

ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Summer 2012

Vol.14, No.2

Summer Walks and Visits

Eagle House Visit: Thursday 21 June

Meet at 7.00 pm at Eagle House, the prep school for Wellington College (post code GU47 8PH), for a tour of the grounds, a visit to the very interesting 'Tudor House' (www.tudorhouse.org), a talk about the history of the house and, perhaps, cookies to finish. The leader will be Doug Buchanan, the former head teacher at the school. Numbers are limited so please book a place with Anne Harrison at anne@jaharrison.me.uk or tel. 0118 978 5520. There will be a small charge of £3.

Knowl Hill Walk: Wednesday 4 July

Meet at 7.00 pm in the Seven Stars lay-by at Knowl Hill on the A4. We will walk over Knowl Hill Common, through the lanes past Lovetts, Frogmore and Ffiennes Farms, to end with a drink at The Cricketers on Littlewick Green. En route we will pass the sites of past, present and future geophysical investigations by BAS members. Walking shoes are recommended and return by car to the lay-by will be arranged. No booking is required but please contact Ann Griffin for more details at griffinshiresteps@hotmail.com

Warfield Historic Walk: Thursday 19 July

Meet at 7.00 pm at Larks Hill car park (opposite Quelm Park), Harvest Ride, Bracknell. Warfield has an ancient but little known history, starting with Iron Age farmsteads. The walk will explore many facets of its past, including a former priory, a gibbet and a brick works, and will be led by Hugh Fitzwilliams. Numbers are limited so please book a place by contacting Andrew Hutt by phone or email (see back page for details).

Silchester: Saturday 28 July

Meet at 2.00 pm at the entrance gate for an update on the work in progress at this major Iron Age and Roman town site. Please book a place with Trevor Coombs at t.coombs1@bopenworld.com and indicate if you can offer a lift to others or would like to request a lift, stating the names of the people concerned and your postcode.

Spring Tour 2013

The next Spring Tour will be to North-West England on 10-13 May 2013 visiting Sawley Abbey, Chester town centre and Roman amphitheatre, Stafford Castle, two museums (including the Staffordshire Hoard), the Fred Dibnah Heritage Centre, two historic houses and a journey on the East Lancs Heritage Railway! **Please see the enclosed leaflet for full details and an application form.**

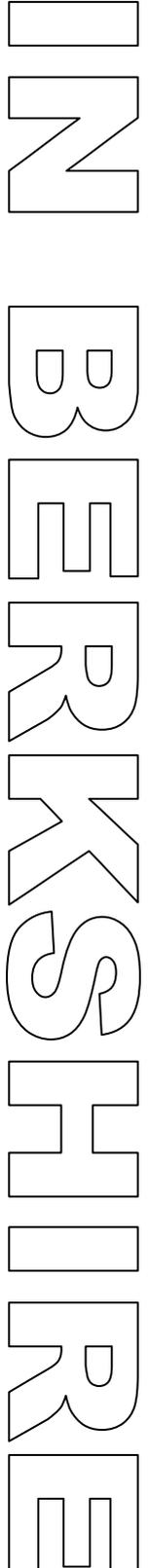
Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Society will take place on Saturday 15 September 2012 at RISC, 35-39 London Road, Reading. Refreshments will be served from 2.00 pm for a 2.30 pm start. The AGM will be followed by a talk on *Religion and the Egyptian afterlife* by Beth Asbury.

Please find enclosed a form for nominations for Council. Completed forms with proposers and seconders (and the approval of the nominee) must be received by the Secretary, Andrew Hutt, by email (andrew_hutt@talktalk.net) or by post (19 Challenor Close, Wokingham RG40 4UJ) by **1 September 2012**.

CBA Festival of British Archaeology 2012

This annual country-wide festival of archaeological and heritage-themed events will take place from **14-29 July**. Events include talks, guided walks, excavation visits, exhibitions, open days, family activities and much more, locally taking place at Silchester, Oxford, Wallingford, Danebury, Lambourn Seven Barrows, Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology (University of Reading), and Dorchester-on-Thames. Consult the website for details: www.archaeologyfestival.org.uk.



