



ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Autumn 2015

Vol.17, No.3

Dates for your diary

- Wednesday 2nd September 2015:** **Anglo-Saxon Discussion Group**, RISC Conference room 3, 14:00 to 16:00 organised by Andrew Hutt
- Wednesday 9th September 2015:** **Visit to Silchester Insula III**, meet at Silchester car park 13:30 for a site visit at 14:00, organised by Trevor Coombs
- Saturday 19th September 2015** **AGM and Lecture: Wiltshire's secret underground city and Berkshire's underground bunkers** by Barrie Randall, RISC Main Hall 14:00 to 16:00 – see page 2 for details
- Wednesday 30th September 2015** **Anglo-Saxon Discussion Group**, RISC Conference room 3 14:00 to 16:00
- Saturday 17th October 2015** **Lecture: How did they make those beautiful things: metal working in Roman Britain** by Justine Bayley, RISC Main Hall 14:00 to 16:00
- Saturday 31st October 2015** **Berkshire Historic Environment Forum** Purley Barn, Purley 10:00 to 16:00 organised by Andrew Hutt - see page 4 for details
- Wednesday 4th November 2015** **Anglo-Saxon Discussion Group** RISC Conference room 3 14:00 to 16:00 organised by Andrew Hutt
- Saturday 21st November 2015** **Lecture: Mesolithic and Paleolithic archaeology in the Kennet Valley** by Cathie Barnett, RISC Main Hall 14:00 to 16:00:
- Wednesday 2nd December 2015** **Anglo-Saxon Discussion Group** RISC Conference room 3, 14:00 to 16:00 organised by Andrew Hutt
- Saturday 12th December 2015** **Lecture: Archaeology on holiday** by BAS members, RISC Main Hall 14:00 to 16:00:

From our Chairman

Dear Members,

I am happy to see that more and more members are joining the activities of the Society. Archaeology covers a vast field of enquiry which can utilise the expertise of all our members and enrich the activities of the Society. Suggestions are always welcome and we have discovered that we are a very friendly group who enjoy visiting the hostelrys local to our venues.

The Heart of England tour in May was the highlight of the year. Many thanks go to Ron and Vinnie, who are already issuing invitations to join the Cornish Tour next year. The May visit to the Blounts Court excavation demonstrated the need to continue next year, as the edge of a further building was discovered. Visits to –Anglo-Saxon Berkshire, Saxon Oxford led by Julian Munby and Anne Dodds (Oxford Archaeology) - Reading University's Marden Henge, in the Vale of Pewsey and the amazing Oxford & Cotswold Archaeology site at Meadow Park, Thame – kept members exploring new corners of our area. Geophysics work led by Andrew, is just concluding at La Hyde in the Pangbourne area, where there is a suspicion of a deserted medieval village.

Just as we were packing up our kit for the August break and looking forward to the Saxon Group meeting on Wednesday 2 September and Barrie's 'Underground' lecture on September 19th, Andrew received an invitation from DJ, Mike Read to bring the geophysics team to investigate the lawn at the BBC's Caversham Park. Irresistible! Look forward to the September News Sheet.

Ann Griffin

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Annual General Meeting 2014

The AGM will take place on Saturday 19 September 2015 at RISC, London Street, Reading. Refreshments will be served from 2.00

There are vacancies on the BAS Council for **Secretary** and **newsletter editor**; for more information, please contact Ann Griffin.

All nominations for Council membership, proposed and seconded, must reach the Acting Secretary (Andrew Hutt, 19 Challenor Close, Wokingham RG40 4UJ; andrew_hutt@talktalk.net) BEFORE 5th September 2015.

