



ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Summer 2022

Vol. 24, No.2

Dates for your diary

Sunday 12th June 2022: Visit: Piddington – 10:30am – For details see below

Thursday 30th June 2022: Visit: Sonning Church – 7:30pm - For details see below

Wednesday 6th July 2022: Study Group - 3pm on Zoom

Thursday 7th July 2022: Outreach Group – 7:30pm on Zoom

Wednesday 13th July 2022: Study Group Lunch - TBC

Saturday 16th July 2022: Visit: Abingdon – 11:15am – For details see below

August - No Meetings

Wednesday 7th September 2022: Study Group - 3pm on Zoom

Thursday 8th 2022: Outreach Group – 7:30pm on Zoom

Wednesday 14th September 2022: Study Group Lunch - TBC

Saturday 17th September 2022: Lecture: Details TBA

From the Chair

The Queen is our patron, so I have sent her a letter on behalf of the Society congratulating her on celebrating her Platinum Jubilee.

In March 2022, Alison McQuitty resigned as organiser of the BAS Outreach Group. The Council thanks Alison for promoting the Society's outreach activities and showing that outreach should form an important part of the work of any county archaeological society.

In my article *From the chair* in the February 2022 newsletter, I showed how the Society's different activities were aimed at: a) the public, b) members who were interested in Berkshire's archaeology and heritage, c) members who wanted to work as archaeologists and d) the archaeological authorities, archaeological contractors, and academics.

Since March, the management team has been reviewing the activities aimed at the public. They concluded that to date the Society's outreach activities were pushing archaeology at the public, whereas to be successful they needed to be in the position where they are responding to a demand for archaeological and heritage evidence. The use of some marketing techniques showed that:

1. Having "the public" as the target of our outreach activities does not work because we have no way of assessing if and how they are reacting to the information we provide
2. Currently, BAS is not a credible supplier of archaeological and heritage information
3. Currently, BAS does not have "a product" or "products" which parishioners and townsfolk want to consume

IN
B
E
R
K
S
H
I
R
E

4. There are opportunities to work with parish councils, town councils and local history societies to present archaeological and heritage information to the communities they represent in order to engender a sense of place in those communities
5. The impact of any work the Society does in this area needs to produce measurable results (they can be positive or negative results; they must be measurable)

The result of this thinking is the new BAS Outreach group which meets on Zoom on the first Thursday of the month at 7.30pm; if this interests you, please join the meetings.

Andrew Hutt

Visits

Walk around Piddington

Sunday 12th June, 10.30am from The Dashwood Roadhouse pub, (formerly The Dashwood Arms) Old Oxford Rd, Piddington, Bucks HP14 3BH (about 14 miles north of Maidenhead).

The walk will be led by Simon Cains, who has published a book on the area, and will include:

- Possible traces of a Roman Road (Simon will also show maps of where Roman coins have been found locally).
 - A well-preserved medieval settlement, 60m diameter, with lots of documentation from an archaeological dig.
 - A holloway drove road which was the main route to Wales until 1810.
 - A turnpike from 1719.
 - A rather poorly designed straight section of turnpike from 1810.
- Simon will also make full use of the Chilterns Lidar survey.



The walk will take about 90 minutes unless there are lots of questions. The path climbs about 75 metres. It is on well-defined paths and roads, except looking around the medieval settlement in the wood by the roadside.

Optional lunch in the Dashwood Roadhouse pub afterwards, but Simon would need numbers to book a table. <https://dashwoodroadhouse.pub/menu> On Sunday they only serve Sunday roasts, fish, and hanging kebabs.

Optional visit to West Wycombe in the afternoon.

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/west-wycombe-park-village-and-hill>

For more information and to join this activity please contact Simon Cains – [simon.cains\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:simon.cains(at)gmail.com)

Visit to experience Medieval Graffiti at Sonning Church

We will meet at St Andrew's Church, Sonning, RG4 6UT, at 7:30pm on Thursday 30th June, to discover some of the graffiti on the church; see how it is recorded; and have a chat.

We will park along the East side of Sonning Lane (RG4 6ST, the left side if coming from A4) alongside the brick and flint wall before to the road turns sharply right into the village. Walk down the hill from where you park to where the road turns right into the village, continue straight on along gravel drive to the kissing gate and on the path to the corner of the church where we will gather.

After a short introduction we will seek out the graffiti on the outside of the church for around 20 minutes. Some of the graffiti can be seen from the path, but for the remainder you will have to walk on the slightly uneven grass. To aid finding the graffiti bring a torch if you have one. There will be a short demonstration of how we record the graffiti. At about 8:30pm we will walk to The Bull Inn (50m) for a chat about what we have seen and how we can survey graffiti in other churches. (For more information see article 'If walls could talk...' in 'BAS Fieldwork' below). Reverse the route to walk back to the cars (total distance to walk about 500m).

If you intend to come, please contact James Peddle peddle(at) hotmail.co.uk, 0798 660 0695



Visit to Abingdon

We will meet at the Abingdon County Hall Museum, Market Place, Abingdon, OX14 3HG, on Saturday 16th July at 11:15am. We will depart at 11:30am for a 90-minute walk lead by a local guide. Cost will be £10 per person (cash on the day).



Abingdon is a very interesting historic town which was the county town of Berkshire from 1556 to 1869. We won't see any traces of the Iron Age oppidum or the Roman town but there are remains of the Saxon abbey from 676AD and many interesting features from this period up to the present day.

There will be the option of a pub lunch afterwards - venue TBC.

To book your place please email Tim Lloyd at [tim.lloyd222\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:tim.lloyd222(at)gmail.com)

Image: Abingdon County Hall Museum built 1678-82

There are some small car parks in the town centre, but the best option is the Hales Meadow car park just south of the town across the river.

<https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/parking-roads-and-streets/parking/car-parks/abingdon-car-parks/hales-meadow-car-park-abingdon/>

Archaeology on Saturdays

Understanding the Early Mediaeval Pottery Assemblage from Lyminge, Kent

A talk by Dr Lisa Backhouse on Saturday 19th March 2022.

Lisa described the location of Lyminge on the Kent coast on a map that showed its proximity to the Continent. A map of Lyminge showed where, from 2008 to 2015, excavations had taken place, with several sites in the vicinity of the Anglo-Saxon church of Saint Mary and Saint Ethelburga. Lisa explained that Lyminge was one of the earliest mediaeval settlements in England, with finds dating to the 5th century A.D. Lyminge had initially been a royal site, and later developed into a monastic settlement with agricultural and industrial features. We saw a reconstruction of early mediaeval Lyminge, showing large and smaller rectangular buildings with steep thatched roofs. Although Lyminge was a port, Lisa explained that

there was no evidence of it having been an emporium (trading settlement), and that the pottery assemblage found indicated that it was a high-status settlement, with high levels of feasting and consumption.

We saw tables covered with some of the over 16,000 potsherds found, which had taken Lisa four months to analyse. Lisa explained that this was the largest assemblage of early mediaeval (5th to 9th century A.D.), pottery found in Kent. While most was hand-made, the assemblage included wheel-turned pottery, such as Ipswich ware from the 8th to 9th centuries. It was the very early date of Lyminge's mediaeval pottery that was of greatest interest, with its un-broken sequence from the 5th to the 9th century.

