



ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Winter 2016

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Dates for your diary

Wednesday 7 December 2016 Anglo-Saxon Discussion Group, Conference Room 3, 14.00 to 16.00 p.m.

Saturday 10 December 2016 Lecture Archaeology found on holiday: The Neolithic in Malta by Janet Ridout Sharpe; **The Orkneys** by Anne Harrison; **Crusader Castles in Israel** by John Sargent; **Roman and Neolithic sites in western France** by Andrew Hutt, Main Hall, RISC, 14.00 to 16.00 p.m.

Wednesday 4 January 2017 Anglo-Saxon Discussion Group, Conference Room 3, 14.00 to 16.00 p.m.

Saturday 21 January 2017 Lecture How did they make those beautiful things: archaeological evidence for metal working in Roman Britain by Dr Justine Bayley, Main Hall, RISC, 14.00 to 16.00 p.m.

Wednesday 1 February 2017 Anglo-Saxon Discussion Group, Conference Room 3, 14.00 to 16.00 p.m.

Saturday 18 February 2017 Lecture Putting Berkshire on the map: from Gough to Google by John Leighfield CBE, Main Hall, RISC, 14.00 to 16.00 p.m.

Wednesday 1 March 2017 Anglo-Saxon Discussion Group, Conference Room 3, 14.00 to 16.00 p.m.

Saturday 4 March 2017 Day School at The Cornerstone, Norrey's Avenue, Wokingham, 10 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Saturday 18 March 2017 Lecture The Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Watlington Viking Hoard by David Williams, Main Hall, RISC, 14.00 to 16.00 p.m.

Wednesday 5 April 2017 Anglo-Saxon Discussion Group, Conference Room 3, 14.00 to 16.00 p.m.

Saturday 8 April 2017 Lecture Beyond London's Walls: recent excavations at the site of the Crossrail Broadgate Ticket Hall by Robert Hartle, Main Hall, RISC, 14.00 to 16.00 p.m.

From our Chairman

Dear Members

Growing numbers of the Society have joined in its activities throughout the summer months, encouraged and reminded by the new website and monthly Newsletters. Ron and Vinnie now have enough participants to ensure that the Spring Tour 2017, based in Kings Lynn, goes ahead. There are a few places available for late bookings.

The joint BAS/BARG Sonning Common, Blounts Court excavation was joined by new members. One trench revealed a solid flint and mortar 'early' wall, the other a scatter of building material levelled in garden redevelopment. We learned that geophysics alone does not provide all the answers. The Anglo-Saxon Group has been gathering clues to the activities and whereabouts of people during the 'dark ages' in Berkshire. The task is to use the fragmentary data from Heritage Records and research, to produce new insights. We invited Colin Berks from Marlow Archaeology Society to explain the research that his society is carrying out at Odney, Cookham. They are seeking the site of King Alfred's burgh, which is recorded there and should be similar to those found at Cricklade and Wallingford. Using LIDAR and auger lines they have found ditches and have excavated the first of two trenches.

Our thanks go to the Councillors and members who are very active in providing access to the archaeology of Berkshire. Please contact the Society if you have a Berkshire site in mind that might provide an interesting investigation.

Ann Griffin

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The AGM

At the AGM in September, Ann Griffin give a summary of the Society's activities between April 2015 and March 2016. Members approved the annual account, re-elected Anne Griffin as Chairman, Anne Harrison as Secretary, Andrew Hutt as Treasurer, and Alison McQuitty, Barrie Randall, Catherine Petts, Gail Eaton, Griselda Truscott-Wickes, John Chapman, Ron Knowles, Tim Lloyd, and Trevor Coombs as trustees.

At the AGM, it became apparent that at the next AGM we will need to replace the Chairman and the Treasurer. If anybody would like to take on the role of the Treasurer's assistant and help banking and paying cheques, please contact me.

