



# ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Summer 2023

Vol. 25, No.2

## Dates for your diary

**Monday 12<sup>th</sup> June to Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2023** Wickham House: Geophysics survey

See below and contact Keith Abbott: keefandtrace(at)hotmail.com

**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023:** BAS Study Group Lunch – At Wickham – Contact Keith Abbott: keefandtrace(at)hotmail.com

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023:** BAS Study Group Lunch – At Winnersh – Organiser TBA

**August – No Meetings**

**September (exact dates TBA):** Wickham House: Geophysics survey

See below

**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023:** BAS Study Group: 2:30pm at Woosehill Community Centre and on Zoom

**Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023:** BAS Study Group Lunch – At Winnersh – Organiser TBA

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2023:** Lecture: *West Berks Historic Environment Records & The Lost Gardens of Shaw House* by Beth Asbury

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023:** AGM followed by lecture: *Sex, Gender, biological relatedness and kinship in early Neolithic Britain* by Professor Chris Fowler, Newcastle University

## From the Chair

I hope you are all enjoying the improved weather.

The Society is so busy that the March Council meeting had to discuss a schedule of work for the period March to August 2023. This schedule was and is dominated by fieldwork, with geophysics surveys at Cock Marsh, Inkpen, and Wickham, graffiti surveys at Waltham St Lawrence, and excavations at Cookham.

In the background, the Society is writing up the excavations at Blounts Court and doing research on Roman Berkshire.

The next big thing for the Society is to establish the BAS Finds Group. This will allow us to undertake excavations safe in the knowledge that we are capable of writing comprehensive reports of our work. Being a member of the BAS Finds Group is a post excavation activity conducted in the warmth and comfort of a study or meeting room but still offering the benefits of working in a team on things which should stimulate your interest. For more details see the article below.

*Andrew Hutt*

IN  
BERKSHIRE

## Archaeology on Saturdays

### Test Pitting in North Warnborough

A talk given by Professor Carenza Lewis, Professor for the Public Understanding of Research, Lincoln University and Senior Research Associate, Cambridge University, on Saturday 18th February, 2023.

Andrew Hutt introduced Professor Lewis, saying he was particularly interested in this subject as BAS may need to conduct similar research in Wickham.

Professor Lewis began her talk by telling us that she had an interest in identifying and mapping medieval villages. In the past research had concentrated on Deserted Medieval Villages (DMVs) as they had visible well-defined features, and their archaeological preservation was good. They told us a lot about the beginning of settlements and life within. However, only about 10% of medieval villages became permanently deserted. So, DMVs are in a minority, tend to be atypical, smaller, in less favourable locations, and therefore tend to be unevenly distributed and poorer. This means that to get a more representative understanding of the past, Currently Occupied Rural Settlements (CORS) need to be studied. This includes hamlets, villages, and small towns.

The CORS Project used test pitting to look at more than 70 settlements mainly in East Anglia. There were a few outliers including North Warnborough, but she didn't explain why this small town in Hampshire, about 20 miles south of Reading, just south of Hook and the M3 and north-west of Odiham, had been chosen.

Test pits of one square metre were taken throughout the area. These are a convenient size because they can easily be fitted into gardens and built-up areas. Also, there is not much disruption or mess, and the excavation takes only one or two days. The methodology is to excavate down in 10-centimetre spits, each of which is given a different context number. The finds are then recorded and collated. The collated results show which places were occupied, how they came into existence and how they have developed over time. (The 'Time Team' did a "Big Dig" near Odiham castle and discovered that the layout of Odiham was completely different from North Warnborough. It showed that Odiham had been planned, whereas North Warnborough had not, but rather had built up gradually since the eighteenth century, giving it a "village" feel.)

Professor Lewis spent four years excavating in North Warnborough, between 2013 and 2017, getting help from experts, local people, and school children. About ten sites were investigated each year, giving powerful evidence of how the settlement developed, mainly from sherds of pottery. The earliest evidence could be dated to 1550 BC, the Bronze Age, and followed through

to 1900 AD. The most unusual find within a test pit was a pit containing about 20 cattle horn cores at the Victorian level. These were probably evidence of the making of drinking vessels, for which only the outer part of a horn was used.

There were no Iron Age finds and very few Roman. Also, there were no Anglo-Saxon finds, which was not what was expected. So, there was no more habitation until the Norman Conquest, when the settlement became densely populated at about 1100 AD. In the fourteenth century there was a catastrophic decline in population and by the sixteenth it was almost deserted, with perhaps only three cottages. Then it gradually increased again, to the late nineteenth century.

More than 70 settlements have been analysed as part of the CORS Project and patterns can be found i.e., that there was peak population in Medieval times, but a drop after the Black Death. This drop is not only manifested in pottery sherds but also in the number of coins and animal bones found from this period. Similar patterns have been found in other parts of Europe.

After the project finished a survey was taken from the participants. They all agreed that it had been a very valuable experience, involving learning about the past, "togetherness", team-working, well-being, life satisfaction, social support, imaginative thinking, becoming more "attached" to their surroundings and being involved with valuable research.

Professor Lewis concluded her talk by thanking everyone who had helped, especially the Odiham Society.

