



ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Winter 2009

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ARCHAEOLOGY IN BERKSHIRE 2009

The Society's annual day school will take place on 6th March 2010 at St Nicolas Church Hall, Newbury RG14 5HG starting at 10am and ending 4.30pm.

The programme includes:

Archaeology in West Berkshire, Duncan Coe, West Berkshire Archaeology Service
Iron Age and Roman Beedon, Catherine Petts and Isobel MacLean, Beedon Archaeology Society
Roman Dorchester, Paul Booth, Oxford Archaeology
Silchester: the Town life project in 2009, Professor M. Fulford, University of Reading
Medieval Wallingford, Dr. Neil Christie, University of Leicester
Archaeology at Bourne House Stables, Diana King, Foundations Archaeology
Museum Buildings, Newbury, Richard Peats, Paul Drury Partnership
Recent work in West Berkshire, Gwilym Williams, J. Moore Heritage Services

The cost of this event is £10 payable on the door. There is disabled parking adjacent to the hall and plenty of local car parks. Bring a packed lunch or eat out at a range of nearby restaurants and pubs.

Andrew Hutt

Report on the Annual General Meeting

The Society's Annual Meeting took place on Saturday 19th September 2009. The business of the meeting is best summarised as being: a) Andrew Hutt, Chairman, gave a résumé of the Society's annual report for the year April 2008 to March 2009 and thanked everybody who had contributed to running of the Society; b) the accounts for 2008/9 were reviewed and approved; c) the Council for 2009/10 was elected; and, d) John Butler was appointed as independent examiner of the accounts for 2009/10.

At the close of the AGM, the Society has: Andrew Hutt as Chairman, Trevor Coombs as Secretary, Catherine Petts as Treasurer, Barrie Randall as a Trustee, and John Chapman, Hugh Davies, Edna Goodburn, Anne Harrison, Griselda Truscott-Wicks and Julie Worsfold as Council members.

Andrew Hutt

Account of the Berkshire Historic Environment Forum meeting on 10th October 2009.

On Saturday 10th October 2009, the Berkshire Historic Environment Forum met in St. Nicolas Church Hall, Newbury. The meeting started with a welcome from Cllr Geoff Findlay, Chairman of West Berkshire Council, and presentations on the historic town of Thatcham and the Berkshire Records Office; these lectures reminded the meeting of the nature of our historic environment. The meeting then focused on putting information about Berkshire's historic environment online with presentations on digitising the archives of the Abbey School Reading; photographs and records of the village of Purley, and the journals of the Berkshire Archaeological Society. This last touched upon the support available to groups interested in developing an electronic archive for their community from the Archaeology Data Service, the History Data Service and the British Library.

The meeting concluded with a discussion during which it was agreed that the next steps forward were: to initiate a project to get the Purley archive on to the History Data Service; to encourage more than 30 organisations, societies and groups with web sites to register with the British Library Web Archiving Project to create a Berkshire Collection; to establish a Berkshire Collection on the Archaeology Data Service; and to encourage everybody to deposit original documents with the Berkshire Records Office.

Andrew Hutt

The December meeting: the Earliest Gold in Wessex

The December meeting will take place on Saturday 19th December 2009 at RISC starting 14:00 with refreshments with the lecture starting at 14:30. The speaker will be Andrew Fitzpatrick, Wessex Archaeology who will give a presentation on the *Earliest Gold in Wessex* – a talk about Bronze Age gold finds around Amesbury and Salisbury.

Andrew Hutt

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Meetings

Calleva Atrebatum, Silchester, Insula IX: A tale of two new streets in the old civitas by Ann Griffin – a report of the September meeting.

This talk was based on Ann Griffin's Masters Project where she set out to investigate the construction and use of two streets in Calleva Atrebatum and how that use changed over the Roman period. The two streets were the main north-south road across Calleva and the east-west road along the north edge of insula IX. Ann presented us with sections across the roads, details of the analysis she carried out of environmental samples taken from them and a summary of the insights into the construction and use of the roads. She then compared these roads with those found on other major road sites to explain how their use changed over time.

Of significance to those of us working in voluntary sector archaeology, was Ann's description of how she used field kits to analyse some of her field samples, and developed a methodology for analysing roads which we could use in our own field work.

All in all an interesting and inspiring lecture.

Andrew Hutt

At our October meeting Frank Meddens from Pre-Construct Archaeology spoke about London's Pirate Community. The work centred on Narrow Street in the Rathcliff and Limehouse area of East London which was uncovered in 2000.

The earliest finds were Roman drainage ditches. From then onwards the area was used for summer grazing, but in the 15th and early 16th centuries it was used for brick manufacture.

