



# SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP

Founded in 1969

PATRON: Prof. Malcolm Airs  
PRESIDENT: Hazel Williams

## Annual Report & Accounts for 2021

### SOAG 53rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Sonning Common Village Hall, 7:30pm Thursday 28 April 2022

#### Chairman's Report

##### Introduction

2021 has again been affected by Covid restrictions but despite this SOAG has managed to put together a good programme of activities in both our lecture programme (mainly by Zoom) thanks to Linda Annan and fieldwork (when possible and within government guidelines) thanks to our project leaders. Jo Morris and Lois Rock organised a number of interesting and enjoyable archaeological walks. We hope that in 2022 we will be able to restart our programme of visits to other organisations' fieldwork projects.

As ever I am hugely grateful to the elected committee who develop and run these programmes and of course to our "Non-executives": President Hazel Williams and Vice Presidents Ian Clarke and Mike Vincent who provide guidance and support when needed. For the first time since I have been Chairman, I am delighted to say that no committee members have retired this year and all are willing to serve for a further year. Thank you all.

##### Membership and Finance

Our continued development of interesting fieldwork projects has attracted many new members over the year. Linda Annan, our Membership Secretary, has reported a significant increase in membership to 137 at the year end.

John Hesketh, our Hon. Treasurer, reports that again we had a surplus on core activities. Following the sad untimely loss of two much loved SOAG members, Dave Jobling and David Cox, we have in addition received a major legacy and kind donations which have significantly bolstered our non-core funds and enabled us to invest in future activities.

##### Publications and Communications

In 2021 we published seven excellent editions of our internal newsletter, SOAG Messenger, edited and produced by our Hon. Secretary, Nigel Peters.

Due to Covid restrictions and the consequent limits on fieldwork, there was relatively little to report and so no SOAG Bulletin was produced in 2021. However, a 2022 edition, which will catch up on all unreported work, is currently in preparation.

The SOAG website, which is maintained by Mike Green, continues to attract interest in our activities and bring new members. The on-line version of our digital archive of SOAG Bulletin is available to the public and this is now frequently flagged up in Web searches for archaeological sites in our area, raising our profile externally. It is planned to develop the website further to provide enhanced support for our fieldwork projects and other activities.

##### Fieldwork and Research

The **Goring Heath** Study led by Vice Chairman, Bill Annan, provided a welcome desk-top activity during

the long days of lockdown. The Group completed its objective of identifying and recording potential archaeological features on the Chiltern Conservation Board's Beacons of the Past LiDAR portal. The Group has now finished its work, but the project has facilitated the identification of possible sites of interest and contact with local landowners which may result in future opportunities.

The third and final year excavations on the site of the 17th century manor house at **Ascott Park** took place between 16 April and 4 May, 2021. Under Ian Clarke's leadership, the excavations were conducted by a small, experienced team of diggers operating under Government coronavirus restrictions; in light of this, the programme was trimmed to a minimum, selecting only key outstanding issues of specific relevance to the project plan. With good ground conditions and remarkably fine weather throughout, the team made rapid progress under Roelie Reed's excellent direction and all of the five planned trenches reached an advanced and satisfactory state by the end of the session. Some of the answers we hoped for were not forthcoming: notably we did not find any evidence of the supporting structures that must once have existed in the basement and we failed to locate the north wall masonry that was so clearly visible to Brian Dix during his 2009 excavation. But to offset that the line of the north wall, as first proposed by Dix, is now sensibly confirmed and we have a clearer understanding of the basement cut profile. Whilst the project is now into its post-excavation phase, research is ongoing to try to locate the elusive north wall masonry as this remains a key area of field investigation.

The **High Wood** project came to an exciting conclusion in the identification of the site as a Romano-Celtic Temple. What we had expected to be some sort of "barn" turned out to be the walkway ("ambulatory") enclosing a sacred space ("cella"), all set within an enclosure ("temenos"). The discovery is of regional importance and generated much interest in the wider archaeological community. Alan Hall and his team are now immersed in preparing the archive for deposit in the Standlake Museum stores and writing a report for publication. We are nearing the end of what has been a satisfying and enjoyable project in which many members new to excavation developed skills and gained in confidence.

In September 2021 we managed three weeks of fieldwork at our new site at **Smokedown Farm** after a delayed start due the prolonged harvest. More than thirty of our members participated with great enthusiasm - in particular bearing the existence of 40-50 cm of topsoil with great fortitude! We achieved our key objectives of completing the magnetometry of the enclosure area at greater resolution and, on the digging side, of establishing that there is extant Late Iron Age and Romano-British archaeology, albeit disturbed by post-Roman era agricultural activity. All very encouraging and plenty of incentive to carry on with this project. Plans are in full swing for a further four-week fieldwork season in the coming September.

