Archaeology in Leicestershire and Rutland 1987

by Peter Liddle

INTERIM REPORTS

A Trial Excavation at Blaston (SP799958)

A survey and trial excavation was carried out in Millfield West, formerly Top Mill field, by the Leicestershire Archaeological Unit and a Manpower Services Commission Community Programme Team during August and September 1987, with the kind permission and co-operation of the landowners, Blaston Estates, and the farmer, Mr John Lane. The Department of Archaeology, University of Leicester, kindly arranged for the loan of the equipment for the geophysical survey — which covered an area of approximately 12800 square metres, and of this some 700 square metres were examined in detail during trial excavations. The purpose of the work was primarily to establish the significance of the scatter of Anglo Saxon pottery and iron slag recovered by the Survey Team when fieldwalking (These Transactions LIX, 101) and to monitor the extent of the plough damage. Excavation revealed traces of at least two possible sunken floored buildings, 300 more sherds of 6th and 7th century Anglo Saxon pottery and associated iron slag — further evidence of iron melting, though unfortunately no hearths were located. The finds are with Leicestershire Museums (Acc. No. A215 1987).

Deborah Sawday and Richard Buckley

Test Pit excavations at Blaston (SP801957)

Excavation of 96 2m test pits was undertaken during 1987 by the Leicestershire Archaeological Unit and a Manpower Services Commission Community Programme Team — with the kind permission and co-operation of the landowners, Blaston Estates, and the farmer, Mr John Lane. The excavations confirmed that the scatter of Anglo Saxon pottery and iron slag discovered in the adjacent field to the west, (Transactions LIX 101), continued along the spur to the east under the pasture in Millfield. No evidence of any structures or other features was identified — the scatter may therefore represent ‘infield’ manuring associated with the settlement in Millfield West. The distribution of the Saxo Norman and medieval pottery, notably Stamford ware and the Stanion/Lyveden types, recorded up to a distance of half a kilometre from the now deserted west end of Blaston village, not surprisingly reflected the manuring patterns associated with this settlement from the 9th or 10th centuries onwards — with the greatest density of sherds occurring towards the southern end of the field. The finds are with Leicestershire Museums (Acc. No. A139 1987).

Deborah Sawday and Richard Pollard

Excavation of a Romano-British Farmstead at Humberstone Farm, Leicester (SK 628073)

Between June 1987 and January 1988 an excavation was carried out on the site of a Romano-British farmstead by the Leicestershire Archaeological Unit, under the direction of John Lucas. The work was carried out by a Manpower Services Commission team,

Transactions LXII 1988
supervised by Ian Hind and sponsored by the County Council’s Employment Unit. The excavation was made possible by the kind permission of Pochin Estates.

The site had been discovered by the Humberstone Fieldwork Group, fieldwalking in advance of the proposed Hamilton development and this work was followed up by a small trial excavation (TLAHS LX, 78-80). Subsequently it was decided to examine what was postulated to be the south-west corner of the farmstead, and two large areas, totalling 1500 square metres, were opened up by machine.

A large ditch was located (F18) whose size and position indicated that it represented a boundary ditch defining the south-west corner of the farmstead. Some sub-division of the area within the farmstead was suggested by the presence of several ditches on an east-west orientation. Material from these ditches suggested they may have been backfilled as late as the early 5th century. Some ditches extended beyond the possible boundary ditch providing evidence the focus of the farmstead changed over what appears to be a long period of occupation.

Medieval disturbances of the site made it particularly difficult to identify less substantial features. Thus although many post holes were located throughout the two areas it was impossible to define any definite timber structures. Two shallow oval shaped features were uncovered. The lack of any evidence for high temperatures associated with these features suggests that they may represent malting ovens (F172 and F114).

Two inhumation burials were recovered, one within and one without the boundary ditch. Both had been disturbed by later Roman ditches so that in each case only the lower spine, pelvic girdle and legs survived. They were orientated north to south but the feet of F220 were at the south end whilst the feet of F230 were at the north. The burials were located immediately below the plough soil. The present shallowness of the burials may reflect on the limited survival of the evidence for timber structures. The burials may even date to the late Iron Age. Further evidence of Iron Age occupation was again found which reinforced the evidence from the 1985 excavation that the farmstead originated in the late Iron Age with the focus of the farm being just to the north of the Roman farmstead. The ditch (F16) and pits (F25 and F26) represent evidence of the Iron Age occupation.

Thus the site is of great importance because of its long period of occupation from the Iron Age until very late in the Roman period. Also of great interest is the lack, at the moment, of any evidence of any higher status settlement that could suggest that the farm identified is part of a villa complex. Only more investigation of the area can confirm that this is a low status farmstead.

John Lucas

Trial excavations at Medbourne (SP793932)

Trial excavations were conducted during the winter of 1987-88 in Millfield, by kind permission of the landowner, Mr J. Walker. The aim was to determine the extent and state of preservation of the Roman ‘small town’ in what is believed to be its north-east quarter. These were carried out by a MSC Community Archaeology Programme team, directed by Jon Coward for the CAP and Richard Pollard for the Leicestershire Archaeological Unit. Twenty-six boxes each 2m x 2m were excavated at 40m intervals within two north-south transects each 120m wide. These revealed a worm-sorted ploughsoil (‘B’ horizon) down to the natural subsoil and in some cases filling the features cut into the latter. Archaeological stratification was confined to the fills of some of these features, notably a ditch apparently aligned with the Roman Gartree Road. This ditch may be the rear boundary to house plots.
which might be expected to front onto the road. Post-medieval field drains were encountered in plough furrows throughout the field, but other features were concentrated in the western half, particularly in the central and southern areas towards Gartree Road. These features include rubbish(?) pits, a second ditch, and a possible well. The relative dearth of Roman material towards the eastern end of the field suggests that the site in Medbourne village, whose existence is demonstrated by records of the finding of a fourth century mosaic, lay at a short distance from the core of the ‘small town’.

