

# ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Winter 2012

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## The Annual General Meeting

This year's AGM took place at the start of the 15 September meeting at RISC, London Street, Reading. Highlights of the meeting were the Chairman's very positive report, the acceptance of the accounts for the year 2011-2012, and the annual election of officers, Council members and trustees.

The current officers of the Society are: Chairman, Trevor Coombs; Secretary, Andrew Hutt; Treasurer, David Lewis. The Trustees are: John Chapman and Barrie Randall. The Council members are: Ann Griffin, Anne Harrison (Membership Secretary), Ron Knowles, Catherine Petts (Journal Editor), Janet Sharpe (Newsletter Editor) and Griselda Truscott-Wickes.

The position of Librarian remains vacant: all queries relating to the Berkshire Archaeology Research Library (BARL) in the meantime should be directed to Andrew Hutt.

Edna Goodburn was elected an Honorary Member in recognition of her services to the Society as a Council member over a long period of time. Thank you, Edna!

### ARCHAEOLOGY IN BERKSHIRE DAY SCHOOL

The Society will be hosting an exciting selection of talks at the Annual Day School on Saturday 2 March 2013 at The Cornerstone, Norreys Avenue, Wokingham RG40 1UE, from 10.00 am to 4.30 pm.

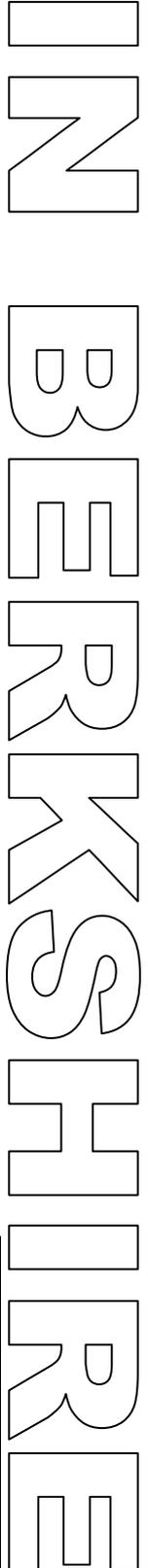
More Neolithic houses have been found by Wessex Archaeology, Professor Fulford will be talking about Iron Age Silchester, and Steve Kaye will present his latest research on Boudica's last stand. Other speakers will bring news of proposals for Reading Abbey, excavations in Cookham and Goring, an update on the Portable Antiquities Scheme, and the changing life of a Victorian lodge. No advance booking is needed; the cost is £10.00, payable at the door. Parking for the disabled is adjacent and there is plenty of space in local car parks. Please bring a packed lunch or eat out in Wokingham. (Trevor Coombs)

### More Dates for your Diary

BAS Saturday afternoon talks coming up at RISC, London Street, Reading RG1 4PS, at 2.00 for a 2.30 pm start are: **The Anglo-Saxons in the Thames Valley** by Anne Dodd (Oxford Archaeology) on 8 December; **Recent work at Dorchester-on-Thames** by Paul Booth (Oxford Archaeology) on 19 January; **The British Museum's Neolithic Collection** by Gillian Varndell (BM) on 16 February.

### Hugh Davies

It is with great regret that we announce the recent death of Hugh Davies, a former member of the BAS Council and an acknowledged expert on Roman roads. Hugh was the author of several books and papers on roads in Roman Britain and he had just completed his chapter on Roman roads in Berkshire for the forthcoming BAJ monograph on Roman Berkshire before he died. He will be sadly missed for his erudition, his unstinting support and friendship, and his gentle sense of humour. The funeral took place in Sandhurst on Friday 9 November.



## Berkshire Historic Environment Forum 2012

**This year's meeting of the Berkshire Historic Environment Forum focused on timber-framed buildings, a theme which attracted more than 30 people to The Cornerstone, Wokingham, on Saturday 6 October 2012.**

In the morning Trevor Ottlewski gave a long and interesting presentation on the construction of these buildings, how the architecture of the buildings changed over time, and the evidence to be found in present day buildings which can confirm that they were originally timber-framed.

