



ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Winter 2014

Vol.16, No.4

Dates for your diary

Wednesday 3rd December 2014: *Berkshire Archaeology discussion group*
in Conference Room 3, RISC starting 14:00

Saturday 13th December 2014 *Archaeology on Saturdays lecture*
Climate and societal change by Dominik Fleitmann at RISC starting 14:30

Wednesday 7th January 2015: *Berkshire Archaeology discussion group*
in Conference Room 3, RISC starting 14:00

Saturday 17th January 2015: *Archaeology on Saturdays lecture*
Early Bronze Age women by Alice Rogers at RISC starting 14:30

Wednesday 4th February 2015: *Berkshire Archaeology discussion group*
in Conference Room 3, RISC starting 14:00

Saturday 14th February 2015 *Archaeology on Saturdays lecture*
Digitizing Domesday by David Roffe at RISC starting 14:30

Wednesday 4th March 2015: *Berkshire Archaeology discussion group*
in Conference Room 3, RISC starting 14:00

Saturday 7th March 2015: **Archaeology in Berkshire Day School**
at The Cornerstone, Norreys Avenue, Wokingham RG40 1UE,
10.00 to 16:15 (see poster)

Saturday 14th March 2015 *Archaeology on Saturdays lecture*
Lindisfarne by David Petts at RISC starting 14:30

Wednesday 1st April 2015: *Berkshire Archaeology discussion group*
in Conference Room 3, RISC starting 14:00

Saturday 18th April 2015 *Archaeology on Saturdays lecture*
Old Windsor by David Lewis at RISC starting 14:00

From our chairman

Welcome to the 2014 Winter edition of the Berkshire Archaeological Society Newsletter.

At recent BAS Council meetings we have been examining the skills required of Councillors by the constitution 'to advance the education of the public in the fields of archaeology and history in the past and present County of Berkshire.' We cover a broad spectrum between us and in welcoming Deborah Loe as Librarian and Colin Forrestal as the Web Master we are fortunate to strengthen our team.

You will notice that we have made progress with one of our new aims - to promote archaeology in the field. It is fitting that it is on a site explored by early BAS members in 1931 and 1933. This gives me the opportunity to emphasise to members that invitations to work on a site are only for the small work team. The report is sent to the appropriate archaeological authority and you, our membership, but it is not for general publication. We rely on you to help us protect our generous hosts and their property. Also, please be alert to, and inform us of, new opportunities to explore.

There may be a few spaces left on the Spring Tour, a highlight of my year, and keep looking in your garden soil for those small clues from the past – we will compare notes in the spring.

Finally, Christmas is a grand time for family togetherness and sharing your enthusiasm with the younger members. Think 'archaeology' when present buying, visiting places and sharing your particular fascination and watch them catch a life-long interest.

Ann Griffin

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Annual General Meeting 2014

This year's AGM took place at the start of the 20th 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 2013-2014, and the annual election of Council members.

Motions passed at the AGM mean that:

- The Society's annual subscription for the years starting 1st April 2015 are raised to £15 for single members and £20 for two members living at the same address and for corporate members
- The Society has agreed to a new level of membership: Associate membership which may be granted to any individual who has signed a sign-on sheet for an event organised by the Society and who has paid any fee approved by the Council for that event. Associate members are only members for the day on which they signed the sign-on sheet.

The current officers of the Society are: Chairman, Ann Griffin; Secretary, none elected; Treasurer, Andrew Hutt. The Council members and trustees are: Dave Carless, John Chapman (Chair Berkshire Historic Environment Forum), Anne Harrison (Membership Secretary), Ron Knowles (Tour Organiser), Catherine Petts (Journal Editor), Barrie Randall (convenor of the Berkshire Building Recording group) and Griselda Truscott-Wickes. **Andrew Hutt**

Paying annual subscriptions by standing order

If you are paying your membership subscription by standing order or bank transfer, then you need to change the instructions that you have given your bank to ensure that you pay the new amounts (see above). Membership fees are due in April, however, to simplify the work of the treasurer, please also ensure that you pay your subscription on or after 7th April each year.

