

ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Winter 2010

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ARCHAEOLOGY IN BERKSHIRE 2010

The Society's Annual Day School will take place on Saturday 5 March 2011 at The Cornerstone, Norreys Avenue, Wokingham RG40 1UE, from 10.00 am to 4.30 pm

The programme will include:

Bronze Age archaeology at Horton (Gareth Chaffey, Wessex Archaeology)

Was Boudica's last stand in Berkshire? (Steve Kaye)

Silchester Town Life Project 2010 (Mike Fulford, University of Reading)

Life in the Iron Age at Finchampstead (Steve Sheldon, Cotswold Archaeology)

Iron Age smelting at Sindlesham (Steve Ford, TVAS)

Kennet Valley archaeology: a resource assessment (Rupert Featherby, Museum of London)

Excavations at Chazey Court Farm, Reading (Ben Ford, Oxford Archaeology)

Plus updates on archaeology in West Berkshire (Duncan Coe, West Berkshire Archaeology Service) and East Berkshire (Fiona MacDonald and David Williams, Berkshire Archaeology).

The cost is £10, payable at the door. Parking for the disabled is adjacent and there is usually space in Norreys Avenue. Bring a packed lunch or eat out at a range of nearby restaurants and pubs.

Trevor Coombs

The Annual General Meeting

About 40 members attended the Annual General Meeting held at RISC, Reading, on 18 September 2010. They heard our Chairman (Andrew Hutt) summarise the activities of the Society for 2009-2010, which included the purchase of new display stands and the display of the Iron Age exhibition in Bracknell. A major publishing event was the appearance of BAJ volume 78, *Living in the Iron Age in and around Berkshire*, and the Roman Berkshire project was launched. The Spring Tour to Hadrian's Wall and Galloway, with an over-night stop at Gretna Green, was enjoyed by 30 members. The Day School held in March attracted 70 people and made a profit, and the monthly lectures had a good attendance during the year. The Society's Treasurer (Catherine Petts) reported that our finances remained on a firm footing, although in 2009-2010 investment income had fallen sharply due to the general fall in interest rates.

The nominations for Officers, Council Members and Trustees were accepted unanimously. The Officers are: Andrew Hutt (Chairman); Trevor Coombs (Secretary); Catherine Petts (Treasurer). Members elected to the Council are: Kevin and Cathy Daisy (Librarians); Hugh Davies; Edna Goodburn; Anne Harrison (Membership Secretary); Janet Sharpe (Newsletter Editor); Griselda Truscott Wickes. The elected Trustees are: John Chapman and Barrie Randall.

Trevor Coombs

Usage of the *Berkshire Archaeological Journal* online

Usage statistics for back issues of the BAJ, which are now available online via the Archaeology Data Service in York, show that there were over 154,000 accesses (including individuals and automated web browsers) to the journals in the year 2009-2010. This is a large increase over the 30,000 we had in 2008-2009. Just imagine the crush if all these people had tried to access the hard copies.

Andrew Hutt

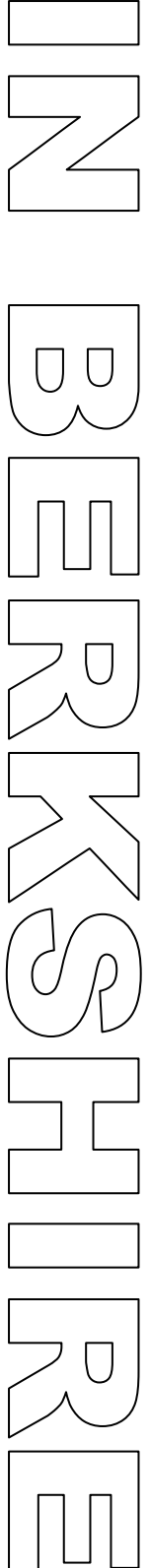
Society meetings - reminder

19 December – **Early Saxons in southern Britain** (Martin Henig, Oxford University)

15 January – **Rituals, Society and Power in and around Iron Age Berkshire** (Andrew Hutt, Berkshire Archaeological Society) – this is a change to the advertised programme

19 February – **Lidar** (Simon Crutchley, English Heritage)

Andrew Hutt



BAS Library Report from the AGM

We would like to start this report by acknowledging and thanking Andrew Hutt for the amount of work and effort he has expended in getting the Society's Library (the Berkshire Archaeology Research Library, BARL) into a manageable and workable structure, both before and during his handover of librarianship to us.