*Liz Jackson*

### Fractured Britannia: Material Culture And The End Of The Roman Empire

A talk by Richard Henry, Reading University Doctoral Candidate, on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

Richard is a finds specialist working part time for both Southampton City Council and at Reading University where he is reviewing late Roman objects within the archaeological record to discover what they can tell us about the end of Roman Britain, a period for which there is scant historical record. Richard's analysis is spatial, including by object type, typologies, decorative elements, and social, i.e., site types, which fall into military and urban sites (*civitas* centres and large towns) and nucleated and rural sites (defended and undefended *vic*).

The talk started with some rhetorical questions such as, 'Why the end of Roman Britain?' and, 'Was it a

catastrophic collapse?' and looked at the key historical events in Britain in the late 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. Wales may have been de-garrisoned under Magnus Maximus (383-388 A.D.) and, therefore, the end of the Roman era would have been different in the different areas of Britain.

To understand the end of Roman Britain we need to understand how it was governed. The Roman state was mainly interested in itself, and to run it needed the army, taxation, and a civil bureaucracy. The *Notitia Dignitatum* provides a snapshot of the army and administration at the turn of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

Around 390 A.D. there was no such thing as the army in Britain. There were 3 commands; the *Dux Britanniarum* (North Britain and Hadrian's Wall); the *Comes Littoris Saxonici* (Count of the Saxon Shore); and the *Comes Britanniarum* (the field army with no permanent bases).

For the administration of Britain, the Count of the Sacred Largesses supervised two *rationales*. One was responsible for processing tax, the other for the Imperial estates. They also supervised the treasury (based in London and overseen by a *praepostius*), and the state run *fabricae* producing woollen goods in Venta Icenorum (Caistor St Edmund).

The Praetorian Prefect of the Gauls supervised the *vicarius* of the diocese, the *praesides*, the *consularis*, and below, and was responsible for the recruitment of the army, supply, and the post.

At this time Britain was divided into four provinces, the capitals of which were, York, Lincoln, London, and Cirencester. Much of the provinces was rural and a patchwork of villages, roadside settlements, farmsteads, and villas.

Servants of the state were paid in tax and coins, stipends, and donatives. Tax was paid primarily in kind or in gold. Copper alloy coins are regular finds in many areas of Britain, they were central to the collection of tax.

In the Roman Empire bureaucrats ranked as soldiers and wore the military belt. The civil service was substantially larger but performed key roles. Primarily it was comprised of the 'State' and local elites.

Crossbow brooches were attached to a cloak and worn on the right shoulder. They are linked with the military and administration, marking the status of the wearer. Most of these brooches were produced on the continent in state *fabricae* and have been divided into five broad types based on the method of manufacture and form: 1, 2, 3/4, 5 and 6. Type 1 was prevalent from 290-320 A.D., type 3/4 from 325-410 A.D., and type 6 from 390-460 A.D. The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) database records 404 crossbow brooches. There are only a few examples post-dating 350 A.D. from Hadrian's Wall, which may indicate changes in supply, and there is a

major variation in the distribution of crossbow brooches between military and all other site types which may indicate a distinction between the military and the administration. Type 6 is concentrated in the south and east.

From all the major studies into belt sets Richard has grouped them into four broad types:

Type I (370-390 A.D.) and Type II (350-370 A.D.) for both of which there are Continental and insular examples; and Type III and Type IV (both from 390 A.D. onwards) of which there are only Continental examples. Nonetheless, the latter have been found in Britain, but they are unusual which may indicate high status. Type IA were made in Britain and may have been for civilian use only as very few have been found on military sites. Type IB have horse heads on the buckles and at 15 mm are very thin, so they may have been shoulder belts. Type II had up to 10 propeller stiffeners and were buckled, but the ends were folded over the belt and displayed. Most Type I (A&B) have been found under a line drawn from the Humber to the Severn.

Rivet spurs were new objects at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. They are rare and usually only found by metal detecting. Type C was from Pannonia, i.e., the eastern settlements, and has only been found in major towns here. Type D was the western provincial type, but only 40 have been found and their distribution, mainly on Deere Street between Lincoln and York, is entirely different to everything else.

All the mints north of the Alps producing copper alloy coin closed c. 395 A.D. *Nummi* were still produced in Rome but were extremely rare. Their chronic supply shortages had implications for the late Roman taxation system. Some 500,000 coins have been found and recorded on the (PAS) database from sites rather than from hoards but to be included in this study sites must have a minimum of 25 coins recorded. Research shows that different types of sites of social analysis behave differently.

All military sites decline in coinage from 350 A.D. Coinage on urban sites increases around 260 A.D. due to the radian. Walled small towns have lots of Theodosian coins. But there is no good dating evidence to show when the use of coins stopped.

Silver siliquae are regular finds at rural sites across the main coin using areas of Britain. They are less common at urban and military sites. By the 450s A.D. coin usage had certainly ceased. Existing coins were clipped and therefore used as bullion.

