite happy to cooperate on library research as back-up to the new volunteer.

The Berkshire Archaeological Society is continuing Esme Few's work on dovecotes in the Vale of the White Horse District. It would be satisfactory if the whole of Oxfordshire were completed and copies could be placed with local Planning Services, museums and the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies

If any members of the OBR are interested they can phone me (Ansaphone) between 6-9pm at 01865 510614

Alison Mitchell

BRIZE NORTON, GRANGE FARM DOVECOTE.

Listed Building (1988) II, 5/30.

Site: The Grange Farm is well outside the village. 3m outside the N.wall of the farmyard, 40m NE of Grange Farmhouse, the dovecote stands in a field with a shallow slope to the southwest. There is a stream in the valley.

Plan: A rotunda of circumference 19.3m at base, wall thickness is 0.97m. The floor is paved by the doorway, earthen elsewhere.

Elevation: Slightly battered coursed limestone rubble, exterior dressed quoins at the window. There appear to be 2-3 courses of black rubble under the eaves. On the east elevation only there is a 0.05m cornice which gradually reduces its projection. The height to the eaves on the S. elevation is c.4m.

Entries: The doorway measures 1.85H x 0.84Wm, the jambs are slightly splayed on the inner half to a width of 0.87m. It has four wood lintels and is closed by a (renewed) plank door. A window in the WSW. elevation, its sill 1.7m above ground level, measures 0.9H x 0.6Wm, has wood lintels and frame with 6 horizontal louvres flush with the outer stonework. Internally its jambs and sill are splayed to measure 0.97H x 0.65Wm, but the stone sill is broken. This is the only entry for birds.

About **270 nests** were originally constructed with coursed limestone slabs in an irregular diamond diaper of 12 tiers of 19-24 nests (allowing for window and door), all on a rubble plinth 0.2m high. They are whitewashed. Unusually, the nests' L-shaped cavities **all twist to the right**. The nests measure 0.14H x 0.14W x 0.46-54Dm (capacious!), with 0.12-0.17m between tiers. Continuous alighting ledges measuring 0.05H x 0.1Dm are below the 3rd, 6th and 9th tiers. The doves could of course also perch on the top of the wall beside the wall plate. There have been no doves in residence within living memory.

Conical roof: Two hewn parallel tie beams cross the rotunda wall plates from N. to S., and each is jointed to two interrupted tie beams lying E-W. Below and diagonal to the tie beams a thinner sawn bridging beam has been bedded SW. to NE. (the slope of the land) into two top tier nests. 8 principal rafters rise from the wall plates' assemblies with the tie beams and meet at the roof's apex. Between the principal rafters are irregular groups (2, 4, 4, 5, 2, 4, 5, 4) of jack rafters of varying length, lying on joggled purlins. As additional reinforcement 8 sawn raking struts now connect each principal rafter to a tie beam in haphazard pattern. There is no evidence of a potence or of a lantern. Graded stone slates are laid over roof felt. A small glazed skylight has been inserted between two rafters on the W.slope. The cone's apex is capped by an inverted lead saucer.

