

# ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Spring 2013

Vol.15, No.1

## DAY SCHOOL REMINDER

The Society's annual day school returns to Wokingham this year with another exciting programme of recent archaeological work in Berkshire. It will be held on Saturday 2 March at The Cornerstone, Norreys Avenue, Wokingham RG40 1UE from 10.00 am to 4.30 pm, cost £10 payable at the door (please note that lunch is not provided). Please consult the BAS website ([www.berksarch.co.uk](http://www.berksarch.co.uk)) or contact Trevor Coombs ([t.coombs1@btopenworld.com](mailto:t.coombs1@btopenworld.com), tel. 01491 873166) for further details.

## Membership Subscriptions

Subscriptions to the Society are due in April 2013 for the year to April 2014, except for those who joined after 1 January 2013. Subscription rates are £12 for an individual and £18 for a couple at the same address and are due on 10 April.

A number of members already pay by Standing Order or the equivalent, and we are most grateful to them for this. A **renewal form is enclosed with this newsletter** for those who prefer to pay by cheque, and also to record any changes in a member's name, address, telephone number or email. The latter is particularly important as the bulk of communication with you now is carried out electronically. Thank you. (Anne Harrison - Membership Secretary - [anne@jaharrison.me.uk](mailto:anne@jaharrison.me.uk))

## ! NEWSLETTER EDITOR REQUIRED !

Janet Sharpe regrets to announce that she has to step down as BAS Newsletter Editor and a **successor is urgently required**. The post would suit anyone who enjoys writing, has an eye for detail, and can use Microsoft Word. All enquiries, please, to Andrew Hutt at [andrew\\_hutt@talktalk.net](mailto:andrew_hutt@talktalk.net), tel. 0118 973 2882.

## A Review of the Berkshire Archaeology Research Library

This research library was established in summer 2007 and consists of books, journals, pamphlets and maps held in 39 plastic boxes kept in the homes of members of BAS and the Berkshire Archaeology Research Group. Over the last five years these boxes have been used by members doing research into the archaeology of Berkshire.

However, not enough people have taken advantage of these publications. For this reason, **it is planned to hold a review of the library from 3-7 June**. The boxes will be collected in, checked to ensure that the material is still required, and then returned to their keepers. If you would like to keep some boxes, would like to keep some different boxes, have had enough of keeping boxes, or would like to help with the review, please contact me. (Andrew Hutt)

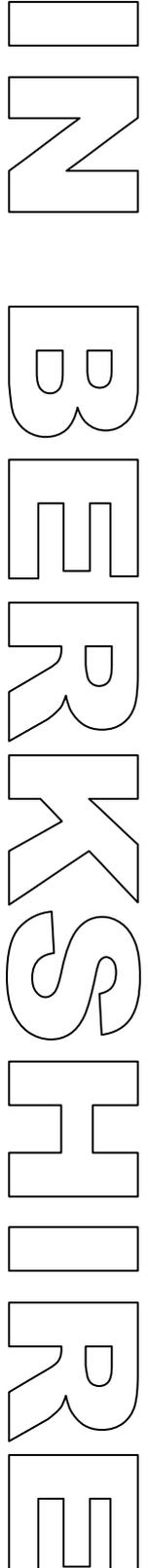
## BAS Saturday Afternoon Meetings

Please continue to support these meetings at RISC, London Street, Reading RG1 4PS, at 2.00 for a 2.30 pm start. Coming soon:

'Coming off the flint standard: Grimes Graves and the quest for black gold' by Gillian Varndell on **16 February**.

'The health of the Romano-British children of Poundbury Camp' by Mary Lewis on **16 March**, preceded by a BAS Council Meeting at 10.30 am.

'Bronze Age and Roman finds in a Medieval Deer Park at Warren Wood' by Andy Ford on **20 April**.



