

ARCHAEOLOGY

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BERKSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Spring 2007

Vol 9 No 1

Solent Thames Archaeological Research Framework (STARF) Moves Up A Gear!!

We have reported on the STARF project in previous newsletters. Work is currently progressing to establish a better understanding of the archaeology of the Solent Thames Region. This region consists of Isle of Wight, Hampshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

Resource Assessments have been carried out on a county by county basis to draw together what we already know about the cultural heritage of the region. Documents are being produced for each of eight chronological periods. Specialists have been appointed to summarise the known archaeology for each of these periods.

The contribution for Berkshire is being coordinated by Duncan Coe, the specialists are:

Upper Paleolithic and Mesolithic: Rob Horsfield

Neolithic and Early Bronze Age: Steve Ford

Late Bronze Age and Iron Age: Steve Ford and Steve Preston

Roman: Jill Greenaway

Early Medieval: Steve Clark

Later Medieval: Grenville Astill

Post medieval and modern: Davis Hopkins

Environmental: Martin Bell

If you want to read their contributions you can find them on the Buckinghamshire County Council website (www.buckscc.gov.uk/archaeology/stf) or the Oxford Archaeology website (www.thehumanjourney.net).

The reports set out the current resource assessment of each county by period. The next important phase of the project is to check these reports and make sure that they have covered all of the key issues. This is where you can help.

Your views count and we would like as broad an opinion on the resource assessments as possible. You can download the reports and comment via the website or you can come along to the Berkshire County Seminar. This event will be held at Reading Museum on **Saturday 28th April 2007**. If you have a view on current, past or future research activities and objectives then please come along.

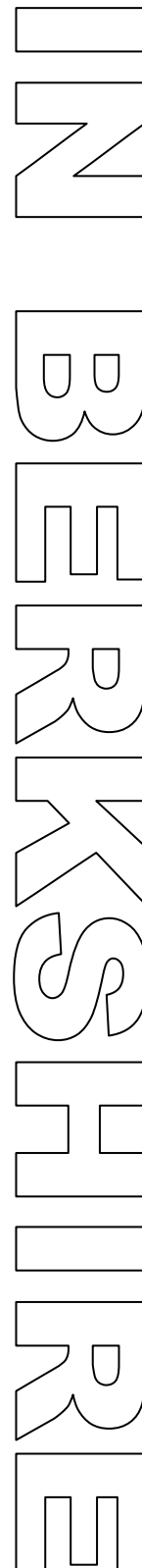
The Editor

With thanks to Andrew Hutt and Duncan Coe

THE SOCIETY BECOMES A REGISTERED CHARITY

In October, many of you voted at Special General Meeting to change to Society's constitution so that the Society could become a registered charity. In December, I received, first a phone call, and then a letter from the Charity Commission stating that the Berkshire Archaeological Society had become registered charity No: 1117197. Those of you who are interested can find the details of our registration on the Charity Commission website (www.charity-commission.gov.uk/registeredcharities/). I offer thanks to all the Society members who helped make this happen. The next step is for the Council to establish a programme realise the benefits that this brings to the Society.