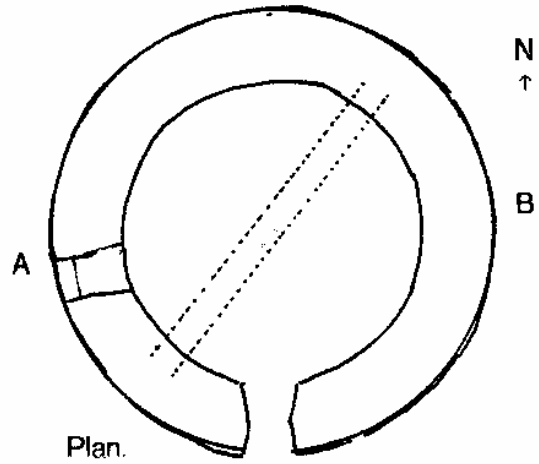
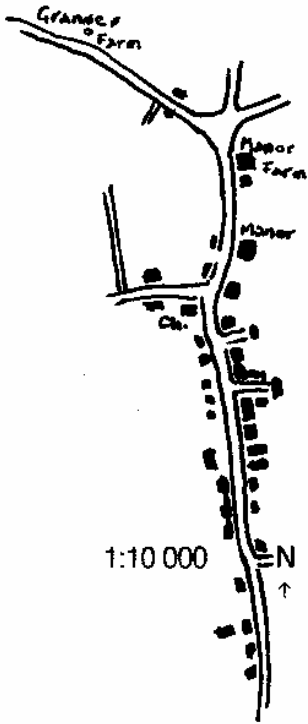
History: Grange Farm may incorporate 14th century fabric but the present house was probably built after the Dissolution in 1549. It was one of four Oxfordshire granges for the Cistercian Abbey at Thame, founded in 1140 (the others were at Stoke Talmadge, Tetsworth and Wyfold at Bensington). In 1549 Henry VIII granted the farm to Christ Church College (still the owner today) which has since leased it to tenant farmers or as a parsonage. The Listed Buildings inspector estimated the dovecote to be of the late 16th/ early 17th century, but it might well be much earlier. A terrier mentions it in 1730 and a valuation in 1827 (Ch.Ch.Coll.arch. ms estates 64.11 & 106). It is now a timber store.

Bibliography:

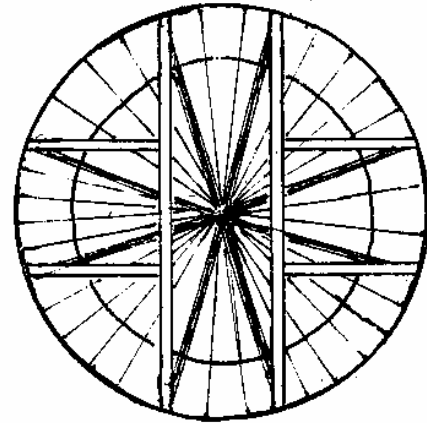
Christ Church College archives: ms Estates 64, Brize Norton - further research is needed;
Dr Alison Maguire, (1998) *Grange Farm, Brize Norton: a Report*.

GRANGE FARM DOVECOTE, BRIZE NORTON.

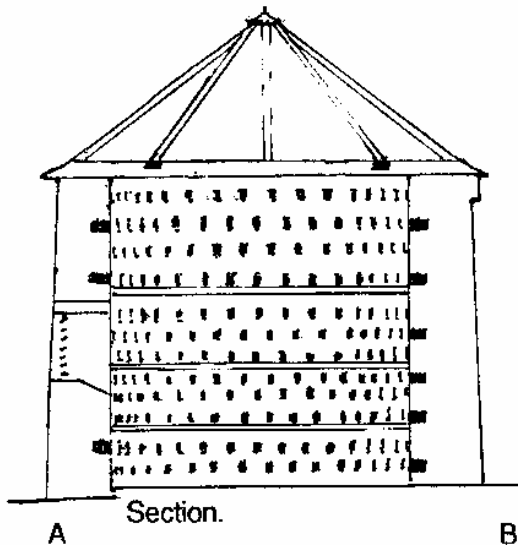
National Grid reference: SP 296 083.



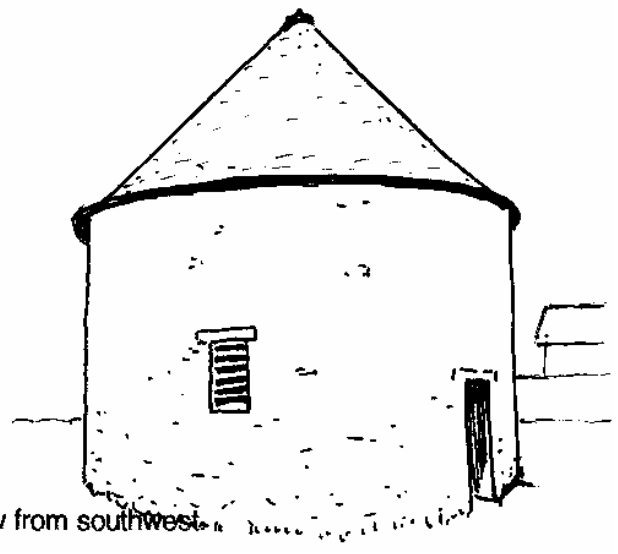
Plan.



