

Archaeological Surveys at Quaker Wood, Blewbury

Introduction

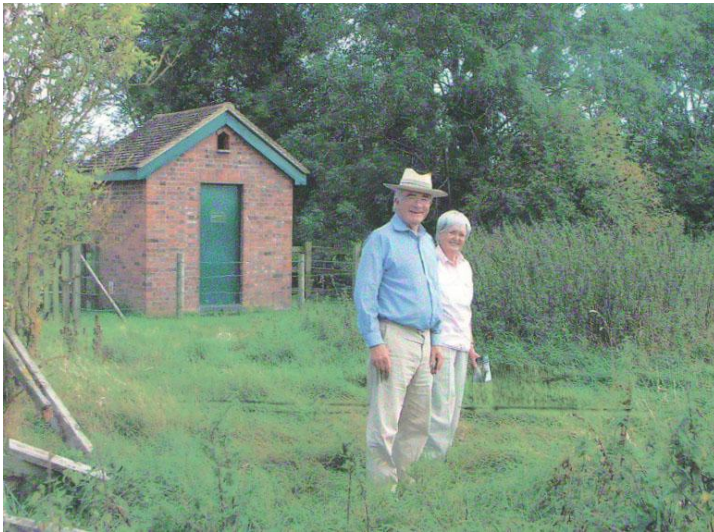


A short series of archaeological surveys has been conducted by SOAG (South Oxfordshire Archaeology Group) on the field being acquired by Sustainable Blewbury for plantation of a new wood. The map shows a section of the 1805 Inclosure Award map. The land includes part of Nos. 11 and 16 and all of No. 21. The last of these, in which a small building can be seen, is identified as “Quakers Meeting House Close”. In the Tithe Apportionment map of 1841 it had become “Tan Yard” but No 19 was called “Quakers House Croft” and No 11 was “Quakers Croft”. It is understood that the meeting house was demolished early in the 19th century and the site then used for tanning.



In 1995 the Thames Conservancy (now the Environment Agency) constructed a flow gauging station on the Millbrook which runs along the eastern edge of these fields, just northeast of the Quakers Meeting House location. This also involved cutting trenches across the fields, presumably for power and phone lines to service the station. During the work human remains were found, and it is believed that these were Quaker burials. These are thought to date back to the

late 18th century when the Quaker movement in Blewbury was at its peak.



The brick structure is the gauging station, seen in 2014. In the foreground are Blewbury residents standing in the approximate position that human remains were located. From observations during the work in 1995 it is clear that the graves were quite shallow.

The Surveys



The aim of the surveys was to see if any trace of the Quaker Meeting House or the burials could be found by non-intrusive methods. The northeastern part of the field was surveyed using resistivity and differential magnetometry equipment. Burials, particularly after more than two centuries, are very difficult to detect and so it was not surprising that no traces of any were found. Buildings can be easier to locate if masonry footings remain in the ground or, in some

conditions, if foundation trenches have been cut and later robbed out, but again no traces were found.



However in the vicinity of the anticipated building a substantial quantity of masonry was found spread over the surface. It would appear that this is demolition material and, because of its constrained location it would seem likely to be the remnants of the Meeting House. A few samples of this were collected and appear to be concrete and decorated mortar.



In addition to the two geophysical surveys, a metal detecting survey was conducted across the whole field. As expected a number of agricultural finds were made including a broken ploughshare, part of a hoe and a large spring.

In addition a number of finer pieces were found including parts of an "apostle" spoon, a 4th century Roman coin (the head is just visible in the left hand image), buttons, a thimble and listed in the table (thanks to Lindsey Bedford) .



