

J. Sebney.

Site diary 1987 - 1988.

Hobs Mead Project

November 23rd

The third year of the project began in September and, as in 1986, there was during the month a considerable change in the teams with many members leaving after their twelve months to be replaced by new faces.

As things stand at present the Supervising team is as it was earlier this year (with, however, Elizabeth Price having left): John McIlwaine, Graham Smyth, David Wicks, Sean Steadman, plus a newcomer in the position of Landscaping Supervisor - David Naughton. He replaces Ron Frampton, now promoted Senior Supervisor at the Core Unit, who in turn replaced Ted Banks - moved elsewhere.

The Leading Hand / Full-time positions have changed a great deal in the last few months and now stand as follows

David Smith	Leading Hand Archaeology
David Platt	Full-time
Alex Evans	Leading Hand
Leslie Whitehorn	Full-time
Robert Dixon	-----
John Beddall	-----
Pat Ryan	Leading Hand
Terry Head	Leading Hand Landscaping
Jon Hackney	-----
Ray Griffiths	-----
Pat McLoughan	Full-time
Peter Lince	-----

Of these appointees only one came from 'outside', Pat Ryan, our artist, but many have readily

joined the project as ^{newcomers (that is, part-timers),} gaining promotion by merit. Alex Evans and Terry Head have returned to the project after an absence of twelve months - or so (less in the case of Terry) - and have proved their worth as expected.

At the present moment the big difficulty on the site is the electricity supply. The project moved its headquarters in July, from the Church Hall to the new facility on Hobs Moat Road. At the moment, however, the electricity is still to be connected and this is exercising everybody's attention; most of whom - I think - are concerned by what they think is neglect by the Agency, rather than the weather conditions, which until now, with some exceptions, have been quite benign. This week, not unexpectedly, it has begun to turn very cold.

Many representations have been made to the Core Unit and many enquiries of individuals, mostly by myself, but all to no avail. It seems that nothing short of the snail-paced progress of the Electricity Board will turn the supply on.

How this situation occurred is difficult to discern and I don't think its worth trying to apportion blame. But it does seem that it's at least attributable to the Agency being slow in applying for the supply, the Metropolitan Borough Council being slower - and wanting three months to pay its bills, and the Electricity Board having been satisfied that the correct ritual has been gone through then getting round to the

job in its own magisterial speed. The upshot is that it's now November and, on site, we are beginning to get very cold.

On Friday, November 20th the supervisors, against my considered advice, put in a written complaint to the Agency Manager, the correct complaints procedure thus far having been gone through. He is bound to reply to their complaint within fourteen days. Today Paul Warren, projects co-ordinator, visited the site apparently following my observation to him that a petition is now circulating among the workforce. On his visit I understand that a remark was passed to D Naughton of which I must make a note here. I expect others have recorded its content in their diaries.

~~November 21st~~
November 21st.

A cold, rainy day; little work was possible on site, but the effort was made. In the afternoon the weather brightened up somewhat. Work generally continued on a 'tick over' basis.

In the morning I took three part-timers to the Central Library in Salford for research work, while David Wicks sent three or four others down to the Branch Library for similar work. This was done largely because of the prevailing temperatures in the site facility (around 5°C), which makes it impossible to work satisfactorily at any time. He thought too it would help to boost morale.

As part of this effort, and because it became exceedingly dull, at around 4.00 p.m. I sent

everyone home.

November 25th.

A dryer day; in the morning I took the opportunity of updating our videotape record. Yesterday in the afternoon I videotaped the landscaping aspect to the project; today I videotaped the progress on H.M.6. This has been done on a regular basis since the trench was begun, which is now nearing completion. This morning David talked about the reduction of the general layer using a quadrant system, the recent erosion of the earthwork into the south western corner of H.M.6, the geological section which has been developed in the north western corner, and the feature 1097, the ditch-like element now becoming apparent.

Generally in the last two or three months progress on the archaeological side of things has been steady and unremarkable. The focus of activity outside has been H.M.6. Excavation showed that the 'medieval' lane has been resurfaced several times in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with quite a build-up of these surfaces - say 40 cms or so - below which is a rather indeterminate surface straight on glacial material. Elsewhere in the trench there is a build up of materials in the last one hundred and fifty years, and below that some rather non-descript features. The most interesting feature yet found is the ditch-like 1097 which is currently being excavated. This may

perhaps be medieval in date and could therefore be a part of the monument. We shall see.

Noteworthy is the lack of a medieval soil, or rather a build-up prior to the recent period. This tendency was noted on the moat platform, but outside the central area, as seen in HM4 & HM6, it is very much more obvious, with almost no medieval 'soil' detectable in either area. This is very difficult, obviously, to account for and is causing a good deal of speculation. Clearly, we need to understand why this has happened.

On the landscaping side of the project work is well up to schedule with the north and south sides of the earthwork now boarded with soil-retaining boards, where necessary, and awaiting top soil. This has been promised by A. Furness-Huson (Solith Tech Services) and will be forthcoming shortly. After that, in the Spring, the areas will be turfed (which both he and I know is wrong - they should be seeded with special grasses), and the remaining eastern side will be prepared for conservation.

