

**BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL
& HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

BAHS

Newsletter 218

February 2017

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Members learning new skills from the Redding Moreys

A Message from Our Chair

Ginny Pringle

Grappling and frapping are some of the interesting skills we acquired at our Christmas party. You might be thinking that things must have got out of hand, but thankfully not; instead we were entertained by the Redding Moreys recreating Tudor Morris dancing, or ‘dawncies’ as they call them. We learned about the vast amounts of money splashed out by royalty on the past-time, including lavish costumes adorned with spangles. The dawncies were not only sponsored by royalty but supported by the church as well – that is, until religious views became a little less liberal. After that, the dawncies seem to have been adopted by ordinary folk for their own pleasure and we are told that for some peculiar reason, were particularly popular in Berkshire.

Our visitors brought along musical instruments and demonstrated how slippery their costume leather shoes could be on our polished wooden floor; in days gone by there might have been more straw and muck on the floors to provide some grip. Anyway, we finished off the evening by joining in, although I’m not sure ‘Strictly’ is ready for us just yet. As always, my thanks go to all who contributed their time and effort to make our party a rather special event for BAHS and one which rounded off our 45th anniversary year with lots of fun.

I would also like to thank all those who volunteered with BAHS over the past year; we have fantastic members and your support is greatly appreciated. We have much more to look forward to in 2017, including our annual trip away to Denmark to see what we can unearth in Copenhagen; but in the meantime I look forward to meeting you again at our excellent monthly talks.

PS ‘Frapping’ now has an alternative and more modern definition whereby individuals leave their Facebook profiles logged in and unattended, leaving them open for their status to be updated comically or embarrassingly changed by another person. Something our Tudor ancestors might have found amusing if they’d known about it.

Jane Austen in Basingstoke

Bob Clarke

This year sees the bicentenary of the death of Jane Austen. She was born in Steventon in 1775 and lived there until 1801 when she moved to Bath. As Basingstoke was the nearest market town, Jane and her family often visited the town for shopping and entertainment.

In 1794 Jane's father paid John Ring of Church Street 12 shillings for "a Small Mahogany Writing Desk with 1 Long Drawer and Glass Ink Stand Compleat".¹ This was the portable writing-desk on which Jane wrote all her novels. John Ring's customers ranged from the local grandees such as the Duke of Bolton, William Chute of the Vine, and Bigg Withers of Manydown, to the publicans and tradesmen of Basingstoke and district.² He supplied everything that was needed to furnish a house, down to the wallpaper, nails and glue. He also supplied coffins to the Basingstoke Corporation for paupers' funerals. He charged the Corporation 3s for children's coffins, and 8s for adults' coffins. However, when Mr Jarvis, Master of the Blue Coat School, needed to bury his daughter, a coffin "laced all round, name date and age, three pairs of handles with a neat frill," cost him £1 5s.³

Jane's father also bought for her the notebooks in which she wrote her juvenilia. He probably got these from John Chambers' haberdashery and stationery shop. John Chambers was a woollen and linen draper who also sold "pocket books, atlases, and all other types of books and almanacs, likewise millinery, perfumery, and a variety of patent medicines".⁴ He had two men "constantly employed making hats."⁵

¹ HRO, 8M62/15.

² HRO, 8M62/14 and 15.

³ HRO, 8M62/14.

⁴ *Reading Mercury*, November 26, 1792.

⁵ *Reading Mercury*, April 27, 1789.



Jane Austen's writing desk in John Ring's account book

In 1792 the shopkeepers included six bakers, four butchers, four drapers, three peruke makers, two grocers, two hatters and an ironmonger. There were also 10 businesses simply described as shopkeepers.⁶

In 1799 the “Ladies of Basingstoke, and its Neighbourhood” were advised that every branch of Mantua-making and fancy-dress making was executed by Maria Somers at Mrs Cooper’s in Winchester Street, where there was a constant supply of “every new fashion from London and Bath.”⁷ This shows that Jane and other Basingstoke customers had a choice between locally-made articles and imported goods.

In one of her letters, Jane warned Cassandra that, “when you come home you will have some shirts to make up for Charles. Mrs Davies frightened him into buying a piece of Irish when we were in Basingstoke”.⁸ The fearsome Mrs Davies was a linen draper. In April 1801 she retired and Nathaniel Loader took over the business, which he continued into the 1820s.⁹

On 26 October 1798 Jane was in Basingstoke and “went to Mrs Ryders, & bought what I intended to buy, but not in much perfection. –There were no narrow Braces for Children, & scarcely any netting silk, but Miss Wood as

⁶ Universal British Directory (1792) 317-8.