The afternoon session started with a talk by Andrew Moir who explained, firstly, how dendrochronology can be used to date timber-framed buildings and, secondly, the work being done in Surrey to record all the timber-framed buildings in the county. This was followed by a talk by Catherine Petts on the history of her house in Steventon. From this point the thrust of the meeting's deliberations moved towards the preservation of timber-framed buildings. John Chapman explained how, in the face of housing development, the Barn at Purley had been dismantled and moved to a new site in the village, and Antony Pick explained how the West Berkshire Heritage Forum is working with West Berkshire Council to establish a local list of heritage buildings, sites and other assets in order to give them greater protection from demolition and inappropriate redevelopment.

The discussion at the end of the meeting showed that organisations, such as the Berkshire Archaeological Society, could either work to record local timber-framed buildings or sponsor local heritage lists. No single organisation should get involved in both of these activities. **(Andrew Hutt)**

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## Recent BAS Lecture Meetings

### Religion and the Egyptian afterlife

Following the BAS AGM on 15 September, Beth Asbury (Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford) gave a most informative and fascinating account of ancient Egyptian mortuary practices. The climate of Egypt is conducive to material preservation, and the natural mummification of bodies by desiccation probably led to artificial 'improvements' and the gradual development of elaborate mummification procedures. It was believed that the body represented only part of the individual: also important were the shadow and the name, and the *ba* (personality) and *ka* (life force) which continued after death. Offerings were made to these entities in the tomb, and the dead person became the *akh* which was represented as an ancestor bust within the family home. The Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom (c.2649-2134 BC) proclaimed that the dead were transformed into stars and became celestial beings in the sky. These texts were restricted to royal tombs, suggesting that only the elite enjoyed an afterlife. After the First Intermediate Period there came a 'democratisation' of the afterlife and in the New Kingdom (c.1550-1070 BC) the Book of the Dead describes the 'Field of Reeds' which was open to all who could pass the 'weighing of the heart' test. The heart (the only organ that was left in the body after mummification) was weighed against the feather of Maat, the goddess of truth. If the deceased failed this test, the heart was eaten by the monster Amemait and that was that – no afterlife. Mummification continued in Egypt until the Greek and Roman periods, by which time it had become very elaborate and an art form in its own right, with the mummies often bearing life-like painted portraits of the deceased. The Christian emperor Theodosius I attempted to ban mummification in AD 392 – but he was only partially successful. **(Janet Sharpe)**

### Digs and discoveries: the Wallingford Burh to Borough Project

On 20 October, Judy Dewey (The Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society) described some of the archaeological and documentary evidence for the origins and development of medieval Wallingford between c.AD 600-1250. The project was initiated by Neil Christie of Leicester University and was eventually led by three universities working with students and a strong team of local volunteers from 2008-2010, although aspects of the work are still continuing. The unpublished results of previous excavations in the town were examined and geophysical surveys were conducted in the open spaces within the 9th century defences and in the Castle grounds. An excavation in the Kinecroft revealed an extension of an existing Saxon road line towards the western town rampart and traces of 11th-13th century occupation: this was the first evidence for any building in this area which has been an open space used for grazing since medieval times, according to documentary evidence. Digs in the Castle grounds have revealed a probable Civil War gun emplacement, and part of a great hall dating to the 13th century. An enigmatic semicircular building associated with the Castle was excavated in Queen's Arbour close to the Thames. Test pitting and developments on the north side of the High Street have revealed bits and pieces of the priory that was known to have existed in this part of the town. Garden archaeology is an on-going adjunct to the project: the aim is to complete 100 test pits in different parts of the town. Over 50 have been dug so far and the distribution of pottery of different ages and status is revealing a lot of new information about medieval Wallingford, which seems to have declined after the 13th century. A BAR monograph describing the Burh to Borough Project is due to be published in 2013. **(Janet Sharpe)**

## Geophysics Survey of Streatley Meadows

In 2011, the parishioners of Streatley formed a trust, collected a large sum of money and bought the field which lies to the north of Streatley High Street and to the west of the church. In 2012, the Streatley Meadows Trust invited a team from BARG to carry out a geophysics survey of the field.

Planning this work started by collecting and studying copies of old maps of the area. These revealed a line of properties along the north side of the High Street. They appeared on a map dating from 1764 but had disappeared by the time the enclosure map was drawn in 1814. Further to this an Ordnance Survey map dated to 1879 noted the site of a Dominican convent to the west of the church.

