

# BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER 111

April/May 1990

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Items for the Newsletter to: Barbara Applin  
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Basingstoke, Hants RG22 5EN

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

The 1990-91 subscriptions are due on 1st May. They have remained at the same level for some time, but understandably we are having to raise them this year:

|             |        |
|-------------|--------|
| Single      | £7.50  |
| Family      | £10.00 |
| OAP/Student | £3.00  |

Please pay at the next meeting or send them to the Treasurer:  
John Horrocks, 5 Oak Close, Oakley

## AGM AT THE VYNE

We are very fortunate this year to be allowed to hold our Annual General Meeting at The Vyne - no, that's not the school but the superb house owned by the National Trust! We shall be meeting at 7.30 pm on Thursday 14th June in the Stone Gallery (details in the Calling Notice).

This will be an important meeting as we need to formally ratify the small amendments to our Constitution that the Charity Commission require before our Society can be given charitable status. And the business meeting will be followed by a short talk on The Vyne by Andrew Duckworth.

## EXCURSION TO BATH

Saturday 9th June

Please fill in and return the enclosed form as soon as possible if you wish to come. We are deliberately leaving much of the day for members to make their own choices of the many attractions of Bath, the one organised feature being a visit to an excavation taking place near the Hot Springs.

## WE'RE ON THE MOVE!

The Committee is hoping to finalise arrangements for our lecture meetings to take place in the Conference Room at the Regional Centre (Queen Mary's College), with pot-washing activities appropriately enough in the Pottery Room. We have had happy years at Chute House - some members will remember that we also spent some time at the Eastrop Hall - but parking and other difficulties have cropped up, and we are being offered a very warm welcome at the Regional Centre. Full details later.

Meanwhile, we hope that the September and October lectures will be in the Conference Room at the Regional Centre:

13th September Dawn Webster  
14th October Mark Corney

Hittite Sites  
Aerial Photographs

and our November lecture will be a special treat, at the Central Studio itself:

8th November Prof. Barry Cunliffe

Danebury and its  
Celtic Hinterland

### INVITATION FROM ALTON

The Alton History and Archaeology Society again invite us to join them on their excursion. This time it is on Saturday 21st July to Avebury (a guided tour of the village and prehistoric stone circle, visit to the Great Barn and the Alexander Keiller Museum) and Devizes (canal, town or museum). The cost, including entrance fees, is £9. The coach will start at 9 am at Petersfield, picking up at Bordon, Alton and Basingstoke, and return to Petersfield (setting down at the same places) about 7.30 pm. A form will be available at the next meeting, or from our Secretary. Queries: Alton 84817.

### HAMPSHIRE FIELD CLUB

30th May AGM & Jane Austen and Southampton (Adrian Rance) 7.30 pm, Room 12, King Alfred's College, Winchester

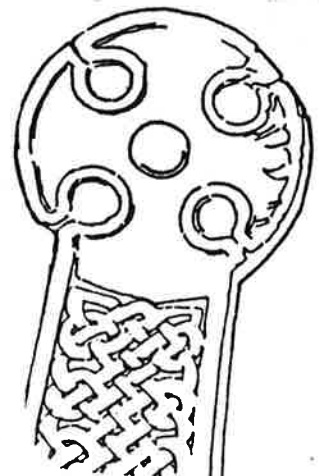
7th July Landscape Section field trip to Sherborne St John. Meet at 10.30 at the rear of Swan car park (SU 625553).

16th August Evening tour of excavations at Bury Hill Fort, Andover, led by Prof. Barry Cunliffe. Assemble at SU347436 on the Red Rice to Upper Clatford road for 7.30 pm departure. Booking not necessary.

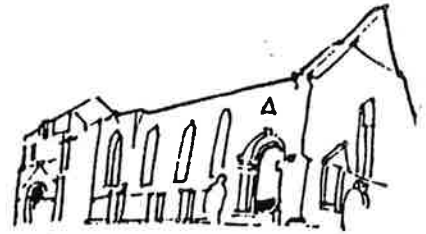
8th September Tour of Mediaeval Buildings in Salisbury. Meet outside the West Front of the Cathedral at 10.20 am. Cost £3 (HFC members), £4.50 non-members. (Our Society is a member)

### WHITHORN

Toward the end of July 89, whilst on holiday in the Scottish Borders, Len and I drove to the attractive Kirroughtree Hotel, Newton Stewart, Wigtownshire. This was a special treat and we were assigned a lovely turret bedroom overlooking the park-like gardens. The weather too was perfect. The following morning we set out for Whithorn to see the extensive "dig" which was going on there.



