



ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Autumn 2010

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AGM - Reminder

The Annual General Meeting will take place on Saturday 18 September at RISC, London Street, Reading. Please come along at 14:00 for refreshments; the meeting will start at 14:30.

A nomination form for Council membership was circulated with the last newsletter. All nominations, proposed and seconded, must reach the Chairman, Andrew Hutt (19 Challenor Close, Wokingham RG40 4UJ; email: andrew_hutt@talktalk.net) BEFORE 4 September.

The AGM will be followed by a talk by Paul Tubb (Bristol University), entitled 'Black-earth sites and field systems: the Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age transition in the Vale of Pewsey, Wiltshire'.

Berkshire Historic Environment Forum 2010

The next meeting of the Forum will take place at The Cornerstone, Norreys Avenue, Wokingham RG40 1UE on 30 October 2010, starting at 10:00 and ending around 16:30.

The main thrust of this meeting will be a discussion of preserving information about our historic environment. Presentations will include:

- Berkshire Historic Electronic Archive, a progress report by John Chapman
- history.pin, by Nick Stanhope (We Are What We Do, London)
- Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association, by Barbara Stagles (WDVTA)
- Berkshire Romans Project, by Andrew Hutt
- Berkshire Library Photographic Archive by David Cliff (Reading Library)
- Theale Town Walk, by Roy Townsend (Theale History Group)
- Village History Books, by Catherine Sampson (Project Purley)

For more details see the BAS website. If you want to come to this meeting you need contact me to register.
Andrew Hutt

Spring Tour 2011

Next year's Spring Tour will include a number of sites in the Durham and Newcastle area, ranging from Arbeia Roman Fort and Museum with its reconstructed gatehouse to the Beamish Open Air Museum, with several churches, a cathedral, castles and abbeys thrown in for good measure.

The tour will take place from Friday 6 to Monday 9 May. Full details and an application form are included with this newsletter. If you have already received details of the tour by email and would like to see the version with colour photographs, please contact Anne Harrison (email: anne@jaharrison.me.uk).

If you wish to reserve a place on the Spring Tour, please express your interest to Barrie Randall as soon as possible – if there is insufficient support, the tour may have to be cancelled.

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Spring Tour 2010

On Friday 7 May, on an overcast late spring morning, around 35 BAS members left Reading station by coach. Our first visit was to Gladstone Pottery Museum, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, where we wandered for an hour or so learning about all facets of making china. In the afternoon we stopped at Brougham, site of a Roman fort and later a Norman castle, before continuing to our hotel in Gretna.

The following morning we travelled via the historic border town of Longtown to Corbridge where some members alighted for a tour of the town, while others continued to the extensive site of the Roman town and supply base for Hadrian's Wall. We progressed to Birdoswald Roman fort and later to Banks Turret, both on Hadrian's Wall. In the afternoon we moved forward chronologically to the 12th century, visiting the Augustinian Priory at Lanercost before spending an hour or so packing in what we could of Carlisle's Cathedral, Castle and Tullie House Museum. For the more energetic, dinner at the hotel was followed by dancing.

Sunday began with an interesting walk around Dumfries, Robert Burns' home and burial place. Our next stop offered the choice of the substantial remains of the 13th century Cistercian Sweetheart Abbey or a tour of the 18th century New Abbey Corn Mill. Our next visit was to the double-moated, uniquely triangular-shaped Caerlaverock Castle, constructed in the late 13th century and updated with fine classical Renaissance-style courtyard dwellings in the 17th century. We then went past Brows Well, where Robert Burns took his last cure, before visiting an interesting local historical society-run exhibition and museum on the First World War cordite factory which had shaped this part of the country. The day concluded with a trip to a local shopping centre and a re-scheduled visit to the forge at the hotel

where Tony and Edna were 'married' in fine style with other BAS members participating.



Tony and Edna's 'wedding' at Gretna

St Martin's church, a splendid example of Pre-Raphaelite work at Brampton, was the first stop of our return trip. Our next visit was to Vindolanda, home of the famous Roman writing tablets, where members visited the museum and the site and talked to the excavation team. We returned to Reading via the 12th century Augustinian Norton Priory.

On behalf of the group, many and sincere thanks to our Tappins' driver Keith and particularly to Barrie, who worked very hard to successfully resolve the various issues which arose as the result of the hotel changing hands and the contract, complete with our special requirements, going missing.

Julie Worsfold

The Berkshire Romans Project

For the last year a group of us have been researching Roman Berkshire with a study area which extends from Abingdon to Basingstoke and Marlborough to Heathrow. So far we have produced a chronology, and studies of the Roman roads and Roman technologies. We are currently reviewing all the Roman sites. Using this as a basis, we are expecting to explain what it was like to live in Roman Berkshire, the ritualisation of Roman Berkshire, and local social and political developments.

