BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

N E W S L E T T E R Number 100 November 1987

CONTENTS

CALENDAR

Sat 14 Nov — The Brooks Excavation HFC Conference, King Alfred's College, Winchester ≠

" " — THE BONHAM CARTERS Open afternoon, Great Hall, Winchester (see page 10)

Wed 18 Nov — Basing House by David Allen, Tadley & District Society (St Paul's Church Hall, Tadley, 8 pm)

Thurs 19 Nov — Gilbert White & Selborne by Andrew Duckworth, Friends of the Willis Museum (Museum, 7.30; see page 2)

Sat 28 Nov — Maps & the Landscape HFC Landscape Section Day Conference, King Alfred's College, Winchester

Sat 5 Dec — OGS Crawford Memorial Lecture by Anthony Pasmore, Tudor Merchants' Hall, Southampton, 4 pm

* Thurs 10 Dec — NONSUCH PALACE by Martin Morris and CHEESE & WINE SOCIAL

* Thurs 14 Jan — TIMBER FRAMED BUILDINGS IN BASINGSTOKE Bill Fergie

* Society activity, Chute House, 7.30 pm

≠ If you can't get to this, you can catch up at our February lecture

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Items for NEWSLETTER to Barbara Applin, 138 Old Kempshott Lane, Basingstoke (Basingstoke 465439)

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please check that you have paid your subscription for 1987-8 (due on 1st May) as further Newsletters will only be sent to paid-up members. Subscriptions remain £8 (family), £6 (single), £3 (OAP/student) and should be paid at a meeting or sent to the Treasurer, Mrs Sarah Duckworth, 177 Pack Lane, Kempshott, Basingstoke.

CHEESE & WINE SOCIAL and NONSUCH PALACE

At our December meeting our own member, Martin Morris, will give a short talk on NONSUCH PALACE. This will be followed by a Cheese & Wine Social - we are not planning a full-scale party, but if anyone would like to bring some titbits to supplement the food and drink provided, they will be very welcome.

ANDREW DUCKWORTH ON GILBERT WHITE

This is another opportunity to hear one of our own members, when Andrew Duckworth gives his lecture on GILBERT WHITE AND SELBORNE to the Friends of the Willis Museum, on Thursday 19 November at 7.30 pm (visitors welcome). Those who know of Andrew's long and erudite interest in Gilbert White will agree this is an occasion not to be missed.

POT WASHING & FIELD WALKING

Peter Heath is trying to make arrangements for more field walking in the near future. He wants to be able to contact interested members quickly when he has details, so please let him know now if you would like to take part.We hope that any members who haven't done any field walking before will have a go - no previous experience needed, and it gives you quite a new perspective on even the most ordinary-looking field.

Until we have some material from field walking, we have no more pottery etc to be processed, so the practical Wednesday evenings at Kempshott Village Hall will be discontinued for the time being.

However, we do have a small Society library there, and the room is booked for us for Wednesday evenings, so if there are other projects you would like to organise there, do let Peter Heath know (Basingstoke 27713) or Mary Oliver (24263).

EXPERIMENTAL ROMAN POT FIRING

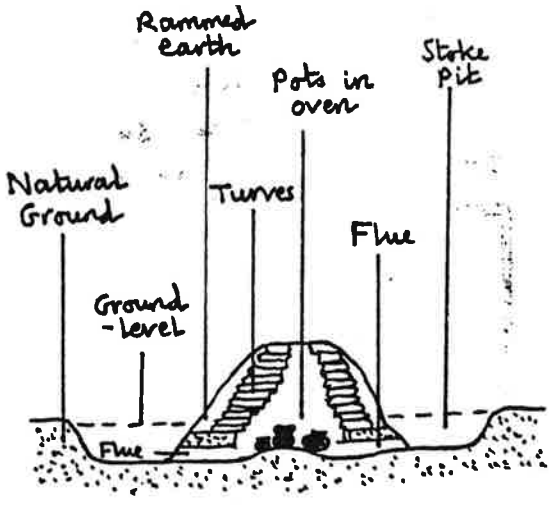
Long-standing members of the Society will be familiar with the work of Malcolm Lyne on the Roman pottery industry in the Alice Holt Forest near Farnham (published in Current Archaeology no 54 for January 1976). Field work and excavation have been amplified by scientifically controlled experimental reconstruction. The particular kiln type being studied in the recent experiment was a 2nd/3rd century type of double flue updraught. Although the surviving evidence gives little indication as to the superstructure of this kind of kiln, the lack of curved kiln furniture led Malcolm to believe that it was not a re-usable clay dome, but something less permanent. Previous experiments had used a brushwood and turf domed cover; this time he decided to try continuing up the cylinder shape and capping it with pot sherds and turves.

