ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Spring 2024 **Vol. 26, No.1**

IN BERKSHIRE

Dates for your diary

Venues - Unless advised otherwise:
BAS Finds Group (in person only) and BAS Study Group (in person and on Zoom) - Woosehill Community Centre, Woosehill Court, Emmview Close, Wokingham, RG41 3DA.
BAS Lunches - The Wheelwright's Arms, Davis Way, Hurst, Reading, RG10 0TR. If you want to come to the lunch, please notify Keith Abbott by the Saturday before the lunch.
Saturday lectures - RISC, London St, Reading, RG1 4PS with refreshments from 2pm. Lectures start at 2:30pm and are live streamed on Zoom. Non-members are welcome to attend lectures. If wishing to attend on Zoom, they need to email **lectures(at)berksarch.co.uk** by the end of the Wednesday before the lecture.

All meeting Zoom links are emailed in advance and the Zoom session opens 10-15 minutes before the meeting.

Tuesday 5th March 2024: BAS Finds Group 7:30pm

Wednesday 6th March 2024: BAS Study Group: 2:30pm

Wednesday 13th March 2024: BAS Lunch: 12 noon

Saturday 16th March 2024: Lecture: *'Iron-ing it out, nail-ing it down: A new multi-period methodology and typology for recording structural iron nails'* by Katie Manby, Doctoral Candidate, University of Reading

Wednesday 10th April 2024: BAS Lunch: 12 noon

Wednesday 17th April 2024: BAS Visit: A guided tour by Professor Michael Fulford of the exhibition, 'Becoming Roman - Silchester a Town of Change' at the Willis Museum and Sainsbury Gallery, Market Place, Basingstoke, RG21 7QD. Organiser: Paul Seddon paul[at]c21networks.co.uk

Tuesday 30th April 2024: BAS Finds Group 7:30pm

Wednesday 1st May 2024: BAS Study Group: 2:30pm

Wednesday 8th May 2024: BAS Lunch: 12 noon

Tuesday 4th June 2024: BAS Finds Group 7:30pm

Wednesday 5th June 2024: BAS Study Group: 2:30pm

Wednesday 12th June 2024: BAS Lunch: 12 noon

N.B. The BAS Day School has been moved to Saturday 5th October 2024. The venue is still St Nicolas' Church Hall, Newbury, RG14 5HG, 10.00am to 4.00pm. (See 'From the Chair' below).

Compiled by Julie Worsfold

From the Chair

The BAS Day School
I have had to change the date of the day school. It was planned for April 2024, but the Saturday we chose clashed with The Roman Archaeology Conference in London from 11th to 14th April, with sessions being addressed by several speakers I wanted at our day school. As a result, I have moved the Day School to Saturday 5th October 2024 in Newbury and key speakers working on Roman Berkshire will be joining us. Please put this date in your diary and come along.

Post-excavation work
The Society is now involved in three post-excavation projects: *Unlocking Old Windsor*, *Blounts Court 2013 -2019* and *Cookham 2023*. This has confirmed that if we want to dig trenches, we need to improve our post-excavation capabilities. The reason for this is very simple, if we spend 3 weeks digging 2 or 3 trenches, the resulting post-excavation work will take us at least 6 months.
Post excavation work involves a wide variety of knowledge and skills including getting familiar with finds: ceramic building materials, pottery, worked stone, glass, metalwork, coins, and bones, and understanding how a site develops by studying its stratigraphy, dating finds and contexts, and grouping contexts to identify phases of use and places where people lived and worked. This all sounds like a lot of learning, but we are developing approaches so that we can learn and work in groups, thus making this a very sociable activity. If you would like to join-in, please come along to the Finds and Study Groups.

Our geophysics equipment
In January, there was a geophysics survey at Hurley which the Society led and involved several BAS members and a crowd of people from the Middle Thames Archaeology Partnership. Unfortunately, one of the outcomes of this event is that both the gradiometer and the earth resistance meter are now out of action. The gradiometer is being repaired by Bartington, who manufactured it, while the earth resistance meter needs a new probe. The planned date for the return of the gradiometer is early April.

