



ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Autumn 2024

Vol. 26, No.3

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 Tim Lloyd ([webmaster\[at\]berksarch.co.uk](mailto:webmaster[at]berksarch.co.uk)) 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](mailto: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.

Wednesday 4th September 2024: BAS Study Group: 2:30pm - Discussion of the forthcoming Field Project at Blounts Court.

Monday 9th to Friday 27th September 2024: BAS Field Project at Blounts Court – Please contact Andrew Hutt ([chair\(at\)berksarch.co.uk](mailto:chair(at)berksarch.co.uk)) or Nigel Spencer ([n.spencer327\(at\)btinternet.com](mailto:n.spencer327(at)btinternet.com)) with details of your availability if you wish to participate.

Saturday 21st September 2024: BAS Lecture: *Re-investigating Richborough: correcting the narrative* by Phil Smither, Finds Liaison Officer, Berkshire.

Wednesday 25th September 2024: Site visit to Blounts Court: 11.00am - Followed by pub lunch at the Butchers Arms.

Tuesday 1st October 2024: BAS Finds Group 7:30pm

Wednesday 2nd October 2024: BAS Study Group: 2:30pm

Saturday 5th October 2024: BAS Day School: 10.00am to 4.00pm, St Nicolas' Church Hall, Newbury, RG14 5HG. (See below).

Wednesday 9th October 2024: BAS Lunch: 12 noon

Saturday 19th October 2024: AGM followed by Lecture: *Dr Brian Hope-Taylor and the investigation of timber halls in northern Bernicia – an evolving story* by Professor Ian Ralston, University of Edinburgh.

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

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

Wednesday 13th November 2024: BAS Lunch: 12 noon

Saturday 16th November 2024: BAS Lecture: *Prehistoric art and its meaning* by Mike Pengelly MA.

Tuesday 3rd December 2024: BAS Finds Group 7:30pm

Wednesday 4th December 2024: BAS Study Group: 2:30pm

Wednesday 11th December 2024: BAS Lunch: 12 noon

Saturday 14th December 2024: BAS Lecture: *Members' Talks: TBA.*

Compiled by Julie Worsfold

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BAS needs a new newsletter editor!

I hope, like me, you enjoy reading the quarterly BAS newsletter with reports of lectures, BAS Study and BAS Finds groups meetings, fieldwork, visits, and other events. So, would you be happy to take over as editor?

Over the last year, I have endured a long period of illness and incapacity followed by the bereavement of a close family member, so I am standing down as BAS newsletter editor after having produced this edition.

If taking on the role of the Society's newsletter interests you, please contact me directly via [newsletter\(at\)berksarch.co.uk](mailto:newsletter(at)berksarch.co.uk). I'm very happy to give a full handover to my successor and Andrew, our chairman, who over the last 20 years has produced many issues of the newsletter, will be on hand to guide you.

Thank you.

Julie Worsfold

From the Chair

Master's Degrees in Archaeology

In 2022, the Society sponsored Keith Abbott to take a Masters in Archaeology at the University of Reading. In August, I received an email from Keith telling me that he had submitted his dissertation and hence had completed his course. Congratulations to Keith for completing his Masters.

You will be able to hear some of the results from his dissertation at the Day School.

It is vital that an archaeological society is led by people who understand the archaeological processes from starting fieldwork to providing an understanding of how people lived and worked in Berkshire in the past. A Master's degree in Archaeology is an ideal conversion from the knowledge and experience of your working life into an area where you can make a significant contribution to the archaeology and heritage of Berkshire.

The Society, through the John Hardman bursary, offers you the opportunity to make this transition. If this sounds interesting to you, please contact me.

Fieldwork and Research Work

Several leading members of the Society have been involved in excavations at Cookham led by the University of Reading; many members have taken the opportunity to work on the site.

By the time this newsletter reaches you we will be excavating at Blounts Court.

With Keith Abbott free from his academic work and me free from publishing the Berkshire Archaeological Journal, you can expect more fieldwork in the coming months.

Post excavation, the Society's finds group is developing its ability to understand finds such as worked stone, ceramic building materials, pottery, glass, coins, and organic remains. If this sounds interesting, please come along to the finds group.