⁷ *Reading Mercury*, August 12, 1799.

⁸ Letter to Cassandra dated January 21, 1801.

⁹ *Reading Mercury*, May 4, 1801; *Hampshire Chronicle*, September 28, 1829.

usual is going to Town very soon, & will lay in a fresh stock. –I gave 2s 3d a yard for my flannel, & I fancy it is not very good ...”¹⁰

In January 1801 she wrote to Cassandra: “The Neighbourhood have quite recovered [sic] the death of Mrs Rider – so much so, that I think they are rather rejoiced at it now; her Things were so very dear! - & Mrs Rogers is to be all that is desirable.”¹¹

Mrs Rogers was originally Miss Bishop, and as such had a shop in London Street. In May 1799 she announced that she had just returned from London with “a new and elegant assortment of millinery, flowers, rich alamode for cloaks, gloves, etc.”¹² In August 1800 she married a Mr Rogers, who was a saddler and harness maker whose shop was near the George Inn.¹³ In 1801 she moved her business from London Street to Mary Martin’s old shop in the Market Place.¹⁴

Mary Martin had been the landlady of the Maidenhead Inn ever since her husband died in 1776.¹⁵ In March 1798, she gave up the inn and took over John Chambers’ haberdashery and stationery business.¹⁶ In 1799 she opened a subscription library. An annual subscription cost 16s.¹⁷ Jane told Cassandra: “I have received a very civil note from Mrs Martin requesting my name as a Subscriber to her Library which opens the 14th of January, & my name, or rather Yours is accordingly given. My Mother finds the Money ... As an inducement to subscribe Mrs Martin tells us that her Collection is not to consist only of Novels, but of every kind of Literature &c &c–She might have spared us this pretention to *our* family, who are great Novel-readers & not ashamed of being so.”¹⁸

¹⁰ Letter to Cassandra dated October 27, 1798.

¹¹ Letter to Cassandra dated January 21, 1801.

¹² *Reading Mercury*, May 13, 1799; *A London Directory for 1797*, p.61.

¹³ *Hampshire Chronicle*, August 11, 1800; *Reading Mercury*, February 26, 1798.

¹⁴ *Reading Mercury*, March 9, 1801

¹⁵ *Hampshire Chronicle*, November 25, 1776.

¹⁶ *Hampshire Chronicle*, March 3, 1798.

¹⁷ *Reading Mercury*, December 24, 1798.

¹⁸ Letter to Cassandra dated December 18, 1798.

In 1800 Mary Martin was declared bankrupt.¹⁹ Jane wrote to Cassandra: “Our whole Neighbourhood is at present very busy grieving over poor Mrs Martin, who has totally failed in her business, & had very lately an execution in her house ... There has been the same affair going on, we are told, at Wilson’s, & my hearing nothing of you makes me apprehensive that You, your fellow travellers & all your effects, might be seized by the Bailiffs when you stopt at the Crown & sold altogether for the benefit of the creditors.”²⁰

William Willson was the innkeeper at the Crown Inn in Winchester Street. There is no indication that he was ever made bankrupt. He was still at the Crown in 1803. At the time, the Crown and the Maidenhead were referred to as the best inns in Basingstoke.²¹ They were the only Basingstoke inns listed in the 1799 edition of *Paterson’s Roads*. The Hants Club, used to meet 12 or 13 times a year on the nearest Thursdays to the full moon at the Crown from 1798 to 1804.²² Most of the more prominent members of North Hampshire society were members of the Hants Club. In 1803 the list of members included Lord Bolton of Hackwood Park, William and Thomas Chute of the Vine, the Earl of Portsmouth, Lovelace and Harris Bigg Wither of Manydown and a smattering of clergy, including the Revd James Austen of Steventon, Jane’s brother. All would have known William Willson. He acted as the secretary to the Club and it was to him they paid their annual subscriptions.²³

In her letters to Cassandra, Jane refers to attending the Basingstoke Balls. These were held at the Town Hall. They were organised by Mrs Martin of the Maidenhead until she relinquished innkeeping in February 1798; and thereafter by William Willson. They dealt with the tickets and refreshments, hired the bands, and placed advertisements in the *Reading Mercury*.²⁴

¹⁹ *Hampshire Telegraph*, November 10, 1800.