The early mediaeval pottery was found to have been made in or near Lyminge, in England outside of Kent, and

on the nearby Continent. We saw potsherds of sand-tempered ware (sandy ware), with thumbnail impressions, and some Continental ware. We saw examples of shell- and flint-tempered ware, with sandy ware forming the greater part of the assemblage. We looked at pie charts comparing 7th to 9th century Continental imports at Lyminge and *Lundenwic*. Lyminge had a high proportion of shell-tempered ware, suggesting that people liked this form of pottery. Later, Lisa would explain that shell-tempered ware was lighter and thinner than sandy ware, and this appeared to be a popular feature.

We looked at the different vessel types found, with 96% being jar-types or pots used for storage or cooking. Charring on the sides was seen on a cooking pot that had sat *within* a fire. If the pot had sat *on* the fire, soot was only seen on its base. Bowls were the next most common vessel type, including bowls with handles, possibly used for ladling or scooping. Another group was of miniature bowls, which may have been used as drinking cups. Lisa said that in 400 years, there had been little variation in the types of vessels used, with the same foodstuffs cooked in the same way at Lyminge, as across all of Kent.

The fourth group of vessel types found was that of pitchers; jars with a spout and a handle, from the 7th to 9th centuries. Lisa said that similar pitchers had been found at ecclesiastical sites at Ipswich and suggested that at Lyminge they may have been used in the monks' refectory, for the serving of wine during meals.

We then looked at different types of decoration seen on early mediaeval pottery. We saw 5th to 7th century pottery with finger-tip bosses, made by pushing out a bulge from inside the pot. We looked at 8th to 9th century tooled bosses, made in a similar way but using a tool. Lisa explained that this bossed pottery was quite rare, only found in monastic sites in south-east Kent, such as St Michael's in Canterbury. We looked at rouletting, where a roller was used to produce a repeating pattern, and at some of the many varieties of patterns, such as small flowers, stamped onto pottery.

Lisa explained that temper is added to clay to prevent shrinkage and cracking of pottery during drying and firing. Sand-tempered ware dominated at Anglo-Saxon sites, and this was seen at Lyminge. Lisa said that sandy ware was popular because sand temper makes pottery more durable, especially when cooking. In earlier, coarse pottery, un-sifted sand had been added to clay. In later, finer pottery, the quartz sand had been sifted. Larger quartz sand was suitable for big pots, used for the simmering of stews or for brewing. Small quartz sand was best for small pots, where quick heating, such as boiling water, was required.

Other types of temper were introduced over time at Lyminge. Thus, while sandy ware was produced in the 5th century, organic temper (chaff or finely chopped animal

dung), appeared in the 6th to 7th centuries in south-east England. At Lyminge, organic-tempered ware has been dated to the mid-6th century, and Lisa said this was 50 years earlier than previously thought. Organic-tempered ware was 34% lighter in weight than sand-tempered ware, making transportation for export easier. Also, organic-tempered ware needed a lower temperature for firing than sandy ware, making it cheaper (less fuel needed), and quicker to produce. The drawback was that it was porous and brittle, and so no good for cooking.

Another ceramic change was seen in the production of shell-tempered ware in the early to mid-7th century, earlier than elsewhere in England. Shell-tempered ware was made using crushed freshwater shells and was found at a time when the Christian monastic site at Lyminge was consuming more fish and shellfish. Crushed shell (calcite), improves clay cohesion, giving greater elasticity. A wider range of shapes and sizes of pottery could be made, offering consumers greater choice. Later, Lisa explained that shell-tempered ware could be fired at lower temperatures, like organic-tempered ware, making it cheaper and quicker to produce. However, if a larger amount of shell temper was added to the clay, it could be fired at higher temperatures and not shatter, with the pottery then being as durable as sandy ware.

We looked at a map that showed the mostly coastal South-East Kent Ceramic Zone, where Continental pottery was found, and the further inland North Kent Ceramic Zone, where Midlands ware was more common. Lisa pointed out that Lyminge fitted into the South-East Kent pottery profile, except that Lyminge had larger amounts of Continental imports, probably due to it being a high-status site. She suggested that because of its high status, Lyminge may have been at the forefront of spreading new technology throughout England.

In the Q&A session that followed, Lisa explained that no kiln sites had been found at Lyminge, because the hand-made pottery was fired in bonfire kilns, of which little or no traces were likely to be found.

Joan Burrow-Newton

Islands of Stone: Neolithic Crannogs on the Outer Hebrides

A talk by Professor Duncan Garrow, University of Reading, on Saturday 23rd April 2022

Duncan Garrow began with an outline of the project which gives his talk its title. Very much a product of teamwork, it has many contributors, including his principal collaborators Dr Fraser Sturt and Stephanie Blanksheim of the University of Southampton, and Angela Gannon of Historic Environment Scotland.

A good definition of a 'crannog' can be found in Canmore (Historic Environment Scotland's national record of the

historic environment), as follows: 'An island, partly or wholly artificial, often formed by dumping timber, earth and stones and revetted with timber piles or a palisade. Built in a loch, wetland or estuary and dating from prehistory to medieval.'

Crannogs have been known (and some excavated) since the mid nineteenth century, and date from various periods, with some having been in use over more than one period. Although over 500 have been recorded in Scotland, of which 150 are in the Outer Hebrides, they are still relatively under-studied. Neolithic crannogs were relatively unknown until the excavation in 1988 of the crannog at Eilean Dhomhnaill, North Uist. This had been supposed Iron Age but was found to be Neolithic, with a long and complex sequence of structures used, perhaps intermittently, for more than a thousand years.

The next significant study was in 2012-15 by Chris Murray and Mark Elliott, Chris being an ex-Royal Naval diver used to delicate work under water. These investigators searched for promising sites on Google Earth, and Chris dived for evidence, often finding pieces of pottery which Mark was able to identify as Neolithic.

This led to pilot work in the lochs of Lewis in 2016-17 after quite a number of crannogs had been found. The University of Reading assisted in dating some material, whereupon Duncan and Fraser became interested in studying crannogs, with the advantage that Fraser was a trained scuba diver. They identified two sites they wished to examine: in Lochs Bhorgastail and Langabhat. Remote sensing revealed that the crannogs were sited in the loch at the point where shallow water (3 – 4m deep) met deep water (up to 20m deep), and photogrammetry allowed visual representations of the structure of the islands.

Crannogs generally cluster around the date 3500 BC. They must have been constructed by communal effort; yet they seem not to have been part of everyday life, because pottery sherds are found in rich quantities on the surrounding loch bed (where they survive well in the silt), with few sherds on the islet itself. They were evidently used for some special purpose, perhaps for feasting. Visible remains often include a causeway connecting the crannog to land.

In preparation for the on-site work, Stephanie Blanksheim searched the available records, and her colleagues at Southampton used computer software to establish the precise position of the islets. The Uist Community Archaeology Group then visited sites identified by Stephanie as promising. Fieldwork could begin in 2020 on receipt of a large grant from the Arts & Humanities Research Council.

The archaeological work on the Bhorgastail crannog was hampered by a modern cairn (a fairly common feature) and a covering of woodrush vegetation which was difficult to remove. Under the vegetation was peat covered in

stones. Two trenches were dug: one across the islet, and an off-islet underwater trench aligned with it. A sondage was also dug through the layers of the islet, which revealed, beneath the stones, thick layers of wood material about 50mm in diameter. Similar layers of timber were found in the underwater trench.

The wooden architecture extended far beyond the visible stone crannog, which was perhaps 20m across. Some burnt layers of timber were dated by radiocarbon techniques to the Bronze Age. It was clear that the wooden structure predated the stone one. Material culture was overwhelmingly associated with the wooden phase.

