

ARCHAEOLOGY

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BERKSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Summer 2007

Vol. 9 No. 2

Solent Thames Archaeological Research Framework – review of archaeology in Berkshire

On Saturday 28th April the Berkshire County seminar to discuss this phase of the project was held at Reading Museum. Although turnout was not as high as might have been hoped, the day was a real success.

The audience comprised a genuine mixture from the professional, voluntary, academic, contracting, museum and local authority sectors. The presentations were to a high standard and the discussions were lively and useful. However the papers on the Neolithic, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age were disappointing; they failed to take account of recent work by Professor Richard Bradley on the Neolithic, and by Dr David Yates on Bronze Age Berkshire and the recent PPG16 sponsored excavations of Iron Age sites. During the day, a number of cross period themes emerged from the presentations and discussion. Jill Hind summarised these as being 1) To understand settlement deposition in the landscape over time; 2) To understand how control of Berkshire changed over time; 3) To understand the longevity of routes through the landscape; and 4) To understand the development of industry over time. Feedback from this session will go to the period authors for consideration in the next phase of the project.

The table below lists the archaeological periods being used by the framework and the individuals who have summarised Berkshire's archaeology. The papers they have produced are available on the web on sites operated by Buckinghamshire County Council and Oxford Archaeology. The simplest way of finding them is to type "Solent Thames" into Google.

Period	Lead author	Berkshire
County coordinator		Duncan Coe
Post medieval	Nick Doggett	David Hopkins
Medieval	Roberta Gilchrist	Grenville Astill
Early Medieval	Sally Crawford	Steve Clark
Roman	Mike Fulford	Jill Greenway
Later Bronze Age and Iron Age	George Lambrick	Steve Ford, Steve Preston
Neolithic to Early Bronze Age	Richard Bradley	Steve Ford
Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic		Cathy Chisham
Lower and Middle Palaeolithic	Francis Wenban-Smith	Rob Horsfield

If you have any comments on the county papers please send them by email to Duncan Coe at dcoe@westberks.gov.uk or by post to Duncan Coe, Archaeological Officer, West Berkshire Council, Avonbank House, West Street, Newbury RG14 1BZ.

There are similar review days for the archaeology of Oxfordshire on 2nd June, and for Hampshire and the Isle of White. Once these have been completed, the next step is for the lead authors (see table) to consolidate a Solent Thames understanding of each of the research periods and to hold a series of meetings to discuss them in the autumn.

The Editor

With thanks to Andrew Hutt and Duncan Coe

A.G.M.

The Annual General Meeting of the Society takes place on Saturday, 15th September, 2007 at the RISC premises, 35-39 London Street, Reading. Come along at 14:00 for refreshments; proceedings will start at 14:30.

Please find enclosed the Agenda for the meeting and a form for making nominations for Council. Nominations with proposers and seconders, must be received by the Secretary, Catherine Petts, 71 The Causeway, Steventon, Abingdon, Oxon, OX13 6SQ, at least 14 days before the AGM.

BERKSHIRE

DAY SCHOOL 2006

This year's annual Day School took place at Ranelagh School, Bracknell. This was the first day school on the east side of the county and like last year, when we visited the west side of the county, the attendance was good.

Once again Duncan Coe started the proceedings. Firstly he explained the background to the Solent Thames Archaeological Research Frameworks Project. He then gave a round up of work in West Berkshire during 2006. At Raghill Quarry, Aldermaston they found an Iron Age field system, with an enclosure with a ditch and 2 round houses, post holes, pits, etc. At Fairfields, Hungerford burgage plot boundaries laid out during the medieval period but not used until later were revealed. This has given an interesting clue to the development of the town. At Sulhamstead an early timber lock was uncovered, illustrating the importance of the canal in its early phase in navigation between Reading and Newbury. Extension work on Kintbury Sewage Works uncovered Mesolithic deposits and a late Iron Age site with a couple of kilns, a boundary feature and 2 large post holes, thought to have ceremonial significance. At Sexton's Cottage in Speen sherds of middle Saxon pottery were discovered. A small evaluation at The Croft, Kintbury, uncovered some medieval activity. In the area of monument management; a gate has been installed at Ufton Nervet to allow easier access to the moat and fishponds; Lambourn Seven Barrows have become an SSSI and also a scheduled ancient monument; Combe Gibbet Long Barrow has had several issues including, sadly, vandalism.

