

BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Newsletter 199 May 2012

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What is happening here??
See page 8.

Fieldwork Report

Mark Peryer

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In late February, several of our members helped Debbie Charlton with the second phase of the excavation at Steventon. Debbie will no doubt share the results with us in a later newsletter. In the mean time, finds processing is in progress for which help would be welcomed.

The Up Nately Brickworks project has progressed, with some sterling work going in over the Easter break. We have now almost traced the boundary of the “mill and engine shed”, although this continues to show up surprises. We have made some interesting finds, including some bottle glass with trademarks that may provide some useful dating evidence in what seems be a robbed out wall footing. **Further work will continue at weekends during May and June.**

I am planning a study day to teach people how to use a level and a total station to help with planning a site. The Up Nately site would be used as a venue since it needs recording and would provide a ready-made workshop. **The provisional date for this day is June 23rd.** Please contact me if you would be interested.

There will be no excavation work at Basing House this year. As with last year, the County Museum Service resources are spread too thinly to justify Dave Allen spending 2-3 weeks in the field. There is an application for funding in progress and it may be possible to do something next year. In the meantime **volunteers would be welcomed on Thursdays at Chilcomb House** to reduce the back-log in post-excavation work from previous years' efforts.

We hope to arrange an excavation at Holybourne Hillfort near Alton, which was the site that Ginny Pringle investigated for her University final year project. The dig would last a week and would investigate some of the features that showed up in the geophysical survey. **The provisional date for the work is the first week in August.** If you would like to take part, please let myself or Ginny know.



Photo: Ginny Pringle

Society Visit

Silchester, Sunday 5th August

Meet at the Silchester car park at 1.30 pm for a guided visit at 2 pm, remembering that it takes about twenty minutes to walk to the site.

Society Outing

Strawberry Hill Trip, 8th August (Wednesday)

Don't forget that Barry Hedger has to provide Strawberry Hill management with the numbers **by the end of June 2012.** Ring **01256 329077**, or **07971 0366**, or e-mail barry.hedger@btinternet.com

AGM papers are circulated with this Newsletter.

*Because of rising postage costs, when you collect your Newsletter at a meeting
please see if you can take someone else's for them.*

We have had few meetings recently because work on the Co-op book has taken up so much time. But two particularly interesting interviews have been about Fort Hill School. First we interviewed Jako Carstens, who had organised a joint project with Fort Hill and a school in Ghana, supported by the Winklebury Co-op (read our book when it comes out to find out more!) He is taking a group of students to Ghana – and will take with him a copy of our DVD “BENEATH BASINGSTOKE”, to show the Ghanaian students something about the school’s archaeological background! We then interviewed the headmistress, Lesley Lawson. This was a particularly interesting interview, explaining the ethos of a community school, and it is a good addition to the many interviews we now have with teachers and head-teachers showing the range of education available in the town and changes in educational ideas and practice.

A spin-off from our research into back numbers of the *Gazette* for the Co-op book is that the same members plus a VCH volunteer are going back to hunt up information for the Economic History part of the Victoria County History revision, and this is proving very fruitful.

The Co-op and Basingstoke

A Story of Change

The book is now at the printers, Sarsen Press of Winchester. We shall be taking copies to the Convention of The Southern Co-operative at Bournemouth **on 26th May**. Waterstones in Basingstoke have offered us a signing session **on 9th June**.

The official launch will be at Church Cottage at 7.30 pm on 29th June, and members and people who have been interviewed for the book or involved in other ways are invited to come and celebrate. We have invited the current Mayor, who was once a manager for PIMCO (which took over the Basingstoke Co-operative Society) and we are hoping that the incoming Mayor will also be able to come. The protocol is that guests should arrive before the Mayor, so we will invite him for 7.45.

Thanks to the generous support of The Southern Co-operative, we are able to sell the book at £9.95. An order form is enclosed with the Newsletter. Until after the launch on 29th June members are offered the special price of £8.95. We hope you will all buy many copies!

