



# SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP

Founded in 1969

PATRON: Prof. Malcolm Airs  
PRESIDENT: Hazel Williams

## Annual Report & Accounts for 2020

### SOAG 52nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

By video conference, 7:30pm Thursday 22 April 2021

#### Chairman's Report

Undoubtedly 2020 will be remembered by us all as a difficult year and indeed, for some, a tragic one. But despite the restrictions and inevitable frustrations SOAG has managed to continue with a programme of lectures, visits, desk research, walks, geophysical surveys and even modest excavations. I must take this opportunity to thank the many project leaders and event organizers, as well as the whole committee who have worked tirelessly to make all this happen at a time when, without their efforts, we could have ended up with nothing. And I should add that our two Vice Presidents, Ian Clarke and Mike Vincent, have also been a great help in steering SOAG through these troubled times.

As every year, a number of committee members are stepping down from their roles and in particular I would like to pay tribute to three long-standing SOAG stalwarts who have been at the heart of our activities for so long. John Hefferan, as well as taking responsibility for curation of all of the pottery and CBM at Gatehampton, has for many years been the Editor of SOAG Bulletin. Nancy Nichols, as well as being Vice Chair, has arranged countless lectures, site visits and events. And Mike Green, as well as leading our geophysical capability, has edited Messenger and run our web site and communications programme including liaising with other local groups. Mike and Nancy have of course also been seen at virtually every dig we have undertaken for many years. We wish them all well as they take the well earned opportunity to continue enjoying archaeology with SOAG without having to organise it!

#### Membership and Finance

Despite very limited opportunities to work on projects, our numbers held up well during 2020. Our Membership Secretary, Linda Annan, reports that we ended the year with 129 members including 11 new members. I am hugely grateful that you have stuck with us during this frustrating year and can promise that the committee will do everything it can to bring a more rewarding 2021.

Our Hon. Treasure, John Hesketh, has kept a tight grip on our finances so that reduced income for the year has not significantly impacted on our reserves. Our only extra expense directly due to the pandemic was a subscription to Zoom Pro to allow us to present our lectures online. Fortunately the cost of this (£144) was refunded by a grant from the Council for British Archaeology, to whom we are most grateful.

#### Publications and Communications

2020 saw seven excellent editions of our newsletter, *SOAG Messenger*, edited and produced by Mike Green. Lois Rock (co-opted to the committee in 2020) is now putting together a team to pick up this work.

In early 2020 we distributed the 2019 edition of our journal, *SOAG Bulletin (No 73)*. However due to the sparseness of our field archaeology over the last year no edition has been produced for 2020. We anticipate the next edition being produced in late 2021 which will cover two years' work.

Our website is maintained by Mike Green, and he has kindly agreed to continue this work. We know that it attracts interest in our activities and has been responsible for bringing us new members. It is also now the repository for the growing digital archive of SOAG publications stretching back to the society's foundation in 1969. Alan Hall has recently been adding to the archive by transcribing Cynthia Graham-Kerr's notebooks detailing early SOAG activity. The availability of this archive has been of great value in particular to participants in SOAG's Goring Heath Landscape Study, who now find it much easier to find reports of previous work undertaken by SOAG in the project's area of interest – a process that was very laborious when the documents existed only in paper form.

## **Fieldwork and Research**

Just as the first lockdown commenced Bill Annan, strongly supported by our Hon Secretary, Nigel Peters, started a new SOAG project - a study of **Goring Heath** Parish and environs in collaboration with the Chiltern Conservation Board's Beacons of the Past (BotP) LiDAR Project. This project has progressed mainly on a desk-top basis throughout the year, with some walking and viewing when restrictions permitted.

The study initially concentrated on the identification and recording of features on the BotP portal, but this task has now been completed and, armed with datasets kindly provided by BotP, the Study Group is developing its own database and moving on to a wider study. The team is also developing a series of archaeological walks which are intended to be rolled out to SOAG members as restrictions are eased.