Next, Bob Hill of Wessex Archaeology addressed the approach to archaeological damage mitigation in development, with respect to White Place Farm, Cookham. This is a scattered farm development including a 16th century dovecote, a mid 17th century barn, and an Arts and Crafts gatehouse and dairy. Although still a working farm, the part not viable for farming was to be converted to housing. Bob took us through the process from a visual assessment of the age and condition of the buildings and the landscape features through to more detailed phases, taking photos and measurements and doing a condition survey to inform the design process. At this stage some below ground investigation was conducted in areas likely to be impacted. Four evaluation trenches were dug revealing archaeological activity from the Palaeolithic, the Bronze Age, the Romano-British period and a disarticulated interment. This information is now with the architects. A new road will be constructed on the site and all the archaeology beneath it will be sealed in. Also the barn floor will be surcharged to minimise damage. The developer is happy as this process and its outcomes have saved arguing potential problems through the planning process. And the archaeologists are happy as the archaeology is being kept where it should be, below ground!!

After coffee Peter Holmes, Sandhurst Historical Society, and Victoria Nisbett, Heritage Officer, Bracknell Forest Borough Council, spoke about the school and community project at Ambarrow Court. Ambarrow Hill, which has given its name to the area, was part of the Bearwood estate sold in 1880 to Colonel George Shepard Harvey who built a large Victorian mansion on the site. As the Harveys had no heirs the place was split up and sold in 1932. At the beginning of the Second World War the main buildings were requisitioned by the MoD for use as a research establishment. In 1969 the MoD closed this facility and attempted to sell it. In the mid 1970s the buildings were flattened and at this point Bracknell Forest Borough purchased it as a leisure area. From Monday 9th to Thursday 12th July this year it will be used to raise awareness and enthusiasm for archaeology. During this time pupils from 4 local schools will attend archaeological activity sessions there.

There will also be a public exhibition at the site on Saturday 14th July.

Then Dick Greenaway spoke to us about the project to determine the currently unknown archaeology in the woodlands of the North Wessex Downs AONB. As a full survey would take too long the aim is to audit every wood. Archaeology tends to survive well in woodland because it is not ploughed, usually private and difficult to explore. Woodland archaeology is the study of features which records; the previous landscape covered by a wood; the use made of a wood by people. It involves documentary research, exploring the wood, mapping and recording. There is neither excavation nor metal detecting. So far the project has been through the conception, design and launch phases. A handbook for volunteers has been produced and 60 auditors have been trained.

Duncan Coe gave a talk on Characterising Early Landscapes through the Historic Landscape Characterisation Project (HLC). Prior to this archaeology has very much been point data, not a view of the whole. So on maps there are concentrations and gaps in the activity. The aim behind the HLC is to record archaeology within the geographical dataset so that we understand the whole and our impact on it. Different areas of the country are at different stages in this project, but patterns are emerging and discussions have commenced with a view to developing common terminologies. Although still not complete this project is starting to have currency in planning matters and in agricultural and environmental schemes.

After lunch our president, Mike Fulford summarized the findings of last summer's extended re-excavation by Reading University of Insula IX at Silchester. Excavation continued on the strata known to date from 50 A.D. to 150 A.D. Interesting finds included; a complete (although broken) tile, the first writing tablet believed to be made of local fir or birch (now being conserved by English Heritage), a human jaw with the teeth in the wrong place believed to have come from a woman in her late teens or early twenties.