As in previous experiments, the pots to be fired were carefully made, copying Roman forms and in this case including a large storage jar - one of the most recognisable products of the industry and a difficult pot to fire under any circumstances.

The firing took place on a weekend of exceptionally bad weather (pre-hurricane, that is!) and the high temperatures required were reached with difficulty as the kiln closed down to exclude oxygen and so produce the required grey reduced colour. In the small hours of the morning the capping burnt through, the air got in and the reduced pots re-oxydised, giving them an unusual and sadly unauthentic brown colour, and some of the pots broke. However, the large storage jar was successfully fired. The whole point about such firings is to discover whether various alternatives are possible, and a great deal was learnt from this one.

A visit to the unloading made a most pleasant Saturday afternoon out, and we hope Malcolm Lyne will let us know if he is to repeat the experiment next year.

MARY OLIVER



Cross-section of kiln

Illustration by Glynis Wilsdon

It was at the unloading of the experimental kiln that Malcolm Lyne handed me the following account of a particularly interesting Congress. Arrangements to send a member of our Society to the Congress had fallen through, so we asked Malcolm to report on it for our Newsletter.

Editor

THE CONGRESS OF INDEPENDENT ARCHAEOLOGISTS

This Congress held at Wolfson College, Cambridge on the weekend of 19th/20th September was a great success. More than 90 delegates attended and the atmosphere was very positive, being described by Andrew Selkirk the organiser* as reminiscent of those in the early 70s which brought about the setting up of RESCUE. There were many speakers, including old favourites such as Tony Rook who gave a talk on the latest developments at Welwyn, and newcomers such as Mrs Rennie who gave a fascinating account of her work on prehistoric hut platform groups over a vast area of western Scotland stretching north from the Mull of Kintyre to the latitude of Skye - an area scarcely touched, archaeologically-speaking.

The whole of Great Britain was well represented, with the curious exception of SW England. I was the only representative from Hampshire and there was no-one from Dorset, Wilts, Somerset, Avon, Devon or Cornwall. Is this indicative of the present state of amateur archaeology in those counties?

Subjects discussed ranged from whether amateurs should dig or not, recent work by amateurs and the use of computers. It was a very crowded schedule with no shortage of speakers.

At the end of the sessions a resolution was voted on to the effect that a liaison committee should be set up under the auspices of the Council for British Archaeology (conveniently represented by Henry Cleere disguised as an amateur archaeologist) to find out how best independent archaeologists could help in archaeology. This committee was to report back to the next Congress in two years' time on its findings.

MALCOLM LYNE

*editor of Current Archaeology

A HISTORY DAY AT ANDOVER

On Saturday 10th of October a number of Society members attended the annual meeting of the Hampshire Field Club (Local History Section). This was hosted by the Andover History Society in the very comfortably appointed Council Chamber at the Guildhall.

In the morning we were treated to a talk which set Andover's place in history and another about the 1830 "Swing" riots in Hampshire, during which there were serious outbreaks of violence in the Andover area. There was also a fascinating talk describing

the negotiations involved in the leasing of Nether Wallop Rectory from 1660 to 1860. This was illustrated by transcripts from the many surviving documents from both parties, which showed a wide divergence of views.

After lunch we were given a well informed guided tour of Andover, where they have managed to retain more of the older buildings than we have in Basingstoke. The day ended with a talk concerning the Weyhill Fair which certainly justified its title "The Greatest Fair in the Kingdom". Next October a similar meeting will be held in Petersfield and it should be well worth attending.

PAUL FENWICK

A NEW GUIDE TO SILCHESTER

Some members have already seen (and bought) copies of the new booklet CALLEVA ATREBATUM - A GUIDE TO THE ROMAN TOWN AT SILCHESTER. For anyone who has not yet seen it, Ralph Atton will bring more copies to future meetings.

It is written by Michael Fulford, of the University of Reading, who has many times shown us his excavations at Silchester. Copies can be obtained from Maurice Bound, Silchester Museum Treasurer, 17 Dukes Rise, Silchester, Reading, Berks (SIL 700630), price £1.50 plus postage - or from Ralph at our meetings.