Producing this book has been a huge team effort by the Basingstoke Talking History members, combining extracts from BTH interviews with reports, adverts etc from back numbers of the *Hants & Berks Gazette* and then *The Gazette*, as well as plans and reports and notices from the Hampshire Record Office and Portsmouth Record Office. Searching through the Co-op’s own archives we even found some shoes sold by the Co-op, so out came Anita Leatherby’s camera for an illustration for the book.



Anita drew the maps we needed and she and Alan and Nicola Turton provided some delightful illustrations. Barbara Large took photos of many items from *The Gazette*, which George Plummer expertly “cleaned”. We are particularly grateful to Fred Tickle for technical advice and for converting the text into PDFs to send to the printer. And to Sean Mullins, of The Southern Co-operative, for designing the cover. Just wait till you see it!

.....JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS IN BASINGSTOKE.....

Barbara Applin

Here is a glimpse of celebrations in Basingstoke for Queen Victoria's Golden and Diamond Jubilees.

Golden

The photograph shows the Town Hall decorated for the Golden Jubilee in 1887. Final touches are being made on the balcony, and men are waiting to put out the chairs for the dignitaries to sit and hear speeches.



Trestle tables and chairs were also put out in London Street. In an interview recorded for the Willis Museum Barbara Broadbridge recounted a family story:

(M 004 in Basingstoke Talking History)



Cannon's, London Street

The old people's dinner, down the length of the street – this was in the Jubilee of 1887 - there was a space left for a water cart to go down beside it. And when it was passing down, somebody had tipped the guard to switch on the water so half-way along the street everybody got swamped a bit with streams of water. So there was a lot of noise!

In our house we had a couple of coppers in the scullery, built of bricks into the wall, and the potatoes for this old people's dinner, at least two copperfuls, were boiled in there. It must have been an awful job to put them in and get them out. I suppose they were a good sort of potatoes that didn't go to mush, you know?

And a baron of beef - I don't even know how big a baron of beef is - half a side or something? - cooked in the back kitchen of my other grandfather, Cannon the butcher, in London Street. The back kitchen, I suppose, had a big range or perhaps it was more or less barbecued, that type of cooking, I don't know, but if it was a big thing. I don't know how they did it. It must have been very difficult, I think.

Jubilee.....

Jubilee Road must have been named for the Golden Jubilee, as it is listed in the 1895 census.

House numbers from 2 to 10 were listed, the occupants including a threshing machinist, a commercial traveller, a tailor and a builder.

Photo: Bob Applin



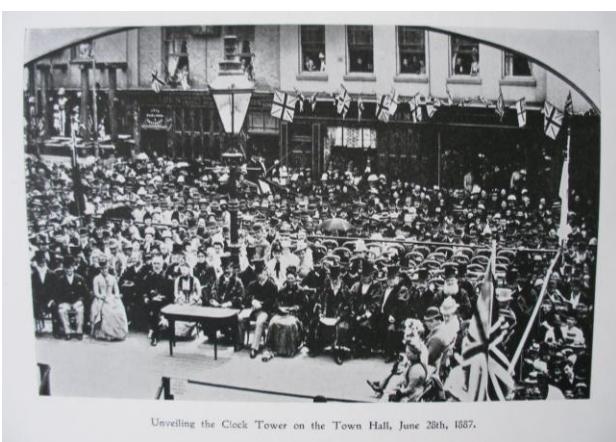
In his book “The Mays of Basingstoke” F Ray tells “a little tale” about Colonel John May and the two Jubilees.

Somehow or other the members of the Corporation had got it into their heads that the Jubilee of Queen Victoria’s reign was to be celebrated in 1886, and Councillor May was regarded as the ideal Mayor for such an auspicious year. It was not till after his election for the year 1885-86 that the mistake was discovered, and then, of course, the only thing to be done was to ask him to serve again the next year, which he readily consented to do.

So during his Mayoralty Colonel May “led the inhabitants in the celebration of the Jubilee of Queen Victoria”.



Not only did he subscribe largely to the local Jubilee Fund and dispense hospitality with a princely hand, but he also erected, at his own cost, the magnificent clock tower, which is now a familiar landmark on the Town Hall, and placed thereon the clock which has been, and will continue to be, a great boon to the inhabitants.



Unveiling the Clock Tower on the Town Hall, June 20th, 1887.

