



ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Spring 2012

Vol.14, No.1

DAY SCHOOL REMINDER !

This year the Society's annual day school will be held on Saturday 3 March at St Nicolas Hall, West Mills, Newbury RG14 5HG, from 10.00 am to 4.45 pm. The cost is £10, payable at the door (no concessions).

Talks will include the latest update from Silchester and round-ups of recent archaeological work in Berkshire, from prehistoric sites to 20th century war memorials. Please refer to the previous newsletter for a programme synopsis.

SOCIETY MEETINGS

The Chairman would very much like to hear from anyone who can recommend a speaker for the Society's lecture programme for Autumn 2012 and Spring 2013. If you can help, please send the speaker's contact details (email address if possible) and an indication of the probable subject matter to Trevor Coombs at t.coombs1@btopenworld.com. Thank you.

Recent Saturday afternoon talks at RISC have been very well attended, and it is most encouraging for our speakers to have a good-sized audience. Please keep it up! Still to come this Spring are:

18 February: Neolithic violence in Western Europe (Dr Rick Schulting)

17 March: Connecting and disconnecting in the Bronze Age – tales from the Thames Valley (Dr David Yates)

14 April: Radcot and Faringdon – defence, lordship and economy in the Upper Thames from 1050-1200 (Professor John Blair)

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions to the Society will become due in April 2012. As notified in the Winter Newsletter, subscriptions for individual members rise to £12, for families to £18 and for corporate members to £18. A renewal form is enclosed.

May I remind those of you who pay by Standing Order to check that the amount payable has been updated and the date of payment changed to April 10th each year. A number of Standing Order payments have already been received in January and I will be contacting those members individually in due course.

If you pay annually by cheque, please return the renewal form to Catherine Petts as normal.

Thank you for your co-operation. (Anne Harrison - Membership Secretary)

Berkshire Archaeological Journal volume 80

Volume 80 of the **Berkshire Archaeological Journal** has now been published. At the meeting on Saturday 21 January 2012, around 30 members received their copies. We are looking forward to giving copies to more members at the February meeting. After that copies will be delivered to members either by hand or in the post.

The Society would like to thank Andrew Hutt and Catherine Petts for editing this journal and making it available and Anne Harrison, Janet Sharpe and Julie Worsfold for proof-reading the papers.

Archaeological Walks 2012

We are planning another series of walks in 2012. To date we have: **Thursday 21 June: Visit to Eagle House.** Eagle House is the prep school for Wellington College. Meet at 7.00 pm at the school (the post code is GU47 8PH) for a tour of the grounds, a visit to the 'Tudor House' (see www.tudorhouse.org) and a talk about the history of the house. There will be a small charge of £3. Names, please, to Anne Harrison.

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Reports of Recent BAS Meetings

19 November: From Wallongong to Wallonia via Westdown: the archaeology of the First World War. **Richard Osgood** (Historic Environment Team, Defence Estates) talked about his archaeological investigations of WWI battle sites in Belgium. In particular, he had worked at the site of Messines where an Australian regiment from Wallongong (near Sydney) had seen action following intensive training in Wiltshire. The Australian 3rd Division, under the command of Sir John Monash, trained at the Bustard site on Salisbury Plain. Photographs of training in progress were shown, and a map of the Australian trenches on Salisbury Plain, which replicated a real set of trenches in northern France, is still in existence. These trenches were backfilled post-1928 and aerial photographs were taken by O.G.S. Crawford. The trenches were relocated by geophysics and some were excavated with an assortment of finds: 1916-17 Lee Enfield cartridges, telephone wiring, Camp coffee and Bovril bottles, and also 'Anzora' bottles that had contained an antipodean variety of scented hair tonic that was presumably used by the men on their evenings off!

The training site also included mine craters, created using 5000 lb of gun cotton. In contrast, 40,000 lb of gun cotton was used in the mines near Messines when the men reached the Front. Some of the craters survive today. Twenty-one mines were laid and 19 went off; one was detonated during an electrical storm after the war and killed a cow; the last one has not yet been accounted for. Geophysics showed up the position of the trenches clearly as they had been lined with corrugated iron.