VISIT TO MOTTISFONT

Anne Hawker gives us her account of a WI summer outing to Mottisfont, with particular reference to a historical figure from our area.

Tickets for the house are timed, and I had time to look at the roses before going in. The garden is along a wide gravel path up a slope from the house, which is quite low, near the river. I did not see the spring which gives the house its name, but the garden, walled with 10 ft high brick walls and crammed with roses, was worth spending hours in. The roses are a sort of museum collection, so they are mainly old types, although one called Constance Spry must be fairly modern. I must confess to a little snort of laughter to find that Constance Spry - a vigorous deep pink climber - is practically scentless, about the only rose they have that is.

The beds hold other plants: huge columbines, great humps of pinks, carnations, lavender, lilies, all the nicest things, and bordered with box. The sudden heat after such a lot of rain seemed to have intensified all the scents. You can walk anywhere, nobody tells you to keep off the grass.

Some people only wanted to see the garden, but I had an interest

in the house. Lord Sandys of the Vyne got it, in the teeth of a merchant from Southampton, but he had to give up the manors of Chelsea and Paddington to Henry VIII for it.

Parties to be taken round the house gather outside the door of the "cellarium", a door under the terrace of the house. The terrace has been made apparently by building above the level of the ancient cloister, and the south front of the house was altered but not spoilt in the early 1740s.

Lord Sandys had had the unusual idea, when he obtained the Priory, of making his home actually out of the Priory church instead of adapting the Prior's residence. The tower of the church was cut down and the nave divided into two floors. The cloister seems to have been left as a courtyard by Lord Sandys and everything else adapted for the use of a great house. An arch of the chapter house is all that is visible on the right as you go in, and some pillar foundations erupting from the turf of the lawn.

Parties go in by a low door, to pitch darkness, although there is a little light eventually from one window. The "cellarium" has heavy round pillars and a vaulted roof, with a sort of flint cobble for floor, very hard on the feet. We were told that they have parties and barbecues there, but I should fancy horrible hairy hands reaching out of the darkness for my sausage on a stick - not at all convivial.

Once out of the gloom there is an ordinary hall and passage, the walls are obviously very thick (the walls between cloister and church). A door to the left leads to another wide passage, with no windows, and up a few steps can be seen a smallish pannelled room with a Tudor fireplace. This is one of the rooms put into the church by Lord Sandys. Out of there and up a narrow stair into a gallery where we were warned not to touch anything, however tempting to try whether it was an illusion, as it was mostly trompe l'oeil, and at the end of the gallery was the Whistler Room. This room was decorated by Rex Whistler just before the second World War. An amazing room, very high, all a pale peach pink. There is an urn painted on one wall, with smoke coming from the top. Reflected in a large glass opposite, it is so realistic the smoke almost seems to move. On one cornice, in fact flat but it takes some believing, he painted his paint pot and a packet of cigarettes. It is a room for admiration, rather too much so for pleasure. This is all of the house that is shown.

Whether Lord Sandys would have liked it is difficult to say. Somebody who can gut a church to live in, even in times when the church took a lot of criticism, must have had tastes out of the ordinary.

Oddly, it is one of the most peaceful places I have ever been in. As we left, the coach driver remarked that there was a trout as long as his arm in the water and those old monks knew a thing or two, living in a place like that.

ANNE HAWKER

DATING TECHNIQUES IN ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC BUILDINGS

This was the title of a one-day conference held on 3rd October at King Alfred's College, Winchester, by the Hampshire Field Club.

The first speaker was Dr Tony King of King Alfred's College, with the subject of Dating from Pottery and Coins for Today's Archaeologist. He began with an example of the hazards of dating sites by coins, telling of an excavation in Italy where a skeleton was found with a 4th or 5th century coin in the mouth, following a Roman burial custom. On re-excavating the site, stratigraphy showed that the grave was later than a wall dated to the 8th century, and the coin is probably five centuries older than the burial.

Dr King then emphasised the importance of stratigraphy in determining relative chronology and its particular use where a datable event such as the vocanic eruptions at Pompeii provides a sealed horizon which can be used as a "terminus ante/post quem" (earliest/latest dates). Horizontal stratigraphy was also discussed. Although this is not as useful as vertical stratigraphy it could show, for instance, the expansion of a cemetery along a Roman road.

