

**S**OUTH

**O**XFORDSHIRE

**A**RCHÆOLOGICAL

**G**ROUP

BULLETIN

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 \*\* SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE \*\*  
 \*\* ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP \*\*  
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Bulletin No. 27

April 1975

Calendar of Events.

- Friday 18th April - Field Work and the Oxfordshire Parish Survey - Clive Hart.  
 Langtree School, 7.45 p.m.
- Sunday *May 11* - Field Walk. Meet at Pot Kiln Lane, Woodcote. SU 64308095. 11 a.m.  
 Bring Packed lunch and pencils etc.
- Thursday 1st May - Lecture at Reading University.  
 Excavations at Usk Roman Fort.  
 Palmer Building, Room 103. 8 p.m.  
 Dr. W.H. Manning.
- Sunday 18th May - A.G.M. at Thatched Cottage, Whitchurch Hill. 3 p.m.. Please bring cakes and any interesting slides.
- Saturday 7th June - Invitation to join Goring History Society on an outing to Warwick Castle. (See back page for details)
- Saturday 28th June - Outing to Saxon Church at Wing, Norman Church at Stewkley: also South Midland Field Systems and possible excavations at Dunstable.  
 (Cost: £1.50. Names to Mrs P. Woodford by June 15th)

It is hoped to arrange an outing to Butser Ancient Farm Project in September.

In the preceding bulletin, members were encouraged to observe developments which might endanger archaeological sites. Did further reduction of the mediaeval lynchet system near Bottom Farm, Ipsden Parish, fail to arouse the interest of all dedicated S.O.A.G.s? Many landowners are unaware of the archaeological features they possess and their subsequent destruction.

Ed.

### Report on Meetings.

1. On January 31st, Clive Hart gave a talk on the prehistory of Orkney and Shetland, and used slides to demonstrate the wealth of nationally important monuments. Sites discussed included the neolithic, excavated village of Skara Brae, Scottish Iron Age phenomena of Brochs, including the famous Island of Mousa Broch, and Viking Settlements.

Ed.

2. On Saturday 22nd February, eleven members were introduced to "Flints" by Mr. Andrew Sharrett of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. The range of flint artifacts was shown from the roughly made Palaeolithic to the beautifully flaked, delicate arrowheads, found in the graves of the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. What could be done with flint was illustrated by a flint spear-head, approximately 50 cms long, from Denmark.

Flint found on or near the surface is nearly always frost-shattered, and is useless for working. Flints therefore have to be mined, to obtain material suitable for tool-making. The method of making knives etc is to hold the flint to be worked in the hand. The other hand holds the "hammer stone" and the worked flint is struck at an angle (about  $95^\circ$ ) to the horizontal. After working, a flint core is left, base uppermost, and a series of flakes. The flakes are further worked, where necessary, by chipping at right angles to the central line of the flakes. This central line at one end shows a "bulb" where the point of impact of the hammer-stone occurs. Concentric rings show where the compression waves travelled along the

flake. Another method used was "pressure flaking", where hand pressure produces long thin blades. These were useful when bound in bone or wooden handles, as knives, sickles, harpoons etc. A polished flint axe suggested its use in cutting down trees. As time went on, worked flints tended to become smaller.

The patina of the flint reveals its original locality, in that a brown-covered flint indicates an ironstone, whereas white indicates chalk.

Where flint did not occur, an alternative was found in obsidian, a natural, metamorphic glass.

Flint tools were used for all purposes - knives, chisels, axes, burins. With them, various bone and leather articles were manufactured, and these included bone needles and barbed spears. The needles were beautifully shaped, with quite a small hole for the thong.

The flints we examined came from Backpen Hill, Windmill Hill, and Aldbourne, all sites in Wiltshire. We owe thanks to Mr Sharrett for instruction given.

W.A.G-K.

