



ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Winter 2024

Vol. 26, No.4

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](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.

Tuesday 7th January 2025: BAS Finds Group: 7:30pm, doors open 7:15pm

Wednesday 8th January 2025: BAS Study Group: 2:30pm, doors and zoom open 2:15pm

Wednesday 15th January 2025: BAS Lunch: 12 noon

Saturday 18th January 2025: Lecture: Mapping Roman roads in SW England, Dr Chris Smart. Exeter University: 2:30pm, doors and zoom open 2:00pm

Tuesday 4th February 2025: BAS Finds Group: 7:30pm, doors open 7:15pm

Wednesday 5th February 2025: BAS Study Group: 2:30pm, doors and zoom open 2:15pm

Wednesday 12th February 2025: BAS Lunch: 12 noon

Saturday 15th February 2025: Lecture: Roman Copper Alloys / coins, Dr Pete Bray 2:30pm, doors and zoom open 2:00pm

Tuesday 4th March 2025: BAS Finds Group 7:30pm, doors open 7:15pm

Wednesday 5th March 2025: BAS Study Group: 2:30pm, doors and zoom open 2:15pm

Wednesday 12th March 2025: BAS Lunch: 12 noon

Saturday 15th March 2025: Lecture: Roman and Early medieval Alloys Defined, Tasha Fullbrook 2:30pm, doors and zoom open 2:00pm

Compiled by Andrew Hutt

From the Chair

The last 3 months have been fairly busy. In September, the Society carried out four weeks of excavations at Blounts Court and in October held a Day School in Newbury; there are reports of both of these later in the newsletter

At the Annual General Meeting in October, I was delighted that the membership voted for Jill Oseman, Peter Clifford and Tony Bakker to join the Council. They have all been busy supporting the Society's activities. All three have got involved in fieldwork, both geophysics and excavations. Peter has completed a desk top study on the *Cursus Publicus*; the official Roman transport system; it is being published in the forthcoming Journal. Peter and Jill are working with Tim Lloyd and me on a desktop study of the Romano-British elite. Tony is working with Martin Labram and me to improve the Society's information technology infrastructure.
Andrew Hutt

IN
BERKSHIRE

Archaeology on Saturdays

Re-investigating Richborough: Correcting the Narrative

Phil Smither, Portable Antiquities Scheme, Berkshire
21st September 2024

In the 1920s, J. P. Bushe-Fox carried out excavations at Richborough. He produced a number of reports, while the artefacts found on site were left in museum stores. Bushe-Fox concluded that over time Richborough was:

- An invasion and supply base AD 43-44
- A port town AD70s – 3rd century
- A triple ditch fortlet – 3rd century
- A shore fort – Late 3rd – 5th century

Phil reviewed evidence from features on the site which included timber stores, pits, wells, workers cottages, masonry buildings and their cellars and artefacts including: pottery, coins and inscriptions.

From this evidence Phil concluded that Richborough was:

- The site of the invasion landing AD 43
- Possible military site AD 43-70s
- Imperial supply port AD 70s – 150s
- Port town with new arch – AD 150s – 3rd century

It remains to be seen if and how Phil's new interpretations find their way into the Kent Historic Environment Record and the notice boards explaining the site to visitors.

Andrew Hutt

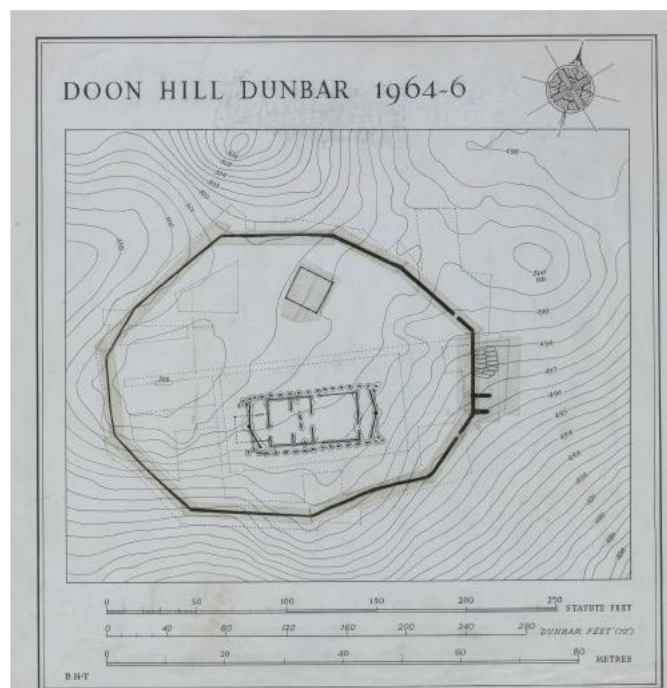
Early Neolithic Timber Halls in Scotland: Dr Brian Hope-Taylor, Yeavinger and Doon Hill - fifty years of confusion or worse ...