Roof timbers, seen from below.



Section.



View from southwest.

OAHS DENDROCHRONOLOGY PROJECT

During 2003 the Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society set up the Oxfordshire Dendrochronology Project and primed it with a grant of £5,000. Although not in a position to wholly fund the cost of dating buildings, the OAHS will consider making a contribution towards the cost of the dendrochronology. Tree-ring analysis for even a single building phase is time-consuming, and as a consequence expensive, ranging between £500 and £1000. Therefore, the OAHS will be looking for a contributing share of the cost of the work to be made by the building owners or the person/group undertaking the recording or research.

It is intended that the dating of the building, together with the recording or research carried out on it, will enable it to be suitable for publication in some appropriate forum. In addition, all dated buildings will be summarised in *Vernacular Architecture*, and will be listed on the Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory's web-site which can be accessed on www.dendrochronology.com under the Oxfordshire section of the Dated Buildings Register.

Submitted buildings will be assessed using the following criteria:

1. Importance of the building and its contribution to the vernacular building history of the county.
2. It is expected that the building will have either been recorded, and/or a written historical analysis completed to a high standard, or that this work is almost complete.
3. The suitability for dating from a dendrochronological point of view.
4. How would dating the building help in the wider understanding of the building on a county-wide or national level?
5. The level of contribution offered by the applicant or owner.

Applications will periodically be considered by the Dendrochronology Panel of the L[isted] B[uildings] S[ub-Committee] of the OAHS. This panel is comprised of John Steane, Julian Munby, and Dan Miles, the latter representing the Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory. The various criteria listed above will be considered to decide whether the building should be given a contribution, and the level of contribution will vary according to circumstances.

The procedure for tapping into this fund is to first complete Part 1 of the application form and submit it to one of the members of the Panel. [Editor's Note: a copy of the form is enclosed with this newsletter, or more available from panel members. It asks for location details and brief outline of why dating is desirable.] The dendrochronologist will then visit the building by appointment and assess the suitability of the timber-work, filling out Part 2 of the form. At this time, an estimate of likely cost will be made, and the prospects of the building producing a date discussed with the applicant. This will enable the applicant to assess their level of, or percentage of, contribution to the costs of dendrochronology. The applicant or owner will then sign the completed form confirming their contribution offer and the form will be submitted to the Dendrochronology Panel for consideration. Naturally, there is no guarantee the OAHS Dendrochronology Panel will grant acceptance to any application, but all options will be fully discussed.

To discuss a potential candidate, applicants are encouraged to contact one of the following:

John Steane

27 Harpes Road, Oxford OX2 7QJ

Tel: 01865 514044

Julian Munby

28 Alexandra Road, Oxford OX2 0DB

Tel: 01865 247290

Dan Miles, Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory

Mill Farm, Mapledurham, Oxon RG4 7TX

Tel: 0118 972 4074

ABINGDON BUILDINGS RECORD

On January 27th a group of stalwarts gathered in the Unicorn Theatre (part of the old Abbey buildings) to launch the new Abingdon Buildings Record. It was a cold evening and a grisly sky was peppering the ground with a mean covering of fine snow pellets, but we were surprisingly cosy.

Proposals for an outline constitution had already been circulated and were agreed by those present. The idea is to form a loose organisation of people who want, singly or jointly, to make their own recordings of buildings in the town; to keep them informed of what other people are doing or have done; and to suggest ideas for future study.

On the basis of 'any record is better than no record', anyone who is interested will be welcome to contribute to any project, whether their ability or experience is in the field of formal building recording, photography, drawing, local knowledge or just holding the foot of a ladder. If a building is under threat or difficult to access, a complete record may well be impossible. Photographs or drawings alone, or simply concentration on one interesting feature, would be much better than nothing at all.

We have started to make a database of recording work that has already been done in Abingdon - some of it by John Steane, much of the rest photographs by individuals. This is primarily so that we don't repeat work that has already been done, and also to build up a body of references that we hope one day to publish (perhaps on the Web). We don't aim to archive any of the material that we locate - just to record the fact that it exists and where it can be studied.