We have recently approached each Library Custodian (members who hold one or more boxes which contain library material) in order to ensure that they still wish to hold boxes and to confirm that the library boxes they hold agree with the records that we have. We also checked that all listed Library Custodians were current paid-up members of the Society or members of BARG. The outcome has been, we are pleased to say, that the Library Custodians have agreed to continue holding their respective boxes, and the locations of several boxes that were requested by members prior to the handover of librarianship have been confirmed. Requests from Society members for material from the Library have been very low, with only one request for access being received since the handover of librarianship in March this year. Members who wish to access the Library need only to contact us and we will be happy to assist. A catalogue is available on request.

Kevin and Cathy Daisy ([BAS Librarian@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:BAS_Librarian@yahoo.co.uk))

Berkshire Historic Environment Forum

Report of a meeting at The Cornerstone, Wokingham, on 30 October 2010

The overall objective of the Forum is to encourage groups, institutions and individuals across Berkshire to research their local history, heritage and environment, record their findings for future generations and present these findings to the general public.

John Chapman introduced the programme and reviewed progress with the Berkshire Historic Electronic Archive. Standards had been agreed and a number of groups had contributed material to a trial archive. This was followed by a video of the launch of History-Pin. This is a global project in collaboration with Google Earth and Google Street to provide a very simple mechanism whereby anyone can post historic photographs or images and pin them to a spot on a map, together with a date and a story.

After coffee Barbara Stagles from the Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association spoke about how what had started as a natural history project, recording the details of mature and interesting trees in Wokingham, turned into a major exercise researching the history of the trees and the environment in which they were growing. Andrew Hutt then took us on a tour of the Iron Age Thames Valley, which was the subject of the first of a series of research projects being undertaken by the Berkshire Archaeological Society.

After lunch David Cliffe, who is head of local studies at Reading Central Library, introduced us to the Local Illustrations Collection of around 20,000 loose photographs, prints, drawings and watercolours. Roy Townsend from the Theale History Group then told us about a leaflet they had prepared to illustrate a walk around the village, and finally Catherine Sampson from Project Purley explained the stages in the production of a very high quality book, *Purley in old images*.

Before the meeting closed there was a lively discussion as to the way forward. Individual groups were invited to register and contribute towards the archive, pin photos to History-Pin, and agree that the British Library could archive individual websites.

John Chapman

News from East Berkshire

We have had a busy year with some excellent results from fieldwork, sometimes in the usual sorts of sites, but sometimes in more unexpected places. The new season at Kingsmead Quarry (Horton) revealed a number of Bronze Age burials and cremations. Post-excavation work on the first few seasons (up to 2009) is continuing apace and Wessex Archaeology hope to have their monograph ready by Spring next year. Elsewhere gravel extraction at Bray has provided important information about Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age flint knapping, and at Eversley, landscape change in the floodplain of the River Blackwater. Suburban sites are showing good results, such as evidence for the late Iron Age at Emmer Green, and a variety of small sites showing surviving features from Prehistoric to Post-Medieval in Slough.

Our Finds Liaison Officer David Williams has been in post for nine months, and has recorded over 160 artefacts from East Berkshire. David holds regular finds surgeries in Reading and Wokingham, and will be attending meetings of a local metal detecting group to help identify and record their finds.

We are currently working towards providing online access to the Berkshire Archaeology HER through the Heritage Gateway. This is an online portal for accessing national and local datasets on all aspects of the historic environment, and adding our records takes us a long way towards our aspiration of greatly increasing public use of the wealth of information available through the HER. The records to be included are currently being checked for accuracy and completeness, and the intention is to have everything ready for going live in January 2011.