²⁰ Letter to Cassandra dated October 25, 1800.

²¹ *Universal British Directory*, 1798, p. 316.

²² HRO, 44M69/K2/2, Hants Club: Days of meetings and membership lists.

²³ HRO, 44M69/K2/2/9, Hants Club, Crown-Inn Basingstoke, 1803. Days of meetings and list of members.

²⁴ *Reading Mercury*, 22 January, 1798 and February 26, 1798.

William Willson was a married man, but sometime in 1803 he managed to seduce and abduct a 15 year-old heiress who was entitled to a third share of £10,000. When her family tried to get her back, he fled with her to London. The court issued a writ of Habeas Corpus, compelling him to return the girl. He defied the writ by hiding her in a brothel in London.²⁵

At the Court of King's Bench in February 1804, Willson was found guilty of contempt of court. The judge said that Willson had been, "... forgetful of his duty to his own family and...forgetful of what was due to this unfortunate child, basely seduced her, ruined her character, destroyed the peace of her relations, and committed an injury to her and them which he could never repair; her reputation was irretrievably injured, and by which the feelings of an aged mother had received a wound beyond the possibility of cure."

He was fined £50, sent to Newgate for six months and to be further imprisoned until the fine was paid.²⁶ *The Times* said "there was too much reason to suppose this man had a view to this child's property as well as her person ... he kept the sign of the Crown at Basingstoke; but every man of common feeling would rather sleep in his chaise than at his house."²⁷

The story of William Willson covered many column inches in the national and provincial newspapers in November 1803 and February 1804. In view of his high profile in Basingstoke and the surrounding area, and the newspaper publicity his mid-life crisis had attracted, his case must have been a delicious subject of gossip for many miles around. Although Jane had left Steventon when these events took place, it seems inconceivable that the news of them had not reached her, given the contacts that she and her acquaintances had with William Willson. It is unfortunate that her correspondence for that period has not survived.

²⁵ *Lloyd's Evening Post*, February 15, 1804.

²⁶ *Kentish Gazette*, February 17, 1804; *Hampshire Chronicle*, February 20, 1804.

²⁷ *The Times*, November 8, 1803.

2016 – A Review of Archaeology in Basingstoke

David Hopkins- County Archaeologist

2016 was a busy year for planning and archaeology in Basingstoke. Few of us can be unaware of the challenging impact of current peripheral expansion as we see these new developments springing up. At Beggarwood a small Bronze Age cremation cemetery was excavated in the summer. The site was located during an evaluation and was excavated to reveal a complex of pits, many of which included evidence of burning, and some of which had burnt human bone and collared urns. Also found was a Roman pit containing hob nails. To the north of the town, on the edge of Chineham, an enclosure complex close to the Roman road was excavated which indicated an evolution of enclosures from the Iron Age through to the Roman period. Close to the border between the clay and the chalk, it was agricultural in character and similar to the enclosure excavated in 2015 at Marnell Park, which was similarly located at the geological junction.

Behind Park Prewett an extensive development was subject to an archaeological evaluation which found evidence suggestive of the presence of late prehistoric occupation. However on excavation the evidence was more dispersed than the evaluation had suggested, and it appeared to be an agricultural landscape of later prehistoric and Roman date. There were tentative hints of the First World War Canadian hospital which must have been laid out as a temporary establishment behind the asylum, but nothing solid was discovered.

To the west, Manydown took steps forward. The master planning process is underway, including public consultation, and there were three archaeological evaluations undertaken. Two were on the cropmark complex at Scraggs Hill and at Worthing Wood, whose size and complexity offered the prospect that preservation in situ within the master plan might be needed; and the third looked at cropmarks at Catterns Crossroads. These are a Scheduled Monument but their importance is poorly understood and needed to be clarified if a balanced development proposal is to be evolved. At all three sites substantive archaeology was revealed. Scraggs Hill offers a complex of enclosures probably more associated with stock management than settlement; south of Worthing Wood there was Iron Age and Roman occupation; and evidence exists of Roman activity at Catterns Crossroads.

Archaeological monitoring of topsoil stripping at Weybrook golf course has found a ring ditch, although the development includes build up of imported soil and so having been revealed it will be reburied.