Finds included worked flint, pottery from Iron Age to modern periods, and several late Roman coins, the last mainly from a pit and the ploughsoil above this and the boundary(?) ditch, which seems to have remained open to the end of the Roman period at least. A bone needle, possibly of Saxon date, and Roman and Saxon pottery came from the ‘well’, which may therefore transcend the period interface; a further late Roman coin was found in the spoil from the box in which this feature lay.

The area dug comprised less that 0.2 percent of the field, a figure which may be contrasted with the 10 percent sample embraced by traverse-and-stint fieldwalking in adjacent fields. However it is felt that the very small sample excavated proved adequate to the tasks of defining ‘activity areas’ within Millfield, and determining the degree of plough damage. It is hoped to extend the work to other areas of both pasture and arable across the ‘small town’ in future seasons.

The material is held by Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries, and Record Service (Acc. No. A126.1987).

Richard Pollard

Breedon on the Hill (SK 40562335)

Between October 1987 and February 1988, a small scale excavation was carried out on the south and east sides of the church of St. Mary and St. Hardulph, Breedon, in advance of a drainage scheme. The scope of the excavation was limited to an examination of those levels to be destroyed by the latter. Approximately seventy burials were excavated, mostly post-medieval in date, which had effectively destroyed any stratification associated with the construction of the church. However, the present south porch was found to have succeeded an earlier polygonal structure, perhaps a transept, contemporary with the south aisle which is thought to be 13th century. In addition, the south aisle was found to have been constructed over the remains of an earlier flagged yard of uncertain period. At the east end of the church, a late medieval wall was discovered, on an east-west orientation, and joining the north aisle. This may represent the remains of a boundary wall separating the monastic and lay communities within the graveyard. The excavation was carried out by Leicestershire Archaeological Unit, with financial assistance from English Heritage.

R.J. Buckley

A watching brief at Hemington Fields, Castle Donington (SK457301)

A Norman Mill dam (1) and four silted channels revealed by gravel quarrying were described in the Transactions LXI, p.90-1. The channels appeared as a succession of profiles as the quarry face was cut back. Further observation throughout 1987 has shown that four of these channels (3), (4), (7) and (8) [Fig.1] were destroyed by ancient river movements and they can no longer be followed. Channel 5, however, is still being observed and this has produced half an oak rib of a boat, a curved ship’s timber, and the end of one longitudinal plank or strake. The last has the remains of two nails and roves,
Ancient river channels at Hemington Fields, Castle Donington.

1. Mill dam: dendro-date 1140 ± 30.
2. Large bank-vegetation or weir, undated.
3. Channel: Calibrated C14 date (brushwood) 4200-3970BC; dendro-date (tree trunk) 1070-1090.
4. Channel: Calibrated C14 date (brushwood) 1007-1081.
5. Channel: Calibrated C14 dates (Fish weir? A) 1016-1157; (Fish weir B) 691-820.
6. Channel: Calibrated C14 date (Fish weir? C) 361±336BC.
7. Channel, undated.
8. Channel, undated.
9. Pre-1830 course of the Trent surviving as a dry river bed.

Figure 1: Site Plan
suggesting it comes from a clinker built boat. In the same channel were found three grooved stones and a post alignment (? Fish Weir) with a radio carbon date, calibrated at one standard deviation to A.D. 695-820 (HAR-8507 : a.d. 670±70). A second fish weir, probably in the same channel, has a calibrated date of A.D. 1016-1157 (Cambridge — PL5 WA785 : a.d. 928±55), which compares well with carbon dates for the Norman Mill dam of A.D. 1030-1215 (HAR-8224 : a.d. 1040±70) and A.D. 1020-1125 (Cambridge — QF385 : a.d. 1000±50), and the dendrochronological date A.D. 1140±20.

The ‘net sinkers’ found in channel 3 which were illustrated in the 1987 Transactions and the grooved stones found near the clinker boat fragments in channel 5, are now thought to be anchor stones of a kind used by small craft throughout the world up to the present century. They give weight to wooden anchors or ‘killicks’(Fig. 1), being tied by their characteristic groove inside a cage-like construction forming the shank of the anchor. A tree trunk found near the anchor stones of channel 3, gave a dendrochronological felling date of A.D. 1070-1090±20.

Two neolithic dates have been obtained from other channels. One was for brush wood in channel 3 which gave a calibrated date of 4200-3970 B.C. (HAR-8223 : 3290 b.c.±70) and was probably redeposited material. The other was from a post lying horizontally with eight others in a single channel profile 6 and associated with a fragment of wattle. The author had a strong impression that this was a man-made structure and probably a broken fish weir. Four of the posts were *Rhamnus Cathartica* (Purging Buckthorn) and the others were of Willow, Holly and Elder. The radio-carbon date was 3625-3375 B.C. (HAR-8508 : 4770 b.c.±70).

Between December 1987 and January 1988, four tree trunks were found deposited in the gravel and sampled for dendrochronology. If these are of Norman date they will help to extend or strengthen the East Midland tree ring chronology; if they are Neolithic, like the similar tree trunks found in the Colwick gravel pits at Nottingham, they may help in the current attempt by Dr Mike Bailey of Belfast University, to establish an English Neolithic chronology which will have, as one of its major aims, the precise dating of the Somerset Level trackways [HILLAM.J. 1987].

Chris Salisbury

References

HILLAM, J. 1987, ‘Dendrochronology Twenty Years On’, *Current Archaeology*, 107. 359

![Figure 1: Wooden anchor with grooved stone](image)
Three Anglo-Saxon Small-long Brooches from Leicestershire

Introduction
In July 1987, Mr Peter Liddle (Archaeological Survey Officer of the Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Records Service) forwarded details of three small-long brooches for comment by the author. These examples, from Sharnford, Stathern and Barkby Thorpe, were finds made by metal detectorists and remain in private hands, thus the following comments are made without the benefit first-hand knowledge and depend upon the drawings kindly supplied by Mr Liddle.

