



ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Winter 2018

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Dates for your diary

Saturday 15 December 2018 Talks by BAS Members **Napoleonic munitions factory at Weedon Beck**, by Catherine Petts, **Excavations at High Wood**, by Alan Hall, **Elite Buildings in Silchester**, by Andrew Hutt. Main Hall, RISC, 14.00 to 16.00 p.m.

Saturday 19 January 2019 Lecture **Experimental Archaeology**, by Jennifer Foster.

Wednesday 6 February 2019 **The Study Group**. Brock Keep, 571 Oxford Road, 12.a.m. to 3 p.m.

Saturday 16 February 2019 Lecture **Grave Goods: objects and death in later British prehistory**, by Duncan Garrow.

Wednesday 6 March 2019 **The Study Group**.

Saturday 16 March 2019 Lecture **Classis Britannica**, by Simon Elliot.

Wednesday 3 April 2019 **The Study Group**.

Saturday 6 April 2019 **Day School** at Cornerstone, Wokingham.

From the Chair

I thought I would start my first report as Chair with a few words about myself and my background since, although I have been a member of BAS since 2014, I may be pretty much 'an unknown quantity' to many of you. I moved back to Reading in 2007 after some 25 years working in the Middle East as an archaeologist. I worked mainly for the Council for British Research in the Levant, based in Jordan, of which I ultimately became Director. Since then my interests have developed in diverse ways ranging from leading the refurbishment of a local Jordanian museum to lecturing on heritage management to organising bespoke tours to the Middle East and North Africa. Through all of these activities has run the thread of my passion for encouraging public engagement with the heritage and landscape. And it is that passion which I see at the core of the Berkshire Archaeology Society of which I feel very privileged to have been elected as Chair. I have spent these first few months talking to your Committee and to several members about the Society – reflecting on what works well and plans for the future. This process is on-going so don't be taken aback if I come up to you at one of the Saturday lectures for 'a brief conversation'! Please feel free to contact me with ideas and feedback about Society activities through info@berksarch.co.uk.

Enough about me. This quarter – as with all quarters in my experience of BAS – has been one filled by learning opportunities, scholarly outcomes, solutions to thorny logistic issues, and shared enthusiasm. Our winter lecture series got off to a flying start while the Study Group continued to explore the Roman presence in Berkshire. The BAJ volume 'Land of the Atrebates: In and around Roman Berkshire' was published and will be an extremely useful research tool for a wide readership – the contributors and our very own editorial team of Andrew Hutt and Catherine Petts are to be congratulated. A new home in Woodley was found for the BAS library of books and journals. Several members took part in the Berkshire Archaeology and Wessex Archaeology-organised 'Old Windsor Project' and plans for BAS fieldwork in 2019 were developed. An active and vibrant society indeed!

Alison McQuitty

BERKSHIRE

The AGM

The Annual General Meeting on Saturday 15 September 2018 was attended by 28 members and chaired by Andrew Hutt following the retirement of Ann Griffin as Chairman. A report of Society activities was given by Andrew and the Treasurer's report was approved.

The following officers and members of the Council were elected:

Chair Alison McQuitty

Secretary Anne Harrison

Treasurer Andrew Hutt

Members John Chapman, Gail Eaton (Newsletter editor), Ann Griffin, Anne Helmore, Tim Lloyd (Monthly

news sheet editor), Catherine Petts (Journal editor), Griselda Truscott-Wicks, Maggie Smith (Minutes secretary), and Julie Worsfold.

Trevor Coombs and Barrie Randall retired from the Council and were presented with cards signed by the Council members thanking them for their long standing services to the Society.

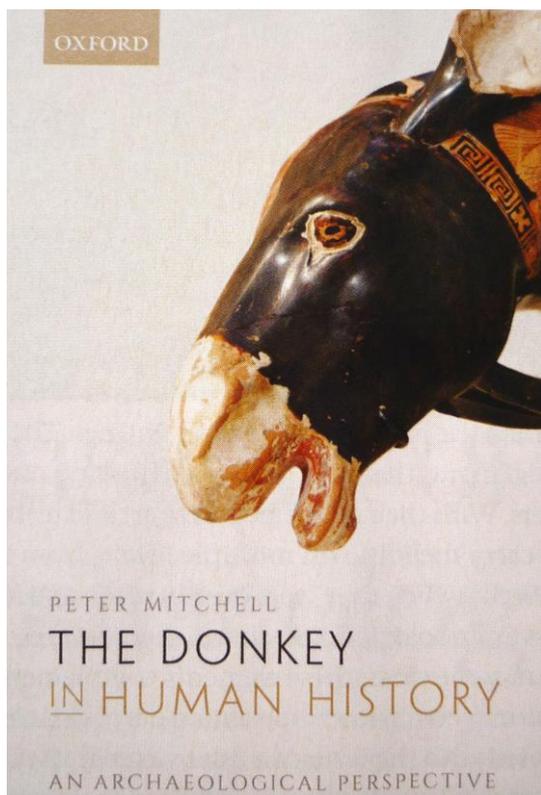
The meeting was followed by a talk on 'The Donkey in Human History' given by Professor Peter Mitchell.

