

ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Summer 2009

Vol.11, No.2

The Society's Summer Events

Archaeological Walks and Visits

Wednesday 27th May 2009: Visit to the excavations at Basing House, Nr. Basingstoke.

Unfortunately, this visit, advertised in the last newsletter has been cancelled. The excavations are still happening should you want to visit on your own.

Thursday 4th June 2009: Grimsbury Castle and Bucklebury Common, north of Thatcham.

Meet at 19:00 at the entrance to Grimsbury Castle (Grid Ref: SU51057233). See last newsletter for more details. On contact Andre Hutt

Wednesday 17th June 2009: Hurley priory and village.

Meet at the village church at 19.00. See last newsletter for more details or contact Andrew Hutt

Saturday 27th June 2009: Visit to Waverley Abbey and the 'Second World Stop Line'

Meet at 12.30 in the Waverley Abbey Car Park (Grid Ref: SU871455). To reach the car park, take the Elstead road, B3001, from Farnham. After about 2 miles the road bends sharp left to cross the River Wey. The Abbey entrance is on the right before the bend and is signed by an English Heritage brown sign. The car park is quite small, so share transport if you can. Please bring a picnic lunch. There are no toilets anywhere in the Abbey or on the estate.

We will begin by picnicking in the Abbey grounds and visiting the standing remains of this important Cistercian Abbey near Farnham. This will be followed by a stroll through Moor Park Estate to view the WWII defences sited along this part of the Wey. The energetic can then climb Crooksbury Hill for a splendid view over the area, before rejoining the others back in the car park. We can then continue for tea or a drink at The Mill, Elstead.

Entrance to the site is through wheelchair friendly kissing gates. Entrance to the Moor Park path is through kissing gates with Radar key operated facilities for wheel chairs. The sites are level but there is no guarantee that there will be no mud!

Please contact me if you have any questions (0118 978 5520) or anne@jaharrison.me.uk

Anne Harrison

Annual General Meeting

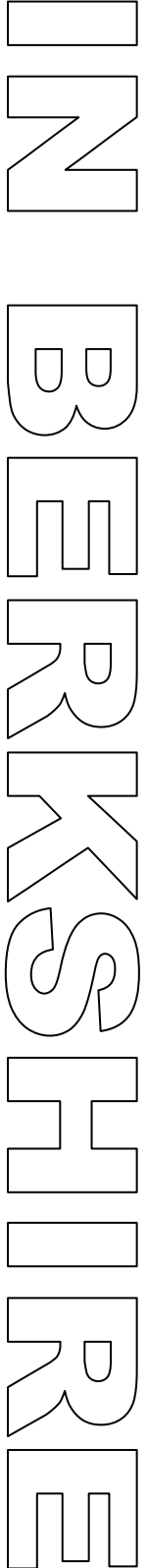
The Annual General Meeting of the Society takes place on Saturday, 19th September, 2009 at the RISC premises, 35-39 London Street, Reading. Come along at 14:00 for refreshments; proceedings will start at 14:30.

Agenda

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

Following the Annual General Meeting there will be a talk; see the next newsletter for details.

Please find enclosed a form for making nominations for Council. Nominations with proposers and seconders, must be received by the Chairman, Andrew Hutt, 19, Challenor Close, Wokingham, Berks, RG40 4UJ at least 14 days before the AGM.



DAY SCHOOL 2008

This year's annual Day School took place at The Cornerstone, Wokingham. This was the second day school on the east side of the county and the attendance was good.

Firstly Fiona MacDonald from Berkshire Archaeology spoke about the conservation work at Reading Abbey. This grade 1 listed site has had issues with falling masonry and the growth of stalactites indicating decaying mortar due to water seepage. A full condition survey showed the severity of the problems. Berkshire Archaeology is working with English Heritage to ascertain how to resolve long term. Many old repairs are now causing problems. They are looking to do their best with the technologies currently available, like soft capping with sedum plants as compared with hard capping. They are also undertaking an analysis of the original mortar, as it worked in the first place. Fiona concluded by advising that the site is like the Fourth Road Bridge, that proper access will not be possible for another 3 years and that stark choices will have to be made as to its future.