Andrew Hutt (Treasurer)

Visit to Butser Ancient Farm

On 17th September on a brilliant sunny day, 15 members of the Society arrived at Butser Ancient Farm to be taken on a guided visit round the site. For the next hour, they enjoyed the company of Ryan Watts, an enthusiastic experimental archaeologist, who guided us through a partial reconstruction of a Neolithic house, a replica Iron Age village with round houses, four post granaries and various pits, Iron Age fields and animals and a reconstruction of a Roman villa.

We learned a lot about experimental archaeology. The most striking experiment was the work to patch round houses which has shown that it was possible to renew areas of the roof thatch and to replace sections of the post, wattle and daub walls. This is a significant finding insofar as it helps answer the question – *How long could people have lived in a round house before replacing it?* To date, it was believed that round houses probably lasted around 50-60 years. The ability to patch them raises the possibility that a round house could have stood for a lot longer. **Andrew Hutt**



Figure. BAS members in the Neolithic house, Butser



Figure. Ryan Watts talking to BAS members outside the Roman villa, Butser

Archaeology on Saturdays

The Roman army and its equipment

**A talk by John Smith on Saturday
20 September 2014**

The infantry soldier's equipment and the role of the army in the conquest of Roman Britain were discussed in this lively talk, which was presented in costume with plenty of examples of replica arms and armour and demonstrations of their use. Much of the replica equipment had been copied from Roman tombstones, such as the rough woollen cape that the speaker was wearing that was fastened with two buttons and two toggles so the front parts could be quickly thrown over the shoulders to expose the sword arm and/or allow the wearer to ride a horse. The practicalities of all the equipment was described in terms of the speaker's own experience through putting the items to use in re-enactments, for which he has adopted the name 'Lucius Julius Hipponicus' found scratched on the base of a Samian cup.

The large amounts of silver coinage associated with the army has led to discussions about the salary of the Roman soldier in today's terms, ranging from £8000 to £18,000 per annum for a soldier at the age of 18, with a centurion earning 20-times the basic salary. In battle the centurion would be in the centre of his 80-man unit, not at the front, since as a highly-paid 'manager' he was less expendable than the soldiers.

We were told that the Romans adopted their brass helmets from the Gauls. There was some discussion about the length of the red horsehair crest that adorned some helmets, and it was argued that, for practical reasons, these were probably considerably shorter than those worn in re-enactments. Roman metal was more malleable than today's equivalent and the neck guard of the helmet was hammered in one piece with the crown. The felt lining was fixed in place with a pine resin and bitumen 'superglue'. Soldiers often scratched their names on the neck guard: one example from the British Museum has seven names. Helmets were also made of iron and it was suggested that the higher dome of the crown served to amplify the sound of the military trumpet. It was also suggested that the rank of the wearer may have been expressed in the number and design of the rivets on the cheek pieces.

Ringed body armour made from bands of iron fastened with leather straps and brass fittings to protect the torso had to be made to measure and presumably new suits were required as an individual changed shape with age. Such heavy armour could not be worn by the cavalry since stirrups were not in use; instead they and standard bearers wore scale armour attached to leather. A more practical form of armour was chain mail which would be brown with rust but was much quicker to put on, didn't clank, and was more economical since one suit would fit different sizes of soldier.

The *ballista* was a Roman innovation: experiments have shown that a ballista bolt had a range of more than 450m and a firing rate of four rounds per minute was possible. Another innovation was the *pilum*, a spear with a 30m range that broke

on impact so it could not be returned by the enemy. Two types of sword were demonstrated, with short and tapered tips for use against different types of body armour. Carried on a baldric, the sword or *gladius* became a personal possession and hilts and scabbards were often decorated by the owner. The dagger was another lethal weapon, carried on a belt stiffened with metal plates, again with individual designs. The 'apron' of studded straps suspended from the front of the belt was not intended for protection but to jingle when the wearer was marching. The short-sleeved tunic was worn above the knee so it would not become caked with mud; in the winter it would be replaced with trousers, a long-sleeved tunic and boots rather than sandals.

The construction of the shield and the symbolism of its markings, including red arrows to represent the thunderbolts of Jupiter, were described. The famous 'tortoise' formation was explained, with each rank overlapping the one in front and the shortest men in the lead. Hollywood versions showing many ranks of soldiers were impractical since the men at the back would have had to be superhumanly tall! Experiment has shown that eight ranks of eight men was probably the most practical formation.