To conclude we were shown distribution maps for the finds of crossbow brooches, belt sets, rivet spurs, coins, and clipped coins in the very late 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. Except for the rivet spurs, which were found predominantly on Deere Street between Lincoln and York, the other items were found in south-east England

in the area from Dorset to The Wash, and then up the north-east coast to Hadrian's Wall. A buckle from a Type 4 belt set with a repaired plate found in Blacknall Field would imply that these items retained value for a long time. There was not one particular end, but a change of

usage of these items over time and by 450 A.D. things had certainly changed.

*Julie Worsfold*

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## BAS Day School

This year's Day School was held both at The Cornerstone, Wokingham, and on Zoom on Saturday 1st April and was chaired by Andrew Hutt.

**Recent discoveries in East Berkshire**, Fiona MacDonald, Berkshire Archaeology

At **Tilehurst Road, Binfield** a 10-trench evaluation revealed mediaeval cut ditches and pits, with charcoal spread on top with sherds of mediaeval pottery. There were a lot of wasters indicating manufacture on site but no evidence of the kiln which is presumably nearby. A single cremation was found in a burial pit and left in situ. Its top had been truncated by the plough, leaving 500g of burnt material which is not enough for a full body. Radiocarbon gave dates of 52 BC to 78 AD.

A geophysical survey over 100 hectares at **Hogwood Farm** showed a feature 40 m x 40 m which could be moated and some clustering of features. There are a lot of mediaeval and post-mediaeval features and charcoal was found as was evidence of Romano-British field systems with pits and ditches and evidence of ironworking. Not all the site will be excavated but to date Parcel 7 has been, showing evidence of a mediaeval enclosure with Roman slag and charcoal pits.

A Lidar survey near **California Park** has shown features which are probably prehistoric or Roman. Another at **Binfield Park** has shown a hollow trackway, and a third has shown a ridge and furrow system **near Windsor**. Near **Reading rugby club** parch marks have been seen which may indicate the presence of a Roman Road.

**Recent discoveries in West Berkshire**, Beth Asbury on behalf of Sarah Orr, West Berkshire Council

At **Coley Farm north of Newbury**, a mediaeval vessel was found. A building demolition in **High Street, Theale** revealed 17th and 18th century activity. A drone produced a 3-D image of **Walbury hillfort earthworks**. TVAS has submitted a monograph on Neolithic and Bronze Age pits and a late Iron Age linear ditch at **Salisbury Road, Hungerford**, and a report on **Pyle Hill, Greenham** with largely Iron Age activity. Crop marks at **Hampstead Norreys** were reported, as were the possible remnants of a Merville Battery replica at **Inkpen**, the site of rehearsals for the D-Day landings. The Second World War American Military Hospital, **Hermitage**, was added to the local list.

The Battlefields Trust is running a pilot project, '**The Battles of Newbury Garden Archaeology Project**' with 150 houses over the 1643 and 1644 Newbury battle

sites to see if more information can be gleaned about them from finds

<https://www.battlefieldstrust.com/page220.asp>.

As a result of information received through Planning about buildings which even though listed are now in disrepair the West Berkshire Council Archaeology team is now asking for building records.

Statutory changes mean that the relevant authority must now maintain an Historic Environment Record (HER) and stipulates what information must be within it. This now includes public art, and any changes to such, such as its construction and dismantling. Consequently, an appeal has been made for public artistic works, sculptures, and statues to be notified and added to the HER.

**Recently found portable antiquities in Berkshire**, Phil Smither, PAS Officer Berkshire



Metal detecting finds, which are recorded on the PAS database, feed into research. However, their find locations are not published on the Portable Antiquities Scheme website but are made available to researchers. Five pierced coins, one dating to the time of Postumus, and the others to the fourth century A.D. point to a possible ritual site.

The account of the second battle of **Newbury**, 1644, was written 200 years later and explains the manoeuvrings of the opposing sides. Work with The Battlefields Trust shows that musket balls found to date line up with this account.

In **Tilehurst** a builder found three tiny pots which no ceramic specialist claims for their period. The handles are odd, and the fabric shape and size indicate they are probably Roman.

Recent finds include an Iron Age hoard including 26 gold staters which in this case are Celtic, a book clasp dated to 1694 with the inscription 'His Book', i.e., the Bible, and an incomplete mystery coin of good silver in five pieces which may be a groschen (groat) of the Holy Roman Empire dating to the late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

There is a new display of the Padworth Hoard which features 8 English and 2 French coins deposited after 1529 A.D. Its value at the time would have equated to 20 days' work for a skilled labourer.

Acquisitions include a silver gilt brooch made from a Henry II Tealby penny of Class C and a Japanese puzzle box from the Roman period.

**Calleva and the Roman Conquest**, Professor Mike Fulford, Reading University

There is little in the written record about the first couple of years after the Claudian invasion in A.D. 43. At that time Caractacus may have been in charge of Calleva and resisted the Romans taking it.

There is no evidence of the traditional playing card shaped Roman military fortress at Richborough, Colchester and Calleva in these very early years so, it looks as though the Roman army made use of the defences it found and expelled the original inhabitants.

Work in Insula IX on the buildings from A.D. 44 to 85 shows some imposition of Roman roads but the Iron Age buildings were still extant.

The 1980s Forum Basilica excavations show the early Roman building overlies the Iron Age settlement. Its position suggests it was a Praetorium built in the A.D. 40s. It was clearly military as no one else could build like that then.

