



ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Summer 2010

Vol.12, No.2

Visits

Visit to Blewburton Hill

On 9th June 2010, starting at 19:00 there will be an archaeological walk up Blewburton Hill, Oxfordshire. This is an Iron Age hillfort with Early Saxon cemeteries, where I carried out a geophysics survey in 2008. This walk involves a climbing a steep hill on rough grass so come with suitable footwear. We will park and meet at the entrance to the farm track leading to the hill at NGR 537860. To join this walk contact Andrew Hutt on andrew_hutt@talktalk.net or by phone 0118 973 2882.

Andrew Hutt

Visit to Silchester

The visit to Silchester is on Saturday, 7th August 2010. Please assemble at the entrance by 2.30 p.m.

Trevor Coombs

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Society takes place on Saturday, 18th September, 2010 at the RISC premises, 35-39 London Street, Reading. Come along at 14:00 for refreshments; proceedings will start at 14:30.

Agenda

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the Last Meeting
3. Matters Arising
4. Chairman's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Librarian's Report
7. Election of Officers of the Society
8. Election of Council Members
9. Appointment of the Independent Examiner
10. Any Other Business

Following the Annual General Meeting there will be a talk on Black-earth sites and field systems: The Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age Transition in the Vale of Pewsey, Wiltshire, by Dr Paul Tubb, Bristol University.

Please find enclosed a form for making nominations for Council. Nominations with proposers and seconders must be received by the Chairman, Andrew Hutt, by email: andrew_hutt@talktalk.net or by post: 19, Challenor Close, Wokingham, Berks, RG40 4UJ by 4th September 2010.

New Faces on the Council

Following my article *Helping the Society* in the February newsletter, I am delighted to announce that Kevin and Cathy Daisy have agreed to take on the role of the Society's librarians and Janet Sharpe has agreed to become the newsletter editor. On the 20th March 2010, they were co-opted on to the Council. All the Council members are looking forward to working with them in the coming months.

Andrew Hutt

Spring Tour 2011

Next year's Spring Tour will be to Durham and Newcastle from Friday 6th to Monday 9th May inclusive. The tour will be based at Ushaw College, Durham.

As usual Barrie Randall has selected a mixture of sites from all archaeological periods. Full details are on the information sheet enclosed. There are a limited number of single rooms available which will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

The Editor with thanks to Barrie Randall

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The Archaeology in Berkshire Day School

This annual event was held this year in Newbury on a cool but pleasant March day. Attendees were welcomed to the hall by a poster display showing aspects of the work that is on-going in the county and linking with some of the presentations.

Dr Andrew Hutt, Chairman of BAS, opened the meeting and introduced the eight speakers to the audience. Proceedings began with Duncan Coe from the West Berkshire Archaeology Service who gave an overview of nine archaeological events in West Berkshire plus details of changes in the Archaeological Service. Next, Andrew Hutt summarised the results of a study of Iron Age Berkshire. He used evidence from Iron Age sites in and around Berkshire to show that the Iron Age was a period of significant technical and social change (for more details see Berkshire Archaeological Journal monograph, Vol. 78).

Paul Booth from Oxford Archaeology talked about the latest work in Dorchester. This is a town which has had much attention in the past, and the current work aimed to consolidate some of this especially through investigating the transition from Iron Age to Roman and then from late Roman to post-Roman. As Google Earth had showed up some features in the Recreation ground, trenches were dug in the area, finding a Bronze Age barrow ditch cut by Roman enclosure ditches. In the allotments a typical Romano-British sequence of black soil and a lot of stones was found, together with fragments of a Roman road and post holes. There were other features too; many pits were seen, some flue tiles and pottery, but no associated building was uncovered.

Professor Mike Fulford preceded the lunch break with a brief account of the thirteenth season of excavations at Silchester in which they are aiming to produce a full profile of Calleva from foundation to abandonment. The dig has now reached the 1st century AD where it seemed the building orientation was at 45 degrees to the later Roman alignment. This grid was in place by the conquest in AD43 while the new street grid was laid down in the late 1st century. Two rectangular buildings are awaiting more work. An area of burning from AD 60 to 70 was seen in the north-east corner of the trench. At least one Iron Age style circular building has been uncovered and masses of pottery found, especially against the street edge.

