

# BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER 116

AUGUST 1991

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*THE OLD ALMS HOUSES - LONDON. ST.*

## SUBSCRIPTIONS - A LAST REMINDER !

The subscriptions for 1991-2 fell due on 1st May. They remain:

Single    £7.50                  Family    £10.00                  OAP/Student    £3.00

Please send your subscriptions NOW to the Treasurer, John Horrocks, 5 Oak Close, Oakley.

## COMPUTERISED MEMBERSHIP RECORDS

In order to facilitate access to our Society membership list and to enable quick production of envelope labels we propose to enter membership details on a stand-alone personal computer at the home of the Hon.Sec. If you have any objection to your name, address and telephone number being put on the computer, please let the Hon.Sec. know by (or at) the September meeting.

## \*\* A WORD ABOUT THE SEPTEMBER MEETING AT THE REGIONAL CENTRE \*\*

FAMILY LIFE FROM THE BERKSHIRE DEPOSITION BOOKS (c 1560-1610)  
by Joan Dils

Thursday, 12th September - NOT in the Conference Room. Please follow the direction signs in Reception to the coffee room next to Q.M. Hall.

Joan Dils is known to us as a good lecturer and has undertaken research to the point when she is well known in her field. She will show how the Deposition books can be exploited to produce interesting facts and points about family life - in this instance from the late 15 and early 1600's.

## THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - A REPORT

The AGM took place on 13th. June and was attended by about 30 members. The following were elected as Officers and Committee:

- Richard Dexter (Chairman)  
4, Rosedene Gardens, Fleet
- Mrs Barbara Herrington (Secretary)  
16, Scotney Road, Basingstoke
- John Horrocks (Treasurer)  
5, Oak Close, Oakley Basingstoke
- Peter Heath  
1, Hammond Road, Basingstoke
- Miss Nicola Hawes (Catering liaison)  
28, Augustus Drive, Basingstoke
- Mrs Marta Cock (Regional Centre liaison)  
16, Soper Grove, Basingstoke

Mrs Barbara Seymour ("Welcome" liaison)  
16, Park Avenue, Basing, Basingstoke

Mrs Paulline Williams (Publicity)  
Lower Farm, Ellisfield, Basingstoke

Martin Morris (C.B.A. liaison)  
8, Clarence Road, Fleet

[The following were co-opted to the Committee at the first meeting after the AGM]

Mrs Barbara Applin (Co-opted, Newsletter Editor)  
138, Old Kempshott Lane, Basingstoke

Mrs Mary Oliver (Co-opted Programme Organiser)  
3, Milkingpen Lane, Basing, Basingstoke

It was reported that the change of venue for meetings to the Regional Centre at QMC had attracted several new members - with a consequent rise in income over the year. This was to some extent balanced by the increase in cost of room hire..... The Video Project continues and the script for the next programme - Iron Age, Roman and Saxon - is almost ready. The "voice-over" will be done by Gareth Thomas of the Regional Centre

The business meeting was followed by the postponed talk on the Rose Theatre. This fascinating talk by Julian Bowden gave the background to the how and why of the creation and construction of the theatre, and its relationship to its contemporaries. The bulk of the evidence presented came from excavations, despite all the difficulties involved.

#### ABOUT THE OCTOBER & NOVEMBER TALKS ——— & THE XMAS PARTY

[ With added comments by Barbara Applin.]

\*\*\* Thursday, 10th October : Mike Allen of Wessex Archaeology will talk on the subject of ritual and landscape based on environmental and archaeological evidence derived from the Buckskin barrow excavations.

[ Anyone who helped to make the "Barrow" for our video last year will want to know the real story.... About 20 years ago, when I worked at the Willis Museum, I excavated a round barrow at Buckskin (near the chalk pit beside Berwyn Close) but, as I had to dash from one site to another, there was never time to work on the finds and write them up before I left the Museum. To my delight, Mike Morris offered to publish the site, and the report is to appear in the Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society. What gave this excavation some importance was the environmental evidence derived from soil samples. Mike Allen, who undertook the analysis of the snail shells, etc., will give us the true story.

And what about the ritual? Come and find out! ]

\*\*\* Thursday, 14th November : Prof. Michael Fulford of Reading University will add to the pleasure of those who went walkabout at the Silchester site

with the Society recently (and make those who could not come wish they had) by giving a talk on the recent archaeological work at Silchester.  
..This meeting will be in the Central Studio at Q.M.C. ..

