

37
1981

BULLETIN

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South Oxfordshire Archæological Group

BULLETIN No. 37 INFORMATION PAGE

1981

Hon. President

P.J. Fowler, MA, PhD, FSA

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Goring 2978ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION - due March 1st

Family (2 persons)	£1.50
Single	£1.00
Junior	.25p

Cheques to be made payable to:-
South Oxfordshire Archaeological GroupBulletin EditorsMrs. Cynthia Graham Kerr
Mrs. Vera Hodges

Please give us a contribution to the family magazine.

THE SOAG PARTY

Tues. Dec. 15th 7.45 for 8 pm

This is something that really brings everyone together so vote it now and be sure you keep well for that date! (We lose as many as 10 through illness!)

It is a great privilege to have the use of the Gold and Black Room at the Senior Oratory School, complete with log fire and furnishings for the tables, and if everybody comes, (and we usually have a good number) it makes for a most happy evening.

Tickets are around £1.80 including wine, and many are kind enough to contribute food. This will all be arranged by a special Committee but it is, as usual, up to each of us to support this one Social Event of the year.

We hope to arrange another fascinating competition, and a raffle, as we did last year - this certainly kept the conversation going!

Monthly Meetings

Held at Langtree School, Woodcote, 7.45 for 8pm until 9.30pm, with Lecturer. Usually 3rd Thurs. or Fri. in the month (see your Membership Card for details).

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1982

SUNDAY MARCH 21st

3 pm at Langtree School

Guest of Honour. Professor S.S. Frere, CBE, D.Litt,
Litt D, D.Litt, FBA, FSA.

Speaking on "An Archaeologist at Work".

Prof. Frere is President of the Royal Archaeological Institute, London and we are particularly fortunate to be honoured with a visit from this well known archaeologist.

(Please bring cakes and visitors)

Lecture on "THE VIKINGS" at the Hexagon, Reading

Informant Mr. Leslie Cram, Reading Museum

Tel Rg 55911. Extn. 2199/2191

Date Thursday October 22nd at 7.30 pm

Lecturer MAGNUS MAGNUSSON

Tickets £1.50 - £2.75

Publicity Officer Mr. Mark Ringwood, The Civic Centre

As there is expected to be heavy booking for this lecture, Mr Cram would appreciate a list of those interested as soon as possible in order to ensure reservations.

Mr Cram has suggested that facilities might be provided for Societies and Groups in what might be described as the Reading "archaeological catchment" area to stage their own publicity displays. The space available for this will be somewhat limited but if several Soags would like to stage a display this would be considered and approved by the Committee. The consequent publicity should prove a help in extending our membership but it must be carried through promptly and properly, with people on duty and the display well-arranged.

Any offers?

EDITORIAL NOTES

With the success of the Soag Messenger, we are continuing to keep the Bulletin as an Annual Report of the Group and its activities. Our thanks are due to those who so kindly contributed articles towards it; and may we encourage this particular activity even more - it's something one can do at odd moments and in comfort at home!

We have had quite a busy year with plenty of scope for even more activities and projects such as Parish Survey and other things. Everyone's problem is TIME, but the joy of Soagging is to fit it in with other

things - give Cyn a ring for Instant Outings, or work on a small project at odd moments and in evenings - Records of different things are always needed - there are special cards for records for the Museum which can be obtained from Dyn.

The attendance at the monthly lecture evenings last session was much improved and we often had 20-25 to encourage the Lecturer. With the influx of new Soags this should increase: do please come as often as possible. We do try to get lecturers who are Experts in different aspects of Archaeology (an expensive item these days) and it's not very nice for them to have a poor audience to speak to, after a long journey!

Consult your Pink Membership Card for details.

Have you brought in any new members recently? The new people round the corner, the man you work with, the girl you met at your friends? It's a splendid opening gambit - "Are you interested in Archaeology?" - and so many say yes!