Steve Clark of the Berkshire Archaeological Research Group spoke about the Peasemore Landscape Archaeology Project in partnership with the Parish Council and West Berkshire Heritage Service. The aim of this project is to determine what the Peasemore enclosure is, when it originated and when the village, which is 6 miles north of Newbury, first took shape. Documentation, field walking, an earthworks survey, a hedgerows survey, geophysics and test pits have been used as research methods. In the process Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age flints and Iron Age, Roman and Medieval pottery have been found. The SMR records it as an Iron Age cattle enclosure; Steve suggested that the evidence points to it being a Saxon arable oval.

After tea Elias Kupfermann spoke about the investigation and restoration of a Victorian landscape at Herschel Park, Slough. In medieval times there were fields, a church and a manor house on this site then known as Upton Court. In 1840 it was bought by the architect Benjamin Bund who developed the park. In 2000 when the lakes disappeared the Heritage Lottery Fund got involved and the restoration of the Victorian park began. The park and its earthworks were surveyed, a pollen analysis was used to work out the Victorian planting scheme

DAY SCHOOL 2006 Contd.

and old photographs were used to reconstruct features such as bridges, lodges, etc.

The final presentation about War and Siege in Reading was given by Foundations Archaeology. In 2001 they excavated in the vicinity of Southampton and Silver Streets which are outside the medieval core of the town besides prehistoric and Roman finds, they discovered the remains of defensive ditches.

These are thought to date from the Civil War, as Reading was briefly fortified in 1642-3. The siege lasted 2 weeks before Reading was overthrown. Although there was a lack of dating evidence it could be seen that the defences had been flattened before the Victorian extension of the town. Remains of the Civil War defences have also been found in East and Friar Streets. There is some discrepancy between Burl's map of these and the Ordnance Survey, but this is to be expected.

The Editor

Parish Planning and the Historic Environment

West Berkshire Council archaeology service is continually striving to ensure that the history and the historic environment are taken into account when local communities are preparing Parish Plans or Village Design Statements. We have worked with a number of parishes, providing information from the Historic Environment Record or the Historic Landscape Character mapping and giving advice and guidance on projects that these groups might undertake.

Of course we are aware that this process must be bottom up if it is to be genuinely community driven. We therefore try hard not to tell communities what they should be doing or how they should be doing it. This means that often we miss out on the chance to influence plans as they are developed and all too often we are sent village plans that make no mention of the historical context of the community, or the surviving historic fabric within the landscape and settlements that the community inhabits.

If you live in a parish or community that is working on developing plans of this type, or even reviewing existing parish plans, why not get involved and get the historic environment included. The West Berkshire archaeology team can provide information, advice and support, but it is the voluntary sector within the community that can ensure that the historic context of these places is considered as part of the parish planning process.

Duncan Coe, Archaeology Officer, West Berkshire Council

Berkshire Archaeology Research Library

At present the Berkshire Archaeological Society has a library of books and journals in the School of Continuing Education at Reading University. Unfortunately the University has condemned the room housing the library as unsafe and has asked the Society to remove it. The Society is taking this opportunity to streamline the library and thereby create the Berkshire Archaeology Research Library.

This library will be stored in boxes, like the one shown below, which will be lent to those interested in archaeology in and around Berkshire. It is planned to have boxes with archaeological books on Prehistory, Roman, Early Medieval, Medieval, Post-medieval, and Archaeological field methods and finds processing, and boxes with journals from Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Middlesex and London, Surrey, Hampshire and Wiltshire.

The boxes (see below) are 310mm high, 390 mm wide and 480 mm long made of rigid transparent plastic, and are completely waterproof. They will hold about 30 books.

If you would be like to store a box of books or journals in exchange for using them while they are with you, please contact me.

Andrew Hutt



Sale of Archaeological Books and Journals

There will be a sale of archaeological books and journals on Saturday 23rd June 2007 between 14:00 and 16:00 in Conference Room 1, RISC, 35-39 London Street, Reading RG1 4PS. The objective of the sale is to find good homes for books and journals currently owned by the Berkshire Archaeological Society and not needed for the Berkshire Archaeology Research Library.

Please come along and support this effort.