The Agenda for the AGM

- 1) Apologies for Absence
- 2) Minutes of the AGM held on 20th September 2014
- 3) Matters Arising
- 4) Chairman's Report
- 5) Treasurer's Report
- 6) Librarian's Report
- 8) Election of Officers of the Society
- 9) Election of Council Members
- 10) Appointment of the Independent Examiner
- 11) Any Other Business

The AGM will be followed by a talk by Barrie Randall on *Wiltshire's secret underground city and Berkshire's underground bunkers*.
Andrew Hutt

Spring Tour 2015

On Friday 8th May twenty-four members of BAS and BARG left a murky Reading en route for "The Heart of England". Our first visit was to Kenilworth Castle with its recently re-instated Elizabethan Garden where we had a guided tour. Our next stop was Coventry where tour members were free to visit places of interest at their leisure. For those who wished to participate Barrie Randall gave two very interesting talks one outside and the other within the new cathedral. Some members chanced upon and attended a brief service of reconciliation, conducted in the remains of the fire bombed old cathedral, in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of VE Day. Our last visit of the day was to Castle Ring Iron Age Hill Fort. As by this time the weather god had turned against us only the hardier members of the tour ventured out of the coach.

On Saturday morning we set off for Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site. Our first visit was to Blists Hill Open Air Museum, a Victorian town re-creation. From there the coach took us to Ironbridge where members were free to visit the



The 2015 tourists

Museum of the Gorge, Ironbridge and Toll House, Coalport China Museum, Tar Tunnel, Jackfield Tile Museum or the Broseley Pipeworks as they pleased. In the middle of the afternoon the coach took us on to Coalbrookdale where members had the choice of visiting the Museum of Iron, the Darby Houses or Ingenuity as they wished.

Our first visit on Sunday was to Much Wenlock where members visited the remains of the medieval Cluniac Priory and explored the picturesque town which formed around it. Our next stop was the historic market town of Shrewsbury, the county town of Shropshire. Here members were free to follow the suggested town walk and visit places of interest as they pleased. In preparation for our final stop of the day many visited the Roman Gallery at the Museum which has an impressive collection of finds from Wroxeter (Viroconium). Our visit to Wroxeter commenced with a guided tour. Afterwards members were free to wander about the site, to visit the small on site museum and the Roman villa constructed about 5 years ago for a C4 series. Some members ventured the half mile or so to St Andrew's Church which features some dressed stone from the Roman city.

On our return drive on Monday morning we stopped at Stokesay Castle. Members were free to visit the castle and nearby church at their leisure. Many also took refreshments outside in the grounds, taking advantage of the first real sunshine of this tour. Our final stop was Hereford where members were given a ticket to visit, at their leisure, the chained library, the Mappa Mundi and the Magna Carta, all housed in an extension to the cathedral. Members also visited the Cathedral and the historic town.

On behalf of all the 2015 tour members many and sincere thanks to our driver, Karl, to the Tour Working Party (Tony Wilson, Griselda Truscot-Wicks, Barrie and Annette Randall) for their suggestions and support and to Ron and Vinny Knowles for organising another excellent tour.
Julie Worsfold

Walks and Visits

Anglo-Saxon Old Berkshire

On Wednesday 3rd June 2015, some 15 members of the Society met at St Andrew's Church, Boxford to look at the chancel and a wooden window with a shutter dating from the 11th century.

Next the group visited Wickham church to look at the tower which was originally built as a free-standing defensive tower in the 11th century.

From there the group visited Uffington Castle to visually trace the line of an Anglo-Saxon charter bound which threaded its way across the fields below the hillfort, and then followed it on foot through the north and south gates and along a Bronze Age ditch leading towards two barrows.

Wantage was the group's next stop. They enjoyed lunch in the museum and a brief visit to the market place.

The picture below shows the group standing on Schutchumer Knob, an Anglo-Saxon meeting place high on the ridge. The visit ended with the group standing on a foot path leading through the arable oval at Peasemore. These ovals were an early form of communal field systems.