Your Editors

NEW MEMBERS LIST 1981

John Percival (Goring)	Edith West (Ascot)
Violet Avery (Caversham)	Ruth Levy (Frieth, Bucks.)
Keith & Janet Smith (Reading)	
Arthur Olsen-Shaw (Caversham)	
Grace Hill (Earley)	Sue Murison (South Stoke)
Fay Hill (Wokingham)	John Bowcock (Caversham)
Jean, Dennis & Kate Webster (Goring)	

GROUP 9

The CBA Conference was held at Pewley House, Oxford and eight Soags were present.

With Mike Farley in the Chair we started with Stephen Coleman on Beds. Parish Survey, followed by a lively talk from Alan Cox on Brickmaking in the S. Midlands, then Lyn Sellwood on the coins of Dubonnis. A welcome break came for coffee, and the collecting of the CBA Newsletter (with Cyn's article on Church Door Hinges). David Knight then discussed Iron Age Pottery and we went on to Excavations.

Firstly came David Parish on some fascinating bones of Mammoth, Lion, Rhino, etc. found in a quarry near Pitstone; he was followed by John Williams on Chalk Lane and St. Peters - a most varied dig. Alal Hannan showed the Tower of Earls Barton, which is cracking, and how there are just a few stones and skeletons (!) as foundations. Barnwell and Raunds were also shown. After Alan we paused for lunch and coffee and a chat; then back to Martin Petchley who showed the dig of a medieval watermill at Caldecott, south of Milton Keynes. John Trutch gave a film on the building of an Iron Age house at the Chiltern Museum with Barry Rose commentating. Tom Hassell rushed in from a wedding, in full morning dress, and belted off a resume of the Units' work - most extensive - and rattled off again!

We recovered with tea and biscuits; then back to hear John Bailey give an excellent discourse on Timbered Houses, rivalled by John Steane from Woodstock Museum on Cogges old Manor and Chesterton old Manor and a wonderful "barn" which turned out to be a Saxon Hall. Finally Paul Woodford of Milton Keynes showed many Medieval Houses in Northants. which were hidden Saxon Halls, - again, most intriguing and a very good speaker.

We finally closed, after discussions, about 4.30pm. All Soags are welcome to join in this Conference and hear what other archaeologists around us are accomplishing.

Receipts & Payments Account for year ended 28 Feb 1981

PAYMENTSLECTURES

Stanley	5.00	
Numismology	8.00	13.00

SUBSCRIPTIONS & AFFILIATIONS

Langtree A.E.	10.00	
C. Archaeology	4.00	
Oxf. Historical Soc.	4.00	
Butser Project	2.50	20.50

VARIOUS

Fixture Cards	4.73	
Bulletin	1.95	
Chairman's Exp.		
Postage, stationery, tel. calls, etc.	24.82	
Chairman's Exp.	1.00	
Treasurer's Exp.	45	32.95

Balances

Feb. 1981

Bank	125.63	
Cash	1.60	127.23

193.68

I have examined the records, statements and receipts, and I believe that the above account represents the true state of the Group's finances.

E. French Mulberry Cottage, Goring

23/3/81

RECEIPTS

SUBSCRIPTIONS

68.00

XMAS PARTY

Receipts 64.83

Expenses

Wine 29.36

Food 9.22

Bk. Token 6.00 44.58 20.25

DONATION

1.00

sale of cake at AGM 60

Feb. 1980

Bank 102.38

Cash 1.45

103.83

193.68

J.A. Wilson

Hon. Treas.

PRESIDENTS' REPORT FOR 1980 (Mar 22nd)

This past year has been one of grumbles and gloom for most of us, in some way or other; so it is both cheering and encouraging to find that Soag, now in its 12th year, and in spite of less money in everyones' pockets, has not only survived, but gained 35 new members since last AGM - and still they come. We have managed, as I said in the Messenger, to keep things going by dint of voluntary work, and if you find it difficult to attend things, there are many other ways to help and enjoy Soag, not the least being contributions for the Bulletin and the Messenger; typing, delivering and so on - do come and ask!