Archaeologist "Jim" gave a group of us a detailed and fascinating guided walk and talk on the site of St Ninian's Candida Casa (the first stone-built church), the Monastery, a Saxon hall, a Viking house and a Medieval cemetery of some 2,000 burials. Skulls and human bones protruded from the banks of the excavation.

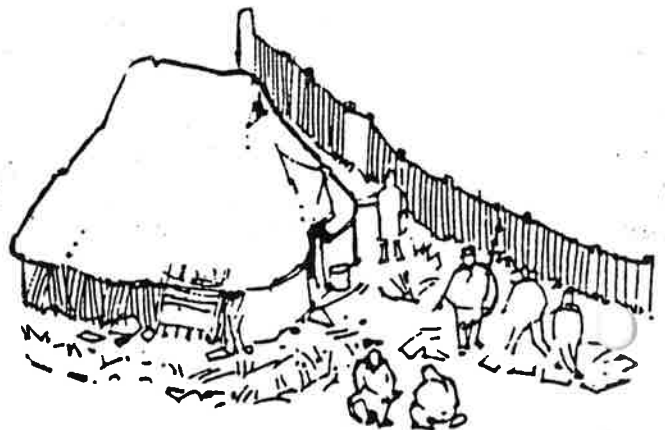


The Priory was founded by St Ninian 150 years before St Columba came to Scotland in 563 AD and so may be regarded as the cradle of Scottish Christianity. Here in the decades after the Romans withdrew from Britain, was a community of Christian Britons. St Ninian continued his ministry while the south was overcome by pagan Saxons. By the time St Columba reached Iona, Whithorn was already a great Christian centre. During the Viking raids Whithorn survived where so many ancient churches and monasteries perished. Very little is now visible of the early church. In the Museum ancient carved gravestones of plain beauty reflect the piety and simplicity of the Christian Fathers. The east end of the late cathedral is the site of a chapel nearly 1300 years old. A massive terrace recently excavated enclosed the monastery which replaced it on the hillside. Outside this enclosure Viking settlers set up houses and workshops. This may well have been Scotland's earliest town.



**T**HE MEDIEVAL GATEWAY

Remarkable late Medieval gatehouse used by the pilgrims and leading to the Priory, Crypt, museum and excavation. 16th Century.



The re-creation of a Norseman's house had suffered some vandalism but repairs were being carried out by the faithful workforce.

In the Middle Ages pilgrims came from all over Europe to visit the Shrine of St Ninian. Gifts left by the tomb enabled the priests of Whithorn to beautify their church. Only a sad fragment of the cathedral remains. It was once the scene of Royal Pilgrimage. Here townsmen and pilgrims worshipped. All the glories passed away in the Reformation. Pilgrimage was banned by law, the shrine was desecrated. The townsmen plundered the great church to build their homes. Only the nave survived, converted to a simple parish church. This church is now abandoned, standing roofless beside the present church of 1822. Thus a tradition of Christian worship has continued for fifteen centuries.

Finds included:

400-700 AD Wine jars from the Eastern Mediterranean. A group of drinking glasses imported from Northern Europe. Merovingian glass cone beakers, a rim sherd of a North Gaulish flanged bowl, a gold ring and rock crystal, indicating widespread trading contacts with Europe.

700-850 AD A large collection of Northumbrian coins dating to the first half of the ninth century AD. Sherds of window glass.

850-1000 AD Few finds, and it is difficult to assess the fortunes of the ecclesiastical community during this period. After the conquest of York by the Danes there is a suggestion that Whithorn received a visit from Bishop Eardulf and Abbot Aenred, carrying with them the Lindisfarne Gospels and the relics of St Cuthbert. Sadly, the only hospitality available to them seems to have been an old cheese and a salted horse's head! Perhaps an indication that Whithorn had fallen on hard times.