Next Professor Mike Fulford updated us with developments in the Town Life Project, Silchester. Excavation work is now revealing the Iron Age. The number of wells and rubbish pits indicates intense occupation of the site in the middle decades of the 1st century A.D. All the wells were filled up in the third quarter of the century and not re-used. This coincides with a thin layer of burning across the site, including under the east-west street. This was believed to cause the abandonment of the older networks in the town and precipitate the new street grid, but now there are questions as to whether this is related to the destruction of Colchester, London and Verulamium by Boudica, although Silchester was not formally a Roman town and the burnt layer here is thinner. It will be necessary to excavate underneath the burning to ascertain the date and resolve the issue.

After coffee Dr John Creighton of Reading University spoke about The Silchester Mapping Project. This large scale geophysical survey instigated 2 years ago began digitising insula by insula looking for additional buildings, pits, etc. not found during the Victorian excavations. Their plans must have been made building by building and then pasted together as the relationships between the buildings are slightly different in the digital images. Work outside the walls started last year. To the north a major earthwork was discovered which seems to join up with the Iron Age earthwork in the town. To the east the survey revealed lots of blobs either side of the road to London, thought to constitute an inhumation cemetery. To the south-west another earthwork was uncovered, believed to have been an earlier Iron Age enclosure, it is empty and its purpose unclear. Also to the south-west are pits 10 to 15 metres in diameter, probably used to extract clay to make bricks to construct the town. The survey on the west side revealed a series of enclosures stretching out a long way along the road, thought to be cemeteries. They will be re-surveyed this summer using high resistivity.

Next Dr Alistair Barclay from Wessex Archaeology spoke about the Horton Neolithic house. Such are still rare in southern Britain, but 70 have been found in southern Ireland. The belief that this is a Neolithic house is based on its rectilinear structure which is like those previously found. The Horton house has 3 pairs of post holes, dark staining which may be the remains of plant material but no evidence of a hearth or floor. Small fragments of pottery, flints, cereals, hazelnuts and polished stone axe fragments were found within

the structure. Flint arrow heads and pottery of a type known from local enclosures have been found in the small cluster of pits.

Then Dr Zena Kamash of the Oxford Institute of Archaeology spoke about the rural Romano-British religious complex at Frilford/Marcham. A plethora of small excavations were conducted during 2001-08. Iron Age pits proved to be the key to the site, defining measurements between the features of this Iron Age ritual site in turn influencing the layout of the Roman site. Finds concentrations indicate different things happened at different parts of the site. There were workshops to produce objects to devote to the gods, although only everyday items rather than specifically votive items were found. The big round thing is not a pool as previously supposed, but a semi-amphitheatre like those found at religious complexes in Gaul. The cruciform structure may be an early church although pagan and Christian structures are unlikely contemporaneously in the same complex. Work will continue on this site, excavating the Iron Age village to the east, the scheduled area with permission from English Heritage, and a geophysical survey. (Open Day: Sunday 26th July 10.00-16.00).

After lunch Duncan Coe of West Berkshire Heritage Service spoke about archaeology in West Berkshire. Cotswold Archaeology uncovered some middle Bronze Age activity at Grange Quarry, Beenham. Thames Valley Archaeological Services revealed a lynchet which could be Bronze Age, Iron Age or Romano-British, and middle Iron Age pits at Stonefield Shaw, Streetly. They also detected Bronze and Iron Age activity at Eddington, Hungerford. At Copyhold Quarry, Chieveley, an undated ditch was found along with a Romano-British corn drier. The analysis of the 2007 excavation at Bourne House, Lambourn showed 7 sunken Saxon houses with apparently more on the periphery. At Park Way, Newbury, Oxford Archaeology discovered a 13th century barrel in a pit dug specifically for it, virtually complete due to preservation in peat. Wessex Archaeology's excavation at the multiplex cinema site, Newbury, revealed Cheap Street is indeed medieval in origin, but was incredibly narrow until more recent times. Walls with a cobbled surface and some post holes in an ancillary building dated to the 13th or 14th century were discovered at the site of the fortified manor of the De la Beche family at Aldworth. A timber framed wattle and daub wall was found remaining in a Victorian building at Church Farm, Compton. A metal detector survey at Blossom's field, Newbury, found surprisingly little given it was the main location of the Civil War battle. The now fragile World War II hospital buildings at Membury were recorded for posterity as they will soon be gone.

