



# ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Spring 2020

Vol. 22, No.1

## Berkshire Archaeological Society Events – March to September 2020

BAS Council members have been following and discussing the developing Covid-19 situation regarding forthcoming events. Over the past few days there has been a flurry of emails and phone conversations between BAS Council members, lecture season speakers and visit leaders as we have tried to determine which forthcoming events to cancel and which to proceed with. The final decisions were due to have been taken at the end of a working group meeting scheduled to be held in my flat this morning. However, with the announcement made by the Prime Minister yesterday evening that all social gatherings and unnecessary travel are to cease with immediate effect we have been completely overtaken by events.

**We have, therefore, now cancelled all BAS events until September but Study Group, Council and Working Group meetings during this time will proceed on Skype.**

For clarity:

| Event                      | Date             | Status    |
|----------------------------|------------------|-----------|
| BAS Lecture                | 21 March         | Cancelled |
| BAS Day School             | 28 March         | Cancelled |
| BAS Study Group            | 1 April          | On Skype  |
| Avebury Visit              | 3 April          | Cancelled |
| BAS Lecture                | 18 April         | Cancelled |
| Blount's Court Excavations | 27 April – 7 May | Cancelled |
| BAS Council Meeting        | 20 June          | On Skype  |
| East Reading Festival      | 21 June          | Cancelled |
| Silchester Visit           | 28 June          | Cancelled |
| Shaw House Summer Fair     | 19 July          | Cancelled |

**Members attending meetings on Skype will be advised of meeting joining instructions beforehand. Please note that dates of such may change from those given above.**

Rest assured that during this time Council members will be working on events to be held in late 2020 and in 2021.

We hope to see you all safe and well in September.

*Julie Worsfold*

BAS Lectures and Day School Organiser & Chair Communications Working Group

IN  
BERKSHIRE

## From the Chair

BAS is indeed a learning organisation. Usually the learning is focussed on subjects like a possible deserted mediaeval village near Arborfield Mill or Anglo-Saxon settlement in Berkshire or archaeological recording techniques. That is still the back-drop but new skills in video-conferencing and cyber working-group meetings are now at the fore as we all discover new ways to connect and to debate and discuss: extraordinary times that are changing at bewildering speed. We decided to cancel all BAS face-to-face events until September: a decision that in light of developments was easy to make but a decision made with great regret.

Archaeology in the wider world is grappling to deal with and respond to these rapid developments. Jen Parker Wooding from ClfA writes: 'It is a very challenging and uncertain time for everyone but archaeological working practices are constantly being reviewed in line with government advice. At the moment, circumstances are changing each day but the sector is committed to continuing to provide archaeological services for as long as it is possible. There may be disruption to construction sector projects, and certainly a number of research/university excavations have been cancelled or postponed but organisations will continue to work for as long as it is possible and safe to do so. This may mean more of a focus on desk-based work that can be completed at home and also post-excavation.' Various heritage organisations are providing advice and

guidance for all those involved in working on heritage projects: [www.theheritagealliance.org.uk](http://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk).

Last month the BAS Committee resolved 'to further devolve' its organisation: we have always had working-groups concerned with particular activities and this approach will be formalised as soon as we have our next Skype Committee meeting! Working-groups have been identified that, amongst other topics, centre around Archiving, Communications, Fieldwork, Outreach, Social Events. Eventually it is envisaged that not just Trustees but also BAS members will be involved in charting the course of these activities.

So there is much to do and much with which to get involved in spite of the suspension of our Day School, fieldwork, visits and lectures. The Study Group will continue to meet virtually; plans of how to celebrate the 150 years anniversary of BAS develop apace; the programme of lectures and visits for next year is being worked on. On your behalf and also from myself, I would like to thank whole-heartedly all of my fellow-Trustees for putting such energy, time and thought into both the unwelcome task of cancelling events and activities but also identifying those which can continue and how they can continue.

Stay well and safe.

*Alison McQuitty*

## Archaeology on Saturdays

### Christmas talks by BAS members

14 December 2019

#### **The Council for British Archaeology: celebrating 75 years of the CBA, past, present and future**

by Sue Dormer

The CBA was founded in 1944 as an independent champion for archaeology in Britain, to safeguard the nation's heritage in the post-war period. In 1949 it received its first grant from the Government and subsequent highlights in its career include the establishment of British Archaeological Awards in 1976, which are held every two years with a ceremony at the British Museum, and the Day (later Festival) of Archaeology in 1990, which is marked by special events held across the UK organised and hosted by different heritage organisations. The first issue of the magazine *British Archaeology* appeared in 1995.

