

Officers and committee 1972-3

Founder President: Mrs. C.A. Graham Kerr, The Thatched Cottage, Whitchurch Hill
(Pangbourne 2901)

Chairman: Mr. W.J. Fowler, 25 High Street, Watlington (Watlington 2734)

Hon. Secretary: Mrs. C. Perdue, Tall Beeches, Hardwick Rd., Whitchurch (Pangbourne 2009)

Hon. Treasurer: Mr. E.L. French, Mulberry Cottage, Manor Road, Goring (Goring 2277)

Directors: Mr. W.J. Fowler (as above)

Mr. C.R. Hart, 2 Goddard Close, Shinfield, Reading (Reading 882454)

Committee: the above, with Mesdames M. Fallowfield, N. Gould, M. Olver, P. Woodford and two others to be co-opted.

Apologies are due because this bulletin is a few weeks later than advised in the April/May Information Sheet but it means that all the May - and one June - activities can be reported. Once again the Editor asks members for contributions - even a few lines - on matters of archaeological interest, and for book recommendations. It is not meant that the Bulletin should be made up entirely by the Editor and the Officers. WJF

CALENDAR

Sun. 18th June, Lilley Farm from 11 am.

ALSO M40 Arch. Research Group. There is a report meeting, to which all who have helped with the excavations are invited, at 8 pm at the Lady Spencer Churchill College of Education, Wheatley. In view of the short notice and the distance a talk on this, with slides, will be arranged for one of the SOAG meetings in the Autumn.

ALSO Work also continues ^{daily} till further notice at the medieval site in Sadler's Wood, NGR 734962, leave cars at 729961, off approach to Upper Vicar's Farm.

Tues. 20 June Committee Meeting at the Thatched Cottage, 8 pm.

Sun. 25 June Field walk along Grim's Ditch from Carmel College entrance, NGR 617879, on B479 Woodcote-Crowmarsh road.

Field walks will also take place most Wednesday evenings from Whitchurch Hill at 7.30 pm.

Friday 30 June General Meeting at Whitchurch Hill at 7.30 pm. Clive Hart will review the results of the field walking to date, illustrating with reference to Ordnance and other maps.

Sats. 1 & 15 July Lilley Farm, unless there is an emergency on the M40, but Sadler's Wood will probably be unavailable by then. It is also hoped to arrange a day at Lilley Farm during the week from Monday 17 July, if members wish.

Sat. 22 July Visit to excavations at Middleton Stoney, RB farmstead within med. castle (alt. 29 July) bailey, where Trevor Rowley will explain what is happening.

REPORTS

Annual General Meeting This was held on 21 May at Tall Beeches, Whitchurch, by invitation of the Hon. Sec. and Mr. C. Perdue, and attended by about 20 members.

The President spoke of the way in which SCAG had grown up during the year and was gaining recognition in archaeological circles through its membership of Gp. 9 CBA and notably by the work of members on 'rescue' excavations. With this growth in stature it was felt that the offices of President and Chairman should henceforth be separated.

In reviewing the work of the year Mrs. Graham Kerr said that there had been work at Lilley Farm on 14 occasions, while the Berins Hill site had been closed after 7 visits, as neither the information from the cuttings nor surface indications offered evidence of a significant site and investigation of the well was beyond our present resources.

No fewer than 29 field walks had been held under the able direction of Clive Hart, and recently we especially welcomed some of the boys from the Cratery School. A second series of WEA lectures had been held and a third is in prospect. Members have taken part in 8 excursions and SOAG had been represented at 3 conferences, including the CBA9 Report weekend at Oxford in Feb. Regular monthly meetings were not held after Jan., while the WEA course was in progress, but two more social gatherings had taken place.

Total membership was now over 60: during the year 20 members had joined, against 6 losses. "I hope that everyone will bring at least one new member in the coming year", the President continued, and went on to extend sympathies to members who had been ill, especially Derek Fallowfield, whom we were happy to see amongst us again, and Nancy Gould. Finally the President thanked the committee, notably the efficient Secretary and the long suffering Treasurer, and also those members who so readily put their cars at the disposal of others. "It is very gratifying the way everyone helps every body else... long may we continue in this very happy manner!"

AGM(contd)

Mrs. Graham Kerr was unanimously asked to become Founder President sine die or for as long as she wished. The other officers and committee members as set out above were then elected.

The Treasurer's report showed a credit balance of £14.04 and Mr. French was assured of our thanks, as was the Hon. Auditor, Mr. A. Graham Kerr.

After tea the Chairman commented on the first series of RESCUE slides, projected by the Hon. Treasurer. Although these are primarily designed to show the dire archaeological effects of present day developments - mineral extraction, roadway and housing schemes and the like - an objective made very clear, they also give a selection of outstanding sites of different types. WJF

Visit to the Oxford City and County Museum, Fletcher's House, Woodstock. Sat. April 29.

21 members, 8 visitors and a baby met here at 10.30 am and were conducted round the offices and workshops by Mick Aston. In the Record Office he explained the system and allowed us access to the files, photographs and maps, and also to the other offices, where pottery and bones are stored. We had a detailed tour of the Conservation Laboratory, where pots were being reconstituted.

We then went round the Museum itself and saw ancient cooking and domestic things and old crafts, and farm implements. Finally we gathered in the Lecture Room for lunch as it was raining. We had hoped to visit Blenheim but decided to look at the church opposite.