Desktop research. The Roman authorities in Britain required the Romano-British elite to manage the urban and rural populations on their behalf. The Berkshire Romans 3 project is sifting through the archaeological evidence for evidence of how the Romano-British elite reacted to these responsibilities.

This summarises the wide-ranging programme of activities for you to join. We are a learning organisation so bring your existing knowledge and skills along and see how these help us throw light on Berkshire's past.

Annual General Meeting

The Society's Annual General Meeting will take place on Saturday 19th October 2024. The Society needs new trustees. To be a trustee you need to have an interest in heritage and archaeology, a good deal of common sense and some management experience. You do not need to have experience of archaeology; you can learn that as we go along.

If you would like to help take the Society forward please contact me or Keith Abbott.

Andrew Hutt

**The Berkshire Archaeological Society's
Day School Programme
Saturday 5th October 2024
St Nicolas Church Hall, West Mills, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5HG
10.00 a.m. to 4.15 p.m.**

10:00	Welcome Andrew Hutt, Chair, Berkshire Archaeological Society
10.05	Recent work in West Berkshire Sarah Orr, Senior Archaeologist, West Berkshire Council
10:35	Recent discoveries in East Berkshire Fiona McDonald, Berkshire Archaeology
11:05	COFFEE – 30 mins
11:35	Recently found portable antiquities in Berkshire Phil Smither, PAS Officer Berkshire
12:05	Making the pennies count: how can 'big data' analysis of material culture be used to characterise Romano-British settlement across West Berkshire? Keith Abbott, University of Reading and Berkshire Archaeological Society
12.35	LUNCH – 1 hour
13:35	Cursus Publicus Peter Clifford, Berkshire Archaeological Society
14:05	Old Windsor Darko Maricevic, University of Reading
14:35	Tea – 30 mins
15:05	Royal Observer Post, Arborfield Bob Clarke, Wessex Archaeology
15:35 -16.00	Questions and Conclusion Andrew Hutt, Chair, Berkshire Archaeological Society

You can attend this event in person or on Zoom, tickets cost £15 and are available on Ticket Source <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/berkshire-archaeological-society>

Annual General Meeting 2024

The AGM will take place on **Saturday 19th October 2024** at 2:15 p.m. There will be a face-to-face meeting at RISC with live streaming to those who prefer an on-line meeting. Details of the arrangements will be notified later.

AGM papers will be emailed to members before the meeting and posted to those who have no email address.

All positions on the BAS Council are open for election. For more information, please contact Keith Abbott. All nominations for Council membership, proposed and seconded, must be sent to the Hon. Secretary (Keith Abbott, 5 The Priory, Winnersh, Wokingham, RG41 5DE; secretary@berksarch.co.uk).

Agenda for the AGM

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the AGM held on 18th November 2023
3. Matters Arising
4. Chairman's Report

5. Treasurer's Report
6. Election of Officers of the Society
7. Election of Council Members
8. Appointment of the Independent Examiner
9. Any Other Business

After the AGM members will hear a talk on, 'Dr Brian Hope-Taylor and the investigation of timber halls in northern Bernicia – an evolving story' by Professor Ian Ralston, University of Edinburgh.

BAS Visits

Visit to Villa Ventorum



On Monday 10th June 2024 a group of around 20 BAS members and friends made their way to The Newt, near Castle Cary in Somerset, an exclusive country club and hotel with beautiful gardens - and a reconstructed Roman Villa!

We were greeted at the museum entrance by Ric Weeks, now exhibitions manager but formerly a field archaeologist for Oxford Archaeology. Ric treated us to an introductory talk about the history of the original villa. It was found during deep ploughing in WW2 but only partially excavated since. The new, wealthy owner of the Newt decided to spare no expense in excavating it, so Oxford were commissioned to spend an unheard of

18 months revealing the full extent.

The site was originally home to an Iron Age farmstead, so it appears to be a classic case of a member of the local elite adopting Romanised living by building a small villa that was then expanded over two centuries. It is likely that the owner was an "ordo" in the nearby civitas of Ilchester and, due to the lack of a heated dining room, probably only used the villa in summer. The lines of the now recovered villa are marked out by wooden beams in the grass. However, the well-preserved remains of the bathhouse are covered by the excellent site museum.