## Recent BAS Saturday Afternoon Talks

### A Visit to the Berkshire Record Office

Peter Durrant gave a special presentation to BAS members on 17 November 2012 in the Berkshire Record Office, describing the BRO's collection of maps of Berkshire. These range in date from early 17th century estate maps, through early 18th century enclosure and tithe maps to the first Ordnance Survey maps published in the 19th century – and lots of other maps besides, including John Rocque's 'Map of the County of Berkshire' published in 1761 at the scale of two inches to the mile. Peter explained the purpose of maps, their limitations and their potential for research. We were treated to an exciting display of maps of all types and ages, starting with the 1609 Bisham estate map and working through to late 19th century OS maps. Many of the maps were works of art in themselves, decorated with beautiful miniature paintings of grand houses and churches, elaborate compass roses and coats of arms. Some of the BRO's collection of old Berkshire maps have been digitised as part of a project to illustrate the history of the British countryside and farming between 1736 and 1914. These include 190 enclosure maps and 158 land awards covering the old county of Berkshire, and they may be consulted at [www.berkshireenclosure.org.uk](http://www.berkshireenclosure.org.uk). (Janet Sharpe)

### The Anglo-Saxons in the Thames Valley

Anne Dodd (Oxford Archaeology) gave a fascinating talk on 8 December 2012, covering the three main periods of Saxon settlement on the banks of the River Thames. The early period was one of migration and settlement (AD 400-500), followed by the middle Saxon period of kings, rich princes, Christian bishops and churches (7th and 8th centuries), and the late Saxon period of major towns, law making and cathedrals and minsters, with burhs, manors and large castles (9th to 11th centuries). Much of the evidence for the migration period comes from gravel pits excavated beside the Thames which have exposed the cemeteries of these Germanic people. Men were buried with their weaponry, whilst the women were buried with jewellery that often demonstrated their status: square-headed brooches were the prerogative of the upper class whereas saucer brooches were for lower orders. Some family groups have been identified by genetic defects, such as bony outgrowths on the skull. The people were industrious in their specialist crafts of weaving wool and making bone tools and combs, which they carried out in the 'sunken featured buildings' which abound on all these early sites. By the late 6th century warring kings such as Ceawlin (King of Wessex,

AD 550-593) had invaded the Thames area but a stable society continued with the appointment of St Birinus (AD 634-650) as the first bishop of the West Saxons based at Dorchester. The 7th century was a growth period for Christianity with the construction of St Frideswide's Abbey in Oxford, and other minster churches in Oxford, Eynsham and Cirencester. Meanwhile the rich were getting richer and lived in large wooden halls up to 25m long; they served as tribal leaders and were wealthy farmers, such as the owner of the large hall and granary at Eynsham. In AD 870 the Vikings invaded and made their headquarters at Reading, but Alfred pushed them back into the 'Danelaw' country and built defended burhs at many places, including Wallingford, Oxford and Cricklade. (Trevor Coombs)

### Recent Work at Dorchester

On 19 January 2013 Paul Booth (Oxford Archaeology) presented Roman Dorchester as a successful town, evidenced by its persistence well into the 5th century AD and the recent discovery of a large extra-mural suburb to the east of the river Thames at Overy. Evidence from current excavations and excavations by Sheppard Frere in the early 1960s shows that elite houses were being built as late as AD 395 and a possible *mansio* existed very close to the present trench since high class hypocaust flue tiles have been found. Professor Frere believed he had also found a Roman fortlet built c. AD 50, but this has not yet been confirmed. Other evidence for the longevity of Roman Dorchester is the high percentage of coins that were issued between AD 388 and 402: these formed 28% of the total number of coins found in the town. In contrast, only 6% of the coins from Silchester belonged to this late period. The reason for this remains a mystery that could be explained by traders working along the Thames. Evidence for Saxon immigrants comes from 'sunken featured buildings', thousands of potsherds, and Germanic-style belt buckles and throwing axes from burials. One of the finest of these buckles ever to be found in England came from Dorchester: it has 'punched' decoration and an animalistic curvilinear design. Two late Roman/early Saxon cemeteries, at Queensford Farm and Berinsfield, contained both male and female Saxon graves with metal buckles and belt-ends. The male burials also included throwing axes and the female ones were accompanied by Roman-style bow brooches. The Romano-Saxon transition at Dorchester requires further investigation. (Trevor Coombs)

---

## The Dorchester Dig

In 2007 the Dorchester Research Project was set up by Oxford Archaeology and the University of Oxford as a community project to explore the archaeological potential of the Dorchester area by combining fieldwork with a reassessment of earlier published and unpublished data. Excavation has been focused on the allotments that lie in the centre of the village, and is peeling back the layers to expose the Saxon and (so far) the late Roman periods.