Steve Ford of Thames Valley Archaeological Services spoke about the Iron Age and Saxon occupation of Slough. An excavation in 2007 at Wexham Road South revealed a small C-shaped ditch enclosure, unusual in Berkshire. This high status Iron Age settlement consisted of a 9 metre diameter round house at the enclosure entrance and some pits. Interpretation has been difficult due to lack of finds. A classic unenclosed Saxon settlement consisting of a rectilinear hall composed of 2 square structures was discovered above. At the gravel pit in Wexham houses, wells and pits were excavated. Enclosures were discovered on the north part of the site. All were dated to the middle or late Bronze Age.

After tea Edward Biddulph of Oxford Archaeology spoke about Jennett's Park, Bracknell. Mesolithic flints, mainly scrapers, were discovered in the hill wash to the south of the

site. A small amount of Neolithic flints were also discovered, but with no stratification. Bronze Age mounds of fire cracked flint dumps were found but no evidence of habitation, implying seasonal activity only even at this time. Iron Age round houses with pottery along with 4 post, possibly raised, structures for grain storage were the first signs of full habitation. Environmental evidence from alder trees indicates the area was quite wet and wooded then. By the late Iron Age (50 B.C), the settlement had vanished leaving only evidence of fields and boundaries at the bottom of Jennet's hill. The early Roman period saw the expansion of the field system and enclosures. In the medieval period the site was part of Windsor Forest and activity moved to the north. By the 14th century the area changed to parkland, evidenced by the field boundaries and enclosures. Easthampstead Park House was remodelled in the 17th century. The lime kiln dates from then. The area became part of Peacock Farm when it was established in the 19th century.

The Editor

Meetings

Lecture: February 2009: *Finding people in the pottery*, by Lisa Brown

Lisa Brown is an expert in British prehistoric pottery. The first part of her lecture was an illustrated presentation of British prehistoric pottery styles starting with the first pottery produced in Britain: Early Neolithic carinated bowls (with round bottoms and distinctive shoulders part way up the sides), through the Bronze Age and Iron Age, and ending with Roman finewares and coursewares. This gave us ample opportunity to see how the shape of pots and the fabrics used in their creation changed over time.

At the start of the second part of her talk, Lisa asked the question: where are the people, animals, trees and houses in the pottery? She answered this by explaining how pots were made and used, and the ritual significance of pottery through prehistory.

This lecture was a tour de force and very interesting.

Lecture March 2009: *Braemore, Yesterday and Today*, by Gerald Ponting

Gerald Ponting was born in Braemore, a village situated to the west of the New Forest in Hampshire, and has spent years recording the history of the village. This talk started with a review of prehistoric artefacts and features found within the village including a Bronze Age bucket, and a Saxon cemetery with the remains and grave goods of 11 individuals including spears and shield bosses, found during a Time team excavation. Braemore has a Saxon church and was recorded in the Domesday book.

Given this archaeological background, Gerald then took us on a visual tour of the village and talked of the Augustan priory, the Tudor manor house, and more recent features including the railway, the village shop and the village reading room.

Andrew Hutt

Membership Cards

With this issue you will receive your membership card for 2009 to 2010 if you are up-to-date with your subscription to BAS. Please let me know if you do not get a card and believe you should have done.

Anne Harrison (0118 978 5520) or anne@jaharrison.me.uk

The Berkshire Archaeological Trust Limited

Before 1978, archaeological work in Berkshire was sponsored and coordinated by the Berkshire Archaeological Society, through its Field Group and, latterly, through the Berkshire Joint Committee for Archaeology. Details of the work of both these groups is recorded in the Berkshire Archaeological Journals.

In 1978, the Government formalised the way in which archaeological work was managed by calling for the creation county archaeological units. In Berkshire, this call was met by creating Berkshire Archaeological Trust Limited, a professional archaeology company and educational charity with a remit to carry out and publish a comprehensive and systematic programme of archaeological investigation in the County of Berkshire¹. For the next few years, the Trust sponsored projects, probably the most memorable being the excavations of the Kennet Waterfront, Kings Road, Reading in the 1980s. In the late 1980s, the archaeological companies in Hampshire, Berkshire and Wiltshire agreed to amalgamate to create Wessex Archaeology.

From then on, the Berkshire Archaeological Trust continued as a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, sponsoring and encouraging private companies and voluntary groups and societies to investigate and record the archaeology of Berkshire. The final acts of the Trust were to sponsor two projects: the reinterpretation of the Iron Age in and around Berkshire, and the publication of the post excavation work being done by Janet Firth arising from the excavations at Spencer's Farm, Maidenhead, and to work with the Society to create the Berkshire Historic Environment Forum.

