

## INTRODUCTION FROM OUR NEW CHAIR

I feel very excited to have been elected chairman of the SSARG at the AGM on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. The group's reputation has grown steadily over the last few years, due in large part to the efforts of Liz Caldwell, who has stepped down after five years in the chair post. Liz will be a hard act to follow and the AGM recognised the contribution she has made and presented her with some small tokens of the group's appreciation. I am grateful that she has agreed to stay on as vice chair and teach me the ropes, though for my first 'Chair person's bit', I thought I'd better introduce myself.

I still recall the friendly reception I was given when I turned up as a green Bristol undergraduate. Pointed towards Somerset for some 'compulsory' fieldwork, I joined what was then the South Cadbury Environs Project around 2002. I returned every year for what turned out to be several seasons of a first class learning experience (being shown by Richard how to dress a section and then draw it on 3 taped-up offcuts of Permatrace was something one never forgets). One aspect of SSARG that remains particularly appealing is a tradition of welcoming people new to archaeology and I hope that is a tradition we can maintain and develop. For those that don't know me, my interests turned towards landscape archaeology and the development of the medieval village. It was an interest that continued and eventually got me through an MSc in Applied Landscape Archaeology. For reasons I'm still not sure of, post-SCEP, I continued to entertain the prehistoric through an attachment to the field team of the Stonehenge Riverside Project and I now find myself in Wales every summer excavating a Bluestone quarry and trying (with little luck so far) to locate Stonehenge antecedent sites for the 'Stone of Stonehenge' project. My academic endeavours have also followed the fieldwork and I'm currently a part-time DPhil student trying to understand a bit more about the landscape context of early Neolithic Causewayed Enclosures. In my spare time I work as an engineer for Wessex Water.

I know it's not always fashionable, but I do believe that the best of archaeology lies not in the library or the classroom, but out there in the landscape, asking questions of it, doing something, learning something from the doing and then sharing it. To this end please keep an eye out for the SSARG project at Tithe Mead this year. We are going to start what promises to be the most substantial excavation that SSARG has taken on in recent years and there is opportunity for all sorts of input. As well as field work we need people to measure, draw, clean, research the libraries and the county records, write up stuff, digitise, categorise and count stuff. There really is something for everyone that would like to get involved. If you do, please get in touch.

Lastly; just a quick reminder that we have had a significant input into the work at Lufton over the last couple of years with James Gerrard (Newcastle University). James is a very entertaining speaker and spoke about the Lufton project at the SANHS Annual Archaeology Day at Yeovil, on the 28th March. It was an invaluable update on what Newcastle students and SSARG volunteers have been working on for the past few years, under his guidance and leadership.

Best wishes to all,

Dave Durkin

April 2014.