

ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Summer 2013

Vol.15, No.2

SUMMER Walks and Visits

Walk from Hackpen Hill to Segsbury Camp and back, Saturday 8th June 2013

Meet at 10am in the car park about 100m north of where the Ridgeway crosses the B4001 (NGR SU 3430 8515). We will walk over Hackpen Hill, a Bronze Age site surveyed by me and excavated by Bob Brewer, who has agreed to accompany us over the site. From there we will walk along the edge of the Downs and down to Letcombe Bassett, for a beer at Letcome Regis. From we will climb to Segsbury Camp, an Iron Age hillfort, and then back along the Ridgeway to Hackpen Hill. This is a distance of some 8 miles. Please come with weatherproof clothing, strong comfortable footwear and a packed lunch.

If you would like to come on this walk please register your interest with Andrew Hutt (0118 973 2882).

Andrew Hutt

Walk round historic Pangbourne, 20th June 2013

Meet at 19:00 in the Village Hall car park, Pangbourne to join a walk round historic Pangbourne led by Rosie Nurick. The walk will end in a pub. If you would like to come on this walk please register your interest with Andrew Hutt (0118 973 2882)

Andrew Hutt

Walk along historic Eton High Street, 8th July 2013

This walk will be along Eton High Street, to discover the history of the village from the Saxon period, its relationship with (New) Windsor in the Middle Ages and its subsequent fame, hosting Eton College. The High street contains a number of interesting vernacular buildings and a now redundant medieval market place. The walk will reflect on why Eton developed in a very different way to its neighbouring town Windsor which, given their proximity, might be thought surprising.

Meet at 19:00 on the bridge over the Thames at the end of Eton High Street. If you would like to come on this walk please register your interest with Dr. David Lewis (01753 864935)

Dr. David Lewis

Visit to Silchester

Meet at 2.00 pm at the entrance gate to the site at Silchester 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 info@berksarch.co.uk 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.

Trevor Coombs

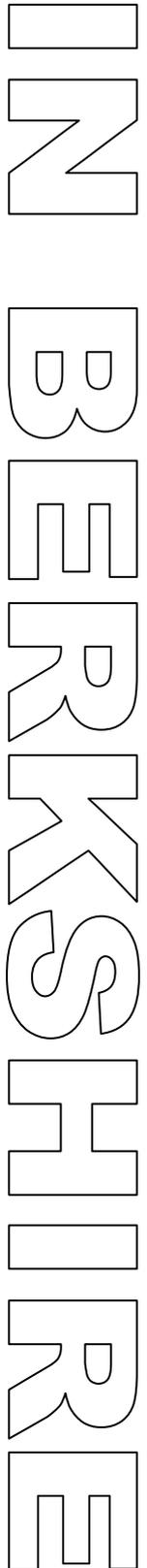
! NEWSLETTER EDITOR REQUIRED !

Janet Sharpe she has had to step down as BAS Newsletter Editor and a successor is urgently required. The post would suit anyone who enjoys writing, has an eye for detail, and can use Microsoft Word. All enquiries, please, to **Andrew Hutt** at andrew_hutt@talktalk.net, tel. 0118 973 2882.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM of the Society will take place on Saturday 21 September 2013 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 by Katie Mieux on **Saxons in the Thames Valley**.

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 2013**.



ARCHAEOLOGY IN BERKSHIRE 2013

This year's annual day school returned to The Cornerstone in Wokingham on 2 March, when a full house heard eight speakers present summaries of archaeological research conducted in Berkshire over the previous 12 months. Unfortunately Professor Mike Fulford, who was due to speak on **Silchester: the Town Life Project 2012**, was unable to attend.

David Williams (Berkshire Archaeology) began with some highlights from **The Portable Antiquities Scheme in East Berkshire**. Over 500 finds had been recorded during 2012 representing all periods, and including several one- and two-penny coins from the 1820s and 1830s that had, for some obscure reason, been over stamped with images of clay tobacco pipes. These items and many more may be viewed on the PAS website, www.finds.org.uk. Steve Ford (TVAS) followed with **Updates on Horton Brook Quarry, ironmaking at Finchampstead, and Sonning cursus**. A Middle Bronze Age waterhole at Horton contained wattle fencing that was C14-dated to 1432-1290 BC. Another waterhole contained a human skull, probably a Late Bronze Age ritual deposit, which appeared to have had white pebbles placed in the eye sockets. A Middle Iron Age iron production site at Manor Farm, Finchampstead, adds to the cluster of similar sites in East Berkshire that appear to have been working bog ore. Sonning cursus was selected to test new geophysical equipment: aerial photographs were confirmed and evidence for an additional mortuary enclosure was found. Steve Kaye next attempted to answer his question, **Was Boudica's army destroyed in the Kennet Valley?** by estimating the water requirements of the Roman army. He had previously identified 263 possible sites for Boudica's last stand from a computer-assisted analysis of Tacitus's description of the battleground. His present study reduced the number of potential sites considerably and he concluded that Ogbourne St George, Wiltshire, was the most likely candidate. Andrew Hutt (BAS and BARG) then presented the results of geophysical surveys at **Streatley Meadows and Fiennes Farm, Littlewick Green**. The Streatley Meadows site showed the outline of a formal garden with the possible line of the Silchester to Dorchester Roman road running alongside it, and traces of late medieval or Tudor buildings and plots beside the present road. [See Andrew's article in the *BAS Newsletter* for Winter 2012.] The Fiennes Farm survey revealed the position of the now destroyed Roman villa with possible trackways to its north and south, a possible Bronze Age enclosure and Iron Age features.