The use of typology was then discussed, particularly its reliance on such assumptions as that complex designs evolve from simple ones. An illustration of the difficulties of this was given from an experiment in which a number of brooches were put in sequence by five archaeologists, a zoologist and a computer model, all reaching different conclusions.

Coming to his own specialist subject of Samian ware, it was said that artefacts can be dated to within about 20 years. This is achieved because the punches used to make the moulds were passed from one potter to another, remaining in use for up to 50 years. As new punches were made, each mould had a unique combination of old and new punches. This form of sophisticated relative chronology is subject to error, since there was no copyright on punches, with old bowls being used to make new punches. Absolute dates have been fixed to particular designs by their association with historic events such as the building of Hadrian's Wall. In some cases the historic dates have been changed by later discoveries, necessitating changes for the other sites dated on the pottery evidence.

In answering questions, Dr King said that coins and pottery were most useful for "fine tuning" of the dating of a site. Easily breakable and disposable items such as amphorae were of most use because more valuable items remain in use for longer periods but the former do not show such clear changes in typology.

The speaker for the second session was Susan Charlesworth of the Isotopes Measurement Laboratory, Harwell, talking on Radio-Carbon Dating: Development to Present-Day Application and Future Potential. A brief history of the technique was given from its invention by Libby in 1939 to the present. She then explained the basis for the technique: this relies on radio-active ^{14}C (which constitutes 1×10^{-10} % of the naturally occurring carbon in the world) decaying at a constant rate with a half life of 5730 years. The

amount initially in any organic material is fixed at the time of death. The amount of ^{14}C present in the sample is measured either by means of a Mass Spectrometer or by measuring the current amount of radio-activity. The latter technique is used at Harwell. One of two methods of analysis is used, depending on the accuracy required and the size of sample available.

In either case the sample is treated to remove contamination such as rootlets in soil, carbonates eg chalk and humic acids from soil. The carbon is then separated and converted into carbon dioxide. In the standard technique this is then converted to benzene and the activity is counted by liquid scintillation counting. For high precision work the CO_2 is counted directly in gas proportional counters. Various techniques are used to reduce interference, such as gold vials for scintillation counting and pre-war steel shields for the proportional counters. Counting is carried out in sessions over two weeks until 40,000 counts have been achieved. Due to the decay of the carbon, it is only possible to date items back to about 40,000 bp (before present). The accuracy claimed is 1% for the standard technique and ½% for the high precision technique. The calibration of radio-carbon dating is based on analysis of individual tree rings with absolute dates from dendrochonology.

In addition to explaining the technique, a number of examples were given. These included groundwater from a well at Slough, dated as 30,000 years old; the Winchester Round Table - mid 13th century; and ten-year-old Scotch whisky - 11 years old (the grain was harvested the previous year).

The laboratory spends one third of its time on archaeological samples, the rest of its work being the analysis of environmental samples for the nuclear industry. The price of the service was given as £250 - £400 per sample.

The afternoon session was opened by Jennifer Hillam of the Dept of Archaeology & Prehistory, Sheffield University, on the subject of Recent Advances in Tree Ring Dating in Britain. Dendrochronology, she stated, can be the most accurate form of dating. The widths of the annual growth rings in trees are measured and plotted on a graph, the pattern then being cross matched with graphs from other samples. To obtain absolute dates a match must be made with a master chronology extending back continuously with overlapping patterns from modern trees, through older buildings to archaeological samples.

Although simple in theory, the cross matching can be difficult and wood is only likely to survive in waterlogged sites. At least 50 rings are needed, or 100 if only a single timber is available from the site. The more samples that are available, the more reliable the technique.

The best method of obtaining samples is to slice the wood with a chain saw, but cores can be drilled, rings can be measured in situ and some success has been achieved using X-ray photographs of the timber, although this technique is expensive and in the early stages of development.

The rings may be measured using a hand lens with a graduated scale, but the modern trend is to use a microscope linked to a

computer. The plotting of graphs and synchronising of plots is also increasingly done by computer but the final match is usually made by the human eye.