1000-1200 AD Leather off-cuts, boots and shoes, Saxo-Norman pottery, a bone needle and a gemstone in silver mount.

1120-1450 AD A stack of four coins secreted within an oven. Three Edward I or II pennies of London. One Edward I of Durham, all dated between 1280 and 1302. A 'lead pilgrims' token depicting a bishop giving a blessing with his right hand and holding a crozier in his left. The pascal lamb stands to his right.

1450-1680 AD Around this time a thoroughfare was constructed across the Medieval cemetery. Finds in this area, probably used as a market, include a group of coins spanning the reigns of James III (1460-1488) and Charles II (1660-1682).

"Jim" concluded his guided tour by telling us that the Excavation was costing £1 per minute and asked for our kind contributions. Len and I went along to his cubby-hole, where we received a certificate bearing an indecipherable signature for our donation of £10. (Excavation organisers please note).

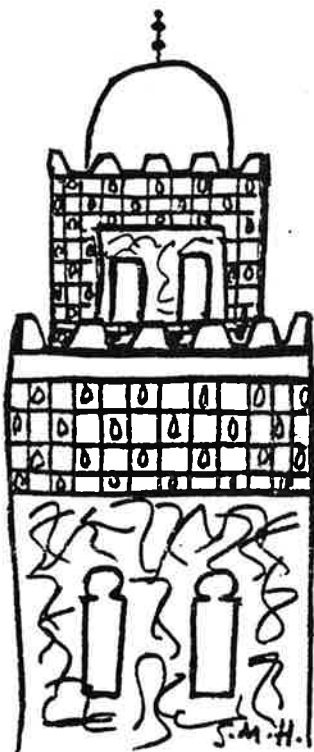
After lunch at an old Inn down by the harbour we had planned a visit to St Ninian's Cave. Unfortunately one of the very, very few wet afternoons of the long hot summer came upon us and, as the rain was very heavy and we were not suitably clad, we had to reluctantly abandon our walk to the coast. We did, however, visit the Whithorn Visitor Centre, the Audio-Visual Programme and the Dig Shop.

Whithorn was given Ecclesiastical Burgh status by Robert the Bruce in 1329 and became a Royal Burgh in 1511. The 16th century gatehouse used by the pilgrims is particularly beautiful and Whithorn is an excellent example of a 17th to 19th century townscape.

JOAN MERRYWEATHER

## MOROCCO - A COUNTRY OF CONTRASTS

If, like me, you imagined that Morocco was a vast expanse of stony or sandy desert you would be in for the same surprises that confronted me at the beginning of February. In what the Moroccans themselves described as unseasonably fine weather, the almond trees were in blossom and the fields were full of small marigolds, wild narcissi, asphodels and other more or less exotic plants. Ploughing was in full swing; generally still with a wooden plough but with an amazing assortment of animals drawing it. It became a case of "spot the most interesting combination": a pair of camels, a camel and a donkey, a mule and a donkey, two oxen etc. When asked why the animals were not of the same species we were told that two of the same spoke the same language and would spend the day chatting rather than working! Cultivation, particularly in the western coastal plain, is reminiscent of the medieval field systems - narrow strips with only crude boundaries separating one holding from another.



The public buildings in the major cities (I visited Casablanca, Rabat, Meknes, Fes and Marrakech) are very fine and reminded me of southern Spain, particularly the Alhambra in Granada. The tile and plaster work is exceptionally detailed and much gold leaf is used for decorative effect. In Rabat, the tomb of King Mohammed V, who saw the country through the early years of independence from the French (1956), is a modern example of the old style and attracts many Moroccan, as well as foreign, visitors. This complex is particularly interesting because the large open area in front of the mausoleum is full of Roman columns - brought in from Volubilis.

Volubilis itself is quite a sight; an extensive city (now in the middle of nowhere) of which several large buildings remain. The particular attraction for me was the splendid collection of mosaics, still in situ, in various domestic buildings throughout the site. One of the best shows Orpheus surrounded by a Noah's Ark of animals, many from the African sub-continent. There were no other parties on site while we were there and no officious guides or custodians; all very peaceful and atmospheric.