Forensic archaeology was employed in an attempt to identify the human remains that were found. In one case, fragments of corduroy and uniform shoulder tags identified the skeleton as that of an Australian and his tooth enamel isotopes showed that he came from the Hunter Valley in the Sydney basin. His backpack contained the remains of a spiked German helmet collected as a souvenir, and clippings on his collar showed that he had recently had his hair cut – and that he suffered from lice. A profiling exercise that involved two years trawling through online records and culminated in a DNA sample from the man's 97-year-old niece eventually identified him and he was finally laid to rest with honours in 2010. (**Janet Sharpe**)

10 December: Foreigners in Roman towns: recent isotope analysis of Romano-British skeletons. **Hella Eckardt** (University of Reading) gave an excellent summary of her work on immigrants who came to Britain in the Roman period and were buried here. She described several sources of evidence, firstly some of the 2000 inscriptions found in Britain, and secondly from isotopic analyses of teeth and bones. A good example of tombstone evidence was that of Regina, a Catuvellaunian freed-woman who had married a Roman army officer called Barates from Palmyra, in the Roman province of Syria.

The main diagnostic tools used with skeletal material determine the oxygen (^{16}O and ^{18}O) and strontium (^{86}Sr and ^{87}Sr) isotope ratios. The oxygen isotope ratio varies by latitude, and it can indicate if a person had come from a warmer climate

than that of Britain. In teeth it provides a signature of where the person lived as a child, and in bone where the person had spent at least ten years of their life. High ratios of ^{16}O to ^{18}O will show that the individual was brought up (or stayed) in a warm climate, such as the Mediterranean. To chart an immigrant's origins more accurately strontium isotope ratios, which provide a fingerprint for different rock types, are determined. Strontium enters human bone via food and drinking water. If the geological source can be determined, so can the geographical origin of that person. When the results of isotope analysis are plotted on a graph, immigrants appear as 'outliers' separated from the cluster representing local people.

Hella determined the percentage of 'locals', 'British non-locals' and 'immigrants' from four different Romano-British sites: York (59, 19 and 22%, respectively), Catterick (46, 42 and 12%), Gloucester (48, 19 and 33%), and Winchester (52, 14 and 34%). These figures demonstrate the extent of mixed races in Roman Britain. Sometimes grave goods can sharpen the focus on an immigrant's origin. In York ceramic braziers associated with African cooking have been found in graves. Also in York, 'The lady with the ivory bangles' had Christian ornaments although her craniometric measurements indicated that she came from sub-Saharan Africa. Eighty decapitated males found in a mass grave in York were subjected to isotopic examination and were found to have come from all parts of the Roman empire. In Winchester, among 16 graves dated to AD 350-410, one girl had bracelets on her left arm indicating that she was an immigrant (British skeletons had their jewellery placed at their feet). Further work on her bones revealed that she had come from Pannonia, a Roman province bounded on the north and east by the river Danube (modern Hungary and Croatia). This raises the issue of how much of a person's childhood culture was retained after they immigrated to Britain. (**Trevor Coombs**)

21 January: Rome's Egyptian Frontier. **Anna Boozer** (University of Reading) emphasised the disparity between written sources and archaeology regarding Egypt's Western Desert in the Roman empire in her talk, which considered two aspects: documentary sources describing the Roman conception of Egypt's oasis region; and archaeological research in the Dakhia Oasis with special reference to fortresses and the city of Amheida (ancient Trimithis) where Anna has been excavating since 2004.

The Romans considered that the people living in the desert oases fell into three groups. The Oasites or sedentary people differed culturally from people living elsewhere in Egypt and in the rest of the Roman empire. Secondly, although nomadic people comprise a large number of different groups, the Romans considered them as a single group and introduced some semi-mythical concepts. (Pliny the Elder referred to them as Blemmyes who had no heads but mouths and eyes on their chests.) The third group comprised exiles including bandits (oases were on trade routes) and early Christians and political exiles, e.g. Nestorius c. AD 386-451. Unapproved Christian sects, Christian 'mystics' who sat on poles and hermits who lived in caves all found sanctuary in the desert, which was generally recognised in the Roman world as 'weird space'.