The Stathern Brooch [Fig.2]
This object was discovered in 1982 at O.S. grid reference SK 775307. A one piece copper alloy casting, the brooch shows heavy wear and damage to its foot and wings. The foot is void of ornament save for a single raised line and is splayed. Its upper half is decorated with cast-in raised lines and has traces of facets below the bow. The bow has a shallow curvature and is also faceted. The headplate is of trefoil form with ‘d’ shaped wings much damaged by wear and later attrition. The inner margins of the headplate and wings are decorated with two incised lines and punches struck in an irregular fashion. The reverse of the brooch is plain with a single pin lug and a broken catch plate.

According to E.T. Leeds’ classification, the Stathern brooch belongs to the Trefoil headed class (Leeds, 1945, p8). This class is the most common and varied of the small-long brooches and still shows a broad distribution from Suffolk and Norfolk to Warwickshire (Leeds, 1945, Fig.6). Examples are known from the valleys of the Trent and Witham and from south of the Thames but the class is most numerous along the valleys of the Lark, Ouse, Nene, Welland and Avon.

The Stathern brooch bears individual decorative elements which can be readily identified and paralleled. The slight ‘rolling’ of the foot’s lower edge is a feature found on many other trefoils and other types of brooch. Examples from Bury St. Edmunds (Hattatt, 1985, Fig.84, no 672) Kempston (British Museum 91, 6-24, 216) and Kings Lynn (Hattatt, 1984, Fig.84, no 676) all have the rolled foot.

The faceted bow and the use of the ‘double inverted V’ punch are also found on many small long classes, particularly the square headed and trefoil varieties, which readily lend themselves to such linear decoration. Brooches from Paddington/Farndish (Bedford Museum enquiry no. 1161 and reg.no.1980/6), Rothwell, Northants (Ashmolean Museum 1927.630) and North Runton, Norfolk, (Norwich Castle reg.no.274.956) are just three examples which are decorated with the ‘double inverted V’.

The Sharnford Brooch [Fig. 2.2]
This broken example (found at Ordnance Survey ref. SP 482921) lacks its foot and is broken across two of its wings. The loss of the foot is not unusual as small longs and cruciform brooches have design faults which cause them to frequently fail at the base of the bow. However it has not been possible to establish whether the damage to the Sharnford brooch is of ancient origin.

It is not unknown for small longs to continue in use after the loss of the foot and catchplate. A brooch from East Shefford, Berk. (British Musuem reg.no. 93,7-16,39) has iron corrosion on the outer face of the stub of the broken foot suggesting that the iron pin was wrapped over the stub, enabling the brooch to function without its catchplate.

The bow of the Sharnford fragment is faceted but has a deep vertical groove running down its median line. This groove occurs on other examples from Great Chesterford, Essex, (British Musuem, 1964,7-2,330 and 331) and Eye, Cambs. (Howe, 1980, Fig.16)
Figure 2: Stathern Brooch (1) Sharnford Brooch (2) Barkby Thorpe Brooch (3)
but it is not a common decorative feature. The Eye brooch also has the shallow bow curvature as the Sharnford brooch, the majority on small longs having a more rounded profile.

The head of the brooch, although much damaged, retains traces of nineteen ‘double inverted V’ punches and incised at the margins of the headplate. the occurrence of such punch work has been noted above and needs no further comment.

The reverse of the brooch retains considerable remains of the iron attachment mechanism corroded around the single pin lug. This feature will be further mentioned below.

The Sharnford fragment belongs to Leeds’ cross-potent class (Leeds, 1945,p14). The angles between the wings are rounded, a trait which Leeds considered to be ‘clear evidence of an immediate continental ancestry’ (ibid,p14). Since Leeds’ time more example have been found making the class one of the most numerous of the small long varieties. The distribution has also broadened out from a northerly one to an area which now includes examples from the West Midlands and East Anglia.

Barkby Thorpe (Fig. 2.3)
The Barkby fragment (found at O.S.ref.SK 629086) is so damaged as to prevent much further comment. The foot is wholly absent and the headplate almost unclassifiable. The bow has the fully rounded profile normally found on small longs but is broad, emphasizing the interrelation with the cruciform brooches.

The remains of the wings suggest that this brooch was also of the cross-potent type.

Discussion
As the study of small long brooches progresses more attention is being given to brooch fragments such as those from Sharnford and Barkby Thorpe. The current increase in these finds may reflect nothing more than the growth of metal detecting as a pastime. Similarly, singletons such as the Stathern brooch are becoming more common. By themselves, such discoveries can only yield a limited amount of information. However, viewed as a whole they offer some explanation for the relative paucity of known Anglo-Saxon burial sites. All the examples show damage and those from Barkby Thorpe and Stathern lack any extensive remains of iron pin and coil spring around their single pin lugs. The Sharnford brooch, although showing extensive remains around its single lug, is damaged to such a degree that it seems unlikely to have been found in its original context. All of these brooches were probably deposited as grave goods in female burials of now destroyed Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. It is likely that this destruction resulted from Medieval agriculture.

The small long brooch is held to be a particularly Anglian artifact and the distribution of the type firmly straddles Midland England from East Anglia to Warwickshire. More recent work has extended the distribution as far north as Northumbria and examples also come from Dorset, Sussex and Kent. When discovered in their primary contexts, the small long brooches are nearly always accompanied by a string of glass or amber beads. Wrist clasps and cruciform brooches are also frequent companions as are iron pins and ‘girdle-hangers’ of iron or copper alloy. Annular brooches of copper alloy also occur.

Modern excavations such as those at Spong Hill, Norfolk, (Hills,C, 1984) are producing consistent grave assemblages which, in their details, enable a greater understanding to be gained from the results of earlier, less controlled work. A picture clearly emerges of relatively wide spread groups of people who buried their dead with very similar grave goods and who employed similar lay-outs for their burial places. Whatever the
detailed relationships were within these groups, their burial practices suggest that they were, as a whole, culturally coherent.