It has three major objectives: to increase public awareness of British archaeology, to enhance the stewardship of same, and to increase the range and diversity of public involvement. The CBA took over the

organisation and running of the Young Archaeologists Club (YAC) in 1972, which is run by volunteers and has 70 branches providing a network of local groups enabling young people aged between 8 and 17 to get involved in archaeological activities. It also helped to found the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) in 1983. It has eleven regional groups, including CBA Wessex and CBA South Midlands that cover 'old' Berkshire, which run their own activities and publications. In addition, the CBA plays a statutory role in listed buildings casework whereby all local planning authorities must notify the CBA of any listed building consent that involves the loss of historic fabric. The Home Front Legacy project ran from 2014-18 and enabled members of the public to record and map some 5660 WW1 sites across the country. The CBA also aims to protect and enhance the historic environment through advocacy and regular meetings are held with the minister responsible for heritage. In 2005 it established its strapline: 'Archaeology for all'.

The world of British archaeology is threatened not only by Brexit but also by a shortage of professional archaeologists. Government funding ceased last year but the CBA is determined to continue its work and is

looking for partnerships elsewhere. For more information about the CBA, visit [www.britarch.ac.uk](http://www.britarch.ac.uk).

## Observatories and other monuments of astronomers in Berkshire

by Kenelm England

Possibly the earliest monument of astronomical significance in 'old' Berkshire is the White Horse at Uffington: the midwinter sun just passes over the top of Whitehorse Hill when it is viewed from the direction of the horse to the north. Eppillus, a Roman client king of the Atrebates, issued a coin with a depiction of Capricorn on the reverse, and another with a possible representation of the crescent moon and the Pleiades, which mark the spring equinox. The inhabitants of Roman Silchester would have experienced a total eclipse of the sun on 6 May 319, although no contemporary account of this event in Britain has survived. Comets were recorded in 837 and 1066 at St Mary's Abbey at Abingdon, and the latter famously features on the Bayeux Tapestry. Richard of Wallingford (1292–1336) designed and built an astronomical clock at St Albans, destroyed in the 1530s. An unusual 18th century sundial can still be seen on St Lawrence's church in Reading.

Astronomers with a Berkshire connection include John Blagrave (1561–1611), a mathematician and designer of astronomical instruments, including an advanced astrolabe; he is buried at St Lawrence's. Sir Paul Neile (1613–1686), one of the founding members of the Royal Society, built an observatory at White Waltham and a 35-foot long telescope with a 2-inch lens, which was then the largest in the British Isles. This was replaced by a 50-foot telescope. One of the earliest observations of Saturn's moon, Titan, was made from White Waltham.

In the 18th century, the astronomer and composer William Herschel (1738–1822) built the largest telescope in the world at Slough in 1774; his home, Observatory House, was replaced by an office block in 1963. He made a special study of double stars, discovered the planet Uranus, and pioneered the use of astronomical spectrophotometry. William Lassell (1799–1880), born in Bolton, Lancashire, made his fortune as a brewer. This enabled him to indulge his passion for astronomy. He named his house near Liverpool 'Starfield' and built an observatory with a 24-inch mirror reflector telescope with which he discovered Triton, the largest moon of Neptune. He moved to Malta for better viewing conditions and built a 48-inch telescope in 1855, which at that time was the best telescope in the world. After several years in Malta he moved to Ray Lodge near Maidenhead Bridge and built a 24-inch reflector telescope. He died in and is buried at St Luke's church. The remains of his observatory have survived.