Andrew Hutt



Standing on Scutchumer Knob

Tour of Medieval Oxford

On 20th June 2015, a group of members explored the medieval nooks and passages guided by Julian Munnby of Oxford Archaeology. Julian has excavated on most of the central Oxford sites since 1965 and knows the history of them as well. We each received a copy of Loggans 17th century map of Oxford and started our tour at the Saxon Castle beside its Norman Mount. We saw the window from which Matilda escaped from the castle in 1141 by sliding down sheets on to the frozen millstream and followed the Thames to Wallingford, thus escaping the siege by King Stephen. The medieval castle occupied a large area and we followed its wall through narrow passages which formed the perimeter. Following the route of Oxford's town wall, we came to the church of St. Michael at the North gate built with a tower c. 1140. Next door was the city's prison where the martyrs were held by Bloody Mary in 1555 before being burned at the stake in Broad Street. Just off this street, we entered Catte Street to look at a pre-reformation frieze which had somehow not been

destroyed by the puritans under Edward VI. The frieze on St. Mary's chapel, Hertford College depicts the Annunciation by Gabriel, dressed in feather leggings, telling the Blessed Virgin Mary that she was pregnant with Jesus. We saw the inscribed marks on the paving representing the town wall in the precinct of the Bodleian Library. And just at the rear of the Bodleian, we stopped to hear about the Radcliffe Camera. This library opened in 1749 with a librarian called Francis Wise who accepted books on any subject. It later became part of the University's Bodleian group of libraries. It was funded by a grant of £40,000 by an Oxford doctor, Dr. John Radcliffe. At the end of a two hour tour we sat down to a welcome lunch at Zizzi's Italian restaurant.

Trevor Coombs

Visit to Marden Henge and Devizes Museum

On 8th July 2015, we met in Franco's Italian restaurant, Devizes (recommended) and after lunch walked to Devizes Museum where we were met by the director, David Dawson. He conducted us around the Neolithic collection where the gold items and Grooved ware are regarded as the best in Britain. The most spectacular are the gold items excavated by William Cunnington in 1808 from the 'Bush Barrow'. Cunnington was the first English archaeologist, as opposed to being an antiquarian because he wrote a detailed report for each of his many excavations. The man in the burial was one of the most important people of his time; he could have been a warrior, priest or chief. He was buried in a foetal position about 1900 BC with a dagger with a wooden handle into which 140,000 tiny gold studs had been impressed. Each stud was thinner than a human hair, 1mm in length and had been shaped from gold wire with a point and circular head. Conveniently placed was a microscope to look at them. The handle had been varnished with pine gum and a sharp bronze point used to make a hole for each one. The man had a gold belt hook decorated by curved lines which follow the shape of the 'plate' and the curve of the hook. It was made of gold sheet wrapped around a wooden backing, made from three interlocking pieces of wood. Largest of all was a lozenge made of sheet gold wrapped around a thin piece of wood. The design is laid out with great accuracy and indicates that its creator had knowledge of mathematics, geometry, and astronomy, since the angle at each corner is 80 degrees, the same as the position of the sun on the horizon at the summer and winter solstices.

The museum has the largest collection in the Britain of Grooved ware pots, which attracts academics, these and the displays of a Neolithic shaman (more gold) with jangly animal bones hanging from his belt and the collection of arrows designed to kill pigs, makes the museum well worth visiting.

We moved on to Marden Henge where Dr Jim Leary and students from the University of Reading are excavating part of the 35 acre henge, the largest in Britain. It has a ditch and internal bank and it was used for community gatherings for feasting and performing religious ceremonies. The current excavation is close to the southern entrance where a 10 x 10m trench has uncovered the base of a rectangular Neolithic



The group standing on the bank of Marden Henge

house which contained an unusually large hearth and was made of small diameter timber with animal skins thrown over as a roof. Adjacent to the house was another large hearth. The question arises, was it a domestic house, or was it a special place for some sort of ceremony? Dr Leary gave his hypothesis, that it could have been a Neolithic 'hot house', i.e. a sauna where people could 'purify' themselves before engaging in other ceremonies. The concept being that stones were heated on the external hearth and carried into the 'house', put on the hearth and dowsed with water from the nearby River Avon to create a steamy atmosphere.