In associated work, the environmental consultancy QUEST made a number of boreholes in the surrounding land, so that their cores can be analysed (for example, for pollen) in order to provide a landscape context. The cores should also reveal whether the crannogs were built in the loch, or whether at the time of their construction they were in shoreline marsh. Since the excavation, Angela Gannon and her staff from Historic Environment Scotland have been undertaking a contextual landscape survey, which will continue next summer when further sites will be excavated and dived.

A team from Bristol University will be looking at ancient DNA found in the loch bed, where it survives well in the sediment. One question to be answered is what animals lived in the area, since bones tend not to remain long in the acid soil. Also at Bristol, Dan Brown and Lucy Cramp will examine the materials absorbed by the pottery, in order to identify what foodstuffs were contained or cooked in the pots. Initial findings suggest that carcase-based and cereal-based foods were cooked separately.

In the summer of 2022 survey work will be undertaken of some 20 crannogs in North and South Uist, including dives to recover material culture around them. The summer of 2023 will see a return to Loch Bhorgastail in order to complete the excavation by providing an understanding of the timber phase.

The finds will probably go to the museum in Stornoway. Duncan's team is also working with the Ordnance Survey to create an app which will provide a tour of the islands' prehistory.

The excellent illustrations to this talk showed not only the lovely landscape but also the logistical challenges of working in such a remote and difficult environment. The nearest road was several hundred metres from the excavation, and the team's four-wheel drive vehicle once had to be rescued from boggy ground by a neighbour's tracked van. Diving equipment is heavy and bulky, and the 8 x 2m metal frame used to demarcate the underwater trench was especially awkward to manage. The most demanding task was the management of spoil in a constricted space. Almost 30 tons had to be put into bags and taken ashore by rowing them there in a rubber

dinghy. Duncan confessed to being extremely tired by the end of the dig. But he still looked very fit!

Toby Bainton

BAS Day School

This year's Day School was held at Saint Nicolas' Church Hall, Newbury, on Saturday 2nd April and focused on Roman Berkshire. It was chaired by Andrew Hutt.

Recent Archaeological Work in Roman West Berkshire, Sarah Orr, Principal Archaeologist, West Berkshire Council.

In **Hungerford** an iron lamp was found which is on display in the 'Focus on Hungerford' exhibition, West Berkshire Museum. In **Greenham**, roundhouses, a ring ditch, and an unusual Roman flagon were found. At **Hartshill Copse Quarry, Thatcham**, a Claudio-Neronian burial pit was found with nine pots accompanying the cremation. **Park Farm, Kintbury** has produced new finds showing parts of a Roman enclosure with ceramic building material (CBM). The bathhouse may be part of a villa complex, but the supposed villa is currently presumed under the sewage works. In **Upper Lambourn** a possible Roman enclosure and a 3rd century Probus coin have been discovered. There is possibly a Roman road at **Boxford**. In Roman times there were widespread field systems across the Downs which have now been ploughed out.

Roman Rural Settlements in Central Southern England: the RoLCAP Project, Paul Chadwick, Oxford University.

RoLCAP looks at the central belt and southern area of the Rural Settlement of Roman Britain (RSRB) project led by Mike Fulford, taking the RSRB database and enhancing it with information from the Historic Environment Records (HERs) and with geological and soil information from the National Mapping Project (NMP). It aims to establish whether Roman farms in given areas were stock based, cereal based or mixed. It has 10 study areas covering 1600 km².

The **Didcot** area splits into two along a Northwest-Southeast line with farms above the line and chalk-based soil below. The results show that clay soil and land liable to flooding was avoided for farms but that fertile gravel-based soils were well utilised. This was a mixed farming landscape with field systems and trackways used for stock movement.

The Berkshire Downs had field systems implying that this area had mixed farming but with a greater emphasis on the arable. Most field systems were between 50 and 100 ha in size with some as large as 250 ha.

The **Wokingham/Bracknell** area has been extensively evaluated but has a less dense pattern of farms which tend to be larger. Roman farming here was stock based in woodland pasture.

Paul hopes he is fleshing out predictive modelling using three simple criteria:

landscape model developed within study areas, applied to wider landscape, and tested against paleo-environmental data.

Little London: building infrastructure in Roman Berkshire and beyond, Professor Mike Fulford, Reading University

Brick stamps of Nero were first discovered in Silchester in 1905. More were discovered in the 1920s approximately 1 ½ miles south at Little London by the Roman road to Winchester, suggesting then that this was a kiln site.

The 2015 Historic England geophysical survey showed the later quarry pit in the middle of the site with kilns around it. The 2017 excavation revealed both a Roman brick kiln and the production of Roman pottery. Approximately 2/3 to ¾ of the production of the site was tegula, imbrex and flat bricks. There were also specific productions such as water pipes, armchair voussoir, bessalis, and flue tile. Relief patterned flue tiles were produced only until the end of the first century A.D. and those produced in Little London have been found at sites in Berkshire and up to Cirencester and Alchester, and down as far as Winchester, Rockbourne, Fishbourne and Chichester, but not at sites to the East. The Roman kiln site at Minety also produced relief patterned tile which has been found at Bath and Lechlade and other Roman towns in its vicinity.

Given the pattern of distribution of the relief patterned tiles it is suspected that there was a Phase 1 for CBM where it was produced in London and distributed from there. The kilns at Little London and Minety were later phases. At that stage expertise in producing CBM had to be imported as it would have been non-existent in the local population.

A Roman road from Poole Harbour via Old Sarum to Alchester, Bob Brewer, BAS

The Roman road from Poole and another from Portsmouth meet outside Cunetio at Forest Hill Farm, a British Oppidum where was an early Roman military presence. Both go into the Oppidum and are 30 m wide indicating military use. From here the road follows the Kennet to Littlecote where there is LiDAR evidence for it. The road doesn't always follow a straight line, there are rectilinear deviations. There is a section along the ridge of the Lambourn Downs. The A338 at Wantage is a remnant of the road.

Military roads between forts and harbours were routed for defence. They had wide road zones. They were a fast light build, but quality construction (thin but very solid).

Where possible they were routed on chalk or other free draining soils via short river crossings. The margins of

swamps were used only where necessary. Wet forests and long river crossings were avoided.

This Roman military road formed both a supply line and a west facing control line. Critical sections and the vexillation fort at Alchester were built very soon after the Roman invasion by Vespasian when he served as legate of Legio II Augusta. The Annals of Tacitus detail the Teutoberg forest massacre in 9 A.D. and in 41 A.D. Vespasian commanded a legion in Germany. From Tacitus and this he would have understood the imperative to construct roads.

Highwood Romano-Celtic Temple, Alan Hall, Site Director, SOAG

SOAG was initially drawn to the site, situated in a clearing on a chalk plateau in the Chilterns, at Highwood, South Oxfordshire, by a mound discovered in 1972 when walking the route of a road which never materialised. The mound was found to be filled with Roman flint, coins, and bones but this information was never published and remained in the SOAG archives.

We were taken year by year through the excavations (2015-2021) and then through the conclusions. The site had previously been excavated in the late 18th century as indicated by the 150-year-old beech tree sitting on top of the mound containing Roman flints, coins etc – evidently the spoil from those excavations of which no record has been found. There was clear evidence of late Iron Age activity on the site. From tegulae cut outs the temple construction was dated to the 2nd to 3rd century A.D. The temenos was cloistered. The outer walls were of good quality. The temple probably had a floor possibly wooden, or something else which was previously excavated?

The excavation went down to 1.2 m and discovered that in the 4th century A.D. the base of some walls had collapsed into a sinkhole bringing down a corner of the ambulatory and of the cella.

The temple was situated close to a significant Iron Age enclosure, and it may be that the temple site was originally associated with that?