Dr Neil Christie from Leicester Archaeology described the three year project in Medieval Wallingford which completes this year. The town was on the border of Mercia and Wessex and was the lowest feasible Thames crossing point for William's army in 1066. The project aimed to explore the archaeological history, to trace the Saxon town, to model changes due to building of the castle and to understand the late medieval shrinkage. A variety of techniques have been used and data from previous excavations has been reassessed. The town was the capital of Berkshire and equivalent to Winchester in terms of size. The castle was a royal possession

until the 14th century and was defended by ramparts up to 7m wide, which survive around the west of the castle site, as does some stonework within the castle mound. After completion of the project this summer a BAJ volume is planned.

Diana King from Foundations Archaeology followed to tell the meeting about the discovery of six Saxon sunken buildings in Lambourn. These used to be known as grubenhauser and are unusual in Berkshire. Lambourn could have been a royal site, or even a burh, in Alfred's time, and the village displays typical features of a Saxon settlement including the circular street plan around the church. Excavations in Bourne House stables revealed Saxon and Roman remains suggesting some continuity of occupation. The sunken buildings were typically Saxon, measuring 4m by 3m and having single posts at each short end to support the roof. Dating has proved difficult as many of the artefacts found, like loom weights, are undatable, but new techniques to date fired clays are currently being used on two samples from the site. Some finds from this excavation were on display and created much interest with the audience.

After the tea break we heard from Richard Peats of Newbury Museum. The building was originally a cloth hall built in 1627 by John Hendrickson to provide work for local people. Now just a third of the original building remains. In effect it was one of the earliest purpose built factories where fleeces were sorted, dyed and corded and sent for spinning by piece workers. After return the wool was woven, fulled, stretched and pressed to make a skin like fabric. In the late 17th century it became a hospital home for elderly people. When the canal arrived and the wharf was built the building became corn stores with up to 16 independent granaries inside, each with its own cat door, and this was successful throughout the life of the canal. It was purchased by Newbury Town Council in the 1970s and converted to a museum. The current refurbishment is to be funded by English Heritage.

The last talk was from John Moore of J.Moore Heritage Services which contracts for work in West Berks and Oxfordshire. Owing to the recession many jobs are currently on hold and he was only able to present results of excavation work at Aldworth. Here they were able to investigate the garden area of the manor site. 12th century walls with post pads were found and there were patched floor levels containing a 16th century pit. The building is thought to have been a barn in the grounds of the manor, and possibly a combination barn where there were spaces for both animals and grain storage.

Andrew Hutt drew the day to a conclusion by thanking all the speakers, organisers and helpers and looking forward to the 2011 event to be held in Wokingham.

Anne Harrison

Meetings

Landscapes of conversion: The archaeology of Anglo-Saxon monasteries in Kent by Gabor Thomas – an account of the February meeting.

St Augustine's mission landed near Margate, Kent in the late 6th century AD. The Kentish King Aethelberht's Frankish wife was already a practising Christian and St Augustine and

his followers were given land in Canterbury (which is now the site of Christ Church cathedral) and outside. Although initially independent the Kentish churches had commonalities. They were in stone, alien to Anglo-Saxon construction. They followed the Frankish model of mixed communities ruled over by royal abbesses. They had a cult of saints. They were

founded by royalty usually on royal estates. So their fortunes were closely linked to those of the royal family. Consequently their funds were confiscated and new leadership implemented when Kent was annexed in the 8th century as a result of the growth of Mercia. They were usually in coastal or riverine locations allowing excellent access to communication routes. As active participants in international trade they benefitted from the economic boom across northern Europe in the 8th century. In the 9th century they were targeted by Viking raids. Several survived as monastic communities but with altered identities. By the 10th century they were part either of Christ Church or St Augustine's and no longer independent.