The talk ended with praise for the Roman army in Britain. The military turned a nation of three million people into Roman citizens and brought a standard of living not seen again until the 20th century. **Janet Sharpe**

Anglo Saxon Assembly places: Berkshire in Context

**A talk by Stuart Brookes on Saturday
18th October 2014**

You may have seen tumps in the landscape and dismissed them as yet another Bronze Age burial mound. This talk told another story based on historical documents and place names. Stuart Brookes was talking about the Anglo Saxons who used many of these humps in the landscape. They were used as 'hundred meeting places' from the 7th century AD onwards until the Norman invasion. Saxon politics contained an element of democracy which is confirmed in the 'Hundred Ordinance' which said, 'all freemen are to meet, discuss issues and resolve disputes every month'. The sites were political foci where common law was defined and formed the basis of the Saxon fiscal organisation.

Research started by searching Saxon charters looking for Witan assemblies and relating them to likely sites on Ordnance Survey maps. This information was used to create a map of all 'hundreds' in England based on data from the Domesday Book. Authors of Domesday did their survey of the existing hundreds and used this as a data base to raise tax revenue for William 1st. Recent research on the 'hundreds' has revealed a few surprises. Domesday includes boundaries of the Late pre-Roman Iron Age tribes, called Iceni, Dumnonii and the Cantiaci!

Historians have classified these assembly points according to their position in the landscape.

Their classification included:

Upland sites such as Bledisloe Tump, Berkshire

Road-side barrows as at Badmington Long Barrow, Knighton, Berkshire

Nodal points on roads thought to be in Moulsoford, Oxfordshire

Hanging promontories such as the one at Scutchamer Knob, Berkshire, a large pre-historic mound in East Hendred on the Ridgeway path

Landmarks like Blewburton Hill, Berkshire, an Iron Age hill fort

'Potentiary' sites found outside places such as Cookham, Wantage and Kintbury

Assemblies at these prominent sites enabled the Royal Council to embed the king's powers deeply into the English landscape. They were also used by military officers to muster their men and by local chiefs to organise festivities and dispense justice. In Wessex, by the 10th century the Burghal Hideage was formed based on 'hundreds' and later became the shire counties which are still with us today, but significantly altered by the County Boundaries Change Act of 1972. **Trevor Coombs**

From our working groups

Geophysics and surveying group

A Roman site in Knowl Hill

For 3 weeks at the end of September/early October, members of the Geophysics and surveying group were able to survey a site in Knowl Hill. The site was two paddocks adjacent to a location where a Roman villa was excavated in the 1930s.

Work on the site involved establishing a survey grid of 20m x 20m squares by selecting a temporary bench mark, establishing a north/south baseline and then using tapes and Pythagorus's theory to measure the squares. The survey was complicated by a large hedge and metal fence which separated the two paddocks.

The next week was spent surveying these squares with the Society's gradiometer. The results are shown on page 5. The large unsurveyed area across the middle of the plot represents the hedge and fence between the two paddocks. The survey revealed a grid of rectangular anomalies on a north/west to south/east alignment terminating at the southern end in an area which was occupied by a badgers set. These are probably the remains of paddocks.

The last week was spent surveying some of the area with a resistivity meter. The results are shown on page 5. A key feature of this survey is the large "S" shaped anomaly in the southern paddock. More detailed processing of the results from the northern paddock produced results similar to those identified using the gradiometer.

In the two figures opposite the arrows mark the same point on the ground and hence helps compare the results from the two pieces of work.

The next step in this work is to produce a report which reiterates the work carried out on the site and explains what we have found in more detail.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the landowner for allowing us to work on this site. Thanks are due to members of the Society: Anne Harrison, Tony Bainton, Richard Miller, Margaret Boltwood and Ron Knowles who came and worked with us. We are especially indebted to Surry Heath Archaeological Trust for lending us their resistivity meter.

Andrew Hutt and Ann Griffin

The Roman Berkshire discussion group

Meeting 1st October 2014:

Trading and manufacturing in Roman communities

This meeting used evidence found on Roman sites in and around Berkshire to assess trade and manufacturing.