Recently the County Council team have been looking at the putative park pale to the north-east of Basingstoke at Pyotts Hill, trying to get a better understanding of the monument. Our interim conclusion is that Williams Freeman was closer when he called it an 'entrenchment' than subsequent observers who have described it as a 'park pale'.

In the wider landscape, recent excavation in Overton has revealed three *grubenhaus*¹ on the flank of the Test valley and a small amount of Mesolithic flint work was also found. In Whitchurch a Bronze Age burial mound has been preserved within the design of a housing estate, but other archaeology within the development - what appears to be a burnt mound, probably Bronze Age - has been excavated. At Kingsclere a wild-life pond uncovered a cluster of burnt stone-filled patches and, thanks to the owner, these were looked at more closely. It appears to be evidence of Sarsen stones being broken up for building material which may be dated to the Roman period.

Ranging rather wider, a Saxon cemetery has been excavated ahead of development in Andover and a significant quantity of Mesolithic flint work in very sharp condition has been found over looking the Test at Michelmersh. The excavations associated with the small Roman town at East Anton is close to publication; a final draft came through this office late in the year and gives a glimpse into the nature of the settlement at the crossroads.

And finally Reading University have been looking at the nature of the occupation of the landscape around Calleva in their Silchester Environs Project and while the results are some way off we do know that their review of aerial photographs and LiDAR will give us a more confident understanding on the nature of settlement and exploitation in this area.

¹ *Grubenhaus* – AD 5th -7th centuries building with a sub rectangular pit underneath the floor.

Excavations at Razor's Farm, Chineham

Ginny Pringle



Thanks to an introduction through David Hopkins, our County Archaeologist, in November members from BAHS were able to visit the Croudace Homes site at Razor's Farm, Chineham. Wessex Archaeology has been busy excavating ahead of building development, funded by Croudace Homes, who also facilitated the visit to the site.

Until recently, the majority of Iron Age settlement discovered in the Basingstoke area has been associated with the chalk, but as Chineham is developed further, more evidence is being discovered on the heavier soils of the London Clay to the north-east of Basingstoke. Past discovery may well have been hampered by less visible cropmarks due to the soil type, and the mosaic of woodland landscape in this area. So Razor's Farm, as a Late Iron Age and Romano-British site, offers potential for increasing our understanding of early development in this area.

We were afforded a bright and sunny day for our visit, which was just as well since the trenches were full to the brim with water, despite the site's being on a hill. Considering we had not had that much rain, it was testament to the heavier soils being more prone to waterlogging in the area, and perhaps explains why it seems it is not until the very Late Iron Age that occupation appears to have spread into this area.



We were led around the site by Jon Sanigar, Project Officer with Wessex Archaeology, who explained that over the past few weeks his team had adopted a sampling strategy of various small-scale trenches, located at strategic points across the site to maximise the potential of obtaining archaeological information. With just one week left on site, they were nearing completion and already had a fair amount recorded. Jon showed us the plan so far, this revealed a couple of interlocking circular Iron Age enclosure ditches, surrounded by a much larger curvilinear early Romano-British enclosure. These curvilinear enclosures were then followed by rectilinear Romano-British enclosures.



Although an access road had been built through the site, archaeology is likely to be preserved under the road itself. Any central features, such as roundhouses, were not located in terms of postholes in a circular shape. However, there were a number of fire-pits present which may well have

been within the centre of roundhouses, with one pit surrounded by a possible drip-gully. The only features that seem certainly to have been part of a structure were a rectangular arrangement of postholes off to one side of the enclosure. The cutting for the Basingstoke to Reading railway runs immediately adjacent to the eastern boundary of the enclosure ditches, and so it is entirely possible that some of the archaeology was destroyed in the mid-nineteenth century.

The site has also revealed copious finds of pottery, both Late Iron Age and Romano-British. The route of the Chichester to Silchester Roman road lies not far to the west of Razor's Farm, and so it is likely that the occupants of the site were tapping into trading opportunities afforded by this proximity, perhaps even in the Late Iron Age if an Iron Age road to pre-Roman *Calleva* existed along this route. Certainly the later finds suggested continental links, which are borne out by Gallic Samian wares. Little bone was found, probably due to the more acidic nature of the soil than that of the neighbouring chalkland. A large triangular loom-weight was also discovered as well as Roman glass and a fine bronze hair or dress pin, which according to Jon, had been preserved as if it were brand new. We didn't get to see all the finds as for security they were taken to Wessex Archaeology's premises at Old Sarum at the end of each day, so all we had to view on the day was pottery, coarse flint tempered Iron Age and some finer greyware (perhaps Alice Holt type), plus some burnt flint.