3. On March 21st, Mike Hall of the Thames Water Authority addressed the Group. He discussed a site where a reservoir is being built at Farmoor, near Cumnor. This site had been occupied from the Earliest Iron Age Period, through to Roman times. It had a well-developed field system with a later Roman Drove way crossing it. Animal husbandry was carried out, indicated by stockades, probably for harbouring cattle.

Ed.

### Mediaeval Tile Project.

After 2 years work, the mediaeval tile project has finally been concluded with a meeting at Rewley House, Oxford. S.O.A.G. covered all our South Oxon area, from Crowmarsh Gifford, south round the river to Henley, and up as far as Thame, across to Great Hasely, Stadhampton and Culham. A large scale map with each site on it was made. It was satisfactory to find so many members participated in the recording of results.

We found the distribution and types of the designs most fascinating, and it is hoped to ~~follow~~ follow up the report by considering the overall pattern of the South

Oxon designs. For this purpose, I have made pen and ink tracings of every design we have recorded, and would like to hear of any further discoveries.

The records were made as follows - Possible sites were first located on the map, and later investigated. Tiles are in the oddest and most inaccessible places, especially when in churches; under boilers, behind pews and at the back of the altar. The tile design is first traced, then a form completed for each site stating colour, size, thickness, position and number of tiles etc.. The tracings are numbered and attached. At home, the tracings are gone over with a suitably black pencil, and the backgrounds shaded in.

We have examined 97 sites, 29 of which contained tiles; at Nuffield, a plan was made of the entire sanctuary floor which was completely covered with tiles.

The whole project was part of a survey of mediaeval tiles of Great Britain, arranged through Oxford, by the British Museum.

C.G-K.

### New Light on the Dark Ages.

While S.O.A.G. helped at Berinsfield, three other Saxon cemeteries were being excavated about thirty miles to the southwest. At Droxford, near the A32, Mike Hughes, the new Hants. County Archaeologist, helped by the South Hampshire Archaeological Rescue Group, excavated the remaining 400 sq. m. of a Saxon cemetery, first discovered when a railway cutting was excavated in 1900. Forty graves remained on a tongue of land between the railway cutting and a sunken road. The finds were lifted in blocks of earth and taken to Southampton University for conservation.

On the Portway Industrial Estate, on the western outskirts of Andover, the local archaeological society has been excavating every weekend for 18 months. While excavating Neolithic ring ditches and an Iron Age boundary ditch, they found Saxon burials. Miss Alison Cooke, a postgraduate at Oxford, who has now taken up a post at the DoE, was called in to supervise excavation of the graves. These now total 67; 80 cremations have also been found. Such mixed cemeteries are very rare. This excavation has shattered two long-held theories.

Theory 1 - place names of Mid Hants - Candover, Micheldever, Andover, suggest that this area remained in the hands of Celtic people after surrounding areas had been occupied by the Anglo-Saxons. Theory 2 - that when Saxon settlements did occur, they arrived from Southampton Water as described in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

It is now realised that the area was settled much earlier than previously thought, and the settlers came from the Thames Valley. This was confirmed by the findings of Chris Gingell of the Wiltshire Archaeological Society, who salvaged 32 burials from a building site at Cadley near the A338. The finds here were also of Upper Thames type. He suggests that the settlers may have come via the Kennet at least 50 years before the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle describes the conquest of the area by Saxons from the South Coast. D.J. Bonney points out that this site is very close to the disputed parish boundary of Collingbourne Kingston and Collingbourne Ducis, where a later Anglo-Saxon Charter lists "Graves" among the land-marks.

Let us hope that in future years it may be possible to devote as much effort to the elusive traces of Saxon settlement, as 1974 devoted to their more obvious final resting-places.

G.K.T.

### Reports on Conferences.

Four members attended a day school on Documents and Local History at Thame. The emphasis was on social history, and how documents could be used to tell how the middle classes, tradesmen, and the poor lived; their life span, housing and food, and how they earned their living. The types of document covered included wills and inventories, maps, Parish records and population records.