Excavating at Blount Court 2024
We are planning to excavate at Blounts Court for 3 weeks in September starting Friday 6th September 2024. Nigel Spencer and I would like some help preparing for this event so if you have some free time over the coming months, please contact us.

Andrew Hutt

Archaeology on Saturdays

'How to Build a Castle', a talk by Tim Lloyd, BAS Member, on Saturday 9th December 2023

At Guédelon, in France, a dedicated team is working for 25 years to construct a complete medieval castle from scratch. The strapline in French is "Nous batissons un chateau-fort" – "we are building a strong chateau". English tourists know a "chateau" as a renaissance confection which in England would be called a "Stately Home". However, a "castle" is a large, partially ruined fortification like the many constructed from the Normans to the Tudors to express power and hold land. These also exist in France so to make the distinction they are called a "chateau-fort".

Why?
The distinction is complicated by the fact that many chateaux are domesticated adaptations of earlier fortified structures. So, when Michel Guyot bought Chateau Saint-Fargeau in western Burgundy he immediately commissioned a team of experts to investigate its origins and it was discovered that the chateau was indeed once a medieval castle. Monsieur Guyot, already practised at restoring old historic buildings, had an initial idea to return the building to its earlier form. Realising the enormity of that task, he decided it would be almost easier, and certainly more interesting, to build a new castle from scratch. So, he raised some initial finance, commissioned the same experts and set about the project which became Guédelon.

What?
It was decided to design a castle based on the architectural canons laid down by Philip Augustus in the 12th and 13th centuries. This was a turbulent period in French history as the Capetian kings fought to wrest control of the west of the country from the Plantagenet and Angevin kings of England.
Philip II Augustus, King of France from 1180-1223, is attributed with standardising the military architecture of castles in the French kingdom, e.g., the Louvre in Paris.
Castles built to this standard plan have the following characteristics: a polygonal ground plan; high stone curtain walls, often built on battered (sloping) plinths; a dry ditch; round flanking towers pierced with single embrasured arrow loops, the position of which is staggered on each floor of the tower; one corner tower, higher and larger than the rest: the *tour maîtresse*; twin drum towers protect the gate. Much of this was intended to facilitate the rapid construction of castles to a restricted budget.
A back-story was created to underpin the project and a site was found at a disused quarry in the wood of Guédelon only a few miles from Fargeau in the department of Puisaye. Plans were drawn up and planning permission was granted on July 25th 1997. A formidable local company CEO, Maryline Martin, was appointed to head the project. She is still CEO of the successful enterprise to this day.

How?
The aim was to recreate the site organisation and construction processes that might have existed on an early 13th-century building site. Right from the start, a

scientific advisory committee made up of archaeologists, historians and castellologists has been associated with this unconventional project. Certain experts join "en route" according to the needs and progress of the project or their research. A lot of information was gleaned from medieval illustrations but there was still much experimentation to be done.
There are no modern tools used on site, certainly none with power. Metal tools are made in the on-site forge and measuring implements are based on ancient wooden examples. A favourite feature is the large treadmill crane used to haul materials up to the top of the construction.
Although the workers all dress in medieval garb, an important exception has been to ensure health and safety by mandating safety shoes and, where necessary, hard hats (disguised by coverings of hessian). Scaffolding must be constructed to modern standards and, although rope is made on site, only industrial standard rope is used to raise heavy loads.

Materials and Methods
Building in a quarry in a wood means there is no shortage of stone and wood. The hard local sandstone is quarried to supply stone of varying precision according to needs – from fully dressed blocks to rubble cores. Finer elements, such as vaults and windows, are carved from limestone imported from a nearby quarry. These are worked on by a team of male and female masons working in the typical masons' lodge just outside the curtain wall. All the materials are carried around the site by hand or on a cart pulled by one of a team of heavy horses.