The Study area contains large numbers of saw pits and other evidence of extensive woodland working and a small team carried out a section excavation of a saw pit in conjunction with the Oxfordshire Woodland Group.

Contacts are gradually being initiated with local landowners to permit a wider range of activities, including hopefully the opportunity for future fieldwork. This project has provided an ongoing activity for many of our members when other activities have been constrained.

The exciting start-up **Smokedown Project** was much limited by conditions and had just three surveying days in October. Led by John Scarborough and manned by an enthusiastic team of 17 volunteers (following all Covid restrictions), we surveyed a total of 65 20m squares, focussing on the area with the most tile and pot sherd scatter. The magnetometry and resistivity results show a roughly 60m by 80m enclosure, possibly with outbuildings, probably of Romano-British origin.

There are many intriguing features, including, just outside the enclosure to the SW, a 10m square negative feature with a strong 5m round positive in the centre. We surmise this could be a fire pit for the hypocaust, a kiln or a corn drier. Inside the enclosure there are signs of further ditches and/or walls. Field walking and metal detecting added to the idea that this is a late Iron Age/Romano-British site of some complexity.

In addition to the LIA/RB area, there are also two Historic England monuments in the field. HE identified them from crop marks as prehistoric or Roman, with enclosures, a hut settlement, trackways and field boundaries. This is a rich archaeological landscape.

Once the crop is harvested in August 2021, we plan to complete the magnetometry of the whole field, redo the RB enclosure at higher resolution and excavate two or three trenches within or around the RB enclosure, and we will have until mid October on the field. This is a fascinating archaeological site and the farmer is as keen as we are to discover what lies beneath!

The temporary relief in Covid19 "lockdown" restrictions in the Summer gave us a window of time in which we were able to return to **High Wood** over the period August to September, albeit subject to "the rule of six". We decided that we could have up to 6 excavators on site at any one time, provided that they maintained "social distancing".

Under Alan Hall's leadership we were able to open one trench, measuring 8m x 6m to target a particular question: "although we had previously identified a range of buildings along the north of the enclosure was there evidence of buildings within the western enclosure wall of the compound?"

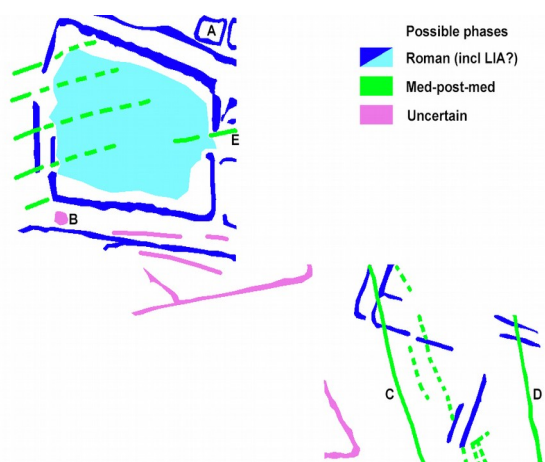
We had sufficient time to clear down to the natural sandy gravel meticulously and found no trace of walling, beam slots, post pads or post holes and conclude that there were no such buildings. Admittedly, this was somewhat disappointing - albeit factual - but enabled us to keep the team together and maintain some momentum to the project. For the 2021, it is hoped that a final season will enable us to explore the character and function of a later building which lies within the perimeter of the C3-4 complex.

After the completion of fieldwork at **Gatehampton** in 2019, our Project Leader, President Hazel Williams, had made plans to backfill the last trench and clear the site of SOAG equipment early in 2020. These were delayed by ground conditions and Covid restrictions but both were completed by the end of June 2020. We had hoped to start immediately on the initial processing of the recent finds but again Covid restrictions have prevented this. It is hoped that a start can be made in the summer of 2021 and that we can progress to more detailed finds processing and analysis in preparation for eventual publication.