We were given audio-guides to explore the museum, taking at least an hour to work our way through the exhibits. As well as the usual general Roman information there were many local finds with their uses imaginatively explained. Two mosaics were on display, one with the head of Diana at the centre. The bathhouse remains were covered in glass with a walkway around the perimeter. We would later see the modest but complete suite reconstructed in the villa.



The new villa has been built away from any archaeology to the exact plan that was uncovered by excavation. It was decided to build to the latest extensive plan and furnish it in the style of AD350 as some coins from around that date had been found. This is the first time that so much effort (and money!) has gone into reconstructing such a large villa in this country. Everything was built using equivalents of Roman materials and techniques, though not restricting the use of tools or mass production. Colour schemes were deduced from fragments of plaster and inspiration taken from sites such as Pompeii and Herculaneum. Known mosaics were reconstructed and a variety of other floor types were used. The front of the villa is planted with a vineyard, while the

garden to the rear is an exotic evocation of a Roman garden.

Over our headsets, a bossy housekeeper guided us through the reception rooms into the bathhouse, kitchen, bedrooms and finally a spectacular dining room furnished with couches and elaborate wall paintings. We were also able to enjoy a

virtual reality portrayal of the family preparing for and enjoying a dinner with an important guest. Since Somerset produced the best lead in the empire, the storyline was based on a bid to win a supply contract.

Most of us stayed on to sample the dining opportunities and explore the gardens. Joining the club for regular access is expensive but RHS members can visit for free on Tuesdays and take paying guests. Note that villa visits must be booked in advance, and it takes at least half an hour to get there from the entrance. Buggy transport can be arranged for the less able. Most of us stayed locally overnight but, traffic permitting, it can take less than 2 hours to drive there. Highly recommended!

Tim Lloyd

The Berkshire Archaeological Society makes sparks fly!

Following the fascinating BAS lecture on the archaeological typography of iron nails by Katie Manby, the BAS Finds Group set out to undertake their own experimental archaeology exercise to recreate iron objects from the past to better understand the past manufacturing processes and the technology needed to undertake iron working. On 19th June eight BAS members (Andrew, Martin, Nigel, Anne, Jo, James, Gabrielle, and Keith) attended a blacksmithing workshop at Cobalt Blacksmiths run by David Gregory who is not only a skilled professional blacksmith but is also a trained archaeologist who has participated in a number of past experimental research projects.

The objective for the day was for each BAS member to identify an artefact from their own archaeological research to recreate using basic iron working skills. Artefacts chosen ranged from iron nails, penannular brooches, shears, and knives. Training was given on basic iron working techniques as well as the technology used to heat and work metal without the aid of modern-day technology. Figure 1 shows an Early Medieval knife similar to one discovered at the University of Reading excavation at Cookham in 2022, the part made object and the finished recreation.

