

SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP
1969 to 2010 - 41 years of Independent Archaeology

President Emeritus: Mrs Cynthia Graham-Kerr
Patron: Prof. Malcolm Airs

Annual Report & Accounts for 2009



A last look at the furnace and associated hypocaust area at Gatehampton Roman Villa. The heated area, furnace and apsed room were all excavated at different times and this view of their relationship was only possible when the earliest excavated areas were uncovered just prior to their backfilling.

SOAG 41st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Goring Heath Parish Hall, Whitchurch Hill
2:00pm on Sunday 28th March 2010

SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (Compiled by the Vice President from reports by members of the Committee)

At the 40th Annual General Meeting on 29th March 2009 we celebrated 40 years of SOAG and the leadership of our esteemed Founder and President, Cynthia Graham Kerr. Cyn was honoured by the granting of the title of President Emeritus, which title she will hold for life. At her request, the celebrations were kept simple, comprising a special tea with celebration cake and sparkling wine. The meeting was well attended and Cyn was once more the centre of a circle of friends and archaeologists. Unknown to all but a very few, this was to be her last attendance at a SOAG event. Shortly afterwards she moved to a care home near Wantage and later in the year to one in the small market town of Bungay, in Suffolk, to be near her son, Alistair.

On 1st July, retired Chairman Ian Clarke was appointed a Vice President of SOAG and will act in lieu until such time as a new President is appointed.

The Group continued its principal activities of evening lectures from September to March and occasional events in the Summer, together with an enhanced programme of fieldwork.

LECTURE PROGRAMME

A high quality lecture programme was put together by Nancy Nichols and David Nicholls. The lectures were well advertised in *SOAG Messenger*, where subsequent discussions of the events were also published. Our venue, the Goring Heath Parish Hall, is beautifully maintained and continues to attract favourable comment from new members and visiting lecturers alike. Whilst attendance this year has been generally good, a number of our members have commented on the difficulty of getting to the venue, not wishing to drive on dark winter nights and there being no public transport available. The Membership Secretary can now put members in touch with those able to offer lifts, although this has rarely been taken up. We have reviewed alternative venues in urban centres but, mindful of the need to control costs, have not found an affordable and suitable alternative. The venue and increased publicity for events will, however, remain on the SOAG Committee's agenda. Tea, coffee and biscuits are once again available on a regular basis - thanks to Rebecca Morrisson, with assistance from David Cox.

VISITS

Two SOAG visits were arranged this year, organised mainly by Nancy Nichols. In July a group of 16 SOAGs visited Ufton Court, a Tudor Manor House in Berkshire to the west of Reading. In anticipation that we would be finding such a building at our dig in Brightwell Park, Ian Clarke, the BBCHAP project leader, has this year been explaining to us the development of mediaeval manor houses. The tour of Ufton therefore gave us the chance to inspect one of the best preserved examples extant, and our guide, Anthony Branfoot, encouraged much discussion during the tour. The visit was followed by an excellent lunch at the Fox and Hounds pub near Theale. The high attendance has encouraged us to plan at least one summer visit for 2010. In December an evening visit was arranged by invitation to Oxbow Books in Oxford, the leading purveyors of specialist books on archaeology and history. SOAG's three project leaders displayed some of the most interesting finds from their sites, and Oxbow provided pre-Christmas refreshments. Best of all, we had the opportunity to browse and buy from Oxbow's extensive book collection. Several of us dined together afterwards at the nearby Mongolian Wok.

FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY

A principal feature of the SOAG projects led by David Nichols at both Rotherfield Greys and Bix, has been our collaboration with Reading University's Archaeology Department. Under the supervision of Dr Tim Astin we have had access to a Bartington magnetometer and also a Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) system, along with Tim's expertise in analysing the results. In addition the University has adopted both sites for field projects by several undergraduate and Masters students. The relationship has worked well with the boundaries of responsibilities being well respected. It has provided much needed opportunities for SOAG members to gain training and experience in the use of the equipment.

Greys (Project Leader: David Nichols)

Our collaborative work in 2008 had confirmed the Mound that was the initial object of our study (now referred to as Greys 1) to be almost certainly of Bronze Age origin, possibly earlier, and to have an intriguing internal structure. In 2009 we turned our attention to the wider landscape, both immediately adjacent to the Mound and in the nearby fields. The geophysical survey of the Greys 1 field was extended, using all available techniques, and should be completed in 2010. We also commenced an in depth study of a 'quarry' like feature on the edge of this field, since geophysics had raised the possibility of this being the site of another ancient mound, since destroyed. The quarry data is still being analysed. A University student, with SOAG assistance, has been studying the underlying geology of the whole area, which is known to lie on ancient fluvial terraces of the Thames.