If you would like to get involved in this project, please contact me to join either the research and writing group, who are doing this work, or a reading group, who will be emailed papers as they are produced so that they can review them.

Andrew Hutt

Archaeological walks and visits, Summer 2010

Ruscombe

On the evening of Wednesday 19 May, a group of 19 members of the Society and the Berkshire Archaeology Research Group met at the church of St James the Great, Ruscombe, near Twyford, to hear a short talk by churchwarden Bruce Cairns on the history and fabric of the church. Believed to have initially been constructed as a chapel in the 12th century, the church is famed as the location of the last communion taken by Charles I before his execution in 1649.

After a walk round the church to see all the features, the group reassembled outside for a walk into the surrounding countryside, led by Andrew Hutt. This started down Southbury Lane to the northern end of a palaeo-lake, which had occupied the fields from ancient times until the 1820s when it was drained. From a vantage point alongside Southbury Lane, members were able to identify the lake-side sites of Neolithic and Bronze Age flint scatters collected during Steve Ford's East Berkshire Archaeological Survey in the 1980s, which were later reanalysed by Geoff Fairclough.

From there the group walked eastwards along the southern side of the railway, under the railway (via the girder bridge) and along the track towards Castle End Farm, from where they were able to see the sites of more Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age flint scatters.

On the way back to Ruscombe church, Andrew demonstrated the impact that Brunel's railway had had on the landscape during its construction in the 19th century. Large piles of earth dumped by the navvies as they dug the deep railway cutting at Woodley had buried the ground surface and cut off natural drainage channels.

The group was also shown the possible line of the Roman road from Silchester to St Albans, which probably ran through the fields to the north and east of Ruscombe church. All in all, this was an enjoyable walk with lots of things to see.

Compiled from reports kindly provided by Andrew Hutt and Julie Worsfold

Blewburton Hill

Nine members of the Society and the Blewbury Village Society met on the evening of 9 June and set off from Winterbrook Farm to walk up Blewburton Hill, with its Iron Age hillfort and early Saxon burials.

At the entrance to the hillfort they paused to review the site of the excavations carried out by A.E.P. Collins between 1947 and 1953 (*Berkshire Archaeological Journal*, 50 (1947): 4-29; 53 (1952-3): 21-64; 57 (1959): 52-73) and later by D.W. Harding (1976, in *Later prehistoric earthworks in Britain and Ireland*, Academic Press, pp.133-145). This was the site of the gateway where Collins discovered the inhumation of three horses and Harding discovered a Saxon cemetery. The group then moved a short distance eastwards to the site of a roundhouse identified during the geophysical survey carried out by Andrew Hutt in 2008, and then followed an alignment along the crest of the ridge involving this roundhouse, two circular anomalies and a possible round barrow alongside the Ordnance Survey benchmark on the summit of the hill.

On their way back down the hill, the group passed various rectangular and circular anomalies until they reached the edge of the hillfort rampart above the top lynchet where both Collins and Harding had dug trenches. At this point on the top lynchet, Collins had discovered a Middle Iron Age grave with the remains of a man tied to a horse, and Andrew Hutt explained that this was probably the burial of a chief. To the east of this grave, the 2008 geophysics survey identified a number of anomalies measuring about 2 m east-west and 1 m north-south which could have been early Christian graves. On reading about these anomalies, Professor Martin Bell and Dr Jennifer Foster from Reading University concluded that the lynchets probably date from the 5th-6th centuries AD, which is interesting because such lynchets are normally attributable to the 11th or 12th centuries. Once back in the village, some of the group retired to the Red Lion for refreshment after what had been an enjoyable evening.

Andrew Hutt

Silchester

On Saturday 7 August ten BAS members assembled outside the Visitor Centre of Reading University's Silchester excavation site at 14.30, hoping that the weather gods would be kind after the downpours of the morning.

Professor Mike Fulford started the visit with some background information on Silchester and the 'Town Life Project' which is just completing its 14th season of excavation over a 3000 square metre area, once the site of ordinary houses and workshops in Insula IX. On the east side the excavations have reached late Iron Age levels. The street running north-south was constructed 30 years before that running east-west. House No.1, which is not in alignment with the street grid, is now known to have started out as a timber construction, probably workshops, in the 1st century. These were later superseded by two buildings and these in turn by the well-known stone building in the 3rd century. A classic Claudian military latrine pit was discovered last season, possibly indicating that the town was at one time a fort. Roman forts and towns have different layouts, but in the transition from fort to town some elements will be reused, creating an amalgam.

