

ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Winter 2011

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ARCHAEOLOGY IN BERKSHIRE DAY SCHOOL

The Society's annual Day School will take place on Saturday 3 March 2012 at St Nicolas Hall, West Mills, NEWBURY RG14 5HG, from 10.00 am to 4.45 pm

The programme includes:

Recent archaeology in West Berkshire (Duncan Coe, West Berkshire Archaeology Service)
Prehistory and early history at AWE, Burghfield: recent finds (Andrew Holmes, Atkins Global)
Silchester: the Town Life Project 2011 (Mike Fulford, University of Reading)
Three Iron Age sites in Berkshire contrasted (Steve Ford, TVAS)
The destruction of Dyke Hills, Dorchester-on-Thames (Chris Welch, English Heritage)
Researching names on West Berkshire's war memorials (Phil Wood, West Berkshire War Memorials)
Medieval Reading at St Mary's Butts (Diana King, Foundations Archaeology)
New discoveries at Horton (Alistair Barclay, Wessex Archaeology)
Recent archaeology in East Berkshire (Mary Neale, Berkshire Archaeology)

The cost is £10 payable at the door. Parking for the disabled is adjacent and there is plenty of space in local car parks. Please bring a packed lunch or eat out at a nearby pub or restaurant. (**Trevor Coombs**)

The Annual General Meeting

This year's AGM took place at the start of the September meeting at RISC, London Street, Reading. The highlights of the meeting were a review by Andrew Hutt of the five years during his tenure as Chairman of the Society, the acceptance of the accounts for the year 2010-11, and the election of the new officers, trustees and Council members. The new officers are: Chairman, Trevor Coombs; Secretary, Andrew Hutt; Treasurer, Catherine Petts. The trustees are: John Chapman and Barrie Randall, and the Council members are: Cathy and Kevin Daisy (Librarians), Hugh Davis, Ann Griffin, Edna Goodburn, Anne Harrison (Membership Secretary), Janet Sharpe (Newsletter Editor) and Griselda Truscott-Wickes. The AGM ended with Andrew Hutt handing over responsibility for chairing the Society to Trevor Coombs. (**Andrew Hutt**)

IMPORTANT: MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

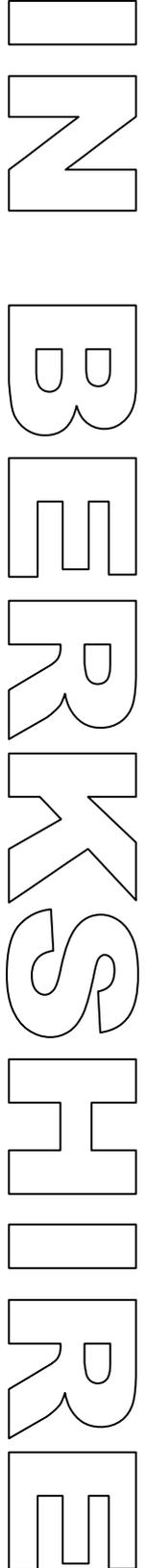
At the Society's AGM in September it was agreed to increase individual member subscriptions to £12 with £18 for family membership. Corporate membership rises to £18.

A large number of members currently pay by Standing Order in January. As the Society's financial year has been changed to run from April, could you please amend your standing orders to be paid instead on 10 April for the revised amount (£12 individual, £18 family). For those with internet access this can be done online, otherwise please contact your bank. **PLEASE ACTION THIS NOW – IT IS EASY TO FORGET.**

For those who pay by cheque there will be the normal reminder form in the Spring newsletter. Thank you for your co-operation. (**Anne Harrison – Membership Secretary**)

Society Meetings: Your Society Needs YOU!

Please come and support our Saturday afternoon talks at RISC (behind the shop at 35-39 London Street – not far from the town centre). All meetings start with refreshments from 2.00 and the talks begin at 2.30 pm. We have a range of topics to interest everyone, and these are presented by experienced speakers who are experts in their respective fields. Please refer to your Membership & Programme Card (distributed with the last newsletter) for details. Coming up soon are talks on **the archaeology of World War I** (Richard Osgood, 19 November) and **isotope analysis of Romano-British skeletons** (Hella Eckardt, 10 December). We hope to see you then!