The archaeological evidence for settlement in the form of possible roundhouses and a Romano-British style rectangular building, would suggest the settlement had an agricultural function. However, with the amounts of pottery, glass and the loomweight, it would seem this is likely to have been a settlement of considerable wealth. We look forward to the report once it has been lodged with the Hampshire Historic Environment Record.

Basingstoke's Railway Mission: 1893-c1911/12

Roger Ottewill

As befitted a railway town, a local branch of what was a national Mission opened in Basingstoke in February 1893.¹ Its object was described as 'the spiritual and temporal welfare of railway employees and their families.' An inaugural meeting was held in a room at the YWCA. This began with a tea and was followed by an evening meeting, attended by a party from Reading station, at which bright hymns were sung and addresses were given together with 'some delightful testimonies from the railwaymen themselves.' It was explained that because of the nature of their employment, railwaymen found it difficult to attend a usual place of worship' and one aim of the Mission was 'to hold meetings at a time when the greatest number were off duty.'²

In its early days, the Mission did not have a permanent home and meetings were held in a variety of locations, including the Wesleyan schoolroom in Potters Lane and the British Workman. During 1898, however, the Mission moved into Longcroft Hall in May Street, which had been erected in 1878. Subsequently, it was able to purchase the hall, which was renamed the Railway Mission Hall, for £200 and enlarge it so that it could also be accessed from Lower Brook Street (see Figs 1 and 2).

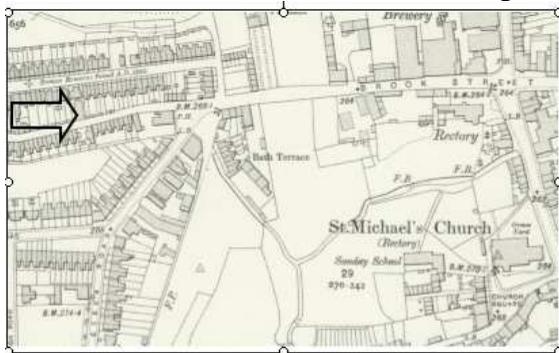


Fig 1. The Location of the Railway Mission Hall as Shown on a 1910 Ordnance Survey Map

¹ The Railway Mission had been founded in 1881, as a successor to the Railway Boys Mission.

² *Hants and Berks Gazette*, February 18, 1893.

The Mission was formally ‘undenominational’. It derived support from a number of leading Nonconformists, including the Baptist, Thomas Burberry; the Congregationalist, Joseph Cane; and the minister of Immanuel Church, Rev. Eustace Long; as well as the C of E Rector of Eastrop, Rev R.W. Boyce. The latter described the Mission as being conducted on ‘gospel lines’, in other words it was evangelical in its theological stance³. In keeping with the preoccupations of the time, it was also committed to the cause of temperance.



Fig 2. The Derelict Buildings of the Railway Mission c1960

Annual meetings were held in February to review the finances and progress of the Mission. From reports of these in the *Hants and Berks Gazette* it is possible to gain some insights into how the Mission operated and the challenges it faced⁴. In many respects it was similar to Nonconformist chapels, holding services and meetings and establishing a variety of affiliated organisations for children and young people, including a Sunday School and Band of Hope in 1898 and a branch of Christian Endeavour in 1903. There was also a Women’s Sewing Class. In addition, there was a choir and band and the *Railway Signal*, a national magazine of the Mission, was distributed. Its activities were overseen by a Superintendent, Mrs Wagstaff.

³ *Hants and Berks Gazette*, February 5, 1898.

⁴ See, for example, *Hants and Berks Gazette*, February 6, 1904.

Perhaps, not surprisingly, the annual reports of the Mission's Secretary were often optimistic in tone. That said, from time to time difficulties were mentioned. At the 1900 meeting, for example, he reported that owing to additional demands arising from the Boer War 'it had been very difficult for the men to come to weeknight services'⁵. Moreover, fund-raising to pay off the debt arising from the purchase and enlargement of Longcroft Hall proved to be an ongoing challenge. The last annual meeting reported in the *Hants and Berks Gazette* was that for 1905⁶. However, the Mission was still functioning in 1910, since it was represented at the anniversary celebration of the Working Men's Mission in George Street⁷.