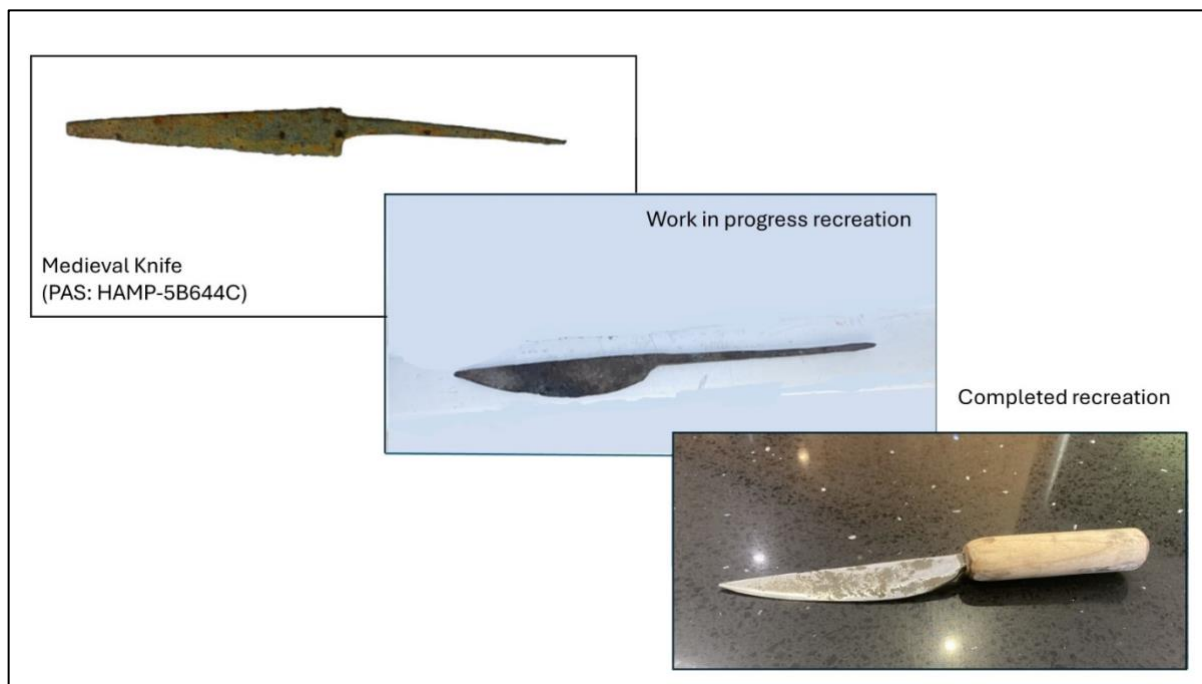


Figure 1. Recreation of an Early Medieval iron knife (Portable Antiquities Scheme, 2024)

Training was also given on how iron artefacts should be curated and preserved when discovered during archaeological excavations. One half of a set of iron tongs discovered at a West Berkshire Roman site by BAS members was used as an exemplar of how such artefacts would have been made.

The BAS team then spent an interesting day learning the basic techniques of iron working needed to recreate the artefacts from their own research. Pictures below show BAS members at work in the foundry, hammering red hot iron on their anvils. All who attended had an enjoyable time learning new skills as well as putting them to practice.



Figure 2. Andrew at work making a Penannular Brooch



Figure3: James making spark fly as Andrew, Jo, Anne, and Nigel look on.

Figure 3.



Figure 4. Martin, Nigel, Andrew, and David at work

The BAS Study Group

The June meeting started with Keith Abbott giving a presentation on *Predictive method for identifying Roman ritual and military sites*. This was the second case study that Keith presented based on his Master's dissertation. In his talk, Keith explained how he has used the presence of Roman artifacts of ritual and military significance to identify sites in West Berkshire.

This presentation was followed by a review of the work on the Anchurus II system. This is being developed as a replacement for the Integrated Archaeology Database (IADB) thereby allowing the Society to develop its interest in excavating archaeological sites using information technology to help record and interpret the results.

These two presentations showed how the Study Group can carry out peer reviews of the work of the Society.

The July Study group meeting was a small meeting which reviewed the planned excavations at Blounts Court. I look forward to welcoming the new members of the Society who came to this meeting to the excavations.

Andrew Hutt

The BAS Finds Group

There was no meeting of the BAS Finds Group in June or July. The June room booking was used to hold the Study Group meeting. The July meeting was cancelled because no progress had been made on the Blounts Court finds.

Andrew Hutt

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.

Local Exhibitions

On now until Sunday 17th November 2024

'From the Nile to Newbury'

West Berkshire Museum, The Wharf, Newbury, RG14 5AS. Open Wednesdays to Sundays.

There are some free guided tours and related talks.

For more information and to book your place on any of the above:

https://booking.westberks.gov.uk/heritage_events.html#?heritage_category%201=Museum%20Exhibitions

Input to the quarterly newsletter and monthly e-newsheet – '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-newsheet, at webmaster(at)berksarch.co.uk and to newsletter(at)berksarch.co.uk by the 27th of the month.

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

The current copy date for the next edition of this publication, the Society's quarterly newsletter, is Wednesday, 27th November 2024.

Thank you,

Julie Worsfold

BERKSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



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



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