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COMMITTEE FOR ARCHAEOLOGY IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1985

During 1985 the Committee for Archaeology in Gloucestershire met five times at roughly regular intervals in different parts of the county. All the meetings were well attended and lively. The Committee continued to pursue its three main aims of providing a forum for the interchange of information between groups and organizations active within the county, acting as a watchdog on impending developments, and encouraging public support for archaeology.

Archaeological activity during the year was as widespread as ever. Several changes in the organization of archaeology in the county took place, among them the final winding-up of the Western Archaeological Trust at the end of the financial year 1984/5. As noted in the 1984 Annual Report of this Committee, arrangements for continuing post-excavation commitments resulting from WAT's work in Gloucestershire have been made. The Crickley Hill Archaeological Trust have taken over WAT's former Manpower Services Commission projects and have not only continued post-excavation work on 1983-4 excavations, but have also undertaken a series of new projects including excavation, survey, and educational work.

Excavation and post-excavation projects in the upper Thames Valley within Gloucestershire continued under the auspices of the Oxford Archaeological Unit. Perhaps the most spectacular find of the year came during the early summer with the unexpected discovery, and subsequent excavation, of an extensive Saxon cemetery at Lechlade. Other work in the Lechlade area included the investigation of the late neolithic cursus and the excavation of several other prehistoric and Roman sites.

Rescue work continued in Gloucester, and in June Mr Malcolm Atkin was appointed as Assistant Director to the Gloucester City Excavation Unit. In the Forest of Dean excavations and fieldwork continued under the auspices of the Dean Heritage Centre and through the Forest of Dean Local History Society. A research excavation was undertaken at Littledean Hall by the Department of Archaeology at Manchester University. East of the Severn research excavations continued at Crickley Hill, Wortley Roman site, Frocester Court, and Ditches, North Cerney. A number of evaluation excavations in connection with applications for Scheduled Monument Consent and planning permission were undertaken, notably in Cirencester, Winchcombe, and Birdlip.

The work of the county Sites and Monuments Record continued and expanded during the year. Alison Alden, who had been the Sites and Monuments Record Officer since the record was established in 1982, left to take up a post at the British Museum in July. At about the same time the County Council re-graded the post as County Archaeological Officer and appointed Ms Jan Wills, formerly with Hereford and Worcester County Council.

Specific topics which engaged the attention of the Committee during the year include:

Annual symposium

The eighth annual symposium was held on Saturday 23 November 1985 in Tewkesbury. The mayor of Tewkesbury Borough, Mr P.J. Pryor, opened the symposium. The morning session was devoted to a review of the archaeology of the Tewkesbury area, while in the afternoon short papers summarizing recent work in the county were presented. Displays included a wide range of finds and publications. About 90 people attended the symposium and a small profit was made on admissions. Much of the local organization was undertaken by Mrs Celia Bennetts, to whom

the Committee is very grateful. Thanks are also extended to Tewkesbury District Council for allowing the Committee to use the Council Offices.

Handbook of Gloucestershire Archaeology

Editorial work on the handbook was completed early in the year and the book was launched at the Annual Symposium in November. A substantial grant towards the cost of publication was received from the Ernest Cook Trust of Fairford, for which the Committee is most grateful. The Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society financed the publication, and special thanks must be given to Mr Leighton, Hon. Treasurer, for his help with the complicated financial arrangements for the publishing of this book.

Relations with other bodies

Close links continued between the Committee and CBA Regional Group XIII. Alison Alden and the Hon. Secretary acted as county representatives and submitted contributions to the Group XIII Newsletter. A short account of the work of the Committee also appeared in the Council for British Archaeology's *Archaeology in Britain 1984*.

The Committee continued its link with the Council for the Gloucestershire Countryside. Although it was not possible to obtain an elected place on their executive committee this year, it has been arranged that the present Hon. Secretary will represent the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society and the CAG together in the former's established place on the Council.

Mobile exhibition

Considerable progress has been made with this project during the year; a text has been produced and picture sources researched. Finance is currently being sought. It is hoped that the exhibition will be ready for the road in 1986. The Committee is very grateful to Stephen Clews for co-ordinating much of the work for this project.

Local plans and local plan amendments

During the year the Winchcombe Town Plan was revived and the CAG made a submission on the archaeological implications.

Gloucester Castle

The Committee took a leading role in protesting against the extensive damage to the remains of Gloucester Castle during building works and the construction of an extension to Gloucester Prison which overlies the castle. In concert with numerous other local and regional archaeological bodies, the MP for Gloucester Mrs Sally Oppenheim-Barnes, and the Council for British Archaeology, strong objections to the work and the failure to properly consider its archaeological implications were voiced. Full responsibility was eventually admitted by the Home Office.

