

SOUTH

OXFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

GROUP

BULLETIN

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\*\* ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP \*\*  
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Bulletin No. 26

January 1975

Calendar of Events.

January 3rd - 5th. Oxford Weekend Conference - The  
Small Towns of Roman Britain.

Friday 31st Jan. Meeting at Langtree School, 7.45 p.m.  
Speaker to be arranged.

Saturday 1st Feb. Day School on Documents and Local  
History. College of Further  
Education, Thame. Fee: £1  
Tutors: David Vaisey, Trevor Rowley,  
Julian Hill.

Sunday 2nd Feb. Progress Meeting, Parish Survey, 2 p.m.  
Rewley House, Oxford. Please bring  
any finds, plans etc.

Saturday 22nd Feb. Flints! Opportunity to handle and  
discuss with Andrew Sharrett. 10 a.m.  
Ashmolean, Oxford.  
Please inform Mrs Pat Woodford.

March 1st and 2nd. C.B.A. Region 9. Local Archaeology  
Weekend, Oxford.

Friday 21st March. Lecture - Archaeology and the Thames  
Water Authority. Mike Hall.  
Langtree School. 7.45 p.m.

Saturday 12th or 19th April. (Date and time to be  
confirmed at previous meeting). Meet  
at the New Oxford Museum for a tour  
with Crispin Paine.

## Monthly Meetings.

It has been discouraging, of late, to notice the dwindling attendance at our monthly meetings. Not only is this disheartening to a speaker, but of considerable embarrassment to the organisers. Every effort has been made to acquire speakers on a variety of topics for the monthly meetings of Jan., Feb., and March 1975. Please make the effort on your part to attend, and we think you will find the talks interesting.

It has been agreed to meet in future at 7.45 p.m., with the lecture beginning at 8 p.m.

## Report on Meetings.

On September 29th John Hinchliffe lectured on his excavation at Appelford. This excavation revealed a large enclosure, fronting onto a roadway flanked by ditches, which showed signs of having been recut. The enclosure contained traces of circular huts; also a four-post structure surrounded by a shallow circular ditch, similar to that found at Winchester in 1974 and thought to have been a shrine.

More recently, Richard Bradley of Reading University addressed the Group on the outcome of excavations at Rams Hill, a Bronze Age Enclosure on the Berkshire Downs. The initial earthwork took the form of a flat-bottomed ditch with vertical sides and an internal rampart, possibly faced by sarsens and large chalk blocks. Possibly after an interval of disuse, the ditch silts were cleared and the bank pushed in to provide rubble packing for a palisade. Later, the defensive system consisted of two parallel palisades. The majority of animal bones were of cattle. Snail evidence has suggested that the environment was previously wooded. From evidence available, the main activity at Rams Hill appears to have been seasonal grazing, but this does not seem to justify the elaborate phases in construction.

26th October 1974. Portchester Castle.

As part of the W.E.A. Evening Course on Early Mediaeval Archaeology, 8 members of S.O.A.G. with our

lecturer, Brendan O'Connor, travelled to Portchester Castle.

Portchester is unusual among English castles in that a mediaeval castle is built inside the walls of a late 3rd century Roman fort of the "Saxon Shore". Square in plan, it has 20 D-shaped bastions, 14 of which remain. The Roman masonry of coursed flintwork, with horizontal bonding courses of tiles and stones, survives in large stretches to a height of 20 feet.

We entered the fort by the Watergate, which faces east (towards Portsmouth). This gate, and the Landgate in the western wall of the fort, are not the original Roman gates, but were rebuilt by the Normans when they erected their castle in the north-west corner of the fort. The Norman castle, with its massive keep, was built in the reign of Henry I, and the internal buildings and gatehouse were altered and rebuilt during the 12th to 14th centuries. The open excavations in the inner bailey showed the post holes of earlier Saxon buildings on the site. The castle has been used as a Royal Palace (by Richard II) and as a military prison during the Napoleonic Wars.

In the south-east corner of the fort is the parish church of Portchester. In 1133 it became the priory church for a convent of Augustinian canons, but after about 20 years the priory was moved to Southwick, behind Portsdown Hill, and the church reverted to parochial use. None of the priory buildings now remain.

D.F.

### Parish Surveys.

During the past three years, members of S.O.A.G. have taken part in field walks, with the intention of identifying sites of archaeological significance. Sites, not previously recorded, have been plotted on 6" O.S. maps.

Earlier this year it was decided to initiate a field survey of all parishes in the county. Historical and archaeological groups throughout the county have offered assistance. A briefing meeting was held at Lady Spencer Churchill College, Wheatley, on October 20th, at which Trevor Rowley and James Bond described

the principles of field walking and surveying. Basic instructions have now been issued to all those taking part in the Survey.

Clive Hart has undertaken to act as liaison officer for the Survey. He has offered to assist any individual or group requiring guidance in field walking. So far, he has organised field walking exercises for beginners in the parishes of Lewknor and Ducklington. The Lewknor Group has identified what appears to be a new prehistoric site from surface finds near Adwell Cop.