Anne Harrison

Archaeology on Saturdays

The Donkey in Human History: An Archaeological Perspective

A talk by Professor Peter Mitchell, St Hugh's College, Oxford, 15 September 2018



Professor Mitchell began his talk with a reference to Eeyore in Winnie the Pooh to illustrate the lowly standing accorded donkeys today and went on to show that this had not always been the case. Rulers in the ancient Near East were carried, or drawn in carts, by donkeys at a time when these animals were essential for the long-distance transport of exotic goods, roles which gave them a semi-divine status. The more recent

introduction of horses and camels, and the exploitation of the sturdy mule, has relegated the donkey to its modern role as a working animal, and it is estimated that more than 40 million are still used today for pulling ploughs, threshing grain, turning mills, and transporting goods to market.

DNA studies have shown that donkeys are descended from one of two subspecies of African ass, the Nubian ass (*Equus africanus africanus*), with genetic input from a second population from either the Sahara or North Africa. The earliest known representation of donkeys is on an Egyptian palette dated c.3100 BC, but bones that could represent domesticated donkeys are known from at least as far back as 4500 BC. The earliest indisputable evidence for domestication comes from donkeys buried with an ancient Egyptian king outside Abydos c.3000 BC, which showed pathological damage as a result of them being used as working animals. Donkeys were also present in the Near East by this time and so domestication must have taken place before then, perhaps 7000 years ago and before donkeys appeared in Egypt, by nomadic populations who travelled through the Sahara and who still use donkeys today.



Detail from the Standard of Ur showing the victorious king dismounted from his chariot

Donkeys were the first animals to pull wheeled vehicles, and the first to be ridden. Riders were higher and faster and therefore superior to people on foot. Cuneiform tablets from the Bronze Age city of Mari in Syria show how donkey carts were considered appropriate transport for kings, and the famous royal Standard of Ur shows

royalty being drawn in carts pulled by donkeys or onagers. The Mari tablets also show that only a pure bred donkey was acceptable for important sacrifices, and a foundation deposit beneath a temple at Tel Haror in Israel (1500–1400) consisted of a sacrificed donkey together with the oldest bridle bit yet recovered. So although Christ's entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey on Palm Sunday is usually taken to represent his association with the poor, this is not so. An alternative translation of the prophecy that Christ would enter Jerusalem on the back of a 'humble ass' makes it clear that the animal was associated with kingship.



Christ entering Jerusalem from a mosaic in the Palatine Chapel, Palermo, Sicily

Donkeys were used by the Roman army from c.200 BC but mules, the hybrid offspring of a male donkey and a female horse, were to become the most important working animals for the military and were used to pull heavy artillery such as catapults. It has been estimated that there were probably half a million mules serving in the Roman army by the time of Augustus (31 BC–AD 14) but they have remained elusive in the archaeological record until recently. The advent of precise morphometric techniques and DNA studies has now shown that mules may have comprised up to 50% of the equids in the Roman Empire. Horses were the elite animals, but mules and donkeys were the commonplace working animals. Roman mules were surprisingly large and uniform in size, suggesting that their breeding was controlled.

Mules were bred by the Spanish conquerors of the Americas, in the absence of native domesticates capable of bearing heavy loads. Mules can carry three times the weight that a llama can and were heavily exploited in the Andean town of Potosí, where the silver mine was the source of much bullion sent back to the mother country. In addition to transporting food in and silver out, mules were used to power the mills for crushing silver ore. Potosí lies at an altitude of 4000 m and each mule was expected to carry a load of 100

kilos. Silver from Potosí was carried by Indian porters and mules to the Isthmus of Panama for shipment to Europe. All this silver went to support Spanish imperialism and eventually had a knock-on effect on the entire world economy.