The Revd John Mackenzie Bacon (1846–1904) was an astronomer and balloonist. He was an 'eclipse-chaser' and made some of the earliest attempts to film a total

solar eclipse. He succeeded on his third attempt in North Carolina in May 1900: this film has been restored and can be found online. Thomas Hinsley Astbury (1858–1922), a teacher in Wallingford by day and an astronomer at night. His special interests were meteorites and variable stars and he discovered the bright Cepheid variable, RT Aurigae. A brass plaque to his memory was unveiled at his school in 1924 by the then Astronomer Royal, Sir Frank Dyson. Other Berkshire astronomers included George Dunn (1864–1912), whose interests also included forestry, horology and antiquarian books, who built an observatory at his home in Littlewick Green, and Peter Birtwhistle, who in 2002 established and still runs the Great Shefford Observatory ([www.birtwhistle.org.uk](http://www.birtwhistle.org.uk)).

## The history of the BAS logo

by Tim Lloyd

The colourful BAS logo, with its iconic White Horse in a green landscape set within a quatrefoil and surrounded by the Society's name in white Gothic script within a black ring, with four stylised red fleur-de-lys (or possibly just tracery infill) on a yellow background to fill the gaps, is familiar to all BAS members and is displayed on all Society posters, leaflets, newsletter and other publications. It would appear to epitomise the history of the Society.

BAS was founded in 1871 as the Berkshire Archaeological and Architectural Society. The first emblem used to represent the Society appears to have been a drawing of Reading Abbey Gateway, which appeared on the journal cover in 1893. The Society owned this building at the time and used it for meetings. It was restored in 1861 by Sir Gilbert Scott but by 1925 it required further repairs and was handed back to Reading Council.

The earliest representation of the present logo was found by Tim in 1943. It was not possible to trace the origin of the design and the significance of the quatrefoil is uncertain. The White Horse (which since 1974 lies in Oxfordshire) is shown against the background of Whitehorse Hill, with a white cloud against blue sky above and horizontal lines representing a river at the bottom. In 1960 the logo was simplified to include just the White Horse in a green oval and as such was published on the journal cover. To mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002, Edna Goodburn donated the Society's plaque showing the full logo and this is displayed at every meeting. Since then the full logo was readopted by the Society and the *Berkshire Archaeological Journal* now sports the simplified logo on the front cover and the full logo on the back.

It has to be admitted that the present logo is out of date and the green landscape does not work well with the green banner headings used on posters and the BAS Newsheet. Tim has searched the archives looking for images to replace the White Horse, only to conclude that

it is the only image specific to the Society's area, even if it is now located in Oxfordshire. He has tried to simplify the logo, by using plain triangles in place of the fleur-de-lis, and replacing the Gothic script with Times New Roman (which some might argue is equally archaic). He showed several examples that he had drawn.

*Janet Sharpe*

## **Bluestones and white bones: the origins of the people buried at Stonehenge**

A talk by Prof. Rick Schulting (University of Oxford School of Archaeology), 18 January 2020

Until fairly recently, the construction of Stonehenge was shrouded in myth, a popular story being that it was built by Merlin with the help of giants. We now know that it is a multiphase site that was remodelled over several hundred years. Four major phases have been identified:

Phase 1 – c.3000–2750 BC, the bank and ditch was constructed together with the ring of 56 Aubrey Holes, which may already have contained bluestones;

Phase 2 – c.2760–2300 BC, the sarsens and trilithons were added, with a double circle of bluestones;

Phase 3 – c.2400–2100 BC, a central bluestone circle was erected, perhaps using stones from an earlier 'bluestonehenge' near the river Avon;

Phase 4 – various later remodellings, which included the addition of bronze dagger carvings on some sarsens.

Experimental archaeology has demonstrated the amount of organisation and manpower that would have been required to build Stonehenge. Its construction would have been a statement of power, raising the question as to who was in control: no single person, since the process took centuries to complete. The bluestones are from the Preseli Hills in Pembrokeshire. An outcrop at Craig Rhos-y-felin shares the same geochemistry and a quarry mark matching one of the Stonehenge bluestones. Three routes have been proposed for their transport to Stonehenge: a lengthy coastal route around Cornwall and up the Hampshire Avon; a coastal route along South Wales, across the Bristol Channel and up the Bristol Avon with portage across to the Hampshire Avon; and a more northerly overland route. An experiment to test the second of these proposals failed and the inland route is now thought to have been the most likely, following an ancient pathway used for moving cattle. Why the stones were moved has not been resolved: were they attributed with healing powers?