Andrew Hutt

Archaeology on Saturdays

Timber buildings: how earlier buildings may be concealed behind later remodelling

A talk by Henry Russell, 17 September 2016

Henry gave an excellent summary of how timber buildings were sourced, constructed, and changed in fashion over time. He began with the management of medieval forests, illustrated in pictures showing that tall trees were thinned to allow them to grow straight and tall, whilst others were coppiced to make lathes for wattle and daub panels to infill timber frames. Tall trees were felled and sawn into planks or square sectioned beams in the forest with a two-man saw, one of whom worked at the bottom of the saw pit. Vast quantities of timber were needed to construct a medium size manor house. A document from Canterbury c.1600 recorded that 72 tree trunks were used for the house frame, seven trunks for boarding walls, and the timber came from an area of 68 acres (27h).

The Saxons built large wooden halls and houses in timber but did not use a base plate, so the posts inserted directly into the ground did not last long. In the medieval period 'box-frame' construction started using base-plates on which to stand vertical posts in the Weald of Kent and quickly spread throughout England. This design had a full height front hall and at each end bedrooms on the first floor with a cross passage between them. On the ground floor would be a kitchen, pantry, and laundry. Square timber uprights rose from the base plate to the attic level and were known as 'wall plates'. Here the purlins (beams across the attic floor) and the rafters were jointed and attached to the wall plates by 'pins'. Barns, such as that at Great Coxwell, have their timbers visible and are well worth a visit.

A fashion started in the early medieval period to construct houses with 'jettys'. Here the first floor was cantilevered out over the street to create more space upstairs without intruding on the street. In 1666 London was consumed in the Great Fire and the principal reason why it spread so quickly and so extensively was that houses caught fire as the flames leapt across narrow

streets. After 1666, 'jettying' went out of fashion, but persisted until the eighteenth century in large castles and monasteries, for example at Windsor Castle. Another fashion, which started in the west of England was 'crook construction' for supporting roofs and walls. Crucks were made by choosing a bent tree, cutting it in half to make a 'mirror image' and creating a concave frame on which to hang lathes and tiles.

Henry used Chalgrove Manor, Oxfordshire as a fine example of a thirteenth century timber frame house, which was repaired in 1480, refurbished in the eighteenth century, and sensitively restored recently. It has a full height open hall with a seventeenth century central fire place from which the smoke exits through the roof. Henry showed the massive timbers in the ceiling of the main bedroom held together with joints and posts.

Trevor Coombs

Men as gods: ancient Maya kingship

A talk by Dr Diane Davies, 15 October 2016

Having developed an interest in the Maya by excavating sites in the rainforest of Mesoamerica, Diane Davies (www.mayaarchaeologist.co.uk) is promoting awareness of their remarkable civilisation, which remains relatively little-known in this country, through education, lectures and guided tours. The Maya lived, and still live, in eastern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and parts of Honduras and El Salvador. The first agricultural villages date back to c.2000 BC but the full flowering of Maya culture, the so-called Classic period, was c. AD 300–900, contemporary with the late Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods here. Their subsequent decline remains the subject of heated debate: overpopulation, environmental degradation, and civil war probably all played a part.

Mayan cities are dotted throughout the rainforest and many remain to be discovered. They are characterised by massive pyramids, elaborate ceremonial centres and palaces, ball courts and roads, and intricately carved monuments. Successive pyramids were built over and

on top of each other (like Russian dolls) and usually had a temple on the summit, often with an elaborately carved roof comb and reached by a long flight of very steep steps. The tallest, at a site El Mirador, is over 70m high. They built in limestone and used corbelled arches to span narrow chambers and vaults. Remarkably, they were a Stone Age culture, creating cities without the help of metal, pack animals, or the wheel.