Berkshire Historic Environment Forum

This annual Forum gives the Society an opportunity to discuss heritage matters with councillors, members of local history groups and fellow archaeologists from across Berkshire and to work with them to research heritage information and make it available to the public. This year's Forum took place on 24 September 2011 at the Tithe Barn, Purley-on-Thames with the theme: *Maps and Heritage Walks*.

There were six talks. **John Chapman** talked about the work of the Forum and in particular his work on war memorials (<http://www.project-purley.eu/BWM0000.htm>). **Amanda Holland** talked about the work History Pin is doing to collect heritage information in Reading and make it available on the internet. She has a large programme of work; for more details see <http://www.historypin.com/community-localprojects-reading-events/>. **Joan Dils** spoke about the work she is doing on the Berkshire Historic Atlas project. This is a major project producing new historic maps of Berkshire; for more information see <http://www.berkshirerecordsociety.org.uk/brsatlas.htm>. After coffee **Martyn Barber** from English Heritage spoke about the national mapping programme (<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/research/landscapes-and-areas/national-mapping-programme/>). He started with a history of aerial photography and went on to show lots of interesting aerial photographs of Berkshire. **Hugh Pihlens** of the Hungerford History Group gave us a rapid review of the Hungerford Virtual Museum website (<http://www.hungerfordvirtualmuseum.co.uk/>) which contains over 800 pages of material. It is a fine example of how to publish material about a town without resorting to a writing a book. Finally **Andrew Hutt** gave a presentation on the mapping initiatives being undertaken by the Berkshire Archaeological Society and the Ordnance Survey under their OpenData initiative (<http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/products/os-opensource.html>), followed by a survey of heritage walks available in and around Berkshire.

Thanks are due to all those members of the Society who helped to organise this event. I recommend that readers access the above websites. (**Andrew Hutt**)

Summer Walks ...

Hidden Wokingham

An evening walk led by **Anne Harrison** on Wednesday 22 June started at Wokingham Town Hall at 7.00pm and explored the façades of the Medieval hall houses and other buildings constructed up to and during the 18th century that can still be seen in Rose Street, Broad Street and Shute End.

The Silchester to Finchampstead Roman road

At around 9.30 am on Sunday 4 September, 10 members of the Society and BARG gathered in the car park at Silchester to walk along the line of the Roman road to Finchampstead. Their route took them across Calleva Atrebatum, past the University of Reading excavations now closed for the winter, and along the modern track to the site of the East Gate. From there they followed the line of the Devil's Highway to Riseley. They were delighted to find that the section from Butler's Lands to Fair Cross, which in the past has been notoriously muddy, had been made into a passable road but their joy was short-lived as just before Fair Cross it started to rain. At Fair Cross there was a pause at the junction with the Roman road running north-east towards Beech Hill. Unfortunately they were not able to see the triangular enclosure at this corner; the owners had put up a 6ft wooden fence. At Riseley, the group had a pub lunch at The Bull and those who had only wanted to walk from Silchester to Riseley were given a lift back to Silchester to pick up their cars. The rest walked on in the rain. Just south of Farley Hill on the banks of the Blackwater River the available footpaths head to the south of the Roman road, so the group walked via Eversley Bridge to Finchampstead – and the weather dried up. Coming across the fields from Eversley Bridge gave the group an opportunity to view both the line of the road and the site of the Roman enclave at Wheatland's Farm. This proved to be an enjoyable walk across some interesting country. (**Andrew Hutt**)

... and Autumn Talks

Beyond and between monuments on Boscombe Down

Alistair Barclay of Wessex Archaeology gave a fascinating talk on 17 September 2011 about the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age burials found adjacent to a housing estate on the edge of Amesbury, Wiltshire. The area, known as Boscombe Down, is about 3 miles from Stonehenge and is famous for the burial of the 'Amesbury Archer' who had an astonishing array of over 100 grave goods originating in the early Bronze Age. He had copper knives, 16 barbed and tanged arrow heads, a flint knapping kit and metalworking tools as well as five outstanding Beaker pots. The pots are decorated with fine parallel lines caused by pressing a fine cord into the wet clay. The archer even had two gold hair decorations securely dated to 2400 BC, although he was thought to have been buried about 100 years later. He was a member of a dominant elite group which had come from either the Preseli Mountains in Wales or central Europe, according to isotopic research. He was part of the community which brought metals to Britain and knew how to work them.