Blewbury Quaker Field Metal detecting finds			
Description	Material	Date	Dimensions
Pottery sherds. Two pieces of yellow glazed Post-med redware.	ceramic	c. 18th C	
One piece glazed stoneware	ceramic	c. 18th - 19thC	
Rifle bullet - blunt tip with indent. One circumferential groove near base		c.20thC	L 32mm, diam 7.8mm
Rifle empty bullet case. No writing visible on base		c.20thC	L 46.9mm. Diam 13.3mm
Possible hobnail	Fe	unknown	incomplete
Possible key bow. Wide oval shaped bow with small part of projecting stem	Fe	unknown	W 63mm
Strap. Possible incomplete hinge strap. Rectangular with pointed tip and 2 remaining attachment holes.	Fe	unknown	L 104mmmm W 32mm
Scrap fragment of lead. Possible trace of design but maybe stress marks.	Pb	unknown	
Button. Plain, flat, shank missing.	Tombac	c.18thC	diam 15mm
Button. Just the top of a 2 piece button. Plain, convex	Cu Alloy	c.19thC	diam 20.5mm
Button. Incomplete with shank missing. Decorated with roped rim, background of concentric rings of tiny dots. Main decoration has 4 lozenge ploye (curved in sides) at cardinal points, 4 smaller ones at ordinal points, 4 small ones in the middle and a central pellet.	Pewter?	c.18th - 19thC	diam 24mm
Thimble. Squashed flat. Rimless, machine knurled on top half, plain lower half.	Cu Alloy	19thC	H approx. 22mm
Button. Plain, flat incomplete with shank missing.	tombac	c.18thC	diam 20.4mm
Coin. Roman nummus of House of Constantine. Diademed bust facing right. 2 soldiers holding spears and shields with military standard between	Cu Alloy	AD 336 - 342	diam 14.3mm

them. [GLORIA EXERCITVS] Trier mint.			
Button. 4-holed, recessed centre with scrolling design around edge. No inscription.	Cu Alloy	c.19-20thC	diam. 16.8mm
Flat disk with no identifying features.	?alloy	unknown	diam. 30mm
Mount. A thin circular disk with central hole and at least 1 other smaller hole for attaching. Decorated with a floral design. Bent almost in half.	Cu Alloy	unknown	diam.c. 37mm
Spoon bowl from a teaspoon. Diagonal incised lines on outer edges of remnants of handle.	?pewter		bowl L 38mm, W 25
Bicycle gear shift (Sturmey Archer type). Very corroded 3-speed quadrant shifter.	Fe	c. 1930s-60s	
Coin. Penny of Queen Victoria. Old veiled bust.	Cu	1898	diam 30.8mm
Button. Concave back only of 2 piece button. Shank missing.	Cu Alloy	c.18th - 20thC	diam. 16.6mm
Button. Plain, flat with broken shank.	tombac	c. 18thC	diam. 17.6mm
Button. Silvered or tinned with shank missing. Decorated with tight and small zig zag border around a running fox with the word TALIO above and ground with tufty grass below. The fur and ground are textured with lines and cross hatching.	Cu Alloy	late 1700s - early 1800s	diam. 24.8mm
Coin. Halfpenny but totally blank now.	Cu	Prob. 19th C	27mm
Horseshoe. Largest of 3 found. Hand forged (slightly irregular) with toe clip. Not possible to count nailholes due to corrosion. No fullering. Arched inner profile. From a working horse.	Fe	Early-mid 1800s	H 160mm, W 173mm
Spoon. The top of the handle from an Apostle spoon depicting St Peter holding the keys to Heaven.	Cu Alloy	unknown	L 32.5mm



One button in particular is really interesting and perhaps quite significant. It probably dates to the late 1700s to early 1800s, is silver plated and depicts a running fox beneath the word TALIO. The same design has cropped up on 18th century cufflinks with various spellings of Talio (TALLIO/TALLY HO/TALLY-O/TALLEO), particularly in America it seems.

This link (although American) is an interesting read and shows the same design being used, linked to Charles James Fox. <https://livesandlegaciesblog.org/2017/07/03/the-fox-a-bygone-symbol-of-liberty/> Although too early for our button it is interesting that another Fox - George Fox (1624 – 1691), was a founder of the Quakers. Perhaps this is just a fox hunting jacket button but perhaps it has a far deeper relevance to our Quaker field.

Conclusions

A scattering of masonry on the field surface is evidence for a building in the expected location of the Meeting House. No new evidence of burials was found but metal detecting found evidence of human activity at the site from Roman times. One button has potential connections to the Quaker movement.