Fiona MacDonald

News from West Berkshire

Kennet Valley Archaeological Resource Assessment

As reported earlier this year, West Berkshire Council archaeology team have been working in partnership with Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) on a new archaeological resource assessment for the aggregates producing areas of the Kennet Valley. The project is funded through English Heritage by the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund. The project aims to identify and assess the known archaeological resource within areas of past, present and future potential for aggregates extraction. This will provide an understanding of the current state of archaeological resources within aggregates extraction areas in the district. Research strategies and management proposals identified from this information would provide the foundation for present and future minerals planning policy and strategies for archaeological assessment and investigation. As part of the project, a considerable amount of data from the Kennet Valley fieldwalking projects of the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s has been digitised and will be examined using statistical and GIS tools to identify significant clusters and potential new sites. A seminar at which the findings of the project will be presented and any major issues discussed is planned for **3 March 2011**. This will be open to the public and further details will be published nearer the time.

West Berkshire Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP)

The West Berkshire Heritage Forum will shortly be publishing a consultation draft of the West Berkshire Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP). The HEAP has been put together by a steering group comprised of representatives from a wide variety of local history/heritage groups, local communities and special interest groups. Feedback on the draft HEAP is most welcome and we encourage anyone with an interest in the district's heritage to let us know what they think. If you would like to be sent a copy of the draft HEAP, please contact Duncan Coe at dcoe@westberks.gov.uk.

West Berkshire Museum temporary closure

Following the successful bid for funding from Heritage Lottery Fund, the historic Newbury Museum has been closed for redevelopment from 1 October 2010. Staff are currently sorting, packing and moving collections so that the restoration of the building can start. The redevelopment includes restoration of the Cloth Hall and Corn Stores at the Wharf museum and construction of a new entrance to replace a 20th century link building. During the temporary closure **there will be no access for research** to the Museum's records or the archaeological archives. The museum is expected to re-open to the public by early 2014.

Duncan Coe

Archaeological talks and visits, Autumn 2010

Black-earth sites and field systems: the Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age transition in the Vale of Pewsey, Wiltshire. A talk by Paul Tubb (University of Bristol) to the Society following the AGM on 18 September.

A recent survey in the Vale of Pewsey has revealed a culture of 'conspicuous consumption' at the Bronze Age-Iron Age transition. 'Black-earth' sites containing burnt bone and smashed pottery have been found near prominent landmarks, and about 50 such sites are known in the Vale of Pewsey. One site at East Chisenbury comprised a 65,000 cubic-metre accumulation of feasting remains that was 3 metres thick and extended for over 100 metres in both directions. Thousands of neonatal lambs had been slaughtered each year at this site, suggesting that the land was being exploited to its maximum extent. Black-earth sites are considered to be settlements rather than middens; they may be enclosed or unenclosed, and they were all abandoned by the end of the Early Iron Age. An enclosure on Milton Hill is associated with a prehistoric field system that is still in use today. There is evidence to suggest that black-earth sites were eventually abandoned in favour of hillforts: Liddington Castle at the west end of the Vale of Pewsey was constructed on top of a Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age enclosure. So were hillforts also used for feasting? Nothing is cut and dried. Many black-earth sites have no associated hillforts and, as happens so frequently in archaeology, this survey has perhaps raised more questions than it has answered.

Janet Sharpe

A visit to a Middle Iron Age smelting site at Sindlesham on the invitation of Steve Ford (TVAS). Six BAS members gathered at Sadler's End behind the Walter Arms pub on Thursday 2 September at 2.30 pm, forming the vanguard of a second group who were to view the site in the evening.

To assess the archaeological potential of this site, which was being levelled in readiness for a new cricket ground, no less than 84 test trenches had been planned. All were barren until trench number 76 struck lucky, revealing slag and pottery that was dated to c.2400 BP (c.400 BC) or the Middle Iron Age. This discovery caused some excitement because only about 20 Middle Iron Age iron working sites are known so far and very few have definite dating evidence. At Sadler's End, the furnaces are simple pits which contained layers of ore and charcoal. The iron ore has not been sourced but is thought to be local. There was a large spread of charcoal and slag-filled soil overlying the furnaces: each bucket-full of soil contained around 50% of iron-rich slag. Steve Ford will be talking about this site at the Archaeology in Berkshire 2010 day school on 5 March 2011.