After lunch, Colin Berks (Marlow Archaeology) presented **Various investigations in Cookham**. Using geophysics and auguring, archaeological features were recorded on former islands in the once marshy area. Extensive work showed little evidence for the Camlet Way, the Roman road from St Albans to Silchester, which some believe to have crossed the Thames at Hedsor Wharf, although there is some evidence for a minor Roman road running from Bray to Bourne End. The role of Sashes Island during Alfred's onslaught against the Danes and Vikings is also being investigated. Hazel Williams (SOAG) followed with an update on **The Roman villa at Gatehampton, Goring**, which dates from the 2nd to 5th centuries. This comprises a single range of rooms with a bath house at the west end and corridors or verandas to the north and south. The large central room is 6m square and was upgraded to a living area after having served as a barn and workshop. Owl pellet deposits from the chalk floor showed that black rats were present and, together with wood fragments preserved on nails, may indicate the position of the roof timbers. An adjacent small room could represent a stairway leading to an upper storey. Going further back in time, Gareth Chaffey (Wessex Archaeology) described **The latest discoveries of Neolithic houses at Horton Quarry**. Four houses have now been found, all rectangular in plan, with two post-built structures and two that were constructed of vertical planks set in foundation trenches. Two of the houses appear to have had a raised floor or loft at one end and the largest house (9.5 x 6.5m) had two rooms. The final presentation, by Mathew Williams (Reading Museum) concerned **The Reading Abbey Quarter Project**. Historical research and conservation work are proceeding side by side and eventually improved signage will increase public awareness of Reading's heritage. The precinct covered some 30 acres and the building itself was huge, similar to those at Winchester and Durham. Founded by Henry I in 1121 in the Romanesque style, the abbey became an important focus for pilgrimages and was the setting for several royal weddings.

Janet Sharpe

FROM OUR LIBRARIES

One of the features of the Berkshire Archaeology Research Library is that it is kept in boxes which members can have in their homes and read at their leisure.

This article focuses on three boxes: numbered 30, 31 and 32 containing volumes of the Surrey Archaeological Collections published by the Surrey Archaeological Society. We hold volume 1 published in 1856, 7 of the 46 volumes published between 1859 and 1940 and then a continuous run of volumes from 1941 to the present day.

These volumes contain lots of detailed reports of archaeological events across Surrey. They also contain reports by the Surrey Society working groups who spend their time assessing and interpreting the evidence found across the county.

You can download articles from all Surrey Archaeological Collections from the Archaeology Data Service <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/surreyac/>

If you are interested in the archaeology of Surrey like to get your hands on paper journals these boxes are an ideal starting point

Andrew Hutt

RECENT BAS LECTURES

Grimes Graves and the quest for black gold. 16th February 2013

With this talk on 16 February, Gillian Varndell (British Museum) attempted to answer the question: why open a flint mine at the dawn of the metal age? The Late Neolithic flint mines known as Grimes Graves in the Norfolk Breckland were first opened c.2600 BC. They cover an extensive area and more than 600 shafts have been identified so far. Each cuts down through two inferior layers of flint nodules in hard chalk to reach the highly prized black 'floorstone', a more or less continuous seam of large nodules of tabular flint at a depth of approximately 30 feet (9 metres). The stone was quarried using antler picks and the floorstone was extracted from galleries radiating from the base of each shaft. Excavations by A.L. Armstrong in the 1930s revealed a chalk goddess figurine and other 'ritual offerings' in one of the mines, but the authenticity of the figurine has since been questioned. Armstrong wished to prove that Grimes Graves were Palaeolithic in date and is known to have enhanced some engravings to substantiate his claim; in any case, the carving is stylistically very different from other contemporary Neolithic figurines such as the 'Orkney Venus'. Further excavations were undertaken by the British Museum in the 1970s. A study of working floors associated with the shafts suggested that rough-outs of axes and discoidal knives were made in situ and then exported elsewhere for further processing and polishing to produce prestige objects. The colour, appearance and source of the stone used for polished axes were important, as was difficulty of access to the raw material. The Grimes Graves flint mines were opened at a time when a range of prestige goods was in circulation; the black floorstone was attractive, easy to work and difficult to obtain, giving it added value. Activity at Grimes Graves overlapped with the introduction of metalworking into Britain and continued, not to produce functional stone tools but instead highly desirable prestige objects that were traded and exchanged over great distances.