That said, it would seem that difficulties mounted and, at some point, probably around 1911/2, it was decided for reasons which are unknown that the Mission could no longer continue in its existing form. Steps were therefore taken to find a purchaser for the Mission Hall who would be prepared to take over the work. In 1913 it was offered to, and eventually purchased by, London Street Congregational Church for the sum of £280. As it was put by the minister Rev. Rocliffe Mackintosh, 'at bottom, it is not a matter of money, but of willingness and devotion to our Master.'⁸ Rather than a mission, it was intended that May Street should be a branch church of London Street under the initial leadership of Rev and Mrs Gamble from Manchester. Thus, the premises were re-designated "The Congregational Hall, May Street". At the reopening, after renovation, the chairman Mr R. Sterry Wallis observed that: 'The place was now entering on a new era with every prospect of usefulness, and he was quite sure that there was plenty of scope in this locality for Christian work.'⁹ The Gambles remained for only a very short period and from then until the Hall's closure in 1941 May Street was supervised by evangelists appointed to oversee London Street's village chapels.

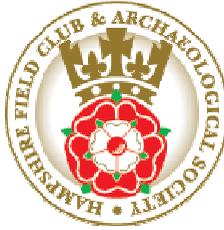
⁵ *Hants and Berks Gazette*, February 17, 1900.

⁶ *Hants and Berks Gazette*, February 10, 1905.

⁷ *Hants and Berks Gazette*, February 26, 1910. The representative was Miss Patrick who gave an address.

⁸ *Basingstoke Congregational Magazine*, May 1913: 3.

⁹ *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 22 November 1913.



Hampshire Studies On-Line

The Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society is pleased to announce that, for the first time, back issues of Hampshire Studies are available online.

The webpage with the links to the volumes, for the years 2000-2009, is at: <http://www.hantsfieldclub.org.uk/publications/hampshirstudies/digital/hs2000s.html>

You will be able to download articles and/or read them on screen, and in time, older volumes will be added. For three years volumes will be in a restricted area, for which access to the online version will be free to HFC members who pay the appropriate membership fee; non-members will be able to access either the whole volume or individual articles on payment of a set fee. After three years volumes will be moved to the website, for totally free access. Further information will be sent and an announcement will appear in the Newsletter when this process has been completed.

If BAHS members who are not individual members of the HFC wish to access any articles, please contact Penny Martin at enquiries@bahsoc.org.uk or on 01256 321 423.

Hold the Date

A churches visit is planned for 6 May, probably heading towards Andover, and taking in St Mary Bourne. The churches to be visited will depend on weddings and other church commitments.

More detail to follow...

Fieldwork Report

Mark Peryer

The dates for this year's Dig Basing weekends are 24-25 June and 23-24 September. Please reserve these dates in your diary. Remember we don't only need help with digging test pits, but also with processing finds; everyone is welcome to join in and we always have great fun. This is likely to be the last year for digging test pits in Old Basing, since we think we have more or less achieved our research goals for the project. However, we are actively researching where to go next.

Work has started on processing the finds from the excavations at Chilton Candover, concentrating initially on the finds from the Commonwealth house site in the valley. We have organised the storage of all the finds in the barn at Chilton Manor Farm, and have arranged several processing sessions where you can join in the work in the relative comfort of St Leonard's centre in Oakley. The next session will take place 2-4 pm on 18 February. We shall be going through the finds, sorting them into different categories, re-bagging as necessary and cataloguing them as we go. Once we get up to date on the house-site finds, we have more from the Iron Age and Roman sites to work on, so there will be other opportunities to get involved.



A selection of bricks, render & tiles from the house-site at Chilton Candover



A piece of fancy ridge tile; frills from the dowdy Commonwealth era?

In the summer we propose to run two digs at Chilton Candover. One at the house site 8-23 July, and the other will return to the Roman site for about two weeks, 5 -20 August. If you would like to get involved in any of this project work, then please feel free to contact me by email (markperyer@gmail.com) or via my mobile number (07770 832397).