The Messenger pulls us all together, so don't be afraid to air your ideas about it, and I hope you don't feel it is too critical, - its job is to ginger us all up, and keep Soag lively.

In this I feel it is succeeding: as on the whole attendance at the monthly meetings has been up, outings too have been better - but do remember, meetings are on your Membership Cards.

Besides 6 meetings last year we had a number of Expeditions, - to Stonor, Littlecote, the Local History Exhibition at Whitchurch, Basing House dig, Silchester, a Metal Detectors' meeting, a few days working at Butser Ancient Farm, a visit to the Royal Archaeological Institute to hear Prof. St. Joseph, of aerial photo fame and as usual 8 of us attended the CBA in Oxford yesterday.

The meetings were enlivened by a variety of lecturers: Mike Hall on Thames Archaeology and Chris Stanley on, surprisingly, Concrete - and very archaeological in spite of the title! Dr. Daphne Nash's talk on Numismatics was both interesting and well-illustrated with Celtic coins and then designs; and we had an unusual evening at Mr. Hawthorne's house where he expounded (also archaeologically) on his horsebrasses and showed us his collection.

Members' Evening produced 3 home-brewed speakers - Vera Hodges talk on Church Spires showed some beautiful and interesting slides; the Griffith Williams arranged a grid ref. game after a brief preparatory talk on maps, and Anne Ingles displayed her finds from the dyke at Sluys, Belgium.

We were very pleased to have a better attendance at the Party this year; (the Messenger, perhaps?) - especially as we presented the retiring Secretary, Marion Fallowfield, with a book, an evening bag and the wherewithal to purchase a greengage tree (we thought the tree itself would not be practical at a party!). Charles Nankivell (delighted to see him) has nobly offered to take on Marion's job but he has had a very bad time healthwise, and is unable to drive again yet; but with Chris Hogbin to help, he hopes to be able to cope as soon as possible. Our thanks yet again to Oratory and its Head (to whom we sent a Book Token) - for loaning us their Gold and Black Room, complete with fire, flowers, and crockery.

I will now turn to Soag outdoors, apart from Expeditions. Whilst on our visit to Littlecote we crossed the fields to see the Roman Temple Excavations, directed by Bryn Walters.

He took us round personally, explaining everything to us as fellow-archaeologists and not merely visitors - and we finished up with an invitation to work on the site. If this is indeed a temple of Orpheus it is a unique site and we are very lucky to be involved: - so we followed this up with two working visits before the wet weather set in, and hope to go again soon.

At our own dig at Checkendon we worked throughout the summer, but as you will hear later, attendance was poor and Trench 4 has still to be finished.

Tim Schadla Hall has also invited us to dig at Basing where, as Director, he took us round last July, and perhaps we shall take this up also. We have also been invited to work at Dorchester on the bypass (details later) and this has priority for Soag.

Some members attended an Oxford Arch.-Unit meeting at Oxford when I gave a report on the Checkendon dig, and we also had a couple of field walks.

I am now fulfilling the promises given to our Hon. President Dr. Peter Fowler, to write up the Lilley Farm dig, this was a condition of his becoming our Honorary President, and older members will remember his father Bill Fowler, who was our Chairman and directed the dig. I have now obtained his notes from Mrs. Fowler from which I am working.

And now, my grateful thanks to our loyal committee for their help and support; together we look forward to our new year of Soagging. Thankyou.

Note on Digs & other Activities

Do you feel left out? Do you wonder what's going on? No need - just ring Cyn at Pangbourne 2901, any time, and she will be delighted to arrange something; during the week or at a weekend. Please encourage her to keep going, by showing your interest. One can do all sorts of things in an hour or two!

