

## THE LAUNCHING OF CDAS

A talk given to members by Keith Lawson, President, in 2011

Alec Down had organised excavations in and around Chichester from the 1960's with a band of volunteers and later he was employed by Chichester District Council as Director of the Chichester District Archaeological Unit. However, there had never been an archaeological society and during the late 1980's there had been occasional discussions among the Archaeological Unit staff about starting one. In 1990 Anne Bone - who was Curator of the Chichester District Museum at the time - decided to start things off.

She formed a Steering Group - mostly members of the Archaeological Unit - and they prepared a draft constitution for the new society. The main aims of the society given in the constitution were - and still are - to promote public interest in archaeology and to encourage the study and preservation of the archaeological heritage of western Sussex.

Early in 1991 they decided to advertise some inaugural talks as a way of judging how much interest there might be and of publicising the launch of the society. At the same time they arranged an open day at the Batten Hanger villa excavation near Hooks Way and there Sue Woodward handed out leaflets and collected details of everyone who was interested in joining.

The first of the inaugural talks was in April 1991 - given by Alec Down - in which he talked about "Excavating Around Chichester". There was a good turnout at the New Park Centre and many of the audience joined the new society that evening. A month later Mark Roberts talked about the Boxgrove excavations which were in progress at the time - to an even bigger audience. By September - only 6 months after the first publicity leaflets were distributed - the Society had 90 members.

At the first AGM in December 1991, the draft constitution was accepted and Anne Bone elected as Chairman. The first committee consisted of (in alphabetical order) Anne Bone, Janet Dummer, Su Fullwood, James Kenny, David Rudkin, Wilf Shannon, Sallie Sloman, Mike Woodford, Sue Woodward, Brian Worsfold and me. Out of the original 11 committee members, 5 are still members of the society and several are here tonight.

By the following March, membership had risen to over 130! There was a full programme of talks and the visits programme was adventurous from the start - in the first year David Rudkin led a party to Stonehenge and in the second year they visited the Isle of Wight - led by David Tomalin, who was the IoW Archaeologist- and Dorset, led by David Rudkin again. In the third year they had a visit to Bath, a walk to Bow Hill led by James Kenny - and a weekend visit to Caen and Bayeux! Incidentally, that journey to Bath was memorable as we had a coach driver who had never been to Bath, had no map (or Satnav in those days) and did not know that the main A36 to Bath had been closed for some time due to the rebuilding of a bridge en route. Fortunately members had brought maps with them and were able to guide him!

The Chichester and District Archaeology Society had definitely been launched and 20 years later still continues on her successful voyage.

KEITH LAWSON