The third-year excavations on the site of the 17th century manor house at **Ascott Park** were planned to take part over the last two weeks of August 2020. Following consultation with the project management team, in the light of the pandemic the Project Director, Ian Clarke, decided to cancel all fieldwork for 2020 and aim instead for excavations in the Spring of 2021. Earlier in 2020 the possibility of extending the current project for a further 1-2 years had been agreed in principle, with a final decision to be based on progress in 2020. With continuing uncertainty over the duration of the pandemic and with new SOAG projects beginning to come on stream, the Project Director decided against an extension beyond the planned three years; if the Spring 2021 excavation should prove impossible, the final analysis and reporting will be based on the results of the 2018-19 seasons alone. The 2021 excavations have been planned from the outset assuming operation under restrictions of a maximum of six people on site with social distancing. The 2020 programme has accordingly been reduced to a minimum number of tasks for 2021 to give a high probability of completion. These tasks have been selected to address only those key outstanding issues of specific relevance to the original project plan.

Finally, we provided support to The Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society for a geophysical survey in a new project led by Lindsey Bedford at **Coldharbour Farm**, Crowmarsh Gifford, looking for evidence of Roman settlement. This work will continue in 2021.

Dave Carless (Chairman) April 2021



What do we have here? All SOAG members are invited to join us in September at Smokedown Farm to excavate this exciting new site, which should keep us busy for many years to come.

## Lecture Programme

23 January **Dr Tim Williams (UCL)**

*On the Silk Road*

27 February **Dr Jennifer Foster (University of Oxford)**  
*Sutton Hoo*

**Lectures in March and April were cancelled due to Covid restrictions. The SOAG AGM was held online on 23 April, with the SOAG Review of Archaeology postponed until September. The following were all held online by Zoom:**

24 September **Review of SOAG Archaeology (2018 – 2020)**

22 October **Simon Maddison**  
*Hillforts of Britain and Ireland*

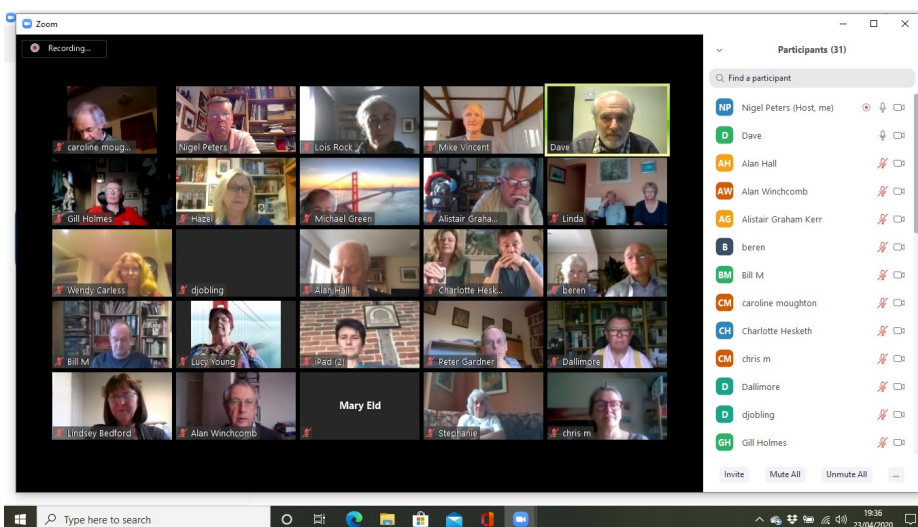
26 November **Dr Jennifer Foster (University of Oxford)**  
*The Celtic Menu*

## Events and Visits

Events and visits were not held during this year due to the constraints imposed by the Covid pandemic.

Nancy Nichols (Events Organiser)

Our AGM in 2020 was held by Zoom, as were many of our lectures, with very good attendance figures.