An adjacent field, Row Croft, was subject to fieldwalking after ploughing, led by Janet Eastment. This yielded a significant haul of mainly Bronze Age artefacts but included some good quality Neolithic tools and maybe Mesolithic. It was an excellent training exercise for many Soags.

Google Earth images of a field 300m away (now Greys 2) hinted at circular features; as a result of which we conducted a geophysics survey. These surveys proved inconclusive, but a dowsing survey conducted by Janet Sharpe yielded positive results which aligned well with the Google Earth features.

In summary, the Rotherfield Greys area is showing every sign of being a significant landscape for Bronze Age activity with the potential to reward SOAG with several years more study. Special thanks are due to Gerard Latham and Geoff Deakin and the University for geophysics, and the landowners Sue and Sam Samuels (Greys 1) and Alexander Hood (Greys 2) for support and access.

Bix (Project Leader: David Nichols)

At Bix, in collaboration with the University, we undertook further geophysical studies of the area around the medieval graves we found in 2008 in the garden of Chapel Cottages, in the hope of locating remains of the 'lost' medieval church of Bix Gibwyn. A SOAG team cleared derelict areas of the garden and in September in a three day exercise, our University colleagues conducted a GPR survey of an extended garden area. Preliminary results suggest that we may be seeing the outlines of the church in the garden and running under the house. In addition a joint SOAG/University team conducted a wide area magnetometry survey in the fields adjacent to the garden. Early analysis of the results suggests possible evidence of Iron Age activity.

The Bix project is part sponsored by Oxon Victoria County History and we will continue collaborating with them in their research into the history of the medieval Bix parishes. Our grateful thanks go to the owner Lord Alvingham and the occupants of Chapel Cottages for allowing this work.

Gatehampton (Director: Hazel Williams)

Much time was spent on preparation for backfilling a large area of the excavation, marking the end of an important phase of the project. This included the suite of heated rooms forming a small bath house at the western end of the villa. Features such as the *opus signinum* floors, box-tiles in situ and *pillae* stacks of the *hypocaust*, have been of great interest and inspiration to diggers and visitors for many years. They are still well preserved and are now securely backfilled.

We completed our investigation of the boundary ditches and cobbled areas north of the villa enclosure, which has revealed evidence of Roman and Iron Age activity in the landscape around the villa.

The project continues to provide basic training and opportunities for beginners and young people to experience all aspects of on-site activity. Students from Bristol and other universities use their Gatehampton experience for course credits, with more experienced diggers taking responsibility for their own trench areas. The dig continues to attract new members and visitors from a wide area.

We are delighted to have good relationship with Robin Cloke and the new landowners (Sarah and Roger Edmunds) and are grateful for their help and encouragement. They are keen for the excavation to continue.

Brightwell Park (BBCHAP) (Project Leader: Ian Clarke)

The southern end of Brightwell Park was surveyed with the resistance meter, confirming that the approach to the old manor house from the village was via a straight, formal drive from the High Street, entering the Park just to the East of the churchyard. The survey also revealed the full southern extent of the formal, manor house gardens, together with evidence for the old rectory and its enclosure that once occupied the south-east corner of the Park. In the summer, a two week excavation was aimed at what we thought might be the entrance porch to the old manor house. The building remains revealed did not fit with this theory and we now think that what we found may be part of a north-west wing of the old manor house, built along the north side of a courtyard, with the house then some 8m to the east of our trench. If this is right, then by extending our trench to the south in 2010 we will hope to find the gatehouse to the courtyard. We are most grateful to landowners Nigel and Tessa Mogg for their continued support and encouragement and for use of the magnificent dovecote for a field base.

PUBLICATIONS AND PUBLICITY

SOAG Bulletin No 63 was produced by the Publications Team led by Hon. Editor Sue Sandford and Graphics Designer Janet Eastment. Alongside members' wide-ranging articles and reports on our field archaeology, this year's issue featured the citation honouring Cynthia Graham Kerr on taking Emeritus status after 40 years at the head of SOAG, and a tribute by Hazel Williams for Cyn's 25 years of fieldwork at Gatehampton. We were pleased to hear that *SOAG Bulletin 62* has been cited by Paul Booth in "The British Archaeology Report" for 2009 in relation to the work of Janet Sharpe and Phil Carter.

The newsletter, *SOAG Messenger*, continues to advertise our lecture and visits programme and convey regular news and reviews of our archaeology projects. Under Editor Mike Green, we have seen a significant increase in the number of articles being contributed by SOAG members, with many more pictures to add interest and amusement. At ten issues per annum, and now typically six A4 pages per issue, it is a very prominent and key member benefit.