Eventually the clock tower was judged to be unsafe and was taken down but the clock itself can now be seen on the top floor of the Willis Museum.

Diamond



For the Diamond Jubilee (as well as for the centenary of the first mayoralty of Thomas May, his great-uncle), Colonel May erected a wing to the Cottage Hospital.

He was among the Mayors presented to Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace and received the Diamond Jubilee Medal

Barbara Broadbridge also provided this photograph of children in Chinese fancy dress for the 1897 Diamond Jubilee. They were John Cannon and Philip Joice, with Reg Joice on the white horse. One of Barbara's grandfathers, as she mentioned in her interview, was William Cannon, the butcher and the other was John Joice who founded the firm of coach-builders - Joice's yard is named after their premises and you can see a gig made by Joice's in Milestones. Just the right firm to make this miniature "Victoria", and a suitable vehicle for this occasion.



Photos Hampshire County Museums Service

.....*Jubilee*.....

Transcription of part of a BTH interview (BAHS 10) with John Handford, a former archivist for Macmillan. Has anyone heard of Dinmont House?

There was an occasion when Hardy stayed in Basingstoke for several weeks. With the first Mrs Hardy he used to go to London for the Season in the spring, and most years he hired a house in London. But in the year of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, 1897 - as you know, it was after *Jude the Obscure* was written - he did stay in London for a while and then he went to Basingstoke, and we know the dates he went, because Mrs Hardy had a diary and he wrote letters with the address of where he was. And we know the name of the house. Maybe somebody in the Society knows where that house was. It was called Dinmont House. He stayed there in 1897 from some time in May until he and his wife went off for a holiday in Switzerland on 15th June. There is a letter in the *Collected Letters* dated 2nd June from Hardy to his friend Edward Clodd, in which he says "This place is only about an hour from Town", so you can see in a hundred years how much faster the trains have gone, or otherwise. So I am sure there is somebody who knows where this house was. He used to go - I quote now from *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* which is the book he wrote to avoid having too many people making money out of his biography, by writing his autobiography and getting his second wife to publish it in her name after he was dead. But now of course it is recognised as his own work. And in this he says of 1897 that he and his wife - he wrote in the third person, of course,

"He and his wife went to London as usual this year but did not take a house there. After two or three weeks' stay during which, according to Mrs Hardy's diary, they went to a large dance at Londonderry House given for Lady Helen Stuart, they adopted the plan of living some way out and going up and down every few days. The place they made their temporary centre being Basingstoke."

And it goes on to say what they did. He found London rather nasty and crowded because of the Diamond Jubilee so by the 15th June he moved out of London and went off to Switzerland and on 20th the Queen celebrated her Jubilee.

Q While he was in Basingstoke, was there any reference to the diaries or any other people that he met in Basingstoke while he stayed there?

I don't know. What I'd like to know is who was his host at Dinmont House because I suspect that he was living as someone's house guest rather than letting a house and bringing in his own servant or whatever. But I don't know. This is obviously a subject with plenty of room for research.



ALTON LOCAL HISTORY DAY

Saturday 19th May, Alton Assembly Rooms 10 1m to 3 pm

Come and find out more about Alton and its surrounding villages
FREE ENTRY

IfA Annual Conference for Archaeologists 2012 Town Hall, Oxford

Debz Charlton

My first thought this year was to be ashamed of myself for not having visited Oxford for many years what an incredible, historical place it is and only a short distance from Basingstoke!

The theme for the 2012 conference was *Working in Partnership* with strong emphasis on community archaeology and the need for collaboration, of the many sectors, to look out for our local heritage during the ongoing struggle against the widespread person and skills ‘cuts’ to the discipline and planning authorities.

Over the last few years the universities have come in for some strong criticism, at the conferences, from the professional sector and I was pleased to see that a whole afternoon session was to be held – *Trenches and ivory towers: universities and commercial field archaeology* – with a strong university speakers’ presence for a change... I did not attend, so cannot relate directly (it’s a discussion that is like a red flag to me!!) It was good to see Mike Fulford there but it was Richard Bradley (University of Reading) who was the talk of the conference the next day as, according to the passed on ‘gossip’ buzz, he had put it to them plainly and simply that it “was not the job of the universities to turn out commercial ‘diggers’ but “to provide practical multi-skilled, academic thinking archaeologists”. There were many heated debates over lunch and evening liquid beverages that day!!