Where a group of samples are available from a site, these are matched to form a master. The results are presented as a bar graph of heartwood and sapwood. A sample complete to the bark is the ideal, as it indicates the time of felling, the completeness of the outer ring indicating the time of year. If the bark is absent, the sapwood gives a clue to the date, as there are generally 10 - 55 sapwood rings. Where the sapwood is also absent, ten years are added to the determined age as a "terminus post quem". The date obtained is the age of the timber; the technique does not account for reuse of wood or periods of seasoning or storage prior to use. Imported wood can cause difficulties, but in some cases it has been possible to match London samples with a Munich chronology.

Continuous chronologies are available in Ireland back to 5000 BC and in Germany to 4000 BC. In England the continuous chronology goes back only to 400 AD, although another section has been cross matched with the Irish chronology between 250 BC and 90 AD. Other sections have been dated approximately by carbon dating but absolute dates have not yet been fixed. These cover parts of the Iron Age and a 400-year period during the Neolithic.

Examples of the technique's use were then given. These included Billingsgate, London, with timbers dated to 1054-5; Hasholme log boat - a single tree - 699 to 323 BC; and roof timbers from Exeter and Lincoln Cathedrals, showing various stages of construction.

In the future, dendrochronologists expect to see improvements in computer crossmatching. The other development hoped for is the ability to date species other than oak. Although this has been the main building material, other woods have also been important. Alder is the second most common wood, particularly for piles in waterlogged sites; this may be datable from the oak chronology but the rings are not so clear. Ash probably matches the oak chronology, the lack of specimens preventing a continuous chronology from the present being developed. The cost of dendrochronology was quoted as being about £50 per sample.

Dr Tony Clark, formerly of the Ancient Monuments Laboratory and now a consultant, gave the last talk with the title Magnetic Dating Comes of Age. Magnetic dating relies chiefly on the chemoremanent magnetic field of baked clay. The origin of terrestial magnetism from magnetohydrodynamic processes derived from convection currents in the liquid metal core of the earth was explained. Due to irregularities between the mantle and the core, localised variations in the magnetic field occur; these are constantly changing.

When clay is fired, the thermal excitation destroys the previous magnetism; as it cools, the field of the kiln's locality is frozen into it. The changes in the field for a particular locality are plotted on a graph called a Bauer diagram, using specimens dated by other means. Unknown samples for dating must be obtained from material which has not moved since the time of firing, eg kiln bases, as it is important to know their orientation relative

to the present magnetic field. With solid materials, samples are obtained by glueing discs to the surface before cutting off the specimen; in soft materials plaster casts are used. The magnetic field in the sample is measured using a magnetometer and related to its orientation on the site. This orientation of the field at the time of firing is compared with the Bauer diagram to give a terminus ante quem for the last firing of the material. Corrections must be made for the gradual adoption of the present magnetic field and, if used for dating ferruginous lake or soil deposits, the deposition process can affect the field's orientation.

Examples of the technique's use were given as Roman pottery from Alice Holt forest, mortar from a hearth at Stamford castle and salt drying pits in Essex. Dr Clark concluded his talk with a demonstration of the magnetism of archaeological materials, moving the needle of a compass using a piece of Roman tile.

R J GUNN

THE BONHAM CARTERS

An exhibition on the archives of this Hampshire family will be on display at the Great Hall, Winchester from 20th October to 30th November. Two of Helena Bonham Carter's costumes from the film A Room with a View will be shown. On Saturday 14th November there will be a special Open Afternoon at the exhibition for members of the Hampshire Archives Trust and their guests, from 2 to 5 pm. A series of short talks on aspects of the family's history and archives will be given, including one by the distinguished writer and historian of the family, Victor Bonham Carter.

If anyone wishes to use our Society's membership of the Trust to attend this Open Afternoon, please let me know (Basingstoke 465439).

BARBARA APPLIN

THE HATCHER REVIEW

We have asked Tom James, of King Alfred's College, Winchester, to contribute this notice of an interesting Journal.

THE HATCHER REVIEW is a new journal treating aspects of Wessex history, literary history, biography, archaeology and related material. Founded in 1976 and based in Salisbury, in early days it had a Wiltshire focus. More recently the scope has broadened to include Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight.

The Review, edited from King Alfred's College, Winchester, has a strong subscription list in both the UK and abroad. The editorial board welcome articles of up to about 300 words on aspects of local history, but with a nod towards national issues. The articles are written by both amateurs and professionals.