Limestone is also imported to be burnt in ovens to make quick lime. This is mixed by hand with sand to provide the mortar that holds the stonework together.
Carpentry is all done using historic tools so there is no sawmill or machine cutting. Wood is vital, not only for the construction of roof timbers and doors, but for the supporting elements of arches and vaults. The curtain walls all betray evidence of "putlogs" – holes left by the attachment of wooden scaffolding as the structure grows in height.
There is plenty of usable clay in the wood so a formidable workshop creates tiles for rooves and floors as well as vessels for the workers' use.
The afore-mentioned forge is a part of a large blacksmith's shop making all the ironwork required on site. They have even experimented with smelting iron from ore. The story of this, and other aspects of the project, is told in a fascinating YouTube series called "Les Feux de Guédelon".
Many other crafts are represented, from weaving and dying to basketry and gardening. All can be viewed in progress by visitors to the site. The project has only about 40 permanent staff but this is swelled in season by trainees who visit to learn about historic construction. In fact, the project has contributed expertise to the restoration of Notre-Dame de Paris.

The Castle in 2023
When I first visited in 2015 the walls were less than half height, but the Great Hall (Logis de Seigneur) was built, and the two adjoining towers were well under way. On my second visit in 2023, I found that the chapel tower was complete, and the Great Tower and SW "Dovecot" Tower were only lacking rooves. This latter was completed at the end of the season. Meanwhile the twin towers of the gatehouse are under intensive construction and will probably be completed in 2024.

The towers all contain vaulted ceilings, a major learning curve for the team. The rooves are all conical with coverings of tiles. This is typical of French castles and their descendant chateaux. It is not clear if this was ever the fashion in England.
Internally, the rooms have been finished according to the standard that Guilbert in the invented backstory could probably afford. The chapel is lovingly plastered and painted with simple star and flower motifs. The walls of the great hall are left in natural dressed stone but the solar (lord's sitting room) next to it is plastered and painted with formal designs inspired by a nearby church that has frescos from the period. Windows do not contain expensive glass but, in the hall and chapel, are fitted with wooden frames across which translucent silk has been stretched and painted.
The Great Tower contains a large, vaulted room which is the lord's chamber. Above and below this are other

rooms. All the towers have several rooms including the SW tower which has a dovecote in the top level.

Visiting Guédelon
Guédelon is open from the end of March to the beginning of November, apart from a couple of special days and is located between the main tourist areas of Burgundy and the Loire but is a feasible day trip from either. It is accessible from Paris from where coach excursions run in high season. Entrance is reasonably priced, and it is worth allocating a whole day.
There is a shop, toilets, snack bar and a large café. A good tip is NOT to eat your lunch from 12:30 to 2pm, even though all the workers will be on lunch break, as all the visitors (especially the French) will be eating at this time.

For more information: https://www.guedelon.fr/en/

Tim Lloyd

'Who we are and where did we come from?', a talk by Francis Taylor of the CBA on Saturday 24th January 2024.

Today's talk started with a look at ancient literature to see how people tried to identify their origins. Thus, after the Biblical Flood, one of Noah's sons, Japhet, was believed to have populated Europe. We learnt that ancient Romans believed that a descendent of Aeneas, Brutus, populated Britain, and named the country after himself. We heard how hair colour, skull shapes and blood groups had been studied in attempts to determine from where people had come.

Then came the discovery of isotopes. From what people had eaten and drunk during their lifetime, scientists were able to tell where they had lived. Thus, isotopes of oxygen and strontium, found in teeth, showed where an individual had lived in their childhood. Isotopes of carbon and nitrogen, found in bone, showed where a person had lived in the last years of their life.

From isotope studies and where an individual had spent their lifetime, we moved on to ancient DNA studies, and looked at where an individual's ancestors had come from. A quick revision of genetics reminded us of inheriting 23 chromosomes from our parents, with men getting 22 matched pairs, plus one X and one Y chromosome (which carries maleness and was inherited only by men from fathers). Also, that Mitochondrial DNA (Mt-DNA), was inherited by both men and women, but only from mothers.

A diagram of a family tree showed clearly how while sons inherit both Y-DNA and Mt-DNA mutations, they only pass on Y-DNA mutations. However, daughters both inherit and pass on Mt-DNA mutations. Mutations in DNA are what drives evolution, with good mutations resulting in an individual thriving. 99.9% of human DNA is identical, and it is the remaining 0.1% that makes each of us unique.