Away from the politics, there were two sessions that stood out for me this year. *Madness in our methods?* – a session hosted by the IfA finds group which was exploring questions such as ‘touching the void’ between ‘trowel and meaning’, ‘handing over the means of interpretation’ and different ways of ‘assessing and reporting CBM (ceramic building material) and pottery’.

The other session was (no apologies) the geophysics session which covered all those points ‘you always wanted to know but were afraid to ask’. It was very instructive and went from simple explanation of the equipment; how and in what situations to use it; all the way through to interpretation of the graphs and how to report your findings. ***The photo on page 1 shows radar going vertical on a broom stick!! (image © Fugro-Aperio Ltd, provided by Dr K Hamilton)***

To sum up 2012 was definitely a ‘heated’ conference with much political and inter-discipline debate from the members, resulting in strong pointed questions, about the way forward, being put to the Institute committee and we must now await their response. Watch this ‘pit’ as they say!!!

Rome Wasn't Built in Wroxeter

Nicola Turton

You may have watched and been entertained by the 2010 programme 'Rome Wasn't Built in a Day'. Or you may have watched 'Rome Wasn't Built in a Day' and been utterly infuriated. We did both, and so were very keen to visit the house. If you recall, a bunch of builders who knew not very much at all about history and archaeology and ancient building techniques were selected to reconstruct a Roman villa at Wroxeter.

There was an April power-shower, and children marching (sinister, dexter, sinister, dexter) as we arrived, and the bathhouse wall, which is the tallest standing Roman ruin in Britain, stood proudly in the ruins. The house is on the other side of the road, behind the famous pillar bases, and I have to say,

sits very nicely on its mound in the landscape (protecting the Roman forum beneath), beaming away in red and yellow plaster. Our hopes rose.

As we entered the gate, there was a sign saying 'Beware Red Plaster'. It turns out that the Romans used a sealant made of egg, but jolly old Health and Safe Tea said that a child with an egg intolerance might lick the house and die, so the coating wasn't used, and the plaster is crumbling.

Sadly, our first favourable impression didn't last. Even after three years, there's a strong smell of wood and damp plaster, but it didn't come from new works, but from the fact that the place is wet. Such a house needs to be lived in, swept and heated every day. But this isn't the case, and it suffers from the neglect. The veranda roof is missing, and the plaster torn away where it's been removed. And that's so not a good look.

As we walked round, we noticed an area where the interior wall has been left partially completed, so one may look at the wattle and daub type building techniques. We were astonished to see that instead of reed, which the English Heritage chap said was available from their own, local land, the builders used a type of fine bamboo. *Bamboo*.

Between the front and back of the house runs a barrel vaulted passage, and from inside one of the rooms I was very interested to look at the outside of the vaulting (other fine outside-of-vaulting may be seen at Chastleton Long Gallery and Farnham Castle chapel roof, if that's your thing).

Through squinting eyes, the house looks good, but it fails badly on detail; timbers are over-machined and too regular, and torn window coverings flap in the wind. Poor, and I mean really appalling fresco paintings, and shockingly bad mosaics are only brought into worse relief by the very good Roman furniture which was installed a few days before our visit.

We spoke to one of the custodians, who was concerned that I was from the *Guardian*, and seemed less than convinced when I said it was an article for the Basingstoke Archaeological Society newsletter (could there be such a body?). He said that Channel 4 had paid for the project, but that maintenance was up to English Heritage. The house had only just opened when the large copper bath was stolen, and so they spent a year's maintenance money on a new alarm system. They replaced the bath with a tin one, and exactly a year later it was stolen again, but this time left in a nearby field (the alarm system didn't work then!).

The porch is to be put back on, soon. And the plaster will be repaired. We asked about the size of the villa, and he said that it is 2/3 size. I suggested that it was lofty enough to have two floors, and he said it was either to let smoke escape, or just that there wasn't the money available to build two floors.