The dating of small long brooches is, like the dating of other Anglo-Saxon metalwork, fraught with difficulties. E.T. Leeds dated the trefoil and cross-potent types to post 500 A.D. Generally the presence of punched decoration suggests that the Stathern and Sharnford brooches date to the middle years of the Sixth century. The wide bow on the Barkby Thorpe fragment is reminiscent of cruciform brooches belonging to Åbergs’ Group II, a type he dated to ‘round the year 500’ (Åberg, 1926, page 38) thus making it slightly earlier than the other two brooches. All three brooches are welcome additions to the present small corpus of Pagan Anglo-Saxon material from Leicestershire.

Bibliography
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An Anglo-Saxon runic inscription from Wardley, near Uppingham (SK 831002)
The Runic Background
Sometime in the first two centuries after Christ the Germanic peoples of Northern Europe began to carve inscriptions using letters known as runes. This is not the place to give a detailed account of the history of the runic alphabet. It is enough to say that it was first used in Scandinavia and soon spread to other Germanic speakers.

When Germanic settlers came to England during the fifth century, they seem to have brought their version of the runic alphabet with them. It differed slightly from the earliest Scandinavian versions, largely because the settlers’ dialects of Germanic used certain sounds not found in Scandinavian dialects. The complete Anglo-Saxon runic alphabet is given by Page (1987, 19).

There are, unfortunately, nowhere near as many runic inscriptions known in England as in Scandinavia. Only 60 or so have been found here, the earliest dating from around 400. The surviving evidence may not be typical either in content or distribution. It is, however, clear that the arrival of Christianity, and with it the Roman alphabet, did not mean the end of runes. The runic and Roman alphabets coexisted for many centuries, and runes were used for Christian as well as secular inscriptions. It is difficult to give a date for the end of the runic tradition in England, but ‘it is unlikely the script survived the Norman Conquest’. (Page, 1987, 42).

The Wardley Inscription
The scarcity of Anglo-Saxon runic inscriptions makes it a particular pleasure to report that one has recently been found at War*ey, near Uppingham. This, the first runic inscription found in Rutland (and, indeed, in the whole of Leicestershire), was discovered by metal-detector enthusiasts Gillian and Brian Hammond at Manor Farm, Wardley.

The inscription occurs on a lozenge-shaped, copper-alloy object. The object is broken at either end, and measures 43x9x1mm. It is probably part of a linking plate from a set of
linked pins. Pins linked with lozenge-shaped plates are also known from Kegworth (Clough et al., 1975, 53-4 & pl.13a) and Witham (Wilson, 1981, 174 & pl.55); both of these are decorated, and have been assigned to the eighth century on stylistic grounds. The Wardley find has no decoration apart from the runes and the simple, one-line border, but a date around the eighth century seems reasonable by analogy.

The beginning of the inscription is unfortunately lost, due to the left-hand break. The stave of the first extant rune is also missing, by the rune is clearly an ‘o’. The inscription may be transliterated as follows:

\[
\text{FIBANX}
\]

\['\text{I o lburg}'\]

(It is conventional to transliterate Anglo-Saxon runes with spaced, lower-case Roman letters, between single inverted commas. ‘.’ indicates that something must be supplied; italicized o indicates that the rune is reconstructed but unequivocal).

This is without doubt an Anglo-Saxon woman’s name. The only suitable name suggested by a search through Searle’s corpus (Searle, 1897) is Ceolburg. A possible reconstruction of the whole inscription might therefore be:

\[
\text{[\text{RM}]\text{FIBANX}}
\]

\['\text{[c e] o lburg}'\]

The ‘c’ is palatal, pronounced as in ‘church’; ‘g’ represents a spirant, but it is impossible to tell whether it is meant to be voiced or unvoiced.
The runes are clearly inscribed, and the ‘l’ is seriffed. Seriffed runes occur on some Anglo-Saxon rune-stones, which are all later than 650; the seriffed runes found on a number of portable objects may well derive from those on runestones. (Pages, 1973, 29 & 104). Runological considerations, therefore, support the suggested date for this object only in the limited sense that they do not contradict it.

It is possible that the inscription is unfinished. The ‘g’, especially, is only lightly scored, in contrast to the bolder, seriffed ‘l’. One explanation might be that the entire name was scored in rough first, before the individual runes were filled out. For some reason the ‘g’ was not finished to the same standard as the other runes.

Searle’s corpus, which lists the names of people known from documentary sources, has only one Ceolburg. She was abess of Berkeley in Gloucestershire in the late eighth century, and died in 807. (Searle, 1897, 129). A charter dated 793, from Croyland Abbey in Lincolnshire, lists her as a witness, implying that she visited the East Midlands at least once. This tenuous connection is hardly worth developing into a speculation, however, because the charter is thought to be among the notorious Croyland forgeries, and cannot be trusted. (ibid).

Kevin Gosling

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A Watching Brief at Burley Road, Oakham (SK 867095)

A watching brief was undertaken during building development in the area of the 1986 excavation (TLAHS, 87-90) with the permission and co-operation of the developers, David Wilson Homes. Although no further evidence of archaeological activity was revealed the ploughwash deposit located in the south west corner of the excavation was observed to continue 70m to the south and west to a depth of 0.75m.

Patrick Clay

A Watching Brief at Oakham Castle, Oakham (SK 861089)

A watching brief was undertaken at Oakham Castle during the replacement of a water main. No structural remains were encountered although traces of a courtyard to the south of the Hall were revealed. Material of 12th-19th C date was recovered.