Fragments of weaponry including a military dagger pommel, brooches, belt buckles, arrowheads, spearheads, and hobnail boot nails are present in deposits at Calleva from the end of the first century B.C. Mike thinks these items are Roman.

Human skeletal remains have been found in Calleva in the antiquarian period, in the 1980s and in 2018. Most are dated to the interface between the Iron Age and the Roman period when instead of being cremated as was usual then, they were buried near to where they had fallen. DNA profiles and isotopes of these skeletal remains are being sought to compare against those of animals raised at Calleva.

*Julie Worsfold*

**Runnymede Explored Archaeological Investigations**, Harry Farmer, National Trust

The site at Ankerwycke is between Heathrow and Staines, next to where the Magna Carta was signed at Runnymede, and is a Scheduled Monument: <https://tinyurl.com/267akh5e>. It was a liminal space between two Saxon boundaries and possibly had spiritual associations. Ankerwycke Priory, a Benedictine nunnery, became a Tudor house after the Dissolution, but that too

was demolished and replaced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, only to burn down in the 1950s! BAS has carried out geophysical surveys on the site as part of the National Trust's current project there, Runnymede Explored: <https://tinyurl.com/da23ss78>. A great deal is known about male monastic life in the medieval period, but less about that of women, which this project hopes to address. One finding so far is that pigs were very important to the nunnery – lots of bones and tusks have been excavated – and that the nuns were allowed to take them to forage in the royal forest on the other side of the River Thames by barge! An exhibition about the project is on at Chertsey Museum in Surrey until 9 October: <https://tinyurl.com/4ebup9ct>.

**Gatehampton Villa**, Hazel Williams, South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group (SOAG)

This site was identified when Oxford Archaeology carried out an excavation along the railway line but was initially thought to be medieval field boundaries. SOAG undertook fieldwalking there and identified a Roman villa! The site features a 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. farmstead and a 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. corridor villa with two bathhouses and a cess pit attached to the kitchen: <https://tinyurl.com/bdhaaahh>. Painted wall plaster associated with the hypocaust and a great many tesserae have been found on the site, but, sadly, no *in situ* mosaics. The villa appears to have been abandoned in c. 380 A.D. and then inhabited by a barn owl that left a layer of rat and mice bones above the floor. This is some of the earliest evidence of black rats in the country! Gatehampton has an important aquifer, which may explain the existence of the two bathhouses. A visiting Young Archaeologists' Club group tested a footbath by pouring water into it that successfully drained down its surviving lead pipe!

**Recent Discoveries at Boxwood**, Jo Skerry, BAS, on behalf of the Eling Estate

Jo began researching this Roman site as part of her degree and now on behalf of the Eling Estate: [www.ellingestate.co.uk](http://www.ellingestate.co.uk). She carried out a metal detecting survey and then surveyed the site's features with a total station, recording everything with a unique number and using What Three Words (<https://what3words.com>). A 10m grid square has now been created on the site and Jo has been working hard to reinterpret features that were possibly over-enthusiastically identified by a previous researcher, such as by reidentifying a plane crash site and a Roman quarry. Members of the BAS and Berkshire Archaeology Research Group (BARG) have assisted Jo with test pits and LiDAR interpretation. Jo has also carried out fieldwalking at Wellhouse Farm in Wickham and carried out a geophysical survey there too. Jo hopes to involve members of Berkshire Women's Aid with her ongoing research at Boxwood later this year.

**Bricks in East Berkshire**, John Harrison, Independent Researcher

John provided a very thorough introduction to brick making and types of bricks, recommending *Old Bricks: History at Your Feet* to those who would like to learn more: <https://tinyurl.com/54zv4ryf>. When the Romans left Britain, brickmaking seems to have died out and been reintroduced in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Although this area has a lot of London clay, it is not all good quality, and brickmaking was not reintroduced here until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Clay would be dug in the winter, moulded in the spring, and dried in the summer until the introduction of drying sheds, which lengthened the period bricks could be dried in. Bricks were fired in a similar way to charcoal

production until permanent kilns were developed, the simplest being the Scotch kiln. Down draft kilns were later developed and then the (oval-shaped!) circular kiln was patented in 1850 by Frederick Hoffman. When bricks were fashionable in the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was popular for timber-framed houses to be refaced! Many 19<sup>th</sup> century brickworks also made terracotta decorations for houses and the Victorians enjoyed polychrome brick patterns too. Thomas Lawrence (look out for the 'TLB' brick stamp) dominated production in east Berkshire. The company started in Bracknell in the 1860s and was internationally popular until production declined in the 1920s.

*Beth Asbury*

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## BAS Study Group

All meetings of the BAS Study Group are held at the Woosehill Community Hall and on Zoom on the afternoon of the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday in the month.

The March 2023 meeting started with a report of the progress answering the Berkshire Roman Project 3 question: Do changes in the built environment reflect social changes in the period 55 B.C. to 410 A.D.? In response to this question, the meeting was presented with maps which showed:

- A significant growth of field systems in the Period 55 B.C. to 100 A.D.
- The growth of villa sites on the Berkshire Downs and the Upper Thames
- The late development of villas in the Middle Thames and Kennet valleys

This last led to discussions as to the reasons why this could be shown in the evidence collected to date.