From the extraction of ancient DNA (aDNA), often from minute fragments of ancient skeletons, the whole science of tracing ancestors; where we have come from, has arisen. Francis told us about 'Mitochondrial Eve', who lived in Africa about 190,000 years ago, and who is thought to be the most recently shared ancestor of modern-day humans along the maternal line.

Mt-DNA mutation markers (haplogroups), are labelled sequentially with letters of the alphabet. The first haplogroup was labelled "L", rather than "A", for historical reasons. Thus, 'Mitochondrial Eve' had an "L" marker, and while other branches of the "L" marker are found in Africa, the "L3" marker, from which all non-Africans are descended, moved north out of Africa about 60,000 years ago. We looked at a 'Map of Mitochondrial DNA Migration' and saw how "L3" had moved out of Africa, with different haplogroups spreading all over the world, and with "H" going to Britain, arriving about 10-1,000 years ago.

We looked at maps showing the interaction of Neanderthals and modern humans, resulting in Neanderthal DNA being found today in all people, except sub-Saharan Africans. We looked at an intricate graph of climate change and ancient visitors to Britain between the Ice Ages, from 1,000,000 years before present, to today, with Homo sapiens the last arrivals, and still here!

Francis told an interesting theory of why Neanderthals died out. Homo sapiens men had bigger, stronger bones than Home sapiens women, and it was thought that men went hunting, bringing home meat for their families, while the women raised children, as well as 'gathering' extra food. In this way Homo sapiens thrived. However, both Neanderthal men and women had big, strong bones, and it is thought both hunted. Analysis of Neanderthal bones show women and children suffering from malnutrition. It is thought that without females raising children and gathering supplementary food; crucial if the hunt failed, Neanderthals did not thrive.

Agriculture had begun by about 9600 BC, and spread from the Fertile Crescent in the Middle East into Europe, with the men carrying the Y-DNA haplogroup G. We heard how Neolithic people were thought to have arrived in Britain from Europe. First, via a possible false start in the west of Ireland, where finds suggest a meal rather than a settlement. Then, via the Irish Sea, with evidence provided by the Pygmy Shrew, found in the Pyrenees and Ireland, but not in the rest of Britain. The next arrivals travelled up the North Sea, settling on the east side of Britain. The last arrival of Neolithic people was across the Channel into southern England.

We looked at a map of Britain showing how very little Mesolithic DNA remains in today's population compared to Neolithic DNA. The Neolithic men carried the Y-DNA haplogroup G, with the few women who came with them having Mt-DNA markers which are carried by about 8% of modern-day British women. That so few men in Britain

today carry Mesolithic Y-DNA suggests that the Neolithic men killed most of the Mesolithic men.

After the Neolithic came the Copper Age and then the Bronze Age from 2200 BC, with the influx of the Beaker and Corded Ware people, and their steppe ancestry. Yamnaya pastoralists arrived from the steppes about 5000 years ago, resulting, in Britain, with 100% of people having steppe ancestry. We looked at the dramatic change in the DNA of Britons, seeing, this time, the removal of Neolithic men and their Y-DNA haplogroup 12a, leaving mostly men with Beaker Y-DNA haplogroup R1b.

We looked at a 'Y-DNA Haplogroup R1b migration map' and saw how this haplogroup had spread from the Middle East, through Europe and into Britain. A 'family tree' of the Y-DNA haplogroup R1b showed that the most common sub-groups in Britain are L21 and S21.

A map of the distribution of Y-DNA haplogroup R1b-L21 in Britain and Europe showed how closely the British and Irish are related to their nearest neighbours on the continent, the northern French. A map of the distribution of Y-DNA haplogroup R1b-S21 showed how many Britons are related to Europeans to the east of France, such as Germans and Scandinavians.