Andrew Hutt
Chairman



MEETINGS

At our November meeting Jane Burrell of West Berkshire Museum gave an interesting talk on Ufton Court, a Grade 1 Listed house situated at Ufton Nervet, about 5 miles from Theale. It was originally built in the medieval period by Francis Lovell, a childhood friend of Richard III. As a medieval property it was grand, but it was engulfed by work done in the Tudor period. In 1567 it was purchased by Elizabeth Marvin, who had been wealthy in her own right before outliving two wealthy husbands. She added to it straightening the façade, adding a wing and a porch. In those days the more elaborate the porch the wealthier the family! Fires were moved from the middle of rooms to one of the walls. One of the new fireplaces was brought in from one of Elizabeth's late husband's family estates. Work also completed during the Tudor period included adding a library in front of the Great Hall and a long gallery to allow for recreation when outside was not suitable. In those days clothes were expensive and people tried not to ruin them. The plasterwork ceiling in the Great Hall is also Tudor as is the minstrels' gallery. In 1583 Elizabeth's nephew, Francis Perkins, inherited the property and continued work. The Perkins family were incredibly wealthy as can be seen from the panelling in the bedrooms. The carving would have been crafted manually by master craftsmen from the local area and is of very fine quality. They were also devoutly Roman Catholic and there are priest holes in the house. They were mainly used to hide money and accoutrements for religious services, and it is known that during a priest hunt a large amount of plate and silver coin was found and duly confiscated. There was also a priest hole in the dining room for emergencies as priests would tend to dine with the family but not stay. In 1599 the house was taken over by Francis Knollys. In the 18th century there were further extensions, including a Chapel, which were made to fit in with the rest of the house. In 1802 the property was purchased by the Benyons and at the end of the 19th century it passed to Mary Sharp. Despite all the changes made to the house many of the original medieval features still survive rather than having been disposed of or bricked up. One such unusual survivor is a medieval door complete with original lock!

The house is on high ground with a good view of the surrounding countryside. But most of the main rooms overlook the back garden so as not to see the tithe barn which is in the front. The current tithe barn is 18th century. There are also ice houses which are about 100 feet from the medieval fish pond, which no doubt served as a larder. The white rendering seen on the outside of the building is 19th century. Beneath this the house is red brick. The property is now used for residential courses for young children and is heavily booked during term time.

Mark Collard from Cotswold Archaeology came to our December meeting to reveal the outcomes of the excavations at Hartshill Quarry, Upper Bucklebury in 2001-3. The site is on a hill to the north-east of Thatcham. The soil is free draining gravel, with some areas of clay particularly in the valley. This is marginal arable land has, therefore, only been settled episodically as and when necessary. There is evidence of use during the late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman period. From the Iron Age there is a large round house in which there was a clear zoning of activities and outside this there is evidence of fence lines. From this stratum the radio

carbon dating from all samples averaged at about 400B.C. From the late Bronze Age period two round houses were found, one of them with a lean to and a stock enclosure. Initially this looked like a typical Bronze Age settlement. Loom weights and flax seeds were evidence for weaving. But these roundhouses lasted no longer than 50 years. One was deliberately burnt down, and then demolished and the post holes were filled with burnt pottery sherds. Sample buckets were taken offsite and filtered revealing 2 kinds of products; tiny solidified iron balls from the end of sparks; flakes of scales from where iron had been hit. Radio carbon dated these to 950.B.C. confirming the pottery finds. These data were then plotted across the site. As this material obviously does not travel far the roundhouses had produced interesting evidence. The interpretation is that roundhouse C was used as a dwelling and for food preparation and the lean to was used for blacksmithing whilst roundhouse D was used as a workshop for textile production and for bloomsmithing. This proved that iron working in Britain had begun at the same time as in northern Europe, and not 200 years later as previously thought, helping to confirm suspicions that trading links did exist at this time. It is now suspected that the supplies of Bronze had started to run out by this time, and that people progressed to working with iron which was to be found in river beds or as nodules in the London clay.

In January Hazel Williams from the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group (SOAG) talked to us about the excavations on the Roman Villa at Goring. There was also a Roman villa at Basildon on the other side of the Thames. Both were in the vicinity of the Roman road from Silchester to Dorchester (Oxon) which would have forded the Thames at this point. Nearby Bronze Age Barrows which have now been flattened indicate this area had been settled before. Indeed the farmstead was set out as early as the 2nd century and a corn drier dating from this period has also been found. The site includes track ways and ditches on a north-north-east axis and an enclosure ditch only 3 metres from the back of the building. This may be indicative of a boundary change. The earliest Roman find to date is a 1st to 2nd century A.D. bronze dolphin type bow brooch. It is suspected that this was an heirloom for those living in the villa. All other finds date from the 3rd and 4th century A.D. supporting the theory that the villa was constructed as part of the 3rd century move to the countryside. The villa was not sophisticated and not all constructed in one phase. The outer walls are of flint and the inner walls and many of the floors are chalk. Early excavation uncovered evidence of hearths which were later covered over. Later excavation revealed an under floor heated suite. In fact a stoke room and two hypocausts, one of which had been deliberately filled. There is also a sunken tank which seems to post date the filling of the hypocaust, but what its use was is cause for conjecture. Whilst a tessellated pavement and tesserae have been found no mosaic tessellated floor has yet been discovered. Other finds include decorated plaster, nails, studs, coins, samien ware, black burnished ware and grog tempered ware. SOAG are grateful to the landowner who allows them to excavate each summer and who is generously giving the finds to Oxford Museum. Further information on the villa and the excavation can be found at www.soagarch.org.uk.