Andrew Hutt

Membership

Membership of the Society runs from 1st April 2007 to 31st March 2008. Please find enclosed a form to renew your membership. If you pay by standing order you may need to notify your bank of 1st April payment date. If you have email, then you can elect to have the Society email you both notices and newsletters. This will ensure that you keep up to date with the work of the Society and save the Society money.

Andrew Hutt

Silchester

This year's excavation at Silchester runs from Monday 2nd July to Sunday 12th August. Visitors are welcome to visit the excavation during this time daily between 10 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. **except** Fridays.

This year's open days which offer expert tours, talks and demonstrations, and a range of children's activities, all free of charge, are Saturday 21st July and Saturday 4th August.

Anyone wishing to work on the excavation at Silchester should already be planning to apply for the 2008 season as places book very quickly.

Further information on the excavation at Silchester is available at: www.silchester.reading.ac.uk

SUMMER FIELDWORK

LOCAL SOCIETIES

Beedon Archaeological Group

Contact: Vic Pocock; Tel: 01635 247617; email: catherine@petts.co.uk *This is a downland site north of /Newbury which has produced evidence for periods from the Bronze Age to Roman. Excavation takes place over the summer months.*

Berkshire Archaeological Research Group

Contact: Steve Clark Tel: 0118 971 2264; email: mail@barg-online.org web site: www.barg-online.org

This group has a number of field projects. These include digging test pits in Peasemore, West Berkshire, and geophysics surveys of a number of sites using both a magnetometer and a resistivity meter.

Gordon Lodge Archaeological Field School

Contact: Jonathan Thomas, Tel: 020 8740 8335, email: admin@countyarch.com
web site: www.countyarch.com *Situated between Milton Keynes and Northampton, this summer field school is a multi-period site. Training is provided at all levels from total beginner to more experienced. Cost: £135 (discounts available), excludes accommodation.*

North East Hants Historical & Archaeological Society

Contact: Dr Whaley; Tel: 01252 548115; email: nehas@hantsweb.org.uk
web site: www.hantsweb.org.uk/nehas *This Site is locating, surveying and excavating the Roman road from Winchester to Guildford. Volunteers welcome and a Certificate of Attendance will be issued.*

South Oxon Archaeological Group (SOAG)

Contact: Hazel Williams, Tel: 0118 947 7397; email: villa@soagarch.org.uk web site: www.soagarch.org.uk

This group is excavating a Roman villa near Goring. They excavate on Sundays, April/November. Cost £10.00 membership fee.

Young Archaeologists (9 -16 years old)

Contact: Phil Stevens, Bagshot Archaeology Centre,
Tel: 01276 506182,
email: philstevens@ntlworld.com web site: www.yaccseb.com
A training excavation at Bagshot, Surrey. Includes four days digging and a visit to Rochester town and castle. Cost: £50.

CONTRACTORS

A number of commercial contractors regularly work in Berkshire (old and new) and surrounding areas. While many of their excavations cannot use volunteer labour, they do sometimes have volunteer opportunities.

Cotswold Archaeology

email: info@cotswoldarch.org.uk web site: www.cotswoldarch.org.uk

Oxford Archaeology

email: info@oxfordarch.co.uk web site: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

Thames Valley Archaeological Services (TVAS)

email: tvass@tvass.co.uk web site: www.tvass.co.uk

Wessex Archaeology

email: info@wessexarch.co.uk web site: www.wessexarch.co.uk

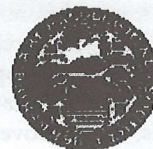
Practical Archaeology Training Course at Down Farm, Sixpenny Handley. The Down Farm landscape includes parts of the Dorset Cursus and Ackling Dyke, Bronze Age barrows and Roman and Iron Age buildings.

Wessex Archaeology has an extensive outreach programme so it is worth consulting their web site to see what else is available.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

For many years the magazine *Current Archaeology* has published an annual handbook with much information on archaeology. This year it has brought all the fieldwork opportunities it could locate together on a website snappily titled: www.ilovethepast.com. If you would like to pay to go on a training excavation or want to combine a holiday and excavation elsewhere in this country or France, this is the place to look.

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