Boscombe Down is a remarkably rich area for late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age 'gathering' places, like the 50 m wide 'pit circle' of 30-40 large postholes dated to the late Neolithic by the 'grooved ware' pottery found in them. In another late Neolithic pit a hoard of 4000 flint tools was found, including 30 scrapers that looked as if they had been curated. The area had many other burials, an important one being that of 'Amber Boy', a 17-year-old male buried with 80-90 tiny amber beads approximately 3-4 mm in diameter. Another burial was that of 'Tall Boy', a 6ft 6in male who had been killed by a blow to the head but was buried with food in a beaker. The graves must have been marked on the surface since people came back to them and rearranged the bones; the Romans buried a horse pelvis and three children in Amber Boy's grave. Finally, we were told that the mass grave of the so-called 'Boscombe Bowmen' is an inaccurate description, since the grave contained three men, one teenage boy and three children, who had come from Wales and who may have been murdered. (**Trevor Coombs**)

Fancy objects in the British Iron Age

Jody Joy, Curator of the British and European Iron Age collections at the British Museum, has a particular interest in Iron Age torcs and feasting pots, and on 15 October he treated us to a veritable feast of decorated objects. The La Tène style of Celtic art reached Britain around 350 BC and shows a mixture of the earlier Hallstatt style with Etruscan, Greek and even Egyptian motifs. The art consists of both highly abstract curvilinear designs arranged into abstract patterns, and anthropomorphic or zoomorphic designs such as moustachioed men and horse faces. Decorated objects fall into four 'social arenas': martial objects deposited in rivers; feasting objects; horse gear; and objects related to personal appearance such as torcs and mirrors. The first category includes the famous 'Battersea shield' and comprises non-functional objects associated with the ideal of warfare. Feasting objects include cauldrons, buckets and 4-litre wooden tankards bound with decorated metal alloy bands. The Snettisham gold torc (c.75 BC), consisting of eight ropes each of eight wires twisted together and elaborate cast terminals, is probably the best known of this type of object. Torcs show evidence of wear; distortion of the wires at the back and terminals at different levels suggest they were opened by twisting and not simply pulled apart. About 300 torcs are known from Britain, and 250 of these came from Norfolk. The technology used to produce these decorated objects was advanced, including depletion gilding and lost-wax casting. They did not just reflect personal status but served to create social differentiation. (**Janet Sharpe**)

Berkshire Archaeology Needs You!

The Berkshire Archaeology Historic Environment Record (HER) is a collection of information built up over the decades from many sources and represents well over a century of archaeological investigation and research. Now available online for the first time through the Heritage Gateway (www.heritagegateway.org.uk), the HER is a dynamic and ever-increasing 'dataset' with new sites and finds being added as we are made aware of them and a lot of work going on in the background to check and refine existing records so that they are as accurate as possible. Almost 800 new sites and over 1000 archaeological 'events' (surveys, excavations and watching briefs, etc) have been added to the HER since Berkshire Archaeology came into existence in 2004.

We are now looking for a small number of volunteers to help us in this checking process, initially by looking at groups of our records online and telling us how easy everything is to use and whether there are simple improvements that could be made. We need 'critical friends' who are able to offer constructive feedback and the benefit of their experience so we can make sure our records are as useful and accessible as possible. We would also like to hear of any research, however small or local, that people are carrying out so we can share the results with the many users of the HER. We think some members of BAS will be uniquely placed to help us because we know there are people out there with a lot of knowledge about their local areas and sites or monuments of importance in their community. This is invaluable for the future development of the HER, which plays a very important role in planning and conservation on a local scale. It may also be a good opportunity for anybody wanting to learn more or become familiar with HERs and their workings!

If you are interested in helping us out, and in particular have a PC or laptop and access to the internet, then please contact either Fiona Macdonald or Teresa Hocking at info@berkshirearchaeology.org.uk and we will be delighted to hear from you.

Empires in Crisis

This was the title of a one-day joint workshop between the Centre for Institutional Performance, the Research Centre for Late Antique and Byzantine Studies and the School of Politics, Economics and International Relations, held at the University of Reading on 4 November and convened by Dr Ken Dark. An open invitation had been extended to our Society and several members attended.