The subscription is £3 a year, which covers both issues of the Review. Further information can be obtained from, and articles for publication should be sent to:

Geoff Ridden, King Alfred's College,
Winchester, Hants SO22 4NR

Subscriptions to:

Tony Dale, 283 Castle Road, Salisbury,
Wiltshire SP1 3SB

TOM JAMES

SOCIETY VISIT TO SUTTON HOO

A visit to the British Museum to see the Sutton Hoo Treasure is enough to trigger enthusiasm to visit the site where it was found, and this we were able to do one Saturday in September. Whilst the day didn't exactly dawn bright and clear, it was certainly tolerable and we had a long, pleasant coach journey to the site, stopping for a picnic lunch at a lovely spot overlooking the River Deben.

We walked to the burial site along a footpath skirting a carrot field: the wind blew, and with it blew the sand, flailing our faces. We arrived at the site of the first burial mound, to be met by our guide. Step by step he took us, in an introductory talk, through the history of this area, originally known as the Sandlings Province: from early, middle and late Neolithic, through Beaker and Bronze Ages, the Iron Age, Romano-British and early Saxon occupation.

Our guide told us of the current excavation of mound 2, which is proving to be a ship of equal size to that already excavated from mound 1 (which was possibly of a Royal personage, though no human remains were found). So far no treasure has come to light in mound 2.

We inspected the robber trench, cut quite recently into a small barrow, which is the only one out of sight of Sutton Hoo House, and we felt stirrings of anger that our fellow beings could be such Philistines.

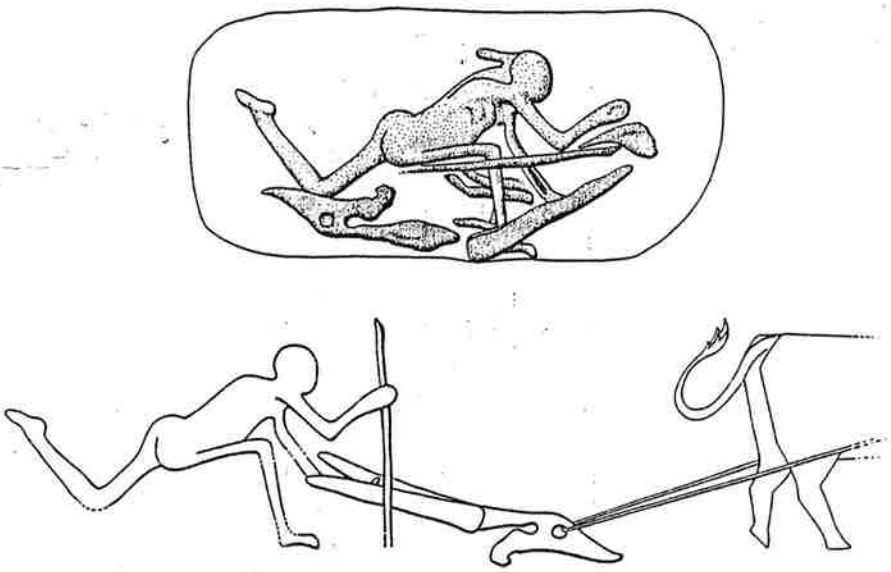
A poignant part of our visit was inspecting the "facsimile" graves. In one was found a large joint of meat, and in another a large wooden artefact thought to be an ard. This, with the wooden staff also found, taken together with the crouched position of the man buried there, gave rise to the speculation that he could well have been a ploughman. Carbon dating showed this to be about 700 AD.

There were also burials which gave evidence of executions - what were these people? Sacrifial lambs? Hardened criminals who had to pay the supreme penalty? Fallen in battle? Even more poignant was the privileged piece of information given by our guide: a small grave had only very recently been

discovered and excavated - so recently that it had not yet been completely recorded. It was that of a small boy, no more than six years old, across whose body lay a royal sceptre. A prince of the blood who died too young to claim his heritage? An Atheling?

The whole lovely, clear-aired region is redolent of ghosts - old and young, prince and peasant; people.

It was a lovely trip.



The 'ploughman' burial excavated in 1986, with reconstruction of ard (Hooper after Carver)

NANCY WILLIAMS

NEW LOCAL SOCIETIES

We have for some time exchanged programmes with the Alton Local History Society. Now we are glad to welcome the Lyde & Whitewater Local History Group (whose Glynis Wilsdon and Nigel Bell have lectured to us) and a new Historical Society at Whitchurch which had a splendid start recently by enrolling 160 members (and whose Maurice Boorman gave us an unforgettable lecture some years ago).