However the finds from the later 16th and then 17th centuries were exceptional in quantity and quality of earthenware and porcelain from Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Persia, China, the Rhineland and The Netherlands.

A normal waterfront site in the UK would have about 5% foreign finds, but in this case it was 30-40% and moreover these finds were of personal goods, whilst foreign finds in the dock areas of Southampton and Plymouth have been of storage vessels. So why was this?

The late 16th century was a period of increasing tension between England and Spain. Spain had imposed a strict mercantile policy whereby goods from its colonies had to be carried on its ships and anything outside this was considered piracy. However, it did not have enough ships of its own.

The English crown intervened and gave privateers legal licence to plunder as an act of revenge for plundering English ships. The English Navy was very small at this time so armed merchants helped to extend its influence.

In the early 17th century peace was made with Spain and privateering became less frequent. But by the middle of the 17th century Britain was at war with The Netherlands.

The quantity and type of 18th century finds from the Narrow Street site were much more like those of a normal waterfront site in the UK. The age of piracy was over.

The Editor

On the move...

West Berkshire Council archaeology service is moving. From the end of November its new address will be:-

Archaeology Service
West Berkshire Council
West Street House
Newbury
Berkshire
RG14 1BD

Phone numbers, email addresses, etc, will all stay the same.

It will continue to be open to the public, as now, on an appointment only basis for HER searches, use of its archaeology library, or other resources.

New Web Site Manager Required

I have been responsible for our website www.berksarch.co.uk, ever since I designed it, about 7 years ago.

Now I am standing down and the society needs someone to take on the job of keeping it up to date or possibly remaking it. Perhaps a younger member with more up-to-date skills would like to do this.

Please let Andrew Hutt or me, Sylvia Chumbley (0118) 9470 762 or cschumbley@waitrose.com know if you are interested. Needless to say, I will make the hand-over as smooth as possible.

Sylvia Chumbley

Berkshire Archaeology Research Group

For our next Quarterly meeting on Thursday, 14th January 2010, Dr Jennifer Foster will talk about *Celtic Art* and answer some of the questions on: what it is? to what type of artefacts does it apply? and about style and technique. After the break, Dr Andrew Hutt will talk about the results of the geophysical work carried out by the Research Group during 2009.

The meeting begins at 7.30pm and is in the de Vitre Room, The Cornerstone, Norreys Avenue, Wokingham RG40 1UE.

Parking is available either in a small car park nearly opposite the Cornerstone or adjacent to All Saints' church graveyard in Norreys Avenue.

We hope you would like to join us; if so please phone Janet Firth 0118 978 7434.

Janet Firth

Spring Tour 2010

The Northern Borders: 7th to 10th May 2010

There are still places on this tour so if you would like to join the Society visiting Hadrian's Wall and sites in the Scottish Borders, please contact Barrie Randall

Tel: 0118 983 2607 or email: banda.burghfield@hotmail.co.uk

Revealing rings...

When we bought our timber-framed house nearly 15 years ago we were told that it had been built in the late 16th century, say 1580 – 1590. The dating seemed quite secure.

The old houses of our village had formed part of a much respected PhD thesis on the vernacular architecture of North Berkshire, as it then was and the dating was based on a detailed examination of the structure and architectural elements that seemed to have a secure chronology. Unusually our house had not been extended or rebuilt in any way since, although it had undergone a series of changes internally.

After 15 years living in the house we had begun to notice one or two features, an internal wall nearly 90cms deep at the base, the size of a beam in one room, which made us wonder whether there had been another house on the site prior to the current house and whether some features from it had been incorporated into the late 16th century structure.

We knew that tree-ring analysis might be able to give us some secure dates for the house so we decided to get the house tree-ring dated. Tree-ring dating (dendrochronology) is a method of calculating the period when a tree was growing and when it was felled. The theory is simple. The width of a tree's growth rings vary from year to year depending on a range of factors including weather and location and trees in any given region are likely to show a similar pattern in their growth rings. For example in Britain there are enough tree ring chronologies for oak for it to be possible to construct a chronology going back nearly 2000 years. More importantly for houses, if the timber being dated has bark it is possible to date exactly, even to the season and year the tree was felled and, as houses are usually built from 'green' or new wood, from that the date the house is likely to have been built can be calculated.

We were fortunate that Andy Moir of Tree-ring Services lives not far away in Hungerford. He visited our house to see if the timbers were suitable for dating. Suitable timbers will usually be of oak and contain at least 50 tree rings. They will also include bark or sapwood to help calculate the date the tree was felled. Fortunately our house timbers were suitable for dating. Andy took his samples by drilling into the wood with a corer at a place and angle which maximised the probability of getting a dateable sample. In all he took eleven core samples from all over the house including timber in our thick internal wall and the massive beam. Of the eleven samples nine were suitable for analysis. This analysis is time consuming so it was some months before we received the results.