There are other Neolithic sites in Britain, notably at Skara Bray, Orkney where houses have been interpreted as saunas. Native American Indians still carry out the practice. All agreed it had been an enlightening day.

Trevor Coombs

BAS Visit to Thames Meadow Park

On Thursday 9th July thirteen BAS members met at Thame Meadow Park. We were joined by some members of SOAG (South Oxfordshire Archaeology Group) and Marlow Archaeological Society.

The site is being excavated by Oxford Archaeology and Cotswold Archaeology, working in collaboration, before development by Bloor Homes.

After an introductory talk the local society members were asked to split into three mixed groups to tour the site which is on the north facing slope of the valley of the Thames.

To date this complex site has revealed use during the Neolithic, Iron Age, Roman, Saxon and Medieval periods.

In the finds hut, members were invited to handle Neolithic flints and pottery; Iron Age pottery and bone tools; Roman pottery, querns, a ring and a brooch; Saxon pottery, bone tools and a beautifully crafted bone hair comb.

On the site itself members were shown; a rare Neolithic causewayed enclosure (it is thought that there are only around 80 of these discovered so far across the whole country); a Neolithic henge monument; part of an Iron Age round house and enclosures; a Roman well, two corn dryers and the Roman field system which follows the contours of the land; the sites of Saxon Gruebenhauser, one which revealed a gravel floor and another which had evidently burnt down whilst still in use, leaving the doughnut shaped pottery warp weights in situ.

Many thanks to Ann Griffin for organising the visit to this fascinating site.

Julie Worsfold

Berkshire Historic Environment Forum

Berkshire's parishes

Who lived on the land?
When did they live there?
What did they do there?

The next meeting of the Forum will take place on Saturday 31st October 2015 in The Barn, Goosecroft Lane, off Beech Road, Purley on Thames RG8 8DR.

The programme will include presentations on:

- The history and archaeology of Wargrave and Hurley
- The history and archaeology of Pangbourne
- The Berkshire archaeology mapping project

This meeting is an opportunity to discuss the work that members of the Society have undertaken on sites in and around these parishes and to consider possible future projects.

The cost of this event is £10 to be paid at the door. For more details contact Andrew Hutt or John Chapman.

Geophysics and surveying working group

Caversham Park

On Monday 13th July 2015, the Society's Geophysics Working Group started work at the BBC site at Caversham Park in response to an invitation from Mike Read, the DJ and presenter, to survey the gardens in front of Caversham Park House. Mike wanted us on site because he is about to publish a History of Caversham Park and had carried out some metal detecting and found metalwork dating from the English Civil War and thereafter, and wanted to see whether there were any archaeological remains.

The project was jointly sponsored by the Society and the Berkshire Archaeology Research Group.

The working group carried out a resistivity survey, the results are which are shown below.

Caversham Park House is to the north of this figure and the results show lots of anomalies. From left to right and top to bottom they include:

- A line of high resistance anomalies across the top of the figure. They run parallel to and some 20m away from the existing house along the line of terrace and a bank. They may represent the remains of walls supporting the terrace or the remains of an earlier building
- In the centre of the figure there is a square anomaly which may correspond to an garden feature shown on a plan of the garden dating to 1730
- At the eastern end there are two rectangular anomalies which may represent the remains of buildings