Patrick Clay

An Excavation at Ryhall

In February 1987 workmen digging a trench for a new hedge discovered a hoard of one gold and 3219 silver coins covering the reigns Elizabeth I to Charles I. In order to ascertain whether these coins constituted Treasure T:rove under the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act the coroner requested further excavation to be undertaken. This was conducted jointly between Rutland County Museum, Leicestershire Archaeological Unit and Rutland Field Research Group with the kind permission and co-operation of the landowners, Mr and Mrs Player.
The excavation revealed a further 42 silver coins associated with the remains of a rectangular oak box, 340mm x 210mm with a minimum height of 80mm and minimum thickness of 5mm. Some of the coins were still stacked within the box and impressions of the coins were discernible on the surface of the box's base. The box had been placed in a shallow pit 380mm x 300mm x 160mm deep. To the south west ground disturbance possibly caused by a hedgeline or tree was noted suggesting that the hoard had been buried near a landmark, perhaps to facilitate recovery.

Examination of the coins at the British Museum revealed that several had been struck from the same die. This was the largest hoard of civil war coins discovered this century with a face value on deposition of £158.0.6d. The hoard was pronounced to be Treasure Trove at Oakham Crown Court on 4th December 1987.

Patrick Clay

107-109 Highcross Street (The Cross Keys Inn) (Figs. 1 and 2)
The crown-post roof structure at the rear of this property was first noted by David Smith in 1977 (Trans Leics Archaeol Hist Soc Vol LII 1976-7, 91-2). Recent work done to renovate the building has brought more details to light, in particular the extension of one wall plate through the building to the present street frontage, and the discovery of an almost identical wall plate in use as a purlin in the 19th century roof at the front of the building.

Figure 1: Cross Keys Inn
Figure 2: Cross Keys, plans and elevations
Tree-ring dating of the structural timbers (including that reused as a purlin) produced an average last heartwood ring date of 1305, suggesting that the trees were felled during the period 1320-1355 with a probable actual date of about 1335, (Nottingham University Tree-Ring Dating Laboratory).

In view of the early date now established for this building it is pleasing to report that all the Medieval timbers have been preserved in situ. The building has been known as the Cross Keys Inn at least since the third decade of the last century, and it is tempting to link it with references to a ‘Cross Keys’ in the 16th and 17th centuries, noted in the Records of the Borough of Leicester from 1551 onwards. If anyone can confirm this connection the author would be pleased to hear from them.

I am grateful to Messrs G. Duxbury & Sons, in the person of Mr D.N. Duxbury, and their employees on site for their kind help in what has been quite a long and delicate rebuilding operation, and to David Smith and my colleague Richard Buckley. Notes on the building, including records of its development in the post-Medieval period, are filed at Jewry Wall Museum.

Robert F. Hartley

Leicestershire Archaeological Unit — Annual Report 1987

1987 has been a more than usually mixed year for the Unit. It opened with high hopes that the long-awaited major excavation project on the High Street development site would start on 1 April. As the month went by and the negotiations foundered yet again desperate efforts had to be made to rescue the situation and to put together a coherent programme. All the other excavation projects during the year were fraught with their own difficulties and frustrations which were compounded by the continuing uncertainty over the High Street. Nevertheless at the end of the year progress in a number of directions and several noteworthy achievements can be recorded.

In order to provide a sufficient labour force for the High Street project the Unit’s MSC scheme was expanded from 10 to 22, including 2 illustrators as well as 2 Supervisors, 2 Assistant Supervisors and 16 excavators. The failure of the High Street project to materialise on time meant that alternative projects had to be devised to occupy this work force and the continuing uncertainty over the High Street affected these projects in turn. The lack of a firm programme made it difficult to build up whole hearted commitment and it is to the credit of all concerned, MSC personnel and Unit staff, that morale and team spirit did not break down. This problem was further exacerbated by the fact that the team was without one Supervisor for a period of two months during the summer following Tim Crump’s departure to take up a post with the National Trust. The success of the publicity and public involvement aspect of the MSC projects in 1986 was very largely due to Tim Crump’s commitment and enthusiasm and his loss was keenly felt. Ian Hind was promoted from Assistant Supervisor to Supervisor in February 1987 and in September the second Supervisor post was filled by Jon Coward. Again both of them deserve our thanks for their hard work, enthusiasm and concern for both the archaeology and the welfare of the team.

The Medbourne project was always intended to form part of the 1987 programme though this season was meant to be relatively low-key, involving only about 6 people. However with the co-operation of the landowners, Blaston Estates, it was possible to extend the initial stages of the project. As a result of five years work in Medbourne and the surrounding parishes by the Survey Team, numerous ‘sites’ of all periods have been identified. The current stage in the investigation is an attempt to evaluate both these ‘sites’
and the surrounding ‘blank’ areas by a series of test-pitting programmes supplemented by open area excavation in specific cases. It is anticipated that this will be a long term project continuing over a number of years and involving various techniques which will themselves be subject to evaluation.

In 1987 work was initially concentrated in Blaston with test-pits in millfield and supplemented by a small area excavation in the adjacent Millfield West. For a brief summary of this work, described by Deborah Sawday and Richard Pollard, see p. Later in the year the team moved to Medbourne where, with the co-operation of the owner Mr John Walker further test-pit were dug within the area of the putative Roman small town. This part of the project will continue into 1988 and a report will therefore appear next year. A small display on the Medbourne project is in preparation and will be on view in the new village hall (the old school) in Medbourne from January 1988.

Meanwhile the Unit also carried out further investigations at Humberstone Farm within the area of the proposed Hamilton development where further evidence of the Roman occupation was revealed. This site, which was first identified by fieldwalking, was trial trenched in 1985 (TLAHS, LX, 1986, 78-80). The work in 1987, again directed by John Lucas and with the co-operation of Pochin Estates, explored an area in the adjacent field and revealed further evidence of occupation from the Iron Age to, at least, the later 4th century AD, mainly in the form of ditches, gullies and post-holes. However although a fairly extensive area has now been explored no substantial buildings have yet been identified, and it is hoped that there will be an opportunity for further work on this site. For an interim report on the 1987 season see p.

During March trial trenching, directed by Richard Buckley, was undertaken at Cotesbach in advance of an extension to the gravel quarry. Records of Anglo-Saxon burials along the line of Watling Street required some investigation of the area in advance of the quarry and the gravel company, Steetley Construction, provided both access in advance of stripping and funds for the evaluation. Results from the trial trenching of the initial area in March were entirely negative but further work will be necessary as quarrying proceeds. The site straddles the county boundary and the evaluation is being undertaken jointly with Warwickshire Museums.

