

EXCAVATIONS AT THE *REINDEER INN*

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The editorial in our Autumn/Winter issue for 2011 recorded that archaeological excavations were carried out at the *Unicorn* and the *Reindeer* in Banbury between 10 and 14 October 2011 as part of a television series entitled 'The Pub Dig' produced by Oxford Scientific Films Ltd. The resultant programme was broadcast on a subscription channel in December, but may be transmitted on a free-to-air channel within a few months. The following is a digest of the report on the project, '*Archaeological Investigations at The Unicorn and Ye Olde Reindeer Public Houses, Banbury, Oxfordshire*', whose principal author was Giles Dawkes, senior archaeologist for the excavations. The report was published by Archaeology South East (www.archaeologyse.co.uk) in November 2011. The project was approved and monitored by the county archaeologist and the site archive will be deposited with the county museum service (accession number OXCMS: 2011.173). The excavation at the *Unicorn* proved unproductive since the archaeologists encountered a previously unknown cellar of eighteenth or nineteenth century date, the construction of which appears to have destroyed all stratified deposits in the vicinity of the building.

Television producers, like tabloid journalists, love stories about celebrities, and sure enough we learn in this report that Oliver Cromwell is believed to have planned the Battle of Edgehill in the Globe Room at the *Reindeer*, something which accounts of the events of 1642 suggest was extremely unlikely. Fortunately the findings from the excavation are reported in a more scientific manner.

The archaeologists dug a pit approx 1.5 x 5 metres in the yard of the *Reindeer*. The hard standing and recent overburden were removed with a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless digging bucket, and the lower levels were excavated by hand. The trench revealed part of a linear feature filled with several sherds of twelfth- or thirteenth-century pottery. The feature was possibly the boundary of a burgage plot, associated perhaps with the extension of the town with newly-laid out streets west of the Market Place. A century or so after the plot was first used a substantial masonry building containing an oven and therefore, presumably, a kitchen was erected there and remained until it was abandoned in the late fifteenth or sixteenth century.

Some 61 pottery finds were found on the site, all of medieval or later date. They are characteristic of those found on other sites in Oxfordshire, and come almost entirely from potteries in Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire. The dearth of fourteenth-century finds suggests that Banbury may have shared the economic decline in that period that has been observed elsewhere in Oxfordshire. Analysis of the botanical samples found on the site