The meeting ended with an informal talk by David Clarke about the reasons, methods and pitfalls of building recording. He emphasised how necessary it was to look at details of buildings closely - "they won't bite", and you might see close up something that makes complete sense of an otherwise baffling aspect of a whole building. The talk encouraged everyone to be curious about buildings in Abingdon and to learn how to record them before they disappear in one of the town's periodic bouts of modernisation.

I am the present convenor and we have a steering group which any Abingdonian is welcome to join (please contact me on 01235 527168). We have already started work on a building in Ock Street which has one roof inside another - a puzzling oddity which we are pursuing. Wish us luck!

Gillian Harrison

Salutation Farm

Some of you will remember Salutation Farm, on the N side of A40 between Barnard Gate and Witney. So far as I can judge, it was newly laid out in the 1830's by the encloser of the common, Eynsham Park Estate, on the lines of a Model Farm, though possibly incorporating an earlier stone field barn. The distinctive covered stockyard was an early 20th C modernisation, probably the last major investment of funds in the fabric. This is the view in March 2004, the stockyard buildings were in the foreground. Access was not possible.

Heather Horner



VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE GROUP Memorial Essay Prize

In memory of the giants who founded or belonged to the Vernacular Architecture Group in its early days, and prompted by the death of Pauline Fenley, former editor of *Vernacular Architecture* and a keen promoter of good writing, the Group wishes to establish a memorial essay prize. Through this it is hoped to encourage articles from those who have not previously published in national or international journals.

A prize of £250 will be awarded annually for the best essay on a subject related to vernacular architecture. The emphasis may be historical, structural, stylistic or archaeological, and the winning essay will be considered for publication in *Vernacular Architecture*.

The essays will be judged by a panel appointed by the committee of the Vernacular Architecture Group, and the judges will be looking for evidence of originality of thought, quality of research, and clarity of expression. The decision of the judges is final, and the Group reserves the right not to award the prize if there are no suitable entries.

There is no age limit for entrants, but entry is restricted to those who have not previously had their work published in national, rather than in local or county, journals.

The essay should be preceded by a short summary of no more than 150 words. The total length, including summary and references, but excluding any figure captions or tabular material, must not exceed 8,000 words. A word count should be included. Shorter essays will be welcome, but longer ones will be rejected.

Essays must be written in English in a form intended for publication. Three copies are required in hard copy, typed and double-spaced on one side of plain paper.

Essays may be accompanied by a reasonable number of illustrations. So long as these are clear, photocopies of photographs may be used. Drawings should be reduced to A4 size. All illustrations should be clearly numbered and captioned (including acknowledgment of sources where necessary), and reference to them included as appropriate in the text.

Although not essential, it would be helpful if essays could be written in the format required for *Vernacular Architecture*. 'Notes for Contributors' may be obtained by writing to the Editor at the address below.

The essay must not have been published previously, and if it is under consideration for publication elsewhere this must be stated and details given.

If an award is made and an essay is considered suitable for publication some amendments may be required before it is finally accepted.

The closing date for entries is 30 September each year, and the award will be announced the following January.

Please send any initial queries, and completed entries with your name and address (including email address if you have one) to:

Sarah Pearson, Editor, *Vernacular Architecture*
Old School House, High Street, Charing, Kent TN27 0LS
Telephone 01233 712772, email sarah.pearson@btinternet.com

Members' Interests

The purpose of this list is to encourage information exchange between members. We have started with committee members, but we would like all members to contribute. Please send your interests to David Clark (address at end).

Grant Audley-Miller

Old maps; Orders, Medals and Decorations; currently researching county police stations.

Tony Blay

The buildings of Thame and environs; the repair and conservation of timber framed buildings, mills, building archaeology, apotropaic markings, wills and inventories.

Jessica Brod

Buildings as part of local history; nineteenth century church building in and around Abingdon.

David Birkett

Repair and reuse of historic buildings. Interest in transport buildings (particularly railways), and firehouses/stations

David Clark

Main interests include buildings of Burford and Oxford. Medieval town buildings, in particular shops. Farm buildings and their carpentry.