[ Many thanks to Prof. Fulford for giving us such an interesting account of this year's excavations at the North Gate at Silchester during the Society's visit - and for a masterly résumé of the town's archaeology for our video cameras. We shall have the chance of a full update at the November lecture]

\*\*\* WEDNESDAY, 11th December : The Annual Cheese & Wine Social Evening with that little something extra. Further details later ....

#### THE VISIT TO WINCHESTER, LED BY DON BRYANT ON APRIL 28TH., 1991

Winchester lies in a fold in the chalk Downs where the River Itchen can be crossed easily. The Romans diverted the river, so that the low-lying land where the Cathedral, College and part of the Town stand is prone to water problems. This is demonstrated by the work undertaken by a diver early this century to prevent the Lady Chapel in the Cathedral from sinking. Even today there are problems with flooding at the new development at the Brooks site.

The first part of the tour was in this low-lying area and included the only visible fragment of Roman wall. The area around the College and Cathedral is dominated by high walls enclosing property owned by Church, Crown, College, local inhabitants and charitable institutions. They have all contributed to the history of the City and left their mark. Our knowledgeable and enthusiastic guide related many historical anecdotes about buildings and sites we passed and the people who had inhabited them.

After an excellent cream tea at the Cathedral tea rooms we started at the West front of the Cathedral. Don described the dig which uncovered the foundations of the original Norman West front of the Cathedral along with evidence of the Roman Forum and later churches which occupied the land around the Cathedral.

We continued to walk uphill to the Castle, stopping on the way at sites where digs had taken place. As Don had helped at all of these, he could answer all the questions we asked him.

At the Castle, the barracks back directly on to the County Office complex. The Army has now left for newer facilities outside the City but a large parade ground, bordered by an impressive collection of buildings, remains. Over the centuries, the hill-top site has been altered, levelled and built over an original large Saxon fortress with massive ditches, the layout of which can only be guessed at. Early indications show that it will reveal greater finds than the Brooks site - a mouth watering prospect! But all depends (as is common today) on when the development plans are finished and funds are available.

Clearly there is more to be learned about Winchester than can be covered in one afternoon. Anyone wishing to go on another tour can contact the Tourist Information Centre at the Guildhall to get the details of City Walks which are organised regularly throughout the year.

Chris Horrocks

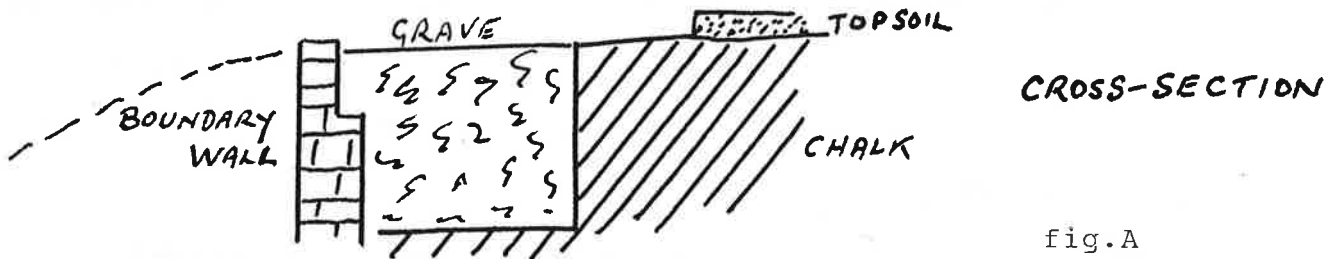
## SKULLDIGGERY

Some weeks ago a builder disturbed part of a grave at the edge of a building site. He was preparing the ground for the foundations of a wall when his mechanical digger sliced through the lower part of a human skeleton. The police were called to the site but a brief examination showed that the bones were old and no further investigations were necessary.

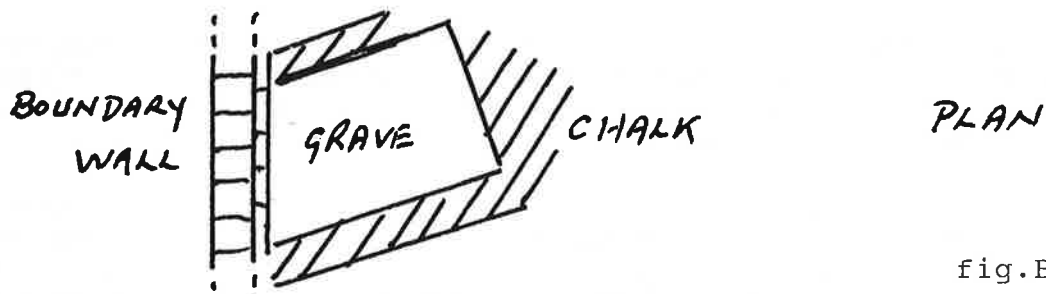
The Society was advised of the discovery and two of our members examined the remains and removed them for safekeeping. In spite of efforts to conceal the rest of the grave (which lay across the site boundary) it appears that some bones were taken by souvenir hunters.

