

SOUTH

OXFORDSHIRE

ARCHÆOLOGICAL

GROUP

BULLETIN

 ** SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE **
 ** ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP **

Bulletin No.28

September 1975

Calendar of Events

- Friday 3 Oct Lecture - "Work of a Field Officer" by James Bond, Oxfordshire County Museum. Langtree School 7.45p.m.
- Sunday 5 Oct Field Walk. Meet at Checkendon Church 11a.m.
- Friday 14 Oct Lecture - "Excavations at Rivenhall" by Kirsty Rodwell (Oxfordshire Arch.Unit) Field Officer for South Oxfordshire. Langtree School 7.45p.m.
- Saturday 22 Nov Field Walk - Meet at Checkendon Church 11a.m.
- Friday 28 Nov Lecture - "Shopping in a 17th Century Town" by David Vaisey, Dept of Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library. Langtree School 7.45p.m.
- December A Social Evening, similar to the Wine and Cheese Party of 1974, is planned for early December.
- Saturday 17 Jan 1976 Visit to the New Museum of Oxford. Meet 10.30a.m. outside Town Hall for Tour of New Museum, conducted by Martin Heighton, Assistant Director.
- 28-29 Feb 1976 C.B.A. Weekend. Oxford.

Observations and Excavations

The economic climate now prevailing has not seen fit to bypass the archeologist, some excavations planned for this summer have not been carried out, due to a lack of finances.

1. Abingdon and District Archaeological Society, under the supervision of Michael Parrington (Oxford Arch. Unit) has excavated foundations of post-medieval buildings in Stert Street. Volunteers are welcome Tuesday and Thursday evenings, and Sundays.

2. A high pressure gas pipe-line is planned to cross South Oxfordshire in the vicinity of a number of known sites. George Lambrick (Oxford Arch. Unit) will be observing its progress.

3. Recent Publicity surrounding the future of Wallingford Castle has caused grave concern, not only to archaeologists in Oxfordshire, but also nationwide.

In Feb 1975, Oxfordshire District Council were advised that the site of Wallingford Castle had been scheduled as an Ancient Monument. This site is one of national importance, both historically and archaeologically. Also, it is one of the major features of the town. The D.O.E. has recently announced its intention to de-schedule part of the site which is the subject of a planning application for a Residential Home. The D.O.E. reached its decision on the advice of the Ancient Monuments Board. The effect of the de-scheduling will be to endanger the future of Wallingford Castle, and possibly even set a precedent for further de-scheduling. A "Save Wallingford Castle" campaign was mounted when the decision of the D.O.E. became known. As a result of this campaign, the D.O.E. has announced that a public inquiry will be made into the future of Wallingford Castle.

Museum News

The Museum of Oxford, opening in December, is a new museum in the centre of the city. The museum aims to relate the story of Oxford, from earliest times to the present day. There will be frequent temporary exhibitions, lectures and demonstrations. S.O.A.G. can look forward to a conducted tour on this museum on

Sat. 17 Jan 1976.

The County Museum at Woodstock is mounting an exhibition from 20 Sept to 31 Dec. to mark European Architectural Heritage Year. The series of almost 200 photographs will show the great diversity of building styles found in farmhouses and cottages, within the Oxford region. The exhibition will also pose questions about problems of recording and conserving these buildings.

An extension to the Museum of English Rural Life, in Reading, is due for completion in less than 8 weeks time. The extension will house farm wagons and ploughs from the reserve collection, not previously available for viewing by the general public.

Survey of Strip Lynchets at Bottom Farm, Ipsden, Oxon

In May this year, S.O.A.G. approached landowners, Hildred Farms Ltd., for permission to measure and plan Lynchets. Mr. Hildred had long been curious about these land features and was only too pleased to learn of their function and approximate dating.

With the Hawthorn scrub removed, the group was able to draw a plan and section of the lynchets. These are the best examples remaining in South Oxfordshire, and can be seen to confirm to the pre-enclosure pattern of the area. Seven lynchets remain on this south facing chalk hillside. They have been preserved as a result of the steepness of the hillside and its covering of scrub.

In the course of surveying, a small pit containing farm rubbish, pre 1930, was observed at the N.W. end of Lynchet No.2. The contents of this pit comprised old white stoneware, Keiller Marmalade jars, Burgess Anchovy Paste pots and lids, and broken torpedo-shaped glass bottles. Inscribed on the glass was "I.C.E. Berg & Son, Bradfield", and "Codd's Patent 4, London S.E." These had all been sealed under downland grass until this year when the plough had ripped up the sods.