The work on site was carried out in June 2012. We laid out a survey area with six 20 x 20 m grid squares south to north (1-6) and four grid squares west to east (A-D) and surveyed them with a Bartington gradiometer and with a Geoscan resistance meter. The results of the resistance survey are shown in Fig. 1. From north to south, according to the grid square, the most notable anomalies are:

B6: A circular anomaly on a site which is occupied by a walnut tree. It just to the west side of a probable Roman road (see below).

A5: A linear anomaly.

B4 to C4: A large rectangular anomaly which lies directly west of the church. This may represent the remains of the Dominican convent.

B2, B3, C2 and C3: A rectangular anomaly which may represent a garden. Its alignment with the B4 to C4 anomaly and the visible features suggest it may be a cloister garden.

C2, C3, C4, C5, C6: A linear anomaly. In C2, it is associated with a bank. About 200 m south next to a projection of this anomaly a Roman coin hoard was found. This suggests that this anomaly may represent the remains of the Roman road from Silchester to Dorchester-on-Thames.

B1, C1, and D1 and extending northwards into B2, C2 and D2: These anomalies are probably the remains of the properties shown on the 1764 map mentioned above.

Field work on this site has now stopped and our attention is drawn to writing a 'grey' report recording this work. (Andrew Hutt)

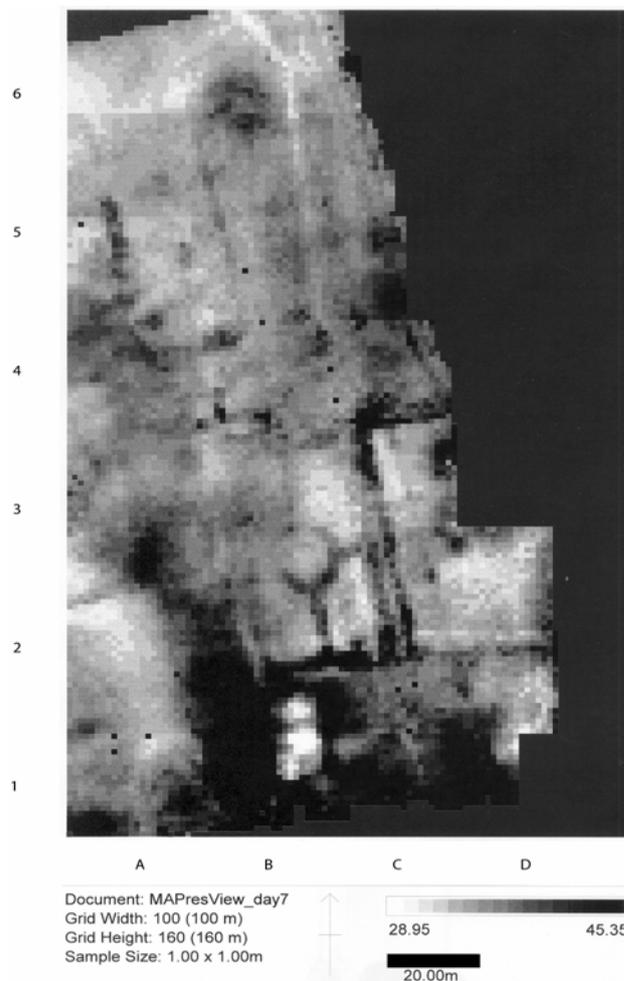


Fig. 1: Streatley Meadow resistance survey.

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## News from West Berkshire

Duncan Coe has left West Berkshire Council after 8½ years as its Archaeological Officer; he has moved to Cotswold Archaeology as a Heritage Consultant. For the time being Sarah Orr is the point of contact for any archaeological issues in the unitary authority although recruitment is planned ([www.westberks.gov.uk/archaeology](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/archaeology)).