I'm not sure why it had to be done at all. After all there are other and better Roman reconstructions, but it's pretty enough, and may bring people to Wroxeter, which is a Good Thing.

After your visit to Wroxeter, head down the road to the Roman Vineyard (highly recommended is their red wine – very rare so far north), and as you pass the church, look out for the Roman columns used in the entrance to the graveyard.

Avebury Walk

Advance Notice – 13th October

Mark Peryer invites members to join him on an 8 mile walk around the Avebury area, taking in the sights in this fascinating and enigmatic area. The walk will include visits to Avebury ring, the Avenue, West Kennett Long Barrow and Silbury Hill.

THE SILCHESTER EAGLE PDS

(*obscurum per obscurius*)

Early 2011 saw the release of a film based on a 1954 children's story 'The Eagle of the Ninth' which tells how the son of a Roman officer set out to clear the name of his father who was blamed for the apparent loss of an entire legion in what is now Scotland during the late first century AD. Overcoming great difficulties and danger the son discovers that his father and the legion died honourably for Rome. He retrieves the legion's standard from the Caledonian barbarians and returns it to its base at Silchester where it is placed in the forum basilica.

The story, it is said, was inspired by the discovery by a clergyman's dog of a Roman bronze eagle at Silchester among burnt layers on the site of the forum basilica during a 19th century excavation.

The scholarly background of the finder (the clergyman that is – not the dog) led him to conclude that the eagle was part of an imperial standard that had been deliberately destroyed during the final stand of its legion and then hidden in the ceiling rather than be allowed to fall into the hands of barbarians when Roman administration in Britain collapsed some three hundred and fifty years later in 410 AD. However the forum basilica was burned to the ground and although the standard was destroyed the eagle somehow survived.

Modern opinion does not wholly support that interpretation and sufficient doubt has remained for researchers, working on the archives of the distinguished early 20th century German antiquarian Dr. Hans Fodion (who some long-time members of this Society may with they had never heard of!) to construct a possible alternative theory.

The researchers suggest that there may be a connection with the destruction by fire which they believe was caused by the Romanised Irish chieftain turned entrepreneur Hebescio Maximus in retaliation for the loss of his stock of wine and cash box of sestertes at the time of the Boudiccan rebellion. Their interpretation was published in BAHS Newsletter 185 in November 2008 (see - DESTRUCTION BY FIRE IN 1ST CENTURY AD AT SILCHESTER: AN EXPLANATION). It includes a reference to the presence of military personnel believed to have been left by Hebescio's business partner, the Roman general Vespasian, to act as security guards. Along with military artefacts found at excavations during the late 20th century it goes some way to help explain the presence of a standard-borne eagle.

However it has to be admitted that the precise course of events is difficult to re-construct given the very limited evidence available and it must be accepted that a plausible explanation of its deposition on the ceiling of the basilica presents a significant challenge. Ritual cannot be ruled out.

The researchers at this stage therefore tentatively suggest that Hebescio, who was very cross at the betrayal of his business interests in part by the security guards, came across the abandoned standard while looking for the culprits in the forum basilica. Angrily he broke the eagle from its pole and kicked at it with such force that it became embedded in the ceiling. It was not seen again until Hebescio gave up looking for the miscreant legionaries, the wine and the cash, and in his rage set fire to the forum basilica. The ceiling – and the eagle – fell to the floor.

Just how the eagle was never severely damaged is still something of a mystery but it survived amid the ruins and remained undiscovered. Then, one thousand eight hundred years later, the clergyman and his dog arrived on the scene. Research however is understood to be continuing and there is optimism that a satisfactory answer will be found. Suggestions will be welcome!

The Plaque in the Park!

Cathy Williams



The idea first came from The Friends of Loddon Vale Parks, who litter-pick, plant and prune in King George V, Victory and Glebe Parks. We thought it would be good to let people know what was there before Victory Park was established. The project was taken on by Brookvale Community Association (BCA), better able to negotiate the grants system, and it was widened to include the history of all Brookvale.