The first part of the meeting studied exchange and/or trade between the sites surrounding Wickham Bushes. These sites included Park Farm, Binfield with evidence of keeping sheep and manufacturing textiles, Jennett's Park with evidence of tanning, South Farm Lightwater with evidence of iron smelting, and a number of agricultural sites. The level of specialisation on these sites suggests that they formed a community which depended on within-community exchange.

The next part of the meeting discussed trading across Southern Britain using a study of the stone found on the site of the Forum/Basilica at Silchester written by Jameson Wooders, who is a member of the Society. This study showed that stone came from locations across Southern Britain and as far away as North Wales and the Mediterranean. This last was dated to the 2nd century AD and showed that the long period of peace in the 1st and 2nd centuries encouraged such long distance trade.

The last part of the meeting focussed on the trade in Samian ware.

One of the conclusions from these discussions was that developing object life histories was one way of understanding the trade associated with a site. **Andrew Hutt**

Meeting 4th November 2014: Trade and the Roman Economy

This meeting started by reviewing trading evidence from the small Roman towns of Wanborough on the road from Silchester to Cirencester and Neatham on the road from Silchester to Chichester.

The meeting then discussed the interaction between: the edicts issued by Emperors, taxation, trade and banking. The edicts are well documented; however, most of the evidence of the many different forms of taxation used by the Roman state to maintain the state coffers comes from Egypt, Rome

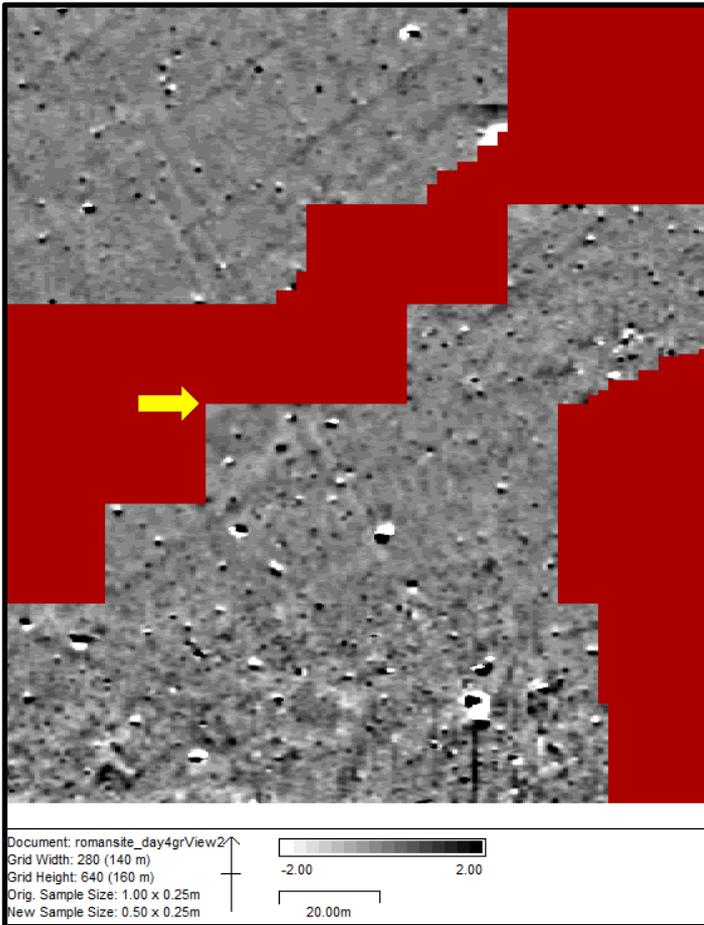


Figure. A Roman site in Knowl Hill, gradiometer survey results

and those Middle Eastern countries where state records have survived. A review of examples of these records gave insights into the thoroughness of the Roman civil service and the degree to which normal people cooperated with the