Several members of the BAS attended the Dorchester Dig Open Day on 21 July 2012 and we were shown around the site by Dave Wilkinson. The trench, reopened from the previous dig in 2010, is located in what was the central part of this small 'bijou' Roman walled town. However, the only clear Roman features to have emerged so far are the surface of the road that ran north-south through the town, and a long line of foundation material that marks the front of a late Roman building lying parallel to but set back from the road, with a gravel yard in front of it. The foundations appeared to be of poor quality and incorporated bits of old tile and animal

bone; nevertheless they could have supported a substantial timber superstructure above a dwarf wall. This feature had been cut by a late 4th century ditch which provided a *terminus ante quem* for the building.

Most visible features were pits or ditches. The former are thought to be late, representing activity in the 5th-7th centuries, but there were several late Roman ditches, most of which were aligned parallel or at right angles to the road line and possibly marked property boundaries. In contrast, the ditch that cut through the building curved round to enclose a large midden area, with fragments of stone, bone and pottery showing on the trench surface.

The latest Roman road surface had been metalled with gravel but in several places it had been crudely patched with building rubble. A Saxon sunken featured building (SFB or grubenhaus) with a massive post hole at each end fronted directly on to the Roman road, suggesting that it was still in use at the time and hence the repairs.



Magnetometry survey of part of the extra-mural suburb of Dorchester (*South Midlands Archaeology*, 41 (2011): 36)  
© Roger Ainslie

Only the later (3rd century onward) Roman levels have been excavated so far. The pottery found is almost all Oxford ware, including imitation Samian together with some real Samian imports. It appears that the centre of the walled town was largely open space during the late Roman period, perhaps forming a market place. According to Dave Wilkinson, as yet there is no direct evidence for the existence of a *mansio* at Dorchester, although its presence has been inferred by comparison with other small Roman towns. The early history of the town is uncertain. Coin evidence suggests the presence of a Roman military fort controlling the road and river crossing around AD 60, at the time of the Boudiccan rebellion when there was great unrest. The extensive extramural suburb, recently identified by a geophysical survey of the field to the east of the river Thames, is thought from its layout to have been built in the 2nd century.

With regard to the veracity of the famous 'Roman altar', purportedly discovered in the 18th century but now missing and considered by some to have been a fake, we were told that opinion is apparently evenly divided. If this altar really was erected by the *beneficiarius consularis*, Marcus Varius Severus, then Dorchester has some claim to fame – but how can we be sure?

The 2013 Dorchester Dig Open Day will take place on Saturday 20 July from 12 noon to 5.00 pm. If you would like to take part in the dig this summer, please contact Wendy Morrison at [wendy.morrison@arch.ox.ac.uk](mailto:wendy.morrison@arch.ox.ac.uk). (Janet Sharpe)

---

## The Berkshire Building Record

It has been proposed that the Berkshire Archaeological Society should initiate and manage a project to record buildings that have a historic and/or heritage value in Berkshire. This proposal, which is still to be approved by the BAS Council, emerged from the recent Berkshire Historic Environment Forum concerning timber-framed buildings held in Wokingham last October when it was recognised that recording buildings could represent a major contribution to the planning process.

The project is envisaged as assisting and encouraging BAS members and local history societies in Berkshire to identify and record buildings according to parish. In each parish, candidate buildings will be identified from documentary and online sources. Once the list has been established, the owners will be approached for permission to record the buildings. The information gathered will be held online on the Berkshire Building Record database, which it is hoped will provide a major resource for future studies of historic buildings in the county.

For more details contact Andrew Hutt or Barrie Randall

---

**Coming soon!** There will be an exhibition of ancient **Greek pottery at Reading Museum** from 5 March to 8 September 2013, and a lunchtime talk about the Museum's collection by Stuart Kennedy on Wednesday 6 March at 1.00-1.30 pm (£2, pay on the day).

## Other Societies

### Berkshire Archaeological Research Group (BARG)

Wednesday 6 March: The BARG Spring Quarterly Meeting will be held in the De Vitre Room, The Cornerstone, Wokingham RG40 1UJ, from 7.30 pm. Ann Griffin and Joy Blake will talk about 'Excavations at Cookham Paddock in 2005'. After the break Andrew Hutt will describe the recent BARG geophysics survey at Ffiennes Farm, Littlewick Green.