THIS YEAR' DIGS

The Devils' Churchyard, Checkendon

The bottom of the ditch was reached at last at the beginning of this year, and after a consultation together, Cyn and Charlie Chambers (Ox. Arch. Unit) laid out the site-lines to be surveyed. Cyn is also drawing the section of Trench 4, and David Richards is supervising the surveying. We have been loaned a Dumpy Level and Staff by the Unit for this; and bought our own line-level for the section drawing. Work has been erratic, owing to bad weather and the difficulty of collecting helpers, but progress is being made and it will be completed soon.

This site is on the new bypass for Dorchester and Soag has put in quite a lot of work, at the invitation of the Unit.

It consisted of various ditches, the Cursus, pits and a satisfactory number of skeletons!

It was a great opportunity to work on such an interesting site, with others, on a Rescue Dig; and covered most periods from Neolithic up to post medieval.

The Temple of Orpheus, Littlecote

We had another pleasant day down here again, and as usual found a crisis on hand - a frantic Bryn Walters (Director) had just heard VIPs were coming - "and look at the weeds!" We all seized buckets and trowels and set to with a will and by lunchtime had cleared most of the front area of the site and proceeded onto the medieval road. By the afternoon we had reached the end of the wall and the delighted Bryn promoted us to some interesting trowelling over a medieval floor - full of goodies, and we looked at churches on the way home.

MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

I enjoy steeples aesthetically and delight to photograph them. The facts which I have learnt about them are a by-product, something which helps me to talk about my pictures. I feel rather a fraud now that I am asked to write about steeples without showing my slides. Perhaps I can say a little about the way which I have come to look at towers and spires and the questions they pose. When was this built? What is it built of?

A tower built of local materials is most likely to blend pleasantly with its surroundings. Worcester-shire and Herefordshire have a few timber-framed towers which are at home among their black and white cottages. The pinkish sandstone of many Herefordshire towers shows a most carefully dressed form of the same stone which is used about them for walls and farm buildings. The yellowish Cotswold limestone makes beautiful churches in beautiful villages; western and central Oxfordshire can show quite a few of these. The Chiltern's local stone is flint, a hard stone which does not seem to weather with age or alter with the weather; yet flint has its interest. Are the flints neatly knapped or are they left rough? How are they faced and strengthened with brick or stone to edge the windows and firm the corners? The bottom stage of Great Shefford tower avoids corners for it is round - a cheap way of avoiding the difficulty. St. Mary's, Reading (1551) could afford an attractive chequerboard design of flint and ashlar for its stone was bought cheaply at the destruction of Reading Abbey.

Often a church's position adds to its character. Is it set on a hill? Is it by water? Some of the handsomest steeples are seen over water. I picture Henley tower, flying the flag of St. George as a tower should, and seen above boats and water birds. My Methuen guide (1911) announces that St. Peter's, Wallingford, "has a curious stone spire which is far too prominent, and spoils most views of the town". But this 1777 spire is light and graceful and is most beautiful seen across the river, the bridge and the flowering cherry between the bridge and the boathouse. Whitchurch spire is indistinguished in itself but just in place as it dips its reflection in the millpool where crested grebe court and breed. The Norman tower of Iffley stands well above the Thames, or should I say the Isis. From the right spot on the Downs Goring and Stratley are seen standing face to face with the Thames threading between them.

It was an Oxfordshire church which first gave me the thrill of standing at the tower parapet and looking down on houses far below and then up at the lightning conductor far above on the top of the spire. When Adderbury church turned to electricity its oil lamps were up for grabs for the first be-nighted, oil-lit vicar prepared to fetch them. My father and I filled our car with beautiful lamps and crowned our day by climbing the tower. The spire is early C14 and deemed less elegant than Bloxham - perhaps the queen of Oxfordshire spires - but probably built by the same man.