Berkshire Archaeology HER Audit

Berkshire Archaeology manages the Historic Environment Record (HER), a database of known sites, finds, buildings, designations and archaeological investigations within the five Unitary Authorities in the east of Berkshire (Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell, Slough and Windsor, and Maidenhead). Over the past number of years we have been working to enhance and develop the HER and it now contains over 6400 monument and findspot records; 1630 archaeological investigations; 2621 designation records (listed buildings, scheduled monuments and registered parks or gardens) and over 8600 finds records.

English Heritage encourages the audit of all HERs on a regular basis in order to work towards achieving and maintaining national standards. So we are pleased to have successfully received funding to begin undertaking an audit of

the Berkshire Archaeology HER this summer, with an anticipated completion date later in the year.

The objective of the audit is to provide both Berkshire Archaeology and English Heritage with an accurate picture of the HER and will include a review of both its management and resources. The results of the audit will then be used to assist us in compiling a detailed action plan and strategy for the development and improvement of the HER over the next few years.

The Berkshire Archaeology HER monument records can be viewed on-line via the Heritage Gateway website at <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>. (**Teresa Hocking, HER Officer**)

Archaeology in Berkshire

This year's annual Day School was held in St Nicolas Hall, Newbury, on 3 March when members and friends gathered to hear ten speakers present summaries of archaeological and historical research conducted in Berkshire over the previous 12 months. Duncan Coe (West Berkshire Archaeology Service) started proceedings with a round-up of **Archaeology in West Berkshire**, briefly describing work at nine sites ranging in date from Bronze Age (possibly) to World War II, and producing updates on the Portable Antiquities Scheme, Historic Environment Records (HERs), the Draft National Planning Policy Framework and other recent developments.

Prehistory and early history at AWE, Burghfield: recent finds were described by Andrew Holmes (Atkins Heritage). A Middle Bronze Age field system was reused and extended during the Roman period, and in turn some of the Roman ditches were reused during the 11-12th centuries, as evidenced by the finding of 'Newbury B ware' including a face jug. After coffee, an update on the on-going **Silchester: the Town Life Project** was presented by Prof. Michael Fulford (University of Reading). Highlights of the 2011 season were the further exploration of the pre-Roman street grid and other aspects of Iron Age Calleva, which appears to have been founded by partly Romanised Gauls before 20 BC. Traces of a possible Claudian military occupation were also found. The theme was continued with **Three Iron Age sites in Berkshire contrasted** by Steve Ford (TVAS), who described findings at Grazeley Road in South Reading, Bisham and Horton to demonstrate the complexity of, and some of the differences between, pastoral and arable Iron Age sites. **The destruction of Dyke Hills** by Chris Welch (English Heritage) looked at the history of the double-banked earthwork which defined the north boundary of the Iron Age oppidum at Dorchester-on-Thames, which was otherwise encircled by the rivers Thames and Thame. In the 1870s the partial destruction of the banks by a local farmer led to outrage in the archaeological community and eventually to the passing of the Ancient Monuments Act in 1913. The original

destruction and more recent damage to Dyke Hills suggest the banks were used as a late Roman burial ground with some interesting finds of Germanic brooches and some military equipment.

After lunch, Phil Wood (Newbury District field Club) spoke about **Researching names on West Berkshire's war memorials**. The results have been posted online on the West Berkshire War Memorials website and the aim is to produce a brief written history of each individual whose name has been listed. Some case studies were described. **Medieval Reading at St Mary's Butts** was presented by Diana King (Foundations Archaeology) who described some very recent work near St Mary's church, which revealed further evidence for a medieval cemetery. Robert Hedge (Foundations Archaeology) followed with **Slough's hidden heritage: a medieval moated manor at Wexham Court**, the subsequent history of which was reconstructed using old maps. Slough was once famous for its apple orchards! We returned to prehistory after tea when Alistair Barclay (Wessex Archaeology) talked about **New discoveries at Horton**. An on-going programme of excavation at Kingsmead Quarry spans the entire range from late glacial to post-medieval, including barrows, Middle Bronze Age field systems and a Roman farmstead. The excavation of a Neolithic oval barrow was completed, with the discovery of antler picks and an almost complete Mortlake ware bowl, and the footprint of a second Neolithic house was found in the area. Finally, **Recent archaeological discoveries in East Berkshire** were presented by Mary Neale (Berkshire Archaeology) and included field systems and the metalled surface of the 'Roman road from Silchester to Henley' at Great Lea Common, Shinfield, more Iron Age and Roman features (including a non-metalled road) at Park Place southwest of Reading, medieval Caversham, and the Victorian railway station in Reading. Thanks were due to all the speakers and to Trevor Coombs and his team of helpers for organising another successful BAS Day School. (**Janet Sharpe**)