Gillian Harrison

Recording the buildings of Abingdon, and always on the lookout for records to add to the collection.

Heather Horner

Landscape history, especially buildings in the landscape. History of farming and changing use of farm buildings. Survival and evolution of smaller labourers' cottages. Smoke blackened thatch.

Bridget Rudge

Local history, particularly in the Wootton, Dry Sandford and Abingdon area.

John Steane

Main interests at present include barns of all types, parks and gardens, Oxford Castle, and the buildings of West Oxfordshire.

Simon Townley

All building types in their historical context. Currently Burford and Henley areas.

Redundant computer hardware

A snippet of useful information passed on by Gillian Harrison. There is a charity which accepts computer hardware that is no longer wanted, and renovates it for Third World use. The address is www.computer-aid.org.uk. That's got to be better than dumping in the local council tip.

Salutation Farm Update (see photo p5)

1st April. I've now sneaked into the barn – the lower part of the 2 west (left) bays with their gable walls are all that remain of the earlier field barn. The full height east (right) bay and the wagon porch were added probably at founding of the farm. In the early 20th C, a substantial hay loft floor has been inserted into the whole of the original 2 bays, including the porch, and the roof raised. Minor later work for machinery, etc.

Forthcoming Events

24th April 10am – 4pm Wood, Stone, Brick & Tile - The Archaeology of Construction. Spring Conference, Council for British Archaeology, South Midlands Group. To be held at The Community Centre, New Road, Woodstock. (Membership not essential) £5 in advance or £6 on door. Mrs Gerry Mico, 6 Rowan Close, Brackley, Northants NN13 6PB. Tel : 01280 702173

22nd May 10am – 4pm Oxfordshire Past. A conference for professional and amateur groups to present recent archaeological findings and exhibit their work. To be held at The Windmill Centre, Deddington. It is essential to book in advance for this popular event. Contact Paul Smith for details on 01865 810115

Forthcoming Events at Rewley House 2004

22nd April, for 10 weeks, Thursday 10.30 – 12.30 am: Home is where the Hearth is Jennifer Foster BA PhD FSA This course aims to examine the archaeological evidence for domestic buildings and their associated material culture from the Palaeolithic to the Medieval period. Includes a visit to Avoncroft Museum of Buildings. More information from ppweekly@conted.ox.ac.uk

23rd – 25th April: From Rood-screen to Parish Church: The Changing English Parish, 1400 - 1700. A weekend school. The English parish before and after the Reformation, what continued and what changed? Addressing theological, economic and administrative aspects, as well as the liturgy within its changing artistic, architectural and musical context. More information from ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk

6th & 7th May: Integrated Survey : Buildings and Landscapes. A short intensive course in conjunction with English Heritage,. Methodologies for characterisation surveys, sketch surveying of historic landscapes, and simple fabric analysis of standing structures. More information from professional.arch@conted.ox.ac.uk

31st May - 4th June: Analysing and Recording Historic Buildings. A professional training week in conjunction with English Heritage. An intensive practical course. More information from professional.arch@conted.ox.ac.uk

29th - 31st October : Vernacular Buildings and the Hearth Tax. The annual Oxford meeting of the Vernacular Architecture Group, this year in association with the Centre for Hearth Tax Studies, Roehampton. More information from ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk **Note : filling up fast – all residential places already full.**

Copy date and contacts

Copy date for Issue 19 is 1st June 2004. Please send articles, information, letters, reviews, etc. to me, Heather Horner, at Windrush Cottage, Station Road, South Leigh, Oxon. OX29 6XN, telephone 01993 773819, or e-mail hahwindrush@aol.com

The Secretary is David Clark, 21 Walton Street, Oxford OX1 2HQ, e-mail david.clark3@which.net

Do have a look at our expanding website at www.obr.org.uk. Comments and contributions welcome. The OBR are extremely grateful to the *Oxfordshire Preservation Trust* for their generosity in supporting the production of *The Oxon Recorder* and to *Awards for All* in supporting our work to record the built heritage of Oxfordshire