Saturday 27 April: Roman pottery workshop at The Bailiff's Cottage, Barkham, with Lorraine Mepham from Wessex Archaeology. The number of places is limited and will be available on a first come, first served basis. Please contact Lindsey Bedford for details, tel. 01635 868518, [linbee2@hotmail.com](mailto:linbee2@hotmail.com).

### South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group (SOAG)

Meetings are held at Goring Heath Parish Hall, Whitchurch Hill, at 7.30 for 7.45 pm. Visitors £3, members free. For more details visit the SOAG website at <http://www.soagarch.org.uk>.

Thursday 28 February: 'Finding the people in the pottery', a talk by Lisa Brown (Oxford Archaeology).

Thursday 28 March: 'The planning of Roman roads in Britain', a talk by John Poulter.

### Marlow Archaeology (MAS)

Meetings are held in the Garden Room, Liston Hall, Marlow SL7 1DD, starting at 8.00 pm.

Visitors £3.50, members £2.50. See the MAS website at <http://www.marlow-archaeology.org>.

Thursday 14 March: 'Hands across the water: lords and lordships in the honour of Wallingford 1066-1166', a talk by Katharine Keats-Rohan.

Thursday 11 April: 'The lost manor house of Great Marlow', a talk by Janet Smith.

### Archaeology in Marlow (AiM)

Meetings are held in the Garden Room, Liston Hall, Marlow SL7 1DD, starting at 8.00 pm.

Visitors £3.50, members £2.50. See <http://www.archaeologyinmarlow.org.uk/>.

Thursday 21 February: 'local National Trust sites', a talk by Gary Marshall.

Thursday 21 March: 'A tour of Medieval Marlow', a talk by Andy Ford.

### Thames Valley Ancient Egypt Society (TVAES)

See [www.tvaes.org.uk](http://www.tvaes.org.uk) for details of the lecture programme and other activities.

---

## Adult Education: Summer Term 2013

### WEA Reading Branch

Website: <http://southern.wea.ork.uk>.

#### New courses include:

'More Thames-side town and village walks', led by Richard Wilson; six historic walks in Sonning, Wargrave, Marlow, Cookham, Windsor and Eton, starting Tuesday 9 April at 2.00 pm (£52).

'Daily life of the ancient Romans', by Virginia Campbell; seven meetings at the Hamilton Centre, 135 Bulmershe Road, Reading RG1 5SG, starting Monday 15 April at 10.30 am (£60).

### Oxford University Courses in Reading ...

Reading courses are held at the London Road campus from 7.00-9.00 pm. Ten meetings cost £145. See [www.conted.ox.ac.uk/](http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/) for more details, online courses, and courses in Oxford.

#### New courses include:

'Britannia: the archaeology of a Roman imperial province', by Mark Grahame, starting on

Wednesday 24 April.

'Beginning hieroglyphics', by Nicholas West, starting on Thursday 25 April.

### ... and at Woodley

'Humps and bumps', by Jennifer Foster, starting on Tuesday 22 April at Waingels College, Woodley RG5 4RF, from 10.00 am; six meetings including field trips to archaeological sites (£145).

## 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.

#### Officers of the Society:

**Chairman:** Trevor Coombs  
01491 873 166  
[t.coombs1@btopenworld.com](mailto:t.coombs1@btopenworld.com)

**Secretary:** Andrew Hutt  
0118 973 2882  
[andrew\\_hutt@talktalk.net](mailto:andrew_hutt@talktalk.net)

**Treasurer:** David Lewis  
[dglx10@hotmail.com](mailto:dglx10@hotmail.com)

**Programme Organiser:**  
Trevor Coombs

**Day School Organiser:**  
Trevor Coombs

**Excursion Organiser:**  
Barrie Randall  
0118 983 2607  
[banda.burghfield@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:banda.burghfield@hotmail.co.uk)

**Newsletter Editor:** Janet Sharpe  
01491 202 552  
[janet@jrs Sharpe83.plus.com](mailto:janet@jrs Sharpe83.plus.com)

**Librarian:** To be announced

**For more information about the Society and membership details contact the Chairman: Trevor Coombs on 01491 873 166.**

[www.berksarch.co.uk](http://www.berksarch.co.uk)  
email: [info@berksarch.co.uk](mailto:info@berksarch.co.uk)