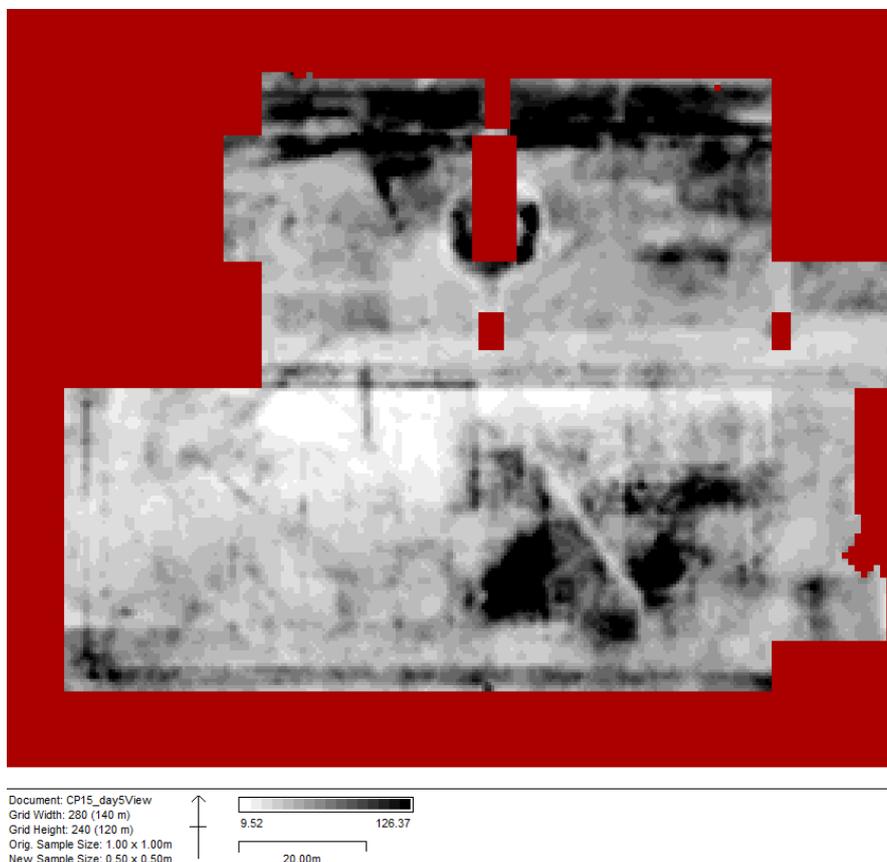
- Across the middle of the figure, there is an anomaly which may represent the remains of a canal shown on the 1730 plan
- Below this there are a number of large rectangular anomalies running at 45° across the figure
- Across the bottom edge of the figure are some circular anomalies and a large area of high resistance. The grandfather of a child at a school where Ann Griffin was teaching told her that during World War II, he was stationed on an anti-aircraft battery overlooking the Thames in Earley and that there was a similar battery at Caversham Park. Such a battery would have consisted of guns surrounded by shoulder high sandbag walls, plus adjacent concrete buildings to house the gunners. These anomalies may represent the remains of a three gun anti-aircraft position

The members of the Society who worked on this site were: Martin Labram, David Wallace, Tim Lloyd, Anne Griffin, Anne Harrison, Nigel Spencer, Margaret Boltwood, and Anne Hutt.

What next?

The main challenge facing the Geophysics and Surveying Working group is writing up the two reports summarised on pages 5 and 6 and the geophysics survey carried out at Blounts Court.

Once these reports are available we are expecting to return to both sites for the next instalment of investigations.



Results of the resistivity survey at Caversham Park

La Hyde

Tuesday 30th June 2015 saw the start of a geophysics survey at Home Farm, Sulham Lane, on the site of a deserted village known as La Hyde. The settlement was named in Domesday and was occupied until the 18th century when the Hyde family built Purley Hall and the settlement was abandoned.