Towards the end of the year a proposal to effect drainage works round the church at Breedon on the Hill necessitated a small excavation in advance of the work. This project was also directed by Richard Buckley and proved again to be an exercise which, although necessary, had in the end little archaeological value as the area excavated had been almost completely disturbed by burials post-dating the construction of the church. This project is still in progress at the end of 1987 and a report will appear on its completion.

Following a Coroner’s inquest on a hoard of silver coins of the Civil War period found at Ryhall in Rutland the Unit was directed to re-excavate the site of the discovery in an attempt to find evidence to show whether the coins had been lost or deliberately hidden. Patrick Clay, with members of the Rutland Field Research Group, undertook this investigation and located a further 43 coins and, buried in a pit, the remains of a small wooden (oak) casket containing coin impressions in its base. As a result of this further evidence the hoard was declared Treasure Trove.

Dr Chris Salisbury has continued to watch the gravel workings at Castle Donington on behalf of the Unit and further ice wedges and channels have been located — of national importance in the field of post-glacial alluvial geology see p.

In Leicester alterations and refurbishment of the Cross Keys Public House on High Cross Street revealed much of the original timber framework. Recording was carried out
by Fred Hartley and Richard Buckley with the help and advice of David Smith. The Dendrochronology Unit from Nottingham University were called in to take samples of the timbers for dating with the result that the construction of the building was dated to mid 14th century-c.1330.

During the year the Unit has found that more and more time has to be given to the consideration of planning applications with possible archaeological implications. Archaeologists generally are beginning to realise that planning legislation can be used to ensure the protection and preservation of archaeological sites and this is a welcome move forward but it is also increasing the Unit’s workload.

With the cooperation of Leicester City Planning Department negotiations with the developers of several sites in 1987 have resulted in the redesign of their proposals to protect the archaeological deposits while in at least one case some on site evaluation will be undertaken in advance of the building design. Within the City itself negotiations have been taking place with the Planning Department to devise a policy and a method of implementation that will ensure that no further destruction of the surviving archaeological levels can be allowed without satisfactory arrangements for their prior excavation and recording.

The Unit has continued to pursue the policy of more publicity and public involvement which was such a marked feature of our work in 1986. The failure of the High Street project to materialise and the loss of Tim Crump both had severe repercussions in this area but some achievements can be recorded though perhaps in a lower key than was hoped for.

Two more displays on the Mountsorrel project were mounted in 1987, at Loughborough Library and at the Charnwood District Offices, and a small booklet on this project was also produced early in the year. A display covering the 1986 excavation at Oakham was provided for Oakham Museum.

A display on Medieval archaeology in Leicestershire was produced for the conference on Medieval Settlement held at Leicester University at the end of March and this display was also seen at County hall, in the foyer, and was taken to the East Midlands History fair at Lincoln in June when Unit staff also manned a stall selling publications. A display on the work of the Unit was provided for the windows of the Midland Bank on Uppingham Road where it attracted a good deal of attention. For the production of all these we are greatly indebted to our 2 MSC illustrators, Sarah Geeves and Wendy Sheppard for both their skill and enthusiasm. Both left at the end of 1987 and will be greatly missed.

The report on Leicester’s Roman and Medieval Defences by Richard Buckley and John Lucas appeared in March 1987, drawing together the results of a series of excavations over the last twenty five years as well as the records of numerous watching briefs over a longer period. This is the only full excavation report to appear in 1987 but progress has been made with the reports on a group of excavations towards the wet side of the City in the 1960s and on the excavations on the Iron Age farmstead at Enderby of 1984 and 1985. Both of these publications should appear in 1988 as should the report on Elbow Lane, Leicester which has been completed this year. A popular account of Leicester Before the Romans, beautifully illustrated by Sarah Geeves has also been completed by Patrick Clay and should appear in 1988.

The Unit has also been active in both regional studies and national concerns. A major one-day conference on MSC and British Archaeology was held at the Museum in October, organised by the Senior Field Archaeologist on behalf of Rescue. This was a most successful and thought provoking day with over 100 participants and well worth the time
and effort which went into its organisation. The east and west Midlands medieval pottery study groups met at Jewry Wall Museum in November to consider the Medieval pottery of Leicestershire. The day was organised by Deborah Sawday with speakers from the Unit and the Archaeology section presenting various aspects of their work and again proved to be a fruitful and rewarding exercise.

Patrick Clay contributed a paper on Recent Research on Iron Age Leicestershire to a day school at Vaughan College on the problems of the Iron Age in the East Midlands and on the Oakham excavation for a day school on archaeology in Rutland and Richard Pollard on behalf of CBA14 organised a day’s tour of archaeology in Rutland.

Unit staff and the Archaeology section have again delivered a series of evening classes on recent research in Leicestershire Archaeology at Syston. Terry Pearce broke new ground in 1987 when he undertook another course on archaeology for the blind and partially sighted and this time took the group out into the field to visit, for example, Ingarsby deserted village and the Groby Iron Age farm. Terry also organised three successful coach trips further afield — to Wharram Percy and West Heslerton in North Yorkshire, to the Raunds project in Northamptonshire and finally in December to the Anglo-Saxon exhibition at Scunthorpe and the Lincoln Christmas fair.

Members of the Unit attended various other conferences and study groups — on Medieval settlement and Roman and medieval pottery. In addition to the MSC team the Unit has had assistance from and given experience to two pupils from the City of Leicester school as part of the work experience scheme, and students from the Archaeology Department at the University and from the post-excavation course. The Unit continues to the represented on CBA14 and at the national council of CBA by Richard Pollard and on the CBA Urban Research Committee and the Rescue committee by Jean Mellor. Both the Senior Field Archaeologist and the Assistant Field Archaeologist continue to serve on the committee of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society and Terry Pearce also continues as lecture secretary for the archaeology lectures.