Donkey pushing a Roman harvester from a relief at Trier, Germany

In conclusion, Peter showed how donkeys themselves have shaped human history. Their usefulness to man is limited by the availability of their food, how quickly they can move, their need for rest at inns and hostleries, and other requirements such as shoeing. Donkeys dictated their requirements to humans and in so doing changed the ecological balance. The humble donkey is not entirely without power! The role of the donkey and its mule offspring has been explored from prehistory right up to Apartheid South Africa in Peter's book, *The donkey in human history: an archaeological perspective*, which has recently been published by Oxford University Press.

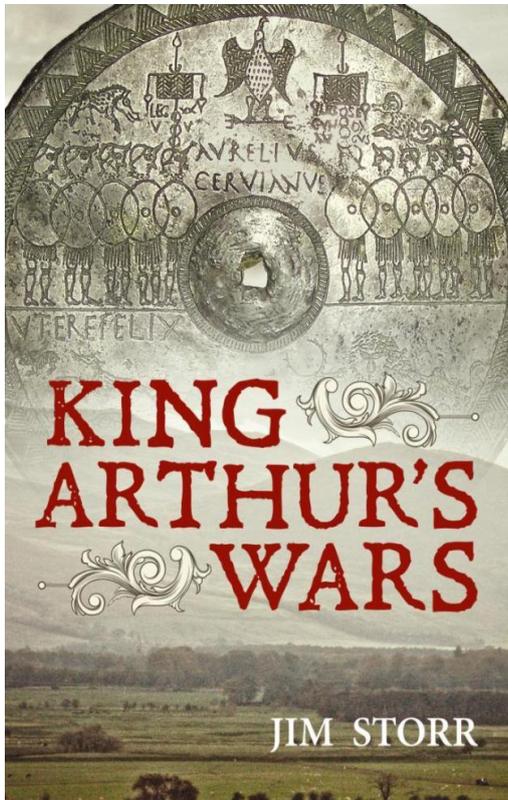
Janet Sharpe

The Anglo-Saxon conquest of England

A talk by Professor Jim Storr, Saturday 20 October 2018

Professor Jim Storr has combined his military experience as a retired infantry officer with a study of linear earthworks and place names in an attempt to re-interpret the history of the Anglo-Saxon conquest of England, and has published his findings in a book entitled *King Arthur's Wars*, published by Helion. He began his talk with a survey of some linear earthworks in central and southern England, starting with Wansdyke, which runs in two sections from Marlborough to Bristol. The Cambridgeshire Dykes comprise four roughly parallel earthworks running from north-west to south-east which get progressively larger towards the east. The largest is the Devil's Dyke which originally stood almost 14 metres high and blocked two Roman roads and the Icknield Way. These earthworks appear to have been constructed in late post-Roman England by peoples fearing invasion, and their configuration indicates from which direction the enemy was expected to attack: from the north in the case of Wansdyke and from the east in Cambridgeshire. There are numerous other examples, including Grim's Bank north of Silchester which faces north-west, and Grim's Ditch near Wallingford which faces north. Exact dating of these dykes is not easy, although there is good archaeological evidence to show that the Cambridgeshire Dykes and

Wansdyke are Anglo-Saxon. It was pointed out that some of the dykes, such as Grim's Ditch, are known to be Iron Age in origin, but Professor Storr maintained that they were probably pressed into service again in the post-Roman period.



Working on the premise that the dykes were protecting some Anglo-Saxon groups from other Anglo-Saxons during their conquest of England, an indication of the geographic spread of these groups may be revealed by the distribution of place names. The invaders named places as they spread across the country, first with names ending with '-ing' such as Reading, followed in the next generation by '-ington' and '-ingham', and in the next generation again by '-ton' and '-ham'. Other place name elements refer to geographical features in the contemporary landscape: '-ley' refers to a clearing in a wood, '-lade' refers to a narrow or difficult river crossing, and '-ford' states the obvious.

Historical evidence for the early post-Roman period is sparse and Gildas (c.AD 493–570), who was much copied by later writers including Bede, is the only contemporary source. Professor Storr considers that all subsequent interpretations of the history of this period are flawed. There is evidence to suggest the presence of Germanic mercenaries or 'foederati' in the very late Roman period, and that Angles and Saxons had already settled in parts of East Anglia and Sussex, and the Jutes in Kent, by AD 450. The histories mention a rebellion of the East Saxons in Essex in the late 5th century but there is no archaeological evidence for this. Likewise there is no evidence for the existence of 'King Arthur',

who may have been a late post-Roman commander. In the absence of a continual historic record, and using place names and the orientation of the linear earthwork defences as a guide, Professor Storr has speculated on the possible invasions and counter-invasions of different groups of Germanic peoples that forced the British westwards and eventually led to the emergence of the great Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Wessex, Mercia, East Anglia, and Northumbria and ultimately, and notwithstanding the Vikings, to the unification of Anglo-Saxon England under Athelstan (c.AD 895–939), the grandson of Alfred the Great of Wessex.