All the speakers were interesting, but the most useful lecture, for the purpose of the Oxfordshire Parish Survey, was that given by Trevor Rowley on Maps. These, he said, were made for various reasons, by people with different interests and very varying degrees of skill and accuracy; so though they record past physical landscapes, they must be used with caution. Land use maps were made, but these give little, if any,

indication of the position of buildings. Antiquarians drew maps showing only monuments, and other maps show pictures of buildings or panoramic views. Estate maps, extending over long periods and showing tenancies, are kept by large landowners, such as Oxford Colleges, and some families have good archives. Where estates were broken up, documentation is very poor. Maps can also be found in County Record Offices.

Enclosure maps made by order of Parliament, mainly in the 18th and 19th centuries, show open arable land, common or woodland, and cottages with their plots. The disadvantage of these is that fields are not always accurate, and land use changed. Tithe maps, drawn as a result of the Tithe Commutation Acts of 1836 to 1860, are very useful, as they are often the first comprehensive parochial maps, and record the old landscape just before the change began. These maps are well surveyed, field by field, with acreages, land use, and owners' and tenants' names recorded, often on a large scale. Many of these can be found in the Bodleian Library or in the Public Record Office, and information from them can be transferred on to an Ordnance Survey Map.

The Ordnance Survey Maps were started in 1791 on a scale of 1 inch to 1 mile, and eventually covered the whole United Kingdom, though the survey extended over a long period, and coverage is better in some areas than in others. Reprints have been made lately of some of the early ones.

For a study of towns and villages, the first edition of the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Maps is very useful.

M.F.

Earlier this year a few S.O.A.G.s attended a weekend school at the Oxford Institute of Archaeology. Myra Shackley, Chief Scientific Officer at the Institute, outlined the development of Environmental Archaeology which, although "trendy", is under-financed, and still depends on the amateur efforts of specialists in other disciplines. Later she explained how human and leather remains survive in the soil or can be chemically traced, how electron

microscopic examination of sand can be used to provenance pottery, and the difference between sediments and soils.

Judy Startin spoke about what questions bones can answer, pointing out that collections of bones selected as interesting by the excavator, or from layers of imported material, are useless. She then supervised a practical session where students articulated animal skeletons, including a "ritual" horse burial from Danebury.

Mark Robinson of the Oxford Unit described the evidence to be derived from the examination of snails and beetles. Either study requires a large reference collection of modern specimens and reveals imperfections in our knowledge of present day ecology. His talk, and the practical session of extracting the remains from soil samples, used beetles from Appleford and snails from Grim's Ditch. If we are to recover a true picture of the past we must try to understand the environment in the fullest sense, including the physical health of the people, and their diet, which from Mesolithic times was the major influence on Britain's plants and animals.

G.K.T.

### C.B.A. Conference.

At the 5th annual meeting of C.B.A. Region 9 at Oxford, some 30 members spoke on their last 12 months' activities in the five counties of Beds, Berks, Bucks, Oxford and Northants. Interest in the prehistoric environment and economy was dominant. We accept the pattern of landscape as we see it now, but 5,000 years ago the picture must have been immensely different.

Results from excavations at Rams Hill indicate that early settlers found the chalk ridge wooded; also that Bronze Age inhabitants probably practiced dairy farming.

A centre for cereal production, however, was found on an ~~ancient~~ Iron Age site, west of Abingdon. Barton Court Farm site, of Roman date, likewise indicated the cultivation of cereals.

John Hinchliffe's excavation at Appleford revealed a number of shallow wood-lined wells from Roman

occupation. The wells contained remains of both plants and insects. Of the 230 invertebrate samples found, 200 were of beetles. Insect and seed remains can provide valuable evidence of land utilisation.

