

SOUTH

OXFORDSHIRE

ARCHÆOLOGICAL

GROUP

BULLETIN

 * SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE *
 * ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP *

Bulletin No 29

December 1975

Calendar Of Events.

- Tuesday 16th December Wine and Buffet Evening at Oratory School, Woodcote. Tickets £1
- Saturday 17th January Visit to the New Museum of Oxford.
1976 Meet 10.30 a.m. outside Town Hall for tour of New Museum, to be conducted by Martin Heighton, Assistant Director.
- Friday 23rd January Meeting, Langtree School. 7.45 p.m.
 - Aspects of Field Survey.
- Friday 20th February Lecture by Dr Malcolm Ayres, Conservation Officer of South Oxfordshire, on Smaller Post-Mediaeval Houses. Joint Meeting with Goring Historical Society at Free Church Hall, Goring, (opposite Miller of Mansfield). 7.45 p.m.
- 28th - 29th February Council for British Archaeology, Group 9. Local Weekend. Rewley House, Oxford.
- Sunday 21st March A.G.M. Langtree School. 3 p.m.
 Speaker to be confirmed.

Oxford University Department for External Studies -
 Future Meetings.

- Friday 30th January Recent Excavations on Mediaeval Village Sites - Guy Beresford
- Friday 27th February Recent Excavations in the Nene Valley.

Friday 26th March Recent Work of the Lincoln
Archaeological Trust - Christine
Colyer, Director of Excavations.

We should like to welcome into our Group, Mr and Mrs W. Harding of Goring, Graham Carter of Whitchurch, Glyn Turner of Blewbury and Marion Jollocks of Woodcote.

What does the Group offer to new (and not so new) members?

Approximately every four weeks we hold a general meeting which takes the form of a talk by a guest speaker, an authority on some topic of historical or archaeological interest. Usually the talk is illustrated with slides or exhibits of some kind.

During the summer months day excursions and evening visits are arranged to places of interest. For Saturday Jan 17th 1976 we have arranged a conducted tour of the New Museum of Oxford.

At frequent intervals field walks are organised for the purpose of gaining experience in identifying and recording archaeological sites through surface finds. Any member is welcome on a field walk. All that is required is a packed lunch, pencil and pad, and a keen eye. Maps can be provided.

Several members of the Group are participating in the Oxfordshire Parish Survey, the object of which is to provide data for the Oxford City and County Museum, sites and monuments record. Some help is required to carry out this survey if all the parishes in South Oxfordshire are to be included. Clive Hart is acting as liaison officer for the Parish Survey, and he is in communication with all groups and societies involved in the project. No special knowledge or expertise is necessary. Clive Hart will assist any member willing to undertake survey in his parish.

Those members making a survey of the parish of Mapledurham recently gained permission to visit Chazey Court Farm. Consequently a group of SOAGs spent a fascinating afternoon identifying building structures dating from the 15th century. Some of the domestic buildings posed many questions which will be raised by further investigation.

Field activities are sometimes arranged at short notice, notice, prior to development, and in conjunction with the Oxford Archaeological Unit. Similarly, members are sometimes asked to help at rescue excavations when sites are threatened.

There are many ways in which you too can become an active SOAG. You may well possess some skill which could be of great value to group activities. And what does it cost to be a member? Subscriptions are 75p per member, £1 for husband and wife membership, and 25p for junior membership.

An account of the Treasurer's report for the year ending March 31st 1975 appears in this bulletin. Since May of this year the Treasurer has received only 20 subscriptions for the current year. He is usually available at General Meetings to accept any outstanding debts.

RECENT LECTURES, summarised by the Secretary, who feels the accounts do not do full justice to two excellent speakers, whose lectures were attended by so few members.

Work of a Field Officer, by James Bond.

The field department at the City and County Museum, Woodstock, was set up ten years ago. Owing to restricted finances, the staff consists of only one field officer and one clerical assistant. They keep the sites and monuments record, which consists of a punch card system, with maps, slides, records and photographs of the sites included. They also collect information to back up the exhibits in the Museum.

During the past, dry summer, flights were made to search for crop marks and take air photographs. Some new sites were discovered, and known sites surveyed. Ground level surveys were also carried out of deserted and shrunken villages. A survey is in progress on the effect of modern deep ploughing, which has been known to destroy even scheduled hill-forts. A rapid survey carried out at Wilcote in Wychwood Forest resulted in the site being saved. Modern farming methods make recording of landscape features a priority, before they disappear; e.g. ancient hedgerows and Saxon boundary

ditches.