A temple pyramid from Tikal with an elaborate roof comb

The Maya devised a complex calendrical system and the only true script in the New World. The calendar consisted of the *haab* or 365-day solar calendar with 18 months of 20 days each and five 'dread' days at the end of the year, and the *tzolkin* or 260-day sacred calendar that was a repeating cycle of 20 day names and 13 numbers. These two calendars combined to form a Calendar Round of 52 years: imagine two giant cogwheels with 365 and 260 teeth respectively; it will take 52 years before the starting combination of dates is reached again. In addition to this, the Long Count calendar was used to date events by simply counting the number of days that had elapsed since a hypothetical start date corresponding to 2 August 3114 BC. For convenience, this enormous count of days was divided into five units ranging from a single day (*kin*) to 144,000 days (*baktun*). The Maya used bars (= five) and dots (= one) to record numbers, used base 20 and were one of possibly only two world cultures to develop the concept of zero (represented as a stylised shell).

Mayan hieroglyphs form a syllabic script (rather like Japanese) of about 800 signs with some logograms (signs representing a whole word) added. Each glyph consists of a central element to which other elements can be added to modify it grammatically: the same concept can be recorded in different ways according to the whim of the scribe or stone mason, adding greatly to the complexity of the system. Most monuments record key events in the lives of the rulers of city states, whereas folded books or codices of deer skin or bark paper recorded astronomical and other information: unfortunately nearly all of these were destroyed as idolatrous by the Spanish conquerors.



Altar Q from Copan showing the first king (on the right) handing the symbols of kingship to the 12th in line. Their names are shown as hieroglyphs between them

All art, whether carved in stone or painted in books or on murals, was commissioned by the king (rarely, but sometimes, the queen) to demonstrate his/her power and achievements. The king is often shown seated on a jaguar pelt being offered the crown, usually by his mother. The bloodline was very important: an altar at Copán in Honduras is carved with all 12 rulers of the dynasty in sequence forming a circle, with the first king giving the symbols of kingship to the last. On his accession the king adopted a new name which often included the name of a god, and was privileged to wear heavy jade ornaments to symbolise his invincibility. He legitimised his kingship in a public display of blood-letting by piercing his own penis, offering his blood as a sacrifice to the gods. When the king died he became a god. The carving on a stone sarcophagus lid from Palenque, famously interpreted by Erich von Daniken as an alien at the controls of a space ship, shows king Pacal falling into the underworld represented by the mouth of a serpent and at the same time being reborn as a god with the tree of life growing out of his body.

Mayan city states were constantly at war with one another, the objective often being to capture high-ranking prisoners for sacrifice. The Mayan ball game, the earliest team sport in the world, was sometimes used as a substitute for warfare. Played in a special court, the players had to propel a hard rubber ball through a stone ring placed high on the side wall using only their elbows, knees, and hips. Woe betide the losing team!

Diane has played a part in uncovering exceptionally well-preserved Mayan murals at a site called San Bartolo, dating back to 100 BC and showing complex creation scenes and the accession of kings. She showed us a replica of a ceramic cup, the king's own cocoa mug, demonstrating that in addition to art, writing and architecture, the Maya also gave the world chocolate.

Janet Sharpe

Fieldwork Projects

Excavations at Blounts Court September 2016

This year's excavations involved three trenches. We reopened trench 1 which was first dug in 2014. We extended trench 3 which was first dug in 2015 and we opened a new trench (trench 4) to investigate a geophysics anomaly. The excavations in trench 4 revealed balls of grey Kimmeridge clay which was used to make waterproof floors, puddle ponds, and to point

brick walls. Excavations in the extended trench 3 revealed a garden path which was probably associated with the Georgian garden wall and two phases of construction of a mortared flint wall. One phase of construction has a floor of assorted tile and rubble covered with domestic rubbish – broken pots, animal bones and clay pipe.

Andrew Hutt

Anglo-Saxon Berkshire Discussion Group

The meeting in September was devoted to presentations by Ann Griffin. Her first presentation was about a Celtic settlement at Brundenbach which is situated on hills between the Mosel and the Rhine in Germany. She visited it while on a geology trip along the Rhine south of Koblenz. She found settlement with earth fast timber framed houses and kilns. She suggested that the site has similarities to West Stow which the Society visited earlier in the year.

Her second presentation focused on Anglo-Saxon Bray and Ripplesmere. Again she used evidence from Domesday to identify manors and then worked backwards in time towards the archaeology.

