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* SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE *
* ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP *

Bulletin no.22

September 1973

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Chairman: Mr. W.J. Fowler, 25 High St., Watlington, Oxford (Wat. 2734)
Hon. Sec.: Mrs. C. Perdue, Tall Beeches, Hardwick Rd., Whitchurch (Pangbourne 2009)
Hon. Treasurer: Mr. F.L. French, Mulberry Cottage, Manor Rd., Goring (Goring 2277)
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All archaeologists in this country will have been cheered by the announcement on 20 September that the Government has appointed an Under-Secretary (Archaeology) in the Department of the Environment and that increased monies will be available during the next few years for archaeology, not only for excavation but also for conservation and publication. Thus, the campaign of the last three years, led by RESCUE but pressed by the CBA and other bodies, has had results in securing recognition that a crisis exists. But there is no place for complacency; every day more evidence of our past disappears for good without record and we must all continue to be on the alert. In our own area the other day an oil pipeline was put through Grims Dyke without any public notice. It was fortunately seen, recorded as far as possible, and reported.

The general position with regard to the proposed DOE Regional Units remains obscure. We are fortunate in that the Oxford Unit, covering the "new" Oxfordshire 1974, came into existence on 1 June, and Tom Hassall officially becomes Director on Oct. 1, though he has been out in his larger parish for some time.

In view of the present uncertainty the CBA has decided that for the present Group 9 will continue to include the five counties - Beds., Berks., Bucks., Northants. & Oxon.

CALENDAR

- Thurs. 25 Oct. (by invitation of the Goring Historical Soc.) Tom Hassall on "Recent excavations on Oxford" in the Church Hall opposite the Miller of Mansfield.
- * Frid. 26 Oct. David Hall, Hon. Sec. of the Higham Ferrers Arch. Soc., will describe and show slides of the fieldwork which he and his society carry out in Northants and at Langtree Sch. N. Beds. His surveys are of a high standard and for this - and because he is travelling a long way - please support this meeting especially.
- Woodcote.
- Fri. 16 Nov. Second Annual Dinner at Chiltern Chase, Woodcote 7. for 7.30 pm.

There will be a guest of honour.

*** Members who wish to take part, with guests, are asked to fill in the slip accompanying this bulletin and return it to the Hon. Secretary by 26 Oct. not forgetting to indicate choice of menu.
*** Early application is advised as numbers have to be limited.

Course of lectures after Christmas.

There is still no firm news on this but if it cannot be arranged there will be a series of Group meetings with guest speakers.

* Fieldwork directed by Clive Hart. Meet at 11 am., bringing packed lunch.

Sunday 4 Nov. The "Four Horseshoes", Checkendon SU 663823

Sunday 2 Dec. Cray's Pond SU 637805

Reports Meetings

24 Aug. After initial difficulties which prevented the use of Langtree School, some 20 members enjoyed an informal meeting at the Thatched Cottage where Clive Hart showed slides of his visit to Holland in April and, with his guests Dr. Ingrid Hoerman and her sister, answered many questions on Dutch archaeology.

28 Sept. David Miles, of the Oxford Arch. Unit, came to Langtree and gave an absorbing illustrated talk on work in Abingdon during the past year. The sites described ranged from necessarily limited excavations in the town centre to more open spaces on the outskirts.

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Reports (contd.)

Excursions

Sat.14 July Woodchester Roman Pavement.

"As the pavement is only uncovered once every ten years the opportunity was not one to be missed. The pavement is part of a great villa occupied from the 2nd to the 4th centuries, excavated by the son of the Vicar of Rodmarton in 1793. Since then only the pavement has been uncovered. As a churchyard extended over it parts of the mosaic were destroyed by graves dug more deeply than the majority.

The pavement is 48'10" square, the largest mosaic N. of the Alps and the finest in Britain. Its central theme is Orpheus, surrounded in a circle by beasts: one unusual feature is a nymph, one of four, who - presumably because of the climate - is wearing boots! We were fortunate in our visit on two counts; firstly because we were able to hear the mosaic described by David Baker (London University, one of the foremost experts on Roman mosaics in the country, and secondly because it had been raining and we saw the colours at their best.