1987 has been a full and active if at times frustrating year. The above account should serve to show something of the progress which has been made in spite of difficulties and of the apparently ever-increasing range of activities in which the Unit is engaged. All members of the Unit have continued to respond with unstinted enthusiasm and vigour to the new demands which continue to be made each year. It is thanks to their loyalty and commitment that a difficult year has resulted in so much positive achievement.

Jean Mellor

Report of the Leicestershire Museums Archaeological Survey Team for 1987

The Survey team have continued to move forward on all fronts. The computerised Sites and Monuments Record for the County (except the City of Leicester) is complete. The new paper record is now also completed for 4 of the 9 districts and is proceeding. Bob Jarrett’s work on this project has been thanks to an 100% grant by HBMCO (English Heritage). The index will be an invaluable tool for much of the work of the team and for many other researchers.

The Community Archaeology Scheme has again proved most valuable and there has been national interest. Peter Liddle has spoken to the Conferences of the Institutes of Field Archaeologists and the Society of Museum Archaeologists about the scheme. The fieldwork group had 6 meetings at which speakers included Richard Hingley, Tony Brown, Peter Hayes, and Steve Parry, and the annual training course was successfully held. A small exhibition has been mounted at Jewry Wall on the scheme.
Planning advisory work has been a major item of Anne Graf's work. She has helped to draft a new Archaeological Policy for the City of Leicester and has been increasingly involved in negotiation with planners and developers.

1987 was a disappointing year for aerial archaeology due to adverse weather conditions. Only one small area of Rutland actually produced reasonable crop marks and here 15 new sites were discovered by Jim Pickering and Fred Hartley and Steve Thursfield. Fred Hartley has also continued his survey of the County's earthwork sites including those at Desford, Oakthorpe, Wanlip, Thrussington, Wymondham, Brentingby, Hoton, Cotes, Quorn, Barrow, Wenton, Stanton-under-Bardon and Glen Parva. The third volume in the earthworks series The Medieval Earthworks of North-East Leicestershire has been published and a fourth, for central Leicestershire, is virtually complete.

More fieldwork has been undertaken in the Medbourne area of the County as new fields have become available and follow up work has also been virtually completed. Publication is hoped for in 1988. Peter Liddle has also been involved in the display of Jewry Wall Museum and a new Anglo-Saxon section should open in 1988.

Peter Liddle
Archaeological Survey Officer

Reports of Fieldwork 1987

BITTESWELL (SP 544880 & SP 542882)
Lutterworth Fieldwork Group have found a Mesolithic-type end scraper of very high quality and a very small thumbnail scraper, plus other scrapers and flakes.

BITTESWELL (SP 545880)
Lutterworth Fieldwork Group have found a good scatter of Roman pottery in a newly ploughed field. (A41 1988)

BLASTON (SP 814959)
The Survey Team have found a small concentration of Late Iron Age/Early Roman pottery which is almost certain to be an occupation site. (A272 1987)

BLASTON (SP 802953)
The Survey Team have again walked the ploughed earthworks south of the village (Transactions LIX p101). Saxo-Norman and Medieval pottery were again recovered with no pottery later than (apparently) the 14th century having been found within the earthworks. Iron slag was also found. (A267 1987)

BLASTON (SP 804956)
The Survey Team has walked the area immediately north of Blaston Village and has found some 40 Saxo-Norman sherds suggesting that the early village was a large one. Four flint scrapers, a discoidal implement and an awl (?) suggest Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age activity. (A253 1987)
CLAYBROOKE PARVA ETC (SP 472880)
Lutterworth Fieldwork Group have walked available fields around the Watling Street/Fosse way crossroads. Much pottery and tile have been recovered representing the Roman small town of Venonae. Detailed plotting of the material will hopefully reveal much of the layout of the settlement.

COTESBACH (SP 523820)
From spoil heaps and scraping prior to gravel extraction Lutterworth Fieldwork Group have found various flint flakes and artefacts, including an end scraper.

DRAYTON (SP 831931)
Great Easton Fieldwork Group have re-walked the Roman villa site (Drayton I) originally found by Miss Edna Linford in 1971. They have found a mass of pottery, tile and tesserae which is not yet processed. Resorting of Miss Linford's finds by Museum staff has revealed a group of Early Saxon material.

EATON (SK 775269)
Gerald Holmes and The Survey Team have found in a nearby ploughed field a large scatter of Roman pottery representing an additional area of Goadby Marwood Roman town which, was extensively quarried in the 1950's (Transactions XXXII p17-35).

KETTON (SK 988043)
The Survey Team has fieldwalked the deserted village site of Fregthorpe. Saxo-Norman and Medieval pottery and slag were collected. (R75 1986)

KETTON (SK 97150580)
Human bones were found protruding from an old quarry face after heavy rain. Leicestershire Archaeological Unit excavated and found the grave to be rectangular of 1.98m by 1.05m aligned north-east to south-west. The grave contained an extended inhumation with head to south-west. Nails suggested a wooden coffin. The grave also contained other human bone suggesting re-use of the grave or the disturbance of earlier burials. No direct dating evidence was found but quantities of Roman pottery in the ploughsoil suggest Roman activity nearby. (A203 1987)

MEDBOURNE (SP 798925)
The Survey Team have found a scatter of Anglo-Saxon pottery associated with iron slag as well as flint blades, blade coes, an axe sharpening flake, cores and scrapers. (A18 1988)

MEDBOURNE (SP 806921)
The Survey Team have found a scatter of Iron Age pottery, some at least being Late Iron Age. This is certainly an occupation site. (A19 1988)