Janet Sharpe

Secrets of the Anglo-Saxon goldsmith: the results from the analysis of the gold in the Staffordshire Hoard

A talk by Dr Eleanor Blakelock, 17 November 2018

A massive hoard of gold and silver objects was found by a metal detectorist in a field near Lichfield in Staffordshire in 2009. The splendour of these objects attracted world-wide attention and the hoard was hailed as a new Lindisfarne Gospel, a new Sutton Hoo, and an archaeological 'mirror' of Beowulf. It consisted of more than 3,500 fragments and objects and it is the largest Anglo-Saxon hoard found to date. Much of it had a military character and it is possible that the hoard represents war booty. A large proportion of the fragments represent a single helmet which has been reconstructed and is of higher status than the famous Sutton Hoo helmet. The present market value of the hoard was estimated at £3.2 million: this sum was raised in less than ten weeks. It is now owned jointly by Birmingham City and Stoke-on-Trent City Councils and the objects are displayed in four local museums.



Reconstruction of helmet from the Staffordshire Hoard

Eleanor Blakelock is a metallurgist who conducted research on the hoard both at the British Museum and the University of Birmingham, analysing the gold, attempting to identify workshops, and studying the

effects of the burial environment. She looked at 150 objects from the hoard together with comparative material, including 43 items from the Sutton Hoo assemblage. The analysis was conducted using a combination of XRF (x-ray fluorescence) and SEM (scanning electron microscope) techniques. The items were dated typologically and range from c.AD 560 when silver was the primary metal, followed by a period when gold predominated, to c.AD 630 when silver came back to the fore. This wide date range indicates that some of the objects were heirloom pieces.



Gold hilt plate with zoomorphic decoration

Natural gold is not pure and can contain up to 40% silver and 1% copper. The Anglo-Saxon goldsmiths appear to have manipulated its properties by alloying gold from different sources. The Staffordshire Hoard contains a range of different gold compositions containing up to 30% silver. A shortage of gold during the Anglo-Saxon period is reflected in the debasement of gold currency. Eleanor compared the hoard gold with datable coins but there were too many variables and no clear pattern emerged. No clear regional grouping of workshops could be determined, although some objects appear to have been manufactured in Suffolk. There was no obvious link between object function and the alloy used but plenty of evidence for recycling and mixing of gold from different sources, including Roman coinage.

Surface enrichment, whereby silver and copper are removed from the alloy to leave purer gold on the surface, can occur naturally in the burial environment. However, some of the objects had lost up to 40% of their surface silver suggesting that they had been artificially enriched. This was probably achieved by applying a paste to the surface. Further analysis of the hoard objects showed that sulphur was present in areas where depletion had occurred, limiting possible paste recipes to three contemporary sources. Separate components of individual objects were enriched to enhance the colour contrast between them. Items associated with men were heavier and tended to have a higher gold content; items associated with women, such as brooches, had a higher silver content but were enriched to appear the same colour as the men's items.



Seax collar

Gold filigree wires were made by twisting the metal and then given a 'beaded' appearance by squeezing the wire in a small hand-held mould that was moved along the wire. The wires were cut into short segments and soldered onto the body of the object to simulate an entwined pattern: the wires did not cross over each other. For inlays, cell walls were soldered on to the body and a small cross-hatched piece of gold foil was inserted under the garnet inlay to make it shine. The garnet was first cut to shape and once it was in place the surface was burnished so the cell walls bent over slightly to hold the stone in place. Recycled Roman glass fragments and Anglo-Saxon green glass were used for inlays using the same technique. Niello, a silver sulphide compound that polishes to a shiny black, and enamels were also used for inlays. 'Anglo-Saxon green' is an unknown powdery substance found in some inlays that could represent the copper component of degraded red enamel.