Ian Ralston, Abercromby Emeritus Professor of Archaeology, University of Edinburgh. 19th October 2024

This was an exciting lecture because the Society was working to record Hope-Taylor's excavation at Old Windsor and Ian Ralston had actually worked with him on Doon Hill.

The excavations at Doon Hill took place in 1964-66. Ian's presentation included lots of pictures of the excavation and of Hope-Taylor presenting the results on television and at local lectures as being an enclosure with a gateway, a British 7th century hall, a later Anglo-Saxon Hall, a temple and a cemetery.

From 1977-1982, Reynolds and Ralston excavated a site at Balbridie, Kincardineshire and revealed a large early Neolithic hall. These finds were comparable with the evidence found at Doon Hill and started a very public debate as the dating of the two sites.



Hope-Taylor's final plan after 1966 season (unpublished)

This debate has concluded that the hall at Doon Hill was also Neolithic with other features on the site dating to the Bronze Age and to Early medieval times.

This lecture gave insights into how Hope-Taylor came to interpret the evidence from Doon Hill and the reaction of fellow archaeologists both at the time and more recently.

Andrew Hutt

Ice Age Art and its Meaning, by Mike Pengelly.

Mike Pengelly started his talk by explaining the importance of prehistoric art; the fact that art sets humans apart from other animals. 'Art is one of the things that makes us uniquely human', said Mike. Art is evidence of early human culture, showing as it does expressions of beliefs or actions. It is also evidence of the human capacity for symbolic thought, by using symbols to represent beliefs and ideas. In short, prehistoric art shows that early humans were artistic, creative, intelligent and had a spiritual dimension... just like us!

We looked at a map of Ice Age art sites, ranging across Europe and Eurasia, with Cresswell Crags in England the most northerly site. Mike told us of the three types of prehistoric art forms; portable, petroglyphs (carved into rock) and pictograms (painted on cave walls).

Starting with portable art, we looked at the Mask of la Roche-Cotard, made about 70,000 years ago. The Mask is a flint, 10.5 cm wide, that had been worked to make it look more like a face. Through a hole behind the 'nose', an animal bone had been positioned so that its protruding

ends resembled eyes. The Neanderthal creator of the Mask had inserted flint flakes to hold the bone in position.

The Venus of Hohle Fels, small enough to hide in a fist, is at 40,000 years old, the oldest sculpture of a human being so far found. Figures like these, of women with large breasts, a prominent 'mummy tummy', genitalia clearly marked, and with little or incomplete representations of arms, legs, and sometimes even the head, became known as Venus figures in the mid-nineteenth century. The Marquis de Vibraye, on finding an ivory figure, named it Venus Impudica, 'immodest Venus', presumably comparing it to Botticelli's Venus, who modestly covers herself in his painting, "The Birth of Venus".

A carved ivory plate, about 32,000 years old, was found in Geißenklösterle cave, Germany, and is known as "The Adorant". On one side a human figure reaches arms upwards 'adoringly', but it may also represent the constellation Orion. On the other side is a series of 88 notches. 32,000 years ago, this was approximately the number of days when Orion disappeared from view each year; leaving the night sky before the spring equinox and returning before the summer solstice.

We looked at other examples of portable art including musical instruments, such as a 32,000-year-old bone flute, and an elaborately decorated Magdalenian 'bullroarer'. A perforated conch shell was shown to have been used to spray pigment on cave walls, but could also have made musical sounds.

Moving on to petroglyphs, we looked at the earliest traces of human life in India; the Bhimbetka Petroglyphs, dating to 290,000-700,000 BC. Carved into sandstone walls are more than 500 cupules, ranging in shape from circular to roughly triangular, and in size from about 6cm to 1.6cm across. They do not show any definite patterns, but pseudo-patterns have been suggested.

In France, dated to 60,000 BC, is a child's grave capped with a stone in which 18 cupules had been carved. It is thought that the La Ferrassie cupules may represent the last few remaining members of a Neanderthal tribe. Mike pointed out that while we all have some Neanderthal DNA, the Neanderthals as a distinct species died out, possibly from inbreeding within small tribal groups, which can cause sterility.

We looked at a Venus figure carved on the wall of a rock shelter in the Dordogne, France, about 25,000 years ago. The female figure holds a bison horn with 13 notches, thought to represent the number of lunar months and/or menstrual cycles in one year. Britain's most famous Ice Age art is found in the caves at Cresswell Crags, Nottinghamshire. Here, lovely engravings of animals and birds, as well as geometric signs, were carved on rock walls about 14,000 years ago.

