

President: Mrs. C.A. Graham-Kerr, The Thatched Cottage, Whitchurch Hill (Pangbourne 2901)
Hon. Sec. : Mrs. C. Perdue, Tall Beeches, Hardwick Rd., Whitchurch (Pangbourne 2009)
Field Director: Mr. C.R. Hart, 2 Goddard Close, Shinfield, Reading (Reading 882454)

A year ago 1972 was described as a year of modest achievement but we were rather worried about attendances at meetings. During the past year 1973 the numbers of members at meetings has justified invitations to speakers of distinction, sometimes travelling considerable distances. Richard Bradley on Maumbury Rings, David Miles on Abingdon and David Hall on his work in Northants will not soon be forgotten, while our Field Director has twice fascinated us with his illustrated impressions of places as far apart as Pompeii and Herculaneum, and Leiden - the latter complete with a live Dutch archaeologist.

Some members may feel that we have not been so active outside, but fieldwork has continued steadily and the President's Medieval Tile group has visited no fewer than 77 sites. It is only on urgent salvage work, like Heath Farm in 1972, or on the large scale excavation that the part-timer can usefully work these days; and there has been none in our area this year. But our role, in fieldwork especially, is vital and recognised. Rescue work has shown how little is known beforehand of the archaeological evidence which is being so rapidly destroyed. Individually we should be alert almost for every hole which is dug, and more widely the Director of the Oxford Unit will soon be calling a meeting of representatives of all volunteer groups in his area to discuss an observation, survey and recording scheme, for the small professional staff cannot possibly cover the whole area, and will depend on us largely for its information.

Our own small excavation at Lilley Farm has lain fallow but will be completed this year. Generally, in this era of archaeological crisis, the days of the leisurely amateur "dig" are properly over. It is taking all our resources to rescue something in advance of present developments.

Calendar

Beginning Ten meetings on Post-Roman Archaeology at Langtree School, Woodcote.
Thursday Tutor: W.J. Rodwell, Inst. of Archaeology, Oxford. 7.30-9 pm.
7 Feb. 1974 Details from the Hon. Sec.

Sat. 9 Feb. Visit to OAU's excavation at Mongewell. Meet 2 pm. at SU617879

Sun. 10 Mar. Survey (bring pencil and board) Checkendon Court. Park at smithy, meet 11 am. at SU662830

Fri. 22 Mar. General meeting at Langtree. Peter Summers on "Heraldry"

(Sat/Sun. 30/31 Mar. CBA9 Report Conference in Oxford. Two days of reports on work in the five counties, with some wider papers and accounts of archaeology overseas. Forms from Hon. Sec., applications to Rewley House.)

(Oxford-Leiden Exchange return visit 13-20 April. We may be able to show visitors something of our area)

Fri. 26 April General meeting at Langtree. Visiting speaker;

Sun. 12 May Fieldwork Meet 11am. at Checkendon SU665830

Sun. 19 May Annual General Meeting, after which Dr. J.M. Fletcher will speak on "Cruck Houses of the Region" Dr. Fletcher is Afternoon, place later. // a leading authority on historic buildings.

Reports

Fri. 26 Oct. David Hall, Higham Ferrers Arch. Soc., Northants, gave a most informative illustrated account of his surveys in S. Northants and N. Bedfordshire, with particular attention to the evidence of medieval field systems.

Reports (contd.)

Fri. 16 Nov. The second Annual Dinner, at Chiltern Chase, Woodcote, was an enjoyable occasion, when our guest speaker, Tom Hassall, Director of the Oxford Unit, discoursed delightfully on his historical and archaeological upbringing in the Oxfordshire countryside.

Fri. 7 Dec. Dr. C.F. Slade, Reading University, an early member of the Group, gave an illustrated account of his work last year on part of the site of Reading Abbey, now under Reading Gaol but available for a time during alterations.

Fieldwork with Clive Hart was carried out on Sun. 4 Nov., 2 Dec. and 27 Jan. at Checkendon, Crays Pond and Hardwick respectively.

Medieval Tiles

Many people use decorative tiles in their houses today but we are concerned with those made from the 12th to the 15th centuries, and usually found now in ecclesiastical buildings.