This was followed by a presentation about starting a BAS Finds group (see separate article) and the use of the Integrated Archaeological Database (IADB) to record the Society's excavation at Blounts Court.

There was no BAS Study Group meeting in April 2023; nobody had anything new to present.

The May 2023 meeting started with a presentation by Peter Clifford on the *Cursus Publicus* (the Roman post and official transport system) across the Berkshire Region. This subject is interesting because the *Cursus Publicus* was under the direct control of the Emperor and the Roman Authorities in Britain and hence may help us understand the impact of the Authorities on the Romano-British population.

This was followed by presentations by:

- Tony Bakker, showing the development of the Roman built environment of the Berkshire Region in 31-year periods.
- Keith Abbott on the geophysics survey at Streatly (see separate article)
- Andrew Hutt on the geophysics survey at Inkpen and the Blounts Court excavations as recorded in the Integrated Archaeological Database (IADB)

The next meeting of the BAS Study Group will be on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

*Andrew Hutt*

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## Forthcoming Fieldwork

### Wickham House Geophysics Survey Project

BAS has been investigating Wickham in West Berkshire since 2021 with survey projects taking place on the Wormstall Estate, Radley Farm and most recently on the Sutton Estate. Together with the increasing number of historic metal detecting finds collated (and belatedly recorded on the PAS), LiDAR and local topology, these surveys have highlighted the potential for there being a sizeable Romano-British settlement close to the modern-day village of Wickham alongside the Roman

Road Ermin Street (Margary 41) and its intersection with the Roman Road to Bath (Margary 53). The results of our geophysics surveys have shed new light on the likely route of the Roman Road to Bath and suggest that the intersection of these two roads is likely to be located near to the modern-day village on Church Hill rather than 1.6km to the southeast as previously projected.



*BAS volunteers Geoff, James, Tony, and Peter surveying near Wickham during September 2022*

We have been invited by the owner of Wickham House to undertake a series of geophysics surveys with the objective of looking for evidence of Romano-British settlement as well as further evidence of the intersection of the two Roman Roads. **The surveys are planned to take place in two tranches – the first from 12<sup>th</sup> June to 15<sup>th</sup> July and the second in September.** Following a BAS lecture in November 2022 at St Swithun's Church that was well attended by local residents, it is hoped that members of the local community will participate in the survey and certainly will be following our progress with great interest. If you are interested in taking part in the survey in June/July or in September please email Keith Abbott ([keefandtrace@hotmail.com](mailto:keefandtrace@hotmail.com)) with details of your availability, etc., to register your interest.

*Keith Abbott*

#### **“Cookham Abbey” – forthcoming further excavation season at the Church Paddock, Cookham**

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July sees the start of a further excavation season at Cookham. Bigger and better than before, this season will extend over the six weeks to September 2<sup>nd</sup>, with a volunteer-only period for the first two weeks, then joined by the University of Reading Field School for the remainder. Dr Gabor Thomas of the University of Reading continues to direct the project over its full six weeks, the Field School weeks being co-directed by Amanda Clarke.

The site itself is being extended, with a new trench to be dug from the edge of the northern, larger trench of 2022 (Trench 1), through the boundary to Bell Rope Meadow to the north, in the direction of the river Thames. While the present riverbank is known, of course, where the edge of the river lay in the early medieval period is an unknown and an important question for understanding the use of the prominent “roadway” feature in Trench 1. Was it a road, might it have been a wharf?

Applications for volunteers have now closed, with more than 80 coming forward. A fantastic level of interest, as expected. However, there will be even greater opportunity this year for visits – everyone reading this will be welcome. I hope there will be an organised BAS visit, so look out for details of that nearer the time.

*Paul Seddon*

## From the Field...

### Streatley Geophysics Survey - Feb 2023

Following the discovery by local metal detectorists of a wide spread of Roman coins and other artefacts in a field north of Streatley close to the River Thames just to the south of the Berkshire/Oxfordshire boundary, BAS was asked to undertake a geophysics survey to assess the future archaeological potential of this site and if possible to provide additional archaeological context for the artefacts discovered. The site is close to the projected route of the Roman Road from Silchester to Dorchester (Margary 160) and the HER records a spread of Roman tile and pottery to the south that is presumed to be the site of a Romano-British settlement, and additionally there are settlements at Moulsoford to the north and Streatley to the south. LiDAR and digitised aerial photographs also highlighted some linear features running across the field.



*Figure 1. BAS Volunteers Jill, Geoff, Tony, and Vaughn surveying the field near Streatley*

The area to be surveyed was some 11ha, which was surveyed initially with the gradiometer over some 8 days by BAS volunteers who, from experience gained on recent projects, were able to consistently deliver more than 30 grid squares each day. BAS was also joined by colleagues from SOAG who have been researching a Romano-British settlement nearby within Oxfordshire, where information and experiences were shared. The gradiometer survey results shown in Figure 2 highlighted anomalies interpreted as the remains of Romano-British field systems in the southeast of the field which are most likely associated with the settlement thought to be located within the field to the south and are consistent with metal detecting find spots suggesting that Roman coins were possibly deposited as a result of manuring. In the south of the field an area of intense burning was identified, and closer inspection of this area with the earth resistance meter identified rectilinear features and a possible spread of rubble suggesting that this could be the remains of a cottage which had been destroyed by a fire. No evidence was found of the Roman Road, which confirms that its location is most likely to the west of the A329 along its currently projected route.

