



BERKSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Patron: H.M. THE QUEEN

President: Professor Michael Fulford FBA FSA

Visits and walks

The walks that took place in summer 2008 are described below. Work on the summer 2009 walks will not start until February/march. If you have a favourite archaeological walk members of the Society would enjoy please send us details.

Theale Village 4th June 2008

On Wednesday 4th June, 16 people assembled in the car park of the Lamb Inn in Church Street with Roy Townsend, who then led us on our walk. Starting at the north of the town we viewed large council houses built between the wars. Next we visited the Church built in 1820-32 in the style of Salisbury Cathedral and the adjacent rectory a stone classical building built in 1830. The perambulation down the High Street visited a variety of shops, inns and houses many dating from the Georgian and Victorian eras, with the occasional house dating from Tudor and earlier times. The weather was warm and at the end we all thoroughly enjoyed a pint in the Lamb. The group thanked Roy Townsend for leading an informative and enjoyable evening.

Andrew Hutt

Caesar's Camp, Easthampstead 18th June 2008

A group of 15 assembled at the Lookout and were led through the woods to the south gate of the Iron Age hillfort at Caesar's Camp by Andrew Hutt. We paused here to examine the ramparts and then Andrew led us through the interior, past the site of the excavations in 1995 which produced pottery dating from the Early and Middle Iron Age and then along the western ramparts. This hillfort is contoured by a long sinuous dump rampart. Bracknell Forest Council has protected this by putting logs in the ditch to deter cyclists and skate boarders. Andrew explained how in the Middle Iron Age, Caesar's Camp lay at the centre of a number of settlements which specialised in various forms of production, for example: iron smelting and working at South Farm, Lightwater; pottery making and iron working at Whitehall Brick and Tile Works, Arborfield; keeping sheep and textile manufacture at Park Farm, Binfield; and cereal production in Fairclough Farm, Bracknell. At the northern end of the site we walked down to the north gate entrance way where we overlooked the line of a later hollow way, probably created in the 18th century when the site was used to train troops. The evening concluded with a walk back to the Lookout in a light drizzle.

Julie Worsfold with thanks to Andrew Hutt

The Lower Pang Valley 16th July 2008

The group met in front of the village hall in Pangbourne for this walk led by Andrew Hutt, based on Dick Greenaway's book, "Around the valley of the Pang". We walked through the village and out into the fields by the Pang. In the 12th century, the land between Pangbourne and Tidmarsh was swamp belonging to Reading Abbey. The Abbey drained it by digging ditches and it is now a large common meadow area. Halfway down this are Pill Boxes, remains

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of a Second World War stop line between the Kennet and Pang rivers. Eventually we came out onto the main road in Tidmarsh by the toll house. This is the only part of the planned toll road from Basingstoke to Dorchester ever constructed. We passed 16th century Greyhound public house and then Tidmarsh Mill where Lytton Strachey of the Bloomsbury Group lived in 1920. Returning to Pangbourne we passed more Pill Boxes before climbing a hill into some managed coppiced woodland. From this point we observed terracing, the remnants of a medieval field system. In the wood we found pit features, evidence of quarrying for lime. The evening concluded with a pint in one of the hostelrys in Pangbourne.

Julie Worsfold

Visit to the Silchester excavations on 19th July 2008

Amanda Clarke, Director of the Field School of The University of Reading, gave a guided tour of the excavations on Insula IX to a combined group from the BAS and BARG on 19 July 2008.

After 11 seasons of digging on the 'Town Life Project' the excavation is revealing structures from AD 40 – 80. Some of the features, however, are distinctly Iron Age, such as the well found under the East-West Roman road.



The Silchester excavation in July 2008 showing metal working hearths [AD 40-70] in the foreground. Photo by Andrew Hutt.

The South East corner of the insula contains a collection of mid-first century workshops constructed of timber with wall plaster applied to their interior walls. The multi-coloured hearths of furnaces indicate that iron and copper alloy were being used to make implements and jewellery. Some of the six copper alloy brooches found this year may well have been moulded here.

This year, the junction of the N/S and the E/W roads is being examined. The substrates of each road are in marked contrast to each other. The packed gravel of the N/S road is more than 1.5m thick, testimony to the maintenance that its surface received over a period of 230 years. The E/W road was not as important as the road between the North and South gates, since the substrate is much thinner. When this road was constructed an Iron Age roundhouse in its path

was demolished, and under the roundhouse, a large well is now revealed, which is yielding Iron Age pottery.

At Silchester there appears to have been an Iron Age road network that first appeared in Mike Fulford's excavation of the basilica area. It has now appeared in Insula IX suggesting a rectangular grid, since it has a 90 degree turn just within the western boundary of the dig. In the South West corner the road was lined with a series of rubbish pits on its southern side. Amongst the artefacts emerging from the pits is a baby's skeleton which had been deposited completely in a large ceramic pot. This is not thought to be a ritual act, but more of an undignified burial.

Small finds have been fewer this year, but they form the evidence for the social life of the community. A copper coin of Cunobelin, king of the Catuvellauni [from north of the Thames] has been dated to AD 20. It is a reminder that the people from north of the Thames had invaded the Atrebatian kingdom which was the cause of king Verica's appeal to Claudius to invade Britain. An elaborately designed catch for closing a box and a finger ring with a small key represented the 'bling' jewellery of the first century. Finally, a socketed iron spear head is heading towards the X-ray machine enabling it to be properly investigated.

The last three objects are indicative of a social elite living in Silchester in the mid-first century AD.

Trevor Coombs