Arrangements were made then for the upper half of the skeleton to be excavated. The work was delayed until the weekend of 12/13 July when our video camera team were available. We intend to include scenes of the excavation in "Beneath Basingstoke".

In the meantime, the boundary wall had been built, leaving the remainder of the grave in the side of the slope. (fig.A)



Finally, both excavation and camera teams were available and work began on a wet Saturday morning. As soon as the shallow top soil had been removed the outline of the grave became apparent (fig. B). The grave fill was then removed, layer by layer, until the skull was exposed. Nothing was found in these layers; disappointing, as we had hoped to find some artifact which could give an indication of the date of the burial.



With the boundary wall in position our excavation was taking place in only half a grave. You can imagine how small was this space. To avoid treading on the skeleton some very awkward positions had to be adopted.

As the skull and left arm were exposed it could be seen that the wrist and hand bones were missing; hopefully these will be among the bones already removed. The skeleton was lying with the head to the north and on the left side. The greater part of the rib cage was in place together with many of the vertebrae. The right hand side of the skeleton had been disturbed by burrowing animals. The jaw bone of a small rodent was found on the bottom of the grave.

On the Saturday evening, for fear of further interference, the skeleton was

covered with polythene sheeting and re-buried by a few inches of soil. Fortunately, there were no more problems and, on the Sunday, the grave was again uncovered. As the film crew recorded the scene the skeleton was carefully removed from its resting place and each bone was logged and given a distinctive number.

From a cursory examination of the skull it appeared to belong to a person in their mid-twenties with an almost complete set of teeth in good condition. Four upper front teeth had become loose after death but only one of these was found in the grave. The most remarkable thing about the skull was the large hole in the back towards the top of the cranium. Presumably, this was the cause of death but only a closer examination will reveal the truth.

The grave had been cut into the chalk bedrock and was square cut at the excavated end. It lay just 15 metres from the old Roman road and it would not be unreasonable to presume that this was the grave of a pre-Christian Roman. However, no firm conclusions can be drawn until a carbon-14 dating can be obtained.

My thanks to the members of the excavating team of Eric Robinson, Peter Read and David Miles for their hard work and no less thanks to our camera team, led by Cliff Eastabrook.

Peter Heath

#### BENEATH BASINGSTOKE

We have just finished the first of two weeks' shooting for Programme 2, and once again Cliff Eastabrook and his camera crew (this time Mole and Strange) have got some splendid shots. We have sequences showing Mary Oliver explaining the Oakridge excavations, Duncan Russell talking about the excavations he directed at Viabes - and, much more up-to-date, Mike Fulford telling about the current excavations at Silchester. All this backed up by shots of finds in the Museum (or loaned from the County Museum Service store) and shots in the Iron Age Museum at Andover.

Peter Heath has had a starring role this time, directing the excavation of the Kempshott skeleton and conducting a stimulating discussion with Fort Hill pupils on the Iron Age hillfort under their school. And we have shots of Anne Hawker studying old documents.

For the sequence describing the Saxon (or, as we are now being encouraged to say, early Mediaeval) excavations at Cowdery's Down, Peter Heath is shown laying out ranging rods to show the size and shape of one of the halls. Even more enterprising, Stephen Oliver has made a superb model of that hall - destined for display in the Museum. Simon James, deputy director of the Cowdery's Down excavations, was consulted on the details of the model and is due to appear before cameras during our next session at the beginning of August. Cliff Eastabrook for once found himself at the other end of the camera, performing as an Anglo-Saxon reciter of the poem "Beowulf" - a phrase about the beams of the hall thundering as the hero crosses the floor may illuminate aspects of construction.

We still have plenty to film at the beginning of August - including a sequence where Mary Oliver and I discuss Ructstalls Hill, which is giving us considerable stage fright!

Once again, we are immensely grateful to Gareth Thomas at the Regional Centre for his whole-hearted support for this venture; to Sony for lending the high quality equipment; to Cliff and his team for their hard work and imagination; and to Marta Cock, Kath Haworth and their band of helpers who have supplied "gofers" and much appreciated lunches.