Close examination of different parts of a single object can provide insights into the object's history. A seax set with four components showed that the pommel cap was of poorer quality gold and probably a later replacement, and new hilt plates were different in that one had been enriched on the outside only whereas the second plate was not enriched at all. This suggests the second plate repair was less costly or the goldsmith did not recognise the technique. These repairs represent three phases in the life of a single object, which was probably a family heirloom.

A book about the Staffordshire Hoard will be published next year, together with an online database of research reports. Anyone particularly interested in this subject is referred to the website of the Historical Metallurgy Society.

Janet Sharpe

The Study Group

September meeting

The September meeting saw the group working on Roman Berkshire. At the start of the meeting Andrew Hutt explained the overall shape of his work on Roman Berkshire Society, Power Economics, and Power. This was followed by a brief presentation on archaeological theory. At the end of the meeting Andrew invited those present to share between them nine small projects which involved reading an archaeological report and preparing a presentation for the next meeting.

October meeting

This started with a series of presentations. Glynis Rampley presented a picture of a wooden writing tablet used by the Roman Finance Department in London. Anne Harrison gave a presentation on Wickham Bushes, the centre of a Roman industrial complex near Bracknell. Julie Worsfold gave a presentation on Jennett's Park, a farming settlement in Bracknell. Paul Seddon gave an explanation of his investigation into a series of near parallel roads across South West England. Nathaniel Tegg gave a presentation of the elite properties in Silchester, and Tim Lloyd gave a presentation on Neatham, a small town on the River Wey in Surrey, and its hinterland. At the end Andrew identified some more areas which people could research.

November meeting

The November meeting followed the same pattern as the October meeting. Anne Harrison gave a brief overview of the *Cursus Publicus*, the Roman post and transport system. Julie Worsfold gave a brief report on Park Farm, Bracknell. Andrew gave a presentation on behalf of Nathaniel Tegg on Starveall Farm, a villa site in Wiltshire. Paul Seddon gave a report on a Roman building found by the Royal Engineers from the Military Academy, Sandhurst, in Egham in 1865. It was reported in *Surrey Arch Collections* volume 1 published in 1856. We have a copy in the Society's library. Next Andrew Hutt gave a presentation on Silchester houses. The meeting ended with some more research questions.

What next for the Study Group?

Work on the BAS Gazetteer has been progressing. This will provide the Society with a tool for collecting and analysing data from archaeological sites and presenting it in maps, tables, and charts. Further to this, the relevant parts of the dataset created by the New Visions of the Countryside of Roman Britain project are being downloaded and integrated into the BAS Gazetteer. As a result, there are now opportunities for anybody who is interested in data analysis to join the group to work with this data. Please contact me if you want further details of this opportunity.

Andrew Hutt

Berkshire Archaeological Journal volume 84

Berkshire Archaeological Journal volume 84 is the next issue of the journal. It will have nine reports of archaeological fieldwork around Berkshire and two of the Society's annual trustee reports. It has reached the point where work has started proof reading and copy editing the articles into their final publishable form.

Proof reading involves reading through a copy of the article either on your computer or a paper copy and

making changes so that it meets the *Berkshire Archaeological Journal Presentation and Typographical Conventions*.

If anybody would like to join the team then please contact me.

Andrew Hutt

Visits

Visit to Oxford's Radiocarbon Accelerator

On 22 June a group of members visited the University of Oxford's radiocarbon accelerator, an amazing room-sized device of shiny steel tubes and banks of blinking lights that measures carbon-14 to date organic remains. The lab was established in the 1950s after a groundbreaking paper by American scientist, Willard Libby (1908–1980), on the subject in 1946.* Libby worked out the half-life of radiocarbon (carbon-14 or

C14), a radioactive isotope of carbon, as 5730 years. Every living thing contains carbon, but stops taking it in when it dies. This means that when a sample's radiocarbon is measured, originally with a Geiger counter, the amount left indicates how long ago that organism died, providing a revolutionary method of absolute dating, reliable up to about 50,000 years ago.

In the 1960s, it was realised that the amount of carbon-14 in the atmosphere fluctuated at different periods of time. Radiocarbon results therefore always need to be corrected against a 'calibration curve' created using other absolute dating methods, such as dendrochronology (tree-rings). The resulting 'wiggles' in this calibration curve are actually called that! Unfortunately though, we learned that radiocarbon stayed at the same rate during the Iron Age and plateaued for about 400 years, so trying to collect C14 for that period is pointless! In 1963 carbon peaked to twice its natural level because of nuclear testing. (It is now declining again.)