Aside from this I have just one problem - the connection of the electricity supply. It is now getting very cold - and has been so since late September.

November 26th

On Tuesday T. Lewis 'phoned to tell me that

we had a monitor by the MSC scheduled for today. The monitoring officer, L Moley, arrived at about 11.45 - 12.00 on a day and stayed for about 1 hour.

A very likeable fellow, and dutiful, he asked all the usual MSC questions which, as usual, were quite irrelevant. He did not notice the cold, which was very fortunate as this did not encourage ^{him} to ask about the electricity supply. As he did not speak to any of the part-timers he was not able to gain from them any knowledge of this matter, either.

The monitor was, therefore, of no useful purpose.

I am very saddened to see the MSC wasting its efforts and resources on such exercises.

Earlier in the morning Paul Warren came to see David Naughton and myself having had David's diary delivered to him this morning, at his request, by myself. He seemed mollified, and came to assure David that there was no plan by anyone to victimise him, David Naughton. I was gratified that Paul came to see David and I think it went some way to clear the air.

November 27th

A quiet day - work proceeded normally on site. 2.30 finish.

November 28th, 29th.

Weekend.

November 30th.

The weather was colder today - but there were suggestions that the electricity may be turned on soon. We live and pray.

Robert Dixon, full-time clerk/typist with the project, left ~~today~~ after handing his notice in in the afternoon. His time with us was rather less than happy, and I had a word with him in the morning, telling him that he would have to undertake tasks which did not appeal to him. He found this unacceptable, - so at about 2.15 he appeared at the Core Unit notice in hand. As he had five days holiday owing this meant that he left immediately.

On site work continued as usual - the archaeology team surveying and digging on HMG, the landscapers collecting eaves and so on around the site.

December 1st. to 3rd

Work on site continued normally, the weather becoming progressively colder.

December 4th

A normal sort of Friday, until about 11.45 when, suddenly and inconspicuously, the MGB

arrived - a man of about fifty-six, quiet, modest. He seemed taken aback at our affectionate reception. Within an hour the electricity was connected - the meter having been installed, the circuits tested. No fires.

With this a great cloud was lifted from the site. - the lighting in the cabins seemed only slightly less important than the heating. Several of our staff members seemed positively euphoric.

We went home at 2.30 with the decision that next week will be the start of a new week.

December 5th, 61.

Weekend.

December 7th

This morning I ~~is~~ ^{arrived} on the site feeling rather unwell - over the weekend I developed what appears to be a cold.

I went to the love unit later and there found Tom Lewis unwell also - he looked very bad. I told him that the electricity supply had been connected, and that the site supervisors were very grateful to him for his efforts. He looked up, smiled and asked me if I knew what the problem had been. I said I did. He said that people hadn't followed basic administrative procedures.

I replied that I knew this - and that they tried to blind us with science. He laughed.

December 8th - 10th.

Nothing much to record. The site continued well, keeping up the general standard of recent times. On Tuesday, 8th, the monthly supervisory meeting for the site was held and this was a useful, constructive occasion. I took the opportunity of thanking all the supervisors for their help and tolerance during my recent difficulties.

One point which was raised was the Borough's plans for the management of the site after our departure. As I do not know them, I thought it would be a good idea to raise the question with A. Furness-Husson when I see him, along with other matters - like the supply of materials. Today, the 10th, I sent to see him but he was not in, so I booked an appointment for tomorrow.

December 11th

An administrative day, rounding off the week. At 2.30 the site was shut down and we all went home, leaving Sean to undertake the 'Friday duty' (talking after the 'phone until 8.00 p.m.)

At 9.30 I sent to see A. Furness-Husson by appointment but he was not in. Eventually

he sent a message saying that he'd been delayed and I could either wait for him or he would come to the site. I decided to do the latter and, predictably, I saw nothing of him. I shall have to chase him towards the end of next week. For the moment at the beginning of next week, I am on a plastering course - raising eyebrows; seeing how the training courses work for the part-timers. I gather people think I'm rather odd to actually go and do a plastering course.

December 12th, 13th.

Weekend

December 14th - 18th

Plastering course

December 18th

Back today by special arrangement - released by J. Hadden and others - to do videotaping for the Core Unit. This concerned the Job Search course.

Late in the morning I went to the site and found everything in order. At 2.30 everything was shut down for the weekend.

December 19th, 20th

Weekend

December 21st.

A quiet day in the run-up to Christmas, with little for the Archaeology team to do. The Landscapes continued as normal; while I attached a few archaeologists to their duties. The rest were sent out to continue the contour survey.

In the morning I went to the Love Unit to do this and that - a promotion for E. Wilkes to L/S full-time, photocopying and so on - and found everything running quite well: surprisingly in view of the season!

Diary ends

October 14

I have just finished the first part of the book. It is a little bit of a mystery, but I think I have found the answer. I will be writing about it in the next issue. I hope you will like it. I will be writing about it in the next issue. I hope you will like it.

John Doe