Julie Worsfold

The first talk after lunch was on '**Berkshire Roman Project 2**', given by Andrew Hutt. He began by introducing the Archaeological Society then went on to explain the Outreach Group. This group was instigated to give people a sense of place and to help explain the amount of data available. The data extends from the first study, which was called 'The Archaeology of the Berkshire Downs', conducted by Richards in 1978, to volume 83 of the Berkshire Archaeological Journal, 'The Land of the Atrebates: in and around Roman Berkshire' published in 2018. The only way forward to sort out and make sense of all the facts was to use IT, so between 2015 and 2021 all the data was digitised using a MIDAS compliant database.

The archaeology of all the sites was recorded at the level of their use always referring to the levels given by Historic England. A Gazetteer has been produced, which consists mainly of a variety of maps. These maps range in area from the whole of Berkshire to just a few streets and they can easily be reproduced over a period of time, if necessary. The objectives of the project are to:

Develop an understanding of archaeological remains, particularly in the local environment.

See patterns of change.

Follow the history of families.

The method of doing this was to divide Berkshire into a number of regions from which to collect data. Each area would contain a Roman town or settlement within it. Many organisations were asked to help, including Reading University and Cotswold Archaeology. The data is subdivided by other criteria e.g., chronology, burials/cremations, geology, and usage.

These sites all went in and out of use from the late Iron Age to late Roman times. Farms became villas and small towns developed into urban areas, with clear evidence of economic and military activity. The data is now presented in the form of essays, each essay containing six maps. Some participants also give presentations of their findings.

Andrew then outlined future plans; the first step will be 'Berkshire Roman Project 3' which will give more explanation of the changes and also lay the foundations of Project 4, hopefully expanding to include the early mediaeval period.

The second presentation of the afternoon was on, '**Roman Finds**' given by Phil Smither, Finds Liaison Officer, Berkshire, who explained how Roman sites in West Berkshire could be identified by their finds. These have been officially recorded since 1997 in response to the 1996 Treasure Act. There have been over 5000 finds recorded - of these 24 can be dated to the Palaeolithic and 3578 are Roman.

The nature of these finds changes over time so that they can be used to date sites. For example, Thatcham has been found to be the town which has been continually inhabited for the longest time. The evidence for this fact is given by a Bronze Age spear then Bronze Age and Iron Age brooches followed by second century A.D. coins. Phil illustrated his talk with some stunning photos, which really brought the past to life.

After a break for tea Keith Abbott from BAS gave a talk intriguingly called, '**All roads lead to Wickham**'.

Ivan Margary mapped and gave numbers to Roman roads in the 1930s. Margary 41 goes from Cirencester to Silchester. Margary 53 starts at Bath and heads east, eventually intersecting and joining up with Margary 41. Keith is trying to find out where this intersection is.

Keith's interest began in 2020, when he was shown some Roman coins collected by the farmer at Radley Farm. Keith started to investigate and found evidence that the road from Bath is not where it was expected to be. Instead, topological surveys of the area highlighted a swathe of boggy ground, obviously not suitable for a road. Further investigation was needed, so the next step was to try and trace the last section of the road going eastwards, using geophysics. This is still an ongoing investigation,

with much work yet to do. Keith added that anybody who is interested in joining the project would be most welcome - just drop him a line.

Andrew Hutt then drew the day to a conclusion by thanking all the speakers, organisers, and helpers for making the day a success. There were no questions.

Liz Jackson

BAS Study Group

March 2022 meeting

This meeting started with a presentation of the project report *BAS Gazetteer development 2015 to 2022* by Andrew Hutt and Martin Labram. It described the work they did to develop a database that supports those parts of the MIDAS data standard which underpin the work of the Society and a mapping system, based on the QGIS geographic information system, which can be used to produce maps of Berkshire's archaeology.

This was followed by a presentation of the results from the geophysics survey of Radley Farm by Keith Abbott and an overview of the, then forthcoming, Runnymede geophysics survey by Andrew Hutt.

April 2022 meeting

This meeting started with a presentation entitled *Graffiti in churches* by James Peddle in which he explained the background to finding and recording graffiti, presented examples of the graffiti he had found in churches in Berkshire and explained the process he was using to photograph, record and interpret graffiti. He closed his presentation with an invitation to spend an evening with him looking at the graffiti on the outside walls of Sonning church.

This was followed by presentations by Keith Abbott to bring people up to date with the work at Radley Farm and by Andrew Hutt to present early results from the Runnymede geophysics survey.

May 2022 meeting

The May meeting started with Andrew Hutt presenting the results of the geophysics survey of Council Meadow, Runnymede. This was followed by Keith Abbott giving a brief presentation on Radley Farm. Andrew Hutt then gave a presentation of the results of the first 5 days of excavations at Blount Court.

Andrew Hutt

BAS Fieldwork

If walls could talk ...



If walls could talk, they could have a lot to tell us - the study of Medieval Graffiti gives us an opportunity to hear what they might tell. Marks left by previous generations are still on some buildings – this graffiti ('scratchings' in Italian) can be discovered today if you look for them in a particular way. We often find protection marks (apotropaic - to turn evil away) such as circle designs (daisy wheels), pentangles and VV or M symbols, they are often

inscribed around doorways or windows. They were believed to stop evil entering the building through the openings by either 'trapping' the evil spirit in the endless pentangle and circles; or by resisting the spirits by evoking the power of Mary the mother of Jesus with an M or VV (Virgin of Virgins). Also common are crosses, not surprising in a Christian church! - A story is often told they are crusader crosses. But they are often clustered around the south door/porch, and the sheer quantity would indicate a more everyday use. It is likely they are a symbol to God of a personal commitment, say to a marriage vow or a commercial contract, as both activities would have taken place in the porch in medieval times. Many initials have been carved, some with dates, which are likely to represent memorials to the dead created by those who could not afford a headstone. If we are lucky, we can find drawings of animals; birds; people; and more rarely boats or music.