There are about 20 labs in the world that can do this work. Oxford's is unique as it is almost entirely focused on archaeological samples. Their current accelerator was designed and purpose-built from scratch, and dates from the 1980s when there was a further 'revelation' that refined the technique even further and meant that smaller samples than previously could be used. Now only about 1 cm² of bone or single charred grains can be dated reliably and specifically. 'Single entities' that grew only within one year give the best dating evidence, such as a bit of bark or a seed. About 45% of the lab's samples are bone, and they have used their expertise to help in missing person and forensic cases as well.

Quirks of the technique, however, are that bog bodies come out older than they actually are because they get stained by humic acids from the breakdown of plants in the water, which have C14 of their own in too. River fish and seafood have different levels of C14 in them than land-based plants and animals (for example, hard water contains calcium carbonate, including C14), so it is also more difficult to date the bodies of people who ate these. Mesolithic people had a varied diet, making use of the sea and land, so are difficult to date as a result, for example. Neolithic people ate a more land-based plant and animal diet, so are easier. The amount of C14 also varies throughout different parts of the body, but can be offset against stable isotope information, which is increasingly requested anyway, as an indicator of differences in diet between sexes or social groups.

Any errors in the following scientific description are mine!

Samples are cleaned in 'pre-treatment' processes that take about three weeks and the lab has forty different processes for different types of material. For example, bones are 20% collagen, which is the bit that is needed. The sample is put into a test tube of acid that breaks down the mineral content ('gelatinisation'!) and is heated in an incubator. (Interestingly this means that younger people are easier to date than older people because collagen turnover slows down as people get older.) The

sample is then combusted in tin capsules in a helium carrier at 1000°C and sulphur is trapped. It is then heated at 600°C with copper to absorb oxygen and the nitrogen gases off.

The sample is run through a mass spectrometer, which fires off electrons, like a Tungsten lamp. The ions are collected by a magnet and any remaining nitrogen is vented off. Liquid nitrogen freezes any remaining oxygen and solid CO₂ is collected. This gets 'graphitised' at temperature and compressed into a 2 mg pellet with a drying agent to remove any excess water. The pellet is put on the end of a tin pellet and loaded onto a wheel. Each wheel has 59 positions on it, but only 57 are taken up with samples. The other two, at the beginning and in the middle of the sequence, are taken up with samples from known tree-ring-dated wood as the control group. This then loaded into the machine.

Caesium is fired at the wheel knocking out the carbon within the samples. The resulting 'sputters' pass through an electrostatic beam. The heavier the electrons, the less the beam bends. 99% of the carbon is C12, most of which gets split off in the beam. The leftover C13 and C14 is fired through a tube insulated with high density gas at a high voltage and at 20 m a second. This strips off some of the electrons. As C12 is similar to C14, some still gets through to this stage, but it is split off again with magnets. C14 then flashes in low pressure gas and this is what is measured. We saw this as a red light blinking on a panel in the control room, sent there via fibre optic cables. Software is then used to eliminate the isotopes that are being counted, and the ratio between C12 and C13, C13 and C14 is measured.

The technology has come along so far now that radiocarbon accelerators are available 'off the shelf' at only 3 m long from a company in Switzerland. They no longer need the big magnets and are 10% more accurate. However, you will need half a million pounds if you fancy getting one for your living room! (Oxford's new machine was due in November and they will be run alongside each other for a while until the old one is given to Physics students to train on, repurposed to measure something else or given to another institution.) Alternatively, getting something dated is a snip of the cost at about £350 per sample and takes a couple of months to provide or only a day, if you are not worried about precision. Something for the Christmas list?

Beth Asbury

*Libby, W.F. (1946). 'Atmospheric Helium Three and Radiocarbon from Cosmic Radiation', *Physical Review* 69 (11-12): 671-2. He had previously worked on the Manhattan Project and received the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1960 for his work with radiocarbon.

Archaeology in and around Berkshire

Excavations at a Roman villa, Cholsey, South Oxfordshire

Archaeologists beginning their evaluation of a proposed new housing development at Celsea Place, Cholsey, did not expect to find anything of significance. Twenty evaluation trenches, each 1.5 m wide, were opened at random across the site – and every trench was found to contain Roman pottery! In the south-west corner of the site there was a spread of chalk and flint building rubble, and the presence of wall foundations and traces of floors in the trenches suggested the presence of a substantial Roman building. Geophysics conducted after the evaluation trenches were closed (the reverse of the usual procedure) revealed the footprint of a Roman farmhouse or villa some 50 m in extent. This discovery necessitated a change of plan on the part of the developers, who agreed (in order to save the costs of excavation) not to construct houses on top of the villa building. This was left intact and covered with a thick layer of soil to hopefully protect it from illicit metal-detecting.