The first part of the work on the site was a gradiometer survey of the whole of the field to the north and west of Home Farm. The results are shown alongside. From left to right and north to south the results survey show:

- A linear anomaly which is evidence of the pipeline from AWE at Aldermaston to the River Thames
- A linear anomaly which is evidence of an oil pipeline which is part of the national oil pipeline network

The position of these pipelines was governed by the fact that they all pass through the Great Western Railway bridge just to the north of the site

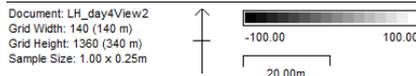
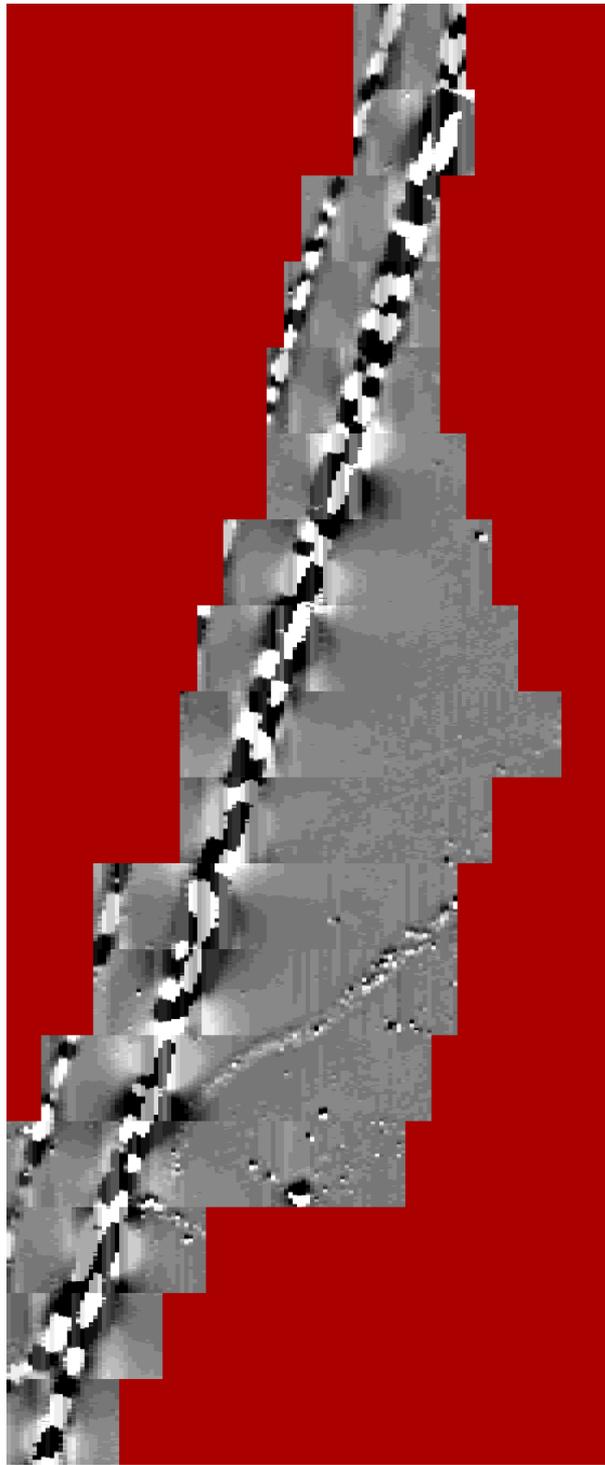
- A curved diagonal anomaly which is a ditch which is probably the northern boundary of the La Hyde settlement
- In the bottom left hand corner anomalies which probably represent buildings

A topological survey was carried out of the area up to and including the curved diagonal anomaly.

The members of the Society who worked on the site were: Martin Labram, Tim Lloyd, Jen Lewis, Margaret Boltwood, and Anne Hutt.

On 14th July, some 14 members of the Society enjoyed lunch together at the Greyhound at Tidmarsh and visited the site.

Andrew Hutt



Results of gradiometer survey at La Hyde

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:

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Input to the newsletter

If you have an archaeological story which you feel would interest the Society, please send it to Andrew Hutt the acting newsletter editor by November 2015.