# Treasurer's Report 2020

## Core Activities:

The year-end accounts show a healthy surplus of £1048 on Receipts and Expenditure for our Core Activities. Subscription income held up well despite the reduced activity owing to Covid pandemic. We received the delayed Gift Aid payment for 2019 in addition to the one for 2020. There was also a significant reduction in room hire costs following the move of lectures and other meetings online.

## Non-Core Activities:

The accounts show a significant deficit of £971 in Non-Core (project) activities. The biggest cost was the infill at Gatehampton which was covered by the remaining project fund of £618 plus a contribution from the Cynthia Graham Kerr fund. The majority of the High Wood project costs were covered by a grant of £400 from the ARA and digging fees. The costs of the surveying work at Smokedown were mostly covered by digging fees. There were no costs associated with Ascott Park in 2020.

## Assets:

No new assets were purchased in 2020.

## Looking forward to 2021:

Given the uncertainty caused by Covid, we have predicted reduced subscription income versus 2020 resulting in a predicted deficit of £144 for all core activities. In the case of non-core activities, funding will be required for the Smokedown project. Existing project funds should be sufficient to cover the remaining activities planned at Ascott park and High Wood.

John Hesketh  
Honorary Treasurer  
March 2021

## Notes:

**Core Activities:** The day-to-day running of the Group, such as insurance, room hire, and lecture series. It is always the intention to fund these activities from Subscription and associated income.

**Non-Core Activities:** The various Projects currently being undertaken. All projects are expected to be self-financing, and funds for these are identified as Designated Funds.

**Restricted Funds:** Funding for specific projects as declared by the donor at the time of donation. They cannot be used to cover other expenditure.

**Designated Funds:** Funds for specific projects, as agreed by the Committee

**South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group (SOAG)**  
Accounts for the year ending 31 December 2020

Receipts and Payments			
2019		2020	2021 Core Activities Budget
10,807	<b>Balance as at 1st January</b>	10,558	
<b>Receipts</b>			
<i>Core Activities</i>			
1,877	Subscriptions	1,681	1,320
0	Gift Aid	659 <sup>1</sup>	248
22	Refreshments income	0	0
	Lecture Visitor Donations	0	0
<u>1,899</u>	<b>Subtotal, Core Activities</b>	<u>2,340</u>	<u>1,568</u>
1,009	Grants/Donations	400 <sup>2</sup>	
580	Diggers Fees	310 <sup>3</sup>	
	T-shirt Sales		
	Training fees		
39	Bank Interest	16	
125	Other	243 <sup>4</sup>	
<u>1,752</u>	<b>Subtotal, Non-core Activities</b>	<u>969</u>	
<u>3,651</u>	<b>Total receipts in year</b>	<u>3,309</u>	
<b>Payments</b>			
<i>Core Activities</i>			
46	Messenger	20	35
95	Bulletin	608 <sup>5</sup>	600
30	Publicity	0	30
90	Website	90	90
60	Room Hire	15	30
290	Insurance	297	330
5	Office/Admin Costs	0	30
220	Hall hire	0 <sup>6</sup>	100
170	Speaker Expenses	0	240
0	Refreshments/Events expenses	54	30
144	Storage Costs	144	144
63	Affiliate fees	65	53
<u>1,212</u>	<b>Subtotal, Core Activities</b>	<u>1,292</u>	<u>1,712</u>
253	Equipment	0	
0	Training Costs	0	
0	Smokedown Expenses	227 <sup>7</sup>	
1,606	High Wood Expenses	622	
54	Gatehampton Expenses	618 <sup>8</sup>	
760	Ascott Park	0 <sup>9</sup>	
0	Storage Container	0	
0	Cyn Bequest	375 <sup>10</sup>	
0	Equipment Repairs	0	
15	Other	97 <sup>11</sup>	
<u>2,687</u>	<b>Subtotal, Non-core Activities</b>	<u>1,940</u>	
<u>3,900</u>	<b>Total payments in year</b>	<u>3,232</u>	
687	Surplus/loss for year on Core Activities	1,048 <sup>12</sup>	-144
-935	Surplus/loss for year Non-Core Activities	-971 <sup>13</sup>	
-248	Total Surplus/loss for year	77	
<u>10,558</u>	<b>Balance carried forward</b>	<u>10,635</u>	