We looked at a map showing the modern distribution of Y-DNA haplogroups in Europe, Britain and Ireland. Colourful pie charts showed the predominance of haplogroup R1b in Britain and Ireland, and in our nearest European neighbours. Noticeably, isolated Ireland had mostly R1b, with just a little I1, 12a and R1a. Britain has more of these, as well as small amounts of three other haplogroups, similar to our continental neighbours.

Looking at Britain by region showed how each area had different amounts of the various Y-DNA haplogroups, showing how individuals had a variety of different ancestors, but with R1b always predominating. A table of 'Mt-DNA frequency by region' showed the predominance of haplogroup "H" in Britain, which arrived from Africa, as we heard earlier, about 10-1,000 years ago.

Joan Burrow-Newton

'The Silchester Environs Project', a talk by Professor Mike Fulford, University of Reading, on Saturday 17th February 2024.

Professor Mike Fulford's talk was an overview of the archaeological work done around Silchester (Calleva Atrebatum) from 2015 to 2020. A map of the study area showed a multitude of archaeological features in the landscape around Calleva. They were mostly linear; possible boundary dykes or roads, but some enclosures could be seen.

As it is not possible to date features from their appearance, excavation was needed. Mike explained that many of these archaeological features had been radiocarbon dated from burnt wood remains only, as no material culture had been found. Thus, people had dug ditches and raised banks, and used the sites for several years, but had left no pottery, metalwork, or other evidence of material culture.

For example, excavations at Pond Farm Hillfort had shown that the inside of the fort was essentially empty, with nothing to suggest how it was used, and with only radiocarbon dated burnt wood to date it to the Middle Iron Age. Other burnt remains showed that the hillfort had been re-used in post-Roman times, and again in the later Mediaeval period, but with no continuity between the different phases of use, and no material culture found. Mike said that this was a picture to be seen all over the study area; sites used for a while, then abandoned, re-used later and then again abandoned.

We looked at enclosures in Pamber Forest, revealed by LiDAR. Three enclosures were radiocarbon dated to the Middle Iron Age from burnt wood, and some sheep and cattle remains were found. The banks had been completely ploughed out during the Middle Ages, but the ditches, when excavated, were found to be about 2 metres deep, representing much hard work and many man-hours of labour. In one enclosure were the remains of a roundhouse's gully, some pottery, and a pit in which Roman period charcoal was found.

The two enclosures at Simm's Copse showed a similar picture starting to emerge from the landscape; of small communities of Middle Iron Age people, using these protective enclosures to keep their valuable animals safe from straying, thieves, and predators, and also to inhabit. Pottery was found at Simm's Copse, and post holes found in one enclosure may have been the remains of roundhouses.

At Windabout South, six trenches had been dug across the cropmarks of the ditches of a roughly rectangular enclosure. One excavated area towards the middle of the site, Trench 3, was shown to date to the Early Iron Age, and the other trenches gave Late Iron Age dates. At this settlement site there was some evidence of cereal cultivation, and possible animal husbandry.

Excavations at Windabout North showed the cropmarks to be mortuary enclosure ditches. The high-status graves within appeared to have been robbed in antiquity, with broken pots and cremated bones scattered over the site. A broken wine amphora left at the site may have belonged to thieves, discarded as it was no longer of use. Or it may have been an offering to the deceased.

A wood-lined cremation burial was the first grave of its kind to be found in Hampshire. The cremated bones were surrounded by six platters and two drinking cups. Four of the pottery vessels had been imported from northern France, the rest had been made locally, and all dated to the 1st century AD. Mike told us that lipids on the pottery

platters had been identified as meat fat from sheep. It was thought that the high-status individual in the grave may have come from Late Iron Age Calleva.

Before starting his summary of the Silchester Environs Project, Mike explained that he was not including any Neolithic or Bronze Age data, that evidence of people from these times using the landscape had been found all across the site, but no settlements found.

On a map entitled Early Iron Age 700-400 BC, we saw that the Windabout South, Pond Farm Hillfort, Church Lane Farm and Wood Farm sites were all situated some distance from Calleva. As with many of the sites excavated, dating was sometimes only from radiocarbon dated charcoal.