The meeting in October had to be cancelled.

Andrew Hutt

Visits

Visit to Silchester

BAS members gathered at Insula III at Silchester on 27 August for our annual update on the excavations. The discovery of reused high-quality building stone, including Bath limestone and Purbeck marble, during the excavation of Insula IX suggested both the construction and demolition of at least one high-status building elsewhere in the town before the end of the 1st century AD. But where? The Victorian excavations in Insula III near the forum-basilica site had revealed the remains of a substantial early building, described as a possible bath house, although the excavators were not too confident about this interpretation. Therefore the 'bath house' was re-investigated during the 2013–14 excavation seasons and found instead it to be the remains of a large 1st-century town house that extended beyond the confines of the excavation trench (see Newsletter for autumn 2014). Its association with Neronian stamped tiles raised the possibility that this may have been the residence of the client king of the Atrebates and that the building may have been subsidised by the emperor. Two further trenches were opened to the north-east and north-west of the earlier trench in 2015 and 2016 to explore the possible extent of this building, which at first had been thought to occupy the entire insula.

Subsequent excavations have been, to the casual onlooker at least, rather disappointing. We were shown around the site as usual by Mike Fulford, whose enthusiasm for gravel-filled foundation trenches of 3rd-century date did not quite make up for the absence of Cogidubnus's palace. It appears that the impressive building remains in the south-east corner of the insula represented an unfinished project – the building did not extend much beyond the 2013–14 trench and was quickly demolished. Instead the insula became the site of road-side shops, cottage-type buildings, rubbish pits, and a well. Nevertheless, the re-excavation of the Victorian trenches has enabled the stratigraphy to be re-examined, and a great deal of additional information about Insula III has been obtained. Not as exciting as a palace, perhaps, but probably more informative in general about Roman town life in Silchester.

Our thanks are due to Trevor Coombs for arranging this visit for us. Next year the work at Silchester will concentrate on its surroundings rather than the town itself.

Janet Sharpe

Berkshire Historic Environment Day School

On 22 October 27 people met in the Barn at Purley on Thames to hear explanations of the archaeology and history of Reading, Thatcham, and Bracknell.

Katie Meheux started proceeding with details of the occupation of the Forbury area of Reading in AD 870–871 by the Viking Great Army. She presented

evidence that this was probably an Anglo-Saxon royal estate that was taken over by the Vikings who improved the fortifications to create a longphort. She was followed by John Painter who gave a history of Reading Abbey and its relationship with monarchs down to Elizabeth I.

Steve Ford then gave a presentation of the archaeology of Roman Thatcham. The first part of his talk focused on the challenge of identifying the exact course of the Roman road. He positioned Roman Thatcham as a roadside settlement, probably sponsored by the local elite. John Chapman summarised the history of Thatcham from the Mesolithic to modern times.

Andrew Hutt started the last session by explaining the farmsteads surrounding Caesar's Camp in the Iron Age and the development of an iron working centre based on Wickham Bushes. Andrew Radick gave a presentation of the history of Ramsden Farm through Victorian times, and its conversion to a military establishment during WWII, on to the end of the 20th century when the land was taken over for housing and the house demolished.

This was a really interesting day with lots of things to think about.

Andrew Hutt

The Roman Roads Research Association Ivan D. Margary Memorial Conference

The RRRRA, founded only in 2015, is a new society with a grand objective: to build a comprehensive online database resource for Roman roads research in Britain that will be made freely available to the public. Their first conference was held at the University of Portsmouth, 3–4 September 2016 to mark the 40th anniversary of Ivan Margary's death and to explore five key themes through talks and discussion groups: Margary's contribution to Roman roads research, recent research in southern England, new technology and new approaches, Roman road planning and surveying, and Margary's road numbering system. A second conference was held in York on 12–13 November 2016 (for more details see the RRRRA website, www.romanroads.org).