The SOAG website, under the excellent supervision of webmaster Steve Gibson, continues to be a key public face for SOAG, playing a major role in advertising our activities to the world outside. However, this year we have not been sufficiently rigorous in keeping the descriptions of our project activities up to date. The committee needs to resolve how this can be done better in future. In fact publicity in general for SOAG and its activities needs to be the focus of greater attention in the future in order to maintain, or increase, membership, and to improve attendance at our public lectures.

OTHER MATTERS

The Committee recognised during the year that rising running costs and increased field activity was impacting on our cash balance. Hon. Treasurer John Gibbs, with the help of the Committee, has established a more formal budgeting process to give better information and help keep control of costs for the future. The underlying principle of our operation is that subscription receipts must cover the 'core' costs of running the Group, but that field projects will require additional funding from other sources. It became clear that membership fees would have to be increased for 2010 and this was communicated to the membership in December. Under Membership Secretary Mike Vincent, the membership database has been much improved and is helping us to keep better track of progress and identify issues quickly when members do not renew. With a postcode listing we can also find potential lifts to lectures for members.

Hon. Secretary Dave Oliver has devised a simple form that any member can use for recording and reporting details of new archaeological features and sites that emerge. Over time, this will build into an important database of sites for possible future investigation by SOAG. Information from it will be communicated to the County Archaeologist to link into the HER and County planning process.

Behind the scenes, Sue Sandford and Janet Sharpe continued their meticulous work of cataloguing and securing SOAG's archives, including absorbing the remaining paperwork from Cyn's personal files. The papers will be stored at the County Museums Resource Centre at Standlake. In retirement, Cyn donated her personal library of archaeological books which were put on sale to members.

The Committee have coped remarkably well through the year without a Chairman by rotating the chair for both committee and lecture meetings, but by the end of the year an inevitable loss of continuity and direction was showing. It is therefore with a considerable sense of relief that we hear that Dave Oliver is willing to take on the Chairmanship for 2010-11. I must pay tribute to all the members of the Committee for dealing with this difficult situation so well and I offer my grateful thanks to them.

I thank also the many others who have contributed to another successful year for SOAG, not least the members of the field teams and those who attend our lectures. But whether or not you attend lectures or take part in field activities, your support is valued and vital to SOAG. It is the shared interest of all our members in the diverse aspects of archaeology that is the very reason for our existence.

Ian Clarke
1st March 2010

LECTURES AND OTHER EVENTS IN 2009

Thursday 22nd January:

Dr Jill Greenaway (Reading Museum)
'The Thames Water Collection'

Thursday 26th February:

Cyril McCombe MBE
'Small Town Foundries - boom or bust?'

Sunday 29th March:

Review of SOAG Archaeology 2008-9

Thursday 23rd April:

Sarah Morton MSc (Museums Resource Centre, Standlake)
'Site Conservation of Archaeological Objects'

Wednesday 22nd July:

Guided Tour of Ufton Court

Thursday 24th September:

Steven Mithen FBA (Professor of Early Prehistory, University of Reading)
"To the Islands ... Reconstructing Mesolithic Settlement in Western Scotland"

Thursday 22nd October:

Peter Crow (Centre for Human and Ecological Sciences, Forestry Commission)
'Let There be Light: The use of Lasers to Reveal Hidden Woodland'

Thursday 26th November:

Angela Care Evans (Former Head of Anglo-Saxon Dept of the British Museum)
'Sutton Hoo – 70 Years Later : An Archaeological Retrospective'

Wednesday 2nd December:

Visit to Oxbow Books in Oxford

SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP

TREASURER'S REPORT

As mentioned in previous reports, it should be noted that all categories can be affected by a timing issue, since we report on when the banking transactions occur rather than when payment was made or due. One clear example of this can be seen in the Bulletin costs which include £287 from 2008, exaggerating the difference by simultaneously reducing 2008 costs and inflating those of 2009. You may remember this discussion from last year's report.

Membership has continued to rise with a corresponding increase in subscription income, although the actual growth in revenue is not accurately reflected in the figure shown due to the reasons mentioned above, since this amount is subject to the timing of renewal requests, the members' responses and the banking of the subscriptions.

Donations from various sources combined with active fundraising have resulted in over a thousand pounds of additional income. Notable figures are another £500 from the Robert Kiln Charitable Trust and £466.25 from the proceeds of the sale of Cyn's cameras and books which were kindly donated to the Group. An additional sum of £188.62 from the Chiltern Conservation Board, which was reimbursement for work undertaken in 2009, will appear in the 2010 accounts. David Nicholls has been particularly active on behalf of the Group in seeking financial support for projects.

Notes to the 2009 Accounts

1. General

These accounts were prepared in accordance with guidance from the Charities Commission 'Statement of Recommended Practice' (SORP 2005).