The Field Officer encourages part-time workers. He also advises on sites such as cob and thatch walls, one of which was proved on inspection to be 18th century by the pottery embedded in it. Industrial monuments are recorded before demolition; e.g. 18th century tannery at Eynsham. Landscape gardens are surveyed and photographed to see how the present remains agree with the original designs, such as those at Rousham House, designed by William Kent. Remains of old fishponds at Tackley were surveyed with the help of documents at the Bodleian Library, which show typical 17th century schemes for laying out such features.

One of the most interesting parts of the talk was the account given of Manor Farm at Coggs, which has been acquired as an addition to the field department for the storage and exhibition of old agricultural machinery. The farm proved to have an abandoned, moated site in one of the fields, and to contain a core of mediaeval building, among later additions to the house. It is hoped, when funds allow, to carry on farming there, and have the old machinery working.

Excavations at Rivenhall and Hadstock Churches (Essex), by Kirsty Rodwell.

Rivenhall Church was to all appearances an uninteresting plastered structure of early Victorian date, known to have been rebuilt in 1839. A small trial excavation was started, parallel to the nave on the south side, and this revealed several phases of construction. Later, external rendering was stripped off the walls, which revealed bands of re-used Roman tiles; also an apse and two small Saxon windows, the remains of the first stone church on the site.

Further excavation at the West end revealed a Saxon doorway below an existing one, and the foundations of a mediaeval tower. Beneath these were earlier trenches where the building of another tower had been started but not completed. Remains of sleeper walls of a wooden building, similar to that at East Bergholt also came to light. Below this had been a large and imposing Roman villa.

of the first century, raised on a podium, so that its internal floors, with their black and white tiles, would have been five feet above ground level.

Many other interesting finds in the village showed that in Iron Age and Roman times this had been a very prosperous area, and that the area in and around the church had been occupied since that date.

Hadstock Church is obviously a beautiful and interesting late Saxon building. The village, once a place of importance, later became so poor that little alteration was made in the building; indeed at one time the chancel fell down and disappeared altogether. Recently a rotting wood-block floor caused the church to be temporarily closed. The enlightened church council gave permission for excavations to be carried out, prior to a new floor being laid. Many floor levels of differing periods were found, but very few actual finds to assist dating.

At one time there had been a furnace and bell-casting pit inside the church, and post-holes gave evidence of mediaeval rebuilding. In the south transept, stripping revealed levels where the church had been built in stages from the 7th to 10th centuries, and the site of a porticus where important people had been buried in Saxon times. One grave had possibly contained a stone coffin and could have been the burial place of St. Botolph. There is a theory that Hadstock could be the minster built by Canute after the Battle of Assendune. This idea is supported by some scholars, as the fine stone-work remaining is thought to be contemporary 1030 A.D.

M.F.

Moel Hiraddug, Flintshire

Some time ago I visited Dyserth, near Prestatyn, where excavations were being carried out on a pre-Roman Iron-Age hill fort, Moel Hiraddug. The earliest fort, built at the dawn of the Iron Age, was bivallate in the east, and of contour type where the ground allowed. The final scheme of defence made greater use of the strong, natural slopes.

The large enclosed area contained the remains of

a settlement within the defensive ramparts. The strongest part was built on the high ground as a last refuge in the event of the enemy entering the walls, while the remainder of the walled area was used as a self-contained village community.

While I was there, the village area was being excavated. Work had started on four huts, of the more than forty thought to be there. The huts appeared to be of two types - round and rectangular. In the round huts, a single central timber supported a thatched roof, which rested on a circular stone wall. Rows of parallel timbers supported a thatched roof in the long huts, which were usually in the form of shelters without walls.

A hearth was found against the rampart on the east side of the hill. This hearth contained large quantities of charcoal and iron residue. Bone found on the site was almost entirely animal, ox and pig being predominant. Very few human bones had been discovered, and those mostly outside the ramparts. Oyster, and other sea shells were found.

The defences of this complex fort were being steadily destroyed by quarrying. A hoard of decorative metal work found between the defences could be dated by its style to the last half-century before the Roman conquest. The hoard included bronze mountings of a shield. The position in which some objects were found suggests that the goods were lost during an actual attack on the site.

J.W.

Refs: Ellis Davies, "The Prehistoric and Roman Remains of Flintshire."
W.F. Grimes, "The Prehistory of Wales."

Mucking Thurrock, Essex. (Crop-mark sites)

Mucking = Muccingas = the settlement of the people of Mucca.