The linear features seen on LiDAR and aerial photographs were revealed in greater detail by the gradiometer and appear to be the remains of a ditched trackway or drove-way possibly connecting the settlement in the field to the south with the River Thames. Of particular interest was a 40m x 40m 'L-shaped' anomaly close to the west bank of the River Thames. This feature was close to the remains of a silted paleochannel running parallel to the modern canalised course of the river. On closer inspection with the earth resistance meter, it could be seen that this 'L-shaped' feature was associated with high resistance anomalies interpreted as being a possible floor surface and also an area of rubble interpreted as being the possible remains of a building.

Given the location of these anomalies to the River Thames and the paleochannel, and the morphology of the anomalies revealed by the survey, it is thought that these features may relate to a previously unknown watermill. A number of watermills are recorded in this area within Domesday, but not at this location, and the Rocque map of Berkshire from 1761 does not show any buildings at this location either. This suggests that if the survey anomalies do indeed relate to a watermill, then it may have been in use during the Late Roman/Early Medieval period and may have fallen into disuse and disappeared before 1086 – or it may have been built much later during the Medieval period but disappeared by 1761. Further work is needed to investigate these findings further.

BAS has been invited to present its results from this survey to the Goring Historical Society in July, where it is hoped that this will result in further liaison and collaboration with local historians to research records of watermills in the area. Having been recently sold, it is hoped also that the new owners of this field will be supportive of further archaeological investigations to shed further light on the anomalies observed. Thanks are due to the volunteers Margaret, Tim, Andrew, Nigel, Paul, Phillip, John, Tony, Richard, Geoff, James, Juan, Jill, Martin, Vaughn, and Nicola who took part in the survey.

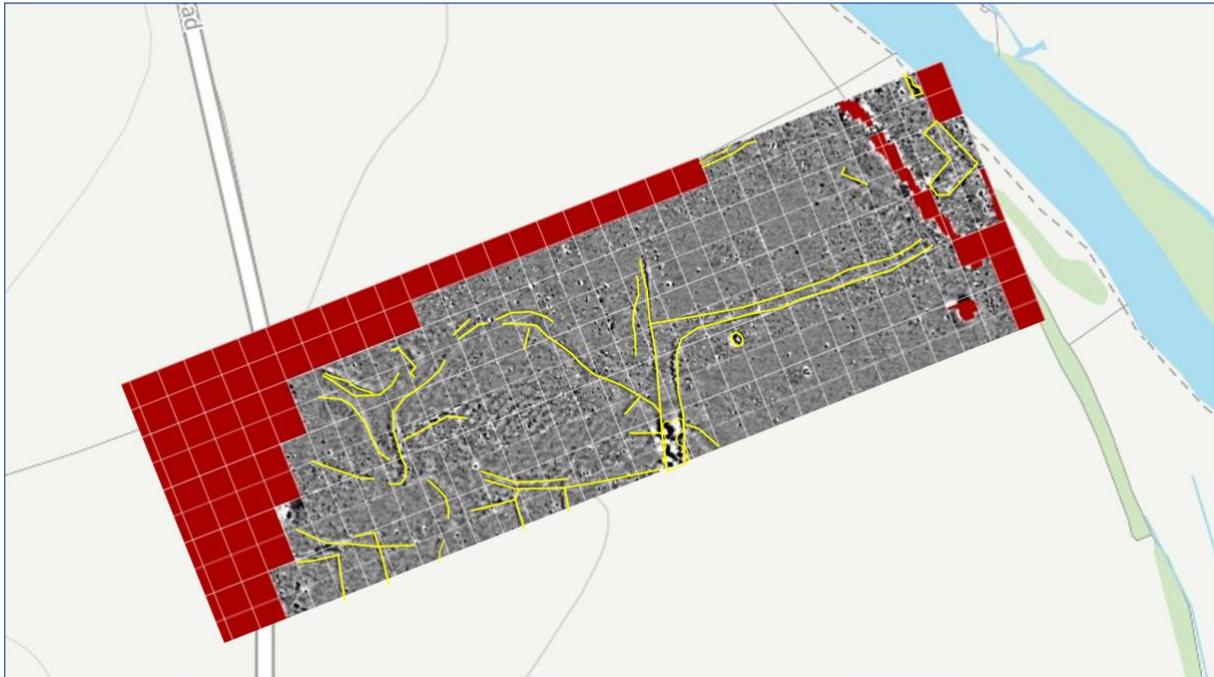


Figure 2. Gradiometer results of the area surveyed

Keith Abbott

### Cock Marsh Geophysical Survey

This report is both interim and informal. There is follow-up work to do which will probably best be taken up in September or October, depending on availability of the gradiometry equipment. A more comprehensive follow-up should therefore appear in this newsletter later this year.