These tiles are usually from 4½-6 ins. square, commonly brown with yellowy designs and roughly glazed. Green and black glazes also occur, made by adding copper to the basic lead.

The main difference between medieval and later, say Victorian, tiles is in texture: Victorian tiles are smooth, shiny and with very clear designs, whilst older ones are uneven, the design and drawing rough and often slurred. They are often so worn as to go unnoticed and are difficult to distinguish.

Our nearest kiln at present was at Penn, Bucks, where there is a record of 3 men working in 1332. We find that although our designs are often very similar, they are never exactly the same as the Bucks ones: a kiln site in Oxfordshire would be a great find.

Designs are numerous. The commonest are often a 4 tile design, with semi-circles and trefoils or fleur de lys going diagonally and making a linked pattern with the other tiles. There can also be 9 and 16 tile designs, geometric and animal.

Dr. Cecil Slade's recent talk showed how tiles were used to pave the ambulatory at Reading Abbey. At Nuffield Church we have the whole sanctuary to record, even the dark hole where brushes and vases lurk.

Most of the churches E. of a line Whitchurch-Nettlebed suffered "restoration" about 1860 and the tiles were thrown out or lost. But we have found some fine examples to the N. and W., for our area now extends from the Thames N. to Thame. Chinnor produced a most unusual and interesting king's head, at present unidentified. Great Haseley has a magnificent dado of tiles round two walls. Unfortunately many of the tiles are crumbling from damp, and we alerted the Vicar to this danger.

This survey has provided us not only with information on tiles, but we have also noted deserted villages and other sites - and even collected new members. If you are interested, please contact the President.

C.A.G-K

Butser Experimental Iron Age Farm

Five of us were luckily able to go to a talk at Reading University Arch. Soc. by Peter Reynolds on the above. The speaker is trying to find out how Iron Age people lived in S. Eng. and by doing the same thing himself in reconstructed conditions.

Butser Hill is a N. facing spur on a high chalk hill in Hampshire. Mr. Reynolds and his helpers have built a round clay-walled house with a thatched roof and plan to build two more. They have also, to fit sites with single post-holes, built a turf or sod house on a light framework round a central post, and have found this perfectly practicable. They are also experimenting with crops and have sown areas variously using a plough, an "ard" (prehistoric plough which made a furrow without turning the sod) and dibbing in seeds individually. They expect the largest crops from the last method. Crops sown have been emmer wheat and spelt, and they hope to try some two-row barley this year.

They are also trying to introduce animals as near to primitive types as possible. They now have some Soay sheep - handsome animals which look like goats except that they have woolly coats. Some striped piglets have been bred from a wild boar and a Tamworth

Butser Experimental I.A.Farm(contd.)

sow, and hope to introduce them seriously this year. It is also planned to introduce cattle, and they have some "throwbacks" which are about the size and shape of "bos longifrons"

The experiment has only been going for a year. After a few more we ought to know a good deal more about Iron Age agriculture; and may even have some useful hints for our own future farms, in these days of falling fertility and overbred animals.

P.M.W.

Items

Oxfordshire Dialect. Please continue the recording of this - from old people for example - and pass to the President. Roy Boyson has recently sent in a copy of the "Stoke Row News" listing over a dozen local words and expressions eg. "Dout the light" (still in use) - a contraction of "Do out the l."

New members We welcome Mark Horton and H. Vaughan.

Wallingford and District Arch. and Hist Society This was formed at a meeting of some 130 people on 4 Jan., following the archaeological implication report by Caroline Simpson on the threat posed by development to this unique Anglo-Saxon town.

(Hon. Sec.: Mrs. J. Dewey, 38 Papist Way, Cholsey.

Hon. Officers It seems that our Secretary and Treasurer intend to resign at the AGM after three years of hard work. Both happily will continue as active members and it is understood that worthy successors have already come forward.

DOE Archaeological Units and CBA While the Oxford Unit is in being the national position remains obscure - as was said in the last bulletin. We may well lose the new Berkshire - local government reorganisation becomes effective after 1 Ap. 1974 - from CBA9 as the archaeological interests have elected to come within the area of the DOE Wessex unit, if and when formed. (A holding committee has been formed)

ENVOI

The Editor has often complained of the failure of members to contribute to this bulletin. This time there can only be thanks - and this is as it should be!