Fortunately, we had the example of the installation made by Basingstoke Heritage Society, in the Holy Ghost cemetery, so we did not need to reinvent the wheel, and I had the designer's contact details on file. I contacted Stephen Towns for a quote to put to Basingstoke & District Borough Council for a grant, with the support of the Brookvale Councillors and Liane Green, Landscape and Horticultural Officer, and we were awarded £4,500, the BCA making up the balance of the cost. Stephen still had his contacts with Adept Sheet Metal, who constructed the frame, and Boundstone, who made the panels and etched the images and text.

The project started in January 2011, and there followed months of research into the History of Brookvale. The primary source was Hampshire Records Office, where I found over 100 references to Brookvale and its streets. David Rymill kindly authorised our use of the Godson map of the estates of the Duke of Bolton, 1762, and Robert Brown kindly allowed the use of his picture of the swimming pool. Information came from several other publications, including Hampshire Treasures and the Victoria County History, and we could not have done without Bob & Barbara Applin checking facts and proof-reading.

I won't detail the convoluted process of sourcing our choice of materials for the groundwork! Or negotiating around HCC improvement works in the park at the same time! We were very pleased that students and staff at BCOT took on the task of actually installing the sign – they worked very hard!

It was finally ready for His Worship the Mayor, David Leeks, to launch the plaque on 24th March.

I won't detail the History of Brookvale – you must really go and see!

Photo: Bob Applin

2012 DIARY DATES

BAHSOC

BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEETINGS on Thursdays at 7.30 pm Church Cottage, Basingstoke

<i>Sat 9 June</i>	<i>Signing of Co-op Book at Waterstones</i>
<i>Thurs 14 June</i>	AGM and BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE PUBLIC Tim Schadla Hall
<i>Fri 29 June</i>	<i>Launch of Co-op Book, Church Cottage, 7.30pm</i>
<i>Sun 5 August</i>	<i>Trip to Silchester (page 2)</i>
<i>Wed 8 August</i>	<i>Trip to Strawberry Hill (page 2)</i>

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FRIENDS OF BASING HOUSE at 7.30 pm, *Basing House Education Centre, The Street, Old Basing*

Tues 9 October First winter lecture

FRIENDS OF WILLIS MUSEUM at 7.30 pm *Willis Museum, Basingstoke*

Thurs 17 May SPRING WOOD, HACKWOOD Brian Spicer
Thurs 21 June FOOD IN ROMAN BRITAIN Sally Grainger, food historian

HAMPSHIRE FIELD CLUB www.fieldclub.hants.org

Sat 19 May VISIT TO TEST VALLEY TO VIEW WALL PAINTINGS *Historic Buildings Section visit to the Test Valley: Medieval and Tudor Wall Paintings*, approx 10-4. Members only, £6. Numbers limited.

Wed 30 May AGM and O G S CRAWFORD LECTURE Dr John Hare, "The medieval bishops of Winchester and their continuing impact on modern Hampshire. 7.30pm, in the Science Lecture Theatre, Peter Symonds College, Bereweeke Rd, Winchester

Sat 9th June Historic Buildings Section visit to Bishop's Waltham Palace and Palace House Gardens, 9th June. Meet at palace car park at 11; finishing about 4 pm. Cost £15.

Thurs 21 June Visit to excavations at Magdalen Hill Leper Hospital, 6.15 pm. No tickets issued but numbers may be limited; stout shoes recommended.

Sat 23 June Local History Section outing to Buriton, 10 am to 4 pm. Meet at Buriton Village Hall for coffee and introductions. £12 for Field Club members, £15 for non-members.

Sun 15 July Landscape Section visit to Overton: Medieval & Post-Medieval Buildings; 2- 4 pm leaving from outside St Mary's Church, Church Street; please arrive by 1.45pm. A limit of 20.

Tues 7 August Archaeology Section visit to WARG excavations at St Elizabeth's College, Winchester, 6.15 pm. Meet at College Walk, Winchester. Numbers limited, £5

Editorial Note

Please send contributions for future Newsletters by e-mail to bth@bahsoc.org.uk or by post to 138 Old Kempshott Lane, Basingstoke, RG22 5EN. Photos are welcome (as jpeg attachments if possible). Please make sure to say who holds the copyright in any text or photograph. Anyone wishing to use items from the Newsletter should first ask for permission.