A further find on the top of positive lynchet No.2 at the N.E. end was an iron plough-share of a type used for hard or stony ground. (Type 10 as p.19, "The English

English Plough", J.B. Passmore). This type of plough-share was used until prior to the last war.

Book reference: "Ancient Fields" by H.C. Bowen,

S.R. Publishers Ltd (90p).

C.R.H.

Surveys

This dry summer has been ideal for the observation of crop marks throughout the country. An alignment of pits has been recorded in Moulsoford parish. Eight pits appeared in the golden corn as green spots running N.W. - S.E. (SU592848).

In August, two "new" ring ditches were visible in South Stoke parish. Each ditch had a diameter of 10 metres and was situated on a south slope in a line N - S. Once again the green corn over the ditches was very apparent in an otherwise golden field.

The dry summer weather unfortunately proved hazardous for many thatched buildings. The Barley Mow Public House at Clifton Hampden, a fine example of a cruck cottage, was burnt to the ground. An enthusiastic archaeologist from Dorchester has agreed to sketch what remains of the Barley Mow for the County Survey records.

C.R.H.

The work of the Berkshire Archaeological Committee

The Berkshire Archaeological Committee was formed to administer D.O.E. funds and formulate coherent policies of research within the County. Its Chairman is Dr. Slade of Reading University, and its secretary is Mr. T.G. Gwatkin of Reading Museum; among other members are Mike Hall, who lectured to us last winter, and representatives of the Berkshire County Council and the six planning districts within the County.

The first act of the committee was to appoint Mr. Tim Gates, a Cambridge graduate, to compile a survey of Berkshire cropmarks on the lines of the "Upper Thames Gravel Report" published by the Oxford Unit. He also carried out observation work on a Bronze Age site at Hovingham's Bray pit. Planned excavation of crop

marks near the M4 at Theale, where extraction of gravel has been cutting features for over 10 years, and a ring ditch near Easthampstead failed to materialise for various reasons.

On 1st April, Grenville Astill from Birmingham University was appointed Director of the Berkshire Archaeological Unit, formed by the Committee. Over the past few months, Mr. Astill has been surveying the archaeological potential of Berkshire, and observing endangered sites. This led to the finding of remains of Roman walls at Beenham gravel pits.
G.K.T.

Ringling the Changes - an Expedition into Beds and Bucks

Eleven members met at Woodcote on Sat. June 28 at 10a.m. and set off for Wing. The church at Wing is one of the earliest Anglo-Saxon churches of basilican plan. The apse is hexagonal in form, a most unusual and curious sight. The church is thought to date from the 7th to 10th centuries. Under the apse, we peered into the crypt with its stout pillars. It is probable that priests entered the crypt from the altar area above. Once in the crypt, they processed around a centrally placed reliquary.

The church itself has a lovely carved roof, reredos and brasses. Other features of interest are 15th century Dormer memorials, and Aylesbury font base in the porch. From the church, we walked across a field for a marvellous view of earthworks. We observed reversed S ridge and furrow, and holloways to the open fields; also house platforms all around the western end of the village.

From Wing, we travelled to Stewkley to visit the Norman church with its massive tower. Stewkley Church is almost entirely 12th century, with arcades and toothed string-course. Inside were heavy Norman arches, a painted ceiling of 1862, and five medieval tiles in the wall in the sanctuary.

On the way to Dunstable we passed a windmill tump at Stourbridge, and paused to look at the moated site, with 15th century gatehouse, of Tilsworth Manor.

At Dunstable, we were met by members of Manshead Archaeological Group at the Friary site. They showed us their excavation of the all-mysterious complex of crosses, and an assortment of Roman pots. We paid a short visit to Dunstable's Five Knolls Barrows, at one time excavated by Sir Mortimer Wheeler. On the homeward journey we passed Pitstone Green Post Mill (1642)

C.G-K.

Evening Meeting - Calleva

The most recent meeting of S.O.A.G.s was held on the evening of July 8. Members met outside Silchester Church for a tour of the Roman remains. The south gate of the Roman wall has recently been re-excavated as part of a consolidation programme by the D.O.E. From the open trenches, several phases of construction could be observed. The group followed the line of the remaining walls, and visited the amphitheatre. The evening concluded with discussion cheese and ale.

The encouraging attendance made any organisation for the evening so rewarding.

C.R.H.