There are several surviving Roman fortresses in the desert – these appear to have been built ‘on the cheap’ for visual effect as the mud brick walls are too thin to resist a serious attack. This suggests that this was not an area of constant warfare but rather of trading posts and the forts were probably multifunctional control points, customs offices, etc., rather than defensive sites. The Dakhia oasis is five days journey by camel from the Nile Valley. Archaeological mapping of Trimithis has revealed a city-sized settlement. A large town house with a domed chamber and wall paintings with classical motifs was shown by texts on the wall to have been the home of a city councillor. Another house on the north-east edge of the city had rooms arranged around an open courtyard in

typical Roman fashion. This house had no wall paintings but its occupants were literate as shown by inscriptions in Greek on ostraca; some of the beads found showed links with Libya and others demonstrated elaborate glass-working techniques from Alexandria. Tomb paintings in the elite burial ground, which had pyramid-shaped tombs built of mud brick, show Egyptian influence rather than Roman. Mummified bodies bear Egyptian names but are represented in a Roman way.

The Romans wanted to paint the Western Desert as a buffer zone between chaos and desert and the order of the Roman world, but this region was not as uncivilised as documentary sources would seem to have us believe. (**Janet Sharpe**)

Forthcoming Events in West Berkshire

South East Region Industrial Archaeology Conference (SERIAC)

This year’s conference is hosted by the Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group (BIAG) and will be held at St Bartholomew’s School, Buckingham Road, Newbury RG14 6JP, on Saturday 28 April, from 9.00 am (registration) for a programme starting at 10.00.

Topics will include local company archives, 20th century military sites in West Berkshire, the steam mechanisation of agriculture, Mapledurham watermill and the Crofton beam engines. A choice of site visits is offered at 5.00 pm: Greenham Common, Ridgeway Military and Aviation Research Group Museum, historic Newbury, and the restored Crux Easton wind engine. The cost is £11 for advance bookings by 24 April (a hot meal is available at an extra charge); thereafter and at the door the cost will be £12. The conference is open to all. For further details and a booking form, please see <http://www.biag.org.uk/programme/seriac2012.html>.

Not just digging up the past – but using it too!

You are invited to join the West Berkshire Museum and Archaeological Service staff and volunteers for an afternoon of discussion and planning concerning the archaeological archives of the unitary authority of West Berkshire. This will take place at Shaw House, near Newbury, on Wednesday 2 May from 12.30 to 4.30 pm.

Duncan Brown, Head of Archaeological Archives at English Heritage, will be speaking on the issues facing other institutions, and will set the scene for discussions relating to concerns at a local level.

Outcomes for the day will include decisions on:

- Use and access – who wants to use the material and how can we encourage that?
- Selection and retention – what should be kept and how much of it?
- Community engagement – how can we make the material more relevant to the community?

There will also be the opportunity to raise questions regarding the current procedures and standards in depositing archives with West Berkshire Museum.

There is no charge for this event, and a free sandwich lunch and refreshments will be provided, but booking is required. To find out more information, please contact Jennifer Allison, Project Officer – Collections, by emailing jallison@westberks.gov.uk or phoning 01635 519562.

The Romans in Berkshire Project

This project has been working to reinterpret Roman remains in and around Berkshire and is beginning to produce some interesting results. Recent work assessed the levels of Romanisation found on well-excavated villa sites.

Evidence of Romanisation was based on architectural features, such as buildings with rectangular plans, walls with painted plaster, buildings with separate rooms and corridors, and rooms with mosaics and hypocausts. Reviewing the evidence shows that the take-up of such features followed what we now think of as a classic innovation curve, with sites developed in the Late Iron Age/Early Roman period (20 BC through AD 43 to the late 1st century) having lots of features; and those developed during the Late Roman period (mid 3rd to 5th^h century) having a number of very specific types of feature, such as shrines. (**Andrew Hutt**)

The copy date for the next newsletter is Friday 4 May

Other Society Meetings

Berkshire Archaeological Research Group (BARG)

Thursday 15 March: The BARG Spring Quarterly Open Meeting will be held in the de Vitre Room, The Cornerstone, Norreys Avenue, Wokingham RG40 1UE, from 7.30-9.30 pm. Dr Louise Loe from Oxford Archaeology will talk on 'Uncovering the fallen: the excavation and analysis of WWI mass graves, Fromelles, France'. This will include the amazing detective work they have carried out to identify some of the soldiers. After the break Ann Griffin and Andrew Hutt will talk about their work on the geophysical survey at Fiennes Farm, Littlewick Green. Parking is available in the car park opposite The Cornerstone or alongside the graveyard. Visitors are warmly welcomed: the charge is £2. For more details please contact Janet Firth (firth@doctors.org.uk or tel: 0118 978 7434).