Church Graffiti – a How To Guide

Nicola Turton

Last year Alan and I attended a medieval graffiti training day at King John's House in Romsey. It was run by Matthew Champion, who has been running the Project to record church graffiti in Norfolk, and has written a book about Church Graffiti. He now wishes to evangelise and get the whole of the country recording this wonderful aspect of social history.

At King John's House the custodians had previously discovered sections of graffiti and protected them with Perspex; but with a torch and a few minutes, Matthew identified several more pieces, including a large helmet. I was hooked. As regular readers will know, I am obsessed with visiting churches, and now I have an added thrill. We carry a tiny torch and cast an oblique light across columns, window surrounds, pews... and if we're lucky, all at once some graffiti pop into view. It is quite intoxicating, and really like archaeology; lots of looking for the occasional gem. And I love the sudden connection with someone from hundreds of years ago.

The thing to remember about church graffiti is that in the past they were not seen as criminal acts. Think of the Norfolk ship graffiti, or the choir desk at St Cross where the Master carved his name. It was often the only way people had to record something, or to seek a blessing (for example the ships). Daisy or compass roses abound, as do crosses and W's and V's, which are properly known as apotropaic marks (or improperly, ritual protection marks). I recently read a book about the Hat Trade in Bedfordshire, and I learned that in the houses of straw plaiters, you can sometimes find notches on the fireplace beam at intervals of $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$ and one yard. These marks enabled the workers to measure the plaits, but these days you simply wouldn't know that was what the notches were for. I shared this on the English Medieval Graffiti page for the members who are doing domestic buildings in the Home Counties, and they were delighted. And there's *another* thing, I've joined Facebook in order to belong to the Graffiti group. We share pictures of all sorts of interesting items, and learn from each other. If someone is puzzled, then they post the picture on the page and someone will have an idea.

The Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Survey is being led by the Hampshire Field Club, and the good news is that BAHS is a corporate member, so we can all join in, and be covered by HFC insurance. We have the chance to visit churches which aren't always open – for example in February, four of us are off to survey St Maurice's tower in Winchester. If you're not sure where that is, think of Debenham's, and the tower is the end of the shop. Since I moved to Hampshire 29 years ago, I've wanted to go in there. It seems that everything comes to her who waits!

In St Michael's, Basingstoke, there is quite a bit of graffiti, including a ship, but although we started a survey last year, we didn't get as far as that piece. As the New Year warms up (we hope, as there's no place for martyrs in the graffiti group), we would like to make a fresh start on St Michael's. Please let me know if you are interested. You don't have to commit to anything; after all, there are some people (I am told) who don't find recording church graffiti completely fascinating. Just come along and see what you think.

**BAHS Trip to Ashmolean Museum Oxford
Sunday 19 March 2017**

We are organising a visit to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. The museum has free admission, and many exhibits and collections of History and Archaeology.

The special exhibition about Alexander the Great is also free.

If you would like to come, please be at the entrance at 10.30am.

Can You Help?

The Society has come into possession of a large number of 35mm slides dating from the 60s and 70s, which were donated by an elderly couple via the Basingstoke Gazette and are said to contain some pictures of Basingstoke before and during the major construction work.

Due to the high number of slides we are looking for volunteers to help review and extract any slides of historical value such as buildings and views of the town which no longer exist today. If you are interested in participating, please contact William King on 07917 679 256.

2017 DIARY DATES

BAHS

**BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL &
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

www.bahsoc.org.uk

Penny Martin Tel: 01256 321 423

secretary@bahsoc.org.uk

Registered Charity no. 11000263

MEETINGS Church Cottage, Basingstoke at 7.30pm

9 March JANE AUSTEN'S HOUSES:
Derek Spruce, local historian and BAHS member.

13 April ALMANACS, ASTROLOGY & POPULAR
MEDICINE IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND:
Louise Curth, Winchester University.

11 May THE EBBSFLEET ELEPHANT BUTCHERY SITE:
Francis Wenban-Smith, University of Southampton

FRIENDS OF THE WILLIS MUSEUM
At 7.30 pm Willis Museum, Basingstoke

16 February DONNINGTON CASTLE: Alex Godden.

16 March SCAMPER THROUGH THE STUARTS:
Diana White.

20 April THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF WARFARE:
Dave Allen.

18 May PEOPLE ON PLINTHS: 10 HAMPSHIRE STATUES:
Tony Cross