



ARCHAEOLOGY in Berkshire

The Newsletter of the Berkshire Archaeological Society

Winter 2025 Volume 27 Number 4

Dates for your Diary

Venues (unless advised otherwise):

BAS Finds Group (in person and on Zoom) 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 (tim.lloyd@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 membership@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 6th January: **BAS Finds Group 7:30pm**

Wednesday 7th January **BAS Study Group 2:30pm**

Wednesday 14th January **BAS Pub Lunch: 12:00pm**

Saturday 17th January **BAS Lecture: Early Medieval Coinage** by *Dr John Naylor*

Tuesday 3rd February **BAS Finds Group 7:30pm**

Wednesday 4th February **BAS Study Group 2:30pm**

Wednesday 11th February **BAS Pub Lunch: 12:00pm**

Saturday 21st February **BAS Lecture: topic TBA** by *Prof. Steven Mithen*

Tuesday 10th March: **BAS Finds Group 7:30pm**

Wednesday 11th March **BAS Study Group 2:30pm**

Wednesday 17th March **BAS Pub Lunch: 12:00pm**

Saturday 21st March **BAS Lecture: topic TBA** by *Grace Strong (MA Oxford University)*

From the Chair

In October, we had a very successful Day School. We thank Peter Clifford who organised it and those members of the Council who helped organise the day.

Since August, the post excavation work arising from the Blounts Court and Wickham excavations is progressing. I am working on the Blounts Court report pulling into it the evidence needed for the finds reports and to interpret the site. Keith has large teams working on different finds materials and the larger numbers of finds from his excavation. The key challenge we both face is to write finds reports that interest you.

The other main archaeological fieldwork has been the geophysics survey at Wickham. Again, many of you have supported and enjoyed this work.

Finally, the development of Anchurus II has reached the point where we are expecting to have the first build of release 2 in the New Year. Later in the newsletter you will find an invitation to come and help document and test this system.

Wishing you a Happy Christmas and looking forward to an interesting New Year with lots of archaeological opportunities.

Andrew Hutt

Archaeology on Saturdays

Medieval Lived Religion: the complex lives of medieval ritual objects

by Dr Rob Webley 20th September 2025

Rob Webley started his talk by describing the MeRit project (2023-2026). The Medieval Ritual Landscape: Archaeology, Material Culture and Lived Religion project (MeRit), is investigating lived religion in the years from c.1000 to 1600 AD, using about 330,000 objects, sourced from Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) finds from England and Wales. A wide range of devotional objects, such as pilgrim badges and ampullae, re-used papal bullae and jewellery with sacred inscriptions, are being examined, with comparisons made to references in historical sources, and to finds from excavation case studies.

The project is looking at everyday religion; what ordinary medieval men and women did, which is not always written about in historical texts. Objects of personal devotion, such as gold rings with Christian iconography, are an indication of Christian materiality; what people owned, and of their belief that such objects had spiritual agency; the power to influence people or events.

We looked at several items:

- A manuscript illustration of the tomb of Edward the Confessor, showing men crawling under it, and praying, seeking cures from their ailments by their proximity to the deceased Christian saint.
- Examples of Christian materiality; a purse bar inscribed 'Ave Maria', and a coin made into a pendant, and to which had been added five marks, thought to signify Christ's wounds.
- A gold ring from our local Reading area, that was inscribed with an image of Saint Catharine of Alexandria; a virgin martyr who was believed to help women in childbirth.

The MeRit project uses PAS finds to trace ritual behaviour in the medieval landscape. Rob described three processes of human-landscape interaction.

1. Ritual movement across the landscape, in the form of a Christian festival called Rogationtide. This religious procession around parish boundaries, with priests blessing the crops, took whole communities into the fields, with personal devotional objects sometimes dropped in the process.
2. Ritual focus on a particular landscape feature, such as the re-use of prehistoric sacred sites by medieval people.
3. Intentional deposits.

Rob's talk was a fascinating look at how medieval people lived, what material objects they believed had spiritual agency; the power to protect themselves, their families and their fields, and how they modified these objects in ritual acts. In the landscape, medieval lived

religion included communal ritual processions along parish boundaries, the re-use of ancient sacred sites, and the intentional deposit of modified objects for apotropaic and iconoclastic purposes.

Report by Joan Burrow-Newton

[Read the full report on the website](#)

Berkshire Archaeological Society 2025 Day School

The BAS Day School took place at St Nicolas Church Hall, Newbury, on 11th October 2025. There were 50 attendees. After the Chair, Andrew Hutt, welcomed everyone, there were the following presentations:

Recent archaeological work in West Berkshire

Sarah Orr, Principal Archaeologist, West Berkshire Council

Sarah explained the work she and her team have been involved in over the past year.