Saturday 21 April: A 'Timber-framed building workshop' with Trevor Ottlewski will be held at The Bailiff's Cottage, Barkham Road, Barkham, Wokingham RG41 4TG, from 10.00 am to about 4.00 pm. There will be two lectures in the morning, followed by an afternoon walking tour of buildings in Wokingham to demonstrate some of the styles discussed. There is room for 12 participants and the cost of £100 will be divided between attendees: **at the time of writing there are just three places left.** If you are interested, please contact Janet Firth (details above), saying if you would like to have lunch at The Bull at Barkham.

Marlow Archaeological Society (MAS)

Meetings are held in the Garden Room, Liston Hall, Marlow, starting at 8.00 pm. Entrance is £3.50 (£2.50 members). For further details, please contact Joy Blake (joyblake@btinternet.com or tel: 01628 523896) or the MAS website at <http://www.marlow-archaeology.org/>.

Thursday 29 March: The East Oxford Archaeology Project will be described by Jane Harrison (Project Officer). This successful community project has included the excavation of Oxford's leper hospital and chapel dating from the 12th century, Civil War discoveries and a 19th century farm. The talk will illustrate how members of the public can be drawn into various aspects of archaeology, sometimes with amazing results.

Thursday 19 April: The Medieval City monasteries – from their foundation to their Dissolution. Val Pretlove (City of London Guide) will trace the history of the medieval monasteries around the edge of the City of London and explore what happened to them through the later Tudor period.

Adult Education

WEA Reading Branch

Enquiries to: WEAreading@googlemail.com or tel: 0118 946 4137, website: <http://southern.wea.org.uk> and select branch required.

New courses include:

Victorian country houses of Berkshire (tutor Margaret Simons, five meetings on Monday afternoons from 23 April)

Ancient art: from Sumer to Ninevah and Babylon (tutor Sandra Smith, five meetings on Tuesday mornings from 24 April)

Reading town walks (tutor Richard Wilson, five walks on Tuesday afternoons from 24 April)

Ancient Egypt: the formative years (tutor John Billman, seven meetings on Wednesday afternoons from 25 April)

An introduction to Medieval art (tutor Dalila Castelijm, seven meetings on Wednesday mornings from 2 May)

Oxford University Continuing Education

Enquiries to: ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk or tel: 01865 270380/270368, website: www.conted.ox.ac.uk.

Weekend courses at Rewley House include:

Medieval and later ceramics (Saturday 10 to Sunday 11 March)

Henges – a late Neolithic conundrum (Friday 23 to Sunday 25 March)

Palaeolithic populations: coping with the environmental challenges of the Pleistocene (Saturday 31 March to Sunday 1 April)

BERKSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Patron: H.M. THE QUEEN
President: Professor
Michael Fulford CBE FBA FSA

The Society was founded in 1871 and for over 100 years has encouraged and supported archaeological activities in Berkshire.

Everybody with an interest in archaeology is welcome to attend our meetings and join the Society. It does not matter whether your interest in archaeology is new found or long standing, the Society offers activities from regular lectures and outings to post-excavation research.

All members receive a regular newsletter, full of news about events in Berkshire. The Berkshire Archaeological Journal is also free to members.

Officers of the Society:

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BERKSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Patron: H.M. THE QUEEN

President: Professor Michael Fulford CBE FBA FSA

RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP April 2012-March 2013

I/We* wish to renew my/our* membership of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Name

Address

.....

.....

Post CodeTelephone number

* delete as applicable

Paying your subscription

Please make cheques payable to 'The Berkshire Archaeological Society'

Subscription rates Single £12.00

Family £18.00 (at same address)

Corporate £18.00

I/We* have already paid by standing order but would like to change my/our* address details (above)

Receiving information by email

I/We* would like to receive information circulated by the Society by email – please tick one of the boxes

I/We* would like to receive the Society's newsletter by email – please tick one of the boxes

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

My/Our* email address is:

All the information supplied by you will be held on a computer and will only be used for the Society's business. Information about members will not be passed to any person or organisation outside the Society.

Signed

Date

Return this form with your subscription to:

Mrs C. Petts, 71 The Causeway, Steventon, Abingdon, Oxon, OX13 6SQ