In March 2009, the Trust transferred its remaining assets and responsibilities to the Berkshire Archaeological Society, and applied to the Charity Commission to be dissolved. As a result of these changes, the Society is planning to run a meeting of the Berkshire Historic Environment Forum in Newbury on 10th October 2009, to sponsor a book entitled *Living in the Iron Age in and around Berkshire* and hopefully run a travelling Iron Age exhibition to be seen in museums and public buildings across Berkshire.

Andrew Hutt

References

1: Memorandum of Association of the Berkshire Archaeological Trust Limited. 1978

Publications of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

All the journals published by the Berkshire Archaeological Society are now available online. Everything published between 1878 and 1980 is available as free downloads from http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/berks_bas_2007/ and everything published thereafter is available as nominally price downloads at <http://archlib.britarch.net>

Andrew Hutt

The Festival of British Archaeology 2009

Formerly National Archaeology Week this event is running from Saturday 18th July – Sunday 2nd August this year promoting 'Archaeology for all!' The information below is in outline, more details can be found at: <http://festival.britarch.ac.uk/>

Roman Silchester Open Days Sat 18 July & Sat 1 Aug 10.00–17.00

Silchester Roman Town.

Join the archaeologists from Reading University to discover what a dig is like. Explore some Roman artefacts and visit our stall for a Roman themed activity. All ages, free event.

Organiser: The Museum of Reading & Reading University

Directions: Nearest train station, Mortimer

E: mail@readingmuseum.org.uk; W: www.readingmuseum.org.uk

Picture Perfect Sat 18 July 11.00–15.00

Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology, University of Reading, Whiteknights, Reading

Learn about the mythical images on the pots of the Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology. Events are suitable for children aged 6+. All children must be accompanied by an adult throughout the sessions. Bring your lunch! Each session will be £3.50 per child to cover materials, accompanying adult is free. **Pre-booking is required.**

Organiser: Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology

Contact: Jennifer Allison; T: 0118 3786990; E: ure.education@reading.ac.uk

W: www.reading.ac.uk/ure

Hook of the Dead Sat 25 July 11.00–15.00

Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology, University of Reading, Whiteknights, Reading

Learn about Ancient Egyptian beliefs surrounding death and what was written in the Book of the Dead. Watch as members of staff mummify a fish, and make your own mummy and sarcophagus to take home, complete with canopic jars and scarab beetles. Events are suitable for children aged 6+. All children must be accompanied by an adult throughout the sessions. Bring your lunch! Each session will be £3.50 per child to cover materials, accompanying adult is free. **Pre-booking is required.**

Organiser: Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology

Contact: Jennifer Allison; T: 0118 3786990; E: ure.education@reading.ac.uk

W: www.reading.ac.uk/ure

Roman Fun Day Tue 28 July 10.00–15.30

The Museum of Reading, Town Hall, Blagrove Street, Reading RG1 1QH

The Museum of Reading is kicking off the summer holidays with a range of Roman activities throughout the day. Meet wealthy Roman citizens from the town at Silchester, handle some Roman artefacts or join in with some Roman themed crafts. Billed as fun for all the family!

Organiser: The Museum of Reading; T: 0118 9399800; E: mail@readingmuseum.org.uk

W: www.readingmuseum.org.uk

Newbury's Buried Past: Guided Walk around Sites of Archaeological Discovery in Historic Newbury Fri 31 July 19.30–21.00

Meet outside St Nicolas Church, Bartholomew Street, Newbury (NGR SU4710 6710)

Pre-booking is required.

Organiser: West Berkshire District Council

Contact: Emma Crawley; T: 01635 519804; E: heritage@westberks.gov.uk

W: www.westberks.gov.uk/heritageevents

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
0118 973 2882
andrew_hutt@talktalk.net

Secretary: Trevor Coombs
01491 873 166
t.coombs1@btopenworld.com

Treasurer: Catherine Petts
01235 831 463
catherine@petts.co.uk

Programme Organiser:
Andrew Hutt

Day School Organiser:
Trevor Coombs

Excursion Organiser:
Barrie Randall
0118 983 2607
banda.burghfield@hotmail.com

Newsletter Editor:
Julie Worsfold
0118 926 2270
jlw@imagesmad.co.uk

Librarian: Andrew Hutt

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

www.berksarch.co.uk

email info@berksarch.co.uk