Recent archaeological work in East Berkshire

Edwin Wood, Archaeology Officer, East Berkshire

Edwin gave a summary of sites in East Berkshire that have been excavated over the past year.

Mesolithic site at Kintbury, Kennet Valley

Paul Riccoboni, Environment Agency archaeologist, Juan Chacon, AOC Archaeology Group and Jessica Taylor, AOC Archaeology Group

This site was excavated as part of an Environment Agency river restoration project on the River Kennet.

Archaeological excavations at Wickham House

Keith Abbott, Berkshire Archaeological Society

Between April and June 2025, excavations were carried out in the grounds of Wickham House, north-west of Newbury. Part of the route of the Roman road of Ermin Street was known to traverse this site and earlier geophysical surveys by BAS revealed an intersection between two roads, potential settlements alongside the roads, and roadside ditches. A total of 8 trenches were dug, with trench 1 containing Roman pottery, evidence of iron working (slag and hammer scale) and a spindle whorl. Trench 2 initially revealed a cobbled surface of large flints, which could be the floor surface of a Medieval building on top of the Roman road. Beneath this surface Roman artefacts included coins, Samian ware pottery, a brooch, hair pin and glass. In one of the roadside ditches there was a green, glass melon bead, which are often found in association with military sites and a possible iron stylus would be evidence of literacy. Other artefacts included a thumb pot containing a second century coin. Trench 4 revealed a possible masonry wall of a Roman building alongside the road, in which was found a second century brooch, Roman glass, pottery, hob nails and buckles.

Post-excavation work is ongoing and involves specialists and many volunteers. A total of 3,591 pottery sherds were found and animal bone analysis to date has shown they are mainly from sheep or goat, but there

is also pig, cattle and horse bone. A total of 16 Roman coins, 27 fragments of Roman glass (including from green storage bottles and orange jugs) and 560 iron objects were excavated. The initial interpretation is of a Roman building alongside the road, where iron production took place, surrounded by ditches and fields, as well as a later Medieval yard and building. No evidence of pre-Roman occupation was found.

A total of 116 people took part in the excavations and post-excavation work (the latter is still ongoing), while 91 people attended the open days. A draft interim report will be available before the 2026 excavations.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) in Berkshire, 2024/25

Phil Smither, Finds Liaison Officer (FLO), Berkshire

Phil explained the history and role of the PAS and FLOs in the recording of archaeological objects found by the public. In the past year in Berkshire, there were finds from all periods from the Palaeolithic to the modern day, although FLOs are primarily interested in finds at least 300 years old.

Roman Rural Settlement at Cake Wood

Abby Christopher, UCL and Phil Smither, FLO, Berkshire

Cake Wood is situated close to Littlecote Roman Villa, near the confluence of the Rivers Kennet and Dun. The same metal detectorist has visited the site for approximately 30 years and it was their 2023 discoveries, comprising 969 coins and 100+ other objects, that prompted Phil Smither to visit the site.

A multi-period site at Hartshill Copse, Thatcham

Pierre Manisse, Thames Valley Archaeological Services (TVAS)

Hartshill Copse lies within an active gravel quarry and has been excavated by various archaeological consultancies since the 1980s.

Introduction to the Historic Ridgeway LiDAR Project

Rebecca Bennett, PTS Consultancy

Rebecca introduced us to the project team and partner organisations and to the Historic Ridgeway Project, which is a 3-year project that started in September 2023.

Report by Debbie Cousins.

[Read the full report on the website](#)

Sailing to Calanais: monuments and the sea in the west of Scotland and beyond

by Professor Richard Bradley 18th October 2025

Professor Richard Bradley described his very long journey to Calanais, which is situated on the west side of the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, and how it had raised questions about the difficulties that prehistoric people, travelling from elsewhere in the British Isles, would have had to get there. He told how the engineer, Alexander

Thom, on a sailing holiday, sought shelter from a gale in an inlet. When the storm had passed, Thom looked up to see the Calanais stones, outlined against the sky, on high land above the safe harbour. This, apparently, was what inspired Thom's studies in archaeoastronomy.