Speakers included Tony King (University of Winchester), David Rudling (Director of the Sussex School of Archaeology), Pete Wilson (former Head of Roman Research for English Heritage), Bryn Gethin (Warwickshire Archaeology) and John Peterson (University of East Anglia). The opening sessions on Saturday considered the role of Roman roads in the landscape, the life and work of 'Donald' Margary, an update on Margary's road network in Sussex, and individual case studies from Sussex and Yorkshire. After lunch, papers were presented on the potential roles of LIDAR and geophysics in Roman roads research, and

Mike Haken (RRRA Chairman) outlined plans for an online database and archive to bring together all available aspects of research. This project is expected to take about ten years, although a prototype should be available soon. Day 1 ended with a presentation on how the distribution of medieval battlefields and other features can provide insights into the routes of 'missing' Roman roads, and a consideration of Margary's road numbering system which, although still widely used, is sorely out of date.

Sunday comprised papers on the use of long-distance alignments in Roman road planning, Roman land surveying and centuriation, and the possible role of long-distance alignments as boundaries. The conference ended with an optional excursion to Fishbourne Roman Villa. Each day's proceedings were concluded with discussion sessions, and a special Margary Memorial Dinner was held on the Saturday night. The conference provided a great opportunity to meet other Roman road enthusiasts. The programme and abstracts of papers are available on the RRRRA's website, as is their first (Spring 2016) newsletter which outlines the impressive aims and objectives of this new organisation.

Janet Sharpe and Phil Carter

Archaeology in and around Berkshire

South Oxfordshire Archaeology Group (SOAG)

Thursday 24 November 2015 at 7.30 p.m. (for 7.45), at Goring Heath Parish Hall, Whitchurch Hill

Two talks: 'Field Work by The Roman Studies Group of Surrey Archaeological Society' by Alan Hall and 'Excavating a Saxon sunken featured building in Blewbury' by Dr Dave Carless. Followed by an 'end-of-the-year' social including wine and mince pies).

Archaeology in Marlow (AIM)

Thursday 24 November, 8 p.m. at Garden Room, Liston Hall.

'Richard III Part 2 - Revealing Richard's burial place and the latest research on the King', by Mathew Morris, who in 2014 talked to us about the discovery of Richard III. This talk will provide an update of the latest research, including excavations at Grey Friars, where Richard's remains were found (A joint talk with Marlow Archaeological Society arranged by AIM). Members £3, visitors £4.

Programme for the Day School

Saturday 4 March 2017 at The Cornerstone, Norrey's Avenue, Wokingham, RG40 1UE, 10 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

10.00–10.05	Welcome Ann Griffin, Chairman Berkshire Archaeological Society
10.05–10.20	Recent work in West Berkshire Alex Godden, West Berkshire Archaeological Officer
10.20–10.40	Recent discoveries in East Berkshire Roland Smith, East Berkshire Archaeological Officer
10.40–11.00	COFFEE
11.00–11.20	The lady in a log boat Jessica Barnsley, University of Reading, PhD student
11.20–11.40	New ventures in the Society Dr Andrew Hutt Berkshire Archaeological Society
11.40–12.00	Results from the Insula III excavation, 2016 Professor M. Fulford, University of Reading
12.00–13.15	LUNCH
13.15–13.45	Iron Age and Roman discoveries at Hatch Farm, Mathews Green Farm, and Amen Corner, Berkshire Dr Steve Ford, TVAS
13.45–14.15	Excavation of Maidenhead Congregational Church, 18th century burial ground Helen Vernon, Museum of London Archaeology
14.15–14.45	TEA
14.45–15.15	The Round Mounds project in South Oxfordshire and East Berkshire Dr Jim Leary, University of Reading
15.15–15.45	Managing archaeological assets in mineral extraction areas: the East Berkshire Terrestrial Minerals Resource Assessment Janette Platt, Museum of London Archaeology
15.45–16.00	Questions and Conclusions Ann Griffin

Input to the Newsletter

If you have an archaeological story which you feel would interest the Society, please send it to Gail Eaton by 15 February 2017 at: gail@eaton37.fsnet.co.uk

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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