Recent BAS Lecture Meetings

Knocked about the head: Neolithic violence in Western Europe

The talk on 18 February was given by Rick Schulting (School of Archaeology, University of Oxford) who overturned our preconceptions of the Neolithic as a relatively tranquil period. At Hambledon Hill c.3600 BC there is evidence for a palisade behind a series of banks and ditches and a body in the ditch with a leaf-shaped arrowhead in its ribcage; at Crickley Hill causewayed enclosure around 400 arrowheads dated to c.3450 BC were concentrated around the breaks in the bank. The Neolithic wooden bow from Meare has been reconstructed and shown to have had the strength of a medieval longbow, and although no arrowheads have been found in animal bone, several are known in human bone. Most trauma, however, is evidenced by skulls, some of which show three or four healed injuries. Ethnographic parallels were drawn to suggest that these injuries may have been the outcome of ritual warfare – but domestic violence, cattle raiding, feuding and open warfare are other possible causes. It has been estimated that about 2% of people in the Neolithic died from cranial trauma; in modern Britain only 0.03% of the population suffers violent death. (JS)

Connecting and disconnecting in the Bronze Age: tales from the Thames Valley

On 17 March, David Yates (University of Reading) overturned another preconception, that the British Bronze Age was marked by barrows and little else. Modern excavation methods and geophysics have now revealed enormous coaxial (= linear) field systems marching across the landscape. Some thousands of miles of straight ditches have now been recorded, associated with drove roads and rectangular fields. Concentrations of these field systems are found south of a line from the Severn to the Wash; in Berkshire they are known at Datchett and Horton, and also at Heathrow. Environmental evidence suggests mixed farming on a grand scale. This is

coupled with evidence for feasting and ‘ringworks’ or circular enclosures around dwellings or groups of dwellings. A re-assessment of Bronze Age metalwork has shown that its distribution closely mirrors drainage patterns. Elite weaponry appears to be associated just with the River Thames and its tributaries, showing a remarkable appreciation of geography. Rivers were probably recognised as networks of communication and isotope studies have shown that some people travelled great distances in the Bronze Age. (JS)

Radcot and Faringdon: defence, lordship and the economy in the Upper Thames region

Prof. John Blair’s talk on 14 April described the rediscovery of Radcot Castle by Time Team and the documentary history of this strategically important source of manorial power during the years 1050-1200. Aelfsige of Faringdon did well out of the Norman Conquest. He became a local ‘entrepreneur’ and owned six manors spread across Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Gloucestershire. To improve communications he built a new road linking Faringdon with Burford, creating a new crossing of the Thames at Radcot and a widespread road system north of the Thames. Radcot Bridge was built in the 13th century and probably marks the line of an earlier causeway that was built by Aelfsige. This causeway continued north across the later castle site; sections of it are very straight and there are signs of deliberate engineering – a raised bank on gravel and a caisson-type bridge consisting of wooden boxes filled with stones and with the road constructed over the top. Aelfsige’s successor was Hugh de Buckland who built a planned settlement and a new manor and defensive keep at Radcot, and the road was diverted around them. The keep was destroyed in the 13th century and the castle then extended to form a comfortable manor house; the settlement disappeared after the Black Death. Civil War fortifications were built over the top of the castle. (JS)

The copy date for the next newsletter is Friday 3 August

Short articles, news of forthcoming events and other items of interest to members are warmly invited: please send all contributions to the Editor (see contact details on back page)

The Berkshire Archaeology Research Library

With reference to the paper entitled ‘Creating the Berkshire Archaeology Research Library’ published in the latest *Berkshire Archaeological Journal* (Volume 80, pages 169-174), please note that in the Introduction it is stated erroneously that Janet and Richard Firth were the Society’s Librarians from 1996 for a period of ten years. They were in fact Librarians for only five years from 2001. Before this, much valuable work listing the contents of the Library had been carried out by Dr Cecil and Mrs Margaret Slade. This was followed by the appointment of Mrs Jan Thomas as Librarian, who was instrumental in dividing the books and periodicals between the Berkshire Record Office and the School of Continuing Education. She also raised a great deal

of money for the Society by selling surplus copies of the Journal.