Andy Hood (Foundations Archaeology) described the discovery of this Roman farmstead in a talk to The Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society (TWHAS) on 14 November. The excavation of 2 ha around the unexcavated building revealed a coaxial system of enclosures, ditched trackways or droveways, and some human burials. There was no evidence for pre- or post-Roman activity. Traces of a possible ornamental garden were found next to the villa. Other features included five corn-dryers of four different designs, two wells, two clay-lined presumed water tanks, dispersed pits and postholes, and some animal burials including half a horse and a dog's skull. Finds included fragments of red-painted wall plaster, a writing stylus, a steelyard balance, box flue tiles and terracotta tesserae, pottery and glass fragments, and about 60 coins.

The corn-dryers, wells, and water tanks were situated close together and it is possible that the former were used as malting floors, rather than grain dryers per se. Grain was recovered and some of it had sprouted. The corn-dryers were completely excavated and have provided much new information about their technology and function. It has not yet been possible to determine whether they were in use at the same time or sequentially. One was V-shaped with twin flues and a stoke hole at the base of the V; another was T-shaped; two were linear; another was square. All were presumably covered by some form of superstructure but no evidence for this was found. The flues were built of chalk and flint mixed with fragments of tiles and tesserae. The walls were one course thick and arched inwards and were probably roofed. There were no structural remains at the stoke hole end, just a layer of dark ash. One corn-dryer had received votive offerings when it went out of use: a complete copper bowl which

X-ray examination showed to have been repaired and riveted, a chain necklace, and fragments of glass. The tops of the two circular stone-lined wells were exposed but the wells themselves were not excavated due to constraints of time, money, and health and safety. These, together with a precisely-cut 4 m-square clay-lined water tank and a similar pit that was clay-bottomed only and linked to one of the wells by a gully and of uncertain function, now lie beneath new houses.

One human burial had been dug into the infill of a pit and may be Iron Age in date; this was found only 3 m away from the half-horse burial. Other burials were found in ditches and there was a small inhumation cemetery to the north of the site; there were very few grave goods and no evidence for high status. Two urn cremations were also found.

The post-excavation reports are still awaited, as is precise dating. The building appears to have simply gone out of use and then been abandoned. Comparison with other Roman farm sites in the area has shown a close similarity to the villa currently being excavated by SOAG at Gatehampton, Goring. The buildings are of similar size and status, and they share a similar rural pottery assemblage with many of the same pottery types. The Cholsey villa lies about 100 m east of the Silchester to Dorchester Roman road that runs along the line of Honey Lane and, from the distribution of local finds, it is considered possible that there was a Roman roadside settlement at Cholsey.

Janet Sharpe

The Old Windsor Project - Quantifying the archive

In Spring 2018 Roland Smith of Berkshire Archaeology contacted BAS to discuss the proposal to quantify the artefacts from the Brian Hope Taylor excavations in Old Windsor, now held in the Reading Museum store. A number of volunteers would be needed to count and weigh the pottery, bones, CBM etc. and it was hoped that they could be recruited from local societies, especially BAS and BARG and groups in Windsor, so in the summer details of the project were circulated to all BAS members.

To explain its purpose Roland sent out information which included the following text:

'In the 1950s the late Dr Brian Hope Taylor undertook a dig at Old Windsor that found Saxon, early Norman and medieval remains, including part of a late Saxon and early Norman royal complex. The site was a precursor to New Windsor, the seat of English and British monarchy over most of the last millennium, making it a site of great importance. It is now protected as a Scheduled Monument.

However, the details of what Hope Taylor found in the 1950s have never been fully explored. His archive (the

documents, drawings, photographs and finds that were created during his excavations) is therefore extremely important and one of the most significant archaeological archives held by Reading Museum.

Remarkably, we do not know precisely how many finds (pottery, metalwork, stone objects, animal bones etc.) were recovered during Hope Taylor's dig. Berkshire Archaeology and Reading Museum are therefore undertaking a project, funded by Historic England, to count, weigh and record all the finds from the 1950s dig held by Reading Museum.'