Richard talked about the similarities between several monuments along the west coast of Scotland in Orkney and in Ireland including:

- Standing Stones of Calanais
- Stone monuments at Kilmartin Glen
- Some of the many stone circles at Machrie Moor on the west coast of the Isle of Arran
- The three Bronze Age Clava Cairns near Inverness.
- Neolithic sites on Mainland Orkney
- Maeshowe Chambered Cairn
- Stones of Stenness
- Ring of Brodgar
- The Boyne Valley in Ireland including Newgrange and Knowth passage tombs
- Ballynahatty Neolithic henge, with the remains of an earlier tomb in the middle
- Balregan, a burial mound within a stone circle

Richard talked of the long-distance links between the various monuments, as seen in shared features, such as their emphasis on the solstices, and the combinations of local and non-local materials used in their building. Also, the non-local imagery, such as the rock art seen at Newgrange, Ireland and Kilmartin, Scotland, could suggest long-distance connections. We looked at a map of the British Isles, showing sea routes around the coasts, which may have been used by prehistoric people to travel to the monument sites.

Richard talked about the long, difficult journeys travelled by people who may have displayed their shared beliefs in the shared architecture of their monuments. These journeys may have been pilgrimages, or possibly even rites of passage.

Richard ended the talk by telling of another 'sacred' journey; that of the 2012 Olympic torch. As part of its relay journey through the UK, which included visiting Stonehenge, the torch, carried by Commonwealth gold medallist Kirsty Wade, travelled up the stormy west coast of Scotland to Calanais... and blew out!

Report by Joan Burrow-Newton

[Read the full report on the website](#)

Wickham House Excavation Project Update

The excavation at the site to the east of Wickham House started on 2nd April 2025 and ended on 26th June 2025. The project is now focused on post-excavation analysis. The excavation records of 179 contexts recorded, 56 plan drawings, 26 section drawings and 497 photographs and supporting registers have been

digitised, uploaded onto the BAS shared drive and made available to members wanting to participate in post-excavation analysis. Specialist analysis of glass, clay pipes, coins and animal bone have been completed, and specialist analysis of stone, iron objects, iron slag, CBM, worked flints and pottery are well underway. Analysis of the pottery assemblage is the most significant element of the current work with 3591 sherds in the process of being identified, with 75% now having completed 'Level 2' fabric identification. To date 73 BAS members have taken part in the post-excavation analysis, and there is plenty of work still to complete if you would like to get involved.



Figure 1: Members of The Marcham Society engaged in Level 2 sorting

During October and November further earth resistance geophysics surveys have been taking place at Wickham across two pastures close to St Swithun's Church. A total of 30 BAS members took part in this survey plus 13 students from the University of Reading. Data from this survey is still being processed, but initial results have already shed new light on the morphology of this fascinating Romano-British roadside settlement. The report is on track to be released in the New Year.



Figure 2: Tony, Eric and Philip collecting 0.5m resolution earth resistance geophysics data.

On the 18th November (Geoff, Dee, John, James, Paul and Keith) were invited to St Nicolas C of E Primary School in Newbury to spend the afternoon with the Year 5 students sharing discoveries made at Wickham. The children had been learning about the Romans and were keen to hear about the Roman archaeology in the area surrounding Newbury, handle Roman artefacts discovered, analyse geophysics images and learn

about the tools that archaeologists use to carry out excavations and surveys. The image below shows a selection of the thankyou cards created by the children in appreciation of the BAS presentations.



Figure 3: Thankyou cards created by the students of St Nicolas C of E Primary School.

The next stage in the post-excavation analysis is to refine the stratigraphic analyses of each of the 8 trenches to develop initial interpretations of the archaeology revealed into include within the interim report. If you would like to be involved in this post-excavation analysis exercise please send an email to keefandtrace@hotmail.com.

Keith Abbott

The BAS Study Group

The September meeting of the group started with a presentation by Keith Abbott on the excavations at Wickham House. He started by summarising the geophysics results and then showed how through careful placement and excavation of trenches, he was able to identify an early Roman phase, a Late Roman phase and a medieval phase of use and occupation of the site.

This was followed by an explanation by Andrew Hutt of how all the evidence collected during an excavation was to be stored in the Society's Google Shared file store and the Anchurus II database.

The October meeting started with a presentation by Keith Abbott on *West Berkshire Sites with High Archaeological Potential for Further Research*. He started his presentation "An overview of Wickham as part of a Romano-British Settlement landscape extending from Lambourn to Thatcham". He then identified a series of opportunities for fieldwork. They were:

- Hungerford Newtown
- Bagnor
- Bagnor Bridge
- Great Shefford
- Chamberhouse Farm
- Wasing
- Chaddleworth
- Peasemore

This was followed by a presentation by Andrew Hutt demonstrating how the Anchurus II release I system

could be used to help interpret an archaeological excavation.