The crossings of the Middle Atlas and the High Atlas, both exhibiting the residue of January snow, were other memorable experiences. If you have no head for heights, it pays to be on

the landward side of the coach; in places the road is nothing but a series of hairpin bends where the cliff edge (and the drop) is not far away. The views are spectacular.

The landscape to the south of the mountains is completely different from that to the north, and more what I had expected of the country as a whole. It is largely an immense stony waste, but the river valleys are well cultivated and were very green. The rock formations in some of the gorges made me wish that I knew a bit more about the geology of the area.

Domestic architecture varies with the region. In the warmer south, where the glare of the summer sun on whitewashed walls would be unbearable, houses are built of sand-coloured blocks. Concrete is not much in evidence in the remoter areas of the south where mud bricks may still be seen hardening in the sun before use. The Dades and Todra valleys are also "kasbah" country; houses rather like miniature fortresses that blend so well into the landscape that you can't see them until you are almost on top of them. These provide accommodation for extended families; as many as 50 or 60 people may live together in one. Many are decorated with a form of pargetting. On the western, Atlantic, coast the Portuguese influence is still apparent. Here the buildings tend to be whitewashed with blue paintwork.

There are many tribes in Morocco, including Berbers and Tuaregs, the descendants of immigrants from Senegal, the Sudan and practically everywhere else in North Africa. They look different, wear different types of clothes and even make different kinds of carpet. All throng together in the local markets which are noisy, colourful and extremely interesting. Outside the major cities, many women are still veiled and rarely seen in places such as markets. So far as I could see, they spent their time indoors or in the fields where they appeared to be engaged in the most back-breaking work. Men, on the other hand, seemed to spend much of their time in small groups, chatting or drinking the ubiquitous mint tea.

I enjoyed the traditional dishes: harira (a thick pulse and vegetable-based soup), couscous and tagine (a meat and vegetable stew named after the conical-topped dish in which it is cooked). There was a plentiful supply of the most delicious oranges. These and the sunshine must account for the healthy appearance of most Moroccans.

All in all, a fascinating country with an amazing variety of landscape. Buildings are going up apace, largely to meet the insatiable demands of tourists, so if you are thinking of going, don't leave it too long. I will gladly lend my guide book, map and photographs to anyone who is interested.

SUE HEADLEY

## CALENDAR

|             |   |                   |
|-------------|---|-------------------|
| Wed 30 May  | HFC AGM & Jane Austen and Southampton<br>7.30 pm King Alfred's College,<br>Winchester       | HFC<br>see page 3 |
| Sat 9 June  | EXCURSION TO BATH   | *<br>see page 2   |
| Sun 10 June | The Reflowering of History a detailed<br>look at the new Tudor Garden, Basing<br>House 3 pm | B                 |
| Thu 14 June | ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING in The Stone<br>Gallery, The Vyne, 7.30                              | *<br>see page 2   |
| Fri 15 June | Walk round Overton (Bill Fergie)  | W                 |
| Wed 20 June | Marine Archaeological Research  | A                 |
| Sun 24 June | Flora of Basing House guided walk   | B                 |
| Wed 27 June | Slade Farm, Colemore - vernacular<br>Architecture   | A                 |
| Sat 7 July  | Landscape Section field trip to<br>Sherborne St John  | HFC<br>see page 3 |
| Sat 21 July | Excursion to Avebury & Devizes  | A<br>see page 2   |
| Thu 16 Aug  | Evening tour of excavations, Bury<br>Hill Fort, Andover, (Prof. Barry<br>Cunliffe)          | HFC<br>see page 3 |
| Sun 19 Aug  | Tudor Cooking in the Citadel, Basing<br>House   | B                 |
| Sat 8 Sep   | Tour of Mediaeval Buildings in<br>Salisbury   | HFC<br>see page 3 |
| Thu 13 Sep  | HITTITE SITES Dawn Webster  | *<br>see page 2   |

- \* Society activity
- A Alton History & Archaeology Society  
Lectures (new venue) The Lecture Room  
(opposite Beech House) Lord Mayor Treloar  
College, Alton
- B Friends of Basing House
- HFC Hampshire Field Club
- W Friends of the Willis Museum, 7.30 pm

Thanks to the Whithorn Project for permission to reproduce their illustrations