SPRING TOUR

The Annual Spring Tour will take place from Friday 27th to Monday 30th April. This year we are touring the south-west based from Torquay. Anyone interested in this year's tour please contact the Tour Organiser, Barrie Randall, on 0118 983 2607.

BAS Library at the Department of Continuing Education

In January, I went to the Department of Continuing Education at London Road to visit our library only to find that the floor where it is held was lock and barred. Evidently, the University of Reading's Health and Safety Inspectors had visited the floor and decided that the weight of books constituted a health hazard and banned all further access. Staff at the Department of Continuing Education have confirmed that there is no access to either our library or their own and that they are currently seeking a way forward.

The impact of this decision is that, in the next few weeks, the Society could either be asked to move its books within the Department or to remove its library from the Department altogether. If we have to leave the Department then my recommended short term response is to move the books and journals to a commercial store for a period of about 6 months while we continue to look for a new home for the library.

Further to this, work has started to identify those books that record and interpret: Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman, Early Medieval, Medieval and Post Medieval archaeology in and around Berkshire.

If you would be prepared to either help move the books and journals or would like to give house room to the books relating to any of the time periods listed above, then I would be delighted to hear from you.

Andrew Hutt

WHAT IS THE CBA?

The CBA (Council for British Archaeology) is the umbrella group for archaeology in Britain. Its members include individuals; amateurs, academics and professionals, local societies and other specialist interest groups. Its most visible product is the magazine *British Archaeology*, which can be bought in newsagents and is sent free to members. It provides valuable services to Societies like ours by providing specialist insurance, which covers both our fieldwork, meetings and the Spring Tour. The latest Society copy of *British Archaeology* is usually available for browsing at our meetings. It also has an excellent website www.britarch.ac.uk that provides a range of services, links and information on British archaeology that is too comprehensive to describe here. If you are on the internet and have yet to visit it, look at it as soon as possible!

CBA Wessex is our own local group of the CBA. It covers Wiltshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, Dorset and two offshore areas, the Isle of Wight and the Channel islands. It has its own website, currently hosted at: <http://beehive.thisisdorset.co.uk/cbawessex> but soon to be

part of the main CBA website. This gives details of membership, activities and its newsletter. Recent activities have included a major weekend tour to Stonehenge and Avebury, which fall within the region, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of them becoming World Heritage sites. More recently it has organised more 'hands-on' events, so far there have been two specialist days, one on 'Historic Standing Buildings' and another on 'Understanding Environmental Archaeology', days organised to help members expand their archaeological knowledge into fields with which they may be unfamiliar.

Individual Membership of the CBA (including membership of CBA Wessex) is only £29.00 a year and for that you get the magazine 'British Archaeology' and the Newsletters of the local group. At the same time you are supporting the work of the organisation that is key archaeology in Britain. It represents archaeology to government and other groups that make the decisions that protect or destroy our archaeological heritage.

Catherine Petts

FIT FOR THE FUTURE: THE NEWBURY HISTORIC CHARACTER STUDY

The West Berkshire Archaeology team have recently published a report on the Historic character study undertaken for Newbury. This report provides a brief history of the town, summarises the main built features and provides an overview of how historic processes have resulted in the form of the town we know today.