2. Payments

i) Dig expenses

These continue to rise as a result of the Group's increasing activity. As described elsewhere, during 2009 projects were undertaken at Gatehampton, Bix, Grey's Mound and Brightwell Baldwin. As a general principle all projects will aim to be self-funding in 2010, hence digger's fees and the pursuit of grants and donations will become the norm, rather than the exception.

ii) Insurance

The cost of insurance rose slightly, and it is possible that the increases in activity mentioned above could drive additional increases in this area.

3. Receipts

i) Subscriptions

As mentioned above, the timing of subscription renewals and banking of cheques received, had a notable effect on the accounts, but no significant impact on our overall financial position. The figure includes £724 of subscriptions for 2010.

4. Monetary Assets

i) Restricted Fund

No grants or donations received in 2009 were subject to specific conditions of use, hence there is nothing to be recorded.

John M. Gibbs
28th February 2010

**SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2009**

**Receipts and Payments Account
for Year Ended 31 December 2009**

<u>UNRESTRICTED GENERAL FUND</u>	
RECEIPTS	
<u>31/12/2008</u>	<u>31/12/2009</u>
<u>£944.94</u> Balance brought forward	<u>£1,132.83</u>
1270.00 Subscriptions	2235.00 *
0.00 Sale of Bulletins	15.00
812.02 Donations	1061.25 *
20.09 Bank Interest	2.74
17.50 Visitors'/Diggers' Fees	294.00 *
0.00 Equipment Sale	57.50
<u>£2,119.61</u> TOTAL RECEIPTS	<u>£3,665.49</u>
PAYMENTS	
195.00 Venue Hall Hire	167.00
342.03 Insurance	367.16
103.70 Bulletin	680.00 *
200.00 Speaker Expenses	170.00
50.99 SOAG Party	100.00
56.50 Standing Orders	48.00
99.39 Postage	0.00
0.00 Replacement cheque	0.00
0.00 Secretary Expenses	0.00
15.00 Publishing SMA	8.50
677.80 Dig Expenses	765.21
59.03 Office Expenses	64.74
23.28 Messenger	66.41
0.00 Reimbursement	0.00
92.00 Committee room	79.00
17.00 Website	31.00
<u>£1,931.72</u> TOTAL PAYMENTS	<u>£2,547.02</u>
187.89 Surplus for year	1118.47
<u>£1,132.83</u> Balance carried forward	<u>£2,251.30</u>

**Statement of Assets & Liabilities
as at 31 December 2009**

MONETARY ASSETS	
<u>31/12/2008</u>	<u>31/12/2009</u>
234.96 Main Account	1350.69
827.78 Reserve Account	830.52
70.09 BBCHAP Account	70.09
<u>£1,132.83</u> TOTAL MONETARY ASSETS	<u>£2,251.30</u>
REPRESENTED BY FUNDS	
1132.83 Unrestricted General Fund	2251.30
0.00 Restricted Fund	0.00
<u>£1,132.83</u> TOTAL FUNDS	<u>£2,251.30</u>

MAJOR FIXED ASSETS	
Geoscan RM15-D Resistivity Meter	6288.36
HP NC6320 Laptop PC	734.36
Toshiba X2000 LCD Projector	505.24
Dumpy Level	349.00
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>£7,876.96</u>

Accounts prepared by:

John M. Gibbs

Notes

Subscriptions:

£2235.00 Does not reflect actual value of year on year increase in membership, but when subscriptions banked.

Donations:

£500.00 Robert Kiln Trust
£400.00 Sale of Cyn's camera's
£66.25 Sale of Cyn's books
£20.00 Peter & Dorothy Kent
£75.00 Victoria County History

Visitor's/Digger's Fees:

£294.00 These will be separately recorded in future with digger's fees split by site in keeping with new project accounting principles

Bulletin:

£680.00 Includes £287.00 from 2008

This account was examined by Trudi Kidd from documentation provided and provides a true and accurate presentation of the transactions of the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group during 2008.

Signed by: **Trudi Kidd** (Examiner)

Dated: **28th February 2010**

(signed original on file)

SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP
OFFICERS AND ORDINARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS
2009-10

President Emeritus :	Mrs Cynthia Graham-Kerr
Vice President:	Mr Ian Clarke
Chairman:	Vacant
Vice Chairman:	Mrs Hazel Williams
Honorary Treasurer:	Mr John Gibbs
Honorary Secretary:	Mr David Oliver
Ordinary Members:	Mrs Susan Sandford (Honorary Editor)
	Mr David Nicholls
	Dr Nancy Nichols
	Mr Michael Green
	Mr Michael Vincent (Membership Secretary)
	Mrs Rebecca Morrisson (co-opted)