Monetary Assets		
2019		2020
288	Main Account	550
<u>10,270</u>	Reserve Account	<u>10,086</u>
<u>10,558</u>	<b>Total Cash</b>	<u>10,635</u>
<b>Represented by</b>		
2,327	Unrestricted Fund	3,216
<i>Restricted Funds</i>		
978	P Preece Trio	978
961	Highwood Project	919
320	Ascott park	320
<i>Designated Funds</i>		
395	Gatehampton Project	0 <sup>14</sup>
864	Digitisation Project	864
2,000	Gatehampton Post excavation	2,000
412	Storage Management	412
<u>2,302</u>	Cyn Bequest	<u>1,927</u>
<u>10,558</u>		<u>10,635</u>
<b>Fixed Assets</b> <sup>15</sup>		
<i>Cost</i>		<i>NBV</i>
2,000	Storage Containers	1,024
0	FM18 Gradiometer	512
2,678	TR Resistivity meter	1,381
0	5700 GPS Receiver	1,638
0	Geodimeter CU and 600 CU	1,638
6,288	Geoscan RM15-D Resistivity Meter	346
734	HP NC6320 Laptop	40
505	Toshiba X2000 LCD Projector	28
<u>350</u>	Dumpy Level	<u>19</u>
<u>12,555</u>		<u>6,626</u>

*Notes to the Accounts*

- 1 Gift Aid payments for 2019 and 2020
- 2 Grant from the Association for Roman Archaeology for Highwood
- 3 Highwood and Smokedown - Reduced number of diggers at Highwood due to Covid-19,
- 4 Gatehampton open day proceeds and Smokedown portaloos refund
- 5 Delayed Bulletin from 2019
- 6 No hall hire costs in 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions
- 7 Smokedown is a new project in 2020
- 8 Includes Gatehampton expenses incurred in 2019
- 9 No activity at Ascott Park in 2020
- 10 Contribution to Gatehampton infill and SOAG 50th expenses
- 11 Zoom fees, signage and a subscription refund
- 12 Surplus primarily due to receipt of Gift Aid payments for 2019 and 2020 and the reduction in face to face events because of Covid
- 13 Project expenses exceeded income
- 14 Gatehampton project has now ended
- 15 No new assets purchased in 2020

These accounts were prepared, on a receipts and payments basis, in accordance with guidance from the Charities Commission 'Statement of Recommended Practice' (SORP 2005) by John Hesketh, Honorary Treasurer, January 2021

These accounts have been examined by Sue Fogden against documentation provided. In her opinion these are a true and accurate presentation of the transactions made by the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group in 2020

Signature: 

Date: 4-2-2021

A/C's examined within the constraints of a Zoom meeting. John had provided, in advance, the balance sheet & Spread Sheet for Expenses & Income.

## **SOAG OFFICERS AND ORDINARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

***As they stand at the end of year 2020-2021 & including reference to any special roles***

Hon President	Hazel Williams (Director of the Gatehampton Roman Villa project)
Hon Vice President	Ian Clarke (Director of the Ascott Park project)
Hon Vice President	Mike Vincent
Chairman	Dave Carless
Vice Chairman	Bill Annan (Director of the Goring Heath project)
Hon Secretary	Nigel Peters
Hon Treasurer	John Hesketh
Ordinary Members	Linda Annan (Membership Secretary & Events Organiser)
	Lindsey Bedford
	Mike Green (Editor, <i>SOAG Messenger</i> , SOAG webmaster and SOAG archive digitisation project manager)
	Lois Rock (Equipment and Publications)
	John Scarborough (Geophysics and Director of the Smokedown project)