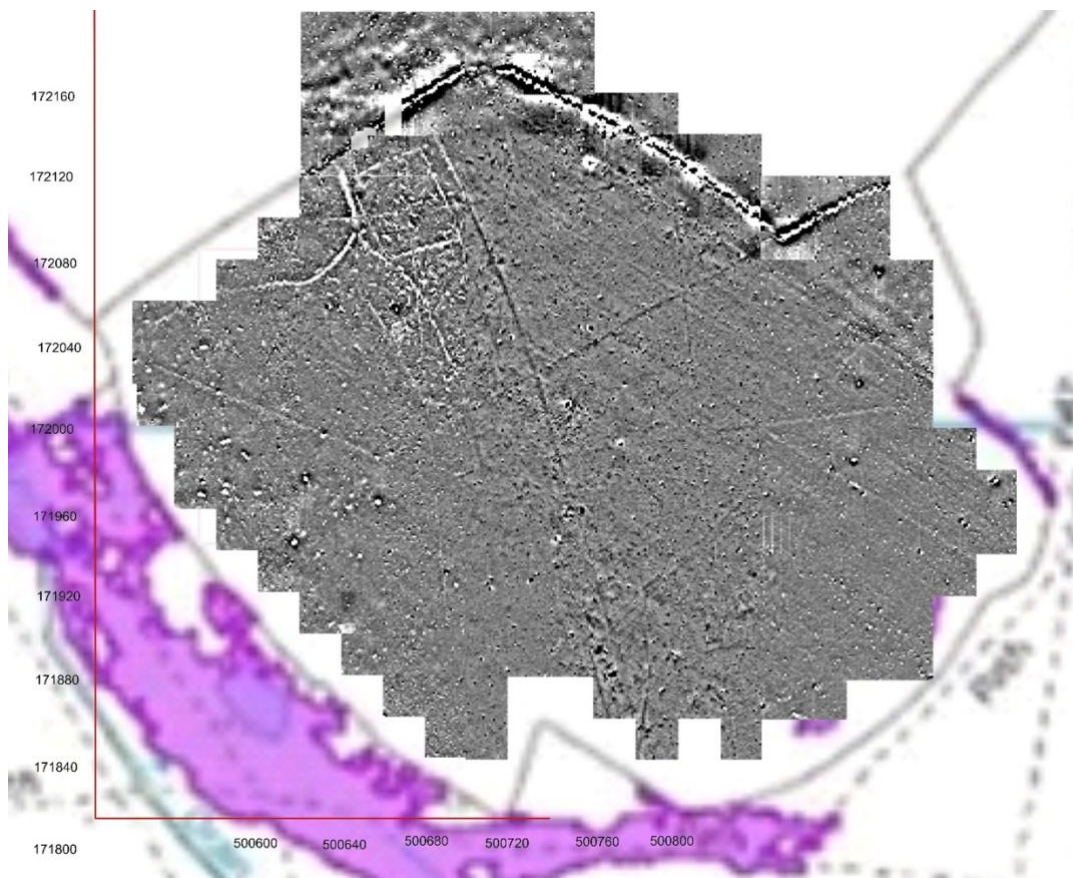
James Peddle

Medieval Graffiti allows us a glimpse into the lives of ordinary folk of many hundreds of years ago – a unique record not available to us through the documents or formal inscriptions of the better off. BAS's project to record the graffiti throughout Berkshire will preserve this archaeological record and help its preservation by making others aware. To record the graffiti, we take photographs with a raking light and where necessary annotate to make the graffiti clearer to then publish. If you are interested in seeing some graffiti or being involved in the group to record the Medieval Graffiti in Berkshire, please contact me, James Peddle, peddle(at)hotmail.co.uk, 07986 600 695, or come along to the visit to Sonning Church at 7:30pm on Thursday 30th June (for details see under 'Visits' above).

Runnymede Geophysics Project

Council Meadow, Runnymede is believed to be where in 1215, the barons camped while they were negotiating Magna Carta with King John.

From Monday 28th March 2022 until Thursday 14th April 2022, Andrew Hutt led a mixed team involving 9 BAS members, 7 Surrey Council Archaeological Unit volunteers, and staff from the National Trust to carry out a gradiometer survey of the meadow. They surveyed around 12ha. The results are shown below. The anomalies found in the results represented evidence of ploughing, a trackway, WWII anti-aircraft trenches, a large drainage ditch, several now defunct field boundaries and three areas with evidence of significant human activity. Artefacts found on the site suggest one of these areas may be Roman, the other two are at the south end of the field adjacent to the Langham Ponds.



The results of the geophysics survey of Council Meadow, Runnymede.

Please contact me if you would like a copy of the draft report.

Andrew Hutt

Fieldwork at Radley Farm

As part of the ongoing project to find the most easterly section of the Roman road to Bath (Margary 53) and its intersection with Ermin Street (Margary 41) fieldwork was carried out between September 2021 and March 2022 at Radley Farm near Hungerford Newtown, West Berkshire. Here earthworks believed to be the most easterly visible surviving remains of Margary 53 can be found in Stibbs Wood and Three Gate Copse.

In his 2013 paper, Toller describes the route of Margary 53 eastwards from Bath to its intersection with Margary 41 near Wickham, West Berkshire. This route first follows the straight and well attested section from Bath to Fyfield; Toller then presents evidence for the route from Fyfield where the road crosses to the north bank of the River Kennet near Stitchcombe (east of Mildenhall) and continues eastwards via Ramsbury to Peaked Lot; and then from Peaked Lot to its intersection with Ermin Street of which the last 2km is uncertain as can be seen in Figures 1 and 2.

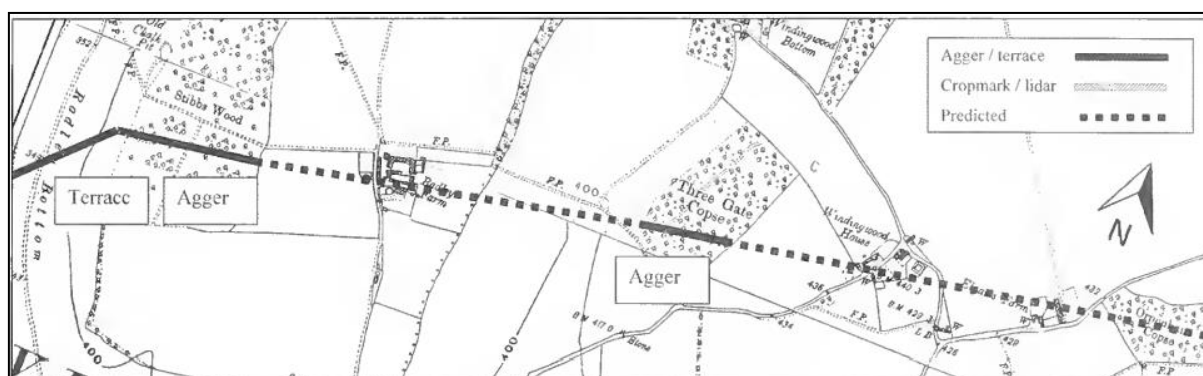


Figure 1. Toller's projected route of Margary 53 from Radley Bottom to Openham Farm (Toller, 2013)

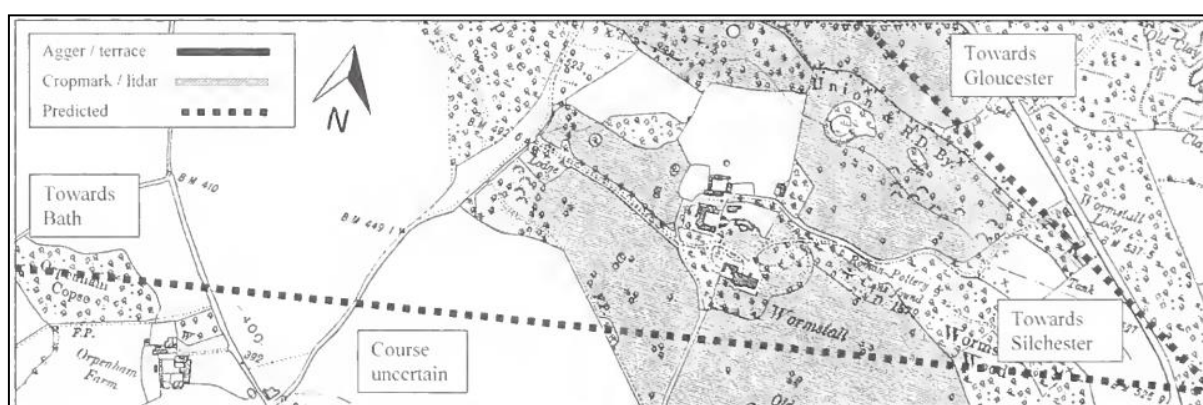


Figure 2. Toller's projected route of Margary 53 from Openham Farm to Ermin Street (Toller, 2013)

In Figure 2 the route of Margary 53 projected by Toller can be seen to continue on a nearly straight projection eastwards passing to the south of Wormstall House, through Wormstall Wood, and intersecting with Ermin Street near Benham Burslot.