#### Background

Cock Marsh is an area of National Trust-managed common land adjacent to the River Thames in which is located a well-known barrow cemetery, about 2 km north-west of Cookham village. Research during and after the Archaeology in East Berkshire project (Humphreys 2019) conducted by the University of Reading in 2018/9, consisting of inspection of Air Photos from Google Earth and Environment Agency LiDAR, suggested that this cemetery could occupy a larger area, i.e., more barrows that have not been recorded through being too ephemeral for visibility at ground level.

The known barrows number four definitely agreed on, which were the subject of an excavation by antiquarian Alfred Heneage Cocks between 1874 and 1877. Also, Ordnance Survey mapping in the past has shown a fifth to the south of the main group. More recently, another barrow to the east of the main group (i.e., not the one on the OS mapping) has been recorded on the HER, derived purely from an air photo.

The barrows that Cocks excavated had an interesting mix of contents, including human and animal remains, and features that suggested Bronze Age origin, but with one barrow containing a clearly early medieval burial with grave goods of that period. Whether that barrow was added in its entirety in the early medieval, or whether the burial was an insertion into an earlier barrow, is not known.

#### Current Project

The location of the early medieval monastic settlement ("Cookham Abbey") at the Church Paddock, Cookham has led to renewed interest in other archaeology in the neighbourhood. It is now well established (Semple 2013 and others) that early medieval settlements, not least Christian religious structures, were often sited with clear reference to visible monuments from earlier periods. One interpretation of this phenomenon is that incoming Germanic settlers were claiming the land as their own by adopting the people buried there as their own ancestors. In the conversion period, this could have been important in overcoming potential resistance from kings and others who would not have wished their ancestors excluded from salvation.

The question whether the Cock Marsh barrows would have been visible from Cookham Abbey, and possibly therefore part of a processional route, is one that has led to a collaborative project to re-survey Cock Marsh to see if the extent of the barrow field can be better defined and its relationship to Cookham Abbey, if any, established. The leading partners in the project are the University of Reading (UoR) and the National Trust. The gradiometry survey was designed by Dr Rob Fry, of the UoR. Keith Abbott worked with Rob to complete the programme design with a view to bringing in volunteer resource,



which was organised by the author. The final project plan settled on two teams to work in week 1 – Rob Fry leading one team to include students and volunteers; Keith Abbott and the author leading the other team of volunteers only. It was decided that in this first week, two gradiometers owned by the UoR would be used to ensure consistency. In the second, volunteer-only week, BAS came into its own by providing its own gradiometer and Keith's supervision of the volunteer teams over four days.

*Fig 1 – Preliminary gradiometry result (part of site) North is at the top. (Image courtesy of the University of Reading)*

The image presented in fig. 1 is the result of high-resolution (0.5m) gradiometry in the vicinity of the known barrow group. A number of interesting results are apparent.

First, though, note that the linear anomaly in the top right area is a known buried high-tension electricity cable.

The most well-known barrow that stands to a height of nearly 2m is apparent in the centre of the image. The HER records it as a bowl barrow with no visible ditch. The Historic England Scheduled Monument particulars record one buried ditch. (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1012812?section=official-list-entry> )

Our survey shows not only one certain ditch but very probably also a second.

To the left (west) of this first barrow, a second barrow remains visible at about a meter in height but is truncated to the west by the boundary fence with a farmer's arable field. This is the site of the early medieval inhumation. In the farmer's field, you can see LiDAR markup where there are no visible remains of the barrow; this clearly matches with the gradiometry result.

In the very top left-hand corner, another LiDAR feature is shown. The gradiometry result is quite busy at this point, so there is some prospect that this is another archaeological feature, but on the Cock Marsh side of the boundary it lies tantalisingly beyond the reach of our survey.

A little to the south south-west of the largest central barrow is an anomaly that appears to be sub-circular, not an obvious ring-ditch, but is the location of the fourth known barrow, barely visible on the surface. According to Cocks, this barrow contained horse remains and 17<sup>th</sup> century bottle fragments.

To the west of this barrow is a linear negative anomaly that might be worthy of further investigation.

Saving the best till last, further toward the bottom right of the image is an obvious ring-ditch, but it is located where there is no feature recorded on the HER or the HE listing particulars. This clearly requires further investigation.

## **Conclusion**

It will be of great service to the National Trust and to Historic England to have created this new geophysical perspective on the site. It remains possible that the planned further geophysical survey of the wider Cock Marsh may reveal more that is of interest. However, it should be noted that to the east of the scheduled area Cock Marsh is largely covered by a layer of alluvium which will have buried the prehistoric ground surface, so detecting anything more is problematic.

The greatest gain from this project, however, has been outreach to the local community. Altogether 80 volunteers, mainly local to Cookham and Maidenhead expressed interest in taking part. Fifty-eight of these, including eight BAS members, actually worked in the nine days of the project and many want to repeat the experience.