In the course of field walking, two of our members, Beryl and Peter Anderson, have made a detailed survey of a Romano-British pottery kiln site near to Nuneham Courtenay.

Further exercises in field walking will be arranged for the New Year in different parts of the county. Anyone interested is welcome to attend.

Forthcoming events related to Parish Survey:

Sat. 1st Feb - Day School on documents and local history.  
College of Further Education, Thame.

Fee, £1.

Sun. 2nd Feb - Progress Meeting. 2 p.m. Rewley House,  
Wellington Square, Oxford.

Please bring any finds, plans etc.

#### W.E.A.

14 members of S.O.A.G. are attending a course on Mediaeval Archaeology this winter. The twenty sessions, accompanied by a veritable avalanche of maps and site plans, have included the study of granges, D.M.V.s, monastic and moated sites. This last subject, it seems, was often nothing more than a mediaeval status symbol, at least in the Norfolk area; not a coloured T.V. but a moat round your pigsty!

As our lecturer, Brendan O'Connor, had been involved in work on excavations at Portchester Castle, we discussed this site at some length, and also paid a most rewarding visit to that ancient place. Discoveries at the recent important digs at Winchester also came into the course, and a visit to the Ashmolean Museum will enable us to see and handle pottery etc., bringing home to us vividly just what utensils and tools people, such

as the fullers at the houses in the Lower Brook and Tanner Street area of Winchester, used in mediaeval times.

M.K.

#### Membership Subscriptions.

The Hon. Treasurer is sorry to note that due subscriptions have not yet been received from some members. The "membership year" runs from May 1st onwards. Membership costs 50 pence per annum, reduced to 25 pence for those under 20; there is also a joint husband and wife membership of 75 pence.

Members whose 1974-75 subscriptions are overdue may instantly ease their conscience by sending the due amount to the Hon. Treasurer, Mr P. Vaughan, 73 Baker Street, Reading, RG1 7XY. (Cheques or postal orders should be made out to S.O.A.G.) He will be equally delighted to receive subscriptions in person at the next meeting.

#### Butser Ancient Farm Project.

This project is no doubt familiar to those of you who attended a lecture given by P.J. Reynolds, Project Director, at Reading University, last winter.

The project, on land made available by Hants County Council, has constructed the beginnings of a small settlement, conceived as of about 300 B.C. The intention is to train and use an ox-team, with prehistoric types of plough, and to have other appropriate animals and implements. It is planned to provide a centre for research, by experiment and observation, of actual practice into the way of life of "Ancient Britons".

It appears that the project is now endangered through lack of funds. If you feel you could assist in saving this project, you might like to enrol as a "Friend of Butser". The basic subscription is £2.50 a year. You could become a "Friend of Butser" by sending your donation to P.J. Reynolds, Butser Ancient Farm Project, Rogate House, Rogate, Petersfield, Hants.

### Cheese and Wine Party.

The annual social evening of S.O.A.G., on Tuesday December 10th, took the form of a cheese and wine party. We are indebted to the headmaster of the Oratory School, Woodcote, who so kindly permitted us the use of school premises. The log fire and congenial surroundings did much to stimulate a festive atmosphere, in which archaeological and more mundane matters were discussed at leisure. Having enjoyed the party fare, members dispersed with renewed enthusiasm and dedication towards the archaeology of 1975.

### The Library Box.

For the past three years I have been in charge of a library box. Some books have been given, and others are lent by members. The box is brought to all meetings, and there is a nominal charge of a penny a borrowing. We have a wide selection of books of general archaeological interest; among others, we have Sir Mortimer Wheeler's "Still Digging", Leslie Alcock's "Arthur's Britain", Caesar's "Conquest of Gaul", Roe's "Prehistory" and Hoskin's "Making of the English Landscape". I do hope members will have a look and find something to interest them.

If any members have any books that they would be willing to lend on a member-to-member basis, I would be very pleased to hear from them. I could put a note in the library box, and anyone who was interested could get in touch.

We also get Current Archaeology and Oxoniensia and circulate them among members. Would anyone who is interested see me at meetings.

P.M.W.

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Every week, many archaeological sites are being destroyed by development of one form or another. Try to observe developments in your locality and, if you feel a site requires investigation, please contact Mrs. Pat Woodford, Goring 2107. She has agreed to act as liaison officer for the Group, and will inform the Oxford Archaeological Unit.

#### Future Bulletins.

Articles for inclusion in the next bulletin should be sent to A. Hart, 2 Goddard Close, Shinfield, Reading, by 31st March 1975.

#### Stop Press.

W.E.A. Course at Goring Church of England Primary School, Wallingford Rd, on Thursdays from 7.30 p.m. on Architecture - Decorative Tiles and Brick Building. The first meeting will be on the 9th January, and the fee will be £1.50.

The Chairman of the Goring branch of the W.E.A. writes; "This course will start from Roman times and will consider the one ancient material for buildings and how it became the country's main building material. It will also deal with the different mediaeval methods for colouring and decorating tiles for floors, and with the massive Victorian revival of tile-making, using machinery and more colours and methods.

The course will be given by Miss J.A. Wight M.A.