### **Isotope studies**

The ratio of certain stable isotopes of calcium and nitrogen in skeletal remains can provide insights into a person's diet; oxygen and strontium isotopes can be matched with the environmental ratios found in different

geographic areas to determine an individual's movements. Ultimately derived from the bedrock, these isotopes enter the ground water and are taken up by plants and animals – and by the humans who drink and eat them. Strontium is taken up by bones and tooth enamel; whereas bone is continually recycled and can only provide a record for the last ten years of life, tooth enamel remains unchanged and is formed during childhood. Isotope analysis of the 'Boscombe Bowmen', a multiple burial dated to 2400–2200 BC from the Stonehenge area, showed that some individuals were local in origin but others had come from west Wales.

Using a strontium 'isoscape' map of the British Isles, the analysis of pig and cattle teeth from Durrington Walls, where the builders of Stonehenge probably lived, suggested that some had come from as far afield as Scotland. Evidence for large-scale feasting at this site implies the need to import livestock from a wider area, but whereas cattle can be driven over long distances, pigs are less amenable. A recent update for the isoscape map now links the pigs with the Black Mountains in Wales and the Malvern Hills, not necessarily Scotland but still a fair distance.

Some of the Aubrey Holes were excavated by William Hawley in the 1920s, who found many of them contained cremated human bone. Ahead of his time, instead of discarding this material he reburied it, albeit as a jumbled mass, in Aubrey Hole 7 where it was later rediscovered. The Aubrey Holes are about 1m across, probably too big and too shallow to have held timber posts, and crushed chalk at the bottom suggests they originally held bluestone-sized stones. After the stones were removed, the holes were re-used for cremations. Among Hawley's material, 28 identical cranial fragments provided a minimum number of individuals although probably more than 50 people were represented. Hawley did not excavate all the Aubrey Holes, which overall may contain the cremated remains of more than 100 individuals. These have been radiocarbon dated to 3000–2800 BC and represent a very rare survival of Late Neolithic cremated remains.

Cremation shatters tooth enamel but fortunately calcined bone is a reliable substitute. Isotopic analysis of 25 individuals showed that 15 were local and the rest had come from west Wales, some possibly from a wider area in western Britain and even Ireland, within the last ten years of life. Intermediate ratios suggested some individuals had arrived at Stonehenge within five years of their death. Hawley noted that some of the cremated bones appeared to have been buried in leather bags and so could have been cremated elsewhere. Cremated bone absorbs the carbon signature of the wood used for the funeral pyre and a study of the stable carbon isotopes suggested that some wood was local in origin and some appeared to have come from a densely wooded area like west Wales, implying some individuals had been cremated elsewhere and their remains brought

to Stonehenge for burial. The bluestones are the link between west Wales and Stonehenge. The cremated bones are of men, women and children and may represent leading families associated with this long-distance movement of bluestones.

Isotope analyses and genetics have given support to the discredited mass-migration theories of Gordon Childe and other past archaeologists. The Mesolithic population of Britain was almost totally replaced by Neolithic

farmers who originated in Anatolia, and they in turn were replaced by the Yamnaya (Early Bronze Age) people from the south-east Eurasian steppes. Genetic profiles of the modern British population show that most of us are descended from the Yamnaya, with just a small proportion of Neolithic genes and an even smaller proportion of Mesolithic genes.

*Janet Sharpe*

## The Study Group

The December 2019 meeting discussed the Roman sites round Wanborough in Wiltshire and Wantage, and the results of the geophysics survey at Hall Farm, Arborfield.