Book Reviews

1. In 1973 Basil Blackwell published for the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council "Oxfordshire. A Handbook for Students of Local History", edited by D.M. Barratt and D.G. Vaisey. In 83 pages, for 52p., they summarise county history in a national context, and list sources and repositories, museums and societies. In the final chapter they try to answer the four questions that are most often asked. There are nine photographs illustrating sources, including Mapledurham church wardens' accounts for 1737. Documentary research is essential if physical remains are to be fully understood.

G.K.T.

2. "Landscape Archaeology - An Introduction to Fieldwork Techniques on post-Roman Landscapes", M. Aston and T. Rowley.

This is Mick and Trevor at their best, and well worth reading by everyone, at whatever stage of learning. It is obtainable from bookshops for £5.50. The book covers many areas of Oxfordshire, Shropshire and Warwickshire. There are many photographs, and a wealth of diagrams and drawings. It is neatly divided into clear, concise sections, without a lot of padding, and one can use it for quick references. Chapter 8, on "organising", shows the "history" of the M40, which won S.O.A.G. its spurs. This is a most readable, clear and fascinating book.

C.G-K.

A Week in Brittany

In July we spent a week in Brittany, primarily to see some of the megaliths which cluster round the little town of Carnac. There is a fantastic array of these, ranging in date from c3,500 to c2,500 BC. Those that fascinated me most were the Alignments - these are quite unlike almost anything else - certainly unlike anything in England - rows and rows of huge stones of all shapes and sizes, marching across the field into the distance, surrounded by golden gorse and broom. The Bretons used to explain them in a vivid legend as being an army of Roman soldiers, petrified while pursuing a local saint, and this describes their appearance very well! In one group of three alignments there are about 3,000 stones, in 10, 11 and 13 rows.

There are also numerous menhirs and dolmens, some inscribed thickly with lines, curves and other marks, one stone is covered with an array of what looked to me exactly like hockey sticks! However, I am told that they are probably sheaves of corn.

The whole area is most attractive. As well as the megaliths, there are beautiful beaches, exciting rocky coasts, fishing villages, astonishingly pleasant holiday cottages (compare them with so many in this country), and delightful villages and small towns.

We drove back by a round-about route, taking in two elaborate and lovely chapels near Le Faouët, the picturesque town of Hennebont, and the ruins of the romantic 13th century Chateau de Tonquedec. Altogether, a most interesting and enjoyable holiday.

P.M.W.

Future Bulletins

Over the past few months, S.O.A.G.s have visited many sites of Archaeological interest. Less fortunate members would like to hear about these exciting experiences! Send your articles please, by 15th November to: A. Hart, 2 Goddard Close, Shinfield, Berks.

RESCUE EXCAVATION

Volunteers required NOW to excavate unique Neolithic site, Cannon Hill, Maidenhead.
(Building site near roundabout, A308M).

Directors: Richard Bradley and Bill Startin

Grid reference: 896793

Group President: Mrs Cynthia Graham-Kerr,
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Liaison Officer: Mrs Pat Woodford,
Ashtree,
Crays Pond,
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Nr. Reading
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W.E.A. Courses. Details from Langtree Adult Education Centre,
Langtree School, Woodcote (Mr. P. Trout)

Introduction to Roman Britain Tutor: Brenda O'Connor
A One Year Course of 20 meetings dealing with
the History and Archaeology of the Roman
occupation of Britain from c55 BC to c410 AD,
on Mondays from 7.30p.m. to 9.30p.m.
beginning 6 October

Old Buildings and Building Materials Tutor: Miss J.A.Wight,
M.A. (who has recently published a book on
the subject), A Terminal Course of 10
meetings on Wednesdays from 7.30p.m. to
9.0p.m. beginning 24 September.

Weekend and Residential Schools. Details from Rewley House,
Wellington Square, Oxford.

- 10 - 12 Oct Beginnings of Urbanism in Barbarian Europe.
25 - 26 Oct Planning - An Introduction for Archaeologists
(and others).
15 - 16 Nov Buildings of Oxfordshire. (Meeting Place to
be arranged in Charlbury).
5 - 7 Dec Medieval Forests, Parks and Gardens
(to be held at Missenden Abbey, Great
Missenden, Bucks).
2 - 4 Jan Archaeology of Monasteries.
1976
25 - 28 Jan The Historic Landscape - An Introduction
28 - 31 Jan Archaeology and Conservation
28 - 29 Feb C.B.A. 9 Local Archaeology Weekend.