In the Middle Iron Age 400-100 BC, while Pond Farm and Wood Farm showed evidence of use, the other sites did not. New sites, for example, Pamber Enclosures 1-3 and Simm's Copse Enclosure 1, were again situated away from Calleva.
In the Late Iron Age 100 BC-AD 70, we could see that the Windabout South settlement was once again occupied, and the Windabout North mortuary enclosure was in use. To the south of Calleva, Wood Farm was occupied, and the Little London Tilery was being used. In addition to radiocarbon dating, some sites could now be dated from settlement evidence, as material culture increased.

On a map entitled Early to Mid-Roman, we saw just a few settlement sites, all situated away from Calleva. The Little London Tilery was still in use, and in the north a new settlement had appeared at Mortimer Hill Farm.

In the Late Roman period the picture was very similar, with the area around Calleva devoid of occupation. Mortimer Hill Farm and Pamber Enclosure 3 were still in use. Nelsons Field and Latchmere Green, previously occupied in the Late Iron Age, were once again in use.

Mike showed us a table entitled Iron Age-Earliest Roman C14 dates. From this we could see that there was no continuity at the sites over time. People appeared to use the sites and then abandon them, only for other people to re-use the sites later in time.

Earlier, we had looked at the geology of the area, with Calleva being built on gravel, and surrounded by London clay and gravel, neither of which are good for agriculture. Mike suggested that the land around Calleva could have been reserved for the use of occupants of the town. The wooded areas: Calleva means 'woods', could have been used for building materials, for domestic cooking and heating, as well as industrial kilns. Any available good agricultural land could have been farmed exclusively by Iron Age and Roman period Calleva residents.

In the Early Medieval period, again only sites away from Calleva were in use. At Pond Farm Hillfort, which was last used in the Middle Iron Age, the ditches were re-dug as the enclosure was once again put to use.

In the Medieval period most of these sites were still in use. At Calleva, settlement evidence, including pottery, was found at the amphitheatre, the bath house and at Silchester church, indicating the use of these sites in Medieval times, which was the last period looked at by the Silchester Environs Project.

Mike ended his talk by telling us of an interactive exhibition *'Becoming Roman - Silchester a Town of Change'* - On now until Sunday 28th April 2024
At the Willis Museum and Sainsbury Gallery, The Haymarket, Market Place, Basingstoke, RG21 7QD. Open Wednesdays to Sundays.
https://www.hampshireculture.org.uk/willis-museum-and-sainsbury-gallery

Joan Burrow-Newton

The BAS Study Group

As you will have seen from my *From the chair* article (see above), post-excavation work using the Integrated Archaeological Database IADB) is currently a significant focus of attention. The IADB is an IT system for recording, representing and interpreting an archaeological excavation. Unfortunately, it is coming to the end of its useful life, so I have written a user manual and design documents which record its database and the software. An inspection of the software code showed that it is not possible to renovate it so a group of us are in the process of designing a new system.

To this end, the Study Group meeting in December was devoted to a design review of the functionality required to record, present, and interpret archaeological contexts. The January meeting was devoted to two similar reviews. One to assess the functionality required to record section drawing and present 3-dimensional representations of an excavation and the other to discuss the processing of finds both on-site and in post-excavation. These reviews and the many comments made during the meetings have helped clarify both how the Society should organise itself when excavating a site and the functionality to be supported by any future IT system.

The February Study Group meeting started with a presentation on the Geophysics survey of Hurley by Paul Seddon. This was followed by a review of the interpretation of the excavations at Blounts Court 2013 -2019. This presented the archaeology industry standard method of grouping contexts. Firstly, you identify contexts in a trench or an area of a large excavation which together represent the structure or the results of past human activity. An example of this was the grouping

of two contexts in trench 3A which recorded evidence of 1m of Roman wall (see Figure 1). The next level of grouping looked across the various trenches, in this case trenches 3A, 6 and 7, which together represent some 4m of Roman wall and give insights of how it was built by different teams of workers. The final grouping of contexts grouped the contexts representing the Roman wall with those representing an adjacent field to show that we had probably found a Roman boundary wall across two fields one of which was wooded. The IADB supports capabilities which enables us to make these deductions. The Study Group was presented with evidence in a spreadsheet which enabled them to review these and similar deductions and offer alternative interpretations of the evidence (see below).