Once again, we provided support to The Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society for a geophysical survey at **Coldharbour Farm**, Crowmarsh Gifford, a project led by Lindsey Bedford.

A number of new projects are underway or in development for 2022 and beyond.

Dave Carless (Chairman) April 2022

## Lecture Programme

- 28 January     **Andy Hood (Foundations Archaeology) online**  
*Beaker settlement and possible Saxon warrior and other burials at Sutton Road, Milton;  
with an update on post-excavation work on the Roman villa at Cholsey*
- 25 February     **Professor Malcolm Airs OBE (University of Oxford) online**  
*Bridges, Bays Windows and Barns: a Dorchester Miscellany*
- 25 March         **Dr Edward Caswell (Oxfordshire Finds Liaison Officer) online**  
*The Portable Antiquities Scheme in Oxfordshire*

- 22 April **SOAG AGM *online*** followed by member talks by **Abigail Lloyd** (the Oxford MSc in Landscape Archaeology), **Lindsey Bedford** (Coldharbour Farm) and **Mike Green** (Geophysics)
- 23 September **Dr Steve Kershaw (Oxford University) *Sonning Common Village Hall***  
*The Ashmolean Museum and its Classical Collections*
- 28 October **Sarah Lambert-Gates (University of Reading) *online***  
*Archaeological Photogrammetry*
- 25 November **SOAG Review of Archaeology (*Sonning Common Village Hall*): Alan Hall** (High Wood), **Bill Annan** (Smokedown), **Roelie Reed** (Ascott Park) and **Dave Carless** (Wyfold Grange), followed by **Christmas Social**

## Events and Visits

Summer walks to look at **archaeology identified by LiDAR in the Goring Heath area** were led by **Lois Rock** on 24 June, 1 July and 10 July

## Treasurer's Report 2021

### Cash reserves:

Our cash reserves significantly increased this year from £10,635 to £21,084 thanks to a cash surplus on Core activities and receipt of a legacy and donations (see below).

### Core activities:

There was a surplus of £1,313 on Receipts and Expenditure for our Core Activities. Subscription income remained strong despite impact of COVID which resulted once again in reduced room/hall hire costs. There were no Bulletin costs this year.

The Core ("Unrestricted") fund balance grew from £3,216 to £4,607.

### Non-Core Activities:

There was a large surplus of £9,136 in Non-Core activities for the year. This was due to the receipt of a significant legacy from David Cox's will and a generous donation from Dave Jobling's work colleagues. The most significant non-project costs were investment in new equipment (see assets). Project costs for Smokedown were more than covered by a £250 donation from Waitrose and digging fees. Costs for Highwood and Ascott were covered by digging fees and from remaining project funds.

### Funds

Two new Restricted funds were created. The David Cox fund was established from a legacy of £10,000 bequeathed by David in his will. This has already been put to good use with the purchase of a new laptop

and projector and the essential repair of our GPS equipment. The Dave Jobling fund was setup using a donation of £850 from Dave's work colleagues in his memory. Both David and Dave are sadly missed.

As a result, the total balance of Restricted funds plus Designated (project) funds increased from £5,342 to £16,478.

**Assets:**

A new laptop and projector were purchased at a total cost of £740.

**Looking forward to 2022:**

Given the continuing uncertainty caused by COVID, we have budgeted for a small reduction in subscription income versus 2021. However, we still expect a modest surplus for our Core Activities.

For Non-Core activities, a draw down from central funds will be needed to cover Highwood post excavation costs (finds deposition at Standlake). Other projects, including the new one at Wyfold Grange, are expected to be self-financing. As usual, funds will be allocated by committee to cover any significant Non-Core costs as appropriate.

John Hesketh  
Honorary Treasurer  
March 2022

**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:** Activities not related to the day-to-day running of the Group. These include project activities and also the purchase and repair of equipment for general use. All projects are expected to be self-financing, and funds for these are identified as Designated Funds (below).

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

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

*(A signed copy is held by the Hon. Treasurer)*

**SOAG OFFICERS AND ORDINARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

***As they stand at the end of year 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 Smokedown project)
Hon Secretary	Nigel Peters
Hon Treasurer	John Hesketh
Ordinary Members	Linda Annan (Membership Secretary & Events Organiser)
	Lindsey Bedford
	Chris Pollard
	Jo Morris
	Lois Rock (Equipment and Bulletin)
	John Scarborough (Geophysics)