The importance of field work was not overlooked at the conference. Much new archaeological evidence of early occupation is obtained today by the practice of walking over fields when under plough. Surface finds of pottery and other artifacts, combined with the observation of soil marks and other land features, contribute to a deeper understanding of our past.

Ed.

### Field Work - Romano-British Kiln Site, Marsh Baldon.

During the autumn of 1974, several weekends were spent walking a field identified a few years earlier as a probably site of Romano-British kilns.

A large amount of pottery and kiln debris was collected, and about ten probably sites of kiln stoke-holes were identified. This was the first occasion on which it had been possible to locate the kilns from surface finds, and this was undoubtedly due to the fact that the landowner was ploughing deeper than usual, and was disturbing more of the archaeological strata. In addition to walking the whole area, a detailed survey was made of approximately 6,000 sq.yds.

From the pottery collected, it is clear that the site did not start production until the late 3rd century or early 4th century, and it is therefore a late site, within the framework of the important Oxford Region Roman Pottery Industry. The pottery being produced was mainly fine table ware, including mortaria, and plain and decorated bowls and dishes, imitating Samian forms. Both cream and red colour coat was used on the mortaria, and red colour coat on the other forms.

A detailed report of our findings is to be sent to the City and County Museum, Woodstock, and it is hoped that a type series of the pottery will be included in Chris Young's forthcoming thesis on the Romano-British Pottery Industry in the Oxford Region.

P.A.

### Book Reviews.

1. "Field Work in Mediaeval Archaeology" by Christopher Taylor. Batsford Paperback, 1974. Price £2.75.

This book outlines the methods used by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments to record our Field Monuments. The eight chapters cover field work, from preparations to publications, via discovering and recording sites in the field, and their interpretation through documents; a worthwhile addition to all S.O.A.G. bookshelves.

2. The "Buildings of England" (Penguin) series was completed by the Oxfordshire volume at £5, and the biggest of 46 volumes. Entries on some South Oxon villages are very cursory. These villages could not have been visited by the authors, as many important structures were given no mention.

G.K.T.

### The Library Box.

Our thanks are due to Mr. Peter Summers for a donation of books. These will help to augment S.O.A.G. Library.

OUTING TO WARWICK CASTLE

A coach outing has been arranged to WARWICK CASTLE on Saturday, June 7th. This outing is arranged in conjunction with the Goring Local History Society.

The Castle will be visited in the morning, and members will then be free to spend the afternoon as they wish. In addition to the attractive Ambience of Warwick, with its numerous antique shops, the attention of members is drawn particularly to the following.

St. Mary's Church: 15th Century Beauchamp Lady Chapel, monument to Earl of Warwick 1439, 7 side canopied tombs, including that of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.

Lord Leycester Hospital; wealth of 13th century buildings.

Luncheon may be taken at Warwick Castle in the licensed restaurant, where a choice of three set menus is available, cost about £1.80 including service. Members wishing to reserve luncheon are asked to indicate on the accompanying application form. There is also a cafeteria at the Castle.

P.T.O.

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Please complete and return to Mr. E.L. French, Mulberry Cottage, Manor Road, Goring, not later than Thursday 29th May, 1975.

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S.O.A.G.

I/We wish to join the trip to Warwick Castle on June 7th, 1975.

Name(s)

I enclose remittance of £

Please reserve places for luncheon.

I wish to join coach at Pangbourne Car Park  
Bull Hotel, Streatley  
Scotts Garage, Goring  
Goring Parish Hall

delete as necessary.

Members may be picked up at Pangbourne Car Park at 9.20 a.m., or at the Bull Hotel, Streatley at 9.25 a.m., or Goring Parish Hall at 9.30 a.m. Please indicate accordingly.

The cost per person, including admission fee to the Castle, is £2.00, children under 14, £1.40. This cost is calculated on 20 total members. Any profit made will be refunded to S.O.A.G. pro-rata to the number of S.O.A.G. members on the trip. Cheques should be made out to Goring Local History Society.

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### Future Bulletins

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