Janet Sharpe

The children of a civitas capital: why was Roman Dorchester so bad for their health? 16th March 2013

On 16 March, Mary Lewis (Reading University) gave a fascinating talk on the health status of the 364 Romano-British children buried at Poundbury Camp near Dorchester, Dorset. A previous study of the child bones from this site concluded that they were too poorly preserved for in-depth study, but Dr Lewis has re-examined them with startling results. In many cases she found that the 'poor preservation' was the result of pathology where incomplete ossification had rendered the bones fragile and distorted. Metabolic diseases such as cribra orbitalia (pitting of bone in the eye sockets) were common and have a controversial aetiology. Rickets and scurvy are deficiency diseases and their presence suggests that the children had restricted access to fresh meat and vegetables. Interestingly, pagan children (buried north-south) appeared to have had a better diet than the Romanised children (buried east-west). A relatively high frequency of rib fractures might have been the result of child abuse. However, a possible factor linking much of the bone pathology in the Poundbury children is congenital anaemia or thalassaemia, which is not indigenous to Britain and implies immigrant parents. The two mortality peaks observed, in infancy and after weaning, could have resulted from thalassaemia major, which is fatal in infancy, and thalassaemia intermedia, where children can survive for five to six years. Six percent of the children were also found to have TB. The high rate of child pathology at Poundbury is similar to that seen in post-medieval London. Whether it is typical for Romano-British children elsewhere remains to be seen.

Janet Sharpe

Warren Wood, Little Marlow. A talk by Andy Ford, 20 April 2013

Andy Ford of Archaeology in Marlow gave an interesting talk on a multi-period site found in ancient woodland near Little Marlow. The excavators had found two enclosures defined by banks adjacent to each other in which they had sunk eight test pits. They found a mix of pot boilers, 44 late Neolithic flints, late Bronze Age and early Iron Age pottery sherds, Medieval pottery and 40 kg of Medieval roof tile. The assumed Medieval building had been built in a wood known as 'The Warren' sometime in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. The word 'warren' in the Medieval period meant, 'hunting area' and the building could have been the keeper's lodge for a deer park. Deer needed to be kept in woodland since they fed on the mast and foliage from the trees. If the site was at the centre of a deer park the owner could well have been, Richard, first Earl of Cornwall, the brother of Henry III. Richard was by far the richest man in England and his passion for hunting deer caused him to establish many deer parks in southern England. Documentary evidence in the king's papers shows that he was given, '*the honour of Wallingford and Little Marlow*' in 1231. Another document in the royal collection says that, '*the king gave 18 deer to his brother, Richard, Earl of Cornwall for the establishment of his deer park in Marlow*'. Richard managed to get himself elected 'King of the Romans' in 1257 but he was generally not regarded as successful in this role. He died in 1272.

Archaeology in Marlow welcomes visitors to their Warren Wood site. Readers who wish to visit the excavations this year should email: johnlaker@thamesinternet.com or telephone 01628 481792. To find out more about Warren Wood excavations, see: www.archaeologyinmarlow.org.uk

Trevor Coombs

This newsletter

This edition of the newsletter was edited by Andrew Hutt. It is expected that other members of Council will edit the next few issues until such time as a permanent editor is appointed.

BERKSHIRE BUILDING RECORDING PROJECT

The Council has agreed that the Society will run this project. This is the first fieldwork that the Society has organised for many years.

The project's goal is to work through Berkshire parish by parish identifying buildings which have a historic or heritage value, agreeing with their owners that they can be recorded, recording them firstly on paper and then on the Berkshire building record database.

The first training event is taking place on Saturday 25th May 2013 with future training events planned for the autumn.

If you would like to join this project please contact Andrew Hutt

Andrew Hutt

EVENTS

Pompeii and Herculaneum exhibition, 28 March-29 September 2013

This major exhibition at the British Museum will take you from the bustling streets to the intimate space of a Roman home, and the heart of people's lives in Pompeii and Herculaneum. Book online at: www.britishmuseum.org

Council of British Archaeology Festival of Archaeology 2013

The annual celebration of archaeology will take place from 13-28 July with over 1000 events across the UK. For details, see the Council of British Archaeology website <http://new.archaeologyuk.org/>

Berkshire Historic Environment Forum, 26th October 2013

This year's meeting of the Forum will take place in the Barn, Goosecroft Lane, Purley on Thames, starting at 10:00. The theme of this year's forum is Names on War Memorials. More details will be published in the next newsletter.

CBA Wessex Study Days

So far the programme includes:

- Conservation and care of archaeological finds Saturday 27th July 2013
- Human Remains: a Guide summer 2013 (exact date to be confirmed)
- The Bluffers Guide to all you need to know about Prehistoric and Roman pottery, Saturday 7th September 2013

The Society is a member of CBA Wessex so you are entitled to attend these events as CBA Wessex members. For more details, see the CBA Wessex website <http://www.cba-wessex.org.uk/cba-wessex-study-days.html>

Kent Archaeological Field School

The Field School's programme of training events includes:

- July 13th to July 28th, Excavation of Bronze Age barrows at Hollingbourne in Kent
- *Archaeological Training Week for students and beginners -August 5th to the 9th 2013 -on a large Roman building at Abbey Barns in Faversham*
- *August 2nd to 18th 2013, Excavation of a Roman bath-house in Faversham*

For more details, see their website at <http://www.kafs.co.uk/courses.aspx>

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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