When the results did arrive they were so surprising that we are still not quite used to them. The first result confirmed the previous investigations. The house was built all in one go, the beam and timber in the wall both had similar felling dates to all the other timber in the house. The surprise came with the second result. The house might be one build but that build was not late 16th century, but mid 15th century, 1467/8 to be precise. Our house was 125 years older than we thought and this is what we still have not got used to, because the 16th century date meant the house was built when Queen Elizabeth I was coming towards the end of her reign and British society, in all its essentials, was the one we have today. The peasant was no longer tied to the soil and its landholder. The merchant was breaking free from the power of the guild and could now trade freely where he willed. Monasteries and religious bodies had been dissolved and dispersed, their land in the hands of lay owners. Intellectually the Renaissance had brought new ideas and philosophy laying the foundations for advances in science and technology

In 1467, the date we now know the house was built, England was fighting the War of the Roses. Richard III, the Princes in the Tower and all the other events in Shakespeare's historical plays were still in the future, and although the Black Death a hundred years earlier is considered the period when the feudal system began to crumble, in 1467 England still in many ways remained feudal in all essentials.

What next? Well the Vernacular Architectural Society is holding its Annual Conference in Oxford in 2011 and one of their tours will be a visit to Steventon to see the village and go in some of the houses. As our house once formed part of the even older house next door it has been suggested that they might like to include our house on the visit list. Having all those experts in the house might help us date some of the changes in the house, when was the open hall ceiled, where was the original access to the solar? Watch this space.

Catherine Petts

ADULT EDUCATION – PART-TIME COURSES SPRING TERM, 2010

THAMES VALLEY ANCIENT EGYPT SOCIETY

Evening Courses

Art in Ancient Egypt (RISC, Reading)

Ancient Egyptian World View (Newbury College)

Day School

Mummification in Ancient Egypt: Methods and Messages (University of Reading)

Web site: www.tvaes.org.uk

ADULT EDUCATION – PART-TIME COURSES SPRING TERM, 2010 – Contd.

READING UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF CONTINUING EDUCATION Evening Course

Sutton Hoo and the Anglo-Saxons

Dayschool

Introduction to archaeological surveying

Details from: The School of Continuing Education, University of Reading,
London Road, Reading, RG1 5AQ. Tel: 0118 378 8347. E-mail: continuing-education@reading.ac.uk

Web site: www.reading.ac.uk/conted

OXFORD UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

Daytime Courses

Ancient Greek Theatre

Latter Days in Roman Britain

Sutton Hoo

Evening Courses

Ancient Egypt – An Introduction

Mesopotamia to Greece: Cuneiform Myths and Epics

Prehistoric Southern Britain – Late Mesolithic to the Early Bronze Age

Day and Weekend Schools

Aerial Photography: Archaeological Interpretation and Mapping

An Introduction to Architecture for Archaeologists

Archaeological Survey Using Airborne Lidar

Archaeology, Planning and Development: An Introduction

Characterisation: Current Approaches

Climate Change and the Historic Landscape: Confronting the Issues

Conquest and Culture: Sicily in the first millennium

Environmental Assessment and the Cultural Heritage

Health and Safety for Historic Environment Professionals

Landscapes of Britain in the Roman Empire

Military Archaeology: An Introduction to Current Professional Approaches

Photographing Archaeological Objects for Record and Publication

Post-Excavation Assessment

Public Enquiry Workshop

Roman Pottery in Britain: a practical introduction

Stonehenge

The Archaeology of the Medieval Family

World Heritage Sites: Their Value, Nomination and Management

Online

Exploring Roman Britain

Origins of Human Behaviour

Pompeii and the Cities of the Roman World

Ritual and Religion in Prehistory

ODDCE – Outside Oxford

Ancient Greek: Term 4 (Evenings, Maidenhead)

Britannia: Rome's North West Frontier (Evenings, Woodley)

The Birth of Democracy (Evenings, Maidenhead)

Details from: ODDCE, 1, Wellington Square, Oxford, OX1 2JA.

Tel: 01865 270360; Fax: 01865 270309 email: enquiries@conted.ox.ac.uk

Web site: www.conted.ox.ac.uk

WORKERS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION COURSES

A branch of the Workers Education Association has been re-established in Reading offering the following courses in archaeology. For more information visit their website: <http://courses.wea.org.uk/courses>

Afternoon Course:

Living in Iron Age Berkshire (C3728013)

Evening Course:

An Introduction to Ancient Egypt (C3728056)

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:

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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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