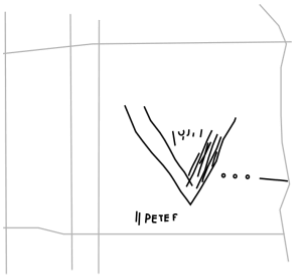
Andrew Hutt

Figure 1. Context C3020 showing 1m of Roman wall

Projects

The Scratching Post: an update from the Berkshire Medieval Graffiti Survey (BMGS)

Over the winter the majority of older churches in Berks have had a quick check to see what graffiti is present – an overview of the result will be out soon. Three talks have been given to local groups, including Cookham, and Beedon. The talk at Beedon Church was part of their 800 years anniversary and included the launch of a leaflet to help the public appreciate some of their graffiti. Two examples from the leaflet:

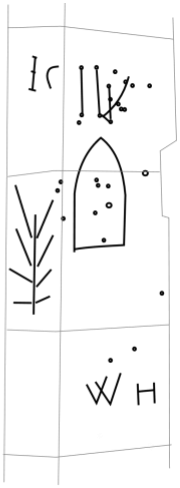


East face of wall north of chancel arch
a V (the letter & morse code) - for Victory? All were encouraged to paint a V in 1941 by the BBC - a modern piece of graffiti.

West side of south door (outside)
top left 'IC' the I is a J, likely to be the initials for Jesus Christ. Lower right interlocked V's - the 'Virgin of Virgins' i.e. Mary (mother of Jesus). Both pairs of initials evoking the power of these names to wardoff evil so keeping the doorway safe.

There is a door or window outline, and a 'tree' shape, perhaps a palm branch, both unusual forms of graffiti.

This area has many small holes 'drilled' into the stone. Locals may have drilled out stone dust to take as 'medicine' for their ailments, believing the dust to be holy and able to aid them.



James Peddle

The BAS Finds Group

The objective of the BAS Finds Group is to develop the Society's ability to record, identify and date finds. Such dating underpins dating contexts and hence the whole process of interpreting an archaeological excavation.

On the 5th of December 2023, the BAS Finds group held a Ceramic Building Materials (CBM) workshop led by local CBM specialist Kevin Hayward. Before the workshop, the group had prepared trays of CBM brick and tile for Kevin to identify and date. Kevin started the workshop by giving a presentation which reminded us that CBM includes brick, roof and flooring tile, mortar, daub, terracotta, building stone, sanitary ware and gems and that the responsibilities of a CBM specialist involved identifying and dating them, spot dating walls found in situ in an excavation, and creating reference collections. He left us a whole series of presentations and documentation. After his presentation, he worked his way through our trays and bags of CBM. By the end of the evening, he had identified and dated 28 finds.

Following Kevin's advice, over Christmas, I created a reference collection of peg tile dating from 1130 to 1500.

The January Finds Group meeting focussed on, absorbing as a group, the results of the CBM workshop. We reviewed all the files that Kevin had given us, the dating results, and the reference collection. The overall conclusion was that the majority of our CBM was peg tile and that a key feature of peg file was the granularity of the sand used to line the moulds used to make the tiles; very coarse sand was used to make early tiles, finer sand was used to make later tiles.

The February Finds group meeting was organised as a game of snap. We worked in teams of two, each team took two tiles from the reference collection, bags of undated tiles were circulated round the room and the teams compared the tile in the bags with their reference collection tiles and recorded matches. We succeeded in dating another 25 bags of tiles. Overall, this was a somewhat chaotic but successful and enjoyable evening. A later conversation with Professor Mike Fulford confirmed that the activity of matching finds to a reference collection was widespread in the archaeology industry.

Since the February meeting, the Society has bought 10 sealable plastic A4 boxes to hold finds, and all the Blounts Court finds have been checked against the finds records in the IADB and stored by material type in the boxes (see below). This ensures that in future, finds recording processing, and dating is well organised.