Afterwards we visited the church at Daglingworth, nr. Cirencester, which contains several Saxon sculptures, in perfect condition because they had been built reversely into the church wall so that they could not be seen. During nineteenth century reconstruction they were discovered and turned the right way round!"

V.F.

Sat.15 Sept. Berkhamstead Castle, Pitstone, Totternhoe motte and bailey castle, Maiden Bower - causewayed camp and plateau fort.

This, including several miles of walking, was much enjoyed. The Editor apologises to Alison Price, who wrote an account for this bulletin, which he has mislaid.

Census of Medieval Tiles, Oxfordshire. (Part of the national project sponsored by the British Museum)

A group of members under the leadership of the President is engaged in this in the area from the Thames northwards to include Dorchester, Stadhampton, Stadhampton and Lewknor. Deborah Hennings, Ox. City & Cty. Mus. is coordinating work in Oxfordshire.

"Already, 31 churches have been visited and a map based on the 2½" OS made on which to record progress. At a church, we search for tiles, often hidden in odd places, and if we are lucky, then record details of size, type, design, glaze etc on a form issued by the OCCM, to which are attached tracings of each different design.

Members wishing to take part in this - no previous experience needed - should get in touch with the President.

Survey of route of new Henley-Reading road.

Work on the ground and on documentary sources goes forward. Those willing and able to take part please get in touch with Clive Hart.

Items

Ian Mason writes enthusiastically of visits to an early 18th cent. blast furnace site near Hartfield, Sussex and to Haxted Water Mill nr. Edenbridge, and commends the work of the Wealden Iron Research Group, of which he would be pleased to supply particulars (30, Lamborough Hill, Wootton, Abingdon, Berks)

Alistair Graham-Carr secured a metric tape measure for the Group at a sale, and has also worked on excavations in Cirencester which produced some mosaic, pottery and wall plaster from Roman domestic sites.

Bernard Levy worked on the Ram's Hill (Bronze Age) site near Kingston Lisle, which was visited more briefly by Clive Hart and the Chairman. The latter spent a month on the Dark Age site at Cadbury Congressbury, Somerset, while the former has been visiting Orkney and Shetland.

The President has recently found some interesting early 19th century pottery under a shop site in Pangbourne.

Books

Caroline Simpson, Wallingford. The archaeological implications of development (Ox. Arch Unit) Copies from Rewley House.

Barry Cunliffe, Cradle of England

80p.

) BBC Publications

South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group.

Subscriptions. 1973-4

To the Hon. Treasurer, Mulberry Cottage, Manor Rd., Goring
or the Hon. Secretary, Tall Beeches, Hardwick Rd., Whitchurch.

Herewith my subscription for 1973-4 (75p. family, 50p. adults, 25p. junior)

Date. Name
Address

South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group.

Annual Dinner Fri. 16 Nov. 1973

To the Hon. Sec., Tall Beeches, Whitchurch, via Reading Berks

I intend to be present with _____ guests, and enclose _____ to cover the cost
of _____ places.

I would prefer menu A/ menu B (See below and delete as appropriate)

Date Name
Address

Menu A Main dish Turkey Cost, inc. extras but not wine c. £1.85)

Menu B " " Roast chicken " " " " " c. £1.65)

Details of other accompanying courses from the Hon. Sec. if required.

STOP PRESS A typescript rediscovered.

Visit to Berkhamstead etc Sat. 15 Sept.

"Our first sighting was Bledlow Cross, cut in the solid chalk. Passing through Ellesborough we caught a glimpse of Cymbeline's Mount, a motte and bailey castle with two small baileys. At Berkhamstead Castle the earthworks are its most notable feature.

After lunch in glorious sunshine on Pitstone Hill, from which we could see the Pitstone Green Mill, a restored post mill with timbers dating from 1627, the earliest windmill date in this country.

Our last stop was at Totternhoe. Clive Hart pointed out a Roman villa site and ancient quarries and we walked to Maiden Bower, an Iron Age enclosure over a Neolithic causewayed camp. Then we walked some further distance to Totternhoe motte and bailey castle - also a nature reserve - which never had later stone walls and buildings.

As it was getting late (and because of the reluctance of older members like the Ed.) we did not visit Irvinghoe Beacon camp and barrow but returned home after a most enjoyable and interesting day."

A.P.