A more accurate title, perhaps, would have been 'The Roman Empire in Crisis'. There were some excellent speakers. **Kevin Butcher** (University of Warwick) talked about 'Roman monetary stability' (or otherwise) based on the history of the debasement of silver coinage. The title of **Dominic Rathbone's** (Kings College, University of London) talk was inspired by a quotation from the Classical author Cassius Dio, who wrote 'When life for the Romans of that time descended from a reign of gold to one of iron, indeed of rust ...'. In 'The age of rust: the 3rd century AD crisis' he in fact described five crises: military disasters and barbarian invasions; the division of the empire; the replacement of aristocratic landowners by a military bureaucracy; cultural decline; and economic breakdown. **Annalisa Marzano** (University of Reading) then considered the archaeological evidence for economic decline shown by Roman villas in northern Italy ('Empires in crisis: what archaeology cannot tell us'). The accepted model holds that the number of

villas peaked in Umbria and Tuscany in the 1st century as wine and olive oil were exported to the provinces. The situation was then reversed as the provinces became self-sufficient and the Italian villas appeared to decline with signs of poor building maintenance, subdivided rooms and squatter occupation. However, recent research has shown that this was not necessarily the case as while some rooms were turned into workshops, lavish mosaic floors continued to be laid elsewhere in the building complex. The 'crisis' apparently did not diminish the annual demands of Rome for 105,400,000 litres of wine! **Sam Moorhead** (British Museum) used numismatic evidence from the Portable Antiquities Scheme to examine 'The collapse of the Roman economy in the Western Empire' and found that the rich remained incredibly rich, despite barbarian incursions. Britain has more late Roman silver coin hoards than any other province in the Roman empire, although in stark contrast some parts of Britain, notably the north-west, appear never to have had a monetary economy. Finally **David Petts** (Durham University), whom some of you will remember from this year's Spring Tour, showed how the Church maintained a cross-Channel exchange network and allowed Rome to retain some control over what happened in Britain in his talk, 'Rupture and transition in the Christian church in 5th century Britain'.

The meeting ended with some lively discussion and, needless to say, several parallels were drawn with the current situation in the Eurozone. (**Janet Sharpe**)

Berkshire Archaeology Research Group (BARG)

The BARG Winter Quarterly Open Meeting will be held on Thursday 19 January 2012 from 7.30 pm at The Cornerstone, Norreys Avenue, Wokingham RG40 1UE, when Dr Kevin Haywood (a former member) will talk about early Roman quarrying and building stone use in south-east England.

After the coffee/tea break, Trevor Ottlewski will show slides he took of the excavations at Beeches Manor, Wokingham, during the summer.

For more information, please contact Janet Firth (firth@doctors.org.uk or tel. 0118 978 7434). Visitors are very welcome; the charge is £2.

Adult education: Spring term 2012

WEA local branches

Website: <http://southern.wea.org.uk> and select branch required.

New courses include:

- Cultural anthropology (tutor Mark Anderson, Reading, Tuesday afternoons from 17 January)
- Saving Rome 1420-1530 (tutor Diana Matthews, Reading, Thursday afternoons from 19 January)
- Town churches (tutor Keith Hasted, Reading, Saturday study day 11 February)
- English country houses in the 20th century (tutor Adam Smith, Reading, Saturday study day 10 March)
- The Grand Tour (tutor Glenis Kerr Elliott, Wokingham, Thursday mornings from 5 January)
- The Stuart Age (tutor Sheila Ephraim, Wokingham, Tuesday afternoons from 10 January)
- Introduction to ancient Egypt (tutor John Billman, Wokingham, Saturday day school 31 March)

Oxford University courses in Reading and Woodley

Website: www.conted.ox.ac.uk

New courses include:

- Minoans (tutor Anna Simandiraki-Grimshaw, Whiteknights, Monday evenings from 16 January)
- Maiden Castle (tutor Jennifer Foster, Whiteknights, Wednesday evenings from 18 January)
- Common people: life in early modern England (tutor Sheila Ephraim, Woodley, Thursday mornings from 12 January)
- Life in the Romano-British countryside (tutor Roger Goodburn, Woodley, Thursday evenings from 12 January)

The copy date for the next newsletter is Friday 3 February 2012

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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