Geophysics surveys carried out on the Wormstall Estate to the southeast of Wickham by BAS from April to July 2021 failed to find any evidence of Margary 53 along the route projected by Toller. During the same period BAS also carried out topological surveys across the Wormstall Estate which revealed a line of natural springs to the north of the estate along the escarpment leading to the natural ridge used by the modern B4000. These springs would have presented a considerable challenge for Margary 53's construction and there is no visible evidence of a ramp, or other such engineering works having been constructed to traverse them. This new evidence suggests that at some point to the east of Three Gate Copse Margary 53 either took a more northerly course (possibly along Church Hill) to join Ermin Street in the vicinity of Wickham, or it turned to the south to join Ermin Street near Lip Lane or even further to the south towards Stockcross.

The above gave rise to the question of what route Margary 53 from Bath actually took for its last 2km eastwards to its intersection with Ermin Street, and led to the instigation of the fieldwork at Radley Farm with the following objectives:

- Carry out gradiometer and earth resistance geophysics surveys in the fields to the west, south and east of Stibbs Wood and in fields to the west and south of Three Gate Copse to capture the characteristic "signature" of anomalies close to

the known location of Margary 53. Carry out earth resistance surveys in areas within Stibbs Wood and Three Gate Copse where earthworks of Margary 53 best survive.

- Carry out gradiometer and earth resistance geophysics surveys in the fields/pastures between Stibbs Wood and Three Gate Copse to assess the level of deterioration in Margary 53's "signature" anomalies as it passes across a varied modern agricultural landscape in order to evaluate the feasibility of using this method to trace its lost section to the east of Three Gate Copse.
- Carry out wider gradiometer and earth resistance geophysics surveys to check for evidence of any earlier phases of the route taken by Margary 53 up the slope from Radley Bottom to Three Gate Copse, and also look for evidence of settlement in this area associated with the road.

Parts of Radley Farm were divided into distinct areas A to G based on differing topology or usage (see Figure 3) within which a number of surveys were taken initially using a Bartington 601 gradiometer and then a Frobisher TAR3 earth resistance meter to further investigate the gradiometer anomalies revealed.

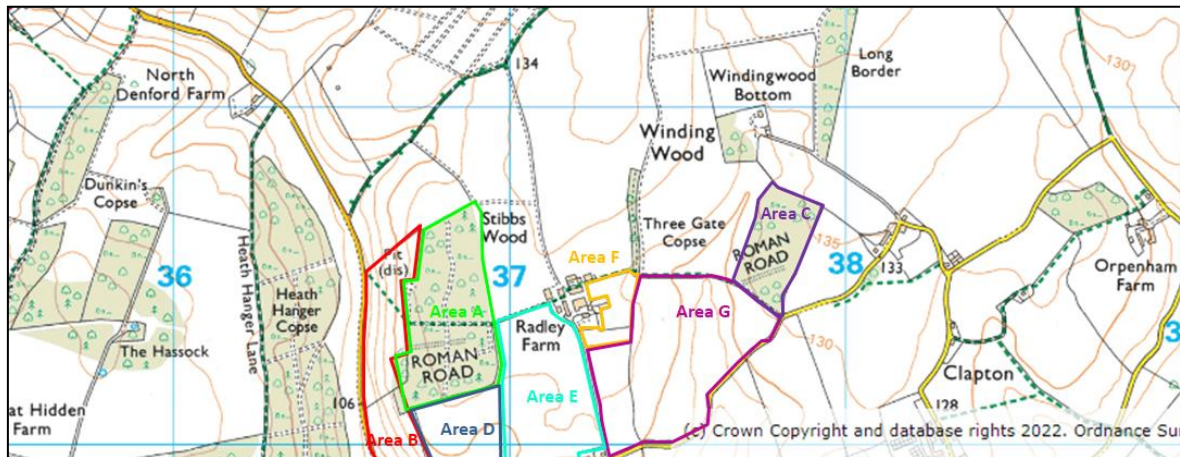


Figure 3. Assigned areas of interest to be surveyed on Radley Farm (Ordnance Survey 2022)

The best-preserved remains of Margary 53 were revealed within the ancient woodland of Three Gate Copse and Stibbs Wood where surviving earthworks are visible. The earth resistance survey of Three Gate Copse showed that the 8.5m wide agger and parallel ditches either side survive well (see Figure 4).

The HER shows an excavation of Margary 53 in Three Gate Copse carried out in the 1960s, but the report from this excavation was never published and had been presumed lost. However, with the help of the landowner the project team tracked down a surviving copy of the transcript of this excavation, undertaken by a teacher and some boys from a school in Reading in 1968. The report confirms the geophysics survey results that the agger is 8.5m wide and well preserved in this location having been constructed to a high standard using compacted flint, with a ditch running on each side of the agger. But the measurements of the section cut through Margary 53 and the photographs taken then have yet to be located.

Surviving earthworks of Margary 53 were also found on the steep slope to Radley Bottom (Area B) and within Stibbs Wood, which were also surveyed. The results in Stibbs Wood were less conclusive as it was also identified that this route was used as the main route of entry to the farm until the early 19th century, and as such it is likely the features of Margary 53 may have been much modified and repaired since their initial construction. However, there is good evidence to suggest that the oblique terrace cut into the slope down Radley Bottom was the route taken by Margary 53 which then continued east through Stibbs Wood where the earthworks survive.

In Area E, East of Stibbs Wood, no trace of Margary 53 was found using geophysics surveys. This is attributed to a combination of the shallow depth of the topsoil over the chalk bedrock, to the effects of clearing woodland and the many years of deep ploughing of the heavy chalk-with-flint topsoil which is thought to have taken place and which most likely removed any remains of Margary 53. In Area F, to the East of Area E, the pasture had been heavily drained, with many ditches and sumps being dug over the years across the projected route of Margary 53, and no trace of it was detected.

However, in the field southeast of Three Gate Copse (Area G) traces of Margary 53's parallel ditches were detected over a 50m stretch using the gradiometer, together with what appears to be a 10m long area of surviving agger between the parallel ditches. This result demonstrates that remains of Margary 53 have indeed survived in some areas of the modern landscape outside of ancient woodland, and that they are detectable using modern geophysics survey methods. However, it must be concluded that the remains of Margary 53 are only detectable for less than 10% of the route due a combination of local geology, topology, and extensive 19th century deep ploughing.