Moving onto pictographs, we looked at many beautiful paintings of animals in the caves at Altamira, Spain, from 22,000 years ago, and at Peche Merle, France, from 25,000 years ago. From the island of Sulawesi,

Indonesia, dated to 44,000 years ago, comes a possible first example of a narrative scene, telling a story of hunters killing a very large, in relation to the human figures, animal.

Mike talked about the research that had been done, trying to find meaning and purpose in prehistoric art. Many Venus figures had been studied with regard to fertility and education, as had the apparently female and male signs found at Lascaux Cave, France.

We looked at a diagram entitled 'The Geometric Signs of Ice Age Europe'. These 32 signs; circles, quadrangles, spirals, triangles, etc., as well as more complex signs such as penniforms, scalariforms, and tetriforms, were drawn on cave walls over a period of 30,000 years. These non-figurative images each had their own pattern of use, suggesting that they were drawn with purpose, and had meaning to their creators. The 32 von Petzinger signs have since been found all over the world, possibly suggesting early humans had a common language and/or a proto-writing system.

In January 2023, a paper with the intriguing title of 'An Upper Palaeolithic Proto-writing System and Phenological Calendar?' was published online by Cambridge University Press. Briefly, dots, lines and Y-signs painted near particular animals, were thought to give seasonal information about these species, which could be of use to people coming to live and hunt in the area in the future. Lines and dots were thought to represent lunar months counting from late spring, and together with the animal depictions, were thought to be 'the first known writing in the history of Homo sapiens.'

Gargas Cave, France, containing 114 negative handprints with missing digits, is well known, and there have been many bizarre suggestions for the cause of the so-called 'mutilated' hands. However, a recent study showed that of 32 possible digit patterns, just 10 are represented in the cave, all of which can be made by simply bending the fingers down on a raised hand, suggesting that they represented a sign language. The many examples at Gargas Cave may have been created for educational purposes, possibly as a teaching aid.

Mike suggested possibilities for the purposes of Ice Age art, such as 'decoration, sympathetic magic, depicting reality, teaching aid, recording history, initiation, fertility, religion' or reasons 'beyond our comprehension'. I look forward to further research to find evidence of how our ancestors lived and communicated with each other.

Joan Burrow-Newton

Old Windsor - Update

Darko Maričević gave a presentation of the findings of the Old Windsor project at the Day School and we have heard that the project report is being reviewed by Professor Gabor Thomas and Roland Smith.

Anne Harrison

Archaeology in Berkshire 2024 Day School

The BAS Day School took place at St Nicolas church hall, Newbury on 5th October 2024. Some 40 people attended. The presentations were:

Recent work in West Berkshire

Sarah Orr, Principal Archaeologist

Sarah explained the work that she and her team were doing. She summarised 3 developer funded excavations, and mentioned Professor Martin Bell's excavation at Ufton Bridge. She then went on to present the schemes her team were involved in to mitigate climate change and improve biodiversity in West Berkshire.

Recent discoveries in East Berkshire

Fiona MacDonald, Principal Archaeologist, Berkshire Archaeology

Fiona presented details of fieldwork on a number of sites including:

- At the Barkham Solar Farm
- The Berkshire County Sports and Social Club, Sonning, where TVAS found a Middle Bronze Age urn
- Oakley Water near Holyport
- High Street Heritage Action Zone, Reading

Fiona finished her talk by stating the Berkshire Archaeology HER has passed its Historic England HER Audit 2023-24.

Making the Pennies Count...

Keith Abbott, University of Reading

Keith's presentation was of some of the work he did for his Master's dissertation. He started by explaining how he had integrated Roman period data from the West Berkshire HER, the Portable Antiquities Scheme, the Roman Rural Settlement database and West Berkshire Museum to create a Consolidated Material Culture database for West Berkshire. He then went on to interpret evidence from this database to gain an understanding of Romano-British trackways across West Berkshire, ritual sites and activity in West Berkshire and of Roman Newbury.

The Cursus Publicus in Berkshire

Peter Clifford, Berkshire archaeological Society

Peter started his presentation by giving an overview of the *Cursus Publicus* as the Roman Authority's empire wide transport system. Its main architectural features were *mansiones* which provided overnight accommodation for travellers and *mutationes* which provided services for changing horses and mules, repairing damaged wagons, etc.

He then presented a map and archaeological evidence from the known *mansiones* and *mutationes* in the Berkshire Region, together with a timeline which showed how this system changed from AD 43 to 410.

Finally, he presented details of the impact of the *Cursus Publicus* on the Romano-British living in the region. It was used by the Roman Authorities to administer the region and collect and transport taxes. For most of the time, the Roman-British elite were responsible for its upkeep and it employed a large number of people to provide services at the *mansiones* and *mutationes*.