Janet Sharpe

The buildings of Burford. David Clark of the Oxfordshire Buildings Record gave a fascinating talk on the construction and history of some of the 200 Grade II homes in Burford on Saturday, 16 October.

A report by Trevor Coombs on this talk will be included in the Spring newsletter.

Berkshire Archaeology Research Group (BARG)

British Museum, Saturday 27 November, 2.00 pm

'They came, they saw, they conquered': *the Romans in Britain*. A guided, themed tour of Gallery 49, British Museum, by Janet Firth, former eyeOpener Guide at the BM, taking about an hour and followed by a cup of tea. We will meet at 2.00 pm in the Great Court, in the left near corner above the west stairs leading down to the basement. Please contact firth@doctors.org.uk or tel 0118 978 7434.

Winter Quarterly Ordinary Meeting, Thursday 20 January, 7.30-9.30 pm

David Williams, part-time Finds Liaison Officer for Berkshire and Surrey: *Recent finds in East Berkshire*. In the de Vitre room, The Cornerstone, Norreys Avenue, Wokingham RG40 1UE. The second half of the evening to be confirmed.

Bone recognition workshops

I am involved with organising a human bone recognition day workshop in Oxford with the Oxford Unit and another on animal bones with Wessex Archaeology in Salisbury, both in the New Year. I am asking for the names of interested people so that I can calculate the cost per person. To express an interest please email: firth@doctors.org.uk or tel 0118 978 7434.

Janet Firth

Conferences

TAG2010: 32nd annual meeting of the Theoretical Archaeology Group, Bristol, 17-19 December 2010.

Our Chairman, Andrew Hutt, will be presenting a paper at this conference based on work recently published in BAJ78: 'Using agency theory to identify Iron Age communities in and around Berkshire'. Full details of the conference, including abstracts of papers, are available at: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/archanth/tag/index.html>

TRAC2011: 21st Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Newcastle, 14-17 April 2011.

This conference will be of interest to all who are researching Roman archaeology in Britain. The programme is still being finalised but will include a pre-conference visit to Hadrian's Wall. Details are available at:

<http://conferences.ncl.ac.uk/TRAC2011/index.html>

Janet Sharpe

Adult education: Spring term 2011

WEA Reading Branch

Website: <http://southern.wea.org.uk> and select the Reading Branch

Courses include:

The Roman Mediterranean (daytime from 18 January)

Exploring Reading's museum collections (daytime from 19 January)

The ancient Egyptian Golden Empire: New Kingdom Egypt (evenings from 19 January)

Oxford University courses in Reading

Website: www.conted.ox.ac.uk

Courses include:

Real life at Deir el-Medina [tomb builders' village at Luxor] (evenings from 17 January)

Myths and religion in ancient Greece (evenings from 18 January)

Who owns the past? The archaeology of ownership and ethics (evenings from 19 Jan)

The Roman Republic: an introduction (evenings from 20 January)

The next newsletter

Contributions are invited for the Spring issue of the BAS Newsletter

All members are invited to submit short items for the Society's newsletter, so if you have any news or information that would be of interest to others please send your contributions to the Editor before **Friday 4 February**.

BERKSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Patron: H.M. THE QUEEN
President: Professor
Michael Fulford 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:

Chairman: Andrew Hutt

0118 973 2882

andrew_hutt@talktalk.net

Secretary: Trevor Coombs

01491 873 166

t.coombs1@btopenworld.com

Treasurer: Catherine Petts

01235 831 463

catherine@petts.co.uk

Programme Organiser:

Andrew Hutt

Day School Organiser:

Trevor Coombs

Excursion Organiser:

Barrie Randall

0118 983 2607

banda.burghfield@hotmail.co.uk

Newsletter Editor: Janet Sharpe

01491 202 552

janet@jsrsharpe83.plus.com

Librarians: Kevin & Cathy Daisy

0118 945 3587

BAS_Librarian@yahoo.co.uk

For more information about the Society and membership details contact the Chairman: Andrew Hutt on 0118 973 2882.

www.berksarch.co.uk
email info@berksarch.co.uk