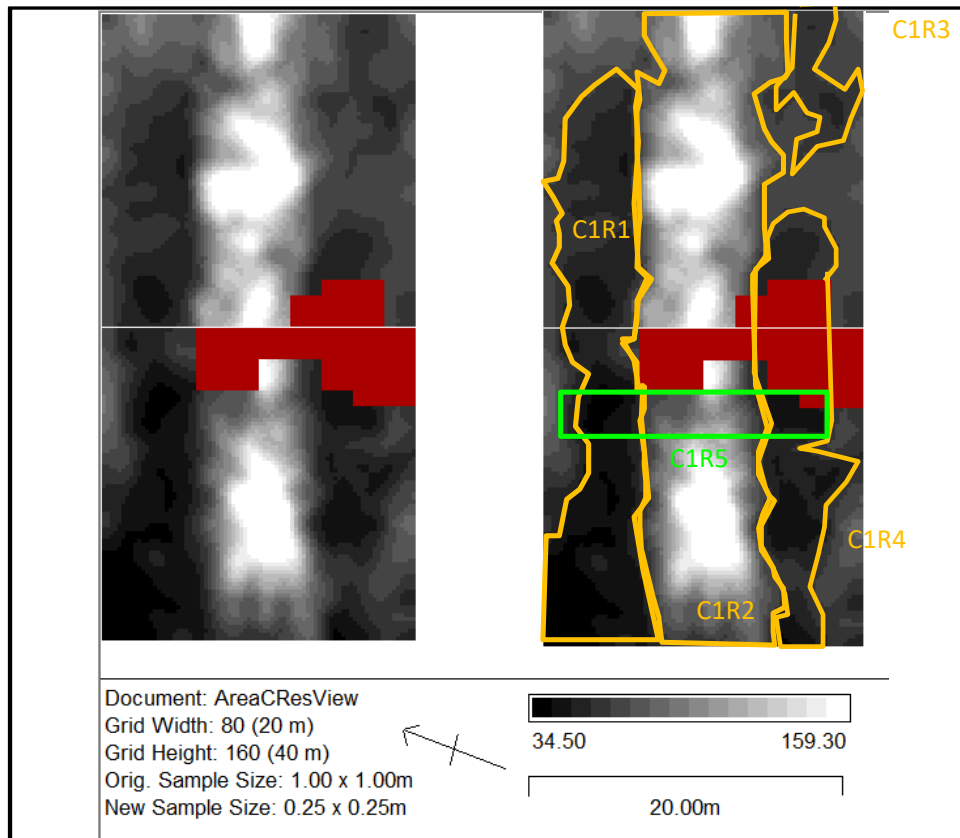


Figure 4. Earth Resistance anomalies observed within Three Gate Copse (Area C)

No evidence of occupation was found close to Margary 53. Neither was any evidence found of earlier phases of its construction using a different route to cross Radley Farm along its alignment seen to the West of Radley Bottom.



Figure 5. BAS project team surveying Area D on Radley Farm

During this project a lot of experience was gained in to how this interaction of local geology, topology and historical agricultural practices can impact the likelihood of survival of a Roman Road, and on the geophysics methods best used to detect them. As a result of this a further BAS project is now being mobilised to undertake a series of geophysics surveys across land to the east of Radley Farm towards Wickham to track the route of Margary 53 to its intersection with Ermin Street.

Keith Abbott

Excavations at Blounts Court 2022

In the 3 weeks from 25th April 2022 to 13th May 2022, a team of 14 BAS members excavated 4 trenches at Blounts Court. We were working to understand a large wall (F5) with a south face of very fine cut flints.

Starting from the present-day archaeology, our labours revealed:

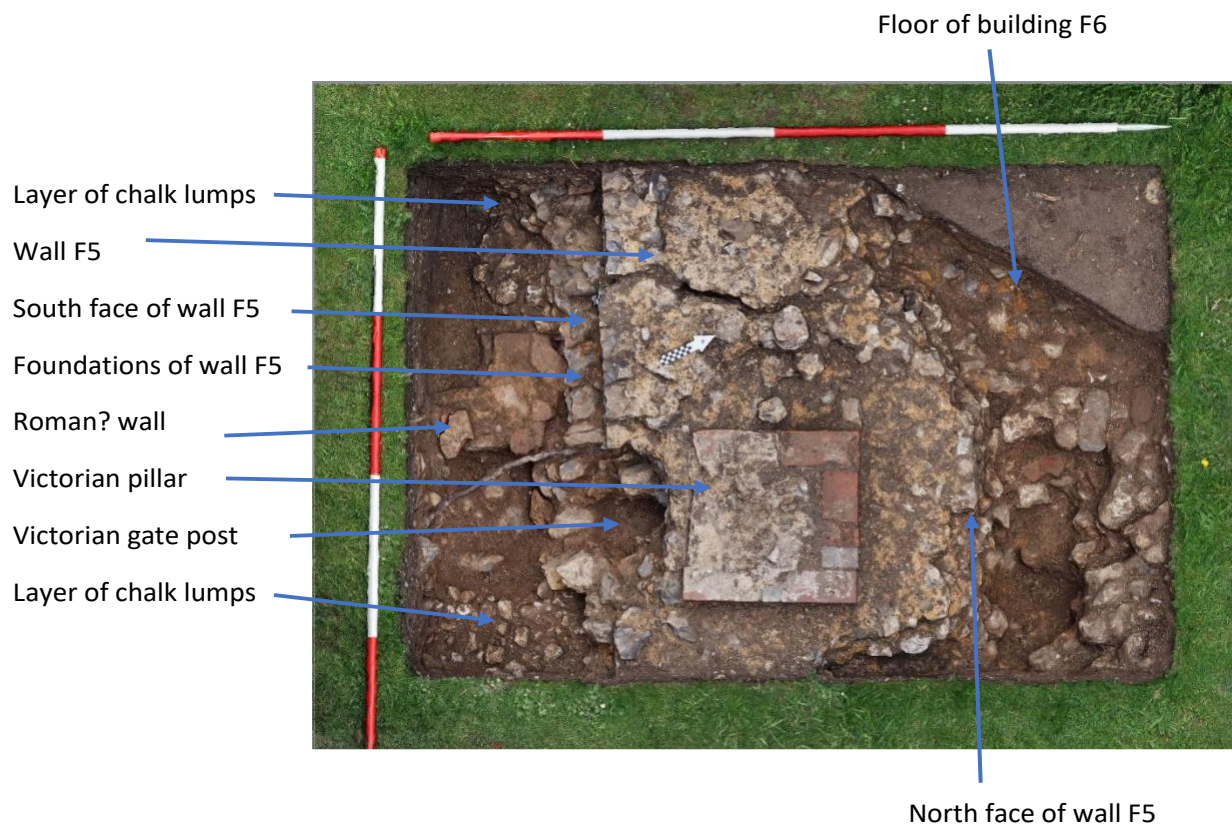
- 1) Part of the 20th century garden with an electric cable used to power the fountain in a garden pond and an electricity supply cable used to supply the nearby Blounts Court Farm. Installing this cable destroyed some relevant archaeology.
- 2) A Victorian gateway leading to a garden to the south. A cut was made in wall F5 to accommodate the turn of the gate as the wall was being built.
- 3) A 15th century wall F5, 0.9m to 1.1m wide and c. 28m long, with a very fine knapped flint south face. The flints were cut off-site and, as the wall was being built, chipped to provide a closely interlocking wall facing. The wall had foundations of mortared flint lumps at circa 49.1m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum) which suggest it was built as a single activity.
Georgina Stonor, the archivist of the family living at Stonor Park, suggested that the wall was built by Elizabeth Stonor in 1462 and suggested that the invoices for the work were probably in the Stonor archives at the National Archives, Kew.
- 4) Evidence of a building F6: the wall F5 formed the south wall of this building. The evidence suggested it was probably a medieval chapel with a tiled floor laid on a sandy mortar with flints. We were unable to find evidence of its other walls.
- 5) Evidence of a layer of chalk lumps which pre-dates wall F5 and may be the foundations of a wall or path.
- 6) Part of the Roman? wall which has found on the site in 2015.
- 7) A sink hole: this caused wall F5 to fracture and building F6 to be abandoned.



Blounts Court: the BAS visit: discussing the evidence in trench 12 (photograph by Richard Miller)



Blounts Court: south face of wall F5



Blounts Court trench 8 (photograph by Richard Miller)

Please contact me If you want a copy of the draft report of this work.

Andrew Hutt

BAS Outreach Group

April 2022 meeting

This meeting started with Andrew Hutt sharing with the attendees the replan of the Society's outreach activities explained in the article *From the Chair* (above).