The report also included a breakdown of the town into character areas, a series of research questions and a summary of the main areas of archaeological potential.

The report is available for downloading from the West Berkshire website (www.westberks.gov.uk), or if you would like a printed copy please contact the archaeology service at Avonbank House, West Street, Newbury RG14 1BZ.

Duncan Coe
Archaeology Officer
West Berkshire Council

THE ARCHAEOLOGY WORKING GROUP

The Winter 2006 newsletter contained a separate page to see if members were interested in starting an Archaeology Working Group. So far eight members of the Society have expressed an interest in working together to interpret Berkshire's Archaeology. Their votes show that in order of interest they would like to work on: 1) Roman Berkshire, 2) Iron Age Berkshire and 3) Early Medieval Berkshire. I have started collecting information from the people who want to join the working group with the objective of starting work in the autumn and will let you have more information nearer the time. Please contact me if you want to join this effort.

Andrew Hutt

Academic Study & Travel

Are offering the following:

Study Tour of Roman and Medieval Welsh Marches from 25th to 29th April 2007.

Study Tour of Normandy from 1st to 5th September 2007.

The Archaeology of the Oxfordshire Thames Valley (Day School) on Saturday 8th September 2007.

Further details are available from the AST web site:

www.academic-study.com or from AST on 01865 864933.

ADULT EDUCATION – PART-TIME COURSES SUMMER TERM, 2007

READING UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

Morning Courses

Humps and bumps: interpreting archaeological landscapes.

An introduction to European prehistory.

Afternoon Courses

A taste of Latin.

Colombia to Chile: ancient South American societies.

The human story: an introduction to Biological Anthropology.

Evening Courses

Classical Art.

Looking at Egyptian artefacts.

Burial archaeology: reconstructing life in the past.

Introduction to Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Day Schools

Interpreting Museums.

Glastonbury and the Somerset Levels.

The Silchester Town Life Project.

King Arthur: myth or history?

A who's who of Fifth Dynasty ancient Egypt.

Chepstow and Tintern Abbey: a visit.

Practical Archaeology

Bronze Age Berkshire: a field-based project.

Details from: The School of Continuing Education, University of Reading, London Road, Reading, RG1 5AQ. Tel: 0118 378 8347. E-mail: continuing-education@reading.ac.uk

Web site: www.reading.ac.uk/conted

OXFORD UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

Morning Courses

Ancient and Modern: Continuity and the Landscape.

Cleopatra.

Small Towns of Oxfordshire.

Evening Courses

Hellenistic Art.

Day and Weekend Schools

Archaeology Survey Week.

Building Survey Week.

Celtic Art.

Historic Environment Project Management.

Planning and the Historic Environment: The Heritage Protection White Paper.

Online

Exploring Roman Britain (Online).

Origins of Human Behaviour (Online).

Details from: OUDCE, 1, Wellington Square,

Oxford, OX1 2JA. Tel: 01865 270360; Fax: 01865 270309 email: enquiries@conted.ox.ac.uk

Web site: www.conted.ox.ac.uk

BERKSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Patron: H.M. THE QUEEN

President: Professor

Michael Fulford FBA FSA

The Society was founded in 1871 and for over 100 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 new found or long standing, the Society offers activities from regular lectures and outings to opportunities for fieldwork and excavation. All members receive a regular newsletter, full of news about events in Berkshire. The Berkshire Archaeological Journal is also free to members.

Officers of the Society

Chairman: Andrew Hutt

0118 973 2882

andrew_hutt@talktalk.net

Secretary: Catherine Petts

Treasurer: Bob Bywater-Lees

Programme Organiser:
vacant

Day School Organiser:
Trevor Coombs

Excursion Organiser:
Barry Randall

Newsletter Editor:
Julie Worsfold

Librarian: Andrew Hutt

For more information about the Society and membership details contact the Secretary: Catherine Petts on 01235 831463.

www.berksarch.co.uk

email info@berksarch.co.uk