The ‘series of notes, photographs, maps and other material relating to Reading’ found among ‘the stranger items’ in the Library (see page 173) had been named by one of us (JF) ‘The James Gafford Collection’. This was a very interesting collection, including hundreds of old photographs of Reading, which James (the Treasurer of the Society for about 40 years) had cut from newspapers over a long time. We were delighted to learn that his collection has been donated to the Local Studies section of Reading Library. (Janet and Richard Firth)

The Berkshire Historic Environment Forum 2012

This year's BHEF will take place on Saturday 6 October at The Cornerstone, Norreys Avenue, Wokingham RG40 1UE, from 10.00 am to 4.30 pm, cost £10. The theme of the meeting will be *Timber-framed buildings: how do we recognise them, what were they for, who lived and worked in them, and how do we protect them?*

The proposed programme is as follows (please contact Andrew Hutt for further details):

- 10.00 Registration
- 10.15 Welcome (John Chapman)
- 10.30 Introduction to timber-framed buildings, Part 1 (Trevor Ottlewski)
- 11.15 Coffee
- 11.45 Introduction to timber-framed buildings, Part 2 (Trevor Ottlewski)
- 12.15 Lunch in Wokingham
- 13.30 Dendrochronology (Andy Moir, Tree-Ring Services)
- 14.00 The history of a timber-framed house (Catherine Petts, BAS)
- 14.30 Tea
- 15.00 Moving a timber-framed building (John Chapman, Project Purley)
- 15.30 Local listing in West Berkshire (Antony Pick, West Berkshire Heritage Forum)
- 16.00 Conclusions

Berkshire Archaeology Research Group (BARG)

Summer Quarterly Ordinary Meeting, Thursday 14 June: Elise Fraser, the Finds Supervisor for the University of Reading's excavations at Silchester, will give a talk entitled *A view from the finds tray: special finds from Insula IX, Silchester*. Elise hopes to be able to bring some of the conserved finds to show the audience. Her talk will be followed by the BARG AGM. The meeting will be held at The Cornerstone, Norreys Avenue, Wokingham RG40 1UE from 7.30 to 9.30 pm. Visitors are welcome for £2 at the door.

Marlow Archaeological Society

Thursday 14 June: David Griffiths, Director of Archaeology Programmes in Continuing Education and Reader in Archaeology at the University of Oxford, will give a talk on *The Vikings in the Thames Valley*. This will review older and more recent archaeological discoveries in the context of the small amount of documented history and will include a wider look at the ways in which the Vikings made use of major rivers in their raiding and settling activities across Britain. The meeting will be held in The Garden Room, Liston Hall, Marlow, at 8.00 pm. Entrance is £3.50 (£2.50 members).

Fieldwork

Silchester, Hampshire: The annual fieldschool for the University of Reading at this major late Iron Age and Roman town will take place from 2 July to 12 August 2012. All training is included. Contact Amanda Clarke, Fieldschool Director, email a.s.clarke@reading.ac.uk, website www.reading.ac.uk/silchester/. Or join the BAS visit to the Silchester excavations on Saturday 28 July to see how the diggers are getting on (see page one for details).

Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire: This certified training excavation by the University of Oxford will resume in July this year with further investigations of the Roman town and its post-Roman occupation, plus the examination of a Neolithic and Bronze Age complex to the north of the village. The dig is open to all but places are limited. The cost is £250 per week, all training included. Contact Wendy Morrison, Assistant Director, email wendy.morrison@arch.ox.ac.uk, website www.arch.ox.ac.uk/DOTi.html.

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.

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