Since 1965, archaeological investigation has been carried out almost continuously on this dense complex of sites, first discovered by aerial photography in 1959. Students from many countries have taken part in investigations organised by Mucking

Excavation Committee with support from Thurrock Borough Council, The British Museum, Essex County Council, Society of Antiquaries and local firms and individuals. Directing excavations are M.U. Jones and W.T. Jones who addressed Oxford University Archaeological Society on Monday, 17th November.

Work (in advance of gravel extraction) so far has shown ditches and pits that extend over 5,000 years, from Neolithic to early Saxon. Flints extend occupation back to the Mesolithic, while a mediaeval windmill and later field ditches are the only recent features. The site, on a 100 feet long terrace, lies close to the natural crossing point at the head of the Thames estuary.

Settlement sequence is revealed thus - Bronze Age farming, indicated by slight enclosure ditches; about 5th century B.C. a circular bivallate hillfort of the early Iron Age followed by later iron-age settlement of peaceful farmers and animal herders; later evidence reveals use as a Romano-British cemetery. A rectangular enclosure, partly double-ditched, could have been constructed at the time of the Roman conquest. Within this enclosure a bronze pendent from a 1st century Roman Legionary's armour was found. The enclosure became a feature in the field layout of a Romano-British villa.

Many finds, including roof and flue tiles, and grave offerings, suggest the site could have been a prosperous one.

In and around the Roman fields are the remains of Saxon shrunken huts, more than 100 of which have been excavated. The huts are arranged in 2 groups, separated by 2 Saxon cemeteries containing some 800 cremations and inhumations. Date of Saxon occupation is possibly from early 5th to 7th centuries. Domestic pottery was in evidence, and graves contained the very distinct late Roman military belt fittings.

The site has revealed evidence of habitation from prehistoric through Romano-British to Saxon times, and for this reason is quite unique.

C.R.H.

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH 1975
(Presented at the SOAG Annual General Meeting)

I am pleased to report a relatively satisfactory year for SOAG from the financial aspect, but we must continue to take special care that our outgoings are judiciously controlled. In previous years it has been the practice to present fully audited accounts at the AGM. I am sorry to have to say that pressure of other work has prevented me from having such a completed statement ready for you, but it will be distributed with a future issue of the Bulletin.

Key points that emerge are as follows;

1. We entered the year with a credit balance of £36.81 and we ended it with one of £45.05 (which included one cheque for £4.50 not yet presented; debit against that balance)
2. Outgoings consist of Subscriptions, Speakers' expenses and General expenses. Subscriptions are for journals for members and our use of Langtree. Speakers' expenses are self-explanatory. General expenses include the costs of preparing and distributing the Bulletin, and sundry items of Postage, telephone and stationary.
3. Receipts for the year arose mainly from members' subscriptions, with a small item from surplus receipts on excursions. Membership income was slightly down on 1973-74 (£24.50 as against £25.75)
Paid-up membership stands at 2 Juniors, 32 Standard, 8 Husband & Wife - a total of 50 persons.

Turning to the future, your committee have reviewed likely increases of expenditure in every area and concluded that an increase in subscriptions is unfortunately necessary. New rates will be: 75p for Standard Membership, £1 for Husband & Wife, with Junior Membership remaining at 25p.

If our membership remains unchanged in numbers, this will give us a membership income of £32.50, which will cushion some of the extra costs. Naturally we hope to acquire new members also.

I would like to thank my fellow committee members for their support; also Mr Ted French, our previous Hon Treasurer, and Mr J.A. Wilson, our Hon Auditor.

SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP.

Receipts and Payments Account for year ending 31st March 1975.

PAYMENTS

Subscriptions C.B.A. 0	£1.00	
Current Archaeology	£2.00	
Oxoniensia 1973	£2.10	
" 1974	£2.10	
" 1975	£2.10	£9.30

Speakers:

Mr R Bradley	£2.00	
Oxford City Museum	£2.00	£4.00

General Expenses:

Postage, Membership		
Secretary's expenses		
Bulletins postage,		
Christmas social meeting	£6.89	

Forward:

Cash in Bank and hand.	£45.05	
	<u>£65.24</u>	

RECEIPTS

Forward from 1974	£36.81
Membership Subscriptions	£24.50
Profit on Excursions	£ 3.93

£65.24

Philip Vaughan, Hon Treasurer.

PROVISIONAL ACCOUNTS - PENDING
AUDIT.

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