There's a long way to go - the editing is very time consuming, and we have a lot of work to do on graphics, incorporating slides and photos, and the narration for Programme 2. But we are very heartened by the interest and help we are getting from so many sources. This video project has developed an amazing sense of vitality and imagination - ideas we thought fanciful and impossible are becoming exciting reality. Just wait till you see it !

Barbara Applin

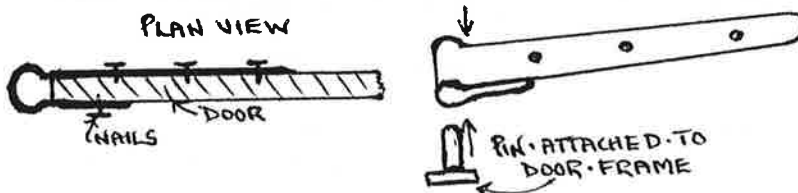
## BASINGSTOKE RECORDS - PART 2

*In part 2 of the continuing story of Anne Hawker's (and Barbara Eastabrook's) on-site visits to the Basingstoke of yesteryear our intrepid explorers are invited to one of the Deane's Almshouses*

*"Deane's Almshouses, in London Street, consist of eight tenements, under one roof, each containing two apartments, and having a small garden behind. They are occupied by eight poor widows, six of whom are of the town of Basingstoke, and are appointed by the Charity Trustees; and the other two are from the parish of Deane, and are appointed by the minister and churchwardens of that parish. They were founded by Sir James Deane, who erected them in 1607, and endowed them with a yearly rent-charge of £55 (now £75 7s 4d net), out of the manor or farm of Ashe. Out of this rent charge each of the eight almswomen receives £6 1s 4d yearly, and 13s 4d each in lieu of gowns. The remainder is retained for repairs, &c. The eight almswomen also receive 1s each per week from the dividends of £693 6s 8d three per cent Consols, purchased pursuant to the will of Francis Russell in 1794. The six belonging to Basingstoke receive in addition the dividends of £523 three per cent Reduced Annuities given by the Rev. Thomas Sheppard, D.D., for charitable uses, and vested by his widow, in 1816, for the above named purpose" (Baigent & Millard, 1889).*

We went to see Mrs Young at number 23 where she had been expecting us after her kind invitation. We were first of all shown the timbering that has to be kept on show in her front room and, indeed, must be kept black. Other regulations in force include an embargo on any bell or letter-box on the front door. We were not sure how she got her letters !

The inner door of the living room appears to be the original one and has the most fascinating hinges, with pin and strap like field gates (see sketch). The door has a latch, too, but Mrs Young thinks that hers is the only one like it in the Almshouses.



The original stairs went up at a very nasty angle, with a knotted rope as one hand-rail, and an extremely narrow bottom step - just ideal for polishing off old ladies one would have thought !

Although when the Almshouses were first erected the occupants were given pocket-money and clothes, they now pay rent .. we did not ask how much. Previously, when there was a Trustee and there were wash-houses and outside lavatories at the back, the said Trustee insisted that the loo seats (wooden planks) and the steps up to the outbuildings should be scrubbed. It cannot have been very easy, or very pleasant, to be a pensioner then.

But now it is such a neat little house, with cupboards in all sorts of places, a tiny pantry, a proper bathroom and kitchen, it is like an Ideal Home exhibit. The garden at the back has a long stretch of grass and sloping beds for flowers near the house. In her flower bed, Mrs Young grows some very fine tulips.

Before the house was modernised, the coal for the fires was kept under the steep stairs and carried into the house in sacks. The scullery at the back had a brick floor, which, when it got old and worn, allowed the earth beneath to work up and form a thin mud on the floor. It is likely that the only heating and cooking fire was in the living room, so that, although the bedroom would have been warmed by the fire in the room directly below, it would not have been very warm and, of course, the fire would have to have been cleaned, laid and lit every day.

Anne Hawker

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#### CALENDAR

(Society activities are in CAPITALS)

8th Sept	Maze Day	Friends of Basing House
12th Sept	FAMILY LIFE IN BERKSHIRE FROM THE DEPOSITION BOOKS	(Joan Dills)
19th Sept	Jane Austen & Chawton	Friends of Willis Museum
10th Oct	RITUAL & LANDSCAPE; ENVIRONMENTAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FROM THE BUCKSKIN BARROW	(Mike Allen)
17th Oct	Changing Face of Basingstoke 1960-90	Friends of Willis Museum
14th Nov	RECENT WORK AT SILCHESTER	(Prof. Michael Fulford)
21st Nov	Aspects of Change in the Hampshire Downland Landscape Since the 16th C.	Friends of Willis Museum
11th Dec	CHEESE & WINE SOCIAL EVENING	