Other matters

During the year a number of planning applications were scrutinized by the Committee and comments returned to the appropriate authorities. Special mention may be made of those relating

to Jefferies' Nursery, Cirencester, Winchcombe Infants' School, Bibury Roman villa, and Condicote Henge, all of which involved archaeologically sensitive areas. Contact was maintained with the various bodies involved with the archaeology of the Esso Pipeline through Gloucestershire.

Membership

At the first meeting of 1985 Bernard Rawes was elected as Chairman for the year and Tim Darvill was elected Hon. Secretary. Elizabeth Bishop was co-opted as a representative from eastern Gloucestershire and also as minuting secretary. The Hon. Secretary wishes to record his thanks to Mrs Bishop for her work on behalf of the Committee during the year.

There were a number of changes in membership during the year, and section 2.1 of the Committee's constitution was amended to take account of recent changes in the structure and organization of archaeology in the county. The principal changes were the removal of the Twyning Archaeological and Historical Society and the Stroud Preservation Trust and the addition of the Wotton-under-Edge Historical Society.

Alison Alden, County Sites and Monuments Record Officer was replaced by Jan Wills the new County Archaeological Officer in September; Stephen Ball and David Miles joined the Committee representing the Campden and District Historical and Archaeological Society and the Oxford Archaeological Unit respectively; Dr Michael Parker-Pearson joined the Committee as an observer from HBMC. Due to pressure of work Mr M. Aston resigned from the Committee.

Finances

Administrative costs for the year 1985 fell back to £45.20; considerably less than in 1984 due to new facilities being available for photocopying. A surplus of £73.31 resulted from the annual symposium. The Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society continued its support for the work of the CAG by meeting administrative costs. For this the Committee is most grateful. The total cash holding as at the end of 1985 was £105.63.

Retrospect and prospect

This will be the last annual report written by the present Hon. Secretary. Over the last six years the Committee has, quite naturally, seen many changes, not just in its size and composition, but also in the scope of its activities and the scale of its work. As the CAG enters its tenth year it is perhaps appropriate to spend a few moments looking back over the achievements of the Committee as recorded in the minute book since its foundation in 1976, and also forward towards its future place in the county.

Gloucestershire is undoubtedly fortunate to have a committee such as the CAG where archaeological issues can be debated in an informed and authoritative way and all the various interests can keep abreast of developments of mutual concern. The cumulative archaeological experience among the members of the CAG is considerable in its breadth and depth of knowledge about the archaeology of the county. It is against this background that the Committee's success in achieving its aims must be viewed.

Since 1976 there appear to be three separate spheres in which the Committee has been particularly successful in furthering its aims.

The first is the CAG's work as a watchdog for local archaeology. Through the Committee the

various archaeological bodies in the county can speak with a united voice on points of mutual interest, be it to national government, local government, or private bodies. The Committee's involvement with structure plans, local plans, and individual planning applications over the years has increased, and this may continue.

The second sphere of activity is the CAG's role as organizer within the county. The success of the Handbook and of the annual symposia in recent years is testimony to the importance of this work.

Thirdly, there is the CAG's place as a forum for debate. A very wide range of archaeological interests exists in the county and the interchange of experience and ideas is certainly stimulating and beneficial to all concerned. In this the equal weight given by the Committee to both amateur and professional involvement is especially important and should be fostered. At a mundane level, knowledge of what is happening elsewhere in the county can be especially valuable to those planning work or events, and it is probably a mark of the CAG's efficiency in this sphere that looking back through the minutes of past meetings there are very few cases of duplication of effort. There is also the point that a basic knowledge of what others are doing in the county allows a more positive, more informed and more united face to be presented to the general public.

All these points reflect the bright side of archaeology in the county. Sadly, the minutes of this Committee over the past few years also record that not everything is as it should be. As a county Gloucestershire still lacks any real focus for archaeological work. Compared with other sectors of the conservation movement, for example the nature conservation trusts, archaeology in general is very fragmented with rather minimal overlap between different levels of interest.

Then there is the question of bad practice. Excavations of an inferior, and sometimes deplorable, quality take place in Gloucestershire from time to time, and it is not enough simply to criticize and lament. The redirection of such inappropriate enthusiasm should perhaps be given further thought.

Finally there is the problem of the public face of archaeology. Much progress has already been made on this score, but it is still not enough. The key here is probably diversity as much as repetition. Ideas about the archaeological heritage do not exist in isolation but rather form part of a wider awareness of the environment and the heritage. All the signs, both nationally and locally, suggest some convergence of interest in the many different facets of the environment. Again, such matters might perhaps be allowed more consideration in future projects by this Committee.

Given the various strengths that the CAG has built up over the past ten years, it is probably well equipped to face the future. A number of new and exciting projects are in prospect, for example the exhibition, the prospect of a newsheet, and the register of ongoing local research. With the involvement and co-operation of all members of the Committee much can, and no doubt will, be achieved for the common good of archaeology in the region.

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