We then looked at the case study, Lyminge which is on a promontory. The church is a continental style building with foundations dated to the 7th century at the core and an Anglo-Saxon periphery. Other buildings had sunken features which would have had 'A' frames over the top. It is almost certain that the buildings were glazed as clear and coloured glass has been found in the surrounding pits. The area of excavation has revealed the whole range of craft work, clothing, cooking, iron smithing and welding and the usual domestic animals, but the marine aspect in this site which is 5 miles from the coast is overwhelming. The University of Reading have been excavating here since 2007 and gained the most extensive view yet of a monastic precinct in pre-Viking Kent. For comparative sites one is forced to travel to Northumbria.

Talking to each other in the Iron Age by Paul Goodenough – an account of the March meeting

Given the diffusion of artistic styles and knowledge of iron working across North-West Europe in the Iron Age, Paul's lecture investigated the possibility of a lingua franca through which people communicated. As the Celts had an oral culture there are no written records, so other sources of evidence have been investigated. Julius Caesar indicated that the Belgae, Aquitani and Gauls each had a common language, but it is not possible to discern if these were three different languages or three dialect forms of the same language. Linguistic studies point to Brythonic or 'p' Celtic comprising Welsh, Cornish and Breton; and Goedelic or 'q' Celtic comprising Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Manx. There are inscriptions on British and Gallic coins from this era using the Greek alphabet which give clues to the pronunciation of the Celtic. One such is the use of 'theta' which is the same as 'th' in English, 'dd' in the Celtic and 'dd' in modern Welsh. There are also inscriptions on stones in France of a Gaulish language in Greek characters. Across Europe there are still traces of place names derived from Celtic. Ronda in southern Spain and Rhondda in Wales both meaning good steep gorge. There is a scant historical and archaeological record of the Celtic language, but from the evidence the existence of a lingua franca across North-West Europe in the Iron Age is probable albeit with several regional dialectal differences.

The Editor

Ashmolean Visit - Sunday 18 April 2010

Twelve BAS and BARG members gathered in the Ashmolean Museum entrance to collect their copies of the floor plan of the new £61M redevelopment of Britain's oldest museum (1683), which was re-opened in December 2009 by the Queen. All the members had made previous visits to the 'old Ashmolean' and had their favourite exhibits and memories, which they hoped were preserved. We had heard criticism of the loss of the solid core of British artefacts and multicultural 'spin' that was promoted by the approach 'Crossing Cultures Crossing Time' and with this in mind we stepped into the entrance where we could see through the glass walls to the galleries beyond and above, immediately enticing us to explore.

The old parts of the building melt into the new with some glass walkways enabling views through to the heart of the building. The thirty-nine new galleries display a third more artefacts than before. However, multiple examples of prehistoric pots for example are not still on view, but each display case has a theme which allows understanding of the artefacts in context.

The Ashmolean is fortunate to have such magnificent works of art and artefacts to display, such as the pre-Raphaelite collection and the Arthur Evans 'Knossos Collection'. The linking of new developments occurring concomitantly in different countries gives us a global view of the historical periods, which is a new way to view our old treasures.

Some of the displays were still being assembled and it was understood that some were not yet fully labelled. It was in this aspect the most criticism was voiced. It was felt that the labels held insufficient information and that the development of interactive displays could be used to provide more. It was felt that labels were too small and badly placed in the sculpture gallery. Confusion arose where the same set of numbers was used more than once in a display. It is suggested the labelling should be rationalised throughout the museum, for instance, numbers should run from left to right without exception. This would help us to quickly understand the labelling method, which would aid the flow of large numbers of visitors through the galleries. However, the museum guide is excellent and the signposting from room to room too. The fresh sandwiches in the café were also excellent but more seats in the galleries would be appreciated.

Ann Griffin

Berkshire Archaeological Journal

Issue 78 of the Berkshire Archaeological Journal has now been printed. This is a monograph entitled *Living in the Iron Age in and around Berkshire* by Andrew Hutt, Paul Goodenough and Valerie Pyne. As explained in the February 2010 newsletter, it is planned to distribute this by hand together with Issue 79 later in the year. If you want a copy earlier than this please contact either Andrew Hutt or Catherine Petts to arrange to collect your copy.