The response from members to the request for volunteers was excellent, and more than 20 BAS members worked on it at some time. Staff from Wessex Archaeology were present to help with any questions and digitise the data recorded by the volunteers. There were up to eight people at a time working at the Museum store on Tuesdays and Wednesdays during October and November. While many people were able to come every week, some could manage just a few sessions, but everyone who was interested was welcome and able to make a contribution. The work has now been completed.

Erica from Wessex Archaeology has sent me some impressive facts and figures:

Old Windsor archive boxes present in Reading store:

109 x pottery
146 x animal bone
7 x stone

13 x shell (11 x 'oysters', 2 x 'snails')
15 x slag
25 x CBM (Ceramic Building Material – tile and brick)
4 x 'loom weights'
8 x 'querns'
13 x 'daub/plaster'
1 x clay pipe
3 x glass
5 x wood
1 x charcoal samples
5 x 'soil samples'

Total: 355 boxes

Pottery totals: 38,651 sherds, weighing 622,610 g

Animal Bone totals: 40,453 pieces, weighing 243,377 g

Data entry is not yet complete for other materials, so figures are not yet available.

Finds were quantified on paper by the Volunteer Team, and then entered onto an Excel spreadsheet by Wessex Archaeology staff. Reading Museum staff were responsible for extracting boxes from the stores and returning them after quantification.

I would like to thank all members who took part in the project and hope they feel it was worthwhile. Pottery and bone workshops based on the finds have now been held for volunteers.

Anne Harrison

Forthcoming talks by other groups

South Oxfordshire Archaeology Group (SOAG), Goring Heath Parish Hall, Whitchurch Hill, 7.30 for 7.45 p.m.

Thursday 24 January 2019 *An Introduction to Dendrochronology (Tree-Ring Dating)*, by Martin Bridge (Oxford Dendrochronology Lab)

Thursday 28 February 2019 *Roman villa site in Tackley*, by David Sanchez (Thames Valley Archaeological Services)

Thursday 28 March 2019 *Beacons of the Past: Hillforts in the Chilterns Landscape*, by Dr Edward Peveler (Chilterns Conservation Board)

Sunday 28 April 2019 *SOAG's Review of Archaeology*, preceded by the SOAG AGM

Exhibitions

Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Art, Word, War

This exhibition is open until 19 February 2019 at the British Library. The people of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms tell their story, in their own words. Explore the beginnings of the English language and English literature. Read some of the earliest-surviving words inscribed in English on objects large and small. Come face-to-face with manuscripts of Old English poetry and prose and the first letter written in English. Wonder at the wit and wisdom in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

I am Ashurbanipal

'I am Ashurbanipal - king of the World, king of Assyria' is at the British Museum until 24 February 2019. King Ashurbanipal of Assyria (r. 669–c.631 BC) was the most powerful man on earth. He described himself in inscriptions as 'king of the world', and his reign from the city of Nineveh (now in northern Iraq) marked the high point of the Assyrian empire.

Programme for the Day School

Saturday 6 April 2019 at The Cornerstone Hall, Wokingham, RG40 1UE

10 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

10.00–10.05	Welcome Chairman, Berkshire Archaeological Society
10.05–10.25	Recent work in West Berkshire , Sarah Orr, West Berkshire Historic Environment Officer
10.25–10.40	Recent discoveries in East Berkshire , Fiona McDonald, East Berkshire Archaeological Officer
10.40–11.00	COFFEE
11.00–11.20	Extracting evidence from gravel quarries in Berkshire and Buckingham Garth Chaffey, Wessex Archaeology
11.20–11.40	Runnymede Explored , Tom Dommett, The National Trust
11.40–12.00	Silchester: the Roman Baths project , Professor M. Fulford, University of Reading
12.00–13.15	LUNCH
13.15–13.45	New thoughts on Dorchester on Thames , Paul Booth, Oxford Archaeology
13.45–14.15	Nero's tile works: The Romano British tile and pottery industry at Little London, Pamber , Dr Sara Machin, University of Reading
14.15–14.45	From the water's edge: preliminary results of the River Thames project, settlement activity on the banks of the river , Phillipa Puzey-Broomhead, Trent and Peak Archaeology
14.45–15.15	TEA
15.15–15.45	Medieval to Modern: osteological and archaeological findings in St Mary's churchyard Wargrave , Dr Ceri Boston, freelance osteologist and Dr Stephanie Duensing, John Moore Heritage Services
15.45–16.00	Questions and Conclusions

Input to the newsletter

If you have an archaeological story that you feel would interest the Society, please send it to Gail Eaton by the end of February 2018 at: newsletter@berksarch.co.uk

**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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