The redevelopment of the West Berkshire Museum in Newbury is proceeding following the award of welcome grants of £1.2 million and £100,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Greenham Common Fund respectively - the process of procuring the main contractor has begun and on-site works are planned to begin in March next year. It is still expected that the Museum will re-open for summer 2014. The Friends of West Berkshire Museum group is now up and running and will welcome your support and involvement; see details at <http://www.friendsofwestberksmuseum.org.uk/>. (Sarah Orr)

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**Berkshire Archaeology** is the archaeological advice service for Windsor and Maidenhead, Reading, Bracknell Forest, Slough and Wokingham. See [www.readingmuseum.org.uk/get-involved/berks-archaeology](http://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/get-involved/berks-archaeology) for further information on the Historic Environment Record and public archaeology in East Berkshire.

## Other Societies

### Berkshire Archaeological Research Group (BARG)

Thursday 17 January: The BARG Winter Quarterly Ordinary Meeting will be held in the De Vere Room, The Cornerstone, Wokingham RG40 1UJ, from 7.30 pm. Bob Brewer will talk on 'Childrey Hill, Berkshire: investigating a prehistoric landscape'. (We have previously referred to this hill as Hackpen; Childrey Hill is the old name for it and avoids confusion with another Hackpen Hill near Marlborough.) After an early break there will be a Special General Meeting to discuss raising the BARG subscriptions for the financial year 2012-2013 and thereafter to £14 for a single person and £19 for two people living at the same address. Following this, Andrew Hutt will talk about the BARG geophysical survey at Streatley Meadows. Visitors are welcome on payment of £2. For any other details please contact Janet firth: [firth@doctors.org.uk](mailto:firth@doctors.org.uk) or 0118 978 7434.

### South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group (SOAG)

Meetings are held at Goring Heath Parish Hall, Whitchurch Hill, at 7.30 for 7.45 pm. Visitors £3, members free. For more details visit the SOAG website at <http://www.soagarch.org.uk>.

Thursday 24 January: 'Excavating the first farmers in the Zagros Mountains of Iran and Iraq', a talk by Professor Roger and Wendy Matthews (University of Reading).

### Marlow Archaeology

Meetings are held in the Garden Room, Liston Hall, Marlow, starting at 8.00 pm. Visitors £3.50, members £2.50. See the MAS website at <http://www.marlow-archaeology.org>.

Thursday 10 January: 'From rags to riches: the Huguenots of Spitalfields', a talk by Sue Jackson.

Thursday 7 February: 'The Roman town of Dorchester-on-Thames', a talk by Paul Booth.

### Thames Valley Ancient Egypt Society (TVAES)

See [www.tvaes.org.uk](http://www.tvaes.org.uk) for details of their lecture programme (in Woodley and Earley).

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## Adult Education: Spring Term 2013

### WEA Reading Branch

Courses are held at the Hamilton Centre, 135 Bulmershe Road, Reading. Website:

<http://southern.wea.ork.uk>.

#### New courses include:

Archaeology of prehistoric Europe, by Mark Anderson, ten meetings starting on Monday 7 January at 10.30 am (£85).

Our early heritage: Anglo-Saxon and Norman architecture, by Keith Hasted, seven meetings starting on Monday 7 January at 2.00 pm (£60).

The Nile: from the Pyramids to Abu Simbel, by John Billman, ten meetings starting on Wednesday 9 January at 2.00 pm (£85).

The impact of climate on societies, by Gordon Tripp, six meetings starting on Thursday 10 January at 2.00 pm (£52).

### Oxford University Courses in Reading

Reading courses are held at the London Road campus from 7.00-9.00 pm. Ten meetings cost £145. See [www.conted.ox.ac.uk/](http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/) for more details, online courses and courses in Oxford.

#### New courses include:

Archaeology of clothing, by Jennifer Foster, starting on Wednesday 16 January.

Pompeii: AD 79, by Eleanor Betts, starting on Thursday 17 January.

Researching medieval Berkshire, by David Peacock, starting on Thursday 17 January.

### Oxford University Courses in Maidenhead and Woodley

Rome's first emperors: Augustus to Nero, by Stephen Kershaw, at the Methodist Church, Allenby Road, Maidenhead SL6 5BQ, from 7.30-9.30 pm, starting on Monday 7 January.

The world of work in Roman Britain, by Roger Goodburn, at Waingels College, Woodley RG5 4RF, from 7.15-9.15 pm, starting on Thursday 10 January.

## 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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**For more information about the Society and membership details contact the Chairman: Trevor Coombs on 01491 873 166.**

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