Andrew Hutt

Membership Cards

Membership cards are enclosed with this issue for those individual and joint members who have paid their subscriptions for the year 2010-11. If you believe you have paid but do not receive a card, please let me know. Subscription reminder forms were included with the last newsletter or can be downloaded from the web.

Anne Harrison, Membership Secretary, 0118 978 5520, anne@jaharrison.me.uk

Berkshire Historic Environment Forum

The next meeting of the Berkshire Historic Environment Forum will take place at the Cornerstone in Wokingham on Saturday 30th October. The programme of speakers will be announced in the August newsletter

Andrew Hutt

Activities in West Berkshire

The West Berkshire Archaeology Exhibition at West Berkshire Museum in Newbury will be on until 27th June and there are a number of special events coming up. Details available – email: museum@westberks.gov.uk, Tel: 01635 519562 Ext: 2562

Shaw House continues to host a series of lectures and events, this year focussed on the Civil War, details of which can be found at: <http://www.shawhouse.org.uk/>.

Duncan Coe

BARG Events

West Berkshire Museum, Newbury: during their exhibition **Archaeology in West Berkshire** which runs until June 27th, members of the Berkshire Archaeology Research Group have been running handling sessions, using flint tools from the Lower Palaeolithic, artefacts from the Bronze Age, Roman pots and eighteenth century curiosities. The handling sessions are mostly during the school holidays (the half-term sessions are currently being arranged, but there will be one on Saturday 5th June from 11am to 4pm) and are advertised by the Museum, who will be able to tell you exactly when they are. Email: museum@westberks.gov.uk, Tel: 01635 519562

The BARG Summer QOM and AGM are on Wednesday, 23rd June, from 7.30pm in the de Vitre Room, The Cornerstone, Norreys Avenue, Wokingham RG40 1UE. Dr Steve Clark will give a talk entitled 'Deserted Medieval Villages in Berkshire and Beyond'. The AGM will be held after the break. Visitors are most welcome; the charge for non-members is £2.

Janet Firth

The Festival of British Archaeology

The festival will run from Saturday 17th July until Sunday 1st August 2010. At the time of going to press there were no details available on the CBA web site. These will be ready in due course, when you may like to look at:

<http://festival.britarch.ac.uk/about> or <http://festival.britarch.ac.uk/whats-on>

SUMMER FIELDWORK

South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group (SOAG)

This excavation is run by a friendly and enthusiastic team of experienced archaeologists and volunteer diggers. After more than 12 years on this site, a substantial part of the 3rd-4th century Roman villa has been excavated and an extensive geophysical survey of the surrounding landscape has been completed.

The excavation is open every Sunday from 23rd May to the end of July. Then after a break in August, open again in September and October. Set up at 10.30am and finish at 4.30 pm with a break for lunch at 1pm, please take a packed lunch. Diggers can attend for a half day.

It is important to let SOAG know in advance when you are available, their present limit is 20 diggers and they have had many enquiries already this year.

If you would like to join the digging team or have any questions please contact Hazel Williams, Project Director at villa@soagarch.org.uk,

Tel: 0118 947 7397 Website: <http://www.soagarch.org.uk/index.html>

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

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BERKSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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

NOMINATION FOR COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

We wish to nominate:

Name

Address

.....

.....

Post Code Telephone Number

Email address

For election to the Council of the Society as
(please tick the appropriate line)

Chairman.....

Secretary.....

Treasurer.....

Council Member.....

Signed: Nominator 1.....

Nominator 2.....

Statement by Nominee

I accept nomination to the Council of the Society and agree to attend Council meetings regularly.

Signed.....

Please return this form to the Chairman. It must reach him at least a fortnight before the AGM. Andrew Hutt, 19, Challenor Close, Wokingham, Berks, RG40 4UJ.

Tel: 0118 973 2882

Email: andrew_hutt@talktalk.net