Andrew Hutt

Find 800001 Peg Tile dating to 1180 to 1450 (reference collection item 3)

Blounts Court finds boxes

Blounts Court

As explained above, we have spent some time working on the post-excavation report of the Blounts Court excavations 2013 to 2019. The current interpretation of the site is that, from the 2nd to the 20th centuries, there were six phases of use. These were:

A Roman phase AD 125 to 1350: where this was a site with a Roman boundary wall running across it with a field (possibly of woodland) on the east side. The Roman boundary wall probably remained in use until 1500

A medieval phase 1350 to 1500: a site with one house built in 1350 (yet to be identified), where work started on a chapel in circa 1375 but was never finished and another house (now Blounts Court house) built in 1431. The remains of the chapel were a flint faced wall and two traceried windows which were later built into the west wall of Blounts Court House. Blounts Court House was just northwest of a garden bounded on the east side by the Roman boundary wall

An early post-medieval phase: 1500 to 1773: when another room was added to Blounts Court House, a large 30m x 12m timber framed barn was built on the garden area, the Roman wall was demolished, and a farm building built using the Roman wall foundations as the foundations of its west wall

A Georgian phase 1773 to circa 1850: when Blounts Court house was remodelled as the Georgian country house we see today with its Doric style portico, a grand staircase, and a large high ceiling lounge. The barn was probably moved to the nearby Blounts Court Farm and the farm building was demolished. They were replaced by a Georgian brick and flint wall with a garden on the east side and grounds similar to those seen today in front of the current house laid on the west side. In early Victorian times, a gateway was constructed leading through or past the Georgian wall to the garden beyond

A modern phase circa 1850 to 2024: when the Georgian wall was removed and the grounds we see today laid out

Please note that this is the current interpretation of the site, we have yet to date all the CBM, pottery and metalwork from the site so things may change.

Andrew Hutt

Membership subscriptions 2024-25

Subscriptions to the Society are due in April 2024 for the year to April 2025, except for those who joined after 1st January 2024. Subscription rates are £15 for an individual and £20 for a couple at the same address and are due on 6th April. Correspondence should be sent to me at the address below. Please note that your membership will lapse if the subscription is not paid by 31st July 2024.

A number of members already pay by Standing Order or the equivalent, and we are most grateful to them for this. If you would like to pay electronically direct to the Society's account in future, please ask me for the details. **A renewal form is enclosed with this newsletter** for use by those who prefer to pay by cheque, and also to record any changes in a member's name, address, telephone number or email. The latter is particularly important as the bulk of communication with you now is carried out electronically. Thank you.

Anne Harrison
2 Murdoch Road, Wokingham, RG40 2DA
tel 01189785520, email treasurer@berksarch.co.uk

Talks by other groups

Berkshire Archaeological Research Group (BARG)

BARG holds quarterly evening meetings in person at The Cornerstone, Norreys Ave, Wokingham RG40 1UE. £3 fee for non-members.: http://www.barg-online.org/calendar

Maidenhead Archaeological and Historical Society (MAHS)

Talks are usually on the last Wednesday in the month 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

Marlow Archaeology Group (MAG)

Talks are once a month on varying Thursdays and start at 8pm. For more information and to book these on Zoom: https://www.marlowarch.co.uk

South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group (SOAG)

Talks now run from October to April (except January) on the first Thursday in the month starting at 7.30pm and are either in-person at **Sonning Common Village Hall or on Zoom.** Talks are open to all although donations at the door are appreciated. For more information:
http://www.soagarch.org.uk/events.html

West Berkshire Museum

Offers talks and courses. Information at:
https://booking.westberks.gov.uk/heritage_events.html#?location=West%20Berkshire%20Museum
It is also possible to sign up for event information on this page.

Input to the quarterly newsletter and monthly e-newssheet – 'What's On'

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-newssheet, at webmaster(at) berksarch.co.uk and to me at newsletter(at) berksarch.co.uk by the 27th 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 Monday, 27th May 2024.
Thank you,
Julie Worsfold