There has been a lot of work in the south-west corner this year, where the excavation has now reached the Pleistocene gravels laid down after the last glaciation (the 'natural'). There is a lot of archaeology cut into the gravel; the pits are shallower, but contain more finds. In such conditions the chronology is quite hard to determine, but the features are definitely all pre-Roman. An Iron Age street with a north-westerly orientation and post holes of an early palisade boundary on the same orientation have been uncovered. There are very large pits on the outside, and it is a puzzle that these appear to have been used only for rubbish. Evidence of iron making, forging and bronze working have also been uncovered, as has evidence for a lot of trade with the Champagne region of France at this time. It is possible that next season's excavations will reach an Iron Age insula across the site. As very little is known about the Iron Age and the early military phase, there will be a lot to discover.

To conclude our visit Ian Marshman talked about some of the finds, the most notable of which was a bronze figurine of Harpocrates, the god of secrecy and silence. This is the earliest representation of an Egyptian deity ever found in Britain and it was attached to part of a charcoal-burning brazier that would have been used to provide heating and lighting. This was a high status item imported from Campania. He also showed us some complete brooches, one of which is possibly La Tène; some worked bone objects including a hinge and a spoon; some coins including one of Verica, discovered last year and now fully conserved; and this year's star find, a beautiful carnelian intaglio of Minerva.

On behalf of the group, thanks to Mike Fulford and Ian Marshman for an interesting visit and to Trevor Coombs for arranging it on behalf of BAS.

Julie Worsfold

Advance notice

The next BAS Annual Day School will be held on Saturday 5 March 2011 at The Cornerstone, Norreys Avenue, Wokingham RG40 1UE, from 10.00 to 16.30.

The programme is still at an early stage of development and will include reports of new archaeological findings in Berkshire in 2010. Details will be published in the next newsletter but please make a note of the date **NOW!**

Berkshire Archaeology Research Group

You are warmly invited to the Berkshire Archaeology Research Group's Autumn Quarterly Meeting on Thursday, 14 October, in the de Vitre Room, The Cornerstone, Norreys Avenue, Wokingham RG40 1UE, starting at 19.00. The main speaker will be Judy Dewey, Hon. Curator of Wallingford Museum, on *Medieval Wallingford – an archaeological perspective*. After the coffee break, Ann Griffin will talk about her project at Knowl Hill. Parking is in the small car park opposite The Cornerstone or adjacent to the church graveyard. More details from Janet Firth (tel: 0118 978 7434 or email: firth@doctors.org.uk).

Ann Griffin has arranged a visit for BARG members to the Museum of English Rural Life, Redlands Road, Reading, on the afternoon of Wednesday 29 September at 14.00; Society members are welcome. Ann would like to know in advance who to expect. She can be contacted on 01628 825 288 or by email: griffinshiresteps@hotmail.com.

Janet Firth

Adult education: Autumn term 2010

WEA Reading Branch

Details from: WEA Reading, 27 Derby Road, Caversham, Reading RG4 5HE.
Tel: 0118 946 4137; email: WEAreading@googlemail.com; website: <http://southern.wea.org.uk> and select the Reading Branch.

Courses include:

Seven key sites of ancient Egypt (evenings from 29 September)
The English country house: a social history (study day 13 November)

Oxford University courses in Reading

Details from: Weekly Class Office, OUDCE, Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA.

Tel: 01865 280 892/893/894; email: ppweekly@conted.ox.ac.uk; website: www.conted.ox.ac.uk

Courses include:

Minos to Alexander: the art and archaeology of ancient Greece (evenings from 28 September)
Man and beast: the archaeology of hunting and domestication (evenings from 29 September)
Plague and catastrophe in the archaeological record (evenings from 30 September)
Change and diversity in Iron Age Britain (evenings from 30 September)
Churchwardens: their records and their role, c.1660-c.1800 (day school 27 November)

Oxford University Continuing Education

Day and evening courses: details as for Oxford University courses in Reading

Saturday schools and weekend courses: details from: Day and Weekend Office, OUDCE, Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA. Tel: 01865 270 380/368; email: ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk; website: www.conted.ox.ac.uk

Online courses (see www.conted.ox.ac.uk/online)

With this newsletter

You should also have received the following documents: details of the Spring Tour 2011 and the BAS Lecture Programme for 2010-2011. If one or both of these items are missing, please contact Andrew Hutt.

The next newsletter

Contributions are invited for the Winter issue of the BAS Newsletter.

All members are invited to submit short items for the Society's newsletter. So if YOU have visited any interesting digs, museums or other heritage sites this summer, please tell us about them! The copy date for the next issue is **Friday 5 November**.

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.

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