As we left the workshop Mick pointed out how the Tudor building is grafted on to the Georgian part; and we thanked him very much for the trouble he took to make it such an interesting visit. CAGK

Visit to Verulamium Sat. June 3.

Some dozen members and friends made the journey to St. Albans, where they met Anne and Clive Hart, returning from the North. It was unfortunate that lack of transport prevented a larger attendance. Gareth Davies, the Museum Curator, gave us a vastly interesting hour's lecture on the history of the settlement from Belgic times to its decline in the 5th century AD, and was sincerely thanked for giving so freely of his time and knowledge.

After a picnic lunch Clive Hart conducted the party round the chief features of the site and everyone was impressed by the theatre - one of the few if not the only one known in this country - and the hypocausts, whose working was explained. Clive knows the area well and was even able to show the younger members of the party where they could find RB pottery in ancient spoil dumps! A very successful day concluded with a visit to the Abbey, and we returned in the early evening. CP (by phone)

Rescue Archaeology - SOAG and the M40.

Some members made their first acquaintance with rescue work on the probable RB cemetery at Queenford Farm, Dorchester, under cold conditions in February.

During April and May about a dozen members have worked on a number of occasions on four sites being hastily investigated before destruction on the line of the M40 extension, nine miles between Stokenchurch and the Waterstock crossroads, on which intensive construction operations began in mid-March. This experience has brought home the realities of rescue work - on one site gigantic earth moving machines were behaving like the hosts of Midian - and has proved of immense benefit to both SOAG and to the M40 Archaeological Research Group. At times SOAG members have been the mainstay and even the majority of the volunteer workers, while members are gaining much from working with more experienced people and under the direction of younger professionals who are very much up to date.

There is one note of warning: under the pressures of the situation corners have to be cut and the meticulous and careful work which must be the hallmark of responsible archaeology is not possible when a site can vanish before one's eyes. Only a salvage operation is possible. This was brought home the other day to the writer when, instead of a trowel, he had the use of a DROMT, a relatively small mechanical scraper, and driver, to take off the ground surface across several sections of a medieval ditch. In one scoop the machine took off most of the topsoil from the ditch surface and dragged it over the edge, with small chance of seeing any finds in this soil, and leaving the surface with inevitably freshly broken tile fragments from the collapsed building roof protruding. One has to match machine with machine, but much is lost. However, the choice is often between nothing if the site is destroyed or some clues from hasty work.

Brief notes on the four sites follow.

Heath Farm, Milton Common. No indication from aerial photos or field walking. Soil marks identified after topsoil stripping. Pottery and other objects from Bronze Age to Belgic (last cent. BC. One IA hut circle completely cleared, evidence of at least 4-5 others while pottery extended for $\frac{1}{2}$ mile; also associated ditches and field boundaries.

Lewknor, Church Farm. The existence of an RB settlement, probably a farmstead, in the field to the S. of the MWY line was known from 1971 fieldwork but its N. limits were unknown. Cleaning of the MWY surface after mechanical scraping enabled the line of the N. boundary and other features to be traced for some distance.

Lewknor, Icknield Way (contd.)

were excavated. There were no grave goods with the generally well preserved skeletons, but dating evidence was provided by sherds of late RB pottery in the fill.

Sadler's Wood, new Christmas Common Road. This was completely covered by trees and most of the site is off the roadway line. It would seem to have been a farmstead complex occupied over some centuries as the pottery runs from the 12th to the 15th. Foundations of flint have been uncovered and masses of tiles have collapsed around these and into a surrounding ditch. It may be possible to continue work here for some weeks. WJF

MISCELLANY

Library Pat Woodford is building up a collection of archaeological books. Any one wishing to borrow - or, better still, lend books for the use of other members - should get in touch with her. "Current Archaeology" is available on loan to members and we shall take other periodicals.

Verulamium For those who missed the recent excursion - and others - it is hoped to arrange another visit in the Autumn.

CBA 9 Newsletter no.2 This contains notes on our Field work and on Lilley Farm amongst some 60 accounts of work in 1971 over the five counties of the Group. Copies at 35p. can be obtained through the Hon. Sec. or Chairman. There are also copies of Newsletter no. 7 still available at 10p.

Goring History Society We must congratulate our Treasurer on becoming Hon. Sec. of this, a happening which will undoubtedly lead on to that cooperation between the societies which has been in the air for some time.

Membership The Committee wishes it to be known that Bulletins will no longer be sent to members who have not renewed their subscriptions, due from May, by the end of the following December.

Active participation Doubts have been expressed by some members about going to help on the M40 and elsewhere owing to lack of experience. There is no need to be diffident. Be prepared to ask someone more experienced, to work with him/her and to see what is done. Opportunity will be taken at Lilley Farm to talk briefly and demonstrate some basic techniques. The importance is again stressed of having one's own trowel, up to 4", with the blade forged in one piece - those with rivetted blades, and gardening trowels, are of little use.

A book recommendation.

W.G. Hoskins, The Making of the English Landscape. Pelican 80p.

It is no exaggeration to say that this classic, first published in 1955, initiated the study of our environment as the product, not only of the developments of the latest two centuries, but of a continuous process from prehistoric times. It should be compulsory reading for anyone interested in how our countryside came to be as we see it.

ENVOI Although we can modestly congratulate ourselves on a relatively high proportion of active members, compared with similar groups, we would still like to see more people in the field and at meetings. We hope to have more visiting speakers during the coming season.

Reports on fieldwork and Lilley Farm are held over until the next issue, when there will be more to say.

16 June 1972

WJF