The November meeting of the group was devoted to a presentation by Philip Rawstron on the geophysics survey carried out at Wickham in October 2025. This presentation was in two parts. The first part presented the results. The second part discussed the capabilities of the various instruments and techniques used during the survey.

Andrew Hutt

The BAS Finds Group

The September meeting started with a presentation by Andrew Hutt which summarised the state of the Blounts Court finds and then demonstrated how finds were registered in the Anchurus II database and could then be linked to the phases of use of the site.

This was followed by a presentation by Keith Abbott on the state of the Wickham finds, and how he was organising the analysis of coins, glass, animal bones, clay pipe, pottery, iron objects, ceramic building materials, iron slag, stones and worked flint.

The October meeting started with an *Update on Wickham finds analysis* by Keith Abbott. He presented details of the quantities of each of the material types listed above with details and plans for how they were being processed and some early results.

This was followed by Andrew Hutt presenting details of the Blounts Court finds.

The November meeting started with a presentation by Andrew Hutt on how to *Write a Pottery Report*. This started with details of how most pottery reports are written by pottery specialists to be read by pottery specialists and how the Society needed to write reports that would interest BAS members. This was followed with details of how to record pottery finds groups in the Anchurus II system and how the information recorded in a database could be presented in a pottery report.

Note: a pottery finds group is a collection of finds that share a common characteristic such as a fabric, form, or a place and period of production.

This was followed by a demonstration by Keith Abbott using Wickham pottery finds of how he was creating pottery find groups and how he planned to run workshops across Berkshire so that BAS members and partners could progress this work.

Andrew Hutt

Librarians wanted

In September, the Society's research library was moved from the BAS store to Keith Abbott's Garden room where Keith is expecting to make some library shelves to hold the Society's library.

- If you have any tall bookshelves you don't want, please let Keith or me know so we can make use of them
- You are invited to join the Society's library working group. This group is responsible for

maintaining catalogues recorded in Excel spreadsheets of both the Society's research library and the Society's library at the Berkshire Archive. If you are able to help with this please contact Keith or me

- In the New Year, we are expecting to hold Library meetings in Keith's Garden room once a month on the Wednesday mornings before the Society's Pub Lunch. They will be advertised so please come and join us

Andrew Hutt

Books for free

As a result of moving the BAS research library from the BAS store to Keith Abbott's Garden Room. Keith and I have been going through the books and other documents to find items which could not be used to support a desk top research project. These books and other items will be put on display at the BAS Saturday meetings and those attending the meeting will be invited to take them home with them.

Unwanted books and documents will be donated to Oxfam Books.

Please come along, review the books and if any interest you take them home.

Andrew Hutt

Blounts Court post-excavation

I have been making progress with post excavation work on Blounts Court. All the finds are registered and, as you may have seen at the BAS Finds group meeting on Tuesday 2nd December, I have started writing finds reports. So far, I have a draft report for Pottery.

This work has shown that I need help to get these reports completed. It has also shown that I need some illustrations to explain what we found (see below). These illustrations are a combination of line drawings of storage vessels, bowls and mugs etc plus images of the finds. This is not as difficult as it sounds because there are lots of drawings on the web. If you would like to help with this please send me an email.

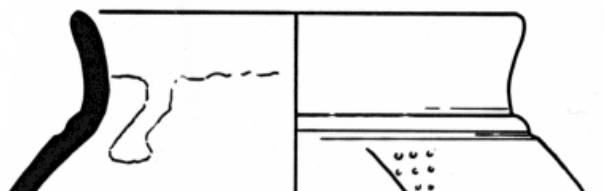


Figure 4: An example of an everted rim of a jar

Over the coming weeks, I am expecting to work on Clay pipes, Nails, Metalwork, Tiles, Bricks and Worked flint.

If you excavated at Blounts Court or just fancy working on a different set of finds, please volunteer to work on these reports. I am planning to work most mornings from 10:00 to 12:00 in my study. If you can spare an hour or two to help with this please let me know.

Andrew Hutt

Other Local Societies

See the links below for details of their activities:

[Berkshire Archaeology Research Group](#)

[Maidenhead Archaeological and Historical Society](#)

[Marlow Archaeology Group](#)

[South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group](#)

[Thames Valley Ancient Egypt Society](#)

The copy date for the next issue of this newsletter is 27th February 2026. Please send any articles to newsletter@berksarch.co.uk

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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