Oxfordshire has a group of earlier spires: Christ Church Cathedral, Bampton and Broadwell belong to the C13. These, especially Broadwell, have a squat grace and rise from pleasant surroundings. We may be more attracted by the slender beauty of St. Helens, Abingdon (above the Thames), or Burford (above the Windrush), or the grandeur of St. Mary's, Oxford (c 1315 - 25). Newington (early C14), above the river Thame, is the most attractive spire in the south of the county. Berkshire has lovely Shottesbrook (late Dec.) which gains by being all of a piece with its church. In contrast St. Michael's Tilehurst has Street's C19 spire set on an C18 brick tower; Pevsner calls the tower "rather wild" but wild or not I like it.

Some little towers and turrets are small and homely and odd perhaps but very endearing. I commend the short shingle-built tower of Drayton St. Leonard though all my old guide says about it is "there is a wooden belfry and six bells". Of Berrick Salome we are told "the liberal use of timber and red tiles gave it a strange unecclesiastical appearance". It is strange certainly. Chiselhampton (1763) is of course a place to visit. My Murray Guide of 1896 dismisses it as "modern church with a bell turret such as is usually placed on stables". Piper's Shell Guide of 1952 describes it as "one of the best buildings in the county for combined fitness and elegance". I met the man who squeezes himself with difficulty up the turret stair twice a week to wind the clock and keep it "not more than ten minutes wrong".

I could go on about clocks and about bells, and about bats and owls in belfries - and about a member of some narrow sect who wanted to know whether it would be a sin if he subscribed to the fund for repairing the church clock. Of course the answer is "NO" for whatever our attitude to the Prayerbook, the church tower with its clock is part of our life, our landscape, and our heritage.

Vera Hodges

REPORT ON PARISH SURVEY WORK IN WHITCHURCH HILL

This has made considerable progress over the past year, especially as I have been able to visit the Public Records Office in Oxford and trace about a dozen maps of varying dates from 1761. One cottage has a firm date of 1733 but the rest of the old, thatched, houses, are extremely difficult to date from documentary evidence, including my own; there being no deeds for early cottages.

All the old cottages, or their sites, have been located and many old inhabitants interviewed, producing some very interesting facts about water-supplies, old families, buildings and roads, and local occupations.

Archaeology. Besides Bozedown Camp which lies SE of the village, there was a barrow at Hill Bottom, and Reading Museum are in the process of locating a sherd found there, for use in the final report.

There is also a rectangular earthwork in Baker's Shaw, th the NE of Copyhold Farm. Field names have also been noted.

The old boundary is being traced and yew trees marking it in places have been located. There are also several ponds, including the Tinepit where the

carts were driven through to wet their wheels. The village well, 365' deep needed a strong man to take 7 minutes to raise the bucket - there was no main water till 1908 & 9, and only about 78 houses, mostly farmworkers.

Every house of any architectural importance is being examined, the elevation drawn if of sufficient interest, and its inhabitant interviewed. Being "of the village" myself this presents no problem as everyone is most willing to talk and produce items to be examined and recorded.

I am also co-ordinating into a report what one might term "curiosities" such as beeboles, odd tools, carvings etc. in the whole Soag area, and would be most grateful for any info. about such things.

Help from other Soags in spare moments would be very pleasing and my thanks to those already helping, as I hope to produce a full Report by the end of the year of this particular area.

Cyn

LAMBOURN 'SEVEN BARROW' CEMETARY

This is the largest barrow cemetery in the Berkshire/South Oxford area - it is situated 2 miles north of Lambourn on the road to Kingston Lisle (G.R. SU 328828).

Belying its name, the actual count of confirmed barrows, visible or invisible, is 32, with another 7 unconfirmed. The same source (ref.) gives the total number of accepted barrows in the 'new' Berkshire as 68, so the importance of the Lambourn group is obvious.

The central group beside the road comprises 9 visible barrows, of different types, arranged in

SUMMER EXPEDITIONSAVEBURY, June 20th.

Only eleven Soags turned up at Avebury (although we discovered a new member also went, but missed us!) We explored the Church, inside and out, but found that unfortunately the Museum was shut for repairs, but we continued around the back and found a dovecot and two shops.