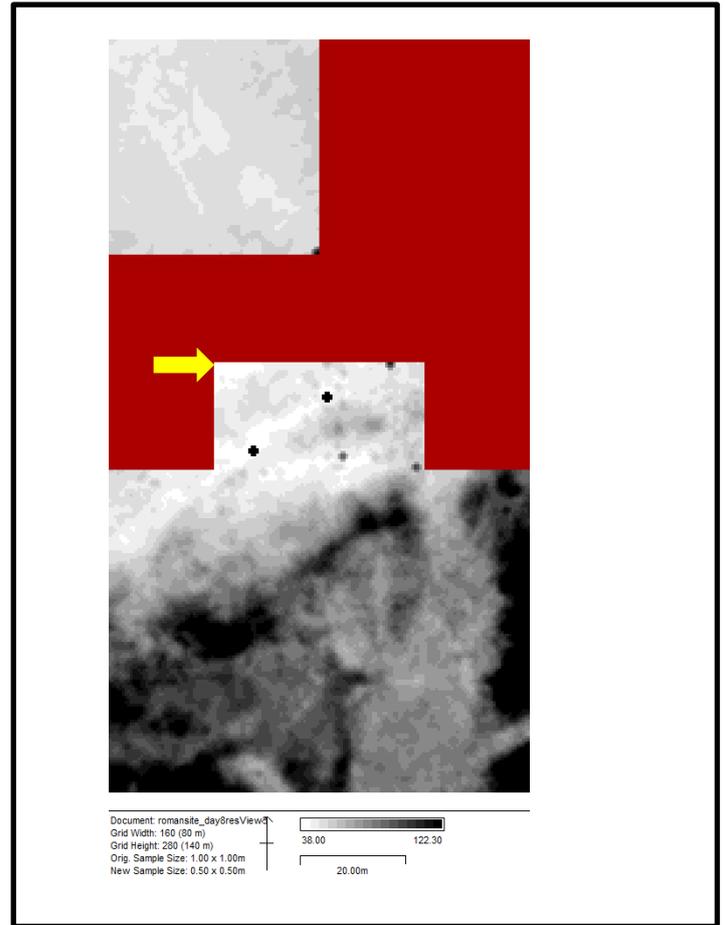


Figure. A Roman site in Knowl Hill, resistivity survey results

system. The meeting then looked at the evidence which showed how taxation stimulated the local economies and long distance trade and that this was probably supported by the services offered by Roman banks. **Andrew Hutt**

Silchester



Figure. The Insula IX trench at Silchester. Picture taken 1/9/2014 Andrew Hutt

The discussion group in 2015

Since its formation, the discussion group has talked about Roman Berkshire and has reached the point where it is beginning to discuss what happened after AD 410 as Saxon people and their social norms and customs infiltrated the area.

The dates of the next meetings are listed on page 1 of this newsletter. If you would like to join our discussions on Anglo-Saxon Berkshire please contact me or just come along to a meeting at RISC on the first Wednesday in the month. **Andrew Hutt**

BAS Tour: Heart of England: 8th to 11th May 2015

The Annual Spring Tour departs by luxury coach from Reading Rail Station at 9.00am on Friday 8th May 2015 heading north to Kenilworth Castle for a guided tour [cost included], where the re-planted Elizabethan garden was preceded by excavations.



Then onwards to Coventry for a guided tour of the two Cathedrals and Priory Undercroft [cost included]. Then a brief stop at Castle Ring Iron-Age fort before finishing at the 3-star Roman Way Hotel.

Day two is a day at Ironbridge (as there is so much to see). First a trip to Blists Hill recreated Victorian Town and then Ironbridge Gorge and Coalbrookdale where there is a choice of museums, the bridge itself and other sights and eating places for refreshments and lunch. Then back to the Roman Way hotel.

Day three, Sunday, begins with a journey to Much Wenlock, the medieval village and the ruined Wenlock Priory.

Then on for a guided tour of Wroxeter Roman Town (Viriconium), the 4th largest Roman city in Britain, with its bath house, basilica, standing walls, and reconstructed town house. Nearby Saxon St Andrew's Church has many Roman artefacts built in.



Then it is on to Shrewsbury with over 600 listed buildings, museum, castle or a river trip and lunch. Then back to the Roman Way hotel.

On the last day, Monday, we first visit the best preserved, fortified, medieval manor house in Britain – Stokesay, then to Hereford Cathedral (*Mappa Mundi*, *Chained Library*, *Magna Carta*) for a guided tour before returning to Reading for 6.45pm.

£335 each with a single room supplement of £45.

Contact: Ron Knowles, 26 Barrington Way, READING, RG1 6EG

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Input to the newsletter

If you have an archaeological story which you feel would interest the Society, please send it to Andrew Hutt the acting newsletter editor by 1st February 2015.

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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