

## Summaries of the two archaeological books about the studies at the sites of the Jubilee River at Dorney and Dorney Lake



### Opening the wood, making the land

#### Summary

Excavations at the Eton Rowing Course at Dorney Lake and along the Jubilee River (Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton Flood Alleviation Channel) revealed extensive evidence for occupation in an evolving landscape of floodplains and gravel terraces set amidst the shifting channels of the Thames.

The most significant evidence was a series of early Neolithic midden deposits, preserved in hollows left by infilled palaeochannels. These deposits contained dense concentrations of pottery, worked flint, animal bone and other finds, and are put into context by other artefact scatters from the floodplain, pits on the gravel terrace and waterlogged environmental deposits from palaeochannels. Early Mesolithic lakeside occupation, later Mesolithic flint scatters along a former channel of the Thames, pits from the middle and late Neolithic and activity areas of the Beaker and Early Bronze Age, demonstrate longer term changes in patterns of occupation.

The excavations also revealed early, middle and late Neolithic human remains in palaeochannels, middle Neolithic crouched inhumation burials and early Neolithic cremated remains. An oval barrow may have first been cut in the early Neolithic. Other ring ditches date from the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age; one contained a central cremation burial in a Collared Urn together with pyre material and the remains of a bier.

## Gathering the people, settling the land

### Summary

Why did people gather at the site of a long abandoned Roman farmstead not far from the river Thames sometime around the year AD 760; what was their purpose and where did they come from?

The middle Thames valley in the Saxon and early medieval period defies easy explanation. While archaeological discoveries and historical research have illuminated our understanding of the upper Thames to the west and London and the estuary to the east, the nature of settlement between has remained elusive and obscure. With no apparent evidence of any major Saxon or early medieval settlement focus, how did this area relate to the important sites at Dorney and Taplow? Was it merely uninhabited pastureland? Given the political importance of the Thames as a border between Mercia and Wessex through much of the Saxon period, was this an area in dispute, and if so, is this reflected in the remains (or lack of them) to be found?

The excavations by Oxford Archaeology on the sites of the Jubilee River (Environment Agency's Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton Flood Alleviation Scheme) and the Eton College Rowing Course at Dorney Lake have produced an exceptional site of Anglo-Saxon date, suggesting occupation and activity unlike that from any existing 'type site'. Its unique nature is perhaps best seen as a product of the role that the middle Thames valley played, as both axis and boundary, in the middle Saxon period.

The excavations have also shed light on the medieval settlement pattern, showing that the nature of the landscape has lent itself to idiosyncratic and unusual occupation.