This was followed by a presentation by Simon Cains on the work he has been doing in Piddington where he has been finding heritage information and presenting it to the people of Piddington and the surrounding parishes. One of the key messages from Simon was he used a variety of channels to present his work including: the local newspaper, the parish magazine, a local heritage Facebook page, presentations to local groups and guided heritage walks round Piddington. This gave the meeting insights into some of the activities the Society may want to reproduce in parts of Berkshire. The meeting ended with a thought shower asking which archaeological and heritage sites people take friends and relatives, and an agreement that we do not have the energy to take a stand at the East Reading Festival in June 2022.

May 2022 meeting

This was a very small meeting. It started with a brief statement concerning the poster competition (see below). This was followed by a review of the article Nigel Spencer, and I wrote for the Arborfield parish magazine published as an A5 booklet. The image below shows what the editor published: the BAS logo, our 250-word article on the geophysics survey at Hall Farm, and the Arborfield area of Saxton's map of Berkshire published in 1574. We have been invited to publish similar short articles in the coming issues which gives us the opportunity to present archaeology and heritage from across the parish.

Berkshire Archaeological Society



Berkshire Archaeological Society finds remains at Hall Farm

In 2019, the Berkshire Archaeological Society carried out some geophysics surveys at Hall Farm.

They were interested in the site because it is very likely that St Bartholomew's church dating from 1200 had houses near it and in 1574 Saxton published a map of Berkshire which showed Arborfield as being on the north side of the River Loddon.

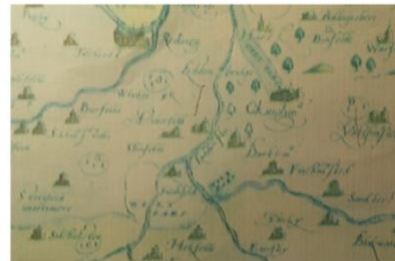
The Society surveyed the area to north of the River Loddon and found anomalies which probably represent the remains of buildings which may be those mapped by Saxton. In 2019, they were only able to survey the land to the east of the track running north of the River Loddon, later this year they are planning to survey the other side of the track which may reveal more buildings.

The Society also surveyed fields to the east of St Bartholomew's church. Here they found anomalies which may represent buildings. They are on the same west to east alignment as the church which suggests they may be contemporary with it and hence may represent the remains of the earlier Arborfield House or part of a medieval village.

More information on this fieldwork will be published on the Arborfield History website. If you want more information about the Berkshire Archaeological Society's fieldwork at Hall Farm send an email to projects@berksarch.co.uk

Nigel Spencer

Berkshire Archaeological Society



Saxton's Map of 1574 showing Arborfield on the north side of the River Loddon

Arborfield parish magazine: our first 2 page spread

Andrew Hutt

The Poster Competition

The final weeks of April leading up to the deadline for competition entries were weeks of excited anticipation. But then the excitement turned to disappointment. There were **no** entries even though application forms and supporting information had been downloaded from the website. The original response from local and national organisations and societies to the announcement of the competition had been overwhelmingly positive. What was going on? The organisers can only speculate. Was the application and supporting information off-putting in some way? Were the terms of the competition unappealing? Was the prize money too low given the amount of creative work and research that was necessary? Did it just need to be simpler?

We will never know for sure but will certainly discuss "lessons to be learned". If any members are amongst those who looked at the competition and then decided **not** to apply it would be very useful to know why so, please send your comments to outreach@berksarch.co.uk.

Alison McQuitty

Obituary – Gail Eaton

Earlier this year the Society heard of the sad passing of Gail Eaton. Gail became an active member of the Society in retirement. She served on Council and as editor of this newsletter, only standing down last summer when ill health forced her to do so. She was also a member of the BAJ Editorial Board where she made a significant contribution to establishing its editorial standards.

Prior to retirement she worked as an advisor to the Home Office on drug misuse and the international drugs trade. In retirement she did contract work for Oxford University Press proof-reading and editing academic books. Those members of the Society who are also members of SOAG will remember that she was heavily involved with the excavations on the Romano-Celtic Temple at High Wood.

Those who knew Gail more personally will also remember her as a warm, friendly, and very down to earth person who was fond of cooking and baking and who was devoted to her family.

My thanks to Andrew Hutt and Alison McQuitty for their recollections of Gail and their contributions to this obituary.

Julie Worsfold

Input to the Newsletter

<p>My thanks to all the contributors to this newsletter and to Anne Harrison for proof-reading. If you have an archaeological story you feel would interest the Society please send it to Julie Worsfold at newsletter@berksarch.co.uk . The copy date for the next issue is Monday, 23rd August 2022. Thank you.</p>

Talks by other groups

Berkshire Archaeological Research Group (BARG)

<http://www.barg-online.org>

Thursday 14th July 2022

In person talk at 7:30pm at The Cornerstone, Norreys Ave, Wokingham RG40 1UE.
£3 fee for non-members.

Speaker: Dr Bob Clarke, Wessex Archaeology

Title: "The Royal Observer Corps - a short history"

Maidenhead Archaeological and Historical Society (MAHS)

All talks on Zoom - 7.50pm for start at 8pm. £3 fee for non-members. To book:

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/maidenhead-archaeological-and-historical-society>

For more information please email: paul@c21networks.co.uk

Wednesday 29th June 2022

Title: Silent images? Women in Ancient Egypt

Wednesday 27th July 2022

Title: How to Read an English Country Church

Wednesday 31st August 2022

Title: Turkish Delights

Marlow Archaeology Group (MAG)

<http://marlowarch.co.uk>

All talks start at 8pm. Talks on Zoom can be booked via the website.

Thursday 7th July 2022 - Zoom

Speaker: Dr James Wright, Triskele Heritage

Title: A Beginner's Guide to Castles

Basingstoke Archaeological and Historical Society

To celebrate its 50th anniversary - Day Conference - Saturday 2nd July at Sherfield Park Community Centre, Sherfield on Loddon, Hants, RG27 0FP, from 9.30 am to 3pm.

From Nero to Cromwell and Beyond: 50 years of discovery in North-East Hampshire.

Confirmed speakers:

- Prof Mike Fulford – Silchester: Reflections on the last 50 years
- David Hopkins, Hampshire County Archaeologist – People and Place: The story of Basingstoke's archaeology
- Alan Turton, author and military historian – Hunting the Golden Calf: 375 years of treasure hunting and archaeology at Basing House

During refreshment breaks there will be a number of exhibitions, displays and bookstalls for delegates to browse.

Tickets - £20 (which includes lunch and one year's free membership to BAHS).

For more information and to purchase tickets, please go to: www.bahsoc.org.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 150 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 newly found or long standing, the Society offers activities from regular lectures, an annual Day School (conference) and visits to excavations and research.

All members receive a monthly e-news sheet with news of the Society's events and other events in Berkshire, this quarterly newsletter and a free copy of The Berkshire Archaeological Journal published by the Society.

Officers of the Society:

Chair: Andrew Hutt
chair@berksarch.co.uk

Secretary: Keith Abbot
secretary@berksarch.co.uk

Treasurer: Anne Harrison
treasurer@berksarch.co.uk

Membership Secretary:
Anne Harrison
membership@berksarch.co.uk

Lectures & visits:
Andrew Hutt
lectures@berksarch.co.uk

Day Schools:
Andrew Hutt
lectures@berksarch.co.uk

Study Group & Field Projects:
Andrew Hutt
projects@berksarch.co.uk

Newsletter: Julie Worsfold
newsletter@berksarch.co.uk

Website: Tim Lloyd
webmaster@berksarch.co.uk

For more contacts and more information about the Society visit:
www.berksarch.co.uk



@BerksArchSoc