MELTON MOWBRAY (SK 752170)
Mr D. Wells reported Roman pottery, coins and other metalwork from this site. By chance, while walking his dog, Mr Edson found a Saxon spearhead. The Survey Team have subsequently walked the field and recovered a large group of Roman pottery and a few sherds of Anglo-Saxon pottery. It is hoped to include a more detailed report on this site in the next Transactions. (A75 1987, A32 1988)
NEVILL HOLT (SP 820947)
The Survey Team have found a very substantial Late Iron Age/Early Roman scatter in a newly ploughed field. This is an occupation site within a 1st century B.C. to 2nd century A.D. date range. (A159 1987)

NEVILL HOLT (SP 830933)
The Survey Team has surveyed the earthworks of Prestgrave deserted village. Six sherds of Stamford and a sherd of Early/Middle Saxon pottery were found in an eroded area. (A30 1988)

NEVILL HOLT (SP 826936)
The Survey Team have followed up the discovery in 1985 of a single sherd of Iron Age pottery and have discovered a small Iron Age pottery scatter, probably an occupation site. (A143 1985, A29 1988)

ROTHLEY (SK 591146)
Peter Foss, Roy Loveday, Fred Hartley and Brian Verity fieldwalked a site on the edge of the Soar flood-plain and found a good group of flints including blade material and several scrapers suggesting 2 periods of occupation. (A258 1987)

TUR LANGTON (SP 701935)
A concentration of Iron-Age pottery found by Paul and Tina Bowman includes scored decorated ware and one sherd with finger impressed decoration. Adjacent to this a dense Roman pottery and tile scatter was located, dating from the 1st Century A.D. to the late Roman period. Two Roman spindle whorls and a few probable Anglo-Saxon sherds were also collected. A scatter of flint, including cores and scrapers was noted throughout the area.

TUR LANGTON (SP 698940)
In a general scatter of flint, including cores and scrapers, a burnt Plano-convex knife has been found by Paul and Tina Bowman. This may possibly be from a cremation burial. Flint finds include some probable Mesolithic and early Neolithic material.

WEST LANGTON (SP 714921)
Following the find of two Anglo-Saxon brooches by Brian Hammond, some 200 sherds of Anglo-Saxon pottery have been found by Paul and Tina Bowman, including a few with stamp decoration and a handle which has few parallels. This site is most likely a cemetery and associated settlement site. Hand made pottery of probable Iron Age date together with some burnt cobbles were also noted.

WEST LANGTON (SP 716939)
Fieldworking by Paul and Tina Bowman has produced a blunted-back flint knife broadly dating from the early Neolithic period.

WYMESWOLD (SK 622235)
Hector MacDonald reports the discovery of a group of Roman pottery sherds including grey-ware and colour-coated ware. Dr R.J. Pollard suggests a 4th century date. Coins and a brooch are reported from nearby.
WYMESWOLD (SK 617232)
Hector MacDonald reports a scatter of Roman pottery sherds including grey-ware, mortarium and calcite gritted ware. The last is probably 1st century in date. Coins are also reported.

Review


The last ten years have witnessed a new appreciation of the historical and architectural value of nonconformist buildings. Now the Royal Commission, largely through the work of Christopher Stell, has published the first volume covering 13 counties in central England of what promises to become the authoritative survey of nonconformist chapels and meeting-houses in the country. The publication under review is one of the separately issued county sections. Handsomely produced, it has over 40 plates, drawings and plans for Leicestershire and Rutland alone. Most entries contain a brief account of the congregation’s origins, a bibliography and a description of the building, its history and the more important fittings and monumental inscriptions. The small number of interior views are particularly interesting, for example the Strict Baptist Chapel at Evington, since they are less familiar than the exteriors and more vulnerable to alteration. The preface to the main volume makes clear that the emphasis is on pre-1800 buildings, though the survey is intended to include all the important buildings up to 1914 and a listing of the most notable examples demolished since 1940. Thus the coverage of the nineteenth century, the main period of chapel building, is selective. Moreover, only those buildings which have actually been visited are included. The results are therefore rather less than the first impression of a gazetteer, though probably only a few buildings of importance have been missed. But a survey on this scale does allow an assessment of the nonconformist buildings in the county. The erection of a building and its subsequent history are visible signs of the success or failure of a congregation, and the later changes in ownership offer a fascinating insight into the fortunes of individual congregations and denominations. Thus at Oakham the Friends meeting-house built in 1719 for £166, closed in 1837 and later leased to the Primitive Methodists, is now in Quaker use again, while the simple Presbyterian meeting-house built in 1727 and now part of Oakham School, was replaced in 1861 by a larger modern building erected for the congregation which had by then become Congregationalist. As in all counties Methodists are well represented, but the particular feature of Leicestershire is the strength of the General Baptists. The number of buildings they erected in the north-west of the county in the early nineteenth century is evident from the survey. The Unitarians, the smallest and traditionally the wealthiest denomination, have only two buildings listed, nonetheless they are among the seven buildings in the county considered by the Commissioners to be most worthy of preservation. If Leicestershire is not perhaps as well endowed as some counties, then it is clear it has not suffered the same level of losses. Redundant buildings have generally fared better.
in Leicester than in other major cities. One notes the treatment of the 'Pork Pie' Chapel in Belvoir Street, now the City Adult Education Centre, compared with the former Baptist Chapel in George Street and the Wesleyan Chapel in Boot Street, both in Nottingham, though the Bond Street Congregational Church demolished in the 1960s should be mentioned. There are a number of slips in the Leicestershire section, such as the dating of the early nineteenth century Congregational Chapel at Lutterworth and the alterations to the Billesdon Baptist Chapel made in 1861. The most serious is the omission of Bardon Chapel said to date largely from 1694. Errors and omissions are inevitable in a work of this scale but they could perhaps have been reduced. The editor obtained assistance with the Staffordshire section, why not for Leicestershire and other counties? Reference to the new Pevsner volume would have highlighted some of the more questionable dates and drawn attention to Bardon Chapel. It would be wrong however not to point out the generally high standard of the work, and what a major contribution the survey is to the study of nonconformist buildings and to the overall history of dissent. The separate county sections are particularly good value and deserve a wide circulation.

David L. Wykes