PAS in Berkshire, 2023 / 2024

Dr. Philip Smither, Finds Liaison Officer for Berkshire

Phil started his presentation by reminding us of the role and capabilities of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) at both national and Berkshire levels. He then presented a Roman coin, a broken silver penny of Edgar (dating to AD 972-975), a Richard II silver penny and a Charles I silver penny.

In addition to coins, he presented a Bronze Age copper loop from a palstave or axe, an Iron Age copper alloy brooch, a Roman coin, a Roman key, a piece of medieval horse harness, a pipe stopper and a Victorian livery button.

He ended his talk with details of an exhibition of finds in West Berkshire Museum.

Unlocking Old Windsor

Darko Maričević, University of Reading

Darko started his presentation with a history of how the site was identified and how in 1953, the Berkshire Archaeological Society got Brian Hope Taylor to carry out a 2 week investigation. This led to the Ministry of Works sponsoring Hope-Taylor in 1954 to excavate trenches G-K and two areas. Excavations continued through 1955 to 1957. There were geophysics surveys from 1955 to 1987. From 1981 to 1991, there was a post-excavation project which consolidated some of the excavation material and produced some specialist reports.

This project confirmed the details of early medieval high status halls, an early medieval mill leat and mill with horizontal mill wheels.

The BAS Study Group

The September 2024 Meeting

The September meeting was devoted to a presentation by Andrew Hutt of the then forthcoming excavation at Blounts Court. This summarised our current understanding of the site and then went on to remind people of how we planned to survey the site, to excavate and record the three trenches and to record the finds. The presentation ended with a list of equipment.

This presentation was significant because it explained how the data collected on site was to be recorded in the Anchurus II system.

The October 2024 meeting

The October meeting was a wash-up of the Blounts Court excavation; we had come off site a few days earlier. The presentation included a summary of the archaeology found in the 3 trenches, a discussion of what people coming on site had learnt and a presentation on the work to be undertaken to complete the Blounts Court report.

Keith Abbott kindly recorded the discussion on what people had learnt while working on site. This showed that our allocation of people with two novices working with a more experience person enabled everybody to participate in all aspects of excavating and recording contexts and processing finds and ensured that everybody gained a broad understanding of how to excavate a site.

The November 2024 meeting

The November meeting started with a presentation by Tony Bakker on the Society's use of a Google Drive shared filestore. He explained how the drive works and how people could be given access to folders in the drive.

This was followed by a presentation and discussion led by Keith Abbott of the proposed excavations at Wickham in 2025. Keith plans to write a proposal for an excavation in late spring 2025 so that the Council can approve it. Once it has been approved you will be invited to participate,

Andrew Hutt

Some of the 9 litre finds boxes



The BAS Finds Group

The September 2024 meeting

There was no meeting of the BAS Finds group on 3rd September 2024.

The October 2024 meeting

This meeting was devoted to sorting all the finds from Blounts Court from 2013 to 2024 by material type and putting them in boxes. The result is that we now have 15 x 9 litre plastic boxes, and 9 x plastic trays each with finds of a single material type. There are some 18 different material types:

Manufactured types:

1. CBM tile
2. CBM Brick
3. CBM Drain pipe
4. CBM Mortar
5. Stone
6. Roofing slate
7. Flint
8. Worked flint
9. Pottery
10. Clay pipe
11. Metalwork
12. Nails
13. Iron Slag
14. Glass

Natural types

1. Animal bone
2. Oyster shells
3. Wood
4. Charcoal

During this meeting, Judith and Pat Ost donated the Society a Nikon Wild M3Z microscope (see below) and a Kaiser Macrospot 1500 light source. The Society thanks Judith and Pat for this generous gift.



The BAS Finds Group continued

The November 2024 meeting

The objective of this meeting was to agree an approach to recording and interpreting finds and writing finds reports. Andrew Hutt proposed that for each of the above material types there should be a finds report with the following main sections:

Characteristics: which explains the physical characteristics of finds of that material type. This is usually the closely guarded intellectual property of a finds specialist but as a voluntary learning organisation we should include this information in our finds reports

Summary of finds: which summarises where the finds of this type were found in the excavation

Analysis of finds: which explains how the finds relate to the sets, groups and phases of archaeology identified on the site

Discussion: this relates these finds to other finds found on this and other sites,

Within the Finds group people have started working in two or three person teams to apply this approach to clay pipes, oyster shells and peg tile. Our objective is to produce reports for all the material types listed above.

If this interests you. please come and join us.

Andrew Hutt

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

West Berkshire Museum

Offers talks, courses, and exhibitions. 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-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 for Tim 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 Tuesday, 27th February 2025.

Thank you,
Andrew Hutt

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:

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