Some walked round the whole bank of the circle and gathering at the Red Lion for a drink before lunch, we all crossed the field and picniced on the ramparts in the sun (which went in).

After lunch we went in convoy to Silbury Hill (which the juniors climbed) and climbed the slope to West Kennet Long Barrow. This is most impressive with its vast stones, and chambers inside in which one may walk. We then drove to the Devils Den, (reached on foot up a sunny lane) - a Dolmen in a field.

On our return some of us drove to Littlecote to see Bryn Walters, the Director, about working at the Roman Temple site; which we showed to the newer members.

THE ROLLRIGHT STONES & CHASTLETON HOUSE, July 11th.

Meeting at the Stones at 12 noon after driving through heavy rain, we were glad to see the sun, which remained for the rest of the day. We examined the Stone Circle; with a grand view over Warwickshire and Oxon.

Walking across a barley-field we found the Whispering Knights - a collapsed dolmen; we also examined the King Stone, by itself over a bog.

Chastleton House was suggested as our next stop so we all drove in convoy about 2 miles on and found it and Chastleton Church; which we explored, with C13 Norman pillars, C14 tower and some paintwork and very fine medieval tiles in situ, (with a dog's footmark in the central one), a very interesting church.

Entering a huge gateway we passed through a courtyard into Chastleton House with its carved beds, fine barrel plaster ceiling (original). The elderly guide told us many interesting details, the original tapestry adorns some rooms still, the hall has been altered and has a fine screen and the family portraits are everywhere. The drawing room also has a fine plaster ceiling and of course a Secret Room off the Cavalier's Room where someone hid behind a mattress whilst his wife doped the Roundheads to allow his escape (he resembled Charles II). We descended the NW staircase and wandered round the garden. Cyn, Col and Chris poked about the spoil-heaps from the drains and found a piece of Ballamine pot and some medieval glass. As it was about 5 pm we then dispersed homewards.

DIG AT THE ROMAN TEMPLE, LITTLECOTE

Following up our previous visit 8 of us drove to Littlecote and found Bryn at panic-stations with VIP's coming and weeds all over the front excavations. Joining those there we set to work with a will and soon cleared all the area much to Bryn's relief and gratitude. After a picnic lunch with them, Bryn rewarded us with some interesting trowelling through a medieval layer where we found bones, pottery and teeth, and we finally went home late afternoon. We hope to return later in the year.

Suggestions for future Expeditions, either for the day or an evening are always welcomed by the Committee. Also some different faces - have you come to one of them yourself, yet? Bring your friends - they might even join!

THE VISIT TO ALDERMASTON, May 23rd.

This was Charles' first major effort at arranging an Expedition as our Secretary and was most successful. We hope he will be encouraged to further efforts!

18 of us met at Aldermaston Church at 2 pm, and the Churchwarden, Mr. Cox, resplendant with white Edwardian beard and whiskers, opened the Church especially for us. He proved a delightful guide, and told us many stories about the Family, for whom he worked and the last daughter had but recently died. He showed us her (Muriel) and her 2 sisters and then Father, depicted in a wall-painting, much to the locals' disapproval.

Most of the walls were covered with medieval paintings - (except the 1893 ones) and there was a mysterious 'Celtic Head' over the Norman doorway. Brasses had been stolen out of the floor. Outside was a sundial, scratched crosses and two Norman pillars with dove capitals. The whole church is a blaze of colour. In 1600 the Chapel was added - there is a Jacobean pulpit; and the vestry has a fine brick arch and an inscription painted inside. In the Sanctuary are 2 roundels - "the oldest in the county", set with later glass.

Mr. Cox produced photos from the Church chest for us, one showed the grave of John Starr - the first to grow William Pears.

Extracting ourselves with some difficulty, we proceeded to Aldermaston Pottery where "Charlie" showed us round, explaining the processes and buildings and most of us bought attractive pots. We also saw the special Europe Exhibition pieces in a barn across the road. We thanked "Charlie", and our own Charles for arranging everything, and finally set off home.