*Paul Seddon*

## Berkshire Medieval Graffiti Survey (BMGS)

Ten BAS members enjoyed their graffiti training, learning to find and record medieval graffiti; this took place on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> of May at Waltham St Lawrence parish church as part of the ongoing recording of the graffiti there. Initially James took people through what graffiti can be found in Berkshire, what those graffiti may represent and where in a building they are often found. We then explored the church discovering graffiti, finding people's initials, dates, roman numerals, butterfly symbols, crosses, a horse/stag and stylised bird, some possible music... These were found on the exposed stonework of the columns and piers, at 'human height' (some 0.5 to 1.5m) by using a 'raking' light (a torch shone at a shallow angle across the graffiti).



BAS Members: Keith Abbott & Nicola Jefferies

Photo: Tim Lloyd



Photo  
Nicola  
Jefferies

We looked at how to take photographs to record the graffiti, making sure we took a good record shot. Ensuring the photograph was 'square on' to the graffiti and included a photographic scale for reference. Several photographs are taken of each graffiti with the raking light coming from different directions to highlight all the scratches of the graffiti. Waltham St Lawrence is a good hunting ground for graffiti – many items have been discovered both inside and out. We hope to be running some more graffiti discovery events for BAS members and the local community at the church in the near future and hope to be able to contribute when the church takes part in Open Heritage Days in September. With a team of trained graffiti surveyors, we now are planning to survey more churches in the county.

*James Peddle*

## BAS Finds Group

The excavations at Blounts Court have shown that the Society needs to establish a BAS Finds Group. It is proposed that this group consists of individuals who are interested in managing, processing, identifying, and recording finds. Each member of the group will take an interest into finds of a particular material type: for example, in alphabetical order: bone, ceramic building materials (brick, tile, mortar), metalwork, organic materials (charcoal, etc), pottery and stone (including worked flint). They will be asked to liaise, on behalf of the Society, with a chosen expert and over time learn about their chosen type of find, any dating evidence associated with it and how it is presented in reports.

Anne Harrison and Andrew Hutt have already started work on the finds from Blounts Court. These finds are best characterised as dating from Roman times and from the Late Medieval to modern times. They have classified the finds by material type and established the following phased programme of work:

- Phase 1 involves working on: clay pipes, nails and shells
- Phase 2 involves working on bones, glass, and stone
- Phase 3 involves working on ceramic buildings materials
- Phase 4 involves working on pottery

When working on a find, the first question to be asked is: does this contribute to dating a context? If it was found in situ, it does; if it was found in a make-up layer then the find could have come from anywhere and hence does not directly contribute to dating a context. Answering this question highlights the finds that must be included in a report of the excavation.

Anne and Andrew have started meeting on some Tuesday evenings to work on the Blounts Court finds so if you are interested, please join us.

Please phone or email one of us with details of your interest.

*Andrew Hutt and Anne Harrison*

## OLD WINDSOR PROJECT - UPDATE

The Old Windsor project, described in the Winter 2022 (Vol 24.4) issue of this newsletter is now progressing after some delays. Roland Smith, joint project leader with Gabor Thomas, reports that excellent progress has been made in Edinburgh, where much of the excavation documentation is kept, in cataloguing and digitising the material held there. Anyone interested can see the work done so far by accessing Historic Environment Scotland's website at [Old Windsor, Kingsbury | Canmore](#), where some material is listed but without an image. This is because the actual digitising is a little behind the cataloguing. It is expected that all the material will be digitised and online by the end of May.

Here in Reading volunteer work has now begun on the collection held by Reading Museum, as directed by Angela Houghton, the Museum Curator. In the recent first session we worked on documents dating back to the origin of the project in the early fifties. These are filed in several boxes and had to be sorted into papers and reports of archaeological significance and those dealing with other matters, such as arrangements for visits, contacts with local groups, museum exhibitions, letters between Brian Hope-Taylor, the excavator, and Reading Museum, etc. A project archive would not contain so much material like this these days as now we have email, and everyone has a telephone. There was also a paper shortage in the early days when some letters, and usually the copies, were written on backs of envelopes and scraps of wrapping paper. When the boxes have all been sorted volunteers will move on to the finds themselves.

BAS volunteers will continue working at the Museum store at fortnightly intervals until at least the end of July, possibly longer, helping to complete this long overdue excavation report.

Anne Harrison

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## Talks by other groups

### **Maidenhead Archaeological and Historical Society (MAHS)**

Talks continue during the summer months usually on the last Wednesday in the month both in person and on Zoom - 7.50pm for start at 8pm.

£3 fee for non-members. For the list of forthcoming talks and to book:

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

For more information please email: paul(at)c21networks.co.uk

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## Input to the quarterly newsletter and monthly e-newsheet

Firstly, many and sincere thanks to Andrew Hutt for producing the last edition of this newsletter when I was too ill to do so.

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 email it to Tim Lloyd, who produces 'What's On', the society's monthly e-newsheet, at webmaster(at)berksarch.co.uk and to me at newsletter(at)berksarch.co.uk by the 27<sup>th</sup> of the month.

Please submit your text and images separately as this makes them much easier for Tim and me to handle than when the images are embedded in the text.

The copy date for the next edition of this publication, the Society's quarterly newsletter is Sunday, 27th August 2023.

Thank you,

Julie Worsfold

## BERKSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Patron: Her Late Majesty 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.

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