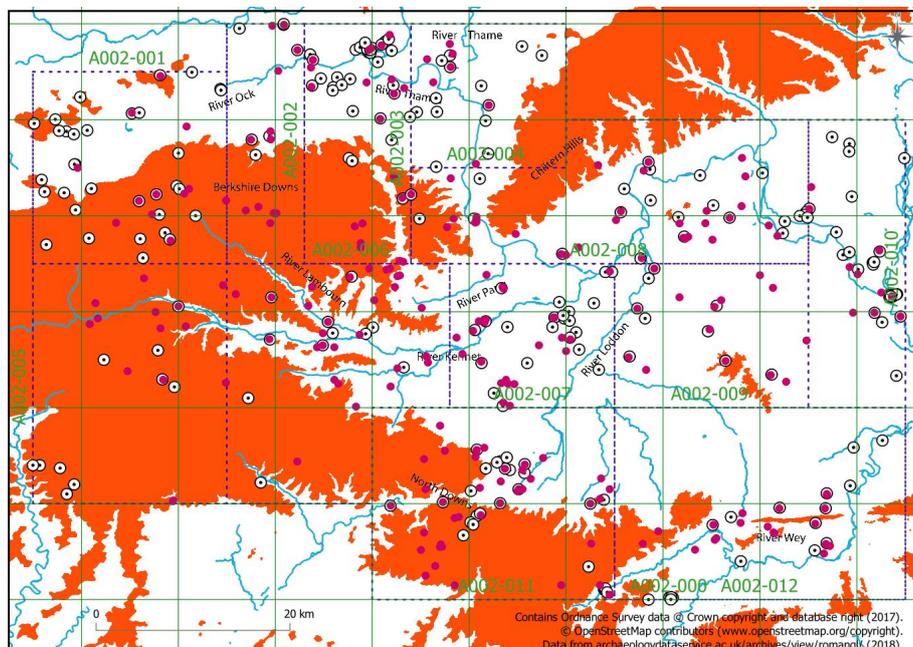
In December 2019, Andrew Hutt attended the Theoretical Archaeology Group (TAG) Conference at University College, London and spent an afternoon discussing journal publication, with the editors of some of the learning archaeological journals, and another discussing community archaeology, which reviewed a variety of projects all of which were successfully promoting the archaeology of local communities. At the January 2020 Study group meeting he proposed that, in the future, the focus of the group's research should be to publish essays on the archaeology of the Berkshire Region on the Society's website.

The February study group meeting started with a presentation by Paul Seddon on his use of Google Earth to identify archaeology sites in North East Berkshire.

This was followed by a discussion during which it was agreed that, subject to the agreement of Council, the group would publish archaeological essays on the Society's website.

The March meeting started with a success story: we can use the BAS Gazetteer to record details of heritage and to produce maps. This was followed by discussions on how we could exploit this capability to record research results for both Roman and Anglo-Saxon Berkshire. The first step in the work is to collect more data. The map below, generated from the BAS gazetteer, shows 12 data collection areas, the table contains the area details and who is working on them.

The Government is now requiring us to not attend public meetings so I am starting **the Study Group online**. If you would like to join in please send me an email. If you want help with getting on to Skype please ask for help.



Map of the Berkshire Region data collection areas (dotted lines) with Roman Rural Settlement sites (white circles) and other Roman sites (Purple blobs)

| Area identifier | Details   | Who           |
|-----------------|---|---------------|
| A002-000        | This is the revised study area for BRP 2              | Andrew Hutt   |
| A002-001        | Wanborough (Wilts) data collection area and community | Andrew Hutt   |
| A002-002        | Wantage data collection area and community            | Andrew Hutt   |
| A002-003        | Abingdon data collection area and community           | Tim Lloyd     |
| A002-004        | Dorchester collection area and community              |               |
| A002-005        | Mildenhall collection area and community              | Keith Abbot   |
| A002-006        | Thatcham collection area and community                |               |
| A002-007        | Silchester collection area and community              |               |
| A002-008        | Middle Thames collection area                         |               |
| A002-009        | Wickham Bushes collection area and community          | Anne Harrison |
| A002-010        | Staines collection area and community                 |               |
| A002-011        | Basingstoke collection area and community             |               |
| A002-012        | Wey Valley collection area and Neatham community      |               |

*Table of Roman Berkshire collection areas and essays and who is working on them*  
Andrew Hutt

## Membership subscriptions 2020–21

Subscriptions to the Society are due in April 2020 for the year to April 2021, except for those who joined after 1 January 2020. Subscription rates are £15 for an individual and £20 for a couple at the same address and are due on 5 April. Please note that your membership will lapse if the subscription is not paid by 31 July 2020.

A number of members already pay by Standing Order or the equivalent, and we are most grateful to them for this. If you would like to pay electronically direct to the Society's account in future please ask me for the details. A renewal form is enclosed with this newsletter for use by 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 - [membership@berksarch.co.uk](mailto:membership@berksarch.co.uk)

## 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 May 2020 at: [newsletter@berksarch.co.uk](mailto: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.

Officers of the Society:

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